



Corporate Parenting Committee

Wednesday 15 July 2020 at 5.00 pm

This will be held as an online virtual meeting.

Membership:

Members

Councillors:

M Patel (Chair)

Conneely

Gbajumo

Kansagra

Thakkar

Substitute Members

Councillors:

W Mitchell Murray and Sangani

Councillor:

Colwill, Maurice

For further information contact: Hannah O'Brien, Governance Officer
020 8937 1339, hannah.o'brien@brent.gov.uk

For electronic copies of minutes, reports and agendas, and to be alerted when the minutes of this meeting have been published visit:

www.brent.gov.uk/committees

The press and public are likely to be excluded from 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.

Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members.

Item	Page
1 Exclusion of the Press and Public	
<p>The committee is advised that the public may be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely in view of the nature of the proceedings that exempt information would be disclosed. Meetings of the Corporate Parenting Committee are attended by representatives of Care In Action (CIA), the council's Children in Care Council. The committee is therefore recommended to exclude the press and public for the duration of the meeting, as the attendance of CIA representatives necessitates the disclosure of the following category of exempt information, set out in the Local Government Act 1972: - information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.</p>	
2 Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members	
3 Declarations of interests	
<p>Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, any relevant disclosable pecuniary or personal interests in the items on this agenda.</p>	
4 Deputations (if any)	
5 Minutes of the previous meeting	To follow
<p>To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record.</p>	
6 Matters arising (if any)	
<p>To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.</p>	
7 Update from Care Leavers In Action Representatives	
<p>This is an opportunity for members of Care Leavers In Action to feedback on recent activity.</p>	
8 Corporate Parenting Support during the COVID-19 Pandemic	1 - 8
<p>Provides a summary of the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on children in care, care leavers and foster carers, detailing Brent's response</p>	

as a Corporate Parent during this period.

9 Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2019/20 9 - 36

An annual report about the outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC) in line with requirements of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010) has to be provided to the Corporate Parenting Committee or local equivalent. This report fulfils that requirement. It provides a profile of Brent's looked after children and care leavers during 2019-2020, reporting on annual activity, highlighting strengths and areas for development in supporting looked after children and care leavers in Brent. The report also includes the Looked After Children and Permanency Service's priorities for 2020/21.

10 Annual Report from the Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children 2018/19 37 - 86

The purpose of the annual report is to outline the activity and impact of the Brent Virtual School during the academic year 2018-2019. Data contained in this report is for looked after children who were in the care of Brent Council for the academic year 2018-2019, and includes outcomes for all children who have been in care for a year or more as at 31st March 2019, ("eligible cohort"). The final DfE data sets for eligible cohorts were published in April 2020.

11 Fostering Service Quarterly Report, Quarter 1 (Jan 2020 - Mar 2020) 87 - 96

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).

12 Six-Monthly Adoption Report - Adopt London West 97 - 110


The purpose of this report is to provide a briefing to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee in relation to: adoption performance data for the period 1st October 2019 – 31st March 2020, the progress and activity of Adopt London West; and how good outcomes are being achieved for children. Information and child level data presented in Section 5 and 6 of this report were provided by Brent; the rest of this report includes the progress and activity of Adopt London West.

13 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: Wednesday 21 October 2020

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 Brent	<p align="center">Corporate Parenting Committee 15 July 2020</p>
	<p align="center">Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</p>
<p align="center">Corporate Parenting Support during the Covid-19 Pandemic</p>	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	0
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	<p>Onder Beter Head of Service, Looked After Children and Permanency Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Brent 020 8937 4382</p> <p>Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Brent 020 8937 4091</p>

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on children in care, care leavers and foster carers, detailing Brent's response as a Corporate Parent during this period.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review and comment on the content of this report.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1. Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown has impacted on children in care and care leavers in various ways. A number of children, foster carers and young people had to self-isolate in their placements or accommodation when they or someone in the household displayed flu-like symptoms. Following risk assessments, face to face contact between children and their birth families was restricted to video and telephone calls. Although most young people were content with the new way of contact, there were some, particularly younger children, who understandably struggled not seeing their parents face to face.
- 3.2. The impact of loneliness, being unable to attend educational settings, visit friends or family face to face during the lockdown has been evident. Young people, particularly care leavers who reside in their own accommodation, have struggled with boredom and anxiety caused in part by inaccurate information on social media on how to keep themselves safe. Most of their leisure activities and hobbies have been put on hold as well as the routine structure of their day to day routine such as going to school, college, university or workplace.
- 3.3. Covid-19 has also had a financial impact on care leavers - young people have found they need to spend more on food shopping as they have been trying to buy from independent stores. They have had higher utility costs due to being inside for prolonged periods and using higher internet data costs. Some care leavers have lost jobs they previously held so are having to work to budget from a smaller amount of money.

4.0 Support Provided during the Pandemic to Looked After Children, Care Leavers and Brent Foster Carers

- 4.1. Children who are looked after have continued to be supported by their allocated social workers during the Covid-19 lockdown with the majority of statutory visits being done virtually. Although some children and young people have been reluctant to engage via video chat, it has been evident that for most they have been comfortable with this new way of working. For those who are more reluctant or where there are complex issues of risk, face to face visits have taken place, following a risk assessment that is regularly reviewed by the social worker and their manager.
- 4.2. Contact between children and their families has been carefully risk-assessed taking into account various guidance including Public Health England, from the President of the Family Division (family courts), the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) and the National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC).
- 4.3. At present, the majority of children are being contacted and seen through phone and video calling where child are of an age/level of understanding that this is possible. For the time being face-to-face contact is prioritised for children under

the age of 3, for children with additional needs where virtual contact would not be beneficial/manageable and where there is court directed contact. Where face-to-face contact has been agreed, a maximum of 6 people can attend in line with government guidance (this is inclusive of the contact workers and any interpreter).

- 4.4. Social workers have demonstrated creativity in engaging children and young people virtually and have taken a flexible approach to ensure that children and young people are as comfortable and relaxed as possible. Some examples from social workers' visits to children demonstrate this engagement during the lockdown period:

The children appeared to be managing with the Lockdown rules. During my video call the children showed me round the garden and how they have moved things around because they are planning on getting a garden pool soon. All three children appeared very happy. They were showing me what they were doing and telling about how hard they are working to ensure that they keep their school work up to date. The children are very cheerful and enjoy talking to me on the phone.

'E' looked smiley and happy, sat in her room, eating a packet of crisps. I asked her to put the blinds up in her room, to let some of the light in. She did so as I was speaking, and asking her why she is avoiding my calls, and not really responding to my text messages. E said, 'because you're old'. I laughed and said I haven't always been this old! I am likely to be one of the youngest social workers she has had, and we have such a great bond! E laughed and agreed. I joked that I can ask for another social worker who will be even OLDER than I am. She said she knows, doesn't want this. I empathised with her situation, and asked if she is just avoiding me because she doesn't like phone conversations? This has always been something that she has said. E said yes. I then asked if she would prefer speaking face to face, and she nodded. We agreed to have our next meeting soon, and I would text her of the day and time I plan to come down and see her.

C was in the front room with the foster carer when I called and seemed excited to have the call. He took the phone and went up to his room. C was wearing a blue t-shirt and navy tracksuit bottoms. C showed me a balloon in his room and started doing kick-ups with it while we spoke. We started chatting about basketball and NBA teams and played a game where C had to name as many as he could in 5 minutes, I set a timer and wrote down the teams he named and he managed to name 25 out of 30! He was pleased with this and at the end of the call I said we could play the game again next time, he suggested he could also name Formula 1 teams and then listed all of them and the drivers while we spoke! When he gave the phone back to the foster carer he told her about how well he did naming the NBA teams.

- 4.5. Social workers, managers and service managers have been involved in placement moves for children and young people who required changes of placement, transporting and settling them into new placements and undertaking Placement Agreement Meetings.
- 4.6. The LAC and Permanency Service has maintained a log of all children, foster carers and young people who have self-isolated either because they had symptoms or where household members had symptoms/shielding. Maintaining this log has helped ensure that children, foster carers and care leavers are receiving the necessary support and intervention.
- 4.7. Upon governmental guidance that a lockdown on movement was to be put into place, a risk assessment of Brent foster carers was undertaken, noting those who were particularly vulnerable due to underlying health conditions or their age. Additional information was gathered regarding which carers would be affected by school closures or put at a disadvantage financially due to their employment status. Regular communication detailing the support available and clarity around government guidance in relation to the impact of Covid-19 on contact, education and social interaction has been shared weekly (or more often where necessary) via a newsletter. Feedback from foster carers has been that they have felt well supported during this pandemic by the team and senior managers.
- 4.8. In addition to emotional support, an offer was circulated that foster carers can approach their supervising social worker if they began to experience hardship directly linked to being furloughed, losing employment or purchasing additional equipment. No carers have taken this offer forward to date and the majority report they are managing well on the resources they have. Allowances were paid slightly early to allow for any delay in processing, which the carers have positively appreciated.
- 4.9. The LAC and Permanency Service has been working effectively with LAC Health partners to ensure that the health of looked after children and young people is prioritised during this time. Initial Health Assessments have continued to be undertaken face to face with Brent paediatricians. This was a decision taken by the health service and it is understood that Brent is the only local authority in the country where this has continued. Review Health Assessments have been undertaken virtually using a new application that has been rolled out across the Trust to conduct these virtual appointments safely.
- 4.10. The Brent LAC Health team has been completing virtually some review health assessments for out of borough children and young people. This has had a positive impact on the timeliness of these assessments. There has also been an improvement in timeliness with other local authorities completing assessments for our young people because these are being done virtually or over the telephone.
- 4.11. LAC health professionals have provided a telephone follow-up service to children and care leavers who have been identified by the LAC and Permanency service as in a household that is self-isolating due to Covid-19 symptoms.

- 4.12. Brent Virtual School (BVS) for Looked after Children has provided online learning opportunities to children in care as well as virtual workshops to foster carers to support them during the pandemic. The BVS has been sharing useful online resources to support educational outcomes as well as encouraging school attendance of LAC as a vulnerable group. Approximately 20% of the children in care have been attending schools to date. BVS has issued guidance around trauma, loss and coping strategies to foster carers shared in weekly newsletters.

5 Support Provided to Care Leavers during the Pandemic

- 5.1. In relation to care leavers who have had additional financial needs, Brent Leaving Care Teams have provided emergency food payments where necessary and regularly topped up internet data costs.
- 5.2. Prior to the government's announcement about educational support to care leavers in EET, Brent had purchased laptops to care leavers who were self-isolating at a crucial stage of their education to ensure they were able to continue with home learning. For example, two young people have subsequently completed their course which may not have been possible otherwise. Since the Government's announcement about laptops for care leavers, 76 young people have received a laptop and a dongle to enable access to the internet.
- 5.3. Barnardo's, as part of a partnership agreement with Brent, has supported some care leavers who are NEET to obtain laptops and young people without a Smartphone to access one to ensure they have a positive way of connecting with friends and family. Additionally, young or expectant parents were also referred to Barnardo's who have provided 'baby bundles' and, where relevant, organised weekly food deliveries via the Council's corporate arrangements.
- 5.4. Brent Leaving Care Teams have encouraged young people to join the WhatsApp group which has expanded during this time. There has been regular conversation on this group, including games and quizzes. Pandemic updates have been provided within the group where relevant to ensure young people know the new guidelines regarding single person households being able to mix in a 'bubble'.
- 5.5. Young people, who have particularly struggled emotionally, have been referred to the Safe Base Brent Programme for online therapy. This programme has been expanded with increased hours of online counselling available for care leavers and is funded through Brent's Virtual School for Looked After Children. Additionally, details of online mental health and well-being support services such as 'Kooth' have been shared and promoted through the WhatsApp group.
- 5.6. The Brent CYP participation worker has used the WhatsApp group to publicise Care Leavers In Action (CLIA) events and has hosted a quiz via Zoom. Personal Advisors have ensured that they have completed regular phone calls to check in, in addition to their statutory 'FaceTime' visits to keep in touch and support care leavers. When workers have been on leave or absent from work, duty

workers have ensured they have been able to check in with that PA's young people.

- 5.7. Brent has continued to support care leavers in semi-independent placements due to delays moving into their tenancies that they had secured prior to the pandemic. This has meant that the Council had to pay for semi-independent placements for longer periods due to the impact of Covid-19.
- 5.8. Care leavers in higher education were provided with financial assistance in relation to accommodation and subsistence, who returned to London earlier than expected holiday terms.
- 5.9 A virtual CLIA session took place on 24th June 2020 with attendance of Gail Tolley, Strategic Director Children and Young People, who heard directly from 9 young people about their experiences during COVID-19. The majority of those within the group shared positive stories of what they had been doing during the 'lockdown' period which included doing podcasts with online cooking session; attending women empowerment sessions; completing university work; attending virtual choir (one voice); looking for employment (one member starting a new job the following week) and exercising. The two parents in the group shared that they were spending time looking after their children with one father sharing that he was reading daily to his daughter. One member of the group shared that they were experiencing financial difficulties and another that there were having difficulties using their laptop to access work, these issues have been raised with the social work team to resolve.
- 5.10 Additionally, a Virtual Care Leavers' Hub took place on 1st July 2020 with attendance of 20 young people with 17 of those actively participating to various discussions including 'Black Lives Matters' and impact of inequality in communities. Young people also talked about what they have been doing during the lockdown and making recommendations to each other about online courses, music and various activities. Feedback from young people has been very positive on the Virtual Hub for care leavers. Therefore, the Leaving Care Teams plan to retain the aspect of virtual attendance to the hub in the future.

6.0. Actions going forward

- 6.1. As guidelines ease some physically-distanced visits will take place face to face outside, where a staff member can safely visit a young person without using public transport. This has already started with a small number of visits including supporting a young person in court.
- 6.2. Brent will continue to support care leavers who were delayed in moving to their own tenancy to now start buying essential goods to start the transition to independent living.
- 6.3. Where it is not possible to visit young people at their home or placement the Civic Centre will be used on an appointment basis to carry out face to face visits or meetings. Many young people provided positive feedback about virtual contact and the Leaving Care Teams will retain more of this element of keeping in touch alongside face to face visits.

- 6.4. Brent foster carers shared that they are happy with the foster carers' online support group meeting and they would like it to continue. They find it easier to attend, as they don't have to secure childcare. Consideration is being given to continuing this virtual support group meeting every other month or quarterly when the lockdown is fully over.
- 6.5. Alongside other LAs, Brent is considering increasing the weekly subsistence allowance of £57.90 for older children in semi-independent placements and eligible care leavers by £20 per week in line with the increase in Universal Credit until 31st March 2021. This will increase CYP budget costs by approximately £100k. This is planned to be a one-off Covid-19 related spend until 31st March 2021. Should the UC increase be maintained by government beyond March 2021 the service will consider whether there is scope to maintain this for care leavers and older young people in care but this would be an additional budget pressure.


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 Brent	<p style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">Corporate Parenting Committee</p> <p>15 July 2020</p>
	<p style="font-weight: bold;">Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</p>
<p style="font-weight: bold;">Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2019-2020</p>	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	<p>Onder Beter Head of Service, Looked After Children and Permanency Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Brent 020 8937 4382</p> <p>Sarah Miller Head of Virtual School for Looked After Children Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Brent 020 8937 3813</p> <p>Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Brent 020 8937 4091</p>

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 An annual report about the outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC) in line with requirements of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010) has to be provided to the Corporate Parenting Committee or local equivalent. This report fulfils that requirement. It provides a profile of Brent's looked after children and care leavers during 2019-2020, reporting on annual activity, highlighting strengths and areas for development in supporting looked after children and care leavers in Brent. The report also includes the Looked After Children and Permanency Service's priorities for 2020/21.
- 1.2 Issues that were identified in the previous Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2018/19 have been updated throughout the body of this report.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review and comment on the contents of this report. This is in order to ensure that the care and support provided to Brent's LAC and care leavers is appropriately monitored. This is in addition to other reporting and scrutiny requirements.

3.0 Corporate Parenting

- 3.1 The concept of Corporate Parenting was introduced by The Children Act 2004, which placed collective responsibility on local authorities to achieve good parenting outcomes for all children in public care. 'Corporate Parent' defines the collective responsibility of council elected members, employees and partner agencies to provide the best possible care for LAC and care leavers.
- 3.2 The notion of being a corporate parent was developed and strengthened by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 which highlighted the following seven principles of being a corporate parent. These are:
 - to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being of those children and young people;
 - to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
 - to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
 - to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
 - to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;

- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

3.3 Elected members in Brent carry out their corporate parenting duty as follows:

1. The Corporate Parenting Committee, chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Young People with cross party Member representation where service performance is scrutinised. This occurs on a quarterly basis.
2. Attendance of CiA (Care in Action) /CLiA (Care Leavers in Action representatives at the Corporate Parenting Committee.
3. Weekly liaison meetings between the Lead Member for Children and Young People, the Strategic Director for Children and Young People and other senior staff within the Local Authority as appropriate.
4. Regular meetings between representatives of CiA and CLiA with the Lead Member, Strategic Director, and Operational Directors for Children and Young People
5. Brent's 'Pledge' to LAC, 'Care Leavers' Charter' and Local Offer for care leavers, approved by the Lead Member. See a copy of Brent's Pledge and Care Leavers' Charter in Appendix 1, 2 and 3.
6. An annual, mandatory Member Learning and Development session on Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting.

3.4 In 2019-2020 the Corporate Parenting Committee provided scrutiny and challenge as follows:

- a. Members of CiA and CLiA attended the Committee on a regular basis to report on their activity and to give their insights. Committee members noted their views and discussed how these could be applied to future work or to challenge the current work of the Local Authority.
- b. The Committee continued to monitor and scrutinise the management and delivery of Brent's fostering service.
- c. The management and delivery of adoption services also continued to be monitored by the Committee on a six-monthly basis. Although Brent's adoption service joined 'Adopt London West' in October 2019, the Committee continues to monitor delivery of adoption services on a six-monthly basis. A relevant senior manager of Adopt London West will present future reports alongside Brent officers to ensure a high standard of performance is maintained.

- d. In July 2019, the Committee reviewed and commented on a report providing details of the quality assurance activity for semi-independent provision that is commissioned by the council to accommodate LAC and care leavers. The report included the findings from a recent multi-agency quality assurance audit.
- e. The Committee was also presented with Brent's Annual Corporate Parenting Report for 2018/19 in July 2019. The report provided a summary of the profile of Brent's LAC and care leavers and the work and interventions undertaken in the last year to support the needs of children and young people. The Virtual School Annual Report for 2017/2018 was presented that outlined the activity and impact of the Brent Virtual School during the academic year 2017-2018. Further, a report providing an overview of Brent's Local Offer to Care Leavers 2018/2019 was presented and the proposed Local Offer for care leavers for 2019/20 was reviewed.
- f. In October 2019, the Committee reviewed the Bright Spots 'your life beyond care' survey for care leavers. The report detailed the responses to the survey, the actions as taken because of last year's survey and the planned response to this year's survey. Officers pledged to work with CLiA to identify specific projects based on the results of the survey.
- g. At the same Committee, the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report was presented and discussed that outlined feedback from looked after children on the contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs). This feedback was gained through consultation with CiA. Further, the findings of the annual 'Children's Commissioner's 2019 Stability Index' for Children in Care was reviewed by the Committee. The Committee was presented with a summary of activities undertaken to achieve stability for looked after children in Brent and activities put in place for further improvements as a result of the findings of the report.
- h. In February 2020, the Committee was presented with the findings of the Ofsted Focused Visit on care leavers, which had taken place in November 2019. The findings and recommendations following the visit were discussed. The Committee also reviewed the Health Annual Report for LAC covering April 2018-March 2019. The report detailed the performance of the service in meeting the health needs of LAC and the priorities for 2019/20.

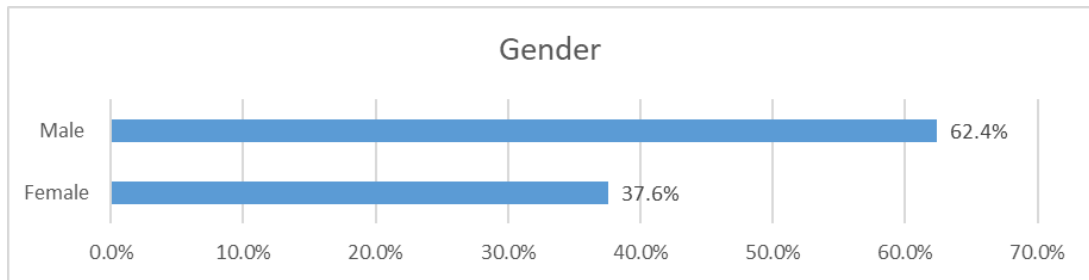
4.0 Profile of Looked after Children and care leavers

- 4.1 As of 31st March 2020 Brent had 298 children and young people who were looked after. This compares with 299 children on 31st March 2019. This represents 38.3 LAC per 10,000 head of child population against the rate for England of 62 per 10,000 head of child population. On 31st

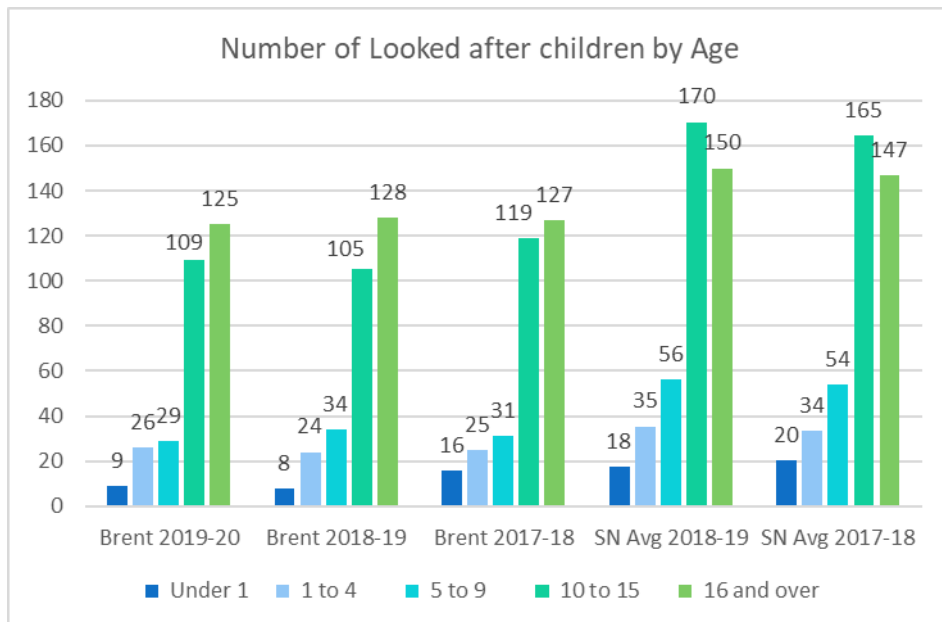
March 2020, the Local Authority looked after 60 UASC compared with 56 in March 2019. This represented 20.1% of the total Brent LAC population.

4.2 In 2019/2020, 47 children became children looked after for a second or subsequent time, in line with statistical neighbours, compared to 46 in 2018/19.

4.3 The gender of the LAC population consists of 62.4% male and 37.6% female, consistent with the position last year.



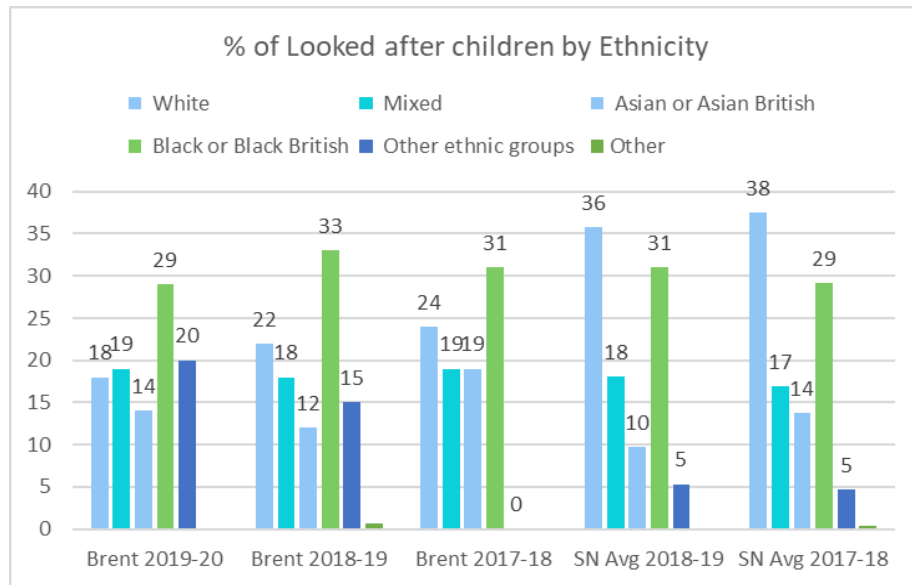
4.4 41.9% of the care population in Brent is aged over 16 years old, compared to 43% at the end of March 2019. Over 78% of the care population in Brent are aged 10 and over. Having a predominantly adolescent LAC population and associated risks present challenges around outcomes such as placement stability, education, employment and training.



4.5 **Ethnicity of LAC**

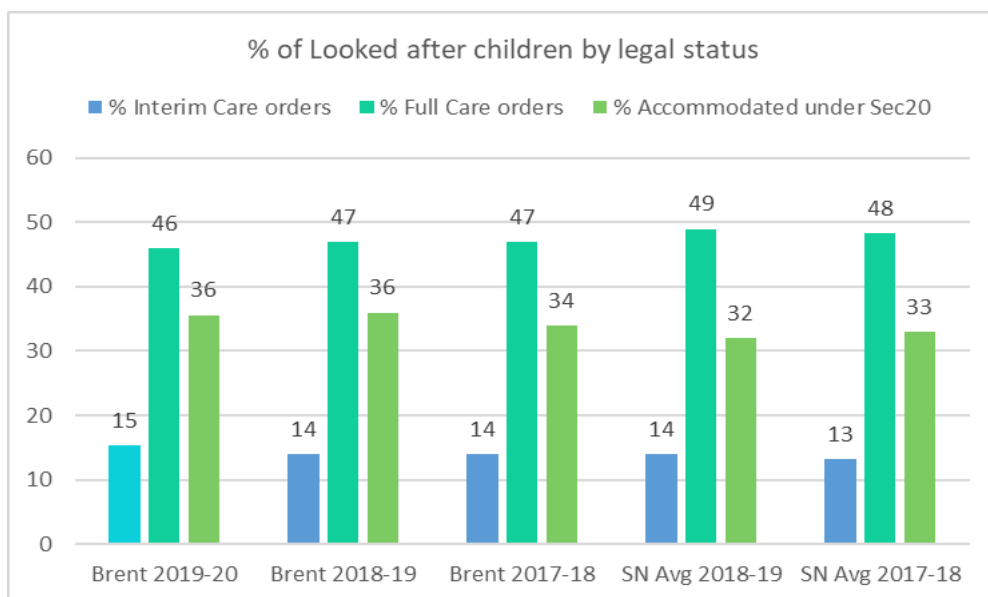
4.6 The ethnicity of looked after children broadly remained the same compared to the previous year. However, there has been a reduction in

the number of looked after children from White UK and Black or Black British backgrounds and an increase of children from Other Ethnic groups and Asian Background. The number of Black or Black British children and young people in care remains comparable with data from statistical neighbours.



5 Legal Status of LAC

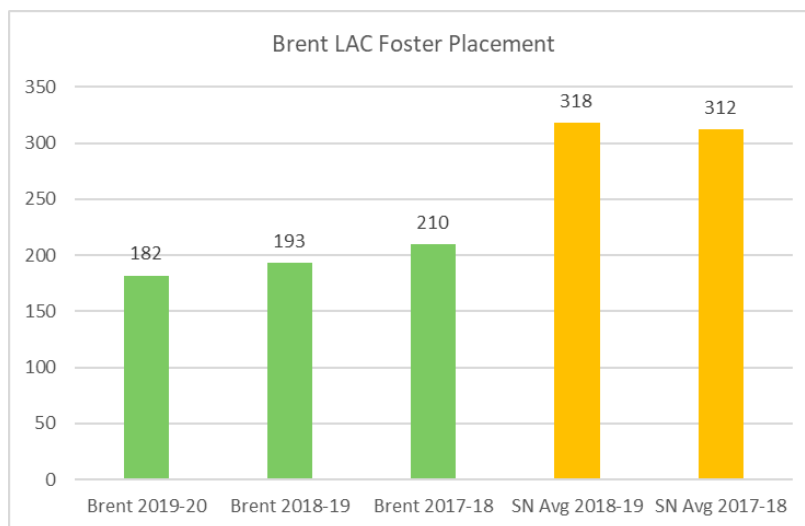
5.1 The majority of looked after children were subject to Care Orders under the Children Act 1989, representing 61.4% of all LAC in this reporting year. A further 106 children (35.6% of all LAC) were in care through a voluntary agreement with the parents/carers as pursuant to Sec 20 of the Children Act 1989. The number of children in care through a voluntary agreement with parents remained broadly consistent compared to the previous year.



5.2 The proportion of children placed more than 20 miles away from their home address as at 31st March 2020 was 20.5%, compared to 19% in 2018/19 (the national average is 14%). Brent Children’s Services aims to place children closer to their families and local support networks. However, in many cases where children enter care in adolescence, young people may need to be placed out of borough for their own safety. Placement sufficiency issues in London are also evident as it is challenging to identify local placements for adolescents with highly complex needs. *Brent’s Sufficiency Strategy 2020-22* identifies this issue as a local and regional issue, including measures to work in partnership with internal and external partners to broaden placement options for looked after children.

5.3 Placements of LAC in Brent

Most children resided within fostering placements (182) – 61.1% of all LAC, a decrease from the same point in 2019 (65%). This area of work remains a challenge for the service. Identifying foster placements for older LAC has continued to be a challenge due to lack of sufficiency in foster placement and the majority of LAC being teenagers (65.4% are over the age of 13 and 41.4% over the age of 16). Increases in late entrants to care coupled by a lack of foster placements for teenagers meant that many children were placed in semi-independent accommodation.



5.4. In 2019/20, 11 new fostering households were recruited, which is a significant improvement compared to last year’s performance (2 new households were recruited in 2018/19). Brent Children’s Services have a successful track record of placing children within kinship arrangements where it is safe to do so. This commitment has continued in 2019/20. The below case study is an example of Brent’s tenacious work to identify and assess connected people in children’s networks:

Case Study – Permanency with Kinship Carers

MC is the 6th child of her mother, with four older siblings adopted and one older sibling with a family member in a kinship arrangement. During her pregnancy, the local authority had concerns about MC's mother's drug use, mental ill-health (drug induced psychosis), homelessness, vulnerability to domestic and sexual abuse. These were the same concerns presenting in the care cases for her 5 older children. MC's father could not be traced.

As part of the permanency planning for MC, contact was made with adopters of the older siblings who all confirmed that they were not able to consider caring for her. Prior to MC's birth the social work team tried to make contact with an aunt who had been supporting mother. Despite maternal grandmother's refusal to be involved in planning for mother's previous 5 children and previous complaints made to the local authority making it clear that she did not want to be contacted about her daughter or her children, the social worker wrote to maternal grandmother to inform her about MC and provide contact details should she want to make contact with the local authority. This decision was made in MC's interest as maternal grandmother was our only known contact for MC's maternal family and as no father had been identified for MC, this meant that the maternal family were MC's only option to remain within her birth family.

At birth MC was placed into foster care, however during mother's labour she was supported by the aunt who the local authority had been trying to contact. Mother's aunt was actually a close family friend of the maternal family and put herself forward as a potential permanent carer for MC. Subsequently MC's maternal grandmother, maternal aunt and another close family friend came forward as potential carers for MC.

Whilst the local authority issued care proceedings in respect of MC, assessments were undertaken of all the potential kinship options. During the proceedings MC's maternal aunt made an application to have MC placed with her under an Interim Child Arrangement Order which was granted by the court. The local authority's final care plan for MC was for her to remain in the permanent care of the maternal aunt, which the court agreed with, and proceedings concluded with a Special Guardianship order being made to maternal aunt in respect of MC.

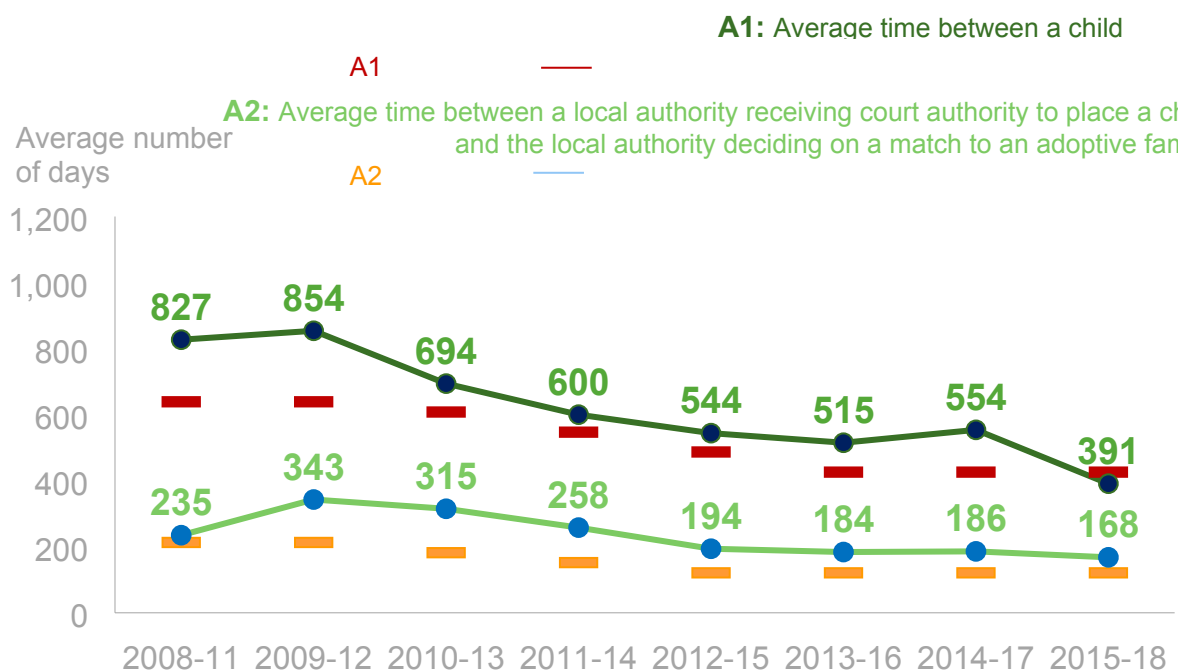
- 5.5 Recruitment and retention of foster carers remains a priority for 2020/21. In 2019/20, Brent led on a fostering feasibility study after a successful bid to the Department for Education for seed funding enabling three local authorities (Brent, Ealing and Hounslow) to work together with a charity (St Christopher's Fellowship) to produce a business case to DfE for a joint fostering service. The work is on-going in 2020/2021 with the aim to create a joint fostering service primarily aiming at increasing placement options for teenagers.

5.6 Placement Stability

- 5.6.1 As at 31st March 2020, 45 children had three or more placements in the year (15.3% of all LAC), which is an increase from last year (14%). Placement disruption has been unavoidable for some children and young people primarily due to the age profile of looked after children; high number of adolescents with multiple complexities and risks associated with late entry to care.
- 5.6.2 Placement stability continues to be a priority area for 2020/21. A weekly Placement Panel continues to monitor and track placement change requests and works in coordination with internal and external partner agencies to ensure the placement change is in the best interest of children. The Head of Service for LAC and Permanency and the Head of Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships are scrutinising requests for placement moves to minimise placement disruptions and the need for a placement change. Children and families, Brent Virtual School and IROs are consulted about placement changes prior to authorisation being sought. The Operational Director must approve any out of area placements and scrutiny is provided at this level of operational service decisions to ensure these are always made in the child's best interests.

5.7 Permanency Planning

- 5.7.1 Between 01/04/2019 and 31/03/2020 there were 5 children adopted and 21 children who left care through the making of Special Guardianship Orders. In addition, in this reporting period, 3 children were made subject of a Placement Order and 7 children were matched and placed with their adopters. As at 31/03/20 the provisional average time in days between a child entering care and moving in with his/her adoptive family was 392.6 days. This is a slight increase on last year(386.7 days) however remains in line with figures over the previous three years, which was 391 days in the March 2018 DfE published figures. The Corporate Parenting Committee provides six-monthly scrutiny on adoption performance.
- 5.7.2 This reporting period has seen the start of the new regionalised adoption and post order support with Adopt London West to carry out this work on behalf of Brent. Family finding for Brent children has continued to be a priority with ALW involved in permanency tracking activity on a monthly basis and leading on permanency planning meetings for children who have a care plan of adoption.
- 5.7.3 The chart below shows the latest available published data from the Department for Education, which shows strong adoption performance for Brent.



5.8 Care Proceedings

- 5.8.1 The number of care proceedings initiated by Brent has risen with a total of 73 cases being issued in 2019/20 compared to 51 cases in 2018/19. This increase is connected to the escalation of cases on Child Protection plans and in pre-proceedings. During this reporting year proceedings were concluded for 86 children.
- 5.8.2 The timeliness for *concluded* care proceedings cases in 2019/20 is in line with the national average at 32 weeks. This is an improvement on 38 weeks in 2018/19. Due to Covid-19 not all data was available for the reporting period.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Brent (Internal data 2019/2020)	29 weeks	35 weeks	38 weeks	32 weeks (CMS cases) 35 weeks (child cases)
London average (Baker Bulletin Q1 and 2)	29 weeks	31 weeks	33 weeks	37 weeks
National average (CAFCASS data for Q1, 2 and 3)	28 weeks	29 weeks	31 weeks	32 weeks

There continue to be multiple and complex reasons for cases that exceed the expected 26 week timeframe for proceedings and these include:

- Complexity within cases - new children born within proceedings, Fact Finding hearings and delays due to outstanding criminal charges/court processes.
- International elements, which require travel, liaising with foreign authorities, legal bodies, and often prolonged, complex family assessments.
- A lack of court availability - leading to delayed final hearings. Please see paragraph 7.8.5 for further explanation.

5.8.3 A robust process was put in place in 2018/19 to further track care proceedings cases. The 'Care Proceedings Tracking meeting' continues to take place monthly, chaired by senior CYP managers and senior lawyers of the Local Authority. The meeting aims to quickly identify any issues that might cause or create delay within proceedings and rectify them.

5.8.4 A Social Work Practice Consultant (specialist in permanency planning and court work) has continued to support and develop social work practice in these areas by co-working court cases and working with looked after children teams to ensure that permanency planning is taking place for children in a timely manner. They have also been a pivotal link with Adopt London West.

5.8.5 During the previous reporting year discussions were initiated with other West London authorities in order to provide a collective challenge to the West London Family Court regarding concerns about a lack of court availability and court capacity issues. A formal letter was sent to the court on behalf of West London authorities outlining concerns and suggested action plan. A formal response was received from the West London Family Court acknowledging the matters raised with ongoing work to increase the court's capacity. Actions to address this have been paused by the courts as a result of the covid-19 pandemic but it remains a priority for local authorities using the West London Family Courts.

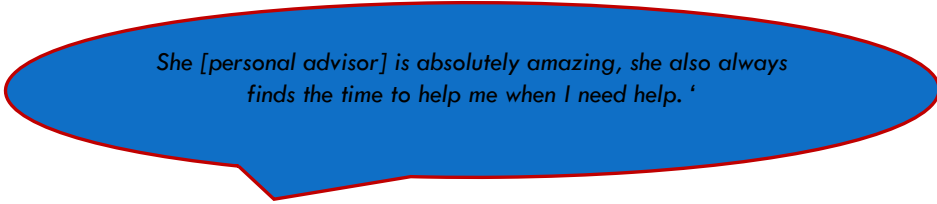
6.0 Participation of looked after children, young people and care leavers.

6.1 Participation and engagement with looked after children and care leavers has continued to ensure their active involvement in decision making.

6.2 In 2019/20, in 65% of LAC reviews, the child/young person attended and spoke for themselves and 95% of reviews occurred within timescales, a similar position to 2018/19 when it was 68% and 95% respectively. Social workers and IROs ensured that care plans and pathway plans consistently included wishes and feelings of children and young people.

6.3 In 2019/20 care leavers participated in a Bright Spots Survey “Your life beyond care” which was a well-being survey for care leavers. The survey was developed with care leavers by Coram Voice and The University of Oxford. This was the first year the survey was completed by care leavers. Care Leavers completed the survey via an online app with the support of the Leaving Care Teams.

6.4 The Survey took place between February and May 2019 and results were made available to Brent Council in September 2019. The Survey’s findings highlighted many positives about care leavers’ experiences i.e. care leavers in Brent have very positive experiences with their leaving care workers; 93% could get in touch with their leaving care workers ‘some’, ‘most’ or ‘all’ of the time and 95% trusted their leaving care workers. As an example the following quote from a care leaver highlights the quality of relationships Personal Advisers have with care leavers:



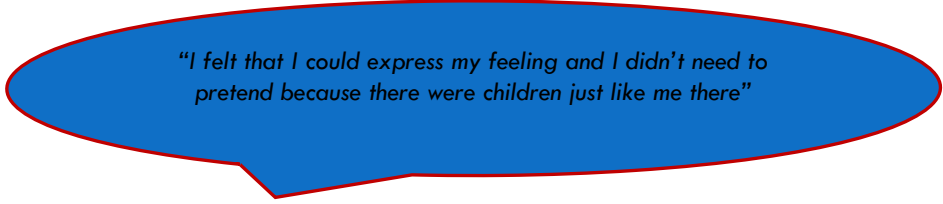
She [personal advisor] is absolutely amazing, she also always finds the time to help me when I need help. ‘

6.5 The survey also reported some areas where care leavers need further support i.e. financial assistance and loneliness and isolation. The LACP Service along with multi-agency partners have translated findings of the survey into an action plan to ensure that a response was provided to care leavers. Similarly, CLIA reviewed the findings of the survey and decided that they could support care leavers with finance issues, an area of concerns for care leavers within the survey, through a ‘young person’s guide’. A small group of CLIA members have continued to work on developing a more comprehensive guide which will include information about finance, budgeting, health and wellbeing, education and training.

6.6 Junior CIA, CIA and CLIA held a number of activities in 2019-20 to support participation and engagement.

6.6.1 Junior CiA continued to meet on a monthly basis with consistent attendance of 12 children to support participation and engagement. Sessions included games and activities that help develop skills, build relationships and allow discussion around identified issues. The group has been involved in reviewing the Brent Pledge and will contribute to a revised ‘pledge’.

6.6.2 CiA is comprised of a small group of 10 young people aged 11-17. In 2019/20 CiA was involved in a number of activities to raise awareness about their needs and experiences. For example, the group attended a three-day drama project in October 2019 with 'The Big House' which allowed young people to discuss their experiences of being in care. Another example was that CIA members have also contributed to the planning of World Social Work Day, giving feedback on their experiences and questions they would like to ask social workers. The below quote from a CIA member shows why she is attending the sessions:



"I felt that I could express my feeling and I didn't need to pretend because there were children just like me there"

6.6.3 CLiA worked on several topics and contributed to decision making in many areas in 2019/20. Members of CLiA always attend Corporate Parenting Committee, voicing the views of care leavers in Brent and providing updates on their activities. They regularly contribute to the strategic direction of services. For example, their views contributed to a revised Staying Put Policy where their experiences and views were used to enhance the offer. They provided input into other key strategic pieces of work including a Health Booklet for Young People; Safer Brent Young People's Consultation and Borough of Culture 2020. Most importantly, they have played a key role in listening to the views of other care leavers through surveys and contributing to improvement activities. For example, following learning about financial struggles in independence, CLiA decided that they want to be involved in the type and content of financial information provided when young people leave care. They are actively working on a project ensure those leaving care have the financial information they need in an accessible way. Senior managers have regularly attended sessions with CLiA which has allowed young people to provide feedback about their experiences and ask questions about the service they receive.

6.6.4 A thriving weekly football night has continued throughout the year. Starting in September 2018 it has engaged more than 25 care leavers right up until COVID-19 lockdown began in March 2020. Senior managers have met with the Jason Roberts Foundation to discuss how to expand the work further to include a cross-authority football league, mentoring and EET opportunities that is combined with the weekly football fixture.

- 6.7 The monthly care leavers' hub has also continued with up to 30 young people attending. This year, 20 young people attended dinner and a theatre performance at the Kiln in Kilburn and there have been many other events including a cooking event where personal advisors supported a group of young people to cook a meal for the wider group. As at 31st March 2020, the Hub WhatsApp group has grown to over 45 young people who have conversations and entertainment.



- 6.8 In 2019/20, advocacy services for children and young people were provided by a commissioned provider (Aidhour). Children and young people have been supported by advocates on a variety of issues including age assessment disputes, communication with professionals and placement related matters. IROs routinely informed the children and young people to ensure that they knew about advocacy and how this could support them in having a say in decisions affecting their lives. They also check at each LAC Review whether an independent visitor would be needed and if there were any communication needs requiring additional or specialist support.
- 6.9 In addition to the advocacy service, Brent has a commissioned Independent Visitors Scheme to support children and young people. Between April 2019 and March 2020, 13 young people were supported by Independent visitors throughout the year. The following feedback is from one young person, highlighting how the scheme is helping young people:

"Having (X) as my Independent Visitor has changed me for the better", young person aged 15, matched for 4 years

6.10 The organisation 'Element' was re-commissioned in April 2019 to run an arts programme for a group of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and a second Element Programme was completed in March 2020 for LAC. Young people presented a showcase of their work to professionals and dignitaries. Many Brent young people joined other young creatives in a video about Element's network, which evidences one of Element's major values, that support must be long-lasting and offer tangible and ambitious progression routes.

7 Health of Looked After Children

7.1 Local Authorities, as the Corporate Parents, are responsible for ensuring that LAC receive regular health checks (six monthly for children under the age of 5 and annually for those over the age of 5), dental checks and appropriate immunisations. Statutory health data for LAC is reported for those children who have been in care for more than 12 months.

	2016-2017		2017-2018		2018 - 2019	
Health care and development assessments	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Number of Children looked after for more than 1 year and still looked after at 31/03	219	68.6%	216	67.9%	194	64.8%
Annual health assessment	205	93.6%	199	92.1%	187	96%
Up to date immunisations	157	72.6%	145	72.8%	137	71%
Number with an SDQ recorded	149	94%	67	47%	149	90%
Teeth checked by a dentist	194	88.5%	181	90.9%	160	82.5%

- 7.2 LAC Health data for 2019/20 has not yet been submitted to DfE as part of the statutory data reporting requirement and will not be submitted until August 2020. Invalidated data shows that health outcomes remain strong for looked after children.
- 7.3 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for children aged 0-18 are provided by Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust. Tier 2 CAMHS service is known as Brent Emotional Wellbeing Service (BEWS) and it is co-located with social work teams. Similarly with last year, BEWS has continued providing clinical support via holding consultations with social workers and foster carers with the aim to increase professional confidence, skill and knowledge in the areas of attachment, managing behaviour and reflective parenting. When the need arises for a Tier 3 CAMHS referral, clinicians support social workers in completing those referrals.

8 Multi-agency Partnership for LAC and Care Leavers

- 8.1 Brent had a key role in the establishment of Adopt London West (ALW) in October 2019. Unlike the other London RAAs, ALW also offers support to Special Guardians, a significant group requiring longer-term support.

Brent's focus on achieving adoption timely for the 'right children' continues to be a driving force in this multi-agency activity.

- 8.2 Brent has strong and effective multi-agency arrangements with external partners such as CCG, schools and various providers. The Children's Trust, chaired by the DCS has a strategic overview of partnership working. The Joint Commissioning Group (JCG), chaired by the Operational Director for Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy and reporting to the Children's Trust, continued monitoring the effectiveness of partnership working and commissioning arrangements for LAC and Care Leavers.
- 8.3 An operational multi-agency partnership meeting for looked after children and care leavers has continued to meet regularly with participation from CiA, Looked After Children and Permanency Service, the Virtual School for looked after children, health professionals, CAMHS, CCG, YOS, Public Health and other providers when required. The meeting promotes collective responsibility and takes a systemic approach to improve overall outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

9. Children Missing or Absent from Care

- 9.1 In the year ending 31st March 2020, 95 LAC were reported to be missing from their placements at least once. This represented 20.4% of all LAC looked after at any point during the year (n=466). This is in line with the number of children reported missing from care in 2018/19. 67 of the 95 had more than one missing incident in the year. In this reporting year 42 children were reported as being absent from their care placement compared with 50 in 2018/19. An absence may be a situation where a child has not returned home at an agreed time but their whereabouts is known. Within this cohort, 36 children were absent from their placement more than once.
- 9.2 Marked improvements were observed in the intervention provided to young people who are reported missing to LAC and Permanency Service in 2019/20 compared to 2018/19. This included the increased number of return home interviews, professional meetings and strategy discussions/meetings to safeguard adolescents.
- 9.3 Staff have been offered training on the contextual safeguarding approach to understand, and respond to, young people's experiences of significant harm that happen beyond their families. A social worker has taken up the role of a 'contextual safeguarding champion' in the service to promote the approach amongst peers.
- 9.4 A Vulnerability Risk Assessment tool has been in use with all contextual safeguarding headlines within CYP department for consistency. Since November 2018, the number of return home interviews for looked After Children has significantly increased, and missing children-related intervention has been robust. Social workers have been receiving one

to one support from a Social Work Practice Consultant who has a specialist role in supporting vulnerable adolescents. Social Workers have been reported to be proactive in completing the missing records in a timely manner. Multiagency working has also improved in providing ongoing support for young people who have been identified as a high risk group according to their risk assessments with contextual safeguarding headlines.

- 9.5 There are two panels in operation to improve multiagency collaboration in tackling contextual safeguarding issues including missing/absent from care; one is the Child Exploitation and Missing Panel (CEMP) and the other Violence and Vulnerability Programme (VVP).
- 9.6 The **Child Exploitation and Missing Panel (CEMP)**, chaired by Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service, meets monthly and is attended by various partners including Police, Health, Community Safety, Youth Offending Service. It was created by merging the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation Panel (MASE) and Missing Operations Panel (MOP). There is an overlap between missing episodes, Child Sexual Exploitation and gang affiliation, particularly drug activity. The CEMP membership consists of several agencies it has oversight on local authority's collective response to children and young people who experience harm and abuse outside of their families. Social Workers have presented cases of LAC at the CEMP with multiple vulnerabilities.
- 9.7 The **Violence and Vulnerability Programme (VVP)** occurs fortnightly and is chaired by the Head of Community Safety. It focuses on reducing re-offending and serious violence through a multi-agency and intelligence- led panel for young people and young adults who reside in Brent. The programme focuses on groups not yet known to statutory services, increasing earlier intervention where needed and identifying unknown potentially younger groups. The programme consists of prolific offenders, weapon carriers, domestic abuse perpetrators and those affiliated, or at risk of affiliation, with gangs. This panel also looks at cases for 18 plus who are open to care leaver's teams; this is a recent development and is focused on transitional safeguarding.
- 9.8 A number of LAC and care leavers' cases have been presented to CEMP and VVP panels, which has influenced positively the way different agencies have collaborated together to support social workers to manage risks and provide advice on safety planning for young people. The support provided on multi-agency safeguarding responses has also helped to remove barriers to working across agency networks, helping to carry out agreed safety plans that require a multi-agency/layered approach. The panel reviews cases and supports practitioners where multi-agency escalation is required. It also decides which cases need to come back to panel for review and this is dependent on the level of risk.

10. Education of Looked After Children

10.1. In partnership with settings, schools, social workers and carers, Brent Virtual School¹ has achieved the following for the children and young people in its care during 2018/19:

- Attendance has improved for the Virtual school pupil register as a whole, from 86% to 88%, which was a key priority from previous year.
- All 203 Looked After pupils received appropriate education, with 91% in Good or Outstanding schools, consistent with previous year.
- There were no Permanent Exclusions, as per previous year's data.
- Improved performance data at KS1, (note: small pupil cohort): 100% Good Level of Development (GLD) at EYFS; 100% achieved expected standard in Year 1 phonics test.
- At Key Stage 2 Reading reached the expected standard for 40% of the cohort.
- At Key Stage 4, 15% of the eligible cohort achieved a pass in both core subjects of English and maths.
- 89% of LAC had a destination school or college place secured for September 2019.
- Brent Celebration event welcomed over 150 LAC at Brent Civic Centre, with speeches and performances from several young people.

11. Care Leavers

11.1 The Local Authority has a dedicated Leaving Care Service that provides support and guidance to all young people who leave their long-term care from the age of 18 years until they reach the age of 25, even if they are not in education or employment.

11.2 All care leavers have an allocated personal advisor who is introduced to them at the age of 17, before their transition to the leaving care service. This ensures that all those in care approaching 18 years of age, already know their personal advisor and have developed a positive relationship in working alongside their allocated social worker. A personal advisor is not a qualified social worker but will have background in working with young people in a variety of settings such as in youth justice, housing organisations or youth groups. The current establishment of the Leaving Care Service consists of two teams with 16 personal advisors supervised by two team managers.

11.3 As of 31st March 2020, Brent was responsible for the support to 218 Former Relevant Young People [aged 18 - 21] (a drop of -31% from 317 last year) and 130 young people aged 22-25 (an increase of 165% from 49 last year). In line with the Social Work Act 2017, Brent offers a 21+

¹ For detailed information on educational outcomes for looked after children in Brent, please see Brent Virtual School Annual Report 2018/19 presented at the Corporate Parenting Committee on 15th July 2020.

service giving support, advice and guidance to any care leaver who may wish to have this support up to the age of 25.

11.4 Brent's Local Offer for Care Leavers

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 (Section 2 of the Act) introduced a new obligation for local authorities to publish a local offer for care leavers to include their support and guidance to care leavers. It requires each local authority to consult on and publish an enhanced local offer for its care leavers. The local offer should provide information about all the services and support that are available to care leavers from the local authority, including information about both their statutory entitlements and any discretionary support from the local authority chooses to provide.

11.5 DfE guidance suggests that it would “expect the local offer to be reviewed every 2-3 years”, although this was not “prescriptive”, it would be for the local authorities to decide. Senior leaders in Brent made a decision for the progress of the local offer to be reviewed on an annual basis with the view to revise it on a two yearly cycle. In this way, care leavers’ needs will be kept on the agenda annually.

11.6. In March 2020 we consulted with young people and stakeholders; over 100 care leavers participated in a consultation process, which included face-to-face dialogue, and completing on-line questionnaires. The feedback received from the consultation enabled us to review and amend the local offer.

11.7 As part of Brent's Local Offer, 60 different commitments were made to care leavers. 8 of those commitments were statutory duties Brent needed to provide by law and 52 were additional, discretionary commitments made to care leavers. An analysis of impact of the local offer was presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in May 2020.

12. Care Leavers in Education, Employment & Training

12.1 There were 41 young people in higher education in 2019/20. These included 24 young people aged 19-21 at university, studying a variety of subjects from Aerospace Technology with Pilot Studies, to Business Studies and Sociology. Additionally, 15 care leavers aged between 22 and 25 were in higher education at the end of the reporting year. Brent had a higher percentage of care leavers in higher education than statistical neighbours and nationally. The table below highlights some of the comparative data for young people at university:

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in Higher Education	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average	Statistical Neighbour average %	National figure	figure %
2018-19	20	8%	24	9%	1,860	6%
2019-20	24	10%				

12.2 At the end of the reporting year, 57% of young people aged 18-25 were in education, employment and training. The figure is 57% amongst care leavers aged 19 to 21, which is slightly above statistical neighbours, and better than the national average. The national key performance measures as related to outcomes for care leavers in education, employment or training are as below:

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in Education, Employment or Training	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average	Statistical Neighbour average %	National figure	figure %
2018-19	131	56%	147	54%	15,640	52%
2019-20	137	57%				

12.3 All care leavers attending University are provided with financial support that includes a Higher Education bursary [as endorsed by the Department for Education Charter for Care Leavers] of £2000 paid in 4 instalments plus subsidised travel to assist with travel costs. In addition, as per Brent's local offer young people (subject to a financial assessment) received subsistence and rent payments from Brent Council during Christmas, Easter and summer vacations.

12.4 The case study below demonstrates Brent's commitment to support care leavers who aspire to attend higher education:

Case Study – A care leaver in higher education

TS is a 22-year-old care leaver. He has remained in the same Staying Put placement for many years and has a very close relationship with the foster carer. After he left Uxbridge college, he was offered a place to study Journalism and creative writing at 4 universities.

Recently he graduated from Hertfordshire University. He was supported during the time to stay on campus but to return to his Staying Put carer for

holidays. TS has epilepsy and his carer has been vital in supporting him with appointments. During TS's final year, he wanted some work experience and the team manager explored links in her personal network and secured TS with a work placement at a London audio production company. TS loved the experience and the company were so positive about him that they invited him to come back on numerous occasions for further experience. They also invited him for a job interview but unfortunately, he was unsuccessful as someone else had more experience.

When TS graduated in 2019, he was looking for his first job in media. TS was again supported by the Leaving Care team to send his CV to a London animation company. TS passed the interview and obtained a 6-month contract, which he currently continues to work at home during lockdown. He is really enjoying the role and is confident that it will shortly turn into a permanent position, which will give him the confidence to leave his Staying Put placement and make the transition into his own tenancy.

- 12.5 Between February and March 2020, a group of care leavers and looked after children by Brent participated in a project called 'Creative Space' which was designed to improve their confidence and self-esteem, to support them in building new relationships and provide a creative outlet to express their feelings. The theme for this year's project was that beautiful things can evolve when young people are given the time and space to create, and in 2020's Borough of Cultures our young creatives were given the opportunity to experiment with painting, photography, poetry, drama, craft and more. Brent Council officers, foster carers got the chance to view the results and tried their hand at creating their very own piece of art, led by the Element Young Creatives. The project was led by the 'Elements' project but co-hosted by Youth Facilitator (Brent young person who participated in previous Element project) which involved training in facilitation, session design and other relevant skills and the young person was paid for doing the work. Below is feedback from a young person;

'I liked when we showed the work at the showcase because it was really fun to show what I did, and to teach and show adults that they don't know everything!'

13. Care Leavers' Accommodation

- 13.1 All care leavers are given priority banding due to their leaving care status. Young people are only put forward for a council tenancy if the personal advisor after completing a vulnerability assessment with the young person agrees that he/she would be able to manage a council or housing association

tenancy. A 'setting up Home Allowance' of £2000 is provided for care leavers to furnish their homes and buy essential items.

- 13.2 As part of the review of the service level agreement with Brent Housing the service ensured that young people participated in an independent life skills programme and attended Tenancy Workshops. An ASDAN 'Living Independently' Short Course was recently introduced, which young people will work through and receive a certificate. This will further evidence their readiness to be nominated for a tenancy.
- 13.3 Brent has continued offering workshops to young people to better manage their finance and tenancy. MyBnk [charity that works with young people] provided training to care leavers on money management and Housing colleagues provided tenancy workshops for young people who are ready to be nominated for a tenancy.
- 13.4 At the end of the reporting year, 82% of care leavers aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation. This performance is equal to statistical neighbours and slightly below the national average. This is partly due to some care leavers who were former UASC, being refused leave to remain in the UK and choosing not to be in touch with the Local Authority².

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in suitable accommodation	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average	Statistical Neighbour average %	National figure	National figure %
2018-19	190	81%	219	82%	25,050	85%
2019-20	197	82%				

- 13.5 The following case study demonstrates housing support offered to a care leaver who cannot live in Brent due to his previous involvement with gangs:

Case Study – Accommodation

EC has a history of gang affiliation and is a victim of knife crime where he sustained serious injuries that required surgery in 2019.

Since then, EC has been able to make changes that minimised the risk of repeated criminal activity and gang affiliation. Despite his age of 21, Brent has maintained his placement and worked closely with Safer London and Housing to identify a reciprocal arrangement for him to be relocated to another borough. Remaining in a Brent tenancy would have increased the likelihood of reoffending and gang affiliation. It has been a long and frustrating journey for EC however; he now has a viewing for his potential new home.

² Care leavers who came to the UK as unaccompanied minors need to apply to the Home Office to regulate their immigration status. Those who exhaust their appeal right to apply for leave to remain in the UK may choose to remain illegally and therefore lose touch with their PAs. In addition, a small group of care leavers in custody chose not to be in touch with the Local Authority although they have an allocated PA.

The multi-agency work is a testament to joint working with Safer London, the police, Brent housing department, the leaving care team and housing department in the receiving borough, all of which was happening during the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought its own challenges.

Professionals have had to be creative whilst adhering to government guidance around social distancing to progress EC's housing situation. For EC this new home is not only a home, it is hope for his future, he has engaged in voluntary work with a local business and had successfully applied and secured a part time job with an agency providing warehouse staff to businesses in North London. During his rehabilitation, EC has volunteered and worked with The Manhood Academy to share his experiences about being involved in gang culture in an effort to dissuade young people from joining gangs

The following quote from EC explains how the multi-agency group helped him ***“to have hope again”***

14. Focused Visit by Ofsted in November 2019

14.1 Ofsted inspected arrangements for care leavers as part of the Inspection of Local Authorities Children Services (ILACS) framework in November 2019. Inspectors reviewed the quality of service provided to care leavers as well as leadership and management arrangements. Outcomes for care leavers were scrutinised around suitability of accommodation; education, employment and training; health including emotional and mental health; quality of overall practice incorporating quality assurance arrangements.

14.2 In relation to the care and experiences of looked after children and care leavers, the Ofsted inspection identified the following areas of strength:

- Robust partnership arrangements to support care leavers.
- Recent Transitional Safeguarding Workshop was well attended by partners to further develop pathways for transition into adult services.
- Senior managers know their services well and address areas of practice where improvement is required.
- Work undertaken by senior managers to stabilise workforce was praised.
- Staff are aspirational for care leavers.

- ‘Accredited life skills programme’, ‘group work’ and ‘Networks for Life’ are ambitious programmes aimed at building resilience and equipping young people with skills they need in adulthood.
- The majority of care leavers are in suitable accommodation as a result of effective partnership working and commissioning arrangements. No tenancy breakdown for care leavers in the last three years were noted.
- A strong focus ensuring that care leavers access education, employment and training. Most care leavers receive help in developing skills to promote their independence; 10 care leavers in apprenticeships and the council working with partners to increase the number of care leavers in apprenticeships.
- Health assessments are conducted regularly and are of good quality. Mental health support to care leavers provided by Safe Base Brent was deemed to be a strength.
- The voice of young people is listened to via various mechanisms such as the Bright Spots Survey, Care in Action, Care Leavers Hub and other enrichment activities.
- UASC (unaccompanied asylum seeking children) receive timely and sensitive support which is a strength. UASC in all cases seen by the inspectors were receiving appropriate support with focus

14.3 The following quotes from the Focused Visit feedback letter highlight the strengths of the support provided by Brent as a strong corporate parent:

“Care leavers are provided with a varied range of social and enrichment opportunities, which they appreciate and value...”

“Care leavers continue to be a council-wide priority in Brent. A comprehensive local offer, together with strong corporate and political support and engagement with partners and the young people themselves, enables senior managers to focus on developing services to improve outcomes for care leavers...”

“Care leavers benefit from being exempt from paying council tax, whether they live in or out of the authority, an initiative that was developed with full council and political support as part of the comprehensive local offer...”

“The majority of pathway plans are completed collaboratively with care leavers. This means that most care leavers are involved with and participate in planning for their futures. ..”

“There is a strong focus on ensuring care leavers access education, employment and training...”

The Inspection identified the following as development areas:

- Need for consistency in the timeliness and quality of pathway plans
- Case recording including records of visits to care leavers, supervision and management oversight and the management rationale for case closures
- Audit arrangements to consider the quality of work with care leavers
- Risk assessments to articulate measures to address and minimise risk

14.4 In response to the above recommendations, an action plan was developed, targeting the above improvement areas. The action plan has been scrutinised on a monthly basis by the Strategic Director of Children and Young People and will have been completed by July 2020. A completion report will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in October 2020.


15 Priorities for Corporate Parenting Partners 2020/21

- 15.1 CYP and Police to lead on the response to vulnerable adolescents, decreasing the number of children and young people at risk of exploitation and missing from care.
- 15.2 Work in partnership between Brent Employment Enterprise and Skills, Prospects and Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children to increase the number of looked after children and care leavers in education, apprenticeships, employment and training in line with the published local offer for care leavers.
- 15.3 Brent Housing and CYP to ensure that suitable accommodation pathways for care leavers are well established and they meet their needs.
- 15.4 Health commissioners and providers to enable looked after children and care leavers to access physical, emotional and mental wellbeing services with particular focus on those affected by Covid-19.

- 15.5 CYP to further improve the stability of children by providing more local and in-house placement options, minimising changes of social workers and placements as well as developing partnerships with neighbouring authorities to recruit and retain more foster carers.

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Head of Service, Looked After Children and Permanency

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	<p align="center">Corporate Parenting Committee July 15 2020</p>
	<p>Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</p>
<p>Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children Annual Report September 2018 – August 2019</p>	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	3 Appendix 1 – Training report Appendix 2 - Enrichment report Appendix 3 - Activity and impact report from Brent Educational Psychologist, within the core BVS team
Background Papers:	
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	<p>Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes Nigel.Chapman@brent.gov.uk 020 8937 4387</p> <p>Sarah Miller Head of Inclusion/Headteacher – Brent Virtual School Sarah.Miller@brent.gov.uk 020 89373804</p> <p>Michaela Richards, Deputy Headteacher, Brent Virtual School Michaela.Richards@brent.gov.uk 020 8937 1075</p>

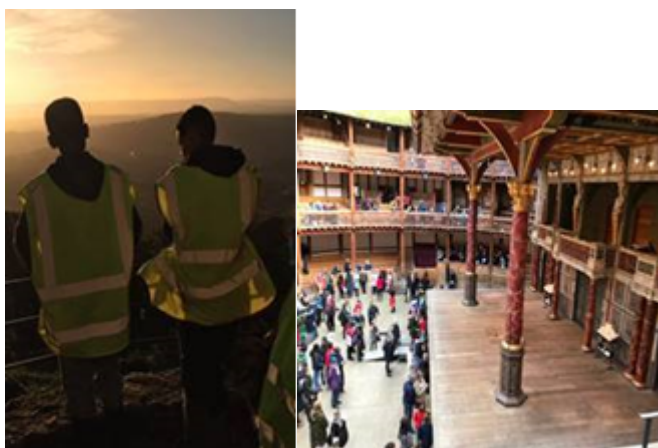


Figure 1- 2: Brent Looked After Children at Jamie's Farm in Wales and at The Globe theatre, London.

1. Purpose of the Annual Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the annual report is to outline the activity and impact of the Brent Virtual School during the academic year 2018-2019. Data contained in this report is for looked after children who were in the care of Brent Council for the academic year 2018-2019, and includes outcomes for all children who have been in care for a year or more as at 31st March 2019, ("eligible cohort"). The final DfE data sets for eligible cohorts were published in April 2020.

2. Summary Statement of Impact for 2018-2019

- 2.1. In partnership with settings and schools, social workers and carers, Brent Virtual School has supported children and young people in its care in the following ways during 2018/19:
- Attendance has improved for the Virtual school pupil register as a whole, from 86% to 88%, which was a key priority from the previous year.
 - All 203 pupils received appropriate education, with 91% in Good or Outstanding schools, consistent with previous year.
 - There were no Permanent Exclusions, as per previous year's data.
 - Improved performance data at KS1 with 100% Good Level of Development (GLD) at EYFS and 100% achieved expected standard in Year 1 phonics test.
 - At Key Stage 2 Reading reached the expected standard for 40% of the cohort.
 - At Key Stage 4, 15% of the eligible cohort achieved a pass in both core subjects of English and maths.
 - 89% of LAC had a destination school or college place secured for September 2019.
 - Brent Celebration event welcomed over 150 LAC at Brent Civic Centre, with speeches and performances from several young people.
 - **Enrichment:** a diverse enrichment programme took place across the year, including two week long residentials at Jamie's Farm in Monmouth, Wales; Theatre trips, University visits and equine therapy. A new Enrichment coordinator post (supported by virtual schools in Harrow, Barnet, Brent and Ealing), and fully funded by John Lyon's charity, enabled a much wider enrichment programme to be in place, as per Virtual school priorities for the previous year, and with positive impact (details within Appendix 2).
 - **BVS Team Expansion:** the team was strengthened by the arrival of the permanent Deputy Head and a full time Post 16 advisor, enabling the KS5 cohort to be monitored and supported alongside Statutory School Age pupils. ePEPs took place for all post 16 LAC, and resulted in stronger EET data for the 16 – 18 year old LAC cohort. NEET figures decreased by 15% in Year 12 and by 10% in Year 13. (Post 16 LAC support was prioritised for action in previous year's annual report.)

- **Training Offer:**
 - 75 education and social care professionals attended KCA attachment training at Brent Civic Centre (four days across the academic year). Kate Cairns Associates (KCA) is regarded as a field leader in this area of work, which supports LAC outcomes in school. Attachment theory is one of 4 approaches which underpins the work of all professionals working with Brent LAC, as part of the Brent Practice Framework and which ensures a consistent and evidence based approach. ***“Inspirational training - I wish all schools had this as standard.”***
 - 74 colleagues from Brent council and schools attended Mental Health training at Brent Civic Centre (three days across the academic year), delivered by AC Education. Further online modules from AC Education have been made available to a number of education and social care professionals since 2018: these modules again support the Brent Practice Framework to ensure a holistic support for Brent LAC. ***“Brilliant training – best I’ve had on mental health. Very empowering.”***
- **Contextual safeguarding:** this has also informed the working practice of Brent Virtual School during 2018-2019: using this approach has enabled more joined up planning and mapping with social care colleagues, taking into account local contextual risks to inform strategic decision-making e.g. for school placements.

Case Study: male, aged 16, during transition from school to college (September 2018)

AA was at risk of exploitation and significant harm due to his gang involvement. A contextual safeguarding approach was taken in response to the risks presented whilst AA was in the community. The concerns heightened when AA started to abscond frequently from his placement and his relationship with his then foster carer deteriorated. Following an assessment of the risks posed to AA, social care made the decision to move the young person out of borough.

The BVS life coach worked jointly with social care to identify a college close to AA’s new placement. The Life Coach supported AA to enrol at college and ensured they had effective pastoral support in place. The Life Coach continued to engage AA and following the move to the new foster carer the Life Coach supported AA acting as an intermediary between social care, foster carer and college – ensuring the young person’s voice was heard. At the autumn PEP, the LAC designated member of staff and the course tutor reported that young person was engaging well and attending all his lessons. (He has remained EET until summer 2020.)

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

- 3.1 The Virtual School in Brent (BVS) has the overall responsibility for the priority admission of LAC into Good or Outstanding schools; for the attendance of LAC at school or college, and for the attainment of LAC at each Key Stage. Virtual School monitors and supports the LAC cohort with individually tailored interventions to ensure that looked after children (LAC) achieve the best possible educational outcomes. Looked after Children attend mainstream and special schools in the communities where they live, but receive additional support from their Virtual school which is based at Brent Civic Centre.
- 3.2 BVS strives to achieve the best possible educational outcomes by:

- Co-ordinating and quality assuring all Personal Education Plans (PEPs) in schools
- 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 and expertise for the various LAC and Permanency panels; keeping education and educational attainment high on the agenda for LAC, across CYP
- Celebrating LAC achievements
- BVS supports LAC from Early Years (aged 3) to 18 years, and beyond (up to the age of 25), if the young person is in education or training. BVS regularly provides education advice and information for Care Leavers, including those due to be released from YOI.
- Brent VS attends key panels in Brent including Entry to Care and Care Placements, ensuring education is of the highest priority and considered alongside home placement, for all looked after children/young people. BVS is a key stake-holder at the bi-monthly Partnership meeting, chaired by Head of Service, LAC and permanency, which brings together relevant partners to support positive LAC outcomes; the meeting is also attended by Brent Care Leavers.

3.3 The revised Statutory guidance in February 2018 extended the Virtual school duty to include previously Looked after Children and states under the main points:

- Looked-after and previously looked-after children start with the disadvantage of their pre-care experiences and, often, have special educational needs. VSHs have a key role to ensure these children have the maximum opportunity to reach their full educational potential - an important part of why this role was made statutory.
- For looked-after children, as part of a local authority's corporate parent role, the VSH needs to be the educational advocate that parents are for others.
- For previously looked-after children, the VSH will be a source of advice and information to help their parents to advocate for them as effectively as possible. VSHs are not acting as part of the corporate parent role in these circumstances, but are there to promote the educational achievement of these children through the provision of advice and information to relevant parties.

4. Brent Virtual School Staff

The Virtual School team comprised a Head, Deputy Head, 3 LAC Advisory teachers covering Early Years and KS1 to KS4, a Data Analyst to track and monitor LAC data, a Post 16 personal advisor and a finance/administrative worker, on a school business apprenticeship programme.

This team is supported by a 0.6 Educational Psychologist, and full time Year 11 Life Coach who supports with Year 12 destinations.

Additional posts for 2018-19:

Because of the significant proportion of Brent LAC who come into care during KS4, a number of additional posts were set up, one permanent role and the others shorter term, in order to provide tailored support to this older statutory school age cohort:

- The Post 16 personal advisor role was established as a permanent role, to address attendance and engagement for the post-16 cohort with stronger NEET data as a result.
- A further temporary role was created to support the high percentage of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) on the Virtual School register. The summer programme for UASC in 2018 was highly valued with very positive feedback from schools and participants, resulting in better school engagement/attendance for the autumn term.
- A temporary post of attainment and achievement advisory teacher was further created from January to December 2018, to support the most able students to achieve their potential. This KS4 attainment consultant was successful in raising outcomes in the previous academic year; for 2018-2019, GCSE outcomes were more mixed in terms of national performance measures, due to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs); furthermore, there wasn't the financial opportunity to extend this post until June 2019.
- A part time role was created to support the extended responsibilities of working with previously LAC i.e. adopted children and children under a special guardianship order or child arrangements order.

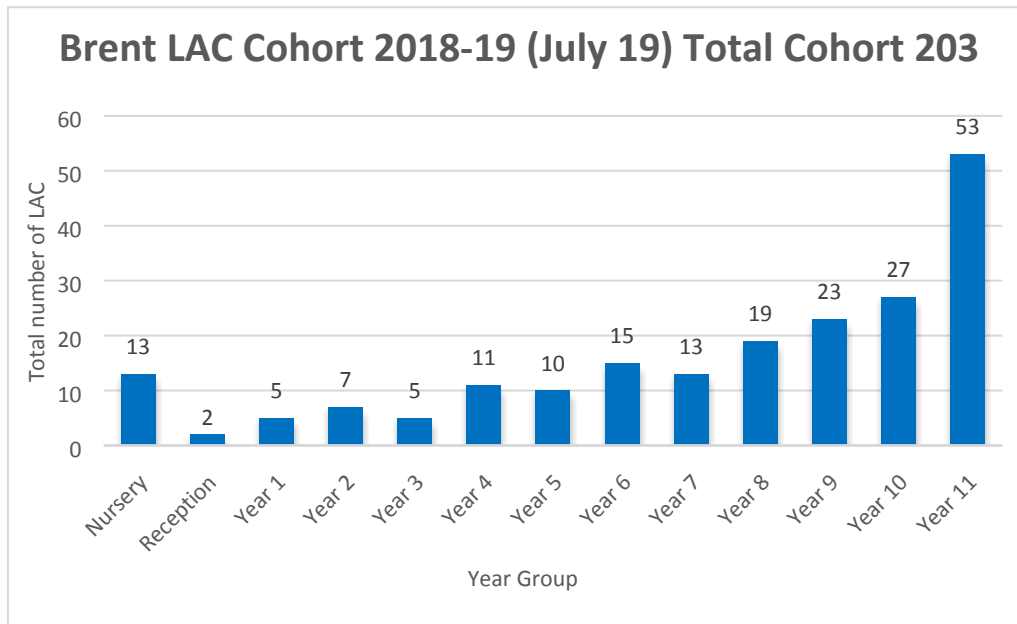
5. Post LAC Support in Brent

A small grant received from the DfE to support PLAC in Brent was used to fund a part time post. Previously looked after children face many of the same challenges as Looked After. A 2018 survey by Adoption UK revealed that adopted children are another vulnerable group in terms of Exclusion, SEND, and attainment. According to Adoption UK, PLAC were permanently excluded at a rate of just over 20 times that of the general pupil population and were 5 times more likely to receive a Fixed Term Exclusion. Furthermore, nearly half of all adopted children represented in the survey had a recognised special educational need, including 45% with SEMHD needs. In these respects there is clearly correlation with the LAC cohort, so similar approaches to supporting achievement were put in place working with fostering and adoption teams within LAC and Permanency.

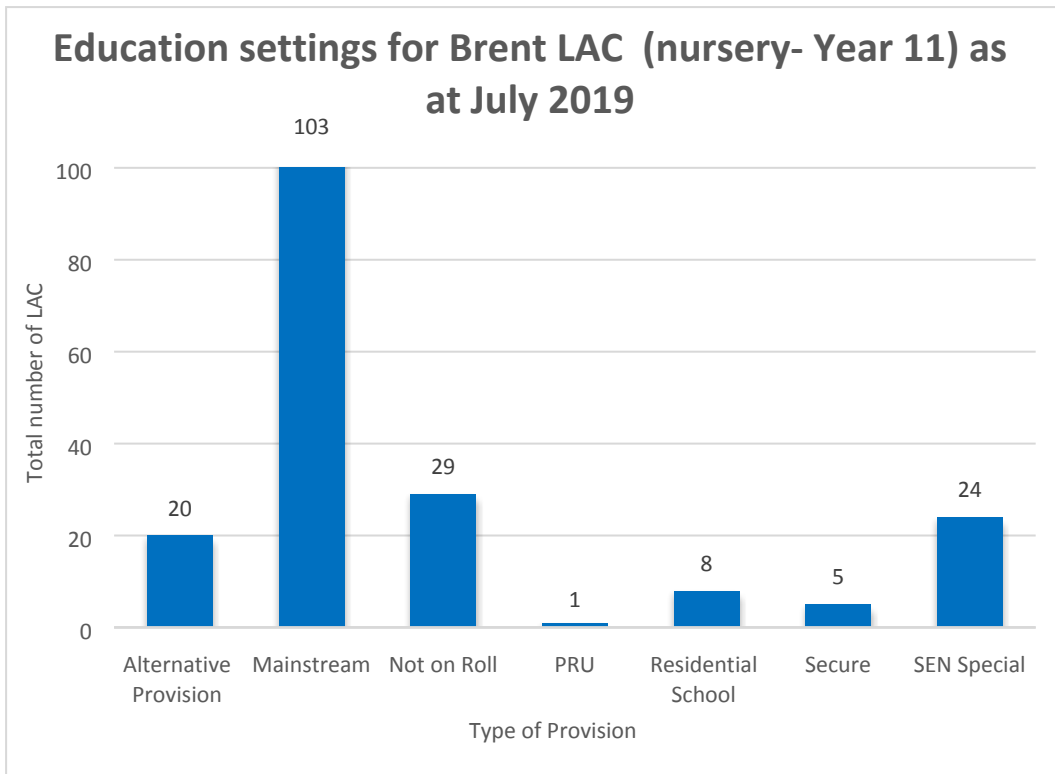
The scope of this role in Brent is in accordance with the 2018 DfE guidance: it is not likely to involve direct case work, or attendance at PEPs or other school meetings, but will encompass advice, guidance and training for schools and other professionals working with Post LAC children. The PLAC consultant made significant progress in identifying the cohort: i.e. establishing a reliable data set to know which schools host the Post LAC children, working with data colleagues, and communicating with all Brent schools. The majority of delivery was focused on upskilling Designated Teachers in Brent schools, and supporting parents/carers at informal coffee mornings in schools where a number of Brent PLAC are placed. The Post LAC consultant was co-located with the adoption team for advice and guidance on educational issues, and attended one meeting per term for adoption social workers and SGO fostering team.

6. Brent's Looked after Children population 2018-2019: nursery to year 11

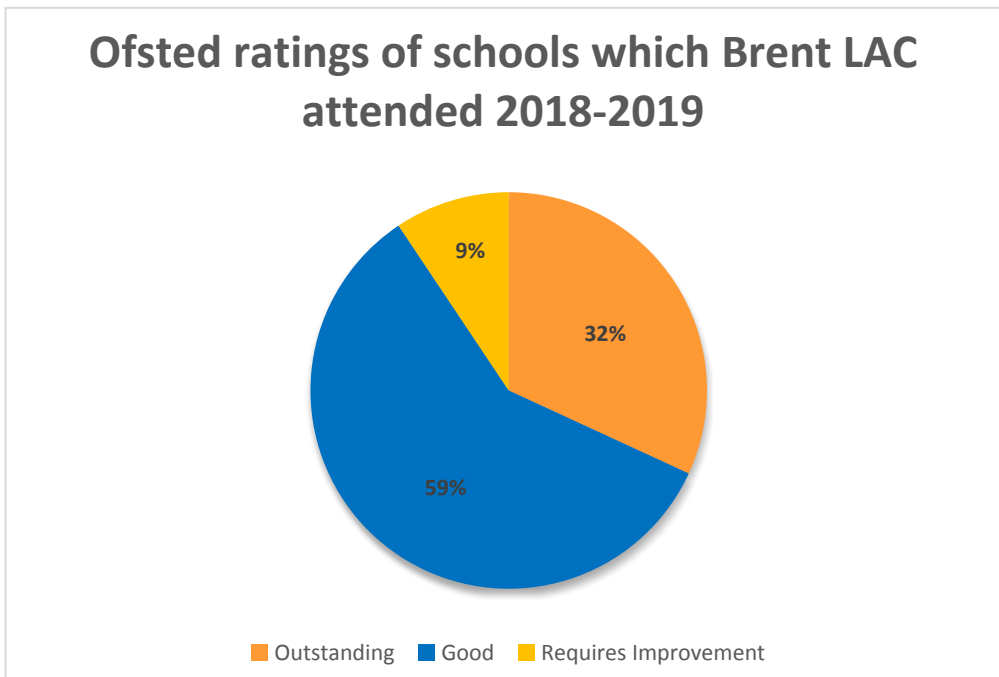
6.1. In July 2019 203 (Nursery - Year 11) children were looked after, attending 66 Brent schools and 97 schools outside the borough. Of these, 124 were in schools in greater London, with the remainder placed outside London, some at a significant distance, including residential placements in Wales and Scotland. The Virtual School maintains contact with LAC wherever they are placed and PEPs have taken place during 2018-2019 in Wales, Scotland and at Young Offender Institutions within, and beyond greater London.



6.2. LAC numbers remain the highest at secondary school age, as most Brent LAC come into care over the age of 11. By this age, there are often entrenched issues, such as poor school attendance, which can impact on LAC home and school placement stability. The highest number of statutory aged LAC is within school years 9 – 11 accounting for over 50% of the total statutory cohort; 25% of the total cohort is in Year 11.



6.3. Over 50% of looked after children are in mainstream education with a further 25% in Alternative Provisions, residential schools or special schools, where all pupils have an Education, Health and Care plan.



6.4. 91% of statutory aged LAC attending school were in Ofsted rated Good or Outstanding schools. 9% of LAC attended schools that were Ofsted rated RI (Requires Improvement).

Requires Improvement school placements:

- Four of these Looked After Children were placed by the courts in two separate secure units (Oakhill and Rainsbrook), which were both judged RI by Ofsted; the LA and BVS had no control over these admissions, but did ensure that PEPs took place and that educational outcomes were monitored.
- One LAC attended a SEN special school, which was rated RI, a year after entry to care. A more recent Ofsted inspection (February 2020) has since rated the school as Good, and monitoring throughout this period has ensured the pupil met personal progress targets.
- Four LAC attended two local Brent primary schools. Of these four pupils, two were siblings who attended the school prior to coming into care. In all cases it was judged that any disruption to education would cause further and unnecessary anxiety at a time when recent entry to care meant that stability and routine, alongside trusted school and peer relationships were of significant importance.
- Two LAC attended a local secondary school. Both had attended prior to the school being rated RI and were in year groups 9 and 11. A more recent Ofsted inspection (November 2019) has rated the school as Good. Both pupils received strong pastoral care during KS4 with tight academic monitoring from BVS.

BVS monitors the progress and achievement of all LAC, paying particular attention to those placed in schools that are less than 'Good', and ensuring there is consistent support for those placed out of borough.

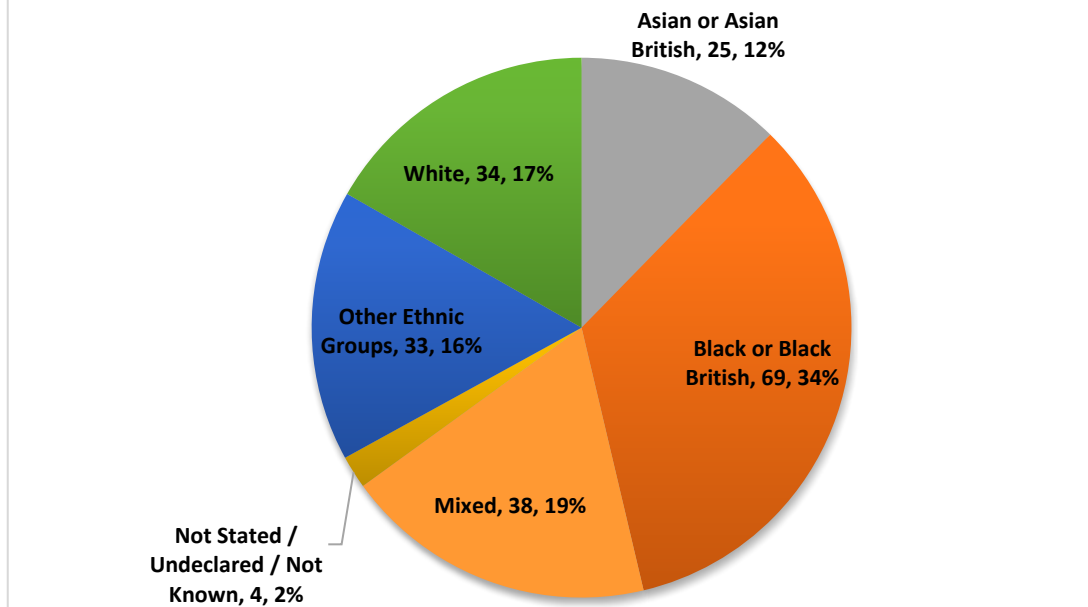
7. LAC Not In School

- 7.1 At any time, there are a few children or young people who are awaiting a mainstream school place, a special school place or an appropriate alternative provision. This will be for a number of reasons:
- newly arrived from abroad, as an UASC with no age assessment
 - emergency entry to care, or change of care placement at short notice
 - school placement has broken down and pupil is assigned a new provision, but not on roll yet

Between school placements, BVS arranges 1:1 tuition for English and maths, funded by the Pupil Premium Grant. This usually takes place in the home setting, although older pupils may be taught in the local library. For some LAC, particularly those who have missed periods of schooling prior to care, mentoring is commissioned in order to prepare and support them back into education.

- 7.2 BVS monitors LAC not on roll at fortnightly meetings, ensuring these pupils are receiving suitable education in the interim period. By far the majority of Brent LAC are placed within statutory time-scale (20 days).

**Ethnicity of the Brent LAC Statutory School Age Cohort 2018-2019
(total cohort of 203)**



- 7.3. A disproportionate number of Brent LAC are black British, in comparison with LAC national figures. For Brent Virtual School, this cohort makes up 34% of statutory school-age LAC. Nationally, considering the totality of virtual schools, the comparative figure is 8%, which is in line with the wider population. For the borough of Brent, which is more diverse than any other borough in the UK, 18% of the general population are black British: therefore, although there is still a disproportionate over-representation of black British pupils in the LAC cohort, it is less so, given the ethnic diversity of the borough.
- 7.4. BVS has a number of initiatives in place to support this over-represented group, such as mentoring with a company whose specialism is working with black boys; targeted work with the LAC attainment consultant; and access to the Promoting the Achievement of Looked after Children programme (PALAC).
- 7.5. The diversity of the BVS team also supports the diversity of Brent LAC via informal mentoring with professionals who are from similar cultural backgrounds to themselves.
- 7.6. A similar percentage of LAC (between 17- 20%) are from the following ethnic groups: White, Mixed and Other ethnic groups. Other ethnic groups include the majority of Brent's UASC, whose number continues to grow within the LAC cohort both at statutory school age and post 16. UASC who arrived in Brent during this academic year (2019-2020) were from Afghanistan, Eastern European and East African countries. The majority of the UASC cohort are male, and over the age of 14, with a similar number (35) in the post 16 LAC cohort too.
- 7.7. UASC continue to be the largest growing cohort across both statutory school age and Post 16. The majority of UASC arriving in Brent are placed at one of the specialist ESOL provisions, which are attached to the following 3 Brent secondary schools:
- Newman Catholic College (Ofsted rated Good)
 - Queens Park Community school (Ofsted rated Good)
 - Claremont School (Ofsted rated Outstanding).
- 7.8. Many Post 16 UASC have been placed at Harrow College (Ofsted rated Outstanding) and are engaging in their ESOL programme. Where UASC have the academic ability they are quickly

transferred from ESOL courses at these provisions, into GCSE classes, and some achieve strong GCSEs either in year 11 or year 12.

7.9 Case studies for UASC arriving in Brent during 2018 - 2019:

UASC, aged 15 on arrival in UK

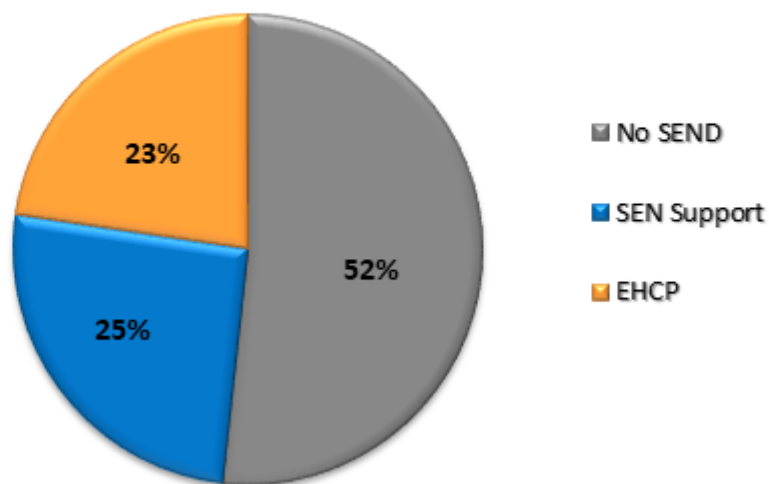
Pupil DW arrived in the UK from Eritrea in January 2019. His journey from Eritrea to UK took 4 years, via Sudan, Libya and France. He said that he was imprisoned and beaten in Sudan and Libya, as he did not have the money to travel further. On arrival into the UK, he was admitted to a specialist ESOL provision at a school near his placement. He quickly started to acquire English, despite a lack of formal schooling in Eritrea, and also displayed a talent for art, evident from doodles in his note-books. He was referred to the Kiln Theatre Art Project in Kilburn, where he later contributed to an art display at the theatre. Through the Virtual school, he has become involved with a second theatre group and is developing his set design skills. He hopes to be an artist full-time when his studies end.

UASC, aged 17 on arrival in UK

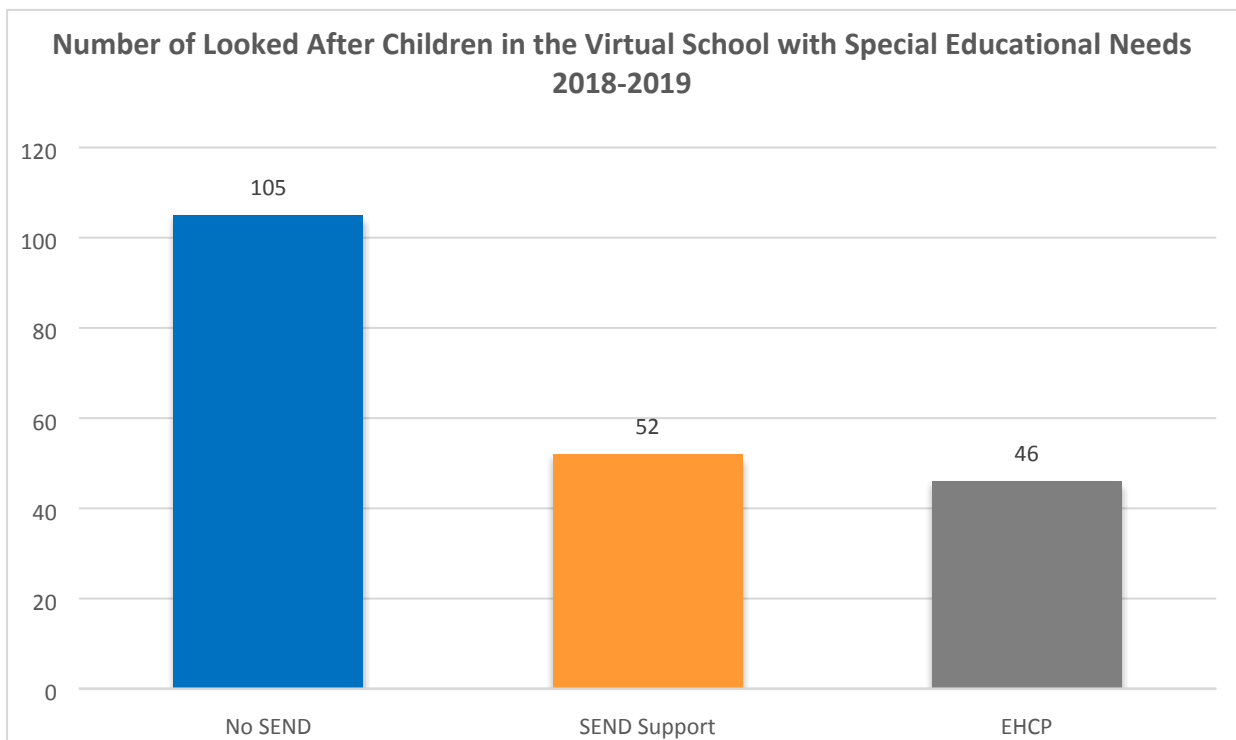
Pupil TDP arrived in England in July 2015 having travelled from Vietnam to the UK. When he arrived in the UK he could not speak English but was a highly motivated learner. Through his interpreter he said he wanted to be a computer engineer when he left school. The VS funded a place at an ESOL summer school, and applied to a local secondary where there was specialist ESOL provision. He continued to be supported with additional tuition, and access to VS led events so he could practise his conversational English. It became increasingly apparent he was a strong mathematician and excelled in computing. Whilst his progress in these subjects was outstanding he continued to struggle with his English. When he did his GCSEs in 2018 he achieved A* in Further Maths, A in computing but E in English and D in English Literature. He has since been supported to improve his English. His progress led to him being referred to a specialist Computer Engineering access course, which when completed, will grant him access to a computer engineering degree course.

8. Looked After Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

% Looked After Children in nursery-Year 11 with Special Educational Needs 2018-2019

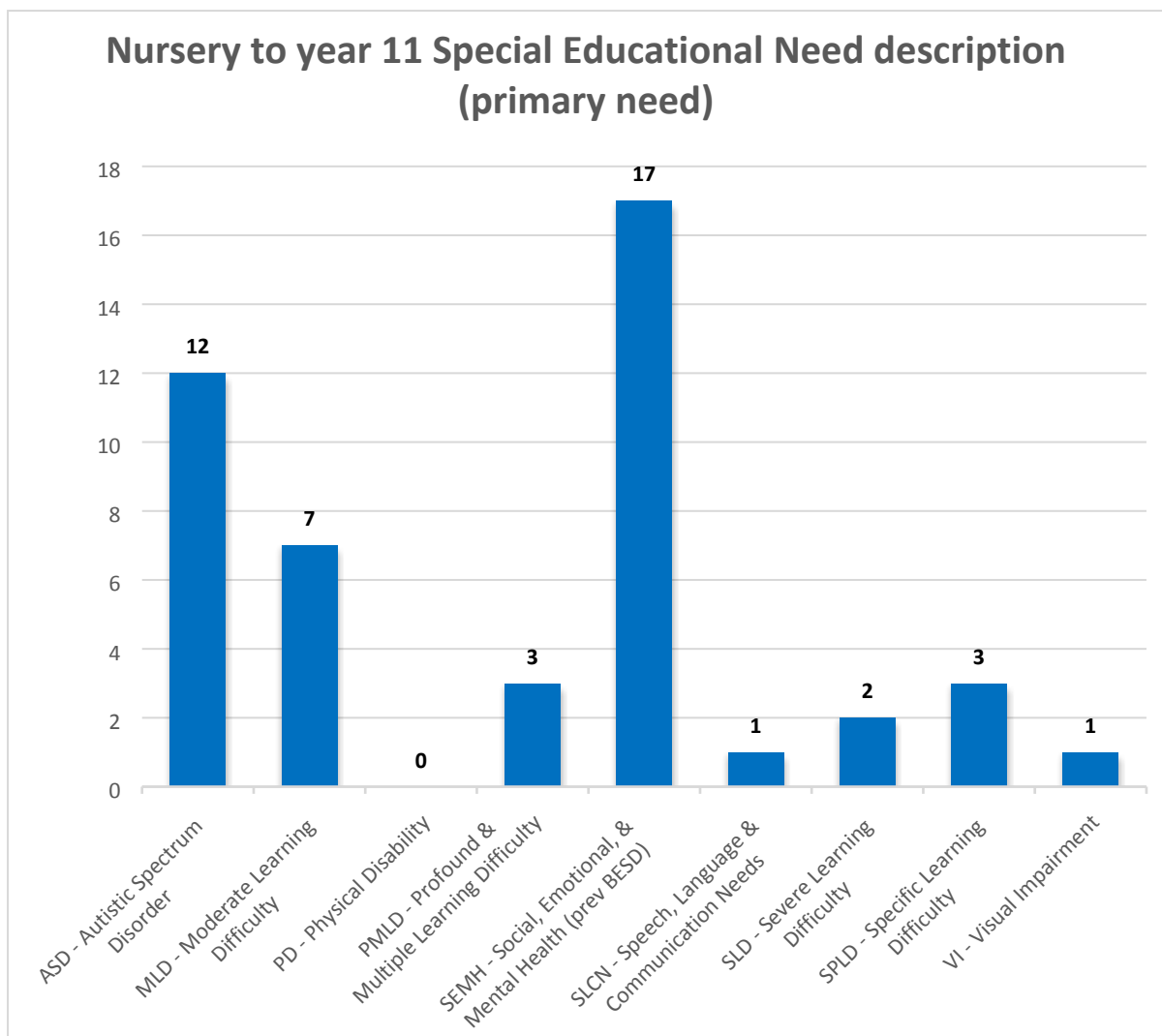


Number of Looked After Children in the Virtual School with Special Educational Needs 2018-2019



8.1. The number of Brent LAC with special educational needs is almost 50% (48%) which is disproportionately high in comparison with the wider school population, although the LAC national figure is higher still at 56%.

23% of Brent LAC have an EHCP compared with 3% of all children and 27% of LAC nationally.



8.2. The largest primary need for all Brent LAC both on SEN support and those with an EHCP continues to be Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties (SEMHD), which is consistent with LAC national data. Nationally black British boys are more likely to have an EHCP for SEMH than other ethnicities; this holds true for Brent LAC with 9 out of 17 EHCPs for SEMH belonging to black British boys, within the statutory cohort. The second largest primary need is Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). 50% of this group are black British boys. Across the general population the largest primary need is ASD. The additional needs and support required for a child with an EHCP could be a contributory factor for a higher level of family breakdowns within this cohort of black British boys, hence linking this SEND LAC data to the ethnicity LAC data above.

9. Primary Need

- SEMHD account for 31% of all Brent LAC with an EHCP
- ASD accounts for 20% of all Brent LAC with an EHCP
- Moderate Learning difficulties (MLD) account for 10% of all Brent LAC with an EHCP

Undoubtedly the high percentage of Brent LAC with SEN support or an EHCP is a significant barrier in the achievement of LAC at school, both at KS2 and KS4. The high figure for those with SEMH is also relevant when analysing exclusion figures for Brent LAC, as there is often a correlation between social and emotional mental health and school exclusions.

Brent Virtual School has commissioned external training via Kate Cairns Associates, as above. As well as the central sessions they have delivered for professionals at Brent Civic Centre, there has been a wider offer to a number of Brent schools. With this training, and via the termly Designated Teacher forum, BVS is building an understanding that behaviours which can be regarded as negative in schools, for example, restlessness, difficulty in concentrating, low level anger, an inability to regulate and manage emotion, are often a result of trauma and other adverse childhood experiences. As such, exclusions are not always the appropriate response. BVS recognises the additional needs and complexities for LAC and works closely with partners to ensure that suitable education provision is in place for those with complex needs or challenging behaviour. BVS has also commissioned online training for schools, social care colleagues and carers through AC Education, who offer a range of courses, some of which are specifically focused on SEND:

- ADHD and Conduct Disorders
- Autism
- Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
- Physical and Learning Disabilities
- Understanding Dyslexia and Dyspraxia
- Working with Disabled Children and Young People
- Supporting Pupils with Mental Health Difficulties

10. Pupil Premium Grant (PPG)

10.1. Pupil Premium Grant is received annually from the DfE and depends on the number of children in care, in Brent for that particular year (see table below).

Financial Year	DfE confirmed no. of LAC	Income Budget £	Expenditure Outturn £	Variance £
2020-21	219	(513,555)		
2019-20	219	(503,700)	503,300	(400)
2018-19	223	(512,900)	557,409	44,509
2017-18	284	(539,600)	539,600	0

10.2. The Pupil Premium is managed by the designated virtual school head in the local authority that looks after the child, and used for the benefit of the looked-after child's educational needs as described in their personal education plan. Each local authority virtual school make their own pupil premium payment arrangements to schools for their looked after children. Brent Virtual School allocates £1100 per LAC to schools and retains £1200 to spend on centrally funded interventions, residentials, tutoring and other enrichment activities – to which all Brent LAC are invited, although those placed a long way out of borough cannot attend all London based activities.

10.3. In 2018-2019 the retained, cumulative balance funded the following BVS activity:

- Life Coach to support post-16 transition, and EET destinations for Year 12

- February half term and Easter Holiday revision sessions for Year 6 tests and Year 11 GCSEs, held in Brent
- Additional 1:1 tuition, educational 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
- Maths Whizz software purchased to accelerate numeracy progress in KS2/3
- PiXL online subscription to support attainment at KS4 across all subjects
- Annual Brent Celebration Event for LAC, including awards.

11. Mental Health support

- **TaMHS** (targeted adolescent mental health support) provides 3 days a week of counselling sessions to Looked After Children in school their own schools, thereby avoiding unnecessary travel to appointments at NHS clinics, which can result in stigma and reluctance to engage. The TaMHS offer, fully funded by BVS comprises:
 - 1 day at Newman Catholic College supporting UASC with Art therapy and counselling;
 - half a day based at Ark Academy seeing individual LAC for counselling;
 - 1 day for individual referrals at Preston Manor school;
 - Managing behaviour with attachment in mind (MBAM) group for foster carers on Friday mornings in the autumn and spring terms.

“CK has engaged well in sessions and makes good use of the materials; we will continue until the end of the year. “

“I have just started work with A A-K, year 10; she has attended two sessions and will continue until the end of the academic year.”

“FW is an unaccompanied asylum seeker from Afghanistan; he has attended all sessions, and we have agreed to continue until the end of the academic year.”

- **MBAM**, a weekly foster carer therapeutic support group was offered to local Brent foster carers, mainly with primary aged children. Feedback for the group has been extremely positive with a number of carers citing the group and its reflective practice, as the reason why they were able to sustain placements for their foster children, during challenging periods.
- **BVS Educational Psychologist BVS further uses the Pupil Premium Grant to fund an educational psychologist for 3 days a week. She is able to respond swiftly to EP referrals, and works with Brent LAC both in borough and more widely across neighbouring boroughs. Feedback for this work stream is extremely positive: having an EP as part of the core VS team, allows for fast access to psychology support in a number of areas, including for EHC assessment and/or referral for other services.**
- **Mental Health support for Care Leavers** PPG also funds the Safe Base project, which is a mental health and wellbeing helpline for Care Leavers. Initially this project started as a pilot to support Care Leavers at university who were feeling isolated and at risk of non-completion of courses. The success of the helpline, which was recognised in the Ofsted ILACS report of May 2018, has embedded it as a key resource now for all Care leavers. Psycho-therapeutic sessions are offered via telephone, and teleconference, but also face to face if Care Leavers are available in Brent.

12. Promoting the achievement of looked after children (PALAC) programme:

12.1. This was an initiative set up in conjunction with the Institute of Education, London (IOE). This intervention uses evidence based research which indicates that for KS2 and KS4 attainment, the most powerful intervention for LAC (nationally) is to offer 1:1 academic mentoring and tuition in English and Maths but with the stipulation that this must be delivered by the class teacher at school. BVS is in its fourth year of running the intervention, paying for 1:1 tuition at KS2 and KS4, for schools to deliver targeted tuition sessions after school from October to May, in the lead up to GCSEs and KS2 national tests. Additionally, the teachers are trained by the IOE to ensure they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to deliver the programme successfully.

In 2019, 7 primary and 5 secondary pupils participated in the PALAC tutoring programme. Of these a third, (4 pupils) achieved the national expected standards.

13. Lexia Core 5 Reading Intervention:

13.1. In February 2017, Brent bought 50 licences for Lexia Core. This is an online reading programme which can be used at school and at home. It is essentially designed to increase the children’s reading skills. The programme was first rolled out with schools, but they were initially reluctant to use the programme and the carers did not have the confidence to use it at home. In February 2018, Brent Virtual School employed a Literacy Consultant to visit schools and introduce the programme face to face with teaching staff, carers and children. The Literacy Consultant was able to visit schools and model use of the programme. At the end of the academic year (July 2019), Lexia reported that reading gains had been made by 76% of pupils using the scheme, and 38 progress certificates had been awarded since September 2018. Reports data evidences the most consistent users are making greatest progress.

14. 12. Brent’s Looked after Children’s Attainment 2018-2019

14.1. Despite the relatively low numbers of LAC in comparison with the wider population of children in Brent, national statistics for Looked after Children allow for some analysis to be made in terms of how well Brent LAC are achieving. The reports for this cohort are based on LAC who have been continuously looked after for at least a year on 31st March 2019 – “the eligible cohort”.

15. Early Years Foundation Stage

15.1. Early Years attainment

Good Level Development	100%
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15.2. There was one eligible LAC in the reception cohort in July 2019, who achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD).

16. Year 1 Phonics

16.1. Year 1 Phonics decoding test

Reporting Year 1 Phonics	Achieved Expected Standard (2018-19) (1 child)
Phonics	100%

16.2. The Brent cohort taking the Phonics Decoding Test in June 2019, was one eligible LAC. Brent Virtual School continues to encourage early phonics interventions with all LAC.

17. Key Stage 1 Statutory Attainment (2018-2019)

17.1. Key Stage 1 Statutory Attainment (2018-2019) – Eligible cohort

KS1 COHORT RESULTS	2018-19			2017-18	
	Achieved Expected Standard (2 children)		National LAC	Achieved Expected Standard (note: no pupil met the criteria for eligible data set in this year)	
Subject	LAC	%	%	LAC	%
Reading, Writing and Maths	1/2	50%	38%	0/0	0%
Reading	2/2	100%	52%	0/0	0%
Writing	1/2	50%	43%	0/0	0%
Maths	2/2	100%	49%	0/0	0%

17.2. In 2018 - 2019 the Brent LAC KS1 cohort was small and consisted of two looked after children. The second pupil recorded in the data only narrowly missed achieving the expected standard in his writing. In reception, he was placed on SEN support and received targeted Speech and Language support. In Y1, he was taken off SEN and SALT support, but received extra tuition in maths. In Year 2, the focus was on supporting his reading, spelling and SEMH skills. He was living outside the borough and although his placement had been stable, he had witnessed unsettled periods within the foster home and his siblings leaving the placement. This has had an impact on his SEMH and has resulted in periods where he has been reluctant to attend school. During 2018-2019 Brent Virtual School offered online reading interventions for both of these pupils and they received Letter Box parcels and weekly Story Time Magazines. (See **Appendix 2: Enrichment**).

17.3. Key Stage 2 Statutory Attainment (2018-2019)

17.4. Key Stage 2 Statutory Attainment (2018-2019) - Eligible cohort

KS2 COHORT RESULTS	2018-19			2017-18	
	Achieved Expected Standard (excluding LAC with EHCPs)		National LAC (excl. EHCPs)	Achieved Standard	Expected
Subject	LAC	%	%	LAC	%
Reading, writing, and maths	2/10	20%	37%	1/5	20%
Reading	4/10	40%	49%	3/5	60%

SPAG	3/10	30%	53%	3/5	60%
Writing	3/10	30%	50%	2/5	40%
Maths	3/10	30%	51%	3/5	60%

17.5. Overall, there has been a decrease in the number of Brent LAC who reached the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths, although as the data sets are small, they are highly volatile from year to year, and this is a consistent picture with other virtual schools. The outcome data, and the context around these young people, demonstrate the complexity and challenges of the 2019 cohort. The majority of the KS2 cohort was based out of borough.

17.6. **Note:** data set above excludes pupils at special schools and those not entered for KS2 tests due to significant special educational needs. Pupils with EHCPs who were entered for KS2 tests are included, as long as they meet the eligibility criteria (i.e. have been in care for a year or more.)

18. KS2 attainment excluding LAC with EHCPs

18.1. The LAC cohort in Year 6 for 2019 KS2 tests, had a range of Speech and Communication difficulties including Dyslexia, which impacted on pupils' progress in reading and writing. One of the cohort has Ataxia and another pupil had recently been assessed for an EHCP. Although one of the pupils did not achieve the expected standard in their reading, through 1:1 tutoring in their PALAC sessions, they made a good level of progress from their KS1 attainment. KS2 schools and LAC pupils were offered support from a Lexia consultant to participate in the Lexia programme, an online reading intervention. The pupils who used the programme regularly made progress, and achieved the expected standard at the end of the year. 9/10 children received 1:1 tuition and 5/10 of the cohort were part of the PALAC programme.

18.2. Some of these year 6 Brent LAC faced difficult and challenging home circumstances such as family bereavement, multiple changes of placement and changes of school. 50% of the KS2 cohort were attending regular therapy supplied by CAMHs or other therapeutic agencies.

18.3. The Brent cohort who achieved the expected standard in one or more subjects were all in Good or Outstanding schools. Two attended the BVS booster classes at Easter and half term; only three of the pupils attended a Brent primary school.

18.4. All LAC in this cohort benefited from tight monitoring via the PEP process.

18.5. Many of the cohort were using Lexia Core 5 reading software throughout Year 6 as a targeted intervention and receiving additional 1:1 tuition (PALAC) through the project developed alongside the Institute of Education.

18.6. BVS interventions and support for the Year 6 Cohort:

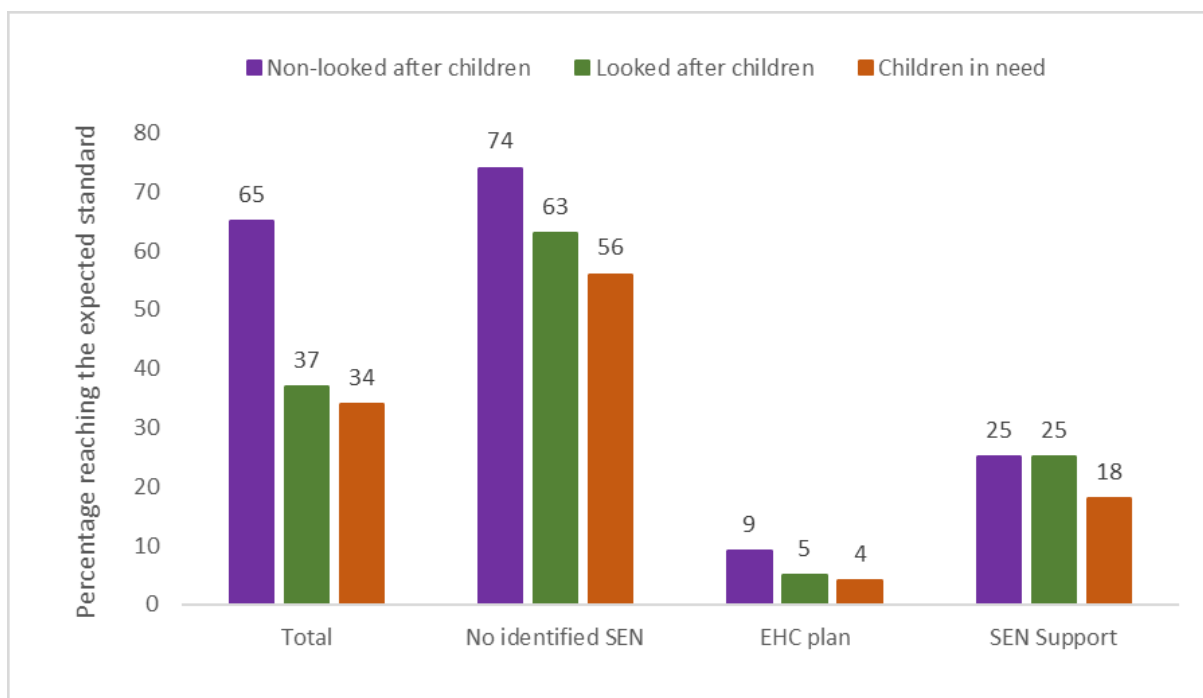
- 2.5 February half term & 4 Easter holiday booster days – subject specialist input
- PALAC and 1:1 tuition for LAC who needed to close the gaps in particular subjects
- Enrichment activities (see Appendix 2)
- primary/secondary transition training for foster carers
- PEP transition meetings for all Year 6 LAC with respective secondary schools
- Learning mentors' support with transitions and placement moves
- Lexia consultant and reading software available to all year 6 – to boost reading scores (BVS bulk purchased 50 licences for use at home or school)

- MBAM (“Managing behaviour with attachment in mind”) foster carers’ therapeutic group to support with understanding behaviours
- All children who do not reach the expected standard at KS2 are eligible for Year 7 Catch-Up funding in their first year at secondary school. BVS ensured that additional support was provided for Year 7 LAC who did not reach the expected standards; support/interventions are documented in their autumn term 2019 PEPs (personal education plans).

18.7. National LAC data and comparison with non LAC cohort: attainment at Key Stage 2, taken from DfE publication “Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, published 26th March 2020” (DfE)

18.8. In 2019, 37% of looked after children reached the expected standard in the headline measure reading, writing and maths. This was lower than the percentage reaching the expected standard in individual subjects which ranged from 49% in reading to 53% in grammar, punctuation and spelling.

18.9. Percentage of children achieving the expected standard in the headline reading, writing and maths measure at key stage 2, for looked after children, non-looked after children and children in need, by SEN, 2019, England.



18.10. Key Stage 4 Statutory Attainment (2018-2019)

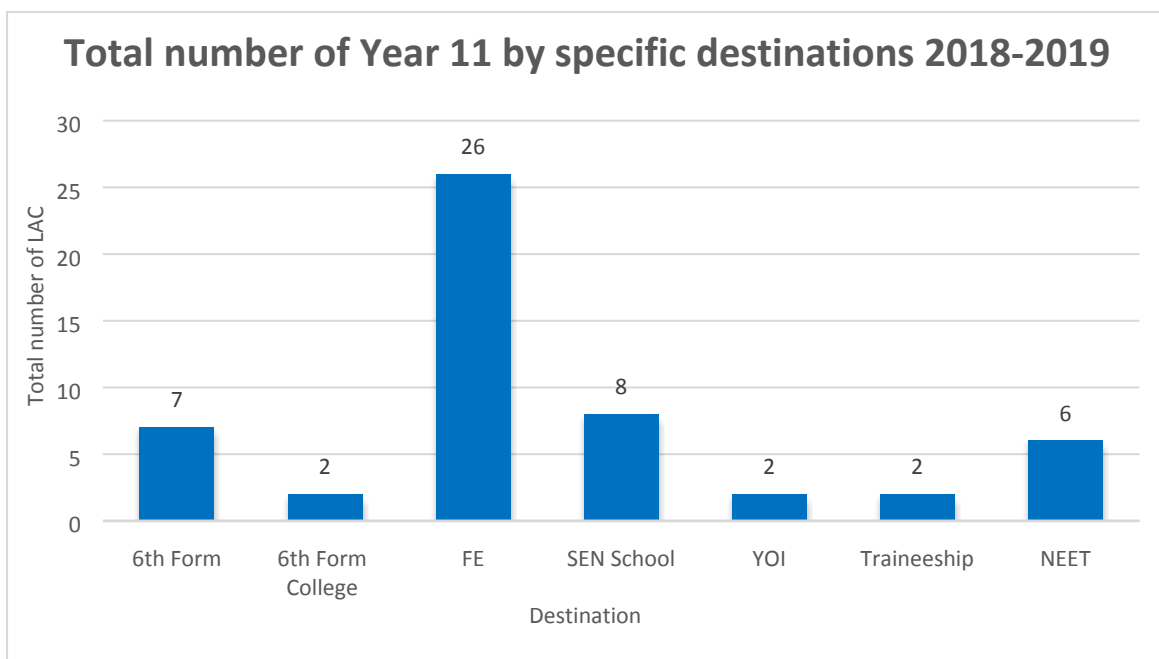
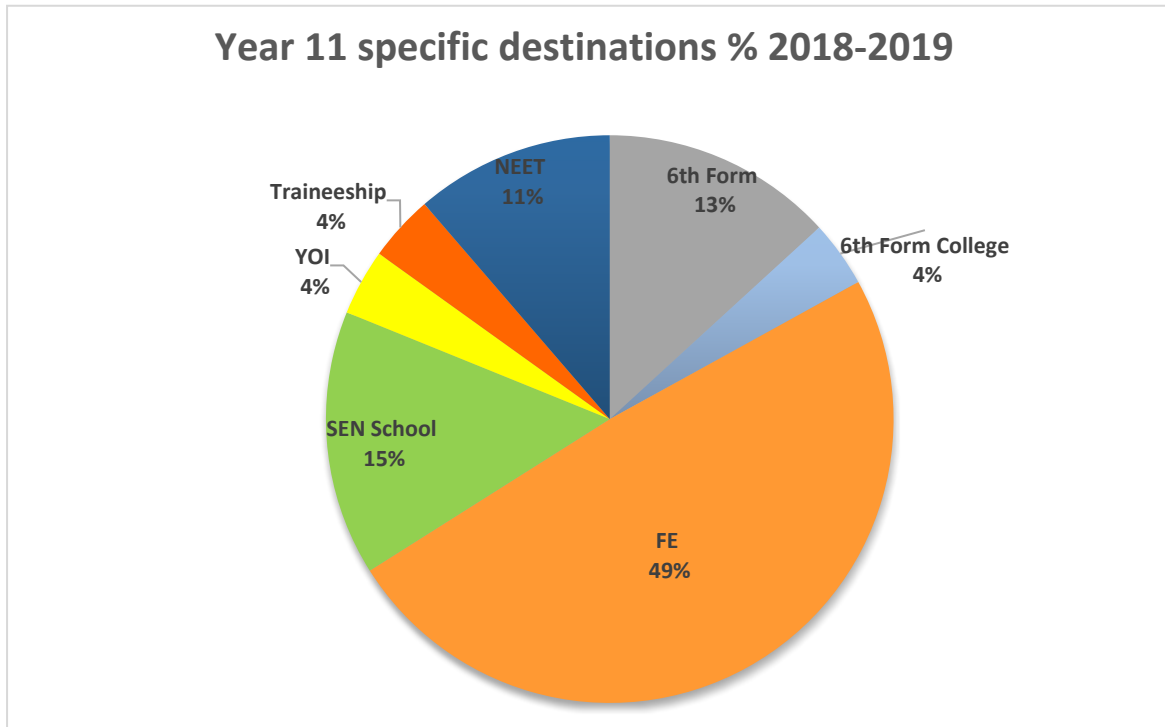
KEY STAGE 4- WHOLE COHORT RESULTS					
New grade levels	Previously known as:	2018/19*		2017/18*	
		LAC	%	LAC	%
5 passes at grades 4-9 incl Eng and Maths	5 A*-C (including English and Maths)	2/29	7%	4/37	11%
4 passes at grades 4-9 incl Eng and Maths	4 A*-C (including English and Maths)	2/29	7%	4/37	11%
5 GCSEs at grades 1-9	5 A-G	13/29	45%	16/37	43%
4 GCSEs at grades 1-9	4 A-G	13/29	45%	18/37	49%
1 GCSE at grade 1-9	1 A-G	19/29	66%	25/37	68%
Achieving 4-9 pass in English and Maths	Eng & Mat A*-C pass	4/29	14%	5/37	14%
<i>*The above data is for the whole LAC cohort minus SEN and ESOL (24 LAC)</i>					
KEY STAGE 4- ELIGIBLE COHORT RESULTS					
New grade levels	Previously known as:	2018/19*		2017/18*	
		LAC	%	LAC	%
5 passes at level 4-9 incl Eng and Maths	5 A*-C (including English and Maths)	2/26	8%	3/23	13%
4 passes at level 4-9 incl Eng and Maths	4 A*-C (including English and Maths)	2/26	8%	3/23	13%
5 GCSEs at grades 1-9	5 A-G	13/26	50%	12/23	52%
4 GCSEs at grades 1-9	4 A-G	13/26	50%	13/23	57%
1 GCSE at grade 1-9	1 A-G	19/26	73%	17/23	74%
Achieving 4-9 pass in English and Maths	Eng & Mat A*-C pass	4/26	15%	3/23	13%
<i>*The above data is for the whole LAC cohort minus SEN and ESOL (13 LAC)</i>					
KEY STAGE 4 - ELIGIBLE COHORT RESULTS, comparison with LAC national (data source: NCER)					
		Progress 8		9-5	
	Attainment 8	Avg. Score	Conf. Int	English & Maths	5+ Inc. English & Maths (pupils achieving A*-C/9-4 in 5 or more subjects including English and Maths)
National LAC	19.1	-1.28	±0.04	18%	14.0%
Brent Virtual School	12.2	-1.37	±0.56	15%	8%

18.11. The KS4 eligible cohort comprised 26 pupils:

- Brent LAC attainment at KS4 remains challenging. The newer measures of Attainment 8 and Progress 8 are a useful way of analysing the whole cohort and figures are presented above, comparing Brent with national LAC data.
- Attainment 8 for Brent VS was 12.2 overall, compared with 19.1 for LAC National.
- Progress 8 score for all Brent LAC (eligible cohort) was -1.37, compared with -1.28 for LAC National.
- The 2 KS4 students who achieved 5 Passes at 4-9 had all received either PALAC intervention or tuition throughout their final year (year 11).

- The percentage of students who achieved a pass at grade 4-9 in English and Maths GCSE was 15%. 7 pupils (27% of the cohort) achieved 5 GCSEs at level 3 or above. (Level 4 is the GCSE pass.)
- In previous years there has been a marked correlation between number of years in care and more positive outcomes at KS4. However, for this cohort, some LAC who had been in care for a number of years did achieve positive results, whereas others with comparable time in care, did not.

19. Destinations at Key stage 5



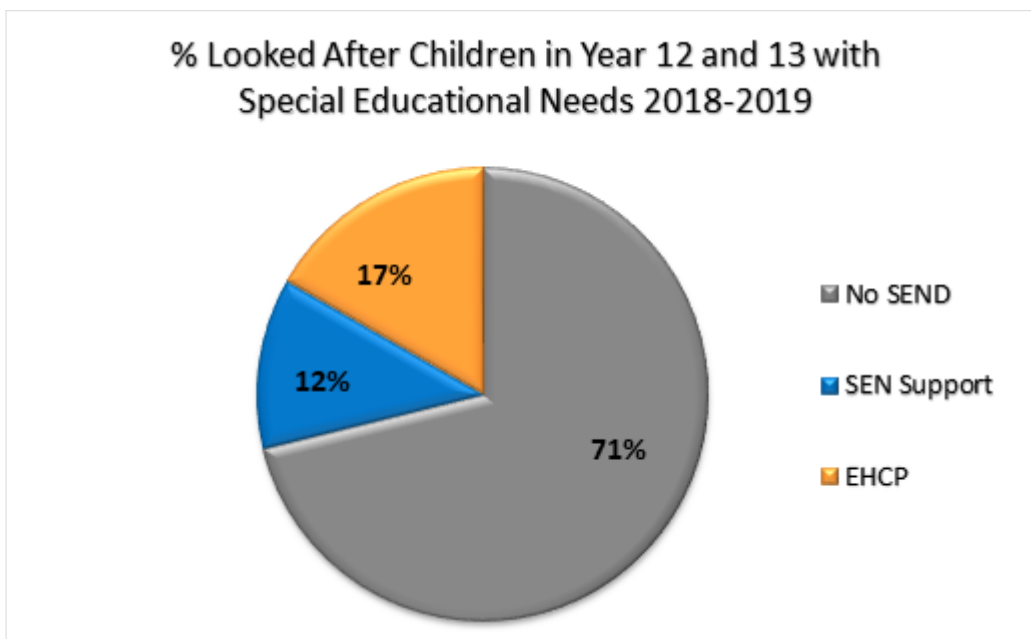
19.1. By July 2019, 89% (47 out of a total of 53) of the year 11 LAC cohort had a September Guarantee.

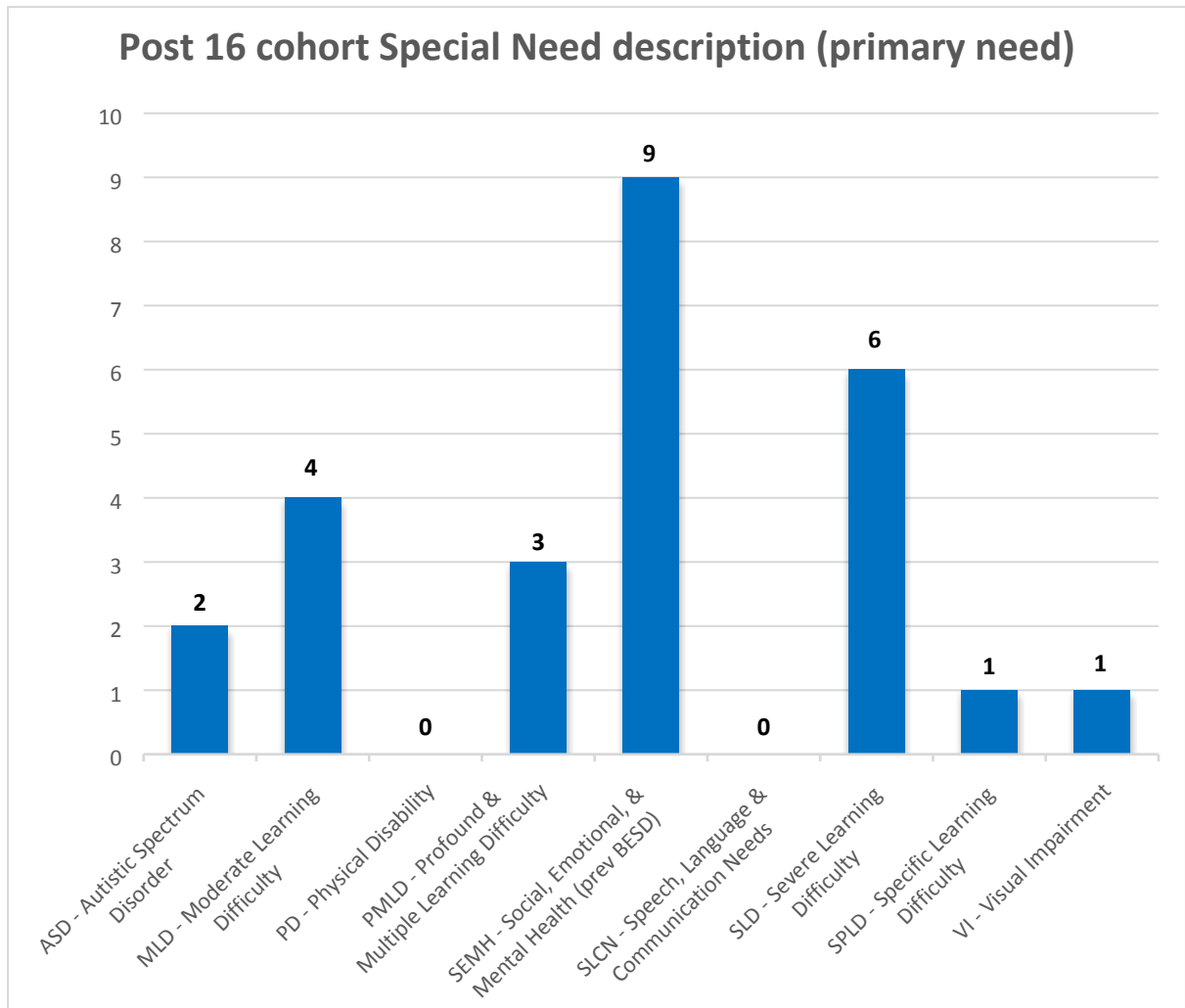
20. Support for Year 11 Brent LAC 2018-19

20.1. BVS Year 11 Life Coach, funded by PPG has maintained strong and effective partnerships with 6th Forms and FE providers to ensure Brent's Year 11 LAC were successfully supported with their transition into KS5. The BVS Life Coach is committed to implementing the BVS transition protocol to reduce the anxiety and stress attached to this life change. He attended several college open days alongside vulnerable students particularly those who did not have a September offer and were at risk of becoming NEET. He supported them with their enrolment and advocated on their behalf to implement their bursaries. The BVS Life Coach continued to work closely with the most vulnerable students into the first term of year 12 to ensure they settled into their courses and were able to sustain EET outcomes.

20.2. The BVS Life Coach was instrumental in supporting a young person placed in a residential unit in Wales back to London and into Further Education. Prior to moving back to London, the Life Coach met with the young person in Wales to explore his aspirations and discuss courses/possible FE destinations in London. On his return to London, the BVS Life Coach worked with the young person to enrol them on a Foundation programme at a local college. The Life Coach worked closely with the professional network to ensure the young person did not re-engage in offending behaviour with known gang associates. The BVS Life Coach supported the young person to re-establish meaningful relationships with siblings by organising and supervising family activities.

21. Post 16 with special educational needs





21.1. The high number of LAC pupils with EHCPs in this post 16 cohort, undoubtedly contributes to the challenge of securing and sustaining a college place, with longer term EET outcomes. Brent Virtual School continues to offer intensive support to the Post 16 cohort through to the end of Year 13; for some students this support may also continue into Year 14.

22. Post 16 EET/NEET

22.1. NEET figures decreased by 15% for the Year 12 cohort, and by 10% for Year 13, based on data from the previous academic year: the increased focus and additional staffing to support this post 16 cohort was evident in the increased EET figure and also in the number/frequency of completed PEPs for this age-group.

23. Exclusions

23.1. Exclusions (2018-2019)

Exclusion Data			
	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Total number of fixed term exclusions- days	169.5	122.5	313

Number of pupils excluded- fixed term	26	21	29
Total number of permanent exclusions	0	0	0

23.2. There were no permanent exclusions for Brent LAC in 2018 – 2019: this continued the trend of previous years. Intensive work with schools, social care colleagues and carers has ensured that BVS has supported students in a timely manner, such that alternative sanctions have been put in place, rather than permanent exclusions. The total number of days lost to fixed term exclusions has increased based on the previous year's figures, as has the number of students with a fixed term exclusion (FTE). The number of days lost due to FTEs increased by 47 days, mainly due to 3 LAC who presented with considerable difficulties over the academic year and together accrued a total of 55 days lost due to FTE. Two of these students attended Brent secondary schools and BVS worked closely with them to support the re-engagement of these students. This included but was not limited to meetings between BVS deputy and SLT, advisory teachers supporting with reintegration meetings, and Brent VS advisory teacher ensuring that one student's SEND was recognised as a key factor in her behaviour and as a result, the school adopting other more supportive approaches. Support was also in place for the LAC placed out of borough, which included mentoring, 1:1 tuition, and VS advocacy on behalf of the young person, to ensure that not all behaviours led to FTEs.

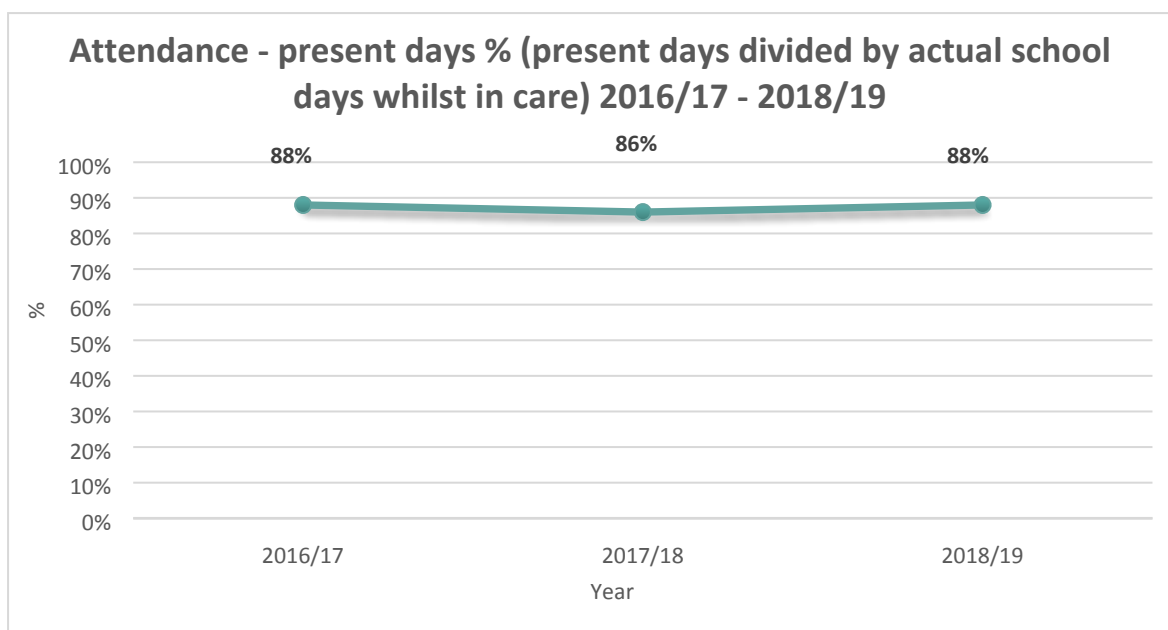
24. Monitoring Attendance

24.1. 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. 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 of absence, e.g. medical, exclusion, as well as alerting both the social worker and the carer.

24.2. 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.

24.3. A rigorous attendance improvement plan has been in place since the ILACS in May 2018 when attendance was highlighted as an area for improvement in an otherwise very positive Ofsted inspection. This plan has driven incremental change including immediate challenge to carers if they request to take holidays during school terms.

24.4. Although attendance for Brent LAC remains a challenge, particularly at KS4, there has been a significant 2% increase since the previous year for all statutory aged LAC. The lower percentage attendance rate at key stage 4 reflects the increased challenge presented by larger numbers of older children entering the care system late. In many cases poor school attendance is already ingrained, and it can take several months if not years for LAC to realise the need to engage with the education provision on offer, and to recognise the difference that exams can make to individual EET pathways. Persistent Absence data is discussed in a monthly meeting with the Head of LAC and Permanency. Where attendance is an issue, BVS works with social care colleagues to address underlying issues and if required, uses Pupil Premium funding for targeted educational mentoring.



25. PEP completion

25.1. PEP completion rates remained at 96% throughout the academic year 2018 -2019 for the statutory cohort. PEP completion and quality assurance is a statutory requirement for all virtual schools and they are one of the main tools for monitoring attainment, progress and attendance. All statutory children have three PEPs throughout the year following the three academic terms. Where a child comes into care during the academic year a PEP is arranged within the first 10 days of them becoming LAC.

25.2. Brent Virtual School undertakes PEP audits throughout the year, which have a range of foci such as SEND or post-16. PEPs are moderated termly by the BVS team and externally by other VS teams to check for consistency and to allow for learning and development. PEP audits are also conducted termly, with a range of senior managers, including Director of Children's Services. Learning is shared with all LAC advisory teachers. The use of PEP audit notes on Welfare Call has been improved as a result of PEP audits.

26. Training and Advice

26.1. The Virtual School staff provide a comprehensive training programme to a range of professionals working with vulnerable students including:

- Designated Teachers (termly forums and annual conference run in conjunction with KCA)
- Safeguarding Teams within schools
- School Governors
- Social Workers, and where required, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)
- Foster Carers

Appendix 1 contains full training details.

27. Priorities for 2019-2020:

- Continue work with John Lyons foundation and other charities/groups to offer a full and varied enrichment offer to all Brent LAC, including those who are placed outside of Greater London.
- Continue to work to raise LAC school attendance, particularly at KS4.

- Build relationships with local schools and utilise these to offer more local tuition with trained teachers at both Key stage 2 and Key stage 4.
- Work collaboratively and creatively with IofE colleagues on the PALAC programme to boost attainment at KS4.
- Continue with “re-takes” programme for Year 12: as Corporate Parents, to ensure LAC have the chance to re-sit GCSEs where they have just missed the pass mark. (Build bank of reliable, quality assured tutors.)
- Continue work with post-16 students to ensure improvement in PEP completion and further reduction in NEET figure.
- PEP quality: ensure the findings of PEP audits build improved quality of PEPs; ensure PEP personal targets are achievable for all LAC.

Appendix 1	Training Report 2018-19			
Training	Objective (s)	Date	No. of participants	Evaluation/ Impact / Participant Comments
Foster Carer Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitions • Supporting with revision and exams 	<u>Transitions</u> Awareness of strategies to support young people around key school transitions. Understanding of transitions and barriers faced by looked after children. <u>Supporting with Revision and Exams</u> Getting motivated to revise Getting organized Tips for boosting recall Managing exam stress Using Mind Mapping	4 April 2019 3 June 2019	6 5	Carers commented on the fact that it was helpful to know what options young people have after 18 and generally finding out about the different types of transitions. One carer noted the 'practical tips on moving to secondary' was particularly helpful for her.
AMHS Foster Carer Group x2 six weekly groups	Help carers support each other and understand attachment Develop ways of looking at the way their young people behave and try out new ways of supporting them	1 Nov 2018 28 Feb 2019	6 6	Reflective feedback from carers: "The course has given me the tools to help and understand my young person". "Relaxed atmosphere, feel at ease to talk and share experiences". "I think this course would have been helpful for me earlier" "How to turn moaning into reflection, need facilitator to help me to do that". "It's refreshing to be able to talk about our own children, safe space to bring children to light".

<p>Foster Carer EP Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADHD • Dyslexia and Dyscalculia 	<p><u>ADHD</u></p> <p>What is ADHD? What difficulties are associated with ADHD? How is a diagnosis made? What do researchers say about ADHD? How can we help pupils with ADHD?</p> <p><u>Dyslexia & Dyscalculia</u></p> <p>The national picture and improving literacy levels Is dyslexia a myth? Definitions of dyslexia Literacy difficulties and associated difficulties Factors linked to reading problems What approaches help? How are primary school children doing in maths? What is dyscalculia? Assessment and what helps?</p>	<p>19 Oct 2018</p> <p>17 June 2019</p>	<p>5</p> <p>6</p>	<p>Reflective feedback from carers:</p> <p>“all of the presentations were interesting”.</p> <p>“it was very informative, we covered a great deal of information...I learnt that dyslexia is not the same for everyone it affects, there can be different levels of it”.</p> <p>“the training helped to clear up some misconceptions I had”.</p> <p>“lots of links given to find out further help and information”.</p>
<p>Governors’ Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting positive outcomes for disadvantaged groups • Effective use of pupil premium 	<p><u>Promoting positive outcomes for disadvantaged groups</u></p> <p>Understand the work of the Virtual School; develop an appreciation of the local context of children in care and the pupil profile of the Brent Virtual School.</p> <p>Understand the governing board’s statutory responsibilities for Children in Care and the role of the Designated Governor and Designated Teacher</p>	<p>31 Jan 2019</p> <p>7 March 2019</p> <p>5 June 2019</p>	<p>12</p> <p>8</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Reflective feedback from governors and future actions :</p> <p>“First thing that I will do is find out who is the designated teacher for LAC students in my school and to discuss about the help offered to the LAC students”.</p> <p>“Challenge the school to evidence how they spend PP on pupils”.</p> <p>“After this course I found out about the Virtual School and about their role in a LAC student’s life. I will attend to as much training they offer to make sure that these pupils receive equal and fair treatment in my school”.</p> <p>“Check funding is being appropriately spent. Review that we are identifying all looked after and post looked after children”.</p>

	<p>Consider how school policies, practices and culture should reflect the needs of vulnerable groups</p> <p><u>Effective use of pupil premium</u></p> <p>To understand what the pupil premium is for, and who is eligible for it</p> <p>Develop awareness of good practice around the effective use of the Pupil Premium and Personal Education Plans in supporting Children in Care</p> <p>Consider the range of ways that pupil premium funding can be used effectively to tackle gaps in attainment and support pupils from low-income families and other target groups.</p>			<p>“Ensure that reporting on Looked After Children to Governors will be more explicit and regular”.</p> <p>“Get to know who the LAC children are so that I can track their achievement”.</p> <p>“I feel the course was very informative and interesting. Would seem more schools should be represented and in attendance”.</p>
<p>CA Attachment Awareness in Practice: in house school training with follow up consultancy and practical workshops and access to E-learning</p>	<p>To offer schools a day to introduce the key concepts and theory of an ‘attachment-aware school.’ This will be an introduction to the core knowledge base around attachment, trauma and resilience.</p> <p>Staff will gain a good understanding of the importance of adult relationships to promote healthy brain development and the (likely) impact when these needs are not met.</p> <p>Follow up consultancy session to explore how learning from the training has been taken into practice and the impact of this.</p>	<p>Dec 2018 - May 2019</p>	<p>5 schools took part (4 of which were Brent schools)</p>	<p>School 1</p> <p>“very well received by staff and I have had some excellent feedback”.</p> <p>School 2</p> <p>“The session on Trauma and Attachment provided an invaluable insight into understanding the impact of adverse childhood experiences on a child's emotional, social, behavioural and physical well-being. Staff developed awareness on how these experiences can influence a child's behaviour in everyday situations, and the importance of self-regulation in helping a child manage their emotions at difficult times. The session has enabled us to consider taking a different approach when a child is showing signs of distress, and to encourage them to remain calm and collected using different methods for self-regulation”.</p>

	<p>The consultancy session would be followed by a twilight workshop for all staff to introduce Emotion Coaching</p> <p>A second session of consultancy offered, followed by a second workshop introducing the needs and interventions practice tool. This tool helps practitioners to re-assess the needs of children in relation to trauma and recovery from trauma.</p> <p>Alongside the face-to-face training, extra resources will be available to all participants to help embed the learning in practice, including modules of e-learning relevant to each of the training sessions.</p>			<p>School 3</p> <p>“Thank you for your support from the many colleagues that have come to tell me how useful they found it”.</p> <p>School 4</p> <p>“Staff were very positive about it today. I would like to share any resources that think would be useful for staff who were either there or couldn’t be present”.</p> <p>School 5</p> <p>“The training was well paced, well-pitched and managed in such a way that staff had opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations to relate the training theory to their hands on experiences, daily, in class working with children in an infant school setting”.</p>
<p>PCA Designated Teacher Training Programme</p>	<p>Developing expert practice for staff working with vulnerable and traumatised children and young people.</p> <p>Blended programme – online and face-to-face comprising of 4 face to face training days focusing on trauma and recovery, foetal exposure to alcohol, emotion coaching, narrative work, maladaptive and sexualised behaviours.</p>	<p>11 Oct 2018 7 Feb 2019 16 May 2019 11 July 2019</p>	<p>15 15 24 21</p>	<p>Reflective feedback from school staff:</p> <p>“Definitely an insightful session”</p> <p>“Fantastic content. Great use of real-life examples”</p> <p>“Kate is a very good trainer, very informative and engaging”</p> <p>“Inspirational training-I wish all schools had this training as standard”</p> <p>“Lots of thought-provoking exercises that will be beneficial for our staff to complete”.</p> <p>“Helped to shape my understanding of the behaviour of some of our students and how best to frame my approach to situations”.</p> <p>“Reinforcing to stretched school staff the importance of mindfulness and ensuring students are taken as individuals, which I think can be forgotten in a hectic school environment”.</p>

<p>DT Focus Group</p>	<p>Opportunity for peer reflection and group supervision using a Solutions Circles approach to discuss the challenges of working as a DT and to raise any specific issues.</p> <p>To encourage the sharing of experiences and form peer networks amongst DTs.</p>	<p>18 Oct 2018 3 Dec 2018 11 Feb 2019</p>	<p>Small group of 4 DTs</p>	<p>Feedback from the group of DTs was that the focus group was very helpful and a useful forum for reflection and discussion. Only drawback noted was that the group could have wider school representation.</p>
<p>AC Education Mental Health Awareness Training Programme</p>	<p>Further understand language around mental health.</p> <p>Introduction to supporting our young people's mental health needs.</p> <p>Introduction to Strategic guidance for MHWB.</p> <p>Deepen understanding of acute mental health needs.</p> <p>Be able to apply practical tools in response to arising needs Understand referral and screening processes.</p>	<p>28 Sept 2018 23 Nov 2018 18 Jan 2019</p>	<p>13 33 28</p>	<p>Reflective feedback from attendees:</p> <p>"Training was helpful but I think we need more practical tools for the classroom".</p> <p>"Each individual has different reasons to act the way they do. I would love to see more real cases to help us understand why that is happening".</p> <p>"Gave me strategies and language to talk more confidently about mental health and mental illness".</p> <p>"Brilliant training-the best I have had on mental health. Very empowering"</p> <p>"With mental health on the rise this is vital information...in supporting our future children".</p> <p>"Safety plan – one adult can make a difference".</p> <p>"I will now be more prepared and confident with students who approach me and tell me about their problems".</p>

<p>Promoting the Achievement of LAC (PALAC) Training - Dr Vivian Hill, Institute of Education</p>	<p>An understanding of the need for raising attainment for LAC.</p> <p>An understanding of how to implement and manage the Year 6/11 tutoring /mentoring sessions.</p> <p>An opportunity to consider how study skills/revision techniques fit.</p>	<p>30 Oct 2018</p>	<p>12 participants with 9 schools represented</p>	<p>Feedback from the school staff in attendance was positive in light of the very interesting evidenced-based presentation from IoE. Staff expressed an interest in taking back the findings to their school settings to explore implementation for their LAC.</p>
<p>Social Worker EPEP training</p>	<p>Introduction to the Virtual School.</p> <p>EPEP process and completion.</p> <p>Navigating the Welfare Call PEP system.</p>	<p>Sept 2018 – July 2019</p>	<p>Up to 15</p>	<p>Training has been delivered mainly to new social workers or those who have not previously had training. Feedback has been positive e.g.:</p> <p>“I feel a bit more confident going into PEP meetings”.</p> <p>“Thank you this was useful”.</p>

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Enrichment activity	Objective (s)	Date	No. of LAC	Attendees	Evaluation/pupil/carers voice/Impact
<p>HEBB (Four Boroughs) STEM Discover Summer Camp Brunel University 5-day Residential</p> <p>STEM Discovery ran as a pilot summer programme for Looked After Children at Brunel University London.</p> <p>The summer camp was designed to provide academic experiences to facilitate enthusiasm for STEM and experience of University.</p>	<p>To promote life at University and further education.</p> <p>To further interest and experience of careers in science, technology and engineering.</p> <p>Each day had a different academic focus. Day 1: Medical Discovery. Day 2: Build a rocket. Day 3: Make a robot and write a code. Day 4: CSI Investigation and DNA exploration.</p>	<p>13th-17th August 2018.</p>	<p>5 LAC</p>	<p>2 x Year 9 2 x Year 10 1 x Year 11</p>	<p><i>“My favourite part was the DNA extraction because it was interesting to see the DNA strands of strawberries”.</i></p> <p><i>“... performing CPR on the fake model because it was interesting and I could benefit in real life”.</i></p> <p><i>“All of it is interesting.....fun, eventful and a good opportunity to meet people”</i></p> <p><i>“A fun, friendly gelling experience that helps give an understanding of life at uni”.</i></p> <p>Impact: In general, the young people felt that it was interesting and taught them about life at Uni. All the young people who attended are making</p>

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					academic progress and have the potential to go on to University or college.
<p>Jamie’s Farm residential (5 days) in Monmouthshire (Wales)</p> <p>The focus on the farm is to explore and improve the SEMH of the young people as they experience life on the farm.</p> <p>Opportunities to feed and care for the animals and take part in a range of activities such as lambing, horse work, horticulture, farm maintenance, cooking, etc.</p> <p>The trip also demands a “digital detox” negotiated in advance with the pupils – no phones or technology throughout the week.</p>	<p>To provide transition support for children who had recently moved up to Secondary School.</p> <p>To help develop the self – esteem and confidence of young people through working hard in a new and alien environment.</p> <p>For the young people to identify their achievements and the strength in themselves and in others.</p> <p>To consider their current life styles and reflect, on where they are and what they want next.</p> <p>To enjoy and explore beautiful countryside, build experiences and new relationships without the access to digital technology, junk food or drugs.</p>	<p>22nd Oct- 26th Oct 2018</p>	<p>9 LAC</p> <p>Target Group: Young people who had just moved into Year 7. The other young people were targeted as they had an EHCP plan or were finding relationships and self - regulation a bit challenging.</p>	<p>5 x Year 7 2 x Year 8 1 x Year 9 1 x Year 10</p> <p>Two of the young people had EHCPs. Five of the young people were on SEN Support.</p>	<p>Young people’s views: “After my week on the farm, I want to remain peaceful and calm by being around people who make me feel positive and spend time outdoors in parks.”</p> <p>“I want to remember that on the farm, I am peaceful, brave and more sociable.”</p> <p>“I want to explore the world more, stay peaceful (by avoiding drama) and eat proper food.”</p> <p>Teacher feedback: It was a very powerful experience. This has had a lasting impact on our young peoples’ lives.</p> <p>Impact: Jamie’s Farm offered a challenging and nurturing experience, which helped to build all the young peoples’ resilience, self-awareness and self-esteem. The experience supported the Year 7 attendees to feel connected and confident after their transition into Secondary School. Five of the children were in Year 7. 90% of these children had a positive time in Year 7 and made friends, made progress, achieved good attendance and avoided FXT exclusions. All the children who attended the residential look back on it fondly and feel that it had a significant impact on them.</p>

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<p>Ice-Skating at Somerset House: Jamie's Farm follow up Trip</p> <p>The young people were reunited with the friends they made on the farm.</p> <p>As a group we travelled into the centre of London, walked by the river and skated on the open-air ice rink.</p>	<p>To experience skating on ice and learn a new skill.</p> <p>To take risks, ask for help and learn new skills when they are in London.</p> <p>To remind them of the fears and difficulties they overcame on the farm.</p> <p>To promote the friendships made and remind the young people that they have support.</p>	<p>28th December 2018</p>	<p>9 LAC The children who had attended Jamie's Farm residential during October.</p>	<p>5 LAC 1 young person with an EHCP.</p>	<p>Young People's Views: "It was really nice to see everyone again". "Pretty scary and I did let go of the rail". "I feel very proud of myself so that's why I'm giving it a 10". "I will never forgive you, it was so scary. I could do it in the end".</p> <p>Impact: Meeting up provided an opportunity to reflect on the farm and remind themselves that they can be brave and overcome difficulties. It was harder to get the young people to reflect or open up on how they were getting on since being back but they reminded each other of things that happened to each other on the farm.</p>
<p>Debate Mate Middle Temple SEBB (Four Boroughs)</p> <p>7 Young people visited Middle Temple Courts and learnt specific debating skills from the Debate Mate Mentors. They then had to form their own arguments within a group. At the end of the day there was a final debate.</p>	<p>To be able to talk in public and to present their ideas in a convincing way.</p> <p>To be inspired by Middle Temple's prestigious courts as a venue and learn from the Debate Mate Mentors and imagine barristers arguing in the space.</p> <p>To develop talking skills, learn how to present and structure an argument and how to debate with other young people.</p> <p>To be able to add this experience onto their CV and into their Personal Statement should they apply for university.</p>	<p>19th January 2019</p>	<p>2 LAC</p>	<p>Year 12 Year 13</p>	<p>Young People Feedback: "It was a great place, it was fun. I liked being allowed to argue back". "It was good meeting people from other boroughs. I knew some of them".</p> <p>Mentors from Debate Mate: "The students were very keen to learn and eagerly participated in all activities. I also had the chance to speak to some students individually, and they told me that they would love to do more debating, despite initially thinking that debating was reserved for private schools, lawyers and politicians".</p> <p>Impact: One of the young people is waiting for his A level results and hoping to go abroad to complete a scholarship. This experience continued to inspire the other young person to want to become a lawyer.</p>

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<p>Stage Xchange: Transitions Project HEBB (four boroughs).</p> <p>Stage Xchange provided four days of drama based on Transition and attended workshops at the Wembley Learning Zone.</p> <p>The young people created their own piece which they performed for their carers on the final afternoon based around the idea of Transition.</p> <p>Page 72</p>	<p>Stage Xchange aims to support young people to develop soft skills such as communication, confidence and creativity through a series of drama workshops.</p> <p>To learn how to work together through drama games, learn drama skills and devise a play.</p> <p>The aim was to use drama to help the young people explore issues around the challenges of transition, fitting in and negotiating friendships etc.</p>	<p>18th-21st February 2019</p>	<p>2 LAC</p>	<p>2 x Year 7 Attended all</p>	<p>Young People: “I loved it. It was great! The end show was a bit confusing”.</p> <p><i>Teacher: “I think they all have made exceptional progress.”</i></p> <p>Impact: The experience impacted the young peoples’ confidence and understanding of communicating feelings and ideas through performance.</p> <p>One of the young people has since joined a weekly drama group and recently performed in a play at The Kiln Theatre. The young person was diagnosed as having autism and this experience helped her to discover a new way to communicate. The other young person recently devised her own dance piece and performed during our LAC celebration awards.</p>
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<p>New Directions- Care Collective Project for Care Leavers HEBB (Four Boroughs) A New Direction Project to create cultural capital specifically for care leavers and children looked after from Barnet, Brent, Ealing and Harrow. The young people will be offered a wide range of activities, from animation to ceramics, fashion to media, music to design.</p>	<p>To reflect on their experience being a LAC and decide what might help others on the journey</p> <p>To identify the specific emotional and creative needs of LAC.</p> <p>Design and develop a manifesto for LAC that should be shared with all professionals.</p> <p>Design and run an enrichment programme (We Belong) to run for LAC across the four boroughs.</p>	<p>27/2/19 9/3/19 16/3/19 30/3/19 6/4/19</p>	<p>2 LAC</p>	<p>2 x Care Leavers</p>	<p>Impact: The We Belong Manifesto was shared with professionals working with LAC, so that their voices can be heard.</p> <p>The group formed a powerful enrichment programme that some of our Brent LAC have participated and enjoyed this year.</p> <p>One of these care leavers was responsible for creating the We Belong Poster that has been displayed across the four boroughs.</p> <p>A New Direction paid for one of the YP's childcare so they could attend.</p>
<p>Arvon Poetry Saturday Work Shops Day 1 with Published Poet Rachel Long Day 2 with Dean Attar Carers and young people come together to explore poetry and form a relationship with the poets who will be attending Arvon Poetry Residential at Easter.</p> <p>Arvon Poetry Residential in Yorkshire (5 days) Lumb Bank (old home of Ted Hughes).</p> <p>Poets ran morning Poetry Sessions with Brent staff</p>	<p>To gain an understanding of different types of poetry and develop confidence in sharing ideas within the group.</p> <p>To improve and promote engagement in writing within the group.</p> <p>For young people and carers to become familiar and feel safe with adults and staff, who will be attending at Arvon residential.</p> <p>To be inspired by professional poets and to</p>	<p>22/02/2019 23/03/2019 08/04/2019</p>	<p>Target group: Year 6/ Year 7 who might need a boost in their confidence or motivation around writing. Young people who also enjoyed writing. Day 1: 6 LAC Day 2: 5 LAC</p> <p>Residential Group 9 LAC</p>	<p>3 x Year 7 2x Year 6 1x Year 8</p> <p>2 x Year 6 2 x Year 7 1 x Year 8</p> <p>1x Year 5 3 x Year 6 3x year 7 2 x Year 8 2 LAC with EHCP 3 with diagnosis of dyslexia</p>	<p>The YPs views were more mixed, about the Poetry Workshops. They found some of the activities engaging but some felt it was like going to school on a Saturday.</p> <p>Pupils Views on the Arvon Residential: "I learnt how to cook and how to change your dream into a poem". "I learnt to look at things with a new perspective. I don't have a favourite part, I liked all of it."</p> <p>Teachers View of Impact: "He seems to be holding himself straighter and with a less infantile manner. He now seems to be able to offer eye contact. Seems to be able to take instruction without arguing back as much. Smiling, calm, confident".</p>

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<p>supporting. BVS provided activities for the afternoon such as walking, football, playgrounds, afternoon art work, night walk and Easter Egg Hunts.</p>	<p>start to develop ideas around belonging and identity.</p> <p>To express themselves in writing in a safe environment and to develop reading and writing confidence and skill.</p>				<p>Impact: 9/9 scored the trip 8 or more. 8/9 of the children gave themselves higher ratings for their writing at the end of the trip. Those children who scored themselves lower than 7 in writing all felt they had good ideas. 3 of the YP had a diagnosis of dyslexia and felt more confident about their ability to express their ideas through words and writing.</p> <p>One poem (haiku influenced) was published by the relevant foster agency and this had a positive impact on the YP: “I come from ribs, I come from storytellers, I come from Black panther...”</p> <p>Another YP was identified as having a talent for writing and encouraged to enter competitions.</p>
<p>Romeo and Juliet at The Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre</p> <p>Watch a live theatrical outdoor production of Romeo and Juliet in the historically evocative Globe theatre.</p>	<p>To watch a historical play come to life from script to stage and to deepen young peoples’ understanding of the language, meaning and structure of the play.</p> <p>To experience watching live performance in famous London setting and being part of a large audience.</p> <p>To imagine what it may have been like to watch plays during Shakespeare’s time.</p>	<p>05/03/2019</p>	<p>6 LAC Targeted group: Year 10s and 11s initially as they may be studying the play as part of their GCSEs, or young people who were interested in theatre.</p>	<p>1 x Year 8 2 x Year 9 1x Year 10 2 x Year11</p> <p>2 X EHCP</p>	<p>Impact: Mixed review from young people, in terms of their enjoyment of watching the play.</p> <p>But all young people enjoyed recalling and comparing their previous experience of Romeo and Juliet films, and adaptations.</p> <p>Only two of the YP had ever been to the theatre prior to their visit. 5/6 YP have since either attended the theatre to watch a play or have read a play in its printed form as they realised theatre, even Shakespeare, could be accessible to them.</p> <p>Longer term - the play will make more sense, and have more value in the future, when they study Shakespeare for GCSE.</p>

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<p>Dolly's Imagination Library Launch Under Fives Tea Party at Wembley Learning Zone</p> <p>Children's tea party to launch Dolly's Imagination Library.</p>	<p>To encourage Brent Carers to attend events and encourage participation in future events</p> <p>For Carers to be introduced to Dolly's Imagination Library.</p> <p>For Carers to know why it is important to read and enjoy books with their young children.</p> <p>To understand the process of Dolly's Imagination Library know that they will receive a children's book once a month for children under 5 years old.</p>	<p>29/05/2019</p>		<p>Target Group: Under Fives</p>	<p>Carers' feedback: "Wonderful staff. (Virtual school team.) Great entertainment for the kids".</p> <p>Impact: Motivated, inspired and gave confidence to carers so they engage in regular reading with their young children for fun.</p> <p>100% of the children enjoyed the activities. 90% of the carers said they would come to future events for their children.</p> <p>Pupil Premium plus (DfE grant), is used to fund literacy interventions such as regular subscriptions of children's magazines across the LAC cohort (see magazine subscriptions below). 100% of the Early Years cohort (although the cohort changes frequently) received a monthly book from Dolly's Imagination Library, fortnightly Story Time Magazine and children in reception received an additional Letter Box Parcel from May 2019 – October 2020 (two books and a maths game in each parcel).</p> <p>Feedback from carers suggested that the venue was hard to find. Action: to make a map with instructions for Wembley Learning Zone.</p>
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<p>Dinosaur World Live Troubadour Theatre</p> <p>Children meet life-size dinosaurs in a stage production of Dinosaur World Live at the Troubadour Theatre, Wembley Park.</p> <p align="center">Page 76</p>	<p>To experience visiting a theatre (many of these children had never been to a show before).</p> <p>To understand what it is like to be in an audience and to begin to participate or respond to performances.</p> <p>To meet different dinosaurs and learn technical language about their different features.</p> <p>To give personal feedback on a show and recount different parts of their experience.</p>	<p>21st July 2019</p>	<p>12 LAC</p> <p>Target Group: 4 - 8 year olds and their carers and families</p>	<p>3 x Nursery 3x Reception 2 x Year 1 1 x Year 2 1 x Year 3 1 x Year 1 x Year 6</p>	<p>YP's View: Nursery child said he was not scared. "I love the dinosaurs!" "I felt a bit shy" but said she was proud that she walked on stage with a dinosaur. The Year 6 boy wrote, "It was amazing. I want to see it again. It was the best ever. I never saw this before. It was good acting, scary dinosaurs. Loud roars!"</p> <p>Carer: "Thank you. I've never been to a show before. They love it!"</p> <p>Impact: The experience of going to the theatre. All the children really enjoyed the experience of going to a theatre and seeing a play. 85% of the children had never been to a theatre before. Some of our carers had not been to a theatre before and were unfamiliar with the process. The experience will give them the confidence to go again in the future. One of Brent LAC "walked with a dinosaur on stage". She now mentions that she is brave in every PEP meeting.</p>
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<p>Jamie's Farm Post 16 and UMC Residential a(5 days) The focus on the farm is to explore and improve the SEMH of the young people as they experience life on the farm.</p> <p>The young people stayed on a working farm, where they had opportunities to feed and care for the animals and take part in a range of activities such as lambing, horse work, horticulture, farm maintenance, cooking, etc.</p>	<p>To offer support and new opportunities and experiences for YP who have encountered significant loss, danger and harmful journeys.</p> <p>For the young people to build relationships, identify their achievements and the strength in themselves and in others.</p> <p>For the young people to experience a life swap for a week and encounter different parts of England.</p> <p>To consider their current life styles and reflect, on where they are and what they want next.</p> <p>To enjoy and explore beautiful countryside, build experiences.</p>	<p>8th-12th July 2019</p>	<p>9 LAC Target Group: UASC and Post 16</p>	<p>2 x Year 11 6 x Year 12 1 x Year 13</p>	<p>Young peoples' views:</p> <p>"When I left my country it was hell. I've been feeling down but at the top of the mountain was like being in heaven. Everything here is very good."</p> <p>"I'm so used to giving up when things get challenging. Some things were so challenging and I felt to give up but I didn't, I just kept on trying. Now I know I can do things."</p> <p>Impact: For 100% of young people the experience had a significant impact on their wellbeing. The young people felt it impacted how they saw themselves and their ability to reflect on their experiences and overcome challenges. 90% of the young people are still in education and attend a college.</p>
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<p align="center">Page 78</p> <p>Cricket Coaching 2 Days with Middlesex Cricketers (UMC) Park in Wembley</p>	<p>To be inspired by and learn techniques from Professional Middlesex Cricketers.</p> <p>To experience having a picnic in the park.</p> <p>To build relationships with other UASC, and share common experiences, hopes and dreams around cricket.</p>	<p>6th and 7th August</p>	<p>Target Group: UASC and young people who had an interest in cricket.</p> <p>13 LAC (first morning)</p>	<p>1 x Year 7 3 x Year 8 2 x Year 9 4 x Year 11 3 x Year 12</p>	<p>Young Peoples View: The young people enjoyed the first mornings session with the coaches but then they became less enthusiastic after lunch. They wanted to be wearing proper cricket clothing “Why can’t we have a hard ball?”</p> <p>On the second day we did not have. A good turn out and we ended the session early due to rain.</p> <p>Impact: On the second day the young people had a good conversation with Middlesex Cricketers about how you become a professional cricketer and the danger of wasting life chances.” 80% of the young people continue to watch and/or play cricket for their school, or a local team. Two of the YP have since joined a cricket club.</p> <p>Feedback: In future, plan cricket events at cricket grounds with professional equipment.</p>
<p>Equine Therapy Summer Camp Daily sessions (5 days) Sessions supported by a psychologist</p> <p>Group emotional wellbeing sessions run through clear communication, interaction, caring for and the training of horses. Therapeutic work with horses helps children to</p>	<p>Learn how to work with horses, using understanding and knowledge of themselves.</p> <p>Learn about self –regulation and communication when relating to other sensitive beings (horses).</p> <p>To learn the practical skills and talks associated with looking after an animal.</p>	<p>29th July -2nd August 2019</p>	<p>3 LAC Target Group: Children who are in need of SEMH support.</p>	<p>1 x Year 8 (EHCP) 1 x Year 7 1x Year 4</p>	<p>Young Peoples’ Views: All the young people felt they had learnt about themselves during the week. “I can be not scared”. “I can be more confident”. “I can do things on my own”. “I can be a good team worker” “That I can be more open to people.” “When I first came I felt excited and a bit scared”</p> <p>Impact: All the young people enjoyed the sessions and learnt about themselves through the horses. All</p>

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<p>reflect on their own strengths, sensitivity, self-regulation and communication needs.</p> <p align="center">Page 79</p>	<p>To develop confidence and key communication skills through leading a horse over an obstacle course.</p> <p>To take on challenges and take risks in a safe environment.</p> <p>To build new friendships and work as a team.</p>				<p>Young people made good progress (increased score) with the targets they set themselves during their first session.</p> <p>One of the young people has poor attendance and is very reluctant to join in BVS activities. On the first day, he did not want to get on the minibus. He attended every day after this and said he had really enjoyed it.</p> <p>One of the young people has an EHCP and can often refuse to talk. This experience was very empowering and she could demonstrate her strength and confidence in this environment without having to speak and was able to be a leader.</p> <p>80% of the YP who attended these sessions reported to have a positive and settled autumn term. School report in autumn term for young person with EHCP, noted: she had spoken about the horses on return to school. In terms of social and emotional development – she was calmer, appeared more confident and was speaking more in class.</p>
<p>Yearly Enrichment Offer Letterbox Club Each child receives their own colourful parcel of two books, a maths game, stationery and other high-quality education materials once a month for six months of each calendar year.</p> <p>Children receive their parcels monthly from May to October.</p> <p>The LAC primary advisory teacher edits and writes a letter to the young people</p>	<p>To motivate young children to love reading and engage with a wide range of books and maths games.</p> <p>To practise key reading skills through sharing and talking about their book.</p> <p>Develop a close and lasting relationship with their carers through the process of sharing and talking about books.</p> <p>To provide an opportunity to engage in maths through</p>	<p>May 2018- October 2019</p>	<p>Around 45 children depending on the number of siblings.</p>	<p>Reception Year 1, Year 3, Year 5 Year 7</p>	<p>Young people's feedback: "You have to keep sending them. We love getting them and we get different coloured parcels". "Can I get more books? I love them".</p> <p>Impact: An opportunity to learn about, experience and explore other worlds through a range of specially selected books.</p> <p>Ongoing enjoyment and engagement with reading, alongside a trusted adult.</p> <p>Development of Maths skills through shared games.</p>

Appendix 2 - Enrichment Grid for September 2018 – July 2019

<p>and sends out the parcels on a monthly basis.</p>	<p>games and practise key mathematical skills.</p>				<p>A sense of belonging as the parcels follow the child, wherever they are.</p> <p>To receive the parcels that are addressed to the young person makes them feel special. The young peoples' feedback has always been very positive although sometimes they may not like a particular book.</p> <p>Long-term aim is to</p> <p>Aiming to set up a Brent Book Club for KS2 next year, and in the longer term boost reading and maths attainment for Brent LAC.</p>
<p>Yearly Enrichment Offer Booster classes to support Literacy and Maths for National Assessments in Year 6, plus GCSE revision for Year 11. The Primary Advisory Teacher and Secondary Advisory Teacher support the groups, with teaching delivered by subject specialists from tutoring agency. Additional Input 6 week After-School Revision Boosters arranged for GCSE Cohort.</p>	<p>To provide targeted opportunity for revision, and skills development prior to school assessments in Years 6 and 11.</p> <p>To provide small group tuition where young people can focus on closing the gaps in their learning, with a high level of support and encouragement, in a small group context, alongside other LAC.</p>	<p>Feb 2019 (2 days)</p> <p>Easter Holidays 17th and 18th April 2019 (2 days)</p>	<p>Secondary 10 LAC in total</p> <p>Primary 4 LAC (1 x Year 5 (1 x EHCP)</p>	<p>14 pupils (includes some LAC pupils, also within vulnerable cohorts and known to the LA)</p>	<p>Impact: Both sets of Boosters sessions were very successful in motivating young people to engage with revision.</p> <p>Young peoples' views: "I found them both helpful". "Maths became a little easier". "It really helped me to get a better understanding".</p> <p>Impact: KS2 – of the 3 Year 6 cohort who attended the Boosters, 1 achieved the expected standard at KS2, and the remaining young people made good progress from their starting point at the beginning of the year. KS4 - 6/7 of the young people achieved the minimum level of 4 in English and Maths, and 2 of the YP passed both Maths and English.</p>

Appendix 2 - Enrichment Grid for September 2018 – July 2019

<p>Yearly Enrichment Offer Family First Nights – £5 tickets to a west end show Carers were encouraged to sign up to Family First Nights to enable them to take their looked-after children (and their own families) to West End Theatre for reduced price tickets (£5 per ticket). The families are supported throughout the process so that they can be confident and informed theatregoers.</p>	<p>The aim is to encourage as many carers as possible to sign up to the deal and commit to attending at least one performance.</p> <p>Family First Night offers an exciting experience for Brent LAC. The shows may inspire young people to work in the theatre, become writers, performers, stage managers, etc. A wide range of themes and topics encourages literacy, e.g. Matilda, and knowledge of the wider world.</p>	<p>June 2019 – continued through the Summer</p>	<p>Carers and their families were targeted to join the scheme with children in different year groups, mainly primary.</p>	<p>8 Families</p>	<p>Brent Virtual School had the highest number of carers who signed up and the carers were thrilled to see the first show. Many have reported that they are continuing to receive fabulous discounts and one carer said she has taken her children to see three shows this year.</p> <p>Impact: Families becoming familiar with visiting the theatre with the young people. Two of the young people who attended Family First Nights Musicals later went on to perform separately at Brent Celebration.</p>
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Appendix 2 - Enrichment Grid for September 2018 – July 2019

<p>Celebration of Achievement Awards The Mayor of Brent attends the Ceremony and presents the certificates. Every year the young people are nominated by social workers, teachers and the Virtual School to reward them for their skills and achievements. The nominations are a way of celebrating everything that has been achieved in the last year.</p> <p>This year students were given an award for their progress and academic attainment. The young people were awarded for their positive attitude and perseverance in education.</p> <p>The annual Brent's Got Talent Show gives LAC the opportunity to perform and showcase their talent.</p>	<p>To reward young people for their efforts and achievements across the academic year. To demonstrate that effort can bring results and rewards.</p> <p>To offer a performance platform for those LAC who have a talent to share – including dance, drama, art, comedy, public speaking, etc. For these performances to provide an inspiration to all attendees.</p>	<p>December 2018</p>	<p>Target group: all LAC up to Year 13</p>	<p>Over 100 LAC, carers and social workers</p> <p>Performers: Year 1 Year 5 Year 6 Year 11(video) Year 13 speech.</p>	<p>The young people were able to reflect on the past year and feel proud of their achievements. Furthermore, they had the opportunity to be inspired and motivated by others' success. One primary aged pupil spoke about his career ambition: "When I grow up, I want to be the first black British Prime Minister and if I am, I would change a few things about Britain..."</p> <p>Young people's reflections: "I didn't want to do it, I was terrified, But I'm glad I did it".</p> <p>"I wanted to let others know they could do it too. Go to university and achieve things in their life". "I was a bit nervous before doing it (my speech) as I was misinformed about the size of the crowd! Nevertheless, I still did it and after doing it, I felt great. It feels good to let people know your story - particularly those who are also in the same situation (listening)".</p> <p>A few carers were very emotional and took the microphone to praise the achievements of their young people.</p> <p>Other LAC commented on being inspired by the key speeches which featured on educational attainment (post-16.)</p> <p>One of the young people performed a dance routine and the other performed "A few of my favourite things" from the Sound of Music. One of the YP now auditions for school performances in her secondary school.</p>
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Appendix 2 - Enrichment Grid for September 2018 – July 2019

<p>Magazine subscriptions Weekly and fortnightly subscriptions to Story Time, Phoenix and The Week (Junior Newspaper)</p>	<p>The aim is to continue to engage young people in reading. Story Time is aimed at promoting reading at home and the development of language with younger primary aged children. Phoenix is aimed at Key Stage 2 and is aimed particularly at increasing boys' interest in reading. The high-quality comic strip format seems to be particularly good at targeting more reluctant readers. The secondary cohort is receiving a weekly newspaper aimed at young people called The Week. This is targeting older children with the aim of engaging them with an interest in what is happening, politically or culturally in the world around them.</p>	<p>Weekly and fortnightly throughout the year</p>	<p>30/40 Primary LAC of different ages</p>		<p>Feedback from young people: "Keep sending that superhero one. I like it". "Can we have the Phoenix every week? One week I got two!"</p> <p>Carer feedback: "The Storytime is nice. I spend special time with her reading the stories. We enjoy it." "She is enjoying Phoenix Magazine. She comes rushing in from school and checks the post box every day. She loves getting them."</p> <p>Impact: The Phoenix was particularly popular with our boys and definitely increased reading engagement and interest within the home. Carers have said they enjoyed reading the stories at bedtime for the younger cohort. The Week was more challenging and less popular as a magazine.</p>
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Appendix Three

Brent Virtual School
Educational Psychologist - Elizabeth Hanna
Part-time Post – 0.6 or 3 days

Impact of EP Work 2018-2019

A total of 27 children and young people in care received EP input. Consultations were provided as well as cognitive assessments and assessments of pupils' social and emotional difficulties. In 2018 - 2019 more direct work was carried out using Video Interaction Guidance (VIG).


VIG involves filming one-to-one interactions between a child and an adult, editing the film to show the best moments, and discussing the film clips to pinpoint what the adult and child are doing when interactions are going especially well. The idea behind VIG is that by focusing on the best moments participants can learn more about what works which in turn can have a positive impact on behaviour and relationships.

In the summer 2019, VIG was used for one child in Nursery. HM and his teacher were filmed taking part in a number of activities e.g. making playdough and building a castle. The clips highlighted the many effective strategies already being used by HM's Nursery teacher, which meant these approaches could be shared in preparation for HM's transition to Reception. Positive strategies included promoting strengths, providing opportunities for HM to take the lead in activities, and pitching activities carefully so there was the right amount of challenge. New ideas that came out of the VIG work included using film generally to capture good moments and naming emotions in interaction with HM (not only to increase awareness of emotions but also as a calming strategy).

In the autumn 2018, one Y3 pupil was seen for a cognitive assessment to address learning issues and then she was seen for VIG sessions to address some social and emotional issues. In a PEP a year later it was noted that AM was enjoying reading and reading accuracy and fluency had improved, though she was still a year behind. A new visual approach to learning spellings had been adopted and there was an improvement in her spelling, though there was still a big gap. During VIG discussions a member of the pastoral staff commented that AM was becoming more accepting of adult help in one-to-one activities and her focus was improving. The VIG work was also shared with the birth family in a meeting in the spring term 2019 and AM's Social Worker commented, "Just a quick thank you for Thursday's meeting with the M family. It was so lovely to see their responses to the children's work and also how proud the children were of their own work. It seems to be a very effective tool in building confidence and children's self-awareness. I do hope these sessions can continue for A and AM. It was very nice to be a part of that session".

In addition, training has been very well received. Carers who attended the Dyslexia and Dyscalculia session in June 2019 said the training was excellent and the presentation was described as "informative" and "helped to clear up some misconceptions". Carers said they would try out some new approaches and that they would follow up references and do some further reading on the subject.

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 Brent	Corporate Parenting Committee 15 July 2020
	Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People
Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report: Quarter 4: 1st April to 30th June 2020	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Onder Beter Head of Service, Looked After Children and Permanency Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Brent 020 8937 4382 Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Brent 020 8937 4091

1. 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).
- 1.2 This report details the activity of Brent's fostering service from 1st April – 30th June 2020.

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 Background

3.1 Service Priorities

The in-house fostering function is positioned within the LAC and Permanency Service (LACPS) of the Children and Young People's Department. Relevant parts of the LACPS service plan 2020/21 set out the vision for fostering as below:

- Continue to improve the stability of children by providing more local and in-house placement options, minimising change of social workers and placements.
- Developing partnerships with neighbouring authorities to recruit and retain more foster carers
- Continuing to run targeted marketing and recruitment strategies to recruit fostering households for teenagers
- Continue to provide an excellent learning and development package for foster carers who will have permanent supervising social workers to supervise and support them.
- Be creative and innovative in engaging and supporting placements for children during the covid-19 Pandemic to minimise negative impact on children and young people

3.2 Staffing Arrangements

The Fostering Support and Assessment Teams consist of two team managers, 12 social work posts and one marketing and recruitment officer (MRO) post. The workload within the teams continues to grow as new carers are approved and need to be allocated for support when they care for children. All posts are filled with permanent members of staff.

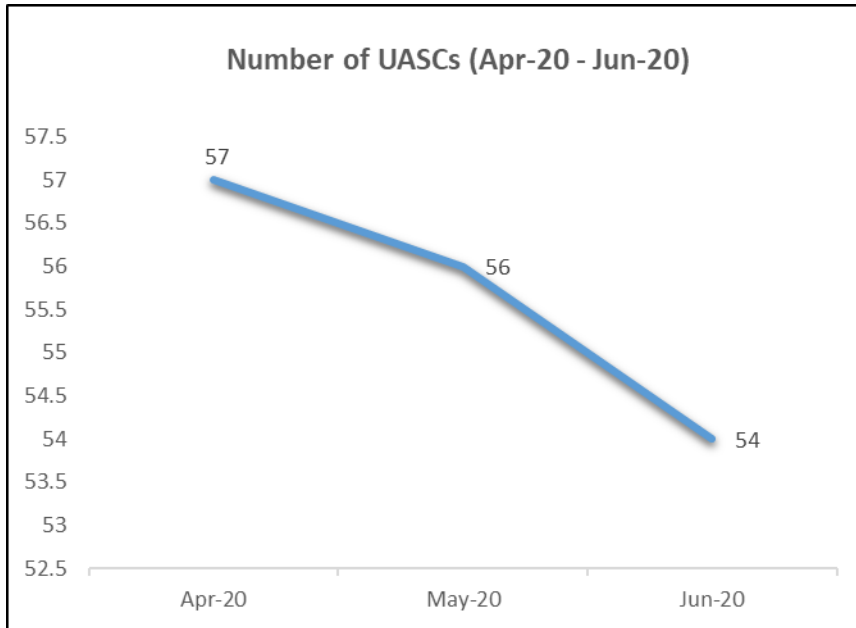
4.0 Placement Activity

- 4.1** The total number of looked after children as at 30th June 2020 was 292, which is a reduction of 2 children from Q4 2019-2020 (294 children) and a decrease of 14 children from the same period in 2019.

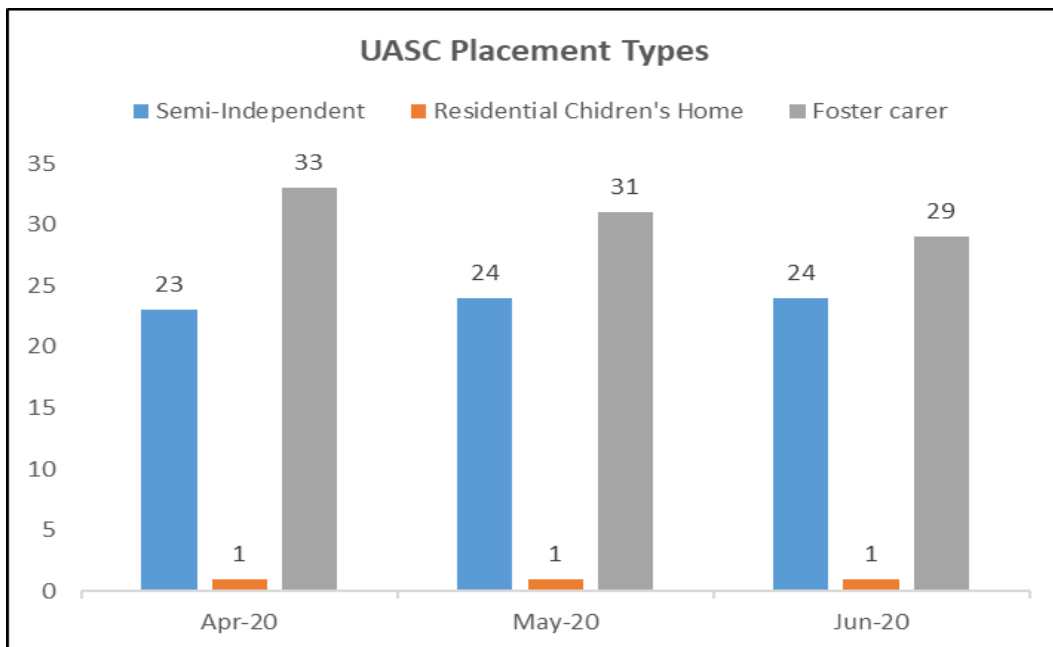
4.2 The corporate performance targets for 2020/2021 are as below:

- Percentage of looked after children placed with in-house (Brent) foster carers – annual target 30% - the actual percentage as of 30th June 2020 was 23% (67 children), a slight decrease from the previous quarter Q4 of 2019-2020, 23.8% (70 children).
- Percentage of looked after children placed with a relative or family friend – annual target 15% - the actual percentage as of 30th June 2020 was 12.3% (36 children), an increase from Q4, 2019-2020 (9.9%, 29 children). Brent's commitment to place children within their family and friends' network has continued.
- Percentage of looked after children placed in independent fostering agencies – annual target 25% - the actual percentage as of 30th June 2020 was 24.7% (72 children); a decrease from Q4, 2019-2020 (26.9%, 79 children).
- Percentage of looked after children overall within foster placements – annual target 70% - the actual percentage as of 30th June 2020 was 60% (175 children), a slight decrease from 60.5% (178 children) at the end of Q4, 2019-2020.
- There were 50 looked after children in registered semi-independent accommodation (residential accommodation not subject to Children's Home Regulations) as at 30th June 2020, which represents 17.1% of all looked after children. This is a reduction from the 18.4% total at the end of Q4, 2019-2020.

4.3 As of 30th June 2020 there were 54 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), 6 fewer than at the end of Q4, 2019– 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic has seen a nationwide reduction in the number of UASC presenting for assistance from local authorities. From March to May 2020, the number of new UASC arrivals in Brent has dropped. However, there were 5 new arrivals in May and June, which is consistent with the pre-Covid-19 period. A large number of new UASC arrivals are predicted from August this year as some UASC may have been unable to move across mainland Europe during the Covid-19 outbreak.



4.4 The majority of UASC are placed in semi-independent accommodation (24, 1 fewer than the end of Q4, 2019-20), or in foster care (29), five less than at the end of Q4, 2019 – 20.



5.0 Recruitment and Assessment

5.1 Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, Brent Fostering has maintained fostering recruitment activity and saw an increase in the number of enquiries and

information evening attendees. Brent launched the 'Help vulnerable children' campaign with the support of the Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care, which saw high engagement from community members who expressed their interest in fostering.

- 5.2** All marketing activity during this period has been carried out online through the Brent Council website, the Brent Council newsletter, the Fostering newsletter, and social media. Enquiries were made by interested parties via the phone or online; initial visits and the assessment process were then carried out through video calls. The monthly fostering information evenings took place online via Zoom, which attendees reportedly enjoyed and found more convenient than having to travel to a venue to hear more about fostering. The consistent positive feedback has led us to plan for more virtual events moving forward.
- 5.3** During this period the Marketing and Recruitment Officer (MRO) released a fostering information pack that has a new and 'fresh' design. The information pack can be downloaded from the website and will also be used for marketing on social media. <https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/children-and-family-support/fostering/fostering-information-pack/>
- 5.4** The MRO continued sending emails to newsletter subscribers, the number of which doubled between April and June. There are currently 1,439 subscribers to the fostering newsletter. To engage with subscribers, content has been created in various forms, including: quizzes; surveys; blog articles; interviews with foster carers and fostering information videos. This has been a successful addition to the marketing strategy – the content produced counts for over half of the total number of web visits to the fostering pages on the Brent Council website. By the end of the reporting trimester there was a total of 10,000 unique website visits to these pages.
- 5.5** Overall, an increase has been recorded from online marketing tactics during the reporting period in comparison to previous months. This may be due to people staying at home and spending more time online. A total of 34 contacts (information evening bookings and other requests for information) and 37 enquiries (requests to apply for fostering made via the website or phone) have been made.
- 5.6** 21 initial visits were booked between April and June 2020 (this is a result of enquiries outside the reporting period as well). Eight of the initial visits resulted in the applicants being recommended for stage 1 of the assessment process.
- 5.7** Of the 3 assessments in stage 1 in the last reporting period:

 - 2 have moved to stage 2

- 1 remains in stage 1 due to the delay in progressing the medical caused by Covid-19 restrictions.
- 5.8** The assessment recorded in the last quarterly report as being in stage 2 was heard at fostering panel in May and the couple were successfully recommended to foster.
- 5.9** In this reporting period there are 10 assessments underway:
- 8 in Stage 1; and
 - 2 in Stage 2, which will be presented to the fostering panel in September and October 2020 respectively.

6.0 Fostering Panel

- 6.1** The LACP 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 and personal experience of fostering and panel members include those with personal experience of the fostering system. Current demand requires three panels to be held every two months.
- 6.2** Fostering Panels have been conducted remotely via Microsoft Teams since 3rd April 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Panels take a little longer due to having to “invite” applicants and workers into the meeting at different times via the application but some practices have been condensed in order to compensate for this so this way of working may be retained for less complex cases.
- 6.3** 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 or 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 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; and
 - the long-term fostering matches of all children below the age of 12.
- 6.4** During the period 1st April – 30th June 2020, 5 panels were held with 10 specific cases discussed during these sessions. Within these cases:

- 1 fostering household was found suitable to continue as foster carers following review;
- 1 fostering household reluctantly resigned from their fostering role due to a change in their personal circumstances;
- The approval of 1 'family and friends' carer ceased due to the young person in their care turning 18;
- 6 new 'family and friends' fostering households were recommended for approval; and
- 1 new fostering household was recommended for approval.

All of the recommendations made above were ratified by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) who is the Head of LAC and Permanency.

7.0 Training and Support for Foster Carers

7.1 The Learning and Development Programme

The Fostering Development Coordinator, who arranges training for foster carers, has reported that no face to face training was offered to carers due to COVID - 19. However all carers have access to the online training. The training courses offered range in topics from 'Bullying & Impulsive Behaviour Training', to 'Child and Parental Substance abuse' and 'Finance for Foster Carers Workshops'. Feedback from foster carers has been positive on online training. Some of the examples were as below:

- *"I have enjoyed doing the online training at home, I can do it in my own time and its manageable";*
- *"I enjoyed the finance training. It was very good; I got more understanding of what to do. It was worthwhile";*
- *' (Online courses are) Ideal for baby carers, as you can stop and start the courses as and when needed, which is great for me*

Supervising social workers and the Fostering Development Coordinator continue to emphasise the importance of attending training to foster carers in their visits.

Uptake regarding the online training has been positive. This is evidenced by the increase in sign up from carers, and course completion. 29 carers have signed up during this time and have completed more than one course each.

During this time of uncertainty, Brent continues to meet the statutory duty to commission and facilitate learning events for foster carers. The learning and development team engage foster carers with innovative ways of offering learning and development. The online courses include mandatory, core and specialist

training modules specifically designed for foster carers. Moving forward, the team have offered carers training courses through zoom and are planning webinars. More detail will be provided in the next reporting period.

7.2 Support from supervising social workers

7.2.1 The feedback received from foster carers is consistently positive in relation to the support they receive from their allocated supervising social workers, their managers and the wider fostering service. Some examples of the feedback received are as below:

“The team manager and my SSW provided me with excellent support regarding any issues I may have regarding my placement and especially after the allegation was made both workers were very supportive; keeping in touch weekly, just having someone to talk to as I could not talk to my family due to data protection, I just said young person moved to kinship placement. It was very helpful for me to have them there.”

7.2.2 At the Foster carers Support group on 9th June 2020, the foster carers expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the department for the support provided to them, particularly during this difficult time. Despite all visits being conducted virtually and heightened anxiety for carers around managing the additional risk Covid-19 poses for them, their families and the children in their care, they spoke of feeling well-supported, and communication being regular and appreciated. They stated that the department made the right decision to pay their fostering allowance ahead of time to prevent any financial hardship.

7.2.3 A virtual meeting was held with foster carers on 9th June 2020 to discuss the annual summer seaside trip and the foster carers’ celebration event at the end of the year. Foster carers were hopeful to be able to have some form of get-together despite the current situation – amongst the suggestions made were: a picnic in a park in the summer and/or the department funding the foster carers to attend a show in the West End or Wembley Arena if it is safe to do so later in the year. This is still in a discussion stage and no firm decisions have been made. The carers and workers are mindful of following government advice around social distancing and bringing households together.

8.0 Monitoring – reviews, allegations, complaints

8.1 A total of 17 foster carer annual review meetings were conducted during the period

8.2 During this quarter, there was one complaint made by a former foster carer who was supporting a care leaver via Staying Put arrangements. This is being dealt with by the respective Service Manager and Team Manager.


9.0 New Developments

9.1 Update on Joint Fostering Feasibility Project

The Committee has previously been informed about the work Brent has been leading on following a successful bid to Department for Education (DfE) seed funding to scope work using a regional approach to fostering. The work has continued with involvement of Ealing and Hounslow Council. Given the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a delay by the DfE in progressing to the next stage of this work, which is to devise a pilot project based on the findings from a Fostering Feasibility Study undertaken earlier in the year. The focus would remain on developing closer working arrangements to improve placement stability and choice for adolescent children in the care system between Hounslow, Ealing and Brent.

It is anticipated that funding will be made available later this year to continue with this work and target carers for the more challenging 11 – 15 year olds to prevent them being placed in residential units. To this end, the Heads of Service in Brent and Ealing have remained in communication and the costs in relation to designing a central web platform to bring together the initial enquiries for the interested local authorities have been sought from the relevant Directors of Children Services. A further update will be provided to the next Committee.

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 Brent	<p align="center">Corporate Parenting Committee</p> <p align="center">15 July 2020</p>
	<p>Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</p>
<p>Brent Adoption Report</p> <p>6-monthly report: 1st October 2019 to 31st March 2020</p>	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Debbie Gabriel, Head of Service, Adopt London West Regional Adoption Agency Perceval House, 14-16 Uxbridge Road, London W5 2HL Tel: 0208 825 8815 Email: gabrield@ealing.gov.uk Onder Beter, Head of Service, LAC and Permanency. Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 0FJ Tel: 020 8937 1228 Email: onder.beter@brent.gov.uk

	<p>Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 OFJ Email: Nigel.Chapman@brent.gov.uk</p>
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1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a briefing to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee in relation to: adoption performance data for the period 1st October 2019 – 31st March 2020, the progress and activity of Adopt London West; and how good outcomes are being achieved for children. Information and child level data presented in Section 5 and 6 of this report were provided by Brent; the rest of this report includes the progress and activity of Adopt London West.
- 1.2 This is the first report presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in this format as Cabinet gave approval in April 2019 for Brent council to:
- a) join the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) *Adopt London West* consisting of the London boroughs of Ealing, Hounslow and Hammersmith and Fulham for the provision of Adoption services and Special Guardianship Support; and
 - b) delegate authority to the Strategic Director, Children and Young People, in consultation with the Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care to agree and enter into a Partnership Agreement with participating boroughs.
- 1.3 The Key Decision was made on 2nd September 2019 and, following the TUPE of those Brent staff members who chose to move to Ealing, Adopt London West has been a 'live' RAA since October 2019.

2.0 Recommendations

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

3.0 Background

Adopt London West

- 3.1** Adopt London West (ALW) Regional Adoption Agency, became operational on 1st September 2019 with a formal launch in October 2019, the service includes 3 staff who TUPE transferred from LB Brent and an additional social worker from Brent who joined the service later. In addition, 3 social workers transferred to ALW from LB Hounslow.
- 3.2** A comprehensive partnership agreement forms the basis of the ongoing partnership arrangements. The partnership board on which the Strategic Director, Brent CYP sits, will continue to provide the necessary oversight to ensure that the shared service is appropriately scrutinised and supported to deliver improved outcomes for children and adopters.
- 3.3** ALW staff have received a comprehensive induction to the service and completed core training. Partnership working across the 4 LAs is generally progressing well with regular meetings between Heads of Service, Team Managers and Social Workers.
- 3.4** As part of the national RAA implementation and development programme a network of RAA leaders has been established and monthly meetings are facilitated by the DfE delivery partner Deloitte. Meetings are attended by senior DfE officials and provide an opportunity to learn from the early RAAs and also to consider wider sector collaboration and influence.
- 3.5** It is acknowledged from evidence gained from the first cohort of national RAAs to become operational, that the first 12 months after going live for an RAA is one of transition and transformation to a new delivery model. Performance has been noted to dip in the early stages of operation, therefore the Partnership Board and Heads of Service meetings are closely monitoring practice and performance as a new and developing service.

4.0 Responsibilities

- 4.1** As delegated in the partnership agreement between Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham and Hounslow, Ealing (as the host Local Authority for ALW) is responsible for ensuring that children whose permanence plan is adoption in all four partner Local Authorities are matched in a timely way with adopters who best meet the needs of those children. This involves featuring children in various profiling events, via national linking websites, supporting them in adoption activity days and networking events with other Regional Adoption Agencies in London and nationally. ALW is also responsible for the preparation and assessment of prospective adopters, supporting adopters

with family finding following approval and the on-going post placement support to adopters and special guardians. ALW is also responsible for the provision of services to adopted adults and all those affected by adoption who request a specific service or an assessment of need.

- 4.2** ALW also provides a service to Brent residents who wish to make a private application to adopt their partner's child, referred to as step-parent adoption, or special guardians who may wish to adopt the child in their care. The team is also involved in completing adoption reports on children who may have travelled from and been adopted abroad; there is a legal requirement for these adoptions to be made lawful in the UK.
- 4.3** Inter-country adoption referrals continue to be referred to the Inter-Country Adoption Centre, a specialist Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA), with whom a service level agreement is in place.
- 4.4** Statutory social work in relation to children needing adoptive placements remains the remit of Brent CYP. The care plans for children are formulated by the social work teams and agreed by Head of Service for LAC and Permanency. The Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes then considers and ratifies any adoption plans.

5.0 Performance Data

- 5.1** The most recent set of national adoption scorecards was published in March 2019, covering the 3-year period 2015-2018.

Adoption Scorecards (published [here](#))

- 5.1.1** The non-published data for the period under review demonstrates that performance against the two most significant indicators has continued to perform strongly in comparison to the published national and statistical neighbour averages:

- **A1** (The time taken from a child entering care to being placed for adoption): 392 days. This is a 1.4% increase against the previous reporting period (387) but still compares favourably against a national average of 486 days and the statistical neighbour average of 552.
- **A2** (The time taken from the Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and a match being approved): 192 days. This is a 6% increase against the previous reporting period (181 days) but is less than the national average of 201 days and compares favourably to the statistical neighbour average of 228.

6.0 Child related data

6.1 In the second six months of this reporting year (1st Oct 2019– 31st March 2020) Adoption Orders were granted for three children.

6.2 As at the 31st March 2020 there were five adoption applications that have been submitted to the Court. Of the five adoption applications submitted, three are being contested by parents or extended family members therefore an element of uncertainty regarding these children's permanency plans remains until the court process has concluded.

6.3 As at 31st March 2020, there were nine children with an adoption plan who had not yet been adopted. The details of these children's cases are as follows:

- Eight children are placed for adoption;
- One child remains subject to ongoing care proceedings further assessments being agreed.

7.0 Adopter Recruitment

7.1 In the period October 19 – March 2020, 10 adoptive households were approved, compared to 4 households in the period April – September prior to ALW taking over responsibility for services.

Adopters Approval per Month				
Month	Total Approvals	BAME	LGBTQ	Single Adopter
Oct 2019	1	1	1	0
Nov 2019	2	1	1	0
Dec 2019	4	1	1	1
Jan 2020	1	1	0	0
Feb 2020	1	0	0	1
Mar 2020	1	0	1	0
Total Cumulative	10	4	4	2

7.2 As at 31st March 2020, ALW had 20 approved adoptive families, 10 of whom are still in the active family finding stage, 5 families are linked to a child/ren or formally matched with a child and 5 families are on hold. Of the 5 families on hold some are taking a break due to personal circumstances and others' situations are under review following their disengagement from the process.

- 7.3 During this reporting period (Oct 19-March 20) the service received 136 general enquiries about domestic adoption with 70 prospective adopters attending an information session.
- 7.4 The adoption assessment process comprises 2 stages, Stage 1 assessments should take place within 2 months - this stage is described as “adopter led” where adopters work through exercises and complete various tasks that will contribute to a full and thorough assessment of their suitability.
- 7.5 Stage 2 should take a maximum of 4 months and is a detailed assessment that is both reflective and analytical. In total, the comprehensive assessment process should be completed within 6 months. However, the average length of time for assessments in 2019/20 was 8 months. Delays were due to the transitioning of workers to the new service and, in some cases, changes in assessing social workers.
- 7.6 As at 31st March 2020, there were 21 families in the formal stages of assessment, 12 in Stage 1 and 9 in Stage 2.

8.0 Adoption and Special Guardianship Support

- 8.1 Throughout the assessment and post approval process of searching for the right child to join their family, prospective adopters are informed about support services available to them and are encouraged and supported to attend the Foundations for Attachment Training course, a course that offers adopters insight and strategies to meet the needs of children who are likely to have experienced developmental trauma.
- 8.2 An internal mentoring scheme is in place to offer support to any new adopters, or those who may need some additional empathic support. ALW have a contract with **Adopter Hub** an online support forum and adopter community that provide training and resources to adopters run by PACT, a voluntary adoption agency. In addition, a peer support organisation **We are Family** organise frequent training events and social groups. ALW have a contract for services delivered by **PAC-UK** that offer sensitive and independent therapeutic support.
- 8.3 ALW has an ‘education support group’, which meets six times throughout the year. The group is facilitated by an Educational Psychologist and provides a forum for families to receive support and guidance on how to engage with their child’s school and a range of education related issues.
- 8.4 In addition, adopters receive regular newsletters that outline relevant research, learning materials, advice and tools to support parenting strategies as well as

training opportunities, seminars and specialist support groups. There are also adoption related evening seminars that take place at least 4 times a year, recent subjects that have been covered are:

- SEN support and EHCP for Adopted Children
- Life Story webinar
- Supporting your child with school transitions

9.0 Adopter and Special Guardians feedback

9.1 The following quotes are from adopters and special guardians who have attended the Foundations for Attachment training mentioned above:

- *“The training has changed both the way I am and the way I think.”*
- *“I think it helps you be a better parent and have a better relationship with your children.”*
- *“I arrived feeling quite low at most sessions and came out feeling a different parent.”*
- *“It was good to hear about everyone’s experiences and to appreciate how the child’s behaviour may have been caused by early years trauma.”*
- *“This training was very useful in learning how to care for the children, I would recommend this course to all carers.”*
- *“This training was very helpful, it changed my perspective of the behaviour in the child, and it was really useful. I have already recommended this course to others.”*
- *“It highlighted the difference of bringing up one’s own children and being put in a position to read children who may have gone through harrowing experiences at a very young age. It also made me realise errors I may have made in parenting my own children. It allowed me to step aside, hold a mirror and look at the actions of my children so that I can best respond to them in a given situation”.*
- *“Very knowledgeable, understanding and supportive staff”*
- *“ALW are real professionals – they make our learning easy, with many clear explanations and a kind approach”*

10. Casework

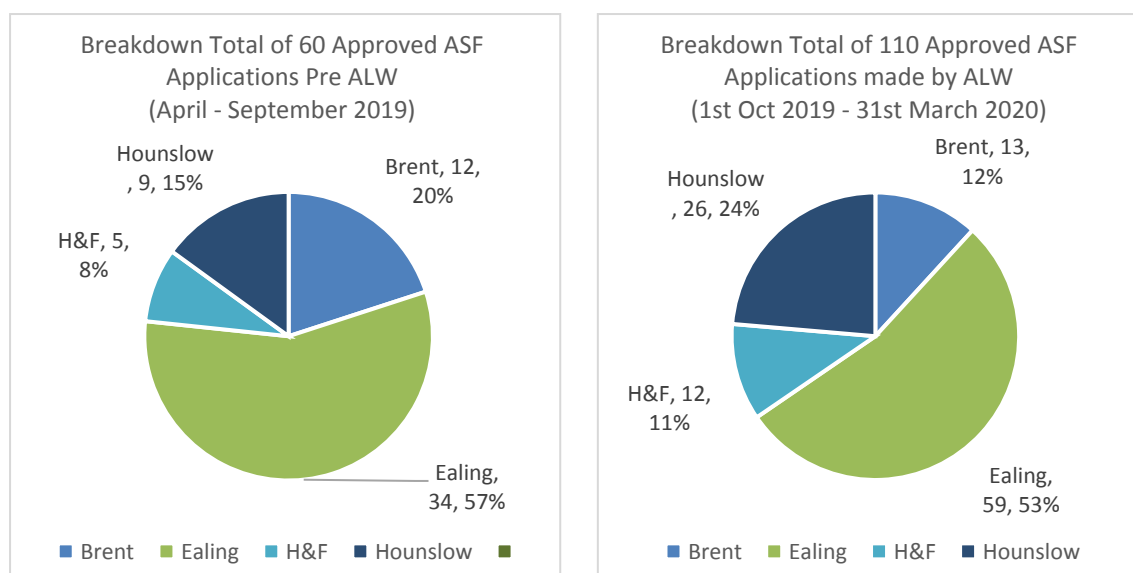
10.1 In the period 1st October 2019 – 31st March 2020, ALW has offered post-order support services to 66 Brent families, 48 adoptive families and 18 special guardians.

10.2 There are 76 contact cases open relating to Brent families: 13 direct contact arrangements and 63 active letterbox exchanges.

10.3 There have been 48 requests for access to records in relation to Brent records out of a total number of 80 requests received by ALW during this period.

11.0 Adoption Support Fund

- 11.1** Families who require specialist therapeutic support will be assessed by a social worker and an application submitted to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) for funding to cover the costs of the therapeutic services.
- 11.2** The charts below show applications from each partner LA for the period April 2019 – September 2019 prior to ALW beginning and from October 2019 to March 2020 when ALW took responsibility for the service.
- 11.3** Since ALW commenced in October 2019, 110 applications have been made to the ASF and £110,000 in funding for therapeutic services has been received. The number of ASF applications for Brent families increased only marginally in the period reported in comparison but there were no Brent families that didn't receive a service.
- 11.4** The Committee members will note in the next report (Q1 and Q2, 2020-21) 22 applications were made, a 69% increase on the previous figure in just a 3 month period compared to a 6 month period. Overall there has been an increase in applications which reflects a more consistent use of the fund on behalf of families living in all partner LA's. There are currently no families waiting for an application to the ASF; all assessments for support are allocated.



12.0 Adopt London

- 12.1** ALW is one of 4 Regional Adoption Agencies that make up "Adopt London" a wider collaboration of 23 boroughs that form Adopt London;

- **Adopt London North** - a partnership between Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Islington, hosted by Islington.
- **Adopt London South** – a partnership between, Achieving for Children (Richmond and Kingston) Croydon, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Wandsworth, Southwark and Sutton, hosted by Southwark.
- **Adopt London East** – a partnership between Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Newham and Tower Hamlets, hosted by Havering
- **Adopt London West** – a partnership between Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham and Hounslow, hosted by Ealing.

12.2 A joint Adopt London staff and media launch event took place in early March 2020, supported and attended by senior DfE officials:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAQZVIRFlm0>

12.3 In order to ensure the best possible services for children and families across London, Adopt London West will collaborate closely with the 3 Adopt London regions. A key priority for Adopt London in its first year of operation is to maximize the opportunities and efficiencies across shared priority areas.

12.4 The development of the Adopt London website, as well as coordination and collaboration between the marketing leads in each RAA to establish a recognised and consistent Adopt London brand across the 23 LAs has been a key early benefit of the partnership and demonstrates the potential value of what can be achieved in the future.

<https://adoptlondon.org.uk/>



13.0 National and Regional Recruitment

13.1 The government has allocated approximately £1 million for a national adopter recruitment campaign with an advertising agency appointed to design the concept and campaign strategy. The planned March 2020 launch was postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic with it rescheduled for September. ALW and the other 3 Adopt London regions have combined marketing resources to create a team of marketing leads, each working 2 days

per week on Adopt London marketing projects. The team will support the national campaign with regional activity across London. Recruiting additional adopters from BAME communities is a priority for the national campaign and regional activity.

14.0 Adoption Support Fund Covid-19 Emergency Fund

14.1 Government allocated £8 million additional ASF funding to RAAs nationally to support adopters and special guardians during the pandemic. Adopt London was awarded:

RAA	£ awarded
Adopt London South	350,109.00
Adopt London East	173,907.84
Adopt London North	280,651.27
Adopt London West	165,470.19
TOTAL	£970,138.30

14.2 A decision to commission the majority of services jointly as Adopt London was agreed by the ALW Partnership Board in recognition that a wider range of services could be provided by pooling the allocated grant funding. The DfE have welcomed this approach and praised Adopt London for the innovative services it has jointly commissioned.

14.3 The services listed below have all now been approved by the ASF and services have commenced, or training dates booked. LB Havering, the host LA for Adopt London East, agreed to manage the financial and commissioning arrangements on behalf of Adopt London.

- Annual membership of National Association of Therapeutic Parents for 500 adopters and special guardians
- Annual membership of Adopter Hub for 500 adopters and special guardians operated by PACT a voluntary adoption support agency
- Annual membership to Grandparents Plus for all special guardians across the 23 Adopt London LAs
- 7 NVR 'Child to Parent' Violence Training courses for adopters and special guardians
- Counselling helpline service from PAC UK/Family Action charity offering evening and weekend support services
- A range of therapy services offering up to 6 sessions for families from Adoption Plus a voluntary adoption support agency

- 14.4** In addition, from the retained local grant allocation to ALW of **£32,984**, applications have been approved for the provision of 2 courses of “The Great Behaviour Breakdown” training available to both adopters and special guardians.
- 14.5** Applications have also been approved for 3 virtual direct work services for children to be delivered by Body and Soul, an Arts-based organisation specialising in services to children who are adopted or the subject of Special Guardianship Orders.
- 14.6** The additional funding has provided the opportunity to deliver a wide range of services to families with additional services that are not usually funded through the ASF being offered. Feedback from families on the quality and effectiveness of these services will enable the commissioning of more focused and targeted services in the future.

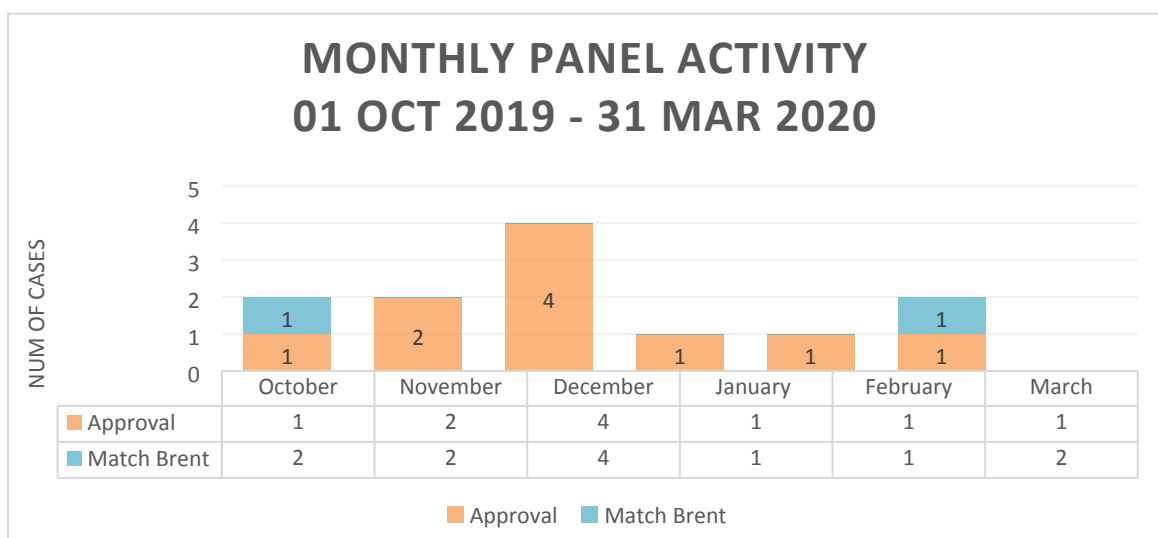
15.0 ALW Adoption Panel

- 15.1** Each of the 4 partner LAs held their final Adoption Panels in September 2019. Adopt London West held their first panel in October 2019. The comprehensive preparation work of the RAA project management team and managers involved in the creation of ALW meant that moving from a LA-run adoption panel to an ALW adoption panel was seamless.
- 15.2** The appointment of the Chair took place in advance of ALW’s start as did the appointment of 12 independent panel members, all with diverse backgrounds and experience. Panel induction training took place prior to the first panel meeting. Members are all part of a central panel list and everyone has now sat on at least one panel. While all members are skilled and professional, having a different panel composition each time does mean that there are challenges in terms of the panel members working effectively together and reaching a consistent approach. Therefore, in response to the Covid-19 restrictions, the Chair and Adviser (in consultation with ALW’s HoS) took the decision to have a core membership during the virtual panel functioning and this has allowed for more challenge and transparency within the group. Quarterly meetings will continue to ensure a continuous, reflective learning and development culture.
- 15.3** The role of ALW’s panel is as follows:
- to consider the presentation of approvals, reviews and terminations of adopters’ suitability to adopt, following which a recommendation is made by panel members and sent to the ALW’s Agency Decision Maker (Head of Service) for ratification/challenge;

- to consider whether a relinquished baby from Brent should be placed for adoption, following which a recommendation is made by panel members but sent to Brent’s Agency Decision Maker (Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes, Children and Young People’s Services) for ratification/challenge; and
- to consider adoption matches between Brent children and their prospective adopters, following which a recommendation will be made by panel members and sent to Brent’s Agency Decision Maker (Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes, Children and Young People’s Services) for ratification/challenge.

15.4 Feedback from ALW to Brent (and back) will be considered by the Heads of Service quality assurance group and the Partnership Board and will be shared with Service Managers in Brent after each panel presentation in order to aid service development and quality assure the work of the RAA.

15.5 During the period under review, 6 adoption panels were held in ALW resulting in the successful approval of 10 adoptive families.



15.6 Panel feedback from prospective and approved adopters and presenting social workers has been consistently good; some examples are listed below:

- *“It was very clear and it was lovely to hear the couple’s strengths and all reasons for the positive recommendations”.*
- *“I liked the fact that panel members each gave their reasons for the recommendation. I thought that this was really affirming for the families”.*
- *“The process was very clear. Each member was invited by the Chair to explain their decision, which was really good for us”.*

- *“There was a helpful checking in meeting. It was positive to have the questions before panel and having the time to discuss these with the applicants and preparing responses”.*
- *“I appreciated the transparency of panel members sharing their reasons for the recommendations in front of the applicants, the reasons were thoughtful and it was apparent the report had been carefully read. The preparations were well executed and must have taken careful planning. All the panel members were warm and professional. It is challenging to have a remote panel but it went well. The applicants found it helpful and a good start in their further journey. They have said that they hope to return to panel for a match, rather than have to deal with an external agency”.*
- *“That each member had taken the time to read the PAR and comment on what their reasons for agreeing the status was extremely endearing. We believe that we will make great parents to a child but here those words being spoken back is a real testament to the work we alongside our SW and all the other various people along this journey have helped us to get to”.*
- *“It was good having contact with the four people the week before (panel adviser, coordinator, SW and her manager). This gave us an idea of what feelings would be on the surface on the actual day, the reason I highlight this is that we had no idea having a chat about what would happen on the day would make us nervous, we had a brief conversation and both felt fine about talking through what would happen, it did not dawn on us that it would feel like a test run of what was to come, it helped us prepare for the real thing”.*
- *“This was very clear, we found it very positive to hear the individual panel members’ reasons for making their decision. Under the current circumstances (during the COVID19), the video panel was done in a very professional manner”.*
- *“We would just like to thank everyone on the panel for making this day even more special for us through the environment they created. Although we had a few nerves beforehand, everyone was so supportive and empathetic it made us feel at complete ease. It was so clear that everyone had spent the time reading our PAR and learning about us as a couple, picking up on details that could only be applicable to us. Feedback was extremely clear and very individualised for us as a couple. It was given with professionalism but also with empathy. We were grateful for the range of reasons given as well, each member searching to add a different point to make the recommendation an even more special moment for us”.*

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