


<p><b>London Borough of Hammersmith &amp; Fulham</b></p> <p><b>CHILDREN AND EDUCATION POLICY AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE</b></p> <p><b>29 January 2018</b></p>	
<p><b>LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS ANNUAL REPORT</b></p>	
<p><b>Report of the Director for Children's Services – Steve Miley</b></p>	
<p><b>Open Report</b></p>	
<p><b>Classification: For review and comment</b> <b>Key Decision: No</b></p>	
<p><b>Wards Affected: All</b></p>	
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## **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.
- 1.2 Looked After Children numbers have increased nationally from 2013 to 2017 by 7% and at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 there were 72,670 Looked After Children nationally. In contrast, regionally London rates have decreased by -7% with the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham seeing a -9% decrease over the same time period. The low numbers in Hammersmith & Fulham place them in the lowest quartile of the 152 local authorities nationally at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. However, this is also in line with other key data sets including children subject to child protection and child in need plans.
- 1.3 Generally, outcomes for Looked After Children across the UK are poorer than those who have not been in care, partly due to earlier life experiences, attachment and psychological difficulties and any disruptions in placements. However, children in care often make progress in comparison than if they had not entered care, even if their outcomes are overall not as positive than peers who do not have any care history. It is therefore essential for any looked after child that their progress is tracked from the point that they enter care. Despite the good work and dedication of professionals and carers, challenges still

remain in improving the experiences and outcomes for this group of children. Locally, we closely monitor the profile and outcomes of our care population in order to effectively plan services. Section 4 outlines the profile of our current care population, Section 5 focuses specifically on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and Sections 6, 10 and 11 highlight Hammersmith and Fulham's strategic priorities for Looked After Children services and future developments in services. The other sections highlight outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 In this report, the term Looked After Children refers to those children for whom the Borough has assumed Parental Responsibility through a care order, by an agreement with their parent(s) or Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.
- 2.2 The Borough 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 effective care within the family home. Many Looked After Children are able to return to their parent(s) or extended family members speedily and do not require long term services or interventions. Many who remain in care are likely to have suffered neglect or abuse, prior to coming into our care, and are likely to require support from a range of services including into adulthood.

## **3. CORPORATE PARENTING**

- 3.1 Corporate Parenting is the term used to refer 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 will need 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.
- 3.2 Councillors in the Borough have a responsibility to act as a good 'corporate parent' for the children it looks after. Once a child becomes Looked After all Members and officers of the Council, as their corporate parents, need to be concerned about that child as if they were their own. This concern should encompass the child's education, health and welfare, what they do in their leisure time and holidays, how they celebrate their culture or religion and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements.

3.3 The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) has a key role in monitoring how the Council discharges its corporate parenting responsibilities. Over the past year, the Board has continued to meet with young people who are member of the Children in Care Council to listen to their views and consultation feedback on a quarterly basis. Consultation activities with Looked After Children and Care Leavers are aligned to the key objectives in the three-year strategy and annual service improvement plan. Section 10 provides an overview of topics consulted upon during 2016-17.

#### 4. NUMBERS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

4.1 Nationally, there were 72,670 children and young people in care on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, compared with 70,440 at the same point in 2016. This represents a 3% increase. This national figure remains the highest figure of children in care since the implementation of the Children Act 1989.

4.2 The Borough's Looked After Children population has overall reduced from 260 in 2008 to 215 in 2017, although there has been an increase including citizen children entering care during 2015-16 and 2016-17 (see Table 2). The number of Looked After Children as a proportion of the population in Hammersmith & Fulham is 61 per 10,000 population as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, higher than the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea at 28 per 10,000 population and Westminster City Council (41 per 10,000). The Borough is becoming increasingly adept at securing alternative solutions outside the care system for Looked After Children, with the number of children leaving care varying from 115 in 2011-12 to 155 in 2013-14, and 99 in 2016-17.

Year April to March	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of children ceasing care	100	115	95	155	120	108	99

**Table 1: Total Looked After Children Ceasing Care**

4.3 The overall reduction in numbers of children in care since 2010 is attributed to several factors. We have invested in significant training to support practitioners across the service to work more effectively with families. A core objective of this initiative is to reduce the numbers of children care and we believe we are seeing early indicators of this effect. Additionally, the range of services provided to support families and avoid adolescent care entry, robust rehabilitation home support packages when it is assessed that it is safe for children to return to live at home, alternatives to remand being implemented by the Youth Courts and significantly improved timescales for care proceedings resulting in timely permanency plans or children being placed with extended family members are all considered to have influence this reduction. In contrast there has been an increase in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) entering care linked to Hammersmith and Fulham's commitment to caring for additional Dubs Amendment UASC alongside those who self-present or placed as part of the National Transfer Scheme. During 2016-17, 25 new UASCs became looked

after by the Borough. This represented 28% of the new 14-17-year-old care entrants in this year and contributes to the majority of Looked After Children being aged 10 and over. Section 5 considers the UASC population in greater detail.

Year Ending March	Citizen	UASC	Total
2010	234	26	260
2011	227	21	248
2012	204	20	224
2013	220	18	238
2014	195	9	204
2015	163	22	185
2016	172	26	198
2017	177	38	215

**Table 2: Total Looked After Children at 31 March: 2010-2017**

- 4.4 The age profile of Looked After Children is significant in that the proportion aged over 16 for 2016-17 was 42% up from 35% in 2015-16, which is higher than the national rate of 22% and London rate of 33%. The Borough's commitment to caring for additional UASC contributes to this variable.

AGE AT 31 MARCH 2017	BOYS	GIRLS	Total	%
Under 1 year	3	3	6	<b>3%</b>
Age 1 - 4 years	6	2	8	<b>4%</b>
Age 5 - 9 years	15	12	27	<b>13%</b>
Age 10 - 15 years	47	36	83	<b>39%</b>
Age 16 - 17 years:	59	32	91	<b>42%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>215</b>	

**Table 3: Age Profile of Children in Care at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017**

- 4.5 At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 only 7% of children in care were aged under 5 years compared with 11% at the same point in 2016. 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, "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. The chart overleaf provides a breakdown of the reasons for new care episodes for 14-17 year olds during 2016-17. This cohort represents 54 children, of which the highest proportion entered care due to Safeguarding/Family breakdown (31 children,

59%). A significant proportion of this cohort do not remain looked after longer term and return to live again with their families following interventions being provided to address safeguarding concerns, conflict and dynamics. UASC accounted for 28% (15 children) of new adolescent care entrants. During 2016-17 the proportion of entries to care due to Court Remands remained steady at 11% (6 children) compared with 9% (5 children) during 2015-16. The most recently published national data on the reasons for entries to care was for 2015-16 which indicates that Court Remands attributed to 3% of entries to care in England and 5% in London.

Entry to care status	Number of young people aged 14 to 17 years	%
Remand	6	11%
Respite	1	2%
Safeguarding	31	58%
UASC	15	28%
<b>Total entries to care during 2016-17 aged 14 to 17 years</b>	<b>53</b>	

**Table 4: Profile of 14-17 years olds entering care during 2016-17**

- 4.6 Hammersmith and Fulham's Looked After Children population is particularly diverse. Rates for children identified as Black or Black British ethnicity accounted for 33% of Looked After Children in 2016-17 which is higher than the most recently published (2015-16) national average at 25%. 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

- 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 24 UASC and when we fall below that threshold new UASC will be referred via the London rota referral or National Transfer Scheme. In addition, Hammersmith and Fulham has given a commitment to caring for a higher number of UASC under the Dubs Amendment. To date, an additional 14 children have been cared for by the local authority as part of this amendment, mainly following the dismantling of the camps in Calais in October 2016. Hammersmith and Fulham social work staff proactively visited the camps in order to assist with assessment of children there and to support their transfer to the UK.

5.2 As a result of the aforementioned commitment Hammersmith and Fulham took responsibility for an increased number of newly arrived unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) during 2016-17. Over the year 25 new UASC became looked after in comparison with 19 young people in 2014-15 and 20 young people in 2015-16. Nearly half of the current UASC and former UASC care leaver population have arrived within the last two years.

As at 31st March	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
UASC Numbers	15	9	22	26	38

**Table 5: UASC Numbers as at 31 March 2012-17**

5.3 During 2016-17 there was a notably shift in the country of origin for new UASC care entrants in Hammersmith and Fulham. Over a number of previous years, Albanian young people accounted for the majority of UASC. In contrast during the last year the majority of new UASC have originated from Afghanistan (32%) and Sudan (16%). This is set against the London trend where Albanian and Vietnamese children remain the highest volume of newly arrived UASC.

Country of origin	Number of young people	%
Afghanistan	8	32%
Albania	2	8%
Armenia	1	4%
Algeria	1	4%
Egypt	1	4%
Eritrea	3	12%
Ethiopia	1	4%
Iran	2	8%
Pakistan	1	4%
Sudan	4	16%
Syria	1	4%
<b>Total UASC entries into care during 2016-17</b>	<b>25</b>	

**Table 6: Number of UASC entering care in 2016-17 by country of origin**

5.4 There is notable consistency in the age of UASC on arrival with the vast majority of the total current UASC population (32 of 38, 82%) aged between 14-17 years at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, although we do occasionally experience much younger children arriving. Given these age trends, the UASC population have a significant bearing on the Borough's care leaver numbers. At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, 58 of 189 (31%) of the Borough's Care Leavers were former UASCs. Legal outcomes are characterised by lengthy processes including several Home Office interviews and legal hearings. A 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. The largest number exit care by receiving their permanent or long term leave to remain and exiting the service in the same way as citizen children. Former UASC care leavers continue to be supported by the Leaving Care Service whilst they await a decision by the Home Office in line with our statutory obligations.

- 5.5 UASC experience a range of physical and emotional difficulties as a result of prolonged journeys in insanitary conditions with inadequate supplies of food and water and/or what they might have been subjected to in their home countries prior to leaving. The effects of separation, bereavement and uncertainty about their families' wellbeing and own immigration status can have a negative emotional impact on UASC children and young people. There is extensive use of agents and smugglers to assist UASC in making their journeys and in a minority of cases there are disclosures of ill-treatment during their journey. These range of needs are addressed through their LAC Health Assessments and involving LAC CAMHS and our in-house clinicians as appropriate.

## **6. STRATEGIC PLANNING**

- 6.1 A three-year strategy for Looked After Children continues to be implemented which sets out the vision and intended outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers for the period 2014 to 2017. A new strategy will be developed and launched once the legislative changes arising from the Children and Social Work Act 2017 are finalised given these changes will have an impact on a numbers of service delivery strands.
- 6.2 The current strategy has six strategic objectives:
- Children on the edge of care are better supported to remain within their families and community.
  - Looked After Children and Care Leavers are provided with security, stability and are cared for.
  - Looked After Children and Care Leavers are safe from harm and neglect.
  - Looked After Children and Care Leavers are supported in reaching a good standard of education.
  - Looked After Children and Care Leavers health needs are promoted and supported.
  - All Looked After Children and Care Leavers have a voice in decisions which affect their lives.
- 6.3 To support the delivery of the strategic priorities an annual Looked After Children and Care Leavers service improvement plan is developed and delivered with partners including Health, Education and the Youth Offending Service. The plan is monitored and further developed in response to the issues and recommendations that children and young people make as part of quarterly consultations and related activity and decisions arising from consultations within the Corporate Parenting Board.

- 6.4 The CEPAC Scrutiny Committee also 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 Team is also presented annually.
- 6.5 Other relevant performance indicators are reported regularly to the Lead Member at Cabinet Board.
- 6.6 Preparations are underway in advance of implementing changes arising from the Children and Social Work Act 2017 which come into effect in April 2018. The key elements specific to children in care includes extending corporate parenting duties to Care Leavers up to 25 years irrespective of educational status, including the allocation of a Personal Advisor, introducing 7 Corporate Parenting principles that Councils must adhere to, producing and advertising a Local Offer that outlines Care Leaver entitlements and extending the advice and support provided by Virtual Schools for children previously looked after but now placed for adoption or under special guardianship orders. Although we are awaiting formal guidance to be issued by the DfE, projections have been completed regarding the increased number of Care Leavers that will remain open or potentially return requesting a service and the associated impact on placement costs and staffing. A consultation will be completed with Looked After Children and Care Leavers regarding the Local Offer, their views on needs, priorities and gaps and platforms for publishing this. 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 also 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.

## **7. SAFEGUARDING OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS**

- 7.1 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 Borough 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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, 90% of children placed by Hammersmith & Fulham were in provisions that were judged as Outstanding or Good. The number of placement moves that children have is carefully monitored to ensure plans are adapted to make placements more resilient where required and that children and carers are given tailored support to address individual needs. In Hammersmith & Fulham 8% (15 children) of Looked After Children had experienced three or more placement moves during their care period, which is below the England rate of 10% (current available data for 2015-16) and also 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.



	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
England	11.0%	11.0%	12.0%	10%	10%	Not yet available
LBHF	8.0%	5.9%	19.5%	9.2%	14.1%	8%

**Table 7: Percentage of children with three or more placements during 2011- 17**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
England	68.0%	67.0%	67%	68%	68%	Not yet available
LBHF	74.6%	66.2%	61.3%	59.7%	78.2%	81%

**Table 8: Percentage of Looked After Children under 16 years in the same placement for at least 2 years**

- 7.2 As a geographically small borough, not all Looked After Children are able to live within Hammersmith and Fulham when they are in care. However, there are significant efforts at both the local and national level to reduce the distance at which Looked After Children are placed from their borough of origin and Hammersmith and Fulham has actively sought to reduce the number of children placed outside London where appropriate. In 2011-12 there were 54 children placed outside Greater London compared with 42 in 2016-17. While there are a small minority of children who are more effectively safeguarded by being placed at a distance such as those young people identified to be at risk due to gang affiliation or child sexual exploitation (CSE), the consistent lack 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 living outside of London includes children who are placed in special educational boarding schools or specialist residential care or placed with extended family members or adopters. Of the children and young people Looked After in foster placements at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, 76% were placed in London boroughs, including within Hammersmith and Fulham, and 73% were placed with Shared Services in-house foster carers. As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, 67% of the Borough's Looked After Children were living inside Hammersmith and Fulham, an improvement from 59% in 2015-16. This compares with 45% of Looked After Children living inside their borough of origin on average across other London authorities. Additionally, there are currently 9 Hammersmith and Fulham Care Leavers who continue to live with foster carers under a "Staying Put" arrangement, an initiative 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.
- 7.3 For some young people foster care is not currently suitable and as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, 10% of Looked After Children were placed in residential care or special educational boarding schools. We also have 111 children placed with relatives who have either been assessed as kinship foster carers (19 children) or under Special Guardianship Orders (92 children), thus enabling these children to reside with relatives rather than outside the family and some of these children account for those not residing in London. In contrast, the

number of adoptions in Hammersmith and Fulham has continued to decline to 4 in 2016-17 compared with 12 in 2014-15 and 6 in 2015-16, although this mirrors a national reduction (18% reduction in 2015-16) in children being placed for adoption outside the extended family linked to the impact of two relevant court judgements.

	<b>% of children placed in foster placements</b>
England	75%
London	75%
Hammersmith and Fulham	73%

**Table 9: Percentage of children placed in foster placements at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017**

- 7.4 Looked After Children are at greater risk of going missing than their peers due to their turbulent life experiences, and are therefore vulnerable to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). 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. In Hammersmith and Fulham, there were 32 Looked After Children who went missing with a total of 134 episodes in 2016-17, which includes a small number of individual young people who had frequent repeat missing episodes often over a short duration or overnight. Whilst there was a decrease in the number of children when compared with 2015-16 (37 children) there was an increase in the number of episodes from 124 in 2015-16. Whilst we track missing incidents carefully and seek to skilfully assess and address causal factors into why young people go missing, of the 32 young people that went missing the majority were for short periods overnight rather than for longer periods where there is evidence of them experiencing significant harm. A robust 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.
- 7.5 With specific reference to children at risk of CSE there continue to be a number of monitoring and practice systems in place to identify those assessed to be at risk and to provide a 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 a CSE lead.
- 7.6 Currently (as at November 2017) the Hammersmith and Fulham has a total of 58 children identified at risk of CSE and these children are categorised following an assessment regarding how serious the risk and evidence is. With specific reference to looked after children there are currently sixteen children assessed to be at risk of CSE – 12 in Category Blue, 2 in Category 1 and 2 in

Category 2. This is in comparison to 9 Looked After Children where there were CSE concerns at the same point last year and 7 in 2014-15. This steady increase relates to improved identification of risks, assessment and interviewing skills and clearer CSE mapping and proactively bringing adolescents into local authority care where there are concerns about CSE, them going missing and their families struggling to safeguard them. Of those 16 young people 11 are not living within the Shared Services geographical boundary, which partly demonstrates actively removing them from risk factors that escalate concerns but also that this cohort can also be at greater risk of placement breakdown and escalation into higher cost placements outside London.

<b>LBHF</b>	<b>BLUE</b>	<b>Cat 1</b>	<b>Cat 2</b>	<b>Total</b>
CIN	11	5		16
CP	2	2	1	5
LAC - Living within Shared Services area	4	1	0	5
LAC - Living outside Shared Services area	8	1	2	11
Other	10	10	1	21
Grand Total	35	19	4	58

**Table 10: CSE Categories Data for Looked After Children 2016-17**

- 7.7 Under the Care Act 2014, implemented in April 2015, local authorities now have a duty to conduct tailored individual transition assessments. This is where there is a likely need for care and support when the young person turns 18 and when that assessment would be of significant benefit. Statutory guidance cites some examples relevant to the care leaving population for those young people:
- whose needs have been largely met by their educational institution, but who, once they leave, will require their needs to be met in some other way (e.g. those with autism, learning disabilities);
  - detained in the youth justice system who will move to adult custodial services and
  - receiving child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) who may also require care and support as adults even if they did not receive children's services from their local authority.

The Act also makes enquiries to safeguard adults a statutory duty, if they are thought to be at risk.

## **8. HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

- 8.1 Looked After Children and young people share the same health risks and difficulties as their peers but often to a greater degree. They often enter care with a worse level of health than their peers in part due to the impact of abuse, neglect and chaotic parenting and for unaccompanied minors the impact of living in countries where there is conflict and extreme poverty. In addition, these children are more likely to be exposed to the consequences of greater social deprivation and disadvantage. A key role for social workers, foster carers and LAC nurses is to educate and support Looked After Children and

Care Leavers around healthy eating, exercise and dental care and address any areas of concern.

- 8.2 Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that health assessments are carried out for every Looked After Child in their care. Of the 135 eligible children (who have been in care for a year) 98% were carried out on time which represents an improvement from 89% in 2015-16. This performance is due in part to the implementation of a reminder system for social workers to refer for health assessment, and increased outreach work by the specialist nurses for children and young people placed out of borough. Some older Looked After Children are unwilling to have their medicals despite best efforts for these to take place.
- 8.3 The Local Authority should act as a 'good parent' in relation to the health of Looked After Children. Within that role it has the right to approve the immunisation of children within its care against vaccine preventable diseases as per the national immunisation schedule. This includes a continued drive to ensure that young people receive their school leaver booster (diphtheria tetanus and polio), to ensure that eligible girls are receiving the human papilloma vaccination (HPV) and that unaccompanied minors receive immunisations that they missed when living in their country of origin or when transient. 98% of children and young people Looked After were up to date with immunisations on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 which represents an improvement from 89% in 2015-16 and is well above the currently available national data (87%).
- 8.4 Dental health is an integral part of the annual Health Assessment. The Local Authority and NHS Trust are required to ensure that children in care receive regular check-ups and treatment with a dentist. The positive improvements in the number of Looked After Children aged 16 and under who are up to date with their dental checks was sustained in 2016-17 with 98% having dental checks up from 96% during 2015-16 and 79% during 2014-15.

<b>Children who had been looked after for at least 12 months at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017</b>	<b>Percentage of children whose immunisations were up to date</b>	<b>Percentage of children who had their teeth checked by a dentist</b>	<b>Percentage of children who had their annual health assessment</b>	<b>Percentage of children aged 5 years old or younger at 31<sup>st</sup> March whose development assessments were up to date</b>
England 2015-16	87%	84%	90%	83%
London 2015-16	84%	88%	93%	93%
Hammersmith and Fulham 2015-16	89%	96%	89%	75%
Hammersmith and Fulham 2016-17	98%	98%	98%	100.0%

**Table 11: Percentage of children with up to date health checks and immunisations**

- 8.5 The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a self-report measure completed by the children's carer and is aimed at assessing a child's

behaviour, emotions and relationships. In 2016-17 the decline continued in the number of SDQs completed for Looked After Children with 73% completed compared to 84% in 2015-16 and 90% in 2014-15 and is an area requiring focus and improvement. A child or young person who reports a high score on their SDQ should be referred for further assessment and, where appropriate, intervention or treatment by the specialist CAMHS Team. Although the SDQ acts as a guide for referring to CAMHS practitioners do refer without this questionnaire if they are concerned about a child's emotional wellbeing or mental health.

- 8.6 Due to the nature of their experiences prior to and whilst looked after, many 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.
- 8.7 A multi-disciplinary borough-based LAC Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (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, can work with children placed outside the borough and if placement moves/breakdowns result in them moving between CCGs and can commission local therapy services for children placed at a distance. The LAC CAMHS team have the shared aims of maintaining placement stability in order to avoid placement breakdown and supporting Looked After Children and their carers to manage transitions between placements. Hammersmith and Fulham's in-house systemic clinicians also work directly with Looked After Children, social workers and foster carers to address emotional distress. Their service compliments the LAC CAMHS provision and enables a larger number of children to receive therapeutic interventions.
- 8.8 During 2016-17, 6% of Looked After Children were reported to be known to have a substance misuse issue compared to 7% in 2015-16 and where this is identified young people are referred for specialist input to address this.

## **9. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

- 9.1 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 Hammersmith and Fulham has a renewed priority for young people to better support their education and improve outcomes to improve the educational achievement.

- 9.2 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 2016-17 which should be noted:
- 9.3 The expected standard has been raised and the accountability framework for schools has also changed. These changes mean that the expected standard this year is higher and not comparable with the expected standard used in previous years' statistics.
- 9.4 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. Local Authorities, such as the Hammersmith and Fulham have small cohorts of pupils in each key stage, which often change over time. Many Looked After Children in these cohorts come into care without prior attainment data, including unaccompanied minors, making it difficult to make judgements about the progress of pupils from one Key Stage to the next.
- 9.5 As yet the DfE has not issued clear guidance to Local Authorities as to the way educational outcomes for 2017 and beyond should be reported. Virtual School Heads are currently in discussions with the DfE as to the most appropriate way to report outcomes for Looked After Children. The DfE has advised schools and Local Authorities that it would be incorrect and misleading to make direct comparisons with previous years' data given these revisions.
- 9.6 In the last three years Looked After Children and Care Leavers have made good progress.
- 2016 and 2017's GCSE results were well above national averages for LAC
  - KS2 results were above national averages for LAC
  - LAC made good progress from particular starting points, e.g. from the point they entered the care system
  - The number of 16 and 17 year olds engaged in education or training is high
  - The number of care leavers in Higher Education is significantly above national averages
- 9.7 Detailed analysis of each cohort of pupils in 2016-17 indicates that Looked After Children and Care Leavers continue to make good progress in most areas. In light of the above context, attention should be paid to individual story and progress of each child/young person rather looking at the headline outcomes.

## 9.8 Progress and attainment at Key Stage 1

There were 2 pupils in the reporting cohort. Results at KS1 have significantly improved year on year. These figures demonstrate carefully tailored interventions were put in place using Pupil Premium to support the improved outcomes.

KS1	New expected standard Reading	New expected standard Writing	New expected standard Maths
LBHF LAC 2 pupils	100%	100%	100%

## 9.9 Progress and attainment at Key Stage 2

There were 3 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 2016-17	33%	33%	33%	33%
LBHF LAC 2015-16	78%	38%	39%	39%
National LAC Data 2015-16 (data for 2016-17 not yet released)	25%	25%	25%	25%
National data for all pupils	71%	77%	75%	61%

9.10 Initial analysis of this year's results would appear to show a widening of the gap between Looked After Children 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 Looked After Children. Analysis of prior attainment for these pupils at KS1 indicates that the majority would have achieved higher results; 66% 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.

9.11 The individual context of each pupil needs to be taken into consideration when analysing results. The cohort this year was particularly unique, whereby one pupil was not entered for SATs due to hospitalisation and one pupil experienced a bereavement several weeks before the exams. 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.

9.12 All of the pupils experienced some form of disruption or difficulty over the previous 2 years; all three have had 1 or more placement moves in the last 2

years, indicating the significant impact of placement instability on education outcomes. One pupil was hospitalised for a considerable length of time and now attends a special day residential school and one pupil is on an SEN support plan and is being well supported in a mainstream setting. 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.

### 9.13 Progress and Attainment at Key Stage 4

9.14 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 LAC makes this a complicated procedure; many LAC do not have prior attainment data or arrive into care during KS3 or KS4 making it very difficult give an accurate score. The Virtual School is still in the process of finalising these figures, therefore for the benefit of this report the old performance measures has been used.

9.15 There were 18 pupils in the reporting cohort.

	<b>5 A-C including English and Maths</b>	<b>5 A-C</b>	<b>5 A-G</b>	<b>1 A-G</b>
LBHF LAC 2017	28%	25%	67%	83%
LBHF LAC 2016	15%	15%	55%	75%
National LAC Data 2015-16 (data for 2016-17 not yet released)	13.6%	Not yet available	Not yet available	Not yet available

9.16 Initial analysis indicates a significant increase in the percentage who achieved 5 GCSE grades A\* to C including English and Maths compared to 2016. However, changes in the nature of GCSE's means any comparison with previous years should be treated with caution. The Rees Centre Research also highlights the specific characteristics of Looked After Children, particularly at KS4 which means it often unhelpful to make comparisons with all pupils.

9.17 2017's year 11 cohort included range of pupils. It included a small number of highly motivated and able pupils, who achieved excellent results. 2 pupils gained outstanding results, achieving A\*'s, A's and B's in the majority of their subjects. However, the cohort also 5 included pupils with Statements/EHCP who were not predicted to achieve high grades or it was deemed inappropriate for them to sit GCSEs and 5 pupils who attended either special residential schools or were enrolled at alternative provisions. In addition, the cohort included 2 pupils who were school refusers and therefore were not entered for GCSE's and one pupil who experienced a lengthy fixed term exclusion, which consequently impacted upon their attainment.



- 9.18 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 83%. 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 linked to behaviours and needs. This contributed greatly to their ability to engage with education and consequently to their results.
- 9.19 It should be noted that two pupils who performed well have been excluded from the above figures. One young person was a late entry to care who was predicted 8F-G's upon arrival, however, ended up achieving all A\*-B or equivalent results and one young person was held down in Year 10 and achieved 5A\*Cs including English and Maths. Both are excellent examples of how carefully tailored interventions and the appropriate level of support can result in positive outcomes and attainment.
- 9.20 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 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.

#### 9.21 Post-16 and Care Leavers: End of Academic Year Performance

	Hammersmith and Fulham 2015-16	Hammersmith and Fulham 2016-17
% of 16 and 17 year olds who are EET	92%	93%
% of 18-25 year olds who are EET	71%	74%
% and number attending university	17% (25 people)	17% (29 people)
% completed apprenticeships	3%	5%
% in training or employment	6%	8%

- 9.22 Outcomes for 16 and 17 year olds are an area of strength in Hammersmith & Fulham. Much of this can be attributed to the support offered by the Virtual School advisory teacher social workers and carers. All 16 and 17 year 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. Beyond 18, the Virtual School provide duty days where they offer advice, support and guidance to 18-25 year olds. These are offered twice a week during term time and have supported improving the number of 18-25 year olds who are EET. 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 NEET remains a continued area of focus and it is our ambition to achieve further improvements. We have recently appointed a Post 16 EET Co-ordinator. The key priorities of this new role is 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. The post intends to be enterprising and take account of the wealth of businesses located within the borough. 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.

9.23 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 29 Care Leavers in Higher Education. We now have two Care Leavers studying at Cambridge. Care Leavers at university continue to progress well and many continue to receive positive support from the Virtual School and Leaving Care Service.

#### 9.24 Attendance and Exclusions

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

9.25 The attendance figures for 2017 demonstrate an increase in performance over the past year. 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 unaccompanied minors coming into care in year 11 without notice and without an immediate school place.

9.26 As in previous years there were no permanent exclusions during 2016-17. This reflects the work the Virtual School undertakes directly with schools, social workers and carers in developing strategies to avoid permanent exclusion. The Virtual School works intensively to improve attendance, engagement and behaviour for learning, however, given that the majority of the care population are adolescents, who often have a poor education record prior to entering the care system this is an issue of continued challenge and focus. 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.

## **10. LAC ASSIST SERVICE**

- 10.1 The impetus in creating the LAC Assist Team and this invest to save delivery model, which commenced in April 2017, was to develop additional strategies to working with some of the most challenging children and young people who are at greatest risk of experiencing placement breakdowns and being placed in the highest cost residential units and semi-independent accommodation. The aims of the service are 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. The service priorities are 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. The team provides intensive support which mirrors that provided by the Family Assist model which was highly praised by Ofsted inspectors.
- 10.2 The team is currently working with 20 children ranging in ages from 0 to over 20 years old. The work ranges from stabilising existing placements, stepping down the level of semi-independent support towards independent living and working with young people in residential placements. The team has successfully engaged with all of the children and young people referred to them and have achieved a number of positive outcomes including improved communication and contact, adherence to boundaries and school attendance and reduced risky behaviours such as going missing which in turn improve placement stability. Outcomes have included a child who had been in care long term, with a high frequency of missing incidents moving back to the care of his father and re-engaging with education, a baby being placed with his father and avoiding long term care and adoption, a 17-year-old moving to a lower level of supported independent living accommodation, a 15-year-old moving out of a placement costing £4000 per week to the care of his mother and a young person who was living in a high cost residential setting who has successfully stepped down to semi-independent accommodation. There has been a range of positive feedback from parents and professionals testifying to the beneficial impact of the intensive, flexible and skilled approach offered by LAC Assist practitioners, highlighting the difference made through building trusting and respectful relationships with complex and previously hard to reach young people.
- 10.3 Within 6 months of operating at October 2017 this invest to save model was contributing to savings totalling £276k which is 47.9% of the total yearly requirement, and is predicted to save £530k at financial year end. This is just below target for the first 2 quarters, but reflects a team only 6 months into

operation and the need to ensure any proposed moves for children and young people are appropriately paced and in their best interests.

## **11. PLACEMENTS STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

- 11.1 Following internal audit recommendations to develop a placement strategy, officers across Children's Services directorate have been working collaboratively to develop a transformational placement strategy that will strengthen practice, increase quality and contribute to the savings agenda.
- 11.2 A series of strategic projects over the next two years have been co-developed through market research, data analysis, extensive stakeholder engagement, and project scoping. This process has enabled strategic themes to be targeted directly to local priorities and initial gains include:

**The delivery of alternative accommodation solutions, creating a more child centred approach and deliver greater efficiencies:** Children's Services has been working with Housing Solutions to secure a new accommodation option for care leavers with low support needs (for example older former-UASC who are still awaiting their immigration decision and/or young people who are attending university). Floating support will be provided to young people at 1a Shepherds Bush Road from May 2018, reducing dependency on out of borough placements, commissioned through spot purchase arrangements.

**EDT and out of hour's: revised processes and systems to support:** Following the repurposing of St. Marks residential home (a resource owned by Kensington and Chelsea previously utilised for emergency placements, often out of hours) in June 2017, the emergency duty team implemented an alternative placement protocol to manage the need for placements outside core hours. The revised emergency placement strategy, and the use of alternative placements (including foster care and semi-independent accommodation), has resulted in more children and young people accessing more appropriate placements based on the needs of the individual. The programme has also led to the development of an out of hours' support offer for foster carers. This will provide greater support to carers and enhance placement stability.

**Developing an enhanced fostering service, reducing the need for residential placements:** This programme will develop an enhanced, targeted, in-house fostering service that will be capable of supporting more complex young people, through a sustainable, planned and person-centred approach. Children's Commissioning have been working with the business intelligence function to develop a better understanding of the applicable evidence-based interventions and associated theory of change. It is suggested that the enhanced fostering model 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. A task and finish group has been established to review the evidence and develop a business case.

- 11.3 The next step would be to approve a set of priorities for 2018-19 and undertake detailed financial analysis of the savings potential of each strategic theme, and agree a timetable for delivery.

## **12. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION**

- 12.1 Hammersmith and Fulham offers an extensive programme of participation for both 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 have organised a variety of engagement activities over the past year, including:

**Looked After Children and Care Leaver's Activities** – The Children in Care Council (CICC) continues to progress well. The Children's Rights Service (CRS) have been supporting a group that meet regularly every month and numbers fluctuate between 5-10 persons. The CRS also supports a virtual group running alongside the group able to attend meetings and that group consists of around another 10 persons too. The CICC offers an opportunity to meet with other children and young people in care and those that are care leavers to raise service delivery issues that will affect this cohort. The group exists to promote the active participation to children and young people supported by the council who want a say in how decisions are made, what type of services exist and are being developed and just as importantly participate in those council activities that affect them. The Corporate Parenting Board meetings include several members of the CICC who have raised a number of issues over the last year with the Board. These have resulted in a number of changes such as 16-18 year olds no longer paying service charges in hostels provisions and improving Wi-Fi availability within the hostels. The CICC is active in reaching out to children and young people not just resident in the borough but more widely throughout the UK. However, an identified area of improvement is how we shape the Corporate Parenting Board to include younger Looked After Children rather than primarily Care Leavers and that the service developments arising from the Board discussions in turn also have a focus on younger children.

**Involvement in recruitment / 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** - The Children in Care Council has worked 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. Four quarterly thematic consultations have been conducted with children and young people during 2016-17 based on the following topics: The Voice of the Child, What's Education Like for Me, Housing, Having a Say on Health. Additionally, an overview survey was completed in the summer addressing the key aspects of being in care. Each of these consultations have resulted in detailed reports which are presented at Corporate Parenting Boards and the findings and young people's recommendations feed into the service development plan.

**Enrichment Programme** – The Virtual School has continued to run a wide range of activities specifically for Looked After Children, Foster Carers and Care Leavers during 2016-17. The projects are run in conjunction with partners including the Lyric Theatre, the BBC, Tate Modern, the Arvon Foundation and Imperial College. Projects have included film making, a writing residential in Yorkshire, musical performance at the Royal Albert Hall and art and design at the Wellcome Collection. One child said of their experience at a project ran at the Tate - "It makes a difference to me because it's relaxing. It also calms me down if I am upset...you feel a lot better when you have done something amazing. And it makes you feel good about yourself". In addition, the Virtual School ran a residential at Jamie's Farm specifically for Hammersmith and Fulham female Care Leavers to address self-esteem, goal setting and identity.

- 12.3 Further developments taking place in 2017-18 include the develop and launch of the Peer Mentoring Scheme called "Aspire, Believe and Achieve" which matches older Care Leavers to support and guide younger children in care to run an 18-week programme including a residential with a focus on aspirations and achievements. Members of the Children in Care Council have developed this programme and a number have expressed an interest in providing mentoring to younger children in care. A group specifically for young care leavers who are parents or expectant parents called will launch in December 2017 and aims to provide both parenting support, reduce isolation through meeting other parents and enable them to voice issues of concern regarding services for this specific group of Care Leavers.

### **13. OUTCOMES FOR CARE LEAVERS**

- 13.1 At the end of March 2017 there were 189 Care Leavers within the service, the highest number in recent years. 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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 Hammersmith & Fulham had 38 UASC an increase from 26 at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 and 22 at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

As at 31st March	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
LBHF	162	162	163	160	170	189
RBKC	135	140	131	130	147	142
WCC	158	160	160	160	166	166

**Table 12: Total number of Care Leavers supported (aged 18-25) at year ending 31st March**

- 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 a particular emphasis on securing settled accommodation and appropriate education, training and employment (EET). The Local Authority has a duty towards eligible and 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.
- 13.3 The report of the National Audit Office to the Government in July 2015 on Care Leavers transition to adulthood identified that Care Leavers' life experiences can include social exclusion, unemployment, health problems or ending up in custody. They recommended the need for a targeted approach, integrated working and the evaluation of data in respect of impact.
- 13.4 Since 2011 a former care leaver over the age of 21, but under 25, and closed to the service is able to return to ask for their case to be reopened in order to complete a course of EET up to the level of a first degree. The legislative changes arising from the Children and Social Work Act 2017 extends this to include that they can return to seek advice, support and the allocation of a Personal Advisor up until the age of 25 irrespective of whether they are in education and if they are NEET. Care Leavers can opt out of this but have the freedom to request support at a subsequent stage. Projections indicate that this could lead to an additional 108 Care Leavers aged 21-25 years open to the service by 2020-21, albeit some may not wish to receive the full duties or may choose to fully opt out.
- 13.5 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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, 74% of care leavers were in education, employment or training (those not included young parents, those in psychiatric units and those in custody) compared with 71% at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. The number of Care Leavers attending university remains positive (29 during 2016-17 compared with 25

during 2015-16 with 6 commencing in Autumn 2017), 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 1<sup>st</sup> Class Honours in Engineering. Current degrees range from Medicine, Engineering, Law, HR, Pharmaceutical Science, English Literature, Natural Sciences and International Tourism.

- 13.6 A key priority is improving the availability, choice and promotion of good quality apprenticeships and employment for Care Leavers and is an area we want to further improve upon. The Virtual School and Leaving Care 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 Worker and individualised packages to support Care Leavers in accessing and sustaining employment and training, and Hammersmith and Fulham have recently appointed a Post 16 EET Co-ordinator. The key priorities for this new role 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. The post intends to be enterprising and take account of the wealth of businesses located within the borough. Current apprenticeships for Care Leavers include with British Rail, Lloyds TSB, the NHS, Royal Mail, as a trainee chef with The Lyric, in Hairdressing and within Hammersmith and Fulham as a Youth Voice apprentice within Early Help.
- 13.7 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.
- 13.8 At the end of March 2017 77% of Care Leavers were in suitable accommodation, a reduction from 81% at the same point in 2016. The majority not in suitable accommodation were either in custody or had disengaged from the service. There were no Care Leavers evicted from their final stage accommodation during 2016-17.
- 13.9 From April 2017 Hammersmith and Fulham began to financially support Care Leavers who are liable to pay council tax charges until they reach 25 years. Hammersmith and Fulham 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.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000**  
**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT**

None.