


<p align="center">London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham</p> <p align="center">CHILDREN AND EDUCATION POLICY AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE</p> <p align="center">28 January 2019</p>	
<p align="center">LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS ANNUAL REPORT</p>	
<p align="center">Report of the Director for Children’s Services – Steve Miley</p>	
<p>Open Report</p>	
<p>Classification: For review and comment Key Decision: No</p>	
<p>Wards Affected: All</p>	
<p>Accountable Director: Steve Miley, Director for Children’s Services</p>	
<p>Report Author: Bev Sharpe, Assistant Director Family Services</p> <p>Adam Davis, Head of Looked after Children and Care Leavers</p>	<p>Contact Details: Bev.Sharpe@lbhf.gov.uk</p> <p>Adam.Davis@lbhf.gov.uk</p>

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report highlights the significant responsibilities the local authority has in relation to Looked After Children and Care Leavers, and how it discharges these. It provides overview of the state of Looked After Children and Care Leavers and their progress in Hammersmith and Fulham
- 1.2 The number of Looked After Children has increased nationally by 8.75% since 2014 to 75,420, as at 31st March 2018. During this 4-year period numbers in Hammersmith and Fulham increased by 12.7% to 230; 64 per 10,000 of the child population.
- 1.3 The vast majority of children remain in foster care with improvements in health, educational attainment, placement stability and safety.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In this report, the term Looked After Children refers to those children for whom the Council has assumed Parental Responsibility through a care order, by an agreement with their parent(s) or Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.

2.2 The Council also has a duty and responsibility to those young people who leave care after the age of 16 years until they reach the age of 25 following the legislative changes that were introduced within the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Previously the duty was until 21 years for Care Leavers not in education.

2.3 The majority of Looked After Children need alternative care and accommodation due to the inability of their primary care giver to offer safe and adequate care within the family home. Some Looked After Children return to their parent(s) or extended family members and do not require long term services or interventions; while some require permanent placements: achieved through adoption, special guardianship, or long-term fostering. For a small minority permanence cannot be achieved and they require long term residential or semi-independent accommodation.

3. CORPORATE PARENTING

3.1 Corporate Parenting refers to the collective responsibility of the Council to provide the best care and protection for children and young people who are 'looked after', that is, who are in public care. Effective corporate parenting requires the commitment from all Council employees and elected Members and an authority wide approach. These responsibilities for Local Authorities were first laid out in the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004 and reinforced in the Children and Young People's Act 2008 and most recently in the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The most recent legislation sets out seven Corporate Parenting principles that all Councils must adhere to for children in care and care leavers to ensure that their needs are met and life chances promoted. All local authorities in England must, in carrying out functions in relation to Looked After Children, have regard to the need:

- 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;
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

- 3.2 Councillors have a responsibility to act as a good 'Corporate Parent' for the children looked after by the Council and need to be concerned about that child as if they were their own. This concern should encompass the child's safety, education, health and welfare, participation, and achievements.
- 3.3 The Corporate Parenting Board provides oversight of the progress of the Council's Looked After Children and Care Leavers and has a key role in monitoring and challenging how the Council discharges its Corporate Parenting responsibilities. Over the past year, the Board has continued to meet with young people to listen to their views and seek feedback from them.
- 3.4 The CEPAC Scrutiny Committee contributes to monitoring the quality and effectiveness of services, via the scrutiny of this annual report on services and outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. A report on the work of the Fostering and Adoption Service is also presented annually. Other relevant performance indicators are reported regularly to the Lead Member at Cabinet Board.

4. PROFILE OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS

- 4.1 The number of Looked After Children in Hammersmith and Fulham has fluctuated over the last 4 years with a decrease from 204 (2014) to 185 (2015) and a gradual increase since then to 230 (2018). The number of citizen children rose from 182 (2017) to 197 (2018) and UASC fell from 39 to 33 during the same period.
- 4.2 The number of Looked After Children as a proportion of the population aged under 18 in Hammersmith and Fulham was 64 per 10,000 population, as at 31st March 2018, an increase from 63 per 10,000 in 2017. This is higher than the statistical neighbour average of 52 per 10,000 in 2018, which was an increase from 51 per 10,000 in 2017; but the same as the national rate, 64 per 10,000 in 2018, which was up from 62 per 10,000 in 2017.
- 4.3 The Council work extensively with families and partners to ensure that wherever possible families are supported to safely care for their children at home. Children come into care when remaining at home would continue to expose them to significant risks of harm. We have services and systems including Family Assist and the Edge of Care Panel that to ensure that when children come into care if it right for them, and there are no other safe options. Family Assist work with adolescents exposed to high risks or beyond parental control to minimise their likelihood of coming into care while the Edge of Care Panel is a multiagency panel that reviews support and interventions to ensure that children at risk of coming into care have the support they need at home or at an alternative home outside the family, where necessary.

Looked After Children at the end of Year

Year Ending March	Citizen	UASC	Total
2014	195	9	204
2015	163	22	185
2016	172	26	198
2017	182	39* (14 Dubs)	221
2018	197	33* (1 Dubs)	230

Children Who Became Looked After During the Period

Year April to March	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of children entering care	122	99	119	119	117

Children who ceased to be Looked After during the period

Year April to March	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of children ceasing care	156	118	108	99	111

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ile of Looked After Children shows that the proportion aged over 16 for 2017-18 was 39%, down from 42% in 2016-17, which is higher than the national rate of 22% and London rate of 33%. The Council's commitment to caring for additional UASC in 2017 contributed to this change.

Age profile of Looked After Children as at 31st March 2018

AGE AT 31 MARCH 2018	BOYS	GIRLS	Total	%
Under 1 year	4	5	9	4%
Age 1 - 4 years	7	5	12	5%
Age 5 - 9 years	16	12	28	12%
Age 10 - 15 years	55	37	92	40%
Age 16 - 17 years:	59	30	89	39%
TOTAL	141	89	230	100%

- 4.5 At 31st March 2018 only 4% of children in care were aged under 5 years compared with 7% at the same point in 2017. Local analysis has identified a number of influencing factors including younger children moving into permanence more quickly through reduced timescales within care proceedings and more being placed with relatives rather than for adoption outside the family.
- 4.6 Table 4 below provides a breakdown of the reasons for new care episodes for 14-17-year olds during 2017-18. This cohort represents 68 children, of which the highest proportion entered care because of safeguarding or family breakdown (31 children, 45%). Influencing factors for the high number include: "ageing out" of older cohorts as they progress through the care system; UASC, particularly those aged 16+; and the impact of Southwark Judgement (16 -17-

year-old children identified as homeless and vulnerable) and remand cases entering care at much older ages.

Profile of 14-17-year olds who entered care during the period

Entry to care status	Number of young people aged 14 to 17 years (2016-17)	%	Number of young people aged 14 to 17 years (2017-18)	%
Remand	6	11%	4	6%
Respite	1	2%	6	9%
Safeguarding	31	58%	31	45%
UASC	15	28%	27	40%
Total entries to care during 2016-18 aged 14 to 17 years	53		68	

- 4.7 Children identified as Black and Minority Ethnic background accounted for 41% of Looked After Children in 2017-18 (94). This is higher than 2016-17 at 34%, and England Average of 6.5%. The Council continues to respond by seeking to recruit a diverse range of foster carers which reflect the diversity of the local population and through placing children with kinship carers when appropriate.

5. UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN (UASC)

- 5.1 On 1st July 2016 the Home Office launched the National Transfer Scheme, a new voluntary transfer arrangement between local authorities for the care of unaccompanied children who arrive in the UK and claim asylum. The scheme has identified that local authorities will be expected to take up to 0.07% of their child population. The intention of this scheme is that any new UASC entering England and Wales are distributed more evenly amongst local authorities rather than primarily concentrating within London and the South East by virtue of where they enter the country and seek asylum. As such Hammersmith and Fulham is expected to be responsible for 25 UASC. When we fall below that threshold new UASC will be referred via the London rota referral or National Transfer Scheme or we have new children who present in borough and become Looked After.
- 5.2 In addition, in 2016, Hammersmith and Fulham gave a commitment to caring for a higher number of UASC who would be entering the UK under the Dubs Amendment. To date, an additional 15 children have been cared for by Hammersmith and Fulham Council as part of this amendment, mainly following the dismantling of the camps in Calais in October 2016. 14 arrived from France in late 2016 and early 2017 and 1 arrived from Greece. Seven of these children have now become adults and are care leavers and continue to be in receipt of

services. In 2016 Hammersmith and Fulham social work staff proactively visited the camps in Calais to assist with the assessment of children there and to support their transfer to the UK.

- 5.3 Since 2016-17 there has been a shift in the country of origin for new UASC in Hammersmith and Fulham. Over the years, Albanian young people accounted for the majority of UASC. In contrast during 2016-17 the majority of new UASC originated from Afghanistan (32%) and Sudan (16%). For the 21 UASC starters the two highest groups were Albania (4 young people- 19%) and Iran (4 young people- 19%).

Number of UASC who entered care between 2016-18, by country of origin

Country of origin	Number of young people (16/17)	%	Number of young people (17/18)	%
Afghanistan	8	32%	1	4.76%
Albania	2	8%	4	19.05%
Armenia	1	4%	1	4.76%
Algeria	1	4%	1	4.76%
Egypt	1	4%	1	4.76%
Eritrea	3	12%	3	14.29%
Ethiopia	1	4%	1	4.76%
Iran	2	8%	4	19.05%
Pakistan	1	4%	1	4.76%
Sudan	4	16%	3	14.29%
Syria	1	4%	1	4.76%
Total UASC entries into care between 2016-18	25		21	

- 5.4 There is notable consistency in the age of UASC on arrival with majority of the total current UASC population (28 of 33, 85%) aged between 14-17 years at 31st March 2018 although we do occasionally experience much younger children arriving. Given these age trends, the UASC population have a significant bearing on the Council's care leaver numbers. At 31st March 2018, 37 of 198 (19%) of Council's care leavers were former UASCs compared to, 54 of 189 (28%) in at 31st March 2017. Legal outcomes are characterised by lengthy processes including several Home Office interviews and legal hearings. A small number of UASC are ultimately unsuccessful in their claims for asylum into adulthood and this can have some bearing on UASC going missing as a means of avoiding deportation. Negative asylum claims in recent years have related to the majority of UASC originating from Albania

and the Home Office concluding that they have not proven genuine persecution. No former-UASC were deported during the last year and Hammersmith and Fulham financially supported several former-UASC in appealing negative Home Office decisions and submitting applications for further periods of leave to remain.

PROGRESS UPDATE

6. PLACEMENT STABILITY

- 6.1 Children who are subject to frequent placement moves are less able to form positive attachments with carers which make them more vulnerable to unsafe relationships from other adults or their peer group. The current strategy has six strategic objectives, which are being reviewed to reflect our sovereign values.
- 6.2 The number of placement moves that children have is carefully monitored to ensure plans are adapted to make placements more resilient when required and that children and carers are given tailored support to address individual needs. In Hammersmith & Fulham for 2017-18, 10% (24 children) of Looked After Children experienced three or more placement moves during their care period, which is in line with the national rate of 10% (current available data for 2016-17) and an improvement from 2015-16 when it was 14% (28 children). Likewise, there has been an improvement in the percentage of under 16s remaining in the same placement for at least 2 years which further evidences on-going progress in achieving placement stability.

Percentage of children with three or more placements during 2011- 18

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
LBHF	19.5%	9.2%	14.1%	8%	10%
England	12.0%	10%	10%	10%	10%

7. PLACEMENT

- 7.1 The Council has a commitment to ensure that children and young people will only be placed in resources with an Ofsted inspection judgement of Good or Outstanding. As at 31st March 2017, 90% of children were in provisions that were judged as Outstanding or Good by Ofsted.
- 7.2 The Council has actively sought to reduce the number of children placed outside London where appropriate however the limited availability of foster placements in Inner London means that many children need to be placed in other local authority areas, although usually these are within London. The cohort of children living outside of London includes children who are placed in special educational boarding schools or specialist residential care; those placed with extended family members or adopters; and those placed at a distance to effectively safeguard them, such as young people identified to be at risk due to gang affiliation or criminal and child sexual exploitation.

- 7.3 Of the children and young people Looked After at 31st March 2018, 23% were placed in Hammersmith and Fulham foster placements and 37% of the Council's Looked After Children were living inside Hammersmith and Fulham, a higher percentage than 2016/2017 which was 33%. This compares with 45% of Looked After Children living inside their borough of origin on average across other London authorities. Additionally, there are currently 14 Hammersmith and Fulham Care Leavers who continue to live with foster carers under a "Staying Put" arrangement, which enables care leavers to continue to live in their foster placement when they become young adults to support them in achieving successful transitions into adulthood.
- 7.4 For some young people foster care does not meet their needs. As of 31st March 2018, 5% of Looked After Children were placed in residential care or special educational boarding schools compared to 10% in 2017. There were 35 children in connected carers placements and 130 children placed with foster carers. The number of adoptions in Hammersmith and Fulham remains low. 4 children were adopted in both 2016-17 and 2017-18. This reflects a continued national trend in reduction in children being placed for adoption.

Percentage of children placed in foster placements at 31st March 2018

	% of children placed in foster placements (16/17)	% of children placed in foster placements (17/18)
England	75%	73%
London	75%	Not yet available
Hammersmith and Fulham	73%	72%

8. LAC ASSIST SERVICE

- 8.1 The LAC Assist team aims to increase placement stability, support a reduction in increased placement costs, increase opportunities to reunify children with their families when it is safe to do so, increase successful transition to independence, sustain lower cost placements and reduce tenancy breakdown. Its priorities include working with children and young people who have experienced placement breakdowns or are at risk of placement breakdowns, those in or at risk of moving to high cost placements, children who could potentially be rehabilitated back to their family's care and sustaining this, and care leavers who are not making sufficient progress to enable them to move to independent living in final stage accommodation.
- 8.2 The team provides intensive support which mirrors that provided by the Family Assist model which was highly praised by Ofsted inspectors. The service commenced in April 2017 and has so far achieved significant placement and accommodation stability, and reduction in placement cost.

9. HEALTH OUTCOMES

- 9.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that health assessments are carried out for every Looked After Child in their care. The assessments for children over 5 are undertaken by one of two LAC Nurses at their placement or location of their choosing. 100% of these have been achieved in the year 2017-2018. These health assessments focus on the holistic health and wellbeing for each child. For Children under 5 the review health assessments are undertaken every 6 months and these are completed predominately by the designated and named LAC paediatrician, 91% of these were completed in times frame although 100% have been achieved.
- 9.2 Two Nurses are co-located with the LAC and Care Leavers services. They are both Specialist Public Health Nurses and are referred to as the LAC Nurses, one being the Named Nurse and One being the Specialist Nurse. The co-location enables ongoing dialog between the allocated social worker and LAC Nurse in relation to children, concerns, and observations.
- 9.3 Due to the nature of their experiences prior to and whilst looked after, many children will have poor mental health. This may be in the form of significant emotional, psychological, or behavioural difficulties. Challenges faced for this cohort are that local CAMHS provisions end their involvement and do not follow the young person experiencing multiple placement breakdowns caused by behavioural issues and yet who are often the most emotionally vulnerable requiring therapeutic services. Additionally, a number of Care Leavers do not meet the higher thresholds for Adult Mental Health Services but continue to have unresolved emotional difficulties requiring input.
- 9.4 A multi-disciplinary borough-based LAC Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (LAC CAMHS) team, that is co-located with the Council's Looked After Children's Teams, offers an extensive range of support services for all levels of mental health needs in a variety of settings. They can work with children placed outside the borough and if a placement move/breakdown results in them moving between CCGs, they assist in identifying local therapy services that can be commissioned.
- 9.5 There is also the Clinical Team consisting of systemic psychotherapists and clinical psychologists offer clinical consultations to social workers and the professional network around the child, reflective case discussions to the LAC and Care leavers teams, facilitation of away-days, systemic training and workshops and direct clinical work with children, young people and families and their social workers and/or parent/carers. Over the last year, the team supported about 40 young people's care through clinical consultations, attending and supporting network meetings, and some direct work with the young people and their carers, residential staff and/or parents when required.

10. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

- 10.1 Education that encourages high aspirations, positive experiences, and individual achievement, with minimal disruption, is central to improving immediate and long-term outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Looked After Children and Care Leavers are more likely to face significant barriers to education and that a renewed priority for young people to improve the educational achievement.
- 10.2 The Virtual School maintains accurate and up to date information about how Looked After Children and Care Leavers are progressing in education and takes urgent and individual action when they are not achieving well. There were a number of changes in the assessment, marking and reporting procedures used by schools and Local Authorities in 2017-18 which should be noted:
- 10.3 GCSEs in England have been reformed and will be graded with a new scale from 9 to 1, with 9 being the highest grade. The new GCSE content is much more challenging and fewer grade 9s will be awarded than A*s. English Language, English Literature and Maths have already moved onto this new grading system, with an additional 20 subjects to follow in 2018 and the remaining transitioning by 2019.
- 10.4 The new grades have been introduced to signal that GCSEs have been reformed and to better differentiate between students of different abilities. The DfE has advised schools and Local Authorities that it would be incorrect and misleading to make direct comparisons showing changes over time.
- 10.5 The introduction of Progress 8 and Attainment 8 last year is the measure by which schools are now being judged. There are significant difficulties in using the new methods for calculating the attainment of Looked After Children. Many pupils do not have prior attainment data, making it difficult to calculate progress, pupils at KS4 often achieve non- GCSE qualifications and the new methods do not take into account the particular educational journey of each pupil. Virtual School Heads are currently in discussions with the DfE as to the most appropriate method to report attainment and progress from 2016.
- 10.6 Historically Hammersmith's Looked after Children have achieved good outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.
 - 2017's GCSE were above the national averages for LAC
 - KS2 outcomes were above national averages for LAC
 - The number of Post 16 LAC in education, employment or training is high compared to national LAC
 - The number of care leavers in Higher Education has remained consistently high and are above the national averages.
- 10.7 Detailed analysis of each cohort of pupils in 2018 indicates Hammersmith's Looked after Children and Care Leavers continue to achieve and make good progress in most areas. In light of the above context attention should be paid

to the individual story and progress each child/young person makes rather looking at the headline outcomes.

10.8 Progress and attainment at Key Stage 1

There were 5 pupils in the reporting cohort.

KS1	New expected standard Reading	New expected standard Writing	New expected standard Maths	New expected standard in all areas
LBHF LAC 5 pupils	60%	60%	60%	60%

60% of pupils met the expected standards in reading, writing and maths in the reporting cohort. Of this cohort, 40% have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and while they didn't meet the expected standards, both have made progress in line with their own expectations.

10.9 Progress and attainment at Key Stage 2

There were 7 pupils in the reporting cohort.

	New expected standard reading	New expected standard grammar, punctuation, and spelling	New expected standard Maths	New expected standard in all areas
LBHF LAC	57%	43%	57%	43%
All pupils	75%	78%	76%	64%

10.10 Initial analysis of this year's results would appear to show a widening of the gap between LAC and all pupils achieving the new expected standard in all areas. However, it is important to note the likely impact of the new assessment arrangements on LAC. Analysis of prior attainment for these pupils at KS1 would seem to have indicated that the majority would have achieved higher results; 56% of this cohort achieved at least a level 2 in all areas as KS1. Despite not achieving the expected standard in some areas many pupils achieved a scaled score in grammar, punctuation and spelling and Maths only a few marks below the expected standard scaled score of 100. The individual context of each pupil needs to be taken into consideration when analysing results. The cohort this year was particularly unique, whereby two pupils were not entered for SATs because of a specific SEND need and two pupils have Education Health & Care Plans (EHCP). It should be noted that one pupil who is not included in the reporting statistics achieved well above the benchmark score of 100 and demonstrates that swift, carefully tailored interventions can have huge impact.

10.11 The majority of this cohort (85%) have experienced some form of disruption or difficulty over the previous 2 years; with either placement or school moves necessary, indicating the significant impact of placement instability on

education outcomes. 28% of the cohort have an Educational Health Care Plan's and 28% of the cohort are classed as having additional special educational needs (SEN+).

10.12 All pupils received the support of the Virtual School and had an up to date PEP. Close collaboration between professionals has ensured that the majority of pupils are now in more stable care and school placements. There is evidence that Pupil Premium was used to good effect to improve progress. There remains work to be done with schools to ensure they are equipped with effective strategies to support these pupils effectively in KS3 and KS4.

10.13 Progress and Attainment at Key Stage 4

10.14 It is difficult to compare this year's grades to previous years due to the introduction of numbered grades instead of lettered grades for English Literature, English Language and Mathematics. The educational background of many Looked After Children makes this a complicated procedure; many Looked After Children do not have prior attainment data or arrive into care during KS3 or KS4 making it very difficult give an accurate score.

10.15 There were 16 pupils in the reporting cohort.

	5 9-4 including English and Maths	5 9-4	5 9-1	1 9-1
LBHF LAC 2018	25%	25%	50%	56%
LBHF LAC 2017	28%	25%	67%	83%
LBHF LAC 2016	15%	15%	55%	75%

10.16 Initial analysis indicates results have more or less stayed the same in the percentage who achieved 5 GCSE grades 9-4/A* to C including English and Maths compared to 2017. However, changes in the nature of GCSE's means any comparison with previous years should be treated with caution. The Rees Centre Research* (welcomed by Edward Timpson) also highlights the specific characteristics of Looked After Children, particularly at KS4 which means it often not valid to make comparisons with all pupils.

10.17 2018's year 11 cohort included a very complex range of pupils. It included a small number of highly motivated and able pupils, who achieved excellent results. 2 pupils gained excellent results, achieving 9's, 8's and 7's in the majority of their subjects. However, the cohort also included 44% of pupils with EHCP's who were not expected to achieve highly, or it was deemed inappropriate for them to sit GCSEs and 6 pupils who attended either special residential schools or were enrolled at alternative provisions. In addition, the cohort included 1 pupil who was a school refuser and therefore was not entered for any GCSE's and one pupil who has experienced a very complex placement history which consequently impacted upon their attainment.

10.18 Nevertheless, it is very positive to note that all pupils who were entered for examinations achieved at least three qualifications. Attendance was not a

concern in the same way as previous years, with an average attendance of 81%. There were four pupils whose attendance dropped below 85%, all with quite significant personal circumstances surrounding this. For these individuals, 50% of them have had at least one placement move in the last twelve months, with almost half having more than 3 placement moves. This contributed greatly to their ability to engage with education and consequently to their results. 25% of the cohort were late entrants to care who came with very complex special educational needs or emotional and behavioural needs.

- 10.19 The cohort was supported by a series of interventions to improve attainment and progress. This included the creative use of Pupil Premium to support the training of school staff, which enabled them to have a better understanding of the required interventions to support pupils, the use of 1-1 tuition and the provision of in-class support. Effective use of Pupil Premium was monitored by the PEP process and the Virtual School's tracking system. Specific projects were organised to support high achieving pupils (e.g. Look to the Future) and to support SEN pupils. All pupils except one have a school or college placement for this academic year and it is expected many will continue to progress.

10.20 Post-16 and Care Leavers: end of academic year performance

	Hammersmith and Fulham 2017	Hammersmith and Fulham 2018
% of 16 and 17-year olds who are in Employment, Education, or Training (EET)	93%	75%
% of 18-25-year olds who are EET	74%	69%
% and number attending university	17% (29)	17% (34)
% and number on completed apprenticeships	5%	2%
% and number in training or employment	8%	7%

- 10.21 All 16 and 17year olds continue to have an allocated Virtual School advisory teacher, which ensures these pupils continue to receive the support of the Virtual School until they finish statutory education or training at 18. In the last academic year there have been a series of complex 16 and 17year olds who have been late entrants into care. They arrive often with complex histories and entrenched behaviour that will take time to change. The Virtual School work closely with the wider network to support these young people in moving away from gang affiliation and moving them away from being school refusers. Beyond 18, the Virtual School provide duty days where they offer advice, support and guidance to 18-25year olds. These are offered twice a week term time and have supported improving the number of 18-25year olds who are EET.

10.22 While some progress has been made in addressing the issues and barriers around sustaining education, training and employment for care leavers, the number of care leavers who are Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET) remains high and this remains a key area for improvement. We are working on continuing to develop partnerships with Council colleagues and with businesses outside the Council to create a wider range of ambitious, stimulating and rewarding apprenticeships and employment opportunities specifically for Hammersmith & Fulham care leavers. There have been a number of very successful cases where long term NEET young people have been successfully re-engaged in training or employment and we are continuing to explore how we can build more capacity in this area.

10.23 The numbers of care leavers in Higher Education continues to be strength and the work of the Virtual School in this area over the last few years has been a significant factor in contributing to this. There are currently 32 care leavers in Higher Education. We now have two care leavers studying at Cambridge, one who has gone onto their fifth year of medicine and one who is entering their final year at Central St Martins. Care leavers at university continue to progress well and many continue to receive positive support from the Virtual School and Leaving Care Service.

10.24 Attendance and exclusions

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Average attendance R-11	90%	93%	94%	93%
Number with one or more fixed term exclusion	16	11	12	6
Number with permanent exclusion	0	0	0	0

10.25 The attendance figures for 2018 shows sustained efforts to ensure the attendance of our young people. This reflects the work of all professionals in ensuring regular attendance at school for all pupils. There has been a decline in the number of pupils classed as Persistently Absent or missing school through not having a school place. A particular pressure going forward however, is the number of UASCs coming into care in year 11 without a school place, (these are not reflected in the reporting cohort).

10.26 There were no permanent exclusions in 2017/18. This reflects the work the Virtual School does directly with schools, social workers and carers in developing strategies to avoid permanent exclusion. There were 6 pupils with one or more fixed term exclusion in 2017/18, this represents a significant decrease on previous years and while The Virtual School works intensively to improve attendance, engagement and behaviour for learning, given that the majority of the care population are adolescents, who often have a poor education record prior to entering the care system this figure is unlikely to be improved upon significantly in future years. The Virtual School works closely with social care professionals and schools to identify pupils who are at risk of

exclusion or have been excluded for a short period. Where the team has concerns that a fixed term exclusion is an indication that a particular school is not able to meet the needs to a pupil, the Virtual School's Educational Psychologist will work with the school to identify strategies to improve behaviour, or alternatively carry out an assessment, which may indicate that another education provision is needed.

11. SAFETY

- 11.1 Looked After Children are at greater risk of going missing than their peers due to their traumatic life experiences, and are therefore vulnerable to exploitation. Children with frequent placement moves, more fragile attachments and late care entrants are more likely to go missing and this behaviour in turn impacts upon the stability of any new placements.
- 11.2 We track missing incidents carefully and seek to skilfully assess and address causal factors into why young people go missing. The majority were for short periods overnight rather than for longer periods where there is evidence of them experiencing significant harm. A monitoring and tracking system is in place that provides high levels of scrutiny, ensures management oversight and that missing children are visited and interviewed in order to address any potential safeguarding concerns children may be encountering either within or outside their placement. Practice has specifically developed in this area, which has been enhanced by the continued appointment of a Missing Person's Co-ordinator who offers advice, further scrutiny, and the development of strategies to reduce risks with front line practitioners.
- 11.3 We have a number of monitoring and practice systems in place to identify those assessed to be at risk of exploitation and provide comprehensive support package to ensure that risks are reduced. This includes monthly Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meetings chaired by the Police and Children's Services, a shared risk assessment tool, a common pathway to services coordinated through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), clear data sets and problem profiles, a range of training and awareness-raising initiatives and an Exploitation Lead

12. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

- 12.1 Hammersmith and Fulham offer an extensive programme of participatory activities for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, providing them with opportunities to participate and engage with the service. This programme includes a variety of groups, consultation events and projects. In doing so, it is recognised that the children and young people we work with want to participate in different ways and in varying degrees. Some young people want direct involvement in consultation and decision making whilst others might want to attend a group or activity. This means that we have a core group of looked after children and care leavers that frequently participate within all aspects of the programme and more specific opportunities that attract many of the wider population.

12.2 The Virtual School and Participation and Engagement Team organised a variety of engagement activities over the past year, including:

- Looked After Children and Care Leaver’s Activities;
- Involvement of children and young people in recruitment, and training - young people continue to be a part of recruitment and training for Family Services staff and sit on interview panels with Officers. This has included being involved in the recruitment of the Team Manager within Care Leaving Team and the staff within LAC Assist Team.
- Thematic consultations - children and young people work collaboratively with the Virtual School to widen the reach of participation, carrying out a series of surveys that engages a wider audience and gathers views across the age and range of young people who are either Looked After Children or Care Leavers
- Enrichment programme – the Virtual School has continued to run a wide range of activities specifically for Looked After Children, foster carers, and care leavers. The projects are run in conjunction with partners including the Lyric Theatre, the BBC, Tate Modern, the Arvon Foundation, and Imperial College.

13. OUTCOMES FOR CARE LEAVERS

13.1 At the end of March 2018 there were 192 Care Leavers within the service compared to 189 in 2017. The increased volume links to a developing trend in relation to older citizen young people with complex needs entering care along with an increase in the overall numbers of unaccompanied minors aged 16 and above. As at 31st March 2018 Hammersmith & Fulham had 33 UASC, a decrease from 39 at 31st March 2017.

Total number of Care Leavers supported (aged 18-25) at the end of year

As at 31st March	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
LBHF	162	162	163	160	170	189	192

13.2 The key functions of practitioners working with Care Leavers is to assist, befriend and advise young people to make a successful transition from the Council’s care to independent living in the community. This includes assessing their needs and drawing up a Pathway Plan for their on-going support. The Pathway Plan sets out the support available for all aspect of their life, with an emphasis on securing settled accommodation and appropriate education, training, and employment (EET). The Local Authority has a duty towards eligible; relevant; and former relevant children. The Leaving Care Act has two main aims:

- To ensure that young people do not leave care until they are ready.
- To ensure that they receive more effective support once they have left.

Care Leaver's education, training and employment outcomes continue to improve steadily, with more Care Leavers in education, training, or employment than in previous years. Hammersmith and Fulham performance remains stronger than Care Leavers nationally (which is 58% EET) and is a key priority for the Leaving Care Teams and the Virtual School. At 31st March 2018, 69% of care leavers were in education, employment, or training (these included young parents, those in psychiatric units). The number of Care Leavers attending university remains positive (32 during 2017-18 compared with 29 during 2016-17), is above the national average for those leaving care and reflects the work of professionals in raising the attainment and aspirations of pupils. This includes two Care Leavers that are currently attending Cambridge University and one Care Leaving achieving a 1st Class Honours in Engineering. Current degrees range from Medicine, Engineering, Law, HR, Pharmaceutical Science, English Literature, Natural Sciences and International Tourism.

- 13.3 There are continued challenges in reducing NEET levels for Care Leavers given their needs are often more complex than peers who have not experienced care. A number of Care Leavers are in custody including those that first entered care as a result of being remanded, a high number have complex mental health needs, a number of late entrants to care have a range of complex behavioural and emotional needs and have had a disrupted education, and there has been an increase in the number of former UASC Care Leavers who have experienced disrupted education or not had a formal education prior to entering the UK. The Virtual School and Leaving Care Teams are working together to tackle these issues and to improve our understanding of the needs of specific groups of Care Leavers.
- 13.4 At the end of March 2018, 86% of Care Leavers were in suitable accommodation, an increase from 77% at the same point in 2017. Of the 26 not in suitable accommodation 16 had disengaged from the service and 8 were in custody.
- 13.5 Since April 2017 Hammersmith and Fulham has been financially supporting Care Leavers who are liable to pay council tax charges until they reach 25 years. The Council was the first London authority to introduce and spearhead this change. Nationally thirty-five other local authorities have since introduced this exemption. Managing budgets can be very challenging for vulnerable young people adjusting to living independently. This exemption is intended to ensure that as they begin to manage their finances as young adults that the Council relieves some of this pressure and that they are given this additional help as they move from care to independence. The decision follows a report by the Children's Society, called "Wolf at the Door" which revealed that council tax debt can be a particularly frightening experience for Care Leavers. What can start out for many Care Leavers as falling slightly behind can very quickly escalate to a court summons and enforcement action being taken. This additional support will give our Care Leavers a helping hand in their first step towards independence, helping them to avoid debt as they learn to manage their finances.

14. KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2018 – 2019

14.1 Care Leavers Support

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 comes into effect in April 2018 and imposes new duties on local authorities. The key elements include:

- extending corporate parenting duties to Care Leavers up to 25 years irrespective of educational status, including the allocation of a Personal Advisor, which is Hammersmith and Fulham is a qualified social worker
- requiring local authorities to consult on and publish a local offer for Care Leavers. The local offer should provide information on all the services and support that are available to Care Leavers in the local area.
- introducing 7 Corporate Parenting principles that local authorities must adhere to, producing and advertising the local offer that outlines Care Leaver entitlements
- extending the advice and support provided by Virtual Schools for children previously looked after but now placed for adoption or under special guardianship orders.

These legislative changes have been introduced to take account that adults that have previously been in care are some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in society. Extending the duties and support to older care leavers seeks to take account of this and acknowledges that children raised within their families typically continue to seek parental advice and support for a number of years as they navigate early adulthood.

14.2 Develop an Enhanced Fostering Service

This programme will develop an enhanced, targeted, in-house fostering service that will support children and young people with more complex needs. This will include respite care, peer support for children and carers, out of hours' professional support, an enhanced training offer for carers and extended accommodation provision, and will reduce the need for residential placements

14.3 Improve Care Leavers Education, Employment, and Training

We want to improve on the availability, choice and promotion of good quality apprenticeships and employment for our Care Leavers. The Virtual School and Care Leavers Teams hold a monthly EET Panel to track and monitor EET performance and further identify the support needs for those that are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. Support offered includes support with writing CVs, interview preparation, accompanying young people to interviews, publicising job vacancies on a weekly basis, providing drop in sessions with the post 16 EET Workers and individualised packages to support Care Leavers in accessing and sustaining employment and training. A key priority for the service is to develop partnerships with council colleagues and with businesses to create a wider range of ambitious, stimulating and rewarding apprenticeships and employment opportunities specifically for Care Leavers.

Current apprenticeships for Care Leavers include with Pret Manger, British Rail, Lloyds TSB, the NHS, Royal Mail, The Lyric and The Dorchester.

14.4 Support for UASC

In December 2018, 3 members of staff visited Greece, to assist in the training of country based NGO workers to support work with asylum seeking children. In December 2018 Hammersmith and Fulham made a further offer and commitment to caring for 10 children who are currently located in Greece. Planning is taking place with the Home Office around their transfer. Five of these will be additional and not counted towards our National Transfer Scheme number of 25 children, and 5 will be included in National Transfer scheme total number.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT

None.