

Parenting looked after children

The Camden strategy 2013 – 2017

**Improving outcomes for looked after children
and care leavers**



Contents

Foreword	Page 3
1. Context	Page 4
2. Who is involved and responsible?	Page 7
3. The Camden Pledge to looked after children, young people and care leavers	Page 11
4. Engagement and involvement	Page 12
5. Key areas for improving outcomes for looked after children and care leavers	Page 13
6. Taking the strategy forward	Page 16

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Extract from the Looked After Children Annual Report to Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee (June 2012)

Appendix 2

Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Board - April 2013.

Foreword

As a corporate parent of looked after children, elected members and Council officers have a statutory responsibility for their wellbeing. Like any good parent, the Council should put the needs of our looked after children first. We aim for each and every child looked after by Camden, wherever they live, to be helped to achieve their potential. This means being a powerful advocate for them to ensure their needs are met in the best way possible and prioritising access to our resources.

Our vision is to ensure that our looked after children and young people have the best opportunities in life regardless of whether they live in Camden or outside the borough. We want our children and young people to be happy and healthy, be safe and protected, be supported successfully into adult life and get the right support and services where they live. We aim to work in partnership with looked after children and young people and carers to hear their views on how best to ensure everyone achieves their full potential, building on the Looked After Children Pledge, which has been signed by looked after children and elected members. We expect everyone working with children, in every agency and every part of our services, to expect the best and go the extra mile to safeguard a looked after child or care leaver.

'Parenting looked after children - the Camden strategy' outlines our key aspirations for looked after children and care leavers and sets out actions we intend to take to achieve them. It provides the framework for all Council officers and elected members to fulfil their roles in ensuring that looked after children achieve their full potential.

We are excited about engaging with young people who have shaped this strategy to help us to be good corporate parents.

Signed by:



Councillor Angela Mason,
Cabinet Member for Children



Helen McMullen,
Director (interim), Children, Schools and Families

1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 Looked after children are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of children who are looked after children are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect and some may have experienced bereavement or are an unaccompanied minor. Therefore they need alternative care and accommodation, due to the inability of their parent, for a range of reasons, to offer safe and adequate care within the family home. As of 15 February 2013, Camden has 260 looked after children and 320 care leavers, who are aged between 16 and 25. This has been the consistent picture in the last five years and current figures show the general trend is that the numbers of looked after children are decreasing. Further details on the profile of looked after children are set out in Appendix 1. The Council's budget for all costs relating to looked after children, care leavers and adoption is £24.7million. This includes staffing costs, all placements and contribution to education and health services for looked after children.
- 1.2 Looked after children and care leavers face a number of challenges as they grow up, develop and then move onto independence. Once the local authority and parents have taken the difficult decision for the child to leave the family, it is the duty of the whole local authority to 'safeguard and promote their welfare' under the Children Act, 1989. The responsibility of the corporate parent continues at least until the age of 21 and up to the age of 25, if the young person is still being supported in higher education or training. Children who are in public care are individuals with distinct needs and their future is shaped by their experiences.
- 1.3 Nationally, the educational, physical and psychological wellbeing, training and employment outcomes for looked after children and young people tend to be poorer, compared with their non-looked after peer group. Looked after children who are disabled also face particular disadvantage. We want the experiences and opportunities in the care of Camden Council to produce the best outcomes. Improving education outcomes, improving access to training and employment opportunities are priorities in Camden for looked after children. These link in with Camden plan themes of "developing new solutions with partners to reduce inequality" and "delivering value for money services by getting it right first time" and 'Change for children and families - delivering the Camden plan', the new children and young people's plan.
- 1.4 The outcome of the Ofsted inspection of looked after children services in April 2012 was that Camden was judged as being consistently good across all aspects of looked after children's services. The inspectors found that partnerships were strong and there was an ambitious vision for looked after children. The partnership was also judged to have a good capacity to improve, which is demonstrated through a consistent track-record. Ofsted has judged the fostering service in Camden as good with outstanding features following the most recent inspection in

January 2013. Providing more local placements is a key priority and is set out in the action plan.

- 1.5 New figures published by the Department for Education on the adoption scorecard show that Camden meets the threshold for adoption indicators, we have improved performance on all key indicators from the previous year and we are significantly better than the national and statistical neighbours' averages in all areas. This shows we are moving in the right direction with more children being placed with adoptive families in a timely way and research suggests this will in time lead to better educational and other life chance outcomes for these children. However, much needs to be done to continuously improve the outcomes for looked after children and the 'parenting looked after children strategy' will give us a framework for ensuring we take an authority-wide approach, which includes the involvement of elected members, Council officers and partners to further improve outcomes for looked after children so that they make a success of their lives.
- 1.6 Ensuring that looked after children receive a high quality education is the foundation for improving their lives. Young people have told us how important this is. Current levels of achievement still show that looked after children are well behind the achievement levels of their peers in London. Therefore, closing the gap between the achievement of looked after children and all young people remains a high priority and much needs to be done to ensure this is achieved.
- 1.7 In Camden, there has been a strong culture of "corporate parenting" which members have taken very seriously. The current cross-party corporate parenting group, made up of elected members and officers, has developed a statement proposing a 'Corporate Parenting Style' which was published in February 2012. This sets out the principles which underpin our work with looked after children. A foster carers charter and the Camden Pledge to looked after children (further details below), which sets out our commitment to working with looked after children, have been agreed and signed up to by elected members (attached below).
- 1.8 The overall aim of the strategy is to build on the work already being progressed and reinforce the corporate responsibility of everyone in the Council, both elected members and staff and of its partner agencies, to improve the life chances of looked after children and care leavers - whether they live in Camden or outside the borough - and get the right support and services where they live. The strategy aims to take a whole-authority approach to drive forward, support and strengthen the areas of good practice and work with key partners in the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors. The formal setting up of the Corporate Parenting Board is proposed, which will provide governance and an overview to ensure outcomes for looked after children improve.

1.9 Looked after children and care leavers

The term 'looked after' refers to any child or young person for whom the local authority has, or shares, parental responsibility, or for whom we provide care and accommodation on behalf of their parent. The term "child" can refer to any child or young person aged 0 to 18 years. The Council also has a duty and responsibility to those young people who leave their long-term care from the age of 16 years until they reach the age of 21, or 25 if they are in higher education.

A child can become looked after with the agreement of their parent (Section 20, Children Act 1989). This is known as voluntary care. Alternatively, a child can become looked after following an application by the local authority for a Care Order (or Interim Care Order) to the Family Proceedings Court (Sections 38 and 41 Children Act 1989). In the latter case, the court has found that the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, unless such an order is made. Most are looked after by other family members, by foster carers or some may live in a children's home.

1.10 Key legislation and policy framework

The legislation and government guidance that relates both generally and specifically to this strategy are:

- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- If this were my child – a councillor's guide to being a good corporate parent 2003
- National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services 2004

- Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children 2009 (DoH)

- Statutory Guidance on Corporate Parenting Responsibilities of Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members 2009

- Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children 2010
- Statutory Guidance and Regulations on Care Planning, Placement and Case Review 2010
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006
- Legal Aid and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012
- Raising the Participation Age duties as set out in the Education and Skills Act 2008.

1.11 What is corporate parenting?

Corporate parenting is the term used to refer to the collective responsibility of a Council (officers and elected members) to provide the best possible care and protection for children and young people who are 'looked after' as set out in the Children Act 1989 where ever they live.

2. WHO IS INVOLVED AND RESPONSIBLE?

The Cabinet Member for Children and the Director of Children, Schools and Families have a specific role to ensure the Council is meeting our statutory responsibilities - in particular, the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children and care leavers. This has to be supported by all elected members and officers who also play a key role. Further details are set out below.

2.1 The role of elected members

Previous government guidance for elected members, 'If this were my child' (DfES 2003) reiterated the leading role of elected members in ensuring their Council acts as an effective corporate parent for children and young people in care, actively supporting standards of care and seeking the high quality outcomes that every good parent would want for their child. Therefore, all elected members should be prepared and ready to champion the interests of looked after children and young people in their community.

Elected members are in the unique position to promote opportunities for looked after children and care leavers through their political power and influence, through their connections in the community, schools, health services, local businesses and employers. If these links can be built upon then 'life choices' and outcomes for children and young people can be greatly improved.

A key role for elected members and Council officers is to challenge and champion looked after children.

Questions they may want to ask themselves:

- Do I understand why children and young people need to be looked after and the legal and policy framework that governs this?
- Do I know about the profile, needs and achievements of all looked after children by my council?
- Are we providing the best care possible to our looked after children and care leavers? "Would it be good enough for my child?"
- Do I know how well my council is doing in comparison with other comparable councils and government indicators?

- Is there an action plan to address any shortcomings in services and to constantly improve outcomes for looked after children?
- Am I taking responsibility for promoting the welfare and opportunities for looked after children and care leavers in all my work in the Council – and in my other capacities?
- Are all directorates across the Council working together to ensure that our looked after children and care leavers are really held in mind and supported in all aspects of life?

An elected member sits on the Camden Fostering and Adoption Panels to ensure there are good quality families available to care for children. Elected members work closely with Camden Association for Foster Care to help them carry out their important role.

2.2 Role and responsibility of the proposed Camden Corporate Parenting Board

Elected members have proposed that a cross-party Camden Corporate Parenting Board is set up. The Corporate Parenting Board will be responsible for monitoring and reviewing the services provided to looked after children. It will establish and monitor the 'parenting looked after children strategy'. The purpose of the Board will be to improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers whether they live in Camden or outside the borough.

It is proposed that the Board will be part of the core business of Camden's Children's Trust and the Council. This will build on the work of the current cross-party corporate parenting group which will be replaced by the proposed new Corporate Parenting Board. Further details on the role of the Children's Trust are set out below.

As well as the cabinet member, there will be cross-party representation on the Board. The proposed cross-party Board will have representatives from each party who will be responsible for feeding back to each political group. The elected members will take responsibility to report back regularly to their political groups and ensure all members are aware of their responsibilities for looked after children and get involved in local activities. The Board will also include foster carers, young people and Council officers from all key service areas and partner agencies.

The Board will meet four times a year, will be supported by Camden's Democratic Services and minutes will be available on the Council website.

The Board will produce an annual report on the performance of the service, which will be presented to the Camden Children's Trust Partnership Board (CTPB), Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet and Full Council. This will provide an

opportunity to amend this strategy as required.

The Corporate Parenting Board will be responsible for:

1. Ensuring that all partners adopt a nurturing approach to looked after children
2. Championing the interests of looked after children
3. Ensuring that promoting the best interests of looked after children is at the core of decision-making of the partnership
4. Health status of looked after children
5. Educational achievements of looked after children
6. After care and long-term outcomes for looked after children
7. Quality and duration of placements
8. Children that go missing from placements.

This will involve:

- Ensuring that the corporate parenting role is understood and fulfilled by all elected members and senior officers working across all directorates in the Council and by our partners.
- Monitoring and overseeing plans, strategies or policies for looked after children, young people and care leavers to ensure performance is maintained.
- Monitoring and implementing the 'parenting looked after children strategy', reviewing the Camden Parenting Style statement, testing that the Camden Pledge is being delivered and ensuring regular reporting of progress made on the Camden offer (details on the offer are set out below).
- Issues from the Board meeting will be taken forward by the Director of Children, Schools and Families and Cabinet Member for Children.
- Meeting and talking to looked after children and young people on a regular basis to inform the work of the Board.
- Monitoring and reviewing key performance data so that they are achieved and show that looked after children have the best start in life.
- Ensuring that looked after children, young people and care leavers are able to participate in decisions about their care and the shaping and delivery of future services and to report on progress on an annual basis.
- Providing support by attending events, such as celebration events for children and carers, achievement events, foster carers and

adopter recruitment events, Children in Care Council meetings and Camden Association for Foster Care meetings.

- The Board will produce an annual report on the performance of the service which will be presented to the Camden Children's Trust Partnership Board, Children Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet and Full Council.

This will ensure that the Council are meeting its statutory responsibility for corporate parenting.

2.3 Role of the Camden's Children's Trust Partnership Board

Camden Children's Trust Partnership Board (CTPB) is an overarching partnership arrangement for the whole system of children's services, where partners work together to ensure joined up services to improve the lives of children that live in the borough. It provides leadership for the 'Change for children and families plan', Camden's children and young people's plan. The CTPB exists to improve outcomes for children and young people in Camden. It acts as the overarching decision-making body for all services for children and young people. This includes looked after children. The terms of reference of CTPB are to:

- Set the strategic vision and direction for services for children and young people
- Champion the interests of children and young people in Camden
- Improve outcomes for children and young people as set out in our 'Change for children and families plan', including responsibility for the early years outcomes duty, acting as the strategic partnership for early years
- Ensure shared priorities and actions agreed by the partnership are firmly embedded within their agency and that there are adequate resources, skills and training for staff
- Monitor and challenge performance in improving outcomes for children and young people
- Set the direction of travel and strategic overview of joint commissioning, budget pooling, workforce and integrated processes across partner organisations
- Identify areas where working together will have the most impact on improving outcomes and set this direction
- Have an oversight of key risks for children and young people and ensure these are managed effectively, so all partners (where relevant) have robust risk management procedures and are linked

into the Clinical Governance and Risk Management frameworks within the local NHS.

2.4 Role and responsibility of Council officers

Operational responsibility for looked after children and care leavers is the Family Services and Social Work division within the Children, Schools and Families Directorate. Social workers, foster carers and residential workers are directly responsible on a day to day basis for making sure children are safeguarded and supported to achieve good outcomes. These frontline practitioners have the most direct corporate parenting role.

In addition, all directorates of the Council with responsibility for improving children's outcomes have a part to play with looked after children in ensuring the effectiveness of corporate parenting. Looked after children cannot achieve good outcomes without the informed support of teachers, youth workers and health practitioners.

2.5 Looked after children provider management group

The purpose of the multi-agency looked after children provider management group is set out below. The terms of reference for this group will be reviewed so that they are fit for purpose and align with the reporting structure for the proposed Corporate Parenting Board and the outcomes framework for the Camden plan. The current terms of reference for the group include:

- To monitor the delivery of services for looked after children, ensuring outcomes are met and monitoring the performance of all agencies working with looked after children across all partners
- To ensure that appropriate services are developed and delivered to specifically improve the health, educational attainment and placement stability of looked after children
- To ensure actions in the 'Change for Children plan' which relate to looked after children are progressed.

3. THE CAMDEN PLEDGE TO LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND CARE LEAVERS

The Camden Pledge lists the thing that we will do to make sure that children in care have help to do their best and make a success of their lives. The Camden Pledge is based on what children have told us is most important to them.

- **Being fit and healthy**
We will help to keep children and young people in good health by making sure that professionals work together.

- **Staying safe from harm**
We promise to do all we can to look after you and keep you protected from harm. We will make sure you know where to go to for help and that carers, social workers and teachers support you.
- **Having a good education and enjoying your interests**
We will give you the support you need to do well in education and help you to enjoy interest and hobbies.
- **Give your views and make a difference**
We will always make sure that you are involved in the decisions made about your life when you are in care and we find ways to help you tell your views. We want to know what you think about the support you are given and the services we provide.
- **Getting ready for independence**
We will give you the support you need when you leave care and prepare you for independence the best way we can.

4. **ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT**

We are committed to listening and taking account of the views of all Camden's looked after children we work with to make sure that their views influence how services are planned. Camden's looked after children, young people and care leavers are encouraged to get involved and share their views and experiences in a range of ways:

- **Children in Care Council**
The Children in Care Council meets once a month and will link with the proposed Corporate Parenting Board. The Children in Care Council provides a formal role for looked after children to voice their views and experiences of the care system, increasing their ability to influence and improve the services they receive from us as corporate parents. They will feedback on the strategy and how they want to be involved in the future with the proposed Board.
- **Young Inspectors programme**
Young people work in the Council during the summer holidays each year and carry out inspections of services for children and young people. They produce a report with actions for Council officers to take forward.
- **Advocacy services**
An independent advocacy service is provided to enable children and young people to represent their views and achieve change in their care plans and represent them through the complaints process.
- **Total Respect**
A group of looked after young people deliver training to professionals and elected members on what it is like to be a looked after child and how to talk with young people about their issues.

- **Recruitment of senior Council officers**
Young people are involved in the recruitment process of senior managers who will be involved in working with looked after children and young people. Recent examples include the recruitment of the Chief Executive and the Director of Children, Schools and Families.
- **Procurement of services**
Young people are involved in procurement of services, such as young people's pathway and short breaks for disabled children. They contributed to the design of the services and met with prospective suppliers.
- **Celebrating achievements**
Children and young people's achievements are celebrated at the annual awards ceremony, which is attended by kinship/family members and corporate parents. It is well supported and the feedback from children and young people is very positive.
- **Looked after children review meetings**
Looked after children are encouraged to take part in their review meetings. Ninety-four per cent of children participate in their placement review meetings and provide their views on their own care plan. They have an allocated independent reviewing officer (IRO) who meets with them to ensure they can contribute their views.

5. **KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS**

It is imperative that looked after children achieve the maximum progress possible and have every support to achieve this. Every child will be given the best chance to achieve this from birth through their early years, schooling and a successful transition to adult life whether they live in Camden or outside the borough. The key areas that we will be focusing on will include:

- **Educational attainment - ensuring that looked after children fulfil their educational potential**

In Camden each child has a personal education plan to ensure they make significant progress in their education and so that everyone can gain a clear understanding about the teaching and learning provision necessary to meet the educational standards of every child in care. Personal Educational Plans have been improved to ensure tracking and monitoring processes for looked after children are integrated with mainstream processes.

The head of the Camden looked after children 'virtual school' (also known as the Looked After Children Academy) monitors all educational progress and provides advocacy and support. The head of the looked after children virtual school also provides consultation

and advice to foster carers. Each key-stage group has a named officer from relevant educational services within CSF to track progress and problem-solve specific areas of difficulty directly with the child's school. One to one tuition support is provided where needed. All looked after children are also provided with laptops if required to support their education.

The key role of the Camden looked after children virtual school is to support and challenge all schools where Camden looked after children attend to improve progress, attainment, attendance and reduce exclusions for looked after children, acting as the concerned parent and helping to organise the child's experiences to maximise attainment. Looked after children school attendance has steadily improved. We will seek to ensure that where possible each child can attend a school of good or outstanding quality. Despite the efforts, the most recent attainment of looked after children shows that more improvement is needed.

The school where each looked after child or young person attends also plays a crucial role in ensuring these children make good progress, securing arrangements for the designated officer and keeping a good track of how each looked after child is working within the school. Each school has a dedicated teacher who is responsible for looked after children and we encourage each school to have a looked after children governor. One of the tasks of Camden's school improvement service is to support schools, schools management and governors in keeping a focus on the progress and attainment of looked after children and assisting them to put in place strategies to improve attainment.

Carers are also supported to help looked after children engage in a range of out of school activities and develop interests. Looked after children have been a priority group for COO-L for a number of years and will continue to be following positive feedback from young people. This provides an opportunity for looked after children to participate in positive activities by choosing what activities they would like to do via the COO-L (choice and opportunities online) website and take part in a wide range of exciting free or discounted activities, helping to broaden their outlook, achievement, self-esteem and avoid being drawn into anti-social behaviour.

- **Training and employment - promoting and providing training and employment opportunities for looked after children**

We know that looked after children are often vulnerable young people and are more likely to become NEET (not in education, employment and training) because of their often complex life experiences. Focussed support will be provided to ensure that looked after children are ready to access and remain in education, employment and training. Looked after children will continue to be

supported until they are aged 21 or 25 years if they are in higher education. Care leavers will be a priority group for improving access to apprenticeships and work placements. This will also include Camden Council providing good opportunities for work and training in our own services.

- **More local foster homes - increasing the number of foster homes available locally**

Although placement stability for looked after children is improving, we need more good quality local foster carers. The Housing and Adult Social Care directorate is working with foster carers to identify some larger homes so that more placements are available locally. An active campaign to recruit more local foster carers is under way and also with the neighbouring boroughs, as part of the 12-borough consortia arrangement.

- **Improved care planning**

Camden is taking part in a joint pilot project with Islington Council which is looking at reducing our overall court timescales from 52 weeks to 26 weeks. This means that children who are remaining in care are more speedily supported to live with their permanent new family.

- **Providing suitable accommodation for care leavers locally**

The Young People's Pathway has been successful in providing local placements for care leavers. Social workers, foster carers and housing officers work together to ensure that young people successfully move onto permanent housing. This will be monitored carefully and developed further.

- **Physical and emotional health and wellbeing**

Maintaining the high standards of physical and emotional health and wellbeing will continue to be a priority. This involves working with the looked after children health team and local child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

- **Transition of disabled looked after children to adult services**

Improving transitions for all disabled children to adult services is a priority and is being progressed jointly with Housing and Adult Social Care. Looked after children are a small section of this group and this requires specific planning to ensure that disabled looked after children are supported effectively. Disabled children are supported during transition by the 16+ Leaving Care Team and Camden MOSAIC (integrated service for disabled children).

6. TAKING THE STRATEGY FORWARD

6.1 Induction and training

Induction and training on the corporate parenting role will continue to be provided for elected members on a regular basis to ensure that everyone is trained to carry out the role of corporate parenting in Camden. Young people can also train members and senior officers on what it is like to be a looked after child through the Total Respect programme.

6.2 Formalising the setting up of the Corporate Parenting Board

It is proposed that membership of the Board would comprise:

- Director of Children, Schools and Families
- Lead Member for Children (co-chair)
- Four cross-party elected members, nominated by the party groups
- Looked after children nominated by the Children in Care Council (subject to discussions with young people, further details below)
- Foster carers nominated by Camden Association for Foster Care
- Senior Council officers, nominated by directors
- CSF lead officers: assistant director for family services and social work (FSSW), looked after children head of service and independent reviewing officer (IRO)
- Virtual school head
- Looked after children lead paediatrician.

Young people's involvement with the Board will be crucial and it is proposed that they are consulted in March 2013 on how they wish to link up with the Board on a regular basis.

It is proposed that the Corporate Parenting Board will be supported and be part of the Children's Trust and Council's core business with minutes available publicly on the Camden Council website.

6.3 Monitoring the quality and outcomes of services

- The Corporate Parenting Board will monitor progress on a quarterly basis in achieving outcomes for looked after children and escalate any emerging issues to the Children's Trust Partnership Board, raised through this process.

- In addition, the Corporate Parenting Board will produce an annual report on the performance of the service which will be presented to the Camden Children's Trust Partnership Board and Children School and Families Scrutiny, the Cabinet and the Full Council.
- The Corporate Parenting Board will identify key areas of focus for 2013-14 and a work programme will be developed on the basis of previous work and new priorities.

Appendix 1

Extract from the looked after children annual report to Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee (18 June 2012)

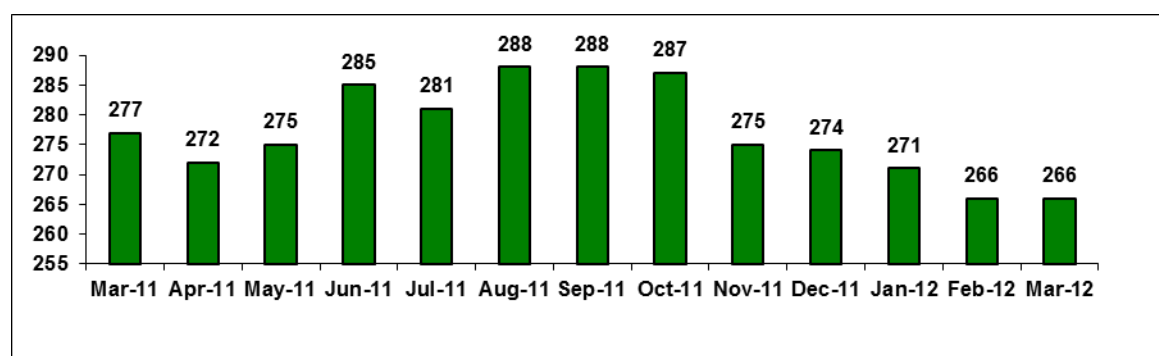
Activity and Performance

The second part of this report will provide a summary of changes, progress and challenges within looked after children's services over the last year. The key outcome areas relate to health, education, and placement stability, and also the performance of the fostering and adoption teams, including an update on achieving permanent placements.

Profile of the Looked After Children Population

- i. The size of the care population has decreased slightly over this period. On 31 March 2011 there were 276 looked after children and by 31 March 2012 the figure was 266. There has also been a slight decrease in the number of teenagers (10yrs – 15yrs) coming into care in this period – 43 compared with 50 in the preceding year.

Number of Children in Care – monthly chart March 2011 to March 2012



- ii. There has been a reduction in the number of girls in care over the last four reporting periods, from 138 (50%) in 2007/08 to 109 (41%) in 2011/12. As at end of March 2012 there were significant disparities in the following age groups:

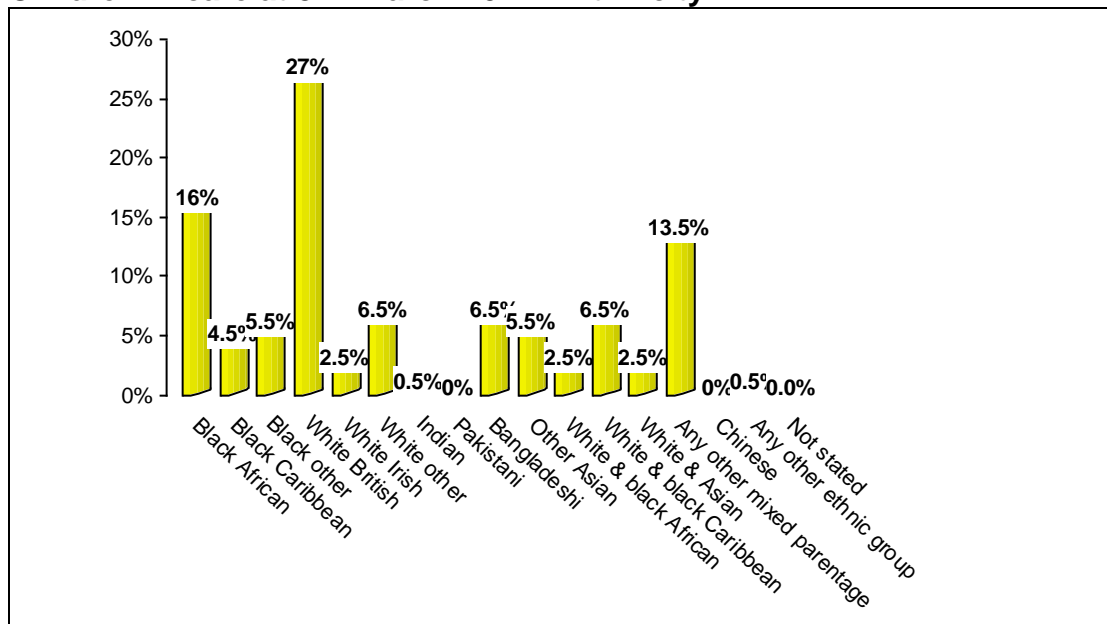
- Under 1 group – 19 (61.5%) boys and 12 (38.5%) girls
- 1 to 4 group - 21 (62%) boys and 13 (38%) girls
- 10 to 15 years group - 64 (63%) boys and 34 (37%) girls

iii. In terms of the age of children in care, there have been some significant differences from the previous reporting period. The age cohorts at the end of March 2012 were:

- Under 1 group – an increase from 7% in 2010/11 to 11.5% in 2011/12
- 5 to 9 group - a decrease from 14% in 2010/11 to 10.5% in 2011/12
- 16+ group - a decrease from 30.5% in 2010/11 to 25% in 2011/12
- The largest age group continues to be 10 to 15 year olds, with 106 children representing 40% of all children looked after.

iv. One element of the care population which has remained stable is the ethnic breakdown. Overall, 163 (73%) children come from ethnic minority groups. The black African, black Caribbean and other groups are over represented whilst the white, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian and Pakistani groups continue to be under represented.

Children in care at 31st March 2012 – Ethnicity

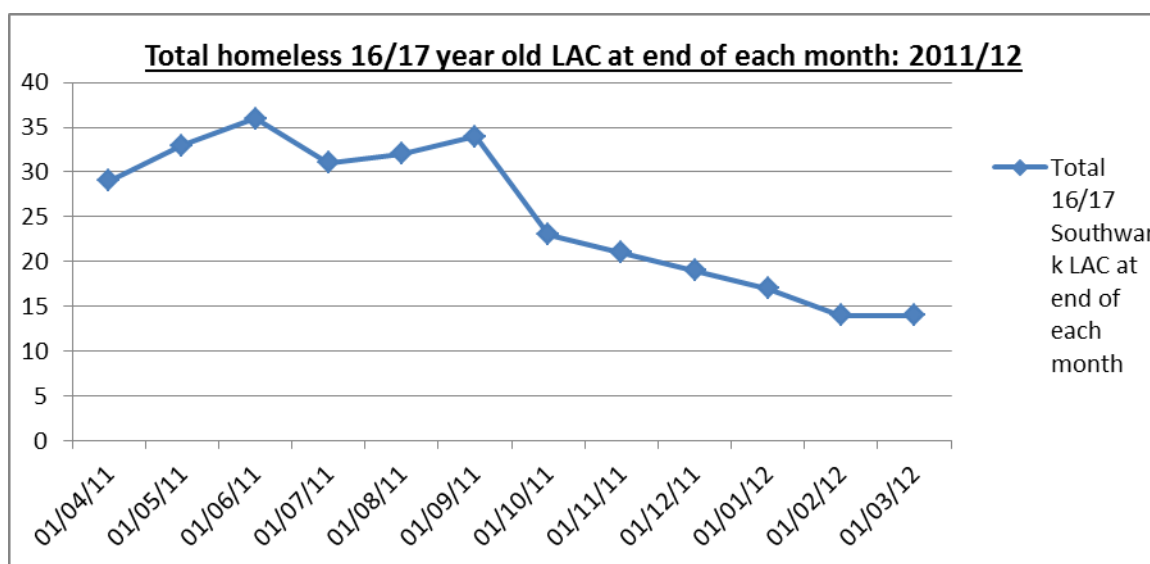


v. The number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in care has decreased in 2011/12; representing 4% of the care population as of 31st March 2012 compared with 5% in March 2011 and 9% in March 2010. There were 10 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in care, with 6 (60%) of these coming from African countries, and 4 (40%) coming from

Afghanistan. This matches a trend of decline across London authorities, though it is possible that more recent global events might lead to a reversal of this trend over the next reporting period.

Analysis of teenagers and homeless young people (aged 16yrs – 17yrs) coming into care.

- vi. Slightly fewer children aged 13 plus entered care in 2011/12 (49% - 71 children) when compared with 2010/11 (51% - 77 children). There has also been a significant reduction in the number of homeless 16 and 17 year old young people assessed as requiring a Looked After Children service over the course of the 2011/12 financial year:



Health

- vii. Looked after children have regular health assessments and dental check-ups to ensure that they are healthy and receive any necessary treatment. The looked after children Health team conduct annual health assessments and developmental checks twice a year for children under five. Young children’s developmental progress is reviewed regularly through an Early Years Development Panel. This multi-disciplinary group meets to consider any potential developmental or health problems and ensure effective and timely interventions to remedy or mitigate these problems.
- viii. In March 2012, 88% of looked after children had an up to date health assessment and dental check. 91% of immunisations were up to date.

- ix. Looked after children receive a yearly screening of their emotional well being (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) and those with specific needs are offered a service from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health service. In 2011/12 carers completed and returned 116 of the total of 122 questionnaires.
- x. Of the 116 completed questionnaires, the mean value of the total difficulties score was 14.1. This compares to an average score of 15.8 in 2010/11, 12.9 in 2009/10 and 13.8 in 2008/09.

Educational outcomes

- xi. In order to support children in care and maximise their potential to achieve a virtual school (The looked after children virtual school) monitors their educational performance and provides advocacy and services to support them. The Head of the looked after children virtual school is available to provide consultation and advice to foster carers. Each key-stage group has a named officer from relevant educational services within CSF to track performance and problem solve and specific areas of difficulty with the child's school.
- xii. The Education Commission has recommended that the Camden Partnership for Educational Excellence (CPEE) considers how to respond to the needs of Looked After Children:

“Committing to providing the very best school place for each looked after child and drawing up a plan for supporting educational attainment of looked after children including looking at how the resources of partners (HE/employers) can be used to help raise the aspirations of these children, develop a pool of education mentors for looked after children and providing effective support for foster carers” (Education Commission final report page 31)

- xiii. A key aim of the looked after children virtual school is to improve school attendance amongst the care population. This has led to positive outcomes and the proportion of absences continues to steadily decline. At the end of April 2012, 13 (11.71%) Looked after Children had missed 25 days of school (based on those children in care one year or more at 31/03/2012). This compares with a figure of 11.76% as at end of April 2011, and is in line with other high performing authorities.

- xiv. Camden looked after children achieved improved academic standards in all Key Stages in 2011 in comparison with the national average. Year on year comparisons for looked after children should be treated with caution, as the numbers of pupils are very small, particularly for KS1 and KS2.
- **Key Stage 1** – There were 5 Camden looked after children pupils who were eligible for KS1 in 2011. The whole group (100%) achieved Level 2+ in reading, writing and mathematics in 2011, an increase from 2010 (when reading was 75% and writing and mathematics were both 50%). As noted above, looked after children numbers are small on in particular, with 4 pupils in this ‘cohort’, caution should be taken when looking at these results over time.
 - **Key Stage 2** – There were 7 Camden looked after children pupils who were eligible for KS2 in 2011. Results for this group increased by 24% to 57%, which is well above national looked after children results (40%) though below that of all pupils in Camden (78%).
 - **Key Stage 4** – There were 20 looked after children pupils who were eligible for KS4 in 2011. 75% of these were entered for at least 1 GCSE or equivalent (compared to 63% last year) and 15% achieved 5+ A*-C including English and mathematics (compared to 13% nationally and an increase from 6% in 2010). The percentage of looked after children pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs A*-C (not including English and mathematics) increased from 25% to 35% whilst the national looked after children figure also increased from 26% to 31%.
 - This year (2011/12) 15 young people started their first year of university, and there are currently 49 care leavers attending university in total.
- xv. At the end of March 2012, there were 39 care leavers aged 19 years. Of these 26 (67%) were engaged in education, employment or training. This is a decrease from March 2011 when the figure was 80%. The thirteen who were not in employment, education and training, have complex needs which made it difficult for them to access support. Of this group, 39 (100%), were considered to be in suitable accommodation. All were receiving regular support from the 16+ services.

Family Placements

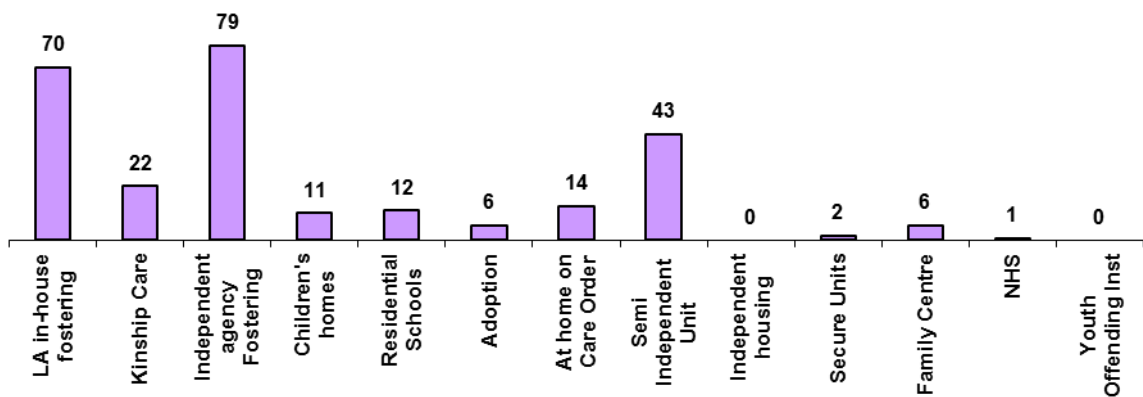
- xvi. The proportion of children placed in foster care has decreased slightly, with 72% in 2010/11 and 70% in 2011/12. The proportion placed in residential children's homes has increased from 27% in 2010/11 to 30% in 2011/12. The percentage of those children placed with their parents but subject to legal (care) orders has decreased from 6% in 2010/11 to 5% in 2011/12.
- xvii. In 2010/11 there was a reduction in the total of permanency orders achieved. There has been a significant improvement in performance during 2011/12 and in total 11 Adoption Orders and 17 Special Guardianship Orders granted. This represents 13.6% of the children who had been in care for six months or more, which is in the very good banding for national performance and in line with other high performing authorities.

Looked after children who were adopted or made subject to SGO during year as a percentage of the number looked after at end of year for six months or more (PAF C23)

2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
12.8	12.6	10	7	13.6

- xviii. The service continues to make efficiencies in relation to the cost of placements in order to make the best use of the available resources. The total number of placement days in 2011-12 increased 25% compared with the previous year (91,716 days compared to 73,496 days in 2010-11). The unit costs reduced significantly (£650 in 2011-12, a reduction of around 15% from 2010-11). The total savings made through placement efficiencies in 2011-12 was £1.9m (early achievement of 2012-13 MTFS savings). The reduced unit costs and savings were achieved through greater efficiencies in the procurement of places and reducing the number of children placed in the most expensive private and voluntary sector placements.

Placements provided for looked after children



- xix. Performance in relation to placement stability remains consistently strong with 64% of children looked after aged under 16 in stable long term placements in March 2012. The proportion of children experiencing three or more placements was 12% which is lower than other London high-performing comparator Boroughs.

Activity Data for Fostering and Adoption Services

- xx. A priority for the Fostering Service in 2010/11 has been to ensure that available in-house placements are used effectively to reduce the need to use Private and Voluntary agencies. In 2011/12:
- The on-going recruitment campaign in 2011/12 has led to 128 initial enquiries from prospective foster carers, compared with 142 in 2009/10 and 112 in 2010/11;
 - Camden is working closely with the newly formed North London Fostering Consortium to collaborate, share resources and advance effective recruitment in this area. We share foster carers with the consortium to ensure that young people remain in their local communities. We plan to jointly recruit mother and baby foster carers and are in the early stages of trying to recruit remand carers for those YP who are remanded into Local Authority care;
 - In 2011/12 11 new foster carers have been approved in this period (including family & friends carers), compared with 2 in 2008/9, 14 in 2009/10 and 18 in 2010/11;

- There are now 75 in-house fostering households regulated by Camden with 112 approved foster carers. These provide 98 available placements for Camden Looked-After Children including a further 16 short breaks placements. 6 fostering households are classed as 'specialist' and are able to provide 11 places for children with complex needs.
- The Fostering Service is preparing for the next OFSTED inspection, which is due to take place imminently, with two weeks' notice. Preparations have been progressing since 2011 when an action plan was drawn up. There have been a number of changes since April 2011 in the fostering arena including changes to the national minimum standards and regulations.
- The fostering service is keenly aware of the need to approve suitable foster placements especially in light of the government's sufficiency agenda that requires sufficient local placements to meet the needs of local children.

xxi. The Adoption Service continues to audit and review the services provided in order to ensure there are on-going improvements in professional practice. In 2011/12:

- The adoption service has enjoyed a successful advertising campaign in 2011/12 and received 96 enquiries (compared to 152 in 2010/11) with 112 people attending open evenings;
- In 2011/12 a total of 12 new carers have been approved by the panel, compared with 14 in 2009/10 and 7 in 2010/11. The panel has approved 19 adoption plans (compared with 14 in 2009/10 and 18 in 2010/11);
- 13 children have been matched with adoptive carers and 7 children have been matched with long term foster carers.

xxii. The Adoption Scorecard, published in May 2012, ranks Local Authorities in relation to the timeliness in achieving different stages of the adoption process. Camden compares well with statistical neighbours and members of the North London Consortium (Haringey, Islington, Barnet, Enfield and Camden) when measured against adoption timescales.

- Between children entering care and being placed for adoption, Camden took the shortest time amongst the consortium, and was in second place when compared with statistical neighbours, at 559 days – this is well below the England average of 625 days.
- Between receiving the placement order and matching the child with an adoptive family, Camden took on average 108 days, which is well below the national average (171), in second place in the consortium, and fourth when compared to statistical neighbours.
- In terms of those children waiting less than 21 months, at 56%, Camden was the second best performer in the consortium, and just below the average for statistical neighbours.

Appendix 2

Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Board - April 2013

Camden Children's Trust Partnership Board is an overarching partnership arrangement for the whole system of children's services, where partners work together to ensure joined up services to improve the lives of children that live in the borough. It provides leadership for Camden's Change for Children Plan.

The Corporate Parenting Board monitors and reviews the services provided to looked after children. It establishes and monitors the Parenting Looked After Children Strategy. The purpose of the board is to improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

The roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's services and the Lead Member for Children's Services are set out in the statutory guidance. The Cabinet Member for Children has delegated responsibility for the Council's role as a corporate parent for the health, education, placements and after care of looked after children. To execute this responsibility the Cabinet Member for Children shall Co-Chair this Board with the Council's elected representative on the Adoption and Fostering Panels.

The board will produce an annual report on the performance of the service which will be presented to the Camden Children's Trust Partnership Board and Children School and Families Scrutiny, the Cabinet and the Full Council. Officers will provide regular updates to the Camden Children's Trust Partnership Board.

The Corporate Parenting Board is responsible for:

- a. Ensuring that all partners adopt a nurturing approach to looked after children.
- b. Championing the interests of looked after children.
- c. Ensuring that promoting the best interests of looked after children is the core of decision-making of the partnership.
- d. Health status of looked after children.
- e. Education achievements of looked after children.
- f. After care and long term outcomes for looked after children.
- g. Quality and duration of placements.
- h. Children that go missing from placements.

Membership

- Lead Member for Children (co-chair)
- Director of Children, Schools and Families
- Cross party Elected Members nominated by the Party Groups
- Looked after children nominated by the Camden Children in Care Council

- Foster Carers nominated by Camden Association for Foster Care
- Senior Council Officers nominated by Directors.
- CSF Lead Officers: Assistant Director for Family Support and Social Work, Looked After Children Head of Service and Independent Reviewing Officer
- Virtual School Head Teacher
- Looked After Children Lead Paediatrician

The Board will meet four times a year, will be supported by Democratic Services and minutes will be available on the website.

CONTACT:

Children, schools and families
Camden Council
Crowndale Centre
218 Eversholt Street
London NW1 1BD.

Tel: 020 7974 4444

Web: camden.gov.uk

backchatonline.org.uk