

	<p>Corporate Parenting Committee 2 February 2026</p> <p>Report from the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Community Development</p> <p>Lead Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Employment - Cllr Gwen Grahil</p>
<p>Brent Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy: 2025-2029</p>	

Wards Affected:	ALL
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	1. Brent Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Michelle Gwyther Head of Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships Michelle.gwyther@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Brent Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2025-2029 sets out how Brent Council, as a Corporate Parent, meets its statutory Sufficiency Duty as laid down in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989. The Strategy also draws on statutory guidance regarding Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children (DfE 2010), the Children Act 2004, the Children Leaving Care Act 2000, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.
- 1.2 The Strategy describes how Brent will meet the current and future placement needs of children looked after (CLA) and care experienced young people. It builds on existing duties in law to promote and safeguard the welfare and wellbeing of children and high-quality care planning. The Strategy provides an update on progress in delivering the previous Looked After Children and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2020-2024, detailing current and planned actions to meet placement sufficiency over the next four years in line with the demographic profile of Brent's population.

- 1.3 There are many challenges that local authorities are experiencing when delivering and building sufficiency. Nationally there is an increasing number of children entering care which often exceeds the number of suitable placements. Locally, whilst the number of children in care has remained relatively stable over the past 4 years, due to the increased number of children with complex needs, older children coming into care and sibling groups means finding a suitable placement is difficult. This in turn increases the likelihood of placement instability, which can cause placement breakdown and further disruption to the child or young person.
- 1.4 Recruitment and retention of foster carers is a pressure for local authorities and the private sector. As explained in biannual reports to the Corporate Parenting Committee, local authorities are finding it increasingly challenging to find fostering placements, especially for those with complex needs and older teenagers. As there is a shortfall of foster carers, there is a requirement to provide a competitive offer to be successful in recruitment. The Strategy also considers the issue of out-of-area placements, where they are not necessary for safeguarding reasons but have had to be made due to sufficiency reasons. Out-of-area placements disrupt education, friendships, family networks and make it more difficult for professionals involved in the lives of children and young people to provide high quality, consistent support.
- 1.5 This Strategy is focused on a strategic principle of increasing the *local* sufficiency of placements for children and young people through increasing the number of in-house foster carers and increasing the *availability* of residential placements which can support a range of complex needs. Collectively this will achieve the outcome of keeping children and young people close to their own communities in high quality, value for money and locally available care.
- 1.6 This strategy aligns with other Brent strategies including but not limited to:
 - The Looked After Children and Care Leavers' Strategy 2025-2027
 - The Brent Youth Strategy 2025-2028
 - The Brent SEND Strategy 2021-2025
 - The Brent Participation Strategy 2024-27
 - The Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 It is recommended that the CPC review and comment on the contents of this strategy. This ensures the CPC is fulfilling its responsibility to monitor and scrutinise the activity of Brent's Children, Young People and Community Development (CYPDCD) directorate, thus ensuring that adequate care and support are being provided to Brent's children looked after and care leavers.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context

3.1.1 Placement sufficiency is a key element to the safety and wellbeing of children looked after and care leavers. Placement sufficiency contributes to the following borough priorities:

- **The Best Start in Life**
- **Prosperity and Stability**
- **A Healthier Brent**
- **Thriving Communities**

In order for care experienced young people to have the best start in life, prosperity and stability, safety, and good health they need access to safe and loving homes, where their physical, emotional, psychological and identity needs are met. It is also important that children and young people are able to remain as close to their family, friends and networks as possible.

4.0 Background

4.1 Please refer to Appendix 1, Brent Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2025-2029.

5.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

5.1 Please refer to page 14 of the strategy for details of how children and young people's voices have contributed to the development of the Sufficiency Strategy.

6.0 Financial Considerations

6.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. The Sufficiency strategy details the achievements, challenges and progress to date from 2020 to 2024. The Financial pressures, for example, of the increased reliance on residential accommodation or the shortage of in-house foster carers in the last few years are well documented.

6.2 Achieving the targets of the outcome measures agreed as part of the Sufficiency Strategy for next year will be key for the department to manage the expected financial pressures in Children Social Care as part of the Medium Term Financial Outlook included in the Budget and Council Tax 2026/27 report.

7.0 Legal Considerations

7.1 There are no specific legal considerations to note.

8.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

8.1 Children and young people who are looked after and care leavers are in care due to adverse experiences, which results in specific vulnerabilities and disadvantages for this cohort of young people, which can negatively impact on outcomes. By keeping children close to their communities, in safe and stable

placements, their identity needs are met, and the local authority is able to provide them with an equitable service.

9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 9.1 There are no climate change or environmental considerations.

10.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

- 10.1 The creation of Brent's new Residential Home, "The Gardens" is referenced in the Strategy and is a key property consideration.

11.0 Communication Considerations

- 11.1 This Strategy is published on the Brent Council website.
- 11.2 Additional action will be undertaken to communicate the strategy through simple, audience-specific approaches. This may include the development of a summary which will enable Brent Council staff and young people to understand and be able to engage with the strategy in a meaningful way.

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Community Development