

Corporate Parenting Panel

AGENDA

DATE: Tuesday 14 January 2020

TIME: 6.00 pm

VENUE: Committee Room 5, Harrow Civic Centre, Station Road, Harrow, HA1 2XY

MEMBERSHIP (Quorum 3)

Chair: Councillor Angella Murphy-Strachan

Councillors:

Sue Anderson
Christine Robson
Chloe Smith

Janet Mote (VC)
Lynda Seymour

Non-Voting Advisory Member:

Valerie Griffin

Reserve Members:

1. Simon Brown
2. Dean Gilligan
3. Rekha Shah
4. Maxine Henson

1. Dr Lesline Lewinson
2. Chetna Halai

Contact: Nikoleta Nikolova, Senior Democratic and Electoral Services Officer
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Useful Information

Meeting details:

This meeting is open to the press and public.

Directions to the Civic Centre can be found at:
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Agenda publication date: Tuesday 31 December 2019

AGENDA - PART I

1. ATTENDANCE BY RESERVE MEMBERS

To note the attendance at this meeting of any duly appointed Reserve Members.

Reserve Members may attend meetings:-

- (i) to take the place of an ordinary Member for whom they are a reserve;
- (ii) where the ordinary Member will be absent for the whole of the meeting; and
- (iii) the meeting notes at the start of the meeting at the item 'Reserves' that the Reserve Member is or will be attending as a reserve;
- (iv) if a Reserve Member whose intention to attend has been noted arrives after the commencement of the meeting, then that Reserve Member can only act as a Member from the start of the next item of business on the agenda after his/her arrival.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary or non pecuniary interests, arising from business to be transacted at this meeting, from:

- (a) all Members of the Panel;
- (b) all other Members present.

3. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 12)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2019 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS *

To receive any public questions received in accordance with paragraph 16 of the Executive Procedure Rules.

Questions will be asked in the order in which they were received. There will be a time limit of 15 minutes for the asking and answering of public questions.

[The deadline for receipt of public questions is 3.00 pm, 9 January 2020. Questions should be sent to publicquestions@harrow.gov.uk

No person may submit more than one question].

5. PETITIONS

To receive petitions (if any) submitted by members of the public/Councillors under the provisions of Executive Procedure Rule 47 (Part 4D of the Constitution).

6. DEPUTATIONS

To receive deputations (if any) under the provisions of Executive Procedure Rule 48 (Part 4D of the Constitution).

7. CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS - DISCUSSION

Verbal report from the Head of Corporate Parenting.

8. INFORMATION REPORT: BEING A CORPORATE PARENT - LGA CORPORATE PARENTING RESOURCE PACK (Pages 13 - 44)

Report from the Corporate Director of People

9. INFORMATION REPORT: HARROW CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER HEALTH (CLA) REPORT (Pages 45 - 48)

Report from the Associate Director of Children, Central and North West London

10. INFORMATION REPORT: ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE (Pages 49 - 76)

Report from the Corporate Director of People

11. INFORMATION REPORT: VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEADTEACHER'S END OF ACADEMIC YEAR REPORT 2018 - 2019 (Pages 77 - 96)

Report from the Corporate Director of People

12. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Which cannot otherwise be dealt with.

AGENDA - PART II - Nil

*** DATA PROTECTION ACT NOTICE**

The Council will audio record item 4 (Public Questions) and will place the audio recording on the Council's website, which will be accessible to all.

[**Note:** The questions and answers will not be reproduced in the minutes.]

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES

2 OCTOBER 2019

Chair:	* Councillor Janet Mote	
Councillors:	* Sue Anderson	* Lynda Seymour
	* Simon Brown (1)	* Chloe Smith
	* Christine Robson	
Non-Voting Advisory Member:	* Valerie Griffin	Foster Carer
In attendance: (Officers)	Paul Hewitt	Corporate Director, People
	Peter Tolley	Divisional Director, Children and Young People
	Barbara Houston	Head of Service, Corporate Parenting
	David Harrington	Head of Business Intelligence, Resources
	Mellina Williamson-Taylor	Headteacher, Harrow Virtual School
	Anupameya Jain	Acting Assistant Head Teacher, Virtual School
	Joanne Tortipidis	Senior Education Officer
	Laurie Ward	Specialist Nurse for Children Looked After, Harrow
	Teresa Chisholm	CNWL

* Denotes Member present
 (1) Denotes category of Reserve Member

55. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Members:-

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Angella Murphy-Strachan

Councillor Simon Brown

56. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interest made by Members.

57. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2019, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

58. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

59. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions had been received.

60. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Executive Procedure Rule 48 (Part 4D of the Constitution).

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

61. Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019/21

Peter Tolley (Divisional Director, Children and Young People Service) introduced the report which set out details of the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2019/21, explaining that the Panel was being asked to make a recommendation to Cabinet to approve the strategy set out in the report. The Strategy outlined the Council's strategic framework and key priorities relating to CLAs in Harrow in order to ensure they were provided with stable placements, support and education.

Following questions and comments from the Panel, officers advised that:

- The principles of corporate parenting outlined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 had placed explicit emphasis on the statutory responsibilities of corporate parenting, particularly in relation to care leavers.

- A report focusing specifically on the Council's Participation Strategy outlining the Council's engagement plans with young people would be presented to the Panel at a separate meeting.
- A Children Looked After (CLA) event was planned during the autumn half-term at the Hive Stadium, providing an opportunity to meet young people. An invitation was extended to members and officers to attend.
- Recent training on corporate parenting had been delivered to elected members. The training was annually refreshed to ensure members were kept abreast of the latest developments.
- A number of minor oversights had been made to the content of the report presented to the Panel. It was agreed that the amendments be made prior to presenting the report to Cabinet.

Resolved to RECOMMEND:

That the Cabinet be recommended to approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019/21, subject to agreed adjustments in content.

RESOLVED ITEMS

62. Children Looked After and Care leavers - discussion

At the invitation of the Chair, Barbara Houston (Head of Corporate Parenting) opened the discussion. The Panel was joined by three young people and their social workers who shared feedback and experiences as care leavers from the Council's corporate parenting services. The Panel welcomed the young people's views, spotlighting specifically on the growth in confidence and achievements made as well as commending the invaluable support and professionalism provided by the social workers.

A key point raised in the ensued discussion revolved around the beneficial impact of having a constant, long-term social worker as a key factor in providing continuous support. The young people commented on the difference it had made to their development through enabling a strong, stable and trusting relationship and praised their respective social workers.

Spotlighting on the matter further, officers advised that support was now available for young people potentially up to the age of 25 and that consistency of social worker remained important throughout. Acknowledging the young people's comments, officers advised that these would be taken into account going forward.

The Panel noted the improvement in corporate parenting services over the years, the positive impact it had made and the continuous work undertaken by Harrow Council in investing in children and young people through the range of services it offered. The Panel thanked the young people and social workers for sharing their experience and feedback.

RESOLVED: That the discussion be noted.

63. Children's Services, IRO Annual Report 2018/19

Barbara Houston (Head of Corporate Parenting Services) introduced the report which set out the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report for 2018/19. The role of the Independent Reviewing Officers was to review care plans for looked after children and young people to ensure the local authority provided quality service. Key messages in the report included the population range of looked after children, caseloads and details of reviews.

Following questions and comments from members, an officer advised that:

- A total of 525 reviews were completed between 2018 and 2019, all of which within the required timescales.
- 3.7% of children and young people chose not to participate in any reviews for the year ending 31 March 2019. This was likely due to challenging behaviour and a feeling of disengagement from the process.
- While majority of CLAs returned to live with parents or were adopted, a high proportion of permanency outcomes (35.6%) also referred to “care ceased for any other reason” (p.32 of report Acknowledging the vagueness of the outcome, officers explained that this was due to categorisation imposed by the Department for Education and agreed to plan to provide a more detailed breakdown to the Panel for the next IRO Annual Report.
- Looked after children and young people were being kept informed of their entitlements, including information about what the local authority was required to provide in terms of costs for education and training.
- The Panel commented on the useful explanation provided in the report over the professional profile of the IRO. It was noted the IROs served a vital role in corporate parenting through the provision of valuable assurance and constructive criticism of the care planning services but also in terms of acting as a consistent communication link between the young people and the Council.

The Panel thanked officers for the report and endorsed the key role provided by IROs in providing quality assurance in the robustness of the existing system.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

64. Information report - Activity and performance

David Harrington (Head of Business Intelligence) introduced the report which set out activity for CLAs and care leavers as well as provisional performance position for Q1 2019/20.

Following questions and comments from members, an officer advised that:

- Data presented in report was for Q1, covering the period up to June 2019, with Q2 data only recently completed. Although a number of indicators were in red, the Panel was assured that the Council was on target to achieve the expected performance results. It was also noted that performance indicators were only an introduction to the subject of CLAs, with more detailed, actionable information provided to the specific teams.
- Long term stability of placements was under target but in line with statistical neighbours and moving in the right direction.
- The number of children and young people going missing during placements remained high and was above the statistical neighbour average. While the number of CLAs in the borough was relatively small, majority of them came with a range of challenging circumstances. The Panel was assured that addressing the problem remained a key focus for Children Services, with regular meetings being held to discuss ongoing concerns with repeat offenders as well as considering ways of disrupting cases of suspected exploitation.
- Persistent school absences remained high and above the statistical average.
- Health checks were progressing well but remained behind target. It was expected that numbers would accelerate by the end of the year.
- Figures on educational attainment in key stages demonstrated a drop from 45.5 to 33% in 2017/18. However, it was explained that the figures were based on a small cohort of children and as a result tended to fluctuate. Instead, members were asked to consider the overarching complexity of care needs.
- A number of out of borough placements had been made as a result of the individual circumstances of some children. Officers agreed to provide a breakdown on some of the indicators used between out and in-borough children for next meeting.
- Spotlighting on the Council's strong engagement with community partners and agencies to address missing children, officers clarified that one of the organisations listed - St Giles (reference p.13 of the report) – was a pan-London charity providing a range of services to vulnerable children and adults.

- A section in the report seemed to suggest that the proportion of placements in 'secure units, children's homes and hostels' was higher in Harrow compared to the rest of England. It was explained that this was due to the Department for Education categorisation and included young people living in semi-independent accommodation. It was clarified that there were no Harrow children currently in welfare secure placements. Officers agreed to provide a detailed breakdown of the numbers.
- Further details on categorisation of "other placements in the community" to be provided at next appropriate meeting for further reassurance. It was noted that some of the smaller categories were not helpful as they didn't allow for like for like comparison.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

65. Information report - Harrow Children Looked After Health (CLA) Report

Laurie Ward (Specialist nurse for Children Looked After, Harrow Westmead Clinic) introduced the report and outlined key performance indicators on the delivery of health services to Harrow's CLA for the period March – April 2019.

Following questions and comments from Members, she advised that:

- Good relationship between the Council's social services team and, Harrow CCG continued, including regular attendance of strategic and partnership meetings in order to best support the health needs of children looked after.
- The Annual Report for 2018/19 had been completed.
- A Peer Review of the CLA Health Team was carried out from CNWL and positive feedback was received.
- An article by the Specialist Nurse and Designated Doctor on understanding and improving outcomes for asylum seekers had been published in the July 2019 edition of the Adoption and Fostering Journal. A copy would be circulated to members and offices for information.
- A number of positive comments and learning points had been raised by children following a recently held Voice of Child assessment event.
- Training on a recent Serious Case Review, relating to a Harrow looked after child placed in Lewisham Council, was attended by the Named Nurse. The Lewisham Safeguarding Board had completed the review, resulting in a number of learning points for the Council and other agencies. A summary of the report would be shared with the Panel for information.

The Chair thanked Ms Ward for her report. Members commended the CLA Health Team for their valuable contributions, continuous support and expertise provided to the Council.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

66. Information report - Harrow Virtual School: Headteacher's Enrichment Report 2018/2019

Mellina Williamson-Taylor (Head Teacher, Harrow Virtual School), Anu Jain (Acting Assistant Head Teacher) and Joanne Tortipidis (Senior Education Officer) introduced the item, which provided the Panel with an overview of the Virtual School's Enrichment Programme and its impact on CLAs and Care Leavers. It was noted that this was the first time the Enrichment Report was being presented in its entirety.

Following questions and comments from members, the officers stated that:

- Enrichment activities had had a threefold increase over the 2018/19 academic year with a range of activities offered to Harrow CLAs.
- The increased staff capacity had had a positive impact on the Team's performance and success rates. Additionally, it had made better use made of funding from the Sir John Lyon Foundation and many activities had been shared with other neighbouring authorities.
- A number of success stories were attributed to the positive impact of the Virtual School's Enrichment Programme. A key highlight of the programme was the difference it had made to young people's confidence as well as the strong relationship maintained between the Virtual School Team and the core group of looked after children over time.

Members thanked officers for their report and noted that it was good to meet more members of the Virtual School Team. The Panel was particularly complimentary on the emotional and mental health support provided by the Team to looked after children and young people, which it felt was evident throughout the report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

67. Exam Results (verbal update)

Mellina Williamson-Taylor (Head Teacher, Harrow Virtual School) delivered a verbal update on the Harrow Virtual School exam results for 2019. In stating that all results were on target and as expected, she highlighted the following:

- Provisional results were available for Key Stage 4.
- Pupils in Year 6 met or exceeded expectations in their SATs.

- Two children who had been in care for a year or longer had passed their GCSEs. These ranged from 5 to 7 subjects, including English and Maths. This was an excellent achievement, indicative of the children's hard work and aspirations.
- Further work was required in Key Stage 3 to avoid a possible regression in the lead up to Key Stage 4.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update be noted.

68. Any Other Urgent Business

RESOLVED: That there was no other urgent business.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 7.35 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JANET MOTE
Chair



REPORT FOR:	Corporate Parenting Panel
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Date of Meeting:	14 th January 2020
Subject:	Being a Corporate Parent – LGA Corporate Parenting Resource Pack
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Paul Hewitt, Corporate Director of People
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Christine Robson, Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	No
Wards affected:	None - This is an Information report
Enclosures:	LGA Corporate Parenting Resource Pack (Published November 2019)

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

In November 2019, the Local Government Association (LGA) published the *Corporate parenting resource pack*. This pack aims to help local authorities to fulfil the role of corporate parents – one of the most important jobs that councils do – as effectively as possible.

RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted

Reason for Recommendation: To keep the Panel updated on their responsibility to ensure that Harrow is meeting its corporate parenting duties towards children in care and care leavers.

Section 2 – Report

See the attached guidance which was published by the LGA.

Key Points:

1. **An introduction to corporate parenting**, including key sources of information to consider.
2. **Updates to legislation and practice**. In particular the Children and Social Work Act 2017 defines the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure secure, nurturing and positive experiences for looked-after children and young people and care leavers.
3. **Key lines of enquiry for all councillors** to support councillors to think holistically about the needs of looked-after children and care leavers and our ambitions for them.

Options considered

Not applicable as this is an information report.

Risk Management Implications

The Children's Services Risk Register includes corporate parenting responsibilities.

Risk included on Directorate risk register? Yes

Separate risk register in place? No

Legal Implications

Not applicable as this is an information report.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable as this is an information report.

Council Priorities

Supporting Those Most in Need

- Children and young people are given the opportunities to have the best start in life and families can thrive

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Not applicable – for information only

Name: Paul Hewitt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Corporate Director
Date: 30/12/2019		

MANDATORY	
Ward Councillors notified:	NO, this is an information report only
EqIA carried out:	NO
EqIA cleared by:	N/A information report only

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Jacinta Kane, Head of Service, Corporate Parenting
Tel - 020 8736 6617
Email - Jacinta.Kane@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers:

- Attached paper – LGA Corporate parenting resource pack

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Corporate parenting resource pack

Foreword

Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs that councils do and when a child, for whatever reason, can't safely stay at home, it is up to us as the local authority to step in and give them the care, support and stability that they deserve. This isn't just up to the lead member or director of children's services – we need everyone looking out for our most vulnerable children and young people, and every councillor has a role to play in embedding the corporate parenting principles and doing all they can to support children in care to live meaningful and fulfilling lives. This pack aims to help them fulfil that role as effectively as possible.

Being a corporate parent means doing everything we can for every child in the council's care – and every care leaver – to give them the opportunities that other children get. This covers everything from keeping an eye on their progress at school, to looking after their health and wellbeing, to preparing them for life as independent adults – and supporting them when they get there. We need to be ambitious for the children in our care, encouraging them to dream big and take chances even if they don't feel like that's been an option in the past. We need to facilitate and empower our children in care to make a smooth and stable transition to adulthood and enable them to have a say in key decisions that affect their lives.

It's also about the smaller things that make life more fulfilling. It's about making sure children receive birthday cards, are rewarded when they do well (and supported when they don't), get to take part in the activities they enjoy and have new experiences. It's about making sure someone's on the end of a phone when a care leaver is having a hard day at work or university, or is there to help them navigate an application form. It's about doing the things you'd do for your own children.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for looked-after children and young people, and care leavers. Councils across the country already do a fantastic job of this, and we've highlighted some examples in this pack. We'd be delighted to hear of any others to add to our online good practice database for others to learn from, to make sure every councillor has the tools they need to be a good corporate parent.

Many of the children who come into our care will face more challenges before they reach adulthood than any child should have to. It is our duty and our privilege to fight their corner and give them every opportunity to reach their potential.

Councillor Judith Blake

Chair, LGA Children and Young People Board

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Corporate parenting

An introduction

What is a corporate parent?

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 says that when a child or young person comes into the care of the local authority, or is under 25 and was looked-after by the authority for at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday, the authority becomes their corporate parent. This means that they should:

- act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
- encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account
- make sure they have access to services
- make sure children and young people are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work
- promote high aspirations and try to secure the best outcomes for them
- prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

As corporate parents, it's every councillor's responsibility to make sure that the council is meeting these duties towards children in care and care leavers. Children can be in care in a range of different settings, with the authority acting as corporate parent to all of them. This includes foster care, children's homes, secure children's homes, young offender institutions, secure training centres and kinship care.

Every councillor and officer within a council has a responsibility to act for those children and young people as a parent would for their own child.

Lead members, those on corporate parenting panels, and overview and scrutiny committees will have particular responsibilities, but for all councillors, this is where your role as the eyes and ears of the community is particularly important.

Are there youth services in your ward that provide a vital service for looked-after children, and if so, how are you supporting them? Is there a children's home or care leaver accommodation in your ward? If foster carers in your ward provide care for disabled children, do they need any help to improve accessibility of local services? What feedback are you getting from residents?

How are you helping to dispel myths and challenge any stigma and discrimination faced by children and young people in care and care leavers? It's important to remember the need to protect the privacy of these children and young people, so work with officers to find out how you can best provide support.

For both officers and councillors, being a corporate parent means that when any service is being reviewed that could impact upon looked-after children and care leavers, or when you're hearing feedback from, or reports about, children in the council's care, consider:

“What if this were my child?”

What can we do to put this right?”

Childhood is a time of huge potential and development. As corporate parents, all councillors will be committed to ensuring the fundamentals are in place for every child and young person in their care – just as any loving parent would. How does a child in care know that they are loved and they matter; who notices and encourages all the great things about them; and to whom can they turn when they are unhappy or want help to be heard? These are some starter questions for exploring how your council does its best for children in care and care leavers.

It is important to remember that, just as not all children are the same, looked-after children and care leavers are not one homogenous group. While it is true that some will have experienced trauma and disruption in their lives and need specialist support to cope with those experiences, others will have adjusted well to being in care and may be flourishing. Periods of stability can be followed by challenges, so councillors need to recognise the uniqueness of the children in their care, and make sure each child is getting what they need to thrive and be happy.

Corporate parenting panel

As corporate parents, all councillors should seek to stay informed about children in the council's care, and care leavers. However, the establishment of a corporate parenting panel can provide a useful forum for regular, detailed discussion of issues, and a positive link with children in care councils and other forums. Members of the corporate parenting panel can also use their position to raise awareness of the role amongst colleagues, and provide support to the lead member for children's services.

It can be helpful to include senior officers on the panel, including from areas such as education, health and housing that have a significant impact on children in care and care leavers. In two-tier areas, consider how district council colleagues can be included.

The corporate parenting panel does not replace the duty of all councillors; members of all committees have a responsibility to consider how reports before them impact upon children in care and care leavers.

Working with partners

Under the Children Act 2004, local authorities have a duty to promote cooperation between 'relevant partners', including the police, the NHS and education providers, while those partners have a duty to cooperate with the local authority in turn. Guidance on the Act highlights that corporate parenting is a 'task [that] must be shared by the whole local authority and partner agencies'.¹ Councils should consider how their partners can help them to deliver their corporate parenting role, especially in relation to the provision of services. The NHS has a responsibility to make sure looked-after children receive the physical and mental health support that they need, for example, while close working between schools and the virtual school head (VSH) can help to improve outcomes for children and young people in care.

Information and data

The lead member for children's services and those on the corporate parenting panel should receive regular progress reports with regard to looked-after children and care leavers, while data will be available to all members through reports presented to Full Council and scrutiny committees.

Data will be able to provide an overview of medium-to-long-term trends, but statistics on their own are not enough. Make sure that data is presented with the necessary context and explanations – for example, if fewer children are going missing, is this the result of a positive intervention that should be continued? Or are there issues with reporting?

Also look for direction of travel, and comparisons with your statistical neighbours and national data to see where the council is performing well and what could be better.

However, as any parent will know, situations with children and young people change quickly, and statistics will not provide all the real-time data that you need. The corporate parenting panel should keep in close contact with the children in care council, independent reviewing officers (IROs), children's rights and advocacy services and the director of children's services (DCS) to make sure they're receiving up-to-date information and can respond quickly if needed.

Listening to children and young people

Local authorities have wide-ranging duties to give due consideration to the wishes and feelings of children in care and care leavers. This applies to decisions and actions affecting children and young people as individuals, and to wider matters concerning children in care and care leavers. As corporate parents, all councillors should take an active interest in how well children in care and care leavers are listened to and how this is acted upon. Care experienced people of all ages have valuable, direct knowledge of how it feels to be in care, and what needs to change for the better.

Safeguarding

Local authorities have a responsibility for safeguarding all children², but there are certain risks that particularly affect children in care and care leavers that corporate parents need to be aware of.

Children in care are three times more likely to go missing than children not in care.³ Processes must be in place to report missing children, take the appropriate action to find the child, and then to follow up with them when they are found to establish the underlying reasons for going missing.

Corporate parents should be monitoring instances of children going missing, and how regularly independent return interviews are taking place (including for children placed out of area), as well as any emerging themes. The local authority should also collaborate and share information and intelligence with other countries if a child in care goes missing and is thought to have travelled abroad.

Child victims of modern slavery are particularly vulnerable, with nearly two thirds of trafficked children in local authority care going missing at some point; some within just one week.⁴ Councils need to make sure a strong multi-agency approach is in place to protect victims from further risk from their traffickers and preventing trafficking from taking place. In particular, there should be a clear understanding between the local authority and the police of roles in planning for this protection and responding if a trafficked child goes missing. Council representatives on local multi-agency safeguarding partnerships should make sure there is oversight of those arrangements, and monitor how well they are being implemented and reviewed.

Children in care are also disproportionately likely to be at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) than those in the general population, though it is important to remember that the vast majority of CSE victims are living at home. While those issues that led young people to need local authority care in the first place may increase their vulnerability to CSE, the experience of care itself can also be significant, especially if the child's placement lacks stability. Those at risk of CSE will need to have clear plans in place to protect them, and all social workers and partners should know how to spot signs of risk and deal with them appropriately.

There is also a growing threat of county lines and child criminal exploitation that children in care may be susceptible to due to increased levels of vulnerability.

In addition to ensuring plans are in place to safeguard young people, local authorities are encouraged through a national protocol⁵ to work in partnership and have effective mechanisms in place to support children in care and care leavers from being unnecessarily criminalised.

There is also a high proportion of children in care within the youth justice system, either at young offender institutions, training centres or secure children's homes. Local authorities are responsible for children in custody who are the subject of care orders, and all remanded children automatically attain looked-after status. Councils should therefore have systems and processes in place to support this group of young people who may be going through a challenging time.

Sufficiency

The council has a duty⁶ to ensure, as far as is reasonably possible, sufficient accommodation is available locally to meet the needs of looked-after children and care leavers. This can be directly provided, or commissioned provision. Councils should regularly review their position on this, and report on how they intend to meet the sufficiency duty. This will be a valuable source of information for corporate parents.

Foreign national children in care

As corporate parents, it can be useful for local authorities to be aware of how many children in care are foreign nationals and whether social workers have access to appropriate support and training to enable them to provide appropriate support to this group of children in care.

Sources of information

Children in Care Council and other feedback mechanisms

There should be mechanisms in place to hear from children in care, with this information being reported regularly to the corporate parenting panel. There may also be an annual report submitted to Full Council. The format for reporting should be discussed with children and young people; some may wish to meet with councillors to discuss issues face-to-face, some may prefer to use mediators, and others may prefer online methods.

This feedback can provide rich information to act upon to make sure children in care and care leavers are getting what they need – from concerns about how they're kept informed about their placements, to how often they can see any siblings they aren't placed with, right down to whether they're happy with their pocket money.

Independent reviewing officer annual report

Amongst other duties, IROs are responsible for making sure that the local authority, as a corporate parent, gives proper consideration and weight to children's wishes and feelings in their care plans, and that it genuinely responds to a child's needs.

The IRO manager should produce an annual report for the consideration of the corporate parenting panel, which should include areas of good practice, and areas for development. It should include commentary on issues including the participation of children and their parents, and whether any resource issues are putting the delivery of a good service to all looked-after children at risk.

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Joint health and wellbeing strategies (JHWSs) are developed by local leaders to enable the planning and commissioning of integrated services that meet the needs of their whole local community. They particularly work to reduce health inequalities and support the needs of vulnerable groups and individuals; the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

underpinning the JHWS should include specific consideration of children in care and care leavers. The strategy (or associated delivery plan) will include targets, actions and who is responsible for implementing those actions.

The JHWS will be agreed by the health and wellbeing board, which should also monitor its implementation. Board meetings should be public, as should the JHWS, reports and meeting minutes.

Performance reports

Reports should be published regularly updating on key indicators in relation to children in care, including direction of travel. These indicators are part of a nationally collected dataset reported to government, and include information on placement stability, outcomes for children in care and adoption. Your authority may also report on other indicators according to local priorities.

Key priorities to consider include:

- placement stability
- health data
- educational attainment
- proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training
- children in care being placed out of area or at a distance including overseas placements
- proportion of care leavers that the council has regular contact with
- availability of suitable housing for care leavers.

Further information on these points is included throughout this pack.

Performance reports should be publicly available and should also be presented to a locally agreed committee – for example the corporate parenting panel, the relevant scrutiny committee or cabinet.

Feedback from foster parents

Most children who are in care live with foster parents, and the quality and experience of those foster parents is key to delivering good outcomes for children. Each council will have different ways of gathering feedback from foster parents, including surveys and focus groups, along with different ways of reporting that feedback. The corporate parenting panel should receive updates on foster parent feedback, and this should be used to help inform support for foster parents, and to improve recruitment and retention.

The panel may also wish to consider ongoing input from foster carers by co-opting representatives onto the panel, or having regular meetings with carers to hear about experiences and receive feedback.

Stability Index

Stability for children in care, where they are in an appropriate placement that meets their needs, is an important element in helping them to secure positive outcomes. To help support improved placement stability, the Children's Commissioner has developed a Stability Index to measures three aspects of children's experiences of care – placement moves, school moves, and changes in social worker.

Updates to legislation and practice

National Quality Standards for children's homes

The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 set out nine Quality Standards which outline the aspirational and positive outcomes that all children's homes are expected to deliver.

These quality standards are:

- quality and purpose of care
- children's views, wishes and feelings
- education
- enjoyment and achievement
- health and wellbeing
- positive relationships
- protection of children
- leadership and management
- care planning.

Further information on each standard is outlined in the Department for Education's (DfE) 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations'.

New rules for out of area placements

Statutory guidance⁷ has strengthened the responsibilities of local authorities to notify other local authorities if they place a looked-after child within their area. Children's homes are also now required to notify their host local authority when a child is placed with them by another authority.

An 'out of area' placement is classified as one outside of the council's geographical boundary, but within an authority that it shares a boundary with. If a child is placed in an authority that doesn't share a geographical boundary with the placing authority, that is classed as an 'at a distance' placement.

A responsible officer should be formally appointed by the DCS to approve out of area placements; this will often be an assistant director. All at a distance placements must be signed off by the DCS. This does not apply where the placement is with the parent, a connected person or a foster carer approved by the responsible authority.

The child's IRO should always be consulted prior to an out of area placement being made, and the wishes of the child should be taken into account. The host authority should also be consulted in advance in the case of out of area and distant placements, and notified when the placement is made.

Staying put and staying close

'Staying put' is an arrangement that allows a looked-after child to continue to live with their foster carer after their 18th birthday, when they cease to be 'looked-after' by the local authority. This can take place where the council considers it appropriate, and both the young person and the carer want to enter a staying put arrangement.

A 'staying put' duty was introduced in the Children and Families Act 2014, which requires councils to monitor arrangements and provide advice and support (including

financial) to the foster parent and young person to facilitate the arrangement until the young person reaches 21. Guidance material has been produced (see references and further information).

A number of councils are trialling approaches to 'staying close' – a variant of staying put for young people leaving residential care – using funding from the DfE's Innovation Programme to enable care leavers to maintain links with their former children's home.

Sir Martin Narey's Independent Review of Residential Care

Sir Martin Narey was commissioned by the Prime Minister in 2015 to carry out an independent review of children's residential care.

The final report was published in July 2016 and contained 34 recommendations. These included ways to improve commissioning of places in children's homes, and to encourage development of the right sort of provision where it is needed.

Sir Martin also recommended a review of fostering provision, and the need for sharing of best practice across a range of areas.

Several areas of national policy were also singled out as needing review, including guidance around planning, the use of restraint, and the recording of criminal offences to avoid the unnecessary criminalisation of children in care. Changes to Ofsted inspections of children's homes and guidance were also recommended.

Finally, Sir Martin highlighted ways to improve staffing, including making sure social work students spent part of their placement within a children's home to make sure new staff are getting experience across the sector.

Independent review of foster care in England⁸

The DfE commissioned Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owens to look at the current state of foster care and how to improve the prospects of children in care. As part of the review there was a public call for evidence for a wide range of stakeholders to contribute. The review made 36 recommendations about how to improve outcomes for children in foster care including:

- ensuring that foster carers are supported and included in decision-making
- improving foster placement commissioning and matching
- greater stability and permanence for children and young people in foster care.

The Government published its response to the report in July 2018.⁹ This outlined the actions the Government intended to take to improve practice and the experience of children in foster care, including amending guidance and developing new tools and resources to support better commissioning.

Care Leaver Strategy 2016

The Government published a new Care Leaver Strategy in July 2016, entitled 'Keep on caring: Supporting young people from care to independence'.

The strategy strengthens the role of the corporate parent, paving the way for the provisions in the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Statutory guidance: Children who go missing from care

Statutory guidance was issued in January 2014 on children who run away or go missing from home or care.

The guidance highlights the need for a children's services authority to name a senior children's service manager as responsible for monitoring policies and performance relating to children who go missing from home or care. The responsible manager should understand the risks and issues facing missing children and review best practice in dealing with the issue.

Councils should agree a protocol, with the police and other partners, for dealing with children who run away or go missing in their area. Protocols should be agreed and reviewed regularly with all agencies and be scrutinised by local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Where appropriate, agreed protocols should also be in place with neighbouring authorities.

Statutory guidance: Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked after children

The Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on every children's services authority in England to appoint a virtual school head (VSH) – an officer employed to make sure that the council's duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked-after children is properly discharged. The VSH should also be an educational advocate for children in care and provide advice and guidance to support parents of previously looked after children.

This statutory guidance, issued in 2014 and updated in 2018, highlights that as corporate parents, councils should have high aspirations for the children they look after. The guidance outlines the ways in which authorities should work to close the attainment and progress gap between looked-after children and their peers, and to make sure that looked-after children have access to high quality education, including appropriate support for any special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The Children and Social Work Act 2017 extended the role of the VSH to previously looked-after children. For these children, the VSH should promote their educational achievement through the provision of information and advice to their parents, educators and others who the VSH considers necessary.

Statutory guidance: Health and wellbeing

Joint guidance from the DfE and Department of Health was issued to councils and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) in 2015 to support them to promote the physical, emotional and mental health of children in care.¹⁰ It emphasises that children in care should be proactively considered in the joint strategic needs assessment and when commissioning health services and advocates that children in care should never be refused a health-related service, including a mental health service, on the grounds of a placement being short-term or unplanned. CCGs and health authorities have a duty to respond to requests by councils to carry out health assessments for children in their care.

Statutory guidance: Special guardianship

Guidance was issued in January 2017 on special guardianship, outlining the issues local authorities should take into account when preparing reports for the court to apply for special guardianship orders. This includes information about the child's needs, and more detailed assessments of the child's relationship with, and the parenting capacity of, the prospective special guardian, both now and longer-term.

Children and Social Work Act 2017

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defines, for the first time in law, the role of corporate parents, in addition to expanding and extending support for care leavers, for example through the publication of a 'local offer for care leavers' and making personal advisers available for care leavers up to the age of 25.

The Act also signalled the introduction of a set of corporate parenting principles to support councils to adopt a positive culture for their children in care and care leavers.¹¹

The Act sets out revised arrangements for local multi-agency safeguarding partnerships to replace local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs). Under the new provisions, the local authority, CCG and the police have a shared responsibility to make arrangements for themselves and 'relevant agencies' to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area. These statutory partners should make sure that all appropriate agencies are involved meaningfully in the partnership, and in particular should look at the engagement of schools, including academies and free schools, which have a key role to play in safeguarding children and young people.

Foreign-national children and working with authorities overseas

The DfE has published non-statutory guidance for cases where a foreign-national child is taken into care, and when a local authority places a child in another country. The guidance emphasises the importance of notifying a country's consulate in the UK when a child who is a national of that country is taken into care (unless doing so would put the child at risk), and to seek permission from and notify the authorities of the other country when a child is placed abroad.

National protocol to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers

This protocol encourages councils to work with partner agencies to avoid the unnecessary criminalisation of children in care and care leavers through, for example, the use of restorative approaches, better understanding of the potential causes of offending and positive parenting in care.¹² The protocol covers all children in care, in all types of placement.

Non-statutory guidance:

Key lines of enquiry for all councillors

What are the characteristics of our cohort of children in care and care leavers?

Understanding the characteristics of children and young people is the first step to making sure that councils are able to act in their interests. The Children in Care team will have information on the children in the council's care, including:

- age and length of time in care
- where children are currently living
- number of children in foster care, children's homes or other settings (including residential schools, hospitals and custodial institutions)
- number of children awaiting adoption
- number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- placement stability
- accommodation and employment information about care leavers
- education information
- foreign national children in care.

The corporate parenting panel and children's scrutiny committee should also receive information about social worker caseloads, to make sure that these are manageable and social workers are able to dedicate sufficient time to children, regardless of their needs.

Find out how this information compares to that of other councils in your statistical group, and to the national picture, and look at direction of travel to help spot trends and areas of concern.

Everyone with a local authority email address has access to LG Inform¹³, which provides a rich source of data for use by councils.

Do all of our councillors and officers know about their corporate parenting responsibilities?

Every councillor should ideally have training on their corporate parenting role when first elected. It is every councillor's responsibility to consider how new plans and policies might affect children in care, and to ask questions to ensure that those children are getting the best care, support and protection.

There are certain departments within a council that this will be particularly important for, such as education, housing, leisure and skills, but every part of the council needs to consider how its work impacts on children in care and care leavers. Look at how business plans and reports are structured – are officers proactively considering the needs of children in the council's care, or could this be improved? How are the corporate parenting principles being applied?

Consider ways of raising awareness about the corporate parenting role, for example inviting all councillors to any celebration events, or inviting the children in care council to give feedback at Full Council or relevant committee meetings.

Do our partner agencies understand their role in supporting us as corporate parents?

The council has a duty, under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004, to promote cooperation between local partners to improve the wellbeing of young people in the area. This includes:

- physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing
- protection from harm and neglect
- education, training and recreation
- the contribution made by young people to society
- social and economic wellbeing.

Relevant partners include the police, probation services, the NHS, schools and further education providers.

The participation of partners in work to promote the wellbeing of all children and young people is vital, and it's important that they understand the specific needs of children in care so that this can be taken account of in their plans. For example, children in care are more likely to need support with their mental health, so colleagues in the NHS will need to consider this, while close working with the police to protect children who are at risk of going missing or being exposed to child exploitation is essential. The phrase 'it takes a village to raise a child' is pertinent here; the council alone cannot provide all the support that a child in care needs, and all local services have a responsibility to keep children safe and well.

Consider how existing partnership forums, such as local safeguarding partnerships, health and wellbeing boards and crime and disorder partnerships, are taking into account the needs of children in care in their plans, and consider whether other partners might wish to support your ambitions for children in care.

For example, local businesses might consider offering apprenticeships to children in care, or leisure facilities might be able to offer discounts or free memberships.

How are we giving children and young people the chance to express their views, wishes and feelings? How do we know those are being acted on?

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children Act 1989 state that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. Children should be involved in developing their care plans, and provided with advocates to help them do this wherever necessary. It might be useful to also consider information about how the rights of children in care are positively promoted and upheld.

Likewise, care leavers need to be integral to the development of their pathway plans. Social workers make the necessary arrangements for this to happen, and IROs should ensure children and young people are listened to, and their views taken seriously. IROs should provide feedback on how well this is happening.

What arrangements are in place for children to have access to independent advocates and how many take this up? How are concerns raised through this service reported?

Most councils have established children in care councils, comprising any looked-after children and care leavers who want to take part (though some councils hold a separate care leavers' forum, depending on what young people ask for); for councils that haven't done so, it is worth considering this or an alternative method of feedback that's appropriate for looked-after children in the area.

They should be able to set the agenda so that they can talk about what matters to them, and they should also decide how they would like to engage with the corporate parenting panel – whether that's through joint meetings, feeding back via a mediator, or something else.

Don't forget, however, that not all children will want to take part in group forums – there should be mechanisms set up to allow all children and young people to express their views in a way that they're comfortable with.

Also consider how to engage with children with special educational needs and disabilities, or those who may face cultural or language barriers to engaging in feedback processes. In some cases, there may be safeguarding concerns about children with particularly complex needs being asked to take part in certain ways of giving feedback – there should be sensitive discussions between the children's carers, advocates, the complex needs team, social workers and any other relevant professionals to find the best ways of engaging these children, who should still have the opportunity to say how they feel about their care.

Very young children may also find it harder to explain their wishes and feelings, and there will inevitably be children and young people who actively disengage from review meetings or feedback forums. Consider also those children placed out of area and at a distance. All looked-after children and care leavers have a right to be heard, and support must be put in place to give them that opportunity.

Review how feedback from children in care and care leavers is fed back to the whole council so that it can be factored into all relevant decisions – from housing and employment to education and public health.

Regardless of how feedback is collected, make sure that all children and young people (not just those who attend forums or participated in the feedback exercise) find out what has been done as a result of that feedback – show the young people that their voices are being heard, and changes are being made as a result.

How do we show children in our care that we have high aspirations for them?

Councils should be ambitious for every child in their care, working with and encouraging them to achieve their full potential, from overcoming early instability or trauma to progressing well in education, learning and training, to pursuing hobbies and developing their talents, depending on what's most appropriate for the individual child.

It's important to recognise that children in care are likely to have had very different experiences to their peers, therefore they might be at very different stages at school to other children of the same age. Additionally, in 2018, 55.5 per cent of children in care had a special educational need, compared to 14.6 per cent of all children.¹⁴ Providing the appropriate support can help children begin to overcome earlier trauma and disadvantage, and research shows that children in care achieve better educational outcomes than children in need who stay at home, thanks to the protective factor of that care.¹⁵ The VSH will keep the council updated with how looked-after children are progressing in school, what support is provided to those with learning difficulties, and what action is being taken to help them reach their potential.

Children and young people thrive on recognition and reward, and it's important to make sure that children in care receive this in the same way children in the rest of the population do. Award ceremonies, money for carers to take children for a celebration of a sports win, or a congratulations card from the lead member for a good school report or a special birthday will all help to reassure children that their efforts are recognised, supported and cared about.

As young people approach leaving care, they should be getting support from their social worker and a personal adviser to consider their future options. The VSH can make sure that young people are encouraged to think broadly and ambitiously about their options, and how to get there.

Are we providing stable environments for children in our care?

Stability for children and young people is linked to improved mental health and educational attainment.¹⁶ It also helps children to develop relationships, feel more secure and wanted, and build a sense of belonging.

That said, clearly statistics alone cannot be taken on face value. A child or young person should not stay in an unsuitable placement, while a change of social worker to one with a smaller caseload may ultimately be positive for the child – provided this is well managed.

Analysis by the Office of the Children's Commissioner found that one in ten children in care had two or more placement moves in 2017/18. The analysis also found that just over one in ten children in care had experienced a mid-year school move in the previous year, while, 27 per cent experienced two or more changes in social worker over the same time period.¹⁷

It's important that the council understands the reasons for any instability experienced by children, and takes action to limit this where it is not in their best interests, while recognising that some moves may be unavoidable.

What are we doing to look after the health and wellbeing of children in our care?

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment should include consideration of the needs of children in care and care leavers¹⁸, with an accompanying Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) in place to meet those needs and minimise inequalities. The health and wellbeing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the JHWS. Particular issues to look out for include:

- mental health services – children in care are four times more likely to have a mental health difficulty than children in the general population¹⁹
- sexual health and family planning services – a quarter of young women leaving care are pregnant, and nearly half become pregnant within two years²⁰
- drug and alcohol prevention services – a third of young people leaving care report problems with drugs or alcohol within a year.²¹

Do children and young people have good access to services to support with these, and other issues? How long do they need to wait for support?

It's important to remember that while many children in care will be happy and well-adjusted, some will have experienced significant trauma, others will have lived unstable home lives, and some may lack good support networks. It's the responsibility of councils, as corporate parents, to work hard to tackle those issues and support the children in their care as they work to overcome difficulties that most children in the general population might never have to deal with.

As corporate parents, councillors will want to challenge any stigma and discrimination faced by children in care and care leavers, and to avoid perpetuating negative stereotypes. It is important that councillors

believe in children and young people in care and care leavers, and fight their corner.

If a child has experienced one or more placement moves, check whether health records are being passed between carers so that things like regular dental check-ups and standard vaccinations aren't being missed. Looked-after children should receive an annual health assessment (every six months for under-fives)²², but make sure these are being carried out in a child-friendly way – some children find these intrusive and feel they are unnecessary, so make sure they understand why they are taking place and that they know their right to opt out. Pass on feedback about assessments to the CCG, which carries them out, and check whether this is being acted on.

Consider also issues like access to sports facilities and music lessons or other activities outside of school, which will contribute to a child's wellbeing and sense of belonging. What happens to these if a child changes placement? Are care leavers helped to keep accessing activities to support their wellbeing? And what is the local offer for care leavers?

A significant issue for looked-after children and care leavers is having a support network. If they aren't able to rely on family, and if they've experienced multiple placement or school moves, they might not have had a chance to build up a network of their own. Look at what's being done to help them develop relationships that will support them both now and when they leave care, and see what help is available locally – are there volunteer mentors or support groups, for example? All looked-after children should be offered the chance to have an independent visitor – a volunteer to befriend and support them consistently, providing a relationship with an adult who isn't their carer or social worker.

Having stable placements and social workers will also help children to feel more secure and help them learn to develop positive relationships.

It is important to respect the diversity and individual needs of children in care and care leavers, and to make sure that those needs are responded to appropriately. This includes catering for the cultural and religious needs of children, and support for children's emotional wellbeing including, for example, issues around gender identity and sexuality.

What are we doing to ensure that our children in care are not unnecessarily criminalised?

With the growth of child criminal exploitation and county lines, it is important that as corporate parents, councils are doing all that they can to prevent children in care from being coerced into criminal activity.

Children in care who have been in the care system for more than 12 months are five times more likely to offend than other children.²³

It is important to find out the proportion of children looked after by your authority that are involved in the youth justice system, and find out how this has been changing over time. Are things improving, or is there more work to be done? Have the types of offence changed, or the profile of young people involved? What arrangements are in place to support children in care to engage with restorative activities?

Research has also found children in care living in children's homes are being criminalised at excessively high rates compared to all other groups of children, including those in other types of care.²⁴ As a result children's homes and police are having to work closely to ensure incidents are dealt with more proportionally.

The council's corporate parenting panel should monitor the proportion of those in children's homes who are involved with the youth justice system, find out what arrangements are already in place to manage incidents in children's homes, and work with and support officers to find out if improvements can be made.

More information can be found in our 'Youth justice' resource pack for councillors.

What are outcomes like for our care leavers?

As a corporate parent, it's up to you to make sure that care leavers are getting the support they need to lead successful lives.

Care leavers can face a wide variety of challenges and, depending on their individual needs, they might need the support of their personal adviser and social worker to overcome their own hurdles to progress – and they need to know that support is there as they make the transition from a looked-after child to independent living.

Each young person's pathway plan should consider their options for when they've left school, whether they want to go on to further study or straight into the world of work. Work should start on this plan well in advance of a young person leaving care.

For those aiming for university and further education, children in care should be getting support at school to help them get achieve the best results they're capable of, and the VSH will know what interventions are working best or could be expanded. It's also important to look at pathway plans to see how children are reassured about university – it's a scary prospect for most young people, so care leavers need to know how they'll manage their finances, and where they can go during the long university holidays.

For those that don't go on to university, how many are not in education, employment or training – and what is the council doing to improve that?

Are the statistics getting better or worse? Find out how care leavers factor into your authority's recruitment, skills and economic development strategies, including access to apprenticeships and work experience.

The availability of suitable housing is a key issue for care leavers, as is preparation for moving on to independent living. Care leavers should not be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation, and the type of housing that they will move into after leaving care should be included in the pathway plan. Some young people will need more support than others as they move towards independence, while all will need to know that there are fall-back options if things don't work out.

For more information on support and outcomes for care leavers, please see our 'Support for care leavers' resource pack.

How many children are we placing in out of area placements and why?

Every children's services council has a 'sufficiency duty', which states that it must take steps to secure, as far as possible, sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of children that it is looking after. But there is no one-size-fits-all approach to meeting the needs of individual children, and there are often very good reasons why some children are placed outside their home authority. This could be for their own safety, to break gang affiliation, to place them near other family members or to access specialist services.

If your council is placing a higher proportion of children out of area than its statistical neighbours, or than it was two years ago, for example, it is important to ask why. Is this because the children need very specialist placements that can only be found elsewhere, or because there are not enough placements locally? If the latter, what is being done to improve this?

If children are moved out of area, this may mean moving them away from their school, their friends and family, and the area they're familiar with – it's important that if that happens, it's for the right reasons and that appropriate support is provided to help the young person manage that transition.

How are we planning for the future and commissioning services?

If a council has too many children and young people being placed out of area inappropriately or in accommodation that doesn't suit their needs, it will need to revisit its sufficiency strategy and revise plans and commissioning to address this. The council will need a strong understanding of what its needs are now and into the future, which it can identify by looking at the data and feedback available, and analysing local and national trends. Councils can then use this information to better manage the local market, whether through recruiting and training more foster carers; evaluating the use of in-house and external provision; and considering the balance of children's home places or foster care with high levels of support for children with complex needs.

Consider also the way in which services for looked-after children are commissioned; are services better commissioned at a local (how local?) or regional level? Would children and young people's outcomes be improved if resources were pooled with partners for specific outcomes, such as early intervention or wellbeing? Are young people involved at any point in commissioning processes, to make sure that services meet their needs?

If in-house provision is an issue, feedback from foster carers – both those that are still working for your authority, and those that have either stopped fostering or moved to an independent fostering agency (IFA) – will be important to find out whether things need to be improved to increase the number of in-house carers.

How well do we support our foster carers?

It's vital that foster carers feel well supported so that they feel able to provide the best possible care to children and young people, and to encourage them to foster for as long as they are able.

The Fostering Network's State of the Nation Report 2019 identified the following three issues that foster carers would choose to change to improve their ability to care for children:

- recognised and valued as experts who best know the children they care for
- empowered to make day to day decisions for the child they are caring for
- better financial support.

These issues highlight the importance of making sure that foster carers are listened to and have access to the right kind of support when they need it. For example, how are foster carers involved in care plan reviews? Do all in-house carers have up-to-date training plans? Is there good support available if there's a problem in the middle of the night? How much freedom are carers given to make decisions for their foster children?

It's important to remember that a foster carers' role is to provide a loving, caring home for a child, rather than to be a council employee; being treated as professionals is about their being valued, respected members of the team whose knowledge and understanding of the child is given appropriate weight in all decisions.

It's also essential that wherever possible, foster carers are kept fully informed about children coming into and leaving their care, and up-to-date with planned changes. This allows them to provide the right support and ease transitions for their foster children.

Financial support can be an issue for any carer, but in particular there may be concerns around carers with young people in staying put arrangements. While they still receive fees and allowances, these are lower than for fostering placements, which can be problematic where fostering is a major source of income for the family, and may make it difficult for families to continue supporting a young person.

Your best source of information about whether your foster carers feel adequately supported is from foster carers themselves; feedback should be considered by the corporate parenting panel, who can then make recommendations for improvements.

Local case studies

Hampshire County Council

Being a good corporate parent means getting involved, asking questions and making sure the voices of children and young people are being heard.

When the children's residential service was under review in Hampshire, the Lead Member for Children's Services took the opportunity to find out exactly what children wanted and needed, and to make sure their voices were at the centre of any new proposals. This included visiting existing homes – owned both by the council and other sectors – to find out about the experiences of the children living there, and to see what they thought made a 'homely environment'.

At the same time, work was underway to implement the evidence-based Pillars of Parenting model, an approach to move from 'looking after' children to 'caring for' them, and providing strong support for staff including access to an educational psychologist. Children were involved in board meetings as the new care model was put in place, ensuring that they could flag up any issues with the model and let officers and councillors know how they felt about the changes.

In one small children's home using the Pillars of Parenting model, stability for the children living there was found to be better, involvement in crime was reduced, and engagement in education was good. The improved outcomes for children as a result of the new care model and the small, well-located home provided a good evidence-base to support what young people were saying.

The Lead Member took those views and the evidence directly back to his fellow elected members, emphasising the benefits the council could realise – both in terms of outcomes for children in care, and financially thanks to those long-term outcomes – by selling old, larger children's homes with poor community links to support new homes more suited to caring for children. As a result, he was able to successfully bid for considerable investment from the council to provide six new homes.

The Lead Member has continued to champion children's views as the process has continued, attending workshops where children contributed to the design of the new homes, and regularly visiting the homes during the build process to make sure they met the varied needs of the children he'd been speaking to. He has also worked with officers on keeping his fellow corporate parents engaged, with many visiting children's homes, and some even taking their dogs along to meet the children – a great ice breaker.

For more information, please contact:
cathi.hadley@hants.gov.uk

Gloucestershire County Council

Gloucestershire aims to put the voice of children and young people at the heart of its approach to corporate parenting, with children in care, young people with experience of children's services and corporate parents working together on everything from strategic planning and service delivery to training and consultation.

One of the key ways that Gloucestershire is working to incorporate the voice of children and young people is through their Ambassadors for Vulnerable Children and Young People, which was highlighted as a strength in an otherwise difficult Ofsted inspection for the authority. These young people, aged 16-25, all have experience of children's social care – whether through being in care, experiencing early help, or receiving support for a disability, for example – and play a central role in developing the council's services. They also act as a link between children and young people and the rest of the council, making sure those voices are heard.

As Participation Manager Della Keith highlights, "Ambassadors help us to keep our focus on, and communicate effectively with, children and young people; they challenge us, work with us, and often identify areas of our work that might be neglected. Most importantly, they've changed our attitudes, understanding and awareness of the issues that are important to children and young people".

Ambassadors are recruited two to three times a year, with 15 currently in post, and are paid for their time and expenses whenever they attend meetings or events. They attend the Children in Care Council so that they can feed back to the Corporate Parenting Group, which they are co-opted onto, and have led consultation with looked-after children to help improve everything from the activities children do with their social workers, to issues around contact with family; their own experiences make them ideally placed to

help communicate the needs and wants of children back to corporate parents.

They have also been part of task groups to improve the quality of care plans, improve questions on fostering panels, and to secure a pilot of personal budgets for children in care who need mental health support. The early involvement of young people in the latter was instrumental in gaining the support of NHS England for the pilot, highlighting the way in which the council places the voice of young people at the heart of their work for looked-after children.

The council has involved the ambassadors in the design of information for young people, which has been highly successful, for example leading to more young people attending fostering panels as they now understand better what goes on, and improving the use of the 'Mind of my Own' app so that children in care can get help with things they are worried about more easily.

All councillors are invited to receive training from the ambassadors about the role of members as corporate parents, and to give them an increased awareness of children's lived experience of their journey into and through care. The Ambassadors have also helped the Children in Care Council to host meetings with councillors, which have had excellent feedback from the children, who feel listened to, and the councillors, whose understanding of being a child in care has improved significantly.

For more information, please contact:
della.keith@gloucestershire.gov.uk

London Borough of Lambeth

Any good parent will know that the needs of their children always come first – and Lambeth Council is committed to putting that philosophy into practice with all the children for whom it is a corporate parent.

Where children are placed in residential care, the council works hard to develop and maintain strong partnerships with those providers to make sure that the children's individual needs and wants are properly taken care of.

In the case of 14-year-old Amy, this has meant support to feel stable in her children's home, and honouring her wish to stay in that home with those she describes as 'family', rather than transferring into foster care. The council and the children's home have worked together to find ways to help her develop her confidence and self-esteem, including providing piano lessons to nurture her passion for music.

Amy is now considering whether she wants to move on to foster care as she gets older, so both the children's home and the council are starting to plan with her. Most importantly, they are working at a pace that suits her, rather than trying to rush her, making sure that her voice is at the forefront of any decision – as any parent knows, children and young people need support and encouragement to work through big decisions, to make sure that they can come to the right decision long-term.

The relationship between the council and the provider is a vital one – much like the relationship between two parents. Trust, mutual respect and good communication mean that both parties can concentrate on working towards the same outcome – a successful and positive care experience for all children being looked-after.

For more information, please contact:
communications@lambeth.gov.uk

Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council

When a young person presents as homeless to a local authority, and they have not been in care before their 16th birthday, the authority's responsibilities in law are very limited, requiring only advice and assistance. In Trafford, the Corporate Parenting Board and officers felt that, despite not being corporate parents in such cases in legislative terms, they still had a responsibility to these vulnerable young people, who were homeless and in need of trusted professional support; doing the bare minimum was not good enough. They agreed to provide these young people with a full leaving care service, with support from a personal adviser, a pathway plan, safe and appropriate accommodation, support to live independently and help to engage in education, employment and training. The leaving care grant could also be awarded in certain circumstances. Ofsted was very supportive of the approach, which is an example of how councillors and officers can and do still step in to help young people – even where they don't have to, and where it isn't easy, just as other good parents would.

For more information, please contact:
aftercare@trafford.gov.uk

Key resources and further reading

Centre for Public Scrutiny, Safeguarding children: A practical guide for overview and scrutiny councillors, June 2016

Department for Education, Children Act 1989 statutory guidance: Care planning, placement and case review, March 2010 (updated July 2015)

Department for Education, Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, January 2014

Department for Education, Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children: Statutory guidance for local authorities, February 2018

Department of Education, Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked after children, March 2015

Department for Education, Applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers, February 2018

Department for Education, Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, April 2015

Department of Education, Home Office, Ministry of Justice, National protocol on reducing the criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers, November 2018

Department for Education, Working with foreign authorities: Child protection cases and care orders, July 2014

Department for Education, Special Guardianship Guidance, January 2017

Fostering Network, Staying Put: Guidance for children and young people services, fostering services and leaving care services, September 2017

HM Government, Keep On Caring: Supporting young people from care to Independence, July 2016

Local Government Association, Youth justice resource pack, April 2018
www.local.gov.uk/youth-justice-resource-pack

TACT, Language that cares, March 2019
www.tactcare.org.uk/content/uploads/2019/03/TACT-Language-that-cares-2019_online.pdf

Glossary of useful terms

Advocacy	An advocate's role is to make sure that the child's views and experiences are considered when decisions are made about their future. Every child has the right to be supported by an advocate and councils must have a system in place to provide written, age appropriate information to each looked-after child about advocates and how to request one.
Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)	Services that work with children and young people experiencing emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties.
Care order	A court order approving the case for a child to be taken into care.
Care plan	A care plan should be developed for every child and young person when they come into care. This should identify how the child will be accommodated, how long it is anticipated that the care order will last, and formulate planned outcomes for the child with associated actions. The plan should be reviewed at least every six months.
Clinical commissioning group (CCG)	These commission most hospital and community NHS services in their area, including mental health and learning disability services.
Child sexual exploitation (CSE)	Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.
County lines	A term used when drug gangs from big cities expand their operation to smaller towns and exploiting children and young people to sell drugs.
Children's home	A residential facility where groups of children are cared for by qualified workers.
Former relevant child	A care leaver aged 18-21 who was a relevant child or was in care until the age of 18. Young people who are still getting help with education or training remain 'former relevant' until their training has finished.

Foster care	Foster care is a way for children to be cared for within a family setting when their own family is unable to care for them. It is considered temporary in that there is no legal split from the family (as with adoption), but can be long term where this is in the best interests of the child.
Independent fostering agency (IFA)	IFAs provide fostering services to local authorities. They recruit, train and support their own foster carers who the council can then place a child with on payment of a fee. IFAs can be charities, not-for-profit or profit-making.
Independent reviewing officer (IRO)	An IRO chairs a looked-after child's review(s) and monitors the child's case on an ongoing basis. They ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects their current needs, wishes and feelings, and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child.
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)	JSNAs identifies the current and future health needs of the local population to inform and guide commissioning of health, wellbeing and social care services within local authority areas.
Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)	The JHWS outlines how local partners will work to improve health in the local population and reduce health inequalities.
Kinship care	Kinship care is where a child is looked-after by a relative or friend. This can be an informal arrangement, through a Special Guardianship Order, or through friends and family foster care, where the local authority still has legal responsibility for the child.
Modern slavery	Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking. A person is trafficked if they are brought to (or moved around) a country by others who threaten, frighten, hurt and force them to do work or other things they don't want to do.
Pathway plan	A pathway plan is developed by the local authority with a young person in care as they approach their 16th birthday to help them effectively make the transition from care to living independently. It includes areas such as accommodation, education, life skills and health.
Personal Education Plan (PEP)	The PEP is a statutory part of a child's care plan, making sure that all relevant partners are engaged in a child's education, tracking their progress and giving them the support they need to achieve and be aspirational in their education.
Private arrangement	An informal arrangement where a child or young person is looked-after by a close relative such as grand-parents, aunts or uncles.
Private fostering	An informal arrangement where a child or young person is looked-after by someone who is not their parent or close relative. The local authority should be informed of the arrangement, but is not responsible for the child and is therefore not the corporate parent.

Secure children's home	Secure children's homes offer specialist care and intensive support in a secure setting to young people sentenced by the courts and to young people detained for their own welfare (for example, where children are at risk of child sexual exploitation, and likely to place themselves in risky situations). These are referred to as youth justice beds, and welfare beds respectively.
Special guardianship	Special guardianship means that a child lives with carers who have parental responsibility for them until they turn 18, but legal ties with the parents are not cut as with adoption. The child is no longer the responsibility of the local authority.
Staying Put	An arrangement whereby a looked-after child can stay with their foster carer after the age of 18, as long as both the young person and the foster parent is happy with this arrangement, and it is in the young person's best interests. The council has a duty to support the arrangement up to young person's 21st birthday.
Sufficiency duty	The duty for a council to take steps that secure, as far as possible, sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of children that it is looking after.
Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)	<p>The definition of an unaccompanied asylum seeking child is set out in the Immigration Rules as someone who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is under 18 years of age when the claim is submitted; • is claiming in their own right; and • is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who in law or by custom has responsibility to do so.
Virtual school head	All local authorities must have a virtual school head (VSH) in charge of promoting the educational achievement of the children looked-after by that authority and previously looked-after children. Their role is to know how the looked-after children are doing, and help school staff and social workers to find out about the extra needs of these children and any additional support available to them. VSHs also work with the children's services department and all schools in the area on initiatives to promote the education of children in care.



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We consider requests on an individual basis.



REPORT FOR:	Corporate Parenting Panel
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Date of Meeting:	14 th January 2020
Subject:	INFORMATION REPORT – Harrow Children Looked After Health (CLA) Report
Responsible Officer:	Zoe Sargent, Associate Director of Children's Services Christine Nichols – Named Nurse CLA to present the report
Exempt:	No
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	Harrow Children Looked After (CLA) Health Report.

Section 1 – Summary

This report sets out the delivery of health services to Harrow's Children Looked After (CLA) during September - November 2019 in line with national guidance.

It reviews performance indicators and clinical work undertaken by the children looked after health team.

FOR INFORMATION

Section 2 – Report

See Attached Reports

Section 3 – Further Information

Not applicable

Section 4 – Financial Implications

Not required

Section 5 - Equalities implications

Not required

Section 6 – Council Priorities

The Council's vision:

Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow

Please identify how the report incorporates the administration's priorities.

- Making a difference for the vulnerable
- Making a difference for communities

The report focuses on the service delivery from health to Children Looked After, a vulnerable group of children including those from the local community.

Ward Councillors notified:

NOT APPLICABLE

Section 7 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Christine Nichols, Named Nurse for Children Looked After Harrow,
01895 488860

Background Papers:

Corporate Parenting Panel Reports March
2019, May 2019, October 2019

Children Looked After Health Report September - November 2019

Targets

All targets in relation to contractual conditions were met for initial health assessments and review health assessments from health.

Month	CNWL Contractual Targets *	
September	100% IHA	100% RHA
October	100% IHA	100% RHA
November	100% IHA	100% RHA

*excludes requests and consent not made available within 3 days for IHA's and within 3 months for RHA's, CLA who do not attend or refuse appointments given, CLA placed out of Harrow who depend upon another provider to offer an appointment.

Month	Number of children looked after seen in timescales	
September	62% IHA	71% RHA
October	75% IHA	73% RHA
November	80% IHA	88% RHA

Monitoring

Bi-monthly monitoring meetings with Harrow CCG and Harrow Council continue.
Weekly meetings attended with Harrow Council to monitor health assessments and weekly case discussion with Social Workers.

Work Undertaken

RHA's & IHA's undertaken which included 2 YP previously non-compliant
Multiple cases discussed with Social workers and health actions taken where appropriate.
Cases discussed with IRO health lead
MASE Panel attended in October and November.
Attendance at performance meeting with Commissioners
Attendance at CLA Children's Awards
Regular monitoring meeting held with health admin to ensure a smooth referral partnership between CNWL and Social services
Quarterly CAMHS meeting held to discuss emotional/mental health needs for YP & children
Attendance at IRO team meeting
Professionals meeting requested and attended to discuss health needs for YP who is now 18 years
A contingency plan was put in place to ensure all RHA's were completed within timescale, until new Named Nurse commenced in her new role.
Peer review of Hillingdon 0-19 School Nursing service undertaken by Specialist Nurse for CLA and Head of Children and Young People and Family Services for Inner London Children Services.

Training

Attendance at Children in Care Networking Forum held in Oxford. Contextual safeguarding & County Lines were amongst subjects discussed with other LAC nurses

Attendance at Group Safeguarding Supervision

Presentation delivered to new Designated teachers Forum

Development

Specialist Nurse provided some managerial support within the team until new Named Nurse joined the team.

Specialist Nurse provided some induction support to the newly appointed Named Nurse and new GPwSPi

Specialist Nurse completed a peer review of another CNWL service.

Team News

New Named Nurse and GPwSPi for Harrow CLA service now in post

Ealing nurses (CNWL) visited team to discuss and share good practices.

Voice of the Child

It went really well thank you. (17)

Everything was fine. (15)

I was alright. (12)

Carers Comments

We felt the assessment went really well in a relaxed and professional environment. The doctor was able to ask a range of questions that were really answered by our foster son.

Biological Parent's Comments

I was happy with how the doctor consulted and spoke with my children.

"U" was very happy with his assessment. He enjoys meeting people who are interested in him. Thank you for a thorough assessment and the opportunity to discuss "U's " health and development.

Christine Nichols Named Nurse for Children Looked After Harrow
10TH December 2019



REPORT FOR:	Corporate Parenting Panel
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Date of Meeting:	14 th January 2020
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Subject:	INFORMATION REPORT – Activity and Performance
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Key Decision:	No
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Responsible Officer:	Paul Hewitt, Corporate Director of People
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Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Christine Robson, Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools
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Exempt:	No
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Decision subject to Call-in:	No
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Wards affected:	None - This is an Information report
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Enclosures:	CLA Performance Report
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Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This is an information report which sets out activity for children looked after and care leavers as well as provisional performance position at Q2 2019-20. National and comparator data is also included where appropriate for context.

RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted

Reason for Recommendation: To keep the Panel informed about activity & performance for looked after children in their role as Corporate Parents.

Section 2 – Report

See the attachment which shows provisional key performance indicators position and an update of activity for children looked after (CLA) at the end of June where available.

Key Points:

1. Performance indicators:
 - i) *Long Term Placement Stability (Indicator 4)* remains below target but progress has been made compared to 2018-19, our Q2 performance is just below statistical neighbours.
 - ii) *Health & Dental checks (Indicators 7 – 8)* are red & amber possibly due to a time lag in receiving data, year end comparator data shows us above or in line with statistical neighbours and England averages.
 - iii) *The increase in CLA placed 20+ miles (Indicator 10)* is mainly due to the increase in numbers of children looked after as well as having a cohort of young people with challenging behaviour requiring placements outside Harrow that is causing the shift.
 - iv) *Missing & Absent instances (Indicators 11 and 12)*, we current have a cohort with challenging behaviour; our work around adolescent safeguarding ensures all children who have missing instances are monitored closely. Further commentary in bullet point 9 below.
2. Overall CLA numbers remain low compared to SN and England averages. The numbers of CLA have increased this quarter though. The rate of CLA per 10,000 has increased in line with the cohort but we continue to remain below statistical neighbour and England averages.
3. No significant changes in the characteristics of our CLA cohort except for an increase in males. CLA & white ethnicity.
4. The proportion of UASC has increased being 23% of CLA and 34% of Care Leavers. Harrow is working with other local authorities in London, through the London Councils, to identify a London wide strategy and approach to ensure consistency and fairness for this vulnerable cohort of young people.
5. Provisional data for CLA looked after over a year shows annual dental checks & health assessments are below comparator data. Our finalised 2018-19 figures were above SN and England averages. There is a time lag in receiving data which impacts on the figures. The integrated CLA

Health Team has supported improved initial and review health assessments, dental checks, and alignment with SDQ analysis. This improved focus has facilitated a smoother pathway to setting up appropriate physical and emotional health provision for all our CLA, including those in out of borough placements

6. Of the cohort of CLA at 30th September , 50% had become looked after due to an initial need category of abuse or neglect, followed by absent parenting at 24% - this is mainly unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
7. Of those that ceased to be looked after, 32% returned home, 17% moved to independent living, 17% ceased for other reasons and 15% had SGO's granted.
8. Improvement in proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation & in education, employment and training from the previous quarter. Our year end performance remains above the statistical neighbour average. Snapshot data suggests 70% are in education, employment and training. The current and future accommodation needs of care leavers are regularly reviewed via the placement sufficiency strategy. Semi-independent placements are also regularly reviewed and commissioned in line with West London Alliance arrangements. The LCT works closely with the Access to Resources team and the Housing Department to ensure there is a wide range of placement and accommodation options for care leavers.
9. Children looked after who had a missing or absent instance is high. Additional training for managers has improved the accuracy of recording of missing episodes on Mosaic. We have a small but significant cohort of young people who have complex issues and have come into care. Missing children are a priority for Harrow and we have robust safeguards and scrutiny in place for all missing children, including: Weekly review of missing children at Missing Children Panel, including police & senior managers. Extended Multiagency child exploitation panel arrangements are in place to review children at risk of criminal as well as sexual exploitation. There is a focus on developing relationships with missing children via the independent return home interviews, sharing intelligence and peer mapping to better understand and address risk..
10. The placement stability of our CLA is good with only 4.4% having had 3 or more placements. The percentage of CLA looked after for 2.5 years who have been in the same placement for 2 years has increased to 64% and similar to our statistical neighbour average. There is a requirement for a detailed profile of a child's strengths and needs before any placement is sourced. This is shared with foster carers prior to children being placed in their care. Any plans for children to return home or a change of placement will need Head of Service agreement and to be ratified at a Looked After Review. Harrow has a strong performance with regards to placement stability which evidences the

good practice and strong systems in this area. If children have to move in an emergency they are discussed at the next Access to Resources panel where effective challenge and support is given and additional resources agreed if appropriate.

Options considered

Not applicable as this is an information report.

Risk Management Implications

The Children's Services Risk Register has been updated to reflect the performance risks highlighted in this report.

Risk included on Directorate risk register? Yes

Separate risk register in place? No

Legal Implications

Not applicable as this is an information report.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable as this is an information report.

Council Priorities

Supporting Those Most in Need

- Children and young people are given the opportunities to have the best start in life and families can thrive

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

[Note: If the report is for information only, it is the author's responsibility to decide whether legal and/or financial clearances are necessary. If not, the report can be submitted without these consents.]

Name: Sharon Daniels	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 30/12/19	

MANDATORY	
Ward Councillors notified:	NO, this is an information report only
EqIA carried out:	NO
EqIA cleared by:	N/A information report only

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Dipika Patel, Partner- Business Intelligence Unit 020 8420 9258 dipika.patel@harrow.gov.uk	David Harrington Head of Business Intelligence 0208 420 9248 David.harrington@harrow.gov.uk
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Background Papers: Source: Local data taken from Mosaic System

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2016-to-2017>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2015-to-2016>

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Corporate Parenting Report

14th January 2020

Children Looked After

Activity to end of September 2019

Key Indicators to end of September 2019 (provisional outturns)

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Part A –Performance Indicators for Children Looked After

Ref No	Indicator Description	Statistical Neighbour Average 2017/18	England average 2017/18	Harrow 2017-18	Harrow 2018-19	Harrow target 2019/20	Harrow actual Q1 2019-20	Harrow actual Q2 2019-20
1	Rate of CLA per 10,000 children aged under 18	38.8	64.0	27.0	29.0		28.2	31.4
2	Timeliness of Reviews of Looked After Children	Not Published	Not Published	97.9	100.0	95%	98.7	98.3
3	% of CLA with 3 or more placements	12.2	10.0	13.0	10.7	Q1 - 2.5% Q2 - 5% Q3 - 7.5% Q4 - 10%	1.2	4.4
4	% of CLA looked after for 2.5+ years and in the same placement for 2 years	64.2	70.0	81.0	53.8	70%	62.2	63.9
5	% of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation (19 - 21 year olds)	78.5	84.0	87.0	94.6	85%	70.4	91.7
6	% of Care Leavers not in education, employment or training (19 - 21 year olds)	35.3	39.0	24.0	31.5	35%	48.1	36.7
7	% of CLA who are looked after 1 yr + with up to date Dental Checks (rolling year)	88.5	84.0	91.2	89.9	90%	88.3	80.4
8	% of CLA who are looked after 1 yr + with up to date Health Checks (rolling year)	93.0	88.0	97.1	96.2	95%	83.0	92.8
9	% of children who ceased to be looked after who were adopted	8.6	13.0	7.0	5.3	Q1 - 2% Q2 - 4% Q3 - 6% Q4 - 8%	4.2	5.1
10	% of CLA placed more than 20 miles away from home (snapshot)	22.3	15.0	19.5	20.0	20%	23.5	26.3
11	% of all CLA (current and ceased) with at least 1 missing episode in year	11.0	13.4	11.0	11.8	Q1 - 3% Q2 - 6% Q3 - 9% Q4 - 12%	10.2	11.9
12	Percentage of all CLA (current and ceased) with at least one instance of being away from placement without authorisation	7.4	4.0	11.0	14.0	Q1 - 2.5% Q2 - 5% Q3 - 7.5% Q4 - 10%	8.6	8.5

Part A – Education Performance Indicators for children looked after

58

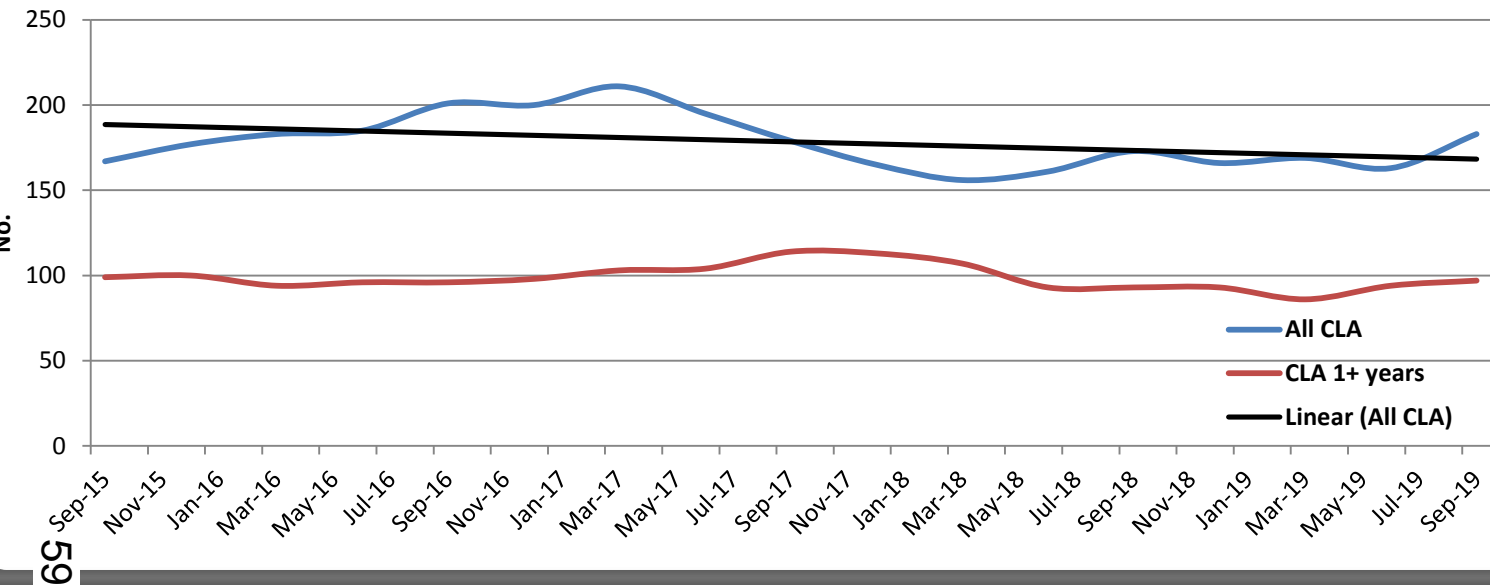
Educational Attainment at Key Stages	Harrow 2015-16	Harrow 2016-17	Harrow 2017-18	England average	SN Average
Percentage of children looked After reaching the expected standard least level 4 at KS2 in Reading, Writing and Maths (Source DfE)	100*	45.5	33	35.0	41 (outer London average)
Percentage of children Looked After (1+ years) achieving 9-4 pass in English and mathematics.	New GCSE's from 2016-17	8.0	20	17.8	25.0
Average Attainment 8 (1) Score for children Looked After (1+ years) at KS4	15.0	12.6	16.1	18.9	18.8
Average Progress 8 (2) Score for children Looked After (1+ years) at KS4		-1.9	-1.9	-1.2	-1.1
Absence Indicator					
Percentage of sessions missed. (CLA 1 year+)	5.3	6.9	5.9	4.5	4.3
Percentage classed as persistent absentees (CLA 1 year+)	X	17.0	21.7	10.6	13.2
Exclusions from school					
Percentage of CLA with at least one fixed term exclusion	15.6	X	12.2	11.8	12.4
Special educational needs					
Percentage of CLA with SEN but without a statement/EHCP	28.6	23.9	31.8	29	25.2
Percentage of CLA with SEN but with a statement/EHCP	30.4	28.2	25.8	26.5	33.3

X - Figures suppressed in order to protect confidentially due to small number

* - Only one child in the cohort.

- (1) Attainment 8 - Attainment 8 measures the average achievement of pupils in up to 8 qualifications including English (double weighted if the combined English qualification, or both language and literature are taken), maths (double weighted), three further qualifications that count in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and three further qualifications that can be GCSE qualifications (including EBacc subjects) or any other non-GCSE qualifications on the DfE approved list.
- (2) Progress 8 - Progress 8 aims to capture the progress a pupil makes from the end of key stage 2 to the end of key stage 4. It compares pupils' achievement – their Attainment 8 score – with the average Attainment 8 score of all pupils nationally who had a similar starting point (or 'prior attainment'), calculated using assessment results from the end of primary school. Progress 8 is a relative measure, therefore the national average Progress 8 score for mainstream schools is zero. When including pupils at special schools the national average is not zero as Progress 8 scores for special schools are calculated using Attainment 8 estimates based on pupils in mainstream schools.

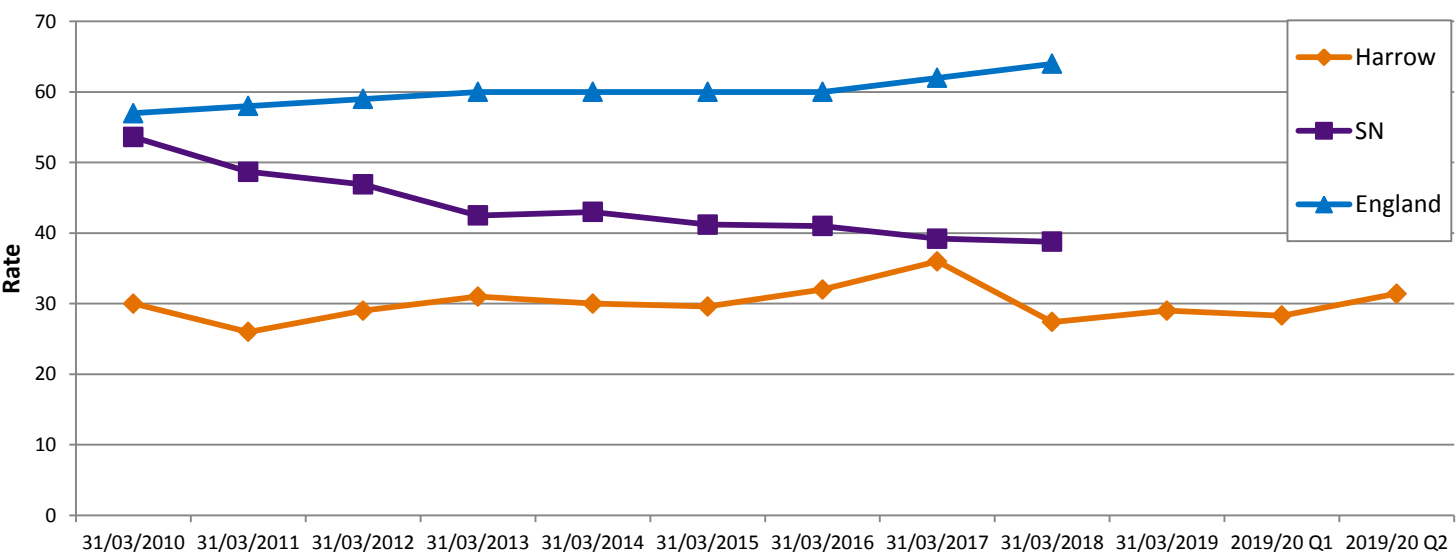
Number of CLA - the long-term trend



The number of all CLA has been increasing from the lower figures seen in the last quarter with CLA 1yr + also showing an increase. The 3 year trend shows an overall decrease in CLA numbers

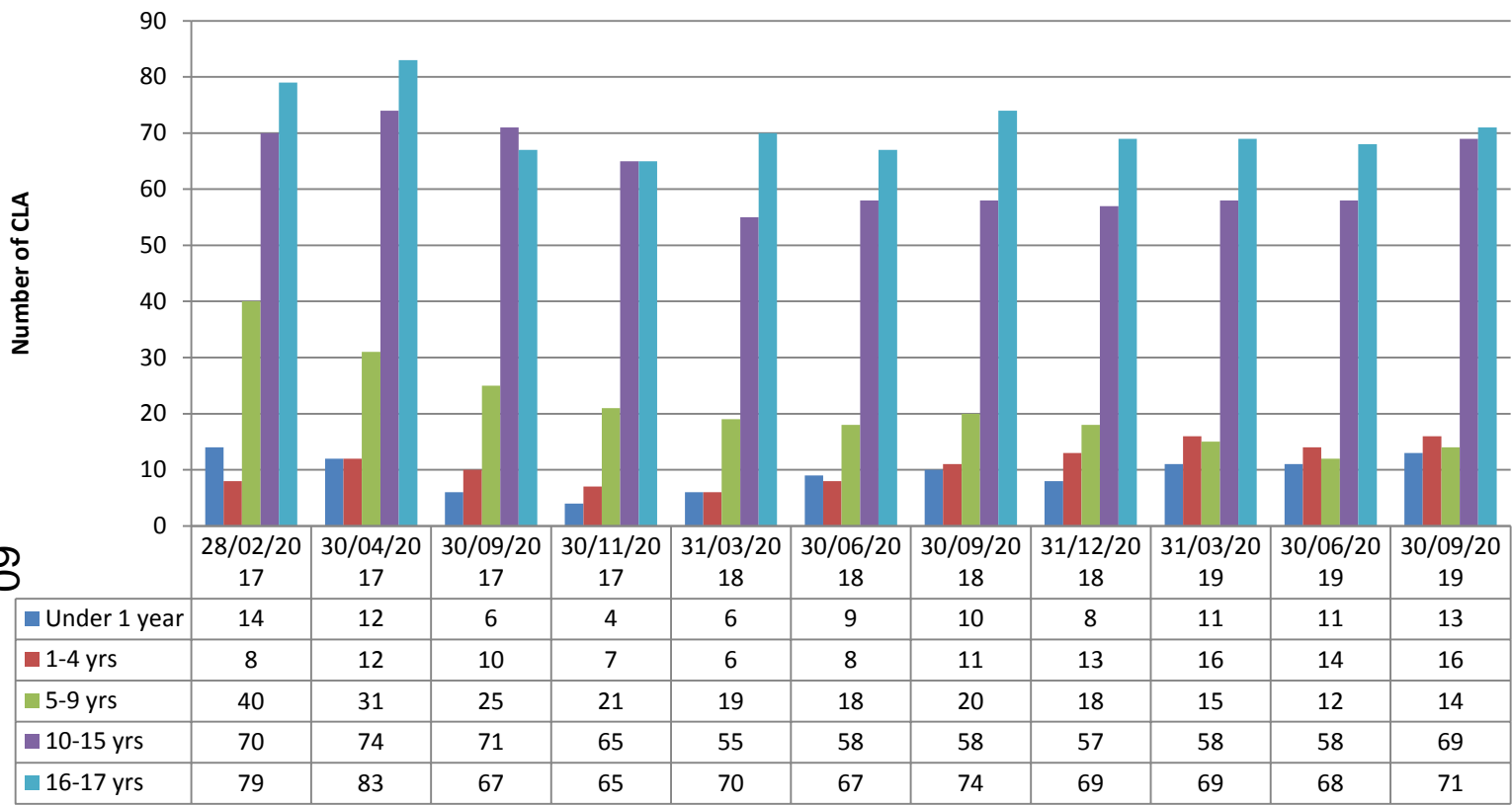
The rate of CLA per 10,000 has increased in line with the cohort but we continue to remain below the 2018 statistical neighbour average and England rates per 10,000.

Rate of CLA per 10,000 children aged under 18



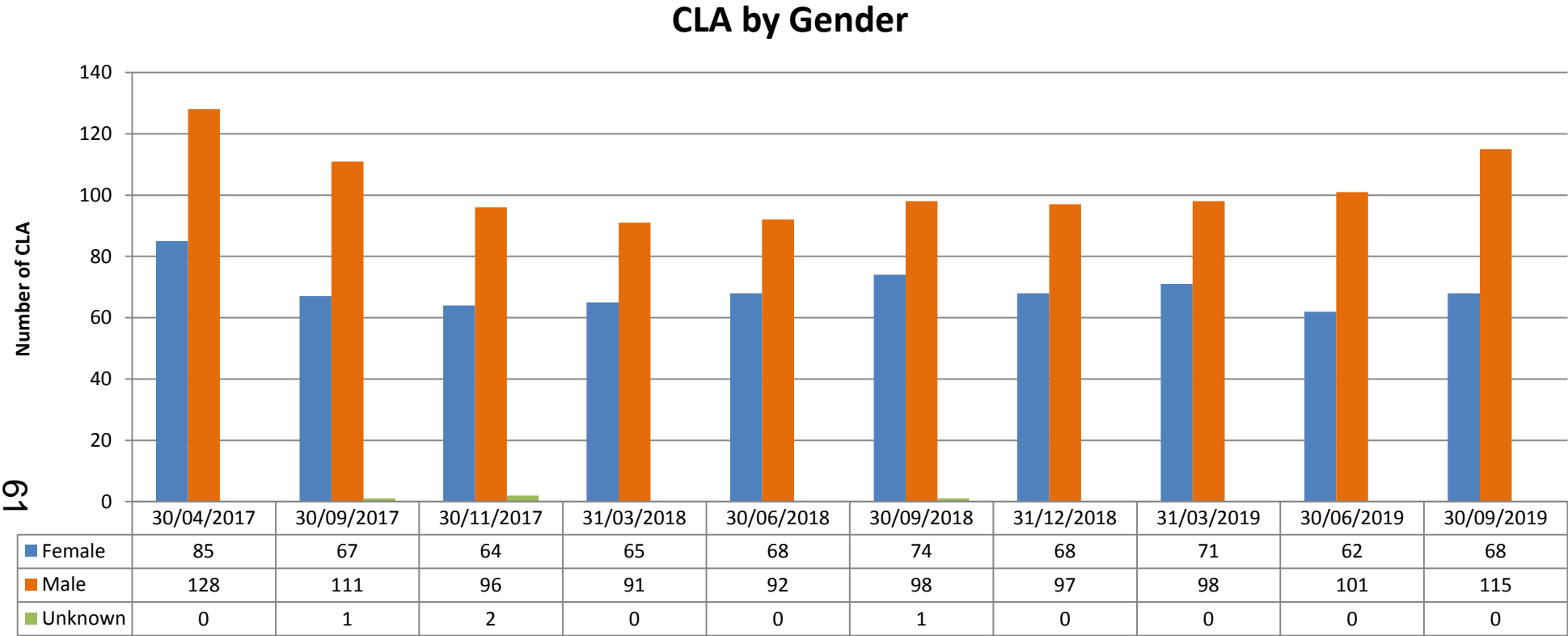
09

CLA by Age Group



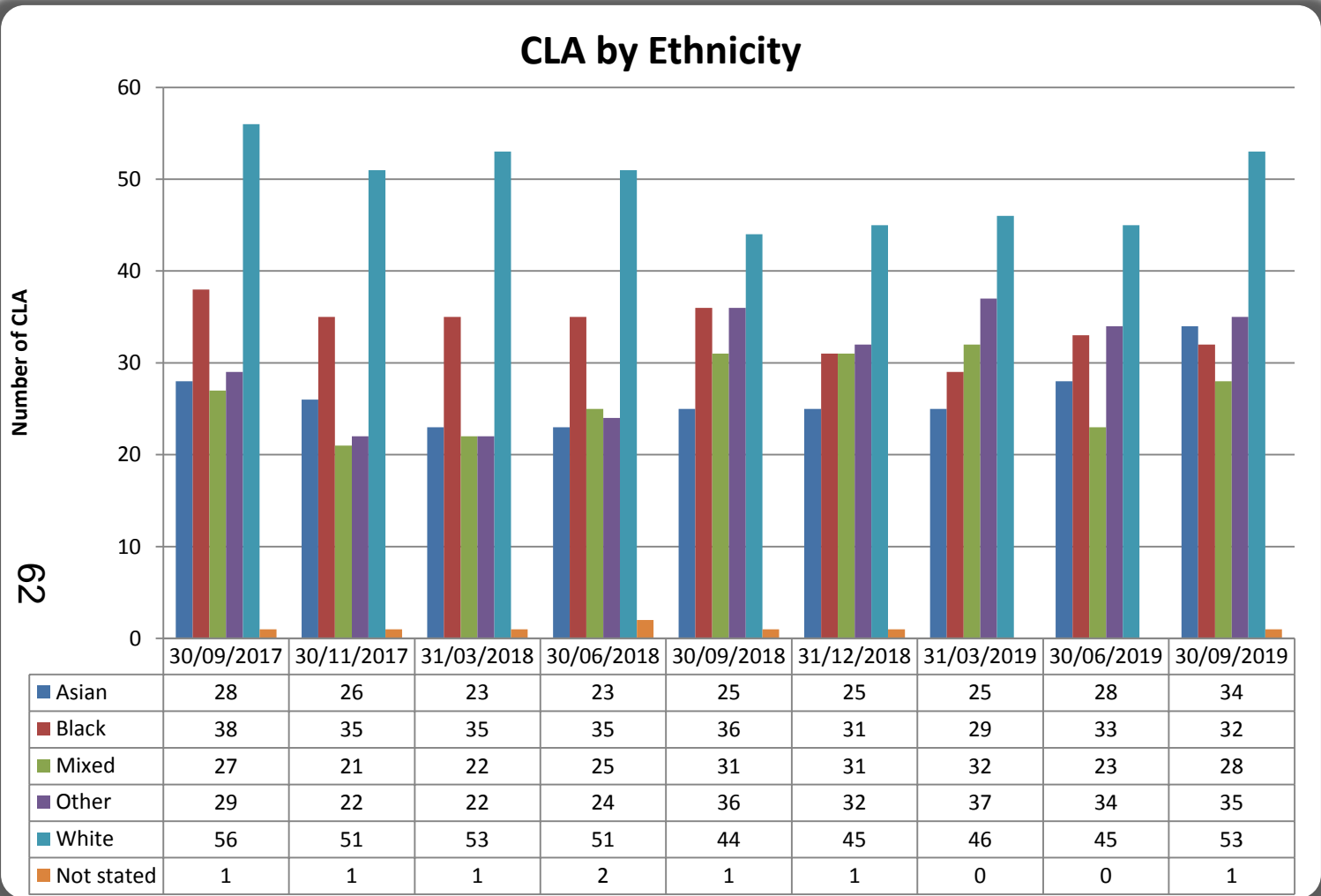
The main shift from the previous quarter has been an increase in the number of CLA between 10 and 15. Looking at annual figures the proportion of 16-17 year old CLA is high compared to the England and Statistical Neighbour averages. This is an additional pressure for leaving care services with just under two thirds of care leavers aged 16 to 18 ceasing to be looked after at age 18.

Comparator Info. for % of age of CLA at 31/03/2018 (Source: SSDA903)	Age at 31 March 2018 (years) (%)				
	Under 1	1 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 15	16 -17
Harrow	3.8%	3.8%	13.2%	34.6%	44.7%
England	5.7%	13.0%	18.9%	39.4%	23.0%
Stat. neighbours avg.	4.6%	8.2%	12.2%	38.3%	36.4%



The looked after cohort is 62.8% Male and 37.2% Female, this is a higher proportion of males in relation to comparator figures

Comparator Info. for % of gender of CLA at 31/03/2018 (Source: SSDA903)	Gender (%)	
	Male	Female
Harrow	57.2%	42.8%
England	56.1%	43.9%
Stat. neighbours avg.	58.1%	41.9%



Just under three quarters of Harrow's children looked after population are from BME groups which is significantly higher than the statistical neighbour average

This quarter the ethnicity which has shown the biggest movement is that of white background with an increase of 8 CLA

Published data shows Harrow to have a higher proportion of CLA from other backgrounds.

Comparator Info. for % of ethnicity of CLA at 31/3/2018 (Source: SSDA903)	White	Mixed	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Other Ethnic Groups/ Other
Harrow	36.5%	12.6%	14.5%	22.0%	13.8%
England	74.6%	9.5%	4.5%	7.1%	3.4%
Stat. neighbours avg.	40.7%	17.5%	15.6%	18.7%	4.8%

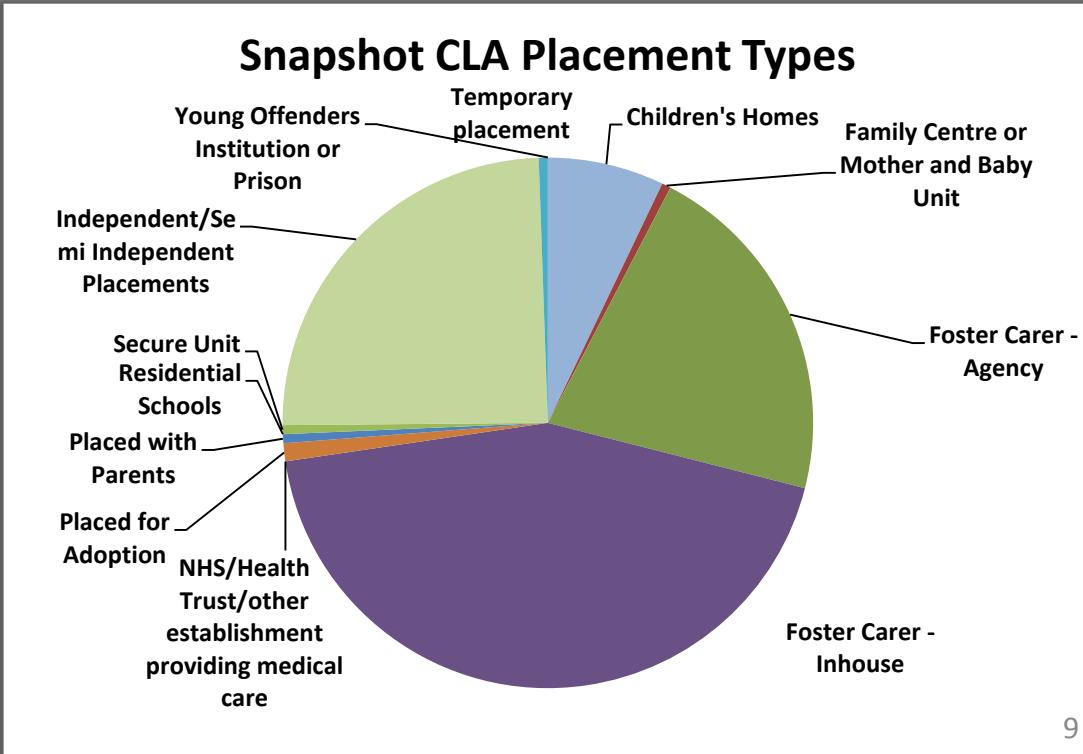
B5 – Children looked after placement type

Placement Type	Sep-16	Nov-16	Feb-17	Apr-17	Sep-17	Nov-17	Feb-18	Mar-18	Jun-18	Sep-18	Dec-18	Mar-19	Jun-19	Sep-19
Children's Homes	13	10	13	16	12	10	11	11	8	11	8	9	11	13
Mother and Baby Unit	3	3	2	2	1	0	2	1	2	3	3	3	0	1
Foster Carer - Agency	25	26	32	31	28	25	17	23	21	23	27	34	35	39
Foster Carer - Inhouse	107	100	101	100	74	71	73	66	74	80	73	75	75	80
NHS/Health Trust	4	4	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Placed for Adoption	4	5	6	7	10	7	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	2
Placed with Parents	0	2	0	0	6	7	5	4	5	7	6	4	2	1
Residential Schools	6	7	7	7	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	6	3	0
Secure Unit	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Independent/Semi Independent	36	39	44	45	37	34	40	39	39	42	41	36	33	45
Temporary placement	0	0	1	0	2	2	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	1
Young Offenders Institution or Prison	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	0	0	0	2	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Grand Total	201	199	211	213	179	162	160	156	173	173	165	169	163	183

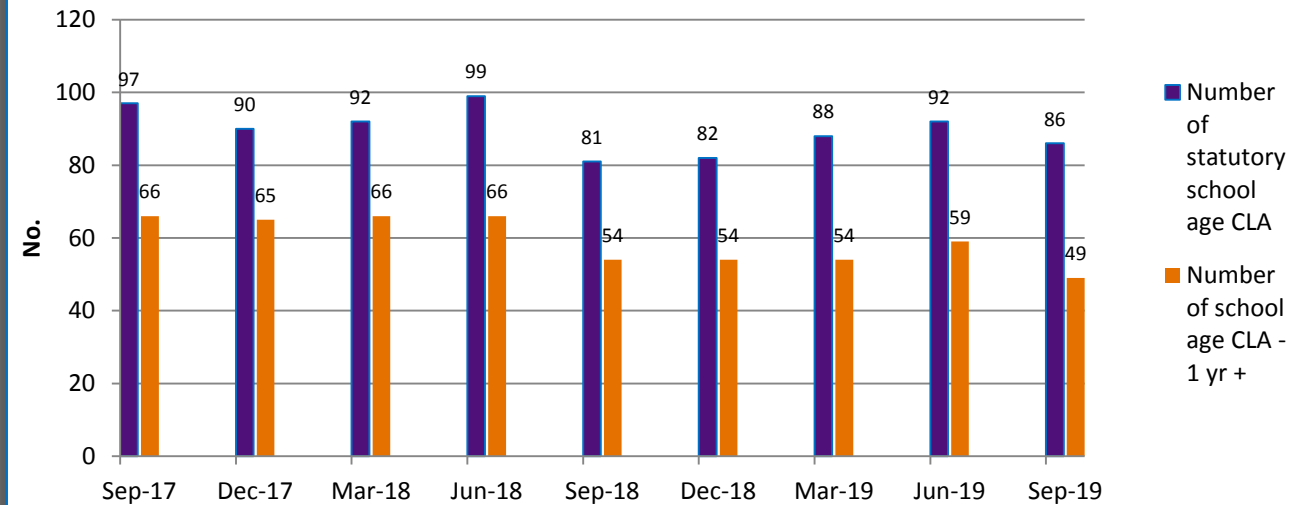
There are no significant changes to the proportion of placement types. Fostering remains the most common placement accounting for 65% of CLA followed by independent and semi independent placements accounting for 24.6%. Annual figures show us above the England and Statistical Neighbour average for the percentage of CLA in the secure units, children's homes and hostels category.

Comparator Info. for % of Main Placement Types of CLA at 31/03/2018 (Source: SSDA903)	Harrow	SN avg.	England
foster placements	58.5%	68.2%	73.2%
placed for adoption	2.5%	0.7%	3.0%
placed with parents	1.8%	1.3%	6.2%
other placements within the community	0.0%	5.4%	4.1%
secure units, children's homes and hostels	34.6%	17.2%	11.3%
other residential accommodation	1.3%	1.5%	1.6%
residential schools	1.3%	0	0.2%
other placements	0.0%	0	0

Published data shows Harrow has slightly less children in foster placements compared to SN average and more in community settings, this is mainly due to higher numbers of children aged 16+



School age CLA



Harrow monitors all school children and those looked after 1 year plus. At the end of September, 86 CLA are of statutory school age of whom 49 have been looked after more than a year. There has been no permanent exclusions this academic year with 2.3% of CLA having at least one fixed term exclusion. Overall session absence and persistent absence remains high and is significantly above the statistical neighbour average. PEP performance has continued to improve considerably with 100% of CLA having a PEP in the last academic term

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PI Description	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jul-18	Dec-18	Mar-19	Jun-19	Sep-19
% of school age CLA (all CLA) permanently excluded this year (Sept to date)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	1.1	0.0
% of school age CLA (1 yr + at 31st March) permanently excluded this year (Sept to date)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
% of school age CLA (all CLA) with at least one fixed-term exclusion this year (Sept to date)	3.3	12.0	15.8	4.9	12.5	14.1	2.3
% of school age CLA (1 yr + at 31st March) with at least one fixed-term exclusion this year (Sept to date)	4.6	13.6	22.1	4.9	14.8	16.9	0.0
% absence from school (all CLA - % of sessions missed)	11.7	11.4	12.6	11.6	12.7	12.5	14.3
% absence from school (1 yr+, % of sessions missed)	8.9	10.5	12.3	10.6	10.7	9.4	8.7
% of CLA (all CLA) classified as persistent absentees	26.7	28.3	29.7	20.7	30.7	34.8	27.9
% of CLA (1 year+) classified as persistent absentees	16.9	22.7	29.4	22.2	20.4	20.3	18.4
% of CLA (all school age CLA) with up to date PEP	70.0	66.3	82.2	93.9	97.7	100.0	100.0

CLA educational attainment - No update, Final results are not yet available

DfE indicators include only CLA who have been looked after for more than one year to measure outcomes. Education data is updated annually

KS2 CLA Looked After for over a year	2017 SN Average	2017 England	2016	2017	2018
Number of CLA			1	11	3
KS2 % of CLA 1yr + reaching expected standard in reading, writing and maths	53%	32%	0.0%	45.5%	33.3%
KS2 Average progress score in reading	1.46	-0.7	-	-1.3	1.12
KS2 Average progress score in writing	1.16	-0.9	-	-2.4	-1.52
KS2 Average progress score in maths	0.31	-1.1	-	-1.6	-

65

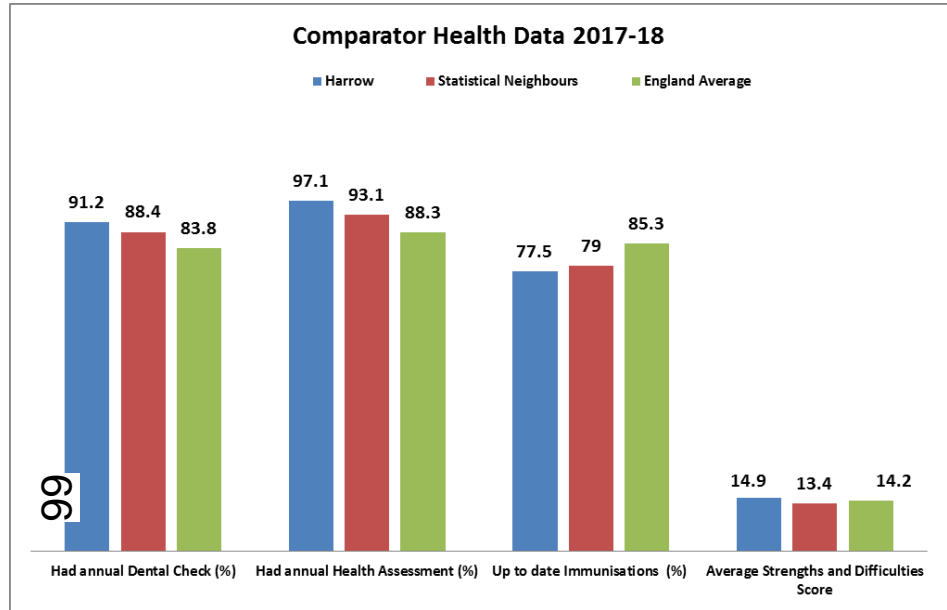
1 out of 3 CLA looked after over a year reached the expected standard in reading, writing and maths. The average progress score across reading, writing and maths has improved from the previous years figures though overall our performance for KS2 dropped.

KS4 CLA Looked After for over a year	2017 SN Average	2017 England	2016	2017	2018 (Provisional)
Number of CLA			14	12	15
KS4 % of CLA 1 year + achieving 9-4 in English and Mathematics	33.30%	17.50%	-	8.0%	20%
KS4 % of CLA 1 year + achieving 9-5 in English and Mathematics		7%	14.3%	0.0%	6.7%
KS4 Average attainment 8 score	18	19.3	15	12.6	16.1
KS4 Average progress 8 score	-1.14	-1.18	-1.71	-1.87	-1.9

Out of the 15 KS4 CLA looked after over a year, 3 achieved a 9-4 in English and Maths. Of these 3, 1 achieving a 9-5. KS4 average attainment 8 scores has improved but both Attainment 8 & Progress 8 scores remains lower than SN and England average

B8 - CLA Health

Annual health checks have improved and is now in line with the statistical neighbour average. Dental checks have decreased and remain below the statistical neighbour average. Immunisations has increased to 67% and is considerably improved from our Q2 position last year. CLA with up to date SDQ's has increased, our average SDQ score was higher in 2017/18 than the statistical neighbour and England averages.



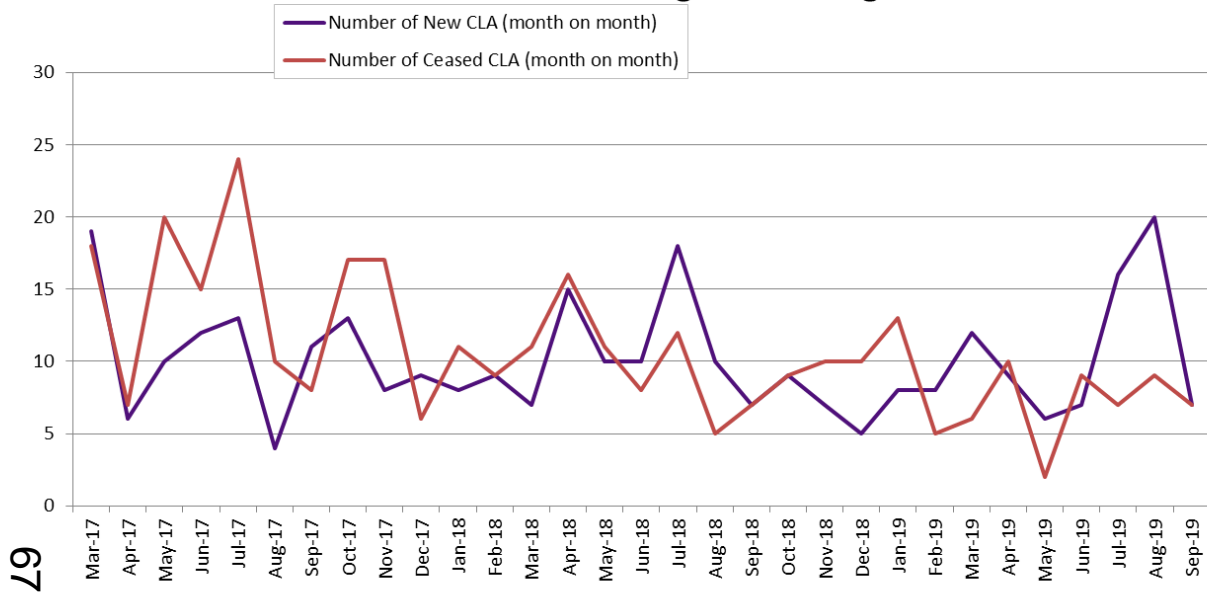
Comparative Data (%) year ending 2018	Had annual Dental Check (%)	Had annual Health Assessment (%)	Up to date Immunisations (%)	Average Strengths and Difficulties Score
Harrow	91.2	97.1	77.5	14.9
Statistical Neighbours	88.4	93.1	79	13.4
England Average	83.8	88.3	85.3	14.2

Note on SDQ scores: a score of under 14 is considered normal, 14-16 is borderline cause for concern and 17 or over is a cause for concern.

Indicator Description	Sep-17	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Sep-18	Dec-18	Mar-19	Jun-19	Sep-19
% of all CLA aged 4-16 who have an up to date strengths and difficulties (SDQ) score	93.4	78.3	87.9	63.4	63.4	72.4	66.0	64.0	67.3
% of CLA (1 yr +) with immunisations up to date	64.1	66.4	63.6	69.3	57.5	61.7	77.2	63.8	67.0
% of CLA with up to date Dental Checks (CLA 1 yr +)	86.8	84.1	80.4	82.8	82.8	88.2	89.9	83.0	80.4
% of CLA with up to date Health Checks (CLA 1 yr +)	93.0	89.4	93.5	73.1	84.9	90.3	96.2	88.3	92.8
% of new CLA where health assessment has been completed within 28 calendar days YTD	69.6	80.5	68.2	38.1	22.8	36.9	41.9	33.3	51.9

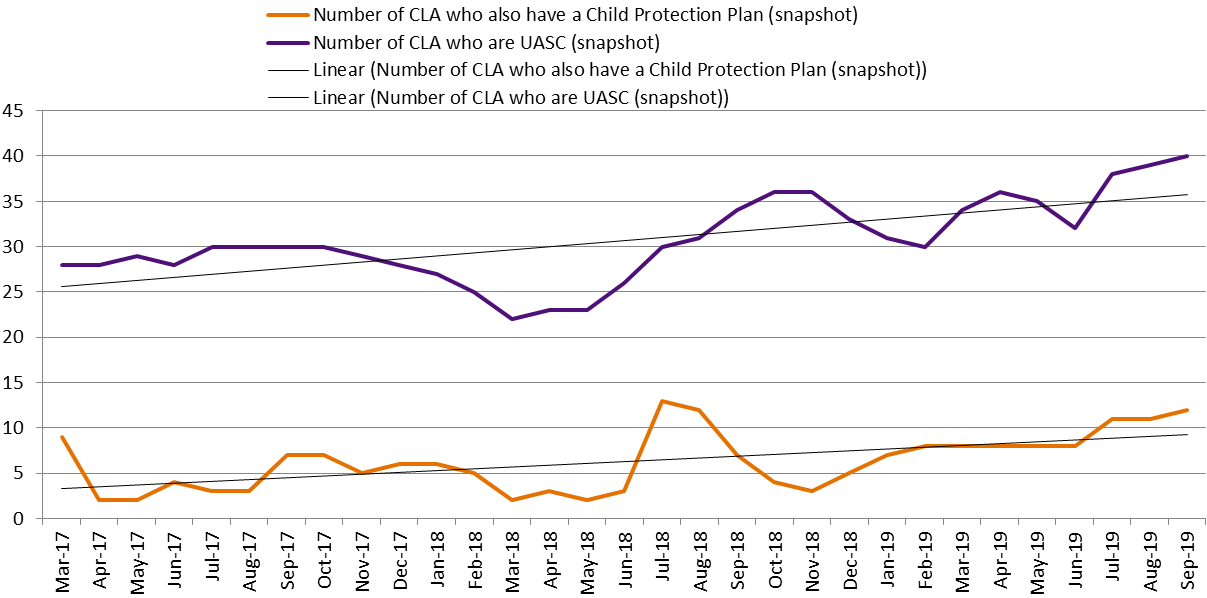
B9 – Number of new CLA, number of ceased CLA and number of children looked after who also have a child protection plan or are unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Number of CLA starting and ceasing



The number of new and ceased CLA continues to vary, month on month.

Number of CLA who are also CPP or UASC (snapshot)



The number of CLA who are UASC has seen a stable increase since the last report. The 3 year trend shows overall UASC figures increasing across the period. Looked after Children who have a Child Protection Plan has increased in the last quarter and continues to be monitored closely.

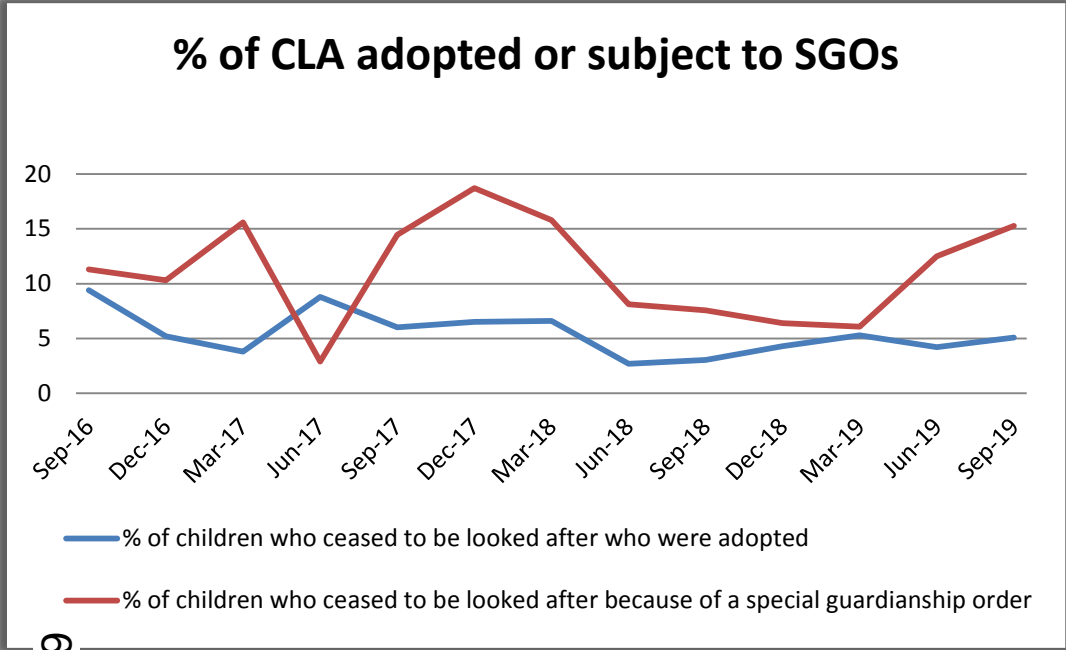
B10 – Reasons for entering and leaving care

When a 'Social Work Assessment' is carried out, the primary need is recorded in line with DfE categories. For children who are looked after at the end of Q2, most common primary need type is Abuse or Neglect (50.3%) followed by Absent Parenting (24%).

Primary Need	Count	%
Abuse or Neglect	92	50.3%
Absent parenting	44	24.0%
Family dysfunction	15	8.2%
Socially unacceptable behaviour	5	2.7%
Family in acute stress	7	3.8%
Child Disability	12	6.6%
Low income	1	0.5%
Parental illness or disability	7	3.8%
Cases other than Children in Need	0	0.0%
Not Stated	0	0.0%
Total	183	

Reason LAC Ceased YTD Description	Count	%
Dead	0	0.0%
Care taken over by another LA	0	0.0%
Returned home to live with parents	19	32.2%
Moved into independent living	10	16.9%
Transferred to residential by ASC	0	0.0%
Period of LAC ceased for any other reason	10	16.9%
Sentenced to custody	4	6.8%
Left care to live with parents, relatives, or other	1	1.7%
Adopted	3	5.1%
Accommodation on remand ended	1	1.7%
Age assessment child is 18 or over	1	1.7%
Child moved abroad	1	1.7%
Residence order	0	0.0%
SGO	9	15.3%
Total	59	

Year to date of the 59 children who ceased to be looked after, 19 (32.2%) returned home to parents and 10 (16.9%) ceased for other reasons.



	LA	2013-16	2014-17	2015-18
Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (days)	Harrow	439.00	472.00	386.00
	Statistical Neighbours	603.30	593.00	468.00
	England Average	558.00	520.00	412.00

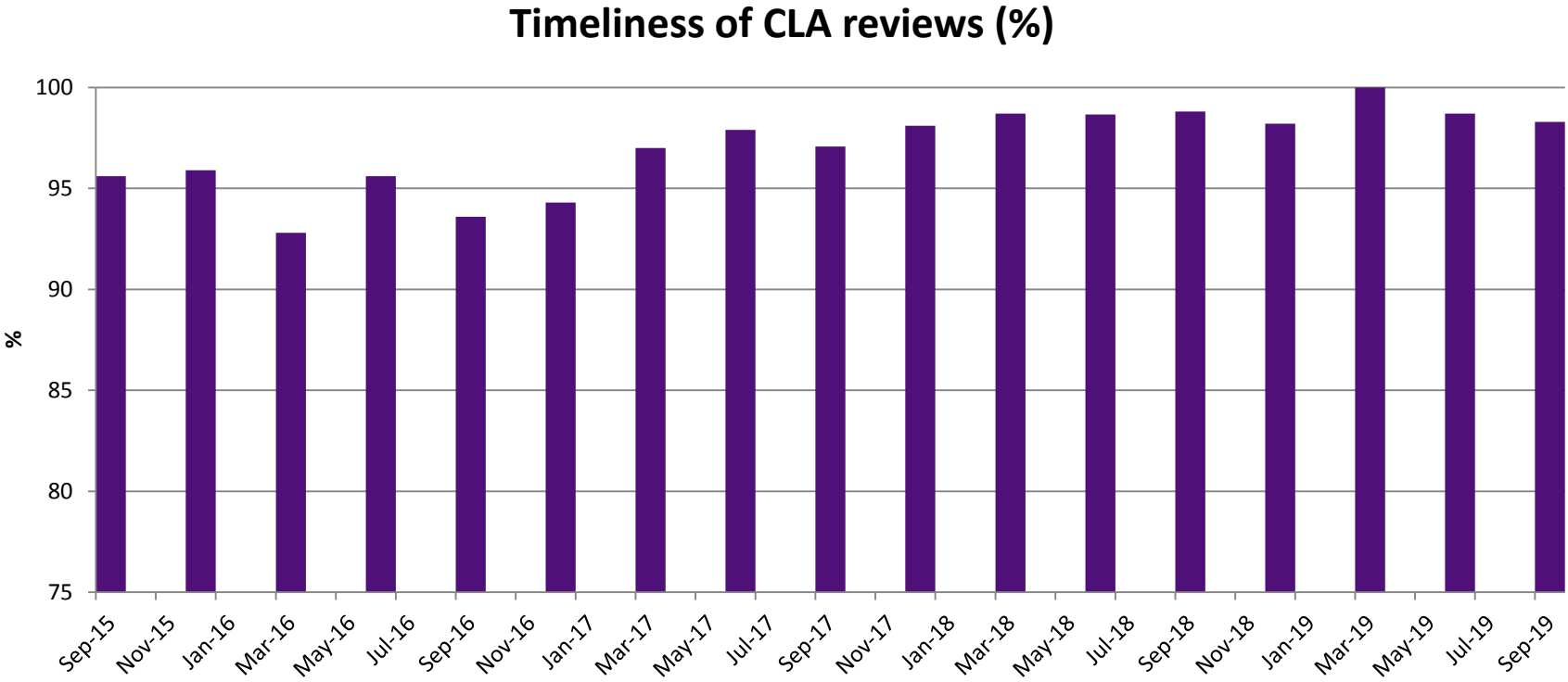
	LA	2013-16	2014-17	2015-18
Average time between a LA receiving court authority to place a child and deciding on a match	Harrow	154.00	173.00	153.00
	Statistical Neighbours	217.80	228.30	224.30
	England Average	226.00	220.00	201.00

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The percentage of ceased CLA who were adopted at the end of Q2 is 5.1% with 15.3% ceasing and becoming subject of an SGO. The average time between a child entering care and moving in with it’s adoptive family has reduced from the previous quarter to 214.7 days and we remain below comparator averages. 80% of children now wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family, a reduction from the previous quarter. The average time between receiving court authority to place a child and matching with adoptive family has reduced from the previous quarter to 86.5 days and remains below comparator averages.

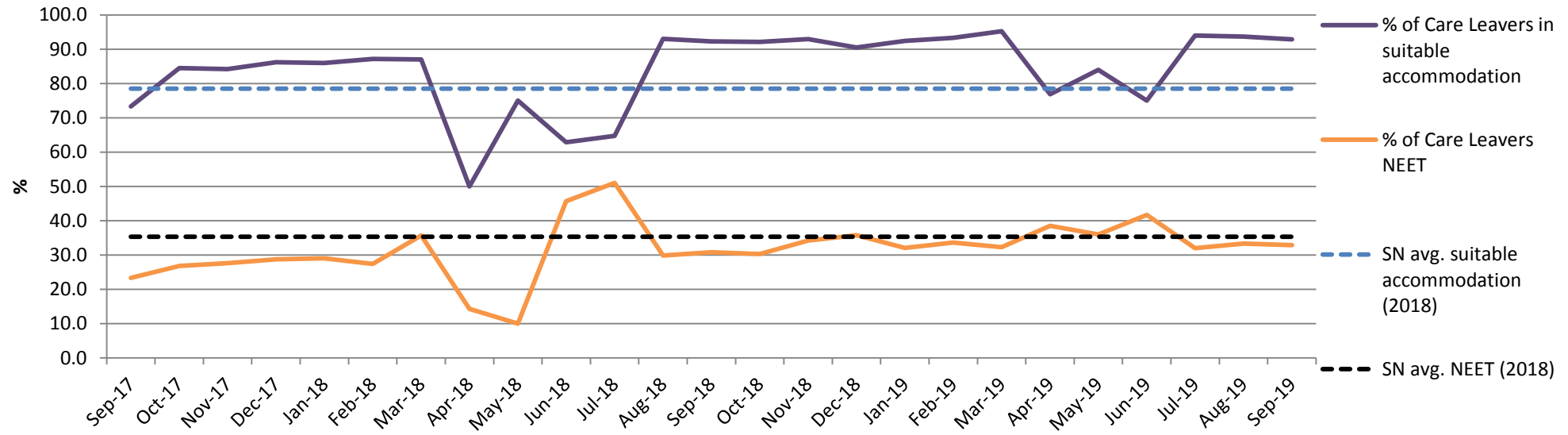
	Sep-16	Dec-16	Mar-17	Jun-17	Sep-17	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Sep-18	Dec-18	Mar-19	Jun-19	Sep-19
The average time (days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted. Measured Quarterly (YTD).	426.0	390.5	390.5	543.0	506.6	380.3	333.0	286.0	437.5	332.2	278.2	340.0	214.7
The average time (days) between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family. Measured Quarterly (YTD).	189.0	167.0	167.0	86.0	102.0	93.9	116.0	147.0	86.0	100.6	100.6	105.6	86.5
Percentage of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. Measured Quarterly.	80.0	83.0	83.0	0.0	20.0	50.0	83.3	100.0	50.0	83.0	86.0	100.0	80.0

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The timeliness of CLA reviews remains high at 98.3% and is above our target of 95% of reviews to be held in time.

Care leavers suitable accommodation and NEET



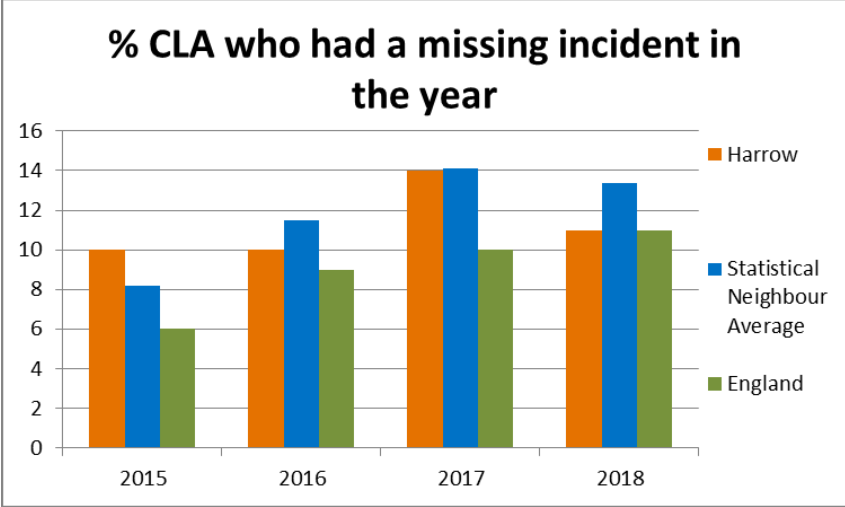
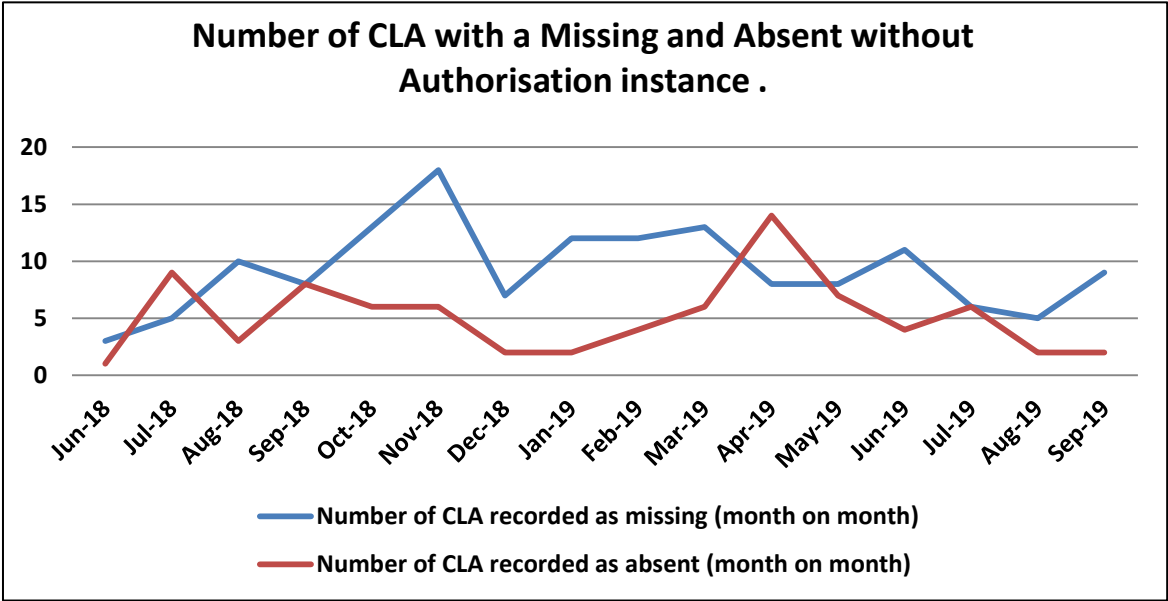
71

Care Leaver Snapshot NEET Status	Sep-19	%
NEET - due to Illness or Disability	2	1.0%
NEET - due to Pregnancy or Parenting	6	2.9%
NEET - Other Circumstances	34	16.6%
Unemployed	1	0.5%
Not Recorded	21	10.2%
Enrolled on Course - Not Yet Started	1	0.5%
F/T Higher Education (i.e. beyond A Level)	19	9.3%
F/T Training or Employment	20	9.8%
Full Time Education	1	0.5%
Other F/T Education	88	42.9%
Other P/T Education	5	2.4%
P/T Higher Education (i.e. beyond A Level)	1	0.5%
P/T Training or Employment	6	2.9%
Count:	205	

Care leavers in suitable accommodation has increased from the previous quarter and is above the statistical neighbour average. Care leavers who are NEET have also decreased from the previous report and is now below the statistical neighbour average.

The suitable accommodation and NEET indicators can only look at activity in the period 3 months before and 1 month after the care leavers birthday in year. As such anything recorded outside of this period cannot be considered. Looking at current data excluding the constraints around birthday, 21% NEET and 10.2% not recorded.

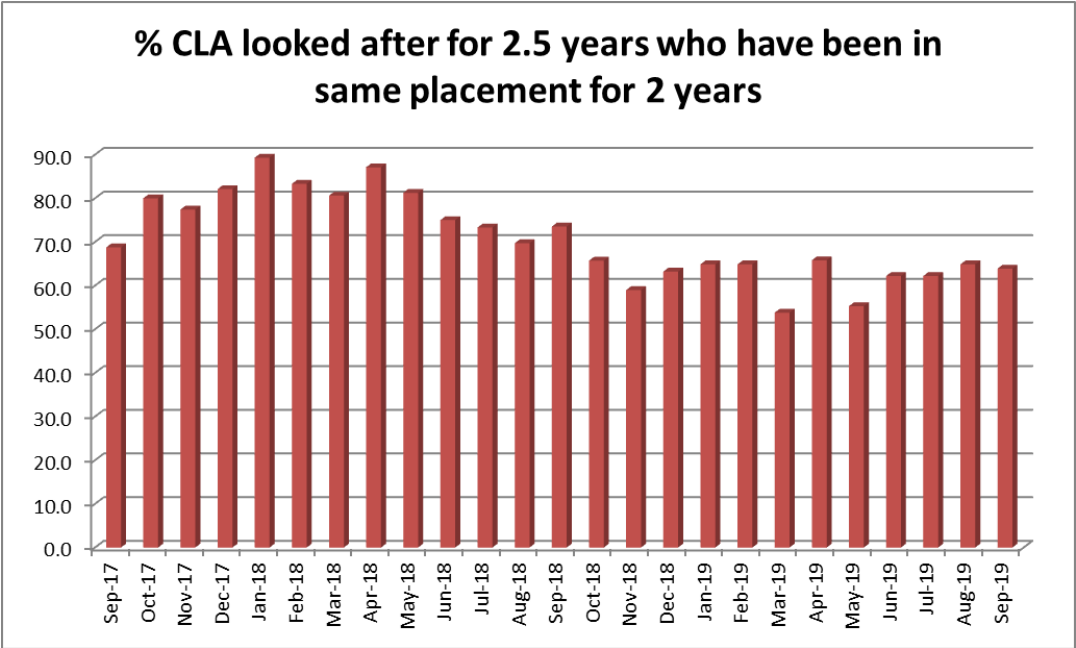
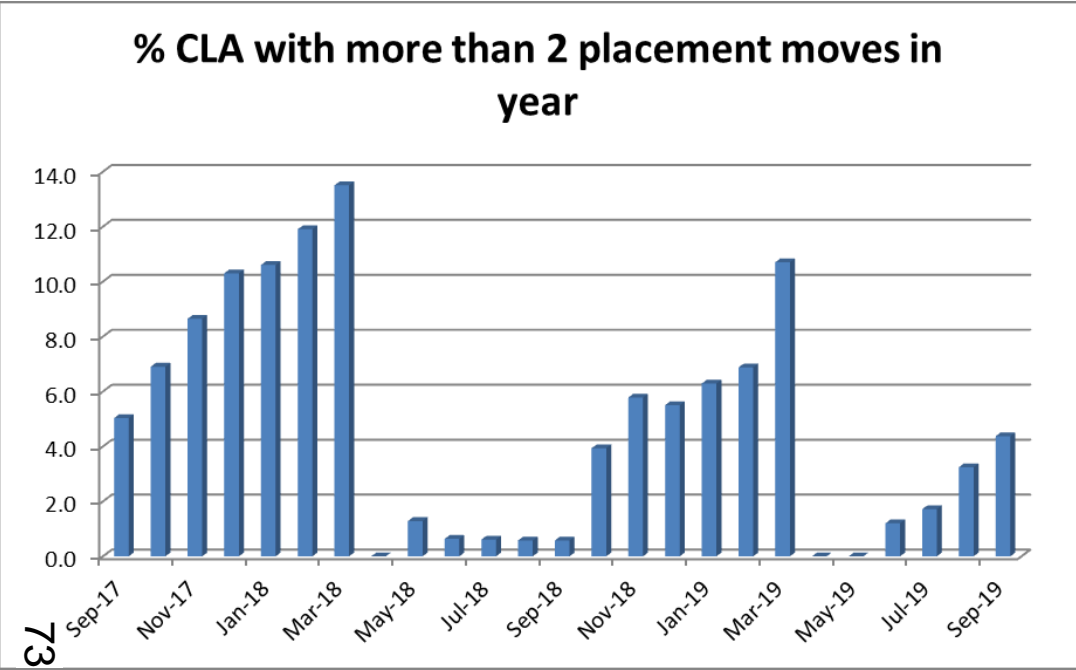
B14 – Children who go missing or are absent



72	Jun-18	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19
Number of CLA recorded as missing (month on month)	3	5	10	8	13	18	7	12	12	13	8	8	11	6	5	9
Number of CLA recorded as absent (month on month)	1	9	3	8	6	6	2	2	4	6	14	7	4	6	2	2

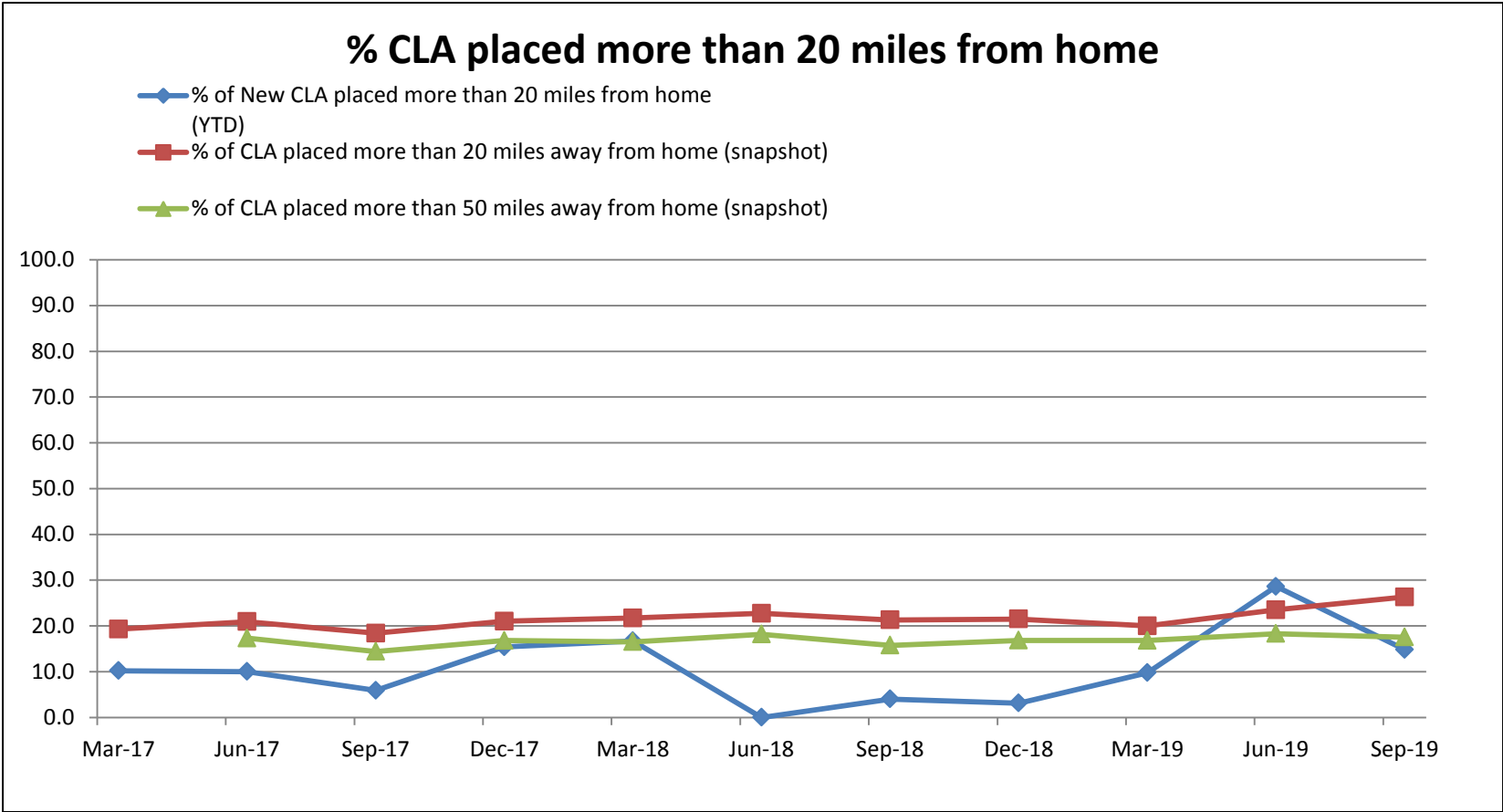
	Sep-17	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Sep-18	Dec-18	Mar-19	Jun-19	Sep-19
% of CLA who had at least one missing incident (year to date)	12.5	12.8	13.2	4.6	8.0	11.7	11.8	10.2	11.9
% of CLA away from placement without authorisation at least on one occasion (year to date)	11.7	11	11.8	4.6	7.6	8.6	14.0	8.6	8.5

The percentage of CLA who’ve had a missing episode during the year has increased with the percentage CLA with an absent episode remaining stable. Missing and absent children continue to remain a focus for Children’s services with weekly and monthly multiagency meetings focussing on repeat offenders. A Runaways Worker is also in post and undertakes return interviews with children who go missing.



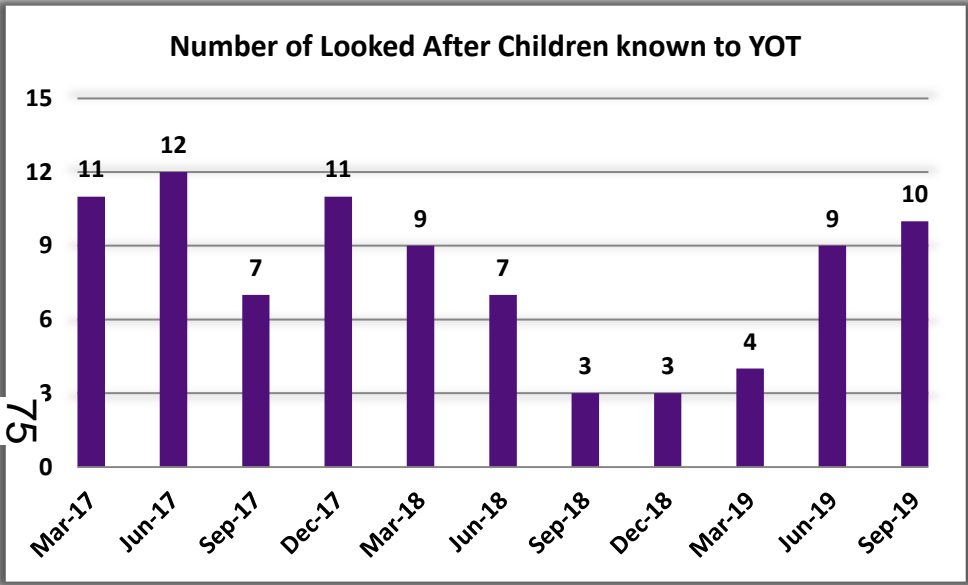
The placement stability of our CLA with respect to moves and length of placements has increased to 4.4% with 8 of our CLA having had 3 or more placements during the year, we are below the England and statistical neighbour averages. There are 23 CLA who have had 2 placement moves whereby another move in the year would have a negative impact on the indicator. The percentage of CLA looked after for 2.5 years who have been in the same placement for 2 years has increased to 63.9% with 23/36 CLA in placement for over 2 years, we are in line with the statistical neighbour average

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The percentage of all new CLA placed more than 20 miles from home has decreased from the previous report to 14.8% due to the overall cohort increasing in size. The percentage of all CLA at the end of each month who are placed more than 20 miles from home has increased slightly from the last quarter with those placed more than 50 miles from home decreasing. In order to give a balanced view, these indicators exclude looked after children who are placed with parents, placed for adoption or are unaccompanied asylum seekers.

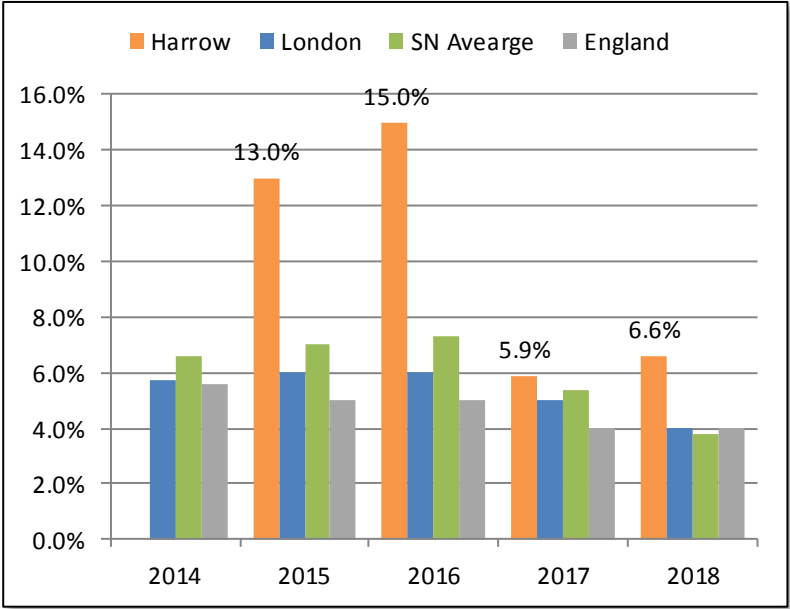
Mar-17	Jun-17	Sep-17	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Sep-18	Dec-18	Mar-19	Jun-19	Sep-19
11	12	7	11	9	7	3	3	4	9	10



The number of Looked After Children known to YOT has increased by 1 in the last quarter. Harrow’s CLA offending rate is higher than comparators – this is being investigated and may be due to the comparatively small numbers of young people who are looked after, and a corresponding tendency towards higher levels of risk and vulnerability amongst this group.

% of children looked after for 1 year+ subject to a conviction, final warning or reprimand during the year

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Harrow		13.0%	15.0%	5.9%	6.6%
London	5.7%	6.0%	6.0%	5.0%	4.0%
SN	6.6%	7.0%	7.3%	5.4%	3.8%
England	5.6%	5.0%	5.0%	4.0%	4.0%



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**REPORT FOR: Corporate Parenting
Panel**

Date of Meeting:	14 January 2020
Subject:	INFORMATION REPORT Virtual School Headteacher's End of Academic Year Report 2018-2019
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Paul Hewitt Corporate Director People Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Christine Robson Schools and Young People
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	No
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	None

This report sets out:

- An overview of the Performance and Standards of Children Looked After (CLA) at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 4
- An analysis of attendance data
- An overview of the work of the Virtual School
- Development priorities for the Virtual School for 2019-20.

Recommendations:

The Panel is requested to note:

- The performance of, and standards achieved, by Harrow's CLA, in particular the improved performance of CLA at the end of Key Stage 4
- School attendance

Reasons for Recommendations:

- So that Members are informed about the outcomes for CLA and can discharge their duties as appropriate

Executive Summary

Harrow Virtual School (HVS) works to ensure that the right support is in place for every child to reach their full educational potential. Working with key stakeholders in education, the VS upholds its philosophy '*Achieving Excellence Together*' with the child at the heart of the school's programmes.

With a population size of 168 pupils in Reception to Year 13, HVS has an adult to pupil ratio of 1:50 respectively. Two-thirds of the Virtual School population are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and White British is the school's largest group .

91% of CLA, regardless of where they live, attend schools which are either 'good' or 'outstanding'. Nearly a half (46%) of CLA are educated outside of the Harrow Local Authority area. This report highlights the following:

Key Indicators of Effectiveness

- Improved performance across Key Stage 4 in Attainment 8 and Progress 8.
- 2% reduction in the number of pupils with a Fixed-Term Exclusion.
- Timely interventions by the VS Educational and Clinical Psychologists to support the educational , social, emotional and mental health needs of students.
- Improved PEP returns from 92% to 100%.
- Increased support for pupils in Key Stage 5.

Areas for Development

- The performance of CLA pertaining to the number of missed sessions although improving remains above England's averages for CLA .
- Attainment and Progress at the end of Key Stage1 and 4 remains an area of focus for Harrow Virtual School.

Section 2 – Report

1. Introduction

Local authorities and their Directors of Children's Services are the corporate parents for CLA .The Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) has the responsibility to promote the educational achievement of children looked after as well as those who are previously looked after (Children and Social Care Act:2017)

HVS works to help overcome the challenges faced by children looked after, as many start with the disadvantage of their pre-care experiences and often, have associated special educational , social, emotional and mental health needs.

The VSH is pivotal in ensuring that children are afforded maximum opportunities to reach their full education potential. The aims of the Virtual School are to mitigate against potential barriers to learning by:

- Ensuring that the educational achievement of CLA is seen as a priority for everyone who has the responsibility for promoting their welfare.
- Having robust procedures in place to monitor the attendance, attainment and progress of CLA.
- Pupil assessments are conducted in a timely manner so children get the right support without drift or delay.

The data provided in this report is from the DfE Statistical Return, the NCER and internal monitoring.

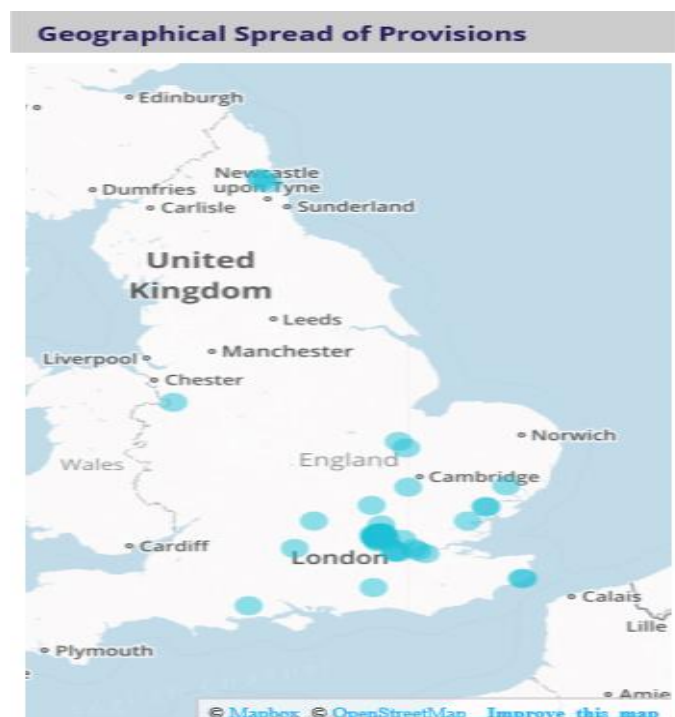
2. Numbers on Roll

There were 94 pupils of statutory school age (SSA, 5-16) on the roll of HVS at the end of the academic year 2018-19. This is 11 pupils less than July 2018. There has been a slight increase in numbers at Key Stage 4 but there was a significant decline at Key Stage 2.

The ratio of girls to boys is 2:3 respectively.

Year Group	Pupil Numbers (Summer 2019)	Phase	Academic Year 2016-2017	Academic Year 2017-2018	Academic Year 2018-2019
11	22	Key Stage 4	40	37	40
10	18				
9	4	Key Stage 3	28	35	30
8	20				
7	6				
6	8	Key Stage 2	40	23	14
5	4				
4	2				
3	0				
2	5	Key Stage 1	11	9	8
1	3				
Reception	2	EYFS	3	1	2
Total	94		122	105	94

CLA School Placements

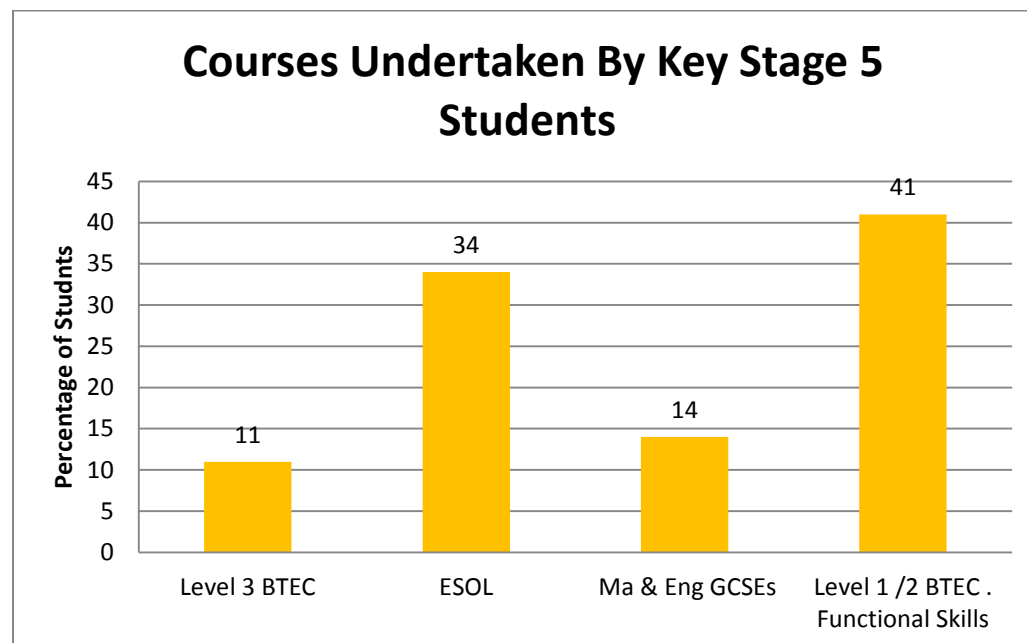


46% of Harrow's looked after students are educated outside of the Local Authority. 91% of Harrow CLA attend schools which are either 'good' or 'outstanding'. The map indicates the locations of Harrow's children.

67 looked after children from other local authorities are educated in Harrow schools. HVS has a duty of care for these pupils.

2.1 Post 16 (Years 12 and 13)

There are 74 students in Key Stage 5. 65% (48/74) of pupils are in Education ,Employment and Training (EET) 92% (44/48) of pupils that are EET are in education.



- Students who did not obtain their Grade 4 or better in Maths and English GCSEs in Year 11 are required to complete these in Key Stage 5.
- English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) courses are usually combined with other subjects, for example, with Maths, English and a Diploma in Vocational Studies.
- Four students at the end of KS5 were awarded university places. Overall 12% (21/178) of our care leavers are at university. This is above the national for CLA which currently stands at 6%. The VS continues to support transitions to Higher Education through our partnership work with universities.

Youth Offending Team (YOT)

- 33% (1/3) of students in Years 12-13 known to Harrow YOT are in education.
- Two of these young people have been identified for support from an Educational Psychologist.

SEN

- There are 10 students in Key Stage 5 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). 60% (6/10) of students with an EHCP are EET.
- 10% (5/48) of students receive SEN support from their college.

- 2 students have had assessments from our CLA Educational Psychologist. The recommendations from these assessments have been beneficial in supporting their needs both at college and in their placements.

Attendance

- 67% (32/48) of students in Key Stage 5 have attendance of 90% or more. 16% (8/48) have 100% attendance.

3. Attainment: 2019 -2019

HVS monitors the performance of all children from entry to care. The DfE, however, only tracks and publishes data for CLA that have been in care for a year or longer. Outlined below is a summary of the performance of CLA by Key Stage. The data is from the NCER.

Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS)

There were no eligible pupils.

Key Stage 1 (KS1)

Key Stage 1 Attainment: 2018-2019			
	Harrow	England Average	London
Reading	33.3%	52%	64%
Writing	33.3%	42%	48%
Maths	67.7%	49%	56%

- There are only 3 pupils in the cohort who have been looked after for 1 year plus. Harrow pupils are above both the England and London average in Maths but are working below the both the England and London average in Writing and Reading. 67.7% of this cohort are on SEN support.
- Harrow pupils have a higher (17) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) score than England average (14) and the London Region (13). A score of 16 and above is considered above the threshold. Interventions are in place to support children's social, emotional and health needs.

Key Stage 2 (KS2)

Key Stage 2 Attainment: SATs 2018			
	Harrow	England Average	London
Reading	66.7 % (1 child working at a greater depth)	49%	55%
Writing (TA)	66.7 % (1 child working at a greater depth)	50%	54%
Maths	66.7 %	51%	57%
RWM	66.7%	36%	43%

- There were 3 pupils eligible to sit the Key Stage 2 SATs in 2019. HVS is well above the England average in Reading, Writing and Maths for attainment.
- 1 child is working at 'greater depth' in both Writing and in Reading.
- Two children (67.7%) met expected standards across all three subjects (Writing, Reading and Maths). The England Average for Reading, Writing and Maths combined is 36%. Harrow CLA (66.7%) are working well above both the England Average and the London Region (43%) for CLA for the combined subjects.
- This is an improved result from 2018 when our CLA were working just below the England Average for the combined subjects.

Pupil Progress KS1-KS2

Harrow CLA (2.68) are well-above both the England (-0.24) and London Region (0.81) average progress score in Reading. This is a similar case for Writing, where Harrow (2.43) is also well above the England (-0.88) and the London Region (-0.57).

Progress in Maths (-3.24) however, is well- below both the England (-0.97) and the London Region (-0.43). The VS will continue to provide pupils with additional support in Maths; there will also be a closer scrutiny of pupils' Maths targets across Key Stage 2.

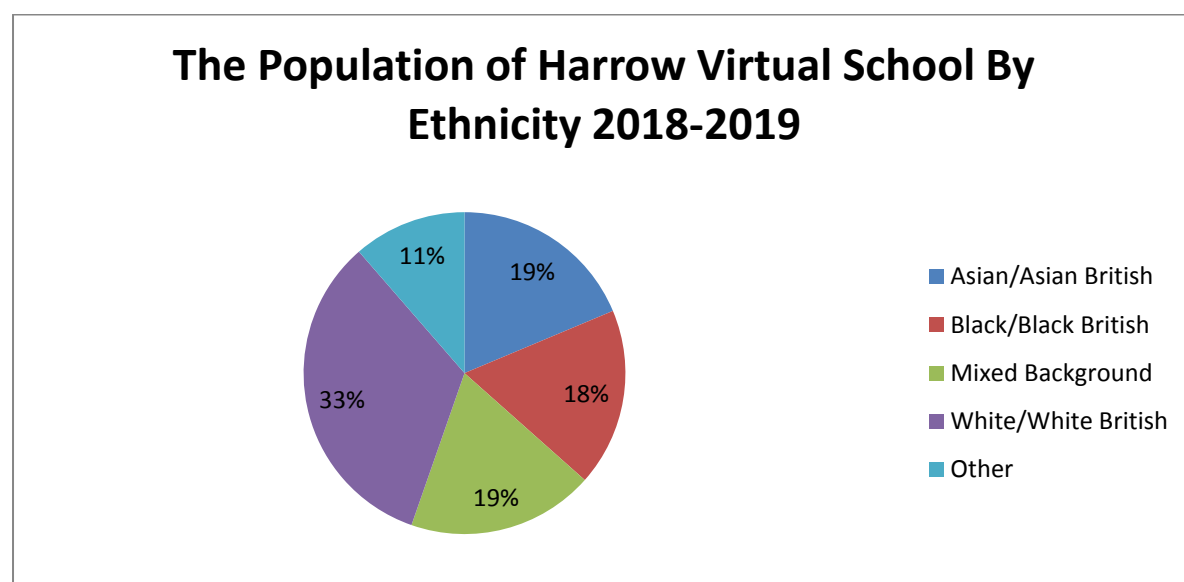
Key Stage 4 (Provisional)

The new Year 11 assessment measures were introduced in 2016. GCSEs for most subjects are now graded from 9-1, where a Grade 9 is equivalent to grade A**, under the old system and a Grade 1 is equivalent to an old grade 'G'. Grade 4 is considered a pass at GCSE and Grade 5 is considered a good pass.

The new Attainment 8 measure calculates the best 8 GCSEs scores. The scores are totalled and then divided by 10. The result gives the pupil an attainment 8 score.

- Attainment 8 for Harrow CLA (31) is above both the England Average (25.1) and the London Region (27). Harrow's Progress 8 score (-1.06) is just below the England Average for CLA (-0.96) and the London Region (-0.81).
- This is an improved result for our CLA as in 2017-18 pupils were working just below (16) the England Average for Attainment 8 and well-below (-1.97) the England Average for Progress 8.
- 60% (3/5) pupils achieved the Standard EBacc for English and 40% (2/5) the Standard EBacc for Maths.
- No child met the EBacc Standard or higher as the maximum number of GCSEs awarded to our students was 7. Eight subjects or more are required for the EBacc.

4. Ethnicity



Our largest groups are White British 33%, followed by Mixed Background and Asian which are both at 19%. 2018-19 saw a decline in numbers of pupils from 'Mixed Backgrounds' by almost 50%. Percentages from other groups of children have remained the same.

HVS continues to support our most vulnerable groups i.e. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (USAC), children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) and children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

The VS has deployed several strategies to support these groups of learners

- English proficiency assessments are undertaken by our school-based EAL consultants. These reports list a range of strategies for schools to support and accelerate learning.
- Weekly online EAL tuition is used to supplement and reinforce learning at school.
- Robust monitoring and tracking of pupils with SEN.

5. Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP)

Nationally 28% of CLA have an EHCP compared with only 2.8% for non-CLA. CLA are ten times more likely to have an EHCP than a child that is not looked after.

In 2019 18% (17/94) of Harrow CLA s had an EHCP. This is an increase of 8.5% from 2017-18. Harrow CLA remains below the England average for CLA with SEN.

88% of pupils with and EHCP are making good progress and continue to be closely monitored by HVS. 29% (5/17) are placed in mainstream schools. All Harrow students with EHCPs attend 'Good' or 'Outstanding' Schools.

There are, however, some students in the HVS with identified learning difficulties who will not meet the criteria for an EHCP. These pupils often attract top-up Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) funding, which is held by the VS. Schools can apply to the VHT for this additional funding.

Educational Psychologist (EP)

Since January 2018 the VS has a dedicated EP who works alongside schools and colleges to support with assessments of students identified with a SEN. These pupils are usually considered to be 'borderline' in terms of meeting the criteria for an EHCP. The EP will not duplicate work that should be fulfilled by schools or the host LAs as a part of their statutory duty.

The EP has undertaken 4 assessments, divided equally between secondary and Post-16 students. Schools have welcomed the EP intervention. The strategies and recommendations provided in the reports have assisted schools in accelerating learning for this group.

6. Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and Pathway Plans

PEPs are held termly at the pupil's school. The Designated Teacher (DT) for CLA usually leads this meeting, along with the pupil, carer and social worker. A representative from HVS attends PEPs for all new CLA or where there are pressing educational concerns. The PEP addresses the following:

- Current Care Plan
- Attainment
- Short and Long-Term Learning Targets
- Attendance

- Pupil Premium Spend
- Education History
- At the end of the Summer Term 2019, 100% of PEPs were in place for pupils aged 5-16. This is a good result. 97% of PEPs were of a good or outstanding quality, our aim is to raise this to 100%.
- 82% of Pathway Plans were in place for CLA in Years 12 and 13 in July 2019. This is slightly higher than the returns for July 2018 which were at 80.6%.
- At the end of July 2019 100% of PEPs were in place for all 3 and 4 year olds.

7. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs)

SDQ scores are monitored via the CLA Education and Health scrutiny group which meets once a term. The group ensures that pupils with identified social and emotional needs, i.e. scoring 17 or above on both the school and carer SDQs, have been referred to the appropriate professional health service. The CLA nurse and the VS Clinical Psychologist monitors this.

The Virtual School is in the process of aligning the education SDQs with the carer and pupil data on our Mosaic System. Our Mosaic Team is supporting with this. It is anticipated that all the SDQs will be triangulated through this database. This will strengthen our intelligence around the specific mental health needs of our pupils.

In 2019 38% (33/85) of our pupils of statutory school age had a SDQ score of 17 or above. These pupils continue to be monitored by our Clinical Psychologist and the CLA Health Team.

At the end of the academic year 2018-19 100% of SDQs were completed by schools. This is an increase of 14% from 2017-2018.

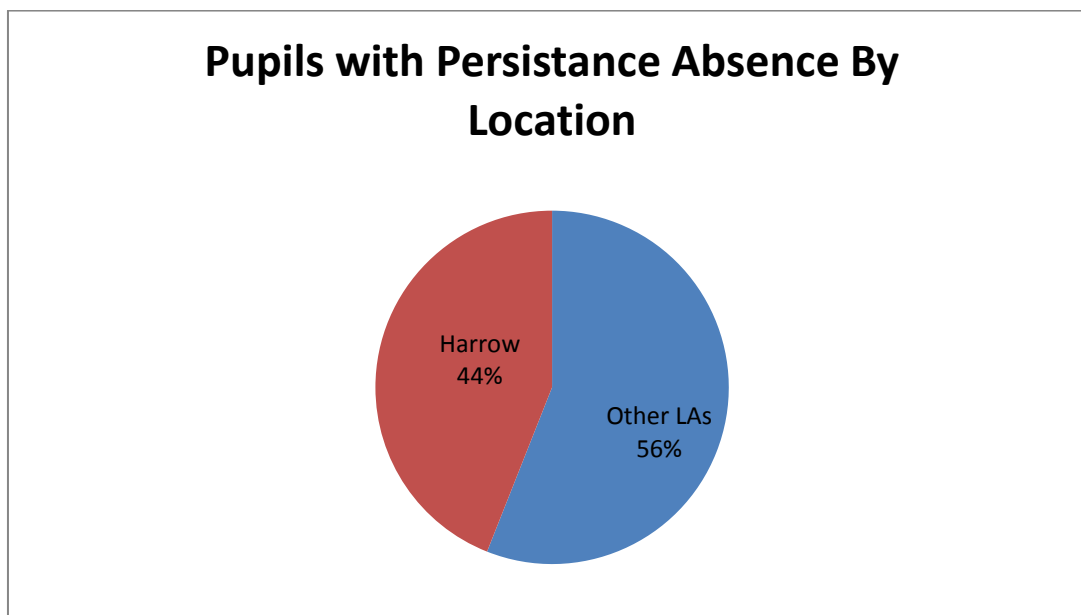
8. Attendance

HVS commissions a company, Welfare Call, to monitor the attendance and exclusions of CLA students. Welfare Call contacts schools daily to ensure that student attendance is tracked closely. The Virtual School Senior Education Officer receives and responds to this information and provides early intervention to prevent situations escalating.

Persistent Absence (PA) and Overall Absence

- The DfE defines PA as an absence percentage of 90% or less. This applies to all pupils that have been in care for a year or longer and attend a mainstream school.
- The Department of Education (DfE) only monitors pupils who are on a mainstream school roll and have been in care 1 year or longer.

However, all pupils are monitored by HVS from their point of entry into care.



- PA is slightly higher for pupils living outside of Harrow. HVS always prioritises pupils living outside of the local authority.
- In March 2019 PA was at 20%. This is well-above the England average (15%) and our statistical neighbours (10%). This area remains a priority.
- The average number of missed sessions is 4.6% which is slightly above the England Average (4.3%) and our SN (4.5%). This is an improved result.

9. Exclusions

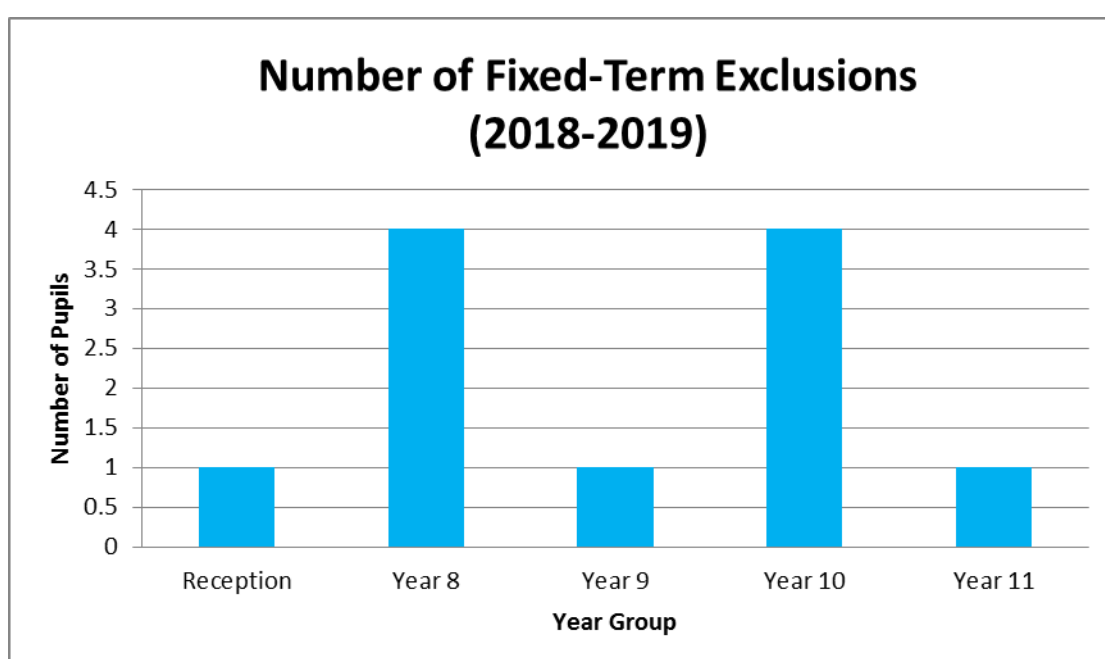
A permanent exclusion (PEX) is the most serious sanction a school can give if a child does something that is against the school's behaviour policy (the school rules). It means that the child is no longer allowed to attend the school and they will be removed from the school roll.

Fixed term exclusions (FTEs) refer to a pupil who is excluded from a school for a set period of time. A FTE can involve a part of the school day and it does not have to be for a continuous period. A pupil may be excluded for one or more fixed periods up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year. This total includes exclusions from previous schools covered by the exclusion legislation. (DfE 2016)

- In the academic year 2018-19 no child, in care for a year or more was permanently excluded. Harrow is doing well regarding

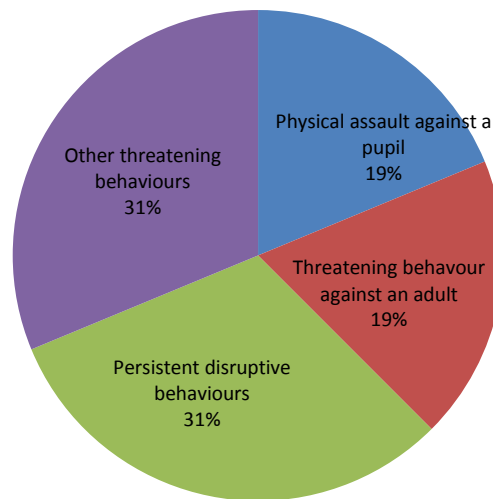
permanent exclusions. We are currently below the England average (0.1%) for PEXs.

- At the end of July 2019 there were 11 students with at least 1 FTE. This is a decrease in the number of students with a FTE from the previous year, where we had 15 students.
- 14.4% (11/76) of Harrow CLA, in care 1 year plus, have at least 1 FTE. Harrow is above both the England Average (13.3%) and our SN (11.4%). Reducing the number of children with a FTE remains a priority for the Virtual School.



In the academic year 2018-19 the highest numbers of FTEs were for pupils in the secondary phase. 72% of the students with at least 1 FTE were male.

Fixed-Term Exclusions By Behaviour Type 2018-2019



The chart above shows a break-down of FTEs by behaviour type. Students may have had more than one behaviour type associated with the exclusion.

- Pupils are more likely to have a FTE for either 'Persistent disruptive behaviours' or for 'Other threatening behaviours'. This mirrors the national picture regarding the reasons behind the FTE; all 4 categories cited in the above chart are in the top five reasons for FTEs as reported by 'The School Run 2019'.
- At least 81% (9/11) of excluded pupils in HVS have an associated mental health need. The children receive support from either CAMHs, Horizons or our Clinical Psychologist.
- The Virtual School continues to build good relationships with our schools and we are often informed when a pupil is about to have a FTE. We have also provided whole school training on 'Attachment and Trauma' for our schools with the highest number of FTEs and vulnerable students. The impact of this, as one school reported, was a 70% reduction in pupils having an internal exclusion.
- Harrow (11.4%) has improved on its number of FTEs and is now below the national average (13.3%) and in line with our statistical neighbours (11.4%) for CLA with at least 1 FTE.
- The national average for non-CLA with 1 FTE is 1.92%. The number of FTEs of children in the VS remains a priority.

10. Professional Development for our Key Stakeholders

Harrow Virtual School offers a range of courses for our key stakeholders in education.

Online Training

41 school practitioners embarked upon online courses as cited in the table below. Each participant studied on average 2 courses. Participants were from Primary, Secondary, Special and FE establishments.

Impulsive Behaviour	ADHD and Conduct Disorders	Bereavement
Social Media, Selfies and Sexting	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity – Children and Young People	Children and Domestic Violence
Supporting Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children	Young Carers	Children and Parental Substance Misuse
Online Safety and Cyberbullying	Physical and Learning Disabilities	Teenage Challenging Behaviour
Social Media, Selfies and Sexting	Working with Children and Young People with Disabilities	Autism
Supporting Pupils with Mental Health Difficulties	Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder	Self-harming Behaviours
Sexualised Behaviour	Secondary Trauma and Workplace Stress	Children and Parental Mental Health Issues
Emotion Coaching	The Role of the Designated Teacher	Working as Part of a Team
Supporting Pupils with Unmet Attachment Needs	Working as Part of a Team	Children and Domestic Violence
Communicating with Children and Young People	Understanding Dyslexia and Dyspraxia	Supporting Travelling Families

Annual Training for Designated Teachers (DTs) New To Role

This was attended by 13 participants and the following areas were covered:

- The Role of the DT
- CLA School Audits
- Reporting to school governors
- Supporting the educational needs of previously looked after children
- Presentations by CLA Nurse, foster carer, a DT and an IRO to highlight joint working regarding CLA

- Attachment awareness

Feedback Themes

- A deeper understanding around the needs of CLA
- To consider new approaches for working with CLA and PLAC i.e improve lesson planning
- Conducting a review of school practice in relation to CLA- using the Audit Tool
- Develop systems of reporting to school governors
- To review their practice on everything from today

Mental Health Training for Schools

Course Aims:

For participants to increase their understanding of the mental health needs and common difficulties in children looked after, learn practical strategies for supporting vulnerable students to reach their full potential in school, and increase their confidence in identifying mental health difficulties in students that may require additional support.

Feedback Themes

- Understanding the different disorders and how these relate our working lives.
- Engaging with us and tailoring discussion points to the group.
- Good examples – helpful information on PTSD.
- I like the fact that it was delivered by s a Clinical Psychologist. Often training comes from Educational Psychologist, but the clinical perspective was useful.
- Useful overview of mental health challenges although not related just to CLA.

Next Steps

Further training will be offered to schools and carers in the next academic year on 'Attachment and Trauma' and 'Identifying the Mental Health Needs' of children'

11. Enrichment

The enrichment on offer for CLA and Care leavers has tripled over the past year. Please see the Virtual Headteacher's Enrichment Report (October 2019) for further details.

12. Pupil Premium Plus

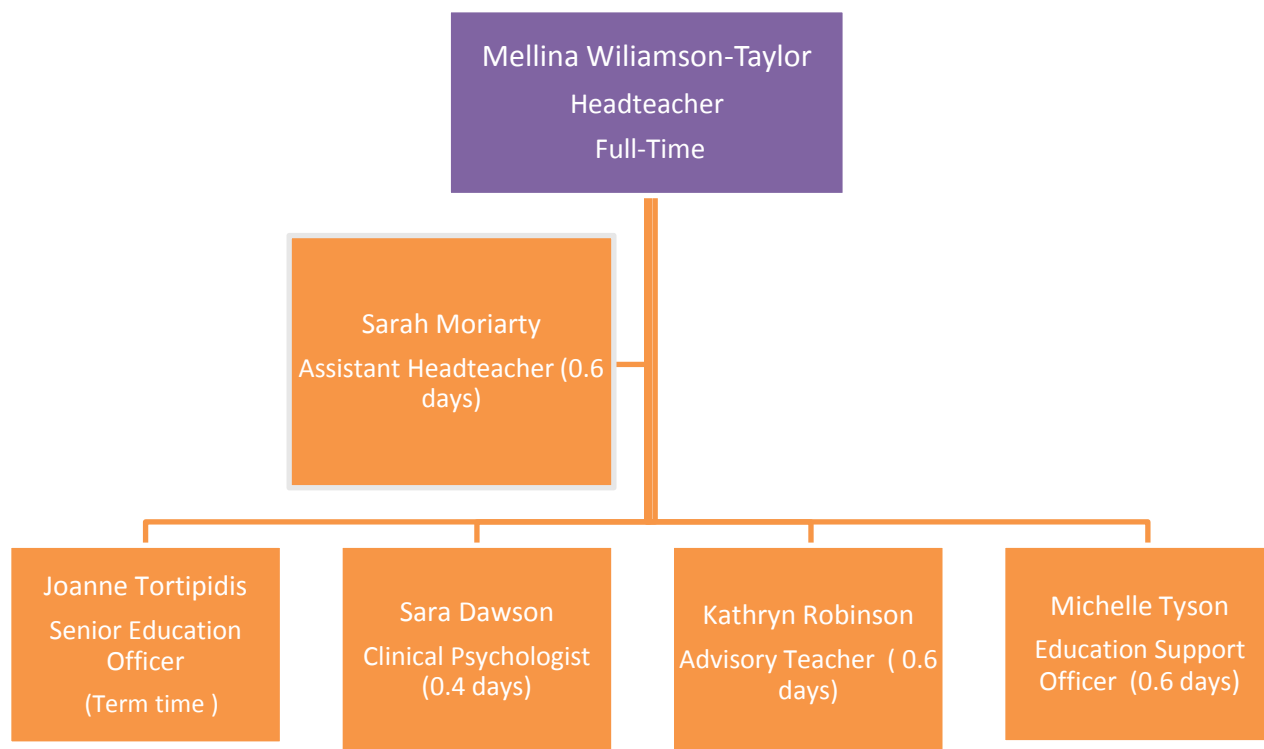
The Department for Education (DfE) allocates to local authorities a provisional amount of £2300 per child looked after for at least one day, as recorded in the March children looked-after data return (SSDA903), and aged 4 to 15 at 31 August. The DfE updates and finalises this allocation in December based on the number of children looked after.

Harrow Virtual School works to a 'child's needs driven' model which is monitored via the PEP process. The termly PEP reviews provides evidence of PPP spend and how progress is monitored and measured. The PPP is 'top-sliced' and schools receive £1500 per child a year.

The remaining budget is used to support a range of activities and interventions to raise the attainment of CLA. This includes, but not exhaustive of the following:

- Enrichment activities for students
- Attendance monitoring
- e-PEP service
- Training for schools, social workers and carers
- 1:1 tuition
- 1:1 mentoring
- VS staffing
- ALP placements
- Pupil resources
- Top-up pupil premium of schools
- Educational Psychologist Support

13. Virtual School Staffing



Clinical Psychologist

In recognition of the increasing numbers of children with school attendance issues related to social, emotional and mental health difficulties. A Clinical Psychologist (CP) was employed last Autumn Term to support the Virtual School to:

- Provide advice and consultation with school staff and social workers regarding the mental health of looked after children.
- Advise and support with formulation and risk assessment.
- Liaise with CAMHS and other mental health services to ensure that looked after children access and engage with the support they need.
- Design and develop courses for parents, teachers, social workers and others involved with the education of children and young people.
- Develop and apply effective interventions to promote psychological wellbeing, social, emotional and behavioural development, and to raise educational standards.

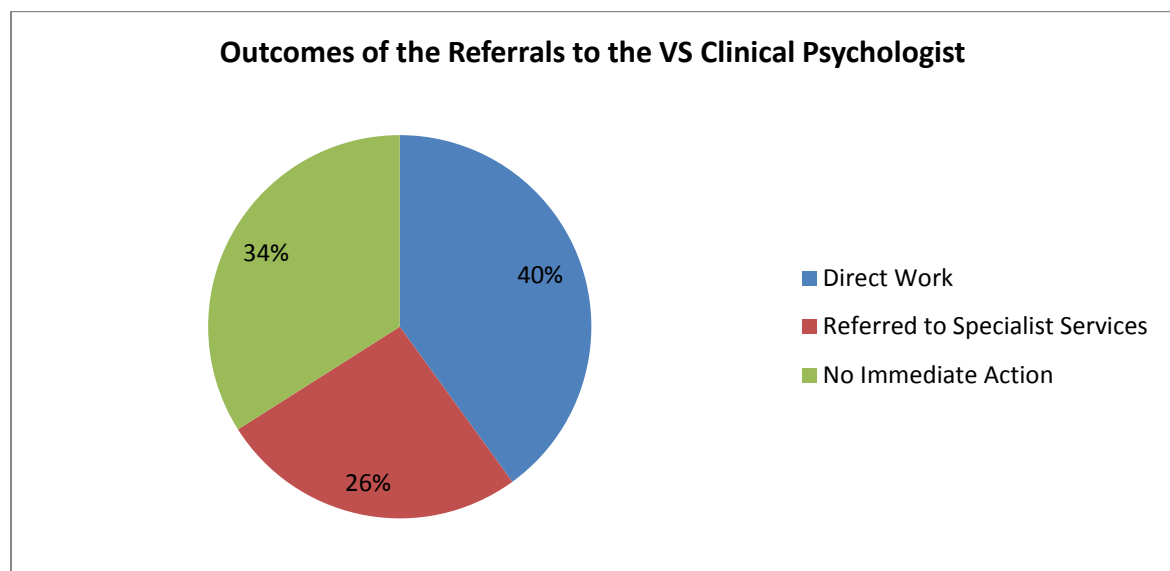
The VS CP has been in post for just over a year and the following has been put in place so far:

- Training for schools and foster carers in 'Identifying Mental Health Needs in Vulnerable Groups'.
- School holiday workshops for groups of children on emotional regulation uses their 5 Senses.
- Provided case supervision for 5 schools and strategies were successfully in put place.

- The CP is integral to the joint Harrow health meeting with CAMHs , Horizons and our CLA Health Team.
- Currently working with our Mosaic Team so the school SDQ scores sits alongside the carer SDQ scores on the database.

CP Referrals

There has been 35 referrals to date from social workers and the Virtual School. 74% (26/35) of referrals are for CLA and the remaining 26% (9/35) are for Previously Looked After children.



- 40% (14/35) of referrals received has resulted in direct work with the young person, schools and carers.
- In 26% (9/35) of cases the child needed more intense work. The CP supported schools and social workers in referring pupils to specialist services in their local area. This has included referrals to Horizons, CAMHs and Tiger.
- 34% of referrals resulted in 'no immediate action'. For example, the child was already receiving support from CAMHs or the child's symptoms showed signs of improvement.

Outcomes:

- Where children needed to be seen, an appointment is made within 2-3 weeks from the point of initial contact.
- The referrer has a response time of typically within a week.
- The intervention from the CP has stabilised home and school placements.
- Schools have a point of contact within the VS when they are concerned about a child's mental health.

Our CP has also provided 'ad-hock' face-to-face and telephone consultancy for schools, carers and social workers.

14. Development Priorities

For HVS to work effectively with schools and other key partners to raise the overall performance of CLA by closer tracking, monitoring, and targeted support for:

- Boys across the school
- SEN pupils, particularly those at risk of fixed-term exclusions
- Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 3 progress and attainment
- Post-16

To improve:

- Progress from KS1 to KS2 in Maths from -3.24 to 0 or above
- Attainment in KS1 Reading from 33% to 52% or above
- Attainment in KS1 Writing from 33% to 42% or above
- Persistent Absence from 20% to 15%

16. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications as this report is for information purposes.

17. Financial Implications

The Virtual School and associated activities in 2018-19 was funded from a combination of council general fund budget of £122k and the Children Looked After Pupil Premium Grant of £368k.

18. Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

The weak performance of particular underachieving groups is a concern and the Local Authority through the Harrow School Improvement Partnership has established a 'Closing the Gap' strategy to ensure that all groups achieve in line with the high standards of achievement in Harrow. The strategy is focussed on supporting and challenging individual schools to improve the quality of their provision, so that all groups achieve well against their peers.

19. Council Priorities

This report provides information on the performance of underachieving groups, and as such is focused on making a difference for the vulnerable. Educational performance and standards are critical in making a difference to the life chances and aspirations of families and communities. A well-educated and skilled workforce secured through quality educational provision in Harrow, contributes significantly to local businesses and industry, within and beyond Harrow.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Jo Frost



Chief Financial Officer

Date: 18th December 2019

Ward Councillors notified:

NO, this is an information report only

EqlA carried out:

NO

EqlA cleared by:

N/A information report only

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Mellina Williamson-Taylor

Headteacher, Harrow Virtual School for CLA, PLAC and Care Leavers.

Mellina.williamson-taylor@harrow.gov.uk

020 8416 8852

Background Papers: None

Call-In Waived by the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

NOT APPLICABLE*