



City of Westminster Committee Report

Meeting or Decision Maker:	Children, Sport & Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	12 January 2015
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Annual Looked After Children and Care Leavers Report 2014
Wards Affected:	All
Better City, Better Lives Summary	The outcomes and life chances of Westminster's Looked After Children and Care Leavers form a critical component of Westminster's commitment to a safer, healthier city, which give every child the best start in life.
Key Decision:	None
Financial Summary:	None
Report of:	Tri-borough Executive Director for Children's Services

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report highlights the significant responsibilities the local authority has in relation to Looked After Children, and how it discharges these.
- 1.2 Nationally, there were 68,400 children and young people in care on 31 March 2014, a slight increase on the previous year. Generally, outcomes for Looked After Children 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 and outcomes for Looked After Children. Locally, we closely monitor the profile and outcomes of our care population in order to effectively plan services. Section 3 outlines the profile of our current care population and the following sections highlight outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

1.3 Section 5 highlights Westminster's strategic priorities for Looked After Children services and future developments in services

1.4 This report is for information.

2. Introduction

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

2.2 Westminster also has a duty and responsibility to those young people who leave care after the age of 16 years until they reach the age of 21 years, or 25 if they are in higher education.

2.3 The majority of Looked After Children need alternative care and accommodation due to the inability of their primary care giver to offer safe and effective care within the family home. Many Looked After Children are able to return to their parent(s) speedily and do not require long term services or interventions. Many who remain in care are likely to have suffered neglect or abuse, prior to coming into our care, and are likely to require support from a range of services.

3. Numbers of Looked After Children

3.1 At the end of March 2014 there were 176 children Looked After by Westminster City Council. Of those children and young people who were Looked After at the 31 March 2014, 70 percent (125 out of 176) had been Looked After for at least twelve months. During the course of the 2013/14 financial year 90 children and young people started to be looked after, of which 44 percent were aged 16 and above (40 out of 90). During the 2013/14 financial year there were 105 children and young people in care who ceased to be looked after; 44 (42 percent) episodes of care ended as a result of the young person turning 18 and 35 (33 percent) ended with the child returning home to their parents.

3.2 The number of Looked After Children has steadily declined over the past five years: from 247 Looked After Children in March 2004 to 176 children in March 2014. The number of Looked After Children as a proportion of the population in Westminster is 49 LAC per 10,000 population; the third lowest in Inner London. This is lower than Hammersmith and Fulham (62 per 10,000) and slightly higher than Kensington and Chelsea (36 per 10,000).

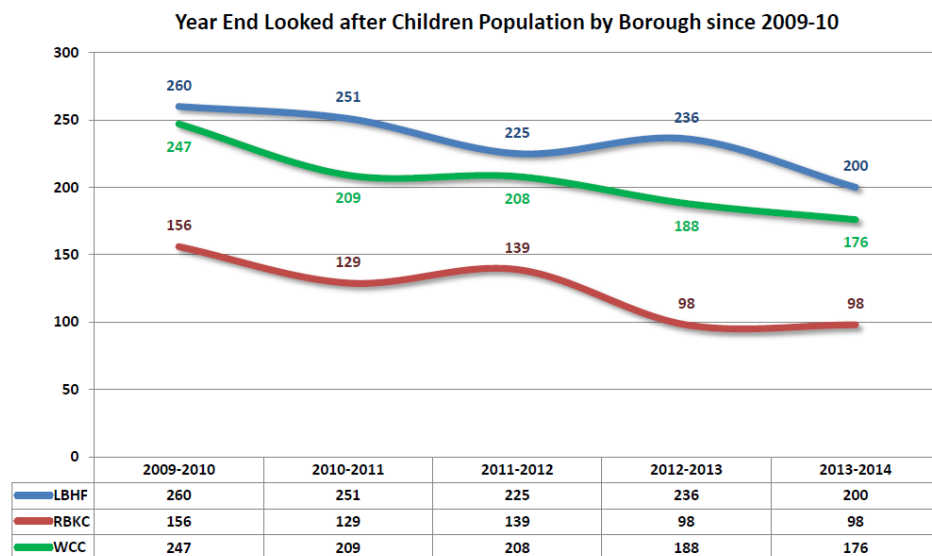


Table 1: Looked After Children population (year end): 2009/10-2013/14

- 3.3 The majority of children Looked After at the 31 March were aged 10 and over, with 58 children aged 16 and above (33 percent) and 65 aged 10 to 15 (37 percent). Only 24 children were Looked After under the age of five (7 aged under one and 17 aged between one and four).
- 3.4 Abuse and neglect was the largest category of need, recorded as the main category of need for 72 of the 176 (x percent) Looked After Children at the 31 March 2014. 16 children were Looked After due to absent parenting (the majority of these young people will be unaccompanied asylum seeking young people); 41 due to family dysfunction; 13 due to family in acute stress; 6 due to disability; 4 due to socially unacceptable behaviour and 24 due to parental illness or disability.
- 3.5 The majority of Looked After Children are in foster care placements: of the 176 Looked After Children at 31 March 2014, 139 (79 percent) were in foster care; were in residential placements; and 2 were in residential school placements. Of the 28 Looked After Children in residential placements 21 were in supported accommodation and 7 in children's homes. Other Looked After Children were placed for adoption or placed with parent.
- 3.6 As a geographically small borough, not all Looked After Children are able to live within Westminster when they are in care. Of the children and young people Looked After at the 31 March 2014, 84 percent were placed in London, including within Westminster

4. CORPORATE PARENTING

- 4.1 Corporate Parenting is the term used to refer to the collective responsibility of the Council to provide the best care and protection for children and young people who are 'looked after', that is, who are in public care. Effective corporate parenting will need the commitment from all Council employees and elected Members and an authority wide approach. These responsibilities for Local Authorities were first laid out in the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004 and reinforced in the Children and Young People's Act 2008.
- 4.2 The Corporate Parenting Panel has a key role in monitoring how the Council discharges its corporate parenting responsibilities. Over the past year the Panel has continued to meet with Looked After children and young people. Topics for this year have included Foster Care Standards; the Tri-borough strategic vision for Looked After Children and Care Leavers; out of area placement standards; educational outcomes; volunteering opportunities for Care Leavers and how the board can help with sponsorship; and planning special events held for Looked After Children and Care leavers, such as the sports day and Christmas Party. The membership and structure of the board has also been reviewed to improve the ability of young people to direct topics and ask questions of the Board.

5. STRATEGIC PLANNING

- 5.1 A Tri-borough strategy for Looked After Children has recently been developed which sets out the vision and intended outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in the three boroughs in the period 2014 to 2017.
- 5.2 The strategy has six strategic objectives:
- Children on the edge of care are better supported to remain within their families and community
 - Looked After Children and Care Leavers are provided with security, stability and are cared for
 - Looked After Children and Care Leavers are safe from harm and neglect
 - Looked After Children and Care Leavers are supported in reaching a good standard of education
 - Looked After Children and Care Leavers health needs are promoted and supported
 - All Looked After Children and Care Leavers have a voice in decisions which affect their lives.
- 5.3 To support the delivery of the strategic priorities, and progress towards shared outcomes, an annual borough specific Looked After Children and Care Leavers improvement plan will be developed and delivered with partners. The plan for the Westminster is included in Appendix A. The plan will be monitored by a Tri-

borough multi-agency service improvement group, which will link directly with the Children in Care Councils and will be able to respond to the issues that these councils raise.

- 5.4 The Tri-borough Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has a significant role in ensuring effective multi-agency work and safeguarding for Looked After Children. The LSCB has requested an annual report on progress made with achieving outcomes outlined in the Tri-borough Looked after Children's Strategy.
- 5.5 The Children, Sport & Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee is also involved in monitoring the quality and effectiveness of services, via the scrutiny of this annual report on services and outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. A report on the work of the Tri-borough Fostering and Adoption Team will also be presented annually.
- 5.6 Other relevant performance indicators are reported quarterly through the Family Services Management Group and then to the Cabinet Member via their weekly Cabinet Briefings.

6. SAFEGUARDING OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS

- 6.1 Children who are subject to frequent placement moves are less able to form positive attachments with carers which make them more vulnerable to unsafe relationships from other adults or their peer group. The number of placement moves that children have is carefully monitored in all three boroughs to ensure plans are adapted to make placements more resilient where required. In 2013/14 only 6.3 percent of Looked After Children experienced three or more placement moves, a significant reduction on previous years (averaging 11.5 percent in 2012/13 and 2011/12) and much lower than the national average of 11 percent.
- 6.2 Looked after children are significantly more likely to go missing than their peers, and therefore vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Children with frequent placement changes are more likely to go missing and this behaviour also impacts upon the stability of their current placement. There were a total of 40 episodes of Looked After Children missing in 2013/14.
- 6.3 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 e.g. those young people identified to be at risk due to gang affiliation, the lack of foster placements in Inner London means that many children need to be placed in other local authority areas, although usually these are in London. A total of 25 Looked After Children, looked after on 31 March 2014 were in an outer London placement.

6.4 Care Leavers aged 18 and under are safeguarded through the application of child care legislation, and post 18 through the Pan London Safeguarding Adults procedures. In 2013/14 the Leaving Care team piloted a project reviewing the knowledge and confidence of Personal Advisors in the application of adult safeguarding procedures. The pilot has increased staff confidence in redefining safeguarding issues into the risks posed by others and the risk from young people's own self disregard through unwise decision making. New templates, practice guidance, audit tool and training has been designed and delivered and plans are being developed to share this across the Tri Borough care leaving services.

7. HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

7.1 Looked After Children and young people share the same health risks and problems as their peers but often to a greater degree. They often enter care with a worse level of health than their peers in part due to the impact of poverty, abuse, neglect and chaotic parenting.

7.2 Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that health assessments are carried out for every looked after child in their care. Of the 156 Annual Health Assessments (for children who have been in care for a year) 98 percent were carried out on time. The six assessments not carried out within timescales were due to child illness, child missing or refusing the assessment, exams, and delay in referral being received. All those children were subsequently seen on another date.

7.3 The Local Authority should act as a 'good parent' in relation to the health of looked after children. Within that role it has the right to approve the immunisation of children within its care against vaccine preventable diseases as per the national immunisation schedule. The proportion of children with up to date immunisations continues to rise: 94 percent in 2013/14. The continued improvement is related to a drive to ensure that young people receive their school leaver booster (diphtheria tetanus and polio) and to ensure that eligible girls are receiving the human papilloma vaccination (HPV).

7.4 Dental health is an integral part of the Health Assessment. The Local Authority and NHS Trust are required to ensure that LAC receive regular check-ups with a dentist. 100 percent of under fives are up to date with dental checks. Dental checks for 5-16 year olds are slightly lower at 94 percent and are lower for over 16s at only 81 percent.

7.5 Due to the nature of their experiences prior to and during being looked after, many LAC will have poor mental health. This may be in the form of significant

emotional, psychological or behavioural difficulties. A total of 57 Looked After Children are engaged with specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

8. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

- 8.1 Education that encourages high aspirations and individual achievement, with minimum disruption, is central to improving immediate and long-term outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. We know that Looked After Children and Care Leavers face significant barriers to achieving good educational outcomes, therefore closing the attainment and progress gap and creating a culture of high aspirations is a major priority for the Westminster City Council.
- 8.2 In April 2014 the three Tri-borough Local Authorities appointed a single Tri-borough Virtual School Head. The virtual school maintains accurate and up to date information about how Looked After Children and Care Leavers are progressing in education and takes urgent and individual action when they are not achieving well.
- 8.3 There were only three pupils in the Key Stage 1 cohort with all achieving L2 or above in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. A key factor in their achievement was that these pupils were in relatively stable school and foster placements, attended mainstream school and none had a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- 8.4 There were 6 pupils in the Key Stage 2 cohort with 50 percent achieving Level 4 or above in both English and Mathematics. Performance at Key stage 2 has declined since the excellent results of 2012 and 2013; however, this was expected and reflects the more complex nature of the cohort. Despite the fall in results it is encouraging that 5 of the 6 pupils met their targets and reached or exceeded their expected level of progress. 60 percent of pupils in mainstream schools achieved L4 in reading, writing and Maths. Pupils who made their expected level of progress were in relatively stable school and foster placements and attended mainstream school.
- 8.5 Most pupils in Key Stage 3 made good progress with 70 percent reaching Level 5 or above in reading and writing (English). Pupils who are making expected levels of progress are predominately in long term stable foster and school placements. One pupil moved to a boarding school at the end of year 8 and it is encouraging that academically she is achieving well. All pupils attend a provision rated as good or outstanding by OFSTED.
- 8.6 There were 21 pupils in the Key Stage 4 cohort. The percentage of pupils achieving 5 GCSE's grades A*-C is less than in previous years (24 percent);

while this is disappointing it was not totally unexpected and reflects the more challenging and diverse nature of the cohort, as well as previous years high levels of performance. Overall Westminster Looked After Children are still expected to be above average for all Looked After Children nationally. One pupil achieved exceptionally well, achieving A or A* in all but one of her subjects. Overall performance was also affected by the fact that two pupils were not educated in the UK and one pupil is still in year 10. One pupil became pregnant during year 11 but managed to complete her education before the birth of her baby.

- 8.7 The most significant factor in determining overall performance was the high number of pupils educated in non mainstream provision, which reflects the more complex and challenging needs of the cohort. This includes 5 in alternative provision and 6 in special day or residential schools. Of those pupils educated in mainstream schools 40 percent achieved 5 GCSE grades A*-C including English and Maths.
- 8.8 Steady progress has been made in addressing the issues and barriers around sustaining education, training and employment for post 16 Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Not in education, employment or training (NEET) levels fluctuate but analysis of EET performance at the end of the academic year 2013/14 shows 74 percent of 18 - 25 year old care leavers are EET and 81 percent of 19 year olds are EET.
- 8.9 Key priorities and areas for improvement for the Virtual School in 2014/15 include:
- Improve progress at KS4 – to above the national for similar pupils;
 - Improve progress and attainment of higher attaining pupils at KS2 and KS3 - raise attainment of this group to above national and ensure all pupils make at least 4 points progress;
 - Improve progress at post 16 – improve EET levels for 16-19 to 75 percent; and
 - Reduce level of persistent absence to less than 8 percent.

9. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

- 9.1 The Children in Care Council (CICC) meets between six to eight times a year. Members of the CICC have been involved in a number consultation and projects over the course of the year. Members are also involved in Westminster Young People's Housing Forum and Corporate Parenting Panel. The members are particularly proactive when involved in specific participation or consultation events. Activities by members of the CICC over the past year have included: taking part in Westminster Takeover Week; applying for funding from the O2 Big Shout which has been used to set up an art project called Chasing Dreams;

meeting with senior managers to discuss services for Care Leavers; taking part in national consultations with a National Voice, Ofsted, and with Ed Timpson MP; participating in consultations for Looked After Children services; and being involved in the planning of Looked After Children events.

- 9.2 The Children and Young People's Panel (CYPP) has nine members aged from 9 to 17. The CYPP sessions are a mixture of consultations and recreational activities; over the past year the CYPP has been involved in national Ofsted Consultations; planning and facilitating events; and met with senior managers from the council. Members have gained transferable knowledge and skills; including knowledge about their rights and entitlements as well as Westminster's policies in relation to LAC. They have also presented in various forums, helped plan and deliver LAC events and contributed to designing LAC information and leaflets. Recreational activities have included going to Thorpe Park, Madame Tussuads, Marchants Hill Residential, Cake Baking, Go karting and Karaoke.
- 9.3 The CICC and CYPP have recently merged to help them have a stronger impact on influencing decision making in Westminster.
- 9.4 Looked After Children and Care Leavers have also been involved in a Recruitment Panel to assist in decision making about various positions in Children's Services. Young People on the panel receive training and learn how to score candidates answers. Their contribution also helps to develop a more child focussed workforce which values the participation of young people. During 2013/14 the Panel has assisted with the appointments of social workers; the Looked After Children Deputy Service Manager; the Tri-borough Assistant Director of Children's Services and Independent Reviewing Officers.
- 9.5 Other activities and events include:
- The **Looked After Children Christmas Party** which involved Looked After Children and Care Leavers in the planning and delivery. Over 80 people attended the Christmas Party which was held at the Stowe Centre. The party included a talent competition "Westminster's got talent", music, Christmas party games, present giving from Father Christmas, face painting and arts and craft.
 - The **Looked After Children Fun day**, held in August 2014 promoted healthy lifestyles in an informal and fun way. Activities included races, giant health stalls, tug of war, and arts and crafts. The event was also attended by the Lord Mayor who gave out medals to the children and young people attended.
 - The annual **Sayers Croft Residential** (know as Summer Camp to the children) is a long established event where staff from Children Services and Francis Holland Girls School work collaboratively to organise a five day residential for Looked After Children and Francis Holland six-formers. On the trip Children took part in various activities such as camping, rope climbing, archery, pond dipping, rock climbing and raft building. Many of

the children that attended had complex and challenging behaviour where they struggle to make relationships with their peers and/or have the opportunity to engage in outward bound activities.

- In November 2013 young people from the 3 boroughs attended the '**Look to the Future**' Residential including five Looked After young people from Westminster. The residential included education workshops focusing on young people's career and education aims for the future as well as how to achieve them. Activities included a Giant Swing, Rope Climbing, Power ball, Robot wars, Night Walk, Playing Hide and seek in the woods and a DVD evening.
- Westminster Children Services have collaborated with Tate Britain for several years on a range of art projects. '**Make Yourself At Home**' was specifically aimed at getting both foster carers and Looked After Children to interact in the gallery and to make connections with specific pieces of Art. In doing so, this would influence the children and foster carers when they were given tasks to create their own art pieces. A total of nine foster families participated in the project which ran over six Saturdays between Januar and March 2014. Foster parents felt the project enabled them to spend quality time together.

9. OUTCOMES FOR CARE LEAVERS

- 9.1 The Leaving Care Service assists, befriends and advises young people to make a successful transition from the council's care to independent living in the community.
- 9.2 Care Leavers move into the service at the age of 18 when they officially leave care and become an adult. At this point, they are allocated a Personal Advisor who takes full case responsibility. The Pathway Plan sets out the support available for all aspect of their life, with a particular emphasis on securing settled accommodation and appropriate education, training and employment (EET). The Plan is reviewed every six months until the young person is 21, or later if they are completing an agreed course of education, training and employment.
- 9.3 From April 2011 a former care leaver over the age of 21, but under 25, will be able to return to ask for their case to be reopened in order to complete a course of EET up to the level of a first degree. The Leaving Care Service are currently supporting 28 young people at university. One care leaver recently achieved a distinction in a masters degree of astrophysics and the service has provided additional support to her to go on to her PhD course in the same subject.
- 9.4 The team supported up to 160 young people in the current year. Following a national trend there has been a fall in care leavers who came into care as Unaccompanied Minors seeking asylum and a rise in high needs, complex cases where the young person came into care over the age of 14.

- 9.5 At the end of March 2014, of the relevant 19 year old care leavers, 72% were in education, employment or training. 100% were in suitable accommodation and further no care leavers were evicted from their final stage accommodation.

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