

Sutton's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015-2018



Our pledge

This is the pledge that we make for young people in our care.

- We will make sure you get the **help you need** when you need it and give you the information you need to make the right decisions.
- We will create clear **plans for care, education, health and wellbeing** to meet your needs.
- We will make sure you will have the **opportunity to talk to your social worker alone** every time he/she visits you.
- We will ensure that you are **involved in decisions** that affect you and your life, listen to your views and respect your choice. We want you to tell us when you meet us whether we are keeping our promises.
- We will make sure **every Sutton school** has a **person who works with children who are looked after to help and support them achieve educationally**. For young people out of borough, to ensure they have a contact from Sutton who can support them in their education.
- We will give you the support you need to have contact with family and friends, including covering travel costs where necessary if they live far away.
- We will support you to **gain training opportunities, further and higher education and employment**.
- We aim to be the best as **parents**, provide you with a **safe and comfortable place to live** and to make your experience of being looked after a positive one.
- We will have **expectations of you** as well and we will make these clear to you.
- We will only **promise you things that we know we can do**.
- We will **celebrate and promote your achievements** with you as well as any contributions that you make to the community, including **marking your birthday, religious festivals and educational attainments**.
- We will **respect you as an individual**, make sure you are **treated fairly**, make sure that you **know your rights** and they are adhered to as set out in relevant legislation, regulations and guidance and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- We will give you support and guidance with **developing life skills** so that you can manage your life effectively.
- We will also ensure you receive your **London Borough of Sutton Pledge entitlements, wherever you live**.
- Any failure on the part of the Council to deliver this will be **promptly resolved**.

Corporate parenting means the responsibility of the council and its partners to provide the best care and protection for children and young people who are in public care.

This strategy sets out Sutton's commitment to its children and young people and the key priorities to maintain and improve services.

Our Objectives

Sutton's objectives as a good corporate parent to looked after children and care leavers are:

- Objective 1** to promote prevention, early intervention and alternatives to care whilst ensuring that children who need to enter care do so in timely way.
- Objective 2** for young people leaving care to make a successful transition to adulthood
- Objective 3** to ensure that children's views and wishes are heard in every activity
- Objective 4** to raise the overall quality of placements and improve outcomes for young people while achieving better value for money
- Objective 5** to ensure placements meet the diverse needs of looked after children and young people in Sutton
- Objective 6** to maintain good health outcomes for looked after children
- Objective 7** to ensure that young people are appropriately educated and have access to opportunities for employment or further education and training
- Objective 8** that the welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted.

To achieve these priorities, corporate parents, elected members and senior officers are committed to championing and meeting the needs of children looked after and care leavers. This is overseen by the Corporate Parenting Forum, which is accountable to Children, Families and Education Committee.

Each meeting of the Corporate Parenting Forum will focus on a different objective.

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Prevention / Early Intervention

Promote prevention, early intervention and alternatives to care whilst ensuring that children who need to enter care do so in timely way

Where we are now

Getting things right for children from the beginning requires members of the children's workforce, including Social Workers to make timely and robust assessments, which support good planning and result in the provision of child centred and timely services. This applies to all services which the Council and its partners provide for children.

What we're doing

- Monitor LAC numbers for all age groups and identify actions to address any increase
- Ensure that Family Group Conferences take place at an early stage (eg. after first CP conference) to prevent children becoming looked after
- Robust Pre-Proceedings work under the PLO to ensure alternative family carers can be identified when a child cannot remain at home
- Ensure Adoptions and Special Guardianships are progressed in a timely way to reduce the length of time children remain looked after. This will be achieved by expanding the Adoption and Permanence Team and regular Permanence Tracking Meetings

What it will look like

- Care Proceedings are completed within 26 weeks in line with the FJR and permanency is achieved for children
- Family Group Conferences take place for 100 families and reduce the number of children coming into care
- Adoptions and SGO's are achieved within 1 year of the child becoming looked after

Transition to adulthood

Young people leaving care to make a successful transition to adulthood

Where we are now

As with any group, Care Leavers vary and in order to meet their diverse needs there has to be individual pathway plans based on the wishes and aspirations of young people and a clear assessment of their needs

What we're doing –

- Work to be undertaken to monitor and track preparation for independence work being undertaken by Social Workers and Carers
- Work alongside the Children in Care Council (CiCC) with joint commissioning and achieving positive outcomes
- Increase apprenticeship opportunities
- Work with Housing providers to ensure are leavers have sufficient accommodation options (Including Staying Put)

What it will look like

- At least 97% of leaving care young people living in suitable accommodation
- CiCC have a meaningful impact in the delivery of service to children in care and care leavers
- Apprenticeships under the Sutton scheme increase the number available to Sutton Care Leavers
- Surveys of care leavers show more have a good experience of moving into their own accommodation

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Listening to Children and Young People

Ensure that children's views and wishes are heard in every activity

Where we are now

Sutton has an active and growing Children in Care Council coordinated by a participation Social Worker based in the Leaving Care Team, who organise activities and events for the children and young people in care and in receipt of leaving care services. This is well linked with other participation services in the Authority.

What we're doing –

- Explore the use of communications technology to improve CiCC's engagement with children and young people in care, especially those in distant placements
- Engage social workers and foster carers in promoting children and young people's attendance at CiCC events
- A programme of Total Respect training for the year, for Children's social care managers; social workers; IROs, Foster Carers and members of the Corporate Parenting Forum
- Explore apprenticeship scheme for care leavers working within the CiCC

What it will look like

- Improve looked after children's participation in their reviews
- Maintain a high proportion of looked after children and care leavers attending annual events, such as Celebrating Success
- At least 25% of eligible looked after young people attend fun days, or other regular CCiC events
- At least 4 Total Respect sessions are run with full attendance
- Corporate Parenting Forum can describe at least three occasions when a young person has affected Sutton policy decisions
- Members of the CiCC to continue to participate in the Local Authority's commissioning process for services affecting looked after children

Placement quality and value

Raise the overall quality of placements and improve outcomes for young people while achieving better value for money

Where we are now

As a proportion of its looked after population, Sutton makes slightly greater use of fostering than other authorities. The proportion of looked after children placed within 20 miles and within its borough boundaries is similar to other Authorities.

What we're doing –

- Continue to develop a provider framework of Independent Fostering Agencies
- Continue to work with the fostering recruitment agency to increase in house recruitment
- Develop capacity within Sutton's fostering service for children with more complex needs.

What it will look like

- Significant increase in the number of new approvals for Sutton in house fostering placements. A target of 30 extra carers by the end of 2016
- Increase the number of fostering placements for adolescents, sibling groups and those with challenging or risky behaviour
- A provider Framework for IFA's and Residential homes offering high quality care
- Reduction in the average placement cost per week for Sutton's LAC

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Diversity

Ensure placements meet the diverse needs of looked after children and young people in Sutton

Where we are now

Once children are in care, there is a matching process with active plans for ensuring that children's identity needs are met, including in cases where a full ethnic and cultural match is not possible. In addition, pre placement meetings and planning meetings, as well as at least annual checks on all placement providers are used to assess the suitability of placements.

What we're doing –

- Audit whether all elements of the matching process are taking place in reality and are of a quality which is good or better
- Engage with service users and community leaders to explore the presence of any barriers to early help in the Caribbean or Asian communities
- Finalise the implementation of EHCs and continue work on individual budgets
- Establishment of a new Provider Framework for Independent Fostering Agencies

What it will look like

- Audit shows all elements of the matching process are undertaken and are of high quality (good or better)
- Provide regular outreach to BME communities and be able to articulate
- Provider framework compliments in house fostering provision and is able to meet the diverse needs of all Sutton's children

Health

Maintain good health outcomes for looked after children

Where we are now

Good parents take active steps to ensure that their children are healthy. For looked after children, the Initial Health Assessment is particularly important to identify any existing conditions or gaps in their health care. Sutton has a designated doctor and a specialist nursing service to work with its looked after population.

What we're doing –

- Timeliness of health assessments
- All health assessments to be quality assured using an agreed tool
- Young people will receive a health summary on leaving care and this needs to be further developed with input from young people and the specialist nurse for care leavers.
- Improved oversight of children placed outside of Sutton in partnership with social care and Independent Reviewing Officers.
- Care pathway to be developed to outline the child's journey

What it will look like

- Sutton remains a high scoring Authority (all over 95%) against timescales for Health Checks
- Looked after children who have physical ill health report receiving a good standard of care from health professionals (audit)
- Over 97% of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires' are completed on time and of a high quality as reported by the IROs on the IRO monitoring form
- There is evidence from oversight of looked after children's Reviews that the questionnaires are used as an active tool to obtain services for children that need them and review continuing needs and outcomes

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Education / Employment

Ensure that young people are appropriately educated and have access to opportunities for employment or further education and training

Where we are now

All systems and processes, including data collection and analysis on quality of provision, attendance, behaviour, learning, progress, the quality of PEPs and additional provision, such as tutoring and access to technology are tracked and monitored.. Sutton performs well on education outcomes for looked after children.

What we're doing –

- To continue to improve KS4 and KS5 outcomes through increasingly strategic education planning in partnership with professionals and education, employment and training services and through deployment of high impact and bespoke pupil premium funded interventions
- To provide high quality outreach to schools and social workers, including training that responds to the priorities and needs of the LAC cohort
- To develop partnership working with a range of partners and services,
- Implementation of Personal Education Planning, for all LAC aged 2-4 and 16-18
- To develop involvement by the Virtual School in the Children in Care Council and other forums representing the needs and interests of Looked After Children

What it will look like

- Attainment at Key Stage 2 & 4 exceeds the national average for LAC children and is improving in line with local averages for Sutton children.
- Audit of PEPs shows 100% of PEPs are fit for purpose and in timescale
- Spending on Pupil Premium Plus all accounted for and can be shown to have benefited each individual looked after child
- There is equality of access of all Sutton LAC to Virtual School outreach, tutoring and other packages of support

Safeguarding

The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted

Where we are now

Safeguarding of children in care is of primary importance. Improving the timeliness of LAC visits, robust challenge of the IRO's and ensuring children are safeguarded from family and others who could place them at risk and also situations that they may be exposed to.

What we're doing –

- Where safeguarding concerns are raised, all incidents are the subject of a strategy meeting and section 47 investigations are commenced when this is appropriate.
- Improving timeliness of LAC visits
- Reviewing all children age 11+ to ensure that they have a CSE risk assessment
- Developing a tracker for children who go missing from care
- Reviewing children living 20 miles +
- Embedding an IRO alert system to challenge areas of risk
- Completing Pen Pictures (with photos) for ease of reference and for information should that child go missing/be at risk of CSE etc.

What it will look like

- All LAC children must have an up to date Pen Picture with picture on their electronic file.
- All LAC reviews must consider safeguarding issues as a key issue to ensure children are safe in placement and LA care. 100% of LAC visits completed on time
- All children 11+ will have a CSE risk assessment on file and a safety plan to help keep them safe if they are deemed at risk
- IRO Alerts are raised and responded to in appropriate timescales and resolution is established
- Children who go missing from care have a return home interview; management reports are developed and used to analyse risk so that strategic response supports the management of cases