



Corporate Parenting Committee

25th July 2018

Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People

Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2017-2018

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	Three: Appendix 1 – Brent's Pledge for Looked After Children Appendix 2 – Brent's Care Leavers' Charter Appendix 3 – Local Offer for Care Leavers
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	<p>Onder Beter Head of Service, Looked After Children and Permanency Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Brent 020 8937 4382</p> <p>Sarah Miller Head of Virtual School for Looked After Children Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Brent 020 8937 3813</p> <p>Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Brent 020 8937 4091</p>

1.0 Summary

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

Committee or local equivalent. This report fulfils that requirement, providing a profile of Brent's looked after children and care leavers during 2017-2018 and reporting on annual activity, highlighting strengths and areas for development in supporting looked after children and care leavers in Brent.

2.0 Recommendations

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

3.0 Corporate Parenting

- 3.1 The concept of Corporate Parenting was introduced in The Children Act 2004, placing collective responsibility on local authorities to achieve good parenting outcomes for all children in public care. 'Corporate Parent' defines the collective responsibility of the Local Authority, elected members, employees and partner agencies to provide the best possible care for Looked After Children and care leavers.

- 3.2 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 strengthened the focus on the role of the corporate parent, highlighting the seven principles of 'corporate parenting':

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

- 3.3 Elected members in Brent carry out their duty of corporate parenting through:

1. Weekly meetings between the Lead Member for Children and Young People, the Strategic Director for Children and Young

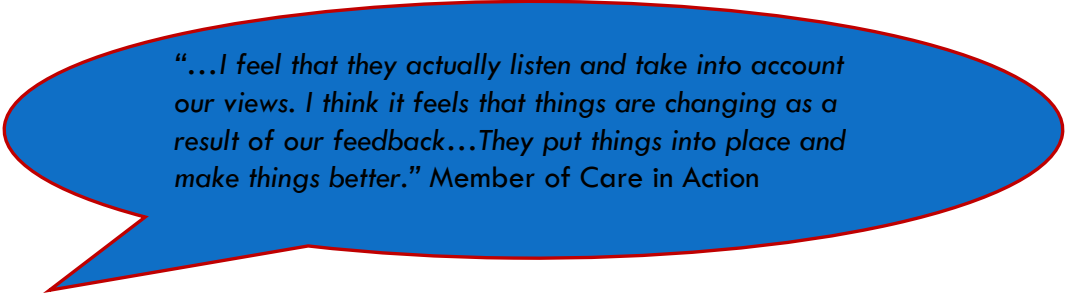
People and other senior staff within the Local Authority as appropriate.

2. Regular meetings between representatives of Care in Action and Care Leavers in Action (CiA/CLiA; Brent's Children in Care Councils), with the Lead Member, Strategic Director, and Operational Directors.
3. Attendance of CiA/CLiA representatives at the Corporate Parenting Committee.
4. The Corporate Parenting Committee, chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Young People with cross party Member representation where service performance is scrutinised.
5. Considering how services meet the stated aims of Brent's 'Pledge' to looked after children and the 'Care Leavers' Charter', approved by the Lead Member (see appendix 1 and 2).

4.0 Corporate Parenting Committee 2017-2018

4.1 In the year 2017-2018 the Corporate Parenting Committee provided scrutiny and challenge as follows:

- a. The representatives of CIA and CLIA attended the Committee regularly and presented their activity and work undertaken during the reporting period. Members provided challenge to relevant service areas within the Local Authority following matters raised by CIA and CLIA in order to promote good outcomes for LAC and care leavers. The feedback from a member of CIA below demonstrates how the CIA views the Corporate Parenting Committee.



"...I feel that they actually listen and take into account our views. I think it feels that things are changing as a result of our feedback...They put things into place and make things better." Member of Care in Action

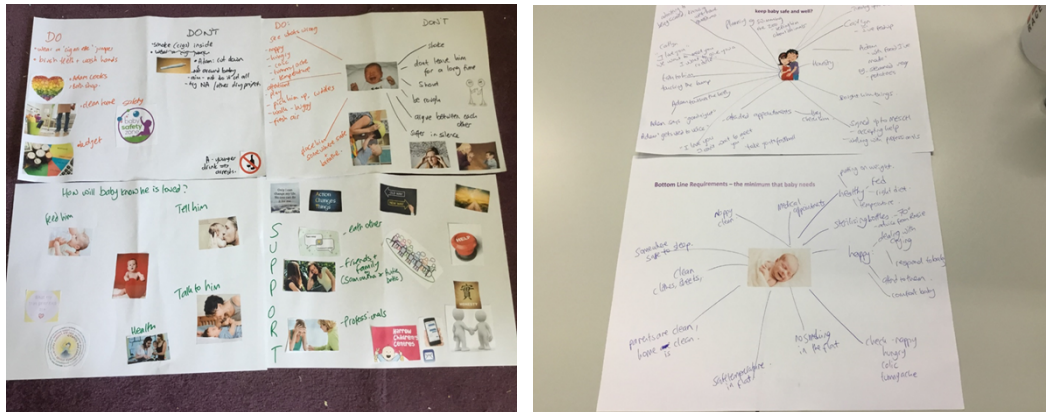
- b. Management and delivery of both the Adoption and Fostering Services have been monitored by Committee members in order to promote good outcomes for children. Service targets for fostering, marketing and recruitment activity, service development as well as the overall effectiveness of the Fostering Panel were considered on a quarterly basis. Statutory adoption service reports including the Adoption Panel activity have been scrutinised on a 6-monthly basis.
- c. In April 2017, the Committee heard from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) regarding the emotional and mental

wellbeing of looked after children. Additionally, the Committee scrutinised educational attainment of looked after children.

- d. In July 2017, the Committee was presented with Brent's Annual Corporate Parenting Committee Report 2016/17 summarising the profile of looked after children and care leavers, social work activity and interventions including some case studies demonstrating how the Council meets the overall needs of children and young people as their Corporate Parent.
- e. In October 2017, the Committee received a presentation from London North West Healthcare NHS Trust in relation to health assessments for looked after children. The Committee scrutinised the process and relevant activity to promote good health outcomes for children. The members also heard about a report on offending behaviour amongst looked after children and work undertaken by the council and its partners to reduce re-offending.
- f. In February 2018, The Committee reviewed and approved Brent's Local Offer for care leavers. Brent's revised Pledge for Looked After Children and Care Leavers' Charter were also considered and approved by the Committee.

5.0 Participation of children and young people, and care leavers.

- 5.1 Relational social work has been at the forefront of practice in Brent and to support this Brent is involved in the second phase of the England Innovation Programme 2 (EIP 2), Signs of Safety project. This approach helps social workers build good relationships with children, engaging with them in a way that shows a deeper understanding of the child's world within assessments and plans. Brent's Practice Framework, launched in November 2017, focuses on the importance of stable and meaningful relationships between social workers and children, young people and their families. Social workers and other practitioners use direct work as part of daily practice. Below are two examples of direct work undertaken with children in care by Brent social workers:



- 5.2 Children and young people are actively supported and encouraged to take part in decisions impacting on their lives. All looked after children and care leavers are visited regularly at their placements or homes and their wishes, feelings and views are clearly recorded on their electronic case files. Children and young people are at the heart of social work interventions and are supported to attend their LAC Reviews, Pathway Plan Reviews and Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings. One young person's feedback below demonstrates the quality of relationships.

"I love my Social Worker. She is so nice and caring; she goes an extra mile for me. She attended my Birthday. I would have nothing to change about my SW", HM (14)

- 5.3 LAC Review Reports and Court Assessments consistently reflect the views of children, young people, parents and carers, gathered through direct work using Signs of Safety tools and through Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) have independent oversight of care plans and decision making; they meet with children as part of the LAC review process. In this period of reporting, 95% of LAC reviews occurred within the required timescales. Children and young people were consulted prior to their LAC Reviews, and encouraged to participate to all decisions made about their care plans as and when appropriate. In 68% of LAC reviews, children and young people physically attended and spoke for themselves.
- 5.4 In 2017/18, Brent's looked after children between the ages of 4 and 18 were encouraged to complete a questionnaire called the Bright Spots Survey that provided a great deal of insight into children's understanding of their journey and care experiences. 33% of children and young people responded to the Survey. Feedback from children and young people through the Bright Spots Survey included that:
- 77% of LAC who completed the Survey reported their lives were improving
 - The majority reported positive relationships with professionals and carers
 - The majority reported that they trust their carers and social workers
 - The majority felt supported with their learning at school.
 - Children and young people who worried regularly were receiving support
- 5.5 Alongside the above positive messages there were two areas where children and young people highlighted the need for further support. Some LAC needed more support to understand their life story and others wanted to have more contact with their families and siblings. As a result, the Local Authority has reviewed all contact arrangements for LAC and social workers had a specific session to discuss children's care journeys including contact arrangements with their families. In addition, social workers had specific sessions with children on their care journey and life story.
- 5.6 The Bright Spots Survey has now embedded in practice as an annual survey which again took place in spring 2018 with LAC and care leavers. The report is currently being written and it is anticipated the outcome will be presented to the committee in October 2018.
- 5.7 As part of a recent change in legislation introduced by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, local authorities are required to publish a local offer for care leavers. As their Corporate Parents, Brent worked together with care leavers in co-producing its local offer for care leavers. In this process, over 120 care leavers were consulted and their views were included in the local offer. The CIA were also actively involved in development and design of the local offer. This is attached as appendix 3.

5.8 With support from Children's rights and participation officers, the CIA promotes participation and encourages young people to take an active part in shaping the services they use in order to make improvements and respond to their needs. The work of the Participation Officers is to provide a forum for children and young people in care and care leavers to share their views and to ensure that service improvements are linked directly to young people's feedback. During the course of this reporting year, CIA have taken part in a number of activities and meetings to advocate on behalf of LAC and care leavers. Some of the activities undertaken by the CIA in 2017/18 included the below:

- Supporting dissemination and use of Bright Spots Questionnaire within children in care
- Proactive involvement in commissioning activity for semi-independent provision for young people
- Involvement in recruitment and interviews of senior managers in Children and Young People's Services
- Organising different activities for looked after children such as 'Summer Fun Day'
- Regular attendance at Corporate Parenting Committee and a multi-agency professional meeting known as 'Local Partnership Meeting for LAC and Care Leavers'
- Promoting attendance of 6 children in care and 3 adopted children at an event at the Wembley SSE Arena known as 'Voice in a Million Concert' in March 2018.
- Providing consultation on various subjects ranging from children and young people's mental health to Brent's local offer for care leavers

5.9 Alongside the CIA, Brent Children and Young People's Service has a commissioned provider (Aidhour) undertaking independent advocacy service for children in care and care leavers. In 2017/18 there were 60 requests for advocacy made by children and young people who were supported by their advocates.

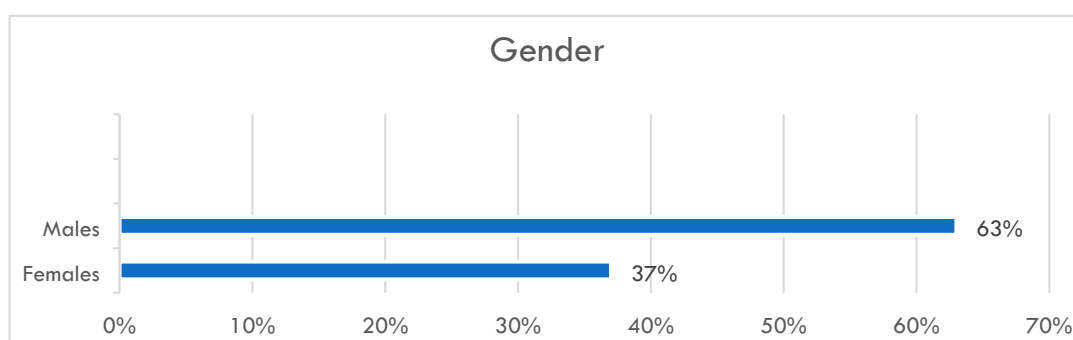
5.10 In addition to the independent advocacy service, Brent has a commissioned Independent Visitors Scheme to support children and young people. Between April 2017 and March 2018, 12 young people were supported by Independent Visitors. Positive feedback was received from young people who were supported by Independent Visitors.

6.0 Profile of Looked after Children and care leavers

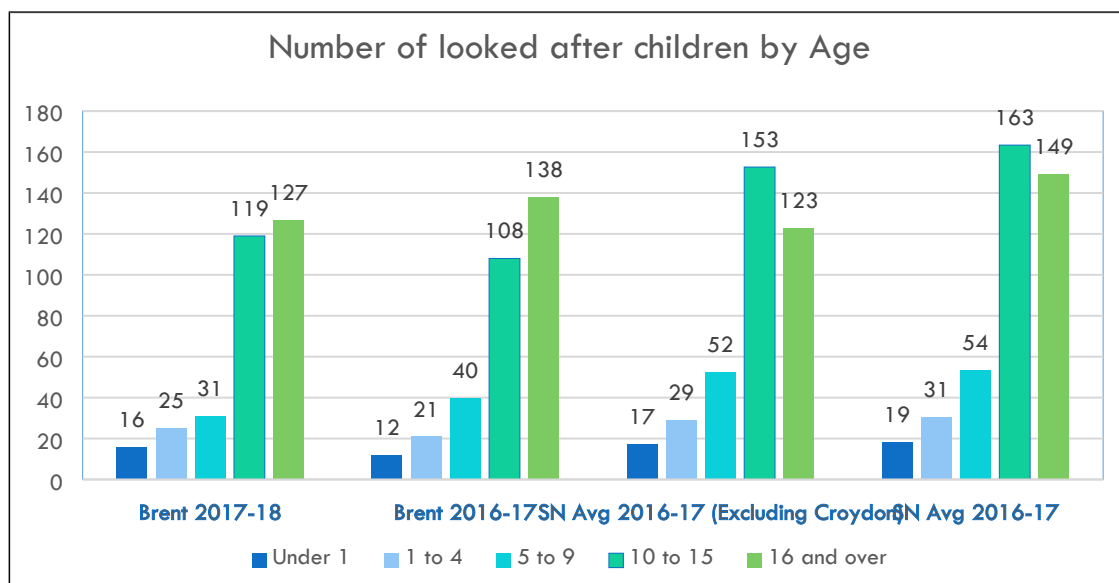
6.1 As of 31st March 2018 Brent had 318 children and young people looked after. This compares with 319 Looked After on 31st March 2017. This represents 42 LAC per 10,000 head of child population against the rate for England of 62 per 10,000 head of child population. There has been a reduction in number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) - 18 fewer

UASC in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17. On 31st March 2018, the Local Authority looked after 56 UASC compared with 74 in March 2017. This represented 17.6% of the total Brent LAC population. Brent's UASC numbers have gradually decreased due to the number of new arrivals being superseded by those turning 18, as well as improvements to the government's national dispersal system. Despite lower number of UASC, Brent's overall number of children in care remained consistent compared to previous year. This means a 6% increase in the number of children in care who are Brent residents in 2017/18.

- 6.2 Brent Children and Young People's Services continue to undertake effective prevention work, using Brent's Practice Framework including Signs of Safety to support children to remain within their families when it is safe to do so. In 17/18, 49 children became children looked after for a second or subsequent time (15.6%, in line with statistical neighbours).
- 6.3 The gender of the LAC population consists of 63% male and 37% female.

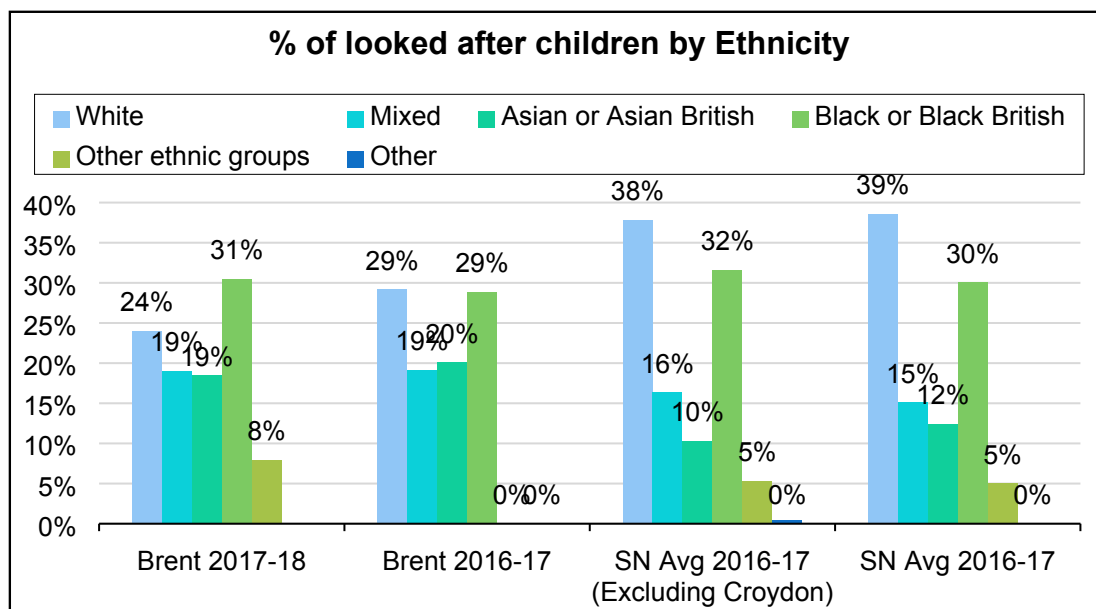


- 6.4 40% of the care population in Brent is aged over 16 years old, compared to 43% at the end of March 17. Over 77% of the care population in Brent are aged 10 and over. This means Brent will have a bigger cohort of leaving care population in the coming years.



6.5 Ethnicity of LAC

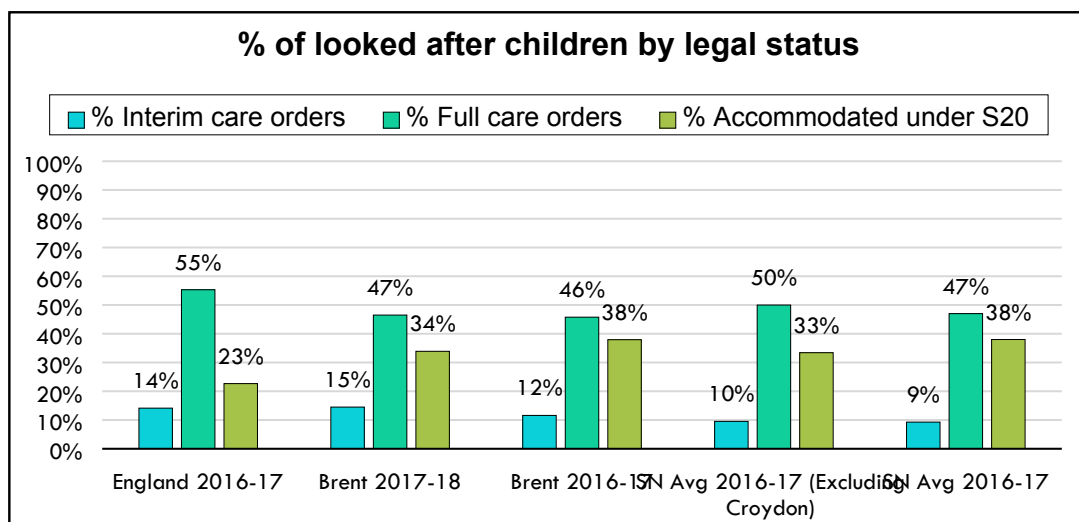
6.6 Whilst there has been a reduction in number of looked after children from White UK and Asian backgrounds, there has been a slight increase of children who are Black or Black British. The number of Black or Black British children and young people is comparable with data from statistical neighbours.



7.0 Legal Status of LAC

7.1 The majority of children looked after by Brent are subject to Care Orders (Interim Care Orders and Full Care Orders) under the Children Act 1989, representing 62% of all LAC in this reporting year. A further 108 children (34% of all LAC) were in care through a voluntary agreement with the

parents/carers under Sec. 20 of the Children Act 1989. There were fewer children in care through a voluntary agreement with parents in this year compared to the previous year. This is partly due to the fact that some young people who were in care based on Sec. 20 agreements turned 18 years of age, a reduction in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

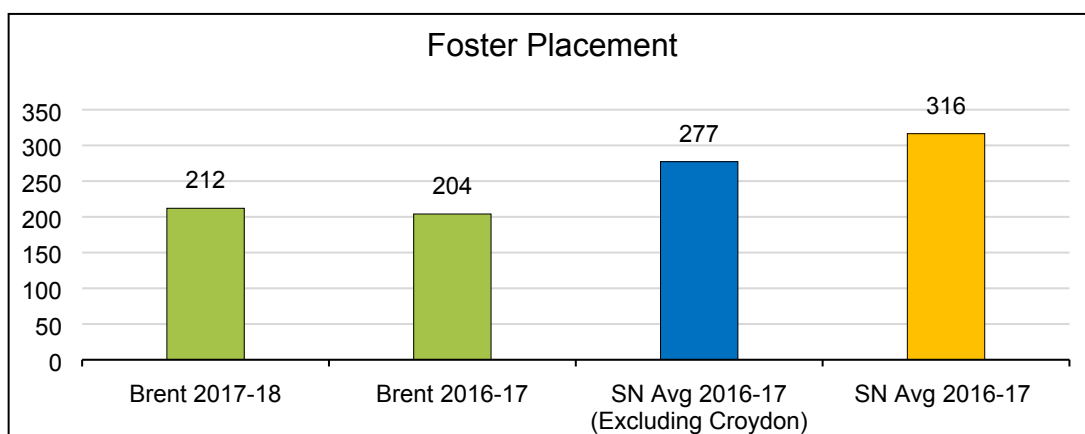


7.2 The proportion of children placed more than 20 miles away as at 31st March 2018 was 19%, compared to 17% in 16/17 (the national average is 14%). Placing young people out of borough, in most cases, is used as part of a strategy to safeguard them appropriately from different forms of exploitation including gang-related exploitation and county lines¹. This is also partly related to a lack of sufficiency of placement options for adolescents with complex needs. This is a challenge nationally and locally in London and Brent is no exception. *Brent's Sufficiency Strategy* identifies this national problem and includes measures to address this for Brent's looked after children.

7.3 Placements of LAC in Brent

Most of our children resided within fostering placements (212) – 66.6% of all LAC, an increase from the same point in 2017 (65%). This is partly related to successful recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers; in this reporting year the number of newly recruited foster carers more than doubled compared to the previous year.

¹ 'County lines' is a term used to describe an organised form of exploitation of children by gangs or crime networks. These children are made to travel across counties, and they use dedicated mobile phone 'lines' to supply drugs. See details at <http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/958-county-lines-drug-networks-now-a-nation-wide-issue>



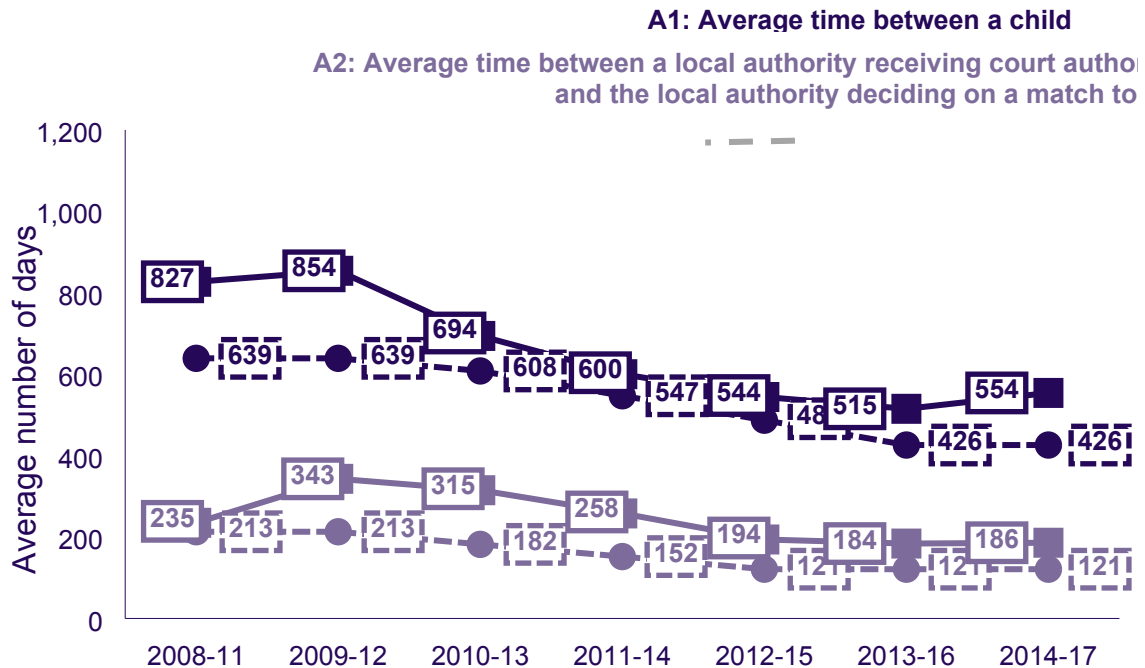
7.4 Placement Stability

7.5 As at 31st March 2018, 42 children had three or more placements in the year (13.2% of all LAC), which is a marginal decrease from last year (13.8%). Any potential placement move for children is carefully considered and planned when possible. All emergency moves are carried out in a way that is in the best interests of children. Children and young people, their parents and carers, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and other professionals are consulted prior to placement moves. Although some improvement has been achieved around placement stability, this area remains a high priority for this reporting year.

7.6 Permanency and Care Proceedings

7.7 Between 01/04/17 and 31/03/18 there were 9 children adopted and 8 children who left care as they were placed on a Special Guardianship Order. Continuous focus on early and effective permanency planning has improved timescales for adoption even further compared to previous years. As at 31/03/18 the provisional average time in days between a child entering care and moving in with his/her adoptive family was 370 days. This shows a significant improvement on the figures over the previous three years and is expected to place Brent's performance above the national average by year end when the data is published. Adoption performance of the Local Authority is reported at 6-monthly intervals to the Corporate Parenting Committee and is scrutinised by Committee members.

7.8 The chart below shows the latest available published data.



- 7.9 The case study below shows how permanency was achieved for a child who was placed with his forever family without delay.

CASE STUDY - Adoption

K was one of the children adopted in this reporting year. K was born at 40 weeks gestation following a concealed pregnancy. K was born withdrawing from drugs as his mother continued to abuse illicit drugs during the pregnancy. K was treated for 2 weeks post birth with oral morphine before he was discharged from hospital and placed with a Brent foster carer.

Care and Placement Orders were granted on the 22/8/16 at the conclusion of care proceedings. Because family finding had begun prior to the proceedings ending prospective adopters were found and “selected” in September 2016. K was formally matched with his new family at the Brent Adoption and Permanency Panel in November 2016 and introductions began straight away with K being placed for adoption in that same month.

K’s attachment to his foster carer was good, and therefore the professional network around K worked hard to ensure that his foster carer was supported in the introductions and transitions to be able to care for K and help him attach and settle within his new, forever family. The work that was undertaken by K’s foster carer during this period was excellent, as well as the joint working between social work professionals. K was formally adopted by his dads in September 2017 and continues to thrive in his forever family.

7.10 Care Proceedings

- 7.11 The number of care proceedings initiated by Brent has fallen this reporting year, with a total of 57 cases being issued in 2017/18. This has reversed the upward trend since 2014 and is in contradiction to the national picture of continued increases in numbers of care proceedings being issued. This is because more families have been worked with outside of the care proceedings within child protection and children in need frameworks as well as early help services.
- 7.12 The timeliness for the completion of care proceedings has lengthened, with an average time for 2017/18 of 35 weeks compared to 33 weeks average of last reporting year.

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Brent	31 weeks	29 weeks	35 weeks
London average	33 weeks	29 weeks	31 weeks

There have been multiple reasons for the lengthening picture that include:

- Complexity within cases- new children born within proceedings, Fact Finding and delays due to outstanding criminal charges/court processes.
 - International elements which required travel, liaising with foreign authorities, legal bodies, and often prolonged, complex assessments.
 - A lack of court availability - leading to delayed final hearings.
- 7.13 In order to prevent delay in completion of care proceedings cases, a 'Care Proceedings Tracking meeting' has been instigated which takes place monthly, chaired by senior managers and legal representatives of the Local Authority. The meeting aims to quickly identify any issues that might cause or create delay within proceedings and rectify them.
- 7.14 Delay due to courts' lack of availability has been raised with the courts in Brent's bi-annual liaison meeting with West London Family Court. The issue is being regularly monitored with Brent's link Family Court Judge.

8.0 Health of Looked After Children

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

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

- 8.2 There were 216 LAC who had been looked after by Brent for 12 months or more at the 31st March 2018. Of these 199 (92%) had an up to date health assessment, a slight reduction on the previous year's position (93%). Regular health quality assurance activity is undertaken to improve performance further.
- 8.3 The percentage for dental checks slightly improved in 17/18 compared to 16/17. The percentage of children with up to date immunisations remained similar to the last reporting period.
- 8.4 The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a tool that is completed by parents, carers or teachers, which measures behavioural difficulties of looked after children. This tool is designed to assist the carers as to whether the child has a well-being related problem. In this reporting year 46% of looked after children had an SDQ score recorded. This area needs significant improvement and will be a priority area for the service in 2018/19. The Corporate Parenting Committee may considering monitoring of improvement in this area during 2018/19.
- 8.5 Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust provide Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for children aged 0-18 at Tier 3 level and beyond. 35 LAC were in receipt of clinical services at Tier 3 level in this period of reporting compared to 31 in the previous year

- 8.6 The NHS through the Brent Emotional Wellbeing Team (BEWT) is providing clinical support to Looked After Children whose clinical needs can be met at Tier 2 level. Co-located with social work teams, BEWT clinicians hold consultations with social worker and foster carers with the aim to increase professional confidence, skill and knowledge in the areas of attachment, managing behaviour and reflective parenting. When the need arises for a Tier 3 CAMHS referral, clinicians will support social workers in completing those referrals.
- 8.7 Below is a case study showing the impact of support provided by BEWT:

CASE STUDY – Emotional Wellbeing

B's social worker requested a consultation with BEWT; B had had 4 foster placements within 9 months due to his behaviours being difficult to manage. In the initial consultation with the social worker (SW), the SW reported that she wanted to think together about how to stabilise the latest placement and consider a referral to the local tier 3 CAMHS.

Initially the BEWT clinician recommended that the social worker speak to the new foster carers to see if they would like some support and if so what their goal for this would be, explaining that it was important for the social worker to be part of this. They also recommended a referral to the local tier 3 CAMHS and aided the social worker in completing this.

Following the initial consultation BEWT and the social worker, together, offered the foster carers two telephone consultations which focused on managing B's behaviour. The foster carers used this space to reflect on how they were managing these behaviours and brainstorm and think with the clinician and social worker about other strategies they may be helpful. These consultations also aimed to contextualise B's behaviours by giving more background regarding his early life experiences.

Four months after the initial consultation request B is reportedly settled in this placement. The foster carers have reported a reduction in the behaviours that were challenging and that the strategies discussed continue to be helpful. BEWT are offering on-going support to the social worker regarding local CAMHS involvement.

8.8 Multi-agency Partnership for LAC and Care Leavers

- 8.9 Brent has strong strategic and operational partnership with external agencies such as CCG, schools and various providers who actively contribute to good outcomes for children in care and care leavers. Chaired by the Strategic Director for Children and Young People, the Children's Trust provides robust strategic ownership to ensure that children in care and care leavers have the best outcomes. Joint Commissioning Group (JCG), chaired by the Operational Director for Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy in Children and Young People's Service and reporting to the Children's Trust, monitors

the effectiveness of partnership working and commissioning arrangements for LAC and Care Leavers. In 2017/18, the JCG monitored and scrutinised a number of activities for LAC and care leavers such as local offer for care leavers, quality of placements, emotional and mental health.

- 8.10 An operational multi-agency partnership meeting for looked after children and care leavers is held regularly with participation from CIA, Looked After Children and Permanency Service, the Virtual School for looked after children, health professionals, CAMHS, CCG, YOS and Public Health. The meeting takes a systemic approach to improve overall outcomes for children in care and care leavers. In 2017/18, embracing a targeted approach, the meeting improved timeliness of health assessments for LAC, improved participation and feedback loop between professionals and children and young people, organised a series of workshops for care leavers and assisted in development of local offer for care leavers.

9.0 Children Missing or Absent from Care

- 9.1 Missing from care is known to increase the vulnerability of looked after children. In the year ending 31st March 2018, 75 LAC were reported to be missing from their placements at some point. This represented 15% of all LAC looked after at any point during the year (n=484). This is a decrease on the 120 children recorded as having a missing episode the previous year. This difference is partly related to Brent's sharpened approach in recording of missing activity and also effective work undertaken with vulnerable adolescents both strategically and operationally using a contextual safeguarding approach. Contextual Safeguarding focuses on understanding and responding to young people's experiences of significant harm in a range of social contexts such as friendships and peer relationships. The approach is helpful in understanding lived experiences of young people, reasons for their behaviours and how to safeguard them more effectively together within communities.
- 9.2 There were 5 of this group of 75 LAC who had more than one missing episode during the year.
- 9.3 In this reporting year 68 LAC were reported as being absent from their care placement compared with 95 last year. An absence may be a situation where a child has not returned home at an agreed time but their whereabouts is known. Within this cohort, 42 children were absent from their placement more than once.
- 9.4 Brent has a multi-agency Vulnerable Adolescents' Panel that has a strategic overview of different forms of vulnerability including children missing from home or care. Chaired by the Operational Director for Integration and Improved Outcomes and attended by partner agencies such as schools, health agencies and the Police the Panel ensures that the needs of

vulnerable adolescents are understood at a strategic level in order to develop and improve services through an action plan. Research shows that children missing from care are at further risk of exploitation and risks experienced by young people are inter-connected. Therefore, the Panel considers links between children missing and other areas of vulnerability such as:

- at risk of child sexual exploitation;
- missing from home or education;
- involved in gang-related activity or offending/violent behaviour;
- at risk of peer on peer abuse;
- displaying sexually harmful behaviour;
- at risk of other forms of exploitation such as radicalisation, female genital mutilation or forced marriage.

9.5 The case study below highlights the complexity of needs, risk and ongoing risk management by the multi-agency group working around the issue of missing:

CASE STUDY – Vulnerable Adolescent

G is a male, 15 year-old young person. He was accommodated in 2012 due to concerns relating to neglect and emotional abuse he experienced in his mother's care.

G has had behavioural difficulties since he came to care. G was groomed by gang members and was at risk of on-going exploitation. Due to his behavioural difficulties, missing from placements and being beyond control, he had several placement changes. These placements included a kinship placement with G's aunt and uncle who were unable to continue to care for him. G was placed in residential placements two of which broke down due to his offending behaviour, missing from care and challenging behaviours. He is currently placed in residential home out of London. He is subject to a nine-month Youth Referral Order for possession of cannabis and also assaulting a member of school staff.

The social work team has been working with professionals and the extended family network, promoting contact between G and his mother who is now out of prison. G's grandmother has come forward as a potential carer who has an older son who lives with her. The Grandmother's assessment is considering whether she would be able to manage G's behaviour with the support of the extended family network.

G is currently being educated in the placement until a new educational setting is identified by the Virtual School for Looked after Children. G expressed remorse and understanding about the consequences of his missing episodes. He can be open to consequential discussions about the impact of his behaviour. This is forming part of his engagement with YOS and key work sessions. G is provided with mentoring that focuses on diversion activities around his interest in sports. G's case is discussed at the Integrated Risk Management Meeting regularly and there is a network of professionals working with him. The professionals continuously work together to manage and reduce risk.

10. Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE)

- 10.1 The MASE Panel is a multi-agency forum established to ensure there are robust multi-agency plans in place to ensure the protection of children who are at high risk of sexual exploitation. This includes looked after children and young people.
- 10.2 The revised London Child Exploitation Operating Protocol was launched in June 2017. This protocol supports the development of more consistency across London in how MASE panels operate. In November 2017 selected members of the Brent MASE attended a development session with a London Metropolitan Police Sexual Exploitation Team. Following this session, actions were undertaken to further align Brent MASE with this protocol.
- 10.3 The Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Brent Children and Young People's Services, chairs the monthly MASE Panel. The panel has a role in ensuring that children and young people are appropriately identified and flagged with the respective agencies and that any plans aimed at ensuring their protection are progressed in a timely and effective manner. It focuses on the management and disruption of offenders identifying locations and themes where a risk of CSE has been identified.
- 10.4 Since January 2016 Brent has introduced a more targeted approach to CSE identification through Multi-Agency Planning Meetings (MAP) for all cases identifying young people at risk of CSE or sexually harmful behaviour. This process underpins and informs the monthly MASE panel. As for the MASE panel, MAP meetings have multi-agency attendance with police, health and educational establishments fully engaged in working together to safeguard children and young people at risk of CSE.
- 10.5 Between October 2017 and March 2018, 20 looked after children had CSE concerns, which is 33.9% of all the children discussed at MAP meetings in the period. 13 young people were aged 16 and over and 7 were between the ages of 14 and 15. There has been rigorous multi-agency action plans put in place to reduce the risk of CSE for all LAC children discussed.

11. Education of Looked After Children

- 11.1. The educational outcomes for looked after children for the academic year 2017/18 will not be available until January 2019. The data presented in this report refers to Brent Virtual School's Annual Report 2016/17 which was discussed at the Corporate Parenting Committee on 26th April 2018.
- 11.2. The annual report from the Brent Virtual School highlighted that:
 - All looked after children in education received appropriate education,

- including 95% in Good or Outstanding provision.
- There were no permanent exclusions of looked after children in statutory education.
- Fewer Looked after Children were excluded from school – 29 compared with 45 in the previous academic year.
- Attainment at Primary school was strong and demonstrated an improvement from the previous year at Key Stage 2, with 80% of children in Year 2, and 86% of children in Year 6, achieving the expected standard in Reading; both of these percentages higher than for LAC National.
- In Year 2, the 40% of Brent LAC who achieved the expected standard (or higher) was equal to LAC National;
- At Year 6, the 57% who achieved the expected standard (or higher) was above LAC National (39%).
- At Year 11, a new tutoring initiative boosted Brent individual student results, although the overall number of LAC achieving English and Maths GCSE was lower than LAC National. BVS has now developed and expanded the tutoring offer, (alongside evidence based research from the Institute of London) to include Years 6, 10, 11 and 12.
- BVS has also now appointed a KS4 Attainment consultant who is working individually with each Year 11 pupil to devise tailored and creative support, in order to maximise attainment and positive outcomes.
- A diverse and exciting enrichment programme reached nearly 100 Brent LAC across the year and took them to Art Exhibitions, theatre, outdoor activities and a number of universities – including a residential trip to Cambridge University with overnight accommodation within St John's college.
- Brent Celebration Event welcomed over 150 LAC.
- The team was strengthened with the arrival of the Deputy Head, which meant the KS5 cohort could be monitored and supported alongside those of statutory school age. 95% of LAC had a destination school or college place secured for September 2017.
- NEET panels were established in conjunction with social care, to monitor and track the attendance and engagement of Year 12 and 13 across the academic year.

12. Care Leavers and Brent's Local Offer

- 12.1 The Local Authority has a duty and responsibility to those young people who leave their long-term care from the age of 18 years until they reach the age of 25, regardless of their education or employment status in line with the key changes introduced by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The Leaving Care Service provides support to all care leavers in partnership with other key local authority departments as well as partner agencies in the Borough.
- 12.2 Each care leaver is allocated to a Personal Advisor (PA) who provides support and guidance to care leavers on various issues such as transition into adulthood; obtaining suitable accommodation; engaging with education, employment and training; promoting their physical, emotional and mental

well-being and participation within society. A PA is not generally a qualified social worker but will have experience of working with young people in a variety of settings such as in schools, voluntary organizations or youth groups. The current establishment of the Leaving Care Service consists of 2 teams with 16 personal advisors supervised by 2 team managers.

- 12.3 As of 31st March 2018, Brent was responsible for the support to 273 Former Relevant Young People [aged 18 - 21] and 48 young people aged 21-25 in education.
- 12.4 Improving outcomes for care leavers has been a key local priority. Brent endorsed the Leaving Care Charter² for Care Leavers, introduced by the Department for Education in 2012. The Charter sets out how care leavers will be treated, and the support they should expect to receive from their local authority. Brent's own current Care Leavers' Charter, developed with young people has recently been revised, considered by the Corporate Parenting Committee and approved by the Lead Member.

12.5 Brent's Local Offer

- 12.6 All senior leaders including Brent's Chief Executive Officer held a session in June 2017 where different departments pledged to make commitments to care leavers as part of Brent's local offer. The session was led by one of our care leavers with the Strategic Director. Further to this there was consultation with partner agencies and our care leavers as required in section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. We published our local Offer in February 2018.
- 12.7 The local offer for care leavers is a combination of statutory entitlements i.e. what the law says must be provided and what Brent Council and its partners offer which is beyond its statutory duty. The personal advisors participated in the consultation process with 'their young people' in order to understand what they wanted in their local offer. CLIA took a pivotal role in expressing voice of care leavers.
- 12.8 The Local Offer agreed by Cabinet in January 2018 includes both an exemption for care leavers from Council Tax living in Brent and financial support to cover any Council Tax costs for Brent care leavers living outside of Brent from April 2018. The funding for this was agreed at Full Council in January 2018 and came into force as of 1st April 2018.

13. Care Leavers in Education, Employment & Training

- 13.1. There were 56 young people in higher education in 2017/18. These included 31 young people aged 19-21, mostly in University, studying a variety of subjects from Aerospace Technology with Pilot Studies to Criminology and

² Care Leavers Charter includes principles and promises to care leavers made by local authorities. This was introduced by the DfE in 2012.

Sociology. Additionally, 25 care leavers aged between 22 and 25 were in higher education at the end of the reporting year. Brent had more care leavers in higher education than statistical neighbours and nationally. The table below highlights some of the comparative data for young people at university:

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in Higher Education (i.e. studies beyond A-levels)	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average	Statistical Neighbour average %	National figure	National figure %
2016-17	25	12%	23	9%	1,640	6%
2017-18	31	14%				

- 13.2 All care leavers attending University were provided with a financial package that included a one-off payment in the 1st year of a Higher Education bursary [as endorsed by the Department for Education Charter for Care Leavers] of £2000 paid in 4 equal instalments. In addition, as per Brent's local offer young people received subsistence and rent payments from Brent Council during Christmas, Easter and Summer Vacations.
- 13.3 The case study below demonstrates Brent's commitment to support care leavers who have aspirations to attend higher education:

CASE STUDY – A care leaver in higher education

AT is a 19 year old female care leaver. She has a good relationship with her Personal Adviser (PA) and is a high achieving young woman. She wanted to study to become a licenced pilot and had chosen a course of Aeronautical Engineering with Pilot Studies at Hertfordshire University, part of which takes place in the USA. The fee for the course is not covered by student loan.

Brent has supported AT to realise her dream. She has begun her first year at the university and enjoyed attending her course. She has shown her PA the detailed aviation drawings she has created as part of her programme, of prototype aeroplanes and runways. She is about to start her piloting modules. AT has developed her independence skills which has helped her research and budget alternative methods of supporting her training. Alongside the support offered by Brent, AT is working part-time to secure additional funding. She is, in line with her pathway plan, progressing to have a bright future as a pilot.

AT sent an email to the service and expressed her appreciation for the support she has received:

'Am most grateful, I appreciate this so much. Thanks so much for having faith in me I will do you all proud! Once again thank you this is perfect'

- 13.4. The Virtual School for LAC continued monitoring and tracking educational attainment of all looked after children and young people. During year 11, all young people had an interview with the Connexions Personal Advisor who works with the Virtual School. The advisor works jointly with social workers and PAs supporting young people establishing routes to further education, employment or training. Liaison with schools, colleges and training providers ensures that young people are guided towards suitable and appropriate education or training placements. In addition, care leavers received personal career advice from specialist Connexions advisors who co-work with the social workers and PAs, offering advice on education, training and employment.
- 13.5. A monthly 'Education & Employment Panel (EEP)' monitored and developed plans for care leavers at risk of becoming NEET (not in Education, employment or Training). Brent recognises that care leavers who are NEET can find it more challenging to enter the labour market and sustain a job or training course. Some young people may have had gaps in their education during the time they were in care. Some might have experienced trauma and mental health difficulties which might have disrupted mainstream schooling and reduced the likelihood of achieving the basic skills necessary to move into further education or employment. The EEP is aware of such vulnerabilities and therefore works with personalised plans for each individual care leaver who is NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. The Panel consists of partner agencies including Connexions. The focus of the panel is on problem solving and agreeing joint action plans for each individual, reviewing on a quarterly basis.
- 13.6. During 2017/18, with assistance from the job coach working within the Leaving Care Service, 11 Care Leavers were supported to work in paid employment. In addition, the Leaving Care Teams jointly with Brent Works and the Football Association (FA) developed a work programme for 6 young people who, after successfully completing the short volunteering programme, were offered employment at Wembley Stadium. Plans are in place for this to turn into a regular training programme between Brent Council and the FA. There is an appointed project lead in Brent's Human Resources Department who is working with the service to develop Brent's apprenticeship strategy for looked after children and care leavers.
- 13.7 Between February and March 2018, 12 care leavers participated in a project called 'The Element Creative Art Project' which was designed to improve their confidence and self-esteem, to support them in building new relationships and provided a creative outlet to express their feelings. The care leavers met for 2 hours twice a week and engaged in photography, poetry, drama and other activities. The programme culminated in an art

exhibition at Wembley Learning Zone in April 2018 where young people read their poems and took professionals around the room, showcasing their art work. Below is a sample of some of the artwork that was produced by young people:



- 13.8 Feedback from care leavers attending the Element Project has been very positive. Below are a couple of comments made by care leavers:

"It had a lot of impact in my life because I can feel more confident in myself"

"I feel more relaxed and confident in my creative process"

- 13.9 At the end of the reporting year, 66% of young people aged 18-25 were in education, employment and training. The figure is 50% amongst care leavers aged 19 to 21, which is in line with both national and statistical neighbours. The national key performance measures as related to outcomes for care leavers in education, employment or training are as below:

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in Education, Employment or Training	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average	Statistical Neighbour average %	National figure	National figure %
2016-17	100	50%	272	52%	13,400	50%
2017-18	111	50%				

14. Care Leavers' Accommodation

- 14.1. Care leavers are recognised as a priority group for social housing. A vulnerability assessment is completed before a young person is put forward for a tenancy, with an option to apply for Brent's social housing. A 'setting up Home Allowance' of £2000 is provided to care leavers to furnish their homes and buy essential items and discretionary amounts over this amount are considered at the weekly care leavers finance meeting.
- 14.2 Through dedicated PAs, tenancy workshops and council-wide support, no care leaver lost their tenancy in 2017/18. The below quote from a care leaver shows the support offered:

"I received a lot of support so nothing else is needed. My PA helped me with everything when I moved: set me up on 'Locata' quickly, helped me with Setting up Home Allowance. I got advice as to what is the best options for my future – encouraged me into education."

- 14.3 Care leavers who wish to reside outside of Brent are supported to obtain accommodation. PAs have been liaising with other local authorities to ensure that care leavers have access to local support for tenancies or social housing.
- 14.4 Care Leavers who were not ready for independent living were accommodated in staying put arrangements provided either via foster care or semi-independent provision. Young people have continued to be supported in preparation for independent living in these placements.

- 14.5 At the end of the reporting year, 87% of care leavers aged 18-25 were in suitable accommodation. This number was 75% for care leavers aged 19-21. This performance is slightly below statistical neighbours. This is partly due to some care leavers who were former UASC, being refused leave to remain in the UK and choosing not to be in touch with the Local Authority. Care leavers who came to the UK as unaccompanied minors need to apply to the Home Office to regulate their immigration status. Those who exhaust their appeal right to apply for leave to remain in the UK may choose to remain illegally and therefore lose touch with their PAs. In addition, a small group of care leavers in custody chose not to be in touch with the Local Authority although they have an allocated PA.

Care leavers aged 19 - 21 in suitable accommodation	Brent	Brent %	Statistical Neighbour average	Statistical Neighbour average %	National figure	National figure %
2015-16	165	85%	187	80%	21,500	83%
2016-17	152	75%				

- 14.6 The below case study shows how a care leaver who came to the UK as a UASC has been supported by the service.

Case Study – Immigration Issues

SG came to the UK in 2010 as an unaccompanied minor from Afghanistan. He was initially refused asylum when he made a claim. His status was preventing him from accessing benefits or housing and impacting on his emotional wellbeing.

SG went through a lengthy appeal process with the Home Office. The appeal to the First Tier immigration tribunal was refused. SG's solicitor lodged another appeal which was permitted. SG's Social Worker provided moral support by going to court with him during that period. In October 2010 SG was granted Discretionary Leave to Remain (DLR).

SG's DLR expired in October 2017 and he needed to make an in-time application a month prior to the expiration date. Brent Council supported SG with financial assistance to cover the legal fee for the application.

In March 2018 SG came to the office to share his good news with his PA. He stated that the Home office had granted him ILR. SG now has full recourse to public funds. The uncertainty surrounding his immigration status had impact on his eligibility for student loans and therefore he could not attend higher education. He has now started to consider pursuing his accounting course to a degree level.

15. Priorities for 2018-19

15.1. The LAC and Permanency Service Plan for 2018/19 has been completed with participation from all members of staff, CIA and partner agencies. The plan is linked with the Children and Young People's Services Departmental Plan and the Brent 2020 corporate plan. There are 4 main priority areas to focus on this year:

- a. *Achieving safer, more stable and local homes for our children.* The Service aims to focus on increasing the number of stable, local in-house fostering placements and good quality semi-independent placements. An increased focus will be on fostering for adoption, early identification of kinship placements and concurrent planning for LAC. The Service aims to achieve 5 net fostering households by effective recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers. The Local Authority will continue working towards establishment of the Adopt London agency with other local authorities as part of the regionalisation of adoption agenda.
- b. *Providing consistently good quality of response to vulnerable adolescents including those going missing from care.* Working closely with both internal and external partners the Service aims to reduce the number of children going missing from care (CMC) or at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation by effectively managing risk and developing effective relationships with them. A sharpened focus will be on achieving consistency in increased number of return home interviews for CMC.
- c. *The Local Authority will continue to prioritise reducing the number of young people who are NEET.* Enabling more young people to engage with education, employment and training opportunities remains a priority. By implementing Brent's Local Offer for care leavers more young people will be engaged in EET.
- d. *Recruiting and retaining a more permanent, skilled and confident workforce.* By fully embedding the recent realignment of the service and working closely with other departments, the Service aims to recruit more permanent, skilled practitioners and managers to enhance the overall stability of the service. We will reduce the number of social workers a looked after child experiences as their lead worker so that the continuity of care for our children improves. The Signs of Safety programme will be further embedded to strengthen development opportunities for our staff in ensuring their continuous professional development.

Linked Reports

- Brent Virtual School for Looked After Children, Annual Report 2016/17
(presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in April 2018)
- Cabinet Report on Brent's Local Offer for Care Leavers – February 2017

Report sign off:

GAIL TOLLEY

Strategic Director Children and Young
People