

Corporate Parenting Committee

Wednesday 22 April 2026

5.00 pm

Ground floor meeting rooms GO2A and B, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1
2QH

Membership

Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Charlie Smith (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Natasha Ennin
Councillor Emily Hickson
Councillor Sarah King
Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall

Reserves

Councillor Sunil Chopra
Councillor Sabina Emmanuel
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor Bethan Roberts
Councillor Kath Whittam
Councillor Irina Von Wiese

Non-voting co-opted members

Mark Kerr and Rosamond Marshall

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Access to information

You have the right to request to inspect copies of minutes and reports on this agenda as well as the background documents used in the preparation of these reports.

Babysitting/Carers allowances

If you are a resident of the borough and have paid someone to look after your children, an elderly dependant or a dependant with disabilities so that you could attend this meeting, you may claim an allowance from the council. Please collect a claim form at the meeting.

Access

The council is committed to making its meetings accessible. For details on building access, translation, provision of signers or any other requirements for this meeting, please contact the person below.

Contact

Email: paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk or beverley.olamijulo@southwark.gov.uk

Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting

Althea Loderick

Chief Executive

Date: 13 April 2026



Corporate Parenting Committee

Wednesday 22 April 2026

5.00 pm

Ground floor meeting rooms GO2A and B, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Order of Business

Item No.	Title	Page No.
	MOBILE PHONES	
	Mobile phones should be turned off or put on silent during the course of the meeting.	
	PART A - OPEN BUSINESS	
1.	APOLOGIES	
	To receive any apologies for absence.	
2.	CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS	
	A representative of each political group will confirm the voting members of the committee.	
3.	NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT	
	In special circumstances, an item of business may be added to an agenda within five clear days of the meeting.	
4.	DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS	
	Members to declare any interests and dispensations in respect of any item of business to be considered at this meeting.	
5.	MINUTES	1 - 9
	To approve as a correct record the minutes of the open section of the meeting held on 25 February 2026.	
6.	SPEAKERBOX VERBAL UPDATE	

Item No.	Title	Page No.
7.	VIRTUAL SCHOOL SUSPENSION, EXCLUSION AND PERSISTENT ABSENCE OF GIRLS REPORT - ARISING FROM THE ANNUAL HEADTEACHER REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE 22 OCTOBER 2025	10 - 27
8.	KINSHIP LOCAL OFFER DEVELOPMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	28 - 41
9.	CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2026-2030 - UPDATE	42 - 46
10.	CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2026-27	47 - 52
11.	VERBAL UPDATE ON THE KENT MENINGITIS OUTBREAK	

ANY OTHER OPEN BUSINESS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING AND ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR AS URGENT.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The following motion should be moved, seconded and approved if the sub-committee wishes to exclude the press and public to deal with reports revealing exempt information:

“That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1-7, Access to Information Procedure rules of the Constitution.”

PART B - CLOSED BUSINESS

ANY OTHER CLOSED BUSINESS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING AND ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR AS URGENT.

Date: 13 April 2026



CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on Wednesday 25 February 2026 at 2.00 pm at the Council Offices, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)
Councillor Natasha Ennin

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr Mark Kerr (subject matter expert)

OFFICER SUPPORT: Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Care
Elaine Reid, Head of Service: Permanence and Resources
Daisy May-James, Permanence Lead Service Manager
Audrey Bouazizi, Head of Service Adopt London South
Jenny Taylor, Head of Clinical Service
Joy Edwards, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children
Dr Stacy John-Legere, Designated Doctor for Looked after Children
Clare Ryan, Service Manager, Looked after Children
Joy Hopkinson, Head of Safeguarding & Community Services, Governance and Assurance (legal)
Usha Singh, Virtual Head Teacher
Alice Beresford, Deputy Head of the Virtual School
Sarah O'Connor, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children
Poppy Laurens, Service Development Officer
Ekta Gupta, Children Rights and Participation Officer
Representatives of Speakerbox
Paula Thornton, Constitutional Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Charlie Smith, Maria Linforth-Hall and Emily Hickson.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

The members listed as present were confirmed as the voting members of the meeting.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were none.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

5. MINUTES**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

6. SPEAKERBOX VERBAL UPDATE AND REPORT ON ACTIONS

Speakerbox provided an update to committee on key work and priorities. Advised that out of the eight pillars of priorities and the focus that has been directed towards the following two areas:

Education and employment

Summary of key issues:

- Have requested mentorship before exams and a meeting planned with head of service, permanence and resources
- Work of the young inspectors with colleagues who undertake training and their involvement in the process
- A representative of Speakerbox spoke of the work undertaken with the parks service in Southwark and their involvement of

- children and young people
- Voices in education and special needs.

Standards and treatment in care

- Speakerbox representative explained work being undertaken with foster care training and their involvement.

Discussion summary

- It was explained that young people used to come for an element of the foster training and which has always been very well received. Young people eager to attend and be a greater part of the programme.
- Councillors thanked Speakerbox for sharing their experiences and considered these children and young people best placed to be involved in the training and recruitment of foster carers
- Confirmed young inspectors to have quarterly meetings to discuss suggestions for improvements
- Issue of care leavers in supported accommodation having access to the gym and information to be provided to enable
- Noted planned meetings with the virtual school and head of service, permanence and resources to discuss mentoring in education.
- Mark Kerr referred to the Lifelong Improvement for looked-after children) project, which is a pioneering initiative, originally developed by the care-leaver group A National Voice (ANV), that trains care-experienced young people to become inspectors of local authority care services. Acknowledgement that each child has a different journey.

7. CORPORATE PARENTING SUBSTANCE MISUSE REPORT

Dr Stacy John-Legere (designated looked after doctor) and Joy Edwards, (designated nurse for looked after children) presented the report to committee and provided an update on substance use and misuse confirming current position and next steps.

- It was explained that number have increased for substance misuse, mainly cannabis, some vaping, alcohol and the use of other drugs. Thankful for the honesty of young people to colleagues.
- This report represents a deeper dive into the issue, calling on professional leads and involving those children/young people

placed out of borough. A risk and finish group also used in order to promote providing action and guidance for young people.

- A referral pathway in Southwark is used and all staff in the looked after children team are trained and local services and systems are good and in place to address any issues. Further work is needed for those children/young people out of the borough. Also referenced work that has been undertaken and a collaboration with the council's drug and alcohol unit manager with the council.
- Efforts are being made to promote the use of the NHS app for young people to increase their access to support and enable this access.
- Plans are in place to provide further support to foster carers, social workers and personal assistants.
- Noted the level of support for children in Southwark and the need to look at those who are not, which represents most of the cohort in Southwark.

Discussion

- Noted work with drugs and alcohol team in Southwark and the self-medicating element that sometimes prevails for impacted young people
- The need to ensure that young people are aware of what can be accessed to enable support
- The virtual head referred to a plan to look at the whole area and collaborative work that is planned on student behaviour and substance misuse.

RESOLVED:

That the following recommendations be noted:

1. That parity of offer for Southwark children looked after (CLA) placed outside of the borough boundaries be reviewed.
2. That in partnership with Public Health: emerging substance trends be monitored and responses adapted accordingly including acceptance of intervention.
3. That data quality and validation across health and social care systems with benchmarking of Southwark's data against

statistical neighbours and Southeast London (SEL) boroughs be improved.

4. That a further report on this item at be submitted to a future corporate parenting committee.

8. CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Poppy Laurens, service development officer presented the report to committee outlining the importance of the voice of children and young people in the report.

Councillor Jasmine Ali indicated her intention to include an acknowledgement of the names of officers that have supported this work on the corporate parenting committee.

RESOLVED:

That the following recommendations to cabinet be noted by the corporate parenting committee

That cabinet:

1. That the report including progress of corporate parenting strategy, areas of focus for 2025 and work of the corporate parenting committee be noted.
2. That it be noted that a child and young person friendly easy read version of the report that will be shared widely with children in care and care leavers and made publicly available and easily accessible on the council's website.

9. SOUTHWARK HOMES FOR SOUTHWARK CHILDREN UPDATE / FOSTER CARE REPORT - RECRUITMENT AND RETIREMENT

Officers provided an update to committee on Southwark homes for children outlining the presence of a board who are working on developing more high-quality homes. Confirmed that Olive House children's home has now opened and has been classed as outstanding on all categories following an inspection. The inspection was very child focused involvement children and young people in the process.

Other key issues covered:

- Noted less children in care and efforts to ensure children live locally and use of kinship carers
- Have seen improved placement stability and work to see how young people can be supported
- Noted the corporate parenting committee annual report and housing allocations policy opening 1-bedroom properties to young people. Further work required at the governance level in the allocation policy
- Growing and supporting foster carers and local placements. Confirmed that by end of the year 10 -11 foster carers to be recruited
- Reunification. Work to try and enable children to return home. A mother had commented that if she had been given support on a par with foster carers, that she could have continued to look after her child
- Priority to reduced high-cost placements as not always the best or good outcomes for children and young people. Growing foster care options and supporting reunification
- Corporate parenting strategy to be reviewed at the end of March 2026, awaiting Brightspots input.

Discussion arising

- Foster care recruitment issues partly linked to housing but a societal shift in fostering and not seeing the good news stories every day
- Update on staffing situation at home
- Higher cost placements and commissioning. Requested that this be looked at the next corporate parenting committee in April 2026
- Request for letter to be drafted to Josh McAlister, Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing to come and speak to young people and about what doing currently and plans for the future.

10. ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT

Daisy May-James (permanence lead service manager) and Audrey Bouazizi (head of service Adopt London South) updated the committee on Southwark's Adoption Performance 2024-25.

- Noted that the number of adoptions has dropped but the positive trend that foster carers are going onto adopt. Sufficiency

challenges in adoption

- Looking at early support offer and starting to do work embedded by experience and being proactive
- Much greater insight into children experience against a changing landscape
- Homes found for children very good, reinforced with an early support offer and proactive steps
- Run an adoption group that any child can attend and provides a safe space to discuss issues / experiences
- Black adoption project and work to provide good permanence arrangements
- Strong governance and regular meetings with service managers.

Discussion

- Infrastructure and blurred line between foster and adoption care support. It was confirmed that efforts were in place to further improve better targeted early support. Huge wealth of support, including fostering hubs.

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress of the children with a care plan of adoption in Southwark during the period of 1 April 2024 till 31 March 2025 be noted.
2. That the activity of the local authority working in partnership with Adopt London South (ALS) during 2024-25 be noted.
3. That the Adopt London South Annual Report for 2024 – 2025 be noted.

11. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS (IRO) AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

Clare Ryan, service manager, quality assurance, children's and adults' services presented the report to committee.

A letter from a child to their IRO (Independent Review Officer) was circulated to the committee to demonstrate the value and support felt by children and young people for this support and service

offered.

Further issues outlined

- Good links with permanent leads
- Informal and formal resolution policy
- Fostering IROs now inhouse with 2 permanent IROs for 64 foster carers
- Further work needed on IRO footprint
- Huge recruitment drive in house and council officers undertaking visits
- Housing seems to be a common issue identified by young people
- Priorities for next year, include consistency with IROs, working towards a resolution policy, children's reviews, modernising feedback from children and parents, developing work on fostering and recruitment of more volunteers.

RESOLVED:

That the Independent Review Officers (IRO) and children's rights and participation annual report 2024-25 be noted.

12. CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2025-26

RESOLVED:

That the following draft agenda for 22 April 2026 meeting be noted:

- Speakerbox verbal update
- Southwark homes for Southwark children update
- Annual virtual headteacher's report
- Update on local offer on Kinship care
- Commissioning report (higher cost placements) arising from discussion at 25 February committee on Southwark homes for Southwark children update.

**13. CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2026 - 2030 - NOTE
FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That the timeline for the delivery of the new corporate parenting strategy 2026-30 be agreed.

The meeting ended at 4.20pm

CHAIR:

DATED:

Meeting Name:	Corporate Parenting Committee
Date:	22 April 2026
Report title:	Virtual School Suspension, Exclusion and Persistent absence of Girls Report - arising from the Annual Headteacher report to Corporate Parenting Committee 22 October 2025
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	N/a
From:	Virtual School Headteacher

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Care Senior Leadership Team note the Virtual School Suspension, Exclusion and Persistent absence of Girls Report - arising from the Annual Headteacher report to Corporate Parenting Committee 22 October 2025 and feedback any comments for consideration by the Virtual School Headteacher.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Southwark Council has a statutory responsibility to promote the educational achievement of vulnerable children. In addition to its duties for looked after children, the Virtual School now has an extended strategic role for children with a Social Worker and children in kinship care arrangements.
3. These duties require the Virtual School to track educational progress, share insights, and support professionals to strengthen educational practice for these groups.
4. The Virtual School provides strategic oversight to ensure that education remains a priority for these cohorts. This includes working with schools, Social Care, and other partners to remove barriers to learning, promote high aspirations, and improve attendance and attainment.
5. The Virtual School Virtual School Suspension, Exclusion and Persistent absence of Girls Report - arising from the Annual Headteacher report to Corporate Parenting Committee 22 October 2025 outlines the strategic and operational work undertaken to support these cohorts. It identifies key priorities and highlights partnership initiatives.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. The Virtual School Suspension, Exclusion and Persistent absence of Girls Report - arising from the Annual Headteacher report to Corporate Parenting Committee is attached as Appendix 1.

Policy framework implications

7. The Borough Plan has a commitment to *'give young people the best opportunities in life'*. The Virtual School report demonstrates working with and for children and across a multitude of stakeholders and professionals to achieve this commitment.
8. In carrying out this work, the Virtual School fulfils the Council's statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of children looked after and its extended strategic duties for children with a social worker and children in kinship care, including oversight and challenge to partners to reduce suspension and exclusion and to address persistent absence for girls, as highlighted through the Annual Headteacher report to Corporate Parenting Committee (22 October 2025).

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

9. This education of children in priority groups impact on the future life chances and opportunities for this part of the community.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

10. The Council is committed to providing fair and just services, addressing inequality. The provision of good and effective education services to all children is an important way that the council and its partners demonstrate commitment to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people

Health impact statement

11. This paper considers the education of children in LB Southwark schools. Good education outcomes are closely correlated with positive health and well-being.

Climate change implications

13. There are no overt implications regarding climate change

Resource implications

14. There are no resource implications of this report, which is provided for information.

Legal implications

15. There are no additional legal implications at this time.

Financial implications

16. This paper is for information only. There are no financial implications attached

Consultation

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance

16. A concurrent was not applicable for this report.

Strategic Director of Resources

17. A concurrent was not applicable for this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Equalities Act 2010	Education Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 th floor, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Usha Singh 020 7525 54076 07548712129
Link: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents		
Council Assembly, 25 November 2020 – Item 6.1 – Appendix A Refresh of the Council Plan: Borough Plan	Education Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 th floor, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Usha Singh 020 7525 54076 07548712129
Link: https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s92006/Appendix%20A%20Southwarks%20Borough%20Plan%202020.pdf		
Department of Education: SEND	Education Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 th floor, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Usha Singh 020 7525 54076 07548712129
Link: https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/special-educational-needs-disabilities		
The Health Inequalities Framework 2020	Education Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 th floor, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Usha Singh 020 7525 54076 07548712129
Link: https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s90726/Appendix%201.pdf		

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Climate Change Strategy	Education Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 th floor, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Usha Singh 020 7525 54076 07548712129
Link: https://www.southwark.gov.uk/environment/climate-emergency/reaching-net-zero/our-plan-for-net-zero		
Southwark Stands Together	Education Directorate, Children and Adult Services, 4 th floor, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Usha Singh 020 7525 54076 07548712129
Link: https://www.southwark.gov.uk/engagement-and-consultations/southwark-stands-together		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Virtual School Suspension, Exclusion and Persistent absence of Girls Report - arising from the Annual Headteacher report to Corporate Parenting Committee 22 October 2025

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	David Quirke-Thornton, Strategic Director of Children and Adult Services	
Report Author	Usha Singh, Virtual School Headteacher	
Version	Final	
Dated	8 April 2026	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments sought	Comments included
Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director of Resources	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	8 April 2026	

Southwark Virtual School

Suspension and Exclusion Report

- Academic year 2025-2026 – Year to date
- Academic year 2024-2025
- Reasons for increased absenteeism of girls - (arising from the Annual Headteacher report to Corporate Parenting Committee 22 October 2025)

Author: Virtual School Headteacher
Usha Singh

Contents

Southwark Virtual School.....	1
Suspension and Exclusion Report	1
Introduction	2
Suspension and Exclusion Data	3
Permanent Exclusions	7
Persistent Absentees	9
Rising Trend in Absenteeism of Girls.....	10
Southwark Virtual School Response.....	12
Executive Summary	14

Introduction

1. This report focuses on Southwark Children Looked After (CLA) suspension and exclusions data.
 - Academic year 2025-2026 – Year to date
 - Academic year 2024-2025
2. Reasons for increased absenteeism of girls (*arising from the annual headteacher report to Corporate Parenting Committee 22 October 2025*).

Suspension and Exclusion Data

- Southwark's suspension rate has dropped from 16% in 2023–2024 to 15% in 2024–2025 and is currently 9% in the academic year to date. This compared with approximately 15.1% average across London and 11.31% nationally.
- There were no permanent exclusions recorded for Southwark CLA in 2024–2025, and the current year-to-date figure also remains at zero. Nationally, the permanent exclusion rate stands at 0.13%. London-wide CLA data is not published within the available datasets
[National - Suspensions and permanent exclusions, Data set from Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)
- Table 1 shows a downward trajectory in suspension rates with Southwark CLA improving from 16% in 2018–2019 to 9% in 2025–2026, despite a reduction in the Virtual School roll over the same timeframe - indicating that reductions are not simply due to cohort size but reflect a sustained improvement in behaviour support and exclusion-prevention practice.

Table 1: Southwark Children in Care – Suspension Data					
	2018 /2019	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Virtual School Roll - School Age	328	267	256	242	204
Children subject to Suspensions	51 (16%)	37 (14%)	40(16%)	36(15%)	19 (9%)
Number of Suspensions	108	82	95	82	33
Number of Permanent Exclusion	2	0	1	0	0

- Suspensions by gender show that boys continue to be more likely to be suspended than girls; however, the gender gap has narrowed each academic year. This reflects a rise in suspensions among girls in previous years, with a reversing trend evident in the current year to date.
- This aligns with national concerns about increasing distress-related behaviours and EBSA (Emotionally Based Non-School Attendance) among girls.

Table 2: Southwark Children in Care Suspensions by Gender					
	2018 /2019	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Boys	37 (73%)	27 (73%)	27(68%)	22(61%)	14 (74%)
Girls	14 (27%)	10 (27%)	13(32%)	14(39%)	5 (26%)
Total	51	37	40	36	19

8. The ethnicity breakdown shows evidence of disproportionality, with Black and Mixed-heritage CLA over-represented in suspensions across both years, while White British and Asian pupils remain proportionally under-represented. This pattern highlights the need for continued, targeted equity-driven practice.

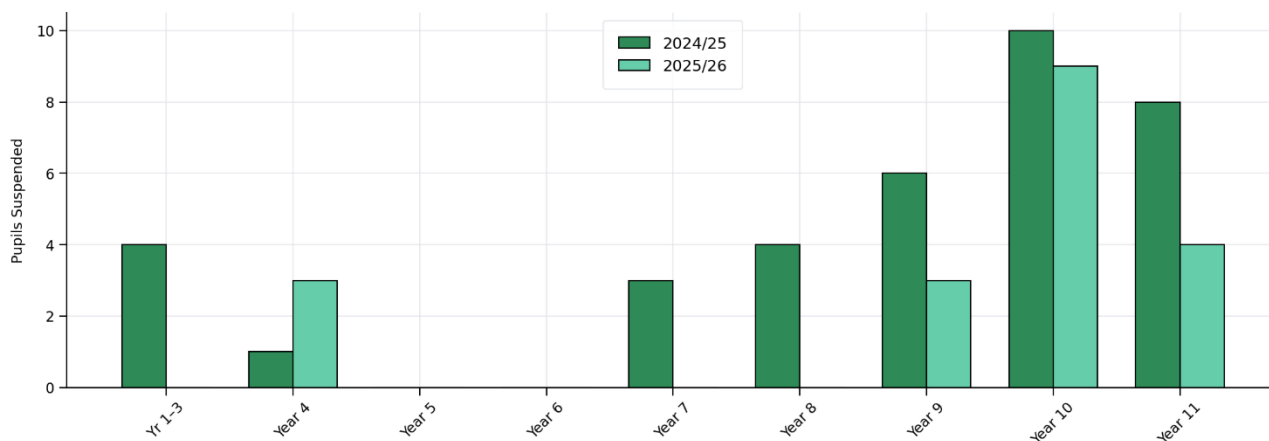
Table 3: Southwark Children in Care - Suspensions by Ethnicity				
	2024/2025		2025/2026	
	Number	%	Number	%
Asian/Asian British/Any other Asian Background	1	3%	1	5%
Black/Black British/African	7	19%	8	42%
Black/Black British/Any other Black background	6	17%	1	5%
Black/Black British/Caribbean	2	6%	1	5%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/Any other Mixed background	5	14%	3	16%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/White and Black African	2	6%	0	0
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/White and Black Caribbean	4	11%	0	0
Other Ethnic Groups/Any other ethnic group	1	3%	0	0
White/British	8	22%	4	21%
White/Any other White Background			1	5%
Total:	36	100%	19	100%

9. The data indicates a persistent over-representation of children with SEN among those suspended, with between 42% and 53% of suspended CLA having identified SEN across the five-year period.
10. Although the proportion of suspensions involving pupils with an EHCP has decreased from 50% to 42% in the current year-to-date, the overall pattern suggests that children with higher levels of need continue to face a disproportionate risk of suspension, highlighting a continued need for strengthened SEN support, earlier assessment, and more consistent use of trauma-informed and inclusive approaches.

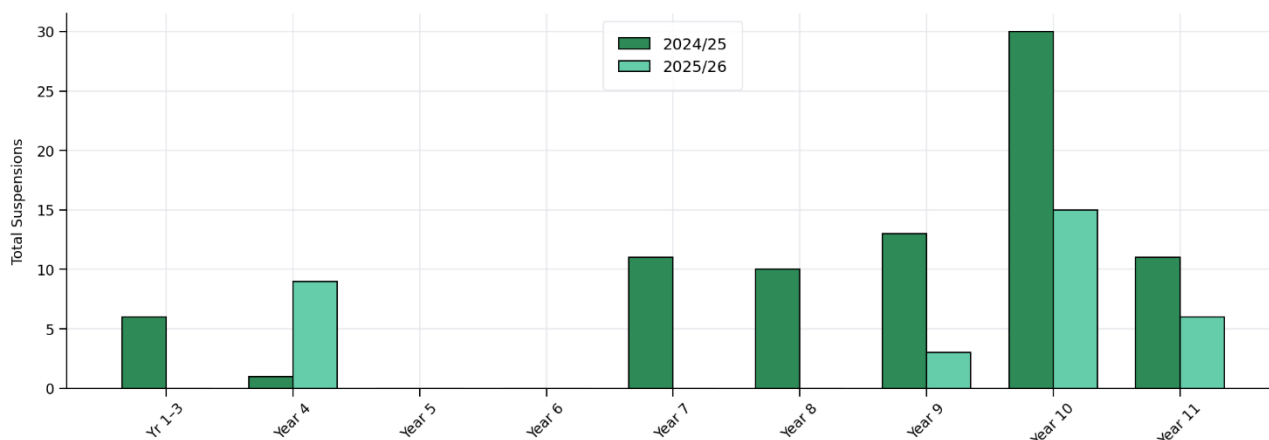
Table 4: Suspensions of Southwark Children in Care with SEN										
	2018/2019		2022/2023		2023/2024		2024/2025		2025/2026	
Suspensions	51		37		40		36		19	
with SEN EHCP	12	24%	11	30%	16	40%	18	50%	8	42%
with SEN Support	12	24%	7	19%	5	13%	1	3%	0	0%
Total with SEN	24	47%	18	49%	21	53%	19	53%	8	42%

11. The chart below shows the number of children in care who received a suspension, broken down by year group. Suspension rates peak in KS4, which is consistent with national trends, highlighting the need for targeted KS3–KS4 interventions—particularly around transition points and exam-related stress.

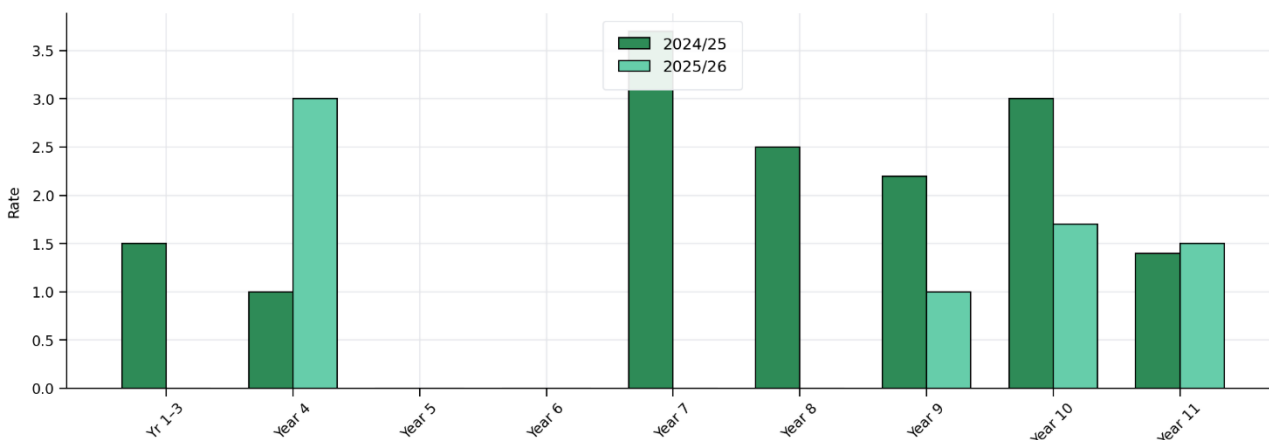
Pupils Suspended by Year Group



Suspensions by Year Group



Rate of Suspension by Year Group



12. The table below shows a marked reduction in both the number of children suspended (from 51 to 19) and the average suspensions per child reduced to 1.7, indicating fewer children reaching crisis point and fewer repeat suspensions.

Table 5: Southwark Children in Care Average Rate of Suspensions					
	2018/2019	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Number of Children Suspended	51	37	40	36	19
No of suspensions	108	82	95	82	33
Average suspensions per child	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.3	1.7

13. **Southwark CLA Suspensions Reasons** - Southwark Virtual School has challenged some schools' use of informal suspensions, resulting in certain suspensions being formally recorded instead. In cases where a permanent exclusion was being considered, suspensions were sometimes used as an alternative while other education options were explored. The data also shows a noticeable increase in incidents involving physical assault signalling a shift toward more serious behavioural incidents within the cohort.

Table 6: Southwark Children in Care Suspensions – Reasons										
Year	2018/2019		2022/2023		2023/2024		2024/2025		2025/2026	
Drug/Alcohol Related	2	2%	2	2%	2	2%	2	2%	1	3%
Damage	1	1%	1	1%	2	2%	2	2%	2	6%
Persistent Disruptive Behaviour	13	12%	26	32%	28	29%	25	30%	7	21%
Physical Assault Against an Adult/Pupil	6	6%	1	1%	9	9%	15	18%	15	45%
Racist Abuse	1	1%	1	1%	1	1%	1	1%	0	0%
Verbal Abuse/Threat Behaviour Adult	18	17%	2	2%	15	16%	10	12%	4	12%
Verbal Abuse/Threatening Behaviour Pupil	3	3%	5	6%	4	4%	2	2%	0	0%
Other	41	11%	24	29%	15	16%	23	28%	4	12%
Offensive weapon /prohibited item	X	X	2	2%	X	0%	1	1%	0	0%
School Yet to Clarify	X	X	2	2%	1	1%	1	1%	0	0%
Sexual Misconduct	X	X	1	1%	X	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Permanent Exclusions

14. All notifications of intention to permanently exclude were successfully overturned or avoided, with Southwark Virtual School and Social Care colleagues intervening early through multi-agency reviews, SEN assessments, appeals, and securing more suitable placements.

Table 7: Notification of Permanent Exclusions(PEX) received

	Year	SEN	Issue Description	Outcome	Current Education
1	11	No	Serious incident involving drugs and disruption.	PEX rescinded, new placement. Multi-agency review; appeal.	AP to mainstream
2	10	No	Behaviour escalation; PEX considered.	PEX rescinded, AP trial placement. VS intervention.	AP provision
3	10	No	High-risk incident; AP ended placement.	PEX avoided. Further AP required.	VS tuition Transition to AP
4	10	No	Escalating behaviour risk in AP.	PEX avoided. Safety review. AP ended place.	VS tuition Transition to AP
5	4	Yes	Multiple suspensions; unmet needs.	PEX averted. Annual review; new placement.	Specialist setting
6	4	Yes	SEND needs exceeded placement.	PEX averted. Review held; placement review	Remains on roll
7	10	No	UASC; behaviour + unsuitable direction.	PEX averted. VS challenge; new curriculum.	Specialist provision
8	11	No	Serious incident; PEX.	PEX rescinded. VS & AP coordinated.	AP provision
9	11	No	High-risk incident; police involved.	PEX averted. AP ended.	Off-site provision
10	11	Yes	Placement unable to meet need.	PEX avoided. Annual review; tuition.	Tuition funded by SEN
11	10	Yes	Suspensions; PEX suggested but unclear.	Pending.	Pending

15. Southwark Virtual School – Response to Potential Permanent Exclusion

Step 1 – Communication and Advocacy

- Immediate contact is made with the child’s Social Worker, Education Advisor, carers, and Virtual School Headteacher to ensure a coordinated response.
- The child’s behaviour is considered through a trauma-informed and attachment-aware lens, acknowledging the impact of care experience.

- A Personal Education Plan (PEP) Review is offered to assess current support, identify unmet needs or triggers, and agree next steps to stabilise the placement.
- Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding is reviewed and targeted to support reintegration or transition, including therapeutic input, tutoring, or mentoring.

Step 2 – Advice and Education Planning

- Guidance is provided to schools and professionals on statutory duties and on alternatives to exclusion, including respite or restorative approaches.
- Alternatives to exclusion are actively explored, such as:
 - Managed moves
 - Short-term off-site placements via direction-off-site with a reintegration plan
 - Applications for new school placements through Local Authority Admissions
- Support is provided to identify a suitable new school, ensuring the receiving setting is properly briefed on the child's needs.
- Southwark Virtual School ensures education is in place from Day 1 using school resources, tuition, or Alternative Provision. Where this is not arranged promptly, the Virtual School intervenes to prevent any gap in education.

Step 3 – Appeal Process

- Where exclusions appear disproportionate or unjust, Southwark Virtual School supports appeals and challenges in line with statutory guidance, ensuring the child's rights and best interests remain central.

16. Grounds for Appeal

A decision to permanently exclude a looked after child can be appealed on the basis that the school has specific duties towards children looked after which must be met:

- **Notify or Consult the Virtual School:** Schools must consult the Virtual School before making exclusion decisions for CLA.
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025):** Schools must consider the safeguarding vulnerabilities of Children Looked After and demonstrate trauma-informed responses
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023):** Exclusion should not occur without evidence of multi-agency collaboration and early intervention.
- **Behaviour in Schools Guidance (2022):** Schools must show that reasonable adjustments, SEN considerations, and preventative strategies were used and reviewed.
- **Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance (2024):** Exclusion must be lawful, reasonable and fair, and used only when all alternatives have been explored.
- **Education Act 2002:** Schools have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote welfare; decisions must show how this duty was upheld for a CLA child.
- **Equality Act 2010** The School must demonstrate it assessed and mitigated any disproportionate impact linked to disability, race, or care experience.
- **Consider Reasonable Adjustments (SEND Code of Practice):** Schools must show that any behaviour linked to unmet or emerging SEND is addressed through reasonable adjustments, support was put in place, and adjustments were reviewed as required.

Persistent Absentees

17. Southwark is currently reporting 23% persistent absenteeism, down from 33% at the same point last year. The monthly data shows a consistent reduction in the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent compared with the same months in 2024–2025.

18. Southwark is currently reporting 21% persistent absenteeism for children looked after continuously for 12 months. The most recently published national data for this group shows roughly between 11% and 46% persistent absenteeism across local authorities.

[Persistent absences for pupils looked after by local authorities - ONS](#)

Table 10: Persistent Absentees by Month					12 month plus		
	2024/25		2025/26			2025/26	
Month	Students	%	Students	%	Month	12M+	%
September	57	28%	44	22%	September	26	13%
October	58	29%	44	22%	October	28	14%
November	58	28%	51	26%	November	32	16%
December	61	30%	43	22%	December	26	13%
January	66	32%	50	25%	January	31	22%
February	70	33%	47	23%	February	30	21%
March	69	31%			March		
April	73	32%			April		
May	66	29%			May		
June	70	30%			June		
July	61	25%			July		

19. **The proportion of girls who are persistently absent** has fallen in Southwark from 49% in 2024–2025 to 38% in 2025–2026 year-to-date, this still represents a disproportionately high share when viewed against historic patterns, where girls made up a much smaller proportion of the persistent absence cohort.

20. Despite this year's improvements, the longer-term trend of rising persistent absence among girls remains evident, consistent with national patterns showing increasing EBSNA and trauma-linked absence in girls.

21. Girls' attendance has improved this year largely due to earlier identification of EBSNA during PEP reviews, strengthened trauma-informed intervention and monitoring, and quicker multi-agency responses that secured support or placement changes before absence escalated.

Table 11: Persistent Absence by Gender				
Reported Gender	2024/25		2025/26	
	Number	%	Number	%
Female	30	49%	18	38%
Male	31	51%	29	61%
Total	61	100%	47	100%

Rising Trend in Absenteeism of Girls

22. Although national datasets do not routinely publish gender-disaggregated figures, regional insights and independent analyses consistently highlight a growing pattern of persistent absenteeism among girls, especially at secondary level.

[Centre for Social Justice School Absence Tracker](#)

23. **Agenda Alliance (2025)** reported a **257% increase** in the number of girls severely absent from school (missing 50% or more sessions) since 2017. The gender gap in absenteeism has narrowed to almost zero, with girls now equally likely to be severely absent as boys.

The screenshot shows the top portion of a news article on the Independent website. The header includes the 'INDEPENDENT' logo, a 'Subscribe' button, and a 'Menu' icon. Below the header is a navigation bar with categories: NEWS, PREMIUM, SPORT, VOICES, CULTURE, LIFESTYLE, INDYBEST, and TRAVEL. The article title is 'Analysis shows 257% rise in girls severely absent from school'. Below the title is a sub-headline: 'Charities say more support for girls in schools is needed'. The author is 'Athena Stavrou' and the date is 'Thursday 24 July 2025 08:56 BST'. There is a 'Comments' link with a speech bubble icon. At the bottom of the article preview are social media sharing icons for WhatsApp, Facebook, X, and Email.

[New analysis shows alarming 257% increase in girls severely absent from school - Agenda Alliance](#)



24. Agenda Alliance said the historic gap in gendered absenteeism has led to limited research into the main reasons girls are absent from school and means support systems have largely been designed for boys, leaving gaps in provisions for the specific needs of girls.
25. Historically, boys were more likely to be persistently absent, but the gender gap has now closed, with girls equally affected.
26. Girls report gendered impacts of trauma, including:
- a. Sexual and domestic abuse
 - b. Mental health challenges
 - c. Inappropriate disciplinary responses (e.g. exclusions for distress-related behaviours)
 - d. Racialised stereotypes (e.g. “loud Black girl”) leading to punitive measures

Emotionally Based Non School Attendance and Girls in Care

27. Evidence consistently shows that girls are disproportionately affected by trauma-related mental-health difficulties, while care-experienced children have high rates of trauma and instability. Given that trauma and emotional distress are core drivers of EBSNA, girls in care represent a high-risk group.
28. EBSNA is often under-identified in CLA cohorts, especially when absence is recorded as unauthorised or behavioural.
29. EBSNA is increasingly recognised as a key driver of absence, especially among girls with:
- a. Mental health needs
 - b. SEND
 - c. Social care involvement (including CLA).

Pandemic impact [Centre for Social Justice School Absence Tracker](#)

30. The number of severely absent pupils has soared by 145 per cent since before the pandemic.
31. In Autumn 2024, 147,605 pupils were absent from school more often than they were present (severely absent), which is 2.0 per cent of the school population.
32. This compares with 60,244 who were severely absent in Autumn 2019, the last full term before the pandemic. This means an additional 87,361 pupils are now severely absent from school.

33. It is vulnerable children who are affected most. In Autumn 2024, children in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) had a severe absence rate 3.6 times the rate for children who were not eligible for FSM. Children in receipt of special educational needs (SEN) support are also more likely to be severely absent than their peers.
34. Persistent absence is still at a concerning high level compared to pre-pandemic. 1,284,005 pupils were persistently absent in Autumn 2024, which equates to 17.8 per cent of all pupils. This is an increase of 39.2 per cent since before the pandemic.
35. The overall absence rate in Autumn term was 6.4 per cent. This is an increase of 29.5 per cent since before the pandemic.

Children’s Commissioner (2023) CLA-Specific Insights

36. The **Children’s Commissioner (2023)** found that hundreds of CLA were **not receiving any education**—some not enrolled, others in unregulated provision, and some missing school 100% of the time. [Looked after children who are not in school May 2023](#)
37. CLA girls may be especially vulnerable to EBSA due to:
- Placement instability
 - Unaddressed trauma
 - Lack of gender-sensitive support
 - Invisibility in data and policy responses
 - An attendance strategy that was aimed at boys.

Southwark Virtual School Response

38. Given the rise in persistent absence among girls, Southwark Virtual School needs to further our work into:
- **Trauma-informed attendance strategies** tailored for girls.
 - **Gender-sensitive EBSNA identification and escalation** during PEP reviews.
 - **Multi-agency collaboration** to address emotional and safeguarding barriers.
 - **Staff training** on recognising EBSNA and responding supportively. Daily Monitoring and Rapid Response
39. **Daily Monitoring and Rapid Response**
Southwark commissions a daily attendance monitoring service that provides real-time updates on school attendance and confirmed reasons for absence. Education Advisors and Social Workers follow up immediately with schools, carers, and placement providers when concerns arise.

Project Officers work closely with schools to resolve coding discrepancies and ensure that attendance data is accurate and up to date. This daily oversight ensures that emerging issues are identified early and addressed before they escalate into persistent absence.

40. Preventing Exclusion and Supporting Reintegration

Southwark advocates for children at risk of suspension or exclusion and works with schools to identify alternatives, develop reintegration plans, and maintain connection to education. Where suspensions occur, the Virtual School collaborates with schools to plan a structured return that supports wellbeing and reduces the likelihood of further absence. Since the start of this academic year we have received 11 intentions to Permanent exclude. We have successfully worked with schools towards reintegration, SEN reviews or have identified alternatives.

41. Multi-Agency Planning - Panels and Surgeries

Southwark Virtual School holds a monthly attendance panel where Education Advisors and Social Workers review the circumstances of each child with attendance concerns and agree targeted actions. The Virtual School supplements this with weekly attendance surgeries for Social Workers and carers, providing rapid problem-solving, coaching, and professional advice. This creates a consistent, borough-wide approach to early intervention. The Virtual school keeps a tracker of Persistently Absence which is updated as actions are discussed and reasons for absence unpicked.

42. Minimising Disruption from changes

Southwark Virtual School and colleagues in Social Care prioritise securing education swiftly when a child experiences a change of home, reducing the risk of extended periods out of education.

- Southwark Virtual School is kept updated when a change of home is anticipated. Education planning is a compulsory section added to Service Provider Response form (SPRF)
- The Virtual School Head is part of the team that vets new residential homes for its response to education and contributes to discussions about the suitability of placements.
- We have recruited specialist post: Education Advisor in Residential Care.

43. Inconsistent School attendance coding

As part of the review, we unpicked significant inconsistencies in attendance coding that coincided with home changes. To address this, we have held bespoke training sessions and addressed this with our schools.

44. Addressing Special Education Needs

Southwark provides access to Educational Psychology and Speech and Language Therapy to identify learning or communication difficulties that may contribute to disengagement. Staff initiate statutory SEN assessments where appropriate and support schools to adopt trauma-informed and attachment-aware practice. We have recruited a specialist post: Education Advisor SEN

45. **Support for Emotionally Based School Avoidance**

Southwark provides tailored planning for pupils experiencing emotionally based school avoidance, including Education Psychology, Speech and Language and bespoke mentoring support. For children expected to take exams, we ensure early preparation for examinations, securing appropriate exam centres, and providing practical and emotional support. Information, Advice and Guidance leads ensure that these young people have clear post-16 pathways.

46. **Additionally, ways Southwark Virtual School** responds to persistent absenteeism:

- **Transition funding** is offered to school where in year admissions take place to ensure attendance is supported and the education placement works.
- **We advocate for children** when there are suspensions and risk of exclusion and find solutions with schools.
- **We trigger statutory assessments for SEN** when we can spot signs that this can improve engagement and in return attendance.
- **We ensure schools are aware** of care status, early years trauma and that school is attachment aware.
- **We offer strategy meetings** with the wider multi-agency network and involve the support of Foster Care
- **Together with colleagues in Care**, we offer support establishing morning routines, escort arrangements to school, and help carers establish structure during periods of instability.
- **Extensive training programme** to social workers, designated teachers, foster carers and school leaders.

Executive Summary

- Suspensions and exclusions for Southwark CLA continue to fall, with all permanent exclusion intentions successfully prevented through early, coordinated intervention.
- Persistent absence has reduced significantly this year, supported by strengthened daily monitoring, rapid multi-agency response, and consistent tracking.
- Girls' attendance has improved due to earlier EBSA identification, trauma-informed support, and timely placement or SEN intervention when needed'
- Disproportionality remains for pupils with SEN and some ethnic groups, but overall numbers and repeat suspensions are declining.
- The Virtual School's proactive approach—stronger partnership working, enhanced SEN pathways, and securing education from day one—continues to improve stability, engagement, and educational continuity.

Meeting Name:	Corporate Parenting Committee
Date:	22 April 2026
Report title:	Kinship Local Offer Developments and Implementation Plan
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	N/a
From:	Elaine Reid, Head of Care, Care Leavers and Fostering Sheherazade Aanchawan, Team Manager Kathleen Salawu, Senior Social Worker Sadie Dann, Service Development Officer

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the contents of this report
2. To agree to the overarching developments and implementation plan

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. In September 2025, Southwark was one of the first local authorities to launch their Kinship Local Offer, a statutory requirement within the Wellbeing and Schools Bill. This was done following a large consultation with kinship carers comprising two focus groups and a survey.
4. The main principle of the offer is that children should be enabled to live with their families unless it is not consistent with their safety and welfare. Those who cannot live with their parents should, where appropriate, remain with members of their extended family or friends, as this will provide a better alternative and avoid them growing up within the public care system.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. Following the implementation of our current offer, we have continued to develop. The focus remains on creating a transparent, accessible, and co-produced framework of needs-led support for all kinship carers, regardless of legal status. The offer will not just 'live' within the Special Guardianship and Connected Carer Team but involve multi-disciplinary teams such as safeguarding, housing, education, and health.
6. Regular communication and engagement are essential. To address this, we have been working closely with our Digital Marketing Officer to strengthen our communications. This will be done by developing clear messaging, using

multiple channels, improving signposting, and focusing attention on all kinship carer groups, from prospective to long-standing and from informal to formal.

Policy framework implications

7. Our Kinship Local Offer supports the delivery of Southwark's Corporate Parenting Strategy, supporting more families to stay safely together and specifically to further increase the rate of children in connected care arrangements. The offer is a live document and is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect new developments, emerging practice guidance and benchmarking with other local authorities.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

8. Southwark is committed to enabling children from across our community to remain safely within their extended family, friends, or other people they are connected to. Through kinship care, we support children and young people to have the best possible family experience, remaining within their networks wherever possible and appropriate, and reducing the need for children to grow up within the public care system.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

9. Our kinship carers reflect the diversity of our children and communities across our borough, including differences in ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, and disability. They play a vital role in supporting children to remain within their families and communities. The service is highly committed to challenging all forms of discrimination and seeking to uphold and have an action plan to address anti-racist practice and the commitment of Southwark stands together.

Health impact statement

10. There are no health impact issues.

Climate change implications

11. There are no climate change implications.

Resource implications

12. As the Kinship Local Offer continues to develop and is shared more widely, including through increased communications activity, this may result in increased demand on the service. The Head of Care, Care Leavers and Fostering will continue to work closely with the team to monitor demand and capacity, ensuring resources are reviewed and managed appropriately as the offer evolves.

Consultation

13. No consultation was undertaken in the preparation of the report.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

14. No supplementary advice is required.

Head of Procurement

15. No supplementary advice is required.

Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance

16. No supplementary advice is required.

Strategic Director, Resources

17. No supplementary advice is required.

Other officers

18. No supplementary advice is required.

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Kinship Local Offer Developments and Implementation Plan

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Elaine Reid, Head of Care, Care Leavers and Fostering		
Report Author	Gabriella De Rosa, Senior Service Development Officer		
Version	7 April 2026		
Dated	Final		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
	Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
	Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance	No	No
	Strategic Director, Resources	No	No
	Cabinet Member	No	No
	Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		7 April 2026

APPENDIX 1



Date:	19 March 2026
Report title:	Kinship Local Offer Developments and Implementation Plan
Report Author:	Service Development Team

Purpose

To share how we are enhancing our Southwark Kinship Local Offer (KLO) which is an integral part of the wider CSC reform agenda. Activity will be progressed through the implementation plan set out below which will require coordinated, whole-family support with shared responsibility across teams and services. Success will look like transparency for families and accountability within our systems, ultimately enabling more children to remain safely within their family networks.

Background

In September 2025, Southwark was one of the first local authorities to launch their KLO. This was done following a large consultation with kinship carers comprising two focus groups and a survey. The KLO is a statutory requirement within the Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

The main principle of the offer is that children should be enabled to live with their families unless it is not consistent with their safety and welfare. Those who cannot live with their parents should, where appropriate, remain with members of their extended family or friends, as this will provide a better alternative and avoid them growing up within the public care system.

Our KLO contributes to overarching Corporate Parenting Strategy, supporting more families to stay safely together and specifically to 'further increase the rate of children in connected care arrangements, through investment in family group decision making and wider support offer'.

Approach

Following implementation of our current offer, we have continued to develop the enhanced offer. The focus remains on creating a transparent, accessible, and co-produced framework of needs-led support for all kinship carers, regardless of legal status. The offer will not just 'live' within the Special Guardianship and Connected Carer Team but involve multi-disciplinary teams such as safeguarding, housing, education, and health.

We recognise that regular communication and engagement is essential. To address this, we have been working closely with our Digital Marketing Officer to strengthen how we communicate the KLO. This will be done by developing clear messaging, using multiple channels, improving signposting and focusing attention on all kinship carer groups, from prospective to long-standing and from informal to formal.

Lastly, it is important to note that the Southwark KLO is a 'live' document. It is proactively reviewed and improved as new developments arise, best practice guidance is disseminated and councils publish their offers which we can benchmark against.

Our current offer

We provide a clear and comprehensive overview of [Southwark's Kinship Local Offer on the Council website](#), setting out the wide range of support available for kinship families. The site explains our wider objectives and approach and clearly signposts how carers can contact our dedicated Special Guardianship and Connected Carer Team for advice and support throughout their kinship care journey.

Kinship developments and implementation plan

Below are tables documenting our current offer, alongside further developments and actions we are taking to continue to enhance support for kinship families.

We have structured this around seven themes: Therapeutic, Training and Support, Financial, Education, FGC Contact, Legal and our Children in Care Council. These themes align with suggested content from the DfE and how we structured our initial offer.

Therapeutic:

- Activity centred around developing one-to-one clinical interactions and a wider and more sustainable pool of Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund service providers.

Current offer	Enhanced offer	Actions	Progress
<p>Southwark Clinical Service</p> <p>Clinician attends SG and CC Team support groups on an ad-hoc basis. Clinician can offer limited child and family interventions. Urgent situations and on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>Southwark Clinical Service</p> <p>Offer more direct one-to-one interactions with KCs on specific issues. This will be on a case-by-case basis after community-based support has not been satisfactory.</p>	<p>SGO & CC team to work with Davina on process and criteria for one-to-one interactions with KCs on specific issues</p> <p>This will be on a case-by-case basis after community-based</p>	<p>Clinician now involved in groups & training on a regular/ scheduled basis</p> <p>Process and criteria for 1-2-1 work to be developed</p>

<p>Eligibility: All kinship carers</p>	<p><i>‘31% of kinship children have diagnosed or suspected social, emotional and mental health needs and more than 1 in 10 have diagnosed Autistic Spectrum Disorder’.</i> (Kinship Forgotten Report 2024)</p> <p><i>‘I’m not sure if she (my SG child) is delayed due to trauma or another underlying issue or if she is even delayed and I’m just being paranoid’.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2025)</p>	<p>support has been tried without success</p> <p>As a part of the ‘induction’ process the SGO and CC team to ensure all eligible KCs know about the fund</p> <p>This can be done by referring KCs to the KLO – specifically under ‘mental and physical wellbeing support’</p> <p>SGO and CC Team to ensure there are team members who are available to support fund applications</p> <p>SGO and CC Team to compile and manage a list of delivery providers.</p> <p>Adopt London South has a list the team can access, however, the SGO and CC Team to ensure these providers understand the specific needs and experiences of kinship families</p>	<p>Leaflet with key aspects of KLO is being developed with Danielle from Comms. This will be sent to all new SGs. IG / GDPR guidance is being sought to determine whether an email can be sent to existing SGs.</p> <p>Existing provider list has been reviewed. Research into additional providers is being undertaken to reduce wait times.</p>
<p>Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF)</p> <p>KCs can access funds of up to £3,000 per child. A wide range of therapies can be funded including psychotherapy, life story work and shorts breaks with a therapeutic element</p> <p>Eligibility: For children who were previously in care of the local authority</p>			

Training and support:

- Activity centred around developing and embedding kinship ‘champions’ throughout children’s social care services from FEH to Care.

Current offer	Enhanced offer	Actions	Progress
<p>SGO and CC Team - training KCs are welcome to attend Southwark’s monthly in-person support group and can also attend monthly walk-in sessions</p> <p>The team have launched four training courses: 1) attachment 2) trauma 3) managing challenging behaviours 4) life story work</p> <p>Kinship charity- training Welcome to attend free online and in-person training and workshops</p>	<p>SGO and CC Team</p> <p>The SG and CC team will call KCs once in the first 3 months and visit them in their home within the first 6 months.</p> <p><i>‘A significant majority of respondents said they had not had any information/advice on kinship care or felt that what they had was not enough.’</i> (Southwark Kinship Survey Nov. 2024)</p>	<p>As a part of the ‘induction’ process the SGO and CC team to ensure all KCs are aware of and participate in internal (SGO and CC team, FEH) and/or external support groups and training</p> <p>This can be done by through direct email/WhatsApp messaging and by referring KCs to the KLO – specifically under ‘TBC’</p>	<p>As above with ASGSF</p> <p>As above taking advice on GDPR and WhatsApp channel</p> <p>Separate section on ‘training’ to be integrated into the current and published KLO.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Managing challenging behaviour ▪ Raising someone else’s child: an introduction to kinship care workshop ▪ Financial support for kinship families ▪ Overview of the EHCP and SEND process ▪ Formalising your kinship care arrangement ▪ Supporting your kinship child at school ▪ Life story work with children in kinship care 	<p>PAUSE Team</p> <p>Develop bespoke training with the PAUSE Team. PAUSE has Innovation Fund money which could support development.</p> <p>Training could include understanding identity through HOPE Boxes and enabling positive relationship dynamics between carers and parents.</p>	<p>Consider working with Pause on additional in-house courses based on KC need and ensuring there is no duplication with other relevant courses offered within Southwark or through local and third section organisations</p>	<p>Meeting with Pause to be booked by end Q1. Proposing Kinship ‘champions’ in partner teams such as Pause, FEH, Lifelong Links.</p> <p>Internal KLO launch to include SG team members joining/ presenting at team meetings</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding how to keep children in kinship care safe online ▪ Dealing with emotional challenges as a kinship carer ▪ Managing contact for kinship families – practical tools and tips <p>Eligibility: All kinship carers for both Southwark and Kinship groups and courses</p>	<p>Southwark Family Early Help (FEH)</p> <p>Consider developing bespoke training with the FEH Team addressing specific need such as addressing contact issues</p>	As above	<p>Meeting with FEH to be booked by end Q1. Proposing Kinship 'champions' in partner teams such as pause, FEH, Lifelong Links</p> <p>Internal KLO launch to include SG team members joining/ presenting at team meetings</p>
	<p>Lifelong Links (part of Family Rights Group)</p> <p>Develop bespoke practical life-story work workshops for kinship families</p>	As above	<p>Meeting with Pause to be booked by end Q1. Proposing Kinship 'champions' in partner teams such as pause, FEH, Lifelong Links</p> <p>Internal KLO launch to include SG team members joining/ presenting at team meetings</p> <p>NB Life Story training has begun with internal life story lead – to support group. Referrals for 1-2-1 bespoke life story work are made.</p>

Financial:

Activity centred around improving and clarifying details on financial entitlements taking account of legal status and the process for applying for one-off payments.

Current offer	Enhanced offer	Actions	Progress
<p>Regular payments to kinship carers National special guardianship means-tested allowance of between £195 and £289 per week dependent on the kinship child's age</p> <p>Eligibility: For carers who have been through social care proceedings</p> <p>Year 1 and 2 payment and post-2 years payment -In year 1 and 2 of a foster carer becoming a special guardian Southwark special guardians will receive the same fostering fee and child's allowance that they were receiving before the Special Guardianship Order was granted -Post-2 years Southwark special guardians receive whatever they are means-tested assessed as being entitled to</p>	<p>Other payments to kinship carers £750 'setting-up' payment (previously £500) – for when the child comes to live with you</p> <p>Eligibility - For carers who have been through social care proceedings</p> <p><i>‘For every 100 children looked after in well-supported kinship care rather than local authority care, the state saves £4 million per year and increases the lifetime earnings of those children by £2 million’.</i> (Kinship report 2020)</p> <p><i>“I find means-testing very unfair. I didn't feel encouraged to work which if very important to my mental health and wellbeing. Being a SGO is expensive no matter how much we earn”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2025)</p>	<p>As a part of the 'induction' process the SGO and CC team to ensure all eligible KCs know their financial entitlements</p> <p>This can be done by referring KCs to the KLO– specifically under 'financial support'</p>	<p>Former 'Friends & Family Policy' (replaced by KLO) is being revised with the Policy and Learning Lead. This will include updated and expanded information on financial support eligibility.</p>

<p>Eligibility: Carers must have previously assessed as a regulation 27 carer</p>	<p><i>“We went without so the children were okay and could have things. They came to us with nothing”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2024)</p>		
--	---	--	--

Education:

Activity centred around partnership work between the SGO and CC Team and the Virtual School.

Current offer	Enhanced offer	Actions	Progress
<p>Virtual School Head Provides information, support and guidance to all kinship carers on a wide variety of issues.</p> <p>Eligibility: All kinship families</p> <p>Designated Teachers Help kinship carers to participate in discussions about their child’s support needs and strategies to meet identified needs, including how Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) can be used to support their child. They can also provide an induction for kinship children starting school or new to a school</p> <p>Eligibility: For children who were previously in care of the local authority</p> <p>Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) £2,570 per child paid directly to schools for a variety of support to be chosen with the school designated teacher</p> <p>Eligibility: For children who were previously in care of the local authority</p>	<p>Devise a programme of activity jointly with the Virtual School to raise the awareness and visibility of kinship care and increase direct one-to-one support for kinship families</p> <p><i>“Kinship children in England are over three times more likely to have an EHCP than all pupils and are around five times more likely to be learning in a special school”.</i> (Kinship Forgotten Report 2024)</p> <p><i>“Schools need to know about SGOs!”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2025)</p>	<p>SGO & CC team to work with Kate Bainbridge, CIN Coordinator on protocol for direct, tailored assistance e.g. to navigate the school system and EHCP applications and process, address specific learning needs and how to link KCs with their schools designated teacher</p> <p>SGO & CC team to also work with Kate on how they can jointly use data on kinship children as it is introduced into the 2026-27 DfE School Census.</p> <p>SGO & CC team to invite Kate Bainbridge to attend the kinship support group twice a year</p> <p>As a part of the ‘induction’ process the SGO and CC team to ensure all eligible KCs know about educational support</p> <p>This can be done by referring KCs to the KLO – specifically under ‘support with a child’s education’</p>	<p>Initial meeting to be booked by end Q1</p> <p>New leaflet to accompany welcome letter will highlight educational support</p>
<p>School admissions Top priority in school admissions and should be placed in good or outstanding schools School place can be secured through the Fair Access Protocol for vulnerable children</p> <p>Eligibility: For Formerly Looked After Children and those in formal kinship care arrangements</p>		<p>As above - referral to the KLO under ‘support with a child’s education’</p>	

<p>Higher Education Higher Government Bursary for Students in Vulnerable Groups'. It is for young people who need financial support to stay on in further education or training. Bursary can cover things like meals, books and transportation</p> <p>Eligibility: For 16-19-year-olds who were previously in care of the local authority</p>		As above - referral to the KLO under 'support with a child's education'	
---	--	---	--

FGC, Contact:

Activity centred around embedding the FGC kinship champion and ensuring all appropriate kinship carers are offered and receive a FGC at the pre-proceedings stage.

Current offer	Enhanced offer	Actions	Progress
<p>The SG and CC Team:</p> <p>FGCs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes referrals and helps coordinate FGCs for kinship carers <p>Contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signposts kinship carers to local contact centres and family mediation services (fee charged to carers) <p>Eligibility: Kinship carers known to Southwark CSC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FGC team to provide family mediation, Lifelong Links only to be used when in-house support is not feasible Provide more referrals to KCs regarding free short-break provision in the community Increase birth parent(s) awareness and understanding of the support plan and their responsibilities within it When supported contact is necessary explore ways to make it more affordable Increase the number of family members identified to offer respite and formalise this in support plans <p>Process and timescales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FGC to take place within the first 6 weeks of assessment (full SG assessment takes 10-12 weeks). During the FGC process family members who are appropriate and able to provide respite are identified If no family members are identified Lifelong Links may be commissioned to work on identifying potential respite carers within the network and build this into broader support plans As a part of the support plan kinship carers are referred to free short-break provision e.g. CHICKS, Forest School, Endorphins holiday club, THRIVE SEND, cooking workshops Trained mediators in the FGC service provide mediation to support Family Plan development and preparations. Where there is a strained relationship between 	<p>SGO & CC team to work with the FGC team lead on process and criteria for one-to-one interactions with KCs on specific issues</p> <p>This will be on a case-by-case basis after community-based support has been tried without success</p> <p>Protocol for family mediation</p> <p>As a part of the 'induction' process the SGO and CC team to ensure all eligible KCs know about FGCs, Contact (family mediation, respite) and refer KCs to 'Kinship' charity training on how to manage contact.</p> <p>This can be done by referring KCs to the KLO – specifically under 'TBC'</p>	<p>Meeting with FGC team has been booked to take place end April. Consider having a kinship 'champion' in FGC team.</p> <p>As above, to be included in new welcome letter and leaflet</p>

	<p>parent(s) and KC around family time arrangements, mediation can be offered (with close consultation with the SW) with a view to agreeing a Family Plan around the future arrangements for family time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family plans to be reviewed on an annual basis by the FGC Coordinator <p>The number of kinship families requiring extra support around family time is low. There have been two cases in past six months (2025)</p> <p>Monthly cost estimate to support with contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ £200 for facility (free if offered in the community or council space) ▪ £100 for the worker ▪ £300 x 6 per/year = £1.8k per kinship family <p>During the entire process all teams SFS, FGC and SG and CC teams to work together to increase birth parent's awareness of and commitment to their responsibilities in keeping to the support plan.</p> <p><i>“Contact is very challenging. It's not easy explaining what and why things happened. Would have liked this to come from an independent professional so it didn't look like we were the bad ones”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2024)</p> <p><i>“Make birth parents keep to the Court order. Ensuring birth parents know they can't do what they want”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2025)</p> <p><i>“There is a huge gap here, especially when the relationship with the birth parent is challenging. I feel like I have been left without the help to manage this – paying £75 per/hour for contact is just too expensive”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2025)</p> <p><i>“Respite is viewed as an emergency rather than a carer simply requesting a break”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2025)</p> <p><i>“It (being a kinship carer) is a very demanding role. Respite is important. Dealing with a child with difficulties is hard. We need a chance to breathe. We need consistent respite”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2024)</p>		
--	--	--	--

Legal:

Activity centred around ensuring kinship carers know about the free legal sessions.

Current offer	Enhanced offer	Actions	Progress
<p>Carers can receive one free advice session with a legal expert Where Southwark considers it necessary, it will assist with the foster carer's legal expenses to apply for a SGO at rates agreed in advance.</p> <p>Eligibility: For carers who have been through social care proceedings</p>	<p>£500 for two legal advice sessions (previously £250 and one session)</p> <p>The first sessions to be held in the viability/reg 24 stage The second to be held after the support plan has been developed</p> <p>Eligibility: For all kinship families, including those applying for a SGO through the private law route and CAO carers. Must have a genuine link to Southwark CSC.</p> <p><i>“The birth mother has free legal representation which means that she is able to make a of requests. As I am not eligible for free legal help due to me working it makes me feel very vulnerable should she decide to take me to Court”.</i> (Southwark SG carer June 2025)</p>	<p>As a part of the 'induction' process the SGO and CC team to ensure all eligible KCs know about legal support they are entitled to</p> <p>This can be done by referring KCs to the KLO – specifically under 'support with legal issues and housing'</p>	<p>Letters confirming legal advice support are sent by both SFS and Care, sometimes A&I, discussion with Service Manager about the best way to disseminate info on this change by the end April 26</p>

Children in Care Council:

Activity centred around ensuring kinship children are participating and benefiting from Southwark's Children in Care Council (SpeakerBox).

Current offer	Enhanced offer	Actions	Progress
<p>Many SpeakerBox activities and events are open to kinship children who were previously in the care of the local authority.</p> <p>Eligibility: Not for babies and very young children</p>		<p>As a part of the 'induction' process the SGO and CC team to ensure all eligible KCs know about SpeakerBox</p> <p>This can be done by referring KCs to the KLO – specifically under 'general support'</p>	<p>SpeakerBox have been contacted re meeting with team, to follow up and confirm by end of Q1</p>

Communication and engagement

As mentioned, alongside enhancing our offer we have been developing our communications and engagement approach focused on improving reach and increasing awareness. Dedicated support from our Marketing Officer has been valuable, enabling us to collaboratively shape clear objectives and a coordinated roadmap of activity. Through this work we aim to:

- Raise awareness and understanding of Southwark's Kinship Local Offer among both existing and prospective kinship carers

- Support current carers to feel confident in what support they are entitled to, and prospective carers to clearly understand what kinship care involves and the support available to them

We have drafted a range of activity across channels to support us in achieving these aims which will feed into a broader plan of delivery, with key items outlined below for April:

Planned Activity	
Channel	Content
Direct mail to existing carers	A letter sent to kinship carers introducing the Kinship Local Offer and clearly outlining available support.
Kinship Local Offer flyer (print and digital)	A visually engaging flyer for residents, designed to raise awareness and provide a clear overview of the support available to kinship carers in Southwark.
Training and Support Groups flyer	A regularly updated digital flyer for SGO and connected carers, highlighting upcoming training sessions and support groups
Southwark Life magazine feature (TBC)	A feature in the residents' magazine showcasing the Kinship Local Offer, supported by a real-life case study. This will sit alongside other carer schemes (Fostering, Family Link, Supported Lodgings and Shared Lives), helping residents understand the full range of support available across Southwark. Adoption will also be referenced as a potential pathway.
Kinship Life e-newsletter	Launch of a quarterly newsletter for kinship carers, sharing updates, stories and reflections, upcoming events, and signposting to support including cost of living help and wider Southwark services.
WhatsApp channel (SGO carers)	Launch of a dedicated WhatsApp channel providing regular, accessible updates (1–3 messages per week), including training opportunities, support groups, and helpful information for carers and young people.
Social media campaign	A series of posts to launch the Local Offer, directing audiences to the website and digital resources, followed by ongoing monthly content to maintain awareness and engagement.
Internal communications	An internal article to raise awareness among staff, encouraging consistent messaging and signposting across services.
School bulletin	Inclusion in the May school bulletin to reach families and raise awareness of kinship care and available support.
Website content (TBC)	A dedicated news article announcing the Kinship Local Offer, supported by clear, accessible web content.

April 2026		
Activity	Owner	Audience
Letter posted to Kinship carers	Marketing Officer create, SGO team to arrange postage	Carers
Kinship Local Offer flyer	Marketing Officer create, SGO team to distribute	Residents/prospective carers
Training and Support Groups flyer	Marketing Officer create, SGO team to distribute and update dates on flyer	Carers
Southwark Life magazine feature – TBC	Marketing Officer write and coordinate, SGO team to provide carers for case studies	Residents/prospective carers
Kinship Life	Marketing Officer write and coordinate with input from SGO team	Carers

WhatsApp channel	SGO Team to manage channel, Marketing Officer to provide support	Carers
Social media – 2 posts a week	Marketing Officer	Residents/prospective carers
Intranet article (internal comms)	Marketing Officer	Southwark Council staff
School bulletin	Marketing Officer	Headteachers & school staff
Website article - TBC	Marketing Officer	Residents/prospective carers

2026-27 Plan Progress

To ensure important outcomes in the enhanced local offer are achieved, the Service Development Team will enable monthly progress meetings with the Special Guardianship and Connected Carers Team and relevant partners where required.

It is also recommended that progress on the implementation plan is followed up with the SH4SC Board on a quarterly basis. This can be done in the form of verbal, exception reporting with a more detailed report at year-end.

Finally, any capacity issues within the Special Guardianship and Connected Carers Team will be monitored, particularly within the context of a higher number of support requests coming in as the KLO is actively publicised.

Appendix

[September 2025 Southwark Kinship Local Offer](#)

[Kinship care | Southwark Council](#)

[Kinship Local Offer | Southwark Council](#)

Meeting Name:	Corporate Parenting Committee
Date:	22 April 2026
Report title:	Corporate Parenting Strategy 2026-2030 – update
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	N/a
From:	Helen Woolgar, Deputy Director of Children’s Services – Safeguarding and Care

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the contents of this report and timeline for delivery of the new Corporate Parenting Strategy 2026-2030

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Southwark’s Council’s Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2025 was published in July 2021 following approval by the Corporate Parenting Committee. The strategy set a renewed vision for every child and young person in the care of the council, or who had left care, which was:

“We want all children and young people in Southwark to grow up in a safe, healthy and happy environment where they have the opportunity to reach their potential”

3. The strategy was further supported by six strategic priorities:
 - **Supporting More Families to Safely Stay Together** – Ensuring all our children & families get the right help at the right time, and at the earliest possible opportunity. To make sure that every child is supported to safely thrive at home.
 - **Growing Up Safe and Independent in Society** - Giving all of our children the tools, skills, resources and support that they need to grow towards independence, and be protected from the threats and risks to them from an increasingly complex world.
 - **Health, Wellbeing, Education & Opportunity** - Marshalling the unique resources of the borough to ensure that every one of our children and young adults gets the support and advocacy they deserve and expect from an excellent parent.
 - **Happy, Safe and Stable** – Making sure that everyone of our children has a say in where they live and who they live with. That they are safe and in permanent homes earlier, closer to home, and supported to remain there as long as they need to.

- **Identity & Belonging** - Giving all our children and young people the chance to learn about themselves, their history and identity, and to live with carers who understand and reflect their cultural identity. Providing every chance for our children to appropriately engage with their own families and personal history.
 - **A Whole Borough That 'Cares to Care'** - Placing delivering for our children and young adults at the heart of everything the Council and its partners do. Broadening the voice and experience of our children across all decision making, and making Southwark a truly Corporate Parenting Borough.
4. Building on the foundations of the existing vision and priorities, we are working to develop the next iteration of the Corporate Parenting Strategy. We are looking to be bold and ambitious in our plans to develop services for children in care and care leavers for our 2026 to 2030 strategy.
 5. The development of the new strategy follows the council's **Southwark 2030 Strategy**, launched in September 2024. We have begun work with our care-experienced children and young people to design the new **Corporate Parenting Strategy 2026 – 2030**. This will be developed in full collaboration with our children and young people ensuring their voice, lived experience and ambitions are at the heart of the next phase of our whole partnership corporate parenting delivery.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. Progress towards the development of the new strategy has included delivery of the **Bright Spots Survey** for children and young people in our care and those who have left our care.
 - Since 2013, Coram Voice has supported local authorities to deliver the Bright Spots survey to hear directly from the children and young people in their care and those who have left their care to gain a holistic insight into their views and experiences.
 - The survey was delivered in Southwark from August to December 2025, with 246 children in care (aged 4-17) and care leavers (aged 16-25) sharing their views.
 - Independent analysis of survey findings was completed at the end of March 2026 and has directly informed development of the strategy.
7. **Speakerbox** have developed eight pillars which set out the priorities for care-experienced children and young people. These will be integral to the development of the new strategy:
 - Education and Employment
 - Non-discrimination
 - Safety and Support Services
 - Freedom of Expression
 - Standards and Treatment in Care
 - Voice of the Child
 - Knowledge of Rights

- Health Services.
8. Building on the results of the Bright Spots survey and Speakerbox's pillars, further detailed and meaningful co-production will take place with our children and young people, as well as cross-council leadership and key partners, to develop our refreshed strategy.

Delivery Timeline

9. The following delivery plan sets out the timescale for completion of the draft strategy by July 2026:

Action	Key dates
Update on strategy development at Corporate Parenting Committee	22 April 2026
Bright Spots feedback and action planning workshop with young people and cross-council leadership	W/C 27 April 2026
Further engagement with young people to test and refine priorities	May 2026
Corporate Parenting Roadshow to secure commitments from across the council, including Director's Forum	May 2026
Draft strategy presented at relevant governance boards	June 2026
Submission of draft strategy to Corporate Parenting Committee	1 July 2026

Policy framework implications

10. An updated and ambitious Corporate Parenting Strategy that recognises the shift in national policy context and builds capacity across the local public sector system to deliver outcomes for our children in care and care leavers, will increasingly serve the delivery of our Southwark 2030 Strategy.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

11. Successful delivery of a strategy to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers will have a significantly positive impact on the outcomes of one of the most vulnerable groups.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

12. In the development of the strategy, all care-experienced children and young people have an opportunity to share their views and contribute to the strategy. This will be done by working closely with colleagues across the system to monitor participation in consultation and engagement.

Health impact statement

13. The health and wellbeing of our care-experienced children and young people will be integral to the development of the strategy and the strategy itself.
14. The Bright Spots survey asks directly about the mental and physical health and wellbeing of children and young people. Each young person aged 4-17 will have the support of a trusted adult to complete the survey.
15. Clinical service, commissioning and health colleagues will be integral to developing the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2026-2030 - particularly the Virtual Mental Health Lead for Looked After Children, Designated Doctor for Children Looked After and Care Leavers, and Designated Nurse for Children Looked After.

Climate change implications

16. There are no climate change implications associated with the development of the strategy.

Resource implications

17. There are no resource implications associated with the development of the strategy.

Legal/Financial implications

18. There are no legal or financial implications associated with the development of the strategy.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2025 Corporate Parenting Committee 22 July 2025 https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99637/Appendix%201%20Draft%20Corporate%20Parenting%20Strategy%202021-2024.pdf	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Paula Thornton Paula.Thornton@SOUTHWARK.GOV.UK

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Helen Woolgar, Deputy Director of Children's Services – Safeguarding and Care	
Report Author	Poppy Laurens, Service Development Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	7 April 2026	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director of Resources	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	7 April 2026	

Meeting Name:	Corporate Parenting Committee
Date:	22 April 2026
Report title:	Corporate Parenting Committee Workplan 2026-27
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	N/A
From:	Helen Woolgar, Deputy Director of Children's Services – Safeguarding and Care

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. To review and agree the work plan as set out in the report.
2. To identify any further items for consideration in the work plan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The constitution for the municipal year 2025-26 records the Corporate Parenting Committee's role and functions as follows:
 - a. To secure real and sustained improvements in the life chances of looked after children and care leavers, and to work within an annual programme to that end.
 - b. To develop, monitor and review a Corporate Parenting Strategy and work plan.
 - c. To seek to ensure that the life chances of looked after children and care leavers are maximised in terms of health, educational attainment, and access to training and employment, to aid the transition to a secure and productive adulthood.
 - d. To develop and co-ordinate a life chances strategy and work plan to improve the life chances of Southwark looked after children.
 - e. To recommend ways in which more integrated services can be developed across all council departments, schools and the voluntary sector to lead towards better outcomes for looked after children.
 - f. To ensure that mechanisms are in place to enable looked after children and care leavers to play an integral role in service planning and design, and that their views are regularly sought and acted upon.

- g. To ensure performance monitoring systems are in place and regularly review performance data to ensure sustained performance improvements in outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.
- h. To receive an annual report on the adoption and fostering services to monitor their effectiveness in providing safe and secure care for looked after children.
- i. To report to the council's cabinet on an annual basis.
- j. To make recommendations to the relevant cabinet decision maker where responsibility for that particular function rests with the cabinet.
- k. To report to the scrutiny sub-committee with responsibility for children's services after each meeting.
- l. To appoint non-voting co-opted members.

National and local context for care leavers

- 4. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 established the collective Corporate Parenting responsibility of the local authority, its partners, and employees to provide the best care, support and protection for children in care and care leavers. It ensures public bodies act as a responsible parent to promote the physical and mental wellbeing, safety and life outcomes for children in their care.
- 5. Southwark Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024 was published in July 2021. The strategy set six strategic priorities to improve experiences and outcomes for every child and young person in the care of the council, or who had left care:
 - **Supporting More Families to Safely Stay Together** – Ensuring all our children & families get the right help at the right time, and at the earliest possible opportunity. To make sure that every child is supported to safely thrive at home.
 - **Growing Up Safe and Independent in Society** - Giving all of our children the tools, skills, resources and support that they need to grow towards independence, and be protected from the threats and risks to them from an increasingly complex world.
 - **Health, Wellbeing, Education & Opportunity** - Marshalling the unique resources of the borough to ensure that every one of our children and young adults gets the support and advocacy they deserve and expect from an excellent parent.
 - **Happy, Safe and Stable** – Making sure that everyone of our children has a say in where they live and who they live with. That they are safe and in permanent homes earlier, closer to home, and supported to remain there as long as

they need to.

- **Identity & Belonging** - Giving all our children and young people the chance to learn about themselves, their history and identity, and to live with carers who understand and reflect their cultural identity. Providing every chance for our children to appropriately engage with their own families and personal history.
- **A Whole Borough That 'Cares to Care'** - Placing delivering for our children and young adults at the heart of everything the Council and its partners do. Broadening the voice and experience of our children across all decision making, and making Southwark a truly Corporate Parenting Borough.

6. A key priority for 2026/27 will be developing the next iteration of the Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2026-30. This will be developed in full collaboration with our children and young people, ensuring their voice, lived experience and ambitions are at the heart of the next phase of our whole partnership corporate parenting delivery.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Corporate Parenting Committee Workplan – 2026-27

7. The committee will be meeting on the following dates for 2026-27: 15 July 2026, 21 October 2026, 24 February 2027 and 21 April 2027.
8. An indicative work plan is set out below for the committee to review and agree. This workplan will also be reviewed at each meeting to identify any further items for consideration in the work plan:

Meeting Date	Indicative Items
15 July 2026	Speakerbox update Annual Health Report for looked after children and care leavers 2025-26 Report on commissioning of higher cost placements Draft Corporate Parenting Strategy 2026-30 Housing and Children's Services Joint Working Protocol
21 October 2026	Speakerbox update Southwark Homes for Southwark Children programme update Fostering Annual Report 2025-26 Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2025-26
24 February 2027	Speakerbox update Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2026 Adoption Annual Report 2026
21 April 2027	Speakerbox update Southwark Homes for Southwark Children programme update
To be allocated	Exploitation, risk and harm measures to break the cycle

SpeakerBox

9. Speakerbox - Southwark's Children in Care Council – is a strong, diverse and determined community of care-experienced children and young people who are passionate about making a difference. Their aim is simple - to support one another, to raise their collective voices to make change and ensure better outcomes for children and young people in care and care leavers.
10. In line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Speakerbox ensures that children and young people can share their wishes and feelings in a safe, supportive space, and know that what they say really matters.
11. Speakerbox offer opportunities for young people to be directly involved in council decision-making, such as through the Young Inspectors scheme and taking part in interview panels. They also deliver a range of activities to bring the community together and celebrate their achievements. Highlights include the Winter Ball and creative projects like recording an album, photography and cookery courses.
12. The programme is operated independently and run by the young people themselves, although it is supported by two dedicated Children's Rights and Participation Officers.

Policy framework implications

13. An updated and ambitious Corporate Parenting Strategy that recognises the shift in national policy context and builds capacity across the local public sector system to deliver outcomes for our children in care and care leavers, will increasingly serve the delivery of our Southwark 2030 Strategy.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

14. The work of the Corporate Parenting Committee ensures the successful delivery of our Corporate Parenting Strategy and improved outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

15. Relevant issues will be addressed in the reports submitted to the Corporate Parenting Committee.

Health impact statement

16. The health and wellbeing of our care-experienced children and young people is a key priority in the workplan for the 2026/27 year.

Climate change implications

17. There are no climate change implications associated with the workplan.

Resource implications

18. There are no resource implications associated with the workplan.

Legal/Financial implications

19. There are no legal or financial implications associated with the workplan.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024 Corporate Parenting Committee 22 July 2025 https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99637/Appendix%201%20Draft%20Corporate%20Parenting%20Strategy%202021-2024.pdf	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Paula Thornton Paula.Thornton@SOUTHWARK.GOV.UK

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Helen Woolgar, Assistant Director for Safeguarding & Corporate Parenting	
Report Author	Poppy Laurens, Service Development Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	8 April 2026	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director of Resources	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		8 April 2026

CORPORATE PARENTING DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2025-26**

NOTE: Original held by Constitutional Team; all amendments/queries to
Paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk; Beverley.olamijulo@southwark.gov.uk

Name	No of copies	Name	No of copies
Membership		Paula Thornton/Beverley Olamijulo	5
Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)	1		
Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall	1	Total:	9
Councillor Charlie Smith	1		
Councillor Natasha Ennin	1		
		Dated: 13 April 2026	
Electronic versions (No hard copy)			
Councillor Esme Dobson			
Councillor Youcef Hassaine			
Councillor Sarah King			
Reserve members – electronic copy			
Councillor Irina Von Wiese			
Councillor Sunny Lambe			
Councillor Joseph Vambe			
Councillor Kath Whittam			
Councillor Renata Hamvas			
Co-opted members			
Mark Kerr (email)			
Rosamond Marshall (email)			
Children's Services - electronic versions (No hard copy)			
Alasdair Smith			
Legal – electronic version (no hard copy)			
Sarah Feasey / Joy Hopkinson			