

Southwark Homes for Southwark Children

Corporate Parenting Committee Update

16 April 2024

Southwark Homes for Southwark Children Overview

Southwark Homes for Southwark Children is a broad improvement programme centred on delivering better outcomes and value for children in our care and our care leavers.

The programme is overseen by the Southwark Homes for Southwark Children Board, with membership across Children's Services and wider council and corporate enablers.

The priorities for the program are linked to the delivery of our Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024 and are broadly intended to deliver on two priorities;

- **Developing our sufficiency** – delivering on our duty under the Children Act 1989 (Section 22) to provide sufficient placements in the locality, as far as reasonably practical, to meet the accommodation needs of our children looked after and of our care leavers.
- **Improving the quality and experience of our care experienced children and young people** – ensuring that more of our children are in stable, caring and high quality care placements and accommodation. That we understand their needs better and are better able to respond to them.

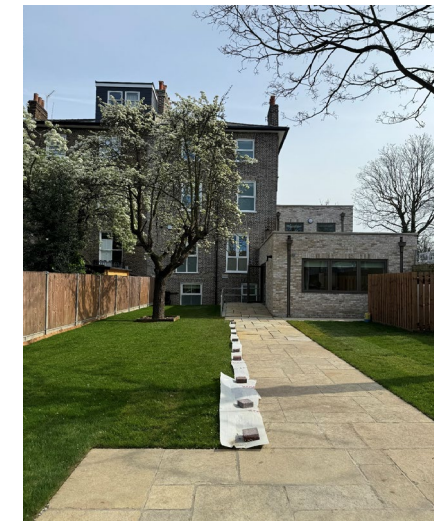


Southwark Homes for Southwark Children

Key Updates Quarter 4 2023/24



Children's residential homes – 1st home



Successful bid for £2m capital grant from the Department for Education to create a new children's home in the borough

Council match funded the DfE capital grant with a redundant council property of equal value

Design proposals developed including consulting Speakerbox for a complete internal rebuild and renovation of the property to create a **state of the art and carbon neutral home** for up to 5 of our children

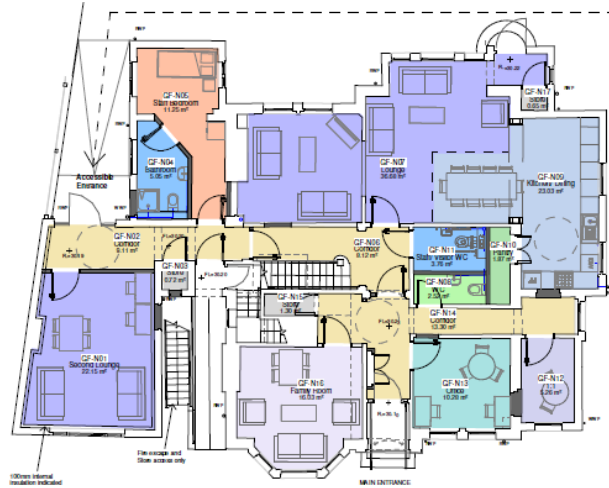
Fully accessible building with a new extension to provide expanded living, dining and education space for our children

Building work is nearing completion with the **handover of keys from the contractors** to the service scheduled to take place **by end of April 2024**

All furniture and fittings scheduled to be installed in May 2024

Whole new staff team and service being recruited to and the **first of our children are expected to living in the home after a planned transition** back to Southwark towards the **end of the school summer break, in August 2024.**

Children's residential homes – 2nd home



Second successful bid for a £1.13m Capital Grant from the Department for Education to build a second residential children's home

Match funded from council capital funds.

The property was formerly an adults supported living property secured on a long-term lease from a Housing Association.

As with the first children's home, design proposals will be developed including consulting Speakerbox for a complete internal rebuild and renovation of the property to create a **state of the art and carbon neutral home** for up to 5 of our children

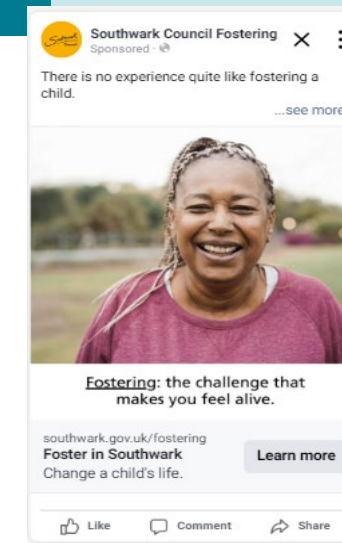
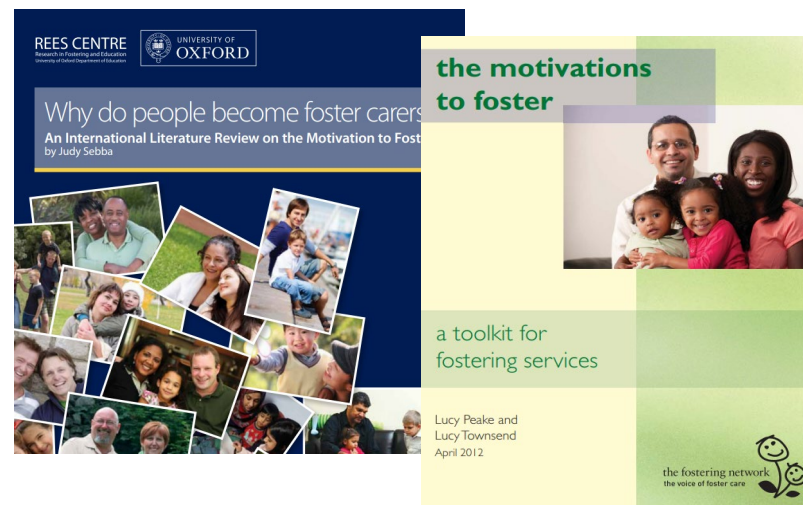
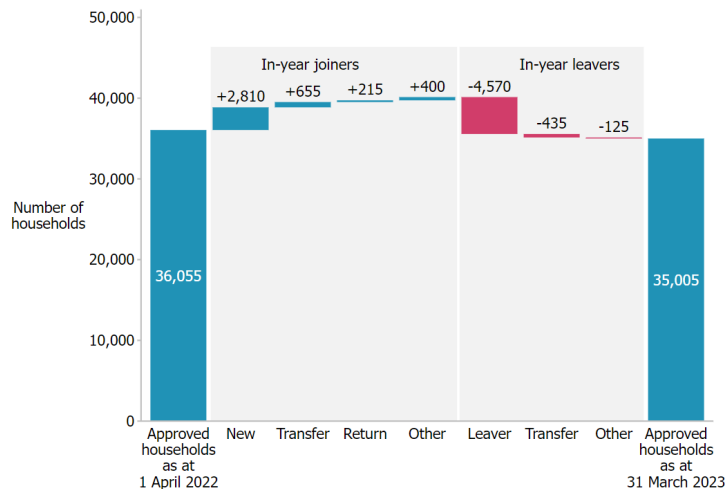
Fully accessible building with an annex to provide flexibility for children with more complex needs.

Detailed design work signed off in March 2024.

Tendering for contractors to go live **April 2024**

Project **on-track for completion** and for the first of our children to move in to our 2nd home **by Summer 2025**

Foster carer recruitment



There is an increasing **national trend** of more people stopping fostering, than those becoming foster carers.

This trend is visible in Southwark. We have a declining number of foster carers. As at January 2024 over 53% of our foster carers are over 60 years old often retiring after 20 plus years fostering.

We need to **reach and motivate new local carers** for our children

We have re-thought **our approach** to carer recruitment based on **national and international research and evidence** into what messaging motivates people to become carers.

We have Created dedicated social media accounts for foster carer recruitment to **modernize our marketing channels for the digital age** and develop targeted community engagement

We are co-producing new **targeted promotional materials** with our children and carers that appeal to the right motivating factors and the right communities

A **dedicated role has been established from January 2024 in Corporate Communications** for carer recruitment

We are completing by end of **April 2024** an **end-to-end business analysis** of our recruitment and assessment process with the transformation, technology and digital service to improve performance and digital capability, providing a better customer experience.

Foster carer retention & models of care

We are continually looking outward at best practice and research to explore **more opportunities to innovate and improve** the offer to our carers and our children. We want the best evidence-based support models in place to make our carers more likely to succeed, sustain their care for our children, and to keep them in caring, and where possible expand their capacity to care

In the coming months we will launch a local pilot of the Mockingbird Model. An evidence-based model that creates a formal network of carers with a highly-experienced carer at the centre offering peer support, guidance and respite to newer and less experienced carers

We will build direct links to **the networked model to our new children's homes**. This will mean that carers have 24hr access to high-quality professional, as well as peer, support and advice

Building on previous successes we are **exploring the opportunity to invest more capital funds** in the enhancing of carers properties, including kinship carers, where we know they could safely and confidently provide care to more children with more space to do so



Modernisation & reform of our placements service

Access to Resources Team (ART) – our placements service ART was formed in 2015. The team works alongside our Children in Care and Care Leaver Services to source and broker homes for our children in the independent and private residential and foster care sectors

ART works to identify homes for new children coming into care, often in crisis situations, as well as working with providers and our social work teams to help identify and plan for new placements when children need to move or when they can be successfully supported to move to different homes as their needs change

The care placement market is volatile and highly competitive. Services need to be able to **build relationships with good providers** to ensure the best placements are available to our children, and we need our team to be proactive in helping good providers to develop.

We have worked on a proposal for the structure needed and will be looking to enhance and modernise the current ART structure by end June 2024.

Placements Quality Assurance – too often the relationship between services and providers is a commissioning and contract monitoring relationship. This misses the opportunity to work more collaboratively with the market to improve the quality of provision and placements and build stronger relationships with our preferred providers to ensure our children get the first choice for homes we can trust. We are developing the model of practice with the ART to increase capacity to deliver a stronger **quality-led approach** to our relationships with the market.

Young Inspectors Programme – at the heart of our new quality-led approach will be **new Young Inspectors**. Care experienced young people who will be trained and supported to inspect and make recommendations about placements and providers.

