	Corporate Parenting Committee 14 July 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Community Development
	Lead Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools - Cllr Gwen Grahl
Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2024-2025	

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)	Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the duration of the meeting, on the grounds that the attendance of representatives from the council's Children in Care council, necessitated the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2, Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, of the Act, namely: Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
List of Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Kelli Eboji Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency Kelli.eboji@brent.gov.uk Palvinder Kudhail Director of Early Help and Social Care Palvinder.Kudhail@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive 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 strengths and areas for development in supporting looked after children and care leavers in Brent.
- 1.2 Progress against the priorities identified in the 2023/24 Corporate Parenting Annual Report have been updated throughout the body of this report. In summary:

- ***To maintain the progress made in 2023/24 in relation to recruitment and retention of LAC social workers and Personal Advisors. To see the benefit in the quality and consistency of practice of practitioners being able to create stable, caring relationships with their children and young people.***

At the end of 2024/25, staffing within the Looked After Children and Leaving Care teams are almost completely permanent. Agency staff recruitment is solely for sickness or maternity cover. This achievement, alongside the Early Help and Social Care redesign, creates a strong foundation to develop quality and consistent practice and stable, caring relationships.

- ***Continued focus from all partners to improve health services and outcomes for LAC and care leavers including emotional wellbeing and CAMHS i.e. ensuring all young people leaving care understand how to access their health histories, system improvements for collaborative reporting with health partners, improved immunisation take up, and targeted wellbeing support for UASC and former UASC.***

This work has continued throughout the reporting year and is a two-year Children's Trust priority and will continue to be an area of focus in 2025/26. See section 10.

- ***To transition from Brent Care Journey (with Barnados) to our new BCJ 2.0, taking on board all of the learning of the past 4-5 years and embedding a new way of providing participation for care experienced children and young people.***

This priority has been achieved. See section 9.

- ***Continued work on accommodation pathways and developing independence skills for care leavers, particularly those placed within semi-independent provision and their readiness to move on.***

There has been substantial progress made with this priority over 2024/25. See section 18.

- ***Continue to promote the voice and engagement of children and young people in day-to-day practice, i.e. improve the uptake and usage of our Pathway Plan App, to act on the recent Bright Spots Survey.***

Bright Spots survey results were received and a number of priority areas identified by Brent care experienced young people for co-design work over summer 2025. See section 9.

- ***To continue to develop, improve and embed practice in relation to life story work for children in care.***

Bespoke Life Story Work training has been provided to staff during this reporting period and a 3-month Life Story Work pilot was completed with frontline social work teams to develop practitioners' understanding and skill in this area. Although case summaries are being completed, more work is required to ensure that these are being completed consistently every 3 months so that every child in care has a narrative of their journey. A life story work platform is still desired to provide an integrated approach to creating memories between children, parents/carers, and professionals, and this will continue to be progressed in 2025/26.

- ***To make Corporate Parenting Committee more engaging for care experienced young people.***

Over the past year care experienced young people have led on

conversations with Councillors to redesign the Corporate Parenting Committee space. This has resulted in more positive engagement from young people, officers and Councillors. Young people report looking forward to attending the committee.

One of our proudest moments of 2024/25 was seeing and supporting our young people lead a campaign for Brent to adopt care experience as a protected characteristic. They worked together and with members of staff to create a proposal to explore what this would mean for young people and how it aligns with the local offer. Young people brought the topic to Corporate Parenting Committee to discuss ideas with committee members. They attended a Full Council meeting in November 2024 where a motion to make care experience a protected characteristic was passed unopposed. See section 9 for more detail.

1.3 The report also sets out the priorities of the Looked After Children and Permanency service (LACP) for 2025/26.

1.4 The service priorities continue to take into account the issues identified in the February 2023 Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) and ongoing quality assurance activity.

The areas that required improvement were:

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

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the CPC review and comment on the contents of this report. This ensures the CPC is fulfilling its responsibility to monitor and scrutinise the activity of Brent's Children, Young People and Community Development (CYPCD) service over the past year, thus ensuring that adequate care and support are being provided to Brent's care experienced children and young people.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

This report sets out the management of the local authority's Corporate Parenting service and the developments that have taken place in the 2024/25 reporting period. The work of the LACP service contributes to the following borough priorities:

- **The Best Start in Life**
- **Prosperity and Stability**
- **A Healthier Brent**
- **Thriving Communities**

4.0 Corporate Parenting

- 4.1 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 Brent's care experienced young people.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 Elected members in Brent carry out their corporate parenting duty as follows:
- The CPC, chaired by the Lead Member for Children, Young People and Schools, with cross party Member representation, scrutinises service performance. This occurs on a quarterly basis.
 - By ensuring the attendance and engagement of BCJ 2.0 representatives at the CPC.
 - Weekly liaison meetings between the Lead Member for Children, Young People and Schools, the Corporate Director CYP CD and other senior staff within the Local Authority as appropriate.
 - By ensuring Brent's 'promises' to children in care and care leavers are adhered to and in line with our Practice Promises, Pledge to children and young people in care, Care Leavers' Charter and Local Offer.
 - By attending Member Learning and Development sessions on Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting.
- 4.4 Members of BCJ 2.0 continued to attend the Committee at each meeting to provide updates on their recent activity and engage Members in discussions about issues pertinent to them. These updates were noted and supported by the Committee. The CPC in 2024/25 scrutinised several reports on various issues affecting Brent care experienced children and young people including the following:
- a. In April 2024, member of BCJ 2.0, with the support of Participation leads, facilitated a workshop for Members and Officers in relation to making the CPC

more “young people friendly”. The CPC were also presented with an annual report from Brent Virtual School. The CPC was also provided with six-monthly reports from the Fostering Service and Adoption London West on the performance of adoption activity.

- b. In July 2024, the members of BCJ 2.0 facilitated a discussion with Members about ‘Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic’. Committee was presented with the Annual Corporate Parenting report for 2023/24 and annual LAC Health reports for 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- c. In October 2024, the Committee received a report from Brent Care Leavers/members of BCJ 2.0 which provided information to the CPC on their views regarding the council adopting care experience as a protected characteristic. BCJ 2.0 members, with the support of the Participation Team, also presented a summary of the Bright Spots survey results and action plan. Reports were provided on the Updated Care Leaver Offer and Charter, the Annual IRO report 2023/24, and both six-monthly monitoring reports for Fostering and Adoption.
- d. In the February 2025 meeting, the Committee was presented with a progress report in respect to the new Brent Residential Children’s Home and a report on the Kinship Care Strategy and the plan to develop our first Kinship Local Offer which was discussed with a representative group of Brent kinship carers.

5.0 Profile of Looked After Children

- 5.1 At the 31 March 2025 Brent had 296 children in care (CiC) compared to 307 children on 31 March 2024, a decrease of 3.6%. This represented 40.1 children per 10,000 child population against the rate for England of 71 per 10,000 head of child population, a decrease in rate by 1.8 from previous year (1.9). In 2024/25, 142 children became looked after compared to 131 children last year and, compared to an average of 180 per year over the previous four years.

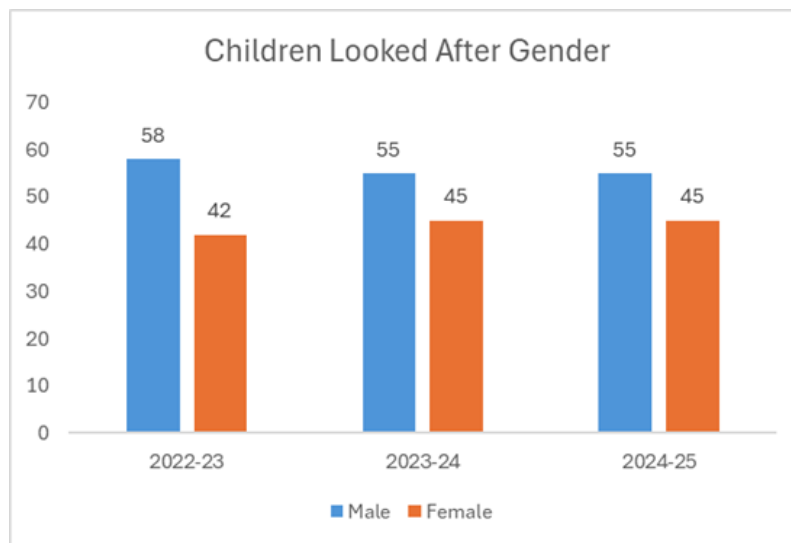
The decrease in CiC is likely to be as a result of several things: robust Entry and Care oversight and gatekeeping and increased use of pre-proceedings.

On 31 March 2025, the Local Authority looked after 30 UASC compared to 27 UASC in March 2024. This represented 10% of the total Brent children in care (CiC) population. It appears that Brent’s UASC numbers have stabilised with no significant change in numbers since 2023/24.

On the 31 March 2025, there were 17 looked after children and 29 care leavers allocated within the Disabled Children and Young People’s 0-25 Team.

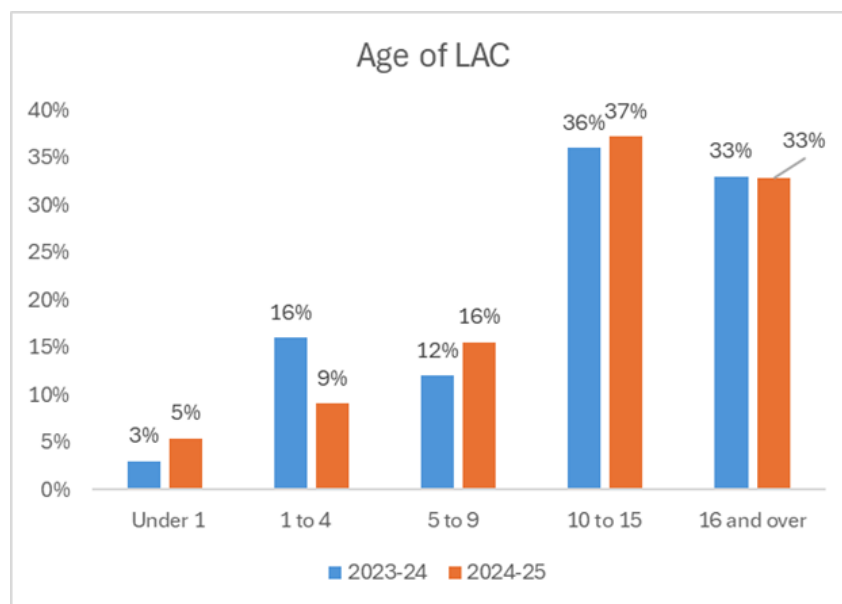
The Q4 London data shows the rate of new entrants to care as 21.4 per 10,000, with Brent’s average of 20.6 per 10,000 for the same period.

- 5.2 Of the 296 CiC on 31/03/25, 41 had had a previous looked after period. This represents 14% of the CiC cohort.
- 5.3 The gender of the CiC population consists of 55.4% male and 44.6% female; with the gender split remaining consistent with data from 2023/24.



- 5.4 32.8% of the care population in Brent was aged 16 and over, compared to 32.6% at the end of March 2024. 70% of the care population in Brent was aged 10 and over. Having a predominantly adolescent care population 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 may not feel equipped to manage. Additionally, there continues to be a national lack of sufficiency for foster carers that have the skills to provide care for teenagers.

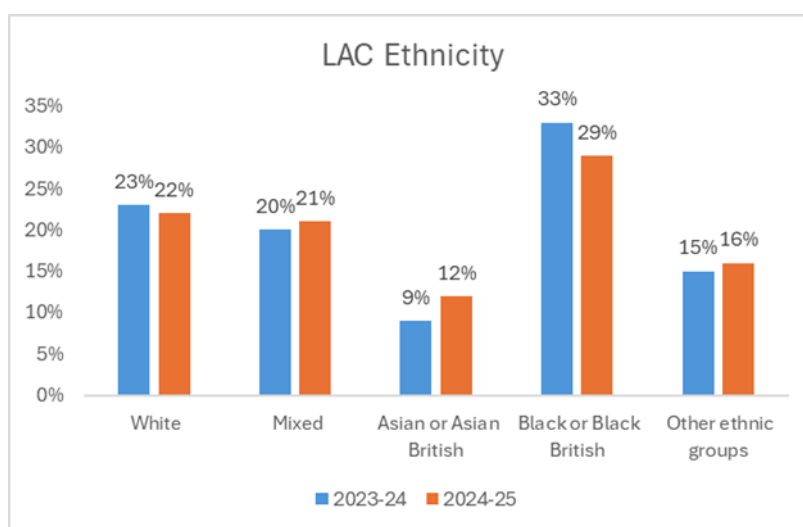
In Brent, whilst our number of children in care is lower than our statistical neighbours, there is an identified trend that the children who do come into our care are often older children who have entered the care system at a later stage and are therefore more likely to experience unstable care. However, despite these challenges Brent's placement stability has improved in this reporting period.



5.5 Ethnicity of LAC

- 5.5.1 The ethnicity¹ of looked after children broadly remained the same compared to the previous year. However, there has been a 3% increase in the number of looked after children from Asian backgrounds and 4% decrease in the number of looked after children from Black/Black British backgrounds.

16% of our children in care were from 'other' ethnic groups. The greatest proportion of ethnicities noted within this group was "Arab" which makes up approximately one third of this cohort, and includes a number of UASC from Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan.

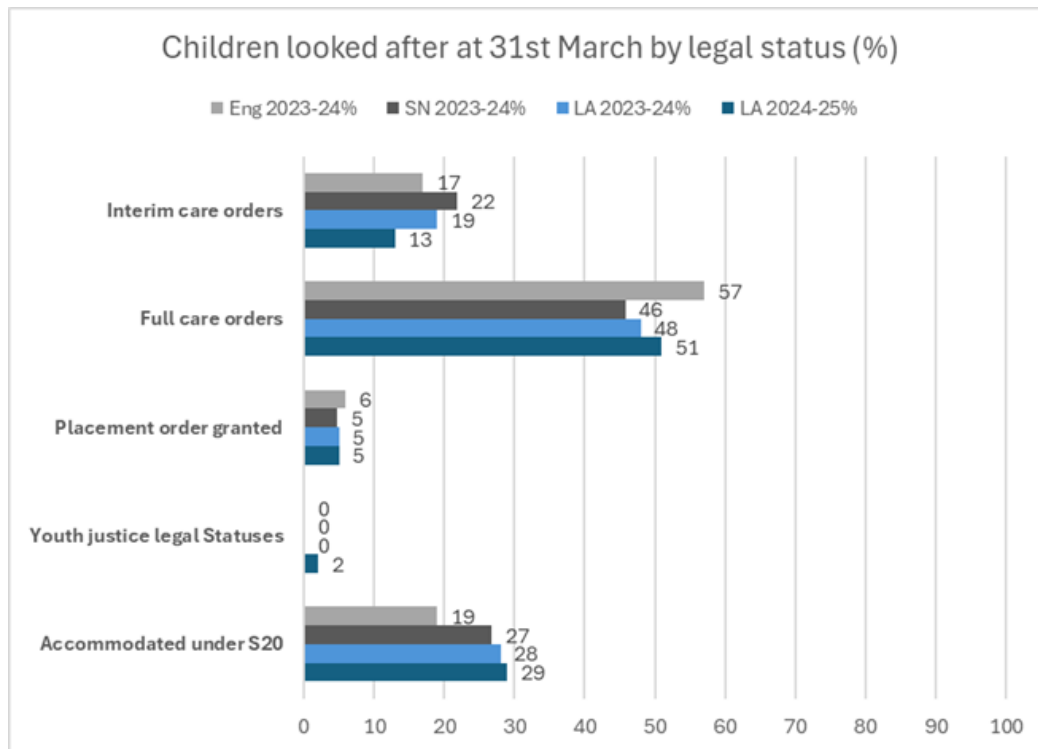


5.6 Legal status and placement location

- 5.6.1 The majority of children in care were subject to Care Orders (Interim and Full Care Orders) under the Children Act 1989, representing 64% of the care population. A further 87 children (29%) were in care through a voluntary agreement with the parents/carers as pursuant to Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. All UASC are looked after via Section 20 agreements.

In this reporting period, 11 young people aged 16/17 present as homeless to the local authority. Of these 11, 4 became "looked after".

1. [Children looked after return 2024 to 2025: guide - GOV.UK](#)



5.6.2 The proportion of children placed more than 20 miles away from their home address as of 31 March 2025 was 18.6%, a decrease of 0.6% from the previous year's figure of 19.2% (the national average is 17%).

5.6.3 Brent 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, which is due to be refreshed this year, 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.

5.6.4 Most children resided within fostering placements (175) – 59% of all children in care, a decrease on 2023-24 (65.1%). 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 with foster placements.

5.6.5 The Local Authority has an in-house fostering service that at the end of March 2025 was supporting 47 children in mainstream fostering placements, 2 fewer children than in March 2024. In Brent we are proud of the significant focus we have on supporting friends and family members of children to become kinship foster carers to avoid children being placed in mainstream foster care (or other placement); at the end of March 2025, we were supporting 49 children in Kinship fostering (connected person carer) arrangements.

6.0 Placement Stability

6.1 Number of Brent fostering households and approved fostering places (mainstream and kinship) at 31 March 2025 (and trend):

Collection year	Number of Households	Number of places
2021	100	153
2022	98	142
2023	101	145
2024	103	145
2025	88	129

6.2 Recruitment and retention of Brent foster carers remained a priority during 2024/25, with a significant amount of work being done in this reporting period to improve our fostering offer, making it more competitive with our West London neighbours. There were 6 new mainstream foster carers approved in 2024-2025. This was a net increase of 1, against the target of 10 for the year, due to 5 mainstream carers resigning in the same period. This was compared to a net increase of - 4 mainstream foster carers in the previous year (2023-2024). Reasons for the resignations included foster carers expecting their own child/ren, retiring to focus on care for their own grandchildren, and retiring from fostering to return to work full-time.

The decrease in fostering households from 103(2023/24) to 88(2024/25) is primarily a reflection of the number of kinship fostering placements ending during this reporting period compared to the new kinship fostering placements beginning over the same period. Endings for these placements are for a range of reasons, including young people turning 18, rehabilitation to parents, placement break downs, and changes to the legal status of the children in placement. In this reporting period 7 kinship foster carers were granted Special Guardianship.

6.3 In September 2023 the Local Authority was notified by the Department for Education that Brent, and 7 other neighbouring West London local authorities (Ealing, Harrow, Hounslow, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster and Hillingdon), received funding from the Department for Education for the West London Fostering Hub to improve recruitment and retention of foster carers in September 2023 and a new joint fostering recruitment hub (dedicated “front door” for fostering enquiries) was created and became operational from May 2024.

Brent, alongside Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster Local Authorities, were successfully awarded funding to establish a West London Fostering Recruitment and Retention Programme involving a recruitment support hub, a regional foster care recruitment communications campaign and funding to implement the “Mockingbird” model of fostering.

The Fostering Recruitment and Retention Programme aims to address the long-standing placement sufficiency problem within foster care. This DfE programme aims to deliver end-to-end improvements across the foster care system, by attracting new

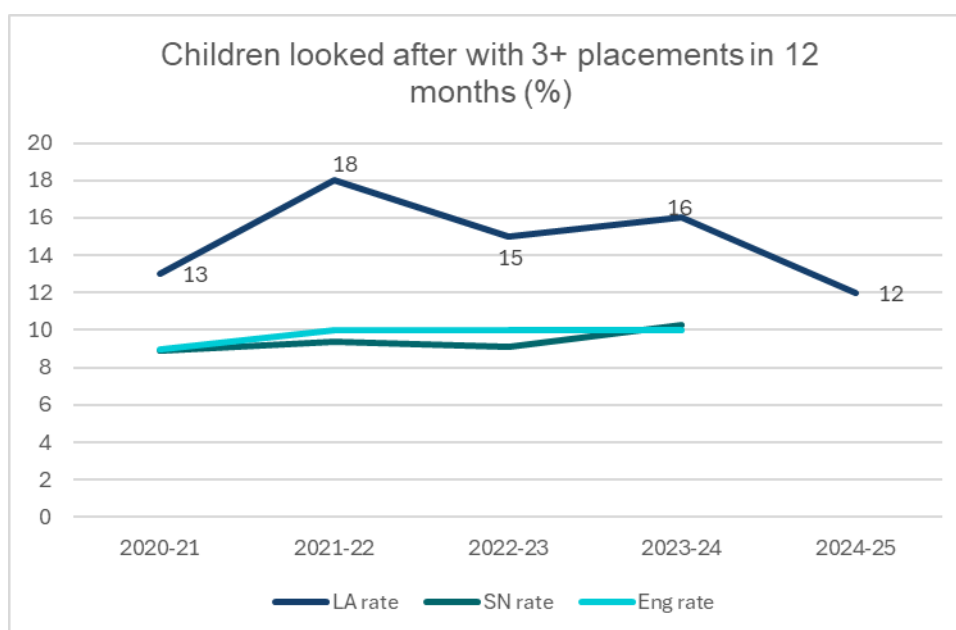
leads, boosting approvals of foster carers in areas of specific shortage, as well as addressing retention through better support to existing foster carers.

The Mockingbird programme is an innovative method of delivering foster care using an extended family model where mockingbird hub carers are specially trained to offer sleepovers, peer support, emergency support, joint planning and social activities to fostering homes. Mockingbird supports children and foster carers by creating extended communities of support around the child and their fostering family.

The launch of Brent's first Mockingbird Constellation was due during this reporting period; unfortunately, the launch was delayed due to challenges of recruiting the Liaison Officer and sourcing Home Hub Carers. The Brent Mockingbird Hub Carers are now in position, they have received their training, and the project went live in May 2025. The Department for Education are pleased with Brent's progress and agreed the continued funding for Mockingbird for 2025/26. There is great excitement from the foster carers involved in the constellation regarding the support they will receive from the project. Impact measures for this project are related to increasing placement stability for children, reduction in the use of residential care, increased foster carer satisfaction and retention for those in the constellation.

- 6.4 Placement stability for children who have had 3 or more placements in a year has improved. Brent's data around 3 or more placement moves decreased from 16% in 2023/24 to 12.1% in 2024/25. The work being done to stabilise placements via Placement Stability meetings and the Children in Care Resilience Service (previously LRS) support have contributed to this improvement, please see more detail below.

The London Q4 data for looked after children who have experienced 3+ placements was 9.6%, compared to Brent's 12.1%. Placement stability performance remains relatively high when considering the London data, however this is directly related to Brent's smaller care population and larger proportion of adolescents in care.



- 6.5 Achieving stability and consistency for children in care continues to be a priority

together with creating opportunities for children to develop secure attachments and providing a sense of security and identity. Placement instability not only reduces children's chances to form warm and enduring relationships but also exacerbates behavioural and emotional difficulties which contribute to further placement breakdown and rejection.

- 6.6 Consequently, a stability meeting continues to be convened every time a placement is at risk of breaking down and is attended by key professionals and where appropriate the young people placed. If the child or young person is not able or willing to attend the meeting, the child's social worker ensures that their views, wishes and feelings are gained and shared with the participants. The placements concerned have included in-house foster placements, Independent Fostering Agencies, residential placements, including residential schools as well as semi-independent units. In this reporting year, the placement stability meetings have been chaired by a Social Work Practice Consultant from the Looked After Children and Permanency Service who has led on placement stability.

The focus of these meetings is understanding the holistic needs of the child or young person, the carers' strengths as well as identifying and agreeing the right support package that would ensure placement stability. These meetings are an opportunity to reflect on what has worked well in the past, which helps inform the plan. Whilst these meetings can be challenging for young people at times, the feedback received from children, young people and carers is that they feel heard and supported. These meetings have meant that issues have been able to be resolved, children have avoided experiencing a placement breakdown (and move) and the child has learnt how to resolve issues in relationships in future should issues arise. Investing time and resources in these meetings when placements are fragile has meant better outcomes for children overall.

- 6.7 During 2024/25 the Social Work Practice Consultant chaired 63 placement stability meetings, inclusive of stability review meetings. As a result of robust planning and individualised support packages, 34 children and young people remained in their current placement and 10 placements disrupted. The chair is able to signpost support services available in Brent such as the Children in care Resilience Service (CRS) and Wellbeing-Emotional Support Team (WEST). These services have been instrumental in sustaining challenging placements. Following our Early Help and Social Care redesign, in 2025/26 responsibility for chairing stability meetings and ensuring the necessary support is in place will rest with the responsible Team Managers in the children social work teams.
- 6.8 The children and young people who are most in need of support and intervention are the children with additional needs and mental health difficulties, followed by those who have been affected by contextual safeguarding issues, or are at risk of gang involvement and have a history of going missing from placements.
- 6.9 CRS (formerly LRS) was launched in January 2024, and it offers a three-tier support offer:
- Tier 1: a universal training offer (co-designed with carers and young people) focusing on skills, resilience, and confidence to reduce placement breakdowns.
 - Tier 2: direct intervention and support to the carer; engagement in network meetings and development of a crisis response plan.
 - Tier 3: provides Tier 2 support plus intensive goal directed support for both

the carer and young person; behaviour assessment and support plans and more direct staff time allocated to the carer and young person.

By the end of March 2025, CRS had received 33 referrals in total.

- The children age range were between 4 – 19 years old.
- 58% of the referrals related to children who identify as male, 42% of the referrals related to children who identify as female.
- 17 of these children were living with foster carers in Independent Fostering Agencies.
- 9 of these children were living with Brent foster carers.
- 5 of these children were living in residential care.
- 2 of these children were living in semi-independent homes.
- 22 of the referrals made to CRS were highlighted as at 'Risk of Placement Breakdown'.
- 11 of the referrals made to CRS were highlighted as 'Behaviours of Concern'.
- 16 children received Tier 3 Intensive support (49%).
- 13 received Tier 2 Consultative support (39%)
- 4 were offered Tier 1 Universal training (12%).
- 4 universal training sessions per week have been delivered since the launch on 29 January 2024, an estimate of 236 hours of training sessions at the end of this reporting period.

89% of children (who were referred to CRS) sustained their placement or moved in a planned way as part of their care plan.

6.10 Some feedback received from young people and social workers who have attended these meetings:

Feedback from a 16-year-old UASC following a stability meeting:

"I like the way you chaired the meeting; you allowed me to speak and asked the carers to listen to me"

Feedback from a social worker following a stability meeting:

"Placement breakdowns are such big things to happen (and nearly always negative in some way to a child or young person due to the loss they suffer) so of course the local authority need to support to try and save placements... I have taken part in a number of stability meetings for different children and young people when there have been difficulties in a placement. I noted it to be a good forum to get everyone together and focussed on all aspects of the care plan. For example, what support might be needed to the child or young person that can help them so that they are less focussed on for example, relationship difficulties. Using the signs of safety format and setting out the positives works well, and carers can be encouraged to think of things and it goes some way to repairing the relationship."

Feedback from a supervising social worker regarding placement stability meetings:

"Foster carers greatly appreciate having an independent person to explore issues and identify additional support to help stabilise placements. They have also mentioned how (the chair's) calm and soothing approach puts them at ease. I'm pleased to say that none of the placements where you have chaired meetings have broken down, and some of this success is due to your advice and

recommendations”.

7.0 Permanency Planning

7.1 Permanency planning for children who have become looked continues to be a priority for the local authority and remains one of the key pillars of care planning. The objective of planning for permanence is to ensure that all children have a secure, stable and loving family or carer to support them through childhood and beyond, and that this placement is found for them as quickly as possible.

7.2 The approach when working towards permanency for a child is to ensure that social workers are progressing parallel plans which ensure a secure and stable permanent option for the child is available to them in the quickest available time. Permanence options can be to return to the care of a parent/s, a permanent placement with someone from the child’s family or friend network, long-term fostering or adoption outside the child’s family or friend network.

7.3 In the February 2023 ILACs inspection, Ofsted inspectors commented that permanency planning for Brent LAC was embedded, and permanency was being achieved for children without delay. The continued ambition is to see Brent children and young people settled in long term, permanent homes in a timely manner.

In the last reporting year, we have continued to focus on the permanency for children and have continued to use the permanency panel, which is held on a monthly basis and is chaired by a senior manager. The focus of this panel is to monitor the progress made, as well as identify any gaps or drift and what action is required to address this. The panel is split into older and younger children, with the younger children having a representative from Adopt London West (ALW), who is able to share information relating to the family finding activities in relation to adoption.

7.4 Between 01/04/2024 and 31/03/2025, there were 8 children adopted and 11 children who left care through the making of Special Guardianship Orders.

7.5 On 31/3/2025:

- 16 children were subject of Placement order
- 7 children with a Placement order waiting to be matched
- 9 children with a placement order who were matched and placed for adoption.

Four of the children placed this year have been placed in Early Permanence placements, allowing the children to move earlier and begin building attachments to their new families sooner.

7.6 The non-published data at the end of March 2025 compared 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. The average time taken for a child entering care to being placed for adoption is 522 days and is longer than previous year of 503 days and can be explained by the increasing numbers of children with a plan of adoption over the last two consecutive years. The average time taken from the local authority receiving court

authority to place a child for adoption and a match being approved is 184 days compared to 180 days the previous reporting year.

Performance variance in this small cohort of children is caused by a range of factors and can be the result of significant delays for just one child, due to extended complex care proceedings, the individual needs of the child impacting on the availability of suitable adopters and therefore 'family finding' taking longer than hoped, these factors affect the average timescale for all children placed.

7.7 Adopt London West (ALW)

7.7.1 Adopt London West (ALW) was established in October 2019 and continues to provide adoption and special guardianship support services 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, together this partnership offers services to 24 London boroughs, there are a number of shared projects across the Adopt London partnership, including nationally funded projects to improve practice in family finding, matching and early permanence.

7.7.2 ALW continues to work closely with staff in Brent CYPCD 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 monthly permanency tracking and leading on permanency planning meetings for children who have a care plan of adoption.

Case Study – Adoption Family Finding

Child A is the only child born to her birth mother, who was in the UK on a student visa studying at university. Child A's father is unknown.

Birth mother was ambivalent about whether to consent to her child being adopted or plan to raise the baby as she had a fiancée in her home country and was due to get married.

She did not have access to public funds, was living in shared housing and had concealed the pregnancy.

Birth mother was given support through Adopt London West (ALW), who provided counselling, and a Children's Guardian was appointed. However, the birth mother continued to be unsure about what to do. A further complication was that she had not disclosed the birth of child A to her fiancée and family back in her home country and she was concerned about the impact of being an unwed mother within her family context. Following many discussions with the social work team and CAFCASS officer, the birth mother made the decision that it would be in her daughter's best interest to be adopted. This was later ratified by the Agency Decision Maker.

The Local Authority was subsequently granted Care and Placement Orders for child A.

Adopters, who reflected the child's ethnic heritage were identified, and Child A was successfully matched and placed.

8.0 Care Proceedings

- 8.1 The number of care proceedings initiated by Brent has reduced with 41 cases being issued in 2024/25 compared to 46 cases in 2023/24. There were 51 children on Brent's care applications in 2024/25 compared to 65 children the previous year.

Local Authority	Children on Care Applications														
	2022-23					2023-24					2024-25				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
London-Brent	29	22	17	21	89	25	13	14	13	65	12	15	15	9	51

Nationally, between April 2024 and March 2025 CAFCASS received a total of 11,450 *care applications. This figure is 4.1% lower than the previous financial year, continuing the downward trend from earlier years, suggest that there are improved early intervention and support for families, or ongoing systemic pressures that may be affecting referral patterns.

The slight decline in the number of care applications between April 2024 and March 2025 may seem modest, however, it could signal important shifts for children's services:

Stabilisation in demand - after years of volatility, especially post-pandemic, the near-flat change may reflect a stabilising trend in family court activity.

Shifting between Public and Private Laws - this might indicate growing concerns about child welfare requiring state intervention, or improved early resolution in private disputes.

Cultural shifts – there are some regions outside London, which have more efficient case management and fewer prolonged proceedings.

Improved pre-proceedings - local authorities appear to be resolving issues earlier, reducing the need for court intervention.

- 8.2 In 2024/25 89 children's cases concluded with the following outcomes:

- 27 Full Care Orders (30.34%)
- 7 Full Care Order and Placement Order (7.87%)
- 4 Child Arrangement Orders (4.49%)
- 1 Family Assistance Order (1.12%)
- 9 No Order (10.11%)
- 12 SGOs (13.48%)
- 23 Supervision Orders (25.84%)
- 4 Designation (out) (4.49%)
- 2 cases withdrawn/vacated (2.25%).

- 8.3 The timeliness of concluded care proceedings in 2024/25 is 66 weeks, compared to 56 weeks in 2023/24.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Brent Internal Data	39.5 weeks	43 weeks	55 weeks	56 weeks	66 weeks
National Average	41 weeks	45 weeks	45 weeks	44 weeks	TBC

(CAFCASS data)					
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West London Family Court data suggests that just over half (53%) of our care proceedings at the end of the reporting period were over 26 weeks, with two cases over 90 weeks and our oldest case just over 100 weeks.

Brent's performance in relation to the timeliness of care proceedings does not stand out compared to the other 10 local authorities using the West London Family Court. All 11 local authorities have a percentage of cases exceeding 26 weeks, the highest percentage being 62% and the lowest 25%, with Brent at 53%. 4 local authorities had more cases at 90+ weeks than Brent, and the oldest case across West London authorities was 202 weeks.

- 8.4 Brent's five longest running cases were reviewed at the end of the reporting period and positively, all 5 cases were listed for hearings within Q1 of 2025/26, 4 cases were listed for final hearings and 1 listed for Issues and Resolution Hearing.

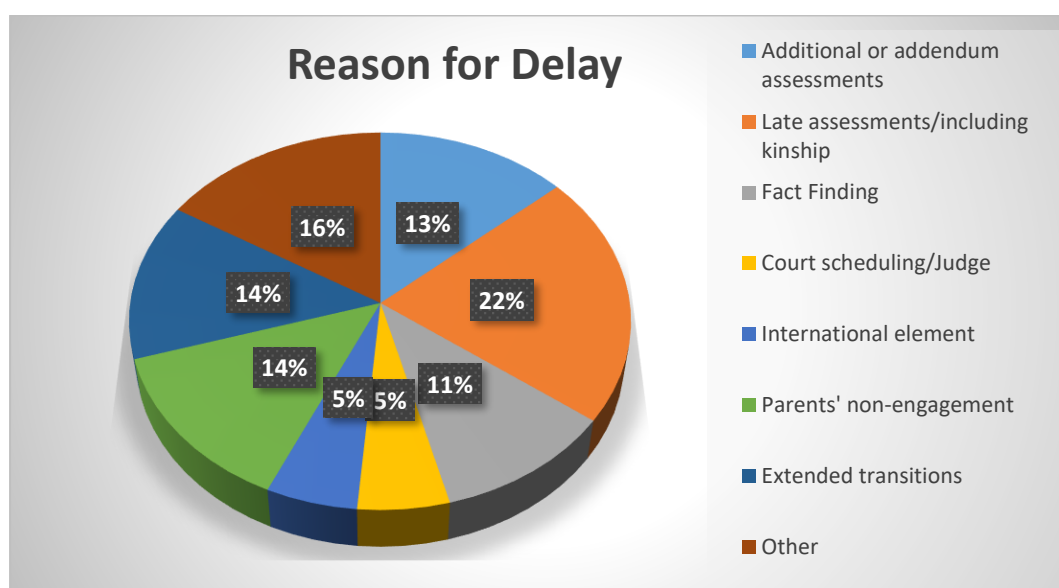
LA	CASE NUMBER	ISSUE DATE	NEXT HEARING	MONTH	LISTED FOR...
BRENT	ZW1	27.3.23	13.6.25	JUN	JMENT/FINAL
BRENT	ZW2	3.4.23	9-13.6.25	JUN	FINAL
BRENT	ZW3	30.11.23	14.7.25	JUL	FINAL
BRENT	ZW4	4.4.24	13.6.25	JUN	IRH
BRENT	ZW5	22.5.24	9-12.6.25	JUN	FINAL

- 8.5 In Brent, we continue to place high importance on the timeliness of care proceedings, in line with the Government's statutory timescale for care proceedings which is 26 weeks (approximately 6 months) from the date the application is issued in court. This timeline was introduced in the Children and Families Act 2014 to reduce delays and ensure timely decisions for children's welfare.

- 8.6 Timeliness is monitored through the monthly 'Care Proceedings Tracking meeting', chaired by the Service Manager with lead responsibility for court proceedings and senior lawyers of the Local Authority. The focus of these tracking meetings is to provide challenge and guidance on cases and to identify particular legal challenges or drift. This panel has provided an opportunity for discussions with lawyers, who are able to give advice in relation to moving the case forward. Practitioners have continued to share how useful they find this forum, as it provides a space to speak directly with senior managers and senior lawyers and tease out any complex issues and identify any learning.

In this reporting period, we have been able to conclude several of our long-standing cases and we have noticed a shift in focus within the Family Court, with Judges being more mindful of keeping within the 26 weeks timescales resulting in fewer agreements to re-timetable and extend filing dates, and more frequent timetabling to final hearing at CMH.

- 8.7 Care proceedings delay in Brent, like many other local authorities, are influenced by a combination of factors including increased complexity of cases, court capacity issues, and challenges in securing suitable placements for children. Specifically, factors like international issues, parental engagement, assessment delays, additional assessments, fact-finding, and criminal matters within care cases can significantly extend the timeline. Additionally, a lack of sufficient foster placements, particularly for older children and teenagers, can lead to delays in finding appropriate homes and contribute to placement instability which can also contribute to delay in care proceedings.
- 8.8 The below chart provides a break down of the reasons for delay in 38 cases throughout the reporting period that were outside the 26 week timescale.



- 8.9 The majority of court hearings are now taking place in person. Only in exceptional circumstances will there be a virtual hearing, usually related to practical reasons such as professionals not being able to attend court due to distance, or when legal representatives have multiple hearings on the same day in different court locations. We have continued to find, that in person hearings are beneficial as they enable parties to address any issues that may arise straight away, avoiding delays caused by having to communicate by phone/email outside of hearings/court dates.

Case Study – Care Proceedings

Child A born January 2018 and **Child B** born in February 2023, to mother who is White British. Child A's father is also White British and Child B's paternal heritage is unknown.

The family has been known to several Local Authorities, however, the last referral received was in relation to mother being intoxicated whilst Child B was found wandering in the street. It was also noted that he had a bump on his head. Both children were subsequently taken into Police Protection and placed with their maternal aunt, in a kinship fostering arrangement whilst further work took place to engage the biological father for Child A.

Child A's father made the decision that he did not want to be involved.

Care proceedings were initiated and an ICO was granted. Mother refused to engage in any of the assessments. Her chaotic lifestyle and substance misuse meant that her engagement was superficial, and throughout the proceedings she was transient, not even able to commit to regular contact with her children. A Hairstrand Test showed chronic use of alcohol and illicit substances.

Maternal Aunt was assessed as a Special Guardian and her assessment was positive. Mother was deemed to be unable to provide appropriate care for the children and maternal Aunt was granted Special Guardianship at the conclusion of proceedings in February 2025 (38 weeks & 6 days).

9.0 Participation of looked after children, young people and care leavers

- 9.1 Looked after children and care leavers continued to have their voices reflected in various ways during 2024/2025, starting with direct work at the assessment stage, continuing through regular visits via longer term intervention and then also as part of the IROs overseeing the progression of their care plans. Looked after children also have access to Coram Voice advocacy that enables them to have independent support in expressing their wishes and feelings. IROs are often a continuing person of trust for many looked after children, who might have several Social Workers involved in their lives.
- 9.2 Young people also have their voices heard in the design and delivery of services and within council decision-making processes through the Brent Care Journeys 2.0 programme, led by the participation team. In this reporting period, the 'Care in Action' participation groups rebranded under the Brent Care Journeys 2.0 programme as part of the transition from the Brent Care Journeys (BCJ).
 - 9.2.1 Brent Care Journeys (BCJ) was a 5-year strategic partnership with Barnados which started in 2019 and aimed to bring about transformational change in the children's social care system, leading to better outcomes for young people, and to provide learning for the wider social care system. Brent Care Journeys aimed to achieve these goals through collaboration with care-experienced young people and professionals based on a robust partnership.
 - 9.2.2 The ambition, and ultimate aim, of this partnership was to improve the children social care system to support young people to achieve "positive destinations", a broader concept of positive outcomes for care experienced young people which went beyond the traditional focus on education, employment and training.
 - 9.2.3 Brent Care Journeys was due to end by March 2025, but in June 2024 Barnardo's ended the programme early, due to an internal restructure. The Council worked with the team at Barnardo's in 2024 to enable a smooth transition to a new programme renamed as Brent Care Journeys 2.0 (BCJ 2.0).
 - 9.2.4 BCJ 2.0 amalgamates Brent's Children in Care Council (previously called 'Care in Action') and projects for care leavers (previously called 'Care Leavers in Action'), providing space and opportunities for different groups to meet in a safe environment

to take part in participation activities throughout the year and engage in trips and events in school holidays.

- 9.2.5 BCJ 2.0 is run by the participation team which became fully staffed in 2024/25, comprising a Participation and Engagement Manager (0.6 FTE), a Participation and Engagement Officer (0.6 FTE) and two Participation Support Officers (0.3 FTE). There are now plans to add sessional participation worker roles to the team, with the roles aimed at care experienced individuals to offer opportunities for care leavers to become formally improved in the Council. This follows a model used within Brent Care Journeys which has transitioned to BCJ 2.0. These roles are expected to be filled by the end of 2025.

9.3 Brent Care Journeys 2.0 (BCJ 2.0) projects and events in 2024/25

- 9.3.1 In summer 2024, seven care leavers attended Stubbers Adventure Centre for a participation residential. The aim of the residential was for care leavers to get to know each other and help design new participation projects. The trip involved fun activities, workshops, and discussions. Seeing young people overcome fears and support each other in the process allowed them to form bonds quickly.

“Dream team of corporate parents. Very well planned.”

“More of this would be awesome especially with bigger groups of care leavers.”



- 9.3.2 We hosted a summer fun day in August at the Unity Centre in Harlesden for care experienced young people and their families with over 60 people attending. There were a lot of indoors and outdoors activities for all ages alongside a DJ. Attendees shared positive feedback of the event.

"It was really fun."

"Lovely day. Thanks for having us xx"

- 9.3.3 We provided fun spaces for young people to connect and build positive relationships during the holidays. In May 2024 half term, young people aged 7-17 took part in a doughnut making workshop at Bread Ahead in Wembley. In October 2024 half term, young people aged 7-17 took part in mini golf at Box Park. In December 2024, young people aged 7-17 took part in bowling for an end of year celebration trip. Also in December 2024, care leavers visited the Tate Modern for an art trip followed by a group dinner in Wembley. These trips ran alongside other projects in the BCJ 2.0 programme including co-design workshops, arts programmes and a range of participation opportunities.



- 9.3.4 The participation team formed a new partnership with arts charity Create Arts to deliver an arts programme for young people in Brent Care Journeys 2.0. The programme included four projects: two with care leavers (ceramics and music) and two with young people aged 11-17 (visual arts and drama). The ceramics project ran in November 2024 for 6 weeks and the visual arts project ran for 3 days in February 2025 half term. The music and drama projects ran in April 2025. Young people really enjoyed being

create and having a social and creative space to chat to each other. There was also feedback received that they enjoyed the 'routine' of the sessions as they ran consecutively for 6 weeks. Young people found these sessions "therapeutic" and it "makes you happy to do stuff".

"When we want something, you can just put it out there saying, we want this, this makes us feel happy, and they'll try their best to bring it for us."

"It actually affected my wellbeing, you know, because it's like, you know, you go out there, you can tell people, yeah, I've done clay. I go to like a thing every Thursday."



9.3.5 Through BCJ 2.0, the participation team have connected young people to participation opportunities outside of Brent to expand their knowledge and experiences. In October 2024, several care leavers from BCJ 2.0 and young people from Brent Youth Parliament attended a Council of Europe event on human rights at Willesden Library. The young people were excellent representatives for Brent and actively got involved in discussions and asked questions. Young people from BCJ 2.0 were proactive at this event by networking with guests to access extra opportunities such as an international social action project. In February 2024, two young people were successful in applying for the Family Justice Young People's Board ran by CAFCASS to improve young people's experiences in family courts. These examples show how young people are growing in confidence and developing their skills through BCJ 2.0 to then connect to external opportunities which support their personal development and career goals.

9.4 Young people's participation in decision-making and service design

- 9.4.1 In June 2024, we launched a "Brent CYP Participation and Engagement Strategy". This followed a process of wide-ranging consultation with children and young people across Brent, including care experienced young people. The strategy was finalised and launched in June 2024, with young people in BCJ 2.0 co-creating a video version by interviewing their peers, writing the script, recording voiceovers and providing feedback during the edit process.
- 9.4.1 Young people have been involved in commissioning by providing feedback for the development of the new children's home. A staff member attended the Brent Virtual School celebration event in December 2024 to obtain views of young people in care (especially if in residential care) on what they perceive as positive characteristics and traits in adults, or qualities in an adult which make them trustworthy. They also attended the Virtual School celebration event in December 2024 to gather more feedback with more young people in care. Young people were asked to choose items they would buy for a bedroom if they were to have a £75 budget. These insights will feed into the recruitment phase of new Children's Home staff as well as generate ideas for purchasing items for the Home.
- 9.4.2 6 former care leavers have been employed by the council as care quality ambassadors. In this role, the ambassadors inspect accommodation for care leavers to provide feedback to the council. In this reporting period, 17 visits have been completed in partnership with ambassadors. This role is a great opportunity for young people to gain employment, build their skills and use their experience of services to improve outcomes for other young people.
- 9.4.3 Young people from BCJ 2.0 have spoken at staff conferences to hundreds of members of staff about their experiences of participation. Their views were well received by staff members and young people developed their confidence in public speaking.
- 9.4.4 Young people from the BCJ 2.0 7-17 group have worked with the NHS on a co-design project to improve health services for looked after children. In May and October half terms, young people took part in workshops where they came up with ideas for a video, wrote a script and drew pictures which were then animated for the video. The final video is expected by the end of 2025.
- 9.4.5 Participation in the Corporate Parenting Committee has been strengthened with young people in BCJ 2.0 working with Councillors and officers to re-design the space. Young people now have a dedicated slot to set the agenda for a discussion topic and they feel more comfortable in the re-designed space to share their views and work with the committee members. Young people now look forward to attending the committee and have developed their understanding of local democratic structures and decision-making processes.
- 9.4.6 Young people in BCJ 2.0 led a campaign for Brent to recognise care experience as a protected characteristic. They worked together to create a proposal and worked with members of staff to explore what this would mean for young people and how it aligns with the local offer. Young people brought the topic to Corporate Parenting Committee to discuss ideas with committee members. They attended a Full Council meeting in November 2024 in which a motion to make care experience a protected characteristic was passed unopposed.

9.4.7 Young people in BCJ 2.0 have been attending the voice and influence sub-group meeting which feeds into the local partnership meeting. In the voice and influence sub-group, young people share their views about participation activities and contribute to planning future activities and the development of the participation objectives. Through this meeting, young people gave feedback on different versions of the participation strategy and suggested a video version to be more accessible to young people. This feedback was actioned through the development of a youth-led participation video.

9.4.8 Care leavers have been involved in several interview panels, including the recruitment of new independent reviewing officers. They were on the interview panel and had their own questions prepared. Young people shared feedback that they like being on the same interview panel as staff instead of a separate young people panel as they feel valued as equal members of the panel.

9.5 Bright Spots

9.5.1 The Bright Spots survey was conducted in 2023/24 with reports on the findings published in 2024/25. The Bright Spots survey is a service improvement tool, designed by CoramVoice, the University of Oxford, and care experienced young people, that supports local authorities to systematically listen to their children in care and care leavers, about the things that are important to them.

9.5.2 Between 1 March and 30 April 2023 and again between 11 October 2023 and 29 March 2024, all Brent children in care aged 4-18 years were asked to take part in an online survey to find out how they felt about their lives.

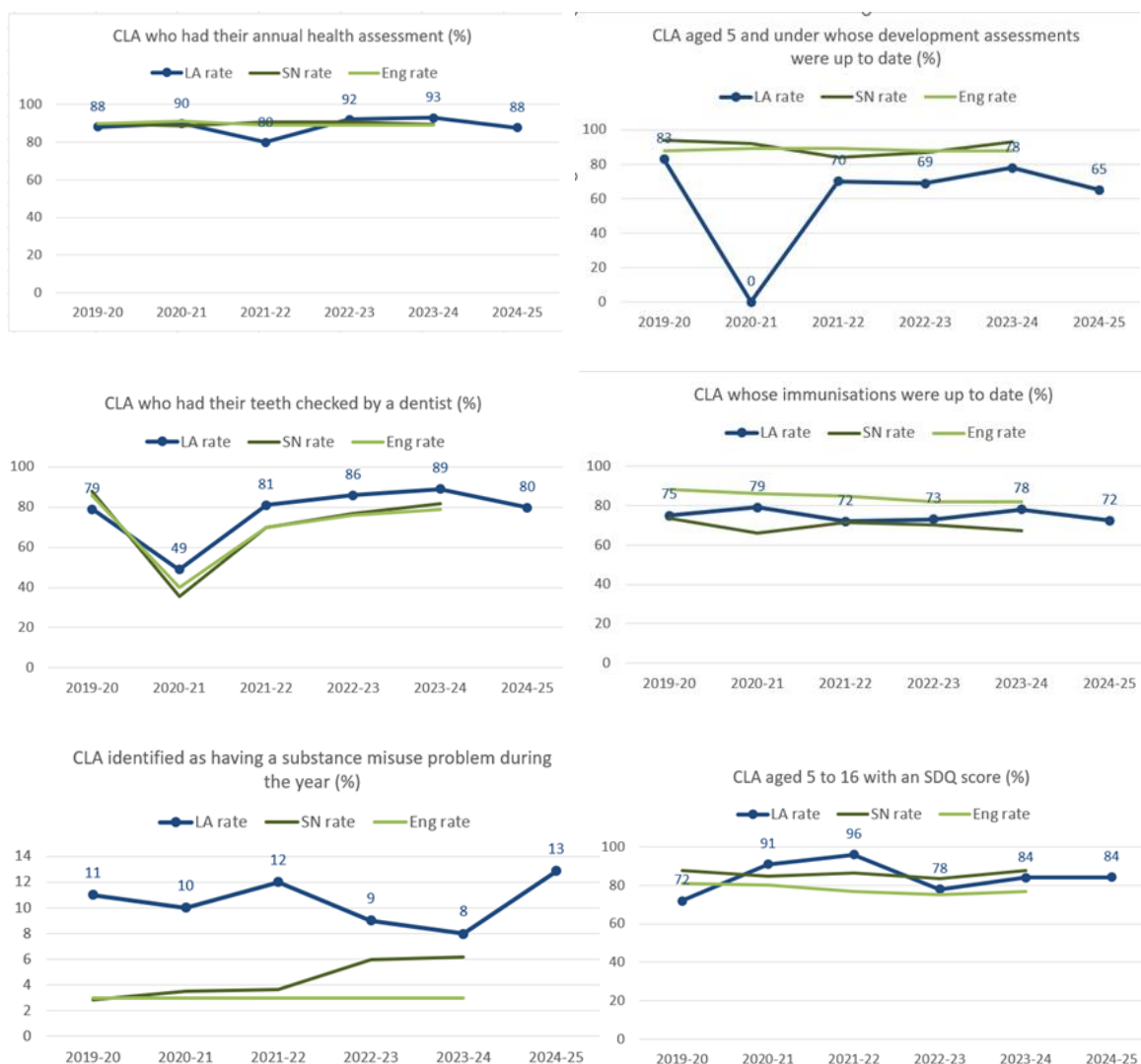
9.5.3 Findings are split into two separate reports *Your Life, Your Care* (for those aged 4-17) and *Your Life Beyond Care* (for Care Leavers). The *Your Life, Your Care* report was presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee by young people in October 2024 and the *Your Life Beyond Care* report was presented by young people in February 2025. In these meetings, young people discussed the findings with the Committee.

9.6 Participation priorities for 2025/26 include; improving services through co-design projects linked to the Bright Spots findings; co-designing BCJ 2.0 branding and termly programmes; recruiting sessional participation workers; continuing to embed the participation strategy across the department to provide new participation opportunities; connecting young people to pan-London and national opportunities.

10.0 **Health of Looked After Children**

10.1 Local Authorities, as Corporate Parents, are responsible for ensuring that CiC 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 CiC is reported for those children who have been looked after for more than 12 months.

10.2 Unpublished data shows that there has been a small downward trend in performance during this reporting period across the spectrum of health-related measures compared to the last reporting year.



10.3 Some possible reasons for this downward trend could be:

- Less children and young people coming into care, with a higher proportion of adolescents, who make a choice to engage with health appointments, consent to immunisations in secondary school
- Some larger sibling groups within the looked after cohort from families who do not give consent for their children to be immunised
- Placement moves and out of borough placements which can present challenges for registration, timeliness of appointments, and access to services

Areas of focus for improvement in 2025/26:

- Improvement in timeliness for Under 5's six-monthly health assessments
- Completion and recording of Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs)
- Recording of immunisations
- A focus on substance misuse and the support available to young people.

- 10.4 In line with our priorities for 2024/25, there was continued focus on providing support regarding emotional wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers in this reporting period.
- 10.5 The Wellbeing and Emotional Support Team (WEST) continue to provide a wide 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.
- 10.6 Over the reporting period April 2024 to March 2025, WEST received 133 referrals for looked after children, providing a mixture of consultation, direct one to one therapeutic work, facilitating workshops and training and/or support for carers. WEST have also continued to offer one to one/group support to professionals, if they are dealing with a complex or emotive situation. This has been received positively by staff who have fed back that they find having this resource helpful.
- 10.7 Other low to moderate mental health and wellbeing services that are providing support to our looked after young people are Via (Elev8), CRS and the Brent Centre for Young People.
- 10.8 During this reporting period the CAMHS Looked After Child and Transition Mental Health Care Coordinator post was predominantly vacant, and recruitment is still underway. This is a CAMHS funded post, and the intention is that this post will be dedicated to 0–18-year-old children in care living in Brent. This role contributes to the Health and Wellbeing subgroup (linked to the Local Partnership Meeting) which brings together professionals who focus on and work to drive forward improvements for the health and wellbeing of our care experienced young people.
- 10.9 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)
- In 2024/25 ongoing support has been provided to the UASC population through individual and group therapeutic work provided by WEST.
 - Weekly football has continued to run throughout 2024/25 through our community partnership with Goals. Goals have provided a free pitch to our leaving care service once a week, with an additional large pitch during care leavers week hosting over 20 players. Unfortunately, the training and employment opportunities hoped for via Goals have not materialised due to changes in management.
 - The service successfully applied for Public Health funding during this reporting period to deliver a bespoke Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health support for UASC and Former UASC over the next three years. This opportunity has gone out to Tender, with the intention of launching within the 2025 summer period.
- 10.10 Healthy Relationships Parenting work

In this reporting year, we hosted 12 parent and child drop-in sessions at Granville

Family Wellbeing Centre. These sessions were offered in response to feedback from care leavers, who were also parents, who shared that becoming parents can be very scary and isolating at times without the “normal” family network around them for support. To encourage attendance the team used the Leaving Care WhatsApp Channel, the Care Leavers Hub group chat, and posters were created and delivered individually by allocated Personal Advisors. Although attendance was limited, with only one parent attending, the Leaving Care service is committed to exploring ways of providing a space for care leavers who are also parents to ensure that they feel supported.

The rationale for using a Family Wellbeing Centre(FWC) for this work was because we know that our care leavers are often reluctant to use the services and supports available via these centres, and therefore it was important to work in partnership with a FWC to deliver this programme so that our young parents also had access to midwives, early development practitioners, and all the opportunities available through the FWCs.

Plans are being developed for a 2025 summer parenting programme aimed at parents of school-aged children. This initiative will provide parents with an opportunity to build stronger connections with their local family centres and learn about additional summer activities they can attend with their children during the holidays.

11.0 Multi-agency Partnership of LAC and Care Leavers

11.1 Brent CYP have well established and mature relationships with partners resulting in strong and effective multi-agency arrangements. The Brent Children’s Trust, chaired by the Corporate Director of Children and Young People 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.

The current areas of focus as agreed by Brent Children’s Trust for Looked After Children and Care Leavers over the two-year period 2024-2026 are:

1. Stronger coordination of health service for care experienced young people
2. Robust development of emotional wellbeing support services for care experienced young people

We have identified the following key activities to progress these areas:

- Hearing from children and young people about their experiences of accessing health services to help shape future delivery of health services to care experienced young people
- Bright Spots Survey- on receipt of the findings to develop an action plan with young people in a “You SAID, We DID” format
- Focus on improving immunisation rate of LAC and Care Leavers
- Health training for Brent foster carers and providers
- Develop the interface between Brent Participation offer, the new Participation Strategy, and low-level emotional wellbeing support for LAC and Care Leavers i.e. Therapart, Vibes in the Kitchen, Brothers, parenting support offer

- 11.2 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 Departments (Looked after Children and Permanency, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Inclusion/SEND, Youth Justice Service within Early Help, Housing Needs, Public Health), Community Wellbeing, Regeneration and Environment) and partners such as NHS North West London ICB, Probation, Via, and Central London Community Healthcare (CLCH) NHS Trust. Members of BCJ 2.0 attend and contribute to the LPM priorities via the Voice and Influence subgroup and act as conduits between the LPM and representatives of BCJ 2.0.
- 11.3 The LPM has been responsible for driving and delivering the priorities of 2024-25 and continues to drive activity through the subgroups with multiagency membership. Chairs of the working groups attended the LPM to report on their progress. The priority areas are:
- Health and Wellbeing
 - Education, Employment and Training
 - Voice and Influence (participation and engagement)
 - Path to Independence

12.0 Children Missing or Absent from Care

- 12.1 At year ending 31st March 2025, 76 CiC were reported to be missing from their placements at least once, compared to 64 in the previous year. This represented 17% of all children looked after at any point during the year (n=442) compared to 14% compared to in the previous year (n=460).
- 12.2 An absence may be a situation where a child has not returned home at an agreed time but their whereabouts is known, or their whereabouts are known but permission has not been given. In this reporting year 87 children were reported as being absent from their care placement compared with 71 in 2024/25.

Missing Children Report Processing Year: 2025	Number of children who went missing during the year	Number of incidences of missing children during the year	Number of children who were away from placement without authorisation during the year	Number of incidences of children away from placement without authorisation during the year
Male	41(32)	377(429)	45(37)	307(155)
Female	35(32)	412(213)	42(34)	416(286)
Total	76(64)	789(642)	87(71)	723(441)

**Figures in brackets reflect data from 2023/24*

- 12.3 The data above shows a considerable increase of young people who are absent and going missing, and a substantial increase in the number of incidences of absent and missing, both for boys and girls.

The reasons for this increase are unclear, however it could be hypothesised that Brent's entry to care demographic, as is known, is predominantly children aged 10 years and above, making the likelihood of more absent/missing episodes a possibility. Additionally, this could reflect an improvement in the reporting and recording of absent and missing episodes.

As a result of staffing changes during this reporting period, the management of missing episodes reverted to the allocated social worker and the responsible team manager. The SWPC who previously led on this area of work, was seconded to the Contextual Safeguarding Lead role within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service.

- 12.4 Children who are missing from care are offered return home interviews (RHIs) by their allocated social worker, or if they prefer someone independent, a duty social worker. Following the RHI, the social worker will complete the RHI work step, which records the feedback from the young person. In the RHI feedback form, the aim is to allow our young people to express the reasons why they go missing or are absent from their placement. The form also highlights the recurring themes and allows the Local Authority to safety plan and put strategies in place to decrease the missing episodes. In many instances the young person will refuse to have an interview, and this will be recorded as such. However, if the young person does agree to the interview, if there are emerging themes, or information linked to other young people from other local authorities involved, this can be fed into other professional meetings or panels (MAPPA or EVVP) as through data collection, we have been able to identify young people who are being criminally(CCE) and sexually(CSE) exploited.
- 12.5 EVVP which is jointly chaired by Brent Council services and the police, leads on operational planning and co-ordination work between partners, driving strong interventions in response to individual young people at risk of exploitation. Most of the young people who are referred have contact with the youth justice system as well as missing from care. EVVP plays a key role in triggering interventions and resources to assist safety planning for young people. A transitional safeguarding plan is also being piloted and used across this forum to further increase safety for young people who are on the verge of adulthood and effectively plan for their support network post adulthood.
- 12.6 During most part of the reporting year, the SWPC who led on group supervision where we had concerns with young people who were missing due to being at risk of exploitation and criminalisation. These arrangements formalised existing good practice by regularising ongoing joint risk management and decision making. Practitioners from partner agencies including Health, Education and CAMHS, placement providers, and YJS. It also involved joint decision making and planning, increasing the ability of the professional network to ensure young people get the right interventions at the right time. Other benefits include children receiving consistent information from practitioners, multi-agency safety planning, and greater clarity surrounding the remit and responsibilities of services.
- 12.7 The SWPC also kept track of young people that were deemed at risk, so when these young people are transitioning to the leaving care service the SWPC works with the personal advisors by providing them with advice on completing safety plans and risk

assessments (VARA) as well as leading on group supervision where there is need to keep the young person safe.

- 12.8 As part of the Early Help and Social Care re-design a new target operating model was implemented on 2 June 2025 with new family support and child protection and court teams. This redesign included the creation of a new Targeted Prevention Hub, which will hold the specialist practitioners who lead on Edge of Care, Missing, Contextual Safeguarding areas of practice. An area of focus will be working with adolescents.

13.0 Education of Looked After Children

- 13.1 The Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children Annual Report September 2023 – August 2024 was presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in April 2025.

- 13.2 The BVS sits within the Education, Partnerships and Strategy Department of CYP. BVS operates as a multi-disciplinary team supporting young people in care to achieve the very best they can. The team comprises of advisory staff (both teaching and non-teaching), an educational psychologist, education officers, an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and Year 11 education officer, a post-16 advisor and an enrichment coordinator. A performance officer provides support to BVS. The team also draws on the expertise of additional services contracted by the local authority, such as Prospects (careers advice) and the Wellbeing and Emotional Support Team (WEST). Staff in BVS work closely with social workers, foster carers, staff in the CYP Inclusion Service, as well as school and setting staff.

- 13.3 The priorities for BVS in 2023/24 were:

- a) To continue to work closely with schools, social care colleagues, carers, and young people to drive up attendance, particularly in Key Stage 4 (for progress see section 3)
- b) To co-design EET and enrichment programmes with young people to ensure that their needs and aspirations are addressed (for progress see section 11).
- c) To implement a way of working with all children known to a social worker, including those in kinship placements, that mirrors, as far as possible the offer to LAC (for progress see section 13)
- d) To continue to provide an enrichment curriculum both online and onsite and rooting this into the interests of looked after children (for progress see section 5).
- e) To use early identification to ensure that the necessary support is in place for LAC in Key Stage 4, who are likely to underachieve in their GCSEs (for progress see section 5)
- f) To utilise the post-16 funding to support Key Stage 5 LAC into EET and higher education opportunities (for progress see section 5.11).

13.4 Attendance

At the end of 2023/24 academic year the school attendance for Looked After Children in KS1 and KS2 (Primary) was 97% compared to 95% in 2022/23. School attendance at KS3 and KS4 (Secondary) was 89%, compared to 84% in 2022/23. LAC Attendance for the last academic year has increased significantly particularly

at Key Stage 4, which was one of the priorities for the academic year as set out in 2.3.

13.5 Achievement

The number of LAC achieving the headline figures of 5 passes at level 4-9 including English and maths was 10%, which is lower than in the past four years. This year's SFR cohort was 30% larger, which needs to be considered in the context of the lower pass rate. Whilst the headline figures of 5 passes at level 4-9 including English and maths is important, it is key to note that the number of young people achieving 5 good passes (4-9) this year was significantly higher (61%) than the last four years and was comparable to the 62% achieved in 2019/20 which was based on teacher assessments instead of exams. There was also a significant increase in the 4 passes at level 1-9 and at least 1 pass at level 1-9.

13.6 Post-16

There were 6 Year 13 students who completed Level 3 courses in 2023/24, which is less than the previous academic year. It is of note though that the cohort size was smaller (70 compared to 93). Despite this the number is still higher than in the pre-pandemic period. Of the six, one is currently at university whilst four are in employment.

13.7 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

Seven new statutory aged UASC entered the care system in the academic year 2023/24, compared to 9 in 2022/23. Two of these young people were in Key Stage 3, whilst 5 were in Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 5, 8 UASC entered the care system during 2023/24 compared to 12 the previous academic year. Within the BVS there is a dedicated worker who supports this cohort and ensures that there is swift access to education as well as enrichment and new arrival support.

Generally, UASC are disapplied from KS4 assessments as new arrivals into the country. For most their entry into education is through one of the three local ESOL provisions in Brent schools. There is often a keen interest in education and language acquisition for this cohort. With the new funding stream for Post-16, BVS has been able to deliver a wider tuition resource including Saturday school in a neighbouring borough.

14.0 Care Leavers

14.1 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.

14.2 As of 31 March 2025, Brent was responsible for the support to 357 Former Relevant Young People [aged 18 - 21] (slight increase from 332 last year) and 252 *eligible* young people aged 22-24, of which 130 are currently receiving support (a slight increase from 125 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.

London Q4 data shows Care Leavers aged 17-24 at 161 per 10,000, compared to Brent at 158 per 10,000.

- 14.3 All care leavers have an allocated personal advisor who we aim to introduce to them at the age of 17.5 to start building relationships and advocate for young people as they approach 18. This approach 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. During this reporting period this has not always been possible due to the capacity within the Leaving Care teams, however the service continues to aim for allocation by 17.5.
- 14.4 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 2024/25, the staffing establishment of the Leaving Care Service consisted of three teams with 6 personal advisors supervised by three team managers. The teams also work closely with external partners such as Prospects, Grandmentors, and newly commissioned service, Settle. The team managers each have a specific area of responsibility, for example, one of the managers has built a good partnership with Youth Justice, Probation, and Housing where she sits on tenancy allocation panel. The other areas of responsibility are Employment, Education and Training, and Promoting Independence. Personal Advisors have also been encouraged to develop specialisms in different areas and currently we have two PAs who organise the Gordon Brown Residential weekends for young people, a PA who coordinates the weekly football sessions as part of the enrichment offer, and a PA who works with care experienced young people to co-design the annual Care Leaver week activities and celebrations.

There is also a PA established within the Disabled Children and Young People 0-25. They work alongside social workers in this team to support disabled care leavers being supported within this team.

15.0 Brent's Local Offer for Care Leavers

- 15.1 Our Care Leaver Local Offer was refreshed and updated in this reporting year and presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in October 2024, before being published.
- 15.2 The main changes in the revised local offer, including the commitments made as part of the Care Leavers Compact, are as follows:
- All eligible care leavers will be able to apply for the Digital Resident Support Fund for a device and 12-month free fibre connectivity in their home.
 - All eligible care leavers claiming universal credit will be able to apply for free internet access from TalkTalk (internet provider).
 - Our current work with Grandmentors will expand to recruit mentors from within the Council to offer mentorship to our care leavers this could be as simple as help with CV, or support if they move to their own tenancy, or more intensive mentoring over a longer period.
 - We will offer a rent deposit scheme to care leavers for whom private rented accommodation is assessed as a suitable option.
 - Care leavers can apply for half price bus and tram travel, we will pay the difference if the young person is in education, employment, or training.

- Statutory guidance requires local authorities to provide a leaving care allowance, to enable care leavers to purchase essentials (such as furniture, white goods and carpets/curtains) when they move into their first home. The allowance has been increased to £3000 for care leavers, or £3250 if you are a care leaver and single parent.
- festival and birthday allowances will rise in line with similar London local authorities.

15.3 Pan-London Care Leavers Compact and Covenant

The Pan London Care Leavers Compact provides a framework for developing consistency, breadth and quality in the support offered to London's care leavers. The compact was initiated in early 2022 to support a more consistent and high-quality offer for care leavers across the capital. The Council endorsed the adoption of the Compact and supports its implementation across the council. These commitments have been incorporated into our revised Local Offer.

Brent is a signatory to the Care Leavers Covenant. There are five housing related positions and an additional commitment relating to whole council support of Care Leavers through membership of the Care Leavers Covenant.

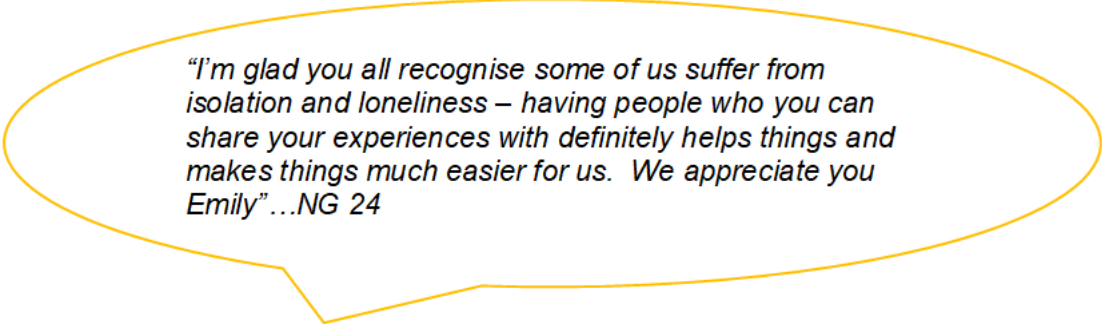
15.4 Brent Care Leavers Charter

The Charter for Care Leavers is designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what local authorities should do to be good Corporate Parents. The Brent Care Leavers Charter has been updated in line with the Brent Local Offer in this reporting period.

16.0 Care Leavers' Enrichment Programme

"The Hub"

- 16.1 The 'Hub Group' (Enrichment Programme) remains an integral part of the Care Leavers Service and seeks to combat isolation, build a network of friends and merge the gap between the younger and older care leavers. The group continue to plan activities, maintain contact with each other, and meet face to face on a monthly basis. Some care leavers now also meet up outside of the Hub Group and have formed closer friendships. Each monthly Hub session sees 7-13 young people attend, except for the December Christmas Party, which saw 20+ people attend. We continue to see an increase of younger care leavers joining the group too.
- 16.2 The Hub continues to discuss the challenges of life, world events, ongoing cost-of-living crisis, and sharing job adverts and opportunities. The care leavers continue to use this time and opportunity to share their experiences and support each other with rich and informative dialogue. The Hub group remains a safe space for young people to come and mingle with each other and alleviate some of the social isolation they may experience. Feedback confirms that young people value this space.



"I'm glad you all recognise some of us suffer from isolation and loneliness – having people who you can share your experiences with definitely helps things and makes things much easier for us. We appreciate you Emily"...NG 24

- 16.3 The group continue to celebrate religious events together where they meet for their annual Christmas Party as well as Eid celebrations, these are well attended and organised by staff, with the help of the manager of the Learning Zone. For summer 2025, the group have decided to plan a beach trip and have worked together to explore ways to both fund the trip and make it more inclusive. One of their ideas was to have a 'bring and share session' to allow for the money saved on eating out to be put towards the beach trip.
- 16.4 Those that attend the Hub are aged between 18-25 years and occasionally care leavers over 25 also attend. The older care leavers (22+) provide support to the younger ones often talking about real life issues such as pregnancy and having children, living independently and managing bills, university, apprenticeships and employment and also talk about their own care journeys as well as their future plans/goals. As a result of these friendships there has been personal development, with some young people feeling less isolation and shyness to becoming vibrant, confident and mature members of the Hub group. There have been several members of the Hub that have turned 25 years who have expressed an interest in their ongoing attendance. Discussions are ongoing, in partnership with Participation colleagues, in relation to developing a post 25 hub group for those young people that have left the service i.e. a 25+ Alumni group.
- 16.5 BCJ 2.0**
This reporting year has seen the end of our BCJ partnership with Barnados, and the development of BCJ 2.0. Please refer to section 9 for more information.
- 16.6 Grandmentors**
The Grandmentors programme aims to transform 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. The support Grandmentors provides depends 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.
- 16.7 In this reporting period there has been 2 newly matched mentors/mentee and 9 new referrals. Due to changes of Grandmentor co-ordinators in 2024/25, there have not been as many 'matches' as hoped for. However, there is a new co-ordinator in post and there is a new cohort of 14 Grandmentors being onboarded which is very positive.
- 16.8 The Grandmentor offer has been extended to 16- and 17-year-olds in 2024/25, which is extremely positive for those young people who would benefit from a mentor to support them over the transition to leaving care.

16.9 Grandmentors have made the most significant impact addressing young people with low self-esteem. Most young people who are referred to the project score low in this area. Mentoring gives a young person (age 16-24) a positive relationship with an adult who is there just for them. Not another professional that has been assigned to them, but an adult that they have chosen to match with based on the mentors' qualities and experience and how these may support the young person in achieving goals of their own. Through regular meetings the Grandmentors will be boosting the mentees confidence and working towards goals specific to them. Ultimately the Grandmentors will be supporting them to develop the skills and self-belief to lead successful and independent lives.

16.10 The following case studies demonstrates the impact grand mentors can have on young peoples lived experience:

Following an incident at the young person's work, the mentor supported the mentee by meeting them at the hospital and also assisting them to attend their GP, they have been supporting them with a lot of emotional and wellbeing support regarding ongoing health issues as well as, budgeting, financial planning and maintaining their employment.

"I don't know where I would be without the help from my mentor."

The young person had been struggling with their emotional health, and her mentor took the time to listen and support her in areas which she wanted to discuss. This included discussions around possible courses and careers too. The young person's PA has also stated how fantastic this mentor is, patient, caring and such a great support.

"My mentor is great and thankful for all he has done for me."

17.0 Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training

17.1 There were 36 young people in higher education in 2024/25. Of these 36 young people, 18 are in the 19 to 21 age range.

The overall drop in the number of Brent care leavers aged 19 to 21 in higher education from 2020-2025 is a result of a number of care leavers opting to engage in employment and training opportunities, rather than higher education. Examples of these are discussed below. Many care leavers often seek out higher education older than those who have not been in the care system. This is reflected in the larger number of care leavers in higher education post 21. Those in higher education are studying a range of courses, including Neuroscience, Business Management and Social Work. The table below highlights some of the provisional comparative data for young people engaged in higher education:

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in Higher Education	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average %	National %
2020-21	24	10%	8%	6%
2021-22	22	7%	8%	7%
2022-23	19	8%	8%	6%

2023-24	20	8%	7%	6%
2024-25	18	7%	TBC	TBC

- 17.2 At the end of the reporting year, the percentage of young people aged 19-21 in education, employment and training was 60%, this is an improvement on last year. The national key performance measures as related to outcomes for care leavers in education, employment or training are set out in the table below:

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in Education, Employment or Training	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average %	figure %
2020-21	128	54%	52%	52%
2021-22	140	56%	57%	55%
2022-23	131	53%	57%	56%
2023-24	117	53%	53%	54%
2024-25	153	60%	TBC	TBC

A care leaver in Higher Education

R is a 24 year old care leaver, who faced many challenges that she herself did not understand very well at the time. A lot of her challenges presented themselves in her behaviour, which made it very difficult to engage her with services. R then became a parent at 18. Concerns were later raised about R's relationship with her son's father and her parenting. This resulted in her son being placed on a Child Protection plan. At first, R did not take the concerns professionals had seriously. However, when she learnt legal action could be taken, the reality of losing her son became apparent. It was at this point R began to make some slow but vital changes to her life and parenting.

R engaged with services and built a family support network, all of which she was able to get the support she needed. R also gained awareness and understanding about the impact of her now past lifestyle choices, the impact they had on her and the development of her son.

Today, R's son remains in her care and the intervention of Children's Services have successfully ended. R is completing a 4-year BSc (hons) in Health, Well-being and Social Care. R has successfully completed her first year of her degree and has almost completed her second year. R hopes to have a career in the Mental Health sector supporting adults.

A care leaver applying for Higher Education

A is a 21-year-old young women who entered care with her younger sister following concerns regarding neglect whilst in their mother's care. Even through the challenges of her childhood, and subsequent entry into care, A placed an importance on education. A obtained her GCSEs and then went to her secondary

school's sixth form with a hope of obtaining her A Levels and progressing to university. Following sixth form, A was unsure what she would like to do at university and chose to take this time to seek employment. A then gave birth to her daughter in 2022 and following this, returned to work in 2023. A then made the decision to apply for the Open University and undertake a BA (Honours) in Primary Education Studies. A is waiting to hear back on whether she has been accepted and hopes to start her studies in September 2025.

- 17.3 Brent has a number of current employment schemes, some of which are targeted exclusively at care experienced young people. For example:

Prospects

Prospects is a service within The Shaw Trust supporting NEET young people in finding suitable Education, Training and Employment opportunities. Prospects were successful in winning a continuation of a contract with Brent last year allowing continued work with our Care Leavers. The support from Prospects has increased with 2 workers co-located with the Care Planning and Leaving Care service 3 days a week. These 2 workers cover the 18–21-year-old cohort, ensuring they have an allocated education, employment and training specialist to support them moving forward. Senior management meet with the Prospects team on a monthly basis to review cases and identify any themes or areas we could support. Referrals can be made independently or via the monthly meeting and the Prospects team support our care leavers into a wealth of different education, training, and employment opportunities. Below is an example of the work they do:

A care leaver supported by Prospects

J is a 21-year-old care leaver who approached the Leaving Care service for support with employment.

J was referred to Prospects, who supported her to engage with their Change Protect which implements the use of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. Whilst working with the Change Project, Prospects supported J in getting a job as a Barista. After several positive CBT sessions, J was supported to further develop her employability skills by registering for online courses in Childcare and Safeguarding, as they hope to develop a career in the Youth Work field.

Drive Forward Foundation

The Drive Forward Foundation worked with the Brent Care Leavers Service to identify Care Leavers who were NEET, and willing to engage in a CSCS Certification Card programme delivered by Wates. Wates enlisted 12 care leavers and supported them through a 2-week CSCS training program, providing them with the skills to gain their own CSCS authorized card. All 12 care leavers passed the course obtaining their Level 1 and 2 in Health and Safety, with several of the 12 also passing and obtaining their CSCS Certificate. One of these care leavers went on to be chosen by Wates, to complete an Apprenticeship with them and is currently employed Full Time developing his skills within this field!

Additional organisations

In recognising our hard-to-reach care leavers, including our UASC young people, the 21+ cohort, and those that may have additional needs or have recently left custody, we work with a number of external organisations to put additional support in place ensuring they have every opportunity to succeed. The main organisations

we work with to address this is the Pathway Group organisation who offer one-to-one education, employment and training coaching for young people referred. We work with the Pathway Group to refer our 21+ care leavers who may still remain NEET despite previous interventions, or who, for a range of reasons, did not access support whilst under 21. We have also established a link with the football organisation, Goals, who have a number of football centres in England and Scotland. They are able to provide referee and coaching training for free for our care leavers and the possibility of a job following this. An additional incentive for free pitch access for our care leavers is also included.

18.0 Care Leavers' Accommodation

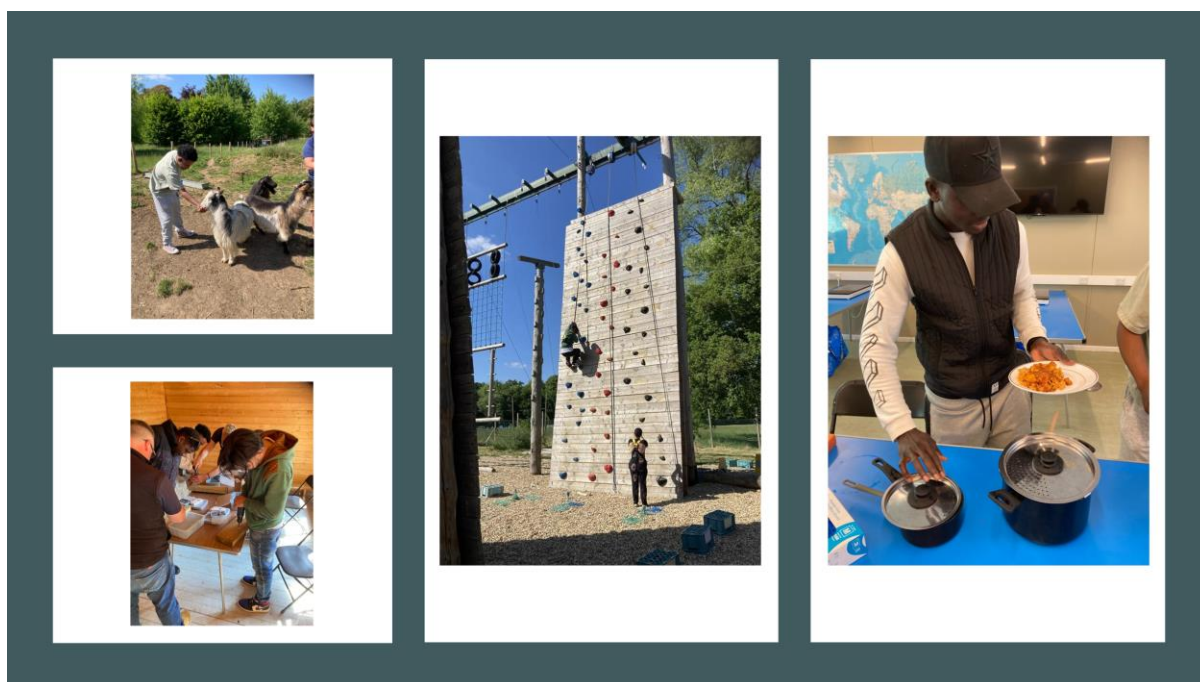
- 18.1 Brent Council is responsible for supporting Care Leavers until they are ready and able to move into independent living arrangements and this support is via the provision of commissioned supported accommodation placements. These placements, coupled with the length of time it is currently taking for Care Leavers to achieve their own social tenancy via the Council, is a significant cause of financial pressures within the CYP placements budget.
- 18.2 Currently supported accommodation placements are commissioned through either the Commissioning Alliance DPV or a spot-purchase arrangement with private supported accommodation providers. In this reporting period we launched our first Shared House model with a 6-bed block contract with Single Homeless Prevention Service (SHPS). This option has been designed to provide a more affordable, independent housing option for Care Leavers who are ready and waiting for their own tenancy.
- 18.3 The Brent Shared House has been operational since September 2024. 6 care leavers are living in this property and receiving 'floating support'. The number of support hours would be low compared to what a significant proportion of Care Leavers receive in semi-independent provision. The 18 hours of floating support provided are shared across the care leavers in the house based on their support requirement that week and can be flexed. This means all young people could receive three hours one week or one young person might require four whilst another young person receives two hours.
- 18.4 The young people in the Shared House are the young people bidding for independent housing via LOCATA, the Council's social housing bidding route. With an established waiting list of identified care leavers, the risk of voids is reduced and the turnaround time for re-let is 48 hours which has been achievable to date. In 2025/26 we hope to establish a second Shared House.
- 18.5 In preparation for independent living, young people are supported to complete either the ASDAN Independent Skills Programme or the Gordon Brown Practical Skills Weekend along with the My Bank Money Programme before being referred for their own accommodation. PAs continue to complete a vulnerability assessment as well as provide evidence of the young person's readiness for their own accommodation.
- 18.6 The Leaving Care service and the Housing team meet monthly for the Housing Allocations Panel where referrals are discussed and accepted for housing, thereafter, care leavers can bid for three months before being eligible for a Direct Offer. Once a care leaver has secured their own accommodation they are supported to furnish and buy essential items for their property with a 'setting up home allowance' of £3000. In

this reporting year we have supported approximately 22 young people into their own tenancies.

- 18.7 Following the success of the Gordon Brown pilot scheme, this has now become of part Brent's life skills programme. 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. Gordon Brown weekends are run every alternate month with males and females attending separately. Each young person is given a starter pack for when they move into their tenancy which includes a tool kit, pots and pans and other essentials for living independently. 20 young people attended Gordon Brown in 2024 and half of them have been presented and accepted at housing panel. In addition to this, each young person being nominated for a tenancy has to complete the ASDAN workbook and MyBank financial workshop, this gives the young people the confidence and the skills to be able to manage a tenancy.
- 18.8 Below are some comments young people have made about the Gordon Brown Centre and pictures of young people engaging in some practical and fun activities:

Gordon Brown Centre – Feedback from participants





- 18.9 The Team Manager who leads on housing works with the Social Housing Team and jointly chairs the monthly Housing Allocation Panel meetings where young people are nominated for tenancy. The manager also attends bi-monthly rent arrears meetings which are held with the Area Management Team to discuss care leavers who have fallen into arrears and plan a way to address this matter to include setting up payment plans, applying for discretionary housing benefit payment or other financial support, i.e. residency support fund they are eligible for and further budgeting and other support provided by their PA.

In addition, in this reporting period, joint Leaving Care, Commissioning and Housing meetings have been held as part of our ongoing commissioning work, chaired by the Head of Service, to develop closer relationships across services, trouble shoot specific issues related to accommodation for care leavers, and to explore different and creative ways of supporting care leavers into independent living.

- 18.10 At the end of the reporting year, 90%(229) of care leavers aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation, compared to 85% the previous year. Apart from the cohort of care leavers on remand or incarcerated, this data is reflective of the care leavers who choose to not stay in touch with the Leaving Care service and therefore the nature of their accommodation is unknown.

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in suitable accommodation	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average	Statistical Neighbour average %	National Figure	National figure %
2020-21	208	88%	210	83%	28270	88%
2021-22	213	86%	212	85%	29270	88%
2022-23	206	83%	212	85%	30320	88%
2023-24	224	85%	198	94%	31630	88%
2024-25	229	90%				

**Brent's statistical neighbours changed in 2023/24 to: Ealing, Newham, Hounslow, Haringey, Luton, Slough, Barking and Dagenham, Enfield, Waltham Forest*

18.11 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 independence. The number of care leavers in semi-independent provision has risen to 260 in March 2025, compared to 227 in March 2024. This increase is mainly due to the pressure on the availability of social housing tenancies for care leavers. Additionally, there are several former UASC who have been waiting for a Home Office decision which has been delayed due to the backlog of cases being dealt with by immigration caseworkers.

19.0 Priorities for Corporate Parenting Partners 2025/26

- To develop the Government's 'Families First Programme' priorities as they relate to children in care and care leavers
 - re-introduction of Family Group Conferences
 - establishing Lifelong Links
 - continued focus on kinship care as a first option for children who are unable to live with parents
 - where reunification is the goal, to support families to develop plans that facilitate safe return home
- To maintain the progress made in relation to recruitment and retention of social workers and Personal Advisors with the aim of continuing to develop quality and consistency of practice and creating stable, caring relationships with their children and young people.
- Continued focus from all partners to improve holistic health services and outcomes for CiC and care leavers, including emotional wellbeing and CAMHS i.e. ensuring all young people leaving care understand how to access their health histories, improved immunisation take up, and targeted wellbeing support for UASC and former UASC.
- Continued work on accommodation pathways and developing independence skills for care leavers, particularly those placed within semi-independent provision and their readiness to move on.
- Continued focus on recruitment and retention of Brent foster carers so that Brent children can be cared for close to family and school.
- Continue to promote the voice and engagement of children and young people in day-to-day practice, i.e. co-design and co-production response to Bright Spots Survey action plan.
- To continue to develop, improve and embed practice in relation to life story work for children in care.

20.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 20.1 Stakeholder consultation and engagement takes many varied methods within the service, and we are committed to evaluating and developing new and creative ways of hearing from stakeholders.
- 20.2 Carers views are sought through one-to-one discussions with their SSW, Annual Foster Carer Reviews, and Support Groups. Carers are encouraged to provide written feedback on their experiences.

- 20.3 Children and young people provide feedback through discussions with their social worker, IRO, or their carers SSW, Looked After Children Reviews, written feedback for Annual Foster Carer Reviews, Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings, Care in Action/Participation activities, Brent Care Journeys.

21.0 Financial Considerations

- 21.1 There are currently no additional financial implications arising from this report.

22.0 Legal Considerations

- 22.1 There are currently no legal considerations arising from this report.

23.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 23.1 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) considerations are within the body of this report.

24.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 24.1 There are no climate change or environmental considerations.

25.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

- 25.1 There are no human resource or property considerations.

26.0 Communication Considerations

- 26.1 There are no additional communication considerations.

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director of Children, Young People and
Community Development