



## Corporate Parenting Committee

**Monday 24 April 2023 at 5.00 pm**

Conference Hall - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way,  
Wembley, HA9 0FJ

The meeting will be held as an in person physical meeting with all members of the Committee required to attend in person.

**The press and public will be excluded from this meeting.**

### Membership:

#### Members

Councillors:

Grahl (Chair)

Collymore

Dixon

Gbajumo

Hirani

#### Substitute Members

Councillors:

Chappell, Conneely, Kennelly  
and Rubin

Councillor: Mistry and Maurice

**For further information contact:** Hannah O'Brien, Governance Officer  
020 8937 1339, hannah.o'brien@brent.gov.uk

For electronic copies of minutes, reports and agendas, and to be alerted when the minutes of this meeting have been published visit: **[www.brent.gov.uk/democracy](http://www.brent.gov.uk/democracy)**

## **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 - 6

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 and Care Leavers in Action Representatives**

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

**8 Overview of support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) 7 - 16**

To provide an overview of the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in Brent and the services available to support them.

**9 Outcome of Ofsted ILACs Inspection 17 - 32**

To provide information on the outcome of the recent Ofsted Inspection of Children's Social Care.

**10 Brent Adoption 6-Monthly Report: 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 33 - 48**

To provide an update on adoption performance, progress and activity from Adopt London West.

**11 Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report Quarter 3: 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023 49 - 58**

To provide an overview of the in-house fostering service and how it is achieving good outcomes for children, in accordance with standard 25.7 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards (2011).

**12 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 her representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 60.

## MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE Wednesday 1 February 2023 at 5.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Grahl (Chair), Collymore, Gbajumo, Hirani and Kennelly (substituting for Councillor Dixon)

### 1. Exclusion of the Press and Public

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

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

Apologies were received from:

- Councillor Dixon, who was substituted by Councillor Kennelly.

### 3. Declarations of interests

None.

### 4. Deputations (if any)

None received.

### 5. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the last meeting, held on 19 October 2022, be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

### 6. Matters arising (if any)

None.

### 7. Update from Care In Action / Care Leavers in Action Representatives

T (Care in Action) informed the Committee that the Bright Spots Survey was now officially finished, and the Care in Action (CIA) group had explored resources for that and how it could be improved. CIA had produced leaflets for social workers and personal advisers to give guidance on issues pertinent to looked after children and care leavers, such as how to build trust, building healthy relationships, and quotes from looked after children and care leavers. The CIA stamp would be included on the leaflet to show it had been co-designed, checked and approved by looked after children before distribution. T informed the Corporate Parenting Committee about the Brent Care Journeys project she had been involved in, which was to develop memory boxes. She had shown her memory book at the last Corporate Parenting Committee and had also presented it to CIA members to demonstrate new projects that they could access and the benefits of life story work. CIA and Care Leavers in Action (CLIA) were working jointly with Brent Care Journeys and the Learning and Development Team to co-develop foster carer training which would be delivered by young people.

K (CIA) had attended CIA since the previous year and felt it was a great space to meet other care experienced young people. K had particularly enjoyed the residential trip CIA had taken during the summer where there had been many activities and opportunities to bond with other young people.

J (CLIA) advised the Corporate Parenting Committee that, since the last meeting, he had been chairing interview panels for personal adviser positions and had been involved in interview panels for the new Chief Executive position at Brent Council. J continued to attend CLIA's quarterly meetings, most recently focused on how CIA and CLIA could work more closely with Brent Care Journeys and develop opportunities for young people to be involved with co-design. CLIA had also worked with the commissioning team regarding the discharge pathway for young people coming out of hospital. J concluded his presentation by informing the Committee that the end of year celebration had been to London Zoo which had been well attended.

The Chair thanked those present for their contributions and invited members of the Committee to ask questions to the CIA / CLIA representatives. The following questions were raised:

Members recalled that T had previously presented her memory box from the Brent Care Journeys project and asked more about where the idea came from and how many other young people were using them. T was not sure where the idea came from but felt they had done a good job. She had tested them as a prototype with other young people. There were 2 different boxes, one with a digital camera and one more creative. T had received the creative box and 2 other young people received the camera. The 2 young people who received the camera did not see the project through to the end, but T had used all the resources she could to make her creative memory box. She was pleased that the project was being taken forward for other young people.

The Committee asked about CIA and CLIA members' experiences of being part of interview panels. J highlighted that he had been doing interview panels for a while and was used to chairing panels. He thought it was useful to know what it was like to interview people because he had an insight into the best way to represent himself at his own interviews now. T added that the questions for the Chief Executive panel had been very tough and showed the person's determination, willpower, and knowledge. This gave her comfort that the people in senior positions had earned it.

In response to discussions around training and employment opportunities for young people, Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) advised the Committee that part of the role of a Personal Adviser was to help young people get good employment, skills and training, and a question during interviews for that position revolved around that responsibility. Overall, the numbers for children and young people in employment and training were good, but he felt there was more to be done to improve the number even more.

The Committee thanked the representatives for the updates and **RESOLVED**:

That the updates by the representatives of Care in Action/Care Leavers in Action be noted.

## 8. Brent Care Journeys

Anna Willow (Barnardo's) introduced the report, which provided a summary of activities undertaken by the Brent Care Journeys Programme, key achievements in 2022, and areas for priority in the remaining three years of the partnership. She highlighted the following key points:

- The first full co-designed project had involved a group of ten care experienced young people who had been late into care, and started with discovery about a problem that democratically people agreed on. The next phase of co-design was ideation, where the subject matter became very broad before being narrowed down and defined into a few prototypes that project members wanted to try out in the real world quickly, cheaply, and with as few risks as possible.
- Since the first full co-design, the Programme had now done a second whole co-design phase which integrated social care staff, children and young people's services, and young people, and worked to break down the systemic roles and barriers that existed.
- The report explained where the programme was at three years through the 5-year partnership. Over the past 2 years, Brent Care Journeys had engaged over 200 young people.
- Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) added that the work being done with Barnardo's through Brent Care Journeys was not a traditional commissioned service where they were paid to deliver a service for Brent, but a different way of working with a full partnership approach. The partnership agreed they wanted to bring young people into the heart of service design to deliver projects with the voice of young people.

The Chair thanked Anna and Nigel for their introduction and invited contributions from the Committee, with the following points raised:

The Committee commended the fact that Brent Care Journeys had been able to engage 200 young people since 2020 but highlighted that, due to lockdown, it was likely there would have been some missed opportunities. They asked whether there were any ways the number of young people engaged could be expanded using provision in the community that was already available. They also wanted to know what other opportunities there were for Brent Care Journeys to partner with organisations facilitating young people to gain further skills. Nigel Chapman felt there were opportunities for Brent Care Journeys to link up to local community groups to offer activities and opportunities for young people, including career opportunities. Anna Willow agreed, advising that their role was to find different ways of doing that. Brent Care Journeys were trying to expand the way in which all parts of the borough had a sense of duty and responsibility for children leaving care. They were aware of the demands on statutory services to give Brent's children the opportunities they deserved, and agreed that needed to be done together. Over the next year within goal setting and service planning, Brent Care Journeys could begin thinking about creating more informal partnerships with the communities they worked with.

The Committee noted that Brent Care Journeys had been able to engage young people who were not involved in CIA, and asked what it was doing differently to groups run directly by the Council. Anna Willow advised the Committee that Brent Care Journeys was very reflective in what it did, and worked with young people to get ideas about what they might do, then tested those ideas and learned from them repeatedly. When things did not work, they stopped doing them and learned from them. Now, Brent Care Journeys had created a relationships first approach and were fortunate to have time to do the work. Anna Willow highlighted that unpicking the power of authority was enticing for young people as well as being part of those deconstructed environments where things could be changed both dramatically and on a smaller scale. The Committee heard that deconstructing the power had proved challenging on occasion, as there were certain ways where it would not be appropriate to deconstruct responsibility. In working together with young people, Brent Care Journeys had to overcome some of those obstacles. For example, a potential barrier was that officers at Brent Care Journeys were employed and paid to do that work, and so had worked hard to create paid roles for young people with professional expectations in order to share that authority.

The Committee asked whether Brent Care Journeys worked with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs). Anna Willow confirmed that UASCs were the fastest growing cohort of new members, mainly boys. Brent Care Journeys had worked to understand where young people were to engage the least heard voices, as the programme existed primarily to address inequalities experienced by looked after children and care leavers. As a result, the programme had approached semi-independent providers and engaged some members there, who had then validated the space for other young people to join. There was a very organic way of working with UASCs because much of the membership came about by word of mouth. There was now a successful 'power group' for young people every morning, led by trained young people, where they ran therapy and art sessions known as 'therapart'.

In response to whether members could attend the performance and exhibition that Brent Care Journeys had worked on, Anna Willow advised that the performance had culminated in October 2022 so was no longer being performed, but if Brent Care Journeys were successful in receiving money for that in the future they had learned a lot about how to do it and had some completed works that could be exhibited. Members asked that councillors be invited to any future performance.

RESOLVED:

- i) To note the report.

**9. Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report Quarter 3– October 2022 to December 2022**

Kelli Eboji (Head of LAC and Permanency, Brent Council) introduced the report. She highlighted that a Sky advert had been sent out in the previous month as a marketing technique for the recruitment of foster carers. She had been pleased to receive some anecdotal feedback that the advert was targeting the right interest groups, and she looked forward to seeing the results of that. Moving forward, the quarterly fostering report would include a focus on kinship carers as well as mainstream foster carers. Kelli Eboji informed the Committee that two foster carers had attended the Committee to talk about their experience of fostering for Brent.

The Chair thanked Kelli for her introduction and invited the foster carers present to speak.

One foster carer had begun his fostering career as a nominated foster carer when he was younger. Over time, he had seen how important it was for the family network to work together to help and support the young person being cared for, and so he became a joint foster carer. The journey had been daunting but rewarding, and he highlighted that no child he cared for was the same as the last. The fostering family had a good network around them, and the family approach to foster caring had encouraged him to be more involved, aware and learn more.

Another foster carer had started her foster career when a young person had come into her care as a friend of her son. The young person was a late teen and had experienced difficult circumstances in life. The young person had been with 3-4 foster carers prior to being with this foster carer, and her son had asked if she would look after the young person for a few nights. She had got in touch with Brent who wanted to bring the young person back into the fostering system to find a carer for them, but through discussion with the foster care team arrangements were made for her to become his carer. She was approved as the young person's carer at foster panel and the young person had now been in her care for 18 months, was well settled and thriving at school.

The Committee asked the foster carer what barriers had been faced which meant the young person did not want to return to his previous foster carers. The foster carer advised that the

young person she cared for had a learning disability which the previous foster carers had not fully understood, and there were also barriers in place because they were in different local authorities and so there had been a lot of changes in school for the young person. The initial process of becoming the young person's carer with Brent had been very smooth, but there had been challenges along the way, such as changes in staff. The family had seen several different social workers over the last few months, making it difficult to build a bond. She highlighted this was a crucial time for her young person's life and it was important to have stable support from the social work team.

Kelli Eboji (Head of LAC and Permanency, Brent Council) added that often a child chose to stay with someone they knew due to the connection and familiarity of the person, which was another reason the fostering service wanted to shine a light on kinship care and make it more visible.

The Committee asked whether the Council were offering any additional support to foster carers amidst the rising cost of living. The foster carers advised the Committee that the support was ongoing. For example, during the pandemic children required laptops, and social workers had done very well in providing those. There were always new environments with new barriers for children, and with the support foster carers had around them they could speak to their social worker who would react as quickly as possible to support the family.

The Committee asked whether there was a Forum set up for kinship carers. Kelli Eboji advised the Committee that kinship carers received specific induction training, and were also able to participate in the mainstream foster carer training and support groups. She hoped to develop more forums where the voice of kinship carers could be heard, and there had been discussions with some non-government organisations and volunteers about promoting the voice of kinship carers specifically. Zafer Yilkan (Director Integration and Improved Outcomes, Brent Council) added that as part of engagement with foster carers the service was looking at introducing more face-to-face activities such as coffee mornings and could consider some kinship carer only sessions.

RESOLVED:

- i) To note the report.

**10. National Safeguarding Review Report of Children with Additional Needs Placed in Residential Education Provisions**

Zafer Yilkan (Director Integration and Improved Outcomes, Brent Council) introduced the report, which summarised the actions local authorities were asked to undertake as part of the national review of children with disabilities and complex health needs placed in residential settings to ensure they were safe, quality placements. As part of Brent's investigation of children in those settings, a manager went to see each child in those service provisions and had spoken to each child on their own, their parents or carer, and the providers. Based on the investigation and feedback, Brent was very satisfied with the quality of service provided to those young people, and had subsequently submitted the report to the national panel.

RESOLVED:

- i) To note the contents of the report.

**11. Annual Looked After Children (LAC) Health Presentation**

Ileen Ashitey (Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, Integrated Care System (ICS)) introduced the presentation. She highlighted the main challenges for the health service, which were around having adequate staff. A designated doctor was now newly appointed and would be in post shortly, but the ICS had to work with the staff shortages they had. Improvements had been made regarding social care staff submitting paperwork on time which had been a work in process. Audits were being carried out on healthcare planning for care leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs), looking at if recommendations were being carried out and if the planning involved the voice of the young person. The audit findings could be presented to the Committee once finalised. The ICS was pleased with the Healthy Smiles Community Dental Services and hoped to have some local data in the future to demonstrate how effective it had been.

Kelli Eboji (Head of LAC and Permanency, Brent Council) added that her team worked closely with the LAC health provider service to ensure children and young people had the support they needed. Following Covid, Brent had reintroduced co-location for social workers and LAC nurses in the Civic Centre, and those nurses had access to a laptop and Mosaic systems. One of the challenges for health providers was where children and young people were placed out of borough, as they were required to receive a local health assessment. This was an area for improvement, and had resource implications.

In response to a query on CAMHS, Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) advised the Committee that the waiting times for assessment for CAMHS had reduced but waiting times for treatment following assessment had not. The Director of Public Health and a representative from the local Integrated Care Board (ICB) had raised the point in a meeting the previous week about the fact Brent had historically been underfunded for CAMHS in comparison to other NWL boroughs and were lobbying to level up that funding in the following year.

As no further issues were raised, the Committee RESOLVED:


- i) To note the report.

#### 11. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 18:35 pm

Councillor Gwen Grahl  
Chair

 <p><b>Brent</b></p>	<p><b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b></p> <p>24 April 2023</p>
<p><b>Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People</b></p>	
<p><b>Overview of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Support Situation</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>Afzal Ahmed Service Manager, Looked After Children and Permanency <a href="mailto:Afzal.Ahmed@brent.gov.uk">Afzal.Ahmed@brent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Kelli Eboji Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency <a href="mailto:Kelli.Eboji@brent.gov.uk">Kelli.Eboji@brent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Palvinder Kudhail Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes <a href="mailto:Palvinder.Kudhail@brent.gov.uk">Palvinder.Kudhail@brent.gov.uk</a></p>

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Council's legal responsibilities towards Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) under the Children Act 1989.
- 1.2 To inform Members of the UK Government scheme operated by the Home Office called the National Transfer Scheme that is intended to address the significant pressure faced by authorities, such as Kent, who have become

legally responsible for the very high numbers of spontaneous arrivals of UASCs under the relevant children's legislation.

- 1.3 To provide Members with an overview of the number and profile of UASC in Brent, their presenting issues and the range of services provided to them.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Note the continued needs of UASCs presenting to Brent and to note and comment upon the range of services provided for them.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 An Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child (UASC) is defined by the Home Office as 'a person who at the time of making the asylum application is, or (if there is no proof) appears to be, under 18 and is applying in his or her own right and has no relative or guardian in this country'.
- 3.2 The 2003 Hillingdon Judgment and DfES Circular LAC (13) 2003 means that all UASC are routinely provided with a service under S20 of the Children Act 1989, as 'looked after' children. This means they become entitled to a leaving care service until at least age 21 from a council's children's services department, rather than being dispersed to other parts of the country under national adult asylum-seeker arrangements. If they are in full-time higher education or have additional needs, they are entitled to support up to age 25. Support to those over 18 consists mainly of advice and guidance on education and employment although it may include subsistence payments of housing costs if the young adult is in full-time education or has no recourse to public funds.
- 3.3 Local authorities across the country have the task of receiving these children, identifying who they are and their specific needs, and ensuring that appropriate support is offered to keep them safe. Local authorities support young people with their legal and immigration status, helping them to settle into their new circumstances, achieve in education or training and to reach their full potential as is the case with other Brent resident children who are in care.

## **4. Legal basis for support**

- 4.1 All UASC referred to Brent are provided with accommodation by the UASC Team after undertaking an initial assessment (which considers necessary safeguarding issues such as child protection and trafficking concerns) within the provisions of the Children Act 1989, this includes young people under the age of 16 and up to 18 years of age. At 18 all young people become eligible for a leaving care services as former relevant young people as defined by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.
- 4.2 If there are concerns about a young person's age, an age assessment is carried out in parallel to an initial assessment and consideration given to whether the stated age is likely to be accurate. If the young person is deemed to be under the age of 18 they are accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

4.3 All UASC once they turn 18 are defined as former relevant young people and therefore eligible for services under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 as long as they have a valid asylum application pending, these include duties to provide assistance with accommodation, finance, educational provision and an allocated personal advisor. This duty remains as care experienced adults until they turn 25.

4.4 The usual outcomes of an asylum application (determined after the young person reaches the age of 18) are:

#### Positive Decisions

- Refugee Status
- Humanitarian Protection
- Other leave to remain

#### Negative Decisions

- Refusal
- Possible Appeal

4.5 If the person is issued with a removal notice or has their asylum application refused and therefore has no recourse to public funds, a Human Rights Assessment is completed, and advice and support is provided until the person is removed from the UK by the Border Agency.

## 5. UASC arrivals

5.1 The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in care has grown by 34% over the past year, driving the latest increase in the care population. Department for Education's (DfE) statistics [on looked-after children in England, released earlier this month](#), showed the number of unaccompanied children in care grew by 1,430 in the year to March 2022, surpassing the overall increase of 1,390 in the care population. The latter rose for the 14<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, by 2%, to 82,170. The number of asylum-seeking children in care, 5,570, was the highest ever recorded, 10% above the 2020 level, following a fall in 2020-21 that appears related to the pandemic.

5.2 London Boroughs continue to have the highest proportion of UASC in the UK and the number of UASC receiving support and assistance from local authorities across the capital has increased. London boroughs are making a huge contribution in taking care of UASC. London continues to have the highest proportion of UASC in the UK by a considerable margin; the number of UASC across London has increased to 1606 as at 31 December 2022 (based on most recent submissions by local authorities to the London Asylum Seekers Consortium, LASC).

Unaccompanied Asylum Children become known to Brent through:

- Presenting directly at a local police station or at council offices
- Being a previously dispersed Asylum Seeker living in Home Office procured Brent hotel accommodation
- The pan-London rota, an agreement between London local authorities to fairly manage the distribution of UASC who presently direct to local authorities for support

- National Transfer Scheme (NTS) managed by the Home Office.
- 5.3 Kent is a 'gateway authority' having ports of entry such as Dover, where following checks, children claiming asylum are placed and assessed. The local authority in which the child first presents is normally responsible for their care. This caused significant pressure in 2021 and 2022 to councils such as Kent and Hillingdon which both have ports of entry, and Croydon where the Asylum Intake Unit is located.
- 5.4 In response to Kent's actions, the Home Office established "The Kent Intake Unit" (KIU) which undertook short form age assessments of young people by Home Office appointed social workers, where the Home Office wanted to assess whether putative unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were either children or adults.
- 5.5 In January 2022 the short form age assessments completed by the KIU were found by the High Court to be unlawful. Subsequently the Home Office established a new age assessment unit to deal with newly arrived applicants.
- 5.6 Since August 2021 59 people placed in hotel accommodation in Brent have presented to the service as putative unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, stating that the Home Office's assessment by the KIU was incorrect, that they were children and not aged over 25, and some have been provided by the council with accommodation under section 20 of the Children Act 1989. Some, following an assessment, were deemed as adults and remained in the hotels. Due to the vulnerability of this group to exploitation and/or re-trafficking the majority have been placed in 24 hour staffed semi-independent accommodation but some in foster placements, where they are well supported and appropriate monitoring in place to promote effective safeguarding.
- 5.7 A significant number of people subject to age assessments were determined to be adults (19). They were advised to return to Home Office accommodation via NASS (National Asylum Seekers Service) for accommodation and support.

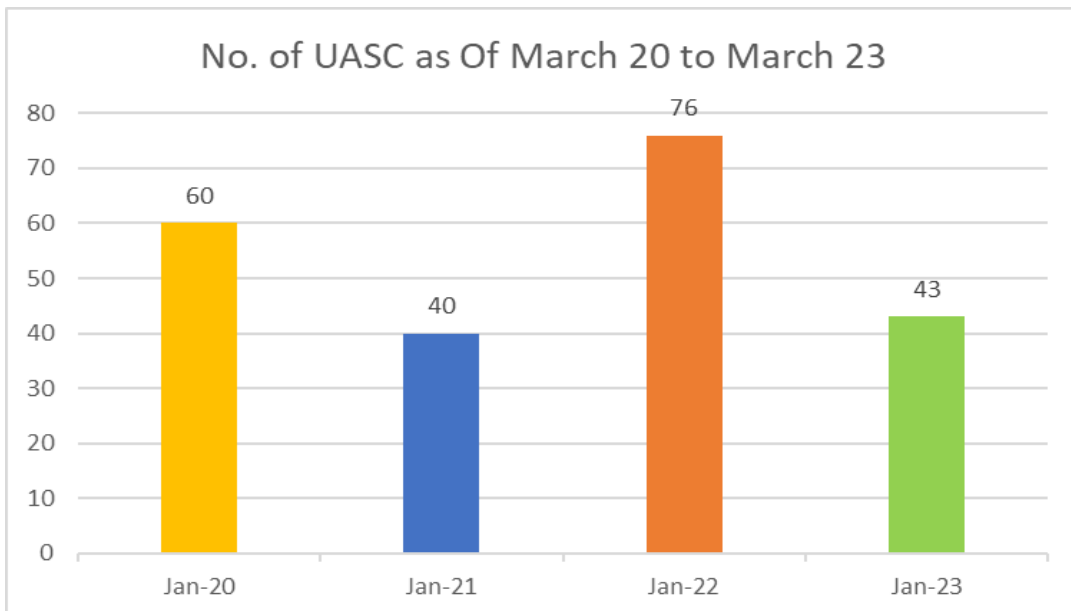
## **6. Pan London Rota Referral through London Asylum Seekers Consortium (LASC)**

- 6.1 The Pan London Rota, coordinated by LASC, is an agreement by London Directors of Children's Services to support equal distribution of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (16/17 years old only) in London. Almost all London Councils have agreed to this and coordinate duties to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children through a Pan London Protocol to ensure an equitable distribution across London. Each council accepts children who arrive at the UK Border Agency in Croydon through a rota referral system. This Pan London protocol works well as a regional model within the broader National Transfer System (NTS).
- 6.2 Eligibility for participation in the Pan London Rota is dependent on the proportion of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in relation to the child population in a particular area. The 'ceiling' on the proportion of the local authority area's child population who are unaccompanied is 0.07%. As at August 2022, the council's current figure is 0.10%. As we are currently below

that threshold, we are receiving referrals from the Pan London Rota as well as any walk-ins or referrals from the police or community groups.

## 7. Local profile of UASC in Brent

- 7.1 On 31 March 2022, the Local Authority looked after 74 UASC compared to 40 UASC in March 2021. This represented 21.7% of the total Brent LAC population. The majority of UASC are young males who were accommodated in hotels in Brent by the Home Office and subsequently age assessed to be under 18.
- 7.2 The number and proportion of UASC in care has reduced over the last year, this is mainly due the Home Office placing fewer adults claiming to be children in the 4 hotels located in Wembley. The graph below illustrates this in relation to numbers over the last four years.

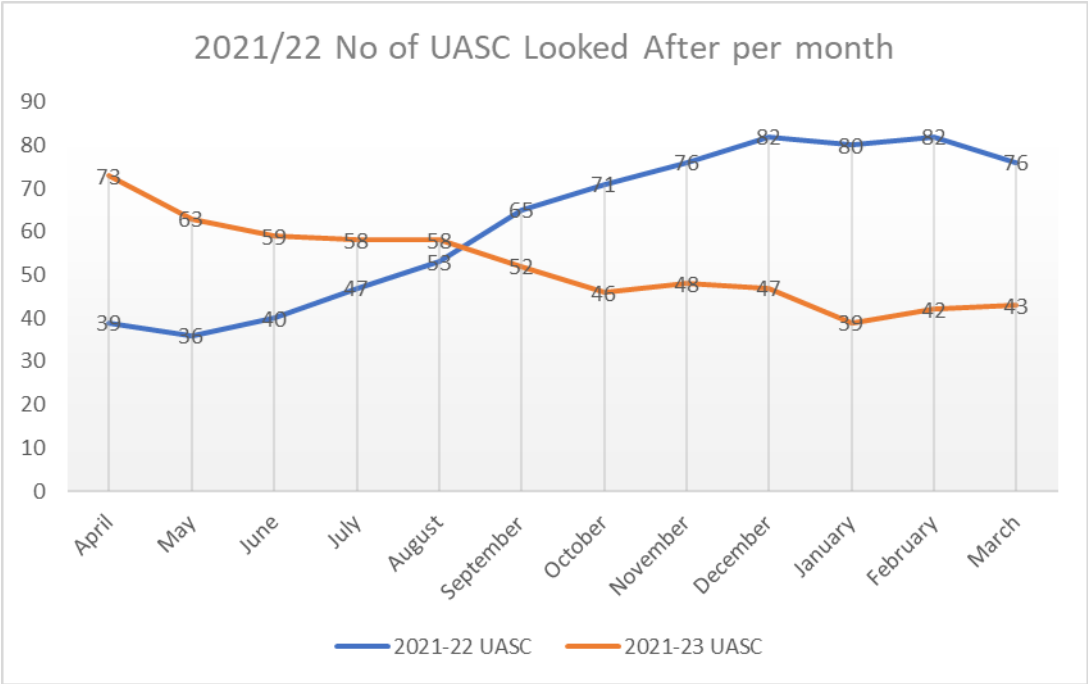


- 7.3 As of 31 March 2023 there were 43 unaccompanied asylum seeking children who are in the care of the council. The table below shows the numbers in age bands over the last 2 years.

Age Band	31st March 20	31st March 21	31st March 22	31st March 23
11-13	1	1		
14-15	12	8	6	5
16 and over	47	31	68	38
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>43</b>

- 7.4 The graph below illustrates the total number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the council's care each month during the 2021-22 and 2022-23 reporting years. It shows the rise in numbers in 2021 and a decrease by the end of March 2023. The reason for this rise is explained below.

- 7.5 When Asylum Seekers arrive in the country, a number of commissioned accommodation providers working under contract from the Home Office receive them into temporary housing. The Covid-19 pandemic caused a bottleneck in this process. In order to maintain social distancing and avoid making people homeless during the pandemic, all decisions on asylum claims were paused for most of 2020. This greatly increased the demand for dispersal accommodation, with large numbers being held in the system while awaiting outcomes of their claims.
- 7.6 As a temporary solution, asylum seekers began being accommodated in hotels, which were otherwise unused due to lockdown restrictions. These are known as contingency hotels. As a result of the increased asylum seeker population in Brent, the local authority received an increase in UASC referrals from solicitors and other charity organisations in the borough, supporting individuals who were initially identified as adults, and who subsequently claimed to be a child. For many an age assessment was required, as they had no documentation or paperwork to confirm their claimed age, or the age the Home Office has determined them to be.



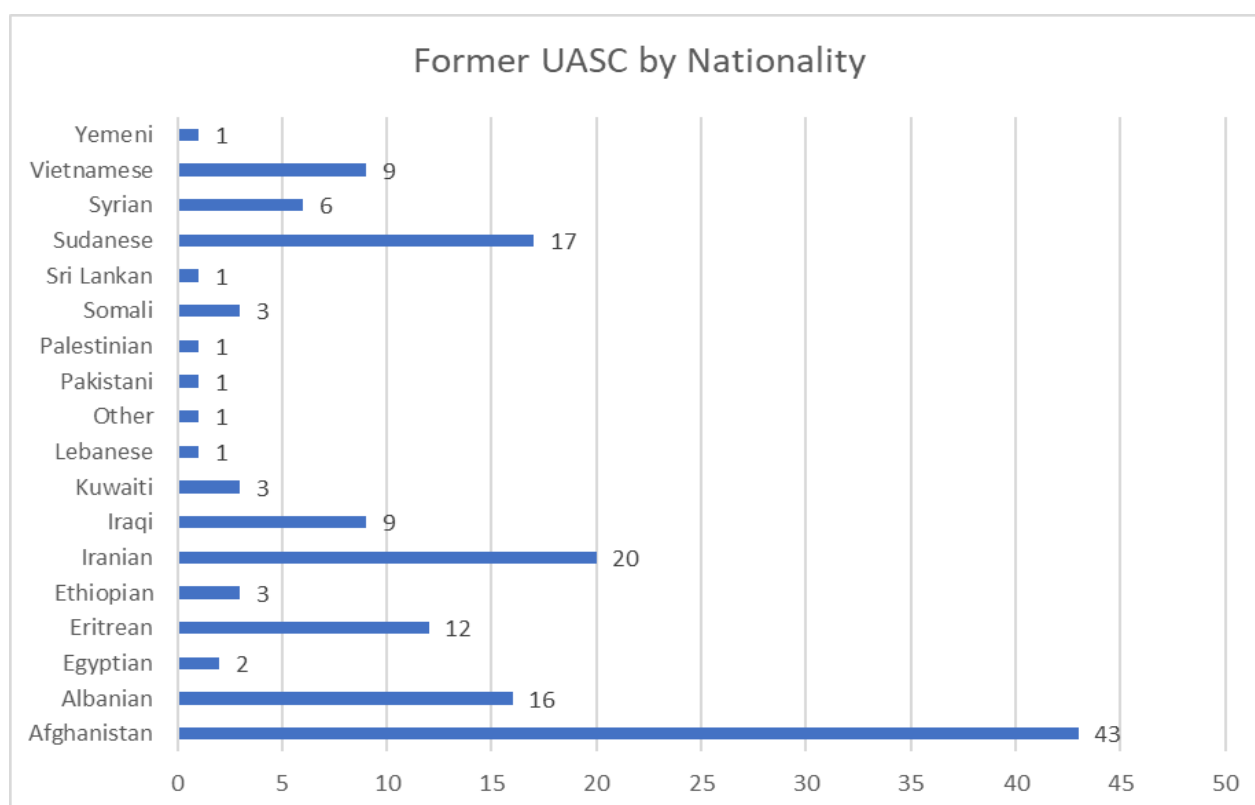
7.7 The table shows the nationality of new UASC arrivals over the last 2 years and the wide range of countries from which young people originate. The largest nationality remains Afghanistan.

30th Mar-2023		30th Mar-2022	
Nationality	Number of UASC	Nationality	Number of UASC
Afghanistan	22	Afghanistan	25
Albanian	4	Albanian	5
Algerian	1	Eritrean	4
Eritrean	1	Gambian	1
Ethiopian	1	Iranian	19
Gambian	1	Iraqi	3

Iranian	3	Lebanese	2
Iraqi	1	Pakistani	1
Pakistani	1	Somali	2
Sudanese	5	Sudanese	11
Syrian	3	Syrian	1
		Vietnamese	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>76</b>

7.8 As of 31 March 23 there were 438 care experienced young adults aged 18-25 open to the leaving care service, 153 of these are former UASC. This is 35% of the total of number care leavers receiving services, the wide majority of whom are men. Of those 39% in semi-independent accommodation, 31% in independent living, 5% are staying put with former foster carers, with very small numbers in various other forms of accommodation including custody or living with a relative.

7.9 The graph below shows the nationality of all former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the care of the council.



## 8. Supporting UASC

8.1 Due to additional needs, supporting UASC is complex and challenging as they often have little or no spoken English on arrival. In addition, due to trauma suffered in their country of origin and/or during the journey to the UK, they may need specialist therapy. Young people have reported that their journey to the UK can take 2 to 3 years, and many will describe how their family members pay traffickers and people smugglers money to assist their child with safe passage

to the UK. Some with little money will stop in between countries to work until they have enough money to complete their journey.

- 8.2 UASC receive the same service as any other child in care. An assessment of their needs must be undertaken, and services provided in relation to those needs. They are allocated a social worker who undertakes the assessment and continues to work with them. They are then allocated a personal advisor in the same way as other care leavers.
- 8.3 Since 2021 a dedicated UASC team has been established within the LAC and Permanency Service in response to the pressure of the increase of UASC requiring care and support. The team is made up of social workers working with children and young people under 18 requiring statutory child in care services and those with specialist UASC knowledge to carry out Merton compliant age assessments.

## **9. Education and training support for UASC**

- 9.1 The LAC and Permanency Service work in partnership with the Virtual School (VS), providing education provision and support to young people with ESOL classes before moving into more mainstream college education. Education is of the highest importance to most UASC although a significant barrier can be an unfamiliarity or a lack of fluency with the English language. Older UASC (aged 16/17) are likely to be attending college and participating in an ESOL programme to assist with their language skills. In some cases where there is an age assessment pending young people will be offered an online ESOL course until the age assessment is complete. This is to ensure that we are confident that the young people are UASC rather than adults and to ensure safeguarding procedures are adhered to.
- 9.2 All UASC will receive a Personal Education Plan (PEP) within 10 working days of coming into care. During these meetings, education history and past achievements are recorded, alongside interests, strengths and home location. Any barriers to learning are also noted including potential additional support. This information gathering informs decision making around sourcing suitable education provision.

## **10 Health of UASC**

- 10.1 Every child entering care receives an initial health assessment that should take place within 28 days of them entering care. For all children, and particularly importantly so for unaccompanied asylum seeking children, a face to face appointment is made with a doctor. The majority of appointments occur face to face unless the young person refuses. Every young person is given the option of seeing a male or female doctor. To ensure that the voice of the young person is heard the appointment is facilitated by an interpreter.
- 10.2 Health assessment work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children highlights considerable variation of health needs alongside some common conditions and health concerns. Most UASC have unknown immunisation status and need catch up immunisations as per public health guidance. It is quite common for presenting UASC to display the following health needs: dental

disease; vision concerns; stomach/bowel problems; parasitic infections; skin problems; risk of vitamin D deficiency.

- 10.3 The Wellbeing and Emotional Support Team (WEST) now provides a wider targeted service for identified vulnerable groups, including Looked After Children and UASC, and is delivered by the Anna Freud Centre. The service provides support, clinical advice and training for professionals working with children and young people and a range of evidence-based interventions working directly with children, young people and families in the identified priority vulnerable groups.
- 10.4 We have recently commissioned a service with Anna Freud Centre to develop our practice with a Reflective Care Framework. This project is being introduced specifically in response to the mental and emotional wellbeing needs of UASC, however its benefits are not limited to UASCs as this approach can benefit all looked after children and care leavers.
- 10.5 Other low to moderate mental health and wellbeing services that are providing support to our looked after young people are WDP Elev8 and the Brent Centre for Young People.

## **11 Placement needs of UASC**

- 11.1 Depending on the needs of the UASC and after a full assessment they will either be placed in foster care or supported accommodation. Foster care is a way for children to be cared within a family setting when their own family is unable to care for them. Shared housing is where a young person lives in a multiple occupancy house which is shared with other young people to provide peer support, with additional visiting support. This type of accommodation allows a young person to live with independence but usually with outreach support to provide the additional level of care and support. Supported living is a shared living space with multiple rooms and facilities which is usually staffed full time, This is the type of establishment where the majority of our UASC are placed as the majority are aged over 16 and display the capacity for some degree of independent living, with targeted support.
- 11.2 We have several enrichment activities that are open to all looked after children and care experienced young people. For example, we have The Care Leavers' Hub which meets every month where young people talk about issues that they are concerned about. We have our long-established weekly football group which is quite popular with our UASC and apart from playing football it also gives individuals the opportunity to socialise with their peers. The Brent Care Journeys (BCJ) is one of Barnardo's Core Priority Programmes as part of their 10-year strategy focusing on outcomes for care experienced young people and will continue until 2025. BCJ has continued to deliver a wide range of activities, from one-off events, to training, and ongoing workshops. Some of the workshops have focused on using Art to engage with UASC. It is led by a care experienced young person with the assistance of a qualified worker from Barnardo's. UASC have also participated in co-production of an idea which has had a direct impact on how we deliver our service to UASC when placing them in supported accommodation.

## **12. Legal Implications**

- 12.1 Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children will almost always be 'children in need' pursuant to section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and therefore entitled to be provided with various services by the local authority usually including accommodation. Where there is a need for accommodation, section 20 of the Children Act 1989 also imposes such a duty to accommodate.
- 12.2 The National Transfer Scheme is mandated by central government pursuant to the National Transfer Scheme Protocol for UASC. The council is under a statutory obligation to participate in the NTS Scheme.


### **13. Financial Implications**

- 13.1 The Council receives Home Office grant funding for unaccompanied asylum seeking children £114 a day for each child. This level of reduces to £34 a day at 18 years of age. Payment is dependent on the completion of age assessments where age is disputed. If age assessments are delayed beyond 3 months the Home Office will make any payments for this period. If the age assessment is not completed by the end of the financial year the Home Office will not accept any claim for that young person retrospectively for that calendar year, assuming the age of under 18 is established. This requirement has caused significant challenge as the service has had to identify and recruit expert age assessment practitioners who are in high demand from other local authorities.

**Report sign-off:**

*Nigel Chapman*

Corporate Director Children and Young People

 <b>Brent</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b> 24 April 2023
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People</b>
<b>Outcome of Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS)</b>	
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Inspection Report
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Palvinder Kudhail Director Integration and Improved Outcomes <a href="mailto:Palvinder.Kudhail@brent.gov.uk">Palvinder.Kudhail@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report informs Members of the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) that was published on 11 April 2023. The full report is attached.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Note the findings of the inspection and the ‘Good’ judgement across all categories.
- 2.2 Agree to receive a further report on the plan to address the recommendations and areas for development in respect of looked after children and care leavers.

## 3.0 Background

- 3.1 ILACS focuses on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements:
  - to help and protect children
  - the experiences and progress of children in care wherever they live, including those children who return home

- the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, including adoption
- the experiences and progress of care leavers.

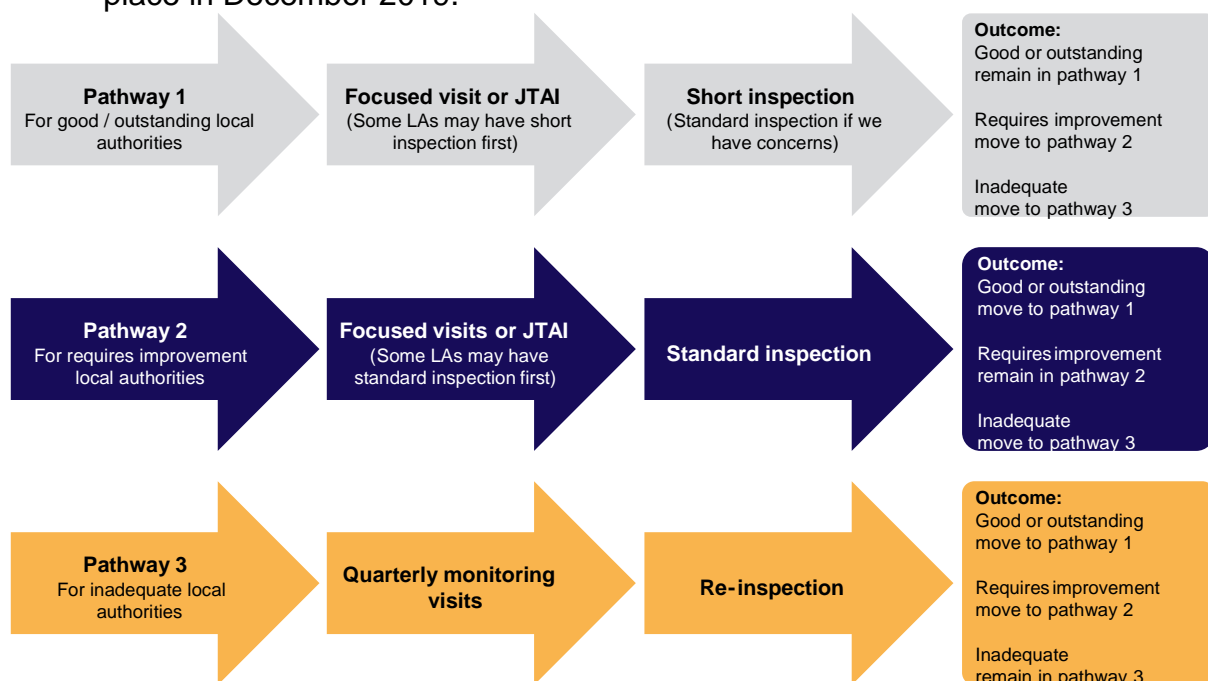
While the framework is primarily focused on social work and the quality of professional practice, the effectiveness of leaders and managers and the impact they have on the lives of children and young people are also evaluated.

3.2 ILACS is an inspection 'system', introduced in January 2018 aimed at making inspection risk-based and proportionate through more frequent contact tailored to each local authority. It comprises:

- an annual engagement meeting (Brent's most recent was July 2022) between the local authority and an Ofsted regional representative to reflect on what is happening in the local authority and to inform future engagement
- standard inspections (usually for local authorities judged requires improvement to be good)
- short inspections (for local authorities judged good or outstanding)
- focused visits that look at a specific area of service or cohort of children, taking place over 2 days, usually in between standard / short inspections
- monitoring visits for authorities rated 'inadequate'
- Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI).

Local authorities are also encouraged to participate in activity outside inspection, such as sharing a self-evaluation for discussion at the annual engagement meeting.

3.3 The following diagram summarises the three inspection pathways in the ILACS framework. Brent is on Pathway 1, having been previously graded as 'Good' at the last ILACS inspection in May 2018. A focused visit into Care Leavers took place in December 2019.



- 3.4 Brent was informed on Monday 13 February 2023 that a short inspection would be undertaken, commencing with immediate effect, with inspectors on site at the Civic Centre from 20 to 24 February. There were 6 inspectors in total. In December 2022 Ofsted introduced a new judgement into the ILACS framework on 'the experiences and progress of care leavers' and this was the first time this was considered in Brent. Ofsted spent time engaging with the local authority in the week preceding the on-site visit, gathering information and intelligence to inform their key lines of enquiry.
- 3.5 Ofsted considered evidence across all ILACS judgements and sought to answer 3 key questions:
- Has the quality and impact of practice been maintained?
  - Are there any areas where the quality and impact of practice have improved?
  - Are there any areas where the quality and impact of practice have deteriorated?
- 3.6 The inspection team tested the validity of Brent's most recent self-evaluation (June 2022) with the main focus on social workers' direct practice with families and the impact on outcomes for children. The inspection involved reading case files and supporting documentation, including evaluating individual children's records that have already been audited by the local authority.
- 3.7 The inspection identified many strengths within the local authority and how it delivers services for children in care and care leavers, particularly services to prevent children entering care, support for disabled children and the education and training opportunities available for children in care and care leavers. In relation to the leadership judgement inspectors found that Members of the council and senior leaders are listening, committed and caring corporate parents, highlighting the impact of Care in Action and Care Leavers in Action to improve and strengthen services.
- 3.8 The overall effectiveness of the local authority was judged to have remained 'good' overall.
- 3.9 An action plan is currently being prepared to address the recommendations arising from the inspection as well as other areas of practice improvement that were identified. An overview of plans to improve and strengthen services will be provided at the next committee meeting.
- 3.10 The full report can be found on this link:  
<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80489>

**Report sign-off:**

*Nigel Chapman*

Corporate Director Children and Young People

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# Inspection of Brent local authority children's services

**Inspection dates:** 20 to 24 February 2023

**Lead inspector:** Kendra Bell, His Majesty's Inspector

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Grade</b>
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care	Good
The experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

Children in the London Borough of Brent benefit from good-quality help, support and care from children's services. They are helped by practitioners who are passionate and committed to improving children's lives and futures. Since the previous inspection in 2018 and a focused visit in 2019, services for children who need help and protection are much improved. However, the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers have declined from outstanding and are now good.

Led by a new director of children's services, senior leaders know the strengths of children's services and the areas that need to improve. The consistent evaluation of the impact of services provides leaders with a mostly comprehensive understanding of service delivery and the progress made. Since the last inspection, leaders have increased their focus on help and protection services and they are now good. However, services for children in care and care leavers have declined from outstanding to good, due to reduced oversight in some areas of social work practice and challenges in recruitment and retention of staff. There is strong political support for children's services across the council. Investment to grow the workforce, restructure services and introduce new specialist teams is making a positive difference in improving children's lives. The recruitment and retention of staff and maintaining stable professional relationships for some children is an ongoing

challenge for senior leaders. As a result, a whole-workforce approach features prominently in improvement plans and in improving the experiences and progress of all children receiving services.

### **What needs to improve?**

- The compliance with private fostering regulations and the senior management oversight, performance management information and quality assurance of these arrangements.
- The attendance of children in care at their reviews and the quality of information provided to children following their reviews.
- Care leavers' understanding of and access to their health histories.
- The consistency of management supervision and recording.

### **The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: good**

1. The integrated Brent family 'front door' (BFFD) is effective in delivering the right response for children at the earliest time. Managers have worked effectively, and with additional resources, to respond to the sustained increase in the volume of contacts. A consultation line provides timely and helpful advice to professionals and a daily multi-agency individual risk management meeting reviews the latest information on highly vulnerable children. These inquisitive professional discussions lead to timely and proportionate actions that support children and keep them safer from harm. Managers and workers clearly identify risks to children, including harm from domestic abuse, neglect and extra-familial harm. Children are quickly referred by BFFD into children's statutory services for an immediate response when there are child protection concerns.
2. Workers gather a wide range of information about children and use this well to evaluate children's situations. Consent is well considered and decisions to override consent are taken appropriately by managers. Management oversight in BFFD is comprehensive and timely. Managers provide clear direction to workers and make informed decisions and recommendations for children. Managers escalate issues quickly if information from partners is delayed. As a result, most children receive the right response to their needs and recommendations for further support and services are appropriate.
3. Children's lives are improved by early help support. Brent's family well-being centres provide an extensive range of early help for children and families, including intensive targeted family support. Families have access to universal services and specialist help relating to poverty, domestic abuse and emotional health. Early help assessments draw on a wealth of family and professional information. They are detailed and analytical and lead to multi-agency family support plans that help to improve areas of concern. Plans are frequently reviewed and updated to reflect the progress children, and their families, make

in reaching their goals. When concerns increase for children, timely and relevant action is taken by early help managers to refer on to statutory services.

4. The emergency duty team responds appropriately to children's situations during evenings and at weekends. Managers hold timely discussions with police to ensure that steps can be taken for the immediate safety and protection of children. The support to children out of hours is strengthened by the work of the accelerated support team.
5. Most strategy discussions are swiftly arranged when there are potential risks of significant harm for children. Discussions are well attended by partners, with good information-sharing and the use of practice tools to help understand children's needs and risks. This leads to informed decision-making and timely action to help and protect children. A small number of strategy discussions are delayed due to police availability. When this happens, social work managers decide quickly if it is appropriate to wait for the strategy discussion or to respond immediately and visit children to ensure that they are safeguarded. Their decision, however, is made without full multi-agency information being available to ensure that there is a proportionate response for children. Subsequent child protection investigations are rightly focused on risk and lead to outcomes and actions that are suitable and protective for children. Professionals work with parents and extended family members at the earliest possible time to create safety plans to safeguard children.
6. Many social workers complete evaluative, thoughtful and strengths-based assessments of children's needs that inform child in need and child protection planning. They understand the impact of neglect and poverty and make good use of early help services to provide additional support to families. Many children's views are consistently captured during assessments through direct work by social workers. However, for a small number of children, assessments are of poorer quality. They are not sufficiently comprehensive and lack strong social work analysis. Management oversight does not consistently challenge poorer practice or clearly record the rationale for decision-making. Higher caseloads for some staff and staff turnover also affect the quality and timeliness of assessments for a small number of children. Senior leaders are aware of these issues and are taking suitable action to address them.
7. Disabled children receive high-quality support and services from well-trained workers. Children's needs are identified well by workers in assessments and result in detailed action plans that help them to make progress. Short-break packages of support are comprehensively monitored and reviewed on a regular basis with children, their family and professionals.
8. Social workers build supportive relationships with children and gain their trust. This helps children to talk openly with workers about their wishes and feelings, their needs, safety and well-being, and the progress they are making. Most

children on child in need and child protection plans receive timely and purposeful visits from social workers and their plans clearly identify risks and vulnerabilities. Actions are clear for families to understand what needs to change to protect their children and improve their lives.

9. Child protection conferences and core groups are mostly well attended and used well to review the impact of changes made by parents and the progress in reducing risk of harm. Parents are helped to improve the quality of their care and to make positive changes that increase safety for their children. These changes are tested over time to ensure improvements are sustained before stepping away from child protection planning. Decisive and timely action is taken by managers to move into the Public Law Outline process and to seek care if risks increase or remain too high for children. The letters sent to parents are clear about what needs to change to ensure that their children remain in their care. The process is used effectively to improve children's situations and divert children and families away from proceedings.
10. The specialist accelerated support team provides effective help for children on the edge of care to remain living with their families. Their work is making a positive difference in rebuilding and strengthening family relationships, and many children remain at home or are supported to return quickly. This includes support to children aged 16 and 17 who present as homeless and those at risk of extra-familial harm.
11. Social workers and managers understand the nature and risk of extra-familial harm for children. They use a range of multi-agency professional meetings, practice tools and specialist risk assessments to explore and understand risk. Targeted multidisciplinary work with youth justice workers and police help to divert and protect many children from harm and keep them safer. Mentors are a valued support for children as trusted adults and play a key role in support and safety plans. When children go missing from home or care, they are consistently offered a return home interview (RHI), although not all are undertaken in a timely manner. RHIs are of good quality, identifying triggers, push/pull factors and locations and they are used well to inform safety plans.
12. The arrangements for a small number of children who are privately fostered do not meet regulation. While children are visited regularly and receive relevant support, the suitability of their care is not thoroughly assessed initially or subsequently reviewed to ensure that these arrangements remain appropriate for them.
13. Robust processes are in place to identify, monitor and review children who are missing education or are electively home educated, to ensure that they are adequately safeguarded.

14. The local authority designated officer is effective in managing allegations against professionals and carers. There is timely action, detailed recording and robust monitoring systems across all activity.

### **The experiences and progress of children in care: good**

15. The decision for children to enter care is made appropriately. Many children in care live in safe and stable homes and receive good care which meets their needs, including complex health needs. They are supported to maintain important relationships with family and friends and enjoy a wide range of fun hobbies and activities that build self-esteem and confidence. Thorough assessments and informed actions support a small number of children to successfully return home to live with their parents.
16. Permanence planning is well considered for most children in care and gives them a sense of belonging and security in their home and care arrangements. A small but increasing number of children are experiencing moves which delay permanence being achieved for them. Senior managers have oversight of these children's arrangements and provide direction to workers on the action needed to prevent further moves.
17. The importance of life-story work is understood well by social workers and is mostly started early with children. However, it is not consistently brought together to form a narrative or completed in a timely way to ensure that children understand their childhoods and the reasons for them being in care.
18. Children's physical and emotional health needs are identified quickly when they come into care and are regularly reviewed. Children access a range of therapeutic services to support their emotional well-being and when waiting for specialist mental health support.
19. Many children in care make good educational progress and are supported well to attend school and to achieve. Personal education plans provide children with realistic and achievable targets and goals. Staff in the virtual school know their children in care very well and encourage them to learn and to have aspirations for their futures. When children need alternative provision, this is arranged quickly to keep them in education. No children in care are permanently excluded from school.
20. A very small number of children live in unregistered children's homes or settings which fall outside regulation. Senior and operational managers have regular oversight of these arrangements to ensure that children are appropriately safeguarded. Managers take timely and relevant action to seek alternative care, to regulate settings or to seek registered children's homes for children as soon as possible.

21. Children in care who go missing and those at risk of extra-familial harm are supported effectively by a range of services and timely interventions that reduce risks and help to keep them safer. This includes return home interviews, which are used well to inform safety plans.
22. Many children in care benefit from frequent and meaningful visiting and direct work from social workers who know them well. Additional funding enables social workers to spend more time with children doing fun activities. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children receive trauma-informed, sensitive and effective support from social workers, which is making a positive difference. They live in well-matched homes and are supported by a range of specialist services to help them settle into their new lives. However, not all children in care benefit from stability in their relationships with workers, due to staff changes.
23. Most children's care plans comprehensively identify their needs and are regularly reviewed to monitor their progress in all aspects of their development. Social workers and advocates regularly capture how children feel about being in care and what they think about the care they receive. Workers help to share this information for and with children at their review, to inform decision-making and plans. Children are helped to understand their rights and entitlements and how to make a complaint, and have access to independent visiting services. There is a waiting list for independent visitors, which delays this support for a very small number of children.
24. Most independent reviewing officers (IROs) monitor the progress of children's plans well between looked after reviews to ensure that actions are progressed. IROs write letters to children following their reviews. These letters are not consistently of good quality and a small number are not routinely shared with children, their carers or families. While many children are actively and purposefully helped to participate in their reviews, too many children do not directly attend. For these children, the decisions and plans made at the review are made for them and not with them.
25. A small number of children leave care and achieve timely permanence through special guardianship arrangements and adoption. There is good use of foster to adopt arrangements that enable children to live with their forever families at the earliest opportunity. Special guardians receive bespoke support, including financial support, to help them look after children and give them the permanence of a family away from the care system.
26. The fostering panel is diligent in its work to approve and review foster carers. Foster carers speak highly of the support they receive, including out of hours, and they are rightly proud of the progress their children make. There is a wide range of training on offer to carers and many foster carers have completed or are completing the training standards.

27. Adopters benefit from good-quality assessment and training through the regional adoption agency (Adopt London West). Children's plans for adoption are timely and supported by cohesive and effective partnerships that work well to achieve permanence for children through adoption. Good-quality life-story work and later-life letters are completed with all children placed for adoption.

### **The experiences and progress of care leavers: good**

28. Care leavers receive responsive and thoughtful help and support from their personal advisers (PAs). They are helped to make progress in their lives and maintain relationships, and many live successfully independently once they leave care. Care leavers have access to a variety of council and community-based services, including advocates, mentors and mental health workers. Planning for independence starts consistently for children in care when they are 16 and they are introduced to their PA at 17 years six months. They are invited to attend a 'getting to know you' session with the care leavers' teams to help them understand the range of support available to them as care leavers up to their 25th birthday.
29. Care leavers are encouraged and supported to help shape and develop care leaver services. The 'Brent care journey' partnership is focused on working with care leavers to co-design and improve care leavers' services as well as offering opportunities for social events. Care leavers routinely attend the corporate parenting board to share their experiences and influence service design.
30. PAs make every effort to ensure that care leavers know about the local offer, and most care leavers are well informed. The local offer is accessible and sets out the range of financial support and help available. This includes council tax relief and help towards transport costs, but not driving lessons. Not all elements of financial support, such as for Wi-Fi, are made explicit in the offer, so care leavers do not always understand what help can be asked for.
31. Care leavers contribute to their pathway plans, which contain their wishes, goals and aspirations. This places them firmly at the heart of decision-making and planning for their future. However, their identity is not covered thoroughly in plans and is not meaningfully described for them. Pathway plans identify current health needs, but care leavers do not routinely receive their health histories. Therefore, they are missing essential information and an understanding of their childhood health.
32. Many care leavers are in employment, education or training, including a large number at university. They have good support to help them with their studies, future careers and with employment aspirations. There are a range of opportunities to help care leavers return to employment, training or education. These include extra support before starting apprenticeships and specific courses to build confidence and skills. The virtual school and extended duty team continually search for apprenticeships and work collaboratively with businesses

and agencies to find opportunities for care leavers within the borough. They have worked well with several businesses and corporations to establish specific care leaver employment programmes and to guarantee job interviews for them. Support is available to care leavers with special educational and learning needs to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made in education, employment and training arrangements.

33. Many care leavers live in suitable and safe accommodation, including semi-independent living, independent living or with their former foster carers. They are provided with substantial advice, training and practical support to help them gain independent living skills. This includes going on accredited independence programmes, residential weekends, money courses and tenancy preparation. A monthly housing panel considers their readiness for independent living before this is agreed. This support enables care leavers to live in stable homes as young adults and provides them with a sense of security for their future. There have been no tenancy breakdowns for several years.
34. Care leavers who are parents are well supported. A recent parenting programme was extremely beneficial in reducing feelings of isolation and helping care leavers to feel more confident as young parents.
35. Care leavers are helped to stay safe and many are safe. PAs understand the risks to them and their vulnerabilities. When there are risks of extra-familial harm, PAs provide intensive support and take proactive steps to help reduce risks. This helps them to live more safely in the community.
36. Care leavers in custody are mostly well supported and have up-to-date pathway plans. They are visited regularly and helped by PAs and prison staff to feel safe. However, with a small number of care leavers, PAs adopt more of a befriending and support role and do not always sufficiently advocate for them following serious incidents in prison.

### **The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: good**

37. There is strong political support for improving services and making positive differences to the lives of children and to their futures. The borough plan is informed by children and members of the community and focuses on what matters most to them. The need for services is increasing and more children and families are needing help and support to manage the impact of growing unemployment levels, adversity and hardship.
38. Robust governance arrangements provide members and senior leaders with a clear line of sight of children's services. There is relevant scrutiny by council members of the impact of services for children. Effective performance management information provides the lead member, chief officer and senior leaders with a comprehensive overview of most aspects of children's services'

delivery, practice and performance. Senior leaders use this information well to identify the strengths of children's services and the areas to improve. However, the systems in place have not identified effectively the shortfalls in practice for children who are privately fostered or in areas of practice for children in care and care leavers that have declined.

39. Senior leaders have well-established and respectful relationships with partners, the judiciary and schools. The strategic and partnership response to protecting children at risk of extra-familial harm is effective and extensive, and the family court judge commented positively on the quality of children's services' practice in the court arena. These relationships provide a solid foundation for effective and purposeful collaborative working across a range of high-functioning strategic boards and programmes. However, while partnership working is strong and senior leaders have regularly escalated the issue, they have not been able to resolve police delays in arranging a small but significant number of child protection strategy discussions.
40. There is a hands-on approach by senior leaders and managers in improving practice and achieving positive change for children in their lives. A range of multi-agency operational panels review practice efficiently and oversee progress for children. However, during the inspection, senior leaders were made aware of the shortfalls in practice, quality assurance and senior management oversight of children who are privately fostered. The numbers of children privately fostered is very low and this suggests children are not being identified. Immediate steps were taken by senior leaders to address these issues during the inspection.
41. Members of the council and senior leaders are listening, committed and caring corporate parents. Members of the vibrant child in care and care leavers' councils, called 'Care in Action' and 'Care Leavers in Action', attend the corporate parenting board and are actively involved in initiatives and innovative projects that help to improve and strengthen services and support. Co-design with children and care leavers is at the heart of the approach to children's services improvement. Managers are working on plans to increase participation activity and the numbers of children and care leavers who attend these groups.
42. The investment in a highly skilled edge of care team is successfully helping to keep many children at home with their families. The use of foster carers, family and friends carers, independent fostering arrangements and externally commissioned supported accommodation is providing most children with suitable care. However, these homes are not all local, and many children move to neighbouring areas when they come into care. Increasing the number of local foster carers and opening a new children's home is a key focus for senior leaders in providing more local care for children. There is extensive senior management oversight and quality assurance of the arrangements for a very small number of children living in unregistered settings and others which fall outside regulation.

43. A comprehensive framework of regular quality assurance activity places importance on listening to children, families and staff to help shape learning. This is used well to provide the whole workforce with insight into the quality of practice and where practice needs to improve. However, not all audits involve workers and feedback from children and families is not routinely sought. Not all workers benefit from supervision discussions with managers that support them to learn from audits and to make improvements in their work.
44. Senior leaders are acutely aware of and responsive to persistent workforce pressures which are impacting on children and staff. The turnover of staff continues to impact on a small number of children, in their relationships with workers and in the progress of their plans. Higher caseloads for a number of staff are affecting the quality of their practice and the help they provide to children. Senior leaders are taking action to recruit and retain staff, and to stabilise the workforce. Additional staffing, a new recruitment campaign and an enhanced employment and comprehensive workplace offer are in place, and senior leaders are taking measures to strengthen management oversight in several teams. However, senior leaders are not sufficiently sighted or assured of the mitigations in place that help to reduce impact for those children who are most affected by changes of worker.
45. Workers benefit from comprehensive and up-to-date operational policies that promote good practice. They have access to a regular programme of learning and training and opportunities to develop themselves in their careers. Succession planning is used well to retain and progress workers within the organisation. Staff emulate the core values of children's services and feel they 'belong' in Brent. They value the very considered approach and openness of senior leaders and have confidence in their leadership. Many staff are committed to working in Brent and enjoy working in teams who become like a family to them. They have a strong and influential voice and feel listened to in service design and improvement work. They feel well supported and supervised by managers. However, the frequency and quality of supervision is not consistent for all workers. Senior leaders are aware of this, and management supervision is a key aspect of the improvement plan for children's services.

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 <b>Brent</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b> 24 April 2023
<b>Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People</b>	
<b>Brent Adoption Report 6-monthly report:          1st October 2022 to 31st March 2023</b>	
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	N/A
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Debbie Gabriel Head of Service, Adopt London West, Brent's Regional Adoption Agency <a href="mailto:GabrielD@ealing.gov.uk">GabrielD@ealing.gov.uk</a>  Elena Muller Service Manager, Looked After Children and Permanency <a href="mailto:Elena.Muller@brent.gov.uk">Elena.Muller@brent.gov.uk</a>  Kelli Eboji Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency <a href="mailto:Kelli.Eboji@brent.gov.uk">Kelli.Eboji@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a briefing to the Council's Corporate Parenting Committee in relation to:

- adoption performance data for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023
- the progress and activity of Adopt London West
- how good outcomes are being achieved for children

Information and child level data presented in Section 5 of this report is provided by Brent; the rest of this report includes the progress and activity of Adopt London West.

- 1.2 This is the seventh report presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in this format as Cabinet gave approval in April 2019 for Brent council to:
  - a) join the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) *Adopt London West* consisting of the London boroughs of Ealing, Hounslow and Hammersmith and Fulham for the provision of Adoption services and Special Guardianship Support; and
  - b) delegate authority to the Strategic Director, Children and Young People, in consultation with the Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care to agree and enter into a Partnership Agreement with participating boroughs.
- 1.3 The Key Decision was made on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2019 and, following the TUPE of those Brent staff members who chose to move to Ealing, Adopt London West has been a 'live' RAA since October 2019.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

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

## **3.0 Background – Adopt London West**

- 3.1 Adopt London West (ALW) Regional Adoption Agency became operational on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019 with a formal launch in October 2019.
- 3.2 A comprehensive partnership agreement forms the basis of the ongoing partnership arrangements. The partnership board on which the Strategic Director, Brent CYP, sits will continue to provide the necessary oversight to ensure that the shared service is appropriately scrutinised and supported to deliver improved outcomes for children and adopters.
- 3.3 As part of the national RAA implementation and development programme a network of RAA leaders has been established and a National strategic lead appointed. Government published a National Adoption Strategy in July 2021, that sets out ambitions to further improve the consistency of support offered to adopters and achieve innovation and change in various aspects of the

adoption system. Monthly meetings take place attended by DfE who remain interested and engaged in the RAA delivery model.

- 3.4 National priorities have been agreed by the network of RAA leaders and several workstreams established to progress specific elements of the National strategy. ALW's Partnership Board and Heads of Service meetings will continue to be informed of practice change and developments and will closely monitor performance and practice to ensure standards of service to children and their families remain consistently high.

#### **4.0 Responsibilities**

- 4.1 As delegated in the partnership agreement between Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham and Hounslow, Ealing (as the host Local Authority for ALW) is responsible for ensuring that children whose permanence plan is adoption in all four partner Local Authorities are matched in a timely way with adopters who best meet the needs of those children. This involves featuring children in various profiling events, via national linking websites, supporting them in adoption activity days and networking events with other Regional Adoption Agencies in London and nationally. ALW is also responsible for the preparation and assessment of prospective adopters, supporting adopters with family finding following approval and the on-going post placement support to adopters and special guardians. ALW is also responsible for the provision of services to adopted adults and all those affected by adoption who request a specific service or an assessment of need.
- 4.2 ALW also provides a service to Brent residents who wish to make a private application to adopt their partner's child, these are non-agency adoptions and often referred to as "step-parent" adoption, or special guardians who may wish to adopt the child in their care. The team is also involved in completing adoption reports on children who may have travelled from and been adopted abroad; there is a legal requirement for these adoptions to be made lawful in the UK.
- 4.3 Inter-country adoption referrals continue to be referred to the Inter-Country Adoption Centre, a specialist Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA), with whom a service level agreement is in place.
- 4.4 Statutory social work in relation to children needing adoptive placements remains the responsibility of Brent CYP. The care plans for children are formulated by the social work teams and agreed by Head of Service for LAC and Permanency. The Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes then considers and ratifies any adoption plans.

#### **5.0 Performance Data**

5.1 The most recent set of national adoption scorecards was published in August 2020 and updated in July 2021, covering the 3-year period 2017-2020.

### **Adoption Scorecards (published [here](#))**

5.1.1 The non-published data for the period under review shows performance against the two most significant indicators:

- **A1** (The average time taken for a child entering care to being placed for adoption): 467.5 days. This is a 4% increase on the previous reporting period (450 days).
- **A2** (The average time taken from the Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and a match being approved): 140 days. This is a 17% decrease on the previous reporting period (169 days).

## **6.0 Child related data**

6.1 There have been 7 Adoption Orders granted during this reporting year.

6.2 There are currently 5 adoption applications in the Court process, the remaining children have been placed more recently, therefore, applications are likely to be made for these children within the next quarter.

6.3 There are currently 15 children with an adoption plan who have not yet been adopted.

The details of these children's cases are as follows:

- Six children are placed with their new families
- Four children are subject to a Placement Order, three of these children are already matched or linked with a new family and will be moving shortly
- The remaining five children have recently had a plan of Adoption agreed by Brent, but no Court order has yet been granted.

## **6.4 Early Permanence for Children**

For some children it is appropriate to consider placing them with foster carers who are also approved adopters, this is referred to as an Early Permanence placement. This enables the child to be placed earlier than is usually possible and before Court proceedings have concluded. Three of the children placed this year have been placed in Early Permanence placements, allowing the children to spend less time in foster care and begin building attachments to their new families.

## **7.0 Adopter Recruitment**

7.1 20 Adopter households have been approved in 2022/23

25% of the Adopters approved this year are from a Black, Asian or mixed black ethnicity and 15% identify as LGBT. The other families have been from mixed European backgrounds, who are also a valued and welcomed resource.

- 7.2 There are currently 37 ALW approved adopters: 14 of whom already have a child placed with them, 15 are in the active family finding stage and 3 families are matched/linked to child/ren. 5 families are on hold due to their personal circumstances and are likely to resign as adopters
- 7.3 The adoption assessment process comprises 2 stages. Stage 1 assessments should take place within 2 months - this stage is described as "adopter led", where adopters work through exercises and complete various tasks that contribute to a full and thorough assessment of their suitability.
- 7.4 Stage 2 should take a maximum of 4 months and is a detailed assessment that is both reflective and analytical. In total, the comprehensive assessment process should be completed within 6 months.
- 7.5 There are currently 18 families in the formal stages of assessment, 10 in Stage 1 and 8 in Stage 2.

## **8.0 Casework**

- 8.1 ALW is currently offering a service to 182 Brent children, families or individuals who are accessing their adoption records – 28 children are allocated to a social worker for family finding, 23 are receiving a Social Work service, 31 are currently receiving an ASF therapeutic service that is under review, and 19 individuals are accessing adoption records.
- 8.2 There are 81 contact cases open relating to Brent families - 13 direct contact arrangements and 68 active letterbox exchanges.
- 8.3 There have been 117 requests for access to records in relation to Brent records, out of a total number of 210 requests received by ALW during 2022/23. This represents 56% of all requests, this remains a consistently busy area of work, however, significant progress has been made through effective partnership working to clear a waiting list of requests.

## **9.0 Adoption Support Fund**

- 9.1 Families who require specialist therapeutic support, are assessed by a social worker and an application submitted to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) for funding to cover the costs of the therapeutic services.

65 applications have been made to the ASF on behalf of Brent families in this reporting year and a total of £158,175 of funding for therapeutic services received for these families.

9.2 There are currently no families waiting for an application to the ASF; all assessments for support are allocated.

## 10.0 ALW Adoption Panel

10.1 The role of ALW's panel is as follows:

- to consider the presentation of approvals, reviews, and terminations of adopters' suitability to adopt, following which a recommendation is made by panel members and sent to ALW's Agency Decision Maker (Head of Service) for a formal decision.
- to consider whether a relinquished baby from Brent should be placed for adoption, following which a recommendation is made by panel members but sent to Brent's Agency Decision Maker (Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes, Children and Young People's Services) for ratification/challenge; and
- to consider adoption matches between Brent's children and their prospective adopters, following which a recommendation is made by panel members and sent to Brent's Agency Decision Maker (Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes, Children and Young People's Services) for ratification/challenge.

10.2 **Feedback** between ALW and Brent is considered by the Heads of Service quality assurance group and the Partnership Board and shared with Service Managers in Brent after each panel presentation to aid service development and quality assure the work of the RAA.

10.3 ALW Panel continues to take place virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Prior to each panel meeting, the Adviser liaises with the applicants and external professionals to support them to access Microsoft Teams to reduce the risk of delay on the day and explain how the panel day will run and confirm that they are able to access the meeting confidentially. The Panel Adviser sets up a panel member check-in to join Microsoft Team to ensure that everyone can join securely, without delay and with ease. Panel members and observers also complete and return a confidentiality self-declaration, attesting to this for the duration of the panel meeting.

10.4 **During** the period under review, 20 new Adopter households have been approved in 2022/23 and 5 Brent children have been formerly matched with

their new families by the Agency following positive recommendations from the Adoption panel.

- 10.5 Annual training for panel members is a regulatory requirement, a series of practice development discussions have taken place throughout the year with panel members, and all attended Safeguarding training on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2023.

## **11.0 ALW practice updates**

### **Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)**

**The** Ofsted inspection took place in February 2023 and found the services to children who leave care to adoption or special guardianship to be good. The report makes the following comments.

“A small number of children leave care and achieve timely permanence through special guardianship and adoption. There is good use of foster to adopt arrangements that enable children to live with their forever families at the earliest opportunity. Special Guardians receive bespoke support, including financial support to help them look after children and give them the permanence of a family away from the care system”.

“Adopters benefit from good quality assessments and training through the regional adoption agency, Adopt London West. Children's plans for adoption are timely and supported by cohesive and effective partnership that work well to achieve permanence through adoption.....”

### **October 2022 half term Drama workshop**

As part of ALW's support offer to families, during the Oct half-term break, 10 young people took part in a 4 day drama workshop facilitated by ALW Social Workers and an independent drama therapist, funded by the Adoption Support Fund. The workshop was open to 11-13 years old young people in both Special Guardianship and adoptive families.

The 10 young people, aged 11-13 years of age, started the week looking at setting the scene, building characters and roles, and creating stories, progressing to directing. The children worked together, supporting each other to bring one of their stories to life, which was wonderful to see. It was impressive that all 10 children came on the first day and continued to come for each of the 4 days.

After just 4 days we could see that they all felt more comfortable in themselves, with each other, and with the staff, and their friendships were becoming more solid. From some parental feedback, we know that some of the young people want to stay in touch, which is an indicator of enjoying each other's company.

A celebration evening was held in November, all of the young people attended as did their parents and special guardians, the children enjoyed pizza's and watching the edited film of the workshop they each received certificates recognising their individual contributions and celebrating their talent.

*After first day of workshop S's Mum and she said she had a great day yesterday and was really keen to come back today. Mom said that S is amazing and is so proud of her.*

(Families' feedback on the drama workshop)

*Thank you all for your hard work for the drama workshop last week and for the regular feedback from ALW. R really enjoyed it and her confidence was definitely boosted. I know she has already exchanged messages with couple of the other attendees and will look forward to the 25th.*

(Families' feedback on the drama workshop)

**Drama Therapist's feedback to the social workers who co-facilitated.**

*I think it was the most amazing week that the young people seemed to get so much from, and I really wanted to thank you for your incredible support.*

*From the conception of the idea a few months ago, to the ongoing organisation of the celebration follow up session, it has been an absolute pleasure to be involved in a project that has been run so smoothly, and with such enthusiasm. I am so grateful to you and your team for supporting the therapeutic work in such a solid and yet subtle and understated way. It makes such a huge difference.*

*All of the interactions I was witness to, were so astute, well timed and completely relevant to the situation. I am certain that the young people will hold these personal connections and newly formed relationships firmly and with real meaning feeling the benefit of them for many weeks/months to come.*

As a result of the success of the workshop, another workshop is being planned for May half-term.

## **12.0 Clinical Psychology**

### Clinical Psychology in Adopt London West

The clinical psychology offer embeds two NHS employed clinical psychologists (equivalent to 1.0 WTE) alongside Adopt London West's social care services which encompasses the recruitment of adopters, family finding and support services for adoptive and special guardian families in Ealing, Hounslow, Brent, and Hammersmith & Fulham.

### Clinical Psychology Provision

This is a Tier 2 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS); the service offers a range of provision to both social work staff and adopted/special guardian families. Below includes an overview of the clinical psychology provision currently:

- Psychology consultation with social workers
- Supporting transitions from foster-carer to adoptive families
- Reflective practice for the recruitment and family finding social work team
- Supporting the team manager/consultant practitioner to hold and maintain the structure for 'group supervision' for the support team
- Training and workshops for staff
- Preparations groups for prospective adopters
- The development of practice guides
- Direct work with children, young people, and families (*funded via the Adoption Support Fund*); this includes:
  - i. *Assessment and Formulation model*; a four-session clinical psychology assessment (with an additional review appointment after a written report has been provided to the family) for adopted and special guardian families.
  - ii. *Foundations for Attachment*; a Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) informed programme, for those parenting children who have relationship difficulties, especially children who have experienced attachment difficulties, trauma, loss and/or early separation in their life. This is a nine-week programme and we approximately run four groups a year
  - iii. *Other Therapeutic Interventions*: The range of direct interventions include Dyadic Developmental Practice/ Parenting/ Psychotherapy (DDP); Narrative therapy; Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT); Mentalisation based approaches; Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Skills; Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR); Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT); and

Compassion Focussed Therapy (CFT). These interventions are funded through the Adoption Support Fund from the child/young person's intervention grant.

### **Case Study example of Clinical Psychologists support to a family**

D, aged three years, was referred to the Clinical Psychology service within Adopt London West following the adoptive parents sharing concerns with their social worker in relation to some of D's behaviours and requesting support in understanding and responding to them. Her parent's described their caring relationship to be 'intense'; D often struggled to play and explore independently and remained preoccupied with remaining close to them. D was also rejecting in her relationship with her adoptive father.

The clinical psychology assessment was four sessions and involved a comprehensive account of the family's strengths, presenting needs and parenting experiences. The parent's described strengths of family stability, commitment and D becoming more open to their attempts of physical comfort. They identified parenting challenges of intense connection seeking, control, and hypervigilance. Within the sessions together, there was an emphasis on co-developing a shared understanding of D's needs and the parenting challenges they were experiencing. We understood D's connection seeking as a communication of need, and in response to this the necessity to provide D with attachment experiences that address missed experiences and supports trust in her parent's availability, whilst also holding in mind the impact this has on them as parents.

Considering the needs identified and the shared understanding that was co-developed, therapeutic parenting values were discussed to further strengthen the parent-child relationship and D's experience of safety and security. Some of the recommendations included dedicated and planned attachment time with D, as well as offering preventative connection prior to key moments of separation. We also thought about embodying playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy within their way of being with D; and the value of naming and storying her emotions and experiences to support D in meaning-making her inner world. The recommendations also recognised the need for adults to be consciously aware of their non-verbal communication and provide storytelling of their emotional world to lessen any worries of rejection or the 'threat-lens' in which D views their interactions with her. Considerations were also given to her parent's noticing when there may be a wrestle for control within their relationship and how they may respond to this.

It has now been agreed to add an additional Clinical Psychology post to enhance the clinical offer and increase the number of families that can be offered a service, this post will be funded by claims made to the Adoption Support Fund at no additional costs to the partner Local Authorities.

### **13.0 Adopt London Black Adoption Project**

As a reminder, the project aims to explore the long standing and persistent challenges recruiting sufficient black adopters for those children with a plan of adoption and the impact on black children.



The initial research phase focussed on data analysis, an online survey and focus groups. The purpose was to gain a better understanding of adoption trends in the Adopt London region and the direct experience of black children, adopters and communities to inform the co creation of a project strategy and theory of change.

In late Autumn 2022, a series of meetings took place with academics to gain support and engagement in the project and to explore funding opportunities. Two theory of change workshops took place in February and March, attended by Cllr Collymore and Cllr Gbajumo, all involved in the project are extremely grateful and appreciative of Brent elected members support to the project. A summary of the phase 1 report will be ready for circulation in early May.

**14.0 Feedback** - Some examples of feedback received in the period October 2022 to March 2023:

**Brent residents who attended information sessions for prospective adopters**

*"I've been to quite a few information sessions and this one was the best; it was so good! It was so clear and informative and helped us confirm that we definitely do want to move agency".*

*"I was so impressed with the information session you organised, so I would love to see if we could start the adoption process with you - would this be a possibility?"*

*"Thank you so much for the fantastic session last week and for sending over the below information".*

**A couple at the beginning of their Adoption journey with some complexities in their history**

*"Many thanks for getting back to us so quickly, it has been on our minds alot since we last spoke so having that quick response is much appreciated.*

*Thank you both for carefully considering moving us forward and we will look out for the form and return it as soon as we get it. I am more than happy to provide those contacts to support our reference.*

*Thank you also for making us aware that it is highly likely that it will be brought up throughout the process and preparing me for potential triggers. Many thanks"*

**Brent residents approved as Adopters, December 22**

*"From the first contact with Adopt London West during the online information session, we felt trusted and listened to. The warmth and quality of the support was constant throughout the preparation process, both during the first home visit and during the interviews with Hana. The preparation courses were very rich for us, both in terms of the encounters we were able to make, the wealth of content and resources we discovered, and which gave us food for thought, and the availability and open-mindedness of the team. If the evaluation was a demanding process insofar as it questioned our motivation, our identity, and our history, it was above all a driving force for us to deepen our reflection and also our reflective view of ourselves as individuals and as a couple."*

**Adopters who live in Brent who have a Brent child placed.**

*"We are grateful for your support throughout the whole process, worth mentioning are:*

- your help in getting ... a place in the nursery,*
- proactively supporting us on the final steps on the adoption - help with filling in required documents for a matching panel and a court hearing.*

*Your availability, support and advice have been invaluable. I felt that you have done everything you could to make our adoption journey as smooth as possible and as quick as it can possibly be in the given circumstances.*

*re the 9-week Foundations for Attachment course we just finished on Monday: we found it valuable, educative, and great opportunity to reflect on our parenting style as well as the style in which we were parented.*

*It was a great opportunity to not only learn more from ALW specialists, but at the same time a great opportunity to hear from others about their parenting challenges. ALW employees were professional, understanding, and knowledgeable. I am glad we had an opportunity to take part in this course so early on our adoption journey."*

**Adopters using the ALW contact service.**

*"I am continuing to get help and support. ALW have helped tremendously since we have been in contact with them, once we were provided with ALW's details, they have been really really, good and I am so happy I have access to them in terms of contact arrangements for our daughter, and the annual letterbox agreement. Thank you very much ALW, for everything thus far."*

*"First to say, I am happy because of giving me this opportunity to take care of my niece baby and to reach out to me. Second, we thank all the supporters for taking care of us as we are in Kenya, to have contact with ALW, who emailed me to know which supports I needed, and I say thanks for everything. ALW and the ALW Support Team have been really good, if we had access to ALW/ALW Support Team earlier I am sure we would have saved ourselves a lot of stress!!! ALW has suggested various training courses for us as well as informing us how she will be managing the letterbox agreement between us and birth parents. We feel at ease knowing ALW is doing this."*

**Adopted adults who requested access to their records held by Brent.**

*"Once again thank you for your time and effort in solving the mystery of who Mum's father was. Although we don't have a picture of him it is wonderful to finally know his name and after some further research a little more about his extended family. I hope you find this little update interesting, knowing the important part you played in helping Mum and I connect the dots and finally put to rest the mystery."*

*"She was very grateful for the details you provided and as you had said found the original photograph of her very precious – it is the earliest photo of her as a baby she had ever seen."*

***Another adopted adult, now 43 who was removed from his mother's care as a young child and placed for Adoption in the 1980's gave comprehensive feedback on how important accessing his records was to him and how the social worker supporting him helped him to make sense of his very difficult story***

*"I would just like to say a big thank you to every single person that ever helped care for me. You all went the extra mile in every way. What really shines through in the reports is the level of care, compassion, perseverance, and resources.*

*Everything from washing my clothes to helping me to learn new words and the speech therapy. The level of support from the details to the bigger picture of trying so hard to help my Mum to develop fundamental skills in effort to look after me. The sheer amount of hard work and dedication from everyone makes me eternally grateful. You collectively saved my life literally. I wouldn't be living the good life I am living now if social workers had not intervened. You kept me safe and placed me for adoption. Social workers deserve a good reputation."*

## **Value for Money**


The overall benefits of a shared service are also realised through the practice improvement and opportunities that are possible now that small individual services have become part of the wider Adopt London collaboration and the national RAA network. It was simply not possible for LA Adoption services to offer the range of support and services that can now be delivered as a Regional Adoption Agency.

**Report sign-off:**

*Nigel Chapman*

Corporate Director Children and Young People

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 <b>Brent</b>	<p align="center"><b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b> 24 April 2023</p>
	<p align="center"><b>Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People</b></p>
<p><b>Brent Fostering Service Quarterly Monitoring Report Quarter 4: 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023</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>Elena Muller Service Manager, Looked After Children and Permanency</p> <p>Kelli Eboji Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency <a href="mailto:Kelli.Eboji@brent.gov.uk">Kelli.Eboji@brent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Palvinder Kudhail Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes <a href="mailto:Palvinder.Kudhail@brent.gov.uk">Palvinder.Kudhail@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 the 1 of January 2023 to the 31 of March 2023.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to review and comment on the contents of this report. This is to provide evidence that the management of the fostering service is being monitored and challenged in order to promote good outcomes for Looked After Children in Brent.

### **3.0 Background**

#### **3.1 Service Priorities:**

3.1.1 The in-house fostering function is positioned within the LAC and Permanency Service of the Children and Young People's Service. The service is focusing on the following priority areas in 2022/23:

- Recruitment, assessment and approval of new carers with a target to achieve a net gain of 5 new carers
- To enhance the support offer to Brent's foster carers and kinship carers by providing therapeutic services to support placement stability
- To enhance the training and development programme for carers that includes a mix of virtual and direct delivery of courses and seminars
- To continue improving the stability of children by providing more local and in-house placement options, minimising changes of social workers and placements
- To develop partnerships with neighbouring authorities to recruit and retain more foster carers
- To recruit, train and retain foster carers that offer emergency placements to children and young people who come into care in unplanned circumstances.

#### **3.2 Staffing Arrangements**

3.2.1 The Fostering Support and Assessment Team consists of 10 Supervising Social Workers, one Team Manager, one Interim Deputy Team Manager and one Marketing and Recruitment Officer post.

3.2.2 The Kinship Care Team, consists of 8 Social Workers, one Team Manager and one Practice Consultant Social Worker. Two student Social Workers had placements in the Kinship Team during this period and they were guided and supported by experienced Practice Educators. One student completed the Step Up programme (a fast-track social work training programme for high calibre graduates interested in career changes) and the other is due to finish her placement in May 2023. They will join the ASYE programme that gives newly qualified social workers extra support during their first year of employment.

3.2.3 The workload in the teams continues to be at manageable levels as new kinship and foster carers are assessed, approved and allocated to supervising social workers to ensure ongoing support.

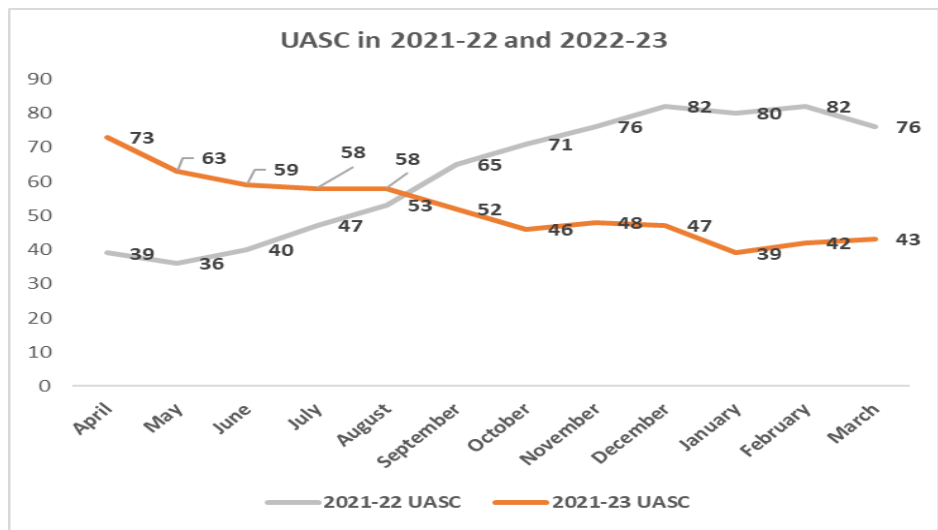
### **4.0 Placement Activity**

4.1 The total number of looked after children as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 was 317, which is a decrease by 6 children from Q3 of 2022-2023 and a decrease by 25 children from the same period in 2022 (342 children).

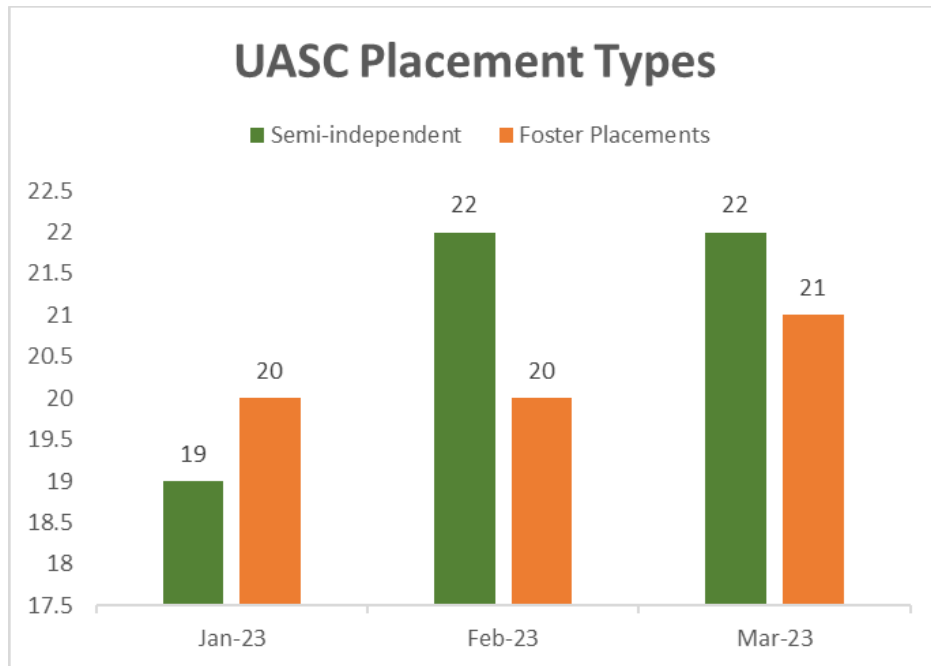
4.2 The corporate performance targets for 2022/2023 are as below:

- Percentage of looked after children placed with in-house (Brent) foster carers as of the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2023 was 19% (58 children), an increase by 0.4% from the previous quarter Q3 of 2022/2023, 18.6% (60 children) – annual target 25%
- Percentage of looked after children placed with a relative or family friend as of the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2023 was 14.5% (46 children), a decrease by 1.3% from Q3 of 2022/2023 (15.8%, 51 children) – annual target 20%
- Percentage of looked after children placed with independent fostering agencies as of the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2023 was 35% (111 children), an increase by 4.3% from Q3 of 2022/2023 (30.7%, 99 children) – annual target 25%
- Percentage of looked after children overall within foster placements as of the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2023 was 67.8% (215 children), an increase of 2.8% from Q3 of 2022/2023 which was 65% (210 children) – annual target 70%. This is primarily related to the age of new looked after children and the increase in the number of 16 - 17 year-old UASC who were placed in semi-independent accommodation
- There were 61 looked after children in semi-independent accommodation (residential accommodation not subject to Children’s Home Regulations) as of the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2023, which represents 16.1% of all looked after children. This is a decrease by 2.8% from the end of Q3, 2022/2023 (18.9%, 61 children).

4.3 There were 43 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) as of 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2023, a decrease of 2 UASC (45 UASC in Q3 2022-23). The decrease is attributable to the number of UASC turning 18.



- 4.4 The number of UASC placed in semi-independent accommodation is the same as Q3 of 2022-23, 22, none in residential children’s homes and 21 UASC placed in foster placements, 1 UASC more from Q3 (20 UASC).



## 5.0 Recruitment and Assessment of new foster carers

- 5.1 During this period, the marketing and recruitment activities took place both online and face-to-face. An advertising campaign took place on Facebook and Google which generated 102 unique visits to the website with four users filling out the enquiry/contact form.
- 5.2 Efforts to recruit new foster carers was supported by a Sky TV campaign rolled out exclusively in the London Borough of Brent aimed at mid, mid-to-high and high-income households. An increase in website traffic by 40% compared to the previous period has been reported and four enquiries about fostering were made through the dedicated campaign landing page.
- 5.3 The Marketing and Recruitment Officer attended events in the local area such as: International Women’s Day which took place on the 7th of March 2023 at the Civic Centre and Brent Connects events for Willesden, Harlesden, Kilburn, Kingsbury and Kenton, and Wembley during March. Following the International Women’s Day event, the Fostering team received four information requests. One enquirer was invited to the April Fostering Information Evening. The people attending Brent Connects events were very interested to find out more about looked after children and their

needs and expressed a desire to get involved in different community activities/initiatives. Moreover, Co-op stores in Brent will be able to distribute fliers and leaflets to promote fostering in Brent, free of charge.

- 5.4 The Marketing and Recruitment Officer contacted various local groups and faith leaders from all religious backgrounds in Brent to request their support to promote fostering. The response received was not consistent, and only a couple of faith leaders replied to the initial contact made. More efforts are needed to engage these communities, which will include meeting the faith and group leaders in their community and attending local events.
- 5.5 The Marketing and Recruitment Officer also sent out flyers, posters and information brochures to Brent Libraries, hubs and wellbeing centres which had been displayed and distributed to residents. The Fostering Newsletter continues to be delivered monthly to the 5000+ subscribers. Three newsletters were sent in the reporting period, focusing on the following themes: fostering as a way to start the year, the needs of children in care, and celebrating female foster carers on International Women's Day. All newsletters recorded on average a click rate of 4%, which is above the sector average.
- 5.6 In the reporting period, the fostering team received 14 enquiries. Phone calls and web requests for call-backs were two of the most popular ways for people to contact the fostering team. Two applicants had an initial visit and they were invited to progress to Stage 1. One applicant was invited to attend the Information Evening to gain a greater understanding of the fostering process. The other 11 enquirers were either in the initial stages of the process or they did not meet the criteria to become foster carers. The duty social worker and the Recruitment Officer keep in touch with previous applicants who for different reasons were not able to move the next stage of the process, by sending them the monthly newsletter, and information about different events to keep potential foster carers engaged.
- 5.7 Of the 5 assessments in stage 2 reported in the last quarter, 3 applicants have been approved and 2 remain in stage 2. 4 assessments are in progress in this reporting period. Of these:
- 2 are in stage 1; and
  - 2 are in stage 2, including one carer on hold until May 2023.

## **6.0 Fostering Panel**

- 6.1 The LAC and Permanency 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 people with personal experience of the fostering system, including care experienced panel members and one independent panel member who was brought up in a

kinship placement. Current demand requires approximately three panels to be held every two months. Active recruitment of more panel members is taking place with a focus on people with a professional background in mental health and education which will add value and expertise to the Fostering Panel and ensure another level of scrutiny and challenge. Suitable candidates have been identified and they are going through the recruitment process.

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
- The long-term fostering matches of all children below the age of 12.

6.3 During this period, 4 panels were held with 18 cases presented of which:

- 5 were recommended for approval as short term connected persons
- 3 were recommended for approval as short term carers
- 4 carers were re-approved as part of their 3 yearly annual review
- 2 carers were re-approved as part of their 1st annual review
- 3 carers whose fostering approval/status were terminated
- 1 carer was re-approved as a long term carer.

All the recommendations made by the panel were ratified by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM).

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

7.1 The CYP Learning and Development Team within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service continues to offer learning opportunities for new and experienced foster carers and connected persons using different delivery methods comprising of face-to-face, online/virtual and E-Learning.

7.2 In the last quarter, the service offered 14 learning sessions to carers which included 4 workshops via the Brent Safeguarding Partnership. Most of the sessions took place online. The initial target, set in April 2022, was for half of the training to take place face-to-face, and half online/virtual sessions, however this has changed following a recent consultation with the carers who shared their preference for the training sessions to be delivered online. The carers have also requested that the sessions are held in the evening, and this request will be taken into consideration when developing the new training offer.

7.3 There has been a reduction in the take up of mandatory training in this quarter, which led to the cancellation of 2 key training sessions due to low

numbers of carers who signed up, The Professional Role of the Foster Carer and The Role of the Local Authority Designated Officer. Despite regular reminders and concerted efforts to promote the mandatory training sessions, the take-up for some workshops remains low. The Learning and Development Team and the supervising social workers will continue to promote and encourage the carers to attend all mandatory courses. The Fostering Panel and each carer's annual review enables monitoring and scrutiny of foster carers' training attendance and hold carers to account if the carers are not compliant with this requirement.

7.4 Conversely, there has been a steady increase in carers accessing the multi-agency learning and development offer via the Brent Safeguarding Partnership. Foster carers have completed the following training via this route: Serious Youth Violence-Gang Affiliation, Criminality, Vulnerability and Safeguarding; Adolescent Mental Health – the rise, and how to support; Parental Mental Health – what, and the impact on the adult(s) and any children; Domestic Abuse: a focus on children and young people in Brent. Other training completed by carers this quarter has included Professional Boundaries and Record Keeping; Digital Safety – keeping children safe online; Attachment and Child Development; Domestic Violence and Impact on Children; Managing Behaviours and De-escalation Techniques; Sexual Health of Children Looked After.

7.5 Carers are encouraged to provide feedback on the training sessions they attend and some quotes can be found below:

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*"Knowing where to go for that extra support and help" (Domestic Abuse: A Focus on Children and Young People in Brent)*

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*"She really explained them well for I have done this course before some years back and like this was like refreshing for me and I enjoyed it."*  
**(Professional Boundaries and Record Keeping)**

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*"My first time doing this course it was so interesting/ because it's something people are scared to address...Not only can you help children in your care but also adults in need... I found all the information helpful" (PAPYRUS Suicide Prevention – Tutorial Overview)*

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7.6 The service continues to provide all carers access to learning opportunities at any time of the day, evenings, and weekends, through access to an E-Learning online courses package. The E-Learning courses cover a wide range of topics including Core Knowledge and Values, Safeguarding and Child Protection Skills, Therapeutic Care, Supporting Adolescence, Working with Looked after Children (Fostering, Residential Care & Adoption),

Understanding Trauma and Promoting Positive Behaviour, Working in Health and Social Care, Working with Disabilities and Special Educational Needs, and Children Safe Online.

7.7 Following a period of consultation involving carers, young people and social workers, new training opportunities will be offered to carers in the new financial year. The new training sessions will focus on Trauma Informed Practice, Adolescent Mental Health, Self-Harming, and Neurodiversity in addition to the mandatory/core training offer.

## **8.0 Support from Supervising Social Workers (SSW)**

8.1 One of the main priorities continues to be the retention of foster carers. Feedback received during the annual reviews and Fostering Panel highlight that carers value the support they receive from the highly skilled and experienced supervising social workers, and this continues to remain the main reason why foster carers are committed to fostering for Brent. The foster carers are able to contact their supervising social workers and the Team Manager outside of office hours as and when required.

8.2 To keep foster carers engaged and informed, the fostering service provides a monthly newsletter and facilitates foster carers' support groups.

8.3 The monthly foster carers' support group continues to be facilitated virtually as it is the foster carers' preferred option.

8.4 Keeping Brent children as close to their family origin where appropriate is crucial to ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people. The aim is to further increase the number of locally available Brent foster carers, and in order to do this Brent Fostering Team are planning to revise the foster carer offer and relaunch the recruitment drive.

8.5 Foster Care Fortnight is The Fostering Network's annual campaign to raise the profile of fostering and show how foster care transforms lives. Foster Care Fortnight 2023 will take place from 15-28 May and provides a great opportunity for Brent Fostering Team to celebrate the work, the strength and the resilience of the Brent fostering community. Brent's Fostering Team are planning a series of events during Foster Care Fortnight to shine a light on fostering and highlight the need for more foster carers.

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

9.1 During this quarter, there was 1 allegation made against a Brent foster carer.

9.2 There have been 34 annual reviews of foster carers in this reporting period.

## **10.0 Service Development**

## **Working with carers and community partners to engage and promote the voices of Brent Kinship Carers**

- 10.1 The Kinship Team have been working with a Brent Kinship Carer Peer Volunteer and other external organisations (Family Rights Group, Families in Harmony) to promote the voice and interests of kinship carers in Brent and West London.
- 10.2 The Peer Volunteer and the Kinship Team organised a forum event in February 2023 for kinship carers, professionals and Elected Members to start an open and transparent dialogue about their lived experiences of being kinship carers in Brent. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the carers' support needs and to agree a way of developing and co-designing the service with input from the carers. One suggestion from this forum was for the group to develop a set of *Practice Promises* specifically for kinship carers and children living in kinship care.
- 10.3 The Kinship Team joined another forum event in March 2023 organised by the Kinship Carer Peer Volunteer. This event was attended by kinship carers, and a number of organisations working in the borough such as Brent Health Inequalities Team, (part of Brent Health Matters programme), Brent Gateway Partnership and Virtual School. As there are a number of organisations in Brent that offer services to kinship carers, the Kinship Team will organise an event and invite these agencies to a meeting in order to get to know one another and develop a joined up approach to supporting carers. One of the anticipated outcomes of the meeting is to put together a guide for professionals and carers of all these organisations that offer services and support to Brent's kinship community.

## **Enhanced Support and Resources for Brent Carers**

- 10.4 One of our main priorities has remained the enhancement of the support offer to Brent's foster carers and kinship carers by including a therapeutic element to support placement stability.
- 10.5 The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families via our Brent WEST service has continued to provide targeted mental health and emotional wellbeing service for vulnerable children and young people in Brent as well as deliver consultations and indirect interventions, supporting foster and kinship carers such as Reflective Carers' Groups. These groups are open to Brent mainstream and connected persons carers and they are increasing in popularity. The carers attending the groups benefit from input from highly skilled and trained mental health professionals, and they are supported to understand how their responses to the children and situations impact on their relationship and ultimately the stability of the placement.
- 10.6 Reflective Carers' Group combines teaching with engaging exercises to help

carers learn and reflect. It uses activities and discussions to explore some of the challenges the carers face in their role. The group offers practical ideas and support to help the carers develop a reflective style. Some foster carers attending these reflective groups found sharing some of their difficulties very helpful and benefitted from listening to and learning from other people's experiences. Other foster carers enjoyed the interactive style of the sessions and found some of the techniques useful and relevant to the development of their professional role as well as their personal lives.

10.7 To increase the sufficiency of foster carers directly employed by Brent, and as a result reduce the requirement to use Independent Fostering Agencies, Brent will seek to increase in-house fostering capacity by developing a more comprehensive and flexible package that can be aligned to the levels of complexity and child need. This will include:

- Marketing: developing an attractive, sustainable brand to sell the impact of fostering alongside developing a more effective, sustainable recruitment campaign
- Enhancing the existing training structure for in-house foster carers to ensure they are equipped to deal with more complex behavioural needs
- Widening the support offer for foster carers (e.g., health and wellbeing, respite, developing a foster carer mentoring system) and developing further a comprehensive package that will offer more than just financial incentives to foster carers
- Exploring how Brent can become a Fostering Friendly organisation and therefore can encourage Brent businesses to do the same.

10.8 Work to develop this model has already commenced as part of the previous West London Fostering Collaboration Project. This work will be used as a starting point to further develop a new package for in-house foster carers.

10.9 Moving forward, the service is proposing that the Fostering report is presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee every 6 months, in October and April and the format is altered slightly to include updates from the Kinship Care Team. Reporting on a longer period of time will give the Committee a clearer picture of the progress made on some of the short to mid-term projects, whilst continuing to scrutinise and monitor the delivery of the regular fostering services and the achievement of best outcomes for children looked after.

**Report sign-off:**

*Nigel Chapman*

Corporate Director Children and Young People