



Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

11 December 2012

Report from the Director of Children & Families

Wards Affected:
ALL

Corporate Parenting Strategy

1.0 Summary

This report summaries the key issues relevant to Looked after Children in Brent and sets out the core principles that ensure the Corporate Parenting Group adopt a locally robust approach to ensuring that Looked After Children receive at least the same standard of care as would be given by a reasonable and responsible parent.

2.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

2.1 Corporate Parenting

The concept of Corporate Parenting was introduced through legislations i.e. Quality Protects (Department of Health 1998), The Children Act 2004, and Care Matters: Time for Change (DCSF 2007) and Care Matters: Time to Deliver (DCSF 2008). This places collective responsibility on local authorities to achieve good parenting for all children in the public care. It requires ownership and leadership at a senior level and includes both officers and elected members. The needs of looked-after children cannot be met by a single agency and the council must work closely with key partners. It is important, not only to listen to young people's views but also to act on them. Elected members in Brent carry out this duty effectively, through:

- Weekly meetings between lead member for children and DCS; + AD children social care
- Regular meetings between representatives of Care in Action, with the lead member, Director, and Assistant Director
- Scrutiny of all aspects of work through Scrutiny Panel
- Quarterly meetings of the Corporate Parenting
- Corporate Parenting Group, which is chaired by the lead member for Children and Families and contains senior officers as well as cross party member representation.

2.2 Service Provision

The Care Planning and Children in Care Service supports looked after children and care leavers from 0-25yrs. The service is managed by a Head of Care Planning and Children in Care and comprises 4 social work teams delivering a service to Looked

after Children aged from 0 to 18 and Care Leavers from 18 to 21yrs (24 + if the young person is in higher education). Within the service there are Participation Officer, Sexual Health Nurse Connexions/Prospects Intensive Workers and Life coaches for F4F (Big Lottery Funded Project).

2.2.1 Overall Picture for children in care and care-leavers in Brent.

Numbers of children and young people in care

In September 2012 Brent had 338 children and young people Looked After, This contrast with 355 in April 2011 and 389 in April 2012. This represents 47LAC per 10,000 head of child population against the rate for statistical neighbours of 63 per 10,000 head of child population. This suggests that we are effective at targeting services at those children who need to be looked after and preventing those coming into the system who can be better cared for at home. . There are 175 Care Leavers (18 – 24 years old) are supported by the CPCIC service. The gender of the LAC population consists of female 41.4% and male 58.6%. Over 55% of the care population in Brent are aged 13 and over. A significant proportion of this age group are male, partly due to the nature of the asylum-seeking group. There are 24 unaccompanied asylum seeking children in this number compared with 42 in Dec 09. The ethnic breakdown of children and young people in care, in descending order, is 36.3% Black Caribbean and African children and young people; 19.0% White British and White Other; 12.1% Asian and 23.9% mixed parentage.

There has been a change in the ethnicity of LAC in Brent. Historically Black Caribbean children looked after by Brent has always been the highest proportion for any single ethnicity type, although this has remained the same, there has been a 11% reduction of Black Caribbean children over the last two years and a nearly 5% increase in White British children being looked after by Brent and 4% increase in White Other. The demographics of the Looked After populations appear to be changing within Brent. Historical large numbers of unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan have decreased over the last 12/18 months. This maybe correlated to tighter immigration controls here and aboard from EEC cooperation policies and the general perceived reduction of the conflict in Afghanistan. Preliminary thoughts also rise whether there are an increasing number of Somali and Eastern European families moving into Brent due to civil unrest and harsher economic conditions in certain eastern European countries. Influx from other London Boroughs into Brent due to changes around Housing Benefits may be a reason.

The number of care proceedings in the Department has remained consistent at approximately 61 issued for 2010/2011, with a total of 74 active care proceedings. There has been a decrease in applications for supervision orders in the same period. It is worthy of note that prior to the death of Peter Connely and events in Haringey, the number of care applications was half of what it is currently.

2.3 Independent Reviewing Role

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008, Section 11 includes a power to confer the delivery of Independent Reviewing Officer Service. The IRO's primary focus is to quality assure the care planning and review process for each child and to ensure that his/her current wishes and feelings are given full consideration. The first Looked After Review of a child's case is within 20 working days of the date on which the child becomes looked after; the second review no more than three months after the first; the third and subsequent reviews no more than six months after the previous one.

The department has a statutory duty to ensure there is compliance with this statutory requirement. This monitored is tracked each month. In September 2012 there was 97.9% LAC Reviews complied within time scales.

2.4 Placement Types

Fostering is always the first placement choice for a child who becomes looked after. It is a way for children to have a family life when they are not able to live with their own parents. Fostering in Brent is provided through “in house” Brent foster carers and those provided by independent fostering agencies (IFA).

2.5 Brent in House Foster Carers

Brent Fostering Service will provide a diverse and wide range of safe, caring, stable and nurturing local family placements to meet the needs of Brent’s children looked after. This will include respite carers, long and short term foster placements for babies, primary age children, adolescents and parent and baby placements. For a number of reasons, the use of Brent carers is always preferred over IFA placements.

2.6 Independent Fostering Agencies

An independent fostering agency is a voluntary or private organisation that places children with foster carers. All independent fostering agencies must register with Ofsted before they can operate

2.7 Private Residential Provision

Brent Children’s Commissioning Services commissions residential places for children and young people. This can be for respite care, shorter term and longer term care. Brent will only commission units that have been assessed by Ofsted as “good”. The staff teams in the units are a committed group of key workers who work with the outcomes framework of every child matters to provide excellent day to day care for children. The aim of the units is to help young people do as well as they can in their education, enjoy good health, keep in touch with family and friends and also support with preparation for independence.

2.8 Current Provision

When a child is initially cared for by Brent the Children’s Commissioning Team will try and place the child within an in house foster placement. This allows continuity of education, contact with birth family and community links. The department will only place a child within an Independent Fostering placement if there is no local provision. Residential care is only reserved for a child with complex needs/challenging behaviour/risky lifestyles for example gang related. There is also difference with the costing for each care provision. Residential care is of a high cost and will often be based outside of London. Reasons why the main of residential provision is outside of London is based of higher quality provision outside of London.

Currently Brent places children in the following provision:

➤ Independent Fostering Agencies	82
➤ Brent In House fostering	122
➤ Placed with relative or friend	26
➤ Residential	32

© Placement Location as September 2012

➤ In Borough	152 (45.0%)
➤ Out Borough	186 (55.0%)
➤ Within Neighbouring Boroughs	90 (26.6%)
➤ Outside Neighbouring Boroughs	96 (28.4%)

Placing children within their own community ensure continuity of their contact with birth family and siblings, friends, education, community links. This ensures those children's identity/emotional needs are being addressed rather than placing them away from their own cultural and emotional links. Great emphasis by Brent to recruit more in house foster carers locally will assist in placement stability.

2.9 Adoption

The first choice for children who require a permanent home is in the majority of cases adoption. This has been a particular focus of Government policy over recent years and especially in the last 12 months. The recently published adoption scorecard measures the number of adoptions taking place each year as well as an analysis of the speed with which children are placed for adoption. In 2011-12, 9 children were placed for adoption in Brent. From April – November 2012 there were 8 children placed with prospective adopters and since April of this year 10 children have been placed with prospective adopters

3.0 Detail

3.1 Education and Higher Education

3.1.1 The Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children 2012

The concept of the "Virtual School Head for Children Looked After was first outlined in the White Paper" Care Matters: Time for Change (DCSF, June 2007). The role within Brent is a senior teacher working within the local authority, charged with ensuring improved educational achievements for this specific group, responsible for overseeing a coordinated system of support for children looked after. The role of the Virtual Head attending the Corporate Parenting Group is to ensure that looked after children's attainment, progression, attendance, exclusion and out of school learning is monitored and tracked to enable support to be put in place where needed.

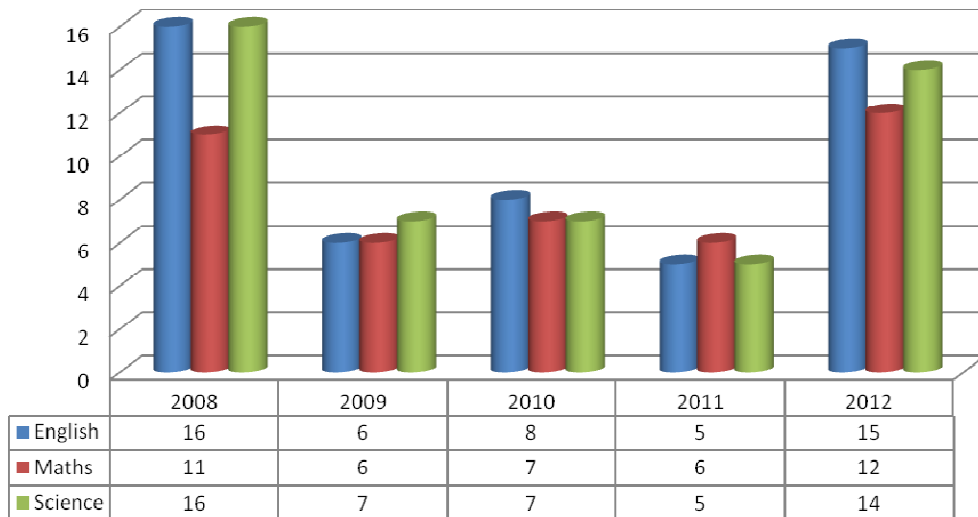
The current Brent Virtual School consists of the Virtual Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher, four LAC Advisory Teachers and a Business Support Officer. The school is 'virtual' in the sense that it tracks the educational progress of all Brent LAC wherever they are placed and collates and monitors data for this cohort like a school would.

The team also ensure children and young people partake in the same cultural and educational experiences as other children in the community through educational trips, arranging extra curriculum lessons, for example, booster classes, reading days, taster day experience at Cambridge University and organise the Celebration of Achievement Day each year which is held in December.

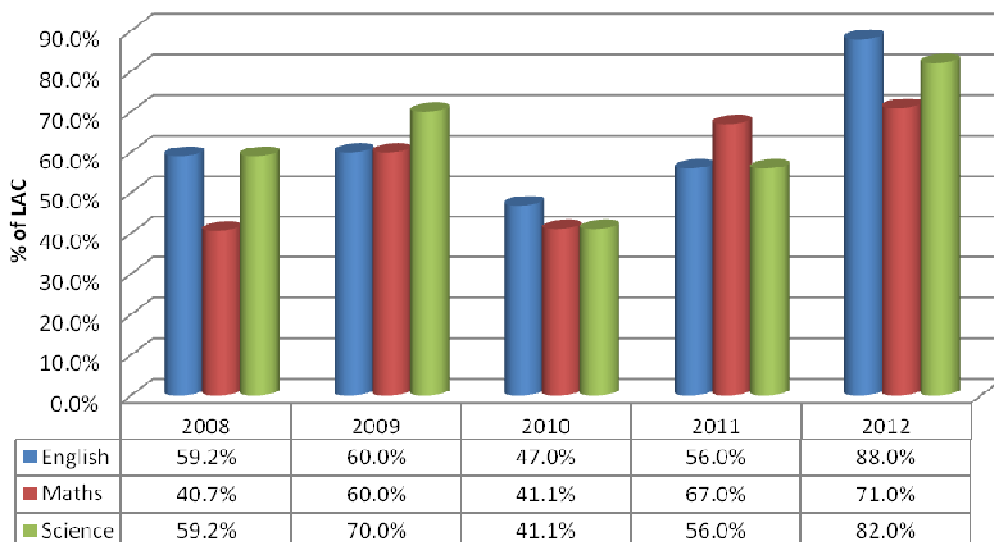
3.1.2 Outcomes for LAC at Key Stage 2 educational attainment of 11 year old

The information on the educational attainment of 11 year old looked after children at Key Stage 2 and the % of LAC achieving passes at level 4 or above in English and Maths is listed in the below chart. The 2012 cohort consisted of 17 looked after children. Chart 1 below shows the cohort of looked after children over the years since 2008.

Numbers of LAC achieving level 4 or above in English, Maths & Science



% of LAC achieving level 4 or above in English & Maths



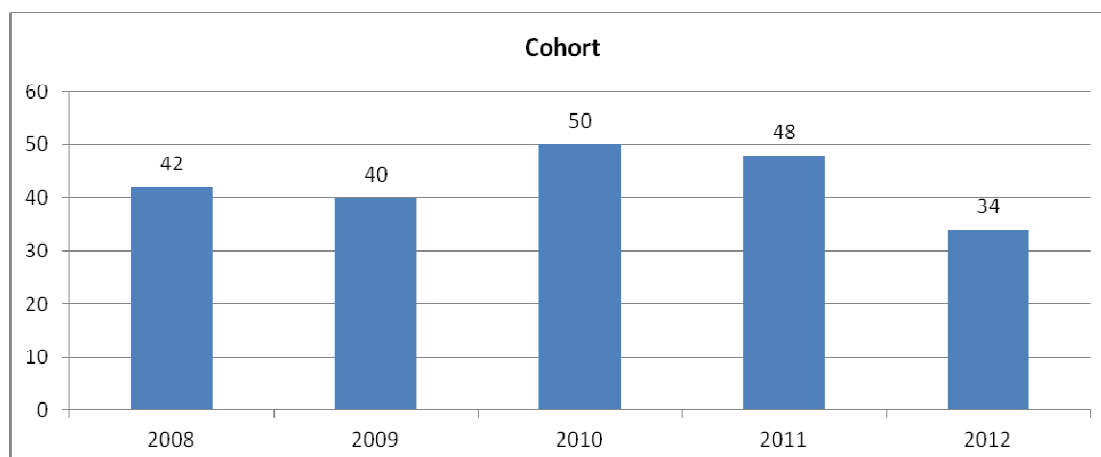
3.1.3 LAC Outcomes at Key Stage 4 educational achievements of 16 year

This relates to the educational achievements of 16 year old looked after children by Brent for the academic year ending July 2012.

Performance is measured by the following indicators:

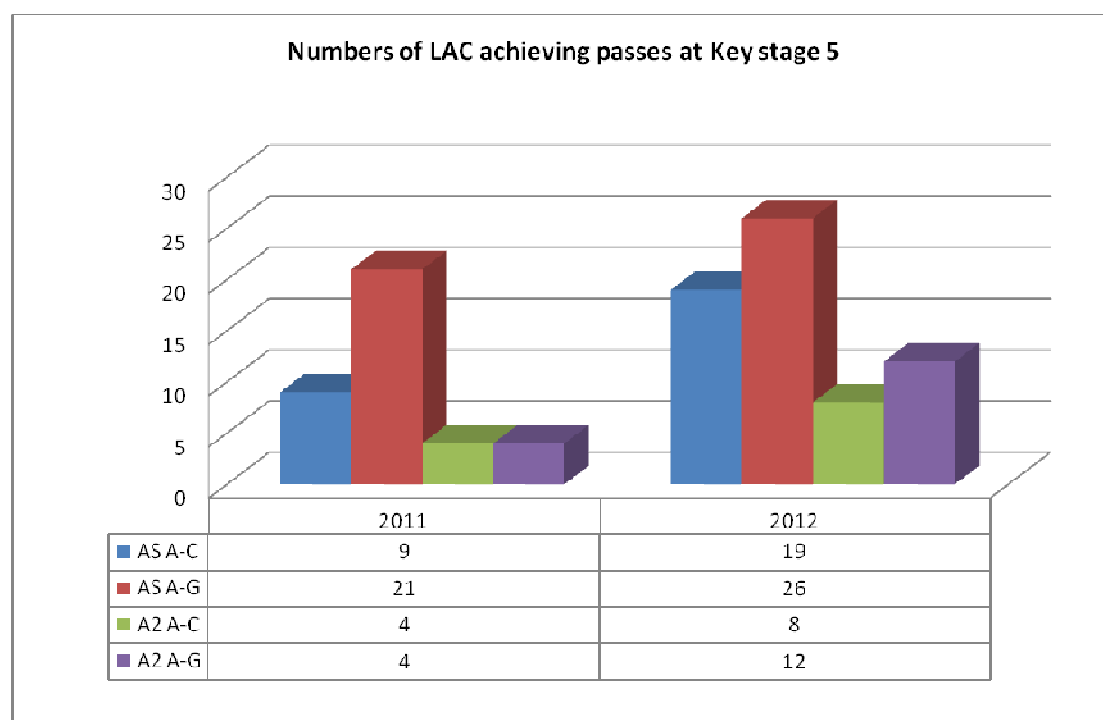
- % of LAC 16 year olds achieving the equivalent of 5+ A*- C GCSE's incl. English & Maths
- % of LAC 16 year olds achieving the equivalent of 5+ A*-G GCSEs
- % of LAC 16 year olds achieving the equivalent of 1+ A*-G GCSEs

The 2012 cohort consisted of 34 looked after children aged 16 years old. 28 had been looked after continuously for 12 months or more and 6 were looked after for less than one year. Chart below shows the cohort of looked after children over the years since 2008.



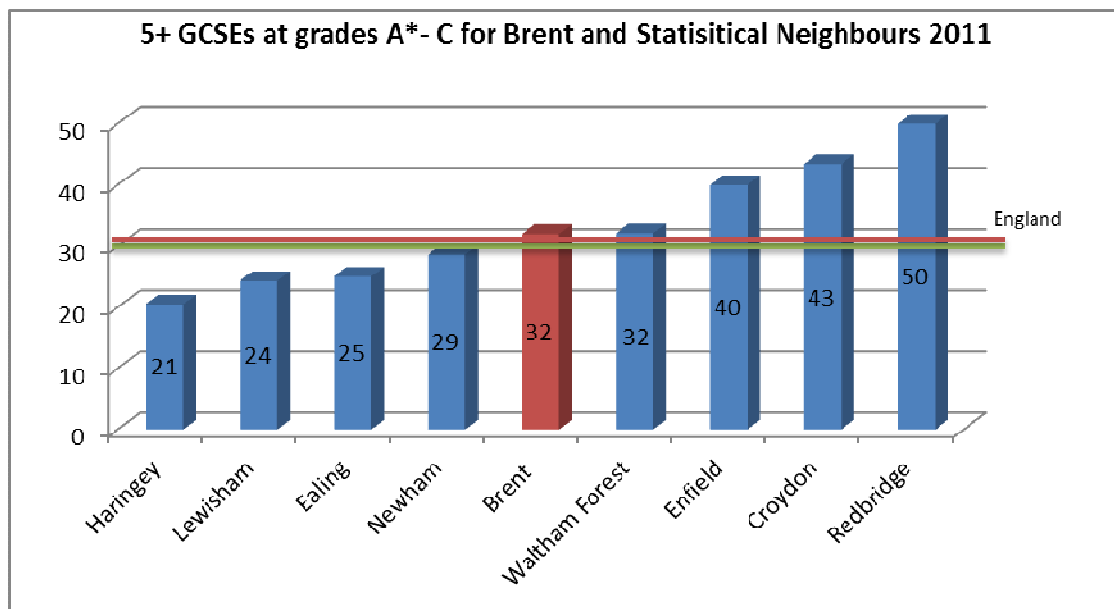
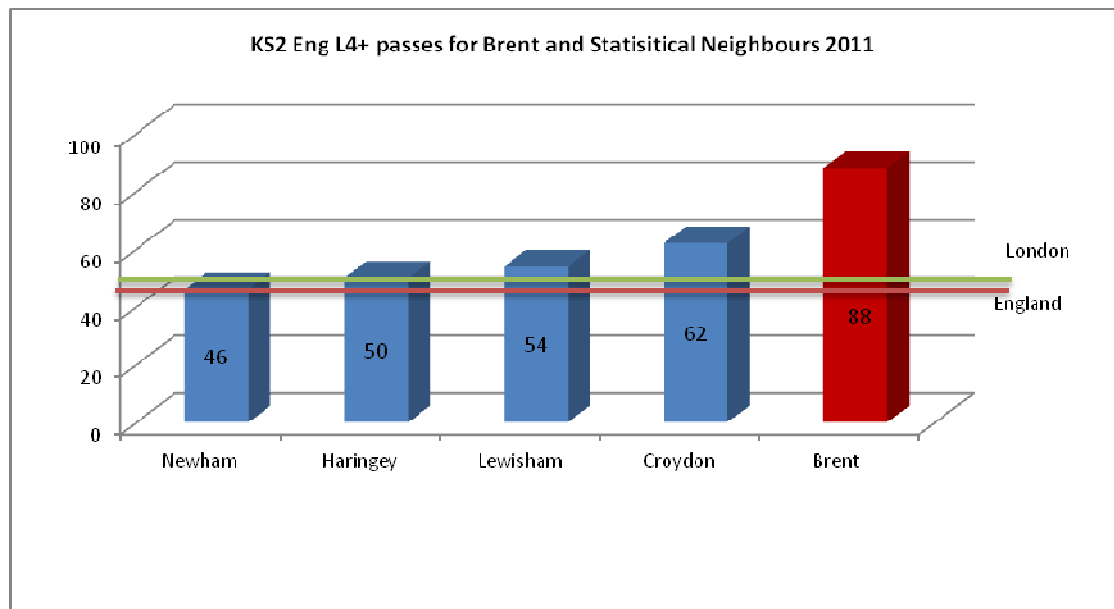
3.1.4 KS 5 (Year 12-14) Outcomes at AS & A2 level (A Level finals) 16 – 18 years of age

This stage is the last stage of secondary education for members attending sixth form. Both AS and A” level combined form the GCSE Advanced Level qualification.



Comparative data for Statistical Neighbours and National averages

The two charts below show a comparison of Brent’s performance at KS2 English and GCSE 5+ A-Cs showing London and England averages as well.



3.1.5 Personal Education Plan

A Personal Education Plan is a document that establishes clear targets and actions to respond effectively to each child's needs and provides a continuous record of their achievements. All local authorities have a duty to promote the educational achievements of looked after children. A Personal Education Plan should be started within 20 days of a child becoming looked after. The document is completed in school with the child/young person in attendance, social worker, carer and designated teacher. The meeting will draw out the child's favourite lessons at school, who the child see as the most helpful person in school, how the child feels, the report from the school on the current levels of achievement and attainment from previous tests. Any current educational targets are set and factors affecting educational progress. PEP's should be reviewed every six months.

There are 94% of children and young people have a current PEP as of November 2012.

3.1.6 Young People Attending University

Over the last three years there has been an increase each year of young people attending university. With the introduction of higher student tuition fees in 2012 this has not decrease the % of young people entering university in 2012/2013.

Year	2010-2011	2011-2012	Increase from previous year (10/11)	2012-2013	Increase/ Decrease from previous year (11/12)
Total Number attending Higher Education	24	29	20.8%	31	6.9%
Degree Course	21	26	23.8%	30	15.4%
HND	3	3	0.0%	3	0.0%
First Year	6	9	50.0%	11	22.2%
Graduated during this period	4	9	125.0%	0	N/A

3.1.7 Brent's Apprenticeship Programme

Brent Council piloted a programme in 2009/10, the Brent Apprenticeship Scheme. The purpose of this programme was to assist 8 local young people and care leavers the opportunity to work for 1 year in various department within the council. This was paid work for 1 year with an NVQ qualification at the end of the period.

- The initial apprenticeship pilot in 2010/2011 there were 6 care leavers people completed the training programme.
- Two care leavers from this cohort had a six week work experience within the council.

To assist 16 to 18 year old in our care into Brent Council Apprenticeship Programme or the Government own apprenticeship programme the Care Planning Service, Brent Employment Initiative Officer and the College of North West London devised a local pre apprenticeship programme at the college to assist our young people back into structure education at a vocational level. This was pilot in May 2012:

- In May 2012 13 young people registered at the College of North West London in a joint partnership with Brent Council to complete a pre apprenticeship programme.
- Five students achieved and have been awarded a certificate in the following qualification - BTEC AWARD IN WORKSKILLS (ENTRY 3).

- 2 young people in care to Brent were successful in applying for the ring-fenced apprenticeship post in children services. One has now commenced employment for 12 months in the council.
- The young person at the end of the year 2012/2013 will be awarded a NVQ2 Apprenticeships.

3.1.8 Fixed 4 Your Future' (F4F) Project

Background

Fixed 4 Your Future' (F4F) Project is funded through the Big Lottery (BIG) Youth in Focus funding stream. The Lead Partner is Prospects Services Ltd, who currently delivers the main Connexions contract on behalf of the Council. Other partners include Brent Care Planning, Youth Offending Service, Genesis Community Foundation, First Rung, BANG Edutainment and the College of North West London.

Project Description

Across 3 years (2011/14), the project will work with 240 care leavers or those who have left Youth Offenders' Institutions, helping them to develop their personal effectiveness, resilience and employability skills so that they can achieve their goals and cope better with life events. The project is open to young people between the ages of 15 and 25. Young people who have been on remand in a YOI are not eligible for the programme.

- Over the first 6 months 76 young people were referred to the F4F project;
- 61 by Brent Care Planning and 16 by the Youth Offending Service.
- 66 of these young people actually joined the project after initial discussions with one of their life coaches.
- 10 young people decided that F4F was not for them or were unable to take part e.g. because of custody issues or because they were settled in a college or an apprenticeship and did not feel they would benefit from the project

The breakdown of the 66 participants is as follows:

Year 1 (July 2012)	Male	Female	Total
Care Leavers	33	16	49
YP leaving YOIs	17	0	17
TOTAL	50	16	66

3.1.9. Year 1 evaluation

The F4F project has conducted a range of evaluation exercises including young people attending the youth committee feedback on the project conducted at the end of August 2012; partner evaluation conducted at the F4F steering group in September 2012 and further feedback from a young person attending the steering group from the youth committee; evaluation from life coach meetings; an evaluation form exercise sent to all F4F colleagues including those in delivery partner agencies not attending the steering group, operations group attendees and social workers and other key workers from care planning, the youth offending service and Connexions Personal

advisers; finally individual meetings with managers within care planning and the YOS.

3.1.10 Some of the key recommendations from this evaluation:

- The location of some activities are reviewed at the end of year 1 to ensure participants can attend activities
- Activities are tailored to support those still in EET as well as those who are NEET i.e. not just in the day during the week
- Lifeskills courses are 'badged' in a more attractive manner (life skills does not mean anything to a young person, if it does it conjures up a negative idea)
- Organise more engagement and achiever events; engagement events to showcase the benefits of the project to wider range of young people within care planning and the YOS and achiever events to celebrate the progress of participants on the project.

The evaluation of year 1 of the project will lead to agreeing new partnership agreements with delivery partners for year 2 based on any adjustments made as a result of recommendations made by young people and agreed by the steering group as part of the year 1 evaluation.

3.1.11 NEETS

NEET is a government acronym which refers to 16 – 24 year olds who are currently not in education, employment or training. Nationally, at the end of 2011 there were 154,900 (8.1 per cent) 16 to 18 year olds were NEET. The characteristics of young people who are NEET include those with few qualifications and those with a health problem, disability or low aspirations

In Brent we ensure a continued focus on LAC Not in Education, Employment or Training through the work of Connexions, Prospects, Fixed for Your Future Project and new providers, for example Skills UK based in Brent. This work with the various providers assists to develop support, advice and guidance for young people who are EET, including high achievers, in order to assist them to develop their educational or career potential.

This is achieved through having a teacher in the Virtual School who will monitor and track the progression of looked after children/leaving care at post-16 transition. This monitoring is reviewed in a bi monthly tracking meeting with Care Planning to review progress with this cohort. A sub group is running parallel with Connexion, Projects, and F4F Project to ensure those young people who need intensive one to one work is in place.

	Total Number of YP in Group	NEETs	% NEET
Aged 16-18 (LAC)	89	7	7.9%
Aged 18-21 (FR)	158	42	26.6%
Aged 21+ (FR)	29	2	6.9%
Totals	276	51	18.5%

Data analysis on the 7 young people in this cohort of 16 – 18 who are NEET are either in secure, prison, just released from prison, new UCAS, learning difficulty.

Data analysis on this cohort of 42 young people 18 – 21 who are NEET are mothers, non engagement, mental health, learning difficulties, prison.

3.2 Health

The safeguarding and looked after children inspection of October 2011 found that health outcomes for looked after children in Brent were “inadequate”. The primary areas of concern were the timeliness and the quality of health assessments. The LAC Health team sits within Community Services Brent, one of the community directorate’s. The roles of the Designated Doctor and Nurse for LAC is to provide both a strategic and clinical response to the needs of Looked after Children

In response to the inspection findings, a Health Action Plan was developed by Brent Primary Care Trust. There is now a monthly meeting held by the Care Quality Commission to review and monitoring the plan. There also is a monthly Joint Working Group held with health and Children Services to review progress of the plan.

A major area that was highlighted by the Ofsted Inspection was the quality of the Health Assessments. To address this concern a range of improvements were put into place by the health providers and NHS Brent commissioned a number of audits of the quality of health assessment which took place in April, August and November 2012. The conclusion of these audits is the quality of HA has improved significantly. One remaining area for further development is to improve the services to those children and young people placed out of borough. The auditing noted that the quality of HA for these children was not always of a sufficiently high quality. Health has agreed that in order to ensure consistency of quality health assessments that the Brent LAC Health Team should undertake the Out of Borough LAC health assessment.

The Sexual Health Nurse has now been in post for 1 year. This is a health funded post. The remit of this post is to reduce teenage pregnancy within the cohort of LAC and care leavers and assist around sexual health, harm reduction, healthy life styles. NHS Brent will continue to fund the sexual health post on a wider health promotion basis and for the post to be integrated into the LAC health team until March 2013. Continues funding will be sought for this post.

The data has been analysed and there were 11 children born from LAC/care leavers and 3 terminations in the year 2011/12. Since the Sexual health Nurse has been in place there have been so far this year 4 children born to LAC/care leavers and 3 expectant mothers. Further analysis will occur at the end of the second year to review the progress.

3.3 Participation of children and young people

Care in Action (CIA) is Brent’s established Children in Care Council which emphasises the participation and views of children and young people in care. The foundational structure of participation combines the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004 and Care Matters: Time for Change White paper, including the Pledge for children in care and care leavers

Brent Care in Action encourages young people to take an active part in the shaping the services they use in order to make improvements and respond to their needs. The work of the Participation Officer workers is to provide a forum for the children and young people in care to share their views and to make decisions. They group work on campaigns about being in care and hold events. They have fun and enjoy activities for example visiting Wembley Stadium, going into central London.

CIA meets twice a month and the age range is 12 to 16. There is a separate Junior Care in Action for the young people in care aged 7 – 12 in Brent which meets once a month.

A young person in care sits on Brent's Youth Parliament.

There are regular meetings between representatives of Care in Action, with the lead member, Director of Children's Services, and Assistant Director. A group of children and young people from CIA attend the Corporate Parenting Group, which is chaired by the Lead Member and contains senior officers as well as cross party member's representative.

3.4 Participation with Health

Care in Action groups has been working on the first draft of the health card with health. The aim of this card is to capture health information to direct child/young persons to local health services. A first draft health card was shared with health and further work is planned to develop this card.

LAC Nurse is now attending on a regularly basis at the Junior Care in Action Group. Topic that are to be discussed in future meetings are advice on:-

- healthy and appropriate relationships and good sexual health;
- good physical health including taking regular exercise and eating a balanced and nutritious diet; less harmful use of substances including alcohol, drugs and tobacco;

3.5 Junior in Care in Action

A group of children from Junior Care in Action and the LAC Participation Officer's have devised a DVD and booklet about how it feels for child/young person going into care. There was a formal launch of this at Tricycle Theatre on 31 October 2012. This was developed in response to the Junior CIA identifying last year that children needed "something" to be given when they go into care.

Young people continue to meet with the Head of Care Planning and Children in Care, Director of Children Services, Assistant Director and Lead Member in ensure there is an open dialogue checking and monitoring service delivery through meetings with Head of Service; DCS; AD and Lead member.

3.6 Brent Pledge

In July 2009, children and young people in the care of Brent Council participated in a consultation event to identify the key areas they felt were needed in a Brent Pledge. The general aim of the Brent Pledge Survey is to check that Brent Council is fulfilling their commitment to providing Looked After Children and Care leavers with the best care in all areas of their lives.

In April 2010, the Brent Pledge was launched as a commitment from Brent Council to all children and young people in care and those leaving Brent care.

This year, the Brent Pledge questionnaire was conducted with members of the Care in Action members and their Social Workers. There were 14 children and young people who completed the questionnaire and four Social Workers and Social Work

Assistants. The findings were that eight promises were fully met, eight were partially met and four were not met.

The department is to take forward the findings of the outcome of the review of the Pledge with a clear action plan. One of the major concerns was around young people's frustration about being able to keep in touch with their social workers. Already there are plans from December 2012 for social workers to have mobile phones to keep in contact via text or phone. A group of children and young people will attend a Staff Forum with all staff to share their feedback from the Pledge. With **Promise 20:** *When the time comes for you to leave care, we will listen to your views and provide the services and support you need to help you become an independent adult (including accommodation, further/higher education, training and employment).* There will be greater flexibility with young people preparing to leave care through the direct work of Connexions Advisors/Prospects based within the service, Fixed for Your Future Project and new providers for example Skills UK based in Wembley.

3.7 Housing

All local authorities have an obligation to provide housing to those young people who were looked after and who are now designated as care leavers. A monthly joint meeting with housing and care planning ensures that all care leavers have options around their future housing needs. The appropriate young people are nominated for housing at 17.5 years of age and are generally housed by the time they are 18 1/2 yrs. The data below shows those young people who obtained their own tenancy:

3.7.1 2011

Young People 18 + placed in their own housing during 2011 were 66.

3.7.2 2012

Young People 18+ waiting to be housed is 33.

Young People as of November 2012 offered own tenancy is 51

There is a recent complication as a result of new immigration legislation which was introduced in August 2012. This has the effect of allowing young people (and in fact families) to stay legally in the UK, but prevents them from gaining access to benefits (and therefore public sector housing). This means that there is a small, but increasing number of care leavers (unaccompanied minors) who are neither entitled to housing nor to the benefits to pay for it. The legal and financial implications of these changes are currently being explored further with Counsel advice being sought.

3.8 Children's Social Care Transformation

The Children's Social Care Transformation Project was one of the One Council programmes and reported to the Council Project Management Office Board. The background to this project was that Children's Social Care has been facing a variety of pressures for many years, from changes in government policy, legal judgements, increasing demands and financial pressures. Children's social care implemented a previous Invest to Save (I2S) programme (2007-10) which was successful in developing services for children on the edge of care, made significant progress in reducing the numbers of Looked after Children (LAC) at the time from statistically higher numbers and improving both the quality and cost of the range of care placements. Numbers of LAC had grown to over 400 in 05/06 and cost of individual placements was also increasing. In addition at the time, despite budget increases in previous years, there was in respect of external placements, a £3.9m overspend in 06/07.

3.9 As a result of the above I2S programme, in real terms in taking into account inflation, as at the end of March 2009, the department had spent £1.9m less on children's care placements than at pre the I2S years (March 2007). However, despite this decrease

in actual expenditure, the outturn for children's placement costs at the end of March 09 was still almost £1.3m over budget for the following reasons – (i) the budget set for children's placements assumed for all I2S targets to be met; (ii) the overarching target set at the outset of I2S was for the department to reach a decrease of children in care to 300; (iii) despite intensive input between 2007-10 and various attempted projects, there was unfortunately no increase in the overall total of Brent foster placements and there was in fact a 22% decrease. As a consequence, there was continued heavy reliance on Independent Fostering Agency placements.

Despite successes of the I2S programme, events in Haringey, made public in November 2008, and the Southwark Judgement (Law Lord ruling that obliges children's services to provide accommodation and support to homeless 16 and 17 – year olds) led to significant increases in activity for children's social care both in Brent and nationally.

3.10 There were, therefore, clear reasons to continue some form of transformation programme in order to reprioritise and refocus the changes required in light of government policy, anticipated future government budget reductions and the increasing demands upon services. In order to reach decisions as to what the new transformation project needed to include and in line with the formation of the One Council Programme, the result of the I2S programme were critically analysed to understand where the priorities at the time needed to be focussed in order to achieve both further and continuing improvements and efficiencies. A number of key areas were therefore identified and the Children's Social Care Transformation (CSCT) was set up in April 2010 designed to focus on progressing the improvement of the previous I2S, to drive root and branch improvements specifically within Brent Fostering Service and to achieve improvements and efficiencies.

3.11 These areas formed Work Streams as described below –

- **Fostering** – focussed upon increasing the number of in-house foster care placements and reducing the expenditure upon IFAs.
- **Residential** – reduce the numbers and costs of residential accommodation through contract/supplier reviews.
- **Semi Independence** – reductions in the cost of semi independent provision by increasing the number of Brent Shared Houses and reducing the support costs with providers, particularly in relation to 18+ care leavers.
- **Post LAC Resources** – reduce expenditure on post LAC resources through a review of eligibility, allowances and support offered to carers.
- **Crisis Intervention and Support Team (CIST)** – to focus the service in line with locality based working, legislative changes and to enhance its effectiveness with young people on the edge of care.

3.12 The project concluded in April 2012 and has delivered successfully against the majority of its objectives. In particular, the project has delivered: –

- **Implementation of the concept** of demand management and affordability in conjunction with responding to increased service demands
- **A continuing targeted approach** for the move on of LAC to lower cost provision in conjunction with care plans. This is particularly relevant to the move on from Independent Fostering Agencies and residential provision.

- **Increase in the in house fostering resources.** The number of Brent foster placements has increased by 30% from 81 in Aug 10 to 115 in Jan 12.
- **A targeted approach to the move on of 18+ care leavers** to their own tenancies and the maximising of benefits which has resulted in semi independent expenditure being reduced by £420k from 10/11 to 11/12.
- **Reduction in unit costs** of residential placements by 9% and semi independent placements by 14%.
- **Cost and volume negotiations** with 5 residential providers which has achieved unit cost reductions in 11/12 totalling £167k.
- **Clear criteria for the eligibility** for post LAC resources

3.13 The above deliverables are now a part of the core business and practice of the department with continuing clear tracking and reporting mechanisms and in place. Ownership of the above deliverables now sits with the relevant Heads of Service with the overall tracking and monitoring by the Commissioning and Resources Team in conjunction with the finance business partner, who will report to a monthly placements monitoring meeting within CSC and to the Strategic Finance Group.

4.0 Summary

4.1 The service developments for the looked after children service are largely contained within Brent's Corporate Parenting Strategy, which also provides an analysis of how well the council is meeting its responsibilities to children and young people in care. The strategy will increasingly focus on planning for those children who are 'on the edge of care'. Good outcomes cannot be achieved without commitment by the Elected Members and the active participation and engagement of children and young people, practitioners, partners, parents and carers. The importance of participation and partnership in improving outcomes for looked after children is essential within a Corporate Parenting Strategy.

4.2 Over the last 12 months there have been significant improvements to the service delivery of Looked after Children:

- **Participation** – Brent's Pledge has been reviewed and there has been positive outcome with 8 pledges fully met, 4 partially met and 4 not. Those 4 not met will be addressed via works mobiles for social workers to have quicker access to the children and young people will be in place from December 2012. Care in Action will attend staff forum to raise their profile and the Pledge. A Looked After Child sits on Brent's Parliament. The group developed, "voice over" a DVD that will now be available for all children entering care. Health have funded a part time Participation Officer post until March 2013
- **Health** – there has been a substantial improvement in the quality of health provision to LAC since the Ofsted Inspection in 2011. Health Assessments have been audited and the outcome is that the quality has improved since the inspection in 2011. Further work is still required with those children placed outside the borough. Health has an action plan to address this. Early indicators are that the Sexual Health Nurse is engaging with hard to reach young people around harm reduction through reducing sexual diseases, pregnancy.
- **Education/Economic wellbeing** – improvements in the Education Attainment of LAC continue with LAC achieving in English at KS2 SATS (after

11) 88% compared to all Brent at 84%. The percentage of LAC achieving at KS2 level 4 or above in English, Maths and Science has increased over the last three years outcomes. There have been increases in young people entering higher education and university in 2012. A % rise each year over the last three years. There is a care leaver working in the council for 1 year through Brent's apprenticeship programme. The 3 year Big Lottery Funding through Fixed for your Future Project has now been in place for 1 year and has had some success with hard to engage young people through getting them back into some form of education or training. Work from the College of North West London on independent skills will assist young people transitions into adulthood.

- **Children's Placements** – the work of the Children's Social Care Transformation Project and Brent's Placement Service have resulted in an increase of in house foster carers to 122. This will ensure that children and young people are placed within their community and will still be able to attend their school and local links. This keeps them in contact with birth family and siblings. There will be a financial saving with less reliance on Independent Fostering Placements.

4.3 Area for Further Development

- **NEETS** – Young people are suffering disproportional in the current economic difficulties. A good education is in many cases the best unemployment insurance. Therefore, tighter tracking via the Virtual School post 16 teacher should ensure that no young person is dropping out of studies without a robust support plan in place. Success stories have been seen in other EEC countries via their apprenticeship programme systems. Often these days employers prefer a well trained apprentice, therefore, exploring new providers for example, Skills UK which is based in Brent to work with the hard to engage young person is being developed. Linking existing service providers for example, the work of F4F Project, Connexions, College of North West London, through an Economic Well-being Strategy Group will address those hard to reach NEET.
- **Family Justice Review** – On 3 November 2011 the Family Justice Review panel published its final report on the review on family justice. Since the tragic events in Haringey in 2008 the numbers of care cases have rose from 20,000 in 2008 to 30,000 in 2011. This lead to huge pressure on the family justice system and lead to unacceptably long delays. The FJR represents the biggest change to the family justice system since the Children Act 1989. FJR set out its key conclusions and recommendations for the family justice system. The key messages are speeding up care cases, committing to limit the length of care cases to 26 weeks, down from the current average of 55 weeks. To eradicate unnecessary delay the judiciary and the care profession will be expected to manage the workload of the court through "effective case management". Any delay may result in the local authority being sanctioned via fixed costs orders for non compliance. It is expected that the primary legislation will be in place by the end of 2013. These major changes will require Brent to improve the quality and speed of assessment. As there is a shortage of experienced social workers in London this may result in less experienced social workers being responsible for decision making in complex cases. This judicial modernisation progress is part of a wider drive for reforms that crucially includes significant change in social work practice arising out of Professor Monroe's reforms. The reforms to the system of family justice at the same time as the reforms from the Monroe around child protection need to ensure that the social work provision in Brent has the skills and capacity to encompass the changes.

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