

Lambeth:
**Children
at the Heart
of Practice**

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021–2024



Lambeth

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About this document

Title: Corporate Parenting Strategy

Purpose: To set out Lambeth's Corporate Parenting vision and principles for the next 3 years

Updated by: Catherine Millington

Approved by: Corporate Parenting Board

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Forward



Merlin Joseph, Strategic Director Children's Services

As corporate parents, we must ensure the services and support we provide to our children looked after and care leavers is of the quality we would expect for our own children. Corporate parenting is everyone's responsibility and Lambeth's corporate parenting three year strategy will support us in ensuring we work together to achieve the best outcomes for our children looked after and care leavers. It is based on wide consultation with partners, children and young people and provides the overarching framework that our corporate parenting annual business plan sits underneath to drive improvement and assess progress in delivering our high ambitions for our children looked after and care leavers.



Councillor Ed Davie, Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

We want Lambeth to be the best place for our children and young people to grow up in regardless of that child or young person's background. As corporate parents we have a special responsibility to make sure children and young people who may have had disrupted experiences of family life get the support they need to live the happiest and healthiest lives possible.

I have three children of my own and as lead member for children's services and a corporate parent, I want to ensure we all have as high aspirations for our children looked after and care leavers as I have for the children growing up in my house. To ensure we provide the best services and support for our children and young people, we must work together in partnership to provide seamless services to enable them to reach their full potential. I welcome Lambeth's corporate parenting strategy which outlines our key vision and principles for our children looked after and care leavers and look forward to working with services and young people themselves to develop and deliver the best services possible.



Visions of Success

Lambeth's children in care council (Visions of Success), along with other children looked after and care leavers have helped in creating our corporate parenting 3-year strategy. It is important to make sure the voices and lived experiences of children looked after and care leavers are at the heart of all work undertaken and we look forward to working with everyone to make sure all children looked after and care leavers have the right support, at the right time that is child focused and meets their needs.

Introduction

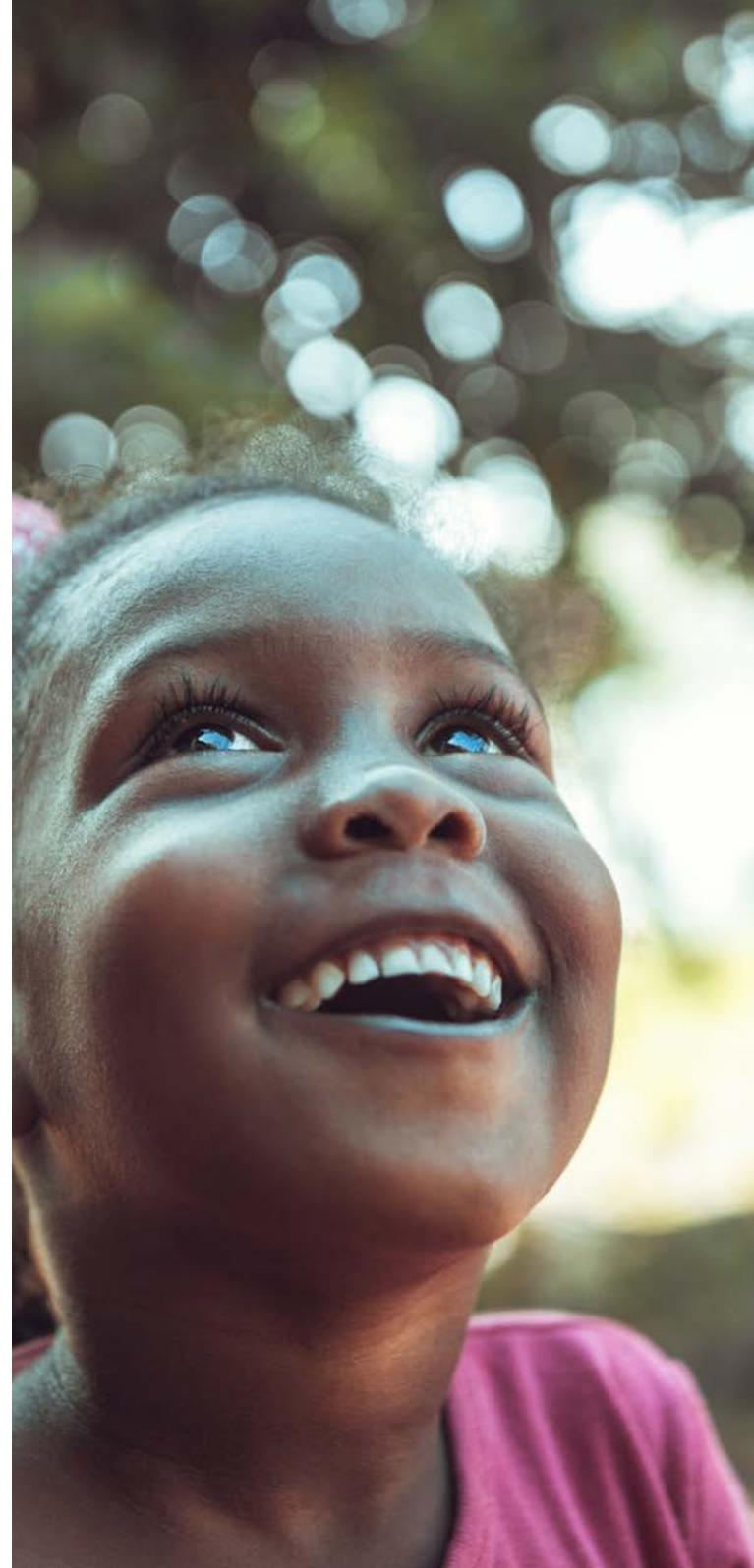
We want all children and young people to achieve, be healthy, be safe and resilient.

One of our areas of focus over the next 5–10 years is reducing inequalities for our most vulnerable groups; this includes children looked after and care experienced young people (care leavers).

This strategy sets out Lambeth's vision and principles, underpinned by the voices of our children looked after and care experienced young people (care leavers) to support us in ensuring we have high aspirations for them. We will work with them to ensure we have the right services delivering the right support at the right time to secure good outcomes for them.

What is abundantly clear is that no single service operating alone can hope to meet the needs of the children in our care or their families. We need to establish close, coordinated working relationships with partners if we are to succeed in improving outcomes for our children – now and in the future. Lambeth are committed to working in partnership with wider services, and with children and young people to achieve this.

As a partnership, we ensure children looked after and care experienced young people have a strong voice to support us in delivering our ambitions and in meeting their needs. We recognise our Children in Care Council: Visions of Success as key to this, in addition to our wider population of children looked after and care experienced young people who can share their lived experiences with us and influence continuous service improvement. We will listen, hear what is being said and take action to improve the lives of this group of children and young people. As a partnership, we are also committed to feeding back to young people to ensure they know how their input has changed the way we support them.



Our Children

Who are Lambeth's children looked after and care leavers?

March 21



362 children looked after
493 care leavers

children looked after
47% girls
53% boys

care leavers
39% girls
61% boys

children in care
52% Black, Black British
25% Mixed origin
17% White
4% Asian, British Asian
3% Other ethnic group

care leavers
59% Black, Black British
13% Mixed origin
14% White
5% Asian, British Asian
8% Other ethnic group

76% of children are living with foster carers

6% of children in care are in residential children's homes

4% of children live with their parents on a care order

1% of children live with their adoptive family

25% of children live with their parents on a care order

11% of children in care are unaccompanied asylum seeking children

90% of children have a review health assessment

22% of children looked after have a missing incident

63% of 18+ care leavers are in education, training or employment

41 care leavers at university

Our Approach

A young boy with dark skin is sitting in a hospital bed, looking intently at a tablet device. He is wearing a blue t-shirt and grey shorts. The background is a bright, softly lit room with white curtains.

Our responsibility

Corporate parenting is a collective responsibility first laid out in the Children Act 1989. In addition to the Local Authority, the Act placed a duty on partners, including health, education and housing services to assist children's services to fulfil their functions under the Act – providing help, support and services in order to meet their corporate parenting responsibilities.

Government guidance for Councillors “If this were my child” (DfES 2003), emphasised the elected member role in ensuring that all children looked after receive a good standard of care and the high-quality outcomes that every parent would want for their own child are sought.

Our vision

Lambeth's vision for all children and young people is that it should be one of the best places in the world for children and young people to grow up, providing a rich mix of relationships, experiences, opportunities and services that enable children and young people from all backgrounds and communities to thrive.

Lambeth will be ambitious every day for every child looked after and care experienced young person, putting young people and their families at the heart of what we do, so that every child achieves well, is safe and enjoys a secure and happy childhood, whilst accessing the right support to prepare to live independently and transition well into adult life as responsible citizens.

Our Values

We will hold high aspirations for our children looked after and high expectations for ourselves as corporate parents.

As a partnership we will continuously ask ourselves: “is this what a good parent would do?”
“Would this be good enough for my child?”

The answers to these questions will underpin our conversations, work and support with children looked after and care experienced young people. Every good parent knows that children need a safe and secure environment in which to grow and thrive. Parents protect and support their children against the dangers and risks of life. Parents are ambitious for them and want them to reach their full potential. Parents celebrate and share their children’s achievements. A good parent is also a good listener responding positively to what their children say.

A child who is cared for by the council has the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that would be expected from a good parent, within a safe, secure and supportive home.

We will take a partnership approach to corporate parenting

For corporate parenting to be effective it needs commitment from all elected members, council employees and partners. The whole council needs to be involved, as well as our partners, all acting as good parents, committing resources and working together to improve the lives of all children and young people in our care. We will support our foster carers and deliver against our commitments within Lambeth’s Foster Carer Charter.

We will champion children looked after and care leavers in everything we do

All council offers, elected members and partners will champion children looked after and care leavers within all their work to ensure this group of young people are recognised and their individual needs met. Lambeth have also adopted elected members to be corporate parent thematic champions. We will question, and where necessary challenge, aspects of services to ensure they have a focus on children looked after and care experienced young people. This role should be active and not passive, as corporate parents are ultimately responsible for the quality of care provided and securing good outcomes for our children and young people.

We will recognise all children and young people as individuals

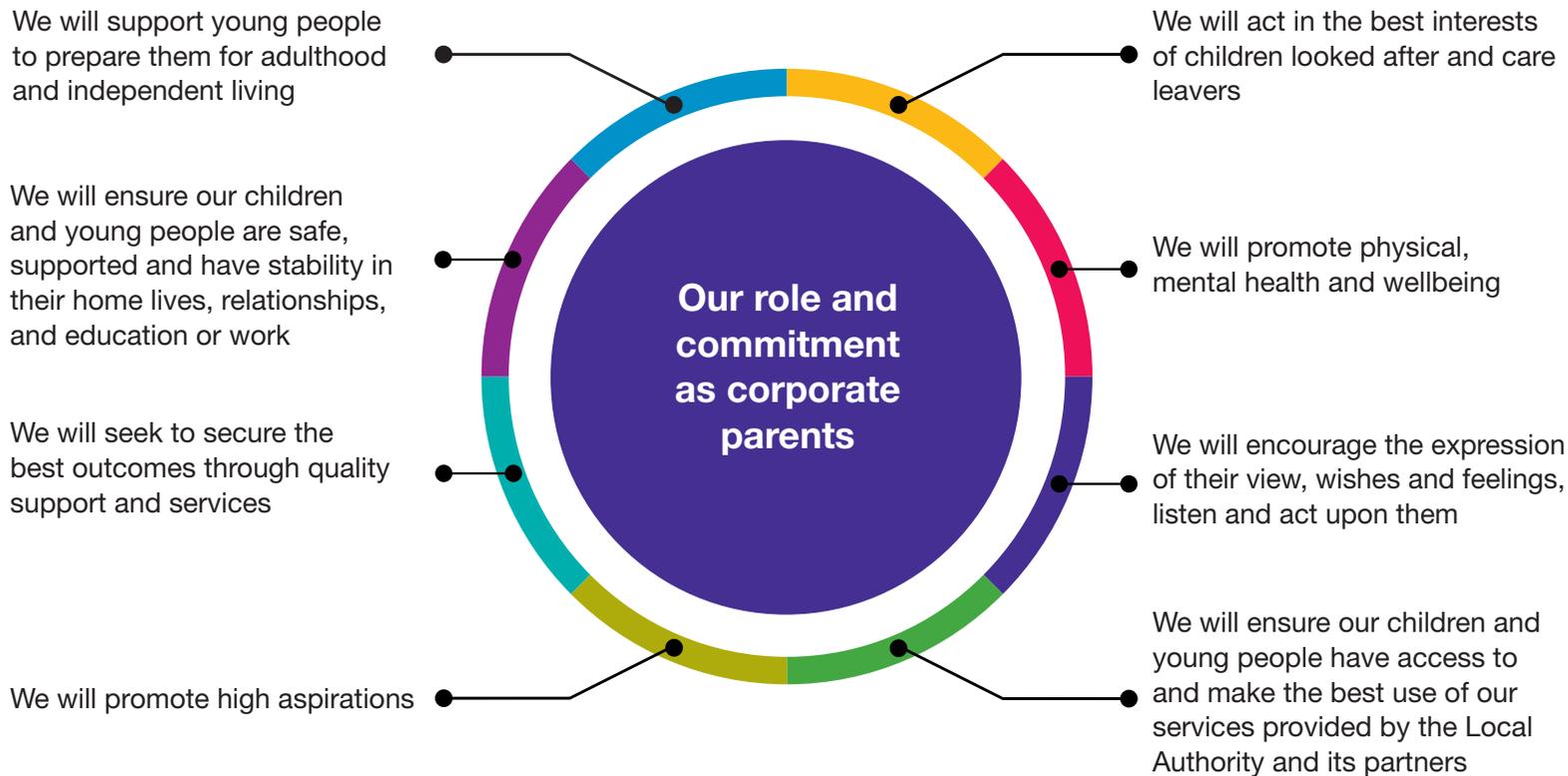
We will be effective and trustworthy corporate parents for children and young people in our care irrespective of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, faith or disability. We recognise that children come into care for different reasons with different needs. We will ensure that provision is bespoke and builds on universal and preventative services. We shall also ensure our young people receive good-quality advice and support when they leave care. We will support young people to understand and celebrate their own culture and identity, recognising and understand individual needs.

We will listen to the lived experiences of children looked after and care experienced young people and involve them in shaping our support and services

Across our services we will continuously listen to young people to understand their needs, experiences and views to influence practice, service and policy changes. We will take an interest in their successes and problems and celebrate their achievements.

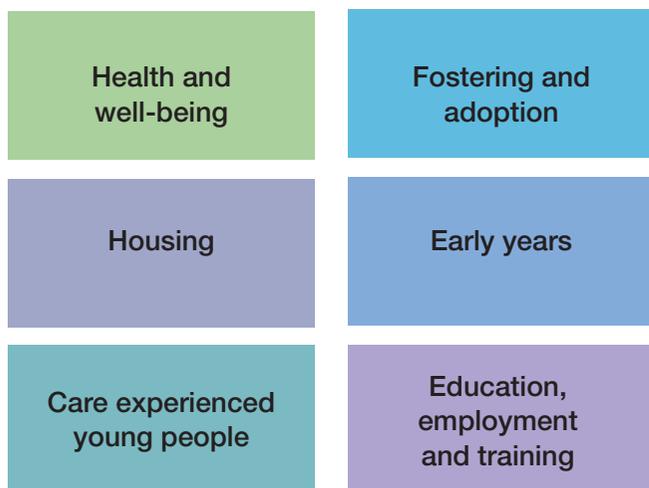
Our Principles

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 outlined the seven key corporate parenting principles which local authorities should have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to children looked after and care leavers.



Our Work Models

The voice of children and young people



Lambeth’s Elected Member Thematic Corporate Champions Model

Whilst every elected member is, by definition, a corporate parent, not all elected members will have the same knowledge and involvement. Lambeth have 7 elected members that are thematic champions for corporate parenting, these roles carry clear responsibilities for knowledge, scrutiny and advocacy for their particular area.

Lambeth’s Corporate Guardians Model

Corporate Guardians are an extension to our corporate parenting model in practice in our residential placements and fostering placements. As Corporate Guardians we have outlined what this model means through a variety of concepts and approaches that we wish to see in all placements regardless of the provider. We will be using this approach to manage any placement we make and to review how we are improving outcomes for children and young people.



Participation

As outlined at the beginning of this strategy, the voices of children looked after and care experienced young people are at the heart of everything we do. For the purposes of this strategy, participation is defined as: Children and young people's involvement in individual decisions about their own lives, as well as collective involvement in matters that affect them.

As corporate parents, Lambeth is committed to ensuring all children looked after and young people whom we are working with, who are capable of forming their own views, will have the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them. Their views will be given due weight according to the age and maturity of the child or young person and this will be a process, not a one off event. We understand that by meaningful participation, this will enable children and young people to have an influence on their own outcomes. As corporate parents we are fully committed to meaningful participation by: young people to understand their needs, experiences and views to influence practice, service and policy

changes. We will take an interest in their successes and problems and celebrate their achievements.

- Communicating in the best way possible
- Listening and taking seriously the views of children and young people
- Use plain language that is easily understood
- Keep in touch regularly
- Support children and young people in achieving their goals
- Putting children and the heart of our plans and practice



Feeling Safe

Are you a child looked after or a care leaver? Can you say yes to all these thoughts?



In their words

What our children and young people are telling corporate parents

If we don't say it enough, we are grateful for what you do. Thank you for all that you do and please stay committed to us no matter how hard it gets. We need you to never give up on us even when we give up on ourselves

For some of us English is not our first language, we have come from bad countries so very happy to be in London, we are happy for what you do and we do not like to complain, please make sure you do right for us

Sometimes I do not want to hear what you have got to say, but I know you are looking out for me. I need you to encourage me and always look out for me

There is more to us than what you read and what you see. We know you must be the professional but don't forget we have feelings too. You are not robots and neither are we. We are humans with feelings and stuck in a lot of processes

Being in care is only one part of our lives, there is so much more to us. Look after us like you would look after your own children and have high hopes for us. We know the job is not easy but for lots of young people you are the person we have to rely on. We really need you

The whole point about being in care is about being safe and well looked after by everyone working with us

Choose to be the best version of yourself every day and work from a truthful place. Who you are is impactful! We are grateful for the work you are doing. Keep going!

The whole thing about health is that it should be thought about I everything instead of feeling like an additional subject



What they told us

What our young people told us at our corporate parenting conference



“ How can you support me?

- Be a human, not just a person in a suit!
- Congratulate me when I do well, cards, phone call and certificates
- More fun activities for kids in care that is not just about being in care and help us learn new things
- Tell us what appointments are important for us to attend
- Question sheets to help us think about what we want to talk about at meetings
- Good financial advice on budgeting and survival skills
- More young people to be legally supported and make sure we know our rights
- Make the process clear on how to report abuse or bad behaviour
- Create a pack to tell us about our new home if we come into care or move placement
- Nice bedroom and space to be by yourself sometimes
- Careers advice, apprenticeships and shadowing opportunities.

“ What is important to me?

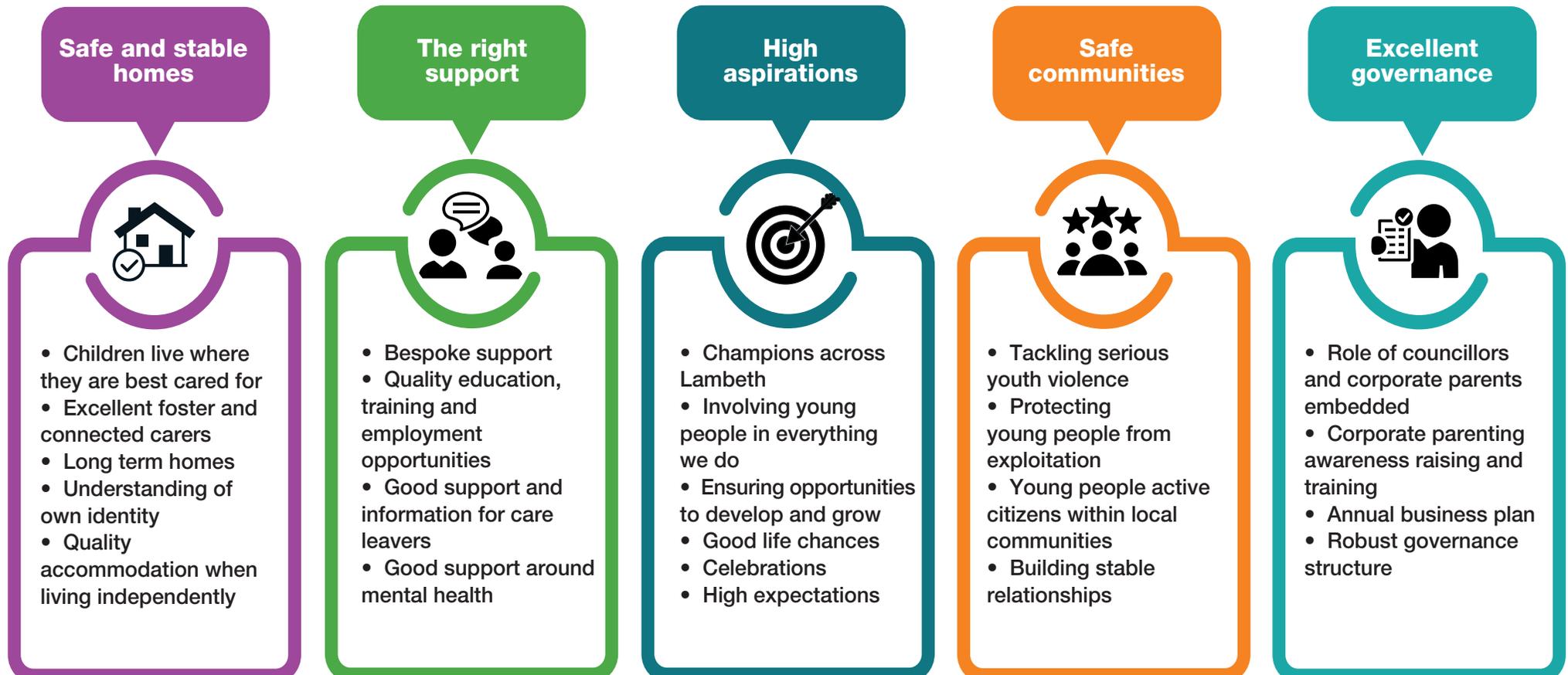
- Be a human not a robot!
- To stay healthy, eat good food
- Affordable, healthy food
- Create online videos for us to help us stay healthy
- Free gym membership
- Help us understand where we are from and understand our cultural identity
- Good life story work, my life story book means a lot to me
- Photos of my family
- Cultured theme days for us to join in with
- Young speakers and advocates to talk about cultural diversity.

“ How can we ensure you are listened to?

- Help us feel comfortable, supported and listened to
- Being in care is the most safe we have ever been, check that we are safe and adults in our lives are doing what they should be
- Call young people personally, build good relationships
- A lot has happened to us before we came to England, check if we need to see a counsellor or psychologist
- When you come into a home, it is a family that make a home
- When I live in a foster placement, it is important that I have a say too!
- I want to be like everyone else, be like other kids in my class, not stand out because I am a foster child
- Encourage us to have aspirations and dreams of our own.

Our Priorities

Lambeth Council's corporate parenting 3-year priorities



Lambeth produce an annual corporate parenting business plan, which clearly sets out the detailed annual priorities for that year. The annual plan is developed and widely consulted on through our corporate parenting governance structure and our annual corporate parenting conference.

