



Corporate Parenting Committee
4 February 2019

**Report from the Strategic Director of
Children and Young People's
Services**

**Feedback from Looked After Children: Outcome of the
Bright Spots 2018 Survey**

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee about the results of the Bright Spots "Your life, Your care" Looked After Children's Survey and Brent's response.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

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

'My current placement is very supportive of my hopes and dreams. I love being there'

3.0 Background to “Your life, Your care” survey 2018

- 3.1 “Your life, Your care” is a survey for measuring the quality of Looked After Children’s care experience and their sense of well-being. The survey was developed by Coram Voice and Bristol University with children and young people in and from care as part of the National Bright Spots Programme.
- 3.2 Brent has been working in partnership with Coram Voice to ensure our Looked After Children are able to talk about their lived experiences and the things that are important to them. The aim of the programme is to hear from children about their well being, improve their care experience and highlight the Bright Spots of practice that contribute to children flourishing. This is the second year that Brent children and young people have taken part in the survey.
- 3.3 As with the 2017 survey, the survey asked questions focused on the following areas:
 - Family contact
 - Friends
 - Adults you live with
 - Social worker
 - Continuity and trust
- 3.4 The outcome of the 2017 survey was disseminated to all Brent Looked After Children, accompanied with a thank you letter written by the Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency. It was also widely circulated to all foster carers using the Fostering newsletter and to partner agencies through the Brent local partnership meeting.
- 3.5 Key actions taken in response to the 2017 survey were as follows:

Looked After Children felt that they didn't have enough contact with siblings and significant family members, once they became looked after.

In response to this feedback, contact arrangements for all Looked After Children were reviewed, with a particular focus on sibling contact to ensure that

arrangements were strengthened and that in cases where contact was not part of the care plan, that children and young people understood the reasons why that decision had been taken.

Children and young people experienced 3 or more changes of social worker.

Social work realignment has been undertaken in order to provide competitive recruitment and retention packages to attract social workers both in the UK and abroad and encourage agency social workers to apply for permanent positions. This has resulted in an increased percentage of permanent social workers and is expected to lead to a reduction in the number of changes of social worker that children and young people experience in 2019.

Children and young people wanted access to more outdoor activities.

Foster carers have been supported in providing children with a wider range of outdoor opportunities.

- 3.6 Improvement in contact, in particular sibling contact was acknowledged to be good by OFSTED during the ILACS inspection of 2018.

4. Summary of key messages from the 2018 survey

- 4.1 This report outlines the outcome of the 2018 survey which was received in November 2018. Some direct feedback from Looked After Children is included in quotations in this report.
- 4.2 The survey includes responses from Looked After Children aged 4-18 and was completed via an on line app with the support of an identified trusted adult such as a designated teacher or an IRO. The was promoted through Care In Action, and designated teachers of Looked After Children. The eligible participation cohort of Looked After Children was 278. Of that number, 82 responded to the survey.
- 4.3 The majority of the respondents to the 2018 survey were teenagers, whereas the respondents to the 2017 survey were mainly younger children. More responses were received from Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). Brent had specifically requested that responses were sought from Looked After Children in both local and out of borough placements to establish if there was any difference in their looked after experiences.

'I think overall, being in care is good and they offer you lots of opportunities'

- 4.4 There are a number of positive findings from Brent children and young people's feedback.

What children and young people said has gone well

- 96% (up from 85% last year) of children and young people felt that they had the opportunity to practice life skills.
- Every child aged 4-11yrs, along with the majority of young people, trusted their social worker. In addition, almost every child and young person knew that they could speak to their social worker.
- No children aged 4-11 years were found to report low wellbeing.
- Two thirds (65%) of young people talked regularly with their carers about things that mattered to them. This is a comparable proportion to the response from Looked After Children in other areas.
- 92%, (up from 83% last year) reported that they engaged in similar positive activities as their friends.
- Children stated that they felt settled in their placements and that their carers paid attention to how they were feeling.
- Similar numbers of children and young people to those in the general population reported that they liked school.



'I am fine at my placement. It feels like home'

- 4.5 Brent children and young people also identified areas for an improved response. These areas will be responded to through actions described in section 5 below.

What children and young people said needs to improve

- 81% of young people trusted their carers which is lower than in other authorities where 96% trusted the adults they lived with. Brent has a proportionally older population of Looked After Children. They are likely to have experienced longer years of inconsistent parenting and less trusting relationships. As a consequence they can therefore find it harder to settle and develop a trusting relationship with their carers.
- Contact with significant family members was a recurring theme. Progress on contact with siblings was a notable improvement from the 2017 survey and promotion of contact with other family members will be a priority for 2019 action.
- Only 16% of young people had had one social worker in the past year. This is lower than elsewhere, where on average 34% of young people had been supported by a single social worker in the past 12 months. Recruitment and

retention of social workers is one of the key priority areas for Brent. Over the past 12 months the proportion of permanent staff has increased, with 80% of front line social work staff now permanent.

- High proportions of children aged 8-11yrs were worried about bullying, and young people (11-18yrs) in Brent were less likely to have a good friend than elsewhere. Girls were more likely than boys to report that they disliked school.

'I think I should have more contact to be honest'

'I enjoy seeing them (social workers) and see them just enough'

5. Brent's Response to Bright spots survey 2018

5.1 The initial verbal feedback of the survey was presented to the local partnership meeting for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in November 2018 and the following actions were agreed to be taken in response to the survey findings:

- Foster carers are to be supported in developing more trusting relationships with the children and young people they care for.

Work has commenced with foster carers, supported by the social pedagogue to help carers understand the particular challenges faced by older Looked After Children in building trusting relationships and developing carers' skills to enable them to provide the care and support needed by these young people.

- Ensure contact plans reflect children and young people's wishes and are regularly reviewed as they grow up.

The Looked After Children and Permanency service will focus on increased promotion of contact, learning from the successful improvement in contact arrangements for siblings achieved in 2018. Focus will also be given to ensuring that children and young people will be informed and supported in understanding the decisions that are made regarding contact, particularly when contact is not agreed as part of the care plan.

- Focus on recruitment and retention of social workers.

In addition to recruitment and retention activity undertaken in 2018, further recruitment and retention incentives are planned for 2019, including a career progression scheme and an enhanced training programme to ensure the percentage of permanent social workers further increases in 2019.

- Improve the number of children and young people who take part in the survey in 2019.

Brent Care In Action will include the sharing and promotion of the survey in their 2019 work programme to focus on improving the response rate from Brent children and young people to the next survey.

- Reduce the number of Looked After Children who feel worried about bullying

The Virtual School will ensure that Looked After Children's schools are aware of the concern reported in this survey and work to identify school-specific actions where appropriate. Extra support will be provided to foster carers to raise awareness of bullying and support them to know the signs and know how to respond. In Anti-Bullying week 2019 we will focus on celebrating difference and promotion of buddying in schools.

- 5.2 As with the 2017 survey outcome, Brent Looked After Children will be written to and thanked for their engagement and feedback. Care In Action and Care Leavers In Action will have a focused session on the survey and the actions proposed in response to inform their work plan in early February 2019. Care In Action will report to a future Corporate Parenting Committee on the progress against the agreed actions in this report.

Contact Officer

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