



# Children Looked After Strategy

## 2018 - 2020

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## Foreword

*I am delighted to introduce the Bromley Children Looked After strategy 2018 - 2020*

As the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Education, Care and Health Services in Bromley, I have met with many children and young people who have experiences of being looked after by Bromley. Many speak positively of their experiences, receiving appropriate and good care and experiencing good outcomes. These young people will likely transition into adulthood equipped to live healthy and happy lives.

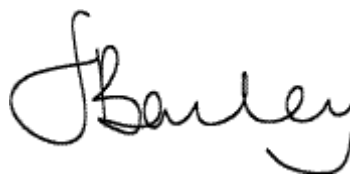
I have also met with children and young people who are looked after by Bromley who are experiencing a less than appropriate care experience. I have spoken at length to many of these young people about their experiences – it is critical that we listen to their experiences and respond at an individual and service level.

I am confident that the proposed activities in this strategy, if implemented, will keep children and young people looked after safer, happier and healthier and will provide them the security and stability they need for their future. It's a goal any good parent would desire for their own children.

We must support, nurture and guide our young people as though they are our own as any reasonable parent would. We must celebrate their successes and we must support them to get back on track if they make mistakes.



Ade Adetosoye OBE  
Deputy Chief Executive and  
Executive Director of Education,  
Care and Health



Janet Bailey  
Director  
Children's Social Care



*What makes a good social worker?*

## Words from the Bromley Living in Care Council (LinCC)

1. Social workers should be easy to contact. We should be given the work number and mobile number of our social worker and social workers should keep an up to date record of our numbers.

2. Social workers should be good listeners. We think that good listening means hearing us out and exploring our thoughts with us.

3. Other qualities of a good social worker includes being:

- Friendly – engage nicely with us but don't be fake we know
- Trustworthy
- Organised – we know when they're not
- Respectful
- Punctual
- Caring
- Committed – always want the best for us
- Non-judgmental
- Reliable
- Honest – we know when they're not
- Loving
- Sympathetic



4. A good social worker should respect our:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Personality and individuality</li><li>• Age</li><li>• Personal space</li><li>• Religion</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Race</li><li>• Culture</li><li>• Ability</li><li>• Family members</li></ul> |
|---|---|

5. A good social worker will know our story but also be willing to get to know us.

6. When we meet with our social workers we want their full attention, so no checking the phones or taking other calls unless it's an emergency.

7. When we meet with our social worker we want them to give us a summary of what was discussed before they leave and if requested we should receive a copy of their notes on what we discussed. We want to make sure that we've been heard and that our words haven't been misunderstood.

8. When a social worker is unable to meet us as agreed we should be told as soon as possible. We are important people.

9. Social workers should make contact with us in between meetings; this lets us know that they care.

10. Social workers should be well resourced and be prepared to do whatever it takes to build a relationship with us.

# **1. Introduction**

Feeling safe, cared for and cared about are key messages expressed from children and young people in the Bromley Living in Care Council (LinCC).

This Strategy sets out our vision for children and young people in Bromley who are looked after and those who are transitioning to leave care. It describes what we will do to secure positive childhoods for all children and young people looked after, where they feel safe, cared for and cared about, so they can grow and develop into confident adults.

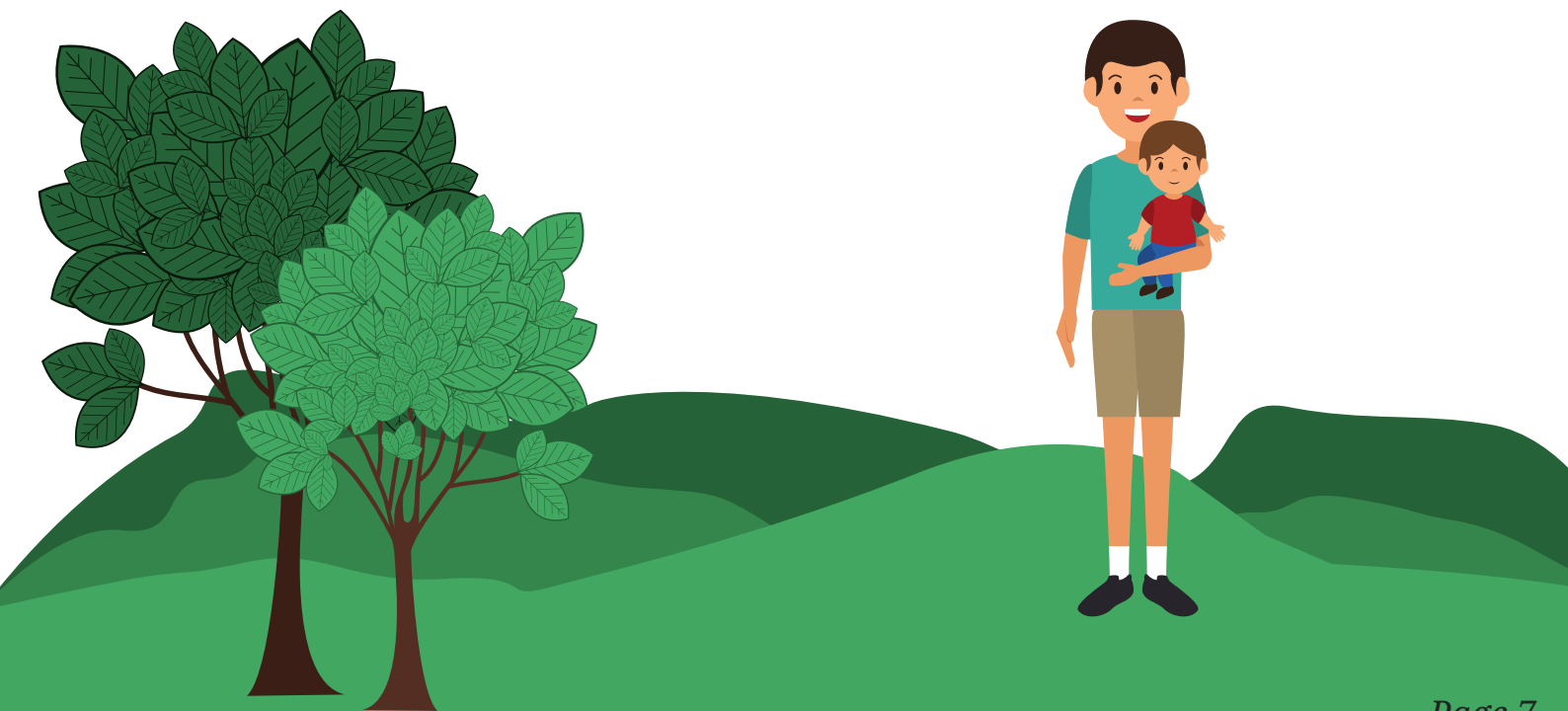
This strategy draws on rigorous reviews and audits of our services and is built on good practice and the things that children and young people have told us make the biggest difference to their lives.

The long-term aspiration of this strategy is to ensure that every child or young person who enters care of Bromley:

- Only enters care if they really need to where all other options have been appropriately explored;
- Remains in care for the minimum time possible;
- Has a secure future with long-term plans in place for the best outcomes for their future;
- Experiences safe, stable, nurturing care in a home-like environment;
- Experiences minimal disruptions to their living arrangements, education and their connection with family, friends and community.
- Has opportunities to heal from past trauma that has led them into care;
- Is provided with the best opportunities to develop resilience, positive identity and coping strategies;
- Is supported to achieve in education and to have good health and well-being outcomes
- Is supported to develop the life-long skills needed to live healthy and happy lives in adulthood
- Understands their journey in care and has a record of this.

To achieve this, we need to:

- Provide services that are centered on the individual needs of children and young people, which take into account individual views, wishes and feelings.
- Develop SMART long-term plans that secure stability and security for each child and young person's future.
- Record decisions in a way that supports a child or young person to understand their journey in care now and/or in the future.
- Provide nurturing and support home-like placements that supports a child or young person in all domains of their life and provides them with the best possible opportunities to meet their needs; encouraging them in education, extra-curricular activities and to lead healthy lives.
- Be trauma-informed in our work and respond sensitively to the individual needs and differences for each child and young person in care.
- Be reflective on what is working well and what needs to be improved; learning and improving from experience through an ongoing process of review, reflection and evaluation.



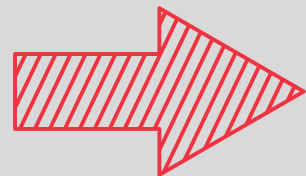
## 2. Our Vision

*We want every child and young person looked after by Bromley to be happy, healthy and safe and to achieve their full potential in life.*

We are ambitious and aspirational for all of the children and young people looked after and leaving care. As their corporate parents we will do everything we can to support them to experience stable and supportive care experiences that meet their needs and provide the best opportunities to grow and develop the skills they will need to lead successful adult lives.

## 3. Shared Values and Practice Principles

We will uphold our Corporate Parenting principles and values in all that we do, and as a starting point, we are committed to providing the same level of help and support that would be provided by any reasonable parent.



In order to achieve this, we will abide by the following values and practice principles.



## *We will be:*

### **Planned and proactive –**

we will take the time to engage with children and young people in care and to get to know them and their needs. We will be rigorous and sensitive in our assessment, care planning, reviews and partnership-working to support children looked after to achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives.

### **Aspirational –**

we will have high aspirations for all children and young people in care and help them to achieve balance in their lives, have optimism and hope, and move with confidence towards a brighter, happier future.

### **Developmental –**

we will support children and young people in care to learn, develop their literacy and numeracy skills, acquire new skills and knowledge and we will provide opportunities for children and young people to develop the confidence and resilience they need to thrive.

### **Empowering –**

we will encourage and support children and young people in care to develop a sense of ownership over their lives; acquiring an understanding of their rights and responsibilities. We are determined in our efforts to engage those children and young people who are finding things challenging and we will help them unconditionally to get back on track if they make mistakes - we won't give up.

### **Needs led –**

we will respond to the developmental needs and interests of all children and young people as individuals.

### **Supportive –**

we will form positive relationships with children and young people and treat them with respect and dignity. We will help children and young people build a sense of safety, security and stability. This means helping them to build enduring relationships with staff, carers and supportive and nurturing adults whom they know well and whom meet their needs.

### **Inclusive –**


we will proactively promote equality of opportunity, access to services and recognise and value diversity. We will give all our children and young people in care a voice including those young people with disabilities, English as an additional language, living in custody or supported within the criminal justice system.

### **Participative and consultative –**

we will encourage all children and young people in care to participate in their care planning, to share their views, input to decision-making and to tell us what we can do better.

## 4. How will we achieve this?

Our vision will be achieved by focusing on the following priorities:

- 
- 1. Safety and nurturing**
  - 2. Stability and security**
  - 3. Identity and connection**
  - 4. Health and emotional well-being**
  - 5. Learning and achieving**
  - 6. Being consulted and heard**

Achievement of these priorities will not only improve the care experience of children and young people looked after in the short to medium term, but improve their future life outcomes in the long-term. Our vision will be achieved by focusing on the following priorities:

## 5. Local and national context

All children and young people who become looked after will have been exposed to multiple traumatic events and/or experiences in their lives including possible abuse, neglect, domestic violence, a family history of mental health issues, drug and alcohol abuse and/or family involvement with the criminal justice system. Negative outcomes of trauma and instability in care includes anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, attachment issues, behavioural issues, anger and aggression and other serious mental health issues. [1]

The presence of caring and supportive adults is integral to a child and young person's sense of stability and safety as well as their ability to understand and recover from a traumatic experience. [2] Therefore, the greater level of safety, stability, security and individualised support Bromley can provide as a Corporate Parent; the greater the capacity for looked after children and young people to overcome traumatic events.

As of January 2018, there were 296 children looked after by Bromley aged from 0 to 17 years. Of these 59% were male and 41% female. The children and young people entered care following exposure to a range of significant abuse and neglect, including family breakdown. Of these, 6% (17) were also receiving services from the Youth Offending Service and 7% (20) were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children with additional trauma, cultural and language support needs.

In any given month, there is a small cohort of 1 to 6% of children and young people that enter or leave the care of Bromley. A majority of those leaving care, 70% return home to live with family. 21% leave care due to permanent arrangements being achieved for children and young people, including special guardianship orders, adoption and child arrangement orders.

Additional challenges are faced by specific groups of children and young people looked after including children with multiple care needs such as developmental disorders (such as ADHD and/or autism), learning disabilities and some with moderate to profound disabilities requiring high-level care and support.

# 296

*children looked after  
by Bromley aged from  
0 to 17 years*



**59%**  
*males*

**41%**  
*females*



# 70%

*return home to  
live with family*

[1] and [2]

*Achieving emotional wellbeing  
for looked after children,  
A whole system approach,  
Louise Bazalgette, Tom Rahilly  
and Grace Trevelyan, June 2015*

## 6. Links to other plans and legislation

As a Corporate Parent Bromley are bound by a multitude of legislation and duties in discharging parental responsibilities to children and young people under the Children's Act 1989. The legislation, regulations and guidance provide the framework for statutory services.

It is critical that this strategy connects to the strategies, plans and policies in relation to health and well-being, housing, education, anti-poverty, community safety and the wider Bromley Council Corporate Plan. This strategy strongly aligns to the priorities and principles set out in the following:



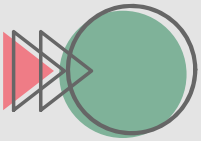
- The Bromley Pledge for Children in Care
- Bromley Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Bromley Care Leavers' Strategy
- Bromley Practice Standards



## 7. Delivering our priorities



**Priority one:**  
**Safe and nurtured**



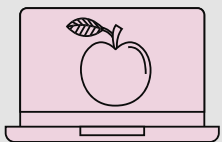
**Priority two:**  
**Stability and security**



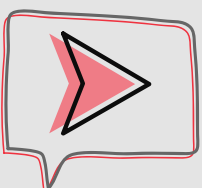
**Priority three:**  
**Identity and connection**



**Priority four:**  
**Healthy and emotionally well**



**Priority five:**  
**Learning and achieving**



**Priority six:**  
**Consulted and heard**



*Children and young people looked after need to not only be safe, but to feel safe in order to calm their inner world and build positive, nurturing relationships.*

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## Priority one: Safe and nurtured

Safety from abuse, violence, threat and exploitation is essential and our top priority. We must provide a care environment that is physically, emotionally and culturally safe, where children and young people are cared for and nurtured in stable environments.

Children and young people feel safe when they know people care about them. Children and young people need positive, daily interactions with carers and professionals that show them they are important, cared for and cared about. This means being warm and nurturing, making time for children and young people and being attuned to how they are feeling. It means helping them when they are stressed or worried. It means modelling good emotional management, giving them strategies to self-soothe and being a positive parent-like figure.

Every interaction with a child or young person is an opportunity for them to build emotional resilience and a feeling of safety. Every element of the care we provide, including their care environment, the food they eat, the clothes they wear sends a message to a young person about how much they are cared for and cared about.

We will be trauma-informed in the way we build relationships with each child and young person in our care. We will recognise that when a child or young person expresses negative emotions through behaviour this is often a pain-based behaviour due to the range of trauma. We commit to being patient, consistent and non-punitive, taking care not to react in ways which leave a young person feeling unsafe.

### **Our aspirations**

Children and young people will live in placements where they:

- *Are physically and emotionally safe and do not experience violence or trauma*
- *Are protected from abuse, neglect, violence, threat and exploitation*
- *Develop safe and secure relationships with adults that persist over time*
- *Feel nurtured, cared for and cared about in stable environments*
- *Feel safe, valued and that their dignity and rights are respected*

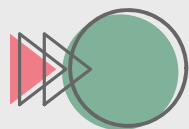
## What will we do...

- *Make sure the right children are in care and support children and young people to return home with their family wherever possible.*
- *Where children must remain in care we will strive to make placements feel like home.*
- *Care placements will provide children and young people with safe and nurturing relationships with adults they can trust*
- *Every child and young person has an allocated social worker who sees them regularly and alone and helps to build a feeling of safety and support*
- *We will listen to children and take seriously any concerns they express about their safety*
- *Review care plans regularly checking that each child and young person is being supported, encouraged and given all of the opportunities they need to reach their full potential. Where this is not the case we will take action promptly.*
- *We will be proactive, thoughtful and attuned to a young person's experiences, wishes and feelings when choosing placements and when making care planning decisions.*
- *Identify risks associated with children and young people offending, misusing drugs or alcohol, going missing or being sexually exploited and put plans in place to reduce the risk of harm or actual harm and keep these plans under regular review*
- *Support children and young people to understand risks in their lives*
- *Ensure that all staff, carers and providers undertake training on identifying and managing the risks of child sexual exploitation and other risk-taking behaviours*
- *Follow procedures and take a multi-agency approach when children and young people go missing from placement ensuring that young people are listened to and action is taken to keep them safe*

## How will we know?

- *100% of looked after children will have an allocated social worker*
- *100% of children will be seen by their social worker within timescale and seen alone*
- *Children are stable in placements*
- *Children are living in long-term and/or permanent homes*
- *Children and young people are on final orders, including adoption where appropriate*
- *Decreased number of placement moves to support stability*
- *Children and young people report feeling safe and secure*
- *Children and young people report feeling a sense of belonging where they live*
- *Number of staff who have undertaken CSE and missing training*





*Every child and young person looked after has the right to a permanent and stable home, providing security, stability, continuity, commitment, identity, belonging and love through their childhood and beyond.*

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## Priority two: Stability and security

Children and young people who experience long-term stable care arrangements, where there is certainty about their future, achieve better life outcomes. The goal of effective permanency planning provides this stability to children and young people looked after. It gives them the opportunity to attend the same school long-term, to have life-long friends, and to have a known group of people that understand their childhood history. Stability and security gives children a knowledge of who their long-term carer will be and an ability to plan for their future. It provides a child or young person the ability to have a sense of belonging and a stronger sense of identity and culture.

Our primary focus for children and young people in care must be permanency planning to create the stability, security and certainty they need for successful futures. We will work with the individual needs of children and young people at the forefront recognising that the routes to permanent arrangements will be different for each child and young person based on their individual circumstances. We are committed to considering the range of options available depending on the age and individual needs and will always look to the family in the first instance, providing it is safe to do so and it does not compromise their development and safety.

We must continually ask ourselves,



*how are the child's needs for stability, security and permanence being met?*

### **Our aspirations**

Children and young people will be:

- *Living in stable and predictable environments*
- *Supported to return home if and when it is safe for them*
- *Living in permanent homes with families without delay*
- *Living with their brothers and sisters wherever possible and when it is assessed as being in their best interests*
- *Experiencing minimal disruptions to their living arrangements, education and connections with family, friends and community.*
- *Experiencing minimal disruptions, wherever possible moving placement only when they are part of a planned return home or in accordance with plans for their future.*



## What will we do...

- *Make sure children come into care where it is best for them and all other options have been appropriately explored. Our decisions are underpinned by timely long-term planning for the best outcomes for their future.*
- *Records, plans and direct work will be properly recorded to help each child and young person understand their journey in care and why decisions are made.*
- *Prioritise permanence planning, securing permanence at the earliest stage for each child and young person with a permanence plan in place by their second statutory review meeting.*
- *Make decisions based on the best interests of each individual child and young person and make them quickly, avoiding drift for children and young people*
- *Involve children and young people in our care planning processes and make decisions with their active involvement, listening to their views, wishes and feelings and understanding any worries and underlying trauma.*
- *Prioritise placement options in the child's extended network of relatives and friends to find suitable long-term care arrangements for each child and young person.*
- *Wherever parents and relatives are not able to provide long term permanent care the planning for the children will include consideration of securing the child's future through adoption or special guardianship at the earliest possible stage where appropriate;*
- *Act early to prevent placement breakdowns by supporting children, young people and carers appropriately ensuring very few unplanned moves*
- *Ensure minimal disruptions to placements, education and connections with community and culture*
- *Increase the number of in-house foster carers who are local to the Bromley area*
- *Wherever meeting a child or young person's needs requires placement in residential settings we will do this as part of a time-limited plan, regularly reviewing the purpose and suitability of the placement for the individual child*
- *Make sure placements feel like home and provide children and young people with safety, quality and nurturing relationships*
- *Find permanence options for children that help each child to develop a feeling of belonging and security as a member of a permanent family or care setting*
- *Find permanence options for children that help each child to develop a feeling of belonging and security as a member of a permanent family or care setting*
- *Independent Reviewing Officers will positively engage with children and young people on a regular and timely basis, considering views and experience of children and their diverse needs and are active in ensuring that the best outcomes of the child are expedited, taking action, where necessary to progress these*
- *Support young people to develop the skills needed to effectively transition to adulthood*

## How will we know?

- *Children are stable in placements*
- *Children in permanent homes*
- *Number of placements to date*
- *Children and young people report feeling safe and secure*
- *Children and young people report feeling a sense of belonging where they live*



*Positive, nurturing and stable relationships and connections with family, carers, friends and community are fundamental to building the positive identity of children and young people in our care and their sense of belonging.*



## Priority three: Identity and connection

The children and young people looked after need our focused attention and support to develop a positive identity and a belief that they can succeed. This is essential for a young person's future emotional well-being and capacity to achieve in life. A lack of positive identity can affect a young person's capacity for positive relationships, to learn, achieve and fulfil their potential in life.

The way we connect with and support each child and young person in our care will make all the difference in how each child and young person feels about themselves. It requires a good amount of effort to help young people to have positive experiences to believe they have a place in the world and to think positively about themselves. Our care planning and day to day interactions with young people will place an emphasis on this and on providing positive, nurturing and restorative relationships for each child and young person.

Connections with family, friends, culture and community (including previous carers where appropriate) are important for the long-term well-being of each child and young person. We need to support each child and young person in care to build, rebuild and/or strengthen their relationships with family members including siblings and extended family members, carers (including previous carers) and other significant adults and to maintain safe contact and connectedness, recognising many of these relationships will endure throughout their lives and be important support networks.

Many young people don't know the full story of what's happened in their childhood and why they came into care. We will place particular attention to each child and young person's life story including what trauma they have experienced and we will not only help them to keep a written record but work with them to deal with this trauma to support them to move forward and heal.

## Our aspirations

Every child and young person in our care has:

- *A sense of identity and belonging*
- *A sense of self-worth and competence*
- *A feeling of connection to family, trusted adults, culture and community*
- *Quality relationships with family, friends and other significant people and good capacity for positive relationships*
- *A capacity to self-reflect and understand their journey before and during care*
- *Motivation to gain mastery in areas of interest to them and reach their potential*
- *A belief in their own capacity to realise their aspirations*
- *Some hope for their future - a belief that things will get better*

## What will we do...

- *Make sure every child and young person has at least one trusted adult they feel they can talk to.*
- *Help children and young people build positive relationships and maintain contact with their family, friends, community and culture.*
- *Deliver training to foster carers on the strategies for building positive identity, belonging and self-belief in children and young people in care.*
- *Encourage carers to nurture and promote each child and young person's ability to build long term friendships and relationships with their peers and other trusted adults as part of a wider long-term network of family and friends.*
- *Every child and young person will have a life story record*
- *Every child and young person will have opportunities to work through and understand their care journey*
- *Help young people to keep a record of their care journey and life story, supporting their identity and sense of understanding of their early life*
- *Have opportunities to engage in social, cultural and community events and activities*

## How will we know?

- *100% children and young people in care have a life story record*
- *100% of young people have at least one trusted adult they feel they can talk to*
- *Number of young people having contact with family*
- *Number of foster carers that attend training on identity*
- *Young people report a sense of identity and belonging, self-worth and connection to family, people, culture and community*

*Children and young people looked after need to be supported to access the appropriate health care services to meet their needs.*



We have a responsibility to address the health disadvantages of the children and young people in our care and do everything we can to promote good health, healthy choices and good communication about their health histories.

Children and young people in care have higher and more complex health needs than non-looked after children due to their earlier life experiences of trauma, abuse and/or neglect. Numerous studies have found that children in care experience significant health challenges with higher risks for their mental health and behaviours due to the impact of their early life experiences on their development. This can adversely affect them for the rest of their lives.

It is our responsibility as corporate parents to do everything we can to nurture and support children and young people in care to receive access to a range of health services to prevent health issues from escalating and prevent the onset of mental health problems. Evidence based practice for children in care highlights the importance of and emphasis on close, collaborative multi-professional and interagency partnership working to support the complex health needs of children and young people in care.

Difficulty in attachment is the most common factor underlying the mental health difficulties of children and young people that receive services from the specialist CAMHS team in Bromley. For some children and young people their experience of care can be made even more difficult by multiple placement breakdowns, instability and changes of key staff they've built relationships with, which can hinder their capacity to resolve trauma. Therapeutic interventions need to be implemented to maximise a sense of safety and stability and will require a clear, consistent and nurturing response to managing behavioural issues.

## Priority four: Healthy and emotionally well

## Our aspirations

Every child and young person in our care has:

- *Are in good health and/or are being helped to improve their health in a timely way.*
- *Have their health needs assessed and identified in a timely way.*
- *Are provided with priority access to a range of health care services including those with disabilities.*
- *Are able to access a range of support including therapeutic support, for as long as is needed, throughout their childhood and beyond.*
- *Have access to child and adolescent mental health provision, therapeutic help when needed and for as long as they are required.*
- *Children are meeting their developmental milestones.*
- *Have their emotional support needs recognised, understood and supported.*
- *Are supported to develop self-regulation skills and resilience for emotional stability.*
- *Make healthy lifestyle choices and lead active, healthy lifestyles.*
- *Eat healthy foods meeting their nutritional needs.*
- *Self-regulation and prosocial behaviour.*
- *Are engaged in social and recreational activities.*
- *Participate in planning their transition to adulthood.*

## What will we do...

- *Assess and review the health needs of children and young people in a timely way making sure every child and young person has a health plan that is regularly reviewed and takes into account a thorough assessment of their physical, mental and emotional health needs.*
- *Ensure access to services and treatment meet the physical, dental, optical, sexual, mental and emotional health needs of our children and young people including those with disabilities.*
- *Ensure children and young people in care are fully immunised and undertake catch up programmes where required.*
- *Every child looked after will have regular health checks, dental checks, eye tests and immunisations and we will prioritise catch ups for children where this is not up to date.*
- *Use trauma-informed care as the basis of our health assessments, health management and care planning to recognise emotional and mental health support needs of children and young people in our care.*
- *Work with CAMHS and Bromley Y to address the mental health needs of children and young people in our care.*
- *Work with CAMHS to support children and young people to develop and maintain attachments with their carers and/or parents.*
- *Support children and young people and work collaboratively with carers, teachers and health staff to address behavioural issues to avoid escalation at school or in placement.*

- *Provide the right support services to children and young people with neurodevelopmental disabilities such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Learning Disability and support to their carers.*
- *Encourage our children and young people to lead healthy and active lifestyles providing access to leisure schemes, encouraging carers to support participation in hobbies and a range of holiday activity programs.*
- *Provide a range of information and education for children and young people around sexual health and the risks of alcohol and substance misuse.*
- *We will provide specialist health services to children and young people in our care including a designated doctor and nurse.*
- *We will develop clear actions to ensure health outcome targets are met for looked after children's entitlements to good access to health services, including where required advice on healthy diet, sex education, obesity reduction, and increased physical activity.*
- *Embedding the strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) as a tool for assessing and evaluating the emotional needs of children and young people looked after.*
- *Every child looked after will have a named Looked After Children's specialist nurse.*
- *Every child looked after will be encouraged to participate in leisure activities and sports.*
- *Every young person will have a health summary with an up to date record of their health history upon leaving care.*
- *Support the positive engagement in sports, hobbies and interests to develop hobbies and talents and promote resilience.*

## How will we know?

*Children and young people will:*

- *have comprehensive health and development assessments*
- *be fully immunised*
- *be engaged in regular exercise and/or sport*
- *have a dental check-up within 12 months*
- *have an optician check-up within 24 months*
- *have a health assessment within 20 days of entering care*
- *have a health assessment within 6 months for children under the age of 5 and once every 12 months for all children and young people over the age of 5*

*Children and young people are making healthy lifestyle choices – reduction in the number of young people who are pregnant, parenting and using drugs and alcohol*

*Children and young people report experiencing improvements to their health and wellbeing*



## Priority five: Learning and achieving

*Every child and young person looked after deserves to achieve to their full potential and to be supported to engage in education, training, work experience and/or employment. A good standard of education is a key driver for achieving positive future employment outcomes in adulthood.*

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We must ensure that children and young people looked after receive the support they need from early education settings, schools, colleges and universities to maximise their educational attainment and employment opportunities.

The Bromley Virtual School has a key role in monitoring; supporting and providing interventions to ensure that children and young people in our care achieve the best possible educational outcomes.

Although the role of the Virtual School is important, it is integral that we adopt a multi-professional and inter-agency approach to support the educational needs of children.

Trauma-impacted children experiencing attachment difficulties displaying a range of complex developmental and health needs require good information-sharing between professionals to best support them within educational settings and placements.

### **Our aspirations**

Children and young people in care:

- *Learn and develop to their full potential*
- *Attend and engage in education - early childhood education, school, training and/or employment*
- *Are meeting their developmental milestones and have age and developmentally appropriate life skills*
- *Engage in, and benefit from, recreational activities*
- *Have stable education - their education is not disrupted unless it is in their best interests*
- *Are supported to catch up on any missed learning and are improving in their educational attainment.*
- *Have career aspirations*
- *Develop and progress personally, socially and educationally*

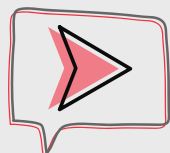


## What will we do...

- *The Virtual School will monitor support and provide interventions to ensure that children and young people in our care achieve the best possible educational outcomes.*
- *Implement the Virtual School annual plan to improve achievement, attainment and attendance of each child and young person in care.*
- *Provide each child and young person with a dedicated personal education plan to identify their key educational learning, social and emotional support needs to best support them at school and provide any specialist support where it is needed, helping them to make good progress in their learning and development.*
- *Work in partnership with other agencies and adopt good information-sharing processes to jointly plan and support each child and young person and address individual needs and any barriers to learning.*
- *Celebrate the achievements of children and young people – recognising progress, hard work and effort.*
- *Provide additional support and opportunities for learning and raising attainment.*
- *Give the continuation of education priority consideration in placement moves to reduce disruption to education.*
- *Skill up foster-carers and residential settings in supporting homework and literacy.*
- *Provide children and young people opportunities to engage in leisure and hobby activities of their choice.*
- *Acknowledge and celebrate important milestones, exams and individual achievements in education and out-of-school activities, including birthdays.*
- *Celebrate successes at an annual achievement awards ceremony.*
- *Offer paid and unpaid work experience placements, and apprenticeships, to young people.*
- *Provide careers advice and education, training and employment support.*
- *Encourage carers to provide a focus on education and development.*
- *Ensure stability in educational provision and training.*

## How will we know?

- *Children are attending school, early childhood or are engaged in employment or training*
- *Personal education plans will be completed in timescale and reviewed termly*
- *Children are achieving their targets as set out in their personal education plans*
- *Children and young people are achieving educational qualifications*
- *Number of school exclusions*
- *Children and young people report enjoying school*
- *Children and young people report feeling supported with their education and learning*



*Listening to children and young people is fundamental to the work that we do to support children and young people looked after.*

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## Priority six: Consulted and heard

It is our statutory duty and a fundamental right of children and young people to have their views, wishes and feelings heard and considered within decision-making processes as per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Children's Act 1989.

We are advocates for our children and young people and must ensure equal opportunities and inclusion. We must be proactive in supporting all children and young people to engage in the range of care planning processes and provide them with a range of opportunities to tell us what life is like for them so they can be involved in the decisions that affect them.

It is our role to be inclusive and thorough in our efforts to gain the views of children and young people who require additional support to communicate their views. It is important we keep good records of each child and young person's views to help inform plans but also to support later life understanding as part of each young person's life story.

We recognise and support the need for children and young people in our care to help inform the work we do as professionals and as corporate parents. We are committed to co-designing services with our young people and creating more participation opportunities for this to happen.

We will continue to work closely with the Living in Care Council (LinCC) to help shape services in Bromley, meet with the senior leaders and elected members and voice their views. This provides a quality assurance check on our services and supports children and young people to gain valuable skills, experience and confidence. We will continue to deliver a range of participation opportunities to engage children and young people in care and help to widen their network of friendships and support.

## Our aspirations

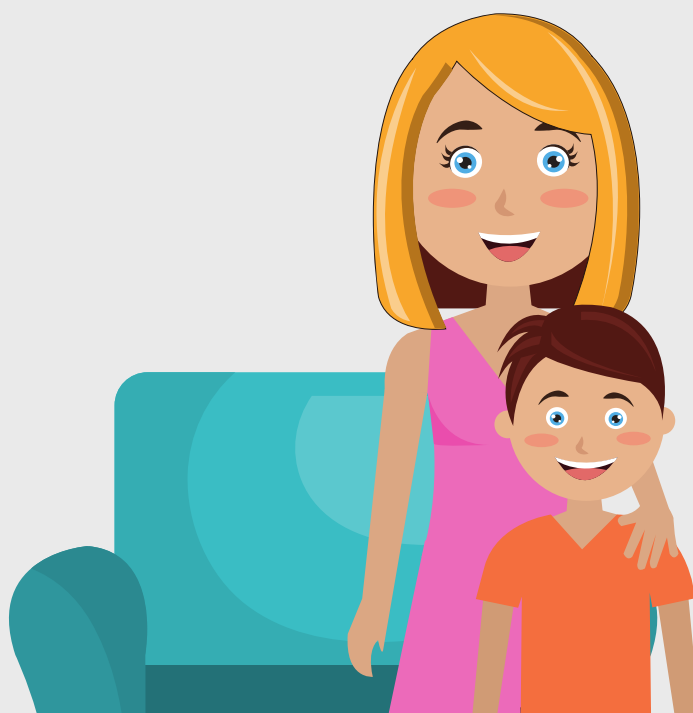
- *Children and young people are listened to by social workers who know them well.*
- *The views of children and young people are considered in the making of all significant decisions.*
- *All children and young people have written records of their views on their case files they can access later in life.*
- *Children and young people have opportunities to speak to their Independent Reviewing Officer.*
- *Children and young people know how to contact an advocate and have ready access to one.*
- *Children and young people have opportunities through the Living in Care Council and a range of participation activities to meet other children and young people in care and to contribute to service design and planning.*

## What will we do...

- *Meet with every child and young person at least every six weeks and will make sure we see them alone away from their carer and others.*
- *Be proactive in listening to each child and young person to ensure that their views shape decisions made about their lives.*
- *Improve the way we record a child and young person's views in care planning on their case file, recognising this will help them to have a clearer sense of their care journey later in life.*
- *Support children and young people to be active participants in their statutory reviews and ensure they have the opportunity to meet with their Independent Reviewing Officer before every review.*
- *Increase the reach of the independent advocacy service and independent visitors' scheme across all age groups.*
- *Promote children and young people's participation and access to Living in Care Council*
- *Increase the interaction between the Living in Care Council and senior managers, elected members and partner agencies for stronger partnership and joint improvement work.*
- *Consult with children and young people looked after and leaving care on their experiences of being looked after by Bromley to capture a wider range of young people's views. This will be a measure of our success as corporate parents and help inform service improvement priorities.*
- *Implement the Bromley Active Involvement Strategy and prioritise the voice and experience of children and young people in our care within this.*

## How will we know?

- *Young people report that they are listened to and their views are taken into account*
- *Number and age of children and young people engaging with the Living in Care Council*
- *Frequency, quality and impact of interaction between the Living in Care Council and senior officers, elected members and partner agencies*
- *Numbers and age profile of children and young people accessing the independent visitor and independent advocacy services*



## **8. Reviewing our progress**

The Senior Management Team (SMT) will provide managerial oversight of this strategy, with the Head of Service for children looked after and care leavers producing a progress update to SMT on a quarterly basis.

The Children's Executive Board will review progress of this plan six monthly to ensure momentum is sustained. The priorities and actions as set out in this strategy align to the wider Children's Services Improvement Plan.

One meeting per year will be an open meeting at which representatives from the Living in Care Council will be able to ask questions about progress and next steps.

The Corporate Parenting Board has a crucial role in overseeing the effectiveness of help and support for care leavers and will take on strategic responsibility for overseeing progress in implementing this strategy. They will oversee the effectiveness of this strategy and, in particular, hold the council and partner agencies to account for their part in implementing this strategy through regular reporting to the board.

Performance measures relating to the 'how will we know' section of this strategy will be assigned to each strategic priority to demonstrate our willingness to be held accountable and enable us to effectively assess our progress. We will use quantitative measures to provide evidence of our efforts and the impact for care leavers. The goals we have set for the next two years will challenge us to improve our services at a fast, but necessary, pace. We acknowledge that many of our core values are harder to quantify and as such, we are committed to undertaking audits of case work, and annual surveys with our care leavers to find out firsthand what support and guidance they are receiving from us, and the impact of this strategic plan.

## **9. Conclusion**

The successful delivery of this strategy will result in Bromley children and young people looked after having the best start in life. It will mean that they are happy, healthy and safe and achieving to their full potential in life with the best opportunities to grow and develop the skills they will need to lead successful adult lives.

We will know that we have achieved our vision and goals for children looked after in Bromley when we hear from children and young people in our care that we have got it right.

*Produced by:*

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