



Corporate Parenting Committee
3 July 2014

**Report from the Strategic Director
Children and Young People**

Placement Stability

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 Placement stability is a key area of performance for Children's Social Care: Care Planning. Our aim is to secure consistent placements that meet the individual assessed needs of children looked after by Brent. We aim to support children and young people through to independent living or a return to family/friends, whichever is agreed within their Care Plan.

2.0 Detail

- 2.1 There are two key measures of placement stability; those with 3 or more placement moves within any given year and those who have been in the same placement for 2 years or more (having already been looked after for more than 2.5years). The measure of 3+ placement moves in a year measures every placement as a "move" regardless of the type of move or the reason. This means that a baby born in hospital (who becomes a looked after child) already is counted as having one move, a move to a Mother and Baby Assessment Unit would be a second move and if that child then returned to mother, that would be a third move. Detailed information is contained in the table below
- 2.2 The national figures reveal a general pattern that children below the age of one year often experience more than one placement, which is explained by a combination of factors, such as families being referred to Residential Family Centres for assessment, young babies being placed in emergencies, young mothers being unable to sustain parent and child foster placements, as well as the fact that a positive move to have a child "placed for adoption" still counts as a placement move.
- 2.3 Nationally, those children who were 13, 14, 15 and 16yr olds when they became looked after are the groups most likely to have 3 placements or more (13yrs – 21%, 14yrs – 22%, 15yrs – 24 % and 16yrs – 21%) (Department of Education, Improving Permanence for looked after children, September 2013).

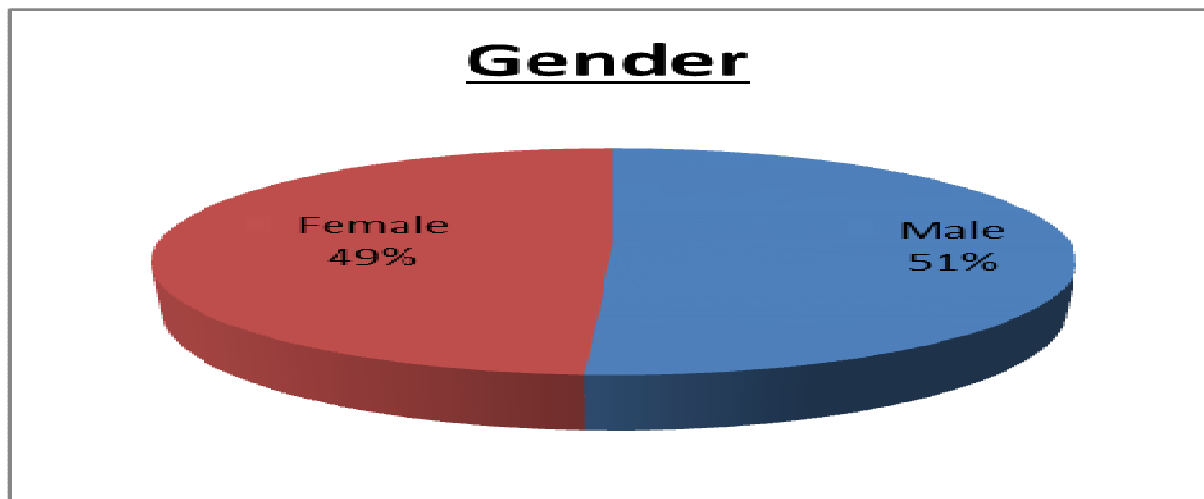
	3+ placement moves (NI62)		Stability of Placements (NI 63))	
	12/13	13/14	12/13	13/14
Brent	15%	15%	65.4%	53%
Statistical Neighbours	12%		67%	
National	11%		65.4%	

Table 1. Indicators for key placement move measures

- 2.4 The data evidences that Brent's 15% of 3+ placement moves is above statistical neighbours. The second indicator which measures the percentage of children in the same placement for over two years appears to have been affected by a recent drop in numbers of children, but this is being further analysed currently.
- 2.5 Age, gender and ethnicity of children who changed placements 3 or more times during the year ending is detailed below:

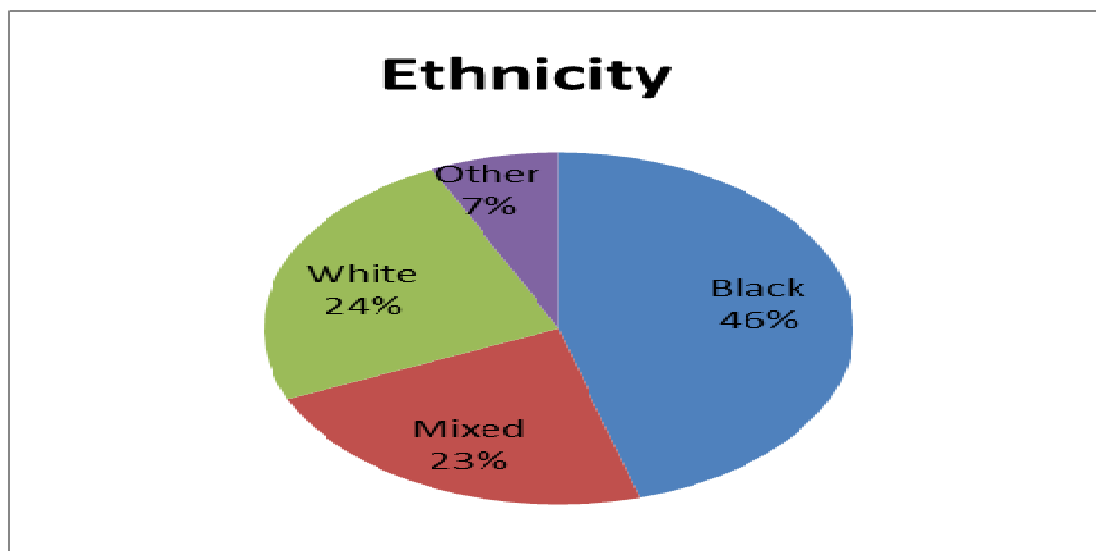
Gender

Female	28	Male	29
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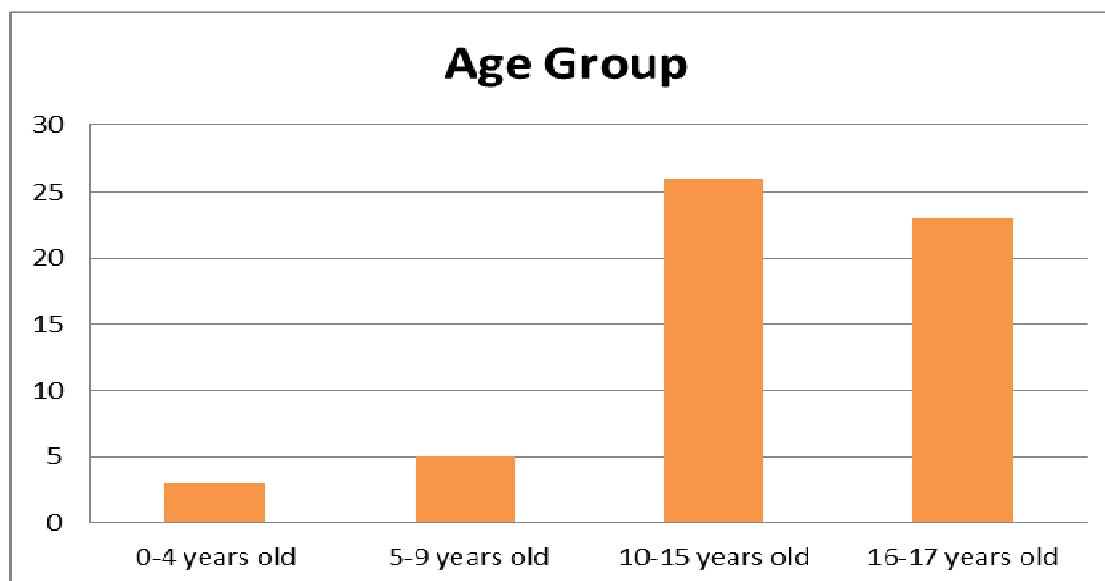
Ethnicity

Black	Mixed	White	Other
26	13	14	4



Age Groups

0-4 years old	5-9 years old	10-15 years old	10-15 years old
3	5	26	23

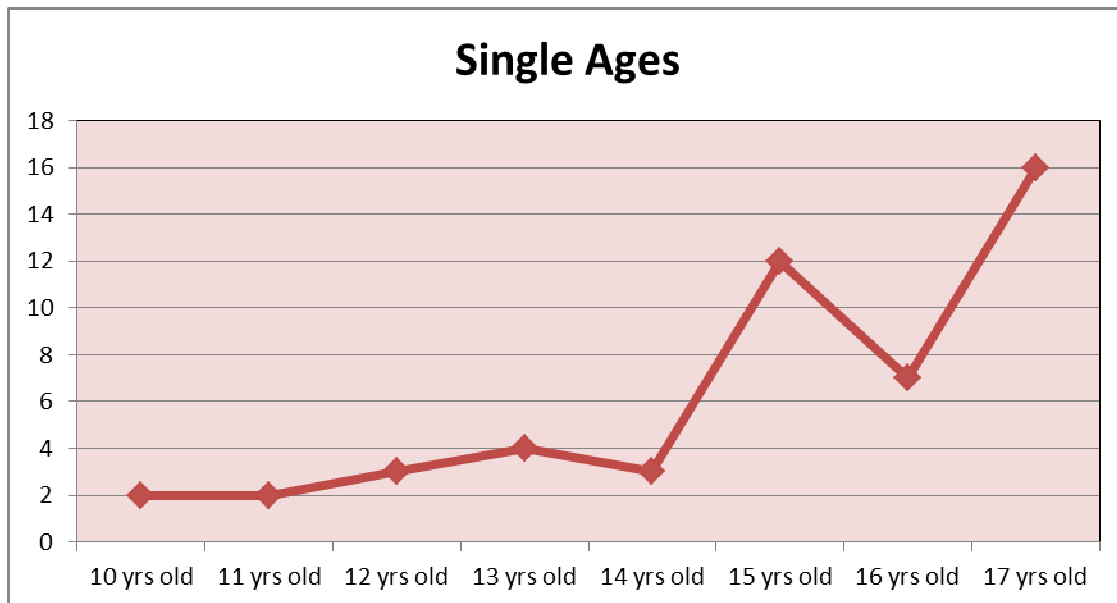


Analysing this data we can see:

- that there are a small number of children under 4 who have moved from hospital, foster carer, mother/baby unit, return to mother or adoption or SGO
- for those over 10yrs, these are teenagers who are likely to have strong attachments to their birth families and have complex needs and present challenging behaviour for foster carers
- Other age related factors may impact on stability - the transition to secondary school, which can be a challenging time for many children
- For those over 16 – 17yrs there are links with going missing, gang involvement/risky life styles and those young people who have to be moved out of borough to keep them safe. This will result in some semi independence providers being unwilling to continue to provide care to young people with risky life styles as they place risk on other residents
- Those aged 16 – 17yrs are also often those young people who are being prepared for leaving care through moves from residential and semi provision

Single Ages

10 years old	2
11 years old	2
12 years old	3
13 years old	4
14 years old	3
15 years old	12
16 years old	7
17 years old	16



3. Placement practice in Brent

- 3.1 When a child becomes looked after and a placement is required, the first area that is explored is the child's family or friends' network. Where such a placement is not available, an in-house Brent fostering placement will be sought. Unless it is not safe to do so, it is expected that such a placement will be close enough to the child's community to enable them to remain at their school and involved in their networks.
- 3.2 Where an in-house Brent foster placement is either not available or not suitable, a foster placement from an independent fostering agency (IFA) will be sought. The priority for both "in-house" and IFA placements is always that they be placed in Brent or surrounding boroughs if it is possible and if it is safe to do so. There are a number of young people who do have to be placed further away from Brent due to safeguarding concerns usually related to child sexual exploitation and gang affiliation.
- 3.3 Where the needs of a young person cannot be met within a family environment, a residential placement will be considered. Residential placements by their nature are usually out of London.
- 3.4 Children aged under 12 will not usually be placed in residential homes unless it is clearly demonstrated that this is consistent with their welfare and the only way of meeting their needs.

4. Placement stability

- 4.1 Placement stability depends on a number of components which form the basis of our approach to making improvements in this area. They include:-
 - having sufficient local placements available so that the right match to meet a child's needs can be made,
 - providing high-quality training and support for foster carers to care for children

- Support to maintain the child in their school.

5. Placement Breakdown

5.1 A placement breakdown can be affected by a number of factors including:

- Young persons challenging behaviour and as such their placement can be unstable and fragile.
- placements where a young person is moved because of a change in the circumstances of their carer
- changes that are necessary because the initial placement made when a young person became looked after was an emergency or interim one.
- new born babies removed from high risk parents - placed into foster placement - courts place in parenting assessment units - removed from parent - placed in foster placement - permanency
- Brent has seen an increase in the number of young people accommodated because of gang related and criminal activity. These are young men aged 15+. who are linked to gang activity and are often accommodated because their parents and family cannot contain their risky behaviour. Frequently there is a risk that these young people will continue their gang related activity or may indeed be at risk from others because of it.

6. Action Plan - support to placement stability

6.1 Improving the placement stability of looked after children has been a priority for the service for a number of years. Key areas where resources have been focused include:

- Improved placement choice-there are almost 40% more Brent fostering placements available than was the case 3 years ago.
- Better use is being made of specialist fostering placements that are better able to meet the needs of children with more complex needs.
- West London Alliance has made significant improvements in the way that placements of all kinds are commissioned across West London and this has included a focus on improved outcomes (including placement stability) with those contractors.
- CAMHS has provided support to both carers and social workers around supporting placements and providing advice and assistance with behaviour management

6.2 Current initiatives aimed at improving placement stability include:

1. Brent Commissioning Team - Improving placement match through a greater scrutiny of the profile and needs of child/young person with in house carers and providers of care
2. The Independent Reviewing officers (IRO's) identify any placements they feel are fragile at Looked after Reviews and monitor them until the next review to ensure

that the required support and social work input is provided to maintain it. Any concern the IRO has is escalated to the Team Manager or Head of Service

3. Placement Stability Meetings - should be convened where foster placements, and residential placements in the independent sector, which are otherwise considered to be suitable for a child, are at risk of breaking down.
4. Developing support packages around care placements i.e. mentoring, greater access to leisure, respite
5. West London Mental Health NHS Trust - new Tier Two clinical provider commissioned to assist social workers and foster carers to support challenging children and young people and support to placement
6. Increase the numbers of Brent Foster Carers for those children who may have complex needs, present challenging behaviours and require support to manage complex relationships with their birth families. Skilling and training in house foster carers with a high degree of support to take hard to place children and young people.
7. Where possible, ensuring that placements are local and priority is given to children and young people to help them continue in the same school or education establishment where this is in their best interests.
8. Brent's Permanency Planning process ensures that early decisions about permanency are made and any drift is avoided. Extended families are always considered as part of the planning process and children are placed with extended family where it is safe to do so.

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