

APPENDIX



Harrow Council
Review of Children's Social Care
January 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Peopletoo were commissioned by the LGA and Harrow Council in December 2016 to support the Council to undertake a review of spend within Children's Social Care.

The intended outcome of the review is to provide an external evaluation of the Council's position regarding spend and budget planning in Children's Social Care, in particular the extent to which budget pressures were due to circumstances outside of the Council's immediate control or whether there were areas for improvement in budget management.

To this end, this review considers the following:

- How demand for Children's Social Care services in Harrow compares with its statistical neighbour comparators, and what trends are identifiable over a 3-year period.
- How spend on Children's Social Care in Harrow compares with its statistical neighbour comparators.
- What is understood as being the key drivers of demand which enables the Council to project future demand.
- An analysis of current spend to establish the extent to which the Council is efficient in managing the costs of its demand, and whether there are further opportunities for greater efficiency.
- A high level review of the approach to and effectiveness of Early Help services in reducing demand.

This review took place over a period of 15 days, including consultation on the findings and final feedback.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank colleagues in Harrow Council who have contributed to this review.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Harrow is experiencing increasing pressure in the demand for Children's Social Care as evidenced by the increase in demand across all key performance areas since 2014. Whilst this still means that demand in Harrow is lower than its statistical neighbours in all cases, this gap is narrowing, and this is putting pressure on a social care budget that has conversely reduced in this same period.

The brief of this review was to establish whether evidence suggested that these budget pressures were due to circumstances outside of the Council's immediate control, or if there were aspects of the way that Children's Social Care was being managed that could be improved to drive financial efficiency.

Our review concludes that, notwithstanding some areas of potential efficiency, there is evidence to suggest that finances are well managed within Children's Social Care in Harrow, and that budget pressures can be attributed to some key emerging, external factors.

The evidence for this is detailed in this report, but primarily we have established two key factors that are driving demand:

- The increase in population, with a particular increase in the wards of higher deprivation.
- The increase in the diversity of ethnicity within the Borough. This not only brings additional demand because some communities are statistically more represented in the social care cohort than others, but additionally, because the community is so diverse, this brings a significant range of differing complexities to manage, some of which incur more cost.

As part of this review, we were also able to evidence the increases in the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers entering the Borough, and the difficulties caused by a lack of housing provision to support families leading to a stark rise in families vulnerable to homelessness. Whilst we also found some evidence of increases in gang culture and knife crime, we recommend that their impact is better evidenced if they are to be conveyed as factors increasing demand.

We have analysed a range of areas where cost can be high if not managed appropriately. Whilst we make some recommendations in this regard, we are confident based on the evidence seen that cost is being managed well. This is further evidenced by CiPFA data, which shows that, overall, Harrow's unit cost spend is lower than that of its statistical neighbours.

We conclude that the approach to Early Help in recent times has not effectively supported the reduction in demand. We acknowledge that the Council is aware of this and is in the process of significantly changing this approach to make it more effective, and agree with its direction of travel. However, this new

approach will take time to embed and demonstrate outcomes, and hence is unlikely to reduce the pressure on social care budgets in the short to medium term.

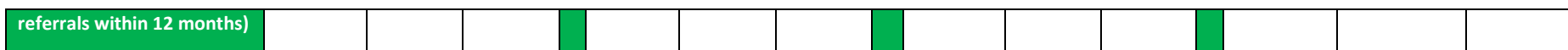
3. KEY FINDINGS

3.1 DEMAND TRENDS AND BENCHMARKING

This section considers demand for Children's Social Care Services over a 3-year period and then considers how current performance compares with its statistical neighbours.

Table 1 - Benchmarking of Demand in Harrow against Statistical Neighbour, Regional and England Average Data (source LAIT).

Category	Harrow			Statistical Neighbour Average			Regional Average			England Average		
	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016
Children in Need per 10,000	307.00	281.40	320.50	302.1	311.44	326.01	367.80	370.60	355.30	346.40	337.30	337.70
Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan per 10,000	32.80	30.40	34.20	37.53	38.01	38.04	37.40	40.60	37.90	42.10	42.90	43.10
Looked After Children per 10,000	30.00	29.00	32.00	42.50	41.30	41.00	54.00	52.00	51.00	60.00	60.00	60.00
Referrals per 10,000	412.90	334.00	431.70	464.1	479.08	471.12	469.60	477.90	491.30	573.00	548.30	532.20
Re-Referral Rates (% of referrals that are re-	11.70	12.20	11.50	16.66	18.38	16.67	16.20	15.90	16.00	23.40	24.00	22.30



Key Findings

- Demand for Children's Social Care services in Harrow has increased in all key areas except re-referral rates since 2014.
- Table 2 below shows that the rise in demand across all areas except re-referrals since 2014 contrasts with statistical neighbours, regional and national averages. All rises are more than statistical neighbour, regional and national averages – in some cases demand across comparators have reduced.

Table 2 – Percentage changes in demand in Harrow compared to statistical neighbour, and regional and national averages.

Category	Change in Demand in Harrow 2014-16	Change in Statistical Neighbour Average 2014-16	Change in Regional Average 2014-16	Change in National Average 2014-16
Rate of Children in Need	+13.5%	+7%	-3.3%	-2.5%
Rate of Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan	+4%	+1%	+1.3%	+2%
Rate of Children Looked After	+6%	-3%	- 5.8%	No change
Rate of Referrals	+22.6%	+1.4%	+4.4%	-7%

- Despite these increases, demand in Harrow is still less than the average of its statistical neighbours, and regional and national averages when compared with.
- **However, as demand has increased in this period, this gap is closing.**

This report therefore considers why demand, and hence the spend required to manage demand, is increasing, and considers one of two possible scenarios:

- That demand has risen and is rising at an expected level due to changes in demographics and emerging needs and that these need to be resourced accordingly to address this.

- That there are recommendations that can be made to improve the efficiency of demand management and the cost of managing demand.

3.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN HARROW

To understand the context of the demand for Children's Social Care services in Harrow, we have considered the following:

- Indices of Deprivation.
- Changes in the Population of Harrow.
- Changes in the Ethnicity of Harrow.

3.2.1 Deprivation

Harrow is ranked 213th out of 326 Districts in England (1st being the most deprived). This has improved since 2010, when the Borough was ranked 184th. Overall Harrow's ranking has been heading in the direction of 'less deprived' compared to previous indices in 2007 and 2010. It is ranked the 6th least deprived borough out of the 33 London Boroughs, an improvement of one place on the 2010 rankings and of 3 places on the 2007 rankings.

- In 2 of the 7 domains of deprivation, Harrow's position has worsened since 2010, based on the national rankings. These are in Crime (131 to 91 out of 326) and Education, Skills and Training (316 to 303 out of 326).
- Harrow's position for Barriers to Housing remained at (48 out of 326). This is by far the domain in which Harrow compares most poorly with local authorities nationally, and, given the links between vulnerable housing and social care need, this is significant for Harrow in managing demand.
- Harrow has improved slightly in the remaining 4 domains of Income Deprivation (90 to 132 out of 326), Health and Disability (272 to 277), and Employment (213 to 217).
- 2 of Harrow's LSOAs are amongst the top 20% most deprived in England for Multiple Deprivation. This is an improved position since 2010, when 3 of Harrow's LSOAs were in England's most deprived 20%.

- Harrow's top 10 most deprived LSOAs are distributed right across the Borough, highlighting the pockets of deprivation within Harrow. This can make demand more challenging to manage as it does not easily support the concept of targeting resources at areas of most need.

3.2.2 Population

Harrow has experienced a population increase of 13.4% between 2001 and 2011.

Table 3 – Overview of the change in population 2001 – 2011.

% Population 2001	% Population 2011
206,814	239,056

The following table shows where these increases have occurred across Wards, showing in the final column the deprivation ranking within the Borough of each Ward. The significance of this for Children's Social Care demand is explored in Section 3.3.1.

Table 4 – Change in population by Ward 2001 – 2011 overlaid with deprivation rankings.

Ward	% Population 2001	% Population 2011	Percentage Change	Deprivation Rating in Harrow (1 being the most deprived, 21 being the least)
Belmont	9506	11,343	+ 16%	18
Canons	10,091	12,471	+ 19%	11
Edgware	9,832	11,653	+ 15.6%	6
Greenhill	9,324	12,420	+ 24.9%	3

Ward	% Population 2001	% Population 2011	Percentage Change	Deprivation Rating in Harrow (1 being the most deprived, 21 being the least)
Harrow Weald	10,345	11,376	+ 9%	5
Harrow on the Hill	10,632	12,270	+ 13.3%	10
Hatch End	10,098	10,693	+ 5%	17
Headstone North	9,522	10,093	+ 5.6%	20
Headstone South	9,366	11,135	+ 15.8%	16
Kenton East	9,888	11,138	+ 11.2%	9
Kenton West	10,277	11,173	+ 8%	14
Marlborough	9,207	12,259	+ 24.8%	4
Pinner	9,601	10,026	+ 4.2%	21
Pinner South	9,555	10,411	+ 8.2%	14
Queensbury	10,055	11,984	+ 16.1%	12
Raynor's Lane	10,038	11,124	+ 9.7%	19
Roxbourne	10,947	12,828	+ 14.6%	2
Roxeth	10,538	11,663	+ 9.6%	8

Ward	% Population 2001	% Population 2011	Percentage Change	Deprivation Rating in Harrow (1 being the most deprived, 21 being the least)
Stanmore Park	9,339	11,229	+ 16.8%	7
Wealdstone	8,963	11,934	+ 24.8%	1
West Harrow	9,690	10,373	+ 6.5%	13

3.2.3 Ethnicity

Harrow has experienced a significant change in its ethnicity between 2001 and 2011, with the percentage of BAME population increasing from 50.1% to 69.1.

Table 5 – Overview of the change in ethnicity 2001 – 2011.

Ethnicity	% Population 2001	% Population 2011
White British	49.9%	30.9%
White Irish	4.38%	3.1%
White Other White	4.49%	8.2%
White and Black Caribbean	0.66%	1%
White and Black African	0.31%	0.4%
White and Asian	0.98%	1.4%

Ethnicity	% Population 2001	% Population 2011
Other Mixed Heritage	0.88%	1.1%
Asian - Indian	21.91%	26.4%
Asian - Pakistani	2.09%	3.3%
Asian - Bangladeshi	0.46%	0.6%
Asian - Chinese	1.24%	1.1%
Other Asian	5.19%	11.3%
Black - Black African	2.73%	3.6%
Black - Black Caribbean	2.96%	2.8%
Black - Other Black	0.45%	1.8%
Other	1.38%	1.4%

3.3 WHY DEMAND FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IN HARROW HAS INCREASED – AN ANALYSIS

To further understand the context of the demand for Children's Social Care services in Harrow, we have considered evidence relating to the impact of demographic changes and emerging trends on social care demand:

- Increase in population.
- Changes in ethnicity.
- Evidence of particular or emerging needs.

3.3.1 Increase in Population

- Harrow has experienced a population increase of 13.4% between 2001 and 2011. Assuming that these increases have continued, they go some way to explaining the rise in social care demand since 2012, where Children in Need rates per 10,000 have increased by 35.3%, Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan per 10,000 by 30.9%, Looked After Children per 10,000 by 9%, and referrals by 35%, though, even taking into account some rises nationally, these increases are still in all cases clearly greater than the rises in population.
- In analysing the 6 Wards with the biggest increases in population, these are:
 - Greenhill – 24.9% (Deprivation Ranking 3)
 - Wealdstone – 24.8% (Deprivation Ranking 1)
 - Marlborough – 24.8% (Deprivation Ranking 4)
 - Stanmore Park – 24.8% (Deprivation Ranking 7)
 - Canons – 19% (Deprivation Ranking 11)
 - Harrow Weald – 11.2% (Deprivation Ranking 5)
- Five of the six Wards experiencing the highest increases in population are within the top 7 most deprived wards in Harrow. As these population increases have not positively impacted upon deprivation rankings, it may therefore be assumed these rises are due to families of similar vulnerability moving into these Wards. An analysis of the source of referrals to social care supports this assumption – more referrals come for these Wards, therefore a rise in population in these Wards is leading to a rise in social care demand.

- Taking into account rises in social care demand that may be expected to be comparable with national rises, this may help to explain why the rise in social care demand has increased at a higher rate in Harrow than by pure population – namely that the biggest rises are being seen in the most deprived Wards, hence more vulnerable families. However, this assertion is slightly offset by the statistics provided previously which show that, overall, Harrow is becoming slightly less deprived, though this still does not negate the pressure on social care being presented by the increase in population alone.

3.3.2 Changes in Ethnicity

- Harrow has experienced a significant change in its ethnicity demographic between 2001 and 2011, with the percentage of BAME population increasing from 50.1% to 69.1%. Assuming that this has at least maintained and in some cases increased, this can have implications for social care if not always in a rise, but certainly in complexity and the need to be able to respond to cultural differences. An analysis of the ethnic demographic in Harrow shows there are a wide variety of different cultures, not just a small number of predominant communities, and this makes managing these complexities more difficult.
- In analysing the 6 Wards with the biggest increases in the percentage of BAME community, these are:
 - Belmont – 22.4% (Deprivation Ranking 18).
 - Roxbourne – 18.2% (Deprivation Ranking 2).
 - Canons – 12.4% (Deprivation Ranking 11).
 - Harrow Weald – 11.2% (Deprivation Ranking 5).
 - Stanmore Park – 10.5% (Deprivation Ranking 7).
 - Raynor's Lane – 10.2% (Deprivation Ranking 19).
- The impact of changes in ethnicity are less clear when considered at Ward level, as the increases are more spread across Wards with greater differentials in deprivation. However, it is still worth noting that 3 of the 6 Wards with the greatest increases are in the top 7 most deprived Wards.
- Of more significance, however, is the proportion of social care cases across the different ethnic communities. Table 6 below shows the percentage of cases recorded in children's social care by ethnicity, compared with their representation in the community. The purpose of this is to identify if

needs within particular communities may be greater, and hence make a case for the change in ethnicity in Harrow putting pressure on children's social care.

Table 6 – Proportion of social care records across ethnic groups compared to their proportion of the community.

	2015-16	% of cases	% of overall community (2011)	% change in recorded cases from 2012-13 to 2015-16	% change in population 2001-2011
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	14	0.4%	0.6%	40.00	+0.14
Asian or Asian British - Indian	209	5.8%	26.4%	19.43	+4.5%
Asian or Asian British - Any Other Asian background	751	20.9%	11.3%	88.69	+6.2%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	138	3.8%	3.3%	21.05	+1.02%
Black or Black British - African	377	10.5%	3.6%	70.59	+0.9%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	183	5.1%	2.8%	31.65	-1.1%
Black or Black British - Any Other Black background	146	4%	1.8%	58.70	+1.35%
Mixed - Any other Mixed background	189	5.2%	1.1%	48.82	+0.2%
Mixed - White and Asian	67	1.8%	1.4%	31.37	+0.4%
Mixed - White and Black African	48	1.3%	0.4%	92.00	+0.9%
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	142	3.9%	1%	24.56	+3.4%
White - White British	459	12.8%	30.9%	-6.52	-10.8%
White - White Irish	52	1.4%	3.1%	18.18	-1.1%
White - Traveller of Irish Heritage	29	0.8%	N/K	190.00	N/K
White - Any Other White background	416	11.6%	8.2%	210.45	+3.7%
White - Gypsy/Roma	1	0.02%	N/K	-75.00	N/K
Other Ethnic Groups - Any other ethnic group	324	9%	1.4%	87.28	+0.02%
Chinese	1	0.02%	1.1%		-0.14%
Other - Information not yet obtained	34	0.9%	N/A	-24.44	N/A
Refused	1	0.02%	N/A		N/A
Grand Total	3581			51.29	N/A

Key Findings

- Cases of social care intervention in all major ethnic groups except the White British category have increased since 2012/13.
- However, the statistics above show there are a number of ethnic groups in Harrow that are more represented in children's social care than they are in the community (based on 2011 census statistics and assuming similar representation in 2015/16). These are:
 - Asian or Asian British – Any Other Asian Background: 20.9% in social care compared to 11.3% in the community.
 - Black or Black British – Black African: 10.5% in social care compared to 3.6% in the community.
 - Black or Black British – Black Caribbean: 5.1% in social care compared to 2.8% in the community.
 - Mixed – Any Other Mixed Background: 5.1% in social care compared to 1.1 % in the community.
 - White and Black Caribbean: 3.8% in social care compared to 1% in the community.
 - White – White Other: 11.6% in social care compared to 8.2% in the community.
 - Any Other Ethnic Groups: 9% in social care compared to 1.4% in the community.
- The rises in representation within the social care population between 2012/13 and 2015/16 are seen across almost all groups, but most acutely seen in the White Other White, Mixed White and Black African, and Asian Other Asian groups.
- This highlights some of the challenges that Harrow faces in managing the impact of demographic changes on its social care demand, namely:
 - As stated above, Harrow has experienced a significant change in its ethnicity demographic between 2001 and 2011, with the percentage of BAME population increasing from 50.1% to 69.1%.
 - This does not in itself prove that social care demand will be higher, but in Harrow's case there are a number of its different ethnic groups who are overrepresented in its social care population, implying that these communities can indeed have greater needs.
 - The wide diversity of communities brings a range of challenges, from linguistically to understanding cultural differences, to exploring placement options for children who need to be accommodated, which can not only be complex but can involve the need to explore options within extended families who may be living in the country of origin.

- If we are to assume that the percentages of ethnic diversity in Harrow have more or less continued to 2015/16, the fact that these ethnic groups have all increased in number in Harrow since 2001 helps to explain why demand for children's social care demand has continued to increase.
- If we are to assume that the percentages of ethnic diversity will remain, we may also assume that this pressure will continue.

3.3.2 Homelessness

- Of the domains of deprivation that are likely to have the most impact on social care demand, Harrow compares most unfavourably in relation to "Barriers to Housing" – it ranks 48

Table 7 – Couples with Dependent Children / Pregnancy found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17 (projected based on first 2 Quarters)
Couples with Dependent Children / Pregnancy found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need	131	166	226
Couples with Dependent Children / Pregnancy accommodated	989	1532	1692

Table 8 – Reasons for eligibility for assistance due to being unintentionally homeless and in priority need

Reason for Acceptance, %	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17 Q1+Q2
Loss of private rented accommodation	73.9	70.3	70.3
Parents not willing/able to accommodate	8.6	8.1	8.9
Others no longer willing/able to accommodate	7.1	7.4	5.8
Breakdown of relationship with partner – violent	4.3	3.7	4.6
Breakdown of relationship with partner – not violent	0.4	1.6	0.0
Other harassment or violence	1.1	1.7	1.2
Mortgage or Rent Arrears	3.6	6.0	5.0
Other	1.1	1.2	4.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Key Findings

- Couples with Dependent Children / Pregnancy found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need have increased year on year 2014/15 to 2016/17 with a projected 72% rise across this period and a projected 36% rise just in the last year.
- The predominant reason for requiring assistance is the loss of private rented accommodation. Whilst this is to be expected across the above categories, in itself it implies that families are struggling to maintain accommodation for a combination of reasons including financial and the availability of suitable housing.

3.3.3 Increase in Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

As well as an increase in the BAME community, Harrow has also experienced a rise in the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers coming into the Borough.

Table 9 –Number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children looked after as at 31 March.

	2014	2015	2016
Harrow	25.00	30.00	30.00
Statistical Neighbour Average	26.67	29.50	34.50
Regional	970.00	1230.00	1440.00
England	2050	2740	4210

Key Findings

- Whilst the numbers entering Harrow are marginally less than their statistical neighbours, they still represent a sizeable, increasing and complex cohort
- It is also expected that the level of entry into the Borough will continue as Harrow are on the London rota, whilst because the population is so ethnically diverse, it increases the diversity of children who may seek asylum in Harrow through existing family contacts or within a community that they have some connection with.

3.3.4 Gang Culture

During the course of this review we were informed that Harrow was facing the challenge of an increase in gang culture amongst young people. We were made aware of increased tensions between Graham Park Estate (group known to Barnet) where a number of young people from Harrow have been saying

Graham Park males have been coming over to Harrow “looking to cause trouble with Harrow young people”, and increased cross Borough issues around Ealing / Northolt area where some of the incidents have taken place.

Whilst this does not necessarily imply a social care need and the extent of “gang culture” is hard to quantify in social care terms, it does imply an increase in young people’s vulnerability. However, if this were to be used as a way of explaining increased demand, the link between gang culture and social care need would need to be more strongly evidenced.

3.3.5 Knife and Offensive Weapon Crime (committed by young people)

As part of this review we were informed that Harrow was experiencing a significant increase in the number of stabbing incidents within the Borough alongside an increase in the numbers of young people convicted of knife offences.

Statistics provided by the Youth Offending Service are shown below:

Table 10 – Knife crime statistics 2013/14 to date.

Offence	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17 (to date)
Having an article with a blade or point in a public: 3	5	8	7	6
Possession of an offensive weapon: 3	5	9	19	14

Key Findings

- The total of knife crime related incidents has risen year on year from 10 in 2013/14 to a projected 27 in 2016/17 (as there have been 20 in the first 3 quarters of the year).
- There have been 12 known stabbings alone since May 2016.
- Convictions for knife crime, as might be expected, are more common with older young people, particularly those aged 15/16.
- The majority of the young people convicted were new to the criminal justice system.
- The statistics in this section relate to convictions for offences. They do not include the numbers of young people carrying knives who state they do so for their own personal safety but who put themselves at risk of offending by carrying them and also implying the increase in young people anecdotally reporting that they feel unsafe (see 3.3.5 – Crime).

As with gang culture, whilst an increase in knife crime amongst young people does not necessarily prove a link to the increase in social care demand, it does imply a greater level of vulnerability. Section 3.6, for example, does evidence that a key reason for the Council needing to source residential provision is due to aggressive behaviour. However, as with gang culture, if this were to be used as a way of explaining increased demand, the link between knife crime and social care need would need to be more strongly evidenced.

Recommendations from Section 3.3

- There is evidence that Children's Social Care in Harrow is under pressure due to increased population, the nature and location of these increases, a continued change in its ethnicity demographic and the associated challenges that this brings, and the pressures caused by housing and homelessness.
- Whilst this report is able to evidence an increase in vulnerability to homelessness on a statistical basis, the timescales of this review have not enabled us to explore or evidence in more depth the reasons behind so many families being unable to sustain private rented accommodation, challenges of housing stock or what the Council is doing to manage an increasing problem. These areas should be explored further.
- The links between some emerging trends which imply vulnerability and their impact upon social care demand need to be made more explicit if they are to be conveyed as contributors to greater demand.

3.4 BUDGET OUTURNS AND BENCHMARKING OF SPEND

3.4.1 Budget and Spend 2014/15 -2016/7

The table below shows the trend of budget for and spend on children's social care between 2014/15 and the projections for 2016/17.

Table 11 – Budgets and Outturns

Year	Budget (£m)	Outturn (£m)
2013/14	£22,657	£22,178
2015/16	£22,145	£22,394

Year	Budget (£m)	Outturn (£m)
2016/17	£20,750	£26,457 (projected)

3.4.2 Comparator of Spend with Statistical Neighbours

Table 12 - Comparator of spend using CIPFA Interactive Tool

Area	Harrow	Statistical Neighbour Average
Net Expenditure by Head of Population 0-17	£3,427	£3,540
Services for Children and Young People	£51	£42
Children's Social Care 0-17	£582	669
Safeguarding Children and Young People Services	£206	£156
Social Work per 0-17	£109	£123
Children Looked After	£200	£235
Residential Care	£61	£55
Fostering Services	£64	£92
Adoption Services	£19	£21
Education of Children Looked After	£4	£2
Special Guardianship Support	£5	£9
Leaving Care Support	£22	£20

Area	Harrow	Statistical Neighbour Average
Other Children Looked After Services	£15	£24
Services to Asylum Seeking Children	£9.9	£2.1
Commissioning and Services Strategy	£95	£31
Local Safeguarding Children's Board	£257	£238
Total Services for Young People aged 13-19	£143	£125
Universal Services for Young People 13-19	£81	£62
Targeted Services for Young People 13-19	£62	£63
Sure Start / Children's Centres	£35	£62
Family Support	£50	£67

Key Findings

- The Budget for Children's Social Care since reduced year on year from 2014/15 to 2016/17.
- However, in the same period, spend as displayed as "outturns" has increased year on year to its highest level of projected spend of £26,457m and the largest overspend (£5,707m).
- In terms of placement management, which in terms of exploring efficiency is the focus of the scope of this project, all key placement budgets (indeed all apart from Adoption Allowances, Mother and Baby, and Semi Independent Placements) are being exceeded by spend, with the largest outlier being external residential placements. These variances between forecast and outturn have increased year on year since 2014/15. Our review explores in sections 3.5 to 3.7 whether this is due to a lack of diligence around spend or whether the spend is to be expected and hence a case can be made for budget growth to meet demand.

- Whilst the scope of our analysis of spend is focussed on placement management, our observation of the budget for children's social care shows further projected overspends in most areas, with the Children in Need and Section 47 teams being particular outliers.
- **Of significance though is that Harrow compares favourably with its statistical neighbours in the comparison of its overall unit cost spend.** This suggests that, despite pressures, Harrow's Children's Social Care is managing its finances well.

3.5 ADOPTION PERFORMANCE

This section considers Harrow's performance in relation to adoption, with comparators with its statistical neighbours.

Table 13 – Adoption Scorecard indicator comparisons (source Adoption Scorecard 2015: Department for Education).

Indicator	Harrow	Statistical Neighbour Average	Harrow – as at present time (2016)
Average time (days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (for children who have been adopted), 2012 – 15.	339	588	As at end September 2016 – 426 days.
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 (days), 2012-15.	104	218	As at end September 2016 – 189 days.
Children who wait less than 16 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (%), 2012-15.	77%	40%	As at end September 2016 – 80%.
Adoptions from care during 2012-15 (% leaving care who are adopted).	6%	9.2%	From April to end November 2016 – 6.3% (5 children).
Number of children waiting to be placed for	5	18.6	As at end September 2016 – 15 children had a best interest decision

Indicator	Harrow	Statistical Neighbour Average	Harrow – as at present time (2016)
adoption (as at 31 March 2015).			made for adoption. As at end of November 2016, 5 children were subject to a Placement Order and all 5 are currently placed with adopters.
Average length of care proceedings locally during 2012 – 15 (weeks).	37	44.3	-
Children for whom the permanence decision has changed away from adoption during 2012 – 15 (number and %).	10 (23%)	22.3%	-
Adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds during 2012 – 15 (% of BME children leaving care who are adopted).	15 (5%)	6.6%	See table below.
Special Guardianship Orders granted (number and %).	2014 – 10% 2015 – 10%	2014 – 9.75% 2015 – 10.75%	Between April to end November 2016 – 9 children (11.4%).

Table 14 – Adoption data provided by Harrow Council.

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Number of Adoptions	10	5	10
Ethnicity			
Asian or Asian British - Any Other Asian background	0	0	1
Asian or Asian British - Indian	4	0	0
Black or Black British - African	1	0	1
Black or Black British - Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed background - Any other mixed background	0	2	1
Mixed background - White and Black African	0	1	0
Mixed background - White and Black Caribbean	0	0	1
White or White British - Any Other White background	1	2	0
White or White British - English	1	0	3
White or White British - Irish	0	0	1
White or White British - Irish Traveller	0	0	1
White or White British - Polish	0	0	1

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
White or White British – Romanian	1	0	0
Age at adoption			
0	0	1	0
1	6	2	3
2	2	1	3
3	1	1	2
4	0	0	1
5	0	0	1
6	0	0	0
7	1	0	0
Adoption agency			
Coram	8	5	8
Agency Other than Coram	2	0	2

* As Harrow does not assess adopters, all enquiries are assessed and approved by Coram.

Key Findings

- In relation to the performance reflected in the Adoption Scorecard (2012 – 2015), Harrow is performing significantly better than its statistical neighbour average in all areas other than the percentage of children adopted from care, the number of children for whom the permanence decision has changed away from adoption and the number of adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Data that has been provided regarding Harrow's performance for 2016/17 shows that performance for adoption timeliness (the first 2 indicators in the above table) has declined when compared to its average across 2012 – 15. It is reported that 2 children have been adopted who were classed as challenging to identify suitable matches for given their health issues and disabilities. This may account for the deterioration in timeliness for this financial year. However, the percentage of adoptions from care has slightly increased. Whilst it is perhaps irrelevant to comment on Harrow's current performance regarding the timeliness of adoption without benchmarking from statistical neighbours being available, it is still worth highlighting given the cost management implications if delays in moving children into adoption placements are encountered once a Placement Order has been granted.
- It is noted there have been 9 children who have left care via Special Guardianship Orders in 2016/17 to date and these should be taken into account when discussing permanence given the legal status awarded to the carer who secures the order.
- In relation to data provided by Harrow Council (table 12), it is noted the number of children adopted in 2014/15 was half that of the previous year and 2015/16.
- There are a variety of children with differing ethnicities who have been adopted; the challenge this will inevitably bring when family finding is acknowledged.
- In 2015/16, 8 out of the 10 children adopted were 3 or under. There has only been 1 child adopted who was over the age of 5 (aged 7) over the past 3 years. However, it is reported there is currently 1 child aged 9 years in an adoption placement waiting for her Adoption Order to be granted. It is reported there are fewer children having Placement Orders granted within Harrow which is reflected nationally, and plans are being changed to permanence via long-term fostering within the Court arena which is again reflected nationally.

- Coram is responsible for Harrow Council's domestic adoption service and have held a contract with Harrow for 10 years. Coram undertake the adoption matching process on behalf of the Council using their pool of approved adopters recruited via Coram's head office. The current contract was renewed on 1 April 2016 and is effective for 12 months at a cost of £121,812. The key performance indicators that Coram are required to meet are to achieve 10 Adoption Orders each financial year, achieve a move for children into their adoption placement quicker than the national average (593 days), and also achieve an adoption match quicker than the national average (223 days) from the date the Placement Order was granted. In exploring this contract, it was noted that over the past 3 years, 10 Adoption Orders have been achieved in each financial year other than 2014/15 when this figure only reached 5. It was confirmed that other tasks are requested of Coram when this situation is faced, such as the completion of Special Guardianship assessments, life-story work, fostering to adopt assessments, and post-adoption support where there is a gap in service. The relationship between the Council and Coram is described as positive and there is no plan to review this function. Where adopters cannot be identified from Coram's pool, they will search nationally for an appropriate match. If a match is made outside of Coram's pool, the inter-agency fees are met by Harrow Council.

Recommendations

- We acknowledge that adoption performance reflected in the Adoption Scorecard is good. However, the highlighted decline in timeliness within 2016/17 in comparison to previous performance is worth further exploration. This would provide an analysis of whether this apparent decline is of concern, or whether it is manageable moving forward given the small cohort of children this concerns which could impact significantly on timescales.
- The age of children progressing into adoption is worth further exploration given the very low numbers of children aged over 5 that have been adopted over the past 3 years; this is coupled with the higher number of adoption plans that are changed away from adoption in comparison to statistical neighbours.
- It would be worth determining whether the number of children from diverse ethnic backgrounds requiring adoption is beginning to impact on the timeliness of family finding and changes of plans away from adoption given their potentially challenging specific matching requirements.
- We accept the relationship between the Council and Coram is long-standing and positive, however, given the recent decline in timeliness seen in 2016/17 the low numbers of children moving into adoption placements over the age of 5 years, and the higher number of adoption plans that are

changed away from adoption, it would be worth undertaking a cost benefit analysis to determine if this contract continues to provide value for money or whether this service could be provided via a different model or a change in contract specification.

3.6 REVIEW OF LAC PLACEMENT SERVICES

Key Findings

3.6.1 Fostering, Adoption, LAC, Care Leavers and Unaccompanied Minors and Access to Resources teams

- The Fostering and Adoption Service sits within Placement Services and has 1 team manager and 2 deputy team managers. The service is responsible for recruiting and supporting foster-carers, assessing Connected Persons, and also all aspects of adoption other than the recruitment of domestic adopters and family finding for children who have a plan of adoption. The team undertakes inter-country adoptions, private fostering assessments and their oversight, step-parent adoptions, Special Guardianship assessments and subsequent support, adoption support and birth record counselling. In relation to the specific fostering service, the team has 3 supervising social workers to support foster-carers and 2 assessing social workers for prospective foster-carers (1.5fte), along with a Training and Development Officer. There are additional supervising social workers for the Connected Persons team which sits under the Fostering and Adoption team manager's remit. There is 1 agency social worker employed within this team to support capacity issues. This individual is over and above the full team complement and if this post was to be removed, caseloads would increase further.
- The Children Looked After team has 1 team manager, 1 deputy team manager and 7 social workers, 2 of whom are newly qualified and 1 is an agency social worker who is in post to meet the increased demand being experienced within the team. The team report there has been an increase in the complexity of the children and young people transferring to their service over the past couple of years. It is reported this team is holding cases that it should not be given its remit; this is currently being explored to understand the rationale for this. There is a risk the team may become diluted and lose focus on those LAC it is working with if cases are being held that should be held by the Safeguarding teams especially as caseloads within the CLA team has increased. It is reported the team should hold cases of 12 – 13, but this has increased with the highest being 21 and the lowest being 15. The deputy team manager is also holding a caseload of 4. It is acknowledged there is an agency social worker in this team who is over and above the full complement of the team, and therefore, if this post was to be removed caseloads would again increase.

- The Leaving Care and Unaccompanied Minors team has 1 team manager, 2 deputy team managers, 4 social workers and 4 social work assistants (personal advisors). There is an agency social worker in this team to meet the increased demand experienced, and this post is over and above the full complement of staff. The average caseload for both the social workers and social work assistants is around 20 – 21. This used to be 16 – 17 but the increase has been seen in the past year. If the agency social worker was not in post, caseloads would inevitably increase further. The Leaving Care team report the new cohort of Care Leavers they have, who are transferred at age 18, are more complex than experienced with previous cohorts.
- The Access to Resources team is managed by 1 team manager who is supported by 1 deputy manager, 1 Family Group Conference manager, 3 Placement Officers, contact supervisors, the No Recourse to Public Funds officers, 1 finance officer and 1 business support officer. This team is responsible for undertaking searches for placements for LAC both in-house and externally including semi-independent accommodation and Care Leavers accommodation. The team is responsible for the commissioning of placements and the individual placement contracts produced between the Council and provider. It is also responsible for the new Family Group Conference service that has recently been brought in-house.
- It is reported that approval for an additional permanent post within the teams who currently have an agency social worker over and above the current complement of staff has been agreed, and funding will be available at the start of new financial year. This will meet current demand to some degree, however, if demand continues caseloads will continue to rise as caseloads reflected above include those held by agency workers.

3.6.2 Placement Sufficiency Strategy

- The Placement Sufficiency Strategy was reviewed along with its associated action plan. The strategy is effective from 2015 – 17 and the action plan was updated at the end of December 2016 but detail was minimal and did not appear to be SMART. In addition, it appears the action plan had not previously been updated. The strategy reflects the trends that Harrow was experiencing at the time of its development in 2015, and is reported to have been developed in partnership with commissioning, housing, LAC and Care Leavers along with staff representatives from Children's Services. The Access to Resource team manager has ownership of the strategy and updating the action plan under the supervision and direction of the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting. The strategy is due for review in September 2017. Whilst it is accepted that any strategy needs to be "owned" by one or two individuals to ensure version control, the Placement Sufficiency Strategy does not appear to be owned by the whole of the Corporate Parenting service or its key stakeholders. It also appears the update of the action plan was undertaken in isolation from key stakeholders. This

leads to a conclusion that the strategy and its progress against agreed actions has insufficient governance arrangements. The service acknowledged the ownership of this strategy and its action plan could be improved, and should be reviewed and owned by a wider audience of key stakeholders.

3.6.3 The Fostering Payment Scheme and Foster-Care Recruitment Strategy

- The fostering payment scheme for in-house foster-carers is simple with only one main payment made for all in-house carers, and the usual banding payments to reflect the child's age regarding their birthday and festival allowances. It is reported this payment scheme is deliberately simple to avoid overly complicated allowances. Supervising social workers are able to request time-limited enhanced payments on behalf of their foster-carers upon sufficient evidence being produced. This payment scheme reflects the fact there is only one category of foster-carer outside of the short-breaks and placement with parent cohort. The ethos is that foster-carers are supported to meet the needs of the individual child or young person they have in placement rather than to have "specialist" foster-carers who are approved to have a complex child or young person placed with them. The Council has previously attempted to recruit foster-carers for more complex children but found this was unsuccessful as those carers were generally new to foster-care and were not sufficiently resilient. Instead, the Council has found it more effective to train, develop and support their current cohort of carers to meet this need.
- The Foster Care Recruitment Strategy 2015 – 17 was reviewed to determine its effectiveness. Although the strategy is still technically in date, some of its content is no longer accurate as interim updates have not been made. Therefore, as a strategy it would benefit from an early review in light of this, and also the recommendations within this review, to ensure the strategy reflects the Council's way forward regarding placement sufficiency. It also does not have an associated action plan to enable the monitoring of progress.

3.6.4 In-house residential and semi-independent provision

- The Council no longer has any in-house residential or semi-independent provision. It is reported there had been two residential homes but the last one was closed in 2012, and had been used to provide accommodation for LAC aged 16 plus. However, at that time the cost of the in-house provision was greater than that commanded by the use of external provision, therefore, it was not cost effective. It is reported the Council does not have the appetite to revisit the possibility of in-house residential provision given the expense incurred, and the lack of suitable and affordable properties in the local area, and instead is working with the West London Alliance via its pricing framework to ensure costs are maintained at as low a level as possible. The Council is also working with their preferred providers to support them to grow the market and to provide more local provision including accommodation required for Care Leavers.

3.6.5 Staying Put Arrangements

- In 2013/14 there were 9 Care Leavers in Staying Put arrangements, in 2014/15 this reduced to 4 and in 2015/16 this increased slightly to 5. The carer receives a weekly fee of £178 for the young person, making this choice of accommodation very cost effective. This means a weekly total cost of £890 (5 young people x £178) and an annual total cost of £46,280 (52-weeks x £890).

3.6.6 LAC Placement Approval Process

- The approval process for initiating a search for a placement is robust and approval is set at the Head of Service level. Whilst this has been reported by the LAC service as time consuming given the number of times approval is required through the placement finding process, it evidences tight oversight and management.
- There is a functioning Access to Resources Panel and a Challenge Panel in place where approval is sought for resources, and also high cost placements are reviewed to determine their continuing suitability. There is also a tripartite panel which includes health colleagues, however, it is reported to be difficult to secure health funding. This issue is not specific to Harrow.

3.6.7 Family Group Conferences

- We understand the approach to Family Group Conferences (FGC) in Harrow has recently changed following the ending of a contract with Forward4Families in September 2016. The Council has made the decision to provide the service in-house, and hence it is not in a position as yet to evidence impact. However, under the previous arrangements, the Council spot purchased the service at a cost of £1350 per FGC. The Council has determined that a FGC provided by the in-house service will cost an average of £850 showing significant savings.
- There was a total of 63 FGC referrals made to Forward4Families between 1 April to 15 December 2016. Of these, 47 FGCs were completed, 14 did not proceed and 2 are currently in progress. There were also 6 FGC reviews completed, 2 reviews did not proceed and there are 7 reviews in progress.

- The in-house FGC service is managed by a full-time manager who reports to the Access to Resource team manager. The process is currently underway to recruit an initial pool of 5 FGC co-ordinators in year 1 who will be contracted to work when FGCs are required only. This will then be increased to 10 FGC co-ordinators in year 2. This new service is to be robustly and routinely reviewed to evidence impact, as this had been an issue with the previous provider.
- The Council's use of FGCs is being addressed as currently there is a tendency to request them at a very late stage, therefore, the service is trying to shift the culture within the workforce and aim to hold FGCs at a much earlier stage. FGCs are not yet routinely used in all appropriate cases and neither are they routinely used to support the exploration of rehabilitation plans.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that an analysis of the potential increase in caseload size is undertaken to determine the number of social workers that may be required over the next 3 years if demand continues at the current pace. As there are no support workers in the teams aforementioned, it is recommended that an analysis of the tasks that support workers could undertake which are currently undertaken by social workers is completed. This would determine whether it is feasible to create additional but cost effective posts to support social workers with tasks that are currently undertaken by social workers out of necessity rather than requirement. This would ensure that social workers are focusing on tasks they need to do given their remit. This analysis to be undertaken alongside the analysis on the impact of caseload size.
- Given the increasing demand in LAC numbers and the continued pressure this is placing on the provision of both in-house and external placements, it is recommended the Placement Sufficiency Strategy is reviewed as soon as possible rather than wait until September. This would ensure the strategy is as robust as it can be and fully reflects the increasing diversity and complexity of both the current and future LAC cohort moving forward. It is also recommended the strategy is reviewed via a series of workshops to ensure all stakeholders are involved with its revision including the Lead Member for Children, Virtual Head, Designated Doctor, Future in Mind service, CAMHS, housing, commissioning, representatives from the LAC and Care Leaver population and representatives from all areas of Children's Services including the Children with Disabilities service, and also a representative from Adult Services given transition processes. Once the strategy is revised, it is recommended that governance arrangements are put in place via pre-planned meetings to oversee the progress of the action plan and to ensure ownership of the strategy across all relevant service

areas. In this way, the strategy will become a valuable document and one which is "live" and responsive to the needs of the service moving forward.

- It is accepted the Council has previously attempted to recruit specialist foster-carers which appeared to be unsuccessful. However, it is recommended the Council re-visit their approach to foster-care recruitment and development of approved carers in light of current and increasing demand which is resulting in the continued use of expensive and external provision. It is accepted the provision of in-house foster-placements has been fairly consistent over the past seven years, but there has been an increase in the use of external residential children's homes. The performance of the Fostering Service is not in question, however, the financial pressures being experienced necessitate the need to review the approach to the recruitment of foster-carers. Whilst this is a challenging area to many Councils, there are examples elsewhere of different approaches to this issue that Harrow could consider that go beyond the traditional methods of recruitment and foster-care scheme. These include:
 - Commissioning the service externally or commissioning the recruitment of the foster-carer element to a specialist marketing agency, or being more creative in how recruitment is targeted (this is based on research by the Fostering Network who explored the motivations for people to become foster-carers and how this should inform recruitment strategies).
 - The Council could also consider the development of currently approved and experienced foster-carers to move to the provision of foster-placements classed as "step-up" and "step-down" placements with comprehensive and responsive wrap around packages of support. This cohort of carers would be enabled to develop the skills and resilience required to support LAC who are leaving residential placements but where it is too soon to move into a mainstream foster-placement, and also those LAC who may otherwise need to move into residential provision as mainstream foster-placements are not meeting their needs. The Council's "Future in Mind" service due to commence in April 2017 will be critical to the success of such wrap-around packages, as will buy in from other agencies such as YOS, and a specifically developed foster-care payment scheme.
- The Foster Care Recruitment Strategy should be reviewed alongside the review of the Placement Sufficiency Strategy to ensure they dovetail effectively. The Foster Care Recruitment Strategy is also one which would greatly benefit from having an associated action plan and robust governance arrangements in place to ensure progress against its highlighted objectives are being achieved in a timely fashion, and to enable the strategy to continue to reflect accurately the demands on the service.

- It is accepted the Council does not wish to revisit the provision of in-house residential or semi-independent provision. However, given the projected annual cost of the current cohort of LAC placed externally has been calculated as £4.3 million, it may be appropriate to undertake a financial viability exercise to determine if this may now offer part of the solution to reducing external placement costs going forward.
- Given the increasing demand within Children's Social Care and the corresponding increase in LAC numbers and therefore placements, it could be suggested the Council should not wait to increase its number of FGC co-ordinators until following review. Instead, it should consider an immediate jump to year 2 as an "invest to save" opportunity, along with a review of expectations for when FGCs should take place. There is a risk that demand for FGCs may not increase if the service is slow to respond due to lack of capacity. The more successful the service is the more demand will increase. FGCs have a proven track record in safely preventing children and young people from being accommodated, and also supporting their safe rehabilitation where appropriate when they have been brought into care. For example, Leeds City Council used the FGC process to safely reduce their high LAC numbers and secured innovation funding to expand their programme further.
- It is acknowledged that community based provision has and is currently being explored within Harrow, such as childminders and faith groups, to support children and young people from needing to become accommodated. However, it is recommended this exploration is prioritised and organisations already well established such as Safe Families for Children are again revisited as this could support in the reduction of LAC numbers moving forward.
- Although this review has not analysed the process regarding the securing of health funding for appropriate LAC placements, there could be a potential opportunity to review the Council's approach where criteria of need are met. A full review of SEND cases could be undertaken as a desk-top exercise using the pre-assessment checklist that is contained within the Department of Health's "National Framework for Children and Young People's Continuing Care, 2016." Any cases identified as "severe" or "priority" or have 3 categories of "high" in any of the 10 domains, should be presented to the CCG for consideration for further assessment with a view to securing additional health funding.

3.7 REVIEW OF HIGH COST PLACEMENTS

3.7.1 Demand trend and benchmarking of external foster-care and residential placements in Harrow

The table below shows the percentage of LAC placed in external foster-care provision from 2010/11 to 2016/17 compared to in-house provision. This figure excludes Connected Persons placements.

Table 15 – Percentage of LAC placed in external foster-care provision compared to in-house provision from 2010/11 to 2016/17 (Source: Harrow Council).

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17 as at November 2016
In-house	33.1%	39.6%	37.4%	20.1%	32.3%	36.5%	37.2%
External	21.4%	13.2%	22.2%	23.1%	25.7%	13.3%	13.6%

The table below shows the percentage of LAC placed in external residential children's homes from 2010/11 to 2016/17 compared to in-house provision. The reduction of in-house provision reflects the closure of the Council run children's homes.

Table 16 – Percentage of LAC placed in external residential children's homes compared to in-house provision from 2010/11 to 2016/17 (Source: Harrow Council).

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17 as at November 2016
In-house	2.8%	5%	1.8%	1.2%	0%	0%	0%
External	6.2%	5.7%	4.7%	7.1%	6.6%	12.2%	9.5%
Total %	9%	10.7%	6.5%	8.3%	6.6%	12.2%	9.5%

Key Findings

- The above tables highlight the current level of external placement provision at 23.1%. This total reflects 13.6% of the LAC population placed in external foster-placements, and 9.5% in external residential provision (children's homes). At the time of writing this review, the LAC population was 199. The remainder of the LAC cohort are placed within in-house foster-care placements (37.2%), Connected Persons placements (13%), and a percentage are in adoption placements, placed at home with parents or in semi-independent or independent living placements.
- The data highlighted in the above table demonstrates that external foster-care placement management is good, as although the percentage of LAC placed externally reached a peak in 2014/15 (25.7%), this was almost halved in the subsequent 2 years.
- The data highlighted in the above table shows that the percentage of LAC placed in external residential provision between 2014/15 was 6.6% but this almost doubled (12.2%) in 2015/16. This figure has since reduced to 9.5% as at November 2016. This current figure is the highest percentage apart from 2015/16 since 2010/11. Given the closure of the Council run residential homes, an increase in this percentage is somewhat inevitable.
- It is noted that the demand for residential placements had remained fairly static until the closure of the Council run residential homes when the figure reached a peak of 12.2% in 2015/16 but this reduced to 9.5% in the subsequent year. This also demonstrates that placement management in this area is good.

3.7.2 External foster-care and residential placements – current position

There are 27 LAC currently placed in external foster-care placement via Independent Fostering Agencies, and 19 LAC currently placed in external residential provision. The financial position relating to these placements follows:

Table 15 – High Cost Placements (Source: Harrow Council).

FINANCIAL POSITION	COSTS
Total weekly cost of the 27 IFA placements	£21,204.29
Average weekly cost of each IFA placement	£785.34
Annual cost of IFA placements	£1,102,623.00 (£21,204.29 x 52 weeks)

FINANCIAL POSITION	COSTS
Total weekly cost of the 19 residential placements	£62,958.31
Average weekly cost of each residential placement	£3,313.60
Annual cost of residential placements	£3,273,832.10 (£62,958.31 x 52 weeks)
Projected total annual cost of both placement provision types using current LAC cohort	£4,376,455.10

3.7.3 Review of sample of high cost placements

As part of this review a cohort of 10 LAC placed in external provision, predominantly residential provision, was undertaken to determine if any themes were apparent.

Key Findings

- 2 of the cohort were aged 12 years, the remaining 8 were aged between 15 and 16 years. 6 were male and 4 were female. 4 were accommodated via section 20 of the Children Act, 2 via an interim Care Order and the remaining 4 via full Care Orders.
- Of the cohort, the over-riding reason cited for accommodation predominantly within residential provision is aggressive and violent behaviour, involvement with the Youth Offending Service, substance misuse, extensive and frequent missing episodes, high risk of child sexual exploitation, and a history of suicidal ideation and attempted suicide. One young person has refugee status and has been in both a secure unit and a Young Offenders Institution since residing in England. This cohort appeared to be very complex and challenging, and there was no dispute regarding the need for this cohort to be accommodated.
- 2 young people are having a plan for semi-independent accommodation explored due to their age and wishes.

- A number of the young people had been accommodated within residential provision as a number of foster-placements had disrupted, or foster-placements could not be identified in the first instance given the individual's profile necessitating the need to identify suitable residential provision. Therefore, it would appear that on the whole placements are being made externally due to a lack of suitable in-house provision. The majority of this cohort may continue to require placements the Council is unable to provide if the traditional approach to in-house placement provision is maintained.
- Each placement offered therapeutic intervention regardless of whether this was an assessed need or whether this could be met via an alternative route. There was evidence that a number of the young people in this cohort had disengaged from therapy within the unit although they were able to re-engage should they wish to do so. There was also no evidence the provider was required to evidence the impact of the sessions. In addition, there was no ability to reduce the placement costs if the young person was not accessing therapy.
- There is evidence the Challenge Panel is reviewing high profile cases and is making decisions regarding the longevity and continuing suitability of placement.
- There is also some evidence of providers being challenged regarding their provision, for example, one to one staffing. It is reported that such challenges are often successful.

3.7.4 Individual Placement Contracts

- 8 of the individual placement contracts between the provider and the Council from the cohort of 10 were made available for review. Of those contracts viewed:
 - All contracts had been signed, dated and had been completed relatively quickly following placement.
 - 7 of the contracts had a list of outcomes to be achieved by each young person divided into the "Every Child Matters" outcomes: being healthy, staying safe, enjoy and achieve, making a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. There was also another section that asked the reader to refer to the young person's Care Plan for specific outcomes. In theory, this approach is robust. However, the outcomes listed were the same for each individual and generic in content, therefore not SMART and as a consequence it would be

difficult to challenge the provider if outcomes were not being met, also a provider cannot be held to account should the outcomes within the young person's Local Authority Care Plan have not been met.

- 1 contract was in relation to the provision of semi-independent accommodation. Although this contract had a section concerning outcomes, this was different to the others aforementioned, and was presented as a SMART action plan rather than a list of generic outcomes to be achieved. Unfortunately, this was blank but nevertheless the principle is good.
- Where education provision was part of the residential package, there was no specific detail provided regarding the hours and type of provision to be provided.
- None of the contracts contained any detail regarding the therapeutic package or cost associated with this specific element. Therefore, this remained an unknown, again causing challenge to be difficult if no longer needed or it could be provided via an alternative route.

Recommendations

- Review the Placement Sufficiency Strategy, as aforementioned, to ensure there is a robust and effective plan in place to meet the increasing and complex needs and demands of Harrow's LAC population going forward.
- Develop more detailed contracts between the provider and the Council to enable a tighter control over individual placements to ensure value for money is being achieved and appropriate challenges are increasingly successful when made.

3.8 REVIEW OF EARLY HELP AND EDGE OF CARE

As part of this review, we undertook a high level review of Early Help arrangements in Harrow.

Key Findings

Early Help

We understand that the approach to Early Help in Harrow is at a point of transition, and hence it is not in a position as yet to evidence impact upon demand.

However, the new approach suggested appears to be well positioned to have an impact, with its key features being:

- The development of a locality based “hub” approach centred around Children’s Centres and Youth Centres.
- The change of focus to intervention at an earlier stage than the previous model which supported higher level cases that were receiving support via Children in Need teams (effectively “co-working” with social work teams), to a targeting of need at an earlier stage, creating more capacity in intervention at an earlier stage.
- Creation of more integrated teams based around hubs as opposed to separate teams of Early Intervention, Children’s Centres and Youth Development Team.
- The focus on addressing the needs of older young people, particularly those at risk of placement breakdown (including breakdown of relationships at home), so that needs do not become so acute as to require them to come into care, when such cases are hard and often expensive to place.
- The focus on intensive, time bound and outcome focussed intervention, to support the development of families’ own resilience, reduce dependency and reduces the potential for the saturation of capacity.
- Work is underway to develop the partnership with Harrow Youth Foundation and increase the “offer” to young people and their families via greater engagement with the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- Referrals to Early Help will be made via the hub based Early Help hubs.

Edge of Care

- The Edge of Care Offer had been provided and funded through the Early Help service and an Innovation Funding stream. This funding has since ended but the Council recognises it still needs to provide an Edge of Care service particularly to work with families who are struggling to manage their children aged between 11 and 18 years. Models are currently being explored to determine the most appropriate and effective way forward.

Recommendations

- We acknowledge and support the new approach being taken to Early Help in Harrow. We acknowledge that there is a need for a new overarching strategy for Early Help which clearly sets out the approach and outlines the activities required to deliver it.
- Whilst we acknowledge that there is a move to earlier intervention, we would recommend that the eligibility for referral to the Early Help Hub are clear, with potentially some prioritisation even within this definition. For example, prioritisation could be given to not only those most in need but those whose needs are consistent with emerging challenges for the Borough e.g. gang culture, knife crime, potential CSE, substance misuse and mental health, and work with siblings of those involved in offending, with the strategy having a focus on other ways of supporting those families are a lower level of need, for example the approach promoted by Safer Families for Children in using community volunteers.
- We acknowledge and support the development of the relationship with Harrow Youth Foundation to widen and formalise the “offer” to young people and their families via more formal and active engagement with the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- Whilst it is too early to evaluate the impact of the new approach to Early Help, it is recommended that measures of impact are established at an early stage, and that Early Help should share ownership of the ultimate outcome of reducing the numbers of children requiring statutory intervention.

4. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section summarises the key findings and recommendations contained within the report.

In doing so, we conclude that there is strong evidence of external factors putting pressure on children's social care's budgets. Whilst we do highlight some areas that could be explored for greater efficiency, it should be stated these areas for improvement are not significant – they would merely make an already effective approach to cost management even more so.

Key Finding	Recommendation
Children's Social Care Demand	
<p>Population and ethnicity changes have contributed to additional pressures to children's social care, particularly as population rises are most acute in some of the most deprived wards, and the spread of and nature of some ethnic groups are creating additional demands and complexity. There is also a rise in the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers entering the Borough.</p>	<p>Evidence suggests that Children's Social Care is managed efficiently and offering good value for money but that current budgets are not able to keep pace with continued rises in population and the changes and diversity of ethnicity.</p>
<p>Harrow is experiencing a range of emerging needs, most notably greater incidents of homelessness and housing difficulties, which is putting pressure on children's social care.</p>	<p>Evidence suggests that Children's Social Care is managed efficiently and offering good value for money but that current budgets are not able to keep pace with the increasing challenges caused by homelessness.</p> <p>Whilst there is anecdotal evidence of emerging pressures due to gang culture, crime and, the impact of these changes on demand would benefit from further evidencing.</p>
<p>Harrow has reviewed its approach to Early Help and has hence undertaken a change in direction which appears to be well placed to support a reduction in social care demand by intervening at a much earlier stage. However, it is too early to evidence the impact of this and this is unlikely to yield financial benefits to the Council in the short term.</p>	<p>The new approach to Early Help will need time to demonstrate impact and whilst the new approach is sound, it does not negate the continued pressures that are likely to be felt in the short to medium term by Children's Social Care due to continued rises in population, cases of homelessness and ethnicity changes.</p>
Key Finding	Recommendation
Children's Social Care Spend - Overall	
<p>Spend on children's social care has since reduced year on year from 2014/15 to 2016/17. However, in the same period, spend as displayed as "outturns" has increased year on year to its highest level of projected spend of £26,457m and the largest overspend (£5,707m). However, spend on children's social care is lower by</p>	<p>As overall spend on children's social care is lower overall by unit cost than its comparator authorities, this suggests that Children's Social Care is managed efficiently and offering good value for money but that current budgets are not able</p>

overall unit cost than its comparator authorities.	to keep pace with the increasing challenges caused by external factors..
Key Finding	Recommendation
Children's Social Care Spend – Areas for Further Scrutiny	
Adoption performance is good in most areas other than a recent decline in timeliness, the number of plans changed away from adoption, and the number of children adopted from minority ethnic backgrounds.	This report recommends the Council undertake a cost-benefit analysis to determine if the Coram contract continues to be value for money or whether this service could be provided via a different model or a change in contract specification.
Increased demand on services within children's social care is directly impacting upon the capacity of the social workers and Personal Advisors within the LAC service areas.	<p>This report recommends an analysis of the potential increase in caseload size is undertaken to determine the number of social workers that may be required over the next 3 years if demand continues at the current pace.</p> <p>This report also recommends that an analysis of the tasks that support workers could undertake which are currently undertaken by social workers is completed. This would determine whether it is feasible to create additional but cost effective posts to support social workers with tasks that are currently undertaken by social workers out of necessity rather than requirement. This would ensure that social workers are focusing on tasks they need to do given their remit. This analysis to be undertaken alongside the analysis on the impact of caseload size.</p>
If the Council continue with the more traditional approach to the provision of placements and recruitment of foster-carers, there will be a continued reliance on expensive external provision.	<p>This report recommends the Council re-visit its approach to Placement Sufficiency via a refresh of its Placement Sufficiency Strategy, Foster-Care Recruitment Strategy and its development of in-house provision using successful innovative models from other Councils.</p> <p>It is also accepted the Council does not wish to revisit the provision of in-house residential or semi-independent provision. However, given the projected annual cost of the current cohort of LAC placed externally has been calculated as £4.3</p>

	million, it may be appropriate to undertake a financial viability exercise to determine if this may now offer part of the solution to reducing external placement costs going forward.
The Family Group Conference service has recently been brought in-house and is currently in the process of becoming embedded with a plan to expand the number of Family Group Conference co-ordinators in year 2.	This report recommends an immediate jump to year 2 as an "invest to save" opportunity, along with a review of expectations for when Family Group Conferences should take place to support in the reduction of LAC numbers and a reduction in placement costs.
It is acknowledged that community based provision has and is currently being explored within Harrow, such as childminders and faith groups, to support children and young people from needing to become accommodated.	This report recommends the exploration of community based provision and community "self-help" approach is prioritised and organisations already well established such as Safe Families for Children are again revisited as this could support in the reduction of LAC numbers moving forward and a reduction in placement costs.
Individual placement contracts between the Council and the provider contain insufficient detail and are generic in content.	This report recommends the Council review its contracts held between the provider and the Council to ensure sufficient detail is included. This would enable tighter control over individual placements and as a consequence ensure value for money is being achieved, and appropriate challenges are increasingly successful when made.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Deprivation by Ward.

Ward	Deprivation Rating in Harrow (1 being the most deprived, 21 being the least)	Wards containing one of the 10 most deprived LSOAs (1 being the most deprived)
Wealdstone	1	5
Roxbourne	2	1 and 9
Greenhill	3	10
Marlborough	4	
Harrow Weald	5	4
Edgware	6	6
Stanmore Park	7	2
Roxeth	8	
Kenton East	9	
Harrow on the Hill	10	7
Canons	11	
Queensbury	12	
West Harrow	13	
Kenton West	14	
Pinner	15	8
South Headstone	16	
Hatch End	17	3
Belmont	18	
Raynors Lane	19	
Headstone North	20	
Pinner South	21	

Appendix 2 – Changes in Ethnicity in Wards Overlaid with Deprivation Levels.

Ward	% BAME 2001	% BAME 2011	% Change	Deprivation Rating in Harrow (1 being the most deprived, 21 being the least)
Belmont	36.3%	58.7%	+ 22.4%	18
Canons	36.8%	48.4%	+ 12.4%	11
Edgware	69.5%	65.3%	-4.2%	6
Greenhill	53.2%	58.5%	+5.3%	3
Harrow Weald	37.1%	48.3%	+11.2%	5
Harrow on the Hill	51.5%	52.6%	+1.1%	10
Hatch End	33.6%	43.3%	+9.6%	17
Headstone North	43%	52.6%	+9.6%	20
Headstone South	51%	56.5%	+5.5%	16
Kenton East	71.3%	73.4%	+2.1%	9
Kenton West	66.3%	72.6%	+6.3%	14
Marlborough	55.9%	62.9%	+ 7%	4
Pinner	30.7%	38%	+7.1%	21

Ward	% BAME 2001	% BAME 2011	% Change	Deprivation Rating in Harrow (1 being the most deprived, 21 being the least)
Pinner South	31%	40.6%	+9.6%	14
Queensbury	70.8%	75%	+4.2%	12
Raynor's Lane	55.3%	65.5%	+10.2%	19
Roxbourne	48.1%	66.3%	+18.2%	2
Roxeth	58.3%	66.3%	+8%	8
Stanmore Park	32.8%	43.3%	+10.5%	7
Wealdstone	53.5%	62.6%	+9.1%	1
West Harrow	51.7%	55.8%	+4.1%	13