



Corporate Parenting Committee Full Reports Pack

Wednesday 19 April 2017 at 5.00 pm

Board Room 2 - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way,
Wembley HA9 0FJ

Membership:

Members

Councillors:

M Patel (Chair)
Conneely
Hossain
Thomas
Warren

Substitute Members

Councillors:

S Choudhary, Crane, Dixon and
Tatler

For further information contact: Bryony Gibbs, Governance Officer
020 8937 1355, bryony.gibbs@brent.gov.uk

For electronic copies of minutes, reports and agendas, and to be alerted when the minutes of this meeting have been published visit:
www.brent.gov.uk/committees

The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting

Agenda and full reports pack

Introductions, if appropriate.

Item	Page
1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions (where applicable)	
To receive any apologies for absence and substitutions from Members.	
2 Declarations of Interests	
In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillors are invited to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests, or other interest, and the nature of it, in relation to any item on the agenda.	
3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting	1 - 6
To confirm as a correct record, the minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee, held on 8 February 2017.	
4 Matters Arising (if any)	
5 Deputations (if any)	
6 Update from Care in Action Members	
A verbal report will be provided to the committee.	
7 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Transformation - What this means for Looked After Children	
A verbal report will be provided to the committee.	
8 Looked After Children (LAC) Attainment Data	7 - 18
The purpose of this report is to summarise and contextualise the education performance data for Brent Looked After Children with the Statistical First Release (SFR). The report outlines SFR data from the previous academic year, including KS1, KS2 & KS4 outcomes/progress from summer 2016. This comparative data was not available when the Annual Report was presented at the meeting on 8 th February 2017.	

9 Adoption Service 6-Month Report (October 2016 - March 2017) 19 - 26

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee about the general management of the adoption service and how it is achieving good outcomes for children. This report details the activity of Brent's adoption service from Oct 1st 2016– March 31st 2017.

10 Fostering Service Quarterly Report (January 2017 - March 2017) 27 - 34

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee about the general management of the in-house fostering service and how it is achieving good outcomes for children. This is in accordance with standard 25.7 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards (2011). The report covers the fourth quarter of this reporting year.

11 Children and Social Work Bill Briefing - Improved Outcomes 35 - 38

This briefing provides information regarding the Children and Social Work Bill, currently awaiting Royal Assent. It has implications for social work practice as it relates to looked after children and care leavers with particular reference to the principles of corporate parenting, the education of looked after children and the regulation of social workers.

12 Any Other Urgent Business

Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Head of Executive and Member Services or his representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 64.

Date of the next meeting: To be confirmed following the Annual Council meeting in May 2017



- Please remember to set your mobile phone to silent during the meeting.
- The meeting room is accessible by lift and seats will be provided for members of the public.

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MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE **Wednesday 8 February 2017 at 5.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor M Patel (Chair), Councillor and Councillors Conneely, Hossain, Thomas and Warren

Also Present: Councillors McLennan

1. Declarations of interests

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Deputations (if any)

There were no deputations received.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 October 2016 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting subject to the following amendment:

- That after the word 'report' on the first line of the second paragraph for item 6, the following be inserted "except Councillor Warren who found the report boring and unimaginative in comparison with some other Councils".

4. Matters arising (if any)

There were no matters arising.

5. Feedback from Care in Action / Junior Care in Action

Anthony Egunjobi and Hannah Mansaray from Care In Action (CIA) updated the Committee on relevant developments since the previous committee meeting, including attendance at a Foster Carer's Conference, Skills to Foster Training Sessions and Brent Youth Parliament meetings. The CIA Celebration of Achievement Ceremony had been held and had been an enjoyable evening.

Gail Tolley and Nigel Chapman emphasised the importance of the input of young people from CIA. Members thanked the representatives from CIA for their hard work and expressed congratulations for the young peoples' achievements.

6. London Regional Adoption Agency

Nigel Chapman (Operational Director Integration and Improved Service) advised that the Cabinet had considered a report on the creation of a London Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) on 12 December 2016; this report, along with the decisions taken by Cabinet were set out in the papers before the committee. Members were advised that a hub and spoke model was currently being pursued. Funding to progress this model had been provided by the Department for Education in January 2017. It was anticipated that approval for the formal establishment of the London RAA would be obtained by the Summer of 2017 and the RAA would be in place for the start 2018. The committee would be kept up to date with the progress made via the six-monthly Adoption Service reports.

A member noted that the recommendations set out in the Cabinet report did not include reference to a hub and spoke model and questioned why the Cabinet had subsequently referred explicitly to this model in the decisions taken. Members questioned whether the proposed changes were anticipated to bring about improvements to the adoption process. Noting that some London Boroughs would be seeking to join different RAAs, the committee queried the impact of this on Brent. Further queries were raised regarding the powers and controls the council would retain to ensure the London RAA was accountable, subject to appropriate scrutiny and that the high standard of service currently delivered in Brent was maintained..

Gail Tolley advised that details of the hub and spoke model had been contained within the body of the Cabinet report and Cabinet, in referring to the model in the decisions taken, sought to be clear about the path that would be pursued. Nigel Chapman explained that RAAs aimed to achieve economies of scale and streamline the adoption process. The model for the London RAA proposed the creation of a company jointly owned by all participating local authorities and subject to Ofsted regulation. The 'hub' would include administrative, recruitment, marketing, human resources and legal activity. The 'spokes' would be regional offices providing the direct connections with each local authority. The focus of the development work going forward would be to ensure that Brent Council's standard of service was maintained and the children remained the focus of the process. It was noted that due predominantly to existing arrangements, Harrow council had chosen to join a different RAA but it was not considered that this would be particularly detrimental to Brent in view of the large pool of resources that would be available through the London RAA. Addressing concerns regarding accountability, Nigel Chapman confirmed that it would be essential to have a direct connection between each local authority Corporate Parenting Committee and the London RAA.

RESOLVED:

That regular updates on the development of the London Regional Adoption Agency be provided to the committee, with the first of these to be provided at the first meeting of the 2017/18 municipal year.

7. Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report 1st October - 31st December 2016

Nigel Chapman (Operational Director, Integration and Improved Service) introduced to the committee the Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report for the period 1 October 2016 to 31 December 2016. Members' attention was drawn to changes in placement activity and recruitment activity over this period. In particular, the committee heard that the number of children placed with Brent Foster Carers had reduced in quarter 1 to twenty-six per cent, which fell below the corporate performance target of thirty-five per cent. During this time, there had also been a stabilisation of the numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) approaching the borough for support. It was anticipated that the recruitment target for foster carers for 2016/17 would only just fall short of the target of twelve to fifteen, with the number of approvals by March 2017 projected at eleven. Future developments for the service were outlined to members, including the rolling out of social pedagogy training to foster carers and a joint bid with Ealing and Harrow local authorities to the DfE to pursue better collaboration and sharing of services regarding foster carer recruitment.

A member noted that the reference to the delays caused by the slow return of information from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) had become a standing item in the monitoring report and queried what action had been taken to address the issue. An appraisal of the current situation with UASC was requested, to include comment on support offered by schools, collaboration with colleagues in the housing service and whether there was a need for more semi-independent provision. A member highlighted the benefit of liaising with the Adults Safeguarding Board in supporting a young person transitioning to adult services and the potential for learning and sharing lessons regarding the provision of semi-independent and assisted living accommodation. It was questioned to what degree financial considerations contributed to foster carers resigning from Brent and further information was sought regarding the out-of-hours support line for foster carers. Queries were raised regarding missing children and the awareness of the procedures in place for foster carers in such circumstances.

In response, Nigel Chapman advised that the difficulties caused by the DBS delays had been raised via the London Directors of Children Services to senior levels of the Metropolitan Police. Whilst the council had not lost foster carers it had resulted in delays in their approval. Gail Tolley advised that officers would contact the London Safeguarding Board, the membership of which included Senior Metropolitan Police Officers, to seek a resolution to the situation.

Turning to the issue of UASC, Nigel Chapman informed the committee that Brent had the third highest numbers, after Croydon and Hillingdon. As one of eight London boroughs where the number of UASC exceeded 0.1 per cent of the child population, Brent was no longer included in the UK Border Agency rota for accommodating UASC. The national scheme was currently ineffective as it relied on local authorities voluntarily accepting UASC and lobbying was taking place at senior levels to try to address this. Gail Tolley (Strategic Director of Children and Young People) advised that Ofsted had visited during the reporting period and provided very positive feedback on the support for young people with English as a second language. Nigel Chapman advised that collaboration with colleagues in the housing service principally related to preventative action to support people into larger accommodation and

prevent children coming into the care system. The council had a range of providers of semi-independent accommodation for young people and now had a framework agreement with the West London Alliance for commissioning additional provision.

Nigel Chapman advised that a benchmarking exercise was underway to ensure that Brent offered a competitive allowance for foster carers. Further information on the reasons for Foster Carers leaving Brent would be included in the next monitoring report. The council had an emergency duty team of social workers, of which foster carers were aware; however by the start of the new financial year it was anticipated that a support line would be available for foster carers to access non-emergency advice and support. Gail Tolley confirmed that foster carers were made aware of the procedures to follow in an urgent situation and would contact their supervising social worker or the out of hours emergency duty team if they needed to report an incident.

RESOLVED: that the Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report 1st October - 31st December 2016 be noted.

8. Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children - Annual Report 2015/2016

Janet Lewis (Virtual School Head) introduced the Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children Annual report 2015/2016, which outlined the activity and impact of the Brent Virtual School during the academic year 2015/2016. The report included details of the educational outcomes of Brent looked after children, reflected on the impact of activities undertaken and identified areas of future development to achieve improved outcomes for looked after children (LAC). Members' received a presentation which set out the key messages from the report. The committee heard that Key Stage 1 results exceeded the national outcomes for all children in reading, writing and mathematics, whilst the Key Stage 2 results fell three per cent below the national average. The Key Stage 4 results were the best achieved in the last few years with seventeen per cent of the LAC cohort achieving five A-C grades, including English and Mathematics. This was in line with the 2015 national outcomes for LAC. Positive trends were identified for the post-16 cohort in respect of the numbers in education, employment and training. In concluding the presentation, Janet Lewis drew members' attention to the priorities for the Virtual School in 2017, in particular the work to raise awareness in schools of the impact of attachment issues, which would be the focus of the schools' conference.

In the subsequent discussion, the committee questioned the reasons underpinning the increase in fixed term exclusions and sought further details of the support provided by the Virtual School in such cases. Members emphasised the importance of tackling poor attendance and endorsed mentoring by other LAC or care leavers with relevant experience. Further details were sought of the alternative provision available in the borough, the quality checks undertaken by the Virtual School of such provision, and whether any LAC attended 14-16 college provision.

Responding to the queries raised, Janet Lewis advised that the reasons behind fixed term exclusions varied according to the child but generally when LAC/young people acted out it was in a demonstrably visible way. The Virtual School would challenge exclusions and if there was a risk that an exclusion could lead to a child falling behind with their learning, other options would be negotiated such as an onsite exclusion, or reduced timetable. Janet Lewis further advised that schools were also encouraged

to give the Virtual School pre warning with any behavioural difficulties in order to allow early discussions to take place. Attendance issues were not taken lightly but unfortunately it was recognised that it was the one form of control most easily exercised by LAC. It was important to build a relationship with the child and there were many success stories around attendance but sometimes this was more difficult. It was an issue which required all involved in a child's care to address, including foster carers and the schools. The Virtual School did offer a range of mentoring services but it was recognised that peer mentoring could be a very powerful tool and this would be further explored.

Janet Lewis outlined the alternative provision available, noting that the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) was in place for secondary age children, though this mostly accommodated children who were permanently excluded. Smaller alternative provision was available in neighbouring boroughs. It was the responsibility of the school to find, monitor and pay for an alternative provision placement and it was important to ensure schools remained accountable for this. There was some use made of 14-16 college provision but it had been variable in its success. It was important for a child to be able manage their behaviour in what was seen as an adult environment of a college. The Virtual School worked closely with providers and the Inclusions Service to quality assure alternative provision. An online curriculum was provided currently and work was underway to commission an educational resource tailored to the needs of Brent's LAC.

Members commended the robust defence offered by the Virtual School in support of LAC facing exclusion and reiterated the need to ensure that poor attendance was tackled as far as possible.

RESOLVED: that the Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children Annual report 2015/2016 be noted.


9. Any other urgent business

None.

The meeting closed at 7.01 pm

M Patel
Chair

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	<p>Corporate Parenting Committee 19 April 2017</p> <p>Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</p>
<p>Brent Virtual School annual report - update (Attainment data about children continuously looked after for at least 12 months, published annually by the DfE, with reference to LAC national outcomes – Statistical First Release)</p>	

1.0 Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarise and contextualise the education performance data for Brent Looked After Children with the Statistical First Release (SFR).

The report outlines SFR data from the previous academic year, including KS1, KS2 & KS4 outcomes/progress from summer 2016.

This comparative data was not available when the Annual Report was presented at the meeting on 8th February 2017.

2.0 Recommendations

The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review, comment on and question the contents of this report.

The report is to provide evidence that the education outcomes for Brent LAC are being monitored, and to demonstrate that there are strategies/interventions in place which focus on raising attainment further, and which are continuously being reviewed.

Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children

SFR Report 2016 Outcomes

April 2017

*Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/outcomes-for-children-looked-after-by-las-31-march-2016>

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*Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/outcomes-for-children-looked-after-by-las-31-march-2016>

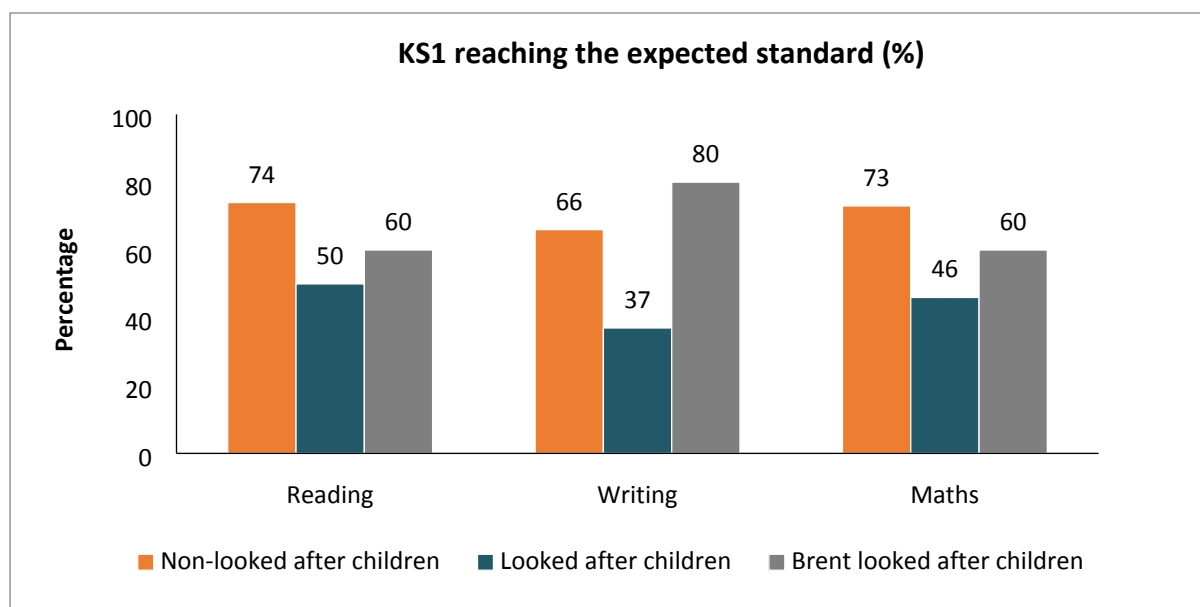
1. Key Stage 1 Statutory Attainment 2015/16

In 2016 the LAC KS1 cohort comprised 5 children.

KS1 TESTS for 2015-16 SFR Cohort (5 children)	Brent LAC achieved expected Standard	Non-looked after children %	All LAC %	Outer London LAC
Reading	4 (80%)	74%	50%	48%
Writing	3 (60%)	66%	37%	36%
Maths	3 (60%)	73%	46%	41%

Comparison with National LAC Outcomes:

- Brent LAC outcomes compare well with both national LAC and Outer London LAC outcomes
- The small number of eligible KS1 LAC means Brent's outcomes do not feature in the 2016 LA tables.

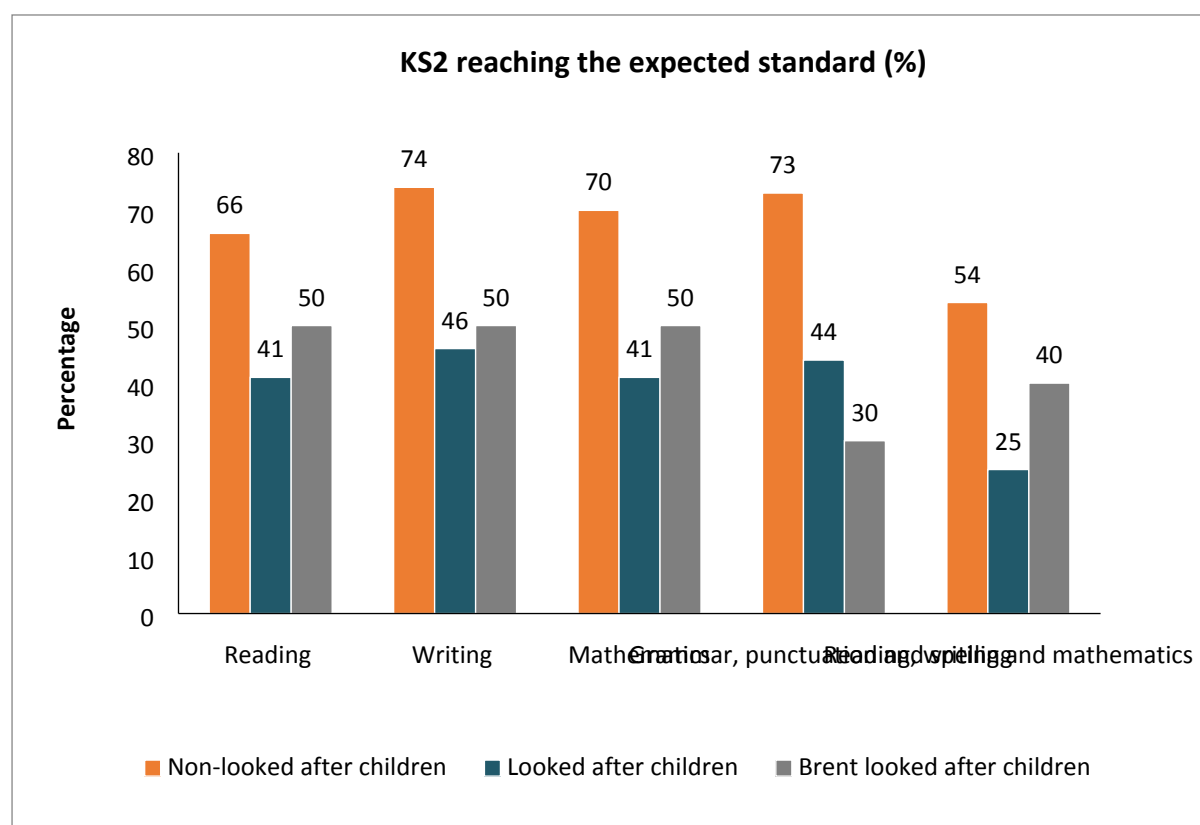


*Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/outcomes-for-children-looked-after-by-las-31-march-2016>

2. Key Stage 2 Statutory Attainment 2015/16

In 2016 the LAC cohort comprised 10 children.

KS2 TESTS for 2015-16 SFR Cohort (10 children)	Brent LAC achieved expected Standard	Non-looked after children %	London Average LAC
Reading	5 (50%)	66%	48%
Writing	5 (50%)	74%	55%
Maths	5 (50%)	70%	47%
Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling	3 (30%)	73%	52%
Reading, Writing and Maths	4 (40%)	53%	32%



Comparison with National LAC Outcomes:

- Apart from GPS, where the gap is significant, Brent's LAC KS2 outcomes are ahead of national LAC
- They also compare well with the London LAC average except in writing and GPS
- 50% of Brent KS2 LAC achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics compared to 35% in Greenwich and 38% in Ealing
- The small number of eligible KS2 LAC means Brent's outcomes do not feature in the 2016 LA tables.

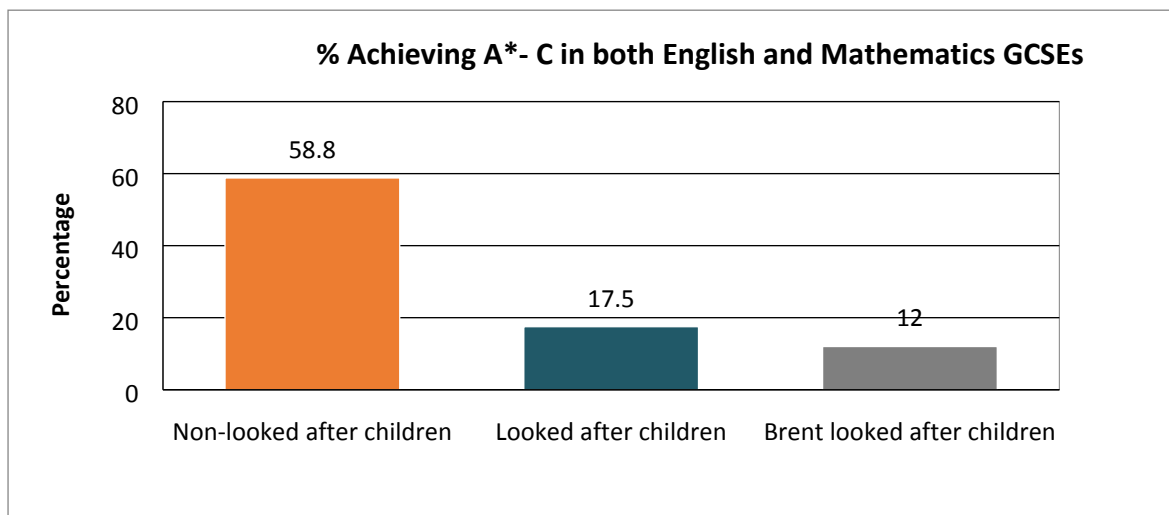
*Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/outcomes-for-children-looked-after-by-las-31-march-2016>

3. Key Stage 4 Statutory Attainment 2015/16

For Key Stage 4, headline performance measures changed for 2016. The tables/graphs below capture data for both the number of LAC/non LAC achieving 5 GCSE passes including English and Maths (previous headline measure), and the new measure which relates to the percentage of Year 11s achieving a pass in both English and Maths GCSE only.

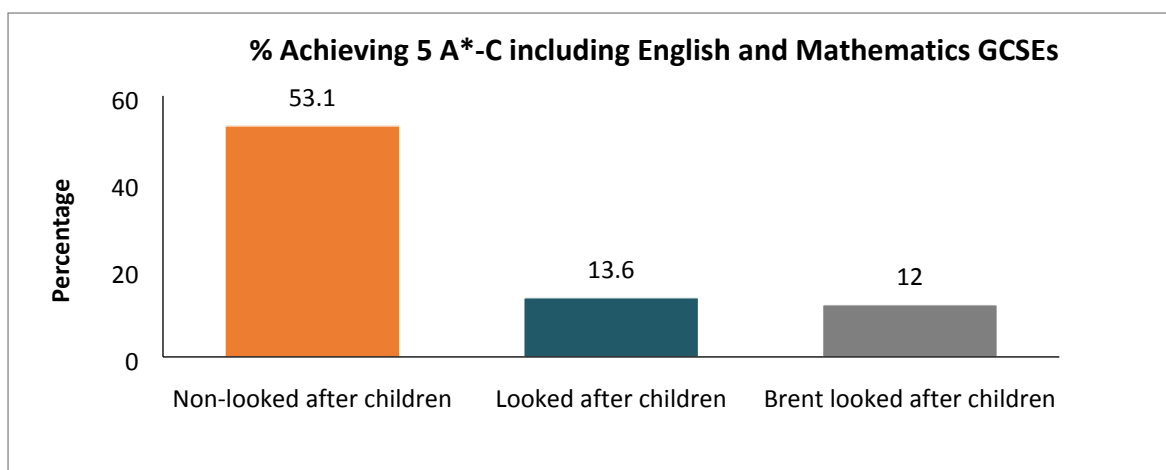
The 2016 Year 11 LAC cohort comprised a total of 25 pupils.

OUTCOME MEASURE for 2016 SFR KS4 Cohort (25)	Non-looked after children %	Looked after children %	Brent LAC
A*- C grades in both English and Maths	58.8%	17.5%	12% (3)

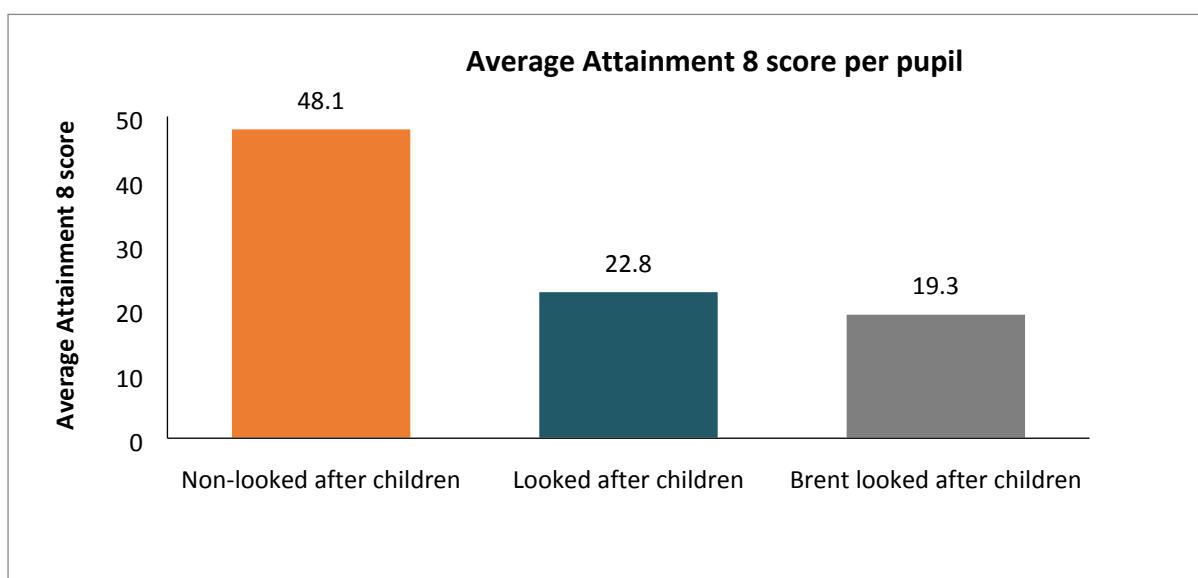


OUTCOME MEASURE for 2016 SFR KS4 Cohort (25)	Non-looked after children %	Looked after children %	Brent LAC
5A*- C grades incl En and ma	53.1%	13.6%	12% (3)

*Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/outcomes-for-children-looked-after-by-las-31-march-2016>

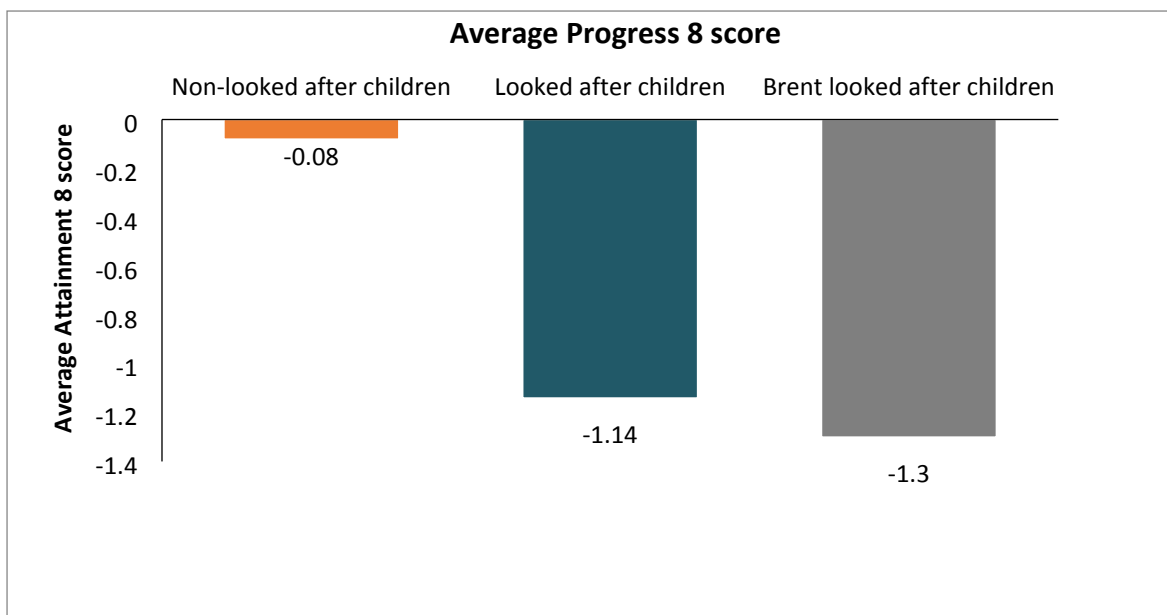


Key Stage 4 Average Attainment 8 Scores 2016	
OUTER LONDON	21.3
Brent	19.3



Key Stage 4 Average Progress 8 Scores 2016	
OUTER LONDON	-1.07
Brent	-1.30

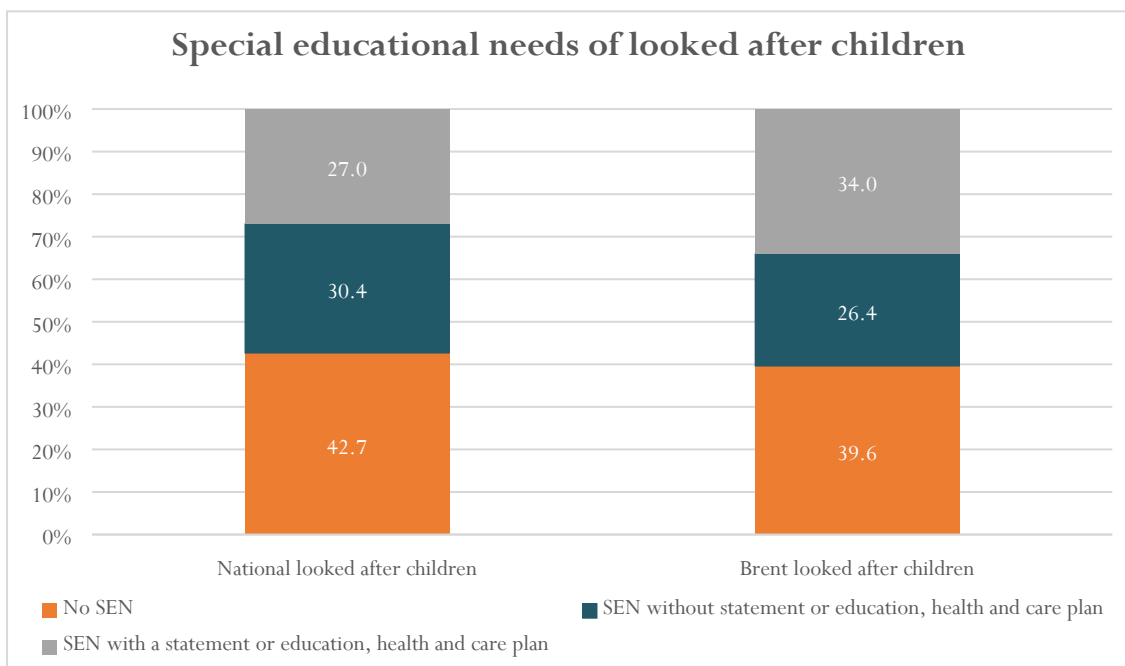
*Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/outcomes-for-children-looked-after-by-las-31-march-2016>



Comparison with National LAC Outcomes:

- Brent KS4 LAC outcomes are below the Outer London average for Attainment 8
- Brent KS4 LAC Outcomes outcomes are below the Outer London average for Progress 8

4. Children looked after with special educational needs



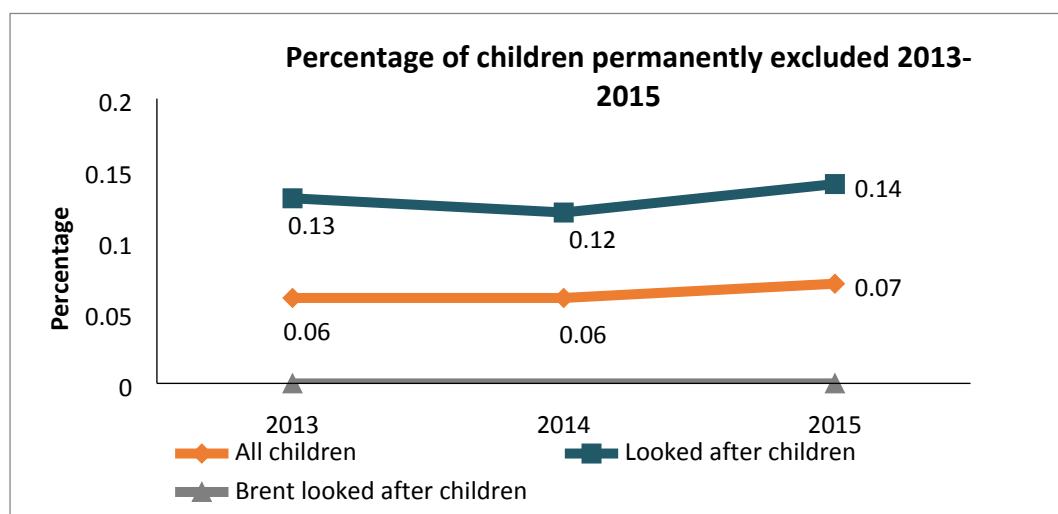
Comparison with National LAC SEND:

- Brent has significantly more LAC with a statement or EHCP and significantly fewer LAC with no SEND.

*Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/outcomes-for-children-looked-after-by-las-31-march-2016>

5. Exclusions

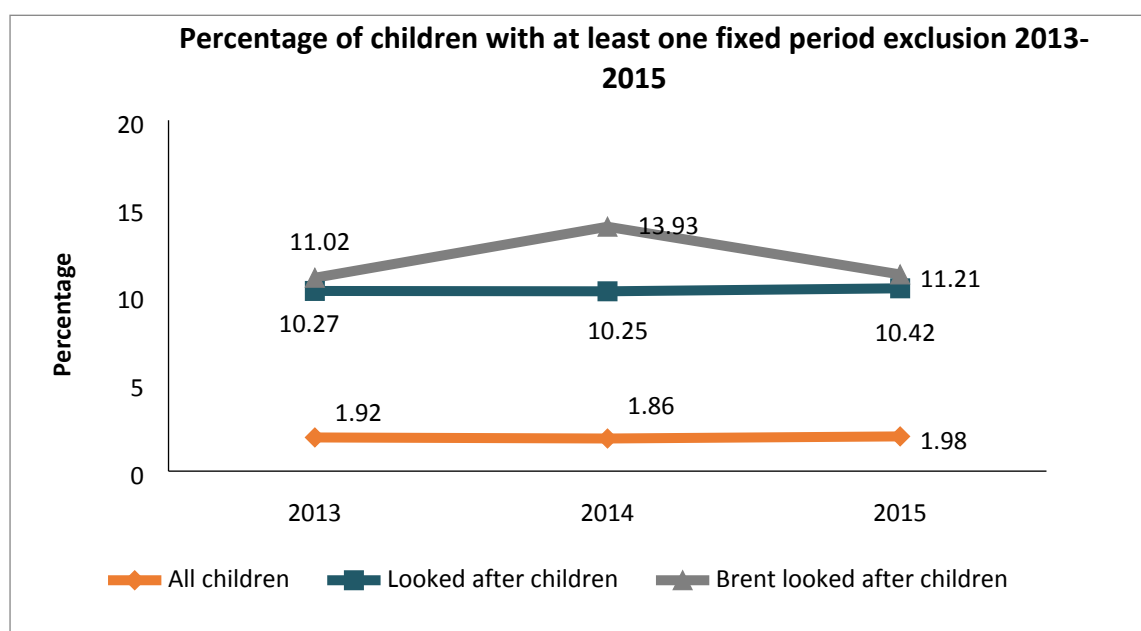
Permanent Exclusions



Comparison with National LAC PEX:

- Our figure of 0% PEX compares well with both all children and all LAC. However it should be noted that in order to avoid the PEX of a Brent LAC the Virtual School agrees with the child's school, especially at KS4, to support a referral to alternative provision.

Fixed Term Exclusions

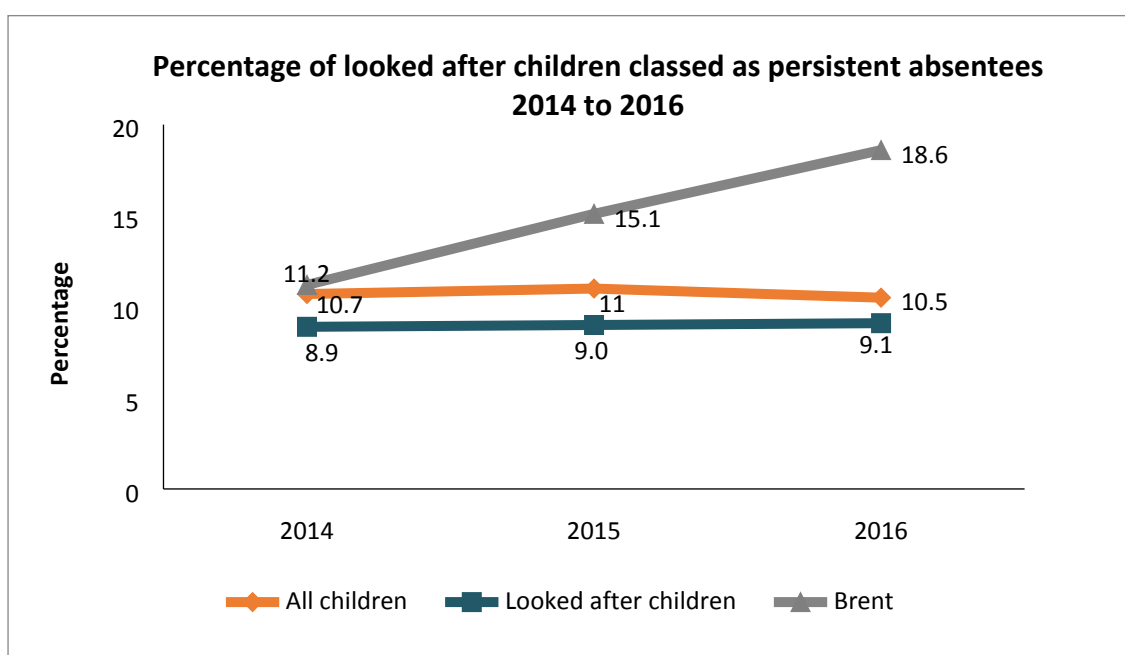
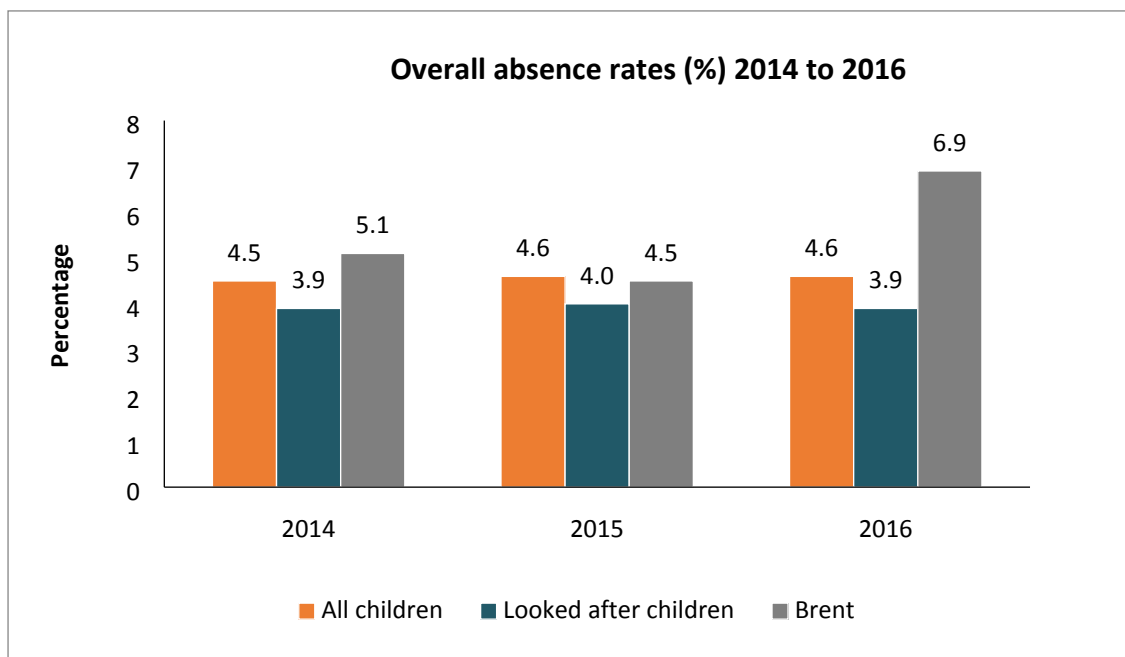


Comparison with National LAC FTE:

- Brent's LAC FTE rose significantly in 2014 and was slightly above the LAC average in 2015.

*Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/outcomes-for-children-looked-after-by-las-31-march-2016>

6. Absence rates



Comparison with National LAC Absence Rates:

- Brent's LAC overall absence and persistent absentee rates have risen significantly over the past 2 years
- BVS is working with the LAC and Permanency Service urgently to address the current 27% of our statutory school age LAC who are persistently absent (below 90% attendance)
- 19% of current PAs are in Years 10 and 11.

*Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/outcomes-for-children-looked-after-by-las-31-march-2016>

7. Strategies in place to address attainment

KS1/KS2 Literacy

For KS1 & KS2, Brent Virtual School has purchased a subscription to an online literacy resource (Lexia) which, with regular use, should help to support and boost our Looked after children's Reading/Writing and GPS scores. The subscription has been purchased for Year groups 1,2,5, 6, 7 & 8 and is available for pupils to access at school or at home. Carer training is planned for April 2017.

KS4 GCSE attainment: focus on Maths/English

PALAC programme, in partnership with Institute of Education, London University (PALAC: Promoting the achievement of Looked After Children)

We are giving additional Pupil Premium to Year 11 core subject teachers, in order for them to mentor/tutor pupils who are at risk of not achieving GCSEs, despite high prior attainment in Year 6 SATs. The Institute of Education will evaluate this pilot project for us, across a 2 year period.

University programme: "scholarship stream"

We have launched a University programme in order to boost expectations and aspirations for LAC at KS2/3. In time, this should impact positively on Progress 8/Attainment 8 at GCSE. To achieve well in terms of KS4 outcomes, our LAC need the support systems we have identified as part of the University programme, in order to fulfil their potential. eg settled care arrangements with specially selected and trained carers, additional tuition, mentoring, summer schools, cultural activities, visits to Universities. St John's College, Cambridge has already hosted a one day visit, as has Brunel University.


Review of PPLAC funding

We are reviewing our Pupil Premium payments to schools, with a view to more significant investment in TAMHS/mental health/education mentoring as we know that early trauma/attachment issues are undoubtedly affecting Brent LAC achievement in school. Placing in outstanding provisions and offering 1:1 support, are of limited value to (high Prior Attainment but) under-achieving LAC, if they cannot work within a mainstream curriculum, due to mental health issues.

Janet Lewis
Headteacher Brent Virtual School
April 2017.

*Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/outcomes-for-children-looked-after-by-las-31-march-2016>

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	<p>Corporate Parenting Committee 19 April 2017</p> <p>Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</p>
<p>Brent Adoption Service Report, 1st October 2016 – 31st March 2017</p>	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee about the general management of the adoption service and how it is achieving good outcomes for children.
- 1.2** This report details the activity of Brent's adoption service from Oct 1st 2016– March 31st 2017.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1** The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review, comment on and question the contents of this report. This is to provide evidence that the management of the adoption service is being monitored and challenged in order to promote good outcomes for children. This is in line with standard 25.6 of the Adoption National Minimum Standards (2014).

3.0 Background

- 3.1** Our Adoption Statement of Purpose highlights the outcomes that the service aims to support:
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their developmental needs during childhood and beyond.
 - Adopted children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefit from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
 - Children, birth parents/guardians and families, and adoptive parents and families will be valued and respected.
- 3.2** In Brent adoption services are delivered through two teams:

- A Placements Assessment and Recruitment Team – responsible for the recruitment, assessment and training of prospective adopters, as well as family finding and support for them post approval up until Adoption Order.
- An Adoption and Post Permanency team – responsible for family finding for children with an adoption plan; statutory social work responsibility for children subject to a Placement Order up until Adoption Order; supporting adoptive families, Special Guardians and birth families and providing a counselling and intermediary service for adopted adults and their birth relatives.

4.0 Performance Data

4.1 The most recent set of national adoption scorecards will be published in April 2017, covering the 3-year period 2014-2016. The next round of national adoption scorecard data will be released in December 2017.

4.2 Brent performance against the two most significant indicators has continued to improve:

- **A1** (The time taken from a child entering care to being placed for adoption): 515 days. This is a 5.3% improvement against the previous reporting period (544) and compares against a national average of 558 days.
- **A2** (The time taken from the Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and a match being approved): 184 days. This is a 5.2% improvement against the previous reporting period (194) and compares against a national average of 226 days.

4.3 Child related data – 1st October 2016 – 31st March 2017

- In the second six months of this reporting year one child was adopted, bringing the total number of children adopted during the year 2016/2017 to four.
- At the 31st March 2017 there were 13 Looked After Children with an adoption plan who had not yet been adopted. The details of these children's cases are as follows:
 - Eight children are placed for adoption;
 - One child is placed with her prospective adopters on a Regulation 24 connected persons' fostering basis and is due to be matched at the Adoption Panel in April;
 - One child is due to be matched with the adopters of her older sibling once she is subject to a Placement Order;
 - Proactive family finding is being undertaken on the remaining three children with a view to matches being presented to the Adoption Panel within the next three months.
- As stated in previous reports, all Local Authorities continue to report a reduction in the number of children being made subject to placement orders. A placement order is the court authorisation that a child can be formally placed with approved adopters. Brent has also seen a reduction

in numbers of children with placement orders and as a result our projection of the number of adoptions for this reporting year was correct.

4.4 Adopter Recruitment

- At 31st March 2017 Brent had 9 approved adoptive households for children where a child had not yet been matched or placed. Two of these households are currently on hold because of changes in their circumstances. The number of children requiring adoption and not yet matched or placed continues to be lower than the number of approved adopters.

During the reporting period the service received 28 enquiries about adoption, including one step parent adoption. However, the majority of preferences of enquirers did not match the various needs of the children needing adoptive homes, both in Brent and nationally, and in addition mirrored the ethnicity of existing Brent approved adopters, who have been waiting for suitable children for up to two years. Some of these enquiries were therefore signposted to First 4 Adoption, which is the National Gateway for adoption enquiries.

Following on from the last six monthly report, a decision was made to put the recruitment of adopters on hold, which was in line with neighbouring authorities. This was due to the very large number of approved adopters still waiting and the significantly reduced number of children needing adoptive homes. Towards the end of this reporting period, there has been a steady increase of children in Brent likely to need adoptive homes and therefore active recruitment for adopters has recommenced.

- At 31st March 2017, there were three ongoing adoption assessments, all of which are in Stage Two of the process. There has been one approval during this reporting period and there are currently two private adoption applications and one step parent application in Court Proceedings.
- One Brent approved adoptive household was matched to a child from another local authority within this reporting period. The lengthy waits which some adopters are experiencing reflect the reduction in children awaiting adoption nationally and the large number of adopters across the country awaiting placements. It is also recognised nationally that there continues to be a mismatch between adopters waiting and the children needing adoptive homes.

Brent strives to attract adopters from a diversity of backgrounds in order to best meet the variety of needs of our Looked After Children. Brent adopters currently waiting to be linked or matched to children are mainly of Asian and African Caribbean heritage.

4.5 Adoption Support

- In the last six months, 85 families received a post-adoption support package (not one-off advice). This support was primarily provided through financial allowances which are reviewed and means tested but also includes life story work, strategies for managing difficult behaviour and advice on managing emotional issues within families brought about through contact with birth families.
- In the six months between 1st October 2016 and 31st March 2017, 3 new families have requested post adoption support. During this period, eight applications to the Adoption Support Fund were successfully approved to support the therapeutic needs of Brent families. Forty-six adopted adults also received adoption support. This was in the form of provision of access to their records, linking them with members of their birth family, and providing counselling support around issues related to adoption.

5.0 The Adoption and Permanence Panel

- 5.1** The purpose and role of the Adoption and Permanence panel was set out in detail within a previous Brent Adoption Service Report to the Corporate Parenting Committee.
- 5.2** The Panel continues to meet once a month in respect of all matters concerning adoption and to consider all long-term fostering matches. During the period under review three panels were cancelled due to lack of cases. This was due in part to the national shortage of children available for adoption and also to Brent's early linking and matching of those children who have a current adoption decision (the details of which are outlined elsewhere in this report).
- 5.3** A joint annual training day for adoption panel members and the adoption team staff is held as per statutory regulation; the last one was delivered on 23rd May 2016 by Brent's Agency Advisor. The focus was on improving function and independent scrutiny, minimising disruptions and identifying particular areas of learning for Brent. The next training day will be held before July 2017.
- 5.4** A central list of panel members, in line with statutory guidance, is used on a rotating basis to ensure members maintain regular links with Brent and current issues in adoption. The central list consists of an independent chair, an independent vice chair, other independent members including: a birth mother with experience of adoption; a previously fostered adult, a former Looked After Child and a foster carer from another Local Authority. There are also panel members employed by Brent, including: representatives from Children's Social Care; an Educational Psychologist; Health and an elected member. All panel members receive an annual appraisal and have the opportunity to attend any additional relevant training provided by Brent and the West London Adoption Consortium.

- 5.5** Panel feedback from prospective and approved adopters and presenting social workers has remained consistent in confirming good or excellent comments regarding the panel process and conduct. Feedback concerning the performance of the social work casework is provided to the Agency Decision Maker (Operational Director – Integration and Improved Outcomes, Children and Young People’s Services) who ensures this is given to the Head of Service (LAC, Permanency and Care Leavers) for follow up with individual staff or, should the issues be more systemic, broader service improvement.
- 5.6** During the period 1st October 2016 – 31st March 2017 three panels were held with fifteen specific cases discussed during these sessions. Within this group:
- One household was recommended as suitable to adopt;
 - Five children were recommended to be placed for adoption with specific carers (one set of twins and three single children)
 - The long-term fostering match of two children was recommended (a sibling group of two);
 - Six prospective adopters were recommended as remaining suitable to adopt following annual review; and
 - Two prospective adoptive households resigned; one due to not having been matched with a suitable child in the two years since their approval and the other due to becoming pregnant following approval.
- All of the recommendations made to the Agency Decision Maker were ratified.

6.0 Service Improvement

- 6.1** Over the last six months, the service has continued to improve outcomes for children with adoption plans in the following ways:
- Through effective tracking of timescales at initial and monthly permanency planning meetings at a team manager level, supplemented by quarterly tracking at Head of Service level for children with an adoption plan. This effective oversight continues to contribute to a reduction in the period of time from a child becoming Looked After to being placed for adoption.
 - By ensuring that adoptive families have been assessed and then enabled to access the ASF. This has provided families with targeted therapeutic support when it has been most needed.
 - By providing our adopters waiting for a suitable child with regular support whereby they can meet with other families to discuss concerns, hear other experiences and ensure we provide services appropriate to individual families’ needs.

6.2 Adoption Support

As described earlier in this report, a number of successful applications have been made to the Adoption Support Fund in order to support families requiring help with their parenting. Whilst in the past, most of the referrals for adoption support have come from adopters of adolescents, it has been noted that there has been a significant increase in behavioural and emotional concerns in relation to much younger children.

6.3 Involving Adopters Many adopters continue to remain closely involved with the service.

- Approved adopters are involved in speaking to prospective adopters at information evenings and preparation groups.
- Adopters are invited to attend relevant training for foster carers where there are crossover issues.
- A bi-monthly Adopters' Support Group for families with children is offered and although feedback has been positive about the supportive nature of the group, attendance in the last reporting period has been variable. A crèche is provided for this group. Many of the participants in the group attended and enjoyed our annual festive party in December 2016.

6.4 Adopter Feedback During this reporting period there have been no complaints received from adopters. Very positive feedback has been received by several Brent adopters and adopters from other local authorities about the high level of support provided by Brent Adoption Social Workers.

6.5 Staff Engagement Staff continue to take responsibility for the delivery of adoption preparation courses in conjunction with colleagues in the West London Adoption Consortium.

Staff deliver Life Story Work training to foster carers and also a regular, separate Life Story Work training to social work colleagues across Children's Social Care. Managers set up and ran a training workshop on Permanency Planning for social workers in the Locality and Care Planning Teams.

7.0 Broader adoption issues and the future

7.1 On the 7th October 2016, we were notified of the immediate changes being made to the allocation of Adoption Support Fund (ASF) monies. As of the 7th October 2016 the ASF have capped the amount of financial support available to individual children. This is having an impact on some families as the projected therapeutic support package costs are in excess of £5k, meaning that support arrangements in these cases are modified as the Local Authority has no additional resource capacity to make up any shortfall.

7.2 Adoption Regionalisation

7.2.1 As discussed at Corporate Parenting Committee on 8th February, Cabinet considered a report on 12th December 2016 seeking approval for the Council to work collaboratively with other London boroughs to continue to develop the London Regional Agency (LRAA) with the intention of joining the agency when it becomes operational. Cabinet approved this approach.

7.2.2 The last two months have seen several workshops for stakeholders in London where professionals have been encouraged to think about the LRAA and shape what it might look like. Brent have been represented at these workshops by the Acting Principal Officer, LAC & Permanency, the Team Manager for Adoption and Post Permanency and the Agency Panel Advisor and Quality Assurance lead.

In brief:


- Twenty-six London boroughs have signed up 'in principle' to the LRAA;
- Funding to take the project through to March 2018 has been agreed by the Department for Education (DfE);

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 Brent	<p>Corporate Parenting Committee 19th April 2017</p> <p>Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</p>
<p>Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report 1st January – 31st March 2017</p>	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee about the general management of the in-house fostering service and how it is achieving good outcomes for children. This is in accordance with standard 25.7 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards (2011).
- 1.2 The report covers the fourth quarter of this reporting year.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review, comment on and question the contents of this report. This is to provide evidence that the management of the fostering service is being monitored and challenged in order to promote good outcomes for children.

3.0 Service Values

- 3.1 The in-house fostering function is positioned within the new LAC and Permanency Service of the Children and Young People's Directorate. The vision as set out in the 2016-17 service plan is that:
- The best foster carers are recruited for our children.
 - All placements receive high quality support, effectively targeted according to need and providing good value for the Local Authority.
 - To increase the number of children placed closer to home with our in-house foster carers.
 - Children are found permanent families without delay and within their extended family network where appropriate.

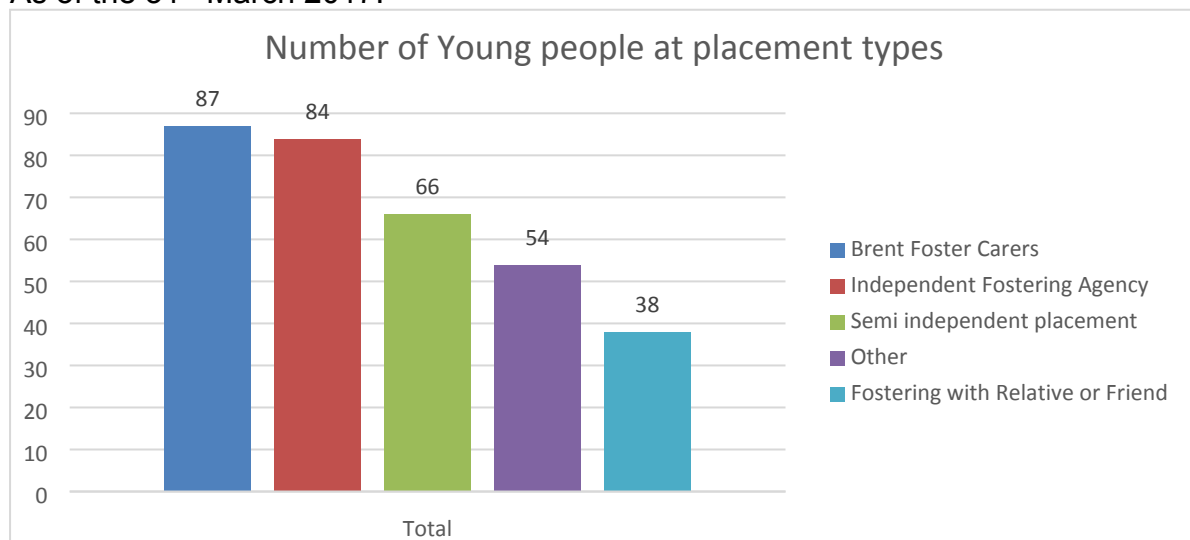
4.0 Staffing Arrangements

- 4.1 The primary in-house fostering functions are distributed across two teams:
- The recruitment and assessment of foster carers is completed within the Placements Assessment and Recruitment Team.
 - The ongoing support and supervision of foster carers is the responsibility of the Fostering Support Team.
- 4.2 The Fostering Panel Advisor, Fostering Reviewing Officer and Fostering Development Co-ordinator roles are also managed within the LAC and Permanency Service and are line managed separately from the two operational teams in order to provide appropriate challenge within the service.

5.0 Placement Activity

- 5.1 The corporate performance targets for this year relating to fostering are as follows:
- Percentage of looked after children placed with in-house (Brent) foster carers – annual target 35%.
 - Percentage of looked after children placed with a relative or family friend – annual target 15%
 - Percentage of looked after children placed in Independent Fostering Agencies – annual target 25%.
 - Percentage of looked after children overall within foster placements – annual target 75%
- 5.2 The overall LAC population has reduced to 329 as at 31st March 2017 compared to 351 as at the 31st of December 2016, this is a 6.2% reduction.

As of the 31st March 2017:

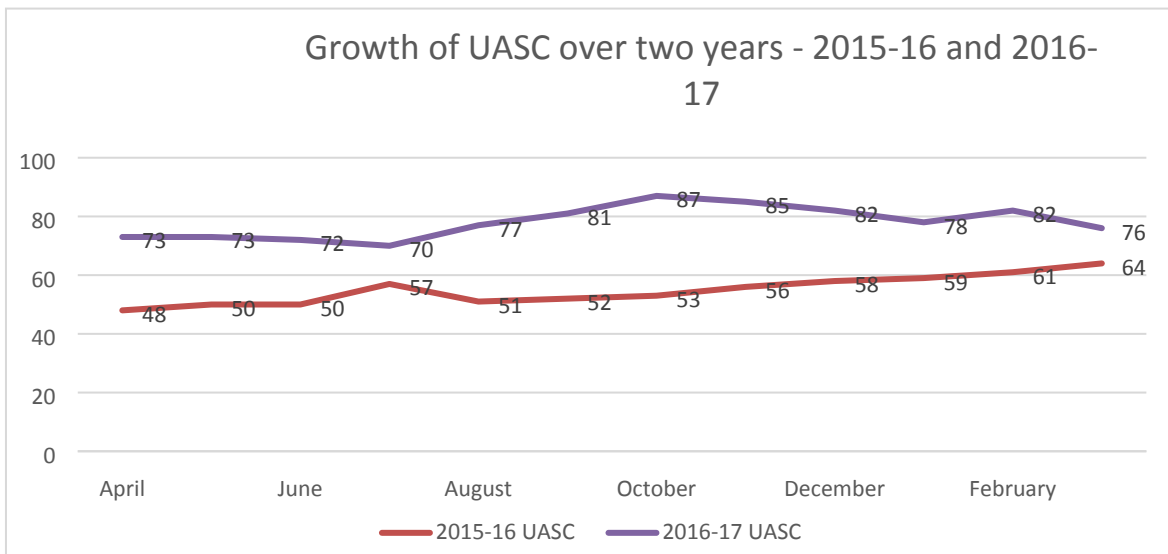


Please note '**other**' includes Children's homes (including secure), residential schools, hospitals, other local authorities and placed for adoption with placement order not with current foster carer.

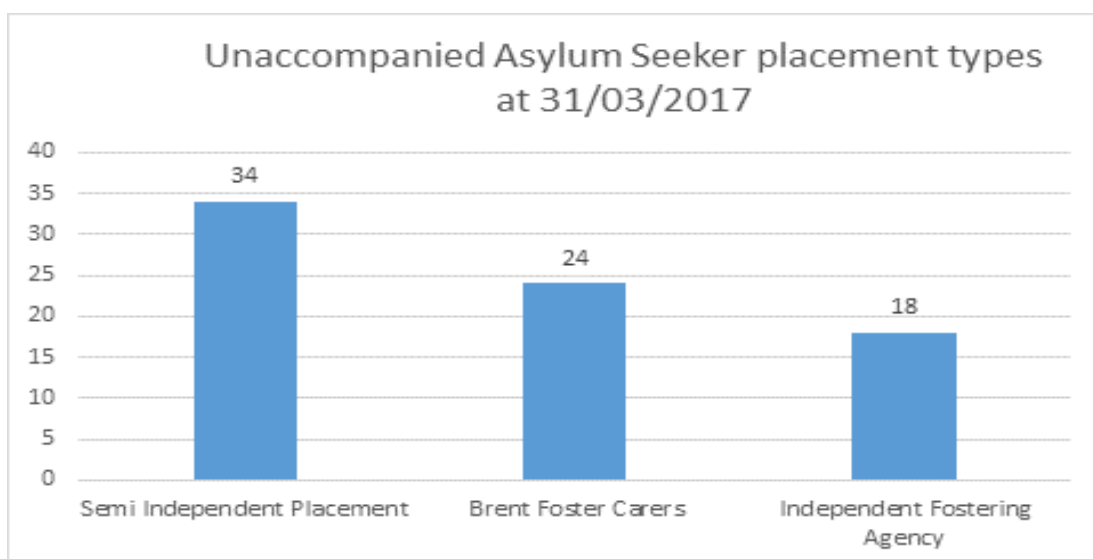
- 87 children were placed with Brent foster carers. This represents 26.4% of total looked after children.

- 84 children were placed with IFAs. This is 25.5% of total looked after children.
- There are 66 looked after children in Semi Independent accommodation (Residential accommodation not subject to Children's Home Regulations) as at 31/03/17, which represents 20.1% of all looked after children
- 38 Children were placed with a relative or family friend on a fostering basis. This is 11.6% of total looked after children
- 211 looked after children were living within a fostering setting at 31/03/17. This is 64.1% of total looked after children

5.3 The most recent reporting period has seen the numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) approaching the borough for support stabilised.



As of 31/03/17 there was a slight drop from 81 to 76 UASC, which represents 23.1% of all LAC. This percentage is higher in spite of declining number of UASCs. This is because of a decline in the overall number of looked after children. 34 UASCs are placed in semi-independent accommodation and 42 are placed in foster care.



- 5.4 In Brent we also support 60 care leavers who are former UASCs. This makes 22% of our Care Leaver population.
- 5.5 The fostering service operates with few vacancies so that the majority of available space with foster carers is maximised. As of 31st March 2017 there were 13 fostering households with at least one bed space available for fostering. This is approximately 14% of the total capacity of non-related households, the current carers with vacancies have a range of approval categories.

6.0 Recruitment and Assessment Activity

- 6.1 The fostering service carried out 8 recruitment focused activities within the reporting period with the aim of raising awareness of fostering and encouraging potential foster carers to come forward within the Brent community. Our main presence was at the Health and Wellbeing event facilitated by the council, International Women's Day, and outreach within the civic centre reception area.
- 6.2 We have continued holding the monthly information evenings at the Civic Centre for members of the public to find out more about the fostering role and to enable us to determine whether an individual or family has the potential to become a carer for Brent.
- 6.3 The recruitment activity during the reporting period produced 74 enquiries for fostering. These enquiries resulted in 13 initial visits. As of the 31st March 2017 there were 16 formal assessments in process under the 2-stage fostering assessment.

Our recruitment and marketing activity saw a slight decrease in enquiries to the service in 2016-17 compared to 2015-16. The service received 268 enquiries in 2016-17, compared to 307 in 2015-16. The reason for the slight decrease for this year could be attributed to the fact we had fewer community events this year in comparison to the previous year. Our last two major campaigns which were targeted recruitment campaigns to 'empty nesters' and families interested in fostering 'sibling groups', may also have had some impact on the reach of our audience. We used relatively new methods of advertisement such as Net Natives and Sky advert, which we are testing, altering and tailoring to meet our recruitment needs. The results from these advertisement models will take a while to filter through.

The conversion rate from enquiry to approval has also decreased as it was 1.5% in 2016-17, in comparison to 2.9% in 2015-16. This is less than the generally accepted average for fostering service providers of 4.5% of enquires resulting in an approved fostering household. The decrease in approval could be the ongoing issue of overcrowding in Brent. We are often approached by potential foster carers at the outreach events, who are keen and willing to foster but are unfortunately not progressed due to lack of space in their home. We also had a number of initial visits deemed unsuitable (including issues such as large levels of debt within a household or child protection concerns in their home local authority) and as such did not progress to assessments.

- 6.4 The target for the service in 2016-17 was to recruit twelve to fifteen non-related foster carers during the reporting year; with a net growth of 5 fostering households once carer resignations and terminations of approval are taken into account. Although we have

not achieved this target, with 4 new fostering approvals, we have a total of 10 fostering assessments booked into panel for approval within the months of April, May and June. The new, permanent Head of Service who commenced in role in January 2017 has focused on this as a priority to resolve in the 1st quarter of 2017-18.

7.0 Fostering Panel

7.1 The fostering service has a Fostering Panel constituted in accordance with Regulation 23 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. The service maintains a diverse and highly experienced central list of Panel members that includes an elected member. The panel chair and vice chair are independent people with professional experience of fostering and panel members include those with personal experience of the fostering system. Demand requires three panels to be held every two months.

7.2 The functions of the Fostering Panel are to consider:

- Each application and to recommend whether or not a person is suitable to be a Foster Carer, Connected Person(s) (Family and Friends Foster Carer) and the terms of their approval.
- The first annual review of each approved carer and any other review as requested by the fostering service, including those of a Standards of Care issue and those exploring any allegations made.
- The termination of approval or change of terms of approval of a Foster Carer.

7.3 The panel has a quality assurance role and monitors the standard of reports presented to it and relays any issues or concerns to the relevant manager. The panel makes recommendations to the fostering service and these recommendations are referred to the Agency Decision Maker who is the Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes.

7.4 During the period 1st January 2017 to 31st March 2017, 5 fostering panels were held with 20 specific cases discussed during these sessions. Within this group:

- 1 family and friends who had their 3rd annual review and was suitable to continue fostering.
- 1 fostering household was deferred for further assessment.
- 6 fostering households was found suitable to continue fostering following their 3rd annual review.
- 1 fostering household was found suitable to foster following an allegation.
- 1 fostering household was deferred following an allegation.
- 1 family and friends foster carer was found suitable to continue fostering following further assessment around the child's needs.
- 1 new fostering household was recommended for approval.
- 1 family and friends household's approval was terminated due to the child reaching the age of 18 years old.
- 1 family and friends household's approval was terminated due to the child moving to an alternative placement.
- 1 foster carer's approval was recommended for termination but the panel did not agree and recommended continued fostering.
- 5 fostering households resigned from their fostering for the following reasons:

- Moved out of London
- Change in circumstances due to birth child's studies.
- Wants to focus on daughter's wedding.
- Young person reached 18 years old and they no longer wish to foster
- 1 transferred to a different fostering provider.

All of the recommendations made to the Agency Decision Maker were ratified.

8.0 Training and Support to Foster Carers

- 8.1 As part of our Learning and Development offer to foster carers we provide a range of mandatory and identified training courses including sessions in evenings and at weekends.
- 8.2 During this reporting period 16 individual training courses were offered providing 222 training spaces. A small number of courses were cancelled in this period due to facilitators being unavailable.
- 8.3 Overall, in this period, carers attended 107 separate learning and development opportunities. Any issues with attendance at training is followed up by Supervising Social Workers, the Fostering Reviewing Officer and the Fostering Panel.
- 8.4 Throughout this period the Development Coordinator has been developing the new learning programme for 2017/18 utilising feedback from carers, supervising social workers, children via the participation lead and from consultation with facilitators directly.

9.0 Monitoring Arrangements

- 9.1 All foster carers, regardless of the length of their approval with Brent must have an annual review of their arrangements. The Fostering Review Officer completed 20 annual reviews out of a possible 26 during this period. Of those uncompleted:

- 3 review were cancelled by foster carer due to carers' personal circumstances.
- 3 reviews were cancelled due to supervising social worker unplanned absence.

Any annual reviews that could not go ahead in the months that they were scheduled for took place in the following month.

- 9.2 During the reporting period there was one formal allegation made against a fostering household. This matter was referred to the respective local authority Designated Officer (LADO) as the carers live outside of Brent. The allegation went through a section 47 investigation process under the Children Act 1989, concluding that the allegations were unsubstantiated. The foster carers will now have a further annual review that will be presented to the Fostering panel before fostering can recommence.

- 9.3 There were no new Standards of Care/Serious Concerns' meetings held during this quarter.

10.0 Future Developments

- 10.1 In supporting the Social Pedagogy Programme, we have recruited a Social Pedagogy Development Worker who, subject to references, will be joining London Borough of Brent in May 2017, the post is being funded through reallocation of existing resources. The focus of their work will be to support the development of social pedagogical thinking and practice with those staff who have undertaken previous training and to undertake direct work with Brent fostering households and Looked after Children, modelling a social pedagogic approach to support carers to affect positive change. This will mean more focused work with young people who have challenging behaviour, which will in the long-term improve placement stability. In addition they will be working closely with the Fostering Manager, Operational Managers and Learning and Development Team to promote and embed social pedagogy practice.
- 10.2 We are currently planning our 2017 Fostering Fortnight (beginning 8th May) campaign, which will include a variety of "pop up" recruitment stands in some of Brent's busiest high roads, a photoshoot with the Tottenham Hotspur football team in the shadow of Wembley Stadium and a Brent schools' art competition.
- 10.3 In February 2017 we agreed to work with Coram Voice to distribute a survey called 'Bright Spots' to help us understand the care experience and well-being of looked after children called 'Your Life, Your Care'. The survey asked children and young people aged between 4 and 18 years old to answer questions about their placements, the people they know, their well-being, their carers and social worker, their rights and the chances they get. The survey was actively promoted by supervising social workers, foster carers and designated Looked after Children teachers.

The Local Authorities that take part will receive a bespoke report of the findings and an interactive platform to allow us to benchmark our results against the population as a whole. Ofsted expects local authorities to ensure the views and experiences of children and young people influence service development and strategic thinking and this survey will enable us to achieve this. The main findings of the results will be reported in the next quarterly monitoring report. The findings are expected to help us shape development of support services for our children and carers.

In March 2017 the Placement Assessment Recruitment Team launched a new video to promote fostering in Brent. The video highlights the experience of a current foster carer and a previous looked after child and is a great showcase of the journey to becoming a foster carer in Brent. The launch was attended by dignitaries such as the Mayor of Brent, Dawn Butler MP and Councillor Butt whom were all complimentary and supportive of the work we undertake. We will be using the video in our future recruitment campaigns.

- 10.4 Our annual exit interview report has been completed for the period April 2016-February 2017. Some of the key areas that emerged and that will be considered and addressed in our planning for 2017/18 were:

- *The need for better placement matching, suitable to the needs and experiences of individual foster carers.* We are putting in place regular information sharing with the various teams within the service i.e. Placement Commissioning, LAC teams and Locality teams to raise awareness around our expectations.
- *The need for consistent communication between foster carers, social workers and management.* Building into current systems to ensure that any concerns raised are dealt with in a timely manner, thus allowing carers to feel supported.
- *The need to recognise and reward the role played by foster carers, including an assessment of the current allowance rates and its comparison with neighbouring boroughs and general support we offer to carers.* We are undertaking a benchmarking exercise of fostering allowances. This work is expected to be completed by June 2017.


Appendices / Links

- (i) Brent's 'Make a Difference' Fostering Campaign:
<https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/children-and-family-support/fostering/make-a-difference/>

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	<p align="center">Corporate Parenting Committee 19 April 2017</p> <p align="center">Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</p>
<p align="right">Wards Affected: All Wards</p>	
<p>Children and Social Work Bill Summary – Implications for Looked After Children and Care Leavers</p>	

1.0 Background

- 1.1 This briefing provides information regarding the Children and Social Work Bill, currently awaiting Royal Assent. It has implications for social work practice as it relates to looked after children and care leavers with particular reference to the principles of corporate parenting, the education of looked after children and the regulation of social workers.

2.0 The Corporate Parenting Principles

- 2.1 The Bill outlines seven Corporate Parenting Principles that Local Authorities must have regard to in respect of Looked After Children and those leaving care in order to establish what it means for the authority as a whole to act as a good parent.

- 2.2 The seven corporate parenting principles 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.

- 2.3 Under the Bill the Local Authority is required to publish its “local offer” setting out the statutory services available to care leavers.

- 2.4 The Bill allows all former relevant children aged under 25 years, as opposed to those in education or training as is currently the case, to continuing receiving support from a personal adviser on request.

3.0 Education of looked after and previously looked after children

- 3.1 Local authorities and maintained schools in England currently have a range of statutory duties in relation to supporting the education of looked after children.
- 3.2 The Bill would extend many of these duties to previously looked after children who have left care through adoption, Special Guardianship Order, or Child Arrangements Order. It places academy schools under similar statutory duties to maintained schools.

4.0 Adoption

- 4.1 The Bill extends the “permanence provisions” in relation to a child in care so that when a court is making decisions about the long term placement of children it must include an assessment of the child’s current and future needs, including any current and future needs resulting from the impact of harm that a child has suffered (or are likely to have suffered). This is intended to fully test out the long-term suitability of proposed special guardianship arrangements to ensure they are robust enough to last throughout a child’s minority.

5.0 Social Work regulation in England

- 5.1. Social workers in England are currently regulated alongside 15 other health and care professions by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). The HCPC’s role is to protect the public by ensuring that only qualified and competent practitioners are allowed to practice as social workers.
- 5.2. Under the Bill and as part of the wider social care reform a social work specific regulatory body would be established. The new regulator will be required to keep a register of social workers in England; set social work professional, education and training standards; determine an individual social worker’s fitness to practice; and cooperate with the other social work regulators in the UK.

6.0 Brent’s Response and Preparation

- 6.1 The principles of corporate parenting will be incorporated into the current pledge for looked after children and care leavers. It is suggested that a specific development session with Members in 17-18 Civic Year is held, to focus on how the principles of corporate parenting can be translated into practice across the Council.
- 6.2 The implications of changes to permanency planning practice will be considered by the Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency and changes to practice will be made as appropriate. Currently a robust assessment is in place to test the suitability of proposed special guardians for looked after children and this will be reviewed once the Bill is enacted.
- 6.3 The impact of new social work regulation will not be known until the new regulatory body has been established. Through established national and regional networks Brent will ensure that any changes and implications for practice are translated into our service planning.

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