

# LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN & CARE LEAVERS ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

<b>Committee name</b>	Social Care, Housing and Public Health
<b>Officer reporting</b>	Zafer Yilkan - Head of Service, Looked After Children, Leaving Care and Court Service
<b>Papers with report</b>	None
<b>Ward</b>	All

## HEADLINES

This report provides a briefing to the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee regarding the Council's engagement with Hillingdon's Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers. It highlights the significant responsibilities the local authority has in relation to Looked After Children and Care Leavers, and how the council discharges its duties to ensure 'best outcomes are achieved' for the children, young people and care leavers who are in our care.

Generally, outcomes for looked after children across the UK are poorer than those who have not been in the care system. Despite the good work and dedication of professionals (Children's Social Care, Education and Health) and carers, challenges still remain in improving the experiences and outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. Locally, the London Borough of Hillingdon closely monitors the progress and outcomes for each and every looked after child and care leaver, and effectively plan services around the child/young person as well as wider service provision for our care population.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**That the Committee notes the content of the report and the role the Committee and all Members have in championing the corporate parenting ethos across the Council. This report is for information.**

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### Introduction

In this report, the term Looked After Children refers to those children for whom Hillingdon has assumed responsibility through a care order, by an agreement with parent(s) (Section 20) or for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs).

Hillingdon also has a duty and responsibility for all those young people who leave care after the age of 18 years until they reach the age of 25, following the recent legislative changes that were introduced with the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Previously, the duty was until 21 years for care leavers who were not in education. The change in legislation requires all local authorities

to support its care leavers until 25 years regardless of their educational status.

## Corporate Parenting

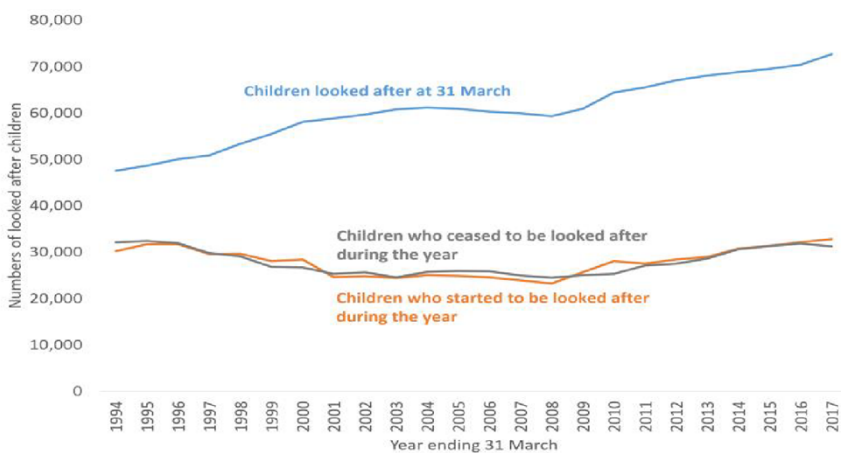
Corporate Parenting is a term used to refer to the collective responsibility of the council to provide the best care and protection for children and young people who are 'looked after' that is, who are in public care. Effective corporate parenting requires the commitment from all council employees and elected members. These responsibilities for Local Authorities were first laid out in the Children Act 1989, subsequently in the Children Act 2004 and the Children and Young People's Act 2008 and most recently again in the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

In Hillingdon, we are 'Corporate parent' to 711 children (looked after children and care leavers). We engage with each child and young person individually at statutory visits, looked after reviews and pathway planning meetings. In the first quarter of 2018, 86% of young people participated in their looked after (LAC) reviews.

## Numbers of Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Nationally, there were 72,670 children and young people in care on 31 March 2017, compared with 70,440 at the same point in 2016 (national data for 2018 figures is not yet available). This represents a 3% increase in LAC population nationally. It is the highest figure of children in care since the implementation of the Children Act 1989.

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



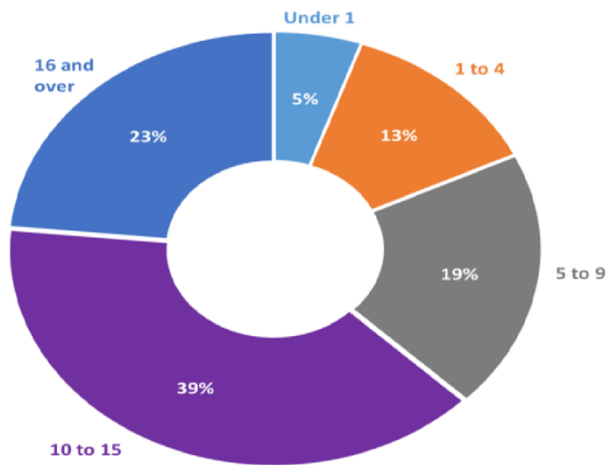
### The majority of looked after children are placed with foster carers

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

75% of looked after children at 31 March 2017 were white, 9% were of mixed ethnicity, 7% were black or black British, 5% were Asian or Asian British and 3% were other ethnic groups. Non-white children

appear to be slightly over-represented in the looked after children population, in particular children of mixed and black ethnicity. Children of Asian ethnicity are slightly under-represented. Over the last five years there have been small increases in the proportions of looked after children of non-white ethnicity which is likely to reflect the increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children

### Age of Looked after children



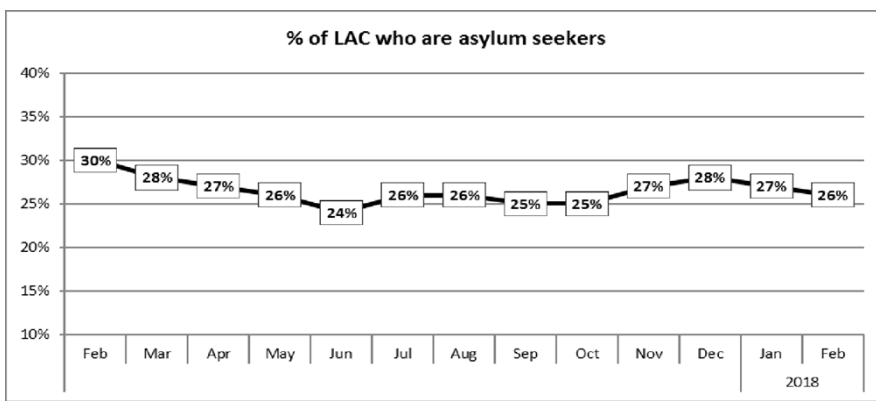
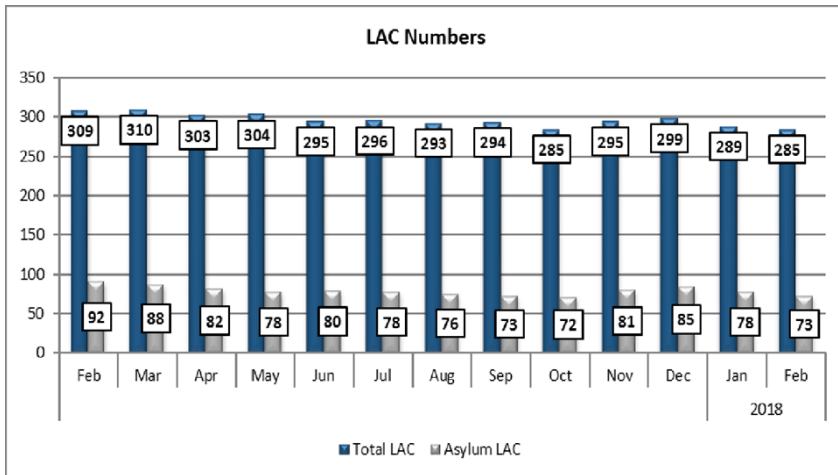
Hillingdon currently has 311 looked after children and 400 care leavers, an increase by 5% from April 2018. In numbers, this is an increase of 15 children from 296 in April to 316 in June 2018, (5 children removed from LAC status in July). Year on year, there has been a 5% increase in the number of LAC this June compared to June last year when there were 295 LAC. Of the 311 LAC at the end of June 2018, 78 (25%) were asylum seeking children. This is an increase from 73 (25%) asylum seeking children at the end of April 2018. Year on year the number of LAC asylum seeking children has fallen from 80 in Q1 2017/18, as a percentage of the whole cohort the ratio of asylum seeking children has risen from 24% in Q1 2017/18 to 25% in Q1 2018/19. The range of LAC asylum seeking children during this period was 71-85 children / 24%-28%.

Table 1 below is a comparison of Hillingdon’s LAC population with our statistical neighbours, London and nationally. There has been a steady year on year decrease in ‘local’ LAC population in contrast to sharp increase in UASC population of 27.4% increase in contrast to London average increase of 15.5% and nationally 6.3%.

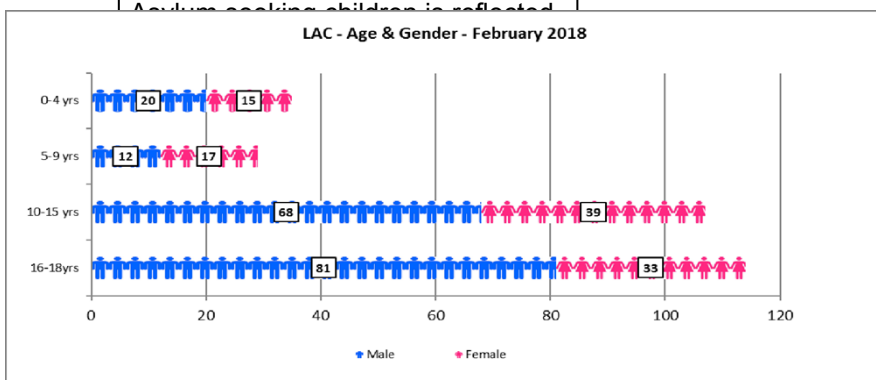
<b>Table LAA1: Children looked after at 31 March</b>						
						<b>Table LAA4</b>

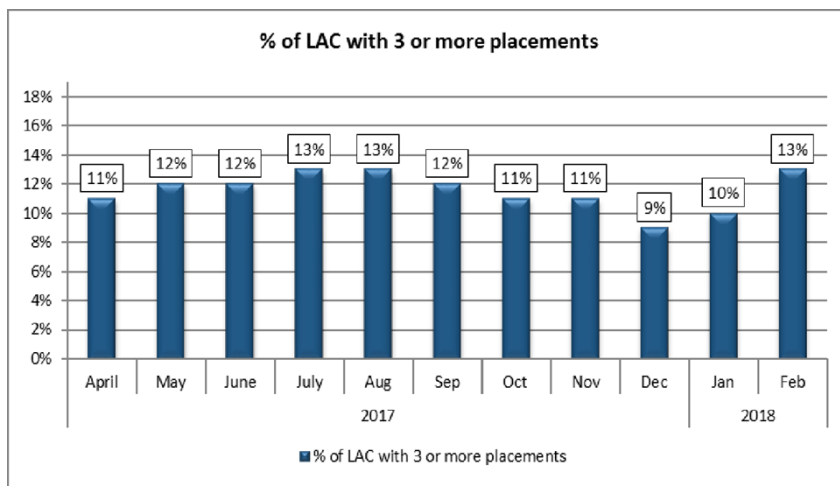
Statistical neighbours	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Number of UASCs	% of LAC that are UASC - 2017
Hounslow	300	315	295	280	250	45	18.0%
Redbridge	205	215	215	215	230	15	6.5%
Slough	185	190	195	180	190	10	5.3%
Barnet	305	310	305	315	345	30	8.7%
Reading	225	205	210	220	260	10	3.8%
Sutton	170	195	225	230	230	20	8.7%
Ealing	400	385	355	370	345	45	13.0%
Coventry	620	630	590	580	620	40	6.5%
Milton Keynes	280	305	340	345	395	40	10.1%
Merton	140	150	155	165	150	20	13.3%
<b>Hillingdon</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>27.4%</b>
Top quartile	333	335	338	343	345	43	12%
Average	290	296	293	295	302	33	11%
England	68070	68820	69500	70450	72670	4560	6.3%
London	10080	10110	9980	9860	9910	1540	15.5%
Outer London	5630	5730	5780	5810	5680	1050	18.5%

The LAC population of Hillingdon is 65% male 35% female. This sits between the national ratio of 56% male and 44% female and for the London area 69% male and 31% female. In respect of age groups, the LAC population of Hillingdon has 41% of the population aged 16-18, this is greater than both the national average of 23% and the London average of 35%. Of the 78 LAC asylum seeking children 59 (76%) are aged 16-18 - 52 of these are male and 7 are female.



The percentage of unaccompanied Asylum seeking children is reflected





### Placement Stability:

Children who are subject to frequent placement moves are less able to form positive attachments with their carers which makes them more vulnerable to forming unsafe relationships with other adults and peer groups and disengagement with education and positive activities. The number of placement moves that children have are carefully monitored and scrutinised to minimise disruption to our children and to make placement more resilient to prevent breakdown. Although every move is carefully planned and considered, placement breakdown for older children (14-16 year olds) remains a challenge for the local authority and a number of strategies have been put in place to prevent breakdown such as regular Placement Stability Meetings, additional support, therapy and where necessary 1-2-1 staffing ratio to prevent it. At the end of June 2018 37 (12%) LAC had three or more placements in the last 12 months, an improvement of 1 child from April 2018.

Unlike most London local authorities, we are fortunate to have 3 in-house residential units for children under 16 years and a semi-independent unit for 16 - 17 year olds. These provisions support Hillingdon's looked after children to remain locally. However, a small number of children are not able to live within Hillingdon when they are in care. A small minority of older children (17 children and young people) are placed at a distance in order to be more effectively safeguarded due to involvement in or due to the risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE), gang affiliation and/or drug dealing activities. At the end of June 2018 170 (55%) of LAC were in foster placements, 73 (23%) were in semi independent living and 54 (17%) in a residential placements. In 2017-18, there were 3 children in secure units (2 already successfully stepped-down to a therapeutic residential placement). At present, there is only one young person who was involved in high risk nationwide drug dealing remaining in a secure unit.

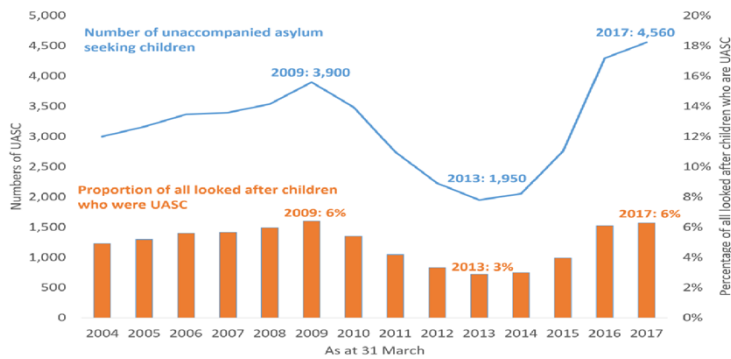
### Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Hillingdon currently has 93 UASC and 220 asylum seeking care leavers in our care. Within Hillingdon there has been consistently high numbers of UASC care entries and remained consistently much higher than Government's recommended ratio of 0.07% per 10.000 of local children's population. There is no dedicated budget for UASC or former UASC care leavers within Hillingdon, other than the Home Office grant received which covers only a small portion of Hillingdon's overall costs for UASC. Although the introduction of the National Transfer Scheme

(NTS) was intended to more evenly distribute UASC between the local authorities rather than primarily within London and the South East. Hillingdon is a port Local Authority to Heathrow Airport which brings additional challenges in relation to UASC and specifically for those UASC who refuse to move out of Hillingdon and London. Having said that, Hillingdon has forged strong links and partnership working with the Home Office, DfE and the UKBA to influence and develop good practice in relation to UASC. Currently, Hillingdon has 38 UASC awaiting transfers to other LAs, 12 refusing to go and 18 transferred since January 2018. Since the introduction of the NTS in July 2016, Hillingdon successfully transferred 61 UASC to other local authorities. Hillingdon also successfully negotiated with the Home Office to fund the Heathrow Standby Rota which ensures UASCs are assessed and supported at point of arrival at Heathrow Airport. Table 4 below demonstrates that Hillingdon deal with significantly higher volumes of UASC than our statistical neighbours and above national average. There is notable consistency in the age of UASC aged between 15-17 years. Given the age trends the UASC population has a significant bearing on Hillingdon's care leavers numbers and associated budgets.

<b>Statistical neighbours</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
Hounslow	25	30	40	35	45
Redbridge	20	20	25	20	15
Slough	10	10	10	10	10
Barnet	5	x	10	20	30
Reading	5	x	x	5	10
Sutton	5	10	10	15	20
Ealing	15	20	25	25	45
Coventry	10	10	15	15	40
Milton Keynes	5	10	25	40	40
Merton	20	15	15	25	20
<b>Hillingdon</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>85</b>
Top quartile	20	20	25	30	43
Average	20	24	27	29	33
England	1950	2060	2750	4300	4560
London	880	970	1230	1470	1540
Outer London	660	740	910	1070	1050

**Table 4 - Unaccompanied asylum seeking children looked after at 31 March, by authority**  
**The number of looked after children who were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children continues to increase in 2017**



### Health Outcomes for Looked After Children

Looked after children and young people share the same health risks and problems as their peers but often to a greater degree. They often enter care with a worse level of health than their peers due to poverty, neglect, abuse and poor parenting. UASCs face additional health, emotional and mental health needs due to their experiences in their country or on route to the UK. Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that regular health assessments are carried out for every looked after child. Hillingdon has a robust monitoring process to ensure timely completion of health assessments supported by a jointly produced Health & Wellbeing Guidance with Health. Table 5 below outlines the progress that has been made to improve health assessment outcomes for our looked after children and young people. 93% of all LAC have up to date health assessments. The remaining 10% refers to our young people who have refused to attend their health assessments, despite persistent encouragement by their workers.

Dental health is an integral part of the health assessment. The local authority and NHS Trust are required to ensure that all looked after children receive regular check-ups with a dentist. There has been a significant improvement (20% increase) in ensuring all LAC children have annual dental checks. At present, over 90% of LAC have up to date dental examination. Similar to health assessments, the remaining 10% relates to young people who refuse to attend their dentist appointments.

% of Health assessments & Dental checks for 2016 -17 and 2017-18 Hillingdon:

Year	Number of children with health surveillance checks up to date	Number of children who have had their annual health assessment	Number of children their teeth checked by a dentist
2017-2018	100%	93%	90%



2016-2017	88%	92%	70%
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**Table 5 - Annual health assessment for LAC 2016-17 and 2017-18**

Hillingdon’s Looked after children have lower Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores than national averages, with Hillingdon’s LAC population having a average score of 12.2 and nationally this being 14.1. Young people have access to community resources from our Targeted programmes and also specially commissioned service MAPS. The practice focuses on to ensure that:

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

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

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

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

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

In 2017, 32% of Looked After Children reached the new expected standard or above in the headline measure reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2, compared to 61% for non-looked after children.

In 2017, there was an increase in the percentage of Looked After Children achieving an A\*-C in English and mathematics from 17.4 % to 17.5%. The percentage of Looked After Children achieving the old headline measure, percentage achieving 5+ GCSEs A\*-C or equivalent including English and mathematics was 15%.

### **Hillingdon LAC educational achievements:**

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

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

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

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

The percentage of statutory school age LAC without a school place remains low at 3.6%. Average attendance for statutory school age LAC is currently 90.18%, with unauthorised absence of 2.89%. 10.6 % of the statutory school age LAC cohort have recorded one or more fixed term exclusions.

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

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

### **Care Leavers**

Nationally 40% of Care leavers aged 19-21 are not in education training or employment (NEET) in 2017. Care Leavers in Hillingdon are more likely to be engaged in Education Training and

Employment than the national average with 22% of our care leaver population being NEET.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Care leavers have the opportunity to stay with their families for longer. 19 care leavers are in 'Staying put' arrangements. 'Staying in touch' arrangements beyond the age of 18 are always

considered and promoted in Hillingdon and all care leavers regardless of their NEET or EET status continue to have a dedicated PA until 21. Our 'Staying put' policy was co-produced with our young people. Hillingdon's Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2018-2021 sets out the vision and priorities regarding placement options, choice and stability.

## **Permanency Planning**

Hillingdon has an established and imbedded Pre-Proceedings process, which is accessed via the Hillingdon Access to Resources Panel. Our PLO and court proceedings were highly praised by both the LGA and Ofsted Inspectors at the last inspection in April 2018. The process includes timely identification of risk and effective intervention, with clear management oversight. Our highly specialised court team ensures timely, evidence-based, child-focused and high quality court work to avoid delays and drift to children's permanency. Our compliance and timescales as set out in Public Law Outline (PLO) which requires care proceedings to conclude within 26 weeks consistently remains one of the best performing Local Authority in London. Our performance since April 2017 as follows:

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

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

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

## **The outcomes of proceedings:**

- 31 Children became subject to Supervision Orders
- 25 Children subject to SGO (6 with Supervision Orders)
- 24 children on Care Orders (5 with Placement Orders)
- 5 Children were granted Placement Orders
- 16 Adoptions Orders have been made and 7 children are currently placed with their prospective adoptive families.

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

## **Listening to the voice of the child**

The 2007 Care Matters: Time for Change White Paper set out the then government's intention for all local authorities to establish a children in care council to provide children and young

people, in and leaving care, with additional opportunities to voice their views and experiences of the care system and increase their ability to influence and improve the services they receive from their local authority corporate parents.

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

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

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

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

### **Key achievement for Children in Care Council in the previous 12 months**

- representatives of stepping out and step up met with Ofsted inspectors in April 2018 who described them as an insightful group of children and young people.
- representative of stepping out and step up met with the director and deputy director on a quarterly basis to discuss key areas of challenge and improvement for services for children in care and care leavers.
- representatives of Stepping out were involved in recruitment of Personal Advisors for the young people's service and staff within the children's rights and participation team.
- CiCC were engaged with the previous Corporate Parenting Board with 8 young people leading the board's discussion.
- Stepping out were actively involved in the planning and delivery of the annual care leavers conference in 2017 choosing the theme of chasing your dreams - education training and employment. The event, supported by Brunel University had 9 education, training and employment providers, with 100% of attendees stating that the event was enjoyable, useful and helpful.

### **Celebrating the achievement of our children in care**

Every year Hillingdon celebrated the achievements of its children in care with an awards ceremony. The event, kindly supported by the Arora hotels group is planned, arranged and presented by children in care. The 2017 event saw 198 Looked after children and young people awarded a KICA with 21 young people actively involved in the preparation, support, presenting

and performing at the red carpet awards event. Feedback received by those in attendance show this event was a huge success.

Plans in in progress for KICA 2018 with the event taking place on 10th November 2018. The young person's KICA panel has chosen a theme of "carnival" for an exciting and uplifting event.

### **Future events and consultation**

The children's rights and participation team continue to lead the involvement of young people in service development and delivery and are supporting young people in the next 6 months to:

- be involved in interviews for newly qualified social workers
- be involved in interviews for children's rights and participation officer
- leading a workshop at the annual CAF/CASS conference
- providing training, alongside the LSCB to multi-agency colleagues regarding to support professionals understanding of their lived experiences
- involved in "young inspectors" project, inspecting Hillingdon's three residential units.
- be involved in the development of complaints leaflets, to meet the identified recommendations from the April 2018 Ofsted inspection.

### **What do looked after children and care leavers say about the service they receive from Hillingdon?**

#### **XX age 15 years**

*My name is XX and I am a 15-year-old girl. I am British/Gambian. I have high aspirations for the future. I have been the secretary of Stepping Up, one of Hillingdon's Children in Care Council subgroups for two years, where I am told I am very opinionated and vocal! I believe we do really good work at Stepping up, including describing what and who we want our social workers to be. I believe that helps children in care, because social workers learn from us. It also helps Hillingdon recruit good social workers!*

*K is my social worker. She is very, very good. She doesn't make promises she can't keep and she always does what she says. I can't even think of once that K didn't do what she said she would. She turns up early and takes me out for lunch, I particularly enjoy our Chinese-food lunches! K really listens to me and she is always there for me. She checks in when I go quiet, and will just turn up or she will text or call me. She tries really hard to make my life better. I find her to be supportive and understanding. She does not always agree with me, but she will listen to what I have to say.*

*K helps me to attend my meetings, because I can be shy around all the adults. I usually tell K what I need to say before a meeting, so that she can help me out if I need it. She is so supportive. She finds me activities to do and she helps me keep in contact with my family. She also helps me to make sense of stuff, like why my foster sister keeps following me around.*

#### **ZZ age 18 years**

*My name is ZZ, I am 18 years old and have had support from the Leaving Care Service from March 2016 when I first came into care. It was a rough ride! I was very angry, confused and volatile at the time. I did many things to hurt myself. I had an eating disorder, I really struggled with my mental health, I did not sleep and I was drinking and using drugs. I was also coming to terms with my sexuality. I would have massive meltdowns in the office, screaming at my social*

*worker and managers, but that is all in the past now.*

*I now have a full-time apprenticeship and am completing my GCSEs at the same time. I live in supported lodgings and have a great relationship with my Key worker and the girls there. It feels like family. I visit my family and even babysit my little niece. I do not binge drink anymore, I do not do drugs and I work really hard to make my dreams come true. I am saving for a car and have started my driving lessons!*

*Part of what helped me turn my life around was a change in my brain and in my thinking and the other part was the support and help from the Leaving Care Team. My social worker was amazing. She was the only person who got me. She listened (even if I was swearing and shouting!), she understood me and she knew my history and my journey. She never judged me. She never got angry. She just accepted me for who I am. The little things made a big difference, like taking me to my mental health appointments, going to the hospital, texting, phoning, turning up and arranging activities (I would have liked more of those!). When she was not around, the duty workers and team managers, even the Head of Service would meet with me and listen to me.*

*I did sometimes think the team was a bunch of pushy parents and I was not always ready or willing to listen to advice, but they never gave up, even when I had massive temper tantrums! They helped me to love myself, because they loved me and cared for me, no matter what I did. They accepted my sexuality and always respected me and treated me fairly.*

*I am now ready for the next part of my life journey and look forward to telling other Care Leavers about my difficult journey in the hope to inspire them to accept the help and know there is light at the end of the tunnel. I know that I would have been six feet under, if it wasn't for the help and support I received.*

### **Implications on related Council policies**

The Committee is able to recommend policy ideas within its remit to the Cabinet who is responsible for Council policy.

### **How this report benefits Hillingdon residents**

Policy Overview Committees directly engage residents in looking at ways to further improve the way the Council provides services to residents.

### **Financial Implications**

None at this stage.

### **Legal Implications**

Engaging with children in care and care leavers is a key component of the seven Corporate Parenting Principles introduced by Statutory guidance for local authorities (February 2018) Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers.

