



## **Corporate Parenting Committee – Supplementary Agenda**

**Wednesday 24 April 2019 at 5.00 pm**

Board Room 2 - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way,  
Wembley HA9 0FJ

### **Membership:**

#### **Members**

Councillors:

M Patel (Chair)  
Conneely  
Gbajumo  
Kansagra  
Thakkar

#### **Substitute Members**

Councillors:

Ezeajughi, W Mitchell Murray,  
Patterson and Sangani

Councillor:

**For further information contact:** Bryony Gibbs, Governance Officer  
020 8937 1355, [bryony.gibbs@brent.gov.uk](mailto:bryony.gibbs@brent.gov.uk)

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**[www.brent.gov.uk/committees](http://www.brent.gov.uk/committees)**

**The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting**

## **Notes for Members - Declarations of Interest:**

If a Member is aware they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest\* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent and must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If a Member is aware they have a Personal Interest\*\* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent.

If the Personal Interest is also a Prejudicial Interest (i.e. it affects a financial position or relates to determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission, or registration) then (unless an exception at 14(2) of the Members Code applies), after disclosing the interest to the meeting the Member must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item, except that they may first make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to the matter, provided that the public are allowed to attend the meeting for those purposes.

### **\*Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:**

- (a) **Employment, etc.** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit gain.
- (b) **Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of election; including from a trade union.
- (c) **Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between the Councillors or their partner (or a body in which one has a beneficial interest) and the council.
- (d) **Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.
- (e) **Licences** - Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.
- (f) **Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which the Councillor or their partner have a beneficial interest.
- (g) **Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

### **\*\*Personal Interests:**

The business relates to or affects:

- (a) Anybody of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management, and:

- To which you are appointed by the council;
- which exercises functions of a public nature;
- which is directed is to charitable purposes;
- whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy (including a political party of trade union).

- (b) The interests a of a person from whom you have received gifts or hospitality of at least £50 as a member in the municipal year;

or

A decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting, to a greater extent than the majority of other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the electoral ward affected by the decision, the well-being or financial position of:

- You yourself;
- a member of your family or your friend or any person with whom you have a close association or any person or body who employs or has appointed any of these or in whom they have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000, or any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are a director
- any body of a type described in (a) above.

# Supplementary Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Item	Page
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<b>1</b>	<b>Exclusion of the Press and Public</b>
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The committee is advised that the public may be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely in view of the nature of the proceedings that exempt information would be disclosed. Meetings of the Corporate Parenting Committee are attended by representatives of Care In Action (CIA), the council's Children in Care Council. The committee is therefore recommended to exclude the press and public for the duration of the meeting, as the attendance of CIA representatives necessitates the disclosure of the following category of exempt information, set out in the Local Government Act 1972: - information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

<b>2</b>	<b>Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members</b>
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<b>3</b>	<b>Declarations of interests</b>
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Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, any relevant disclosable pecuniary, personal or prejudicial interests in the items on this agenda.

<b>4</b>	<b>Deputations (if any)</b>
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To hear any deputations received from members of the public in accordance with Standing Order 67.

<b>5</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b>	<b>1 - 6</b>
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To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record.

<b>6</b>	<b>Matters arising (if any)</b>
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To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

<b>7</b>	<b>Update from Care In Action and Care Leavers in Action Representatives</b>
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This is an opportunity for members of Care In Action (CIA) and Care Leavers in Action (CLIA) to feedback on recent activity.

**8 National protocol on reducing the criminalisation of looked after children 7 - 14**

This report provides details of the National protocol on reducing the criminalisation of looked after children for the committee's consideration and information.

**9 Adoption Service 6-monthly report and regionalisation update 15 - 22**

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee about the general management of the adoption service and how it is achieving good outcomes for children.

**10 Fostering Service Quarterly Report 23 - 32**

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee about the general management of the in-house fostering service and how it is achieving good outcomes for children. This is in accordance with standard 25.7 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards (2011).

**11 Any other urgent business**

Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Head of Executive and Member Services or his representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 60.

**Date of the next meeting:** To be agreed at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2019



Please remember to set your mobile phone to silent during the meeting.

- The meeting room is accessible by lift and seats will be provided for members of the public.



## **MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE** **Monday 4 February 2019 at 5.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor M Patel (Chair), Councillor Conneely (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Gbajumo and Sangani

Also present: Councillors McLennan

Apologies were received from: Councillors Kansagra

### **1. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED: that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the duration of the meeting, on the grounds that the attendance of representatives from the council's Children in Care council, necessitated the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2, Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, of the Act, namely: Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

### **2. Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members**

Apologies were received from Councillor Kansagra and Thakkar. Councillor Sangani was in attendance in place of Councillor Thakkar.

### **3. Declarations of interests**

For purposes of transparency, Councillor Conneely advised that she worked for a local mental health charity in Brent and some young people accessing the services provided were Looked After Children (LAC).

### **4. Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 October 2018 be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

### **5. Matters arising (if any)**

There were no matters arising.

### **6. Update from Care In Action Representatives**

The committee received an update from the Care in Action (CIA) representatives on activity since the last meeting. HS advised that as part of the London Wide Care in Action group, focus groups were being held with LAC and Care Leavers to identify

key areas of improvement across London. The findings would be communicated to MPs and Councillors. Gail Tolley (Strategic Director, Children and Young People) added that the report would also be submitted to the Association of London Directors of Children's Services. The Chair confirmed that she would identify whether there was a London Councils Lead Member group for Children's Services and would report back accordingly.

JBK then advised that the Junior Care in Action meeting had taken place and had included pizza, science based activities, board games, and basketball and football as usual. In response to a query regarding recruitment to the Junior CIA, HS advised that recruitment activity had been undertaken at the celebration events but advised that some foster carers did not appear to be particularly eager to support foster children attending. Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency) suggested that officers facilitate a dialogue between CIA and the foster carer support group to better understand and address any issues around supporting attendance of younger members.

JBK further advised that he would be performing in the Voice in a Million concert as part of the Children in Care choir. The event aimed to raise awareness of Children in Care and would be held in the SSE Arena on 20 and 21 March 2019. JBK would be singing a solo as part of the performance!

HM advised that she and other members of Care in Action had attended a staff conference event in November 2018 to share their personal experiences as LAC and Care Leavers. This had been very well received and it was hoped had made people think about how they impacted on the lives of LAC and Care Leavers.

BJ informed the committee that the Care in Action end of year celebration had been held, with secret Santa and other fun activities.

The Chair thanked the CIA representatives for their update to the committee.

**7. Brent Looked After Children Health Annual Report 2017-2018 by NHS Brent Clinical Commissioning Group and Brent LAC Health Team - London Northwest University NHS Trust (LNWUHT)**

Dr Arlene Boroda (Designated Doctor for Safeguarding Children, Brent CCG) delivered a presentation to the committee summarising the Brent LAC Health Annual Report 2017-18. The Annual Report outlined the delivery of health services to LAC by the London Borough of Brent and combined NHS Brent CCG and Provider health reports; it included performance indicators, clinical work undertaken by the LAC health team, service improvements and plans for further development.

During the presentation, Dr Boroda drew the committee's attention to the statutory monitoring requirements, noting that the majority of health assessments for LAC were completed within the statutory timeframe. Any that were not undertaken within timescales were analysed to ascertain the reasons for delay and whether improvements to arrangements were needed. Members further heard about Brent's audit tool, used to assess the quality of health assessments, which would be used across the eight North West London CCGs. The audit explored issues of thoroughness, identification of health needs, consent, voice of the child, record keeping, developmental and educational needs, risk factors, and substance abuse,

among others. Highlighting areas for improvement, Dr Boroda noted that these included the recording of who was in the room during health checks, the tracking of immunisations, dental and vision checks, and supporting transitions between children's and adults' services.

In the subsequent discussion, the committee questioned how the statutory requirements were met for those young people who did not want to engage with LAC health services. Assurance was sought regarding the quality of the working relationship with London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (LNUH). Clarification was sought regarding the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in Brent. The committee queried what actions would be undertaken to deliver against the conclusions identified from the analysis of UASC health assessments. Questions were raised regarding non-NHS service providers and how the council and CCG engaged these organisations to ensure that the care and quality provided was sufficient. Further details were also sought regarding vulnerable LAC in prisons and the barriers to understanding whether their disability and learning needs were being addressed. Committee members raised further questions regarding mental health support when transitioning between children's and adults' services.

The Chair invited questions and contributions from the CIA representatives who sought an update on activity relating to a matter on which they had been previously consulted regarding mental health support

Responding to the queries raised, Dr Boroda explained that if a child or young person appeared unwilling to engage, an offer could be made to hold the assessment over the phone initially or in a place where the young person felt safe and comfortable. The team would also work to identify and utilise any existing channels of engagement with the individual established by other services. It was emphasised that for safeguarding and LAC services, communication and connectivity with the LNUH worked well.

Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency) clarified that there had been an overall decline in the numbers of UASC from 2016/17. Dr Boroda provided an overview of the activity to address the identified needs of the UASC cohort which included training by the CCG across the local health economy, particularly for GPs, with whom all UASC had to be registered. The committee heard that the needs of UASC were being continually highlighted. Screenings for infectious diseases were offered routinely for UASC, as were emotional health and wellbeing screenings, with referrals made to other services as appropriate. It was noted that a significant number of UASC arrived without immunisation records. Training was given to foster carers and other care providers on supporting health needs, including immunisations and how to recognise a sick child.

Addressing questions regarding non-NHS service providers, Dr Boroda advised that this was an area which required further attention but a lot of work was being done to raise awareness of safeguarding considerations amongst commissioners. The committee heard that health care services for prisons and offender units were directly commissioned by the NHS. Brent CCG was currently in dialogue with the NHS regarding arrangements around quality assurance. It was emphasised that some of the health care services at these facilities were outstanding; however, this was a cohort of very vulnerable young people and therefore the matter would

continue to be pursued with the NHS. In response to a query regarding capturing the voice of the child, Gail Tolley (Strategic Director, Children and Young People) advised that each young person would have a Youth Offending Service (YOS) worker and a Social Worker.

Dr Boroda advised that supporting transitions was a priority and a specific post had been commissioned to support Young People transitioning between children's and adults services. It was explained that the CIA had been consulted with respect to a scoping exercise on the emotional health needs of children and young people. It had been found that there was overlap in the services and support available but that often there was a lack of connectivity between these services. It was agreed that arrangements would be made to formally feedback to the CIA on the findings and work arising from the scoping exercise.

The Chair thanked Dr Boroda for her contribution to the meeting.

#### **8. Feedback from Looked After Children: Outcome of Bright Spots Questionnaire 2018**

The committee received a report setting out feedback from the Bright Spots "Your Life, Your Care" Survey for 2018. The survey, delivered by Coram Voice, sought to measure the quality of Looked After Children's care experience and their sense of well-being. This was the second year that Brent's children and young people had taken part. The report detailed the actions which had been taken following analysis of the previous year's survey, including review of contact arrangements, social work realignment to provide competitive recruitment and retention packages, and support to foster carers to provide children with a wider range of outdoor opportunities.

Outlining the key messages of the 2018 survey, Janice Altenor (Interim Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance) highlighted the positive feedback received including children and young people reporting feeling settled in their placements and having trusted relationships with their social workers. Addressing areas identified for improvement, Janice Altenor explained that the percentage of children who reported trusting their carers (81 per cent) was lower than in other authorities (96 percent); children and young people continued to want more contact with significant family members; Brent had a higher percentage of children experiencing more than one social worker in the past 12 month period; high proportions of children aged 8-11 years were worried about bullying; and, young people aged 11 to 18 years were less likely to have a good friend than elsewhere.

Members' attention was drawn to section 5 of the report which set out the activities underway in response to the issues and concerns highlighted. These activities included: supporting foster carers to understand the challenges faced by older LAC in building trusting relationships; a continued focus on increased promotion of contact with family members; further recruitment and retention activities; and raising awareness amongst LAC's schools and foster carers of the concerns expressed about bullying. In concluding the introduction, Janice Altenor explained that efforts would be made to better promote the survey next year to encourage more LAC to get involved.



The Chair invited views from the Care in Action representatives, who emphasised the importance of the feedback and shared how some of the issues identified had affected them.

The committee then directed a number of questions to the presenting officers, including whether Britain's impending withdrawal from the European Union (Brexit) could affect efforts to recruit and retain social work staff. Further details were sought on the actions to address concerns about bullying and members questioned whether the results had been analysed by in borough and out of borough placements.

In response, Gail Tolley advised that the Department for Education (DfE) had written to all Directors of Children's Services regarding Brexit and the potential impact on workforce. Brent had undertaken an analysis and had identified a small number of staff who would be affected. Those members of staff had been given advice and guidance regarding the process for applying for the resettlement scheme. Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency) advised that the council also recruited social workers from non-EU countries including South Africa and India. Providing further detail on the activities undertaken to address concerns around bullying, Onder Beter advised that Ofsted had previously highlighted the good work of Brent's Virtual School which was preparing a specific piece of work on this area. It was confirmed that there was little difference in the feedback received from those placed with carers in the borough to those placed out of borough.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the discussion.

9. **Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report: Quarter 3: 1 October to 31 December 2018**

Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency) introduced the Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report for the period 1 October 2018 to 31 December 2018. Members' attention was drawn to the summary of activities regarding foster carer recruitment. Onder Beter highlighted that these had not proven as fruitful as hoped and moving forward, new ideas would be explored with the new Marketing and Recruitment Officer. One such idea was that the Marketing and Recruitment Officer would attend some home visits with supervising social workers to map networks to identify potential recruitment opportunities. Proposals were also contained in the 2020-22 budget for joint recruitment activity with neighbouring boroughs. Pooling resources in this way would enable the local authority to better compete with Independent Fostering Agencies and, if approved, it was hoped to have a joint recruitment campaign from May 2019. Drawing Members' attention to other key activity, Onder Beter advised that Brent offered a strong learning and development offer for foster carers and had received very positive feedback from the 23 courses which had been held in the reporting period. Positive feedback had also been received in relation to the Foster Carers Ball, an event which had been held in December 2018, to thank Brent's foster carers for looking after the children and to encourage lifelong links for children.

Members questioned how a forthcoming recruitment event had been advertised and were informed that in addition to social media, open evenings were featured in the Brent Magazine and on the council's website, stands were held and events were promoted directly in the community in a variety of ways. In response to a query from

a member of Care in Action, Onder Beter acknowledged the value of LAC and Care Leavers sharing their experiences directly with foster carers and staff and advised that this could be explored for recruitment and open evening events.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the discussion.

10. **Verbal update on 'Regionalisation of Adoption'**


Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency) updated the committee on the progress in establishing a West London Regional Adoption Agency. Members were informed that the process was nearing completion. The London Borough of Hillingdon had recently withdrawn however, and this had necessitated further work to redraw the model, which would subsequently be submitted to Cabinet for approval.

11. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 6.47 pm

COUNCILLOR MILI PATEL  
Chair

 <b>Brent</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b> <b>24 April 2019</b>
	<b>Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</b>
<b>The national protocol on reducing unnecessary criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	N/A
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Onder Beter, Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency <a href="mailto:Onder.beter@brent.gov.uk">Onder.beter@brent.gov.uk</a>  Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes <a href="mailto:Nigel.chapman@brent.gov.uk">Nigel.chapman@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 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 National Protocol (The Protocol hereafter) on Reducing Unnecessary Criminalisation of Looked After Children and Care Leavers*', published in November 2018 by the Department for Education (DfE). This report outlines what current practice looks like in Brent and activities underway to further sharpen Brent's response on this issue as it relates to looked after children and care leavers. The protocol can be viewed online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-protocol-on-reducing-criminalisation-of-looked-after-children>

## **2.0 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review and comment on the contents of this report. This is to provide evidence that looked after children and care leavers receive both preventative and rehabilitative support from relevant agencies such as social work teams, youth offending services, probation services and the police when associated with offending behaviour.

## **3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 The Protocol was jointly published by the DfE, Home Office and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in November 2018. It is aimed at local authority children's services, local care providers, youth offending services, the crown prosecution service, police, HM Courts and Tribunal Services and local health services.
- 3.2. The Protocol draws attention to the fact that the majority of looked after children and care leavers do not come into contact with the criminal justice system. However, it acknowledges that it is a challenge for all agencies to tackle as young people from these groups remain over-represented compared to the general population within the criminal justice system<sup>1</sup>.
- 3.3. The Protocol is part of the Government's practical response to recommendations made by three recent reviews into issues affecting looked after children and care leavers. These were conducted by Sir Martin Narey<sup>2</sup> into residential care, David Lammy MP<sup>3</sup> into the disproportionate number of young people in the prison system from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and by Charlie Taylor<sup>4</sup> into the youth justice system. The Protocol is supported by the Association of Directors of Children's Services and local authorities are urged to adopt the practice model suggested by the Protocol.
- 3.4. The objectives and key principles of the Protocol focus on a practice model that aims to introduce preventative measures, reduce re-offending behaviour and rehabilitate young people who have offended via joint working between relevant agencies. The protocol draws attention to the impact of previous trauma,

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<sup>1</sup> In the year to 31 March 2018, 4% of LAC aged 10 or over looked after for at least 12 months were convicted or subject to youth cautions or youth conditional cautions during the year. Looked after children (who have been looked after for at least 12 months) are five times more likely to offend than all children. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018> ).

<sup>2</sup> Sir Martin Narey's Independent Review of Residential Care <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-residential-care-in-england>

<sup>3</sup> The Lammy Review, (Sep 2017) <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/lammy-review>

<sup>4</sup> Taylor's Review (Dec 2016) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-youth-justice-system>

attachment issues and specific vulnerabilities of looked after children and care leavers. Authorities dealing with looked after children and care leavers are urged to be aware of such vulnerabilities and experiences that might contribute to behaviours which could make them vulnerable to involvement in the youth justice system. For example, it is suggested that looked after children and care leavers should not be taken to police stations when their offence does not warrant a charge.

- 3.5 The Protocol recommends that restorative approaches should be used in a child-centred way to enable integrated, coordinated and proactive responses to prevent and address challenging offending behaviour. The voice of the child is particularly emphasised in the Protocol.
- 3.6 It is recommended that planning work commences early to enable effective care and re-settlement of young people on remand or those serving a custodial sentence. Local authorities' Corporate Parenting Boards are advised to make sure systems are in place to identify and build an accurate picture of all looked after children coming into contact with the youth justice system in a holistic way, regardless of where they are placed.
- 3.7 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) are specifically mentioned in the Protocol with their additional vulnerabilities to being exposed to the risk of modern slavery, radicalisation or different forms of exploitation.

#### **4. Context in Brent**

- 4.1 On a national and local level, with establishment of YOS Management Boards over the last two decades, an on-going focus has been placed on reducing anti-social behaviour and promoting prevention and diversion activities in the youth justice system. Although this focus helped to reduce number of young people entering the youth justice system, professionals started to work with a more challenging, smaller cohort of young people with complex and additional needs. These young people have displayed an entrenched pattern of offending behaviour who require far more personalised, trauma informed interventions and support to change behaviours. The profile of young people known to youth justice system, including those who are LAC, is similar in Brent.
- 4.2 Brent has been identified by the Home Office as one of 30 boroughs in England and Wales with a significant national-level gang issue regarding a more innovative offender management model. The Safer Brent Partnership is developing their new targets and these will link in with future developments for YOS. Although the gang issue is not the only indicator when it comes to offending, it has been an important factor leading to young people becoming LAC at teenage years.
- 4.3 Young people coming in contact with the youth justice system are supported by Youth Offending Service (YOS) in the Early Help Service which is in CYP.

- 4.4 Looked after children and care leavers are known to be a vulnerable group, the majority of whom have suffered neglect, abuse and harm as a child. As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, Brent had 300 LAC and 326 care leavers. Looked after children and care leavers are supported within the Looked After Children and Permanency (LACP) Service, a part of Children and Young People's Department in the Council.
- 4.5 Brent's Practice Framework has underpinned the work undertaken with LAC and care leavers. As part of this framework, the restorative approach is utilised in conflict resolution between victims and perpetrators when appropriate by colleagues in YOS. A lead professional in restorative justice has been working with practitioners in achieving community resolution. This is in line with the requirements of the practice model suggested by the National Protocol.
- 4.6 Additionally, Brent has been a part of Signs of Safety (SOS) England Innovation Project 2 (EIP 2). SOS has been embedded in early help social work practice that is underpinned by clear assessment of risk and danger and relational social work interventions that are in line with the suggested practice model by the National Protocol

## **5. Data**

- 5.1 Brent YOS data reflects the national picture showing the overrepresentation of Looked After Children within the youth justice system and in particular from BME communities. A significant number of LAC have an offending history, with the majority's involvement with the criminal justice system preceding their entry to public care.
- 5.2 In the 18-months since, *Brent Looked After Children and Offending Behaviour*, was presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017, many of the themes and considerations that were highlighted in this report remain the same. In summary, below themes are commonly observed in the cohort of LAC and care leavers who come in contact with offending:
- complex emotional needs of young people and trauma caused by early childhood experiences
  - substance misuse, emotional and mental health difficulties
  - multiple placement changes for teenagers leading to greater instability that is linked to increase likelihood of offending
  - young people living in areas of high crime and high deprivation
  - increased contextual risk (outside of family) for teenagers
  - management of behaviour of children placed in residential homes varies resulting in inconsistent outcomes
  - Difficulties in relation to custody and resettlement in the community
- 5.3 Whilst LAC young people continue to be overrepresented in the youth justice system, it is encouraging that the overall number of LAC young people

supported by the Youth Offending Service (YOS) has decreased from 32 in June 2017 to 24 as at the end of January 2019.

**5.4 In January 2019 there were 24 Brent LAC young people supervised by the YOS:**

- Eighteen of these young people were subject to a court order and the remaining six had recently completed their order.
- Overall, LAC young people represented 14% of the total YOS caseload:
- Seventy-nine percent were male.
- Sixty-three percent were aged 16 or 17 years.
- Sixty-three percent were of Black African or Caribbean heritage, compared to only 33% from this background in the LAC 10-17 population (Jan '19).
- Fifty-eight percent had committed a drugs offence, 46% a violent offence and 42% committed an offence with an offensive weapon.
- Twelve looked after children, who had been in care for more than 12 months received a caution or conviction in 2017/18. This is lower than the average of Brent's statistical neighbours (13). This also shows that children who have been looked after for longer periods are less likely to offend. In other words, offending behaviour could be one of the factors for children becoming LAC in their adolescence.
- Fifty-three percent of 16-17 year olds were recorded as not in employment, education or training.
- Out of 326 open cases of care leavers, twenty-four are currently in custody. This equates to 7.8% of the total care leavers' population.

**6. Brent's practice to reduce criminalisation of LAC and care leavers**

- 6.1 There are a number of strategic initiatives in place that drive practice developments and add value to the work undertaken to reduce offending behaviour and support vulnerable young people. One of them is the 'Vulnerable Adolescents Panel' chaired by the Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes. The Panel is held monthly and operates as a platform for learning from practice, sharing information and strengthening collaboration and cooperation of partner agencies to better respond to the needs of adolescents with multiple vulnerabilities.
- 6.2 Additionally, the YOS Management Board, chaired by the Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes, consists of representatives from different agencies including the police, probation, operational social work services, YOS and YJB and courts. The overall aim of the Board is to provide strategic direction for youth justice services, and monitor objectives linked to key performance indicators, within the national framework established by the Youth Justice Board and other locally agreed priorities. The Board aims to reduce re-offending, first time entrants into the youth justice system and reduce use of custody.

- 6.3 In relation to high risk young people, an escalation process is in place. Heads of Service provide a briefing to the Operational Director and the Strategic Director Children and Young People in their statutory role. The DCS and Lead Member are provided with regular updates and briefings about these cases by the Operational Director IIO. These procedures for the recording and reporting of critical incidents internally also demonstrate adherence to Youth Justice Board serious incident requirements.
- 6.4 In relation to an operational response, Brent has a successful track record of joint working between professionals to plan, assess and intervene when it comes to working with LAC and care leavers. For instance, the monthly Resettlement and After Care Meetings involve managers from various services which enables a plan to be developed to help young people after their release from custody. This assists risk management and facilitates smooth transitions back into the community. Similar meetings are taking place with Probation prior to release day of care leavers from custody. This helps in relation to rehabilitation back into community as well as risk management.
- 6.5 The Brent YOS and social work teams have developed effective arrangements and a joint protocol underpinning partnership working when managing cases of looked after children. Brent's joint protocol was received as a piece of national good practice and been placed on the YJB's Effective Practice Resource Hub. The newly refreshed protocol covers three areas of work with LAC:
- Joint working where young people are remanded to Local Authority accommodation;
  - Providing joint support to young people who are transitioning from custody to the community upon release;
  - Improved partnership working when children and young people are in the community and are receiving services from both teams.
- 6.6 The daily Integrated Risk Management Meeting (IRM) has been in operation since January 2017. The IRM brings police and Brent Council staff together to discuss immediate operational matters regarding children who are missing, at risk of exploitation or involved in the youth justice system. LAC are discussed at this forum when appropriate.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 The Protocol on reducing unnecessary criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers is a positive step forward to strengthen multi-agency working to support these vulnerable groups. It provides a practice model that focuses on understanding reasons behind offending behaviours displayed by LAC and care leavers most of whom would have had adverse childhood experiences, trauma and complex needs. It makes helpful recommendations for agencies to work in partnership to shift practice that may not be child-focused.
- 7.2 Brent has a successful track record of working in partnership with police, probation, YJB and courts in reducing number of young people coming into the youth justice system. Work is underway to extend the content of the Protocol



YOS and social work teams have to include other partners such as the probation and police, particularly around the work done with care leavers.

- 7.3 Working relationship between YOS and social work teams is stronger, which has over the last two years reduced the number of LAC subject to youth offending orders. However, the cohort of young people who are known as persistent offenders present a challenge to all agencies to safeguard them as well as protecting the public.

**Report sign off:**

**GAIL TOLLEY**

Strategic Director of Children and Young People

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 <b>Brent</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b> <b>24 April 2019</b>
	<b>Report from the Strategic Director, Children and Young People</b>
<b>Brent Adoption Service Report: 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	1
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes <a href="mailto:Nigel.Chapman@brent.gov.uk">Nigel.Chapman@brent.gov.uk</a>  Onder Beter, Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency <a href="mailto:Onder.Beter@brent.gov.uk">Onder.Beter@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Summary

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee about the general management of the adoption service and how it is achieving good outcomes for children.
- 1.2** This report details the activity of Brent's adoption service from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

## 2.0 Recommendations

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

### **3.0 Background**

- 3.1** The Adoption Statement of Purpose highlights the outcomes that the service aims to support:

- children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their developmental needs during childhood and beyond;
- adopted children should have an enjoyable childhood, benefit from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life; and
- children, birth parents/guardians and families, and adoptive parents and families will be valued and respected.

- 3.2** Adoption services are fully delivered by the Adoption and Post Permanence Team within the Looked After Children and Permanency Service. This team is responsible for two main areas of work:

- In relation to adults – the recruitment, assessment and training of prospective adopters, as well as family finding and support for them post-approval up until Adoption Order, the undertaking of step-parent and private adoption assessments as directed by the Court and providing a counselling and intermediary service for adopted adults and their birth relatives.
- In relation to children – family finding for children with an adoption plan, statutory social work responsibility for one child subject to a Placement Order up until the Adoption Order (all new cases now remain held by social workers within the care planning teams) and supporting adoptive families, Special Guardians and birth families.

### **4.0 Performance Data**

- 4.1** The most recent set of national adoption scorecards was published in March 2019, covering the 3-year period 2016-2018.

*Adoption Scorecards detail can be found [here](#)*

- 4.2** The non-published data for the period under review indicates that performance against the two most significant indicators continues to perform strongly:

- **A1** (The time taken from a child entering care to being placed for adoption): 386.7 days. This is an 8.3% decrease against the previous reporting period (354.6 days) but still compares favourably against a national average of 486 days and a statistical neighbour average of 552 days.
- **A2** (The time taken from the Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and a match being approved): 180.8 days. This is a 16.9% increase against the previous reporting period (150.1 days) but still favourably compares against a national average of 201 days and statistical neighbour average of 228 days.

### **4.3 Child related data**

In the second six months of this reporting year (1<sup>st</sup> October 2018 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019) three children were adopted, bringing the total number of children adopted for the financial year 2018-2019 to six. There are currently three adoption applications in the process of being submitted to court and it is hoped that these will result in Adoption Orders for these children being granted in the next reporting period. As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, there were twelve children with an adoption plan who had not yet been adopted. The details of these children's cases are as follows:

- two children are placed for adoption;
- a sibling group of two children were matched at Brent's Adoption and Permanence Panel on the 11<sup>th</sup> March;
- three individual children are going to be adopted by their current foster carers;
- three individual children are expected to be matched with prospective adopters in panel by June 2019;
- one child is waiting for a match, with extensive family finding in progress;
- one remaining child's case is still within the court arena.

### **4.4 Adopter Recruitment**

As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, there were 5 approved adoptive households waiting for a placement where a child had not yet been matched or placed. Of these five households, two are likely to have their cases re-presented to the Adoption and Permanence Panel to consider their ongoing suitability for adoption.

During this reporting period the service received 37 general enquiries about domestic adoption resulting in one couple, who are already Brent approved adopters for a Brent child, proceeding to a full assessment as 'second time' adopters and two new prospective adoptive families being accepted for full assessments. There were three further enquiries related to step-parent

adoption. As in the previous reporting period, Brent is continuing to see an increase in the volume of step-parent and private adoption applications, which is also the experience of other local authorities in the West London Consortium. Inter-country adoption referrals continue to be referred to the Inter-Country Adoption Centre, a specialist Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA), with whom a service level agreement is in place.

Brent strives to attract adopters from a diversity of backgrounds in order to best meet the variety of needs of our looked after children. Brent adopters currently waiting to be linked or matched to children are either of Asian, African Caribbean, African or White European heritage.

There has been one new adoptive family approved at panel during this reporting period.

As of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 there were:

- 2 assessments in Stage One of the process;
- 3 assessments in Stage Two of the process; and
- 1 ongoing private adoption (step parent adoption) assessment.

In this reporting period, one Brent adoptive household was matched with a child from another local authority. In addition, another Brent adoptive household was matched with a child from another local authority within the West London Consortium, who had been placed with them on a 'Fostering for Adoption' basis.

#### **4.5 Adoption Support**

In the six months between 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, 4 new families requested post adoption support bringing the total number of families being actively worked with to 29, a slight increase from last period. During this period, 11 new applications to the DfE Adoption Support Fund (ASF) were successfully approved to support the therapeutic needs of Brent families caring for children under an Adoption or Special Guardianship Order. In the past 6 months a number of DfE ASF applications have been completed on behalf of a wide age-range of children. 1 of these applications was in relation to an adoptive family who had not previously accessed therapeutic support from Brent. 2 of them were for young people under a Special Guardianship Order, who also receive support from the adoption and post-permanence team and are eligible for this government funding. There are currently 4 adoption support assessments in process, which will be resulting in applications for therapeutic intervention for these families in the next few months. 17 kinship placements are being supported by the team.

30 adults also received adoption support. This was in the form of provision of access to their records, linking them with members of their birth family, and providing counselling support around issues related to adoption. There were a further 37 enquiries from other Adoption Agencies seeking information on whether files were held by Brent.

Should the regionalisation of Brent's adoption services be agreed by Cabinet in April 2019, the responsibility for the above work will transfer to the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) (see **6.1 Adoption Regionalisation** below). There is expected to be a period of transition whilst carers and localities and care planning social work staff get used to linking with the RAA rather than an internal team. In order to minimise any confusion, communication about the changes are being shared via a newsletter to all adopters and special guardians and workshops are being offered to staff via their bi-monthly staff forum. There has been a slight increase in the demand for post-permanence support during this reporting period; this is an area of work that is expected to grow further post-regionalisation.

## **5.0 The Adoption and Permanence Panel**

- 5.1** The purpose and role of the Adoption and Permanence panel was set out in detail within a previous Brent Adoption Service Report to the Corporate Parenting Committee.
- 5.2** A central list of panel members, in line with statutory guidance, is used on a rotating basis to ensure members maintain regular links with Brent and current issues in adoption. The central list in Brent remains the same as recorded in previous reports to the Corporate Parenting Committee, with the addition of a new council representative following the local elections in May 2018. All panel members receive an annual appraisal and have the opportunity to attend any additional relevant training provided by Brent and the West London Adoption Consortium.
- 5.3** A joint annual training day for adoption panel members and adoption team staff is held as per statutory regulation; this took place on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2019, the focus of which was the role of local authorities in adoption moving forward, given the Regionalisation agenda set out by the government and coming into force later this year and learning from another local authority's serious case review involving the death of a young adopted child.
- 5.4** Panel feedback from prospective and approved adopters and presenting social workers has remained consistent in confirming good or excellent comments regarding the panel process and conduct. Feedback concerning the performance of the social work casework is provided to the Agency

Decision Maker (Operational Director – Integration and Improved Outcomes, Children and Young People’s Services) who ensures this is given to the Head of Service (LAC and Permanency) and Service Managers for follow up with individual staff or, should the issues be more systemic, broader service improvement.

**5.5** During the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 3 panels were held with 5 specific adoption cases discussed during these sessions. Within these cases:

- one couple were recommended as suitable to adopt for the second time, having previously adopted a child in April 2017;
- one couple were recommended for continued approval following their 1<sup>st</sup> annual review;
- the approval of a prospective adoptive couple was terminated due to them withdrawing from the process;
- three children were matched with prospective adopters (a single child and a sibling group of two).

The low numbers of panels within this period continues to reflect the reduction in Looked After Children numbers and, more specifically, the ongoing relatively low numbers of children for whom an adoption plan is recommended.

All of the recommendations made to the Agency Decision Maker were ratified.

## **6.0 Service Development**

### **6.1 Regionalisation of adoption**

The work to establish an RAA is on-going but the number of councils has reduced, with the withdrawal of Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster and Hillingdon from the proposed *Adopt London West* regional adoption agency. Brent, Ealing, Hounslow and Hammersmith and Fulham remain committed to the model and the rate of progress has increased significantly again during this reporting period. Ealing remains the proposed host of the project, with Brent continuing to take a leading role by co-ordinating a number of planning meetings to ensure there is direct involvement in every aspect of the creation of the model. These include: staff engagement meetings, where staff are informed about new developments and how this work will affect their employment status; meetings with representatives from lead colleagues in finance, human resources and social care; and workforce development groups designed to shape practice and inform future policy.

Regular updates are provided to The Corporate Parenting Committee about the work around RAA. A detailed briefing report is due to be presented to Brent’s Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019. If approved, a period of 30 working days’ consultation would begin for all the staff in scope once all four council Cabinets



have met. Given the changes in membership of the proposed model, this has had an impact on the timings for implementation of the model; the intention now is for the new RAA model to be implemented incrementally from late September 2019.

As previously mentioned, the Adopt London West RAA will include support for SGO carers that will enable better joint commissioning of post-permanency support services in order to achieve more cost effective service delivery.

## **6.2 Increasing adopter numbers**

As mentioned in the previous report, the national picture in adoption for some time had been an imbalance between the number of children waiting for adoptive placements and approved adopters, with an extremely large number of adopters waiting for a relatively small number of children. As such, many local authorities slowed their recruitment activity to redress the balance. Given the plans for regionalisation of adoption services across England, this has now changed and all local authorities are open for new enquiries. Brent's Adoption and Fostering Teams have continued to facilitate monthly joint information evenings, but with the move towards adoption regionalisation, the Adoption Team will be joining with Ealing, Hounslow and Hammersmith & Fulham from May 2019 (post-Cabinet approval) to run shared adoption-specific information sessions. Adoption preparation training courses have been run collaboratively by the West London Consortium for the last two years and these have proved to be very successful and have helped to minimise the time prospective adopters have needed to wait for this mandatory training. These will continue post-regionalisation but will be run solely by the 4 local authorities in *Adopt London West*.

## **6.2 Support for special guardians and kinship carers**

The Adoption and Post-Permanency Team holds quarterly support groups for Special Guardians (SGO carers). Those attending continue to give consistently positive feedback about the service they receive from the team. Consultation is taking place with current kinship carers to establish how they would prefer to obtain support from each other – whether this by through group attendance or online forums – which will inform support offered via Adopt London West RAA moving forward.

## **7.0 Involving Adoptive Families**

- 7.1** A festive party was held in December 2018 for Brent's adoptive families. There was a good turnout with positive feedback from the adults and children. The day was filled with crafts, cookie decorating, a piñata, and closed with a sing-a-long. The adults were able to renew old friendships and make new connections, as well as using the time to update staff on how their children were doing and seek advice. Feedback always places this opportunity to

socialise and share experiences as supportive as any other offered by the adoption service.

**7.2** Some adopters and children attended Voice in a Million concert. Adoptive families provided positive feedback about the event.

**7.3** There have been several education seminars offered to both adopters and Special Guardians by the Brent Virtual School for LAC during the last six months. These have been offered by an educational advisor, offering information and guidance. This position is funded by the DfE and has proved invaluable to Brent's post-permanence families. Topics covered at the seminars included: how to encourage attachment-friendly schools; use of the Pupil Premium money; and supporting children with additional difficulties. These will continue over the next few months.

**7.4** Brent is part of the West London Adoption and Permanency Consortium, who organise bi-monthly seminars on a variety of adoption-specific topics. Recent ones have included: life-story work; sensory integration issues; and one workshop tailored to helping family and friends understand adoption. Adopters continue to take advantage of these. Additionally, they are able to take up anything on the Brent CYP training calendar for foster carers and adopters and occasionally do attend these.

## **8.0 Adopter Feedback**

During this reporting period, Brent's Adoption and Post-Permanence Team has continued to receive very positive feedback from service users. No complaints were made about the team or the service received during this reporting period. Many Brent adopters have continued very willingly to attend preparation training groups and information evenings as 'guest speakers' and have given very honest, balanced accounts of their respective adoption journeys, which is commonly reported as the highlight of the sessions for the participants attending. There has been no adoption breakdown.


### **Appendix:**

Cabinet Paper – 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019 'Adopt London - West Regional Adoption Agency'  
<http://democracy.brent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=4726&EVT=101&DT=A>

**Report sign off:**

**GAIL TOLLEY**

Strategic Director of Children and Young People

	<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b> <b>24 April 2019</b>
	<b>Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</b>
<b>Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report: Quarter 3: 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	N/A
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes <a href="mailto:Nigel.Chapman@brent.gov.uk">Nigel.Chapman@brent.gov.uk</a>  Onder Beter, Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency <a href="mailto:Onder.beter@brent.gov.uk">Onder.beter@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 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 general management of the in-house fostering service and how it is achieving good outcomes for children. This is in accordance with standard 25.7 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards (2011).
- 1.2 This report details the activity of Brent's fostering service from 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

## **2.0 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1** The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review, comment on and question the contents of this report. This is to provide evidence that the management of the fostering service is being monitored and challenged in order to promote good outcomes for children.

## **3.0 Background**

### **3.1 Service Values**

The in-house fostering function is positioned within the LAC and Permanency Service of the Children and Young People's Department. The 2018-19 service plan set out the vision for the service as below:

- Caring and loving families will be found for children without delay and within their extended family network where appropriate.
- Diversity needs including disability, race, religion, language and culture will always be considered when placing a child.
- Placements will be well matched to children's individual needs. The best foster carers will be recruited for our children.
- We will increase good quality local placements for children by securing more in-house fostering placements. We will recruit, assess and approve new foster carers with the aim to have 5 net fostering households in the end of financial year taking into account termination of approvals and resignations.
- There will be a decrease in the number of resignations/de-registrations of foster carers as a result of appropriate support and well-established, positive relationships with foster carers.

### **3.2 Staffing Arrangements**

The Fostering Support and Assessment Teams consist of two team managers, 11 social work posts and one marketing and recruitment officer post. A Marketing and Recruitment Officer (MRO) joined the team in January 2019.

One of the two previously mentioned social work positions that were being kept vacant until March 2019 has been recruited into as the workload has increased in the team. This social worker is due to start in the team in April 2019.

## **4.0 Performance Data**

### **4.1 Child Related Data**

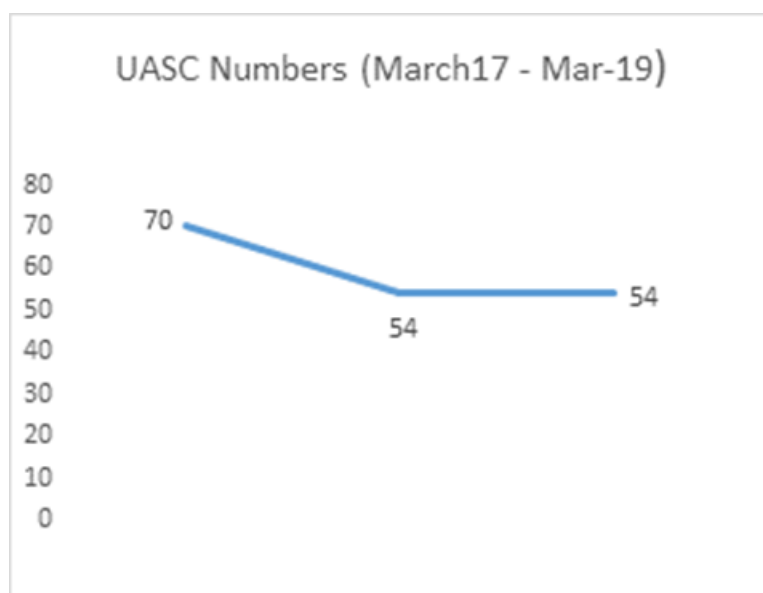
The total number of looked after children as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 was 300 which is a decrease from the end of Q3 of 2 children, however this is a reduction of 12 children

from 313 in March 2018. The difference is regarding Brent having a smaller cohort of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) in 2018/19.

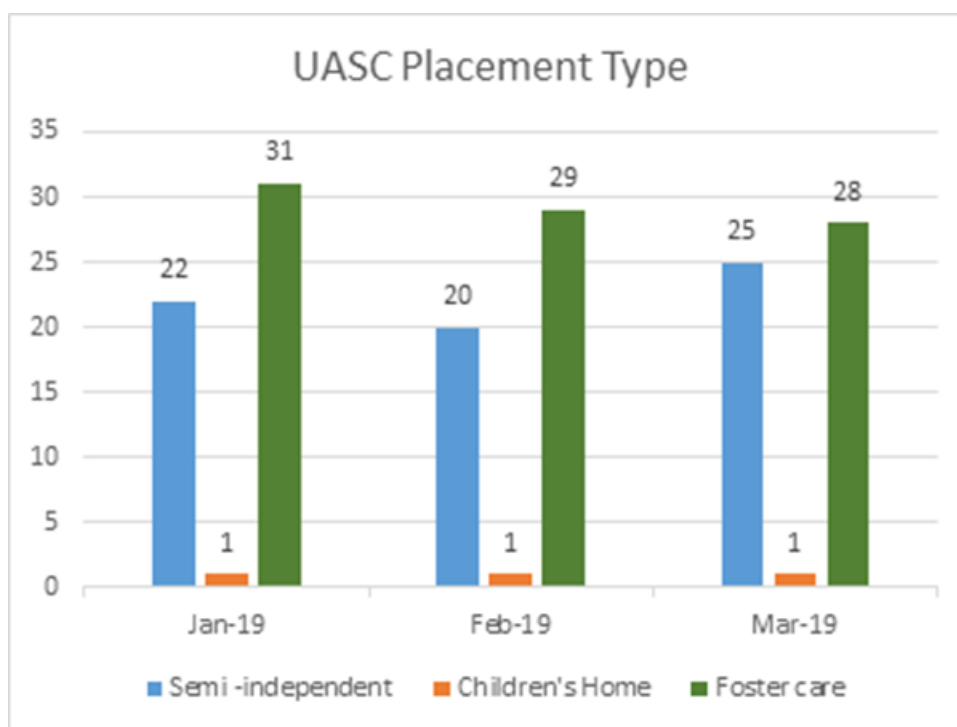
The corporate performance targets for 2018/19 were as below:

- Percentage of looked after children placed with in-house (Brent) foster carers – annual target 35% - the actual percentage as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 was 24% (72 children), a reduction from 24.8% (75 children) compared in the previous quarter;
- Percentage of looked after children placed with a relative or family friend – annual target 15% - the actual percentage as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 was 11.7% (35 children) compared to 11.6% (35 children) in quarter 3;
- Percentage of looked after children placed in Independent fostering agencies – annual target 25% - the actual percentage as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 was 27.7% (83 children) compared to 26.5% (80 children) in quarter 3;
- Percentage of looked after children overall within foster placements – annual target 75% - the actual percentage as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 was 63.3% (190 children) compared to 63.58% (192 children) at the end of quarter 3;
- There were 63 looked after children in semi-independent accommodation (residential accommodation not subject to Children's Home Regulations) as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, which represents 21% of all looked after children. This number is an increase from 54 in quarter 3 (17.8%).

As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 there were 54 UASC, 1 fewer than at the end of quarter 3.



25 UASC are placed in semi-independent accommodation, compared to 21 in Quarter 3, 1 UASC is in a residential children's home, and 28 UASC are placed in foster care compared to 33 in quarter 3.



## 5. Recruitment and Assessment

- 5.1 Within the reporting period Brent's new Marketing and Recruitment Officer (MRO) and the fostering teams carried recruitment focused activities with the aim of raising awareness of fostering for Brent and encouraging potential foster carers to make enquiries with Brent Fostering Service. The period was dedicated to testing the strengths associated with different routes (online and offline) by which outreach can be undertaken to reach specific groups. Targeted carers included: parents of young children; professionals with flexible working patterns; and LGBT+ individuals and couples, in order to tap into their availability in the first instance.
- 5.2 With regards to physical outreach, 3 major events were attended by the teams during this quarter: International Women's Day; Voice in a Million (children's concert); and event organised by Time to Talk in relation to mental health and wellbeing. Additionally, a stand was set up at Kilburn Library during an event for children under 5.
- 5.3 The MRO has heightened the digital presence of fostering in Brent by increasing the presence on social media on both Facebook and Twitter to raise awareness. In addition, the MRO has had some creative ideas about including positive fostering stories to make the whole experience more accessible. Enquiries are then received via the Brent website, which filter through to the fostering teams' internal email address

and are responded to on a daily basis. Through this forum, there has been an increase in approved foster carers 'liking' the web page, sharing non-confidential positive stories and achievements and more enquiries via the webpage.

- 5.4 The fostering service also took part in the national LGBT+ Adoption and Fostering Campaign between 4<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> March 2019, organised and led by *New Family Social*, a UK-wide social network run by LGBT+ adopters and foster carers. To show Brent's support, the MRO organised a dedicated LGBT+ information evening, which was promoted through a range of digital resources, including: the all-Brent residents' newsletter; social media (videos of fostering and adoption staff, previous adopters, and Cllr Mili Patel talking about the need for LGBT+ carers and adopters); LGBT+ supporters and media networks; and a news article on the Brent website homepage. The event attracted many individuals and couples interested in adoption and one fostering enquiry came out of the campaign.
- 5.5 Flyers and Brent fostering branded goodies have been distributed to all customer service points in the Civic Centre, at 'The Yellow' – activity centre managed by Wembley Park, at SEID (Social Innovation and Enterprise Hub) where many flexible-workers/part-timers spend time, and the Wembley Hub Café.
- 5.6 The overwhelming response from enquirers is that they first noticed Brent's fostering adverts on the webpage rather than as a result of the previous quarter's leaflet drop. The MRO is therefore focusing attention on improving the accessibility of the webpage and simplifying the online enquiry form, in conjunction with Brent's Communications Team.
- 5.7 During this quarter, the team continued to facilitate information evenings at the Civic Centre (3 in addition to the LGBT+ specific one), providing an opportunity to members of the public to find out more about the fostering role and to enable Brent to determine whether an individual or family has the potential to become a carer for Brent.
- 5.8 Future plans include finding local businesses that are willing to support fostering, as part of their corporate social responsibility strategy, and working closely with Wembley Park stakeholders to find out more about their events calendar and how we can get involved to raise awareness about fostering in the community.
- 5.9 The recruitment activity during the reporting period produced 23 contacts (website, telephone calls or emails requesting further information) and out of the 23, 11 people expressed a serious interest in becoming foster carers. 1 enquiry was for adoption, which was passed on to the adoption team. Of these 11 possible prospective carers: 7 people had a successful initial visit and progressed to stage 1 of the assessment process; 2 are being visited by social workers in April 2019; and 2 withdrew from the process for personal reasons.

- 5.10 The 2 assessments recorded in the last quarterly report as being in stage 1 have progressed to stage 2 in this period. The 2 assessments that were already noted as being in stage 2 are due to Fostering Panel in May 2019.
- 5.11 In this reporting period there are a total of 13 assessments underway (including the 4 noted above): 8 in stage 1 and 5 in stage 2.
- 5.12 Performance meetings have remained weekly during this period to ensure that the focus remains strongly on increasing foster carer numbers. Alongside this, the teams are improving sufficiency via smarter matching during placement searches as well as increasing foster carers' approval numbers through Qualifying Determination Letters for carers who have the capacity and skills to care for more children or young people. The intention is then to return these carers to fostering panel after this to permanently increase their terms to ensure utilising as many vacancies as possible as well as being more creative around increasing in-house placements.

## **6.0 Fostering Panel**

- 6.1 The fostering service has a Fostering Panel constituted in accordance with Regulation 23 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. The service maintains a diverse and highly experienced central list of panel members that includes an elected member. The panel chair and vice chair are independent people with professional and personal experience of fostering and panel members include those with personal experience of the fostering system. Current demand requires three panels to be held every two months.
- 6.2 The functions of the fostering panel are to consider:
- each application and to recommend whether or not a person is suitable to be a foster carer or Connected Person(s) (Family and Friends foster carer) and the terms of their approval;
  - the first annual review of each approved carer and any other review as requested by the service, including those of a Standards of Care issue and those exploring any allegations made;
  - the termination of approval or change of terms of approval of a foster carer.
- 6.3 During the period 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, 5 panels were held with 23 specific cases discussed during these sessions. Within these cases:
- 4 'family and friends' fostering households were found suitable to continue as foster carers following review;
  - 9 fostering households were found suitable to continue as foster carers following review, 2 of whom increased their approval numbers thus providing a possible additional placement;
  - 3 fostering households' approvals were terminated due to a failure on the part of the foster carers to meet the required fostering standards; and



- 3 fostering households resigned from their fostering role – 1 transferred to an independent fostering agency, 1 considered that they had naturally come to the end of their fostering career and 1 cited their deteriorating health; and
- The approval of 3 'family and friends' foster carers was terminated – 2 due to the child in their care turning 18 and 1 due to the child returning to the care of their birth mother.

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

- 6.4 The panel has a quality assurance role and monitors the standard of reports presented to it and relays any issues or concerns and any suggested practice improvements to the ADM. The Agency Advisor and the ADM continue to hold quarterly meetings to review all feedback received from the Fostering Panel to review learning to disseminate within the service to improve social work practice. The next meeting is scheduled for 26<sup>th</sup> April 2019.
- 6.5 A joint annual training day for fostering panel members and the kinship care and fostering teams' staff is held as per statutory regulation. This took place on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2019, the focus of which was a combination of the National Fostering Stocktake and the Government's response (as noted in the previous report), and learning from a serious case review from another council covering issues including: radicalisation in relation to the fostering role; criminal exploitation; and county lines.

## **7.0 Training and Support for Foster Carers**

### **7.1 Learning and Development Programme:**

The feedback regarding the courses offered as part of the learning and development programme for our foster carers continues to be positive.

During this reporting period, 11 separate training courses were offered on a variety of topics ranging in diversity from 'managing and de-escalating conflict', to 'young people and sexual health' and 'working with birth parents'.

The carers' feedback has been positive for most sessions in relation to the training format and content. The constructive feedback received in relation to the 'managing and de-escalating conflict' course requested an improvement, with the addition of suggested practical techniques. This has been listened to and a session has been scheduled for May 2019.

### **7.2 Social Pedagogy:**

The second 'Common Third' art intervention workshop went ahead during the February half term holiday, with foster carers, their birth children and foster children all taking part. Feedback received suggested that carers felt that the art workshops created a

stronger link with each other and supported them to get to know each other better. All attendees agreed that they would love more such activities based on social pedagogic practice.

Supervising social workers continued to have the offer of attending social pedagogy surgeries with the social pedagogue, reflecting and receiving advice on methods or models to be used to help the situations. In addition, the social pedagogue is available in-between these times for consultation where necessary.

One of the Fostering Support Team's Supervising Social Workers has acquired a Level 3 Diploma in Social Pedagogy through the Crossfields Institute and can now hold the title 'Social Pedagogy Practitioner'. This has provided her with the skills to work closely with Brent's Social Pedagogue and to assist in implementing social pedagogic practice, which should improve the support offered to Brent's foster carers.

The new learning and development programme is in progress and will feature various learning and development activities surrounding social pedagogic practice for foster carers.

### 7.3 Social Work Support:

The feedback received from foster carers is consistently positive in relation to the support they receive from their allocated supervising social workers and the wider fostering service.

## 8.0 Monitoring – reviews, allegations, complaints

8.1 A total of 32 foster carer annual review meetings were scheduled to take place in this period. 7 of these reviews were either postponed or cancelled for legitimate foster carers-led reasons.

8.2 During this quarter, there were no allegations or complaints.

## 9.0 New Developments

### 9.1 Brent's response to *Fostering Better Outcomes 2018*

As outlined in the last 2 quarterly reports, Brent's fostering service is being proactive in responding to the government's, *Fostering Better Outcomes* report in relation to each of the developmental points. Updates will continue to be provided as this work develops in the future.

9.2 *Improving the consultation of current and past looked after children to use their views to drive improvements.* Initial discussions have taken place with Care in Action, Junior Care in Action and Care Leavers in Action, via the Children in Care Participation Officer, to address this point. As the individual in post is leaving Brent, this work will be continued by their successor once recruited.

- 9.3 *Improving the recognition of foster carers as valued experts who best know the children they care for across children and young people's services and with partner agencies* – this was the focus of Brent's LAC and Permanency staff forum on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2019. It was very successful; 3 foster carers attended and presented their experiences for the staff, sharing their suggestions for achieving best practice and therefore improved outcomes for children. Feedback from the staff present was that this was a powerful presentation. There are plans to repeat this within the Localities and Early Help staff forums to develop this further.
- 9.4 *Making peer-to-peer support more structured for foster carers and their children* – four task groups, each comprising two social workers, have been established by the fostering teams to drive progress in the following areas: summer trip for foster carers; foster carer's ball; supporting the birth children of foster carers; and developing a more inclusive awards scheme for foster carers. They are seeking the support of interested foster carers to join these groups to encourage a more collaborative development of these four areas.
- 9.5 *Developing partnership working and commissioning of placements to ensure that matching is driven by the needs of the child, not cost.* Senior managers in LAC and Permanency and Forward Planning Performance and Partnerships continue to work together to drive improvements in this area.
- 9.6 *Exploring the use of regional consortia and/or neighbouring local authorities for combined needs-led and targeted marketing and recruitment and commissioning and integration.* Early scoping work has identified that Ealing and Hounslow are keen to progress this with Brent. The 3 local authorities are looking to make a bid for seed funding, due to be released by the DfE very soon, to progress this. The MROs from Ealing and Brent have met and discussed their plans for future marketing and recruitment and are in the early stages of combining efforts.

**Report sign off:**

**Gail Tolley**

Strategic Director of Children and Young People

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