



## Corporate Parenting Committee

**Tuesday 16 February 2016 at 5.00 pm**

Board Room 7&8 - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way,  
Wembley HA9 0FJ

### Membership:

#### Members

Councillors:

Moher (Chair)  
Conneely  
Hossain  
Ms Shaw  
Thomas

#### Substitute Members

Councillors:

Choudhary, Crane and Dixon

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**The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting**

# Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members.

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<b>1 Minutes of the previous meeting</b>	1 - 6
<b>2 Matters arising</b>	
<b>3 Deputations (if any)</b>	
<b>4 Children in Care - questions and answers</b>	

This is an opportunity for members of the Children In Care Council (CIA) to feedback on recent activity.

<b>5 Fostering report - 3rd quarter 2015-2016</b>	7 - 16
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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).

**Ward Affected:**  
All Wards

**Contact Officer:** Nigel Chapman, Head of Placements, nigel.chapman@brent.gov.uk, tel 020 8937 4456

<b>6 Brent Virtual School Annual Report</b>	17 - 44
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The purpose of this annual report is to outline the activity and impact of the Brent Virtual School during the academic year 2014-15. The report includes full details of the educational outcomes of our Brent looked after children. It reflects on the impact of our activities and identifies areas of future development to achieve improved outcomes for our looked after children.

**Ward Affected:**  
All Wards

**Contact Officer:** Janet Lewis, Inclusion and Alternative Education, janet.lewis@brent.gov.uk, tel 020 8937 3813

## **7 Presentation on the research report on Education Progress of Looked After Children**

**Ward Affected:**  
All Wards

**Contact Officer:** Janet Lewis, Inclusion and Alternative Education, janet.lewis@brent.gov.uk, tel 020 8937 3813

## **8 Ofsted Report 2015**

The purpose of this item is to feedback on the key findings of the Ofsted inspection as they relate to looked after children and care leavers

**Ward Affected:**  
All Wards

**Contact Officer:** Gail Tolley, Strategic Director, Children and Young People, gail.tolley@brent.gov.uk, tel 020 8937 6422

## **9 Recruitment and Expectations of Foster Carers**

## **10 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: Thursday 28 April 2016**



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 Tuesday 3 November 2015 at 5.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Moher (Chair) and Councillors S Choudhary, Hossain and Thomas

Apologies were received from: Councillors Conneely and Ms Shaw

### 1. **Chair**

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Thomas was elected to chair the meeting pending her arrival.

### 2. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 July 2015 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

### 3. **Matters arising**

The committee were pleased to hear that the Ade Adepitan Short Break Centre had been awarded Outstanding status following an Ofsted inspection. Members asked that their congratulations be extended to the staff and students.

### 4. **Deputations**

None.

### 5. **Children in Care - questions and answers**

The Committee heard from Paul Egunjobi (Brent Care In Action) on plans for an end of Summer trip and a half term bowling trip attended by 15 students which had received positive feedback.

Jerome Ben-Kilani (Brent Care In Action) gave feedback on the recent visit by Ofsted inspectors where children had been asked to comment on the borough's care services. Caroline MacGuinness advised that the planned health fun day had been rescheduled for 6 February 2016. The website construction was ongoing and discussions were also taking place on making and maintaining links using social media with children placed outside of the borough.

The committee heard that an approach had been made for CIA to participate in recruitment interviews in November for plans for Park Lane residential home for children across London, including children in care. Gail Tolley expressed support

for the project subject to further checks into background of the scheme and the appropriateness of the young people's involvement. The young people had also attended a black history event which provided an opportunity to present facts and share cultures.

Members raised questions on the frequency of activities throughout the year and heard that the young people were keen to get involved in the development of the website and to try to ensure it met their needs. They reminded the committee that social media was currently the most effective way of getting information across. Lorraine Emmanuel (interim Children in Care Participation Officer) assured that alternative ways using social media, that would ensure confidentiality and safety were being investigated.

**6. Chair**

During the discussion of the above item, Councillor Moher arrived and took the chair.

**7. Fostering Service monitoring report 1 April - 30 June 2015**

The committee agreed to discuss this report in conjunction with the following report on the fostering service for the Quarter 1 July – 30 September 2015.

**8. Fostering Service monitoring report 1 July - 30 September 2015**

Nigel Chapman (Head of Placements) introduced the reports for Quarters 1 and 2 of the Fostering Service which provided information about the general management of the in-house fostering service and how it was achieving good outcomes for children. This was in accordance with standard 25.7 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards (2011). He drew attention to the fostering targets, placements abroad, the number of asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors. The committee heard that efforts were being made to increase the number of foster carers able to take older children. An increasing number and proportion of LAC were also now residing in semi-independent accommodation an increase from 10% - 13% between April-September 2015, reflective of the older age range of young people entering the care system.

The committee heard that overall, the number of available in-house foster carers has reduced however, as of 31 March 2015, Brent had the highest number of fostering households within the West London Alliance sub-region and the highest number of filled fostering places, and also internal fostering placements used at any point during the year 2014-15. On recruitment, while the number of enquiries had increased, it was felt few would result in applications. Work was also taking place to look into reasons why some carers left fostering and also into reasons behind resignations. Nigel Chapman also outlined progress on training in particular the Social Pedagogy course which would continue on a reduced scale. Focus in the future would be on recruitment and ensuring that specialist training was available to foster carers with an interest in developing their role.

Members raised questions why only on average 10% of enquiries developed into formal applications to foster and plans to deal with the increasing number of unaccompanied minors.

Nigel Chapman responded that this was in the main to do with lack of suitable accommodation and insecure tenancies but also some were unable to commit the time and others were found to view fostering solely as a means of income as opposed to a vocation. Staff continued to work with prospective carers who had language issues. The committee heard that unaccompanied minors were a South-East issue primarily Kent and Gail Tolley advised that at its peak, the Kent DCS supported by the National Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) had written to all directors asking for assistance. Meetings were taking place with government ministers. A rota had been established in London and the WLA was working to stimulate the market however semi-independent accommodation would be used where necessary.

In response to a question on the corporate performance targets and effectiveness of monitoring, Nigel Chapman advised that the total numbers were set at the England average however these would be reviewed. Visits took place annually and also monthly in some cases, DBS checks were conducted and carers were reviewed by the Fostering Panel regularly. The child's social worker would also be involved.

Questions were raised regarding Brent's position in fees payments and efforts made to deal with allegations and conflict. Nigel Chapman responded that none of the foster carers leaving the service attributed this to insufficient fees and, while the independent fostering agency paid more, carers frequently left to come to a local authority with which they could identify. Brent currently paid more than the recommended rates and this was increased annually. Regarding allegations and conflict, Nigel Chapman advised that foster carers could contact the independent advice line and training was provided in dealing with allegations and support available. The aim was to deal with conflict in a similar manner to a normal family. On accommodation, the committee heard that efforts were being made to target households with larger houses and where children had left home and council tax rebates were an added incentive.

RESOLVED:

that the contents of the fostering service monitoring reports for 1 April to 30 June and 1 July to 30 September 2015 be noted.

**9. Adoption Service report 1 April - 30 September 2015**

The report from the Strategic Director, Children and Young People provided information about the general management of the Adoption Service and how it was achieving good outcomes for children. The report detailed the activity of Brent's adoption service from 1 April–30 September 2015.

Nigel Chapman (Head of Placements) in introducing the report drew attention to the performance data and while comparative data was not yet available he was pleased to report on two significant improvements - a 9% improvement in the time taken from a child entering care to being placed for adoption and the 36% improvement in the time taken from court authority to place a child for adoption and match approval. There has been a 52% decrease in new placement orders and the authority had its first Fostering for Adoption arrangement an alternative which would hopefully

increase in number and thereby decrease the time children spent in foster care before moving to permanent families. Adoption support fund. Nigel Chapman referred to families' requests for therapy and four successful applications to the with two further ASF assessments in process. The committee also heard about arrangements for scrutiny and challenge by the Adoption Panel and tracking of timescales. For the future, the recently published Education and Adoption Bill would encourage local authorities to establish regional adoption agencies within two years and so there was significant activity within the London Adoption Board and locally to agree on future direction for adoption services within London.

Gail Tolley added that at meetings of the London Adoption Board and the London Councils, the message from Central Government was that London should take control and decide how the new arrangements would be taken forward. It was anticipated that by April 2017, no local authority would have its own adoption agency. The committee noted that a national adoption register already existed and so it remained to be seen what improvements would be made.

Members heard about the on going activities while children were waiting to be placed for adoption and efforts made to start work as early as possible, in some cases, triple planning. The service focussed on the child's needs while at the same time seeking to broaden prospective adopters' horizons.

RESOLVED:

that the Adoption Service report 1 April – 30 September 2015 be noted.

#### 10. **Independent Reviewing Officer service**

Goitom Mebrahtu (Independent Reviewing Officer Manager) introduced the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report for 2014/15 as required by statutory regulations. The report provided both quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the IRO Services in Brent. He was pleased to report that the service had a stable workforce and that the experience reported by children of their IROs continued to be positive overall. 95.5% of Looked after Reviews took place within the statutory timescales. On inspection the quality of their work was found to be good and they had initiated the escalation of 65 cases in 2014/15. For the coming year, the focus would be on monitoring timescales and implementing Signs of Safety.

In response to members' questions, Gail Tolley expanded on the role of the IRO. Caroline MacGuinness supported the view that the service was a valuable resource, providing a consistent and effective service.

RESOLVED:

that the content of the Independent Review contents of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2014/15 be noted.

#### 11. **Virtual School update**

Ann Holmes (Head of Care Planning and Children) gave a verbal update on the Key Stage 2 and 4 test results for Looked After Children. It was noted that from past



experience good KS2 results rarely were reflected at GCSE level however tracking would continue and the pupil premium used to help bring about improvement.

The committee noted that a full report would be submitted to the next meeting.

12. **Any other urgent business**


No urgent business.

Paul Egunjobi was pleased to report that having passed his Law degree, he would shortly be attending his graduation ceremony. He thanked all those who had participated in his survey which on presentation had been awarded 1<sup>st</sup> class. He also reported on his recent placement in Belize which had been invaluable.

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm

R MOHER  
Chair

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	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b> 16 February 2016</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</b></p>
<p>Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report 1<sup>st</sup> October – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015</p>	

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## 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 third 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 Placements Service of Children and Young People's Services. The vision for the Placements service as set out in the 2015-16 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.
  - The number of children placed closer to home with our in-house foster carers' increases.

- Children are found permanent families without delay – whether within their extended family network or outside.
- Staff within the service are encouraged to become more professionally autonomous and confident.

#### **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 Placements' 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 LAC placed with in-house (Brent) foster carers – annual target 35%.
  - Percentage of LAC placed with a relative or family friend – annual target 15%
  - Percentage of LAC placed in Independent Fostering Agencies – annual target 25%.
  - Percentage of LAC overall within foster placements – annual target 75%
- 5.2 The overall LAC population increased during the reporting period; from 326 on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015 to 328 on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015.
- 5.3 As at the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 there were:
- 96 children placed with Brent foster carers compared to 97 children at the end of the previous quarter. This is 30% of the total.
  - 48 children placed with a relative or family friend on a fostering basis compared to 46 children at the end of the previous quarter. This is 15% of the total.
  - 83 children placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) compared to 91 children at the end of the previous quarter. This is 25% of the total.
  - 70% of children lived within a fostering setting as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015.
- 5.4 This reporting period continued to see an increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) approaching the borough for support. Between 1st October and 31st December 2015 13 UASC started to receive support; this represents 31% of all children starting to be looked after during this period. During the same period in 2014 11 UASC started to be looked after, representing 16% of children starting to be looked after during the period. The proportion of all Looked After Children who are UASC is now 17.7%, compared to 12.2% in December 2014. A greater number and

proportion of LAC are now residing in semi-independent accommodation - an increase from 10% to 15% between April-December 2015. This reflects the older age range of young people entering the care system within Brent.

- 5.5 The service has fewer internal foster carers approved to look after older teenagers and therefore a growth in new referrals in this age range adversely affects our ability to provide in-house resources.
- 5.6 The number of in-house carer resignations and terminations exceeded approvals in 2014-15 and this has had an adverse impact upon our capacity to provide placements for children in-house (see paragraph 6.6 below). To improve performance our activity has been re-focused – resulting in an increase in enquiries and assessments in progress. This will result in greater capacity within the service and it is anticipated that the proportion of children placed in-house will rise over the next 12 months.
- 5.7 The service operates with few vacancies so that the majority of available space with foster carers is maximised. As at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 there were 15 fostering households with at least one bed space available for fostering. This is approximately 13% of the total capacity of non-related households. The majority of carers with vacancies are approved for younger children and are therefore unsuitable to care for the older range of children becoming looked after.
- 5.8 In response to the need for placements out of office hours and to ensure children and young people are less likely to be found homes at a distance from Brent the service has worked closely with local IFA providers to provide the details of local carers to the Emergency Duty Team should a placement be required. This was in direct response to issues raised in this area by the Ofsted single inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers between September – October 2015.

## **6.0 Recruitment Activity**

- 6.1 The fostering service carried out 11 recruitment focused activities within the reporting period with the aim of raising awareness of fostering and encouraging potential foster carers to come forward. For example as part of the ‘#OurDay tweetathon’ on 18<sup>th</sup> November, the fostering service promoted ourselves to the wider world as part of the Local Government Association’s campaign to raise awareness of the work done every single day by local councils across the UK: ([https://twitter.com/Brent\\_Council/status/666983441712480257](https://twitter.com/Brent_Council/status/666983441712480257)). We also continue to run regular outreach sessions within community spaces and at Wembley ASDA.

- 6.2 The monthly information evenings have continued to be held 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 Our improved recruitment and marketing activity has seen a significant growth in enquiries to the service this year in comparison to 2014-15. On current performance we are projecting 300 enquiries this reporting year, compared to 203 in 2014-15. From our own historical data as well as comparisons with other boroughs and IFAs on average 10% of enquiries move ahead to a formal application to foster, with approximately 5-6% of enquiries resulting in an approved fostering household. The recruitment activity during the reporting period produced 42 enquiries about fostering. These enquiries resulted in 9 initial visits. As at the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015 there were 19 formal assessments in process under the 2-stage fostering assessment process, a growth of 6 since the previous reporting period.
- 6.4 A 3-month internet based recruitment project with an external provider commenced on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2015, aiming to target advertising at carers with an interest in fostering older children and sibling groups, as well as from within White Irish and White European communities. The campaign will also assist in the recruitment of foster carers who match the following characteristics:
- Potential foster carers who live in Brent and immediate surrounding areas.
  - Potential foster carers who live in a property with a spare bedroom, especially those with multiple spare bedrooms.
  - Potential foster carers aged between 29 – 59 years.

Google Search and Facebook campaigns are being used to target those actively looking to foster in Brent. The service provider will produce monthly monitoring reports that will assess the impact and success of each digital advertising campaign. The reports will be considered as to whether to extend the programme. A link to more information about the campaign can be found at appendix (ii) below.

- 6.5 The target for the service is to recruit 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. Fortnightly monitoring of the recruitment process ensures that the recruitment team's performance is scrutinised. Whilst there have been a number of carer resignations, there are a high number of assessments in progress with a projection of 13 completed before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. There have been some delays due to the slow return of DBS forms. This is a systemic issue affecting all fostering agencies within London and has been signalled as a priority area to resolve by the Metropolitan Police.
- 6.6 The service is unlikely to reach the net growth target due to the number of carer terminations. To better understand reasons for carers leaving the service and in order to aid recruitment and retention a survey and analysis of households that had left fostering during the previous was completed. Of those households that responded there was no overriding factor that explained carers' decisions to stop fostering - ranging from a change in personal circumstances to having to deal with an

allegation or a challenging placement. The majority of respondents thought they received good support from the fostering support team; that matching was appropriate and the training on offer was good. Areas where carers were dissatisfied related to the inconsistent support from the child's social worker and not feeling valued by the service as a whole. This analysis will help the service respond to carer needs quickly with the intended outcome that there are greater levels of retention.

## **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 central list of Panel members. The panel chair and vice chair are independent people with professional experience of fostering. The Panel meets on the first Friday of every month and more regularly where there is service demand.

7.2 The functions of the Fostering Panel are to consider:

- Each application and 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.
- 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, Children's Social Care.

7.4 During the period 1<sup>st</sup> October – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 3 panels were held with 17 specific cases discussed during these sessions. Within this group:

- 1 new fostering household and 1 new 'Family and Friends' foster carer household were recommended for approval.
- 11 fostering and 3 family and friends households were found suitable to continue as foster carers following review.
- 1 fostering household's approval was recommended for termination - due to the named child for whom they had been approved having left their care and them not seeking approval for any other child or in pursuing the fostering task.

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

7.5 The feedback from the fostering panel chair has been constructive to the service as it develops. Discussions have been held with the chair about how the service could more effectively deal with the issue of allegations against carers to support the reintegration of the household to fostering. The issue of inconsistent children's social worker attendance at panels has been noted. As a result the panel advisor is providing a regular report to the Head of Service for Care Planning to ensure there is

a regular presence, whether within the form of a written report or verbal presentation. At the next panel training day a mock panel will be created, where supervising social workers will be invited to take the roles of panel members. This will improve both panel members and social workers' understanding of the role and what is expected of them in presenting their assessments and reports.

## **8.0 Training and Support to Foster Carers.**

- 8.1 All of Brent's foster carers are allocated to a Supervising Social Worker who carries out monthly supervision and support visits, ensures carers provide a good standard of care and creates an important link between the child's social worker and the foster carer.
- 8.2 As part of foster carers' commitment to Brent and reinforced within their foster care agreement is a requirement to attend mandatory and identified training courses. During the period 1<sup>st</sup> October – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 13 training courses were held, attended by 91 foster carers. An overall analysis of the impact of foster carer training carried out during the reporting year will be provided with the final quarter's fostering service monitoring report.
- 8.3 Every month a foster carers' support group is held, facilitated by Supervising Social Workers but informed by the needs of carers. The groups are well attended and provide an important communication link between carers and the Placements' Service. A foster carers' focus group was held in October between fostering service managers and carers to share information and discuss issues of concern.
- 8.4 The annual foster carers' awards and celebration evening was held in December and was well-attended by many carers. A number of awards were presented to carers who had gone the 'extra mile' in supporting children in their care. The highlight of the evening was a special award to Patrice Thomas for her fostering career of over 30 years, encompassing the care of more than 150 children. This tremendous achievement was recognised nationally when Patrice was awarded the MBE in the New Year Honours' List. A link to further information is available at appendix (i) below.
- 8.4 A continuation of social pedagogy development through a bridging project to embed the learning of foster carers and social care staff is taking place between October 2015 and April 2016. Meetings have been held with other Local Authorities using a similar approach in order to share practice.

## **9.0 Monitoring Arrangements**

- 9.1 During the reporting period there was one allegation made against the adult son of a Brent foster carer.
- 9.2 There was one formal complaint received from a Brent foster carer during the reporting period. This related to the management of a child with challenging



behaviour and was from the carer whose adult son was subject of an allegation in paragraph 9.1 above.

- 9.3 All foster carers, regardless of the length of their approval with Brent must have an annual review of their arrangements. The Fostering Reviewing Officer completed 29 annual reviews out of a possible 38 during this period. Of those uncompleted, 3 were at the request of the foster carer, 4 were considering resignation from their role and 2 due to supervising social worker delays. These have all been re-scheduled and will be completed within timescales.

## **10.0 Ofsted Inspection**

- 10.1 The Ofsted single inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers took place between 14<sup>th</sup> September and 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015. The final report was published on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

- 10.2 The inspection of fostering services was combined within the overall judgement for children looked after and achieving permanence and as such was judged as 'Requires Improvement'. There were a number of positive findings as they related to fostering:

- That strategic leaders were prioritising sufficiency and proactively targeting foster carer recruitment. The number of potential foster carers under assessment was noted as showing improvement and the duration of assessments were closely monitored to ensure timely approvals.
- That family finding for older children considered the use of long-term foster care, including the use of externally commissioned placements. Inspectors found timely formal matching and good use of connected person's assessments. The ethnic, cultural and religious mix of the local authority's foster carers was confirmed as matching that of the borough with almost all children and young people being well matched with foster carers in this respect.
- That the panel adviser and panel chair provide robust quality assurance and challenge. It was noted that there had been a refocusing of the training agenda since the recent appointment of the fostering development co-ordinator to ensure a skilled workforce to meet the needs of children and to help build stability.
- That carers were very positive about the recent introduction of social pedagogy training; they said that it helps them to develop strategies for managing difficult behaviours and so reduces the chances of placements breaking down and children or young people having to move to new carers.
- Foster carers said that they felt well supported by the fostering service and inspectors found annual foster carer reviews to be of a high standard.

- 10.3 There were a number of areas where inspectors felt that fostering services could be improved:

- To ensure that current strategies aimed at providing a sufficient range and number of placement options for children and young people deliver in providing enough capacity to meet the needs of all children.
- That the local authority's fostering strategy was not meeting its own objective to ensure that Brent has enough foster carers with the right skills to meet the

needs of all of its children looked after. The reasons foster carers leave the fostering service were noted not to be collated and analysed to inform the fostering strategy.

- That foster carer assessments presented to panel were variable in quality with most requiring some additional information or further analysis to fully support good decision making by panel.
- That individual foster carer training plans were not yet ensuring that all foster carers were encouraged by supervising social workers to engage fully in developing their skills and taking up available training.

10.4 The areas noted within the inspection as requiring improvement are part of service action planning to ensure these are effectively tackled.

## **11.0 Future Developments**

11.1 As described above, a social pedagogy bridging programme is in operation between October 2015 until April 2016 to support those who have completed the programme and to share and embed the learning and knowledge more broadly across Children's Social Care. A project plan has been developed with the intention to deliver a second training cohort in 2016. St Christopher's Fellowship are using social pedagogy within their children's homes in west London and are committed to leading a network of organisations committed to this approach. Brent intends to participate within this network.

11.2 Collaborative work with other west London authorities has continued with joint foster carer preparation training now in place and an agreement made to offer the same carer benefits' package to foster carers – delivered through the Fostering Network.

11.3 The main activities for the final quarter of the reporting year are as follows:

- To ensure that the recruitment of in-house carers continues to improve and that the impact of the digital campaign is evaluated.
- To carry out a survey of current foster carers and to compare this with the exit interviews to identify trends and to support service planning.
- To review the foster carer training offer with the intention to provide more targeted activity and to ensure fostering support workers actively promote training and development.
- To progress the plan for social pedagogy implementation within Brent.

## **Appendices / Links**

- (i) Press Release: Brent resident awarded MBE for 31 years of fostering:  
<https://www.brent.gov.uk/council-news/press-releases/pr6200/>

(ii) Brent's 'Make a Difference' Fostering Campaign:

<https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/children-and-family-support/fostering/make-a-difference/>

**Contact Officer**

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**GAIL TOLLEY**

**STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

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Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children

Annual Report 2014/15

February 2016

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Appendix 1	Case Studies showing impact of BVS intervention
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## 1. Purpose of the Annual Report

The purpose of this annual report is to outline the activity and impact of the Brent Virtual School during the academic year 2014-15. The report includes full details of the educational outcomes of our Brent looked after children. It reflects on the impact of our activities and identifies areas of future development to achieve improved outcomes for our looked after children.

Data contained in this report is for looked after children who were in the care of the Brent Council for the academic year 2014/15. It is un-validated data and includes all children in care in Brent in 2014/15; not just those in care for a year or more. The national LAC comparison data included in this report is from 2013/14<sup>1</sup>. National, validated LAC data includes only children who have been in care for a year or more.

The Annual Report will be presented to the Corporate parenting Board on 16.02.2016.

## 2. Key Messages from the 2014/15 Data

- 40% of LAC in Brent in compulsory education in 2014/15 were in care for a year or less
- 20% of LAC in Brent were aged 15-17 years and 68% were aged 12-17 years
- PEP completion rates whilst much improved in 2014/15 require improvement in terms of their quality
- The Key Stage 1 (7 year olds) results were in line with the Virtual School's predictions. The cohort was small: 12 children; with 50% achieving the expected Level 2+ outcome in reading and writing and 58% (7 children) achieving the expected Level 2+ outcome in mathematics. These results were 13-21% below those of the 2014 cohort. The 2015 cohort had significantly more children with complex SEND needs. However the levels of progress were broadly similar
- The Key Stage 2 (11 year olds) results were much improved on 2014 with 100% (5 children) achieving Level 4+. This cohort, very different in characteristics from the 2013/14 cohort, were all resident in Brent, in stable placements, attending local schools. They have all made positive starts to their secondary education
- The Key Stage 4 (15 year olds) results were disappointing. Of a cohort of 37<sup>2</sup> only 5% (2) achieved 5A\*-C incl. English and mathematics a further decline on 2014. These 2 LAC had been in care for less than a year and will not be counted in the national data. 41% (15) achieved 5A\*-G, a significant improvement on 2014 and 78% (29) achieved at least 1A\*-G. 8 achieved no GCSE or equivalent qualifications
- The post-16 EET data (in education, employment and training) is currently very positive: 91% are EET; the 4 young people currently NEET (not in education, employment and training) all are receiving support from the Virtual School's Life Coach
- The post-16 results show a decline in the number of LAC sitting AS and A2 examinations. Post-16 attainment is not currently being supported or monitored by BVS
- Attendance: 92%; 1% above 2013/14: a significant improvement
- Permanent Exclusion in 2014/15: 1 Year 8 LAC who was permanently excluded shortly after returning to care in May 2015. He is currently attending the Key Stage PRU in Brent and an application for a statutory assessment is being made. He is currently in

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<sup>1</sup> From 2015 national attainment data for LAC will include information about SEND and will be produced for the first time by the DfE in March 2016. This Annual Report will then be updated accordingly.

<sup>2</sup> The actual 2014/15 Year 11 cohort was 46 of which 9 were EAL recent arrivals in the UK and were not eligible for GCSE entry. The EET data is based on the full cohort.

- a residential children's home
- Ofsted inspection of Brent services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children, October 2015 concluded that the work of the Brent Virtual School requires improvement. This was in line with BVS' self-assessment. Please see below in the report for more detail.

### **3. Role of the Brent Virtual School and the Virtual Headteacher**

#### **Role of the Brent Virtual School**

The Virtual School in Brent (BVS) has the overall responsibility for the monitoring, supporting and provision of interventions to ensure that looked after children (LAC) achieve the best possible educational outcomes. BVS strives to achieve this by:

- Co-ordinating and quality assuring all Personal Education Plans (PEP)
- Monitoring and challenging schools to make effective use of Pupil Premium in line with DfE guidance
- Tracking the academic progress, attendance and exclusions of LAC
- Using tracking data to highlight individuals who are not on target to achieve their predicted outcomes and providing them with additional educational support.
- Ensuring Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) needs are identified and supported appropriately, including applications for statutory assessment
- Implementing a range of targeted interventions to raise academic standards
- Providing support and challenge to LAC, schools and carers, ensuring that expectations around achievement are high
- Ensuring effective transition between schools or specialist providers
- Encouraging LAC to have high aspirations about their futures and helping to remove barriers to further education
- Leading training for foster carers, designated teachers, school governors and bespoke training for alternative learning providers and staff in schools
- Encouraging LAC and their carers to engage in a wide range of enrichment activities
- Providing education updates for the Residential Panel
- Celebrating LAC achievements.

BVS was re-structured in 2013 and the size of the team was reduced in from January 2014; going from a team of 6: a lead advisory teacher (deputy head of BVS) and 5 advisory teachers to a team of 4: a lead advisory teacher (deputy head of BVS) and 3 advisory teachers. This has had a significant impact on the capacity of the team to support an ever increasingly complex caseload of LAC.

#### **Role of the Brent Virtual Headteacher**

The concept of the 'Virtual School Headteacher' for Children Looked After was first outlined in the White Paper 'Care Matters: Time for Change' (DCSF, June 2007). Directors of Children's Services have a statutory responsibility to make sure that their local authority promotes the educational achievement of the children they look after, regardless of where they are placed.

The Children and Families Act 2014 amended section 22 of the Children Act 1989 and placed a statutory duty on all local authorities to appoint a Virtual School Head (VSH) to promote the educational achievement of its Looked After Children. It is the responsibility of the Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to ensure that these duties are met.



The VSH role in Brent Council is held by Janet Lewis<sup>3</sup> and is a strategic role that can influence practice and the use of resources across the authority.

The role was expanded in the DfE document 'Promoting the Education of Looked After Children, statutory guidance for local authorities' July 2014. This document prescribes clearly that:

- VSHs are in place and that they have the resources, time, training and support they need to discharge the duty effectively
- VSHs have robust procedures in place to monitor the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after (including those placed and educated out of county)
- VSHs must maintain an up to date roll of their Local Authority's Looked After Children who are in school or college settings and gather information about their education placement, attendance and educational progress
- VSHs must inform headteachers and designated teachers in schools if they have a child on roll who is looked after by the VSH's local authority
- Ensure social workers, designated teachers and schools, carers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating each child's PEP (personal education plan) and ensuring that identified needs are met
- Ensure up to date, effective and high quality PEPs focus on educational outcomes and that all Looked After Children, wherever they are placed, have an effective PEP
- Ensure the educational achievement of children looked after by the authority is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibility for promoting their welfare.
- Report regularly on the attainment of Looked After Children through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

The BVS Headteacher is also a regular member of the borough's Fostering Panel.

#### **4. Brent Virtual School Members**

##### **2014/15**

Lesley Hobbs, Interim Headteacher (until December 2014)  
Janet Lewis, Headteacher (from January 2015)  
Maggie Taylor, Lead LAC Advisory Teacher (retired December 2014)  
Susan Lofthouse, Interim Deputy Headteacher (01.04.15-31.01.16)  
Priya Upadhyaya, LAC Information Analyst  
Sara Thrower, KS4 LAC Advisory Teacher (left Brent Council August 2015)  
Nayna Joshi, KS3 LAC Advisory Teacher  
Margaret Curtin, KS1 and 2 LAC Advisory Teacher  
Elizabeth Hannah, LAC Educational Psychologist  
Ben Kwofie, Year 11 LAC Life Coach, Connexions Team.

##### **2015/16**

Janet Lewis, Headteacher  
Susan Lofthouse, Interim Deputy Headteacher (01.04.15-31.01.16)  
Priya Upadhyaya, LAC Information Analyst  
Nayna Joshi, KS4 LAC Advisory Teacher  
Anna Lewis, Interim KS4 LAC Advisory Teacher (until 30.03.16)  
Margaret Curtin, KS3 LAC Advisory Teacher  
Emma Gavin, KS1 and 2 and Early Years LAC Advisory Teacher  
Elizabeth Hannah, LAC Educational Psychologist (0.6)

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<sup>3</sup> Janet Lewis is also the Head of the Inclusion and Alternative Education Service in Brent

Ben Kwofie, Year 11 LAC Life Coach, Connexions Team (until 30.03.16).

The Virtual School is governed by the Corporate Parenting Board and its Management Board chaired by the Operational Director for Early Help and Education.

During 2015 BVS made 2 attempts to appoint a substantive Deputy Headteacher without success. Appointing an outstanding Deputy Headteacher remains a priority for BVS.

Please see Appendix 3 attached to this report for an account of a typical day in the life of a BVS LAC Advisory Teacher.

### **Ofsted inspection of Brent services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children, October 2015**

The Ofsted judgement for Brent of requires improvement was in line with BVS's self-assessment. The inspection report made the following specific comments and recommendations for BVS:

#### **Comments**

- Outcomes for children looked after in Brent are not yet good because services are not consistently meeting the needs of all children
- Measures aimed at improving educational attainment for children looked after are not yet improving outcomes across all key stages.
- The head of the virtual school has implemented a wide range of actions to improve the educational attainment of children looked after. Attainment gaps have narrowed at Key Stage 1 over the last three years and at Key Stage 2 in 2014–15 but despite initiatives to address them, they have continued to widen at Key Stage 4. The virtual school is targeting additional help and tracking children's progress, but the quality of personal education plans is too variable and too many children are underachieving, limiting their options for future education, employment and economic well-being.
- Previous problems with low completion rates for personal education plans have been resolved. However, while a minority are completed well, the majority require improvement
- The personal and educational achievements of care leavers and children looked after are recognised at an annual celebration evening and young people are proud of their achievements.

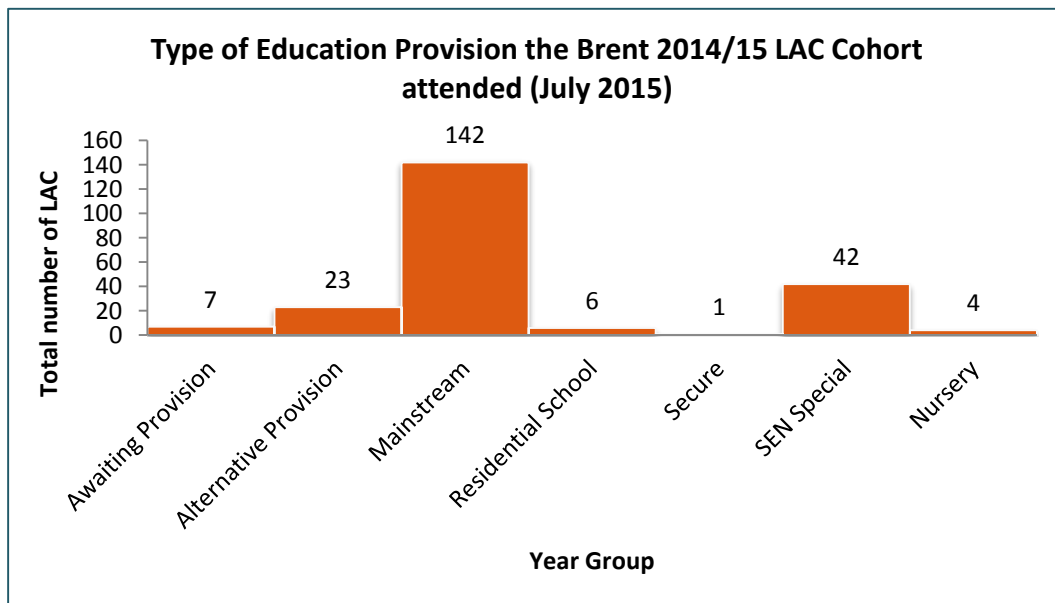
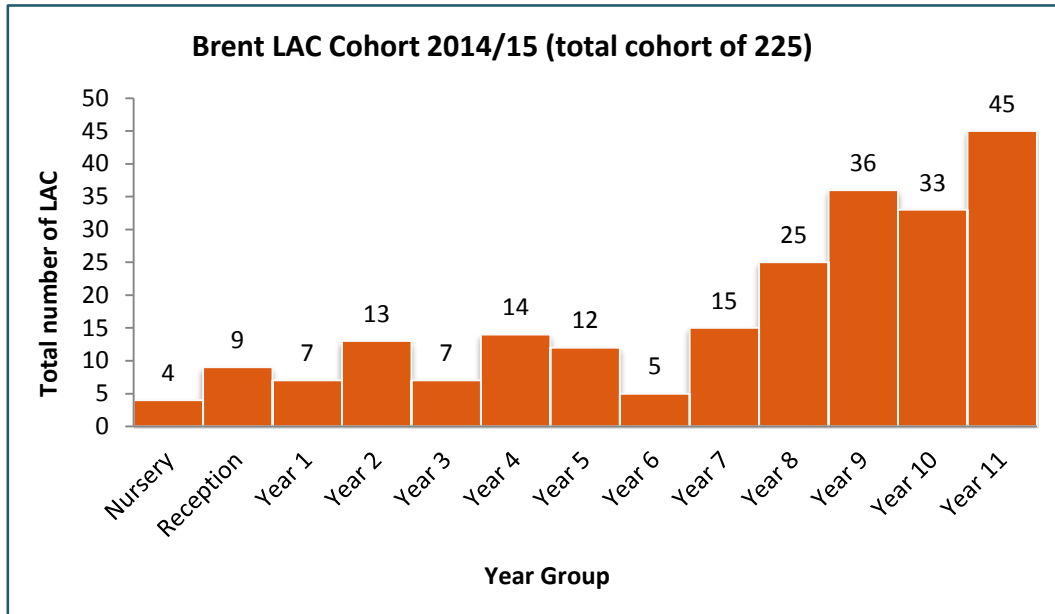
#### **Recommendations:**

- Ensure that children's plans, including personal education plans and pathway plans, contain clear and specific actions with timescales for completion
- Concentrate the work of the virtual school on measures to narrow the attainment gap across all key stages to build on the success achieved at Key Stage 1 in 2013–14 and at Key Stage 2 in 2014–15
- Work closely with training providers and careers advice and guidance workers to increase care leaver progression into apprenticeships and other vocational further education

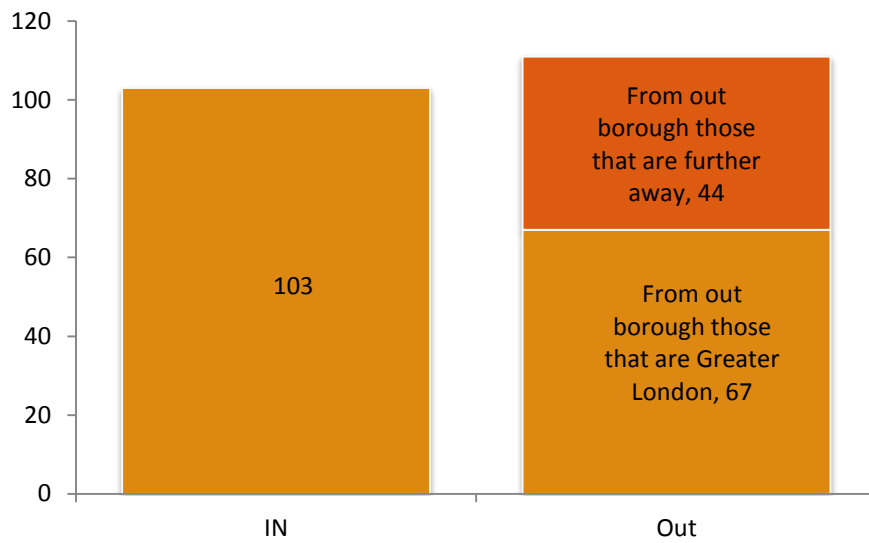
The recommendations are now part of BVS's current service plan.

## 5. Brent's Looked After Children Population 2014/15

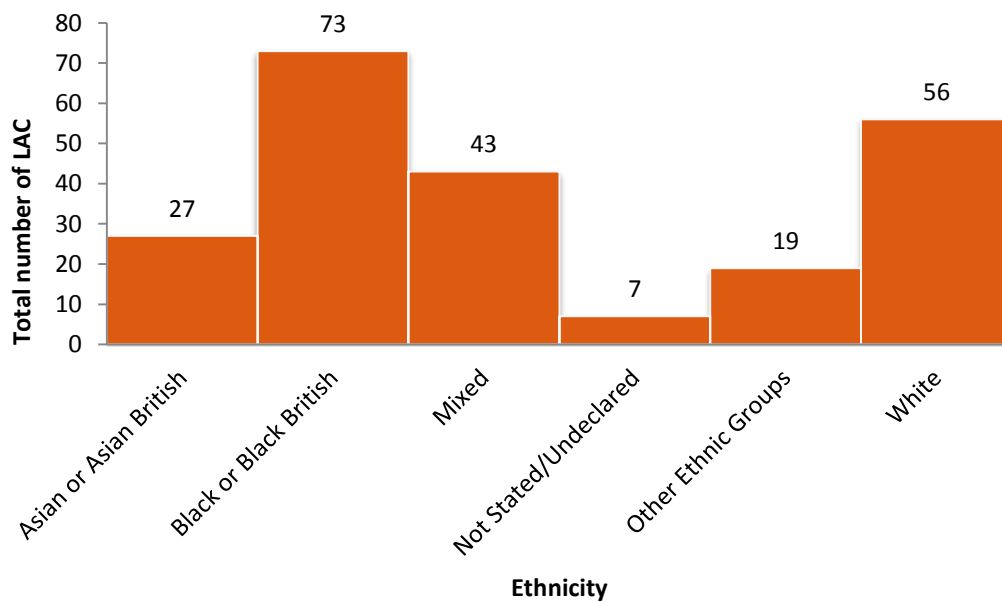
In July 2015 225 (Nursery- Year 11) children were looked after, 103 attending Brent schools and 111 attending schools outside the borough. Of these 111, 67 were in schools in greater London, with the remainder placed outside London, some at a significant distance.



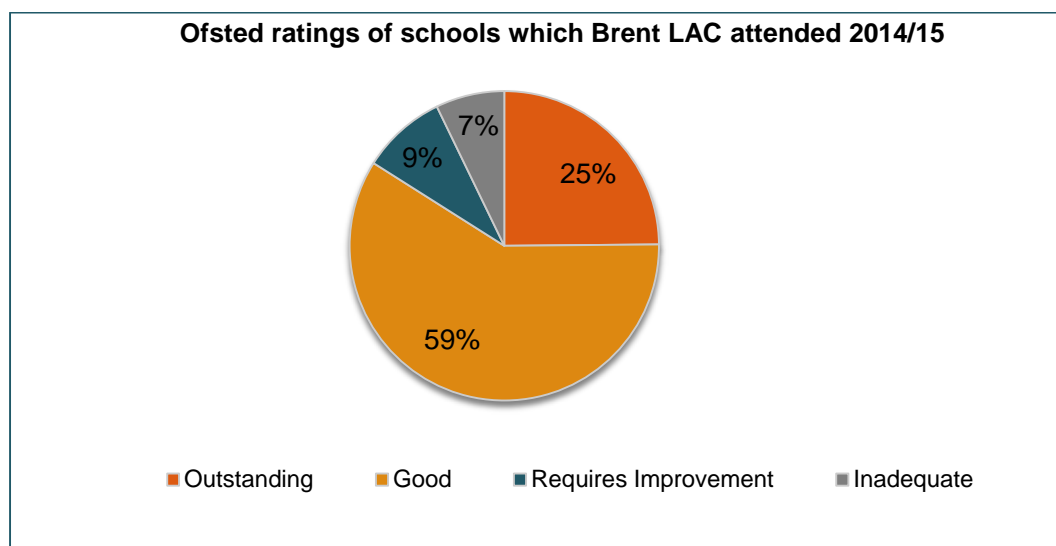
### Brent LAC 2014/15 Proportion placed in/out Brent



### Ethnicity of the Brent LAC Cohort 2014/15 (total cohort of 225)



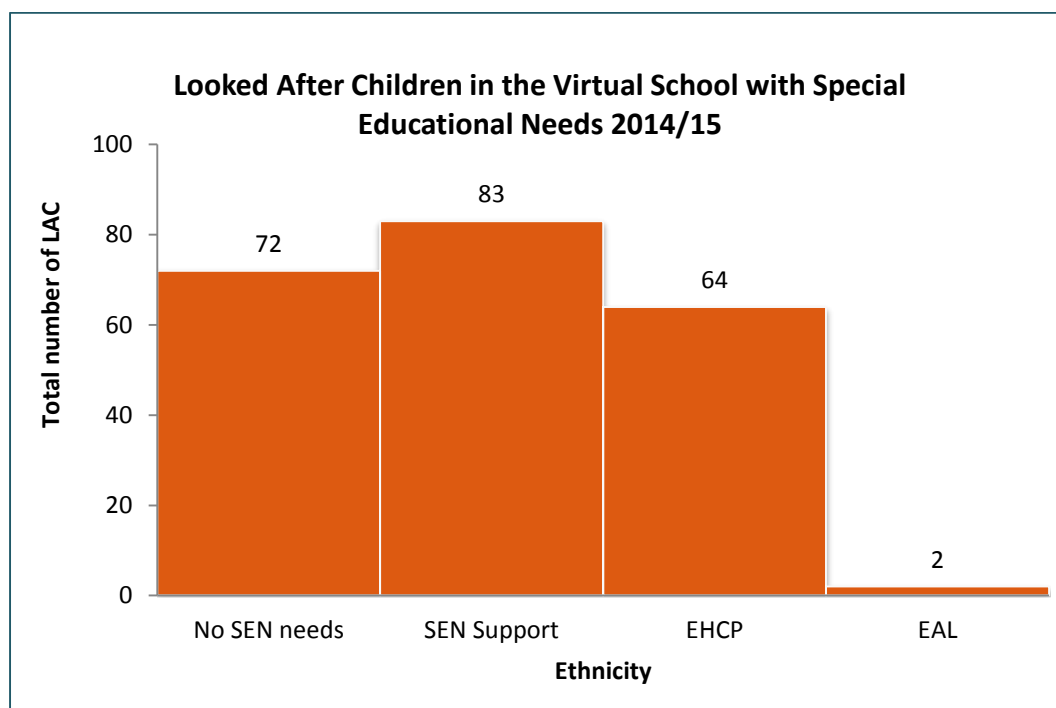
In 2014/15 84% of statutory school aged LAC attended schools that were Ofsted rated as good or outstanding, 9% (16 LAC) attended schools that required improvement and 7% (13 LAC) attended an inadequate school.



BVS monitors the progress and achievement of all LAC paying particular attention to those placed in schools that are less than 'good'.

## 6. SEND

65% of the 2014/15 LAC cohort had identified SEND needs compared with 12% nationally. 28% had Education Health Care Plan (EHC plan) compared with 3% nationally.



Please note that the above graph represents LAC in Reception- Year 11



## **7. Brent's Looked After Children's Attainment 2014/15**

Monitoring and improving outcomes for Brent LAC is a key priority for the BVS and although LAC numbers are relatively small, national and regional comparisons allow an understanding of educational and other outcomes achieved for children for which Brent Council are responsible as the corporate parent. Outcomes are reported for LAC who have been continuously looked after for at least 12 months up to and including 31 March 2015. Data is collated from the annual LAC return (SSDA903) and matched to attainment and school census data<sup>4</sup>.

## **8. Early Years (Non Statutory) Provision 2014/15**

In the summer term 2014, 4 LAC aged 2-4 years were eligible to access free early education. Of these 1 attended a Brent nursery provision, 2 pupils attended an out of borough nursery setting and 1 child did not attend nursery due to a severe disability. These 3 children are in receipt, since April 2015, of the Early Years Pupil Premium. BVS did not support or monitor LAC in Early Years settings in 2014/15. This important work started in September 2015.

### **2014/15 Statutory Attainment**

The attainment of the Year 2 (Key Stage 1), 6 (Key Stage 2) and 11 (Key Stage 4) cohorts in 2014/15 is set out below.

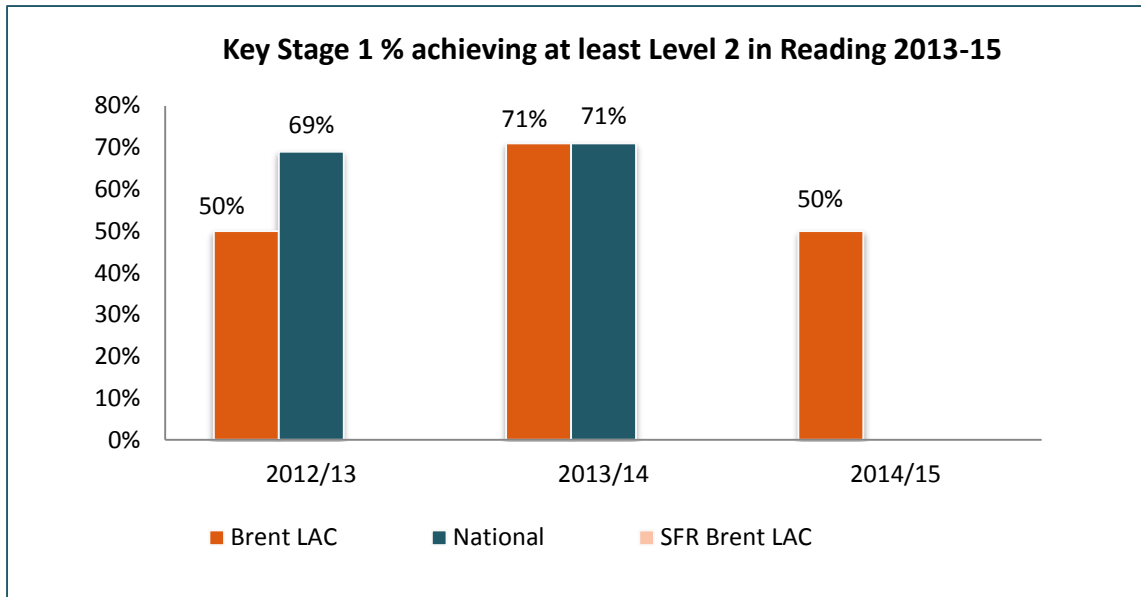
## **9. Key Stage 1 Statutory Attainment**

Attainment at Key Stage 1 declined in 2014/15 in all areas assessed.

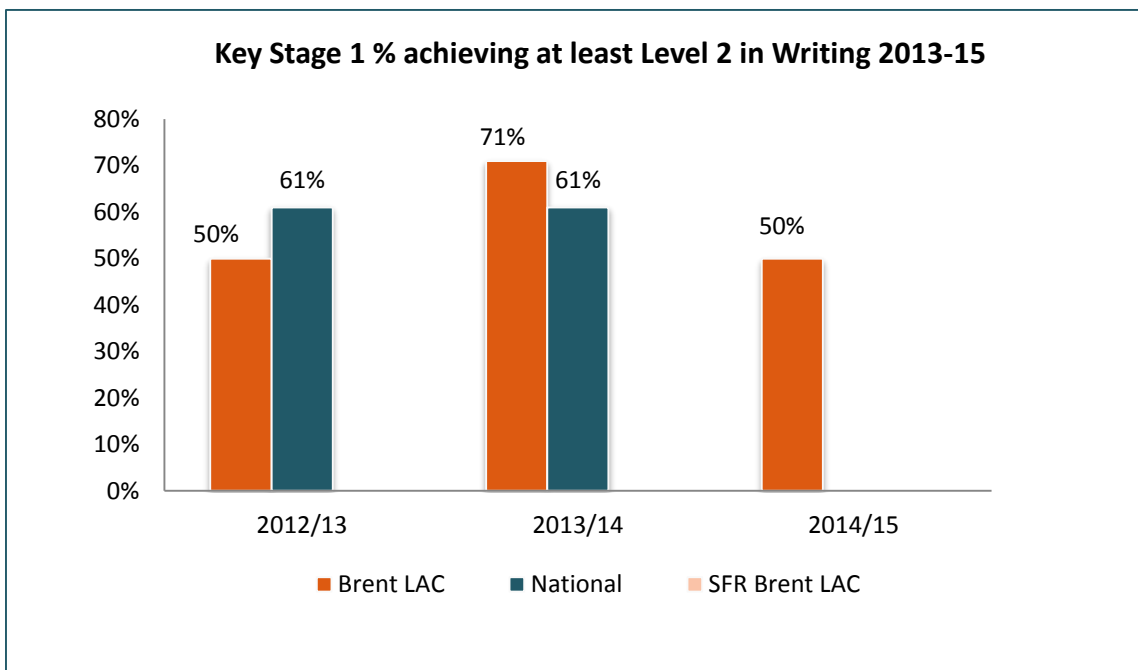
In 2014/15, 12 LAC completed KS1. Results show that 50% achieved Level 2 in Reading, 50% in Writing and 58% in Mathematics.

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<sup>4</sup> The national data included in this report is LAC only. Care must be taken when interpreting this information due to the small number of children and the vulnerability of these cohorts.

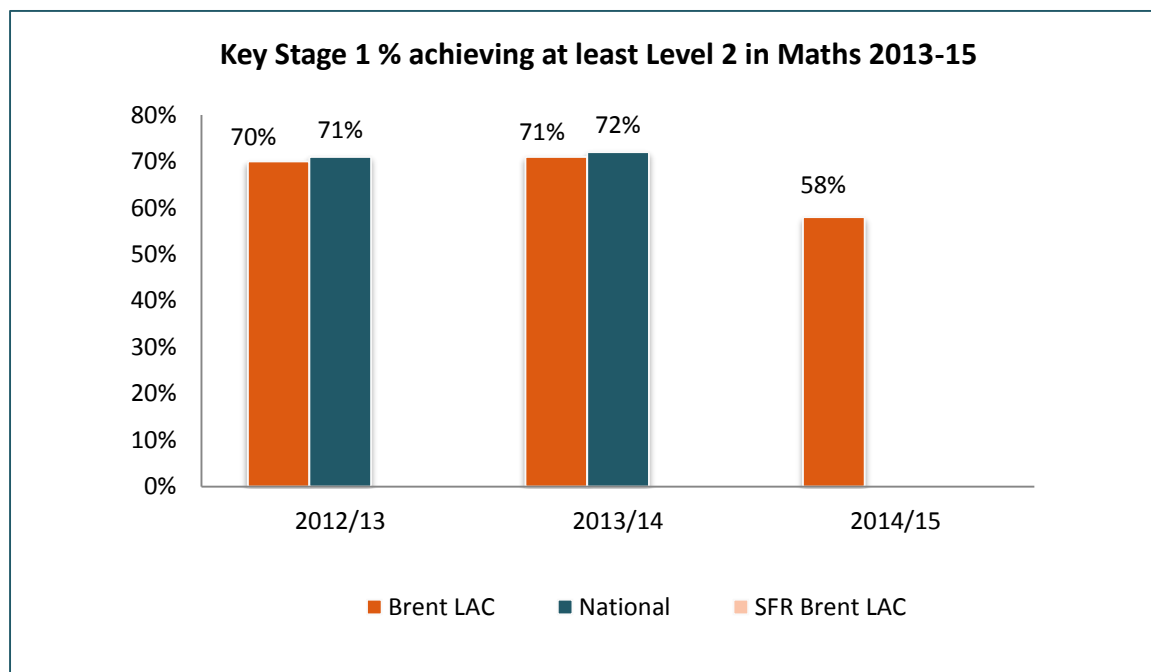


Reading Key Stage 1 % achieving at least Level 2	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Number in LAC Cohort	10	7	12
Brent LAC	50% (5 Pupils)	71% (5 Pupils)	50% (6 Pupils)
National	69%	71%	TBC
SFR Brent LAC <sup>5</sup>	x	x	TBC



<sup>5</sup> Statistical First Release – verified data published by the Department for Education. In the case of LAC data only the outcomes of children who have been in care for at least 12 months are included in the SFR. Brent’s LAC data includes all children in that Key Stage as of the end of the academic year.

Writing Key Stage 1 % achieving at least Level 2	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Number in LAC Cohort	10	7	12
Brent LAC	50% (5 Pupils)	71% (5 Pupils)	50% (6 Pupils)
National	61%	61%	TBC
SFR Brent LAC	x	x	TBC



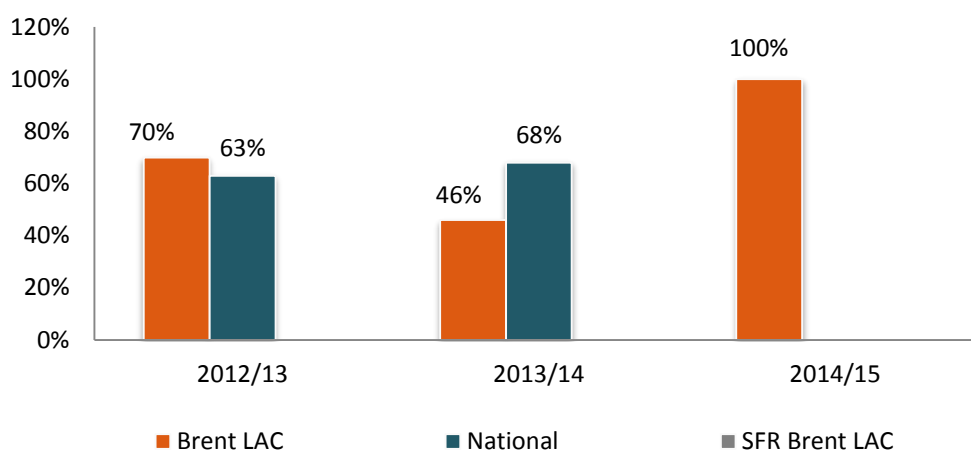
Maths Key Stage 1 % achieving at least Level 2	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Number in LAC Cohort	10	7	12
Brent LAC	70% (7 pupils)	71% (5 Pupils)	58% (7 Pupils)
National	71%	72%	TBC
SFR Brent LAC	x	x	TBC

## 10. Key Stage 2 Statutory Attainment 2014/15

Results for the 5 LAC who completed KS2 show that 100% achieved L4+ in reading, writing and maths.

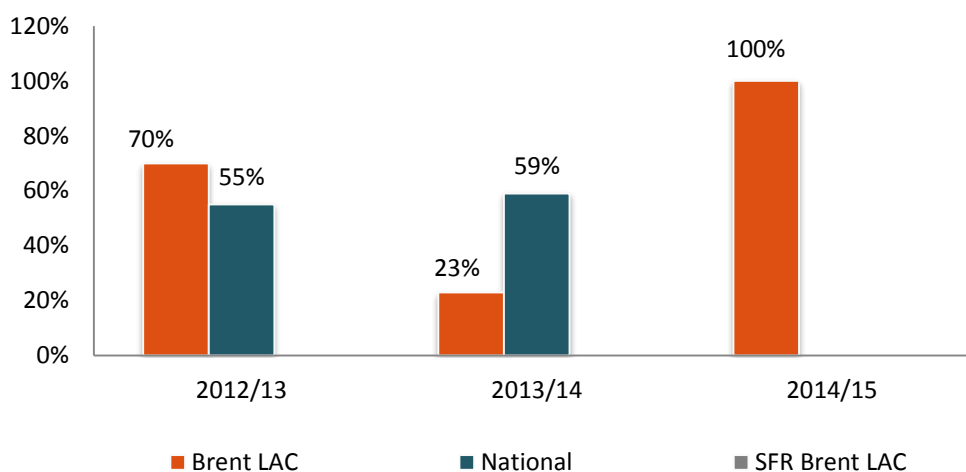


### Key Stage 2 % achieving at least Level 4 in Reading 2013-15

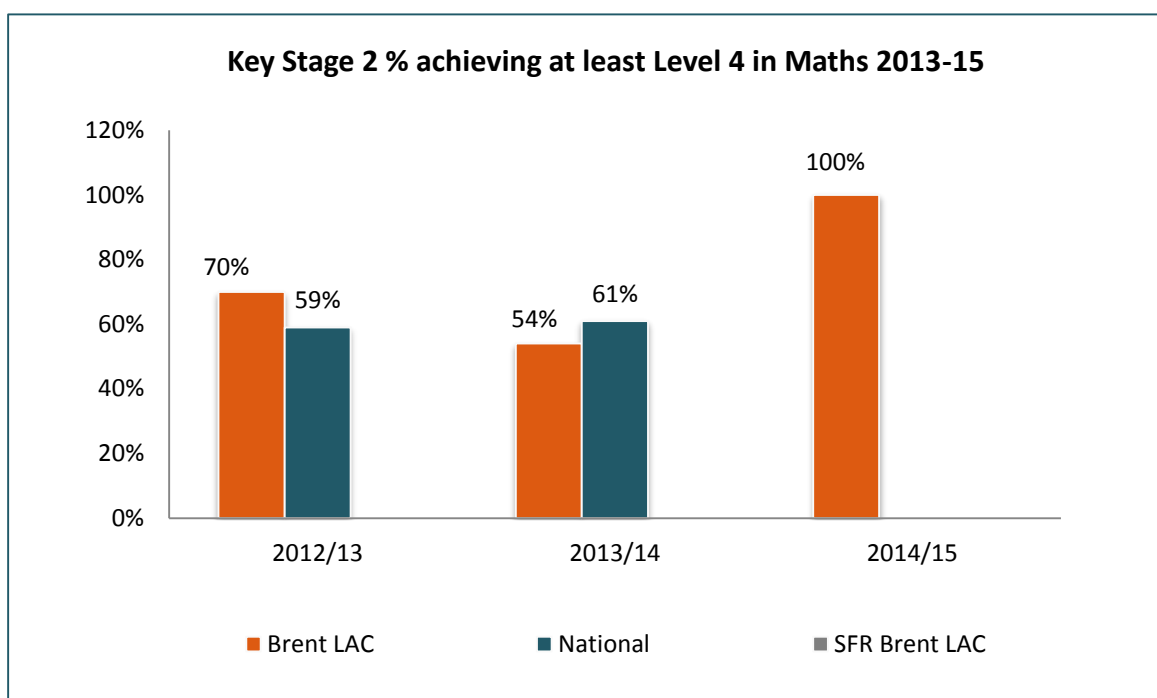


Reading Key Stage 2 % achieving at least Level 4	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Number in LAC Cohort	10	13	5
Brent LAC	70% (7 Pupils)	46% (6 Pupils)	100% (5 Pupils)
National	63%	68%	TBC
SFR Brent LAC	x	x	TBC

### Key Stage 2 % achieving at least Level 4 in Writing 2013-15



Writing Key Stage 2 % achieving at least Level 4	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Number in LAC Cohort	10	13	5
Brent LAC	70% (7 Pupils)	23% (3 Pupils)	100% (5 Pupils)
National	55%	59%	TBC
SFR Brent LAC	x	x	TBC



Maths Key Stage 2 % achieving at least Level 4	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Number in LAC Cohort	10	13	5
Brent LAC	70% (7 Pupils)	54% (7 Pupils)	100% (5 Pupils)
National	59%	61%	TBC
SFR Brent LAC	x	x	TBC

## 11. Key Stage 4 Statutory Attainment 2014/15

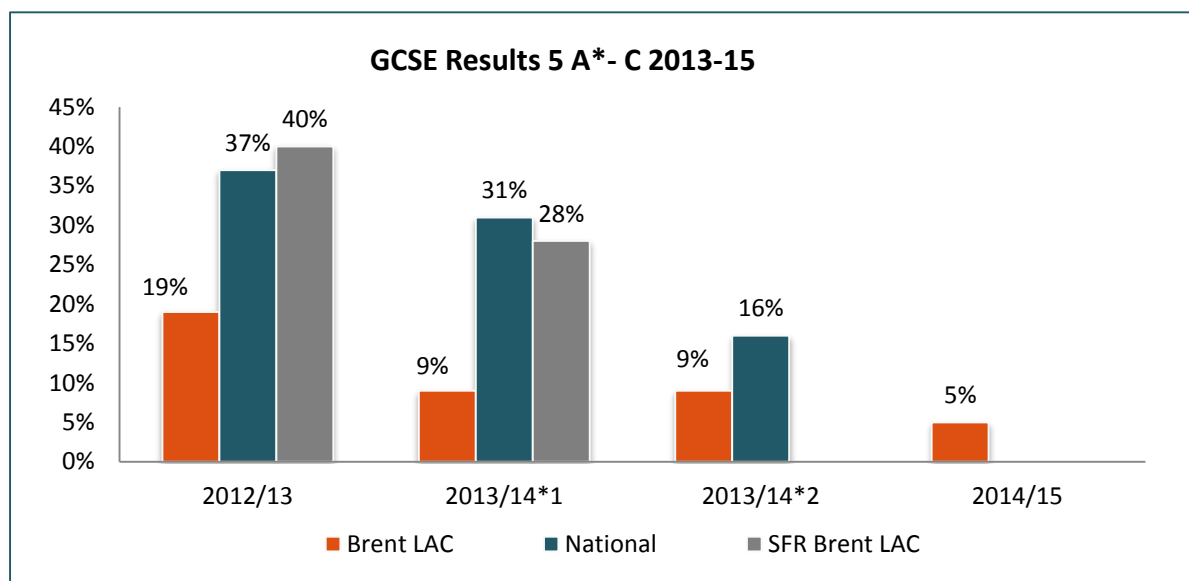
Attainment at Key Stage 4 in 2014/15 was disappointing. However the cohort faced a significant number of barriers to academic success (please see below). The eligible cohort consisted of 37 LAC.

GCSE Results	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
	% (cohort)	% (cohort)	% (cohort)
5 A*-C	19% (8)	9% (3)	5% (2)
5 A*- C (incl. Eng & Maths)	19% (8)	9% (3)	5% (2)
5 A*-G	60% (26)	39% (13)	41% (15)
1 A*-G	77% (33)	85% (28)	78% (29)
Didn't sit/didn't pass GCSE exams	23% (10) <sup>6</sup>	15% (5)	22% (8) <sup>7</sup>
Total eligible cohort	43	33	37
Not eligible /EAL (less than 2 yrs)	4	6	8
<b>Total Cohort</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>45</b>

<sup>6</sup> includes 4 EAL- if these 4 pupils were not included the % would be 14%

<sup>7</sup> please note 4 pupils sat exams but did not pass and 4 pupils didn't sit

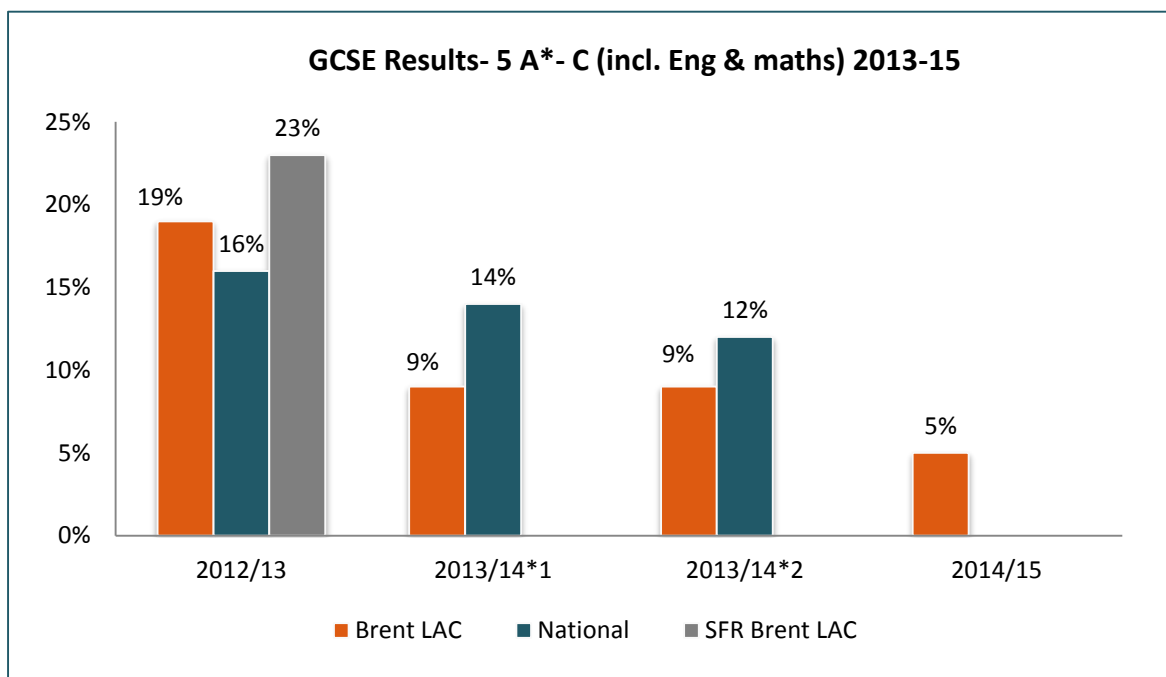
2 pupils achieved 5 A\*-C GCSE including English and maths.



GCSE Results 5 A* - C	2012/13	2013/14 <sup>8</sup>	2013/14 <sup>9</sup>	2014/15
Number in LAC Cohort	43	33	33	37
Brent LAC	19% (8 pupils)	9% (3 pupils)	9% (3 pupils)	5% (2 pupils)
National	37%	31%	16%	TBC
SFR Brent LAC	40%	28%	x	TBC

<sup>8</sup> The '2013 methodology' data removes the rules regarding the Wolf Review recommendations and early entry policy from the calculation of performance measures

<sup>9</sup> New 2014 methodology applied to 2013/14 data. Two major reforms have been implemented which affect the calculation of key stage 4 (KS4) performance measures data. Professor Alison Wolf's Review of Vocational Education recommendations which restrict the qualifications counted, prevent any qualification from counting as larger than one GCSE and cap the number of non-GCSEs included in performance measures at two per pupil. There is also an early entry policy to only count a pupil's first attempt at a qualification. More details can be found in the statistical release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provisional-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2013-to-2015>



GCSE Results- 5 A* - C (incl. Eng & maths)	2012/13	2013/14 <sup>10</sup>	2013/14 <sup>11</sup>	2014/15
Number in LAC Cohort	43	33	33	37
Brent LAC	19% (8)	9% (3)	9% (3)	5% (2)
National	16%	14%	12%	TBC
SFR Brent LAC	23%	x	x	TBC

Please see below results for 5 A\*-G and 1A\*-G, which are not included in the SFR.

Brent LAC GCSE Results	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
5 A*-G	60% (26)	39% (13)	41% (15)
1 A*-G	77% (33)	85% (28)	78% (29)

### Context and Impact on Outcomes

**Why do different cohorts of LAC achieve such different outcomes from both other LAC and other children not in care?**

<sup>10</sup> The '2013 methodology' data removes the rules regarding the Wolf Review recommendations and early entry policy from the calculation of performance measures

<sup>11</sup> New 2014 methodology applied to 2013/14 data. Two major reforms have been implemented which affect the calculation of key stage 4 (KS4) performance measures data. Professor Alison Wolf's Review of Vocational Education recommendations which restrict the qualifications counted, prevent any qualification from counting as larger than one GCSE and cap the number of non-GCSEs included in performance measures at two per pupil. There is also an early entry policy to only count a pupil's first attempt at a qualification. More details can be found in the statistical release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provisional-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2013-to-2015>

The educational attainment of LAC is measured against the educational attainment of all children. The majority of LAC face challenges and barriers to their overall achievement that the majority of other children do not. For example:

- 60% of LAC experience emotional and mental health problems: 4 times higher than children generally
- 66% of LAC have at least 1 physical health issue; are 3 times more likely to drink alcohol and/or smoke; 4 times more likely to take illegal drugs; more likely to become teenage parents
- Over 25% of LAC have an EHC Plan compared with only 3% of all pupils.

Brent's LAC reflect these national statistics. In addition the majority of Brent's LAC come into care between the ages of 11-16 at a time when the challenges faced by young people are more intractable and are more likely to result in placement breakdown and change of education setting.

In 2014/15 the Year 11 cohort was impacted by the following contextual issues:

- Prior Attainment: Only 9% (4 LAC) had achieved Level 5 in English and 7% (3 LAC) had achieved Level 5 in maths at Key Stage 2 – a key predictor for achieving 5A\*-C including English and maths at GCSE
- Change of care placement: 73% experienced more than 1 change of care placement
- 62% of the cohort were educated in schools outside the borough
- Residential children's home: 20% were in a residential children's home for part or all of their Year 11 education
- SEND: 56% of the Year 11 cohort had the following SEND:
  - Identified SEND need: 27% (most commonly for emotional and behavior development needs)
  - EHC Plan: 29% (most commonly for emotional and behavior development needs)
- Attendance; 48% of Year 11 had attendance of 85% or less in the summer term of 2014/15
- Alternative Provision (a PRU or small setting): 31% were in an alternative provision for part or all of Year 11
- Time in care: 33% were in care pre Year 7 and 67% became LAC after Year 7.

All of the above challenges had an impact on how individual 2014/15 Year 11 LAC prepared for and performed in their public examinations. On the basis of prior attainment, only 3 of the cohort had achieved the expected levels at Key Stage 2 to secure 5A\*-C grades including English and maths at GCSE. None of the 3 achieved 5A\*-C grades. Of these 3, 1 had a baby in February 2015 and was out of school for 2014/15. She was supported by Brent's Inclusion and Alternative Provision Service and did sit some GCSEs in May 2015 with limited success. Another, following a care placement breakdown, was supported by BVS in travelling some distance to his school. His engagement following a period of non-attendance, improved and he did achieve 2 C grades at GCSE in maths and science. The 3<sup>rd</sup> LAC achieved 5A\*-G GCSEs and has progressed onto college. Of the 2 LAC who did achieve 5A\*-C grades including English and maths, 1 had achieved L4 at Key Stage 2 in English and maths and the other L2 in English and L4 in maths. Both came into care during 2014/15

BVS RAG rates and tracks all LAC including those in Year 11 paying particular attention to young people whose school and/or care placement is at risk and those who are underachieving. The support and intervention offered to the 2014/15 Year 11 LAC includes:

- Provision of additional 1:1 tutoring and/or mentoring
- Emergency PEP reviews
- LAC advisory teacher involvement at LAC reviews
- Home and school visits to engage with and advise individual LAC
- Support and training for social workers and foster carers

- Sourcing an alternative school place or alternative provision and providing support for transition.

The Advisory Teacher working with the 2014/15 Year 11 LAC cohort worked closely with colleagues in social care to address issues causing academic under performance.

Conversely the 2014/15 Year 6 cohort faced a far less severe level of challenge and the outcomes at Key Stage 2 were more positive:

- 60% had more than 1 change of care placement
- None were in residential children's homes
- SEND: 60% had SEN support at school but no child had an EHC Plan
- All were in Brent primary schools rated good or outstanding and all attended BVS Easter Revision Programme
- Attendance: all Year 6 LAC had attendance of 95%+
- 60% were in care for over 1 year.

A recent joint Policy Paper produced by the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), the national Consortium for Examination Results and the National Association of Virtual School Heads<sup>12</sup> made a number of recommendations and proposals to help minimise a number of important factors that impact negatively on LAC educational outcomes and which are too often associated with being in the care system. In particular it proposes that ADCS, the DfE and Ofsted should work together to develop a more comprehensive set of metrics and analyses to enable a better assessment of local authority and school performance, including the consideration of longer-term outcomes post-16, post-18 and post-25.

Another important research report produced by the Rees Centre<sup>13</sup> into the educational progress of looked after children in England published in November 2015, points out that of all children in care those who are in care for the shortest periods do least well academically. Those in longer-stay care do better especially when compared with children in need (on the edge of care). Of the 2014/15 Year 11 LAC cohort only 33% had been in care for the whole of their secondary education.

BVS will be playing its part in bringing about such changes through joint working with the London Network of Virtual Heads and the new National Association of Virtual Heads.

Finally the comparison of year on year cohorts is particularly unhelpful. The Year 2, 6 and 11 Brent LAC cohorts vary tremendously from year to year; in some cases the LAC comprising one cohort might attend completely different schools from that of a previous year's cohort.

#### **2014/15 Levels of Progress at Key Stages 2 and 4**

BVS has begun to analyse the levels of progress made by LAC at Key Stage 2 measured against their starting points at Key Stage 1 and by LAC at Key Stage 4 measured against their starting points at Key Stage 2 using performance matrices. This work is in its early stages and BVS will publish details when the 2014/15 Annual Report is updated in April after the national data for 2014/15 is available.

Work on monitoring current LAC progress is also a key focus for BVS, using termly data drops collected by Welfare Call. Such monitoring is enabling us quickly to identify LAC at risk of under-achievement, to challenge schools and to work with the Designated Teachers in schools to provide appropriate individual support and adapt PEPs as appropriate.

<sup>12</sup> <http://adcs.org.uk/care/subject-results/educational-achievement-of-children-in-care>

<sup>13</sup> <http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/research/educational-progress-of-looked-after-children/>

## 12. Key Stage Five Attainment 2014/15

BVS does not currently have a dedicated post-16 advisory teacher resource. This was removed when the team was re-structured in 2013 going from a team of 6: a lead advisory teacher (deputy head of BVS) and 5 advisory teachers to a team of 4: a lead advisory teacher (deputy head of BVS) and 3 advisory teachers. The number of LAC has remained constant and the raising of the participation age by government to 18 has accentuated the need to ensure that post-16 LAC's educational progress is monitored and supported.

The attainment of Year 13 LAC in 2014/15 below is not complete. BVS needs the permission of each LAC to collect post-16 results from schools and colleges. The 2013/14 figures are provided for comparison.

AS Results	2013/14	2014/15
Total AS exams taken	26	23
Total AS number of passes A*-E	23	15
Total % of AS passes A*-E	88%	65%

A2 Results	2013/14	2014/15
Total A2 exams taken	13	9
Total A2 number of passes A*-E	13	9
Total % of AS passes A*-E	100%	100%

1 LAC completed the International Baccalaureate and achieved:

- English Literature Grade 5,
- Italian Grade 4,
- History Grade 4,
- Physics EE Grade C,
- Physics HL Grade 4,
- Chemistry Grade 3,
- Maths Grade- 2
- Theory Knowledge Grade C.

1 LAC took Level 3 in Health & Social Care and Level 3 in Performing Arts and achieved a distinction in both.

## 13. Destinations of LAC at 16+ and 18+

The education, employment and training (EET) status of LAC in the September following completion of Years 11 and 13.

### 16+ LAC September Guarantees

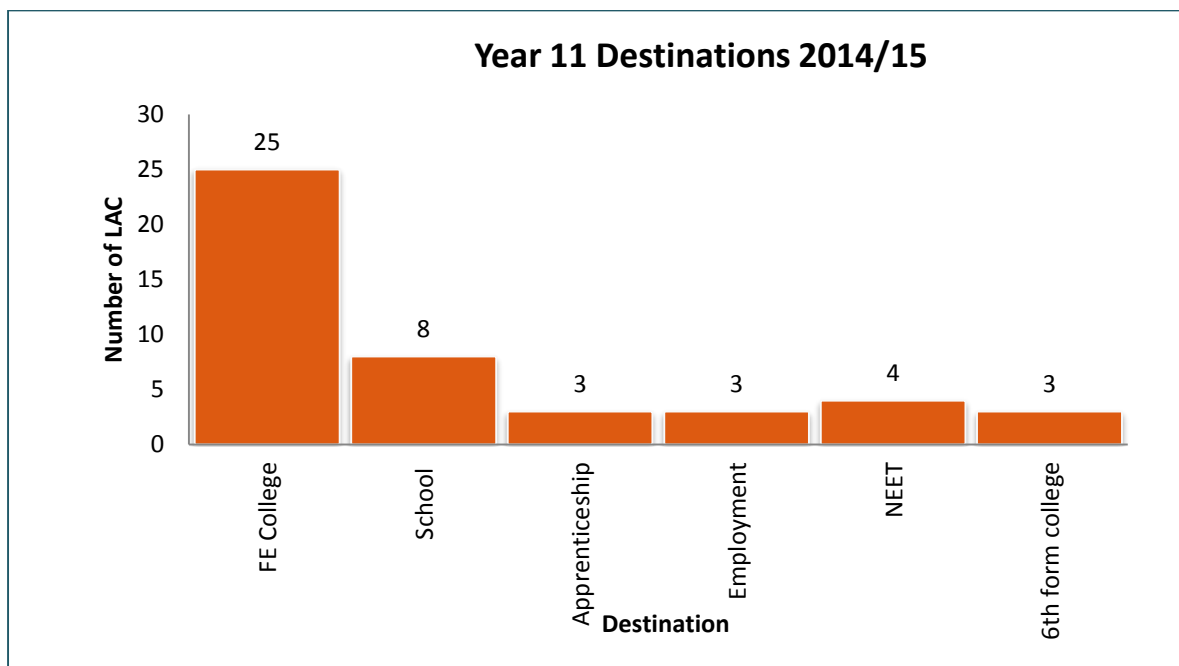
Out of a total of 46<sup>14</sup> year 11 LAC in 2014/15; 42 had September guarantees<sup>15</sup>. The graph

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<sup>14</sup> The actual 2014/15 Year 11 cohort was 46 of which 9 were EAL recent arrivals in the UK and were not eligible for GCSE entry. The EET data is based on the full cohort.

<sup>15</sup> The September Guarantee is an offer, by the end of September, of a suitable place in learning to young people completing compulsory education. The Guarantee was implemented nationally in 2007 for 16 year olds and extended to 17 year olds in 2008.

below breaks this down into specific destinations.



The 4 LAC identified as NEET continue to receive individual support and guidance from the BVS Life Coach.

### 17+ and 18+ LAC Progression

2014/15 Year 12 and 13 destinations	Number of LAC	%
6th Form	19	14%
FE College/Provision	61	45%
Special School	7	5%
Training	3	2%
Apprenticeship	6	4%
Employment	1	1%
NEET	39	29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	



## 14. Exclusions

1 Brent LAC pupil was permanently excluded in 2014/15. Fixed term exclusions were higher than in 2013/14 in terms of number of days lost to exclusion.

Please see below summary table for exclusions

Exclusion Data <sup>16</sup>			
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Total number of fixed term exclusions- days	183	190.5	253
Number of pupils excluded- fixed term	33	38	35
Total number of permanent exclusions	0	1	1

The 1 LAC permanently excluded in 2014/15 was in Year 8 and was excluded shortly after being taken into care. In 2014/15 a number of LAC were at risk of exclusion and 19% of KS4 LAC were directed to alternative provision to address their behavior by their mainstream school.

## 15. Monitoring Educational Provision and Attendance

Maintaining regular school attendance is fundamental to a young person achieving their potential at school. BVS recognises that monitoring LAC attendance is a key activity.

Since April 2012 the Welfare Call Service has been commissioned by the BVS to provide accurate data that enables it to monitor attendance, punctuality and exclusions for Brent LAC, wherever they live. The Welfare Call Service is used across the country by other local authorities and has an excellent track record in providing a variety of accurate attendance/exclusion reports and statistics on a daily basis.

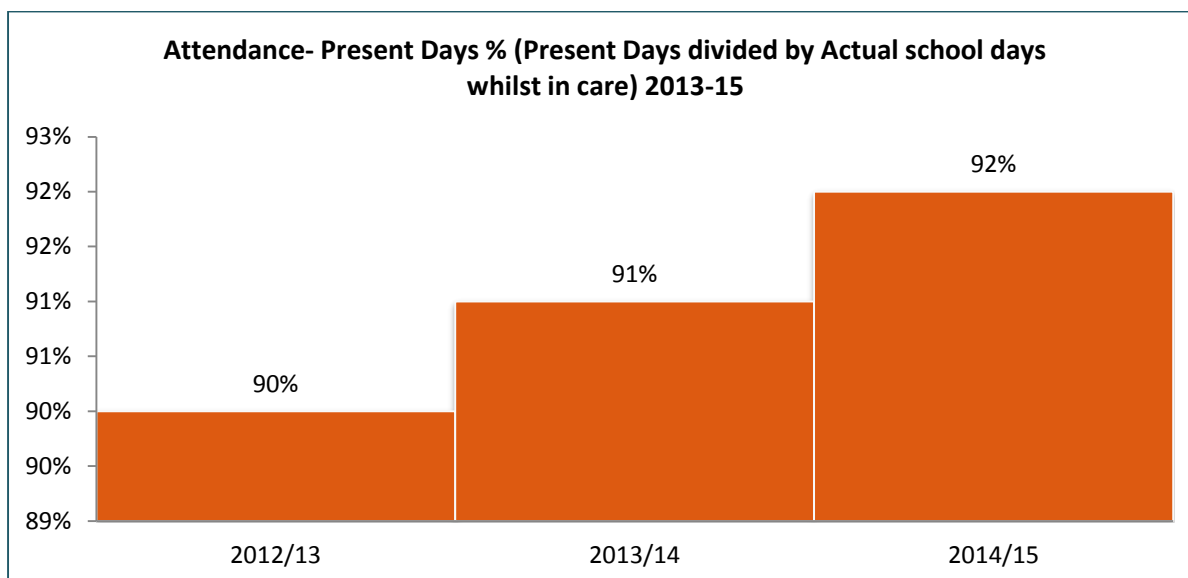
An important aspect of the service is the daily call to each school attended by Brent LAC. Once an attendance issue is raised, the Welfare Call Service ascertains whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised and the type (e.g. medical, exclusion) as well as alerting both the social worker and the carer.

BVS is able to access regular datasets regarding young people's attendance at primary, secondary, special and residential schools across the country. Welfare Call reports are sent daily to BVS. If any unusual absences or significant concerns are noted, the relevant advisory teacher will send an alert to the social worker, their manager and any involved person, for further investigation.

Overall attendance for Brent LAC, although below national averages, has shown significant improvement over the past 3 years. However the overall figure can hide significant pockets of very poor attendance. For example a recent analysis of attendance undertaken by BVS shows that the poorest attenders are LAC in Year 11 where in the summer term 2015 48% (22 LAC) had less than 85% attendance.

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<sup>16</sup> Please note that the figures included above are collected by Welfare Call.



## 16. Pupil Premium Grant

The Pupil Premium grant (PPG) for Brent LAC (£1900pa per LAC) is managed by the BVS. BVS currently provides schools with £1300 per LAC; the £600 balance is retained for centrally funded support. Schools are asked to attach PPG spend to PEP targets and the expectation is that it will be spent, in the main, on 1:1 tuition. Schools can bid for the whole £1900; each bid is approved on its merits. In 2014/15 the retained balance funded the following BVS activity:

- Life Coach Ben Kwofie supporting Post-16 transition
- Easter Holiday and summer Half Term revision sessions for Year 6 and Year 11 LAC both in Brent and elsewhere
- Additional 1:1 tuition, mentoring sessions and additional support to a number of individual LAC who were not in school for a variety of reasons or were between schools due to foster placement changes.

The impact of PPG on LAC outcomes is variable. LAC report back that they value the 1:1 tuition they receive but too often this alone does not reverse a long history of low expectations and achievement. BVS works hard to hold schools to account for how LAC PPG is spent.

The impact of a Year 11 Life Coach, funded by PPG, has made a significant improvement to the current post-16 EET outcomes.

## 17. Training and Advice

The Virtual School staff group provide training sessions to:

- Designated Teachers (termly sessions)
- Foster Carers (bi-annually)
- Fostering Team
- Safeguarding Teams
- LAC Teams in schools
- Newly employed Social Workers.

The content of these training sessions includes, PEP and PPG processes, attachment disorders and strategies, school application and admission processes, expected roles and responsibilities.

During 2014/15 members of BVS provided the following training:

- EPEP training/Launch
- Care Planning Staff Forum Training
- Achievement for All joint Foster Carer and Designated Teacher Training
- PPG workshop at Governors' Finance Conference
- Brent Governors' Forum Training
- Foster Carer Training
- Social Worker Induction Training (repeated several times across the academic year)
- Social Care Staff Forum Training
- EPEP workshops for Social Care Staff
- Placements Staff Forum Update Training
- Designated Teacher Forum: Attachment and EPEP Training.

## 18. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

BVS has amended its PEP process in line with the DfE statutory guidance, 'Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children' (July 2014). BVS aims to review PEPs three times each academic year, and bring these in line with school assessments.

PEPs are statutory and when done well are a key driver of LAC education improvement.

During 2014/15 steps were taken to improve the completion rate of PEPs. The focus for 2015/16 is to improve the quality of the PEPs. The audit of PEPs completed as part of the 2015 Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, and review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board in Brent, concluded that the quality of PEPs required improvement. BVS also conducted its own audit in November 2015 in order to more clearly understand the barriers to both timely completion and quality. From this snapshot of 195 PEPs the following was noted:

- 29% (58 PEPs) had incomplete attainment data
- Of this 29%: 36% (70 PEPs) had no English attainment data and 26% (50 PEPs) had no Maths attainment data.

Securing improvement in both completion and quality of PEPs is a key priority in 2015/16 for BVS. In particular this will involve the provision of further training for social workers and Designated Teachers. Regular audits will also better ensure consistency of quality PEPs. Please see below PEP analysis from February 2015 to July 2015.

PEP Overall Analysis		Feb-15	Mar-15	Apr-15	May-15	Jun-15	Jul-15
Total LAC of Statutory School Age (excluding those in secure/ YOI, and new)	Overview chart	195	200	206	208	210	214
Total Number of PEPs Outstanding (meeting hasn't occurred)		34	26	24	9	11	10
Total Number of Completed PEPS (meeting has occurred or is planned)		161	174	182	199	199	204
Outstanding PEP %		17.44%	13.00%	11.65%	4.33%	5.24%	4.67%
Current PEP Completion Rate %		82.56%	87.00%	88.35%	95.67%	94.76%	95.33%
Total number of PEPs uploaded		113	147	171	189	199	202
Total number of PEPs not uploaded		82	53	35	19	11	12
Current % of PEPs uploaded		57.95%	73.50%	83.01%	90.87%	94.76%	94.39%
Current % of PEPs not uploaded		42.05%	26.50%	16.99%	9.13%	5.24%	5.61%

Post 16 PEPS are conducted by the Social Care teams.

## **19. Celebrating Achievement**

Each year BVS organises a celebration event for LAC and invites nominations to recognize the achievements of the children and young people. The event to celebrate achievement in 2014/15 was held on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> January in the Grand Hall in Brent's Civic Centre and was attended by over 200 people. Certificates and prizes were presented by the Mayor of Brent, the Cabinet Member for Education and the Strategic Director of Children and Young People in Brent. LAC's achievements were celebrated and a number of LAC took part in a special 'Brent's Got Talent' presentation. It was a joyful occasion.

## **20. LAC Enrichment**

During 2014/15, BVS supported LAC in the following enrichment activities:

- The Letterbox Project – a literacy and numeracy project which promotes home learning. Feedback from pupils is very positive and foster carers report that receiving a book each month encourages greater interest in reading
- Enrichment Opportunities funded by the John Lyon's Charity.

Due to reduced permanent staffing in BVS in 2015 support for enrichment activities was limited.

## **21. Current Action Plan for Brent Virtual School**

The post Ofsted Action Plan for BVS is attached as Appendix

The priorities for BVS in 2015/16 are:

- Secure substantive staff in the team
- Maintain the improved completion rate of PEPs
- Improve the quality of PEPs via regular audits
- Improve outcomes and progress at KS4
- Ensure LAC receive high quality CEG and maintain positive EET progression rates
- Identify a resource to support education of post-16 LAC

**Janet Lewis**  
**Headteacher Brent Virtual School**  
**February 2016.**

## Appendix 1

### Brent Virtual School: Case Studies 2014/15

#### **Case Study 1: It's never too late to intervene.**

C achieved Level 5 in En, ma and sci at KS2 but at the start of Year 11 was being predicted G and U grades at GCSE. His was in a good school but his care placement had broken down. He was moved and faced a long complicated journey on public transport to get to school. His attendance and punctuality immediately dropped along with any motivation to achieve his obvious potential. The BVS advisor met with C's social worker and focusing only on his need and not what was the easiest response arranged and paid for (from retained PPG) for a daily taxi to take C to school. For the first few days C refused to get up on time and take the taxi. We persisted in sending the taxi and after about a week C decided to take advantage of it. We talked to his school and they agreed to push him more and ensure he was taking full advantage of all the additional support on offer. In the meantime the BVS planned an Easter and Summer Half Term Catch-Up School with experienced tutors who were tailoring programmes to match individual pupils. C attended both Catch-Up Schools and gave some very positive feedback. C was more ready to face the challenge of sitting his GCSEs and achieved C grades in maths and science. Unfortunately he did not achieve 5A\*-C grades but has gone on to college with a more positive attitude to learning.

#### **Case Study 2: Challenging the School System.**

R is a 7 year old LAC who when he came into care in December 2014 had never been in a formal school setting. He had attended Nursery until July 2011 and was then 'home schooled' by his mother for 3 years. He had made minimal progress in learning and in developing speech and socialisation skills. He knew only a few letters of the alphabet and could not write his name. Early admission to school was crucial and he started in Year 3 in February 2015. A PEP meeting was held two weeks later. The challenge was to devise an appropriate programme that would accelerate his progress. The school was initially resistant to 'treating R differently' and placed him on a part-time timetable and allocated a TA to work with him. His timetable was split – mornings in Reception class learning Phonics and foundation skills, afternoons in Year 3 doing Art. School provided one hour Play Therapy weekly. BVS challenged the lack of teacher input and, using R's PPG, provided two hours per week home tuition in literacy and numeracy. Social Care referred him to the Speech and Language Service. The LAC EP did an initial observation followed by an assessment six weeks later. The first term was traumatic for R. However, he gradually settled and began to progress. A PEP Review, held in July 2015, was positive. His school reports that he is making progress academically and his speech and social skills are improving. He is happy and loves learning. In the autumn term he will attend school full-time, with a split timetable – mornings in Year 1, afternoons with his peer group. Additional support is on-going. All believe that progression to age-related levels of achievement is going to be a long-term process but is attainable. The support and challenge provided to R's school by both social care and the BVS has been critical in the progress made.

#### **Case Study 3: From risk of exclusion to a positive fresh start.**

A was struggling in an outstanding school and an incident in Dec 2014 led to a period of fixed term exclusion. This period coincided with his foster placement breakdown. His school was reluctant to take A back until some therapeutic work had been undertaken. BVS and Brent Inclusion Support Team arranged alternative provision as 'respite' and supported the transition by attending the initial induction meeting with carer. Clear targets and timescales for review were discussed as the aim was for A to be reintegrated back into mainstream as soon as possible. BVS also arranged for the Educational Psychologist for LAC to assess A in his respite provision. In the meantime A was also placed with new carer which offered some much needed stability. A PEP review meeting in March at his school, professionals agreed that due to the travelling distance, A should move to a school nearer to his new placement and have a 'fresh start'. BVS worked with A's carer and social worker in identifying 'good' local schools and supported in the school application process. A started at a 'good' school in June 2015 and the new school has recently reported that A continues to make good progress.

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## **Appendix 3**

### **All in a Day's work for a Brent LAC Advisory Teacher!**

As one of the LAC Advisory Teachers supporting Brent young people in care, no one day is typical. Each day brings new challenges and opportunities to make a difference, however big or small. Certainly life in the Virtual School can never be described as dull!

My day might begin by catching up on my emails and phone calls. There will be queries about young people out of school or who have been excluded or where the school placement is at risk of breakdown. These are often the priority, red RAG rated, young people on my caseload who need urgent intervention. I may also get a query from a social worker about a pending placement move for a young person and where a new school placement is also required. Additionally, I may be alerted about a new LAC who may already be on roll at a school or is a new arrival to the country and needs a school place. Contact will be made with the school and/or the social worker to initiate a Personal Education Plan (PEP).

My morning may also involve meeting any new social workers to familiarise them with the role and function of the Virtual School and go through our electronic PEP processes. Later on, I would log in to the Welfare Call extranet to check on any outstanding PEPs, follow up on any incomplete ones and sign off those satisfactorily completed. There may be actions for me to follow up on such as making 1:1 tuition referrals where pupils are underperforming in core subjects. I may also be working on the planning and organising of extra-curricular activities during half term such as booster classes or finalising a presentation for any upcoming training scheduled.

My afternoon would probably involve attending a PEP meeting at school for a pupil where things might not be going so well. There may be concerns around attendance, behaviour or academic underperformance. It's a good opportunity for the key people in the young person's life: school, carer and social worker to share information and discuss strategies and creative use of resources through pupil premium funding. At the centre of course is the young person and meeting and hearing from them can often reveal a lot about other underlying issues.

Many of the young people we work with are probably not always aware of the work we do beavering away behind the scenes. Our role is to ensure young people achieve the best outcomes, with access to the right support and opportunities. Sometimes it can feel like 'two steps back and one step forward' but what makes it all worthwhile in the end is seeing the difference we can make; getting a pupil into a good or outstanding school and managing a successful transition, ensuring there is robust support in place through an effective PEP or seeing the real impact 1:1 tuition can have on improving a pupil's grades.

**Nayna Joshi**  
**BVS LAC Advisory Teacher**

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