

# Bi-Borough Inclusion Strategy 2021



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
KENSINGTON  
AND CHELSEA



City of Westminster

# Opening Statements

## Foreword from the Councils' two Lead Members

We are really pleased to be launching our 2021 Bi-borough Inclusion Strategy. Only by working together with partners can we achieve our ambition of ensuring that our excellent schools in Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea are inclusive spaces that nurture and support all of our pupils.

Across the country, fixed terms and permanent exclusions rates are rising. We know that exclusion from school presents specific challenges for young people and is linked to poor life outcomes. Exclusion increases safeguarding concerns, increases the likelihood of involvement with the criminal justice system and adversely affects employment prospects.

We also know that exclusion from school disproportionately affects certain children and young people. Children who have experienced trauma or poverty, boys from a black Caribbean background and children with special educational needs are all more likely to be excluded than other pupils. One of our greatest assets in Westminster and in Kensington and Chelsea is the diversity of our residents and of our pupils. By embedding inclusive practices, we will ensure that all our pupils have the chance to thrive.

There are no 'easy fix' solutions for creating a truly inclusive learning environment. This will be a journey that we undertake in partnership and in which we learn from one another. This strategy highlights the amazing inclusive work that is already taking place in our schools and across the local area. We know that local charities are delivering inspiring mentoring sessions to young people at risk of exclusion and that trauma-informed training in schools is ensuring that we are viewing behaviour through a lens of unmet need and vulnerability.

We will be embarking on the journey ahead with the many people and organisations who have made invaluable contributions to this strategy. We have heard from young people and parents, schools, the voluntary sector and our education service and early help teams. In partnership, we will ensure that those pupils at risk of exclusion receive support which is holistic, person-centred and which addresses their vulnerabilities. We will ensure that young people are well supported through the transition from primary to secondary school and that parents and carers feel empowered to take part in their child's education.

We look forward to continuing our strong partnership working over the next few years as we bring this bi-borough inclusion strategy to life.

Cllr Timothy Barnes, Lead Member, Young People and Learning

City of Westminster

Cllr Josh Rendall, Lead Member for Family and Children's Services

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

## Foreword from the Executive Director of Children's Service

I am delighted to launch our 2021 Inclusion Strategy and echo the words of Cllr Barnes and Cllr Rendall.

We've developed this strategy with open and honest conversations with schools, early help and the voluntary sector. We've also heard from our parents, carers and children and young people. We have listened to your voice on what interventions are making a difference and what we need to improve upon. Together, we will make a difference to our children and young people's participation at school and their educational outcomes. I look forward to working with you all to make sure every child in our schools has the chance to succeed.

Sarah Newman

Executive Director of Children's Services

City of Westminster and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

## Purpose of this strategy

All children and young people are entitled to inclusive, high quality education which is suitable and meets their needs, and which paves the way to a successful future. Over the past five years there has been an increase, nationally and locally, in the rate of both permanent and fixed term exclusions from school. Our most vulnerable children and young people are at a greater risk of being placed outside of mainstream education and a school exclusion is a key turning point in a child's or young person's life, often resulting in poorer life chances.

The circumstances leading to a student being removed from mainstream education are complex and no one agency is responsible or able to solve this challenge alone. As two boroughs with outstanding Children's Services, we have the opportunity to lead by example when it comes to presenting a strong leadership narrative that celebrates what is working well locally and presents an ambitious vision for schools and services to work together by intervening early and taking collective responsibility for ensuring that no child or young person is left behind.

### **Ambitions**

Our collective ambitions through this strategy are to:

- ✓ **Reduce the number of children and young people being removed from mainstream education as a result of their behaviour.**
- ✓ **Address factors that lead to specific groups of children and young people being disproportionately affected by exclusion.**
- ✓ **Drive a whole system commitment to work with children and young people at risk of exclusion in a trauma informed way.**
- ✓ **Improve outcomes for children and young people who are excluded.**
- ✓ **Improve reintegration rates from alternative provision back into mainstream education**

## Our approach to developing this strategy

The development of this strategy and the principles it outlines have been informed by engagement with a wide range of stakeholders (see *Appendix A*), detailed data analysis, a review of published research and learning from examples of good practice nationally and locally.

This strategy should be seen in the context of Westminster’s ‘[City for All](#)’ strategic plan and Kensington and Chelsea’s ‘[Our Council Plan](#)’. Both include a focus on taking care of the vulnerable and equipping children and young people with the skills and resilience they need to have a good life. It also compliments the [SEND Strategy](#), the [WCC](#) and RBKC Early Help Strategies, the [Local Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) priorities and the [Bi-Borough Children and Young People’s Plan](#) commitment to do more to avoid children and young people being excluded from school.

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## What is Inclusion

Inclusion is not simply the absence of a formal exclusion. An inclusive education system is welcoming and respectful to all children and families, whatever their characteristics, experiences, needs or ambitions. In practice this involves offering a variety of education settings and pathways, actively involving parents in decision making regarding their children, and ensuring staff are confident they have the skills and resources to meet the needs of all students.

Schools play a critical role in keeping children safe<sup>1</sup> and for some children school is the safest place they could be. School inclusion must be supported by strong and effective multi-agency working and clear referral pathways to ensure children and families get the right support at the right time.

## What is Exclusion

Exclusion is the removal of a child or young person from their education setting due to their behaviour. Sometimes this can be preventative: an attempt to access therapeutic or specialist education for a child or young person in order to improve their behaviour. Sometimes exclusions are used punitively: an attempt to punish a child or young person to disincentivise their negative behaviour.

Exclusions can also be divided into those which are formal and informal. Formal exclusions can be permanent or fixed-term<sup>2</sup> and go on record for the child or young person and the school. Nationally the rate of formal exclusions has increased in recent years. Since 2012/13, fixed term exclusions have risen by almost 40% and permanent exclusions by more than 42%.

An unofficial exclusion<sup>3</sup> is when parents or carers are asked to take their child home following an incident in school; this type of informal exclusion, also known as off rolling, is illegal regardless of whether it is with the agreement of parents or carers or not. There is no evidence of off rolling in either Westminster or in Kensington and Chelsea, but this continues to be monitored closely by the bi-borough education service, who report any such instances to the Department for Education, and by Ofsted when they inspect schools. In addition, a pupil at any type of school can transfer to another school as part of a 'managed move'<sup>4</sup> providing there is consent from parents or carers and the admission authority of the school.

Informal exclusions (unofficial exclusions and managed moves) are not recorded in the national data meaning the full extent to which children and young people are removed from school isn't always clear. We do know that the formal exclusion figures significantly underestimate the scale of the problem. The chart below shows that the total number of children or young people being educated outside of mainstream school nationally as a result of their behaviour<sup>5</sup> is up to eight times higher than the number of permanent exclusions recorded each year.

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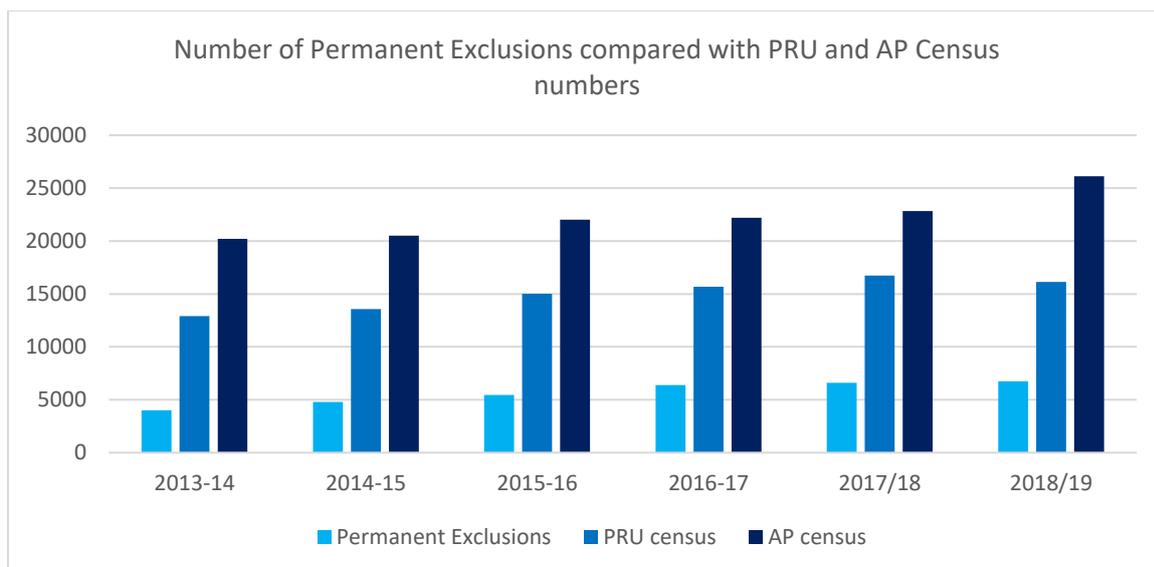
<sup>1</sup> [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

<sup>2</sup> A fixed period exclusion is where a child is temporarily removed from school but remains on the school roll. They can only be removed for up to 45 school days in one school year, even if they've changed school. See <https://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions> for more details.

<sup>3</sup> Unofficial exclusions also include off-rolling. Off-rolling refers to the removal of a child from the school roll where it is not in the interests of the child or the result of a parental decision such as to move house or to voluntarily change schools. It may also involve parents being encouraged to home educate. Off-rolling is illegal.

<sup>4</sup> Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England: Statutory guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion, *Department for Education (2017)*

<sup>5</sup> Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Alternative Provision (AP) Academies are full time education settings for children who have been removed from mainstream education as a result of their behaviour. PRUs are delivered in-house by the local authority, whereas AP is commissioned from independent providers.



## National Context

Over the last few years there has been significant attention on school inclusion, both locally and nationally. Published research has highlighted that our most vulnerable children and young people are at the greatest risk of being removed from mainstream education as a result of their behaviour. Such occurrences often have an immediate and longer-term negative impact on a child or young person's health and wellbeing.

### *Accountability*

An independent review of school exclusion by Edward Timpson CBE, commissioned by the Secretary of State for Education<sup>6</sup> concluded that nationally there is more we can do to ensure that every exclusion is lawful, reasonable and fair and that permanent exclusion is always a last resort.

Timpson's review identified differences in school leadership as a fundamental driver of current practice – resulting in too much variation in the culture and standards set within schools and how staff deliver them. The decision by Ofsted to update their school inspection framework in 2019 to recognise schools that are demonstrating inclusive practices represented a key turning point in the national conversation on inclusion.

Local Authorities have also been reminded of their responsibility to monitor and oversee all movement of children and young people out of mainstream education as a result of their behaviour, not just formal exclusions.

### *Children and Young People in AP*

Alternative provision (AP) is too often a forgotten part of the education system or is stigmatised as somewhere only the very worst behaved students are placed. In practice, AP settings endeavour to meet the needs of a wide cross-section of children and young people who will often arrive with complex vulnerabilities.

<sup>6</sup> Timpson review of school exclusion, *Department for Education* ([2019](#))

The House of Commons Education Committee report<sup>7</sup> highlights that the quality of AP is far too variable and that there ‘seems to be high quality AP despite the system, not because of it’. For many children and young people, AP can be transformational and has made a real difference to their lives; however this relies on the right children and young people receiving high quality AP and entering for the right reasons at the right time.

#### *Drivers of exclusion*

Schools are facing many challenges that make it more difficult to identify problems and then provide support. The Education Committee noted that schools increasingly lack the financial resources to fund pastoral support, including teaching assistants, that would often help keep students in mainstream.

Over recent years Ofsted have highlighted that where the curriculum is narrowing, some students will have fewer opportunities to take subjects that interest them, and this may negatively affect their engagement with education.

There has also been an increase in zero-tolerance behaviour policies, which may not be flexible enough to accommodate behaviours that arise from some of the underlying challenges mentioned above. The more rigid the curriculum and behaviour policies in some places become, the more difficult it will be for some students to fit into these school structures.

#### *Risk factors and Inequalities*

There is growing recognition of the inequalities that some children and young people experience within the education system as well as in other key areas of their lives.

A literature review by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2018<sup>8</sup> confirmed that, even when accounting for other factors about their background, children and young people from some groups are more likely to be excluded than others.

The review notes that schools do not operate in a vacuum, and that as microcosms of society these patterns of exclusion perpetuate society wide stereotyping and discrimination, particularly along the lines of class, race, gender and disadvantage.

#### *Covid-19*

The complexities of school exclusions have increased further due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many schools will have amended behaviour policies to incorporate government guidelines around social distancing, the ‘digital divide’ will have been greater than ever as many students received their education remotely, and an extended period of time without going into school may have exacerbated vulnerabilities including social anxiety and will have made it harder for some children and young people to return to school this year. Careful recovery planning has and continues to support those children and young people who may be struggling to manage the return to school.

The majority of safeguarding referrals are received from schools. The continued provision of on-site education to our most vulnerable children and young people during lockdown has further

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<sup>7</sup> Forgotten children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever-increasing exclusions, *House of Commons Education Committee* (2018)

<sup>8</sup> School exclusion: a literature review on the continued disproportionate exclusion of certain children, *Graham et al.* (2019)

emphasised the importance of attendance in school for keeping children and young people safe from harm.

During this time there is an even greater need to explore the impact exclusion has on lives and learning and to understand how we can support young people not only to stay, but also to thrive, in school.

## Local Context

### Characteristics of the Bi-borough

The two councils, Westminster City Council (WCC) and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC), agreed to deliver Bi-Borough Children’s Services jointly from April 2018.

Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea are prosperous and healthy boroughs, where many families enjoy an excellent quality of life. There are exceptional local amenities, including outstanding schools, beautiful parks and open spaces, renowned cultural venues, internationally important heritage sites, and a vibrant arts and cultural scene. These two boroughs sit side by side in the heart of London and are excellent places to live, work, study and visit.

A visible affluence in both boroughs masks areas of deprivation. In Westminster, seven wards in the borough are among the least deprived nationally and eleven are in the top 10% of most deprived. The picture is similar in Kensington and Chelsea which overall is in the top 10 least deprived boroughs yet has several neighbourhood areas which rank in the top 10% of most deprived areas in England.

Compared to other areas, the numbers of children and young people living in the boroughs are low. The percentage of those aged 0-18 is lower than elsewhere in the capital at 21% (WCC) and 20% (RBKC) compared to 25% in London.

The two boroughs provide an excellent start in life, however, there are a number of local challenges faced by our children and young people that impact on their lives and learning:

Kensington and Chelsea		Westminster		England	
21% of children are living in poverty		29% of children are living in poverty		22% of children are living in poverty	
24% of children are eligible for free school meals		27% of children are eligible for free school meals		17% of children are eligible for free school meals	
53% of primary pupils have English as an additional language	46% of secondary students have English as an additional language	66% of primary pupils have English as an additional language	58% of secondary students have English as an additional language	49% of primary pupils have English as an additional language	41% of secondary students have English as an additional language
28%		21%		3%	

of households are living in temporary accommodation	of households are living in temporary accommodation	of households are living in temporary accommodation
<b>2.1%</b> of school pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs	<b>3.2%</b> of school pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs	<b>2.4%</b> of school pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs
<b>164</b> children per 10,000 are children in need due to family stress or dysfunction or absent parenting	<b>145</b> children per 10,000 are children in need due to family stress or dysfunction or absent parenting	<b>94</b> children per 10,000 are children in need due to family stress or dysfunction or absent parenting

Although locally, in line with the national picture, we have seen overall reductions in youth offending, there have been increases in knife crime and serious youth violence across both Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea.

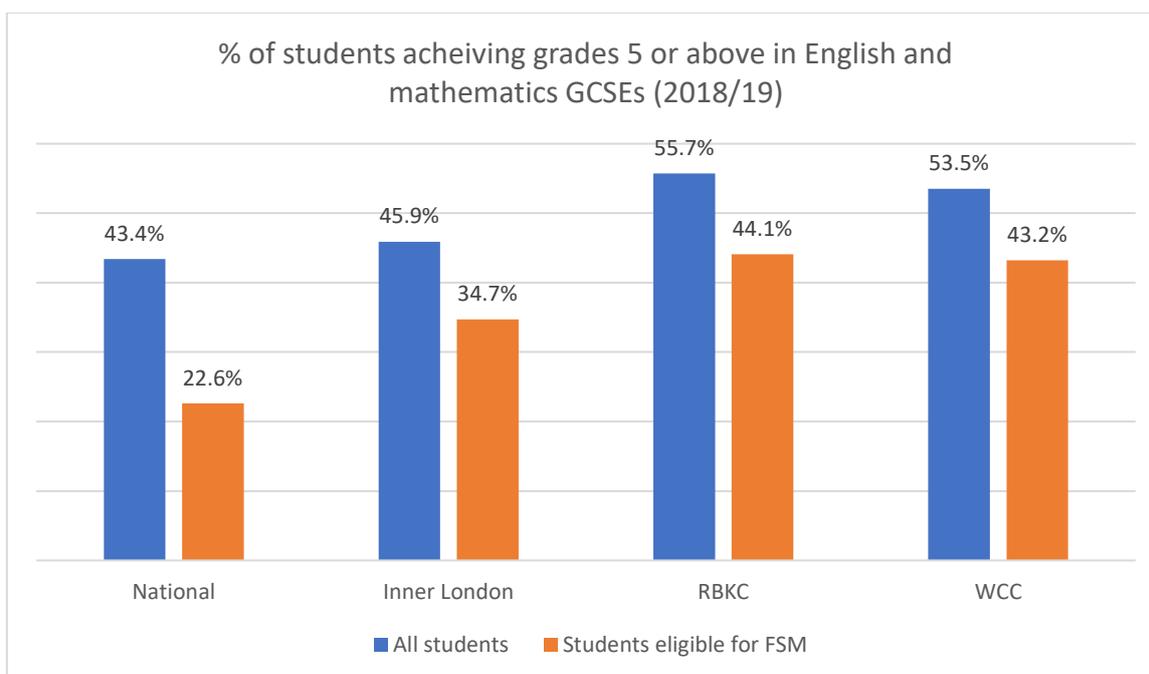
In Kensington, the Grenfell Tragedy (June 2017) has had a profound effect on the whole Council and the way services are organised and delivered. The focus has been and continues to be on supporting the bereaved, survivors and those most affected by the fire. Children’s Services, local schools and community organisations have an important role in continuing to provide this support.

### Characteristics of our schools

We have 100 nursery, primary and secondary schools, including special, hospital and alternative provision, across Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea. Strong working relationships are in place with all local schools.

High numbers of pupils travel into Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea from other areas to attend our schools, and many of our resident children and young people attend schools in neighbouring boroughs. This can present a challenge as different parts of the system are working with different but overlapping cohorts of children. For example, a vulnerable child attending school locally may be known to family services in their home borough but not to bi-borough front line services. Likewise, it may be difficult for our early help teams to build relationships with a school across London in order to work together to support a child attending there.

All state-funded schools in Kensington and Chelsea, and 93% of state-funded schools in Westminster have been rated ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted. This excellent standard of education has led to educational performance for both boroughs that is well above London and national levels, and a smaller attainment gap for students eligible for free school meals (FSM) than elsewhere (see chart below).



Education provision for children and young people who have been removed from mainstream education as a result of their behaviour is delivered by a single Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) with AP academies in both boroughs. Both Beachcroft AP Academy in Westminster and Latimer AP Academy in RBKC were rated as ‘Good’ by Ofsted when last inspected.

#### *Early Years and Post-16*

We have 144 early years settings and 100 childminders across Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development (GLD) at the end of reception in Westminster (71%) and Kensington and Chelsea (70%) is just below the London (74%) and National (72%) averages in 2019. This is a current area of focus locally to ensure all children have the best possible start in life.

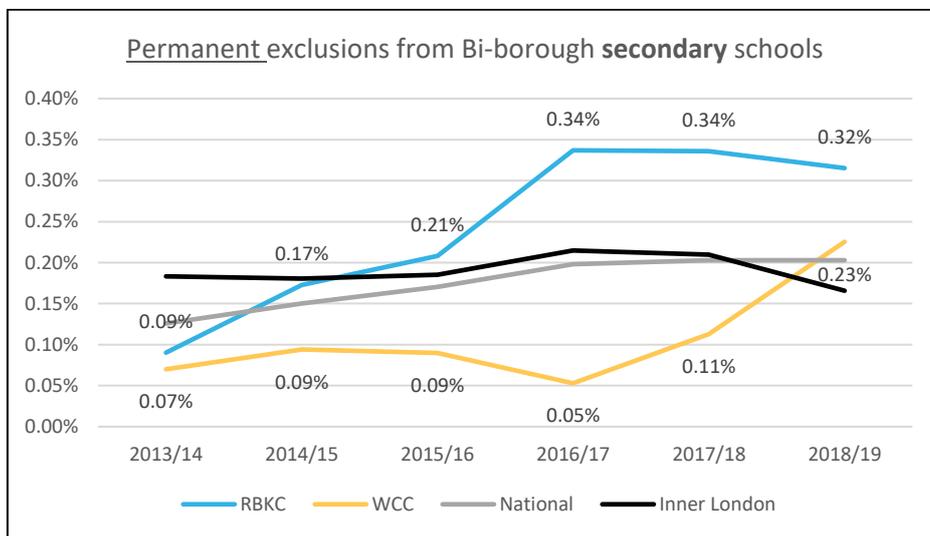
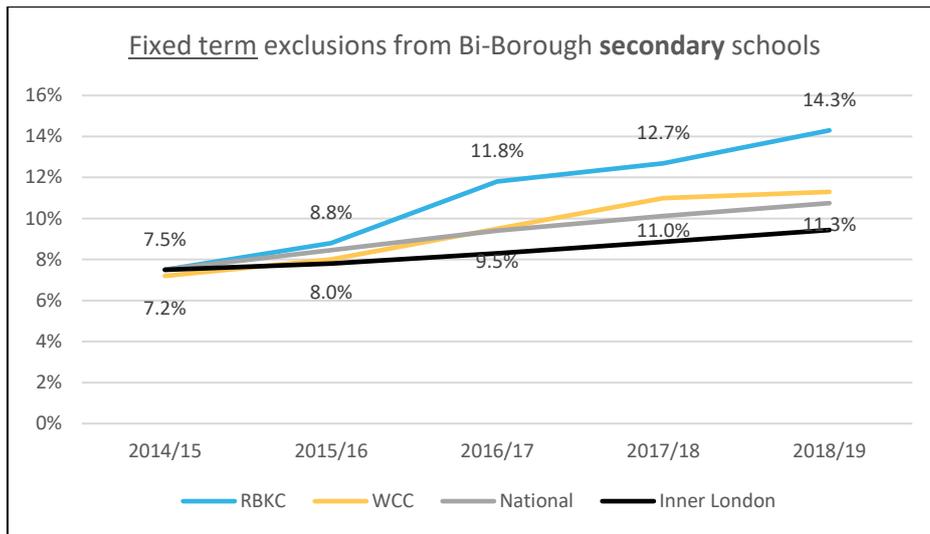
Participation rates for 16–17-year olds in 2020 were in line with the London rate (95%) at 98% (WCC) and 93% (RBKC). Most young people are in full-time education or training within a school sixth form, sixth form college or further education. Participation through the apprenticeship pathway, at 1.3% (WCC) and 1.7% (RBKC), is below London (2.5%) and national (5.4%) averages.

## Discovery: What does the data tell us?

The exclusion data for Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea tells us that:

### **There are too many students being removed from mainstream education due to their behaviour**

- While exclusion rates from primary schools have come down since 2017/18 (*Appendix B, Chart 1*), the rates of fixed and permanent exclusions from Bi-borough secondary schools had risen above inner London and national rates (see charts below) by 2019. This trend was more pronounced in Kensington and Chelsea.



- In addition to these formal exclusions, some students placed into bi-borough secondary AP as a result of their behaviour are on managed moves (*Appendix B, Chart 2*).

#### Financial investment could be re-focused further upstream

- Around 80% of the total investment in this area goes towards full time education provision for children and young people placed in AP (*Appendix B, Chart 3*), while only 20% goes towards interventions to reduce the risk of exclusion. Mainstream schools in both boroughs also invest in behaviour outreach and in managed interventions (temporary alternative provision placements).
- Despite the good work of the inclusion programmes in Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea led by early help teams, they currently only have the capacity to support 2.8% and 2.4% of students who receive at least one fixed term exclusion each year. This strategy on its own is unlikely to be sufficient to have a marked impact on our exclusion rates.

#### Exclusion rates vary significantly between schools

- Over the last three years, 45% of primary fixed term exclusions in Kensington and Chelsea were from just two schools, whilst 12 primary schools had no fixed term exclusions at all during this period.

- Similarly, in Westminster, the one secondary school with the highest number of fixed term exclusions arranged as many as the eight schools with the lowest numbers of fixed exclusions (*Appendix B, Chart 4*).

#### **Exclusion affects both our resident and educated populations**

- Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, 37% of children and young people permanently excluded from Kensington and Chelsea schools were residents of the borough and 7% were from Westminster.
- During the same period, 37% of children and young people permanently excluded from Westminster schools were residents of the borough (*Appendix B, Chart 5*).

#### **There are significant spikes in exclusions around transition points**

- The rates of exclusion from primary schools are low both locally and nationally, however there is a significant leap in fixed term exclusions in both boroughs for students in year 7. This increase is greater locally than either Inner London or England (*Appendix B, Chart 6*).
- There were significant spikes in permanent exclusions from Kensington and Chelsea schools in year 7 (5.6 times the Inner London rate) and year 9 (2.4 times the Inner London rate) in 2018/19.
- In contrast, there was a significant spike in permanent exclusions from Westminster schools in year 10 (2.8 times the Inner London rate) in 2018/19

#### **Academic outcomes for students placed outside of mainstream education are often much worse than for their peers**

- Despite investment in quality AP across the Bi-borough, national trends are reflected locally: in 2017/18, average attendance at Beachcroft and Latimer AP Academies was 71% and 49% respectively.
- Only around 36% of students completing year 11 left with at least one good GCSE.
- The number of students completing year 11 at Latimer (59%) or Beachcroft (53%) AP Academies without a confirmed September Guarantee or offer of post-16 study or training was significantly lower than for mainstream students in Kensington and Chelsea and in Westminster in 2019.

#### **There are also much broader negative impacts of exclusion**

- Nearly nine in ten young men and three quarters of young women in custody have been excluded from school at some point<sup>9</sup>.
- Exclusions place additional strain on a child's whole family. Parents and carers who spoke to the children's charity, Coram<sup>10</sup>, revealed that one couple's son *"had 7 fixed term exclusions in the last 2 years. My husband and I have lost significant workdays and salary as a result. As a family we are at breaking point."*
- Published research<sup>11</sup> has revealed that academic outcomes for even non-excluded students are negatively affected in schools with high levels of exclusions.

<sup>9</sup> Leap Confronting Conflict, <https://www.leapconfrontingconflict.org.uk/>

<sup>10</sup> Unfair results: Pupil and parent views on school exclusion, *Coram* (2019)

<sup>11</sup> Suspending Progress: Collateral Consequences of Exclusionary Punishment in Public Schools, *Perry & Morris* (2014)

- The IPPR<sup>12</sup> estimate that the cost of exclusion is around £370,000 per young person in lifetime education, benefits, health care and criminal justice costs. When scaled up across all permanent exclusions nationally over a year, the cost to the state is an extra £2.1billion.

### Early signs of improvement

During the period that this strategy has been in development, there has been a shift in the focus of the conversations between professionals and links between different parts of the system have been strengthened. The latest fixed-term exclusion data, subject to DfE validation, suggests that this picture has already begun to move in a positive direction (see table below).

### Reduction in secondary fixed term exclusions per month from September 2019 to February 2020 compared to the same period the previous year

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Kensington and Chelsea	-7	0	-17	-48	2	-7
Westminster	-34	-49	-38	-34	5	-51

### Inequalities in our excluded cohort:

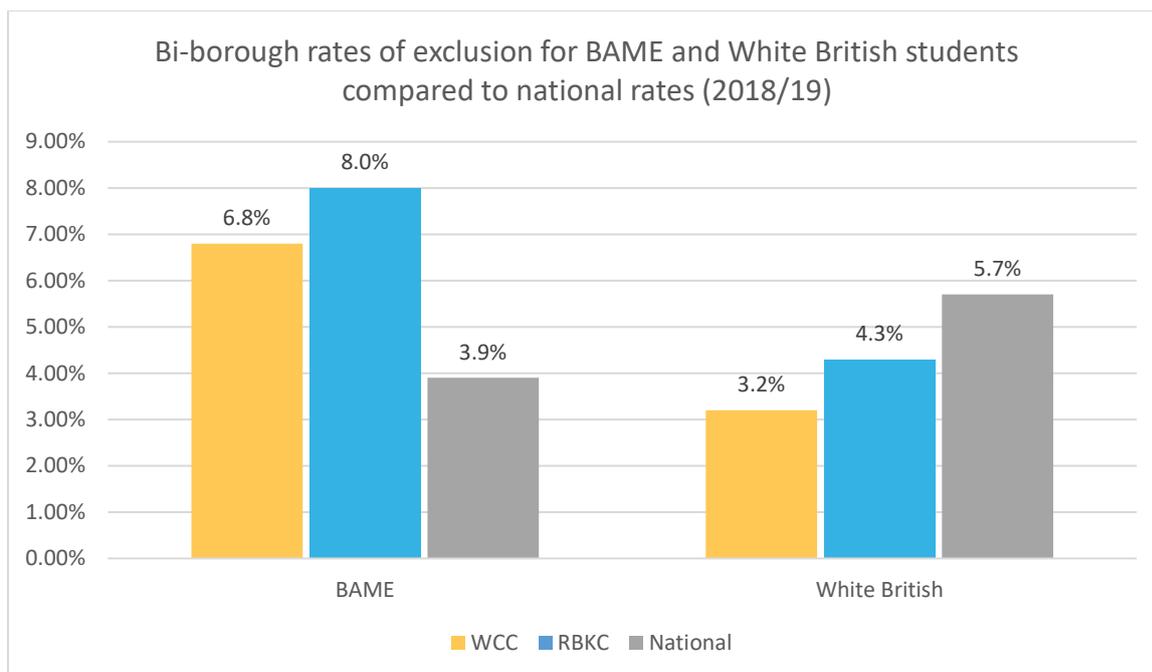
The inequalities that some children and young people face in their lives and education are evident in the patterns of exclusion across the Bi-Borough:

#### *Ethnicity*

Across the Bi-borough children and young people from certain ethnic backgrounds are disproportionately affected by exclusions. Whilst children and young people from White British backgrounds are **less** likely to receive a fixed term exclusion than elsewhere in the country, those from BAME backgrounds are **more** likely to receive a fixed term exclusion if they attend schools in Westminster or Kensington and Chelsea.

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<sup>12</sup> Making The Difference: Breaking the link between school exclusion and social exclusion, *Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)* (2017)



Children and young people from certain ethnicities are overrepresented in our AP population compared to mainstream (*Appendix B, Chart 7*). In both boroughs, the proportion of children and young people from Black Caribbean backgrounds is around 2.5 times higher in AP than in our mainstream secondary population.

The two ethnic backgrounds that are the most under-represented in both boroughs' excluded population are 'any other White background' and 'Black African'. This pattern is not unique to the Bi-borough and is seen across London as a whole.

### *Deprivation*

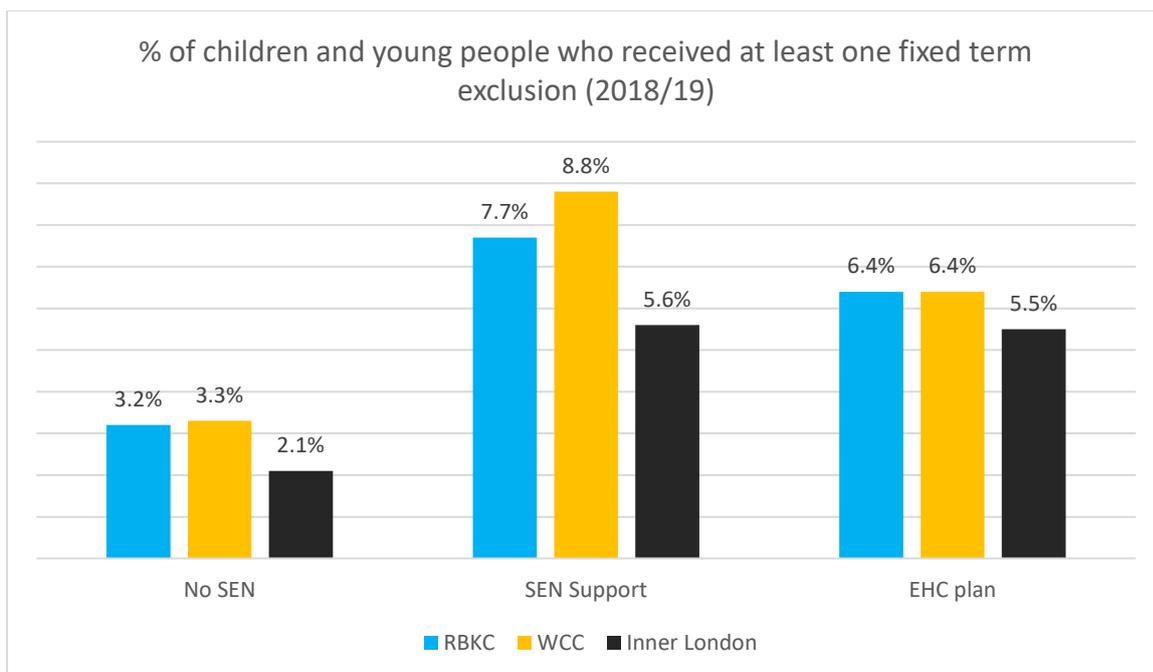
The highest number of fixed term exclusions are received by children and young people who are living in the most deprived wards in each borough (*Appendix B, Chart 8*):

- In Kensington and Chelsea, 61% of all fixed exclusions were for residents of only four wards: Notting Dale<sup>13</sup> (22%), Golborne (17%), Colville (12%) and Dalgarno (10%).
- In Westminster, 64% of all fixed exclusions were for residents of only four wards: Church Street (22%), Westbourne (20%), Harrow Road (11%) and Queen's Park (10%).

### *SEND*

Across London, children and young people with SEN are disproportionately affected by exclusion, however the overrepresentation of these needs in the excluded cohort is more pronounced across the Bi-borough than elsewhere in the capital. This trend is strongest for children and young people identified by their schools as requiring SEN support.

<sup>13</sup> Notting Dale was the location of the Grenfell tragedy, which has intensified the pre-existing structural inequalities and poorer outcomes for children in this ward.



## Discovery: What have we heard?

Engagement in the development of this strategy began towards the end of 2019. The country went into lockdown as a result of Covid-19 in March 2020 but this work was able to start up again in September 2020 and included:

- Attending parent and carer coffee mornings and reference groups
- Asking children and young people targeted questions about their views and experiences via their allocated workers
- Seeking feedback from local schools based on consultation and engagement with their own pupils, for example through their school councils
- Running a series of workshops with an internal working group made up of more than 25 officers from across Children’s Services
- Circulating surveys via the school bulletins for primary and secondary schools across Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea, and attending headteacher meetings
- Meeting with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations’ reference group

These conversations allowed us to hear different perspectives on some of the challenges and opportunities that we have locally.

In addition to the work above, broader pieces of work have explored this area such as the RBKC Select Committee review of exclusions in Kensington and Chelsea in 2020.

The emerging themes from the engagement work are as follows:

### Communication between schools and parents/carers

By far the strongest theme to emerge was the need and desire of both parents /carers and schools to work together more closely to manage behaviour issues as they arise.

*“Any successful intervention must include the family and school working closely together to set realistic targets for the child. It is important for the child to see that school and home agree.” – schools’ survey*

Learning from the schools inclusion pilots in both boroughs and the findings of the Select Committee support the importance of these relationships.

*“Establishing these relationships is highly important to ensure both school and family are happy with decisions and outcomes for children.” – learning from inclusion pilot*

It was noted by parents and carers, the Select Committee report and some of the community organisations that work with local families that parents and carers need to be given enough information and support to be able to advocate for their children.

*“I want to work with the school to manage my child’s behaviour, but I need to understand what behaviour they have exhibited, why it was deserving of punishment and what the plan is for my child” – parent/carer coffee morning*

*“Parents often do not have a good understanding of the school system. They do not always understand the questions asked at hearings with Headteachers or Governing Bodies and may get angry with the school or their child, making the situation worse.” – K&C Select Committee review of exclusions*

*“Parents often come to us for support as we are already trusted by them, but our staff need training to understand the rights that parents have.” – local VCS organisation*

## Systemic Interventions

Children and young people are increasingly experiencing overlapping vulnerabilities - problems at home can manifest in behaviours at school, and issues at school can put additional strain on a child’s whole family.

*“Schools should be mindful of the wider impact the exclusion can have on the family unit and the likelihood of increased conflict and stress in the home environment.” – parent/carer coffee morning*

*“Schools should check if there had been arguments at home or anything going on and listen before they make any decision.” - young person*

*“There is growing evidence of increasing numbers of children experiencing intersecting vulnerabilities, such as child poverty; family problems including parental mental ill health, abuse and*

*neglect and young carer responsibilities; learning needs; mental ill health; and poor educational progress.” – K&C Select Committee review of exclusions*

*“The young people we work with, on the whole come from families facing significant challenges such as poverty, family breakdown, experiences of trauma sometimes from a war-torn context, domestic abuse, mental health problems, drug misuse and lack of childcare provision or wider family support. These issues are systemic and complex.” – Youth Offending Service*

The ARC Trauma Training that is being rolled out across the Bi-borough was frequently referenced as having a significantly positive impact on attitudes and approaches.

*“ARC trauma training helps to develop a whole school approach and has resulted in many positive interventions in school.” - schools’ survey*

*“The biggest impact has been from the trauma informed training which helps staff to see how complicated home situations can affect children’s behaviour.” – local VCS organisation*

However, schools cannot be the solution to these challenges alone and don’t have the necessary resources or information to support vulnerable students in all other areas of their lives.

*“Early intervention is key to supporting young people at risk of exclusion, but this can be hampered by the lack of necessary information.” – K&C Select Committee review of exclusions*

There are strong networks of support services in both boroughs. Systemic, multiagency interventions are critical to identify issues as early as possible and to address the root cause of a child’s behaviour.

*“A team approach from the start where all professionals commit to problem solving and the family are engaged and on board.” - schools’ survey*

*“A fully inclusive approach would involve families working closely with early years settings, schools, health and social care professionals to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made, and appropriate steps are taken to meet the child’s needs effectively.” – Early Years manager*

## Accessibility of targeted support

Some children and young people may need targeted support around specific needs or stages.

Transitions in general were highlighted as a time when children are particularly vulnerable, and more specifically the transitions from year 6 to year 7 and returning to mainstream school after attending AP or a period of being out of education.

*“The transition from year 6 to 7 puts emotional and academic pressure on students – even if this doesn’t lead to an exclusion immediately it can be the seed of problems that arise later” – parent/carer coffee morning*

*“I got given a tour of the school on my own before I started year 7. This helped reduce my anxiety about starting secondary school” – young person*

*“There is a need for an in-school programme, which students complete using the strategies they learned at the Westminster Education Centre (WEC) when they return to their mainstream setting.” – schools’ survey*

### Overcoming barriers to engagement

Offering a more diverse range of pathway options for young people was highlighted as key for improving their engagement with education. An academic curriculum doesn’t suit every child or young person’s skills, interests and aspirations and particularly for our young people aged 14 the local options are relatively limited.

*“As kids get older the curriculum is purely academic and those who don’t fit into that look for other ways of dealing with ‘failure’ by acting out, or they slip through the net and become NEET.” – local VCS organisation*

*“Pupils behave better if the curriculum meets their needs – need to think about the 14-19 curriculum and timetable.” – headteacher meeting*

Children and young people may find it particularly difficult to engage with education and support services if they feel their voice isn’t being heard.

*“I thought it was unfair, no one listened to my side of the story and it was annoying.” – young person*

*“It would help if a teacher checked in with the child in the morning to see if they were not feeling good so they could help them.” – young person*

*“I think school should listen to both sides of the story, they usually just assume it was one person’s fault and the other person doesn’t get into trouble.” – young person*

In some cases, there may be additional barriers to engagement such as parental consent, cultural barriers, eligibility thresholds or being educated out of borough - which can make it very difficult for children and young people to get the additional support they need.

*“Parents have to agree to involvement from CAMHS, if they don’t then CAMHS often feel they can go no further and the suggestion is to instead go down the behaviour route.” – schools’ survey*

*“Some parents are struggling with quite young children presenting with behaviours relating to MH. They don’t trust the system and feel there is a stigma around accessing MH services.” – local VCS organisation*

Where particular characteristics are overrepresented in our excluded cohort, we may need to consider the accessibility of support that is available. Some anxieties around engaging with services can be alleviated by considering who is best placed to deliver services, and where they should be delivered from.

*“There is a generalised anxiety within the community about accessing statutory services, which could be alleviated by support being provided through the voluntary sector and from community settings.” – parent/carer coffee morning*

## Discovery: What works?

### Published research

Many of the challenges that we face locally are not unique to the Bi-borough. National research and guidance can offer learning and recommendations for how to successfully tackle some of these issues.

#### *Communication with parents and Carers*

Echoing some of the conversations noted above, DfE guidance<sup>14</sup> highlights that parental involvement has a large and positive impact on children’s learning and adjustment, even when all other factors are taken out of the equation, and therefore makes several recommendations:

- Parental engagement is unlikely to be successful if it is ‘bolted on’ to mainstream activities and should instead be integrated into a whole school approach.
- To engage effectively and confidently, staff require training and coaching, particularly when working with parents/carers whose backgrounds are very different to their own.
- A parental engagement strategy should take into consideration the views of parents/carers and the expertise of other schools and organisations locally and should establish two-way information sharing – not only from school to home but also from home to school.

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<sup>14</sup> Review of best practice in parental engagement, *Department for Education* ([2011](#))

- Digital or online communications can provide convenient and flexible means for accessing up to date information

#### *Opportunities for success in AP*

The DfE's vision for AP<sup>15</sup> stressed the importance of children being "offered equal opportunities to make the most of their talents and become successful adults" even if they are removed from mainstream education. For this to be the case, students must have access to high-quality AP education with a curriculum that includes a good range of core skills and vocational options, as is the case in both local AP academies.

The report also highlights the importance of maintaining high expectations of a child's development and progress. One way to strengthen this is to promote stronger information sharing between local authorities and education settings about children's needs and outcomes at a strategic and individual placement level.

There must also be transparent routes into and out of AP settings that operate in the best interests of the child, with effective planning and support to children as they transition and clear accountability from the referring schools and from local authorities.

#### *Being part of a school community*

The conversations with parents and professionals during the development of this strategy stressed the vulnerability to exclusion around key transition points, and in particular the progression from primary to secondary school. This is backed by research<sup>16</sup> that observes that in part behaviour problems in school "occurred due to the stress of having to adapt quickly to a new environment".

During the transition between primary and secondary school, pupils have to contend with larger classes and less lenient behaviour policies. The report advocates for transition work to be "considered an ongoing process, not confined to the first few weeks, especially in cases of more vulnerable students who may require longer to adjust."

Timpson's review<sup>17</sup> identified the importance of pupils feeling they 'belonged' to a school as a prominent theme, a term that incorporates feeling valued as an individual, having friends, getting appropriate support and having positive relationships with teachers. Research summarised in the review highlighted that feeling disrespected and not understanding what was expected of them were common among students who had been excluded, whereas support, praise, reward and encouragement from teachers could create a strong sense of belonging.

#### *Investing in interventions that work*

It is important that interventions have evidence to show that they will work as research has demonstrated the risk of certain interventions not only being ineffective, but actually doing more harm than good.

The 'Engage in Education' model applied in the London Education and Inclusion Project led by Catch22 and ICAN (a national children's communication charity) engaged secondary students at risk of exclusion in a 12-week structured programme aimed at improving social, emotional and communication skills. Students also received an allocated worker to guide them through the

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<sup>15</sup> Creating opportunity for all: Our vision for alternative provision, *Department for Education* ([2018](#))

<sup>16</sup> Pinball kids: Preventing school exclusions, *Partridge, Strong, Lobley & Mason* ([2020](#))

<sup>17</sup> Timpson review of school exclusion, *Department for Education* ([2019](#))

programme and work on individual targets. The intervention included an element of family support where appropriate.

The programme was independently evaluated by Cambridge University, who found that the intervention actually resulted in an increase in exclusion rates for young people who took part. The researchers suggested that short-term school-based interventions that have not been well-integrated into school provision, or are otherwise ‘external’ to the school, are unlikely to be successful in changing students’ behaviour, particularly students who have already had difficulties at school. The report also highlights the potentially harmful effect of bringing students with challenging behaviour together as they are particularly vulnerable to social influence and can encourage each other’s antisocial behaviour.

### Learning from inclusion pilots

Inclusion pilots have been set up in both boroughs. The programmes are led by Early Help in partnership with local VCS organisations and schools and work with pupils at risk of exclusion as they approach the transition into secondary school. Through systematic, targeted multi-agency support for the pupil and their family, the programmes aim to intervene early to tackle the underlying issues that lead to exclusion.

The main learning from these programmes has been the importance of all parties sharing the same approach to working with a family and framework for understanding the child’s behaviour i.e. using the same trauma informed approach. Where this happens, we have seen some real change and exclusions have been prevented.

Two schools taking part in the pilot have begun reviewing their behaviour policies to be more trauma informed, and we are exploring how some schools can become centres of excellence.

The case studies outlined below are examples of the success of the pilots to date (please note, all names have been changed):

<b>Case Study: Myia’s story</b>		
<p>Following several detentions whilst Myia was in year 7, she was sent to Westminster Education Centre (WEC) for 5 weeks. WEC identified that she would benefit from support to transition back into mainstream education and subsequently referred Myia to Westminster’s inclusion pilot.</p>		
<p><i>Before Myia joined the programme, she exhibited a lack of engagement at school due to difficulties at home</i></p>	<p><i>The programme worked systemically with Myia and her grandmother to improve communication and regulation, and improve Myia’s engagement in school</i></p>	<p><i>On completion of the programme Myia noted improvements in her ability to manage her emotions and the programme restored her desire to do well in school</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Myia had no trust in school staff</i></li> <li>○ <i>Myia was underachieving and talking back to teachers</i></li> <li>○ <i>Myia had a poor relationship with peers, and</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Pilot staff worked with the school to identify a trusted person Myia could approach</i></li> <li>○ <i>Identifying triggers for Myia at home and at school and use of creative exercises to help Myia explore feelings</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Myia entered year 8 in mainstream education</i></li> <li>○ <i>Myia is asking for help at school from her identified trusted adult</i></li> <li>○ <i>School holds a more positive view of Myia</i></li> </ul>

<p><i>had been fighting with others in school</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Myia had a low mood and lack of motivation.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Myia was fearful of talking to her grandmother about her difficulties</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Myia attended Team Around the Family meetings</i></li> <li>○ <i>Psychoeducation for school around Myia's emotional needs</i></li> <li>○ <i>Psychoeducation for grandmother around teenage brain</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Myia's grandmother is more reassured of her wellbeing and progress in school</i></li> </ul>
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<b>Case Study: Jamal's story</b>		
<p>Jamal's primary school referred him to the school inclusion pilot because his behaviour was likely to lead to exclusion, and the school was worried about his upcoming transition to secondary school.</p>		
<p><i>Before Jamal joined the programme, he was at risk of exclusion and the relationship between his mother and the school had broken down.</i></p>	<p><i>The programme's family therapist identified several difficult experiences that may have been contributing to J's behaviour and his mother's engagement, including his mother's physical and mental health, the separation of Jamal's parents and a recent family bereavement, and Jamal's experiences of racism and physical abuse.</i></p>	<p><i>On completion of the programme Jamal and his mother have developed strong, trusting relationships with his new school and family tensions have been reduced.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Jamal had frequent fights in school and was described as a bully by his mother</i></li> <li>○ <i>Jamal was easily distracted in class and would also distract others.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Jamal would miss days of school with no explanation.</i></li> <li>○ <i>There was poor communication between Jamal's mother and the school and when the family were initially referred to the programme, his mother missed several meetings arranged at the school.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Pilot staff worked with Jamal's mother to reduce her anxiety and build a trusting relationship between her and the school.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Jamal's mother had revealed that she felt criticised by most people in her life and this appeared to be a barrier in her attending meetings at school. Therefore, meetings were arranged in an office space in the community to provide a more neutral setting.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Pilot staff worked with Jamal's teacher to help her develop empathy towards him and to see what was working well and what he found difficult. Jamal could see that his teacher cared about him and he became less anxious in school</i></li> <li>○ <i>A communication diary was set up for Jamal and his mother to keep in touch with school during the covid-19 lockdown, which was a particularly anxious time for them.</i></li> <li>○ <i>To support Jamal's transition to secondary school, he worked with his mother and teacher to create a student passport, a meeting was held between both schools and Jamal's mother in the</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Jamal had a positive start to year 7 and continues to excel, achieving high scores in recent tests and receiving awards for his efforts in school.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Jamal hasn't had any fights and has developed positive friendships in his new school.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Jamal's mother attends all meetings with the school and feels confident to contact his head of year directly.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Both of Jamal's parents have expressed their pride for him and his teachers say he is a "pleasure to teach".</i></li> <li>○ <i>With Jamal's return to school and his mother's return to work, the level of stress has been reduced for the whole family.</i></li> </ul>

	<p><i>summer term to start building a trusting relationship and a private tour of the new school was arranged for Jamal before he started.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Pilot staff worked with both of Jamal's parents and his older sister to support improved communication and build up the family support around Jamal and his mother.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Jamal's mother can sometimes get overwhelmed and so the pilot staff have continued to support Jamal and his mother with family sessions.</i></li> </ul>
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## Examples of good practice in our local schools

The Bi-Borough Education Service reviews school performance regularly, in partnership with local schools, and delivers high quality support and intervention work, in order to ensure that excellence is maintained across the two boroughs. Dedicated lead adviser support is in place to provide advice to schools about matters relating to inclusion and to monitor exclusion rates across the two boroughs.

There is a good deal of good practice already underway across the Bi-Borough supporting inclusive practice as highlighted by the following case studies (please note, all names have been changed).

<b>Case Study: Rosanna's story</b>		
<p>Rosanna had been through several very difficult experiences in her early life, and for a period was placed under the guardianship of her grandmother. Although Rosanna displayed some challenging behaviour in primary school, the smaller environment and regular dialogue between her mother, grandmother and school staff were enough to keep the situation stable overall. However, at the start of year 8, Rosanna's behaviour suddenly deteriorated, and this led to Rosanna being transferred to another mainstream school on a managed move via a managed intervention placement at the Golborne Education Centre.</p>		
<p><i>Rosanna's disruptive and aggressive behaviour in school resulted in several fixed term exclusions and meant that the risk of permanent exclusion was high.</i></p>	<p><i>A managed move was arranged to another mainstream secondary school with a strong trauma informed approach. Additional support was also put in place to support Rosanna's emotional well-being.</i></p>	<p><i>Things are going well for Rosanna in her new school. Her family is pleased with progress she is making and have formed positive relationships with the school.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Rosanna became persistently disruptive in the classroom and abusive towards school and Safer Schools Policing staff, including threats of serious physical harm.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Rosanna's home environment was volatile as she moved between the care of her mother and grandmother. On two occasions Rosanna had been reported missing.</i></li> <li>○ <i>There were significant concerns about Rosanna's</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Links were bridged between the headteachers of the referring and receiving schools, allowing the sharing of information that had been lacking when Rosanna transitioned from primary.</i></li> <li>○ <i>The receiving headteacher reached out to Rosanna and her family to communicate the school's commitment to giving Rosanna the opportunity and necessary support to succeed.</i></li> <li>○ <i>The receiving headteacher arranged to meet with</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>As at Christmas 2020, Rosanna's managed move to her new school continues to be a success. Rosanna has settled in well and her attendance has improved.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Rosanna is making good progress with her learning and has been moved into classes that offer greater challenge.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Rosanna has formed positive friendships and her self-confidence is growing.</i></li> </ul>

<p><i>emotional well-being and incidents of self-harm resulted in contact with A&amp;E.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Communication between Rosanna's family and the school had become difficult and unhelpful.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Rosanna received three fixed term exclusions of 2-3 days each.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Rosanna's family agreed to a managed intervention from TBAP and initially Rosanna responded well to the smaller setting. However, relatively quickly her behaviour deteriorated, and she was considered a risk to her own safety and that of others.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Rosanna was then placed into AP, on dual roll with her mainstream school, however she didn't engage with the provision and reported feeling rejected, angry and upset. The placement also brought up difficult feelings for her family who'd had their own experiences of school exclusion as children.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Rosanna's family wanted her to return to her mainstream secondary school, however the risk of exclusion if she were to return remained high.</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>Rosanna's family, with the support of Rosanna's social worker and the LA Inclusion Advisor, reflecting the trauma informed approach adopted across the school.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Rosanna visited the receiving school for a half day to orient herself and to meet other children at the school who had attended the same primary school as her.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Points of contact at school were identified for Rosanna and she feels confident reaching out to them for support</i></li> <li>○ <i>Strong links were established between the school and support services. When Rosanna initially missed a couple of days of school, this was promptly followed up by a meeting between the school, Rosanna and her social worker at Rosanna's home.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Rosanna's emotional well-being was supported by a systemic therapist from Place2Be, with oversight from CAMHS.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Rosanna's family are pleased with her progress and have developed a good rapport with the school.</i></li> <li>○ <i>The placement is still under review, however it seems promising that the dual-roll arrangement will soon end and Rosanna will be fully on roll in her new school.</i></li> </ul>
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<p><b>Case Study: Max's story</b></p>		
<p>Max was on roll at a primary school in Camden when moved with his mother to live in Westminster. Following several fixed term exclusions, Max was at risk of a permanent exclusion as was also under assessment for an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan.</p>		
<p><i>Serious concerns were raised by Max's school about his risk of exclusion, and an assessment for a potential EHC plan had stalled.</i></p>	<p><i>The professional network came together to support Max and his mother, and Max was placed into primary AP while his EHC assessment was progressed.</i></p>	<p><i>Things have stabilised for Max at school and at home and there are plans for him to be re-integrated into his mainstream primary in Camden.</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Max was becoming increasingly violent towards his peers and was often removed from the classroom to sit with the SENCo or headteacher.</li> <li>○ Max was spending time living between his mother, who was feeling overwhelmed and anxious following the separation from her partner, and his father who had a very different parenting approach with different routines and expectations around behaviour.</li> <li>○ Max's school had enlisted support from inclusion services in Camden, but these interventions were unsuccessful in meeting Max's level of need</li> <li>○ Camden initiated an assessment for an EHC plan, however this was forwarded to Westminster when the family relocated and there were issues around missing or out of date information.</li> <li>○ Max received several short fixed term exclusions and was at risk of being permanently excluded.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Regular meetings were arranged between Max's school, Westminster Early Help, the LA Inclusion Advisor and SEN Lead, to agree on a way forward and to facilitate collaborative working.</li> <li>○ Early Help worked with Max's mother to provide support, and to help her to broaden her focus to recognise the importance of Max's engagement with education.</li> <li>○ A referral to primary AP in Westminster was arranged while the EHC assessment was progressed, with Max staying dual rolled with his primary school in Camden.</li> <li>○ TBAP arranged a visit for Max and his mother, accompanied by an Early Help worker, to the primary AP, which helped to reassure Max's mother about the placement.</li> <li>○ The SEN service worked closely with TBAP during Max's placement, to revisit and update the information and reports required for his EHC assessment.</li> <li>○ Further assessments by Education Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy services and CAMHS have been arranged and are in progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Max has really settled in well to the primary AP routine, has made great progress and maintained good attendance.</li> <li>○ Max has made new friends in the smaller setting and has also kept in touch with his friends in Camden so those connections haven't been lost.</li> <li>○ Max's EHC assessment is nearing completion, with up to date reports from all relevant services.</li> <li>○ Max's mother is no longer feeling so overwhelmed and her input with regards to Max's education is being valued and validated.</li> <li>○ Plans are underway for Max to reintegrate into his Camden school, with the ongoing support of the professional network.</li> </ul>
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## Learning from other LAs

We spoke to inclusion leads and AP commissioners from 11 Local Authorities<sup>18</sup> to learn about different approaches to tackling exclusions and promoting school inclusion in other areas.

What stood out the most from these discussions was the focus these authorities place on targeted work on school inclusion; providing oversight and challenge, coordinating support and ensuring there is a single point of contact.

Many London authorities have dedicated Inclusion and Participation leads and most hold Fair Access Panels (FAPs) at least half-termly, as is the case in Bi-borough, to ensure that all children, particularly those arriving in-year, have a school place. In addition to the FAPs some authorities hold regular

<sup>18</sup> *Inner London:* Lewisham, Greenwich, Lambeth, Camden, Southwark; *Outer London:* Brent, Hounslow, Hillingdon, Newham; *Wider UK:* Suffolk, Manchester

fortnightly tracking panels, attended by staff from the PRU, AP settings, YOT and SEN services, to go review the case for every child attending an alternative setting (in tranches of 15 children). Some further examples of good practice are set out below:

#### *Education partnerships*

The circumstances leading to a student being removed from mainstream education are hugely complex and no one agency is responsible or able to solve this challenge alone. The London Borough of Brent has developed a Strategic School Effectiveness Partnership Board with representation from Children's Services, schools, health services, the police and the community. The board meets five times a year for discussion and debate and has been effective in providing systems leadership to promote continuous improvement and secure better outcomes for children and young people. Following consultation with schools, both Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea are due to launch their own local Education Partnership Boards in 2021, chaired by the executive director of children's services.

#### *Oversight of all placements into AP*

In the last two years, the London Borough of Lewisham has taken several steps to strengthen the LA's oversight of all moves out of mainstream as a result of behaviour. In this time, they have seen a reduction from around 70 permanent exclusions to 20 permanent exclusions and 30 Managed Transitions, a net reduction of 20 students placed into AP.

- All placements into AP, and re-integration into mainstream settings, are recorded and reviewed at the FAP, which is held every three weeks.
- All moves are quality assured by an Exclusions and Re-integration Officer within the Authority's Inclusion and Participation Team.
- The Assessment Centre, based in the Authority's PRU, assesses the individual needs of each student and develops a plan - for those year 10 or below, to put them on a path back into mainstream settings, and for those who will likely complete their education within AP, to set their course into meaningful EET destinations.
- Training to governors to build confidence and the skills to provide effective scrutiny to school decision making around exclusions and managed moves

#### *Peer Reviewing Exclusions*

The London Borough of Southwark introduced peer reviews between schools and encouraged a culture of challenging exclusions. This emerged due to the vast difference in how many children and young people are excluded by different schools in the borough, which is something that has been seen locally. Through peer reviewing schools are likely to become more streamlined in their approach to exclusions making the process fairer.

#### *Parent and carer support and engagement*

Lambeth has put systems in place to ensure parents and carers have access to a discussion with headteachers if their child is at risk of or experiences exclusions, and Southwark has made a commitment to regular parental contact. This allows both parents and teachers to have a more complete picture of what is going on for the child, and for behaviour management approaches to be applied consistently across school and home.

Lewisham has created an accessible handbook for parents and carers on exclusions which is available online to help them to be well informed, understand school policies and processes, and know how to access support.

### *Commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*

The Rights Respecting Schools Approach run by UNICEF UK places the UN Convention at the heart of school curriculums. This approach not only teaches children about rights but models rights and respect in all its relationships. It outlines several principles both teachers and students are encouraged to follow. Manchester has 30 schools which are actively embedding this approach. Practically this is implemented through a positive praise and reward system, restorative approaches, self-reflection on behaviour and rights, clear boundaries agreed by the children, UNICEF Councillors and peer mentoring.

## Summary of discovery

Nationally published research has identified several factors that are driving exclusions across the country. The local research we have conducted in the discovery phase of this strategy's development has provided insights into how these national drivers may be influencing exclusion practices across the Bi-borough.

One of the main drivers of school exclusion identified by Timpson in his review is differences in school leadership, which leads to too much variation in the culture and standards in schools and how staff deliver them – what will get a child excluded in one school may not be seen as grounds for exclusion in another. Bi-borough data has highlighted the variation between schools in their rates of exclusion and their exclusion practices (*Appendix B, Chart 4*).

Our engagement with parents/carers has revealed that they would like to work with school staff to address problems as they arise, and to have greater opportunity to effectively advocate for their children. Engagement with schools across the Bi-borough has revealed that they too would like stronger engagement with parents in tackling behaviour issues together.

Timpson's review also highlighted a lack of consistent systems, capability or capacity in schools to understand and manage poor behaviour and to support additional needs as a driver of exclusion nationally. This is an area we have collectively begun to address locally with the roll out of training in trauma informed practice for all schools and frontline services. This will help us work towards a consistent framework for how behaviour and support needs are perceived and managed across the whole system.

All children and young people should have the opportunity to thrive in education and training that aligns with their skills, interests and aspirations. Most children and young people living and learning in the Bi-borough are thriving in education, and work is underway to diversify the range of pathways available for 14-19 year olds. Our engagement with families and frontline services has identified the need for a continuum of targeted support delivered from a broader range of alternative education provision for children and young people who are removed from mainstream education.

While the vast majority of schools are motivated by doing what is best for all pupils, the current national performance and funding system doesn't incentivise or reward schools for taking responsibility for the needs of all children and using permanent exclusion only when nothing else will do. The current system means that schools do not bear the costs of the alternative provision these

children then attend, nor are they accountable for the outcomes of the children they exclude. Timpson highlighted this as a priority area for national policy to address, however there are steps we can take locally to mitigate this challenge.

Although our education service is quick to address any suggestion of off-rolling from Bi-borough schools, it may be helpful to consider if any additional oversight of managed moves between schools and into alternative provision may be beneficial to help ensure that every removal of a child from mainstream education as a result of their behaviour is reasonable and fair. Some LAs we spoke to have established inclusion panels that oversee all placements into AP and regularly review the progress of these children and young people towards reintegration into mainstream settings or progression onto meaningful post-16 study and training.

Finally, there is more we can do locally to increase accountability across the network for the children and young people, particularly those who are disproportionately affected by exclusions. Other LAs we spoke to have achieved this by improving information sharing around the academic and longer-term outcomes of these children and young people, and by supporting schools to increase their financial responsibility for children on fixed term exclusions and managed moves into AP.

## Our Commitments

The collective ambition, as set out at the beginning of this document is to:

- Reduce the number of children and young people being removed from mainstream education as a result of their behaviour.
- Address factors that lead to specific groups of children and young people being disproportionately affected by exclusion.
- Drive a whole system commitment to work with children and young people at risk of exclusion in a trauma informed way.
- Improve outcomes for children and young people who are excluded.
- Improve reintegration rates from alternative provision back into mainstream education

The commitments listed in the table outline the high-level steps we plan to take in order to achieve the ambitions of this strategy and will be underpinned by a more detailed action plan to be implemented over the coming years.

Principles	Commitments
<p><b>Parents/carers are the best advocates for their children and must be empowered with the information, skills and opportunities to play this important role</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will work with schools and governors to develop shared policies and best practice approaches to behaviour management, the use of internal exclusions/inclusion units and effective use of outreach programmes.</li> <li>• We will ensure these policies and processes are clearly communicated to students and families and are available in a range of languages and accessible formats.</li> <li>• We will support schools to work with parents/carers to establish effective mechanisms for sharing information as issues arise, whether at school or at home, and what strategies are being implemented.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will empower parents/carers with the information, skills and opportunities to confidently advocate on behalf of their children.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The systems and processes in place must provide assurances that every exclusion is legal and fair</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will consult with schools on increasing oversight of managed moves via an inclusion panel (or similar mechanism). This would bring together professionals from across children’s services to act as a first point of contact for any queries or concerns relating to inclusion from across the network and to better understand what factors are driving exclusion rates locally and to identify opportunities to strengthen inclusion</li> <li>• We will work with schools to ensure systems are in place to ensure any child or young person who is removed from mainstream education as a result of their behaviour has a personalised plan with clear objectives to work towards re-integration to mainstream, with commitment from all stakeholders and regular progress reviews</li> </ul>
<p><b>Presenting behaviours in school are only one part of a child’s or young person’s lived experience and schools are only one part of the network in place to support those who are vulnerable in other areas of their lives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will seek to ensure all parts of the system receive ARC trauma training to ensure a consistent delivery framework and lens through which behaviour is perceived and work with schools to embed this approach.</li> <li>• We will create more opportunities for different agencies to come together to build relationships, share good practice and further strengthen multi-disciplinary capability and capacity (e.g. via pastoral support planning).</li> <li>• We will strengthen information sharing processes around children and young people who are at risk of being removed from mainstream education as a result of their behaviour to ensure that professionals have a full picture of an individual’s circumstances, can identify issues as early as possible and agree on who is best placed to offer support centred on the whole family to avoid an exclusion where possible.</li> <li>• We will work with partners to improve the data collection around individual and cohort wide outcomes for children and young people in AP and share this information with mainstream schools to increase awareness of, and accountability for, the progress of those removed from mainstream education, giving particular attention to overrepresented groups.</li> <li>• We will seek to develop intervention approaches that are committed to addressing the root causes of a child's or young person’s behaviour in school and at home</li> </ul>
<p><b>Children and young people may need targeted support around specific needs or stages and this support must be readily available with barriers to engagement removed</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will ensure a directory of all available support is maintained and clearly communicated to all stakeholders including information around capacity, eligibility thresholds, and referral routes.</li> <li>• We will explore opportunities to meet need if there are any gaps in the current offer.</li> <li>• We will seek to establish clear and simple pathways for referrals for assessments and support for children with special educational needs, including social emotional and mental health needs.</li> <li>• We will explore the option of additional support in mainstream schools to keep children on roll while undergoing an assessment for an EHC plan,</li> </ul>

	<p>rather than being placed elsewhere until the appropriate setting to meet their needs has been identified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will develop the approach to identifying students at key stage 2 who are at risk of exclusion and how this information can be shared with secondary schools</li> </ul>
<p><b>Children and young people should have the opportunity to thrive in education and training that aligns with their skills, interests and aspirations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will complement the work already underway to strengthen the vocational pathways available in each borough and to encourage greater take up of local apprenticeships, by working to diversify the range of pathways and provision options for children and young people who are removed from mainstream education, particularly for those aged 14+ to ensure all have access to education and support provision that meets their individual needs and aspirations.</li> <li>• We will review our commissioning arrangements for AP and behaviour outreach to ensure a range of provision is available to meet need and that any investment of funding and resources is into sustainable, evidence-based interventions and provision.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Everyone has the right to be treated fairly and equitably where they live and learn</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will promote unconscious bias training for school staff and the wider network.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Children, young people and their families should have the option of being supported by professionals and organisations they trust and that can relate to their lived experiences</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will empower and equip local community organisations and youth providers to support young people and their families and to advocate for them.</li> <li>• This will include targeted interventions to mitigate against the inflated risk of exclusions for children and young people with certain characteristics</li> <li>• We will take steps to establish more diverse and representative leadership and decision makers - school governors, review/decision panels.</li> </ul>
<p><b>We are collectively responsible for ensuring all children and young people have the opportunity to thrive in education</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will establish an Education Partnership Board to monitor progress against strategic priorities in this inclusion strategy and maintain accountability across the system.</li> </ul>
<p><b>We have a duty to invest responsibly in provision that is known to be effective and that is meeting local needs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will carry out visits to other areas to learn from their ways of working that have been shown to work.</li> <li>• We will review our commissioning arrangements for AP and behaviour outreach to ensure a range of provision is available to meet need and that any investment of funding and resources is into sustainable, evidence-based interventions and provision.</li> <li>• We will continue to work with schools as joint commissioners of alternative provision, particularly in relation to managed moves and managed interventions, in line with national and regional best practice.</li> </ul>