



# HILLINGDON

LONDON

**Looked After Children  
&  
Care Leavers Strategy**

**2018-2021**

**London Borough of Hillingdon**

## **Contents:**

INTRODUCTION	3
HILLINGDON'S STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND GOVERNANCE	4
CORPORATE PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES	4
THE NATIONAL CONTEXT	5
THE LOCAL PICTURE	8
RECENT PERFORMANCE	10
THE STRATEGY	11
TO BE THE BEST VERSION OF THEMSELVES	12
TO ENJOY GOOD PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH	15
TO HAVE PRIDE IN THEIR UNIQUE IDENTITIES	16
LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF THE CHILD	16
<b>TO LIVE SOMEWHERE</b> WHERE THEY FEEL THEY BELONG	18
ENSURING DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGY	24

## Introduction

Welcome to the London Borough of Hillingdon Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy. This strategy relates to children and young people who are Looked After by, and Care Leavers of the London Borough of Hillingdon up to the age of 25. Children and Young people become looked after for a variety of reasons, at various ages. They are not one homogenous group, but individual children with individual needs. The disadvantages that looked after children and young people face is seen in the differences in outcomes when compared to the national population. But children and young people in care can achieve. With the right support they can fulfil their ambitions and their potential, they can successfully transition into adulthood and contribute to society. Our aim as their Corporate Parent is to enable this, to provide excellent parenting to ensure that they have the opportunities, ambition and support required to achieve their potential.

A child who is cared for by the Council has the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that would be expected from a good parent, after all ***what would you do if this was your child?*** This strategy therefore focusses on Corporate Parenting responsibilities across the council and in partnership with other agencies. We recognise that children have individual needs and therefore require individualised support and opportunities. By leading a culture which values the voice of our children and young people we will involve them in service design, improvement and development alongside individual care planning and decision making.

We recognise that just as moving through care and into adulthood is a journey, so is our strategy. As national and local policy develops, and the needs of Children in Care and Care Leavers change, this strategy will be reviewed and refreshed. This strategy is therefore a working document that will evolve and grow to meet the ever- changing needs of our children.

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Corporate Director  
Social Care

Cllr David Simmonds  
Deputy Leader of Hillingdon  
Council and Cabinet  
Member for Education and  
Children's Services

Cllr John Riley  
Chairman  
Corporate Parenting Board

## Hillingdon's Strategic Framework and Governance

Looked After Children and Care Leavers should expect the same level of care and support that other children and young people receive from their parents. Our strategy is therefore based on the principles of good corporate parenting. This strategy is not a stand-alone publication and should be read alongside Children and Young People's '*plan on a page*' **High 5 for Hillingdon**, which sets out our ambitions for Services for all of Hillingdon's children and young people. This Strategy will be delivered with the mind sets and behaviours of Hillingdon's High 5 vision which underpin all the work of Hillingdon Children and Young People services.

Nationally, outcomes for looked after children and care leavers across the UK are poorer than those who have not been in the care system. Despite the good work and dedication of professionals and carers, challenges still remain in improving the experiences, life chances and outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. Locally, we closely monitor the profile and outcomes of our care population in order to effectively plan services.

### Corporate parenting responsibilities

Corporate Parenting is the term used to refer to the collective responsibility of the Council to provide the best care and protection for children and young people who are 'looked after', that is, who are in public care. Effective corporate parenting will need the commitment from all Council employees and elected Members and an authority wide approach. These responsibilities for Local Authorities were first laid out in the Children Act 1989, subsequently in the Children Act 2004 and the Children and Young People's Act 2008 and most recently in the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The London Borough of Hillingdon is committed to being an outstanding corporate parent. This strategy demonstrates Hillingdon's commitment to this, and to improving the life chances of looked after children and care leavers. The strategy reinforces the corporate parenting responsibility across the entire council and with all stakeholders and relevant partners.

To achieve this aim the strategy takes into account the Corporate Parenting Principles, as laid out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017:

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

The Children in Care Councils, Talkers, Step up and Stepping out supports the Corporate Parenting Board and our Directors to understand the issues facing looked after children and care leavers in Hillingdon.

## The National Context

The London Borough of Hillingdon Children in Care and Care Leaver strategy sits within a national and local context, is determined and driven by legislation and guidance. We all share a common aim of 'putting our residents first'.

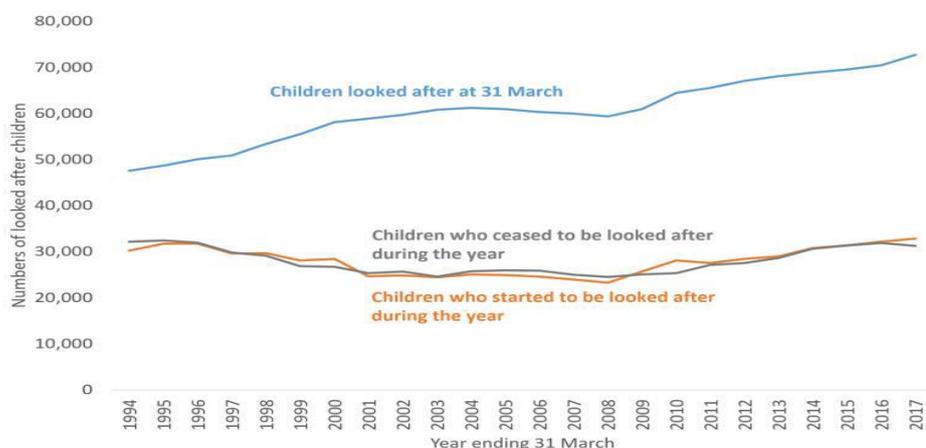
The legislation and policies which primarily impact on Children in Care and Care Leavers and Care Leaver services that have influenced the development of the strategy include:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations 2015
- Volume 1: Court Orders
- Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review
- Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers
- Volume 4: Fostering Services
- Volume 5: Children's Homes
  
- Children (Leaving Care Act) 2000
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Care Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
  
- Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011
- Children's Homes National Minimum Standards 2011
- Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children. Statutory guidance for local authorities (2018)
- Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers. Statutory guidance for local authorities. February 2018
- Extending Personal Adviser support to all care leavers to age 25. Statutory guidance for local authorities (2018)
- Promoting the health and well-being of looked-after children. Statutory guidance for local authorities, clinical commissioning groups and NHS England (2015)
- Statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children (2010)
- Statutory Guidance on Corporate Parenting Responsibilities of Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members 2009
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015)
- Children's social care reform: a vision for change (2016)
- Putting children first: delivering our vision for excellent children's social care (2016)
- Residential Care in England: Report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of children's residential care (2016)
- Keep on Caring – Supporting Young People from Care to Independence (2016)
- Foster Care in England A Review for the Department for Education by Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers (2018)

## The National Picture

Data from Department of Education Children looked after in England (including adoption) year ending 31 March 2017

### Numbers of looked after children have continued to steadily rise



At 31 March 2017 there were 72,670 looked after children, an increase of 3% on 2016. The number of children starting to be looked after in 2016-17 has also risen in recent years and has increased by 2% compared with the previous year. The number of children ceasing to be looked after in 2016-17 has fallen by 2% compared with the previous year.

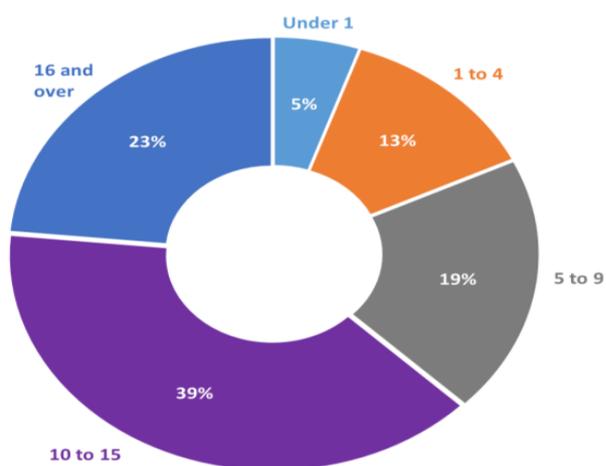
### The majority of looked after children are placed with foster carers

74% of children looked after at 31 March 2017 were in foster placements, a similar proportion as in previous years. There has continued to be a fall in children placed with prospective adopters.

### Looked after children are predominantly white.

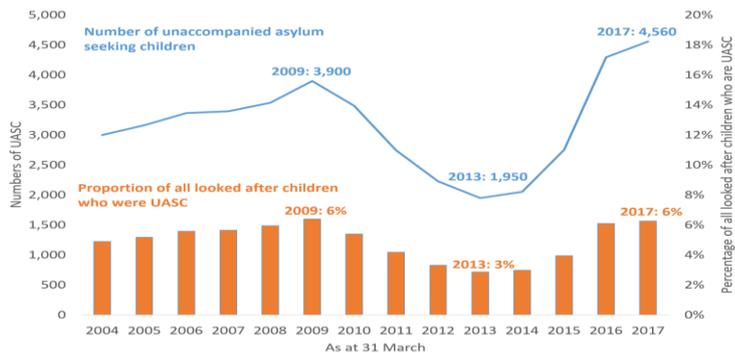
75% of looked after children at 31 March 2017 were white, 9% were of mixed ethnicity, 7% were black or black British, 5% were Asian or Asian British and 3% were other ethnic groups. Non-white children appear to be slightly over-represented in the looked after children population, in particular children of mixed and black ethnicity. Children of Asian ethnicity are slightly under represented. Over the last five years there have been small increases in the proportions of looked after children of non-white ethnicity which is likely to reflect the increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children

### Age of Looked after children



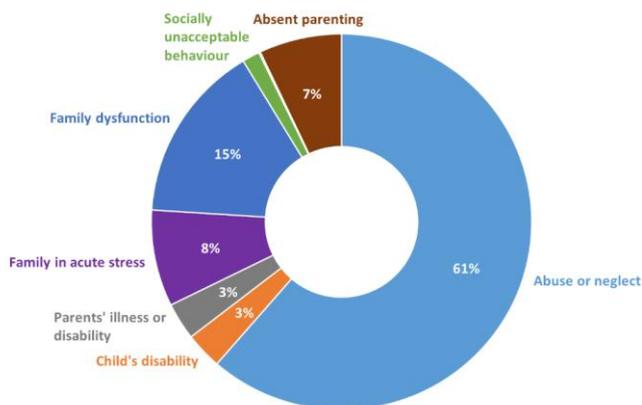
Over recent years the numbers of looked after children aged under 1 year have been decreasing; at 31 March 2017 they are down 11% on five years ago, however we did see a slight increase this year of 280 children (8%) between 2016 and 2017. There has been very little change in the number of 1-4 year olds and 5-9 year olds this year; after decreasing slightly in recent years the 1-4 year old group has stabilised around 9,200 children in 2017 and the 5-9 year old group, after increasing in recent years, has stabilised around 14,100.

## The number of looked after children who were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children continues to increase in 2017



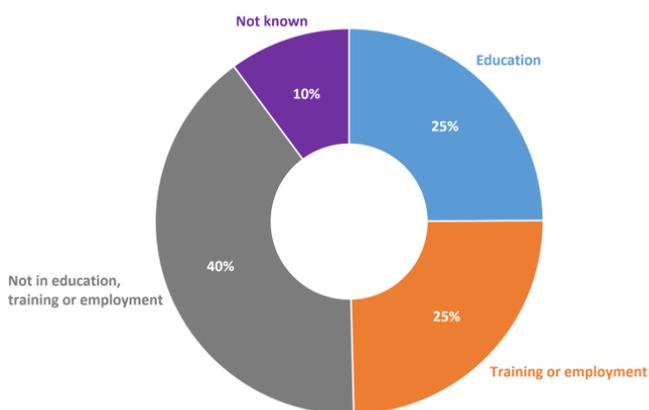
The number of looked after children at 31 March 2017 who were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children increased by 6% compared to last year, up to 4,560 from 4,300 in 2016, and up 134% from 1,950 in 2013.

## 61% of children in care were looked after due to an initial need of abuse or neglect



For children who are looked after at 31 March 2017, the proportions of children with each recorded category of need is very similar to last year. 61% (44,600 children) were looked after due to an initial need of abuse or neglect, 15% (11,150) family dysfunction, 8% (6,030) family in acute stress and 7% (5,100) absent parenting.

## 19-21 year old care leavers (40%) were not in education, training or employment



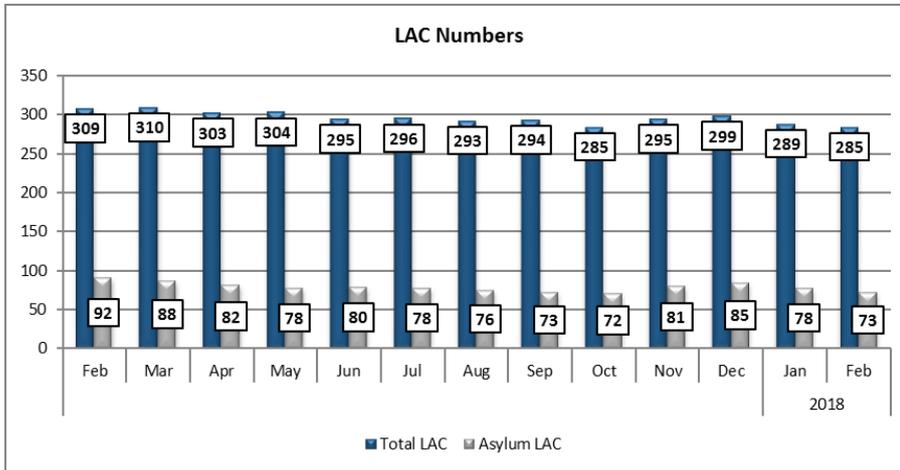
19-21 year old care leavers (40%) were not in education, training or employment in 2017, compared to 13% of all 19 to 21 year olds. This proportion is the same as in 2016 and up slightly from 39% in 2015

## Local authorities continue to be in touch with more care leavers

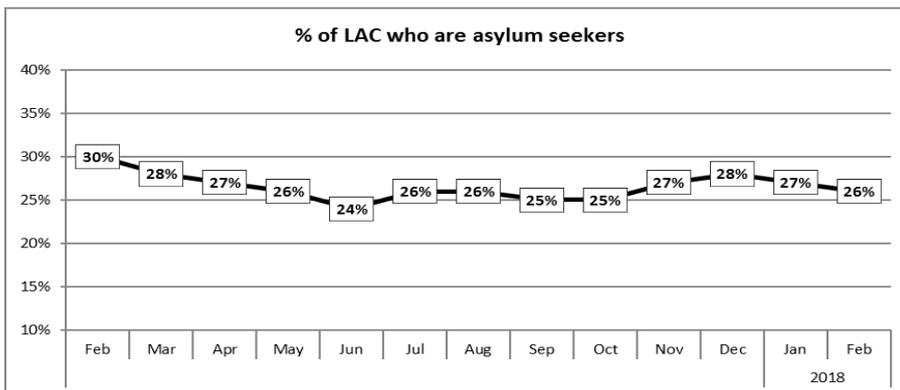
For 19-21 year olds, 23,780 (88%) were in touch in 2017, up from 87% in 2016 and 86 % in 2015

## The Local Picture

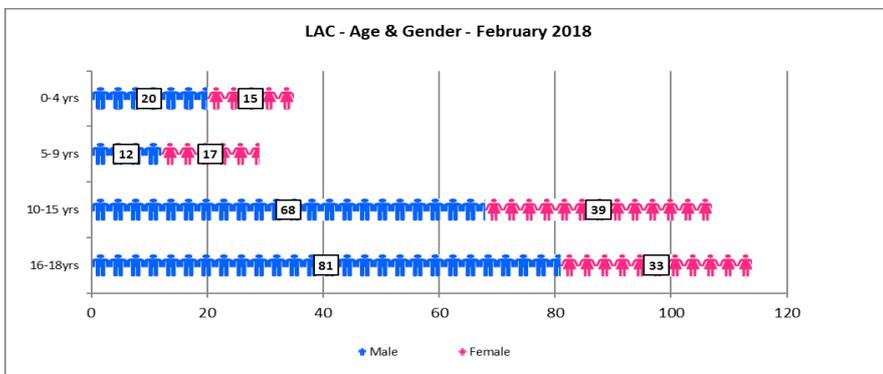
The London Borough of Hillingdon's Looked after children and care leavers population varies from the national picture due to the location of Heathrow airport. 26% of Hillingdon's Looked After Children and 58% of Hillingdon's Care Leavers are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who may have experienced trafficking and trauma prior to arrival, and during their journey to the UK. Due to this, the age profile of Looked after Children in Hillingdon is higher than national averages.



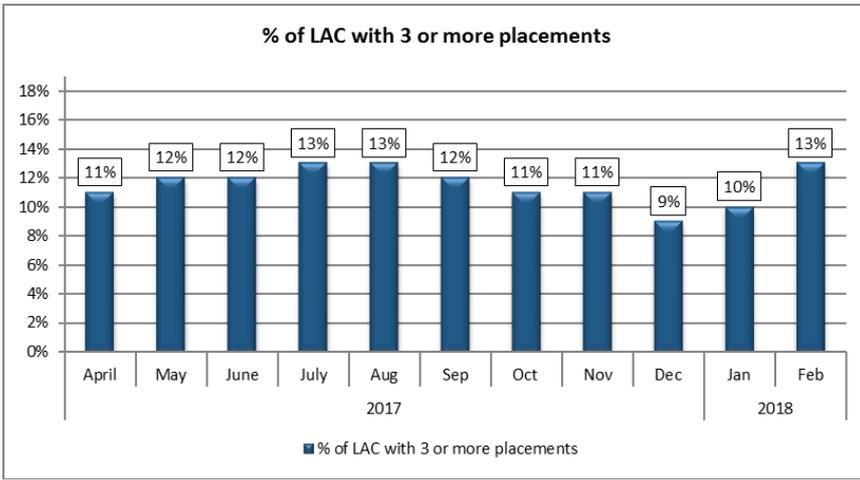
In Hillingdon there has been an 8% decrease in the number of Looked After Children between February 2017 and February 2018, contrary to the national trends.



26% of our Looked After children are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. This impacts on the ethnicity of our looked after children which differs to the national average, with a smaller percentage of White British LAC 34% and larger percentage of young people being Asian 24% and Black 17%



The percentage of unaccompanied Asylum seeking children is reflected in the higher percentage of looked after children aged 16+ in Hillingdon compared to the national average.



In February 12.6% (35) children had 3 or more placements

### Care Leavers

In Hillingdon 71% of care leavers are in Education, Training and Employment, including 13% in University.

## Recent performance

The Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers November – December 2013 evaluated the London Borough of Hillingdon as Requiring Improvement.

Much work and restructuring has been undertaken since this inspection to support the improvement of services including:

- Significant financial investment in social care which has enhanced our social work capacity and improved front line practice including:
  - New Deputy Director appointed in March 2016
  - New Heads of Service and Service managers across services
  - Appointment of Principle Social Worker in December 2017
  - Development of the Advanced Practitioner Role
  
- Commissioning of the Multi-Agency Psychology Service (MAPS)
- Development of the Hillingdon High 5 on a page.
- Development and implementation of the Hillingdon Access to Resource Panel (HARP)
- Well developed and established Virtual School
- NEET Panel
- London Borough of Housing and Children' Social Care Social Housing Panel
- Permanency Planning and Stability Meetings
- Development of Leaving Care Financial Policy
- Health and Wellbeing Guidance

### Raising Aspirations

Hillingdon continues to be proud of all that our children in care and care leavers have achieved and continue to support them to raise their aspirations. To do this we continue to develop, learn and change. We have already achieved:

- Higher percentage of Care Leavers in education, training and employment compared to the national average
- 13% of Care leavers attending University
- A well developed and rounded enrichment programme offered by the Virtual School
- Participation opportunities in the CiCC's including membership of the regional CiCC
- Annual Looked After Children celebration event (KICA)
- Development of the Health and Wellbeing Guidance
- Development of NEET Panel to support children and young people's return to Education, Employment and Training (EET)

## The strategy

Our strategy sets out how we will deliver good and effective corporate parenting for children and young people in care and leaving care and is built on the commitment across the partner agencies in London Borough of Hillingdon.



## To be the best version of themselves

We want all our children and young people to achieve, to have opportunities to learn new skills, to move into adulthood prepared and supported. This means offering them opportunities to access good quality and well supported education, learning experiences and enrichment programmes.

### **Education of Looked After Children**

#### **The National context**

Responsibility to promote the educational achievement of children looked after has been a statutory duty placed upon Local Authorities since the Children Act 1989 (“the 1989 Act”) (as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014). The Children and Families Act 2014 amended the Children Act 1989 to require local authorities in England to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority’s duty to promote the educational achievements of its Children Looked After, wherever they live or are educated. That person (the Virtual School Head, VSH) must be an officer employed by the authority or another local authority in England. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 further expanded this work to include making advice and information available for the purpose of promoting the educational achievement of each relevant child educated in their area.

Ensuring that Children Looked After receive a high quality education is the foundation for improving their lives. Children Looked After have poorer educational outcomes than non-children looked after. They still face significant challenges with Children Looked After being four times more likely to have a special educational need than all children and are almost 10 times as likely to have a statement of special educational need or an education, health and care plan (EHCP).

The rate of permanent exclusions for Children Looked After is around twice as high as the rate for all children. Children Looked After are more than five times more likely to have a fixed period exclusion than all children.

In 2016, 25% of Children Looked After reached the new expected standard or above in the headline measure reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2, compared to 54% for non-children looked after.

In 2016 there was an increase in the percentage of Children Looked After achieving an A\*-C in English and mathematics from 15.9% to 17.5%. The percentage of Children Looked After and non-children looked after achieving the old headline measure, percentage achieving 5+ GCSEs A\*-C or equivalent including English and mathematics was 13.6% and 53% respectively.

#### **Local context**

We have high aspirations for our children and encourage them to pursue a broad spectrum of activities. Hillingdon Virtual School continue to actively monitor, support and advocate for its complex and varied Children Looked After (CLA) population and this work has contributed to many positive outcomes.

Although outcomes for Hillingdon CLA who have been in continuous care for 12 months or more fluctuate year on year and are highly dependent on the makeup of the cohort, progress over time has been evident, particularly at KS4 with a rise in CLA achieving the old headline measure of 5 A\*-C including English and maths from 7% in 2014 to 20% in 2017.

In 2017, 43% of eligible CLA achieved expected attainment at Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and maths, with positive progress recorded in writing (5.14) and maths (0.14).

On average, 2/3 of the statutory school age CLA cohort are making expected progress.

The percentage of statutory school age CLA without a school place remains low at 3.6%. Average attendance for statutory school age CLA is currently 89.58%, with unauthorised absence of 2.35%. 10% of the statutory school age CLA cohort have recorded one or more fixed term exclusions.

### **Hillingdon's commitment moving forward**

To support CLA and care leavers to reach their educational potential, the following commitments have been made:

- Every CLA aged 4-18 has an allocated Virtual School Officer.
- Every CLA has access to high quality full time education, as appropriate to their needs.
- Every CLA has access to a comprehensive enrichment offer.
- Progress and attainment of CLA is closely monitored and 100% of PEPs are completed in time scale, 90%+ rag rated as the high quality, with the child's voice at the centre.
- To track and monitor the use of pupil premium plus, to ensure that all eligible CLA receive the support they require in a timely fashion.
- To work closely with schools, foster carers, social care colleagues and external partners to monitor and improve attendance and reduce unauthorised absence and exclusions for CLA.
- To build and strengthen the collaborative working to further reduce school changes, particularly as a result of care placement breakdowns.
- To reduce NEET figures for 16-18 Hillingdon CLA.
- To strengthen transitions from KS4 to KS5 and KS5 to leaving care and to develop a better understanding of educational needs post 18 in order to support HE access and provide appropriate information, advice and guidance.

### **Impact measures**

- Percentage of Statutory school age children looked after making expected progress.
- Percentage of Personal Education Plans completed and assessed as high quality (green)
- Percentage of average attendance for statutory school age children looked after
- Percentage of sessions missed by statutory school age children looked after through unauthorised absence.
- Percentage of statutory school age children looked after with one or more fixed term exclusions in an academic year
- Percentage of statutory school age children looked after not offered a school place within 20 days

## **Care Leavers**

### **Local context**

Nationally 40% of Care leavers aged 19-21 are not in education training or employment in 2017. Care Leavers in Hillingdon are more likely to be engaged in Education Training and Employment than the national average with 22% of our care leaver population being NEET.

We undertook a thematic NEET audit in 2017, which has resulted in greater investment in young people through promoting a greater range of options for training, employment and learning. We also established a NEET Panel, in collaboration with partners, which works closely to improve EET and outcomes for our care leavers such as promoting apprenticeships. The Virtual School actively supports the transition from care, through maintaining the PEP until the young person turns 18. This provides an understanding of the young person's progress in education or training, outlines the use of the 16-19 bursary and the young person's plans for the future and required steps to achieve.

Post 18, information, advice and guidance continues to be provided by the Virtual School for any young people remaining in education and this is communicated at the young person's final PEP, before they turn 18. The Virtual School team work with the PA's and social workers to ensure relevant services are signposted and support is available as required.

We are very proud of our academic achievements of our care leaver with 62 care leavers undertaking degree courses at University in the current academic year.

We have also encouraged care leavers to apply for jobs within the Council and we have committed to at least offer all those interested, the experience of a job interview. So far, 4 care leavers have applied for administrative roles. We continue to explore opportunities for care leavers to engage in Council leisure activities free of charge.

### **Hillingdon's commitment moving forward**

- Recruitment and employment practices that offer supportive work experience and employment opportunities, including priority for apprenticeships for young people who are in or have left the Council's care
- Commissioning structures that take into account opportunities for looked after children and young people, including apprenticeships
- Continue to develop links with local ETE providers to enable young people to have access to a range to employment and training options
- Virtual school team continue to offer information, advice and guidance post 18.
- Support young people to access training and services to develop their independent living skills at an early age.

### **Impact measures**

- Numbers of LAC and care leavers population being offered work experience and paid work opportunities within the council 2018-2021.
- Number of young people interviewed for apprenticeships by commissioned services
- Number of care leavers accessing higher and further education
- Number of Post 18 CLA and care leavers in education, employment and training.

## To enjoy good physical, mental and emotional health

### National context

Children often enter the care system with a poorer level of physical and mental health than their peers, and their longer-term outcomes remain worse. Nationally two thirds of looked after children have at least one physical health complaint, and nearly half have a mental health disorder.

### The Local Context

The London Borough of Hillingdon is committed to act as a 'good parent' in relation to the health of looked after children. Within that role it has the right to approve the immunisation of children within its care against vaccine preventable diseases as per the national immunisation schedule. It has also have a statutory duty to ensure that all looked after children have annual dental checks and regular health assessments. Over 91% of health assessments are carried out within the required timescales and recently completed audit identified that 93.6% of looked after children who require dental checks are up to date.

The Local authority produced a joint Good Practice Guidance with health outlining the practice and performance expectations in respect of looked after children's health.

Hillingdon's Looked after children have lower SDQ scores than national averages, with Hillingdon's LAC population having a average score of 12.2 and nationally this being 14.1. Young people have access to community resources from our Targetted programmes and also specially commissioned service MAPS.

### Hillingdon's commitment moving forward

- Initial and review health assessments inform good care planning, review and monitoring of health & wellbeing of our looked after children and care leavers
- Looked after children and Young people are given priority access to specialist services, including targeted programmes, CAMHS and sexual health services.
- Completion of SDQ's is undertaken in timescales laid out in Health and Wellbeing policy with all young people with a SDQ score of 17+ being referred to our in-house specialist Multi-Agency Psychology Service (MAPS). Review of middle scores between 14-16 need further analysis to ensure timely and appropriate support is provided to prevent mental health breakdown.
- Young people are supported to access their health records, including immunisation records
- Looked after children and young people and encouraged and supported to engage in extra curriculum activities to support their social skills, self esteem and emotional wellbeing

#### Impact measure

- Children seen for initial and review health assessments within statutory timeframes
- Percentage of children having up to date dental checks
- Percentage of children having up to date immunisations
- Children referred to and supported by MAPS and CAMHs.
- Children with additional health needs accessing specialist services, including respite care

### Listening to the voice of the child

#### National context

The 2007 Care Matters: Time for Change White Paper set out the then government's intention for all local authorities to establish a children in care council to provide children and young people, in and leaving care, with additional opportunities to voice their views and experiences of the care system and increase their ability to influence and improve the services they receive from their local authority corporate parents.

The importance of listening to the voice of the child is reinforced by Children and Social Work Act 2017 introducing the Corporate Parenting Principle of "to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people."

#### Local Context

Hillingdon has three established and well attended children in care council's (CiCC) Talkers, Step up and Stepping out who meet monthly and are part of the regional children in care council network. Our CiCC have a powerful collective voice, including having had input in the development on marketing materials in fostering recruitment, consultation on the licence agreements for staying put, development of a leaflet for care leavers to accompany the new financial policy. Consultation with the CiCC resulted in Operation makesafe, a joint social care/police operation to make Hillingdon's high streets safer.

The CiCC's views are presented at each Corporate parenting board, at social work team and management meetings alongside members of stepping out attending the corporate parenting board meeting. Young people participate in the recruitment of staff and foster carers and meet with the director and deputy director on a quarterly basis.

Individually children are seen by qualified social workers with statutory visits being up to date for 93% of our children and young people. 86.7% of our Looked after children participated in their LAC reviews and there is ongoing development of the consultation forms, agenda's and a menu of options to support young people to be able to participation in LAC reviews in a way that suits them best, including the option to chair their own reviews.

#### Hillingdon's commitment moving forward

Children and young people have a say in how decisions are made about themselves and their care. Children and young people have a say in how decisions are made about services that affect them and that they have an opportunity to influence those decisions through the children in care councils.

- Communication between Elected Members and looked after children is facilitated through the Children in Care Councils.
- The needs of looked after children and care leavers are prioritised across the council, led by the Corporate Parenting Board that listens and responds to the views of children and young people.
- All policies which impact directly on children and young people will be made available to the Children in Care Councils for comment and consideration, prior to approval. This will enable Hillingdon's children and young people to be a key contributor to policy development, and ensure that implementation can be considered from their perspective.

- Children and young people will also continue to be involved in recruitment of staff, training of officers, development of information i.e. leaflets / website design
- Young people will continue to monitor and develop the Children in Care pledge and Care Leavers local offer. Any instances where the promises set out in the pledge and local offer are not adhered to will be referred to the children's rights and participation team for reporting to the corporate parenting board

### **Impact measure**

- **You said, we did.** The Corporate Parenting Board, informed by the working groups and Children's Rights and Participation team will collate a "YOU SAID, WE DID" register to evidence the changes made as the direct result of the views of young people. This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to evidence the impact of young people's views on service development. These changes and input will be implemented by project work undertaken under the auspices of the working groups.
- Numbers of policies presented to the children in care councils, with clear recording of views, comments and recommendations and impact of consultation.
- Number of cases referred to the children's rights and participation team where the children in care pledge has not been adhered to.
- Number of completed/reviewed pathway plans collaborative written by young people
- Number of young people participating in LAC reviews.

## **Demonstrating pride**

### **National context**

Being a good parent includes celebrating achievements and showing pride in our young people. Statutory guidance makes reference to annual awards ceremonies to celebrate achievements alongside supporting young people's aspirations and potential.

### **The Local Context**

Hillingdon is incredibly proud of our Looked After Children and care leavers. Proud of the 62 young people who are attending university, proud of the young people who participate in the Children in Care Councils, enrichment activities and chair their own LAC reviews. Proud of the resilience our young people show despite multiple challenges faced.

In 2017 we celebrated the achievements of 198 children and young people at the annual Kids in Care Awards, an increase from all previous years. The Children in Care councils continue to develop and in March 2018 successfully took over the Corporate Parenting Board, facilitating a series of workshops to increase members insight into the challenges of being a looked after child.

### **Hillingdon's commitment moving forward**

- Strengths based social work practice that recognised the achievements of our children and young people
- Annual celebration event planned and presented by children in care
- Birthday cards for all children and young people including care leavers up to 25
- Recognition cards and vouchers for high achieving GCSE/A-Levels results
- Support young people to engage in regional activities via CiCC
- Supporting individual young people's skills and aspirations through the use of pupil premium.

## **Permanency**

### **National Context**

Local authorities are under a legal duty to support families to stay together when that is a realistic prospect and many looked after children are looked after by local authorities for short periods and then return home to live with their families.

Providing stability relies on identifying the right placement for a child early in their care journey whilst ensuring that individual and family needs are properly assessed and support services provided in order to achieve early permanence. Local authorities should provide a range of placement options to ensure that the right placement is available for every child. For many children returning home to their family after a period in care will be the route to permanence and stability. For others, returning to other family or friends under a formal or informal arrangement will be the setting they need in order to thrive. Remaining in care with a long term foster family or finding a new permanent family through adoption, special guardianship or residence orders are other routes to permanence. While it is evident that achieving timely permanence is desirable, nationally annual data returns show that a small but substantial number of children still experience multiple placements each year.

### **The Local Context**

Hillingdon has an established and imbedded Pre Proceedings process which is accessed via the Hillingdon Access to Resources Panel. The process includes timely identification of risk and effective intervention, with clear management oversight. Our highly specialised court team ensures timely, evidence-based, child-focused and high quality court work to avoid delays and drift to children's permanency. Our compliance and timescales as set out in Public Law Outline (PLO) which requires care proceedings to conclude within 26 weeks consistently remains one of the best performing Local Authority in London. Our performance since April 2017 as follows:

- There were 27 families- 57 children subject to pre-proceedings PLO and average of PLO process is 9 weeks ( national target as set out in PLO is 12 weeks)
- Number of live care proceedings stands at 33 families and 60 children and average of care proceedings stands at 20 weeks which is below the 26 weeks set nationally.

#### **Concluded cases by each quarter between April 2017 - March 2018**

- Quarter 1 - 15 families involving 22 children are concluded within 21 weeks
- Quarter 2 - 20 families involving 32 children are concluded within 27 weeks
- Quarter 3- 11 families involving 17 children care concluded within 26 weeks
- Quarter 4 - 11 families involving 14 children are concluded in 25 weeks
- In total 57 care proceedings involving 85 children are concluded between April 2017- March 2018 and the average of care proceedings stands at 25 weeks.

#### **The outcomes of proceedings:**

- 31 Children became subject to Supervision Orders
- 25 Children subject to SGO ( 6 with Supervision Orders)
- 24 children on Care Orders ( 5 with Placement Orders)
- 5 Children were granted Placement Orders

- 16 Adoptions Orders have been made and 7 children are currently placed with their prospective adoptive families.

Wherever possible children remain within their families. Our Family Group Conference Service is contracted from DayBreak with good use of the service and this is promoted via HARP, supervision and Legal Planning Processes. Hillingdon have recently commissioned additional conference capacity to meet demand and ensure that children grow up in familiar families. This supports early identification of connected carers.

### **Hillingdon's commitment**

- We will continue to ensure children achieve early permanency and avoid delays and drift to their long-term stability
- We will provide additional support and resources to minimise and prevent unnecessary placement moves
- We will do our best children and young people do not experience change of social workers
- We will work with families to undertake FGC's at the earliest opportunities and support them to consider permanent arrangements for children, outside of the family home.
- We will start parallel planning at the earliest opportunity to prevent delays in matching.
- We will continue to recruit foster carers, who can meet the needs of our young people and support them to be matched on a long term basis for children.
- We will continue to work closely with the West London Adoption Consortium to ensure that we are pooling resources and subsequently securing best matches.

### **Impact measure**

- Number of new foster carers being approved by social panel
- Number of young people placed for adoption
- Number of adoption breakdowns
- Timeliness of placement orders
- Timeliness of pre PLO and court proceedings
- Reduction in placement moves and placement breakdowns
- Minimise social work changes

## **Placement stability and choice**

### **National context**

Permanence is the framework of emotional permanence (attachment), physical permanence (stability) and legal permanence (the carer has parental responsibility for the child) which gives a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity.

Permanency and placement stability are undoubtedly linked, having the most suitable placement available is a vital factor in improving placement stability, which in turn is a critical success factor in relation to improved outcomes for looked after children.

Children who are subject to frequent placement moves are less able to form positive attachments with carers which makes them more vulnerable to forming unsafe relationships with other adults or their peer group and disengagement from education and positive activities.

### **The Local Context**

The number of placement moves that children have is carefully monitored to ensure plans are adapted and additional services introduced to make placements more resilient where required. In February 2018 12.6 % (35) looked after children experienced three or more placement moves, a slight increase on the previous year where there were 10% of children with three or more placement moves. Placement stability and multiple placement moves remains a challenge for the Local Authority and we have introduced robust processes and strong management oversight to monitor and address placement stability. Children and young people are provided with stability in their placements with a commitment to supporting placements and preventing breakdowns. Children and young people are fully involved in decisions about placements and placement moves.

As it with all London Local authorities, not all looked after children are able to live within Hillingdon when they are in care. However, there are significant efforts at both the local and national level to reduce the distance at which looked after children are placed from their borough of origin. While there are a small minority of children who are more effectively safeguarded by being placed at a distance such as those young people identified to be at risk due to gang affiliation or child sexual exploitation (CSE), the consistent lack of foster placements in Inner London means that many children need to be placed in other local authority areas. Of the children and young people looked after as at February 2018, 61% of our children placed with foster carers, 22% are in semi-independent units, 12% in residential schools and 3 children are placed in a secure welfare unit equating to 69% of our looked after children are placed within 20 miles radius to Hillingdon. We have a robust Placement with Parent Assessment process which is completed by the child's social worker and re-unification with birth families are actively considered, if in the child's best interest. We currently have 2 young people placed with their families under the Placement with Parents Regulations.

Care leavers with additional needs who require an assessment under the Care Act are presented to the Transition panel before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to ensure timely assessment and provision of service based on assessed need. Our care leavers are given a choice to live in various housing options depending on the need identified and availability. We knew and our peers told us, about the need to explore further opportunities for care leavers linked to housing options. Our Children's Social Care and Housing Panel meet monthly to consider social housing for care leavers. This year, 38 care leavers were provided with council houses and 61 are waiting for suitable social housing. Care Leavers that are in shared accommodation or HMOs are routinely visited by the Monitoring Officer to ensure the suitability of the accommodation. We have moved a few care leavers from shared accommodations as the condition of the accommodation did not meet the standards set by the council.

Care leavers have the opportunity to stay with their families for longer. 19 care leavers are in 'Staying put' arrangements. 'Staying in touch' arrangements beyond the age of 18 are always considered and promoted in Hillingdon and all care leavers regardless of their NEET or EET status continue to have a dedicated PA until 21. Our 'Staying put' policy was co-produced with our young people. Hillingdon's Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2018-2021 sets out the vision and priorities regarding placement options, choice and stability.

## **Hillingdon's commitment moving forward**

- Looked after children will not be moved placement unless presented and agreed at HARP.
- Children and young people's views on placement moves are obtained and evidenced in decision making including HARP
- Placement stability meetings take place as soon as possible to prevent placement breakdown
- Social workers and professional networks have access to MAPS for consultation and support.
- Actively consider the possibility of re-unification with birth parents where safe and appropriate and in line with children and young people's wishes & feelings and that that it is in their best interests.
- Work with housing providers to provide a wider range of housing provision for care leavers including YMCA, shared houses and semi-independent accommodation based on an assessment of need.

## **Impact measure**

- Children and young people with more than 3 placements in 12 months.
- Number of Placement stability meetings and outcomes
- Complaints / advocacy support for care leavers regarding placements. We will proactively work with colleagues across services to support placements at risk of breakdown
- Number of Care leavers being awarded social housing

### **National context**

Local authorities have specific duties towards children and young people who are or have been looked after in relation to assessments, care plans, accommodation, advice and support and ensuring that they are safe at all times. Children in care have additional vulnerabilities due to the often turbulent early childhoods they have experienced. Looked after children are significantly more likely to have run away than their peers and are vulnerable to forming unsafe relationships placing them at risk of grooming, CSE and gang involvement.

### **The Local Context**

Looked after children are at greater risk of going missing than their peers due to their turbulent life experiences, and are therefore vulnerable to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). Children with frequent placement moves, more fragile attachments and late care entrants are more likely to go missing and this behaviour in turn impacts upon the stability of any new placements. There was a total of 75 missing children in care during 2017-18 of which 22 were care leaves. This includes a small number of individual young people who had frequent repeat missing episodes. A robust process is in place that ensures management oversight and that missing children are visited and interviewed in order to address any potential safeguarding issues that the child may be encountering either within or outside the placement.

With specific reference to children at risk of CSE there continue to be a number of monitoring and practice systems in place to identify those assessed to be at risk and to provide a comprehensive support package to ensure that risks are reduced. This includes six weekly Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meetings chaired by the Police and Children's Services. The recently introduced resource, AXIS within the YOS is tracking and collating information or intelligence on young people who are involved in or on the edge of criminal activities or gang related activities.

Hillingdon works pro-actively to assess high risk young people to ensure they are safe to themselves and others and when necessary consider application for a secure welfare unit. In 2017-18 we had 3 children placed in secure welfare units ( 2 young males involved in gang related activities and one female involved in high risk CSE). Two of the young people benefitted from being in secure units and have now transitioned to a community based residential unit where they are making good progress. Owing the national shortage of secure welfare beds, we were able to consider suitable placements outside England and placed one young person in a secure unit in Scotland with the endorsement of the court.

### **Hillingdon commitment moving forward**

- Development of the Vulnerability Panel to include young people involved, or at risk of CSE, radicalisation and serious youth violence
- Young people will continue to be encouraged to be involved in decision making at LAC reviews including chairing their own review
- All Looked after children are able to access Advocacy and will be offered independent return home interviews following episodes of missing. These contracts are currently being retendered with new services specifications identified.

- Young people will be informed of their rights to make a complaint
- Publication of Local offer ages 16-18, 18-21 and 21+ to enable young people to access services
- In house residential placements to develop further their links with their community police officer
- Regular visits to the in house residential units by the Children's rights service.

### **Impact measures**

- Number of LAC referred to Vulnerability panel
- Number of recorded missing episodes
- Conversion rate of referral for Return home interview to completion
- Percentage of young people participating in LAC reviews
- Number of secure accommodation applications to court

## Ensuring delivery of the strategy

This strategy seeks to complement, not replicate, the activity undertaken by others to improve outcomes for Children in care and Care Leavers as such it aligns itself with the Health and Wellbeing Board, Hillingdon LSBC and Young People and Learning Policy Overview Committee. The strategy will be monitored by the Corporate Parenting Board and its associated 5 working groups. It will receive information on the council's performance in respect of looked after children and care leavers at each Corporate Parenting Board meeting. Looked after children and care leavers will have a key role in monitoring the delivery of the strategy through consultation, events and involvement at board meetings.

An Elected Member chairs both the Children, Young People and Learning Policy Overview Committee and the cross-party Corporate Parenting Board. Officers from across the Council and its partner agencies are also represented and held accountable at a senior level through the Corporate Parenting Board. This body has the responsibility for leadership, vision and implementation of the strategy. Members will be asking whether, as corporate parents, we are keeping our promises and if not, what we should all be doing to make sure that we do.

The Board also provides both a governance and a supportive role in improving educational, health, safeguarding and transition to adulthood outcome, escalating any emerging issues to the Lead Member for Children's and young people's services, Local Safeguarding Children's Board, or Health and Well Being Board as appropriate.

The work of the Corporate Parenting Board is supported by five Working Groups. They will deliver the priorities as set out by the Board which could include re-shaping the priorities based on national policies, local service needs and legal changes. The five working groups are:

- Education
- Health and Wellbeing
- Leaving Care and Transition
- Social Development and Participation
- Safeguarding

The Board will be supported by Hillingdon's Democratic Services Team which will ensure that the meetings are supported to a high standard and that there is parity with other similar bodies. Minutes are available on the Council website.

Health and wellbeing Board	Hillingdon LSCB		Young People and Learning Policy Overview Committee	
Corporate Parenting Board				
Talkers	Step Up		Stepping out	
Education working group	Health and Wellbeing working group	Leaving care and transitions' working group	Participation and social development working group	Safeguarding working group

Finally as corporate parents we need to continually ask our service areas, our departments and ourselves;

**If this were my child, would it be good enough?**