

# Children, Sports & Customer Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date:</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> June 2015
<b>Classification:</b>	General Release
<b>Title:</b>	Updated report on Looked after Children and Care Leavers
<b>Cabinet Member Portfolio:</b>	Children's Services
<b>Wards Involved</b>	All
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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides further updated information to the annual report submitted to the Children, Sports and Leisure Policy and Scrutiny committee on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2015. The focus of the report is to provide specific information on the role of the Corporate Parent, the educational outcomes of Looked after Children and Care Leavers and to provide the committee with some further analysis in relation to the small increase of Looked after Children numbers at the end of year March 2015.
- 1.2 Data contained within this report is currently being verified in time for the end of year data returns to the Department for Education.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 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 needs 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.

- 2.2 Government Guidance for Councillors "If this were my child" reinforced the leading role of Councillors in ensuring that their Council acts as an effective Corporate Parent for every child in care, actively supporting standards of care and seeking high quality outcomes that every good parent would want for their child. "When you became a councillor you became responsible for ensuring that the Council acts as the 'corporate parent' for all the children in its care." This duty is to promote positive outcomes, which encompass their education, their health and welfare, what they do in their leisure time and holidays, how they celebrate their culture and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements.
- 2.3 The term 'Looked After' refers to any child or young person for whom the authority has, or shares parental responsibility, or for whom the authority provides care and accommodation to the child or young person on behalf of their parent.
- 2.4 The majority of the children and young people need alternative care and accommodation due to the inability of their prime care giver, for a range of reasons, to offer safe and effective caring within the family home and many, but not all, of our children and young people have suffered abuse or neglect of some form prior to coming into our care.
- 2.5 The term 'child' refers to any child or young person between 0-18years of age. The Authority also has a duty and responsibility to those young people who leave care after the age of 18 years until they reach the age of 21 years, or up to 25 if they are in higher education.
- 2.6 Children and young people in and leaving care have been subject to a range of legislation and initiatives. The Children and Young People's Act 2008 specifically contains core recognition of the role and responsibilities of the Corporate Parent and a move towards a more 'normative' approach to parenting, giving children in care the support and care that children in the wider community expect and receive from their parents.
- 2.7 The Corporate Parenting Board, which has a key role in monitoring how the Council discharges its corporate parenting responsibilities has agreed a work plan that focuses upon thematic issues linked to the Looked after Children and Care Leavers three year strategic plan (2014-17). It is anticipated that this will enable greater engagement of children and young people in consultation activities and ensure service improvements are informed by the experiences of children in care and care leavers.

### **3 Numbers of Looked after Children**

- 3.1 Nationally, there were 68,400 children and young people in care on 31 March 2014, a slight increase on the previous year of approximately 1 per cent. This national figure is the highest figure of children in care since the

implementation of the 1989 Children Act. The national end of year figure for 2015 is yet to be verified.

3.2 Within Westminster City Council (WCC) the number of Looked after Children has steadily declined over the last six years, from 247 in March 2009 to 185 children in March 2015. The number of children looked after as a proportion of the population in Westminster City Council is 51 LAC per 10,000 population, which is a 1% increase on the 2014 figure. This is lower when comparing to our statistical neighbours (67.1%) and Nationally (60%).

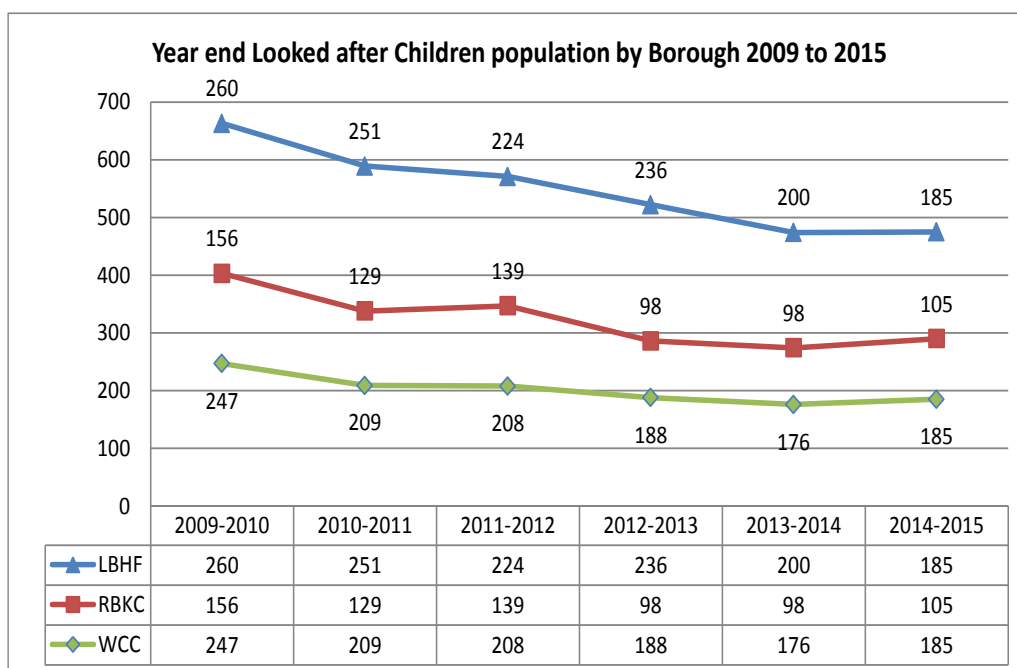


Table 1: Looked After Children population (year end): 2009/10-2014/15

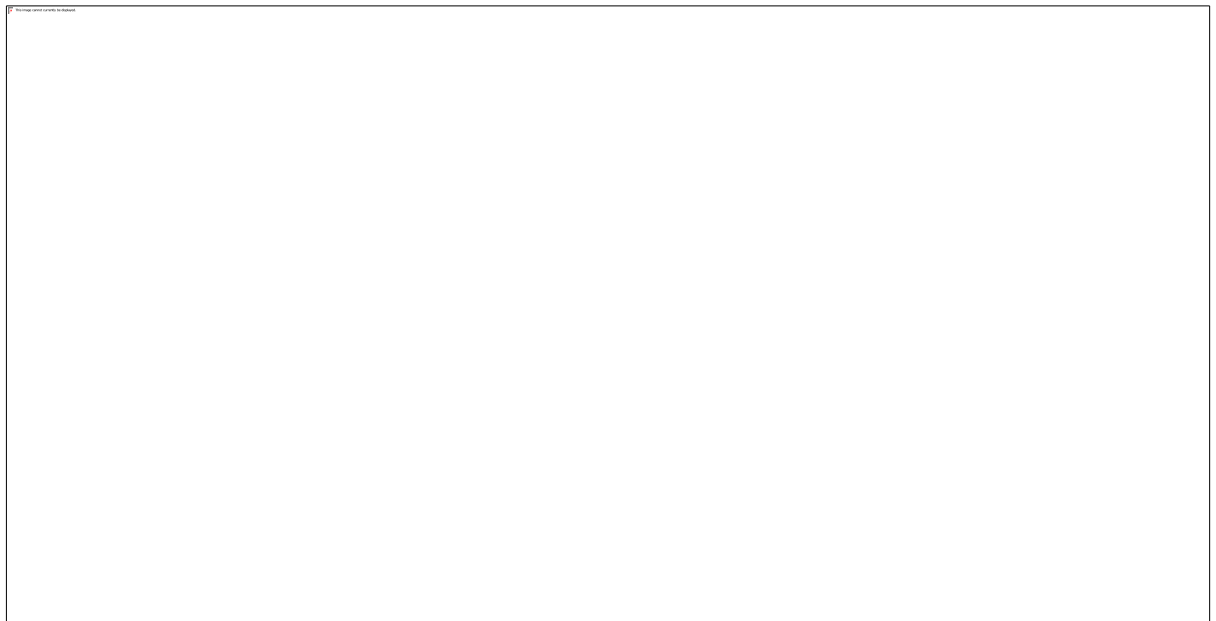
3.3 The majority of children Looked After at the 31 March were aged 10 and over, with 64 children aged 16 and above (35 percent) and 70 aged 10 to 15 (38 percent). Only 19 children were Looked After under the age of five (8 aged under one and 11 aged between one and four).

3.4 The increase in WCC children in care numbers in 2014/15 is largely attributed to the increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). Between April 2014 and March 2015, 27 Asylum Seeking Children became looked after by WCC. This represented 38% of the children who became newly looked after in this year. There are two points of entry of UASC and analysis demonstrates an even balance between referrals via the Pan London rota system (14 young people aged 16 plus) and those deemed to have a local connection e.g. presented to WCC via a range of local agencies and services (13 children under 16 years of age).

**Total number of UASCs looked after by borough by year (2011-2014) and late 2014/15**

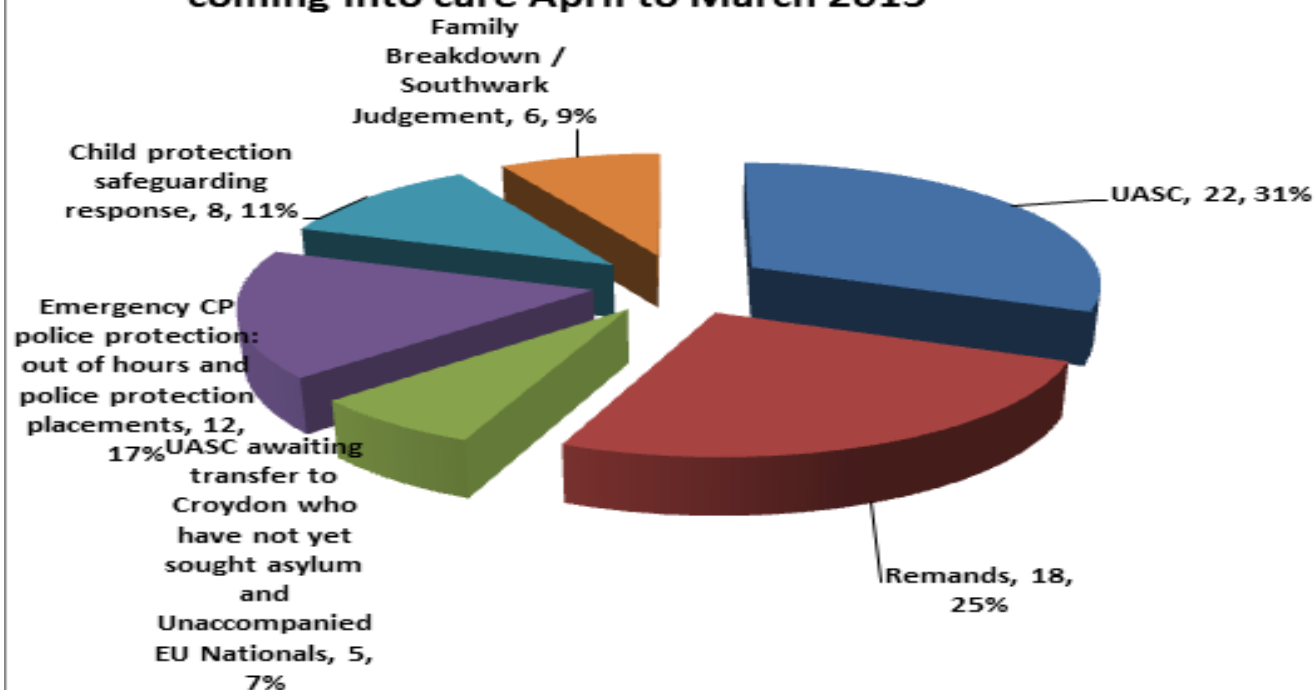
Borough	Year end 2011/12	Year end 2012/13	Year end 2013/14	DEC 2014	JAN 2015	FEB 2015
LBHF	21	15	9	15	15	17
RBKC	22	15	13	20	25	23
WCC	9	9	11	21	27	24

3.5 Mirroring the experiences of other London boroughs, 10 of the new arrivals were Albanian, with also significant numbers arriving from Eritrea (6), Egypt (3), Ethiopia and Syria (2 each), and finally individuals arriving from Afghanistan, Iran, Morocco, and Somalia.



3.6 With reference to the WCC 2014-15 Better City Better Lives pledge you will see by the chart below the breakdown of the reasons why children aged between 14-17 years of age were accommodated. The highest figure for children entering care are either due to the child being an UASC or being placed in remand. A much smaller proportion are entering care due to safeguarding concerns or assessed level of a risk of homelessness and vulnerability (Southwark Judgement cases).

### Number of young people aged 14 to 17 years coming into care April to March 2015



- 3.7 In the same 2014/15 year, there were 32 Care Leavers over the age of 18 who were classified as seeking asylum. The largest number exit care by receiving their permanent leave to remain (11 young people) and exiting the service in the same way as British born children. However the service has seen increasing numbers of young people going permanently missing (4 young people currently with more at risk) on receiving a negative decision from the home office. 1 young person was deported and another 1 young person was referred to Asylum Support Services as they were not eligible for further local authority assistance. Of those that remain, they continue to be supported by the leaving care service whilst they await a decision by the Home Office in line with our statutory obligations. The age of those awaiting a decision ranges from 18 to 24 years old
- 3.8 A range of actions are being implemented in order to address the current trend. These include ensuring robust age assessments of UASC young people to prevent those assessed to be over 18 years of age entering care, examining our alternatives to remand that is placed before the Courts for young offenders, development of a range of interventions linked to the 'Focus On Practice' change initiative to support families and avoid adolescent care entry and develop robust rehabilitation home support packages when it is assessed that this is safe to do so.

## **4 SAFEGUARDING OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS**

- 4.1 Children who are subject to frequent placement moves are less able to form positive attachments with carers which makes them more vulnerable to unsafe relationships from other adults or their peer group. The number of placement moves that children have is carefully monitored to ensure plans are adapted to make placements more resilient where required. In 2014/15 only 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.
- 4.2 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 2015, 81 percent were placed in London boroughs, including within Westminster.
- 4.3 Looked after children are significantly more likely to go missing than their peers, and therefore vulnerable to child sexual exploitation (CSE). 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 41 episodes of missing children in care in 2014/15. A robust process is in place that ensures missing children are visited and interviewed in order to address any potential safeguarding issues that the child may be encountering.
- 4.4. With specific reference to children at risk of CSE there have been a number of developments to identify those assessed to be at risk and to provide a comprehensive support package to ensure that risks are reduced. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) oversees this work. Local developments have been informed by the publication of London Child Sexual Exploitation Operation Protocols. These include:
- a. Agreement of a CSE Strategy by the LSCB.
  - b. The implementation of a monthly Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation meeting chaired by the Police and Children's Services.
  - c. A shared risk assessment tool.
  - d. A common pathway to services coordinated through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
  - e. Development of data sets and problem profiles
  - f. A range of training and awareness-raising initiatives.
  - g. Trialing a specific CSE screening tool.

4.5 Currently WCC has a total of 40 children identified at risk of CSE and these children are categorized from the assessment on how serious the risk is. The majority of children in WCC are within the blue category, which following an assessment has identified the potential to present as vulnerable to CSE. With specific reference to Looked after Children there are currently two children out of the 40 and both are assessed to be in the blue category.

<b>CSE Concern</b>	<b>LBHF</b>	<b>RBKC</b>	<b>WCC</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
<b>CSE Blue</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>CAT 1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>CAT 2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CAT 3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>96</b>

4.5 In 2014/15 the legal framework supporting and protecting Care Leavers aged 18 and above has changed. Care Leavers aged 16 – 18 continue to be supported and safeguarded through the application of child care legislation. Under the Care Act 2014, implemented in April 2015, Local Authorities now have a duty to conduct transition assessments. This is where there is a likely need for care and support when the young person turns 18 and when that assessment would be of significant benefit. Statutory guidance cites some examples relevant to the care leaving population for those young people:

- whose needs have been largely met by their educational institution, but who, once they leave, will require their needs to be met in some other way (e.g. those with autism);
- detained in the youth justice system who will move to adult custodial services and
- receiving child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) who may also require care and support as adults even if they did not receive children's services from their local authority.

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

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

5.1 Education that encourages high aspirations and individual achievement, with minimum disruption, is central to improving immediate and long-term outcomes for children in care and Care Leavers. We know that these children

and young people 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 WCC.

- 5.2 The data provided within this report is primarily from the academic year 2013/14 as examinations for this year will be taken during the summer. In 2013/14 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; they attended mainstream school and none had a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- 5.3 In the same year 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 children within the current 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.
- 5.4 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 attended a provision rated as good or outstanding by OFSTED.
- 5.5 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.
- 5.6 The most significant factor in determining overall performance of pupils in KS4 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.



- 5.7. 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 2014/15 shows 71 percent of 19-21 year old care leavers are EET.
- 5.8 Comparing outcomes for our children in care with other boroughs and all pupils should be treated with caution. Cohorts vary in size from borough to borough and as a significant number of children in WCC care attend school outside of the borough, direct a comparison with pupils attending Westminster schools does not always provide a useful measure. However, comparisons of outcomes for Westminster children in care and other care pupils show that Westminster achieves outcomes at KS2 and KS4 similar or above the national averages. 50 percent of WCC children in care achieved at least Level 4 in Reading, Writing and Maths compared to 48 percent nationally, 52 percent for those in London and 54 percent for those in inner London. At KS4 WCC's children in care achieved outcomes above the national averages with 19 percent achieving 5 GCSE grades A\*-C including English and Maths compared to 12 percent nationally, 15 percent in London and 13.8 percent in Inner London.
- 5.9 The attainment gap between children in care and all non looked after pupils remains wide for the reasons already discussed. At KS2 50 percent of WCC's children in care achieved Level 4 or above in Reading, Writing and Maths compared to 67 percent of all pupils and 85 percent of WCC's pupils. At KS4 19 percent of WCC's children in care achieved 5 GCSE grades A\*-C including English and Maths compared to 53% percent of all pupils and 68 percent of WCC's pupils.
- 5.10 It is expected that outcomes at all Key Stages will improve in this (2015) academic year. At KS1 and KS2 it is expected that all looked after pupils will achieve either a L2 or above or a Level 4 or above in Reading, Writing and Maths. At KS4 it is expected that 42 percent of pupils will achieve at least 5 GCSE grades A\*-C including English and Maths. It should be noted however, that cohorts in each year group is less than 10. Currently there have been no permanent exclusions, but the average attendance is currently running lower than expected, mainly due to the arrival of a number of UASC who became looked after and did not have a school place. The percentage of 16-21 year olds in education, employment or training is expected to be between 70 and 75 percent.

## **6 Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration**

- 1) The rise in numbers of looked after children is largely attributed to children seeking asylum.
- 2) Potential welfare benefit changes may have an impact upon Care Leavers ability to obtain housing benefits and therefore some greater analysis of the financial implications to the council is required.

3) The changes to the Care Act will require agreement with adult services as to how this will be effectively implemented to meet the specific needs of Care Leavers assessed to require ongoing support. Specifically agreement is required as to what service will undertake assessments of adult safeguarding risks.

4) I am proposing that the committee considers that an update report is scheduled within the forward plan, which provides further information in relation to UASC's care entry, any identified impact to care leavers ability to claim housing benefit and to inform members about how we have progressed transition assessments in partnership with adult services.

**If you have any queries about this Report please contact:**

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