

# ACHIEVING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY 2021/24



achieving  
for children

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# SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

## Our vision

*Achieving for Children is committed to taking proactive steps to minimise the environmental impact of its activities. We will seek to deliver children's services in an environmentally-friendly way through identifying areas of change which will result in fewer carbon emissions. We will work with the boroughs of Kingston, Richmond and Windsor & Maidenhead in the hope that through our actions, we will contribute to our boroughs' efforts in creating a sustainable and biodiverse environment for future generations to enjoy.*



## Foreword

I am pleased to present Achieving for Children's (Afc's) first environment strategy. As an organisation that works with children and young people every day we feel that we have an important role to play in raising awareness of environmental issues as well as leading by example in the way we deliver and commission services. We are committed to ensuring that we are proactive in minimising the environmental footprint of our own activities to promote a sustainable environment for future generations to enjoy.



Over the coming years, we plan to have a more structured approach to measuring, improving and reporting on our environmental impact so that we are transparent about where we need to do better, as well as to allow us to celebrate and document our progress. This strategy is our first step on that journey. Our new Environment Taskforce will develop a plan that will outline the practical steps we will take to bring this strategy to life. In developing our plans we will make sure that we listen to and reflect the voice of the children and young people we support and our workforce, as well as partners to ensure that we develop an approach that is respected by all and becomes embedded in Afc's culture.

**Lucy Kourpas**  
**Chief Operating and Finance Officer**  
**Achieving for Children**



# Introduction and background

Achieving for Children was created as a community interest company in 2014 and is now owned and commissioned by the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead to deliver children's services.

In June 2019, all three of AfC's owning councils announced a climate change emergency, with the ambition that the carbon emissions produced by each local authority will be net zero by 2050.

Achieving for Children, as a commissioned service, recognises that it too has a part to play towards the local and national efforts to reduce carbon emissions to protect the environment for future generations to enjoy.

## Legislation and policy

### National level

[The Climate Change Act 2008](#) introduced the UK's first legally binding target for 2050 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% compared to 1990 levels. While there is no legislation that directly obliges local authorities to decrease their emissions or set a target for being carbon neutral, local authorities are plugged into a dense network of overlapping policy requirements and frameworks that require us to have due regard to and take action on preventing and adapting to climate change.



### Local level

AfC's strategy is aligned with the wider climate and environment strategies which have been developed by Kingston, Richmond and Windsor & Maidenhead:

- [Royal Borough of Kingston Environmental Management Plan 2018-2023](#)
- [Richmond Climate Emergency Strategy 2019-2024](#)
- [Windsor & Maidenhead Environment and Climate Strategy](#)





# Section 2: Our future commitment

## Areas of change

We have identified six key areas where AfC can focus on having an impact.

- Staff awareness and engagement
- Waste and recycling
- Energy efficiency and biodiversity
- Travel and transport
- Commissioning and procurement
- Young people's participation

## Staff awareness, engagement and behaviour change



### The aim

To increase staff awareness on climate change and how day-to-day activities and individual actions impact on the environment.

Staff will be informed and enabled to make more environmentally friendly decisions in their day-to-day work, whether that is working from an AfC site, working in the community or working from home.

With increased knowledge and understanding, staff will also be able to identify opportunities – through changes to working practice or through new initiatives – can help towards the efforts in AfC becoming a greener organisation.

### The challenge

Achieving for Children employs approximately 1,400 employees who work across three local authorities. As a children's service, we do not have environmental expertise in-house. The success of our strategy will be determined by strong partnership working with our councils and wider networks to share best practice and build up knowledge.

### Our key actions in this area include to:

- deliver carbon literacy training to staff
- introduce environment champions within each service area
- work with our partners and owning councils to share good practice and learning



# Waste, recycling and resource management



## The aim

To generate less waste, and encourage the use of sustainable alternatives to single-use plastics and other single-use items.

## The challenge

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the majority of AfC's staff have been working from home. Whilst our need to print has greatly reduced, and we are producing fewer emissions from less travel, there is less control over waste produced and single-use plastic used by staff within their homes.

We will need to work with staff and our councils to promote the importance of recycling and reducing waste, and where possible, provide initiatives and incentives to support our staff to be less wasteful when working from home or in the community.

### Our key actions in this area include to:

- work with our owning councils to ensure there are appropriate and sufficient recycling facilities within AfC-occupied buildings
- review the use of single-use plastics within each service area and find sustainable alternatives
- continue with digital initiatives to drive down the need for printing
- ensure that hardware, such as mobile phones, is decommissioned and recycled in an environmentally-friendly way when at end of life

# Energy consumption and biodiversity (our buildings and green spaces)



## The aim

AfC, where responsible for the building's energy procurement, reduces energy consumption within its buildings, using only renewable energies. We use our green spaces at our sites, where possible, to promote biodiversity.

## The challenge

AfC currently operates from 71 sites across the three boroughs. This is made up of various services and the purpose of these buildings range from office space to children's centres and youth provision to supported accommodation.

The majority of the buildings which we operate from are council-owned and the energy and water provision is supplied by the owning council, recharged through lease arrangements. A challenge for AfC is to identify where we are able to have an impact within the buildings which we occupy, and where there are opportunities for us to promote the local wildlife and biodiversity, such as green spaces.



### **Our key actions in this area include to:**

- work with our owning councils (landlords) to improve the energy efficiency within the buildings which AfC leases
- work with our owning councils (landlords) to promote biodiversity within the green spaces where AfC occupies

## **Travel and transport**

### **The aim**

There are sustainable travel options available for all staff who are required to travel as part of their job. Non-essential travel to the workplace, between sites and across operational areas is dramatically reduced through flexible working and digital solutions.



### **The challenge**

Each operational area presents different challenges and opportunities in relation to travel, due to the geography, existing travel options and digital solutions in place.

Delivering services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has provided reassurance that we can work more flexibly, and some services, support functions and meetings can be delivered remotely. In doing so this can be a more effective way of engaging with each other and our families. When considering digital solutions to reduce travel we must ensure that our staff and families are not disadvantaged or excluded as a result.

As a relationship-based organisation, delivering statutory services, face-to-face support is unavoidable and we recognise that an element of travel will remain an essential part of our business. Finding sustainable alternatives that meet the needs of the service will be dependent on the right infrastructure being in place, large investment and will take time to implement.

### **Our key actions in this area include to:**

- work with our owning councils to explore options for electric pool cars or vehicles with renewable fuel sources
- work with our SEND transport provider to transition the current fleet of diesel buses to electric or vehicles which have renewable fuel sources
- ensure the cycle to work scheme is available in all operational areas
- continue to explore digital technology solutions to enable flexible working



# Goods and services from sustainable suppliers



## The aim

Environmental and sustainable questions are embedded as part of the procurement and commissioning scoring process, consistently across the organisation.

## The challenge

AfC commissions and procures a range of services and products across the organisation. The challenge will be to bring in consistency which is proportionate to what we are procuring or commissioning.

There is also a reliance on staff knowledge and understanding to ask the right questions during the tender process.

### Our key action in this area includes to:

- review AfC's current commissioning framework to incorporate sustainability and climate change



# What our young people think about climate change

It is important that children and young people feel they can have a real impact on decisions that affect them and the services they receive through the contribution they make.

Whilst the strategy focuses on the workforce and how we deliver operational services in an environmentally-friendly way, we will, where possible, link in with our children and young people to support their activity in relation to environmental and sustainability projects.

Involving young people within the work of the strategy will be achieved through a number of ways.

### Our key actions in this area include to:

- provide our young people with balanced, objective, regular and transparent information about our progress
- support and promote initiatives and opportunities, through partnership working, which actively encourage children, young people and their families to take part in activities across the boroughs that are informative and are working towards an environmentally-friendly positive outcome

'Climate change will affect everyone and we all have responsibility over what will happen.'

As issues surrounding climate change begin to worsen, it is important that as local people we actively try and prevent its detrimental impact as it could lead to severe consequences.'

Kingston and Richmond Youth Council Climate Summit (2021)





# Section 3: Monitoring and accountability

## Our promise

AfC promises that the following principles will be applied when delivering the strategy.



**Leading by example:** Achieving for Children's Company Leadership Team should lead by example.

**Learning from best practice:** Achieving for Children will require collaboration with its owning councils and similar organisations, sharing ideas and learning from best practice.

**Involving our children, young people and families:** Achieving for Children is a relationship-based organisation and is committed to putting children and young people's voices at the heart of everything we do.

## Implementing the strategy and reviewing arrangements



Implementation of the strategy is scheduled to take place from the beginning of 2021 through to 2024, to align with Achieving for Children's Business Plan cycle.

Alongside the strategy, AfC will develop an action plan which will support AfC's aims in reducing its carbon footprint and take forward the key priorities identified under each theme. The action plan will be overseen by an Environment Taskforce, coordinated by the Strategy, Policy and Programmes Team. Where possible, it will capture how impact will be measured.

The action plan will be presented to the AfC Board on a quarterly basis and have regular scrutiny by the Kingston and Richmond and Windsor & Maidenhead youth councils.

We recognise that information on climate change is continually evolving along with our learning. Therefore as our understanding matures on what impact we are having, this document will be regularly revised to reflect new information. AfC is committed to work alongside its owning councils to share learning and best practice where possible to maximise the success in tackling climate change.





# Roles and responsibilities

## AfC Board

- Provide scrutiny and challenge on the Environment Strategy Action Plan

## Company Leadership Team

- Make staff aware of the strategy
- Champion the strategy
- Encourage and enable sustainable ways of working



## Environment Taskforce

- Establish and maintain oversight of the actions identified as part of the strategy, ensuring progress is made
- Monitor the impact with the use of data and intelligence
- Provide regular updates to the AfC Board
- Be the link with the owning councils' environment teams and share best practice where possible

## Strategy, Policy and Programmes Team

- Coordinate the Environment Taskforce and ensure regular reporting is carried out

## All staff

- Be aware of the strategy and its aims
- Engage in any available training
- Make a conscious effort to contribute to AfC's aims of reducing its carbon footprint



# Section 4: Glossary A-Z

## B

### **Biodiversity**

This refers to the variety of plants and animals and other living things in a particular area or region. It encompasses habitat diversity, species diversity and genetic diversity.



## C

### **Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)**

Principal greenhouse gas related to climate change.

### **Carbon emissions**

Pollutants produced by mechanical, industrial or combustion processes released into the atmosphere.

### **Carbon footprint**

Total greenhouse gas emissions resulting from one or a group of activities, including embodied carbon.

### **Carbon literacy/literate**

Being aware of the impact of everyday activities on the climate, and knowing what steps can be taken to reduce emissions as an individual, a community group, or an organisation, and why it's important that we all take these steps.



### **Climate change**

A large scale, long-term shift in the planet's weather patterns or average temperatures. Characterised by higher temperatures, sea level rise, changing rainfall, and more frequent and severe extreme weather.



# E

## Electric vehicle



A vehicle that uses an electric motor for propulsion, comprising ones that run solely on batteries, as well as plug-in hybrid electric vehicles that have an attached petrol or diesel engine to power the battery engine.

## Energy efficiency

Making the best or most efficient use of energy in order to achieve a given output of goods or services, and of comfort and convenience.

## Environment

The natural world, as a whole or in a particular geographical area, especially as affected by human activity.

## Environmentally-friendly

Not harmful to the environment.

# G

## Greenhouse gas



Any gas that induces the greenhouse effect, trapping heat within the atmosphere that would normally be lost to space, resulting in an increase in average atmospheric temperatures, contributing to climate change. Examples include carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxides.

## Green space

An area of grass, trees, or other vegetation set apart for recreational or aesthetic purposes in an otherwise urban environment.

# O

## Operational area



The geographical locations of where AfC's children's services are based. AfC has two operational areas, defined as the Kingston and Richmond boroughs (forming one operational area) and Windsor & Maidenhead (forming another operational area).



# R

## Renewable energy

Energy from a source that is not depleted when used, such as wind or solar power.



## Renewable fuel

Renewable fuels are fuels produced from renewable resources. Examples include: biofuels and hydrogen fuel. Renewable fuels can include fuels that are synthesized from renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar.

# S

## Sustainable

For the purpose of this strategy, the term sustainable is defined as responsibly interacting with the planet to maintain natural resources and avoid jeopardising the ability for future generations to meet their needs.



# W

## Waste

For the purposes of this strategy, waste is defined as waste generated by businesses that is similar in composition and nature to household waste.



# Appendix I: Environment Taskforce terms of reference



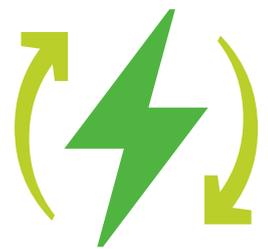
## Purpose and responsibilities

The Environment Taskforce will be made up from representatives across Achieving for Children to carry forward AfC's Environment Strategy. The main responsibilities of the group will be to:

- establish and maintain oversight of an environment action plan to address the key themes identified within the strategy, ensuring that
  - the actions identified are aligned with AfC's Business Plan
  - actions are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related)
  - progress is monitored through regular updates
  - where possible, data indicators are used to measure impact
  - gaps are identified and addressed
- evaluate impact using information available to assess trends, including what is working well, what could be better and what needs to change
- develop a campaign and communications plan to raise awareness of the strategy and action plan with staff and service users
- provide advice on any political and cost implications, and where additional resource or funding is required to achieve a target, support the business case or grant application
- work closely with the owning councils' environment teams and share best practice where possible
- be environment champions across AfC, leading by example and bring respective professional expertise to identify where further changes can be implemented to help AfC's mission in tackling its carbon footprint

## Reporting and monitoring

- Regular updates will be provided to the AfC Board (quarterly)
- The group will escalate risks and issues that cannot be resolved to the Company Leadership Team



# Chairing arrangements and administration

The group will meet bi-monthly and will be chaired by a member from the Company Leadership Team.

The group will be supported by a project lead from the Strategy, Policy and Programmes Team who will oversee the administration for the meetings and updating of the action plan.

## Membership

Membership is to be confirmed. There will be one taskforce with representation from both operational areas (Kingston and Richmond and Windsor & Maidenhead)

Representation will include the following:

- AfC's Company Leadership Team (Chair)
- Strategy, Policy and Programmes (Project Lead)
- Commissioning and Partnership directorate
- AfC's Digital Board/Team
- representative from Communications
- representative from Workforce
- representative from Property
- representative from Education
- representative from Social Care
- representative from Youth Services



