

# Corporate Parenting Strategy

2025-2028



# Foreword

Dear Corporate Parents,

**We are writing to you as the Voices of Sandwell (VOS) and the Forum for Independent Young Adults (FIYA), who trust and rely on your care, guidance, and support. Together, and on behalf of all Sandwell children and young people in your care, we ask you to strive for our best and make sure that our futures are bright, our needs are understood, and our voices are heard. This is a chance for us to share what matters most to us and how we can work with you to ensure the best possible outcomes for all the children and young people in your care**

The pledges and priorities you've made show that you're thinking about our needs and are committed to helping us succeed, stay healthy and feel safe and valued. By listening to our experiences, involving us in decisions and showing that you truly care, you give us the confidence to aim high and believe in ourselves.

We know education is key to building our futures, thank you for your pledges, which help us to achieve the best we can, this is celebrating our successes to create growth opportunities. To ensure your pledges lead to real outcomes, we ask you to keep improving Personal Education Plans and providing high-quality training for those who work with us. Everyone should have fair and equal access to education, and we hope that your actions will help close the gaps and give us the best chance to succeed. Your focus on apprenticeships and preventing youth unemployment makes us feel hopeful about our independence and future.

When it comes to health, both physical and emotional, we are glad to see you working hard to ensure we get the care and support we need. Being in care is hard, and having access to timely help for our well-being makes a huge difference. But it's not just about pledging, it's about seeing real actions that reflect our journeys. We ask you to make sure health services are really centred on us so that we can feel the changes you pledge to improve our day-to-day lives.

A safe and loving home we can call our base is something we all need to feel secure and thrive to do our best. Your pledge to provide this while we are in care and to support us as we prepare to live on our own, gives us hope for a stable and bright future. We

appreciate your efforts to revise strategies, work with housing teams and involve us in creating better plans for our culture, heritage and transition into adulthood. Preparing us with life skills and connecting us with supportive communities shows you care about the bigger picture, and it means so much to us.

Growing up and becoming an adult is a big step for us. Your pledge to help us through this is reassuring but promises need actions to make them work. Please make sure all young people have the help they need, whether it's about money, housing, school, or care. No one should feel left out. We count on you to fix gaps, improve services and make sure we are part of these changes.

We want to work with our Corporate Parents to build a future where every young person feels safe, cared for, and inspired to succeed. Thank you for believing in us and for taking the time to listen. Please remember, your pledges and priorities are a commitment to action as our parents. We count on your parenting, care, and accountability to make sure every child and young person in Sandwell has the chance to thrive and succeed.

**Thank you for listening.**

**(Voices of Sandwell and Forum For Independent Young Adults)**



# Introduction

Dear Children and Young People,

**Thank you for your thoughtful letter. We at Sandwell's Corporate Parenting Board feel inspired by your words and are dedicated to honouring the trust you have shown us. Your voices give us hope and show strength and determination. We promise to turn our promises into real actions that will help you.**

As your Corporate Parents, we are here to listen and work with you to make a difference in your life. Between 2025 and 2028, we will focus on the ideas you've shared, and we are excited to explain how we plan to bring positive changes in the areas you mentioned.

## Education:

Your future matters to us. We want to give you every chance to succeed in school and beyond. We'll improve your Personal Education Plans, provide training for those who support you, and ensure that everyone has an equal chance to learn and grow. We'll also create more opportunities for apprenticeships, work experience and help you find jobs as you grow older.

## Health:

We care about your physical health, feelings, and mental health. With your input, we'll make sure health services are easy to use and fit your needs. Getting health check-ups on time will stay a top priority and we'll offer emotional support and therapy to help you thrive.

## Care:

Every young person deserves a safe and loving home. We are changing how we work to better meet your needs and you'll be included in every step of the process. We'll work with housing teams to make plans that respect your culture and life changes. Teaching you important life skills is a promise we take seriously because we care about you.

## Growing Up:

As you get older and prepare for adult life, we'll help you feel confident and ready. We know this can be a hard time, but we'll make sure you're supported with housing, money, school, jobs, and other services. We'll make transitions between services smoother, so you're never left confused or alone. We will work with other teams to meet your needs and protect your rights.

We want Sandwell to be a place where every young

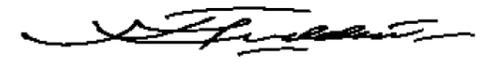
person feels supported, valued and able to reach their dreams. As a candidate for a "child-friendly borough," we'll make sure children's rights and voices are part of every decision. As a "foster-friendly borough," we'll also support foster carers and children in their care to help them succeed.

Working together is the best way to help you. We will continue to use the Sandwell Children's Trust Working Together Strategy to build stronger partnerships, improve communication, and make sure all services meet your needs. Your voice will always guide us as we build a brighter future together.

Your bravery reminds us why we're here, to help you and make sure you succeed. These promises aren't just words; they are actions we will take. Together, we will create a future where every child and young person in Sandwell feels valued, heard, and supported.

**Thank you for trusting us as your Corporate Parents.**

**We are proud to be here for you.**



**Cllr Jalal Uddin**

**Sandwell Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Chair Sandwell Corporate Parenting Board**



# What is Corporate Parenting?

**As your Corporate Parents, it is our responsibility and duty to care and support children and young people in our care, including those who have recently transitioned into adulthood.**

This includes protecting you from harm and keeping you safe. Nurturing your ambitions and supporting our children and young people to get the most out of life. Ultimately, our goal is to help you become independent and thriving young adults.

As a good Corporate Parent, we should continue to ask ourselves 'would this be good enough for my child?'

## Our Vision and Values

We have high aspirations for you. We want you to achieve the best possible outcomes by enabling you to be resilient and successful in whatever you choose to do. We want to do this by listening to you, involving you in the decisions we make, learning from you and making sure that you feel safe and valued.

We will encourage by providing you with more personal academic growth and the best development opportunities available. As your Corporate Parents, we will ensure you have a safe place to call home and stay healthy. We will ensure you have a network of supportive adults and that you thrive in becoming a successful healthy adult.

To ensure you continue to receive the best physical and emotional care and opportunities, we will strive to be a beacon of outstanding Corporate Parenting by providing training to professionals who work with you.

## How was this strategy created and co-produced?

A strategy is a plan. It is a way to make sure important things happen and that we can see the difference they make. Our strategy is all about making life better for the Children We Care For and Care Experienced Young People in Sandwell.

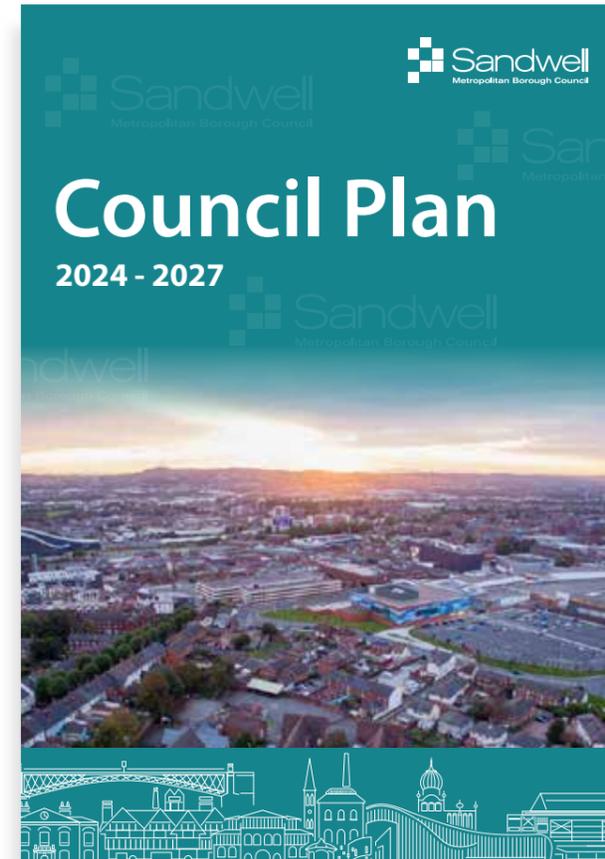
This won't happen overnight. It will take time, teamwork and hard work, and we'll need to face and overcome challenges along the way.

This plan was created together with young people like you. The Voices of Sandwell (VOS) group for under-18s and the Forum for Independent Young Adults (FIYA) for those aged 18–25 worked to decide what is most important. You told us what matters to you, what you need from your Corporate Parents, social workers, foster carers, and other supporters, which shaped the priorities of this plan.

We have listened, and we are working to make the changes that matter to you.

# SMBC Council Plan: 2024 – 2027

**Sandwell is working hard to create a bright future for children and young people.**



### Here's how:

- **Growing Up in Sandwell (Theme 1)** – We want Sandwell to be a fantastic place for children to grow up, where everyone feels valued and has the right support to succeed.
- **Living in Sandwell (Theme 2)** – Our communities should feel safe and welcoming, so we're taking strong steps to make sure families feel protected in their homes and neighbourhoods.
- **Healthy in Sandwell (Theme 3)** – We believe everyone deserves to be healthy and happy. That's why we're building a system that makes sure people's health and wellbeing are looked after.
- **Thriving Economy in Sandwell (Theme 4)** – We want Sandwell to grow, improve, and become a great place to work and live, helping to create a strong future for everyone.

We also believe that Corporate Parenting is everyone's responsibility. That's why this plan is part of Sandwell Council's 2024–2027 strategy to work together as One Council and make life better for the children we care for and young people who have experienced care.

“What matters to me is that I am heard and other young people are heard. Our connection is strong, and we want this to continue. Sandwell is part of our lives and always will be. This is our Sandwell story” Lukas

“Learn from our experience to improve how services can support us - learn from our experiences so together we can improve services for the future children and young people”

**SANDWELL**

“We want to have a place that makes us feel safe”



**In 2017, the Children and Social Work Act introduced National Corporate Parenting Principles. Sandwell is committed to embedding these principles across all its services, recognising them as the essential foundation for everything we do. These principles have been shaped by the voices of children and young people and are a guide to the work we do to ensure every child we care for and care-experienced young person feels supported, respected, and empowered.**

This commitment aligns with UNICEF UK's child's rights-based approach, emphasising dignity, respect, and the best interests of children. Both frameworks promote children's rights and well-being by prioritising their physical and mental health, encouraging their active participation in decisions, providing access to services, ensuring safety and stability, and preparing for adulthood.

Sandwell's pledge to exceeding national expectations is strengthened by working to these principles, ensuring our efforts are based on a deep understanding of the rights and needs of the children and young people we support, striving for a level of care and aspiration that any good parent would give.

## Our Corporate Parenting Board Priorities

These principles have guided us to an agreed set of Local Corporate Parenting Board Priorities which focus on what young people have told us they want, so we can make real improvements they'll notice and so they can make sure we stick to our promises.

- **Less corporate more parent:** Build strong and meaningful relationships.
- **Look after learning:** Support engagement and achievement in education, employment and training.
- **Our health matters:** Ensure we are physically, emotionally and mentally well.
- **Experience counts:** Nobody knows more than us about what it means to be in care.



“Community support doesn't stop at 18 years; we need to have positive relationships into adulthood”

## Partnerships and Alignment

**Sandwell Council, Sandwell Children's Trust, and our partners including schools, health services, housing and the police are all working together to make sure children and young people feel safe, heard, and supported.**

There are lots of different strategies in place to improve the lives of young people, but instead of working separately, everyone is joining together to make sure they really listen to what children need and want.

By being part of the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme, Sandwell is putting young people first, creating spaces and services that respect their rights and make life better. The Working Together Strategy makes sure young people's voices are heard, encourages clear and simple communication, and strengthens support that strengthens the support that services deliver, so children get the best care possible.

Sandwell is also making life easier for foster carers by offering flexible work policies and creating a strong, supportive community for families. As a Foster Friendly Borough, Sandwell wants to give every foster child the best possible chance to thrive.

The STAR Practice Model is all about teamwork. Social workers, carers, and other professionals work together

to make sure young people and families in Sandwell get the help they need at the right time.

All these efforts connect to build a community where every child feels valued, supported, and has the chance to succeed.

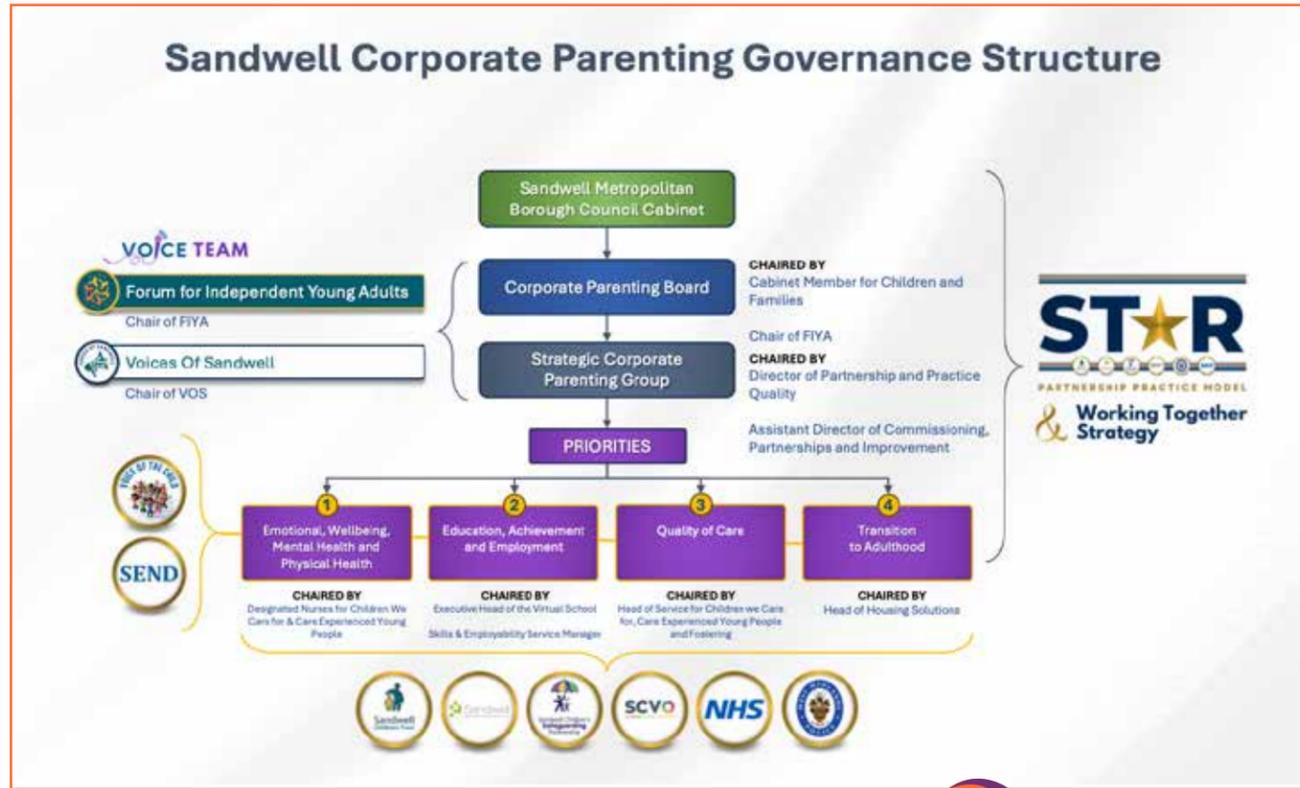
How the strategy aligns with:

- Sandwell Council Plan
- Sandwell Children's Trust Transformation
- UNICEF Child Friendly Cities
- Foster Friendly Borough initiative
- ICB health and wellbeing plan

The Integrated Care Board NHS Black Country Joint Forward Plan 2023-2028 will ensure the physical health, emotional wellbeing and mental health of Sandwell children we care for and care experienced young people live healthier and happier lives.



# Governance and Accountability



Between 2025 – 2028, children, young people and partners will share the strategy progression and feedback at each Corporate Parenting Board meeting.



# Our Children and Young Peoples Feedback

**Young people are at the heart of this strategy and they've told us what matters most to them. What they want, what they need, and how they'd like us to support them. We've listened carefully to their voices and ideas.**

Our partners have made promises and taken action to start meeting those needs. Together, we're working to make things better for young people now and in the future.

The Strategy will be delivered through an outcome-based action plan, overseen and regularly reviewed by the Strategic Corporate Parenting Group and its subgroups.

VOS & FIYA: Feedback							
Less corporate and more parent	Treating us as if we were your own	Offering support without having to ask for it	Being accountable for their actions	Still being their when we make mistakes	Having corporate family days during the years with those they work with	Treating children in care like their own being a champion for us and supporting us	Looking after us like our parents
We are important, worthy of respect and having our say is essential which must be protected	Always listening to our voice and respect our decisions	Always trying to engage with us throughout our day to day lives E.G- activities and events	Acknowledge our feedback by giving a response	Giving praise and celebrate our achievements	Being aware of what goes on in our lives	To let foster parents know what we want and so our voices heard	Further support with accommodation
Our mental health and well-being are impacted by the care systems, it is one of our biggest worries and there is a lot of change to be made	Having priority within mental health services	Providing a mentoring programme or signposting to another organisation	Providing high quality counselling or therapy for serious mental health issue	Being available in a crisis	When listening to our problem give us positive support and guidance	Further support with Physical Health	Further support with mental health and emotional wellbeing
Nobody knows more about what it means to be in care than we do	Support us with our cultural, religious and heritage awareness journey	Acknowledge where improvements need to be made to ensure things are not repeated	More visitors to come to FIYA & VOS in order to listen to us and learn from us	Allowing us to take over some meetings that involves us	Investing into our knowledge and experience for training, recruitment and research purposes	Further support with higher education	Further opportunities to encourage children and young people to achieve their full potential
The impact of the care experience do not end at 18 or 21, or even 25	Having lifelong link support doesn't stop for your children at that age.	Having ambassadors' roles to be offered to experience FIYA forum member when we turn 25 to continue to support children in care and care leavers	Encouraging consistency regarding relationships with staff members	Supporting care experienced with jobs within the council and the trust	Supporting with mental health services post 25	Further support to transition into adulthood and preparation for adulthood (Finances, and cost of living)	Support to children and young people to aspire and thrive to be successful adults

- All priorities
- Physical Health
- Education
- Access to Services
- Quality of Care
- Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
- Employment, Skills and Training
- Housing Services

# Our Priorities (2025–2028)

## Education, Achievement and Employment

### What you told us

- Provide children we are for and care-experienced young people more Care chances to reach their full potential
- Encourage them to be ambitious, to aim high and achieve success
- Help and provide care experienced young people with support to go into higher education
- Provide support for care experienced young people to find employment within Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and Sandwell Children's Trust

### Our pledge to you

We pledge to support your education journey by helping you do your best and celebrating your successes. We will provide you with chances to grow, guide you as you get older, and help you with job experience opportunities. We aim to keep learning and improving so we can always support your future success.

### What we will do

- Continue to improve the Personal Education Plans (PEP) ensuring further focus on what children in care for need to succeed in school.
- Prioritise high quality training for the adults who are responsible for supporting the children we care for and care experienced young people to ensure we close the education gaps.
- Make sure every child in care and care-experienced Child we care for has a school place and attends regularly, so they don't miss out on education.
- Support young people aged 19-21 who aren't in school, college, or work (NEET), by looking at data to better understand their needs and help them find learning opportunities.
- Run apprenticeship campaigns, to show young people the jobs available in the Council and Sandwell Children's Trust and create more opportunities with local employers.
- Help prevent young people from becoming NEET, by making sure they have the right guidance and options after finishing school, so they can move into education, training, or employment without struggling.

"Have people like me that are care experienced to help others understand what it's like to be in care"

# Physical Health, emotional wellbeing and mental health

### What you told us

- They want more help with their physical health and to make sure children and young people have access to the support they need to stay healthy.
- Make mental health services a priority, so children and young people can get faster and better support when they need it.
- Mental health and well-being are impacted by the care systems, it is one of the biggest worries and there is a lot of change to be made.

### Our pledge to you

We pledge to support your health by making sure you get the help you need for your physical and mental health and well-being. We will provide support for both your emotional and physical health by working to make things better the first time.

### What we will do

- Health checks should be done on time and be high quality and staff should listen to what children and young people say when planning and providing support.
- Every child and young person should get the emotional and therapeutic help they need based on what works best for them, while keeping their pathway plans on track.
- Young people should be seen within 8 weeks after all information is received, to make sure they can access the right support quickly.

"Listen to our views and respect our decisions about our day-to-day life, by providing support and guidance"

# Quality of Care

## What you told us

- Need more help with finding the right place to live.
- Foster parents should listen to us and understand Foster carers, so our voices are heard.
- We need support in learning about our culture, religion and heritage, so we can understand and feel connected to who we are.

## Our pledge to you

We pledge to provide you with a safe home while you are in care and support you when it's time to live on your own. We will help you find a safe place and a supportive community. We will also help you understand your culture, religion, and heritage, and prepare you for adulthood by teaching you essential life skills.

## What we will do

- **Update the Children We Care for Plan, working with young people to create it together and linking it with the Sufficiency Strategy and Marketing, Recruitment & Retention Strategy for Fostering.**
- **Create a support hub for housing, working with Housing Services to review different accommodation options and help 16-17 year olds find safe and stable places to live.**
- **Make sure health and dental checks happen on time and improve how health services respond to children's needs.**
- **Improve support for care-experienced young people, by updating the Local Offer, making sure more young people know about it and involving them in shaping it so it's easy to access.**



# Transition to Adulthood

## What you told us

- We need more support with finding the right place to live.
- There should be help available when we're in a crisis and don't know where to turn.
- We need more guidance on becoming adults, things like managing money and dealing with the cost of living.
- Being in care affects us for a long time, not just until we turn 18, 21, or even 25.

## Our pledge to you

We pledge to help you prepare for adulthood by teaching important skills like managing money and planning for the future.

## What we will do

- Make the support available for care-experienced young people even better so they know what help they can get.
- Improve the delivery of transition services for children we care for.
- Have a clear understanding of all the services that help young people become independent adults, so they fit together and work properly.
- To understand and influence gaps in current provision to meet the needs of children we care for.
- To focus on service improvement at important time when life changes, like moving into a safe home, managing money, continuing education or training, finding a job, and moving from Children's Trust to adult social care if needed.



## How we will measure success:

Each Subgroup will help make sure our Corporate Parenting Strategy is working well by regularly checking how the action plan is progressing and whether it's making a real difference. They'll look at the outcomes, share updates with the Corporate Parenting Board, and make sure the voices and needs of children we care for care and care-experienced young people are at the heart of every decision. This will help the Strategic Group deliver the strategy over the next three years, making sure support is focused where it's needed most.

# Glossary

Acronym	Meaning
CPB	Corporate Parenting Board
SCPG	Strategic Corporate Parenting Board
NEET	Not in Education, Employment and Training
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
CWCF	Children We Care For
VOS	Voices of Sandwell
FIYA	Forum for Independent Young Adults
CIC	Children in Care
CL	Care leavers
SMBC	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
SCT	Sandwell Children's Trust
ICB	Integrated Care Board
EET	Education, Employment and Training
CEYP	Care Experienced Young People
SEND	Special Educational Needs & Disabilities
PEP	Personal Educational Plan
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children/Separated Young people
EHCP	Educational, Health and Care plan
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
SF	Strengthening Families
VOS	Voices of Sandwell Forum
FIYA	Forum for Independent Young Adults
Supported Lodgings	A type of placement, often in a shared house, with staff on site either 24 hours or on a drop-in basis. The young person must be aged 16 or older.
Supported Lodgings	A young person over the age of 16 lives with a "host" in their home, in the style of a lodger. The host will provide support for the young person, but isn't expected to provide transport, pocket money, clothing etc.
Staying Put	In circumstances where a young person remains with their former foster carer/s after their eighteenth birthday, the arrangement becomes a "Staying Put" arrangement.

Acronym	Meaning
EDT	Emergency Duty Team
FC	Foster Carers
IFA	Independent Fostering Association
IHA	Initial Health Assessment
RHA	Review Health Assessment
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer
PA	Personal Advisor
PEP	Personal Education Plan
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SSW	Senior Social Worker/Student Social Worker/Supervising Social Worker
SW	Social Worker

## Our pledges

### Education, Achievement and Employment:

We pledge to support your education journey by helping you do your best and celebrating your successes. We will provide you with chances to grow, guide you as you get older, and help you with job experience opportunities. We aim to keep learning and improving so we can always support your future success.

### Physical Health, emotional wellbeing and mental health:

We pledge to support your health by making sure you get the help you need for your physical and mental health and well-being. We will provide support for both your emotional and physical health by working to make things better the first time.

### Quality of Care:

We pledge to provide you with a safe home while you're in care and support you when it's time to live on your own. We will help you find a safe place and a supportive community. We will also help you understand your culture, religion, and heritage, and prepare you for adulthood by teaching you essential life skills.

### Transition to Adulthood:

We pledge to help you prepare for adulthood by teaching important skills like managing money and planning for the future.

“The transparency and understanding shown by our Corporate Parents is genuinely refreshing. It’s clear there’s a shared commitment to listening to our views and ensuring we are recognised, heard, and treated with the importance we deserve. What’s especially clear is how it aligns with the Working Together strategy which was developed by Sandwell Children’s Trust and young people like us. This joined up strategy between the Council, Sandwell Children’s Trust and partners shows us that people understand that it takes a community to raise a child. It gives us hope and confidence that this isn’t just a strategy on paper, but a meaningful step forward, built on partnership to make a difference.

‘Be honest and try to understand how we feel’