



OUR
EPIC
PLAN

BRISTOL CORPORATE

PARENTING STRATEGY

2024 - 2029



Contents

One page strategy	3
Message to Bristol's corporate parents	4
Foreword	5
Introduction	6
Context in Bristol	9
Our principles	12
Our building blocks	13
Strategic priorities:	16
Meaningful relationships	16
Positive futures	18
Identity and belonging	20
Safe and stable homes	23
Happy and healthy	25
Workforce and carers	27
Governance	29
Glossary	30



You can request alternative formats of this document by contacting:
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One page strategy

Corporate Parenting Strategy Vision

Children in care grow up in safe and stable homes, are supported as young people leaving care and go on to lead happy, healthy and fulfilling lives as adults.

Our principles

Dedicated • Respectful • Hopeful and Ambitious • Responsible

Our priorities



Meaningful relationships



Positive Futures



Identity and Belonging



Safe and Stable Homes



Happy and Healthy



Carers and Workforce

Children and young people

Staff and carers

- Remain in touch with family and friends, especially siblings
- Have stable relationships with those around them

- Have access to range of education and learning opportunities
- Are supported in school by staff who understand impact of care
- Are supported into work

- Understand their care history
- Have their identities supported
- Do not experience stigma on account of their care experience
- Have citizenship needs addressed
- Know their rights
- Who are Disabled get the right help

- Remain in Bristol wherever possible
- Are well matched with carers
- Are prepared for any changes in living arrangements
- Have positive experiences moving into independent living

- Get the right support at the right time
- Have help to lead healthy lifestyles
- Are supported by workers who use a trauma-informed approach and understand impact of care
- Can access hobbies and opportunities

- Have time to build relationships with children and young people.
- Are well-resourced, trained and nurtured
- Feel valued and supported by the city

Our building blocks

Staying safe • Having a voice and being listened to • Equity and inclusion
Trauma informed practice • Supporting through change • Partnership working

Message to Bristol's corporate parents from our children and young people

Dear Corporate Parents

Bristolians have a well-earned reputation for being friendly and welcoming. We need you to do more for it to feel like that for us in care.

Please help us in changing how people see the Bristol care system. We are children, and it is not our fault we are in care, but society gives us the burden of feeling unwanted and unloved. We want you to focus on the care we need.

We want you to ask us what we need and be sincere and realistic in what you can deliver. We have been let down in life already, so please keep your promises.

We are all different and don't want to be treated the same. We do not want to be a statistic, and we want the same chance as any other child who has a supportive loving family.

We need you to care about us as individual people and to show that you care not just because you are paid to do so.

We would like to be heard and valued. Not only do we want to have a voice, but we want to hear your voice: tell us what has improved. What will you do to make things better?

Support us with the big changes, help us deal with our emotions, provide us with carers that provide healthy relationships. Introduce us to caring, loving people who will care for us and stay in our lives forever.

With this Corporate Parenting Strategy, we are hopeful that you want to make a positive impact on our lives, we look forward to you keeping us up to date on how you will achieve this.

From members of the Children in Care Council, Corporate Parenting Shadow Board, Care-experienced Community Group, and Reboot Wellbeing Group.

Foreword



Our ambition is to make Bristol a fantastic place for children and young people to grow up. Central to this is a focus on how Bristol supports the children, young people and families who face the most challenges in life, and in particular, how well we support our care-experienced children and young people.

Bristol is a great city with a wealth of resources amongst its businesses, communities and public services but we know these are not enjoyed equitably by our communities or therefore our city's children and young people. The resource needed to provide all our children and young people with the very best care and support will need the deliberate redistribution of opportunities. We want our children to have every opportunity

to live happy and fulfilling lives in the same way as any other child from our city.

We need to do more if we are to make Bristol a city where everyone feels they belong. We need to work together in new ways if we are to improve the lives of our children and young people. The Council has the main legal duty as 'corporate parent' for our children and young people, but it does this on behalf of the whole city, and it's only when everyone plays their part – from foster carers to schools, from doctors to leisure centres, and from neighbours to friends – that we can really expect to see change.

We want all children for whom we hold a corporate parenting responsibility to be seen as 'children of Bristol'. We want everyone in the city to feel they have something to offer to help improve the lives and experiences of our children and young people, as any good parent would, and to continually ask ourselves 'would this be good enough for my child?'. This strategy sets out how in Bristol, together with our partners, we are going to deliver that ambition for our children and young people.

I'd like to take this opportunity to particularly thank our carers and workforce who work so hard to provide for our children and give them all they need. In the development of this strategy, we have worked together with children, young people, carers and the workforce, our wider council and our key partners to express our joint commitment and determination to do better by our children. As corporate parents we look forward to travelling with you together on this very important journey of responsibility.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine Townsend".

Cllr. Christine Townsend

Lead Member for Children and Families

Introduction

Our vision for corporate parenting

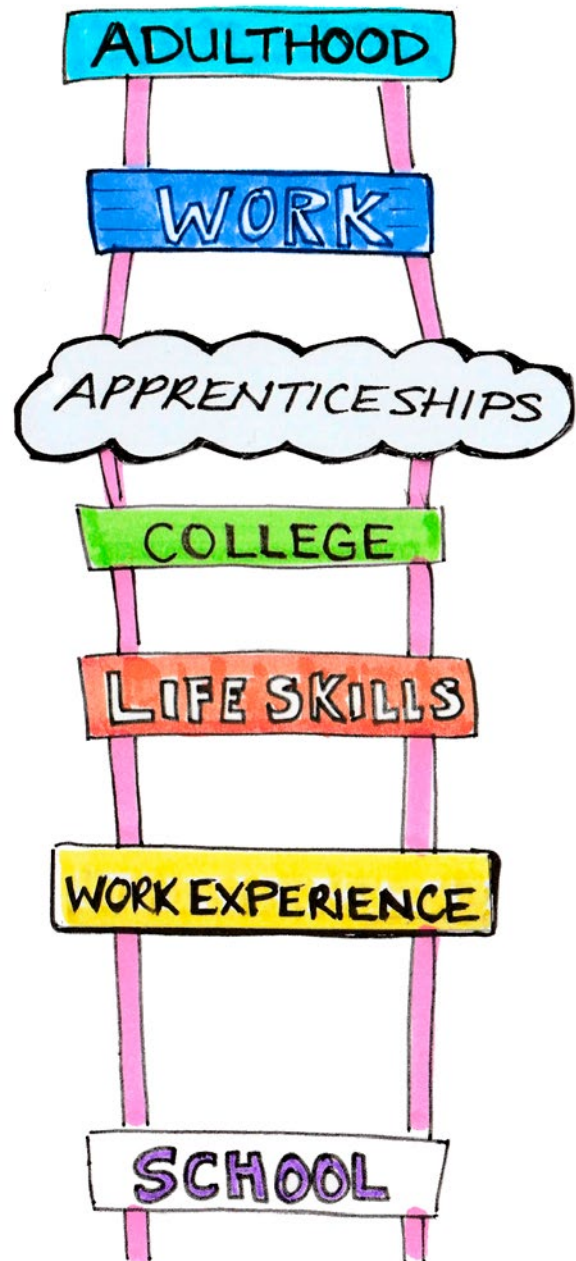
Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe our collective responsibility to care for, love and champion our care-experienced children and young people to ensure they have every opportunity to reach their potential as they grow up in our care¹.

Our vision is for our children to grow up in stable and secure homes, and go on to lead happy, healthy and fulfilling lives as adults. We want Bristol to be a city where care-experienced children and young people can belong and build a successful future.

In Bristol, as in the rest of the country, care-experienced children and young people are at risk of poorer outcomes than their peers in many areas of their lives including in health, employment and housing. This disadvantage persists into adulthood, as adults with a history of care are more likely to have continued poor outcomes in the same areas throughout their later life. In Bristol we are determined to address this inequality and our corporate parenting strategy will set out how we will do so.

The children in our care need to know that as a city we are putting them first, and that we act for our care-experienced children as we would for our own children. In Bristol we are committed to taking a citywide approach to improving outcomes for our children. Bristol City Council alone cannot meet the needs of care-experienced children and young people and needs to work effectively with partners. We are proud to have long-standing support from our key partners, voluntary and community organisations and businesses in the city through our One City Approach.

¹As defined by the Children Act 2004 and Children and Social Work Act 2017



A note about language:

Throughout this document we use where possible the term 'care-experienced' to refer to children in care and care leavers as that is what they have told us they prefer. When we refer to children in our care, we mean children who are the subject of statutory orders, children for whom we are caring with their parent or carer's agreement, and young people who have left care and are in receipt of, or eligible for a leaving care service.

Developing our strategy

This strategy has been created in partnership with organisations across Bristol including Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board, Avon and Somerset Police, University of Bristol and University of the West of England, 1625 Independent People, as well as services across the council. We are very grateful for the support of our partners in developing this important piece of work.

In addition to a broad foundation of research and data, the strategy is centred on the experiences of the children and young people core to our services. At the heart of bringing up children is love, and this is no different for care-experienced children and young people. This strategy should build on an absolute essential: that our children are loved and experience love, and that as corporate parents we are supporting those positive relationships and experiences to take place.

“By adding love in as a strategy priority or a theme you are implying we are not already loved by people. Being loved should be a given!”

Children in Care Council feedback, 2024

The principles and priorities of the strategy are based upon a range of research and data including the following:

- The Children Act 2004, principally section 10, and The Children and Social Work Act 2017, specifying arrangements for Local Authorities and key partners in delivering services for children in care and care leavers.
- [The Corporate Parenting Principles](#) from the Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Corporate Parenting [Statutory Guidance](#) for Local Authorities 2018
- Recommendations from the [Independent Review into Children's Social Care](#)
- Extensive consultation and analysis of feedback from our own care-experienced children and young people, as well as that of our carers and workforce.
- Local and national research and performance data and analysis of children's outcomes and trends
- Our inspection and peer review feedback from Ofsted and the Local Government Association

The bigger picture

This strategy is part of a wide range of activity that supports our shared aim to improve provision for our care-experienced children and young people. The alignment of the Corporate Parenting Strategy with the One City Plan, the Bristol City Council Corporate Strategy, the Placement Sufficiency Strategy and the Bristol Belonging Strategy, as well as many others creates a shared understanding about our priorities and our approach to Corporate Parenting, particularly Theme 1 in Bristol's Corporate Strategy: A city where every child belongs and every child gets the best start in life, whatever circumstances they were born into.

Bristol's Corporate Strategy 2022–27 is rooted in the values of our organisation which firmly place people at the heart of everything that we do and plays a vital role in helping Bristol to achieve its vision.

All Local Authorities are required to publish a pledge for care-experienced children and young people so they understand what support they can expect from their corporate parents. The corporate parenting strategy sits alongside our Pledge and draws from the same body of research.

The Corporate Parenting Principles²

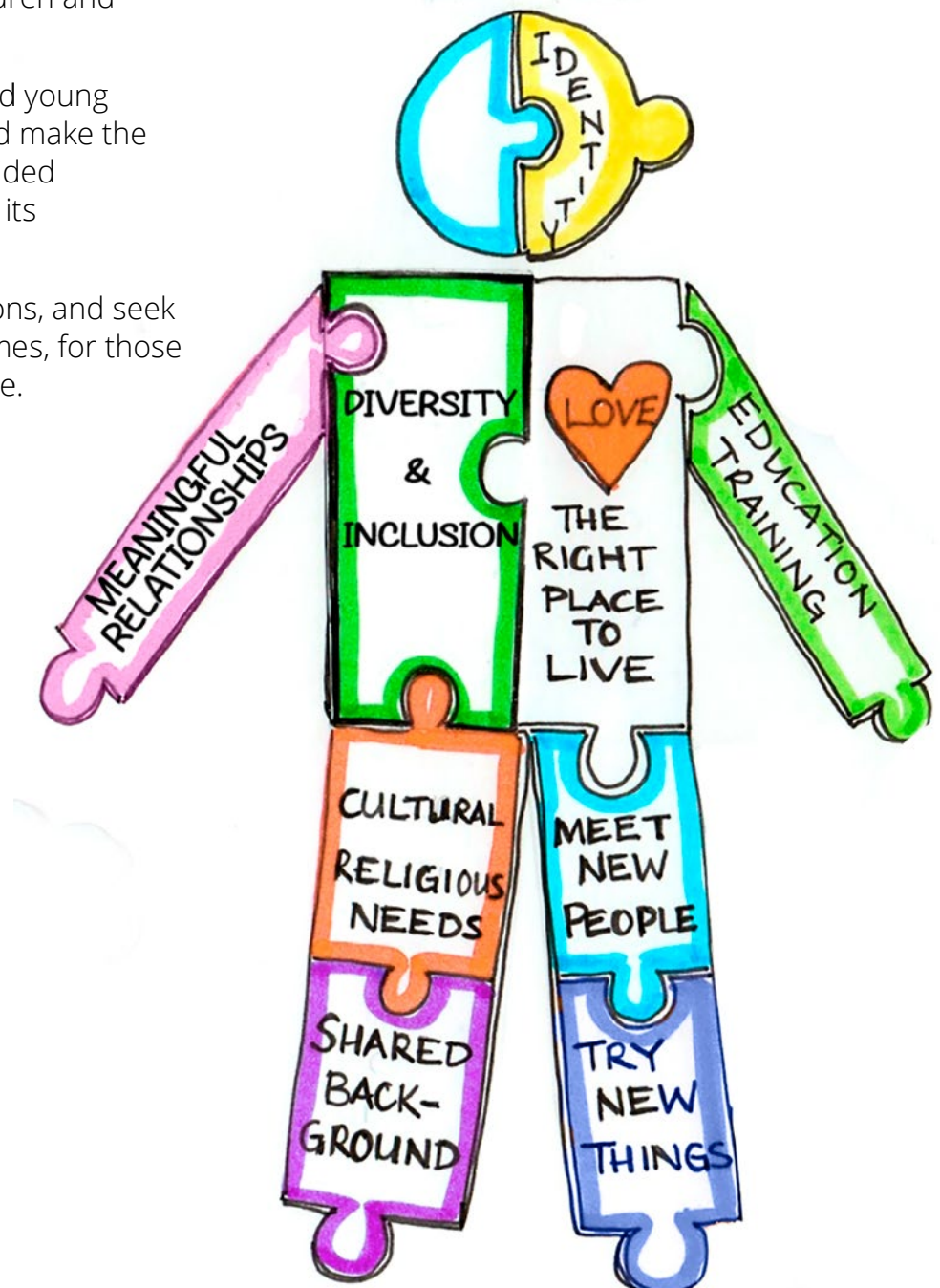
In delivering our strategy we will ensure that the Local Authority and all our partners have regards to these national principles when exercising their functions:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people.
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.

- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Whilst set out as a five-year strategy, delivery of the priorities will be supported through a series of annual action plans and robust governance arrangements to ensure ongoing support and engagement in our corporate parenting responsibility.

² Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers, Department for Education, 2018



Context in Bristol

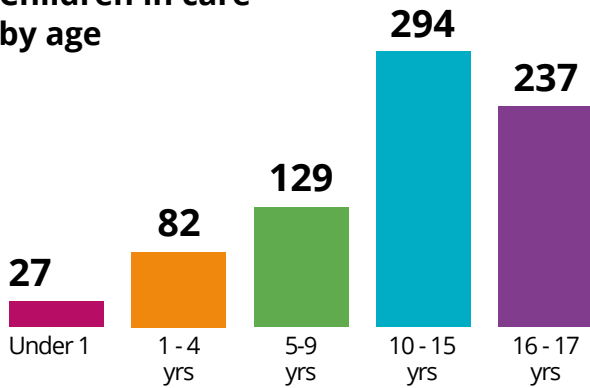
As of May 2024:

There are 769 Children in our Care:

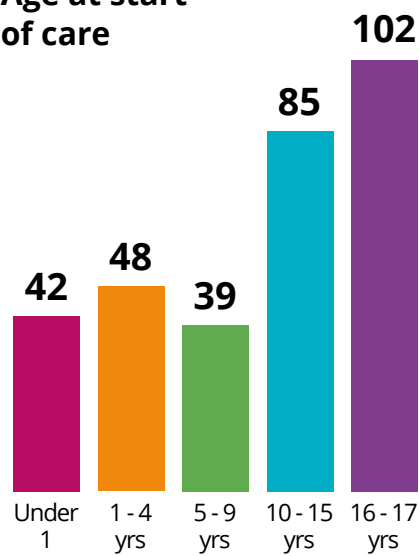
- **75** are children seeking asylum
- **81** are Disabled

- Our rate of children in care is around **80** children per **10,000** children of our population.
- **316** children entered care in the previous year:

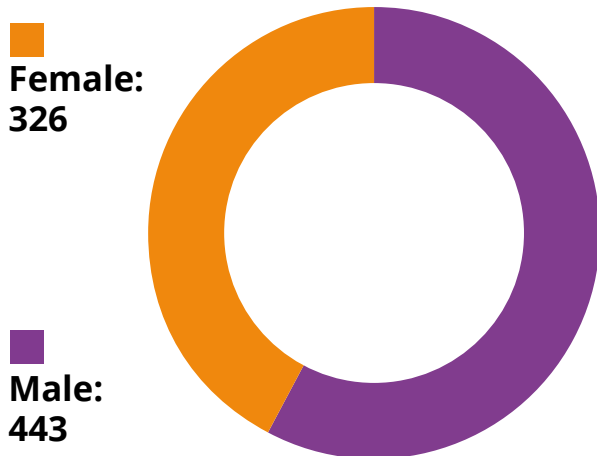
Children in care by age



Age at start of care

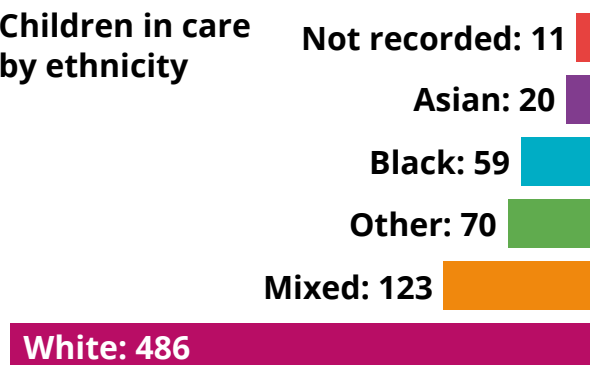


Children in care by gender

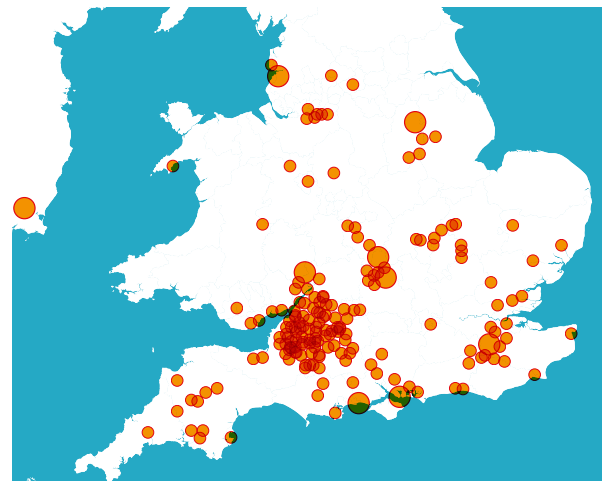


- **44%** live outside Bristol
- **20%** live over 20 miles away from home
- **67%** live in foster homes
- **13%** live in children's homes

Children in care by ethnicity



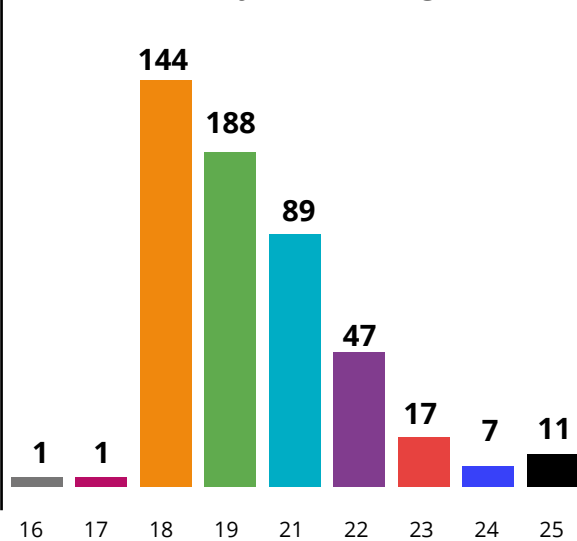
Where children live



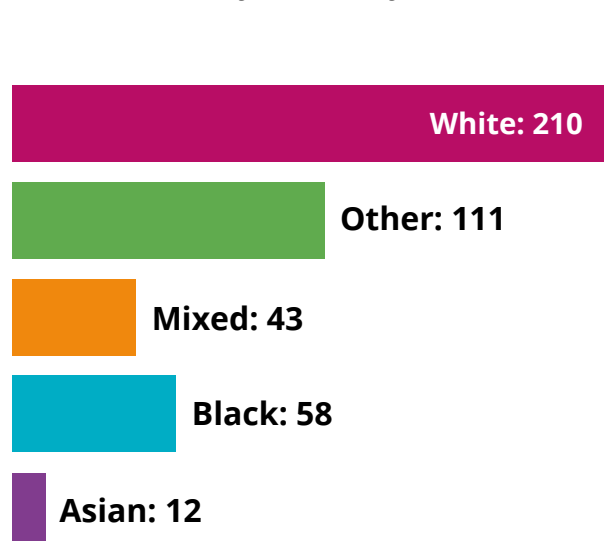
There are 434 care leavers

- **64%** of our care leavers are in education employment and training
- **90%** of our care leavers are living in suitable accommodation
- **15%** live with former foster carers
- **30.4 %** of our care leavers have refugee status

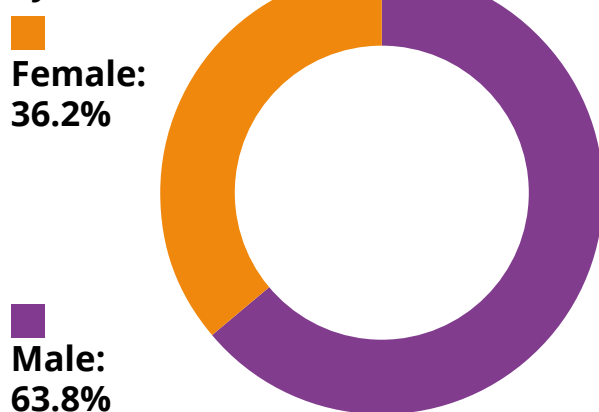
Care leavers by Current Age



Care leavers by Ethnicity



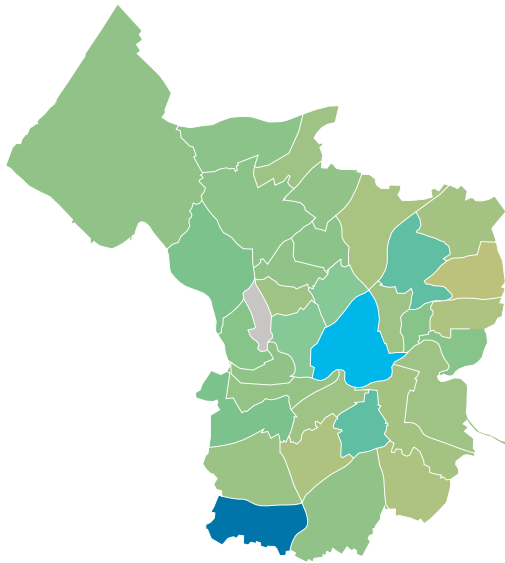
Care leavers by Gender



Care leaver is Disabled

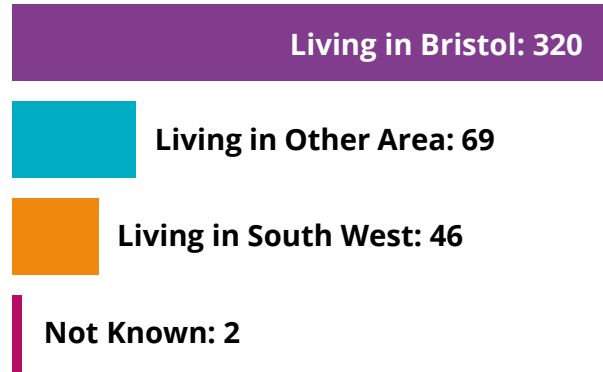


Care leavers by ward of current address



Highest Lowest

Care leavers by location



Over the next 5 years we will be following the data closely to monitor the impact of our actions. Some of the key indicators for this will be:

Rates of children coming into care reduce to England average (**71 per 100,000**)

Percentage of children more than 20 miles away reduces to England average of **17%**

Percentage of children living outside of Bristol reduces to **40%**

90% of children have their dental and health checks on time

Percentage of children with a missing incident reduces to match the England average of **11%**

93% of young people aged 19-21 living in suitable accommodation

75% of young people aged 17-21 engaged in work and learning

Our Principles: behaviours that are important to us

In delivering our strategy we will ensure that the local authority and all our partners have regards to the following local principles that will direct the way we work:

Dedicated:

We are dedicated to providing nurturing and supportive environments where our children feel safe, valued, and empowered to reach their potential. It will require time, resources, and expertise to meet the needs of our children and young people. We will constantly ask ourselves 'would this be good enough for my child?'



Respectful:

We will treat children with dignity and empathy, attending to their backgrounds, experiences and identities. Respect involves listening to their voices, involving them in decision-making, and wherever possible honouring their preferences.



Hopeful and Ambitious:

We work with hope and we are ambitious for our children and young people. The strategy should foster a sense of hope and optimism, inspiring children and young people to believe in their own potential and future possibilities. This principle involves setting high expectations and aspirations for each child, supporting them to dream big and pursue their goals with confidence and determination. It means providing access to educational, vocational and recreational opportunities that expand their horizons and enable them to overcome obstacles and fulfil their aspirations.



Responsible:

The success of this strategy depends upon all those with a corporate parenting responsibility, as set out in the Children Act 2004, contributing to the wellbeing of our children. We will further engage with our partners in supporting children and young people to achieve their goals.



As a council we will build in a corporate parenting focus into our decision pathways, service plans and equality impact processes to ensure we have explored all opportunities for positive impact on our children and avoid any inadvertent detrimental impact.

The corporate leadership team will take responsibility for ensuring engagement in corporate parenting is embedded across the council and will encourage our partners take a similar approach.

Our building blocks: how we will achieve our vision

The following building blocks will be the golden threads that run through the strategy and are crucial to achieving our vision. The priority themes should be read with these in mind as they will underpin everything within the strategy.

Trauma-informed approach

Our work on belonging supports our citywide work to develop and implement a system-wide, trauma-informed approach. Trauma-informed approaches recognise the prevalence of trauma in people's lives and acknowledge the potential effects that this can have on individuals and their families, networks, and communities. They are non-labelling, respectful and hopeful approaches that recognise people's strengths and resilience and their potential for healing. We will work with partners and communities to deliver this strategy in line with our agreed [Principles for Trauma-Informed Practice](#): safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment and inclusivity.

These approaches require us to listen, understand and work together with children, young people, and their families. Understanding and responding to individuals' views and experiences is essential to this way of working. Trauma-informed practice is above all relational, recognising that recovery happens in relationships.

Equity and inclusion

Our commitment to equity and inclusion involves ensuring that all children can participate fully in society, irrespective of their care experience, other characteristics and circumstances. We strive to eliminate barriers to inclusion, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to benefit from, contribute to and enjoy all that society has to offer.

This will require intentional actions, supported by policies. We will acknowledge and value our children's differences, creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and heard.

We will use Bristol's [Equity and Inclusion Strategic Framework](#) and the five objectives of leadership, diverse workforce, council services, partnerships, communities as the way of guiding how this building block will be worked out through the priorities.

Staying safe

We want our care-experienced children and young people to grow up in environments free from all forms of abuse or harassment so they can go on to thrive and reach their potential. The risks and challenges that children and young people face outside of their home in peer groups, schools, neighbourhoods and in the wider community is becoming increasingly complex and the risks are exacerbated for children and young people with additional vulnerabilities, including care experience and in particular the transition to adulthood. Our safeguarding approaches will need to be attentive to this, and safeguarding will need to be considered at every level of the strategy to provide the safe environments our children and young people need.

We will use [Bristol's Corporate Safeguarding Policy](#) as our framework for the work in this area. We are guided by the following principles as defined in the [Children's social care national framework](#)

- Multi-agency working is prioritised and effective
- Leaders drive conditions for effective practice
- The workforce is equipped and effective

Having a voice and being listened to

Children and young people being listened to and having their views taken into account in decision-making is critical to the success of the strategy. We recognise that care-experienced children and young people often don't feel they have a say over decisions that affect them, and the impact this has on their wellbeing. Children and young people are experts in their own lives and should be key partners in anything that involves them.

Central to this will be ensuring the range of feedback we gather from our children, both formally and informally, is used to shape and influence service delivery across the wider city. It will be important for us to work with established groups including the Children in Care Council and the Community participation group (over 18's).

Partnership working

We will work in a collaborative way, enabling our partners to engage in their corporate parenting responsibilities, recognising that we can't achieve this alone and it's only through working together that we will attain the positive long-term outcomes that our care-experienced children and young people deserve.

Key council services and organisations for us to engage include housing, employment and skills, adult social care, public health, equalities, economic development, West of England Combined Authority, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board, health services, schools, Avon and Somerset Police, further education providers and the universities.

Supporting through change

Care-experienced children and young people tend to experience far more changes and transitions than the wider population of children. If not carefully planned and managed these changes can add to the trauma they have already experienced. We will work to ensure in every aspect of children and young people's lives changes and transitions are handled in a supportive and sensitive way so that they can navigate them successfully.

Key changes for children where it will be important for us to work together with our partners include school transitions, moving homes, change in worker, turning 18, turning 25 and support moving from children's social care to adult social care.



Strategic priorities:

The following six priorities have been developed from the research and consultation and along with the building blocks and principles will provide the strategic focus for our corporate parenting work.

Meaningful relationships



Having a sense of belonging, feeling cared for and cared about are essential for our children and young people's wellbeing. Our children are liable to experience significant disruption in their friendships and family relationships through changes in schools and carers. Healthy relationships with others foster a sense of security and belonging in children and help to provide stability and safety, as well as enabling recovery from trauma and building resilience. Wherever possible we will support children to maintain links with friends and family – particularly their siblings, and any others who are important to them.

"Seeing people I know regularly is really important"

Children in Care Council
feedback, 2024

"We need help to manage changes, we need to feel supported with that"

Care-experienced
focus group, 2024

How we will do it:

- 1 Enabling meaningful relationships between children and people they love to be a core priority to all relevant corporate strategies, commissioning practice and market management, and encouraging the same of our key partners.
- 2 Develop a hub for young people leaving care to maintain connections, reduce loneliness and isolation and increase access to support.
- 3 Strive to ensure our children have strong relationships with trusted adults. Where changes in staff are unavoidable we will help prepare and support children through this. Above all, we will seek to avoid further traumatising.
- 4 Strengthen our contextual safeguarding and approach for children at risk of exploitation and those who go missing through our Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership arrangements.
- 5 Ensure safeguarding is considered and attended to in all areas of our children's lives and experiences, including making sure our children experience psychological safety.
- 6 Work with West of England Combined Authority to build a corporate parenting offer into their transport strategy.

Key building blocks:

- Trauma-informed approach
- Equity and Inclusion
- Safeguarding
- Having a voice and being listened to, Partnership working
- Supporting through change

We will focus on:

- Strong social and support networks with family and friends.
- Stable relationships amongst the children's wider support network.

Meaningful relationships



Key partners for us to work with:

Health organisations

Education providers including schools and Multi-Academy Trusts

HOPE Virtual School

Avon and Somerset Police

West of England Combined Authority

Youth Justice

How we will know if we are successful:

- The transport offer for care-experienced young people is maintained, and extended to those aged 21–25.
- Children report higher rates of trusting their workers.
- Recording shows evidence of an active family and friends network around the child.
- Care-experienced young people more likely to report feeling supported, coping financially and having goals/plans for the future.
- The number of children going missing decreases year on year.
- The percentage of scores of concern on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire reduces.
- Feedback from the annual survey shows children able to spend time with family and friends.
- Number of children at risk of exploitation reduces.





We want all care-experienced children and young people to have every opportunity to reach their learning potential, to develop confidence and skills for their future and to have opportunities to transition into meaningful work. We recognise that there are many different learning pathways and we will work in partnership with a range of education and training providers to make sure our children and young people are in the setting that's right for them.

Key building blocks:

- Trauma-informed approach
- Equity and Inclusion
- Safeguarding
- Having a voice and being listened to
- Partnership working
- Supporting through change.

We will focus on:

- Increased access to a range of education and learning opportunities, including further and higher education.
- Belonging in schools: ensuring schools to have a strong understanding of the needs of care-experienced children and are able to meet those needs.
- Supportive pathways into meaningful work opportunities.

How we will do it:

- 1 Build on the offer available to our children 16+ via the Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning Plan to encourage increased engagement in further and higher education, including for young people returning to education post 21.
- 2 Ensure that young people benefit from meaningful experiences of work and are provided with careers development and specialist employment support.
- 3 Review our apprenticeship strategy to increase the range of apprenticeships available both in the council and with key partners.
- 4 Work with our schools and education providers to increase inclusion rates in school, levels of education attainment, attendance and enjoyment in learning.
- 5 Build capacity and skills in schools to understand and support our children's social, emotional and mental health needs in the context of their care and education.
- 6 Strengthen the early identification and support for neurodivergent children, and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities including speech and language difficulties.



- 1 Deliver a targeted programme to engage and secure commitment from across our council, key partners and wider city to build on the offer to our children.
- 2 Use our leverage in key partnership and commissioning arrangements to build in social impact opportunities that benefit our children's learning and development.
- 3 Work with West of England Combined Authority to build a corporate parenting offer into their employment and skills strategy.
- 4 Explore becoming a [Care Leaver Covenant partner](#) authority.

Key partners for us to work with:

Education providers including schools and Multi-Academy Trusts

Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning Service

Post 16 Training and Youth Support Services

West of England Combined Authority

HOPE Virtual School

School Governor Boards and Academy Trustees

How we will know if we are successful:

- Increased rates of participation in further and higher education.
- Evidence of the impact of impact of children's feedback from education reviews on service development.
- Increased numbers of care-experienced young people accessing apprenticeship schemes in Bristol.
- Every child has an allocated school place.
- Children report feeling happier in school.
- Exclusion rates decrease; attendance and attainment rates increase.
- Rates of engagement in work and learning increase for our care-experienced young people 16+.
- Pupil Voice survey shows increased intention to stay on in education post 16.
- Increased number of in education providers havewith policies specifying provision support for care-experienced children and young people. children and young people.



Identity and belonging



We recognise the need to support our care-experienced children and young people to develop strong and positive identities, including an understanding of their care story. We want to help our children understand who they are, where they come from and all that they can achieve.

"We need help to feel comfortable with who we are"

Care-experienced young person, 2023

"We would like more child-friendly ways of giving feedback"

Care-experienced strategy focus group, 2024

Key building blocks:

- Trauma-informed approach
- Equity and Inclusion
- Safeguarding
- Having a voice and being listened to
- Partnership working
- Supporting through change

We will focus on:

- Ensuring that children and young people understand their care history to make sense of their experiences and identity.
- Supporting and nurturing the identities of children and young people by affirming their individuality, strengths, and aspirations, and providing them with opportunities for personal growth and self-expression.
- Preventing stigma and discrimination on account of care experience by promoting awareness and understanding in Bristol.
- Addressing children and young people's citizenship needs at the earliest opportunity, ensuring that they have access to rights and opportunities to fully participate in society.
- Ensuring our children understand their rights and entitlements.
- Getting the right help and support for our Disabled children.
- Exploring any inequalities linked to other identities and/or protected characteristics such as race and gender to adequately address any differences in outcomes.

Identity and belonging



How we will do it:

- 1 Deliver training to staff working with care-experienced children to promote understanding of our children's needs and enable them to be good advocates for them in their services and organisations.
- 2 Promote our offer of support and opportunities in ways that are accessible to our children, including our app for young people leaving care.
- 3 Increase our capacity for life story work to help our children understand their history and experiences.
- 4 Engage our wider council and key partners in celebrating our children's achievements via regular celebration events.
- 5 Sign and enact the [Immigration Support Pledge](#) to ensure all children in our care have had any unresolved immigration or nationality issues addressed.
- 6 Strengthen the membership and remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the structure that supports it to drive the strategy and maintain momentum for improvement.
- 7 Improve our data collection and analysis to increase awareness of disproportionality of our children in areas such as health, education and youth justice. We will be especially mindful of intersectionality and other minoritised or protected characteristics such as race and Disability so we can effectively address inequalities in experiences.
- 8 Strengthen our corporate equalities work to build in care experience into any monitoring, review and inclusion programmes.
- 9 Work to ensure that care-experienced children and young people are supported to express their views, wishes and feelings and that these are taken into account when decisions are made about their lives.
- 10 Review our systems and develop a robust framework to ensure that children and young people's feedback is sought, prioritised and responded to at all levels of decision-making across the council and amongst our key partners. We will also need to ensure that children and young people have child-friendly and accessible ways of challenging decisions and hearing the result of that challenge.
- 11 Explore the inclusion of care-experience as a locally protected characteristic.

Identity and belonging



Key partners for us to work with:

Health organisations

Youth services

Youth Justice

Avon and Somerset Police

How we will know if we are successful:

- Annual surveys show children have higher levels of life satisfaction, involvement in meaningful activity and the chance to have fun at the weekends (key indicators of wellbeing).
- Records show increased evidence of life story work.
- Annual surveys show increased understanding of care history.
- Evidence of positive impact of service plans and corporate business plan on care-experienced children.
- Children's feedback and evidence of impact is routinely reported on at a senior level.
- Data collection is able to highlight more effectively and across multiple areas where there is inequality in both short and long-term outcomes for care-experienced children.
- Overrepresentation across multiple domains (child exploitation, rates of children going missing, school exclusions, involvement in the criminal justice system) is reduced to match those of the general population.



Safe and stable homes



For our children to thrive they need to feel secure and to have a strong sense of belonging at home and in the community. To facilitate that effectively we need access to a range of high-quality foster homes and housing arrangements that are well-matched to their needs and backgrounds. We want our children wherever possible to stay in Bristol near places and people that are important to them such as friends, schools and community groups. We want to turn the trend on the increased numbers of children living outside of Bristol and help keep them in their own communities.

"I get to live with my pet which is awesome because she has one eye and gives the best snuggles. She makes me happy when I'm upset"

Feedback from Annual Survey for children in care 2023

"Feeling safe and settled where you live is so important"

Care-experienced focus group 2023

Key building blocks:

- Trauma-informed approach
- Equity and Inclusion
- Safeguarding
- Having a voice and being listened to
- Partnership working
- Supporting through change

We will focus on:

- Increasing the availability of foster homes and children's homes in Bristol.
- Increasing our ability to carefully match children and young people with carers who provide the appropriate level of support.
- Ensuring any changes in living arrangements are kept to a minimum and where possible are well-planned and prepared for.
- Increasing access to appropriate move-on accommodation for care-experienced young people, enabling smooth transitions into adulthood in supportive and familiar communities.
- Enabling siblings to stay together wherever possible.

Safe and stable homes



How we will do it:

- 1 Ensure all relevant housing and planning strategies have a focus on increasing availability of foster carers in Bristol such as planning processes, help to buy schemes, property programmes and improvement programmes.
- 2 Increase the numbers of young people staying with their carers beyond 18 via incentivisation schemes.
- 3 Use our voice as one of the UK's core cities to campaign for national change to ensure appropriate move-on accommodation for our children who live outside of Bristol.
- 4 Work with our key delivery partners to develop a joint policy for young people leaving care to support transitions into independent living and stable tenancies.
- 5 Increase availability of housing for young people leaving care through internal and partnership arrangements and the development of a guarantor scheme.
- 6 Strengthen family-finding to give children the best chance of being able to live with people who are familiar to them.

Key partners for us to work with:

Housing organisations
Business community
Voluntary and community sector

How we will know if we are successful:

- Our children report feeling supported through the transition into independent living.
- Our measures for children's long-term stability remain above the national average.
- Annual surveys show improvements in children's indicators of wellbeing.
- We see an increase in the number of available foster carers.
- Increased rates of children staying with their carers beyond 18.
- Increased rates of children living locally.
- Tenancy stability for care-experienced young people improves.
- Fostering as a percentage of overall provision increases.



Care-experienced children and young people are likely to need support to recover from adverse childhood experiences and trauma. We want to address the inequalities in health and wellbeing that our children and go on to experience in adulthood. Our children need a consistent and supportive approach that takes into account the impact of their experiences and enables them to recover and go on to become healthy and active citizens of Bristol.

Key building blocks:

- Trauma-informed approach
- Equity and Inclusion
- Safeguarding
- Having a voice and being listened to
- Partnership working
- Supporting through change

We will focus on:

- Providing care-experienced children and young people with the right mental health and wellbeing support at the right time.
- Helping our children lead healthy lifestyles.
- Embedding a trauma-informed approach amongst the wider workforce, including our key partners such as health, Avon and Somerset Police and education services.
- Facilitating access to a range of hobbies, interests and opportunities for children and young people, allowing them to explore their passions and talents.

"We need help to manage big emotions"
Care-experienced focus group 2023

How we will do it:

- 1 Upskill our carers to best support to the children they care for.
- 2 Maintain and extend free access to council leisure centres and encourage our partners in the private sector and in neighbouring authorities to do the same.
- 3 Extend corporate and partnership engagement in the EPIC charity to ensure children have access to hobbies and opportunities.
- 4 Establish a Bristol-wide offer to promote access to arts, leisure, sports and culture, including discounted entry and/or parking.
- 5 Work with our key partners to extend the availability of training for trauma-informed practice for staff, focussing on schools, youth services, Avon and Somerset Police and health and wellbeing services so that children have a consistent and understanding approach.
- 6 Improve access to health services, particularly for mental health and wellbeing such as fast-track access, adapted policies and improved data collection.



Key partners for us to work with:

Health organisations

Youth services

Leisure services

Business community

Education providers



How we will know if we are successful:

- Children report having access to support if they need it.
- Performance data shows improvements in key health metrics (access to dentistry, optician, and timely health assessments).
- Strength and Difficulty performance indicators show decreased levels of concern.
- Recording shows evidence of Strength and Difficulty Questionnaires used to inform support plans.
- Data on care experience is captured by health and support services to ensure equality of access.
- There is clear evidence of children's engagement in hobbies and activities in their personal education plan meetings and review meetings.
- Increased numbers of partners engaged in supporting access to hobbies, activities and leisure via the One City Plan.
- Increased engagement in the EPIC charity from the wider council and partners.
- Reduction in school-based absence due to illness.
- Pupil Voice survey results show outcomes for care-experienced children are more aligned with their peers (increased healthy eating, reduced smoking, reduced consumption of alcohol and illegal drugs, increased wellbeing).

Workforce and carers



We recognise that to provide the right care and support to our children we need a skilled, valued and well-equipped workforce. Carers and workers are the city's most important resource and we want to give our staff and carers all that they need to help our children and young people feel secure, connected and supported into adulthood.

"We need people around us to be role models"

Care-experienced focus group 2023

Key building blocks:

- Trauma-informed approach
- Equity and Inclusion
- Safeguarding
- Having a voice and being listened to
- Partnership working
- Supporting through change

We will focus on:

- Enabling staff and carers to have sufficient time to cultivate strong relationships with the children and young people they support and care for.
- Ensuring our workforce and carers are well-resourced, trained, and equipped to meet the diverse needs of children and young people.
- Valuing carers and workers for their vital role in supporting Bristol's care-experienced children and young people, wherever they live.

How we will do it:

- 1 Improve administrative and data collection processes for social care staff to allow for more time with children.
- 2 Establish a Bristol-wide offer for carers and staff to recognise and reward their contributions.
- 3 Strengthen and increase the range and availability of training and support for workforce and carers.
- 4 Focus on workforce stability and develop a corporate offer to incentivise recruitment and retention.
- 5 Support our key partners and commissioned services with staff retention via an increased and improved training offer.



Key partners for us to work with:

Leisure services

Business community

Education providers

Voluntary and community sector

Health organisations

How we will know if we are successful:

- Children report higher levels of trust in their workers and carers.
- Staff surveys show increased job satisfaction.
- Workforce data shows improved retention rates.
- Carers report feeling more valued by the city.
- Data shows increased foster carer recruitment via 'word of mouth'.
- Carers report feeling more equipped to support children and young people in areas such as mental health and emotional wellbeing, healthy lifestyles, and identity and inclusion.





Governance

The Corporate Parenting Panel has been set up by Full Council to ensure that the Local Authority effectively discharges its statutory duties as corporate parent. It provides oversight to ensure that the priorities listed in this strategy remain a focus in all areas of activity. The panel formalises the strategic partnerships which facilitate our arrangements for ensuring that care experienced children, young people and adults within Bristol achieve the best possible outcomes.

The Panel is led by councillors and reports back to Full Council. It ensures that councillors can engage with and discharge their Corporate Parenting responsibilities including scrutiny of this strategy. The panel also brings partners together as part of their 'duty to cooperate' and support the council to fulfil their corporate parenting role.

The Corporate Parenting Panel will be vocal about the specific needs of care experienced people. This will be done through elected members, council officers, partner agencies working with each other and with children and young people. The Panel will ensure that corporate parenting duties are discussed at all levels, and that services are developed with the needs of care-experienced people in mind to enable full access to the widest possible resources to support successful outcomes.

At the heart of the Council's governance, oversight and accountability arrangements are Statutory roles emphasising the political and officer leadership of and accountability for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of care experienced children: the Chief Executive, the Director for Children's Services, the Lead Member for Children's Services, and the Council Leader.

The Director of Children's Services and Lead member for Children's Services will report to the Chief Executive and to the Council Leader respectively. They are the post holders with ultimate responsibility in this context for the political and corporate leadership of the Council. They hold the accountability for ensuring the effectiveness of steps taken and capacity to improve outcomes for all care-experienced children and young people is reflected across the full range of the Council's business.

The reach and impact of the strategy will be maximised through links with existing boards and accountability structures such as the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership, Health and Wellbeing Board, One City Boards and Bristol's committee system, with clear processes for escalation.

Specific action plans will be developed in partnership with our children and renewed annually to ensure focus remains in the most relevant areas. Plans will be held corporately with appropriate monitoring and oversight to review and maintain progress.

Glossary

Term	Explanation
Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE's)	Refers to some of the most intensive and frequently occurring sources of stress that children may suffer early in life.
Care-experienced	In this strategy the term refers to children currently in care of the Local Authority, and those young people eligible and/or receiving a statutory leaving care service. Its broader definition includes any child or adult who has experience of being in care.
Care Leaver Covenant	The government's keep on caring strategy to support people leaving care to become independent. It allows public, private, and voluntary sector organisations to pledge support.
Care Leavers	Refers to a young adult who spent time in care as a child (i.e. under the age of 18). Such care could be in foster care, residential care (e.g. children's homes), or other arrangements outside the immediate or extended family. Depending on time spent in care, care leavers are entitled to help and support from their Local Authority.
Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)	Child criminal exploitation is a form of child abuse involving a child or young person being coerced or manipulated into engaging with criminal activity.
Child in Care Review	This is a statutory meeting where the child and the people who support them review and update the care plan.
Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)	Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group coerces, manipulates, or deceives a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity.
Children in Care	A legal definition under the Children Act 1989 meaning that children aged 0 – 18 are provided Local Authority care.
Children in Care Council	A group of children and young people who meet regularly to campaign on issues that are important to them.
Children's Home	A house where children and young people live together as a group with a team of carers to look after them.
Citizenship	Citizenship is the status of a person recognised under the custom or law of a sovereign state as a member of or belonging to the state.
Community Group	A group of care leavers who meet regularly to campaign on issues that are important to them.
Decision Pathway	Process by which key decisions in Bristol City Council are made involving officers and elected members.

Term	Explanation
Equalities Impact Assessment	Process to ensure that all decision-making has been checked for impact on people with protected or minority characteristics, and that any adverse impact has been mitigated.
Foster Carer	Adults who care for children in their own home and take on the day-to-day parenting responsibility for those children.
Health Assessments	A regular health check for children in care. All children should be offered a health assessment within 28 days of coming into care.
HOPE Virtual School	A Local Authority team that oversees (but does not provide) the education for children in care, and children with a social worker.
Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)	IROs chair reviews meetings for children in care.
Life Story	A way of documenting and capturing a child's experiences to help them understand their care journey.
Pathway Plan	The Pathway Plan is written by a personal adviser with a child in care or care leaver aged 16–21 to outline the services and support needed. The Pathway Plan should map out the young person's future, their aspirations and goals along the way to realising their ambitions.
Personal Adviser	A personal adviser is someone who works alongside care leavers to ensure their wellbeing and needs are met as best as possible.
Personal Education Plans (PEPs)	This is plan compiled in partnership with a child and young person's education provider which is regularly reviewed to ensure needs are being met.
Service Plans	A plan which sets out how a particular Bristol City Council department will deliver a service
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	This term is used to describe any educational need, learning difficulty or Disability that may require additional support for the child to achieve their potential.
Special Guardianship (SGO)	When the Court agrees for a child to live with someone who is not their parents on a long-term basis. A Special Guardian has parental responsibility.
Trauma	Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as harmful or life threatening. While unique to the individual, generally the experience of trauma can cause lasting adverse effects, limiting the ability to function and achieve mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being.
UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child)	Children who are outside their country of origin to seek asylum in the United Kingdom, and have been separated from parents and relatives.

