



**Children and Young People Overview and
Scrutiny Committee
10 October 2013**

**Report from the Acting Director of
Children and Families**

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

Corporate Parenting Strategy

1.0 Summary

1.1 The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations effective from the 1st April 2011 introduced a requirement to provide an annual report on the outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC). The aim of this report is to evidence the progress being made towards improving the outcomes for LAC in order to narrow the gap in the outcomes of LAC and those of children in the wider population. The first of these reports was produced in December 2012.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

3.0 Corporate Parenting

3.1 The concept of Corporate Parenting was introduced through legislation 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 and the Assistant Director, Children's Social Care
- Regular meetings between representatives of Care in Action (which is Brent's Council for Children in Care), with the lead member, Director, and Assistant Director
- Regular reports to scrutiny

- 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.

4.0 Service Provision

4.1 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 Officers, a Sexual Health Nurse Connexions/Prospects Intensive Workers and a Life coaches for F4F (Big Lottery Funded Project).

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

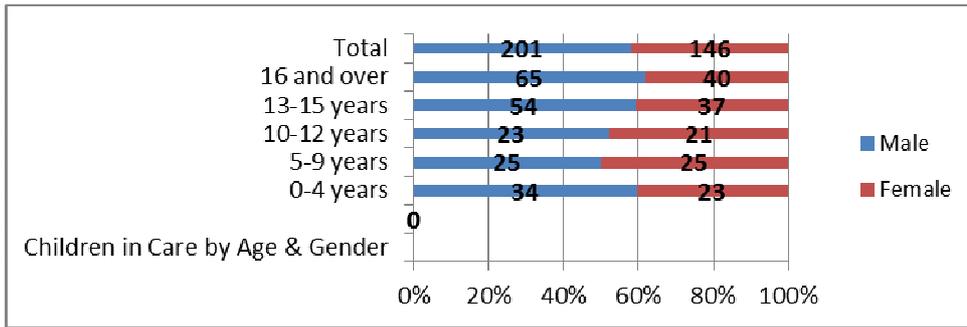
5.1 Numbers of children and young people in care

5.1.1 As of 31st March 2013 Brent had 347 children and young people Looked After. This contrast with 369 Looked After in 31st March 2012, which is in effect a 5.9% reduction. This represents 47.6 % LAC per 10,000 head of child population against the rate for statistical neighbours of 55 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 145 Care Leavers (18 – 24 years old) who are supported by the CPCIC service.

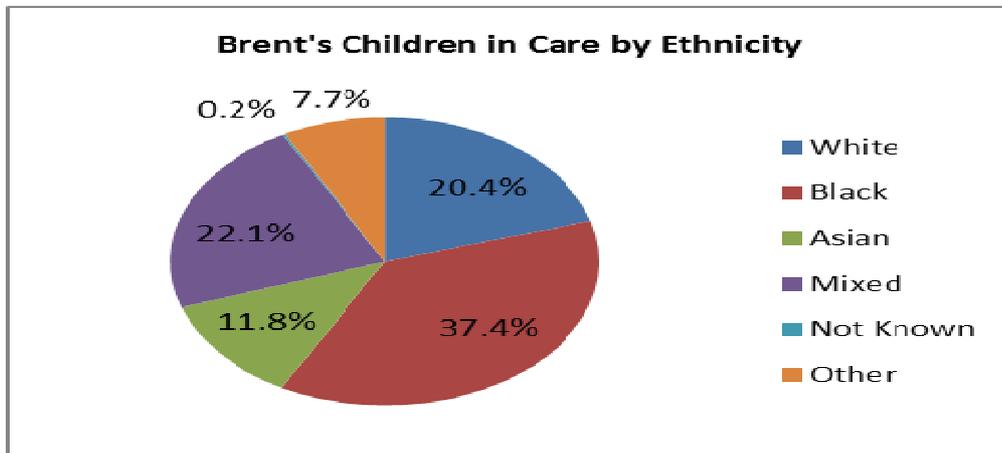
The gender of the LAC population consists of:

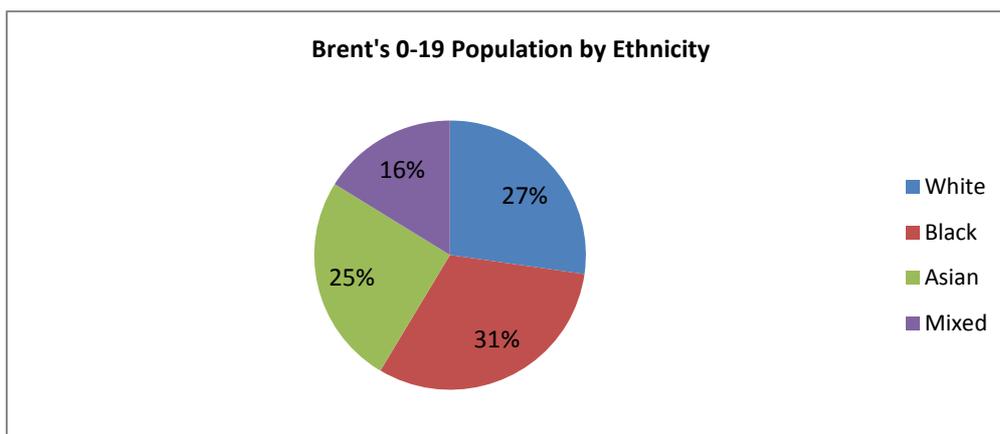
Age	Male	Female
0 to 4	34	23
5 to 9	25	25
10 to 12	23	21
13 to 15	54	37
16 and over	65	40
Total	201	146

Over 56% of the care population in Brent are aged 13 and over. There are 23 unaccompanied asylum seeking children in this number compared with 29 in March 2012.



5.1.2 The ethnic breakdown of children and young people in care, in descending order, are 37.4 % Black Caribbean, African & other children and young people from a Black background; 19.3 % White British, Irish and White Other; 11.8 % Asian and 22.1 % mixed parentage. The demographics of the Looked After populations however appear to be changing within Brent. Historically, Black children Looked After by Brent had always been the highest proportion by ethnicity type. Although this has remained the same, there has been a 6.6% reduction of Black children over the last two years, It should be noted there has also been a 8.2% increase in Asian children being looked after and 5% increase in White children being looked after by Brent. The demographics of the Looked After populations appear to be changing within Brent.





5.1.3 The number of care proceedings in the Department has remained relatively consistent at approximately 61 issued for 2010/2011, 74 for 2011/2012 and 57 public law proceedings and 3 other significant cases for 2012-13.

5.1.4 **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.

5.1.5 The department has a statutory duty to ensure there is compliance with this statutory requirement and this activity is monitored and reported to the social care management team on a monthly basis tracked each month. For the year ending 31st March 2013 97% of LAC Reviews complied with statutory time scales.

5.1.6 **Permanence**

Planning for permanent care underpins work with looked after children and their families, seeking to give a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity throughout childhood and into adulthood.

A range of options for permanence exists, all of which can deliver good outcomes for individual children and will reduce the numbers of children in care:

- For many children, permanence is achieved through a successful return to their birth family.
- For other children routes to permanence may include family and friends care, particularly where such care can be supported by a legal order such as a residence order, special guardianship order.
- Another important route to permanence is long term foster care.

- For children who are unable to return to their birth or wider family permanence is through adoption.

5.1.7 **Adoption**

There is a national focus on adoption due to the declining number of children being adopted and the length of time some children have had to wait for a family. The Adoption Service is taking action along with Looked After Children's social workers to reduce delay and increase the timeliness of the assessments of adopters and the timeliness of placing children with adopters.

5.1.8 There are a number of routes out of care for children. For many children the most suitable option for those that need a permanent home is adoption. The government has prioritised the adoption issue over the last 18 months and there have been developments in a number of related areas:

- Measuring timeliness of adoption decisions to ensure there are no delays in progressing adoption plans. In 2012-13 there were 19 adoptions of Brent children (compared to 9 the previous year). The average time taken from these children coming into care to being placed with their adopters was 565 days (compared to 955 days for the previous year's cohort). The current adoption projection for this financial year is that there will be 15 adoptions with an average time taken for these children to be placed reducing to 450 days. Brent now has clear tracking systems in place to ensure that those children with an adoption plan are prioritised without delay.
- Ensuring the supply of prospective adopter's increases to enable more children to be placed quickly in permanent families. A change to Adoption regulations (2013) has been made which requires Local Authorities to introduce a 2-stage assessment process for prospective adopters. This is an adopter led process and will reduce the risks of delays that were present within the previous system. Brent introduced our new 2-stage assessment process on 1st September 2013 and we are working closely with our partner boroughs within West London to ensure this is successful. The Adoption regulations (2013) also introduced the formal concept of 'fostering to adopt' – providing Local Authorities with the option of placing children swiftly with approved adopters on a fostering basis until the formal adoption process is concluded. This will be a preferred option for a small number of children and is actively considered alongside other placement choices for children that need accommodating.
- Considering how to improve adopter's access to support services once adoption orders are made. Adopters now have an adoption passport which enables their child to be prioritised for certain services. Within Brent our post-adoption support team maintain links to our adoptive families, providing advice and assessments of need for services where this is required.

5.1.9 **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 try and 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.

5.1.10 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. The use of Brent's own foster carers is always the first preference as they are considerably cheaper than Independent Fostering Agency placements and tend to be more local to Brent allowing for more continuity in terms of education, parental contact 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:

- **Placement Types as 31 March 2012**

➤ Independent Fostering Agencies	98
➤ Brent In House fostering	115
➤ Placed with relative or friend	35
➤ Residential	90

- **Placement Types as 31 March 2013**

➤ Independent Fostering Agencies	90
➤ Brent In House fostering	125
➤ Placed with relative or friend	35
➤ Residential	75

5.1.11 Placing children within their own community ensures continuity of their contact with birth family and siblings, friends, education, community links. In this way, the children's identity/emotional needs are being addressed rather than placing them away from their own cultural and emotional links. During the last 12 months great efforts have been made to place/move complex needs children from residential into specialist/highly supported foster care placement. The number of LAC in residential provision has reduced from **90** in March 2012 to **75** children in March 2013.

- **Placement Location as 31 March 2012**

➤ In Borough	158 (42.6%)
➤ Out Borough	213 (57.4%)
➤ Within Neighbouring Boroughs	97 (26.1%)
➤ Outside Neighbouring Boroughs	116 (31.3%)

- **Placement Location as 31 March 2013**

➤ In Borough	153 (44.1%)
➤ Out Borough	194 (55.9%)
➤ Within Neighbouring Boroughs	86 (24.8%)
➤ Outside Neighbouring Boroughs	107 (30.8%)

5.1.12 In Brent the numbers of LAC placed in residential provision has decreased over the year from 90 in March 2012 to 75 in March 2013. The Borough has supported the move for a number of LAC with complex needs into specialised foster placements to meet the complex needs of these children and young people.

5.1.13 **Staying Safe**

5.1.14 **Child Sexual Exploitation**

A multi-agency Child Sexual Exploitation Sub-Group of Brent's Safeguarding Children Board has been established to address the needs of children and young people who are at risk of or currently experiencing sexual exploitation. Its focus is prevention and protection. This group is addressing the risk within the LAC/Care Population.

5.1.15 **Definition of child sexual exploitation**

'Any involvement of a child or young person below the age of 18 years in sexual activity for which remuneration in cash or in kind is given to the child or young person or to a third person or persons. The perpetrator will have power over the child by virtue of one or more of the following: age, emotional maturity, gender, physical strength, intellect.' (**Tink Palmer, Barnardo's, 2001**)

5.1.16 There is a strong link between CSE and children who go missing. For some young people at risk of serious harm it is one of the 'push' factors in them running away from home and placements.

5.1.17 Children who are already deemed vulnerable, particularly those looked after by the Local Authority, are at disproportionate risk of being sexually exploited by older men who may they may view in certain circumstances as their 'boyfriends'.

5.1.18 In some cases children may be drawn into sexual exploitation by peers who are already Involved, and additionally, there appears to be a strong link between trafficked children and CSE.

5.1.19 **Children Missing from Care**

The current government statutory guidance on *Children Who Run Away and Go Missing from Home or Care* was published in July 2009. From this guidance, Brent Local Safeguarding Board developed a protocol for children who go missing from care. This protocol is designed to support the effective collaborative safeguarding response from all agencies involved when a child goes missing. It aims to provide guidance for assessing both the risk of the child going missing and the risk to the child when they are missing. The Protocol describes appropriate staff/agency actions to locate the child, to effect their return and to identify the issues which caused, and may continue to cause, the child to go missing.

Research has shown that:

- Every year approximately 100,000 (or 1 in 9) young people in the UK will run away overnight or on at least one occasion before the age of 16.
- 20,000 of them (or 1 in 5) will be at serious risk while they are away as they may be hurt or harmed, sleep rough or stay with someone they have just met.
- 1 in 10 young people run away before the age of 10; the majority of young people who will run away are in the 13- 15 year age group.
(The Children's Society, Jan 2010)

5.1.20 Recent high profile court cases including Rochdale and Oxford, and the report of the Office of the Children's Commissioner on Child Sexual Exploitation in gangs, all highlighted the vulnerability of children in care who go missing from their placement. The recent Ofsted thematic report on *Missing Children* published in February 2013 highlighted that some local authorities were inconsistent in applying and meeting the requirements of the statutory guidance *Children Who Run Away and Go Missing from Home or Care* (2009).

5.1.21 Brent's Local Safeguarding Board is currently reviewing our protocol/policies and risk assessments plans/tools. Brent Senior Management and the board is monitoring and interrogating data on children who go missing. Social workers are expected to complete risk management plans for individual looked after children and these plans are reviewed by managers on the level of risk. Missing from Care Meetings (Strategy Meetings) are being held with the police to review the risk management plans for those children who go missing.

5.1.22 Return interviews are being carried out with the child/young person when they return.

5.1.23 The service is analysing trends and patterns in relation to children in care who runaway particular attention should be paid to repeat 'missing

5.1.24 **Children Missing from Education**

Children who miss school are more likely to be at risk of offending, sexual exploitation, being victims of crime and drug misuse. In Brent the number of looked after children absent from school for 25 days or more was 22% in 2012/13.

5.1.25 **Gangs within the LAC/Care Population**

There are a small numbers of males in the Looked After population who are/were affiliated to gangs. At a Borough level, the recent report '*Gangs in Brent: An assessment of gangs in Brent and services for at risk young people and gang members to exit*', March 2013, provides background in terms of information about the nature of gangs and gang activity In Brent. There are 12 to 13 identifiable gangs in Brent with approximately 500 members between them, ranging from around 13 to mid 30's. To address the conflict with gangs in the borough the council has developed the *Pathway Multi Agency Partnership (PMAP)*. PMAP meetings provide a coordinated, visible and accountable partnership response for managing high risk gang members in Brent, and diverting them away from crime and into positive lifestyle choices. The purpose of the meetings will be to identify, monitor, divert and

disrupt high risk gang members in Brent through facilitating information sharing on referred gang members, their siblings and other family members, and ensuring that the most appropriate interventions are in place for them. Looked after children are discussed in this forum to reduce the risk they place themselves in. A small number of those in residential provision/unit have been placed out of Borough to keep them safe and address their allegiance to their gangs operating in their community.

5.1.26 During the year ending 31st March 2013, 10 looked after young people received a conviction or were cautioned or received a final warning. Comparisons to the previous year shows an increase by 1 looked after child.

Indicator	Outturn 10/11	Outturn 11/12	Outturn 12/13
Final warnings and reprimands and convictions of children looked after	2.3%	3.9%	4.4%

6.0 Education and Higher Education

6.1 The Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children 2012

6.1.1 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 current 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.

6.1.2 The current Brent Virtual School consists of the Virtual Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher, four LAC Advisory Teachers. 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.

6.1.3 The school monitors/supports 235 Brent LAC (of statutory school age) of which 60% reside out of Brent across the country. Approximately 30% of Brent looked after pupils have a statement of special educational needs which is more or less in line with the national LAC % but much higher when compared to the general population.

6.1.4 The Brent looked after population in 2012/13 was placed across 46 different schools/education settings in borough and 90 schools/education settings out borough. This shows the diverse number of education settings the virtual school has to liaise with in order to collect key information such as attendance, attainment and exclusion information.

6.1.5 Since April 2012, the Virtual School has been using an external company called Welfare Call who call schools daily to check on attendance and report daily absences

which can then be followed up. The data has enabled the Virtual School to provide monthly reports / data on all aspects of LAC attendance which in turn has helped us to focus resources, to intervene early and to provide a clear and simple attendance protocol for all staff working with Looked After Children.

6.1.6 Headline statistics for the 2012/13 academic year are:

- Overall LAC absence was 10.30%. The general Brent population school absence in 2011/12 was 4.81%.
- Of the above, 6.93% was authorised absence and 3.37% was unauthorised.
- Overall persistent absence for LAC (those who had total absence of 15% and above) was 20%. Persistent absence for the general Brent population is around 5%.
- 15% of LAC received one or more periods of fixed term exclusions.

6.1.7 The school 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. Activities are open to all LAC but are often age-group specific and although often dependent on local access, opportunities are offered for LAC outside Brent to participate where possible.

6.1.8 In the academic year 2012-13, the Virtual School ran over ten out of school activities for over 100 Brent LAC from Brent and across the UK, including trips to Cambridge University, Highgate School, Duke of Edinburgh outdoor activities, a Spoken Word drama activity led by the Brent Poet Laureate, Simon Mole and a week-long creative writing residential in Devon with Ealing LAC as part of the John Lyons Charity cross-borough project. In addition they ran the Year 10/11 GCSE Booster Classes and the 2012 Celebration of Achievement attended by over 250 children carers and staff.

6.1.9 OSHL DATA SEPT 2012-13

Activity	Date	Total LAC / Adults	Purpose	Funder
Cambridge University Taster Day Years 12/13 Realise Programme	Oct 012	17 LAC /; 3 Adults	Years 12/13 – Taster in Humanities / Sciences	Cambridge University
Highgate Chrysalis Project (1 x term)	Sep 2012 Mar 2013 May 2013	12 LAC / 6 Adults	Termly activities to promote ongoing education and raise aspiration to enter university – in conjunction with 6 other LA's	Highgate School
Duke of Edinburgh Programme (1 x 3 events)	Aug 2012 Feb 2013 Aug 2013	24 LAC / 4 adults	Hikes and an overnight residential with Ealing LAC to introduce the D of E Programme	John Lyon's Charity
Cambridge Taster Day Years 7,8,9 Realise Programme	April 2013	16 LAC / 13 Adults / Carers	Introduction to Social Sciences / interactive museum experience	Cambridge University
Synergy Theatre Project	August 2013	9 LAC 3 adults	Three-day Spoken Word / Drama + writing workshop + performance in front of an invited audience at the Brent Civic Centre, led by Brent Poet Laureate, Simon Mole	Synergy + John Lyons Charity
Arvon Creative Writing Workshop in Devon	August 2013	12 LAC 4 Adults 3 tutors	5-day residential writing workshop with Ealing LAC / teachers with Courttia Newland, Caroline Bird and Inua Ellams	John Lyon's Charity cross-borough project

6.1.10 LAC KS2/KS4 Performance

6.1.11 The table below shows the year on year KS2 and KS4 results for Brent looked after children. It is important to note that the LAC population is not a stable cohort group as children come in and out of care at different times. Each year the make up of the cohort group can vary considerably which explains some of the year on year fluctuations.

Indicator	Outturn 09/10	Outturn 10/11	Outturn 11/12	Outturn 12/14
Children in care reaching level 4 in English at Key Stage 2	47%	56%	88%	54%
Children in care reaching level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2	41%	67%	71%	54%
Children in care reaching level 4 in Science at Key Stage 2	41%	56%	82%	54%

Children in care achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and Maths)	20%	16%	15%	19%
Children in care achieving at least 1 A*-G (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4	73%	64%	77%	77%
Children in care achieving 5 A*-G (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4	43%	52%	44%	60%

6.1.12 Post 16

6.1.13 The Virtual School Post 16 Teacher monitors and supports approximately 65 care leavers in Post 16 education and 34 at university (figures correct at Sept 2013). A Level results for 2013 were very good, attributed to early intervention and support such as putting in additional tuition and offering pupils the option of having a Post 16 Personal Education Plan meeting at college.

AS & A Level (A²) Results for 2013

No of Post 16 LAC	AS Results, passed at Grades A-C	AS Results, passed at Grades A-G	AS Results Grade U
7	9	21	4
AS Subjects passed at grades A-E: Theology, Politics, Sociology, Maths, Economics, English Language, Government & Politics, Chemistry, English Literature, Drama & Theatre Studies, Law.			
No of Post 16 LAC	A2 Results, passed at Grades A-C	A2 Results, passed at Grades A-G	A2 Results Grade U
8	16	22	2
A2 Subjects passed at grades A-E: Media Studies, Drama, Art & Design, English Literature, Economics, Chemistry, Biology, Maths, Sociology, English Language, Psychology, French, IT, Physics.			

AS & A Level (A2) Results for 2013

Comparative tables

Year	AS		A Level A2	
2011	9 A-C passes	21 A-G passes	4 A-C passes	4 A-G passes
2012	19 A-C passes	26 A-G Passes	8 A-C passes	12 A-G passes
2013	9 A-C passes	17 A-G passes	16 A-C passes	22 A-G passes

6.1.14 Brent's Apprenticeship Programme

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

6.1.15 To assist 16 to 18 year olds into Brent Council Apprenticeship Programme or the Government's 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 structured education at a vocational level. This was piloted in May 2012:

- 6 care leavers people completed the initial apprenticeship training pilot in 2010/2011.

- Two care leavers from this cohort had a six week work experience within the council.
- In 2012/13 there was 1 young person successfully employed in Brent Early Years Service.
- This year the young people will be supported via a local apprenticeship provider during their time in the council.

6.1.16 Fixed 4 Your Future' (F4F) Project

Background

6.1.17 The 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 deliver 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.

6.1.18 Project Description

6.1.19 Across 3 calendar 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 or remain in a YOI are not eligible for the programme.

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

Year 2 (July 2013)	Male	Female	Total
Care Leavers	39	29	68
YP leaving YOIs	10	1	11
TOTAL	49	30	79

6.1.20 NEETS

6.1.21 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 who 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.

6.1.22 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. The improved number of EET is delivered through having a teacher in the virtual school tracking progression of high achieving care leavers at post 16.

6.1.23 This is delivered through having a teacher in the Virtual School who monitors and tracks 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 in parallel with Connexions, Prospects and the F4F Project to ensure that intensive work is available for the people.

6.1.24 See relevant data below for the years 2012 to 2013:

2012	Total Number of YP in Group	NEETs	% NEET
Aged 16-18 (LAC)	89	7	7.9%
Aged 18-21 Care Leavers)	158	42	26.6%
Aged 21+ (Care Leavers)	29	2	6.9%
Totals	276	51	18.5%

2013	Total Number of YP in Group	NEETs	% NEET
Aged 16-18 (LAC)	88	9	10.2%
Aged 18-21 (Care Leavers)	171	57	33.3%
Aged 21+ (Care Leavers)	26	8	30.8%
Totals	285	74	26.0%

6.1.25 Data analysis on the **9** young people in this cohort of 16 – 18 who are NEET in 2013 indicates that; they are either in secure accommodation, prison, just released from prison, new UCAS or have a significant learning difficulty.

6.1.26 Data analysis on the cohort of **57** young people within the age range of 18 – 21 in 2013 who are NEET indicate that they are a group comprised of young mothers, the long term non-engaged, young people suffering from mental health problems, those who have learning difficulties and young people in prison or recently released from prison.

7.0 Health

7.1 An OFSTED/CQC inspection of Safeguarding and Looked after Children Services in Brent in October 2011 judged that the 'being healthy' standard for Looked after Children (LAC) was inadequate. A remedial action plan was agreed between the Ealing Hospitals Trust (Integrated Care Organisation Brent – *the Provider*), NHS Brent / Brent CCG and Brent Council from 1 April 2012.

7.2 Current Situation

- Following a review of the service and in line with statutory guidance, the post of Designated Nurse and Designated Doctor for Looked After Children have been moved into the Clinical Commissioning Group.
- Discussions regarding geographical location of these children are being held and decisions will be made regarding health care for those children who are placed out of Borough. Commissioning arrangements will be secured to ensure that those children who are placed out of Borough receive their health care from the area within which they will be residing
- During April and May 2013 health file records were audited. All available health file initial assessments and review health assessments were reviewed (383 and a further 20 unaccompanied asylum seeking children).

7.3 Outcomes

- All the health files audited with the exception of three, were compliant with recognised good practice and complied with professional record keeping guidance and standards.
- There is an overall trajectory of improvement in health assessments, both initial and review health assessments and their resulting action plans.
- The quality of health assessments is being sustained most notably those completed in the last 6 months prior to this audit.
- The main reason as to why a 'good' under the new grading structure, cannot be awarded is due in part to the lack of information sharing across the partnership and from the lead agency, which is adversely affecting the quality of assessments.

Progress to Date

- Designated Nurse for LAC post is covered in the interim to ensure expectations from statutory agencies, commissioners and children and young people are met and all services (multi-agency) work effectively to improve outcomes for children and young people. NHS Brent CCG intends to recruit to the CLA post substantively.
- Joint working with partner agencies to develop a service model for delivery of this specialist service with skilled practitioners, with transparent governance ensuring quality.
- Agreement that the Designated Nurse will attend regular meetings and have a stronger presence at the Local Authority to foster excellent communication and joint working arrangements.

7.4 Being Healthy

	31st March 2011	31st March 2012	31st March 2013
Total Children looked after <i>for 12 months or more at the 31st March.</i>	255	253	227
Immunisations	58.8%	80.6%	78.4%
Teeth Checks	88.2%	87.3%	89.9%
Health Assessments	78.4%	98.8%	99.1%
Substance misuse	1.5%	1.2%	5.7%
Intervention offered	0.4%	1.2%	0.4%
Intervention taken	0.4%	0%	0.4%
C19 The Health of Children Looked After	83%	93%	94%

7.5 The above table details the numbers of looked after children looked after by Brent for 12 months or more at the 31st March. Over the last three years overall there has been an increase in the number of children who had their teeth checks, immunisations up to date and health assessments being carried. In 2011 overall 83% of children had their teeth checked, health assessments carried and immunisations all up to date and this has risen to 94% in 2013.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

7.6 The average number of Looked After Child cases open to CAMHS during 2012 and 2013 stands at 83 children and young people. Additionally, the Service provides regular consultations, advice and information to practitioners and carers to aid their work with children and families.

7.7 The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire is a short screening questionnaire for children and young people aged 4 to 16 years that gives information on emotional health, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer relationship problems and pro social behaviour. The higher the overall score, the more issues have been raised in the questionnaire. There has been an increase in the average SDQ score for LAC but these remains below the level of the national and statistical neighbour figures from 2010/11. 97% LAC have Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire completed on their emotional health

7.8 Research and experience also suggests that the health and educational needs of looked-after children are different from and greater than many other groups of children and young people. This has an impact on their ability to be parents as they are more likely than others to be unemployed, have more mental health problems, be expected to be independent and have little support.

7.9 Teenage Pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy rates are at their lowest since 1969, according to figures released by the Office for National Statistics on 27th Feb 2013.

They have now fallen by 34% from the baseline year of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy.

Office for National Statistics, 2013 www.statistics.gov.uk : The statistical data for rates of teenage pregnancy has declined steadily in Brent.

The challenge is to reduce rates of teenage pregnancy in Brent's looked after population. The Sexual Health Nurses based within the service have assisted in reducing this target for LAC over the last 3 years.

Age of Mother/Father	As at Dec 2011	Pregnancy Planned/Not Planned	2012	Pregnancy Planned/Not Planned	As at 15 th Sept 2013	Pregnancy Planned/Not Planned
14 to 18 years	5	1 termination 4 planned	3	1 termination 2 planned	1	Planned
19 to 21 years	1	planned	1	planned	4	Planned

8.0 Participation of children and young people

8.1 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 principle 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

8.2 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 etc.

8.3 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.
- The group is currently developing a website for all children looked after and care leavers.
- The group has been piloting subsidised gym membership for 16 year olds not in foster care.
- A Health Awareness Day was arranged in July by the group in partnership with health professional to promote health lifestyles.
- There was the annual Celebration of Achievement Ceremony held in December 2012 at the Holiday Inn in Brent at which various awards were presented.
- Young People are part of interview panels for interview of staff in the service

8.4 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.

9.0 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 1/2yrs. The data below shows those young people who obtained their own tenancy:

9.1 2011

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

2012

Young People 18+ waiting to be housed is **33**.

Young People offered their own tenancy during 2012 was **51**

2013

Young People 18+ waiting to be housed is **49**

Young People as of September 2013 offered own tenancy is **43**

9.2 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.

10.0 Family Assessment and Intervention Resource Team (Barnardo's/Brent)

10.1 The Children and Families Bill legislates for the outcome of the Family Justice Review. The expectation is that care proceedings cases, which currently take on average 54 weeks to complete, will be limited to 26 weeks, with a dedicated Family Court. The Freeman Family Centre based in Harlesden – a team managed by Barnardo's under a service level agreement and Brent Council, in partnership are developing a pre assessment service to reduce delays for children whilst at the same reducing risk for children.

10.2 The 'edge of care' arrangements will assist Brent's respond to these legal requirements and also reduce the need for costly expert assessments and residential family assessments during court proceedings.

10.3 The Family Assessment Intervention Resource Team will undertake pre-care proceedings, mainly for younger children: This involves assessment and intervention when care proceedings are under serious consideration. The families are likely to have younger children (or pre-birth) who are subject to a child protection plan. Currently there is no specific provision for intensive interventions with this group and it is proposed to put in place new arrangements which will either:

- support improvements in family functioning in order to divert children from care; or

- if care proceedings are required, enable proceedings to take place within 26 weeks as required by the Family Justice Review, thus ensuring permanency arrangements are made for the children without any delay.

11.0 Summary

11.1 A significant amount of progress has already been made in reducing the number of Looked After Children in Brent, improving outcomes for LAC and narrowing the gap between LAC and their peers. Ensuring LAC live in stable placements, within the local authority boundary with access to local services is crucial to improving outcomes and we remain relentless in our desire to narrowing the gap. Although the gap in outcomes between LAC and the rest of the population is narrowing, LAC still achieve below their ability and their peers. Looked After Children living in residential children's homes in particular, are more likely to achieve poorer outcomes. In Brent the numbers of LAC in residential has decreased over the year from 90 in September 2012 to 75 in September 2013. We have supported the move for a number of LAC with complex needs into highly supported foster placement to meet the complex needs of these challenging children.

11.2 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' and those young people moving into adulthood/independence. The work of the joint initiative between Barnardo's/Brent Care Planning should aim to reduce delays for children 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.

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

- **LAC Population** - the numbers of children looked after has continued to reduce over the last two years. There were 369 2012 and 347 in 2013. There has been a gradual decrease in the numbers of asylum seekers. There has been a reduction of LAC in residential from 90 to 75.
- **Participation** – Looked after Children in Brent participate with officers and members in a number of different ways. A Looked After Child sits on Brent's Parliament. There is both a junior and senior group for young people in care called Care in Action (CIA). The group have regular meetings with the Lead Member, Director and Assistant Director. There is attendance by the Care in Actions Groups at the 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. The group developed, a DVD that will now be available for all children entering care. The various groups are developing a healthy lifestyle pack for children entering care, a website for all children whether placed in borough or out of borough to access via a secured link. A joint initiative with health has resulted in funding through health for a part time Participation Officer post to take forward the health agenda around healthy lifestyle/options for

Looked after Children and Care Leavers. Looked after children participate in in the recruitment and selection of staff within the department.

- **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** – 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 2 year and has had some success with hard to engage young people through getting them back into some form of education or training.
- **Children's Placements** – the work of the 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 financially saving with less reliance on Independent Fostering Placements. This has also assisted in diverting complex children/young people away from high cost residential units to foster care. Further work is identified with a next cohort of children/young people placed in residential.

12.0 Child Poverty Implications

Looked after children tend to come from the most economically and socially deprived groups in society. Good corporate parenting aims to address this disadvantage. This is especially the case in relation to educational outcomes, which are a primary focus for the department. Research indicates that whilst looked after children generally suffer from worse educational outcomes than the general population, this disadvantage tends to be offset the longer the children/young people remain in care.

13.0 Priorities for development 2013/14

- **NEETS** – Young people are suffering disproportionately in the current economic climate. A good education is in many cases the best unemployment insurance. Therefore, tighter tracking via the Economic Well-being Strategy Group and Virtual School post 16 teacher should ensure that no young person is dropping out of studies without a robust support plan in place. There are good partnerships with providers addressing youth unemployment through, Bang (Harlesden based community project) Connexions, and College of North West London. The service will continue to work with Fixed 4 the Future to improve prospects for young care leavers as outlined earlier in this report.
- **Brent's Apprenticeship programme** – the programme is currently being reviewed corporately and by the LAC Service. This is due to the various departmental changes/structures within the council. There is still commitment by the council to take this initiative forward. The programme is only targeted for 16 to 19 years old and this LAC /Care Leavers group are mainly in education or higher education. Therefore, the cohort is small to target onto this programme.

- **Children at risk of sexual exploitation/gang involvement** – Brent Local Safeguarding Board, are taking the lead on this topic. Social workers and partners are expected to be aware of the risk factors for children being sexually exploited. The service has conducted an initial review focusing on the risks posed to those children in residential care. Some children have been identified as potentially at risk and these are being carefully tracked. A more detailed risk assessment is currently being conducted. Further training/collection, analysis and use of data and intelligence will assist in this process.
- **Health** – many post 16 year olds are ambivalent and will often dis engage with formal health assessment as they move into transitions into adulthood. We know that CLA are more at risk of suffering a number of health problems, especially mental health, substance misuse and early pregnancy. This service needs to look creatively at how best to ensure health is available and accessible to all children and to improve its interface with children and young people. We are looking at “in formal drop in sessions” for these young people to have a Health MOT (pre leaving care) around these health topics and healthy lifestyles/sexual awareness. The joint appointment of a Participation Officer (based in the Looked after Service) will support engagement for LAC and provide health information in a user-friendly way as advised by this group. A Care In Action meeting identified that it would be helpful to have a ‘health credit’ card with health information on the card directing LAC to services (telephone numbers and e-mail addresses).
- **Mental health and emotional needs**
Further analysis with the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire scores to be undertaken and use this to identify and assess the mental health needs of high scoring children looked after and offer them targeted interventions.
- **Responding to the Family Justice Review**
The service has put the FAIR and FAST teams into place to both respond to the requirements of the FJR and to ensure that only those children who really need to be, are accommodated by the authority. Ensuring that these teams deliver on these objectives is a key priority for the coming year.

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