

 Brent	<p align="center">Corporate Parenting Committee</p> <p align="center">20 July 2022</p> <p align="center">Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</p>
<p align="center">Annual Corporate Parenting Report April 2021 - March 2022</p>	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	1. Local Offer for Care Leavers 2022-24, https://democracy.brent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=446&MId=6614&Ver=4
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1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report fulfils the Council's statutory obligation to present an annual report to the Corporate Parenting Committee (CPC) on outcomes for Looked After Children and care leavers, in line with The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010). The report provides a

summary of the activity alongside with strengths and areas for growth in supporting looked after children and care leavers in Brent.

1.2 Progress against the previous year's priorities identified in the previous Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2020/21 have been updated throughout the body of this report. The priorities were:

- Improving access to mental health support services, particularly specialist CAMHS support for looked after children and targeted support for care leavers in the light of the impact of COVID-19
- Increasing the number of looked after children and care leavers in education, employment and training including late entrants to the care system and Key Stage 4 pupils.
- Ensuring that the voice of looked after children and care leavers is seen within all service development initiatives.
- To ensure there continues to be effective multi-agency strategy meetings to shape a coordinated, collaborative safety plan for vulnerable adolescents. This will include commitment to raise further awareness on transitional safeguarding to ensure continuity of services for the most vulnerable young people after their 18th birthday.
- All partners to ensure potential increase in demand for services – in line with the impact of Covid-19 – does not have a negative impact on outcomes for looked after children and care leavers

1.3 The report also sets out the priorities of the Looked After Children and Permanency service for 2022/23.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the CPC review and comment on the contents of this report. This ensures the CPC is fulfilling their responsibility to monitor and scrutinise the activity of Brent's CYP over the past year, thus ensuring that adequate care and support are being provided to looked after children and care leavers in the borough.

3.0 Corporate Parenting

3.1 The concept of Corporate Parenting was introduced by The Children Act 2004, which placed collective responsibility on local authorities and their partners to achieve good outcomes for all children in and those leaving public care. The term 'Corporate Parent' defines the collective

responsibility of elected members, employees and partner agencies to provide the best possible care for LAC and care leavers.

3.2 The notion of being a corporate parent was strengthened further by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 which highlighted the following seven principles of being a corporate parent. These are:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being of those children and young people;
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

3.3 Elected members in Brent carry out their corporate parenting duty as follows:

- a. The CPC, chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Young People with cross party Member representation scrutinises service performance. This occurs on a quarterly basis.
- b. Attendance of CIA (Care in Action) and CLIA (Care Leavers in Action) representatives at the CPC.
- c. Weekly liaison meetings between the Lead Member for Children and Young People, the Strategic Director Children and Young People and other senior staff within the Local Authority as appropriate.
- d. Regular meetings between representatives of CIA and CLIA with the Lead Member, Strategic Director, and Operational Directors for Children and Young People
- e. By ensuring Brent's 'Promise' to LAC, 'Care Leavers' Charter' and Local Offer for care leavers is abided by.
- f. An annual, mandatory Member Learning and Development session on Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting.

3.4 Members of Care in Action and Care Leavers in Action continued attending the Committee every quarter to provide updates on their recent activity. These updates were noted and supported by the Committee. The CPC in 2021/22 scrutinised a number of reports on various issues affecting LAC and care leavers including the following:

- a. In April 2021, the CPC scrutinised activities undertaken to assist Looked After Children and Care Leavers with their applications to obtain European Union Settled Status (EUSS). Additionally, The Committee heard about an update on the quality assurance of semi-independent provision commissioned by the Council to accommodate Looked After Children (LAC) aged 16-18 and Care Leavers. As a regular activity, the CPC has been provided with a quarterly update from the Fostering Service, including on Brent's Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, the joint fostering project, and the recruitment of foster carers. The last item covered in April 2022 was the six-monthly update on the performance of adoption activity managed by Adopt London West. These reports were co-written by Adopt London West and Brent, including information on activity on marketing/recruitment, assessment and approval of adopters; adoption scorecard information; family finding and matching; post adoption and post Special Guardianship Order (SGO) support including how Adoption Support Fund has been utilised.
- b. In July 2021, the Committee was presented with a report on the summary of activities undertaken by the Brent Care Journeys Programme. The report also drew attention to key achievements, challenges within the Covid-19 context as well as areas of priority for 2021/22. The Annual Corporate Parenting report for 2020/21 was presented to the Committee at the July 2021 meeting. At the same CPC, a quarterly report was presented with a summary of activities on Brent's in-house fostering service alongside with data in relation to UASC and placements for children.
- c. In October 2021, the Committee received a report summarising the outcomes of the Bright Spots Survey¹: 'Your life, your care' which was carried out with looked after children and young people in November/December 2020, and how the Council was responding to the results. Another report presented to the CPC was the Annual IRO report prepared by the Safeguarding and Review Service, in accordance with statutory requirements. The CPC also heard about a summary of activity undertaken to support Brent's Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers who originated from Afghanistan. This was the time when internal conflict in Afghanistan was affecting emotional wellbeing of Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers who originated from the country. At the same CPC, the Annual Report of the Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children was presented with an outline of the activity to support the educational outcomes for Brent Council's Looked After Children.

¹ Bright Spots Surveys are undertaken independently by Coram-Voice and University of Oxford in relation to care experiences of looked after children and care leavers.

As a routine activity, the CPC heard about the quarterly fostering and six monthly adoption reports.

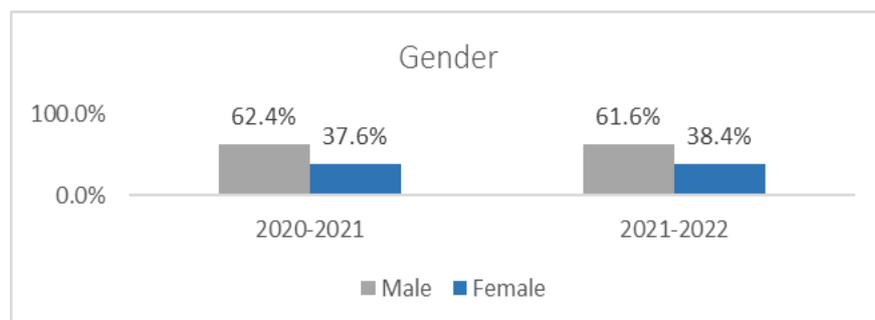
- d. In the January 2022 meeting, the Committee was presented with a report on another Bright Spots Survey 'Your Life beyond Care' undertaken with Brent care leavers and the Council's response to the results. The London Protocol on reducing criminalisation of Looked After Children and Care Leavers was another paper presented to the CPC, informing the Committee on Brent's position in relation to this and the relevant activities. North West London CCG presented a report to the CPC on the ways health services respond to the health needs of Looked After Children. The CPC also heard about the quarterly activity on Brent's in-house fostering service as the last item.

4.0 Profile of Looked after Children

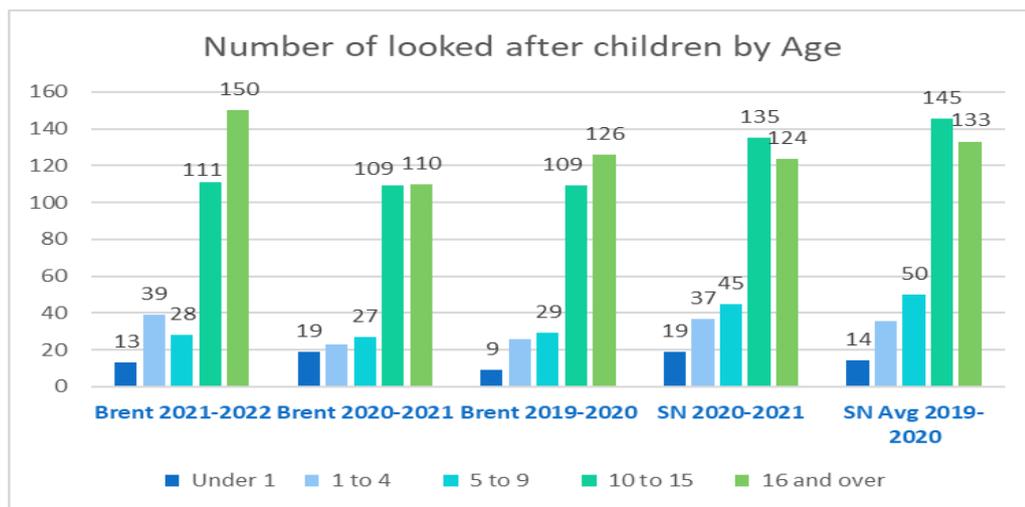
4.1 As of 31st March 2022 Brent had 341 children in care compared to 288 children on 31st March 2021, an increase of 18.4%. At 355 in February 2022, it was the highest at any time in the past five years. This represented 44 LAC per 10,000 among child population against the rate for England of 62 per 10,000 head of child population, an increase in rate by 7 from previous year (37). In 2021/22, 190 children have become looked after, compared to an average of 167 per year in the previous four years. The increase in LAC has primarily been driven by an increase in UASC. On 31st 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.

4.2 In 2021/2022, 49 children became children looked after for a second or subsequent time, compared to 44 in 2020/2021.

4.3 The gender of the LAC population consists of 61.6% male and 38.4% female, which is comparable to the previous year 2020-2021



4.4 44% of the care population in Brent is aged over 16 years old, compared to 38.2% at the end of March 2021. Over 76.5% of the care population in Brent are aged 10 and over. Having a predominantly adolescent LAC population and associated risks presents challenges around outcomes such as placement stability, education, employment and training. Many young people present with emotional and behavioural difficulties and complex needs that foster carers do not feel equipped to manage. Additionally, there is a national lack of sufficiency around foster carers for teenagers.



4.5 Ethnicity of LAC

4.5.1 The ethnicity² of looked after children broadly remained the same compared to the previous year. However, there has been a decrease in the number of looked after children from Mixed population and Black or Black British backgrounds and an increase of children from Other Ethnic groups and Asian Background. This is

² **White includes** (White –British, White-Cornish, White-English, White Scottish, White Welsh, White-Irish, Traveller of Iris heritage, Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Greek, Italian, Kosovan, Portuguese, White Eastern European, White Western European, Gypsy/Roma, Turkish, Serbian, any other white background)

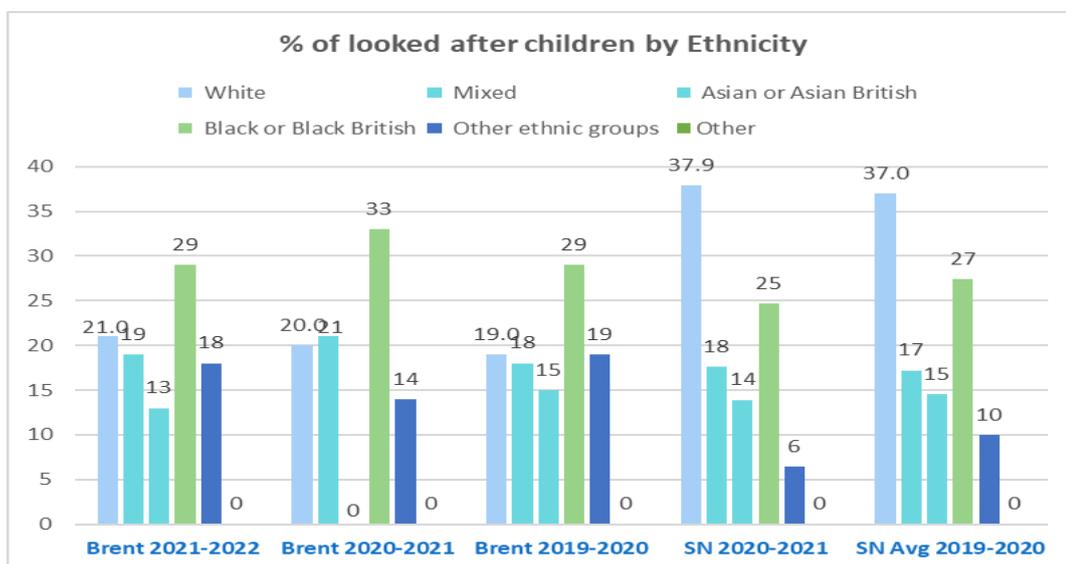
Mixed includes (White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Pakistani, White and Indian, Asian and any Black, Asian and Chinese, Black and Chinese, Chinese and any other ethnic group, White and Chinese, Any other mixed background)

Asian or Asian British includes (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, African Asian, Nepali, Sri Lankan, Any other Asian background)

Black or Black British includes (Black Caribbean, Black African, Black Angolan, Black, Congolese, Black Ghanaian, Black Nigerian, Black Sierra Leonean, Black Somali, Black Sudanese, Black European, Black North American and Any other Black background.)

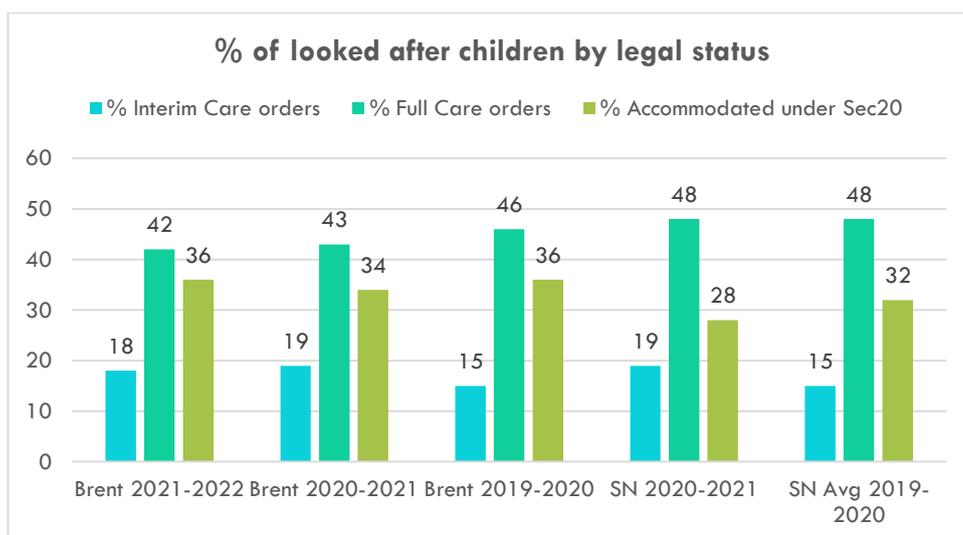
Any other ethnic group includes (Afghan, Arab, Egyptian, Filipino, Iranian, Iraqi, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Latin American, Libyan, Lebanese, Malay, Moroccan, Polynesian, Thai, Vietnamese, Yemeni, Refused, Information not yet obtained)

mostly related to the increased number of UASC taken into care in 2021/22. The large majority of UASC taken into care in this reporting year were of Asian background.



4.6 Legal Status and placement's locality of LAC

4.6.1 The majority of looked after children were subject to Care Orders (Interim and Full Care orders) under the Children Act 1989, representing 60% of all LAC in this reporting year. A further 124 children (36% of all LAC) were in care through a voluntary agreement with the parents/carers as pursuant to Sec 20 of the Children Act 1989. 77 of these children are UASC who are looked after on Sec 20 agreement.



4.6.2 The proportion of children placed more than 20 miles away from their home address as at 31st March 2022 was 16.4%, a reduction on the previous year's figure of 19.8% (the national average is 14%).

Brent was able to place more children locally within this reporting year. Brent Children’s Services aims to place children closer to their families and local support networks. However, in many cases where children enter care in adolescence, young people may need to be placed out of borough for their own safety. Placement sufficiency issues in London are also evident as it is challenging to identify local placements for adolescents with highly complex needs. Brent’s Sufficiency Strategy 2022-24 identifies this issue as a local and regional issue, including measures to work in partnership with internal and external partners to broaden placement options for looked after children.

4.7 Placements of LAC in Brent

4.7.1 Most children resided within fostering placements (205) – 60% of all LAC, a reduction from 2021 (63%). This area of work remains a challenge for most London local authorities and nationally. Identifying foster placements for adolescents has continued to be a challenge due to lack of sufficiency in foster placements and the majority of LAC being teenagers (60% are over the age of 13 and 44% over the age of 16).

4.7.2 The LA has an in-house fostering service that at the end of March 2022 supported 51 children.

5.0 Placement Stability

5.1 Recruitment and retention of foster carers remained a priority for 2021/22. The plan, following a successful fostering feasibility study in 2020-21, to create a joint fostering service primarily aimed at increasing placement options for teenagers, continued in 2021-22. Brent, Ealing and Harrow agreed to work together, initially in combining marketing, recruitment and training offers. Brent is leading this piece of work and four work streams (sufficiency, placement stability, co-production and engagement and performance and finance) attended by the relevant managers in Social Care, commissioning and marketing are meeting regularly to plan for this.

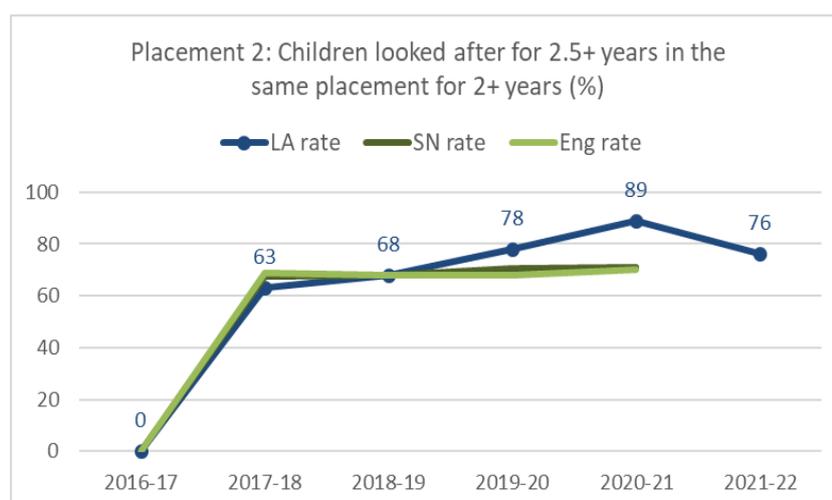
5.2 Number of Brent fostering households and approved fostering places at 31 March 2022 (and trend)

Collection year	Number of Households	Number of places
2020	99	155
2021	100	153
2022	98	142

5.3 Placement stability for children who have had 3 or more placements in a year has deteriorated. Brent's performance around 3 or more placement moves increased from 13% in March 2021 to 17.9% in 2022. This is particularly related to Brent's profile of looked after children as described above.

5.4 Scrutiny of all placement change requests at the weekly Children's Placement Panel has ensured a robust process for decision-making around placement changes and ensuring that change is only supported when it is in the child or young person's best interest. A monthly placement stability meeting was established to track multiple placement changes and share learning with practitioners and foster carers with the view to support placement stability. A social work practice consultant with the focus on placement stability has provided support to practitioners and chaired placement stability meetings. There continued to be a number of children and young people with complex needs who found it difficult to settle and where placement moves have been necessary. The focus of work is identifying and commissioning the right intervention for each young person to support stability. Where a placement is at risk, placement stability meetings are held with key professionals. Individual placements are monitored by social workers and by IROs as part of LAC Reviews and by the LAC Tracking Panel, chaired by the Head of Looked After Children and Permanency.

5.5 The robust activity and focus on placement stability has resulted in more looked after children remaining in their long-term placements for more than 2 years. This is well above national and statistical neighbour's performance.



5.6 The Head of LAC and Permanency scrutinised all placement change requests. The Operational Director continued to approve any out of area

placements and provided scrutiny at this level of operational service decisions to ensure placements meet the needs of children.

5.7 Permanency Planning

5.7.1 Between 01/04/2021 and 31/03/2022, there were 3 children adopted and 12 children who left care through the making of Special Guardianship Orders. In addition, in this reporting period, 8 children were made subject of a Placement Order, 4 children were formally matched and 3 were placed with their adopters.

5.7.2 The non-published data at the end of March 2022, in comparison to the published national and statistical neighbour averages, demonstrates that adoption timeliness remains strong when placing children for adoption once court authority to place has been granted. However, the average time taken for a child entering care to being placed for adoption is 488.5 days and compares less well against the Brent 2016-19 national average of 376 days and the statistical neighbour average of 370. The average time taken from the local authority receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and a match being approved is 184.7 days which compares favourably to the national average of 178 days and the statistical neighbour average of 203.

5.7.3 Adopt London West (ALW)

5.7.3.1 Adopt London West (ALW) established in October 2019, continues to provide adoption and post-order support work on behalf of Brent. Adopt London West is hosted by Ealing and works closely with the other three regional adoption agencies within the Adopt London group. Unlike the other London RAAs, ALW also offers support to Special Guardians, a significant group requiring longer-term support.

5.7.3.2 ALW works closely with staff in Brent Children's Services once permanence for a child is first discussed. ALW ensures that adoption plans and associated family finding are progressed quickly and a robust approval and matching process is in place for children. Family finding for Brent children has continued to be a priority with ALW involved in permanency tracking activity on a monthly basis and leading on permanency planning meetings for children who have a care plan of adoption.

5.7.3.3 Over this past year we have worked proactively with ALW to utilise early permanency options for children with a likely

plan for adoption. This is an ongoing area of development; however, we have had three relinquished babies placed in Fostering for Adoption placements in this reporting year, one of whom was also adopted in this same period.

Case Study – Early Permanency with adopters

CZ is the first child of her mother and second child of her unnamed father.

CZ was born in the autumn of 2020. Her mother left the hospital on the same day she gave birth, leaving the baby. Brent Family Front Door received a referral from the hospital advising that the mother, aged 21 years old, had attended the delivery suite without a booking, reporting that she did not know about her pregnancy. The midwife advised that mother did not want to keep the baby and wanted the baby to be placed for adoption.

Mother was reported by the hospital to have depression and was prescribed anti-depressant medication. The full circumstances surrounding CZ's conception and her parent's relationship remains unclear and it is believed that CZ's father is not aware of the baby. CZ's mother did not want to provide any identifying information about the father but did state that the father has mental health needs and he and his family 'would not be good for the baby' as she had experienced ongoing domestic, sexual and financial abuse within the relationship. CZ was placed with a Brent foster carer under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

Formal permanency planning and family finding began immediately.

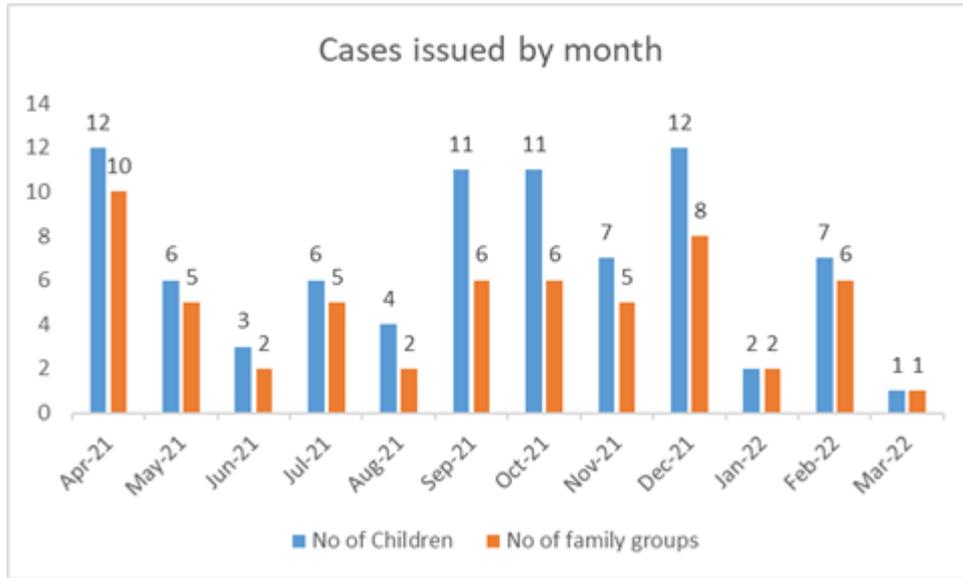
CAFCASS subsequently appointed a reporting officer who met mother to sign the adoption consent forms. Mother made it clear that she wanted the baby to be placed for adoption and that there was no one in her family able to look after CZ.

The Local Authority made a Part 19 Application in respect of CZ for the court to determine whether the child's putative father should be informed or consulted in respect of the child's adoption proceedings, or whether the adoption could proceed based on the child's mother's consent alone. The High Court ruled in favour of mother's position to keep the adoption confidential from the birth father having taken into consideration mother's depression and alleged history of domestic abuse.

In spring of 2021, Adopt London West Adoption Panel recommended CZ was placed for adoption. Within a month, CZ was placed for adoption and in the same year, the Adoption Order was granted.

5.8 Care Proceedings

5.8.1 The number of care proceedings initiated by Brent has remained consistent with a total of 58 cases (82 children) being issued in 2021/22 compared to 57 cases in 2020/21. Nationally there was a 1.1% increase in care proceedings applications.



5.8.2 Timeliness of care proceedings concluded in 2021/22 is 43 weeks, again, better performance than the national average at 45 weeks. This continues to reflect strong joint working between social work and legal teams as well as effective care proceedings tracking arrangements.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Brent (Internal data 2020/2021)	35 weeks	38 weeks	35 weeks	39.5 weeks	43 weeks
London average (Baker Bulletin Q1 and 2)	31 weeks	33 weeks	37 weeks	Not available	Not available
National average (CAFCASS data)	29 weeks	31 weeks	32 weeks	41 weeks	45 weeks

5.8.3 There continued to be multiple and complex reasons for cases that exceeded the expected 26 week timeframe for proceedings and these include:

- Complexity within cases - new children born within proceedings, larger sibling groups often with different care plans, Fact Finding hearings and delays due to outstanding criminal charges/court processes.
- International elements- requiring travel, liaising with foreign authorities and legal bodies, and often prolonged, complex family assessments.

- Delays caused by difficulties in securing independent experts and completing expert assessments.

5.8.4 Brent has continued to track care proceedings cases via an established monthly 'Care Proceedings Tracking meeting', chaired by senior CYP managers and senior lawyers of the Local Authority. The meeting aims to quickly identify any issues that might cause or create delay within proceedings and rectify them as well as provide advice and guidance to practitioners on complex court cases.

5.8.5 A Social Work Practice Consultant (SWPC, specialist in permanency planning and court work) has continued supporting and developing social work practice in these areas by co-working court cases. The support provided by this role has been invaluable, particularly for the newly qualified and less experienced social work staff in the service who benefit from the additional support, expertise and modelling that the SWPC provides for court work cases. The SWPC also works with looked after children teams to ensure that permanency planning is taking place for children, including those with a plan of adoption, in a timely manner.

5.8.6 There has continued to be a high number of court hearings this year, as virtual hearings have remained in place for the majority of cases. Virtual court hearings have presented several benefits, like decreased time taken to travel to and from court, less sitting and waiting around at court. However, the change to virtual hearings has also presented some challenges: additional hearings, limited ability to discuss, negotiate and liaise with parties in person and a lack of physical support for parents during hearings.

6.0 Participation of looked after children, young people and care leavers.

6.1 Looked after children continued to have their voice heard and influence exerted during 2021/22. Their views have consistently been reflected in assessments and applications to court, gathered through direct work using Signs of Safety tools and through IROs who meet with children as part of the LAC review process. IROs continued to provide good independent oversight of decision-making. The child/young person attended and spoke for themselves in 62% of LAC reviews in 2021/22, an increase from 59% in the year previous.

6.2 In Brent children and young people who are the members of Brent's Children in Care Council call their groups 'Care in Action'. There are three groups who meet once a month as:

- Junior Care in Action (JCIA) (7-11 year olds)
- Care in Action (CIA) (12-17 year olds)
- Care Leavers in Action (CLIA) (18 – 25 year olds)

6.3 Key achievements in 2021/22 include:

- The first Youth Inspection was completed, with findings presented to the Director of Children Services and the Lead Member in September 2021. CLIA members have held the LAC and Permanency Service to account regarding the changes that they have committed to implementing.
- The first residential for CIA was held at the Gordon Brown Centre in summer 2021 with 12 participants attending.
- Care in Action Groups produced videos of what was important to them at their Christmas parties and these were shared at the CYP Staff Conference in January 2022.
- Care in Action groups were involved in a range of consultations to help develop services. This includes contributing to the development of Brent Practice Promises with their direct quotes being included.

6.4 There continues to be a core group of children and young people in each of the Care in Action groups with a focus on understanding the views of their care experienced peers through Bright Spots surveys. They are actively involved in ways to recruit more children and young people into the groups. The groups are directly promoted to children and young people through foster carers, social workers, personal advisors, the Virtual School and Independent Reviewing Officers.

"I think we are seeing changes and differences, I am getting good support"

CIA member, (12-17 years, Feb 2022)

"CIA is a close knit group and have built great relationships with senior leaders"

CIA member, (12-17 years old), February 2022

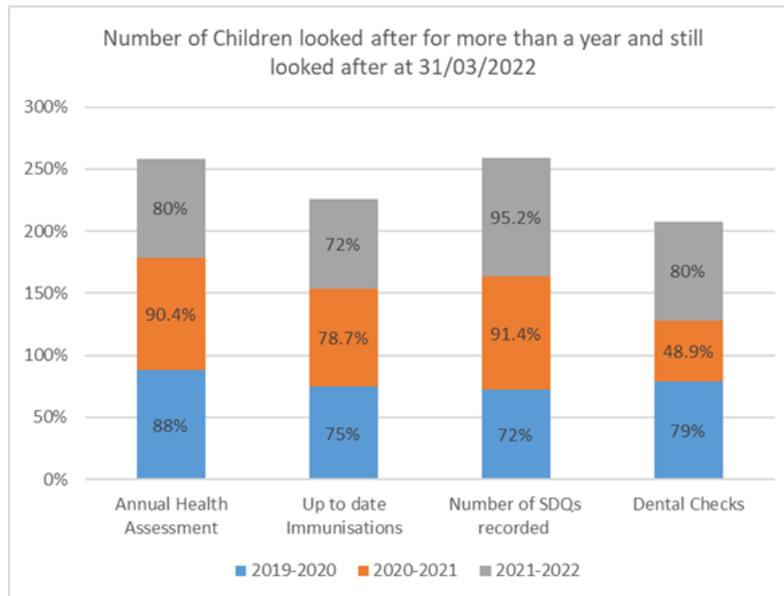
6.5 In the past year, the Strategic Director and Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care and other senior leaders attended each of the groups. For example, at an event in October 2021, JCIA/CIA members prepared questions to ask the Strategic Director and gave feedback on their experiences.

6.6 Members of CIA/CLIA have attended every Corporate Parenting Committee meeting in 2021/22. They represent their peers and explain what each group has accomplished. The members take their responsibility to represent their peers seriously and support each other to prepare and represent themselves and their peers well. In addition, representatives of CIA/CLIA attended the Local Partnership Meeting with LAC and Care Leavers and are members of the Voice and Influence sub-group of this meeting. The Local Partnership Meeting is a multi-agency meeting of partners working together to improve outcomes for LAC and care leavers. Participants include representatives from CCG, CAMHS, Central North West London NHS trust, Anna Freud Centre; Probation, various providers as well as Brent staff from Housing, YOS, Brent Virtual School for LAC, Localities, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance and Looked after Children and Permanency service.

7.0 Health of Looked After Children

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

7.2 LAC Health data for 2021/22 has not yet been submitted to the DfE as part of the statutory data reporting requirement and will not be submitted until August 2022. Unpublished data shows that there has been significant progress in ensuring dental checks (following difficulties last reporting period due to the Covid-19 pandemic) and SDQs are completed for LAC. It also indicates that health assessment and immunisation performance has declined, primarily due to a large cohort of unaccompanied asylum children who do not have a record of immunisations and also a large cohort of adolescents for whom it has been more challenging to encourage them to undertake a health assessment.



7.3 In line with our priorities for 2021/22, there has been increased activity to support emotional wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers in this reporting period.

7.4 The Wellbeing and Emotional Support Team (WEST) now provides a wider targeted service for identified vulnerable groups, including Looked After Children and children with a disability, 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. Additional capacity was built into this service when our Brent Emotional Wellbeing Service (BEWS) was decommissioned in this reporting period. When the need arises for a Tier 3 CAMHS referral, clinicians are available to support social workers in completing those referrals.

7.5 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.

7.6 A CAMHS Looked After Child and Transition Mental Health Care Coordinator is co-located with LAC teams to work alongside social workers. The Coordinator ensures that the emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of children and young people who are accommodated outside of Brent are met. This role began as a pilot and has now been confirmed as a permanent post, with contracted hours being extended to 0.8 F/T. The aim of this post is to improve emotional and mental wellbeing of children placed out of borough and to ensure that they have access to

the necessary support locally. Feedback from social workers has continued to be positive about the impact of having access to a clinical practitioner with the flexibility to undertake direct work and advocacy for some of our most vulnerable and challenging to care for children and young people.

7.7 During this reporting period we have provided specific support to our UASC LAC population through individual and group therapeutic work provided by WEST. This support is ongoing and the plan is to expand this further in 2022/23. In partnership with CNWL, we provided a Bespoke Wellbeing Workshop for UASCs and former UASCs affected by the political changes in Afghanistan in August 2021. An emotional wellbeing programme for UASC and former UASC is planned to take place in 2022/23. The proposed programme of support will involve low-level therapeutic work in the form of case work and group work, and some social activities focused on achieving overall wellbeing, over 24 months from 1st August 2022.

7.8 During this reporting period, in partnership with Tender (<https://tender.org.uk/>), we delivered a four-day Healthy Relationship programme to a group of our 12-15 year old LAC girls. Using a mixture of yoga and creative arts, the girls were able to explore what healthy relationships were and how to create healthy relationships for themselves in a relaxed and fun environment. They celebrated successfully completing this week with a fun Graffiti Art session. We continue to partner with Tender and plan to run several more Healthy Relationship groups in 2022/23.

Feedback from participants of Healthy Relationship group:

What are the key elements of a healthy and unhealthy relationship?

Healthy – kindness, mature, funny, fairness, loving, good listener

Unhealthy – control, pressure, physical fighting

I learnt that healthy and unhealthy relationships are good to talk about because you never know what might happen in an unhealthy relationship. I also learnt that yoga is calming.

I enjoyed meeting new friends and having a good time. I also enjoyed the yoga and different activities.

I have enjoyed that you can talk about anything, and people will listen to you.

8.0 Multi-agency Partnership for LAC and Care Leavers

8.1 Brent Children's Services have well established and mature relationships with partners resulting in strong and effective multi-agency arrangements. The Brent Children's Trust, chaired by the statutory Director of Children's Services, and plays a key role within Brent's Corporate Parenting Strategy via setting priorities for all partners working with children and families including children in care and care leavers. A range of activities undertaken by partners, including service providers, is routinely reported to the Joint Commissioning Group, a sub-group of the Children's Trust.

8.2 The Local Partnership Meeting (LPM) for Care Experienced Children and Young People is one of the five transformation groups reporting to the Joint Commissioning Group. The LPM consists of relevant officers from Brent Council (including CYP Department (Looked after Children and Permanency, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Youth Offending Service within Early Help, Housing Needs, Public Health), Community Wellbeing, Regeneration and Environment) and partners such as NHS North West London CCG, Probation, Westminster Drug Project (WDP) and Central London Community Healthcare (CLCH) NHS Trust. The group is also attended by Care Leavers in Action Group (Brent's Children in Care Council) representatives who act as conduits between the LPM and representatives of the CLIA group.

8.3 The LPM has been responsible for achieving the priorities of 2021/22. Six working groups were set up by the LPM with relevant representation, each group working on one particular priority area. Chairs of these priority area working groups regularly attended the LPM to report on their progress. These priority areas were as below:

- Health and Wellbeing of the looked after children and care leavers
- Education, Employment and Training
- Voice and Influence (participation and engagement)
- Independent living
- Transitional Safeguarding
- Stability for LAC and Care Leavers

9.0 Children Missing or Absent from Care

9.1 In the year ending 31st March 2022, 94 children in care were reported to be missing from their placements at least once compared to 74 in the previous year. This represented 18% of all LAC looked after at any point during the year (n=503) compared to 15% in the previous year. 64 of the

94 had more than one missing incident in the year. In this reporting year 87 children were reported as being absent from their care placement compared with 34 in 2020/21. An absence may be a situation where a child has not returned home at an agreed time but their whereabouts is known. These higher figures are likely to be in relation to pandemic lockdown measures easing and the missing figures, although higher than last year, have remained lower than they were pre-Covid.

9.2 Children who are missing from care are offered return home interviews (RHIs) by the Children's Rights Officers (CRO), from the Early Help service and the Looked After and Permanency Service. The goal of this work is for young people to receive a consistent response from an independent person outside of the 'social services system'. In addition, these consistent workers have a much clearer overview of all the missing young people in the borough and are able to help identify trends and patterns within the regular missing forums.

A Social Work Practice Consultant (SWPC,) a specialist in missing and vulnerable young people in the service, monitors RHIs and supports team managers in chairing missing complex strategy meetings. The SWPC also makes sure that safety plans and Vulnerability Adolescent Risk Assessments (VARA) are completed.

9.3 The Vulnerability Risk Assessment is a tool used to assess risk holistically and plan with multi-agency partners to reduce risk. This VARA is being integrated into Mosaic to further aid information sharing and reporting between agencies.

9.4 The SWPC liaises daily with the CRO to gather information and themes from the RHIs. Some of the learning from the RHIs from 2021/2022 are: A small number of young people commented that placement staff lack interest in their experience/journey. Young people have spoken of their need to have more of a holistic approach towards their care within their placement as well as warmth from staff in relation to their interaction with young people. This learning was fed into meetings with the commissioning team. There is also further learning about the desire for changes to contact with family which are passed back to the appropriate social worker. In addition, we have been able to identify that unaccompanied asylum seeking young people are more likely to go missing if they feel they are placed further from any support network that exists in the UK. There is an ongoing theme that most young people do not view themselves as missing and say they were just out with friends. Many do not want to take part in an RHI for this reason but often do have more informal conversations with the CRO which provide the local authority with useful information. Further work is progressing to explore other ways to capture information, including

looking at whether there are other trusted people in the young person's support network who could carry out the RHI with them. The SWPC shares information with the Contextual Safeguarding Lead (CSL) and partners in different forums with the aim to improve practice and upskill practitioners in different direct work approaches with the aim to engage our young people.

- 9.5 The contextual safeguarding lead chairs a weekly missing meeting with the police to ensure cases are progressing and information is being shared between agencies or escalated if needed, in addition to a monthly operations meeting to further interrogate the missing data and ensure learning is being applied to practice.
- 9.6 Brent has collaborative approaches to provide a coherent overview of the most vulnerable adolescents. Practitioners have the opportunity to have a 1:1 consultation with the CSL who provides advice and tools to practitioners to identify young people who are at risk of exploitation or other vulnerabilities. Other tools and resources available for practitioners are the NRM (National Referral Mechanism), Global Thinking and Rescue and Response (GTRR), exploitation services. These services, including the Exploitation, Violence and Vulnerability Panel (EVVP) are available for young people up to the age of 25, thus including both Looked after Children and Care Leavers. Further work is ongoing to explore Transitional Safeguarding processes within the Council, to support those over the age of 18 who remain at risk of extra familial harm.
- 9.7 A strategic overview of operational activity is provided by the Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group - a strong multi-agency forum, supported by a Vulnerable Adolescents Data Analyst who triangulates data to identify children and young people at risk. During CSSG themes and trends that have been identified from the EVVP panel are discussed to ensure a multi-agency strategic response.
- 9.8 The CSL has relaunched the Contextual Safeguarding Champions group including a local Pupil Referral Unit and the Young Brent Foundation. These partners share best practice, identify trends and address barriers to safeguarding young people within the community. In the longer term, these findings and the implementation of the safety measures will help to further reduce the number of young people going missing.

10.0 Education of Looked After Children

- 10.1 There is a multidisciplinary team operating within Brent Virtual School (BVS) to support young people in care to achieve their best educational outcomes. This comprises lead advisory teachers, educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, emotional wellbeing practitioners, mentors, education officers, a UASC and year 11 education officer, post 16 advisors and a performance officer. The team draws on the expertise of colleagues in the Inclusion Support team and works closely with social workers and foster carers, as well as school and setting staff.
- 10.2 As of the end of summer term 1 2021/22 Looked After Children's school attendance at KS1 and KS2 (Primary) is 94.1% and KS3 and KS4 (Secondary) is 82.8%. There has been a steady increase in attendance rates each month since the start of the spring term. There has been an increase in fixed term exclusions this year (20) in comparison to the last two years, but this is still lower than pre-pandemic numbers. As with previous years there has not been any permanent exclusions for looked after children. This is due to the close partnership working with schools, designated teachers, foster carers and social workers, addressing problems before they arise.
- 10.3 Since the start of the academic year 12 new statutory aged UASC have entered the care system, all but one of these young people are in Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 5, 25 UASC have entered the care system during this academic year. A dedicated BVS welcome pack has been developed for the UASC cohort and translated into relevant languages. Additionally a dedicated BVS staff member works with statutory aged UASC to ensure that appropriate education provisions are in place as soon as possible and where there is a dispute with a young person's age tuition is provided until the outcome of the relevant assessments. In addition to school/college admissions the UASC advisor also ensures that the young person and their carer are signposted to local community groups and activities including Springforward, Young Roots and Paiwand as well as online resources. There is also a comprehensive enrichment programme including residential trips that are both UASC specific and with others which seek to promote transition and integration into the local area and wider community.
- 10.4 The number of statutory aged young people in care under the BVS with an EHCP is 48, just over 25% of the cohort. A new system was introduced this academic year whereby the annual review is combined with a PEP review. A dedicated SEND officer for LAC has been identified and is supporting the BVS, social workers and schools to ensure a coherent approach. Where BVS have difficulty in placing students with an EHCP the SEND team support the commissioning and negotiation within the placement area. Where there are challenges the

Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) and Deputy step in to negotiate with local VSH and Inclusion Assistant Directors.

- 10.5 The number of Post-16 young people that are EET has significantly increased since the same reporting period last year (81%). This is in part due to the removal of restrictions due to the pandemic but also largely due to the partnership working between the commissioned service Prospects and BVS. The Post-16 advisor, data manager and Prospects advisors meet on a monthly basis and go through all students cross referencing databases to ensure the most accurate information and then ensure that those young people who are NEET are receiving direct support from one of the three workers. This process has helped to close the gap between EET and NEET and also allowed for early intervention for those most at risk of becoming NEET. Prospects have also provided access to a new programme funded by the GLA ESF, Spark Change. This is a supported internship programme for young people including LAC and care leavers. The support programme includes CBT job coaches and will commence in the summer term 2021/22 to support young people back into EET.
- 10.6 There are currently 53 Year 11 students of which 20 are UASC. The SFR cohort number is 34 of which 8 are UASC who will not be sitting external examinations. Of the remaining 26, 9 students have an EHCP and a further 9 are SEN support. 20 students are expected to sit GCSEs and another two are being entered for functional skills. The PPG has been utilised to support these students in a number of ways including: art therapy, 1:1 tuition in specific subject areas, enrichment activities that explore their Post 16 ambitions. The BVS enrichment programme is a key tool to keep children and young people motivated. A regular programme of activity includes the BVS Homework Club, which is a weekly session that takes place at Brent Civic Centre each Wednesday, where BVS teaching staff are on hand to support students with revision and the development of their learning styles; the PALAC tuition programme offered to students in English and Maths; online resources - Savemyexams and GCSEPod and a range of revision resources.
- 10.7 94% of PEPs for the autumn term 2021/22 were completed and signed off by the Virtual School. There has been some drift since then in the timeliness of completion due to two main reasons, the first being a move to a new PEP and Attendance digital platform (eGov) that has taken time to embed with schools and the second being a renewed focus on PEP quality. In order to improve the quality of the PEPs the BVS has organised a Designated Teachers' (DTs) Forum on the theme of standardisation and PEP quality; is undertaking ongoing training for social workers on the new system and the PEP process; has provided

guidance and training videos to all schools; is undertaking group and 1:1 training with DTs and is holding improvement meetings with identified schools to discuss the quality of their PEPs

- 10.8 The mental health and wellbeing of Looked After Children is supported by the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and the Wellbeing and Emotional Support Team (WEST). The Education Psychology Service has undertaken consultations with 34 young people new to care since the start of the academic year. The key themes emerging for the adolescent cohort are communication skills, self-confidence in their ability to succeed and learning delays due to their fractured educational experience. As a consequence the PPG is being refocused in the summer term to expand the enrichment activities via the use of the Gordon Brown Centre with CBT supported weekend activity programmes, a broadened offer based on individual interests and the engagement of a speech language therapist, to delivery group work and individual work in developing their communication skills.
- 10.9 WEST provide clinical psychology support for looked after children and young people not meeting the CAMHS threshold. WEST also provide consultations and indirect intervention programmes supporting social workers, foster carers, Brent Virtual School and other members of the professional network to best support LAC. WEST has worked with 41 LAC in the spring 2022 term with 79 direct sessions delivered to 19 CYP and 132 indirect sessions relating to 30 children. The team leads a Reflective Fostering Group, which is an 11-session group programme for foster carers and kinship carers. During the summer term WEST is providing direct work tailored to supporting UASC. WEST have also been preparing to deliver tailored support for life-story work with social workers alongside training on 'Understanding Trauma' and clinical supervision for social workers managing highly complex cases.
- 10.10 Brent Virtual School retains 50% of the Pupil Premium Plus which is used for a number of resources and activities including mentoring, residential trips, enrichment activities; training – online and face to face and 1:1 tuition for students out of school. The enrichment programme offers LAC a wide range of opportunities both local and further afield and the Virtual School is constantly looking at ways to improve the offer with one of the focus points this year being how to engage a wider range of LAC. Key groups that have been identified as being the ones that are least represented are, children with profound SEN, Key Stage 4 boys and those who live beyond 50 miles of Brent. BVS is working with local borough partners, Harrow, Barnet and Ealing, in order to create an even more robust offer that targets these groups whilst also maintaining those that are already engaged. Whilst the enrichment programme has a

major impact on those involved it is sometimes hard to measure as some of the impact could be described as 'soft' skills. After each activity feedback is collected in order to measure the impact and decide on whether the activity is one that we will run again in the future.

11.0 Care Leavers

- 11.1 The Local Authority has a dedicated Leaving Care Service that provides services and support to all young people who leave care from the age of 18 years (including those leaving care at age of 16 and 17) until they reach the age of 25.
- 11.2 All care leavers have an allocated personal advisor who is introduced to them at the age of 17 to start building relationships and advocate for young people as they approach 18. This ensures that all those in care approaching 18 years of age, already know their personal advisor and have developed a positive relationship in working alongside their allocated social worker, this then helps smooth the transition into adulthood. Due to the impact of the Social Work Act 2017, there has been an expected increase in the overall number of care leavers. In line with this growth in demand Brent has allocated additional resources to increase the capacity of Leaving Care Teams in 2021/22. With an increased capacity in leaving care, personal advisors will start to be co-allocated cases at 16 and a half.
- 11.3 A personal advisor is not a qualified social worker but often has a background in working with young people in a variety of settings such as in youth justice, housing organisations or youth groups. In 2021/22, the staffing establishment of the Leaving Care Service consisted of three teams with 6 personal advisors supervised by three team managers. The teams also had co-allocated external partners such as Prospects, 2 part-time DWP workers, personal advisor with a lead in housing as well as Barnardo's Care Journey's Team members.
- 11.4 As of 31st March 2022, Brent was responsible for the support to 333 Former Relevant Young People [aged 18 - 21] (an increase of 8.5% from 307 last year) and 133 young people aged 22-25 (an increase of 23% from 108 last year). In line with the Social Work Act 2017, Brent offers a 21+ service providing support, advice and guidance to any care leaver who may wish to have this support up to the age of 25.

12.0 Brent's Local Offer for Care Leavers

- 12.1 The comprehensive local offer for care leavers, revised in April 2022, shows that the local authority is an ambitious corporate parent for care

leavers. As part of reviewing the local offer, a series of workshops were delivered in conjunction with Barnardo's (Brent Care Journeys (BCJ) which included workshops with Children in Care, current care leavers and consultation took place with young people who attend the care leaver's hub and Care leavers in Action (CLIA).

- 12.2 The main findings from consultation were captured in several themes, some of these themes have been converted to actions and have been part of the revised local offer for care leavers for example under 'User Experience' care leavers wanted to know about the local offer in person. Under 'Inclusion and Accessibility' care leavers were concerned that the local offer maybe inaccessible to those who have no or low level of English, or those with special needs such as learning disability. As part of the local offer we agreed to assess financial viability of making the offer available in different languages as well as a visual version. The local authority provides for appropriate tailored individual support, including 10 ring-fenced apprenticeships for care leavers, a traineeship programme, various workshops around vocational training and development opportunities.
- 12.3 Care Leavers have access to a range of services including careers advice and guidance through daily drop-in sessions across Brent, a dedicated Care Leavers Careers Advice worker and two life coaches as well as consultations with a DWP worker regarding financial support. Care Leavers who are parents are encouraged to be actively engaged in activities/programmes on offer in Brent's newly established Family Wellbeing Centres (former Children's Centres), including access to The Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home-visiting (MESCH) through the Health Visitors Service. Care Leavers are supported by Brent Virtual School to achieve education outcomes. For example, the counselling phone line Safe Base has been made available to Care Leavers in Higher Education, to support with mental health issues and build resilience to stay the course. As part of Brent's Local Offer, 67 different commitments were made to care leavers. 8 of those commitments were statutory duties Brent needed to provide by law and 59 were additional, discretionary commitments made to care leavers.
- 12.4 DfE guidance suggests that local authorities should review their local offers every 2-3 years. Senior leaders in Brent made a decision for the progress of the local offer to be reviewed on an annual basis with the view to revise it in a two yearly cycle. In this way, care leavers' needs continue to be kept on the agenda annually.
- 12.5 Brent has continued to meet its statutory responsibilities as well as discretionary commitments to care leavers during the COVID-19

pandemic, in line with our priorities for 2021/22. During national lockdowns, the majority of care leavers were visited online and at times face to face when required. During the restrictions of in-person meetings, there was significant impact on face-to-face activities such as the weekly football and monthly enrichment activities for care leavers. All activities returned to face to face after the national public health guidance allowed this.

13.0 Care Leavers' Enrichment Programme throughout the Pandemic

13.1 Throughout the pandemic, the enrichment programme for care leavers has continued through a hybrid mixture of online and offline events. The Enrichment Programme continues to be a peer support programme and our young people are now meeting face to face once a month and communicate and share knowledge and events via their WhatsApp Group. It was positive to see young people meeting to share their experiences of how they coped during lockdown, a number of social events have taken place including a Christmas party. With the support from personal advisor(s) and the manager from Wembley Stadium Learning Zone we were granted permission from Wembley Stadium to allow the party to take place. Young people took part in various things such as a dance performance, we had a photo booth available, and another young person prepared a DJ music mix throughout the evening.

13.2 The Care Leavers' Hub has been meeting since its inception in November 2018 and the participants continue to grow the work after lockdowns ended. Some of the comments made are:

"...I find the hub group a great place for socialising with other people, the atmosphere is enjoyable to catch up with friends and food is sometimes involved so that's a plus as well" (*NM, Care Leaver*)..."

"...Yeah I do, it's a good time to chill and just be with people. I really enjoy them" (*CM, Care Leaver*)..."

Thereafter activities have included going to the cinema, bowling and having a meal. We continue to recognise how our interactions on the Enrichment Programme helps the young people to combat isolation. During our sessions, we also discuss current issues such as mental wellbeing, the rise in the cost of living and other topics raised by young people.

13.3 We have continued to support young people into employment. This includes starting a 'Seeking employment' WhatsApp group. Jobs are being posted every day and Brent's commissioned provider for EET, Prospects, are part of the group, supporting young people with their CV

and interview skills. One young person successfully gained a place on the civil service year-long internship based on information in this group and many others have asked for support and more information on various roles.

- 13.4 Element's autumn project with Brent care leavers ran from October to December 21. There were 12 sessions, covering photography, mixed media, painting, lino printing, drama, marbling and poetry. We also ran a project showcase at the Kiln cinema space, to celebrate the group's hard work and creativity. The sessions were co-facilitated by two Brent Youth Champions: these were paid roles and both received training in facilitation, and then worked co-facilitating sessions alongside Element staff members. Both facilitators supported Element staff to run the project showcase and one of the co-facilitators also planned and ran her own mixed media session. The final project showcase was held at the Kiln cinema space in December 21. Element staff, with Kiln guests, celebrated the efforts of the group over the past two months.

"I've been doing this project for a couple of months now. It was nice meeting new people and doing more art.", care leaver

'Thank you, this has been something that I've always wanted to do. I've always wanted to express myself through art, I've always been into drawing but I've never had the chance to showcase it. This opportunity was nice so I said to myself, "let's go for it". I've met some very nice, cool people, with lots of jokes. Thank you for coming through- shout out to everyone.' care leaver

- 13.5 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. As reported in the first interim report, up to June 2021 BCJ ran a variety of Here and Now activities that were a combination of 'voice and influence events' (e.g., Black History Month vent) and recreational activities (e.g., horse riding). After June 2021, BCJ continued to deliver 'Here and Now' activities, including:

- Recreational activities such as meals and movie nights
- Influence and voice events: Barnardo's Excellence Awards, motivational workshops, participation in recruitment of Brent and Barnardo's staff
- Training and support sessions for movement members
- Power groups were introduced around themes such as fitness, reading and being a parent. These groups are led by movement

members and represent spaces for care experienced young people to connect with others under those themes.

Last year Brent worked with BCJ to find opportunities and experiences for young people within the local authority. Since July 2021 this process has evolved to include the recruitment of care-experienced young people to junior staff roles within the BCJ team.

14.0 Grandmentors Programme

14.1 The Grandmentors programme transforms the lives of young people through the emotional and practical support of older volunteers. The trained volunteers, aged 50 and over, forge trusting and positive relationships that support, challenge and empower mentees to unlock their own skills and to shape their own future. Grandmentors provide a vital link for young people as they navigate life after care. Despite the challenges of Covid-19, Brent Grandmentors have been instrumental in guiding and supporting young people transitioning into Independent Living. The support Grandmentors provided varied depending on the individual's needs, i.e. from managing a budget, to finding a job or progressing in education and/or building confidence and healthy relationships. Each relationship helped to provide the essential building blocks to support young people in their transition from care to independence. The following case study demonstrates the impact grand mentors have on young people's lived experience:

Case Study – M receives support from his grand mentor

M is a young 19-year-old man that needed support with independence, having someone to speak to when feeling low and support when looking for employment and attending interviews. M was also currently bidding for his own place and wanted support through the transition of him living independently.

M was matched with grandmentor shortly after referral, this grandmentor is teaching assistant in a secondary school. In a recent interview with the project M spoke in detail about his experiences with his mentor. He spoke about being initially very nervous meeting Barbara face to face but was pleasantly surprised with how at ease he felt with her during their first chat taking a walk through Wembley Central, he stated that "things seemed very informal and I didn't feel like I was talking to a professional, just someone that wanted to help". M also mentions how setting goals and objectives really helped him as he was feeling a sense of loss of purpose and motivation. Since meeting with his grandmentor, M now has job as a finance assistant and has successfully moved into his flat. He spoke about how much his

Grandmentor has advised motivated and supported him on his job seeking. "My Grandmentor helped me create my C.V. She helped me revise for exams and would provide me with links for work experience and helped me prepare for the job I now have". When asked how his life has changed since being matched, M said he has "A new flat, and a new Job" but highlighted that what he valued the most from the match was "Emotional support".

- 14.2 Feedback from another care leaver referred to have a grandmentor demonstrates the positive relationship that develops between the young person and his mentee:

"...I am so grateful for this opportunity, my mentor is amazing and I couldn't have picked anyone better. She is very nice and understanding, full of wisdom that I enjoy listening to. I am able to speak about things that matter and receive great insight that I'm sure I wouldn't have been able to get elsewhere. Honestly, R has been a huge influx of positivity and I look forward to speaking to her every week. We speak for over an hour sometimes two and I love that she doesn't mind and doesn't get rid of me but instead continues to listen and help me. I am grateful for every session so far and the sessions to come I can feel myself becoming a better person already. Thank you so much!" Grandmentors mentee

15.0 Care Leavers in Education, Employment & Training

- 15.1 There were 44 young people in higher education in 2021/22. These included 22 young people aged 19-21 at university (a decrease from 25 last year), studying a variety of subjects from Sociology, Health and Social Care, Early Childhood Studies and Politics and Economics. Additionally, 22 care leavers aged between 22 and 25 were in higher education at the end of the reporting year (an increase from 14 last year). Brent had a higher percentage of care leavers in higher education than statistical neighbours and nationally. The table below highlights some of the comparative data for young people at university:

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in Higher Education	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average	Statistical Neighbour average %	National figure	figure %
2019-20	24	10%	20	8%	1,920	6%
2020-21	24	10%	20	8%	2040	6%
2021-22	22	7%				

15.2 At the end of the reporting year, the percentage of young people aged 19-21 in education, employment and training was just over 56%, compared to 53% last year. The difference is mainly due to the impact of Covid-19 pandemic which has left some care leavers, particularly those working within the hospitality sector and on zero-hour contracts, unemployed. Brent's performance is in line with statistical neighbours and the national average. The national key performance measures as related to outcomes for care leavers in education, employment or training are as below:

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in Education, Employment or Training	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average	Statistical Neighbour average %	National figure	figure %
2019-20	137	57%	133	53%	16440	53%
2020-21	128	54%	131	52%	16900	52%
2021-22	140	56%				

15.3 All care leavers attending University are provided with financial support that includes a Higher Education bursary [as endorsed by the Department for Education Charter for Care Leavers] of £2000 plus subsidised travel to assist with travel costs. In addition, as per Brent's local offer young people (subject to a financial assessment) received subsistence and rent payments from Brent Council during Christmas, Easter and summer vacations.

15.4 The case studies below demonstrates Brent's commitment to support care leavers who aspire to attend higher education despite having additional needs:

Case Study 1 – A care leaver in higher education

DD is 21 years old. She has completed her final year at University where she was studying Sociology, during term time she was residing on campus and during the holiday period, she resided with her former Foster Carer whom she fondly calls Nan with whom she has a very strong relationship. Given that DD suffer from Lupus which affects her ability to carry out her daily life chores and makes her feel low occasionally, she has remained strong minded and positive which has resulted in her achieving her lifelong EET goals and having a powerful personal and professional network surrounding her has made a contribution towards this achievement.

Her plan now is to go on to do a Master's Degree for the next upcoming academic year and thereafter to find suitable and permanent employment where it hoped that there are many opportunities for her to have some kind of career progression.

Case Study 2 – A care leaver in higher education

GK is studying at a university, part of the Russell group of universities, and has dreams of being a politician. This young man has shown real promise in the future, despite the uncertainty of his immigration status. The university have provided additional financial assistance to GK in recognition of his academic abilities. We have only supported GK with subsistence and accommodation as we would for any another young person in similar circumstances but what GK has shown is his determination and commitment to succeed.

16.0 Care Leavers' Accommodation

- 16.1 All care leavers in Brent are given priority housing banding due to their leaving care status. Young people are only put forward for a council tenancy when they are ready to move on. The PAs complete a vulnerability assessment with the young person and recommend that they should be able to manage a council or housing association tenancy. Young people also need to complete a mandatory one-week MyBnk money programme and ASDAN independent life skills programme or a week at the Gordon Brown Centre before they move to their tenancies. A 'setting up home allowance' of £2000 is provided for care leavers to furnish their homes and buy essential items.
- 16.2 The Leaving Care service piloted two weekends at the Gordon Brown Centre for 17 young people in preparation for their independent living. The Gordon Brown Centre is an outdoor facility set on a 25-acre site in Hampshire operated by Brent staff. The centre is in a natural setting that enables young people to experience positive activities such as low ropes, high ropes archery, farm animals, and a fire-making woodland/campfire area. The first group were facilitated in February 2022. It allowed the young people to learn and demonstrate the skills needed to manage their property independently.
- 16.3 We have developed a joint protocol with the Probation Service to better meet the needs of care leavers transitioning from prison to the community, a joint approach that will ensure that young people's needs are being addressed before they leave custody so that they are provided with suitable accommodation with the right level of support when they are released from prison. A monthly housing panel reviews all requests for tenancy nominations for care leavers, which is chaired by the Housing Service Manager.

- 16.4 A personal advisor with specialism in housing provides intensive support to care leavers at highest risk of homelessness/rough sleeping. Over 100 ASDAN Independent Living workbooks have been distributed to looked after children and care leavers. ASDAN is a curriculum development and awarding organisation, providing programmes and qualifications to help young people develop skills for learning, work and life. Later this year, a celebration event will be held for those who have completed the Independent Living Workbook in 20/21. MyBank Charity that works with young people provided training to care leavers on money management and managing tenancies.
- 16.5 A collaboration between BCJ and Brent commissioning team has resulted in changes to the Quality Assurance framework Brent used to assess semi-independent accommodation and to the development and delivery of training Semi-Independent Accommodation providers. It also led to Brent offering care experienced young people paid roles as accommodation co-inspectors.
- 16.6 At the end of the reporting year, 81% of care leavers aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation (down from 83% last year). This performance is equal to statistical neighbours and slightly below the national average. This is partly due to some care leavers who were former UASC, being refused leave to remain in the UK and choosing not to be in touch with the Local Authority.

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in suitable accommodation	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average	Statistical Neighbour average %	National Figure	National figure %
2019-20	197	82%	202	82%	26360	85%
2020-21	208	88%	210	83%	28270	88%
2021-22	209	81%				

- 16.7 Care Leavers continue to be placed in appropriate and safe accommodation. Those who are not ready to move to independence are encouraged to stay put with their foster carers or in semi-independent accommodation until they are ready, with the expectation that carers identify how they will support transition to adulthood. The number of care leavers in semi-independent provision has dropped to 91 in March 2022 from 136 in March 2021. This decrease was partly due to the pandemic delaying young people's move into their tenancies. Additionally, there are several former UASC who have been waiting for a Home Office decision which has been delayed due to the backlog caused by the pandemic.

- 16.8 The following case study demonstrates evidence of good joint work between Youth Offending, LAC and Permanency and the Metropolitan Police Protection Officer. There was evidence of strong professional network and communication between various professionals:

Case Study – Accommodation

TM is 18 years old of Black British Caribbean heritage who grew up with his mother and 3 siblings in Brent.

TM has been known to Children Services since 11 years old. He had a history of school exclusions including bringing a knife to primary school, and missing episodes from his home.

The family were known to Youth Offending Services and Probation within the borough as well. TM committed a serious offence in 2017 and was sentenced to 4 years in custody. As a result of this he became a Looked After Child and subsequently was cared for under a Full Care Order from 2019.

TM was recalled to custody twice after being released on licence as a result of breaching his licence. TM finished his sentence in 2021 and return home under a PWP and has shown good engagement following this.

TM has resided with his mother since this time and now 18, TM is engaging with Prospects and will be referred to a specialist organisation dealing with the issues associated with the offence TM had committed.

He continues to follow the guidelines of the professionals and no concerns have been raised since his final release from custody.

17.0 Priorities for Corporate Parenting Partners 2022/23

- Continuous focus from all partners to improve health services and outcomes for LAC and care leavers including but not limited to dental care, emotional wellbeing and CAMHS i.e. targeted support for UASC and former UASC.
- Partners to work together to increase the number of Brent's looked after children and care leavers in employment, education and training. In line with this, partners are encouraged to offer Brent care leavers work place experiences and apprenticeships
- Partners to have increased engagement with Brent Care Journeys Programme (in partnership with Barnardo's) enabling young people being involved in design and improvement of services across the locality

- Ongoing work around transitional safeguarding to enable a coordinated approach based on collaboration from partners, i.e. completion of a joint protocol with Probation on care leavers being released from custody
- Further work on accommodation pathways for care leavers, particularly those placed within semi-independent provision and their readiness to move on.

Report sign off:

Gail Tolley

Strategic Director Children and Young People