

April 21 – March 22

# Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report



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## 1. Chair's Foreword

In September 2021 I was invited to take on the role of Lead Member for Children's Services from Councillor Helen Godwin. I feel tremendously privileged to hold this position and to be able to turn my attention fully to the task of building a Bristol where children and families can flourish. A key part of my role is to ensure we as a city are fulfilling our responsibility towards our children in care and care leavers as loving and caring parents, and to champion them at every opportunity.

We have continued to face challenges as an authority over the last year with the rise in numbers of children in care, sufficiency of homes for children and housing pressures for our young people but we have a strong and committed workforce and good collaborative arrangements with our key partners to work towards the best outcomes for our children in care and care leavers. In Bristol we care for almost 700 children, half of whom live with Bristol carers in a fostering arrangement. We would love to be able to offer many more of our children a home in their own city and are always looking out for more carers. Please visit [www.bristol.gov.uk/foster](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/foster) to find out more.

Our vision is that Bristol's care-experienced children and young people receive the same standard of care as any good parent so as corporate parents we have high aspirations for our children and are strong advocates for them. We will do everything we can to ensure our children are set up for life, and for this to materialise it is vital that we all engage with our responsibility as corporate parents. The old adage "*It takes a village to raise a child*" was never more apt than for corporate parenting, where for children in care to grow up to live fulfilling and happy lives we need the whole city to play their part.

Over 2022-23 we are looking forward to making further progress in our ambitious outcomes set out in our Corporate Parenting Strategy. As a panel we are grateful for the support from our fellow councillors and we look forward to working with you more closely over the next year as committed corporate parents.

*Councillor Asher Craig, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Equalities, Deputy Mayor of Bristol*

## 2. Introduction

In January 2021 we refreshed Bristol's [Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2023](#) and [Pledge](#) to children in care and care leavers. Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs that we do as a city. The Corporate Parenting Strategy sits underneath the Belonging Strategy and is closely aligned with its objectives of ensuring all children and young people can thrive.

This strategy contains eight priorities and over 40 actions related to the way we care for our children and young people. It was produced in partnership with children and young people, and the priorities and actions were developed in response to their feedback (Appendix 1).

The [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#) enshrined in legislation a set of corporate parenting principles that all local authorities must adhere to and demonstrate as good corporate parents.

These are:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, 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;
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

As defined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 as corporate parents **we must have the same regard for children in care and care leavers as we would for our own children**. We need everyone looking out for our most vulnerable children and young people, and every councillor has a role to play in embedding the corporate parenting principles and doing all they can to support children in care and care leavers to live meaningful and fulfilling lives. As councillors we have an important role in holding senior officers to account and ensuring children and young people's voices influence the service they receive.

We want Bristol to be a 'Care Aware' city that champions our children in care and our care leavers. We will take bold and innovative steps to ensure that the people who are privileged to parent our children have the right training, support, knowledge and skills that our children need and deserve.

### 3. Performance

Measure	Unit	Bristol 2020-21	Bristol 2021-22 (provisional)	LA Quartile	Statistical Neighbour 2020-21	England 2020-21
Rate of children looked after at 31 March per 10,000 children aged under 18 years	Rate	67	73	N/A	82	67
Started to be looked after % Age: 10 to 15	%	28	32	C	26	26
Started to be looked after % Age: 16 and over	%	19	29	B	20	19
Children in care with three or more placements during the year	%	8	7	A	10	11
Children in care in the same placement for at least 2 years,	%	73	76	A	70	70
% CiC in own provision (by the Local Authority)	%	60	53	A	48	48
% of children leaving care over the aged of 16 who remained looked after until the age of 18	%	85	88	A	80	81

Measure	Unit	Bristol 2020-21	Bristol 2021-22 (provisional)	LA Quartile	Statistical Neighbour 2020-21	England 2020-21
Children in care aged 10 and above convicted or subject to a final warning or reprimand	%	0	0	A	4	3
Children whose immunisations were up to date	%	95	92	A	86	88
Children who had their teeth checked by a dentist	%	54	53	D*	42	40
Children who had their annual health assessment	%	93	83	B	91	91
Children for whom an SDQ score was submitted	%	91	/	A	77	80
% Banded SDQ Score: Concern	%	32	/	B	43	39

Measure	Unit	Bristol 2020-21	Bristol 2021-22 (provisional)	LA Quartile	Statistical Neighbour 2020-21	England 2020-21
17 / 18 year olds - % in education, employment or training (EET)	%	74	68	A	63	65
17 / 18 year olds - % Accommodation considered suitable	%	91	82	A	89	91
% care leavers Local authority In touch with (19-21)	%	95	98	A	91	91
19 -21 year olds - % Total number in education, employment or training (EET)	%	65	63	A	46	52
19 -21 year olds - % Accommodation considered suitable	%	90	88	B	86	88

## 4. Corporate Parenting Panel Overview

The Corporate Parenting Panel is established as a panel of Full Council to ensure that the City Council effectively discharges its statutory duties as corporate parent for children in care and care leavers. The Panel will undertake its work by holding all parts of the City Council to account for the delivery of improved outcomes in every area of a child or young person's life, championing children in care and care leavers across the council. The Chair is Councillor Asher Craig, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Equalities. The group has representation from care-experienced children and young people and key stakeholders such as health and education.

### Reporting process

The panel reviewed reports in the following areas over the course of 2021:

- September: Fostering; Special Educational Needs and Disabilities; Adoption; Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (Through Care); Independent Reviewing Service
- November: Thinking Allowed Specialist CAMHS; Children's Homes; Care Leavers in Higher Education;
- January: Sufficiency Progress Report; Children placed out of area; HOPE School Head's Report;
- March: Missing children; Extra-familial Harm; Safeguarding; Care Leaver Annual Report; Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (Education);

In addition to the above Finance and Performance reports are submitted for each panel.

## 5. Children in Care

At the conclusion of March 2022 Bristol City Council were the corporate parents to 695 children in care aged between 0-17. Of our 691 children 71 (roughly 10%) had a defined disability. In terms of Ethnicity, it is reported that 35% of our children are from a Black or Minority Ethnic Background and 65% identify as White British. It is predicted that our children in care population is likely to rise further, in part due to the Covid pandemic and the additional pressure this has placed on mental, physical health and economic well-being.

Our children predominately live in foster homes (76%) which includes kinship care with a family member or connected person. The remaining 24% of our children live in alternative home options such as residential care. Of our children living in foster care, 53% live in in-house provision. This is higher than the national average for England and that of our statistical neighbours.

With regards to location 60% of our children live in Bristol, and a further 17% live within a neighbouring authority. This is a slight decrease on last year where we were able to accommodate a bigger proportion of children and young people in our area (80%).

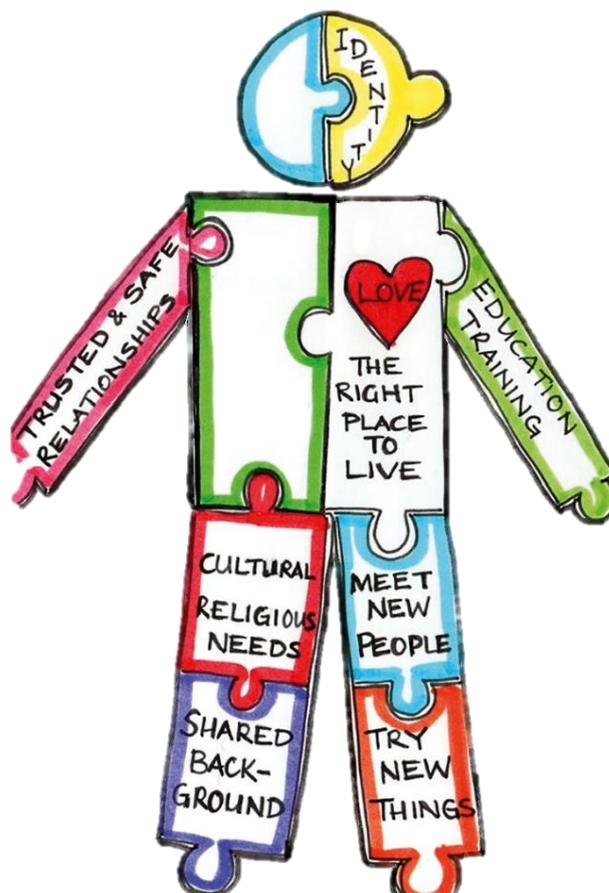


Most of our children in care are settled in homes and experience good stability; only 8% of our children experience three or more moves within their first year in care compared to the national average (10%) and our statistical neighbours (12%). Children cared for in a home continuously for two and a half years or more was reported at 73%. This is again above the national average and our statistical neighbours (70%). Although we show good performance in this area in comparison to others it is also a key area of improvement against a challenging landscape.

Bristol like many local authorities is experiencing a significant pressure and shortfall regarding the number of available homes for our children in all settings including in-house fostering, independent fostering and residential homes, as well as access to welfare secure provision for our most complex children. This has impacted upon our children in terms of our ability to place our children within our city boundary and can impair our ability to find the best matched home for the needs of that children or young person. Furthermore, it is placing a significant strain on the local authority budget position due to escalation in use of high cost independent residential and supported provision, where traditionally a child may have been placed within a foster family setting. It is acknowledged regionally and nationally that over the covid pandemic and post pandemic period sufficiency for both fostering and residential care is increasingly challenging, particularly for our older children and those with the most complex needs and presentation.

Of our children in care 61 were unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors. These children have entered our care after fleeing their country of origin and have arrived in the UK without a parent or carer to look after them. There is a detailed summary of our work with children who are unaccompanied further in the report.

All our children in care have an allocated Social Worker to oversee and progress their care plan which is independently overseen and reviewed by their allocated Independent Reviewing Officer. Children and young people often have entered care due to experiencing significant abuse and trauma in their childhood, meaning it was no longer physically or emotionally safe for them to remain living at home with their parents or care givers. Often this abuse encompasses one or several elements of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect. There may also be contextual safeguarding concerns meaning children and young people face significant risk outside their home and within their local community, such as criminal or sexual exploitation. Due to their experience of relational and developmental trauma our children in care are more likely to experience more significant emotional, mental and physical health issues in comparison to their peers. Children in care are also more vulnerable to sexual and criminal exploitation and alcohol and substance misuse.



It was reported 11% of our children in care experienced a missing episode in 2021-22<sup>1</sup>. Our children in care also are more likely to struggle to achieve their full educational and economic potential, hopes and dreams as children and adults (care leavers) than their peers who are not in care. This means our children are likely to need a range of specialist services and intervention to ensure their needs are met, and that they can recover from and process the abuse and trauma they have experienced.

Our priority developmental areas for the coming year for our children in care are as follows:

- Further development of extra familial harm practice and processes for children at risk of missing and exploitation.
- Further development of our offer to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people, including embedding a specialist team.
- Focus on school attendance, attainment and our education offer in collaboration with The HOPE.
- To increase our sufficiency and diversity of foster homes.
- In collaboration with Thinking Allowed and the Clinical Commissioning Group to continue to develop the emotional and mental health offer for our children in care.
- Further strengthen and embed our networking approach to ensure our children have lifelong support and links as children in our care and care leavers
- Review our offer for children in care in custody
- Review and develop our offer, training to staff and toolkit to ensure we are giving the right support to our children and young people in care exploring their sexuality and/or gender identity.
- Develop opportunities for children in care to regularly connect with each other through the children in care council and our activity offer
- Ensure all children in care have access to an annual health assessment and dental checks (there has been an impact on the availability of dental checks due to the Covid pandemic), and that these are accurately recorded for children.
- Assess and analyse our services and their capacity in response to the predicted rise in the number of children likely to enter our care.



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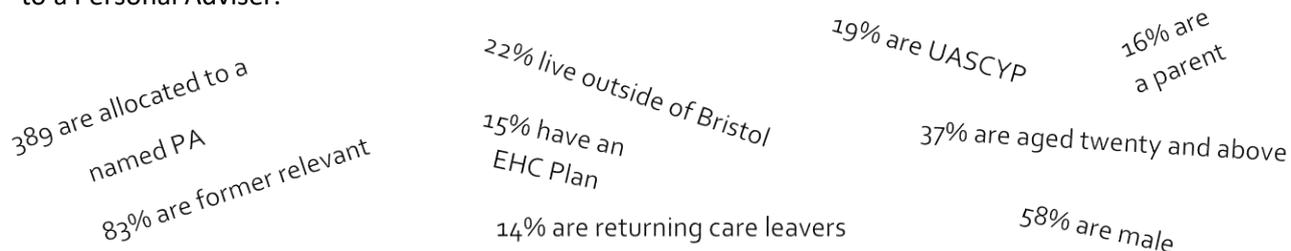
<sup>1</sup> Main reasons for going missing include child returning later than agreed time, going back to see family and friends, finding care too stressful or not liking their carers, and CCE/CSE factors.

## 6. Care Leavers

We offer a service to care leavers up to the age of 25. Care leavers have a named Personal Adviser up to the age of 21 and our young people can access our social events and return for support at any time up to 25. We make annual contact with our young people to remind them of this offer and how to get in touch.

### Key statistics about our young people

We have 731 Bristol care leavers. Below is a breakdown of key facts about the young people open to a Personal Adviser.



Areas of strength over the last year:

**Corporate Parenting Panel:** Following the council elections in 2021 there has been significant change in councillor representation and a new lead member. We have introduced a Champion Model Approach to bolster support for key priorities within the strategy and a young person's corporate parenting shadow board to scrutinise our work and offer to young people.

**Restructure of Through Care Service:** In November 2021 the Through Care Service was restructured in response to the increased numbers of children in care and care leavers, a change in the context of the work and risk and increasing numbers of teenagers in our care. The service was restructured into three units to allow for continuation of the through care model.

**Introduction of a monthly preparing for change panel:** to track the transition plans for all 17 year-olds to ensure timely assessment of need and planning for these young people.

**Southwest Regional offer for care leavers:** Bristol is leading the development of a Southwest regional offer alongside 5 Local Authorities across the Southwest to lead a Care Leaver Recovery Project.

**Our local offer to care leavers:** As Corporate Parents we are committed to doing everything we can to make sure our care leavers are set up for life. We are committed to being effective, caring, and ambitious and our [Local Offer](#) refreshed in October 2021 sets out how we can support our young people to achieve their full potential.

**Domestic abuse lead practitioner for care leavers – pilot project:** This practitioner offers consultation, joint assessment, joint working, direct work to young people in abusive and controlling relationships, including the development of a group work offer leading to safety plans and safeguarding.

**PASS Business apprentices:** In June 2021 we welcomed 6 care experienced apprentices to join us in Permanency and Specialist Services to gain their Level 2 in Business Administration and Customer Service.

**Launch of our quarterly care leaver newsletter:** edited by our care experienced apprentices and engagement workers provides an opportunity for young people to share their stories and successes and for us to share news and opportunities for young people.

**Extension of our social events and activities:** has allowed our young people to come together to make friends and socialise. Our supper club now has more than 40 regular attendees.

**Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people's voices:** Creative Youth Network in partnership with Bristol Refugee Rights have developed a Young Leaders group for young people from refugee or asylum background. Feedback will be used to inform in staff training, service development and the work of the shadow corporate parenting panel.



**Pilot home for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people:** We are trialling a new pilot home for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people so that we can carefully match young people to build on or create new friendships, networks, and communities.

Bristol has a wealth of education offers for young people and these can be accessed via the weekly Into Work meetings. Over 2021-22 we had 41 care leavers on higher education courses from Foundation to Masters level.

Areas for development:

- Our mental health offer for care leavers is under review and will incorporate recommendation outlined in Barnardo's 2021 report "A health offer for care experienced young people".
- Finalise the Bristol care leaver participation strategy with the help of a new senior personal adviser with a lead on participation.
- Widen our participation with our young people and launch a new participation forum.
- Complete a needs analysis of the NEET population for children in care and care leavers to see how we can encourage more young people into education, training and employment.

## 7. Health

Sirona Health and Care are commissioned by the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board to deliver a health service to Children in Care which includes; undertaking initial in depth health assessments, reviewing these periodically dependent upon age of the child and offering help, support and advice to this cohort.

During 2021-22, provider and commissioning colleagues worked together closely and agreed that datasets should be reviewed and simplified. A refined set of performance metrics were agreed with support from the Business Intelligence team within Sirona, as provider, from April 2022. A system workshop is planned for Quarter 2 2022-23 to share and discuss with local authority colleagues.

In December 2021, Care Leavers, supported by Barnardo's, delivered a presentation to the Clinical Commissioning Group Governing Body. The powerful content emphasised the enduring corporate parenting responsibility to care leavers. Their experience of leaving care and barriers they encounter when attempting to navigate health resources, develop health relationships and understand their rights. They presented the outcome of their engagement work and the Care Leaver Health Manifesto for South Gloucestershire and Bristol. Executive Directors within the Integrated Care Board have since discussed this content, considerations for actions to be taken by the Integrated Care Board have been incorporated into system development co-delivered with partners.

During Quarter 4, 2021-22, two dedicated posts were recruited to in the Clinical Commissioning Group to support the delivery of our statutory duties for safeguarding and to support Children in Care; a Safeguarding Children in Care and Care Leaver Nurse to support the work of the Designated Nurse and a Designated Doctor who has a strategic leadership role similar to that of the Nurse. This additional capacity will enable the Integrated Care Board to facilitate several system workshops over the remaining quarters of 2022-23 to focus on the pathway, experiences and improved outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

## 8. Adoption

Nationally the proportion of children leaving our care who were adopted fell from 12% in 2019-20 to 10% in 2020-21.

In 2018-21 nationally there were 9940 adoptions and 3050 changes of plan; for every ten adoptions there were 3 changes of plan. Bristol had 12 adoptions but only one change of plan in 2021-22, fewer than would be predicted from the national picture.



In 2021-22 the number of Bristol's children placed for adoption has slightly increased (from 18 to 20) but is still below the level two to three years ago. This continues to reflect the national shift to the making of Special Guardianship Orders for those children whose long-term permanency needs cannot be met by their birth parents.

There has been a decrease in children who have a 'Should Be Placed' for adoption plan. There has been an increase in children matched to adopters and an overall decrease in the number of children who have secured an Adoption Order. That said, there were 20 children still placed for adoption on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and waiting for the adoption application to be made or heard, and two children in early permanence placements. Overall, the total number of children still in the adoption process on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 is very similar to last year, with a larger proportion having been matched to adopters.

During 2021/2022 there were 23 children placed for adoption (including placements turning into adoptive placements known as Early Permanence) 12 children were adopted, and six are waiting to be formally adopted but with a Placement Order.

Only two children had a placement order issued more than 18 months ago, a third child has been in our care for more than 18 months, but the placement order was issued more recently.

The main challenge for our children whose plan is for adoption is recruitment of adopters for siblings, older children, children from ethnic minority families, and for children with complex health needs. This year, we have had four sets of siblings placed outside of our Adoption West Adopters using outside adoption agencies.

## 9. Fostering

This year has presented challenges in terms of recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers. We have seen increasing national and local issues in relation to placement sufficiency alongside a significant increase in children in care. To mitigate some of the challenges throughout the year we have worked on improving both our financial offer to carers and our support offer, with the aim that the changes we are making will help us remain competitive within a challenging market, attract potential new carers and to ensure we retain and value our existing carers who do an amazing job providing safe and loving homes for our children.

We successfully secured additional budget to enable us to significantly increase foster carer fees and after a positive consultation with carers, will implement the new fee structure in April 2022. The fostering service work closely with colleagues in the external communications team to keep a significant social media profile and ensure that we are reaching potential carers. Throughout the year we have worked hard at refreshing our branding and website in order to attract new carers and our new branding will go live to coincide with our increased fee offer and a significant social media campaign to attract as much interest as possible.

As well as attracting new carers we value our current carers and want to ensure we retain them. To help achieve this we have increased capacity within our fostering support service which will enable reduced caseloads, improved support to carers and improved timeliness in relation to our statutory

requirements. Foster carer wellbeing has been a priority throughout the year and we worked with BFCA (Bristol Foster Carer Association) and BTSS (Bristol Therapeutic Support Service) to pilot wellbeing activities in support groups. We have developed a full programme of wellbeing activities which will offer opportunities throughout the coming year for foster carers to take time out and feel appreciated.

Whilst this has been a challenging year for recruitment we successfully approved 29 foster carers which compares well to pre-covid levels and is close to our target of 30 carers per year.

At the end of March 2022 there were 695 Bristol children in care in a variety of homes, a significant increase from 643 in March 2021. Of these children 338 were placed with in-house foster carers.

Our kinship and Special Guardianship teams have continued to respond quickly to support children to remain in the care of their wider family or connected people where this is the right plan. Throughout the year they have completed 250 viability assessments and approved 42 connected carers under Regulation 24, enabling temporary approval as a foster carer whilst a full assessment is completed.

We have continued our specialist parent and child fostering scheme and were able to offer five short-term homes across the year. This scheme enables a baby to remain with their parent and in their local area whilst assessments are completed. We plan to continue to grow and develop this scheme over the next year.

A real strength of the service is a hugely committed and skilled staff team who have helped to progress improvements across the service throughout the year. This was evidenced at our safeguarding assurance visit in November *'The SAV Team found a group of highly committed, passionate staff who talked proudly about their service and were optimistic about the future. Everyone spoken to spoke of their enthusiasm and recognition of the positive journey the service is on. There was a sense of being in "touching distance" of brilliance. There is a noticeable focus on children and the child being at the centre of decision making.'*

Bristol Therapeutic Support Service (BTSS) provides support for foster carers, special guardians, and the children they look after, with the aim of improving stability. We offer short term support typically over three to four months. The support usually includes allocating a Therapeutic Support Practitioner to support the carer, and a Skills Coach might be allocated to support the child. As every situation is different, we are able to be creative and adjust what we offer based on what's needed. A foster carer who recently completed support from BTSS said: *"I feel more confident about how I talk to R, and I approach situations more calmly"*.

BTSS are also involved in training for carers including the Reflective Fostering Programme, a ten week course which aims to improve the carer-child relationship and promote the child's emotional and behavioural well-being. Each session has a specific focus e.g. impact of trauma, and the sessions are a mix of education, group work, some role play and lots of time for discussion and sharing experiences. We have had good feedback so far from the carers that have taken part in this programme.



BTSS also offer wellbeing and self-care sessions for Foster Carers. 'Time for Me' for carers include painting and art sessions, yoga and mindfulness, head massage, mindfulness walks, fire making and BBQ's.

We have monthly support groups for foster carers that the Therapeutic Support Practitioners facilitate alongside a Supervising Social Worker. There is also a monthly online Topic Support Group that is co-facilitated with a Foster Carer. Subjects are common themes that are experienced by foster carers, such as: - Grief and Loss, Lying and Stealing, Separation Anxiety, Managing feelings and behaviours after family time etc.

In the Autumn, BTSS and fostering will be running a positive parenting course for foster carers and special guardians of adolescents which aims to improve positive family relationships and improve child behaviour. Carers attend eight group sessions where they learn effective methods for communicating with and disciplining their teenager. The programme involves reviewing DVD clips of parenting and ways of communicating followed by group discussion and thinking about plans for the week ahead. There are also activity days for the birth children of foster carers, running every school holiday.

## 10. Children's Homes

Throughout the year, we have continued the process of reprofiling and developing the service, to deliver our core aim of improving experiences and outcomes for the children and young people in our care. This process has involved continuing to change the physical environments, whilst implementing the 'Bristol Model' to offer nurturing care that is well planned and delivered by staff teams who are given a high level of support, offered relevant and up to date training to enable and ensure homely nurturing homes. This reflects our vision for our children and young people offering an excellent quality of care in accordance with the Children's Homes Regulations and Quality Standards 2015. Noticeable improvements include a reduction in the number of children going missing, positive relationships with children in the home and high occupancy rate.

A new three-bedroom home was opened during winter 2021, replacing a five-bedroom home that closed during the same period, after the team and the children moved into the newly purchased and renovated house. This is the third new home we have opened, as two two-bedroom children's homes were opened in January 2020 and May 2020 (following the closure of a five-bedroom home in 2018). In order to continue to open small homes, there is a plan to close the three remaining larger homes.

Across the city there are now six children's homes that are all Ofsted registered to provide care for children/ young people between the ages of eight and 17 years, (although only five are currently open). As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 there are 14 children living in Bristol children's homes; Maple Tree has been redecorated whilst temporarily closed. Our most recent Ofsted ratings across the children's homes over the past year are as follows:

Home	Ofsted Rating 2021- 2022
Frome House	GOOD
Blaise House	GOOD
Witch Hazel Road	GOOD
Silbury House	Improved effectiveness
Cherry Blossom	Awaiting first inspection

**Our plans and priorities for 2022-2023:**

- New children's home to be open in Summer 2022 in South Bristol
- Recruiting teams for Maple Tree and new Children's Home
- Review current staffing structures (ongoing Management of Change program)
- Identify and match children into new home

## 11. Commissioning Service

Bristol City Council's Commissioning Service is responsible for the commissioning of all homes for children that require fostering, residential children's homes, parent and child and externally supported accommodation. In regard to commissioning fostering and residential placements, Bristol belong to the South-Central Framework which is a collaboration of 19 local authorities. Southampton are the lead local authority for the framework and the framework provides a comprehensive list of approved providers that offer residential care across the country and in Wales. Since joining the framework Bristol have been able to work closer with other local authorities to ensure that children are being matched appropriately and that the residential homes are of good quality.

When it comes to commissioning parent and child and externally-supported accommodation for children in care, Bristol manages its own framework which enables greater negotiation on costs whilst ensuring quality services that are value for money.

Sourcing placements for children in care is a significant challenge for Bristol, as it is for all local authorities, with increased numbers of children presenting with complex behaviours and a lack of available services nationally to meet those needs. When placements are identified that are a match for the child we often incur increased fees due to the bespoke packages of care required to meet the complex needs of the child. Bristol is part of a collaboration with other local authorities to try and influence the introduction of legislation to regulate profits and introduce caps on placement fee prices as well as encouraging providers to join the South-Central framework.

The priorities set within the [Children's Sufficiency Strategy](#) are to develop and increase sufficiency of both fostering and children's homes in the Bristol area including a potential specialist CAMHS mental health home. There is also a transformational project across the whole of children's social care to address the challenges across children's placements and placement sufficiency.

## 12. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Bristol continues to care for and support children and young people seeking asylum. Bristol has done so since the early 1990s when children and young people travelled to the UK escaping conflict in Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia. Since that time, children and young people have presented with increasing frequency and from a variety of countries, escaping conflicts in Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa. Currently the largest group of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are children from Afghanistan.

There are three groups of unaccompanied children seeking asylum who arrive in the city:

- Those who present spontaneously.

- Those accepted through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). Due to high number of children seeking asylum in Kent a revised NTS is in operation which places a duty on the local authorities around the country to accommodate children from Kent.
- Those accepted from Europe and camps in Northern France or elsewhere (often referred to as 'Dubs' children).

Upon arrival in Bristol an initial interview is carried out by Bristol's Asylum Team; if required an age assessment will also be undertaken. Children assessed as being younger than 18 years of age, become children in care, under Section 20 of Children Act 1989 and are provided with accommodation and care.

### Current Snapshot

Bristol has seen an increase in the numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children we care for in recent months:

- 61 children in care (March 2022) compared to 51 children in care in August 2021 and 46 children in June 2020
- This is 11% of the total child in care population and an increase from 8% in August 2021 (cf. our statistical neighbours – 5%, or England average – 5%)
- Care leavers who arrived as unaccompanied children make up 19% of Bristol's care leaver population.

It is not expected that the war in Ukraine will lead to an increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from the Ukraine because the Home Office visa sponsorship scheme is aimed at resettling families.

### Successes

The Virtual Practice Group for children and young people seeking asylum meets monthly and has strengthened the links between Through Care with The HOPE virtual school, fostering and The ARC (Asylum and Refugee Clinic, specialist CAMHS provision), as well as our voluntary partners.

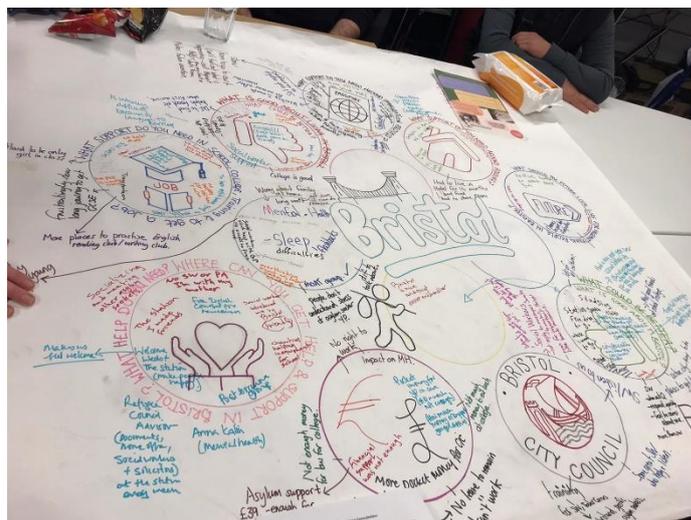
Welcome pack for all new arrivals is near to completion including process maps for all aspects of the care and asylum processes.

Engaging with our partners in the voluntary sector including Bristol Refugee Rights and Creative Youth Network's Welcome Wednesday group and the Young Leaders project to ensure the voices of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are heard.

The unaccompanied asylum-seeking children Qlik data app is completed which will support practice with an improved data set relating to the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

### Challenges

It is likely that the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in care will continue to grow. It is an ongoing challenge to plan services to meet that need when the actual numbers are unknown. Services including health, education and social care need to be responsive to meet this increased demand.



Young people who are relevant or qualifying care leavers whose asylum claims have not been successful will become ARE (Appeal Rights Exhausted) and we will need to develop our offer of support to this group of young people in line with national and local policy in context of Bristol as a [City of Sanctuary](#).

We are working towards the creation of a specialist team within Through Care to deliver a more consistent service and better outcomes for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as well as:

- Deliver basic training to all social workers, personal advisors in partnership with Bristol Refugee Rights and the Young Leaders group on issues specific to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- Building links with the wider diverse communities in Bristol around the safety of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, including befriending and integration opportunities.

Building on the Welcome Packs develop a group work programme to offer to all new arrivals and establish our community of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

### 13. Thinking Allowed Specialist CAMHS team

Thinking Allowed (TA) is a specialist branch of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) that provides clinical services for Bristol's children in care and those children who have been adopted and are referred by Adoption West. During the period April 2020 to April 2021 the Covid pandemic had a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of Bristol's children, young people, carers, other professionals and general service delivery. The main issues and service developments for Thinking Allowed for this period are as follows. Referral rates to Thinking Allowed remained similar to previous years (189) with 86% accepted for an initial assessment and the remainder having a telephone discussion with the social worker and signposting and advice. Thinking Allowed has seen an increase in the complexity and severity of the difficulties that children and young people are experiencing. There has been an increase in placement breakdowns, more children in care presenting at A&E, more children risk assessed as Red, more children placed out of area with complex presentations. This means caseloads have increased by 22% and in the second half of the reporting period waiting times started to increase but remained within the specified timeframe of first appointments within eight weeks. New methods to provide services were used including online meetings, socially distanced working practices and the use of other mediums (text, phone). This enabled some young people to benefit from interventions that would not have used face to face services. Thinking Allowed's priorities for this period were responding to referrals, providing initial assessments, face to face work with children and work with carers and the network.

- Some of the staff for the Asylum and Refugee Clinic staffing have been moved back into the Locality CAMHS teams where children from refugee families will be seen if they meet the criteria. Young people who arrived in the UK seeking asylum are still provided with services through ARC.
- During this period, all young people were rated according to immediate risk (Red, Amber, Green – RAG) and those rated Red were seen face to face if they did not like or manage virtual meetings (with Covid secure measures in place). Treatment for other children was paused, moved online or took place through their carers.

- Carers' strengths and vulnerabilities were RAG rated and appointments were offered in line with this assessment using virtual platforms.
- AWP established an out of hours crisis line where children and families can phone in and speak to CAMHS staff. They are given advice and strategies to manage the immediate difficulties they are facing and if it is necessary assessment by the on call clinician or psychiatrist can be arranged. This system has worked well, diverted children from attending hospital and continues.

Priorities for next year:

- Responding to children and young people with urgent mental health difficulties
- Limit further increase in waiting times
- Review the areas of work that TA offers to inform a clear service specification

## 14. Missing Children and Extra-Familial Harm

In 2018-2021 there was a sustained year-on-year reduction in the number of children in care who were reported missing to the police as a result of the targeted interventions undertaken such as work with carers to reduce the inappropriate reporting of children who were known to not be at risk but had come in late. However, despite this significant improvement those children in care who do go missing are going missing more frequently in 2020 and 2021 to previous years. This relates to an increased number of children in care due to criminal exploitation and county lines.

Missing return conversations is an area requiring improvement in the service. In this year missing return conversations are only recorded as having been offered in 83% of episodes. Despite the reduction in the percentage of times that children have been offered a missing return conversation, acceptance of return home conversations when offered has been maintained with children accepting missing return conversations on 289 occasions (54% of offered).

The increase in the proportion of children in care who are male and are Black, Mixed Race, Asian or Arab who were reported missing from care seen in 2020 was sustained in 2021 with 32% of missing children being from these ethnic demographics and 35.3% in 2020, compared to 28.3% in 2019.

Peer friendships remains the biggest influence on missing highlighting the importance of understanding friendship networks and offering opportunities for pro-social friendships.

There are currently 92 children in care and 113 care leavers open to the service who have been identified as being victims of or at risk of child sexual or child criminal exploitation at some time in their life. This means that a significant proportion of our children in care (13.5%) and care leaver population (15%) have been affected by exploitation and/or trafficking.

62% of our children in care who have been harmed through exploitation have come into our care as adolescents. Of the 92 children in care identified as being harmed by exploitation or trafficking, 85 are known to Operation Topaz the specialist police team working to disrupt perpetrators of sexual exploitation.

Our response:

- Increased capacity for missing return conversations
- A new Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship service in Bristol
- Safer Options launched conflict resolution training to staff and young people
- Safer Options have increased their mentoring and 1:1 support offer for young people affected by county lines
- Safer Options established a mediation and restorative justice early intervention service in the team specifically for children in care to assist placement stability and avoid disproportionate engagement with the police for children in care.
- Avon and Somerset Constabulary have expanded the specialist police team Operation Topaz which is now working on prosecuting and disrupting perpetrators of both sexual and criminal exploitation.
- A regional trauma-informed training package has been rolled out coordinated through Safer Options and the VRU.

Areas for development:

- We plan to introduce Operation Innerste with the police to safeguard unaccompanied children who are likely to go missing
- New peer mental health service starting later this year for young people affected by violence and exploitation

## 15. The HOPE Virtual School

A new senior leadership post was created focusing on post-16 support for this academic year. The HOPE are now collecting progress information throughout the year for children in care and care leavers in further education. We are working with social care to develop means of sharing this effectively and informing actions that support our young people to remain in employment, education and training and achieve the best outcomes. We have also appointed a dedicated advocate whose role it is to provide advice and guidance for children with a history of being in care.

We have trained around 90 colleagues at City of Bristol College on the subject of 'Children in Care and Care Leavers: Understanding Attachment and Trauma'. We are working closely with the provider to support their work in being trauma-informed and also offering our training to other post-16 settings.

We have developed regular meetings with colleagues in the Youth Offending Team, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Team, Social Care and the Post 16 Participation Team to work collaboratively to increase rates of young people involved in education, employment or training through identifying engagement opportunities.

This year two of our Year 11 Children in Care have been offered a funded post-16 place at private settings (Bristol Grammar School and Colstons). Both students were identified and supported by their HOPE Advocates throughout the process.

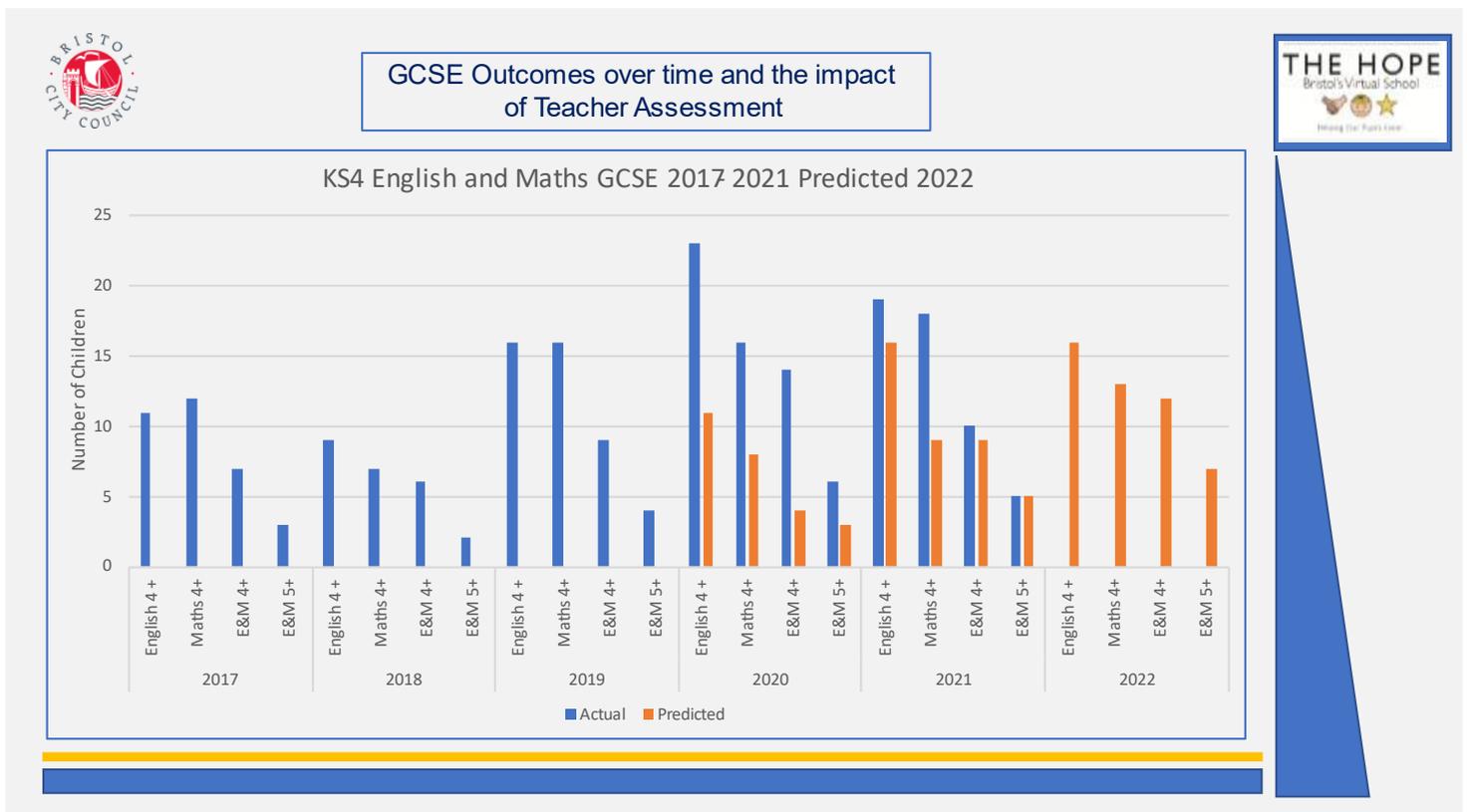
Improvements in the quality of Personal Education Planning (PEP) from Early Years Foundation stage (EYFS) to post-16 and complex special educational needs with 96% of PEPs now assessed as good or better. Over this period 91.3% of Children in Care attend schools which are at least good.

We have provided several educational schemes to enhance and enrich the education offer our children including The Letterbox Club. This involves sending children in N2, Y1, Y3, Y5 and Y7 parcels of books and math games once a month for six months (May-Oct). Run by Book Trust but facilitated by The HOPE, the scheme ensures children in care receive these parcels. We also support entry to the Mary Palmer Poetry Prize Competition and facilitate the Bristol Career Coach Career Coach which is a five-year coaching programme for children in care - a collaboration between the Cabot Learning Federation, Hope Virtual School and Bristol WORKS. The programme matches volunteer coaches with young people, aged 13 or 14 who are in the care of the Local Authority, with inspirational local professionals based on their interests and preferred ways of learning. In March 2022 we welcomed our fifth cohort of new Career Coaches, and we now have 36 successful children and coaching relationships in place across the city. We look forward to offering this opportunity to more children as the project develops.

Development work has started on introducing an EPeP system, this is currently going through procurement for roll out for Term 2 or 3.

We had 33 young people seeking asylum arrive since the start of the academic year; Year 7 – one, Year 9 – two, Year 10 – five, Year 11 – eight, Year 12 – 16, Year 13 – one.

The pandemic had limited testing in schools over the last two years, but the 2021 GCSE result predictions and actual results were in line with each other and show an upward trend since 2017 in Children in Care achieving Maths and English GCSE at a level 4 or higher (see graph).



### Challenges for 2022/23

Gathering accurate and reliable attendance data continues to be a challenge due to issues with schools' input and the systems we use. However, we are working hard with BCC colleagues to improve this and are developing a plan for next academic year where we have an increased collaborative focus on improving attendance for children in care.

With the rise in numbers of unaccompanied young people seeking asylum in care we have a key issue with the availability of post-16 ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) courses that will provide an education. This leads to young people either being unable to access education, having no local provision or only being able to access a part-time offer.

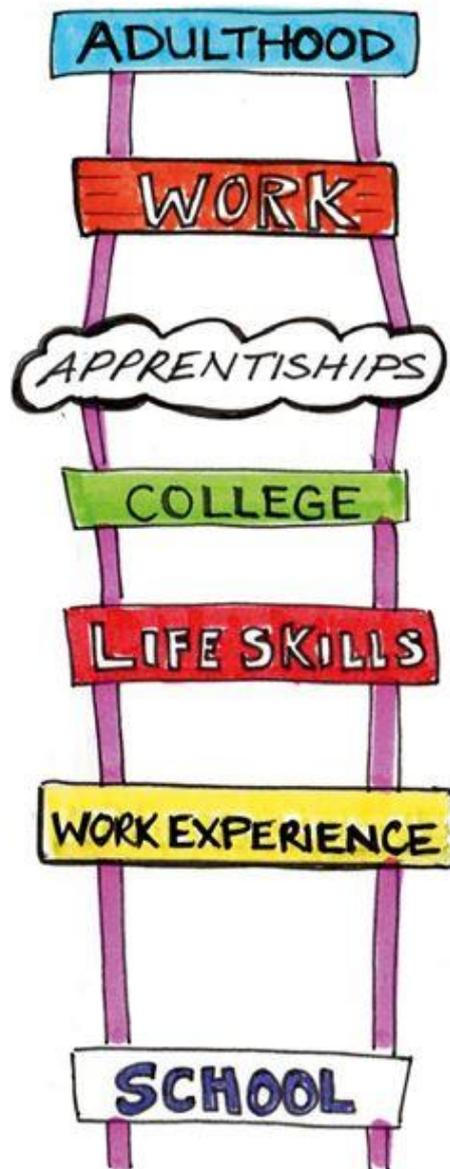
We currently do not have a means of collecting attendance information for the vast majority of our children in care and care leavers in further education. We will be looking to develop this to enable us to further act in promoting engagement and education.

## 16. Independent Reviewing Service

All children in care have an allocated Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) whose primary focus is to quality assure the care planning and review process for the child and to ensure that their wishes and feelings are given full consideration. The role is an important one as it should enable the local authority to achieve improved outcomes for children. An annual report is written by the IRO manager and presented at Corporate Parenting Panel.

The annual report for 2021/2022 highlighted the following strengths:

- IROs found creative ways of involving children in their reviews during the pandemic using virtual sessions, played games and used WhatsApp and Zoom.
- IROs talked about life story work and words and pictures at all reviews. They talked about how it is important for children in care to know about why they can't live with their family and why decisions have been made. IROs made sure that children had life story work when Special Guardianship Orders have been made.
- IROs always made attempts to speak to/make contact with parents, even those who don't have a lot of involvement in their child's life. They are mindful that they are still their parents and that they need to try every review. Using virtual meetings helped some families attend.
- Within our team meetings we made regular time for discussions around anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice.



- Children's participation in their reviews improved and by the end of the reporting period was above target at just over 96%.
- There was also evidence of successful group challenge of the sufficiency strategy for placement options for 16 and 17-year-olds who had been recently criminally or sexually exploited.

The service also identified the following priorities for future work:

- To reduce the number of children each IRO supports and make sure that children, families and professionals receive their reports soon after their reviews
- To ensure that children and young people know their story and why they are in care
- To involve parents in reviews whenever possible and regularly review decisions around involvement of parents, wider family and other Important people. We will make sure that we involve dads.
- We will find the best way for each child or young person to give their views and feedback
- To ensure children and young people in care in Bristol are getting the right support and IROs are communicating with children and young people in the best way they can about gender identity and sexuality
- To ensure that everyone is thinking about the future of children and young people in care in Bristol and thinking about their permanence plans

The following are the areas that the IRO service have identified as priorities for improvement for children in care in Bristol. We will be working alongside the Local Authority with challenge and support to make improvements for children in these areas:

- That there are enough good quality homes for children to live in, particularly teenagers who are experiencing harm and exploitation in their communities.
- That the matching and placement planning process is improved - particularly in our Children's Homes – so that children have the best chances of having their needs met and thriving.
- That children who might have care and support needs receive a Care Act Assessment before they turn 17 so there is a lot of time to plan what support they are going to receive when they are an adult.
- That the local authority has effective plans to support social workers to stay in their jobs after the pandemic to reduce change for children and ensure their important relationships are prioritised.
- That life story work is completed with and for children in care, and that this regularly monitored and assured at a senior level.
- That when safe enough, reunification is considered and work is done to support children returning to their families.

- That there is a clear plan for supporting children in care to recover from the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in relation to their emotional wellbeing, family networks and educational outcomes.
- That where appropriate, kinship and foster carers are supported to become SGO carers with the resource to enable them to continue to care for children and meet their needs.

## 17. Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Children in our care with special education needs and/or a disability are supported by a range of professionals, and we aim to ensure that all the plans of support are linked up, as this means children and young people know who is doing what to help them achieve their full academic potential.

Since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 we have had a social care hub for all social care contributions to the needs assessments and plans for Education Health Care Plans. The social worker allocated to children in care will write and attend reviews, but will have additional support if they need it from the hub to ensure all our children have the best available provision. For children aged 14 or over we have the 'pathway 2 independence' team who bridge the gap between children and adult services and check that the allocated social worker is making the right referral to adult care where appropriate.

The hub is working closely with the education SEN team, and we are working together, with the HOPE, to ensure the EHCP and the PEP linking up, and are clear, so everyone knows what they should be doing and how and when.



Our FLORA team (Family, Local Offer, Resources, and Advice) offer advice to foster carers, parent carers, and professionals. They specialise in the support children with additional needs may have before they enter any statutory processes like an EHCP. They support special education needs coordinators to think about support plans and get support at the earliest point to support a child, and their carers.

The HOPE works closely in partnership with a range of colleagues including social care and SEND supporting and developing practice to ensure setting and placement stability, and appropriateness. Personal Education Plans are monitored and moderated to ensure a consistency of practice, and that the 'core offer' is distinguished from the Pupil Premium spend, and both are supporting progress. At PEP (Personal Education Plan) meetings progress and attendance are reviewed and challenged and the young person's voice is heard and included within actions.

Special educational needs and disability issues are reviewed at each personal education plan meeting and guidance is offered regarding the graduated response offered by the setting and if additional funding or support is required. The HOPE supports schools to use the Bristol SEND Support Plan where necessary and to use this to make applications for additional high needs funding or EHCNA (Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment). The HOPE's SEND register enables accurate information sharing from School Support Top-up and EHCP.

## 18. Participation and Co-production

Participation, voice and influence are central to the strategic vision for services in Bristol. Co-construction and participation are at the heart of Bristol's Children's Charter, Belonging Strategy, Corporate Parenting Strategy and the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership Strategic Plan. Our vision is to ensure that Bristol's children and young people are listened to and involved in the decisions that affect their lives. Our services actively engage children and young people and use their views and experiences to inform plans and improve outcomes for both individuals and services. We have systems in place to support participation work and our workforce have the skills and knowledge needed to ensure that views of children and young people are heard and make a difference.

Reconstruct have facilitated our Children in Care Council since it began and report regularly to the Corporate Parenting Panel. They have supported children to lead campaigns and projects, as well as provided space for care-experienced children to come together. They are well known amongst the children and social workers.



They have permanent representation on the Youth Council and meet regularly with the Youth Mayors and other participation workers in the city to ensure children in care are well represented in participative processes.

Children and young people participate in the Corporate Parenting Panel twilight sessions to update members on projects they've been working on and to raise awareness of issues faced by children in care and care leavers. The Corporate Parenting Manager meets with the participation workers monthly and visits the participation groups regularly to respond to feedback and embed co-production opportunities.

We have developed a young people's shadow Corporate Parenting Panel in order to allow more meaningful opportunities for care-experienced young people to influence decision-making, as well as helping hold the local authority to account with the delivery of their corporate parenting strategy. This is based on a best-practice example from another Local Authority in order to move forward from a more tokenistic engagement of young people on the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Barnardo's run a health project for young people with lived experience of using health services to inform development of health services. The group is well represented by care leavers and they have produced a care leaver health report<sup>2</sup> which has been taken up by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

We have strong links with our specialist youth provision Welcome Wednesday which caters for unaccompanied asylum seekers aged 13-19. The group recently created a report after consulting with the wider local cohort of asylum-seeking young people which they shared at our Corporate Parenting Panel in March 2022. The panel will continue to review how we as a city continue to improve our support to unaccompanied young people arriving in our city.

Building on our Care Ambassadors, we have a further 3 care-experienced apprentices supporting us with projects and participation across the service.

Over the next year we will be working on embedding changes in service delivery based on feedback from children and young people including our activities and support offer for young people seeking

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<sup>2</sup> This report was produced by young people with lived experience of the care system and health and well-being services. Please see appendix for report in full.

asylum. We continue to explore ways and opportunities for care-experienced children to contribute to the work of the panel and to ensure all our service design and delivery has its roots in the wishes and experiences of the children and young people we care for.

## 19. Conclusion

This year has not been without its challenges as we have looked to recover from a disruptive period whilst maintaining stable and loving homes for children, support for our staff and carers, and continuing to strive for the goals we set ourselves in the Corporate Parenting Strategy. The panel have overseen the work from the operational staff to maintain accountability and to offer support. We have seen significant work within the fostering teams to recruit and retain a range of loving carers, investment into children's homes to provide stable and supportive environments, new and innovative practice in the Through Care teams in order to best meet the needs of our children and young people and a relentless drive for improvement within disabled children's services, education and our Quality Assurance teams.

We are committed to Bristol being a city that provides the very best for the children and young people in its care. We will continue to have high aspirations for our children and to work in partnership with them to ensure the same standard of care as any good parent would.

There is plenty of work that remains to be done and it is imperative that we have the full support of all our elected members in order to make this vision a reality. We particularly ask that you champion and support foster carers and care leavers living in your ward, including encouraging residents to consider applying to become foster carers. Please also consider supporting The EPIC Charity which offers grants to care-experienced young people in Bristol to have access to hobbies, opportunities and a chance to make positive memories. Please see the appendix for how to sign up to become a monthly supporter.

Next year we will be addressing the challenges set out below, as well as those raised in the report. As we look to the last 18 months of the current Corporate Parenting Strategy we will be monitoring and review its progress before its renewal in 2024. We are looking forward to the LGA (Local Government Association) Peer Review Challenge later this year as we aspire to grow in effectiveness as a panel.

## 20. Appendices

### a. Appendix 1: How have we been doing?

Key Priority	What's been working well	Challenges that remain?
<p>Trusted and Safe Relationships: Children and young people feel loved, connected and safe</p>	<p>Network Building is firmly embedded at every layer of the service and evidenced in guidelines, plans, supervisions, and audits.</p> <p>Extension of our social events and activities has allowed our young people to come together to make friends and socialise. We have a suite of social and activity events across the year for children and young people to join, including a big focus on celebrating Care Leavers Week in October. Our monthly supper club now has more than 40 regular attendees.</p> <p>The Safer Choices and Routes projects have strengthened the work to safeguard and protect children and young people from exploitation, including increased mentoring and 1:1 support offers for young people affected by county lines.</p> <p>We have established a mediation and restorative justice early intervention service in the team specifically for children in care to assist placement stability and avoid disproportionate engagement with the police for children in care.</p> <p>Care Leaver Champions are established in the locality areas and within children's centres.</p> <p>Domestic Abuse lead practitioner for care leavers offers consultation, joint assessment, joint-working, direct work to young people including development of a group work offer leading to safety plans and safeguarding.</p>	<p>Broaden the reach and range of events so there's something for everyone.</p> <p>Develop the Youth Housing pathway to ensure availability of appropriate accommodation</p> <p>Review our offer for children in care in custody</p> <p>Further strengthen and embed our networking approach to ensure our children have lifelong support and links as children in our care and care leavers</p>

<b>Key Priority</b>	<b><i>What's been working well</i></b>	<b><i>Challenges that remain</i></b>
<p>Education, Training and Employment: Hold high aspirations and close the attainment gap for children in care. Increase the proportion of care leavers in education, training and employment.</p>	<p>Attendance and achievement results show continued year on year improvement despite the disruption throughout Covid.</p> <p>Training and support offered to school staff has led to 98% of Pupil Education Plans monitored as being good or outstanding with children's voices routinely captured within reports.</p> <p>There has been a reduction in the number of days lost to exclusion.</p> <p>Relationships and Belonging Guidance has been produced and shared with Designated Teachers</p> <p>The HOPE's SEND register enables accurate information sharing from School Support Top Up and EHCP</p>	<p>Lack of sufficiency of ESOL places for our post 16 young people.</p> <p>Access to a broad range of ring-fenced opportunities for care leavers across the city.</p> <p>Further embed the culture of trauma-informed practice embedded across all Bristol Education Settings that supports learning for care-experienced children and young people</p> <p>More children are able to access quality alternative learning provision within Bristol</p> <p>Develop the HOPE offer for care leavers in further and higher education to enable us to further act in promoting engagement and education</p>

<b>Key Priority</b>	<b><i>What's been working well</i></b>	<b><i>Challenges that remain</i></b>
<p>Opportunities Growing Up: Being in care is an enriching experience that equips children for a successful life.</p>	<p>Introduction of a monthly preparing for change panel to track the transition plans for all 17 year-olds to ensure timely assessment of need and planning</p> <p>EPIC is a registered charity and now in a position to begin to offer small grants to care-experienced young people in Bristol.</p> <p>Our partners in the voluntary sector and asylum-seeking young people are core partners in the development of our service to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.</p> <p>The care leaver regional offer work is firmly underway with the first big event completed early June, and final sign off in September 2022.</p> <p>All children and young people in care and care leavers have access to a tablet or laptop.</p> <p>Launch of our quarterly care leaver newsletter edited by our care experienced apprentices and engagement workers provides an opportunity for young people to share their stories and successes and for us to share news and opportunities for young people.</p>	<p>Development of mentoring or befriending projects beyond the Independent Visiting Scheme</p> <p>EPIC needs to secure regular financial support and grow its profile in order to reach the cohort of care experienced young people in Bristol</p> <p>Build on the regional offer work to continue to engage our key partners across the city in order to provide the best possible opportunities for care leavers</p>
<b>Key priority</b>	<b><i>What's been working well</i></b>	<b><i>Challenges that remain</i></b>
<p>Identity: Children and young people have a strong sense of self, and an understanding of their care story.</p>	<p>Foster carers and staff in children's homes are supported to celebrate and nurture children's identities in new and innovative ways including care plans, starter packs and mandatory training. Designated teachers in schools receive training on working with children in care.</p> <p>Cultural Intelligence training is being rolled out to staff across the service</p> <p>Participation pathways created to ensure young people with asylum background can share feedback</p> <p>Life story work guidelines are being developed with children and young people</p>	<p>Ensure children and young people's identities can be celebrated and nurtured at every level of their care</p> <p>Agree care experience as a locally protected characteristic</p> <p>Review and develop our staff training offer, policies and guidance to ensure we are giving the right support to our children and young people exploring their sexuality and/or gender identity.</p> <p>Co-produce the specialist service with asylum-experienced young people</p>

<b>Key Priority</b>	<b><i>What's been working well</i></b>	<b><i>Challenges that remain</i></b>
<p>Co-production: Children and young people are at the heart of service design, delivery and evaluation</p>	<p>Range of opportunities for children and young people to participate in service planning, share feedback, take part in interview panels and deliver training.</p> <p>Surveys, consultations and participation in the Independent Review of Children's Social Care</p> <p>Care Leaver Forum, Young Leaders Group and Children in Care Council have contributed to the work of the panel, shared campaigns and influenced service design and delivery.</p> <p>New Corporate Parenting Shadow Board established</p> <p>Apprenticeship opportunities for care-experienced young people created within the service.</p>	<p>Embed young people's involvement with recruitment, training and quality assurance</p> <p>Include young people in foster carer assessment processes</p> <p>Co-produce a strategy and practice framework for working in partnership with children in care, care leavers and their families.</p> <p>Safely reduce the number of meetings and appointments for children that make them feel different.</p>

Key Priority	What's been working well	Challenges that remain
<p>Homes and Housing: Children and young people will live somewhere where they feel a sense of safety and belonging and are loved</p>	<p>Re-profiling of children's homes completed including acquisition of new home (Cherry Blossom). Children's Homes Improvement Plan is completed, the work is now firmly embedded and children's homes inspections report significant improvement. The Bristol Model is being rolled out to foster carers and children's homes.</p> <p>Increased capacity and resourcing within the fostering and kinship care teams has resulted in reduced caseloads, improved support to carers and improved timeliness in relation to our statutory requirements.</p>	<p>Increase sufficiency of foster homes and recruit a more diverse group of foster carers to reflect the identities of children we care for.</p> <p>Develop a bespoke home for disabled children to allow more children to access specialist provision within Bristol.</p> <p>Ensure a range of high-quality housing options for care leavers to meet their needs, including bespoke homes for young people with more complex needs.</p> <p>Provide timely and flexible move-on accommodation for care leavers who are ready for independent living.</p> <p>Address the challenges across children's placements and placement sufficiency via the transformational project</p> <p>Trial a new pilot home for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people so that we can carefully match in order to build new friendships, networks, and communities.</p>

Key Priority	What's been working well	Challenges that remain
<p><b>Health and Support: Improve health and well-being by ensuring high quality health services and information are provided to children, young people and carers.</b></p>	<p>Training programme developed and rolled out to carers and Children's Homes staff</p> <p>Adolescent Support Programme is operational</p> <p>A campaign around access to health services has been co-produced with care leavers and Barnardo's</p> <p>A social care hub has been developed to support social workers to contribute to plans and needs assessments for Education and Health Care Plans.</p> <p>The new Pathway 2 Independence team bridge the gap between children's and adult services for young people who may go on to need care from adult services.</p>	<p>Provide timely, accessible, relationship-based and trauma-informed health and wellbeing services</p> <p>In collaboration with thinking allowed and the CCG continue to develop the emotional and mental health offer for our children in care</p> <p>Ensure all children in care have access to an annual health assessment and Dental checks (there has been an impact on the availability of dental checks due to the Covid pandemic) and that these are accurately recorded for children.</p>
Key Priority	What's been working well	Challenges that remain
<p><b>Caring for those who care: children and young people are nurtured by carers and workers who are well-resourced, valued and supported</b></p>	<p>Bristol has introduced a competitive financial and support package for carers, including a new Special Guardianship Offer, leading to improved stability for children.</p> <p>Foster Carer Wellbeing offer has been set up and is well-established. There is a full programme of activities throughout the year to ensure carers are offered time and space to feel supported and appreciated. Recent celebrations took place at the Fostering Fun Day and the annual Foster Carer Celebration.</p> <p>Increased team capacity has led to improved support for carers</p>	<p>Children, young people, families and staff have shared space within the city for events, workspace and shared activities.</p> <p>Explore "light touch" model for eligible children to reduce number of professionals involved and promote a more normalised family life experience.</p>

## b. Appendix 2: Corporate Parenting Panel membership

### Corporate Parenting Panel Membership:

#### Elected members:

CLlr Asher Craig (Chair)  
CLlr John Goulandris  
CLlr Brenda Massey  
CLlr Christine Townsend  
CLlr Sarah Classick  
CLlr Don Alexander  
CLlr Phillipa Hulme  
CLlr Heather Mack

#### Officer Membership:

Sarah Parker, Interim Director Children's Services  
Fiona Tudge, Deputy Director Children's Services  
James Beardall, Head of Service, Permanency and Specialist Services and Safer Communities  
Tara Parsons, Service Manager Fostering  
Amanda Braund, Service Manager, Through Care  
Emma Lloyd, Head of HOPE Virtual School  
Liz Small, Corporate Parenting Manager  
Angela Stephen, Designated Nurse, Bristol, North Somerset and South Glos Clinical Commissioning Group

#### Partners:

Dr Jon Symonds, University of Bristol  
Bristol Foster Carer Association  
Brian Price, Alderman  
Jackie Norman, Alderman  
Reconstruct  
Barnardo's

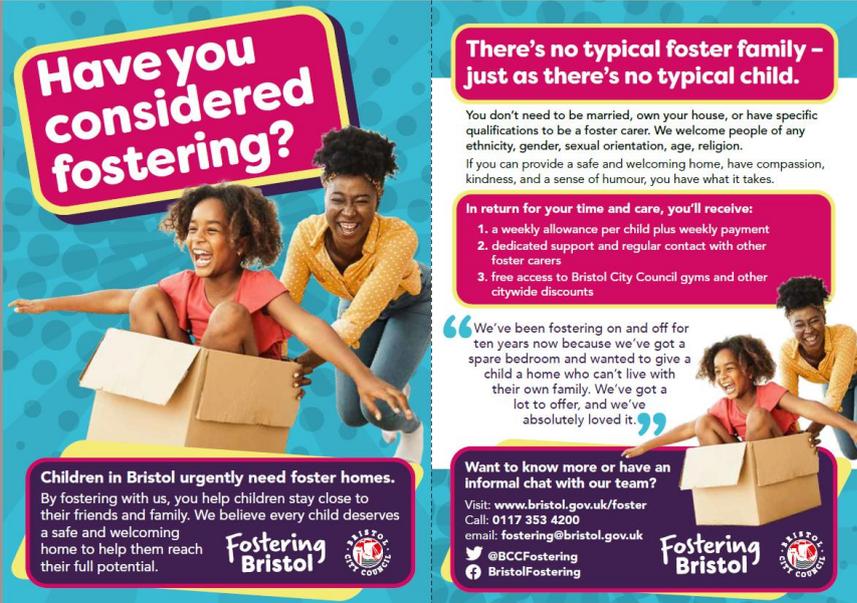
## c. Appendix 3: links to key documents

[Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge 2021-2023](#)

[Bristol Belonging Strategy 2021-2024](#)

[www.bristol.gov.uk/foster](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/foster)

[A health offer for care-experienced young people](#)



**Have you considered fostering?**

**There's no typical foster family – just as there's no typical child.**

You don't need to be married, own your house, or have specific qualifications to be a foster carer. We welcome people of any ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion.

If you can provide a safe and welcoming home, have compassion, kindness, and a sense of humour, you have what it takes.

**In return for your time and care, you'll receive:**

1. a weekly allowance per child plus weekly payment
2. dedicated support and regular contact with other foster carers
3. free access to Bristol City Council gyms and other citywide discounts

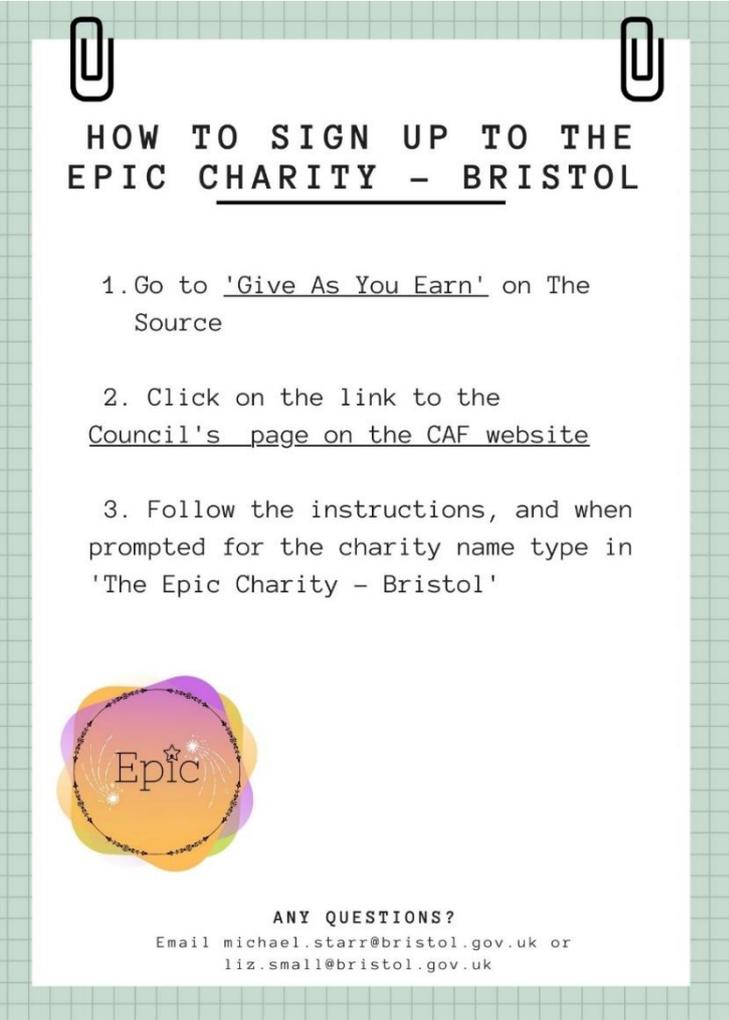
**“We've been fostering on and off for ten years now because we've got a spare bedroom and wanted to give a child a home who can't live with their own family. We've got a lot to offer, and we've absolutely loved it.”**

**Children in Bristol urgently need foster homes.**  
By fostering with us, you help children stay close to their friends and family. We believe every child deserves a safe and welcoming home to help them reach their full potential.

**Want to know more or have an informal chat with our team?**  
Visit: [www.bristol.gov.uk/foster](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/foster)  
Call: 0117 353 4200  
email: [fostering@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@bristol.gov.uk)  
@BCCFostering  
BristolFostering

**Fostering Bristol**

**Sign up to the EPIC charity:**



**HOW TO SIGN UP TO THE EPIC CHARITY – BRISTOL**

1. Go to 'Give As You Earn' on The Source
2. Click on the link to the Council's page on the CAF website
3. Follow the instructions, and when prompted for the charity name type in 'The Epic Charity – Bristol'



**ANY QUESTIONS?**  
Email [michael.starr@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:michael.starr@bristol.gov.uk) or [liz.small@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:liz.small@bristol.gov.uk)