

CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT 2021- 2022



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Foreword

Our children in care and care experienced young adults have faced another year of significant challenge with an ongoing pandemic, returning to education, facing uncertainty around placement changes and managing the anxiety about what the future may look like. Despite all this we have seen incredible resilience, determination and wonderful moments of success and happiness. When I watched our children and young people all receiving certificates of achievement at the recent celebration event, I was once again humbled by what our children and young people are able to achieve with the support and positive focus from their team of carers, social workers, educators and peers. As the corporate parent to every child and young adult, I am proud to present the information in this report and to know that everyone in Barnet Family Services continue to only do better, deliver more and celebrate every child's smallest success.

Brigitte Jordaan – Director of Corporate Parenting and Disability

Introduction

At the start of April 2021, we were hopeful to progress our new ways of working that had become embedded in our practice as a result of the Covid-19 global pandemic. As part of our recovery planning, we adapted and then embedded our flexible and creative approaches of care, support and guidance to children, young people and care experienced adults, enabling them to strive and achieve.

In June 2021 we were visited by Ofsted under the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework for a focussed visit on our services to children in care. During this visit, Ofsted inspectors found that:

“Senior leaders and partner agencies in Barnet have worked together to deliver a well-coordinated and effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic...Despite the ongoing pressures, leaders have continued to prioritise children's services, underpinned by strong corporate and political support.”

Inspectors also found that:

“despite the challenges of the Covid pandemic, services for children in care have continued to improve since the last inspection in May 2019. Leaders understand what further improvements can be made and have plans in place to deliver this.”

The year continued with the unprecedented nature of 2020-21, and we have progressed the blueprint developed over the previous year in how we have delivered services to ensure children, young adults continued to feel held, supported and achieving, whether they were in a school bubble or remaining at home, and able to see their friends and family face to face or across a screen. As a service, we efficiently and effectively continued with our model of hybrid working, ensuring direct working with children, families, and professionals when it was considered in the child's best interest, and offering the flexibility of remote working when a creative approach was needed. We ensured that vulnerable children remained connected to

their families and wider social networks to promote their sense of safety, well-being and belonging.

Ofsted highlighted two areas of social work practice that need to improve:

- Case recording, including the recording of supervision, visits and direct work with children, and the rationale for decision-making on placements
- The completion and quality of 'All About Me' plans.

In response to these recommendations, we have consistently audited case files to identify examples of good practice and highlight where improvement is needed. Team managers and auditors have worked alongside practitioners to ensure that information from the audits inform practice, and the case files effectively represent the excellent practice that teams are producing. Across the year 75% of audits were rated as 'good', some with outstanding features, and the small number of requires improvement audits indicated that supervision recordings and management oversight needed to show more of the reflective discussions that take place and rationale for decision. The most recent quarterly report shows ongoing improvements and evidence that the audit actions are being used in supervision to reflect on practice.

For all children and young people in care, the 'All about me' assessment and plan is an essential piece of direct work and planning that social workers complete with the child and young person. When a child is subject to court proceedings this document is presented to the court in legal statements and care plans. To ensure that we do not have a system that requires unnecessary duplication for social workers it has been agreed that the child's file will note where the care plan is recorded and the 'All about me' plans will have a link embedded to the legal documents. Audits show that the majority of plans are good.

The last year has brought with it some of the continued challenges experienced in 2020/21 namely the increase in referrals of UASC from the Home Office Hotels and the subsequent increase in care experienced young adults needing support. In response we have developed a collaborative support offer for these young people together with BICS, BELS 16+ team, the Virtual School, the LAC health team and a designated link person in the Home Office. The expertise on age assessment has grown and the creation of the UASC Team within Onwards and Upwards will ensure a timely and expert response to all referrals for UASC arriving in Barnet.

As we have slowly moved out of lockdowns and Covid restrictions we have had to assess the health and wellbeing needs of every child and young person within Corporate Parenting and although health assessments and reviews continued at an appropriate level, the number of annual dental checks declined significantly from over 70% completed to as low as 30% completed on time. A concerted effort has gone into understanding and reversing the decline and there is a slow improvement. An area needing more work is being able to provide our UASC with reassurance that dental checks are not in any way linked to their age assessment or asylum claim.

Placement sufficiency nationally and locally continued to be a concern throughout the year. Finding the right care option for each child first time is our aim however it was not always possible to do so for sibling groups and adolescents with complex behaviours. The social

work teams together with the dynamic Placements Team worked consistently to find creative solutions for children and families. Whether sibling groups were placed together or apart was assessed and reviewed and if separated a rationale for this decision was communicated. Every attempt was made to keep children close to their connections within Barnet, when it was safe to do so, and for children who were previously placed a far distance away a plan to bring them back to Barnet was agreed.

In 2021 we commissioned the Bright Spots Survey in partnership with Coram Voice and the Rees Centre. This survey closed in June 2021 with participation of 176 (54%) of children and young people and initial findings indicate that the majority of children know and trust their social worker, feel involved in decisions made about their lives and feel safe where they live. The full report highlighted the need for:

- Stronger focus on lifestory work to ensure children and young people understand their reasons for being in care
- Children and young people's contact with their birth family needs to remain an area under regular review
- Embedded pathways for young people developing the necessary life skills to support their transitions to independent living
- Continued partnership work with partner agencies and housing services to ensure the appropriate, safe and stable accommodation options available for young people moving to independent living
- Stronger pathways for young people transitioning to leaving care services requiring support with their mental health

What they told us formed the foundation of the new Corporate Parenting Strategy and as corporate parents we make a pledge to our children and young people to hold ourselves to account against the 6 promises within our strategy, to ensure their voice is central to our planning and that we strive to always be ambitious for them.

Progress against the 6 key pledges within the Corporate Parenting Strategy

We will support you to fulfil your dreams

According to the Bright Spots survey, all of the children (4-11 years) liked school and 83% of the young people (11-18yrs) liked school or college 'a lot' or 'a bit' – slightly higher than young people (80%) in the general population. Children and young people liking school is a Bright Spot of practice in Barnet.

Throughout 2021/22 we have:

- Continued to provide a virtual school that is dedicated to helping children and young people get the best from their educational experience in order for them to have exciting choices later in life through additional educational support and a variety of enrichment activities.

- Supported children and young people to remain connected and able to access learning through a number of different avenues via their carers and professionals in their lives; all children and young people continue to be supported with a laptop or tablet to ensure they are able to participate in their education when virtual education was necessary.
- Encouraged children returning to school through the '*Barnet – helping children back to school*' campaign providing families and professionals including teachers with guidance and resources for supporting children's mental health as they return to school post lockdowns.
- Continued to risk assess and RAG rate children and young people's school attendance and support needs in line with their educational needs. As noted in the Ofsted Focused visit in June 2021:

“At the beginning of the pandemic, all children's cases were risk assessed to establish visiting schedules to children in accordance with their vulnerability. Social workers have continued to keep these arrangements under regular review.”
- Barnet Education, Employment and Training Support (BEETS) has continued to provide careers guidance, information and advice for young people in Barnet after leaving Year 11 until the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with statements/EHCP).
- Bridging the Gap and Thrive programs have continued to run throughout the 2021/2022 and 75% of 17-18 year olds have remained in Education, Employment or Training.
- Continued developing the Care Experienced EET Project, with multiple projects focusing on supporting young people to move into further education, employment, and training opportunities (EET) with 6 young people supported into Apprenticeships, 28 young people into jobs and 22 young people into Education and Training.
- We have developed an Education, Employment and Training panel, where care experienced young people's circumstances are reviewed and multi-agency plans developed to support their progression from NEET to EET.
- With our charity Live Unlimited, we have engaged with 62 young people through Aspire High careers networking scheme, with 36 young people attending networking events and workshops with industry experts. Through Live Unlimited, 2 young people were supported into paid work placements, 1 young person onto a training scheme and two people onto vocational training courses.
- Through the Virtual School, continued to support young people transitioning into care, and in need of additional support with a school placement through our Transitions Hub.

The Bright Spots survey, 'Your life Your care' (June 2021) showed that nearly all (98%) of the children and young people (8- 18yrs) reported that the adults they lived with showed an interest in their education. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

We will be there for you when you need us

Bright Spots survey: “Young people aged 11 – 18 years in Barnet are statistically more likely than young people living in other boroughs to have the same social worker in the past 12 months. This is a Bright Spot of practice.”

Bright Spots also told us that for care experienced young adults; “Most young people (89%) had someone who listened to them. A similar proportion (88%) had someone who told them when they’d done well. Nine in ten (90%) young people had someone who believed that they would be a success.”

Over the past year, we have:

- Continued to maintain positive relationships, supporting children and young people in navigating the continuously changing world through spending time with them in their home and out in the community, through video calls and text messages when it was preferred not to meet face to face, and provided online forums for meet ups and celebrations.
- Ensured ongoing availability to children and young people, with 93% of young people aged 11-18 years reported they could get in touch with their social worker ‘all or most of the time’ or ‘sometimes’ in the Bright Spots Survey, June 2021.
- Ensured that care experienced young people know who their PA is (Bright spots survey - 94% knew their PA) and the vast majority refer to being able to get in touch with their PA all or most of the time.
- Successfully maintained team work in a hybrid virtual world through continuing to focus on our relationships with each other as professionals, across different parts of the Council and with partners, working together with the children’s, young people’s and care experienced young adults’ best interest in mind.
 - o As noted in the Bright Spots Survey, ‘Being able to get to know the whole leaving care team has been great, as I know if I have any issues I can speak to anyone in the team and they will do their best to help’
- Continued to provide safe and secure home environments for children, young people, and adults through child-centred planning for care arrangements that take into consideration children and young people’s views and wishes, including their cultural background, relationships and connections in the local area.
- Faced the challenge of placement sufficiency with creativity and joint working to ensure wherever possible we identified the right placement for every child and when a child moved it was planned and supported the child.
 - o In the Bright Spots Survey, all but one of the youngest children (aged 4-7 years) felt settled where they live and amongst the children and young people aged 8-18 years, just over two thirds felt settled ‘all or most of the time’.
- Enhanced our placement offer to ensure children and young people are supported through ‘rocky’ periods and when they have a move that the right option is identified to avoid any further disruption, including expanding our out of hours offer to foster carers every weeknight and over the weekend

- As noted by Ofsted during the focused visit in June 2021, “The vast majority of children in care benefit from living in placement arrangements which meet their individual needs. Children told inspectors that they valued their carers and felt well supported. The rationale for placement matching and for decisions to move older children into unregulated provision is understood by staff.”
- Developed the Barnet TEAM (Transitioning Everyone to Achieve More) Hub, supporting children new to care and children in care experiencing a transition in home/school placement.
- Adapted and developed the training and support offer to foster carers and family carers through a variety of means to ensure the adults trusted to care for our children have the best support available to them to provide the warmth, care and love children and young need to thrive.
- Worked together with our colleagues in Youth Justice to ensure young people have the right support available to them when they need it, from police officers to family support workers to psychologists.
- Progressed plans for a pan-London alternative to custody scheme in Barnet where young people live together in a shared house supported by staff to make positive life changes.
- Expanded our children’s home provisions to include a more specialist therapeutic home to better meet the needs of young people ensuring that wherever possible children can be cared for within their community even when needs are complex.
- Through Coram Legal service, we have commissioned a service to support all children, young people and care experienced adults who do not hold British Citizenship, to ensure they have correct legal advice to secure stable immigration status following Brexit.

We will support your mental and physical health

The Bright Spots survey told us that the well-being of children aged 4-11 years was encouraging, with none reporting low levels of happiness. All children aged 4-7yrs thought that the adults they lived with noticed how they were feeling. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

For 11-18’s who completed the survey, around a third of the young people appeared to be thriving.

Across the four well being measures it was reports that 31% have very high levels of happiness; 36% have very high life satisfaction; 34% reported feeling that things done in life were very worthwhile; and 40% reported feeling very positive about the future.

Bright Spots noted that 35% of care leavers in Barnet reported high levels of anxiety the previous day – nearly twice that reported by young people in the general population (18%). The factors most strongly associated with low overall well-being were: disliking your appearance, not always feeling safe at home, little or no trust in their social worker, not always feeling settled where they live, disliking school.

Throughout 2021 /22 we have:

- Provided different activities, from gym membership and cooking classes, to volunteering opportunities for children young people and care experienced young adults.
 - o 95% of children (8-11yrs) and 96% of young people (11- 18yrs) had spent time outdoors in the previous week: higher than children (70%) in the general population. This is a Bright Spot of practice
- Maintained mental health support services for children, young people and care experienced adults that meets their needs, including:
 - online support, for everyone up to the age of 25.
 - In-person and more comprehensive support through Barnet Integrated Clinical Service (BICS) and through our key mental health partners such as Terapia.
- The Youth Engagement Officer based in BICS has been established to empower and support the voice of young people receiving mental health support from BICS and develop projects resulting from needs identified, including looked after children.
- Developed our Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy and our Autism Strategy to ensure that children who have additional needs are appropriately supported.
- Opened Green Bank House, our 6-bed therapeutic children's home with onsite clinicians developing a therapeutic community with staff and will include foster carers to establish an effective step down into foster carer for residents.
- Refined the offer of mental health support for care leavers and provided additional therapists to ensure that those most in need had the support they required to manage living through the global pandemic
- Strengthened our offer of mental and physical health support to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children through specialised offers through introducing the designated clinician for UASC within BICs and an enhanced health assessment offer within the LAC Health team, ensuring they have access to the right care when they first enter the care system in Barnet and assisting their positive integration into life in the UK.
- Refined our clinical and therapeutic support offer to foster carers, including the support of clinicians attending foster carer support groups.
- Successfully explored with carers the impact that trauma has on a child's 'window of tolerance' as well as sharing useful strategies to support children in their care when they are 'in crisis' to promote placement stability.
- A detailed analysis was completed into the decline of completed dental checks. The LAC Health Team worked with foster carers to ensure that dental surgeries prioritised children in care. The analysis showed that it was mostly adolescents and UASC who had been reluctant to attend dental appointments. Focussed work is ongoing to allay

fears and reassure young people that this is in their best interest. Some recent improvement in this area has been observed.

We will listen, communicate, and make decisions together with you

We have made sure that children and young people feel included in decisions about their life, with 86% of 8-11 year olds and 87% of 11-18 year old reporting this in the Bright Spots Survey.

Through the Bright Spots survey care experienced young adults stated that 84% trusted their worker 'all or most of the time', 14% 'sometimes' trusted their worker and just 2 (2%) care leavers 'hardly ever' or 'never' trusted their leaving care worker.

Every child in the age groups 4-7yrs and 8-11yrs trusted their social worker. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

Throughout 2021 / 22 we have:

- Commissioned the Bright Spots Survey (June 2021), Your Life Your Care for children 4-18 years and Your Life Beyond Care for care experienced adults aged 18 – 25, with 52% responses from children in care and 33% response from care experienced adults.
- Work to further embed the 'All about me' assessment and plan for all children in care that represented the child's wishes and views and set out in a way that they can understand the rationale for their plan and how their needs will be met. Enhanced our commitment to consistently recording children and young people's voices and promoting their wishes and feelings focussing on ensure their voice is at the centre of care planning.
- During the year we supported 32 children and young people to return to care arrangements with their birth family.
- We have continued to meet with children, young people and care experienced adults in person and when required, virtually, ensuring the significant relationship with social worker and/or personal advisors remained strong and supportive to those who needed it most throughout the year.

Child in Care reviews continued within timescales providing consistent oversight from the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO). All About Me and Pathway Plans continued to be reviewed when circumstances changed and captured the lived experience of those they reflect.

The Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report is included in Appendix A.

- Ensured that the majority of children continue to be seen within timescales and this has remained stable over the past 12 months, reflecting the creativity of social workers using technology to visit children on the occasion when they could not visit in person and they have ensured their relationship remains strong.
- We have strengthened our commitment to ensuring that all care experienced adults feel involved with their pathway planning. The Bright Spots survey indicated that 2/3

(69%) of young people felt involved. Our ambition is to ensure that every young person has the opportunity to shape their pathway plan.

- Feedback loops with children, young people and care experienced adults continued in their development, reinvigorating our Children in Care Council Barnet on Point (#BOP) with a number of in person events and development of our engagement strategy, My Say Matters.
- Progressed the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019-2023, ensuring that the voice of young people remains central to our corporate commitment to achieving an excellent service.
- We have continued to provide an improved advocacy service as part of the Ofsted recommendation and seen an increase in children and young people accessing this service with 117 children and young people accessing advocacy services in the last 12 month period.

We will support you to become independent and prepare for adulthood

The Bright Spots survey, Your Life Beyond Care, states that 62% of care leavers in Barnet reported 'living comfortably' or 'doing alright': a figure slightly more favourable than that reported by care leavers in other LAs (56%). However, it is somewhat lower than that reported by young people (16-24yrs) in the general population, where three quarters (75%) report 'living comfortably' or at least 'doing alright'.

In comparison to young people in the general population, care leavers in Barnet were over twice as likely to report financial difficulties. 25 (22%) care leavers identified fun stuff they wished they could do more of and 19 (16%) care leavers identified things that stopped them from having fun. Not having enough money was the reason most often cited. Others identified poor mental health, covid lockdown, and a limited social network

Throughout 2021/22 we have:

- Embedded the Expert by Experience post in Onwards & Upwards to promote feedback loops and co-production of service design and delivery with care experienced young adults.
- Ensured the Strengths and Resilience Group has continued to run throughout the year, both in person and virtually depending on the wants on the attendees and primarily delivered online and co-facilitated by the Expert by Experience.
- Continued to promote Staying Put and Support Lodgings care arrangements with 15% of 17-18 years olds living with their former foster carer and a further 10% of 19-21 year olds living with their former foster carers and supported lodgings hosts.
- In June 2021 repurposed one of Barnet's children's homes, Meadow Close, into a 16+ semi independent provision for 16-21 year olds to support young people preparing for adulthood. Throughout the year, it maintained good occupancy rate with 7 young people residing in the provision throughout the year.

- Developed the independent living project 'We Built This Home'; a series of workshops that will support independent living skills through both practical skills training alongside health, personal care, nutrition, cooking, budgeting and finance.
- Promoted the Barnet Supported Living Service helping young people with disabilities to live as independently as possible in their own home.
- Continued to provide financial education to 15-17 years through the Step-ladder program with 4 young people completing the project through the year.
- Promoted health passports for all care experienced young adults to ensure they have access to their health histories to support them in their adult years.
- Developed a specific pathway of independence for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) including developing a specific UASC team embedded in Onwards & Upwards, and the development of the Whitefields Project to promote assimilation into British society and culture, and a community based volunteering project whereby asylum seeking adults support UASC at Whitefields school.
- Progressed partnership working with Barnet Homes to ensure that all young people aged 17 are supported with housing nomination forms to assist their transition to independent living upon their 18th birthday or when they are appropriately ready.
- Increased our offer to provide direct housing offers to young people in partnership with Barnet homes to 66 young people, up from a target of 56.
- Raised the need for more housing for care experienced young adults with the Housing & Growth Committee and obtained agreement for Barnet Homes to acquire 30 units for our young adults.
- Maintained the services of a designated work coach in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions who has continued to offer services remotely, and when possible at Woodhouse Road.
- Provided driving lessons to 20 young people through our partnership work with the charity, Live Unlimited's Driving Ahead scheme, with 13 young people / young adults taking their driving test and 9 successfully passing.
- We also continued to run the Bridging the Gap and RON courses both virtually and face to face throughout the year, continuing to support young people accessing apprenticeships, employment and training enabling them to fulfil their hopes and dreams.
- Maintained an average of 61% of care experienced young adults remaining in education, employment and training, despite the significant hardship young people aged 18-24 were experiencing on account of COVID-19. Developed new training and educational offers to improve the EET percentage and build the young people's confidence in being able to acquire employment and retain it.

We will celebrate children & young people, their achievements, identity, and culture support their mental and physical health

Throughout 2020/21 we have:

- Continued our provision of additional support to foster carers and residential workers to ensure that they have the skills and confidence to help children and young people discuss and explore their reflections and responses to the Black Lives Matter movement and in celebration of Black History Month.
- Implemented recommendations from the Barnet wide Anti-Racism Strategy promoting a work environment that is committed to equality and diversity.
- Continued to run our program of celebration activities both online and in person, including Foster Care Fortnight in May, the children in care summer celebration in July, the annual summer BBQ for care experienced adults, and online events for Foster Carer Appreciation Day in October, Care Leavers Week in November and virtual Christmas parties for foster carers and care experienced adults in December.
- Continued to ensure that children and young people's individual care plans acknowledge their difference and reflect nationality, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and disability.
- Provided a training program supporting all staff and managers to develop the skills to have confident conversations about race to enable social workers and personal advisors to promote children and young people's life story through a racial and cultural lens with confidence and sensitivity.
- Continue to recruit foster carers from diverse backgrounds to support children and young people settling into their homes and feeling safe, secure and understood.
- Developed a specific UASC pathway for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people and asylum seeking adults, including partnership work with education, health and mental health.

Voice of the Child

Throughout 2021/2022 the Family Services Workforce Development Team has continued mapping and collating child consultation, participation initiatives and service-user feedback to inform a comprehensive and meaningful Feedback, Engagement and Participation Strategy launched as My Say Matters in June 2022.

The Head of Service continued to maintain an open feedback loop with the BOP (#Barnet on Point) Chair throughout the year building on the relationship developed in the previous year. While BOP sessions remained mostly as virtual sessions due to varying Covid restrictions and uncertainties for group activities, attendance continued to be low as children and young's digital fatigue continued. When possible, the Head of Service, continued to meet with the Chair of Children in Care Council in the community to ensure ongoing communication, and discuss plans to relaunch face to face BOP events in 2022.

Throughout the year, a number of events took place including:

- Face to Face relaunch event taking place in June 2021.

- Children in Care summer celebration event, in person at a local Barnet school.
- BOP half term face to face activities taking place throughout the year attended by a small number of young people, including Go-Karting.
- A virtual foster carer and children in care Christmas Party in December 2022 with a visit from Father Christmas.
- BOP Children in Care Council lead member attended virtual Skills to Foster training, where they shared their experience and needs in care, advising new foster carers how to develop good relationships with children.
- BOP Children in Care Council Chair contributed to the ASYE training program for newly qualified social workers and their practice educators.

During the focused visit from Ofsted inspectors in June 2021, inspectors commented on the following regarding Barnet’s youth participation:

“Senior leaders, managers and social workers demonstrate a clear focus on hearing the voices of children and young people to develop and further improve services. The Barnet children in care council, ‘Barnet on Point’ (BOP), has continued to support children and young people in having their views heard throughout the pandemic. Children have been engaged through a range of activities, including virtual cookalongs, consultations, celebration events and the recently commissioned Bright Spots survey.”

The BOP Annual Report is included in Appendix B.

Children in Care Profile

Barnet has continued to have a stable figure of children coming into care with 329 children in care on 31st March 2022. Although the numbers have stayed stable the cohort has changed over time with an increasing number of UASCs, vulnerable adolescents entering care in their late teens as a result of the risks of exploration and youth violence and the younger children being placed with family members as their connected carers.

Children having to leave their family homes and coming into the care of Barnet family services do so for a number of different reasons, however for the majority of these young people, it is on account of abuse and neglect. On 7th April 2022, 38% of looked after children were in care on account of abuse and neglect and 28% due to absent parenting, a similar figure to 2020-21.

The following table shows our cohort of children in care (329) as at 31st March 2022:

		LAC	UASC	Total
Gender	Male	48%	100%	59%
	Female	52%	0%	41%

Ethnicity	Any Other Ethnicity	8%	0%	0%
	Asian	3%	82%	26%
	Black	17%	13%	16%
	Gypsy/Roma	1%	0%	1%
	Mixed	26%	0%	21%
	White	45%	4%	36%
	Not Stated	0%	0%	0%
Age on Starting Care	0 to 10	48%	0%	36%
	11 to 13	17%	4%	13%
	14 to 15	14%	13%	14%
	16 to 17	21%	83%	37%

There was a decrease in children aged 0 – 10 coming into care, from 67% in 2019/20 and 64% in 2020/2021 to 48% in 2022. This is likely due to a decrease in referrals from the early years provision and schools on account of closures and lockdown restrictions over the past 2 years. In contrast there has been an increase in young people aged 16-17, who are not UASC, coming into care, which is now at 21%, up from 7% in 2019/2020 and 12% in 2020/2021. Older children, aged 16 -17, have struggled in the care of their parents and have sought assistance and support outside of their family network which has led to referrals. Young people that come into care when they are older tend to become looked after due to complex reasons, from escalating mental health concerns to family breakdown. In many cases there have been missing episodes and some substance misuse, and in some cases child sexual or criminal exploitation.

Care arrangements for children and young people continue to be in the care of the Local Authority through three different legal pathways; 37% of children were voluntary accommodated under S.20 of the Children’s Act (1989), 36% were subject to Care Orders and in our care for the duration of their childhood and 24% of children were subject to Interim Care Orders with their care arrangements continuing to be determined by the Courts. These figures evidence no significant change from 2020-21. During the previous year, there had been some delays with the progression for final care plans in the Family Court. This has seen a prolonged delay for a small cohort of children in having their permanence plans progressed, particularly where the care plan recommends adoption.

Case study: Luisa’s story

Luisa came into care in January 2021 aged 16 years old; she has an ADHD diagnosis with ASD traits. Luisa came into the care of Barnet Family Services due to concerns regarding her mother’s mental health, the impact this was having upon Luisa, being bullied, self harm and a poor relationship with

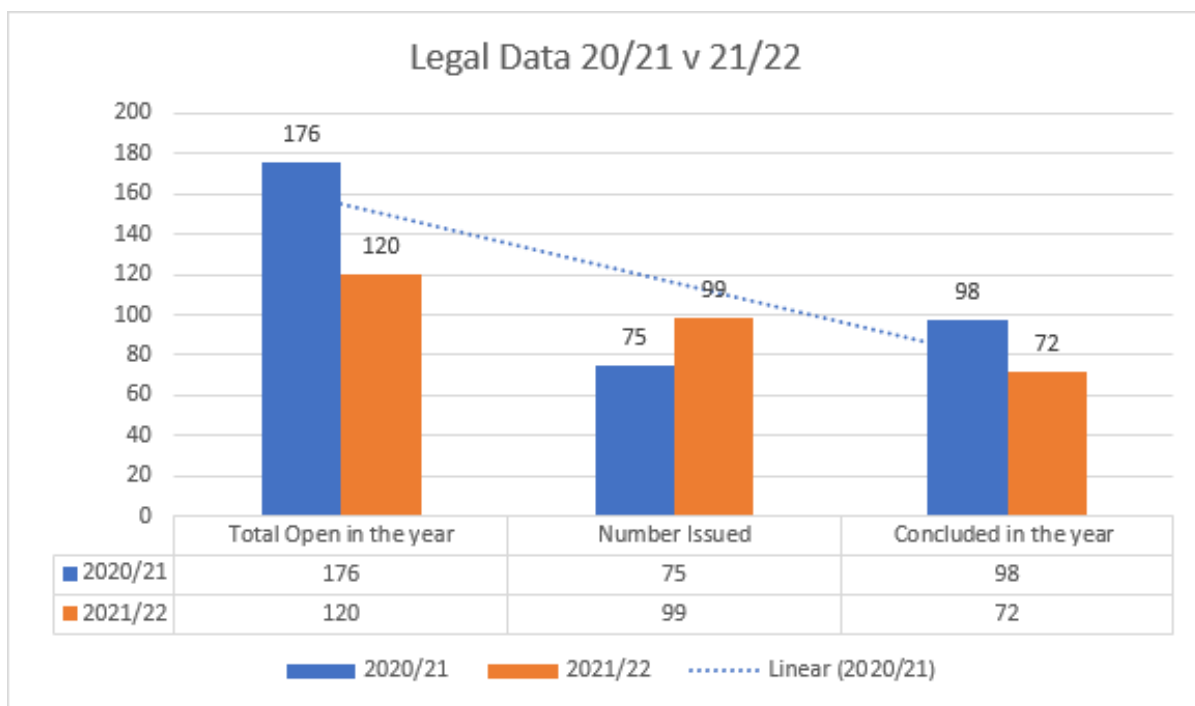
her mother. There were also concerns that Luisa was at risk of possible exploitation by sharing explicit images. Luisa signed s20 placing herself into Local authority care in due to a deterioration in mother's mental health. Luisa's mother refused to engage with mental health and social care services and returned to Romania where the family originated from. There were no identified family in the UK that could care for Luisa and she was placed in a semi-independent provision where was supported to develop independent living skills in preparation for adulthood. Luisa celebrated her 18th birthday in March 2022 and remains living in her current placement for a period of support before obtaining her long term housing tenancy when available and she is ready to live independently.

Continuing with our resilience based approach social work practice, our teams across Family Services remain committed to all children remaining within their birth family where possible and safe to do so. In the last year we entered care proceedings in respect of 99 children, and throughout the year 120 children were subject to care proceedings reflecting that there are a number of children whose care proceedings had not concluded during 2020/21.

Within the last year, 72 sets of care proceedings concluded with a remaining 32 care proceedings remaining in progress within the Court. More children became subject to care proceedings within 2021/22 than the previous year, with proceedings taking longer on account of the continued delays attributed to the previous year.

For the children whose care proceedings did conclude and who have achieved permanence in their care arrangements, the following was observed:

- 38 children (52%) achieved permanence through alternative care arrangements outside of the care of their birth families.
 - 4 children (5%) achieved care plans of adoption through the granting of a placement order
 - 21 children (29%), generally older children, were provided with permanence through long term care orders, the majority of whom will remain in foster care
 - 13 children (18%) were placed in the care of their wider families by virtual of Special Guardianship orders
- 32 (44%) children remain or have returned home to their birth families and will remain subject to continued intervention and monitoring by Family Services, however they are no longer children in care.
 - 22 children (30%) were returned home to the care of their parents under a Supervision Order
 - 6 children (8%) were returned home to their families under No Order
 - 4 children (5%) were returned home to their families under a Child Arrangement Order
- 2 children were referred to other Local Authorities for ongoing support and assistance.



In 2021/22, 58% of care proceedings concluded in 50 weeks or more. This is an increase on the 49% of proceedings that concluded in 50 or more weeks in 2020/21. Fewer children (5%) were granted placement orders in 2021/22 supporting a care plan for adoption, compared to 2020/2021 (11%) and fewer Supervision Orders were made in 2021/22 (27) compared to 2020/21 (22).

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

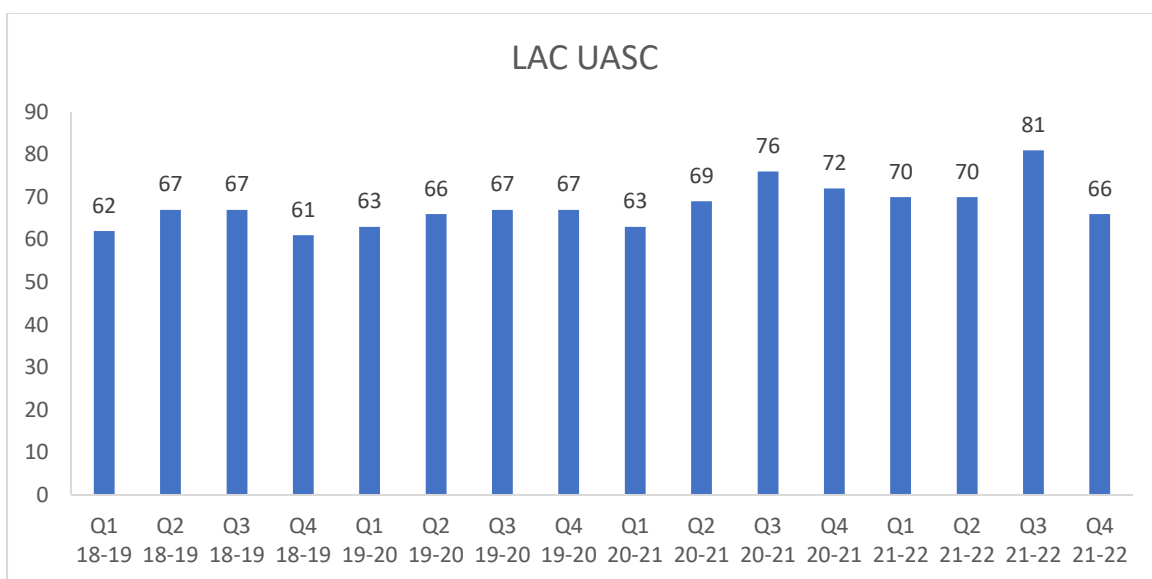
Throughout the year, Barnet has continued to see an increase in number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) coming into care (see below table) and quickly turning 18 becoming a care experienced adult accessing leaving care support. At the end of March 2022, 68 of our children in care were UASC, continuing the trend noted the previous year. This trend is the result of world events leading children and young people having to flee their homes and families and travel to Europe and United Kingdom through various means seeking safety and a place to call home. This year the Home Office has continued to maintain 4 hotels within Barnet used as dispersal accommodation for asylum seeking families and single adults. These four asylum seeker contingency hotels have a current population (as of 06/06/2022) of 992 people. Since the opening of these hotels in July 2020, Barnet has received in total 81 referrals for unaccompanied children wrongly assessed as adults by the Home Office, and in need of care and support. During 2021/22, 22 children originating from asylum seeker contingency hotels have been accommodated by Barnet Council

Ofsted noted:

“Barnet has seen a significant rise in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children within the borough. These children benefit from effective, timely work to ensure that their needs are assessed and

responded to. Their educational, emotional and physical health needs are well considered, and translators are used to support children’s engagement if necessary.”

In response to the needs for this specific and unique group of young people, a dedicated UASC team has been developed this last year, coming into effect in the spring of 2022. This team is comprised of social workers and personal advisors, embedded within the leaving care service, Onwards and Upwards. This team accepts referrals directly from MASH which ends unnecessary transition points for these young people, it holds expertise and experience in relation to age assessments and immigration processes and law and it ensures a smooth transition for asylum seeking young people to asylum seeking adults, many who will continue to experience an uncertain immigration status due to delays with the Home Office.



Case study: YP’s story

YP is a young person who identifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. He came to the UK in 2016, seeking asylum as a child aged 14, having fled persecution related to his sexuality in his country of origin. His journey whilst looked-after included some serious health challenges, and very sadly, in 2018 he was diagnosed with life altering and life-limiting condition. Despite this, and compounded by the precarity of his immigration status, YP worked tirelessly to achieve excellent academic results, securing himself a place on his course of choice at a Russell Group University. Alongside his studies he also maintained paid employment, working in retail, where his employer described him as kind, considerate and very hard-working. In July 2022, some 6 years after first arriving in the UK seeking safety, YP graduated from his UG programme of study with first class honours. YP is a remarkable young person, and his Leaving Care Person Advisor says he is privileged to have been able to share in his journey. Onwards and Upwards for YP to a secure, safe and bright future.

Placement Sufficiency

Our placement transformation programme continued in earnest this year with a refreshed Fostering Recruitment Strategy and the expansion of our inhouse provision.

Foster care remains the best alternative care option for most children in care and in Barnet the majority of our children continuing to be placed in foster care with 170 children (52%) in this arrangement. 74 of these children live with Barnet foster carers and 96 children live with independent foster carers, registered with independent fostering agencies. This is a decrease from 2020/21 when 200 children (60%) were living in foster care arrangements. This reflects the changes in the children in care cohort with less younger children and more UASC and complex adolescents entering care during 2021. There continues to be a shortage of foster carers nationally and although recruitment has continued, we have not been able to increase the number of foster care placements available for our children which at times limits the placement choice for each child. Despite the ongoing challenges our recruitment drive has remained strong.

Moving from outreach events to online recruitment and using social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram has been beneficial and this flexible approach has provided effective and aspirational high-quality campaigns. Through our creative and dynamic use of Facebook live events and Instagram stories we successfully recruited 5 fostering households and a further 6 supported lodgings hosts. This is a reduction from the 11 fostering households recruited in 2020/2021.

As we now live post-pandemic, our foster care recruitment drive has shifted to a hybrid of virtual events, live face to face outreach events and the launch of our fostering film, *The Difference is You*, released in July 2022, to be streamed across social media and London-based television, channel 5, Barnet TV and local cinemas.

During 2021/22 we have had some success in recruiting Supported Lodgings hosts for adolescents which is proving to be an effective option for young people needing additional support whilst transitioning to adulthood.

29 children live with extended family members such as grandparents, aunts and uncles or family friend under a Connected Carer arrangement. The carers are assessed to be appropriate carers for a named child and are supported by the Fostering Support Team. They are provided with the same level of training opportunities and social work intervention as an approved registered foster carer. This is an opportunity for a child to safely remain in the care of their family with the support and monitoring of the local authority. In the long term these arrangements are often converted to Special Guardianship.

As at March 2022 Barnet has 81 foster carers who can potentially provide a home for 171 children if all placements were active, and a further 23 connected carers, providing homes for 29 children within their wider family. At this time there are some Barnet carers who are unable to care for children for personal reasons, some who can only have one child in their care even though they are approved for more due to the complexity of the child's needs, and we have a small number of carers who are in the process of adopting a child or becoming the special guardian for a child and during this legal transition we choose not to put a new child with the family.

The Fostering Annual Report is included in Appendix C.

Placement stability

The below table outlines the breakdown of placements for children in Barnet as at 31st March 2022:

Internal		
LBB Fostering	74	56%
Connected Persons (kinship)	29	22%
Placed for Adoption	8	6%
Internal Residential	8	6%
Parental	13	10%
All Internal	132	40%
External		
Agency Fostering	96	49%
Semi Independence	62	31%
External Residential	36	18%
Secure/YOI	3	2%
All External	195	60%
Overall Total	329	

The large majority of children and young people (213 children, 65%) remained in the same home throughout the year, representing a minor shift from 2020/2021 (66%). Mostly due to Covid-19 lockdowns placement stability remained strong throughout the first half of the year and into summer, with some instability occurring in October – December 2021, a pattern similar to last year, reflecting the frequent changes in lockdown restrictions and school openings and closures. Foster carers, their families and looked after children and young people continued to demonstrate great resilience throughout the two pandemic years, and for many families, the opportunity of spending periods of time living in isolation provided opportunities for improved relationships.

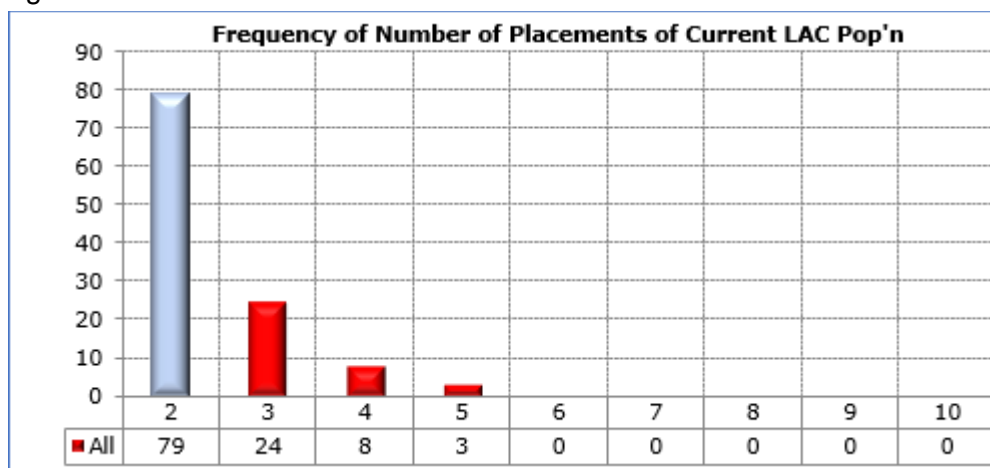
35 children experienced 3 or more placement moves throughout the year, up from 29 in 2020/2021, however a decrease from the pre-pandemic years of 2019-20 (37) and 2018-19 (37). Most children who experienced 3 or more placement moves can be categorised into three cohorts, those coming new into care in a crisis and tend to move from an emergency placement to medium or long term placements quite quickly, those experiencing an unplanned move because their escalating needs, and those moving back to within their birth family or their permanent care arrangement.

We recognise that children and young people need stability and permanency in their lives and to know their care arrangement is the right home for them. As part of our 'Who we place where' protocol, all children and young people who move placements are now routinely

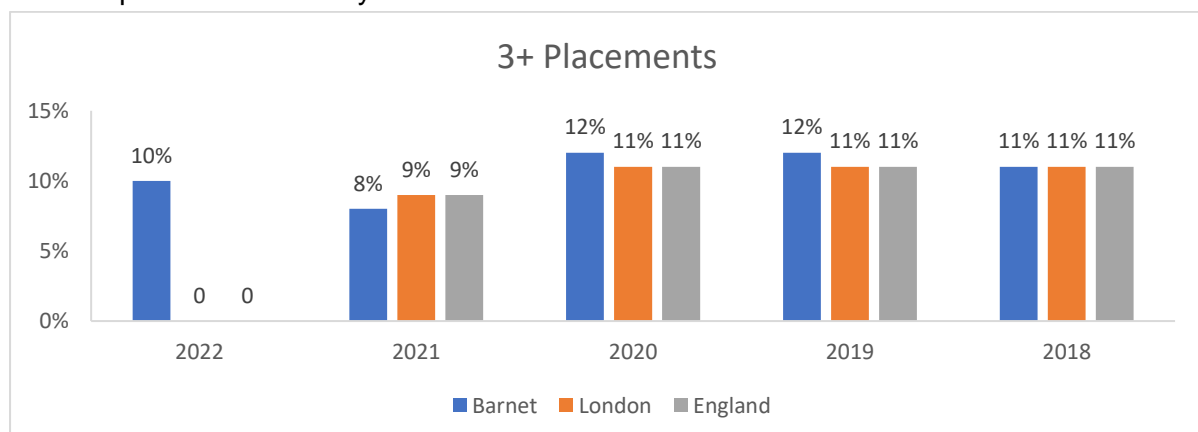
reviewed within our permanency tracking meeting to ensure their next move, as far as possible, is their final destination. Some moves continue to be undertaken in order to ensure a child or young person's needs are best met and where they are safeguarded effectively. Older young people, those 15 years and over and who have come into care as an adolescent continue to be more likely to experience 3 or more placements, as their needs change in line with their shifting neurodevelopment and behaviours.

The stability of placements for under 16's who have been in care continuously for 2.5 years has declined slightly from 70% in 2020/21 to 69% in 2021/22 and has improved by 5% since 2020. In 2021/22 there were 49 children in this cohort. There are a number of factors that have contributed to this shift, namely the delays in care proceedings resulting in children remaining in a placement for longer before moving to their permanent care arrangement or back home to parents. Children who have been in residential placements for a period of intervention remained there longer than planned due to Covid but have moved to foster care or back to parents this year and we have seen provisions closing some of their units as a result of the change in the law and Ofsted scrutiny resulting in children moving to alternative 'sister' units. During this last year a focus has also been on ensuring the children in long term foster care are permanently matched to carers and this process has resulted in positive planned moves for a small group of children.

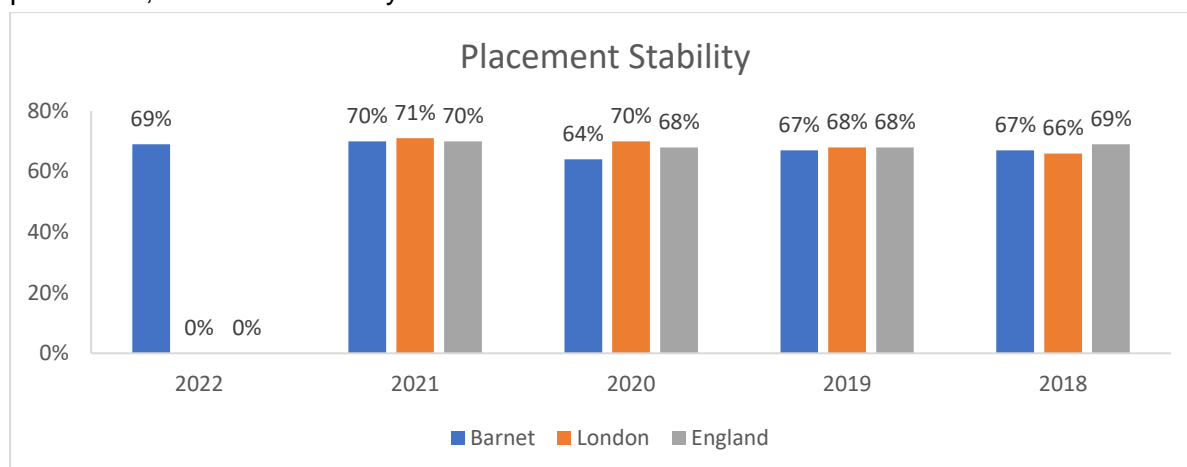
The chart below outlines the number of moves children and young people experienced during 2021/2022:



Yearly comparison across Barnet, London and England of children in care who have had 3 or more placements in the year:



Below is the comparison of children in care under 16 years old who have been in care continuously for 2.5 years and have been living in the same placement for at least 2 years, or are placed for adoption and their adoptive placement together with their previous placement, last for at least 2 years:



Case Study: Jamilla's story

Jamilla now 16, had been looked after since she was 9 and had been living in a foster placement with her sister which broke down due to her foster carer's struggling to manage Jamilla's complex and at times challenging behaviours. Jamilla moved to one of Barnet's internal provisions as she was very clear she did not wish to move to another foster placement. She had already had her family, and her carers maintained a positive and warm relationship, visiting frequently and having overnight stays. Despite this, Jamilla struggled with the level of independence required of her; she stopped attending school, stopped washing and caring for herself, didn't engage with her key workers sessions, and started staying out late and eventually overnight. She was vulnerable to exploitation from negative peer influences and was soon missing for days at a time. The professional network around Jamilla, including her former foster carers, concluded that Jamilla needed to leave London and move to a placement that was quite rural, but able to provide her with the care and support she needed. Her social worker was worried Jamilla would struggle and would run away, however Jamilla surprised everyone and decided it was the fresh start she needed. Since moving, Jamilla returned to school and intends to complete her GCSE with plans for the future. She engages with professionals, attends her key worker and therapeutic sessions and has recently started working in McDonalds for some financial independence.

Internal Residential Provisions

New Park House

New Park House is based in New Southgate and is one of two children's homes run by Barnet. This home looks after up to six young people between the ages of 11 and 18 and is a medium to long term provision. On the 2nd and 3rd March 2022, Ofsted inspectors visited the home to conduct a routine inspection under the social care common inspection framework and judged the overall experiences of children and young people living there to be Good. Inspectors found that young people living in the home have positive and trusting relationships with staff, who work to meet their needs and ensure they have good

experiences. There are several examples which illustrated how young people are supported to maintain their own identity by developing their own interests and cultural practices, including accessing college courses, vegan cooking, boxing and access to interpreters and opportunities to practice their faith. Children reported that they feel safe in the home, and staff promote positive behaviour.

Some areas of improvement were identified by inspectors in terms of leadership and management of the home. There is an enhancement plan in place to ensure supervision and management oversight is recorded and meets the frequency required.

Meadow Close

Meadow Close is a 6 bed 16+ semi independent provision that supports 16-21 year olds develop their independent skills in preparation for having their own tenancy and moving to independent adulthood. Meadow Close repurposed from a children's home to 16+ provision in July 21 and has supported 7 young people throughout the year with some moving on into alternative care arrangements and/or their own accommodation living independently following their 18th birthday. The property has been undergoing renovations to ensure we provide a homely shared accommodation for young adults where they can develop into confident adults.

Greenbank House

Greenbank House is a 6 bed therapeutic Ofsted registered children's home that officially opened in August 2021. All admissions are planned, and children are assessed as to whether the home will meet their needs and if they will match well with other children in the home. Children who are placed out of borough are being referred to this home as an opportunity to bring vulnerable children back into Barnet as well as children with complex emotional needs arising from trauma. Between August and October 2021 four young people aged between 13 – 15 came to live in Green Bank House. Three young people came after the breakdown of their long-term foster and residential placements and the other young person was stepped down from a tier four mental health service, to be supported with emotion regulation skills and independence.

There has been a strong progression in relationship building between staff and young people that have been placed since August 2021. The young people have expressed valuing the regular in-house therapy sessions and key work sessions, and in time have shown openness and capacity to reflect on their own emotional and behavioural wellbeing, which is a huge step for them. Young people have also enjoyed the array of activities they go on, and the time spent with staff, building relationships and having fun. Young people's progress is being measured by goal-based outcomes, therapeutic care plans, holistic support care plans, and three-monthly review meetings with young people, key workers, clinicians, and the house manager. Green Bank are currently implementing the BERRI measure, to numerically track outcomes of holistic wellbeing for the young people (e.g., school, physical and emotional wellbeing, behaviour, relationships, etc).

The admission pathway and procedure for Green Bank House is currently under review and 2 beds have been made available to the North London Consortium (Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey & Islington) to develop a better occupancy rate and ensure appropriate matching of young people.

Moving Forward 1

This project maintains the eligibility criteria for young people being male, aged over 18, who have access to public funds and where their Section 24 Housing Nomination Form has been completed.

The property maintained 75% occupancy in line with Covid restrictions and rules. Since July 2020, 9 young adults have successfully moved on from this property, 4 into their own tenancy, 2 into temporary accommodation in preparation to transitioning to their own accommodation, 1 to Centrepont Foyer, and 1 sadly has been recalled to prison. Feedback from residents at the Moving Forward project accommodation is that they feel safe. They have had opportunities to develop independence and manage the day-to-day responsibilities of managing a tenancy within a supported environment, including negotiating repairs and manage relationships with neighbours.

Moving Forward 2

This project is also referred to as ‘the training flat’, and was the original moving forward project. Since May 2020, 4 young people have successfully transitioned from this accommodation into their own accommodation, 2 into their own permanent accommodation (secure flexible tenancy), 1 to Temporary Accommodation and another young person remains in situ. The flat is currently occupied by a young person who is resettling back into the community after a period of incarceration. She is currently receiving weekly floating support; this is progressing her readiness for independence – a developmental period that was stalled whilst in custody. This young person also has complex medical needs, and maladapted coping behaviours which can include the misuse of prescribed medication. The bespoke package of floating support via the dynamic purchasing vehicle can follow the young person as required on the accommodation pathway. This standalone provision with floating support is providing good quality care and support to reduce the future likelihood of risk of care leaver homelessness.

Special Guardianship Children & Carers

Case Study: Spencer's story

Spencer is a 13-year-old boy who has been living with his grandparents under an SGO since May 2012. Since this time there has been periodic intervention from several social work teams, with the main concerns being linked to his grandparents' ability to support his paternal heritage, poor school attendance, social isolation and low-level neglect. Spencer and his grandparents have been open to the Carer Support Team since May 2020. A family plan has been implemented and is regularly reviewed; this has resulted in sustained improvements to the home environment and in Spencer and his grandmother working together to look after themselves and their belongings. Grandmother and Spencer were having mediation, facilitated by a family support practitioner who is a culturally appropriate match for him. This work is helping to strengthen bonds and encourage positive communication, together with empowering Spencer to celebrate and embrace his heritage. He particularly enjoys it when the mediator speaks in a Jamaican accent to him!

The Carer Support Team have commissioned a therapist who Spencer worked with previously in CAMHS. Spencer also now has a male mentor, who is undertaking excellent work to increase his social engagement, provide him with a positive male role model, encouraging him to recognise his potential and increase his resilience and self-esteem. He previously struggled to leave the house; he is now back attending school, engaging in police cadets and boxing.

Spencer takes part in all his Special Guardianship support reviews and is an imperative part of the feedback loop and decision making. This case was previously close to threshold to refer into the Duty and Assessment Team. Due to the wrap around support provided, the trajectory for this family is looking much more positive. This is an example of crisis intervention from the Carer Support Team, with a focus on repairing and rebuilding relationships, self-worth, empowering the family to make their own achievable changes and providing Spencer with the scaffolding he needs to thrive.

In 2021/2022, 13 children achieved stability through, going to live with their wider family members under a Special Guardianship Order. There were 160 Special Guardians who received a financial allowance from the Local Authority to support them in caring for 223 children. 28 (17%) of these carers were provided with additional support through an assessment of need, and 11 (7%) carers were supported with contact work to ensure the children in their care had safe and meaningful contact with their parents.

Following a peer learning review undertaken in the second half of this year regarding a Special Guardianship care arrangements, we have updated our Special Guardianship policy and how we work with special guardians and the children in their care. In the first year of the making of a Special Guardian Order, the carer and children will now have a social work visit to their home on 3 occasions. In addition, all carers will have a social worker undertake their annual review, to ensure the ongoing and changing needs of the children are known and addressed. It is the goal of the Carer Support Team that all Special Guardianship children should have the opportunity to engage in life story work. This can be therapeutically driven, in the format of a letter and/or a book. Decisions regarding this are made on a case-by-case basis. Over the year 10 children (4%) received therapeutic life story work to assist them in understanding their life journey and why they do not live in the care of their birth parents.

Case Study: Marni's story

Marni is a 6-year-old little girl who lives with her grandfather under an SGO. Sadly, her mother died following excessive drug use and she more recently experienced the death of her grandmother who was her primary carer. Marni was presenting as very confused about her family relationships and was unaware that her mother was deceased. As part of the therapeutic life story work undertaken directly with Marni; she was informed about the death of her mother, and the part drugs played in this. The life story worker wrote a card to Marni in the words she imagined her mother would say to her. She facilitated something similar regarding her grandmother. The life story worker facilitated a celebration of life for mother and grandmother, with the immediate family gathering together to release balloons for them. This is documented within her life story book. This process really helped Marni come to terms with these losses and gave her permission to celebrate and speak about these important people to other members of her family, who were

struggling with their own grief. She has a better sense of her family relationships and where she fits within her network, together with the reasons why she could not live with her parents. It is hoped that the positive impact of this work continues for Marni and that she grows with an understanding of her experiences, in a way that doesn't prevent her from having a secure sense of self.

Care Experienced Adults

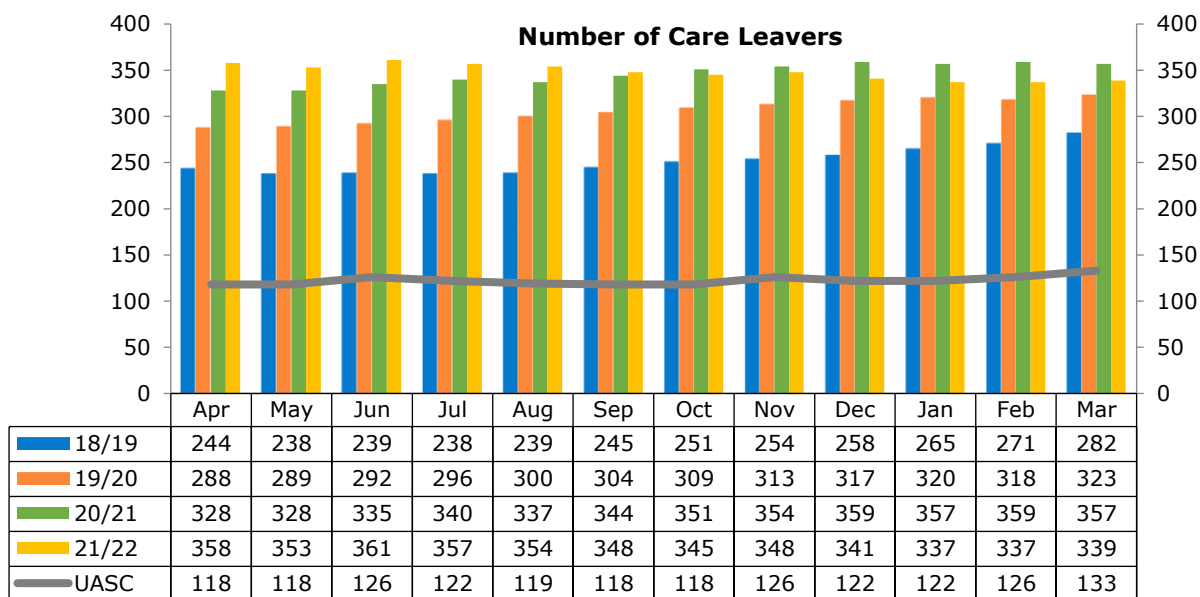
“The Covid-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus how difficult it can be to cope with multiple and abrupt changes in one’s life simultaneously. Rapidly having to adapt to different ways of living, working and providing care in response to the pandemic has undoubtedly been challenging for all of us. These recent experiences provide some insight into the ‘accelerated and compressed’ transitions that around 13,000 young people leaving foster and residential care experience each year. Care leavers typically navigate a number of changes in their lives (setting up home, managing day to day living and their finances and maintaining education, employment or training) at a much younger age than other young people in the community, and without the levels of practical, emotional and financial support that families typically offer their children. Although they have a right to care and protection there can be a mismatch between the services and support they want and need and what is actually provided during this important life stage. Covid-19 has served to further intensify the pressures facing young people leaving care and local authorities have been working hard to adapt.”

‘Care Leavers, Covid-19 and Transitions from Care’ study, Tilda Goldberg Centre for Social Work and Social Care, June 2021.

During 2021/22 the number of care leavers continued to increase for the first quarter, and then maintained a steady number for the duration of the year. On 7th April 2022 Barnet had 341 care leavers, a third of whom (133) are former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, having turned 18 and becoming asylum seeking adults.

Most of our care leavers are aged between 18 - 20 years old (227; 66%) with 17% (60) aged 21 years old and 16% (54) 22 years or older. This correlates to the data from 2020/2021 and evidences a limited change in the demographic. The concerns noted for care experienced young adults in 2020/2021 living through a global pandemic, remained similar to the worries, fears and uncertainties young adults continued to grapple with this year, including worries about their mental health, their finances and their housing. A greater number of young adults accessing the service which reflects the incredibly difficult last two years young people aged 18 – 25 have experienced across the UK, leaving them in need of additional supports and services.

These shifts also continue to be attributable in-part to the increased former UASC cohort, who continue to need support from the Leaving Care service for accommodation and subsistence until their asylum application has been resolved. The pandemic, together with delays caused by outstanding National Referral Mechanism (NRM) decisions have, as expected, continued to have an impact on the timeliness of conclusive grounds decisions.



Care experienced young adults have experienced digital poverty, financial hardship, loneliness, anxiety and fear, with many care experienced young people having few people within their networks they could reliably turn to for support. Personal Advisors were for some, their only form of connection to the wider world at points during the various lockdowns over the two years. Care experienced adults who previously would have been independent and self-sufficient enough to manage with the prospect of a job, employment, education or an active social life struggled to progress to living independently without their backup of the leaving care service. As illustrated in the following quote from a Barnet care experienced young adult in the Your Life Beyond Care Bright Spots survey undertaken in 2021:

“She has helped me with countless things and stages in my life. I would not be where I am without her help and guidance and I am eternally grateful for her. She has always listened and always tried to help, she has never left me without some solution. Thank you for all that you do!”

The Onwards and Upwards centre remained open throughout the two years of the pandemic. Staff continued to be available every day to meet young people by appointment. The on-site foodbank provision expanded to operate a limited delivery service where possible and necessary for those young people unable to travel. As restrictions eased and we moved into recovery planning, we developed a number of innovations to better support our young people to prepare for independence this included developing the 20+ Progression and Resource Forum. It considers the needs of care experienced young people as they approach 21 years of age; bringing together key professionals to consider how best they can support young adults who may be transitioning from the one-to-one service to duty-based support and/or to universal services, or in some cases, on to Adults Social Care support and/or other specialist provision. In parallel, we have also developed the Empower21+ project, offering support, advice and guidance to Barnet care experienced young adults when requested. We have increased our offer of clinical support with partner agency Terepia to ensure that all those in need have access to high quality therapeutic and clinical intervention. Following an increase in self-harming concerns for young adults, further training was provided to the personal advisors to ensure they were upskilled to meet the needs of those they work with in identify risks and developing response strategies.

The high-risk case forum continued to be held virtually throughout the year, allowing personal advisors to produce pathway plans that best support the needs of the most complex young people with packages of support from partner agencies. As we head into the new year and further into transitioning to the new ways of working, the high-risk case forum has returned to in person, and a number of our partner colleagues have returned to the centre offering face to face appointments to young people.

The Expert by Experience role has gone from strength to strength over the past two years. With a new worker in post, the remit of the role has extended beyond co-facilitating the Strengths and Resilience group and supporting the development of a peer support group for care experienced parents. The role now includes organising social events and meetups for care experienced adults in response to the concerns for social isolation, low motivation and poor mental health, and developing the inaugural Care Leavers Conference, scheduled for later in 2022.

We have continued to work in partnership with the Barnet charity Live Unlimited to provide dongles and tablets/laptops for care experienced adults ensuring that they could remain connected to their families and friends through the wider, virtual world. Throughout the year Onwards and Upwards continued to provide virtual celebration and social events in recognition of the challenges of supporting people to come together during periods of restriction. This includes virtual events celebrating Care Leavers fortnight, Black History Month, Christmas and Carers Remembrance Day. The Strength and Resilience group continued throughout the year moving to in person events where possible, particularly during the summer, co-facilitated by the Expert by Experience practitioner. Additional sub-groups from the Strengths and Resilience group, including the parents' group and the groups specifically for Vietnamese care experienced young adults also continued to be facilitated by the service on an as and when basis, and in response to the changing needs of the service users.

The annual summer BBQ took place in August with great success attended by many young people who provided feedback on how great it was to be coming together again! Renovation work to the building commenced over the year, including a new kitchen and laundry for young people to use as their own. This has been celebrated with live and virtual cooking classes and workshops as set to continue in response to feedback from young people.

Case Study: Amy's story

Amy came into care aged 7 following significant physical harm, emotional abuse and neglect. Unfortunately, Amy had a few placement breakdowns. Amy's mother later ended up in prison and Amy's early life, mothers' imprisonment and her placement breakdowns caused significant trauma. As a result of this trauma Amy had significant emotional needs as well as un-diagnosed mental health needs. Counselling support was set up for her, but this was found to be too difficult and in fact caused her to relive her early trauma and significantly deteriorate. Her trauma meant she found it hard to trust and build relationships, her hurt and frustration meant to others she presented as angry and resistant to support offered. She had no faith in statutory services and her previous experiences of counselling meant that she declined to engage in any Mental health

support. The leaving care service supporting Amy looked at other ways to support her emotional and mental health, to get her to a point that she was ready to engage in statutory support services rather than just offering her what was already there around Mental health support and education available to her, they worked with her to build relationships of trust. They arranged for a mentor to support her physically and emotionally, but more importantly to get to know her the real Amy. This time last year Amy was calling her PA and senior managers daily, she was threatening and at times very abusive to staff, she did not live in appropriate accommodation, she did not work or engage in education, and she would not engage in any mental health support services. Her PA took a step back, a step back from engaging Amy in things like training that she was never going to effectively engage with and focused on one of her primary needs, a need for belonging, hand holding and nurturing and stability. Now, one year later, Amy has moved to her permanent accommodation, she has not only engaged with mental health she has received a diagnosis and being provided with specialist support services, she has a partner and is in a trusting relationship and she has gone back into education and received a 7 (old grade A) in GCSE maths.

Housing

Our care experienced young adults have previously told us that some of the semi-independent providers have not prepared them sufficiently for the future. In 2019-2020 we reviewed our provisions and began developing alternative accommodation offers for young people. In July 2020, we opened the first of our Moving Forward provisions, a 4-bedroom shared living space in West Hendon with some targeted outreach support where young people can develop the necessary independence skills to allow them to successfully move into their own accommodation and maintain their tenancy.

The majority of 18 year olds (55%) and of 19-21 year olds (73%) of our care experienced adults continue to live independently. This is a positive trajectory showing that young people are living in accommodation that meets their needs, and that proactive care planning is now undertaken with young people approaching their 18th birthday. In 2020-21 slightly more than half (59%) of all care experienced young adults continued to live independently, up from 44% in March 2019 and 43% in March 2018. We have continued the floating support offer introduced in 2020, providing additional support for the minority of young people requiring this to ensure a successful and smooth transition to independent living.

A small number of young people continue to remain living in their child in care arrangement post 18, reflecting both their level of need and the reduced availability of suitable properties in the housing market. As a direct consequence of the global pandemic, there has been, in some instances, a lack of appropriate housing for young people assessed as ready to move into their independent property. Social Workers and Personal Advisors continue to advocate for these young people. Almost all care experienced young adults are living in suitable accommodation (98%) up from 94% in 2020/2021. Staying put continues to be a positive accommodation arrangement for some with 20 (10%) care experienced young adults remaining with their former foster carer, up slightly from 8%. As part of our fostering recruitment strategy, we have recruited a number of supported lodgings hosts and now are able to offer support lodging accommodation with a host who will aid their transition to

independent living in their own tenancy. As at 8th April 2022, there were 5 (2.5%) care experienced young adults living in this care arrangement.

Semi-independent accommodation continues to be our main offer of transition accommodation for 16+ year olds. This year 15% of 17-18 year olds and 8% of 19-21 years olds were living in semi-independent accommodation, a decrease from last year, when 60 (17%) care experienced adults lived in semi-independent accommodation. The number of young people residing in semi-independent accommodation in 2020/21 relates to the increase of young people remaining in their semi-independent accommodation during the initial lockdown period in 2020/2021, when there was a decision not to move young people during lockdown to ensure they were safe and in familiar places. These young people have now started to move to their secure tenancies.

Our partnership work with Barnet Homes, including their review of the Care Leaver Housing Protocol in May 2021, resulted in an increase performance target to accommodate 56 care leavers in 2021/22, up from 48 in 2020/21. Barnet Homes recognised the additional pressures placed on vulnerable young people living through a global pandemic and their need for security and stability in the face of a changing world. They were able to offer permanent accommodation to 66 care experienced adults throughout the year.

The need for additional housing units earmarked for care experienced young adults was agreed and we are continuing to work with the Barnet Group to identify the most effective route to purchase 30 x 1 and 2-bedrooms units to be available in 2023 ensuring young people can move into their own properties when they are ready for independent living, and avoid the unnecessary time living in temporary accommodation. In addition, we consulted with children and young people throughout the year on our revised Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021 – 2023 who shared their wish to live independently and learn 'how to get my own home'. In response to this feedback, the 'We Built this Home' project will include modules in supporting young people to maintain a tenancy, bills and budgeting and taking care of your home with general repairs and maintenance.

Education, employment, and training

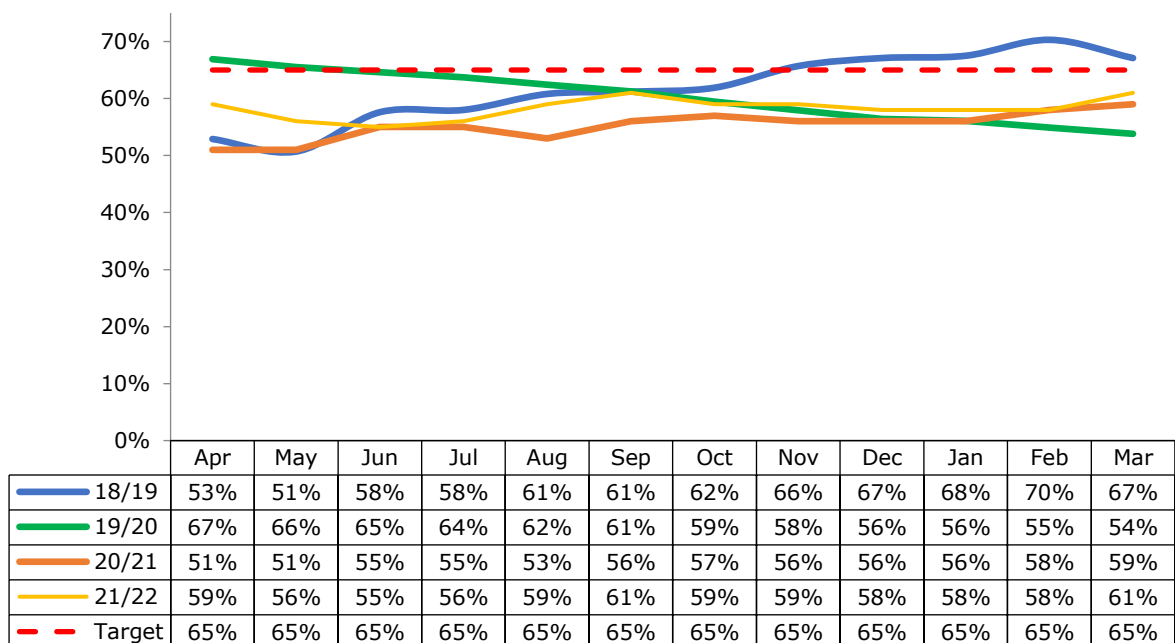
Like its predecessor, 2021 continued to be a difficult and challenging year across the globe as Covid-19 continued as both a health and economic crisis, with young people becoming disproportionately impacted. Before COVID-19 the social and economic integration of young people was an ongoing challenge, however because of lockdowns and living in isolation, young people aged 18-25 are likely to suffer a severe and long-lasting impact to employment and training opportunity, adversely affecting their opportunities for financial stability and security.

The percentage of care experienced young adults who were accessing Employment, Education and Training remained steady at 61% throughout the year, continuing to evidence an improving picture from the 55% recorded in 2020/21. Throughout the year, Barnet continued to fund the Care Leavers Project through the 16+ service within Family Services, with multiple projects focussing on enabling care leavers to move into education, employment, and training opportunities. The project launched in September 2019 and at the end of March 2022, 6 young people had been supported into apprenticeships, 28 young

people into employment and a further 22 young people accessing education and training. Despite the challenges of lockdown restrictions and social distancing, intervention and support continued to be available to care experienced young adults through the ongoing partnership with Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS).

The Bridging the Gap course continued to successfully run throughout the year offering training opportunities for young people to gain access into education and employment. Alongside this, the RON project was launched in early 2021, seeking to provide mentoring support underpinned by principles of life coaching to NEET young people aged 16-19 including care leavers. This follows the identified barrier for longer-term NEET young people being a lack of confidence, something we aim to reduce for our care experienced young adults as a good corporate parent.

Care Leavers (aged 19,20,21) in Employment, Education or Training



Case Study: Kai's story

In September 2015, Kai, then aged 15 was given a 9-year extended sentence for GBH and wounding with intent. Kai had several previous convictions for assault, possession of cannabis, possession of a bladed weapon, robbery, and theft. Despite some initial bravado, Kai found the transition to custody extremely difficult, for example becoming embroiled in disturbances and fights with other prisoners. However, after some time, he began to settle and found a focus within education. Despite having had a very fracture educational experience prior to entering prison, he achieved Functional skills level 2 in Maths and English, levels 1 and 2 in health and fitness training, and painting and decorating qualifications.

Kai was granted early release from prison in April 2022. Within 8 weeks of his return to the community he had secured full-time employment with a recruitment agency, and also works as a youth mentor. Kai is thriving in his role where he is able to draw on his feelings and experiences to support young people and help build their confidence when seeking employment. Kai has aspirations to continue his educational journey, hoping to study business management. However, Kai's true passion is supporting young people at the cusp of criminal exploitation. A testament to his tenacity and resilience, Kai is determined to use his own negative experiences to support other young people to make positive choices.

Maintaining Relationships

Case Study: Alfie & Sophie's story

Alfie is a 15year old boy who has been looked after for 8 years. He lived in foster care for 5 of those years with his sister, Sophie aged 14years old before they were placed separately in different foster placement due to a breakdown in relationship with their carer. Fast forward to 2022, Alfie and Sophie have been able to maintain a very close sibling relationship, which has been aided by their close relationship with their social worker, Tim. Throughout the pandemic (when restrictions lifted!) and to present day, Tim has supported them to plan fun days out together during their school holidays, so they can spend time together, as brother and sister, as they want. Tim has taken them to activity centre and exploring forest parks to name a few places. This summer, Sophie asked Tim if she could go to the seaside near where Alfie lived and spend a few days with him so they could spend 'normal sibling' time together. Tim spoke with Alfie's foster carers who readily offered to have Sophie join Alfie and their family on a holiday to the seaside. For 1 week following this holiday, it was agreed that Sophie could then spend a further 2 weeks with Alfie in foster placement during the summer holidays before returning to her foster placement ready for a school return in September. Alfie and Sophie's close relationships has been actively supported, encouraged and maintained in line with both their wishes and feelings, and really aided by the excellent bond they have with their social worker Tim, who always goes above and beyond to make their time together extra special. We are very proud of Alfie and Sophie.

Alongside implementing our support to children and young people through relational social work, we continued to engage with our foster carers ensuring they were able to meet the needs of the children in their care. In line with the evolving and changing guidance from the pandemic we provided a hybrid model of support and supervision for our carers; meeting online when necessary and visiting in the home when possible. Carers and children continued to be RAG rated and additional support provided when necessary.

Our increased offer of support to carers, including additional support and supervision in line with their identified needs and the fortnightly skype coffee sessions with the fostering management team, continued into the start of 2021/2022. This space offered both a sense of community and a reflection for carers to come together on a regular basis and engage in an open dialogue regarding how they were managing through lockdowns with home schooling and periods of extended isolation. Online training continued throughout the year for carers in response to feedback that the flexibility suits their needs, an award ceremony attended by

the Lead Member for Children celebrating Foster Care Appreciation Day in October. The foster carer and children in care Christmas Party took place in December virtually with over 30 fostering households in attendance and a return to face to face events is scheduled to launch in Foster Care Fortnight with a celebration event.

In response to the Foster Carer Survey completed in December 2020, that stated that many carers felt the out of hours support offer was poor, we developed our Out of Hours support offer launched in Foster Care Fortnight in 2021, providing evening support Monday – Sunday.

“I think [name] is good, he goes above and beyond to help the young people he works with, I can’t think him highly enough for the help he’s given me

She has helped me with countless things and stages in my life. I would not be where I am without her help and guidance and I am eternally grateful for her. She has always listened and always tried to help, she has never left me without some solution. Thank you for all that you do!”

Bright Spots Survey: comments from care experienced adults about their Personal Advisors

Education / The Virtual School

The Virtual School acts as a champion for Children in Care by fulfilling the responsibilities of being a highly ambitious, proactive, and effective Corporate Parent. There is a clear emphasis on the need to raise aspirations and improve rates of progress and to close the attainment gap between looked after children and their peers. As noted in feedback from the Ofsted focus visit in June 2021:

The virtual school acted swiftly at the start of the first national lockdown to work with school leaders to identify and support vulnerable pupils. School attendance for children in care has been closely monitored and has significantly improved over the lockdown periods. Social workers have maintained close liaison with carers and the virtual school to ensure planned returns to school for pupils following lockdowns. Children’s educational experiences have been further supported through the use of additional tuition, distribution of laptops and development of online learning resources to support foster carers. COVID-19-specific personal education plans (PEPs) have been developed to focus on supporting children during this period.

Over the year there has been minimal changes to the data previously reported on 2020/2021. There is a slight reduction of children of ethnic minority from 73.3% to 68.1% and a reduction of children receiving SEND support, from 42 (21.5%) to 34 (17.8%). However, this is balanced out with the increase in children and young people receiving support under an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP), up from 48 (24.%) to 59 (30.5%). The UASC cohort of statutory school aged children has also reduced from 35 in 2020/2021 to 28, reflecting that UASC are entering care shortly before they turn 18 requiring the support and service from the local authority.

		2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022
Statutory age group	Nursery		11	12	13
	% of children SEN support			2	1
	% of children with EHCPs			3	1
	Statutory age	191	196	195	191
	Reception		4	7	8
	Key Stage 1		16	14	15
	Key Stage 2		43	37	45
	Key Stage 3		51	53	52
	Key Stage 4		82	84	71
	Male/female	111/80	113/83	109/86	108/83
	% of children from ethnic minority groups		70.6%	73.3%	68.1%
	% of children SEN support		19.8% (39)	21.5% (42)	17.8% (34)
	% of children with EHCPs		24.9% (49)	24.6% (48)	30.9% (59)
			O/B I/B 33 16	O/B I/B 30 18	O/B I/B 38 21
	Number of UASC	18	25	35	28
Children without a school place		0	2	5	
Post 16 age group	Post 16	157	135	152	155
	Male/female	113/44	96/39	113/39	111/44
	% of children from ethnic minority groups		78.5%	79.6%	79.4%
	% of children with EHCPs		14%(19)	13.8%(21)	14.8% (23)
			O/B I/B 11 3	O/B I/B 16 5	O/B I/B 7 16
	Number of UASC	39	67	76	75
	NEET Year 12		11	19	15
NEET Year 13		14	14	22	

Over the last year, the Virtual School caseworkers under the leadership of the Head Teacher promoted their working practices in response to Covid-19 pandemic and the changing impact on education for children and young people. Despite these challenges with school closures for extended periods of time alongside various year closures with students isolating at home due to outbreaks, the team have continued to support the education of Barnet's looked after children effectively and with positive outcomes.

Over the year, the Virtual School has continued to support young people's well-being, engagement, and achievement in several different ways including:

- Tuition and additional support provided to students during school closures over the pandemic.
- Home learning ideas given to foster carers and continued to be a children and young people's Personal Education Plans throughout the year.
- Developing guides to support children with understanding coronavirus and return to school.

- Supporting young people 16+ who are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), including support with Barnet Education, Employment and Training (BEET) Team through individual advisors allocated to young people and the mentoring project through Post 16 Pupil Premium Fund.
- 1:1 support provided to young people who are NEET.
- Enrichment opportunities continued to be provided with foster carers and young people encouraged to participate; this included:
 - o A New Direction: arts program for young people addressing issues pertinent to them through creative platforms
 - o Arvon Meet Up: a week-long residential program with writing and poetry workshops with a published book of poetry
 - o Lumina Project 1:1 tuition and mentoring program for GCSE support.
 - o Care to Dance: 12 week dance class
 - o Element Project: workshops for UASC young people to developed their creative identities
 - o Springboard Youth Academy: Saturday club with ESOL classes, cricket /football game and lunch for UASC young people
 - o Reading Club: monthly book club for years 3-8
 - o Brunel Mentoring scheme for years 12/13 matching them with a care experienced mentor to support with high education
 - o The letterbox club through the Book Trust providing a regular box of books to children in care to promote literacy and English
 - o Pen pal project encouraging young people to remain in higher education through linking them up with care experienced university students
 - o Jamie's Farm: 5 day residential trip in Wales to build resilience, confidence and teamwork
- UASC working party to develop a UASC welcome pack and provide ongoing pathways for school, college and ESOL classes for this children and young people.
- Training sessions continued to be offered to foster carers, along with attendance at foster carer coffee mornings to ensure feedback loops continued.
- Termly newsletter sent to foster carers providing useful resources and information to support with home education throughout the lockdown and half term activities along with well-being ideas given to foster carers.

Other initiatives supporting children and young people's education and independence throughout the year include The Stepladder program: incentivised learning program through the Child Trust Fund, with 35 young people successfully registered and 4 young people completing the program this year, bringing the total of 9 young people completing the program since August 2019. There are currently 11 learners and 35 registered participants.

The Virtual School Annual Report is included in Appendix D

Case Study: Kayler's story

Kayler now aged 17 has been out of school for over 12 months, not wanting to go and feeling like school is not for them. Kayler has also struggled to remain in their foster home, struggling with motivation and being in a family environment. They moved to a semi-independent provision, but struggled with other young people living there, and moved again, to another semi-independent provision where they feel more settled and stable. Kayler's virtual school caseworker has maintained regular contact with them through their moves. When Kaylar expressed an interest in getting a job and becoming financially independent, their caseworker supported them with preparing their CV and identified retail work with a large fashion chain in Oxford Street. The caseworker supported Kaylar in being their referee and guided through interview preparation to ensure Kayler was confident when attending their job interview. Kayler was successful and in started their retail career before Easter.

Emotional Wellbeing of our Children in Care and Care Leavers

Children, young people and care experienced young adults have been well supported throughout this year with a number of online initiatives taking place alongside our usual services continuing to deliver their programs of support. In response to the need to remain at home and isolate throughout spring and into summer and how this may impact our children, Barnet Integrated Clinical Services (BICS) provided several online video workshop resources for children. BICS introduced a new podcast series to support children and carers' well-being during lockdown and established a public phone line for young people to access mental health support. Topics of the podcasts included mental wellbeing, managing relationships, exam results, emotions and anxiety, emotions, and anger and 'what does mental health mean to you'.

Terapia continued to offer 1:1 counselling support to young people and care experienced adults. Given the increasing challenges of living through a global pandemic in social isolation, the support offer from Terapia was increased to ensure more young people are able to access the service in 2021/2022. In the year, 7 trainee Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists provided 290 contact counselling sessions to 20 young people. 431 sessions were offered, with 290 sessions attended (67%). Young people were referred for multiple presenting needs, including relationship issues, anxiety / stress and depression

being the most notable recognised needs, following by difficulties with managing anger and processing experiences of trauma and abuse.

Of the young people supported, 68% reported to show improvement in their capacity to express feelings / problems in a healthy way, 60% developed and demonstrated the use of more positive coping strategies/methods and better subjective well-being, 4% had improved day-to-day functioning and were able to explore their feelings/problems more easily and 29% expressed improved personal relationships.

Appendix A

Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report

Document control	
Document title	Annual Independent Reviewing Service Report
Document description	This draft report provides an overview of service delivery for 2021/22.
Document Author	Samantha Maynard - Principal Independent Reviewing Officer
Contributors	Donna Swanberg - Head of Safeguarding, Quality Assurance & Workforce Development
Executive Director of Children's Services	Chris Munday
Document production date	30 May 2022

Service Structure and Delivery

The Independent Reviewing Service is managed within the Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Workforce Development Service to ensure that the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) input and contribution to social work practice and care planning for children and young people is distinct from case holding service areas. The Head of Service has a direct line of accountability to the Executive Director of Children's Services, and they meet regularly to review any practice concerns independently.

IROs play an important role in ensuring that the local authority fulfils its responsibilities as Corporate Parents for the children in our care by ensuring that they receive a good service that meets their range of needs and are provided with safe, stable care that enables them to flourish and achieve. IROs provide quality assurance of children and young people's care plans by monitoring the effectiveness and progress of care planning, alongside providing challenge to the professional systems responsible for supporting children and young people in care as necessary.

The IRO's core functions, tasks and responsibilities are set in statutory guidance within the Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review (June 2015) and the IRO Handbook: Statutory Guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers and local authorities, which sets out their functions in relation to case management and review for Looked After Children (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010).

The role of the IRO is to improve care planning and secure better outcomes for children in care. They do this by chairing children's reviews and monitoring the child's journey in care on an ongoing basis with particular attention to:

- Monitoring the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to the child in care journey.
- Alerting senior managers of identified areas of poor practice or patterns of concern.
- Recognising and reporting on good practice.
- Participating in any review relating to the child.
- Promoting the voice of the child and ensuring that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child are given due consideration by the appropriate authority.
- Ensuring the care plan for the child is informed by an up-to-date assessment and fully reflects the child's current needs and that actions are set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child.
- Preventing drift in care planning and delivery of services to children.

- Making sure that children’s care plans give proper consideration and weight to the child or young person’s wishes and feelings, and that they understand the implications of any changes made to his/her care plan.
- Ensuring children understand how an advocate can help.

Statutory Guidance recommends that IROs hold caseloads of between 50 to 70 ‘Looked After’ children, to deliver a good quality of service that includes the full range of functions set out in the IRO handbook. Caseloads have remained within statutory guidelines and average 60 -65 children per IRO.

The IRO Team is comprised of four permanent full-time Independent Reviewing Officers and one Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (responsible for chairing annual foster carer reviews); they are line managed by an experienced Principal Independent Reviewing Officer. In addition to the permanent IROs, London Borough of Barnet utilise two commissioned providers to provide cost effective delivery, flexibility, and additional capacity.

Annual performance 2021/22

For the 335 children that were in care in the reporting period 2021/22; the data and performance indicators show:

- 95.6% of Looked After Children Reviews were held within statutory timescales.
- 95.5% of children and young people participated in their Children in Care reviews.

The performance of reviews held within statutory timescales is 2% lower than in 2020/21 (97.5%). This is attributed, in part, to late notifications of children coming into care and a small number of initial reviews impacted by staff availability.

There was a positive 1.5% increase in child participation (from 94.0%). The small number of children who do not wish to participate in their reviews are encouraged to do so and their views are captured separately if they feel unable to attend.

There was an overall increase in the number of children who were in care during the reporting period 2021/22. The highest number of children and young people in care at any one time reached 358 which has now reduced to 338.

The rise in the number of children looked after resulted in a temporary increase in the caseloads of both the permanent IROs and the commissioned IROs. Currently caseloads are operating at the annual average reflected in the 2020/21 reporting year.

Focus on Care Planning

Ensure the care plan for the child is informed by an up to date assessment and fully reflects the child’s current needs and that actions are set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority’s legal responsibilities towards the child.

- Mostly, the All About Me assessment and care plan is updated and available for the IRO prior to the review and there is also discussion between the IRO and the social work team prior to the review. This ensures information sharing is up-to-date and the IRO is

aware of any new developments in the child's circumstances. Performance, audit data and tracking reflect the positive efforts being made by social work practitioners to ensure the All About Me assessments are updated before reviews.

- The All About Me assessment and care plan requires the voice of the child to be evidenced throughout their care planning, alongside professionals reflecting any change in circumstances and the child's needs. The IRO service notes that children and young people's plans mostly reflect current needs and they have been able to participate in their reviews and contribute to their care plans and pathway plans directly or indirectly.
- Where needed, IROs provide respectful challenge which is largely accepted and responded to promptly by social work teams. Challenge is respectful, clear, and consistent and is evidenced in discussions, correspondence, and virtual meetings with the social work teams. When necessary, the escalation process is implemented.

Alert senior managers of identified areas of poor practice or patterns of concern and recognise and report on good practice

- The increased communication and consultation between the IROs and social work teams has led to fewer practice alerts. When an alert is raised, they are generally swiftly addressed, although, there is a slight increase this year in formal escalations relating to processes.
- In the reporting period there were 17 formal escalations. Of those escalations, 12 were related to processes, i.e., care plans not being updated by the social workers thereby preventing IROs from completing planning outcomes on LCS. The remaining escalations were a mixture of practice, planning and recording issues.
 - One data breach whereby a care plan contained the details of another family;
 - One unaccompanied asylum seeking minor not having legal representation;
 - One young person being in placement where a placement agreement meeting had not taken place;
 - One due to the lack of visits recorded on the child's file and;
 - One due to Child in Care visits not taking place with the statutory timescale
- Occasionally placements may become unregulated. This means that for fostering placements the placement does not meet the requirements under the Fostering Regulations. Examples of this is when family members have not been positively assessed as connected carers but the child's care plan to reside with family is court directed, or when a connected carer has not progressed to the Fostering Panel for approval and matching within statutory timescales because of delays in statutory checks being completed i.e., DBS, medical assessments. These placements are fully risk assessed and closely monitored by the IRO and the Permanency Planning Panel to ensure the needs of the child remains central to the care planning and the final care arrangement is progressed for the child. The quality of care provided in unregulated placements is mostly positive, but practice would be strengthened by a more robust approach to timeframes for placement approval and matching processes

- Semi-independent placements are unregulated as they are not inspected and registered by Ofsted. In September 2021 the Care Planning Placement and Case Review regulations came into force that makes it illegal for any under 16 year old to be placed in an unregistered setting. Barnet is fully compliant with this regulation and ensures that all under 16 year olds are placed with Ofsted registered provisions.
- There have been a small number of children placed at home on a Care Order or Interim Care Order; these have been court directed. Findings of a review of these placements highlighted the difficulties inherent in sourcing suitable placements for hard to place teenagers, due to a high national demand for such placements. Placements at home are robustly monitored through the social work teams, reviewing process, alongside scrutiny at the Permanency Tracking Meeting. Robust multi-agency support plans are in place to support children placed at home and where applicable enhanced searches for a suitable placement continues. This is documented on children's records and is closely scrutinised through court proceedings and by IROs.
- Occasionally where care planning is contrary to the wishes and feelings of the child, there is evidence of IROs providing challenge and ensuring children and young people's voices are well represented. This may occur in relation to a change of placement or school where the child may request a change or is resisting a change and their wishes are brought to the attention of the social work team. In relation to children with a disability who are in care, the IRO will ensure that the child's voice is included in the care planning and that all professionals involved understand how best to get the views and wishes from a child who may be non-verbal or has limited speech.
- Where there is the need for formal escalation, this is tracked and monitored by the Principal Reviewing Officer and, where necessary, escalated to the relevant Head of Service. The Principal Reviewing Officer provides focused feedback and support to ensure that IROs provide appropriate and respectful challenge to professionals when care plans are not sufficiently addressing or progressing the support children need to achieve good outcomes.
- The IRO service is focused on preventing drift in care planning and delivery of services when required. This is evidenced by IROs challenging unsuitable placement arrangements, that may not support stability, reflect long-term placement planning and permanency. There has been slight increase in the need to escalate cases in relation to drift in care planning. However, this is significantly lower than periods prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and escalations are swiftly addressed. Children's placements have mostly remained stable in this period and increased collaboration between the IROs and the Corporate Parenting Service mostly ensures care plans are updated in a timely manner which supports best practice and the progression of All About Me plans. IROs are routinely invited to permanency planning meetings, professional meetings, the Vulnerable Adolescents at Risk Panel and Child Exploitation and Missing planning meetings.
- Steps are being undertaken to strengthen and embed the working relationship between the IRO service and Assessment, Intervention & Planning Service (AIP).

The IROs linked to the AIP service need to ensure they are invited to team meetings on a regular basis, and this will be tracked by the Principal Reviewing Officer.

Child Participation

Promote the voice of the child and ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority;

Child participation at reviews increased due to the delivery of virtual meetings during lockdown periods and this reporting year has seen a further increase in children attending and/or participating in their reviews. During the easing of lockdown restrictions in 2021, the IROs delivered a mix of virtual reviews (especially if placements were long term) and physical reviews where permitted, prioritising those children who had entered into care during the lockdown. Following the lifting of all lockdown restrictions most reviews are being delivered physically but some children continue to wish to join their reviews virtually.

Where there is a need to schedule an urgent initial review due to a late notification, the option of a virtual review is often utilised to keep the review within timescale.

Prior to the pandemic a priority for the IRO service was developing and embedding our child participation model by increasing engagement with newly identified children and holding age-appropriate activities and events chosen by them. This was negatively impacted by restrictions through 2020 but the first events were able to be reinstated in late 2021.

- Go-Karting followed by lunch was arranged for the October 2021 half-term for children aged 12 years + (later lowered to include children 8 years + and inclusion of siblings). Ten children and their respective IROs took part in the event. Working relationships observed by the Principal IRO, showed clear evidence of positive professional relationships between the children and their IROs. During lunch the children engaged in a discussion with their IROs, Participation Officer and the Service Development Officer. The children and young people provided feedback about their individual experiences as a child in care and views about the processes they are subject to.
- A further event at 'Go Ape' followed by an early evening meal took place during the Easter break. Feedback received from the young people was in relation to their care experience, preferences of virtual and hybrid reviews and request to increase planned events to four times a year. The young people positively stated their wish to be more involved in planning and participation opportunities. Overall, the children reflected they wanted to be able to make choices regarding delivery of their reviews and take part in activities that included all children (i.e., not labelled as specifically for children in care or participation).

- The personalised record of review letter written to children has now been in use for two years. Feedback pertaining to the child friendly, age-appropriate language and personalised content continues to be extremely positive from both children, social workers, families and partner agencies.

Ensure children understand how an advocate can help

The IRO service, alongside the social work practitioners, have explained the advocate role to children and young people and encouraged participation with the advocates and independent visitors available to them through the commissioned services. Feedback during reviews from children and young people is generally positive about their experience of advocacy.

IRO Footprint

Monitor the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to the child's case

There is clear evidence of IRO oversight on children's records. The Principal IRO routinely reviews cases, particularly where an issue/concern has been raised to ensure the IROs are appropriately recording their views and concerns. This ensures their challenge and involvement is clear and results in action for children and young people.

IROs provide appropriate challenge and escalate concerns where necessary, which contributes to robust and timely planning for children. Statutory reviews are taking place regularly and within timescale. Midway reviews are routinely scheduled at statutory reviews and recorded on children's records once they have taken place, along with child level discussions involving the IRO.

The Principal Reviewing Officer attends the weekly Permanency Tracking Meeting and the weekly Permanency Planning Panel. This enables the IRO service to contribute to planning, provide positive feedback and/or raise concerns about progression of permanency for the children and young people who are discussed.

IRO Workshops

- Child in care process workshops facilitated by IROs have been implemented following the delay created by the pandemic. The workshop focuses on children in care processes and care planning with an emphasis of the timescales, expectations, and process for the All About Me assessments and plans.

Attendance at the first workshop was low and a focus will be placed on additional promotion with the workforce development team through the IRO links, POD

Child Participation Model

- A key priority for the year ahead is to resume face-to-face statutory reviews where children live and feel comfortable, which is usually in their placement.
- Encourage the creation of refreshed consultation processes/booklets to capture their views and suggestions about the care plan.
- Strengthen opportunities for participation and encourage more children and young people to attend participation events, alongside, working closely with the Service Development Officer to use child and parent feedback to help improve services.
- A refreshed consultation booklet co-produced with children is going to be created to encourage completion by children and young people. Completion of the existing consultation booklet (hard copy and electronic) has remained minimal despite encouragement by the IROs and this may be due to the older design of the content. Digital platforms have been suggested as a way forward and this will be explored. However, children's verbal feedback and views are being obtained outside of and during reviews and is recorded and appropriately responded to at every opportunity.

IRO Practice Development

- A key priority for the Principal Independent Reviewing Officer is to work with the Workforce Development Team to source training specific to the role of the IRO from external providers. Knowledge gained from training days will be shared across the IRO service and wider service where relevant.
- There is a need to ensure that all IROs continue to develop their capacity to drive high quality care planning activity and to monitor the effectiveness of children's plans by providing respectful and robust challenge to professionals when plans are not achieving good outcomes for children, and to do so consistently.
- The IROs are being supported to achieve these aims through both formal and informal supervision and group supervision. Training opportunities provided for the workforce is attended by the IROs to keep practice up to date.
- The Principal Reviewing Officer will continue to support the IRO's practice through the review of performance data, quality assuring the IRO's case recording and the letters of review and ongoing live observation of the IROs chairing reviews to give feedback and support learning.
- Data is used to support management oversight and the development of the IRO service. This includes individual performance data and the monitoring of statutory requirements i.e., timescales of decisions and minutes to prevent practice falling below expected standards.

Conclusion

Communication and consultation between IROs, social work teams and partner agencies continues to contribute to robust care planning and good outcomes for children and young people.

The IRO footprint is evident on children's records with both midway tracking and case discussions being recorded. Respectful challenge to drive improvements in care planning for children is positively received and responded to which reduces the need for practice alerts and formal escalations.

IRO workshops will be offered throughout the year to provide insight into the role and expectations of the IRO service.

A key focus for the IROs is to promote participation events to develop their relationships and feedback loops with their children and young people. Practice development specific to the role of the IRO supported by training, child participation and using service user feedback to inform service development will continue to be the key priorities for 2022/23.

Appendix B

#BOP Barnet on Point Children in Care Council Report 2021-2022



AUGUST 2022

**Barnet Council
Family Services**

1. BOP – Children in Care Council

- The children in care council is a group of children and young people who represent the children and young people who are in the care of Barnet. The group is placed at the heart of family services, informing, and improving all that we do whilst providing all children in care and care experienced young adults the opportunity to have their say and get involved with decision making that affects them.
- We meet once a month to talk about issues effecting our children and young people in care. However, it's not all about meetings and meeting senior officials. It's a safe place where young people in similar situations can meet, have fun and make a difference for all children and young people in our care.
- Senior BOP has 10 members, 7 of which are active members and attend BOP on a monthly basis. BOP meets at Unitas Youth Zone where they meet different guest speakers, discuss issues affecting them, learn about new opportunities for young people in Barnet, influence decisions about children in care and get the chance to meet other young people in the borough through different activities at Unitas.
- Senior BOP for young people aged 12-17 years old was relaunched in June 2021 and started the first face-to-face session in October 2021.
- Junior BOP for children aged 7-11 years old met for the first time in October 2021 and has 10 members. Junior BOP members decided to meet ever half term.

2. Senior BOP sessions – engagement, consultations, and guest speakers

- October 2021 – First face to face session after the relaunch event in June 2021 and Celebration Event in August 2021. 7 members attended the session and new members were introduced to the children in care council.
- November 2021 – Live Unlimited staff attended BOP to discuss about their current projects and young people gave feedback about the outdoor club and how they enjoyed it. Young people at BOP gave suggestions about Aspire Higher and that it should be offered to young people younger than 16 years old. They also talked about what career workshop they would be interested in, to prepare them for the future.
- December 2021 – Festive session at Unitas with BOP members (see below).
- January 2022 – no session was held.
- February 2022 – Liz Shaw joined BOP session to discuss My Say Matters strategy and involve them in the process of planning the launch event.
- March 2022 – Michelle Allen, Enterprise Coordinator for Unitas attended BOP and informed our young people about different opportunities such as: CV/Cover letter/applications writing workshops, writing competitions and lessons, snowboarding/skiing lessons, and career pathways.
- April 2022 – Half term go karting activity (See below).
- May 2022 – Kate Jeffrey, Head of Corporate Parenting and Patricia Hodge – Fostering Team Manager attended the BOP session to get young people views and involve them in the planning of Fostering Summer Event.

- June 2022 – Kofi Danso from Commissioning attended BOP and informed them about the Young Commissioners roles and how to be part of it. Young people’s feedback was that the programme should offer training for young people about commissioning, the roles should be paid, young people should be involved in the recruitment
- July 2022 – BOP members welcomed a new member and discussed about placements and having more free time to do what they want – and that sometimes means not doing anything at all. They feel they are expected to be doing something all the time and they are monitored all the time. They proposed to invite senior management to discuss this issue.

3. Half-term activities 2021-2022 for Junior BOP (7-11) and Senior BOP (12-17)

- October 2021, Bowling – 10 Junior BOP members met at Hollywood Bowl Finchley where they bowled together and discussed what they would like to do more of to shape the Junior BOP sessions.
- December 2021, Festive session – 7 Senior BOP members came together at Unitas Youth Zone and engaged in different activities such as: gingerbread house making, cupcake decorations, watching a movie and discussions.
- April 2022, GoKarting – 13 Senior BOP members participated in a go-karting day event, where young people from different backgrounds came together and had a really great day. For some unaccompanied asylum seeking young people it was the first time they had participated in this activity.
- May 2022, Gaming event – 6 Junior BOP members participated in a gaming event where they got to play PS4 and Nintendo switch together. We had siblings placed in different homes come together and enjoy their time playing different games. Followed with delicious waffles and discussions about what activities they would like to see at the summer celebration event.

4. Skills to Foster Training, July 2021, February 2022

- BOP members attended the skills to foster training and met the new prospective foster carers.
- Young people gave advice to new carers how to foster good relationships with the children and young people coming into their care.
- Q&A session with carers and young person.

The advice offered to new foster carers by BOP members:

1. Don’t make promises you can’t keep
2. Be punctual
3. Keep young people updated on next steps and progress

4. Remember birthdays
5. Give reasons if you need to cancel appointments
6. Return calls and messages promptly
7. Don't judge me
8. Have high aspirations for me
9. Be clear about next steps
10. Be respectful. Treat me as an equal
11. I am your priority. Look after me
12. Include me in decisions about me
13. Remember it is your job, but it is my life
14. Talk to me on my level. Don't patronise or use jargon
15. Be my advocate
16. Find out about me as a person. Support my interests and activities
17. Take me out occasionally
18. Tell me if you are going to be on holiday and who to contact while you are away.
19. Be creative to keep me engaged
20. Be involved, efficient and effective, get things done for me

5. BOP – Live Unlimited Christmas Card design competition, November 2021

During Live Unlimited visit at BOP beginning of November, BOP members proposed to do a Christmas card competition for children in care. The call was open for 3 weeks and we received 10 designs. 2 designs were selected as winners.



C, aged 10

Winning Christmas card design 1 drawn by A, aged 7



Winning Christmas card design 2 by

6. BOP involvement in My Say Matters – Barnet Child Participation & Family Involvement Strategy 2022 – 2025

- October 2021 - January 2022 - Senior BOP and Junior BOP feedback has helped shape the strategy.
- March/April 2022 - Senior BOP chair has been involved in the young people's working group to plan and deliver the strategy launch event.
- May 2022 - As part of the launch event, young people from across different Barnet youth forums have presented their forums and work. BOP members wrote the speech and presentation, and it was presented by its chair – please see below.

“Hi everyone,

BOP short for Barnet on Point is the Children in Care Council, we meet once a month and during half terms for different enrichment activities. BOP is a supporting group, a safe space where we have a voice, where we can learn that we have opportunities, where you can express your individuality without feeling judged because the young people in the group have the same lived experiences. It means a lot to us to have discussions with young people from different backgrounds who can relate - we're family.

BOP helps you have a voice; it makes us understand the importance of having a voice and we feel that we are listened. At BOP you can always find someone to confide in. Even if you are shy and going through a lot, someone else will say it for you and it makes it easier. Sometimes you don't feel like talking and opening up to your social worker or foster carer, and BOP offers that space to talk about different issues affecting us.

We want to be treated the same as other children and young people. We often hear: you are special and these opportunities are for normal children, but we are normal children, so please treat us like that. We are listened at BOP and so should you!

The Children in Care Council allows us to influence policies, strategies and decisions and it means a lot to know that you're not just a bystander and decisions are being made for you without being asked.

We invite different guests like the career advisors to prepare us for the future, we train new foster carers how to foster good relationships with her foster kids as they feel isolated when they move to a new place, we influenced My Say Matters strategy and what practice educators need to teach new social workers.

We will share with you and audio message I've done which showcases my experience with social workers and giving advice to Practice Educators.

Thank you” (Chair of BOP)

7. First Annual Practice Education Awards Ceremony – 20 April 2022

- The Chair of BOP prepared a speech and shared her thoughts about the most important things Practice Educators need to be teaching student social workers, what has it meant to her when a social worker has gotten it right and how she knows the young person is a priority to their social worker.
- The message below was delivered as a audio message by the young person in the (online) Award Ceremony held in April 2022.

Hi everyone,

I'm Yasmin, the Chair of BOP - the Children in Care Council. Congratulations to all Practice Educators, your work is so valuable and us children in care benefit from it a lot.

I've personally had a positive experience with social workers and I would like to share some thoughts and advice. I think the most important things you need to be teaching student social workers are: to keep me informed, to be understanding, to keep your word, to clarify and provide information why you are meeting with the child, not to repeat the same things and updating on all the things that are happening which affect me (even something insignificant but you need to tell us!). We need to be informed beforehand if the social worker is retiring or leaving, just keep us informed – we don't want to feel condescended. Changes and transitions are difficult for us. Also, please know in advance which foster kid you are seeing and know who they actually are. Knowing some information from the back before meeting us would be a less awkward introduction.

From my personal experience, I feel happy that I can actually trust my social worker with certain information and priorities and don't feel let down. When there is trust, you feel less closed off to be asking them about something you are entitled to. I feel listened. Whenever I had my requests like: seeing my dad, or not wanting to move to Ireland – I was always listened. My social worker backed me up.

I told a teacher about my experience of not being happy at my mainstream school when I was younger there. As soon as I spoke with social workers, they arranged a meeting and helped me change school and find a happier school environment for me. I know I am a priority to my social worker when they put me at the top of their list. 'We're gonna have this done for you, because we want what's best for you!' It's a good feeling to know you have a supportive person in your life.

So, thank you for your work in educating, facilitating and supporting student social workers to become supportive workers to children in care.

8. Children in Care Summer Celebration Event, August 2021

- The first celebration event as the pandemic restriction started lifting.
- We had 50 children and carers attend the event and enjoyed different activities such as: gaming van, arts and crafts, face painting, bouncy castles etc.

9. Children in Care Summer Celebration Event, July 2022

- BOP members were involved in planning the activities for the summer celebration event.
- Staff working group met to plan the awards ceremony, the fun activities, catering, assigning volunteer roles, running information stalls by different family services teams.
- The event had 200+ children, carers, and staff members – it was a beautiful fun packed day with different activities such as: face painting, arts and crafts, gaming van, photo booth, bouncy castles, plant pot making workshop, silent disco, dance workshop, sports, bucking bronco and many other activities.
- All children and young people attending the event were given a certificate to celebrate them and recognise their achievements. The certificates were written by social workers, virtual school caseworkers and carers.

Appendix C

Family Services

Document control	
Document title	Annual Fostering Service Report
Document description	This report provides an overview of service delivery for 2021/2022.
Document Author	Lisa Sayers, Assistant Head of Service – Fostering and Leaving Care Kate Jeffrey, Head of Service - Corporate Parenting
Director of Children’s Services	Chris Munday
Document production date	June 2022

The Fostering Service Annual Report 2021/22

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the work of the Barnet Fostering Service for the year 2021/22 and highlights the service outcomes, quality of practice and innovations with plans to continue to improve the service. This report should be read in conjunction with the Fostering Panel Annual Review 2021/22.

Ensuring children and young people in the care of Barnet Family Services flourish and thrive is at the heart of Barnet's resilience-based approach to social work practice. We know that it is fundamental that children and young people in our care are placed in the best provision to meet their diverse and individual needs, as informed by our Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2019/23 and Barnet's guidance document, *Who We Place Where* (2020).

Please note that for the purpose of this document, the word 'placement' and 'home' is used interchangeably throughout. Barnet recognizes that these words may not be the right choice as each child will wish for the place where they live to be called something different. For some it is home, but for others home can have powerful connotations and therefore for the purpose of this report the words placement and home are both used.



1. Summary

The global Covid-19 pandemic has signified many challenges for fostering including a national shortage of carers and a significant reduction of enquiries nationally, alongside approximately 12% of current foster carers who are leaving fostering or retiring across the country. 2021/22 saw Barnet's fostering service progress with a more digital advertising recruitment strategy, where traditional recruitment methods previously used such as newspapers and banners, were used in conjunction with a wider social media presence, an updated website and analytics. Over the past year as restrictions lifted, we were able to adapt and embed Barnet's practice model for hybrid flexible working. What this meant was that we continued our outreach work online as well as progress back to activities in person,

generating enquiries and undertaking our holistic, thorough, and dynamic assessments in line with our best practice standards. This year we recruited 11 carers, made up of 6 foster carers and 5 supported lodgings hosts. As of 31st March 2022, Barnet have 84 approved foster carers, totalling 171 placements for children, as well as 23 connected carers. This is a reduction from 2020-2021 of 48 households, of which 15 were foster carer placements and 33 were connected carer placements.

In December 2020, we undertook a service wide survey with foster carers as part of our participation strategy and commitment to feedback. This informed our service design for 2021-23, and included:

- the development of an Out of Hours support offer to carers, which launched a social work telephone support line in May 2021
- the development of specific support groups and a foster carer forum
- enhanced training through reflective fostering programme and an online accessible handbook.

2. Covid-19 Pandemic

In ways experienced by many, if not all families across the world, foster carers too experienced the challenges of life returning to the new normal in response to living through a global pandemic. Foster carers, staff and children have had to constantly keep abreast and adapt to changes in guidance and legislation around lockdowns, managing the needs of children who had experienced the additional effects of living through a pandemic, such as mental health issues, social anxieties and children having fallen behind academically. Virtual events including Foster Carer Appreciation Day with an award ceremony for carers long service, the Christmas Party in December and fortnightly foster carer drop-in Skype meetings continued with the fostering team and guests. These provided unique opportunities to come together to celebrate and gain support during the most trying of times.

3. Recruitment and Assessment

The Fostering Recruitment Team are involved with prospective carers from the point of initial enquiry, until they are formally presented to the Fostering Panel for approval, after which their approval as foster carers is ratified by the Agency Decision Maker. Once approved, fostering households are allocated a supervising social worker in the Fostering Support Team, who will then oversee their development as carers, provide them with regular supervision and support them in their care of Barnet's looked after children.

Barnet's placement transformation programme is underpinned by developing our in-house offer for foster carers and supported lodgings hosts. To aid the program of development, the foster care services have undergone a review focusing on a needs-led analysis of the service. The analysis has enabled the service to implement systemic changes to how we deliver services across fostering, utilizing virtual working mechanisms such as virtual fostering panels and hybrid models of assessment and supervision, alongside continuing to develop our online social media presence through Instagram and Facebook as both a recruitment tool and a support service. The demand for carers to provide warm and loving homes for the most vulnerable children has continued to increase, and despite the challenges of the pandemic the Fostering Recruitment Team has continued to recruit foster carers utilizing social media platforms alongside more traditional means of print advertising.

4. Enquiries

In 2019/20 the target for the recruitment of 30 households by 2022 was set. This target was set prior to the start of the pandemic in 2020 and unsurprisingly we have been unable to meet this target. Nationally the recruitment of foster carers continued to be challenging, with a shortage of 8000 carers across the United Kingdom (Fostering Network, December 2021). Using creative and dynamic approaches on social media platforms alongside transition print and bus stops campaigns we continued to receive enquiries throughout the year and undertake a number of positive assessments generating 11 new carer households to the Barnet Fostering Family.

During 2019/20 there were 201 initial enquiries; this reduced to 168 in 2020/21 and further reduced to 121 in 2021/22. Although lower levels of enquiries were received from prospective fostering households during 2021-22, the proportion of those enquiries converting into applications was at an all-time high at 9%. Barnet’s conversion rate from enquiries to approval however increased from 3.98% in 2019/2020 to 8.92% in 2020/2021, with the approval of 16 households, and in 2021/22 increasing to 9% with the approval of 11 households.

In addition to the pressures of the pandemic and national shortage of people coming forward to be considered as foster carers, there have also been changes systemically to the ways in which we are permitted to use social media advertising through Facebook and how ads are optimized on an iPhone. This has significantly impacted our recruitment given the Facebook led campaign in 2020-21 resulted in 31 enquiries.

The below table illustrates the decrease in enquiries pre-pandemic.

Enquiries	Total
2019/20	201
2020/21	168
2021/22	121

Table 1: Barnet Fostering Enquiries 2019/2020 – 2021/2022

There has been limited change in where enquiries are generated from, with the majority continuing to be from Barnet’s own website with 37 enquiries (31%) in 2021/22. Other online mechanism including search engines accounted for 17 enquiries (14%) suggesting digital approaches are fairly effective. The raise in our referral reward fee has seen an increase generating 16 enquiries this year.

Since the reduction of enquires, we have reviewed our processes and implemented alternative marketing activities including returning to face-to-face outreach and increased offline marketing activity. We have also introduced alternative types of digital marketing, through the use of marketing analytics and pay per click, email marketing with changes to signature profiles, teams advertising backgrounds and web design changes. This has already started to see in increase in enquiries this year to date.

The following table details the breakdown in enquires throughout the year:

Source	Approved (FC/SL)	Closed	Enquiry	Screening /IV	Stage 2	Total
Bus Stop Ad	1	2	0	0	0	3
Consortium	0	2	0	1	0	3
Facebook	0	7	0	0	1	8
Internal Comms	1	1	0	0	3	5
Leaflet	0	3	0	0	0	3
Online	0	0	0	0	0	0
Outreach	0	1	0	1	0	2
Previously enquired	1	2	0	2	1	6
Publication	1	6	0	0	0	7
Referral	1	9	3	2	1	16
Search Engine	2	11	2	2	0	17
Website	2	27	8	0	0	37
WOM	0	7	1	0	0	8
Unknown	2	3	1	0	0	6
Grand Total	11	81	15	8	6	121

It is estimated that it often takes a prospective foster carer around 2 years to get from making the first enquiry to being approved. It is a very significant decision to make which has an impact on the person's family, work, lifestyle and emotional resilience. It is not unusual that a number of people will make the first enquiry just to casually explore the option and will not progress it further. Other reasons for an enquiry to not progress further is not having the required space in their home, financial instability, only wanting to foster a specific age group that does not meet the requirements of the children and for some the tight regulations in place to protect children in a placement is too difficult to comply with.

For those that need time to reflect and consider the option, the Fostering Recruitment Team remain in contact with them, ensuring that they are well informed and supported in their decision making.

5. Recent campaigns





6. Fostering Households

As of 31st March 2022, Barnet had 84 approved foster carers, totalling 171 placements for children within these homes, alongside 23 connected carers.

The majority of Barnet fostering households are residents of Barnet with 55 (65%) foster care households living in the borough and a further 14 (17%) in neighbouring boroughs. The remaining 15 (18%) reside both across London and outside the capital having moved away from Barnet after being approved as a foster carer. 60 (71%) foster carers are female, and there has been a significant 13% increase of males being the main carer in 2021-22. A possible hypothesis around this increase is the changing work patterns and impact of covid, resulting in more people either being out of work or working from home. 33 (39%) carers are of White British origin, with second largest groups being of Caribbean origin and African. 46 (55%) of all carers in Barnet are over 55 years old and 35 (42%) of our foster carers are over 60 years old.

11 supported lodgings hosts have been recruited since 2020, exceeded the 2-year target by 1 host. 9 currently remain listed as Supported Lodging hosts and the other 2 have become dual registered as foster carers and supported lodging hosts and are included in the fostering data. In respect of supported lodgings hosts, 3 live within Barnet, 5 just outside the border within neighbouring authorities and 1 lives out of borough. In terms of diversity 7 are female, 3 are white, 2 are dual heritage and 2 are Asian.

7. De-registrations

During the period from April 2021 – March 2022 there has been a total of 48 de-registrations, including both internal foster carers and connected carers, who no longer had children in their care. All foster carers or connected carers who can no longer foster for Barnet are presented to the Fostering Panel where de-registration is fully considered and a recommendation is sent to the Agency Decision Maker for the final decision. Barnet has an aging fostering community and the majority of foster carers who have resigned are those who have retired from fostering after many years of caring for our children. We have seen some families relocating outside of London and have resigned as they want to fully settle before they consider fostering in their new location. Careful planning is done with the carers to ensure that there is minimal disruption for the children in their care that that there are positive endings for the children. For some children we have seen the foster carer or connected carer take on a permanent caring role for the child through adoption or special guardianship.

In relation to connected carers, they at times only care for the children for a limited period during which social work teams implement interventions with the child's parents. For some children, they are able to return to the care of their parents and the connected carer will then be deregistered as they are only approved for specific children.

The breakdown was as follows:

Of the **15** Foster Carers who deregistered:

- 12 foster carers resigned
- 1 foster carer transferred to another Authority
- 1 foster carer became a Special Guardian to the child in their care
- 1 foster carer adopted the child in their care

Of the **33** Connected Carers who were deregistered

- 26 were deregistered on account of no longer having a child in their care
- 7 connected carers became Special Guardians for the child in their care

8. Fostering Support and Development

Foster care is the right choice for the majority of children in our care. Children of all ages need to feel secure in their relationships with adults who look after them. Barnet's resilience and secure based model is provided by high-quality foster care in a stable family-like environment to act as a protective factor in supporting and enabling children to achieve positive outcomes and thrive throughout their lives.

When we place children and young people in foster care, we focus on their needs, the quality of the care and the outcomes we wish to achieve for the child. We think systematically about their relationships and networks in their local area and the support that will enable them to thrive, including aiming to place siblings together where possible. We also seek to prioritise cultural matching and other individual factors and to ensure that the secure base relationship promote not only their identity but their sense of security, confidence and resilience. Our goal is to find an alternative home where they are loved, kept safe and are encouraged to be the best they can be.

The fostering support team are responsible for the support and development of foster carers to ensure that they meet National Minimum Standards as underpinned by the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, providing care for Barnet's children which supports their overall well-being and aspirations. The team of 9 social workers have several years of experience in front line child protection and fostering. They have attended training offered to foster carers in Attuned Therapeutic Care, PACE and working with the mental health needs of children and young people looked after, to enable them to support carers in working therapeutically. Over the past 2 years, supervising social workers have also been involved with the Reflective Fostering programme, run by the Anna Freud Centre, aiming to assist foster carers to provide the best possible home and care by building strong supportive relationships via a reflective stance.

The team supports foster carers in providing a good standard of care, providing challenge, reflection and support to develop foster carers' practice. Supervising social workers have worked flexibly and creatively supporting foster carers throughout the pandemic; providing assistance when the children were unable to attend school, and younger children struggle with not accessing children's group and community events and when children are affected by family contact arrangements. As with the wider

service response to working creatively and flexibly, all carers were RAG rated at the start of the pandemic and provided with support accordingly. Carers were visited in the home when possible, with virtual and creative means explored when face to face work was hindered by lockdowns and restrictions.

CASE STUDY: Leo and Nevaeh's Story

It was during lockdown that things within the family home deteriorated and Leo (aged 6) and Neveah (aged 4) came into foster care. They went to stay with foster carers Jane and Edward as an emergency placement. They both had tested positive for covid but this was not a problem for Jane and Edward. During the lockdown it was hard to find carers to take in covid positive children, but fortunately this was not the case with Jane and Edward and many of our Barnet foster carers.

Thankfully, both Leo, Nevaeh, recovered well from covid. Adjusting to being with Jane and Edward was hard for Leo in particular. Whilst he had Covid, Jane and Edward supported his contact with his mother via face time and used this time to get to know their mother and their journey. Leo found foster care hard to adjust to, but Jane and Edward showed him love and patience. With the support of their supervising social worker they were able to think about how the abuse he had suffered had impacted upon him, his behaviour, thinking and development. School was also a challenge for Leo and now he had to adjust to home learning. For Jane she has highlighted that although things were hard, in fact the lockdown gave her and Leo the chance to connect, to get to know each other, to build a relationship and trust. Leo found it hard to trust and manage his feelings as his previous parenting had been a source of fear. Jane feels that whilst lockdown was hard in so many ways for so many people, for Leo and Nevaeh and their foster family, it gave them time, time to connect, build a secure base.

Leo is doing so well at school now. Jane and Edward have focused upon his confidence, trust and self-esteem. Nevaeh is a bundle of energy who too has found things hard in her own way, but is described as a funny, playful, bundle of fun and energy.

A year on, assessments of family have taken place and a final decision has been made that Leo and Neveah should remain in foster care. What started out as an emergency placement has developed into a loving relationship of sensitive care giving, stability and protection. And Jane and Edward have said they would like to offer Leo and Nevaeh a permanent home and be matched with them in the long term. This plan is supported by Leo, Nevaeh and their mother and plans are in place to progress this match in the coming months.

Supporting carers throughout 2021/22 has required sensitivity, flexibility and resilience, when so many carers and staff have felt their own compassion fatigue. Foster carers have expressed their appreciation with the provision of online coffee mornings and support groups attended by senior managers and other colleagues from across Family Services, including the Virtual School, the clinical service (BICS) and health colleagues.

Training for foster carers has continued to be provided via virtual platforms and via e-learning, with attendance and completion of courses remaining at consistently high levels. A number of carers, whilst missing the face-to-face training have also found the flexibility of out of hours training schedules helpful in their busy lives. Training opportunities for Barnet foster carers is also accessible via the North London Consortium of which Barnet is part of along with Camden, Haringey, Hackney, Enfield and Islington.

Over the year, foster carers have accessed support from BICS (Barnet Integrated Clinical Services) through consultations and therapeutic sessions with the child in their care, enhancing the support provided to children and carers in the home. In addition, the development of a specific support group

for carers of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) has been of great support to carers, including the support from the specific clinical pathway for this cohort of young people.

9. Staying Put

The 'Staying Put' Scheme allows care experienced young people to remain living with their foster carers after they turn 18, if both the young person and foster carer agree to this arrangement. As of 31 March 2022, Barnet has 18 care experienced young people who remain living with their former foster parent. The data evidences a slight increase of young people who remain living with their carers under Staying Put arrangements, in comparison to 2020/21, when 16 young people remained living with their foster carers post 18. This does remain significantly lower than 2019/20 where 27 young people remained living with their foster carers. This decline from 2019/20 is attributed to a variety of reasons including, young people being accommodated later in adolescence and preferring to move into their own accommodation and the development of Supported Lodgings as a stepping stone to independence.

10. Supported Lodgings

Barnet's Supported Lodgings scheme was introduced in 2019 with 2 supported lodgings carers successfully recruited in the first year. Capacity increased with a further 6 being approved in 2020/21 and 5 in 2021/22. Barnet currently has 11 supported lodgings hosts. The supported lodgings campaign has been successful, where the target of 10 supported lodgings hosts recruited between 2020/22 having been met.

Your kindness will make all the difference

"It's nice to have choices like everyone else. I didn't feel ready to live alone at 18 and it was good I had the freedom to choose when I was ready." Ahmed, 20yrs

Supported Lodgings
Do you have a spare room? You could support a young person like Ahmed on their journey to independent living.



For further information: 020 8359 6274
www.barnet.gov.uk/supportedlodging



Your kindness... makes all the difference!

"Staying in a family environment gave me the confidence I needed to believe in myself. I have now started university. I feel more confident and ready to live independently." Sarah, 19yrs

Supported Lodgings
Do you have a spare room? You could support a young person like Sarah on their journey to independent living.



For further information: 020 8359 6274
www.barnet.gov.uk/supportedlodging



11. Foster Carer Survey

A foster carer survey was completed in December 2020 to support the service delivery improvement plan for 2020-2023. The survey had a response rate of 45% and demonstrated that the majority of foster carers felt good about fostering for Barnet (63%). The results also highlighted areas where we can work together to develop the service further and these developments have continued through 2021/22.

Areas for development;

- the continued development of our out of hours and clinical support to foster carers.
- the development of specific support groups for carers, male carers, UASC and currently the development of SEND and quarterly forums attended by managers and senior managers to update and talk to carers.
- improvements to the recording workstreams has continued with the development of working groups which include foster carers who have re-designing and implementation of a new daily log and supervision policy and proforma.

In follow-up interviews, foster carers reflected on how they appreciate the support that they receive from their social workers, but also that there are moments when communication is not as efficient as they would like.

12. Fostering Panel

The Fostering Panel acts in accordance with the regulatory framework provided by the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, Family and Friends Care, Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2011, and the Standards set out in the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011. The Foster Panel takes account of the legislation set out in The Children Act 1989, and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and Amendments 2015 and Guidance, volume 2, 2010.

The Fostering Panel has the responsibility for making recommendations in relation to:

- The approval of foster carers.
- The approval of family members or friends as "connected person" carers
- The first annual review of foster carers and connected persons carers
- Reviews of carers where there have been serious concerns and breach of the fostering regulations
- Investigations or reviews of carers where there are concerns regarding their fostering practice and their suitability.

13. Review of Objectives for 2021-22 - What have we achieved?

- Barnet Fostering Web pages were redesigned and launched, ensuring consistency across Barnet's Fostering website. This was for an improved journey tailored specifically to fostering.
- Increased focus on social media presence and campaigns, including Facebook boosts, Google AdWords to increase website views alongside Barnet fostering Instagram page continued. Changes were made to ways in which Facebook operated and this impacted and resulted in changes needing to be made.
- Improved and expand internal communications with staff and current cohort of foster carers to increase recruitment, including financial incentive with the refer a friend scheme. The re-designing of the foster carers newsletter raised the profile of fostering in service events and meetings.
- Referral fee was increased during targeted campaigns over the year and saw an increase in enquiries. The Foster Carer Forum set up to support communication directly from senior managers to foster carers.
- Consistent transition between assessment social worker and supervising social worker from Fostering Support Service to ensure carers feel supported, held and contained throughout the time of the first placement.

- We have transferred the foster carer handbook to more accessible online version for a more user-friendly platform for ease for foster carers.
- We reviewed the virtual fostering panel with a view to move to a hybrid model to allow prospective applicants to attend panel in person and provide better real-life experience, however, this was delayed due to further government restrictions throughout the year and as such remained virtual throughout 2021/22.
- Work and consultation took place with foster carers to develop a foster carers charter to support a shared understanding of expectations of the fostering service and of our foster carers. The statement of Purpose was updated.
- We successfully continue with online support groups and celebration events, including Foster Carer Appreciation Day, Foster Carer Fortnight, Black History Month and Christmas party.

14. Service Priorities for 2022-2023

- Develop robust recruitment partnership working with local businesses, the Barnet community and faith groups as well as schools and colleges.
- Increase social and digital media activity.
- Successfully achieve and be accredited as a 'Foster Friendly Employer' with the Fostering Network. Use this to raise the profile of fostering and encourage other employers to become Fostering Friendly employers.

The recruitment focus:

- Increase our online presence. Includes expanding our website to develop a targeted Fostering video to educate and raise awareness of the need for more carers and progress to use of TV and internet advertising.
- Revise the Barnet fostering hashtag to support recruitment activity.

Foster Carer Support focus:

- Maximise foster carer retention and placement stability by reviewing matching processes, permanency planning and further develop the use of early permanency.
- Maximise the use of in-house placement, by using annual reviews to strategically explore carers capacity and encouraging increased approval where appropriate, to review and develop carers who have remained on the same skill set for 2 or more years.
- Improve foster carer support and engagement, including a foster carer association survey in partnership with the Fostering network.
- Continue to explore ways of capturing the child's voice and the carers voice for service development and individual plans
- Review professional portal development within LCS and consider use for foster carers that can be provided to carers in a digital form.

Appendix D

BARNET VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT 2021 - 2022

THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL

The Virtual School is the key educational advocacy service for all children in care (CIC), whether educated in Barnet or placed out of authority. The focus of our statutory duty is to improve educational outcomes through challenging and supporting schools, academies, and specialist settings to ensure that CIC:

- Attend school on a full-time basis
- Receive the best possible opportunities as learners by accessing mainstream education or where appropriate specialist or alternative provisions and through attending schools which are judged to be at least good in Ofsted inspections
- Maintain at least expected rates of progress relative to their starting points on becoming looked after
- Close the achievement gap with their peers

The Virtual School acts as a champion for CIC by fulfilling the responsibilities of being a highly ambitious, proactive, and effective 'Corporate Parent'. There is a clear emphasis on the need to raise aspirations and improve rates of progress and to close the attainment gap between CIC and their peers. As part of the Corporate Parenting Strategy pledges, the Virtual School supports young people's 'educational and career dreams through providing the best possible quality of education, and exploring options for additional educational support' (Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-23)

The Virtual School is not a registered educational provider - it is each educational setting that is directly responsible for improving the rates of progress and educational outcomes of CIC on roll. However, through the effective use of Personal Education Plans (PEPs), the Virtual School holds schools and colleges to account in relation to the:

- provision offered
- level of aspirations encouraged
- setting and reviewing of SMART targets
- attendance of young people
- reduction of fixed term exclusions and need to find alternatives to permanent exclusions

The Virtual School team is responsible for ensuring that Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) for children in care is managed to improve educational outcomes and has primary responsibility for ensuring that there is a suitable education in place for all children in care, this includes overseeing admissions, managed moves and education moves brought about through care placement moves. The Virtual School team works with children at times of placement change, school change and periods of challenge in their lives to ensure that engagement with education is sustained. It also provides advice and information to support children who were previously looked after and are now subject to adoption orders, special guardianship orders and child arrangement orders.

In June 2021, the DfE extended the duties of the Virtual School to all children with a social worker. The responsibilities are different from the work with children in care and are more strategic in nature.

1. Key Performance Indicators 2020-2021

Key Performance Indicator	Outcome
Average Progress 8 score of looked-after children in the top 10% when compared to CIC nationally.	There is no Progress 8 information available
Gap between (i) A8 for Barnet CIC and A8 nationally for all pupils and (ii) P8 for Barnet CIC and P8 nationally for all pupils is in the top quartile. (2020/21 results)	<p>In all KS4 measures Barnet improved between 2020 and 2021. However, the changes to the way GCSE grades have been awarded over the last two years mean 2020/21 pupil attainment data cannot be directly compared to pupil attainment data from previous years for the purposes of measuring year on year changes in pupil performance.</p> <p>Barnet's Attainment 8 was in line with the national average in 2021 for CiC.</p> <p>The proportion of Looked After Children attaining a Level 5+ in English and Maths was above the National average.</p> <p>Barnet was ranked 3rd best Local Authority (out of 151 LAs) for the proportion of CLA students attaining a Level 5+.</p> <p>The proportion of CLA pupils attaining a 4+ in English and Maths in Barnet was above all comparators.</p> <p>There is no Progress 8 information available.</p>
90% of 0–16-year-olds PEPs are good or better	July 2022 – 92%
75% of 16–17-year-olds PEPs are good or better	July 2022 – Years 12 and 13 97%
RWM in KS2, at the expected standard, is in the top quartile	No comparative data
The percentage of 16–17-year-olds who are NEET is below 20% by the end of March 2022	July 2022 – 20.5% of 16/17year olds are NEET. This is higher than the previous year.

2. School Context (as of 22/7/22)

		2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022
	Nursery		11	12	13
	% of children SEN support			2	1
	% of children with EHCPS			3	1
Statutory age group	Statutory age	191	196	195	191
	Reception		4	7	8
	Key Stage 1		16	14	15
	Key Stage 2		43	37	45
	Key Stage 3		51	53	52
	Key Stage 4		82	84	71
	Male/female	111/80	113/83	109/86	108/83
	% of children from ethnic minority groups		70.6%	73.3%	68.1%
	% of children SEN support		19.8% (39)	21.5% (42)	17.8% (34)
	% of children with EHCPS		24.9% (49)	24.6% (48)	30.9% (59)
			O/B I/B	O/B I/B	O/B I/B
			33 16	30 18	38 21
	Number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)	18	25	35	28
Children without a school place		0	2	5	
Post 16 age group	Post 16	157	135	152	155
	Male/female	113/44	96/39	113/39	111/44
	% of children from ethnic minority groups		78.5%	79.6%	79.4%
	% of children with EHCPS		14%(19)	13.8%(21)	14.8% (23)
			O/B I/B	O/B I/B	O/B I/B
			11 3	16 5	7 16
	Number of UASC	39	67	76	75
	Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) Year 12		11	19	15
NEET Year 13		14	14	22	

3. Attendance (statutory age children)

Absence over time – children in care for more than 12 months (Local authority interactive tool - LAIT)

% absence from school of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months										
Local Authority, Region and England										
					2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change from previous year
302	Barnet	-	-	-	5.50	3.30	6.50	-	10.10	-
988	Outer London	-	-	-	5.10	5.20	5.00	-	8.70	-
	Statistical Neighbours	-	-	-	4.48	4.37	4.61	-	8.26	-
970	England	-	-	-	4.70	5.00	5.10	-	9.10	-

Official Data Release for Children Looked After (CLA) 2020/21

LA	Barnet	Rank	England	London
Total Number of Pupils	104		35380	3500

Attendance Rate	89.9%	110	90.9%	91.0%
Authorised Absence	8.0%	97	7.7%	7.3%
Unauthorised Absence	2.0%	117	1.5%	1.7%
Persistently Absent	32.7%	96	30.4%	29.4%

- For all attendance measures Barnet CLA pupils are below the national and London averages.
- Barnet is ranked well outside the top 10% for all measures however, only 3.1% separates Barnet from being within the top 10% for attendance. Overall attendance is significantly impacted by Barnet’s high number of Year 11s in care who have lower attendance nationally and a low number of primary age children compared with national who have higher attendance.

Current Attendance – 2021/22

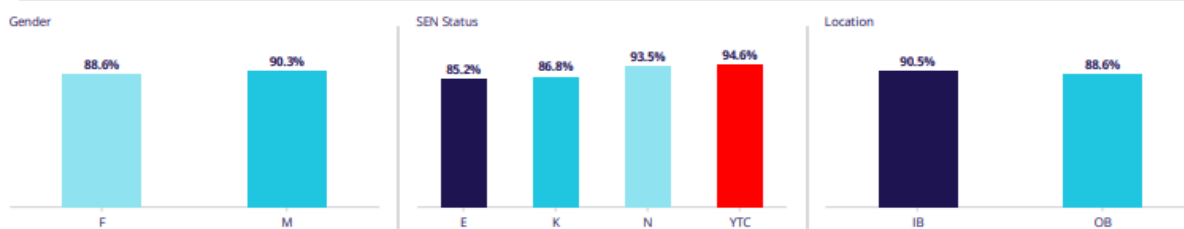
Our whole school attendance is 89.54%

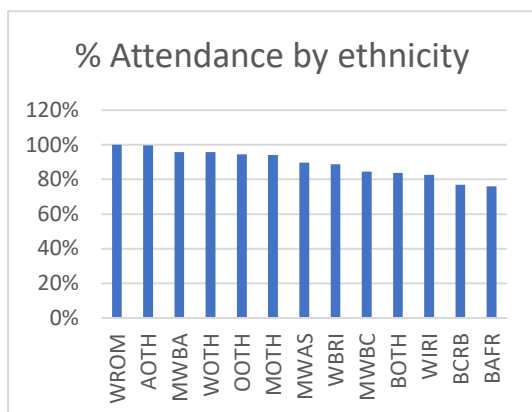


Attendance over the year has been strongest among our primary aged children, specifically Reception and Year 5. Attendance drops in KS3 and is lowest in KS4 with year 9 and year 11 being particularly low. To provide a greater context, there are also larger numbers of young people in the older year groups:

- 68 students from Y0-Y6
- 52 students in Y7-Y9
- 70 students across Y10-Y11.

Year 11 has historically been the most challenging year group in terms of attendance and the number of Year 11 in Barnet Virtual School remains high – currently 40 students. This impacts considerably on overall attendance. Across the cohort, there has been little variation when analysing by gender, location, and SEN.





Looking at the groups with attendance below 90% the cohort numbers (except for White British) are very small. For example, there were 5 children of Black Caribbean ethnicity who had been in care for over a year. Three of them significantly impacted on the overall attendance of this group. These 3 all have EHCPs and complex profiles e.g., one has had a long period without attending his school placement due to gang related activity and difficulty in finding him a suitable home placement with access to a new school. He has now moved to a crisis placement.

Attendance Comparison

	Autumn 20	Spring 2021 (schools limited opening)	Summer 2021 (whole year)	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022 (whole year)
Numbers (all)	165	177	192	169	178	189
Attendance (all)	92%	64.45% (Spring) 79% (Aut/Spring)	90.51%	90.55%	90.02%	89.54%
Number with 100% (all)	56	20 (Aut/Spring)	46 (23.6%)	38	22	11
Number of eligible children (in care for 12 months plus)	115	129	128	115	121	134
Attendance (in care 12 months plus)	91.9%	63.7% (Spring) 79.3% (Aut/Spring)	91.4%	92.22%	90.15%	90.16%

Persistent Absence (below 90%) in children in care 12 months plus

Looking at the 134 children who have been in care for more than 12 months:

8/134 - 100% attendance across the whole year

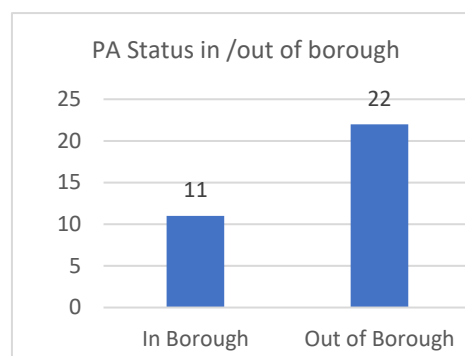
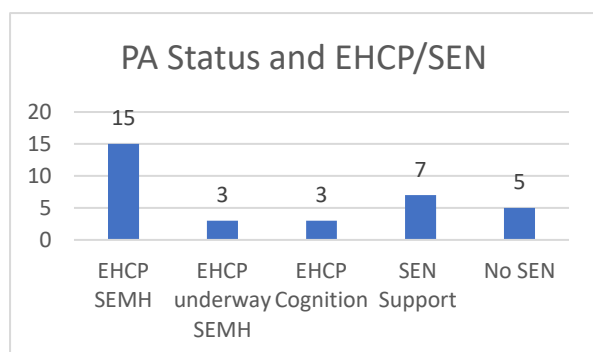
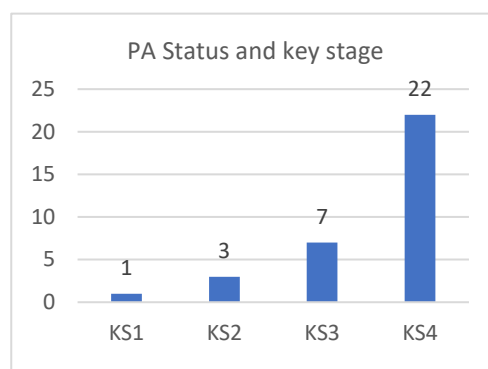
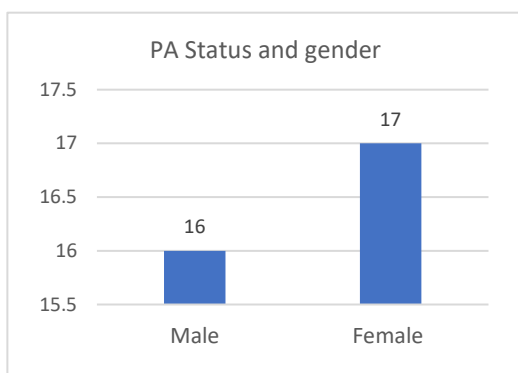
74/134 - above 95% attendance across the whole year

101/134 - more than 90% attendance across the whole year.

33 children are considered persistently absent (attendance below 90%)

Persistent Absence attendance ranges	Number of Students
70-90%	17
50-70%	6
Below 50%	10 (6 x EHCPs 2 x EHCP applications) (6 x Placement moves/crisis placements) (4 x Emotional Based School Avoidance)

To provide a context to those that are persistently absent:



Reason for PA Status	Number of Students (with EHCP)	How is this is being addressed by Virtual School
Emotional Based School Avoidance	6 (6 EHCP)	Involvement from VS EPs, BICS/CAMHS, targeted support and funding through PEP.
Unauthorised absence / missing episodes)	11 (6 EHCP)	Targeted support and funding through PEP, Attend SEAM meetings with family services, EP involvement if appropriate.
Genuine illness	4 (0 EHCP)	Ensure absence from illness is appropriate and proportional and monitor.
Placement Changes	11 (6 EHCP 3 underway)	<i>Where YP have an EHCP and change placements, SEN will keep them on roll at previous placement until new schools have been consulted with resulting in additional absence.</i>
Fixed Term Exclusions	1	Targeted support and funding through PEPs, Behaviour Support Plans, EP involvement, BICs/CAMHS. Support from Pavilion mentors.

Persistent absence is of greatest concern across Key Stage 4 (8 students in Year 10 and 14 students in Year 11), comprising two thirds of the entire cohort of persistently absent students. Within this Key Stage 4 cohort of 22 students, 14 have Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) for Social

Emotional and Mental Health, 6 of whom have entrenched patterns of emotional based school avoidance requiring specialist professional input from EPs and other professionals. This is a particularly complex and challenging cohort. Moving forward the Educational Psychologists attached to the team, are further developing the Barnet approach to support schools in addressing persistent absence attributed to anxiety.

4. Exclusions

Exclusions 2019/20

Official data relates to the 2019/20 academic year as this is latest official data available. The data is from the most pandemic hit year therefore the information is not directly comparable to previous years. It only includes children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months.

Year	Measure	Barnet	Rank	England	London
2019/20	Number of Pupils	112		37900	3950
	Number of Pupils with at least one Suspension	7.14%	25	9.4%	9.6%

- The proportion of Barnet CLA pupils with one or more fixed term suspensions is lower than National and London.
- Barnet is ranked in the top quintile.

Barnet Exclusions over time – all children

	Number of fixed-term exclusions			Number of permanent exclusions		
	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
No of pupils	18	18	26	0	0	0
No of exclusions	30	25	35	0	0	0
No of days excluded	79.5	89	130.5	0	0	0
No of exclusions with day 1 provision	27	24	31	0	0	0

	In Borough					
	Fixed-period exclusions			Permanent exclusions		
	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Total number of pupils excluded	7	8	13	0	0	0
Total number of days lost	34	58.5	72.5	0	0	0
	Out of Borough					
Total number of pupils excluded	11	10	14	0	0	0
Total number of days lost	45.5	30.5	58	0	0	0

Of the children who received a fixed term exclusion, most children were boys in secondary provisions – only three were primary age. 54% of young people excluded were from Years 9 and 11. Twenty (77%) of the young people who had fixed term exclusions were boys. The highest ethnic group to receive exclusions was White British. This group is the largest in the Virtual School, but the number excluded is disproportionate at 42.3%. 42% of the children who received an exclusion have an EHCP with a primary need of SEMH.

Typical reasons for exclusions continue to be:

- Persistent disruptive behaviour
- Physical assault on an adult or child
- Verbal abuse
- Threatening behaviour
- Bringing in banned items
- Not following instructions

Exclusions enforced without clear reason are challenged by the Virtual School and schools are expected to provide alternative education from the first day of the exclusion, whether this be a placement at an alternative school or tutoring. As part of the Virtual School strategy this is communicated to schools as soon as we are made aware of an intention to exclude or an exclusion. A few schools did not provide Day 1 provision, and this has been addressed. In one case of a primary age child, day 1 provision was not put in place at the request of the carer due to the young person's needs. Schools are supported to look at alternatives to exclusions and with putting in place preventative measures e.g., the Virtual School worked with one school to get an exclusion revoked and a referral made to Alternative Provision to support the young person and for another child, fortnightly meetings with professionals were set up to help the school understand how to meet the young person's needs.

5. School Places

Number of children currently without a school place: 5

Number of directions for a school place: 0

Of the children currently without a school place, two are in 17-week therapeutic crisis placements, one is a new to care unaccompanied asylum seeker and two have moved placements and have EHCPs – consultations are underway.

Changes in circumstances – Summer Term 2022 (brackets Summer Term 2021)

No. of pupils:	Same School Place	Change in school place
Same placement	177 (165)	4 (2)
Change in placement	14 (16)	2 (7)

Looking at the Summer Term, there were two young people who changed placement and schools. This was due to:

- Moving placements so needed to change schools
- Moving back to live with a parent from an out of borough specialist placement

Educational Provision – Ofsted Judgements

	Total	No in good /outstanding schools	No in requires improvement /inadequate school	Reason for placements in requires improvement /inadequate school
In Borough school	99	97 (98%)	2 (2%)	Children already attending prior to coming into care
Out of Borough school	83	77 (93%)	6 (7%)	Foster carer choice x 2 Already attending before RI grading x 2 Older sibling already attending. Specialist placement with education attached 14-16 provision in college

6. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) for each child includes progress and attainment information as well as recording interventions, often funded through the Pupil Premium Plus Grant, to ensure the child achieves well. The Virtual School works in partnership with teams in Children and Families and with Designated Teachers in schools, to ensure that each child has an up to date, effective and high-quality PEP that focuses on education outcomes. The PEP forms part of the child’s overall care plan.

Summer Term 2022

Information provided as of the 19th of July 2022.

	Total Number of PEPs	Number and % rag rated gold	Number and % rag rated Green	Number and % rag rated amber	Number and % rag rated Red
Overall	359	1 (0.28%)	347 (96.7%)	10 (2.8%)	1 (0.28%)
Early Years	13		13 (100%)	0	0
Statutory	190	1 (0.53%)	180 (94.7%)	8 (4.2%)	1 (0.53%)
Post 16	156		154 (98.7%)	2 (1.3%)	0

In the summer term one statutory aged PEP was RAG rated red. This rating was due to a lack of a pastoral update and only 1 target being set. This target was not a SMART target and focused on investigating extra-curricular clubs. The PEP was also submitted several weeks after the deadline date. The school has received feedback regarding this.

There were 10 amber rated PEPs. Four of these were due to fewer targets being set than the required minimum. Feedback has been given to the schools where PEPs require improvement. The remaining six PEPs were due to social workers not completing their sections of the PEPs. Social Workers were reminded and chased to complete their sections prior to these ratings being given and feedback has been given to Social Workers and their managers where PEPs had to be rated amber. Changes to the PEP document for September include requiring a mandatory sign off section for Social Workers. Arrangements to attend Social Worker team meetings year to share best practice and changes to the PEP ready for next academic year is in progress.

Whole Year

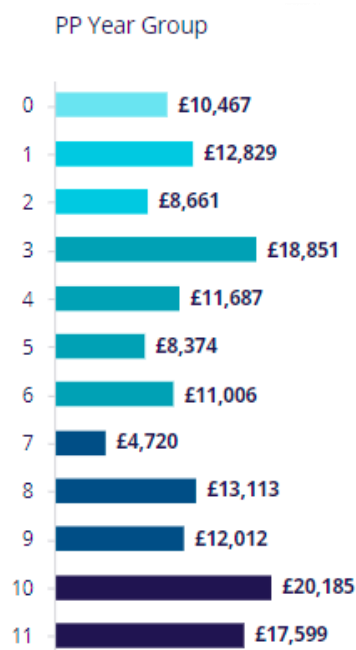
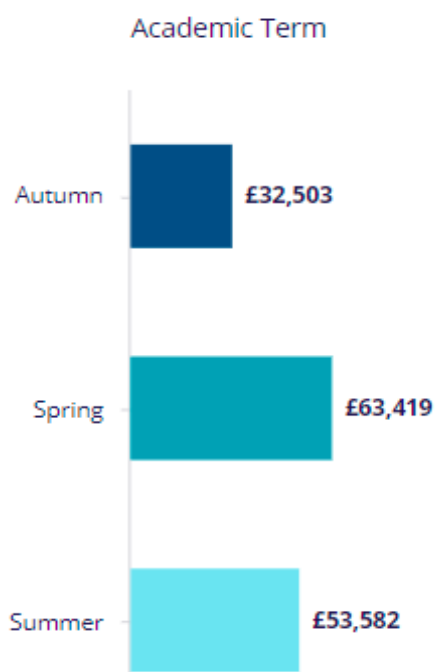
	Total Number of PEPs	Number and % rag rated gold	Number and % rag rated green	Number and % rag rated amber	Number and % rag rated red
Overall	1,043	5 (0.48%)	984 (94.3%)	50 (4.8%)	4 (0.38%)
EYFS	37		36 (97.3%)	1 (2.7%)	0
Statutory	545	5 (0.92%)	500 (91.7%)	37 (6.8%)	3 (0.55%)
Post 16	461		448 (97.2%)	12 (2.6%)	1 (0.22%)

Over the year there have been 4 PEP's RAG rated red. This rating was given owing mainly to either a lack of detail and data, no pupil voice, no pastoral update, an insufficient number of targets or the quality of the target setting.

There have been 50 amber rated PEPs over this academic year. This has mainly been due to missing information such as no achievement data, no attendance information, fewer targets set than required or no pastoral update. Feedback has been given to the schools where PEPs require improvement and a guide on how to complete high quality PEPs is being included in the Autumn term newsletters to DTs. Additional training around the use of Welfare Call when completing PEPs is also being added within the 'New to DT training'.

Pupil Premium Plus - funding attached to targets in the PEP

This academic year £149,504 was allocated directly to schools in relation to targets set in the PEPs. £124,495 was from Pupil Premium Plus funding and £25,009 came from Recovery Funding. This funding supported 152 pupils with split between in borough and out of borough schools (57.2% v 42.8%) fairly in line with the overall cohort (52% v 48%)



Year 10 and 11 saw the largest funding allocations which was mainly to support exam outcomes. Within the Year 10 cohort 37.4% of funding was for 1:1 tuition, whilst in Year 11, 70.8% of the funding was allocated to 1:1 tuition or individualised instruction.

It appears that there was a disproportionate amount of spend allocated to Year 3. However Year 2 has half the number of pupils of Year 3 and the spend for Year 3 was spread across 11 out of the 12 children in cohort. A sizeable proportion of the funding for this cohort was spent on supporting children in schools whilst EHCP applications were made. 49.9% of this funding was allocated to support social and emotional learning.

Breakdown by ethnicity

Ethnicity	PP+ Approved	Funding contribution	Virtual School cohort
[AOTH] Any Other Asian Background	£1,345	0.9%	1.1%
[BAFR] Black African	£9,897	6.6%	6.3%
[BCRB] Black Caribbean	£1,705	1.1%	2.6%
[BOTH] Any Other Black Background	£3,823	2.6%	4.2%
[MOTH] Any Other Mixed Background	£28,918	19.3%	16.4%
[MWAS] White and Asian	£6,375	4.3%	3.7%
[MWBA] White and Black African	£3,090	2.1%	1.1%
[MWBC] White and Black Caribbean	£6,978	4.7%	5.8%
[OOTH] Any Other Ethnic Group	£22,001	14.7%	15.3%
[WBRI] White British	£45,513	30.4%	32.3%
[WIRI] White Irish	£925	0.6%	0.53%
[WOTH] Any Other White Background	£17,444	11.7%	9.0%
[WROM] Gypsy / Roma	£1,490	1%	0.53%
[WIRT] Traveller of Irish Heritage			0%
[YTC] Yet to confirm			1.1%

Although there is a high spend on White British young people, this in line with the cohort in the Virtual School.

Breakdown of spend by type

Category	Pupils	Contribution to PP+
Academic achievement and progress	108	42.4%
Emotional health and well-being	77	32.4%
Wider Achievement	51	11%
Social Skills	43	8.9%
Other	11	2.8%
Transition	7	1.2%
Inclusion (reducing internal and external exclusions and detentions)	2	0.92%
Attendance	3	0.35%

Pupil premium money was allocated to a variety of areas, supporting children in education. Across the academic year there was an increase in requests for funding to support social and emotional learning interventions, but one-to-one tuition continued to be one of the main areas pupil premium funding is used to provide additional support.

PP+ Intervention	Pupils	Total Cost	Contribution to PP+
Social and emotional learning	55	£31,655	21.2%
One to one tuition	46	£27,546	18.4%
Arts participation	37	£14,708	9.8%
Individualised instruction	36	£13,929	9.3%
Other	42	£11,448	7.7%
Metacognition and self-regulation	15	£6,131	4.1%
Small group tuition	16	£5,960	4.0%
Sports participation	24	£5,347	3.6%
Mastery learning	17	£4,975	3.3%
Behaviour Interventions	13	£4,679	3.1%
Outdoor adventure learning	18	£4,473	3.0%
Mentoring	12	£4,304	2.9%
Reading comprehension strategy	18	£3,192	2.1%
Digital technology	9	£2,466	1.6%
Oral language interventions	5	£2,365	1.6%
Early years interventions	5	£1,727	1.2%
Phonics	6	£1,623	1.1%
Homework	8	£957	0.64%
Collaborative learning	6	£924	0.62%
Summer schools	6	£760	0.51%
Within-class attainment grouping	1	£335	0.22%

Over the academic year 53% of targets funded by Pupil Premium Plus funding were either achieved, partially achieved or still in progress. Only 9% of targets funded were not achieved. The remaining targets were not reviewed. Schools which have not reviewed targets have received feedback and this will be monitored closely in the forthcoming PEPs.

The Virtual School has also received School Led tuition funding which has been used to partially fund tuition both in schools and by external companies and recovery funding.

7. Achievement

Children Looked After (CLA)– Statistical first Release 2020/21

The Statistical First Release (SFR) published at the end of March 2022. Due to the cancellation of primary phase exams and assessments, there were no KS2 releases as was the case last year. The following data relates to KS4 Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) The data relates to Children Looked After for 12 months or more on 31st March 2021. Progress 8 was not included in this release.

CLA KS4 Attainment data 2021

Year	Category	Barnet	Rank	England	London
2020	Number of pupils	29		5920	810
2021		33		5920	810
2020	Attainment 8	21.8	72	21.3	21.9
2021		23.3	66	23.2	24.5
2020	5+ E&M	N/A	N/A	10.8%	14.3%
2021		24.2%	3	12.7%	16.0%
2020	4+ E&M	24.1%	64	24.3%	26.4%
2021		36.4%	28	28.9%	32.1%

- In all KS4 measures Barnet improved between 2020 and 2021.
- Barnet’s Attainment 8 was in line with the national average in 2021, but below the London average.
- The proportion of Looked After Children attaining a Level 5+ in English and Maths was above the National and London average.
- Barnet was ranked 3rd for the proportion of CLA students attaining a Level 5+
- The proportion of CLA pupils attaining a 4+ in English and Maths in Barnet was above all comparators.
- The rankings for Attainment 8 and the proportion of pupils attaining a Level 4+ in English and Maths has improved between 2020 and 2021, however Barnet is still outside the top 10% for both measures.

Current achievement 2021/22

Statutory assessments in the primary phase took place for the first time in two years. These results will not be published however results have been obtained for most of our children in care.

Reception

8 Reception children were in care at the end of the Summer Term
 1 of these children had an EHCP
 3/8 children reached a good level of development

Phonics – Year 1

9 Year 1 children were in care at the end of the Summer Term
 3/9 are SENs with one EHCP application underway
 2/9 came into care since February 2022
 5/9 children met the standard
 Two children scored maximum marks

Of the 4 who did not meet the standard, two are new into care since January, one has additional needs and an EHCP application is underway and the fourth was two marks away from meeting the standard so should be successful in Year 2.

Key Stage 1 SATS - Year 2

6 Year 2 children were in care at the end of the Summer Term.
 1/6 has an EHCP
 2 have come into care since January 2022

The results were:

	Pre-key stage	Working towards the expected standard	Working at the expected standard
Reading	1	3	2
Writing	1	2	3
Maths	2	1	3

Key Stage 2 SATS - Year 6

11 Year 6 children were in care at the end of the summer term.
 5/11 have EHCPs
 3/11 are SENs with one EHCP application in progress
 7/11 attend schools outside of Barnet and 3 are in specialist placements
 3 children were not entered for their SATS as they were working below the level of the tests. All three children have EHCPs and are in specialist settings.

Results for the other 8 children:

	Working below the expected standard	Working at the expected standard	Working at greater depth
Reading	4	3	1
Writing	4	3	1
Maths	4	3	1

Predicted Results GCSEs - Year 11

Year 11

No in cohort – 40

Context:

10/40 young people have an EHCP

14/40 are on their school's SEN register – SENS

14/40 are UASC

11/40 have been in care for less than 12 months

Number expected to reach 4+ in English and Maths: 7

This year all young people completing GCSE were sent a revision pack including materials and revision tips. A session was also held for foster carers on how to support young people manage their anxiety approaching their exams. Moving forward to the 2022/23 cohort a training session will be offered to carers on how to support their young people in the Autumn Term and a blanket offer of 12 tuition sessions will be given to all young people in September.

8. Planned Destinations – Year 11

Destination	Number
College– A levels	2
College- vocational course	16
College – other course	10
Staying on at school – A levels	3
Staying on at school – special school	2
Changing to another school – A levels	1
Apprenticeship	0
Working	1
Other - please specify	1 (changing school – special school) 1 in YOI 1 under section
Unclear on plans	1

9. Post 16 Cohort

Engagement with education, employment and training

	In Borough	Out of Borough
Apprenticeship		1
Working	7	4
College/6th Form/SEN Provision	36	66
NEET due to being new to care UASC	1	1
NEET - other	18	17
In secure unit		1

Young people who are NEET

At Post-16 the young people not in education, employment or training present a significant challenge and engaging them is no easy task. The category includes those in psychiatric units, pregnant or who frequently go missing thus are even harder to engage in education or training.

In 2020, 39% of care leavers were NEET nationally. Currently, we have 24% of our Year 12 and 13's who are NEET. 29% have been in care for less than 12 months.

Supporting young people who are NEET is a key area and caseworkers work closely with them to support reengagement into education, employment, or training. The BEETS team support with connections within various industries whereby companies head hunt young people who are searching for either a work placement or apprenticeship. Construction and motor vehicle apprenticeship/placement have been of interest to young people.

Looking at the cohort of young people who are NEET at the end of the year, there are some who have been involved in education/employment during the year but have disengaged. Some of these young people had been NEET for a significant time and their engagement in smaller opportunities of activities this year has been hugely significant

Action undertaken

1-1 work providing advice and guidance regarding action planning for the future.
 Support for young people who are NEET regarding applications for courses.
 Course ideas/opportunities provided on a regular basis to professional network.
 Follow up on progress on a regular basis (weekly or fortnightly).
 Continue to build relationships and trust through meetings and telephone contact.
 Support young people with interviews/visits when possible.
 Maintain regular communication with professional networks so as not to duplicate actions.
 Refer to Barnet Education Employment and Training Support (BEETS) if young person is not engaging
 Liaise with placement to support young people
 Mentoring as part of the Post 16 Pupil Premium Project which has supported them in a holistic manner
 Encouraged to engage in activities e.g., playing instruments, joining youth clubs, accessing Princes Trust, New Citizens Gateway and Unitas Youth Zone etc.

Planned Destinations for Year 13 September 2022

Destination	Number
Higher Education – university	5
College	49
Staying on at school	
Educated at home	
Illness	
Pregnancy	
Specialist provision	2
Re-engagement provision	
Work training programme	1 (CSCS Programme)
Apprenticeship	1
Working	16
Other - please specify	
Unknown	2 stopped engaging with college and next steps are not clear. 1 in custody 1 undecided

Number currently likely to be NEET in September: 11

Higher Education

Number considering higher education 2022: 5

Number considering higher education 2021: 10

10. Staffing

During the year, the Executive Head and the PEP coordinator both left to pursue other ventures. This allowed for consideration of what would best meet the needs of the service moving forward. This result in a restructure and the creation of a Deputy Head of School post. There was also a new appointment to lead on the extension of our duties.

a. Current Staffing

Staff member's name	Position	Additional comments
Sarah Deale	Headteacher	4 days a week
Julie Locke	Deputy Head of School	
Jane Thrift	School Business Manager	
Caroline Gladkow	PEP Coordinator	2 days termtime only
Nicola Axford	Education Lead for Children with a Social Worker	4 days a week, 1 year contract
Allan Newby	Caseworker	
Hannah Hudson	Caseworker	
Sejal Patel	Caseworker	
Ornella Rochfort	Caseworker	
Frasier Stroud	Caseworker	
Aiysha Iqbal	Caseworker	
Rosanna Gariboli	Admin Assistant	Agency– 2 days
Amy Wight	Senior Learning Mentor	Transition Hub
Nathanael Ribas	Outreach Learning Mentor	Transition Hub
Jhana Mills	Outreach Learning Mentor	Transition Hub

b. Professional Development

Training attended by members of the team during the year included

Disadvantaged pupils in primary education

ELSA training

NAVSH training sessions and conference

Welfare Call attendance and analytics training

New Paradigms for Disadvantaged Learners

NAVSH conference

Supporting Afghan learners in school

Trauma and suicide briefings

Anxiety and low mood

Exclusion Conference

Attendance Conference

Supporting UASC

ADHD training sessions

Using Synergy

How virtual schools can support care experienced LGBTQ+ children and young people

Promoting Anti-Racist Practice in Schools

Visitors to team meetings included representatives from the Youth Offending Service, Stepladder, Independent Visiting Service, BICs, Social Media and PR Officer, Inclusion Advisory Team, Family Services Participation Officer and Element.

The whole Virtual School team has had training on:

Creating a Path

Emotionally Based School Avoidance

Trauma and Attachment

Language Matters

c. Supervision

Caseworkers had 1:1 supervision with the Deputy Head monthly and the Head and Deputy Head have monthly supervision with one the Educational Psychologists.

A group supervision is carried out to support more difficult cases and share expertise. This is supported by the Educational Psychology Team who also carry out the supervision for the senior members of the team.

11. Engagement with Stakeholders

a. **Children**

Enrichment Activities

Term	Activity	Age group	No	Outline
Ongoing	A New Direction – ongoing 1-year project	13-17 years old	4	Arts enrichment programme for young people in care co-designed with Care Leavers, addressing issues and topics they feel are pertinent to them. Young people who are participating are building a community through a creative platform, supporting each other during transition phases, raising public awareness of this process, learning about their rights and having their voices heard.
Autumn	Arvon – Meet up	Year 11	3	Barnet Virtual School took 3 Year 11 students to meet up with the other students from other Virtual Schools who attended the week at Arvon. They took part in a follow up workshop with the poet who led the sessions in Arvon. They all had lunch and then went bowling with the other young people and staff from the week. Comments by young people on Arvon held over the summer ‘I felt more literally confident’. ‘Liked meeting new people, made new friends, had fun, alright travelling, learnt about packing suitcase to carry less, gained more confidence, good to be independent’. ‘The week was really lovely as I got to experience new things such as the countryside and different cultures and food. I learnt a lot about poetry and made friends too which has enlightened me and made me think a lot about things. It was a wonderful experience’.
Autumn	Lumina Project Welcome Day (Harrow School)	GCSE	2	The Harrow School Lumina Project and Virtual Schools Welcome Day. The day was a mix of enrichment workshops and fun activities for the young people. Carers also attended and had a separate programme of events for them that included more information about Lumina Tutoring along with an afternoon tea and a tour of Harrow School’s historic buildings.
	Lumina Project	GCSE	Referred 10 - 6	The Harrow School Lumina Project and Virtual Schools 1:1 tuition and mentoring programme. Barnet Virtual School joined the programme in Autumn 2020.The

Autumn Term and ongoing	(Harrow School)		have been paired with tutors to date	programme currently delivers 1:1 subject specific GCSE online tuition and/or mentoring to Children Looked After Each session runs for approximately 40 to 60 minutes at a time. Each young person is specifically paired with a tutor who can support their specific subject.
Autumn and ongoing	Letterbox	Years R/1/2/3/4/6 & 7	29	The Booktrust runs The Letterbox club which aims to provide children with parcels full of high-quality books and resources, to help encourage reading and learning. Letterbox Club can help looked-after students to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build their confidence in reading, maths and their self-esteem • Feel remembered, valued and excited about receiving their parcels • Spend time with their carers/families and peers to share stories and play games • Have continuity through receiving their parcels despite any placement moves Each child registered received six parcels, with a total of up to 14 fiction and non-fiction books, 10 maths games, around 40 items of stationery and other resources. Feedback from carers has been generally positive with a couple of issues with the levels of books.
Autumn	Care to dance	Y7 -11	1	12 weeks dance classes, street and contemporary and other dance styles. With a group performance on the final Saturday. Classes at Oti Mabuse's studio. It's also an opportunity for young people in care to socialise with their peers.
Autumn	Element Project	Y10-Y13	6	Specifically, for UASC's, the project's mission is to develop the young people's creative identities and aim to improve participants self-confidence, self-expression and creativity, as well as capitalising on engagement with them and linking them to further opportunities. Over 4 afternoons the young people have workshops to help with their English, photography, design, painting, collage and creative writing. On the final afternoon there was a display of all the young people's work and carers and staff were invited. See separate report
Autumn	Springboard Youth Academy	Y10-Y13	2	Specifically, for UASC's age 13 and above who have been in the UK for less than 2 years. Held every Saturday at Newman College, the young people have 1.5 hours ESOL tuition, then play football or cricket, they have a free hot halal meal and then life skills or art in the afternoon. The feedback received is that it helps the young people meet other young people in the same situation as themselves.
Autumn	Spring-forward	Yr 12/13	3	Springforward is a DfE sponsored project. The first pilot programme offers five sessions on university "preparation", e.g. courses, applications and wider university related issues such as finance.
Autumn/Spring/Summer	Reading Club	Years 3 - 8	8	Designed and led by Virtual Schools, this is a virtual book club which takes place once per month. Children are sent a book each month ahead of the meeting. The aim of this book club is to foster a love of reading, so sessions are kept fun and informative to boost enjoyment and comprehension.
Spring	Jamie's Farm	Y9-10	5	5-day residential trip to Jamie's Farm – Monmouth in Wales. The aim of the trip is to build up resilience, confidence, teamwork, and independent life skills as well as learning about the environment, caring for animals and growing crops. Activities included farming, cooking, gardening, log chopping, working with horses, playing games, and exploring the countryside.
Spring	Philosophy Club	Y5-6	3	Critical Thinking Skills for Y3 to Y6 – young people can make new friends online, whilst having the chance to converse and discuss lots of different ideas. In the sessions, the young people are presented with an idea or other stimulus such as a story or poem or short film and are then asked questions to engage them in conversation with each other. Developing thinking skills like this will help the young person to be able to express themselves and their ideas more clearly, to listen to the ideas of others and to create new ideas out of their discussions.
Spring	Harrow School Lumina EasyA	Y11	24	This is an app that can support our young people with homework. They can take a photo of a question and then a mentor will connect with them virtually to offer support. The support is currently offered for the following subjects :- Maths, Physics, Chemistry and Biology.
Spring	Care to Dance	Y7-11	1	Celebration event, as previous event had to be cancelled due to changes in COVID guidelines. The young people were able to put on a performance of the variety of dances they had learnt over the 11 weeks of dance classes.
Spring	Debate Mate	Y9-11	3	A series of virtual sessions, young people had the opportunity to practice lots of different elements to debating – thinking on their feet, structuring an argument and backing up their argument, whilst developing their public speaking skills and learning to articulate their views clearly. This is done in a very engaging, fun way using topics that

				are relevant to them. Young people then practice these skills with a final 'debate challenge' in person and all young people were given a certificate for participating in the programme
Spring	Brunel Urban Scholars	Y9	1	The urban scholars programme is based at Brunel University. It runs over 3 years. The aim of the programme is to increase engagement with learning, increase academic achievement, enhance aspirations and support to fulfil potential. Undergraduates and past urban scholars support the young people as mentors and encourage the students to participate fully in the programme.
Spring and Summer	Music Lessons	All years	8	We have recently connected with Barnet Educational Arts Trust, who offer music lessons in most Barnet schools. We have referred over 20 young people and they have currently arranged music lessons for piano, clarinet, Djembe drums, violin and recorder.
Summer	UASC Element Project	Y10-Y13	13	As the Autumn Element project was so popular, an Element project just for Barnet VS was commissioned. See above for details
Summer	Phoenix Outdoor centre	Y5-7 Y10-11 Y12-13	1 3 1	Four different dates for Phoenix for 4 different age range were offered. Phoenix Outdoor Centre is situated on the Welsh Harp Reservoir and provided some great outdoor activities for our young people. The aim of the day was to have great fun in a safe outdoor environment, including Orienteering and Kayaking.
Summer	Live Unlimited. Outdoor Club	Age 6-10 Age 11-17	4 2	Barnet Outdoor club runs for 6 weeks on Saturday Mornings for ages 6-10 and afternoons for ages 11-17. They give Barnet's care experienced children an opportunity to make friends with other care experienced children, learn new skills, build fires, feed chickens, get muddy and have some fun.
Summer	Horsenden Hill Activity	Y3-8 Y11-13	2 5	Two separate days at Horsenden Hill Activity Centre were offered - one day for Y3-8 and the other day for Y11-13. It was a fun day for the young people who took part in Battle Zone Archery, NERF Battle, Giant Inflatables and Footgolf.
Summer	Family First Nights – Mousetrap theatre	Rec-Y5	4	10 families were offered free theatre tickets and 4 families took up the offer. They were asked to give their top 3 choices from a list of shows, with specific dates and times for each performance. This enrichment was targeted to our younger cohort as they had had less enrichment opportunities
Summer	Strength in Horses	Y6-9	4	Strength and Learning Through Horses' provides an alternative experience for young people who sometimes find it difficult to engage in traditional therapy and classroom settings but thrive in the inclusive outdoor setting of the stables. The expert team of Clinic Psychologists, Psychotherapists and Horse Behaviour Experts work with young people helping them to translate the horse's behaviour into observations which are meaningful for the young person.
Summer	Brunel University 3 day and night residential	Y9-10	2	One of the aims of the residential is to de-mystify university so that the young people can make an informed choice when the time comes. The sessions will be led by university undergraduates who are all Care Leavers and they will talk to the young people about their journeys through education and the choices they made. The theme of the residential is "Science, Society and Me". There will be a focus on looking forward to KS4 and their GCSEs.
Summer	Springboard Youth Academy	UASC Y9-13	4	Springboard Youth Academy are offering a 3-week UASC Summer Camp where the young people will have some ESOL tuition and be able to practice their speaking and listening along with taking part in sports activities, art and drama. They will also have a day trip to London and visit the Natural History Museum. A hot halal lunch will be provided every day and any leftovers can be taken home by the young people.

Over the year, 60 statutory aged young people took part in at least one enrichment activity (32%). 39 were attending in borough schools and 21 out of borough. There are more in borough young people in the Virtual School and ease of accessibility for out of borough young people can be an issue. 45% of attendees were girls and 55% boys with 25% having EHCPs. 44 of the young people who took part in an enrichment did not take part in one last year and 6 of those were new to care during the year.

Stepladder Project

This is a tailor-made incentivised learning programme for 15–17-year-olds who have been in care for at least one year (with Child Trust Fund). Online modules covering Literacy, numeracy, financial

capability, future planning, and employment are completed, resulting in a monetary contribution to their savings account, which they can access when they turn 18.

The total amount paid out in incentive payments has increased to £24,300. There should be an increase in completed steps over the summer holidays in the KS4 cohort, particularly due to Y11 finishing exams and wanting to participate in something constructive. The Virtual School caseworker has been working closely with The Stepladder Mentor to follow up on new registrations, regularly monitoring progress and checking in with young people and their carers to ensure they have the support needed to complete the programme.

Total number of young people registered - 42

Total number of young people over 18 who have completed the programme in full - 9

Total number of young people under 18 who have completed the programme in full – 1

Total number of young people under 18 who are active on the programme – 17

Of these 17

- 1 has completed the programme in full
- 3 young people have achieved step 5
- 3 young people have achieved step 4
- 4 young people have achieved step 3
- 5 young people have achieved Step 2
- 7 young people have achieved step 1

Total number of young people under 18 where no steps have been completed – 9

8 young people did not start and have turned 18 and therefore no longer eligible for stepladder.

b. Family Services

The Virtual School has continued to work closely with Family Services, attending several meetings including Permanency Panel, Permanency Tracking Meeting and Vulnerable Adolescents Panel ensuring a clear link with the wider team. The Virtual School are also represented on CPOG, a multi-agency group which coordinates and advances the Corporate Parenting Plan in Barnet to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers. The Headteacher is meeting monthly with Kate Jeffrey, Head of Service, Corporate Parenting.

The Virtual School is represented on the Barnet on Point working party and the Deputy Head attends monthly. Several social events including a celebration event in the summer term have been supported by the Virtual School. There is now a Junior and Senior BOP termly meeting and the meetings are being shaped to best promote the voices of our CIC and enable them to contribute to policy and practice.

The Virtual School is now represented on the monthly Specialist Inpatient Surgery Panel which is led by NHS representatives across mental health inpatient provisions and enables social workers and other professionals to effectively plan for our CIC who are accessing these services and ensure that discharge plans are in place prior to returning to their placements.

Training has been delivered through the fostering team on The Role of the Educational Professional and from September education specific training to foster carers will be of a rolling programme and will form a compulsory part of the training for foster carers. The first session is due to be delivered in the Autumn Term. Expectations for PEPs has been shared with team managers and will be addressed again before the Autumn PEP season.

c. Designated Teachers

The Virtual School has continued to send out two newsletters a term and to offer a range of training. Both have now been extended to Designated Safeguarding Leads as well as Designated Teachers in response to the extensions of the Virtual School duties.

Training has included:

- New to being a D.T/New to Barnet
- Understanding the impact of domestic violence
- An introduction to the impact of relational and developmental trauma on children's bodies and sensory worlds – Dr Karen Treisman
- 'Working with children/young people who are hurting: Trauma and the developing brain'
- Working with refugee and asylum-seeking children and young people
- Supporting care Leavers at Post 16 (Pathway plans and working with Personal Advisors)
- Improving School Attendance Conference

d. Foster Carers

Termly newsletters have been sent to foster carers and training offered across the year. Topics covered have included:

- Supporting early reading and home learning for primary aged children
- Strategies to support reading and home learning for secondary aged children
- The Role of the Educational Professional
- Transitions
- Managing exam anxiety
- Supporting positive relationships at home

e. Educational Psychology (E.P.)

The Virtual School has two days of EP support per week over the year, they have supported the team in a variety of ways including:

- Supervision for senior members of the team
- Work Discussion Groups for caseworkers to explore working practices
- Consultation sessions for caseworkers to explore complex cases
- Direct pieces of work / assessments with young people, carers, and schools for complex cases
- Training for caseworkers, designated teachers, and carers
- Newsletter contributions
- Consultation slots for foster carers
- Research focus (currently post USAC young people with suspect learning needs)

Their input has been invaluable and has really supported young people in challenging situations.

f. SEND and Inclusion

Within the Virtual School there are a high number of children with special educational needs. Monthly meetings are held with the Head of SEN Assessments and Placements team to discuss any difficult cases and there is also occasional representation on the Complex Needs Panel to discuss and agree applications for EHCP assessments and funding requests.

g. Pupil Placement Panel

The Virtual School attends the fortnightly Pupil Placement Panel, a multi-agency group which monitors all statutory age pupil without a school place and formulates plans to ensure a school placement is identified or an education plan put in place.

h. Inclusion Advisory Team (I.A.T.)

The Virtual School has continued to benefit from the support of the I.A.T. team. The team have delivered a range of training and collaborated on work with the extended duties of all children with a social worker and the Post 16 Pupil Premium Plus Pilot.

i. Working party - Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

The Virtual School has continued to facilitate termly meetings of a working party to look more closely at the issues for UASC young people. It now has a wide range of attendees including representatives from Barnet and Southgate College, social work, the Refugee Council, social workers, educational psychologists and members of other Virtual Schools.

Over the year there have been contributions from the London Asylum Seeking Consortium and care leavers themselves on their experience of Education in the UK. Refugee Education UK provided a talk on age disputes within post-16 environment and an educational psychologist provided an update regarding the ongoing project to help colleges better assess learning needs in Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.

Through doing this working group the Virtual School has also developed (thanks to collaboration with Kent Virtual School) a UASC welcome pack which includes various stationery, Maths and English workbooks, visual dictionaries, and mindfulness colouring booklets. These have been rolled out and any new UASC to Barnet will receive a pack.

12. Post-16 Pupil Premium Pilot Project

Barnet Virtual School was selected to receive funding from the DFE for a Post-16 Pupil Premium Pilot Project after a successful bid. The project ran for 6 months and was a positive piece of work involving collaboration with different professionals. It had several different aspects including:

- an art project run by Barnet and Southgate College for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people to raise the profile of this group and make a positive contribution to the college

This culminated in an opening event. Feedback from the college and young people was positive and they talked with pride about the pieces they had created and how they had amalgamated their lives in their home country and the UK. Feedback from the college included: 'The impact of this project has resulted in learners being able to understand the differences in cultures and other backgrounds whilst developing their language skills. The learners who took part said they enjoyed the classes because they could learn about their own cultural backgrounds along with learning about their friends and this project has supported them and helped the group bond.'

- the development of an introductory booklet explaining education for Post 16 UASC, translated into different languages and a series of YouTube videos for young people not literate in their own language.
- a bespoke post-16 provision newsletter
- two mentors, line managed by the Post 16 team

- training for Barnet and Southgate College on emotionally based school avoidance and on Trauma and Attachment particularly in relation to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking young people, delivered by Barnet Educational Psychologists. Feedback was positive with 100% of participants stating that the training was relevant to their needs and would improve their practice/skills
- developing the PEP process at Post 16 with a member of the Inclusion Advisory team supporting Barnet and Southgate College and writing a booklet of good practice for college setting which was shared in a training session with other post 16 settings

13. Transition Hub (YEF Project) – Hassan Sufi (Lead Teacher)

Achieving for Children’s Virtual School (Kingston, Richmond, Windsor and Maidenhead), in collaboration with Barnet Virtual School and St Mary’s University were awarded a £750,000 research grant, for two years, by the Youth Endowment Foundation for a feasibility study to implement a Transition Hub for children in care aged 11 to 14 who are dealing with a significant transition in their lives e.g. new to care, new school, change of placement or school. This is hosted at Whitefield’s Secondary School and was launched in October 2019.

During this academic year, the hub has supported 18 young people. 10 of these students completed the 6-month journey of the program and 1 student dropped out of the program due to being remanded in custody for a criminal offence. Out of the 10 students who have completed the 6-month journey, 3 are continuing to receive extended support but this will not be used for the evaluation. These 3 were identified as still requiring support and assistance and that stopping it due to the research project’s restrictions would be detrimental for them. 7 students are continuing to work with the hub and 6 are making progress and developing good relationships with professionals. The other young person has decided not to engage due to being overwhelmed with other professionals and GCSE exams.

The hub is now looking as to how they further develop ways of working with young people to support periods of transition as the research element of the project is completed. Interim funding has been agreed to allow the hub staff to move over to the Virtual School from January to March 2023. In the Autumn Term we will be looking at the best use of these Transition Hub staff when they no longer are constricted by the requirements of the project.

Sarah Deale July 2022

Appendix 1

14. Extension to duties – children with a social worker

From September 2021 Virtual School Heads (VSH) were asked to become **strategic** leaders for the cohort of children who have been assessed as being in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and currently have a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker. It covers all children who were assessed as needing a social worker at any time due to safeguarding and/or welfare reasons, which includes all those subject to a Child in Need plan or a Child Protection plan. This includes children aged from 0 up to 18 in all education settings.

The non-statutory guidance advises three ways to implement strategic leadership:

- Enhance partnerships between education settings and the local authority so agencies can work together

- Identify the needs of the cohort and addressing barriers to poor educational outcomes and ensure pupils make educational progress
- Offer advice and support to key professionals to help children make progress, including through increasing their confidence in using evidence-based interventions

The first phase of the project has been an information gathering exercise to identify the cohort and their educational placements. Working with data teams across the authority, a system has been developed to provide a weekly report of CIN cases including SEN and UPN data. After confirming educational placements with schools, a third-party company has been used to design and set up a data collection system to monitor the attendance and attainment for young people who have been on a Child Protection Plan this academic year. Weekly attendance reports have been compiled for Social Care team managers and the Education Welfare Team to enable attendance and incidents of exclusion or suspension to be followed up. The Virtual School is routinely performing spot checks for attendance and exclusions and following up with schools and social workers. Accompanying this data collection, consultations with schools and social workers have been offered to support with individual cases. From these initial steps, an analysis of the data is building a picture of the issues surrounding the cohort based on evidence. Whilst only a proportion of the cohort has been monitored, overall attendance shows a similar pattern as with the children in care. Attendance for the year is 88.87% with strongest attendance in the primary phase, dropping off in Key Stage 3. Year 11 shows the lowest attendance at 66.9%.

Action was taken to address the issue of persistent absence within the cohort by hosting a conference to look at ways to improve school attendance and tackle persistent absence during the Summer term. The conference provided an opportunity for both schools and social care teams to hear the latest evidence-based research and advice around supporting school attendance with the following speakers attending:

- Hannah Blausten from the Education Endowment Fund gave a summary of the Rapid Evidence Assessment into interventions to improve attendance recently published on the EEF website ([Attendance interventions rapid evidence assessment | EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](https://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk))
- Ellie Costello from the charity Square Peg spoke about the lack of data on persistent absence and what schools can do to make a difference in supporting young people and families. Square Peg was set up as a social enterprise in April 2019, to effect change for children who struggle to attend school and their families.
- Dr Ruth Moyse from Southampton University spoke about how the words we use frame how we understand and address persistent absenteeism with a particular focus on autistic girls and other groups of marginalised young people.
- Lauren Jefferson updated attendees about processes and support offered through the BELs Education Welfare service
- Barnet Family Services highlighted ways that social care can support attendance and discussed examples of best practice between schools and social workers
- Amy Gibb and Parminder Chana from BELs Educational Psychology team discussed Emotion Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and ways for schools to support young people affected by this.

Feedback showed that participants were interested to hear about strategies for tackling EBSA and were appreciative of hearing from a diverse range of speakers. Key information has been distributed to schools and the Virtual School will continue to provide information and signposting as part of the Local Authority response to 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'.

The Virtual School has looked at ways to make systemic change to improve persistent absence rates for Children with a social worker, researching best practice in other authorities and attending workshops with Camden and Wandsworth boroughs to look at the ways they have linked with social care to improve attendance. During the summer term Child Protection cases with Persistent Absence have been audited and results show that school attendance has yet to be routinely included as a target and actions for schools regarding attendance have not been identified. Out of the 47 plans sampled, 12 had targets relating to school attendance. Findings have been shared with Family Services with the proposed expectation that over the next academic year, attendance of young people is discussed as part of every social worker home visit, school visit, supervision session and CIN/CP plan, with social workers following up with parent/child about non-attendance and unauthorised absences and how it can be improved. The Virtual School proposes that every child who has school attendance below 90%, has a target on the CP/CIN plan to improve this with actions for all to support this.

To support data collection for the extended CiN cohort, including school placement and attainment data available on DfE databases, the Virtual School has worked with Family Services to improve the collection of UPN data at the point of referral with vast improvements being made in this area.

	% with no UPN recorded on LCS November 2021	% with no UPN recorded on LCS July 2022
Child Protection Cases	77%	2%
Child in Need Cases	55%	5%

Because of the size of the cohort, the collection of CiN attendance data has been financially prohibitive using a third-party company. It is expected with the UPN data now in place, Virtual Schools will be able to access this data as the DfE develops its attendance portal in the new academic year.

At the beginning of the year, social workers were surveyed to better understand training needs in relation to education. A handbook has been compiled to be published on the Virtual School website as an easy reference for social workers new to post covering areas such as attendance and exclusions, admissions, SEN and the national curriculum.

School safeguarding teams were surveyed in January to look at what support could be offered in schools to raise outcomes for Children with a Social Worker. Schools identified the need for:

- training to support staff with understanding and working with families and young people who have experienced domestic violence or abuse.
 - The Virtual School provided training from the Educational Psychology team in June outlining the impact of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) on children and young people’s psychological wellbeing, learning and relationships and exploring approaches to support young people and families affected by DVA. The training also provided an opportunity for social workers and school staff to train together.
 - Virtual School training and newsletters previously directed at Designated Teachers in schools has been opened to any staff member involved with working with children with a social worker this academic year.
- clarification around expected communication between Family Services and Schools once a young person goes on to a plan.
 - The Virtual School created a one-page document outlining CiN communication expectations including processes for escalating a concern. This document has been distributed to all safeguarding teams and will be updated for distribution in September in accordance with the new DfE guidance Behaviour in Schools – Advice for headteachers and school staff.

Additionally, the Virtual School ran a series of 50-minute standalone consultations for social workers &/or designated safeguarding leads in schools throughout the year to discuss a concern about a child or young person (CYP)/group of CYP with a social worker or who previously had a social worker, linked to their education e.g., attendance, learning, wellbeing at school etc. The feedback from this initiative has been very positive with all attendees reporting that they strongly agreed that the session was helpful and that they would recommend the service to other professionals. Individual feedback about what was most helpful about the session included:

'The opportunity to speak to a clinician without prejudice and troubleshoot some challenges we have with a number of cases involving social care. Parminder was open, friendly and knowledgeable.'

'Discussing the case with other professionals & listening to ideas/strategies which could help. Having the Early Help professional linked to the family present was also useful - thank you to whoever spent the time to invite her. It is always a relief to know that you are not alone when working with complex cases.'

Some of the areas that came up during the consultations are listed below. These areas will be explored and used to inform planning for EP support during academic year 2022-3

- Managing taboos and stigma for the school community when a family becomes involved in social care
- Difficulties in communication between organisations and services especially when a plan changes or when a child changes educational placement
- Domestic violence and trauma experiences impacting on development and emotional regulation
- Difficulties and challenges working with parents
- Parents accepting support from both schools and family services
- School attendance
- Emotionally based school avoidance and social isolation experienced by young people
- School staff struggling to manage difficult behaviours in school
- Accessing therapeutic support
- Responsibility and emotional load experienced by school safeguarding teams - who is supporting them?

Governors have been made aware of the extension to the duties of the Virtual School and information has been distributed through the Governors briefing describing what Governors should be doing to support the cohort. Governors will be able to access the information on the website in the new academic year.

Over the Summer term, the Virtual School has continued to develop a strategic approach to improving outcomes for Children with a Social worker by focusing on trauma informed practice in Barnet schools. A pilot Attachment Aware whole school project is now in development with a primary and secondary school which will be implemented over the course of the next academic year. Attendance, exclusions, cohort size and data relating to support offered from other BELs services was scrutinised to establish a shortlist of schools to target resulting in Underhill and Copthall being selected for the pilot. Through research and by speaking with other Virtual Schools, the Attachment Research Community is being used to allow schools to access online audit and development tools and be part of a wider research community. Initial discussions and visits with schools have taken place this term with audits being completed over the summer in preparation for development planning in September. The Virtual School is working with the Inclusion Advisory team and the

Virtual School link EPs to devise this programme which can then be rolled out to other Barnet schools to improve the outcomes for Children with a Social Worker.