



Corporate Parenting Committee

17 July 2023

Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People

Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children Annual Report (2021-22 academic year)

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	
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:	None
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Sharon Buckby Head of Inclusion/Headteacher – Brent Virtual School Sharon.buckby@brent.gov.uk 020 89373804 Michaela Richards, Deputy Headteacher, Brent Virtual School Michaela.Richards@brent.gov.uk 020 8937 1075

1. Purpose of the Annual Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the annual report is to outline the activity and impact of the Brent Virtual School (BVS) during the academic year 2021/2022 in monitoring and supporting looked after children to achieve the best possible educational outcomes. Data contained in this report is for looked after children who were in the care of Brent Council for the academic year 2021/2022, and the report includes outcomes for all children who have been in care for a year or more as of 31 March 2021 (“the eligible cohort” for the Statistical First Release (SFR)).
- 1.2 The data in this report is for the 2021/22 academic year and could not be presented to Corporate Parenting Committee earlier as the local authority was waiting for the DfE to publish the final data.

2.0 Context

- 2.1 423 children and young people were on roll with the BVS in 2021/22. 24 were under four years old, 234 pupils were aged 4-16 years old and 165 were aged 16–18.
- 2.2 The BVS operates as a multi-disciplinary team supporting young people in care to achieve the very best they can. The team comprises of lead advisory teachers, educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, emotional wellbeing practitioners, mentors, and education officers, a UASC and year 11 education officer and a post-16 advisors. The team draws on the expertise of colleagues across the Inclusion Service and the Management Information and Performance Team and works closely with social workers and foster carers, as well as school and setting staff.
- 2.3 The priorities for BVS in 2021/22 were to:
- a) Embed training for social workers on personal education plans (PEPs) as mandatory training.
 - b) Provide online surgeries for designated teachers on improving the quality of PEPs and in the use of the pupil premium to raise aspirations; targeting schools and settings where additional support for these activities has been identified.
 - c) Continue to provide an enrichment curriculum both online and onsite, drawing in expertise as required and rooting this into the interests of looked after children.
 - d) Increase the direct work by the advisory teachers and life coaches in schools and colleges where young people are experiencing challenges.
 - e) Review the multi-disciplinary support provided to ensure effective earlier identification of SEND needs in tandem with the new guidance for Virtual Schools in supporting the educational outcomes for all children with a social worker.
- 2.4 The BVS was successful in delivering against the five priorities during the academic year 2021/22, the details of which are contained in the relevant sections of the main body of this report.

3.0 Attendance

- 3.1 At the end of 2021/22 academic year the school attendance for Looked After Children in KS1 and KS2 (Primary) was 93.68%, compared to 91.29% in 2020/21, 90.30% in 2019/20 and 95.89% in 2018/2019 pre-pandemic. School attendance at KS3 and KS4 (Secondary) was 82.42% in 2021/22, compared to 76.18% in 2020/21, 81.09% during 2019/20 and 83.66% in 2018/2019 pre-pandemic. Whilst attendance figures for the last academic year were lower than pre-pandemic figures, they are higher than the previous academic year.
- 3.2 The approach adopted to improving attendance includes:
- Monitoring attendance via an online attendance collection platform
 - PEP meetings and liaising with school staff
 - Regular meetings with LAC and Permanency Service managers to discuss attendance

- Working collaboratively with Education Welfare Service (EWS) to monitor attendance
- Working with careers and placement providers on strategies to ensure attendance.

3.3 At any one time, there will be small number of looked after children or young people who are awaiting a mainstream school place, a special school place or an appropriate alternative provision. This will be for several reasons; for example children may have newly arrived from abroad as an unaccompanied minor (UASC) for whom an age assessment is required; children may be placed into care as an emergency or may have had a change of care placement at short notice. In a small number of cases, school placements break down and the child or young person may not yet be on the roll of an identified new provision.

3.4 To ensure that children who are between school placements do not miss education, the BVS arranges 1:1 tuition for English and maths, which is funded by the Pupil Premium Grant. This usually takes place in the home setting, although older pupils may be taught in the local library. For some LAC, particularly those who have missed periods of schooling prior to care, mentoring is commissioned to prepare and support them back into education and to consider their wider personal, social, careers and health education.

3.5 The BVS Deputy Headteacher monitors the children not on a school roll at fortnightly meetings, ensuring these pupils are receiving suitable education in the interim period. The majority of Brent LAC are placed into an appropriate education setting within the statutory timescale (20 days). For children where there are challenging placement stability or vulnerability issues, the BVS leadership team meets with the Looked After Children and Permanency Service leadership team to ensure a holistic approach to enable the child to access education.

4.0 Exclusions

4.1 There was an increase in fixed term exclusions for Looked After Children during the academic year 2021/22 in comparison to the previous two academic years (21 compared to 16 in 2020/21 and 12 in 2019/20), but this is still lower than before the pandemic (26 in 2018/19). The BVS has actively engaged with schools where young people's behaviour has been identified as a barrier to achievement. Additionally, the BVS has arranged respite provision, extra support in the classroom or outside of school and, for those pupils on a pathway to a permanent exclusion, a managed move has been arranged. As with previous years there have not been any permanent exclusions for Looked After Children. This is due to close partnership working with schools, designated teachers, foster carers and social workers and addressing problems before they arise with the oversight of the BVS leadership team.

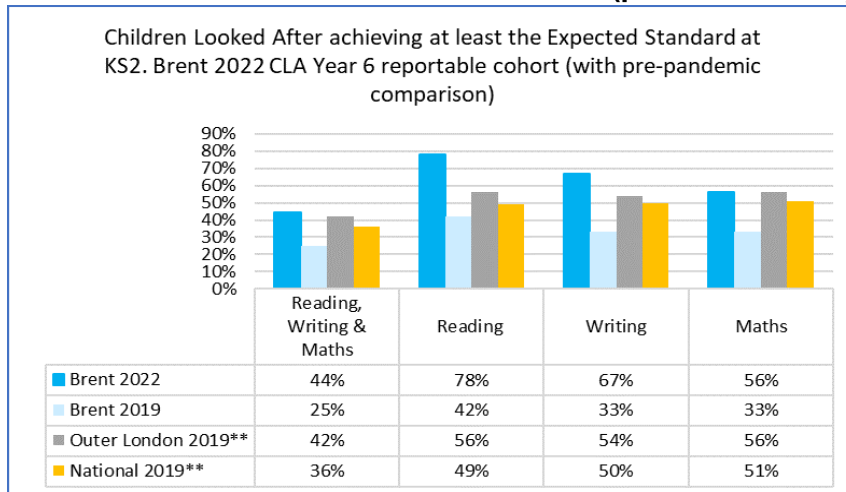
5.0 Progress and Attainment

5.1 **Key Stage 2.** The academic year 2021/22 saw the reintroduction of testing after two years. Nationally there was a drop in achievement rates at Key Stage 2. As primary progress measures in 2019/20 and 2020/21 were subject to centre assessments, they are not comparable to this academic year. When compared to 2018/19, the last year when testing was undertaken, the provisional results indicate a significant increase in

levels of attainment for LAC at KS2 (Tables 1 and 2). Within this context, it should be noted that the number of children in the cohort is relatively small.

5.2 At the time of the 2022 KS2 tests, Brent had 12 LAC in Year 6, of whom there are results for nine children. Two of the three children for whom there are no results did not sit KS2 tests due to their level of SEND (both have an Education, Health and Care Plan - EHCP). Therefore, Table 1 below captures the outcomes for nine children.

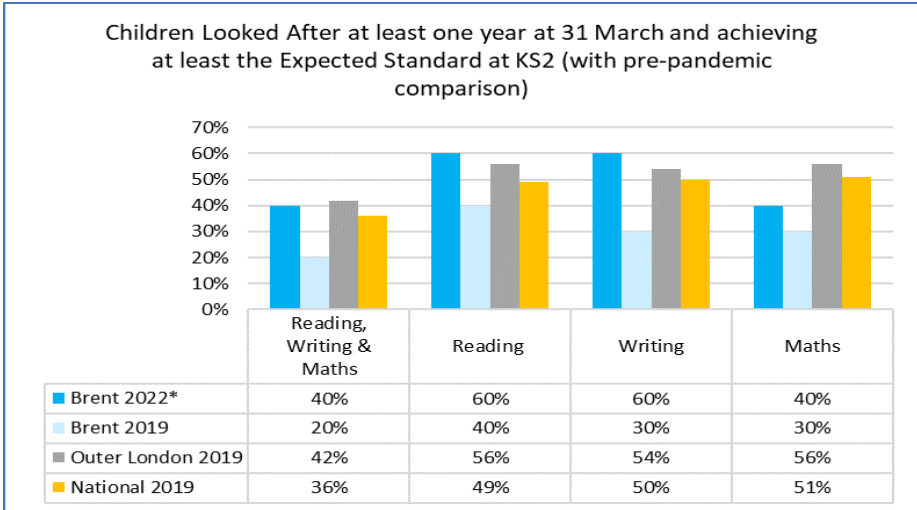
Table 1: 2022 KS2 All CLA in KS2 cohort (provisional data)



**2019 Outer London & National Data as published by DfE is only for CLA at least one year at 31 March

5.3 Of the whole cohort of 12 children, seven had been in care for at least a year on 31 March 2022. Taking into account the two children with an EHCP who were not tested, Table 2 presents the results for five children who had been in care for at least a year. Three of the five children who had been in care for at least a year and achieved expected at the end of KS2 in Reading and Writing, have been in care for over two years and one of these who achieved expected in Maths also, has been in care for over 4 years. Furthermore, all have been in stable placements with their same carer since coming into care. The length of care and stability of placement are two important factors in their outcomes and if these are maintained by the time they reach KS4, they are more likely to be on track to achieve their expected KS4 outcomes of level 4-9 passes including English and maths.

Table 2: 2022 KS2 CLA in care at least one year at 31/03/2022



- 5.4 BVS promotes access to additional tutoring support for all pupils but especially those sitting end of KS2 or KS4 assessments. This is accessed through either face to face or online external tutoring or through the preferred option of schools and education settings providing an in-house 1:1 individualised support programme using the PALAC (Promoting the Achievement of Looked After Children) tutoring/mentoring evidenced based method developed by the Institute of Education. This focuses on using in-school staff as "tutors" to secure the best possible academic outcomes. Research conducted by the Institute of Education indicates a strong and sustained correlation between the tutoring and improved grades. All three children who achieved their expected KS2 outcomes were in receipt of PALAC tutoring prior to sitting their assessments.
- 5.5 To support achievement in numeracy and literacy during 2021/22, as with the two previous academic years, the BVS held booster classes using the Letterbox Club, PALAC, MathsWhizz (software subscription) and weekly group booster sessions. In total 29 Children engaged in either booster or PALAC sessions, whilst a further 45 had access to MathsWhizz and/or Letterbox subscriptions. Whilst it is difficult to quantify the impact that these have had directly on attainment, it is apparent that all are considered to be valuable resources as recognised through the PEP process and in feedback from carers.

KS2 Case Study MG

In 2017, before MG came into care, she was permanently excluded from her mainstream school. MG came into care in June 2018 and was subsequently placed with long term foster carers in Kent County Council. BVS took advice from Kent Virtual School with regards appropriate schools and was able to help secure a school place for September 2018. She has since been on roll at this school and attended consistently however on entry was working below expected standards. Given MG's previous trauma and disrupted education which had impacted on her academic levels, school disapplied her from the KS1 SATS assessments as she was working pre key stage. MG continued to face many academic and emotional challenges and was reported to be working two years behind her peers in 2019. BVS worked with the school to ensure she was supported with PALAC tuition. Support was also sought from the Brent Wellbeing and Emotional Support Team (WEST) who worked to support MG and her school to build her emotional resilience. By the end of the 18/19 academic year, MG was working towards expected levels across the board. However in 2020, faced with the pandemic challenges, MG's academic and emotional abilities began to decline. Counselling was put in place weekly for a year, which supported her to get back on track with her learning. In 2022 her school report showed an improvement in her academic levels and overall a more positive change in her behaviour and attitude both at home and school.

- 5.6 **Key Stage 4:** At the end of the academic year 2021/22 there were 60 Year 11 students of whom 23 were UASC. The SFR (eligible) cohort number was 44 of which 18 were UASC who did not sit external examinations. Of the remaining 26, eight students had an EHCP and a further six were SEN support. 20 students sat GCSEs and another two were entered for functional skills qualifications.
- 5.7 Pupil Premium Funding has been utilised to support these students in a number of ways including art therapy, 1:1 tuition in specific subject areas and 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 included The BVS Homework Club, which is a weekly session held at Brent Civic Centre, with BVS teaching staff on hand to support students with revision and the development of their learning styles; the PALAC tuition programme was offered to students in English and Maths; online resources - Savemyexams and GCSEPod and a range of revision resources.
- 5.8 There were no national examinations in 2020 and 2021, with centre assessed grades awarded in their place. As with all children and young people, this method of assessment tends to be more favourable to vulnerable children, who are not subject to the pressure of exam conditions. 2020 and 2021 saw a significant increase in the headline results for the looked after children in the SFR cohort.
- 5.9 The methods to support KS4 LAC during the pandemic were maintained in 2021/22 along with weekly homework clubs that provided a face-to-face opportunity for BVS to support pupils. However, like many young people facing public examinations against the backdrop of two previous years of centre assessed grades, levels of anxiety for some LAC increased in 2021/22. This was compounded by a cohort at KS4 that included several children new to care and many that had experienced significant challenges, including placement stability.

5.10 Despite this, LAC achieving the 5 passes at 4-9 including English and maths was higher than the previous academic year by 2%. However, the most accurate data set to compare to is the 2018/19, the last time examinations were held. Based on the previous data for public examinations (Table 3) there has been a marked increase in all the headline figures from 7% to 20%.

Table 3: Achievement rates for GCSEs 2018/19-2021/22

New grade levels	2021/22****		2020/21***		2019/20**		2018/19*	
	LAC	%	LAC	%	LAC	%	LAC	%
5 passes at level 4-9 incl Eng and Maths	7/35	20.0%	6/34	18%	8/29	28%	2/29	7%
4 passes at level 4-9 incl Eng and Maths	7/35	20.0%	8/34	24%	8/29	28%	2/29	7%
5 passes at level 1-9	19/35	54.3%	17/34	50%	18/29	62%	13/29	45%
4 passes at Level 1-9	23/35	65.7%	19/34	56%	18/29	62%	13/29	45%
1 pass Level 1-9	27/35	77.1%	24/34	71%	21/29	72%	19/29	66%
Achieving 4-9 pass in English and Maths	7/35	20.0%	9/34	26%	9/29	31%	4/29	14%

The above data is for the whole cohort (53) minus SEN/Disabilities and ESOL (18).

Key Stage 4- SFR COHORT								
New grade levels	2021/22****		2020/21***		2019/20**		2018/19*	
	LAC	%	LAC	%	LAC	%	LAC	%
5 passes at level 4-9 incl Eng and Maths	4/24	17%	5/21	24%	6/21	29%	2/26	8%
4 passes at level 4-9 incl Eng and Maths	4/24	17%	6/21	29%	6/21	29%	2/26	8%
5 passes at level 1-9	13/24	54%	12/21	57%	13/21	62%	13/26	50%
4 passes at Level 1-9	16/24	67%	13/21	62%	13/21	62%	13/26	50%
1 pass Level 1-9	19/24	79%	16/21	76%	15/21	71%	19/26	73%
Achieving 4-9 pass in English and Maths	4/24	17%	6/21	29%	6/21	29%	4/26	15%

*The above data is for the eligible LAC cohort minus SEN and ESOL (13 LAC)

**The above data is for the eligible LAC cohort minus SEN and ESOL (2 LAC)

***The above data is for the eligible LAC cohort minus SEN and ESOL (3 LAC)

****The above data is for the eligible LAC cohort minus SEN and ESOL (10 LAC)

5.11 Of the four pupils who had been in care for at least a year and made expected progress at KS4, achieving 5 passes at level 4-9 including English and Maths, three had been in long term care for 5-13 years. Three were in care at the end of KS2; two achieved expected standards in Reading, Writing and Maths and one pupil with English as an additional language (EAL) was working below threshold. Thus, between the KS2 and KS4 milestones, two had made expected levels of progress and one had made above expected progress. Notably all four pupils were in stable and supportive foster care placements which undoubtedly had a positive impact.

5.12 Additionally, of the four KS4 pupils who achieved their expected outcomes of level 4-9 passes including English and maths, three also had 1:1 tutoring in the core subjects either delivered in school or externally. BVS has also partnered with the Harrow School to offer young people access to their online Lumina Tutoring Programme

which matches young people to qualified subject teachers (who teach in Independent Settings) and deliver focused online sessions x45 mins weekly during term time. The programme has been running for two years with positive feedback from both carers and young people. One of the KS4 young people who was receiving regular and consistent English tutoring (which started in summer term of Yr 10), achieved a level 5 pass in English Language surpassing his school prediction of a level 4. For another pupil who was receiving support for Maths externally, the school commented “..he came into school this morning and was showing his maths teacher new ways to solve problems (which he said he learnt yesterday) and was so proud of himself”.

5.13 In 2021/22 there were five students who did not achieve any GCSE passes who were eligible for entry. These students had a series of contextual safeguarding issues that impacted on the consistency of their education and in some cases the impact was from Year 10 through to Year 11. Throughout the year additional support was put in place to ensure that these young people had clear Post-16 pathways, although this has been with varying degrees of success.

5.14 **Post-16:** The number of post-16 young people that were in education, employment, or training (EET) at the end of the academic year 2021/22 has significantly increased since the same reporting period last year at 80% compared to 73% in 2020/21. This is in part due to the removal of restrictions due to the pandemic, but also largely due to the partnership working between Prospects (the commissioned provider) and BVS. The BVS Post-16 Advisor, the Performance Data Officer and Prospects advisors meet monthly to review the position of all students and to ensure those young people who are NEET are receiving direct support. This process has helped to close the gap between EET and NEET and allowed for early intervention for those most at risk of becoming NEET. Prospects has also provided access to a new programme funded by the GLA Education Support Fund called Spark Change, which is a supported internship programme for young people including LAC and care leavers. The support programme, which includes cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) trained job coaches, commenced in the summer term 2021/22 to support young people back into EET. A particular focus has been on rooting participation into the interests of young people as a hook to re-engage them. This is particularly important for those young people whose education has been fractured due to placement moves and contextual safeguarding issues.

KS4 Case Study BK

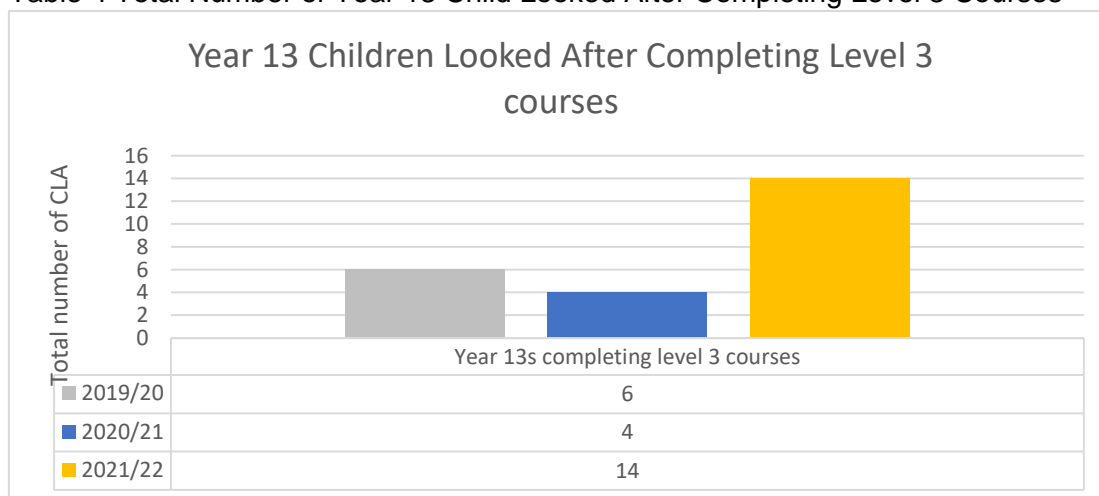
BK arrived in the UK from Afghanistan as an unaccompanied minor and was placed in care in 2016 along with his brother. The siblings moved to their current carer in Sept 2017. BK's primary school had put in considerable EAL support and he was disapplied from the KS2 SATS due to working below threshold. His transition to secondary school was positive and the EAL support continued in Years 7 and 8. By the end of KS3, BK had made age related expected progress.

In KS4, concerns around behaviour and motivation arose. This was exacerbated during lockdown learning as BK struggled to get up to log into his school lessons. Efforts were made to encourage him to attend school as a vulnerable learner, but he resisted as most of his peers were learning from home. Following a joint meeting held with BK, his carer, the school, BVS and his social worker, a modified timetable was agreed which proved to be successful for a period of time. At a further review, in consultation with BK, incentives were offered in the form of vouchers if he continued meeting his targets around completing homework and logging in for at least 3 hours daily.

The network remained in regular email communication with BK's school doing regular check ins and the social worker completing regular home visits. In Year 11, to address concerns around altercations BK had in particular with some female staff members, training was offered around staff using trauma informed approaches. The school also used pupil premium plus funding to put in targeted 1:1 after school interventions in maths and science which were the two subjects he had fallen behind in. BVS Link Advisor also visited BK fortnightly in school for mentoring and post- 16 support. This enabled a rapport to be built and gave BK an opportunity to articulate his views which were communicated with the network. BVS also advocated for school to use pupil premium plus funding for BK to access cricket club membership as this was something he was passionate about. There was a marked improvement between Autumn and Spring mock assessments due to the tailored 1:1 intervention package.

5.15 Of the 14 LAC who completed level 3 courses, five are now at university. This is an improvement on the previous two academic years both of which saw three Year 13 students progress onto university study. The overall number of Year 13s completing level 3 courses increased from six in 2019/20 and four in 2020/21 to 14 in 2021/22.

Table 4 Total Number of Year 13 Child Looked After Completing Level 3 Courses



6.0 SEND

- 6.1 The number of statutory aged young people in care under the BVS with an EHCP is 49, just under 25% of the cohort, 7 of whom were in residential settings and 23 of whom were placed in SEN special schools (mostly educated outside of Brent) during 2021/22.
- 6.2 Table 5 outlines the categories of need of LAC pupils with an EHCP with Table 6 comparing Brent LAC categories of need with all Brent, London and national pupils with an EHCP. There are higher rates of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs and moderate learning difficulties (MLD) in the LAC cohort, compared to all children and young people with an EHCP in Brent, London and nationally. These rates will reflect the impact of the vulnerability of young people becoming LAC, and the complex trauma and challenging environments experienced by young people prior to becoming LAC. Evidence suggests there is often unidentified SEND need for those late into care that is subsequently identified as SEMH, as a consequence of a pattern of neurodiversity conditions (particularly attention deficit disorder) as well as trauma experience underpinning SEMH needs. In 2022/23 academic year health partners and Brent Council have identified both mental health and neurodiversity (including a better understanding of trauma and trauma related SEMH) as priority areas, for which LAC will be a focus cohort. Section 9.0 'Mental Health and Wellbeing' provides further details of the work underway to support the SEMH of LAC pupils.

Table 5: Categories of need of LAC pupils with an EHCP

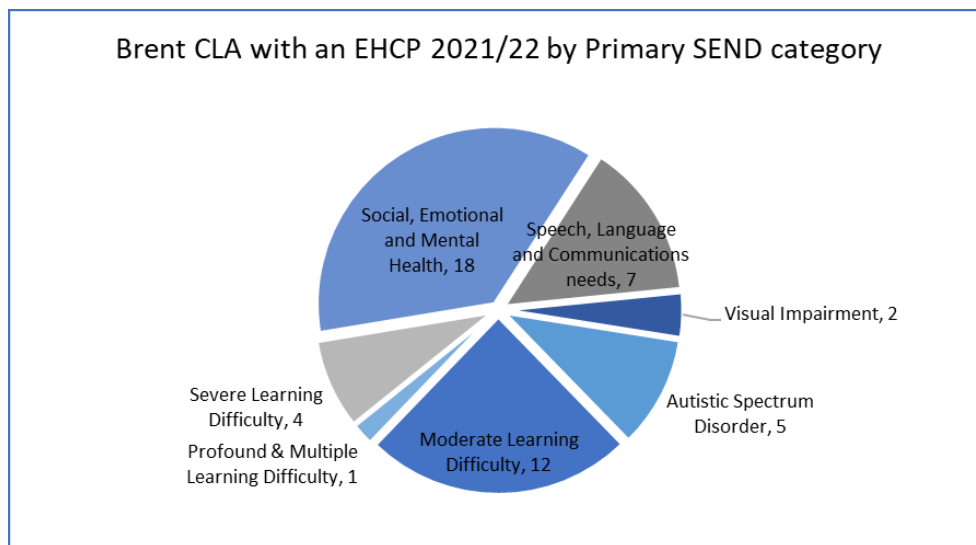
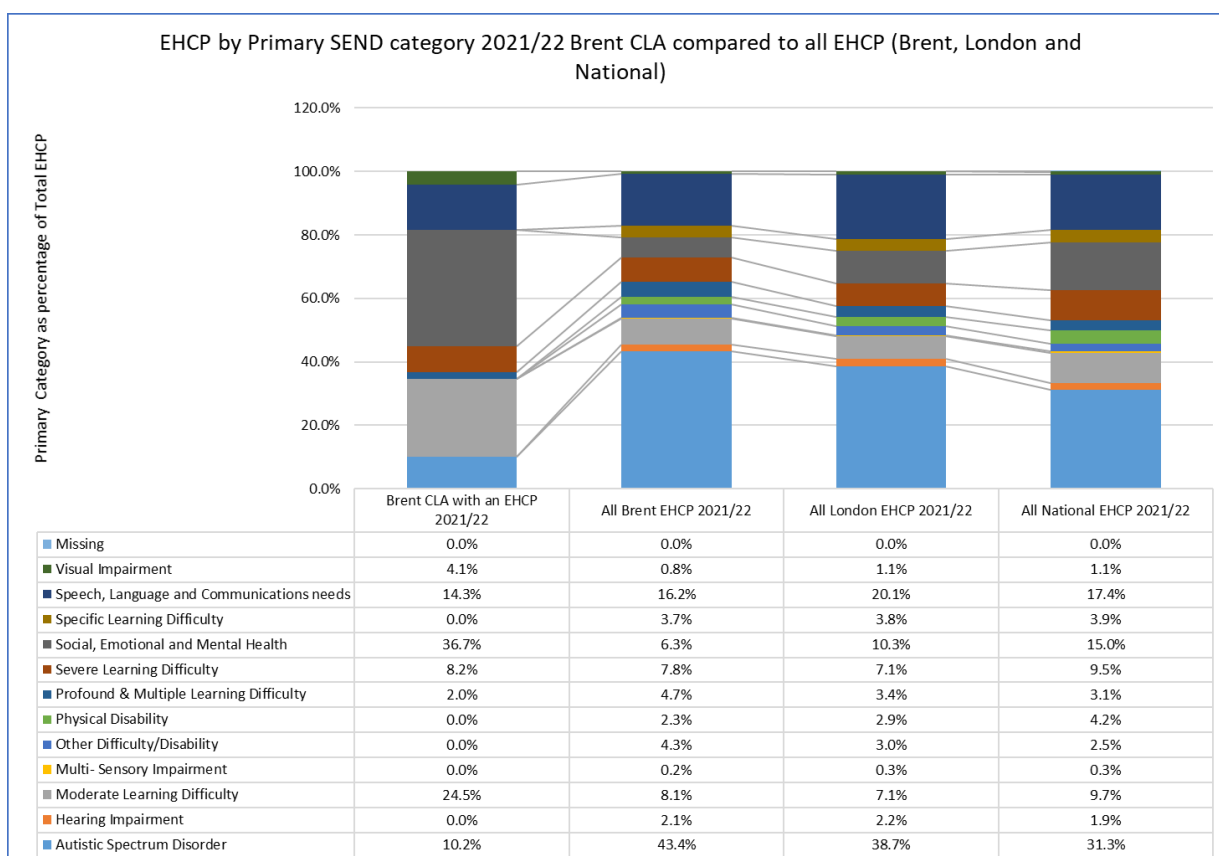


Table 6: LAC SEND needs 2021/22 compared to all Brent, London and national



6.3 A new system was introduced this academic year whereby the EHCP 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 has difficulty placing students with an EHCP in other local authority areas, the SEND team support the commissioning and negotiation within the placement area. Where there are challenges the Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) and Deputy Headteacher step in to negotiate with local Virtual School Heads and Inclusion Service Heads of Service.

7.0 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

7.1 17 new statutory aged UASC entered the care system in the academic year 2021/22. All but one of these young people were in Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 5, 33 UASC entered the care system during 2021/22. 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 UASCs 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 age 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 to promote transition and integration into the local area and wider community.

7.2 Most of the UASC pupils are disapplied from KS4 assessments as new arrivals into the country. The majority are placed into local English as an Additional Language provision from which they progress into further education and onto BTEC courses wherever possible.

8.0 ePEP

8.1 94% of PEPs for the autumn term 2021/22 were completed and signed off by the advisory staff and leadership of the BVS. There was some drift 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 taken a number of steps: a Designated Teachers' (DTs) Forum focused on the theme of standardisation and PEP quality and ongoing training is underway for social workers on the new system and the PEP process; guidance and training videos have been provided to all schools; group and 1:1 training with DTs and improvement meetings with identified schools to discuss the quality of their PEPs are taking place.

8.2 The quality of PEPs are reviewed termly and 65% were judged as good during the spring term. Wherever the quality of PEPs are considered to be inadequate or to require improvement to be good, the BVS team work with designated teachers to improve the quality. This has resulted in improvement group discussions with a few schools both in and outside of Brent. Critically there needs to be a clear demonstration of stretch in progress objectives with a clear link to use of the pupil premium.

9.0 Mental Health and Wellbeing

9.1 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), a commissioned service delivered by the Anna Freud Centre. 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 PPP is being refocused in the summer term 2022/23 to expand enrichment activities with CBT supported weekend activity programmes, a broadened offer based on individual interests and the engagement of a speech language therapist, to deliver group work and individual work to support communication skills.

9.2 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, BVS and other members of the professional network to best support children looked after. WEST 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. In the summer term, WEST worked with 44 LAC. During this term, 80 direct sessions were delivered relating to 18 CYP. 40 of these sessions were delivered face to face. 59 indirect sessions were delivered to 27 young people.

9.3 WEST also lead a Reflective Fostering Group, which is an 11-session group programme for foster carers and kinship carers. During the summer term WEST provided direct work tailored to supporting UASC. WEST have also been preparing to deliver a tailored support for life-story work with social workers alongside training

on 'Understanding Trauma' and clinical supervision for social workers managing highly complex cases.

10.0 Pupil Premium Spend

10.1 The BVS retains 50% of the Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) and it is used for a number of resources and activities including mentoring, residential trips, enrichment activities; online and face to face training and 1:1 tuition for students out of school. The remaining 50% is allocated to schools to support the progress of children and young people looked after by Brent, the use of which is monitored through the PEP process. 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. One of the foci this year has been how to engage a wider range of LAC. Key groups that have been identified as being the least represented are children with profound SEN, Key Stage 4 boys and those who live beyond 50 miles of Brent. BVS is working with the local borough Virtual School partners, Harrow, Barnet and Ealing, to create an even more robust offer that targets these groups whilst also maintaining those that are already engaged. Whilst the enrichment programme has positive impact on those involved, it is sometimes hard to measure the impact as much of the support is targeted at developing 'soft' skills. After each activity feedback is collected in order to measure the impact and the benefits of the activity to determine future use. The focus for 2022/23 will be to target those young people who are not yet engaged. This tends to be boys aged 14-16. A key ambition is to develop a mentoring programme in partnership with the Football Association and Wembley Stadium for this group.

10.2 Some of the retained PPP is used for BVS staff to provide a comprehensive training programme to a range of professionals working with vulnerable students. The content of these sessions includes:

- Governors' Training, promoting positive outcomes for disadvantaged groups and the effective use of pupil premium
- Gender Awareness and Sexuality Training by Brook (multi agency training for social workers and designated teachers)
- Education Online Training Programme for foster carers
- Targeting new DTs and staff working with post LAC children in schools

10.3 Towards the end of 2021/22 academic year, the BVS began the delivery of Social Worker EPEP training as a mandatory course. BVS provide a monthly rolling training programme for social workers with 38 social workers attending the training.

11.0 Enrichment Programme

11.1 The BVS enrichment programme is an integral part of the BVS offer to young people and care leavers. This included three weekend trips during the summer term to the Gordon Brown Centre, the LA's outdoor centre. In partnership with John Lyons Foundation and the Harrow, Ealing, Barnet and Brent Virtual School alliance, the BVS has been able to offer a variety of activities. Over 70 children attended the following events:

- Strength with horses
- Care to Dance
- Arvon Writing Residential

- Book club
- Debate mate
- Brunel STEM residential
- Family First Theatre Nights
- Outdoor pursuits – Horsenden Hill and Phoenix Outdoor Centre



Gordon Brown Residential Trip, June 2022): *"I liked the different activities, some were hard"* (AK, Yr 7)



Debate Mate, Feb 2022: *"it taught me to express myself and made me confident"* (JCB, Yr 9)



A Christmas Carol at The Old Vic, Dec 2021): *"It was such fun"* (RH, Yr9

12.0 Extended Duties for all Children with a Social Worker

12.1 In 2021 Brent Virtual School recruited an Extended Duties Team (ExDT) to meet new national criteria following the expansion of Virtual Schools' remit.

12.2 A key requirement of the extended duties is to provide strategic oversight of children with a social worker. This duty has been met through:

- Supporting social workers to address attendance, challenge exclusions and provision of reduced timetables where necessary. Additionally social workers have a better understanding of their role in the EHCP process. The Extended Duties Team (ExDT) spend part of each week working at both the Civic Centre and Willesden Library to provide information, advice and guidance to social workers through individual discussions and weekly surgeries.
- The ExDT has attended a number of multi-agency forums to raise the importance of education for children with a social worker and has supported schools to revisit policies (behaviour and attendance) to ensure that children with a social worker are not disadvantaged. This includes the Brent Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group and EVVP.
- Cross service training for school staff, carers and social workers has been developed and delivered. One-minute guides including part-time timetables, exclusions and attendance are in development so that professionals and parents have a good understanding of DfE guidance regarding this cohort and the position and offer available in Brent.
- Engagement has also taken place with the Borough's School Designated Safeguarding Leads and SENCOs, through various forums, to highlight the issues arising for children on CIN and CP Plans and to consider sustainable solutions to some of the challenges identified.

12.3 Monitoring the attendance of children with a social worker is a key element of the extended duties remit. Currently there is no statutory requirement for schools to share

this data with local authorities. As a consequence, the BVS have been exploring how best to establish this both with Brent schools and for schools in other local authorities. The BVS have been awaiting guidance from the DfE as to whether the new national attendance monitoring system will become a statutory requirement from September 2023. Until then, the BVS are working closely with social workers to ensure that attendance is a key priority within plans and that schools supporting young people with a social worker are linked to the ExDT. Given the high rate of pupil mobility the monitoring of attendance will facilitate better coordination of cross borough working and also identify any trends emerging from the monitoring process.

- 12.4 Whilst not an objective in the extended duty requirements, the ExDT has delivered direct work with 118 children during 2021/22, with the team maintaining a maximum caseload of 50 children at any one time, predominantly educated out of borough, who have experienced the most fractured education, very low attendance and who are at risk of permanent exclusion. Impact measurements are currently in development for 2022/23.
- 12.5 Approximately 50% of all referrals are listed as attendance concerns due to mental health issues (social anxiety disorders), social and emotional issues, previously undiagnosed learning difficulties, gang affiliations and parental issues (parents with mental health problems, parents keeping children off school). A third of the referrals relate to children at high risk of permanent exclusion from out of borough schools and children's parents needing support to help their children to access education and educational support. Examples of the work undertaken include:
- Preventing the exclusion of a Year 10 pupil attending an academy school in a neighbouring borough. Due to a series of incidents, the case was referred to the Virtual School after the school had decided to permanently exclude. The VS managed to prevent the PEX, liaised with the school, Brent admissions and social care to facilitate an in-year transfer.
 - Working with Secondary Schools in Brent and another local authority to facilitate a managed move, avoiding a permanent exclusion.
 - Supporting the education of three siblings seeking a nurse, primary and secondary school place due to the family being moved out of the LA due to a serious incident. The VS school team worked with the children's mother and social care to identify schools and nurseries, liaised with them on the parent's behalf, engaged with other LA admissions team to secure school places and have those ready for when they moved to their new home.

13.0 Strategic priorities for BVS for 2022/23 and 2023/24

- 13.1 The strategic priority for the BVS remains the continued drive to improve the educational outcomes for looked after children and children with a social worker. To that end many of the priorities for 2022/23 are a continuation of those for 2021/22:
- a) To provide online surgeries for designated teachers on improving the quality of PEPs and the use of the pupil premium to raise aspirations, targeting schools and settings where the need for additional support has been identified to ensure PEPs support improved outcomes.
 - b) To continue to provide an enrichment curriculum both online and onsite, drawing in expertise as required and rooting this into the interests of looked after children to improve aspirations and outcomes.
 - c) To increase attendance through working collaboratively with schools and carers / placement providers and through the direct work by the advisory teachers and life coaches in school and colleges where young people are experiencing challenges to remain positively engaged.

- d) To evaluate the impact of the BVS Extended Duties Team (ExDT), and
- e) To review multi-disciplinary support to ensure effective earlier identification of SEND needs in tandem with the new guidance for Virtual Schools in supporting the educational outcomes for all children with a social worker.

Report sign-off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director Children & Young People