



## Corporate Parenting Committee

**Wednesday 24 July 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:

W Mitchell Murray, Patterson  
and Sangani

Councillors:

Maurice and Colwill

**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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**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.

# Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members.

**Item** **Page**

**1 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

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.

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

**3 Declarations of interests**

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.

**4 Deputations (if any)**

To hear any deputations received from members of the public in accordance with Standing Order 67.

**5 Minutes of the previous meeting** 1 - 8

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record.

**6 Matters arising (if any)**

To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

**7 Update from Care In Action / Care Leavers in Action Representatives**

This is an opportunity for members of Care In Action (CIA) and Care Leavers in Action to feedback on recent activity.

**8 Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2018/19** 9 - 38

An annual report about the outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC) in line with requirements of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010) has to be provided to the Corporate Parenting Committee or local equivalent. This report fulfils that requirement, providing a profile of Brent's looked after children and care leavers during 2018-2019, reporting on annual activity, highlighting strengths and areas for development in supporting looked after children and care leavers in Brent.

**9 Update on Semi-independent Provision for looked after children and care leavers** 39 - 46

This report provides Corporate Parenting Committee with an overview of semi-independent provision commissioned by the council to accommodate looked after children (LAC) aged 16-18 and care leavers. It provides information on the quality assurance of commissioned services, including findings from a recent multi-agency quality assurance audit.

**10 Brent Virtual School Annual Report 2017/18** 47 - 92

The purpose of the annual report is to outline the activity and impact of the Brent Virtual School during the academic year 2017-2018. Data contained in this report is for looked after children who were in the care of Brent Council for the academic year 2017-2018, and includes outcomes for all children who have been in care for a year or more as at 31st March 2018, ("eligible cohort").

**11 Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report: Quarter 1: 1st April to 30th June 2019** 93 - 102

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). This report details the activity of Brent's fostering service from 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

**12 Brent's Local Offer for Care Leavers 2018-2020: a year on** 103 - 120

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the progress of the Brent Local Offer to Care Leavers during the period from 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 and seek approval from the Corporate Parenting Committee regarding Brent's reviewed Local Offer for care leavers for 2019/20.

### **13 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:            Wednesday 30 October 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.

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## MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE Wednesday 24 April 2019 at 5.00 pm

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

Also Present: Councillor McLennan

### 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**

None.

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

None.

### 4. **Deputations (if any)**

No deputations were received.

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

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 February 2019 be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

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

None raised.

### 7. **Order of Business**

RESOLVED: that the order of business be amended as below.

## 8. National protocol on reducing the criminalisation of looked after children

Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency) introduced the report on the National Protocol on Reducing Unnecessary Criminalisation of Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers. The report summarised the Protocol, outlined current practice in Brent and detailed activities underway to further sharpen Brent's response to this issue. Members were reminded that the committee had previously received a report on 'Brent Looked After Children and Offending Behaviour' in October 2017, which had highlighted many of the same themes and considerations.

The Committee heard that the Protocol was jointly published by the Department for Education (DfE), Home Office and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in November 2018. It was 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. The objectives and key principles of the Protocol focussed on a practice model that aimed to introduce preventative measures, reduce re-offending behaviour and rehabilitate young people who had offended via joint working between relevant agencies. The protocol drew attention to the impact of previous trauma, attachment issues and specific vulnerabilities of looked after children and care leavers and recommended the use of child centred, restorative approaches to address challenging offending behaviour.

Onder Beter advised that Brent was already proactive at ensuring LAC were not unnecessarily criminalised and the principles of the protocol were already embedded in much of the work of the council at both a strategic and operational level. Members heard that Brent's Practice Framework included a restorative approach, which was used as appropriate by the Brent Youth Offending Service (YOS). The council had also embedded the Signs of Safety model across its social work practice and provided interventions in line with the suggested practice model. Whilst LAC young people continued to be over represented in the youth justice system, it was encouraging that the overall number of LAC young people supported by the YOS in Brent had reduced from 32 to 24 between June 2017 and January 2019. Onder Beter advised that further work was still required, particularly with regard to Care Leavers. The LAC and Permanency Service had developed strong relationships with the YOS and other partners but further work was needed to continue to sharpen practice and to improve the connection with the Probation Service.

The Chair thanked Onder Beter for the introduction to the report and invited questions and contributions from the committee.

Members sought further information about the preventative interventions provided by the council and its partners, and how young people were supported to cease offending behaviour, including exiting gang activity. Members noted that living in areas of high crime and deprivation was a commonly observed theme for the cohort of LAC and care leavers who had come into contact with offending, alongside difficulties relating to custody and resettlement in the community. It was subsequently questioned what actions were taken to address these issues, what further work was required in this area and to what degree these issues were prioritised when identifying an appropriate placement for a child. Comment was sought with regard to another theme highlighted in the report relating to inconsistent outcomes for children placed in residential homes. A member noted that 58 per

cent of the 24 Brent LAC young people supervised by YOS in January 2019 had committed drugs offences and questioned whether these were serious drug offences, noting that it would be concerning if a young person were to receive a Referral Order for a minor possession offence. Questions were also raised regarding the support provided to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

In response to the committee's queries, Nigel Chapman (Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes) explained that there were a variety of Brent specific programmes provided via the YOS to support young people's exit from gang and knife crime activity. It was noted that the numbers of young people classed as first time entrants to the criminal justice system were small and the focus for this cohort was to divert them to programmes aimed at preventing further criminalisation. It was clarified that the YOS supported young people under the age of 18. Those aged 18 years old and over would fall under the remit of the Probation Service. It was further highlighted that in response to a recommendation from the council's outcome based review of gangs, an Accelerated Support Team had been established to quickly provide a greater presence where needed and offer a combination of support. It was noted that being excluded from school was a contributing factor to vulnerability. There was a positive direction of travel in Brent in this regard with smaller numbers of permanent and fixed exclusions than previous years, and Brent's schools working with the council to help these children and young people remain in the school system.

Onder Beter addressed members' queries regarding housing difficulties and priorities for placement of LAC young people leaving secure accommodation/prison. It was explained that for those under 18, a resettlement meeting was held to plan and co-ordinate the wrap around support for a young person – this included placement options. Some young people would be placed outside of Brent for their safety. It was emphasised that the greater challenge lay in supporting Care Leavers, particularly where there were license conditions in place which prevented their returning to certain areas. It was clarified that the Probation Service was responsible for identifying suitable accommodation for those aged 18 and over leaving prison but a care leaver's Personal Advisor would advocate for the young person in such circumstances. There had been examples of where the council and the Probation Service had worked together to deliver a really good rehabilitation package but work was required to further develop this relationship. There were Probation officers located within the YOS and the Brent Family Front Door service. The key issue for the council was to ensure that recommendations made in partnership with the YOS via the YOS Management Board were also driven through for care leavers. It was explained that the Board reported to the Safer Brent Partnership which included Probation Service representation.

Gail Tolley (Strategic Director, Children and Young People) informed the committee that there were 6 privately run residential children's homes in Brent; however, the council would only place children in residential homes outside of the borough due to the associated risks of these placements. It was acknowledged that some children's homes did not manage challenging behaviours very well and had been found for instance, to escalate matters to the police when situations could have been dealt with in a more positive way. Nigel Chapman advised that there had been progress in addressing some of the issues with residential children's homes. Ofsted had recently closed a number of residential homes across the country in response to a

range of issues. There were now more residential children's homes rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted but there was also a reduction in capacity across the system. Whilst this type of provision was not specifically rated against compliance with the Protocol, Ofsted inspections would identify if there were issues with disproportionate responses to children's behaviours. The council had also improved the quality assessment framework for residential children's homes and additional work in this area was underway at a sub-regional level via the West London Alliance.

Onder Beter confirmed that the drugs offences recorded for the Brent LAC young people being supported by the YOS in January 2019 varied in degree and this was reflected in the package of support offered to them. The LAC and Permanency service had a good partnership with the YOS and the joint protocol with the YOS had been recognised as an example of good practice.

With regard to UASC, the council undertook a needs analysis which included a risk assessment of vulnerabilities. The concerns raised in the report related more to the national issue of a young person's UASC status not being explicit when they came into contact with the criminal justice system. This was not deemed a particular issue for Brent's LAC young people.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- i) That a report on how the council was supporting the strengthening of residential children's homes and semi-independent provision be submitted to a future meeting of the committee.
- ii) That the Annual Report on LAC include statistics on the number of LAC and Care Leavers known to the criminal justice system.

## 9. **Update from Care In Action and Care Leavers in Action Representatives**

JBK provided an update on the activities of Care in Action and Care Leavers in Action since the last meeting. The committee heard that the Junior Care in Action group had taken a trip to Kidzania and everyone had had a really good day. It was explained that Kidzania was a play city for children which allowed children to do different jobs such as radio show presenter, police officer, paramedic, fire fighter, tour guide and window cleaner. JBK had helped to supervise the visit and explained that it had been really fun but very hectic.

Care Leavers in Action had previously discussed the issue of cases being closed, sometimes without the knowledge of the young person, once a care leaver reached the age of 21. In response to the anxieties expressed regarding this matter, a council officer had attended the session to discuss the matter. JBK advised that he felt that the concerns of the care leavers had been taken on board. Onder Beter explained that sometimes a case would be closed if it was felt that there was no need for involvement at that current time. This did not however, exclude the possibility of the council providing further support to the young person in the future and they would always be encouraged to get in touch with any issues. Nigel Chapman explained that it had been a year since the council had developed and

published its Care Leavers Offer and officers were currently in the process of reviewing the offer and seeking feedback from care leavers.

JBK advised that since the last meeting he had performed a solo in the Voice in a Million concert held at Wembley Arena. The committee and officers present congratulated JBK on this achievement.

The Chair thanked JBK for the update.

#### 10. **Adoption Service 6-monthly report and regionalisation update**

Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency) introduced the Brent Adoption Service Report for 1 October 2018 to 31 March 2019, highlighting that the council continued to perform well against the national indicator for the number of days between the date a child becomes a Looked After Child and the date that they are adopted. There had been a slight increase from the previous reporting period due to a particular case in which parents had appealed against their children being subject to a Placement Order, leading to a longer court process. Brent continued to perform better than the national or London average for this measure. The committee was informed that during this reporting period there had been three children adopted, five approvals of adoptive households, with six ongoing, and 11 applications for the Adoptions Support Fund (ASF). Onder Beter added that Brent was one of the West London authorities which most utilised the ASF.

Members' attention was subsequently drawn to the update on the regionalisation of adoption. The committee heard that the Chair, Councillor M Patel, as Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care, had presented the proposed arrangements for the West London Regional Adoption Agency (Adopt London West) between Brent, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hounslow and Ealing to the Cabinet. The proposals had been approved by the Cabinet. Hounslow Council and Ealing Council had also approved the proposals, leaving only Hammersmith and Fulham Council to complete the approval process. Consideration was now being given to when to commence the formal consultation process with staff affected by the changes. Various work streams were progressing at different levels to agree the detail of the arrangement. A draft partnership agreement setting out how the four local authorities would work together was currently being reviewed by the councils' legal departments. It was now anticipated that the new arrangements would be implemented from September 2019.

In response to a query, Nigel Chapman confirmed that Ealing would remain the lead authority for the Regional Adoption Agency but would be required to report to the West London Regionalisation Steering Group. Brent was represented on this Group by Gail Tolley as the Statutory Director of Children's Services for the borough. Brent Council would retain responsibility for ensuring that its adoption performance remained outstanding and furthermore, Adopt London West would be required to provide an annual performance report. Commenting on the arrangements for the Adoption Panel, Nigel Chapman explained that the details were still being agreed, but it was expected that there would be one Panel for all four authorities to ensure a more efficient use of resources. Further details would be shared with the committee when available.

In the subsequent discussion, the Committee welcomed the number of foster carers who had gone on to adopt the children they cared for. Several queries were raised regarding the frequency and impact of parents appealing against Placement Orders. Members questioned how many cases exceeded the 26 weeks' target for resolution. In concluding their questions, the committee sought further details regarding the impact of the £5k cap on the ASF and on adoption placement breakdowns.

Responding to the questions raised, Onder Beter advised that appeals by parents were not very common and it was rare for them to be successful as cases went through a process of intense scrutiny and it was a last resort for a judge to agree a Placement Order. Though an appeal might create delay for a child's adoption, it would not create any disruption to their placement. Each case was meant to be resolved by the Family Courts within 26 weeks. The council monitored this and did apply pressure to bring cases forward as quickly as possible. Currently, cases brought by the council were taking approximately 30 weeks. Again, whilst this did create some delay for the children, it would not cause any disruption to their placements.

Onder Beter advised that it was rare that the council would spend over £5k for a support package but there were cases where this was needed and the council maintained a list of various providers to ensure cost effectiveness. The feedback from workers and adopters was very positive about the ASF. The future of the ASF was not certain but there were plans via the Regional Adoption Agency to lobby for a similar resource. All other members of the Regional Adoption Agency were being urged to make use of the ASF to support any such action.

Nigel Chapman confirmed that less than 5 percent of adoptions would breakdown at some point. There were some examples of adoptions which had broken down when children were in the mid to late teenage years but at that point they would be treated as any other family experiencing these issues. The council did provide a clinical psychologist to support adopters post-placement.

The Chair thanked the officers for the responses.

RESOLVED:

The Corporate Parenting Committee recommended that the Adoption Panel of Adopt London West include an elected representative from the respective authorities in the pool of panel members.

## 11. **Fostering Service Quarterly Report**

Onder Beter (Head of LAC and Permanency) introduced the Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report for the period 1 January 2019 to 31 March 2019. Members' attention was drawn to the summary of activities regarding foster carer recruitment. Onder Beter highlighted that 13 assessments had commenced during the reporting period with eight at Stage1 and five at Stage 2 of the process. There had been significant increase in the targeted recruitment activity and outreach activity undertaken, including an increased social media presence, following the recruitment of a Marketing Officer. This was reflected in the increased number of assessments from the last reporting period.

Outlining other key developments, Onder Beter highlighted the positive reception of the social pedagogue approach, noting that an art intervention workshop for foster carers, their birth children and foster children had been really well received. The committee further heard that one of the Fostering Team's Supervising Social Workers had acquired a Level 3 Diploma in Social Pedagogy. This enabled her to work closely with Brent's Social Pedagogue to assist in implementing social pedagogic practice.

In concluding his introduction to the report, Onder Beter updated members on the work with neighbouring local authorities to develop combined, needs-led, targeted marketing and recruitment and commissioning. The council was currently leading on this work, with Ealing and Hounslow councils and a bid was due to be submitted to the Department for Education for seed funding to further explore the feasibility of a joined up service for the three authorities.

The Chair thanked Onder Beter for his introduction to the report.

Reflecting on the feedback received from foster carers at a previous meeting of the committee, members subsequently questioned whether the take up of training was affected by the school holidays. Noting the recent successes in increasing targeted foster carer recruitment activity, the committee questioned the timeline for this being reflected in performance data for the percentage of children placed with in-house foster carers. During the discussion, members reiterated their request for further information about the quality of semi-independent provision.

With the permission of the Chair, Councillor McLennan queried whether Hammersmith and Fulham Council would be joining the work to develop joint recruitment and commissioning activity.

Onder Beter confirmed that officers were reviewing the learning and development offer for foster carers and were taking in to consideration the views shared by carers, including those regarding availability. Members were further informed that it was likely that it would take at least six months to see an impact of increased recruitment activity, but the placement of children with in-house foster carers would still be dependent on the profile and needs of Brent's LAC population. Nigel Chapman (Operational Director Integration and Improved Outcomes) confirmed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the committee on Semi-Independent Accommodation. It was highlighted that a multiagency audit of this provision had recently been undertaken via a work stream of the Brent Children's Trust and the update to the committee would include the findings from this audit. It was confirmed that Hammersmith and Fulham had shown interest in the work to develop a joint recruitment and commissioning service but Hammersmith and Fulham council remained embedded in their tri-borough arrangements.


The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the discussion.

## 12. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 6.43 pm

COUNCILLOR MILI PATEL  
Chair

	<p align="center"><b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b> 24 July 2019</p>
	<p align="center"><b>Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</b></p>
<p align="center"><b>Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2018-2019</b></p>	

<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)	<p>Onder Beter Head of Service, Looked After Children and Permanency Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Brent <a href="mailto:Onder.beter@brent.gov.uk">Onder.beter@brent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Sarah Miller Head of Virtual School for Looked After Children Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Brent <a href="mailto:Sarah.miller@brent.gov.uk">Sarah.miller@brent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Brent <a href="mailto:Nigel.chapman@brent.gov.uk">Nigel.chapman@brent.gov.uk</a></p>

## 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 An annual report about the outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC) in line with requirements of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010) has to be provided to the Corporate Parenting Committee

or local equivalent. This report fulfils that requirement, providing a profile of Brent's looked after children and care leavers during 2018-2019, reporting on annual activity, highlighting strengths and areas for development in supporting looked after children and care leavers in Brent.

- 1.2 Issues that were identified in the previous Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2017/18 were updated throughout the body of this annual report.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review and comment on the contents of this report. This is to provide evidence, alongside other reporting and scrutiny requirements, that the care and support provided to Brent's LAC and care leavers are appropriately monitored.

## **3.0 Corporate Parenting**

- 3.1 The concept of Corporate Parenting was introduced in The Children Act 2004, placing collective responsibility on local authorities to achieve good parenting outcomes for all children in public care. 'Corporate Parent' defines the collective responsibility of the Local Authority, elected members, employees and partner agencies to provide the best possible care for Looked After Children and care leavers.
- 3.2 The notion of being a corporate parent has been enriched and strengthened by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 which highlighted seven principles of being a corporate parent. These are:
- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being of those children and young people;
  - to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
  - to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
  - to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
  - to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
  - for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
  - to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
- 3.3 Brent has welcomed and embraced the above principles entirely. Elected members in Brent carry out their duty of corporate parenting through:

1. The Corporate Parenting Committee, chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Young People with cross party Member representation where service performance is scrutinised.
2. Attendance of CiA/CLiA representatives at the Corporate Parenting Committee.
3. Weekly liaison meetings between the Lead Member for Children and Young People, the Strategic Director for Children and Young People and other senior staff within the Local Authority as appropriate.
4. Regular meetings between representatives of Care in Action and Care Leavers in Action (CiA/CLiA; Brent's Children in Care Councils), with the Lead Member, Strategic Director, and Operational Directors.
5. Brent's 'Pledge' to looked after children, 'Care Leavers' Charter' and local offer for care leavers, approved by the Lead Member. See a copy of Brent's Pledge and Care Leavers' Charter in appendix 1, 2 and 3.
6. An annual, mandatory Member Learning and Development session on Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting.

3.4 In 2018-2019 the Corporate Parenting Committee provided scrutiny and challenge as follows:

- a. Members of the CiA and CLiA attended the Committee on a regular basis to report on their activity and present their views. Committee members noted the activities, made recommendations about further work and provided challenge to relevant service areas within the Local Authority following matters raised by CIA and CLIA.
- b. The Committee has continued to monitor and scrutinise management and delivery of Brent fostering service in their pursuit to achieve good outcomes for children and young people. Members heard and commented upon foster carers' recruitment and retention, service development as well as hearing directly from foster carers about their experience. In October 2018, 3 foster carers attended the Committee and provided positive feedback on the support they had been receiving from Brent and also made a suggestion regarding provision of more 'out of hours training for foster carers'. The service has listened to this suggestion and provided more training session for foster carers out of hours.
- c. Management and delivery of adoption services have also been monitored on a six monthly basis by the Committee. In addition, quarterly updates were received by Members regarding the 'regionalisation of adoption' and how Brent has been actively involved

in designing and development of the 'Adopt London West, West London's regional adoption agency.

- d. In July 2018, the Committee was presented with Brent's Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2017/18. The report provided a summary of the profile of looked after children and care leavers, social work activity and interventions including some case studies demonstrating how the Council meets the overall needs of children and young people as their Corporate Parent.
- e. In October 2018, the Committee reviewed and noted enrichment activities for looked after children and care leavers jointly provided by the Looked After Children and Permanency Service and Brent Virtual School for LAC. At the same meeting, Members reviewed and commented on the content of an annual report on Independent Reviewing Officers. Additionally, Members were presented with a report on the Stability Index (SI) for looked after children<sup>1</sup>. The SI for Brent focused on data across three main domains: placement changes, school changes and changes in social workers. The Committee reviewed and commented upon the activity undertaken to improve the stability of lives of looked after children in Brent.
- f. In February 2019, Members were presented with an Annual Health Report for Looked After Children jointly by Brent Clinical Commissioning Group and Brent LAC Health Team – London Northwest University NHS Trust. The report included a summary of activity around looked after children's overall health, including initial and review health assessments, dental and optician checks as well as Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires that are used to assess emotional wellbeing.
- g. Members were presented a report regarding the Annual Bright Spots Questionnaire<sup>2</sup> and heard about Brent's response to the Survey in February 2019. The report detailed the actions taken following analysis of the previous year's survey, including review of contact arrangements, life story work, social work realignment to provide further continuity of relationship between social workers and looked after children.
- h. In April 2019, the Committee heard about the activity undertaken in the last quarter of the reporting year 2017/18. This included a report on 'the national protocol on reducing unnecessary criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers'. The report provided a summary on

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<sup>1</sup> The Stability Index (SI) was launched in 2017 by the Children's Commissioner as an annual measure of the stability of the lives of children in care. The SI aims to improve stability for looked after children by highlighting the issue of stability and providing data that allows stability to be monitored over time.

<sup>2</sup> Bright Spots Questionnaire is known as "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. 33% of looked after children responded to the Survey.

activities and current practice in Brent in reducing looked after children's contact with the Youth Justice System.

#### 4. Inspection of Brent's Children's Services - ILACS

4.1 Brent's Children's Services were inspected by Ofsted in May 2018. The inspection covered wide range of areas such as impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families, the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection including children in care and care leavers and the overall effectiveness of the service.

4.2 The Ofsted inspection in May 2018 graded overall effectiveness of services 'good'. The experience and progress of looked after children and care leavers were graded 'outstanding'.

4.3 In relation to the care and experiences of looked after children and care leavers, the Ofsted inspection identified the following areas of strength:

- Adoption is an area of best practice and performance remains one of the strongest in London and nationally.
- Permanency planning is effective and timely.
- Social workers build good, positive relationships with children and families using direct work and children are being seen and spoken to as per their care plans.
- The quality of court reports continues to be of a high standard, particularly those undertaken by the in-house Kinship Care Team.
- The majority of care plans are of good quality and timeliness of LAC reviews is good.
- Brent commissions good quality placements and suitable accommodation for looked after children and care leavers.
- Academic progress is good, evidenced by the high number of care leavers at university.
- Outcomes for care leavers are really good. Care leavers receive various enrichment activities and support assisting them to tackle isolation and loneliness, including an innovative phone-line, Safe Base, that provides counselling support to care leavers at university.
- There have been no tenancy breakdowns for care leavers for 2 years.

4.4 Some of the quotes from the Inspection Report<sup>3</sup> below highlights the strengths of the support provided by Brent as a strong corporate parent:

- *"The care for children and care leavers is outstanding..."*
- *"Strong leadership at a political level and throughout the council has prioritised support and care for children in care and care leavers..."*
- *"Corporate parenting is a real strength for the local authority. There is a strong focus on achieving positive outcomes for children in care and care leavers..."*

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<sup>3</sup> For Ofsted's full report visit <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80489>

- *“Staff and managers are ambitious for children and young people. The lived experiences of children and young people are at the heart of social work practice...”*
- *Excellent support is available for children and young people to help them achieve stability in their lives. Strong multi-agency work across partnerships is helping children and young people thrive...”*
- *“...Social workers and personal advisers demonstrate considerable empathy, understanding and compassion when talking about ‘their’ young people. This is valued by care leavers. In the words of one care leaver: ‘My PA [personal adviser] is like the mum I didn’t have. Her words encourage me to feel better and do better.”*
- *“Great care is taken to ensure that care leavers only move into their own independent homes when they are assessed as able to maintain a tenancy. For this reason, there have been no tenancy breakdowns...”*

The Inspection identified the following as development areas

- Ensure that Care in Action and Care Leavers in Action involves a wider group of looked after children and care leavers in service development.
- Improve attendance and academic attainment at Key Stage 4.
- Further improve use of fostering to adopt options
- Improve use of return home interviews for children missing from home or care

4.5 In relation to the areas for development, an action plan was put in place and all of the above areas have been improved within 6 months after the Inspection.

## **5.0 Participation of looked after children, young people and care leavers.**

5.1 Looked after children and care leavers have been supported and encouraged to participate in decision making process that impact on their lives in several different ways in 2018/19. Children and care leavers been visited regularly in their placements or homes and their wishes, feelings and views were obtained and recorded.

5.2 Social work practitioners, from social workers to the independent reviewing officers use Brent’s Practice Framework to undertake direct work with children and young people. LAC review reports, care plans and pathway plans consistently include wishes and feelings of children and young people. In 2018/19, The majority of children and young people aged over 4 years (648 reviews – 66% of all) attended their review and spoke for themselves. The IROs have continued to play a vital role in developing relationships with children and young people. The following quote from a young person reflects the quality of this relationship:

"I have known my IRO for more than 10 years. He is cool and always keeps in touch with me", Young Person, aged 15

- 5.3 Similar to last year, in 2018/19, Brent's looked after children were invited to participate in a survey called the Bright Spots Questionnaire, "Your life, Your care". This 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.
- 5.3.1 The survey 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 CiA and CLiA, designated teachers of Looked After Children, social workers and foster carers. The eligible participation cohort of Looked After Children was 278. Of that number, 82 responded to the survey.
- 5.3.2 Compared to last year's Survey, 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. There are a number of positive findings from Brent children and young people's feedback.

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

- 96% (up from 85% last year) of children and young people felt that they had the opportunity to practice life skills.
- Every child aged 4-11 yrs, 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 a low sense of 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 local 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

5.3.3 Below were some of what children and young people said should be improved:

- 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 result, 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 is a priority for 2019-20.
- 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. Brent's Virtual School for LAC is liaising with schools to provide additional information and support in order to address this area.
- Girls were more likely than boys to report that they disliked school.

5.3.4 An action plan was agreed to address the issues above and a report was presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee with Brent's response to the Survey in February 2019.

5.4 In January 2019, Brent's care leavers between the ages of 18 and 25 were encouraged to complete the 'Bright Spots' Survey that would provide an insight into care leaver's understanding of their journey after care. Over 130 Brent care leavers responded to the questionnaire, which was well above the 30% average response rate nationally. Results will be published in August 2019; feedback will be used to further improve Brent's support to care leavers.

5.5 Junior CiA, CiA and CLiA held a number of activities in 2018-19 to support participation and engagement:

5.5.1 Junior CiA continued to meet regularly to provide a positive forum for meeting other young people in care, develop a positive narrative about life in care and take part in activities which enrich their social and emotional development. A consistent group of eight young people attended throughout the year and a Brent care leaver supported

facilitation of the group. They have taken part in fun sports and drama activities.

- 5.5.2 CiA, Brent's Children in Care Council, is comprised of a small group of young people aged 11-17. Through fortnightly meetings, they provided advice and feedback to local agencies providing services, met with senior leaders including the strategic director and Lead Member and routinely attended the Corporate Parenting Committee to ensure young people's experiences were well understood and services are improved to meet their needs.
- 5.5.3 Care Leavers in Action (CLIA), a committed group of care leavers continued to meet fortnightly. Some representatives of CLIA also attended the Corporate Parenting Committee, actively participating in discussions. A representative of CLIA attended the Local Partnership Meeting for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, a multi-agency officers group to be the voice of care leavers.
- 5.5. A thriving weekly football night - started in September 2018 - which has engaged more than 25 care leavers as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, sees staff, managers and leaders facing off with care leavers in a fun, relaxed and competitive game – fostering relationships and building trust. During National Care Leavers' Week, a group of staff, including senior managers played a football game against care leavers. This was a good engagement event and young people provided positive feedback about it. Below are two photos from the football activities for care leavers:



- 5.6 Additionally, a monthly care leavers hub, provided a forum for more than 30 care leavers to network, build relationships and discuss issues which concern them and provide challenge to managers and leaders on service provision. The hub has been used by care leavers as a forum to tackle isolation and loneliness and build supportive networks. The following quote from a care leaver shows good engagement in the hub activities:

*'I would come if it was every fortnight'*

- 5.7 Five children and young people (ages 6-18) were part of the Voice in a Million Choir that took place in March 2019 at the Wembley SSE Arena. The Brent group comprised three adopted children, one looked after child and a care leaver who also had a solo performance. This is an outstanding and high profile opportunity for young people to connect with other children in care from across the country while developing and showcasing their talent.
- 5.8 In 2018/19, advocacy services for children and young people were provided by a Children's Rights officer/advocate, who was appointed on a fixed term contract for a period of 12 months, and a commissioned provider (Aidhour). In 2018/19 there were 62 requests for advocacy. Referrals for advocacy were made either directly by the child or young person or through a social worker or other professionals such as an IRO, foster carer, teacher or a solicitor. During 2018/19 the advocate supported children and young people at their LAC review, meeting with solicitors, at school, during child protection conferences, and in making complaints. Advocacy services were provided regarding the issues raised include housing, finance, placement moves, disagreement with a proposed care plan and request for a change of social worker or personal advisor.
- 5.9 In addition to the advocacy service, Brent has a commissioned Independent Visitors Scheme to support children and young people. Between April 2018 and March 2019 10 young people were supported by Independent visitors throughout the year. The following feedback is from one young person, highlighting how the scheme is helping young people:

*'I get on well with her (IV) and my confidence has improved'*

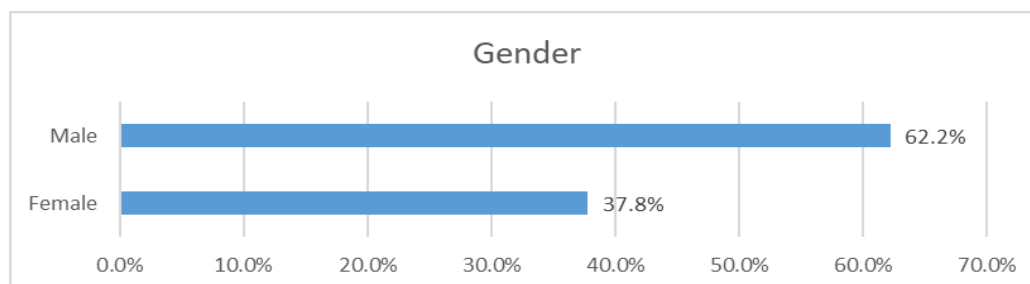
- 5.10 In 2018/19 Brent put in place a project to empower young people to achieve more positive outcomes by improving engagement, guidance and support through the digitalisation of pathway planning for care leavers. 19 older looked after children and care leavers have been actively involved through workshops in the ideation and design of a digital solution for the pathway plan. The final output design and functionalities are based on what care leavers developed and what they need to feel supported, empowered as well as engaged and what will enable them to learn and develop. The work is on-going with the view to be completed in 2019/20.

## 6.0 Profile of Looked after Children and care leavers

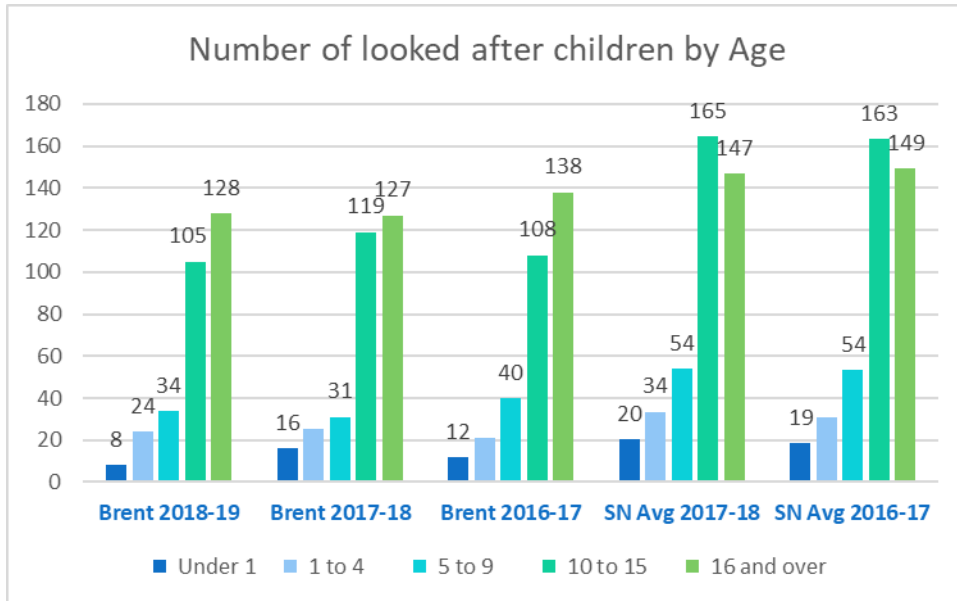
- 6.1 As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 Brent had 299 children and young people looked after. This compares with 318 Looked After on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018. This represents 38.5 LAC per 10,000 head of child population against the rate for England of 62 per 10,000 head of child population. The number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) remained the same in 2018/2019 compared to 2017/18. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, the Local Authority looked after 56 UASC compared with 56 in March 2018. This represented 18.7% of the total Brent LAC population.
- 6.2 Brent Children and Young People's Services continue to support children remaining within their families when it is safe to do so. In 2018/19, 46 children became children looked after for a second or subsequent time, in line with statistical neighbours, compared to 49 in 2017/18. The below extract from the Ofsted Inspection in May highlights Brent's strong commitment to keeping children within their networks when appropriate:

*"Consideration of kinship care is particularly strong. Social workers go to great lengths to identify safe family members with whom children can live. Often, there are complex international elements..."*

- 6.3 The gender of the LAC population consists of 62.2% male and 37.8% female, consistent with the last year.

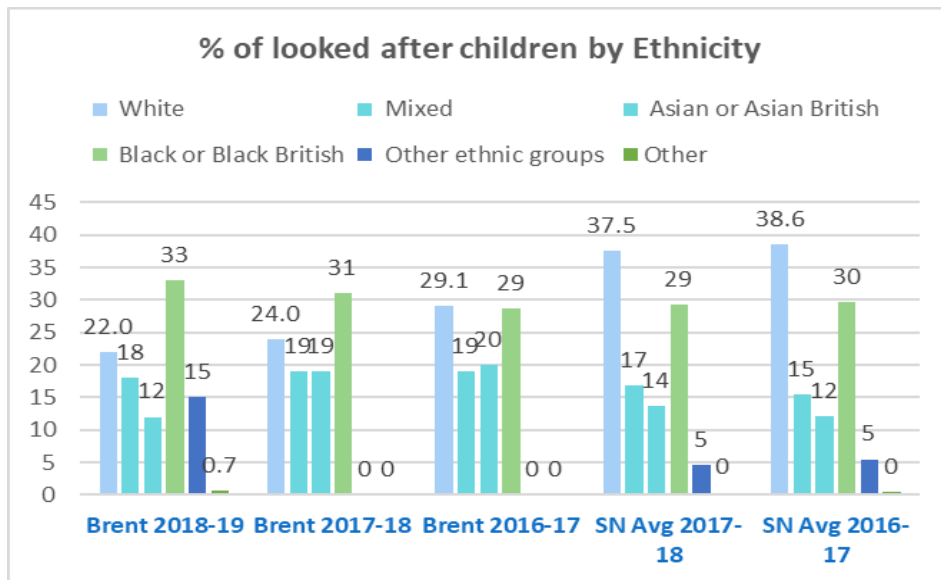


- 6.4 42.8% of the care population in Brent is aged over 16 years old, compared to 40% at the end of March 2018. Over 77.5% of the care population in Brent are aged 10 and over. This presents some challenges around having a predominantly adolescent LAC population and associated risks as well as pointing to a bigger cohort of leaving care population in coming years.



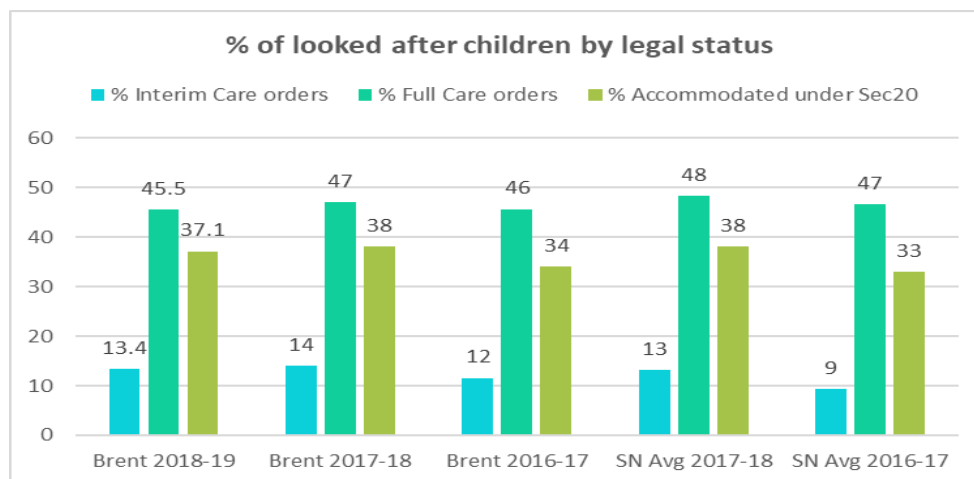
**6.5 Ethnicity of LAC**

6.6 Ethnicity of looked after children broadly remained the same compared to the previous year. The trend of a slight reduction in the number of looked after children from White UK and Asian background continued with a slight increase of children who are Black or Black British. The number of Black or Black British children and young people remains comparable with data from statistical neighbours.



## 7 Legal Status of LAC

7.1 The majority of looked after children were subject to Care Orders (Interim Care Orders and Full Care Orders) under the Children Act 1989, representing 58.9% of all LAC in this reporting year. A further 111 children (37.1% of all LAC) were in care through a voluntary agreement with the parents/carers as pursuant to Sec 20 of the Children Act 1989. The number of children in care through a voluntary agreement with parents remained broadly consistent compared to the previous year.



7.2 The proportion of children placed more than 20 miles away as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 was 18.4%, compared to 19% in 17/18 (the national average is 14%). Brent Children and Young People's Services endeavour to place children locally, close to their families. However, in most cases of teenagers coming into care with multiple vulnerabilities, placing them out of borough was essential to safeguard them from associated risks such as gang, affiliation or county lines<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, the lack of sufficiency of local placement options for adolescents with complex needs was another reason for placing young people more than 20 miles away. *Brent's Sufficiency Strategy* identifies this as a national problem and includes measures to work in partnership with internal and external partners to broaden placement options for looked after children. An extract from the Ofsted Inspection Report in May 2018, highlights the careful planning that goes into placements of looked after children and reasons for out-of-borough placements:

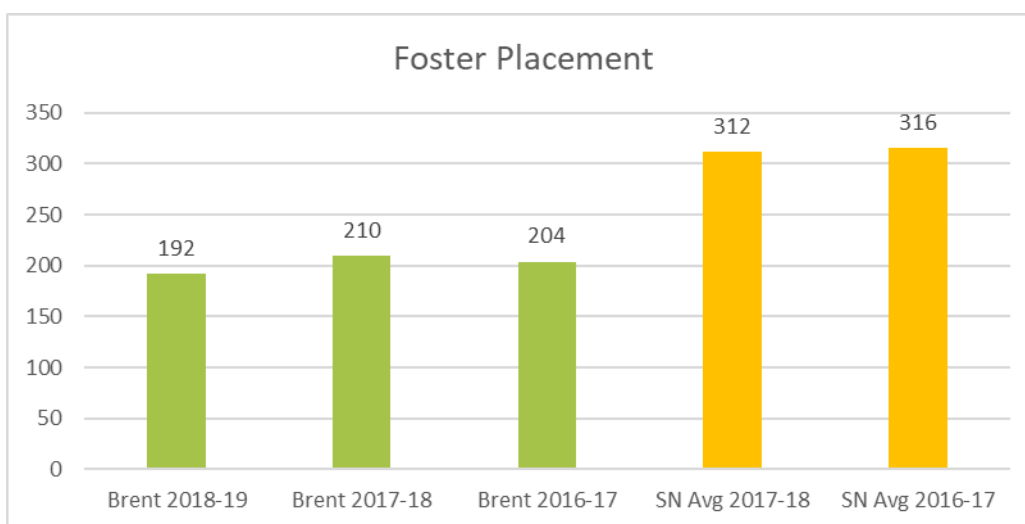
<sup>4</sup> 'County lines' is a term used to describe an organised form of exploitation of children by gangs or crime networks. These children are made to travel across counties, and they use dedicated mobile phone 'lines' to supply drugs. See details at <http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/958-county-lines-drug-networks-now-a-nation-wide-issue>

*"Placement planning ensures that, wherever possible, children's homes are able to meet the unique needs of each child or young person. If they are placed out of borough, this is most often in response to a safeguarding or complex need..."*

### 7.3 Placements of LAC in Brent

Most of our children resided within fostering placements (192) – 64.2% of all LAC, a decrease from the same point in 2018 (66.6%). This area of work remains to be a challenge for the service. The reasons for this are as below:

- Reduction in number of children in fostering households is partly due to an increased complexity of young people's needs, who enter the care system late, predominantly due to contextual safeguarding/extra familial risks<sup>5</sup>. Presenting needs are complex and associated risks are high and as such fostering households are not able meet the young people's needs.
- Lack of sufficiency of foster placements for teenagers in London and nationally plays a major role that impacts on this figure.
- Additionally, efforts to recruit and retain in-house foster carers have not been as successful as anticipated in 2018/19, mostly because of cessation of 6 assessments of prospective foster carers at a late stage due to various reasons including personal, fostering standards and safeguarding-related issues.



### 7.4 Recruitment and retention of foster carers remains a priority for 2019/20. An action plan is in place including exploration of regional consortia and/or

<sup>5</sup> "Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships", <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/about/what-is-contextual-safeguarding>

neighbouring local authorities for combined, needs-led and targeted marketing and recruitment and commissioning and integration activities.

## **7.5 Placement Stability**

7.5.1 As at 31st March 2019, 39 children had three or more placements in the year (13% of all LAC), which is a marginal decrease from last year (13.2%, 3 fewer children). Placement disruption is unavoidable for some children and young people; Brent has a high number of adolescents with multiple complexities and risks coming to care late. Due to mostly contextual safeguarding-related risks coupled by adverse childhood experiences, some young people find it hard to build relationships with their carers and struggle to settle in placements for the initial period of care.

7.5.2 Placement stability continues to be a priority area. A robust process is in place to manage planned and unplanned placement changes for children and young people. For example, a weekly Placement Panel monitors and tracks placement change requests and works in coordination with internal and external partner agencies to ensure the placement change is in the best interest of children. Children and families, Brent Virtual School and IROs are consulted about placement changes prior to authorisation being sought from the Head of Service. An extract from the Ofsted Inspection in May 2018 shows the rigour in practice around placement stability:

*"Disruption rates are low but unavoidable for some children and young people. Good preventative support is provided if disruption is anticipated. Lessons are learned from reviews if placements break down..."*

## **7.6 Permanency and Care Proceedings**

7.6.1 Between 01/04/18 and 31/03/19 there were 6 children adopted and 21 children who left care as they were placed on Special Guardianship Orders. Continuous focus on early and effective permanency planning has improved timescales for adoption even further compared to previous years. As at 31/03/19 the provisional average time in days between a child entering care and moving in with his/her adoptive family was 386.7 days. This shows an improvement on the figures over the previous three years, which was 391 days in the March 2018 published figures and is expected to place Brent's performance above the national average by year end when the data is published. The Corporate Parenting Committee provides six-monthly scrutiny on adoption performance.

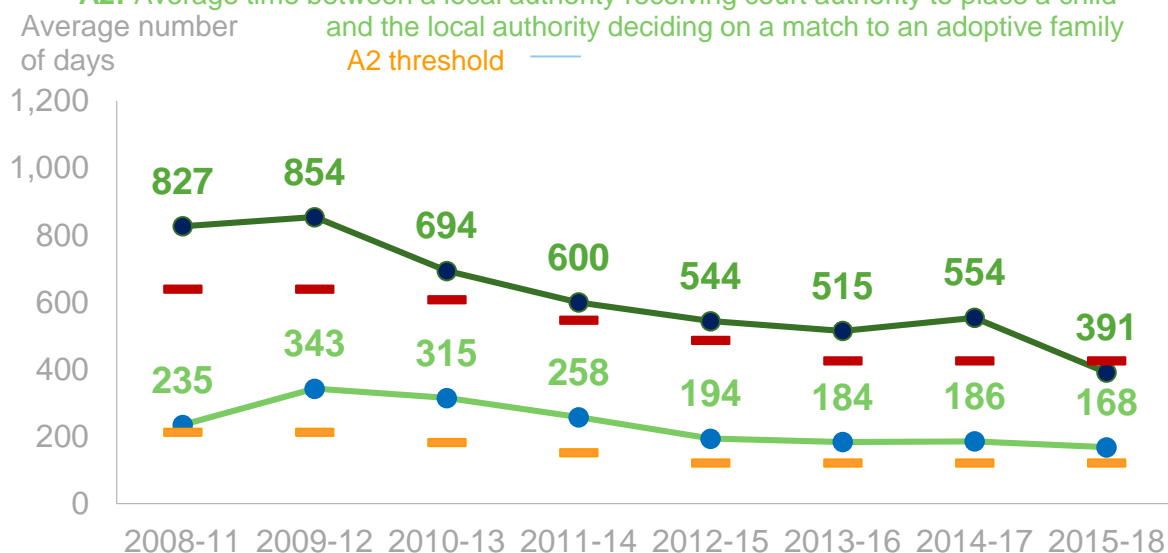
7.6.2 The chart below shows the latest available published data from the Department for Education.

**A1:** Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family

A1 threshold —

**A2:** Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family

A2 threshold —



## 7.10 Care Proceedings

7.10.1 The number of care proceedings initiated by Brent has fallen again this reporting year, with a total of 51 cases being issued in 2018/19 compared to 57 in 2017/18. This could be attributed to the increase of families being worked with under a pre-proceedings framework<sup>6</sup> during this reporting year.

7.10.2 The timeliness for the completion of care proceedings has lengthened, with an average time for 2018/19 of 38 weeks compared to 35 weeks-average of last reporting year.

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
<b>Brent</b>	31 weeks	29 weeks	35 weeks	38 weeks
<b>London average</b>	33 weeks	29 weeks	31 weeks	33 weeks

<sup>6</sup> 'Pre-proceedings' is a term used to define a time period, prior to initiation of care proceedings, when the families are provided with a last chance to make changes in their parenting behaviour that causes the Local Authority to be concerned about their children. Family members are represented by their lawyers at this stage.

There continue to be multiple and complex reasons for the lengthening picture that include:

- A small number of cases which have been concluded in 50+ weeks which has had a significant impact on the overall average.
- Complexity within cases- new children born within proceedings, Fact Finding hearings and delays due to outstanding criminal charges/court processes.
- International elements which required travel, liaising with foreign authorities, legal bodies, and often prolonged, complex family assessments.
- A lack of court availability - leading to delayed final hearings. Please see paragraph 7.15 for further explanation.

7.10.3 A robust process was put in place in 2018/19 to further track care proceedings cases. The 'Care Proceedings Tracking meeting' continues to take place monthly, chaired by senior managers and legal representatives of the Local Authority. The meeting aims to quickly identify any issues that might cause or create delay within proceedings and rectify them.

7.10.4 The Service appointed a Social Work Practice Consultant championing the area of care proceedings and permanency over a portion of this past year with the aim of supporting and developing social work practice in these areas.

7.10.5 One of the issues contributing to delay in care proceedings was courts' lack of availability, and capacity issues. Brent raised this as a concern in Brent's bi-annual liaison meeting with West London Family Court during 2018/19. However due to the lack of progress, Brent has instigated a conversation with other West London authorities to explore a collective response and action plan to address this challenge. This work will continue in 2019/20 and remains a priority area.

## **8 Health of Looked After Children**

8.1 Local Authorities, as the Corporate Parents, are responsible for ensuring that LAC receive regular health checks (six monthly for children under the age of 5 and annually for those over the age of 5), dental checks and appropriate immunisations. Statutory health data for LAC is reported for those children who have been in care for more than 12 months.

	2016-2017		2017-2018		2018 - 2019	
Health care and development assessments	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Number of Children looked after for more than 1 year and still looked after at 31/03	219	68.6%	216	67.9%	194	64.8%
Annual health assessment	205	93.6%	199	92.1%	187	96%
Up to date immunisations	157	72.6%	145	72.8%	137	71%
Number with an SDQ recorded	149	94%	67	47%	149	90%
Teeth checked by a dentist	194	88.5%	181	90.9%	160	82.5%

- 8.2 There were 194 LAC who had been looked after by Brent for 12 months or more at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. Of these 187 (96%) had an up to date health assessment, an improvement on the previous year's position (92.1%). Regular health quality assurance meetings are undertaken to improve performance further.
- 8.3 The percentage for dental checks and children with up to date immunisations slightly decreased in 2018/19 compared to 2017/18.
- 8.4 The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a tool that is completed by parents, carers or teachers, which measures behavioural difficulties of looked after children. This tool is designed to assist the carers as to whether the child has a well-being related problem. In this reporting year 90% of looked after children had an SDQ score recorded. This was a significant improvement compared to the previous year's score of 46%.
- 8.5 Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust provide Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for children aged 0-18. Tier 2 CAMHS service is known as Brent Emotional Wellbeing Team (BEWT) and it is co-located with social work teams. BEWT has continued providing clinical support via holding consultations with social workers and foster carers with

the aim to increase professional confidence, skill and knowledge in the areas of attachment, managing behaviour and reflective parenting. When the need arises for a Tier 3 CAMHS referral, clinicians support social workers in completing those referrals.

## **8.6 Multi-agency Partnership for LAC and Care Leavers**

- 8.6.1 Brent's strong and effective multi-agency arrangements with external agencies such as CCG, schools and various providers ensures good outcomes for children in care and care leavers. The Children's Trust and Local Safeguarding Children's Board drove information sharing across partner agencies in 2018/19, aimed at consistency of approach and improving safeguarding for children and access to services. The Joint Commissioning Group (JCG), chaired by the Operational Director for Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy and reporting to the Children's Trust, continued monitoring the effectiveness of partnership working and commissioning arrangements for LAC and Care Leavers.
- 8.6.2 An operational multi-agency partnership meeting for looked after children and care leavers has continued to meet regularly with participation from the CiA, Looked After Children and Permanency Service, the Virtual School for looked after children, health professionals, CAMHS, CCG, YOS, Public Health and other providers when required. The meeting promotes collective responsibility and takes a systemic approach to improve overall outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

## **9. Children Missing or Absent from Care**

- 9.1 In the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, 78 LAC were reported to be missing from their placements once. This represented 16.5% of all LAC looked after at any point during the year (n=474). This is in line with the number of children reported missing from care in 2018/19.
- 9.2 58 of the 78 had more than one missing incident in the year. In this reporting year 50 LAC were reported as being absent from their care placement compared with 68 in 2018/19. An absence may be a situation where a child has not returned home at an agreed time but their whereabouts is known. Within this cohort, 33 children were absent from their placement more than once.
- 9.4 The Ofsted Inspection in May 2018 highlighted this area as requiring further improvement. Even though Brent's strategic response was found to be sound, further work was required operationally to provide a well-coordinated response. Additionally, more return home interviews were needed to be undertaken with children and young people. The inspectors stated below:

*"While the strategic response when children go missing from home and care is good, the pace of improvement in operational practice has been too slow..."*

- 9.5 Post-inspection an action plan was put in place to achieve the required improvement swiftly. As part of this action plan, a multi-agency Operational Missing Panel was established to bring all professionals working together with the relevant children and young people. This has resulted in a better coordinated operational response to the children and young people. As a result of the action plan, data quality has also improved with more return home interviews being offered to and taken by looked after children.
- 9.6 Children who go missing from care receive a robust response from their allocated social workers and partner agencies. A daily Integrated Risk Management Meeting, chaired by the Police is used to ensure effective strategies and timely response when a child goes missing. The Strategic Director, Children and Young People, in her role as the Statutory Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for children and young people receive weekly updates on children going missing.
- 9.7 Brent's Vulnerable Adolescents' Panel, chaired by the Operational Director for Integration and Improved Outcomes is a multi-agency forum with a strategic overview of different forms of vulnerabilities including children missing from care. The Vulnerable Adolescents Panel considers links between children missing and other areas of vulnerability such as:
- at risk of child sexual exploitation;
  - missing from home or education;
  - involved in gang-related activity or offending/violent behaviour;
  - at risk of peer on peer abuse;
  - displaying sexually harmful behaviour;
  - at risk of other forms of exploitation such as radicalisation, female genital mutilation or forced marriage.

## **10. Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE)**

- 10.1 The MASE Panel is a multi-agency forum established to ensure there are robust multi-agency plans in place to ensure the protection of children who are at high risk of sexual exploitation. This includes looked after children and young people. The Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance chairs the monthly MASE Panel. The panel has a role in ensuring that children and young people are appropriately identified and flagged with the respective agencies and that any plans aimed at ensuring their protection are progressed in a timely and effective manner. It focuses on the management and disruption of offenders identifying locations and themes where a risk of CSE has been identified.

- 10.2 The exploitation of children and young people has evolved to include child criminal exploitation (CCE), commonly referred to as county lines. This means that there are often interconnected risks associated with children going missing, CSE and CCE, a range of harm that occurs outside of the family home and is generally non familial. The MASE Panel started to use the term contextual safeguarding in recognition of this. The Panel requires agencies to consider the associations, environments and community that a child or young person engages with, as factors that can contribute to risks of harm.
- 10.3 In 2018/19 there were 23 looked after young people who were known to the MASE Panel. Of these, a total of 14 (4.9%) had been previously known to Panel and a further 9 young people have been identified through the Child Referral and Section 47 enquiry work-steps on Mosaic, electronic recording system as being at risk of CSE in 2018/19.

Age	Total	Percentage
13	2	8.7%
14	3	13.0%
15	5	21.7%
16	3	13.0%
17	10	43.5%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100%</b>

- 10.4 Of the total 23 Looked After Children identified as at risk of CSE, 73.9% are female, and 26.1% are male. Young people of Black or Black British ethnicity are over-represented in the cohort, at 47.8%. The average age is 16.

Ethnicity	Total	Percentage
Black or Black British	11	47.8%
White	7	30.4%
Asian or Asian British	3	13.0%
Other Ethnic Groups	1	4.3%
Mixed / Multiple	1	4.3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100%</b>

- 10.5 In response to this issue a number of actions have been undertaken to enhance the partnership response:

- The prioritisation of identifying funding opportunities to provide increased one-to-one support to children at risk of CSE. Safer London were funded in 2018/19 to work directly with young people at risk of CSE and provided short term intervention to a small cohort of young people using their Empower Programme.
- The Metropolitan Police has developed ways to track offenders and the MASE Panel is aware of potential offenders living in Brent, even if the victim is overseen by another local authority's MASE Panel. This has allowed for a greater understanding of trends happening in Brent and enabled disruption activities to be put in place.
- As part of targeted intervention and preventative work, MASE actively looks at locations where CSE has occurred or that are linked to CSE and develops activity to make these areas safer for children. In March 2019 the Metropolitan Police carried out an Operation Griffin refresher in 3 boroughs during CSE awareness week. The last day was spent in Brent, during which 5 hotels in the Wembley area were inspected, out of which only one passed the test. This replicated the poor pass rate as result of the same operation undertaken in September 2018, when only one hotel of 11 passed the test. In the debrief with hotels, the high turnover of staff working on Reception desks was cited as a key issue, with different policies in each hotel. In response, the Police will carry out regular spot checks on hotels every 3 months and give training to staff

## **11. Education of Looked After Children**

11.1. The educational outcomes for looked after children for the academic year 2018/19 will not be available until January 2020. Details of educational outcomes in 2018 can be seen in the Virtual School annual report presented to the July 2019 Corporate Parenting Committee. Some of the Virtual School's achievements during 2017/18 are summarised below:

- All 204 children received appropriate education, including 96% in Good or Outstanding provisions.
- There were no Permanent Exclusions.
- Fewer Looked After Children were excluded from school – 20 compared with 29 in the previous academic year.
- At Key Stage 4, 22% of the eligible cohort achieved at least 4 passes including English or Maths.
- 13% of the eligible cohort achieved the benchmark of 5 passes (grade 4+) including English and Maths, which is consistent with LAC National data.
- At Year 12, support with retakes resulted in one previously disengaged student achieving the required grades to allow him to access A level studies.

- 87% of LAC had a destination school or college place secured for September 2018, and a new post-16 worker ensured all post 16 students had ePEPs.
- Brent Celebration event welcomed over 150 LAC and heard from a post 16 student who spoke passionately about his academic “turnaround” and the support he received from his school Designated Teacher and Brent Virtual School.
- A diverse and exciting enrichment programme took place across the year and included a week long residential at Jamie’s Farm, a Tall Ships sailing trip, Theatre trips, ESOL (English as a Second Language) enrichment programme focusing on British values and culture, and further university visits.
- Designated teachers for LAC (a statutory role), came to the Civic Centre to attend termly VS training; over 20 schools attended across the year, from in and out of borough. A Designated Teachers Conference was held in June 2018 at the Civic Centre welcoming 33 delegates from 9 schools.
- HEBB (Harrow, Ealing, Barnet and Brent) Virtual Schools joint network meeting was hosted by Brent in May 2018, at Wembley Learning Zone. This enabled neighbouring virtual schools to share and compare best practice, moderate PEPs and plan a joint enrichment programme. This joint Virtual School format is being piloted amongst the wider London network for a pan-London Virtual Schools’ conference during 2019.
- Children’s services were inspected by Ofsted in May 2018, and this included a review of the Virtual School. The report praised Brent’s focus on education for its Looked After cohort, stating: *“Senior managers place high priority on ensuring that children and young people in care attend good schools or alternative provision. A high proportion of children and young people come into care with significant gaps in their learning and attendance, many with complex needs and substantial barriers to overcome. Despite this, they are making better progress in care than they were previously. This is the result of highly effective partnership working.”*

## 12. Care Leavers

- 12.1 The Local Authority has a dedicated Leaving Care Service that provides support and guidance to all young people who leave their long-term care from the age of 18 years until they reach the age of 25, even if they are not in education or employment.
- 12.2 All care leavers have an allocated personal advisor who are introduced to them at the age of 17, before their transition to the leaving care service. This ensures that all those in care approaching 18 years of age, receive a consistent offer to progress the next steps of their journey. A personal

advisor is not a qualified social worker but will have background in working with young people in a variety of settings such as in youth justice, housing organisations or youth groups. The current establishment of the Leaving Care Service consists of 2 teams with 16 personal advisors supervised by 2 team managers.

12.3 As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, Brent was responsible for the support to 317 Former Relevant Young People [aged 18 - 21] and 49 young people aged 22-25. In line with the Social Work Act 2017, Brent offers a 21+ service giving support, advice and guidance to any care leaver who may wish this support up to the age of 25.

**12.4 Brent's Local Offer for Care Leavers**

Brent's Local Offer to care leavers 2018/19, published on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018, was one of the first published in the country. Brent consulted with senior leaders in the Council, members of staff, partners and most importantly young people in the development of the local offer. Young people played a vital role in the development of the offer. 119 care leavers participated in a direct consultation process which included face to face dialogue, workshops and a questionnaire being used.

12.5 The Local Offer agreed by Cabinet in 2018 included both an exemption for care leavers from Council Tax living in Brent and financial support to cover any Council Tax costs for Brent care leavers living outside of Brent from April 2018.

12.6 As part of Brent's Local Offer, 60 different commitments were made to care leavers. 8 of those commitments were statutory duties Brent needed to provide by law and 52 were additional, discretionary commitments made to care leavers. An analysis of impact of the local offer will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in July 2019.

**13. Care Leavers in Education, Employment & Training**

13.1 There were 46 young people in higher education in 2018/19. These included 20 young people aged 19-21, in university, studying a variety of subjects from Aerospace Technology with Pilot Studies to Business Studies and Sociology. Additionally, 26 care leavers aged between 22 and 25 were in higher education at the end of the reporting year. Brent had the same percentage of care leavers in higher education as statistical neighbours and more than nationally.

The table below highlights some of the comparative data for young people at university:

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in Higher Education	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average	Statistical Neighbour average %	National figure	National figure %
2017-18	31	14%	24	9%	1,750	6%
2018-19	20	9%				

- 13.2 At the end of the reporting year, 74% of young people aged 18-25 were in education, employment and training. The figure is 56% amongst care leavers aged 19 to 21, which is in line with statistical neighbours, and better than the national average. The national key performance measures as related to outcomes for care leavers in education, employment or training are as below:

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in Education, Employment or Training	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average	Statistical Neighbour average %	National figure	National figure %
2017-18	111	50%	144	55%	14,640	51%
2018-19	131	56%				

- 13.3 All care leavers attending University are provided with financial support which includes a Higher Education bursary [as endorsed by the Department for Education Charter for Care Leavers] of £2000 paid in 4 instalments plus subsidised travel to assist with travel costs. In addition, as per Brent's local offer young people (subject to a financial assessment) received subsistence and rent payments from Brent Council during Christmas, Easter and Summer vacations.
- 13.4 The case study below demonstrates Brent's commitment to support care leavers who have aspirations to attend higher education:

### **Case Study – A care leaver in higher education**

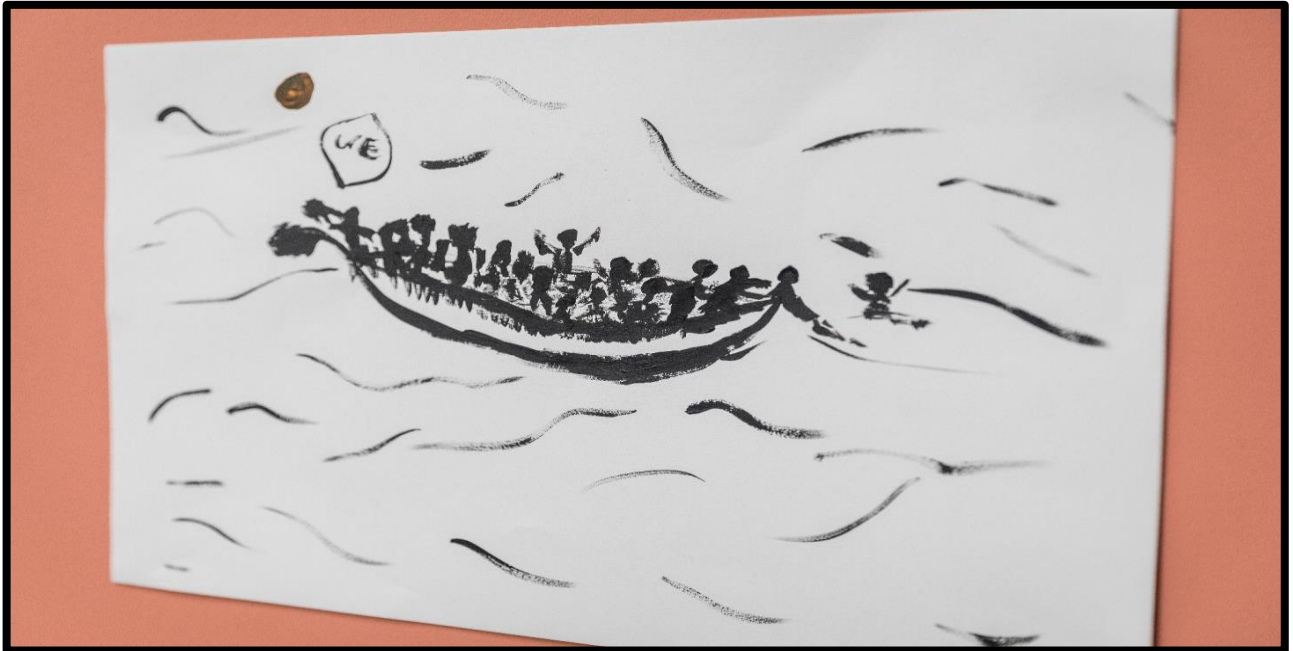
YV is a refugee from an Asian country. She was referred to Brent Social Care under the Home Office Referral System and was accommodated in June 2009.

YV has a good relationship with her Personal Advisor (PA) and engages well with the leaving care service as well as the Refugee Support Network. YV has mental health needs. She also experiences periods of debilitating anxiety and will resort to alcohol to manage stress and anxiety. YV was arrested when she was involved in a serious offence. An in-time asylum application had been submitted to the home office who advised that the decision for YV to remain indefinitely in the UK is dependent upon the outcome of the crown prosecution service (CPS) decision on the current criminal case.

The CPS took two years to decide that YV was a victim of DA and the charges against her were dropped to no further action. During this period YV was supported by her PA to transfer accommodation, access mental health services with the joint support of her GP, Refugee Support Network, student welfare, immigration solicitor and criminal solicitor. With support, she was able to remain focused on her studies. YV undertook work experience in a major fashion house and was recently involved in London fashion week. She was also invited to take part in fashion events in Milan and Paris but, at the time she did not have access to her passport. YV will be graduating from university in July 2019. The home office has now granted YV indefinite leave to remain. YV is now proactive in managing any issue that arises and no longer resorts to alcohol. YV has also been offered employment at notable fashion houses after graduation.

- 13.5 The Virtual School for LAC continues to monitor and track educational attainment for all looked after children and young people. Prospects [Connexions Provider for Brent] have a personal advisor who is based with the Virtual School 2 days a week. The advisor works in partnership with the Virtual School and the allocated social workers to identify appropriate routes to further education, employment or training.
- 13.6 Between February and March 2019, 16 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Looked After by Brent participated in a project called 'The Element Creative Arts Project' which was designed to improve their confidence and self-esteem, to support them in building new relationships and provide a creative outlet to express their feelings. There were eleven sessions delivered, covering the following art approaches: portraiture, collage, drama, card-making and calligraphy, graphic art, creative writing, photography, animation and dance. The project had a number of guest artists, some from migrant background themselves. At the end of the project the young people presented their work at an event at the Yellow in Wembley Park. In attendance were representatives from Brent children's services, Brent councillors, and representatives from arts organisations and youth

organisations. Below is a sample of some of the work that was showcased at the event.



13.7 Feedback from UASC attending the Element Project has been very positive.

*“For this group of young people the council is like their family. We don’t have our family here in the UK so the council is what we have. I have to say thank you to Brent council for offering projects like Element to us, and providing opportunities to work on creative things.”*

*“We have travelled, travelled, travelled very far to get here, and now it is nice to meet some new people and make some good friends.”*

#### **14. Care Leavers’ Accommodation**

- 14.1 All care leavers are given priority banding due to their leaving care status. Young people are only put forward for a council tenancy if the personal advisor after completing a vulnerability assessment with the young person agrees that he/she would be able to manage a council or housing association tenancy. A ‘setting up Home Allowance’ of £2000 is provided for care leavers to furnish their homes and buy essential items.
- 14.2 Brent has continued offering workshops to young people to better manage their finance and tenancy. MyBank [charity that works with young people] provided training to care leavers on money management and our colleagues in housing provided tenancy workshops for young people who are ready to be nominated for a tenancy.
- 14.3 A multi-agency audit of semi-independent provision was carried out with representatives from Leaving Care, virtual school, CYP commissioning, Brent CCG, Designated Professionals for looked after children and CYP Safeguarding and Quality Assurance. The audit took place between September 2018 and February 2019. It included interviews with young people, key-worker staff and social workers. All the young people interviewed felt they were safe. The audits identified some areas for improvement for which an action plan was put in place to address those, led by Brent’s CYP Commissioning Team.

14.4 At the end of the reporting year, 81% of care leavers aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation. This performance is slightly above statistical neighbours, but still below the national average. This is partly due to some care leavers who were former UASC, being refused leave to remain in the UK and choosing not to be in touch with the Local Authority<sup>7</sup>.

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in suitable accommodation	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average	Statistical Neighbour average %	National figure	National figure %
2017-18	167	76%	203	80%	23,510	84%
2018-19	190	81%				

14.5 The following case study demonstrates transitional support offered to a care leaver following his release from prison:

**Case Study – Accommodation**

STF has a history of offending behaviour and received a 15-month sentence for breach of his probation in September 2018. He was released into an ‘approved premise unit in March 2018, temporarily.

STF has mental health related difficulties namely a diagnosis for depression and anxiety. Prior to his release, the professional network came together to plan the support he would need in his transition back into community. The network consisted of his personal advisor, a team manager from leaving care team, representatives from the approved premises unit, probation service and Brent housing service.

Via careful and timely planning, the professional network ensured that all partner agencies worked together around a plan of transition for STF. He was placed in supported living where he receives advice and support to improve his employability prospects; having secure accommodation also reduces the likelihood of re-offending.

STF was supported to be in receipt of all of his benefit entitlements. The following quote from STF explains how the multi-agency group helped him to ***“land on his feet after prison, as I was so worried that I would be forced back in to my old life”***


<sup>7</sup> Care leavers who came to the UK as unaccompanied minors need to apply to the Home Office to regulate their immigration status. Those who exhaust their appeal right to apply for leave to remain in the UK may choose to remain illegally and therefore lose touch with their PAs. In addition, a small group of care leavers in custody chose not to be in touch with the Local Authority although they have an allocated PA.

## **15. Service Priorities for 2019/20**

- 15.1 Increasing the number of looked after children and care leavers who are in education, employment and training. This includes improving attendance and academic attainment for LAC, especially in Key Stage 4.
- 15.2 Further improving the stability of children and young people by providing more local and in-house placement options, minimising change of social workers and placements as well as developing partnerships with neighbouring authorities to recruit and retain more foster carers.
- 15.3 Working in partnership with other partner authorities in establishment and running of Adopt West London as West London's regional adoption agency.
- 15.4 Offering more return home interviews for children and young people who go missing from care (recommendation from the Ofsted Inspection)
- 15.5 Providing support to looked after children and care leavers in building healthy relationships and supportive networks to tackle isolation and loneliness after leaving care. Putting in place a 2 year-long project called 'networks for life' which aims to link LAC and care leavers with their families and support networks.
- 15.6 Implementation of an accredited life-skills programme for LAC and care leavers to assist better transition into adulthood.

**Report sign off**

**GAIL TOLLEY**  
**Strategic Director Children and**  
**Young People.**

	<p align="center"><b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b> 24 July 2019</p>
	<p align="center"><b>Report from the Strategic Director, Children and Young People</b></p>
<p><b>Update on Semi-independent Provision for looked after children and care leavers (requested by CPC at a previous meeting)</b></p>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	ALL
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	n/a
<b>Background Papers:</b>	
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	<p>Brian Grady Operational Director Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy <a href="mailto:Brian.grady@brent.gov.uk">Brian.grady@brent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Shirley Parks Head of Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships <a href="mailto:Shirley.parks@brent.gov.uk">Shirley.parks@brent.gov.uk</a></p>

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides Corporate Parenting Committee with an overview of semi-independent provision commissioned by the council to accommodate looked after children (LAC) aged 16-18 and care leavers. It provides information on the quality assurance of commissioned services, including findings from a recent multi-agency quality assurance audit.

## 2.0 Recommendations

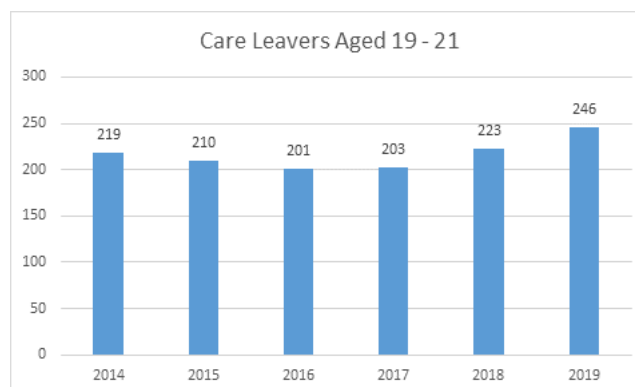
- 2.1 Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review and comment on the contents of this report.

### 3.0 Detail

#### Background

- 3.1 In accordance with the Children Act 1989 and 2004, the Children Leaving Care Act 2000 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017, local authorities have a duty to assess and meet the needs of young people aged 16+ who are looked after and who are care leavers. Wherever the young person lives, local authorities have a duty to maintain contact with care leavers until they are at least 21 (although care leavers can request support up to age 25). It is the local authority's responsibility to ensure all LAC and care leavers are properly prepared for transition to adulthood in a planned and effective way to achieve the best possible outcomes for the individual young person.
- 3.2 To support this duty, the council commissions a range of semi-independent living accommodations for looked after children aged 16–18 and care leavers aged 18–21, as an alternative to staying put arrangements in foster placements or as a step-down from residential provision. This kind of accommodation is not regulated under the Care Standards Act 2000 and, as a result, it is not inspected by Ofsted.
- 3.3 The profile of Brent's LAC population points to increasing demand for semi-independent provision. The number of young people in Brent placed in semi-independent provision has risen from 90 in April 2016 to 147 in April 2019, of whom 60 were LAC and 87 were aged 18+ (care leavers or young people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)). Currently there are 62 LAC and 81 care leavers or young people with NRPF placed in semi-independent provision. It is anticipated that demand will continue to grow, given an increase in the number of young people entering care in their teenage years, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The graph below shows the number of 19-21-year-old care leavers at April for the past 5 years, and this year's provisional number.

Graph 1: Care Leavers aged 19-21



## Commissioning of Semi-Independent Placements

- 3.4 The range of semi-independent placements that the council commissions includes supported placements that have 24-hour onsite support, shared placements with different levels of day time support and independent accommodation with floating/visiting support. Brent commissions many semi-independent placements through a contract framework established by the West London Alliance, a commissioning partnership of local authorities comprising Brent, Barnet, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea councils. Brent also spot-purchases placements outside of this framework. At any point in time the local authority commissions placements from around 30 providers.
- 3.5 The type of semi-independent placement commissioned is based on assessment of the needs of the individual young person. Brent expects all semi-independent providers to work with young people to provide a settled and safe environment, supporting access to education, employment or training and to help young people build a range of life skills within a supportive environment that will enable them to make a successful transition to independence. Brent's care leavers placed in semi-independent provision are supported to move into their own tenancies only when they are considered to be ready. This approach has enabled Brent young people to successfully maintain their tenancies. Over the past two years, there have been no tenancy breakdowns among the care leaver population living in Brent.
- 3.6 Semi-independent accommodations play a key part in helping Brent to manage the risks of serious youth violence and are key partners in Brent's contextual safeguarding approach. The challenges of safeguarding incidents, related to county lines, knife crime and the risks of vulnerable young people missing from care, require agencies, including semi-independent providers to collaborate and work together in identifying and implementing models of intervention to address these concerns which are often related to drugs or postcode rivalry. Training was provided to semi-independent providers in January 2019 in collaboration with the Metropolitan Police to enable them to have a greater understanding of Contextual Safeguarding and peer-on-peer abuse.
- 3.7 Brent awarded a block contract to Centrepoin in July 2018 for the provision of up to 60 placements, subject to identification of suitable properties. Having a strong supplier relationship with Centrepoin enables greater influence over the quality of the provision Brent's young people can access. Centrepoin currently provides 20 placements, 5 of which are high support placements. Expanding placements at Centrepoin will mean that this provision will deliver the Council's core semi-independent accommodation offer to achieve the following outcomes:
- Increasing placement stability for young people;
  - Increasing young people's life skills to enable successful move on to their own council tenancy or other long-term housing solution;
  - Reducing the proportion of 16-18 year olds, who are not in education, employment or training (NEET);

- Increasing the percentage of young people participating in learning, activity and sport;
  - Improving emotional health and wellbeing of care leavers
- 3.8 In a survey carried out in 2018 Brent care leavers ranked Centrepoint as the number one provider for quality of accommodation and services. The Centrepoint service provides added value to the young people placed in the provision including:
- A Health and Wellbeing Team that provide young people with access to a health needs assessment, drug and alcohol interventions, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Drama Therapy and Art Therapy
  - Mentoring through an accredited Mentoring programme
  - A range of support and skills development services, for example functional skills courses, English language courses for UASC, careers information advice and guidance and financial skills courses.

### **Quality Assurance of Semi Independent provision**

- 3.9 There are no regulatory or national minimum standards for what constitutes “good” quality semi-independent provision. As this kind of accommodation is unregulated, local authorities determine their own quality assurance processes. Unregulated provision is allowed in law and is for children usually over the age of 16 who need support to live independently rather than needing full-time care.
- 3.10 Brent’s current quality assurance framework involves a range of technical and compliance quality assurance checks that aim to ensure that young people are living in a safe, clean environment and have appropriate support to meet their needs. When considering placing a young person in a semi-independent provision, the Children and Young People Commissioning Team discusses safeguarding information, including information about other young people placed in the provision, with the placement to ensure appropriate matching. Where placements are being considered in semi-independent settings that have not been used before, references are sought from two other local authorities who have placed children there alongside the Brent quality assurance checks.
- 3.11 The local authority undertakes a rolling programme of quality assurance visits to semi-independent providers, which includes seeking feedback from young people. The key focus for site visits is to assess the standard/condition of the accommodation, review staff records and supervision records, and review how the young person is being supported to achieve positive outcomes, for example if they have been registered with a GP, dentist and optician. Qualitative measures, such as how well the provider knows the young person and their goals and achievements, are also assessed. An action plan is agreed with the provider to address any identified concerns. In the last quality assurance round, 3 of 11 providers visited were asked to undertake actions to improve the quality of provision. Examples of improvement actions include ensuring that training and supervision records are up-to-date and ensuring that key worker

sessions happen in a timely way. The local authority has also implemented a provider self-evaluation process from July 2019 which will be used regularly to assess providers against Brent's standards.

- 3.12 Providers are also expected to provide regular placement progress reports to the young person's social worker that detail the support and care provided. Social workers and personal advisers play a key role in the quality assurance of provision through their regular visits to young people every 4 or 6 weeks, feeding back both positive observations and any concerns to the CYP Commissioning Team.
- 3.13 A multi-agency audit (local authority and Brent CCG) was undertaken of 3 semi-independent providers, including Centrepont, between September 2018 to February 2019. The audit found that young people interviewed confirmed that they were being prepared for independent living. All young people were registered with a GP, dentist and optician. 80% were in some form of education, employment or training. One provider used a personal outcomes framework for each young person that set out how they would be supported to transition to adulthood. In terms of facilities, all properties complied with Health and Safety requirements.
- 3.14 The audit also identified a number of areas for improvement. The audit found inconsistency in the quality of accommodation across the sample of units, for example not all provided access to desks and computer facilities to support personal study. The accommodation of one provider was considered to be of poor quality and actions were taken by the provider to improve this quality, including to install a new shared bathroom and kitchen.
- 3.15 Whilst all three providers supplied evidence that young people were supported in preparing for adulthood, not all providers had a *structured* programme that prepares young people for adulthood and independence and a framework that sets out how young people will be supported to be healthy and to participate in activities and opportunities aimed at improving young people's self-esteem, confidence and economic well-being. Providers are being supported to develop structured frameworks by signposting to good examples when these are not in place.
- 3.16 There was variability in how young people's health needs are supported. Contract requirements that all staff are fully aware of the health plans and medical needs of each young person have been clarified, as has the requirement that social workers and personal advisors are kept fully abreast of young people's health needs so that they can ensure that relevant multi-agency professionals are working together to provide holistic support. Through the audit process, health colleagues have recommended that staff and all young people have access to the 'NHS go' App that provides health information and information about local clinics, A/E, NHS walk-in health centres, alcohol, drug and substance misuse services, services related to mental health and emotional well-being and one stop information services. Information regarding this App has been circulated to providers.

## **4.0 Future developments**

- 4.1 To ensure providers understand the needs of Brent's young people and the local authority's expectations of providers, Brent engages with semi-independent providers in six-monthly provider forums. This is a multi-agency forum and a range of topics are discussed. For example, in previous sessions the police have delivered a presentation on safeguarding with respect to CSE and the LAC and Permanency Service delivered a session on planning the transition to adulthood. The next forum is scheduled for September 2019, which will have a focus on quality assurance, pathway plans and keywork support.
- 4.2 The local authority is working with Barnardo's on a project that will support consistent commissioning of high quality semi-independent provision for looked after children and care leavers to improve their life chances. The project has a number of objectives:
- To develop a quality assurance approach that is informed throughout by care experienced young people operating as 'experts by experience'.
  - To develop an understanding of the providers that can meet Brent's requirements to inform future commissioning and thereby narrow the number of providers the local authority commissions, which will give the local authority greater influence over quality.
- 4.3 This project will involve close working with young people currently or previously placed in semi-independent accommodation to understand their views of placements in terms of the quality of the accommodation and support available (eg. staff/the role of the key worker). At every stage of the project, the roles that care experienced young people can play will be considered – for example helping to draft standards, undertaking quality assurance evaluations of providers, operating as an advisory board to inform commissioning and ensuring real time feedback on current places.
- 4.4 Brent Commissioning Team is working with the WLA to further develop high quality semi-independent provision through a Dynamic Purchasing Vehicle (DPV).
- 4.5 At a national level, Ministers have asked local authorities to ensure that they are meeting their statutory responsibilities to ensure that the accommodation used is suitable and to ensure that young people are getting the support they need, including safeguards when they are placed out of area. There have also been calls for the DfE to consider regulating semi-independent provision to ensure that there is consistently high-quality provision across the system. However, there are concerns that this could reduce choice and capacity or increase costs. Brent is contributing to some research that Sir Alan Wood, Chair of the Residential Care Leadership Board, is leading on the use of semi-independent provision to increase understanding of the drivers behind an increase in its use and of the challenges that local authorities are facing.

## **5.0 Financial Implications**


The financial cost (excluding staffing costs) associated with Brent's looked after children and care leavers consists primarily of the cost of placements, and of the statutory and discretionary spend incurred supporting those young people, as outlined in the Looked After Children Offer and Care Leavers Offer. The budgeted expenditure in 2018-19 for placements of looked after children (LAC) and care leavers was £13.1m compared to the actual expenditure of £15.0m. The 2019-20 expenditure budget for placements is £13.9m.

**Report sign off:**

**GAIL TOLLEY**

Strategic Director, Children and  
Young People

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 <b>Brent</b>	Corporate Parenting Committee 24 July 2019
	Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People
<b>Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children -                  Annual Report September 2017 – August 2018</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	
<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>	2
<b>Background Papers:</b>	
<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>  Sarah Miller Head of inclusion/Headteacher – Brent Virtual School <a href="mailto:Sarah.Miller@brent.gov.uk">Sarah.Miller@brent.gov.uk</a>  Michaela Richards, Deputy Headteacher, Brent Virtual School <a href="mailto:Michaela.Richards@brent.gov.uk">Michaela.Richards@brent.gov.uk</a>

**1. Purpose of the Annual Report**

- 1.1. The purpose of the annual report is to outline the activity and impact of the Brent Virtual School during the academic year 2017-2018. Data contained in this report is for looked after children who were in the care of Brent Council for the academic year 2017-2018, and includes outcomes for all children who have been in care for a year or more as at 31st March 2018, (“eligible cohort”).

## 2. Summary Statement of Impact for 2017-2018.

2.1 Brent Virtual School has achieved the following for the children and young people in its care during 2017/18:

- All 204 children received appropriate education, including 96% in Good or Outstanding provisions.
- Children's services were inspected by Ofsted in May 2018, and this included a review of the Virtual School. The report praised Brent's focus on education for its Looked After cohort, stating: "Senior managers place high priority on ensuring that children and young people in care attend good schools or alternative provision. A high proportion of children and young people come into care with significant gaps in their learning and attendance, many with complex needs and substantial barriers to overcome. Despite this, they are making better progress in care than they were previously. This is the result of highly effective partnership working."
- There were no Permanent Exclusions.
- Fewer Looked After Children were fixed term excluded from school – 20 compared with 29 in the previous academic year.
- At Key Stage 4, 22% of the eligible cohort achieved at least 4 passes including English or Maths.
- 13% of the eligible cohort achieved the benchmark of 5 passes (grade 4+) including English and Maths, which is consistent with LAC National data.
- At Year 12, support with retakes resulted in one previously disengaged student achieving the required grades to allow him to access A level studies. His speech at the LAC celebration awards, is included as Appendix 2.
- 87% of LAC had a destination school or college place secured for September 2018, and a new post-16 worker ensured all post 16 students had ePEPs.
- A diverse and exciting enrichment programme took place across the year and included a week long residential at Jamie's Farm, a Tall Ships sailing trip, Theatre trips, ESOL (English as a Second Language) enrichment programme focusing on British values and culture, and further university visits. See Appendix 1.
- Designated teachers for LAC (a statutory role), came to the Civic Centre to attend termly VS training; over 20 schools attended across the year, from in and out of borough. A Designated Teachers' conference was held in June 2018 at the Civic Centre welcoming 33 delegates from 9 schools.

### **3. Role of the Brent Virtual School and the Virtual Headteacher**

3.1 The Virtual School in Brent (BVS) has the overall responsibility for the priority admission of LAC into Good or Outstanding schools; for the attendance of LAC at school or college, and for the attainment of LAC at each Key Stage. The Virtual School monitors and supports the LAC cohort with interventions to ensure that looked after children (LAC) achieve the best possible educational outcomes. Looked after Children attend mainstream and special schools in the communities where they live, but receive additional support from their Virtual school which is based at Brent Civic Centre.

3.2 BVS strives to achieve the best possible educational outcomes by:

- Co-ordinating and quality assuring all Personal Education Plans (PEPs) in schools
- Monitoring and challenging schools to make effective use of Pupil Premium in line with DfE guidance
- Tracking the academic progress, attendance and exclusions of LAC
- Using tracking data to highlight individuals who are not on target to achieve their predicted outcomes and providing them with additional educational support
- Ensuring Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) needs are identified and supported appropriately, including applications for statutory assessment
- Implementing a range of targeted interventions to raise academic standards
- Providing support and challenge to LAC, schools and carers, ensuring that expectations around achievement are high
- Ensuring effective transition between schools or specialist providers
- Encouraging LAC to have high aspirations about their futures and helping to remove barriers to further education
- Leading training for foster carers, designated teachers, school governors and bespoke training for alternative learning providers and staff in schools
- Encouraging LAC and their carers to engage in a wide range of enrichment activities
- Providing education updates and expertise for the various LAC and Permanency panels; keeping education and educational attainment high on the agenda for LAC, across CYP
- Celebrating LAC achievements
- BVS supports LAC from Early Years (aged 3) to 18 years, and beyond (up to the age of 25), if the young person is in education or training. BVS regularly provides education advice and information for Care Leavers, including those due to be released from YOI.

### **4. Role of the Headteacher of the Virtual School**

4.1 The concept of the 'Virtual School Headteacher' for Children Looked After was first outlined in the White Paper 'Care Matters: Time for Change' (DCSF, June 2007). Directors of Children's Services have a statutory responsibility to make sure that their local authority promotes the educational achievement of the children they look after, regardless of where they are placed.

- 4.2 The Children and Families Act 2014 (amended section 22 of the Children Act 1989), placed a statutory duty on all local authorities to appoint a Virtual School Head (VSH) to promote the educational achievement of its Looked After Children. It is the responsibility of the Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to ensure that these duties are met.
- 4.3 The role was expanded in the DfE document 'Promoting the Education of Looked After Children, statutory guidance for local authorities' July 2014. This document prescribes clearly that: Virtual School Headteachers are in place and that they have the resources, time, training and support they need to discharge the duty effectively.
- 4.4 The revised Statutory guidance in February 2018 states:

"As leaders responsible for ensuring that the local authority discharges its duty to promote the educational achievement of their looked-after children, Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services should ensure that: top priority is given to creating a culture of high educational aspirations and that the authority strives for accelerated progress and age-related attainment or better for looked-after children."

## **5 The Impact of the Children and Social Work Act, 2017.**

- 5.1 There are two main provisions within the Act that have affected the Virtual School, from 2017 onwards:  
firstly, it extended the role of the Virtual School Head Teacher to include promoting the interests of children who have been adopted or who are in long term care permanent arrangements (under an adoption, special guardianship or a child arrangements order). In April 2018 the DfE made an additional grant available to support this work. This has been used in Brent to fund the part-time role of an experienced former Virtual School Head who provides training and advice to adoptive families and their social work teams.

Identifying and profiling the cohort of children who are no longer in the care of the local authority presents challenges. It is dependent on self-disclosure by parents or guardians and is, by default, only required if there is a problem in school or if the parent has reason to believe that it will entitle them to a service or other provision

- 5.2 In addition, a new set of measures in respect of care leavers was introduced. These include a new requirement on local authorities to consult on and publish a local offer, setting out the support available for care leavers, and allowing all care leavers to have support from a personal adviser up to the age of 25 if they need it; (previously it was only those in education and training who had access to this support after age 21).
- 5.3 With regard to Care Leavers, the Virtual School already shares the responsibility of providing support to care leavers up to the age of 21, but the requirement to provide education support and guidance now applies to all relevant young people up to the age of 25, should they request it.

## 6. Brent Virtual School Staff

### 2017-2018

The Virtual School team comprised a Head, Interim Deputy Head, 3 LAC Advisory teachers covering Early Years and KS1 to KS4, Data Analyst to track and monitor LAC data and 2 post-16 personal advisers.

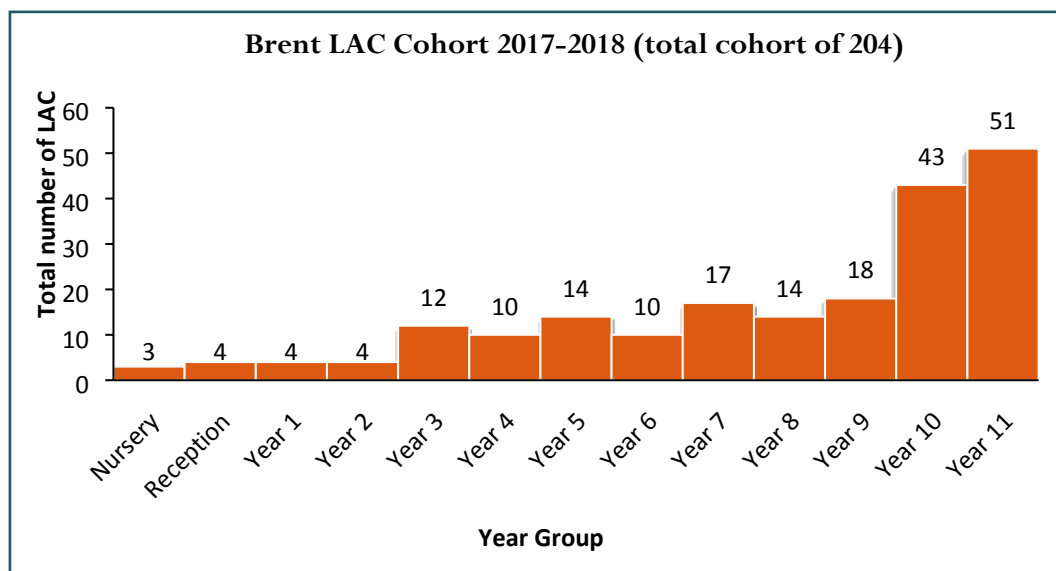
This team is supported by a 0.6 Educational Psychologist, and full time Year 11 Life Coach who supports with Year 12 destinations.

#### Additional posts for 2017-18:

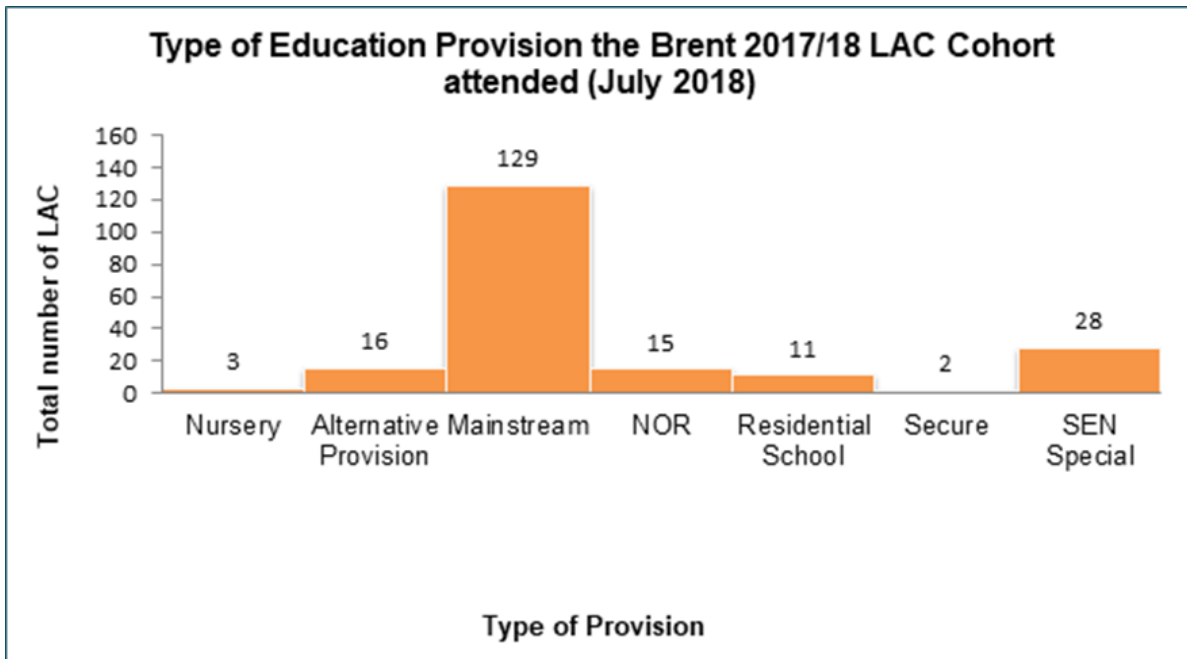
To support KS5, plans were put in place to create additional Life Coach roles, in order to address attendance and engagement for the post-16 cohort, with tailored support for the high percentage of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who come into care in Brent. A temporary post of attainment and achievement advisory teacher was created from January to August 2018, to support the most able students to achieve their potential.

## 7. Brent's Looked After Children Population 2017-2018: Nursery to Year 11

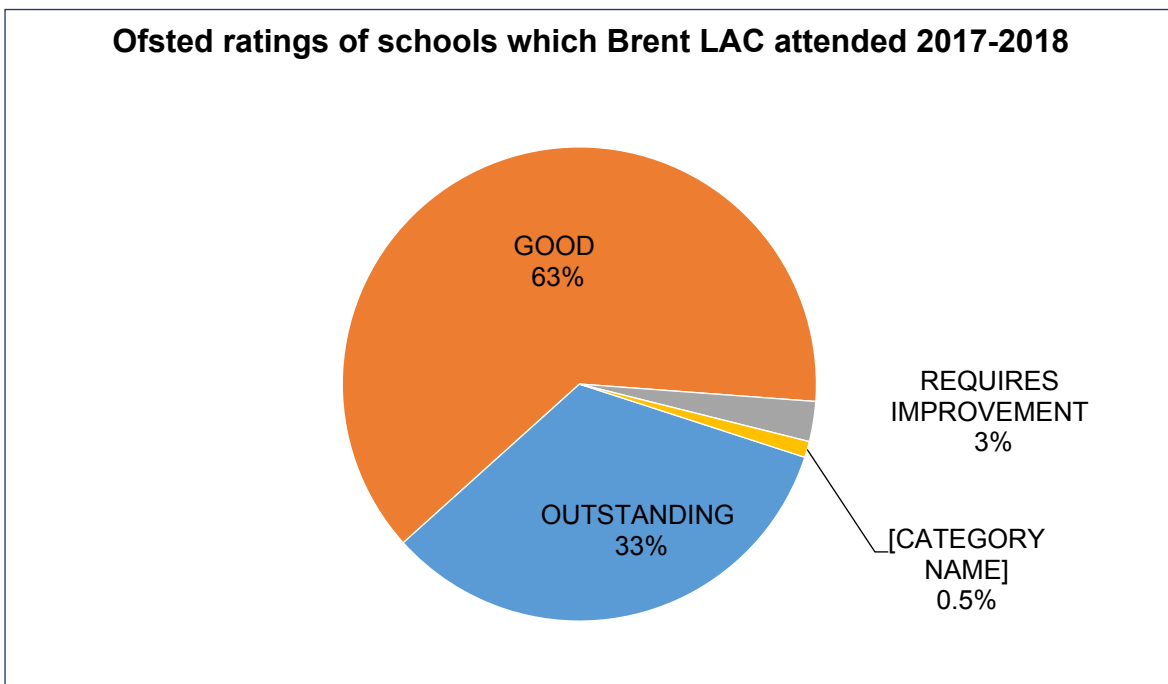
7.1 In July 2018 204 (Nursery - Year 11) children were looked after, 81 attending Brent schools and 108 attending schools outside the borough. Of these, 69 were in schools in greater London, with the remainder placed outside London, some at a significant distance, including residential placements in Wales and Scotland. The Virtual School still maintains contact with LAC wherever they are placed and PEPs have taken place during 2017-2018 in Wales, Scotland and at Young Offender Institutions within, and beyond greater London.



7.2 The majority of Brent's LAC come into care between the ages of 11-16 at a time when the challenges faced by young people are more likely to result in placement breakdown and change of education setting. LAC numbers are highest in Years 10 and 11. By far the majority of Brent LAC are placed in mainstream schools.



(NOR – Not on Roll)



7.3 In 2017-2018 96% of statutory school aged LAC attended schools that were Ofsted rated as Good or Outstanding, 3% (5 LAC) attended schools that Required improvement and 0.5%% (1 LAC) attended an Inadequate provision.

7.4 The chart above highlights one LAC who attended a provision that was judged Inadequate.

- Cambian Tyldesley School was judged Inadequate in November 2016. The LAC student who was placed there attended for less than 2 months (February -April 2018) following release from a secure custodial setting. There were serious concerns for the safety of this LAC and as such a residential place was sought by CRT outside of London: safety issues were deemed the most important aspect of this placement and safe-guarding was checked as

acceptable.

- 5 LAC in schools judged as RI:  
3 of these were attending the (same) school prior to becoming looked after. Professionals considered that in each of these cases the consistency provided by remaining at the school was in each child's best interests. The school had demonstrated excellent pastoral support previously and the Virtual school continued to monitor progress closely.
- 1 UASC initially attended a language provision and a place was sourced at a college, but the young person was adamant he wanted to attend a mainstream school. A place was offered by a local RI school – but a school which had offered effective support for other Brent LAC as above. He remained at the school for only a short time before moving out of borough.
- 1 LAC student attended New Level Academy, an alternative provision in Brent which was judged RI. This was a short-term placement and needed to be local to account for specific health needs, which had previously required hospitalisations.

7.5 Brent LAC (new to care) are not placed in RI or Inadequate schools, but if they are attending an RI school when they come into care, BVS works with the school management team to ensure sufficient support is in place, or looks at better options within the local area of placement, particularly if the young person is in Year 10 or below. Ofsted monitoring of RI schools enables high visibility of progress. BVS would endeavour to move any LAC placed in Inadequate provision in line with Statutory Guidance, unless there are clear and justifiable reasons not to.

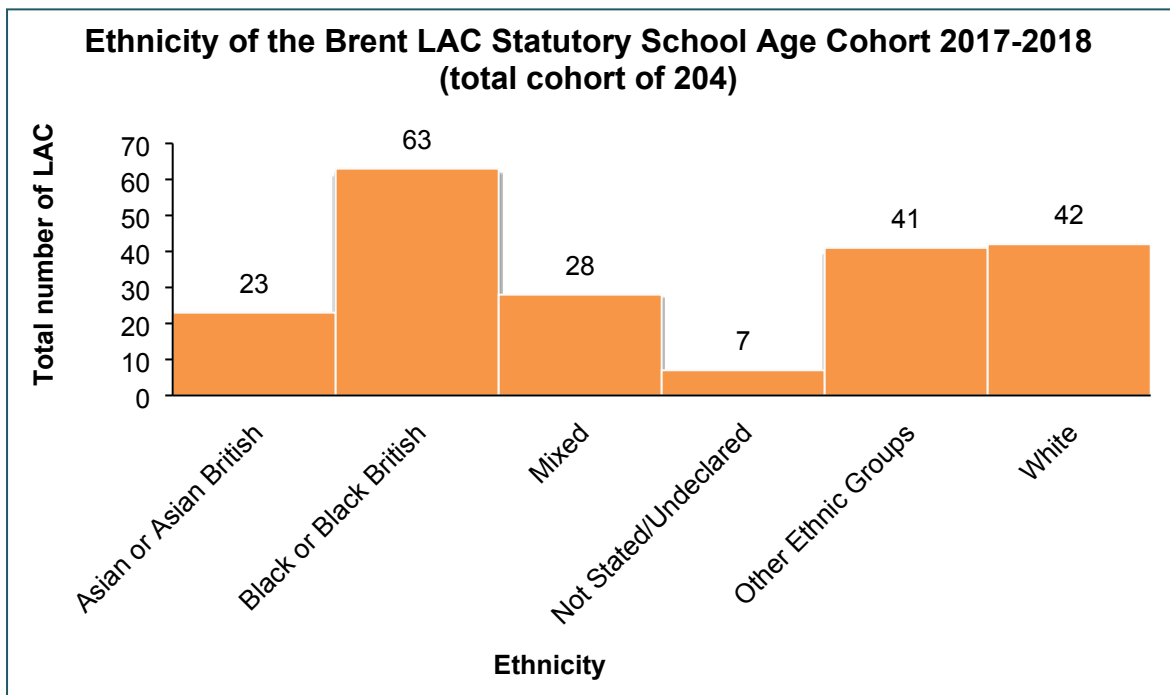
7.6 BVS monitors the progress and achievement of all LAC paying particular attention to those placed in schools that are less than 'Good', and ensuring there is consistent support for those placed out of borough.

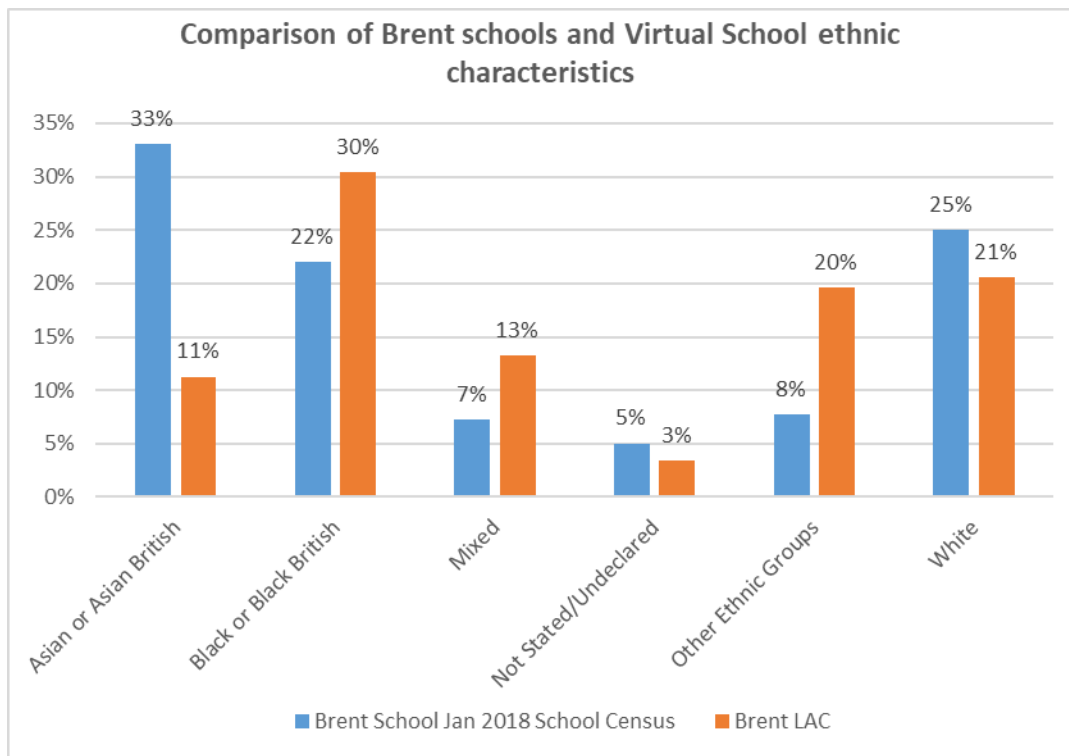
## **8 LAC Not In School**

8.1 At any time, there are a few children or young people who are not in school or an appropriate alternative provision. This will be for a number of reasons: newly arrived from abroad as an unaccompanied minor with no age assessment, change of care placement at short notice, or challenges in engaging with a young person. Where a young person disengages, BVS work with social care colleagues and schools to plan programmes to support re-engagement. Mentoring often plays a critical role in this process, and can be supported via Pupil Premium. Between school placements, BVS arranges 1:1 tuition funded by the Pupil Premium Grant, often alongside education mentoring.

8.2 BVS monitors this roll of LAC not in school at fortnightly team meetings, and works closely with social workers and carers to secure appropriate provision. The average time to get a child or young person into school is 4 weeks. For primary aged children when a LAC moves area a school place is usually found within statutory guidelines – 4 weeks or often sooner. In one case a school move was facilitated within 2 weeks.

- 8.3 In terms of Looked After Children's ethnicity, Asian groups are largely under-represented, whilst Black and groups of mixed-heritage ethnicity are over-represented.
- 8.4 BVS interventions for over-represented groups (see tables below), namely boys of black African and black Caribbean heritage, include 1:1 tutoring to boost confidence and fill knowledge gaps, alongside positive role modelling via education mentoring, for which excellent feedback has been received from social care colleagues, carers and young people.





- 8.5 Over the past 2 years Brent has seen a significant number of UASC (unaccompanied asylum seeking children) come into care. For 2016-2017 the number was 14% of the statutory school age cohort. In 2017-2018 there were 25 UASC, 5 in KS3 and 20 in KS4, giving an overall figure of 8% (within SSA cohort). The numbers in KS5 are higher: over the past two years, approximately a third (33%) of the post-16 cohort are unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- 8.6 Brent UASC come from a number of different nations, although Afghani pupils represent the largest group. Brent Virtual School also includes unaccompanied minors from Eritrea, Vietnam and Albania. Often these young people arrive without proof of age which can delay school admission. The majority of UASC are in KS4/5 and if they are living in Brent, once their age has been assessed, they will be placed in one of the innovative ESOL projects at Newman Catholic College, Claremont School or Queens Park Community School. As their English improves they may move to other schools within borough, or progress to the GCSE curriculum where they are already placed. UASC in care outside of Brent are referred to the relevant ESOL provision in their local area.
- 8.7 Many Brent UASC are highly motivated to learn and make good progress. However, they often face challenges regarding the right to remain in the UK (and funding), which can affect access to higher education. UASC who take GCSEs may take them later than other LAC, which BVS supports as below:

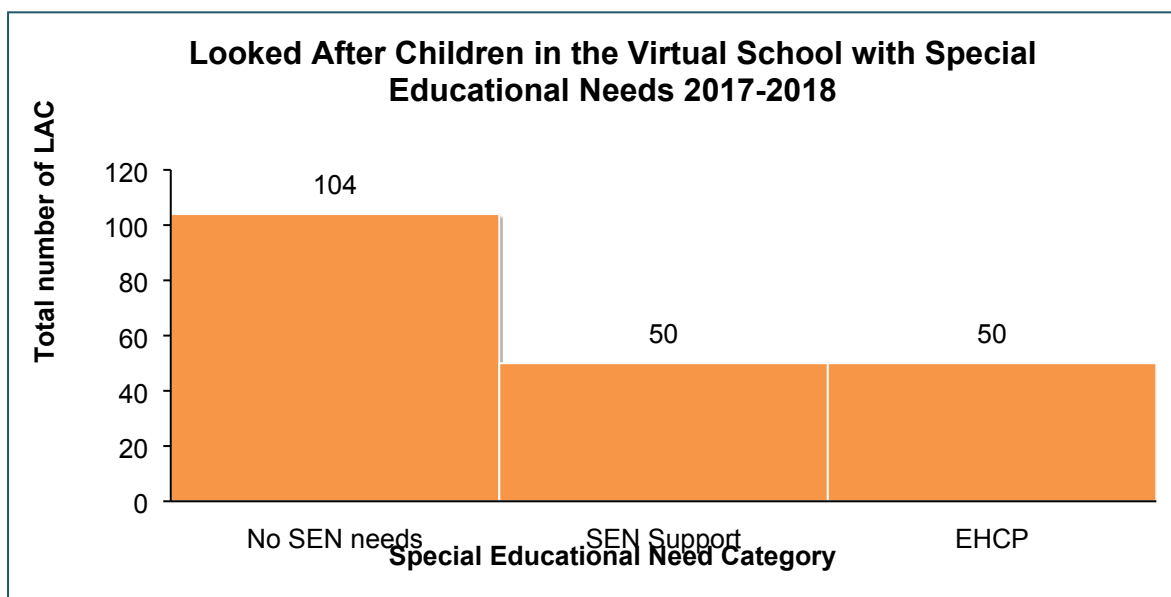
an example of positive outcomes over the longer term is evidenced by an UASC from Iraq, who arrived in the UK in 2016. On arrival he could not speak English and required an interpreter to communicate. He described this as a very difficult and traumatic period. He was enrolled onto a Brent ESOL project at Newman Catholic College, and supported pastorally by their experienced Designated Teacher, with

academic progress monitored regularly by Brent Virtual School. BVS also supported him with 1:1 tuition in Maths and English, ensuring positive mentoring via the University of London's PALAC project. (Promoting the Achievement of Looked After Children). Over time, in school Year 12, he was successful at achieving GCSEs and with the support of the Virtual School Life Coach, progressed onto a BTEC level 2 Business programme at City of Westminster college. He continues to push himself to do well and has successfully completed the 1<sup>st</sup> year of his Level 2 Business programme and is progressing onto the final year.

8.8 Two further Brent UASC achieved a grade 4 in English Language GCSE, despite their late entry into the British system, on arrival in the UK. Both are now at college, one studying a level 3 engineering course and the other studying a level 2 applied science course.

8.9 BVS funded a number of enrichment programmes for the UASC cohort including The Element Art Project, which was co-funded with social care. This culminated in an exhibition held at Wembley Learning Zone, within Wembley Stadium. Poems were read by Brent UASCs and creative artwork was on display. UASC formed friendships which have been maintained by a regular Care Leavers youth group and weekly football practice.

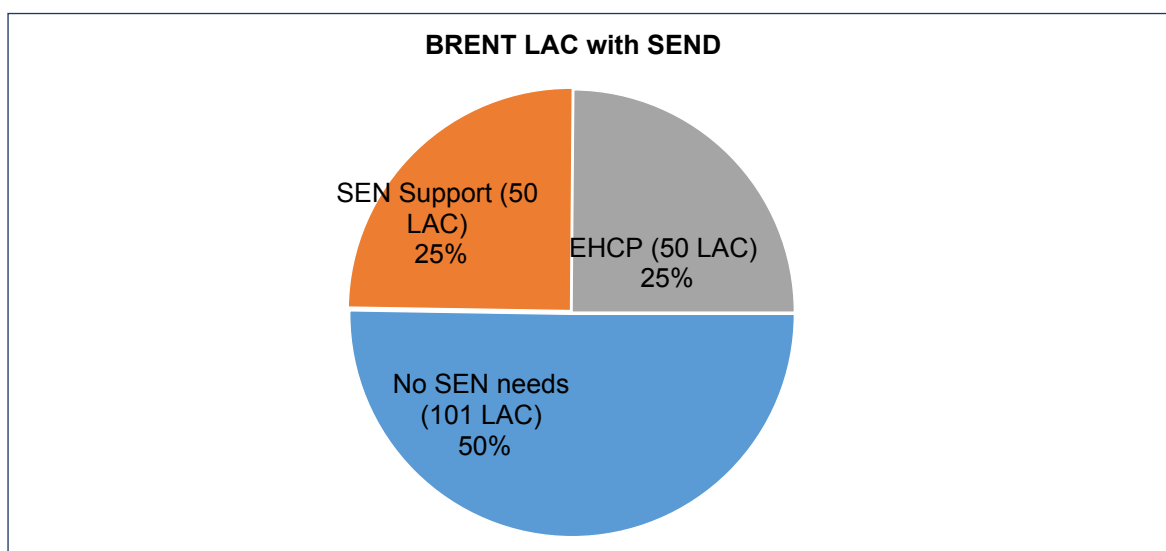
## 9 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)



Special Educational Need Description (EHCPs)	Total
ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder	15
MLD - Moderate Learning Difficulty	6
PD - Physical Disability	1
PMLD - Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty	1
SEMH - Social, Emotional, & Mental Health (prev BESD)	16
SLCN - Speech, Language & Communication Needs	2
SLD - Severe Learning Difficulty	2
SPLD - Specific Learning Difficulty	4
Under Assessment	1
VI - Visual Impairment	2

9.1 50% of the 2017-2018 LAC cohort had a special educational need of some sort – either requiring SEND support in school, or an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), to support their needs. This compares with 56.3% of LAC nationally.

9.2 25% of the 2017-2018 LAC cohort had an EHCP, compared with 26.7% of LAC nationally; this is in contrast to the wider school population – where only 2.9% of all pupils nationally have an EHCP.



9.3 Primary Need:

- 8% of Brent LAC have an EHCP for Social Emotional Mental Health Difficulties, accounting for 30% of the EHCP LAC cohort, significantly higher than the figure for non-LAC.
- 8% of Brent LAC have an EHCP for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), accounting for 30% of the EHCP LAC cohort, a slightly higher figure compared with the non-LAC cohort.
- 4% of Brent LAC have a Speech and Language Communication Need (SLCN).

The high percentage of Brent LAC with EHCPs is a significant barrier to LAC achievement in school. The particularly high figure for those with Social, Emotional

and Mental Health needs evidences the trauma and attachment difficulties so many Brent LAC experience.

- 9.4 The Inclusion Strategic Board, chaired by the Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes, is working on a project to streamline the EHCP and LAC review process with the intended outcome of focusing professional activity and avoiding duplication of effort. This activity is monitored by an annual action plan and reported to the board.

## **10 Brent's Looked After Children's Attainment 2017-2018**

- 10.1 Monitoring and improving outcomes for Brent LAC is a key priority for the BVS and although LAC numbers are relatively small, national and regional comparisons allow for an understanding of educational and other outcomes achieved for children for whom Brent Council is responsible as the corporate parent. Outcomes are reported for LAC who have been continuously looked after for at least 12 months up to and including 31 March 2018.
- 10.2 The outcome measures at KS4 (GCSE) have been revised, as of 2016, with A\* – G grades being replaced with 9-1. Grade 9 reflects a higher level of achievement than an A\* and is equivalent to A\*\*.

## **11 Context of Looked After Children, and impact on outcomes**

- 11.1 The educational attainment of LAC is measured against the educational attainment of all children. Most LAC face challenges and barriers to their overall achievement that the majority of other children do not. (See 6.2 above.)

Changes of care placement and schools have a negative effect on academic progress and achievement. Research into LAC attainment by the Rees Institute (Oxford University) and Bristol University (2016), showed a close correlation between high attainment and good attendance in a stable school placement, especially across a key stage - supported by a stable care placement.

- 11.2 The research highlighted also the significantly higher percentages of SEND (Special Education Needs and Disabilities) in the LAC population and the higher number of risk factors for LAC:
- 60% of LAC experience emotional and mental health problems: 4 times higher than children generally
  - 66% of LAC have at least 1 physical health issue; are 3 times more likely to drink alcohol and/or smoke; 4 times more likely to take illegal drugs; more likely to become teenage parents
  - Over 25% of LAC have an EHC Plan compared with only 2.9% of all pupils.
- 11.3 BVS is now offering further training to schools about these issues and to encourage them to adopt “attachment-aware” approaches with LAC which should be supportive rather than punitive. In particular it is funding, through the retained Pupil Premium Grant, bespoke training for five local primary schools and five local secondary schools delivered by Kate Cairns Associates (KCA). Also funded for 2017-2018 was Lego Theraplay for both local and out of borough schools: 22 schools/settings in total took up the offer of this training, and feedback was consistently positive.

- 11.4 BVS also used the Pupil Premium Grant to fund mental health support for Looked After Children, within secondary schools. Each school received counselling support via the Targeted Adolescent Mental Health Support (TAMHS), which places a CAMHS therapist in school for a day or half a day per week. Allowing vulnerable young people to access mental health support on site at school improves attendance rates at these sessions and avoids them having to travel to appointments at NHS clinics, which can result in stigma and reluctance. Some feedback from the therapists is below:

*“I currently have a small group of three male students from Afghanistan... This is a supportive art therapy space where they can use the materials available and check-in regarding any concerns. This is working well and is ongoing.”*

(On arrival at an ESOL project in Brent, Art therapy allows UASC to explore trauma through art, at a time when their beginner/emerging English language skills don't always allow for 1:1 formal counselling.)

- 11.5 Additionally, a weekly foster carer therapeutic support group was offered to local foster carers, mainly with primary aged children.

Feedback from the group has been extremely positive with a number of carers citing the group and its reflective practice as the reason why they were able to sustain placements for their foster children.

*“I appreciate the way you made it bite-size, you explained the ideas in a way that really made sense to me.” (Counselling in relation to trauma related anger, giving carers strategies for managing challenging behaviour).*

*“You've helped me to realise and understand, it has touched areas of my life and that has been therapeutic. It's been invaluable.”*

*“You have helped me to manage him (my looked after child). He's here (now) because of you. You have given me the strength to carry on with my child.”*

- 11.6 BVS further uses the Pupil Premium Grant to fund an educational psychologist who is able to fast track EP referrals and work with Brent LAC who are placed in borough or in neighbouring boroughs. Feedback for this work stream is extremely positive: having an EP as part of the core VS team, allows for fast access to psychology support in a number of areas, including for EHC assessment and/or referral for other services:

**Pupil feedback on 1:1 sessions with BVS Educational Psychologist in preparation for GCSEs at Key Stage 4 and/or national tests in Year 6:**

**Session on study skills, revision tips & coping with exam stress:** NA said the first session was helpful and he wanted a copy of a blank revision timetable. He said he would try revising by reading his notes, covering them up and from memory saying out loud what he had just read.

**PEP Feedback:** RH tried activities from the book, “Sitting Still Like A Frog,” and said it helps (with focus). In Sept 2017 RH gave her concentration 5 out of 10 and said she would like to be able to write a page in an hour. Later in the school year

RH passed all Y6 tests, evidencing an improvement in concentration and focus skills.

### Carer, Social Worker & School Feedback

Her carer gave the EP input a rating of 10 out of 10. She said the assessment highlighted RH's difficulties. The carer especially liked the strategies recommended to increase concentration. Her social worker commented that the EP report was accessible and enhanced understanding of RH's learning style.

## 12 Attainment for Brent LAC, 2017-2018

### Early Years

12.1 3 LAC aged 2-4 years were eligible in 2017-2018 to access nursery education.

## 13 Year 1 Phonics decoding test

Reporting Year 1 Phonics	Achieved Expected Standard (2017-18) (1 child)
Phonics	100%

13.1 The Brent cohort taking the Phonics Decoding Test in June 2018 was one eligible LAC. Brent Virtual School continues to encourage early phonics interventions with all LAC. Success with literacy at Primary school contributes to positive English GCSE outcomes in Year 11.

## 14 Key Stage 1 Statutory Attainment (2017-2018)

14.1 KS1 Benchmark (Whole Cohort)

Cohort	READING		WRITING		MATHS		SCIENCE		RWM*	RWMS*
	<EXS	≥EXS	<EXS	≥EXS	<EXS	≥EXS	<EXS	≥EXS	≥EXS	≥EXS
National (CLA)	48.0%	51.0%	57.0%	42.0%	50.0%	49.0%	41.0%	58.0%	37.0%	36.0%
Local Authority (all schools)	24.2%	75.6%	31.5%	68.4%	23.8%	76.0%	18.3%	81.5%	65.0%	64.5%
Local Authority (state-funded)	24.2%	75.6%	31.5%	68.4%	23.8%	76.0%	18.3%	81.5%	65.0%	64.5%
Virtual School	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

● A = Absent | ● D/U Disapplied | ● BLW = Below the standard of the pre-key stage | ● PKF = Pre-key stage foundations for the expected standard | ● HNM = Has not met the expected standard

● WTS = Working towards the expected standard | ● EXS = Working at the expected standard | ● GDS = Working at greater depth at the expected standard | x/ Result suppressed

\* Multi-subject indicators: Pupils working at or above expected standard (≥EXS) in all respective subjects.

\*\* Cohort numbers used in percentage calculations may vary by subject.

Source NEXUS (NPD)

## 14.2 KS1 Benchmark (excluding EHCPs)

	Cohort **	READING		WRITING		MATHS		SCIENCE		RWM*	RWMS*
		<EXS	≥EXS	<EXS	≥EXS	<EXS	≥EXS	<EXS	≥EXS	≥EXS	≥EXS
National (CLA)	1,490	43.0%	57.0%	53.0%	47.0%	45.0%	54.0%	35.0%	64.0%	41.0%	41.0%
Local Authority (all schools)	3,714	22.1%	77.8%	29.6%	70.3%	21.6%	78.3%	16.0%	84.0%	66.9%	66.5%
Local Authority (state-funded)	3,714	22.1%	77.8%	29.6%	70.3%	21.6%	78.3%	16.0%	84.0%	66.9%	66.5%
Virtual School	1	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

- In 2017- 2018 KS1 cohort was unusually small and consisted of two looked after children. One of the pupils had an Education Health and Care Plan and attended a special school. The second pupil recorded in the data had missed significant amounts of school prior to coming into care. During his time in care he had a number of placements (in and out of borough) and one school move outside of London. During 2017-2018 Brent Virtual School provided reading support and Nimbl Tablets with curriculum related software for both of these pupils.

## 15 Key Stage 2 Statutory Attainment (2017-2018)

### 15.1 KS2 Benchmark Whole Cohort

	Cohort	RWM*		READING			WRITING TA			MATHS			GPS				
		≥ Exp	High	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High	≥ Exp	GDS	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High
National (CLA)	3120	35.0%	2.0%	101.0	47.0%	51.0%	14.0%	49.0%	6.0%	99.6	51.0%	47.0%	8.0%	101.0	49.0%	50.0%	14.0%
Local Authority (all schools)	3855	61.0%	8.5%	104.3	29.1%	70.7%	24.6%	73.6%	15.1%	105.2	23.6%	76.2%	27.0%	107.4	21.8%	78.0%	41.6%
Local Authority (state-funded)	3777	61.2%	8.6%	104.3	29.1%	70.7%	24.7%	73.5%	15.2%	105.3	23.5%	76.3%	27.2%	107.5	21.9%	77.9%	42.0%
Virtual School	7	14.3%	0.0%	104.4	57.1%	42.9%	28.6%	28.6%	0.0%	101.6	57.1%	42.9%	0.0%	105.0	42.9%	57.1%	14.3%

<Exp: Scaled score lower than 100 in tested subjects and performance category lower than EXS in Writing TA | Exp+: Scaled score of 100 or higher in tested subjects and performance category of EXS or GDS in Writing TA | High: Scaled score at or above higher threshold in tested subjects and performance category of GDS in Writing TA

Avg SS: Average (mean) scaled score across all pupils with a scaled score. Pupils with no scaled score or "N" are discounted | x/ Result suppressed

\*In multi-subject indicators (i.e.: RWM) the pupil must have achieved the stated level of performance in all respective subjects | Cohort numbers across different subjects may vary from stated figure

- The 2017-2018 KS2 cohort was small which makes the data unreliable. The Brent Virtual School cohort comprised 7 LAC. The Brent Virtual School reportable cohort also comprised 7 LAC.
- 100% of the cohort were identified as having some level of Special Educational Needs. Five of the cohort were on SEN support and two of the cohort had an EHCP and attended special schools.
- In the KS2 tests 42.9% (3/7LAC) achieved the expected standard in Reading. 28.6% (2/7 LAC) achieved expected standard in Writing and 42.9%(3/7 LAC)

achieved expected standard in Maths. 14.3% (1/7 LAC) was able to achieve the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths.

- Although there has been a decrease in the number of Brent LAC who reached the expected standard, the data above highlights that the 2018 cohort has increased their scaled scores in 2018 and made progress from their starting points in Reading and in Maths. Moving forwards Brent Virtual School will need to ensure there are targeted interventions in all core areas but especially in writing skills.

## 15.2 KS2 Benchmark Excluding EHCPs

Cohort	RWM*		READING			WRITING TA		MATHS			GPS						
	≥ Exp	High	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High	≥ Exp	GDS	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High	
National (CLA)	2410	43.0%	3.0%	101.8	39.0%	61.0%	16.0%	60.0%	7.0%	100.4	42.0%	57.0%	9.0%	101.9	39.0%	60.0%	17.0%
Local Authority (all schools)	3621	63.4%	8.9%	104.4	26.8%	73.1%	25.7%	76.0%	15.7%	105.4	21.1%	78.8%	28.2%	107.6	19.4%	80.5%	43.5%
Local Authority (state-funded)	3619	63.4%	8.9%	104.4	26.8%	73.1%	25.7%	76.1%	15.8%	105.4	21.1%	78.8%	28.2%	107.7	19.4%	80.5%	43.5%
Virtual School	5	20.0%	0.0%	104.4	40.0%	60.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%	101.6	40.0%	60.0%	0.0%	105.0	20.0%	80.0%	20.0%

<Exp: Scaled score lower than 100 in tested subjects and performance category lower than EKS in Writing TA | Exp+: Scaled score of 100 or higher in tested subjects and performance category of EKS or GDS in Writing TA | High: Scaled score at or above higher threshold in tested subjects and performance category of GDS in Writing TA

Avg SS: Average (mean) scaled score across all pupils with a scaled score. Pupils with no scaled score or "N" are discounted | x/ | Result suppressed

\*In multi-subject indicators (i.e.: RWM) the pupil must have achieved the stated level of performance in all respective subjects | Cohort numbers across different subjects may vary from stated figure

- The data reveals that 60% of the cohort achieved the expected standard or Greater Depth in Reading; 40% of LAC achieved Greater Depth in their KS2 Reading. The data outlines that there was also an increase in the children's' average progress score and this indicates that the children in the cohort have made good progress since their starting points.
- KS2 students used Lexia, an online reading intervention program, regularly and of these 3 achieved Expected at KS2 Reading. 1 made good progress and achieved a scaled score of 98, he had previously been significantly behind in his reading. The remaining student had a difficult year with a family bereavement.
- Two of the young people were very close to achieving the expected standard in all three subjects. One LAC narrowly missed getting the Expected Standard in Maths and another young person was close to achieving the Expected Standard in Writing.
- 60% of the Brent cohort achieved the expected standard in Maths and 40% achieved the expected standard in their Writing. 20% of the cohort achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths. Overall, four out of the five pupils successfully managed to achieve the expected standard in at least one or more of the core subjects.
- The KS2 Benchmark data above shows that a higher percentage of Brent LAC pupils (excluding EHCP) achieved the expected standard in Maths and Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling, than the National LAC cohort. Brent

LAC pupils achieved a similar percentage to the National LAC cohort in Reading.

- Some LAC did not make enough progress this year due to difficult circumstances such as family bereavement, family illness and ongoing emotional difficulties that impact on attendance. 60% of the KS2 cohort were attending regular therapy supplied by CAMHs or other therapeutic agencies.
- The Brent cohort who achieved the expected standard in one or more subjects were all in Good or Outstanding schools, 4/5 attended the BVS booster classes at Easter and half term.
- All LAC in this cohort benefited from tight monitoring via the PEP process. Many of the cohort were using Lexia Core 5 reading software throughout Year 6 as a targeted intervention and receiving additional 1:1 tuition (PALAC) through a project developed alongside the Institute of Education.

## **16 BVS interventions and support for the Year 6 Cohort:**

- 2.5 February half term & 4 Easter holiday booster days – subject specialist input
- 1:1 tuition for LAC who needed to close the gaps in particular subjects
- enrichment activities (see Enrichment Appendix 2)
- primary/secondary transition training for foster carers
- PEP transition meetings for all Year 6 LAC with respective secondary schools
- Learning mentors support with transitions and placement moves
- Lexia reading software available to all year 6 – to boost reading scores (BVS bulk purchased 50 licences for use at home or school)
- MBAM (Managing behaviour with attachment in mind) foster carers' therapeutic group to support with understanding behaviours

16.1 All children who do not reach the expected standard at KS2 are eligible for Year 7 Catch-Up funding in their first year at secondary school. BVS has ensured that additional support is being provided for Year 7 LAC who did not reach the expected standards; support/interventions are documented in their autumn term 2018 PEP.

### **Key Stage 3 Attainment**

Although there are no statutory tests at the end of KS3 feedback from educational establishments through the PEP process showed that 76% of LAC were making progress in relation to their targets.

## **17 Key Stage 4 Statutory Attainment**

17.1 Assessment for these pupils is conducted in the academic year pupils turn 16, i.e. school Year 11. The headline KS4 accountability measures for schools in 2018 are:

- Progress 8 (progress in 8 qualifications)
- Attainment 8 (average attainment in 8 qualifications)
- % achieving A\*-C in English and maths
- % achieving the EBacc
- % entering the EBacc
- Destinations (% staying in education or training at post-16)

## 17.2 KS4 Benchmark

Key Stage 4				
New grade levels*	Previously known as:	2017-2018*	2016-2017*	2015-2016*
5 passes at level 4-9 incl Eng and Maths	5 A*-C (including English and Maths)	11% (4/37)	7% (2/27)	13% (4/31)
5 passes at level 1-9	5 A-G	43% (16/37)	41% (11/27)	58% (18/31)
4 passes at Level 1-9	4 A-G	49% (18/37)	22% (6/27)	58% (18/31)
1 pass Level 1-9	1 A-G	68% (25/37)	78% (21/27)	87% (27/31)

\*The above data is for the whole LAC cohort minus Special Education Needs (SEN) and English Second or Other Language (ESOL)

## 17.4 The below chart is for the Statistical First Release (SFR) analysis

Key Stage 4				
New grade levels*	Previously known as:	2017-2018*		
5 passes at level 4-9 incl Eng and Maths	5 A*-C (including English and Maths)	3/23	13%	
5 passes at level 1-9	5 A-G	12/23	52%	
4 passes at Level 1-9	4 A-G	13/23	57%	
1 pass Level 1-9	1 A-G	17/23	74%	

\*The above data is for the whole LAC cohort minus SEN and ESOL

## 17.5 KS4 Trend

KS4 Descriptor	Brent Virtual School			National LAC			National (All Schools)		
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
<b>Attainment 8: Average Score</b>	19.3	15.2	13.1	22.8	19.3	18.8	48.6	44.8	44.6
<b>Progress 8: Average Score</b>	-1.3	-1.76	-1.56	-1.14	-1.17	-1.24	-0.08	-0.08	-0.08
<b>Basics: 9-5</b>	11.10%	2.90%	6.90%	17%	7%	8%	59%	40%	40%
<b>Basics: 9-4</b>	-	14.30%	6.90%	-	17%	17%	-	59%	59%
<b>5+ A*-C/9-4 inc. Eng. &amp; Mat.</b>	11.10%	8.60%	6.90%	13%	15%	15%	54%	57%	56%

## **18 Key characteristics of the Brent cohort:**

The eligible cohort was 29 (in care a year or more). Of these, 20 Year 11s were placed in out of Borough schools and 9 were in schools in Brent. 7 pupils were placed in Alternative Provision, where the outcomes are known to be significantly poorer. (Reference Rees Institute research in conjunction with Bristol University, from 2016.)

- Also out of the 29, 9 pupils had an EHC plan and 5 pupils were EAL learners (English as an additional language).
- Brent LAC attainment at KS4 remains challenging. It is difficult to compare year on year, partly because of changes to the performance measures (from 2016), and benchmark passes, but mainly because of the small size of the eligible cohort – which makes small data sets very volatile. The newer measures of Attainment 8 and Progress 8 are a useful way of analysing the whole cohort and figures are presented in the report, comparing Brent with national LAC data. The 4 KS4 students who achieved 5 Passes at 4-9 had all received either PALAC intervention (2 students) or tuition (2 students). All were placed in Outstanding schools (one remained on roll at the school while attending a different provision to meet Mental health needs) and all were in stable placements. One placement did become 'fragile' but VS stressed the importance of him remaining in placement until exams were finished.

## **19 PALAC Evaluation**

- 19.1 This was an initiative set up in conjunction with the Institute of Education, London University. Their research had indicated that for KS2, the most powerful intervention for LAC (nationally) was to offer 1:1 tuition in Literacy, but with the stipulation that this must be delivered by the class teacher, at Primary school. BVS is in its third year of running the intervention, paying for 1:1 tuition at KS4 (where the need is greatest for Brent), and asking relevant secondary schools to supply a core subject teacher in either English or Maths, to deliver LAC tuition after school – generally 15 x 1 hour sessions from October to May, in the lead up to GCSEs. The PALAC tutoring programme has been further developed for 2017-2018 to include Year 12 LAC GCSE retakes, those who just missed the pass last summer, and to include Year 6. This intervention uses evidence based research from the Institute of Education to impact meaningfully upon KS4 (and KS2) attainment. BVS used the attainment advisory teacher to monitor this intervention.
- 19.2 In 2018, 7 primary and 8 secondary pupils participated in the PALAC tutoring programme. Positive feedback was received from teachers who delivered the PALAC programme for 2018 and from the pupils.
- 19.3 Whilst these are encouraging signs, there is still a significant challenge around secondary attainment for BVS.

## **20. Key Stage 5 Attainment 2017-2018**

- 20.1 From September 2018 there was a new post 16 advisor in place working alongside a dedicated NEET advisor and a life coach to support this cohort. Monitoring attendance, exclusions and attending PEP meetings, as well as supporting the NEET cohort.
- 20.2 BVS supported on two occasions when students were excluded from college, this resulted in 2 LAC students retaining their places. BVS also maintained college places for several LAC where attendance levels had fallen, e.g. at Uxbridge College and Stanmore College.
- 20.3 For the academic year 2017-2018, **35** Care Leavers were attending university.
- 20.4 One A level student received a conditional offer to study at Oxford University. The young person, who has been LAC for over 11 years, received support from BVS KS4 attainment teacher and will take his place at Wadham College in September 2019 based on the following conditions: successful History A level retake, alongside 3 adult access courses for Oxford University, which will enable him to adjust to the Oxford university context, and demonstrate his readiness for a degree course. (He has successfully met this already; A level retake result due August 2019.)

## **21. Destinations of LAC at 16+**

- 21.1 The education, employment and training (EET) status of LAC in the September following completion of Year 11.

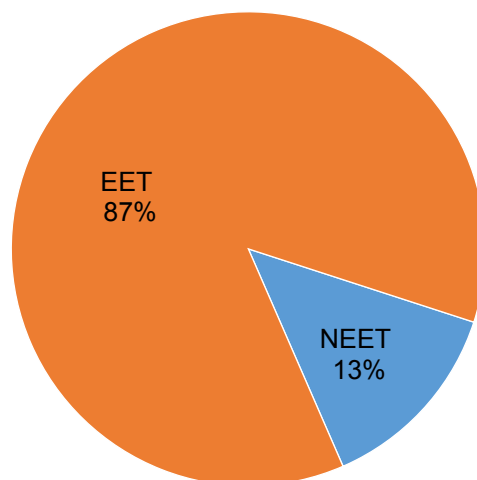
16+ LAC September Guarantees<sup>1</sup>

By July 2018 87% (45 out of a total of 52) of the year 11 LAC cohort had a September Guarantee.

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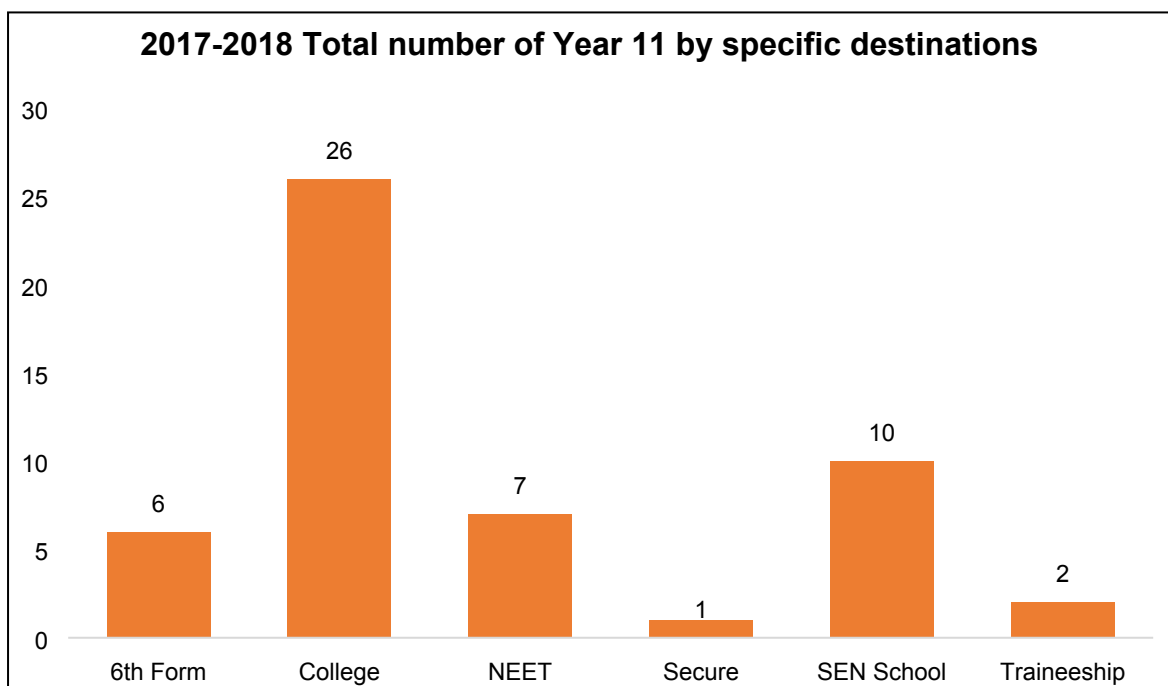
<sup>1</sup> The September Guarantee is an offer, by the end of September, of a suitable place in learning to young people completing compulsory education. The Guarantee was implemented nationally in 2007 for 16 year olds and extended to 17 year olds in 2008.

**2017-2018  
Year 11 September Guarantee  
EET/ NEET Analysis**



21.2 The 7 LAC identified as NEET were all supported by the BVS Life coach to apply for an FE place. Due to their behavioural challenges they were not ready to progress with the application. BVS continued to support this group into the following academic year and engaged with them through apprenticeship fairs and targeted NEET support.

21.3 The graph below shows the specific destinations for Brent LAC who left school in summer 2017:



## **22. Support for Year 11 Brent LAC, and transition into KS5.**

- BVS Year 11 Life Coach, funded by PPG, continued to provide significant support to Brent Year 11 LAC in making a positive post-16 transition. He attended several college open days alongside vulnerable students, and was there to meet students on the first day of college too – as part of BVS Transition protocol. A proactive approach was taken to reduce students becoming NEET in the first term of college, by working closely with FE providers in the first 6 weeks of the autumn term.
- There was considerable effort and resources put in place to re-engage students at risk of involvement in gang activities and those at risk of CSE. One student received 1:1 tuition to support them to sit their Russian exam. A further student, engaged in gang activity was reintegrated back into education and allocated a mentor for additional support.
- A student who refused to return back to school following a fixed term exclusion was supported to re-engage with the 14-16 programme at Westminster Kingsway College where he successfully completed the programme gaining a level 2 qualification. Another LAC absconded a day before his GCSE exam following the breakdown of his placement - BVS Life Coach arranged to pick him up in the morning from the address where he was staying and took him to school to sit the exam. The Life Coach continued to support him into year 12 – successfully enrolling him onto a Level 1 programme at college. BVS Life Coach continued to support a number of LAC into year 12 due to the relationship he established with them.
- To ensure a student engaged in education following release from a secure unit, BVS Head Teacher authorised for a taxi to transport the LAC to school for a term. The LAC had good attendance and engaged well. BVS LAC teacher pushed for school to apply for special dispensation with the exam boards after LAC became ill before GCSE exams. As a result, the LAC was able to continue onto 6<sup>th</sup> form in year 12.
- A student who had a difficult year 11, refusing to attend school, not sitting their GCSE exams and numerous missing episodes, was successfully supported to enrol onto a level 3 music production programme. The BVS Life Coach continues to support this vulnerable student into year 12 and he has managed to sustain his college place - achieving merits and distinctions to date
- Employing post-16 staff within the Virtual school meant this was the first year when post-16 PEPs were routinely undertaken. A regular NEET panel was established by the VS where all professionals were invited to attend and a plan was devised to track a pathway back to EET. Data and experience from these panels was used to devise a NEET reduction plan. There were also some Intensive Personal Advisers who worked with some of the most vulnerable NEET students one of who went on the enrichment trip to Jamie's Farm and sometime after that re-engaged with education on a cabin crew course.

## 23. Exclusion

23.1 No Brent LAC was permanently excluded in 2017-2018.

23.2 Please see below summary table for exclusions data.

Exclusion Data <sup>2</sup>					
		2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Total number of fixed term exclusions- days		253	300	313	122.5
Number of pupils excluded- fixed term		35	45	29	21
Total number of permanent exclusions		1	0	0	0

## 24. Monitoring Attendance

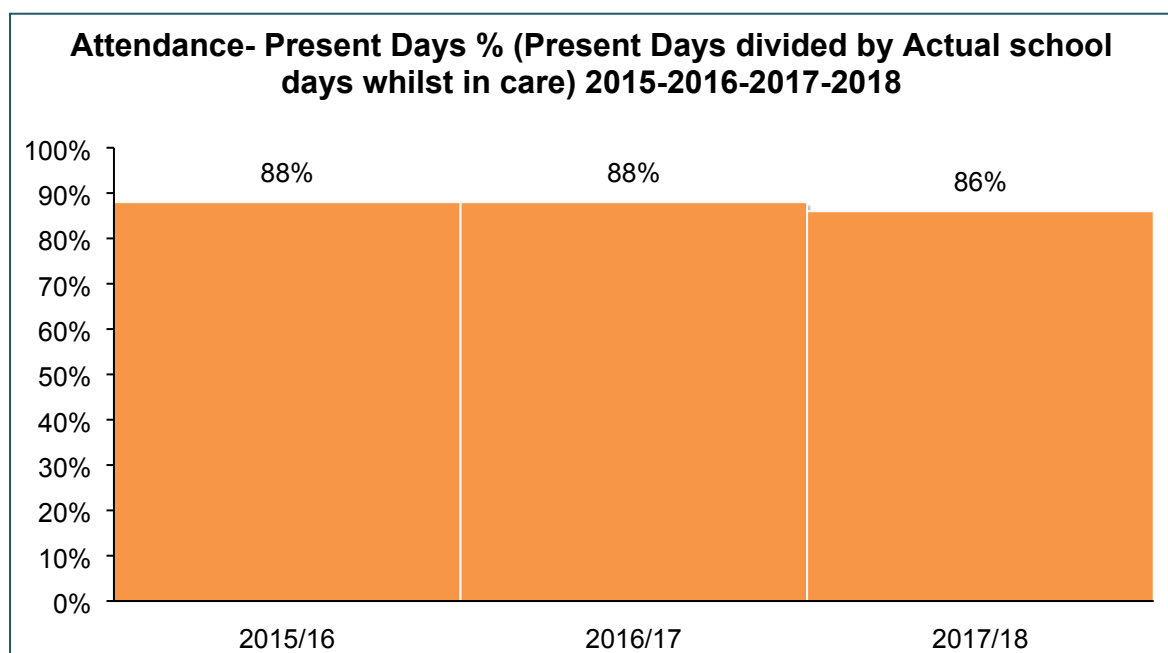
- Since April 2012 the Welfare Call Service has been commissioned by the BVS to provide accurate data that enables it to monitor attendance, punctuality and exclusions for Brent LAC, wherever they live. The Welfare Call Service is used across the country by other local authorities and has an excellent track record in providing a variety of accurate attendance/exclusion reports and statistics on a daily basis.
- An important aspect of the service is the daily call to each school attended by Brent LAC. Once an attendance issue is raised, the Welfare Call Service ascertains whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised and the type (e.g. medical, exclusion) as well as alerting both the social worker and the carer.
- BVS is able to access regular datasets regarding young people's attendance at primary, secondary, special and residential schools across the country. Welfare Call reports are sent daily to BVS. If any unusual absences or significant concerns are noted, the relevant advisory teacher will send an alert to the social worker, their manager and any involved person, for further investigation.

Attendance for Brent LAC, remains a challenge particularly at KS4. The lower percentage attendance at this key stage reflects the increased challenge presented by larger numbers of older children entering the care system, many of who come into care with low attendance or are school refusers. Attendance at KS1 and 2 are positive at 94.44% and whilst attendance at KS3 is lower it is still above 90%. BVS recognise that being LAC does not make children have poor attendance and often attendance improves once a young person becomes LAC. BVS is continuously looking at ways to support better LAC school attendance. BVS takes part in the monthly CME panel (Children Missing Education), and shares Persistence Absence data on a monthly basis with Head of LAC and Permanency. Where attendance is an issue, BVS works

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that the figures included above are collected by Welfare Call.

with social care colleagues to address underlying issues and if required, uses Pupil Premium funding for targeted educational mentoring. Several Brent LAC have sustained school places with mentor support in 2018.



## 25 PEP completion for the Statutory School Age Cohort

- PEP completion rates continued to improve in 2017-2018, reaching 96% completion for the summer term (2018). PEP meetings and the quality assurance of PEP reports are statutory requirements for Virtual Schools, as they allow for the monitoring of schools where LAC are placed. Since LAC have priority access to Good or Outstanding schools, ensuring attendance and engagement at school is the best way of supporting LAC attainment.
- Improved consistency within the team was achieved via moderation. Feedback to schools using email alongside the Notes tool on Welfare Call addressed any inadequacies in PEP reports. The introduction of mandatory fields for PEPs including Pupil Voice, helped to improve PEP quality.

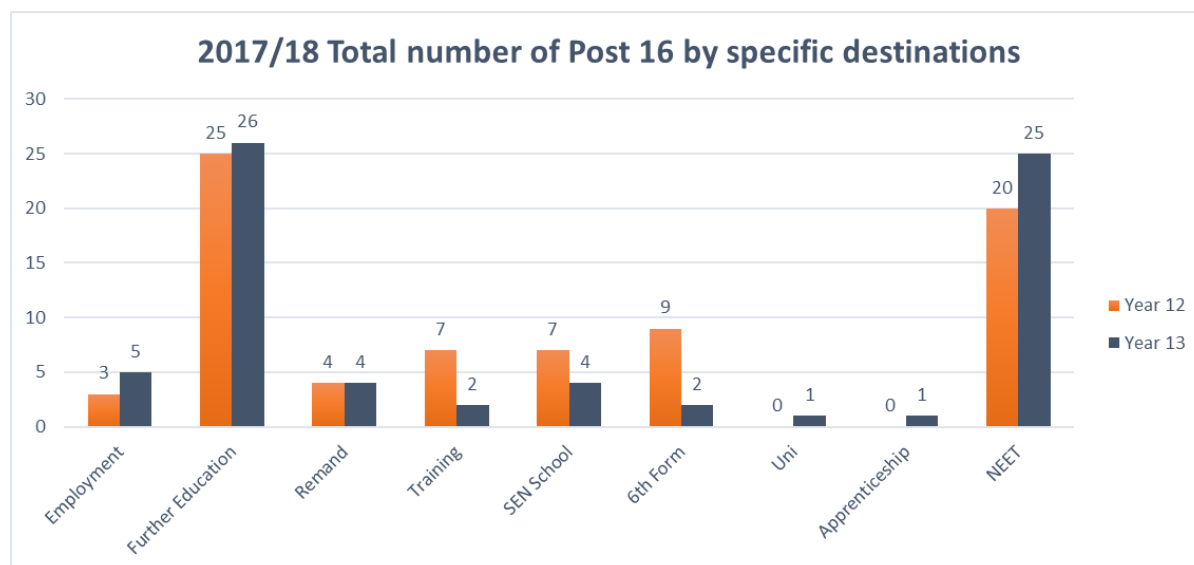
## 26. PEP completion for the post-16 LAC Cohort

26.1 Prior to September 2016, there had been inconsistent monitoring of the post-16 cohorts, primarily due to the capacity of the BVS and PEP completion rates were low. From September 2017 onwards the BVS took a firmer grip of the situation both in terms of fast-tracking admissions, ensuring ESOL provisions were available for UASC and using the termly PEP reports to monitor and challenge progress.

26.2 Transferring the paper PEP onto the ePEP on the Welfare Call portal (as per Statutory School Age) resulted in better oversight of completed PEPs. The ePEP for post-16 was launched in April 2017, and 2017-2018 has seen significant improvement in PEP completion rates for this cohort. Headteacher BVS has further prioritised the KS5 cohort for 2017-2018 with the appointment of a new personal advisor to oversee the Year 12 cohort and PEP completion rates for spring term 2018 have been significantly higher now, at over 70%. A further personal advisor, has been allocated, (in February 2018) to oversee the Year 13 LAC cohort: again, PEP

completion is seen as a major priority – in order to monitor and boost academic progress, alongside maintaining EET outcomes.

EET/NEET	Year 12	Year 13
EET	78%	64%
NEET	28%	36%



## 27. Pupil Premium Grant

27.1 The Pupil Premium grant (PPG) for Brent LAC (£1,900 pa per LAC) is managed by the Headteacher of BVS. The DfE provides the PPG on a financial year basis. In 2017/18 BVS received £540k based on a register of 284 LAC, though every LAC who comes into care attracts PPG, even if they do not stay in care for more than a few weeks. The academic year spans 5 12ths of 1 financial year and 7 12ths of the following financial year. PPG changed in April 2018 to £2300 per LAC.

		17-18 Budget	17-18 Spend	Variance
THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL				
(PUPIL PREMIUM)	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	640,000	540,000	
	TOTAL INCOME	-640,000	-540,000	
		<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>

- The net budget is nil and the allocations are not known at the time of budget setting and therefore the budget is an estimate.

- 27.2 For 2017-2018, all schools where LAC were placed received the full Pupil Premium. This was because there was sufficient additional Pupil Premium funding available to provide interventions centrally (from VS) due to the number of YP moving into and out of care during that academic year.
- 27.3 Schools are asked to attach PPG spend to PEP targets, which is then agreed by BVS as part of the quality assurance process of PEPs. This is to ensure appropriate and targeted use of PPG spend.
- 27.4 The Brent ePEP on Welfare Call requests details from all schools on PPG spend, (as a Mandatory field), as Headteacher BVS is held accountable for the impact of that spend. The majority of schools spend Pupil premium on 1:1 or additional school-based interventions.
- 27.5 The Virtual School service is primarily funded by the High Needs Block of the DSG. Due to rising demand pressures the High Needs Block overspent in 2018/19 and is forecast to overspend by £3m in 2019/20.
- 27.6 In 2017-2018 the retained, cumulative balance funded the following BVS activity:
- Life Coach to support post-16 transition, and EET destinations for Year 12
  - February half term and Easter Holiday revision sessions for Year 6 tests and Year 11 GCSEs, held in Brent
  - Additional 1:1 tuition, educational mentoring sessions and additional support to a number of individual LAC who were not in school for a variety of reasons or were between schools due to foster placement changes
  - Attachment Training for schools provided by a national trainer
  - TAMHS (targeted adolescent mental health support) within local schools
  - 1:1 tuition as part of the PALAC intervention at Year 11 in conjunction with the Institute of Education, London University. BVS paid maths and English GCSE teachers at the secondary schools where Brent LAC are placed (both in and out of borough), to provide after school tuition to Brent LAC, ideally over a period of 3 – 6 months in the run up to GCSEs. PALAC tuition boosted LAC attainment in core subjects, though not all of those pupils targeted achieved 5 GCSEs in total, so impact on headline measures is not instantly recognisable.
  - Lexia reading software purchased to accelerate reading progress for KS2 LAC.
  - Annual Brent celebration Event for LAC, including awards

## **28. Training and Advice:**

- 28.1 The Virtual School staff provide training sessions to:
- Designated Teachers (termly forums and conference run in conjunction with KCA)
  - Safeguarding Teams within schools
  - Social Workers
  - Foster Carers
  - Semi Independent providers

28.2 The content of these training sessions includes: ePEP guidance and PPG process, attachment disorders and strategies, school application and admission processes, attendance, expected roles and responsibilities to support Brent LAC, EHCP process and awareness of Special Educational Needs.

28.3 During 2017-2018 members of BVS provided the following training:

- ePEP training, monthly drop-in for social workers
- Foster Carer Training – including literacy, revision and mind-mapping, ADHD and supporting with transition
- Five carers also attended a six weekly therapy support group in conjunction with a TAMHS therapist. Aim of the group was to help carers support each other and understand attachment and develop ways of looking at the way their young people behave and try out new ways of supporting them. Feedback was extremely positive.
- Semi-Independent Training – focusing on attendance and engagement
- Social Worker Induction Training
- Designated Teacher Forum (termly): ePEP, Pupil Premium and developing LAC policy and guidance training
- PALAC training for teachers in conjunction with the Institute of Education
- Attachment conference, for Designated teachers and social care.
- Staff inset training around barriers to LAC achievement at a local secondary school

28.4 BVS works closely with the Head of LAC and Permanency to ensure that social workers receive appropriate and timely training on how to hold schools to account for the progress and attainment of Brent LAC.

28.5 BVS also organised a joint INSET training day with Harrow, Ealing and Barnet Virtual Schools aimed at sharing best practice. Feedback from all was extremely positive.

## **29. Celebrating Achievement**

29.1 Each year BVS organises a celebration event for LAC and invites nominations to recognise the achievements of the children and young people. For 2018, the event took place in April in the Grand Hall at Brent Civic Centre. 128 children and young people were nominated by their social workers, carers or designated teachers to receive a certificate of achievement. Certificates and prizes were presented by the Mayor of Brent, alongside the Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care, and the Strategic Director, Children and Young People. See appendix 2.

## **30. Priorities for 2018-2019**

- Raise attendance particularly at KS4.
- Work closely with social care colleagues around placements for KS4 LAC, especially those placed out of borough.
- Work with Harrow, Barnet and Brent Virtual Schools to develop best practice and ensure full enrichment offer, utilising new resource of shared Enrichment co-ordination for the 4 boroughs, funded by John Lyons.

- Secure relationships with high performing Alternative Provisions, in and out of London, as these provisions are critical to the academic success of Brent LAC who cannot attend mainstream
- Develop relationships with local schools and utilise teaching staff for Key Stage 4 intervention.
- Train foster carers as education mentors so that their aspiration for the young people placed with them is high. Coach them to be education champions, alongside Virtual school.
- Continue with “re-takes” programme for Year 12: as Corporate Parents, to ensure LAC have the chance to re-sit GCSEs where they have just missed the pass mark. (Build bank of reliable, quality assured tutors.)
- Set up high quality training for Designated Teachers from field leader in Attachment theory - Kate Cairns Associates.
- Continue work with post-16 students to ensure improvement in PEP completion and reduction in NEET figure.
- Improve offer for advice and guidance service for children who have been adopted from care, left local authority care on a special guardianship order (SGO) or become subject to a child arrangement order (CAO) in Brent by allocating a specific staff member to the role.

**Appendices attached:    Appendix 1 – Enrichment report**

**Appendix 2 – NJ speech**

**Appendix 3 – Training report**

**Sarah Miller  
Headteacher BVS  
June 2019**

**Michaela Richards  
Deputy Headteacher, BVS**

**Enrichment Grid for September 2017 – July 2018**

Enrichment activity	Objective (s)	Date	No. of LAC	Attendees	Evaluation/pupil/carers voice/Impact
<p><b>Weekly after-school Philosophy club</b></p> <p>The Philosophy Foundation provided a teacher (funded by PPG) to lead the Philosophy sessions in Brent Library with support from BVS.</p>	<p>To improve children’s confidence in thinking through their ideas and expressing and justifying their points of view within a group situation.</p> <p>To learn how to ask questions to help them clarify and develop their thinking.</p> <p>To understand what Philosophy is.</p> <p>To listen to others, take it in turns to speak, and learn different ways of responding to their peer’s viewpoints.</p> <p>To learn how to think about things in a new and different way, to link their thoughts and formulate viewpoints through debates.</p> <p>To develop relationships with other LAC and share their experiences.</p>	<p>Term-time only</p> <p>January 2018 – April 2018</p>	<p>5 x KS2/3</p> <p>Target group: primary pupils needing language and debating skills, and confidence building</p>	<p>Year 3 Year 4 Year 5</p> <p>Year 7 (EHCP attending special school)</p> <p>Year 7 (EHCP with communication difficulties)</p>	<p><b>Young people’s views:</b> “Thank you for organising Philosophy Club. I really enjoyed it and got to make new friends.” “I listen better now.”</p> <p><b>Teacher views:</b> “I have noticed that he is putting his hand up and is much more engaged in lessons. He seems more confident.” One of the pupils who attended the Philosophy Club wrote in his PEP that he would like us to “run Philosophy Club again.”</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> One of the group achieved the expected standard in her Reading, Writing and Maths KS2 tests.</p> <p>One of the boys was targeted for this group as data indicated a gap between potential and attainment. Since being part of the Philosophy Group he is now working at above the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths.</p> <p>All young people enjoyed the sessions after initially struggling with the concept of sitting and talking for an hour. Overall the Philosophy sessions had a significant impact on the young people.</p> <p>They grew in confidence over the weeks, were able to listen more carefully, make connections between ideas and use new vocabulary to explain or present their arguments.</p>

**Enrichment Grid for September 2017 – July 2018**

<p><b>Pre-Grad Programme Kingston University – BBC School Report Project (in association with BBC News)</b></p>	<p>To provide an opportunity at first-hand to experience what life at University would be like, meet students and therefore raise aspirations.</p> <p>To be part of a National Schools based project through the BBC Reports Programme</p> <p>To learn the key components and skills of Media and how to make a TV report.</p> <p>To plan, record and edit a TV report.</p>	<p>15<sup>th</sup> March 2018</p>	<p>7 LAC</p> <p>Target group: young people selected specifically for ability to go to university.</p>	<p>2 x Year 7 3 x Year 8 2 x Year 9</p> <p>1 x EHCP attending special school (SEMHD)</p> <p>1 x EHCP attending Alternative Provision</p>	<p><b>Young people’s views:</b> “I felt like a real reporter! I liked the filming with my friends. The green screen made it look real. We laughed so much!”</p> <p>“The students helped us to know how to edit and use the camera’s properly. I would like to go to university here...”</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> The students made great reports, worked well as part of a team and gained hands on experience of filming, presenting and editing a short piece of news footage.</p> <p>Many of the student’s enjoyed the experience and expressed an interest in working in the media.</p> <p>This trip promoted academic aspiration and awareness of post 16 progression and opportunities.</p>
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**Enrichment Grid for September 2017 – July 2018**

<p><b>Jamie's Farm residential (5 days) in Monmouthshire (Wales)</b></p>	<p>The young people stayed at a working farm, where they had opportunities to feed and care for the animals and take part in a range of activities such as lambing, horse work, horticulture, farm maintenance, cooking, etc. The trip also demands a "digital detox" negotiated in advance with the pupils – ie no phones or technology throughout the week.</p>	<p>12th July 2018 – 21<sup>st</sup> July 2018</p>	<p>9 LAC</p> <p>Target group: vulnerable young people who may be at risk of exclusion or becoming NEET post-16.</p>	<p>5 x Year 11 3 x Year 12 1 x Care Leaver with EHCP</p>	<p><b>Young people's views:</b></p> <p>"The trip was amazing, one of my best trips ever not gonna lie..... The fresh air the view the people on the farm far from noises and gangs ☐everything was amazing."</p> <p>"And the trip helped me to be more opened with people, more confident to talk with someone about how i feel which made me to realise who i am and who i think want to be."</p> <p>"Jamie's farm was the best thing that's ever happened to me. I got to explore myself. And I also got a family out of it. I felt like I belong somewhere and I was listened to and heard. The staff are so lovely and well trained. The experience I've had at Jamie's farm I wouldn't trade for the world. I would love to be able to do something like this again. Jamie's farm has taught me a lot of things to take away with me into the real world. I'm so glad I went."</p> <p><b>Teacher feedback:</b> It was a very powerful experience that has had a lasting impact on our young peoples' lives.</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> Jamie's Farm offered a challenging and nurturing experience to build resilience and self-esteem.</p> <p>The digital detox helped the young people find the space to reflect. The experience gave the young people the chance to</p>
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Enrichment Grid for September 2017 – July 2018

Page 78					<p>establish new identities and levels of independence. They were able to reflect on how external factors can impact on how they act and feel.</p> <p>One year on, and 70% of participants are EET despite significant vulnerabilities; the other 3 are engaged with BVS LAC Advisory teachers looking at college courses and employment options for September 2019.</p>
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**Enrichment Grid for September 2017 – July 2018**

<p><b>Cirdan Sailing – Residential sailing trip around the coast of Dorset</b></p>	<p>The Tall Ships sailing trip provides disadvantaged young people with the opportunity to develop life skills through the experience of living and working on a large sailing vessel.</p> <p>The young people gained skills in preparing and cooking three meals a day for an entire crew, alongside leadership skills, taking charge of a team and directing them how to hoist sails, or pilot the ship.</p>	<p>July 2018</p>	<p>Target group: Care Leavers</p>	<p>13 Care Leavers</p>	<p><b>Young people’s views:</b> “The Tall Ship was an amazing experience that allowed us as young people to venture out into the wilderness and learn about life at sea. We were provided with the opportunity to see different parts of England that we may have never seen before.”</p> <p>“We had to learn to be patient with changes in the weather and how it affects our decisions. Sailing a ship is not for the faint hearted. It’s a lot of effort and patience and at times – it is stressful!”</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> All the participants grew in confidence, displaying a ‘can do’ approach, even in the high seas and under challenging circumstances. They developed life skills from the experience of living and working on a large sailing vessel. This provided the young people with transferable skills in preparation for independent living.</p>
<p><b>UASC summer school</b></p>	<p>Week one - classroom based – run by Talent Engaged (tutoring agency).</p> <p>Aimed at introducing the basics of the English language, communicating with others, developing social communication and gaining confidence in speaking publically. Developing skills in speaking and giving short presentations. The first week</p>	<p>August 2018</p>	<p>14 Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers and 4 LAC mentors</p>	<p>Year 8 Year 9 5 x Year 10 3 x Year 11 1 x Year 12</p> <p>All male UASC</p> <p>Mentors: 2 x Year 11 2 x Year 12</p>	<p><b>Young people’s views:</b> “It was fantastic. Staff were great. The place, the food, the view was sick. You should run it again!”</p> <p>“Of course it was great fun. More fun than I thought. It was a great experience. Lovely amazing people. Even the other groups there were very friendly.” “Yes, I think you should do it again!”</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> The young people engaged well with the</p>

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 80</p>	<p>also included a trip to Madame Tussaud's.</p> <p>The second week comprised five days at PGL in Dorset to build confidence, communication and skills in social interaction through climbing, archery, abseiling, etc.</p>				<p>sessions based in London and improved their language skills. They developed confidence and built self- esteem as they took risks and challenged themselves during the PGL activity week.</p> <p>The group came to a presentation evening and several of the unaccompanied minors stood up and were able to talk about the impact of the programme.</p> <p>The young people had grown in confidence and were able to identify how the experience had helped them with their language skills and their ability to make friends.</p> <p>All the young people who attended the summer camp remain in education and training.</p> <p>The young people are completing ESOL courses, construction courses and plumbing training at FE college.</p> <p>All of the four young people in Year 11 achieved at least one or more GCSE. One of these young people achieved higher than predicted grade.</p>
<p><b>Letterbox Club</b> Each child receives their own colourful parcel of books, maths games, stationery and other high quality education materials once a month for six months of each calendar year.</p> <p>Children usually receive their parcels from May to</p>	<p>To motivate young children to love reading and engage with a wide range of books.</p> <p>Develop a close and lasting relationship with their carers through the process of sharing and talking about books.</p> <p>To provide an opportunity to engage in maths games and practise key mathematical</p>	<p>May - October 2017</p> <p>May - October 2018</p>	<p>Around 45 children depending on the number of siblings.</p>	<p>Reception, Year 1, Year 3, Year 5, Year 7</p>	<p><b>Young people's feedback:</b> "Dear Emma, Can I get the books forever? cos I love them please."</p> <p>"You have to keep sending them. We love getting them and we get different coloured parcels."</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> Ongoing enjoyment and engagement with reading, alongside a trusted adult.</p>

**Enrichment Grid for September 2017 – July 2018**

<p>October.</p> <p>The LAC primary advisory teacher edits and writes a letter to the young people and sends out the parcels on a monthly basis.</p>	<p>skills repeatedly with their friends and carer.</p>				<p>An opportunity to learn about, experience and explore other worlds through a range of specially selected books.</p> <p>A sense of belonging as the parcels follow them around wherever they move to.</p> <p>To receive the parcels that are addressed to them, makes them feel special and held in mind by others, whatever is happening in their lives. The young people's feedback has always been positive and the carers say that they wait at the door on a Saturday ready to receive the magazines.</p>
<p><b>Booster classes</b> to support Literacy and Maths for National Assessments in Year 6, plus GCSE revision for Year 11.</p> <p>The Primary Advisory Teacher and Secondary Advisory Teacher manage the groups, with teaching delivered by subject specialists from tutoring agency, Talent Engaged.</p>	<p>To provide targeted opportunity for revision, and skills development prior to school assessments in Years 6 and 11.</p> <p>To provide small group tuition where young people can focus on closing the gaps in their learning, with a high level of support and encouragement, in a small group context, alongside other LAC.</p>	<p>Feb 2017 (2.5 days)</p> <p>Easter Holidays April 2017 (3 days)</p>	<p>15 LAC in total</p>	<p>18 pupils (includes some non-LAC pupils, also within vulnerable cohorts and known to the LA</p>	<p><b>Impact:</b> Both sets of Boosters sessions were very successful in motivating young people to engage with revision.</p> <p><b>Young people's views:</b> "The teachers were helpful." "I remembered things I couldn't (before)". "Fun and enjoyable". "It's always good to do extra learning." "It was really good. If students come they will find it really useful." "It helped me with my English."</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> KS2 – the 40% of the young people who achieved the expected standard in their</p>

**Enrichment Grid for September 2017 – July 2018**

					Reading, Writing and Maths KS2 tests had attended the booster classes. KS4 - 50% of the young people who achieved the 5 A-C (previous) GCSE measure attended the booster classes.
<p><b>St John's Cambridge University – Family Day</b></p> <p>LAC and carers, working alongside students from the university to explore what life is like for students at St John's University. Additional exercises included:</p> <p><b>Project Lego Enterprise</b> Students worked in small groups with the support of a Student Ambassador to create a product which would help the lives of students at university out of Lego. Students had to present and pitch their ideas back to the rest of the group.</p> <p><b>College Tour/Scavenger Hunt</b> Three groups were taken for a campus tour by Student Ambassadors and experienced the key features of the university campus.</p> <p><b>Punting</b></p>	<p>To evidence first-hand the opportunities afforded at a top campus university, and to think through the pros and cons alongside current students and tutors, including financial aspects, living accommodation, potential impact on earnings, job opportunities, career satisfaction, etc.</p>	<p>02/07/2018</p>	<p>16 people altogether – ie LAC and carers.</p>	<p>9 LAC Year 7 Year 8 Year 9</p> <p>7 Carers</p>	<p><b>Young people's feedback:</b> "It was fantastic and amazing." "I want to go to university and the subject I want to learn is teaching."</p> <p><b>Carers' feedback:</b> "I enjoyed the day immensely." "Yes, I learned everything from uni life from the daily routines, the finances and the accommodation." "I think you should arrange days like this because it could help those who really don't know what to expect." "This trip will motivate people to work harder to achieve their grades."</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> All of the young people who remain in Care since this visit, are in education and are all studying for their GCSEs.</p> <p>This trip promoted academic aspiration and taught the young people what to expect from living and learning in a University. The young people were challenged to give presentations to an audience and to work jointly on projects.</p> <p>The young people were inspired by working alongside the students at Cambridge and all felt they would be interested in going to university, (although not necessarily Cambridge).</p>

**Enrichment Grid for September 2017 – July 2018**

<p>The students went on a guided punt tour along the river Cam and learnt about the history of Cambridge.</p>					
<p><b>Celebration of Achievement Awards</b>                  Every year the young people are nominated by social workers, teachers and the Virtual School to reward them for their skills and achievements. The nominations are a way of celebrating everything that has been achieved in the last year.                  This year 87 of students were given an award for their progress and academic attainment. 88 young people were awarded for their positive attitude and perseverance in education. A group of young people were nominated for their effort and significant improvement in their attendance.                  The annual Brent's Got Talent Show gives LAC the opportunity to perform and showcase their talent in front of a large audience.</p>	<p>To reward young people for their efforts and achievements across the academic year.                  To demonstrate that effort can bring results and rewards.</p> <p>To offer a performance platform for those LAC who have a talent to share – including dance, drama, art, comedy, public speaking, etc.                  For these performances to provide an inspiration to all attendees.</p>	<p>April 2018</p>	<p>Target group: all LAC up to Year 13, and Care Leavers too as performers</p>	<p>Over 100 LAC, carers and social workers</p> <p>Performers:                  Year 6                  Year 11                  Year 13                  Year 12                  Care Leaver</p>	<p>The children and young people were able to reflect on the past year and feel proud of their achievements. Furthermore, they had the opportunity to be inspired and motivated by others' success.</p> <p><b>Young people's views:</b>                  "I didn't want to do it, I was terrified, But I'm glad I did it."                  "I wanted to let others know they could do it too. Go to university and achieve things in their life."                  "I was a bit nervous before doing it (my speech) as I was misinformed about the size of the crowd! Nevertheless, I still did it and after doing it, I felt great. It feels good to let people know your story - particularly those who are also in the same situation (listening)."                  A few carers were very emotional and took the microphone to praise the achievements of their young people.                  Other LAC commented on being inspired by the key speeches which featured on educational attainment (post-16.)</p>
<p><b>Football match mascots:</b>                  BVS nominated two</p>	<p>To build confidence by walking out into a large arena. Both</p>	<p><b>Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June</b></p>	<p>2 LAC and their carers</p>	<p>2 selected LAC</p>	<p>The young people were delighted. They each received an England football kit that</p>

**Enrichment Grid for September 2017 – July 2018**

<p>children as Flag Bearer and Football Mascot during a football match at Wembley Stadium for an international game: England vs Nigeria</p> <p>One of the Brent LAC was a nominated Flag Bearer for England, and another was nominated as the mascot for the Nigerian Team.</p> <p>Page 84</p>	<p>children needed the confidence to walk out onto Wembley Stadium pitch in front of thousands of people</p> <p>To understand the protocol of a formal football match, learning the skills needed to be a mascot and a flag bearer at an international football game in a large arena.</p>	<p><b>2018</b></p>	<p>4 tickets</p> <p>1 x Year 6 1 x Year 7</p>	<p>rewarded for excellent attitude towards learning and achieving excellent results in KS2 tests</p>	<p>they were very proud of, and they were both thrilled that they had been seen by millions of viewers on the TV.</p> <p><b>Young people's views:</b> "I was a mascot for Nigeria but I wanted to be with England. I liked it, they were nice and friends saw me on the TV."</p> <p><b>Carers' feedback:</b> "Because she loves football, she was speechless and overwhelmed and wondered how you had arranged it!"</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> "She has since been trying to catch the eye of a Watford Football Scout and has (now) been seen: they have given positive feedback on her performance."</p>
<p><b>Family First Nights – £5 tickets to a west end show</b></p> <p>Carers were encouraged to sign up to Family First Nights to enable them to take their Looked after children (and their own families) to West End Theatre for reduced price tickets (£5 per ticket). The families are supported throughout the process so that they can be confident and informed theatre-goers.</p>	<p>The aim is to encourage as many carers as possible to sign up to the deal and commit to attending at least one performance.</p> <p>Family First Night offers an exciting experience for Brent LAC. The shows may inspire young people to work in the theatre, become writers, performers, stage managers, etc. A wide range of themes and topics encourages literacy, e.g. Matilda, and knowledge of the wider world.</p>	<p>June 2018 – continued for the rest of the year</p>	<p>8 Carers and their families were targeted to join the scheme with children in different year groups, mainly primary</p>	<p>50 participants in all</p>	<p>Brent Virtual School had the highest number of carers who signed up and the carers were thrilled to see the first show. Many have reported that they are continuing to receive fabulous discounts and one carer said she has taken her children to see three shows this year.</p> <p><b>Carers feedback:</b> "It was brilliant. We arranged to go and see Thriller and L did not know that her sister would also be coming. They were so excited when they realised they would be sitting next to each other. They absolutely loved the show."</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> Two of the young people who attended Family First Nights Musicals later went on to perform separately at Brent Celebration</p>

**Enrichment Grid for September 2017 – July 2018**

					of Achievement. Both children have future aspirations to be performers on the stage.
<p><b>Magazine subscriptions</b> Weekly and fortnightly subscriptions to Story Time, Phoenix and The Week</p>	<p>The aim is to continue to engage young people in reading. <b>Story Time</b> is aimed at encouraging reading at home and the development of language with younger primary aged children. <b>Phoenix</b> is aimed at Key Stage 2 but the high quality comic strip format seems to be particularly good at targeting and more reluctant readers. The secondary cohort is receiving a weekly newspaper aimed at young people called <b>The Week</b>. This is targeting older children with the aim of engaging them with an interest in what is happening, politically or culturally in the world around them.</p>	<p>Weekly throughout the year</p>	<p>30/40 LAC of different ages (as left)</p>		<p><b>Feedback form young people:</b> "Keep sending that superhero one. I like it". "Can we have the Phoenix every week? One week I got two!"</p> <p><b>Carer feedback:</b>  "The Storytime is nice. I spend special time with her reading the stories. We enjoy it."  "She is enjoying Phoenix Magazine. She comes rushing in from school and checks the post box every day. She loves getting them."</p>

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## Year 12 Speech for Brent Celebration of Achievement

Good afternoon everybody. My name is N and I am 17 years old.

People say I'm articulate but to be honest talking in front of crowds isn't really my thing however, (pause) I'm still up here today. I've been asked to say a few words about my experiences being in care.

I've been in care from the age of 4 and was placed in semi-independent living at 16. Up until Year 9, I was in one placement but then things changed and my school and home placement broke down. It was a difficult time, I moved around a lot and lost myself. I can admit I did a few things that maybe today looking back I wouldn't have done. Even so, I am now at a different point where I realise that there is no reason why I can't be successful.

I was a bit lost for most of my high school years. In year 9, I was excluded from my school-a very good Grammar school in Watford. I was out of school for a long period. During the time I was out of school, I grew lazy and unmotivated. I wouldn't say I was depressed but for a long time I was just not happy.

Thankfully I did get another school placement in year 10. It took me a long time to adjust to school. I wouldn't attend every day and I also just really wasn't used to working and focusing on my studies, so it seemed to be going very downhill. There were a few teachers at my school who were I suppose almost like my 'guardian angel' who watched over me even when I thought they weren't there. Particularly, 'Miss' who even till this day still helps me. She didn't give up on me even when I pushed and pushed and pushed away. I rebelled, didn't attend school and she still fought my corner.

My exams were so much harder than imagined. I scraped through with 5 A to C GCSE passes, which I wouldn't have got without the support of 'Miss'. It took me time to mature but I suppose it takes everyone time. Even last year there were difficulties. In September I had lost my college placement, well it all looked to be going pear shaped. No college would accept me or they didn't have space and well I went into the same unmotivated mode. Even Ben my life-coach, who supported me with college interviews, I think felt a little fed up and frustrated with me!

Around December something changed me. I picked up a book and starting reading again. It almost sparked a motivational flame inside me and I decided

life wasn't over and that I can be successful. With some assistance from Ben and Miss Purtil, I applied for more colleges and sixth forms for next year. I prepared better for the interviews and currently I have three sixth form offers and 1 college offer for this year September coming. I am currently resitting my English and Maths.

In sixth form I'm going to study business media & politics and after that I am hopefully going to complete an international business with French degree abroad. I also have several business ideas/plans which I would like to start, including selling vegan juices & opening a franchise of restaurants. There is no reason not to start your own business now, there are grants you can apply for or even courses which can assist you in starting your own business. With a set goal I feel I now am more in control of sculpting my future.


So I'd like to give a shout out to Ben & 'Miss' for holding me down all this time. Also to the Virtual School for continuing to support and encourage me not just this year but in past years. And lastly to my uncle who treats me like his son and who has made me the person I am today!

Appendix Three				
Training	Objective (s)	Date	No. of participants	Evaluation/ Impact / Participant Comments
Foster Carer Training (Transitions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of strategies to support young people around key school transitions</li> <li>Understanding of transitions and barriers faced by looked after children</li> </ul>	28 June	4	From rating 1-4 (low to high), rated 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>“Excellent”</i></li> <li><i>“useful information given”</i></li> </ul>
Designated Teacher (DT) Forum – Autumn/Spring term	<p><u>Autumn</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roles and Responsibilities of Designated Teachers for Looked after Children”</li> <li>Improving Outcomes through the ePEP (electronic personal education plan)</li> <li>Pupil Premium Plus - applying for the full PPG: case studies &amp; impact</li> </ul> <p><u>Spring</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model policy for Looked After Children</li> <li>SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire)</li> </ul>	9 Nov, 19 March,	16 -Autumn 22 -Spring	What worked well: <p><i>Autumn</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>“Sharing experiences/difficulties with other DTs”</i></li> <li><i>“very satisfied”</i></li> <li><i>“I have come away with lots of information”</i></li> <li><i>“An excellent morning of CPD”</i></li> <li><i>“incredibly constructive discussions”</i></li> <li><i>“enabled me to reflect on my role as DT for LAC”</i></li> <li><i>“As a new DT the session was very informative and clear”</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Spring</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>“LAC model policy made me realise what we need to put in place”</i></li> <li><i>“allowed me to think of next steps as a school”</i></li> <li><i>“very useful”</i></li> <li><i>“thank you so much, I feel more equipped moving forward”</i></li> <li><i>“good opportunity to network with other DTs”</i></li> <li><i>“so much to take in but I learned a lot”</i></li> <li><i>“very informative/reflective”</i></li> </ul>

<p>Kate Cairns Associates (KCA) Conference for DTs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing the theory base: attachment, trauma and resilience</li> <li>• Tools and practical strategies for schools to embed</li> <li>• What next? An audit tool; what schools can do next and information about the wider project and training opportunities for schools who wish to participate in the Attachment Aware Programme</li> </ul>	<p>18 June</p>	<p>35</p>	<p>From rating 1-4 (low to high), rated mainly 4s</p> <p>What worked well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “the wealth of good practice”</li> <li>• “great delivery, punchy, informative”</li> <li>• “reflective and informative”</li> <li>• “good to network with other schools”</li> <li>• “excellent ideas”</li> <li>• “so much information”</li> <li>• “all sessions were thought provoking”</li> <li>• “gained a better understanding of attachment awareness and emotional coaching”</li> <li>• “really interesting and provided food for thought..”</li> </ul>
<p>Promoting the Achievement of LAC (PALAC) Training - Dr Vivian Hill, Institute of Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An understanding of the need for raising attainment for LAC</li> <li>• An understanding of how to implement and manage the Year 11 tutoring /mentoring sessions</li> <li>• An opportunity to consider how study skills/revision techniques fit within the project</li> </ul>	<p>31 Oct, 29 Nov</p>	<p>Oct-15 Nov-12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“the group and the project is specific so was well targeted and precise”</i></li> <li>• <i>“Great, relaxed setting allowing for good dialogue and questioning”</i></li> <li>• <i>“effective sharing of case studies”</i></li> <li>• <i>“clear instructions for mentors”</i></li> <li>• <i>“useful to have thorough grounding and context”</i></li> <li>• <i>“very approachable presenters”</i></li> <li>• <i>“excellent content that was well delivered”</i></li> <li>• <i>“I have a better understanding of PALAC”</i></li> <li>• <i>“statistics in first session very informative and eye-opening”</i></li> <li>• <i>“feeling fully equipped and motivated to deliver these sessions to my mentee”</i></li> </ul>

BVS/ HEBB (Harrow Ealing, Brent, Barnet) INSET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking and sharing good practice</li> <li>• PEPs and quality assurance</li> <li>• Enrichment: John Lyons</li> </ul>	18 May	30	<p>What worked well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“opportunities for virtual schools to present”</i></li> <li>• <i>“interesting ideas”</i></li> <li>• <i>“thank you to Brent for organising the day”</i></li> <li>• <i>“great opportunity to network and share best practice”</i></li> <li>• <i>“learning and picking up ideas”</i></li> </ul>
Social Worker lunchtime ePEP training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the Virtual School</li> <li>• EPEP process and completion</li> </ul>	Monthly 1 hr sessions	11	<p>What Worked Well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Information provided was informative and clear. It was easy to follow..”</i></li> <li>• <i>“Better understanding of PEP process”</i></li> <li>• <i>“Greater confidence”</i></li> <li>• <i>“Good overview of welfare call EPEP”</i></li> </ul>
<p>Elizabeth Hanna EP Training: ADHD, Revision and Mind-mapping, Dyslexia and Dyscalculia,</p>	<p><u>ADHD</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties associated with ADHD</li> <li>• How is a diagnosis made?</li> <li>• What do researchers say about ADHD?</li> <li>• How can we help pupils with ADHD?</li> </ul> <p><u>Revision Tips &amp; Mind Mapping</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting motivated to revise</li> <li>• Getting organized</li> <li>• Tips for boosting recall</li> <li>• Managing exam stress</li> <li>• Using Mind Mapping across the curriculum</li> </ul> <p><u>Dyslexia &amp; Dyscalculia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The national picture and improving literacy/numeracy levels</li> </ul>	12 Sept, 24 Jan, 17 Oct, 24 May	9	<p><i>“delivery very good”</i></p> <p><i>“the strategies were very interesting”</i></p> <p><i>“excellent”</i></p> <p><i>“the speaker was very clear in her presentation”</i></p> <p><i>“it was all good”</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definitions of dyslexia and dyscalculia</li> <li>• Factors linked to difficulties</li> <li>• Strategies and approaches</li> <li>• Assessment-What helps?</li> </ul>			
Semi-Independent Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of the Virtual School</li> <li>• Impact of Low Attendance</li> <li>• Raising of the Participation Age</li> <li>• How to Support your Young Person?</li> </ul>	18 April	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “delivery was very good”</li> <li>• “all useful”</li> <li>• “the whole programme was very informative”</li> <li>• “A well-structured and concise event”</li> <li>• “I will share information with staff in my organisation”</li> </ul>
INSET day at Convent of Jesus & Mary Language College on raising attainment for LAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of the Virtual School</li> <li>• Barriers to learning and impact of trauma and attachment</li> <li>• Exploration of strategies/interventions informed by case studies demonstrating positive outcomes</li> </ul>	20 March	15	<p>From rating 1-4 (low to high), rated 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“very informative and relevant”</i></li> <li>• <i>“excellent session”</i></li> <li>• <i>“will use to sharpen practice”</i></li> <li>• <i>“develop ideas for adapting behaviour policies”</i></li> <li>• <i>“very engaging and concise”</i></li> <li>• <i>“I will reflect on the attachment style that students portray to help me mould my mentoring practice more effectively”</i></li> <li>• <i>“I have gained a better understanding of the role of the virtual school”</i></li> </ul>

 <p><b>Brent</b></p>	<p><b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b> 24 July 2019</p> <hr/> <p><b>Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services</b></p>
<p><b>Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report: Quarter 1: 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019</b></p>	

<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)	<p>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></p> <p>Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes <a href="mailto:Nigel.chapman@brent.gov.uk">Nigel.chapman@brent.gov.uk</a></p>

## 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> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June 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 2019-20 service plan set out the vision for the service as below:

- Family finding for looked after children will be timely and within their extended family network where appropriate.
- Children's individual needs, including diversity needs such as disability, race, religion, language and culture will always be considered when placing a child.
- 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 additional 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.
- We will continue to provide an excellent learning and development package for foster carers who will have permanent supervising social workers to supervise and support them.

### **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.

The workload within the teams continues to grow as new carers are approved and need to be allocated. As such, whilst we retain 2 vacant posts (one reported in the last report and one from a member of the team who has recently retired), one is due to be filled by an international social worker in July 2019.

## 4.0 Performance Data

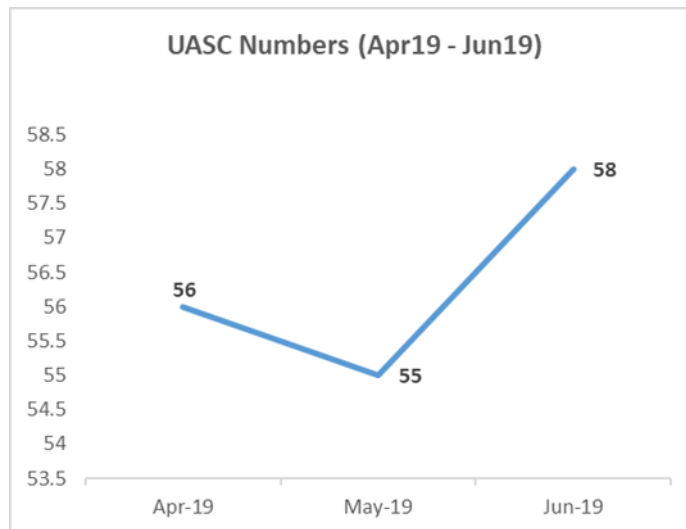
### 4.1 Placement Activity

The total number of looked after children as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019 was 306, which is an increase from the end of Q4 of 6 children, however this is a reduction of 6 children from 312 the previous year (June 2018).

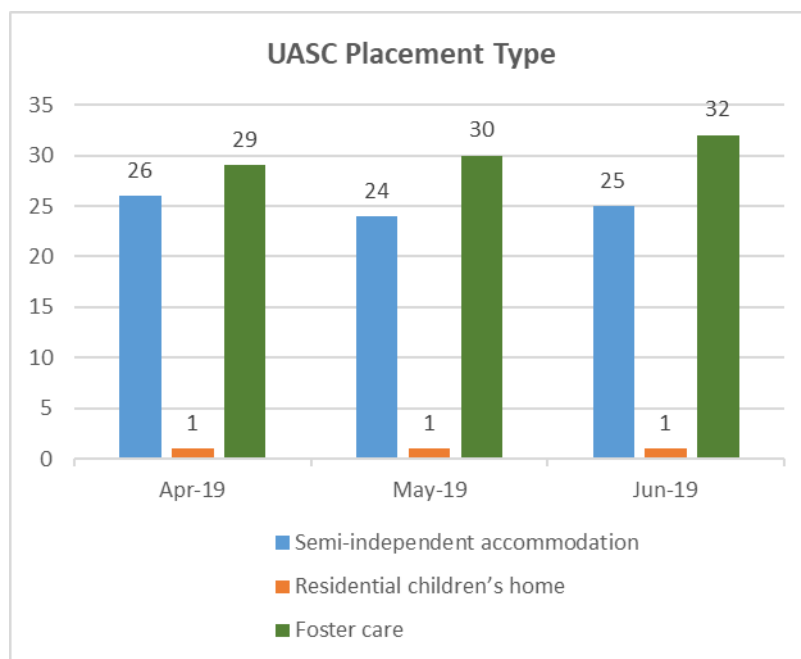
4.2 The corporate performance targets for 2019/20 remain broadly the same as the previous year and are as below:

- Percentage of looked after children placed with in-house (Brent) foster carers – annual target 30% - the actual percentage as of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019 was 22.2% (68 children), a reduction from 24% (72 children) compared to the previous quarter.
- Percentage of looked after children placed with a relative or family friend – annual target 15% - the actual percentage as of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019 was 10.5% (32 children) compared to 11.7% (35 children) at the end of Q4, 2018 -19.
- Percentage of looked after children placed in independent fostering agencies – annual target 25% - the actual percentage as of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019 was 27.8% (85 children) compared to 27.7% (83 children) at the end of Q4, 2018 – 19.
- Percentage of looked after children overall within foster placements – annual target 75% - the actual percentage as of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019 was 60.8% (186 children) compared to 63.3% (190 children) at the end of Q4, 2018 – 19.
- There were 62 looked after children in semi-independent accommodation (residential accommodation not subject to Children’s Home Regulations) as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019, which represents 20.3% of all looked after children. This number is a decrease from 63 at the end of Q4, 2018 – 19 (21%).

**4.3** As of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019 there were 58 UASC, 4 more than at the end of Q4, 2018 – 19.



**4.4** 25 UASC are placed in semi-independent accommodation (no change from the end of Q4, 2018 – 19), the same 1 UASC is in a residential children’s home as was at the end of March 2019, and 32 UASC are placed in foster care compared to 28 at the end of Q4, 2018 – 19.



## **5.0 Recruitment and Assessment**

- 5.1** Within the reporting period, Brent's Marketing and Recruitment Officer (MRO) and the fostering teams continued to carry out 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. Following on from the last period's focus on comparing interest raised from online and offline recruitment activities, it was clear that Brent's digital presence seemed to be creating more interest from people seeking further information about fostering.
- 5.2** With regards to physical outreach, Foster Care Fortnight (13 – 26<sup>th</sup> May 2019) was the main focus during this period. This is an annual event across the UK devoted to recruiting foster carers. The teams used this time to promote fostering for Brent in different ways: For the first time foster carers participated in this event; our MRO recorded positive stories of Brent foster carers' experiences of fostering for Brent, which were broadcast at each of the outreach events – the main ones of which were in the Civic Centre, Brent libraries, at Brent Fest and at the Wembley Job Fair. It was felt that the videos brought a human element to the outreach events and will be used from now on.
- 5.3** The MRO continues to develop the presence of fostering in Brent by increasing the presence on social media on both Facebook and Twitter. Following on from the last quarter, she has recorded some positive fostering stories from Brent carers 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. These forums continue to show an increase in approved foster carers 'liking' our page, sharing non-confidential positive stories and achievements and more enquiries via the webpage.
- 5.4** During this quarter, the team continued to facilitate information evenings at the Civic Centre (one per month), 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.
- 5.5** The recruitment activity during the reporting period produced 52 contacts (website, telephone calls or emails requesting further information). This is a big increase from last quarter and was mainly due to enquiries received from the Job Fair. Out of the 52 contacts, 17 attended the information evening sessions in April, May and June. Of the 17 possible prospective carers only 3 were considered suitable to progress to initial visit. Common reasons for not progressing further included: working hours that did not allow any time for fostering; lack of suitable accommodation; large debts; and some people only seeking information about fostering rather than wishing to be assessed at this time.

- 5.6** 2 of the initial visits concluded negatively as they are moving out of the area so assessment and future placements could not be considered. 1 initial visit was very successful and has progressed to stage 1 of the assessment process.
- 5.7** 4 of the 5 assessments recorded in the last quarterly report as being in stage 2 have been to panel and received positive recommendations for approval as foster carers in the May and June panels.
- 5.8** The 5<sup>th</sup> assessment was due to come to panel as well but the couple shared the presence of a lodger in their home with their assessing social worker and asked to be put on hold until September 2020 when the lodger is moving out. However, given that the couple's circumstances may have changed by then a decision was made to cease the assessment and add an addendum nearer the time to update panel before possible approval can be considered.
- 5.9** Of the 8 assessments in stage 1 in the last reporting period:  
2 have withdrawn for personal reasons;  
1 has been ended by the team due to non-availability for assessment visits; and  
5 remain in assessment.
- 5.10** In this reporting period there are therefore a total of 5 assessments underway: 3 in stage 1 and 3 in Stage 2.

## **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> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019, 4 panels were held with 21 specific cases discussed during these sessions. Within these cases:

- 2 'family and friends' fostering households were found suitable to continue as foster carers following review;
- 10 fostering households were found suitable to continue as foster carers following review, 2 of whom increased their approval numbers thus providing possible additional placements;
- 3 fostering households resigned from their fostering role – 2 transferred to independent fostering agencies for financial reasons and 1 wanted to concentrate on child minding;
- the approval of 1 'family and friends' foster carer was terminated due to the child in their care turning 18;
- 1 new 'family and friends' fostering household was recommended for approval; and
- 4 new fostering households were recommended for approval.

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

**6.4** An appeal by a family and friends carer against the recommended termination of their approval as foster carers was upheld by the ADM. This had been reported as being in progress within the last quarterly report (Q4 2018-19).

**6.5** 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 last meeting was held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2019 and found that close communication is now happening proactively between the fostering and care planning teams resulting in better planned placements. The performance of 3 individual workers has continued to improve resulting in quicker recognition of carers who excel and swift identification of those carers whose abilities fall below the standards outlined in fostering guidance and legislation. The workers have been informed of their achievements in person and publicly via the LAC and Permanency staff forum. The carers who have excelled are acknowledged by senior managers in writing and via public recognition in the fostering newsletter. Support and training are offered to those carers where concerns are noted. The improved timescales around this have resulted in fewer carers requiring formal monitoring.

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

### **7.1 The 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.

**7.1.1** During this reporting period, 21 individual training courses were offered on a variety of topics ranging from 'Education Transitions, to 'Social Pedagogy Learning' and 'The Power of Positive Parenting'.

**7.1.2** 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 resulted in an improvement, with the addition of suggested practical techniques. A session has been scheduled for August 2019.

## **7.2 Social Pedagogy**

The 2019 – 20 Carers Learning and Development Programme is now up and running and, as proposed in the last quarter's report, features various social pedagogic learning and development activities, such as a monthly social pedagogic learning space, 'common third' workshops and foster family socials. These activities are core learning for foster parents and were introduced as a direct response to the carers' requests to undertake more activities based on social pedagogic practice, as noted in the previous quarterly report.

**7.2.1** Feedback on the social pedagogic learning space thus far has been positive; foster parents feel that the space allows for reflective practice, enables a greater understanding of children's life worlds and their needs as well as getting ideas for their practice.

**7.2.2** In order to make more focused use of the social pedagogue, specific carers are being referred to her with the targeted aim of improving their skillset – see 9.1 New Developments.

**7.2.3** Supervising social workers continue 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 situations. In addition, the social pedagogue is available in-between these times for consultation where necessary. Regular slots are offered in the fostering team meetings for focused case discussions facilitated by the social pedagogue with the aim of developing techniques for the workers to use in their supervisory visits. The role of a social worker in the fostering support team, also now a qualified social pedagogue, will be utilised differently in order to support social pedagogic approach in practice.

**7.2.4** The development lead for social pedagogy has also met with the Kinship Care Team to explain the social pedagogic offer to them with the intention that kinship foster carers and their social workers can also benefit from the offer given that they face the same issues as our foster carers and could benefit from this additional support.

### **7.3 Support from supervising social workers**

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

### **8.0 Monitoring – reviews, allegations, complaints**

**8.1** A total of 17 foster carer annual review meetings were held during the period under focus. The dedicated Fostering Reviewing Officer has left the department via voluntary redundancy so this work is now commissioned from AidHour and covered by the same reviewing officers who chair children's LAC reviews.

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

### **9.0 New Developments**

**9.1** As briefly outlined earlier in this report, in order to make more focused use of the Social Pedagogue's role, specific carers are being referred to her with the targeted aim of improving their skillset and shifting the focus away from crisis intervention to development. Initially, 6 families are being referred to the Social Pedagogue – 3 newly approved carers and 3 more experienced carers. The aim of the work with the new carers is in preparing them for their first placement and then supporting them in the early days of that placement and the sessions with more experienced carers are focused on those carers who can be stretched further – helping get them to the next stage of taking on slightly more challenging placements. This will increase to 10 families by September 2019. The impact of this will be considered in the next quarterly report.

**9.2** The new Participation and Engagement Lead, based within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service of CYP, started in May 2019 and a meeting has been arranged within the next quarterly reporting period to continue discussions about how best to improve consultation with current and former looked after children to drive service development.

### **9.3 Working groups**

**9.3.1** The working groups outlined in the last quarterly report are all up and running. The group responsible for the planning of the summer foster carers trip consists of two social workers and 11 foster carers, who collectively chose the destination and the date. This year the destination is Brighton and it is on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2019. As part of the preparation and encouraging foster carers to work together to plan this, a 'bring and

share' evening has been organised for the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2019 foster carers support group. This has generated much interest and foster carers are looking forward to this. If this is successful, more events will be arranged in future.

**9.3.2** The working group for the foster carer's ball is in progress. The date being suggested is at the end of November; venues are being explored and funding for this is being sought. Two foster carers are participating in the planning of this event initially, with more joining once the early arrangements are secured. It is anticipated that the arrangements will be finalised by the end of September 2019. Plans for the award scheme that takes place at this event has been broadened to include long service, split into those who have fostered 5, 10 years and over 10 years. Other categories include: carers currently with or who have had sibling group placements; carers who have cared for children with additional needs; carers who have successfully fostered individual children for a year or more (thus providing consistency); carers who have been 'buddies' to newly approved carers or have helped other carers in the year; carers who have completed the Training Support and Development Standards within timescales; and a welcome card to newly approved foster carers.

**9.3.3** The working group supporting the birth children of foster carers has not yet got any foster carer members. However, there are two social workers pushing this forward who have requested the foster carers support group nominate 2 foster carers to join the group. Meanwhile, a proposal has been made to acknowledge birth children of foster carers and family and friends foster carers and the understanding they show the fostered children in their family home in a similar event to that which is offered to foster carers.


**9.4** Exploring the use of regional consortia and/or neighbouring local authorities for combined needs-led and targeted marketing and recruitment and commissioning and integration – Ealing and Hounslow remain keen to progress this with Brent taking the lead. The outcome of Brent's bid for seed funding offered for this purpose from the Department for Education has been successful. A group, led by Brent will now review future steps with an update provided to a future committee this reporting year.

## **10 Financial Position**

The budgeted expenditure in 2018-19 for placements with Brent foster carers was £1.9m compared to actual expenditure of £2.0m, an overspend of £0.1m. The 2019-20 budget has been set at £2.0m. The budgeted expenditure in 2018-19 for placements with independent foster agencies was £3.7m compared to actual expenditure of £4.0m, an overspend of £0.3m. The 2019-20 budget has been set at £3.9m.

**Report sign off:**

**GAIL TOLLEY** Page 102  
Strategic Director of Children and Young People

	<p><b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b> 24 July 2019</p>
<p><b>Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</b></p>	
<p><b>Brent's Local Offer for Care Leavers 2018-2020: a year on</b></p>	

<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>	3 Appendices
<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>

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the progress of the Brent Local Offer to Care Leavers during the period from 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 and seek approval from the Corporate Parenting Committee regarding Brent's reviewed Local Offer for care leavers for 2019/20.

## 2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review and note the content of this report and provide support and challenge to the service area in their pursuit to achieve the best outcomes for Brent's care leavers.

2.2 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to approve Brent's reviewed local offer, presented in appendix 1.

### **3.0 Background**

- 3.1 Brent's first Local Offer to Care Leavers was presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2018, following the Children and Social Work Act 2017 (Section 2 of the Act) introducing a new obligation for local authorities to publish a local offer for care leavers to include their support and guidance to care leavers.
- 3.2 Following approval from the Committee, the Local Offer was then presented to Cabinet for approval as the offer included council tax exemption for Brent's care leavers. The Cabinet unanimously approved the offer which was then signed off by the Lead Member for children and young people before being put in place as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018.
- 3.3 Brent's Local Offer to care leavers was one of the first published in the country. Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018, allowed local authorities to have another year before publishing their local offers. However, in order to meet our statutory duty, Brent consulted with senior leaders in the Council, members of staff, partners and most importantly young people in the development of the local offer well before the DfE guideline of publishing the offer by 1 January 2019. Brent's Local Offer was co-produced with young people; 119 care leavers participated in a consultation process which included face to face dialogue, workshops and a questionnaire.
- 3.4 DfE guidance suggests that it would "expect the local offer to be reviewed every 2-3 years", although this was not "prescriptive", it would be for the local authorities to decide. Senior leaders in Brent made a decision for the progress of the local offer to be reviewed on an annual basis with the view to revise it on a two yearly cycle. In this way, care leavers' needs will be kept on the agenda annually.

### **4.0 Impact of Brent's Offer to Care Leavers in 2018/19**

- 4.1 Between May and June 2018, Brent's Children's Services were inspected by Ofsted as part of their Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services. The inspection report was published<sup>1</sup> in July 2018. The inspection judged overall effectiveness of services provided to children and families as 'good' and experience and progress of looked after children and care leavers 'outstanding'.
- 4.2 Although, the Inspection did not specifically comment on Brent's local offer, the quotes below from the Inspection report highlight the strength of support and services offered to care leavers by Brent, as their corporate parent:

- *"The care for children and care leavers is outstanding..."*

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<sup>1</sup> For Ofsted's full report visit <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80489>

- *“Corporate parenting is a real strength for the local authority. There is a strong focus on achieving positive outcomes for children in care and care leavers...”*
- *“Care leavers now benefit from a service and staff that greatly invest in relationships with young people. Staff value the importance of these relationships and nurture them well. Care leavers are surrounded by strong support networks, and barriers to their progress are overcome by the committed and tenacious staff group. Increased resources and manageable reduced caseloads enable this to happen.”*

4.3 Brent’s Local Offer to care leavers included statutory support and guidance the Local Authority must provide and additional support offered with partner agencies.

4.4 Brent has fulfilled all its statutory duties to care leavers as set out in the Local Offer:

- i. Allocation of personal advisors to care leavers: all of our care leavers had an allocated personal advisor. As of 31 March 2019 there were 317 care leavers.
- ii. Pathway plans for young people: all care leavers were provided with a pathway plan when statutorily required and the majority of them were reviewed on a six monthly basis. Some care leavers who did not have a pathway plan review were young people who were deported, or did not wish to have a leaving care service.
- iii. Higher education bursary: all care leavers at university have been offered a bursary of £2,000.
- iv. Providing accommodation to care leavers in higher education during holidays: All care leavers in higher education or in residential further education were provided either with accommodation or reasonable funding when they made their own arrangements during school holidays
- v. Providing accommodation: all young people were offered suitable accommodation as per their needs. Young people who were in foster care were provided with the choice of ‘staying put’ with their foster carer or moving to supported accommodation where they were offered weekly sessions to improve their independent life skills. No care leaver had a breakdown of tenancy or became intentionally homeless.
- vi. Financial support: as per statutory requirements, all care leavers were offered an assessment of need when required and they received financial assistance towards expenses related to education, employment and training. They were also supported to access other sources of funding such as college or university funds or from the Department of Work and Pensions.

## 5.0 Additional Support Offered under the Local Offer

i. Education, Employment and Training: The Local Offer had 9 discretionary commitments; 7 were fully met, 2 partly met. An outline of some of the offers achieved are set out below:

- A staff member from Department of Works and Pensions was seconded into leaving care teams.
- A celebration event for care leavers' achievement was organised with participation of over 70 care leavers. Care leavers' feedback from the event was very positive. An extract from an email sent to the Strategic Director, Children and Young People by a care leaver is as follows:

*"...I want to thank you and everyone involved in putting together the event; it was filled with warmth, positivity, and not to mention the delicious food! I've never felt truly cared about in a long time."*

There were two offers that were partly met:

- The apprenticeship scheme for care leavers: 10 ring-fenced apprenticeships were offered within Brent's local offer, either directly by the Council or arranged by the Council. There are 3 young people who have successfully secured apprenticeships within the council; a further 5 identified apprenticeships due to commence in 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of this financial year. Work is on-going to increase the number of care leavers in apprenticeships.
  - The other partly met offer was a traineeship programme for care leavers who are not in employment or education 'NEET'. Although this was offered, it did not start due to the low take up of students. An accredited life skills programme is under development for care leavers, which will provide further support in this area.
- ii. Accommodation: there were 9 additional support offers which were all met. Some of the examples were:
- 3 workshops were put in place during the course of the last financial year to support care leavers in maintaining a tenancy.
  - No care leaver was made intentionally homeless. Care leavers were either supported with managing their tenancy through a payment plan where we paid a part payment to secure their tenancy or offered an alternative housing option through the housing needs support team.
  - Care leavers were provided with a 'setting up home allowance' of £2,000.
- iii. Health and Wellbeing: under this offer, 6 were delivered; some of those included:

- Safe Base, therapeutic telephone line for care leavers has been well-used by care leavers.
- Support provided to register with a GP
- Care leavers were provided with a summary of their health records at their last Health Review prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

2 offers were partly delivered:

- ‘Staying Healthy’ sessions were not delivered due to the lack of provider availability. This issue was escalated to the Public Health Commissioning Service to address with the commissioned providers. As a result ‘Staying Healthy’ workshops are being put in place this year. Separately, personal advisors offered advice and signposted young people to services that offered health and wellbeing advice.
- Theatre tickets offered to care leavers by the Kiln Theatre were not fully taken up by care leavers. More work is underway to promote and encourage care leavers to utilise this offer.

iv. Finances: there were 7 additional commitments under this title and all of those were offered. Some of the successes were as below:

- 30 young people were supported via being made exempt from council tax included those residing in another borough.
- Provision of workshops on ‘money management and budgeting
- Support to open a bank account
- Support to obtain identification documents such as passport, provisional driving licence prior to 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday

v. Relationships: 8 commitments were made as additional support under relationships: 4 were fully met and 4 were partly met. Some of the delivered commitments are below:

- Life skills programmes have been delivered by placement providers and foster carers.
- Therapeutic group work (called Tree of Life) with care leavers. Even though a small number of care leavers attended these sessions provided by a clinical psychologist from Brent Emotional Wellbeing Team, this was a successful start. 2 of those care leavers are willing to participate in delivery of further workshops. Feedback below demonstrates the positive impact of the sessions:

*“...The thing that I felt was good about doing this was actually remembering that I have people who care about me who will never leave my side and will always guide me.”*

*“...They [people around me] never gave up on me.”*

Some of the partly delivered commitments were as below:

- Even though the planning process has started, group work for young parents could not be delivered in 2018/19 due to lack of capacity. A project proposal was submitted for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in the last quarter of 2018/19 for funding to enable delivery of group work with care leavers and older looked after children. This has been successful and will enable delivery of the group work activity in 2019/20.
  - Similarly, workshops for care leavers with special educational needs and disabilities are underway to be delivered in 2019/20.
- vi. Participation in Society: 7 commitments were made under participation in society. 6 were offered and 1 will be offered in 2019/20. Some of the offered commitments are as below:
- Provision of seats in Brent Youth Parliament
  - Encouragement and support for enrolment on electoral register
  - Providing information about voluntary work, clubs or groups.

One commitment, that will be delivered in 2019/20, is the workshop led by the Chief Executive Officer around participation in society.

## **6.0 Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The Looked After Children and Permanency service overspent by £1.1m (approx. £230k salary and £870k non-salary costs) against a budget of £5.8m in 2018-19. The service budget is supported by the general fund and £0.1m of government grant. A significant part of the non-salary overspend was attributable to the statutory and discretionary spend on looked after children and care leavers.
- 6.2 The detailed causes of this overspend were reviewed with the conclusion that the service budget has been increased by an additional £0.7m in 2019-20 to alleviate the demand led pressures in the service - including an increasing number of care leavers requiring support.
- 6.3 Appendix 1 details the offer to care leavers including the maximum amounts of support for each area of spend. The service will need to continue to carefully manage this spend within their overall service budget.

## **7.0 Appendices**

Appendix 1: Local Offer to care leavers for 2018/2020 (Draft)  
Appendix 2: Brent's Pledge for Children in Care  
Appendix 3: Brent's Care Leaver's Charter

**Report sign off:**

**GAIL TOLLEY**

Strategic Director of Children and Young People

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# Appendix 1:

## Our Offer to Care Leavers 2018-2020 (Draft)

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### 1. Introduction

As your corporate parent, Brent Council continues to be responsible for you after you turn 18. We must make sure that you are safe, healthy and are achieving your goals. As any good parent, we want to make sure you have the best possible support to help you thrive as you grow older.

We will do our best to help you achieve your full potential. We know that it is a big step when you move out of care and start living on your own. Being a good parent means keeping in touch and providing you with the support you need to meet your individual needs.

Just because you are leaving care, or have already left care, we haven't stopped caring about you. We want to make sure that you feel safe and supported and know where and who to go for advice and help.

This local offer is made by Brent Council to all care leavers and sets out how we will support you.

To be able to get the support set out in this offer, you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16 (including your 16th birthday) or for 13 weeks after your 16th birthday. Your personal advisor will talk with you about the information in this offer.

### 2. Support we must provide by law

Following changes introduced through the Children and Social Work Act 2017, you can ask for support from your personal advisor until you reach the age of 25. This is to make sure care leavers receive similar support that young adults who live with their families would normally expect.

- **Personal Advisor**

Once you turn 18, in most cases, you'll no longer have a social worker, so your personal advisor, we call them PAs, will make sure you get the services you need and help co-ordinate your pathway plan and reviews.

Your PA is there to help you to think about your future, what you are studying, what you want to do in the future and your independence skills. Your PA will talk to you and other people who are important to you to find out more about you and your needs.

Your PA can help you with lots of things in your life. The main things they will do are:

- Be involved in understanding your needs and preparing your Pathway Plan so that you can get a good idea of what you want to do with your life;

- Review your Pathway Plan at least every six months to help you to stay on track and achieve the things you want from life;
- With your agreement, seek the views of our partner agencies when completing your pathway plan. This may include housing, education, training and employment providers, benefits and health services. PAs will also liaise with youth offending services and probation if needed.
- Even if your case has been closed you can still get in touch with us before your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday and we will assess what help or assistance we may be able to give you.

## **2. Support we offer**

### **• Education, Employment and Training**

Good parents want to help their children achieve the right qualifications, training and skills to enable them to succeed in life. As your corporate parent, we want to make sure you have this solid foundation so that you are able to find the right career and job that goes with it. To do this we will make sure you have good advice, support and assistance.

The law says that we provide you with assistance with expenses linked with employment, education and training, if you cannot excess assistance from any other agency. In particular:

- We will provide you with a Higher Education (HE) bursary of £2,000 if you go to University, to help with books and materials. The payment will be paid in instalments over the duration of your course.
- We will provide somewhere for you to stay during your summer University holiday (or funding if you would prefer to make your own arrangements) if you are in higher education or in residential further education. We will only pay your rent if you cannot claim housing benefit or universal credit. During the Christmas and Easter term time your maintenance and student loan should cover your rent. If you think this will cause you financial hardship, please contact your personal advisor who might be able to help.

Our other education and training support offer to you includes:

- Support to meet your transport costs when travelling to training, school/college, apprenticeships or job interviews;
- Support to buy tools, equipment, essential clothing and books, if you cannot get them from your local college or through the Department of Work and Pensions.
- Support & advice if you choose to go to university, such as helping you apply for tuition fees and maintenance loans;
- In partnership with Brent Works we will send your personal advisor employment, training and apprenticeship opportunities to help you get into employment, training or an apprenticeship scheme within the Council or elsewhere;
- A Department of Work and Pensions worker seconded to the leaving care team who will assist you in claiming benefits and avoid you getting undue benefit sanctions;
- An annual celebration event to share the positive education and training experiences of care leavers;
- Up to 10 apprenticeships arranged by the council on an annual basis;
- A traineeship programme offered twice a year in partnership with Brent Employment Skills & Enterprise for all care leavers who do not have the required qualification and skills to apply for an apprenticeship scheme;
- Volunteering opportunities for care leavers.

- **Accommodation**

Your PA will help you to find suitable accommodation. We will work with you to ensure you are provided with the most suitable housing options. Our accommodation support offer to you includes:

The law says the following about how we must support you with your accommodation:

- We will encourage you to stay in care until you are 18, but if you choose to leave care before the age of 18 we must provide you with suitable accommodation.

Our other accommodation support offer to you includes:

- Supported accommodation if you are not ready or don't want to have your own tenancy yet;
- Supporting you to remain with your foster carers under what's called a 'Staying Put' arrangement. This will be reviewed every six months to make sure its meeting your needs;
- Once you have reached the stage where you can live independently and maintain your tenancy, you will have the option to apply to Brent Council for social housing (this is accommodation managed by us or a housing association). As a care leaver you will be given priority. Your PA will speak to the nominated housing officer, who works with the leaving care team, when you are ready to live on your own;
- Access to a nominated tenancy officer who can assist you with your tenancy;
- Workshops to receive advice about holding down a tenancy, including avoiding rent arrears, paying bills and budgeting effectively;
- A 'Setting up Home Allowance' of £2,000 (based on assessed need) for items you need to set up home like appliances, bedding and furniture.
- If you don't want to live in Brent because you have friends, family or connections elsewhere you will need to talk to your PA. Your PA can make contact with the Local Authority where you wish to live to see if they are able to assist you.
- A decorating allowance if housed in a Brent Housing property, such as to buy paint or wallpaper;
- To give you advice to prevent you from becoming intentionally homeless in Brent and being given a second chance if you run into problems with your tenancy.

- **Your Health & Wellbeing**

Looking after your physical health and mental wellbeing is extremely important as you get older. The Leaving Care Team and your PA will arrange advice and support for you to encourage you to lead a healthy and active lifestyle. Our health and wellbeing offer to you includes:

- Providing you with a health passport at your last statutory health check before turning 18;
- Support to register with a GP;
- Providing information on healthy living including 'Staying Healthy' sessions;
- Use of the Tricycle Theatre: care leavers will have free tickets to events;

- If you need someone to talk to your PA or keyworker can refer you to counselling including offering ‘talking therapies’ or for general advice to The Mix (Freephone 0808 808 4994);
- A Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service consultation before turning 18 for social workers and PAs so that they can be better equipped to assist you in relation to your health and well-being;
- If you are a young parent, being referred to a local children’s centre for help;
- We will, depending on assessment of need, provide assistance towards certain medical costs if they are not covered by the NHS. This particularly applies to young people with no recourse to public funds.
- All young people in custody are provided with resettlement and aftercare support.

- **Finances**

We will provide you with support to become financially independent, in a similar way to how other parents support their own children.

The law and the guidance says:

- We can, depending on assessment of need, provide financial assistance towards expenses relating to education, employment or training and also access to other sources of funding such as college or university funds or from the Department of Works and Pensions.

Our additional support offer to you includes:

- Being exempt from paying Council Tax, only after you have maximised the council tax rebate because you are on a low income or receiving universal credit;
- Providing you with relevant money management courses;
- Information on how to access your Junior ISA, if you have one (a fund of money set aside by the government and the council);
- Support to open a bank account;
- Support to gain important identification documents, such as a passport National Insurance number and/or provisional driving licence, before your 18th birthday;
- Financial support in exceptional emergencies.

- **Relationships**

As well as support from a Personal Advisor, we will offer you additional practical support, such as:

- Signpost you to advocacy service if you need one;
- Where appropriate, continuing support contact with an ‘independent visitor’
- Help to maintain or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers or social workers;
- Life skills workshops that will focus on practical skills and managing relationships;
- Group work for young parents regarding healthy relationships;
- Group work with former Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children regarding relationships to minimise risks of isolation;
- Workshops for care leavers with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities by Brent Outreach Autism Team regarding relationships;

- As part of our independence training, workshops on Healthy Relationships.
- **Participation in Society**

We want our care leavers to be active members of society, and to have all the chances in life that other young adults have. We can help you participate in society in the following ways:

- Workshops to inform you more about participation in society and having your voice heard, led by the Chief Executive of the council.
- Encouraging and helping you to enrol on the Electoral Register, so you can vote in elections;
- Providing information on groups and clubs you may wish to join;
- Development of a website for care leavers and an app to support independent living arrangements;
- Seats on Brent Youth Parliament;
- Informing you about voluntary work that you may be interested in;
- Giving you advice and helping you to challenge any discrimination you face as a care leaver;
- You will have access to our Children and Young People's participation service called Care Leavers in Action (CLIA), where you can get involved in decision making on matters that have impact on children in care and care leavers or join an interview panel when recruiting senior staff and commissioned services to the council.
- Monthly Hub events which are organised by care leavers and personal advisors
- Weekly football practice for all care leavers in Brent.

### 3. Who can help?

As a care leaver, there is a range of support services available to you. We have put together a list of useful contact details. If there is anything you do not understand or need further information about then please speak to your PA.

#### Brent Leaving Care Team

Where to find the Leaving Care Team: Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley.  
 When are we open: Monday to Friday 9 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.  
 How to contact us: Duty Number 0208 379 4612 or 4613 during office hours, 24-hour emergency number 0208 863 5250

Independent Advocacy: You have a right to support from an independent advocate if you are thinking about challenging decisions about the care we give you. An advocate is someone who is independent of the council who can inform you of your rights and help you to be heard in meetings. For advocacy, we use an independent agency called Aidhour that provides advocacy services for looked after children and care leavers. To find out more you can contact the manager of this service, Goitom Mebrahtu, [Goitom.Mebrahtu@brent.gov.uk](mailto:Goitom.Mebrahtu@brent.gov.uk)

Participation Service (Care Leavers in Action) – email: [Francesca.Carr@brent.gov.uk](mailto:Francesca.Carr@brent.gov.uk)  
 or Phone: 020 8937 3695

#### Brent Care Leavers Charter

Other places you can go for help:

- Rees: The Care Leavers Foundation <https://www.reesfoundation.org> Provides small grants for care leavers aged 18-25;
- The care leavers association <http://www.careleavers.com> A charity aimed at improving the lives of care leavers;
- Become <http://www.becomecharity.org.uk> Online advice and information for care leavers;
- Propel <http://propel.org.uk/UK> Information on what support is available for care leavers at university;
- Shelter <https://england.shelter.org.uk> Provides housing advice;
- National government benefits calculator <https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators> Information on benefits;
- Citizens Advice Bureau <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk> Information about money, benefits, your rights, employment, housing and the law.

# THE BRENT PLEDGE 2018

The Brent Pledge is a list of promises to children and young people in our care. These are things that we will do so that they have the best support and help possible.



## We promise

### To respect and honour your identity

- ✓ We will respect your personal beliefs, values, culture and heritage.
- ✓ We will support who you are and what you want to be.
- ✓ We will provide you with information about your background that is appropriate for your age.
- ✓ We will support and encourage relationships between you and members of your family.

### To involve you in the decisions about your life

- ✓ We will actively listen to your views and opinions and act on your behalf.
- ✓ We will explain our decisions and make sure that you fully understand what has been decided.
- ✓ We will involve you in planning of services that you receive.



### To provide stability for you

- ✓ You will have your social worker's telephone number and know where they work so you can speak to them when you need to.
- ✓ If your social worker leaves you will be told when and know details of your new social worker and their manager.

- ✓ We will do our best to make sure you don't have too many change of social workers and move too many times
- ✓ Your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) will listen to you and make sure your views are heard.

### To support you

- ✓ We will help you to manage challenging relationships.
- ✓ You can tell us how you feel and we will help you choose what you want in your life.
- ✓ We will support you to become the person you want to be.
- ✓ We will make sure you get to meet other children in care where you live and in other places so you can help each other and talk about the things you like and don't like.
- ✓ Your social worker will come and see you and you can talk to them on your own every time they come.
- ✓ When we come to see you we will make sure you can be there and that you are not in school
- ✓ We will tell you and other people when you have done something really well.
- ✓ We will ensure that you have access to an independent person (an advocate) upon request.
- ✓ We will remember your birthday and other important days.



## To provide you with a safe, stable and happy place to live

- ✓ We will ensure that your carer knows enough about you to be able to support you.
- ✓ We will support your carer to understand you and the things that you are going through.
- ✓ We will provide you with a safe place that you can call home.
- ✓ We will do everything possible so that you can meet your new carer before you move.



## To support you to be active and stay healthy

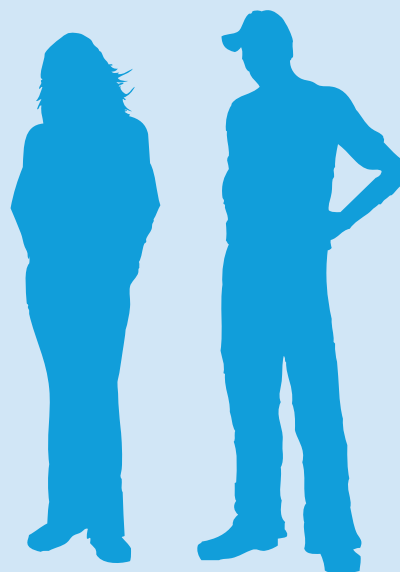
- ✓ We will provide you with opportunities to take part in fun activities such as sports, access to the outdoors and other activities you are interested in.
- ✓ We will support your physical and mental health and encourage you to make healthy and positive choices for your life.
- ✓ We will make sure that your carer takes you to see your doctor, dentist and other healthcare professional when you need to visit them.
- ✓ We will provide you with information and advice about healthy eating, exercise, smoking, drugs and sexual health.

## Work with you to achieve your goals and targets in education

- ✓ We will value your strengths, gifts, talents and encourage you to have high ambitions.
- ✓ We will support you to learn, help you to achieve your very best at school and support you when you are making decisions about your future.
- ✓ We will ensure that you have the things you need for your education including access to a laptop.
- ✓ If needed, we will find an advisor, life coach or mentor to support you.

## Preparing you for independence

- ✓ We will work to ensure that you are ready for independent living including how to manage money and how to cook.
- ✓ We will work with you on your Pathway Plan at the age of 16 so that you are clear about what will happen next and what support you will receive.



- ✓ We will provide you with information about what you are entitled to and how to access your entitlements.
- ✓ We will consider your wishes to stay living with your foster carer after the age of 18.

Councillor Mili Patel  
Brent Council's Cabinet  
Member for Children and  
Young People Chair, Corporate  
Parenting Committee

Updated February 2018

# Brent Care Leavers' Charter

We will ensure that all children and young people in and leaving our care have the right support to keep them safe and to help them grow into happy, healthy and fulfilled young adults who are optimistic about their future.

## We promise

### To respect and honour your identity

- We will respect your personal beliefs and values and accept your culture and heritage.
- We will support you to become the person you want to be.

### To believe in you

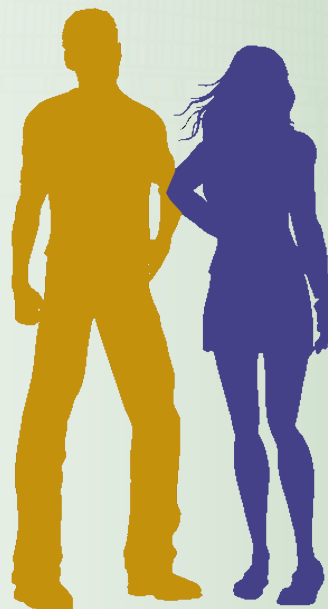
- We will value your strengths, gifts and talents and encourage your aspirations.

### To listen to you

- We will listen to your feelings and you can tell us what help you need to be a young adult.
- We will promote and encourage access to independent advocacy whenever you need it.
- We will provide easy access to complaint and appeals processes.

### To inform you

- We will give you information that you need at every point in your journey, from care to adulthood, including information on legal entitlements and the service you can expect to receive from us. The information will be presented in a way that you want.
- We will make clear to you what information about yourself and your time in care you are entitled to see. We will support you to access this when you want it, to manage any feelings that you might have about the information and to put on record any disagreement with the content.



## To provide you with information on how to stay healthy

- We will encourage you to make healthy and positive choices for your life.
- We will provide you with information and advice about healthy eating, exercise, smoking, drugs and sexual health.

## To support you

- We will help you manage changing relationships or come to terms with loss, trauma or other significant life events.
- We will provide guidance on your next steps in life – in terms of education, financial, leaving care and more.
- As well as information, advice, practical and financial help, we will provide emotional support.
- We will make it our responsibility to understand your needs. If we can't meet those needs we will try and help you find a service that can.



## To find you a home

- We will work alongside you to prepare you for your move into independent living only when you are ready. We will help you think about the choices available and to find accommodation that is right for you.
- We will do everything we can to ensure you are happy and feel safe when you move to independent living.

## To be a lifelong champion

- We will provide you with support and guidance to equip you for independent living.
- We will do our best to support you until you are settled in your independent life.
- We will work proactively with other agencies to help you sustain your home.
- We will do our best to help you break down barriers you face when dealing with other agencies.
- We will work together with the services you need to help you establish yourself as an independent individual. These services can include housing, benefits, health services, training providers, colleges and universities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mili Patel'.

Councillor Mili Patel  
Brent Council's Cabinet Member  
for Children and Young People  
Chair, Corporate Parenting Committee