

CYPE Scrutiny Commission

Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2025/26

**Children, Young People and Education
Scrutiny Commission: 27 October 2026**

Lead director: Laurence Mackie-Jones

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: David Thrussell, Head of Service
- Author contact details: 0116 454 1657
- Report version number: v1

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of corporate parenting activity and performance from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.
- 1.2. The report identifies local performance set against the five priority areas in the corporate parenting strategy, together with identified priorities for 2026/27.

2. Recommended actions/decision

- 2.1 To note the Corporate Parenting annual report for 2025-6 and the priorities for 2026/27.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

- 3.1 A presentation on the annual report and priorities for 2026/27 was delivered to the Corporate Parenting Board and strategic partners in May. Further discussions to progress the priorities will be undertaken with the children and young people's participation and engagement team, together with the care experienced consultants and care leaver reference group.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

- 4.1 The report is for information purposes and does not require a decision.

5. Detailed report

- 5.0 The Wellbeing & School Act 2026 strengthens Corporate Parenting duties for Local Authorities and statutory partners. Relevant authorities and local authorities in England must, so far as reasonably practicable, collaborate with each other when performing their corporate parenting duty where they consider that doing so would safeguard or promote the wellbeing of looked-after children or relevant young people. Collaboration may include sharing information; providing advice or assistance; or co-ordinating activities.

“We will act with the same care, aspiration and determination for everyone of our children looked after and care leaver as we would for our own children, showing love and patience, championing their voices, removing barriers, and relentlessly pursuing the best possible outcomes in their lives.”

- 5.1 Our Corporate Parenting Strategy has five priority themes to measure progress and impact for children looked after and care leavers.

- Active Participation
- Education Training and Employment
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Preparing for Successful Living
- A Place To live

Active Participation

“Nothing about you, without you - your voice will shape every decision we make.”

- 5.2 The Children’s Rights and Participation Team has worked throughout the year to support children looked after and care leavers engagement in the Corporate Parenting Board and to enable young people to have a meaningful voice in shaping services and decisions that impact on their lives.

- 5.3 Children looked after and care leavers are supported to have a voice through monthly meetings of the care experienced consultant’s forum together with regular meetings of the Young People’s Council that includes children looked after. Children

and young people have a standing item for feedback at the Corporate Parenting Board and are also supported by the Rights and Participation team to attend the council's Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission, and Overview Scrutiny Commission.

5.4. Activities undertaken to support active participation of children looked after and care leavers over the past twelve months has included:

- Producing Podcast recordings and a red-carpet film launch
- Developing a language guide for working with children and young people
- Participation in a Public Health Vaping campaign
- Producing an animation promoting Children's Rights and Participation
- Safer Spaces Project with Coventry University for Black young people in Care
- Information for young people to understand Local Designated Officer (LADO)
- Launch of a Children in Care from Abroad Seeking Safety Group (CASS)
- Support to Peer Reviewers quality assurance activities at children's homes
- Advocacy Surgeries and QR code voice boxes in our children's homes
- Presentation at the Regional Family Court Judges Conference
- Celebrating Success Event for Looked After Children & Young People

5.5 There remain challenges in widening the participation and engagement of children looked after and care leavers in the corporate parenting board and opportunities will be explored for alternative engagement in the coming year through both celebratory events and a Takeover Corporate Parenting Board in October.

Education, Training and Employment

"We will be unapologetically ambitious for our children, driving high expectations, closing attainment gaps, and ensuring every child and care leaver has access to education, skills and opportunities that enable them to thrive in adulthood."

5.6. Support for looked after children and young people's education, training and employment is overseen by the Virtual School Team, and the Director of Education and the Virtual School Head are standing members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

- 5.7. Education, Training and Employment for children looked after and care leavers has remained a priority throughout the year and was a spotlight theme session for the corporate parenting board, supported by the Virtual Head and the Service Manager for Information, Advice and Guidance.
- 5.8. The Virtual School provides support for all children looked after living in Leicester and children looked after who are placed outside the city. There is a positive focus on being aspirational for our children and young people to support them to achieve their full potential including targeted educational support packages and extra-curricular activities.
- 5.9 Activities undertaken to support education, training and employment of our children looked after and care leavers this year has included:
- Trauma Informed Training for Schools (30 more schools signed up)
 - Supported Internship programme for students
 - Work experience with John Lewis Partnership
 - Additional ESOL Classes for Young people from Abroad Seeking Safety
 - NHS Care Leavers Employability Programme (17 care leavers referred)
 - Apprenticeship Recruitment Fayre
 - Extra- curricular activities including Bullfrog Arts and Tall Ships
 - Transitions programme, supporting year 6 into year 7 with PGL residential trip
 - Monthly forest school for Foster Families
 - Planning our first summer school, to take place over the summer holidays
 - Annual Curve takeover for our Early Years and Primary children
 - Monthly book parcels from Reception to Year 8
 - Liaising with the strategic lead for LLR Work Well to ensure their Work and Health Coaches consider the health needs of care leavers
- 5.10. Our aspirations for our Early Years children is for them to achieve a good level of development (GLD). Last academic year, 60% reached this marker. Our children achieved higher than their looked after peers in the East Midlands (38%) and 3 % lower than their non looked after peers in Leicester City (63%). Our children looked after (CLA) achieved higher than their looked after peers in the East Midlands in the phonics benchmark with 60% reaching the benchmark. 76% of

the general cohort in Leicester schools reached the benchmark by comparison.

5.11 In 2024/2025 Key Stage 2 outcomes:

- A higher proportion of our CLA achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths than CLA nationally.
- Leicester City CLA who achieved the expected standard in maths are still behind CLA nationally and all children in Leicester.
- Leicester City CLA are making less progress in reading than those nationally and fall well below those who are not looked after in the city.

5.12 Our primary aged children are making pleasing progress when compared with other CLA, but there is still work to do to close the gap between them and non looked after peers. The phonics benchmark showed us that this cohort are still behind their non-looked after peers, but they have achieved better than CLA across the East Midlands area and nationally for the proportion working at the expected standard.

5.13 A higher proportion of our children looked after (CLA) achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and math's than CLA nationally. Leicester City CLA who achieved the expected standard in math's are still behind CLA nationally and all children in Leicester. Leicester City CLA are making less progress in reading than those nationally and fall well below those who are not looked after in the city.

5.14 There was a 10% increase in our young people gaining a GCSE grade 4 or higher and a 19% increase in our young people gaining 5 GCSEs at grade 1 or higher and a 10% increase in young people gaining a grade 4 or higher in English and Math's. Improvement is still required in science, and the Virtual School development plan will address how we bring about change in this area.

5.15 The Virtual School exam centre has grown from strength to strength, and we are now offering AQA unit awards, enabling engagement from our children and young people who are not ready for more formal exams.

5.16 The number of children with school attendance below 95% (10 days absence over a school year) in 2025/26 was 33.52% compared to 29.60% in 2024/25. (September-Mar for respective periods). The number and percentage of children looked after with fixed term suspensions 51 (17.79%) in 2025/26 compared to 76 (21.97%) 2024/25. (Autumn – Spring terms).

5.17 The Virtual School Priorities for 2026/27 include:

Narrowing the achievement gap between our looked after children and their peers
Improving the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Improving proportion of children achieving expected standards in all areas at KS1 / 2

Continuing to increase the number of year 11 students completing GCSE.

or equivalent qualification at the end of KS 4, with a focus on English and Maths

Improving outcomes at Key Stage 4.

Improving outcomes and reduce drop-out for young people pursuing Level 3 courses in schools or Sixth Form Colleges.

Improving school attendance

Working in partnership with Leaving Care to reduce NEET figures and continue our cross working with Connexions.

Improving quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs and PEP meeting including student voice.

Maintaining high level of PEP compliance.

Supporting foster carers and Designated Teachers to better support looked after children with their learning.

5.18 The Connexions Service has worked collaboratively with the Virtual School and Leaving Care Team to further develop the local offer to support our care experienced young people to make a positive transition into employment, education or training (EET) at post-16 and beyond. This will form the foundation of a local EET Offer based on the concept of the 'family business' model across the council and wider partnership.

Health & Wellbeing

“We will actively reduce health inequalities for our children and care leavers, ensuring they achieve the same health outcomes as their peers”.

- 5.19 The health and wellbeing of children looked after, and care leavers is supported through collaboration with the NHS Leicester Partnership Trust and Integrated Commissioning Board who provide the Designated Nurse for Children in Care and who commission the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Young People’s Team and the Looked After Children Health Team. The Director for Public Health is a member of the Corporate Parenting Board together with the designated doctor for Looked After Children.
- 5.20 The Health and wellbeing of children looked after, and care leavers was subject to a deep dive spotlight session in 2025/26 and priorities for improving health outcomes for children looked after is overseen by a standing Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland strategic group attended by the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting. The board also receives updates on progress against the Strategic Health Needs Assessment for Children Looked after by the Public Health Team.
- 5.21 Health and wellbeing priorities for children looked after in 2025/26 have included:
- Reducing health inequalities including Core 20 +5 pledge
 - Developing an Oral health pathway and LLR Care Records
 - Implementing a care leaver icon on System One health electronic patient record
 - Support for transition of health care with planning from year 9
 - Adult clinical team awareness and training around Trauma Informed practice
 - The Care Leaver’s Covenant/ NHS Universal Family Programme
 - Supporting the Staying Close and Connected Programme
 - Support to access prescriptions and appointments
 - Implementation of an Immunisation pathway following audit
- 5.22 The CAMHS Young Peoples Team (YPT) provides specialist mental health assessment and treatment to young people aged 0-18 years who are living in LLR with a registered GP in the area and who have a moderate to severe mental illness.

The team provides specialist assessment and care to children who are Looked After, Adopted, UASC, Homeless or involved with Youth Justice services, and to ensure that comprehensive assessments of risk are completed for these young people and that care planning is put into place which details their treatment plan.

5.23 In 2025 the CAMHS service were engaged with 119 children and young people in the city. This included:

- 6 children and young people supported through adoption team
- 1 homeless young person
- 17 children and young people living in fostering households
- 43 children and young people living in children's residential homes
- 14 children with Adverse Childhood Experiences (mild to moderate)
- 11 young people engaged in Youth Justice system (moderate to severe)
- 7 Children from Abroad Seeking Safety (UASC)
- 19 young people supported through Staying Close and Connected (SCSC)

5.24 The YPT have a specialist transitions nurse to support any young people in the team who are transitioning to an adult Community Mental Health Team (CMHT), this post ensures we have strong links to all CMHTs across LLR and can support young adults leaving CAMHS services to ensure their care is continued as adults.

5.25 The Director for Public Health is a standing member of the Corporate Parenting Board and the Public Health Team have reviewed progress on the Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for children looked after in the city.

5.26 Given time and resource constraints this was a rapid review of progress against the recommendations of the 2025 Health Needs Assessments. It was conducted via email and face to face discussions. For the purposes of the progress report impact is defined as changes at an organisational level. 17 recommendations were considered, 2 have been completed, 9 are progressing and 8 were delayed.

5.27 All care experienced children in Leicester, now have a code applied to the System One record, to ensure any clinical practitioner accessing their notes are aware of their status and as part of the Review Health Assessment RHA, nursing staff will review all contacts in the past 12 months, which will include Health Care Plan's.

- 5.28 Turning Point now have a recovery worker that regularly attends children's residential care settings to develop relationships with both children and young people and staff, including delivering training to staff working in care homes. This worker has delivered training to foster carers at least twice in the past 6 months and has recently started to do some co-location work with children's social care in their offices. Training has focused on working with children and young people in foster care that are using drugs but also considering how to work with children who have been affected by parental substance use.
- 5.29 The Looked After Children's Health Team in Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland (LLR) have developed a pathway to support young people with care experience, access to an NHS dentist, which was launched in April 2024. This utilises the NHSE funding for general dental practices to become enhanced dental practices with additional support and funding, which in turn supports the Community Dental Services to clear their backlog post-pandemic.
- 5.30 Health priorities for 2026/27 for Children Looked After and Care Leavers will include maintaining a focus on transition arrangements for young people with complex health and mental health needs as they transition to adulthood, timeliness of health assessments, oral health and continuing to reduce health inequalities.

Preparing for Successful Living

"We will stand alongside our care leavers as they move into adulthood, providing consistent support, opportunities and relationships that enable them to succeed".

- 5.31 Work to support preparing for successful living has been progressed jointly with Adult Social Care, and Special Education Services.
- 5.32 Activities undertaken to support children looked after and care leavers prepare for successful living have included:
- Residential programmes
 - Transition workshops

- Visioning event for an integrated Preparing for Adulthood Strategy
- Targeted youth work offer to support successful living

5.33 Preparing for Adulthood is a strategic priority for the council, and a new strategy will be launched in 2026. Work will also be undertaken with care experienced young people to strengthen the local care leaver offer and to review managing your own home in preparation for adulthood.

A Place to Live

“We will ensure that every child in our care grows up in a safe, stable and nurturing home, and that every care leaver has access to suitable, secure accommodation that supports their independence and wellbeing.”

5.34 The majority of our children looked after are living locally in foster carer households supported internally through the council’s fostering service. An increasing though smaller proportion of our children looked after are living out of the local area in foster care households supported by Independent Fostering Agencies.

5.35 The numbers of our children looked after living in children’s residential homes has increased both internally and externally. We have continued to expand our local internal children’s residential estate in line with our placement sufficiency strategy of reducing our use of externally commissioned homes and allowing more children to continue to live in Leicester when they are looked after. All seven of the children’s residential homes are currently rated either good or outstanding by Ofsted.

5.36 Children’s Social Care continues to work collaboratively with the Housing Department to ensure that our care leavers have good quality accommodation. All care leavers have priority banding for their housing applications and there is very low use of emergency accommodation for care leavers at risk of homelessness.

5.37 Activities undertaken to support our children looked after and care leavers Place to Live Priority has included:

- Joint work with Housing colleagues to strengthen our local offer
- Revisions to our Homelessness Strategy for Young People

- Development of a Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers
- Securing DfE Funding for a dedicated Housing Officer Post

- 5.38 A very small number of children looked after are placed in unlawful accommodation placements unregulated by Ofsted and our absolute priority is to cease use of this accommodation entirely. Robust senior management oversight arrangements are in place when children and young people are unavoidably placed in unlawful accommodation, and we have continued to work with unregulated providers to expedite Ofsted registration where this is not in place and to develop the regulated market so there is sufficient volume and quality of placements to meet all our children's needs.
- 5.39 There continues to be a shortage of suitable semi-independent and independent move on accommodation for children looked after and care leavers which prevents care experienced young people being able to move to be more suitable accommodation in a timely way and has significant cost impact.
- 5.40 Priorities for 2026/27 will include working with housing and adult social care colleagues to identify opportunities to provide more move on housing and support for care leavers whilst continuing to shape the market with local providers.

“We will lead as an effective and accountable Corporate Parent working across the council and with partners who also hold corporate parenting responsibilities to continuously improve, challenge ourselves, and deliver meaningful change for children looked after and care leavers.”

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

- 6.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
- Mohammed Irfan – Head of Finance
- 07 July 2026

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Susan Holmes

Head of Law for Social Care & Safeguarding

30th July 2026

6.3 Equalities implications

6.3.1 The Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act 2010 by having due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

6.3.2 Children looked after and care leavers are a particularly vulnerable group who often experience poorer outcomes compared to their peers across education, health, employment and housing. Many will also have protected characteristics, including disability, race, sex, or religion or belief, and may experience multiple and overlapping disadvantages.

6.3.3 This report highlights the Council's role as a Corporate Parent in seeking to reduce these inequalities. Activity outlined within the report demonstrates a continued focus on improving outcomes and access to services, including targeted education support through the Virtual School, health interventions to address inequalities, and work to improve access to suitable accommodation.

6.3.4 There is evidence of inclusive and participatory practice, with children and young people supported to have their voices heard through forums, advocacy, and engagement in decision-making processes. Specific initiatives, such as work with Black young people in care and children seeking safety from abroad, demonstrate an awareness of the need for culturally responsive and tailored approaches.

6.3.5 The report also identifies ongoing inequalities. Children looked after continue to experience lower educational attainment and attendance compared to their non-looked after peers, and there are challenges in securing timely, suitable housing for care leavers. Some groups, including those with complex needs,

those placed out of area, and those in unregulated accommodation, may be at greater risk of poorer outcomes.

- 6.3.6 The priorities identified for 2026/27, including narrowing attainment gaps, improving health outcomes, increasing participation, and expanding housing provision, are aligned with the Council's responsibilities under the PSED. Continued focus on targeted support, inclusive service design, and co-production with care experienced young people will be important to ensure that services meet diverse needs and that inequalities are reduced over time.

Equalities officer, Surinder Singh,
Ext 37 4148
Dated 8 July 2026

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

- 6.4.1 The report does not imply any significant negative climate impacts. Future implementation of accommodation, housing and estate-related initiatives should seek to maximise energy efficiency, climate resilience and opportunities for sustainable travel where appropriate.

Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer,
Ext 372246
8th July 2026

6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

- 6.5.1 None

7. Background information and other papers:

- 7.1 Corporate Parenting Strategy
Virtual School Annual Report
Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report
Health Needs Assessment Children Looked After
Annual Report Designated Doctor Children Looked After

8. Summary of appendices:

8.1 None

9. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

9.1 No

10. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?

10.1 No