



Corporate Parenting Committee

Wednesday 7 February 2018 at 5.00 pm

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

Membership:

Members

Councillors:

M Patel (Chair)
Conneely
Hossain
Kansagra
Thomas

Substitute Members

Councillors:

S Choudhary, Crane, Dixon and
Hoda-Benn

Councillor:

Warren

For further information contact: Bryony Gibbs, Governance Officer
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www.brent.gov.uk/committees

The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting

Notes for Members - Declarations of Interest:

If a Member is aware they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent and must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If a Member is aware they have a Personal Interest** in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent.

If the Personal Interest is also a Prejudicial Interest (i.e. it affects a financial position or relates to determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission, or registration) then (unless an exception at 14(2) of the Members Code applies), after disclosing the interest to the meeting the Member must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item, except that they may first make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to the matter, provided that the public are allowed to attend the meeting for those purposes.

*Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:

- (a) **Employment, etc.** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit gain.
- (b) **Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of election; including from a trade union.
- (c) **Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between the Councillors or their partner (or a body in which one has a beneficial interest) and the council.
- (d) **Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.
- (e) **Licences** - Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.
- (f) **Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which the Councillor or their partner have a beneficial interest.
- (g) **Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

**Personal Interests:

The business relates to or affects:

(a) Anybody of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management, and:

- To which you are appointed by the council;
- which exercises functions of a public nature;
- which is directed is to charitable purposes;
- whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy (including a political party of trade union).

(b) The interests a of a person from whom you have received gifts or hospitality of at least £50 as a member in the municipal year;

or

A decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting, to a greater extent than the majority of other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the electoral ward affected by the decision, the well-being or financial position of:

- You yourself;
- a member of your family or your friend or any person with whom you have a close association or any person or body who employs or has appointed any of these or in whom they have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000, or any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are a director
- any body of a type described in (a) above.

Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Item	Page
1 Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members	
2 Declarations of interests	
Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, any relevant disclosable pecuniary, personal or prejudicial interests in the items on this agenda.	
3 Deputations (if any)	
To hear any deputations received from members of the public in accordance with Standing Order 67.	
4 Minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 8
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record.	
5 Matters arising (if any)	
To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.	
6 Update from Care In Action	
This is an opportunity for members of Care In Action (CIA) to feedback on recent activity.	
7 Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Local Offer for Care Leavers	9 - 30
The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Corporate Parenting Committee regarding Brent's Local Offer for care leavers. The Children and Social Work Act (CSWA) 2017 aims to improve support for looked after children especially for those leaving care. This report outlines the main legislative changes in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and how Brent aims to implement those changes locally to ensure that our care leavers have the brightest future.	

8 Brent's Pledge for Looked After Children

Report
to follow

This report provides an overview of the reviewed Brent Pledge for Looked After Children and invites the Corporate Parenting Committee to endorse and adopt the Pledge.

9 Fostering Quarterly Monitoring Report

31 - 38

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).

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 60.

Date of the next meeting: Thursday 26 April 2018



- 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.



MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE Held on Tuesday 24 October 2017 at 5.10 pm

PRESENT: Councillors M Patel (Chair), Conneely, Hossain, Kansagra and S Choudhary

Also Present: Councillor McLennan

1. **Apologies for Absence and Clarification of Alternate Members**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Thomas. Councillor S Choudhary was present in his place, as substitute. The Chair specified that Councillor Conneely had given an apology for lateness.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

3. **Deputations**

There were no deputations received.

4. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 July 2017 be approved as an accurate record.

5. **Matters Arising**

Gail Tolley (the Council's Strategic Director, Children and Young People) questioned whether the Looked After Children (LAC) Annual Health Report would be combined with the presentation on Health Assessments for LAC (agenda item number seven of the meeting) as had been agreed at the last meeting of the Committee. Jacinth Jeffers (General Manager, Children's Services – Brent, London North West Healthcare NHS Trust) confirmed that it would be referenced within the presentation but was yet to be ratified through their internal governance process.

6. **Update from Care In Action Representatives**

The Chair welcomed CM, HM and PE (speakers) and other representatives from Care in Action (CIA) who were observing the meeting from the public gallery. CM, HM and PE were then invited to provide their respective updates.

CM began and said that CIA representatives had recently attended a very interesting event at London's City Hall called 'Take Care' which comprised a variety of different sessions and topics about children in care. CM spoke about how informative they had found the personal development sessions which had included a life coaching discussion and also explored the different ways that Personal Advisers (PAs) could assist Care Leavers on the different issues that they might be

going through. CM said that they had very much appreciated an illustrative drama piece on this issue (which had demonstrated a personal adviser working to ensure their young person had a laptop available to them at college) giving them a new perspective on the hard work that social workers and PAs undertook within their roles. CM also explained another discussion session which considered what 'having a voice' meant and the different ways that Care Leavers could express themselves in planning their future. CM stated that they were happy at the respect being shown to Care Leavers, as they were ultimately the experts in planning their own lives. CM also noted that they had received a presentation about the London-wide Care Council, the meetings of which two representatives from CIA were due to attend.

CM continued and explained the artistic elements to the event which had included an innovative project by the City of Westminster which had encouraged young people in care to express their feelings through art. CM outlined what a unique and positive idea that they felt this was and how it was very exciting that young people would have their work shown in the Tate gallery and other art museums. Members also heard about another drama piece, coordinated by the London Borough of Wandsworth, which had highlighted instability and what can go wrong with young people's lives if they are moved from different social workers frequently. CM said that they had identified strongly with this play as they too felt that they had been adversely affected by frequent social worker changes. CM concluded by emphasising how much they had enjoyed being able to communicate with young people from other boroughs and Councils, particularly during the break times. They explained how they had spoken to young people from Essex Council about gardening and looking after allotments, which they found very intriguing and something that they would like to try in future.

HM spoke positively about their recent CIA meeting which had focused on the Council's London Borough of Culture bid. Members heard that CIA representatives appreciated being involved in the bid process and that they felt that they were being listened to in terms of both their positive and negative experiences of Brent as a place to live. HM also described the summer fun day at Poplar Grove Centre, which had involved an array of entertaining activities such as: t-shirt designing; personalising bangles; nail art; football competitions; a sack race; a mini zoo; DJ'ing workshop; and a raffle. HM also explained that there were a number of different stalls which had offered advice on health issues, drugs and alcohol amongst others which they had found useful. They said that they had really enjoyed the day and that they could not wait until the next fun day event.

PE spoke about a care leaver's consultation event which they had attended in August which had focused on the Council's local offer to Care Leavers and the 'Care Leaver's Charter' which was planned to be launched. They explained how they were pleased to have made significant contributions at the event, such as having suggested to make the offer 'friendlier' to young people and through more elements being in e-form such as an app. They also spoke about how they had enjoyed a budgeting exercise which split those in attendance into different Council departments and asked them to consider the most important of the Council's service areas to spend money on. PE noted that it was extremely interesting that each young person had come up with different ideas and had different opinions as part of the process.

(Councillor Kansagra joined the meeting at 5.20pm)

Members thanked CM, HM and PE for their contributions and referred to the discussion that the CIA representatives had had about their experiences of Brent as part of the consultation meeting on the London Borough of Culture bid. Questions arose which asked the CIA representatives what they viewed positively and negatively about Brent. HM stated that they loved the diversity of the borough, with an array of different cultures living harmoniously in the area. They also said that they liked being so close to Wembley Stadium and Wembley Arena as they were able to enjoy some of the exciting major events which took place there. CM spoke about the negative aspects of the borough and felt that unfortunately young people could find themselves in troublesome situations quite frequently, and that this stemmed from an apparent tension between young people, particularly from certain ethnic backgrounds, and the local police in the area. Gail Tolley stated that the Children and Young People's Department at the Council liaised with Senior Police Officers in the area and suggested some officers be invited to a future CIA meeting in order to resolve some of the concerns raised.

Members also asked CM's opinion on artistic elements, such as spoken word and drama pieces, of the 'Take Care' event. CM said that they felt that these pieces had made the issues easier to understand and definitely more enjoyable. CM said that they would assess if any other CIA representatives would be interested in creating a film or drama piece about their own perspectives and some point in the future.

Members asked PE to outline what Brent's offer to young people was and what their opinion would be if Brent took a decision to exempt young people from paying council tax in the future. PE described Brent's proposed local offer, and mentioned that it centred on things that the Council could provide to support Care Leavers such as clothes, equipment or holiday money. PE said that they felt a council tax exemption for Care Leavers would be a fantastic idea, and hoped that this policy would be adopted.

It was **RESOLVED** that the updates from the CIA representatives be noted.

7. **Presentation on Health Assessments for Looked after Children**

Jacinth Jeffers (General Manager, Children's Services – Brent, London North West Healthcare NHS Trust) introduced the presentation and stated that it would initially focus on three different case studies of Looked After Children (LAC) before providing an overview of the year ahead for Brent LAC and Care Leavers. She noted that the 2016-2017 LAC Annual Health Report was in the process of being ratified internally before it would be circulated more widely to relevant stakeholders.

Esther Powers (LAC Specialist Nurse) began and provided detail on the first case study which focused on a looked after child known as "Jane" who was under five years old. She gave a 'snapshot' of the case and explained that Jane was 11 months old having been removed from her parent's care at birth, and that she was now on her third placement with a prospective adopter. Members heard that, although Jane was placed outside of the borough, the health assessment team had travelled to see her in order to provide a holistic assessment which not only assessed typical health elements such as height and weight, but emotional wellbeing and attachment to her new carer too. She explained the subsequent process for drawing up a health plan and how the child's GP, school nurse, health

visitor and other relevant parties would be involved. She noted that the final report and health plan would be forwarded to the Council's social care service and that the child would have access to a copy of the plan.

Esther Powers moved onto the second case study of a boy known as "Joe" who was over five years old, and was now on his fifth placement having been removed from his parent's care at age six. She spoke about the health assessment which had highlighted that Joe was limited in his diet, and only ate one type of food at one time. Members heard that the health assessment team worked with Joe's GP, a dietician and his foster carer in order to understand and address the issue to allow Joe to move forward to a more normal nutritional experience. She also explained the use of a strengths and difficulties questionnaire which assisted the creation of a health plan for Joe.

The Committee heard about the final case study which focused on an unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC) known as "John" who was over five years old and on his first placement of care in the UK. Esther Powers explained that UASC tended to be over five years old and often required specific support such as access to English Language courses or services. She outlined John's sexuality had caused care placement problems for him in the past and that the health plan which had been drawn aimed to address this to ensure he was well supported and comfortable. Ms Powers concluded and stressed the importance of health plans being followed to improve the young person's experience in care and also explained that children under five years old had health assessments every six months and children over five years old had them annually.

At this point of the meeting, Members were invited to ask questions on the case studies outlined. A Member of the Committee referred to "Jane's" case study and questioned what shape the assessments would take as the child became older. Esther Powers responded and said that the skillset of specialist LAC nurses would continue to be utilised as part of the assessments and that it remained important to monitor the child's development holistically, such as through an evaluation of the communication and bond between the child and their carer. It was also mentioned that consideration of any transfer from fostering to adoption placements were vitally important in the long term.

A Member asked how many UASC had been assessed in the past year and what the process had been for assessments of age across both health and social care settings. Nigel Chapman (the Council's Operational Director of Integration and Improved Outcomes) stated that 68 UASC had approached the borough for support as of 30 September 2017. He outlined that the Council had trained members of staff to undertake age assessments if young people arrived, usually at either Brent Civic Centre or local police stations, without any documentation. He detailed that if the young person was under 18 the Council would consider the best path for their care, and that if the young person was deemed over 18 they would usually be referred to the Home Office. Jacinth Jeffers said that the NHS was mandated to deliver health assessments and deliver care regardless for UASC, and as such age assessments were not a primary concern.

Jacinth Jeffers provided the second part of the presentation which provided an overview of the year ahead for Brent LAC and Care Leavers. She spoke about a focus on internal audit processes in order to drive up quality and timeliness for LAC

and Care Leavers' health assessments the methods to draw upon resources and feedback in order to continuously ensure services had been improved. She ran through some additional priorities for the upcoming year which included: the identification of all LAC teenage pregnancies and development of a health database; linking with the Local Authority Engagement Officer to attend participation meetings with LAC and Care Leavers; develop and implement health pathways for all UASCs; improve methods of sharing information across relevant multi-agency organisations; continue to provide training for foster carers and kinship carers; monitor health outcomes and actions for LAC; continue expanding the work of the outreach service; have the Lead Doctor and Nurse continue to provide training on new CoramBAAF forms, processes and outcomes for LAC to social workers, trainees and nurses; and assess feasibility of rolling out an 'NHS Go' app which provided young people with access to all personal health information and enable them to make and receive appointments regarding their care.

A representative from CIA questioned what the provisions were for LAC with mental health issues. Jacinth Jeffers explained that a referral would be made to the relevant Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) alongside a review of all of the different options available to the child.

Discussions ensued on the potential roll out of the 'NHS Go' app and whether this was deemed more likely to be more efficient and effective than the health passport for LAC. Jacinth Jeffers clarified to a member of the Committee that the app provided generic information on different health needs, and was essentially a supporting signpost application to relevant services. Esther Powers added that the app was designed to be friendlier to young people than the health passport, and was beneficial particularly in allowing young people to book appointments. The CIA representatives present were split in their opinions on the prospective app, and raised that the health passport remained popular. It was also mentioned that the app would require young people to have enough mobile phone data at all times in able to access. It was acknowledged that there needed to be additional dialogue between the NHS and CIA representatives present and it was suggested that a meeting be organised to discuss both the app and health passport at a date in the near future.

It was **RESOLVED** that the presentation be noted.

8. **Looked After Children and Offending Behaviour**

Nigel Chapman introduced the report which provided an overview of the common themes and considerations of working with LAC within the youth justice system and those known to the Brent Youth Offending Service (YOS). He outlined that the data as of June 2017 had shown that there were 32 LAC young people who were the subject of a youth justice court order and subsequently under YOS supervision. He explained the data within the report which highlighted that the majority of this group tended to be: males; over 16; of black African or Caribbean heritage; not in employment, education or training (NEET); and that violence or drug offences accounted for 50% of the crimes. He emphasised that it was considerably more likely that young people would offend before they entered care, rather than offending whilst in care itself.

Sue Gates (the Council's Head of Early Help) continued and gave the Committee an overview of the four common themes identified by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) into why there was an overrepresentation of LAC with court orders compared to young people with court orders in the general population. The themes included: the complex emotional needs of young people if attachments were not formed early in their care placement; multiple placement breakdown for teenagers leading to greater instability; young people living in areas of high crime and deprivation; and the management of behaviour in residential homes varying which resulted in inconsistent outcomes. She also drew the Committee's attention to the statistics on paragraph 3.6 of the report which highlighted that, within Brent, the number of young people sentenced and in custody was eleven, of which five were LAC.

Onder Beter (the Council's Head of LAC and Permanency Exclusion) stated that the issues raised within the report remained a challenge and required different service areas to work closely together in response. He highlighted the various different operational partnership working arrangements which had been developed between the Brent YOS and social work teams. Members also heard about the different strategic level initiatives which were being carried out to better understand and respond to the challenges of young people caught up in the youth justice system (as detailed within paragraph 4.6 of the report). Mr Beter also spoke about the recent Critical Learning Review (CLR) which had been prepared in February 2017 and analysed a very serious incident of a LAC who had been charged and later convicted of murder. He concluded and re-iterated that joint partnership working was critical to improved outcomes for LAC within the youth justice system.

The Chair welcomed the comprehensive report and invited Members and CIA representatives to ask questions. A Member of the Committee referenced that ten looked after young people who had been in care for more than a year had received a final warning, reprimand or conviction from 2013 to 2016 and questioned whether more could be avoided through earlier intervention. Sue Gates said that the methods to improve early interventions were being assessed, but she also highlighted that by the time of the final warning many of the issues surrounding the young person were already very complex and that the individual may already be too emotionally withdrawn to be receptive to any support aimed at behavioural changes.

(Councillor Conneely joined the meeting at 6.31pm)

A CIA representative questioned what support was available for LAC with emotionally complex problems. Sue Gates said that training had been provided to LAC and YOS staff to enable them to understand emotional trauma in young people and different types of therapeutic approaches to try to prevent any problems from escalating. She also mentioned the mentoring scheme and the work of the Early Help Panel to help to identify the level of support that the young person required.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

9. **Fostering Service Quarterly Report (July 2017 - September 2017)**

Onder Beter introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the general management of the Council's in-house fostering service and detail on

how it had worked to achieve good outcomes for children throughout the second quarter of the reporting year.

The Committee heard an overview of the key headlines of the reporting period, the detail of which was contained within the report, this included: a reduction of the overall LAC population; the key statistics of placement activity across the service; the recruitment and assessment activity for the period; the recent work of the Council's Fostering Panel; the training courses offered between July and September; the status of complaints received from fostering households throughout the period; and that the social pedagogue was now in post. Mr Beter also specifically corrected an error under paragraph 6.3 of the report within the original agenda pack and stated that, as of the 30 September 2017, there were 3 assessments in Stage 2 and 7 assessments in Stage 1, and therefore that there had been 10 assessments in total under the 2-stage fostering assessment process.

A Member of the Committee noted the statistic within the report of 60 LAC aged 16 to 18 being placed in semi-independent accommodation, and questioned where this accommodation was located and whether there were any related capacity issues. Nigel Chapman stated that the locations were a mixture of Brent and neighbouring boroughs (such as Harrow, Hounslow and Hillingdon). He said that capacity was not an issue for semi-independent accommodation in the same way it was an issue for access to children's residential accommodation. He also provided assurance about the standard of semi-independent accommodation by noting that the West London Alliance had a framework agreement which provided minimum standards expected of providers, and that Brent placed young people via this framework.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

10. **Adoption Service Six Monthly Report (April 2017 - September 2017)**

Onder Beter provided the Committee with a similar update on the general management of the Council's adoption service and how it had achieved good outcomes for children over the period April 2017 to September 2017.

He stated that the performance data (section 4 of the report) for this period had been particularly pleasing as the two most significant performance indicators had continued to improve. These were explained as being: the time taken from a child entering care to being placed for adoption being reduced by 25%; and the time taken from the local authority having received court authority to place a child for adoption and a match being approved being reduced by 13%. Onder Beter also outlined that seven children were successfully adopted in the reporting period, which had improved from three children being adopted in the same period last year. He also spoke about how Brent continued to have approved adoptive households waiting for an adoptive placement where the child had not yet been matched. The Committee also heard that there had been additional significant steps taken towards the establishment of a London Regional Adoption Agency. He offered further detail on the expected timeline for this, which was expected to be in operation as a 'hub and spoke' model by March 2019.

A Member of the Committee expressed her surprise that Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) were noted as not being planned to be part of the first stage of the London Regional Adoption Agency and questioned why this was. Nigel Chapman

responded and said that officers would try and ascertain why SGOs were not proposed to be included at an upcoming meeting on the potential regional arrangements. He pointed out that any draft proposals relating to this would still have to adhere to the Council's internal governance processes before being approved by Cabinet.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

11. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There was no other urgent business to transact.

The meeting was declared closed at 6.51 pm

COUNCILLOR MILI PATEL
Chair

	<p align="center">Corporate Parenting Committee 7 February 2018</p>
	<p align="center">Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</p>
<p align="center">Children and Social Work Act 2017 – The ‘Local Offer’ for Care Leavers</p>	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	2
Background Papers:	
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	<p>Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes Nigel.Chapman@brent.gov.uk 020 8937 4387</p> <p>Onder Beter, Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency Onder.Beter@brent.gov.uk 020 8937 1228</p>

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Corporate Parenting Committee regarding Brent’s Local Offer for care leavers. The Children and Social Work Act (CSWA) 2017 aims to improve support for looked after children especially for those leaving care. This report outlines the main legislative changes in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and how Brent aims to implement those changes locally to ensure that our care leavers have the brightest future.

- 1.2 The CSWA 2017 includes the following key provisions about looked after children and care leavers:
- Introduces corporate parenting principles to which local authorities must have regard;
 - Local authorities must publish a Local Offer for care leavers, providing information about services which the local authority offers that may assist care leavers in, or preparing for, adulthood and independent living.
 - Extension of local authority support to Care Leavers up to the age of 25, including provision of Personal Advisors, assessment of the needs of former relevant children and preparation of a Pathway Plan.

2.0 Recommendations

That Corporate Parenting Committee:

- 2.1 To recommend to Cabinet to approve the draft Local Offer to Care Leavers as set out in appendix 1 and for authority to be delegated to the Strategic Director, Children and Young People, to make any necessary revisions to the Local Offer and re-consult if required following publication of statutory guidance.
- 2.2. To recommend to Cabinet to approve the Brent Care Leavers Charter at appendix 2
- 2.3 Supports the work of the department in ensuring partner agencies commit to providing an offer to care leavers that will be included in the final version of the Local Offer document.
- 2.4 To recommend to Cabinet to agree that as part of the Local Offer to Care Leavers who are looked after by Brent:
- that the Council use its powers as a billing authority to reduce to nil council tax payable by care leavers who live in the borough;
 - In cases where care leavers live outside the borough and are liable to pay council tax that the Council provide financial support to reimburse that cost.
- 2.5 To recommend to Cabinet that authority be given to the Strategic Director of Resources and the Strategic Director Children and Young People to take all appropriate steps to set up, implement and administer all the areas of support as set out in the Local Offer.

3.0 Looked after Children and Care Leavers

- 3.1 The term 'looked after' refers to any child or young person for whom the local authority has, or shares, parental responsibility, or for whom we provide care and accommodation on behalf of their parent. The term "child" can refer to any child or young person aged 0 to 18 years. The Council also has a duty and responsibility to those young people who leave their long-term care from the

age of 18 years until they reach the age of 21, or 25 if they are in higher education. One of key changes made in the CSWA 2017 was that the duty and responsibility to all care leavers be extended to the age of 25, regardless of their education or employment status.

3.2 In November 2017 the Council's Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee considered the effectiveness of the existing support arrangements for care leavers. The report to this committee detailed the specific additional needs and increased vulnerabilities of this group of young people.

3.3 As of 31st March 2017, Brent was responsible for the support to 308 Former Relevant young people (aged 18-21). This includes 63 former Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). A further 25 young people aged 21-25 continue to receive support as they are in further or higher education.

4.0 Implications of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 for Brent

4.1 Extending the Personal Advisor duty to age 25

4.1.1 The major implication will be the financial burden on Brent, as the requirement to provide advice and support, a personal advisor (PA) and a pathway plan is extended to young people up to 25 who are not in education or training. The legislation also affects young people who are present in the UK, but have no recourse to public funds such as former UASC.

4.2 Local Offer

4.2.1 Section 2 of the CSWA 2017 requires Brent to publish information about:

- Services that Brent offers to care leavers;
- Any other service Brent offers that may assist care leavers in preparing for adulthood and independent living. This includes services relating to health and well-being, relationships, education and training, employment, and participation in society.

4.2.1 The DfE intends to issue practice guidance in early 2018 to detail the type and level of support to care leavers aged 21 to 25. It is not envisaged that there will be an expectation on authorities to provide the same level of service as is currently offered to young people aged 18-21. This approach recognises care leavers' growing stability and maturity between the ages of 21 and 25, during which time many care leavers are able to lead successful lives without PA support and may not want continuing contact with their local authority.

5. Brent's Local Offer

5.1 The local offer for care leavers is a combination of statutory entitlements and what Brent and its partners can provide, over and above its statutory duty. The CSWA 2017 requires local authorities to consult on and publish details of their local offer to care leavers, setting out areas such as education, health,

employment and accommodation. In development of Brent's local offer for care leavers, a focus has been on areas where improvement is needed in the progress of and outcomes for care leavers.

- 5.2 As part of the offer Brent has examined whether to exempt care leavers from paying council tax. More than a third of councils across England have taken the step to exempt care leavers from council tax, up to the age of 25. The care leavers who would benefit from this are the ones who are in employment, on a training or apprenticeship scheme. Young people in full-time education are usually exempt from paying council tax due to their student status or because they are claiming certain welfare benefits such as universal credit or income support. It is recommended that there is a Council Tax exemption for Brent care leavers who live in the borough. For Brent care leavers placed outside of the borough in areas where they are not exempt from paying Council Tax the council will reimburse the cost. The specific details as to how this process will operate are being developed.
- 5.3 Local authorities have statutory responsibility for support to care leavers formally looked after by them. In the absence of a London-wide approach to co-ordinate Council Tax arrangements it is incumbent on those local authorities whose care leavers are placed within Brent to consider similar exemption arrangements.
- 5.4 Local authorities will be expected to publish their Local Offer to care leavers by April 2018. A summary of Brent's proposal, provided in full at appendix 1, is as follows:

Specific areas	Existing support	Proposed examples of additional support under our local offer
Support from Personal Advisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people are allocated a personal advisor from the age of 17 to ensure they receive a consistent service when they are preparing to leave care. • PAs are allocated to work with all care leavers until they are 21 or until they are 25 if they are in education, training or employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All care leavers up to the age of 25 regardless of their education status, will have an allocated PA. • Care leavers whose cases are closed after their 21st birthday can approach Brent and ask for support and guidance before they turn 25. As the corporate parent, Brent will be responsible for assessing their needs and providing support and guidance where necessary.

Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenancy – following an assessment, care leavers are offered priority housing nomination. • Care Leavers are entitled to a Setting up Home Allowance of £2,000 when gaining a permanent tenancy • Supported Accommodation – care leavers are offered supported accommodation if they are not ready for independence; support workers are available to assist the young person in her/his transition to independent living • Work is undertaken with organisations such as Centrepont to provide suitable accommodation for young people leaving care with a range of individual needs • The ‘Staying Put’ policy has been implemented to enable more care leavers to remain in stable supportive fostering placements. • A nominated housing officer who works with the leaving care team and manages the housing nominations for care leavers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and workshops will be offered to care leavers and their PAs by the Housing Needs Service. • Decoration allowance to young people housed in Brent Housing properties. • Handyperson support who can assist care leavers when they move into their new tenancy such as putting up shelves, curtain rails or assembling furniture. • Care leavers will be supported to avoid becoming intentionally homeless.
Education Employment and Training (EET)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial contribution towards travel, books and laptop if young person is in further or higher education. • A monthly panel meets to look at opportunities for care leavers who are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will assess and provide financial assistance towards EET travel expenses. • The Council will aim to arrange up to 10 apprenticeships. • A traineeship

	<p>currently not in employment, training or education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Brent Works' offers specialist life and career coaches on a pilot basis, funded by the DWP and the Brent Employment, Skills and Enterprise Team. The project is being delivered over the course of a 12-month contract and staff are co-located with the Leaving Care Team in the Civic Centre. • Support young people who wish to go onto further or higher education with financial support including a £2000 Higher Education Grant 	<p>programme will be offered twice a year in partnership with Brent Employment Skills & Enterprise for all care leavers who do not have the required qualification and skills to apply for an apprenticeship scheme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial assistance towards specialist equipment/clothing depending on work requirements. • Volunteering opportunities for care leavers.
Transition to Independent Living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life skills workshops are offered to all care leavers to improve their money management skills, practical skills such as cooking, managing tenancy, etc. • Financial assistance towards rent and subsistence payment for care leavers in higher education during the Christmas, Easter and summer vacations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a website for care leavers and an app to support independent living arrangements. • To provide Council Tax exemption for Brent care leavers who live in the borough. For Brent care leavers living outside of the borough in areas where they are not exempt from paying Council Tax the council will reimburse the cost.
Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Children Looked After in the criminal justice system have an allocated youth offending worker • All young people in custody are provided with resettlement support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of the Tricycle Theatre: care leavers will have free tickets to events. • Clinical Mental Health worker for care leavers who need emotional support including offer of

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The health needs of care leavers are assessed, prioritised and met • LAC Nurse conducts annual health assessments until the age of 18 • CAMHS consultation offered to social workers. • Support to register with a GP • Give information about counselling services that are available locally • Provide financial assistance towards assessed health costs. • Young parents are supported by children's centres. 	<p>'talking therapies'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health passports to care leavers at their last statutory health check. • CAMHS Consultation to PAs. • 'Staying healthy' sessions for care leavers. • Annual celebration event to celebrate care leavers achievements.
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA support and encouragement to establish or maintain healthy relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate, continuing contact with an 'Independent Visitor'. • Group work for young parents regarding healthy relationships. • Group work with former UASC regarding relationships, minimising isolation in society. • Workshops for care leavers with SEND by Brent Outreach Autism Team regarding positive relationships.
Participation and achieving well in society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care in Action (CIA/CLIA) promotes participation and encourages young people to take an active part in shaping the services they use in order to make improvements and respond to their needs. • Seats on Brent Youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops to inform care leavers about participation in society, led by the Chief Executive of the council. • Assistance to enrol on the Electoral Register. • Support to participate in community events. • Providing young people with an advocate if they

	Parliament.	<p>need one.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a website for care leavers that will have updated information on key events, links to helpful advice and support.
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6.0 Finance

6.1. The table below shows the projected number of young people that could potentially require a service beyond their 21st birthday. The projection is based on the assumption that the looked after children population stays relatively stable over a 5-year period.

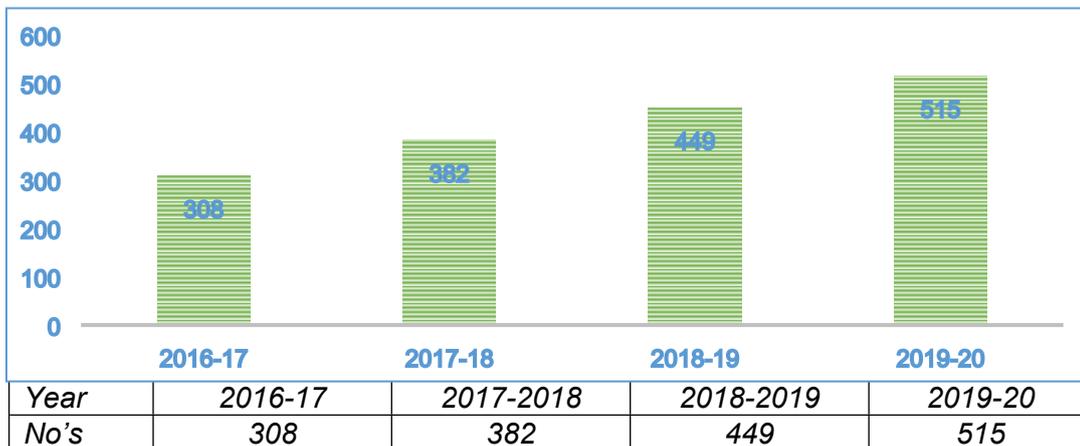


Table 1: Care Leavers Current and Projected Growth

6.2 The current Leaving Care team comprises 2 Team Managers plus 13 PAs working with 308 care leavers. The projected growth will mean that our resources will need to be increased in order to meet our new statutory obligations.

6.3 Each new PA, who would have on average a caseload of 25 young people, would cost an additional £41k. The burden of the duty may grow incrementally for four years as young people who turn 21 and are accustomed to having a personal advisor continue to request support.

6.4 The Department for Education (DfE) has consulted on the statutory guidance that sets out in detail how local authorities are expected to implement the new duty to provide personal advisors to all care leavers up to age 25. The DfE modelled the financial implications of this new duty and produced a new burdens assessment. No details of any additional funding have been published so far.

- 6.5 The projected increase in the numbers of care leavers is also partly due to population changes, and so part of the increased cost will be met from the demographic growth allocations in the medium term financial plan.
- 6.6 Considering current Brent care leavers, an additional 2 to 3 personal advisors may be required in the first year of the new duty which will commence from 1st April 2018.
- 6.7 Granting an exemption from Council tax to care leavers who reside in Brent has a financial impact as the total Council tax to be collected by Brent is reduced. However a number of care leavers will already be eligible for existing exemptions, discounts or council tax support – for example Council tax exemptions for full time students; single person discounts or council tax support for those not in employment or on low incomes.
- 6.8 Granting an exemption from Council tax to care leavers who don't reside in Brent has a financial impact as the young person may still have a liability to pay in the borough they live in; Brent would then have to pay the Council tax for the young person to that borough.
- 6.9 The total cost of an exemption from Council tax for Brent care leavers up to the age of 25 is estimated at £50k based on the circumstances of the current care leavers.

7.0 Equality Implications

- 7.1 The Council's corporate parenting duty extends to all care leavers to whom the local authority owes a duty, regardless of their current area of residence. On that basis the support offered should be broadly similar, irrespective of where a young person resides.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 received Royal Assent on 27th April 2017. However, the government has yet to take the required steps for the following provisions of the CSWA 2017 to commence.

8.2 *Corporate Parenting Principles*

Section 1 of the CSWA 2017 Act introduces corporate parenting principles which comprises of seven needs that local authorities must have regard to whenever they exercise a function in relation to looked after children and care leavers. These principles will apply to the every part of the local authority and not just to children's services in how it carries out its functions to ensure that there is more joined up approach in relation looked after children and care leavers. These are largely a collation of existing duties local authorities have towards looked after children and those leaving care.

The seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when carrying out their functions in relation to children and young people are as follows:

- To act in their best interests and promote their physical and mental health and well-being.
- To encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To take into account their views and wishes and feelings.
- To help them to gain access to and make the best use of services provided by the LA and its relevant partners.
- To promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for them.
- To ensure they are safe, and have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- To prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

8.3 *Local offer for care leavers*

Section 2 of the CSWA 2017 states that local authorities will be required to consult on and publish their local support offer to care leavers and to promote the educational attainment of children who have been adopted or placed in other long-term arrangements.

The Council will be required to publish information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers. It should include information about their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support the Council might chose to provide. The local offer can include details of other services the Council will offer in relation to health and well-being, relationships, education and training, employment, accommodation and participation in society.

When developing their local offer local authorities are required to consult with relevant persons which would include care leavers and organisations or people that support care leavers.

The CSWA 2017 does not specify how soon after the commencement of the above duty the local offer should be published. However, draft statutory Guidance states there will be a duty on the local authority to publish the local offer (subject to the consultation requirements) on the commencement, and the Government's expectation is that the local offer should be available within six to nine months of commencement.

8.4 *Advice and support*

Section 3 of the CSWA 2017 requires local authorities to appoint a personal adviser for care leavers who request one up until the age of 25, even if they are not in education or training. The local authority also has a duty to carry out an assessment of the young person's needs and to provide the necessary advice and support.

8.5 *Commencement of the CSWA 2017*

At the time of writing these implications, the Government has yet to bring the above provisions into effect. The Government has consulted on three sets of draft statutory guidance to accompany sections 1 – 3 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The consultation ran from 16 October 2017 to 27 November 2017. Therefore the development and approval Brent's Local Offer is therefore in advance of the commencement of this duty.

8.6 *Council tax exemption*

As stated above, S1 of the CSWA 2017 states that every part of the local authority will need to consider the extent to which the corporate parenting principles are relevant to their particular service area and all service areas can have a role in supporting care leavers.

The Council has power as a billing authority under S13A (1) (c) of the Local Government Act 1992 to reduce to nil to reduce the amount of council tax payable by young people leaving in care. The power to reduce council tax to nil is limited to those young people living in care in the borough. However, financial support can be offered to meet the cost of council tax that may be payable by Brent's leavers who live outside the borough.

8.7 *Apprenticeships*

The funding for apprenticeship training is no longer restricted to younger age groups, although some additional funds are available for younger groups and 19-24 year old care leavers. The Council has in place an Apprenticeship Strategy 2017-20 which was agreed by Cabinet on 23 October 2017. Generally the Council will need to advertise apprenticeship opportunities to every age group within of the community to avoid giving the impression that apprenticeships are just for young people even if in practice the majority of those applying for and being offered them are young; otherwise the Council may be vulnerable to claims of age discrimination.

The Council's Local offer can include employment services and support that is specifically available to care leavers. In the context of age discrimination in having a quota of apprenticeship places for care leavers, it is lawful for the Council to make such an offer to care leavers provided that the Council is able to demonstrate that there is justification for this offer, which promotes fairness and accords with a social policy aim to secure best outcomes for care leavers

8.7 *Public Sector Equality Duty*

Under Section 149 the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty to have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics covered by the Equality Duty are as follows:

Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination), pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex and sexual orientation.

The public sector equality duty requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a “protected characteristic” and those who do not share that protected characteristic.

Before Cabinet makes a decision on the proposals set out in this report, the Council must consider the effects of equalities of in relation to all of the protected characteristics to identify any potential for discrimination and respond accordingly.

9.0 Consultation with Internal Stakeholders

- 9.1 Young people have been consulted in relation to the development of the local offer. Care Leavers in Action (CLIA), the participation group for young people who have left care were consulted with in July 2017 where a workshop was held. Young people were asked to act as a Director of a service area in a council and write down what they thought they could offer care leavers from their service area. Feedback was collated from all the participants to be incorporated into the final version of the Local Offer.
- 9.2 A Local Offer questionnaire is in progress to all care leavers to obtain their views on what is important to them and what should be included in the Brent Local Offer. The feedback will provide an opportunity to refine the current draft document.
- 9.3 In the development of the local offer Senior Managers across all Brent departments were consulted and pledged to work together at an event in June 2017. Further meetings took place with several service areas across the Council including Housing Needs, Employment Skills & Enterprise, Human Resources and Legal Services for their contribution to explore their contribution to the Local Offer. The outcome of these discussions are contained within the draft offer. There is continuing liaison with the Resources, Community Wellbeing and Regeneration and Environment departments to

have final agreement for the inclusion of services relating to pro-bono legal advice, free leisure passes and travel passes.

- 9.4 Consultation with social work staff on the Local Offer was undertaken at a recent Looked after Children staff forum.
- 9.5 Should Corporate Parenting Committee approve the recommendations in this report they will be further considered at Cabinet on 12th February 2017. Subject to approval, the final version of the local offer will then be designed by Brent's care leavers before being formally launched at the end of March 2018.

Appendix 1: Draft - Brent Local Offer to Care Leavers

Appendix 2: Brent Leaving Care Charter

Report sign off:

GAIL TOLLEY

Strategic Director of Children and
Young People

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Appendix 1: Our Offer to Care Leavers

1. Introduction

As your corporate parent, Brent Council continues to be responsible for you after you turn 18. We must make sure that you are safe, healthy and are achieving your goals. As any good parent, we want to make sure you have the best possible support to help you thrive as you grow older.

We will do our best to help you achieve your full potential. We know that it is a big step when you move out of care and start living on your own. Being a good parent means keeping in touch and providing you with the support you need to meet your individual needs.

Just because you are leaving care, or have already left care, we haven't stopped caring about you. We want to make sure that you feel safe and supported and know where and who to go for advice and help.

This local offer is made by Brent Council to all care leavers and sets out how we will support you.

To be able to get the support set out in this offer, you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16 (including your 16th birthday) or for 13 weeks after your 16th birthday. Your personal advisor will talk with you about the information in this offer.

2. Support we must provide by law

Following changes introduced through the Children and Social Work Act 2017, you can ask for support from your personal advisor until you reach the age of 25. This is to make sure care leavers receive similar support that young adults who live with their families would normally expect.

- **Personal Advisor**

Once you turn 18, in most cases, you'll no longer have a social worker, so your personal advisor, we call them PAs, will make sure you get the services you need and help co-ordinate your pathway plan and reviews.

Your PA is there to help you to think about your future, what you are studying, what you want to do in the future and your independence skills. Your PA will talk to you and other people who are important to you to find out more about you and your needs.

Your PA can help you with lots of things in your life. The main things they will do are:

- Be involved in understanding your needs and preparing your Pathway Plan so that you can get a good idea of what you want to do with your life;

- Review your Pathway Plan at least every six months to help you to stay on track and achieve the things you want from life;
- With your agreement, seek the views of our partner agencies when completing your pathway plan. This may include housing, education, training and employment providers, benefits and health services. PAs will also liaise with youth offending services and probation if needed.
- Even if your case has been closed you can still get in touch with us before your 25th birthday and we will assess what help or assistance we may be able to give you.

2. Support we offer

• Education, Employment and Training

Good parents want to help their children achieve the right qualifications, training and skills to enable them to succeed in life. As your corporate parent, we want to make sure you have this solid foundation so that you are able to find the right career and job that goes with it. To do this we will make sure you have good advice, support and assistance.

The law says we must provide you with assistance with expenses linked with employment, education and training. In particular:

- We will provide you with a Higher Education (HE) bursary of £2,000 if you go to University, to help with books and materials.
- We will provide somewhere for you to stay during University holidays (or funding for this if you would prefer to make your own arrangements) if you are in higher education or in residential further education.

Our other education and training support offer to you includes:

- Support to meet your transport costs when travelling to training, school/college, apprenticeships or job interviews;
- Support to buy tools, equipment, essential clothing and books;
- Support & advice if you choose to go to university, such as helping you apply for tuition fees and maintenance loans;
- A job coach through our partnership with Brent Works to help you get into employment, training or an apprenticeship scheme within the Council or elsewhere;
- A Department of Work and Pensions worker seconded to the leaving care team who will assist you in claiming benefits and avoid you getting undue benefit sanctions;
- An annual celebration event to share the positive education and training experiences of care leavers;
- Up to 10 apprenticeships arranged by the council on an annual basis;
- A traineeship programme offered twice a year in partnership with Brent Employment Skills & Enterprise for all care leavers who do not have the required qualification and skills to apply for an apprenticeship scheme;
- Volunteering opportunities for care leavers.

• Accommodation

Your PA will help you to find suitable accommodation. We will work with you to ensure you are provided with the most suitable housing options. Our accommodation support offer to you includes:

The law says the following about how we must support you with your accommodation:

- We will encourage you to stay in care until you are 18, but if you choose to leave care before the age of 18 we must provide you with suitable accommodation.

Our other accommodation support offer to you includes:

- Supported accommodation if you are not ready or don't want to have your own tenancy yet;
 - Supporting you to remain with your foster carers under what's called a 'Staying Put' arrangement. This will be reviewed every six months to make sure its meeting your needs;
 - Once you have reached the stage where you can live independently and maintain your tenancy, you will have the option to apply to Brent Council for social housing (this is accommodation managed by us or a housing association). As a care leaver you will be given priority. Your PA will speak to the nominated housing officer, who works with the leaving care team, when you are ready to live on your own;
 - Access to a nominated tenancy officer who can assist you with your tenancy;
 - Workshops to receive advice about holding down a tenancy, including avoiding rent arrears, paying bills and budgeting effectively;
 - A 'Setting up Home Allowance' of £2,000 (based on assessed need) for items you need to set up home like appliances, bedding and furniture.
 - If you don't want to live in Brent because you have friends, family or connections elsewhere you will need to talk to your PA. Your PA can make contact with the Local Authority where you wish to live to see if they are able to assist you.
 - A decorating allowance if housed in a Brent Housing Property, such as to buy paint or wallpaper;
 - A Handyperson who can assist care leavers who move to their new tenancy such as putting up shelves, curtain rails or assisting with assembling a bed or furniture;
 - Not making care leavers intentionally homeless in Brent and being given a second chance if you run into problems with your tenancy.
- **Your Health & Wellbeing**

Looking after your physical health and mental wellbeing is extremely important as you get older. The Leaving Care Team and your PA will arrange advice and support for you to encourage you to lead a healthy and active lifestyle. Our health and wellbeing offer to you includes:

- Providing you with a health passport at your last statutory health check before turning 18;
- Support to register with a GP;
- Providing information on healthy living including 'Staying Healthy' sessions;
- Use of the Tricycle Theatre: care leavers will have free tickets to events;
- If you need someone to talk to your PA or keyworker can refer you to counselling including offering 'talking therapies' or for general advice to The Mix (Freephone 0808 808 4994);
- A Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service consultation before turning 18 for social workers and PAs so that they can be better equipped to assist you in relation to your health and well-being;
- Clinical Mental Health worker for care leavers who need emotional support;
- If you are a young parent, being referred to a local children's centre for help;

- We will, depending on assessment of need, provide assistance towards certain medical costs if they are not covered by the NHS. This particularly applies to young people with no recourse to public funds.
- All young people in custody are provided with resettlement and aftercare support.

- **Finances**

We will provide you with support to become financially independent, in a similar way to how other parents support their own children.

The law and the guidance says:

- We can, depending on assessment of need, provide financial assistance towards expenses relating to education, employment or training and also access to other sources of funding such as college or university funds or from the Department of Works and Pensions.

Our additional support offer to you includes:

- Being exempt from paying Council Tax;
- Providing you with relevant money management courses;
- Information on how to access your Junior ISA, if you have one (a fund of money set aside by the government and the council);
- Support to open a bank account;
- Support to gain important identification documents, such as a passport and/or provisional driving licence, before your 18th birthday;
- Support to get your National Insurance number;
- Financial support in exceptional emergencies.

- **Relationships**

As well as support from a Personal Advisor, we will offer you additional practical support, such as:

- Providing you with an advocate if you need one;
- Where appropriate, continuing support contact with an 'independent visitor'
- Help to maintain or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers or social workers;
- Life skills workshops that will focus on practical skills and managing relationships;
- Group work for young parents regarding healthy relationships;
- Group work with former Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children regarding relationships to minimise risks of isolation;
- Workshops for care leavers with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities by Brent Outreach Autism Team regarding relationships;
- As part of our independence training, workshops on Healthy Relationships.

- **Participation in Society**

We want our care leavers to be active members of society, and to have all the chances in life that other young adults have. We can help you participate in society in the following ways:

- Workshops to inform you more about participation in society and having your voice heard, led by the Chief Executive of the council.
- Encouraging and helping you to enrol on the Electoral Register, so you can vote in elections;
- Providing information on groups and clubs you may wish to join;
- Development of a website for care leavers and an app to support independent living arrangements;
- Seats on Brent Youth Parliament;
- Informing you about voluntary work that you may be interested in;
- Giving you advice and helping you to challenge any discrimination you face as a care leaver;
- You will have access to our Children and Young People's participation service called Care Leavers in Action (CLIA), where you can get involved in decision making on matters that have impact on children in care and care leaver or join an interview panel when recruiting senior staff and commissioned services to the council.

3. Who can help?

As a care leaver, there is a range of support services available to you. We have put together a list of useful contact details. If there is anything you do not understand or need further information about then please speak to your PA.

Brent Leaving Care Team

Where to find the Leaving Care Team: Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley.

When are we open: Monday to Friday 9 a.m. – 5.00 pm.

How to contact us: Duty Number 0208 379 4612 or 4613 during office hours, 24 hour emergency number 0208 863 5250

Independent Advocacy: You have a right to support from an independent advocate if you are thinking about challenging decisions about the care we give you. An advocate is someone who is independent of the council who can inform you of your rights and help you to be heard in meetings. For advocacy, we use an independent agency called Aidhour that provides advocacy services for looked after children and care leavers. To find out more you can contact the manager of this service, Goitom Mebrahtu, Goitom.Mebrahtu@brent.gov.uk

Participation Service (Care Leavers in Action) – email: Shirley.Ricketts@brent.gov.uk or Phone: 020 8937 3695

Brent Care Leavers Charter

Other places you can go for help:

- Rees: The Care Leavers Foundation <https://www.reesfoundation.org> Provides small grants for care leavers aged 18-25;

- The care leavers association <http://www.careleavers.com> A charity aimed at improving the lives of care leavers;
- Become <http://www.becomecharity.org.uk> Online advice and information for care leavers;
- Propel <http://propel.org.uk/UK> Information on what support is available for care leavers at university;
- Shelter <https://england.shelter.org.uk> Provides housing advice;
- National government benefits calculator <https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators> Information on benefits;
- Citizens Advice Bureau <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk> Information about money, benefits, your rights, employment, housing and the law.

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Brent Care Leavers' Charter

We will ensure that all children and young people in and leaving our care have the right support to keep them safe and to help them grow into happy, healthy and fulfilled young adults who are optimistic about their future.

We promise

To respect and honour your identity

- We will respect your personal beliefs and values and accept your culture and heritage.
- We will support you to become the person you want to be.

To believe in you

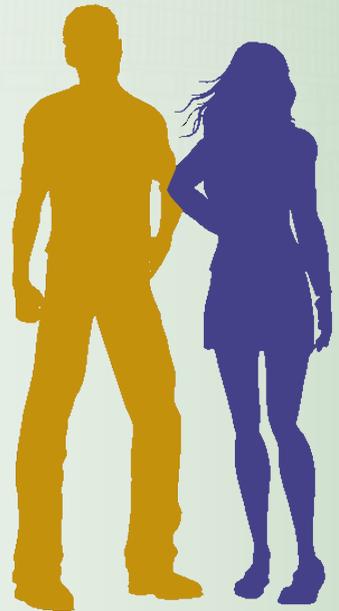
- We will value your strengths, gifts and talents and encourage your aspirations.

To listen to you

- We will listen to your feelings and you can tell us what help you need to be a young adult.
- We will promote and encourage access to independent advocacy whenever you need it.
- We will provide easy access to complaint and appeals processes.

To inform you

- We will give you information that you need at every point in your journey, from care to adulthood, including information on legal entitlements and the service you can expect to receive from us. The information will be presented in a way that you want.
- We will make clear to you what information about yourself and your time in care you are entitled to see. We will support you to access this when you want it, to manage any feelings that you might have about the information and to put on record any disagreement with the content.



To provide you with information on how to stay healthy

- We will encourage you to make healthy and positive choices for your life.
- We will provide you with information and advice about healthy eating, exercise, smoking, drugs and sexual health.

To support you

- We will help you manage changing relationships or come to terms with loss, trauma or other significant life events.
- We will provide guidance on your next steps in life – in terms of education, financial, leaving care and more.
- As well as information, advice, practical and financial help, we will provide emotional support.
- We will make it our responsibility to understand your needs. If we can't meet those needs we will try and help you find a service that can.



To find you a home

- We will work alongside you to prepare you for your move into independent living only when you are ready. We will help you think about the choices available and to find accommodation that is right for you.
- We will do everything we can to ensure you are happy and feel safe when you move to independent living.

To be a lifelong champion

- We will provide you with support and guidance to equip you for independent living.
- We will do our best to support you until you are settled in your independent life.
- We will work proactively with other agencies to help you sustain your home.
- We will do our best to help you break down barriers you face when dealing with other agencies.
- We will work together with the services you need to help you establish yourself as an independent individual. These services can include housing, benefits, health services, training providers, colleges and universities.

 <p>Brent</p>	<p>Corporate Parenting Committee 7 February 2018</p> <hr/> <p>Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services</p>
<p>Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report: 1st October 2017 to 31st December 2017</p>	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	<p>Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes Nigel.Chapman@brent.gov.uk 020 8937 4387</p> <p>Onder Beter, Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency Onder.Beter@brent.gov.uk 020 8937 1228</p>

1.0 Purpose of the Report

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).

2.0 Recommendation(s)

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 Detail

3.1 Service Values

The in-house fostering function is positioned within the LAC and Permanency Service of the Children and Young People's Directorate. The vision for the service as set out in the 2017-18 service plan is that:

- We will increase good quality local placements for children by securing more in-house fostering placements. We will recruit, assess and approve new foster carers to accommodate 10 placements by the end of September 2017 and an additional 10 placements by March 2018.
- There will be a decrease in the number of resignations/de-registrations of foster carers as a result of appropriate support and well-established, positive relationships with foster carers.
- Placements will be well matched to children's individual needs. The best foster carers will be recruited for our children.
- Diversity needs including disability, race, religion, language and culture will always be considered when placing a child.
- Children will be found permanent families without delay and within their extended family network where appropriate.

3.2 Staffing Arrangements

As mentioned in the previous quarterly report, a consultation process regarding proposed changes to the delivery of social work services within the department (including fostering) was initiated in September 2017. The rationale for change was based on the need to learn from the best social work systems, to embed quality improvements within services and to secure a more permanent and stable workforce.

Prior to the re-alignment of services the primary in-house fostering functions were distributed across two teams within the LAC and Permanency Service:

- The recruitment and assessment of foster carers were completed within the
- Placements Assessment and Recruitment Team.
- The ongoing support and supervision of foster carers was the responsibility of the Fostering Support Team.

This has changed and as of the 8th January 2018 the arrangements are as follows:

- The recruitment, assessment and support of foster carers will be undertaken within two Fostering Support and Assessment Teams.
- The Fostering Reviewing Officer role has moved to the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service; the Fostering Development Co-ordinator role has also moved to the same service area.
- The Fostering Panel Advisor role will be incorporated into a new Service Manager role which will have management oversight of the Fostering Support and Assessment, Kinship and Adoption and Post Permanency Teams.

The benefits of realignment will allow continuity of relationships with foster carers, more independent scrutiny and challenge through fostering reviewing

process and better aligned development programme for foster carers. Through these changes, the service aims to recruit and retain more foster carers which will have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people. Wider benefits to children and young people will be stronger relationships with social work teams created through smaller team structures with a greater focus on staff learning and development.

3.3 Placement Activity

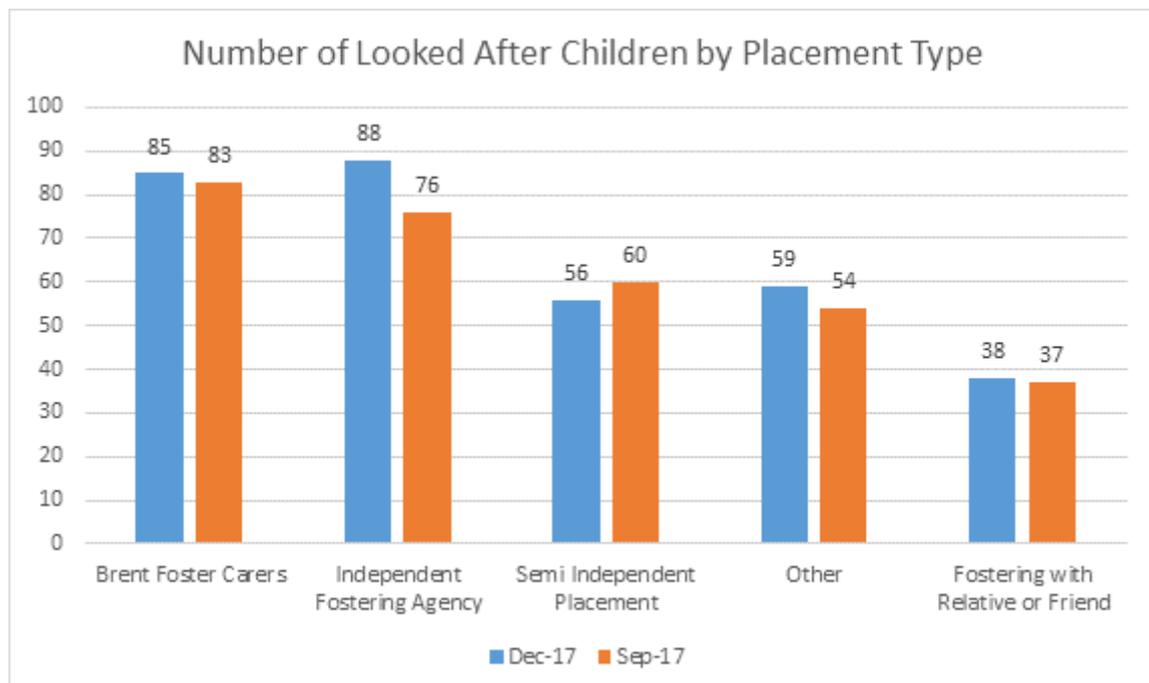
The corporate performance targets for this year relating to fostering remain broadly similar to last year:

- 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%

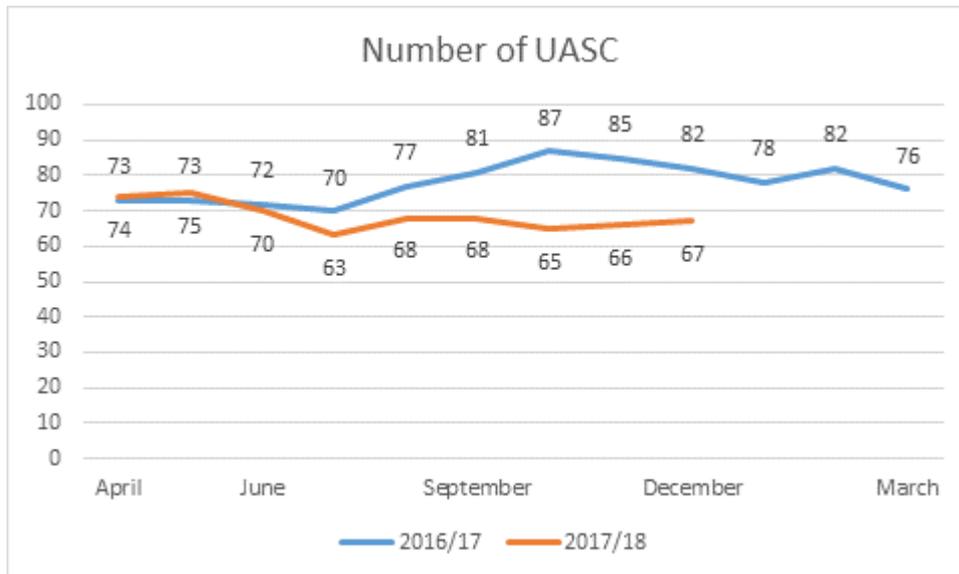
The overall LAC population increased from 311 on 30th September 2017 to 326 as at 31st December 2017. This is a 4.8% increase in the number of Looked After Children.

As of the 31st December 2017:

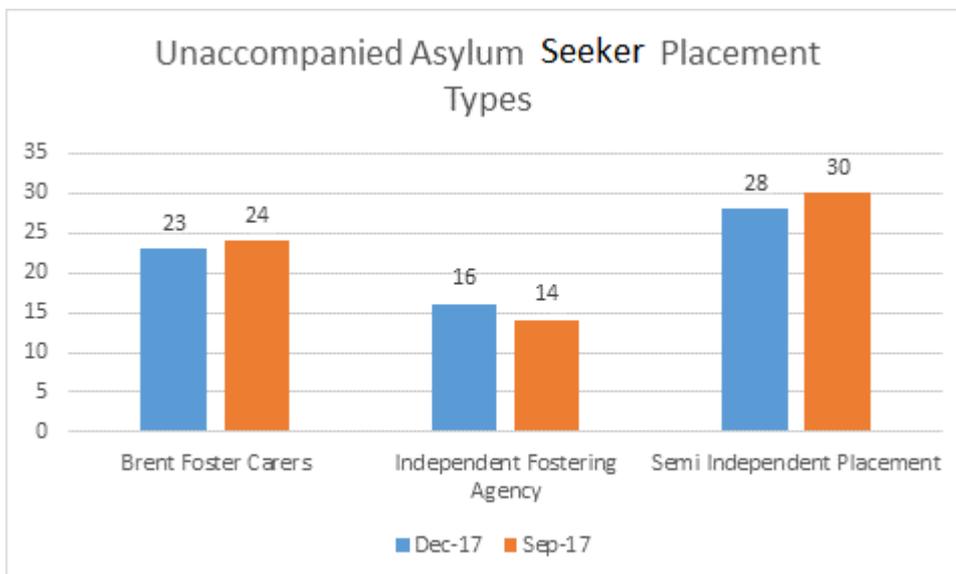
- 85 children were placed with Brent foster carers. This represents 26.07% of total looked after children.
- 88 children were placed with IFAs. This is 26.9% of the total looked after children population. (This is an increase of 12 children and 2.4% since end of Q2)



- There are 56 looked after children (aged 16-17) in semi Independent accommodation (Residential accommodation not subject to Children's Home Regulations) as at 31/12/17, which represents 17.2% of all looked after children.
- 38 children were placed with a relative or family friend on a fostering basis. This is 11.7% of total looked after children as at 31/12/17.
- 213 looked after children were living within a fostering setting at 31/12/17. This is 65.3% of the total of all looked after children. This is a slight increase from Q2 where the percentage was 63.9% of LAC.



As of 31/12/17 there were 67 UASC, 15 fewer than the same period last year. The 67 UASC represents 20.6% of all LAC as at 31/12/2017. 28 UASC are placed in semi-independent accommodation and 39 are placed in foster care.



3.4 Recruitment and Assessment

The fostering service carried out 6 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. During this quarter, the main presence was at two local hospitals (Northwick Park and Central Middlesex Hospital) and within the foyer area of the Brent Civic Centre. Additionally, there were 3 monthly information evenings held at the Civic Centre, providing an opportunity to members of the public to find out more about the fostering role and to enable Brent to determine whether an individual or family has the potential to become a carer for Brent.

The recruitment activity during the reporting period produced 16 enquiries for fostering. These enquiries resulted in 3 initial visits. As of the 31st December 2017 there were 8 formal assessments in process. These are a mixture of Stage 1 and Stage 2 assessments.

The target for the service in 2017-18 remains to recruit 20 fostering placements within the reporting year; with a net growth of 5 fostering households once carer resignations and terminations of approval are taken into account. We have achieved a total of 11 new fostering household approvals (with 12 potential fostering placements and a mother and baby placement) in quarters 1, 2 and 3 of 2017-18. A further prospective fostering household is currently booked into panel for approval within the final quarter of 2017.

Recruitment targets have not been achieved in this reporting period. One of the reasons for this was lower conversion rates from referrals to 'initial visits' as only 4 referrals resulted in initial visits in Quarter 3 compared to 7 in Quarter 1 and 6 in Quarter 2.

Additionally, a significant number of assessments have not progressed beyond Stage 1 of the assessment process over the last two quarters. Of the positive Initial Visits that progressed to Stage 1 in Q1, 6 out of a total of 8 assessments ended in Stage 1, and in Q2, 4 out of 9 assessments ended in Stage 1. The reasons for ending these assessments are varied and include;

- Applicants' personal circumstances; moving house, family crisis, ill health, deciding to remain with current fostering agency.
- A lack of engagement and communication from the applicants.
- One case where it became evident that the applicant's level of English proficiency was not sufficient.

Through the newly realigned fostering assessment and support service, focus will be on recruitment and retention of foster carers with the aim to have 5 net fostering household recruited by the end of the financial year.

3.5 Fostering Panel

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.

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.

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 Head of Service, LAC Care Leavers & Permanency.

During the period 1st October – 31st 2017, 4 panels were held with 15 specific cases discussed during these sessions. Within this group:

- 4 new 'Family and Friends' foster carer households were recommended for approval;
- 3 new fostering households were recommended for approval;
- 3 fostering households were found suitable to continue as foster carers following review;
- 1 'Family and Friends' fostering household was found suitable to continue following an allegation;
- 2 'Family and Friends' fostering households' approval were terminated due to the following:
 - child in placement returning to birth parents' care;
 - placement change for a young person.
- 1 fostering household resigned from their fostering role following the outcome of a Standards of Care concern;
- 1 fostering household was found unsuitable to continue fostering due to there being significant concern about their ability to safeguard a child and themselves.

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

3.6 Training and Support to Foster Carers

As was mentioned in the previous quarterly report, the Fostering Development Co-ordinator (FDC) role was vacant and recruitment was underway. This role has been successfully recruited to and the successful candidate commenced in role on 8th January 2018.

There continues to be a full training calendar in place and the service managed, within existing resources, to deliver these courses during the period without the FDC in position.

During this reporting period (Oct-Dec 2017), 20 individual training courses were offered. These courses ranged from core training such as 'First Aid', 'Concerns and allegations', 'Domestic violence & the effect on young people', 'Caring for a Child who has been sexually abused', 'Dealing with the

Challenges of Caring for Unaccompanied Minors' to more specialist training such as 'Down Syndrome Awareness', and 'Blood Borne Diseases'.

The carers' feedback about training sessions was very positive. In terms of First Aid training, carers specifically mentioned their new skills in CPR and being aware of dangers before they pose a risk to children of different ages as something they will take forward. They felt that Concerns & Allegations training provided tools to identify signs and how to continue offering good standards of care whilst an allegation is being investigated. Domestic violence & the effect on young people training was found to be helpful in increasing ability to understand the impact on the child, how this may present itself in the young person's behaviour and how to adjust the care of that young person with this in mind. Another training session provided was dealing with the challenges of caring for unaccompanied minors. Carers felt it provided increased insight into the emotional world of the child (therefore offering increased emotional intelligence in the area) as well as advising on the practical process with dealing with the Home Office. The carers requested this training to be delivered in one day instead of a half day and this request is being reviewed.

3.7 Monitoring

All foster carers, regardless of the length of their approval with Brent must have an annual review of their arrangements.

A total of 32 annual review meetings were scheduled to take place in this reporting period:

- 15 reviews scheduled for October 2017; 10 reviews went ahead;
- 11 reviews scheduled for November 2017; 8 reviews went ahead;
- 6 reviews scheduled for December 2017; 4 reviews went ahead.

Of the reviews that did not go ahead, there were 4 resignations.

During this reporting period there were no allegations against foster carers.

In the last reporting period (July-Sept 2017) there were 3 allegations made against foster carers. Two of these allegations were concluded and have been presented back at the Fostering Panel. They have been recommended to continue fostering. The other allegation has also concluded and will be presented to the Fostering Panel in March 2018.

Following an allegation that was made prior to the last reporting period, the foster carers have resigned. They will be presented to Fostering Panel in February 2018. Learning from the allegations and panel feedback was used to improve our recording of visits to foster carers.

Learning taken from the allegations made against foster carers, resignations and termination of approvals has been on three areas:

- Need for better and more timely communication between allocated social workers and supervising social workers for foster carers

- Need to provide social workers appropriate tools to assess applicants' ability to deal with the changing challenges as children grow into adolescent years
- On one case, need to give careful consideration when placing known challenging children with newly approved foster carers

Training workshops have been arranged and are being delivered to social workers and supervising social workers on the above matters. Team Managers also discuss these cases as case examples in their team meetings to disseminate the learning.

During this reporting period, there were no Standard of Care/Serious Concerns raised.

During quarter two, there were 5 formal complaints received that have all been resolved satisfactorily. There have been no formal complaints in this reporting period.

3.8 New Developments

Social Pedagogy

The Brent Practice Framework has been introduced to the department to support learning and development of staff. Social pedagogy represents one of the 4 practice approaches within the framework.

The Brent employed Social Pedagogue is currently developing a learning and development programme for foster carers with the newly appointed Fostering Development Coordinator. The programme will offer social pedagogic workshops to foster parents, supervising social workers and foster children.

Social pedagogical reflective sessions and support are now being provided to supervising social workers.

Joint social worker and foster carer training

Joint training is currently being delivered to foster carers and social workers in relation to Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaires (SDQs) for looked after children. This has been a positive experience for carers and staff, with several more workshop dates scheduled. These workshops help to develop a common language in relation to emotional wellbeing and enable the SDQ tool to be used to consider how our children and young people are managing, demonstrating resilience and alerting carers and social workers where they may require additional support.

Report sign off:

GAIL TOLLEY

Strategic Director of Children and Young People