

MEETING

CHILDREN, EDUCATION & SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

DATE AND TIME

MONDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER, 2022

AT 7.00 PM

VENUE

HENDON TOWN HALL, THE BURROUGHS, LONDON NW4 4BQ

**TO: MEMBERS OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION & SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE
(Quorum 3)**

Chair: Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb
Vice Chair: Councillor Tony Vourou

David Longstaff
Giulia Monasterio
Zahra Beg

Liron Velleman
Linda Lusingu
Joshua Conway

Matthew Perlberg
Mark Shooter
Lucy Wakeley

Substitute Members

Richard Barnes
Laithe Jajeh

Anne Clarke
Kath McGuirk

Jennifer Grocock
Alex Prager

In line with the Constitution's Public Participation and Engagement Rules, requests to submit public questions or comments must be submitted by 10AM on the third working day before the date of the committee meeting. Therefore, the deadline for this meeting is Wednesday 7 September 2022 at 10AM. Requests must be submitted to Pakeezah Rahman Pakeezah.Rahman@Barnet.gov.uk

You are requested to attend the above meeting for which an agenda is attached.

Andrew Charlwood – Head of Governance

Governance Service contact: Pakeezah Rahman Pakeezah.Rahman@Barnet.gov.uk

Media Relations Contact: Tristan Garrick 020 8359 2454 Tristan.Garrick@Barnet.gov.uk

ASSURANCE GROUP

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ORDER OF BUSINESS

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1.	Minutes of the last Meeting	5 - 12
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text phone, may telephone our minicom number on 020 8203 8942. All of our Committee Rooms also have induction loops.

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Decisions of the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee

7 June 2022

Members Present:-

AGENDA ITEM 1

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb (Chair)

Councillor Tony Vourou (Vice-Chair)

Councillor David Longstaff

Councillor Zahra Beg

Councillor Giulia Monasterio

Councillor Liron Velleman

Councillor Linda Lusingu

Councillor Matthew Perlberg

Councillor Mark Shooter

Councillor Lucy Wakeley

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Under Educational Standards Update on page 3, Members sought clarification to the sentence, 'It was noted that the overall ranking of Key Stages 4 and 5 placed Barnet in the top 5% of the country.'

Officers confirmed that the sentence was correct adding that in 2019, Barnet came in second in the UK for progress figures.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee held on 19 January 2022 be approved as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joshua Conway who was substituted for by Councillor Alex Prager.

3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

None.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

The Committee noted that details of a written question and response were published and circulated in advance of the meeting.

Verbal responses were given to a supplementary question at the meeting.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

7. UPDATE ON BARNET'S ASYLUM SEEKER CONTINGENCY HOTELS

The Chair welcomed Sean Palmer, Director of Resettlement, Asylum Support and Integration Support at the Home Office (HO) and Tina Rea, Operations Director at Clearsprings Ready Homes Ltd. to the meeting.

Mr Palmer thanked Barnet for all the support that was being provided to asylum seekers and refugees in the Borough.

Mr Palmer answered questions from the Committee and Council. With regards to costs incurred by the Council on contingency hotels, a new scheme was being implemented to pay the Council £250 for every asylum seeker placed in accommodation and to direct other Local Authorities in providing housing for asylum seekers. Through the scheme, an additional £3,500 per bed space would be made available for accepted dispersal accommodation.

Informal consultation on accomplishing full dispersal as a commitment to the New burdens doctrine was underway between the Government, Home Office (HO) and other interested parties. The HO had been working closely with Clearsprings to move people out of temporary accommodation in order of priority.

In relation to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), where a Local Authority's child population consisted of over 0.07% asylum seeking children, a higher rate of funding would be made available. Additional children could be referred via the national transfer scheme to be looked after by other Local Authorities.

Mr Palmer apologised for the time taken in processing Asylum claims but reassured the Committee that a lot of work was being done to speed up the process, especially for asylum seeking children with a dedicated asylum case worker team in place.

The Age Assessments process had recently changed due to litigation (R (on the application of BF (Eritrea)) (Respondent) v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Appellant) which ruled in favour of the HO.

Immigration Officers were being trained so as to be able to assess and determine whether one was 18 years of age or over.

The Nationality and Borders Act allowed for a National Age Assessment Board within the HO to enable social workers to conduct such assessments which would be binding on the LA. Any mitigation arising out of that would be the responsibility of the HO. It was noted that costs for assessments and legal challenges would be incurred by the HO. An exceptional cost fund had also been set up which invited LAs to refer additional costs incurred to the HO.

Chris Munday, Executive Director, Children's and Family Services, highlighted that £250 per person was approximately a quarter of what had been spent per person in contingency hotels and as of September 2021, the Council had already disbursed over £600,000. In addition, Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

funding had been set aside for schools to enable support for children coming in at different times of the year.

Mr Palmer explained that £250 was only a contribution towards costs incurred by LAs. The New burdens doctrine would need to be adopted to assess Barnet's situation and going forward, additional costs could be picked up by the Home Office.

Mr Munday said that there was over 300 UASC and over 800 families in hotels with a large influx of people over the years. 25% of Barnet's Looked After Children were UASC and they have been supported substantially by Barnet.

It was noted that all figures including different tariff funding arrangements may not have covered all costs incurred and that some asylum claims may need to be processed through mainstream benefits.

Ms Rea offered ways to ease some of Barnet's burden which included limiting the number of children being enrolled which would otherwise have a negative impact on the class. Certain types of accommodation could also be provided upon request.

Members highlighted that hotels have been at maximum capacity for two years and enquired about an indicative time on when the New burden doctrine would be completed so as to move people out of temporary accommodation.

It was noted that it took an average of 12 weeks from identifying a property to moving in. Procurement requests were continuously being made with LAs in the UK to acquire more dispersal properties. However, procuring social housing or affordable housing had been a challenge.

Mr Palmer accepted that it was unusual for families to remain in hotels for lengthy periods of time which could be due particular needs such as accessibility issues. Mr Palmer offered to look into those cases to help ensure that people were moved on as quickly as possible.

It was noted that funding for costs incurred by the LA would not be backdated.

Members stressed the importance and urgency to alleviate some of the pressures faced by the Council.

The Chair highlighted that the way in which different groups of asylum seeker claims have been dealt with depending on their country of origin, was worrying and could give rise to an equalities issue. The Chair also highlighted the limited facilities for families, enquiring about the longest length of time one was placed in a hotel and whether the disruption to continuity of life during dispersal had been taken into account.

The data on the length of 'stayers' would be provided to the Council after the meeting by Ms Rea.

It was noted that there have been no issues with communication with the availability of translation services and a library of languages. A new online digital service in some hotels also help speed up applications.

It was recommended that the Council participated with the New burdens doctrine analysis and to provide accurate figures to the HO to allow consideration of the impact of cost on the LA. Officers would work with the HO to establish a true baseline for the New burdens doctrine.

Ms Rea added that many communal spaces had reopened after Covid and a range of activities were available to ensure that children and young people were well supported. For the summer holidays, Ms Rea welcomed ideas from the Council as staff at Clearsprings would be happy to engage in activities with young people.

Mr Palmer also offered to assist with the day to day needs as required by the Council.

It was noted that data on the longest length of stay would be fed back to Officers by the Home Office and Clear Springs providing accurate reasons as to why people were accommodated for lengthy periods of time.

The Chair thanked the guests for attending the meeting and their contribution.

RESOLVED:

- **That members note the report**
- **That members take the opportunity to question guest representatives from the Home Office and Clearsprings Ready Homes**

8. CES PRIORITIES OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

In response to Members' questions, the Chair addressed some of the new administration's priorities. They included support from staff to ensure that children services reached to an outstanding level of performance. There was a need for sustainable nurseries and schools to function properly. Schools in deficit due to additional costs and budgeting problems, had to be addressed. Another priority was to focus on children who suffered during the pandemic and to support schools in getting them back on track.

Transitional Housing for Care Leavers had been an ongoing problem. Therefore, a bigger push for supported lodgings for Care leavers was needed. Problems with providers and affordable childcare had been noted with residents paying a lot more for childcare in comparison to other countries.

Members suggested identifying suitable locations of current nurseries and 0-19 hubs to increase productivity for Barnet residents and their children.

In relation to the vision for youth services, the Chair spoke about finding ways to provide more services through the Borough or charitable organisations so that all young people could have access to the things they wanted to do in areas which were not easily accessible.

RESOLVED:

- **That Committee requests that the Executive Director for Children and Families develops a programme of work which embeds the aspirations of the new Administration and bring back to the next CES committee for agreement.**

9. SEND INSPECTION, SCHOOLS WHITE PAPER AND SEND GREEN PAPER

Mr Munday talked about the inspection carried out by Ofsted and the CPC on services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), the outcome of which was very positive. An action plan had been developed to focus on particular issues such as therapies and diagnosis which would be monitored and updates arising out of that would be reported back to a future Committee.

Cllr Longstaff congratulated Officers and the SEND team for all their work as noted in Parliament and for being top five for SEND services in the UK which was a great achievement. The Councillor also thanked all health partners, police and parents for their contribution.

Neil Marlow, Chief Executive and Director of Education and Learning, Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS) presented the report. The Committee was asked to note the outcome of the inspection and to delegate authority to the Executive Director to develop a Barnet response to the White Paper as well as explore the development of a Local Authority Multi Academy Trust.

One of the key points arising out of the White Paper and Schools Bill had been legally enforceable set of standards for academy trusts and a legal tool for LAs to request that some of their schools join an academy trust. It was noted that the Bill would provide protection and other benefits to schools.

A coordinated response to the White Paper was required to address the controversial decision to enjoin all Barnet schools to multi academy trusts.

One of the implications for Barnet was a minimum length of school week of 32.5 hours. There was the ambition that 90% of children would leave primary school by 2030 with expected standards in Reading, Writing and Maths. A drop in attainment was expected this year due to the loss of learning as a result of the pandemic. Ranking of schools however, remained at the top 10%.

Guidance would be provided to schools to achieve pre-pandemic levels of attendance.

A lot of Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) support was already available in schools and the LA would continue to ensure that the needs of schools in SEMH would be met.

The LA worked well in partnership with schools by demonstrating the benefit of change rather than enforcing it on them. There was the possibility of BELS or the Local Authority starting one or more Multi Academy Trusts to help shape the future with schools by enhancing what was already being provided.

It was noted that the DFE had released a 'Test and Learn' for LAs which allowed the Local Authority to put in an interest as early adopter of the multi academy trust on a trial basis.

Officers suggested raising at the next Directors' briefing that governing bodies and Headteachers start discussions with the LA on the new prospect.

A motion was moved and seconded by the Chair for an additional recommendation to be added as follows:

To delegate the Executive Director to explore options for sharing the expertise in Barnet with DfE officials. Officers should seek to maximise opportunities to pilot or seek grant funding to benefit local schools identified through the White and Green Papers.

The motion was carried.

Schools have been engaged on the implications of the Green Paper. The three key challenges noted were outcomes for children with SEND, navigation of the system where alternative provision was not suitable for families and investment to ensure that the system was delivering value for money for families.

Mainstream schools would be directed to follow the new national standards that would ensure children's needs were met effectively through mainstream provision. A single national formula proposed by the DFE would allow the government to set funding levels.

In terms of mediation, families and councils would be required to engage on disputes prior to appeals, to help reduce the number of tribunals. Parents would also be offered a tailored list of schools by Admissions.

RESOLVED That Committee:

-Notes the outcome of the SEND Local Area inspection by Ofsted and the CQC

-Agrees the Action Plan attached at Appendix A

-Notes the Congratulatory Letter attached at Appendix B from Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

-Notes the contents of the Government's White Paper "Opportunity for all: Strong Schools with great teachers for your child" and potential implications for schools, settings and the Local Authority.

-Delegates to the Executive Director, in consultation with the Committee Chair, the authority to develop a Barnet response to the White Paper in discussion with local schools and settings.

-Agrees to delegate authority to the Executive Director to explore the development of a Local Authority Multi-Academy Trust with schools in Barnet and bring back proposals to a future CES committee.

-Notes the contents of the DfE Green Paper "Right Support, Right Place, Right Time" and the potential implications for schools, settings and the Local Authority.

-Delegates the Executive Director to explore options for sharing the expertise in Barnet with DfE officials. Officers should seek to maximise opportunities to pilot or seek grant funding to benefit local schools identified through the White and Green Papers.

10. FAMILY SERVICES QUARTERLY UPDATE

Mr Munday presented the Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) used as performance indicators.

It was noted that Social Care placements have been challenging due to shortages. However, referral pathways have proven to be successful.

One key issue raised by Members had been around performance in relation to time scale of assessments. Assessments were noted to be of good quality and recruitment would support teams to increase performance.

Low numbers of dental checks for Looked After Children was due to the pandemic as well as older children choosing not to visit a dentist. Many young people comprised of UASC with associated issues such as their age being matched with dental records hence fear of repercussion. Other children who came into Care had never been to a dentist and may have been avoiding checks out of fear. The service continued to ensure registration with dentists and to appoint a trusted person in the young person's life.

Tina McElligott, Director, Children's Social Care explained that that statutory worker assessments should be completed within 45 days from start to finish for a Child in Need. (CIN) Data presented to Committee appeared as though assessments were not completed in time. However, due to complex needs in particular cases, a break might be needed to seek expert professional input into the assessment. It was noted that an assessment would commence as soon as a need had been identified to ensure the child received the support needed.

It was noted that a session on the ChAT might prove useful for Members. Members also requested a mechanism of comparative data.

An Annual Self-Assessment was done each year to show data trends which could be used for scrutiny.

RESOLVED That Committee:

- **Notes and provides comments on the ChAT performance report summarised in this report and provided in Appendix 1**
- **Notes and provides comments on the Competition and Marketing Authority (CMA) report into the Children's Social Care placements market summarised in this report and provided in Appendix 2, and to note and provide comments on our placements sufficiency programme an update on the Greenbank House provision, and the London Accommodation Pathfinder programme secure.**
- **Agrees the revised Special Guardianship Policy, provided in Appendix 4**
- **Agrees the revised Connected Carers Policy, provided in Appendix 5**
- **Notes and provide comments on the Nationals Referral Mechanism report summarised in this report and included in Appendix 6**

11. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME


RESOLVED that Committee notes the Work Programme.

12. ANY OTHER ITEM(S) THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT (IF ANY)

None.

The meeting ended at 8.53pm.

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	<p align="center">Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee</p> <p align="center">12 September 2022</p>
<p align="center">Title</p>	<p align="center">Barnet Youth Parliament and Youth Ambassador Scheme 2022</p>
<p align="center">Report of</p>	<p>Chair of the Committee, Councillor Coakley-Webb</p>
<p align="center">Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p align="center">Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p align="center">Urgent</p>	<p>No</p>
<p align="center">Key</p>	<p>Non-key</p>
<p align="center">Enclosures</p>	<p>None</p>
<p align="center">Officer Contact Details</p>	<p>Chris Munday, Executive Director for Children’s Services Chris.munday@barnet.gov.uk 020 8359 7099</p>

Summary

The Barnet Youth Parliament and Youth Ambassador schemes provide opportunities for young people in Barnet to work with their MPs, decision makers, councillors, officers and local youth groups on the issues that are important to young people in the Borough. This report provides a summary of the activities of these two initiatives.

Officers Recommendations

1. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the Barnet Youth Parliament and Youth Ambassador Scheme 2022

1. Why this report is needed

- 1.1 Our child participation and family involvement strategy, My Say Matters, is for all children, young people and their families especially those from racially minoritised communities, migrant families, LGBTQ+, children with disabilities and any other

marginalised groups whose voices may not be heard as often. We have made a commitment in this strategy to sure that everyone is supported to share their voice and express themselves fully. This report outlines some of the participation centred around the Barnet Youth Parliament and Youth Ambassador's Scheme.

2. Reasons for recommendations

- 2.1 Members of Youth Parliament are 11–18-year-olds elected to represent young people across the borough for a two-year term, and work with their MPs, decision makers, councillors, and local youth groups on the issues of greatest concern to their constituents. Youth Parliament Members take part in a national scheme run by the British Youth Council which includes a national debate in the House of Commons chamber where two national priorities are selected for the following year.
- 2.2 Barnet's Youth Ambassadors work to identify the needs of local young people and chair Barnet's Youth Board where council officers and partners attend to consult young people and gain their views and involvement in policy making. They also attend Children Education & Safeguarding Committee (CES) to represent the young people of Barnet as well as to provide feedback from the work of Barnet Youth Board.
- 2.3 Earlier in 2022, young people across Barnet voted to elect their Members of Youth Parliament and Youth Ambassadors for the 2022 - 2024 term. A total of 38 candidates from 14 schools stood for election and over 7,700 young votes were cast. Votes came from across 26 establishments including three primary schools that invited former pupils, who were candidates, to come back and speak. Candidates also took part in online debates where they presented their campaigns, which included a range of topics such as knife crime, mental health and education gaps caused by COVID-19. This is a clear sign of young people's interest in having an influence over issues that affect them and their active citizenship. The results were announced at a special ceremony evening at Avenue House, Finchley on 24 March 2022.
- 2.4 Elected members:
 - Barnet's Members of Youth Parliament are:
 - Elyse Adil, age 11, Belmont Preparatory School
 - Isaac Reuben, age 16, JCOSS
 - Barnet's Youth Ambassadors are:
 - Ania Siad, age 14, Ashmole Academy
 - Deetya Pardasani, age 13, Mill Hill County High school.
- 2.5 The four elected members presented their campaigns during the election period and are now in the process of refining these. They will present their updated programme of work verbally to CES on 12 September 2022. An indicative summary is provided below:

- Elysse Adil – Preventing Knife Crime: Concern about the number of incidents involving knives and young people, need for education in schools for all age groups, promoting resources for schools that will help prevent knife crime
- Isaac Reuben - Welcoming LGBTQ+ students in schools: Ways students can feel safe to be their true selves, access to gender neutral toilets and pro-noun use, discussions with students and SLTs.
- Deetya Pardasani - Drug Awareness and Prevention: Youth led schools and community based initiatives to break the cycle of peer pressure, drug use and crime. Reporting mechanisms for young people to raise concerns so support can be targeted where needed.
- Ania Shah – Promoting Good Mental Health: Making sure the rewards system in schools is not biased against those with additional needs, ensuring fair access to school trips and enrichment activities. Developing a greater range of school trips and learning experiences that support career options and healthy lifestyles.

- 2.6 Barnet's Members of Youth Parliament attended the residential Youth Parliament Annual Sitting in July 2022 at the University of Hull, where Members of Youth Parliament representatives from across England came together to take part in workshops, debate and created a national manifesto policy. The event was opened by the House of Commons Speaker and the NHS Youth Forum. The 'Big Debate' involved Members of Youth Parliament submitting a policy motion which was then presented and debated before being voted on for inclusion in the current manifesto. Some of the policies debated included Tackling Racism and Hate Crimes, Violence Against Women and Girls and Barnet's Youth Parliament member Elysse Adil, presented her motion on Knife Crime.
- 2.7 Members of Youth Parliament also started to prepare for the House of Commons sitting where representatives are invited to debate in the Commons Chamber; this will be taking place for the first time in three years and will select the two priority campaigns for the forthcoming year.
- 2.8 Barnet Youth Board took a break in May due to exams and is now in recess for the summer holidays, it will resume in September. Recent activity includes working with Public Health on various food plans and offering support to the planning of focus groups with young people to gather their views to inform Barnet's Children and Young People's Plan due to be published in 2023.
- 2.9 Barnet Members of Youth Parliament and Youth Ambassadors have also been involved in the creation and delivery of the work that sits within the My Say Matters Child Participation & Family Involvement Strategy for example planning the launch event in May 2022 and writing the speech which was read out by young people who opened the first full council meeting of the new administration on 26 July 22.

3. Alternative options considered and not recommended

- 3.1 None

4. Post decision implementation

4.1 None

5. Implications of decision

Corporate Priorities and Performance

5.1.1 Family Friendly is a key part of the Barnet Plan for 2021-2025 with the vision of “Creating a Family Friendly Barnet, enabling opportunities for our children and young people to achieve their best”.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

5.2.1 There are no resource implications

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

5.3.1 Local authorities have specific duties in respect of children under various legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004. They have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and, if this is consistent with the child’s safety and welfare, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing services appropriate to the child’s needs. They should do this in partnership with parents, in a way that is sensitive to the child’s race, religion, culture and language and that, where practicable, takes account of the child’s wishes and feelings. Under the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities must consider how the child or young person can be supported to facilitate their development and to help them achieve the “best possible educational and other outcomes”.

5.3.2 Under the Council’s Constitution Article 7 (Committees, Forums and Partnerships) the terms of reference of the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee includes the ‘responsibility for all matters relating to children, care experienced (up to the age of 25), schools and education.’

5.4 Insight

5.4.1 N/A

5.5 Social Value

5.5.1 This is a programme designed to proactively include young people in making decisions and providing their views about council activities that promote their safety and wellbeing.

5.6 Risk Management

5.6.1 Specific risk management is being carried out for Children and Young People’s Plan. Any Family Services risks are recorded on the Family Services Risk Register and monitored each quarter by the Senior Leadership Team with escalations to CMT if necessary.

5.7 Equalities and Diversity

5.7.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public-Sector Equalities Duty

which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- foster good relations between people from different groups

5.7.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services

5.7.3 Equalities and diversity considerations are a key element of social work practice. It is imperative that help and protection services for children and young are sensitive and responsive to age, disability, race and ethnicity, faith or belief, sex, gender reassignment, language, maternity / parental status and sexual orientation. We continue to closely monitor this, as report appendixes notes, in our performance data.

5.8 Corporate Parenting

5.8.1 In July 2016, the Government published their Care Leavers' strategy Keep on Caring which outlined that the "... [the government] will introduce a set of corporate parenting principles that will require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children.'

5.8.2 The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and;
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

5.9 Consultation and Engagement


5.9.1 This has been developed as part of My Say Matters, the Family Services consultation and participation programme.

5.10 Environmental Impact

5.10.1 None

6. Background papers

6.1 None

	<p>Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee</p> <p>12 September 2022</p>
<p>Title</p>	<p>Barnet Young People’s Survey 2021/22</p>
<p>Report of</p>	<p>Chair of the Committee - Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb</p>
<p>Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p>Urgent</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Key</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Enclosures</p>	<p>Appendix 1: Young People’s Survey 2021/22</p>
<p>Officer Contact Details</p>	<p>Chris Munday, Executive Director, Children and Young People Chris.Munday@Barnet.gov.uk Ben Thomas, Assistant Director, Family Services Ben.thomas@barnet.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary</p>	
<p>Barnet’s strategic vision is to be family friendly, as part of that work we have a programme to hear the voice of young people and ascertain information about their experiences. The Young People’s Survey (YPS) is a bi-annual face-to-face survey of Barnet young residents aged 11-18, undertaken by an independent research company. The survey has been undertaken since 2016 which gives the Council indications of trends in young people’s views over time. 500 Barnet young people were interviewed between 10th November 2021 – 20th March 2022. To ensure a cross section of young people are represented, quotas are on age, gender, disability and ethnicity. Confidence levels for a sample of 500 is +/-4.3% at the 95% confidence levels. Results of the survey looks at the local area perceptions, as well as a range of demographic and usage indicators.</p>	

Recommendations

- 1. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee note and comment on the Young People’s Perception Survey results as detailed in Appendix 1**
- 2. That the information is utilised to support service and partnership planning.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 Barnet is committed to listening to young people and acting in their best interests. Regular surveys provide feedback on what is important to young people. The YPS has been used to inform the development of the key strategies affecting young people including the Children and Young People’s Plan and Health & Wellbeing Strategy.
- 1.2 The approach and survey method will allow for the results to be directly comparable to previous surveys administered in 2019, 2017 and 2016, and the survey is carried out in such a way so that it is engaging for young people. It will also enable comparisons, where available with to National and London data.
- 1.3 A representative sample of the young people population were interviewed face-to-face between 10th November 2021 – 20th March 2022. 500 young people took part in the survey. As well as schools, interviews were carried out at shopping centres, cinemas and youth centres.
- 1.4 The YPS provides important insight on what young people think about living in the borough, their perception of the council, the services they receive, and also helps to understand young people’s priorities and concerns.
- 1.5 The results of the YPS informs decisions, processes and procedures that directly affect children and young people. It enables the opportunity to directly target improved services assisting with better outcomes.
- 1.6 The YPS is part of a suite of initiatives which seek to hear the voice of children including Bright Spots (for children in care and care leavers) and the recently launched My Say Matters participation strategy.
- 1.7 The YPS provides important information on the views and opinions of young people in Barnet. (See appendix 1)
 - The majority of young people feel Barnet (89%) is a family friendly place to live, compared to (84%) in 2019, (84%) in 2017 and (81%) in 2016
 - The measures also show what young people think about the council, and have improved significantly since the start of the survey:
 - is doing a good job (90%), compared to (92%) in 2019, (73%) in 2018 and (63%) in 2016

- provides the services young people need (81%), compared to (86%) in 2019, (71%) in 2017 and (54%) in 2016
- does enough to keep young people safe (78%), compared to (75%) in 2019, (69%) in 2017 and (54%) in 2016
- acts on the concerns of young people (75%), compared to (67%) in 2019, (66%) in 2017, and (47%) in 2016
- listens to the concerns of young people (73%) compared to (63%) in 2019, (54%) in 2017 and (39%) in 2016
- has a say on things the council is going to do (70%), new for 21/22 survey
- keeps young people informed (65%), compared to (60%) in 2019, (52%) in 2017 and (40%) in 2016

Further analysis on the data is underway with young people focus groups to provide a deeper understanding of the results.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The committee is asked to provide scrutiny and feedback responses that will assist in developing policies and strategies to drive improved outcomes. It will ensure the work has effective oversight and input.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 The alternative option is to not to conduct surveys gathering the views of young people. However, this could have an impact on inequality and the council's duty to fairness.

4 POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The views of young people are central to policy, procedures and decision making. They will help inform planning and development of key strategies such as the Children and Young People's Plan. The responses from children and young people assists in supporting improved outcomes. This will be in addition to the feedback and comments received from members.

5 IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 Creating a place where children excel and enjoy living, enabling opportunities for young people to achieve their best is a key aim of the Barnet Family Friendly vision for the borough.
- 5.1.2 Ensuring that residents live happy, healthy, independent lives with the most vulnerable protected is one of the Council's three strategic outcomes set out in its

Barnet Plan 2021-25, based on the core principles of fairness, responsibility and opportunity to make sure Barnet is a place:

- of opportunity, where people can further their quality of life
- where people are helped to help themselves, recognising that prevention is better than cure
- where responsibility is shared, fairly where services are delivered efficiently to get value for money for the taxpayer.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

The work to drive improve outcomes utilising the results of the survey will be delivered from within existing resources of the Council and its partners.

5.3 Social Value

5.3.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wide social, economic and environmental benefits. Before commencing a procurement process, commissioners should think about whether the services they are going to buy, or the way they are going to buy them, could secure these benefits for their area or stakeholders.

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

5.4.1 Local authorities have specific duties in respect of children under various legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004. They have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and, if this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing services appropriate to the child's needs. They also have a duty to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing services appropriate to the child's needs, provided this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare. They should do this in partnership with parents, in a way that is sensitive to the child's race, religion, culture and language and that, where practicable, takes account of the child's wishes and feelings.

5.4.2 The Council's Constitution, Article 7 notes that the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee has 'Responsibility for all matters relating to children, schools and education.

5.5 Insight

5.5.1 Data in this report is provided by Opinion Research Services (ORS), an independent social research company, commissioned to conduct the interviews for this survey. Safeguarding Committee has 'Responsibility for all matters relating to children, schools and education.

5.6 Risk Management

The nature of services provided to children and young people provides a certain element of risk. Poor information can affect response or affect decision making that could lead to poor outcomes. Good quality data reduce this likelihood and increase the chances of children developing into successful adults and achieving and succeeding. The results of surveys reduce risk and help to drive forward improvements towards good outcomes.

5.7 Equalities and Diversity

5.7.1 The Council has a duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to:

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

5.7.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day to day business and to keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services.

5.7.3 The approach taken was to ensure that a representative sample of children and young people were interviewed. The sample is representative of the 11 to 18 year olds population of Barnet with an equal representation of young people across each ward. Quotas were set on gender, age, ethnic origin, faith and disability. See Appendix 1.

5.8 Corporate Parenting Principles

- 5.8.1 In July 2016, the Government published their Care Leavers' strategy *Keep on Caring* outlined that the "... [the government] will introduce a set of corporate parenting principles that will require *all departments* within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children.'
- 5.8.2 The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:
1. to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
 2. to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
 3. to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
 4. to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
 5. to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
 6. for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and;
 7. to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
- 5.8.3 During the summer 2021, a survey by Bright Spots in partnership with Coram Voice and the Rees Centre was commissioned. The survey was set up to discover what matters to children in care and care leavers. The aim is to improve care experience for young people and give young children a voice on their own well-being.

5.9 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.9.1 Consultation and engagement with children and young people is central to developing strategies that provides support and improves outcomes. It is important that the work is child-centred and that we know, understand and capture their lived experience which leads to service improvement.
- 5.9.2 The Young Persons Survey (YPS) is a regular face-to-face survey of 500 Barnet young residents aged 11-18 carried out since 2016.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

BARNET COUNCIL – YOUNG PERSONS SURVEY 2021/22

June 2022

Research conducted by:



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Introduction

This presentation reports on the main findings from the most recent Young Peoples Perception Survey (YPS) 2021/22. It also includes comparisons to the most recent Adults Residents Perception Survey (ARPS) 2021/22 where available.

The Children's Partnership Board are asked to consider the YPS findings in context: to the Children and Young Peoples Plan and what we are striving to achieve in terms of outcomes; how the results can be used to inform service delivery and next steps.

To aid in these discussions the detailed analysis that has been conducted on the whole data set has also been provided in this presentation, namely:

- Segmentation analysis in terms of key demographics, including protected characteristics
- A breakdown by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), the measure of relative deprivation for neighbourhoods in England. The IMD ranks every small area in England from the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods to the least deprived 10% of neighbourhoods. In this presentation, the most deprived areas are referred to as 'deciles 1-3' while the least deprived areas are 'deciles 8-10'.
- Constituency analysis.

It should also be noted Family Services has already commissioned the Consultation and Research Team to run a series of Constituency based workshops with young people, and a focus group with those young people who have a disability to help unpack the findings in more detail.

Methodology and benchmarking

Methodology

- Barnet Young Persons Survey is a face-to-face quota survey of Barnet residents aged 11-18
- It measures reputation, service and local area perceptions, as well as a range of demographic and usage indicators.
- 500 Barnet young people were interviewed between 10th November 2021 – 20th March 2022.
- Confidence intervals for a sample of 500 is +/-4.3% at the 95% confidence interval.

Benchmarking

- This is the fourth wave of the YPS, the first was conducted in Autumn 2016 and the second in Autumn 2017 and the third in Autumn 2019. The intention is to bring out the voice of young people – what may be important to adults may not be important for young people.
- Where possible, findings from the YPS are also compared with the Adults Barnet Resident Perception Survey (RPS) 2021/22 where a representative random sample of 2,000 Barnet residents (aged 18 or over) were surveyed between 26th October 2021– 31st March 2022. 800 RPS interviews were conducted via telephone and 1,200 were conducted face-to-face.
- This presentation also uses national data from a variety of sources primarily the LGA's national polling on resident satisfaction with councils, which surveyed a representative random sample of c.1,000 British adults (aged 18 or over) between 22nd February to 6th March 2022. All interviews were conducted via telephone.

Summary of key findings

Key highlights

- On the whole, the results show a positive direction of travel on most perception measures – a trend which is also evident in the most recent LGA national polling and the council’s Adults Residents Perception Survey.
- The positive results could be attributed to young people enjoying a ‘feel good factor’ as they come out of COVID-19 restrictions and the return to relative normality. The council has also played an important and high profile role in supporting residents during the pandemic which may have impacted residents’ perceptions of it. However, it is difficult to know how much the positive results can be attributed to COVID-19 restrictions ending and it is important to flag there is a chance that the results for future surveys may return to pre-COVID levels.
- There are, however, some results that have remained stationary or shown a negative direction of travel. The proportion of young people who think the council is doing a good job and providing services young people need has shown small declines. Satisfaction with libraries has also continued to decline year-on-year and is now at its lowest recorded level.
- In terms of the demographic analysis, and in particular equalities, there are some clear themes emerging across questions, where residents are less likely to agree/ less satisfied if they:
 - live in a deprived area
 - live in the constituency of Hendon (in particular with regard safe guarding, crime, and community safety)
 - are White (BAME YP tend to be on average more satisfied)
 - are older (11- 13 year olds tend to be on average more satisfied)
 - have a disability

Key headlines

Barnet as a family friendly place to live

Nine in ten young people feel Barnet/your local area is a family friendly place to live, the highest of percentage of any survey conducted.

Young people in Barnet are significantly more likely to feel that Barnet is a family friendly place to live (89%) compared to adults (83%).

Residents of Finchley and Golders Green are more likely to agree that Barnet/your local area is a family friendly place to live.

Council's image

Most measures of the council's image have improved in 2021/22 compared to 2019.

Young people think that the council is doing a good job (90%), provides services young people need (81%), do enough to keep young people safe (78%), acts on the concerns of young people (75%), listens to the concerns of young people (73%) involves young people when making decisions (70%) and keeps young people informed (65%).

Those who are BME or aged 11-13 were more likely to view the council highly across a number of these measures.

Key headlines

Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live

Over nine in ten young people are satisfied with the local area as a place to live (94%). The highest recorded percentage.

The proportion of young people satisfied with the local area is significantly higher than in adults.

Those from Chipping Barnet are more likely to be satisfied while those who are disabled are less likely to be satisfied.

Satisfaction with the local services

Young people are more satisfied with all local services compared to adults

Satisfaction with some services have significantly improved, this includes: parks, playgrounds and open spaces (89%) up 7 percentage points* and activities for teenagers/young people (66%) up 8 percentage points*

Only satisfaction with libraries (65%) was lower than in 2019 but only by 1 percentage point.

Key headlines

Top concerns

Young people's concern with crime (41%) has significantly decreased by 15 percentage points* when compared with 2019 but remains young people's biggest concern.

When compared with the 2019 survey there has also been a significant decreases with concern in litter and dirt (29%) down 8 percentage points*, the lack of affordable housing (12%) down 8 percentage points*, and the number of homeless people (12%) down 7 percentage points*.

There have been significant increases in concern in traffic jams/congestion (26%) up 8 percentage points* and how well roads and pavements are looked after (13%) up 5 percentage points*.

Concern with the impact of Covid-19 was measured for the first time this survey. 14% of young people were concerned with the impact of Covid. The inclusion of the Covid-19 option may explain some of the relative decline of some other concerns.

Feelings of safety

Young people feelings of safety have improved in most situations

When compared with 2019, there has been a significant increase in young people's feelings of safety when travelling to and from school (90%) up 6 percentage points* and in local playgrounds and open spaces (87%) up 8 percentage points* While the percentage of young people feeling safe while out at night remains low (49%) it has increased four percentage points compared to 2019.



* Change is statistically significant with a p-value lower than, or equal to, 0.05.

Key headlines

Top safety concerns

Young people's top personal safety concern remains knife crime (51%), but the level of concern over knife crime has seen a significant decrease of 20 percentage points since the question was first asked in 2019.

Those who are between 16 and 18 were more likely to be concerned with knife crime

When compared with 2019, there has been a decrease in concern with gangs (down 17 percentage points*), but an increase in concern with safety on public transport (up 7 percentage points*) and bullying online (up 6 percentage points*).

Council priorities

Young people's views on the main priorities for the council and its partners are broadly similar to 2019.

Their top priority is now protecting people from crime and ASB (41% - a decrease of 4 percentage points), followed by protecting young people from harm (48% - a decrease of 5 percentage points) and supporting young people with mental health problems (29% - the same as in 2019). A number of areas have also reduced in priority, for example parks and open spaces which dropped 6 percentage points* and sports and leisure facilities fell 4 percentage points*.

The largest increases in priority were improving town centre (increased by 3 percentage points*) and promoting reading and learning (increased by 3 percentage points*) but these remain at the bottom of young people's list of priorities.

Key headlines

Community and Cohesion

All measures on community and cohesion have increased compared with 2019

There were significant increases in the percent that think Barnet is a place where you can live a healthy life (92% - increase of 8 percentage points), a family friendly place to live (89% - up 5 percentage points) and that they feel valued and respected (77% - up 13 percentage points)

Communication with the Council

In terms of preferred method of communication, young people indicated they prefer to be contacted by schools or email newsletter

As in 2019 'through schools' was also the most popular response when young people were asked for their communication preferences (33% - down 1 percentage point compared to 2019), followed by email newsletter (22% down 6 percentage points compared to 2019*).

Awareness of the Council's Work

Just under three quarters of young people surveyed have heard of at least one piece of work that the Council is doing, which is similar to the level in the 2019 survey.

The top things that young people have heard of are Kooth.com (36% - 15 percentage points higher than in 2019*), Unitas Youth Zone (30% - 1 percentage point lower than in 2019), and the Youth Parliament Elections (18% - 13 percentage points lower than in 2019)

Key headlines

Personal Wellbeing

Most young people seem satisfied with their life, this has increased since 2019.

The mean satisfaction score (0 = not at all satisfied; 10 = completely satisfied) was 8.70, higher than the 2019 mean of 8.49.

Those who are age 11-13 have a significantly higher average life satisfaction.

8 in 10 young people would want to talk to someone if feeling depressed or anxious.

Young people who are male, older (14 – 18), and are white are significantly less likely to want to talk to someone if feeling depressed or anxious.

85% of young people are fairly active or active doing over 30 minutes of physical activity a week.

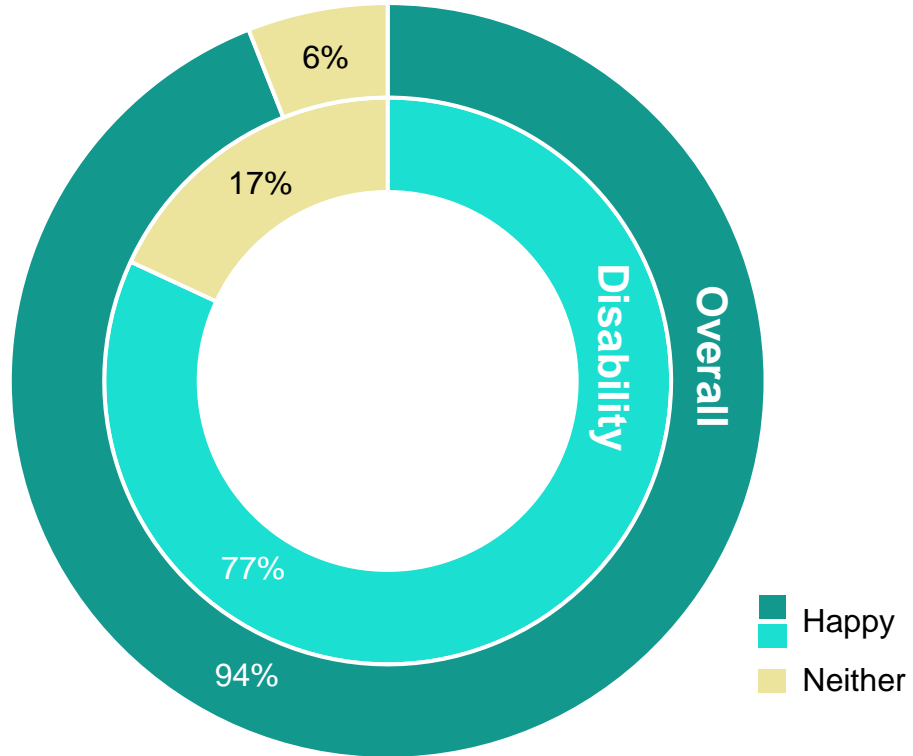
This is a higher percentage than the Active Lives Children and Young People Survey found for young people in England (67%).

However, young people who are female are significantly less likely to be active or fairly active.

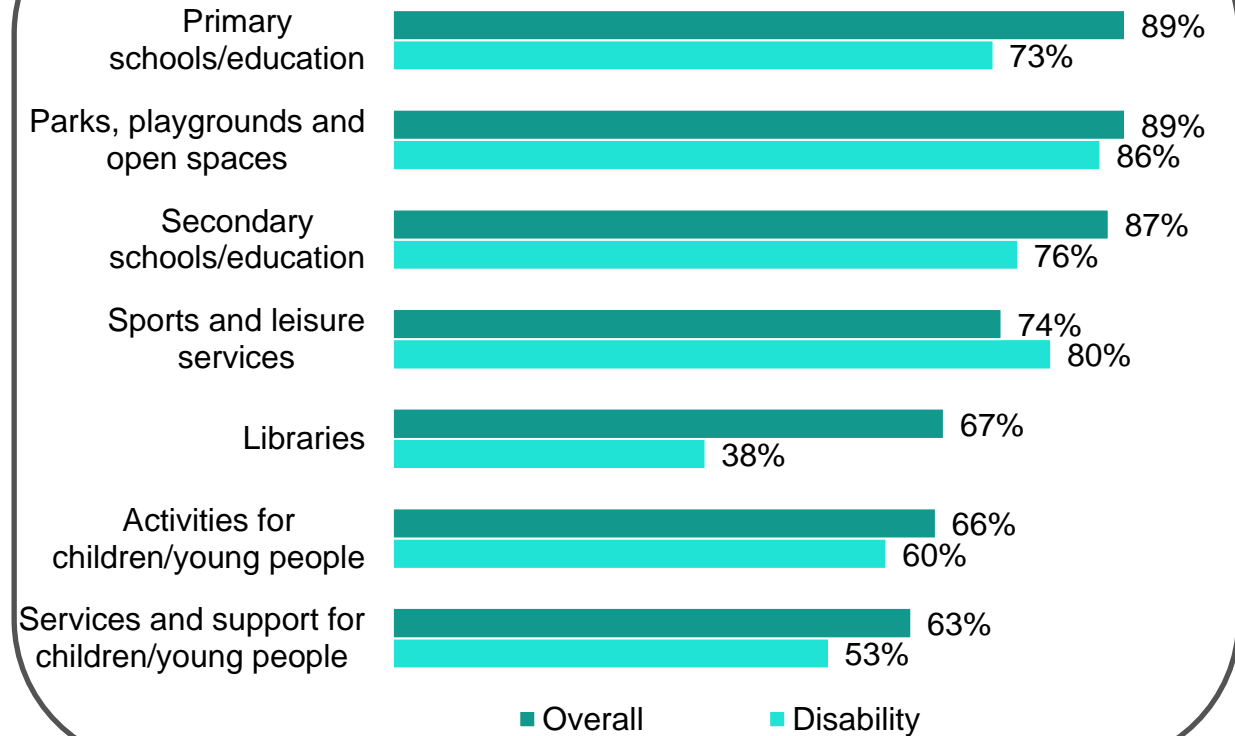
Summary of disability segmentation analysis

- Those who have a disability are less likely to say they are happy with their local area as a place to live and say they are satisfied with local services (especially libraries).

Happiness with local area as a place to live



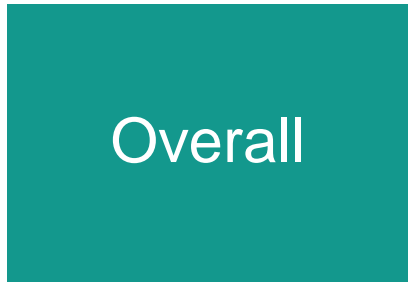
Satisfaction with services



Disability

- Those who have a disability are more likely to be worried about how good health services are. A quarter of disabled young people are (25%) worried about the quality of health services.

Top Worries



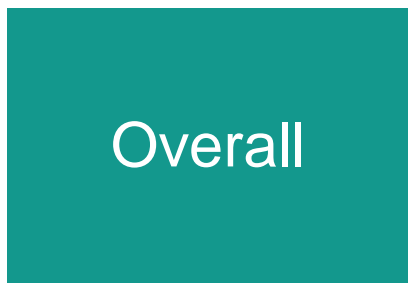
1st Crime (41%)
2nd Litter/dirt (30%)
3rd Traffic jams/congestion (26%)
4th Lack of jobs (21%)
5th Not enough being done for young people (21%)



1st Crime (42%)
2nd Traffic jams/congestion (29%)
3rd Lack of jobs (26%)
4th How good health services are (25%)
5th Litter/dirt (23%)

- Those who have a disability are more likely to want the council to focus time and money on supporting those with long-term health problems or disabilities and those with emotional and mental health problems.

Top Priorities



1st Protecting people from crime and ASB (42%)
2nd Protecting you people and children from harm (38%)
3rd Supporting those with emotional and mental health problems (29%)

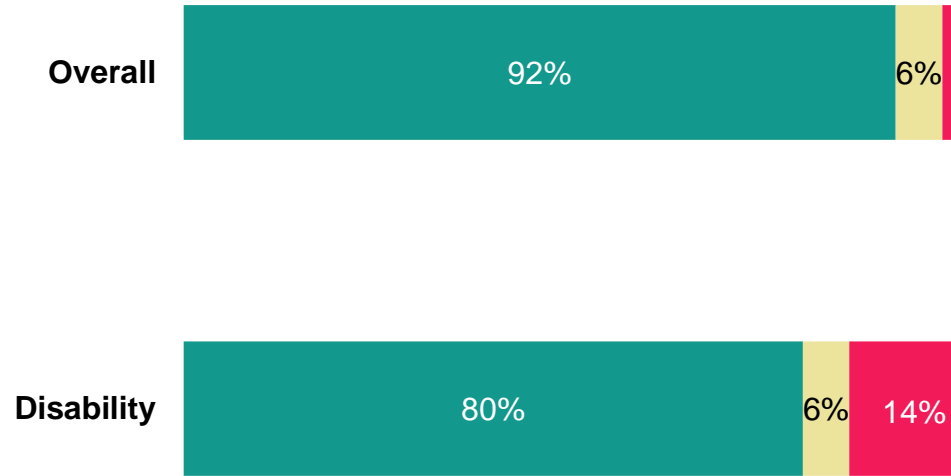


1st Protecting children and young people from harm (52%)
2nd Supporting those with long-term health problems or disabilities (50%)
3rd Supporting those with emotional and mental health problems (43%)

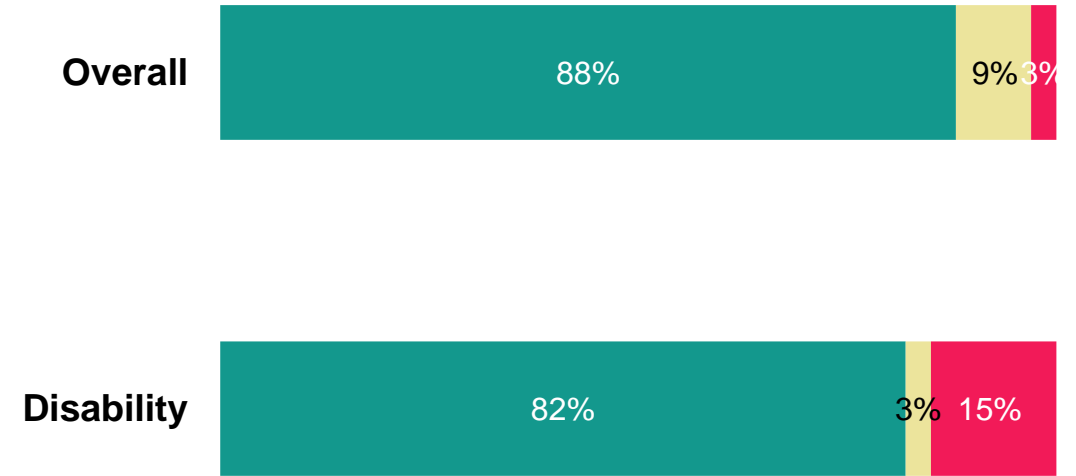
Disability

- Those who have a disability are more likely to disagree that Barnet/your local area is a place where you can live a healthy life and that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds/groups get on well together

Barnet/your local area is a place where you can live a healthy life



Barnet/your local area is a place where people from different backgrounds/groups get on well together



■ Agree ■ Neither ■ Disagree

Disability

- Those who have a disability are less likely to agree that the council provides services which young people need but more likely to agree that they do enough to protect young people from harm.

Agreement that the Council is...?



Findings in Full

Key perception indicators



94%
Are happy with Barnet
as a place to live



89%
Agree Barnet is a
family friendly place



70%
Agree young people have
a say on things the council
is going to do



78%
Agree the council protects
young people from harm



90%
Agree the council is
doing a good job

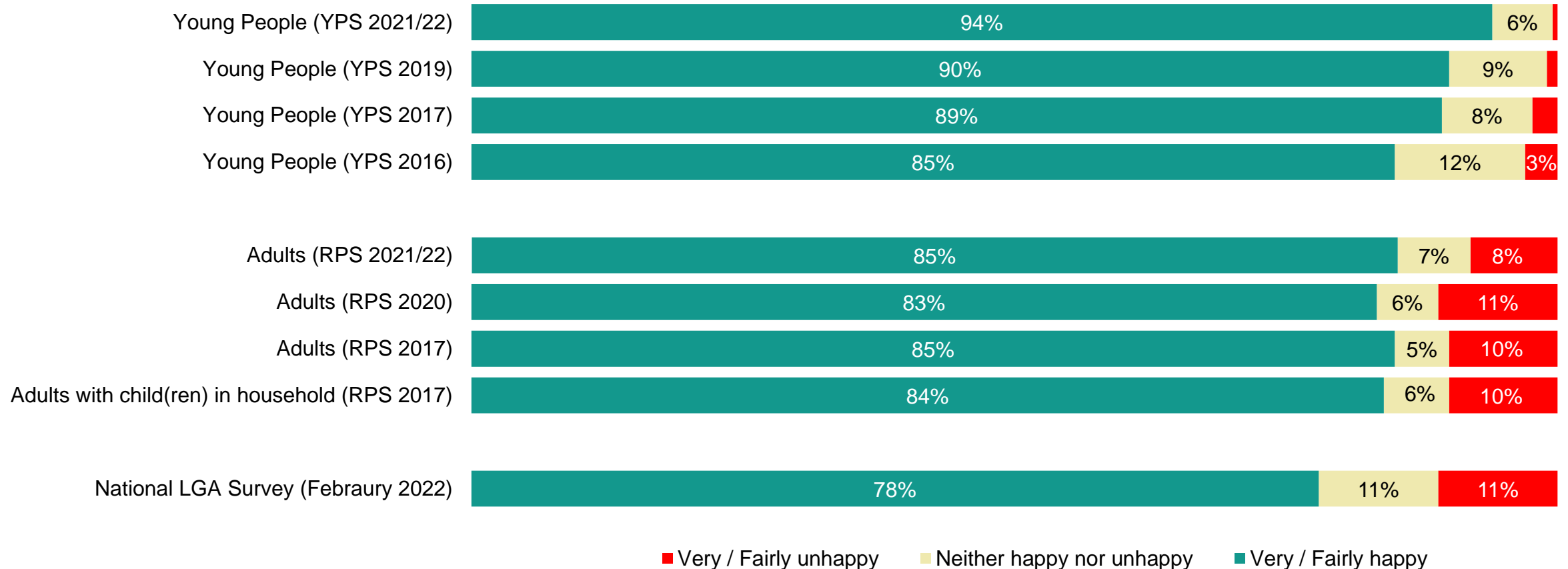


65%
Agree that the council
keeps young people
informed

Happy with Barnet as a place to live

Satisfaction with the local area

The majority of young people (94%) are happy with their local area as a place to live, which is a significant increase on the 2019 YPS and also significantly higher than the 2021/22 result for adults.

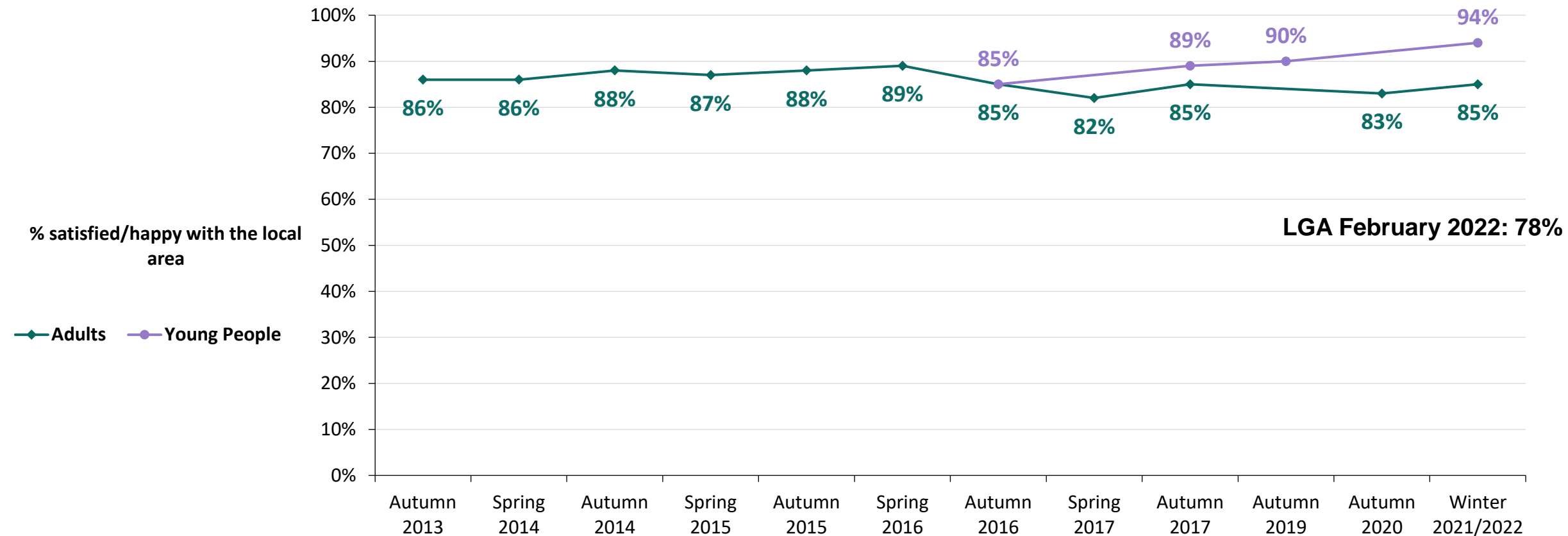


NOTE: YPS survey uses a very happy to very unhappy rating, RPS and LGA surveys use a very satisfied to very unsatisfied rating.

Satisfaction with the local area (long term trends)

Adult satisfaction with the local area has remained consistent and higher than the LGA average for a number years.

Young people's happiness with the local area has increased year-on-year and is now 9 percentage points (significantly higher) than the 2021/22 result for adults.

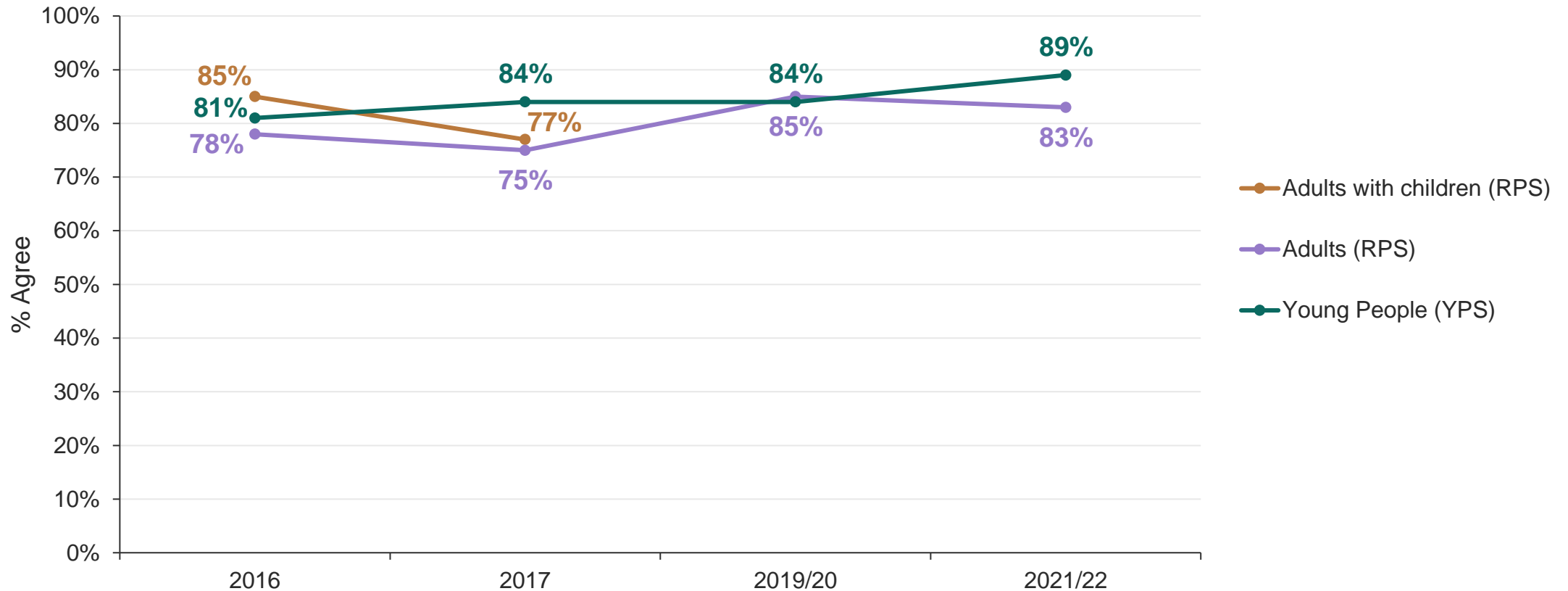


Barnet a Family-Friendly Borough

Barnet a family-friendly place to live

The proportion of young people who feel Barnet is a family friendly place to live is significantly higher (5 percentage points) than the previous wave in 2019/20.

When compared with the adults survey, young people are significantly more likely to feel that their local area is a family friendly place to live (+6%).



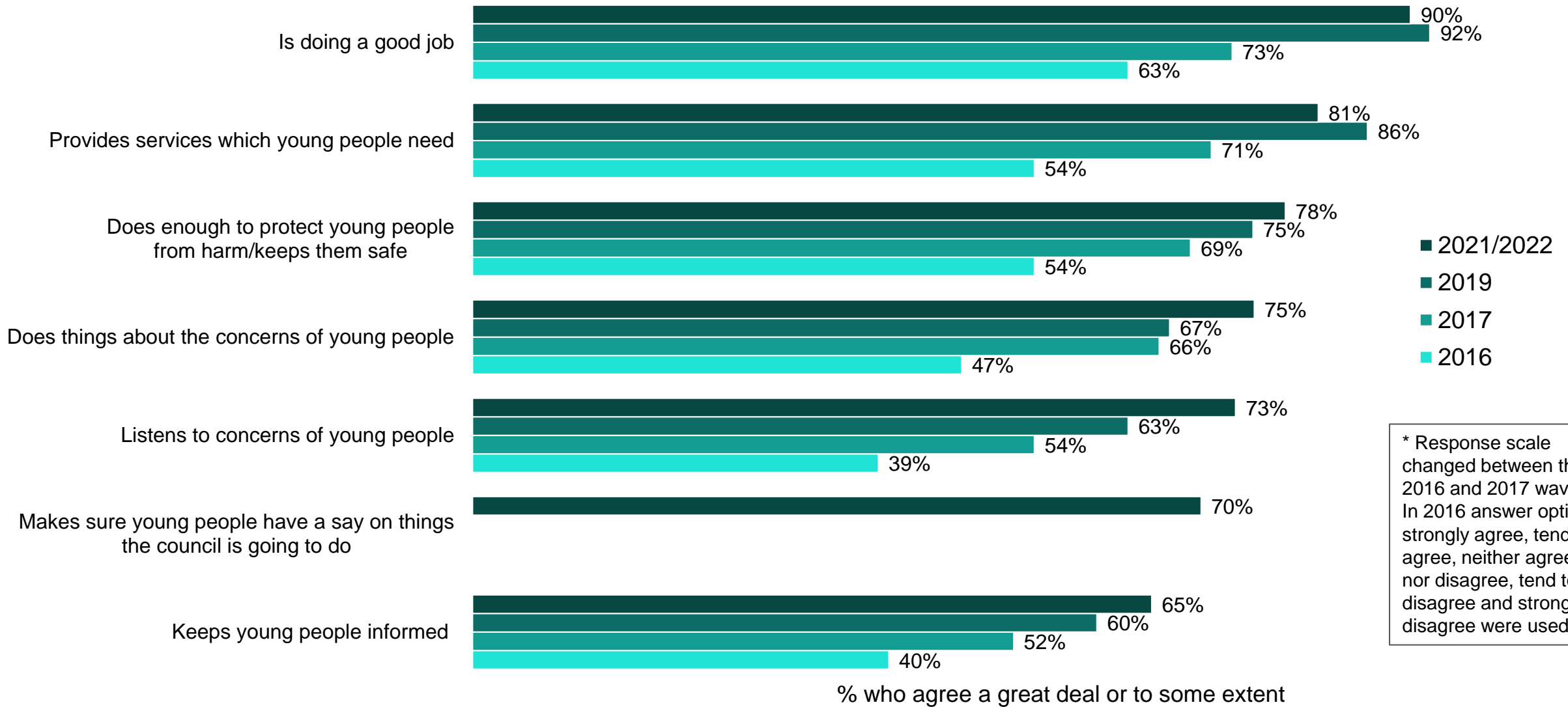
47
Questions: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the borough of Barnet is a family-friendly place to live? (YPS/RPS)

Source: Barnet Council Young People Survey (2021/22) of 500 residents aged 11-18, carried out by face-to-face/Barnet Council resident perception survey of c.2000 residents 18+, carried out by telephone and face-to-face

Image of the Council

Image of the Council – over time

Since 2019 five of the seven measures of the council's image have improved amongst young people.

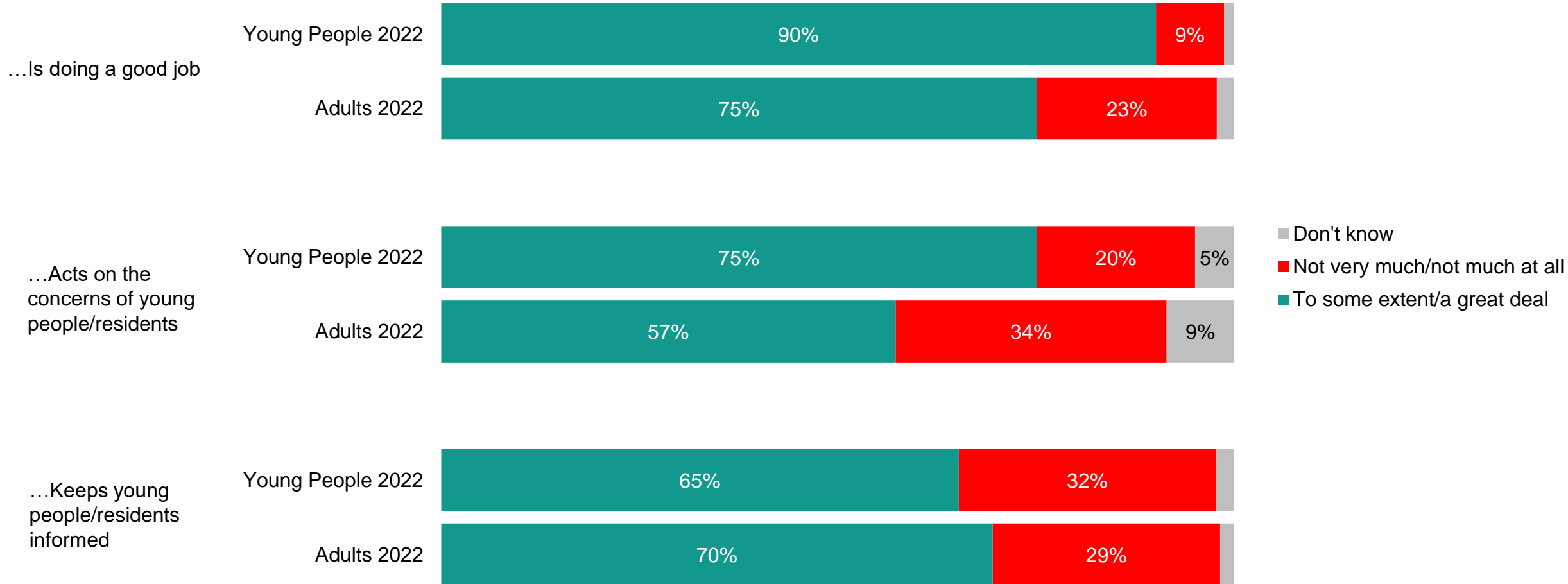


* Response scale changed between the 2016 and 2017 waves. In 2016 answer options strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree and strongly disagree were used.

Image of the Council

There are some differences between adults and young people* – more young people agree to some extent/a great deal that the council is doing a good job and acts on the concerns of young people. However a smaller proportion of young people agree that the council keeps them informed.

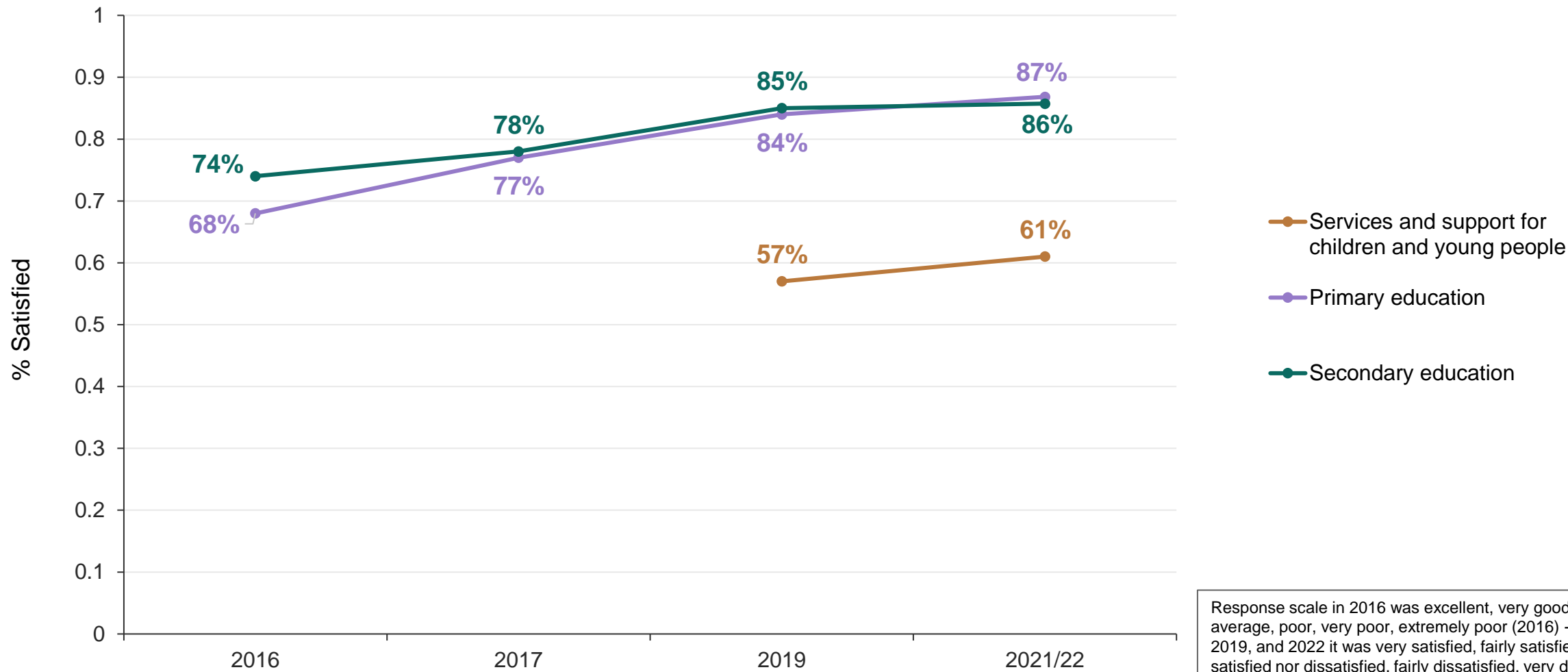
*The options scale for this question was different for those in RPS. While only 'is doing a good job' can be directly compared with RPS, the rest presented here are for reference - they are not for direct comparison.



Perception on council services

Children and family services – comparison to previous years

Satisfaction with services for children and young people as well as secondary and primary education have all seen their highest level of satisfaction recorded.

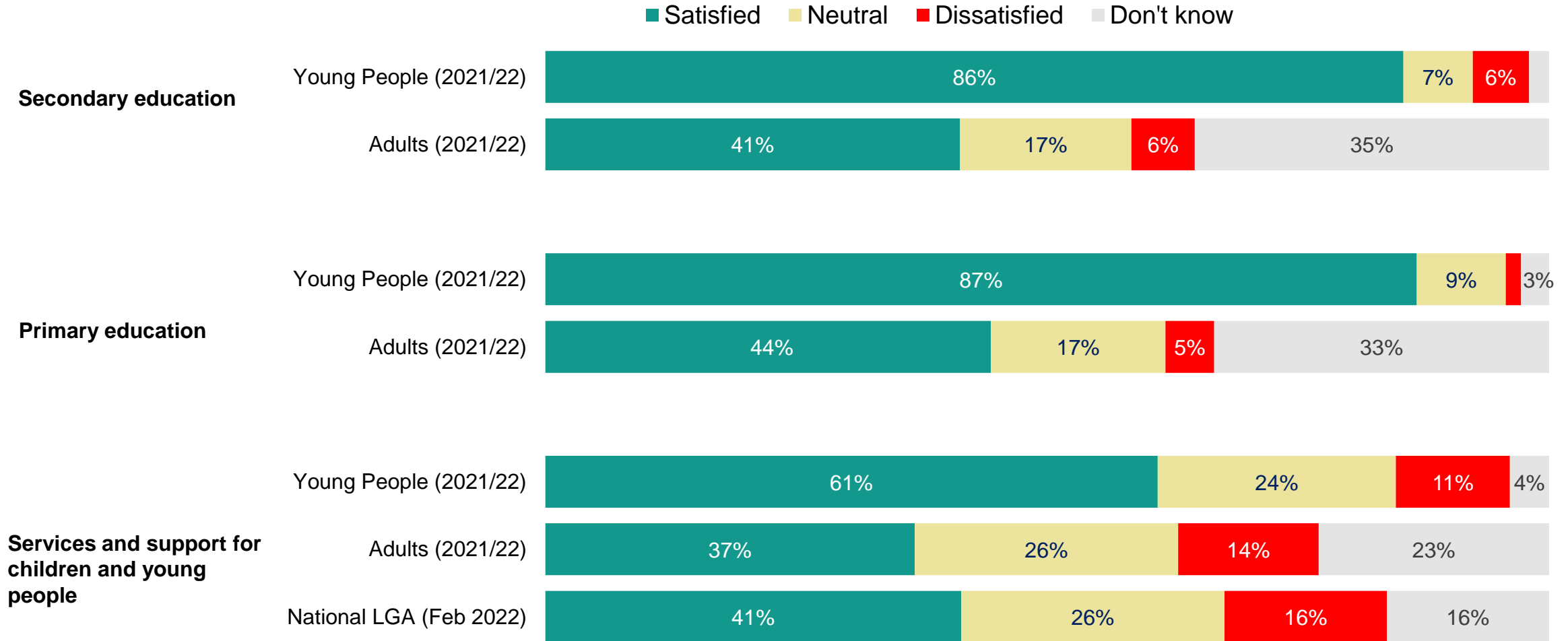


52
Question: We would now like to know what you think about different services in this area. Please say what you think about these services even if you have not used them yourself (YPS/RPS)

Source: Barnet Council Young People Survey (2021/22) of 500 residents 11-18, carried out by face-to-face

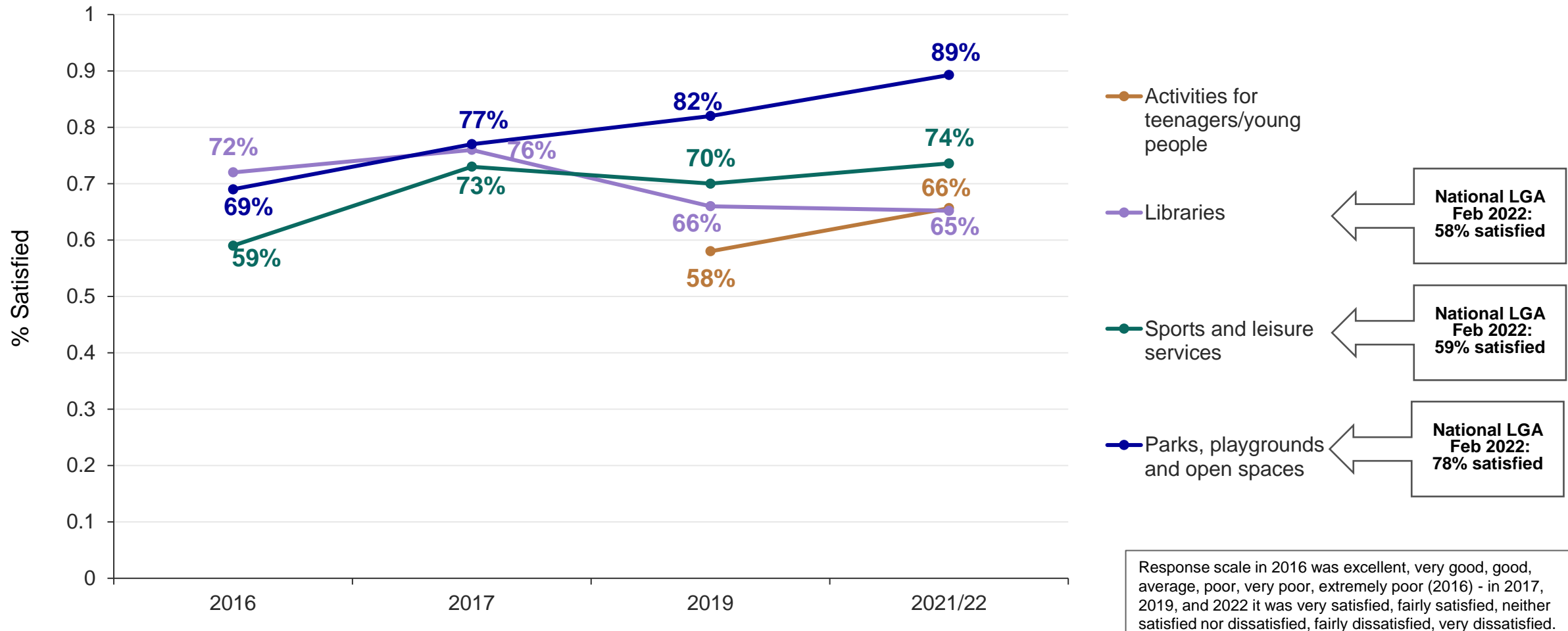
Children and Family Services – Young People vs Adults

Young people are significantly more likely to be satisfied with all of the council’s children and family services compared to adults.



Other services satisfaction – comparison to previous years

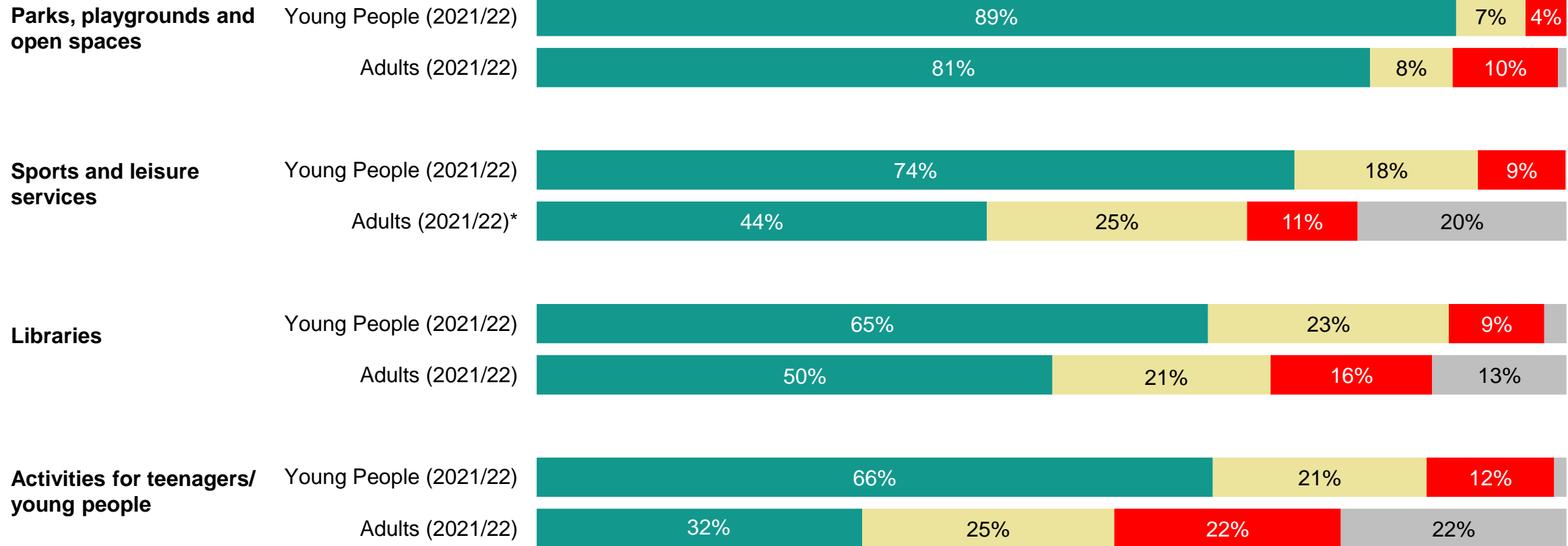
Satisfaction with parks, playgrounds and open spaces has increased significantly by 7 percentage points since 2019. Satisfaction with activities for teenagers/young people has also increased significantly by 8 percentage points.



Other Services – Young People vs Adults

Compared to adults, young people are significantly more satisfied with parks, playgrounds and open spaces, sports and leisure services, libraries, and activities for teenagers and young people.

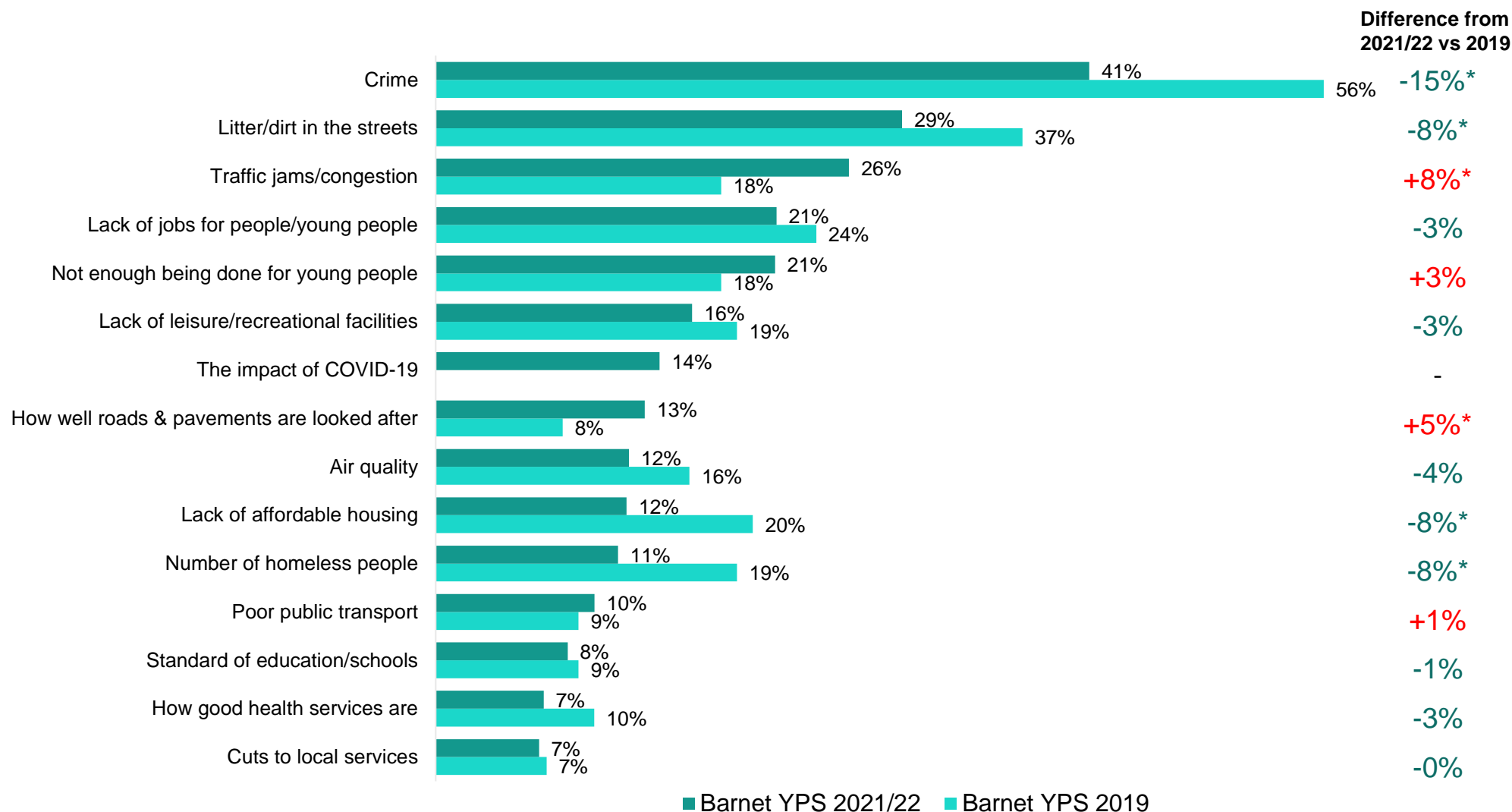
■ Satisfied ■ Neutral ■ Dissatisfied ■ Don't know



Young People's Concerns

Young peoples' top three concerns 2021/22 vs. 2019

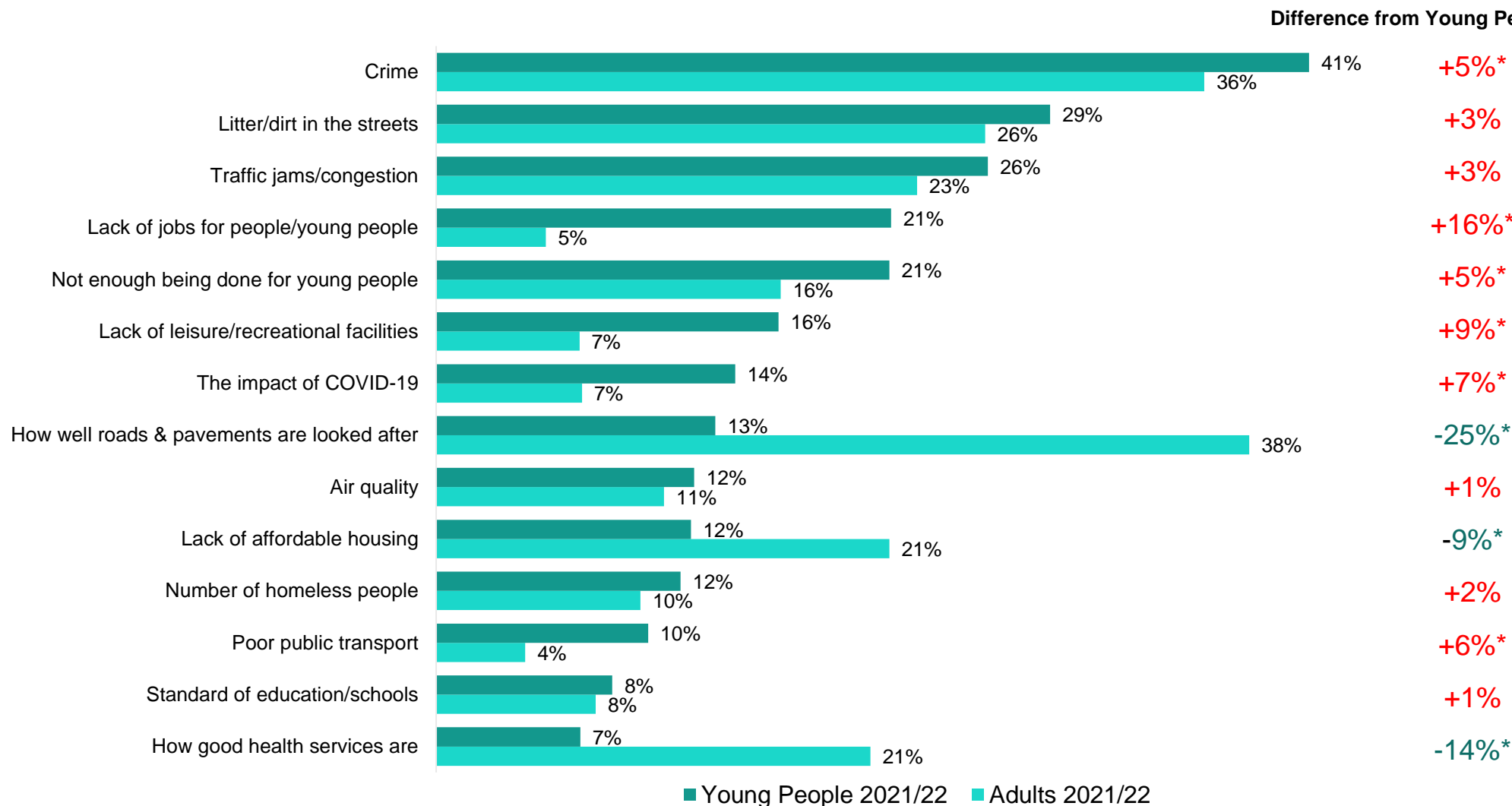
Crime remains the main concern for young people but this has seen a significant 15 percentage point decrease since 2019. Concern over litter/dirt in the streets has also significantly declined whilst concern over traffic jams/congestion has seen a significant increase.



Some of the downward shifts in the graph can be explained by the addition of the new 'impacts of Covid' option – i.e. many have chosen this option, meaning other issues have moved down the list in relative importance, although they still remain a concern.

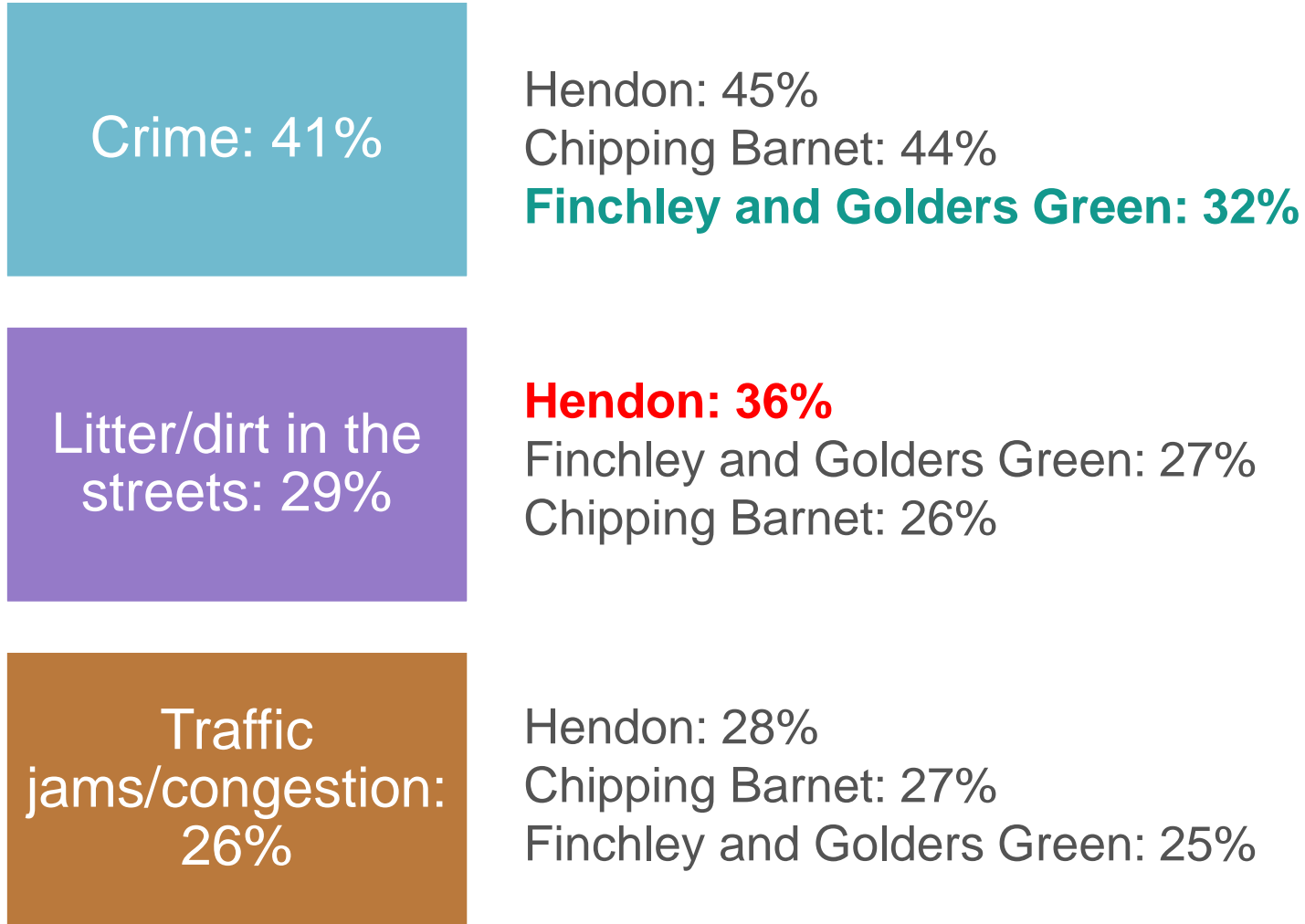
Young peoples' top concerns compared to adults

Crime is the number one concern for both young people and adults. But young people are significantly more concerned about crime, a lack of jobs, not enough being done for young people, a lack of leisure and recreational facilities, the impact of Covid-19 and poor public transport.



Some of the difference in the graph can be explained by the RPS survey having more options for this question – meaning respondents three choices are more spread out over other issues

Young people's top three concerns by resident constituency



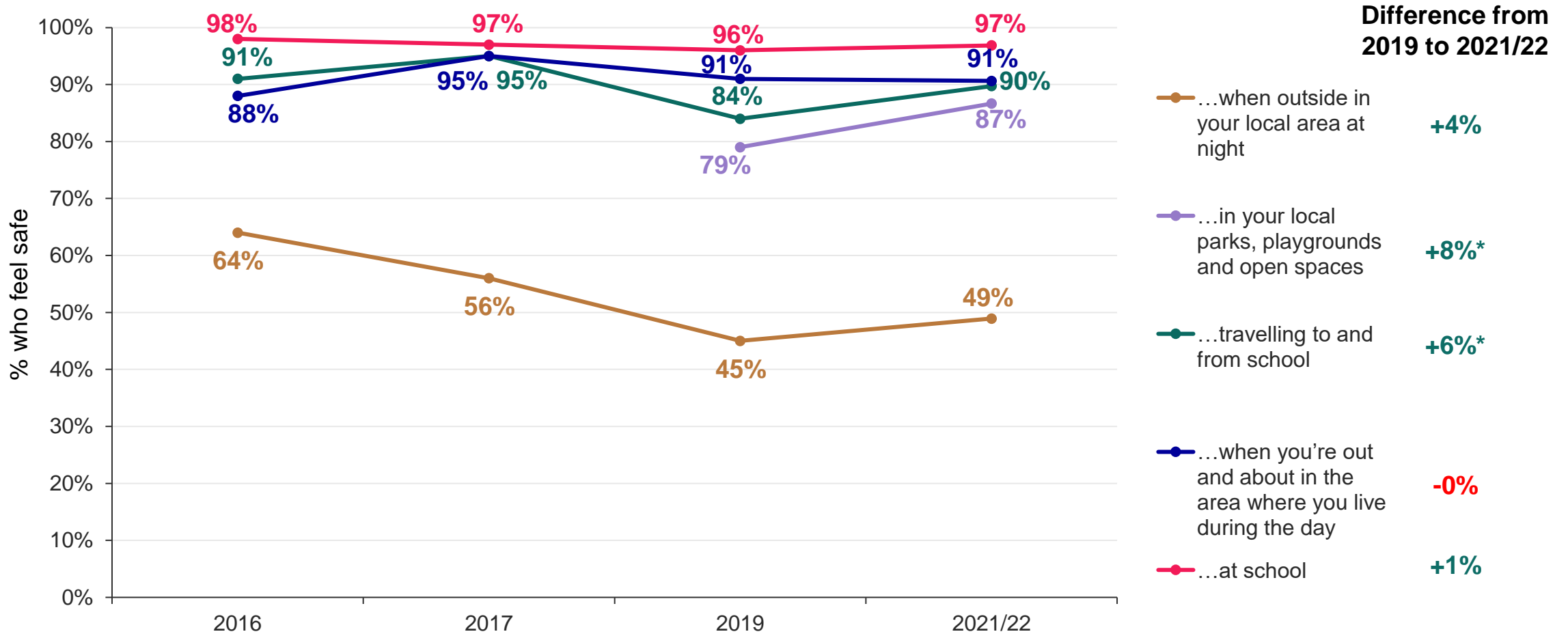
Green indicates result is significantly lower.

Red indicates result is significantly higher.

Young People's Personal Safety

Where do young people feel most safe?

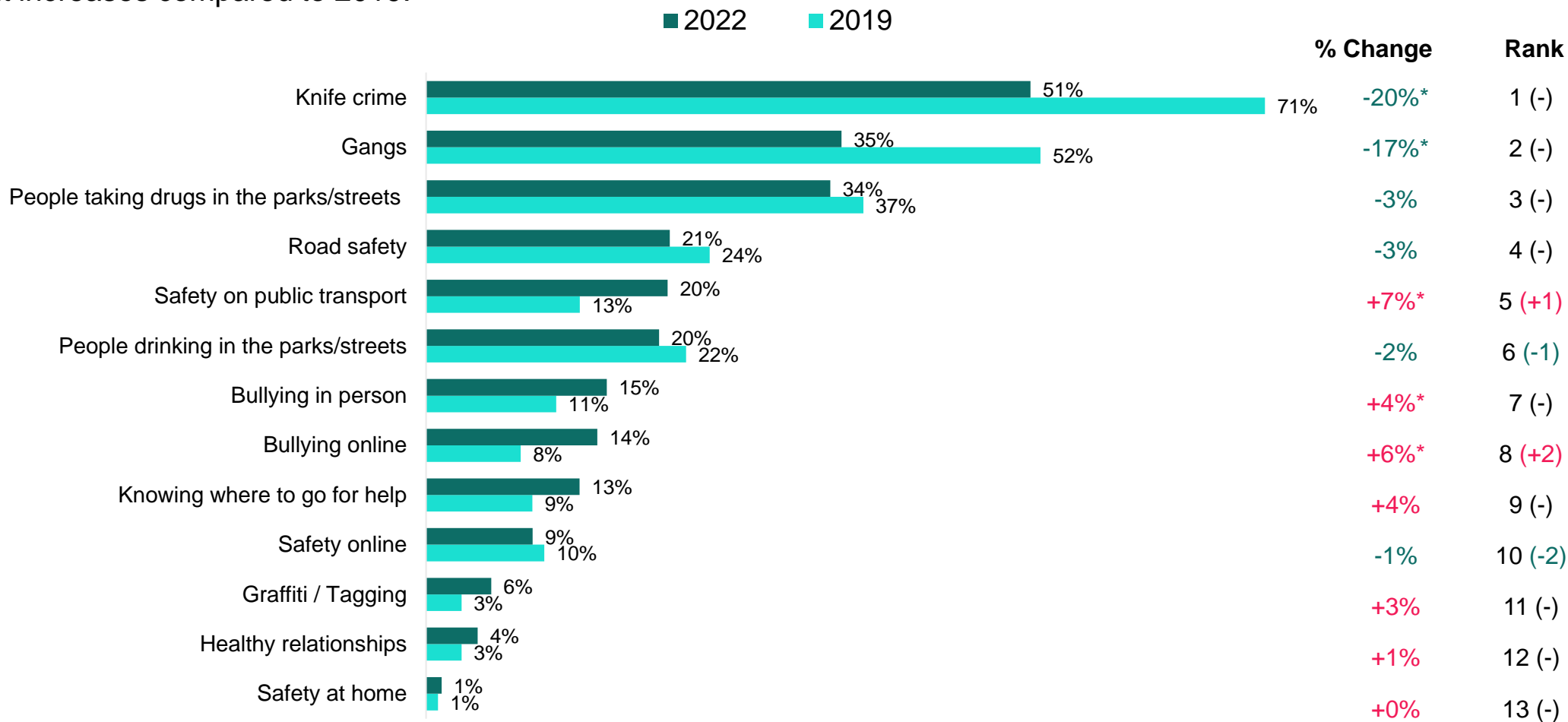
Feelings of safety among young people have broadly improved since 2019. There has been a significant increase in feelings of safety when in local parks, playgrounds and open spaces and when travelling to and from school.



Young people's personal safety concerns

Knife crime (51%) remains young people's top personal safety concern, but the percentage of young people putting it in their top three concerns is significantly lower than in 2019. Similarly, the level of concern over gangs (35%) is also significantly lower than in 2019.

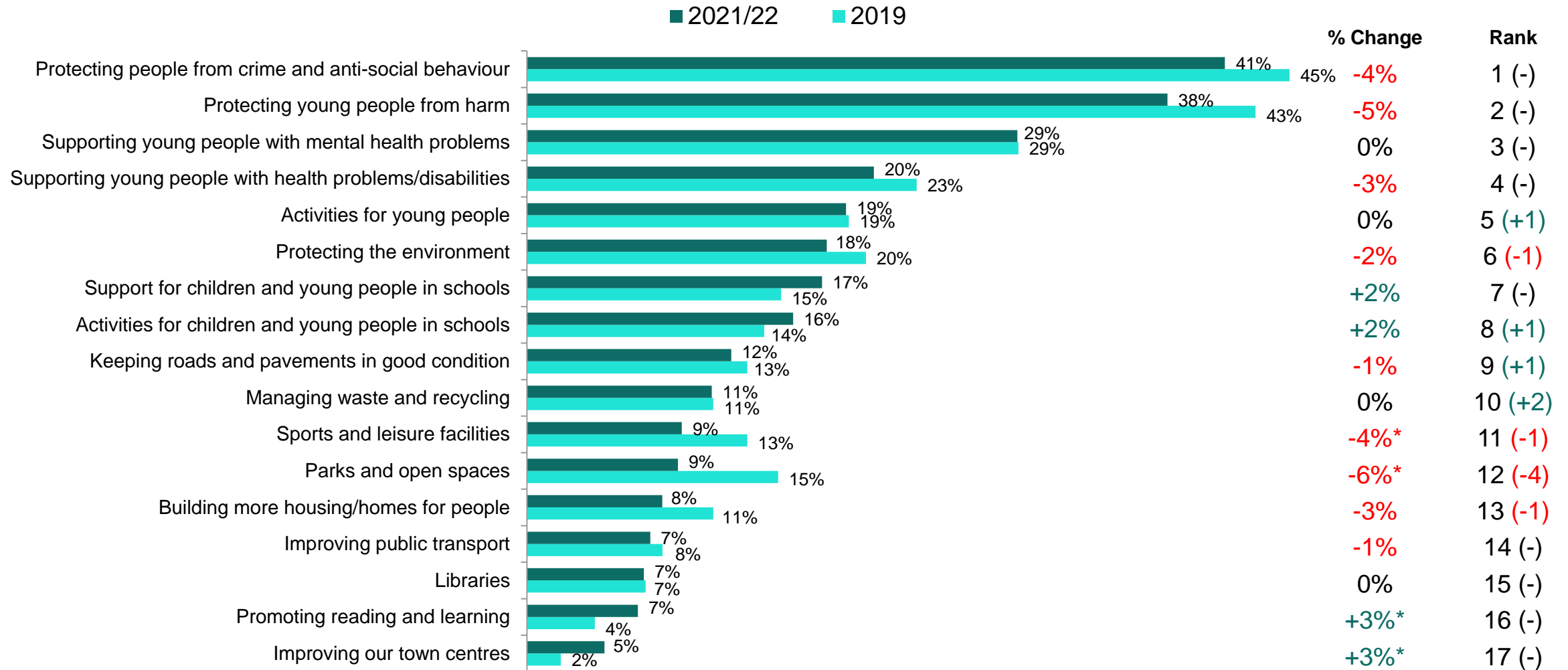
On the other hand, concerns over safety on public transport (20%) and bullying – both online (14%) and in-person (15%) – have seen a significant increases compared to 2019.



Improving the Lives of Children & Young People

Young People's top priority for the Council and Partners

Young people's top priority remains protecting people from crime and antisocial behaviour (41%) followed by protecting young people from harm (38%). There have been changes, for example, parks and open spaces (9%) has dropped from the 7th to the 12th most chosen priority.



Question: Where do you think they need to focus the most time and money to make things better for children and young people?

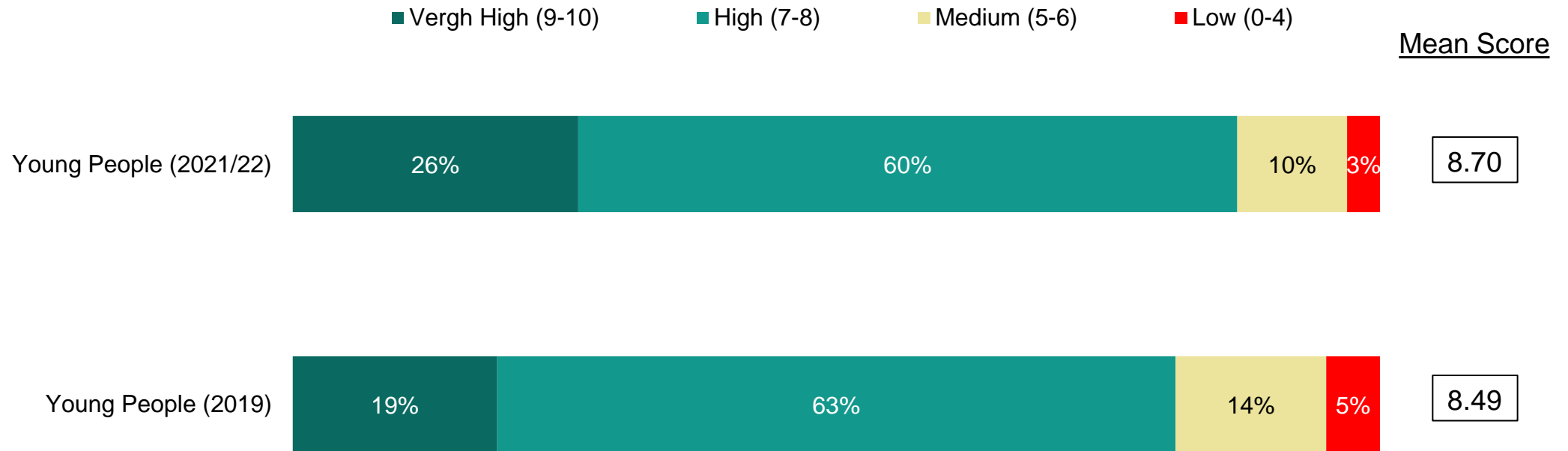
Source: Barnet Council Young People Survey (2021/22) of 500 residents aged 11-18, carried out by face-to-face

Personal Wellbeing

Satisfied with life...

Satisfaction with life among young people has improved between 2019 and 2021/22. The percentage of young people with a high or very high level of life satisfaction has increased from 82% to 86%. The percentage with a low level of life satisfaction has decreased from 5% to 3%.

The mean satisfaction score has seen an increase from 8.49 to 8.70.

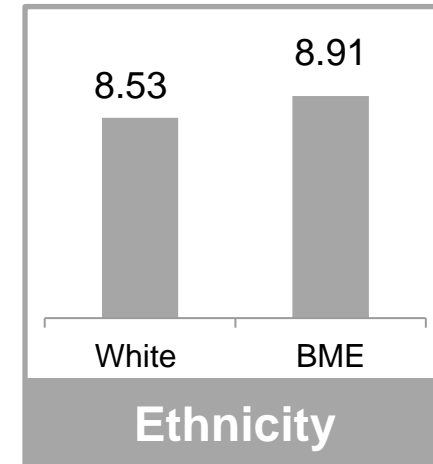
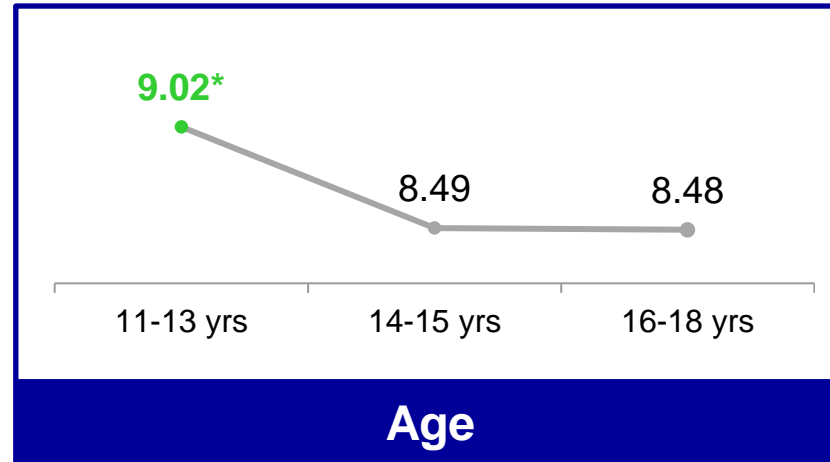


Satisfied with life...

The mean life satisfaction score for young people is 8.70.

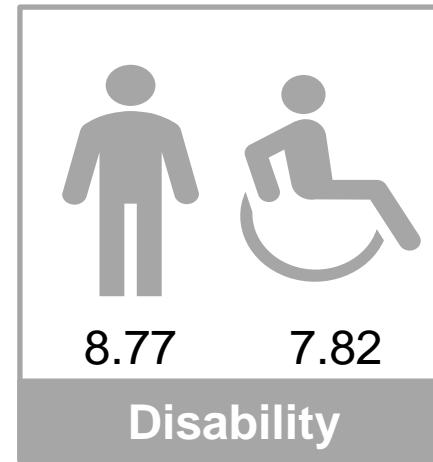
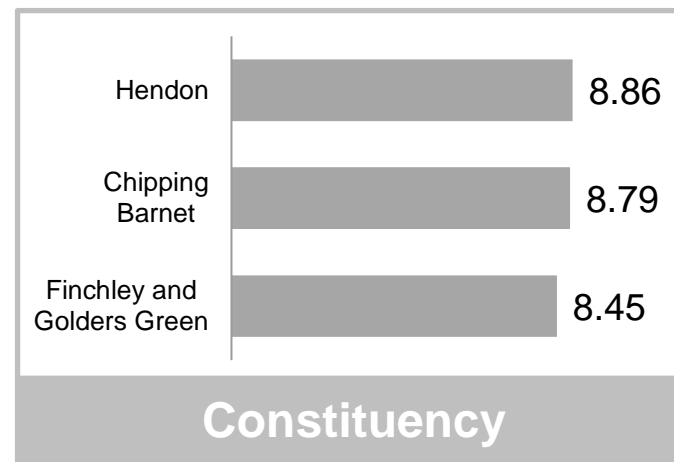
There is significant variation in mean life satisfaction by age, with those aged 11-13 having significantly higher life satisfaction on average.

Young People Survey
(2021/22)



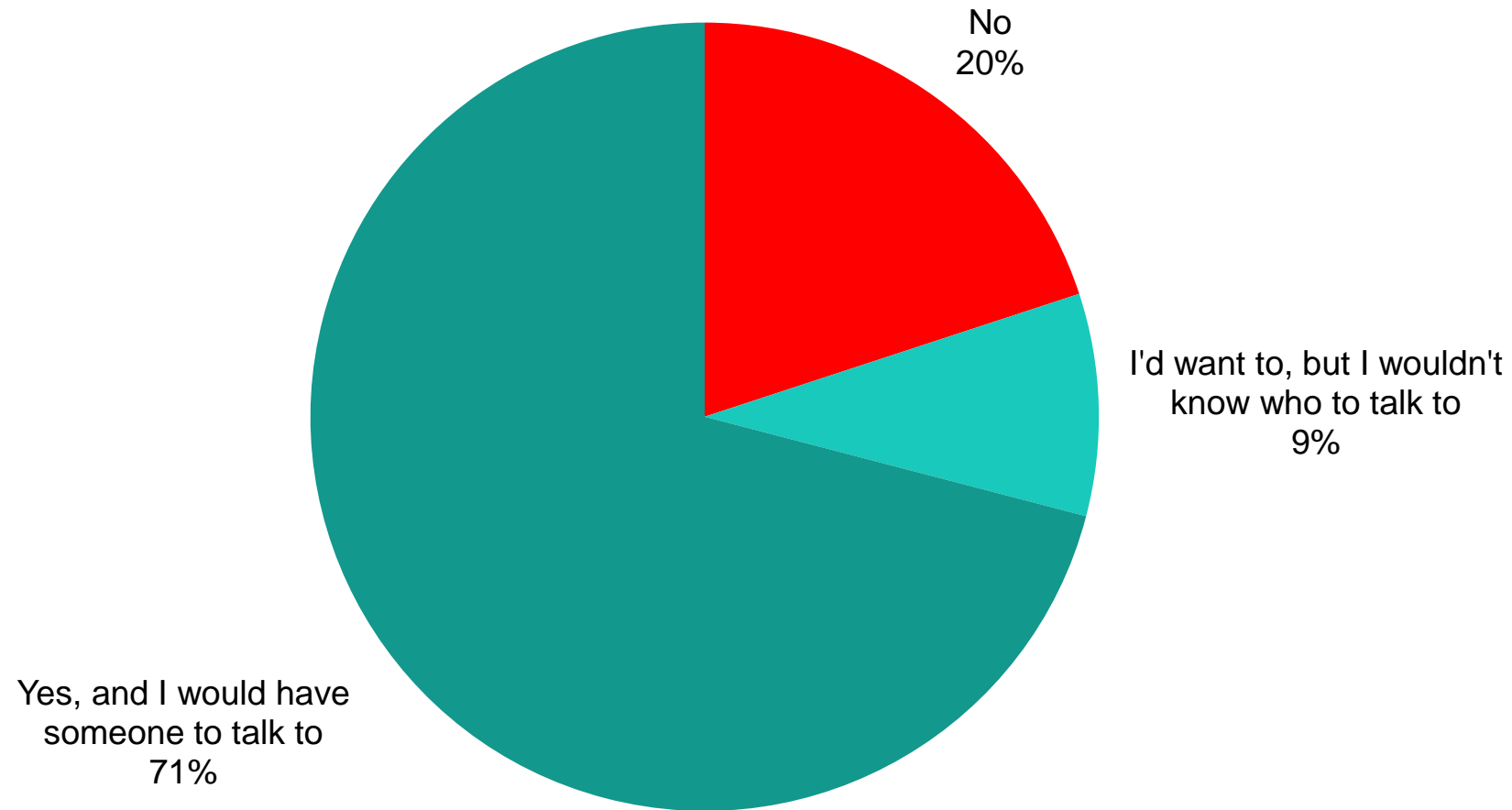
1-3 decile (most deprived)	4-7 decile	8-10 decile (least deprived)
8.75	8.57	8.80

IMD deciles



Someone to talk to when depressed or anxious...

8 in 10 young people would want to talk to someone if feeling depressed or anxious. However 9% wouldn't have anyone to talk to about it. The remaining 20% of young people wouldn't want to talk to anyone about feeling depressed or anxious.



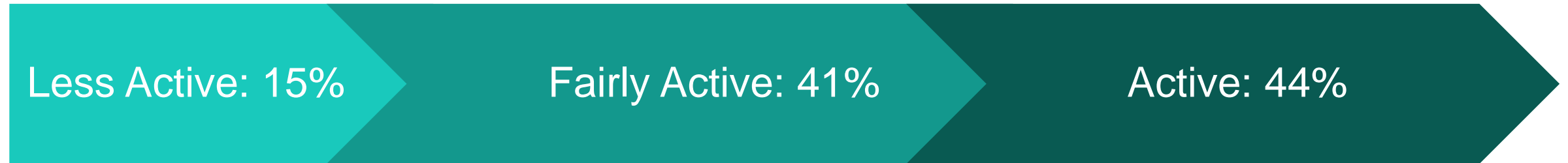
Physical activity...

85% of young people are fairly active or active doing over 30 minutes of physical activity a week.

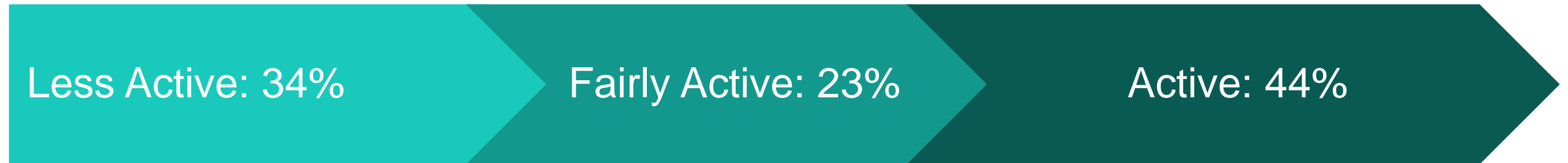
This is higher than the national average (66% - Active Lives Children and Young People Survey Academic Year 2020/21).

However, it should be noted that the national survey was conducted on young people of a slightly different age range and at a different date so comparison should be treated with caution.

Barnet Young Persons Survey 2021/22 (Ages 11 – 18)



England 2020/21 - Active Lives Children and Young People Survey (Ages 11 – 16)



Less Active: Less than an average of 30 minutes a day

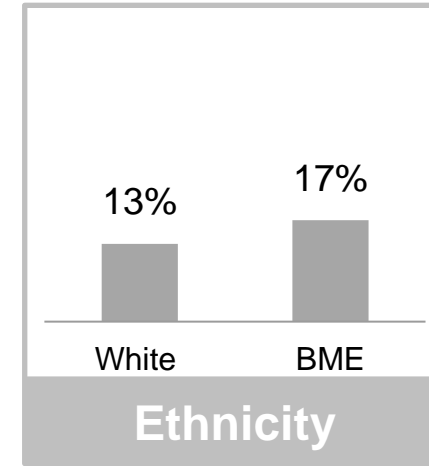
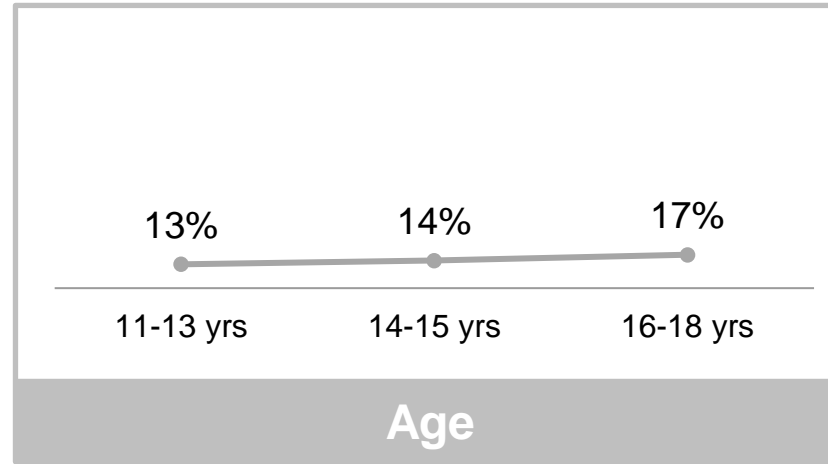
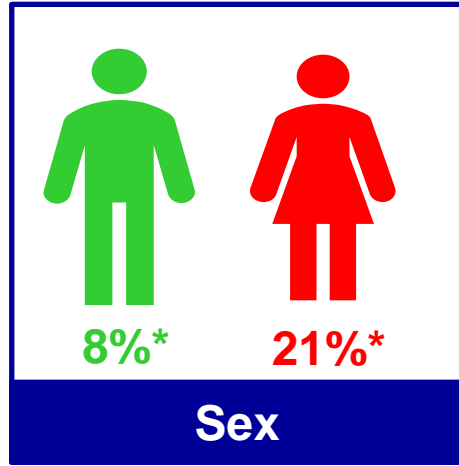
Fairly Active: An average of 30-59 minutes a day

Active: An average of 60+ minutes a day

Those who are physically less active...

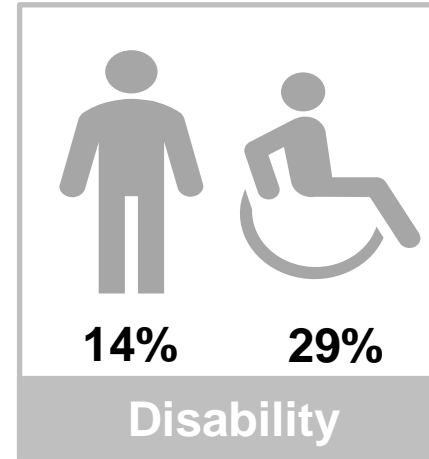
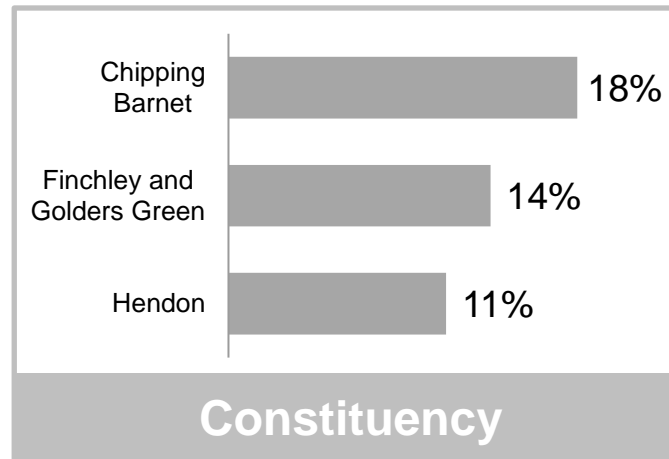
15% of young people are physically less active (doing on average under 30 minutes of exercise a week). There is significant variation in this by sex, with females over twice as likely to be inactive than males.

Young People Survey
(2021/22)



1-3 decile (most deprived)	4-7 decile	8-10 decile (least deprived)
16%	12%	13%

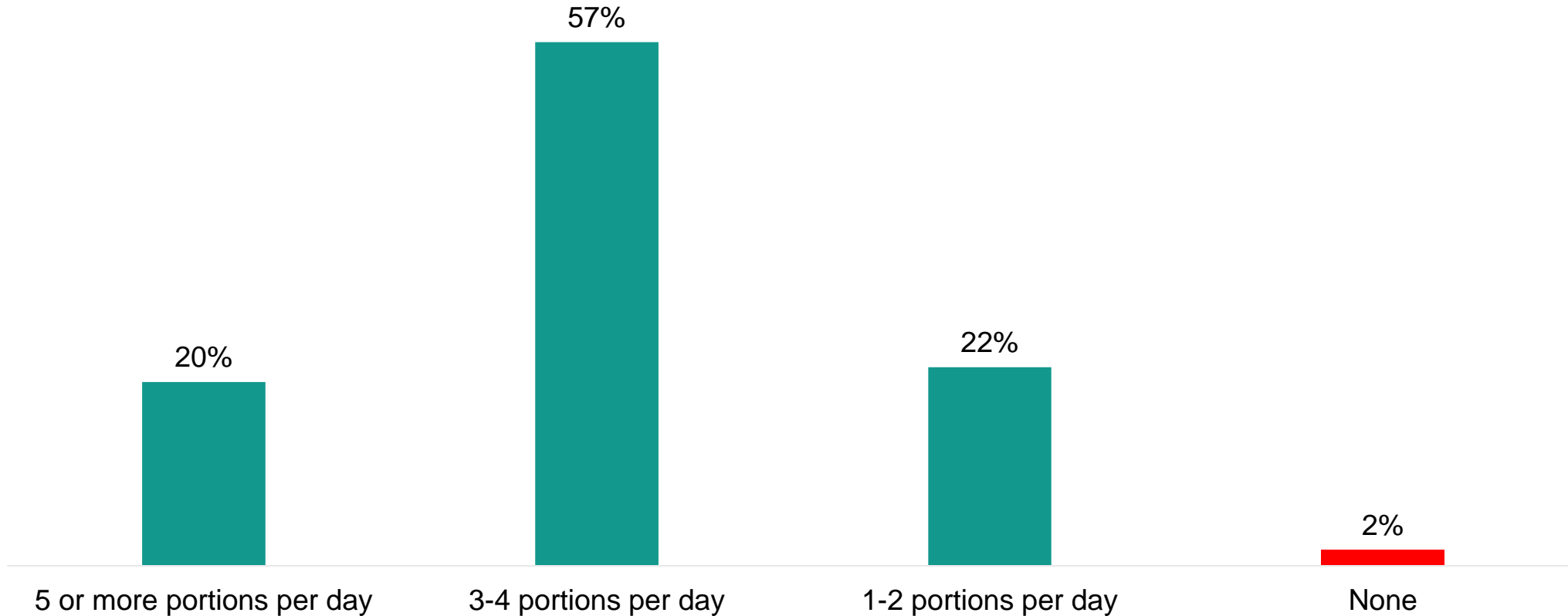
IMD deciles



Eating fruit and vegetables...

20% of young people in Barnet eat the recommended 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables each day. This is in line with the share of children in England that eat 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables (18%)*.

Just 2% of young people eat no portions of fruit and vegetables each day.



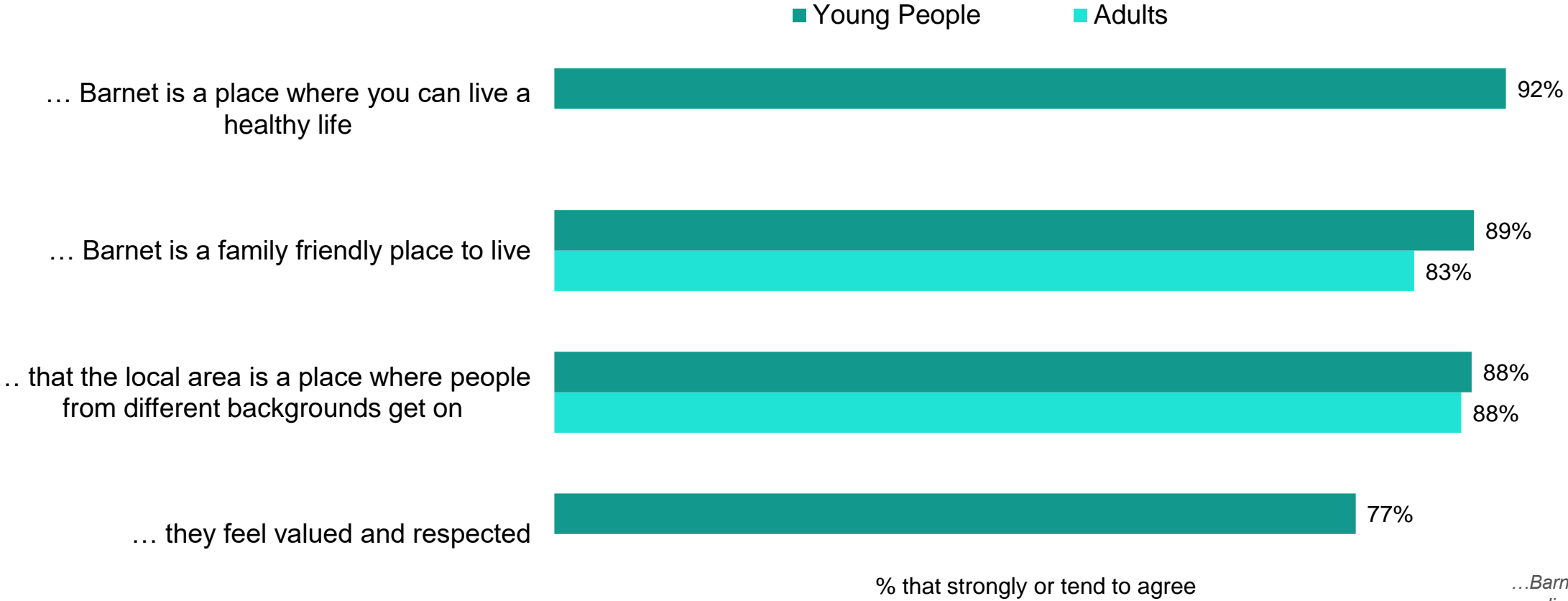
**England data from the 2018 Health Survey for England looking at children age 5-15*

Respect and Consideration

Community and Cohesion

The majority of young people rate Barnet positively on all measures of community cohesions.

When compared with adults, young people are marginally more positive about the local area being a place where people from different backgrounds get on, but significantly more likely to agree that Barnet is a family friendly place to live.

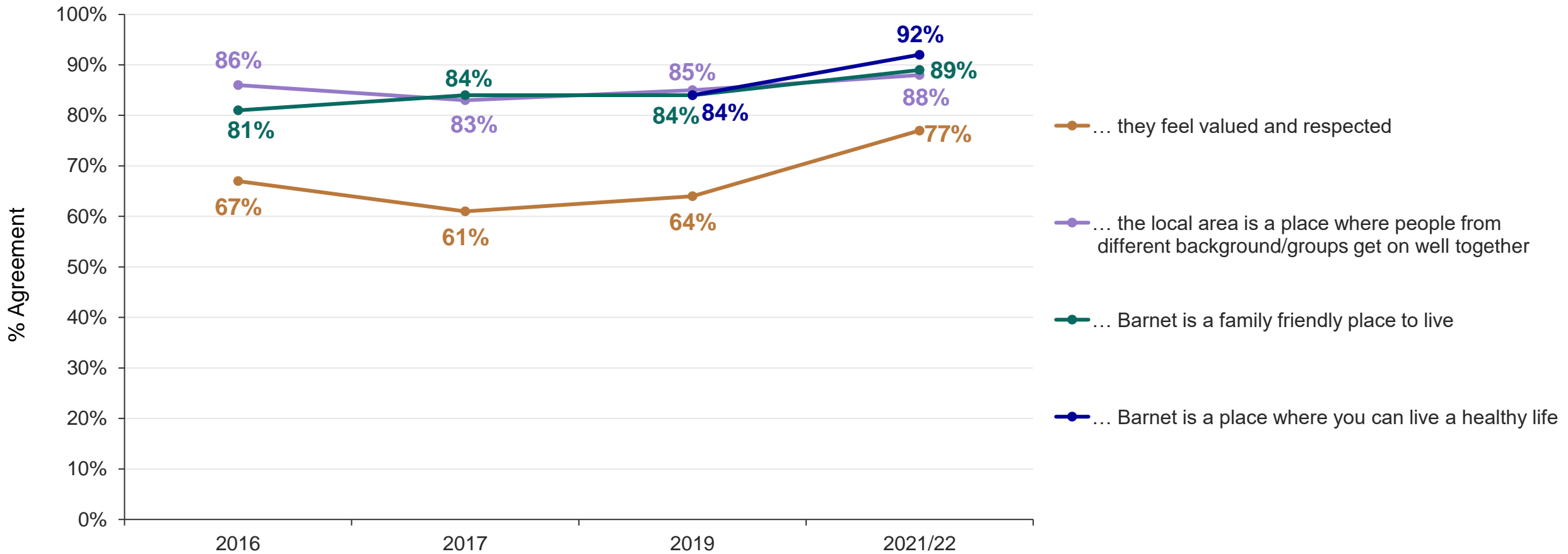


...Barnet is a place where you can live a healthy life and ...they feel valued and respected were not asked in the adult survey

Questions: To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local area is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together?; To what extent do you agree or disagree that Barnet is a family friendly place? ...To what extent do you feel valued and respected?; To what extent do you feel that Barnet is a place where you can live a healthy life? **Source:** Barnet Council Young People survey (2021/22) of 500 residents 11-18, carried out face to face / Barnet Council Resident Perception Survey (2021/22) of c.2000 residents 18+, carried out by telephone and face-to-face

Community and Cohesion – over time

All measures of community and cohesion received a higher percentage of agreement than in any prior survey. There were significant increases in agreement between 2019 and 2021/22 for the following statements: *Barnet is a place where you can live a healthy life, Barnet is a family friendly place to live, and they feel valued and respected.*

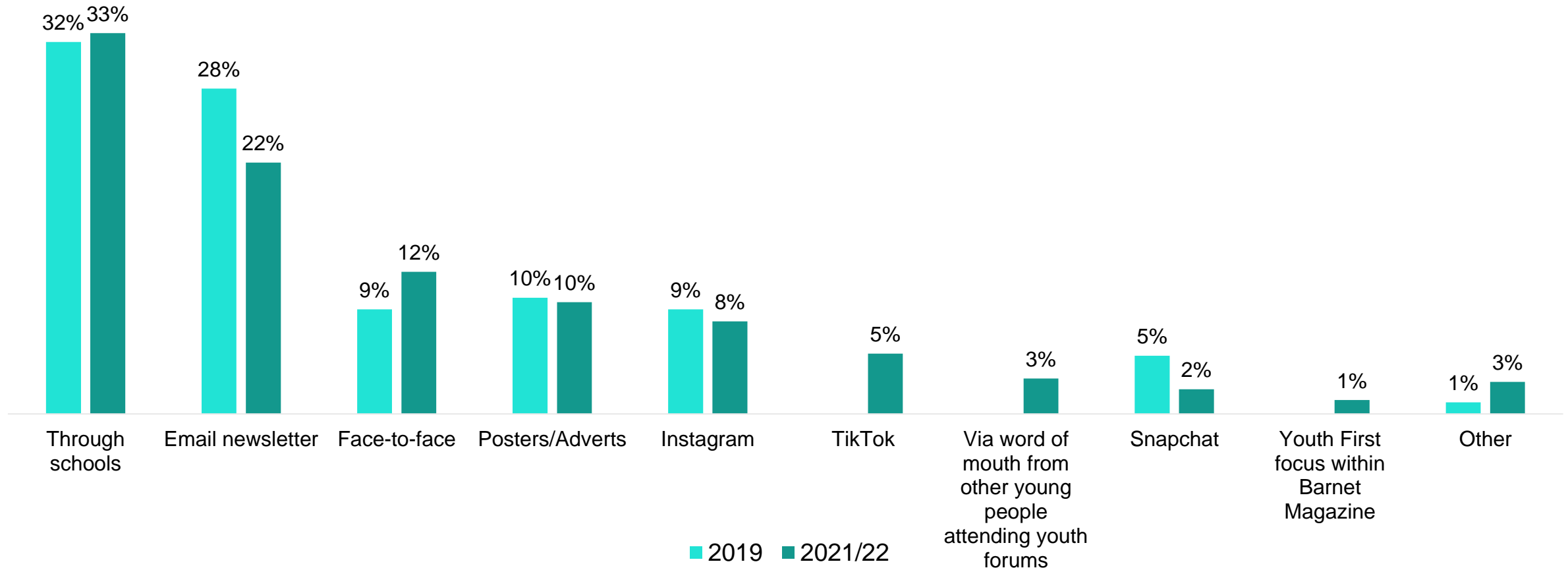


Communications

Young people's preferred methods of communication

33% of young people would prefer the council to communicate through schools, As in 2019 this was the most popular method of communication.

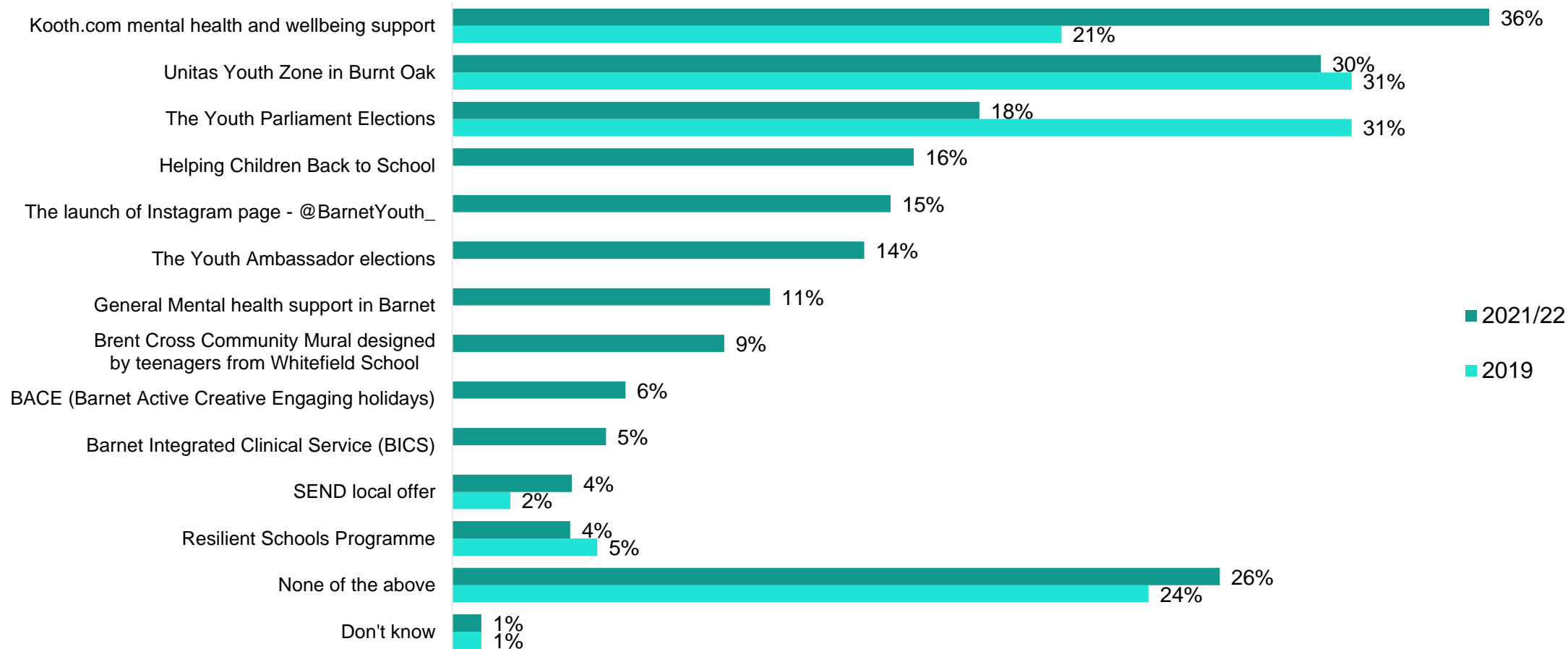
There were two significant changes between 2019 and 2021/22. Firstly, there was a decline in the proportion of young people who would prefer an email newsletter and secondly, there was also a decline in the proportion of young people who would prefer Snapchat as their method of communication.



Awareness of what the council is doing

Three quarters (73%) of young people surveyed have heard of at least one of the following pieces of work Barnet Council is doing – this is in line with the 2019 survey (75%).

Only a few comparisons can be made with the 2019 survey. A significantly higher proportion have heard of Kooth (+15%) and significantly smaller proportion have heard about the Youth Parliament Elections (-13%).



Next steps

Next steps for dissemination and further research

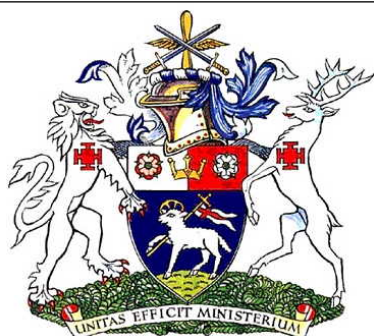
- Full briefing provided to Leader and the Deputy Leader of the council
- Full briefing provided to Leader of the opposition
- All-Member briefing to be offered
- Young people constituency based workshops will be used to gain more in-depth understanding of results, we will also be running focus groups with young people with a disability.
- Information will be used to inform development of a new Children and Young People Plan
- Full presentation will be used to roll out further deep dive presentations to the different Barnet Plan workstreams and also presented to the Tackling the Gaps Operational Group. Each workstream will be presented with key findings that are pertinent for their workstream, however the presentations will ensure each workstream has access to the full set of analysis too
- Sharing of presentation and analysis with CMT

Next steps for dissemination and further research

- Presentations to be offered to CMTs Senior Management Teams on request
- Findings to be disseminated further to staff via First Team and an all-staff Breakfast Briefing.
- Detailed results, and how the council is acting on the results, will be fed back to residents via <http://engage.barnet.gov.uk>.
- Full press release to be issued
- Featured article on the RPS and YPS results is also planned for the Banet First July paper edition.

Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee

12 September 2022



Title	Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy 2021-2024 Update
Report of	Chair of the Committee, Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	Yes
Enclosures	Appendix A – Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy 2021-2024 Update
Officer Contact Details	<p>Chris Munday, Executive Director, Children and Family Services Chair of Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS) Board Chris.Munday@Barnet.gov.uk Telephone: 0208 359 7099</p> <p>Neil Marlow, Chief Executive and Director of Education and Learning, Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS) neil.marlow@Barnet.gov.uk Telephone: 0208 359 7725</p>

Summary

This report provides an update of the Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy for Barnet for the period 2021 to 2024. The Strategy, approved by this Committee in June 2021, set out the challenges facing young people in Barnet in accessing appropriate education, training and employment and the council's plans for extending the opportunities available to young people, particularly those from disadvantaged groups, and for keeping the number of young people who

are not in employment, education or training (NEET) to a minimum.

Officers' Recommendations

1. That the Committee note the report.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 The Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy provides a clear vision and clear strategic objectives and priorities for the education service in Barnet between 2021 and 2024. The Strategy links to and supports the Barnet Education Strategy 2021 to 2024, which was approved by this committee on 30 November 2020.
- 1.2 The Strategy set out the three strategic objectives of the Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy, which were:
 - Strategic Objective 1: Extend the opportunities for young people to access vocational and technical programmes by developing vocational pathways and the curriculum through partnerships and collaborative approaches with post-16 providers.
 - Strategic Objective 2: Minimise the number of young people who are NEET, by developing the employability skills and resilience of young people and by ensuring excellent transition support and interventions for all young people, especially those at risk of becoming NEET or who are already NEET.
 - Strategic Objective 3: Increase the opportunities for disadvantaged young people to progress to suitable education, training and employment, including care leavers and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
- 1.3 This report provides an update on the strategy to date in meeting the above objectives.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The committee need to be aware of the progress made following the launch of the Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy in 2021.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 Whilst there is no legal requirement to publish a Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy, by doing so, the Council set out its plans to fulfil its education duties in respect of post-16 education and skills in a transparent way. Therefore the alternative option of not preparing, publishing and monitoring and reviewing such a strategy is not recommended.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Barnet Education and Learning Service, acting on behalf of the local authority, will continue to implement the strategy in close liaison with the council's Regeneration department and in partnership with secondary schools, colleges and other training providers.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 The quality of the education offer in Barnet is at the heart of Barnet's continuing success as a place where people want to live, work and study. It plays a crucial part in making Barnet a popular and desirable place with many families attracted to the area by the good reputation of Barnet's schools.
- 5.1.2 Excellent educational outcomes and ensuring children and young people are equipped to meet the needs of employers are key to delivering the Council's strategic objectives set out in its Corporate Plan, Barnet 2024, based on the core principles of fairness, responsibility and opportunity to make sure Barnet is a place:
- of opportunity, where people can further their quality of life;
 - where people are helped to help themselves, recognising that prevention is better than cure;
 - where responsibility is shared, fairly;
 - where services are delivered efficiently to get value for money for the taxpayer.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.2.1 The work to drive the delivery of the Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy is delivered from within existing resources of Barnet Education and Learning Service Ltd.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.3.1 Article 7 - Committees, Forums, Working Groups and Partnerships of the council's constitution states that the committee has responsibility for all matters relating to children, schools, education and safeguarding.
- 5.3.2 Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 place a duty on local authorities to secure efficient primary, secondary and further education are available to meet the needs of the

population of their area. Section 13A requires local authorities to ensure that their functions are exercised with a view of promoting high standards, ensuring fair access to opportunity for education and training and promoting fulfilment of learning potential for children and young people in its area. Section 14 requires local authorities to secure sufficient schools and sufficient is defined by reference to number, character and equipment to provide appropriate education based on age, ability and aptitude, as well as ensuring diversity of provision. These duties are overarching duties and apply regardless of whether schools are maintained by the local authority or independent of local authority support. The Post 16 Education and Skills Strategy along with Education Strategy, the School and Settings Improvement Strategy and the report on school place planning set out how the Council intends to meet these duties.

5.3.3 State funded schools are split into maintained schools, which are funded via the local authority and academy schools which are funded directly by the Department for Education. The Council has powers of intervention for maintained schools and whilst it does not have these powers for academy schools, it still has a role to work with its community of schools and raise any issues about performance with the Regional Schools Commissioner.

5.3.4 The Council has duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 in relation to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It also has duties under that Act to consult parents, young people and other stakeholders on strategies and policies setting out how it will fulfil its duties.

5.3.5 The local authority has a duty to secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people aged 16-18 (aged up to 25 for young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan). The duty is met by close partnership working between the BELS post-16 team, secondary schools, colleges and other training providers. The local authority also has a duty to encourage, enable and support young people to participate in post-16 education or training.

5.4 **Insight**

5.4.1 None

5.5 **Social Value**

5.5.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Before commencing a procurement process, commissioners should think about whether the services they are going to buy, or the way they are going to buy them, could secure these benefits for their area or stakeholders

5.6 **Risk Management**

5.6.1 None

5.7 **Equalities and Diversity**

5.6.1 The Council has a duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day to day business and to keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services. School improvement monitoring, supporting and challenging arrangements ensure that the quality of education in Barnet is maintained and improved. Outcomes for all groups of children and young people are monitored including children with special educational needs and disabilities and disadvantaged children (those in receipt of free school meals and children looked after).

5.7 Corporate Parenting

- 5.7.1 In the Summer Term 2022 Barnet had 155 Looked After young people aged 16 years or over (111 male and 44 female). 79.4% of these are from ethnic minority groups and 14.8% had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). 75 of the 155 were Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC). 37 of the 155 were not in education, employment or training (NEET). The Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy aims to ensure as few Looked After Children and Care-leavers as possible are NEET. One of the three strategic objectives is to 'Increase the opportunities for disadvantaged young people to progress to suitable education, training and employment, including care leavers and young people with special educational needs and disabilities'.

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.8.1 The Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy was presented to and discussed at the meeting of the School Standards and Settings Partnership Board in June 2021. The Parent-Carer Forum was also consulted along with a focus group of young people. The focus group of young people comprised young people aged 16 to 22, who were undertaking training and support on a range of post-16 projects.

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Barnet Education Strategy 2021-2024: [Agenda for Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee on Monday 30th November, 2020, 6.00 pm \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Post 16 Education and Skills Strategy 2021-2024 [Agenda for Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee on Monday 7th June, 2021, 7.00 pm | Barnet Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

The Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy 2021-2024 Update

CES Committee 12.09.22 – Appendix A

Strategic objectives of the Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy

Our approach is underpinned by the following strategic objectives of the post-sixteen education and skills strategy:

Strategic Objective 1: ***Extend the opportunities for young people to access vocational and technical programmes*** by developing vocational pathways and the curriculum through partnerships and collaborative approaches with post-sixteen providers.

Strategic Objective 2: ***Minimise the number of young people who are NEET***, by developing the employability skills and resilience of young people and by ensuring excellent transition support and interventions for all young people, especially those at risk of becoming NEET or who are already NEET.

Strategic Objective 3: ***Increase the opportunities for disadvantaged young people to progress to suitable education, training, and employment***, including care leavers and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

This strategy is intended to contribute to the wider Education Strategy in the following ways:

Inclusion:

- Developing progression routes and opportunities for young people with special educational needs and disabilities aged 16 to 25 to enable them to develop the skills and independence they need to access employment.
- Collaborating with partners to support disadvantaged groups, such as care-leavers, to access suitable progression routes into education, training, or employment.

Review of Activities in 2021-2

Strategic Objective 1

‘Extend the opportunities for young people to access vocational and technical programmes by developing vocational pathways and the curriculum through partnerships and collaborative approaches with post-sixteen providers.’

1.1 A key priority for the Post 16 Team is to increase access to, and the take-up of, vocational provision (including T levels) for young people. Schools and colleges were contacted and offered an opportunity to meet to discuss vocational curriculum development. Most schools accepted the offer, to date four schools have applied to the DfE to deliver T levels as well as Barnet and Southgate College. This work will continue into 22/23; as schools roll-out T Levels further and collaboration is encouraged.

1.2 School meetings have taken place to discuss vocational and technical curriculum development, this was followed by the T Level CPD Conference for schools in May 2022 to support school leaders in their consideration of the introduction of T Levels, and the implications of this for school sixth forms. After the T Level CPD Conference, follow up meetings took place with interested school leaders and subsequently four schools applied to

deliver T Levels from 2023. We will set up a T Level network for these schools and colleges to collaborate from September 2022.

1.3 Exploring options for extending technical and vocational opportunities through the creation of dedicated technical and vocational sixth-form provision attached to one or more existing sixth forms or Barnet and Southgate College; this would involve support for the school/college in identifying suitable premises and could involve a joint approach to central government to secure the necessary capital and revenue funding. There is one school who are interested in developing their technical and vocational Sixth Form provision to facilitate T Level delivery which would include a new building. This discussion will continue in the academic year 2022/23.

1.4 We have shared with school governors the rationale for the KS5 strategic plan and strengthened their understanding of the current KS5 landscape, both nationally and within Barnet. Governors have received several updates regarding T levels and a further presentation is scheduled for Autumn term 2022.

1.5 A key focus for the Post 16 Team and for post sixteen providers in Barnet is to improve the overall attainment of vocational qualifications. To do this we have implemented and supported good practice networks to improve the quality of vocational provision across the borough; this includes running networks in agreed vocational subjects to share best practice and improve outcomes for young people. From 2022/23, these networks will become 'vocational teaching and learning communities', open to all schools in Barnet. These communities will be supported by the major examination boards as well as being led by experience practitioners. Following vocational examination results in 2022, key priorities will be identified to ensure the teaching and learning communities facilitate an improvement in student outcomes.

1.6 We have encouraged good practice networks to share the learning derived by providers from the Covid19 pandemic in respect of remote and online learning and the development of a blended learning offer of face-to-face and remote learning. We hope this will help providers to improve the offer and the opportunities for young people with a diverse range of needs and different learning styles. In 2021/22, the vocational networks facilitated colleagues to share best practice and lessons learnt from the Covid period to enable colleagues to consider how lessons learnt could become a feature of teaching and learning going forwards.

1.7 This year, we have continued to work with schools and colleges on developing and implementing an improvement strategy for vocational attainment. We have been using best practice networks to improve grades across vocational provision within Barnet, e.g., by sharing strategies on how teachers can support students to gain distinctions. In addition to the networks, we set up in-school training from an examination board for two schools. This work will continue in 2022/23 and be based upon results analysis and will be facilitated through the teaching learning communities.

1.8 We continue to research what further curriculum provision is needed, especially within the vocational landscape, and then supporting groups of schools, and linking with local colleges, in working together to meet these priorities, especially around careers advice and guidance and work-related learning within the curriculum. In the summer term 2022, BELS-Inspire was launched to support schools in delivering quality Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEAIG) as well as facilitating work experience and all work-related learning opportunities. This has been marketed and some schools have engaged and purchased packages.

1.9 In the summer term 2022, we established a data dashboard for post-sixteen education in Barnet to enable providers to benchmark their performance and the achievement of their pupils against other providers. Existing data systems within BELS have allowed for the

creation of a template to collate academic and vocational results. This will be issued to schools and will help improve our understanding of progress and attainment.

1.10 In 2021/22 the 'Barnet Vocational Prospectus' was revised and published. The prospectus was sent to all secondary schools, colleges, and training providers in Barnet. This document is also available online; it will be updated annually. We will continue to develop and produce the Barnet Vocational Prospectus so that young people are aware of the opportunities within Barnet. Hopefully, this will lead to more young people embarking on vocational qualifications nearer to home without feeling the need to travel to other boroughs to access vocational pathways.

1.11 Schools for the very first time have been approached to share vocational success stories in August 2022 including destinations and we hope to raise the profile of technical and vocational courses. In October 2022 we are holding a Barnet Options and Careers event in conjunction with Middlesex University to promote opportunities. We will continue to work with secondary schools and local colleges to ensure that positive messages are delivered to secondary pupils about technical and vocational education opportunities within Barnet and to give pupils easy access to the colleges' open events or to presentations in school from the colleges to promote this local offer. We recognise that Barnet and Southgate College are by the far the largest provider of technical and vocational education in the borough and we will therefore promote it as the local college of first choice for technical and vocational education.

1.12 In line with the Barnet's 'Work, Skills and Productivity Strategy' we will encourage young residents into jobs and learning opportunities that have good prospects for progression within the fastest growing sectors of the economy. We work closely with colleagues across the council to analyse trends in employability and skills to identify 'growth' employment areas such as health, care, construction & trades, and the creative industries sectors that forecast the fastest growing numbers of new entry level jobs (and realistic progression pathways) to ensure that we provide training and support for young people to meet the demands in employment from local and regional employers.

1.13 We have collaborated with the Employment and Skills division of the council to identify skills shortages and have communicated this to our post sixteen providers so that new or existing provision can be tailored to meet this need. We have five providers planning to deliver T levels in these shortage areas. This should encourage young people into these pathways. We also deliver the 'Routes into Construction Programme' this supports the hardest to reach young people into construction employment.

1.14 We have used the allocated COVID funding to launch BELS- Inspire with our secondary schools and post sixteen providers. This innovative provision will provide high quality work experience opportunities to young people in schools, sixth form and colleges. We have now established links with a wide range of employers; we are working collaboratively with the council business development unit to further develop our reach of employers to enhance and enrich the vocational curriculum offer, to identify opportunities, promote work experience, and work opportunities to schools to enhance and complement their curriculum offer. We will disseminate good practice regarding employability initiatives at regular networking events with schools and colleges.

Strategic Objective 2

'Minimise the number of young people who are NEET, by developing the employability skills and resilience of young people and by ensuring excellent transition support and interventions for all young people, especially those at risk of becoming NEET or who are already NEET.'

Employability skills and resilience

'The world of work is constantly evolving, with employers looking for a wide range of occupational skills, qualifications, and personal competencies. When it comes to recruitment, however, attitudes and aptitudes are often seen as more important than formal qualifications. Although technical and basic skills are required to get past the initial application stage, other aspects such as personal qualities, attitudes, and general aptitudes are then seen as far more critical. Resilience is frequently cited by employers as an essential quality for young people to possess, the ability to cope with setbacks and criticism, be motivated to overcome obstacles, and stay calm under pressure. A positive attitude to work, punctuality, flexibility, verbal communication skills, and the ability to make a professional introduction are all crucial when deciding whether to recruit a young person.' (UCAS 2020).

Activities completed for 2021-22:

2.1 The Post 16 team has representation at the Barnet's employability group with post-sixteen providers to look at the core skills needed by young people to be effective in the workplace and to develop the resilience to cope with the changes in employment that may be an inevitable part of career progression. As part of this group, we are working with a wide range of providers to look at how we can improve employability skills including resilience training for young people.

2.2 We have launched BELS – Inspire, a new programme working with schools and other providers to offer and support schools to develop work placements and/or employer links. This will embed employability and relevant work experiences for young people into their curriculum. The focus is to prepare young people for working life with the skills and aptitudes needed to succeed in the workplace.

2.3 Providing information and support to our providers to ensure that young people can be supported onto programmes that are reactive to training and skills shortages; we will do this based on research and will share with post-sixteen providers an awareness of skill shortage areas, so that they may respond to this by developing the appropriate curriculum and programmes.

2.4 As part of the employability group, we are sharing data with providers on job opportunities and skills shortages in Barnet. We have commissioned programmes with North London Garages and Cherry Tree Foundation to meet the skills gaps. In addition to this, we work closely with Cidori and other training providers to provide occupational related courses to support young people into employment. This year we are collaborating with Hawk Training who have an extensive network of local employers who are experiencing difficulties in recruiting young people into employment.

NEETs

2.5 Overall, the number of Barnet young people aged 16 and 17 who are not engaged in education, employment, or training (NEET) is low. Current NEET figures for August 2022 is 8.4%. However, the next priority must now be on reducing the number of young people dropping out from their programme during the transition from Year 12 to Year 13.

2.6 In line with Barnet's 'Work, Skills, and Productivity Strategy,' we want to enable residents from all backgrounds and communities of the borough to have access to high quality employment, learning and skills opportunities, and for this to happen at a scale that is consistent with the challenge facing us because of the pandemic.

2.7 The key priority is to ensure that young people are supported onto the correct programmes, so they do not become NEET. At the beginning of the pandemic, we recognised that young people needed timely support and advice on available education courses, as well as employment advice or information on training programmes. In response, we developed a vacancy resource list to give young people up-to-date information on

opportunities. We will continue to update this resource and make it more widely available to schools, other providers, and partner organisations. We also developed a dedicated careers and information telephone line to provide support to young people. We will continue to provide this.

2.8 During 2020 we established specialised 'pathways' leading to employment for long-term NEET young people, taking into account the impact of COVID on the employment prospects for young people aged 18-24 years. We will continue to provide and develop these targeted pathways.

2.9 The Department of Education requires the local authorities to track and monitor young people up until the age of 18 years old. In Barnet, we have decided to go much further and we now track young people up until the age of 20 years. We have the lowest NEET figures in London (except for the City of London) however we believe that we need to provide support for young people beyond this age as we know from data that unemployment figures increase for young people after the age of 18. We have used the COVID funding allocated to BELS for post-sixteen projects to track 18-year-olds and to organise interventions to prevent those at risk of being NEET becoming NEET and to get those who are NEET into education, training, or employment.

2.10. Our aim is to ensure that good quality information and guidance, along with transition support, is provided to young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET, through a mixture of school-based sessions, virtual sessions and through the post-16 Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and Careers Information Telephone line. In Summer 2022 on A' Level and GCSE results days BELS had Careers Advisers in five schools/ colleges to support young people. The Careers Information Telephone Line was also available for students, this was well publicised.

2.11 We will continue to offer a borough-wide careers education service on a traded basis for young people in Years 8 to 13. The aim of the provision is to ensure young people have a clear understanding of the provision on offer in both schools and colleges and the pathways to employment. BELS will be offering Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) to schools, however the take-up for this service is shrinking. Schools have increasingly opted to appoint their own staff. BELS also works with some Barnet schools in a more ad hoc way to support them with different projects. From September schools who buy-in CEIAG as a traded service have been offered a complimentary careers quality audit.

2.12 We continue to develop our communication strategy with young people, schools, parents, and carers so that they are fully aware of the range of post-sixteen options available to them. The Post-16 prospectuses are available to our young people and parents, these can also be found online. We have updated the content of post-sixteen section of the BELS website and included relevant documents for school leaders, young people, and parents. We have publicised our programmes and events through BELS social media platforms and with external organisations. Furthermore, we have engaged with the Council's Senior Communications and Campaigns Manager, this has resulted in 'Barnet First' publicity as well as online promotions.

2.13 We have created a calendar of regular careers and networking events for schools and post-sixteen providers to be publicised to young people, parents, and carers. BELS engages with the Barnet Careers Forum and regularly attends meetings. In October 2022, we are holding Barnet Options and Careers evening, all schools will be encouraged to attend. This is in addition to the vocational teaching learning communities and T Level network we will establish from September 2022. A list of all Sixth Form Open Evenings for September 2022 has also been collated will be shared with all providers.

Projects

Risk of NEET project

2.14 The Risk of NEET (RON) programme has been devised to minimise the number of young people who become NEET aged 16-19 years. Schools and colleges already have in place interventions to support learners who are vulnerable or likely to disengage. However, there is a hard-to-reach cohort of young people who, after these interventions, are still at high risk of being NEET by the age of nineteen and therefore are likely to become dependent on state benefits. The RONI programme has two elements:

- use of data to identify those at risk of becoming NEET and
- a mentoring and IAG support package as part of re-engagement support.

2.15 The post-16 team will continue to work with local secondary schools to develop and refine data systems for early identification of young people at risk of becoming NEET at the end of Year 11 and to create programmes for students from Year 10 upwards aimed at ensuring those at risk progress to a sustainable destination of employment, education or training (particularly learners with SEND and young men from black heritage backgrounds and White British backgrounds). The team will also work closely with the Youth Justice Service to identify those at risk and suitable programmes.

2.16 We are currently delivering mentoring support to young people in eleven schools (including sixth form college), from year 10 upwards, enabling the students to sustain their education placements. The mentoring support is dynamic, personalised, asset driven, and strengths based. We work with young people to identify the barriers to transformation, gain a clearer vision, unleash the power of a growth mindset, and identify and develop the skills that are required for them to thrive in a post-pandemic world. In 2021 to 2022 we engaged 320 young people. Since April 2022, 125 young people have engaged. We have used the COVID funding allocated to Post 16, to employ a mentor who is assigned to the Youth Offending Service.

Future Pathways – Targeted NEETS project

2.17 BELS has also been successful in bidding for funding from the Mayor of London's European Social Fund. The charity, Catch 22, was appointed as lead bidder for the West London area and BELS put its name to the bid along with the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Ealing. Funding has been approved from April 21 – August 23.

The project provides extra funding for work on NEETS with a focus on young people aged 16 to 24 who are:

- Looked After or care leavers; or
- Homeless or at risk of being homeless; or
- Who fall into two or more of the categories below:
 - lone parent
 - in problem debt (minimum of £1,000)
 - young carer
 - involved in substance misuse
 - involved in criminal activity

2.18 To date, this extra funding has enabled us to work intensely with ninety-three hard to reach vulnerable young people. So far twenty-nine have successfully moved into employment, ten into education/ training and another eleven have enrolled to start training courses in September 2022. These achievements have resulted in the contractor increasing the funding allowing us to support more young people.

Access for All – Routes to Construction project

2.19 The Routes into Construction Project was established in 2019, collaborating with the Council's Regeneration team (S106), The project is designed to align with construction partners/ employers' needs and is designed to support young people who are NEET at Post-16. During Phase 2 of the programme from January 2021 to August 2022, we have placed over seventy unemployed young people aged 16 to 24 in jobs or training within construction and allied trades in Barnet. We have used the COVID funding allocated to Post 16 to increase the number of staff working on this programme this includes an Outreach Employment Adviser who will be based a Graham Park and other regeneration projects within Barnet.

Strategic Objective 3

'Increase the opportunities for disadvantaged young people to progress to suitable education, training and employment, including care leavers and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.'

3.1 In addition to the Care-Leavers and Supported Internships projects, described below, we will continue to prioritise targeted support for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. We have supported young people with additional needs through transition by aiming to prioritise advice and support for children with additional needs from Year 9 onwards and for young adults who will transition to adult social care. In 2021/2022 all schools were offered free CIEAG individual interviews for students with additional needs, nine schools accepted the offer. This year 22/23, this service will be offered as a traded service.

3.2 Our focus is to signpost comprehensive transition pathways for all young people who require SEND support. We have created a range of booklets to support young people with SEN, by providing detailed information on programmes available. In addition to this, the Post 16 Careers Adviser contacts young people and parents by telephone where we feel they may require additional support.

3.3 In line with our Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) Protocol, all Year 9 Annual Reviews include a transition plan and all Year 9 pupils with EHCPs have transitions explicitly discussed and documented as part of their Annual Review. We have begun this work with our schools, but this needs to be developed further. We have used the COVID funding to employ a SEN Support Officer who will collaborate with schools from September 2022 to ensure that all young people with SEN have a detailed transition plans to include pathways planning. We have also in place a SEND Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Adviser available to work with schools to improve IAG for young people with SEND.

3.4 We will continue to develop new provision and embed a range of pathways for post-sixteen young people with SEND, including supported internships, apprenticeships, voluntary and paid employment.

3.5 Supported Internships Project

The aim of supported internships is to prepare young people with complex needs for paid employment by supporting them to develop the skills valued by employers. This enables young people aged 16-24 with an Education, Health, and Care Plan to achieve sustainable paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need for work, through learning in the workplace. This allows young people to become financially independent and to contribute, socially, and financially within the wider community.

3.6 Outcomes: We have established good partnerships with three main supported internships providers; Royal Mencap, Harrington Scheme and Health Education England,

who have ringfenced twenty-five places on their programmes for Barnet young people. Thirty-three young people completed the programme in July 2022 and to date seventeen have already secured employment, one accepted into university and two into further training. Examples of employment secured include: - Chef – Royal Free Hospital and Nursing Assistant – Royal Free Hospital. We have used the COVID funding allocated to Post 16 employ an Employment Adviser who supports young learners into employment and to sustain employment.

Projects:

Care Leavers Participation Project

3.7 The Care Leavers Participation Project delivered by BELS, has the aim of increasing Education, Employment and Training (EET) levels amongst care leavers aged 16-25 in line with Barnet's Corporate Parenting priorities. This work includes delivering sessions, and running events to promote post-sixteen options, and working with key stakeholders to develop an understanding of best practice in supporting care leavers.:

3.8 We have been working more closely with Onwards & Upwards to track and identify the progress of the NEET care leavers. This has proven to be beneficial because we can identify the barriers (for each young person) to EET and discuss and agree on the best strategy to reduce the NEET numbers. We have increased the number of people working on this programme and staff members are working from Woodhouse Road five days per week to provide targeted support to the young people. Approximately fifty-five care leavers engage with us monthly.

3.9 We have used the COVID funding allocated to Post sixteen education to employ a caseworker who is working specifically with the young people in EET to help them to sustain these placements. We are now closely working with the looked-after young people (Virtual School) to identify those who will transition to care leavers. We are aiming to create an induction programme to ensure their transition from being looked after to a care leaver is as seamless as possible.

3.10 Since April 2022, we have moved twenty-three care leavers in positive outcomes, this includes three young people into traineeships, three young people in apprenticeships, fourteen young people in jobs and three young people into education. The latest data for June 2022 shows that there are 81% of care leavers who are in Employment, Education and Training (EET) and 19% who are NEET (58 Care Leavers).

	<p>Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee</p> <p>12 September 2022</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Title</p>	<p>Planning for new school places: Update and School Places Plan 2023-2027</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Report of</p>	<p>Chair of the Committee, Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Urgent</p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Key</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Enclosures</p>	<p>Appendix A – Planning for new school places: update and School Places Plan 2023-2027</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Officer Contact Details</p>	<p>Chris Munday, Executive Director, Children and Family Services Chair of Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS) Board Chris.Munday@Barnet.gov.uk Telephone: 0208 359 7099</p> <p>Neil Marlow, Chief Executive and Director of Education and Learning, Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS) neil.marlow@Barnet.gov.uk Telephone: 0208 359 7725</p>

Summary

This report provides an update on the school places plan for 2023-2027 and compares the five-year forecast projected in September 2017 with the actual demand that has emerged. It sets out the revised projections of pupil places for the next few years and the plan to meet the need for additional places.

Recommendation

1. That the Children, Education, Safeguarding Committee note the projected future requirements for school places up to 2026/27.
2. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee note the progress in delivering sufficient primary, secondary and special school places to date

1 WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 In 2017 the committee approved a School Places Plan for the period 2018 to 2023.
- 1.2 This year's annual report provides an update on the council's approach in ensuring there are sufficient school places in Barnet. It sets out the projected demand for new school places for a five year period from 2022/23 through to 2026/27 based on the latest pupil projections (summer 2022) provided by the Greater London Authority (GLA). It sets out the plans that are in place and plans that are in progress to meet this demand.
- 1.3 The report focuses on the provision of primary and secondary school places, including places to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities. Meeting the need for additional early years places is driven by the Early Years strategy which promotes and champions new provision across the private, voluntary and independent providers sectors as well as in the school sector. However, where appropriate, additional early years places are provided as part of the growth in primary school places covered in this report.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The council has a duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The expansion of schools and the development of new free schools over the last five years has enabled the council to fulfil this duty through to 2022/23. It has also helped to maintain the diversity of Barnet's current educational offer. However, due to the complexities outlined in the report, the programme of activity and its associated capital requirements will need to be kept under review.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 The council uses pupil projections provided by the Greater London Authority. The council has a statutory duty to provide a school place and the options in providing new places are limited to expanding existing schools or securing a provider to open/build new schools. Site availability for new schools is severely restricted in London. Like all London boroughs, the council's approach is to adopt a mix of strategies, assessing all opportunities and retaining a flexible and adaptable approach.

4 POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Capital requirements to provide school places are considered by the council's Policy and Resources Committee in the council's annual medium term financial strategy.

5 IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1 Ensuring a sufficient supply of good quality school places supports the council's ambition for Barnet to create the right environment to promote responsible growth,

development and success. The reputation and quality of Barnet's schools makes Barnet an attractive place to live and is key to the satisfaction of many residents in the borough.

Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

5.2 Until 2020 the council received an annual capital allocation from central government as a contribution towards meeting the 'basic need' for new school places. Basic need allocations are made to local authorities to support the capital requirement for providing new pupil places by expanding existing maintained schools, free schools or academies, and by establishing new schools. Between 2011 and 2017 the council received £86m in basic need grant, including an element of 'targeted' basic need grant. Like many other London boroughs, Barnet has not received basic need funding for new mainstream places since 2020 because of the falling birth rate across the capital resulting in a sharp fall in the demand for mainstream places. However, the demand for places for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) has continued to rise significantly in Barnet, London and nationally. In 2017 the Department for Education launched an additional funding stream in response to the growing need for additional SEND school places (Special Provision Fund). Announcements by the Department for Education in 2017, 2018 & 2020 resulted in an allocation to a total of £8 million. The council has now reviewed its plans for allocating the Special Provision Fund to different projects in light of the increase in the fund from £5.1 million to £8.0 million in 2020 and in light of its needs analysis and Sufficiency Review.

Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.3.1 Article 7 - Committees, Forums, Working Groups and Partnerships of the council's constitution states that the committee has responsibility for all matters relating to children, schools, education and safeguarding.
- 5.3.2 The Council has a statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 to ensure the provision of sufficient schools for primary and secondary education in their area. Under s.14 of the Education Act 1996, a local authority shall secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available in their area. Sufficient means sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education. In meeting this duty, a local authority must do so with a view to securing diversity in the provision of schools and increasing opportunities for parental choice
- 5.3.3 The Council has duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 in relation to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It also has duties under that Act to consult parents, young people and other stakeholders on strategies and policies setting out how it will fulfil its duties
- 5.3.4 State funded schools are split into schools maintained by the Local Authority and

those directly funded by Central Government. The former are split into a number of categories, including foundation, community and voluntary aided schools. The latter encompass Academies and free schools (which are Academies which did not convert from a maintained school). For maintained schools, there are prescribed requirements in order to make specific alterations. This includes expanding existing schools to add additional form groups. The requirements are set out in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and associated regulations. Academies do not have to follow the same requirements in order to expand, but are expected to seek the approval of the Secretary of State. Section 6A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires that local authorities seek proposals for the establishment of an academy if they think that a new school is required in their area. There are only limited circumstances when a local authority will be able to publish proposals to establish a new maintained school.

Risk Management

- 5.4.1 The report assumes that some school and special school places will be funded by central government through the free school programme. Should this not occur, the council will need to identify further resources.
- 5.4.2 With rising costs of construction, some council-funded project budgets may come under pressure. There is a contingency assumed within the capital programme which is kept under review as the programme is delivered.
- 5.4.3 It is assumed that there will be land available to accommodate school expansions and new schools and that the council will not need to purchase additional land.
- 5.4.4 Significant school construction projects usually require planning consent. There is a risk that planning consent is refused. If planning consent is refused for any given project, an alternative project will need to be developed and where the project refused is a central government funded free school, any alternative project may potentially need to be funded by the council.
- 5.4.5 All pupil place planning is based on pupil projections and there is a risk that the projections are inaccurate. The council utilises projections produced by the Greater London Authority and regularly reviews the accuracy of the projections to inform future planning.

5.5 Equalities and Diversity

Ensuring a high-quality education offer supports the progress of all children and young people including those with additional needs or at risk of underachievement, for example, children with additional learning needs, young people with poor mental health or those at economic disadvantage. By expanding successful schools, investing in new provision for children with special educational needs and aiming to retain Barnet's diverse educational offer, the council is investing to ensure that Barnet remains a popular place for families to live and study.

5.6 Corporate Parenting Principles

- 5.6.1 The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those children and young people;
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and;
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living

5.6.2 Ensuring that our looked after children have quality school provision is essential to supporting positive development and outcomes

5.7 Consultation and Engagement

Schools are engaged with the strategic approach to planning school places through the School Organisation and Place Planning Board (SOPPB), which last convened on 13 July 2022. The SOPPB is attended by the Council, Barnet Education and Learning Service and headteacher representatives. In addition, briefings are provided through the termly Director's meetings with headteachers and chairs of governors. For individual projects that involve the expansion of an existing school or the establishment of a new school or a reduction to a school's published admission number, there is a statutory requirement for a wider, formal consultation.

5.8 Insight

The council sources data from the Greater London Authority's (GLA) school roll projection service which provides projections for the majority of London boroughs. Projections are based on pupil numbers on roll at the termly Census. The projections use the GLA population projections which incorporate actual births, trends in population (migration, fertility trends etc.) and housing development. Each year, the council provides to the GLA the number of housing units projected to be built in each of Barnet's wards for the next ten years, which are then incorporated into the model. To sense check these projections, the council also analyses births by postcode area (data from ONS) and nursery data

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Planning for new school places 2018/19 to 2022/23 - Agenda Item

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=697&MId=8693&Ver=4>

2. Special Educational Places Plan – November 2021 – Agenda Item

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=697&MId=10814&Ver=4>

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Planning for new school places 2022/23 to 2026/27

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Local authorities are responsible for making sure there are enough school places to meet the need of children and young people living in the borough (*Section 14, Education Act 1996*). This duty should be exercised with a view to maintaining a balanced supply of places, avoiding either a shortfall or large surplus, as well as securing diversity in the provision and increasing opportunities for parental preference (*Education and Inspections Act 2006*). Whilst local authorities are the commissioners or brokers of school places, school place planning requires collaborative working between councils, schools, admission authorities and other partners.
- 1.2 Maintaining a balanced supply of school places is a task of enormous complexity. Trends in demand are driven by a number of variables, some of which are acutely sensitive to changes at local, regional, national and global level. Whilst factors that determine the borough's changing population (**birth rates**, **death rates** and **migration**) can be estimated, and to some extent predicted over time, other variables such as **parental preference** and the **autonomy** own admission authority schools have to vary their admission limits, fundamental principles that underpin the legislative framework surrounding school admissions, are difficult to predict and reconcile with place planning. The greatest challenge is the uncertainty around the medium and long-term impact of the **Covid-19 crisis** and **Brexit**, both of which have caused unprecedented disruption to the education system.
- 1.3 In order to effectively plan for and maintain the appropriate level of school places, the Council undertakes an annual review of the existing primary and secondary capacity and compares this against the pupil forecast for the future decade. We subscribe to the **Greater London Authority's (GLA) School Roll Projection Service** for pupil forecasts and sense-check the projections against a variety of datasets to ensure local context has been taken into account.
- 1.4 This report provides an updated summary of the Borough's demographics and emerging trends and patterns that are used for pupil forecasting - and informs the shape of our future school place planning strategy. It focuses on future demand and provision for both mainstream and specialist settings. Meeting the need for additional early years places is driven by the Early Years strategy which promotes and champions new provision across the private, voluntary and independent providers sectors as well as in the school sector. However, where appropriate, additional early years places are provided as part of the growth in primary school places covered in this report.

2. CONTEXT

- 2.1 The population in Barnet is continuing to rise. According to the 2021 population Census, the borough's population has increased by **almost 33,000** from 356,836 in 2011 to 389,300 in 2021 – **an increase of 9.2%**. This is higher than the London and England population increase at 7.6% and 6.6% respectively. The population aged 0 to 19 in Barnet has increased by 7% (6,000 people). Over the next decade, Barnet's population is expected to grow further in areas where largescale regeneration across the borough is already delivering new homes.
- 2.2 Barnet is building more new homes than any other borough in outer London. There are **seven major regeneration schemes** across the borough, delivering **27,000 new and replacement homes** and **500 new council owned homes**. The schemes have been delivering new homes

since 2011 and the majority are expected to complete before the end of the decade (see *Appendix 1 for map of major regeneration schemes*).

- 2.3 Barnet is one of the areas in the UK that has seen the highest number of Hong Kong migrant arrivals, many with school-aged children settling in the borough for its diverse and high quality educational offer. Barnet has received approximately **600 in-year applications in respect of children from Hong Kong British National Overseas (BNO) families** and in the 2021/22 academic year, approximately **8% of in-year offers** have been made to migrant children in this category. More recently, Barnet has seen an increasing number of school admission applications, in respect of Ukrainian migrant children. So far, more than **226 applications** have been processed and more than **177 Barnet school places have been allocated to Ukrainian children**.
- 2.4 Barnet has been home to **four asylum seeker contingency hotels** since 2020, last recorded as accommodating **154 children and young people of statutory school age**, and one hotel with 32 children under five years old .
- 2.5 Live births in Barnet have seen a downward trend, with a **12% fall in live births** between 2014 and 2021. Over the next five years, births are projected to increase from 4,600 in 2021/22 to 4,708 in 2028/29, **an increase of 2.3%**.
- 2.6 The borough of Barnet borders with five London boroughs, **Brent, Camden, Enfield, Haringey** and **Harrow**, and **Hertfordshire County**. Cross-borough flow of pupils is significant particularly near the borough boundaries.

3. PAST SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

- 3.1 Local Authorities have a statutory duty under *Section 14 of the Education Act 1996* to ensure sufficiency of school places for its resident children. Failure to fulfil this obligation carries serious consequences, including adverse publicity and legal challenge.
- 3.2 Between 2010 and 2016, an unprecedented rise in primary mainstream demand resulted in a **25% increase in the number of ‘on-time’ applications**, in respect resident children rising to five years of age and first starting school. Since 2017, a downward trend has been observed in the borough’s primary demand largely as a result of a London-wide fall in birth-rate. A parallel increase has been seen in secondary demand as aging primary bulges are transferring across to the secondary phase. Over the last decade, **secondary transfer application from home residents have increased by 30%**.
- 3.3 In anticipation of growth in demand, the council commissioned a total of over **12,000 additional mainstream places** in the last decade. Over **5,800** of these additional places have been created in the primary phase, excluding **630 former independent places converting to voluntary-aided places** across three primary schools that have joined Barnet’s maintained sector. In the secondary phase, over 6,500 additional mainstream places have been provided (*see Appendix 2 for a list additional primary and secondary provision created since 2009*).
- 3.4 Over the next decade, Barnet’s population is expected to grow further in areas where largescale regeneration is already underway in the South-West of the borough: Brent Cross, Colindale and West Hendon.
- 3.5 When new school places are needed as a result of pupil yield from housing development, there is an expectation that the developers will contribute to the capital costs. The Council plays a difficult role in facilitating and supporting discussions between developers and the Department for Education (DfE), in relation to funding based on basic need, particularly in the recent financial climate and the anticipated recession in the coming months.

Negotiations about a new primary school (Saracens Primary) in the heart of the Colindale regeneration area have been on-going for the past five years. This is a DfE decision and the DfE has yet to make a final decision.

- 3.6 So far, the Council has made good judgements in predicting demand and planning for additional capacity at both the primary and secondary level. The delivery of additional school places in a measured and timely way has enabled the Council to allocate a school place to every child who has needed one at both the normal points of entry and to movers-in, in contrast to a shortfall experienced by most other North London boroughs during the peak of the surge.
- 3.7 Whilst these investment programmes have ensured sufficient high-quality mainstream provision to meet the anticipated demand over the next decade, the focus is now on creating additional Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision, where demand has been rising and a growing shortfall is anticipated.
- 3.8 Falling primary rolls has become a cause for increasing concern shared by schools across London. An over-supply of school places presents its own problems, particularly for one-form entry schools where the financial challenge is more acute and benefits from economies of scale do not apply. The Council has supported a small number of primary schools that have experienced financial pressure and struggled with effective staff planning due to falling pupil numbers. A range of measures has helped to tackle this issue, including reduction in published admission numbers, temporary capping and re-design of surplus capacity to create additional SEND provision, thereby alleviating pressure in this category. The Council has also supported the Board of Trustees for **Grasvenor Avenue Infant School** and the DfE with the **permanent closure of the school**, effective from July 2022, after it was deemed financially unviable for the academy to continue operating as a one-form entry infant school.
- 3.9 Whilst the statutory duty to ensure a sufficient supply of school places falls to the local authority, the ability to directly control supply is impacted by the growth in academies and free schools. For example, the Council has no jurisdiction with respect to the decision-making process that leads an Academy to expand and all newly commissioned schools in the borough are free schools (academies). Within this complexity, the Council has taken a measured and balanced approach in utilising its basic needs grant to ensure that its statutory duty is met.

4. EDUCATION STRATEGY

- 4.1 The local strategic context for the commissioning and delivery of new school places in the borough is rooted within **Barnet's Education Strategy 2021-2024**. This sets out the shared strategic vision for education in Barnet:
'Resilient schools – resilient communities: We want Barnet to be the most successful place for high quality education where excellent school standards result in all children achieving their best, being safe and happy and able to progress to become successful adults'
- 4.2 The strategy further sets out the shared mission to ensure that every child attends a **good or outstanding school**; the attainment and progress of children in Barnet schools is **within the top 10%** nationally, the progress of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils is accelerated in order to **diminish the difference** between them and their peers, every child receives a high-quality education through **clear curriculum intent** and effective implementation and we **minimise the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on learning**.
- 4.3 In order to achieve these outcomes, the primary strategic goal is to ensure **access to sufficient high-quality school places** to meet the needs of Barnet residents, including

local specialist provision when required for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

5. ADDITIONAL PROVISION THROUGH INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

- 5.1 The Council has commissioned new primary and secondary school places through a combination of different routes ensuring that decisions are centred around cost-effectiveness and high-quality provision. This has primarily involved the **permanent expansion** of existing schools and the **academy presumption route**, whereby the Council has invited proposals for new academy schools. In addition, the Council has ‘supported’ **free school proposals** where the need for new places has been identified.
- 5.2 **Expanding existing schools and remodelling surplus capacity** is often the more cost-effective option funded by the Council from the Basic Need Grant or Special Provision Capital Funding for Additionally Resourced Provision and SEND places. The majority of the new places in Barnet have so far been provided through working with headteachers and governing bodies of successful primary schools that have been accredited with ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ Ofsted rating. Since 2009, the primary expansion programme has delivered a total of **3,136 new mainstream** places across 17 primary schools. In the secondary phase, 14 schools have expanded to provide a total of **2,390 additional mainstream places**, over the last decade. The potential for expansion reduces once schools on larger sites have been expanded.
- 5.3 **New Schools (including free schools)** have been funded through the DfE’s Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). In the last three years the DfE has approved five new free schools in Barnet, as follows:
- **Saracens High School** (opened in September 2018, mainstream, 11-18 years);
 - **Ark Pioneer Academy** (opened in September 2019, mainstream, 11-18 years);
 - **Kisharon Free School** (opened in August 2018, Special School, 4-19 years);
 - **Saracens Primary School** (currently under review, mainstream 4-11 years);
 - **The Windmill** (Special School, 5-18 years, planning to open in September 2023).
- 5.4 **Independent schools joining Barnet’s maintained sector as voluntary-aided schools** have further enriched Barnet’s diverse educational offer and helped to meet the demand for faith school places in the borough. In 2019, **Shalom Noam**, former independent Jewish school joined Barnet’s maintained sector making a total of five independent schools joining Barnet’s family of voluntary aided schools in the last decade. In September 2023, **Barnet Hill Academy**, an Independent School in West Hendon, is expected to join Barnet’s maintained sector as Barnet’s first voluntary aided Islamic school, subject to conditions. Barnet is home to a well-established and growing Muslim community, which represents approximately **12% of the borough’s population (45,000 Muslims)**.

6. METHODOLOGY FOR 2022 SCHOOL ROLL PROJECTIONS

- 6.1 The GLA’s forecast methodology creates school roll projections essentially based on population projection and the home wards of the pupils that attend each Barnet school. Most London boroughs subscribe to this service, as the GLA has expertise in the area and uses a model that incorporates the boroughs own housing development and pupil roll data, together with national data on births, deaths, migration and household formation.
- 6.2 For the 2022 forecast, the GLA School Roll Projection Service provided each borough with projections based on **two migration variants**. In both projections the ward-level assumptions are identical. Initial rates are designed to reflect the immediate impacts of COVID-19 and Brexit on the population in the years 2021 and 2022. In these years

Scenarios 1 and 2 are identical. From 2023 rates in the scenarios begin to diverge and from 2025 return to averages based on past observed behaviours.

- **Scenario 1:** Standard migration assumptions for the covid period; Higher domestic out-migration assumptions in the longer-term (5-year average).
- **Scenario 2:** Standard migration assumptions for the covid period; Lower domestic out-migration assumptions in the longer-term (10-year average).

Barnet has opted for Scenario 2 as the borough's population is continuing to rise, regeneration across the borough has started to yield additional school-aged child population and numbers are expected to rise later in the decade as the majority of the new housing comes to fruition. The same migration variant was used for pupil numbers provided in the DfE's annual school capacity survey 2021, with the GLA's reassurance that the Council had made sound judgement in selecting this scenario given the Borough's development trajectory.

6.3 For the relationship between the child's home ward and the school attended, the GLA has offered three options of back-series (historical school roll data), as follows:

The **3/4 option** is the default variant and incorporates several years of past data to smooth out fluctuations and give more stable results. It uses

- **three years** of past detailed flow (2019-2021) to define the relationship between the ward of residence and the school attended for the 2022 intake;
- **four years** of school roll data (2019 – 2022) to calculate the size of the new intake.

The **3/1 option** aims to smooth out fluctuations in the underlying patterns of pupil movement, whilst reflecting only the most recent data in terms of pupil roll numbers. It uses

- **three years** of past detailed flow (2019-2021) to define the relationship between the ward of residence and the school attended for the 2022 intake;
- **one year** of school roll data (2022) to calculate the size of the new intake.

The **1/1 option** aims to reflect most recent patterns where it is anticipated that these will continue in the future. It uses

- **one year** of past detailed flow (2021) to define the relationship between the ward of residence and the school attended for the 2022 intake;
- **one year** of school roll data (2022) to calculate the size of the new intake.

Barnet has opted for the standard 3/4 scenario for more stable results particularly given the fluctuations observed in the wake of the pandemic.

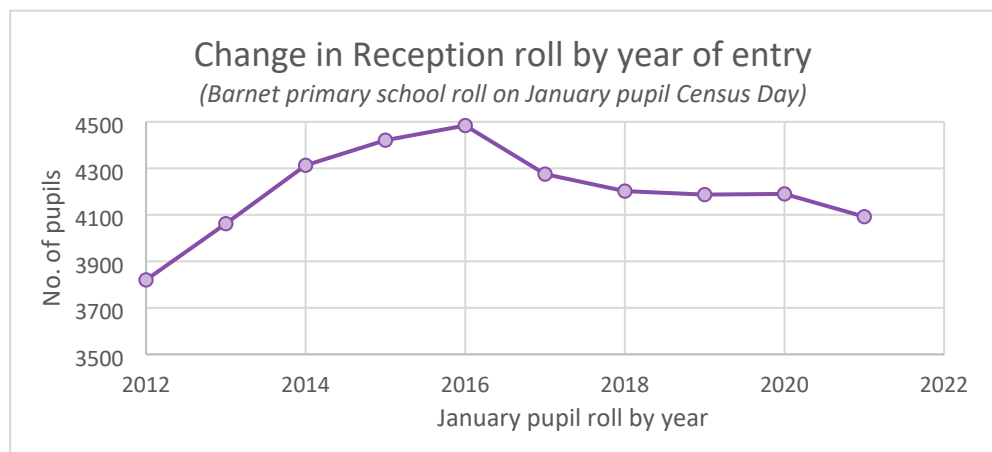
7. CHANGES IN PRIMARY DEMAND AND FUTURE PROJECTIONS

7.1 The demand for primary school places across London rose at a faster rate than any other region, during the last decade. This was reflected in Barnet, with applications numbers rising by almost **1000 applications (25%)** between 2010 and 2016. However, since 2017 Barnet, along with the rest of the Capital, has seen a growing surplus of primary school places partly as a result of declining birth rates. For the 2022 Reception intake, Barnet received a total of **4052 'on time' applications**, an **11% drop** compared to the peak seen in 2016. However, there is considerable variation across the borough, with two-thirds of Barnet school

remaining oversubscribed and the main surplus in a small number of schools that have experienced the highest rates of falling rolls.

7.2 Figure 1 below shows the change over time in the number of Reception pupils on roll in Barnet schools on January Pupil Census Day:

Figure 1: Number of on-time Reception applications from Barnet residents, by year of entry



7.3 Falling primary rolls continue to create significant budget challenges for some schools that are operating with vacant places and higher unit costs. The Local Authority is mindful of the unpredictable nature of the factors that can influence quick changes in population and where trends have become evident at school level, we will continue to work with schools to explore a variety of measures that we have already used, including reductions to published admission numbers, soft capping and redesignating spare capacity to help tackle the rising demand for SEND provision. This will enable schools to use resources more efficiently whilst retaining some existing capacity in the case of an unexpected rise in future demand.

7.4 Based on the latest forecast and local intelligence, the Council anticipates continued variation across the borough, with growth expected in Brent Cross/Cricklewood, Colindale and West Hendon, where large-scale regeneration is underway, but an overall decline across the rest of the borough. A primary **surplus of 5% is recommended** to allow for in-year demand. This is particularly significant in Barnet, where approximately 45% of primary schools and 40% of secondary schools have faith character.

Primary Planning Areas

7.5 Barnet has **six planning areas**, which were drawn around the 2013 wards. In May 2022, Barnet's ward boundaries changed and the **number of wards increased from 21 to 24**. The 2022 school roll projections and information in this report refers to the 2013 ward boundaries. We intend to carry out a review of the primary planning areas based on the new wards, at the end of the year.

7.6 Below is a summary of activity, forecast and projected surplus / deficit in each primary planning area. The majority of Barnet's faith schools are over-subscribed which means that school choices are limited for families who do not practise the faith of the individual school or who prefer to send their children to a secular school. To put this in context, Figures 2 to 9 below show the pupil forecast against the number of non-denominational school places, as well as the total number of school places available.

Planning Area (PA) 1: Burnt Oak, Colindale, Hendon and West Hendon

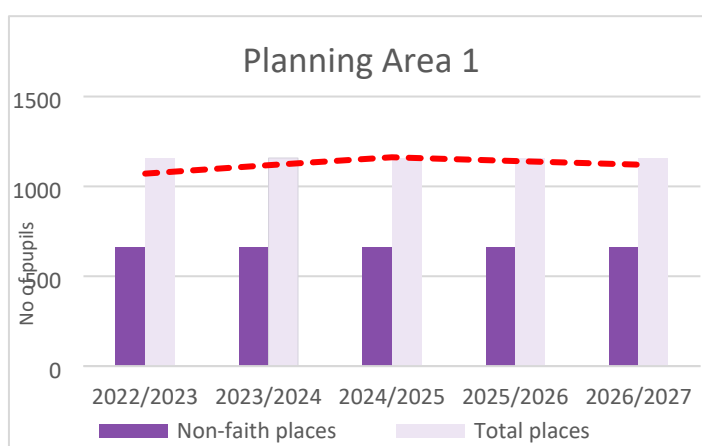
- 7.7 The demand for primary places in Planning Area 1 is expected to increase over the next five years, as new housing developments continue to yield additional school-aged children.
- 7.8 Colindale is one of the largest regeneration areas in the borough and continues to make the single largest contribution to housing growth (including affordable housing) in the borough. Colindale regeneration will continue over the next 10 years to be one of the biggest growth areas in North London. Previous plans to open a new two-form entry **Saracens Primary School**, as part of the development, are currently under review by the DfE given the overall projected surplus in planning area.
- 7.9 Colindale is a border ward straddling the A5 boundary with Brent and is delivering significant mixed-use, mixed tenure developments. On the Barnet side of Colindale alone several housing schemes have been completed with **5,276 homes in 2020/21**, a further **5,600 for completion by the year 2027** and **2,689 homes with planning consent**.
- 7.10 The West Hendon regeneration in the south-west of the borough, will create a new mixed neighbourhood of social, private and affordable homes. The programme in West Hendon will deliver **2,194 new homes**.
- 7.11 There are currently **1,158 permanent mainstream Reception places** in PA1 across 20 schools. Half of these schools, which together provide **43%** of total primary places in the area, **have religious character** and five of these schools are Jewish.
- 7.12 The May 2022 pupil roll Census shows **6% surplus places in Planning Area 1**, but 2% of this surplus exists in a single Catholic school which has previously filled three forms across all year groups and is now struggling to fill two forms.
- 7.13 The latest school roll projections indicate pressure for primary schools emerging from 2024/25, across the planning area and a localised rising deficit in the Colindale ward. The new two-form entry Saracens Primary was expected to open at the heart of the regeneration in 2024/25, to help to meet the additional demand. This is now under review and a decision is awaited.
- 7.14 In the West Hendon ward, Barnet Hill Academy, Islamic Independent school is expected to convert to a voluntary aided school in September 2023 subject to certain conditions being met. In the first academic year as a voluntary aided school, Barnet Hill Academy will operate with one form of entry (30 places) in Years 1 to 6 and two forms of entry in the Reception year (60 places), with each subsequent year accruing an additional form from bottom up, thus completing the transition to a full two-form entry school by 2029/30.
- 7.15 A two-form community school proposed as part of the latter stages of the West Hendon regeneration scheme may no longer be required but the position will be kept under review.
- 7.16 Barnet's Planning Area 1 borders with Brent's Planning Area 1 and Harrow's South-East planning area. Brent's housing target in the London Plan is set to significantly increase, with Colindale and Burnt Oak identified as two of the main growth areas. Brent has no current plans to increase mainstream primary provision on the border of Barnet. Harrow has two schools included in its regeneration programme aligned to open when new housing developments start to yield child population, but neither school is near the border of Barnet.
- 7.17 The projections in Table 1 below do not include the additional provision in the pipeline (Saracens Primary and Barnet Hill Academy places). However, it is anticipated that these places will be delivered and will help to meet the deficit expected in 2024/25, as well as creating a small buffer for in-year movement and future growth.

Table 1: Updated Reception forecast in Planning Area 1

Academic Year	Pupil forecast	Non-faith places	Faith	Total places*	Shortfall/surplus places	Shortfall/Surplus forms of entry
2022/2023	1071	660	498	1158	87	2.90
2023/2024	1118	660	498	1158	40	1.33
2024/2025	1162	660	498	1158	-4	-0.13
2025/2026	1141	660	498	1158	17	0.57
2026/2027	1121	660	498	1158	37	1.23

* Barnet Hill Academy (60 faith places) and Saracens Primary (60 non-denominational places) are not included in figures

Figure 2. Forecast shown against total available places and non-denominational places in Planning Area 1



Planning Area 2: Hale, Mill Hill, Edgware & Totteridge

- 7.18 The regeneration and growth in Mill Hill will deliver **2,240 new homes**. The development in Mill Hill East delivered the three-form entry Millbrook Park Primary. The school has been operating with two-forms of entry since it opened in 2014, due to the subsequent fall in primary demand seen London-wide. The additional capacity will help to meet the anticipated future growth in the area as the regeneration scheme continues to deliver new homes and starts to yield additional school-aged children.
- 7.19 There are currently **853 permanent mainstream Reception places** in Planning Area 2, across 19 schools. Almost half of the schools in the area have religious character.
- 7.20 Planning Area 2 has experienced the highest level of surplus places since 2017, when primary demand plummeted. The May 2022 pupil roll Census shows **8% surplus places** in this planning area. Half of the schools in the area are undersubscribed and this has created particular financial difficulty for the schools listed below. The Council has supported these schools to reduce their admission numbers to enable more efficient use of resources and financial management.
- **Dollis Primary:** On 1 April 2019, Dollis Junior amalgamated with Dollis Infant to form a new all-through Dollis Primary School. As part of the amalgamation, the school's PAN was reduced from three forms of entry to two forms of entry.

- **Frith Manor:** From 1 September 2020, the school’s PAN was reduced from three to two forms of entry.
- **Edgware Primary:** From September 2021, the school’s PAN was reduced from three to two forms of entry. Remodelling of surplus capacity has created additional SEND provision.
- **Deansbrook Infant and Deansbrook Junior:** Both schools have three forms of entry but are now operating with temporary reductions in year groups that have been seen the highest level of falling rolls.

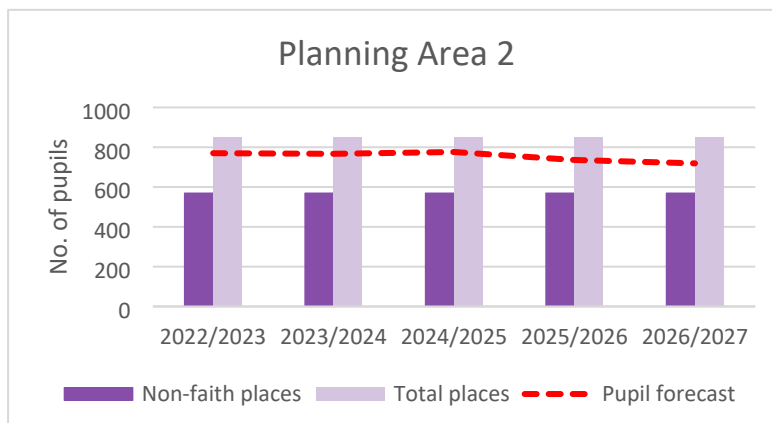
7.21 The pressure point in Planning Area 2 tends to be on the border with adjoining Planning Area 1, and its current surplus is helping to ease the pressure across the border. Planning Area 2 also borders with Harrow, with a net inflow of Harrow pupils drawn into Barnet schools near the border.

7.22 The projected surplus shown in Table 2 below is below 5% and will help to meet in-year demand and additional pupil yield from the Mill Hill development.

Table 2: Updated Reception forecast in Planning Area 2

Academic Year	Pupil forecast	Non-faith places	Faith places	Total places	Surplus places	Surplus forms of entry
2022/2023	770	570	283	853	83	2.77
2023/2024	767	570	283	853	86	2.87
2024/2025	776	570	283	853	77	2.57
2025/2026	736	570	283	853	117	3.90
2026/2027	719	570	283	853	134	4.47

Figure 3: Forecast shown against total available places and non-denominational places in Planning Area 2



Planning Area 3: Childs Hill, Garden Suburb and Golders Green

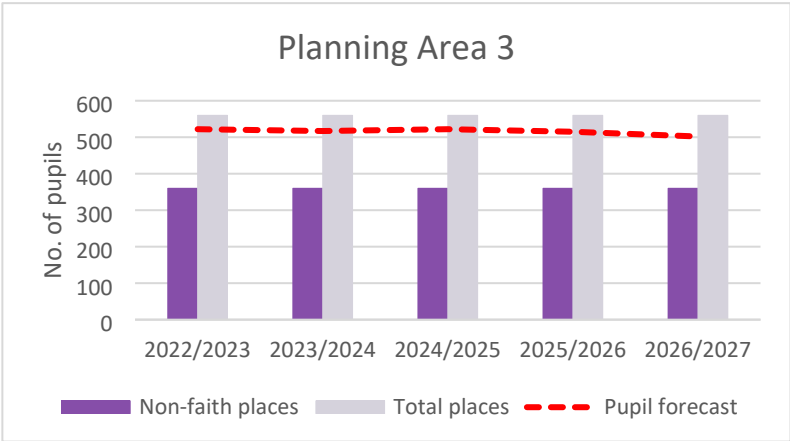
7.23 The Brent Cross Cricklewood scheme is one of the largest regeneration projects in Europe and is expected to deliver **7,500 new homes** within the next 10 years. Additional demand is expected to emerge over the next few years, as the scheme starts to yield additional school-aged children. However, there is already some surplus capacity in the wards adjoining the regeneration area and no shortfall is anticipated.

- 7.24 There are currently **560 permanent mainstream Reception places** in this planning area across 12 schools, five of which have religious character. The May 2022 pupil roll Census shows **8% surplus** primary school places in Planning Area 3.
- 7.25 Since 2016, no bulge has been required for entry into Reception. However, Orthodox Jewish primary schools in Planning Area 3 continue to admit over number in response to the pressure for Jewish school places.
- 7.26 A detailed ward-level analysis of school roll projections indicates an increase in the demand for primary places in the Golders Green ward, near the Brent Cross Cricklewood regeneration. Surplus capacity in the Childs Hill and Garden Suburb wards is unlikely to fully off-set the growing primary demand in Golders Green as most of the schools in Childs Hill and Garden Suburb will not be within the 2-mile statutory home-school distance from the heart of regeneration. The Council will monitor emerging patterns and expected child yield over the course of the development trajectory. Any deficit that arises in the longer term will be addressed through inviting proposals to deliver more school places through the regeneration scheme itself. Golders Green ward borders with West Hendon in PA1, another area of regeneration and anticipated rising demand.
- 7.27 The projected surplus shown in Table 3 below is less than 2% which could result in localised pressure to meet in-year demand. However, nearly half of the schools in the area are currently undersubscribed and a few have applied soft caps for efficient use of resources.

Table 3 : Updated Reception forecast in Planning Area 3

Academic Year	Pupil forecast	Non-faith places	Faith places	Total places	Surplus places	Surplus forms of entry
2022/2023	522	360	200	560	38	1.27
2023/2024	517	360	200	560	43	1.43
2024/2025	522	360	200	560	38	1.27
2025/2026	515	360	200	560	45	1.50
2026/2027	502	360	200	560	58	1.93

Figure 4. Forecast shown against total available places and non-denominational places in Planning Area 3



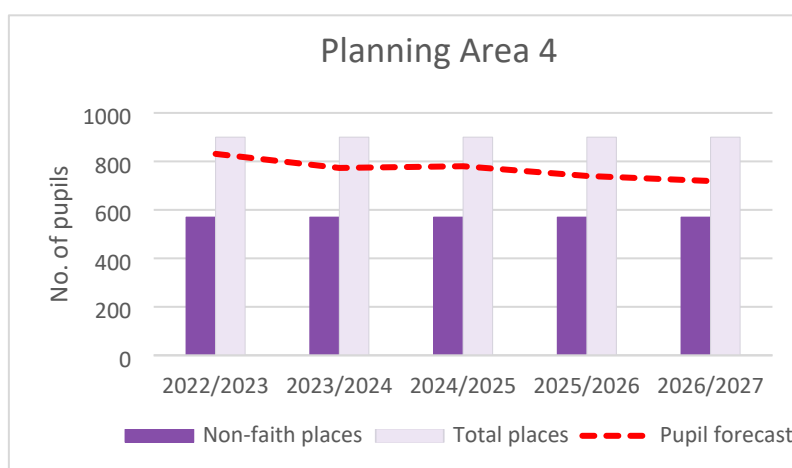
Planning Area 4: Coppetts, East Finchley, Finchley Church End, West Finchley and Woodhouse

- 7.28 There are currently **900 permanent mainstream Reception places** in PA4, across 21 primary schools. Nine schools have religious character. Previous localised pressure in Planning Area 4 necessitated several bulge classes prior to 2017, one of which are still in operation.
- 7.29 PA4 borders with Haringey, in the North-East. There is a high level of cross-borough flow in the area with Barnet. Haringey draws high numbers of Barnet pupils in schools across the border. For the Reception 2022 intake, **21 Haringey children have secured a place at a school in Barnet**. The reciprocal figure is five times higher, with **106 Haringey school places allocated to Barnet children**.
- 7.30 Latest school roll projections indicate a downward trend in the demand for school places in the area, as shown in Table 4 below. However, the arrival of migrant children has helped to fill the surplus in the area and most of the schools in Planning Area 4 are currently oversubscribed. The May 2022 pupil roll Census shows **3% surplus** primary school places in Planning Area 3. There are no plans to add or remove places in the planning area.

Table 4 : Updated Reception forecast in Planning Area 4

Academic Year	Pupil forecast	Non-faith places	Faith	Total places	Surplus places	Surplus forms of entry
2022/2023	831	570	330	900	69	2.30
2023/2024	773	570	330	900	127	4.23
2024/2025	780	570	330	900	120	4.00
2025/2026	740	570	330	900	160	5.33
2026/2027	719	570	330	900	181	6.03

Figure 5. Forecast shown against total available places and non-denominational places in Planning Area 4



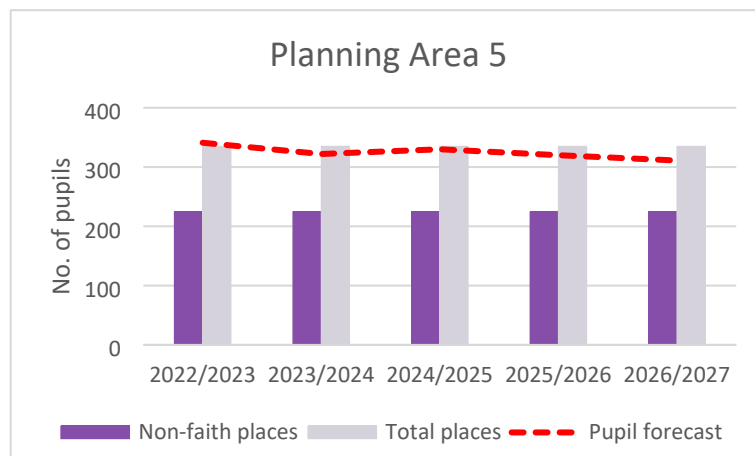
Planning Area 5: Underhill & High Barnet

- 7.31 The regeneration of Dollis Valley Estate on the North of the borough is one of the seven major regeneration schemes in Barnet. The programme is well underway and will deliver **631 new homes**, on completion. Permission for a new two-form entry primary school as part of the regeneration was previously refused. PA5 borders with PA2 on the South side and PA6 on the East. Surplus capacity in the bordering planning areas is concentrated to a small number of schools and unreasonable home-to-school distance is likely limit cross-border allocations.
- 7.32 Following the closure of Grasvenor Avenue Infant School, the planning area will have **335 permanent mainstream Reception places** remaining across seven schools, three of which have religious character.
- 7.33 Planning area 5 has been an area of localised pressure for some years. For this reason, the Council has commissioned **two in-year bulge classes at Underhill School**, in order to accommodate Grasvenor’s displaced pupils and help to meet in-year demand. The additional places at Underhill School may be outside the statutory distance for a small proportion of the children who would normally be accommodated at Grasvenor Avenue. The situation will be kept under review and temporary expansion of other existing schools will be considered if additional places are required in the future.
- 7.34 The latest forecast indicates a downward trend in demand for places in the area, from 2023/24, as shown in Table 5 below. However, the May 2022 pupil roll Census shows less than **2% surplus** primary school places in the planning area and half of the schools have already been required to take children in excess of their admission limits to accommodate new arrivals in the area.

Table 5 : Updated Reception forecast in Planning Area 5

Academic Year	Pupil forecast	Non-faith places	Faith places	Total places	Surplus shortfall places	Surplus / shortfall forms of entry
2022/2023	341	225	110	335	-6	-0.20
2023/2024	322	225	110	335	13	0.43
2024/2025	330	225	110	335	5	0.17
2025/2026	320	225	110	335	15	0.50
2026/2027	311	225	110	335	24	0.80

Figure 6. Forecast shown against total available places and non-denominational places in Planning Area 5



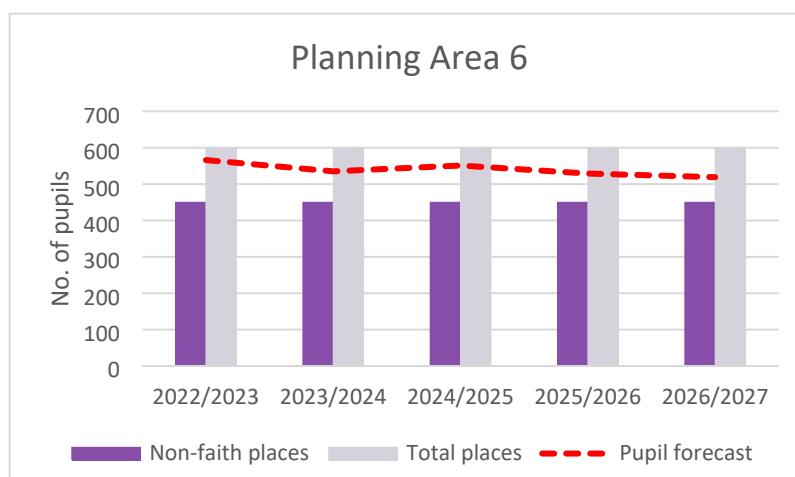
Planning Area 6: Brunswick Park, East Barnet and Oakleigh.

- 7.35 There are currently **600 permanent Reception mainstream places** in PA6 across 13 schools, four of which have religious character. Most of the schools in the area are oversubscribed and over a third have been required to admit in excess of their admission limit to accommodate new arrivals. The schools in the area draw a high percentage of children from the neighbouring Enfield borough. Queenswell Infant and Queenswell Junior have previously undergone permanent PAN reductions from three forms to two forms of entry, due to falling pupil numbers. Surplus capacity has been remodelled as SEND provision, where demand currently outweighs existing capacity.
- 7.36 The latest forecast, as shown on Table 6 below, indicates sufficient primary capacity to meet the projected demand over the next five years and there are no further plans to create or reduce primary provision in the planning area. However, the surplus is small and this is another area where the actual demand has been higher than projected over the past five years. The pressure is localised on the South of the PA6, bordering PA5 and so far this has been managed through equitable sharing of unplaced pupils across local schools that are already full.
- 7.37 Planning Area 6 borders the London Borough of Enfield. For the Reception 2022 intake, **81 Barnet children have secured a place at a school in Enfield**. The reciprocal figure is slightly higher, with **96 Barnet school places allocated to Enfield residents**.

Table 6 : Updated Reception forecast in Planning Area 6

Academic Year	Pupil forecast	Non-faith places	Faith places	Total places	Surplus places	Surplus forms of entry
2022/2023	566	450	150	600	34	1.13
2023/2024	535	450	150	600	65	2.17
2024/2025	551	450	150	600	49	1.63
2025/2026	529	450	150	600	71	2.37
2026/2027	519	450	150	600	81	2.70

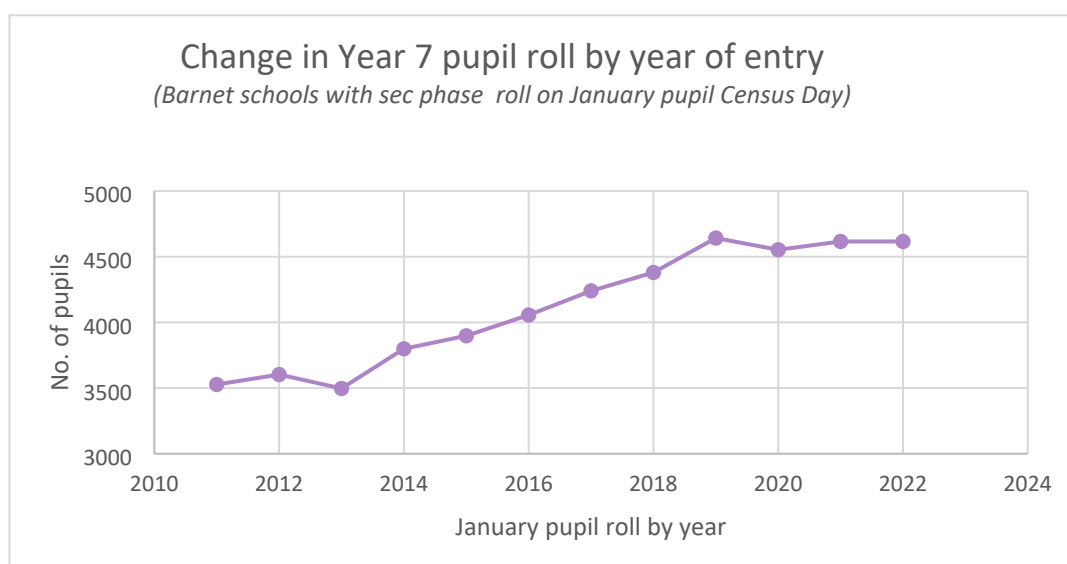
Figure 7. Forecast shown against total available places and non-denominational places in Planning Area 6



8. CHANGES IN SECONDARY DEMAND AND FUTURE PROJECTIONS

- 8.1 Barnet has a single planning area in the secondary phase. The desirability of Barnet secondary schools makes home-to-school distance and travel far less significant and the competition for school places is mainly driven by parental preference and perceptions.
- 8.2 There are currently **28 schools with a secondary phase** in the borough; one community school, 6 voluntary-aided schools, 17 academies and 4 free schools. Of the **4,812 permanent secondary transfer places, 1,632 (34%)** are in schools **with religious character**.
- 8.3 Three schools with a secondary cohort are all-through schools that also have a primary phase: London Academy, St Mary's and St John's CE and Wren Academy. The borough also has three heavily oversubscribed secondary Grammar schools: Queen Elizabeth Boys, Henrietta Barnett and St Michael's Catholic that select wholly on academic ability and draw pupils from far and wide. In addition, Mill Hill County High, Ashmole Academy offer a quota of available places on aptitude.
- 8.4 Barnet's secondary expansion programme, in addition to new provision at two six-form entry Free schools (Saracens High and Ark Pioneer) has helped to meet the rise in demand for secondary places, which started to emerge in 2017 and reached a peak in 2019. Since then, there has been some fluctuation in demand and the rate of growth has slowed down but no clear trends can be drawn at present. Surplus capacity at Copthall Girls School has been remodelled to create additional SEND provision. Other secondary schools have capped in-year admission limits across selected year groups where surplus exists.
- 8.5 Figure 8 below shows the change in Year 7 pupil roll on January Census Day, over the last decade.

Figure 8: *Number of Year 7 pupils on roll at Barnet secondary and all-through schools, on January Census Day*



- 8.6 There are no current plans to create or reduce secondary capacity. However, several Barnet secondary schools continue to admit in excess of their PAN at secondary transfer stage. For secondary Transfer 2022, six secondary schools provided a combined total of **156**

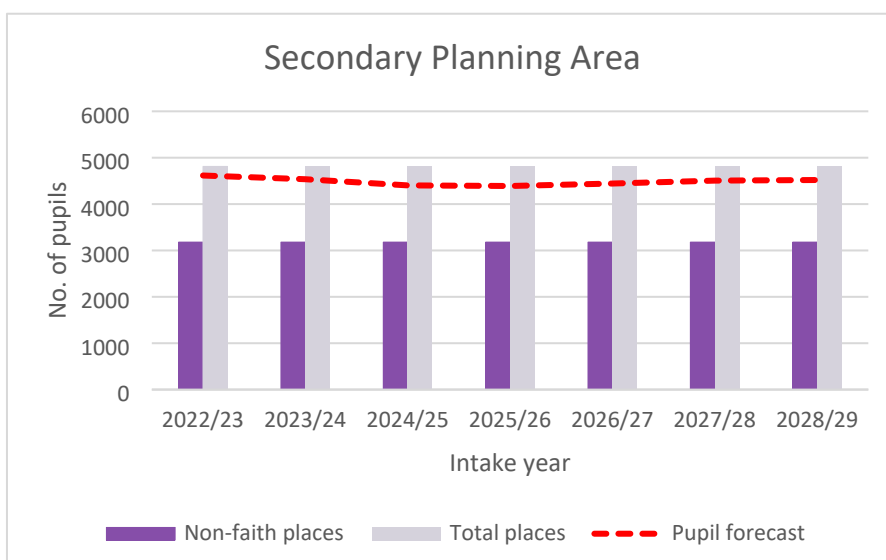
unplanned additional temporary places. Despite this additional unplanned provision, the majority of Barnet secondary schools remain oversubscribed.

- 8.7 There is a high level of cross-borough secondary flow, with over **25% of Barnet school places allocated to children from other boroughs**. In comparison, **approximately 15% Barnet children on average secure a place at an out-borough school**.
- 8.8 In line with GLA projections, the surge in secondary demand started to decline from 2020/21 and we have already seen a plateau emerging in the last few years. Current provision is expected to meet the projected need through to the end of the decade, with a surplus for in-year arrivals and cross-borough movement, and there are no further plans to invest council funds in additional secondary school places at present.

Table 6 : Updated Secondary forecast

Academic Year	Pupil forecast	Non-faith places	Faith places	Total places	Surplus places	Surplus forms of entry
2022/23	4616	3180	1632	4812	196	6.53
2023/24	4536	3180	1632	4812	276	9.20
2024/25	4403	3180	1632	4812	409	13.63
2025/26	4390	3180	1632	4812	422	14.07
2026/27	4443	3180	1632	4812	369	12.30
2027/28	4506	3180	1632	4812	306	10.20
2028/29	4519	3180	1632	4812	293	9.77

Figure 9. Forecast shown against total available places and non-denominational places in Secondary Planning Area



9. IN YEAR ADMISSIONS

- 9.1 In-year demand across all year groups has returned to pre-Covid level, with **over 5,000 in-year applications** received for Barnet school places during the 2021/22 academic year.

More than 25% of these in-year applications are in respect of children from outside the UK. So far, there has been no significant pressure and places have been allocated well within statutory timescales for both the primary and secondary school-age children.

- 9.2 Barnet continues to receive applications from Hong Kong Migrants arriving under the resettlement scheme. The number of applications in respect of Ukrainian migrant children arriving under both the 'Ukraine Family Scheme' and 'Homes for Ukraine scheme' is also rising. The table below shows the breakdown of in-year Barnet school place allocations to children from abroad.

Table 7: Number of Barnet school places allocated in-year to children from abroad, by phase of education

Country of origin	Primary allocations	Secondary allocations	Total allocations
Ukraine	110	67	177
Hong Kong	178	107	285
Afghanistan	36	41	77
Other country	525	320	845

10. EARLY YEARS PROVISION

- 10.1 In Barnet there are a total of 387 providers delivering Early Education and Childcare. These providers are categorised as childminders, private, voluntary and independent nurseries, nurseries within schools and 4 maintained nursery schools. The providers are across the three 0-19 Early Help localities. The latest census data shows Barnet has a total of 24,100 children aged 0-4 years .
- 10.2 As with other Local Authorities, Barnet has experienced several settings closing and others opening. The sample period below demonstrates that this does not necessarily have a negative impact on the overall sufficiency levels. In this sample larger providers have opened. Further work is to be undertaken to explore the reasoning why the number of childminders deregistering has increased.

January – August 2022	Closed	Number of spaces	Newly Opened	Numbers of Spaces	Impact on sufficiency
Early Years Settings	4	96	4	268	172
Childminder	23	124	9	54	-70
					102 Additional spaces

- 10.3 Where previously sufficiency issues had been identified in localised areas such as Burnt Oak, Colindale and Golders Green where more provision was required, data now highlights the impact of the introduction of the new Ofsted inspection framework (February 2022). As with

national statistics, Barnet has seen an increase in the numbers of settings receiving requires improvement or inadequate.

The Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (June 2018) states we should

'Secure alternative provision and withdraw funding from a provider (other than a local authority maintained school), as soon as is practicable, when Ofsted publish an inspection judgement of the provider of 'inadequate' or an inspection judgement of a childminder agency of 'not effective'

And for 2 year olds

'Only fund places for two-year-old children in 'satisfactory' or 'requires improvement' providers where there is not sufficient, accessible 'good' or 'outstanding' provision.'

In the past we have managed to avoid placing children in these settings and have been able to work with families to find a suitable alternative, whilst working with the settings to improve. However, this is now beginning to influence sufficiency across the Borough.

- 10.4 The council will be undertaking some further data analysis with a view to target areas of need with capital support and expand existing provision.

11. ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

- 11.1 The council has been continuing to work with the Education and Skills Funding Agency to progress the delivery of a project to re-build the Pavilion Pupil Referral Unit on its current site. This project was completed in June 2022 and the school has taken occupation of the new building and the temporary accommodation has been removed from the site. The new Sports Pavilion has also been completed and works to the new sports pitches have commenced.
- 11.2 On 1 May 2017, Oak Hill School was established as a special Academy following the de-merger of the Oak Hill provision from the Mill Hill Academy Trust. The new Oak Hill school is part of the newly established AP Barnet Multi-Academy Trust and the longer-term intention is for the Pavilion Pupil Referral Unit and Northgate school to become part of this Multi-Academy Trust.

12. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) PROVISION

- 12.1 A report outlining the Special Educational Places Plan will be presented to the CES Committee in the November 2022 meeting, in line with the Committee Work Programme.

13. POST-16 PROVISION

- 13.1 In Barnet, the Post 16 provision has more than sufficient places across the borough to ensure that young people aged 16 plus have access to a varied and quality provision. The focus has been on ensuring that young people have knowledge of what provision exists at Post 16, as there has been a small increase in young people travelling to learn in other neighbouring boroughs. This has been achieved through improved centralised collation and publicity of the range of course choices on offer.
- 13.2 Most schools in Barnet have a sixth form and offer predominantly level 3 provision (small level 2 provision) consisting of A' levels and some Level 3 vocational qualifications (BTEC/CTEC) . Vocational provision is offered mainly at Barnet and Southgate College, where learners can access work-based qualifications as well as BTECs and A' level provision. There are also a very small number of private training providers offering traineeships and apprenticeships to learners in the borough. In terms of new provision:

- **Woodhouse College** has been given approval to collaborate with Imperial College London to open a new Post-16 maths school in North Finchley, offering 150 places for students aged 16-19 years. The new free school is expected to open in 2023.
- **Totteridge Academy** reopened its sixth form in September 2020, offering 50 places to young people in Year 12. The school plans to grow the sixth form and initial discussions indicate that this would involve a two-fold increase in PAN, to 100 pupils, for the next Year 12 intake. The school will be offering predominately A levels provision only.
- **St Andrews Apostle Greek school** opened its sixth form in September 2018 and offers a wide range of A' Level and BTEC options to post-16 students.
- **St Mary's and St John's CE all-through school** opened its sixth form in September 2019, offering a broad range of A' Level courses.
- **Saracens High School** and **Ark Pioneer Academy** are new free schools that are still growing and have plans to provide sixth form provision in the future.
- **JCoSS** plans to open a post 16 Technical College in 2024/25, offering T Levels to help students progress into skilled employment.

14. CAPITAL FUNDING

- 14.1 The government makes capital grant funding available for the 'basic need' for school places through an annual allocation. Barnet has not received a Basic Need Allocation since 2019 because the government has assessed that there is sufficient capacity within the existing school estate to meet the future demand for school places in the borough. However, as part of the regeneration schemes, the Council has secured Section 106 funding that has contributed towards the educational infrastructure in some areas under development. Additional funding has also been provided from government by way of a SEND capital funding grant. To date the following projects has been delivered through this funding stream:

2018/19

- Remodelling the Additional Resource Provision (ARP) at Coppetts Wood Primary School to create and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) ARP.
- New build ASD ARP at Chalgrove Primary School

2019/20

- Remodelling space in Oakleigh Special School to provide additional capacity.
- Remodelling space in Claremont Primary School to provide an ASD ARP
- New build ASD ARP at Whitefield School

2020/21

- Remodelling space in Northway Special School and Fairway Primary School to provide addition special school places for Northway.
- Remodelling space at Queenswell Infant School to create a satellite class for Oakleigh Special School.
- Remodelling space at Edgware Hospital to provide additional space for Northgate Pupil Referral Unit.

2021/22

- New Build ASD ARP at Broadfields Primary School
- Remodelling Edgware Primary School to create space for Oakbridge Special Provision (19 – 25yrs)

- Remodelling Copthall Academy to create satellite classes for Mapledown Special School

2022/23

- New build additional space at Queenswell Infant School to create further satellite classes for Oakleigh Special School
- Remodelling Grasvenor Infant School to create satellite classes for Northway Special School
- Remodelling Underhill Primary School to accommodate displaced Grasvenor classes following the closure of the school.
- Remodelling Whitefield ARP to create satellite classes for Mapledown Special School

14.2 The government also makes capital grant funding available to improve the condition of maintained schools. The 'School Condition Allocation' grant funding is provided on an annual basis and for 2022/23 the council received £3.8m. Annually, following receipt of this funding, the council and its delivery partner, Capita CSG, designs and delivers a programme of works. The programme of works is prioritised using condition surveys and the local knowledge of a team of building surveyors within Capita CSG. It aims to target works to address failing roofing, the replacement of windows to improve energy efficiency and the upgrading of electrical and mechanical items within the school estate. A small contingency is held to support schools with significant emergency works that would otherwise result in the closure of the school.

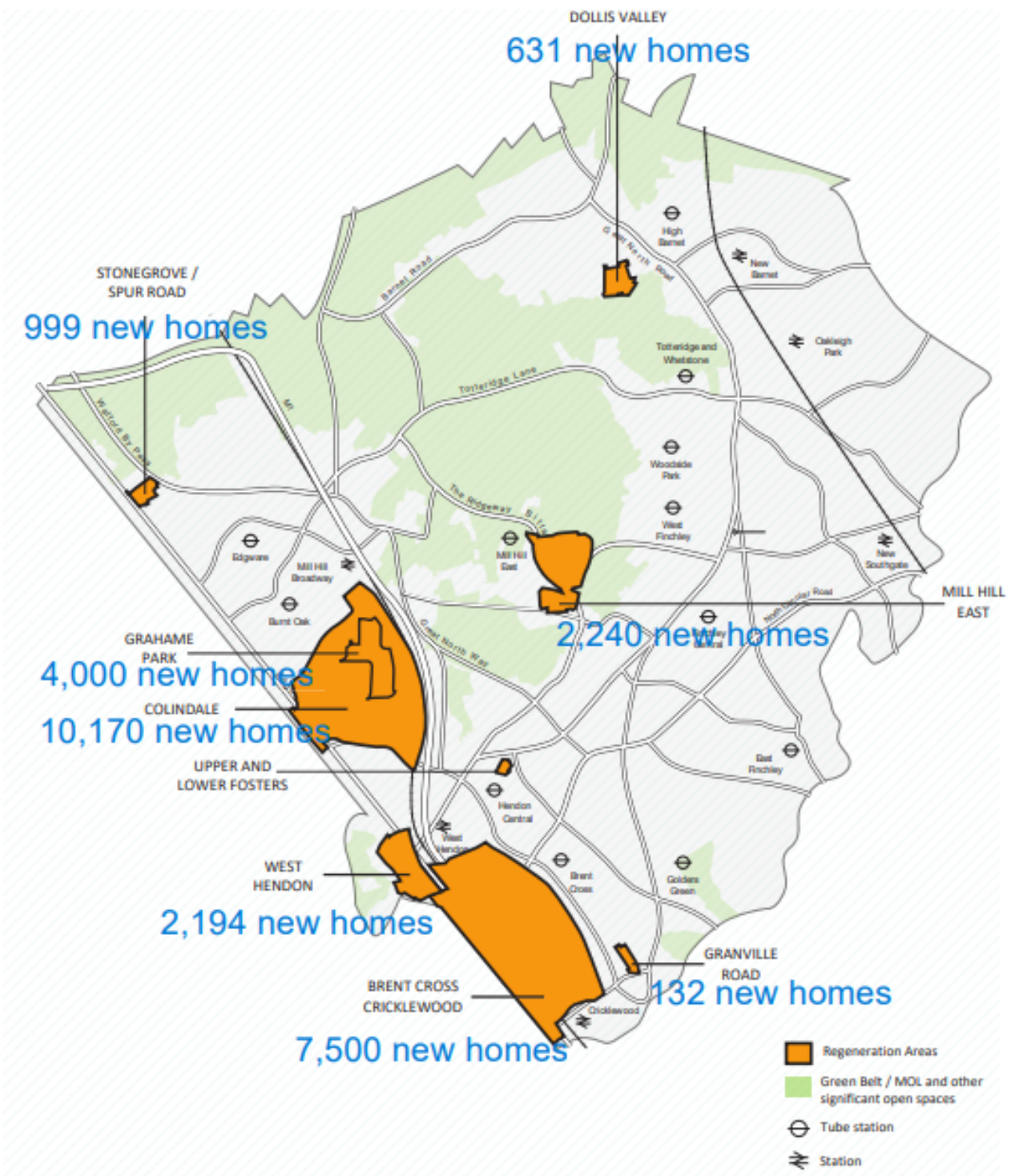


Table 1. *New permanent primary school places in Barnet since 2009*

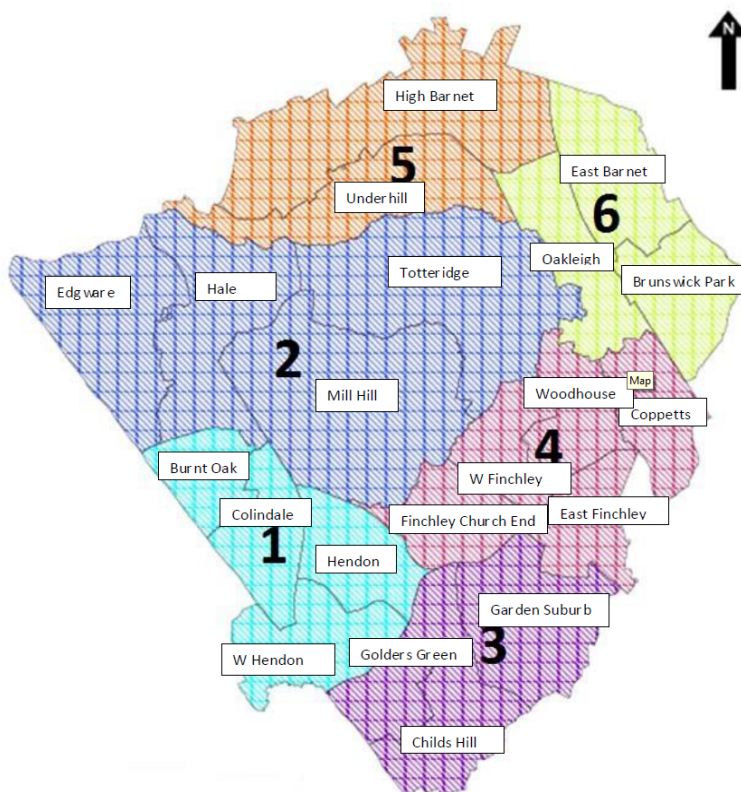
Year	Primary School / Phase	Type of project	Total places added
2009	St Catherine's RC	Expansion	105
	Parkfield	Expansion	105
2010	Colindale	Expansion	210
2011	Beit Shvidler Jewish	Entering the VA sector	210
	Etz Chaim Jewish	New Free School	210
2012	Broadfields	Expansion	210
	Rimon Jewish	New Free School	210
2013	Alma Jewish	New Free School	210
	Blessed Dominic Catholic	Expansion	210
	Brunswick Park	Expansion	210
	Martin	Expansion	210
	Menorah Foundation Jewish	Expansion	210
	Sacks Morasha Jewish	Entering the VA sector	210
	Moss Hall	Expansion	210
	The Orion	Re-provision and Expansion	210
2014	Beis Yaakov Jewish	Expansion	196
	Millbrook Park	New Academy	420
	The Orion	Expansion	210
2015	London Academy	New all-through provision	420
	Monkfrith	Expansion	210
	Watling Park	New free school	420
	St Joseph's RC Primary	Expansion	210
	Wren Academy	New all-through provision	420
2016	Ashmole Primary Free School	New free school	420
2017	Childs Hill	Expansion	105
	St Agnes Catholic	Expansion	105
2019	Noam Primary Jewish	Entering VA sector	210
TOTAL			6496

Table 2: *New permanent secondary school places in Barnet since 2010*

Year	Secondary School / Phase	Type of project	Total places added
2010	East Barnet	Re-provision and expansion	50
	Jewish Community Secondary School (JCoSS)	Entering the VA sector	750
2011	Jewish Community Secondary School (JCoSS)	Expansion	150
	Wren Academy, Finchley CE	Expansion	90
2012	The Compton	Expansion	150
2013	The Archer Academy	New Free School	750
	Christ College Finchley	Expansion	150
	St Andrew the Apostle Greek Orthodox	New Free School	750
2014	Ashmole Academy	Expansion	40
	Hasmonean High	Expansion	100
	St Mary's and St John's CE	All through	600
2015	Copthall School	Expansion	150
	Finchley Catholic High	Expansion	150
2016	Menorah High	Entering the VA sector	300
2017	St Mary's & St John's CE	Expansion	300
	St James' Catholic High	Expansion 1	150
2018	Saracens High	New Free School	750
2019	Ark Pioneer Academy	New Free School	900
	St Michael's Catholic Grammar	Grammar school expansion	160
	St James' Catholic High	Expansion 2	150
TOTAL			6590


Primary Planning Areas (2013 Ward boundaries)

Planning area 1	Planning area 2	Planning area 3	Planning area 4	Planning area 5
Barnfield	Beit Schvidler Jewish	All Saints CE NW2	Alma Jewish	Christ Church CE
Beis Yaakov Jewish	Broadfields Primary	Brookland Infants	Akiva Jewish	Cromer Road
Bell Lane	Courtland	Brookland Junior	Chalgrove	Foulds
Blessed Dominic Catholic	Deansbrook Infant	Childs Hill	Coppetts Wood	Grasvenor Avenue Inf
Colindale	Deansbrook Junior	Claremont	Hollickwood	Monken Hadley CE
Goldbeaters	Dollis Primary	Garden Suburb Infant	Holly Park	St Catherine's RC
Hasmonean Jewish	Edgware	Garden Suburb Junior	Holy Trinity CE	Underhill
Independent Jewish Day	Etz Chaim Jewish	Menorah Primary	Manorside	Whitings Hill
Menorah Foundation Jewish	Fairway	Pardes House	Martin Primary	Planning area 6
Noam Jewish	Frith Manor	Rimon Jewish	Moss Hall Infant	All Saints' CE N20
Parkfield	London Academy	St Agnes' RC	Moss Hall Junior	Ashmole Primary
St Joseph's RC	Mathilda Marks Kennedy Jewish	Wessex Gardens	Northside	Brunswick Park
St Mary's and St John's CE	Millbrook Park		Our Lady of Lourdes	Church Hill
Sunnyfields	Rosh Pinah Jewish		Sacks Morasha Jewish	Danegrove
The Annunciation RC	St Andrew's CE		St John's CE N11	Livingstone
The Annunciation RC Junior	St John's CE N20		St Mary's CE N3	Monkfrith
The Hyde	St Paul's CE NW7		St Paul's CE N11	Osidge
The Orion	St Vincent's Catholic		St Theresa's	Queenswell Infant
Watling Park	Woodridge		Summerside	Queenswell Junior
Woodcroft Primary			Tudor	Sacred Heart Catholic
			Wren Academy CE	St Mary's CE EN4
				Trent CE





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	<h2>Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee</h2> <h3>12 September 2022</h3>
Title	Local Authority School Governor nominations – update
Report of	Chair of the Committee, Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	Appendix A (embedded within this document below)
Officer Contact Details	<p>Chris Munday, Executive Director, Children and Family Services Chair of Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS) Board Chris.Munday@Barnet.gov.uk Telephone: 0208 359 7099</p> <p>Neil Marlow, Chief Executive and Director of Education and Learning, Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS) neil.marlow@Barnet.gov.uk Telephone: 0208 359 7725</p>
<h2>Summary</h2>	
<p>In September 2018, the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee received a report on the process for nominating Local Authority governors to serve on the governing bodies of Barnet schools. The committee approved the proposed changes to the process and agreed there should be a review of the new process in twelve months' time. At its meeting on 10 September 2019 the committee noted the nominations made in the school year 2018/19 and agreed that the process for making nominations described in the report should continue.</p> <p>This report describes the process that has operated since September 2018 and Appendix A sets out the details of the decisions taken by the panel at the three meetings held in the school year 2021/22.</p>	

Recommendation

- 1. That the Committee note the information in Appendix A of this report on the nominations of local authority governors to Barnet Schools since September 2021.**

1 WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 In September 2018, the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee received a report on the process for nominating Local Authority governors to serve on the governing bodies of Barnet schools. The committee approved the proposed changes to the process and agreed there should be a review of the new process in twelve months' time. At its meeting on 10 September 2019 the committee noted the nominations made in the school year 2018/19 and agreed that the process for making nominations described in the report should continue.
- 1.2 The agreed process for nominating local authority (LA) governors is as follows:
 - A panel consisting of one majority party councillor and one minority party councillor meets with the Governor Services and Advice Officer from Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS). The panel considers Local Authority Governor vacancies and possible nominations and makes recommendations on nominations to the Executive Director, Children's Services.
 - The Executive Director considers the recommendations and decides on the nominations. Nominations made by the Executive Director are reported via a Chief Officer Decision in the name of the Executive Director, Children's Services.
 - Each nomination is then reported to the appropriate Clerk to the Governing Body, advising that the Governing Body should consider appointment of the nominee, and requiring the Clerk to report the Governing Body decision, with terms of office of the LA Governor as appropriate, for the Council's records.
 - The school then decides on whether to accept the nomination and make the appointment.
- 1.3 The Chair of the panel is the representative from the majority party (Cllr Pauline Coakley Webb) and the representative from the minority party (Cllr Michael Mire). If the two members disagree on a nomination, the chair has a second or casting vote. Named reserves from both parties are to be confirmed.
- 1.4 When it meets, the panel considers applications (via a completed application form), which is matched to details of the skills and other eligibility criteria outlined by the Governing Body of the school with the vacancy. First preference is given to Ward Members who have put themselves forward. The panel considers whether the Ward

Member has the requisite skills and, if required, requests further information from the individual. If no Ward Members or other Councillors put themselves forward or the Ward Member/other Councillor does not have the requisite skills, other candidates, who have applied independently to Governor Services, are assessed for suitability, based on their application form/Curriculum Vitae, together with any comments from the Chair of Governors regarding desirable skills and experience being sought. The panel considers whether the other candidates have the requisite skills and selects the best candidate based on merit.

1.5 The panel meets termly, and the panel has met three times in the 2021/22 school year.

1.6 Details of the decisions taken by the panel are shown in Appendix A.

1.7 On the three occasions when the panel met, the panel considered and made recommendations for nominations as follows:

- December 2021 – 7 vacancies considered; 6 nominations agreed, 1 deferred
- March 2022 – 11 vacancies considered; 10 nominations agreed, 1 deferred
- July 2022 – 13 vacancies considered; 10 nominations agreed, 3 deferred

1.8 All recommendations made were agreed by the Executive Director and therefore the nominations were put forward to the relevant Governing Bodies. Where recommendations for nomination were deferred, this was because the panel did not believe it had anyone suitable to nominate or was still awaiting nomination forms.

1.9 The percentage of LA governor vacancies after each termly meeting for 2021/22 remained below 3%, compared to 24% before the new process was implemented in December 2018.

1.10 **Ethnicity of Governing Boards**

We don't have any evidence that the LA Governor Nomination process has made our governing boards more diverse as our nomination form doesn't currently ask about ethnicity. However, we will start to do this from now on. We do advertise the role and reach BAME groups via Barnet First and our own webpage, specifically aimed at BAME groups and offering them free taster 'induction' training to give a better understanding of school governance for those prospective governors who approach us from BAME communities. We've had 7 expressions of interest so far and these have either been placed, are awaiting places, or we are awaiting their nomination form. The government funded agencies we use to source prospective governors from (and signpost schools to) have their own incentives to increase diversity among volunteers coming through them. We also promote the role of the Associate Member as a means of helping prospective governors, who are unsure whether to commit, to gain an understanding of governance before taking on the full role. To publicise this, we continue to recommend to schools that they include a statement to reflect this in their election material (those schools subscribing to our service will be using our forms which include this). It is a national issue that many ethnic groups are underrepresented on governing boards. Hence, the DfE are working on increasing awareness of the Governor Role nationally as this is seen to

be the biggest barrier. We have asked schools to follow suit by doing so within their communities and have sent them some recommended text. We hope that this, coupled with our advertising campaign, will help schools diversify their governing boards.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The change to the procedure for nominating local authority governors agreed by the committee in September 2018 was intended:
- to improve the selection of appropriately skilled governors to enhance schools' governance, by introducing more rigorous selection, informed by local knowledge of each school's context and skills required.
 - to contribute to good oversight and management of schools for the benefit of children and young people.
 - to ensure that the process reflects the new legislative requirements.
 - to reduce delay in appointments.

The change appears to continue to meet these objectives.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 The nominations process could be undertaken by a committee. Previous experience has found this practice to be lengthy and to result in delays in making nominations. The revised arrangements have streamlined the process, whilst retaining Member involvement and oversight.

4 POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The nomination process agreed by the committee in September 2018 and again in September 2019 and September 2020 will continue to be implemented. Recommendations made by the Panel and decisions taken by the Executive Director will continue to be reported via a Chief Officer Decision.

5 IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1 The quality of the education offer in Barnet is at the heart of Barnet's continuing success as a place where people want to live, work and study. It plays a crucial part in making Barnet a popular and desirable place with many families attracted to the area by the good reputation of Barnet's schools.
- 5.2 Excellent educational outcomes and ensuring children and young people are equipped to meet the needs of employers are key to delivering the Council's strategic objectives set out in its Corporate Plan, Barnet 2024, based on the core principles of fairness, responsibility and opportunity to make sure Barnet is a place:
- of opportunity, where people can further their quality of life
 - where people are helped to help themselves, recognising that prevention is

better than cure

- where responsibility is shared, fairly
- where services are delivered efficiently to get value for money for the taxpayer.

5.3 The London Borough of Barnet's Education Strategy 2021-2024 sets out that good leadership and governance is a key driver to the achievement of the improvement of schools and educational outcomes.

Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

5.4 The work to drive the delivery of the council's contribution to the Education Strategy is delivered from within existing resources of the Education and Skills service, which is delivered in partnership with Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS).

Legal and Constitutional References

5.5 The School Governance (Constitution)(England) Regulations 2012 came into force on 1 September 2012, amendments came into force on 1 September 2014 and further amendments came into force on 1 September 2015. The Constitution of Governing Bodies of Maintained Schools 2017 contains statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and local authorities.

5.6 Under the Council's Constitution Article 7 (Committees, Forums and Partnerships) the terms of reference of the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee includes responsibility for 'determining the arrangements for making nominations to the governing bodies of Local Authority administered schools.'

Risk Management

5.7 The risk of not responding to the increased focus being placed on Governing Bodies within the Ofsted Inspection Framework is a risk to the council and the local community in terms of failing to maintain the quality of education in Barnet.

5.8 If responsibility for the nominations process were to be transferred back to a committee, there is a risk of delay in decision-making, leading to governing bodies carrying vacancies for a significant period of time which could impact on the effectiveness of the governing bodies and their ability to discharge their duties.

Equalities and Diversity

5.9 The competency framework for governors states that governors should be mindful of their responsibilities under equalities legislation, recognising and encouraging diversity and inclusion. By ensuring that governors have the requisite skills to undertake the role, the process in place for nominating LA governors should ensure an improved form of school governance in terms of compliance with equalities legislation.

Corporate Parenting Principles

- 5.10 Governing bodies are responsible for holding the headteacher to account. This includes assurance that the designated teacher for looked after children is properly supported and challenged to undertake this role. By ensuring that governors have the requisite skills to undertake the role of governor, this should ensure an improved form of school governance in terms of schools' complying with duties towards looked after children.

Consultation and Engagement

- 5.11 Nominations have been made to a number of maintained schools. Schools have not given any negative feedback on the new process for nominating governors.

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee, 12th September 2018:
Item 9 - Report on 'Proposed change to the Local Authority School Governor Appointments Process'.

<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=697&MId=9467&Ver=4>

Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee, 10th September 2019:
Item 9 - Report on 'Proposed change to the Local Authority School Governor nominations – update and review'.

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s55005/Local%20Authority%20School%20Governor%20nominations%20-%20update%20and%20review.pdf>

Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee, 22nd September 2020:
Item 8 - Report on 'Local Authority School Governor nominations – update'.

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s60152/CES%2022.9.20%20-%20LA%20School%20Governor%20Nominations%20Report%20-%20final%20cleared%20version%209.9.20.pdf>

Appendix A

Decisions taken by the LA Governor Nominations Panel at meetings in Autumn, Spring and Summer terms of 2021/22

LA Governor Nomination Panel Meeting Report – 10 December 2021

School	Nomination received via	Panel Decision/Nomination
BEIT SHVIDLER	Au21: School nomination for Eli Kosiner received. Colin Richman (Renominated Dec 2018) resigned October 2021.	Eli Kosiner
DEANSBROOK INFANT	AU21: Hugh Rayner reappointment received. Au17: Cllr Hugh Rayner via Cons 18.11.17.	Hugh Rayner
OAKLEIGH	Au21: Cllr Sachin Rajput Re-appointment nomination form received	Cllr Sachin Rajput
ST JAMES CATHOLIC HIGH	AU21: Nomination from Dr Peter Harries chosen by school from waiting list of prospective governors kept by GS.	Dr Peter Harries
ST PAUL'S CE PRIMARY NW7	AU21: Keme Ndukwe nominated by school. AU21: Charlotte Elizabeth Daus resigned.	Keme Ndukwe
JCOSS (Jewish Community Secondary School)	AU21: Nomination from Kinjal Vadgama chosen by school from waiting list of prospective governors kept by GS. AU21: Judith Usiskin has resigned Sept 2021 due to ill health.	Kinjal Vadgama
OSIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL	AU21: No nomination received. Awaiting school's nomination via GS. SU18: Andreas Tambourides nominated 31.8.18 consequently resigned.	Deferred

LA Governor Nomination Panel Meeting Report – 11 March 2022

School	Nomination Information	Panel Decision/Nomination
BEIS YAAKOV PRIMARY	SP22: Awaiting confirmation from Cllr Shimon Ryde following school's re-nomination.	Deferred.
CROMER ROAD PRIMARY	SP22: Renomination of Tony Vourou requested by School. Approved.	Tony Vourou
FOULDS	SP22: Cllr Longstaff renominated by school. Nomination received.	Cllr David Longstaff
FRIERN BARNET	SP22: Cllr Anne Hutton Re-Nominated by school - Nomination Received.	Cllr Anne Hutton
Gold Star Federation (Orion & Goldbeaters)	SP22: Cllr Gill Sargeant Re-nominated by school.	Cllr Gill Sargeant.
HOLLICKWOOD PRIMARY	SP22: Cllr Barry Rawlings Re-Nomination (nomination received).	Cllr Barry Rawlings
MONKFRITH PRIMARY	SP22: Cllr Kathy Levine re-nomination by school.	Cllr Kathy Levine
NORTHSIDE PRIMARY	SP22: Nam Thaker resigned but being kept on as Associate Member. School nominates Ola Williams to LA Governor Vacancy.	Ola Williams
NORTHWAY	SP22: Matt Dreisin Renomination form received.	Matt Dreisin
ST AGNES CATHOLIC PRIMARY	SP22: Cllr Jack Cohen renomination received.	Jack Cohen
WHITINGS HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL	SP22: Free School: Chair nominates Cllr Paul Edwards. Nomination received.	Cllr Paul Edwards

LA Governor Nomination Panel Meeting Report – 22 July 2022

School	Nomination Information	Panel Decision/Nomination
ALL SAINTS' CE PRIMARY NW2	SU22: Cllr Nigel Young. Form Received. Sp18: Cllr Anne Clarke Nominated 19.3.2018	Cllr Nigel Young
BEIS YAAKOV PRIMARY	SU22: Chair and Cllr Ryde non-responsive to correspondence sent. Suggest deferring and matching with other prospect if nothing received before the next panel meeting in Autumn 22.	Deferred
CHURCH HILL & Brunswick Park (CHBP) Federation	SU22: Cllr Philip Cohen nomination received. Cllr Lisa Rutter stepped down. SP18: Cllr Lisa Rutter appointed 16.4.18	Cllr Philip Cohen
COURTLAND PRIMARY	SU22: Awaiting nomination once chair meets with prospective candidates. Former LA Governor, Golnar Bukael, resigned.	Deferred
DANEGROVE PRIMARY	SU22: Informed by School that Cllr Coakley Webb's term ends August 2022. Cllr CoakleyWebb has indicated willingness to continue. Suggest renomination.	Cllr Coakley Webb
FINCHLEY CATHOLIC HIGH	SU22: Jane Inzani's term of office expires 31 July 2022. Reappointment requested by school via Clerk Chris Jones on 21 June 2022. Jane is Chair of Governors so school have chased renomination several times. Form received. Suggest renomination.	Jane Inzani
HOLLICKWOOD PRIMARY	SU22: Josh Tapper chosen from prospects sent. The Governing Board have rejected the previous nomination for Cllr Barry Rawlings as attendance had dropped to 25% since September	Josh Tapper

	2020. SP22: Cllr Barry Rawlings Re-Nomination.	
HOLLY PARK PRIMARY	SU22: Clare Hegarty, Chair of Governors, Re-nominated by GB. SU18: Clare Hegarty nominated 19.3.2018.	Clare Hegarty
MENORAH HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS	SU22: Cllr Dean Cohen nominated by school. Form received. Previous LA Governor, Cllr Anthony Finn, passed away.	Cllr Dean Cohen
MONKFRITH PRIMARY	SU22: Cllr Paul Lemon nominated via school - form received. Former LA Governor, Kathy Levine, resigned. School specifically requested a ward councillor.	Cllr Paul Lemon
PARDES HOUSE PRIMARY	SU22: Abigail Fowles (matched prospect) withdrew – prefers non-faith school. Former LA Governor, Cllr Anthony Finn, passed away.	Deferred
QUEENSWELL FEDERATION PRIMARY	SU22: Nomination for Wendy Kravetz chosen from prospects by school. Former LA Governor, Priya Nair, resigned.	Wendy Kravetz
ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC GRAMMAR SCHOOL	SU22: Prospective nominee Robin Moss withdrew as no longer has capacity to be a governor.	Deferred
SQUIRES LANE LEARNING FEDERATION (THE) (SLLF)	AU22: Alison Moore Renomination (form received).. AU15: Cllr Alison Moore via Labour.	Cllr Alison Moore



Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee

12th September 2022

<p>Title</p>	<p>Fees and Charges 2023/24</p>
<p>Report of</p>	<p>Chair of the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee</p>
<p>Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p>Urgent</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Key</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Enclosures</p>	<p>Appendix A – Fees & Charges January 2023: Family Resource Centre (FRC) Proposed Charges Early Help 0-19 Children’s Centres Early Help 0-19 Traded Services</p>
<p>Officer Contact Details</p>	<p>Chris Munday, Executive Director, Children’s and Family Services Chris.Munday@barnet.gov.uk</p> <p>Tina McElligott, Director, Early Help & Children’s Social Care Services Tina.McElligott@barnet.gov.uk</p> <p>Brigitte Jordaan, Director of Children Social Care – Family Services Brigitte.Jordaan@barnet.gov.uk</p> <p>Ben Thomas, Assistant Director- Education, Strategy and Partnerships Ben.Thomas@barnet.gov.uk</p> <p>Sharon Palma, Head of Finance, Children’s and Family Services, Sharon.Palma@barnet.gov.uk</p>

Summary

A Business Planning Report was received by Policy and Resources Committee on 19 July 2022 outlining the council's updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2026/27 and the future financial risks and challenges facing the council.

In line with the Administration's priorities, the 19 July report outlined a project to maximise cost recovery for the council, through administration of fees and charges, where revised fees and charges will be effective from January 2023.

All revised fees and charges should be at full cost recovery, where consideration is given for those driven by inflation, or statute.

This report asks the Committee to approve the Fees and Charges for services reporting to this Committee, for onward referral and approval.

The outcomes of all Theme Committee discussions will go forward as recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee in September 2022 and Full Council in November 2022.

Officers Recommendations

That the Committee approve the proposed fees and charges for 2023/24 set out in Appendix A that will be included in the budget proposals submitted to Policy and Resources Committee for consideration and recommendation to Full Council in January 2023.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 This report is required as part of the council's annual business planning process, to discuss and approve priorities for the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee for 2023/24.
- 1.2 The Committee's approval is requested for:
 - 1.2.1 Proposed Fees and Charges which will be included in the budget proposals submitted to Policy and Resources Committee.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 Fees & Charges for 2023-24

- 2.1.1 Fees and charges are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the costs of chargeable services are covered, and the Council is achieving value for money. Appendix A sets out the proposed new and changed fees and charges for 2023-

24 for services within the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee portfolio.

2.1.2 Theme Committees and other committees refer all fees and charges to the Policy and Resources Committee. The Policy and Resources Committee reviews all fees and charges which then form part of the budget that is subject to public consultation. Subject to public consultation outcomes, the Policy and Resources Committee recommends all fees and charges to Full Council for approval as part of the council's overall budget.

2.1.3 All fees and charges should be full cost recovery.

2.1.3.1 Consideration should be given to how the fees and charges increases will be prioritised:

2.1.3.2 some are driven by inflation so should be increased by the August inflation rate (Consumer Price Index (CPI) at around 10.1%,

2.1.3.3 others are driven by demand, statutory prescription, and other factors.

2.1.3.4 Consideration must be given to consultation and any Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) requirements with consultation to take place over Summer 2022.

2.1.4 The budget recommended by Policy and Resources Committee to Full Council will incorporate the latest projection of income from fees and charges. Full Council will be asked to approve all fees and charges at November Council for application on 1 January 2023.

2.1.5 All fees and charges that fall under the remit of this committee are listed in Appendix A. These include:

Family Resource Centre

2.1.6 These are fees that would be charged to external clients who need a supervised contact service, i.e., other local authorities with CIC placed in our area, and families going through private law proceedings. A project which concluded in January 2020 noted that the average staff cost of providing a contact was £85. The proposal is to charge £100, which covers this staff cost plus indirect costs associated with the service. The other charges also reflect staff time, which is the main cost of providing the service. These charges will mean income from external clients that is greater than full cost recovery.

Early Help 0-19 Children's Centres

2.1.7 Whilst CPI is acknowledged at 10.1%, the proposed change to fees is 6% uplift. This is to ensure that the provision remains affordable and additional costs are not passed onto vulnerable families. There is a holiday activity fund in place to support service delivery.

Early Help 0-19 Traded Services

2.1.8 The proposed change to fees is 6% uplift. This is to ensure that the provision remains affordable.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Local Government continues to face significant reductions in funding and increased demand for services, as set out in the above context. These challenges require longer term, robust financial and strategic planning and the recommendations in this report support this.
- 3.2 By law, the council is required to set a balanced budget. These proposals are the best way of doing that by meeting financial requirement and delivering outcomes and ambitions for Barnet.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 4.1 The alternative options are not to propose changes to fees and charges, This, however, is not considered to be good practice and may expose the council to the risk of not achieving a balanced budget, and under recovery on costs of providing services. There is a statutory requirement to set a balanced budget, so increases to fees and charges are in the council's best interests.

5. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 If the Committee approves the recommendations made by this report, the Fees and Charges will be referred to Policy and Resources Committee on 29th September 2022. They will then be presented at Policy and Resources Committee with the whole council budget papers in December 2022 and considered for final approval at Full Council and implemented in January 2023.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

6.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 6.1.1 This report supports the administration's priorities. This includes the **outcomes** we want to achieve for the borough, the **priorities** we will focus limited resources on, and our **approach** for how we will deliver this.

6.1.2 All measures outlined in this report align with council strategy and priorities.

- 6.1.3 The approach for delivering on this is underpinned by four strands; ensuring residents get a fair deal, maximising on opportunities, sharing responsibilities with the community and partners, and working effectively and efficiently.

6.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 6.2.1 In line with the Administration's priorities, the 19 July Policy and Resources Committee report outlined the council's focus on maximising income from Fees and Charges.

- 6.2.2 Council officers have revised fees and charges through the application of a full cost recovery model, the indexation of fees and charges to the level of inflation at around 10.1%, statutory prescription, or other means by which officers have benchmarked with other authorities to ensure the council is maximising cost recovery.
- 6.2.3 The outcomes of all Theme Committee discussions will go forward as recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee in September 2022 and Full council in November 2022.
- 6.2.4 Revised fees and charges will be effective from January 2023 at the earliest
- 6.2.5 The council is required by law to set a balanced budget for each financial year. It is also good financial management to set a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for a further 3-5 year period. The proposals in this report will support the council in its legal obligations in setting a balanced budget through increasing income receipts to finance revenue expenditure.
- 6.2.6 Where income levels generated do not meet expected and planned resources, officers will seek to constrain these within the overall financial envelope within the remit of this Committee through appropriate mitigation plans. The Financial Regulations, part of the council's Constitution, are clear *Chief Officers have no authority to overspend revenue budgets, or under-recover income budgets under their control.*

6.3 Social Value

- 6.3.1 None are applicable to this report; however, the council must consider the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 to try to maximise the social and local economic value it derives from its procurement spend. The Barnet living wage is an example of where the council has considered its social value powers.

6.4 Legal and Constitutional References

- 6.4.1 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that: “without prejudice to section 111, every local authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs”. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, relates to the subsidiary powers of local authorities.
- 6.4.2 Local authorities owe a fiduciary duty to council taxpayers, which means it must consider the prudent use of resources, including control of expenditure, financial prudence in the short and long term, the need to strike a fair balance between the interests of council taxpayers and ratepayers and the community's interest in adequate and efficient services and the need to act in good faith in relation to compliance with statutory duties and exercising statutory powers.

- 6.4.3 Local authorities have a variety of powers to charge for specific statutory services set out in statute. The Local Government Act 2003 also provides a power to trade and a power to charge for discretionary services, the latter on a cost recovery basis. Discretionary services are those that a local authority is permitted to provide under statute but is not obliged to do so. The power to charge for discretionary services is not available to local authorities if there is a statutory duty to provide the service or if there is a specific power to charge for it or if there is a prohibition on charging for the service.
- 6.4.4 Additionally, the Localism Act 2011 provides local authorities with a general power of competence that confers on them the power to charge for services but again subject to conditions/limitations, like those noted above.
- 6.4.5 Where authorities have a duty to provide a statutory service free of charge to a certain standard, no charge can be made for delivery to that standard, however delivery beyond that point may constitute a discretionary service for which a charge could be made.
- 6.4.6 There is a variety of legislation permitting charging for different services, some of which sets prescribed fees and charges (or the range of charges for a given service), and others which allow a discretion to determine the charge based on recovering the costs of providing the service.
- 6.4.7 A link to the council's Financial Regulations can be found at (see section 2.3.6): [4 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](http://4.moderngov.co.uk), in which the following is stated:
- 6.4.8 Changes to fees and charges should be included in the budget proposals submitted by theme Committees or the relevant committee as part of the budget setting process. Theme Committees and other committees refer all fees and charges to the Policy and Resources Committee. The Policy and Resources Committee reviews all fees and charges which then form part of the budget that is subject to public consultation. Subject to public consultation outcomes, the Policy and Resources Committee recommends all fees and charges to Full Council for approval as part of the council's overall budget.
- 6.4.9 All proposals emerging from the business planning process will need to be considered in terms of the council's legal powers and obligations (including, specifically, the public-sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010)
- 6.4.10 Under Article 7 of the Council's Constitution, (Committees, Forums and Partnerships) the terms of reference of the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee includes
- (2) *To submit to the Policy and Resources Committee proposals relating to the Committee's budget (including fees and charges) for the following year in accordance with the budget timetable.*
- (3) *To make recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee on issues relating to the budget for the Committee, including virements or underspends and overspends on the budget. No decisions which result in amendments to the*

agreed budget may be made by the Committee unless and until the amendment has been agreed by Policy and Resources Committee.'

6.5 Risk Management

- 6.5.1 The Council has taken steps to improve its risk management processes by integrating the management of financial and other risks facing the organisation. The allocation of an amount to contingency is a step to mitigate the pressures that had yet to be quantified during the budget setting process.
- 6.5.2 The allocation of budgets from contingency seeks to mitigate financial risks which have materialised.

6.6 Equalities and Diversity

- 6.6.1 Equality and diversity issues are a mandatory consideration in the decision making of the council.
- 6.6.2 Decision makers should have due regard to the public sector equality duty in making their decisions. The Equality Act 2010 and the Public-Sector Equality Duty require elected Members to satisfy themselves that equality considerations are integrated into day-to-day business and that all proposals emerging from the business planning process have taken into consideration the impact, if any, on any protected group and what mitigating factors can be put in place. The equalities duties are continuing duties; they are not duties to secure a particular outcome. The public sector equality duty can be found at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 as follows:
- 6.6.3 A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 6.6.4 Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
 - Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

- 6.6.5 The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.
- 6.6.6 Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
- Tackle prejudice, and
 - Promote understanding.
- 6.6.7 Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act. The relevant protected characteristics are:
- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race,
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation
 - Marriage and Civil partnership
- 6.6.8 This is set out in the council's Equalities Policy together with our strategic Equalities Objective - as set out in the Corporate Plan - that citizens will be treated equally with understanding and respect; have equal opportunities and receive quality services provided to best value principles.
- 6.6.9 Progress against the performance measures we use is published on our website at:
www.barnet.gov.uk/info/200041/equality_and_diversity/224/equality_and_diversity
- 6.6.10 Where there are changes to service delivery or changes to staff, the council will conduct an equalities impact assessment (EIA) where appropriate, to ensure that where persons are impacted, proper measures are considered to mitigate the effect as far as possible. The fees and charges proposed are not anticipated to have an impact on service delivery or customer satisfaction. Where necessary, proposals will not be implemented or agreed until members have fully considered the equality impacts and responses to any consultation.
- 6.6.11 All human resources implications will be managed in accordance with the Council's Managing Organisational Change policy, which supports the Council's Human Resources Strategy and meets statutory equalities duties and current employment legislation.
- 6.6.12 The proposed fees and charges have been reviewed against the protected characteristics and it is considered that there will not be any specific adverse impact on any of the groups.

6.6.13 It is considered that HMO licensing and housing enforcement action requiring the improvement of accommodation has an overall positive impact for landlords, tenants, residents, and businesses by virtue of the potential improvement to the quality and management of accommodation in the borough.

6.6.14 In addition, there are potential benefits arising from the increased choice of high quality, well-managed affordable housing.

6.7 Corporate Parenting

6.7.1 In line with the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the council has a duty to consider Corporate Parenting Principles in all relevant decision-making. Promoting independence is priority of the council. Barnet Homes work closely with relevant council departments to ensure that care leavers make a successful transition to independent living.

6.7.2 The Council, in setting its budget, has considered the Corporate Parenting Principles both in terms of fees and charges. The Council proposals have sought to protect front-line social work and services to children in care and care leavers and in some cases, has invested in them.

6.8 Consultation and Engagement

6.8.1 As a matter of public law, the duty to consult with regards to proposals to vary, reduce or withdraw services will arise in four circumstances:

- where there is a statutory requirement in the relevant legislative framework
 - where the practice has been to consult, or, where a policy document states the council will consult, then the council must comply with its own practice or policy
 - exceptionally, where the matter is so important that there is a legitimate expectation of consultation
- Where consultation is required to complete an equalities impact assessment.

6.8.2 Regardless of whether the council has a duty to consult, if it chooses to consult, such consultation must be carried out fairly. In general, a consultation can only be considered as proper consultation if:

- comments are genuinely invited at the formative stage
- the consultation documents include sufficient reasons for the proposal to allow those being consulted to be properly informed and to give an informed response
- there is adequate time given to the consultees to consider the proposals
- there is a mechanism for feeding back the comments and those comments are considered by the decision-maker / decision-making body when making a final decision
- the degree of specificity with which, in fairness, the public authority should conduct its consultation exercise may be influenced by the identity of those whom it is consulting

- where relevant and appropriate, the consultation is clear on the reasons why and extent to which alternatives and discarded options have been discarded. The more intrusive the decision, the more likely it is to attract a higher level of procedural fairness.

6.8.3 The council will perform a consultation for Fees and Charges during October to November 2022.

6.8.4 In terms of service specific consultations, the council has a duty to consult with residents and service users in several different situations including proposals to significantly vary, reduce or withdraw services. Consultation is also needed in other circumstances, for example to identify the impact of proposals or to assist with complying with the council's equality duties. Service specific consultations will take place where necessary in line with timescales for any changes to be implemented.

6.8.5 If when council sets the budget envelope some service specific consultations have not been completed, then Council will allow a contingency so that decision makers may make alternative decisions should there be undesirable equalities impacts.

6.8.6 Fees and Charges will be referred to Policy and Resources Committee. Policy and Resources Committee reviews all fees and charges which then form part of the budget that is subject to public consultation between October and November 2022. Subject to public consultation outcomes, the Policy and Resources Committee recommends all fees and charges to Full Council for approval from January 2022.

6.9 **Insight**

6.9.1 None in the context of this report

6.10 **Environmental Impact**

6.10.1 None in the context of this report

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 Policy and Resources Committee 19th July - [Revised budget 2022/23 and Business Planning 2023-2027](#)

Appendix A – Fees & Charges January 2023

Proposed Fees & Charges - Family Resource Centre

Reference/ Area	Fee/Charge Title	Description	Unit of Measure	Charges 2021/22	Charges 2022/23 from 01/01/23	Change from prior year (actual)	Change from prior year (%)	Comments/ use volume	Additional detail for new charges / above or below inflation	Statutory Basis for charging (i.e. the legislation that permits you to charge for this service / product)	Basis of charging (Statutory prescribed, Statutory discretionary, statutory costs recovery or Discretionary).
Family Resource Centre	Referral Fee	Referral Fee	Per Referral	£0.00	£25.00	£25.00	New	Estimate 1 per month	There is considerable work involved in processing a referral, so this covers the admin time	Local Government Act 2003, Section 93	Discretionary
Family Resource Centre	Contact Agreement Meeting and Contact review meeting	Contact Agreement Meeting and Contact review meeting	Per Meeting	£0.00	£35.00	£35.00	New	Estimate 1 per month	This reflects staff time taken to organise, chair and write up the outcome the meeting	Local Government Act 2003, Section 93	Discretionary
Family Resource Centre	Weekday supervised Contact (up to two hours contact)	Weekday supervised Contact (up to two hours contact)	Per 3 Hour Session	£86.70	£100.00	£13.30	15.34%	Estimate 8 per month	This rate has not been increased since c.2009.	Local Government Act 2003, Section 93	Discretionary
Family Resource Centre	Weekend supervised Contact (up to 2 hours contact)	Weekend supervised Contact (up to 2 hours contact)	Per 3 Hour Session	£130.50	£160.00	£29.50	22.61%		This rate has not been increased since c.2009.	Local Government Act 2003, Section 93	Discretionary
Family Resource Centre	Weekday supported (room only)	Weekday supported (room only)	Per Hour	£23.20	£30.00	£6.80	29.31%	Estimate 1 per month	This rate has not been increased since c.2009.	Local Government Act 2003, Section 93	Discretionary
Family Resource Centre	Weekend supported (room only)	Weekend supported (room only)	Per Hour	£34.70	£45.00	£10.30	29.68%		This rate has not been increased since c.2009.	Local Government Act 2003, Section 93	Discretionary
Family Resource Centre	Court Report writing fee	Court Report writing fee	Per Report	£0.00	£35.00	£35.00	New		This reflects staff time	Local Government Act 2003, Section 93	Discretionary
Family Resource Centre	Handover service	Handover service	Per Handover	£0.00	£20.00	£20.00	New		This is a new proposed service, and reflects staff time	Local Government Act 2003, Section 93	Discretionary
Family Resource Centre	Second Supervisor	Second Supervisor	Per Hour	£0.00	£35.00	£35.00	New		This is a new proposed fee	Local Government Act 2003, Section 93	Discretionary
Family Resource Centre	Attendance at Court	Attendance at Court	Per Attendance	£0.00	£150.00	£150.00	New		This is a new proposed fee	Local Government Act 2003, Section 93	Discretionary

Proposed Fees & Charges - Children Centres

Reference/ Area	Fee/Charge Title	Description	Unit of Measure	Charges 2020/21	Charges 2021/22	Charges 2022/23	Proposed Charges 2023/24	Change from prior year, £	Change from prior year, %	Comments	Additional detail for new charges / above inflation	Statutory Basis for Charging (i.e. the legislation that permits you to charge for this service / product)	Basis of Charging (Statutory prescribed, Statutory discretionary, statutory costs recovery or Discretionary)
Children Centres	Parkfield child care	Age 2	Per Child Per Hour	£6.12	£6.12	£6.12	£6.49	£0.37	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary
Children Centres	Parkfield child care	Age 3-4	Per Child Per Hour	£5.87	£5.87	£5.87	£6.22	£0.35	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary
Children Centres	Meals	Children Centre - Parkfield	Per Child Per Hour	£2.31	£2.31	£2.31	£2.45	£0.14	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary
Children Centres	Wingfield child care	Age 2	Per Child Per Hour	£5.97	£5.97	£5.97	£6.33	£0.36	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary
Children Centres	Wingfield child care	Age 3-4	Per Child Per Hour	£5.71	£5.71	£5.71	£6.05	£0.34	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary

Proposed Fees & Charges - Children Centres

Reference/ Area	Fee/Charge Title	Description	Unit of Measure	Charges 2020/21	Charges 2021/22	Charges 2022/23	Proposed Charges 2023/24	Change from prior year, £	Change from prior year, %	Comments	Additional detail for new charges / above inflation	Statutory Basis for Charging (i.e. the legislation that permits you to charge for this service / product)	Basis of Charging (Statutory prescribed, Statutory discretionary, statutory costs recovery or Discretionary)
Children Centres	Meals	Children Centre - Wingfield	Per Child Per Hour	£2.14	£2.14	£2.14	£2.27	£0.13	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary
Children Centres	Newstead Child care	Age 2	Per Child Per Hour	£6.51	£6.51	£6.51	£6.90	£0.39	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary
Children Centres	Newstead Child care	Age 3-4	Per Child Per Hour	£6.25	£6.25	£6.25	£6.63	£0.38	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary
Children Centres	Meals	Children Centre - Newstead	Per Child Per Hour	£2.19	£2.19	£2.19	£2.32	£0.13	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary
Play Team charges	Holiday programmes	Holiday Schemes	Per day	£18.36	£18.36	£18.36	£19.46	£1.10	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary

Proposed Fees & Charges - Children Centres

Reference/ Area	Fee/Charge Title	Description	Unit of Measure	Charges 2020/21	Charges 2021/22	Charges 2022/23	Proposed Charges 2023/24	Change from prior year, £	Change from prior year, %	Comments	Additional detail for new charges / above inflation	Statutory Basis for Charging (i.e. the legislation that permits you to charge for this service / product)	Basis of Charging (Statutory prescribed, Statutory discretionary, statutory costs recovery or Discretionary)
Play Team charges	Holiday programmes	Holiday Schemes - Siblings charge	Per day	£14.79	£14.79	£14.79	£15.68	£0.89	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary
Play Team charges	Holiday programmes	Holiday schemes including aftercare	Per day	£22.95	£22.95	£22.95	£24.33	£1.38	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary
Play Team charges	Holiday programmes	Holiday Schemes including aftercare - Siblings charge	Per day	£19.38	£19.38	£19.38	£20.54	£1.16	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary
Play Team	After School Club	Term Time Only	Per Session	£7.00	£7.00	£7.00	£7.42	£0.42	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary
Play Team	School Holiday Play Scheme	Holiday Playscheme	Per Day	£20.00	£20.00	£20.00	£21.20	£1.20	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary

Proposed Fees & Charges - Children Centres

Reference/ Area	Fee/Charge Title	Description	Unit of Measure	Charges 2020/21	Charges 2021/22	Charges 2022/23	Proposed Charges 2023/24	Change from prior year, £	Change from prior year, %	Comments	Additional detail for new charges / above inflation	Statutory Basis for Charging (i.e. the legislation that permits you to charge for this service / product)	Basis of Charging (Statutory prescribed, Statutory discretionary, statutory costs recovery or Discretionary)
Play Team	School Holiday Play Scheme	Sibling	Per Day	£16.50	£16.50	£16.50	£17.49	£0.99	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary
Play Team	Nursery fee paying	Age 2-3	Per Session	£18.00	£18.00	£18.00	£19.08	£1.08	6.00%	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there.	Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Childcare Act 2006 - Section 10	Statutory discretionary

Proposed Fees & Charges - Traded Services

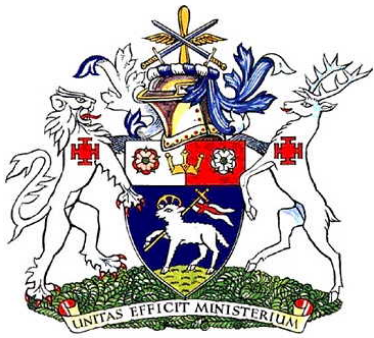
Reference/ Area	Fee/Charge Title	Description	Unit of Measure	Charges 2020/21	Charges 2021/22	Charges 2022/23	Proposed Charges 2023/24	Change from prior year, £	Change from prior year, %	Comments	Additional detail for new charges / above inflation	Statutory Basis for Charging (i.e. the legislation that permits you to charge for this service / product)	Basis of Charging (Statutory prescribed, Statutory discretionary, statutory costs recovery or Discretionary)
0 - 19 Early Help Service Traded Service & Programmes	Equipment	Partnership/charitable	Per Item	£4.00	£4.00	£4.00	£4.24	£0.24	6.00%	Equipment for hire with lighting Box for Theatre Productions	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there. Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Local Government Act 2003 - Section 93	Discretionary
0 - 19 Early Help Service Traded Service & Programmes	Hire of Theatre, Blue Room, Foyer and PA System / lighting Box for Theatre Productions	Partnership/charitable		£200.00	£200.00	£200.00	£212.00	£12.00	6.00%	Hourly Rate for Hire of FYC Theatre, Foyer and PA System / CV Hall, stage, kitchen area, reception and PA System including lighting Box for Theatre Productions	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there. Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Local Government Act 2003 - Section 93	Discretionary
0 - 19 Early Help Service Traded Service & Programmes	Theatre Production Booking. Full Day Hire	Partnership Rate		£550.00	£550.00	£550.00	£583.00	£33.00	6.00%	Full Day booking for Theatre Hire for Productions. All Area Access, Theatre with seating for 80 - 100 people. Dance Studio, Blue Room (behind theatre). Foyer for entrance including café area. Or CV Hire seating 100 - 120 with kitchen, summer house and reception area Includes PA System and Lighting Box. Full Day Hire	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there. Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Local Government Act 2003 - Section 93	Discretionary

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0 - 19 Early Help Service Traded Service & Programmes	Theatre Production Booking. Per Hour. Minimum of 3 Hour Hire	Partnership Rate		£100.00	£100.00	£100.00	£106.00	£6.00	6.00%	Full Day booking for Theatre Hire for Productions. All Area Access, Theatre with seating for 80 - 100 people. Dance Studio, Blue Room (behind theatre). Foyer for entrance including café area. Or CV Hire seating 100 - 120 with kitchen, summer house and reception area Includes PA System and Lighting Box. Full Day Hire Includes PA System and Lighting Box per hour. Minimum of 3 Hour Booking	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there. Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Local Government Act 2003 - Section 93	Discretionary
0 - 19 Early Help Service Traded Service & Programmes	Membership on Provider Directory on 0 - 19 Website	Standard		£400.00	£400.00	£400.00	£424.00	£24.00	6.00%	ANNUAL CHARGE for Provider Directory where the Provider will have their company link and course details. Companies will be vetted to meet suitability of 0 - 19 website	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there. Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Local Government Act 2003 - Section 93	Discretionary
0 - 19 Early Help Service Traded Service & Programmes	Homepage TOP Banner Advertising space peak times	Standard		£200.00	£200.00	£200.00	£212.00	£12.00	6.00%	MONTHLY advertising on homepage TOP banner Space on 0 -19 Website	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there. Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Local Government Act 2003 - Section 93	Discretionary

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0 - 19 Early Help Service Traded Service & Programm es	Homepage BOTTOM Banner - Advertising space on website off peak	Standar d		£150.00	£150.00	£150.00	£159.00	£9.00	6.00%	MONTHLY advertising on homepage BOTTOM banner Space on 0 -19 Website	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there. Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Local Government Act 2003 - Section 93	Discretionary
0 - 19 Early Help Service Traded Service & Programm es	Miscallaneou s Pages - Banner Advertising space on website	Standar d		£100.00	£100.00	£100.00	£106.00	£6.00	6.00%	MONTHLY advertising on miscallaneous pages on 0 -19 Website	6% uplift on fees, running costs are higher, but since CPI uplift could make it unaffordable for providers, a lower than CPI increase to ensure demand still there. Cost shouldn't be passed on to vulnerable families, there is the Holiday Activities Fund now to support delivery.	Local Government Act 2003 - Section 93	Discretionary



Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee

AGENDA ITEM 13

12 September 2022

Title	Family Services Quarterly Update
Report of	Chair of the Committee, Councillor Coakley-Webb
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	<p>Appendix 1 – Children’s Services Analysis Tool (ChAT)</p> <p>Appendix 2 – LIA Benchmarking Report Q4 (Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended)</p> <p>Appendix 3 – National review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Corporate Parenting Annual Report (draft)</p>
Officer Contact Details	Chris Munday, Executive Director for Children’s Services

Summary

This report gives an update on Family Services progress and asks Members to scrutinise performance data, that can be found in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

The National review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson in Appendix 3 has led to some important learning This report outlines the actions we are taking in respect of the findings.

The draft Corporate Parenting Annual Report is included in Appendix 4 along with updates from the recent Children in Care celebration event.

Our successful BACE (Barnet Active, Creative, Engaging) summer activity programme has just finished for another year, and a summary of this work is included in this report.

Workforce continues to be a priority for the service, and our current position is outlined including information about the London Pledge which we have now signed up for to ensure effective management of agency staff.

Officers Recommendations

Officers Recommendations
1. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the ChAT performance report summarised in this report and Appendix 1 and the LIA Benchmarking Report for Quarter 4 in Appendix 2.
2. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the National review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson (appendix 3)
3. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the Draft Corporate Parenting Annual Report (appendix 4)
4. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the summer celebration for Barnet children in care and the BACE (Barnet Active, Creative, Engaged) summer activities
5. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on our progress against our Recruitment & Workforce Development Strategy
6. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the development of our new Early Help Strategy

1. Why this report is needed

- 1.1 Family Services performance update provides members with an overview of the key data items used by the service to measure performance and identify opportunities for strategic development as well as lines of enquiry to ensure standards and statutory obligations are met. A copy of the full performance report is available in appendix 1. The London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA) is the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) sector-led improvement partnership and is hosted by London Councils. We submit quarterly datasets to the LIIA to allow comparative data analysis on performance across London. The data is provided on the condition that it is used for internal reporting only and other LAs data should not be shared with external partners or the public. For this reason, Appendix 2 is exempt from publication and its contents should not be shared on a wider basis.
- 1.2 The National review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson (appendix 3) sets out recommendations and findings for national government and local safeguarding partners to protect children at risk of serious harm. It examines the circumstances leading up to the deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson and considers whether their murders reflect wider national issues in child protection. Family Services is responding to the recommendations of the review, and this activity is outlined in this report.
- 1.3 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 says that when a child or young person comes into the care of the local authority or is under 25 and was looked-after by the authority for at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday, the authority becomes their corporate parent. Every councillor and officer within a council has a responsibility to act for those children and young people as a parent would for their own child. The Corporate Parenting Annual Report (appendix 4) details the activity and impact of our corporate parenting work over the last 12 months and sets out priorities for the year ahead.

- 1.4 Our child participation and family involvement strategy, My Say Matters, is for all children, young people and their families especially those from racially minoritised communities, migrant families, LGBT+, children with disabilities and any other marginalised groups whose voices may not be heard as often. We have made a commitment in this strategy to sure that everyone is supported to share their voice and express themselves fully. This report outlines some of the participation centred around the Children in Care celebration event.

2. Reasons for recommendations

2.1 Family Services Performance Update

- 2.2 Capacity in the system remains stable, though contacts into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the first point of referral for the public and professionals about children and young people, are up to 11056 (appendix 1), which is an increase from the previous quarterly update which showed contacts at 10756 and is an increase of 19% from the August 2019 pre pandemic figure of 9283. The increase in contacts is mirrored across London, with LIIA data (appendix 2) showing a London average increase in contacts of 12% over the last 12 months with the Barnet data at 13% , the median across London. This has been mirrored by an increase the number of Early Help Assessments 1984 to 2045, and referrals rising from 1417 to 1503. Our rate of Early Help Assessments at 314 is amongst the highest in London, showing a positive story that we are delivering intervention with families at this earlier stage. This is evidenced by our referral rates to children's social care which are lower when compared to the London average, with the data for Q4 12% putting us towards the lowest in London, although within the tolerance that we would expect to see.

- 2.3 The timeliness of completed assessments remains an area of focus for performance, with the CHAT (appendix 1) showing in the ChAT, currently at 72% within timescales. Assessment timeliness has, in part, been affected by rapid movement of agency staff which has resulted in assessments having to be restarted when agency social workers leave at short notice. The instability in the workforce created by agency staff who start and end assignments over short periods is being addressed via the pan-London Pledge which is discussed later in the report. Further, the successful recent permanent recruitment of a new Assistant Head of Service will ensure there is increased scrutiny of open assessments across the service to ensure that assessments are closed when families move out of the borough and/or their circumstances change. A focused piece of work in this area may result in some temporary data fluctuations as assessments that need to end are closed on the system but will have the longer term benefit of improving the timeliness percentage.

- 2.4 The number of Section 47 enquiries remains stable, with the July ChAT data showing 463 in the previous 6 months. The LIIA data (appendix 2) shows that across London rates of Section 47 investigations are also stable. The ChAT (appendix 1) shows that 75% of Section 47 enquiries did not result in an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC), but of the 25% that progressed to ICPC, 96% resulted in a Child Protection Plan indicating that thresholds are being applied appropriately. We have seen a reduction in new child protection plans from 123 to 112 following a previous increase, however the overall number of children on plans remains stable.

- 2.5 The number of children looked after continues remain stable with some slight reductions, in this period from 334 to 330, and the number of new children looked after decreased from 80 to 67. 9 % of children coming into care were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, a significant decrease from 29% in the previous period. The LIIA data (appendix 2) shows that the rate of children coming into care is lower in Barnet than across most other London boroughs which aligns with the lower amounts of child protection activity in the system. Across London, the rates of children in care has remained stable. Further work is being undertaken at a NCL level to ensure sufficient health provision is in place. The investment in additional resources to ensure care leavers are in education, employment or training has had an impact on the outcomes for this cohort of young people, up from 73% to 86% for 17-18 year olds and 59% to 81% for 19-21 year olds.
- 2.6 **National Panel Report into the deaths of Arthur Labdinjo- Hughes and Star Hobson**
- 2.7 The National review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson (appendix 3) was initiated in the context of widespread public distress about the circumstances of their tragic deaths and was conducted to evaluate the role of the agencies involved in these children's lives. The report identifies a set of issues which hindered professionals' understanding of what was happening to Star and Arthur:
- 2.8 Weaknesses in information sharing and seeking within and between agencies.
- 2.9 A lack of robust critical thinking and challenge within and between agencies, compounded by a failure to trigger statutory multi-agency child protection processes at a number of key moments.
- 2.10 A need for sharper specialist child protection skills and expertise, especially in relation to complex risk assessment and decision making; engaging reluctant parents; understanding the daily life of children; and domestic abuse.
- 2.11 Underpinning these issues, is the need for leaders to have a powerful enabling impact on child protection practice, creating and protecting the optimum organisational conditions for undertaking this complex work
- 2.12 Eight national recommendations are made in the report. These are being considered by National Government:
- Recommendation 1: A new expert-led, multi-agency model for child protection investigation, planning, intervention, and review.
 - Recommendation 2: Establishing National Multi-Agency Practice Standards for Child Protection.
 - Recommendation 3: Strengthening the local Safeguarding Partners to ensure proper co-ordination and involvement of all agencies.
 - Recommendation 4: Changes to multi-agency inspection to better understand local performance and drive improvement.
 - Recommendation 5: A new role for the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel in driving practice improvement in Safeguarding Partners.

- Recommendation 6: A sharper performance focus and better co-ordination of child protection policy in central Government.
 - Recommendation 7: Using the potential of data to help professionals protect children.
 - Recommendation 8: Specific practice improvements in relation to domestic abuse.
- 2.13 The National Panel required Local Children’s Safeguarding Partnerships to “assure themselves that:
- Robust multi-agency strategy discussions are always being held whenever it is suspected a child may be at risk of suffering significant harm.
 - Sufficient resources are in place from across all agencies to allow for the necessary multi-agency engagement in child protection processes e.g., strategy discussions, section 47 enquiries, Initial Child Protection Conferences.
 - There are robust information sharing arrangements and protocols in place across the Partnership.
 - Referrals are not deemed malicious without a full and thorough multi-agency assessment, including talking with the referrer, and agreement with the appropriate manager. Indeed, the Panel believes that the use of such language has many attendant risks and would therefore discourage its usage as a professional conclusion.
- 2.14 In response the safeguarding partnership have discussed the recommendations and detailed findings in the report and have agreed the following actions to ensure our own referral systems and Section 47 processes are robust:
- A review of our Section 47 processes including the quality of strategy discussions, multi-agency contributions and decision making; this includes a review of the use of child protection medicals. 10% of all S47 enquiries over the past 12 months will be sampled (103 S47 enquiries)
 - A review of referrals made by friends/family to the MASH to ensure these referrals have been responded to appropriately
 - To support practitioners learning across agencies, in September, the Barnet Safeguarding Children’s Partnership will be delivering a series of workshops on the learning from the national review and Children’s Social Care and the Police have a workshop planned focused on lessons from the review and what a robust S47 investigation looks like.
- 2.15 **Corporate Parenting Annual Report**
- 2.16 In the full council meeting on 26th July 2022 the new administration carried the motion that:
- “Council notes that: as ‘corporate parents’ we are responsible for the care and support of our children in care and care leavers. We will make sure that they are safeguarded and that they are provided with the opportunities they need; the same as any parent.
- Council also notes that: responsibility for corporate parenting sits with the whole council, Councillors, community services, education support, schools and health services; we all

have a vital role to play in supporting our children in care and care leavers to do well. As with all parents we know we will not always get things right, but we pledge to do our best.

To our children in care and our care leavers, Council therefore resolves that: We, your Corporate Parents, will:

1. Support you to fulfil your dreams,
2. Be there for you, when you need us,
3. Support your mental and physical health,
4. Listen, communicate and make decisions together with you,
5. Support you to become independent and prepare for adulthood,
6. Celebrate you, your achievements, identity and culture.”

2.17 During 2021/22 there were 335 children in our care and we have provided support and services to 340 care experienced young adults. Placement sufficiency has been our greatest challenge but for each child there has been a committed determined professional network that has work alongside each child to ensure they are safe, nurtured, and supported to achieve. We have maintained good placement stability, only moving children when necessary; we have ensured that every unaccompanied asylum seeking child coming into our care receives the necessary support together with our colleagues from Education and Health and that as they move into adulthood, they are well supported with their asylum claims and developing their independence.

2.18 This year has seen to culmination of many months of planning with the opening of the Therapeutic Children’s Home, the development of a semi-independent provision and a revised Fostering recruitment strategy as part of the Placement Transformation programme. Increasing our in-house provisions for our children enables us to create better options for them, ensure better value for money and ensure that they maintain their local connections where it is safe to do so.

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- 2.21 To demonstrate the work of the network around the children and young adults the following reports are included in the Corporate Parenting report;
- The Annual Independent Reviewing Service report
 - The Annual Fostering Report
 - The Annual Virtual school report.
- 2.22 **Barnet Active, Creative, Engaging (BACE) Summer 2022**
- 2.23 BACE (Barnet Active, Creative, Engaging) Holidays is Department for Education funded and organised and delivered by Barnet Council and Young Barnet Foundation. BACE holidays supports children and young people aged 5 – 16 living in Barnet who receive free school meals. As school holidays can be a pressure point for some families, particularly with increases in the cost of living, BACE Holidays provide engaging and healthy activities with an emphasis on physical, emotional, and nutritional wellbeing during the school holidays.
- 2.24 This summer, a range of creative, enriching and physical activities have been available including Circus Skills, Arts and Crafts, Trips, Team Challenges, Music Production, Talent Shows, Football, Basketball, Multi-sports, Tennis, Dance and access to gyms. Young people attending BACE are provided with a hot healthy meal on each day that they attend activities as well as receiving a healthy snack bag or fresh fruit. There is opportunity for children and young people to learn about nutrition, ingredients and how to cook healthy meals. In this cohort, 18 food providers were used handing out 1202 snack bags or fresh fruit to every child attending activities.
- 2.25 4675 children attended 73 BACE provisions, across 58 venues and delivered by 54 providers between 25 July and 18 August. There were 6694 spaces available; as the full data is not available at time of reporting this gap may narrow. In addition, Young Barnet Foundation had c.400 children attending activities each day across 19 provisions in 17 venues between 25 July and 26 August 2022.
- 2.26 It has been more of a challenge to engage young people aged 12-16 years in BACE activities, and young people in this age range were offered a 'pick and mix' of activities, with most interest in activities that were related to business skills or skill related activities compared to the sessions offered at the leisure centre. Future BACE programmes will consider this preference to promote greater engagement with this age group.
- 2.27 The cost of delivering BACE this summer has totalled £735,781.90; this includes staffing, venues, food and activity materials.
- 2.28 This summer, multiple food providers were used, and this was successful with feedback from families suggesting the providers offering greater variety and meat options were more popular than vegetarian options which was the only option available in previous BACE programmes. The fruit orders were excessive for most sites, and this will be adjusted for future BACE programmes, although children were able to take extra fruit home with them.
- 2.29 On top of the core spend, BACE received two donations from local supermarkets totalling £2,166.00 and Groundworks Volunteering partnered with BACE Holidays and our providers to offer volunteering opportunities and experiences to parents.

- 2.30 Barnet Library service 'Summer Reading Challenge' was well received when packs were given to providers; the mobile library was also successful with 2,000 summer Reading Challenges and free books given out.
- 2.31 The BACE Team in 0-19 Early Help Services supported the asylum contingency hotels and local schools to offer children of refugee families places on BACE and are now part of the 'Information Meeting Regarding Hotel Families' (Refugees) in the south and west of the borough which is supporting engagement with refugee children and local charities referrals to BACE.
- 2.32 The BACE team have also developed a partnership with Interlink to work with Barnet's Orthodox Jewish population which has enabled children from the community to attend provision within their local community.
- 2.33 Other partnerships include parent and child cooking sessions with Bread n Butter, Metropolitan Police and Better Gyms (GLL) delivering sessions for young people aged 12-16 years in local leisure centres. There have been trips to the RAF museum and for the first time, a family picnic was held in a local park.
- 2.34 Several children with SEND needs used BACE provision, with some parents referring to the provision as 'respite'. Teach Now have supported this aspect of delivery, although it is very costly. All providers offer provisions that are inclusive, but there are only a few that specialise just in SEND which has given us the option to place children with higher needs in this provision where they have appropriate support to engage fully.
- 2.35 The success of the summer BACE programme has been supported by staff delivering outreach at local school fayres and festivals which helped raise the profile resulting in more referrals from schools, including the MOPAC risk of exclusion mentoring team. The introduction of E-Vouchers via Wonde has increased bookings and attendance. Attending these events enabled feedback from children to be gathered via focus groups; children have told us what they have enjoyed and would like in future BACE delivery including how they would like to celebrate Black History Month.
- 2.36 **Summer Celebration for Barnet's Children in Care**
- 2.37 On 26 July 2022 Barnet held a Family Fun Day for young people, their carers and Family Services staff to celebrate the achievements of our children in care. Over 200 children, parents and carers attended and many staff volunteers from across Family Services worked tirelessly to ensure everyone had a great time. The event included an awards ceremony where children of all ages received a certificate which was presented by Barnet's Mayor and senior leaders. Certificates recognised a range of achievements from passing exams, being kind or brave and excelling in activities like dance or sport – the hall was packed to overflowing with the audience showing their appreciation by cheering and clapping each child as they took to the stage.
- 2.38 Other activities included music, great food, inflatables, mindfulness, dance, arts and crafts, face painting, a silent disco, an area for under 5s (hosted by our children's centre and libraries staff), sports, a rodeo ride and visit by the fire brigade and an ice-cream van. Pop up stalls were delivered by BOP our child in care council and the My Say Matters project, Onwards and Upwards our leaving care team, our Live Unlimited Charity and Barnet Integrated Care Service which offers mental health support. The day provided a

great opportunity for our children in care to get together, socialise and meet the staff who support them all year round and we were lucky the weather was perfect too.

2.39 Excellent feedback has been received from children and their carers many of whom travelled from other parts of the country to attend. They commented on the range of activities, the chance to spend time with their social worker and the pride they felt at the awards ceremony as well as the way feedback from previous events was taken on board. The theme for the day was Belonging and the event had the feel of an authentic family get together with all parts of the Family Services system coming together to collectively contribute in some way. This has left a legacy of great memories and shared experiences and we are already looking forward to next year's event.

2.40 **Workforce**

2.41 Our Recruitment and Workforce Development Strategy 2021 – 2024 sets out our ambition to recruit, develop and retain a diverse and resilient workforce that delivers child-focused outcomes.

2.42 Barnet Family Services benefit from a permanent and stable senior leadership team and from permanently filled senior manager and team manager roles.

2.43 Our successful "Grow Your Own" strategy launched in 2018 has facilitated the recruitment of good quality student social workers who have completed their final practice placements in Barnet into Newly Qualified Social Work roles during which the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) is completed with a highly intensive and bespoke support and practice development programme. We have invested in induction, training, group supervision and tailored support which embeds knowledge and applied experience within our resilience informed practice model. This approach has facilitated a retention rate of NQSW's transitioning into vacant social worker roles at the end of their ASYE programme.

2.44 The 'Grow Your Own' strategy is particularly important as a long-term strategy given the London-wide and national difficulties in recruiting and retaining experienced social work practitioners. There are currently 54 social work vacancies across Family Services, representing 39% of all social work posts. The vacancies are particularly prevalent in the Duty and Assessment and Intervention & Planning Service, as agency staff often leave at short notice, this can create instability in assessment and care planning for children and has the disruptive impact of frequent change of worker as social workers move across London and the surrounding counties for higher paid roles.

2.45 To tackle this, London Councils developed the pan-London Pledge which has been signed up to for 2 years by 32/33 London authorities; the Pledge went live on 1 June 2022. The Pledge is "a pan-London commitment by Children's Services system leaders to work cooperatively and transparently to manage the agency supply chain, improve the quality of agency staff and regulate pay rates within Children's Social Work" (pan-London Pledge, May 2022). The Pledge replaces the Memorandum of Cooperation and is supported by London Councils who are coordinating implementation and the sub-regional governance groups.

2.46 In signing the Pledge, London borough's agree to advertise and pay social work staff, from practitioner to team manager levels, within agreed capped rates; including existing

staff who are currently being paid over the capped rates. Agreement to work within the Pledge has been discussed and agreed with Barnet's Managed Service Provider, Matrix.

- 2.47 The Pledge prohibits newly qualified social work staff from joining an agency for 2 years after social work qualification and permanent social workers from joining an agency to work in London within six months of resigning from a permanent post. Within the Pledge, there is a right to instate a 3-week notice period (previously one week) to minimise rapid departures. Barnet is working within the capped rate, as the implementation settles across London it is expected that agency staff movement will reduce across London as higher rates of agency pay will not be a motivating factor. Impact reporting will be available at the next CES once the first quarter data has been shared across London.
- 2.48 In 2021, Barnet Family Services developed a recruitment video with a professional media company; this is accompanied by short 'reels' that can be viewed on social media. Family Services will be re-launching the campaign over the coming months to attract agency social workers who may be seeking permanent employment now that the Pledge has been implemented.
- 2.49 Securing a stable workforce, that is diverse, so that it is representative of the communities we work with and highly-skilled so that children and families receive an excellent service is core to our workforce strategy. Our Workforce Development Team have developed a comprehensive programme of learning for new starters and existing staff that promotes understanding of systemic/relational, trauma-informed, signs of safety and anti-racist practice approaches which sit within our resilience-based practice framework.
- 2.50 All staff have an agreed professional development plan as part of their annual appraisal and there are clear career progression pathways across the service, including bespoke pathways to encourage minoritized staff to progress into leadership roles.
- 2.51 A strategy based on resilience involves looking for strengths and opportunities to build on, rather than for issues or problems to treat. As an organisation we recognise the historical, structural and systemic contexts in our society that increase the opportunities of some children, young people and families compared to others, in particular, Black and other minoritised members of society. This means that not all families we work with will have the same opportunities or access to resources, alongside, varied experiences of equality and inclusion which can impact their life chances and outcomes. To ensure our 'resilience-based approach' works to support all children, young people and families we have an explicit Anti-racism Strategy designed to support practice, address racism and/or discrimination externally or within the organisation. This includes a clear commitment to promoting equalities, diversity and inclusion within our recruitment and retention processes, training opportunities and overall development of the workforce.
- 2.52 Coming out of the pandemic, the workforce has adapted to and adopted hybrid ways of working that allow for greater flexibility and improved work/life balance. However, there are agreed core activities which have been mandated as face to face including supervision, interviews, new starter inductions, student supervision, team and management meetings, promoting cohesive. In practice, direct work and home visits are mainly undertaken face to face, unless there are exceptional circumstances that would warrant virtual working arrangements.
- 2.53 **Early Help Strategy**

- 2.54 A multi-agency EH Strategy Development Away Day was held on 6 July attended by a range of agency representatives, including parents. The day focused on building on our success and strengthening multi-agency engagement in operational delivery. A new strategy will draw on evidence from national reviews, reports, and research to set out how our multi-agency partnership will work together effectively and emphasises the need for information about Universal, Universal Plus and Targeted Support to be accessible to all communities, particularly those who have newly arrived or who may experience language barriers.
- 2.55 The Strategy will focus on the support children need at different ages and stages of their developmental journey to reach their full potential and will incorporate a new vision for youth services. The first draft of the Early Help Strategy 2022 - 2026 will be shared with the 0-19 Early Help Strategic Board on 8th September for multi-agency review and final amendments ahead of children, young people and families / public consultation and member consultation period during month of October with a plan to bring to CES for agreement in November and publication in December 2022.

3. Post decision implementation

- 3.1 N/A

4. Implications of decision

4.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 4.1.1 Family Friendly is a key part of the Barnet Plan for 2021-2025 with the vision of “Creating a Family Friendly Barnet, enabling opportunities for our children and young people to achieve their best”.

4.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 4.2.1 There are no resource implications.

4.3 Legal and Constitutional References

- 4.3.1 Local authorities have specific duties in respect of children under various legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004. They have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and, if this is consistent with the child’s safety and welfare, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing services appropriate to the child’s needs. They also have a duty to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing services appropriate to the child’s needs, provided this is consistent with the child’s safety and welfare. They should do this in partnership with parents, in a way that is sensitive to the child’s race, religion, culture and language and that, where practicable, takes account of the child’s wishes and feelings. Under the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities must consider how the child or young person can be supported to facilitate their development and to help them achieve the “best possible educational and other outcomes”.

- 4.3.2 Local authorities have specific duties to care leavers under the Children Act 1989 as

amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The corporate parenting duties and powers under the 1989 Act include:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and,
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living

4.3.3 The Council's Constitution, Article 7 notes that the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee has 'Responsibility for all matters relating to children, schools and education.'

4.4 Insight

4.4.1 Family Services uses a comprehensive suite of performance information to support decision making, including local and regional datasets, audit and financial analysis. This information is scrutinised by Senior Leaders in a variety of forums including Placement Board, Performance Board, MTFS Board and in quarterly meetings with the Lead Member for Children and Families, and the Chief Executive.

4.5 Social Value

4.5.1 All commissioning activity includes social value as a standard monitoring item.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 Specific risk management is being carried out for Children and Young People's Plan. Any Family Services risks are recorded on the Family Services Risk Register and monitored each quarter by the Senior Leadership Team with escalations to CMT if necessary.

4.7 Equalities and Diversity

4.7.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public-Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other

conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- foster good relations between people from different groups

4.7.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services

4.7.3 Equalities and diversity considerations are a key element of social work practice. It is imperative that help and protection services for children and young are sensitive and responsive to age, disability, race and ethnicity, faith or belief, sex, gender reassignment, language, maternity / parental status and sexual orientation. We continue to closely monitor this, as report appendixes notes, in our performance data.

4.8 Corporate Parenting

4.8.1 In July 2016, the Government published their Care Leavers' strategy Keep on Caring which outlined that the "... [the government] will introduce a set of corporate parenting principles that will require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children.'

4.8.2 The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and;
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

4.9 Consultation and Engagement

4.9.1 My Say Matters, the Family Services consultation and participation programme, has

been launched and the quarterly updates will report on activity in this programme

4.10 Environmental Impact

4.10.1 N/A

5. Background papers

None

Data to Insight is a national project commissioned by the ADCS,
DfE and Ofsted to help local authorities make better use of data.

Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT)

Based on Ofsted's ILACS Annex A dataset (2020) / Inspection Report

Barnet

11 July 2022

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Comparisons of headline figures and performance data to published statistics	Page 23

Headline figures

Contacts

Contacts in the last 6 months 11,056

Early Help / Common / Targeted Assessments

Early Help in the last 6 months 2,045

Referrals

Referrals in the last 6 months 1,503

Social Care Assessments

Total assessments in the last 6 months 1,586

Assessments completed in the last 6 months 1,084

Ongoing assessments 502

Section 47 enquiries and Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCS)

Section 47 enquiries in the last 6 months 463

ICPCs that started from an S47 in the last 6 months 112

Children in Need (CIN)

Total CIN in the last 6 months 2,856

CIN started in the last 6 months 1,156

CIN ceased in the last 6 months 1,322

Current children in need (snapshot) 1,514

Child Protection Plans (CPP)

Total CPP in the last 6 months 331

CPP started in the last 6 months 115

CPP ceased in the last 6 months 105

Current children subject of a child protection plan (snapshot) 226

Children Looked After (CLA)

Total CLA in the last 6 months 398

CLA started in the last 6 months 67

CLA ceased in the last 6 months 68

Current children looked after (snapshot) 330

Care leavers

Care leavers currently in receipt of leaving care services 323

Adoptions

Children adopted, waiting to be adopted, or had an adoption decision reversed in the last 12 months 36

Children adopted in the last 12 months 3

Children waiting to be adopted (snapshot) 23

Children with decision reversed in the last 12 months 3

Adopters

Prospective adopters in the last 12 months 0

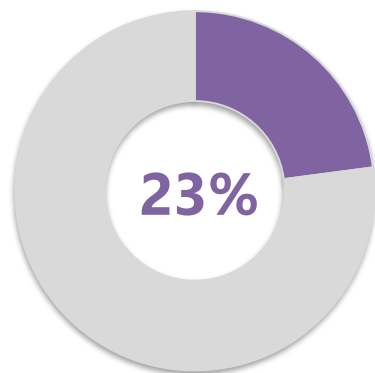
Contacts in the last 6 months

from 12/01/2022
to 11/07/2022

11056 contacts

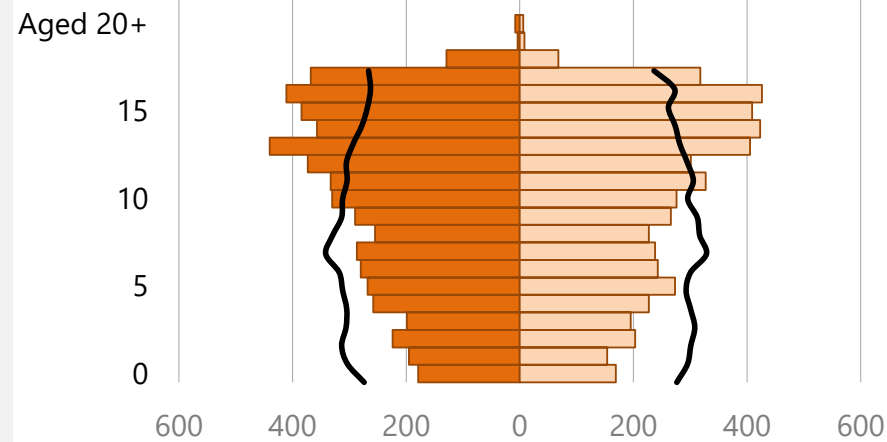
Children who also appear on the Referrals list

Yes No



Age and gender

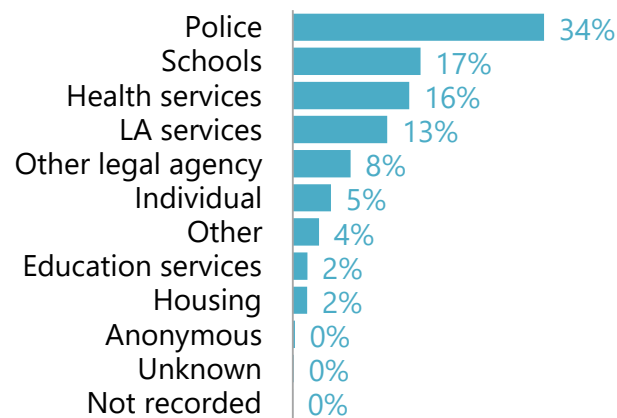
5572 Males (50%)
5162 Females (47%)
322 Other (not shown) (3%)
— 0-17 population estimate



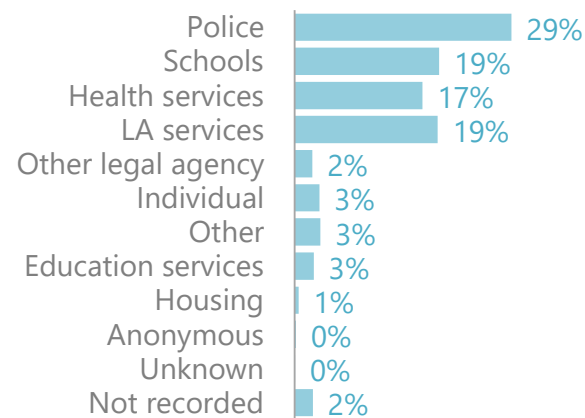
Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Source of contacts compared to source of referrals

Contact source



Referral source comparison



Children with multiple contacts in period



Ethnic backgrounds

White	32%
Mixed	11%
Asian or Asian British	9%
Black or black British	13%
Other ethnic group	9%
Not stated	25%
Not recorded	1%

See page 22 for comparisons

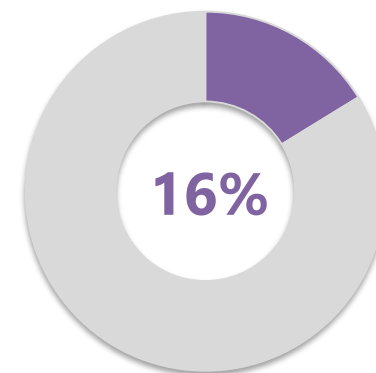
Early Help in the last 6 months

from 12/01/2022
to 11/07/2022

2045 Early Help / Common / Targeted Assessments

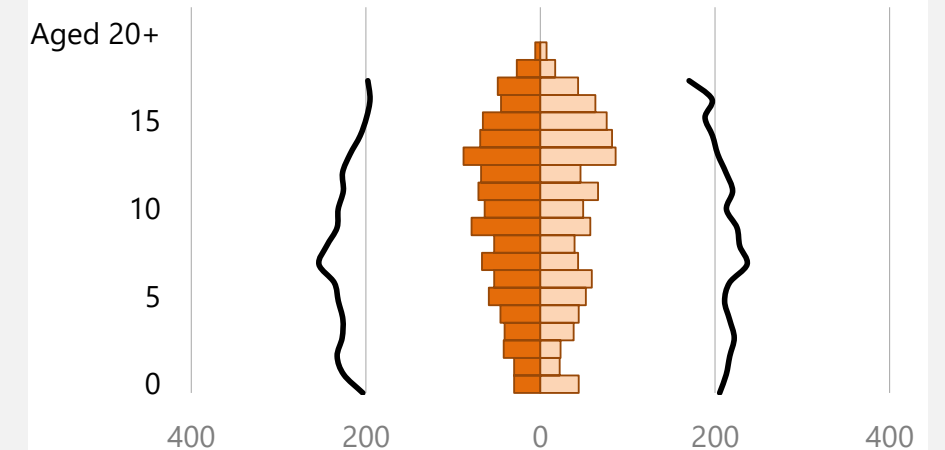
Early Help cases that also appear on the Referrals list

Yes No



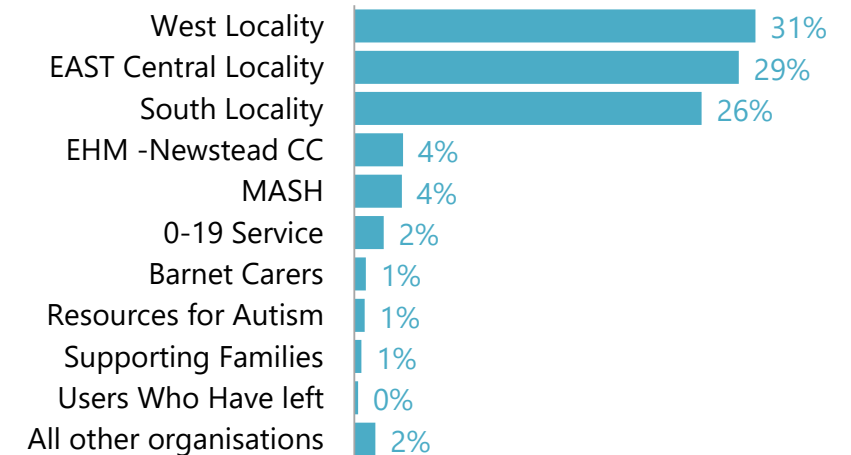
Age and gender

1053 Males (51%)
956 Females (47%)
36 Other (not shown) (2%)
— 0-17 population estimate

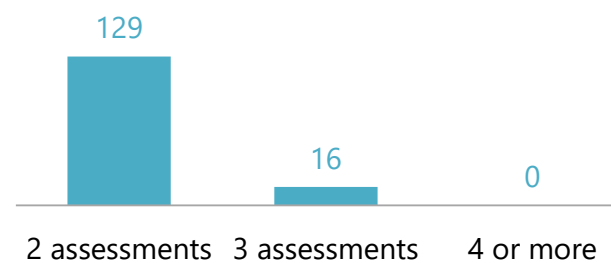


Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Organisation completing assessment



Children with multiple records in period



Ethnic backgrounds

White	41%
Mixed	10%
Asian or Asian British	11%
Black or black British	13%
Other ethnic group	11%
Not stated	13%
Not recorded	0%

See page 22 for comparisons

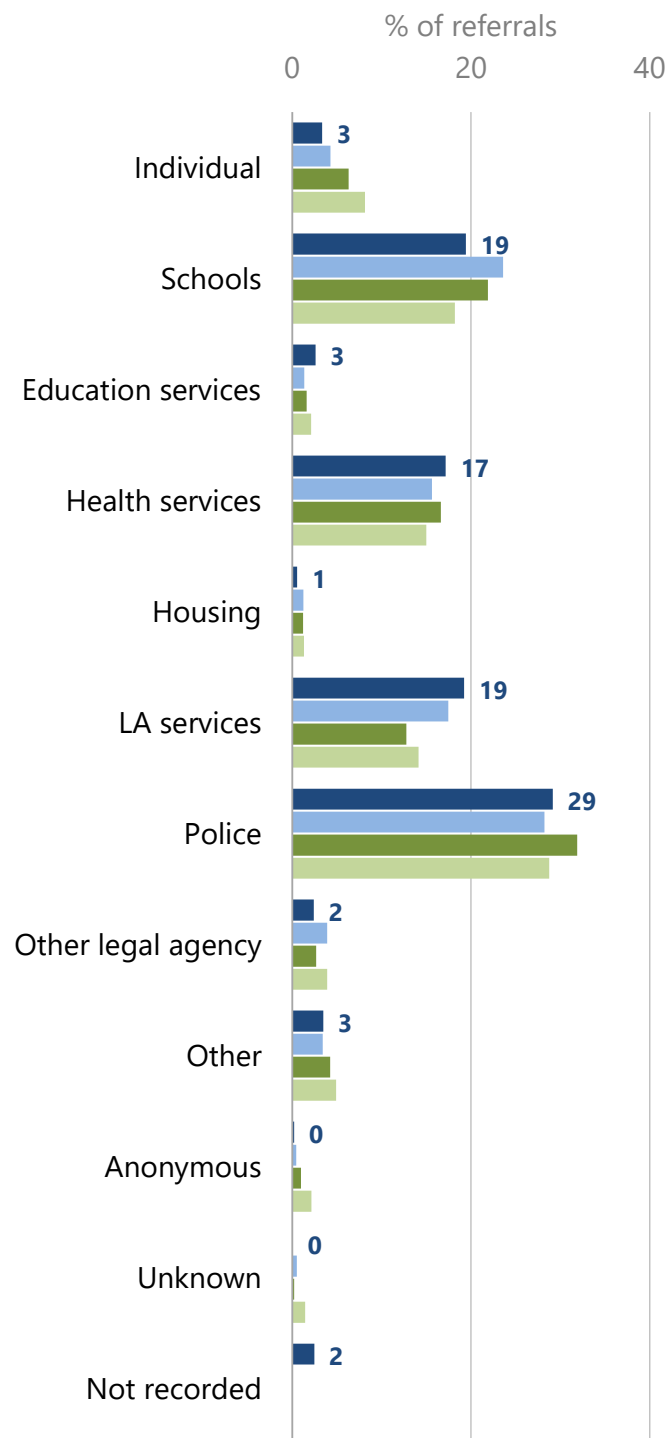
Referrals in the last 6 months

from 12/01/2022
to 11/07/2022

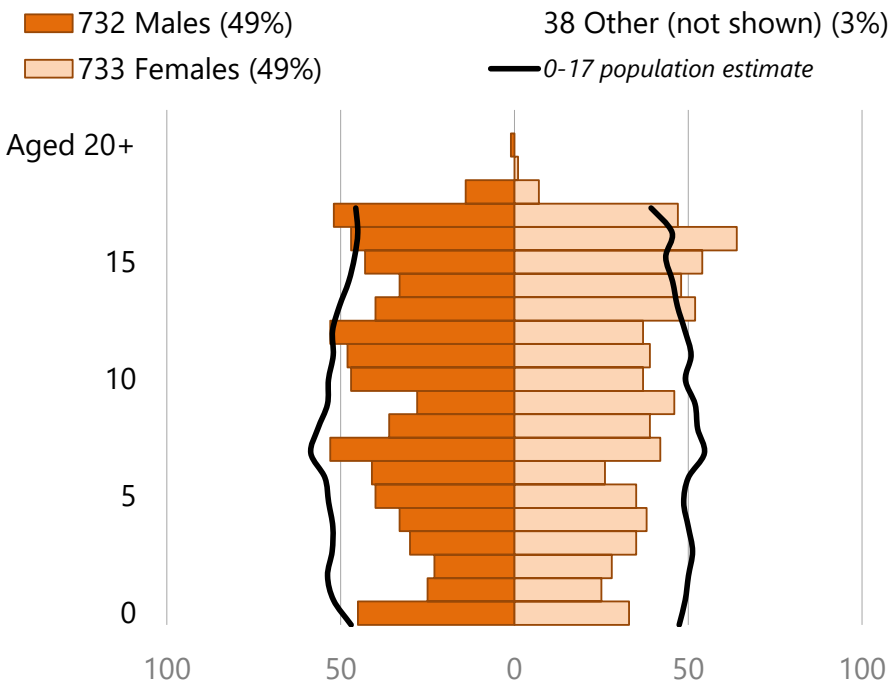
1503 referrals

Source of referral

■ Last 6 months ■ LA 19-20 ■ SNs 19-20 ■ Eng 19-20



Age and gender



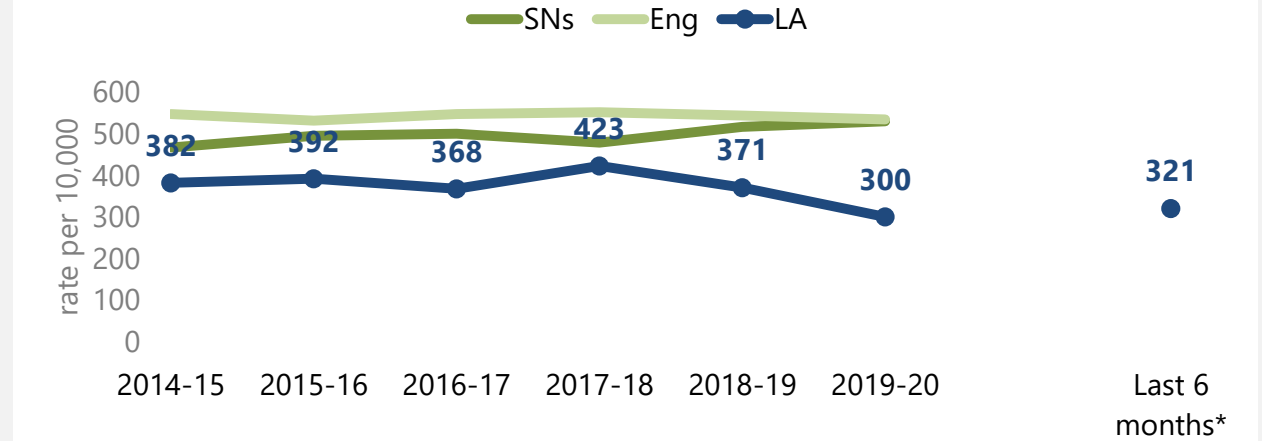
Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Ethnic backgrounds

White	33%
Mixed	15%
Asian or Asian British	10%
Black or black British	17%
Other ethnic group	10%
Not stated	15%
Not recorded	0%

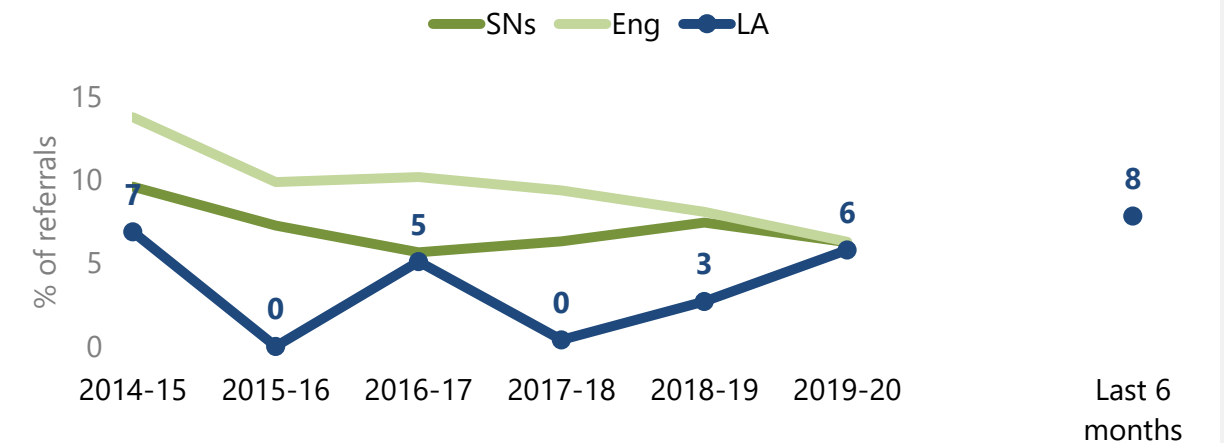
See page 22 for comparisons

Rate of referrals per 10,000 children aged 0-17



*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Referrals with No Further Action (NFA)

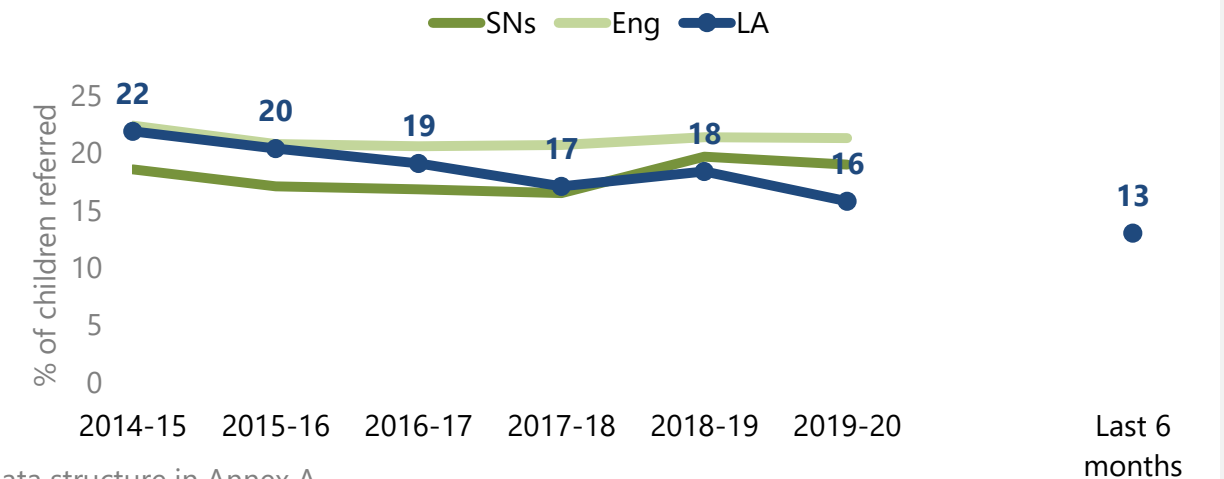
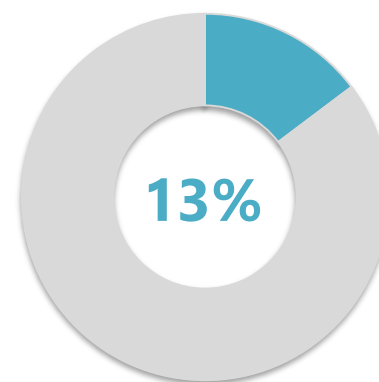


Re-referrals: children with a previous referral within 12 months of their latest referral

190 children with previous referrals within 12 months of latest referral

■ Re-referral ■ First referral □ Not recorded

First referral	1,269
1 prev referral	162
2 prev referrals	24
3 prev referrals	2
4+ prev referrals	2
Not recorded	0

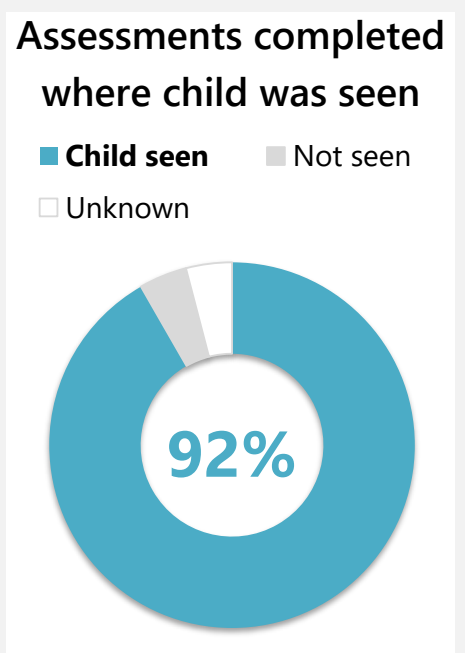
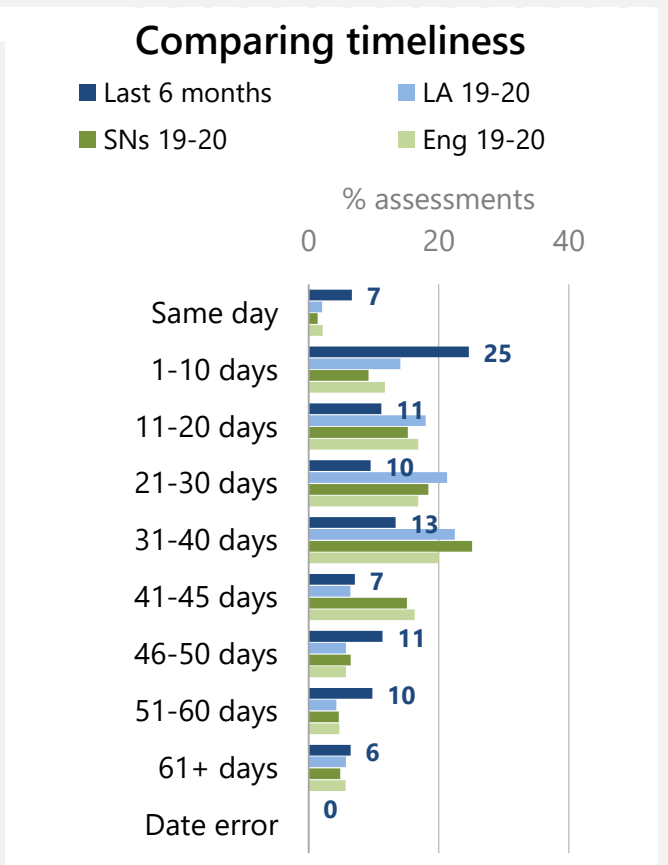
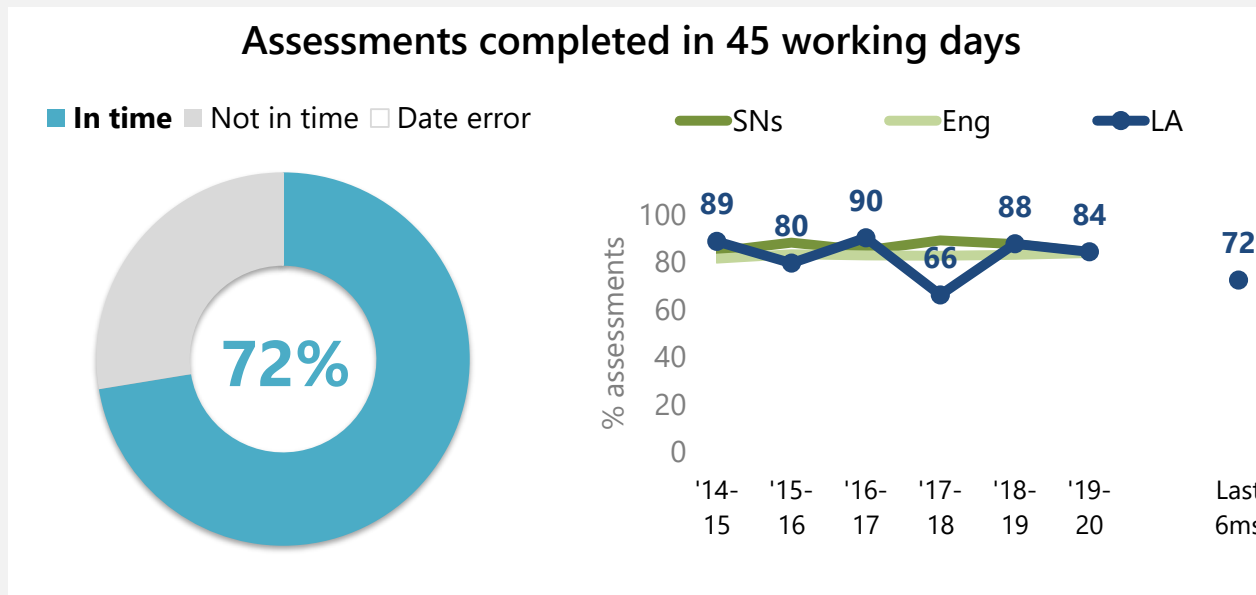
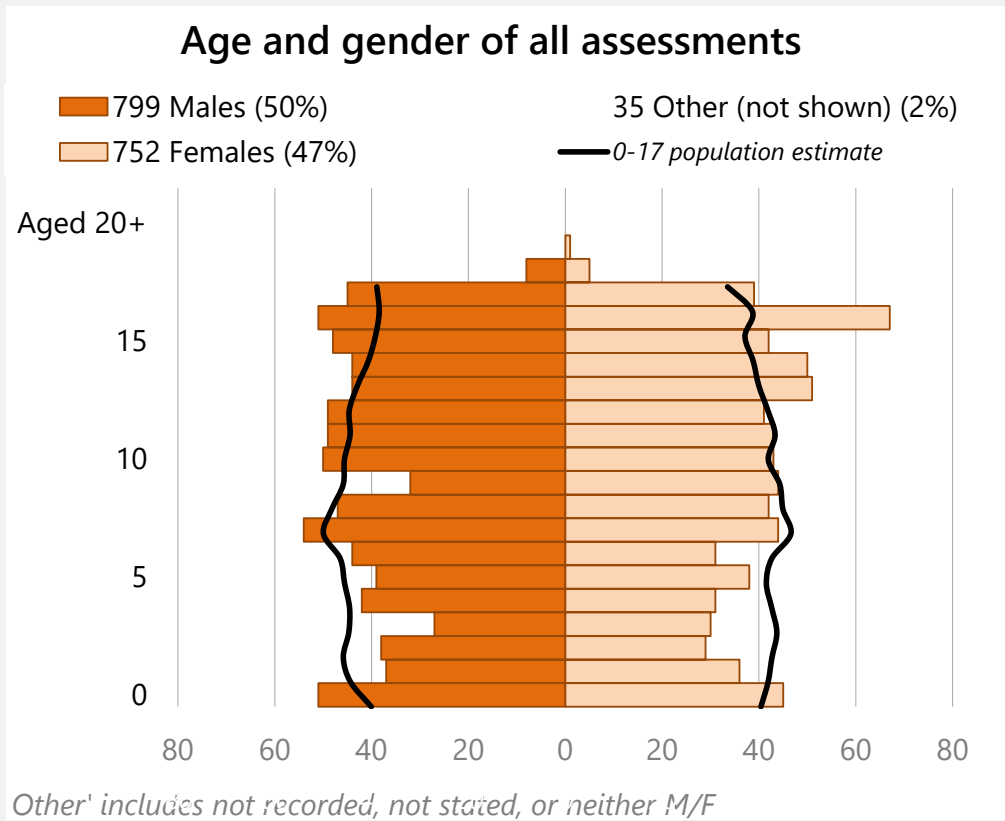
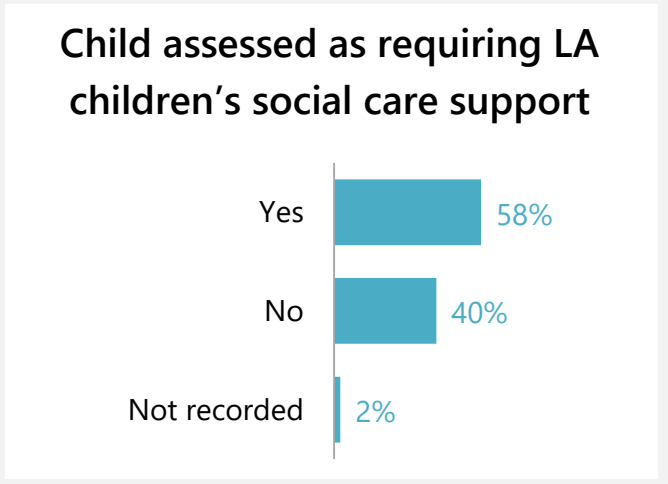
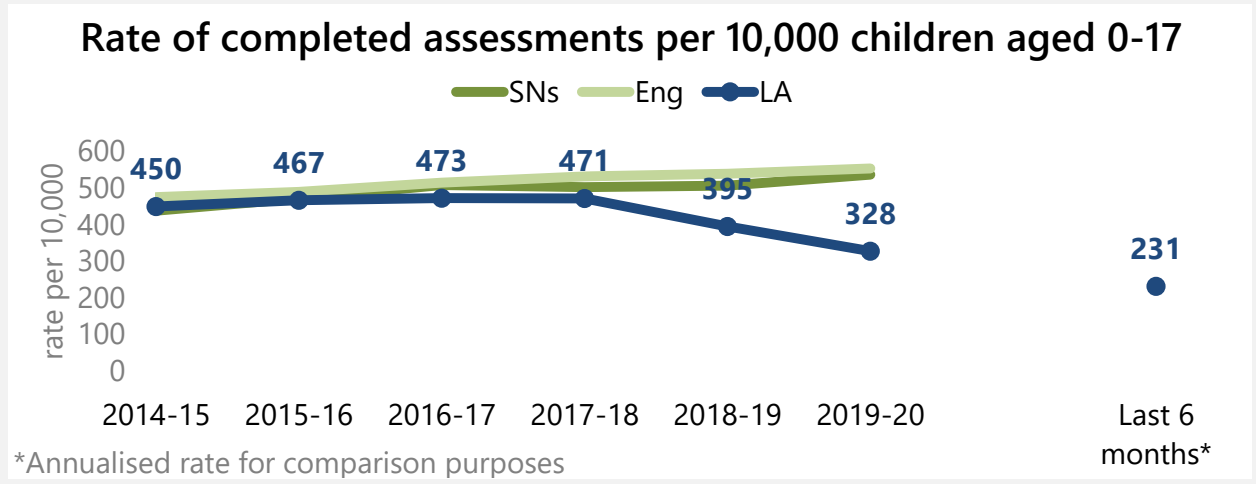


*"Last 6 months" calculation differs slightly from national statistics, due to data structure in Annex A

Assessments in the last 6 months

from 12/01/2022
to 11/07/2022

1586 total assessments
502 open assessments
1084 completed assessments

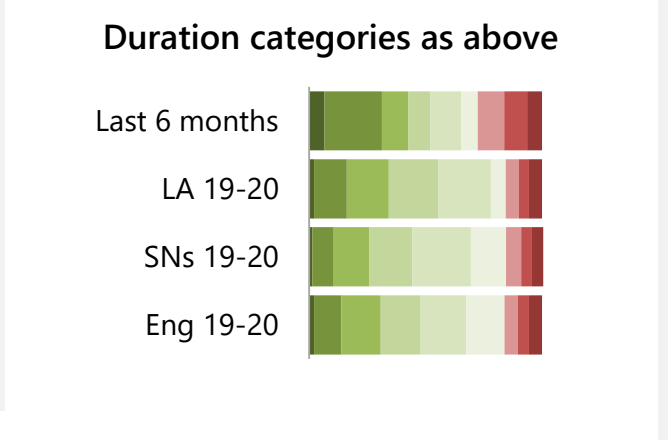
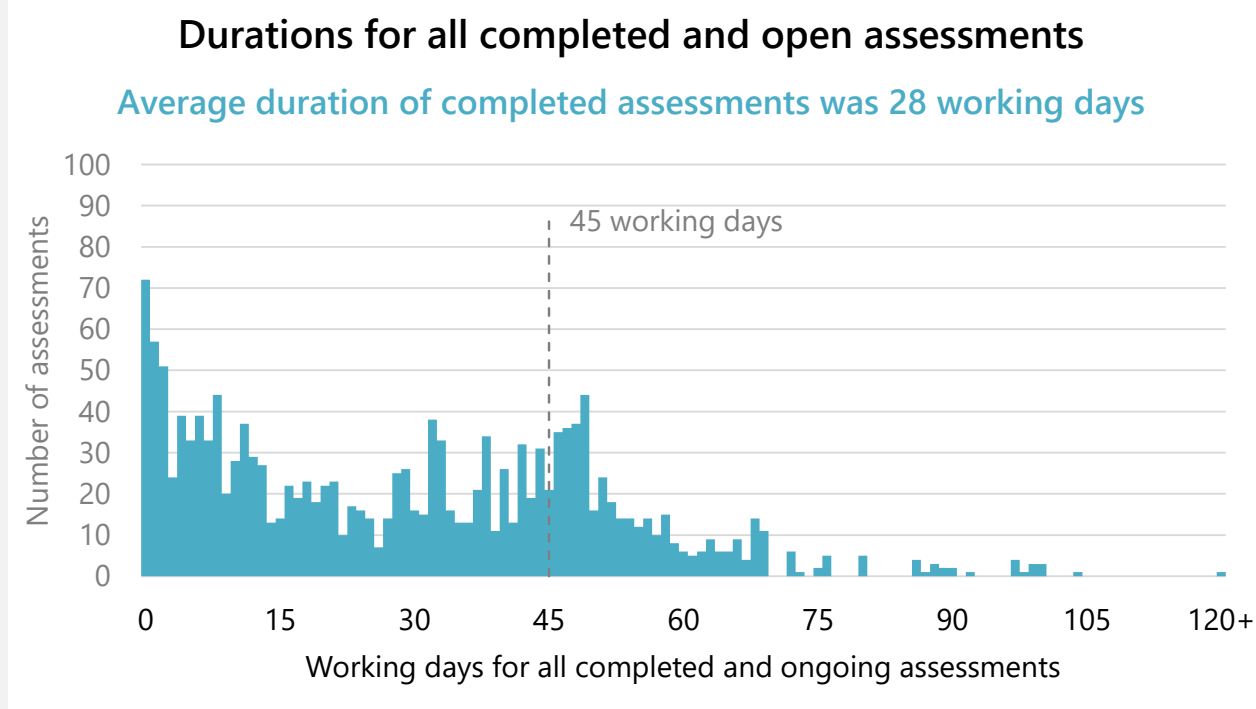


Ethnic background

White	34%
Mixed	18%
Asian or Asian British	9%
Black or black British	19%
Other ethnic group	13%
Not stated	7%
Not recorded	0%

See page 22 for comparisons

106 assessments (7%)
for children with a disability

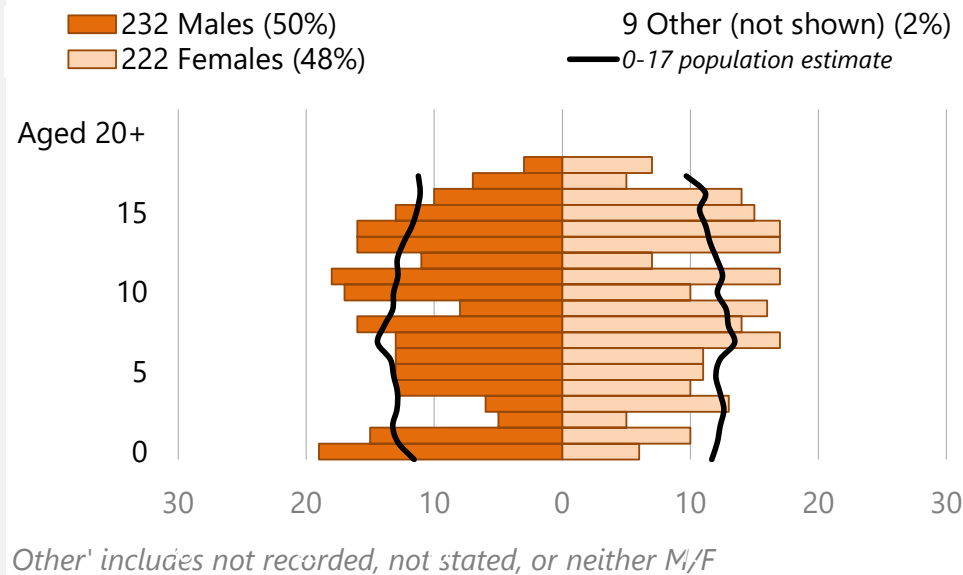


Section 47 enquiries in the last 6 months

from 12/01/2022
to 11/07/2022

463 Section 47 enquiries

Age and gender

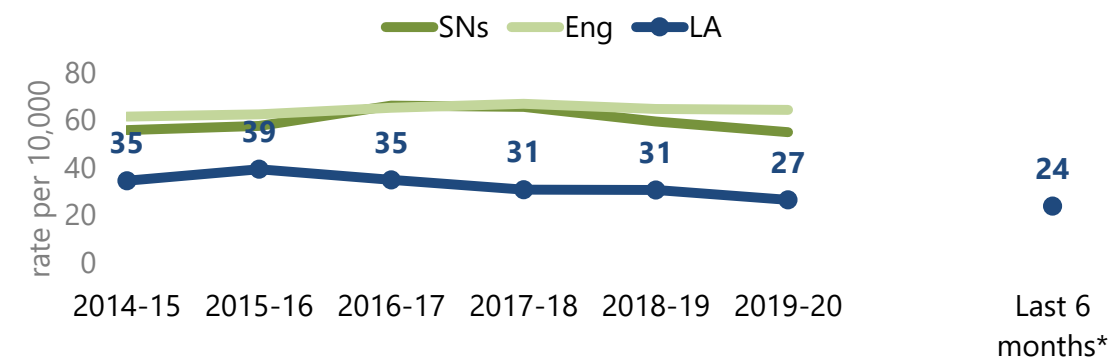


112 Initial Child Protection Conferences (from S47 in period)

75% of completed S47s **did not require an ICPC**

ICPC not required may include S47s for open CPP where ICPC was not required, and may exclude children where an ICPC was required but has not yet occurred

Rate of ICPCs per 10,000 children aged 0-17



0 child(ren) with a repeat ICPC within 12 months of latest Section 47*

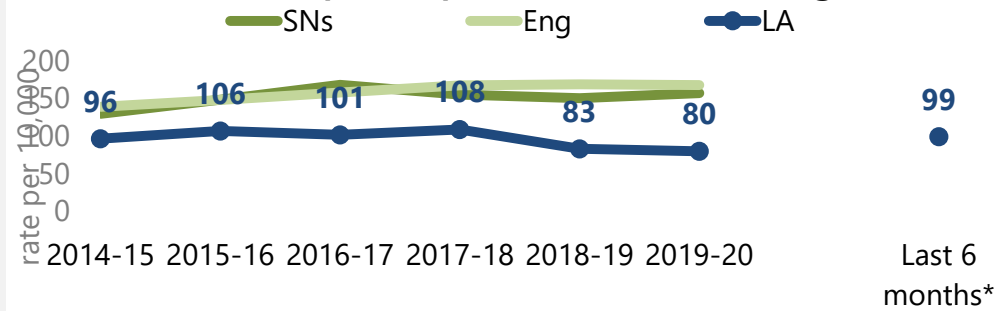
*Including where latest S47 did not result in ICPC

96%

of ICPCs resulted in a child protection plan

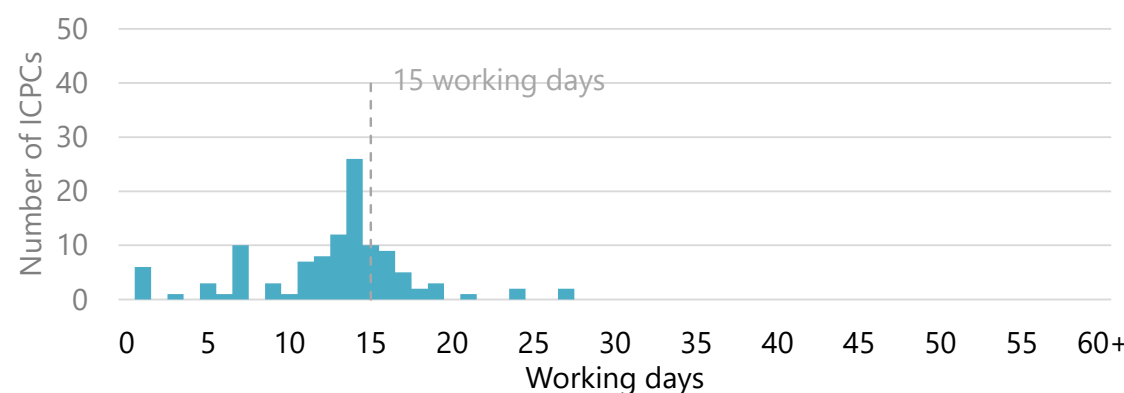
*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Rate of S47 enquiries per 10,000 children aged 0-17

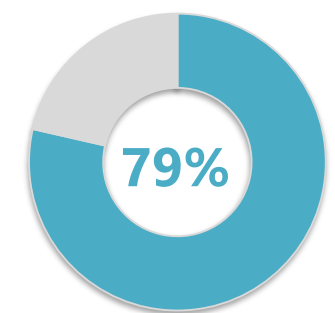


*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

ICPCs occurred within 15 working days of the strategy discussion date

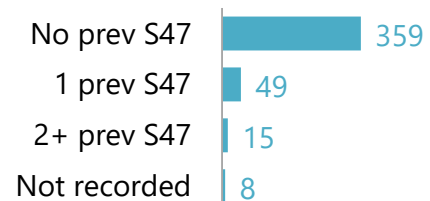


In time
Not in time
Date error



19 S47s (4%) for children with a disability

Children with a repeat S47 within 12 months of latest

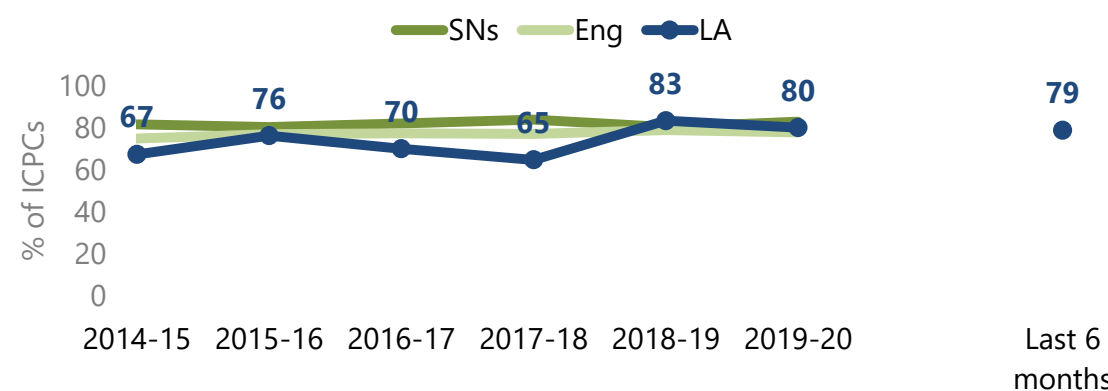


Ethnic background

White	37%
Mixed	13%
Asian or Asian British	7%
Black or black British	18%
Other ethnic group	18%
Not stated	6%
Not recorded	0%

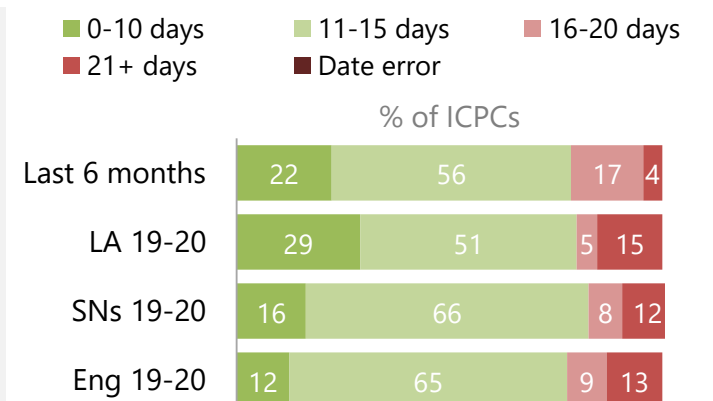
See page 22 for comparisons

Trend of ICPC timeliness (within 15 days of S47 start)



Last 6 months

Comparing ICPC durations



Children in Need (CIN) - total, started, and ceased in the last 6 months

from 12/01/2022
to 11/07/2022

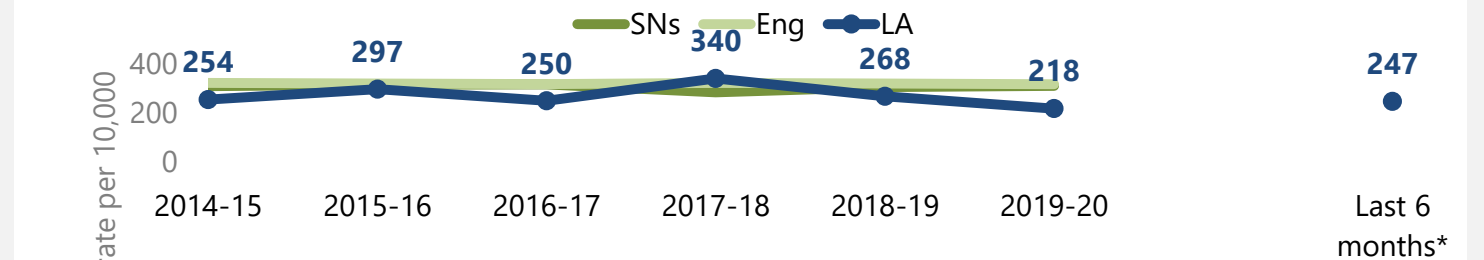
2856 total CIN in 6 months*

#

*Note: the numbers of children in need reported in ChAT are not directly comparable to published CIN census statistics due to an undercount of referrals and care leavers.

1156 CIN started in 6 months

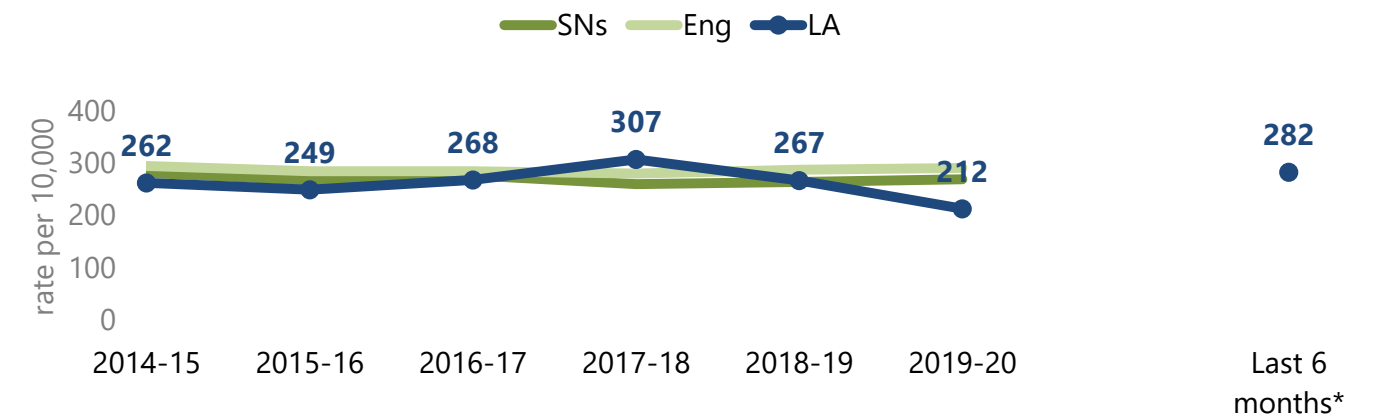
Rate of children who started an episode of need per 10,000 children aged 0-17



*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

1322 CIN ceased in 6 months

Rate of children who ended an episode of need per 10,000 children aged 0-17

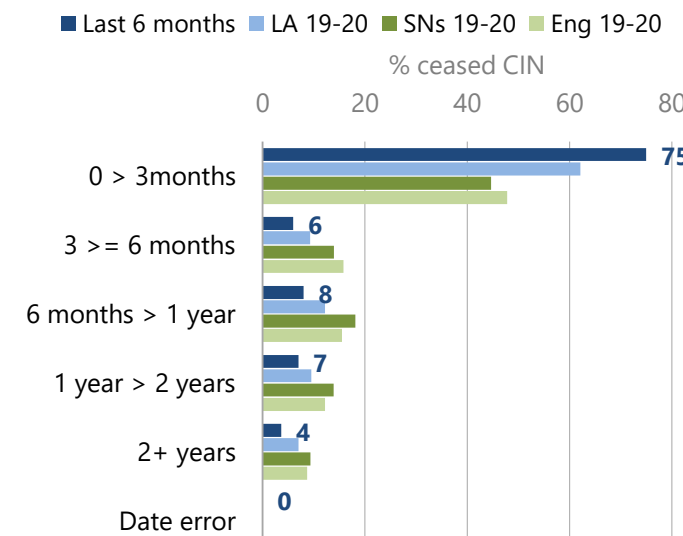


*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

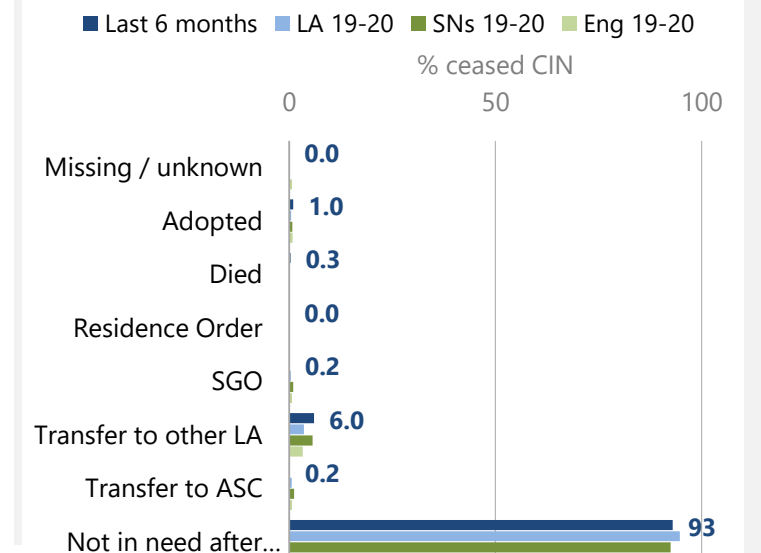
Cases included in Annex A / ChAT

Case status of children on CIN list	Number	Percentage
Looked after child	330	12%
Child protection plan	226	8%
Child in need plan	380	13%
Open assessment	502	18%
Closed episode	1,322	46%
Case status not recorded	96	3%
Total (excluding case status unknown)	2,760	97%

Comparing CIN ceased durations



Comparing CIN ceased reasons



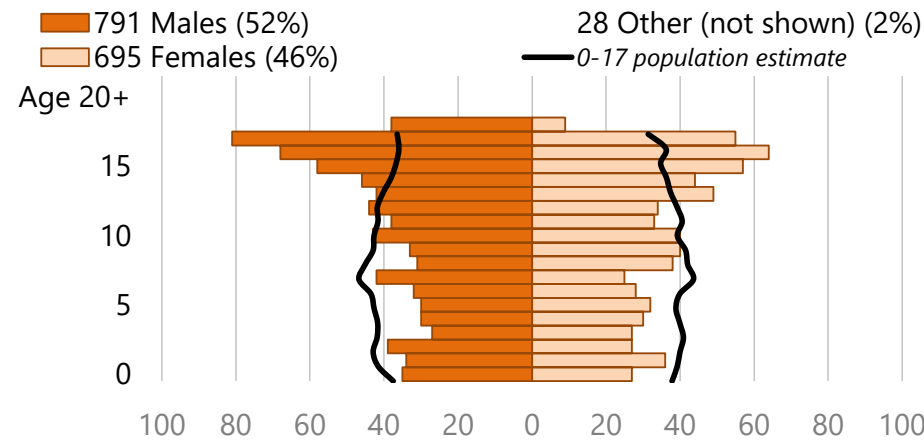
Children in Need (CIN) with an open episode of need

Snapshot 11/07/2022

1514 Children in Need with an open episode of need*

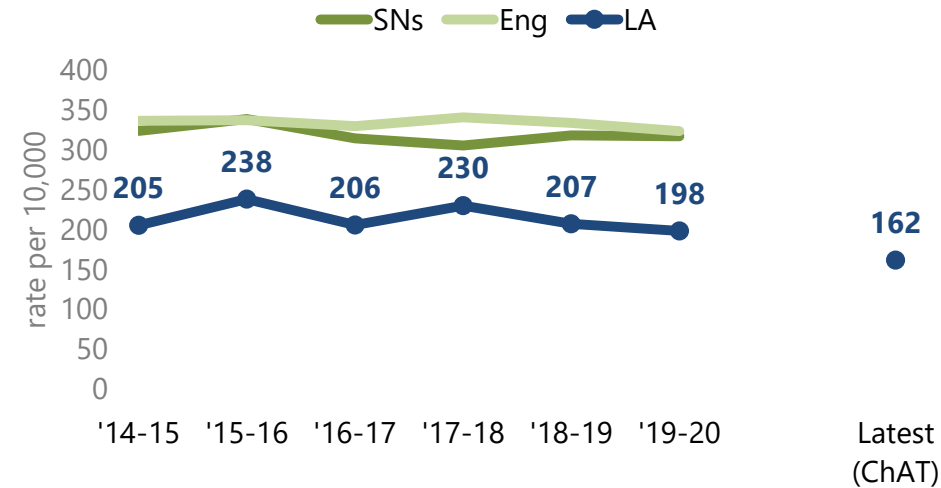
*Note: Annex A figures in this section are not directly comparable to the published Children in need census statistics (see note on page 8)

Age and gender

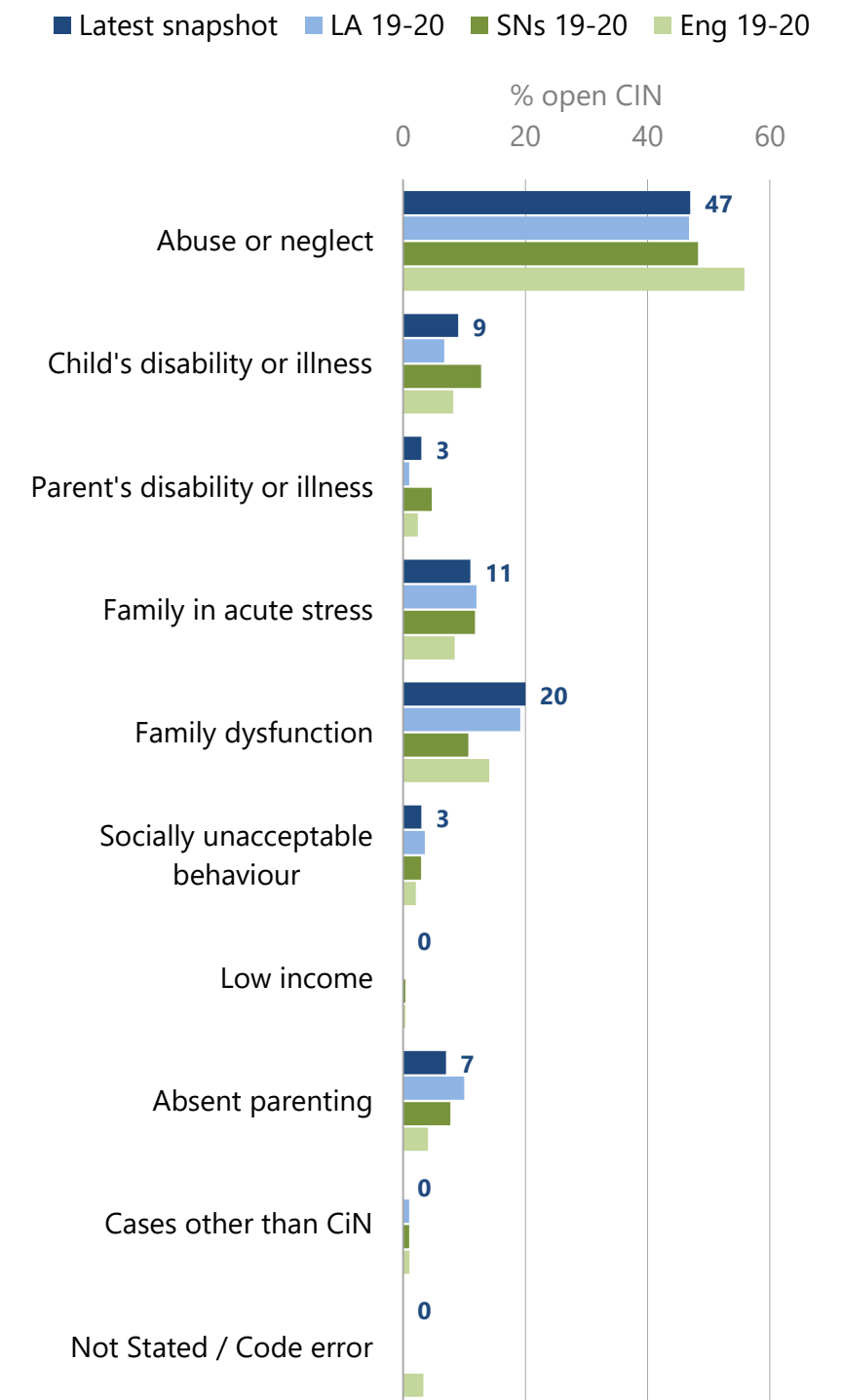


'Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Rate of open CIN per 10,000 children aged 0-17*

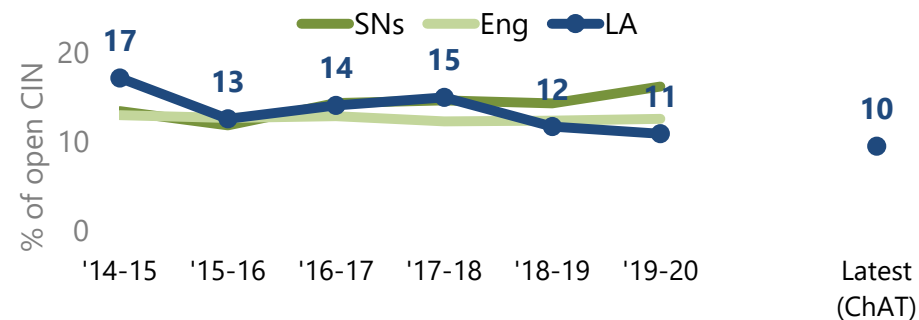


Comparing primary need of open CIN

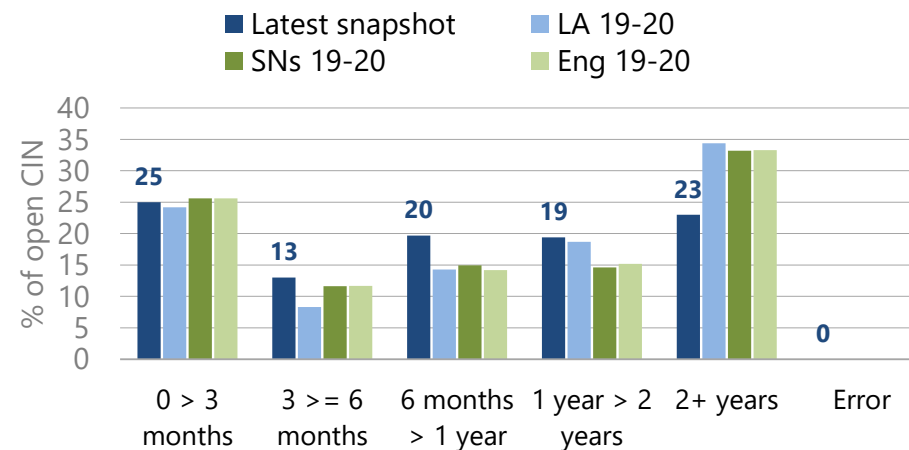


144 children (10%) with a disability

CIN with an open episode of need with a disability



Comparing episode duration of open CIN

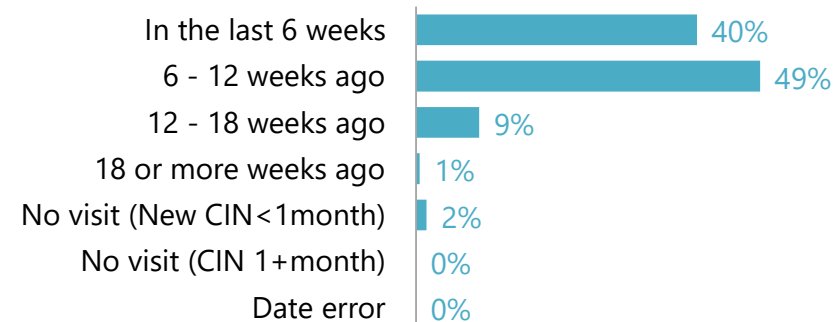


Ethnic background

White	37%
Mixed	16%
Asian or Asian British	9%
Black or black British	19%
Other ethnic group	15%
Not stated	4%
Not recorded	0%

See page 22 for comparisons

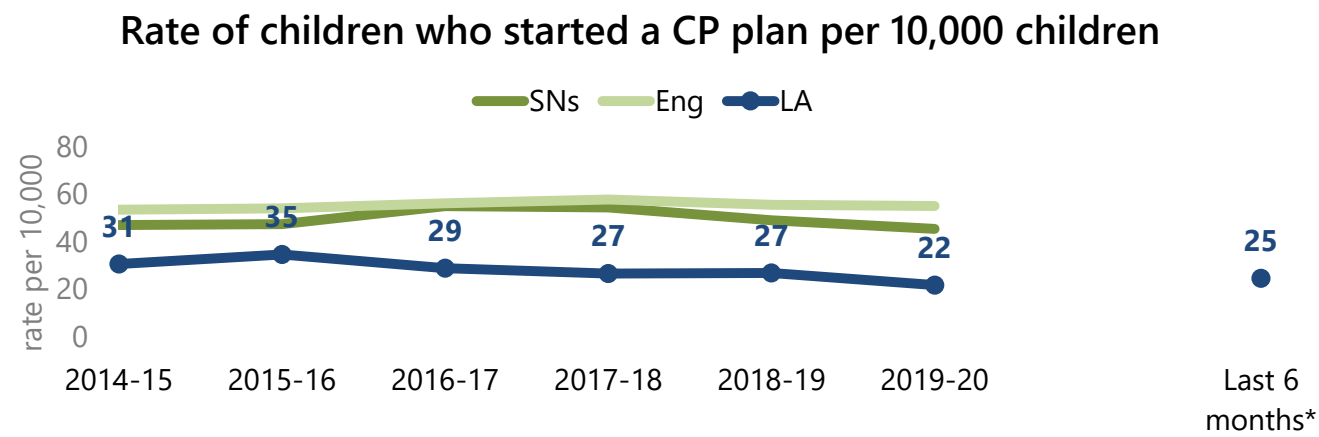
Time since the child's latest social worker visit



Child Protection Plans (CPP) started and ceased in the last 6 months

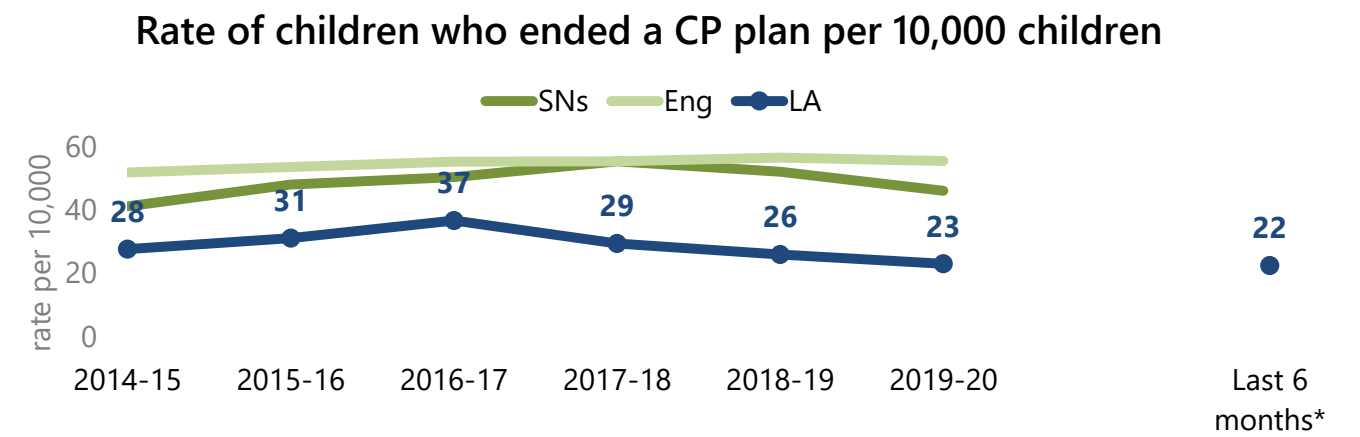
from 12/01/2022
to 11/07/2022

115 CPP started in 6 months



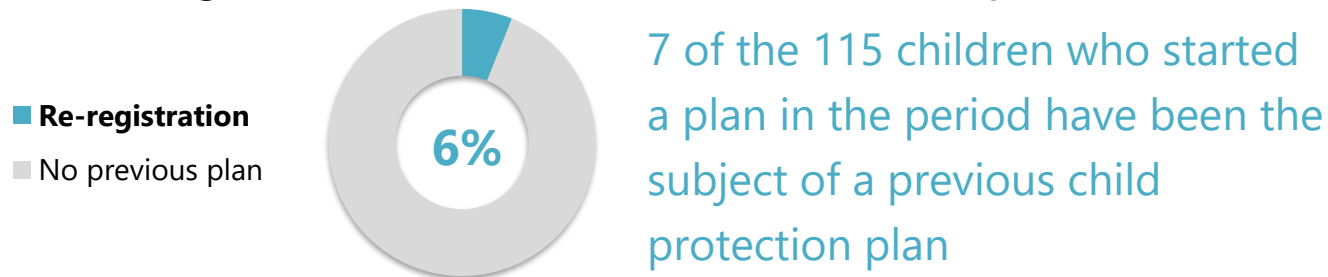
*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

105 CPP ended in 6 months

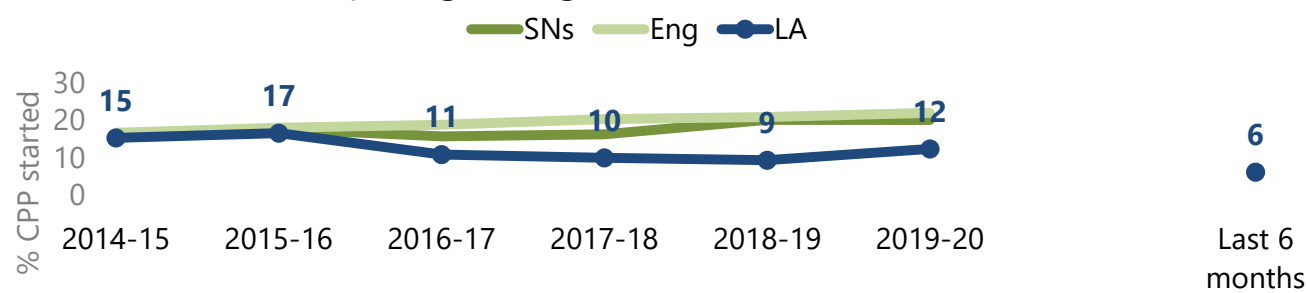


*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

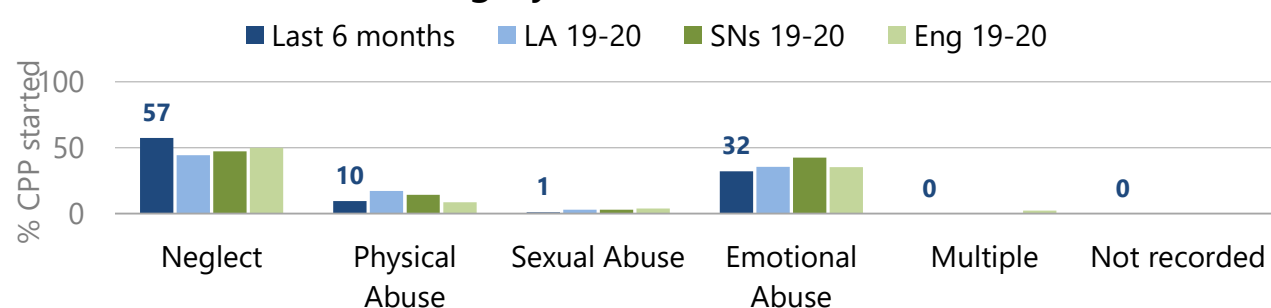
Re-registrations for children who started on a CP plan (ever)



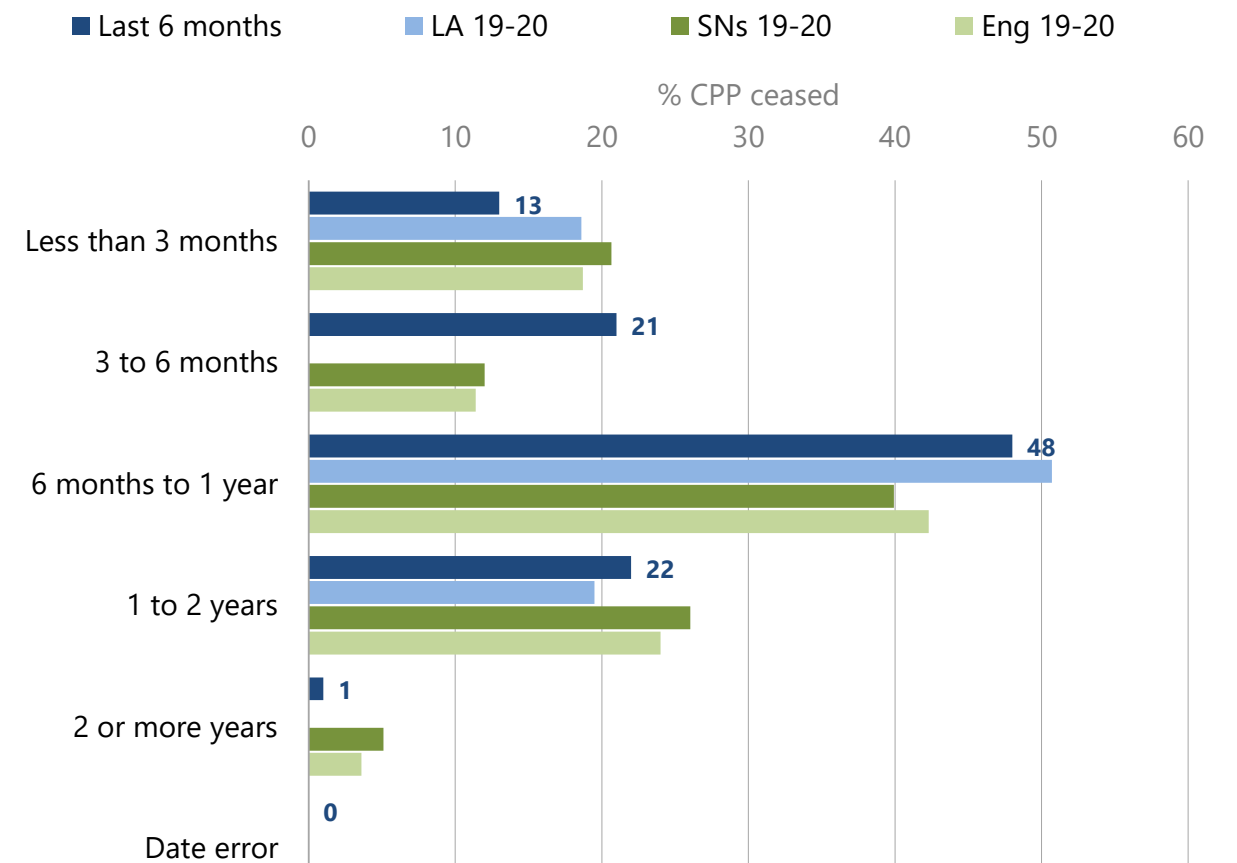
Comparing re-registrations for CPP started



Initial category of abuse for CPP started



Comparing plan durations for CPP ended



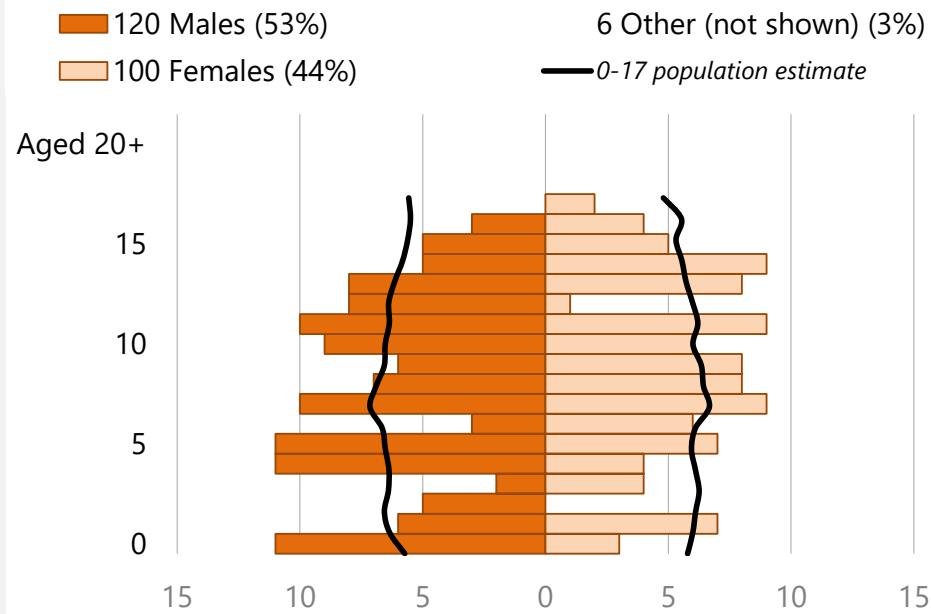
1 of 105 children ended a CP plan after 2 years or more

Child Protection Plans (CPP) currently open

Snapshot 11/07/2022

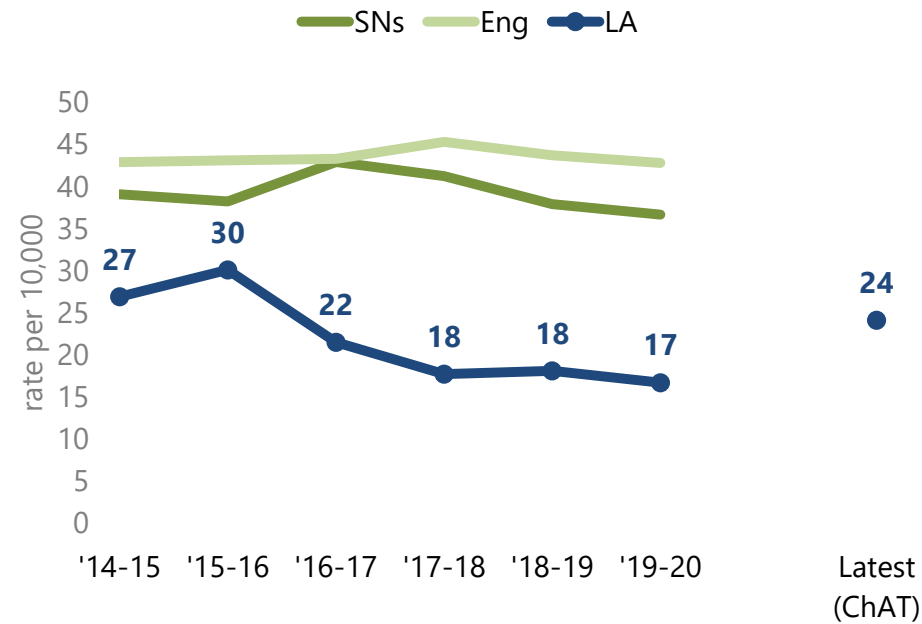
226 children currently subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP)

Age and gender

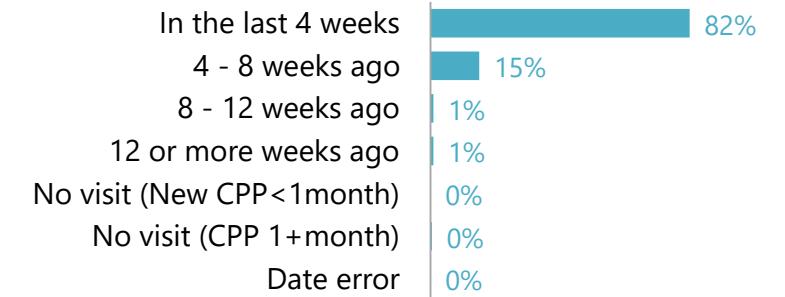


Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Rate of CPP per 10,000 children aged 0-17

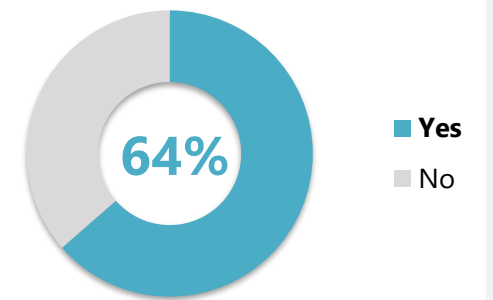


Time since the child was last seen



Open CPP **seen alone** at their last social work visit

(excludes Not recorded or N/A)



Ethnic background

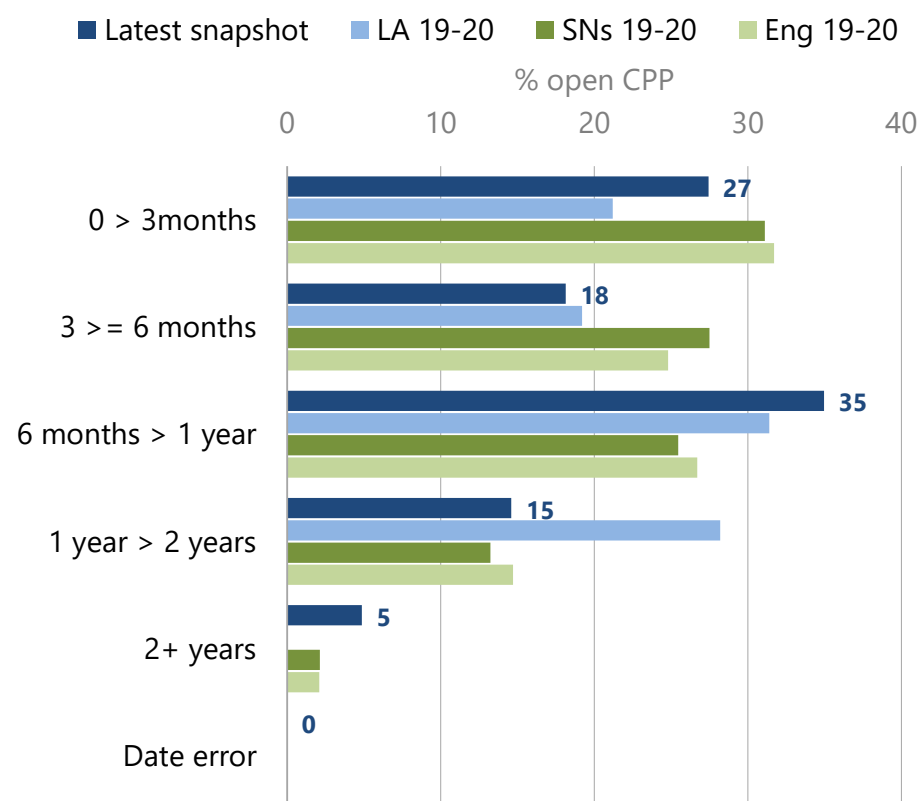
White	35%
Mixed	22%
Asian or Asian British	5%
Black or black British	12%
Other ethnic group	24%
Not stated	2%
Not recorded	0%

See page 20 for comparisons

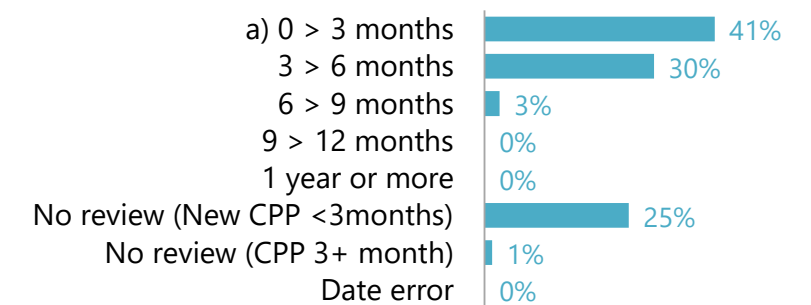
14 children (6%) with a disability

14 open CP subject to Emergency Protection Order or Protected Under Police Powers in last 6 months

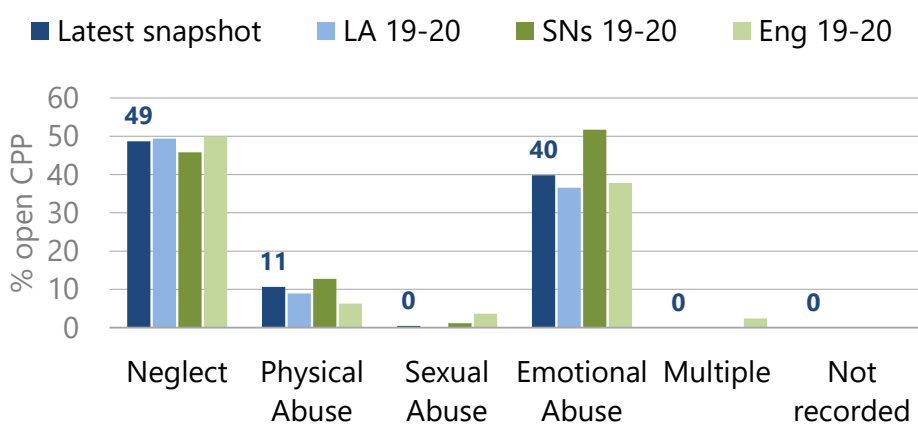
Comparing duration of open CP plans



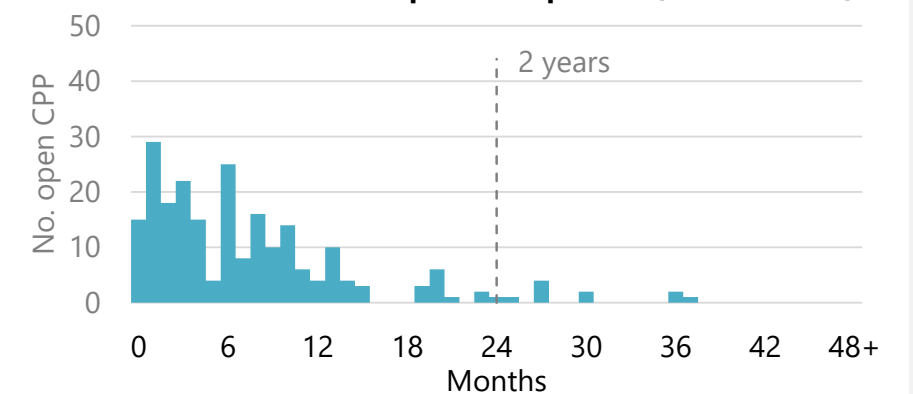
Time since the child's latest review



Latest category of abuse for current CP plans



Duration of current open CP plans (in months)

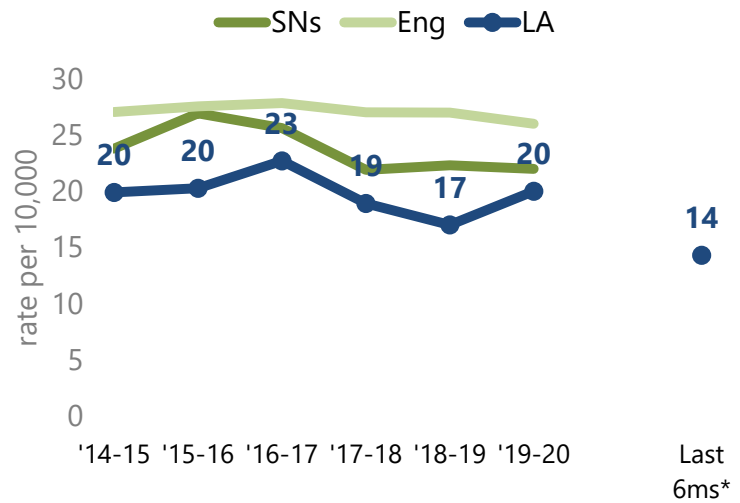


Children Looked After (CLA) started and ceased in the last 6 months

from 12/01/2022
to 11/07/2022

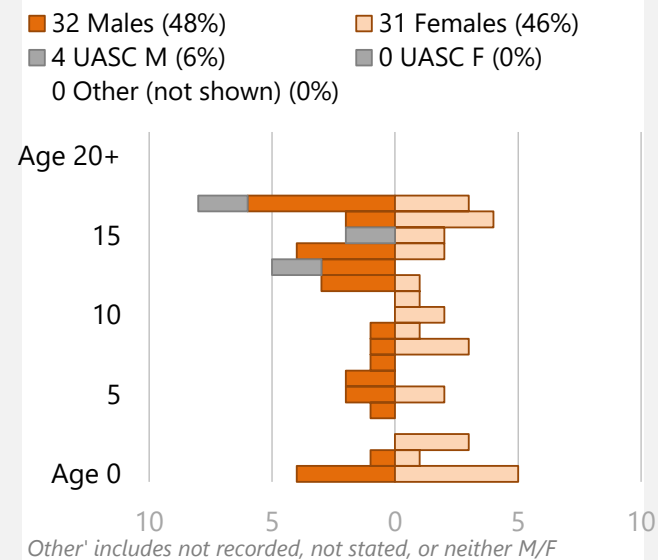
67 CLA started in the last 6 months

Rate of CLA started per 10,000 children



*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

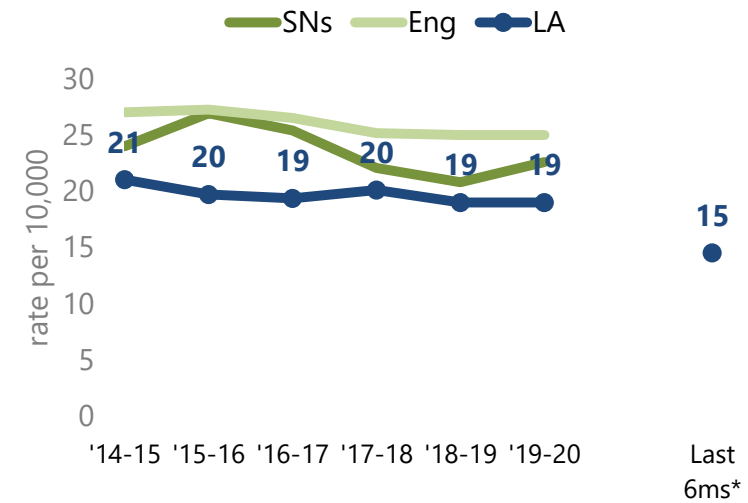
Age and gender



Other includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

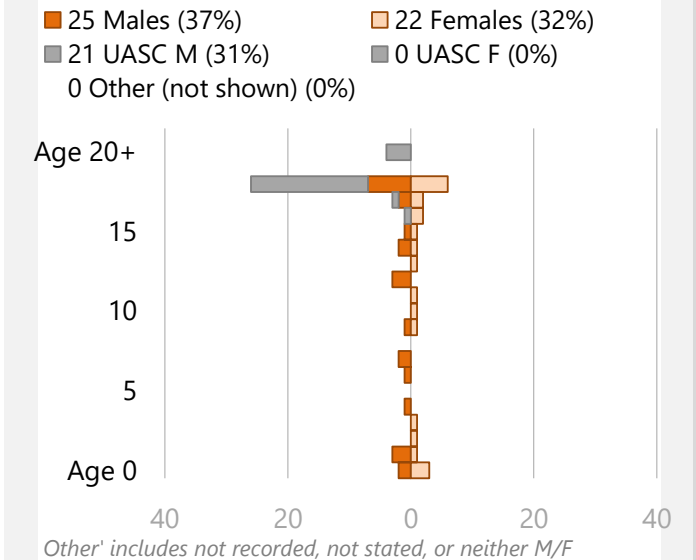
68 CLA ceased in the last 6 months

Rate of CLA ceased per 10,000 children



*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Age and gender



Other includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

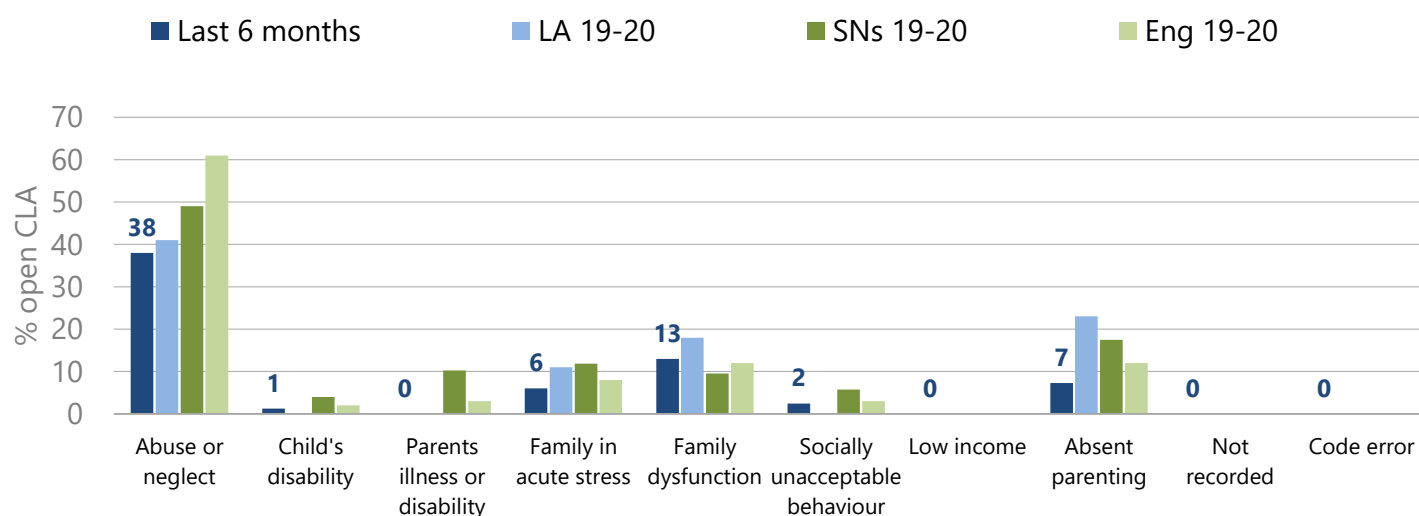
9%

6 of the 67 CLA starters were unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

4%

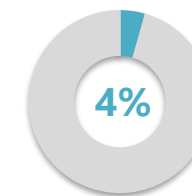
3 of the 67 CLA starters have previously been looked after

Comparing the primary need of CLA starters



Reason episode of care ceased

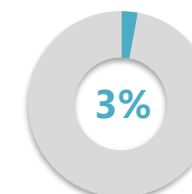
Adopted



Last 6 months 4%

2018-19 (published)
LA 7% SNs 8% Eng 12%

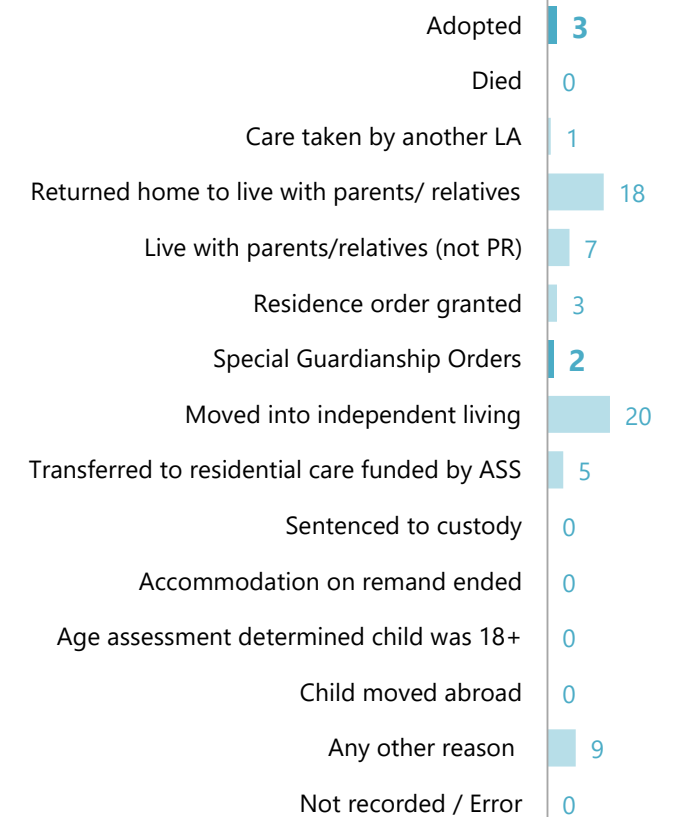
Special Guardianship Order



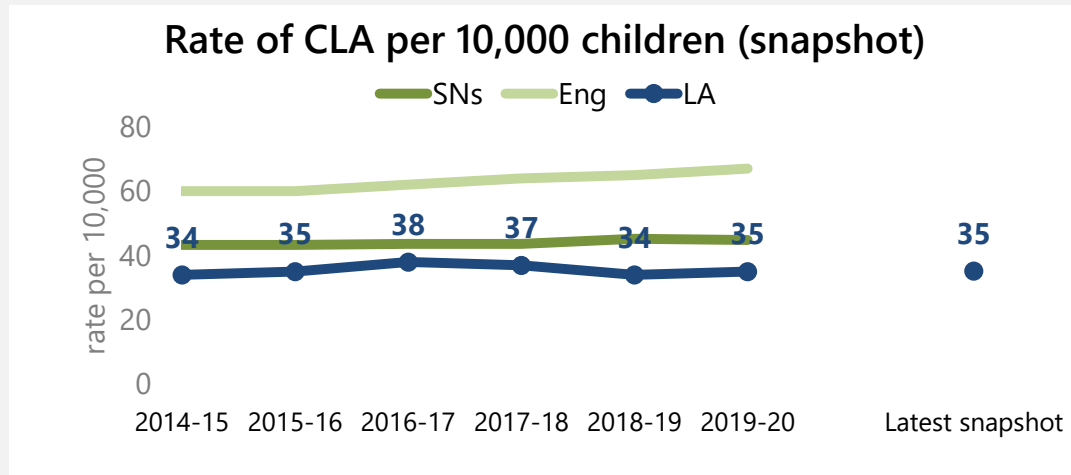
Last 6 months 3%

2018-19 (published)
LA 3% SNs 19% Eng -

Number of CLA ceased by reason in the period



330 Children Looked After (CLA) with an open episode of care



Ethnic background

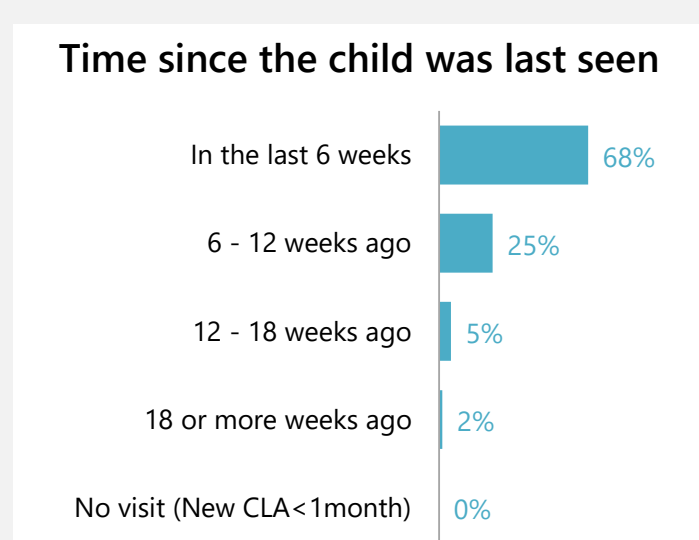
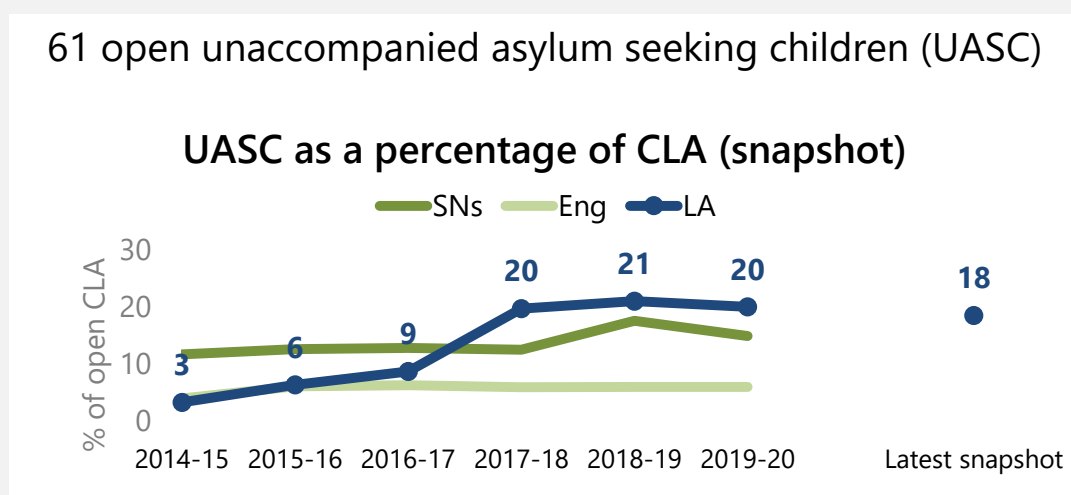
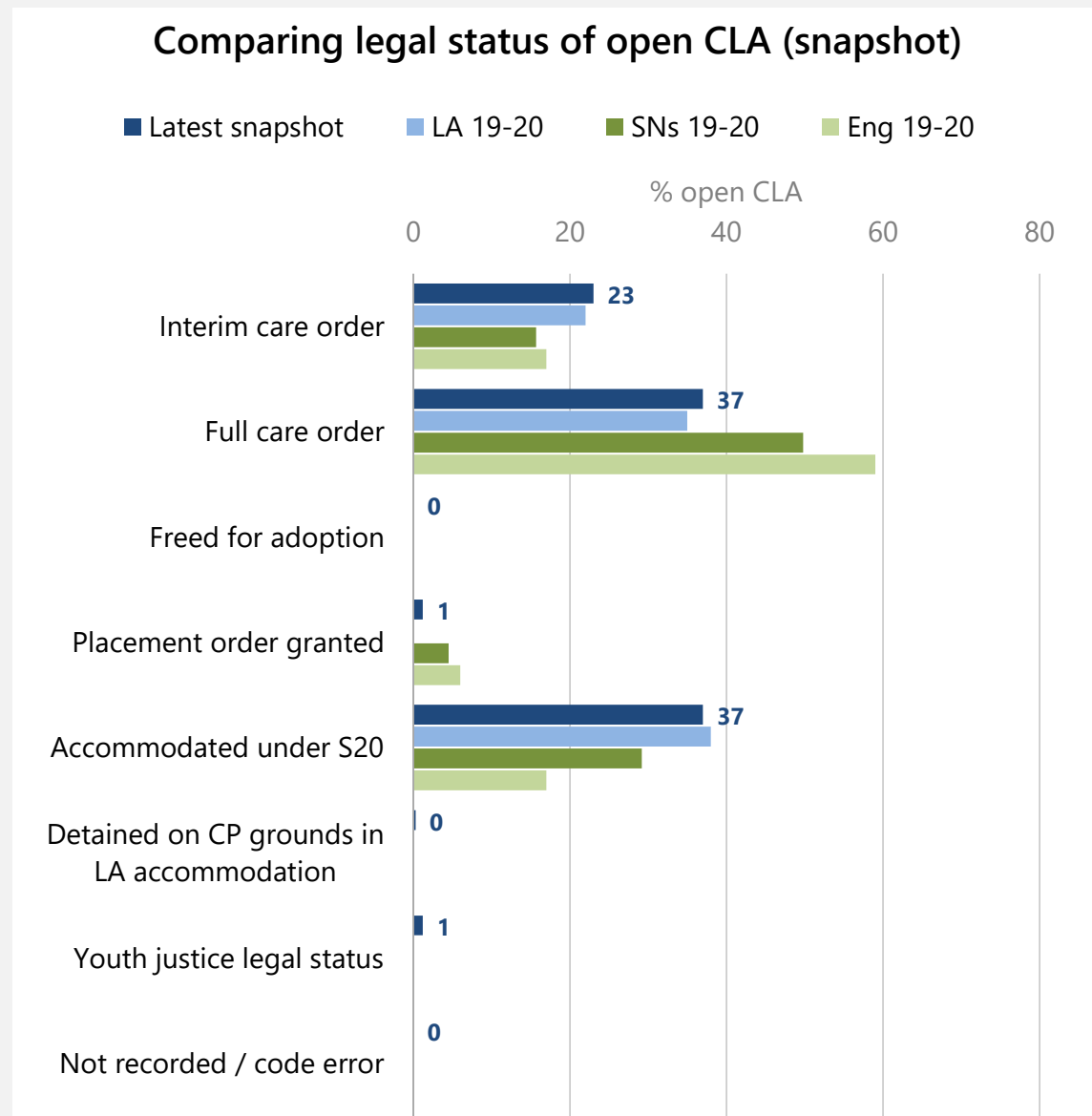
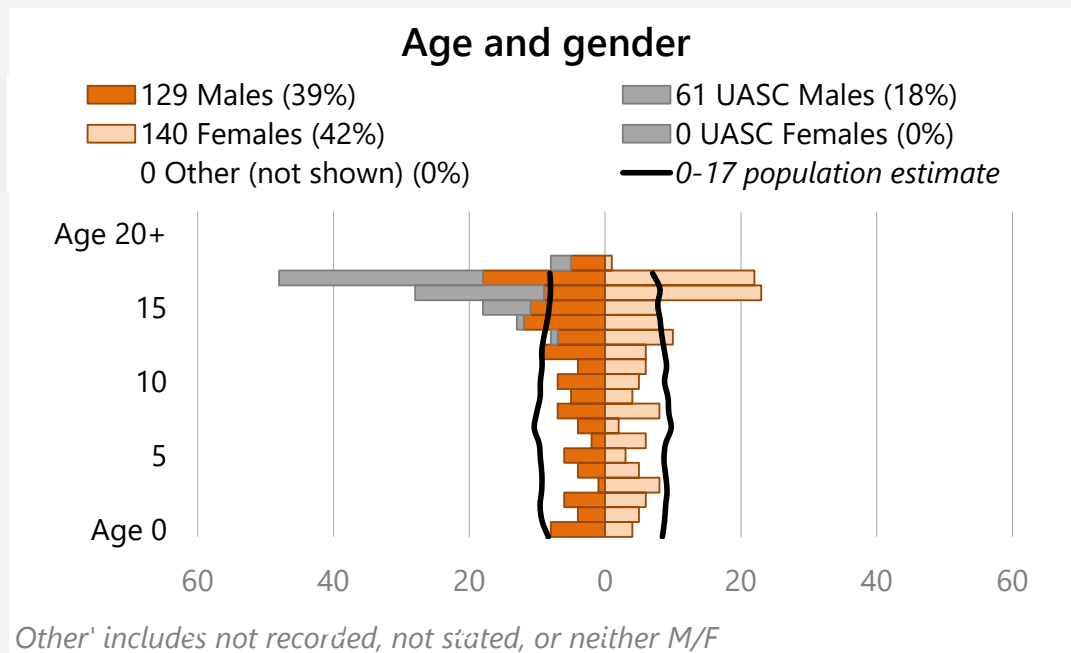
	All CLA	Not UASC	UASC
White	40%	48%	5%
Mixed	22%	27%	2%
Asian or Asian British	5%	3%	16%
Black or black British	15%	16%	10%
Other ethnic group	17%	5%	67%
Not stated	0%	0%	0%
Not recorded	0%	0%	0%

See page 22 for comparisons

28 children (8%) with a disability

Permanence plan

	Number	%
Return to family	0	0%
Adoption	0	0%
SGO/CAO	0	0%
Supported living	0	0%
L/T residential	0	0%
L/T fostering	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Not recorded	0	0%

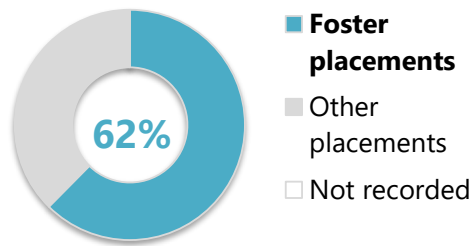


Children Looked After (CLA) placements

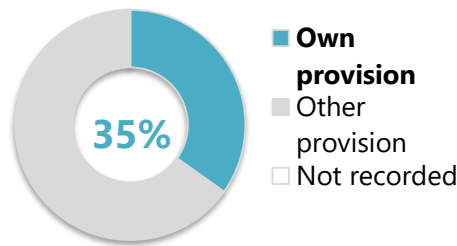
Snapshot 11/07/2022

CLA placements by type and provision

Foster placements



Own provision

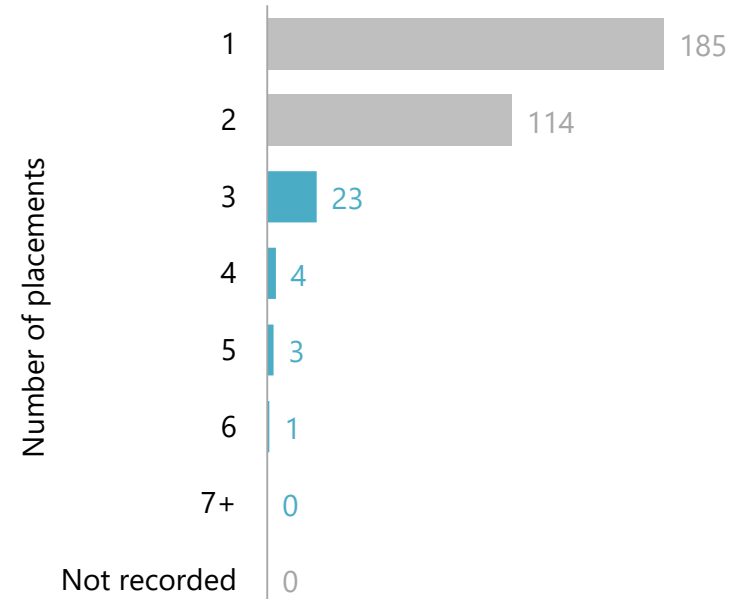


LA 2018-19 65%
SNs 2018-19 70%
Eng 2018-19 72%

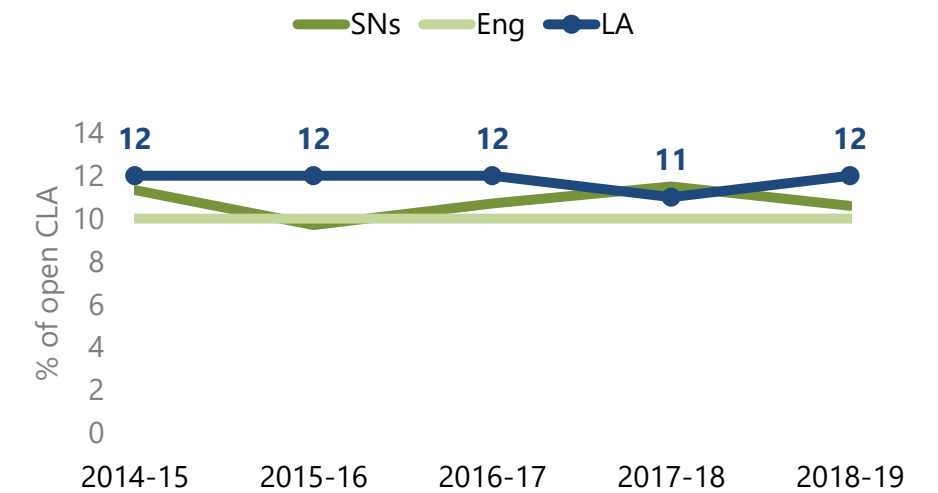
LA 2018-19 47%
SNs 2018-19 41%
Eng 2018-19 50%

Placement type (open CLA)	Own LA	Private	Other	Total
Foster placement	102	103	1	206
Placed for adoption	0	2	7	9
Placed with parents	0	0	13	13
Independent living	0	0	0	0
Residential employment	0	0	0	0
Residential accommodation	5	53	0	58
Secure Children's Homes	0	0	0	0
Children's Homes	8	26	0	34
Residential Care Home	0	0	0	0
NHS/Health Trust	0	0	1	1
Family Centre	0	3	0	3
Young Offender Institution	0	0	3	3
Residential school	0	3	0	3
Other placements	0	0	0	0
Temporary placement	0	0	0	0
Total placements	115	190	25	330

Number of placements in the last 12 months

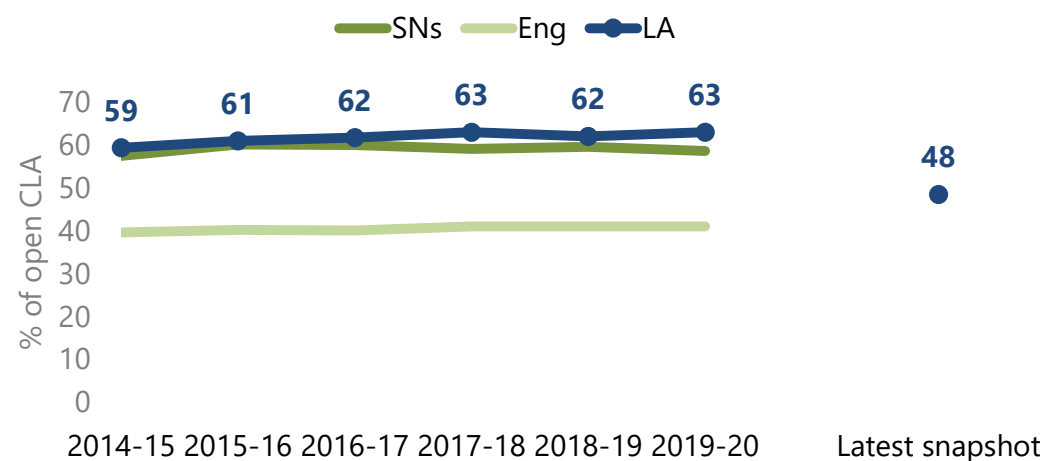


Comparing short term placement stability



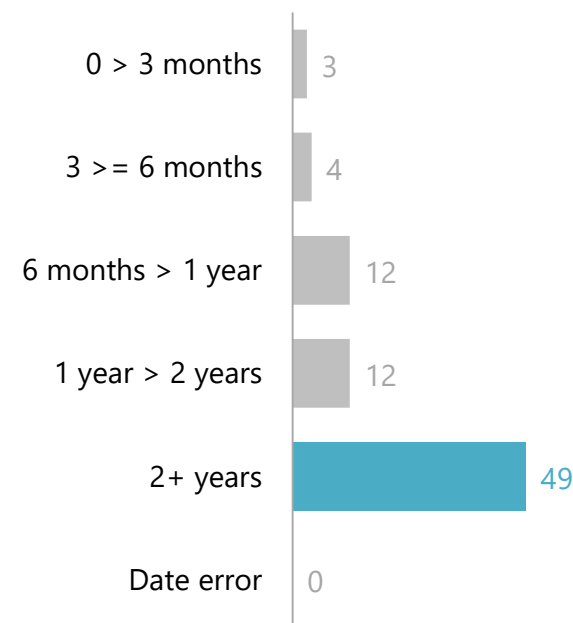
Due to limited data in the Annex A dataset, ChAT does not present short-term stability alongside published statistics

CLA placements out of borough

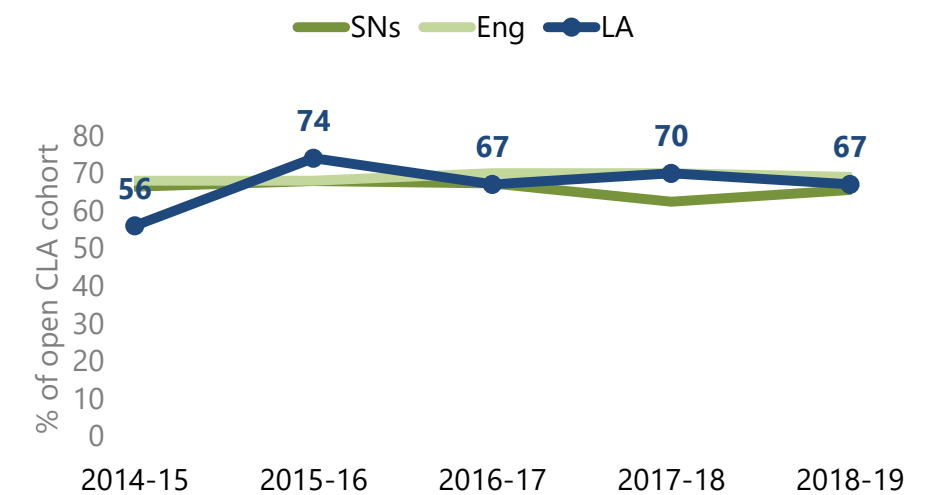


Duration of placements

Duration of latest placement for each current CLA aged under 16 who have been looked after for 2½ years or more



Comparing long term placement stability



Due to limited data in the Annex A dataset, ChAT does not present long-term stability alongside published statistics

Children Looked After (CLA) health and missing/absent from placement

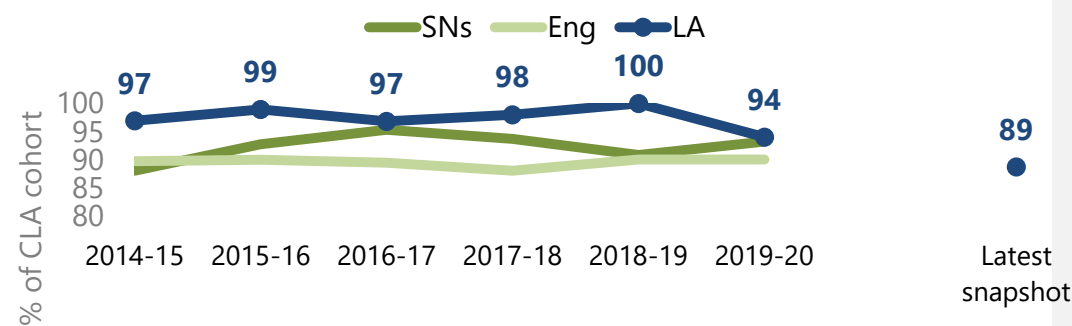
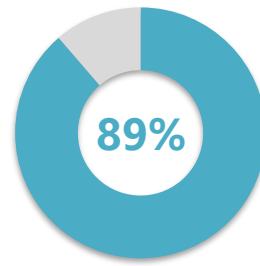
Snapshot 11/07/2022

Health

212 current open CLA looked after for at least 12 months

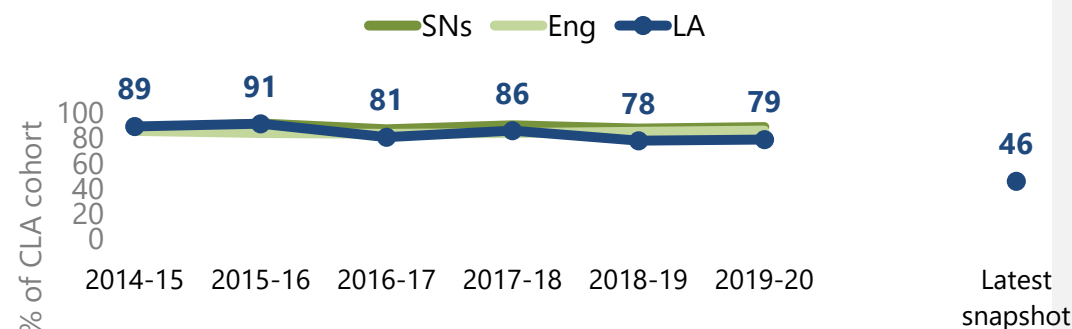
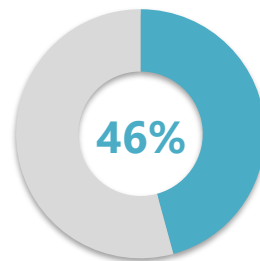
Health assessments

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months with an up to date health assessment (in the last 6 months for CLA aged under 5, and in the last 12 months for CLA aged 5-plus)



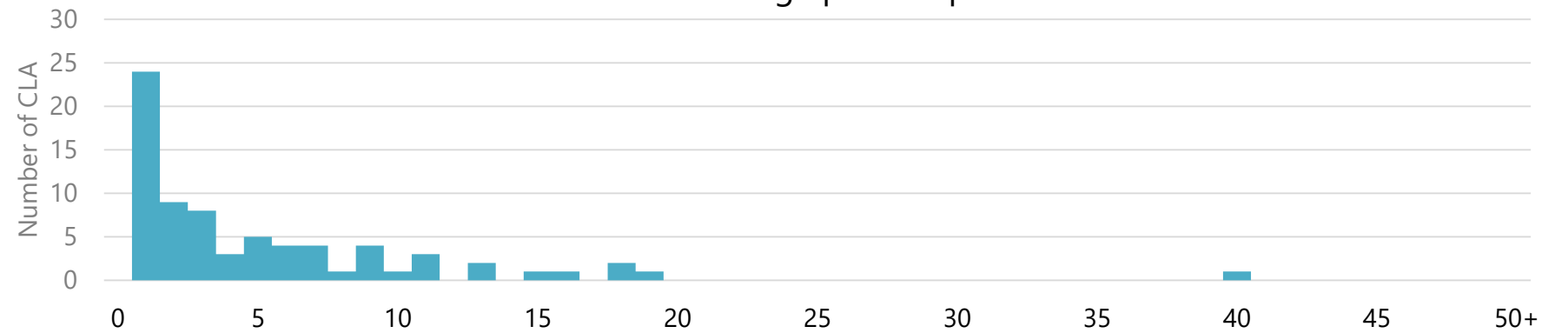
Dental checks

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months who have had a dental check in the last 12 months.



Missing from placement

Number of missing episodes per CLA

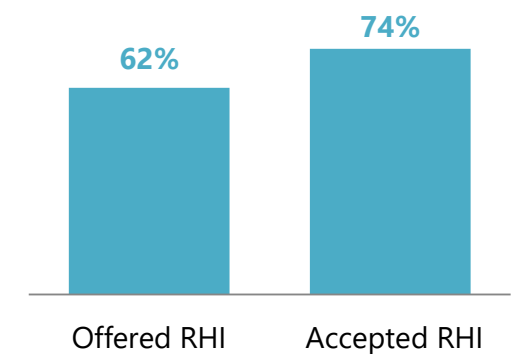


74 of 398 looked after children had a missing incident in the last 12 months

	Latest data	LA 19-20	SNs 19-20	Eng 19-20
Number of all CLA with a missing incident	74 of 398	81		
Percentage of all CLA with a missing incident	19%	16%	13%	11%
Total number of missing incidents for all CLA	394	542		
Average number of incidents per CLA who went missing	5.3	6.7	6.4	6.5

Missing incidents - return home interviews

	Latest data	
Missing children offered return interview	46 of 74	62%
Missing children not offered return interview	17 of 74	23%
Missing children return interview offer not recorded	0 of 74	0%
Missing children where return interview was n/a	11 of 74	15%



	Latest data	
Missing children accepted return interview	34 of 46	74%
Missing children not accepted return interview	11 of 46	24%
Missing children return interview acceptance not recorded	1 of 46	2%

Absent from placement

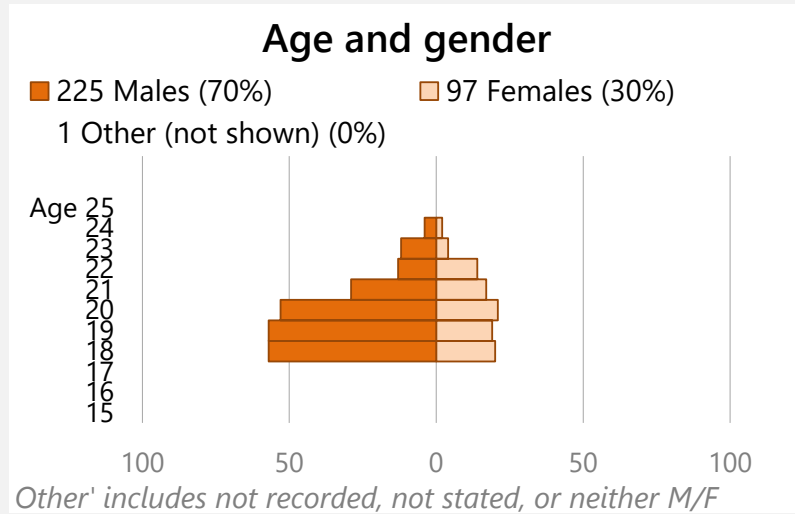
0 of 398 looked after children had an absent incident in the last 12 months

	Latest data	LA 19-20	SNs 19-20	Eng 19-20
Number of all CLA with an absent incident	0 of 398	51		
Percentage of all CLA with an absent incident	0%	10%	7%	3%
Total number of absent incidents for all CLA	0	240		
Average number of incidents per CLA who were absent	-	4.7	4.0	4.0

Care leavers currently in receipt of leaving care services

Snapshot 11/07/2022

323 care leavers

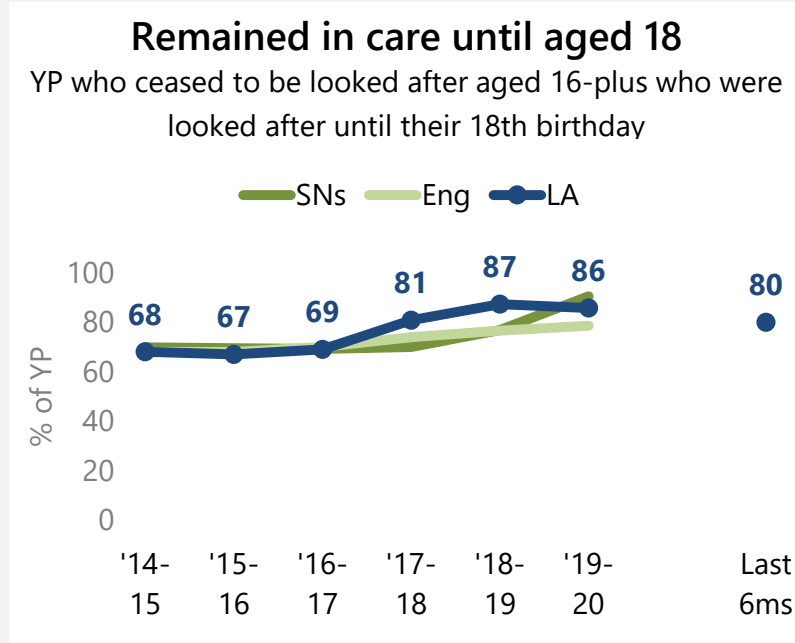


Ethnic background

White	28%
Mixed	12%
Asian or Asian British	9%
Black or black British	23%
Other ethnic group	27%
Not stated	1%
Not recorded	0%

See page 22 for comparisons

27 (8%) care leavers with a disability



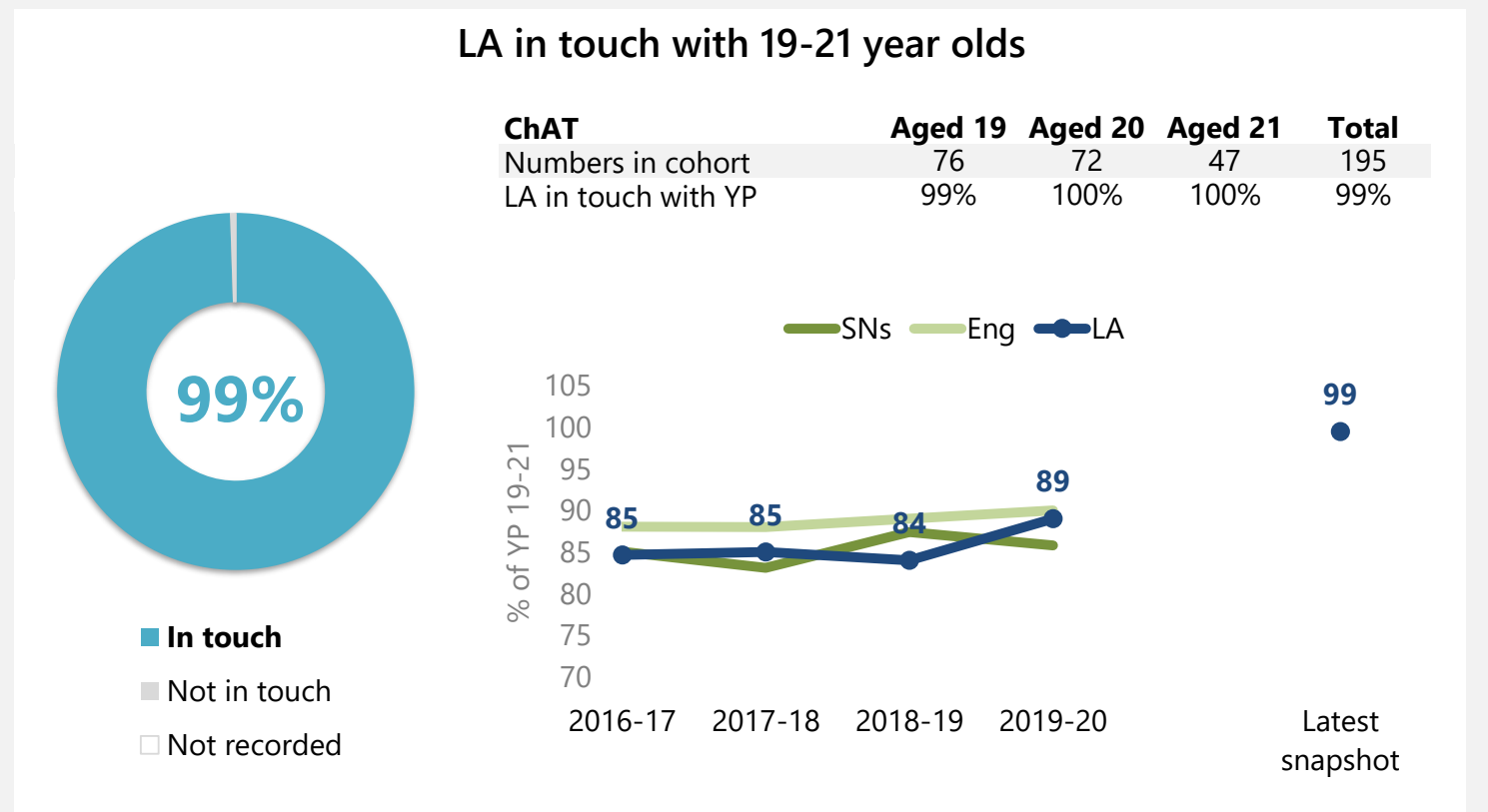
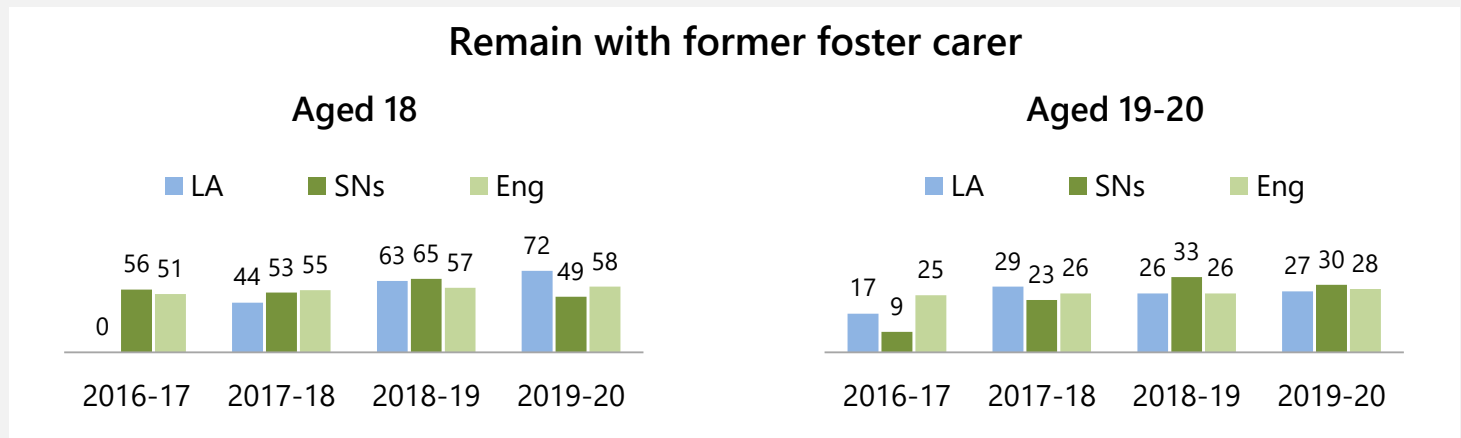
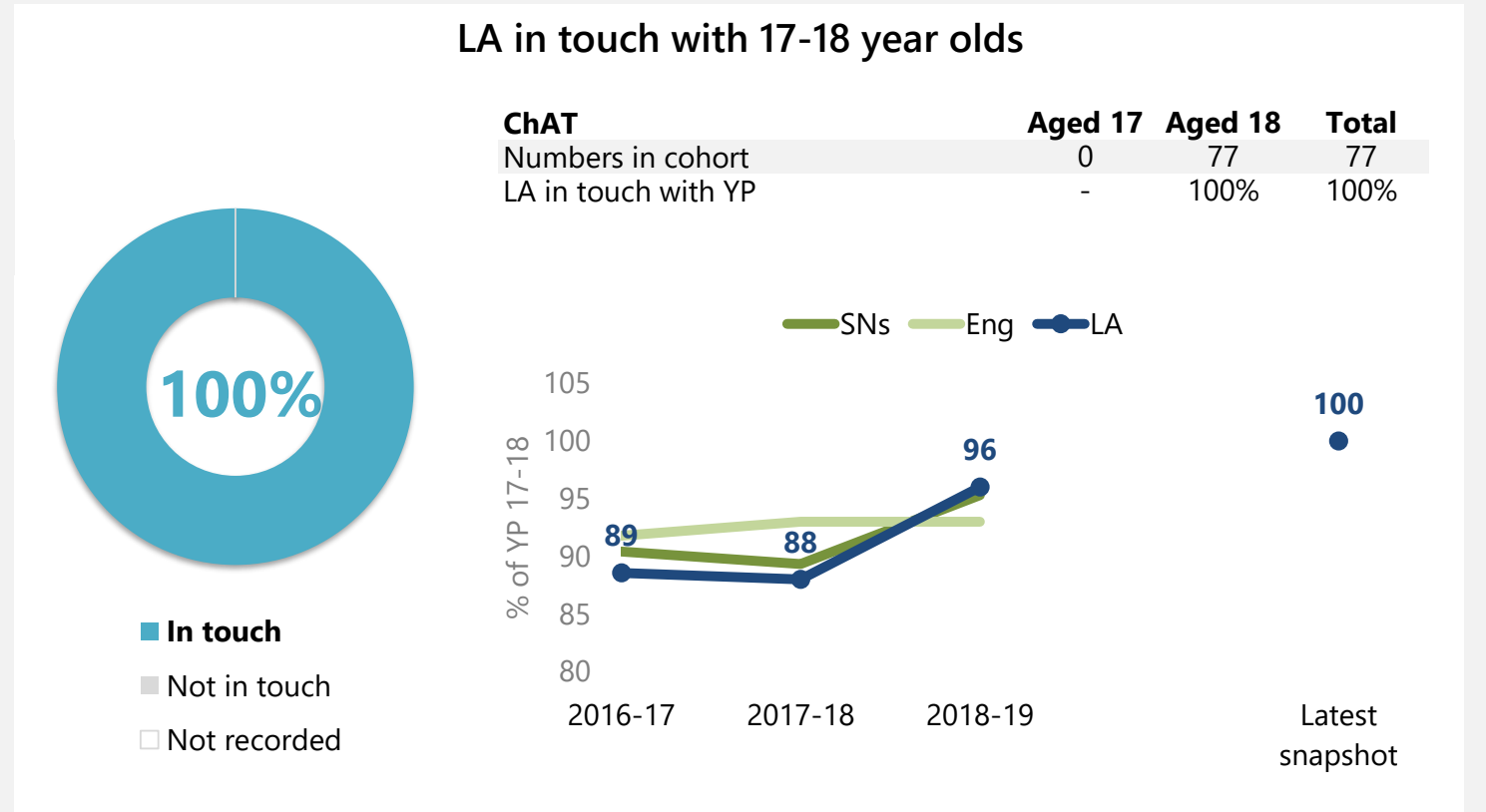
Eligibility category

Relevant	0
Former relevant	321
Qualifying	1
Other	1
Not recorded	0

Relevant = YP aged 16-17 no longer looked after and eligible for leaving care services.

Former relevant = YP aged 18-25 eligible for leaving care services.

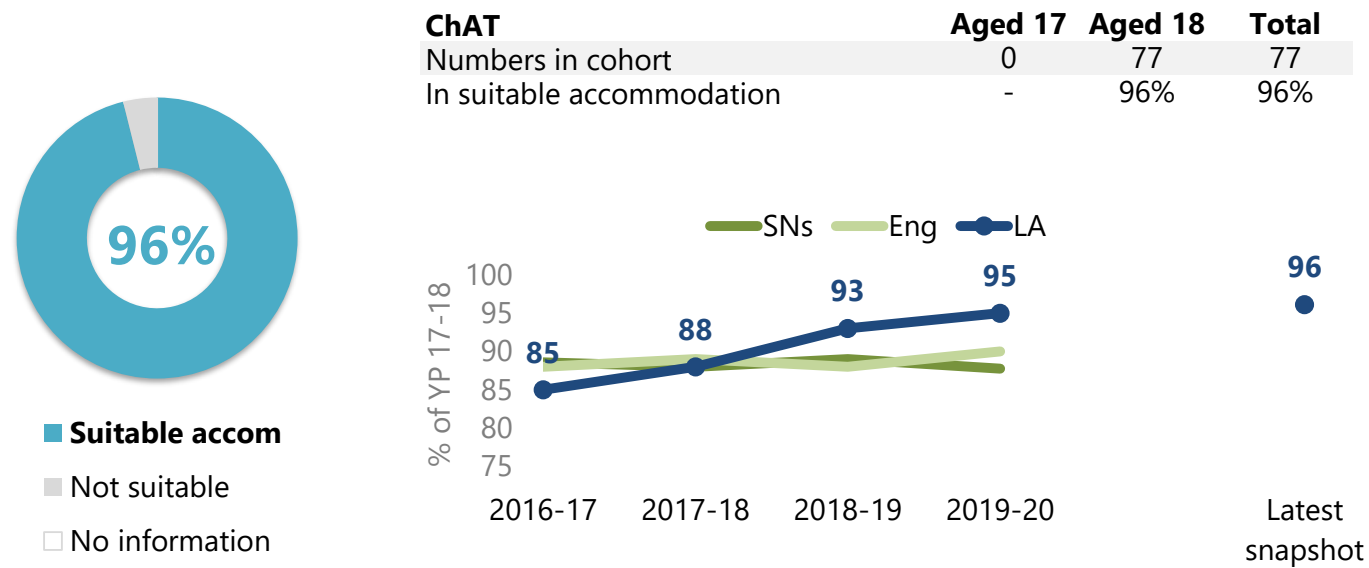
Qualifying = YP aged 18-25 in receipt of support but not eligible for full leaving care services.



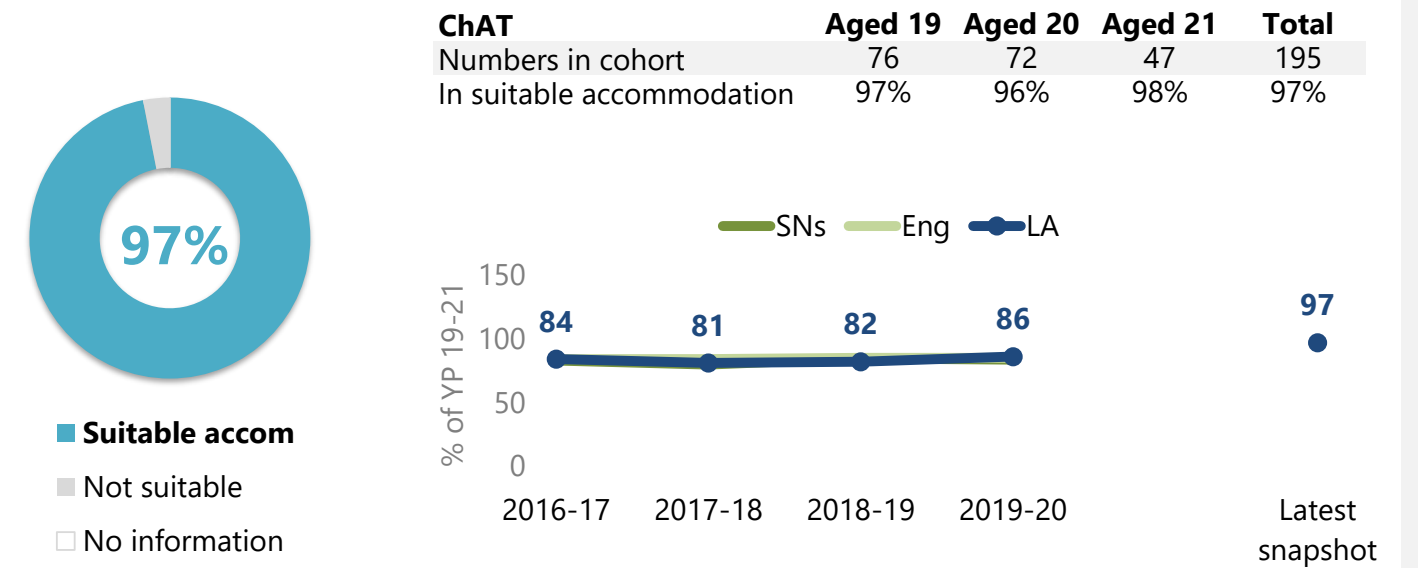
Care leavers accommodation suitability and type

Snapshot 11/07/2022

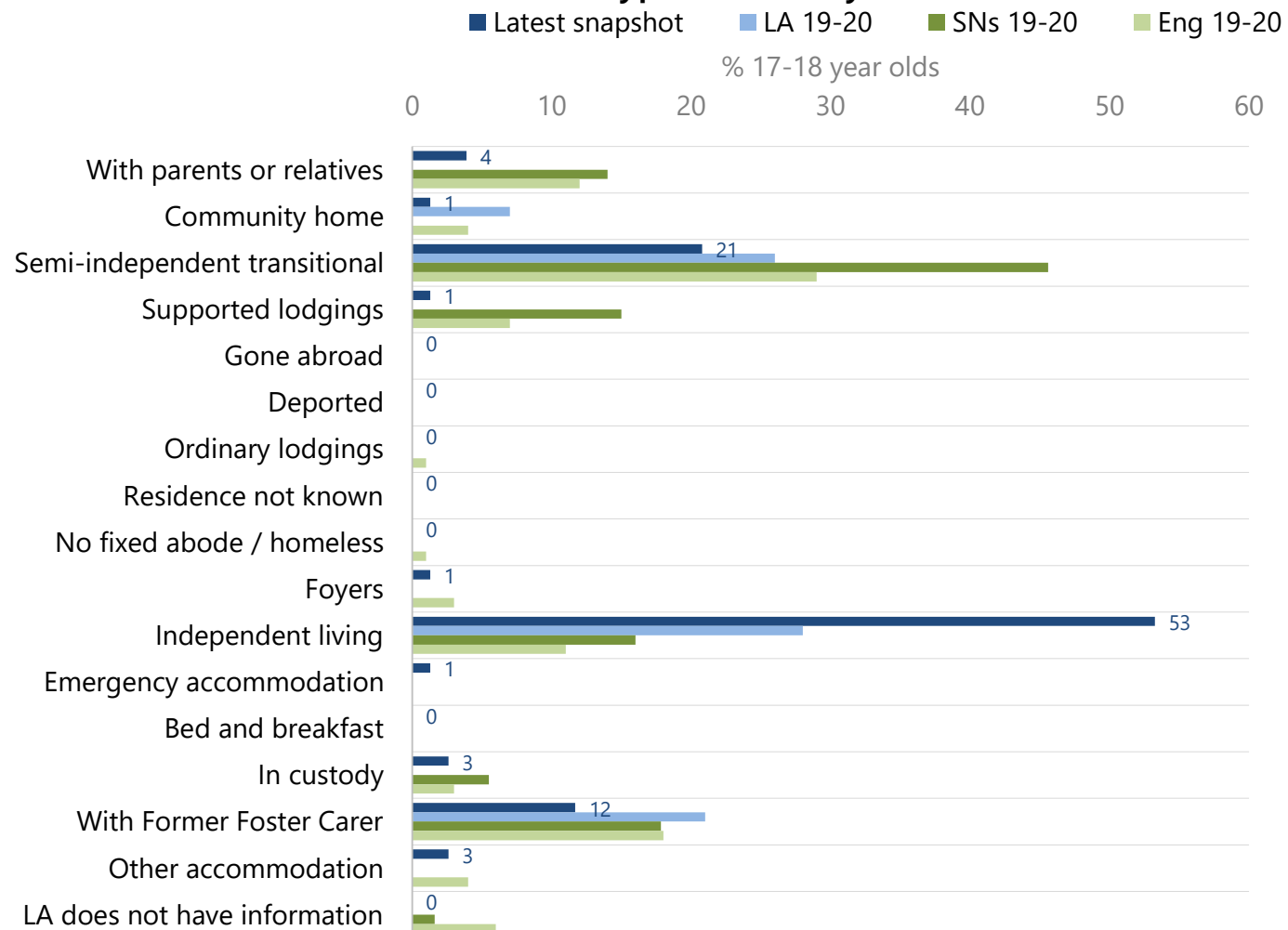
Accommodation suitability of 17-18 year olds



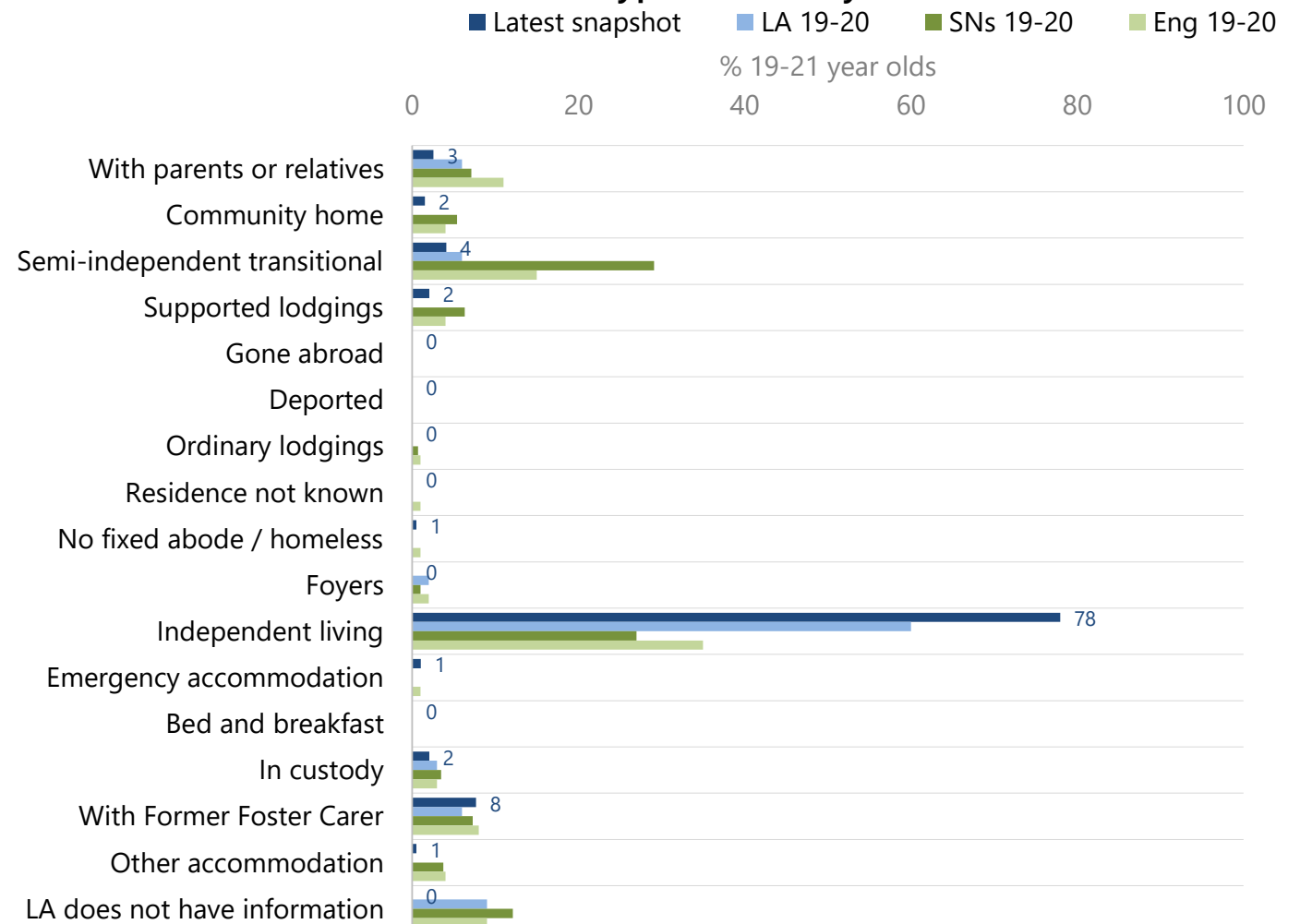
Accommodation suitability of 19-21 year olds



Accommodation types of 17-18 year olds



Accommodation types of 19-21 year olds

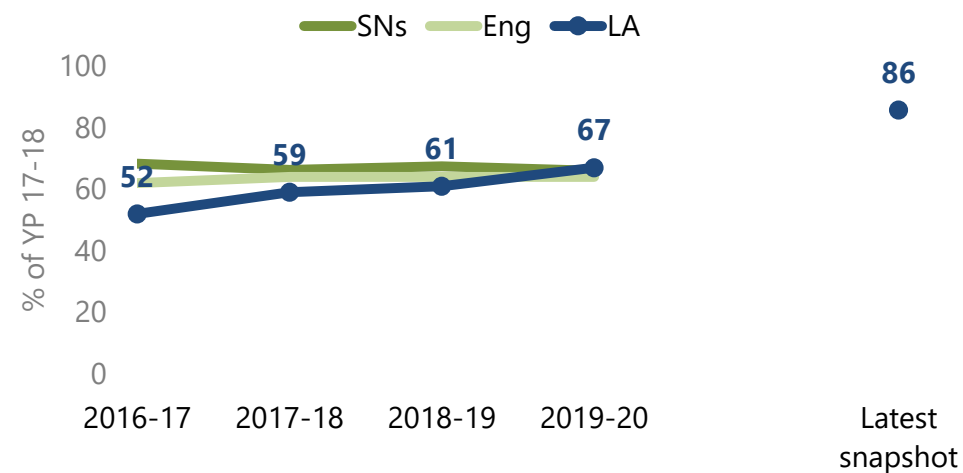
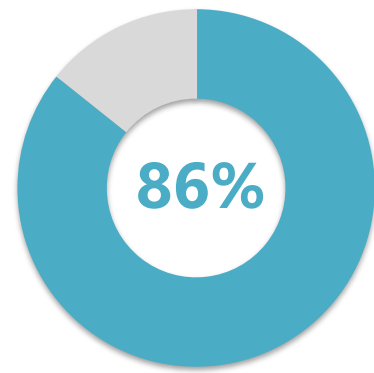


Care leavers activity (Education, Employment, or Training)

Snapshot 11/07/2022

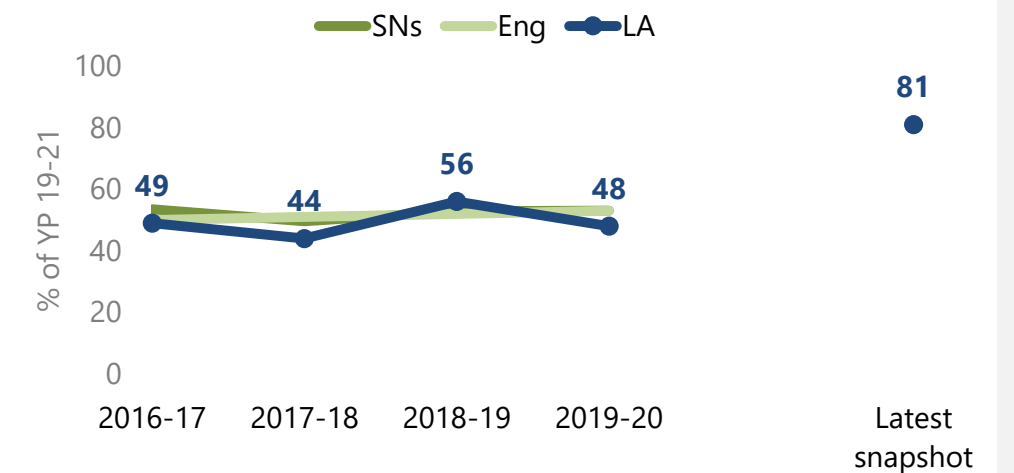
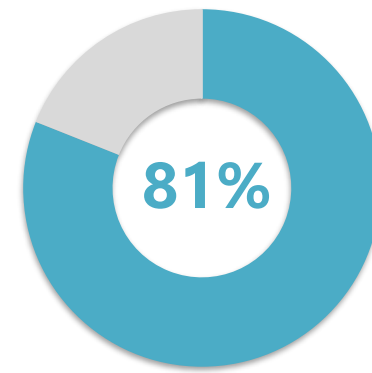
Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 17-18 year olds

ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	0	77	77
In EET	-	86%	86%



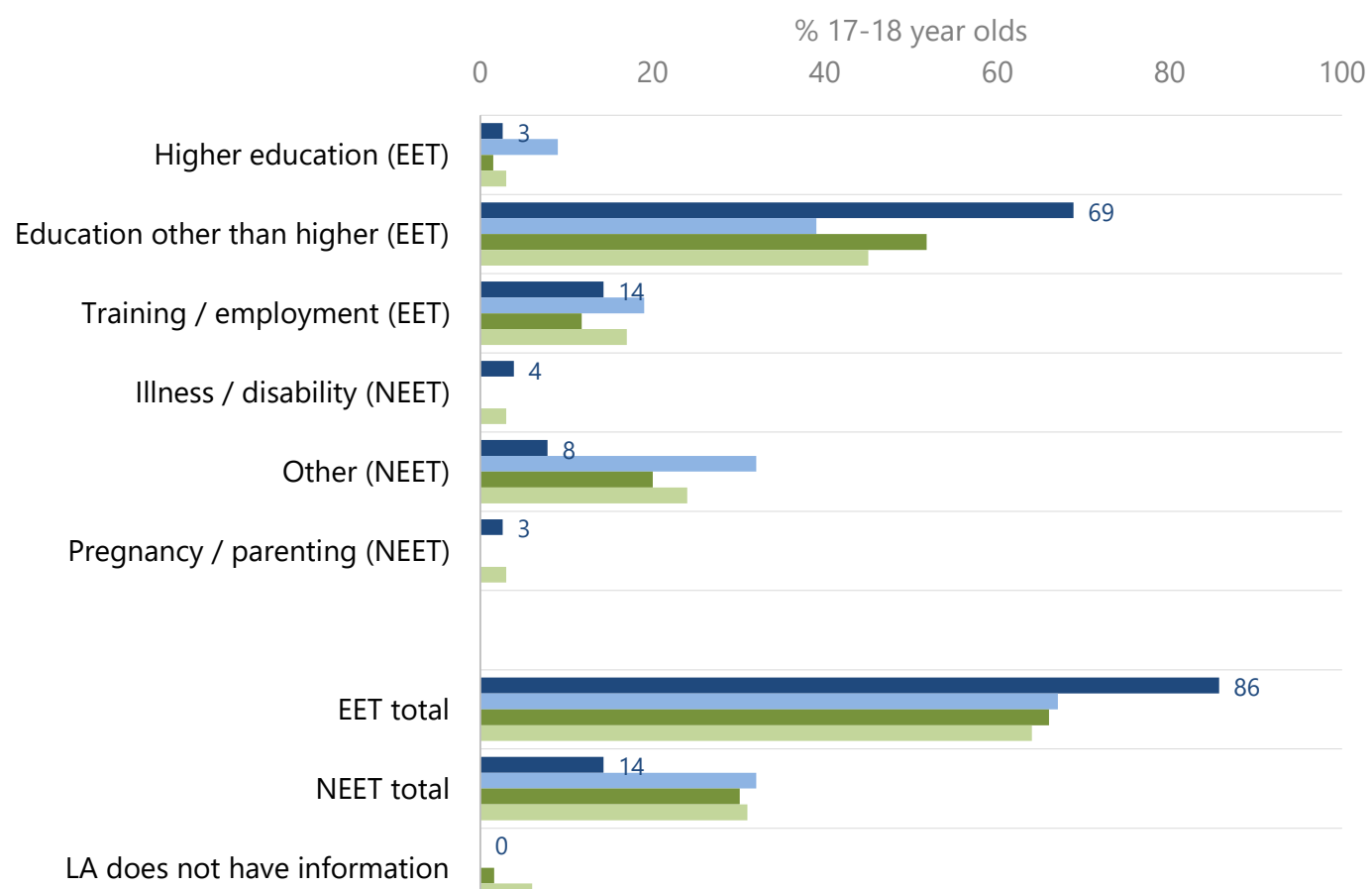
Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 19-21 year olds

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	76	72	47	195
In EET	88%	78%	74%	81%



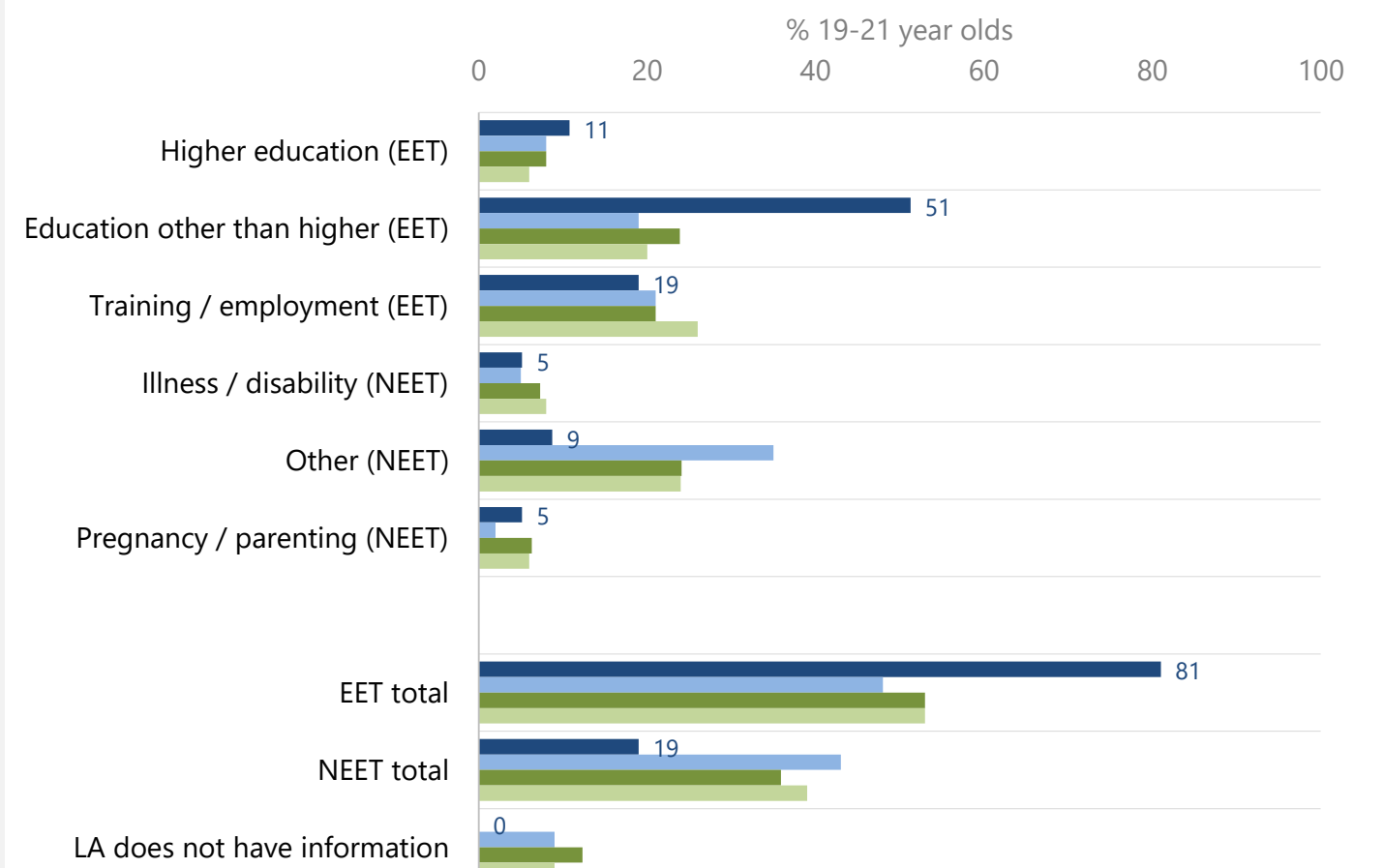
Activity types of 17-18 year olds

Legend: Latest snapshot, LA 19-20, SNs 19-20, Eng 19-20



Activity types of 19-21 year olds

Legend: Latest snapshot, LA 19-20, SNs 19-20, Eng 19-20



Children adopted, waiting to be adopted, or had an adoption decision reversed in the last 12 months from 12/07/2021 to 11/07/2022

36 children

- 3 Child/ren adopted last 12 months
- 23 Child/ren waiting to be adopted
- (7 Child/ren waiting with placement order)
- 3 Child/ren with decision reversed

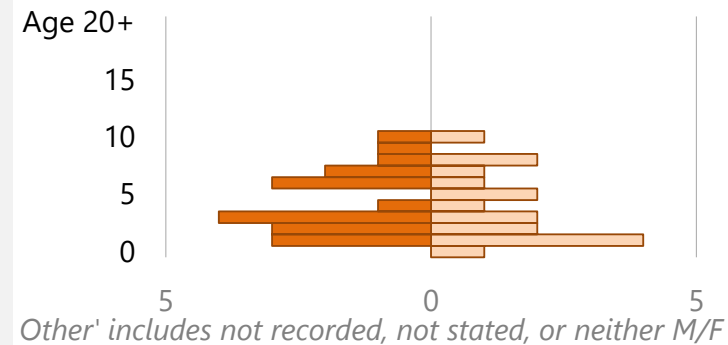
Ethnic background

White	58%
Mixed	28%
Asian or Asian British	11%
Black or black British	3%
Other ethnic group	0%
Not stated	0%
Not recorded	0%

See page 22 for comparisons

Age and gender

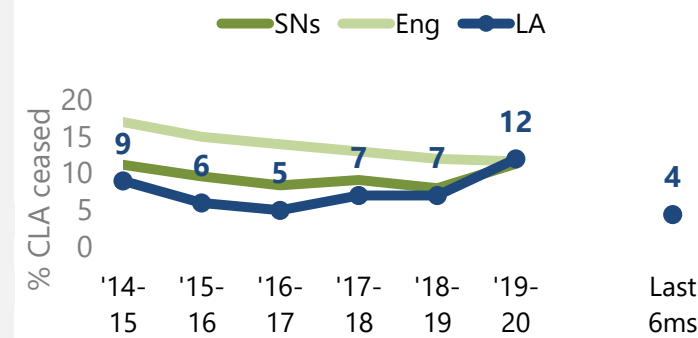
18 Males (50%) 18 Females (50%)
0 Other (not shown) (0%)



1 children (3%) with a disability

Of the 68 children who ceased to be looked after in the last 6 months, 3 was/were adopted (4%)

Children ceased who were adopted



Children aged 5-plus who were adopted

0%

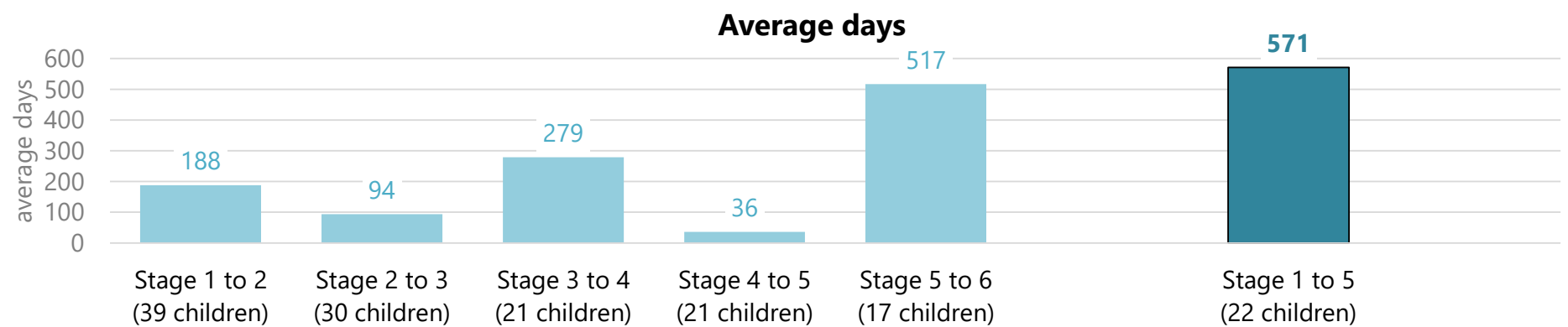
0 of the 56 children aged 5-plus who ceased to be looked after in the last 6 months were adopted

Comparing 5-plus adoptions

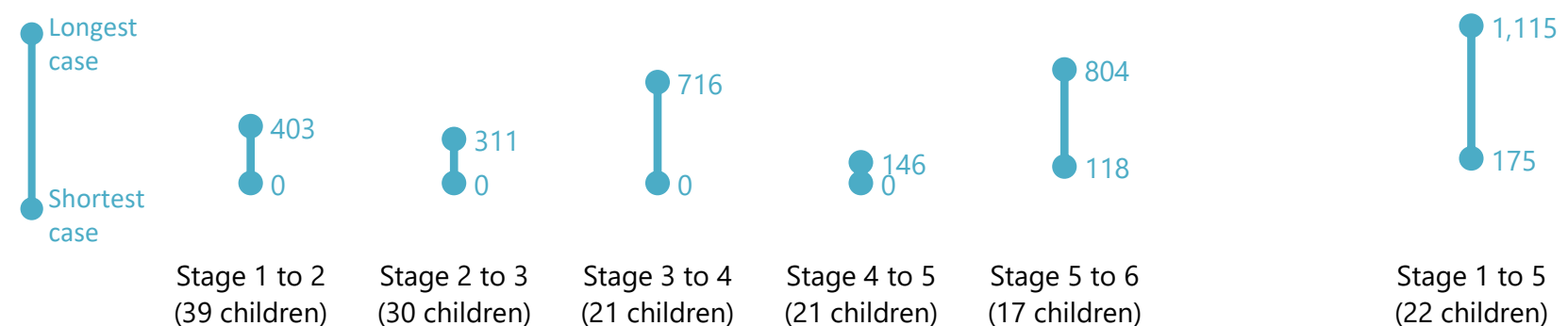
LA last 6 months	0.0%
LA 2013-16 (3 yr average)	2.0%
SNs 2013-16 (3 yr average)	5.0%
Eng 2013-16 (3 yr average)	5.0%

Timeliness of each stage of the adoption process

Average duration of each stage (number of days)



Range in days between shortest and longest cases at each stage

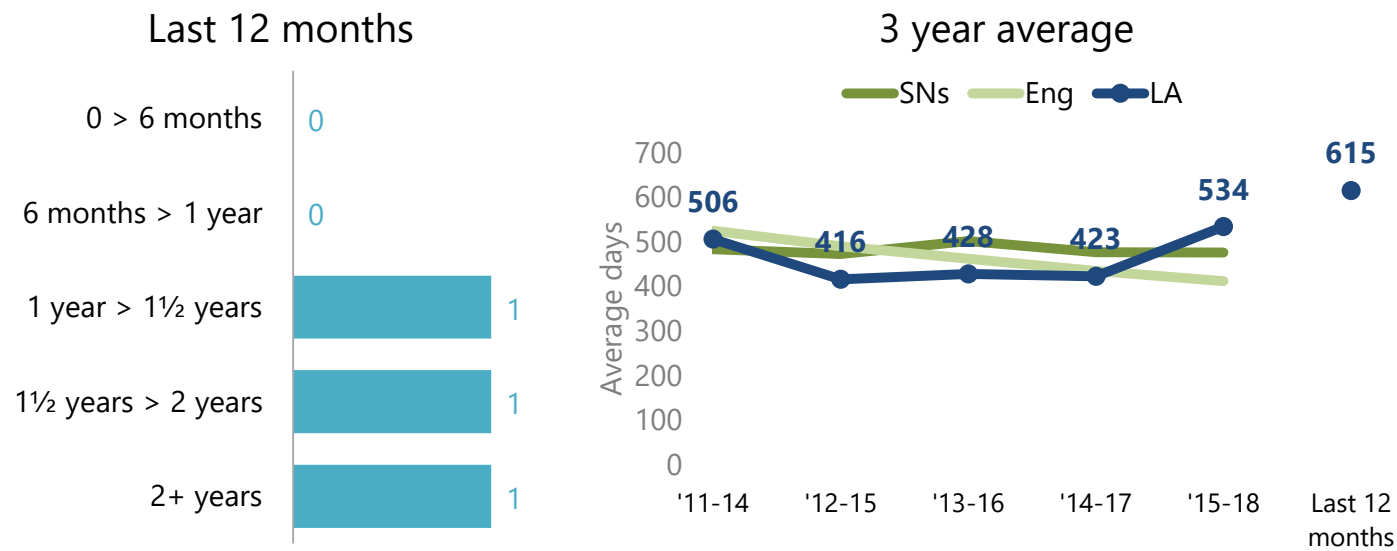


Adoption benchmarking

from 12/07/2021
to 11/07/2022

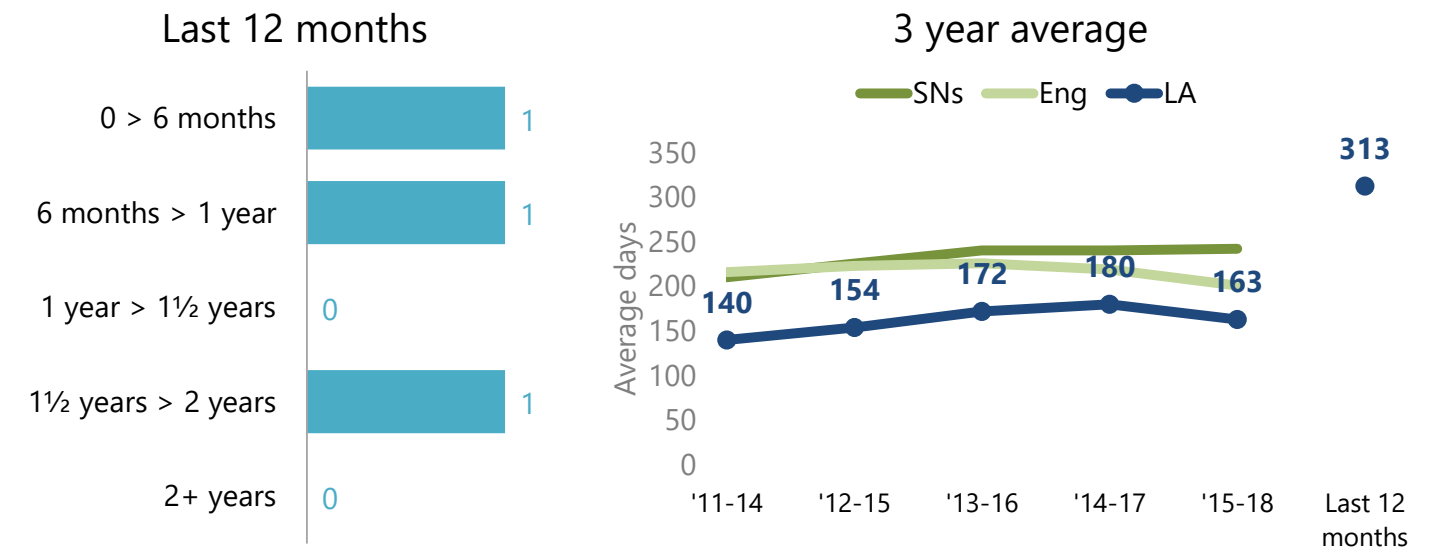
(A10) Time between entering care and placed with family for adopted children

615 days Average number of days between entering care and moving in with adoptive family for adopted children (adjusted for foster carer adoptions)
3 children



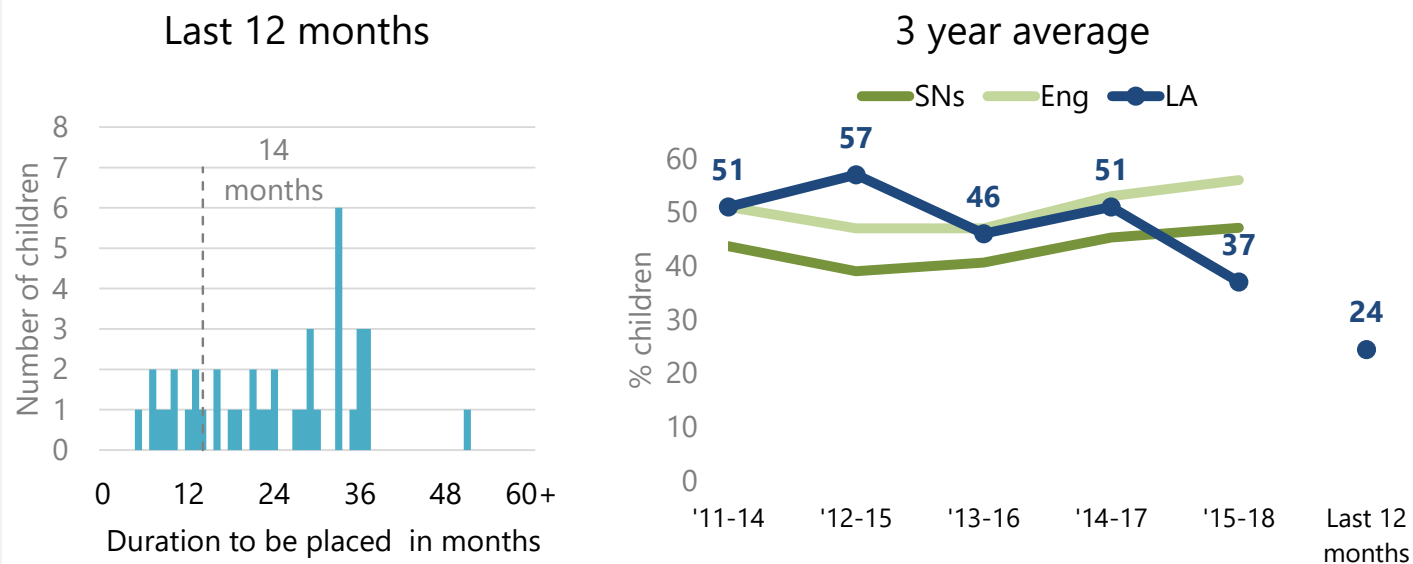
(A2) Time between placement order and deciding on a match

313 days The average number of days from the date of the placement order to the date the child was matched to prospective adopters
3 children



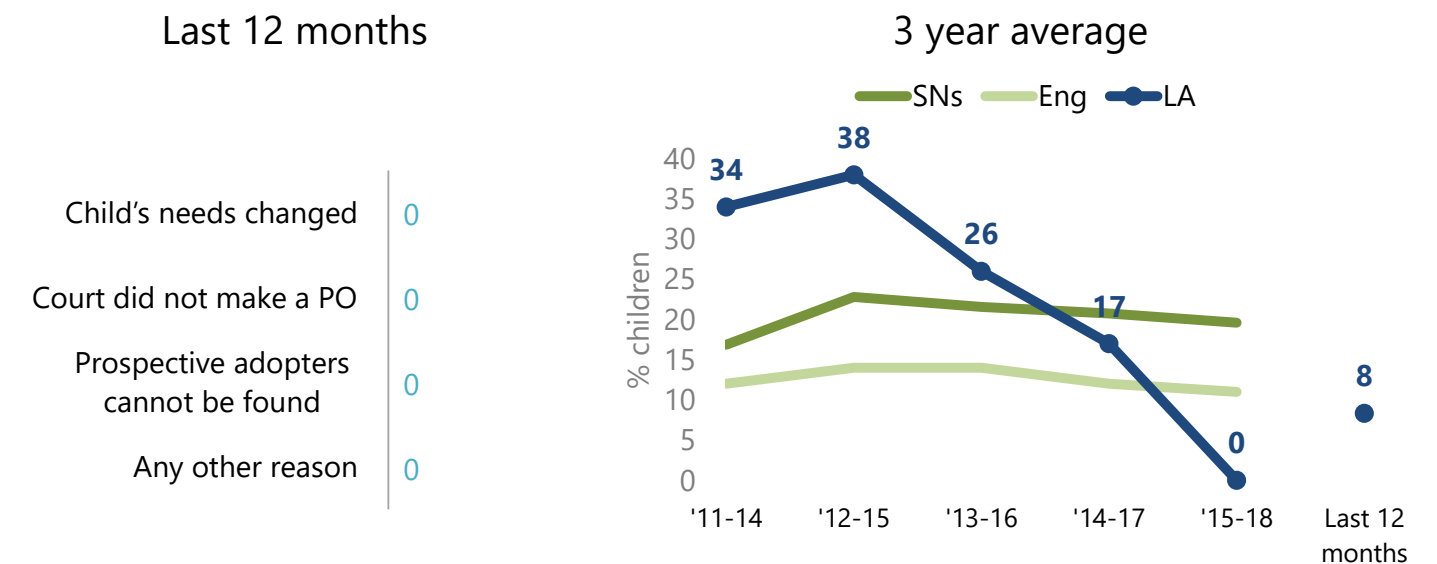
(A3) Time between entering care and placed for adoption

24% Children placed who waited less than the threshold between entering care and being placed for adoption (threshold: 14 months for 2013-16)
10/41 children



(A5) Permanence decision changed away from adoption

8% Children where there was a decision that the child should no longer be placed for adoption
3/36 children



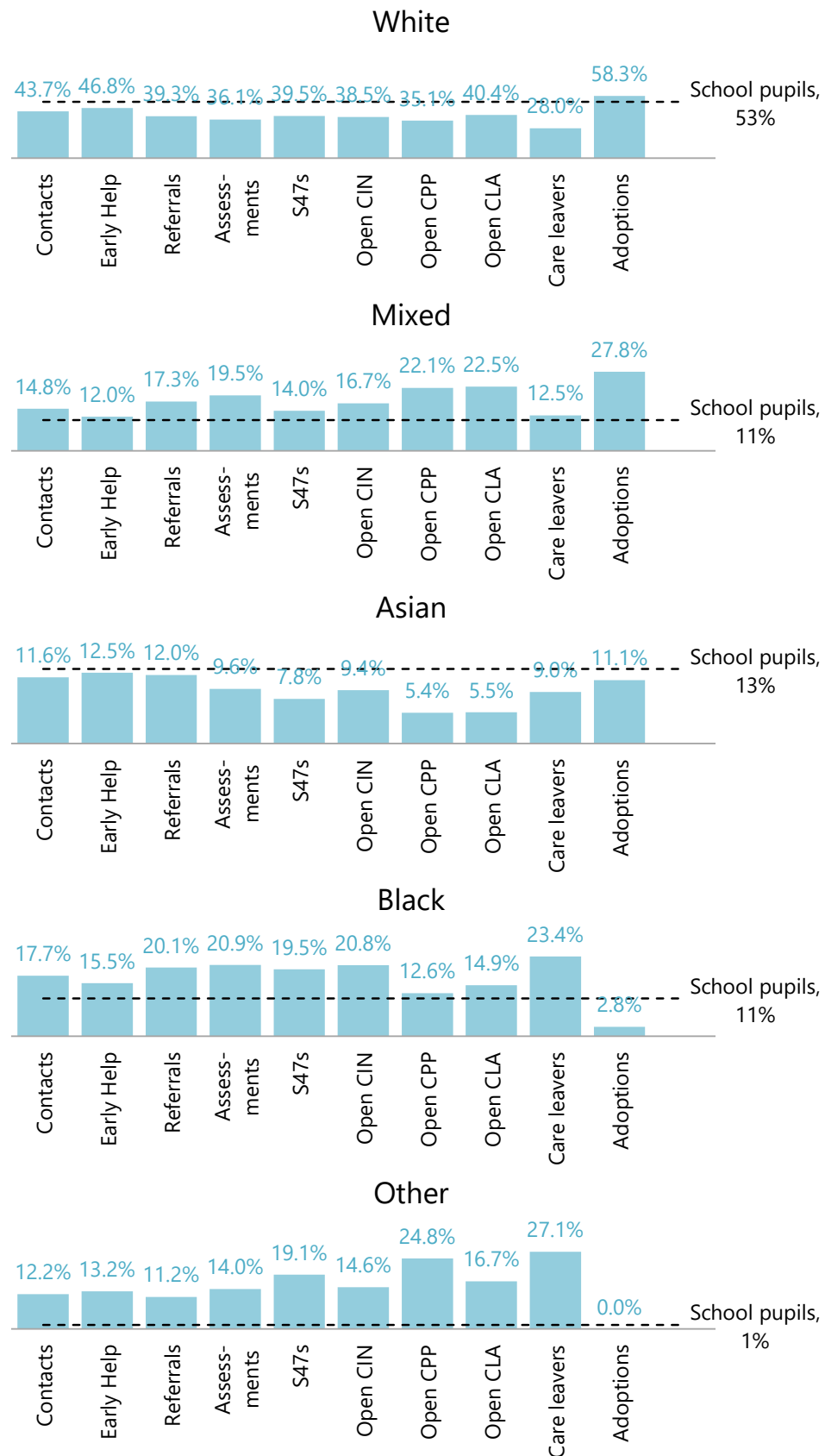
DATA NOW HELD BY THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

Demographics of children across all areas of children's social care

Snapshot 11/07/2022

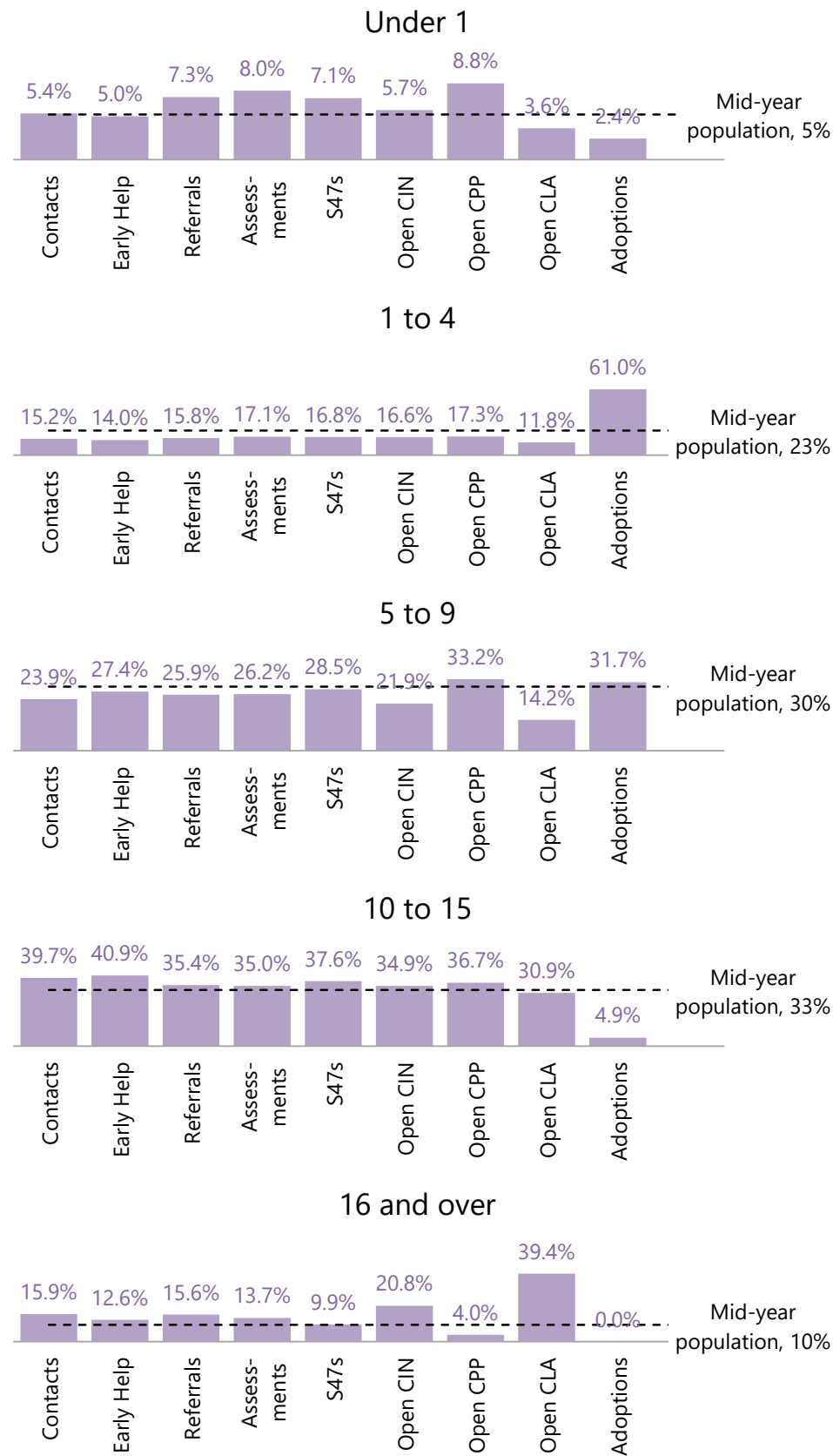
Ethnicity

ChAT* compared to pupils in the LA schools (Jan-20)
*percentage of known ethnicity only



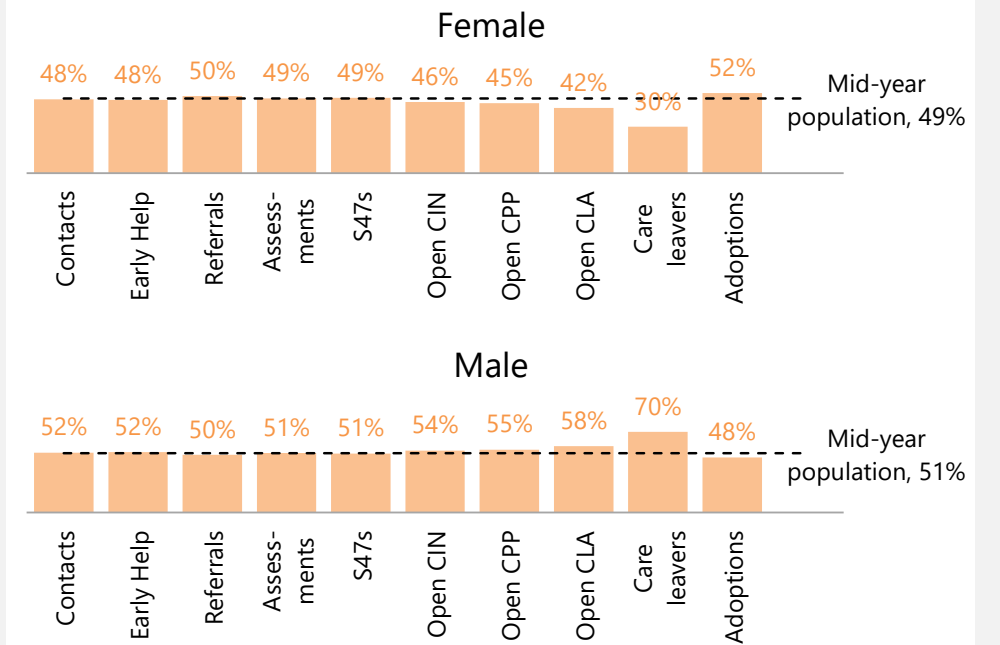
Age

ChAT* compared to mid-year population estimates (ONS-2019)
*percentage of known age only



Gender

ChAT* compared to mid-year population estimates (ONS-2019)
*percentage of Male / Female genders only, excludes Other



Comparing CLA demographics

CLA figures compared to published population statistics

Ethnicity

	LA Latest snapshot			LA 2020			Eng 2020		
	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference
White	40	53	lower -24%	39	53	lower -26%	74	74	no dif 0%
Mixed	22	11	higher 108%	22	11	higher 104%	10	6	higher 59%
Asian	5	13	lower -58%	6	13	lower -54%	4	12	lower -65%
Black	15	11	higher 34%	15	11	higher 36%	7	6	higher 21%
Other	17	1	higher 1096%	16	1	higher 1048%	4	0	higher 769%

Age

	LA Latest snapshot			LA 2020			Eng 2020		
	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference
Under 1	4	5	lower -31%	5	5	lower -4%	5	5	lower -3%
1 to 4	12	23	lower -48%	10	23	lower -56%	14	22	lower -37%
5 to 9	14	30	lower -52%	13	30	lower -56%	18	29	lower -39%
10 to 15	31	33	lower -5%	35	33	higher 7%	39	33	higher 18%
16-plus	39	10	higher 305%	36	10	higher 270%	24	10	higher 139%

Gender

	LA Latest snapshot			LA 2020			Eng 2020		
	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference
Male	58	51	higher 12%	59	51	higher 15%	56	51	higher 9%
Female	42	49	lower -13%	41	49	lower -16%	44	49	lower -10%

Comparisons of headline figures and performance data to published statistics

The table below shows the Local Authority's latest data for each indicator as calculated in ChAT, and the direction of travel since the latest published statistics (where available).

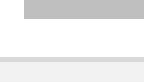
Decreasing, low is good



Increasing, high is good



No change, not RAG rated



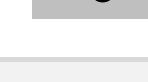
Lowest 25% quartile, low is good



Highest 25% quartile, high is good



Mid 50% range, not RAG-rated



Indicator	Latest data (ChAT)			Latest published statistics for all local authorities					Date
	LA	Direction of travel		LA	SNs	Eng	LA compared to mid-50% range of all LAs		
Referrals received (annual rate per 10,000 of children)	321	Increase	➤	300	531	535	Lower	○	2019-20
Referrals to social care that were within 12 months of a previous referral (%)	13	Decrease	➤	16	19	21	Lower	○	2019-20
Assessments completed (annual rate per 10,000 of children)	231	Decrease	➤	328	537	554	Lower	○	2019-20
Assessments completed within 45 working days (%)	72	Decrease	➤	84	84	84	In range	○	2019-20
Children subject to section 47 enquiries (annual rate per 10,000 of children)	99	Increase	➤	80	157	167	Lower	○	2019-20
Children subject of an initial child protection conference (annual rate per 10,000 of children)	24	Decrease	➤	27	55	64	Lower	○	2019-20
Initial Child Protection Conferences held within 15 working days of the start of the section 47 enquiry (%)	79	Decrease	➤	80	83	78	In range	○	2019-20
Children in need (snapshot rate per 10,000 children)	162	Decrease	➤	198	317	324	Lower	○	2019-20
Children who are the subject of a child protection plan (snapshot rate per 10,000 children)	24	Increase	➤	17	37	43	Lower	○	2019-20
Children who became the subject of a CP plan for a second or subsequent time (%)	6	Decrease	➤	12	20	22	Lower	○	2019-20
Children who ceased to be on a CP plan whose plan lasted 2 years or more (%)	1	-	↑ ↑	c	5	4	Higher	○	2019-20
Children who are looked after (snapshot rate per 10,000 children)	35	Increase	➤	35	45	67	Lower	○	2019-20
Children looked after who had a missing incident in the period (%)	19	Increase	➤	16	13	11	Higher	○	2019-20
Children looked after who were away without authorisation in the period (%)	0	Decrease	➤	10	7	3	Higher	○	2019-20
Children looked after who had their teeth checked by a dentist in the last 12 months (%)	46	Decrease	➤	79	89	86	Lower	○	2019-20
Children looked after who had their annual health assessment (%)	89	Decrease	➤	94	93	90	In range	○	2019-20
Children who ceased to be looked after in the period who were adopted (%)	4	Decrease	➤	12	11	12	In range	○	2019-20
Children who ceased to be looked after in the period due to a Special Guardianship Order (%)	3	-	↑ ↑	-	-	-	Higher	○	2019-20
Children leaving care over the age of 16 who remained looked after until their 18th birthday (%)	80	Decrease	➤	86	90	79	In range	○	2019-20
Care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation (%)	97	Increase	➤	86	84	85	In range	○	2019-20
Care leavers aged 19-21 in education, employment, or training (%)	81	Increase	➤	48	53	53	In range	○	2019-20
A1 - Average time between entering care and moving in with family for children who were adopted (days)	615	Increase	➤	576	577	486	Higher	○	2015-18
A2 - Average time between LA receiving placement order and LA deciding on a match with family (days)	313	Increase	➤	163	242	201	In range	○	2015-18

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Child Protection in England

National review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson

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Foreword

There was palpable public shock just before Christmas 2021 when the unimaginably horrific deaths from abuse suffered by Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson became known. We will never know what their respective lives were really like in the weeks and months leading up to their murders. What we must do is attempt to understand how and why the public services and systems designed to protect them were not able to do so. That is the primary purpose of this review, which has been undertaken by the national independent Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (the Panel).

In carrying out this review, we have sought to make sense of what happened to Arthur and Star, recognising the uniqueness of their individual lives, so that we can consider what we might do differently in the future.

Arthur and Star's families have made unique and crucial contributions to this report, and it is very important that everyone respects their rights to privacy. Too often their concerns were disregarded and not taken sufficiently seriously. We have drawn on their insights to inform proposals about how national child protection systems could better protect children in the future. In that way, the lives of Arthur and Star can become, in the words of a family member, a 'footprint' in making the changes that are needed.

This report asserts that the child protection system must be strengthened, both locally and nationally. We think that there is too much inconsistency and ambiguity in child protection practice in England. This does not serve children, their families or practitioners well. That does not mean that the child protection system is 'broken'; indeed there is good evidence that, every day, many thousands of children are protected from harm by conscientious, committed and capable social workers, police officers, health, educational and many other professionals.

However, current arrangements for this difficult work are not consistently supportive or sophisticated enough to ensure the very best practice. There is a need for a clearer and sharper focus on protecting children from significant harm across England's diverse geographical and social communities. Professionals working in child protection must have the very best and right expertise for making the very difficult decisions that they must make.

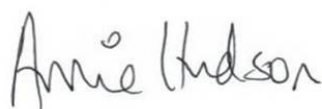
Despite the intentions of recent reforms (and most recently the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#)), multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are not yet fit for purpose everywhere. This results too often in blurred strategic and operational responsibilities, creating fault lines in practice arrangements. This has major consequences for the ability of practitioners across different agencies to work together skilfully and purposively to protect children.

There needs to be much greater focus on creating the optimum conditions and environment for what is very complex and high-risk decision making. The perennial problems of sharing, seeking and using information about a child and a family persist. This must be tackled. We cannot afford to revisit these problems again and again; new approaches are required.

This review is focussed on Arthur and Star. Yet we know from our extensive evidence base spanning all serious safeguarding incidents over the last three years that many of the issues identified during the course of this review are frequently seen in practice more broadly across England. Our proposal for how we change the way child protection practice is undertaken extends out towards the serious risks faced by some children and young people outside their homes, and beyond that to serious online harm.

We hope that this review also provides a window of opportunity to enhance public understanding about the realities of child protection. All those professionally entrusted with protecting children must be held to public account, and this must be based on knowledge of the complexities involved.

We want this report to prompt considered, honest and careful reflection on what changes we must all make to better protect children in England. It is the responsibility of national and local leaders to take all necessary steps to strengthen and better support the very best child protection practice. We owe this to the families of Arthur and Star. Indeed, every family in England deserves nothing less.



Annie Hudson

Chair, Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

Overview

Arthur Labinjo-Hughes was a little boy who loved playing cricket and football. He enjoyed school, had lots of friends, and was always laughing. Arthur died in Solihull aged six on 17th June 2020. His father's partner, Emma Tustin, was convicted on 1st December 2021 of his murder. Arthur's father, Thomas Hughes, was convicted of manslaughter. They are now both serving prison terms.

Star Hobson was an inquisitive toddler who loved to listen to music and would dance in her baby walker, laughing and giggling. Star died in Bradford aged 16 months on 22nd September 2020. Her mother's partner, Savannah Brockhill, was subsequently convicted of murder on 15th December 2021 and her mother, Frankie Smith, was convicted of causing or allowing her death. They too are now in prison.

This national review was initiated in the context of widespread public distress about the circumstances of the deaths of these children that followed the conclusion of the two murder trials. Understandable questions were asked about why children had experienced such gross abuse and suffering when they were seemingly in 'plain sight' of public agencies. The extraordinarily harrowing video footage and images of both Arthur and Star, during the final weeks and days of their lives, no doubt contributed to questions being asked about how well children are protected in England.

The review has sought to keep the unique and distinctive lives and experiences of Arthur and Star at its heart. The point of this review is to evaluate the role of agencies. We can never know or understand why the perpetrators of these terrible crimes did what they did. Instead, we have to ask how agencies acted to protect Star and Arthur, and what factors enabled or limited their ability to do so, so we can identify improvements for the future. Arthur and Star were killed by people who should have been caring for them and loving them. The perpetrators, and they alone, are responsible for what happened. That inescapable fact cannot and should not be obscured by any of this review's findings and conclusions.

It is also very important to acknowledge that Arthur and Star both died during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have therefore sought to understand, as far as it is possible, whether the circumstances of this global crisis affected Arthur and Star, their families and the response of professionals to what was happening in their lives.

There has been a determination amongst those who have contributed to this review to make sure that significant change follows from the learning about the circumstances of Arthur and Star's deaths. This is important to members of Arthur and Star's respective

families as well as to the professionals who were directly affected by the extraordinary tragedy of what happened.

The death or serious injury of a child as a result of abuse at the hands of their parents or their parents' partners is relatively exceptional but the fact that it is an unusual event should not detract from our collective responsibility to make sense of what happened, to learn and to secure the improvements that may be required. There are obvious hazards in recommending major policy or system changes on the basis of what happened to one or two individual children. It has been vital therefore to triangulate the Panel's analysis with a wider evidence base, including the reviews of the many serious safeguarding incidents considered every year by the Panel.

What went wrong?

In analysing what happened to Arthur and Star and how public agencies responded, we have identified a set of issues which hindered professionals' understanding of what was happening to Arthur and Star. These are:

- Weaknesses in information sharing and seeking within and between agencies.
- A lack of robust critical thinking and challenge within and between agencies, compounded by a failure to trigger statutory multi-agency child protection processes at a number of key moments.
- A need for sharper specialist child protection skills and expertise, especially in relation to complex risk assessment and decision making; engaging reluctant parents; understanding the daily life of children; and domestic abuse.
- Underpinning these issues, is the need for leaders to have a powerful enabling impact on child protection practice, creating and protecting the optimum organisational conditions for undertaking this complex work.

These are not new issues; they recur across the reviews of serious incidents that the Panel sees on a fortnightly basis. They come up in all analyses of serious case reviews and thematic practice reviews; and they have featured in all previous inquiries into child deaths.

Why do these issues persist?

Protecting children from abuse is intrinsically complex and challenging work. It requires great expertise in finding out what is happening in the intimate realm of family life. It involves intruding into very private spaces to evaluate and make professional judgements about parenting, the development and wellbeing of children, and whether a child or infant is experiencing harm. Outside of the family, child protection professionals must also

address the complex issues of extra-familial harm, including child sexual and criminal exploitation. All child protection practice requires confidence, capability and the use of expert authority to make decisions about children's lives, recognising that these will have enduring and life shaping consequences. These involve, for example, initiating court-led decisions that a child should be removed from their parents, or deciding that the best thing for a child is to remain safely with their parents, even where this involves managing complex ongoing risk.

At its heart, child protection practice requires consummate skill in blending 'care' and 'control' functions, helping families to protect children. This can only be achieved by building trusting relationships with parents and children whilst recognising that how things appear may not be the reality of a child's experience. It also involves a well-honed ability to understand diverse and different communities, being able to reflect on how biases and cultural assumptions about, for example, ethnicity or sexual orientation, may shape judgements and decisions.

It is important to recognise at the outset that what happened to Arthur and Star was difficult to predict and understand. Arthur and Star were surrounded by loving extended families who were looking out for them. Professionals and family members had previously thought their parents capable of providing good care to them.

This complexity is a central feature of child protection work. It is what we are asking child protection professionals to cut through, to get to the truth of what life is like for children. It is our contention that the way the child protection system in England is designed currently does not give professionals the best possible opportunity of succeeding at this very difficult task.

What needs to change?

This review has highlighted two important factors about child protection in England.

The review contends that **multi-agency arrangements for protecting children are more fractured and fragmented** than they should be.

Despite the best intentions of reforms, the design of multi-agency child protection arrangements is sometimes inhibiting professionals from having a clear, accurate and contemporaneous picture of what is happening to a child and their family. The child's story is often held by multiple people in multiple places, the detail of which is constantly evolving. This means that it can be extremely difficult to build and maintain an accurate sense of what life is actually like for a child, without a forensic focus held by a consistent set of multi-disciplinary professionals who are charged with pulling together the disparate parts of the jigsaw of a child's life.

Whilst we have a well-embedded concept of partnership working across agencies, enshrined in statutory guidance ([Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#)), in practice, the key ingredients of effective operational delivery are not hard wired into our current arrangements. Trust, shared values, and identity are crucial behavioural factors in frictionless sharing of information between professionals. The current reliance on quickly pulling together a team from across overstretched agencies to think and act together to protect a child every time child protection processes are triggered is certainly inefficient and often ineffective.

Lord Laming described to us how, during his inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié (2003), many professionals reflected on how they would have acted differently: ‘if only I’d known’. Arthur and Star’s stories tragically illustrate how critical information from multiple sources becomes rapidly fragmented leading to a partial and siloed understanding of children’s experiences and lives. Our recommendations seek to address these issues.

There has been insufficient attention to, and investment in, securing the **specialist multi-agency expertise** required for undertaking investigations and responses to significant harm from abuse and neglect.

There is value in the concept of safeguarding being ‘everyone’s business’ but its meaning has become too broad and elastic. As a consequence, there has been distraction and drift away from the need to make sure that those investigating and responding to abuse and neglect have the right specialist expertise. A stronger focus on the specialist skills required to work with this relatively small but extremely vulnerable group of children should lead to more clearly differentiated responses to concerns about abuse and neglect.

Redesigning child protection practice

We believe that the way that we approach child protection in this country needs to change fundamentally. The importance of effective ‘multi-agency working’ has been emphasised for many decades. But it is still not yet achieving the impact that it must have. There are examples of excellent multi-agency practice, but too often we see critical, life changing decisions being taken for children by children’s social care alone or with only superficial and partial involvement of other agencies. We need to see genuinely joint, challenging, rigorous decision making every time there are concerns that a child may be suffering significant harm.

Progress has been made in recent years. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) model has led to more accurate assessment of risk and need at the ‘front door’ of child protection, when it has been implemented well (Home Office, 2014). The reforms in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 established genuinely joint multi-agency accountability for safeguarding for the first time. Practice frameworks such as Family Safeguarding

Hertfordshire have shown us the great value of bringing highly skilled, multi-agency professionals together into a single team with a shared vision and purpose (Department for Education, 2017a).

But promising approaches are implemented patchily across the country. It does take time to build the evidence but once that is sufficiently strong, incremental changes are no longer enough. The way child protection work is undertaken currently is not benefitting from the wealth of knowledge and skill we hold about the benefits of multi-disciplinary and multi-agency practice, bringing the functions and expertise from multiple partner agencies to work together in a cohesive whole. Therefore, in all areas across the country, we need:

- Fully integrated multi-agency investigation and decision making, end-to-end across the child protection process; embedded in both structures and cultures.
- Those with the appropriate expertise and skill undertaking child protection work.
- Leaders who know what it takes to deliver an excellent child protection response and can create the organisational context in which this can flourish. This includes prioritising child protection, ensuring the resources necessary to deliver the work are in place, and working tirelessly to remove barriers – for example around IT systems – that get in the way.

Therefore, at the heart of our recommendations is a proposal for a new approach to undertaking child protection work.

We are recommending that **Multi-Agency Child Protection Units** – integrated and co-located multi-agency teams staffed by experienced child protection professionals – are established in every local authority area.

These teams will be staffed by professionals with the highest levels of child protection expertise and experience and will see the key child protection agencies of the police, health and social care working together seamlessly as a single team. This does not mean that the highest levels of child protection expertise are not also held elsewhere, for example, by those overseeing the practice of those working with children in need. It does mean though, that there would be a consistent and highly skilled group of multi-disciplinary professionals leading statutory child protection practice in every local area.

Our other recommendations are rooted in enabling the proposed new Multi-Agency Child Protection Units to deliver excellent practice. The most important enabler of excellent practice is, of course, leadership. This is most pertinent in a multi-agency context where professionals are reliant on the right authorising environment – the right multi-agency budgets, priorities, protocols, values and systems – being in place. Therefore, we have put forward proposals for strengthened multi-agency leadership and accountability, and for

better multi-agency co-ordination and system oversight from central government. We have also recommended that new National Multi-Agency Practice Standards are developed for child protection, to help deliver consistently good practice across the country. Local area child protection practice across all agencies should be substantially and frequently inspected to ensure these national standards are met.

Delivering high quality child protection services to communities in rural Northumberland will be different to what is needed in urban Newham or Nottingham. However, roles and responsibilities for child protection need to be clearer nationally and locally. Central government must take a clear leadership role, with other stakeholders, for setting and overseeing implementation of child protection. We are therefore recommending that a new Ministerial group is created to oversee the implementation of these new arrangements. Child protection is a major public concern and should be matched by sufficient and sustained political leadership across all relevant Government Departments.

Review approach

The Education Secretary's [oral statement to Parliament](#) following Arthur's murder announced that the Panel would undertake this national review.

The Panel is part of the relatively new safeguarding architecture ushered in by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The Panel's primary role is to oversee the national system of learning from serious incidents where children have died or been seriously harmed in the context of abuse and neglect, and to recommend ways in which policy or practice should change in response. The Panel has a unique perspective on the quality and effectiveness of safeguarding and child protection practice in England; its evidence base of over 1,500 reviews of serious incidents since its inception in 2018, alongside a range of thematic reviews that it has commissioned, positions it well to discern and analyse patterns in practice involving both intra and extra-familial harm to children.¹

The Panel's focus on the most serious incidents of abuse and neglect means that it has a very specific perspective examining situations where something has gone drastically, and sometimes fatally, wrong for children. The national system of rapid reviews and local child safeguarding practice reviews (LCSPRs) has generated much robust learning about how safeguarding systems should change or improve though there is much more to be done to ensure that change and improvements are sustained and consistently delivered.

We are rightly focussed on child protection systems and practice and have not sought to attribute individual blame or responsibility, though we have necessarily examined in considerable detail why professionals behaved in the way they did and what the consequences of each decision may have been for Arthur and Star. Our aim has been to identify a set of recommendations that will support – rather than get in the way of – the

¹ [Research and statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

professional behaviours and organisational conditions needed to engender high quality decisions for children.

This review is reporting just after the publication of the [independent review of children's social care in England](#) led by Josh MacAlister. Its terms of reference were to look at the whole system of support, safeguarding, protection and care, and the child's journey into and out of that system, including relevant aspects of preventative services provided as part of early help. The lens for our review is different in that it has focussed specifically on multi-agency child protection practice. While both reviews have worked independently of each other, we have shared pertinent information and the Government should consider the findings in the round to take forward comprehensive recommendations to improve the lives of children and families.

Methodology

Following the Secretary of State for Education's announcement that the Panel would undertake a national review, the [terms of reference](#) were published and a methodology was agreed.

The methodology has been adapted as the Panel and review team have gathered information, spoken to those involved and worked with the Safeguarding Partners in Bradford and Solihull to ensure the national review builds on what was learned locally. The review method was not to undertake two local child safeguarding practice reviews but to apply the learning from the deaths of these two children to the national system.

Key working principles for this review have been:

- The Panel has drawn on its unique and independent national role to analyse robustly and objectively the effectiveness and quality of child protection systems, processes, policy and professional behaviours.
- It has ensured that its analysis and recommendations are based on clear and robust evidence, drawing upon Panel evidence alongside that from other sources including research.
- It has involved key organisations and representative bodies at relevant points of the review to 'test' hypotheses and emerging findings. This includes appropriate engagement with the independent review of children's social care.
- There has been a particular focus on analysing child protection's perennial problems (e.g., risk assessment and decision making, information sharing and seeking). This is to help bring about change that will reduce risk and better protect children.
- The review has focussed on child protection systems and practice. It has considered individual practice within that context; this is in order to learn from practice issues rather than to assign blame.

The Panel has used a systems framework to understand the factors that underpin effective risk management and decision making; these factors are leadership and culture, systems and processes, practice and practice knowledge and the wider service context.

It is important to emphasise also that this review does not supersede or replace any complaints, disciplinary or other processes relating to individual professionals. Any such processes are a matter for other bodies, including employers.

Phase 1

Chronology: All the information, case notes, records and witness statements were gathered and analysed to form a chronology of Arthur and Star's lives. This work included the material accrued through the local reviews undertaken in Solihull and Bradford. The Panel is particularly grateful to family members and professionals who contributed to both processes.

Significant events and 'Key Practice Episodes': The chronology analysis identified significant events that happened to Arthur and Star pre-birth, during their lives and that impacted on their deaths. These were then analysed in detail to understand the role of all agencies and are referred to as 'Key Practice Episodes'.

Phase 2

Interviews and reflective conversations: The Panel and their reviewers conducted just under 80 interviews with professionals across Bradford, Birmingham and Solihull. This phase of the work was completed on the following basis:

- All participants were invited through a letter from the Panel chair. The meetings were largely held on Teams over video conferencing. Brief notes were made to capture reflections and better understand what factors in the work environment supported or hindered practice.
- The conversation included structured and unstructured questioning. Prepared questions focussed on key practice episodes that were relevant to each participant.
- Discussions sought to seek clarity over what happened and why but also to invite wider reflections about the practice environment and context.
- The conversations were undertaken by an experienced reviewer and a Panel member. A member of the secretariat attended to take notes.
- Consideration was given to ethical issues when preparing for and undertaking the conversations; including when consent was required.

Reflections of family members: The Panel approached, either directly, or through other family members, Arthur and Star's relatives to offer a conversation about what had happened. Not everyone responded or felt able to speak to the Panel. Some had already spoken to local reviewers and the report has drawn on those conversations.

We conducted the majority of these in person except where circumstances did not allow. We are very appreciative not only of the engagement of family members in such difficult circumstances but also of the insights they brought and which have added a great deal to our learning and understanding about child protection practice.

Interviews with perpetrators: The Panel approached the individuals who have been imprisoned as a result of Arthur and Star's murders respectively. Thomas Hughes and Emma Tustin declined to be interviewed. Frankie Smith and Savannah Brockhill were interviewed.

Interviews with professionals: The Panel spoke to practitioners and other professionals, some involved in the lives of Arthur and Star, and others with roles in local services, to understand what happened and identify underlying wider influences on local practice. More than 65 interviews took place with professionals involved. This covered around 100 personal perspectives of practitioners, managers and leaders.

Safeguarding Partners - visiting the localities: The Panel chair and lead reviewer visited Solihull and Bradford to meet with leaders and staff across agencies. These visits allowed the reviewer to understand more about the working environment for professionals. As part of the visits, the Panel also visited local offices and Arthur's school.

Other Panel reviews: The Panel has seen over 1,500 rapid reviews of serious incidents since its inception. This evidence base offers considerable learning and recommendations. The Panel's previous and ongoing reviews, including its published reports, were also drawn upon.

Wider evidence and data: The learning from serious incidents provides a robust basis for recommending improvement but the Panel has also drawn upon relevant national and international research and other studies. Where appropriate, inspectorate reports have also been considered. The collection and analysis of data has informed our understanding of local and national child protection contexts. The Panel has exchanged relevant information about emerging learning with the independent review of children's social care.

Risk assessment and decision making review: The Panel previously commissioned work to review incidents that feature poor management of risk and decision making. This included an analysis of 30 rapid reviews of circumstances where a child has died or been seriously injured in the context of abuse and neglect, to establish some of the factors behind effective and strong child protection practice. This work has been an important input to the review and evidenced further some of the factors that can inhibit strong practice. We have drawn upon this systems framework to help provide a clear foundation for the review's analysis and recommendations.

Thematic review of domestic abuse: The Panel commissioned a thematic review of multi-agency child safeguarding and domestic abuse. The learning from that report has fed

into this report and the findings are aligned. The Panel will publish a practice briefing on safeguarding children in families where there is domestic abuse in Summer 2022, this will include more specific recommendations.

Behavioural insights and Challenge Group: Understanding the culture and context in which practitioners make highly complex decisions under pressure has been a consideration of the review. To get underneath this, the Panel has considered how decisions are made in other high-risk environments which involve multiple institutions/ organisations to see if there are lessons in behavioural science which could inform the Panel's hypotheses and recommendations. The Panel commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) to carry out research focussed on how behavioural science might inform decision making and information sharing in child protection practice. It also convened a group of leading researchers and thinkers from outside of the world of child protection to consider different ways of tackling some of the systemic issues in the English child protection system.

Stakeholder engagement: The Panel has developed and tested out its hypotheses and recommendations with a range of stakeholders. This has included the chairs of previous national reviews of child protection, key stakeholders from local government, charity, policing and health sectors, as well as with individuals of significance in related fields. A full list of these stakeholders can be found in Appendix A.

Phase 3

Recommendations and report development: This brought together key lines of enquiry, findings from the chronology and interviews, wider research and data and learning from the wider system. In this phase we tested hypotheses and recommendations with a range of people, including sector bodies and leaders, and with relevant central government departments to complete the final report for publication. The draft report was checked for factual accuracy by Solihull and Bradford Safeguarding Partners.

Arthur's Story

This chapter provides a short overview of Arthur's life and the involvement of key agencies with him and his family. In the overview, we refer to Key Practice Episodes where the assessments, decisions taken, and actions at these critical points subsequently affected what happened to Arthur. The next section analyses these Key Practice Episodes in detail, enabling us to understand more about what happened to Arthur and why. The final section of the chapter sets out key findings about the factors that enabled or limited the ability of key agencies to protect Arthur from the profound and ultimately fatal abuse and neglect that he suffered.

- 1.1 Arthur was six years old when he died on 17th June 2020. He was living with his father Thomas Hughes, father's partner Emma Tustin, and her two children. Arthur is described by family members and his teachers as a happy, healthy young boy who always had a smile on his face.
- 1.2 Professionals had not recorded any significant concerns about Arthur's welfare prior to June 2018. Arthur's mother and father separated in November 2015. Arthur continued to live with his mother. After the separation Thomas Hughes maintained a fully involved role in Arthur's life as a co-parent alongside Olivia, Arthur's mother. Arthur had extensive contact with both sets of grandparents and extended family members, who played a positive role in his life.
- 1.3 In February 2019, Arthur's mother was arrested for the domestic-related murder of her then partner, Gary Cunningham. Subsequently she was convicted of manslaughter and received a significant term of imprisonment. The relationship had been characterised by arguments and domestic abuse after excessive alcohol consumption. Olivia was the victim of a domestic abuse incident in June 2018, when Arthur was not present. This prompted a Children in Need² assessment by Birmingham Children's Trust (BCT). It concluded with no further action required for the Trust, but with recommendations for help and support from other agencies.
- 1.4 Following his mother's arrest, Arthur was cared for by his father. A further Children in Need assessment by BCT also concluded with no further action for the Trust.

² A 'child in need' assessment under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 will identify the needs of the child and ensure that the family are given the appropriate support in enabling them to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

Arthur's father was assessed to be a 'protective factor' for him. They lived with Arthur's paternal grandparents and Arthur moved to a new school and settled well. He made good progress in his learning, made friends quickly, and engaged in sporting and other opportunities in school. School was a positive place for him with staff who knew Arthur and his family well.

- 1.5 Initially Arthur had telephone contact with his mother three times a week. In October 2019, his father stopped the contact between Arthur and his mother, his maternal grandmother and the maternal extended family. In December 2019, his mother initiated the process to establish contact arrangements with Arthur again through a Child Arrangement Order³. The Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)⁴ therefore became involved with Arthur as part of this process.
- 1.6 Escalating concerns about Arthur's behaviour and emotional well-being in the autumn of 2019 were noted by his father at home and by staff in school. These concerns led to a referral to SOLAR⁵ (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) from his GP in January 2020. Arthur was assessed by SOLAR for specialist support on 4th March 2020 but was not offered a service. On the same day, Arthur was seen by a CAFCASS officer in the course of the completion of a Section 7 report for the Family Court. The report in April 2020 recommended that Arthur should have only indirect contact with his mother in the form of letters.
- 1.7 In autumn 2019 Thomas Hughes had begun a relationship with Emma Tustin. She was previously known to children's social care and other agencies in Solihull, including the police, Community Mental Health Team (CMHT), and Solihull Community Housing. There was a history of domestic abuse with Emma Tustin as both victim and perpetrator. Emma Tustin had four children, two of whom continued to live with her. It is not clear about the extent to which Thomas Hughes knew about Emma's previous history, and Arthur's wider family were not aware of these issues.
- 1.8 Thomas and Arthur moved into Emma Tustin's home on 23rd March 2020, when the UK entered the first period of national lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. Family members report that the arrangement was put in place due to the announcement of lockdown. Like most children, Arthur was not attending school, having not been classified within the group of vulnerable children identified to continue

³ A Child Arrangements Order (CAO) is an order that settles arrangements for a child or children that relate to the following: with whom the child is to live, spend time or otherwise have contact.

⁴ CAFCASS represents children in family court cases in England. Its duty is to safeguard children and young people through the family justice system, understanding their experiences and speaking up for them when the family court makes critical decisions about their futures.

⁵ SOLAR is a partnership between Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (BSMHFT), Barnardos, and Autism West Midlands. It provides emotional well-being and mental health services to children and young people up to their 19th birthday.

with daily school attendance. The school was not aware of the details of father's new partner or that Arthur was no longer living at his grandparents' address.

- 1.9 On 14th April, Arthur and his father stayed overnight at the paternal grandparents' house following a disagreement between Thomas and Emma, which led to Thomas leaving the house with Arthur. Emma later sent Thomas a text message threatening suicide; Thomas sent Emma a hostile text message in reply.
- 1.10 On 15th April, when Thomas was unable to contact Emma, whose phone was turned off, he filed a missing person report with the police. During subsequent enquiries by the police, Arthur was seen and deemed to be safe and well with his father at his paternal grandparents' house. Emma was located later the same day by the Birmingham and Solihull Street Triage team and declined the offer of referral back to the Community Mental Health Team.
- 1.11 On 16th April, Thomas and Emma reconciled their differences. Thomas and Arthur returned to Emma's address, despite strongly expressed misgivings from the paternal grandparents, who were concerned about the return to what they saw as an abusive situation for Arthur. This was the last occasion that Arthur was seen by his wider family until the day of his death.
- 1.12 Late in the evening on 16th April, Arthur's paternal grandmother contacted the Solihull Emergency Duty Team (EDT)⁶ regarding bruising to Arthur's back and scratches on his face that she had noticed when Arthur had been staying. She questioned the explanation given by Arthur's father that the bruising was a result of a playfight between Arthur and Emma's son. In response to this referral, the EDT contacted the police and requested a welfare check that evening. The police did not consider that such a visit was necessary as Arthur had been seen safe and well the previous day. The EDT advised Arthur's paternal grandmother of the police response and assured her that her referral would be considered by the Solihull MASH⁷ the following day.
- 1.13 On 17th April, having reviewed the paternal grandmother's referral and the observations from the police who had seen Arthur safe and well the previous day,

⁶ EDT provides an emergency out of hours social work response to concerns relating to both Children and Adults as well as providing an out of hours Approved Mental Health Practitioner response where mental health concerns have been identified. They then pass their work over to the day teams for them to carry on the work as required.

⁷ The MASH function provides a contact point for members of the public or professionals if they have a concern about a child or young person. It enables partner agencies such as the Police, Education, Health and Housing to share information, knowledge and skills to enable the right decisions to be made for a child, so that support is identified and put in place at the right time for a child to be safeguarded and protected.

Solihull MASH decided that the concerns about bruising warranted a home visit. According to the social worker's case recording from the visit, a scratch on Arthur's face and a faded bruise on his back were observed. No safeguarding concerns were identified from the visit.

- 1.14 Family members continued to express their concerns. There were further contacts to children's social care, the police, and Arthur's school. Photographs of the bruising on Arthur's back, taken by Arthur's paternal grandmother when Arthur and his father had stayed for two nights at her home, were emailed initially to the police by another family member, two days after the photographs were taken. The photographs were not passed on by the police to the Solihull MASH, which subsequently received them from Arthur's maternal grandmother seven days after the home visit by children's social care.
- 1.15 The photographs were considered by children's social care once they arrived in the MASH from Arthur's maternal grandmother on April 24th. They indicated more extensive and severe bruising than the practitioners reported seeing during their visit on 17th April. This was a very significant moment to re-assess the risk to Arthur in the light of important new evidence of potential physical abuse. The concern and uncertainty on the causation and timing of these injuries should have prompted a strategy discussion and advice sought from health professionals. Instead, it was concluded that the bruising seen in the photographs could be consistent with the adults' explanation that there had been a playfight between the two boys. Accordingly, it was decided that no further investigation was needed in relation to the family's concerns about bruising. It was hoped that the family would consent to an offer of 'life story' work with Arthur, which would be an opportunity to monitor and escalate any safeguarding concerns.
- 1.16 At the end of April, Arthur's father declined the offer of 'life story' work with Arthur. Thomas stated that he had a good relationship with the key worker in school, who was in contact weekly, and he could speak with them if he needed help with Arthur's behaviour. The case was closed to children's social care. The home visit in mid-April was the last time that Arthur was seen by any professional until the day of his death.
- 1.17 Having been advised by children's social care about Arthur's new address, school contacted father and spoke to Arthur at the end of April. Father was offered support strategies from the school's lead for Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) when he talked about struggling with Arthur's behaviour. Thomas confirmed that he would be taking up the offer of a school place for Arthur when school re-opened in June.

- 1.18 Arthur did not attend school as planned on June 8th. Thomas advised the school that Arthur was unwell and would look to return later in the week. On June 11th, Thomas spoke to the school office and shared increasing concerns about his son's well-being – he had lost interest in eating and was lethargic. The school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) later spoke to Thomas and advised that he contact his GP. On the following Monday, the DSL made a referral to the School Nursing Service. Thomas notified school that Arthur would not be returning until June 18th as there would be two days of celebrations for his partner's birthday. The GP made two attempts at telephone consultation with Thomas but the calls failed, and there was no option to leave voicemails.
- 1.19 On 16th June, emergency services were called to Emma Tustin's address in response to a report of Arthur being in cardiac arrest. Arthur had sustained a substantial head injury. The ambulance crew raised concerns regarding Arthur's presentation. He was described as looking unkempt, with bruising on his body. Arthur was conveyed to hospital and a CT scan found that he had sustained a devastating and fatal head injury. It was not possible to stabilise him and he died of his injuries. Arthur died in the early hours of the following morning.
- 1.20 The explanations for Arthur's injuries given by Thomas Hughes and Emma Tustin were not considered plausible. They were arrested and subsequently charged with the offence of causing or allowing the death of a child. In court proceedings concluded on 1st December 2021, Emma Tustin was convicted of murder and Thomas Hughes of manslaughter.

Evidence from video footage and text messages seen at the criminal proceedings revealed a shocking scale of physical abuse and neglect suffered by Arthur. A total of 130 bruises were found on Arthur's body at the time of his death. Blood tests indicated very high levels of sodium, suggesting the possibility of salt poisoning, for which Emma Tustin was convicted. In the days leading up to his murder, CCTV footage showed that Arthur had been forced to stand to attention alone in the hallway of the house for most of the day, without water. He was made to sleep downstairs on a hard floor without a mattress. This was the pattern of Arthur's life for many weeks before his death, with no contact from family members or friends, and out of the sight of children's social care, school, and other public services.

Professionals regrettably had very limited understanding of what was happening to Arthur and what his life was like when he and his father were living with Emma Tustin. The decision by children's social care not to investigate formally and fully the allegations of bruising any further, together with Thomas Hughes' choice not to take up 'life story' work, were pivotal moments when crucial decisions were made.

After March 2020, Arthur lost the contact and support of loving family members who adored him. Family members suspected Arthur may be at risk and did everything they could to try and speak up for Arthur. They contacted every agency they could think of – children’s social care, school, police – and some several times. But their voice was not heard.

The following timeline sets out the key events in Arthur’s life until March 2020.

Jan 2014	Arthur Labinjo-Hughes born
Nov 2015	Arthur's parents separate
June 2018	Domestic abuse between Arthur's mother and new partner
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A domestic abuse incident (when Arthur was not present) prompted a Children in Need assessment by Birmingham Children’s Trust (BCT) that concluded with no further action.
Feb 2019	Arthur's mother arrested
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olivia Labinjo-Halcrow arrested for Domestic Murder of Gary Cunningham. Arthur moves in full time with Thomas Hughes. A further Children in Need assessment by Birmingham Children’s Trust (BCT) concluded with no further action. Arthur’s father was assessed to be a ‘protective factor’ for him.
Oct 2019	Contact with maternal family stopped
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arthur’s father stopped the contact between Arthur and his mother, his maternal grandmother and the maternal extended family. Around this time, autumn 2019, Thomas Hughes had begun a relationship with Emma Tustin.
Dec 2019	Mother attempts to re-establish contact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arthur’s mother initiated the process to establish contact arrangements with Arthur again through a Child Arrangement Order. CAFCASS therefore became involved with Arthur as part of this process.
Jan 2020	Arthur referred to mental health services
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalating concerns about Arthur’s behaviour and emotional well-being in the autumn of 2019 were noted by his father at home and by staff in school. These concerns led to a referral to SOLAR (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) from his GP.
March 2020	Arthur assessed by SOLAR and CAFCASS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arthur was assessed by SOLAR for specialist support but was not offered a service. On the same day, Arthur was seen by a CAFCASS officer in the course of the completion of a Section 7 report for the Family Court. Lockdown is established in the UK and Arthur moves with Thomas Hughes from his paternal grandparent’s home into the home of Emma Tustin.

The following timeline sets out the key practice episodes after Arthur and Thomas move to live with Emma Tustin in March 2020.

14th April

Arthur moved to grandparents' house

Thomas and Emma get into a dispute. Thomas removes Arthur and himself back to his parents' house. Emma's suicidal text met with hostile reply.

15th April

Arthur seen safe and well

Thomas filed a missing persons report in regard to Emma. Police visit Thomas' house and found Arthur to be safe and well. Emma was found that day and assisted by the Street Triage team.

16th April

Grandparents raise concerns about bruising

Emma and Thomas reconcile their differences. Thomas returns to Emma's home with Arthur. Paternal grandparents voice growing concerns about bruising with Solihull Emergency Duty Team (EDT). EDT call police that evening relaying grandparents concerns. Police deny request for a 'Safe and Well' visit based on their observation of Arthur the previous day.

17th April

Social work team check on Arthur

Following paternal grandparent's concern, the MASH send social workers to check on Arthur. Social workers report that Arthur and Emma's son are willing to show bruises – no safeguarding concerns were identified. An offer of 'Life Story' work is made.

18th April

Police receive photos of bruising

Photographs of bruising are sent to the police by Arthur's uncle. They are received by the police but never sent onto the MASH.

24th April

MASH receive photos of bruising

Family members continue to express their concerns to Children's Social Care, the police, and Arthur's school. The photos of bruising are passed onto the MASH by maternal grandmother on April 24th.

End of April

No further investigation

It was decided that no further investigation was needed in relation to the family's concerns about bruising. It was hoped that the family would consent to an offer of 'life story' work with Arthur, which would be an opportunity to monitor and escalate any safeguarding concerns. At the end of April, Arthur's father declined the offer of 'life story' work.

16th June

Emergency services called

Emergency Services called as Arthur is suffering Cardiac Arrest after sustaining a severe head injury. He dies the next day.

Analysis and findings

The analysis that follows:

- seeks to understand what happened to Arthur and why; and,
- evaluates how agencies acted to safeguard Arthur, and what factors enabled or limited their ability to protect him from the profound and ultimately fatal abuse and neglect that he suffered.

The analysis is structured around six **Key Practice Episodes (KPE)** where professionals were directly involved in working with Arthur and his wider family to respond to possible safeguarding concerns, assess risk of neglect, abuse or significant harm, and consider his wider support needs. The assessments, decisions, and actions taken at these critical points subsequently affected the outcomes for Arthur. We evaluate the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding practice in each of the six Key Practice Episodes. From that analysis we then set out findings in relation to **cross-cutting themes**⁸ that inform the national or local recommendations in this report.

At different points across the practice episodes in Solihull there was one social worker from the Emergency Duty Team, one duty social worker and a referral and advice officer in the MASH, one social worker and family support worker in the Family Support Team, and four assistant team managers.

KPE 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for Arthur to deal with the trauma of his mother going to prison
KPE 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response to domestic abuse incident between Thomas Hughes and Emma Tustin
KPE 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a) Response to referral from Arthur's paternal grandmother • b) Home visit and after
KPE 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response to photographs of bruising on Arthur
KPE 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the role and impact of Emma Tustin after Thomas Hughes and Arthur move to live with her from March 2020
KPE 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact with Arthur and the wider family by school and other agencies March - June 2020

⁸ The analysis for the cross-cutting themes draws on Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) drawn up by the review team. The KLOEs are linked to the Panel's analytical framework for Risk Assessment and Decision Making in child safeguarding.

Early years – Arthur living with his mother

- 2.1 Arthur was known and considered by children's social care twice when he lived with his mother. Firstly, in June 2018, Gary Cunningham assaulted Arthur's mother when Arthur was not present and BCT undertook a Children in Need assessment which concluded with no further action. There was no overt consideration in this assessment on the possible impact on Arthur of being in a household where domestic abuse and alcohol abuse were present.
- 2.2 Secondly, following the domestic manslaughter of Gary Cunningham by Olivia on 23rd February 2019, a multi-agency strategy discussion took place. It was agreed that BCT would carry out another Children in Need assessment to consider whether Arthur could be well looked after by his father now his mother was in prison, and work out what support Arthur might need in the circumstances.
- 2.3 The case was allocated to a social worker who contacted Thomas by telephone on the same day. Thomas outlined the immediate steps he had taken to support Arthur, including arranging for Arthur to move schools and attend Dickens Heath Primary School in Solihull. At a home visit with Thomas and Arthur the social worker noted no concerns regarding the care given to Arthur by his father. There was considered to be a positive network of family support from paternal grandparents. Arthur told the social worker that time spent with paternal grandparents was positive for him.
- 2.4 A judgement was made at this point which seemingly became fixed throughout all the children's social care interactions with Thomas Hughes that followed. This was that Thomas Hughes was a protective father. This was a reasonable judgement to make in 2019. Thomas Hughes, with the support of his family, did provide good care to Arthur over the coming months, until he began his relationship with Emma Tustin.
- 2.5 However, the assumption that Thomas was a protective factor for Arthur would nonetheless have benefitted from further critical thinking and challenge as early as 2019. Thomas Hughes was aware of the continuing relationship between Olivia and Gary Cunningham. He reported being present and protecting Arthur during a domestic abuse incident between the couple in November 2018. He had described increasing concerns in the weeks leading up to the domestic homicide, with Olivia increasing her consumption of alcohol. The assessment might have explored whether, given these circumstances, Thomas had the capacity to act to protect Arthur from physical or emotional harm. Thomas did not demonstrate steps he might have taken to protect Arthur in the short period before Olivia killed Gary, but he had remained active in co-parenting his son and immediately took on Arthur's full-time care when Olivia was arrested, supported by his family.

- 2.6 Assumptions about Thomas Hughes being a ‘protective father’ would be an important factor when professionals in Solihull responded to safeguarding concerns about Arthur in subsequent months, and these assumptions might have been reconsidered in the light of changing circumstances and the new relationship formed between Thomas and Emma.
- 2.7 The assessment also did not give any consideration to the needs of Arthur as a child whose mother had been sentenced to a long prison term. The issue was, however, discussed with Thomas, and recommendations made about services that could support Arthur. The agreement was that Arthur’s new school would make the appropriate referral. The BCT assessment concluded with no further action needed from the Trust. The case was kept open until the school’s referral to SOLAR had been completed.

Key Practice Episode 1

Support for Arthur to deal with the trauma of his mother going to prison

The need to consider mental health support for Arthur was included in the assessment completed by BCT in March 2019. It indicated that referral to SOLAR would be taken forward through Arthur’s new school. The first referral to SOLAR was made promptly by the school on 11th March. The referral was not accepted as it was felt there were no obvious mental health issues. The response from SOLAR was not challenged by the school.

Concerns about Arthur’s behaviour at home and his emotional well-being increased in the period after September 2019. Olivia had been sentenced and Arthur was aware that his mother was in prison. School made a second referral to SOLAR on 21st November. The referral was made by post. The SOLAR team had no record of receiving this referral and no support was offered to Arthur. School liaised with Arthur’s GP and supported Thomas to seek a further referral to SOLAR in January 2020. At the GP consultation on 6th January, Thomas reiterated his concerns about Arthur’s behaviour and emotional well-being. The GP sought advice from the Practice Safeguarding Lead. They agreed that Arthur’s behaviour was triggered by traumatic experiences and initiated an urgent further referral to SOLAR.

After a period of delay, in part because for six days the service was unable to make contact with Arthur’s father to arrange and agree the appointment date, Thomas and Arthur were seen for a Choice Assessment (an initial meeting to talk to the child) by SOLAR on 4th March. Thomas reported that Arthur’s anxiety and aggression were reducing. Thomas shared information that Arthur had begun to disclose distressing

experiences whilst in the care of his mother. Arthur was present for almost all of the assessment meeting. Father was seen alone for a short time due to the nature of the discussion being potentially distressing for Arthur. The assessment concluded: 'no mental health need due to anxious and aggressive behaviour decreasing – to be discharged, with advice for family to monitor Arthur's disclosures and discussions around his mum and offer time and space to explore this. To re-refer if mental health needs escalate.' On the same day as the SOLAR assessment Arthur was seen by a Family Court Adviser from CAFCASS as part of the preparation of a Section 7 assessment, following Olivia's decision to seek a Child Arrangement Order under Private Law proceedings.

- 2.8 SOLAR's decision to discharge Arthur in March 2020 was surprising, given the diagnostic formulation in the assessment, which suggested that Arthur met the eligibility criteria for the service. The clinical impression from the assessment was that: *'Arthur is presenting with loss and confusion following mum's arrest, additionally having experienced and witnessed abuse in the family home. He has internalised these experiences and it is unknown how it has impacted upon him or if he has experiences to share. This can manifest itself in low level anxiety or aggression.'*
- 2.9 The decision may have been influenced by Thomas's statement that the behaviour that had prompted the referral from the GP was now reducing. The SOLAR practitioner did not see Arthur alone. In the notes from the assessment, he was described as 'very smiley, happy and played independently, proudly showing off his colouring at the end.'
- 2.10 The decision by SOLAR to not offer a service was a missed opportunity to receive some of the support Arthur needed and would have allowed professionals to have a better sense of what life was like for him. In interviews for this review, managers with oversight of the SOLAR service in Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust (BSMHFT) have reflected on the limited quality of the assessment of Arthur's needs and accept that he would have met the eligibility requirements for a service for SOLAR well-being support and anxiety management. They have noted that at the time there was a waiting list for assessment appointments and limited capacity to meet the demand for services.
- 2.11 The court order for CAFCASS to undertake a Section 7 assessment following Olivia's decision to seek a Child Arrangement Order to spend time with Arthur was also an opportunity when there might have been a more in depth understanding of, and response to Arthur's emotional and social needs, in the context of the significant changes and disruptions that he had experienced in a relatively short period of time. Arthur was seen once by the Family Court Adviser (FCA) in March 2020 on the same day as the SOLAR assessment. The Section 7 report was filed with the court on 14th

April 2020. Whilst accepting that the FCA completed their enquiries in accordance with the court ordered work for the report, our review considers that wider liaison with CAMHS and extended family members might have enabled a better understanding of Arthur's emotional health needs. Senior managers at CAFCASS have recognised this, noting in particular that more consideration could have been given to the potential for the maternal extended family to facilitate positive contact between Arthur and his mother in support of her application.

Response to allegations of bruising to Arthur

- 2.12 This is the critical period in Arthur's story. The response by professionals to concerns about bruising to Arthur involved a number of significant Key Practice Episodes. It is important to consider the response from children's social care, the police and Arthur's school over the whole period from 14th April 2020, when a disagreement between Thomas Hughes and Emma Tustin took place, through to the decision by children's social care to close the case on 27th April 2020. Assumptions and decisions taken at different points over this fourteen-day period informed and limited the basis on which professionals acted subsequently in response to the continuing concerns of family members and in their engagement with Thomas Hughes.
- 2.13 Professionals interviewed for our review have highlighted the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on their working arrangements. In response to the impending pandemic, the local authority had put critical incident arrangements in place from early March 2020. These were at an early stage of implementation in April 2020 when concerns about Arthur were notified to the MASH. Children's social care made a number of important adaptations for COVID-safe practice. In the MASH, social workers continued on duty and were office-based. The shared police link officers to the MASH for Solihull and Coventry worked remotely. Referrals were 'RAG (red-amber-green) rated' for priority response to safeguarding concerns and then allocated as 'tasks' to social workers and Family Support Workers (who were working from home and deployed on a more fluid basis than formal team structures) based on their home geographical location and ease of travel for visiting the child and family. There was more limited information gathering and provision of previous case information and chronology.
- 2.14 Children's social care put in place guidance for home visiting during the pandemic. Specific criteria were established for children and young people in need of support and protection, with a requirement for them to be seen alone and to assess child safety and parenting capacity. Whilst responsiveness to referrals was maintained, the impact of the modifications was some fragmentation in the management oversight of

the response to individual referrals and lack of clarity about case-holding accountability. These aspects have been carefully considered in our analysis.

Key Practice Episode 2

Response to Domestic Abuse incident between Thomas Hughes and Emma Tustin, 14th – 16th April 2020

On 14th April there was a disagreement between Thomas Hughes and Emma Tustin following an apparent fight in which Arthur allegedly hit Emma's son. This led to an argument between Thomas and Emma. Thomas and Arthur left the property and returned to the paternal grandparents' house where they stayed for the next two nights.

The following day, 15th April 2020, Thomas Hughes contacted the police to report that Emma Tustin was threatening suicide and he could not locate her. In responding to the missing person notification, a police officer attended Arthur's paternal grandparents' house where he spoke to paternal grandmother and saw Arthur in the course of his enquiries.

Late afternoon, the police made contact with Emma by phone. She stated that she was fine and her mobile was then turned off. Police completed comprehensive record checks, including some health records. These checks revealed that Emma was known to mental health services with previous thoughts of suicide. The police attended Emma's property and broke the door down to gain entry for a safe and well check. Emma was not at the property. The locks were changed to secure the property; as a result, when she returned later, she was unable to get into the house and contacted a neighbour.

The Birmingham and Solihull Street Triage team later located Emma and screened her mental health. Emma told them that she was experiencing low mood and was offered a referral back into the Community Mental Health Team. Emma declined this offer of support and provided some information to the Street Triage team about 'difficulties at home with her stepson, Arthur, bullying her son.' Emma reported that Arthur punched her son, which led to an argument between Thomas and Emma, during which Thomas had pushed her son with his elbow, causing him to fall over. On the basis of this information, the police generated a crime report for Wilful Assault.

On 16th April Thomas decided that he and Arthur would return to live with Emma and her children at her address. Arthur's paternal grandparents and other family members expressed strong misgivings and there was a falling out between Thomas and his family before he and Arthur left.

On the morning of 16th April, Arthur's paternal grandmother noted bruising on Arthur's back and shoulders. She was doubtful that these had been the result of a playfight with Emma's son and took photographs of them on her mobile phone.

- 2.15 The actions by West Midlands Police over the period 15th – 20th April were the subject of a complaint by Arthur’s paternal grandmother. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) has conducted an investigation and is reviewing its findings.
- 2.16 The police appropriately recorded the alleged assault on Emma’s son by Thomas as a crime.⁹ This should have been reported to the Public Protection Unit and referred to the Solihull MASH.
- 2.17 There were good processes in place for the police to respond to reports of suicide ideation, with sustained enquiries to locate Emma Tustin. The Street Triage service, comprising a mental health nurse, police officer, and paramedic in one vehicle, enabled a swift and coordinated response. The team was able to access police and some health records to assist in the assessment of risk, but it did not have access to information from children’s social care. Although Emma was offered access to CMHT support, there was no wider consideration of the risks to her own children or to Arthur, given the mental health difficulties she had described and her historic issues which were known to the Street Triage team. The incident warranted a referral to the Solihull MASH because of the potential impacts on both Arthur’s and her children’s welfare.
- 2.18 Arthur and Thomas were seen at paternal grandmother’s house by the response police officer who was in charge of locating Emma Tustin. The officer (who had received general awareness training on child safeguarding but was not a specialist in child protection) considered that Arthur looked fit and healthy, with no obvious injuries. Thomas Hughes was observed to be mentally stable and a concerned and caring father. The same police officer also undertook the forced entry of Emma Tustin’s property as part of the search for her. The property was seen to be clean and tidy. There was a child’s bedroom, children’s beds and age-appropriate toys. These observations, made in the context of responding to the report of a high-risk missing person, were important in framing subsequent responses to and decision making about reports of bruising to Arthur.

Key Practice Episode 3 (a)

Response to referral from Arthur’s paternal grandmother 16th – 17th April

Late on 16th April, Arthur’s paternal grandmother contacted Solihull Emergency Duty Team with a concern that she had seen bruises and scratches to Arthur’s body. Arthur and his father had told her that these injuries had been done by Emma’s four-year-old son. She was concerned that this explanation was not true and that the injuries could have been caused by Emma. Arthur’s paternal grandmother maintains that the EDT was informed

⁹ This allegation was later shown in court to be unsubstantiated.

that she had taken photographs of the bruising. The record of the call in the case notes from EDT does not include any mention that photographs had been taken.

In response to paternal grandmother's referral, the EDT contacted the police and requested a welfare check that evening. EDT gave the police the contact details for Arthur's grandmother and father. The police were informed that Arthur's grandmother would care for Arthur if it was felt that he needed to be removed. It was agreed that the police would contact grandmother to update her following the visit.

The police officer who had dealt with the domestic abuse incident the previous day contacted EDT. He advised that they had no safeguarding concerns and described Thomas as a caring father who was able to manage Emma's mental health concerns and prioritise Arthur's care. Thomas had mentioned the argument between Arthur and Emma's son and the police had not seen any visible injuries so the police view was that a further welfare visit would not be proportionate. It was agreed that the police would contact grandmother with their decision, EDT agreed to pass on the information and concerns to the MASH for consideration the following day.

Arthur's grandmother challenged the police officer about his decision not to undertake a welfare check. She called back to EDT and stated that she was not certain that Thomas would protect Arthur (if he was at risk) as he had taken him back to the household with Emma, even though she had expressed her concerns to him. The EDT officer assured her that the MASH would look at the situation as a priority the following day, and that, as the referrer, she would be contacted about next steps. This follow-up contact did not happen.

On 17th April social work duty screening took place in the MASH. The decision was that as Arthur had not made a disclosure children's social care should follow up the referral by contacting Thomas Hughes and arranging a threshold visit¹⁰ to see Arthur that day. This was a single agency process – statutory multi-agency child protection processes were not initiated. Thomas Hughes was contacted by the MASH and told that children's social care needed to visit to see Thomas and Arthur 'within the next hour.' He was initially reluctant to agree a home visit but ultimately gave consent.

2.19 The decision by the police officer not to visit on the evening of 16th April was not appropriate. Although the officer had formed the view that Thomas was a caring father, and Arthur had been seen apparently safe and well the previous day, the information that Arthur's grandmother had found bruising on Arthur had not been known and the area of alleged bruising (on Arthur's back) would not have been seen. The rationale for not visiting on the evening of 16th April seemed to take more account of the reaction of the adults in the household rather than placing Arthur's needs at the centre of the decision making. A visit that evening (preferably jointly by the police and

¹⁰ Threshold Visits were single agency visits undertaken by duty social workers in the MASH in circumstances where children were not deemed to be at immediate risk and managers needed more information to determine whether the threshold had been met for a social work assessment to be initiated.

EDT) should have revealed the bruising and led to the initiation of child protection procedures.

2.20 Decision making in the MASH was not robust. The relevant joint guidance in the region at the time stated that a joint investigation should take place where there was: *'any allegation of physical abuse to a child or a suspicious injury to a child, or inconsistent explanations or an admission about a non-accidental injury.'*¹¹ Although a discussion did take place between the duty manager in the MASH and the linked police officer, this did not constitute a strategy meeting. The information available from EDT warranted the convening of a multi-agency strategy meeting.¹² This is likely to have enabled the wider consideration of the events over the previous two days, the sharing of the full range of information held by partner agencies about all family members (including Emma Tustin) and next steps to be agreed, including whether to undertake section 47 enquiries.¹³ A robust strategy discussion would have identified the need to go back to Arthur's paternal grandmother for further clarification about the referral; and this in turn is likely to have resulted in her repeating the fact she had photographs of the bruising. A strategy discussion would also have highlighted the need to: seek advice about whether a Child Protection Medical might be required; agree the purpose and format for the home visit; and decide whether or not to inform Thomas Hughes ahead of it. The lack of a strategy discussion set the tone for subsequent practice weaknesses in responding to the allegations about bruising to Arthur.

2.21 The decision taken by children's social care to initiate a threshold visit, without having convened a strategy discussion, was not appropriate, given the nature of the concerns in the referral from Arthur's paternal grandmother. Threshold visits were a local arrangement in Solihull in situations where a child was not deemed at immediate risk and managers needed more information to make a decision. The intention was to ensure a timely and proportionate response to needs and concerns, with children and families only subject to a social work assessment if they needed to be. Managers in the MASH may have taken the view that these circumstances applied in respect of the concerns about Arthur, relying on the observations of the police officer who had seen Arthur on 15th April. The MASH should have contacted Arthur's paternal grandmother prior to the visit to ascertain further details about the bruising she had seen and provide reassurance to her about the response from children's social care.

¹¹ West Midlands Joint Protocol – Joint Investigation – Child Protection enquiries and related criminal investigations 2011.

¹² See West Midlands Child Protection Procedures, section 1.8. 'A strategy meeting is an opportunity to share as much of the available information as possible between participants to inform the next steps.'

¹³ Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.

2.22 In initiating a swift response to arrange a face-to-face home visit the duty social worker appropriately challenged Thomas Hughes to ensure that the visit took place in the home rather than an external location. Within the framework of a threshold visit, and the adaptations for COVID-safe working arranged by the local authority, it was appropriate to allocate the visit to a social worker and family support worker. The practitioners who carried out the home visit had the necessary experience for what was required.

Key Practice Episode 3 (b)

Home visit and after: 17th – 18th April

The home visit was allocated to a Social Worker and Family Support Worker. The practitioners have reported that they were told by Thomas about the plan for he and Arthur to move to Emma's address on a full-time basis. The couple explained that the domestic abuse incident was a 'one off' when they were getting used to living together. The argument was triggered by Arthur telling Thomas that Emma had hit him. Arthur later told Thomas that this was not true. Arthur and Emma's son had been physically fighting and had to be pulled apart. Freezer packs had later been applied to take down the bruises.

Arthur and Emma's son were observed at play and spoken to. The visit record describes them as eager to show their bruises, and reports that Arthur was found to have a scratch on his face and faded bruise on his back. Emma's son also showed a bruise. The children gave 10/10 when asked to rate how safe and happy they felt.

Thomas described the relationship with his parents as raw and felt the referral to Children's Services had escalated the situation. Thomas and Emma raised concerns about Arthur's behaviour. He had experienced change and trauma over the previous twelve months and they said that he had disclosed physical abuse by his mother (these claims have never been substantiated). Thomas agreed to consider an offer of 'life story' work with Arthur from the Family Support Worker. The visit report recorded that there were no safeguarding concerns identified from the visit and recommended Level 3 support (Solihull LCSP has four levels of need. The threshold at Level 3 was for children requiring early help, which would include mental health support).

Home visit – 17th April

2.23 The home visit on 17th April lasted for around ninety minutes. The practitioners undertaking the visit considered that Thomas and Emma had engaged well. It is important to remember that, at this point, and in an ongoing way, Thomas and Emma were seeking to mislead and manipulate professionals. We know from evidence at the criminal trial that Thomas and Emma exchanged text messages and a video of Thomas examining Arthur on the day of the visit; it is possible that this was in order to

prepare a plausible account for Arthur's injuries.¹⁴ The practitioners spoke to the boys about the fighting between them. They were asked about and showed their bruising. The case note stated that '*both children were keen to show their injuries – observed a scratch on the face and a faded bruise on Arthur's back.*'¹⁵ We now know from the court evidence (a) the photographs of bruising taken by the paternal grandmother were taken just 25 hours before the home visit; and (b) the consultant physician confirmed that the bruising shown in the photos would not have faded in the time from when the photos were taken to the time of the home visit.

- 2.24 We must therefore conclude that (a) the bruising to Arthur was there on 17th April when the visit took place; and (b) the limited examination of the boys meant that the full extent of the bruising was not seen during the visit, or if it was seen, its significance was not recognised. Either way, the thoroughness of the physical examination during the visit, and thus the conclusions drawn from it, were insufficient given the reason for the visit was to explore allegations of non-accidental injury. Any physical examination of the boys should have been undertaken only following a strategy discussion between safeguarding partners.
- 2.25 The practitioners had to make a judgement call about whether Arthur had experienced or was at risk of significant harm on the basis of a single visit. They have told the review team that they left the visit with absolute confidence that Arthur was not living in circumstances that suggested a need for Section 47 enquiries. Thomas and Emma had responded positively to an offer to support Arthur through 'life story' work in the light of the trauma that he had experienced in the previous twelve months.
- 2.26 The limited nature of a threshold visit meant there was strong reliance on self-reports from Thomas and Emma, which required further critical examination and triangulation with other information (for example about Thomas's presentation of the views of the family and their motivation for expressing concerns). This applied particularly to the account of the domestic abuse incident on 14th April and the circumstances in which Arthur had told his father that Emma had hit him and then later told him that this was not true. Although Arthur and Emma's son were seen together without adults present, Arthur was not seen on his own during the visit, which may well have limited the opportunity to hear the truth from him.
- 2.27 Interviews with practitioners and managers have indicated some lack of clarity about the nature and purpose of the visit. In part, this could have been as a result of the adaptations for COVID-safe working. The practitioners, who were working from home with remote access to case records, responded to an email requesting availability to carry out the visit. They were briefed by the team manager and provided with limited

¹⁴ West Midlands Police, MG5 document for criminal trial, page 7.

¹⁵ Solihull case records

screening information about Arthur and the immediate background to the referral. They then travelled separately to Emma's address. Case records show the task allocated and logged as a threshold visit and witness statements from the practitioners at the criminal trial described it as such. The practitioners and a senior manager have also told us that the visit was more extensive in its scope and length than would normally be done on a threshold visit. We consider that a threshold visit, with whatever refinement of the brief, limited the scope for responding effectively to the concerns about Arthur.

- 2.28 It is notable that since May 2021 children's social care has ceased to use threshold visits. A key reason for this was a concern that such visits were completed on a single agency basis by children's social care, excluding practitioners from partner agencies and their expertise from the process, with critical evidence missed as a result.
- 2.29 Practitioners report that they saw two small boys, showing all outward signs of being happy, with consistent stories about their injuries, in what looked like a safe and comfortable home. Uncovering what was really happening to Arthur would have required greater challenge to the self-reported explanations of Thomas Hughes and Emma Tustin; and greater triangulation of evidence from across agencies particularly with reference to Emma Tustin's history. Reference to information already held about Emma Tustin in children's social care could have been drawn upon more extensively to frame the focus of the visit. There also needed to be greater interrogation of the information shared that Arthur had said Emma had hit him and then later changed his mind. Finally, there needed to be much greater analysis of the concerns being raised by Arthur's wider family, to understand more fully why they were so concerned that a previously loving father may now be failing to protect his son.
- 2.30 There would have been a better chance of uncovering what was happening to Arthur if statutory multi-agency child protection processes had been initiated. A multi-agency strategy meeting would have been the place to bring together everything that was known about Emma Tustin and Thomas Hughes, to consider in greater depth the allegations about bruising and for professionals to challenge any potential bias such as the assumption that family allegations were unfounded. It would also have provided an opportunity to consider whether or not Thomas Hughes should be made aware of the nature of the allegations ahead of the visit. As it was, they both had an opportunity to prepare an account of any injuries. Using the single agency 'threshold visit' meant that these issues were never addressed with enough persistence.
- 2.31 Following the visit, it would have been expected practice for the MASH to inform Arthur's paternal grandmother about the outcome of her referral. This did not happen. Similarly, the police were not informed about the outcome from the referral and were proceeding, without any further information, on the basis that children's social care

was responding on a single agency basis. This lack of communication with the police affected the way in which the police responded to concerns about Arthur from family members over the next few days.

Key Practice Episode 4

Response to photographs of bruises on Arthur: 17th – 27th April

On 18th April, Arthur's uncle called the police to say he was worried about Arthur as he had bruises. He stated that he had been shown photographs of Arthur with bruises all over his back. He was also worried that he had found out that Thomas was self-harming and saying he was suicidal, as was his partner Emma. When he had tried to talk to his brother, Thomas had threatened to tell the police that he was being harassed. The police officer responding confirmed that Arthur had been seen safe and well and children's social care were handling allegations about bruising. The police officer did accept and agree that Arthur's uncle could email the photographs of Arthur's bruises and these were sent through to the police officer afterwards. On receiving the photographs (which did not have a date stamp) the police officer sought management advice and updated the call log with an action point for response officers picking up the log to contact children's social care. This did not happen. There was no contact with children's social care and the photographs were not sent from the police to the MASH.

On 20th April, Arthur's maternal grandmother telephoned the police to say that she had seen a photograph of Arthur covered in bruises. She was advised that the police had attended previously and children's social care was now involved. On the same day she also called the MASH and advised that she had seen photographs of Arthur and was concerned about bruising. She provided specific details about the nature and location of the bruises and did not believe the explanation given by Thomas Hughes that they were the result of a playfight. The MASH did not request copies of the photographs.

The same social worker contacted Thomas Hughes to make further enquiries about the photographs. Thomas Hughes stated that Arthur had told him that the grandparents had not taken any photographs of him. He informed the social worker that family members were harassing him. The social worker advised that Thomas should not open the door to family members to avoid a verbal or physical altercation. This was to ensure that children were not exposed to adult conversations that could make them feel worried or unsafe.

On 24th April, Arthur's maternal grandmother contacted the MASH and emailed photographs of Arthur with bruising. There was initial confusion about the date on which the photographs were taken. The maternal grandmother's email had indicated 7th April 2020 but records show that on 24th April the social worker telephoned Arthur's paternal grandmother who confirmed that the date on which the photographs were taken was 16th April.

Records show that the social worker made contact with Thomas Hughes to discuss the photographs that had now been received. Thomas explained that the fight between the boys had occurred on 14th April. The parents had intervened and applied freezer packs to their bodies. The boys' skin was initially red from the marks. This later developed into bruising. Later the boys were laughing and joking and did not complain about soreness – hence no medical intervention was sought. Thomas confirmed that the photographs could only have been taken on 15th or 16th April.

The photographs were considered and management oversight by an Assistant Team Manager recorded:

'I am concerned that when the SWs saw the boys on 17th April and they looked at their backs the injuries were not seen to be this severe and it is unlikely that a day later they would have healed. The children have however been seen to be safe and well and not shared any concerns about being intentionally harmed and the injuries could be consistent with the explanation given about a playfight. Had we seen these pictures on the day they were taken, consideration may have been given to a CP medical this is now not applicable a week later. I do not feel any further investigation is needed in relation to this and agree with the recommendation for Level 3, it is hoped the family will consent to work with FSW and [they] can monitor and escalate concerns of this nature raised in future.'

On 27th April, the Family Support Worker telephoned Thomas Hughes to discuss the offer of 'life story work.' Thomas advised that he felt able to support Arthur with explanations of his life story. He was in contact with school weekly and would speak to the school if he needed support with Arthur's behaviour. The case record noted that the threshold for Level 3 intervention required consent from the parent. As there was no consent the threshold for intervention was not met and the case was closed.

Complaints from Thomas Hughes about harassment from family members

2.32 On 18th April Thomas Hughes made two calls to the police alleging that his family were harassing him by driving past and parking outside Emma Tustin's address and knocking on the door. Thomas was not at the address but had viewed this remotely on CCTV. After the second call, two police officers responded, going firstly to Emma Tustin's address and then visiting the address of Emma Tustin's mother, where they saw Thomas Hughes with Arthur. A DASH assessment was completed and domestic abuse non-crime was recorded in relation to the dispute between Thomas Hughes and his mother. During their time at the property the police officers observed Arthur laughing and playing with toys on the floor in the kitchen. The police took no further action, advising Thomas Hughes to speak to his brothers and inform the police if there were any further incidents. The fact that Arthur was seen apparently 'safe and

well' by another police officer subsequent to the visit by children's social care would have some importance in the way that the police responded to the further contact from a family member and the receipt of photographs of bruising to Arthur later on the same day.

2.33 The call to the police from Arthur's uncle included important new information about the mental health of Thomas Hughes. This was also the first time that the photographs taken by Arthur's paternal grandmother on 16th April had been seen by any agency. After taking line management advice, this information was not responded to on the basis that Arthur had been seen (albeit briefly) on 18th April with no safeguarding concerns and there was on-going involvement by children's social care. The officer left a note in the call log: *'I advise whoever picks up this log calls social services as they have had recent interaction with the family and if any action plan is in place with the family'*. This did not happen. The contact from Arthur's uncle should have been recorded as a non-crime, with the new information and the photographs forwarded to the Public Protection Unit. This was a missed opportunity to share information and initiate a review of the risk to Arthur.

2.34 When photographs were received by the MASH on 24th April, there was a period of confusion about the date when the photographs were taken, and whether it was Arthur in the photographs. The practitioners who had visited on 17th April could not reconcile the injuries shown in the photographs of Arthur with what they had seen during their visit. However, there was verification that the photographs were indeed of Arthur and had been taken on 16th April, the day before the home visit.¹⁶ The case record stated that the photographs showed significant bruising. The concern and uncertainty on the causation and timing of these injuries should have prompted a strategy discussion and advice sought from a health professional. Our interviews with managers and practitioners have given no clear rationale for the decision that was taken to close the investigation. This was a very significant moment when there was an opportunity to re-assess the risk to Arthur in the light of important new evidence of potential physical abuse. Management oversight was fragmented, with four different team managers involved in decision making at different points. No single manager appeared to have a full picture of all the circumstances. As a result, management oversight and decision making was insufficiently inquisitive and robust.

2.35 The record of the decision to close the case noted that 'life story' work with Arthur, if taken up, provided the opportunity to monitor the situation and escalate any future concerns. When Thomas Hughes declined this offer of support, which practitioners have told us was a surprise given the concerns he had expressed about Arthur's behaviour and emotional well-being, there could have been further consideration of

¹⁶ Police evidence for the criminal trial has verified that the photographs were taken on 16th April 2020.

the risk to Arthur. Thomas's narrative about harassment from family members, the withdrawal of consent to share information with wider family, and the decline of the offer of support suggested a pattern of disguised compliance where the attention of professionals is deflected to respond to issues in relation to adults and away from the focus on risks to the child.

Key Practice Episode 5

Understanding the role and impact of Emma Tustin after Thomas and Arthur move to live with her and her children in March 2020

Children's social care had sporadic involvement with Emma Tustin from 2007. Extensive information about Emma's family history, relationships, domestic abuse incidents, mental health, and care for her children was held by children's social care but this was not included in the MASH screening information for the home visit on 17th April 2020. As a 'threshold visit,' this triggered only limited information gathering and was less detailed than would have been the case if there had been a strategy discussion and Section 47 enquiries had been initiated.

Between 2007 and 2018 there were a number of referrals to children's social care and eight social work assessments over an 11-year period. The concerns primarily related to incidents of domestic abuse between Emma and her previous partners. Emma was described as both a victim and a perpetrator, and was accused of coercive and controlling behaviour.

Emma Tustin had ongoing involvement with Adult Mental Health services. There are recorded at least two incidents of suspected attempted suicide by Emma; the latter occasion in 2013 resulted in her sustaining serious injuries requiring hospitalisation for a number of months. There was no direct liaison between children's services and adult mental health services in understanding the safeguarding needs of the children.

2.36 Given the previous children's social care involvement with Emma Tustin, and the wider history of domestic abuse and mental health concerns, we have considered whether this ought to have prompted wider consideration of the risks in circumstances where Emma and Thomas with their children were forming a new household. As previously discussed in our report, a strategy meeting in April 2020 would have given multi-agency professionals the opportunity to review all available evidence together, including the information about Emma Tustin's previous involvement with services. Without an up-to-date history of the involvement of key agencies in supporting Emma and her family it is possible that views about Emma's parenting capacity and future risk relied too heavily on the conclusions from previous assessments. In that regard, the review team's analysis of previous work by children's social care and partner

agencies with Emma Tustin and her children found it to be narrow in focus and over-reliant on self-reporting. Emma's mental health issues and experience of domestic abuse had not been analysed or understood in relation to her parenting capacity.

2.37 Practitioners and managers involved with the work with Arthur and his family in April 2020 have told us that the particular pattern of domestic abuse and mental health concerns was typical of vulnerable families in Solihull and would not have stood out. Practitioners described Emma as someone who presented well, was articulate and appeared to have insight into her behaviour.

Key Practice Episode 6

Contact with Arthur and his wider family by school and other agencies, March to June 2020

From 23rd March 2020, schools were closed during lockdown. The respective schools for Arthur and Emma's two children did not identify them as vulnerable (in accordance with Solihull criteria). The children were not invited to continue to attend school during lockdown.

On 27th April Thomas declined the offer of 'life story' work with Arthur and the case was closed to children's social care.

On 28th April the Family Support Worker telephoned Dickens Heath Primary School and provided the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) with details of Arthur's new address.

On 29th April and 12th May there was telephone contact from school with Arthur and his father. Father stated that he was struggling with Arthur's behaviour. School suggested support strategies.

Father accepted a place for Arthur when school re-opened on 8th June but did not attend as had been planned. School made follow up calls.

On 11th June father rang school and expressed increasing concerns about Arthur's wellbeing. Arthur was chewing his food and spitting it in the bin. Father was worried that Arthur would faint or refuse to eat. School advised Thomas to contact his GP.

On 15th June the school DSL made a referral to the School Nursing Service following a further call with Thomas. Thomas had told them he was awaiting a call back from the GP. The GP made two attempts to call Thomas. The calls failed, with no option to leave a voicemail.

- 2.38 Schools received clear guidance to identify and assess risk for vulnerable pupils. There were good systems in place at Arthur's primary school, where Arthur was appropriately identified as not vulnerable according to information available at the time. Arthur's class teacher set work for Arthur every week and tracked engagement in his learning. The school has described Arthur's participation in learning during the lockdown period at 'at the lower end' of engagement.
- 2.39 Operation Encompass (the system in which the police notify schools after a recorded domestic abuse incident where a child on the school's roll was present) was not in operation in Solihull in the weeks immediately following lockdown so the domestic abuse incident on 15th April 2020 was not notified to Arthur's school. The school has reflected that if it had been notified about the incident it would have offered a place to Arthur because of his increased vulnerability.
- 2.40 The local authority provided clear guidance to support schools for phased re-opening in June 2020, with a requirement for daily tracking and monitoring of attendance. Staff at Arthur's primary school were proactive in contacting Thomas Hughes when Arthur did not attend school on 8th June. School responded to his father's concerns about Arthur's behaviour with advice to contact his GP and made a referral to School Nursing service.
- 2.41 Family members have questioned whether Arthur's school should have revisited its decision not to designate Arthur as a vulnerable pupil. Following contact from family members in April 2020 the school's designated safeguarding lead did contact the MASH and was advised, in line with the conclusion from the home visit on 17th April, that there were no safeguarding concerns and that Emma Tustin had 'worked hard on her parenting'. Thomas Hughes attributed Arthur's absence from school in June to issues relating to his behaviour and well-being – issues that school was familiar with and for which it had supported Arthur's father in seeking help for Arthur previously. The school's advice to Thomas to contact his GP, and the notification to the School Nursing Service were appropriate in that regard.
- 2.42 Family members have also queried whether the school might have challenged Thomas Hughes when he advised that Arthur would be absent from school for two days of celebrations for his partner's birthday. It is important to note that school attendance for Year 1 children at that time was not compulsory. Dickens Heath, like other primary schools, made places available and strongly encouraged children to attend. Ultimately, parents made the final decision about whether their child came to school. With the benefit of hindsight, a home visit to check on Arthur's welfare might have been considered, but the information available to the school had been about Arthur's behaviour and emotional well-being about which school had alerted an appropriate service on the previous working day.

Solihull local context

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council is one of the smaller local authorities in the country. It has a population of 217,500.¹⁷ It is overall a relatively affluent area. It currently ranks as the 32nd least deprived local authority in England, out of 151 (MHCLG, 2019). Around 13% of Solihull's children aged under 16 are in low-income families, 5% below the national average.¹⁸

Inspection findings

- 3.1 Solihull's Children's Services was rated by OFSTED as 'Requires Improvement' in its previous two inspections (OFSTED, 2016; OFSTED, 2019a). Whilst the 2019 report noted some strengths in child protection, areas of improvement included quality assurance and audit arrangements and reviewing the practice of 'threshold' visits. It was also noted that in some instances cases were closed without sufficient information being gathered. These issues featured in Arthur's case.
- 3.2 Solihull was issued with an Improvement Notice in February 2022 following concerns around serious weaknesses in parts of the council's children's social care functions. An Improvement Adviser has been appointed to Solihull by the Secretary of State for Education (Department for Education, 2022a).
- 3.3 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) graded the performance of West Midlands Police (an area that covers Solihull) across eleven areas (HMICFRS, 2021). It was found to be 'adequate' at 'responding to the public' and 'requires improvement' at 'protecting vulnerable people' and 'investigating crime'.¹⁹ Areas for improvement included responses to domestic abuse and better recognition of vulnerability, although there had been some positive progress on domestic abuse responses.
- 3.4 The Care Quality Commission's (CQC's) 2014 inspection of Solihull's health services for children looked-after and safeguarding found that health professionals felt clear about thresholds for safeguarding referrals although some work was needed on the quality of referrals (CQC, 2014). CQC inspected SOLAR - the specialist community mental health service for children and young people in Birmingham and Solihull - in 2018 and rated the service 'good' (CQC, 2018).

¹⁷ Population estimates - local authority based by five year age band, ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 21 March 2022

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait>

¹⁹ The report found the force was 'outstanding' in four areas, 'good' in four areas and 'adequate' in two areas.

3.5 A joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to the identification of initial need and risk in Solihull was published in February 2022 (OFSTED, 2022).

Its headline findings were:

‘Children in need of help and protection in Solihull wait too long for their initial need and risk to be assessed...Weaknesses in the joint strategic governance of the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) have led to the lack of a cohesive approach to structuring and resourcing the MASH. The Local Safeguarding Children Partnership does not have a clear understanding of the impact of practice from the MASH or the experiences of children and their families that need help and protection in their local area.’

Its areas for priority action identified were:

- Leaders of the local safeguarding children partnership taking urgent action to understand and identify the initial needs and risks of children presenting to Solihull’s ‘front door’ services’.
- West Midlands Police taking urgent action to improve the quality of information held on the Connect system so that risk to children can be clearly seen, recognised and shared when appropriate.

Solihull children’s social care – key figures

3.6 Solihull’s referral rate has been slightly higher than its statistical neighbours in recent years, however, it has been declining since 2019 (Department for Education, 2022d).

3.7 In recent years, a very large percentage of referrals to Solihull children’s social care were closed with no further action, as was the case with Arthur (Ibid). This may reflect issues in the MASH, which featured in Arthur’s story and was highlighted in the JTAI of Solihull.

3.8 The following charts show:

- the percentage of referrals that went to No Further Action (NFA) between 2013 and 2021. It shows that markedly more referrals went to NFA in Solihull compared to its statistical neighbours, the West Midlands region and England until 2020.
- the higher section 47 enquiry (S.47), Child in Need (CiN) and looked-after children (LAC) rate of Solihull compared to its statistical neighbours, the West Midlands region and England. It also shows that its rate of children on a child protection plan (CPP) is comparable to its statistical neighbours.

Chart 1: Referrals to children's social care closed with no further action

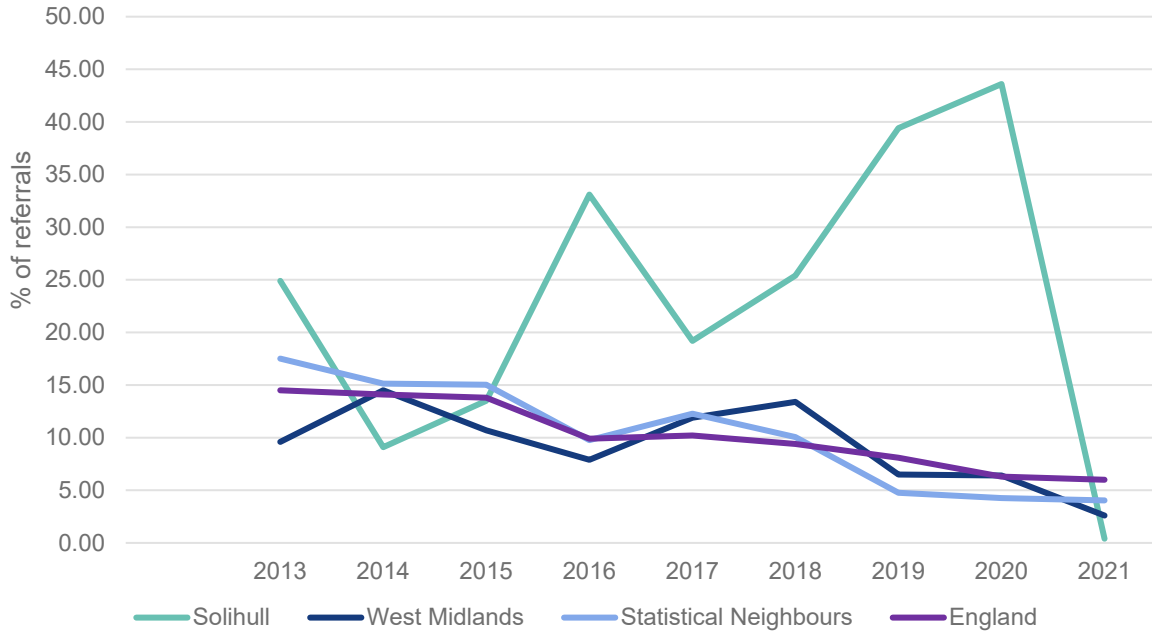
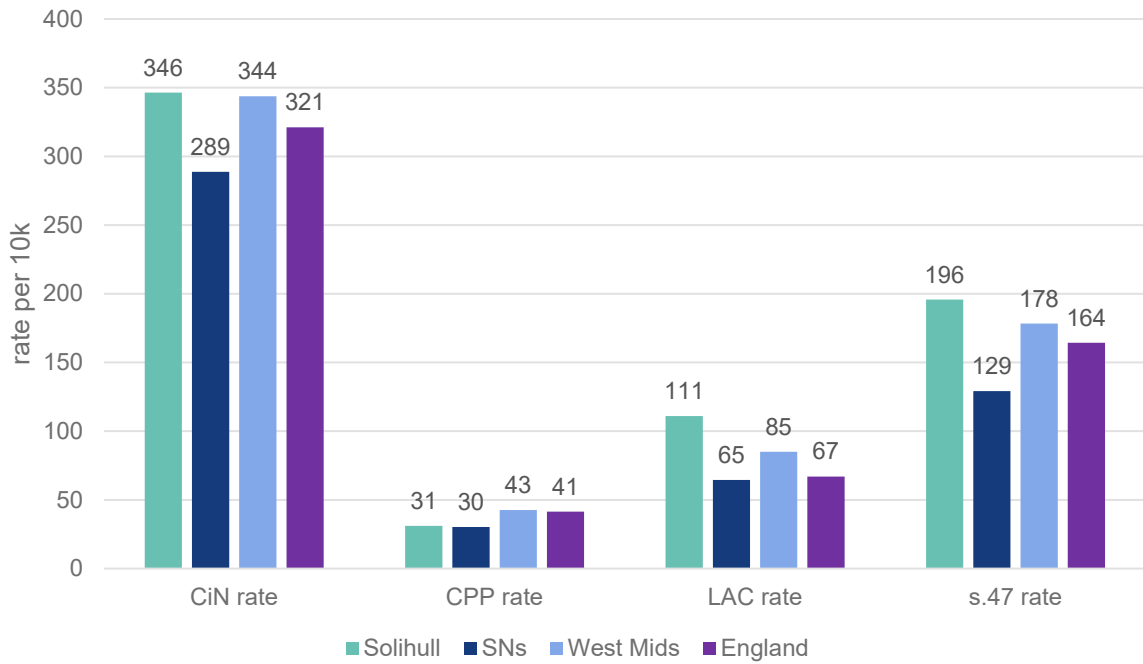


Chart 2: Children in need and child protection (31 March 2021)



COVID-19 adaptations

- 3.9 In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the local authority put critical incident arrangements in place from March 2020. These were at an early stage of implementation in April 2020 when concerns about Arthur were notified to the MASH.
- 3.10 Children's social care made a number of important adaptations for COVID-safe practice. Whilst responsiveness to referrals was maintained, the impact of these modifications led to fragmented management oversight of the response to individual referrals and a lack of clarity about case-holding accountability. These aspects had some impact on the effectiveness of the response to concerns about bruising to Arthur and subsequent decision making.

Workforce

- 3.11 In Solihull, children and family social worker vacancy and absence rates have been declining in recent years. However, its social worker turnover rate has been increasing since 2019 and its use of agency staff is high when compared to its statistical neighbours (Department for Education, 2022d). These factors did not have a direct bearing on Arthur's case.
- 3.12 Other service pressures identified included:
- Under-resourcing of the Solihull MASH by all partner agencies. The recent JTAI in January 2022, found that this had been an unresolved issue by leaders of the partnership;
 - Limited capacity in children's mental health services. This may have had an impact on the delayed response to Arthur's emotional and mental health needs when he was referred to SOLAR in January 2020.

Impact of the Safeguarding Partners

- 3.13 Working between partner agencies in the interventions with Arthur reflects OFSTED's finding in 2019 that '*partnership working was not universally strong*'. Multi-agency capacity and resourcing of the MASH was a longstanding and unresolved issue for the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP). This has been addressed and strengthened following the JTAI in January 2022 with additional police, health, mental health and education personnel.
- 3.14 The leadership of the partnership did not have a strong line of sight to frontline practice. Performance information and multi-agency learning from audits were not brought together at partnership level. This was evident notably in the quality assurance of MASH arrangements.

Conclusions

- 4.1. Professionals had only a limited understanding of what daily life was like for Arthur. The short time for developing a relationship and engaging with Arthur in assessments and visits limited the scope to establish trust.
- 4.2. Professionals did not always hear Arthur's voice. Arthur's voice was often mediated by his father in contact with professionals. Too many assessments relied on his father's perspective and did not include the views of the wider extended family or other professionals who had significant involvement with Arthur.
- 4.3. Thomas Hughes was seen from the very first assessment in 2019 as a protective father. Whilst this was a reasonable judgement at that time, this framing was never subsequently challenged by any professional when circumstances changed and when evidence to the contrary – such as reports from Thomas' own family that they were not sure he would protect Arthur – was available.
- 4.4. There was never proper consideration given to the risks to Arthur arising from the move to live with Emma Tustin, despite her long involvement with children's social care and the very significant information about her that was available.
- 4.5. Arthur's wider family members were not listened to, despite their many attempts to get agencies to look into what might be happening to Arthur. Their views were not sought and their concerns were not taken seriously. Family members and other connected adults can speak on behalf of the child and enable their voice to be heard.
- 4.6. The response to concerns about bruising to Arthur was undermined by the lack of a multi-agency strategy discussion, which should always be triggered when there are allegations about the suspected abuse of children.
- 4.7. The West Midlands Child Protection Procedures did not include practice guidance in relation to allegations of the physical abuse of a child. In the absence of a strategy discussion, the single agency nature of the response to the referral from Arthur's paternal grandmother left social workers to make judgements about evidence of bruising without the relevant professional knowledge, guidance on how reports of injuries are viewed and triangulated, or tools for accurately recording injuries observed.
- 4.8. Our conclusion is that a pivotal dynamic underpinning many of these practice issues was a systemic flaw in the quality of multi-agency working. There was an over-reliance on single agency processes with superficial joint working and joint decision making. This had very significant consequences. The nature of the assessments and decisions that child protection professionals are being asked to make are

extremely complex. They cannot do it alone. Robust multi-agency working is critical to the challenging work of uncovering what is really happening to children who are being abused.

Local recommendations

Safeguarding Partners in Solihull should:

- 5.1 Review their strategic and operational responsibilities as recommended nationally by this review. This review should include making sure that they have an understanding of learning from the review, oversight of performance, that priorities are agreed and funding is fair and equitable.
- 5.2 Review the partnership MASH arrangements to ensure:
- multi-agency capacity is able to meet demand
 - performance information and scrutiny activity is used to support core child protection procedures
 - frontline practitioners understand the importance of safeguarding and domestic abuse referrals
 - a more “Think Family” approach based on best practice specifically between Adult Mental Health, MARAC and Children’s Services
- 5.3 Review and commission strategies to ensure practitioners know how to respond to:
- incidents of domestic abuse and have a clear understanding of coercive and controlling behaviour, including female perpetrators and as well as the impact of domestic abuse on children
 - the risks to children of prisoners, that they are supported and safeguarded and considered as vulnerable in their own right.
- 5.4 Ensure that all assessments undertaken by agencies draw on information and analysis from all relevant professionals, wider family members or other significant adults who try and speak on behalf of the child.
- 5.5 Ensure that the right agencies are represented in the range of the LSCP activities and that there are sufficient resources to support the LSCP to carry out its statutory functions, particularly multi-agency quality assurance of practice.
- 5.6 Ensure that where consent is not given to Child and Family assessments or Level 3 support, all agencies must consider whether the subsequent lack of assessment and support is likely to cause significant harm. That they roll out communications and training resources in respect of consent to share information under GDPR as set out in the LSCP Thresholds Guidance.

- 5.7 Ensure that all practitioners understand their role when considering allegations of bruising including consideration of images which appear to show bruising. This should include:
- convening a strategy discussion with relevant agencies, both in and outside working hours
 - an assumption that a medical will be required and recording the rationale for any decision not to arrange a Child Protection Medical where there are allegations of bruising or other concerning external injury. The absence of visible marks should NOT be a reason, without consultation with a Paediatrician
 - discussion with the on-call Paediatrician with respect to arranging a Child Protection Medical Assessment
 - ensuring that all relevant information on the child and family is available at the time of this assessment
 - the medical assessment should be done in accordance with RCPCH's standards for such assessments, and such assessments subjected to peer review.
- 5.8 Seek assurance from West Midlands Police and Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust that the Street Triage team are aware of their responsibility to make safeguarding and domestic abuse referrals.
- 5.9 Undertake scrutiny of the current thresholds for access to CAMHS services provided by Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust to seek assurance that children are offered services appropriately and in a timely manner.

The Department for Education will hold the 'Improving Outcomes for Children in Solihull' board to account for the implementation of these recommendations.

- 5.10 The review recognises that Safeguarding Partners in Solihull are working to address a number of the issues identified through local learning processes and have acted swiftly following OFSTED's Joint Targeted Area Inspection. We are grateful to the Safeguarding Partners and professionals locally for their open and honest engagement with this review.

Star's Story

This chapter provides a short overview of Star's life and the involvement of key agencies with her and her family. In the overview we refer to Key Practice Episodes where the assessments, decisions taken and actions by key agencies at these critical points subsequently affected what happened to Star. The next section analyses these Key Practice Episodes in detail, enabling us to understand more about what happened to Star and why. The final section of the chapter sets out key findings about the factors that enabled or limited the ability of key agencies to protect Star from the profound and ultimately fatal abuse and neglect that she suffered.

- 6.1 Star was born on 21st May 2019 and was 16 months old when she was murdered on 22nd September 2020. She is described by family and friends as an easy baby who developed into an inquisitive toddler who loved to listen to music and would dance in her baby walker, laughing and giggling. She brought joy and pleasure to her extended family who supported Star's mother when she was struggling to look after a young baby.
- 6.2 Star's mother Frankie Smith was 17 years old when she became pregnant. Frankie was the oldest of 5 children and is described by her family as very young for her age. Frankie had not found school easy; she struggled academically and experienced bullying. Star's father had been in care and was living in supported accommodation but remained in contact with his parents. He was in regular contact with both a transitions social worker in Adult Social Care and a Personal Adviser from the Leaving Care team.
- 6.3 After her birth, Star had a somewhat unsettled life, moving households frequently and with times when people other than her mother were looking after her full time. Health visitors and nursery nurses were not aware of the extent of disruption in Star's life and found her to be developing as expected.
- 6.4 Frankie's relationship with Star's father was "on and off" both during the pregnancy and immediately after her birth. This relationship caused some tensions within Frankie's family, on one occasion necessitating police involvement. The relationship between Star's parents finally ended when Star was four months old. Arrangements were then made for Star to have regular contact with her father at his parents' home.
- 6.5 Frankie Smith met Savannah Brockhill around October 2019. Savannah was 26 years old and worked as a security guard. We now know that Savannah had a history

of domestic abuse with a previous partner and was made subject to a Restraining Order in 2015. There are consistent reports from family and friends about the change in Star after Frankie began her relationship with Savannah. There were also reports that Frankie was seen with bruises, possibly caused by Savannah, and that Savannah seemed to be controlling her. This control included restricting Star's contact with other family members.

- 6.6 In January 2020 a domestic abuse organisation was working with a friend of the family who often looked after Star. The friend was worried about abuse in Frankie's relationship with Savannah and Savannah's physical chastisement of Star. Following a written referral, the police made a welfare check and a social worker completed a child and family assessment, having seen Star at a home visit. The final assessment did not report any child protection concerns. The main need identified for Star was accommodation for her and Frankie. A letter was sent to the Housing Department and the case was closed to children's social care.
- 6.7 Meanwhile, family members describe Star in February 2020 as looking sad and depressed. Around this time Frankie asked Star's great grandmother to look after her as she could not cope after Savannah had ended the relationship with her. When Star arrived at her great grandmother's home, she had very bad nappy rash but soon began to thrive and become happy and content. She was able to crawl and walk around the furniture, was inquisitive, good fun and loved bath times. Star stayed with her great grandparents until April 2020 when, without any prior warning or discussion, Frankie removed Star from their care at the point when the relationship with Savannah resumed. Frankie and Star went back to live at Star's grandmother's house and Frankie stopped all contact with Star's great grandparents. Paternal grandparents saw Star for the last time in March 2020, after which point they were also denied contact.
- 6.8 During May 2020, family members became increasingly concerned about the way that Savannah was treating Star. Star's great grandmother made a referral to children's social care on 4th May 2020 which resulted in an unannounced visit the next day. Frankie told the social worker that she felt the referral was malicious as Star's great grandmother did not approve of same sex relationships. No visible injuries were seen, Star's grandmother said she had no concerns and agreed to supervise contact between Star, Savannah and Frankie for the duration of the assessment.
- 6.9 On Sunday 21st June 2020 Star's father contacted the Emergency Duty Team to say that he wanted to send some pictures of bruising on Star's face that had been sent to him by a relative of Star. He was given the contact details of the allocated social worker and advised to call 101 which he did. A police officer spoke to Star's

grandmother and another relative of Star at their home and then visited Star and Frankie, who had moved to live at Savannah's home. The police officer observed three bruises to Star's face which Frankie said had been caused by Star banging her head into a coffee table. Alerted by the police officer (who was concerned that accounts of how the bruising occurred were not consistent), the Emergency Duty Team and police safeguarding team agreed that a Child Protection Medical was needed. The medical examination was conducted the same day and concluded that the injuries were consistent with the explanation that Star's mother had given of an accidental injury. Star was discharged from hospital into the care of her mother.

- 6.10 After the medical the single agency child and family assessment was completed and the case closed on 8th July 2020 with a note that the concerns were unsubstantiated and the original referral from great grandmother was recorded as malicious.
- 6.11 Meanwhile on 29th June 2020, Frankie informed the homeless partnership that she had been living with her partner for a month and had to leave and was therefore homeless. She was offered accommodation by a social housing project and moved with Star into her flat on 3rd July. Savannah remained a regular visitor to the home.
- 6.12 On 27th August 2020 Star was being looked after by a family friend. Another friend of the family was there and noticed bruises to her face which looked like finger marks. The friend took a video and sent it the next day to Star's uncle. He shared the video with Star's maternal great grandfather. Star's father also saw a copy of the video and contacted the police on 31st August. The police tried to visit the home but were told that Star was with Frankie and Savannah in Scotland. The next day (1st September) Frankie called the GP to say that Star had sustained a cut lip when falling off cobbled steps and it was "swollen, oozing red and green stuff and split open." The GP surgery was about to close for the day and the GP asked Frankie to call NHS 111. A safeguarding note was entered on the file. A health visitor was asked to make contact with Frankie routinely to deliver accident prevention advice.
- 6.13 On Tuesday 2nd September 2020 Star's great grandfather contacted children's social care as he had now seen the video of the bruises. The Integrated Front Door²⁰ provided maternal grandfather with an email address to send in a copy of the video. A social worker in the IFD contacted Frankie, who said she had already contacted her previous social worker to say that Star had bruised herself falling downstairs. This call to the social worker was because her grandmother said she was going to inform children's social care of the bruises seen on the video. Frankie said that she had also contacted her GP, who, as the surgery was about to close for the evening, had advised a call to 111 if she had concerns.

²⁰ The Integrated Front Door (IFD) in Bradford is the service which receives contacts and referrals to children's social care. In some areas, this is referred to as a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

- 6.14 The social worker in the IFD reviewed the previous case records, noting that this was the second time that Star had fallen, and there seemed to be a pattern. The social worker also checked the health records, which indicated that Frankie had not followed up the advice to call 111. As the bruising to Star had not been seen by a medical professional it was decided that a social worker should undertake a home visit to assess whether there was appropriate supervision by Star's mother, and to address the numerous concerns raised by family members, some of which had previously been deemed to be malicious. The IFD contacted Frankie to arrange a home visit. Frankie told them that they were leaving at 4pm that day for a family holiday in Scotland and would be returning on Friday 4th September. The home visit was deferred until that date. Frankie told the IFD social worker that she was happy for the visit to take place at any time on the Friday. No specific time was set for the visit.
- 6.15 On 3rd September 2020 the GP, having seen that Frankie had not called 111, called her and offered a face-to-face appointment. Frankie said this was not possible as they were in Scotland. A booked call was arranged for the following morning and a face-to-face appointment for the afternoon.
- 6.16 On 4th September at 9.20am Frankie was called by the GP. She reported that Star's lip injury was now healing and declined the face-to-face appointment booked for that afternoon.
- 6.17 At 11am, the social worker visited Star, Frankie and Savannah at Frankie's home address. The social worker did not have a copy of the video showing the bruising to Star that had prompted maternal great grandfather's concerns or the photo of bruising that had been sent to the police. The social worker noted that the home was clean, warm and tidy and there was a "good attachment" between Frankie and Star. Frankie "happily stripped Star" and bruises were seen but perceived to be consistent with normal bruising. The referral was once again deemed to be malicious and concerns were not substantiated.
- 6.18 At 17.25 on 4th September Frankie rang the GP because she had noticed blisters on Star's tongue, something she had forgotten to mention in the call to the GP that morning.
- 6.19 The GP offered to see Star immediately. Frankie advised that this was not possible as they were in the car on the way to Doncaster. The GP told her they must access an emergency appointment at Doncaster and advised Frankie to ring NHS 111 to arrange this.

6.20 From early September 2020 it is clear that Frankie Smith and Savannah Brockhill acted to prevent professionals and family members from coming into contact with Star. A GP called Frankie on 7th September and she said that Star was now back to normal. After this, no professional saw Star or had contact with Frankie Smith before Star's murder on 22nd September 2020.

Photographs taken during this period and recovered as part of the police investigation show a sad child with many bruises on her legs, arms and face. These photographs are in stark contrast to earlier photos of the happy child taken by her extended family. CCTV footage on September 13th, when Star was in the sole care of Savannah, showed the child being physically assaulted by Savannah with 20 separate blows to the head and body recorded over a period of two hours.

The final cause of death was an abdominal haemorrhage caused by blunt force trauma. A post-mortem found evidence of a recent skull fracture approximately ten days before Star's death; re-fracturing of her right tibia approximately three – seven days before; and multiple injuries to the scalp, forehead, cheek and back - stark evidence that Star had been physically assaulted on numerous occasions in the weeks and months leading up to her death. The following timeline outlines key moments in Star's life.

May 2019	Star Hobson born
Sept 2019	Star's parents separate
Oct 2019	Frankie Smith meets Savannah Brockhill
Jan 2020	Concerns of domestic abuse and bruising
	Following concerns by a family friend, a social worker visited Star. The assessment was completed which included 3 visits. There were no obvious concerns noted or observed during the visits and the decision was made that the main issue was housing for Frankie and Star.
Feb 2020	Star lives with maternal family
	Savannah and Frankie's relationship breaks down and Star moves in with her maternal great-grandmother. Star begins to thrive.
April 2020	Star removed from maternal family
	Frankie removes Star from the care of her maternal great-grandmother without warning.
May 2020	Referral to Children's Social Care
	Star's maternal great-grandmother made a referral to Children's Social Care in Bradford. The next day a social work team made an unannounced visit to Savannah's household and were content that Star was safe and well. It was concluded that the referral was malicious.
June 2020	Father submits photos of bruising
	Star's father submits more photos of Star to the MASH with concerns over Star's treatment by Savannah. Child Protection Medical is arranged after Police talk with family. CP medical finds no points of concern and concludes that the bruising to Star was most likely to be accidental and consistent with
July 2020	Assessment closed down
	After the medical report is received, the single-agency child and family assessment is closed down.

27th Aug

Video of Star with bruises emerges

A video of Star with bruises on her face is exchanged between family members and some close adults on social media. The video is sent to the police. Police attempt a visit but Frankie and Savannah report that they are in Scotland with Star.

2nd Sept

Maternal family contact the Integrated Front Door

Star's maternal great grandfather contacted the Integrated Front Door (IFD) stating he had a video of bruising to Star. He was asked to send it by email but was unable to do so. A social worker contacted Frankie. Frankie said that she had already contacted her previous social worker to say that Star had bruised herself falling downstairs. There is no record of such a contact. As a result, a home visit was deferred until 4th September.

3rd Sept

GP contacts Savannah and Frankie

GPs contact family and advise Star be taken to be seen. This is never followed through by Frankie and Savannah.

4th Sept

Children's Social Care visit Star

No further action is taken.

15th Sept

Star's case is closed

The case was closed to Children's Social Care on the basis that concerns had been unsubstantiated and the referral was malicious in intent.

22nd Sept

Star dies

There was no further contact with professionals between 5th and 22nd September, when Star passed away after sustaining multiple injuries inflicted by Savannah.

Analysis and findings

The analysis that follows:

- seeks to understand what happened to Star and why;
- evaluates how agencies acted to protect Star, and what factors enabled or limited their ability to protect her from the profound and ultimately fatal abuse and neglect that she suffered.

We have identified six **Key Practice Episodes** where professionals were directly involved in working with Star and her wider family to respond to possible child protection concerns, assess risk of neglect, abuse or significant harm, and consider her wider support needs. These were critical points that subsequently affected the outcomes for Star.

At different points across the practice episodes there were four social workers involved in the Integrated Front Door (IFD)²¹, two from the Locality Team, two Emergency Duty Team members, three Practice Supervisors (social work qualified), two Locality Team Managers and two Team Managers in the Emergency Duty Team. The same social worker and Team Manager from the Locality Team were involved in Key Practice Episodes 2 to 5.

KPE 1	• Identifying risk in the pre- and post-birth period
KPE 2	• Referral from domestic abuse service (Dare2) - assessment and decision making
KPE 3	• Concerns about Savannah's care of Star and domestic abuse to Frankie
KPE 4	Bruises to Star and the Child Protection Medical
KPE 5	• Continuing concerns about Star from family members
KPE 6	• Video of Star with bruises

²¹ The Integrated Front Door (IFD) in Bradford is the service which receives contacts and referrals to children's social care. In some areas, this is referred to as a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Identifying risk and harm before and directly after Star's birth

- 7.1. There was a significant period directly before and after Star's birth where professionals missed the opportunity to understand the vulnerabilities of both parents, consider potential risks, and consider the support that would be needed for Star to be looked after adequately.

Key Practice Episode 1

Identifying risk and harm in the pre- and post-birth period (October 2018 to January 2020)

Frankie Smith presented as pregnant to her GP in October 2018 at the age of 17. There was a referral for routine antenatal care and Frankie saw a midwife for booking on 15th November 2018. At this stage Frankie said that the baby's father would not be involved in the care of the child, and she would not give his name. With limited exploration of social factors, including possible risk of domestic abuse, the pregnancy was classified as low risk. Frankie was not offered the support of the Teenage Pregnancy Midwife as she was over the age of 16.

Children's social care did become aware of the pregnancy in February 2019 via the leaving care service who were working with Star's father. This was not progressed to a referral as it was felt that "universal services" support would be sufficient. A second referral from the transitions team in May 2019 highlighted potential risks but again it was felt that there was sufficient family support available.

Star was born on 21st May 2019. Three days later she was moved to a paediatric ward due to excessive weight loss. Star was then transferred to hospital in Leeds where gastro-oesophageal reflux was identified. Star was eventually released home to live at her maternal grandmother's house, where she was seen for a new birth visit on 5th June 2019.

In the months immediately after Star's birth there were increasing family tensions about the relationship between Frankie and Star's father. There were three domestic incidents recorded by the police in June and July 2019.

Frankie relationship with Star's father ended in early September 2019. In October, children's social care received a referral about Star's father, who had attended the emergency department in a distressed condition. The referrer was concerned about a potential risk to Star. Children's social care spoke to Frankie who said that Star saw her paternal grandparents weekly and the contact with Star's father was supervised by paternal grandparents. The case was closed.

- 7.2. There were a number of important concerns raised about actual or potential risk to Star from before her birth until she was eight months old. The way that these concerns were framed and responded to evidences a number of important missed opportunities when Frankie's needs and vulnerabilities as a teenage first-time parent should have been identified. Had they been, then some of the risks in respects of her care of Star might have been better mediated and understood.
- 7.3. An opportunity for early help was missed as no ante-natal health visit took place. This is a requirement under the national specification for health visiting and should take place at 28 weeks or later in the pregnancy. Such visits enable health visitors to identify the appropriate level of health visitor support that a family needs. An ante-natal visit to Frankie would have been a moment to engage with Frankie and Star's father, and to understand better the wider family context and how this might impact on Frankie's care of her then unborn baby. It is of concern that this did not take place. The reason given by Bradford District Care Foundation Trust (BDCFT) was human error in the context of a service under some strain with high caseloads and reduced funding under a new contract from the local authority.
- 7.4. The information to children's social care from the two referrals in February and May 2019 should have prompted consideration of a pre-birth assessment²² for Star. Five of the 13 criteria in the Bradford Partnership pre-birth procedures for considering a pre-birth assessment were met. The case records do not indicate whether a pre-birth assessment was ever considered; if consideration had been given, the reasons for not initiating a pre-birth assessment were not recorded.
- 7.5. A pre-birth assessment would have brought together information about Frankie and Star's father's past, their current challenges, and provided a more accurate picture of the support that needed to be offered. It would have established a baseline and context for consideration of the accumulating risk factors that were present after Star's birth including lack of settled accommodation, domestic abuse, substance misuse, mental health issues and family tensions within Frankie's family.
- 7.6. Within Bradford there was no health pathway to support teenage mothers over the age of 16. Had such a pathway been available Frankie might have been supported by specialist health professionals who would have been expected to take time to understand her and make sure that necessary assessments were carried out.
- 7.7. The response within children's social care to the concerns expressed by the Transitions Worker was influenced by the assumption that support was available

²² Pre-birth assessment is a proactive process for analysing the potential risk to a new-born baby when there are concerns that would fall within the definition of children in need about a pregnant woman and/or the birth father and, where appropriate, her partner and immediate family.

from Frankie's family. These referrals occurred at a time when the focus within Bradford children's social care was on managing high volumes of referrals at the front door. Interviews with managers and practitioners for our review have highlighted that in these circumstances there was little consideration given to the background information. As a result, the complex relationships within Frankie's family were not fully understood.

- 7.8. Relevant information that would have helped decision making was not always shared by the police. The domestic abuse incident, between Star's grandmother and grandfather, did have a crime raised by the police officers but this was then deemed to require no further action after the grandfather, as the perpetrator, was removed by the police from the premises. There was no Domestic Abuse, Stalking and 'Honour'-based violence (DASH) assessment, no acknowledgement of Star and other children in the household, and no referral to children's social care as would have been expected practice. A referral to the IFD at that point might have provided a context to identify any emerging risks in relation to Star and the other children in the household.

Assessment and decision making in response to referrals

- 7.9. This significant event was the first time a referral had been received by children's social care citing specific concerns about Savannah Brockhill's treatment of Star and domestic abuse between her and Frankie.

Key Practice Episode 2

Referral from domestic abuse service (Dare2)

(First referral - 23rd January 2020)

Dare2, a specialist domestic abuse service for children and young people, was providing support for a young person who had a number concerns about Star, including:

- Domestic abuse between Frankie's partner (who was a frequent visitor but not living at the address) and Frankie, with children present;
- Frankie's partner had been seen to smack Star;
- Frankie increasingly left the care of Star to the referrer who had sometimes taken Star to her own home as she was frightened of mother's partner.

The domestic abuse practitioner and manager immediately recognised the child protection risks, completed their own internal safeguarding documentation and contacted children's social care who then referred them to the Integrated Front Door (IFD). As requested, they

submitted a written referral the same day. The domestic abuse organisation was concerned about the referrer's safety and asked to be contacted when action was taken so that they could safeguard the referrer. The referral was treated as anonymous at the request of Dare2. Savannah Brockhill was not named in the referral and no details were provided.

The immediate action by the IFD was to speak to Frankie on the phone, who at once denied any domestic abuse from her partner. Savannah Brockhill was present during the call from the IFD. The Duty Social Worker was sufficiently concerned by the details in the referral and the response to the call that they requested a police welfare check over the weekend. This check reported that there were no concerns; Frankie was in a relationship but denied any domestic abuse. A management decision was made the following day to undertake a child and family assessment.

This assessment was allocated to a newly qualified social worker who was supervised by a practice supervisor and a team manager. It was carried out between January – March 2020 and consisted of three visits during which all the children in the household, except for one, were seen. Enquiries were made of the health visitor and relevant schools although no checks were carried out in respect of Savannah Brockhill. There were no obvious concerns noted or observed during the visits and the decision was made that the main issue was housing for Frankie and her baby. It was decided that a letter would be sent to the local authority Housing Department and that there was no further role for children's social care.

We now know that in February 2020, during the period when the assessment was active, Savannah ended the relationship with Frankie, who then asked her great grandmother to look after Star as she could not cope. This was not known to the social worker carrying out the assessment. Other than the first name of Frankie's partner the assessment did not include any details about her.

7.10. Practitioners in the specialist domestic abuse service showed a good understanding of the impact of domestic abuse and the potential risks to children. They acted swiftly when the family friend expressed their concerns and filled in a thorough referral document. It demonstrates the importance of involving specialist practitioners in multi-agency working where there are concerns about risks to children. Continuing contact with Dare2 as the assessment progressed would have enabled children's social care to maintain an up-to-date view of changing risk and need without compromising the safety and well-being of the referrer. In February 2020, when the assessment was still open to children's social care, the referrer had disclosed to Dare2 that Star had gone to live with her maternal great grandmother as she was finding it difficult to cope with the care of the child. If this information had

been available to children's social care it might have prompted further enquiries before the assessment was closed in March 2020.

- 7.11. Given the designation of the referral by the IFD as 'Level 4 – Statutory Specialist and Child Protection', there should have been a strategy discussion to consider the range of concerns and how they would be addressed, share information, and plan the approach to the home visit. This should have included deciding whether or not to advise Star's mother ahead of the visit of some of the detail of the concerns. Raising these issues by phone ahead of the visit was problematic as it would have alerted Frankie and Savannah about what would need to be discussed.
- 7.12. The referrer had specifically cited a range of important concerns about Star and the environment in which she was living. Critically the referrer mentioned that Frankie's partner had been observed to be smacking Star, who was then an eight-month-old baby. Formal consideration should have been given to carrying out Section 47 enquiries. Given that the referrer had witnessed domestic abuse by Savannah to Frankie, a DASH assessment could have been completed and a crime raised, with further specialist involvement from the police. In interviews for our review, practitioners involved have reflected that the immediate focus became the children being left in the care of a young person and it was decided that this did not warrant Section 47 enquiries.
- 7.13. The assessment did not address the concerns raised about Savannah Brockhill. The initial direction to the social worker from a Practice Supervisor included the requirement to establish the partner's identity and any risks that she presented. The completed assessment recorded her first name as Savannah but provided no other details. The assessment case notes show that checks were undertaken with health and education regarding other children in the household, some direct work was undertaken, and a discussion was held with Frankie alone about domestic abuse from her partner, which she again denied. Star's maternal grandmother was seen to be a protective factor. However, the case notes show a superficial and mechanistic approach to the assessment. Limitations in the quality of this assessment and the decisions that were taken on the basis of it, significantly affected the way that subsequent child protection concerns about the care of Star by Frankie and Savannah were viewed and addressed.
- 7.14. Supervision of the social worker was equally split between the team manager and practice supervisor with a lack of clarity as to who was driving practice decisions and had oversight of the quality of assessment practice. The practice supervisor's focus was ostensibly reflective practice and supporting a newly qualified member of staff. They were placed in a difficult position as records show they discussed Star's family with the social worker but did not at any time see the assessment document in order to consider the quality of analysis, any missing information, and whether the original concerns in the referral had been addressed.

Key Practice Episode 3

Concerns about Savannah Brockhill's care of Star and domestic abuse to Frankie (Second referral - 4th May 2020)

On 4th May 2020, Star's maternal great grandmother contacted children's social care. Frankie had abruptly removed Star from her care when she had resumed her relationship with Savannah in April. Maternal great grandmother had been told by Frankie's siblings that Savannah had destroyed Star's dummy in front of her, forced her to eat garlic and that Savannah was 'slam-choking' Star (grabbing her by the throat and banging her against the wall) to 'toughen her up'.

This referral was passed to the social worker who had carried out the previous assessment and a new assessment started. An unannounced visit took place on 5th May and the social worker spoke to Frankie and Savannah. They also met one of Frankie's siblings. Frankie's mother was shielding at the time in another part of the house due to COVID-19 and was spoken to via a phone. The social worker did not observe anything that gave her cause for concern. They heard from Frankie that in her view the referral was because maternal great grandmother did not like being prevented from seeing Star, did not agree with Frankie and Savannah's parenting method – i.e. getting Star into a routine - and did not approve of same sex relationships. At the end of the visit another family member asked to speak to the social worker separately on the phone. Various attempts were made by the social worker to make contact but these were not successful.

After the visit the social worker spoke to Star's father on the phone. His view was that Frankie could not look after Star properly and that she slapped Star on the face when naughty. He also said that he saw a bruise on Frankie's face when she had visited him, which she said had been caused by Savannah. On 13th May, when the social worker spoke further to Frankie about the bruises she denied experiencing any domestic abuse from Savannah.

The agreed safety plan at this stage was that until the assessment was concluded maternal grandmother should supervise all contact with Star and that background checks should be made in respect of Savannah. Savannah gave permission for these to be carried out.

By 9th June the social work decision was that there was no role for children's social care and the case would be closed after receiving background checks. Police checks were received on 11th June; the detail of which is not recorded in the social work records. These were discussed with Savannah who questioned their accuracy. Frankie said that she was aware of these previous incidents and confirmed that all was fine between herself and Savannah. The plan remained that there should be no further action and that the case should be closed. At this stage Frankie had moved into the home of Savannah and Savannah's ex-partner.

- 7.15. The response to this referral was not commensurate with the seriousness of the allegations. A referral alleging serious harm to a child needs a response in line with child protection procedures and undoubtedly there should have been consideration as to whether a strategy discussion should be held with police and health professionals. A strategy discussion would have provided the opportunity to share information held by different agencies about Star, her mother, and the wider family. The decision to move directly to a single agency home visit appears to have been influenced by the fact that the case had recently been closed and could be reallocated to the same social worker.
- 7.16. It was appropriate to undertake an unannounced home visit, but the failure to make contact with the referrer to discuss her concerns more fully, together with the minimal questioning of the perspective given by Frankie, Savannah and maternal grandmother, circumscribed what was learned and achieved from the visit. Star's father did give an alternative point of view but this was not given sufficient weight. The hint from another of Star's relatives that there were issues to discuss further should also have raised questions that needed to be pursued before any decision was made that the case was to close. The explanation that the referral might have been malicious and rooted in a dislike of Frankie and Savannah's same sex relationship was also too easily accepted. Finally, the proposed safety plan for Star's maternal grandmother to supervise the contact between Star, Frankie and Savannah was problematic in that there was no detail about how this would work in practice or how the arrangement would be monitored. The notion of a safety plan suggests that there were concerns about possible risks but in practice these were not considered and robustly evaluated.
- 7.17. It is apparent that Savannah and Frankie were able to divert the attention of professionals from concerns about Star, including about being physically harmed, and about domestic abuse. As the social worker perceived a positive relationship between Savannah and Star, and checks with the health visitor had not identified any concerns, a number of very critical child protection issues were either left unexplored or addressed in an insufficiently in-depth way. It is important to remember that at both this point and in an ongoing way, the actions of Savannah and Frankie misled and manipulated professionals. As is often the case with child protection investigations, getting underneath the surface of what parents and carers may say to understand what is truly happening for children can be extremely challenging. Uncovering what was really happening to Star required greater challenge to the self-reported explanations of Savannah and Frankie. There needed to be more forensic follow-up of the divergent opinions suggested by, for example, Star's father; greater analysis of the concerns raised by Star's maternal great grandmother, including a more in-depth discussion with her about why she was so worried; and more specialist advice to the social worker in working with potential victims of domestic abuse.

7.18. Our analysis is that it is unrealistic to expect a single agency process undertaken by an inexperienced social worker to uncover and address these complicated issues. There would have been a better chance of uncovering what was happening to Star had statutory multi-agency child protection processes been initiated. A multi-agency strategy discussion would have been the place to bring together and critically analyse all that was known about Frankie Smith and Savannah Brockhill, including from the previous referral in January 2020. It would have meant that professionals could have challenged any assumptions such that family allegations were malicious; importantly it would have evaluated different and serious allegations, including that Star was being ‘slam choked’ and forced to eat garlic. Using a single agency assessment to investigate these concerns meant that these key questions were never asked with necessary rigour and follow through.

Responses to bruises on Star

7.19. This was a significant sequence of events after the police received photos of Star with a bruise on her cheek.

Key Practice Episode 4

Bruising to Star and a Child Protection Medical

(Third referral – 21st June 2020)

Star’s father contacted the police on 21st June 2020. He said that he had been sent a photo by a relative of Star that showed Star with a bruise on her left cheek. A response police officer visited and spoke to maternal grandmother who informed them that Frankie and Star had moved to Savannah’s address. She knew about the bruising and told the police that she had witnessed Savannah punching Frankie and that Savannah was too strict with Star.

A family member then arrived at the home and confirmed that they had sent the photos to Star’s father. They emailed the images to the police officer and also raised concerns about Star’s care, saying that Frankie would leave Star in her cot all day, in a dirty nappy and she heard Frankie swearing at Star.

The family member also told the police that one of Frankie’s siblings had sent them a Snapchat message stating that they had seen Frankie slap Star across the face. The police spoke to Frankie’s siblings at the address and they confirmed what they had seen to officers.

The police then visited Frankie at Savannah’s address and spoke to her alone. Frankie said that Star had ‘banged her head on the oval-shaped coffee table in the front room’ which was a different explanation than she had given to maternal grandmother. The Police Officers noted ‘two small circular bruises on Star that looked about the size of a fingerprint

each, plus one on her left temple. The police log notes, 'I initially thought that this would have been caused by somebody putting their hand across her face, with the thumb causing the mark on her left temple and the two on her right from fingers. There were 'two bruises on the back of her right thigh'.

The police contacted children's social care EDT and spoke to the social worker. The social worker spoke to the on-call Consultant Paediatrician who initially suggested seeing Star the next day as "*there is no accurate timeline for the bruising to have occurred and the bruising would still be present tomorrow*". The EDT Social Worker planned to set up a strategy discussion with the police but, after speaking to the police safeguarding team, a decision was made to request a Child Protection Medical Assessment that day. It was not possible for a medical to be undertaken at the local hospital (Airedale) and it was therefore agreed with the paediatrician that Star and her mother should be brought to the hospital in Bradford.

The Child Protection Medical Assessment was undertaken by a Senior Specialist Paediatric Trainee – who was compliant with child safeguarding training requirements to undertake such examinations. The examination took place at the Bradford Royal Infirmary and Star was accompanied by Frankie and a different Emergency Duty Team Social Worker. Some minimal background information was provided by the social worker about the referrals made on 23rd January and 5th May 2020. The Paediatric Registrar documented that the child and family assessment initiated following the second of these referrals had been concluded and that no further action was being taken. Mother told the doctor that the facial bruises were from Star 'toddling' into a drawer handle on the new coffee table three days earlier and that the small bruises to her legs were from playing with the new puppy.

The doctor identified two bruises to the left cheek overlying bony prominences plus four on the right leg. He discussed the case over the phone with the Consultant on-call and it was agreed that the injuries were consistent with the explanations mother gave and were most likely to be accidental in nature. Star was discharged from hospital to the care of Frankie. The police log noted that "*the findings from the medical do not give any concerns of assault on the child*".

7.20. With the information available to the paediatrician at the time, the conclusion from the Child Protection Medical was not unreasonable. The facial bruising to Star was over bony prominences – a pattern of bruising that is typically associated with accidental injury in infants and children and which could be considered consistent with Frankie Smith's explanation of what happened to Star.

7.21. The Bradford Children's Social Care guidance states that 'a request for a Child Protection Medical should be made as an outcome of a multiagency strategy discussion, in which the paediatrician partakes'. This did not occur. The lack of a

formal multi-agency strategy discussion, which could have pulled together and critically reviewed all relevant information about the family, meant that the Paediatrician was not making an assessment with a full understanding of the whole context.

- 7.22. A multi-agency strategy discussion may not have changed the physical assessment of the bruising, but it would have prompted a more probing and challenging approach to questions posed to Frankie about the circumstances surrounding the injuries. The outcome of Child Protection Medicals should contribute to, but never be the only consideration when making child protection decisions. It needs to be considered along with other information about the child and family, including any known risks and previous concerns (for example, the two previous and recent referrals involving the risk of physical abuse and harm to Star).

Key Practice Episode 5

Continuing concerns from family members about Star's care (Fourth referral)

The day after the Child Protection Medical (22nd June) the allocated social worker had a conversation with one of Star's relatives, who reported that Frankie spoke to Star in a horrible way and that one of her siblings had seen Frankie hitting Star. Previously the relative had been scared to speak to children's social care as Savannah intimidated them.

The social worker called maternal grandmother who said that Savannah had "got into" Frankie's head. Maternal grandmother had never witnessed anything herself; but, when asked about her specific concerns, maternal grandmother said that she was worried for Star's safety in Savannah and Frankie's care. She reported that Frankie had moved out of the family home and was now living with Savannah.

The social worker carried out a virtual home visit on 23rd June, which was conducted via a facetime mobile phone call. This noted no concerns and the Safety Plan was for Frankie to seek support from professionals when needed. The analysis recorded was: "*Frankie gave an explanation of the bruises found on Star. She explained that she had moved out of the family home and feels this has contributed to all the malicious concerns being raised. Star was observed following the visit from the hospital and she appeared content. Mum expressed that due to her family allegations she will not be letting them see Star for now as feels her family are causing so much disruption in her relationship*".

After the virtual visit the social worker contacted the relative who had reported concerns on 22nd June to inform them that the case would be closed. The relative was very upset and reiterated that Frankie was lying and that they "*had a strong feeling something bad was happening to Star*". On the same day, a family friend called children's social care to say that the family were scared to share their worries about Star and they were sure that Star

was being abused: children's social care "*would have another Baby P on their case as they are not listening to all the concerns.*"

The social work single agency assessment was completed and the case closed on 8th July without any further contact with family members. The concerns were noted to be unsubstantiated and the referral was regarded as malicious in intent.

- 7.23. Given the concerns leading up to the Child Protection Medical, and the further concerns that had been raised by family members soon afterwards, it is not clear why a virtual visit was undertaken rather than a face-to-face home visit. Although there was a discussion with Frankie, and Star was observed to be 'well dressed and alert [and] to respond to her name over the phone', a virtual visit limited the opportunity for the social worker to use their observational skills, becoming over-reliant on what they heard from Frankie and what they were shown. With a facetime call they could not be certain who else was in the room, listening to the conversation and not seen – a key issue in a situation where there were concerns that Frankie was subject to domestic abuse.
- 7.24. This second assessment did not achieve a balanced and critical approach to the assessment of risk. Too much weight was given to Frankie and Savannah's self-reported information, and too little time was spent with Star. The clearly expressed concerns of family and friends were assumed to be malicious and referrers were not consistently spoken to or informed of the outcome of the assessment. What happened highlighted how important it is to give due and equal weight to the views of and evidence from family members; in this instance, family members were a critical source of information and evidence as well as being important sources of support to Star.
- 7.25. When the assessment was closed to children's social care the 'Signs of Safety' scale recorded by the social worker on the assessment was eight.²³ This meant that Star was considered reasonably, but not completely, safe. The analysis within the assessment did not explore what the outstanding concerns might be and how they could be mitigated. There continued to be unanswered questions, particularly about the possibility of domestic abuse alongside family concerns from a range of sources. There was an overreliance on a binary approach whereby concerns were either 'substantiated' or 'unsubstantiated' with no consideration of whether a Child in Need Plan might be an appropriate way forward. It is possible that Frankie would not have consented to this approach but it should have been considered and explored.

²³ In Bradford, children's social care had implemented 'Signs of Safety' as a social work practice model. Key elements of the model were built into the case notes and assessment recording system, which included 'scaling' of risk on a scale from 0-10, where 0 was 'no safety' through to 10 'no concerns, fully safe'.

- 7.26. Despite the influence of the finding from the Child Protection Medical that the cause of bruising to Star was consistent with the explanation of the circumstances given by Frankie, there were many direct concerns expressed by family members, including from maternal grandmother who previously had been supportive of Frankie. The social work assessment did not hold in mind the possibility that there could be tensions and disagreements within the family alongside very real concerns about the abuse of Star. Frankie and Savannah's explanation that family members' concerns were motivated by their disapproval of same sex relationships was too readily accepted. The designation of these concerns as 'malicious referrals' in the case record gave validity to Frankie and Savannah's claims of malicious intent when family members contacted children's social care again at the end of August.
- 7.27. Again, professionals were negotiating two conflicting sets of information. The version of events put forward by Frankie Smith and Savannah Brockhill, which the paediatrician's report seemed to add weight to; and the growing body of concern from multiple wider family members. Again, a single agency assessment process – where decisions are being made by individual professionals in relative isolation – was not an appropriate way to fully interrogate and analyse all of the evidence available. A multi-agency strategy discussion involving relevant police, paediatrician and social workers, where professionals challenged one another and explored multiple hypotheses, with the full range of evidence in front of them, would have provided a better opportunity to get to the bottom of what was happening.

Key Practice Episode 6

Video of Star with bruises (Fifth referral)

A video of bruises was circulating among family members and Star's father saw a copy of the video and contacted the police on 31st August. The police tried to visit the home but were told that Star was with Frankie and Savannah in Scotland. On 2nd September Star's maternal great grandfather contacted the IFD, stating he had a video of bruising to Star. He reported concerns about Frankie's care of Star and domestic abuse towards her by Savannah. He was asked to send it by email but was unable to do so. A social worker contacted Frankie. Frankie said that she had already contacted her previous social worker to say that Star had bruised herself falling downstairs. There is no record of such a contact. A home visit was deferred until 4th September because Frankie, Star and Savannah said they were going to Scotland.

Frankie had already been in contact with her GP via phone on 1st September to say that Star had sustained a cut lip when falling off cobbled steps and, as the GP surgery was about to close for the day, the GP asked Frankie to call NHS 111. A safeguarding note was entered on the file and a health visitor was asked to make contact routinely to deliver

accident prevention advice. On 3rd September, the GP followed up with a call to Frankie when it was apparent that she had not contacted NHS 111 and the GP offered a face-to-face appointment which Frankie then cancelled as Star's lip injury was now healing. Frankie also did not follow up on GP advice to access an emergency appointment on 4th September when she told the GP she was travelling to Doncaster and that Star's tongue had blisters.

Prior to Star, Frankie and Savannah travelling to Doncaster, at 11am on 4th September a social worker saw Star, Frankie and Savannah. The social worker noted that the home was clean warm and tidy and there was a "good attachment" between Frankie and Star. The case notes recorded a faint bruise to Star's cheek, a previous bruise to the ear, and a bruise to the right shin 'consistent with normal marks and bruises'. The case was closed on 15th September 2020, just seven days prior to Star's murder, on the basis that concerns had been unsubstantiated and that the referral was malicious in intent.

- 7.28. The concerns noted in this fifth referral again warranted a strategy discussion. This would have ensured that children's social care, the police, the GPs and health visitors shared information and followed up any gaps in what was known, particularly securing a copy of the video showing the bruising to Star, which was never received in the IFD. There should have been more active follow up to secure this video.
- 7.29. The management direction from the IFD when the case was allocated lacked necessary critical analysis and challenge in the light of the continuing concerns of family members. The previous and recent closure of the work with Star with no further action, and the fact that previous referrals from family members had been deemed to be malicious, may well have influenced the decision to undertake a single agency assessment.
- 7.30. Important information held by the GPs and police was not brought together. Statements from Frankie that she was unavailable as she was in Scotland and Doncaster were taken at face value, with no consideration that there was an emerging pattern of possible avoidant behaviour, seeking to keep professionals and family members at arm's length.
- 7.31. An agency social worker carried out the home visit. They recorded details of the visit in case notes but left the local authority before the assessment was completed. Their intention to give notice was not apparent to local managers at the point when the case was allocated. A Team Manager completed the assessment from the case notes and closed the case. In an interview for this review, the manager described significant pressure to re-assign the cases that had been held by the agency worker. At the time there were very high caseloads for social workers in the locality team. It was because of these circumstances, and because of the number of

cases the manager had to re-allocate, that the assessment was concluded and the case closed without due critical reflection and challenge. The review has concluded that the assessment and related decision making following this fifth referral was inadequate and not commensurate with the concerns and risks that were being highlighted.

Bradford local context

Bradford is the fifth largest metropolitan local authority district in England. It currently ranks as the 12th most deprived local authority in England (MHCLG, 2019), over a third of children under 16-years-old come from low-income households (Department for Education, 2022d). The population is markedly more ethnically diverse than the national average. 26% of the working age population is from an ethnic minority, compared to 17% nationally. West Yorkshire Police force, of which Bradford is part, recorded the highest rates of domestic abuse-related crimes in England and Wales in 2020 and 2021.²⁴

Inspection findings

8.1 Bradford has struggled to deliver effective children's social care for a number of years, with its children's services rated 'Inadequate' by OFSTED since 2018 (OFSTED, 2018). In his report to the Secretary of State for Education in January 2022, the Children's Services Commissioner concluded that control of children's services needed to be removed from the Council (Department for Education, 2022c). Work is now underway to establish a Trust. This will run services for vulnerable children and families in Bradford and will operate at arms-length from the Council under an independent Chair and Board of Directors.

8.2 Practice concerns in the work with Star and her family were reflective of the social work practice found in Bradford over the period 2019 -20, as summarised in OFSTED monitoring reports over that period. Key points to note from these OFSTED reports were:

- Assessments were often overly optimistic and lacking 'professional curiosity' in testing out parental self-reporting. They were too parent-focused and not always considering all adults in the household:
- Premature case closures, with risks not fully understood or managed.
- Limited analysis of a child's 'lived experience'.
- Insufficient management oversight or critical challenge.
- Supervision was not supporting practice improvement or driving forward plans.
- Inconsistent support for care leavers.²⁵

²⁴ [Domestic Abuse Statistics Data tool](#)

²⁵ Source: OFSTED 2019b; OFSTED 2019c; OFSTED 2020a; OFSTED 2020b.

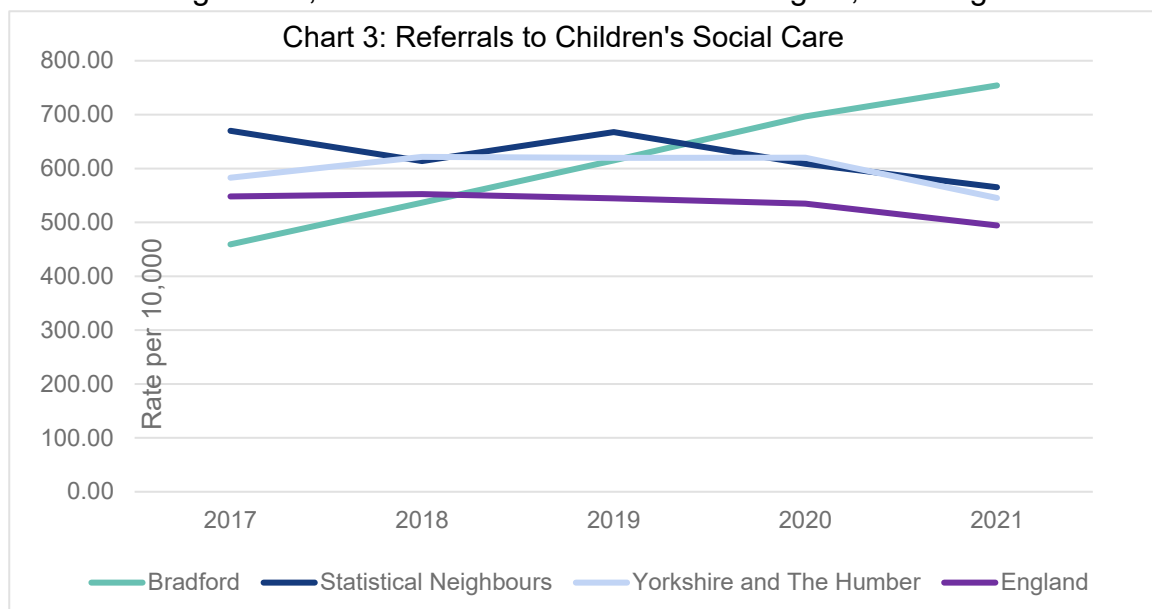
8.3 HMI-CFRS graded the performance of West Yorkshire Police (an area that covers Bradford) across ten areas (HMI-CFRS, 2021). It was found to be 'good' at 'Protecting vulnerable people' and 'Responding to the public' and 'adequate' at 'Investigating crime' and 'Providing a service to the victims of crime'.²⁶ Relevant strengths included domestic abuse reports being recorded well and reviewed by supervisors. An area for improvement was the lack of routine screening of referrals to children's social care, with referrals often made based on information about a single incident rather than the family history.

8.4 A CQC review of health services for looked after children and safeguarding in Bradford was carried out in 2019. As well as strengths, it also identified several areas for improvement including improving the quality and consistency of referrals made to the MASH (now Integrated Front Door) (CQC, 2019).

Bradford children's social care – key figures

8.5 Over the past few years, Bradford has seen an increase in children's social care activity and its referral rate is now markedly higher than the average for comparable local authorities (Department for Education, 2022d).

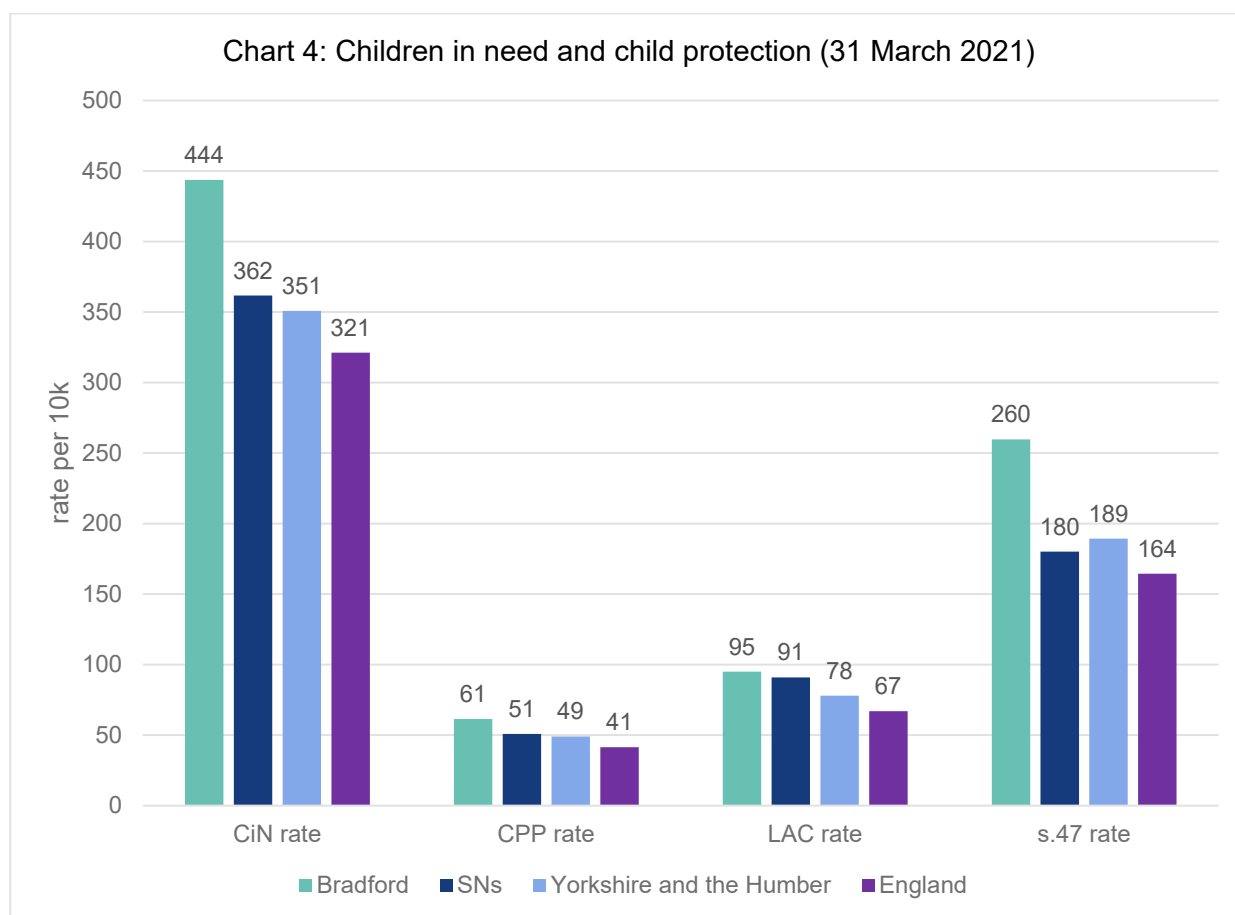
8.6 The following chart shows the rising rate of referrals in Bradford compared to its statistical neighbours, the Yorkshire and the Humber region, and England.²⁷



²⁶ The report found the force was 'outstanding' in four areas, 'good' in four areas and 'adequate' in two areas.

²⁷ Source: [Local authority interactive tool \(LAIT\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/tools/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait)

8.7 The following chart shows the higher rates of Section 47 (s.47) enquiries, Child in Need (CiN), Child Protection Plans (CPP) and Looked-After Children (LAC) in Bradford compared with its statistical neighbours, the Yorkshire and the Humber region, and England at 31st March 2021.²⁸



COVID-19 adaptations

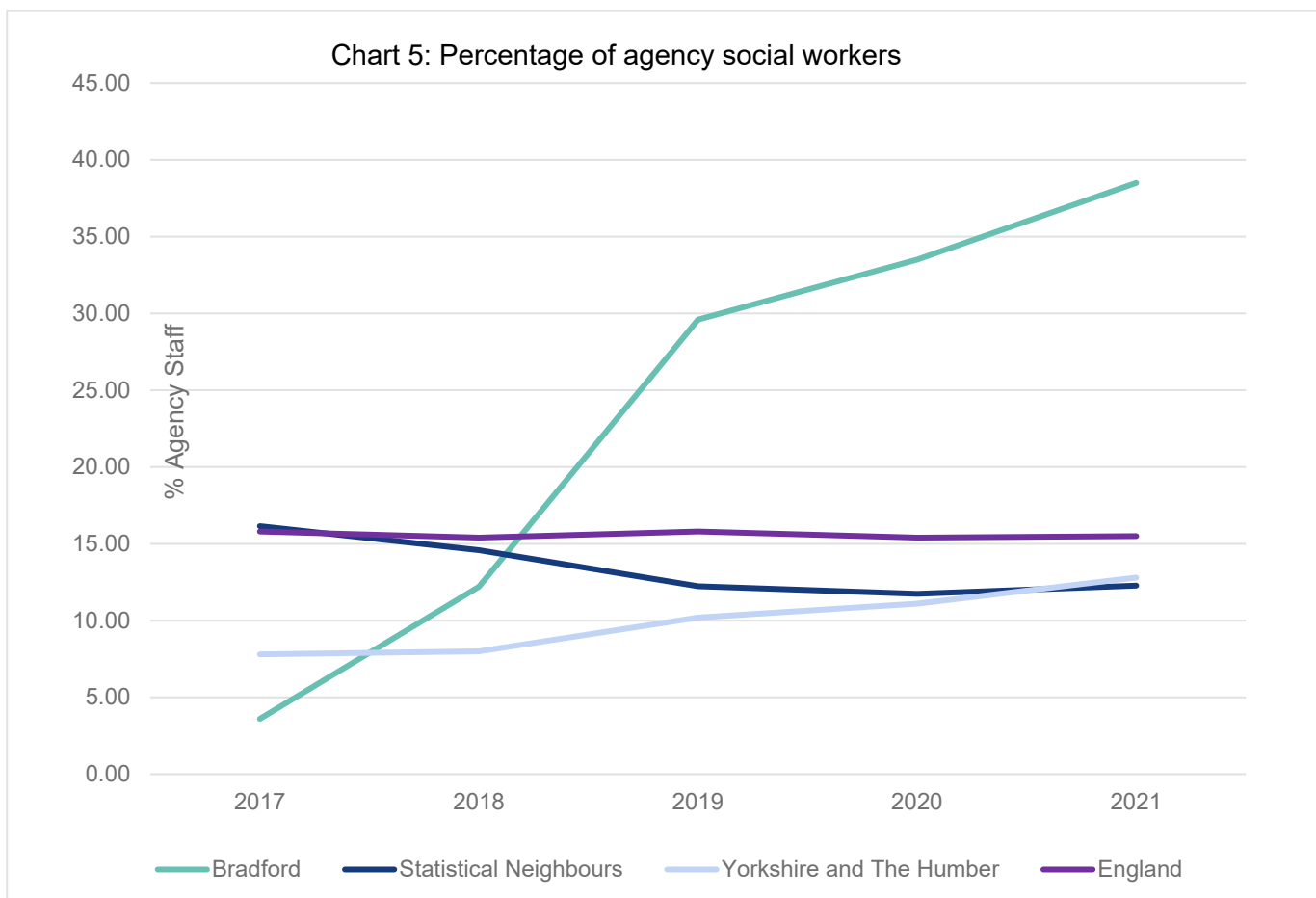
8.8. Interviews with practitioners have not indicated that adaptations for COVID-safe practice had a significant impact on the assessment and decision making in relation to Star. The involvement of Children's Services and partner agencies with Star and her family pre-dated the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The second assessment in May 2020 and the Child Protection Medical in June 2020 were in the period when lockdown measures were in force. Face to face home visits by social workers were very largely maintained in Star's case, with one virtual visit by a social worker in June 2020. As was common practice at the time for children offered health visiting at universal level, the Health Visitor carried out Star's 9–12-month assessment by telephone. This would have been more limited in nature than a face-to-face review

²⁸ Source: [Local authority interactive tool \(LAIT\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

and offered less opportunity to explore wider aspects of Star’s care and development. GP contacts were initially through telephone consultation in early September 2020. Frankie was then offered a face-to-face appointment, which she declined.

8.9 The recruitment of social workers (already very problematic in Bradford) became more difficult during the pandemic. With staff working from home, it was difficult for managers to induct, support and get to know agency staff joining their teams. Home working limited the opportunities for training and development to support practice improvement.

Workforce



8.10. After the 2018 OFSTED inspection, Bradford lost experienced social workers and has struggled to replace them, relying predominantly on newly qualified and agency staff. Between 2017 and 2021 there was a tenfold increase in the use of agency staff (Department for Education, 2022d). In January 2020, the average caseload for social workers in Bradford was 20.1. This compares to an average social worker caseload in England of 16.3 (Department for Education, 2021g).²⁹

²⁹ Source: Local authority interactive tool (LAIT) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

- 8.11. High turnover of social workers had a substantial impact on quality of practice. This was evidenced in the work with Star in September 2020. The social worker who made the home visit on 4th September 2020 had no previous knowledge of Star or her family. They left the service the following week (with one week's notice) with the assessment incomplete.
- 8.12. During the period in which key agencies were working with Star there were challenges of capacity across the system. In the local authority children's services there was inexperienced leadership and management at all levels. Social worker vacancies and turnover, with high levels of agency staff, affected the capacity to improve practice. The Children's Services Commissioner's report highlighted that progress was also affected by initial shortcomings in corporate support for Children's Services relating to IT and the recruitment and retention of staff.
- 8.13. Within the health economy, a CQC review of health services for looked after children and safeguarding in 2019 highlighted capacity issues in relation to health visiting and midwifery and the need to ensure timely and appropriate support for teenage pregnancy (CQC, 2019). In respect of the police, frequent changes of divisional leadership led to inconsistency of approach in some aspects of multi-agency working. Good collaborative working in response to domestic abuse was noted by the Children's Services Commissioner, but this was not necessarily evident in work with Star and her family (Department for Education, 2022c).
- 8.14. Faced with reducing local authority budgets, funding had been taken out of early help services but by 2018 the local authority had worked to restore preventative service funding, and with partners, had scaled up depleted early help services. An early help service was in place in 2020 offering both targeted early help and family support.

Impact of the Safeguarding Partners

- 8.15. The Children's Services Commissioner's report found weak local strategic partnerships and a lack of shared vision and plan. This was seen as a major gap and had impacted on the ability of partners to work together to deliver better outcomes for children in Bradford. Similarly, the review team found limited evidence of safeguarding partnership arrangements impacting positively on front line practice. From our conversations with senior leaders, it was clear that they recognised these concerns and were making a strong practical commitment to re-set relationships and establish a focus on ambitious outcomes for children and young people.

Conclusions

- 9.1. Professionals had only a limited understanding of what daily life was like for Star, beyond a superficial assessment from “one off” visits, which did not build on any historic information known by each agency. Star experienced a high level of disruption due to constant moves throughout her short life. No professionals understood this. The fact that she may have been experiencing serious and systematic physical and emotional abuse was never really considered and addressed.
- 9.2. Decision making in the Integrated Front Door reflected management priorities to respond to a high volume of referrals and ensure throughput of cases. This resulted in minimal information gathering, including checking background information. Referrals about Star that would have benefited from a fuller assessment were not recognised.
- 9.3. Assessments did not explore the family context and interaction between family members, most specifically in relation to concerns raised about how Star was being treated. This meant professionals did not understand referrals from family members in context and dismissed them too readily.
- 9.4. Star’s wider family members were not listened to. The growing weight of concerned voices speaking on behalf of Star should have prompted professionals to reconsider the escalating risks to her. Framing family concerns as being ‘malicious’ was inappropriate and distracted professional attention from what might be happening to Star. The positive contribution that maternal great grandmother made to Star’s care was not fully recognised or understood.
- 9.5. Domestic abuse between Savannah and Frankie was cited by referrers to children’s social care in January and May 2020 but this was not assessed in the respective single agency assessments. Witness statements from family members and family associates to the police have attested to Savannah’s coercive, threatening, aggressive, ‘grooming’ and sometimes violent behaviour towards Frankie, but no professional understood this. Frankie was not given sufficient space to disclose what was happening to her.
- 9.6. Assessments within children’s social care were not fit for purpose and did not enable the identification of risks to Star and a plan for mitigating those risks. The practice framework underpinned by the Signs of Safety methodology was reduced in practice to the use of a formulaic list and rating scale and did not lead to a better understanding of risks and protective factors for Star. Assessments needed to move beyond superficial judgements and imprecise language, to the position where all

available information was used, triangulated and analysed in order to understand what was happening to Star.

- 9.7. The responses to the referrals with concerns about Star were significantly weakened by the lack of formal multi-agency child protection processes, especially strategy discussions and consideration of whether Section 47 enquiries should be initiated. This was particularly the case when there were allegations about bruising to Star. Robust strategy discussions would have allowed professionals to put all of the evidence together, interrogate it, challenge each other's perspectives, and agree a coordinated and strong response.
- 9.8. In 2020, Bradford children's social care service was a service in turmoil, where professionals were working in conditions that made high quality decision making very difficult to achieve. An overwhelming impression from our interviews with children's social care managers and practitioners was that this had been their experience.
- 9.9. The decision by the Secretary of State for Education on 25th January 2022 to place children's social care in Bradford into a not-for-profit trust, following a report from the Children's Services Commissioner, highlighted the scale and depth of systemic problems in Children's Services in Bradford which, in our view, had a substantive and material impact on the quality of practice and decision making about Star.
- 9.10. The volume of work and significant problems with workforce stability and experience, at every level, meant assessments and work with Star and her family were too superficial and did not rigorously address the repeated concerns expressed by different family members. These problems were compounded by weaknesses in multi-agency working. Taken together, these factors had a significant impact on the professional judgements made about Star's safety and well-being at several very critical moments; resulting in professionals not knowing about or addressing the harm she was suffering.
- 9.11. There were undoubtedly multiple fault lines in multi and individual agency practice arrangements in Bradford in 2020, some of which are unique to that area. These contributed to the practice issues identified by this review. However, as the next chapter will illustrate, many of these fault lines have been identified in other situations and in other places. The next chapter considers some of these wider issues and challenges.

Local recommendations

Safeguarding Partners in Bradford should:

- 10.1. Review their strategic and operational responsibilities as recommended nationally by this review, including making sure that they have a good understanding of learning from the review, good oversight of performance and that priorities are agreed, and funding is fair and equitable.
- 10.2. Review, develop, commission and resource a comprehensive, early help offer which can be accessed before/during and after the completion of any child and family assessment by children's social care. This offer should include:
 - A review of the Partnership's Pre-Birth Procedures to ensure that the assessment of parental and family risk factors are explored and decisions are appropriately documented. Any barriers to implementation should be identified.
 - Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust to ensure that ante natal health visiting is offered and priority is given to first time parents.
 - Teenage pregnancy support going beyond the age of 16
 - Develop the role of the Care Leaving services to ensure that it supports care leavers who become parents.
 - A whole family approach where the wider extended family and neighbourhood networks are involved in providing support to vulnerable young parents
- 10.3. Agree clear expectations regarding risk assessment and decision making and these are understood by all agencies. Partners should work with CSC to ensure that:
 - Decisions not to proceed following a referral are based on a review of previous history, background checks and a chronology of prior concerns
 - No referral is deemed malicious without a full and thorough multi-agency assessment, including talking with the referrer, and agreement with the appropriate manager
 - All staff are compliant with information sharing protocols
 - Risk assessments are always informed by multi agency information gathering which includes listening to family and friends and an assessment that goes beyond self-reporting
 - Supervision is always used to test assumptions and alternative hypotheses

- 10.4. Jointly review and commission domestic abuse services to guide the response of practitioners and ensure there is a robust understanding of what the domestic abuse support offer is in Bradford. This should lead towards a coordinated community response by providing a bridge between services. Immediate action should be taken to provide multi-agency practitioners with guidance and/or training, supported within supervision, to enquire about domestic violence in mixed and same sex relationships, to develop safety plans for victims and their children and support perpetrator interventions. This should include that routine enquiry about domestic abuse is embedded in professional practice of midwifery and health visitor services.
- 10.5. Ensure that all practitioners understand their role when considering allegations of bruising including consideration of images which appear to show bruising. This should include:
- convening a strategy discussion with relevant agencies, both in and outside working hours
 - an assumption that a medical will be required and recording the rationale for any decision not to arrange a Child Protection Medical where there are allegations of bruising or other concerning external injury. The absence of visible marks should NOT be a reason, without consultation with a Paediatrician
 - discussion with the on-call Paediatrician with respect to arranging a Child Protection Medical Assessment
 - ensuring that all relevant information on the child and family is available at the time of this assessment
 - the medical assessment should be done in accordance with RCPCH's standards for such assessments, and such assessments subjected to peer review
 - providing social workers with relevant knowledge about bruising to children, so that they are alert to situations which require follow up, including discussion with medical practitioners.
- 10.6. Review information sharing protocols to ensure that practitioners have an accurate understanding what data is available what information must be shared. This review should pay attention to whether sufficient information is available to the emergency duty service.

The Department for Education's Children's Services Commissioner in Bradford should hold Bradford's improvement board to account for implementation of these recommendations.

- 10.7. The review recognises that Safeguarding Partners in Bradford have acted to address a number of the issues identified through local learning processes and are working to deliver the recommendations set out in the report of the Children's Services Commissioner. We are grateful to the Safeguarding Partners and professionals locally for their open and honest engagement with this review.

Key messages for all Safeguarding Partners

In the sections of this report which follow, we set out our wider analysis of the issues identified by the stories of Arthur and Star, and then propose a set of national recommendations which we think necessary to strengthen the child protection system. However, there are also a set of practice issues which we think all Safeguarding Partners across the country should immediately assure themselves are being dealt with effectively in their area.

11.1 All Safeguarding Partners should assure themselves that:

- Robust multi-agency strategy discussions are always being held whenever it is suspected a child may be at risk of suffering significant harm.
- Sufficient resources are in place from across all agencies to allow for the necessary multi-agency engagement in child protection processes e.g., strategy discussions, section 47 enquiries, Initial Child Protection Conferences.
- There are robust information sharing arrangements and protocols in place across the Partnership.
- Referrals are not deemed malicious without a full and thorough multi-agency assessment, including talking with the referrer, and agreement with the appropriate manager. Indeed, the Panel believes that the use of such language has many attendant risks and would therefore discourage its usage as a professional conclusion.

11.2 It is important for all Safeguarding Partners to recognise that when there is a high level of media and public scrutiny of children dying as a result of abuse, professional anxiety is raised and this can drive up risk averse practice in the system. This in turn can obscure those children who most need help. Increasing rates of child protection activity does not necessarily translate into effective child protection practice. It is for all Safeguarding Partners to ensure that practitioners are well supported, have necessary expertise and that systems and processes are in place locally for identifying those children who need to be protected, whilst minimising any unnecessary intervention in family life.

Wider practice themes: the current picture of child protection in England

While undertaking this review it has been abundantly clear to the Panel that the experiences of Arthur and Star are, tragically, not unusual when considered against other serious safeguarding incidents.

This chapter looks at:

- The national child protection context.
- Patterns and trends in serious safeguarding incidents nationally to analyse whether Arthur and Star’s experiences were similar to those of other children.
- The key practice issues highlighted by Arthur and Star’s experiences, and whether these issues are widespread in child protection practice or not.

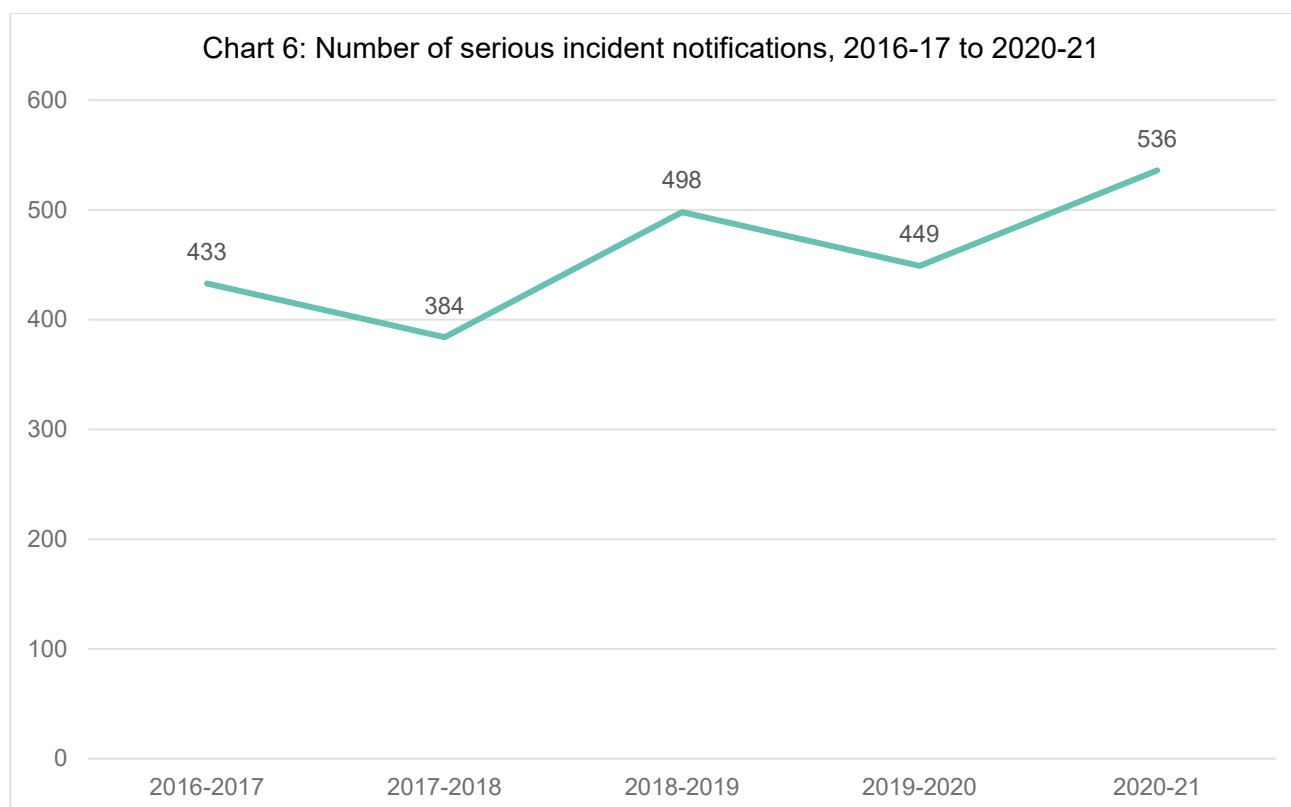
We need to acknowledge that the key practice issues in this review have been identified in the context of abuse within a family environment. They are not exclusive to this environment; the context for child protection is changing and there are a whole range of risks that children can face outside of the family home, some of which have been the focus of national reviews by the Panel (CSPRP, 2020a; CSPRP, 2022). Many of the reviews the Panel sees include criminal and sexual exploitation, serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour and online abuse which require equally strong multi-agency child protection practice. The same principles of prompt and effective multi-agency information sharing, discussion, planning and action apply whether it is children in the family home, outside the home, or in another setting where they are being cared for.

Child protection – overall context

- 12.1. The UK is not an outlier internationally when it comes to the prevalence of child mortality by homicide or assault. The number of child deaths in the UK, where another person was responsible or where responsibility was not determined, are some of the lowest in Europe (Fry, D. and Casey, T, 2017).
- 12.2. However, every year we see a significant number of serious safeguarding incidents, which are incidents where a child whom the local authority knows, or suspects, has been abused or neglected is seriously harmed or killed. The number of serious safeguarding incidents has fluctuated year-on-year. There has been a general increasing trend but comparisons over time are difficult to draw due to changes in 2018 to the reporting requirements placed on local authorities (Department for

Education, 2021e).³⁰ The 536 incidents reported in 2020-21 is an 8% increase on the 498 incidents reported in 2018-19 (Ibid). There has also been a sharp increase in child protection activity in recent years (Department for Education, 2021c).

12.3. The following chart shows that whilst the number of serious incident notifications have fluctuated year-on-year, there has been a general increasing trend; although, changes in reporting requirements make comparisons hard to draw.³¹



12.4. The following figures provide a snapshot of the latest child protection activity in England:

- At the more acute end of the children's social care system, there were 50,010 children on a child protection plan at 31 March 2021 (Department for Education, 2021c). This is the equivalent to around 1 in every 250 children in England.³²

³⁰ The Children and Social Work Act 2017 placed a duty on local authorities to notify the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel of serious incidents. The duty came into effect when the Panel was established in June 2018. Prior to this, notifications (to OFSTED) had not been a legal requirement but guidance on them had been included in 'Working together to safeguard children' since March 2015. (Department for Education, 2021e)

³¹ Source: [Serious incident notifications, Financial Year 2020-21 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

³² [Population estimates - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk). There are around 12 million children in England.

Children on a child protection plan have been assessed as suffering or being likely to suffer serious harm.

- There were also 198,790 Section 47 enquiries initiated in the same year, where significant harm or a likelihood of it was suspected (Department for Education, 2021c). Just over a third (37%) of those enquiries progressed to an Initial Child Protection Conference, convened when concerns are substantiated (Ibid).
- Children on a child protection plan form part of much larger cohort of children in need - 388,490 children were considered in need at 31 March 2021 (Ibid). This includes 80,850 looked-after children (Department for Education, 2021d).³³ Estimates suggest that around 1 in 10 children were considered in need in the past six years (Department for Education, 2019a).
- There were 536 serious incident notifications in the year ending 31 March 2021, relating to the death or serious harm to a child where abuse or neglect is known or suspected (Department for Education, 2021e). Arthur and Star would have been included in those figures.
- Around 1 in 10 (56) of those notifications related to children who were on a child protection plan at the time of the incident (Department for Education, 2021e). This equates to around 0.11% or 1 in 1000 children on a child protection plan that year. Whilst the vast majority were not on a plan a marked proportion - over 60% in 2020 - were previously known to children's services, as with Arthur and Star (CSPRP, 2021c).
- Of the 536 incidents, 223 (42%) were deaths (Department for Education, 2021e).
- Cases such as Arthur and Star's are uncommon in that the majority of deaths did not result from the deliberate intention of parents or parents' partners to kill or harm their child but reflect a more complex set of circumstances. In 2020, approximately 1 in 6 (17%) deaths were caused by maltreatment within the family, and of those, less than half (14 cases) had evidence of intentional murder/harm. Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) was the most common category of fatal cases (30.6%) (CSPRP, 2021c).

Analysing the findings from Arthur and Star's stories

12.5. We have taken the following approach when analysing the issues highlighted by Arthur and Star's experiences:

- Triangulating the findings with the over 1500 rapid reviews which have come to the Panel's attention since it was established, as well as previous triennial analyses of serious case reviews.

³³ [Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting Year 2020 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics)

- Reviewing those findings against wider research on child protection.
- Drawing on new analyses commissioned by the Panel including an in-depth review of the quality of risk assessment and decision making in serious cases; and a review by the Behavioural Insights Team into the barriers to effective inter-agency information sharing and decision making.
- Convening a Challenge Group of leading thinkers from outside of child protection to provide a different perspective on tackling recurrent issues.

12.6. It is clear from our analysis that there are a set of chronic challenges getting in the way of good child protection practice in England. These issues are not new but they are complex and complicated to overcome. To do so effectively, requires that we consider death and serious harm from abuse and neglect within their system context rather than seeing them as isolated events. We need to recognise the patterns and similarities between such horrific events and identify what conditions would make it less likely for such events to reoccur (Reason, J., 2000).

12.7. We have set out below our analysis of the systemic factors influencing child protection practice on the ground; highlighting how these issues affected Arthur and Star; and how this connects with the wider evidence about child protection practice.

We have organised this analysis under four key domains:

- Practice and practice knowledge
- Systems and processes
- Leadership and culture
- Wider service context

12.8. These domains reflect the way that the Panel has analysed the key system factors that make for effective risk assessment and decision making. As well as featuring strongly in Arthur and Star's stories, weaknesses in risk assessment and decision making have been recognised as a predominant issue in serious cases by OFSTED, triennial analyses of Serious Case Reviews (Sidebotham *et al.*, 2016; Brandon *et al.*, 2020), the Panel's Annual Reports 2018-19 and 2020 and the independent review of children's social care.

Practice and practice-knowledge

Understanding what the child's daily life is like, where this might not be straightforward

- 12.9. At the heart of child protection is the need to really understand what life is like for a child, including in situations where adults are trying to obscure this. This is complex work and children who are experiencing abuse and neglect may be reticent or unable to speak out about their experiences. Practitioners need to have the right skills and expertise to develop a trusting and respectful relationship with the child, ask the right questions, and to critically reflect on what the child is saying or expressing through their words, actions or behaviours. Effective practice also necessitates understanding the impact that the histories of those involved in their life, e.g., their parents or parents' partners, may have on the child's experiences.
- 12.10. With both Arthur and Star, there was limited direct work; for example, Arthur's voice was often mediated by his father. There was also a lack of critical reflection on such engagement when it did take place; for example, Star was recorded as displaying "secure attachment" with her mother without explanation of what this meant or looked like. The histories of those involved in Arthur and Star's lives also required further exploration. Along with not probing further about Savannah Brockhill and Emma Tustin's histories, professionals in Bradford did not seek to understand Star's mother's own history in-depth and the potential impact on her parenting capacity.
- 12.11. Munro highlighted the persistent issue found by reviews into child deaths that the child was not spoken to enough (Munro, E. 2011).³⁴ Barriers to engaging the voice of the child, for example, lack of confidence or skills of some police officers (Allnock, D., Dawson, J. and Rawden, H. 2020), need to be remedied; and the child's views ascertained in a variety of ways (CSPRP, 2021c). Most importantly, practitioners need to be given the space and time to do quality work with the child and to critically reflect on the child's experiences (Ferguson, H. 2016), including putting together the jigsaw of information they hold about them and the network around them. Otherwise, there is a risk that the child will become invisible.

Listening to the views of the wider family and those who know the child well

- 12.12. A significant gap in understanding what daily life was like for Arthur and Star was the failure to talk to and listen to wider family members – especially grandparents

³⁴ This issue is also highlighted in other reviews e.g. CQC, 2016.

and great-grandparents – who had a very big part to play in the children’s lives. Effective child protection practice requires professionals to understand the significant relationships in that child’s life, including their extended family or peer network, and to build a picture of the child’s experiences that draws on their views and listens to their concerns.

- 12.13. Many different family members, in some cases on multiple occasions, raised concerns with police and social care professionals about the harm that they believed Arthur and Star were suffering. These family members knew Arthur and Star well but were not listened to in the same way that Arthur’s father and Star’s mother were. Instead, there was too easy an acceptance of the framing put forward by the children’s parents that the concerns being raised were ‘malicious’. Additionally, concerns raised by family (as well as family friends in Star’s case) about Thomas Hughes’ and Frankie Smith’s parenting capacity were not explored in depth. For example, Arthur’s paternal grandparents expressed concerns that Arthur’s father might not be able to protect him but these were not fully explored by professionals.
- 12.14. As well as featuring prominently in Arthur and Star’s stories, the impact of not considering grandparents’ and other adults’ views and overreliance on parental self-report is highlighted in other serious case analyses (OFSTED, 2011; Brandon *et al.*, 2020). The fact that concerns raised by family members are the least likely to proceed to further action also requires closer examination (Department for Education, 2017b). There needs to be greater consistency in speaking to and listening to the views of family/friends, recognising that they may be able to provide important insights into what the child is experiencing.

Specialist skills and expertise for working with families whose engagement is reluctant or sporadic

- 12.15. Child protection work requires sophisticated relational skills, with practitioners needing to build trust and cooperation with families who can be - or appear to be - reluctant to engage with them, whilst being authoritative and challenging where needed. Professionals need to be able to analyse the engagement of families critically, understanding the signs of parental disengagement and being able to interpret this as evidence when making decisions about a child’s safety. Practitioners also need good knowledge and understanding of the factors that might impact on such engagement, for example, different types of domestic abuse including coercive controlling behaviour.

- 12.16. In Arthur and Star's stories, professionals were increasingly kept at arm's length by those who were perpetrating abuse. From early September 2020, Frankie Smith and Savannah Brockhill actively prevented professionals and family members coming into contact with Star. Avoidant behaviour was also evident in Arthur's case - Arthur's father did not consent to share information about Arthur with family members; refused an offer of life-story work to support Arthur; and did not send Arthur back to school as required in mid-June.
- 12.17. Reviews into serious incidents often refer to a particular pattern of parental engagement when risk is escalating. The Panel's 2020 Annual Report outlined the importance of following up on 'missed appointments, blocking of communications, and cancelled visits', which are typical signs of parental avoidance (CSPRP, 2021c). Critical thinking in supervision and management can help professionals to identify a 'pattern of closure' whereby families try to minimise contact with the external world - an issue identified in over half of fatal abuse cases (Reder, P. and Duncan, S., 1999). Equally, it can bring a more forensic lens to situations where a parent seems to be co-operating in order to allay concerns; an issue that practitioners can lack confidence in identifying (Fauth *et al.*, 2010).
- 12.18. Ultimately, the Panel's analysis of risk assessment and decision making found that the skills of practitioners in establishing authentic 'support and challenge' relationships was key to having a timely response to changing risk. Developing those skills amongst the child protection workforce is therefore essential.

Working with diverse communities

- 12.19. Effective child protection work requires practitioners to unpack biases and assumptions that may impact on how they perceive and assess the risk to a child. This includes assumptions and biases that relate to culture, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Practitioners need to be confident working with diverse communities and to be supported and challenged through supervision to reflect on these issues.
- 12.20. Assumptions about such issues impacted upon how practitioners understood Arthur and Star's daily experiences and made decisions about their safety. This includes:
- The perception of Arthur's father as a protective factor in his life.
 - The belief that referrals about Star were driven by dislike of her mother's same-sex relationship.
 - Potentially, the perception of women as unlikely perpetrators of harm to children.

- 12.21. Wider analyses of serious cases have found that practitioners need greater confidence and competence in exploring how ethnicity, racism and culture affect parenting and a child's lived experience (Bernard, C. and Harris, P. 2018; CSPRP, 2021c). Additionally, whilst case reviews often state a child's ethnicity, they do not tend to consider this in a meaningful way (Bernard, C. and Harris, P. 2018).
- 12.22. Similarly, the assumptions about Arthur's father's ability to look after him reflects a theme highlighted in the Panel's report 'The Myth of Invisible Men' that men are often framed in child protection contexts as either 'good' or 'bad', leading to a superficial understanding of their role (CSPRP, 2021b).
- 12.23. In both cases, the role of women in perpetrating abuse may have also impacted upon how professionals perceived the risk to Arthur and Star, given societal beliefs about women as caregivers etc. Whilst there is limited research about the role of women in serious incidents some international research highlights the prevalence of different mental health factors in maternal filicide (Krischer *et al.*, 2007; Kauppi *et al.*, 2010). It is also noteworthy that a previous triennial analysis of serious case reviews identified as a particular risk – for fatal physical abuse - domestic abuse where there is also a young or immature mother, with the situation exacerbated by social isolation, frequent house moves or a chaotic lifestyle (Sidebotham *et al.*, 2016). Irrespective of gender, Arthur and Star's stories underline the importance of the arrival of a new partner being considered as part of ongoing assessments of changing risk and need.

Appropriate responses to domestic abuse

- 12.24. Domestic abuse was a factor in over 40% of the serious incidents reviewed by the Panel in 2020 (CSPRP, 2021c). The risk posed by domestic abuse also features prominently in previous analyses of serious cases (CSPRP, 2020b; Sidebotham *et al.*, 2016; Brandon *et al.*, 2020).
- 12.25. In Arthur and Star's stories, there were a range of issues highlighted with regard to domestic abuse. In Arthur's case, Emma Tustin's experience of domestic abuse had not been sufficiently analysed in relation to her parenting capacity. Additionally, in Birmingham Children's Trust's assessment for Arthur, limited consideration was given to the impact on Arthur of witnessing domestic abuse. Similarly, domestic abuse as a feature in Star's family life was not explored in sufficient detail by any agency, with incidents considered individually rather than as part of an ongoing pattern. There were also limited efforts to engage Frankie Smith about reports of domestic abuse and to explore the concerns raised by family and friends further, for example, by talking to the referrers themselves.

- 12.26. Many of these issues resonate with the findings from the Panel's unpublished thematic review of multi-agency child safeguarding and domestic abuse which highlighted: a lack of understanding of domestic abuse, with it often being named but not explored; incident-driven responses; and the lack of a 'whole system' response to domestic abuse bringing relevant practitioners together. The importance of moving away from incident-based models of intervention to a deeper understanding of the ongoing nature of coercive control and its impact on victims, including the fear that can arise, has been highlighted by other reviews (Sidebotham *et al.*, 2016; CSPRP, 2020b). Ultimately, professionals need to build a picture of what is happening by linking together individual incidents and identifying patterns of behaviour in order to understand domestic abuse within a family (OFSTED, 2017).
- 12.27. Through Star's case, we also see the importance and value of specialist domestic abuse input when assessing risk. Practitioners in the specialist domestic abuse service (Dare2) recognised the risks to Star from domestic abuse but their expertise was not sufficiently drawn on by other agencies.

Specialist skills and expertise for undertaking child protection investigations

- 12.28. Child protection decision making is a highly skilled and intrinsically complicated activity. It involves extremely complex risk assessment in an ever-changing context, requiring analytical skill to collate and distil evidence forensically. Whilst there are many high skilled individuals working in child protection, we too often find the least experienced social workers undertaking statutory child protection work, often with inadequate supervision (Department for Education, 2021f). The importance of expertise and experience in police, health and other agencies' responses to child protection cases is also clear (HMIC, 2015; Cowley *et al.*, 2018).³⁵
- 12.29. In the case of Arthur and Star, there were gaps in such specialist skills particularly around interrogating and analysing evidence. The versions of events given by Thomas Hughes and Emma Tustin, and by Frankie Smith and Savannah Brockhill, were too readily accepted. Their framing of the concerns raised by wider family members as 'malicious' was accepted without enough investigation or triangulation with other sources. Additionally, issues of lack of experience and limited supervision and oversight were evident. For example, on the day photographs of bruising to

³⁵ 'Safeguarding children and young people: roles and competencies for healthcare staff' provides a framework which identifies the safeguarding competencies required for all healthcare staff. [Safeguarding Children and Young People: Roles and Competencies for Healthcare Staff | Royal College of Nursing \(rcn.org.uk\)](https://www.rcn.org.uk/child-protection/roles-and-competencies-for-healthcare-staff)

Arthur were received by the police there was limited capacity in the police team and relatively inexperienced officers on duty.

- 12.30. A range of research highlights the importance of considerable expertise and practice experience in making effective decisions (summarised in Hood *et al.*, 2022). Whittaker has found that experienced practitioners were better at: recognising patterns; focussing on key information rather than treating all information as equal; spotting missing information; and triangulating wider information with their own observations and intuition. These skills were more developed in highly experienced practitioners - over five years' experience (Whittaker, A. 2018). Lord Laming described the importance of social workers retaining a stance of 'respectful uncertainty' when carrying out child protection investigations – a process involving critical evaluation of all information gathered and keeping an open mind (Laming, L., 2003). Ultimately, child protection work requires authoritative practice and 'the ability to negotiate the complexity and ambiguity of child protection work with confidence and competence' (Brandon *et al.*, 2020).

Systems and Processes

Appropriate information sharing and seeking

- 12.31. In order for professionals to make good decisions about children in need of protection, they have to have a full picture of what is happening in a child's life. Part of this is about having access to all the information known about the child. But just as important is seeking out missing information, considering disparate pieces of information in the round, and asking what bigger picture is being painted about a child's experience. As outlined, this is something that requires both experience and expertise.
- 12.32. In Arthur and Star's cases, we see three main information sharing issues: a lack of timely and appropriate information sharing; limited information seeking; and evidence not being pieced together and considered in the round. For Arthur, photographs of bruising received by the police were not passed on to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); and relevant information about Emma Tustin's background was not included in the MASH screening ahead of the April home visit. Additionally, information was not shared with referrers due to concerns about the lack of consent from Arthur's father meaning that opportunities to re-appraise risks and gather further information were missed. For Star, insufficient attempts were made to understand Savannah Brockhill's history, even when family members were raising significant concerns about her. In both cases there was limited evidence of

professionals trying to unpick the concerns being raised by family members and seek additional information. An episodic approach was taken to addressing concerns, with too much weight put on a single 'positive' observation, rather than looking at the evidence altogether.

- 12.33. Problems with information sharing have been raised by every national child protection review and inquiry – going back as far as the inquiry into the death of Maria Colwell in 1973. They have also been a central theme in all triennial analysis of serious cases (Sidebotham *et al.*, 2016; Brandon *et al.*, 2020) and in the Panel's two annual reports (CSPRP, 2020b; CSPRP, 2021c). Time and again we see that different agencies hold pieces of the same puzzle but no one holds all of the pieces or is seeking to put them together. As Eileen Munro summarised in her 2011 review of child protection, 'abuse and neglect rarely present with a clear, unequivocal picture. It is often the totality of information, the overall pattern of the child's story, that raises suspicions of possible abuse or neglect.' (Munro, E. 2011, p.79).
- 12.34. Arthur and Star's stories also highlight the behavioural biases that can impact upon information sharing within and between agencies, which need to be addressed. This includes:
- **Diffusion of responsibility** - the tendency for people in groups to fail to act on the assumption that someone else is responsible, an issue identified as a frequent contributor to children's deaths or serious injuries (Brandon *et al.*, 2009). In Solihull, the police did not share photographs with the MASH because they knew that children's social care had made a home visit and assumed that issues were 'in hand'.
 - **Source bias** - the tendency to interpret information depending on its source not substance, for example, the view in Star's case that family members' referrals were malicious.
 - **Confirmation bias** - the tendency to dismiss evidence which does not support your initial position. Practitioners' perceptions of Arthur's father as a protective factor in his life and their impression from the home visit impacted upon how photographs provided to the MASH later on were perceived.
 - **Risk aversion** - preference for more certain outcomes even when more uncertain outcomes could be of greater benefit, for example, practitioners' reluctance to share information with Arthur's family without his father's consent, potentially due to concerns that GDPR laws would be violated.
- 12.35. With regard to consent, legislation is clear that sharing information without consent for the purposes of safeguarding is permitted; and guidance, such as Working Together to Safeguard Children, should reinforce this unambiguously. Locally, child protection practitioners need to feel empowered to share information without

consent but we recognise that this is not commonplace (Department for Education and Kantar Public, 2021). The culture around information sharing and seeking must be driven by leaders at every level including central Government, and to this end we welcome positive steps such as the Department of Culture Media and Sport's proposed amendment to GDPR.³⁶

Critical thinking and challenge within and between agencies

- 12.36. Key to overcoming behavioural biases is critical thinking and robust challenge within and between agencies. Good child protection practice requires professionals to consider a wide range of evidence from many sources, and to synthesise it into meaningful working hypotheses within a very short time frame. This relies on professionals engaging in critical thinking both individually and as a collective and having the right support and opportunities to do this well, for example, manageable case numbers, supervisor stability and good quality supervision.
- 12.37. For both Arthur and Star, we see missed opportunities for critical thinking and challenge. For example, as part of Star's first assessment, practitioners did not go back and test their findings about domestic abuse with the specialist domestic abuse service, who may have been able to provide important challenge. The opportunity for professionals to consider information altogether and see the bigger picture was also missed in both cases when Strategy Meetings were not held including prior to the home visit to see Arthur and Star's Child Protection Medical. Instead, single perspectives, for example, the conclusions of the police officer from the 'safe and well' visit to Emma Tustin's home were too heavily relied upon.
- 12.38. The issue of inter and intra-professional challenge features as a key theme in case reviews and has been found to particularly affect decisions in contact, referral and assessment (CSPRP, 2021c). A range of factors can impact upon professionals' willingness to challenge one another's hypotheses and assumptions. Issues that feature prominently include: a lack of confidence to challenge decisions; a lack of clarity about how to escalate concerns; and a lack of reflective space (Sidebotham *et al.*, 2016; Allnock, D., Dawson, J. and Rawden, H., 2020; Brandon *et al.*, 2020). To tackle this, requires a change in culture to one where challenge is promoted and encouraged and more regular opportunities to bridge siloes and consider different professionals' perspectives are created. Countries such as Finland have embraced this approach, with Finnish social workers more likely to cite the role of peers and interdisciplinary teams in decision making than other countries surveyed (Berrick *et al.*, 2016). Without such a shift, professionals risk continuing to see cases only

³⁶ The proposed amendment will ensure that sharing information without consent for safeguarding purposes always passes the legitimate interest test.

within the narrow frame of their own professional background and without a holistic picture of risk (Sidebotham *et al.*, 2016).

Leadership and culture

- 12.39. It is leaders who create the operating context in which child protection decisions are taken. At a strategic level, leaders need to ensure: clarity of vision, responsibilities and resources; robust governance; and a culture of learning, improvement and challenge. When there are conflicting agency priorities, capacity issues, and a lack of shared vision and values, effective multi-disciplinary and multiagency working becomes very much dependent on individual will and relationships. Children cannot rely on that alone.
- 12.40. Both Solihull and Bradford's Safeguarding Partners have distinct challenges to address around effective multi-agency working and driving forward improvement. However, common to both Bradford and Solihull was a weak 'line of sight' to frontline practice by Safeguarding Partners.
- 12.41. In Solihull, leaders of the Safeguarding Partners did not have a clear enough understanding of the impact of child protection practice. The impact of this was directly felt by practice in the MASH where weaknesses in the joint strategic governance of MASH led to key staffing gaps going unresolved. This came through in Solihull's JTAI report (2022) and in conversations with leaders, managers and practitioners (OFSTED, 2022).
- 12.42. In Bradford, the Children's Services Commissioner's report (2022) set out very clearly the absence of an agreed partnership vision and the impact that this had on delivering good outcomes for children in Bradford. Our analysis of interviews with senior leaders, managers and practitioners supports this conclusion and we found little evidence of Safeguarding Partners' arrangements impacting positively on front line practice.
- 12.43. The Behavioural Insights Team's literature review also highlighted the importance of leadership support in fostering good child protection practices and in particular effective cross-organisational information sharing. Embedding trust and a shared set of values between organisations is key to this (Abrams *et al.*, 2003; Skopik *et al.*, 2011). Without such trust, staff may lack the motivation to share information (Cress, U., Kimmerle, J. and Hesse, F.W. 2006); be unwilling to share information out of fear of criticism (Goodman, P.S. and Darr, E.D. 1998); and/or may withhold information to protect their own position (Constant, D., Kiesler, S. and Sproull, L., 1994).

- 12.44. Lord Laming's Inquiry (2003) pointed to the vital necessity of children's services leaders having their 'finger on the pulse' about the quality and effectiveness of child protection practice. This involves using a range of mechanisms to know what is happening, what is working well and what is not. It means meeting and listening to practitioners and children and families. It entails reading case files, contributing to file audits and other forms of quality assurance, and generally engaging with a diverse range of quality assurance mechanisms so that they speak with authority and authentically about where and how practice should improve. An important aspect of the role of Safeguarding Partners is making sure that there is strong and robust management oversight of the quality of multi-agency practice and that quality assurance mechanisms are in place.
- 12.45. Case reviews also highlight the importance of management oversight and quality assurance to promote and assure good practice standards (CSPRP, 2021c). Effective oversight can enable timely escalation of concerns and facilitate challenge of other agencies' decisions (Brandon *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, it helps ensure that core processes, which help protect children, are being adhered to.
- 12.46. Reflective supervision also plays a key part in intra-agency challenge and requires leaders to create a learning culture within which supervision can take place and thrive (Wonnacott, J., 2020; Rothwell *et al.*, 2021). In both Solihull and Bradford, the impression gained from interviews was that reflective supervision was superficial and not a constant feature of professional life. Yet the lack of meaningful and regular supervision in these cases reflects wider national issues (Wilkins, D. Forrester, D. and Grant, L. 2017). Over a third (34%) of social workers receive reflective supervision less than every 6 weeks, a figure which has increased in recent years, and social workers in 'Requires improvement' or 'Inadequate' local authorities are less likely to receive regular supervision (Department for Education, 2021f). A review of clinical supervision in the workplace also identified a number of barriers to effective supervision including lack of time and heavy workloads; lack of staffing, shift working; and a lack of supervisor training and support (Rothwell *et al.*, 2021).

Wider service context

- 12.47. Effective risk assessment and decision making in child protection is also affected by factors in the wider service context. This includes:
- workforce development

- funding levels and the strategic use of funding to invest in family support services
- the impact of wider socio-economic factors and matching priorities to resources.

- 12.48. In Bradford in particular a range of wider service issues impacted on risk assessment and decision making and the protection offered to Star.
- 12.49. With regard to workforce development, there were and are acute issues in Bradford with recruitment and retention of social work staff and the capacity to conduct sustained direct work with families. The social worker vacancy rate increased fourfold between 2017 and 2021 and the agency rate sevenfold (Department for Education, 2022b). The high turnover of staff had a direct impact on the quality of practice provided to Star. For example, the social worker who visited Star in September 2020 had no previous knowledge of Star or her family and left the service the following week with the assessment incomplete. Whilst particularly acute in Bradford, the social worker workforce challenges evidenced – instability and inexperience – and the impact on support for children and families reflect national issues.
- 12.50. There were also issues with funding levels, capacity and turnover within other Bradford services. For example, in relation to health visiting (CQC, 2019). During the interviews, we heard that health visiting caseloads had increased from an average 299 in 2018 to 479 in 2022. In Star’s case, a pre-birth family health needs assessment would have been an opportunity to understand her mother’s support needs and the wider family context but this did not happen due to human error in the context of a service under strain.
- 12.51. The issue of capacity in health visiting services is a national concern and merits further attention. Only 9% of health visitors in England work with the recommended ration of 250 children aged 0-5 or less, with nearly half (49%) accountable for over 500 children (Institute of Health Visiting, 2021). This is particularly concerning from a child protection perspective as health visitors are some of the few professionals likely to have ‘eyes on’ vulnerable infants and pre-school age children.
- 12.52. In Solihull, limited capacity in children’s mental health services may have had an impact on the response to Arthur’s emotional and mental health needs when he was referred to SOLAR in January 2020. Additionally, there was a lack of a domestic abuse commissioning strategy in place. Similar constraints feature in the Panel’s analysis of cases featuring weak risk assessment and decision making, with gaps in early intervention provision limiting support for vulnerable families as well as there being issues accessing specialist support.

National recommendations

- 13.1. In the previous chapter, we set out how the issues highlighted by Arthur and Star's stories resonate with the other serious incidents reviewed by the Panel every year. We identify the following fundamental issues with practice:
- Weaknesses in seeking, sharing and acting on information from multiple sources.
 - A lack of robust critical thinking and challenge within and between agencies.
 - A need for sharper specialist child protection skills and expertise, especially in relation to complex risk assessment and decision making; engaging reluctant parents; understanding the daily life of children; and domestic abuse.
 - Underpinning all of the above, a need for leadership and management which has a powerful enabling impact on child protection practice; and creates and protects the optimum organisational context for undertaking this complex activity.
- 13.2. Whilst there are also examples of good practice, it is clear that these issues affecting practice in Arthur and Star's cases are not local but national. These are problems which successive reviews and inquiries have pointed to and sought to address. And yet they keep recurring. We are advocating therefore that our approach to child protection practice should be strengthened at both a local and at a national level.
- 13.3. In this chapter, we set out what we think needs to be done on a national level to address these issues. The focus of our recommendations is the child protection system. We use the term 'child protection' rather than 'safeguarding' intentionally, to mean what happens when there are concerns that a child might be being (or at risk of being) significantly harmed. There is value in the concept of safeguarding being 'everyone's business' but it is our contention that its meaning has become so broad and elastic that there has been some distraction from the need for those investigating abuse and neglect to have highly specialist expertise and a forensic focus on child abuse and potential perpetrators. A stronger focus on the specialist skills required to work with this relatively small but extremely vulnerable group of children and their families should, in our view, lead to more clearly differentiated responses to concerns about abuse and neglect.
- 13.4. Therefore, at the heart of our recommendations is a proposal for a new approach to undertaking child protection work; this will entail a significant change to the way that

professionals from all agencies work with children and their families day to day, building on best practice developments. We are proposing that child protection practice needs to be a genuinely multi-professional, multi-agency endeavour, end to end. Operational delivery should be organised at a local level so that the key practitioners best placed to investigate and oversee child protection planning work together in established units under a single line of management and leadership. We want to see fresh thinking about the multi-disciplinary make-up of these units and encourage, for example, dedicated time from psychologists, psychiatrists and paediatricians. We want to move away from having to jump through multiple hurdles to access multi-disciplinary skills and multi-agency input, and instead have that expertise as central to child protection investigation and planning.

- 13.5. Child protection work is intrinsically complex and complicated and should be led by a diverse multi-professional and multi-agency team, with extensive expertise. Too often we see inexperienced professionals – social workers in particular – being asked to undertake this work without sufficient supervision and support. This is not fair to the social workers or to the children they serve. This is why we are recommending that Multi-Agency Child Protection Units – integrated and co-located multi-agency, multi-professional teams staffed by experienced child protection practitioners – are established in every local authority area.
- 13.6. Our other recommendations are all about enabling these new Multi-Agency Child Protection Units to deliver excellent practice. The most important enabler of excellent practice is of course leadership. This is even more pertinent in a multi-agency context where professionals are reliant on the right authorising environment – the right multi-agency budgets, protocols, values and systems – being in place. We have therefore put forward proposals for strengthened multi-agency leadership and accountability, and for better multi-agency co-ordination and system oversight from central government. We have also recommended the development of new National Multi-Agency Child Protection Practice Standards, to help deliver consistently good practice across the country.
- 13.7. It is important to clarify at the outset that we do not think child protection work should be separate from the rest of children’s social care, but integral to its effective delivery. Help and protection are of course a continuum, and the Panel’s analysis on risk and decision making in child protection highlighted the heightened risks for children associated with frequent hand off/ hand over points. Families frequently move in and out of different statutory processes as their needs shift and professional concerns about the safety of children change.
- 13.8. To address this issue, the independent review of children’s social care recommends the introduction of multi-disciplinary Family Help Teams working with families who would currently fall into targeted early help, child in need or child protection. Where

there are concerns of significant harm or a case is on a child protection plan the case would be held by a social worker in the Family Help Team and co-worked by an Expert Child Protection Practitioner (IRCSC, 2022). We welcome this emphasis on maintaining relationships and on the importance of specialist expertise.

- 13.9. Under our recommendations, the Multi-Agency Child Protection Units will need to work hand-in-hand with the new multi-disciplinary Family Help teams, enabling decisions about child protection to be made jointly cross agencies and by those with the right expertise. The dedicated Multi-Agency Child Protection Units, responsible for child protection investigation and planning, will ensure that protecting children remains in sharp and forensic focus without disrupting the established relationships with existing practitioners.
- 13.10. It is also important to recognise that more child protection activity does not necessarily mean a safer child protection system. Inappropriate child protection activity can overheat the system and obscure the children facing the greatest risks. We think that the changes we are proposing through Multi-Agency Child Protection Units should lead to stronger risk assessment and decision making, and more of the right children protected at the right time.
- 13.11. We have summarised our recommendations below and provide more detail in the following pages.
- Recommendation 1: A new expert-led, multi-agency model for child protection investigation, planning, intervention, and review.
 - Recommendation 2: Establishing National Multi-Agency Practice Standards for Child Protection.
 - Recommendation 3: Strengthening the local Safeguarding Partners to ensure proper co-ordination and involvement of all agencies.
 - Recommendation 4: Changes to multi-agency inspection to better understand local performance and drive improvement.
 - Recommendation 5: A new role for the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel in driving practice improvement in Safeguarding Partners.
 - Recommendation 6: A sharper performance focus and better co-ordination of child protection policy in central Government.
 - Recommendation 7: Using the potential of data to help professionals protect children.
 - Recommendation 8: Specific practice improvements in relation to domestic abuse.

Recommendation 1: A new expert-led, multi-agency model for child protection investigation, planning, intervention and review

13.12. In Star and Arthur's cases, we have seen:

- Photos of bruising not shared across agencies (Arthur).
- A Child Protection Medical taking place without full information about contextual factors (Star).
- Children with suspected injuries not being subject to Child Protection Medicals when they should have been (both children).
- Gaps in the information shared about Emma Tustin's background ahead of a social work visit (Arthur).
- Very concerning referrals from family members being dismissed without enough investigation (both children).
- Too easy an acceptance of the version of events put forward by parents, and a difficulty challenging the early framing of Thomas as a protective father and Star as at the centre of a protective wider family (both children).
- A failure to identify a pattern of parental disengagement and avoidant behaviour (both cases).

13.13. The previous chapter has set out the problems of information sharing across agencies; insufficient professional challenge within and between agencies; and a lack of specialist child protection skills and expertise. These are common features across serious incidents and across the wider child protection evidence base.

13.14. Complex child protection decisions need to be reached after inter-agency deliberation with inter-professional challenge encouraged, and all available information in view. This improves professional understanding of what is happening for a family, and therefore improves the quality of decision making. For example, the evaluation of Family Safeguarding Hertfordshire found that the introduction of multidisciplinary working and group supervision provided for better communication between agencies, with agencies reporting improved understanding of risk factors (Department for Education, 2017a).

13.15. Research has given us a good understanding of the features of effective inter agency collaboration and cross agency working. Miller, C. and McNicholl, A. (2003) point to unified management systems, multi-agency common governance, shared training, integrated information sharing systems, and co-location as factors for success. Research by Department for Education and Kantar Public (2021) highlights the importance of clarity on cross-agency roles, appropriate and well understood policies, formal communication structures at strategic and operational level, cross agency commitment and shared time and space at the front line.

Alfandari, R. and Taylor, B. (2022) also highlight co-location, inter-professional in-service training, developing an overarching commitment to collaboration at all levels, and mechanisms to support long term collaborative working as critical.

- 13.16. Agencies already work seamlessly together in some parts of the English child protection system. Over the past ten years, we have seen the MASH model spread widely. This involves multi-agency professionals working in a single co-located team at the front door of child protection, sharing information effectively, making joint decisions and delivering co-ordinated interventions.
- 13.17. For this review, we commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) to undertake a rapid review of literature on cross agency working and information sharing not just in children's social care but across all sectors. By looking at examples of where this has gone particularly well and examples of where it has gone wrong, the team identified the following five conditions for effective information sharing across agencies:
- **Trust, shared values and identity:** Creating a culture of trust and support for colleagues where information sharing is the norm.
 - **A clear information sharing policy:** Ensuring overarching data sharing agreements are in place where feasible to permit easy and timely sharing.
 - **Leadership support:** Modelling collaborative behaviours and ensuring sufficient resources are available to set up and sustain information sharing across organisations.
 - **Regular feedback loops:** Establishing processes whereby feedback is solicited and provided on a regular basis both internally and across organisations.
 - **Systems that minimise the cost of sharing:** Removing friction costs associated with sharing information.
- 13.18. BIT's findings were based on a range of research but in particular Yang and Maxwell's review of success factors for information sharing in public organisations (Yang, T.M. and Maxwell, T.A. 2011). It is clear that the way child protection practice is organised at the moment – and the persistence of organisational barriers between agencies – means these conditions are not sufficiently reflected.

Multi-Agency Child Protection Units

- 13.19. Therefore, we are recommending a new operational framework be developed for undertaking child protection investigations, and the necessary planning, delivery and review of children who are at risk of significant harm. We are proposing the development of new multi-agency child protection units in every local authority – a

multi-agency, co-located team led by an expert social worker with a wealth of child protection experience.

13.20. Child protection is absolutely core work for all children’s social workers. It is also a priority for any agency that works with children, especially police, health and schools. This is as it should be – all professionals need to be equipped with the right level of knowledge and skills to protect children, in the context of their role and in the context of the different harms experienced. Any practitioner working with children and adults need sufficient understanding about child protection to be able to recognise when a child might be at risk, and have access to talk those concerns through with an experienced child protection professional.

13.21. However, the core child protection statutory processes – of investigating child protection concerns, child protection planning and implementation, and reviewing progress – are the points where integrated multi-agency involvement and specialist child protection skills are most critical. It is in these processes that the most difficult and finely balanced decisions about children are being made. Currently, the extent to which child protection investigations are properly multi-disciplinary and multi-agency is too variable. We have heard evidence of children’s social care sometimes finding it difficult to get other agencies to engage, and of other agencies feeling they are kept out of the loop. We have seen in Star and Arthur’s cases the limitations of taking a single agency approach to investigating concerns when statutory multi-agency procedures were needed. A single-agency approach to investigation creates the problems we see with information sharing, and means the opportunity is lost for appropriate deliberation and professional challenge. It also means that child protection work is often being led by inexperienced and insufficiently supported social workers, and overseen by managers with multiple demands and organisational pressures.

13.22. The unit’s functions would include:

- providing specialist child protection advice and consultancy across the local multi-agency system;
- convening and leading child protection Strategy discussions;
- undertaking section 47 enquiries;
- organising/ undertaking Child Protection Medicals;
- undertaking Achieving Best Evidence interviews;
- chairing child protection conferences;

- overseeing child protection planning and review;
- supporting the implementation of child protection plans;
- advising other multi-agency and local authority children's social care teams (including MASH/ front door, Children in Need, more specialist teams such as disabled children's teams, children in care services) on whether a child and family should be on a Child Protection pathway;
- recommending applications to court for removal and providing expert multi-disciplinary evidence to court where necessary.

13.23. As set out earlier, operational delivery should be organised at a local level so that key practitioners and managers best placed to investigate and oversee child protection planning work together in established units under a single line of management and leadership. We want to see fresh thinking about the multi-disciplinary make-up of these units. We would expect membership of the unit to include as a minimum representatives from the police, health services, education, and children and adult mental health.

13.24. Multi-agency professionals would be employed by their 'home' agency but seconded into the child protection unit, bringing their agency function with them. We expect units would be hosted by the local authority to ensure smooth join-up with the rest of children's social care. It is important for the unit to be staffed by professionals employed by their 'home' agency so that they retain strong links to that agency (much of their role will be coordinating the involvement of their colleagues so these links are crucial) and also so they retain proper professional development, oversight and supervision for their specific profession. In addition, the local area may wish to employ directly multi-disciplinary practitioners for the unit, through either joint or single agency funding.

Links between 'Family Help' teams and Multi-Agency Child Protection Units

13.25. The independent review of children's social care proposes comprehensive reform to the way families are supported by children's social care – a 'revolution in Family Help'. It states that:

'The proposed model of Family Help ... will improve the safety of children by making sure families get the help they need to get through painful, dangerous or isolating times - whether this is an abusive relationship, struggles with mental health or a child being exploited. The majority of serious incidents in 2020 (64.5%) involved children already known to children's social care (Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, 2021). By

bringing more help into families' lives delivered through a single multidisciplinary team, workers are more likely to build better relationships with families, develop a holistic understanding of the situations in which children are living, address the underlying reasons that families become involved in social care, and more accurately identify situations where there are more serious concerns. By making help less stigmatising and more meaningful, and by giving professionals more time with families, we will also increase the likelihood that families will want to engage with social care. By removing the arbitrary distinction between early help and social care, we will improve the ability of the system to respond to changing risk, without the inherent weakness in hand off points.' (IRCSC, 2022), p. 70

- 13.26. Providing much better help to families facing difficulties will both help to alleviate pressure on families, and also provide better insight into the situations children are living in.
- 13.27. At the same time, fundamental reforms to the core child protection system are needed. There will always be children in need of protection and the response to these children must be robust.
- 13.28. Key to this is having a cadre of skilled and experienced social workers leading child protection work. We envisage the Expert Child Protection Practitioners, proposed by the independent review of children's social care, as those leaders. Additionally, the five-year Early Career Framework for social workers proposed by independent review of children's social care is a sensible model for delivering the level of skill and expertise required.
- 13.29. The question of how the Multi-Agency Child Protection Unit and wider Family Help teams work together is an important one. We would want to ensure that introducing Child Protection Units does not create additional 'hand-off' points for children where their case was passed to someone new. We also want to maintain the relationship between a child and their family, and their lead worker, whether they are subject to statutory child protection processes or not. Therefore, we think a co-working model, where specialist Child Protection social workers co-work cases with the allocated family social workers, is the right approach. It is important that the Child Protection Unit – where the most expertise resides – has decision making authority and oversight of the process; but also that the allocated Family Social Worker continues their programme of work with the family.
- 13.30. We envisage that the unit's functions would include all section 47 enquiries relating to both intra-familial and extra-familial harm; managing investigations relating to public institutions; and the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer. We recognise the tensions that these arrangements bring and welcome discussion over

how best to operationalise these distinct functions and decision making responsibilities across the multi-agency response. There is no room for ambiguity.

Links to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

- 13.31. Most local authorities now use a 'Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub' or 'MASH' model at the front door of children's social care. These are co-located multi-agency teams involving at least police, health and children's social care. They review referrals as they come into children's social care and make decisions about next steps. Their core aim is to improve safeguarding responses at the front door of children's social care through:
- Better information sharing
 - Joint multi-agency decision making
 - Co-ordinated interventions with families
- 13.32. The Multi-Agency Child Protection Unit model we are proposing shares similarities with some MASH models. We have heard about cases where successful authorities have extended the MASH model or aspects of it to deliver a multi-agency response across more of the child protection process. For example, in Hampshire children's services, strategy discussions take place in the MASH which has led to 'comprehensive information sharing' (OFSTED, 2019d).
- 13.33. It is important that we learn from the MASH model when designing Multi-Agency Child Protection Units. What is clear from the evidence base on MASH is that, as ever, success comes down to the quality of the implementation – especially whether all agencies are involved and resourcing the MASH appropriately, and the extent of genuine integration between agencies (Home Office, 2014). This is of course directly dependent on the quality of leadership overseeing the arrangements. We know from the Joint Targeted Area Inspection of Solihull that reported in February 2022 that gaps in resourcing in the MASH impacted on the quality of decision making there. There is a high level of variability in what different MASH models involve, and therefore variability in their quality.
- 13.34. We think that, alongside developing Multi-Agency Child Protection Units, there is also an opportunity to level up the quality and consistency of MASH models across the country. We believe our proposed National Multi-Agency Child Protection Standards should underpin this. To support the development of those standards, we also recommend government commission a more up-to-date evaluation of the

MASH model, to establish more clearly the key success factors and different operating models.

Implementing Multi-Agency Child Protection Units

- 13.35. Developing the Multi-Agency Child Protection Unit operating model should be done in close partnership with multi-agency child protection practitioners and leaders, locally and nationally. We think an ‘early adopter’ approach to roll out would be a good model, where some areas are supported to implement the new model quickly as part of a first wave, with following waves learning from their implementation experience. Central Government should sponsor a cross-Departmental programme to design, develop and implement the new model, working in partnership with local areas. It will be important to take into account the workforce pressures already facing the multi-agency child protection system, and recognise that implementing new ways of working requires additional resource. Government should provide start-up funding that helps areas to transition to the new model, whilst recognising that ongoing operation will need to be funded locally. There will be an important role for the new national Child Protection Board in overseeing the implementation of Multi-Agency Child Protection Units.

Recommendation 2: Establishing National Multi-Agency Practice Standards for Child Protection

- 13.36. Intervening in private family life through a child protection process is one of the most serious responsibilities of the state. And yet, there is very little in the way of a national set of standards or expectations, based on evidence, for how this work should be carried out. The ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ government guidance sets out processes to be followed, and it is right to be cautious about excessive levels of practice prescription. The Munro Review (2011) points to the way that increased prescription can erode good professional practice. It states:

‘The level of increased prescription for social workers, while intended to improve the quality of practice, has created an imbalance. Complying with prescription and keeping records to demonstrate compliance has become too dominant. The centrality of forming relationships with children and families to understand and help them has become obscured.’ (Munro, E. 2011, p. 7-8)

- 13.37. We do, however, think it is necessary to develop a set of national standards – as exist in other fields – which capture the best available evidence of what works when working with children and families in a multi-agency child protection context. This is especially important in this area because we are asking a group of practitioners

from different professional backgrounds to come together and work as a single team. They need a common practice framework to operate from if they are to do this effectively and consistently across England. It is also right that the public have access to this kind of information so they know what to expect from a child protection process and how to challenge when standards are not met.

- 13.38. We believe there is great value in giving evidence-based guidance through Multi-Agency Child Protection Practice Standards because of the complexity of different agencies working seamlessly together. These standards must be truly multi-agency in their nature and speak to all local Safeguarding Partners. To this end, they should be co-designed with practitioners and leaders from the range of multi-agency backgrounds.

Recommendation 3: Strengthening the local Safeguarding Partners to ensure proper co-ordination and involvement of all agencies

- 13.39. Protecting children from abuse and neglect is a multi-agency endeavour. When things go wrong, a lack of co-ordination across agencies is often a key issue. This isn't a problem that front line police, social workers or health professionals can solve on their own, despite their best efforts. It is a problem which stems from a lack of joined up leadership in the local area. In both Bradford and Solihull, the impact that the local Safeguarding Partners was having on front line practice was not clear, and leaders did not have a sufficient line of sight over what was happening on the ground.
- 13.40. Ensuring the proper involvement of and oversight by all agencies – including agreeing a shared set of values, establishing the right systems and processes for working together, and securing the right resources to undertake the work – requires leaders across the key agencies of health, police and the local authority jointly leading the system. This is why the Children and Social Work Act 2017 created a strengthened set of arrangements to ensure the full engagement (and accountability) of the most senior level through local Safeguarding Partners. However, as the Wood report (Wood, A. 2021) and the Panel's Annual Report (CSPRP, 2021c) also set out, there is inconsistent evidence of the added value of the new governance arrangements. The ambition of the 2017 reforms is yet to be achieved in all areas and the Panel believe that Safeguarding Partners are currently struggling with the following key issues:
- A lack of clarity about their functions – especially a confusion about whether this should be a strategic or operational body, with too much delegation making it impossible for them to make strategic decisions.
 - Limited oversight of performance and learning – with Safeguarding Partners not always receiving the right data, information and practice insight to oversee and

assure performance at the strategic level; and not always demonstrating sufficient ownership over the learning review process in response to serious incidents.

- A lack of accountability, especially around funding decisions, with Safeguarding Partners not managing to agree a level of funding that is fair and equitable in the way required in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*.

13.41. The independent review of children's social care proposes changes to the way Safeguarding Partners operate including greater clarity on their functions and how they provide senior, strategic, leadership. Expectations for how multi-agency arrangements provide strategic oversight of the system, delegate operational delivery and how arrangements are properly resourced must be clearer. We think this offers the right platform for change.

13.42. Operational oversight of day-to-day working must also reinforce the cultural significance of a shared responsibility and we therefore recommend that each area establish a multi-agency operational sub-group of the Safeguarding Partners to direct operations, chaired by any of the three statutory partners. This group would direct the implementation of new Multi-Agency Child Protection Units in each area.

13.43. This group will give Safeguarding Partners a clear route to get intelligence about performance of the system locally, a way of holding operational leaders to account and a clear escalation route when issues affecting joint working cannot be resolved at the operational level.

Role of education in multi-agency arrangements

13.44. Schools, colleges and other educational settings have a pivotal role to play in protecting children. In seeing children every day, they are in a unique position to identify concerns early, to recognise when concerns are escalating, and to share key information with Safeguarding Partners. Where a child is on a Child Protection Plan, they have a lot to offer to help protect children from harm, for example, working with a child's social worker to ensure that the child attends school.

13.45. For many vulnerable children, school is a place of safety and support. For Arthur, school was a positive place with staff who knew him well. They helped him develop his different interests and supported his wellbeing. Professionals also frequently have an insight into family life that would otherwise be unknown, through their contact with parents and carers. Arthur's school was the last to have contact with his father in the days leading up to Arthur's death. The critical role schools and other educational settings play is highlighted in previous reviews of serious incidents (Sidebotham *et al.*, 2016; CSPRP, 2021c).

- 13.46. At present, Working Together (2018) expects Safeguarding Partners to name schools, colleges and other educational settings as ‘relevant agencies’. However, it is then for safeguarding partners to determine how they engage and involve educational settings overall, and individual institutions specifically, in their local arrangements. Whilst the Wood report (Wood, A. 2021) found that there was successful engagement of schools in most areas and examples of good practice, there were also issues with consistency and schools being ‘kept out’ of discussions. The Department for Education and Kantar Public report (2021) highlighted that schools can feel like an ‘add-on’ and are not always involved in feedback channels.
- 13.47. The Panel believes the involvement of schools, colleges and other education providers needs to be reconsidered and there must be full involvement of schools and education services at both the strategic and operational level. There is a compelling argument for their inclusion as a Safeguarding Partner. We recognise that this poses practical challenges (Wood, A. 2021). However, this is not insurmountable and it is vital that schools are given ‘a seat at the table’ (Children’s Commissioner, 2022, p. 17). Doing so will strengthen educational settings’ role in shaping child protection systems, including the critical sharing of data and the establishment of the proposed Child Protection Units. At the same time, it will ensure that they are consistently engaged as an equal partner at both an operational and strategic level and that they are held to account in the same way as other Partners.

Leadership development for Safeguarding Partners

- 13.48. One additional area where we think central Government action is needed is in relation to the support given to local leaders to develop in their role. Our final recommendation in this area is that a National Safeguarding Leadership Programme should be established for all Safeguarding Partners. Exercising leadership in a shared way is complicated. This is compounded by the fact that those leading the police, NHS and local authority in a local area have a wide portfolio of responsibilities and will not necessarily have had much experience of child safeguarding across their careers.
- 13.49. Therefore, we think it is critical that all Safeguarding Partners have access to a shared set of knowledge, as well as an opportunity to develop their leadership roles together. Leadership programmes such as the Directors of Children’s Services programme (UPON), the Aspire Leadership development Programme offered by College of Policing and the NHS Leadership Academy programme all offer a range of resources, training and development to grow and strengthen leaders within their own professional parameters. We think there is a significant gap around support for

leaders to work across professions and organisations. There should be a bespoke leadership development programme for Safeguarding Partners to help to really unlock the potential of joint and equal responsibility, with each partner grounded in their own professional background but also understanding how to work together to set shared values and ambition for all those working with vulnerable children in need of help and protection.

Recommendation 4: Changes to multi-agency inspection to better understand local performance and drive improvement

- 13.50. The three key agencies involved in child protection are inspected by their own separate inspectorates – OFSTED for children’s social care, the Care Quality Commission for health and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) for the police. However, inspecting services from a single agency viewpoint does not give a full picture of partner contributions to multi-agency arrangements. Alan Wood’s 2021 report on Safeguarding Partners found that single agency inspections provide only partial coverage of the effectiveness of the multi-agency arrangements, and therefore it is not clear how the three statutory partner organisations (as a group) are held accountable for their contribution to delivering effective and coherent multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (Wood, A. 2021).
- 13.51. To fill this gap, the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) was developed. During a JTAI, OFSTED, HMICFRS, CQC and HM Inspectorate of Probation jointly inspect and report on the impact of local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for children. The JTAI evaluates the quality and impact of the agencies’ leadership and local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements on practice with children in relation to the ‘front-door’ of child protection.
- 13.52. These joint child protection inspections do provide a more robust assessment of how police, probation, health, and children’s social care work together to help and protect children – but the number of inspections carried out and the span of child protection activity that is covered is limited. There are only around 10-12 JTAs per year, of which half focus on the ‘front door’ of child protection and the other half on particular themes. And JTAs do not look past the front door, at the way multi-agency partners are working together across the child protection response.
- 13.53. The Panel shares Sir Alan’s concerns that the current framework of single agency inspection with a very limited number of joint targeted area inspections is not sufficient to provide an up to date and comprehensive picture of how the system is operating. Against a backdrop of 135 partnerships an annual total of 5 or 6 JTAs looking at how well partners are working together to safeguard and protect children is not adequate. As a result, we lack a system wide picture of how well the multi-

agency area arrangements are operating, and there is a gap in how Safeguarding Partners are held to account.

- 13.54. Multi-agency inspection should play a stronger role in ensuring all areas are held to account for their multi-agency partnership working, both operationally and strategically. Multi-agency inspection needs to mirror and model sound multi-agency practice, and focus relentlessly on outcomes for children. This requires significant reform to the overall culture, commitment including resource commitment, models for working together, and frameworks for inspection in the medium term. We recommend that the inspectorates draw up proposals for a more genuinely integrated and comprehensive model of multi-agency inspection, adequately resourced by all partners, and integrated into the ongoing work of each inspectorate. This is likely to entail taking stock of the overall system of accountabilities for inspection so that individual and joint agency inspections are proportionate and scheduled carefully to avoid unnecessary impact on those delivering services.
- 13.55. However, in the shorter term there is a gap in our national understanding of the current baseline effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements. Therefore, we recommend the inspectorates undertake an initial thematic review of multi-agency arrangements in a number of areas, looking not just at the front door but at the multi-agency response across the child protection journey. We note the current suspension of HM Inspectorate of Probation in Joint Targeted Area Inspections during 2022/23. We recommend that this is reviewed for future years as the role and contribution of the probation service to multi agency safeguarding arrangements is extremely important.

Recommendation 5: A new role for the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel in driving practice improvement in Safeguarding Partners

- 13.56. One of the key findings of our review is about the impact multi-agency leaders are having on child protection practice. We understand that it is hard for Safeguarding Partners to benchmark their performance or learn from the best when there is very little information available about good practice.
- 13.57. The Panel's role in child safeguarding practice is through system oversight, learning and leadership in identifying national issues, encouraging local learning and influencing policy. Our focus has been to ensure that the learning from individual cases is reviewed systematically and disseminated locally and nationally to ensure recommendations bring about change and improvement. Our lens to do this has primarily been through the learning from serious incidents. We recognise the need to review this role, and consider again the scope and priorities of the National Panel. In particular, we recognise the need to facilitate greater sharing of learning

and insight about how agencies work well together to protect vulnerable children and especially the role of the safeguarding partners in facilitating this.

- 13.58. We know that peer support is highly valued by those that have used it and it can be powerful in providing support and challenge. For example, through the local authority sector-led improvement programme, a genuine partnership between local and central government has brought together the best practitioners and leaders in children's social care to improve the system leading to a greater understanding of the conditions needed for excellent practice to flourish. The investment has encouraged sector led improvement through peer support to authorities which need to improve.
- 13.59. The Local Government Association, in response to continuing demand from local authorities, have a number of peer reviews and diagnostics that have been designed to assist local authorities on their improvement journey. Local authorities have valued the co-produced methodology, challenge and advice. The College of Policing facilitates similar organisational support from peers to help understand issues, solve problems and try new initiatives. The support is inclusive, promotes diversity of thinking and is founded on the key principles of respect, shared responsibility and mutual agreement of what is helpful.
- 13.60. We think there is a role for the Panel to facilitate greater sharing of learning and insight across Safeguarding Partners in the way that already happens through a single agency lens. This can be done, in part, through the Panel's programme of national reports and reviews. But in addition, we believe the Panel should offer greater facilitation to enable Safeguarding Partners to learn from each other and provide more hands-on, practical support. There may also be scope to encourage and incentivise better self-assessments. This role goes beyond learning from when things go wrong to capturing the best practice that protects the most vulnerable children, for example, building on the Panel's six key practice themes found to make a difference in reducing serious harm and preventing child deaths from abuse or neglect (CSPRP, 2021c).
- 13.61. Therefore, we are recommending that a national peer support capability for Safeguarding Partners is developed. This should be overseen by the panel - working in partnership with all key stakeholders - so that it can aggregate and disseminate learning about effective practice, however, this work would necessarily and importantly be co led with all key stakeholders. This capability should be jointly funded by the Department for Education, Department for Health and Social Care and the Home Office. The peer support capacity would include the three national facilitators already working to support Safeguarding Partners, who would be joined

by a wider team of subject matter experts, analysts and researchers from health and mental health, policing, education, and social care.

13.62. The operation of this model needs to be worked through with partners but we see the role of the Panel as responsible for identifying good practice and common challenges faced by Safeguarding Partners across the country, and facilitating peer to peer support between Safeguarding Partners. They would also coordinate problem solving on common issues.

Recommendation 6: A sharper performance focus and better co-ordination of child protection policy in central Government

13.63. As well as improving local governance of child protection, we believe the way that child protection activity is overseen and coordinated at a national level also needs to be strengthened.

13.64. There needs to be clearer, stronger leadership and support from central government departments for local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. At the moment there is no clear, joined up national oversight of the multi-agency child protection system, and as a result issues are often dealt with by one department in an ad hoc way. This leads to fragmented policy development and implementation. It also means there is no clear escalation route for issues impacting locally which need national action. The issues we have seen reflected strongly in our analysis, around workforce sufficiency, capability and capacity, are an example of this. There is no national cross government programme of action around these issues and as a result the performance of local areas is undermined.

13.65. Therefore, we believe that a new and more robust means of co-ordinating policy activity and of exercising oversight and accountability is needed at the national level.

13.66. We are recommending the establishment of a national Child Protection Board, bringing together all relevant central Government departments, local Government, the police, education and health representatives and others. The Board will have three roles:

- To oversee performance in the child protection system, spotting emerging issues, ensuring the delivery of reforms, and acting as the escalation route for issues which need resolving at the national level
- To develop a set of national operational standards for multi-agency child protection work; and

- To oversee and ensure delivery of multi-agency child protection units in all local authorities.

13.67. Whilst the core membership would be fixed, there should be scope to invite additional attendees for specific themes and issues. It will also be important to clarify how the National Panel should work with the new Board as a key source of system intelligence.

13.68. In order to carry out its role effectively, the new Child Protection Board will need to ensure it receives the right set of meaningful multi-agency data. It will use this alongside practice insight, inspection findings and insight from serious incident analysis to understand performance across the system. We think that there is potential for multi-agency data to play a bigger role in helping us to understand performance both locally and nationally, and for greater transparency around this data. However current data collections and the way that data is used does not serve this purpose. Therefore, we think an important function for the national Board will be to review this landscape and oversee the development of meaningful and incisive data collection. The Child Protection Board should be accountable to a new Ministerial child protection oversight group, bringing together Ministers from DfE, HO, DHSC and DLUHC. We recommend this group is chaired by the DfE Minister for Children and Families, as the department with the largest policy responsibility for child protection. The Ministerial Group should appoint an independent chair for the Child Protection Board, directly accountable to them.

Recommendation 7: Using the potential of data to help professionals protect children

13.69. There is one final specific area where greater national level coordination is needed. As part of the wider evidence work on the review, we convened a group of leading thinkers from the fields of data science, behavioural science and economics to give us insight into areas where learning from other sectors could be used to improve child protection responses across the country. The group concluded that:

- There is huge scope for better use of data and technological solutions in child protection and a need to ‘upgrade’ the digital landscape and innovate within it; but
- Any innovation needs to be done with the user (practitioner) and families in mind – thinking about how best to support practitioners to do their job rather than trying to replace professional judgement.

13.70. Over the course of this review, we have also heard from family members about the importance of digital improvements, with a national child database being suggested in order to make it easier to access information about children moving between agencies and areas. Similarly, professionals interviewed as part of the review have raised concerns about technical barriers to sharing information and the need for

change. These findings resonate with learning from other serious case reviews, for example, practitioners' lack of access to IT systems outside their professional role inhibiting information sharing and impacting upon accurate cross-service chronologies of a child and their family (CSPRP, 2021c). Conversely, through the wider evidence review we have heard about the potential of data to support practitioners when making decisions. For example, in the USA, the Allegheny Family Screening Tool was found to help identify children at heightened risk of physical harm (Vaithianathan *et al.*, 2020).

- 13.71. At the most fundamental level, to help protect children we need to ensure that when practitioners make decisions on crucial issues and under pressure that they are equipped with the best available information in a timely way and that this information is easy to understand. Various reports highlight the challenge of social workers and other practitioners making difficult decisions on the basis of incomplete and inconclusive information and the tension between making timely decisions and gathering and verifying information (Helm, D. 2017; Saltiel, D. 2016). Good data and technology is part of the solution and smarter data systems can help build up our system defences and reduce the potential for errors to occur (Reason, J. 2000). Effective data systems is something we already expect for professionals operating in other high risk contexts, for example, counter terrorism and aviation. We must now expect the same for professionals working to protect some of the most vulnerable in society.
- 13.72. Where central Government has put its weight behind technological improvements we have seen how it can yield results. For example, the Child Protection-Information Sharing system, which helps health and social care staff share information securely about vulnerable children, has already been rolled out to unscheduled healthcare settings and is now being expanded to scheduled healthcare settings – with a number of reported benefits.³⁷ Additionally, NHS Digital's investment in the Social Care Digital innovation Programme has funded a number of promising projects.³⁸ Cross-government work is also underway focussed on implementing a consistent identifier, following the commitment in the Health and Social Care Bill. The Panel welcomes this work, given its centrality to better information sharing, and urges that it moves at pace.
- 13.73. Whilst there has been positive progress, we believe a step change in the energy and investment targeted at this area and the innovation within it is needed. Building on the challenge group, we therefore recommend that the Secretary of State

³⁷ <https://digital.nhs.uk/services/child-protection-information-sharing-project/benefits-of-child-protection-information-sharing>

³⁸ [Social Care Digital Innovation Programme | Local Government Association; NHSX Technology and Digital Skills Review Main Report November 2021.pdf \(ipsos.com\)](#)

urgently convenes a task and finish group of high-profile data and technological experts from a range of sectors, and chaired by a child protection expert, to answer the question: 'How can we transform our use of data to better protect children?'. The group should report back to the Secretary of State by the end of the year on its findings including the scale, pace and nature of change required.

Recommendation 8: Specific practice improvements in relation to domestic abuse

- 13.74. In general, throughout this review, we have focused on recommendations for the overall child protection system framework and architecture. However, domestic abuse is one area which we consider to be in need of significant focused work given its prevalence not only in these cases, but across society. There are no simple and straightforward solutions for tackling domestic abuse, which is a complex and pervasive issue.
- 13.75. In order to develop this recommendation, we have taken our learning from the stories of Arthur and Star and combined this with the breadth of Panel evidence in this area. Of the rapid reviews seen by the Panel in 2020, domestic abuse was a factor in over 40% (CSPRP, 2021c). The Panel's Annual report for 2018-19 and previous triennial serious case review analyses further demonstrate the prominence of domestic abuse as a factor in child harm and death (CSPRP, 2020b; Sidebotham *et al.*, 2016; Brandon *et al.*, 2020). As such, the Panel commissioned a thematic review of multi-agency child safeguarding and domestic abuse. The learning from that report has fed into this report and the findings are aligned. The Panel will publish a practice briefing on safeguarding children in families where there is domestic abuse in Summer 2022, this will include more specific recommendations.
- 13.76. As our preceding recommendations outline, improvements must be made in developing the specialist skill and expertise of staff, and in information sharing between agencies. These two factors are relevant to all elements of child protection, but we believe the situation in relation to domestic abuse is so severe that these areas must be particularly strengthened for practitioners working with victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. This work builds on the recently published Domestic Abuse Act and subsequent Victims Bill. We have also taken on board advice from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner on the work she is currently delivering.
- 13.77. Therefore, in line with recommendations 1, 2, and 3 we are calling for specific changes in relation to the way domestic abuse is approached in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements:

- Safeguarding Partners to improve how they work with specialist domestic abuse services by establishing stronger working relationships and clear information sharing protocols.
- Safeguarding Partners must be committed to, and fully invested in, the commissioning of DA services and ensure all staff have a robust understanding of what the DA support offer is in their area.
- Appropriate responses to domestic abuse should feature clearly in the new National Child Protection Practice Framework and training should be embedded across all Safeguarding Partners for all practitioners to ensure they provide a domestic abuse informed response.

Appendix A: Contributors to the review

We are very grateful to all of those that have dedicated time and provided perspectives that have shaped the Review.

For gathering information about Arthur Labinjo-Hughes' life and the involvement of key agencies with him and his family, we:

- Interviewed 5 family members
- Conducted 33 interviews with approximately 48 professionals

For gathering information about Star Hobson's life and the involvement of key agencies with her and her family, we:

- Interviewed 2 family members
- Interviewed 2 perpetrators
- Conducted 34 interviews with approximately 50 professionals

We also held a combination of in-person and virtual stakeholder sessions and roundtables with specific sectors to discuss the design and implementation of any recommendations.

Stakeholder organisations were as follows:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| - Action for Children | Young People's Mental Health Coalition | - Local Government Association |
| - ADCS | - College of Policing | - National Association of Head Teachers |
| - Association of School and College Leaders | - Coram | - National Children's Bureau |
| - Barnardo's | - Domestic Abuse Commissioner | - Network for Designated Healthcare Professionals |
| - Bedfordshire University TASP | - Essex Local Authority | - NHS England |
| - British Association of Social Workers | - Family Rights Group | - Nottingham Local Authority |
| - CAFCASS | - For Baby's Sake | - Norfolk Police |
| - Children's Society | - Institute of Health Visiting | |
| - Children and | | |

- NSPCC
- Office of the Children's Commissioner
- Pause
- Principal Social Worker Network
- Police Vulnerability, Knowledge and Practice Programme
- Relationships Alliance
- Royal Collage of GPs
- Royal Collage of Nursing
- Royal Collage of Paediatrics and Child Health
- School and Public Health Nurses Association
- Social Care Institute for Excellence
- Social Work England
- SOLACE
- The General Medical Council
- University of East Anglia
- UNISON
- West Mercia Police
- Wakefield Local Authority
- What Works Centre for Children's Social Care

Individuals with relevant expertise that were consulted:

- Professor, Andy Bilson (University of Central Lancashire) (Social Work, Birmingham University)
- Sir, Anthony Finkelstein (University of London) - Tim Leuning (London School of Economics/ HMT)
- David Halpern (Behavioural Insights Unit, Cabinet Office)
- David Maguire (The Kings Trust)
- Professor, Donald Foster (CASCADE Director, Cardiff University)
- Professor, Eileen Munro (London School of Economics)
- Dr, Jonathan Bright (Oxford Internet Institute)
- Lord Laming (CBE, PC)
- Professor, Paul Bywaters (Coventry University)
- Professor Harry Ferguson

Appendix B: Glossary of terms

Child Arrangement Order

A Child Arrangements Order (CAO) is an order that settles arrangements for a child or children that relate to the following: with whom the child is to live, spend time or otherwise have contact.

Child in need assessment

A 'child in need' assessment under section 17 of the Childrens Act 1989 will identify the needs of the child and ensure that the family are given the appropriate support in enabling them to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

Child Protection

Part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. Domestic abuse is not limited to physical acts of violence or threatening behaviour, and can include emotional, psychological, controlling or coercive behaviour, sexual and/or economic abuse. Types of domestic abuse include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse and adolescent to parent violence. Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home. (Working Together, 2018)

Emergency Duty Team (EDT)

Provides an emergency out of hours social work response to concerns relating to both Children and Adults as well as providing an out of hours Approved Mental Health Practitioner response where mental health concerns have been identified. They then pass their work over to the day teams for them to carry on the work as required.

Level 3 Support (Solihull)

Solihull Local Safeguarding Children Partnership has published guidance to help professionals make judgements about levels of need for children (often referred to 'thresholds'). There are four levels of need, with Level 4 representing children who require statutory intervention as they are in need of protection. The threshold at Level 3 was for children requiring early help, which would include mental health support.

Looked After Child

A child is looked after by a local authority if they are provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours; are subject to a care order or are subject to a

placement order.

The MASH/ Integrated Front Door

Provides a contact point for members of the public or professionals if they have a concern about a child or young person. It enables partner agencies such as Social Care, Police, Education, Health and Housing to share information, knowledge and skills to enable the right decisions to be made for a child, so that support is identified and put in place at the right time for a child to be safeguarded and protected. In Bradford this was referred to as the Integrated Front Door, in Solihull this was referred to as the MASH.

Pre-birth assessment

Pre-birth assessment is a proactive process for analysing the potential risk to a new-born baby when there are concerns that would fall within the definition of children in need about a pregnant woman and/or the birth father and, where appropriate, her partner and immediate family.

Safeguarding Partner

A safeguarding partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 as: (a) the local authority, (b) a clinical commissioning group for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area, and (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area. The three safeguarding partners should agree on ways to co-ordinate their safeguarding services; act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others; and implement local and national learning including from serious child safeguarding incidents. To fulfil this role, the three safeguarding partners must set out how they will work together and with any relevant agencies as well as arrangements for conducting local reviews.

Section 47 enquiry

If a local authority identifies there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, it will carry out an assessment under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 to determine if it needs to take steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. (IRCSC, 2021).

Strategy Discussion

Strategy discussions are part of the local arrangements for how cases are managed once a child is referred into local authority children's social care. Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm there should be a strategy discussion involving children's social care, Police, Health and other relevant agencies. The purpose of the discussion is to determine a child's welfare and plan rapid future action if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or likely to suffer harm. For further details, see *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*, pp. 39 – 41.

Threshold Visit (Solihull specific)

Threshold Visits were single agency visits undertaken by duty social workers in the MASH in circumstances where children were not deemed to be at immediate risk and managers

needed more information to determine whether the threshold had been met for a social work assessment to be initiated.

Appendix C: Bibliography

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CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT 2021- 2022





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DRAFT

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 to 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
 - o 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 or 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.

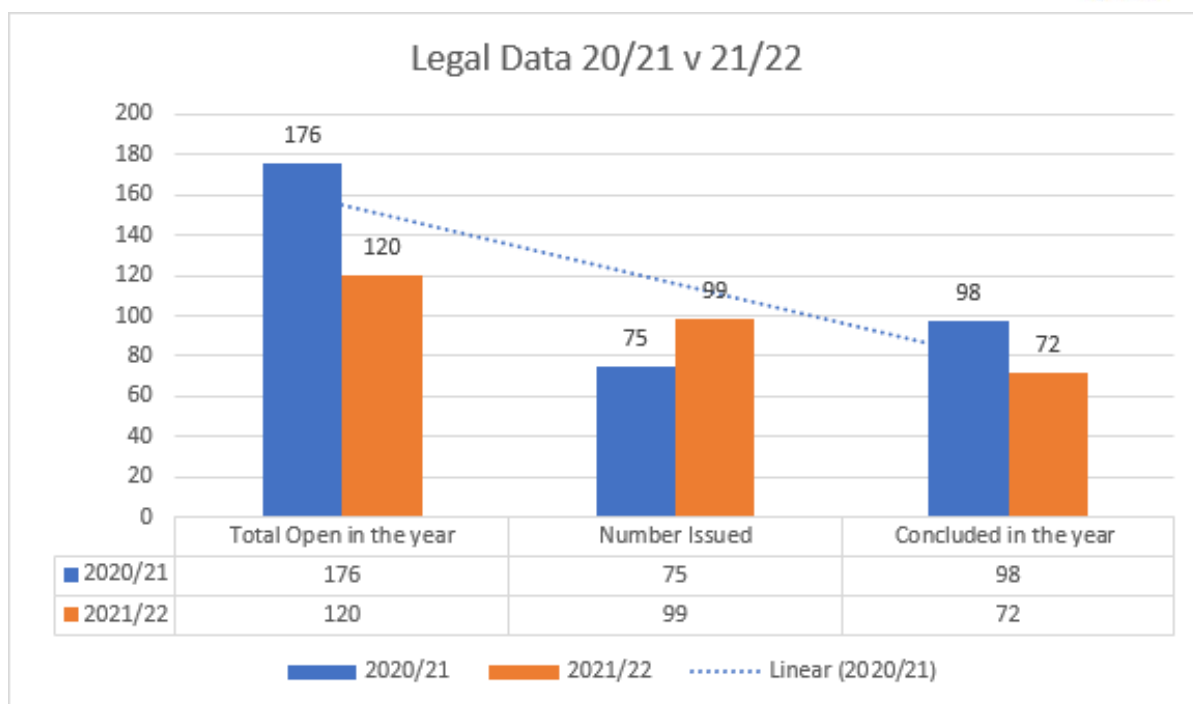
Continuing with our resilience based approach social work practice, our teams across Family Services remain committed to all children remaining within their birth family where possible and safe to do so. In the last year we entered care proceedings in respect of 99 children, and throughout the year 120 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)

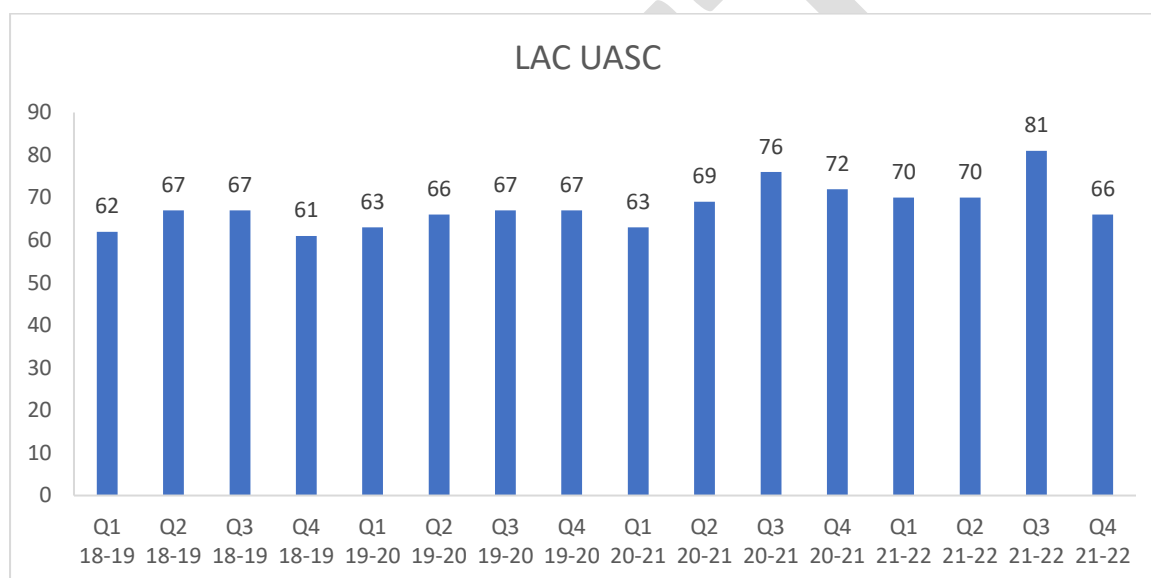
Throughout the year, Barnet has continued to see an increase in number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) coming into care (see below table) and quickly turning 18 becoming a care experienced adult accessing leaving care support. At the end of March 2022, 68 of our children in care were 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.

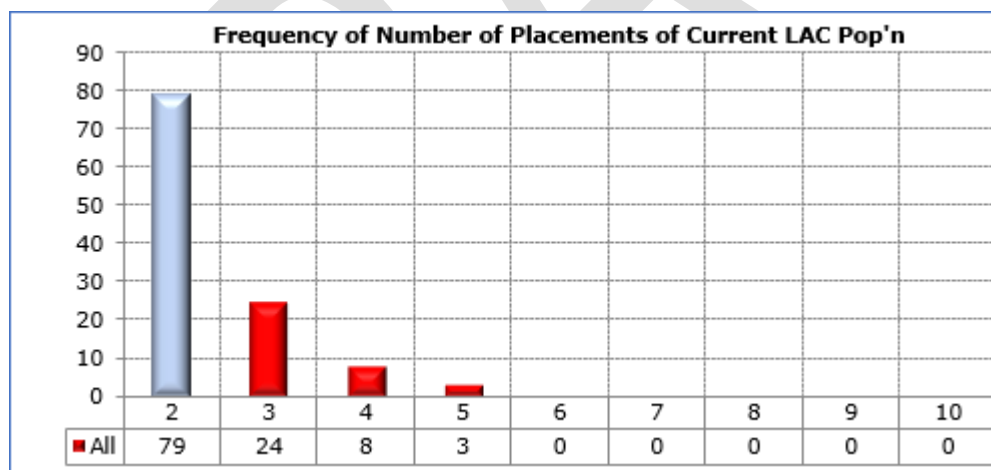
35 children experienced 3 or more placement moves throughout the year, up from 29 in 2020/2021, however a decrease from the pre-pandemic years of 2019-20 (37) and 2018-19 (37). Most children who experienced 3 or more placement moves can be categorised into three cohorts, those coming new into care in 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

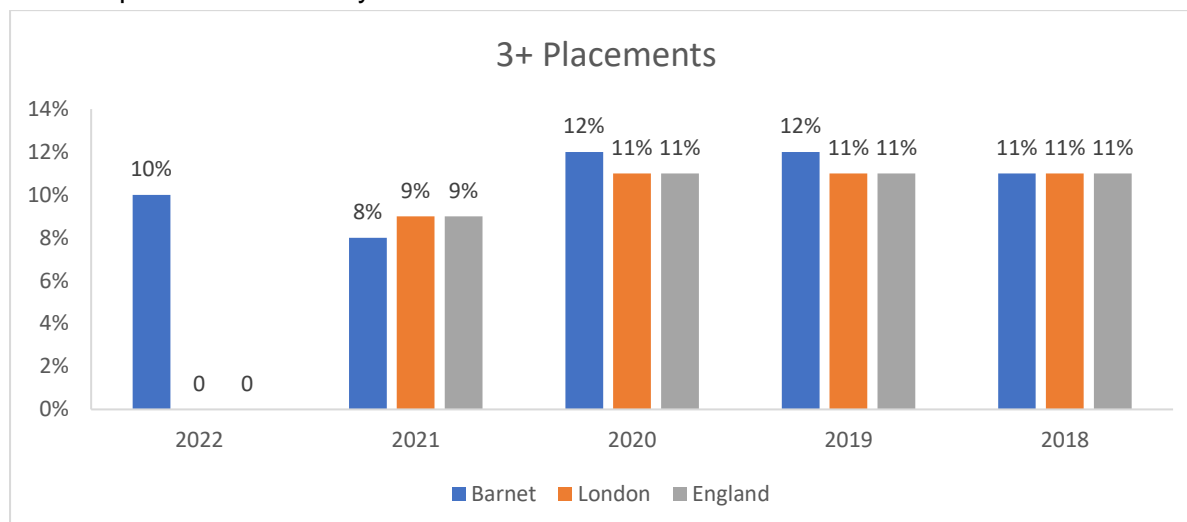
where' protocol, all children and young people who move placements are now routinely reviewed within our permanency tracking meeting to ensure their next move, as far as possible, is their final destination. Some moves continue to be undertaken in order to ensure a child or young person's needs are best 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.

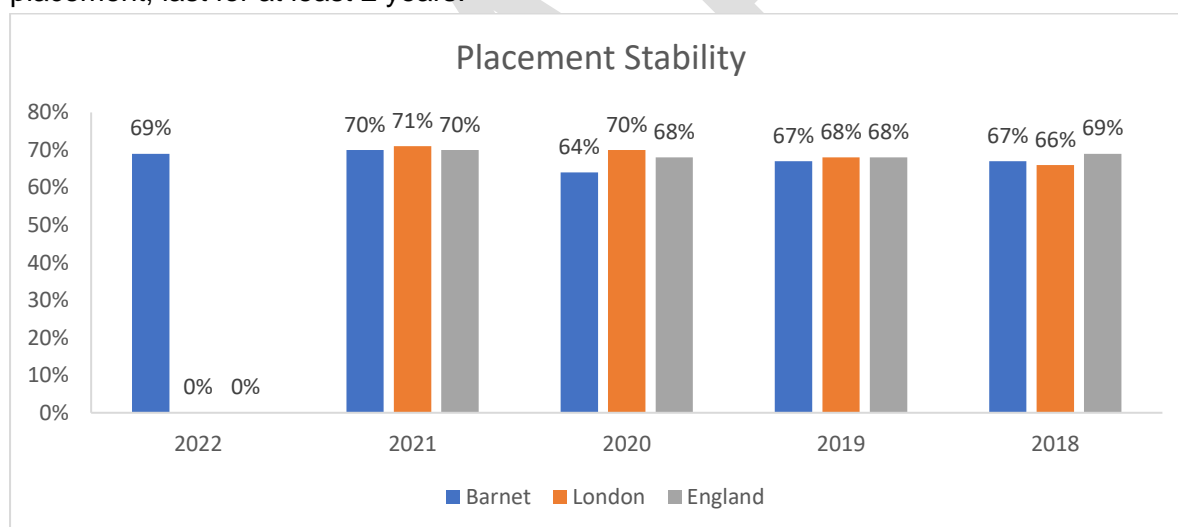
The chart below outlines the number of moves children and young people experienced during 2021/2022:



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

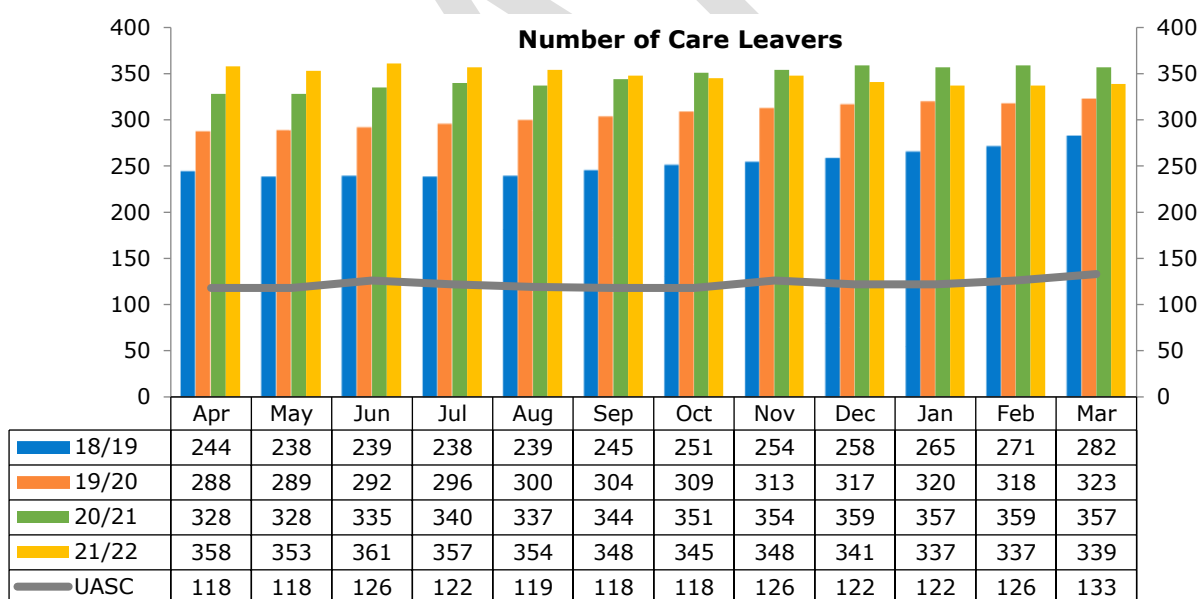
"The Covid-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus how difficult it can be to cope with multiple and abrupt changes in one's life simultaneously. Rapidly having to adapt to different ways of living, working and providing care in response to the pandemic has undoubtedly been challenging for all of us. 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.

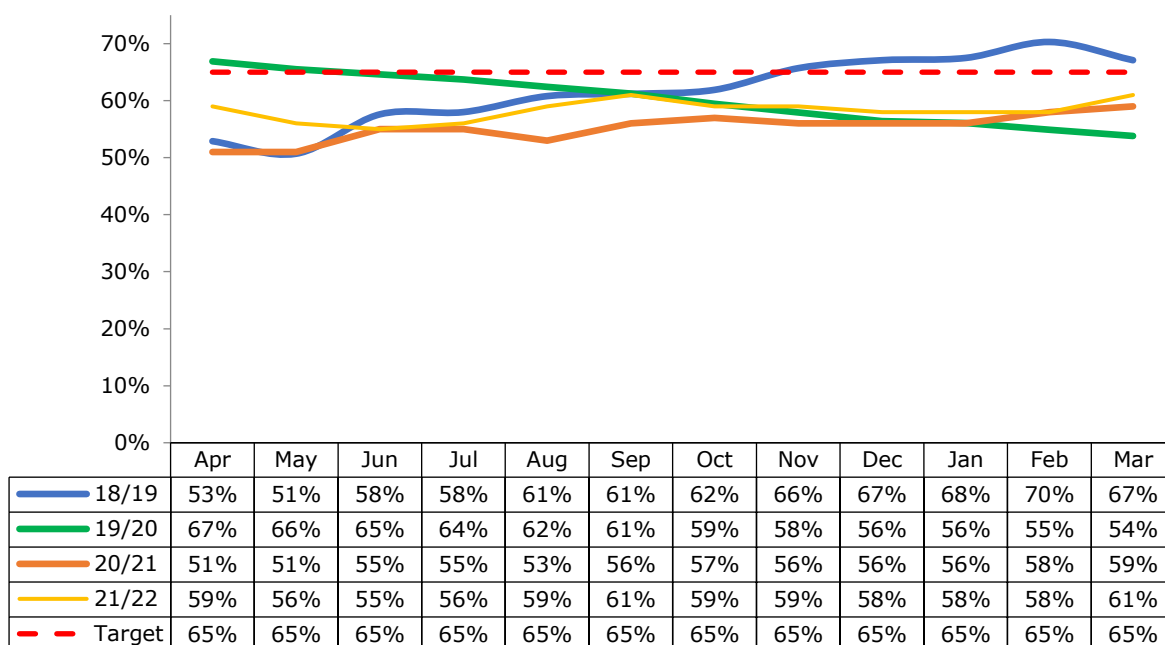
Education, employment, and training

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 wit, 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	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	O/B	I/B	O/B	I/B
				33	16	30	18	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	O/B	I/B	O/B	I/B
				11	3	16	5	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:
 - A New Direction: arts program for young people addressing issues pertinent to them through creative platforms
 - Arvon Meet Up: a week-long residential program with writing and poetry workshops with a published book of poetry
 - Lumina Project 1:1 tuition and mentoring program for GCSE support.
 - Care to Dance: 12 week dance class
 - Element Project: workshops for UASC young people to developed their creative identities
 - Springboard Youth Academy: Saturday club with ESOL classes, cricket /football game and lunch for UASC young people
 - Reading Club: monthly book club for years 3-8
 - Brunel Mentoring scheme for years 12/13 matching them with a care experienced mentor to support with high education
 - The letterbox club through the Book Trust providing a regular box of books to children in care to promote literacy and English
 - Pen pal project encouraging young people to remain in higher education through linking them up with care experienced university students
 - 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

2022/23 Priorities

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.

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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.



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

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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 lodging 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 mechanism 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 home 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 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 Nevaeh 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	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

<p>Barnet CiC and P8 nationally for all pupils is in the top quartile. (2020/21 results)</p>	<p>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>
<p>90% of 0–16-year-olds PEPs are good or better</p>	<p>July 2022 – 92%</p>
<p>75% of 16–17-year-olds PEPs are good or better</p>	<p>July 2022 – Years 12 and 13 97%</p>
<p>RWM in KS2, at the expected standard, is in the top quartile</p>	<p>No comparative data</p>
<p>The percentage of 16–17-year-olds who are NEET is below 20% by the end of March 2022</p>	<p>July 2022 – 20.5% of 16/17year olds are NEET. This is higher than the previous year.</p>

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
Statut	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	5.50	-	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

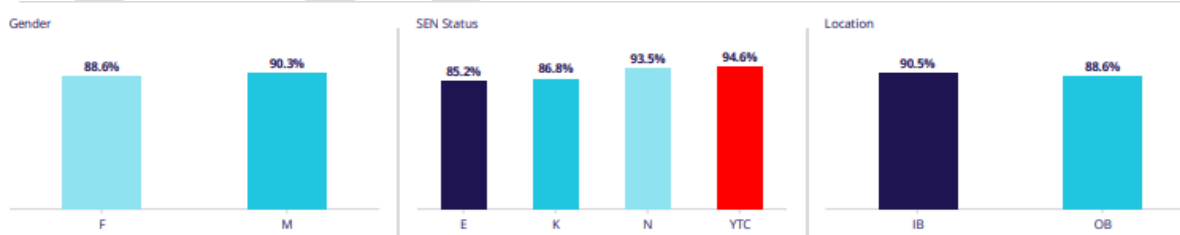
Our whole school attendance is 89.54%

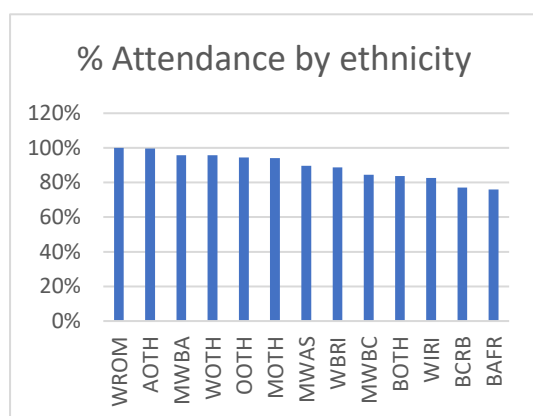


Attendance over the year has been strongest among our primary aged children, specifically Reception and Year 5. Attendance drops in KS3 and is lowest in KS4 with year 9 and year 11 being particularly low. To provide a greater context, there are also larger numbers of young people in the older year groups:

- 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

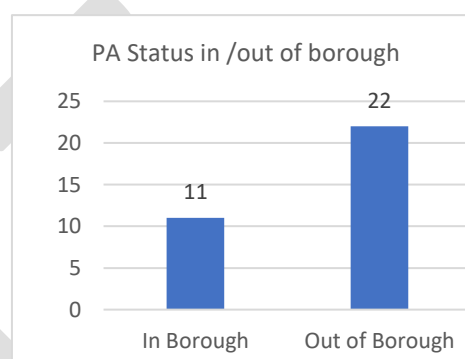
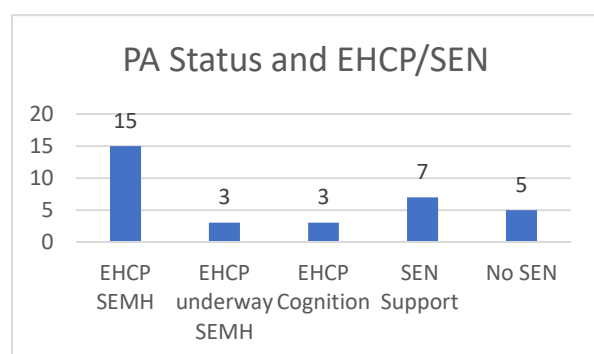
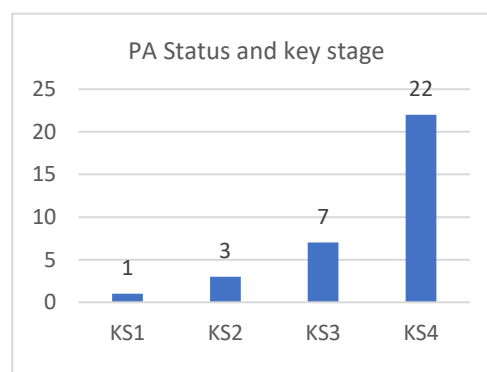
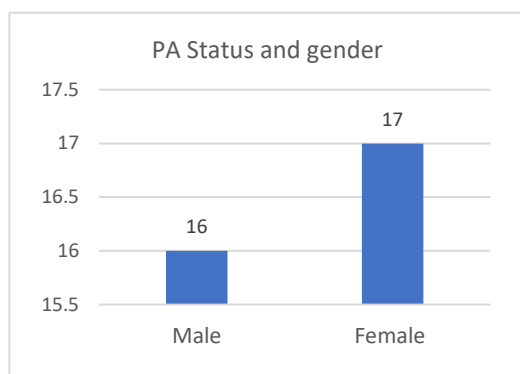
74/134 - above 95% attendance across the whole year

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)	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.
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

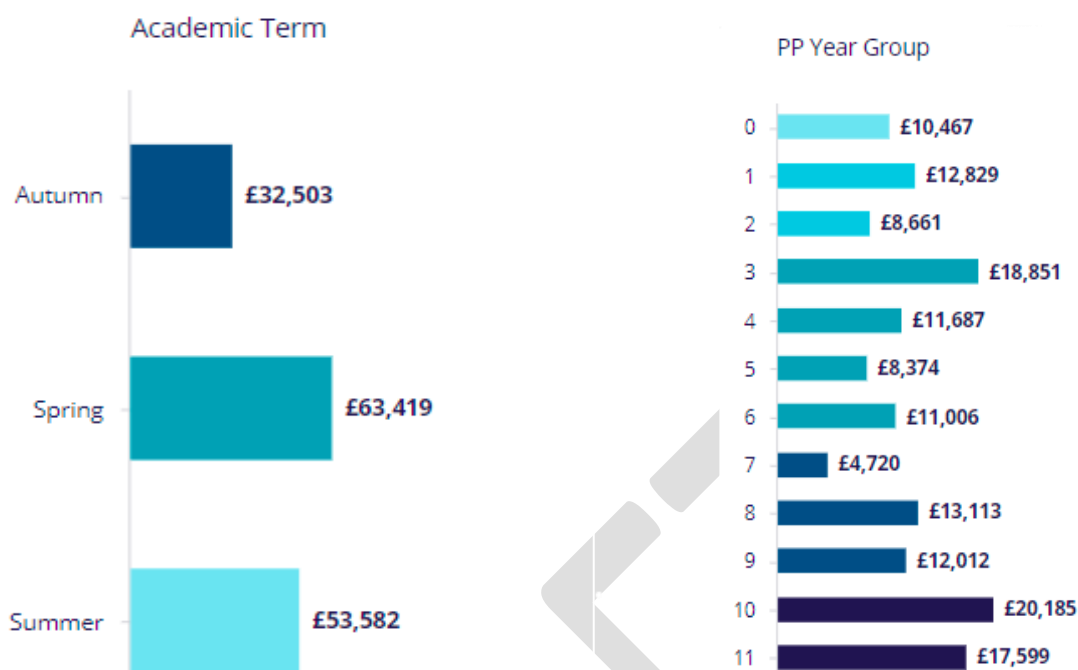
	Total Number of PEPs	Number and % rag rated gold	Number and % rag rated green	Number and % rag rated amber	Number and % rag rated red
Overall	1,043	5 (0.48%)	984 (94.3%)	50 (4.8%)	4 (0.38%)
EYFS	37		36 (97.3%)	1 (2.7%)	0
Statutory	545	5 (0.92%)	500 (91.7%)	37 (6.8%)	3 (0.55%)
Post 16	461		448 (97.2%)	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%
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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
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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.
Autumn Term and ongoing	Lumina Project (Harrow School)	GCSE	Referred 10 - 6 have been paired with tutors to date	The Harrow School Lumina Project and Virtual Schools 1:1 tuition and mentoring programme. Barnet Virtual School joined the programme in Autumn 2020. The 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.
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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.

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](https://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/Attendance-interventions-rapid-evidence-assessment) ([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 Moyses 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%
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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.

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**Children, Education & Safeguarding
Committee
Work Programme
2022 - 2023**

Contact: Pakeezah Rahman 020 8359 6452 pakeezah.rahman@barnet.gov.uk

Title of Report	Overview of decision	Chief/Lead Officer(s)
Tuesday 07 June 2022 [deadline for cleared reports Wednesday 25 May]		
Home Office & Clearsprings Vist and Update on Barnet's Asylum Seeker Contingency Hotels	Committee to note the report and take the opportunity to question guest representatives from the Home Office and Clearsprings Ready Homes.	William Cooper, Deputy Head of Strategy and Engagement
CES Priorities of the New Administration	That Committee agrees for the Executive Director, Children and Families to develop a programme of work which embeds the aspirations of the new Administration and brings back to the next CES committee for agreement.	Chris Munday, Executive Director Children's Services
SEND Local Area Inspection – Inspection findings and action plan	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Neil Marlow, Director of Education and Learning
DfE SEND Review (Green Paper)	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Neil Marlow, Director of Education and Learning
Schools White Paper	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Neil Marlow, Director of Education and Learning

Title of Report	Overview of decision	Chief/Lead Officer(s)
Family Services Quarterly Update	Committee to note the report. Each meeting will also have an update on data and performance.	Chris Munday, Executive Director Children's Services
Connected (Friend and family) Care Policy	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Brigitte Jordaan, Director of Children Social Care
Special Guardianship Support policy	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Brigitte Jordaan, Director of Children Social Care
National Referral Mechanism (NRM) report	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Tina McElligott, Director of Children Social Care
Children's Social Care placements including Residential homes, Independent Fostering Agency, 16+ accommodation and accommodation with support, Semi Independent and Supported Lodging	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Grace Walker, Head of Commissioning, Performance & Improvement
Monday 12 September 2022 [deadline for cleared reports Thursday 01 September]		
Family Services Quarterly Update including Corporate Parenting	Committee to note the report. Each meeting will also have an update on data and performance.	Chris Munday, Executive Director for Children's Services
Youth Perception Survey results and Family Friendly update	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Ben Thomas, Assistant Director, Education, Strategy & Partnership

Title of Report	Overview of decision	Chief/Lead Officer(s)
Voice of the Child: Introduce the newly elected Youth Parliament and Youth Ambassadors	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Tina McElligott, Director of Children Social Care
Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy update	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Neil Marlow, Director of Education and Learning
Planning for new school places: Update and School Places Plan 2023-2027	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Neil Marlow, Director of Education and Learning
Local Authority School Governor Nominations: Update	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Neil Marlow, Director of Education and Learning
Fees and Charges	Committee to approve proposed fees and charges and to consider recommendations set out in the report.	Ben Thomas, Assistant Director, Education, Strategy & Partnership
Thursday 17 November 2022 [deadline for cleared reports Tuesday 08 November]		
Family Services Quarterly Update	The Committee to note the report. Each meeting will also have an update on data and performance.	Chris Munday, Executive Director for Children's Services
Business Planning	To agree the committee's business planning proposals for the medium term financial strategy period of 2021-25 and recommend the proposals to Policy and Resources Committee.	Ben Thomas, Assistant Director, Education, Strategy & Partnership

Title of Report	Overview of decision	Chief/Lead Officer(s)
Care Leaver Local Offer & Staying put policy	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Brigitte Jordaan, Director of Children Social Care
Child Care Sufficiency – Annual Report	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Tina McElligott, Director of Children Social Care
Education Strategies update (including updates on School and Settings Improvement Strategy 2021-24, SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2021-24)	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Neil Marlow, Director of Education and Learning
Special Educational Places Plan Consultation	Committee to note the final plan and proposals.	Neil Marlow, Director of Education and Learning
20 March 2023 [deadline for cleared reports 09 March]		
Family Services Quarterly Update	Committee to note the report. Each meeting will also have an update on data and performance.	Chris Munday, Executive Director for Children’s Services
Barnet Safeguarding Children’s Partnership report, including Independent Scrutiny report	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Ben Thomas, Assistant Director, Education, Strategy & Partnership
Maintained Nursery Schools funding	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Neil Marlow, Director of Education and Learning
Educational Standards in Barnet 2021-22	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Neil Marlow, Director of Education and Learning

Title of Report	Overview of decision	Chief/Lead Officer(s)
Annual Report on School Funding	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Neil Marlow, Director of Education and Learning
Independent and specialist social workers and specialist assessments	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Grace Walker, Head of Commissioning, Performance & Improvement
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) contracts - including Parenting Programmes	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Grace Walker, Head of Commissioning, Performance & Improvement
Emergency Duty Team (EDT)	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Grace Walker, Head of Commissioning, Performance & Improvement
Independent Living Housing Management	Committee to determine as per recommendations set out in the report.	Grace Walker, Head of Commissioning, Performance & Improvement