

Meeting

Cabinet

Date and time

Wednesday 18TH OCTOBER, 2023

At 7.00 PM

Venue

Hendon TOWN HALL, THE BURROUGHS, LONDON NW4 4BQ

To: Members of Cabinet (Quorum 3)

Chair: Councillor Barry Rawlings
Vice Chair: Councillor Ross Houston

Councillors

Zahra Beg	Ammar Naqvi	Pauline Coakley Webb
Paul Edwards	Anne Clarke	Alison Moore
Alan Schneiderman	Sara Conway	

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

Andrew Charlwood – Head of Governance

Governance Service contact: Salar.Rida@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

Item No	Title of Report	Pages
	Agenda Part 1 (Public)	
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4.	Questions from non-Executive Members (if any)	
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16.	Urgent Business (if any)	

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Decisions of the Cabinet

5 September 2023

Members Present:-

AGENDA ITEM 1

Councillor Barry Rawlings (Chair)
Councillor Ross Houston (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Barry Rawlings (Chair)	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member – Resources and Effective Council
Councillor Ross Houston (Vice-Chair)	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member – Homes and Regeneration
Councillor Paul Edwards	Cabinet Member – Adult Social Care
Councillor Ammar Naqvi	Cabinet Member – Culture, Leisure, Arts and Sports
Councillor Anne Clarke	Cabinet Member – Community Wealth Building
Councillor Sara Conway	Cabinet Member – Community Safety and Participation
Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb	Cabinet Member – Family Friendly Barnet
Councillor Alison Moore	Cabinet Member – Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Alan Schneiderman	Cabinet Member – Environment and Climate Change

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Zahra Beg, Cabinet Member –
Equalities, Voluntary and Community Sector

Also in attendance:

Councillor Arjun Mittra
Councillor Daniel Thomas
Councillor Peter Zinkin

Councillor Barry Rawlings, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources and Effective Council welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2023 be approved as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

An apology for absence had been received from the Cabinet Member – Equalities and the Voluntary and Community Sector, Councillor Zahra Beg.

3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS (IF ANY)

None.

4. QUESTIONS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

The Chair welcomed Councillors Daniel Thomas, Peter Zinkin and Arjun Mittra to the meeting who were in attendance to ask questions on agenda items in accordance with Executive Procedure Rule 13.6. Questions were raised in relation to agenda items 10, 11 and 14 which were responded to verbally at the meeting by Cabinet Members.

5. PETITIONS (IF ANY)

None.

6. DEPUTATIONS

A deputation had been received from the Grahame Park – The Strand Resident Association on Agenda Item 10 (Our Plan for Barnet delivery and Outcomes framework Q1 2023 -2024) details of which had been circulated to Cabinet.

Representatives from the Deputation did not attend Cabinet.

The Leader advised that Cabinet would need to decide whether to:

1. Note the deputation and take no action.
2. Note the deputation in consideration of the report.
3. Ask officers to prepare a report for the next meeting (of either this committee or another relevant committee) on the deputation.
4. Ask officers to provide a written response to the deputation.

The Leader and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration responded verbally to the Deputation at the meeting.

Following discussion, Cabinet

RESOLVED that officers be requested to provide a written response to the Deputation.

7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

8. MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE (IF ANY)

None.

9. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE OR SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEES (IF ANY)

None.

10. URGENT ITEM - SCHOOL BUILDING SAFETY STATEMENT

At the invitation of the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Family Friendly Barnet read the following statement to Cabinet:

“As you will be aware the Secretary of State for Education significantly escalated the risks associated with the safety of school buildings, last week, because of the use of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in public buildings, following failures of this in some schools in England.

Barnet Council has been proactive in addressing these concerns for the schools we have responsibility for (i.e. community schools and foundation schools). There are 51 Community Schools/Foundation Schools in the Borough. Following a desktop analysis and questionnaires, initial survey checks have already been conducted across these institutions yesterday and today. We are pleased to report that in general community/foundation schools in Barnet are not affected by RAAC-related issues. We do need to do some further intrusive survey work in five schools and they are not able to use all of their facilities. No schools have needed to close or educate their pupils at home, although one did delay the start of term by one day.

In addition, there are 79 Academies and Voluntary Aided Schools in Barnet and the school buildings for these schools are not the responsibility of the Council. We did not have access to their DfE Questionnaire responses so were unable to ascertain which schools fully complied with the requirements. The Diocesan Boards and Trusts, responsible for these school buildings dealt directly with the DfE.

We have contacted the Responsible Bodies for all our non-Community Schools requesting that they confirm to us that they have completed the DfE survey/questionnaire and that no further surveys were requested by the DfE. Responses so far have confirmed that no RAAC has been identified, apart from the academy indicated previously. We will follow up with any school where the DfE survey/questionnaire has not taken place.

We have been made aware that one academy, who had a survey conducted directly by the DfE, has got the RAAC material in one of its buildings. We have been notified that this area has been made safe.

The safety of our children and the structural integrity of our schools remains our top priorities. Barnet Council is committed to cooperating fully with the government's inquiry and taking all necessary actions to maintain the highest safety standards in our educational establishments.”

11. OUR PLAN FOR BARNET - DELIVERY AND OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK, Q1 2023-24

Councillor Barry Rawlings Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources & Effective Council introduced the report.

During discussion officers were requested to:

- Provide a response on the “technical reason” for the decrease in “% of customers who are satisfied with the service on the web”; and
- Ensure that Our Plan for Barnet indicators included all of the new Office for Local Government indicators.

Following discussion, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations.

DECISION:

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the contents of Our Plan for Barnet – Delivery and Outcomes Framework, Q1 2023-24 Report.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendations and the decision.

12. CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER REPORT - 2023/24 QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL FORECAST AND 2023/24 BUDGET MANAGEMENT

Councillor Barry Rawlings Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources & Effective Council introduced the report.

Following discussion, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations.

DECISION:

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- 1. Note the forecast outturn for 2023/24 against the Council's revenue budget.**
- 2. Note the current use of reserves, and the outlook.**
- 3. Note the expenditure against capital budgets in the year.**
- 4. Note the current debt position and related actions.**
- 5. Approve the changes to the existing Capital Programme in relation to additions and slippage as set out in section 5.1 – 5.12 in accordance with the virement rules.**
- 6. Agree the CIL funding for Road Safety & Parking be increased from £0.450m per annum to £1.2m per annum for schemes to be authorised by the Director, Highways & Transportation**
- 7. Approve the Fees and Charges as set out in section 6 and attached at Appendix B for recommendation of the council side fees and charges to Full Council for consideration with any consultation responses and equality impact assessments (EqIA), and to delegate the approval of the executive side fees and charges to the Portfolio Holder for Resources & Effective Council once they have been subject to consultation and EqIA.**
- 8. Approve the writes-offs for Tenant Arrears and Sundry Debt as detailed in sections 7.17 – 7.26 and in Appendix C.**

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendations and the decision.

13. LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE - REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

Councillor Barry Rawlings, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources & Effective Council introduced the report.

Following discussion, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations.

DECISION:

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

- 1. Agree the contents of the report and accepts the recommendations of the LGA Peer Review team (as set out in Appendix A).**
- 2. Agree the contents of the Action Plan prepared in response to those recommendations (Appendix B) and that implementation of the actions is delegated to the Chief Executive, who will report progress to Cabinet or appropriate committee.**
- 3. Agree to publish the LGA Peer Review report and the Action Plan on the Barnet website.**
- 4. Note that there will be a follow-up visit from members of the Peer Team to review progress against the Action Plan, date to be confirmed but likely to be spring 2024.**

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendations and the decision.

14. BARNET'S LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (LFRMS) AND ACTION PLAN (2023-29)

Councillor Alan Schneiderman, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change introduced the report.

Following discussion, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations.

DECISION:

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the proposed Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) 2023-29.**
- 2. Adopt the associated Action Plan 2023-29 to achieve the four key strategic objectives as set out by the LFRMS 2023-29 and under section 1.2.**

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendations and the decision.

15. REDUCTION & RECYCLING PLAN

Councillor Alan Schneiderman, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change introduced the report.

Following discussion, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations.

DECISION:

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the Council's Reduction & Recycling Plan (RRP) for submission to the Greater London Authority (GLA).**
- 2. Delegate authority to the Street Scene Director in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change to implement the actions detailed within the RRP once the plan is formally approved by the GLA.**
- 3. Delegate authority to the Street Scene Director in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change to provide any updates to the GLA as required in relation to the RRP.**

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendations and the decision.

16. TEMPORARY AND INTERIM WORKFORCE (INCLUDING PERMANENT RECRUITMENT SERVICES) TWO YEAR CONTRACT EXTENSION WITH MATRIX SCM

Councillor Barry Rawlings, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources & Effective Council.

Following discussion, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations.

DECISION:

RESOLVED that Cabinet authorise the extension of the Temporary and Interim Workforce (including Permanent Recruitment Service) contract with Matrix SCM Limited for 2 years from 1st October 2023 until 30th September 2025.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendations and the decision.

17. FORENSIC TESTING ASSESSMENT SERVICES - CONTRACT EXTENSION AND APPROVAL TO PROCURE

Councillor Barry Rawlings, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources and Effective Council introduced the report.

Cabinet noted the information detailed in the associated exempt report in making the decision.

Following discussion, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations.

DECISION:

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

1. Note a 12-month extension to the contract with Lextox T/A E4 Law Limited with new agreed pricing (Appendix 1) from 05/06/2023 to 04/06/2024 to allow time to complete the tender process.
2. Note that there was an overspend of £113,790 in the contract with Lextox Ltd between 05/06/2021 to 04/06/2023 due to demand for higher volumes. The contract is a volume-based contract.
3. Note that a Waiver should have been granted for 12-months pursuant to the Contract Procedure Rules to enable continuity of service and enable a new procurement exercise.
4. Authorise to increase from the agreed contract value of £100,000 on the Annual Procurement Forward Plan to £150,000 per annum over a 2 year plus up to 2-year extension period to a forecast total contract value £600,000.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendations and the decision.

18. APPROVAL OF THE AWARD OF PROVISION OF LEASEHOLD & MAIN INSURANCE CONTRACTS EFFECTIVE FROM 1 OCTOBER 2023

Councillor Barry Rawlings, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources and Effective Council introduced the report.

Cabinet noted that an addendum had been circulated which:

1. Proposed an amendment to recommendation 2;
2. Provided the exempt appendix (Insurance Tender Report – AJ Gallagher Insurance Brokers) marked as ‘to follow’ in the agenda; and
3. Replaced text in section 5 of the report relating to Resource Implications.

Cabinet noted the information detailed in the associated exempt report in making the decision.

Following discussion, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations.

DECISION:

RESOLVED that the Cabinet:

1. Award the Main Insurance contracts to commence on the 1 October 2023 for a period of three years, with the option to extend for a further period of up to two years.
2. Award of the Leasehold Insurance contract to commence on the 1 October 2023 for a period of three years, with the option to extend for a further period of up to two years.
3. Delegate authority to the Director of Finance (S151 Officer) to have regard to the S20 notice and to make any emergency arrangements for insurance cover

beyond 1 October 2023 in the event contracts are not able to be finalised in line with these proposals by 1 October 2023.

4. Delegate authority to the Director of Finance (S151 Officer) to determine funding for any extra budgetary requirements caused by the awarding the new contracts commencing 1 October 2023.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendations and the decision.

19. CABINET FORWARD PLAN - KEY DECISION SCHEDULE

Cabinet noted the Forward Plan – Key Decision Schedule.

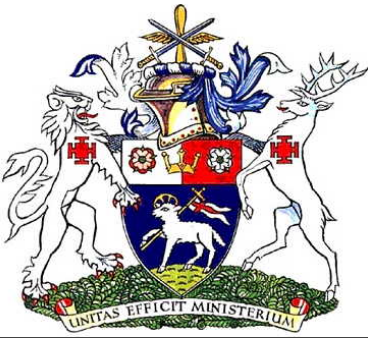
The meeting finished at 8.33pm.

Proper Officer

This document outlines the decisions taken at the above Cabinet meeting. Unless otherwise indicated, executive decisions listed in this document will come into force and may then be implemented 5 clear working days after publication of this document unless the decision is called in.

Five Members of the Council can call in a decision of the Cabinet, which has been taken but not implemented. For matters impacting a particular ward, a ward Councillor must be included in the 5 signatures. Call-in must be by notification to the Monitoring Officer or Head of Governance in writing signed by all five Members ([Part 3C - Committee Procedure Rules of the Council's Constitution](#)).

Date of Publication:	7 th September 2023
Last Date for Call-In:	(Please note that Call-in may not apply to all decisions).
Date decision can be implemented if not called in:	14 th September 2023, 5pm
Contact:	Head of Governance: Andrew.Charlwood@barnet.gov.uk

Cabinet

Title	Petition – Remove the Golders Green Crescent Road Closure
Date of meeting	18 October 2023
Report of	Head of Governance
Wards	Golders Green
Status	Public
Key	Non-key
Urgent	No
Appendices	None
Lead Officer	Salar Rida – Governance Manager
Officer Contact Details	Salar.Rida@Barnet.gov.uk – 0208 359 7113

Summary

This report informs Cabinet of the petition(s) received. The Cabinet is requested to consider the petition and make a determination on its desired course of action in accordance with its powers.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet notes the petition detailed in section 1.
2. That Cabinet decides whether to:
 - (a) Take no action
 - (b) Refer the matter to the relevant Cabinet Member or Committee Chair to provide a written respond to the Lead Petitioner within 20 working days; or
 - (c) Instruct an officer to prepare a report for a future meeting of Cabinet on the issue(s) raised with a recommended course of action.

1. Reasons for the Recommendations

1.1 A petition was submitted to the Head of Governance on 5th October 2023 titled “Remove the Golders Green Crescent Road Closure – Petition to remove the Golders Green Crescent planters.” The petition has received more than 500 signatures from Barnet citizens. In accordance with the Petition Scheme, the petition is required to be reported to Cabinet for consideration.

1.2

Petition:	Petition to remove the Golders Green Crescent planters
Details:	We the undersigned petition the Labour-run Barnet Council to remove the wooden planter boxes and seating at the junction of Golders Green Rd and Golders Green Crescent. The planters are a magnet for anti-social behaviour and other problems and were installed against the advice of those responsible for community safety. Many local residents and shopkeepers have expressed concern about the planters. The planters must be removed as soon as possible. Any future scheme for the area must be subject to local consultation and consent before any such scheme is implemented.
Ward:	Golders Green
Lead Petitioner:	Shimon Ryde
Signatures:	570

2. Alternative Options Considered and Not Recommended

2.1 Not applicable.

3. Post Decision Implementation

3.1 Cabinet will decide on the appropriate action to be taken (if any) which will be referred to the relevant parties by the Governance Team.

4. Corporate Priorities, Performance and Other Considerations

Corporate Plan

4.1 Consideration of the item aligns with the Council’s Corporate Plan (2023-2026) priorities:

- To encourage participation in our policymaking and democracy.
- To actively listen to and consider different perspectives and needs in policymaking and service design
- To act on concerns of local residents and involve them in decision making.

Corporate Performance / Outcome Measures

4.2 N/A.

Sustainability

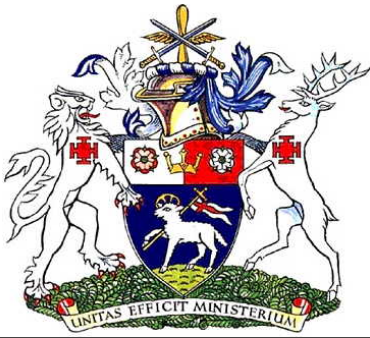
4.3 N/A.

Corporate Parenting

4.4	Not applicable. Risk Management
4.5	Not applicable. Social Value
4.6	Not applicable.
5.	Resource Implications (Finance and Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT and Property)
5.1	Not applicable.
6.	Legal Implications and Constitution References
6.1	Under the Council’s Constitution, Part 3F Petition Scheme, Petitions with signatories between 501-3,000 will be reported to Cabinet (or other/ Area Committee). The Lead Petitioner will be given 3 minutes to present the petition to Cabinet or committee. Following the presentation, the Leader and Cabinet Members, will have an opportunity to ask the Lead Petitioner questions. After the debate Cabinet or the committee will decide the petition in accordance with the options set out in the recommendations above.
6.2	Part 2D (Terms of Reference and Delegation of Duties to the Cabinet) of the Constitution states that Cabinet is responsible for the following functions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of proposals for the budget (including the capital and revenue budgets, the fixing of the Council Tax Base, and the level of Council Tax) and the financial strategy for the Council; - Monitoring the implementation of the budget and financial strategy; - Recommending major new policies (and amendments to existing policies) to the Council for approval as part of the Council’s Policy Framework and implementing those approved by Council; - Approving policies that are not part of the policy framework; - Management of the Council’s Capital Programme.
6.3	Part 3B, Executive Procedure Rules, Section 13.2 (Petitions) states that “The Council has a petition scheme and this will be followed.”
7.	Consultation
7.1	Not applicable in the context of this report.
8.	Equalities and Diversity
8.1	None specifically in relation to this report.
9.	Background Papers

9.1 The petition submitted in hard copy to Governance Service on 5 October 2023.

[petition - To Remove the Golders Green Crescent Planters \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/petition-to-remove-the-golders-green-crescent-planters)

Cabinet

Title	Reducing Poverty
Date of meeting	18 October 2023
Report of	Councillor Anne Clarke, Cabinet Member for Community Wealth Building
Wards	All
Status	Public
Key	Key
Urgent	No
Appendices	Appendix 1 – Sustainable Commercial strategy Appendix 2 – Reducing poverty action plan Appendix 3 – Internal workshops findings
Lead Officer	<p>Cath Shaw Deputy Chief Executive Cath.Shaw@barnet.gov.uk</p> <p>Anisa Darr Executive Director, Strategy and Resources Anisa.Darr@barnet.gov.uk</p> <p>Liz Cowie Assistant Director, Strategy, Engagement and Communications Liz.Cowie@barnet.gov.uk</p>
Officer Contact Details	<p>Renee Shingles Strategy Manager, Strategy, Engagement and Communications Renee.Shingles@barnet.gov.uk</p>
Summary	

Following the launch of our Barnet Plan 2023-26, and ahead of what could be another tough winter for many, this paper outlines initial actions it will take to enable and encourage community wealth building opportunities with the aim of reducing poverty and tackling inequalities in Barnet.

Recommendations

- 1. That Cabinet approves the costs of approach and actions as outlined in 5.1 and 5.2**
- 2. The Cabinet approves the Sustainable Commercial Strategy (Appendix 1) which outlines how we can utilise our procurement to support local economy**
- 3. The Cabinet approves officers taking a phased approach to developing a community wealth programme, with work undertaken by Centre for Local Economic Strategies to inform how we can develop this programme as outlined in 1.4**
- 4. Officers will report back to Cabinet on work conducted alongside the Living Wage Foundation to become accredited, with an equalities impact assessment.**

1. Reasons for the Recommendations

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The last few years has seen a great deal of change in people's lives from several seismic shocks that have presented substantial challenges and some opportunities. Our role is to support people most impacted economically by these challenges, while capturing opportunities that bolster our local neighbourhoods and communities to create places where residents, their families and friends can thrive. This paper does not capture all the work we do to support our residents. It outlines our plan to leverage procurement and social value initiatives to encourage suppliers to buy local and create local jobs and investing in our people, organisations, and businesses through initiatives from digital upskilling to working with our local college and university to develop the workforce of the future and create opportunities for our residents.

1.1.2 A strong support network is crucial for everyone, but for some, these connections are not as readily available. The pandemic, war in Ukraine and cost-of-living crisis highlighted the role our voluntary, community, faith sector (VCFS) holds in providing this network. While council services are a crucial part of this network, specifically for some of our most vulnerable residents, we have learnt that investing in community-led initiatives provides more help to people in times of crises. Last winter our schools, care centres, libraries, foodbanks, faith, and community centres provided spaces for people to access support and meet new people. We have seen from our response to the cost-of-living crisis that residents have benefited from these organisations and spaces by reducing stigma around asking for help, accessing welfare and benefits advice, and for those who can and want work, providing training and skills.

1.1.3 As we work together to build a greener, healthier borough we want to make sure that we are capturing opportunity that comes from existing and growing industries, and make sure those who are most susceptible to the consequences of economic inequalities are supported and prioritised for access to these opportunities. It is not just new industries we want to capture, but ones that are at the heart of our local economy. Creative, sports and hospitality industries bring life to our high streets and green spaces, bring people together and give our borough a sense of identity. Along with bringing in jobs and

investment, we aim to create places where people can reach their full potential and feel like they belong.

- 1.1.4 We know we cannot do this alone, working in partnership is crucial to delivering outcomes for our communities. Therefore, taking a phased approach to developing a community wealth building programme, we will outline how we will maximise benefits for people economically excluded through our sustainable procurement strategy, social value policy, and economic development practices to encourage fair and sustainable employment opportunities, invest money back into the community and share learnings and best practice with local and neighbouring organisations on how we can work together to reduce poverty in Barnet.

1.2 Crisis support for our residents

- 1.3.1 This work started last year with our cost-of-living programme, by providing immediate financial support, increasing benefit uptake, streamlining our support mechanisms, and leveraging our partnerships to provide a network of support for our residents. Since the programme launched a year ago, outcomes include:

- 1.3.2 Led by our communications team, developed and executed an extensive communications campaign, starting last Autumn the team generated over 77,000 (October 2022 – January 2023) visits to top pages, distributed nearly 20,000 leaflets and reached target audiences of families with young children, pensioners, those with disabilities and mental health support through partnerships with AgeUK, 0-19 Early Help services, Barnet Activity Creative and Engaging (BACE) Holidays, Citizens Advice Barnet, BOOST, libraries, foodbanks and public health bodies;

- Between April - August 2023 we received 1,212 Significant Advice recorded in Barnet Children's Centres (increase of 6% between Q4 and Q1).
- Through the Household Support Fund school nominations have seen the largest increase with a total of 15,981 in July 2023. The data tells us that of those supported, 13,487 families were in receipt of Free School Meals with a further 2,494 who have been financially impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.
- 729 vulnerable children have been placed in an early year setting and accessed up to 15 hours free early years education per week.
- During Summer delivery of 2022 the BACE programme reached 2,871 unique children, statistics from Summer 2023 highlight we reached over 3,500 unique participants. Year, upon year we are seeing an increased demand upon our service. BACE also works with over 30 private businesses across the borough, working with them to upskill providers with regards to supporting children and families.
- BOOST have seen a considerable rise in residents coming to them for support, which continued through to spring and summer with 5,520 total contacts (numbers include footfall and calls) and an estimated 4,155 (75%) due to cost of living pressures through April to August 2023.

- 1.3.3 Libraries, as well as being warm spaces, held a number of initiatives including;

- 283 events, attended by 5,913 residents;

- Drop-in sessions with BOOST welfare benefits advisors, money management sessions delivered in partnership with Barclays Bank and fraud prevention sessions with HSBC; and
 - In partnership with Wrap-up London, libraries acted as drop-off points for spare coats, collecting around 400 warm coats last winter which were distributed to approximately 30 charities and community groups who made them available to residents.
- 1.3.4 Led by Barnet Homes, we ran a targeted campaign identifying 7,900 eligible households with EPC rating of E, F or G; and organised a mailout to each property, alongside newsletters, social media, and magazine promotion. Figures from December 2022 indicated that the targeted autumn campaign resulted in an estimated 80% required referrals to achieve full utilisation of the grant funding;
- 1.3.5 In partnership with Barnet Together Alliance we provided a £300k fund, resulting in:
- Receiving applications for 71 projects at a total of £582,722;
 - 40 successful projects with 20% of organisations working in partnership to deliver projects; and
 - Over 137,500 estimated beneficiaries which include 7,509 scheduled sessions supporting our residents.
- 1.3.6 Worked with community groups to develop a network of warm spaces, with over 40 warm spaces (including our libraries) dispersed throughout the borough, the aim was to identify spaces which would be part of a long-term support network:
- We identified 2 warm spaces as well as 2 foodbanks which would benefit from outreach advisors to support residents in accessing financial support, we have worked with BOOST and Citizens Advice Barnet and internal benefits team to provide support;
 - One of these spaces, the ArtsDepot provided positive feedback of the scheme, explaining that an unexpected outcome was the lift in staff morale who felt proud to be giving something back to the community;
 - We worked with public health colleagues to provide support and first aid mental health training to front-line staff at our libraries; and
 - One of our spaces has now partnered with Boost to provide digital skills training, with specific focus on supporting our refugee and asylum seeker community.
- 1.3.7 An infrastructure rebuild of a service and systems, which included;
- 1.3.8 Insourcing of the welfare team;
- An all-in-one online application form with integrated SFS Income and Expenditure Form, Benefit calculator and Open Banking option, delivering £2.1m of support to residents;
 - The introduction of vulnerability and propensity to pay profiling to tailor engagement to our residents;
 - Introduction of geospatial data to enable analysis of velocity of change and resiliency across the borough at post code level, enabling targeted intervention, and in collaboration with Insight & Intelligence hub building Barnet's own vulnerability index to further improve how we engage with residents and feeding back into all LBB legacy systems; and
 - Developed dashboards to enable outcomes to be shared with key stakeholders and enable continuous evaluation and improvement.

1.3.9 As we go into the winter, we will continue to deliver these initiatives to support residents who are struggling. Providing immediate financial support through the Household Support Fund and Residents Support Fund, we will continue working with partners to provide benefits and welfare advice to ensure residents are accessing benefits available to them. As we look to more long-term solutions of financial support, we will undertake the following actions:

- Finalise and review Barnet’s Council Tax Support Scheme, take it out for public consultation and present this to committee by the end of financial year 2023-24
- Review the Residents Support Fund policy, using data from current applications to better understand the needs of our residents by the end of financial year 2023-24
- Working with our Residents Experience team to improve our service offering and understand how we can join-up with other welfare and benefit advisors in the council to provide a ‘no-wrong-door approach’ to supporting our residents.

1.3 **Boosting the local economy**

1.3.10 Thriving businesses and local employment

1.3.11 Whilst Barnet is generally an affluent borough, there are pockets of stubborn deprivation, high housing costs and a higher than London average of households without work and those who suffer from long-term illness. Barnet has a higher job density compared to other outer-London boroughs; however, it is amongst the top 6 lowest paying boroughs, with stark inequality of earnings for residents who work in Barnet compared to outside of the borough. This disparity of earnings in and out of the borough is not unusual for outer London, but limits day time spend. linked to higher levels of parttime and contract based work. Insight from our partners, BOOST and foodbanks have highlighted that more residents who are in work are struggling to pay the bills, this insight reflects the applications we see coming through our Household Support Fund, Residents Support Fund and benefits calculator. In-work poverty is a prevailing challenge in our communities.

1.3.12 With a high proportion of micro-businesses and below London average of small to large businesses, Barnet has fewer opportunities to leverage hiring power and therefore the role of larger employers becomes more important. As a major employer whose long term sustainability is tied to the population it serves (an ‘anchor institution’), the council can leverage its own hiring and financial resources to stimulate local economy while ensuring we are getting the best environmental, economic and social outcomes out of our procurement practices.

1.3.13 Earlier this year, the council approved the Boost 3-year plan which provides a one-stop-shop to supporting residents with employment, financial and digital guidance. The approach targets residents who may not otherwise have access to support services or the networks available to them to build their knowledge, skills, experience and self-efficacy.

1.3.14 Our procurement and social value initiatives will create local investment and local living wage jobs, but capturing the opportunity of growth industries, encouraging fair work practices, supporting our residents most affected by economic, health and social

inequalities will require a place-based approach. When focusing on our people, this means working with our current network of partners to understand who and why people are struggling, and how we can support them to becoming financially independent and reach their full potential.

1.3.15 This approach does not just benefit our residents. Our businesses and highstreets will also benefit from a diverse talent pool who have the means to spend locally, encouraging further investment and stimulating our local economy. Our neighbouring boroughs will also benefit from this, not just through sharing best practices and learnings, but because we know our communities go beyond the Barnet boundaries. Our priorities include:

1. Implementing the Boost 3-year plan:
 - a. Investing in qualifying staff, standardised processes, formalised quality assurance;
 - b. Using data and information to take a more preventative approach, to supporting residents, specifically with relation to health and social inequalities;
 - c. Continuing the partnership model, it will build closer links with benefits teams within councils and VCFS to start specialising and building out its employment, skills and training arm; and
 - d. In line with our Tackling Inequalities theme, target support to those least from the job market.
2. Working with internal teams to learn best practices on how we can use Apprenticeships to help residents into work, including degree level apprenticeships.
 - a. Taking advantage of growth sectors:
 - b. Developing a construction and skills centre in Barnet, which focuses on industries that support the transition to Net Zero;
 - c. Accessible digital skills training; and
 - d. Training and brokerage in film, TV and care sector.
3. Encouraging businesses to become London Living Wage and Good Work Standards accreditation.
4. Supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs:
 - a. Investment in the borough is retained locally by boosting Barnet's construction supplier capacity;
 - b. Providing skills and knowledge to residents to start their own business; and
 - c. Improve skills and digital presence for up to 150 businesses across three town centres.

1.3.16 Our education institutions also play an important role in our local economy with Barnet having some of the best schools, NEET and EET scores in the country. ONS data suggests that our young people rarely settle in Barnet, with latest figures showing that residents

aged between 25-34 decreased by 5.5%. Currently there is a lot of work taking place with Middlesex University offering degree apprenticeships, with creative, environment, social and healthcare pathways, and Sheffield Hallam University announcing the opening of its first satellite campus in Brent Cross Town.

1.3.17 We know our young people are experiencing a tougher time breaking into the workforce, with more people gaining higher education, those who do have this are often competing with a larger talent pool for work, and those unable to attend higher education experiencing starker inequalities, stigma, and long-term career progression opportunities. However, as we see a change in the needs of employer's, diverse pools of talent, who come from difference backgrounds will be key to addressing the challenges we are faced with today. This means apprenticeships, vocational training, volunteering and more hands-on training and skills opportunities will help candidates stand out and develop networks they can utilise to access employment opportunities.

1.3.18 We acknowledge that more work could be done preparing our young people for the workforce, specifically our young people with disabilities and care leavers. Barnet Education & Learning Service provide a great deal of support to our most vulnerable young people, however, there is still a need for organisations to proactively carve out and provide employment opportunities for those with protected characteristics, specifically as our vulnerable young people lose a great deal of the support mechanisms available as they turn 25. There is still work to be done in this space, but some of the work currently being undertaken, includes:

1. Getting young people into volunteer opportunities early, to build skills that will help them succeed in the workplace, with a number of technical and vocational developments in schools and colleges across Barnet.
2. Education Business Partnerships with schools and post-16 providers.
3. Supported internship programme and the development of a new apprenticeship strategy, which will link into internal initiatives and identify and provide technical and degree level apprenticeships as well as carved out employment for people with disabilities.
4. Barnet Education & Learning Services (BELS) ensures our action is taken to support our young people most at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET).
5. Care leavers programmes which support work and life skills initiatives as well as support schemes to support independent living up to the age of 25.

1.4 **Working with Centre for Local Economic Strategies**

1.4.1 Community wealth building is a bespoke model, that takes a systems approach to economic development. When considering the multidimensional drivers of poverty and inequality, this approach leverages the strengths of a local area to develop opportunities for the wider community. This can result in more cohesive and inclusive communities while stimulating the local economy.

1.4.2 To support our ambitions for developing a Community Wealth Building approach, we have commissioned Centre for Local Economic Strategies to support us to:

1. Understand what residents want from a Community Wealth Building programme.
2. Examine the Council's spend profile and identify opportunities for local spend.
3. Analyse how wealth flows and grows within Barnet.
4. Work with procurement, planning and sustainability teams towards developing progressive practices.

1.4.3 While the aim of this work is targeting towards reducing poverty, considerations on how a programme can link in with other council priorities, specifically tackling inequalities and Net Zero are included in the programme of work. This work will be completed by early next year, at which time we will provide findings and outline the next phase of work to cabinet.

1.5 Working with Neighbourly Lab

1.5.1 The council has started work which seeks to explore how it can better align its physical assets to community needs, as the just use of land is an element of community wealth building. To support developing approaches, the Council is conducting an audit of community spaces, both formal and informal, through the lens of its residents with work commissioned through Neighbourly Lab as part of a Neighbourhood Working pilot. A pilot focused on East Barnet will engage with residents in asset-based and constructive ways, allowing their needs and usage of their local area to inform future decision making around Barnet's places and spaces. Subject to the findings, we will look to use the learning in other areas in the Borough.

1.6 Leveraging our procurement and processes

1.6.1 Every year the council spends an estimated £600 million in procuring goods and services. Until last year procurement services were outsourced, and consequently, data and insight around where we spend and its environmental and social impact is unclear. The abovementioned research conducted by Centre for Local Economic Strategies will provide insight into how we can leverage procurement processes towards local economy, reducing poverty, tackling inequalities, and achieving Net Zero. In this sense, our Sustainable Commercial Strategy should aim to go beyond environmental goals, considering social and economic outcomes that will set the foundation of a wider community wealth building programme, with the aim of:

1. Encouraging suppliers to buy local and create local jobs,
2. Ensuring suppliers are paying a living wage and implementing fair working practices, and
3. Ensuring suppliers are working towards net zero outcomes in their own business models and supply chains.

1.6.2 It is important to look at these priorities not as competing, but complimentary, to achieving outcomes for our residents. While strides have been made in measuring decarbonisation and Net Zero ambitions, as well as social and wellbeing outcomes, can be difficult to quantify. It is therefore important that we invest in communicating their value to businesses and residents, this will require engagement activities and best

practice examples on how suppliers can succeed in meeting these commitments and practices they can implement to support them winning contracts.

1.6.3 We have started this journey by refreshing our Social Value policy and themes, outcomes and measures framework (TOMs). The refreshed policy and TOMs have been submitted in a separate paper to cabinet today. This paper outlines how we will improve compliance from suppliers, have clear expectations for social value offers and a simple but robust monitoring and reporting process that will ensure delivery of social value within contracts, we are proposing to implement the following:

1. A minimum expectation of 5% reinvested in social value initiatives by suppliers on contracts over £100,000. [new]
2. Minimum of one employment outcome expectation for each million pound a contract is valued at (reviewed on a tender-by-tender basis). [new]
3. Liquidated Damages Clauses in contracts for non-delivery of Social Value Commitments. [new]
4. Condense Barnet TOMs from 83 measures to circa 40 and assign a monetary value for each measure. [change]
5. Allow financial or in-kind material contributions. However, they should not exceed 10% of Total Proposed Commitment. [new]
6. Embed Social Value Matrix in the Invitation to Tender/Quote and replace social value question in the tender documents. [new]
7. Social Value Impact Fund to reinvest funds from liquidated damages and financial contributions back into the community. [change]

1.6.4 Contract managers will be responsible for managing their own contracts but will be expected to report the social value outcomes bi-annually to the Social Investment Officer, who will be responsible for producing the larger Social Value report at the end of the financial year encompassing all procured contracts.

1.6.5 Training will be developed to support existing contract managers and guidance will be made available for new contract managers. Monitoring tools have been developed to ensure social value outcomes are tracked in a consistent way across the organisation.

1.6.6 Members of the Social Value Task Group, a pan-Council group comprised of 26 representatives from various service areas, contributed to construct these mechanisms and every member of the group was given an opportunity to vote. Results are as follows:

Proposed change / addition	Approval %
1. 5% minimum expectation	100%
2. Minimum one job outcome	80%
3. Liquidated Damages Clauses	90%
4. Condensed list of TOMs & monetary values	100%
5. Financial or materials contributions	70%
6. Social Value Matrix	90%
7. Social Value Impact Fund	100%

1.6.7 The Barnet TOMs will be reviewed annually by the Social Value Task Group and the Social Value Panel to ensure they continue to reflect our priorities and address the needs

of our communities. The panel is a multiagency group comprising LBB staff, residents, VCFS partners and businesses.

1.7 Becoming a living wage borough

- 1.7.1 As we continue to see more employed residents needing extra support, we cannot reduce poverty without having a clear approach to becoming a living wage borough. As an employer Barnet council pays all our staff a living wage and has undertaken a review of our contracts, confirming most of our contracts pay a living wage.
- 1.7.2 For some of our contracts, implementing this has been more difficult and will take more time. This challenge is most prevalent within our adult social care contracts, which is an issue all local authorities and the wider care industry are grappling with. Officers are currently working with 3rd parties to ensure they all pay a living wage on contracts. We are therefore taking a long-term view on addressing this issue and will continue to work with the Living Wage Foundation and other local authorities on this matter.
- 1.7.3 Barnet is committed to being a living wage borough, but we cannot achieve this alone. Therefore, as well as focusing on our own workforce and contracts, we have started developing a plan to engage local businesses and anchor institutions, which is outlined in our attached action plan, Appendix 2.

1.8 A joined-up approach to Reducing Poverty

- 1.8.1 Reducing poverty is not an ambition that can be achieved alone, it touches all parts of the council and intertwines closely with our Tackling Inequalities theme, while we have not touched on all the work going on in the council in this paper, learnings from our cost-of-living programme have been used to understand where we can make the biggest impact and extensive research and internal engagement activities have been undertaken to understand the local landscape and ensure we are targeting our resources effectively.
- 1.8.2 Throughout this paper there we have touched on work currently being delivered in the council and added further priorities around procurement, social value, and local economy. Below we outline how these priorities will align and support initiatives identified in the Barnet Plan to support our residents:

State of the Borough Report: Inequalities and poverty

- 1.8.3 With people of many cultural backgrounds, faiths and life experiences living side by side, one of Barnet's biggest strengths is its diversity. We are proud of these diverse communities and of being a place where people feel welcomed and celebrated.
- 1.8.4 But not everyone's experience of Barnet is the same, with some finding it easier to access services and take advantage of opportunities. Some people with protected characteristics face structural discrimination when institutional and other common practices within society disadvantage them across many aspects of their lives. Others face inequalities and social exclusion as a result of low income and poverty.
- 1.8.5 The emerging State of the Borough Report starts to build an understanding of residents' experiences of inequalities in Barnet and the impact. Bringing together different themes, it provides an overview of what inequalities look like in important aspects of their lives.

Taking this report as an evidence base, we will be refreshing our Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy to demonstrate how we can work together with partners and residents to address inequalities and poverty.

- 1.8.6 Those who experience the greatest income inequality are more likely to have poorer outcomes in education, housing, health and life expectancy. Low-income households also have a disproportionate over-representation of people with one or more protected characteristics. In London, those at highest risk of living in deprived areas include young people, disabled people and people in black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups.
- 1.8.7 Working and earning a reasonable wage are a crucial part of many of our lives helping us to support our families and have a decent quality of life. Some residents face inequalities that limit their ability to find a job and make a decent living.
- 1.8.8 24.3% of Barnet's working age population is economically inactive. The rate for women (30.9%) is significantly higher than for men (19.2%). Both are higher than the respective rates for London at 24.6% for women and 15.9% for men. The rate of economic inactivity for residents with disabilities is 37.5%. The most common reasons given for economic inactivity are long-term sickness (32.5%) and looking after a family or home (19.3%). 79.7% do not want a job.
- 1.8.9 Working age economic inactivity varies significantly between ethnic groups in Barnet ranging from 11.6% for those identifying as Indian to 35.3% in the Black and Black British community.
- 1.8.10 Unemployment rates in Barnet are lowest for white residents not born in the UK (4.0%), followed by white UK born residents (4.7%) and residents from ethnic minorities born outside the UK (6.8%). The highest rate is for residents from ethnic minorities born in the UK (8.9%).
- 1.8.11 Across London, there is a difference in the earnings of white employees compared to those of other ethnicities. In 2019, the median hourly wage of black workers was 19% lower, followed by workers from other ethnic backgrounds (11%) and Asian workers (10%). The disability pay gap was 16.6%.
- 1.8.12 Children's health and education have a critical impact on their future life chances. Factors such as deprivation, living conditions and family lifestyles in the early years have a profound impact and can entrench inequalities later in life. There are significant disparities between the childhood experiences of different demographic groups.
- 1.8.13 Children who grow up in poverty are likely to suffer poorer education and health outcomes throughout their lives compared to children who do not. In Barnet, 11.9% of children live in relative poverty, significantly lower than the comparable rates for London (16.4%) and England (20.1%). 9.5% of children live in absolute poverty. Again, this is lower than comparable rates for London (13.1%) and England (15.3%). Whilst this is generally positive, there are pockets of higher deprivation in parts of the borough. Deprivation affecting children is highest in Burnt Oak (22.4%), Colindale (19.2%) and Golders Green (15.1%).
- 1.8.14 People's health is associated with their economic and social circumstances, the quality of housing and nearby outdoor environments. Differences in life expectancy between population groups is a marker of health inequalities and this is seen within Barnet. For example, the difference between people living in the most and least deprived areas of

the borough is 5.7 years for females and 6.7 years for males. This is why our neighbourhood approach to tackle health inequalities is crucial.

1.8.15 The circumstances in which people live influence the formation of healthy or unhealthy behaviours and therefore health inequalities. The prevalence of obesity, alcohol misuse or dependence and smoking differs across Barnet, with the highest prevalence of these behavioural risk factors observed in more deprived parts of the borough. In addition to people's circumstances and behaviours, access to healthcare also affects health and health inequalities in the borough.

1.8.16 The new Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will seek to improve outcomes for our residents by tackling the gaps between different communities. This will include developing a better understanding of the structural, place-based drivers of inequalities. We will also improve our understanding of our communities and residents' experiences to ensure services are fair, equitable and accessible to all. This includes developing a focus on intersectionality to understand how combinations of equality characteristics influence their experiences of the borough.

Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector

1.8.17 As a council we will enable people to help each other. Working in partnership with our voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector we are taking a community-led approach to setting out our next steps. Together, we want to continue to develop better ways of supporting our local economies.

- Working closely with Tackling Inequalities to ensure alignment of activities.
- Continuing work with our VCF community to encourage more residents to take up volunteer opportunities and build community resilience.
- Encourage and enable VCFSE to bid for council contracts and utilise our social impact fund to support community projects.
- Undertake a mapping exercise of VCFSE in Barnet to understand the current landscape.
- Undertake ongoing external engagement with our VCFSE community to capacity build and understand challenges in the community.

Family Friendly

1.8.18 To take a preventative approach to reducing poverty, we must start early. Families with children are still amongst the highest impacted by poverty, specifically lone parent families. Through the delivery of their Early Help Strategy 2023-27, our Early Help 0-19 services provide a great deal of support, as do our schools, children and care centres and libraries. Our Life Chances Strategy 2020/24 has outlined actions taken over the last 3 years, to ensure we continue work we will:

- Work closely with the Tackling Inequalities and Family Friendly themes to ensure alignment of activities.
- Ensure work introduced through the cost-of-living programme continues to reach our families.

- Barnet Education & Learning Services (BELS) ensures our action is taken to support our young people most at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET). Our Social Value and economic development actions will work towards ensuring local opportunities are available, specifically apprenticeships, however, funding for this programme is uncertain. We will work closely with this theme to continue this important work.

1.8.19 To maximise the benefits of the opportunities created through harnessing local spending power, we will prioritise supporting young people leaving care within our overall focus on supporting residents economically excluded. In Barnet we currently have 319 care leavers, most of our care leavers are aged between 18 - 20 years old (64%) with 16% aged 21 years old and 20% age 22 years or older. Our care leavers care about the cost of living crises, and have expressed concerns about their mental health, their finances and their housing.

1.8.20 To counter the challenges faced by care experienced young people Barnet has developed the life-long offer of support for care experienced young people embedded within our revised and updated Local Offer; young adults are contacted at 6-monthly intervals and reminded of this offer available to them.

1.8.21 We have 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. O&U has become an accredited ASDAN provider, and will be launching the first ASDAN module for independent living in April 2023.

Aging Well

1.8.22 Barnet has a high proportion of pension age residents. Pensioners are among the group more likely to be digitally excluded so providing support to access information and services will be crucial. We will work with this theme by:

- Work closely with Aging Well themes to ensure alignment of activities.
- Continued partnership with AgeUK, specifically with relation to increasing uptake of benefits such as pension credits.
- Working with adult's teams benefits and welfare advisors to ensure we are supporting our residents who are digitally excluded providing awareness of financial abuse and online scams.
- As part of the work CLES is doing we will be recruiting a community researcher in Brunswick Park where 2021 Census data highlighted there is the highest percentage of residents providing unpaid care to understand how barriers to employment could be broken down using Community Wealth Building approaches.
- Access to important health and wellbeing services, including preventative measures that protect physical and mental wellbeing.

Living Well

Addressing food poverty

1.8.23 The number of people accessing food banks in Barnet is on an upward trajectory. The number of food bank users in January, March and April 2023 was higher than the busiest

month of 2022 (no data available yet beyond April at the time of drafting this paper). Food bank staff and volunteers report seeing more residents in work relying on foodbanks.

- 1.8.24 As part of a community wealth building programme, we will work with the Barnet Food Steering Group, composed of a broad range of stakeholders in the local food system, to implement the Barnet Food Plan 2022-27. The vision of the food plan is that everyone in Barnet should have access to affordable, healthy food.

Supporting our disabled, deaf and hard of hearing residents

- 1.8.25 We are working across the council and with partners to understand more about the experience of disabled residents. We want to provide the right support and services, including creating more opportunities for disabled people to gain employment.
- 1.8.26 Boost have hired a Disability Employment Coordinator who is tasked with creating a network of employment services, direct assistance and raising awareness and brokering vacancies for our disabled, deaf and hard of hearing residents looking for employment opportunities.
- 1.8.27 Supporting our disabled, deaf and hard of hearing residents on accessing the benefits they are entitled to.

Borough of Fun

- 1.8.28 We will use our creative, sports and hospitality industries to bring life to our high streets and green spaces, bring people together. We will do this by:
- Working closely with Borough of Fun theme to ensure alignment of activities.
 - Promoting BACE holiday programme for children and young people provides engaging and healthy activities such as sports and games, arts and crafts and the performing arts.

Net Zero

- 1.8.29 Barnet will collaborate, create, and leverage opportunities to make the borough an attractive place for sustainable businesses and investments; upskilling our communities to take advantage of new green job opportunities and green technology.

Affordable Housing and Homelessness

- 1.8.30 Delivering the right homes to meet diverse needs now and for future generations, that people can afford and are in the right places, is a key priority and challenge for the council.
- 1.8.31 Barnet Homes is currently working with our Insight & Intelligence team to learn more and map homelessness in Barnet so we can understand demographics and who is most vulnerable to homelessness.
- 1.8.32 We are building more homes that people can afford, including 1,000 homes for rent at half market rates.
- 1.8.33 Recently cabinet have approved a Housing Strategy, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Tenancy Strategy which outlines actions taken to address this challenge.

Community Safety & Participation

1.8.34 Poverty and crime are closely interlinked and can leave people vulnerable to exploitation or result in turning to informal work.

- We will develop a modern slavery policy and strategy to be presented to cabinet in March 2024.

2. Alternative Options Considered and Not Recommended

2.1 Do nothing. Our communities and residents are still feeling the impact from the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis. Looking at this from a wider systems approach allows us to take a preventative approach to reducing poverty. If we do nothing, it is likely we will experience more demand on our support services.

3. Post Decision Implementation

3.1 A detailed action plan which includes details on activities and responsible officers can be accessed in Appendix 2.

4. Corporate Priorities, Performance and Other Considerations

Corporate Plan

4.1 This paper sets out initial steps to be taken by the council in line with its Reducing Poverty theme and Barnet Corporate Plan 2023-2026.

Corporate Performance / Outcome Measures

4.2 Key performance indicators have been set out in the action plan which can be accessed in Appendix 2.

Sustainability

4.3 The sustainable commercial strategy and updated social value policy reference initiatives that will work towards sustainability goals.

Corporate Parenting

4.4 As a corporate parent to all children in care and care leavers, the council must have regard to the need to act in the best interests and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those children and young people, help them gain access to and make the best use of services provided, promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for them, help ensure they are safe and have stability in their lives, and prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

Risk Management

4.5 This is a wide ranging and cross-cutting piece of work with different directorates and responsible officers leading on the actions. Each responsible officer will be expected to undertake their own risk management processes which will differ according to their area of focus. Responsible officers are highlighted in the action plan in Appendix 2.

Insight

4.6 Since the launch of our Barnet Plan, we have undertaken desktop research and internal engagement activities to understand what best practices are currently being done, can be amplified further, and where there might be gaps.

- 4.7 We conducted extensive research to understand the local landscape, and where possible, cross reference this data with internal data. While these findings have identified some clear actions that can be taken, as outlined in this paper, there is still some uncertainty on what the data is telling us. To address this, we will aim to utilise initiatives in the action plan to provide further insight on the local landscape.
- 4.8 We have used a wide range of resources and data to ensure we are getting a clear picture, references can be found in our background papers section, if you would like to view the scoping and findings report please contact the officer on details provided.
- 4.9 London has always experienced higher costs of living in comparison to other parts of the country, however following the pandemic, war in Ukraine and inflation 2022 saw a rise in people experiencing food and fuel poverty. The knock-on effect is still being felt throughout the economy. Food prices have remained high and issues like cost of housing is adding further burden across board. While the recession predicted has not yet come, the future remains uncertain as higher mortgage rates and rental prices are causing concerns for those beyond low income and workless households.
- 4.10 Since the pandemic we have been tracking numbers of residents using foodbanks and throughout 2022 we saw an average 20% compared to the year before with the last half seeing 42%. This trend has continued into 2023 with months from January to April 2023 experiencing a 52% rise in beneficiaries.
- 4.11 While Government interventions around energy support provided some relief to households, gas and electricity prices rose 36.2% and 17.3% in the year to June 2023 leaving many households still struggling to keep up with inflated energy bills. In their cost-of-living dashboard Citizens Advice has highlighted concerning trends including record number of people who have been unable to top-up their pre-payments and energy bill debt overtaking council arrears as the top debt concern people need help with.
- 4.12 ONS reinforces these findings with recent insight from its public opinion and social trends research highlighting that 51% of respondents are using less fuel, such as gas or electricity. While it is still unclear if there will be further support provided this winter long-term and sustainable solutions need to be identified and given those most impacted are already burdened by income and structural inequalities an intervention that targets these first would be an equitable approach to addressing this challenge.
- 4.13 We conducted three workshops, included 39 participants across: Finance, Strategy, Community Engagement, Public Health, Customer & Place, Children & Families, Barnet Group and Adults. This included a breakdown of 9 at Senior Management level, 22 at Manager / Lead level and 8 at officer level. These workshops identified a lot of good practices already taking place, highlighted areas of focus and identified the need for an agreed definition of poverty. Further insight from these workshops can be viewed in Appendix 3.
- 4.14 The research conducted by Centre for Local Economic Strategies, includes piloting a new community research programme, which will:
- Co-design a series of (maximum 5) questions to gain first hand insights about the challenges Barnet residents are facing.
 - Train 6 community researchers to undertake 20 interviews in a light touch consultation exercise each within selected wards to gain insights from a cross-section of Barnet's communities.

- Work with Art Against Knives to recruit two community researchers who are young people, providing easier access to young people to gain their views as part of this research.
- Insights will be used to complement the wealth flows research and generate a picture of the challenges Barnet's residents are facing to use in the Procurement Team workshops.
- The first-hand experience and insights generated by the community research will help to bring the Procurement Team on board by identifying challenges which could be addressed using community wealth building approaches.
- Researchers will be involved for a short period of time to co-design the research questions, gather the interviews and reconvene to discuss the findings of the research. If the council would like to continue this engagement beyond the duration of the project, we will work with Centre for Local Economic Strategies on how we can continue this programme.

Social Value

- 4.15 The updated social value policy outlines how we can extract benefits from our procured contracts and reinvest them into the community. The officers worked very closely throughout the development of this paper and the social value paper to ensure we are aligned on reducing poverty and tackling inequalities.

5. Resource Implications (Finance and Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT and Property)

- 5.1 We have engaged Centre for Local Economic Strategies to help inform the work we do and conduct research in this area. The cost of this contract is £33,350 and has received approval for Single Tender Action so the work can be undertaken alongside our Sustainable Commercial strategy.
- 5.2 Our economic development team will be crucial to ensuring local businesses and residents can benefit from a thriving local economy and living wage jobs. A great deal of this work will be funded through the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund, however a few of the programmes which fall outside of the fund requirements, such as our living wage and good work standards engagement projects will require further funding. We will also be looking to hire a Grade I officer who can work with our local businesses on these initiatives. Subject to the identification of an appropriate funding source, costs come to £82,014.

6. Legal Implications and Constitution References

- 6.1 Under the Council's Constitution, Part 2D the terms of reference states that Cabinet is responsible for the following functions:
- Development of proposals for the budget (including the capital and revenue budgets, the fixing of the Council Tax Base, and the level of Council Tax) and the financial strategy for the Council;
 - Monitoring the implementation of the budget and financial strategy;
 - Recommending major new policies (and amendments to existing policies) to the Council for approval as part of the Council's Policy Framework and implementing those approved by Council;
 - Approving policies that are not part of the policy framework;

- Management of the Council's Capital Programme.

7. Consultation

7.1 No consultation is required at this stage. We will continue to work with Barnet Together Alliance, our Strategic Partnerships Board, Public Health Network, and other anchor institutions and community organisation on an ongoing basis.

8. Equalities and Diversity

8.1 Equality and diversity issues are a mandatory consideration in the decision-making of the council.

8.2 Decision makers should have due regard to the public sector equality duty in making their decisions. The equalities duties are continuing duties they are not duties to secure a particular outcome. The equalities impact will be revisited on each of the proposals as they are developed. Consideration of the duties should precede the decision. It is important that Cabinet has regard to the statutory grounds in the light of all available material such as consultation responses. The statutory grounds of the public sector equality duty are found at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and are as follows:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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:

- a) Age
- b) Disability
- c) Gender reassignment
- d) Pregnancy and maternity
- e) Race
- f) Religion or belief
- g) Sex
- h) Sexual orientation
- i) Marriage and civil partnership

The council will conduct equalities impact assessments (EqIA) of the various projects in the action plan as appropriate. We will also use a coproduction principle to ensure the community is fully engaged on the deliverable actions we intend to take.

9. Background Papers

9.1 This paper references the following programmes and strategies:

[Barnet Plan 2023/26](#)

[Cost of living programme – September 2022](#)

[Boost 3-year plan](#)

[Early Help Strategy 2023-27](#)

[Life Chances Strategy 2020/24](#)

[Barnet Post 16 Options Prospectus Feb22.pdf](#)

[Housing Strategy Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Tenancy Strategy and Housing Allocation Sc.pdf \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

9.2 There was an extensive research and scoping phase undertaken to inform this approach, materials used include:

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN07096/SN07096.pdf>

[The English Indices of Deprivation](#)

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/minimum-income-standard-uk-2022>

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/our-work/what-is-poverty>

<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/ending-poverty>

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/measuringpoverty>

<https://journals.lwbooks.co.uk/renewal/vol-24-issue-2/article-8864/>

<https://www.pwc.co.uk/who-we-are/purpose/green-jobs-barometer-2022.pdf>

[London Learner Survey 2021/22 \(airdrive-secure.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com\)](#)

[Social Mobility Commission](#)

<https://www.cbi.org.uk/articles/skills-for-an-inclusive-economy-cbibrkbeck-education-and-skills-survey-2021/>

[The Sutton Trust](#)

[Business Case for Increasing Young and Diverse Apprenticeships FINAL.pdf \(londoncouncils.gov.uk\)](#)

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships>

[PSC-Framework-Report-230831-Web-FINAL-revised.pdf \(povertystrategycommission.org.uk\)](#)

[Degree apprenticeships | Middlesex University London \(mdx.ac.uk\)](#)

9.3 We drew from a range of different data sources which include:

[Nomis – Official Census and Labour Market Statistics](#)

<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/workers-on-zero-hours-contracts>

<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/earning-below-llw>

[ONS Subnational indicators explorer](#)

<https://data.london.gov.uk/economic-fairness/>

[Source: Barnet council food security dashboard](#)

[Cost of living insights - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

[Our new cost-of-living dashboard: the crisis we're seeing unfold | by Morgan Wild | We are Citizens Advice](#)

[Employment rates by disability \(2021\)](#)

[Economic inactivity by gender \(2022\)](#)

[Economic inactivity rate by broad ethnic group](#)

[Unemployment rate by ethnic group and nationality](#)

[Ethnicity pay gaps in London \(2020\)](#)

[Disability pay gaps in London \(2020\)](#)

[Children in low income families \(2022\)](#)



Sustainable Commercial Strategy

December 2022

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1 Strategic Objectives

1.1 Delivering a new Sustainable Commercial Strategy

1.1.1 The London Borough of Barnet (LBB), like many other local authorities, is facing a series of challenges as it works towards delivering both recent commitments made to residents and the key priorities within the Corporate Plan.

This is within the context of the Council's developing corporate vision, putting caring for people, our places and the planet as part of the vision of the new Corporate Plan. Implementing the Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Plan is now a priority for the Council. The Commercial Team will have a pivotal role to play in supporting the Council achieve its target of being a Net Zero organisation by 2030 and Barnet as a place, to achieve this by 2042. Supporting and developing the supply chain to provide products and services which increase sustainability and embedding sustainability within the commercial lifecycle will be key drivers of the Commercial Team.

1.1.2 Economic pressures, across all markets means that LBB must realise operational efficiencies and manage supply chain performance to deliver:

- Innovation
- Cashable & cost avoidance savings
- Sustainable commercial activity that considers environmental and social factors in decision making
- Improved commercial performance through continuous improvement

1.1.3 Increased cost pressures through **rising inflation, the levelling up agenda, climate change emergency** and continued **funding pressures**, will require highly proactive and strong Commercial Team to meet these challenges. The Commercial Team at LBB must now move into a more pivotal role to become a key business partner, both internally and externally, to a **proactive, influential, and high performing team**. This will be through early and continued engagement with the supply chain markets and fully supporting the commissioning cycle. By doing this, the Team will put residents and local communities at the heart of decision making by creating economic, environmental and social value in everything it does.

1.1.4 Achieving these objectives and priorities is not only about taking specific actions but seizing the opportunity to step back and adopt a different strategic vision for a Commercial Team.

1.1.5 A new Sustainable Commercial Strategy will enable services to realise this vision, drive longer term initiatives and behavioural change that will deliver sustainable improvements in services to the residents of Barnet.

2 Benefits

Barnet is transforming the way in which it will deliver commercial activities, focusing on improving the lives of residents, the place and the planet

2.1 Building a strong Commercial Team

2.1.1 A structured approach to building and delivering a highly effective Commercial Team within LBB will have significant benefits to the whole organisation. Through collaborative working relationships and utilising data and insights, the Team will make better decisions and drive improved outcomes, resulting in improved services for residents and communities across the borough.

2.1.2 **Adding Value:** LBB will benefit from a Team that delivers procurement activities to a high level but also providing its internal customers a strategically led service covering the full commercial lifecycle, working closely with stakeholders to plan, challenge traditional service requirements.

- 2.1.3 **Improved Relationships:** The Team will be proactive in its communication with key customers and stakeholders understanding the wider LBB priorities and demands facing the service areas. This will enhance knowledge and build trust, driving mutually beneficial relationships which are honest and open, working together to improve outcomes.
- 2.1.4 **Working closely with the Supply Market:** Improving how LBB interacts with the supply market through improved market engagement will support improved planning, understanding trends, future capacity and how local providers can help to shape and support internal strategic plans. As planning and pipeline development becomes structured, this external engagement will support market testing; how the market will support changes in legislation and give visibility of available supply chains. This will also include how local community organisations can be well placed to provide future services in partnerships and collaborations.
- 2.1.5 **Utilising the right tools to drive better decision making:** The Commercial Team will use digital tools and automate processes to capture and effectively use sources of information for the benefit of its internal customers and the management of its external suppliers. This will support the Team to be a more effective, efficient and dynamic to ensure improved procurement outcomes. This will also positively impact how suppliers and contracts are managed, with improved quality and visibility of performance information. Improved tools and information will also assist how risks are managed, particularly in a more volatile supply environment, together with tracking and reporting internal governance and controls.

2.2 Service offering and the benefits to ensure the strategic plan is delivered

Table 1: Service offering and benefits

Service Offering	Benefit
Successfully integrate Sustainability goals and objectives, including the SV Toolkit and Sustainability Decision Making Wheel into commercial lifecycle decision making, track and monitor progress and implementation impact on goals and objectives	Support the delivery of the Council's Sustainability goals and manifesto promises
Deliver strategically important procurement activity, that maximises value for money	Maximise budgets and deliver better outcomes and services for residents of the borough through cashable savings and cost avoidance opportunities
Be seen as a centre of excellence to internal stakeholder in supporting across the commercial lifecycle	Drive value for service users and positively impact commercial outcomes, providing support and guidance where needed
Provide a forum through a new Commercial Board to robustly review and approve future procurement and contracting activity	Oversight of all commercial activities to enable the Council to deliver strategic priorities, within the context of Council controls
Provide the right tools, guidance and documentation to internal stakeholders to ensure they can deliver efficiently and effectively commercial activities within their service areas	Provide clarity to service users, making commercial activities simpler to carry out, improving confidence and commercial skills within the Council
Deliver a service that is proactive, consistently applied, efficient and proportionately applied, which reduces time and bureaucracy	

3 Background

The Sustainable Commercial Strategy will put sustainability at the heart of decision-making with the newly established Team provide a leading role

3.1 Overview and context

- 3.1.1 There is a need for a strategy that sets out the direction of the Commercial Team, and how it will meet the future needs and challenges of the Council in the years ahead.

- 3.1.2 The Commercial Team will be at the heart of the organisation driving the delivery of the commercial lifecycle whilst providing support and guidance to the service teams. Where service teams carry out commercial activities, (within spend thresholds and based on levels of complexity and impact), they will receive the necessary tools, guidance and information to do this efficiently with reduced bureaucracy. Larger strategic procurement activity will be managed by the Commercial Team, working closely with key internal stakeholders in a collaborative way to deliver the best outcome within the desired timescales.
- 3.1.3 A new Commercial Team operating model will be in place by April 2023, where a fully resourced team and structure will be supporting the Council to achieve the wider strategic direction and election manifesto commitments. The final structure and roles will be part of a further update.

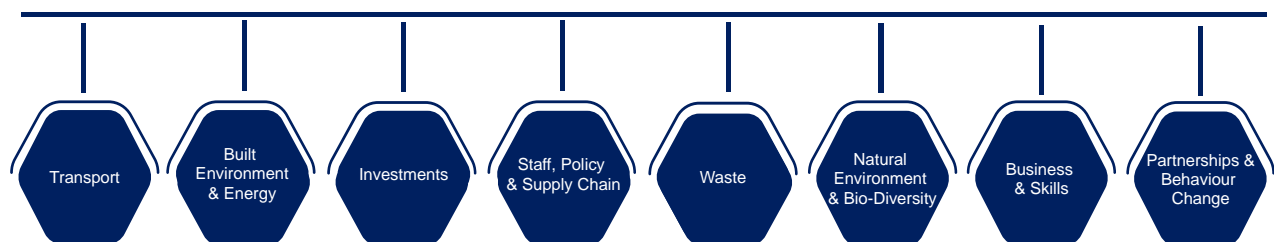
4 Supporting Barnet’s Social, Economic and Environmental priorities

How Commercial supports the Council’s ambition to be one of the most sustainable boroughs in London

4.1 Embedding sustainability into all commercial activity

- 4.1.1 The Commercial Team will support this ambition to promote activities through the full commercial lifecycle, which achieves value for money but in the context of the how value is determined. This will be through benefits to the borough, the local economy, residents’ quality of lives and minimising the impact of decision making on the environment.
- 4.1.2 The Commercial Team will create opportunities to make Barnet an attractive place for business and investments that support the Council’s vision. The Commercial Team and stakeholders will work with the supply chain to monitor current and future market trends, potential suppliers and legislation to improve sustainable choices and decision making to make a positive impact in supporting the objectives of LBB.
- 4.1.3 Sustainability goals will be integrated into the procurement and decision-making processes from the Sustainability Framework and the identification of key themes which will be the focus of achieving the Council’s sustainability goals.

Figure 1: Sustainability Framework Key Themes



- 4.1.4 As part of the structured approach to procurement activities, sustainability will be at the heart of planning and pipeline development; implementing a strong and consistent governance process which will reflect existing national policy legislation and recent Government priorities such as the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012, Modern Slavery Act 2015 and UK Climate Change Act 2008.
- 4.1.5 The Commercial Team will support delivery of the LBB Sustainability Action Plan, demonstrating how activities, decision-making, and outcomes are contributing to the Sustainability Strategic Framework.

- 4.1.6 The Commercial Team will work with service leads and internal stakeholders to:
- Review the need: Do the goods/services need to be procured or can it be delivered in another way?
 - Consider the impact of the activity, quantity and requirements: If the procurement is necessary, how can the specification focus on the relevant social, economic and environmental outcomes?
 - Consider and manage risks (with mitigations) and opportunities: When procuring products or services, what are the impacts throughout the lifecycle, consider alternative routes of supply procurement decision making?

4.1.7 An example of sustainable decision-making:

Figure 2: Sustainable decision-making process



4.1.8 Sustainability will be embedded into the business planning process and where high impact and strategically important procurement activity has been identified, a member of the Sustainability Team will be a key partner and support the delivery of the project. Links will also be made to the MTFS (Medium Term Financial Strategy) contributing to financial sustainability.

4.2 Social Value

- 4.2.1 LBB would like all suppliers and partners who provide services to support and contribute to the Council's values and aspirations to be a more social, economic and sustainable borough. As part of the legal duty within the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, LBB already considers the social benefits of procurement activity which is set out within the council's Social Value Policy and toolkit.
- 4.2.2 To support the Social Value Policy, the Commercial Team will continue to utilise the existing Social Value Toolkit, giving guidance and information to service leads and teams as to how to apply the Social Value themes, outcomes and measures (TOMs) throughout the commissioning and commercial lifecycles. This will provide a consistent understanding and approach to Social Value, with supporting training (with external expertise) where required to fully understand the impacts of Social Value and how this links to the wider tracking and reporting within the Council. This toolkit will be reviewed and updated where required to ensure its consistency with wider corporate goals.
- 4.2.3 Refreshed and relevant guidance documentation will also be available to potential suppliers and partners in how they demonstrate their Social Value to the Council as part of a tender or proposal response. This will include user-friendly working examples of the TOMs and sources of information outlining what the benefits are to them, the Council and the wider borough community. This will be clear and accessible information to also encourage local SMEs and VCSEs to participate in procurement opportunities.
- 4.2.4 The Commercial Team will be working closely with the Social Value / Community Investment team to ensure joined up working within the early planning of procurement activity and contract management (with service teams) to fully realise the Social Value benefits of contracting models and opportunities for suppliers including SMEs and VCSEs.
- 4.2.5 As part of the implementation of the Procurement Bill (in 2023) and the change of procurement evaluation methodology to Most Advantageous Tender, the Commercial Team will implement new legislation allowing the Council greater emphasis on Social Value and sustainability objectives.

4.3 Ethical Procurement Practices

- 4.3.1 The Commercial Team will work proactively with its supply chain, contractors and partners to set out wider ethical procurement practices, as part of procurement and contract management activity. This will communicate the high ethical standards and code of conduct required by external partners as to how it conducts business. It will complement existing policy documents promoting fair and equal opportunities.
- 4.3.2 LBB is committed to high standards in its procurement practices and therefore an Ethical Procurement Policy will outline and define ethical standards, practices and requirements which will cover the following areas:
- Financial: fraud, taxation & compliance, bribery, corruption, conflict of interest
 - Employment: Modern Slavery, employment rights, working hours, minimum wage, H&S, child labour, training, working conditions, access to employment support etc
 - Equality in the workplace: sex, age, disability, gender
 - Environmental: sustainability through the supply chain and key partners
 - SMEs and local organisations: using legislation and the new Procurement Bill, providing access and opportunities locally
- 4.3.3 Clear objectives within procurement documentation (such as pre-qualification) will set out proportionate expectations and minimum standards for suppliers to self-declare, where appropriate (then validated) before entering into contractual arrangements with LBB. This will be tracked as part of ongoing contract management activity.

5 Delivering the new service

New and enhanced service offering to internal teams to unlock opportunities, deliver value and improve outcomes for residents, the borough, and the environment

- 5.1.1 Summary of the service offering, how and when these will be delivered (targeted KPIs will be published to demonstrate and progress the success criteria of the Commercial Team)

Table 2: Strategic Delivery Milestones

Strategic Delivery	Milestone Delivery Date
Establish Commercial Board as governance vehicle for relevant commercial activities with supporting revised ToR	January 2023
Review of strategic contracts to develop appropriate negotiation strategies (where relevant) to alleviate proposed inflationary cost increases from suppliers, consolidation opportunities and specification reviews	
Develop and finalise Commercial Team Target Operating Model and structure	Feb 2023
Establish/Review Commercial Team key documentation: Procurement policy, Contract Management policy, Risk Register, PID	
Develop and issue a Technology Roadmap for the Commercial Team, setting our key deliverables and actions	March 2023
Integrate Forward Planning to proactive pipeline management setting up regular review points to plan commercial activities, resourcing, and priorities	
Establish procurement activity input to Sustainability Action Plan and associated process to assign relevant Sustainability support during activity	
Identify, review & (re)issue of all procurement guidance and supporting toolkits for service users with roadshows & training sessions to drive usage and understanding	

6 Business Planning

Improved planning outputs with increased visibility and oversight to build effective pipelines of activity

6.1 Increasing visibility of commercial activity and decision making

- 6.1.1 The Commercial Team will work to increase visibility of planned procurements by linking activities to the Council’s strategic objectives and business planning process and will demonstrate that the activity contributes to achieving these objectives during regular pipeline reviews every 3-6 months.
- 6.1.2 Where strategically important activities are planned (regardless of value), they will form a future outlook which is shared with both senior management and the relevant Members.
- 6.1.3 This will promote greater visibility and improve confidence that planned activity is carefully considered from the outset and the rationale supporting each activity meets the overall Council’s strategic objectives with the associated benefit analysis.

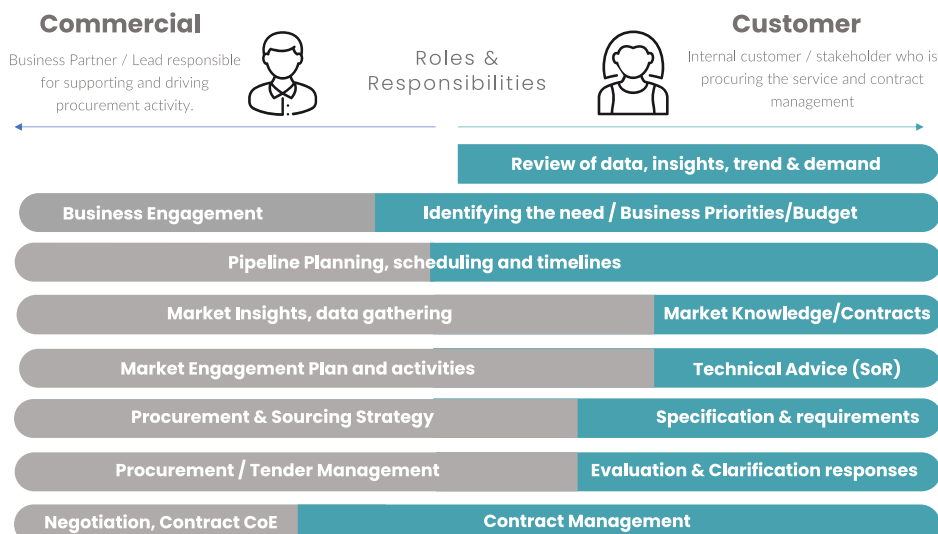
7 Commissioning Objectives

Supporting commissioning objectives with efficiency in an environment of increased demand and decreasing resources

7.1 The Commercial Team will provide a business partnering model to its internal customers

- 7.1.1 The Team will actively support service leads in **understanding market dynamics** and matching service delivery requirements with the supply chain through market management and engagement activities, from the outset of business planning. This will support horizon scanning and early detection of trends and best practice in the marketplace.
- 7.1.2 There will be **clear accountabilities and roles** defined to encourage joint working and support, agreed project deliverables, timelines and outputs to provide clarity and principles to what success looks like, to achieve better outcomes.

Figure 3: Example roles & responsibilities Commercial and Stakeholder



- 7.1.3 **Proactive and joint working** with service leads of services will enable better ways of working both internally within LBB and externally with the market, service providers, local organisations and partnership opportunities through:
- Understanding needs and challenge priorities
 - Promoting sustainable and responsible procurement
 - Developing and shaping a strong supply market
 - Challenging existing service models
 - Undertaking timely procurement activity using the forward planning process
- 7.1.4 **Efficient and effective procurement** will achieve better outcomes and improved value for money. The Commercial Team will support innovation, routes to market and solutions that promote innovative procurement practices and commissioning objectives. They will consider opportunities to develop projects that can generate income for LBB and positively contribute to delivering value for money and efficiencies through the procurement of excellent and cost-effective services.
- 7.1.5 The Commercial Team will positively contribute and support service leads to **drive value for money and maximise operational efficiencies through the life of contracts** through improved tools, resources and robust commercial expertise, including training and guidance. This will improve contract management skills and outcomes throughout LBB.
- 7.1.6 The Commercial Team will support service leads to **affect change**, presenting wide ranging ways and creative options about how compliant procurement activities can be completed effectively and efficiently. These will be presented with associated levels of risk, benefits and outcomes so that informed decisions and judgements can be made.

8 Commercial Capability and Organisational Structure

Providing high quality skills to stakeholders that is proactive, adds value, and drives innovation

8.1 Commercial expertise and support using a Hub & Spoke model

- 8.1.1 This approach facilitates communication and collaboration, with the Commercial Team developing and leading on the Council's commercial strategies, processes and policies.
- 8.1.2 The team's role is to demonstrably deliver value-added solutions for the Council working diligently across the commissioning lifecycle. The team will ensure the professional management of tenders, efficient handover to contract management, and supporting contract managers to deliver value providing tools and techniques to enhance skills and consistency of application across the organisation.
- 8.1.3 Local service teams will be expected to undertake routine, low risk procurement activity (to be determined by engagement with the Commercial team and decision-making criteria) using templates and processes provided by the Commercial Team and in accordance with the Council's Procurement Rules set out in the Contract Procedure Rules (CPR).
- 8.1.4 The team will ensure that all relevant Public Procurement Notices (PPNs) are reviewed and implemented fully and adhere to the wider transparency obligations of public sector contracting authorities.
- 8.1.5 Changes under the new Procurement Bill (expected into law in 2023) will be implemented within the transition period allowed as the new legal framework.

- 8.1.6 Professional development and retention of the Commercial Team is vital to its success, specifically within the context of the impact the team and individuals can make to the wider organisation. Using best practice commercial standards to improve performance and demonstrate a clear career path will ensure the support and advice given will be of a consistently high standard.
- 8.1.7 The Commercial Team will adopt the following attributes to fully support the needs of the Council:

Figure 4: Commercial Attributes



9 Governance, Assurance and Approvals

Providing confidence to all stakeholders and suppliers that a robust, fair, and managed process is undertaken which promotes transparency

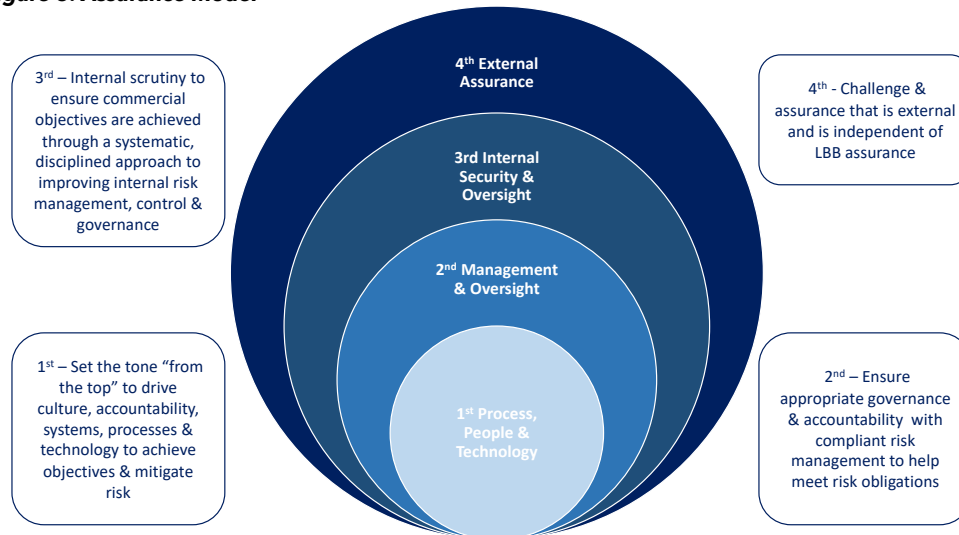
9.1 The governance and assurance approach

- 9.1.1 Through the Commissioning Lifecycle the Council has very clear approval gates and peer reviews to ensure that robust challenge happens, and that all public money has a clear and thorough audit of decision making. At the heart of the approval process is the ability for the expenditure proposed to deliver the Sustainability and Net Zero commitments.
- 9.1.2 The Commercial Board will be the forum to review and approve strategic procurement activity from the forward plan and new activities required outside of this process. The Terms of Reference will set out the role of the Commercial Board, frequency of meetings and the decision-making process. This will allow greater insight to planned activity, rationale and a value for money approach, with the oversight of the relevant Procurement Strategy outlining procurement objectives and how they are aligned to the Council's wider strategic objectives.
- 9.1.3 The Commercial Board will also review and approve at the Contract Award stage, to give confidence before entering into external contractual arrangements, that the procurement outcome and proposed contract will meet the needs of the service team and residents through the delivery of the strategy.

9.2 Assurance

- 9.2.1 The Authority will embed a 4 lines of defence model in line with the Authorities assurance framework. Specific focus from a Commercial perspective is as follows:

Figure 5: Assurance Model



10 Contract and Supplier Relationship Management

Introducing best in class contract management that is effective and efficient across the Supply Chain

10.1 Driving savings

- 10.1.1 In light of inflationary pressures, all strategic contracts clauses will be reviewed, and associated negotiation strategies will be planned to respond to any supplier cost increases. Through contract management discussions, inflation will be explored as to its relevance together with options for specification changes and operational efficiencies which could impact price.
- 10.1.2 There will be a focus on planned cashable savings activities (and reporting) together with cost avoidance savings as part of contract management activities.

10.2 Managing contracts in a structured and planned way

- 10.2.1 LBB has the responsibility to manage contracts, drive collaboration and integration across the supply chain and it is critical that proportionate and effective contract management is applied consistently throughout the lifetime of the contract.
- 10.2.2 The Commercial Team will develop and implement a single, common framework approach to contract management. This will be shared with all relevant contract managers to provide consistency in approach and improve skills.
- 10.2.3 Service teams will be the responsible for managing their own contracts, the Commercial Team’s role will be to provide a Centre of Excellence, this includes training, guidance materials, appropriate toolkits and documentation to aid in the management of contracts. Commercial will support service teams with additional resource and practical interventions such as complex contractual negotiations or escalations where required. In addition, the team will identify a number of Strategic Contracts to the Council, which it will lead on in the roll out of a Strategic Supplier Relationship Management capability.

- 10.2.4 The Contract Management Professional Standards as set out by the Government Commercial Team (GCF) outline the core capabilities required for the successful management of third-party contracts in the Public Sector. These standards will be used proportionally as the basis of training and development to support contract management activity, where relevant within LBB
- 10.2.5 The benefits of raising capability of individuals managing contracts or suppliers through learning, development and formal accreditation are that LBB can achieve:
- **Greater efficiency** by having confident individuals in place to manage risk and complexity
 - **Better value** through informed and timelier contract management decision-making
 - **Quality services** and satisfied service users
- 10.2.6 Through the contract award process and subsequent contract management, the Council will embed mechanisms to constantly review the scope of delivery and the outcomes to ensure the Council is flexible and agile to meet the changing needs of its residents and service groups.
- 10.2.7 The visibility, performance monitoring and tracking of the Council's contracts will be improved as part of the overall monitoring and risk reporting of suppliers and contract management, in particular, the Council's most critical external supply relationships.

11 Technology

Use tools to transform and support decision-making, enhance supply chain and performance visibility

11.1 Improving ways of working and improve visibility of performance.

- 11.1.1 Accelerating the use of digital procurement tools will support efficient commercial activity, processes and outcomes together with improved visibility of contractual performance and delivery. A Technology Roadmap will be developed to underpin the team activities and drive effective performance.
- 11.1.2 The Commercial Team will look at how automation can improve internal processes and positively impact visibility and agility within the team. We will remove duplication of data throughout the process and rely on systems to hold relevant data in the most efficient manner. The sharing of more reliable, accessible information across the Council will ensure that better, informed decisions are made.
- 11.1.3 The use of e-catalogues and technology solutions to support low value spend across the Council will be implemented, reducing handling costs and providing better value for money and automation for commodity purchases.

Figure 6: How the right tools will create Commercial Value



12 Supporting the Borough’s business community

Commercial activity will promote new business models, community organisations and local businesses to help deliver requirements

12.1 Positive engagement and building local capacity

- 12.1.1 The Commercial Team will ensure the right balance of collaboration with the local business community in the borough through procurement activity, actively promoting opportunities (using relevant procurement legislation), local events and engagement; all supporting the local economy.
- 12.1.2 They will work closely with local businesses by holding supplier events with service leads to further understand the local supplier market and what they can do to support the Council, so that a local network of suppliers be developed. By sharing insight and information with suppliers, they too will understand the local needs so that they can support the wider community.
- 12.1.3 By engaging with larger suppliers in Barnet they will introduce them to the local networks in order that they can build skills pipelines and local supply chains where possible, therefore building local opportunities.
- 12.1.4 The Commercial Team will ensure the Council’s procurement toolkit promotes and supports the local supply chain through providing social value, sustainability and achieving net zero in Barnet by 2042 or earlier. Through the implementation of the Procurement Bill (in 2023) and subsequent legislation (via amendments of the Local Government Act 1988) the Commercial Team will embed ring-fencing low value applicable procurement opportunities to SMEs and VCSEs within the locality, promoting economic and social benefits to the local borough economy.
- 12.1.5 The Commercial Team will also support the Council by working with local businesses, Middlesex University, Barnet and Southgate College and others, to build supply chains and partnerships to develop the skills needed to support the green economy.

- 12.1.6 It is important that SMEs find it easy to come together as consortia and bid for opportunities at the Council and that systems, payments and communication all support SMEs to participate with the use of proportionality and clear guidance. The Commercial Team will review the Federation of Small Business (FSB) direction to take key steps to encourage and support local business engagement to help to deliver for local communities and drive economic, social and sustainable benefits¹.
- 12.1.7 Opportunities and supporting tender documentation will be clear, concise and user-friendly to encourage SMEs and VCSEs to prepare tender responses. Focussed service specifications will enable participants to respond to service and sustainability requirements.

13 Risk & Issues

Understanding and being aware of risks, ensuring they managed at the right level to benefit the delivery of commercial activities

13.1 Proactive risk identification and management

- 13.1.1 Allocation and management of risk is key to all LBB commercial activity, with a proportionate, pragmatic approach to initial risk identification. Assessment will be carried out periodically as circumstances change during the commercial lifecycle, specific procurement activity and the life of relevant, strategically important contracts.
- 13.1.2 A Commercial Risks & Issues log will be utilised to identify and categorise risks within the commercial lifecycle. This will be shared where appropriate as part of wider LBB risk reporting.
- 13.1.3 A risk allocation matrix will be developed to shape the approach to risk allocation as recommended by the HMG GCF Green Book², the Construction Playbook³ and the Sourcing Playbook.⁴

¹ [FSB Developing Local Supply Chains](#)

² [GCF Risk Allocation & Pricing Approaches May 21](#)

³ [The Construction Playbook](#)

⁴ [The Sourcing Playbook](#)

Directorate	Services	Responsible officer	Project/workstream	Reducing poverty link/objective	Status	Delivery time frames	Next step(s)	Targets/KPIs (where known)
Commercial	Procurement	Tim Campbell	Sustainable Commercial Strategy	Inline with our Social Value Policy update we will utilise our procurement to enable local opportunities	In delivery	Medium-term	Implement the delivery plan	In line with SV
Economic Development	Business engagement	Oli Pinch	Construction supply chain support	To ensure investment in the borough is retained locally by boosting Barnet's construction supplier capacity and connecting them with building and property contract	In delivery	Short term (Apr 2022 to Mar 2024)	Assess performance ahead of renewal	100 businesses supported
Economic Development	Business engagement	Oli Pinch	West Hendon business support	To equip business owners with new skills (e.g., digital) and opportunities to promote their business and town centre (e.g., voucher scheme, biz assoc)	In delivery	Short term (May 2023 to Apr 2024)	Monitor performance against KPIs, launch marketing voucher scheme	70 businesses supported
Economic Development	Business engagement	Oli Pinch	Digital support for town centre businesses	To improve the skills and digital presence of up to 150 businesses across three town centres, helping them grow and generate new jobs	In delivery	Short term (Nov 2023 to Jul 2024)	Run procurement and appoint partner	150 businesses
Economic Development	Business engagement	Oli Pinch	Shop local campaigns and newsletters	Bi-annual campaigns to encourage people to spend locally and support their high street businesses	In delivery	Ongoing	Design and deliver Winter campaign	TBC
Economic Development	Business engagement	Oli Pinch	Start-up school	To give residents skills, knowledge and confidence to start-up their own business and/or become more entrepreneurial, creating new jobs	In delivery	Short term (Sep 2022 to Aug 2023)	Assess performance against KPIs ahead of renewal discussion	50-100 residents
Economic Development	Business engagement	Oli Pinch	London Living Wage business engagement and comms	To educate and encourage businesses to become LLW accredited to help reduce in-work poverty.	In development	Short to medium term	Meet Living Wage Foundation to design engagement plan	March 2023 baseline is 35, targets to be agreed
Economic Development	Business engagement	Oli Pinch	Business engagement on 'good work standards'	To educate and encourage businesses to adopt the GLA's Good Work Standards and accreditation to reduce in-work poverty and promote CWB	In development	Short to medium term	Convene internal working group to define scope and objectives	TBC (ask GLA for baseline data)
Economic Development	Business engagement	Oli Pinch	Town team/business association grants & support	To empower local groups to design and deliver business support in their town centres to support business growth and encourage local spend	In development	Short term	Set up grant criteria and recruit consultant	5 grants awarded, 75 businesses supported across five town centres
Economic Development	Business engagement	Oli Pinch	Empty shops/vacant town centre spaces	To reduce the number of empty units in our town centres by introducing new amenities that benefit the local economy and generate new job and skills opportunities	In development	Medium to long term	Convene a cross-service working group to define scope of project	TBC
Economic Development	Employment & Skills	John Bryson	BOOST Employment Support and Wraparound Services	To provide an accessible employment support service including the provision of employability skills and job brokerage; plus support with finance and debt, mental health, legal advice and benefits advice for unemployed and working people on low incomes	In delivery	Current 3 year plan April 2023 to March 2026	Continue to deliver the plan which includes specialist provision for refugees, people with disabilities and working people struggling with cost of living. Quality Development of service featuring this year 2023/24	800 engaged, 350 job starts, 280 jobs sustained for 3 months
Economic Development	Employment & Skills	John Bryson	SPD Refresh	Work with Planning to rewrite the Employment and Skills SPD Local Plan for inclusion in the wider Local Plan to maximise opportunities for employment and apprenticeships from development	In delivery	In progress since 2022 with expected publication in spring 2024	Continue to work with Planning towards approval for the new E&S SPD. Collaborate with WLA boroughs towards closer alignment.	Publication by June 2024
Economic Development	Employment & Skills	John Bryson	Access to apprenticeships	Work with Barnet Homes, L&D, developers and other stakeholders to offer apprenticeship opportunities to residents at all levels in multiple sectors	In delivery	Ongoing	Support Barnet Homes Apprenticeship Programme, improve construction brokerage provided by provider partners, work with developers to offer accessible apprenticeships with appropriate lead in times, encourage L&D to offer more apprenticeships in LBB for residents coming into the council	Barnet Homes only - 10 apprenticeships / Developers have individual apprenticeship targets for each site
Economic Development	Employment & Skills	John Bryson	Maximising opportunities from growth sectors	Focus on growth employment sectors including creative industries, health and social care, construction and green skills etc and engage with employers to provide entry routes to employment and skills for residents	In delivery	Ongoing	Continue to work with employers, providers and key stakeholders to develop accessible routes into growth sectors concentrating in 2023/24 on Film and TV, Construction and Green Skills and Health and Social Care	No target
Economic Development	Employment & Skills	John Bryson	Digital Inclusion	Delivery the Digital Inclusion Programme via BOOST to offer accessible skills training and access to equipment and devices	In delivery	Part of BOOST 3 year plan April 2023 to March 2026	Continue to develop and deliver the BOOST Digital Inclusion offer and Libraries service including the collection and distribution of refurbished devices, skills training and support from broadband provider to increase connectivity	No target but increase in venues for delivery
Economic Development	Employment & Skills	John Bryson	Youth Employment and Skills Initiatives	Work with and support BELS to deliver programmes to engage young people with the most barriers to employment, education or training and move them on to positive outcomes	In delivery	Recommissioned year on year, currently funded to March 2024	Continue to support and monitor performance of Care Leavers and Supported Internships programmes and for 2023/24 continue to support, monitor and fund RONI programme.	RONI - 350 engaged, 25 apprenticeships, 34 jobs / Care Leavers - 120 engaged, 20 apprenticeships, 40 jobs / Supported Internships - 25 engaged, 5 apprenticeships, 10 jobs: All programmes have additional targets
Finance	Revenues & Benefits	Darren Smith	Reviewing Residents Support Fund policy	Understand impact of the fund to supporting residents	To be developed	Short-term	Use data to understand impact, to go to committee Jan 2024	TBA
Finance	Revenues & Benefits	Allan Clark	Reviewing the Council Tax Support scheme	Updating the council tax support scheme will provide support to residents who are in crisis or experience financial vulnerabilities	To be approved	Short term	To conduct public consultation and go to cabinet before end of 2023/24	TBA
Finance	Revenues & Benefits (FRT)	Darren Smith	Community Outreach	Planning and delivery of drop-in sessions across Barnet venues to support residents accessing the calculator and online application form and helping to apply for wider support along with general CoL advice and support. Working in collaboration with CAB, Age UK Barnet, Boost, Barnet Homes and other LBB services.	In development	Short term to launch (Oct 23) with review on long term commitment	1. Finalise Tupe to LBB contracts. 2. Collaborate with partners on venues and dates. 3. Risk assessments 4. Comms approach	TBA
Finance	Revenues & Benefits (FRT)	Darren Smith	Community Outreach	Benefit Take-Up Campaigns including Pension Credit, Universal Credit and disability benefits.	In development	Short term (Oct 23 to March 24 initially)	1. Finalise the reversal of existing benefit caseload to identify potential UC and PC. 2. Develop tailored letters and Telsolutions campaigns. 3. Establish venues and dates to hold drop-in sessions at CAB and Age UK initially. 4. Create comms ahead of launch (including utilising Age and CAB comms and networks).	TBA

Finance	Revenues & Benefits (FRT Darren Smith)	Community Outreach	Working with key services and programmes, including the RX Front Door Programme to deliver in person support across a range of services, ensuring programmes align and support one another.	In development	Short Term (Oct 23 to Mar 24)	Ensure programmes align and establish practicalities of delivering in person support, in particular RX Front Door vision of Tier 1 and Tier 2 support.	TBA	
Finance	Revenues & Benefits (FRT Darren Smith)	Community Outreach	Continuing a current pilot outreach project within local community setting: Colindale Community Trust	In delivery	Short Term (initially funded between Aug 23 and Dec 23). To be reviewed thereafter based on outcomes.	Continued meetings between welfare team and CCT along with analysis of outcomes and impact.	TBA	
Finance	Revenues & Benefits (FRT Darren Smith)	Software & Infrastructure	Continued development and improvement of software, linking all software with LBB's Data Lake and continuing to reduce manual intervention of system processing..	In delivery	Oct 22 to Mar 24	All software now developed ad launched. Continuoos imporvement process has now begun based on outcomes	TBA	
Finance	Revenues & Benefits (FRT Darren Smith)	Software & Infrastructure	Investigate Know Your Customer (KYC) data and it's potential benefits to help identify pensioners in the borough and enable matching against household records on Council Tax Single Person Discounts.	In Scoping	Nov 23 to Mar 24	Review, liaise with IMT and legal	TBA	
Strategy & Communications	Community engagement	Lwazi Ngubane	TOMs and weighting systems.	Developed a set of Themes, Outcome and Measures (TOMs) that are aligned with Our Plan for Barnet, and a weighting system that encourages suppliers to commit to our high priority objectives such as reducing poverty and community wealth building. Employment outcomes have the highest weighting in the TOMs.	To be approved	Short term	Social Value Policy needs to be approved by CMT, go through clearance and then Cabinet.	TBA
Strategy & Communications	Community engagement	Lwazi Ngubane	A minimum of one employment outcome for every million a contract is valued at	Employment has been identified as a key solution to reducing poverty, in particular if individuals are paid at a London Living Wage or above, therefore this requirement will	To be approved	Short term	Social Value Policy needs to be approved by CMT, go through clearance and then Cabinet.	TBA
Strategy & Communications	Community engagement	Lwazi Ngubane	Local person	When a supplier commits to hiring a local person, they are committing to recruiting a person that lives in a Barnet postcode.	To be approved	Short term	Social Value Policy needs to be approved by CMT, go through clearance and then Cabinet.	TBA
Strategy & Communications	Community engagement	Lwazi Ngubane	TOMs aiming to support local businesses	we have designed TOMs that support local business to gain procurement and learning opportunities from businesses in our supply chain.	To be approved	Short term	Social Value Policy needs to be approved by CMT, go through clearance and then Cabinet.	TBA
Strategy & Communications	Community engagement	Lwazi Ngubane	New SV Policy will allow financial or in-kind material contributions, but as long as they do	Financial and material contributions will provide much needed funding to VCSFES and support them to maintain their assets. The 10% cap will ensure smaller businesses have	To be approved	Short term	Social Value Policy needs to be approved by CMT, go through clearance and then Cabinet.	TBA
Strategy & Communications	Community engagement	Lwazi Ngubane	VCFSEs will be involved in decision making	The SV Policy will introduce the Social Value Impact Fund. Liquidated damages and financial contributions will feed into this fund. The Social Value Panel, a multiagency group will be formed comprising of LBB staff, residents, VCFS partners and local businesses, which will decide the eligibility criteria and how the money will be redistributed back into the community.	To be approved	Medium to long term	Social Value Policy needs to be approved by CMT, go through clearance and then Cabinet.	TBA
Strategy & Communications	Community engagement	Lwazi Ngubane	TOMs reflecting BarNET zero goals	Sustainability TOMs make up 31% of the overall TOMs demonstrating our ambitions to achieve carbon neutrality through our supply chain.	To be approved	Short-term	Social Value Policy needs to be approved by CMT, go through clearance and then Cabinet.	TBA
Strategy & Communications	Community engagement	Lwazi Ngubane	Liquidated damages clauses	Liquidated damages clauses will feed into our Social Value Impact Fund and will be reinvested back into the community.	To be approved	Medium to long term	Social Value Policy needs to be approved by CMT, go through clearance and then Cabinet.	TBA
Strategy & Communications	Strategy & Engagement	Liz Cowie	VCFSE Mapping	Understanding the support network available to residents	To be developed	Short-medium term	Initial mapping taken place to look at potential partners or data purchases to start the development of a list. Scoping to be undertaken to understand project costs.	TBA
Strategy & Communications	Strategy & Engagement	Liz Cowie	Modern Slavery policy	Developing a policy and strategy to raise awareness to Modern Slavery practices will limit exploitation taking place in Barnet	To be approved	Short term (Nov 2023 to Jul 2024)	To go to Cabinet in March 2024	TBA
Strategy & Communications	Communications	Liz Cowie	Develop a joined-up communications campaign with partners	Raising awareness and reducing stigma around asking for help and highlighted the support network available to residents for benefits uptake, employment and skills etc.	In development	Short tmer (Nov 2023 to Jul 2024)	Communications team currently undertaking internal and external engagement	TBA
		Oli Pinch	Social care sector support for VCS organisations	To boost the bidding and administration capacity of the VCS so they are better equipped at measuring and demonstrating their impact to funders and supporters	In development	Short term	Scope project with adult social care and community participation teams	TBC

Workshops

We conducted 3 workshops, with findings coded into areas that all relate to poverty and follow up survey which focused on defining poverty in Barnet.

Attendees	#
Assistant Director / Head of Service	9
Manager / Lead	22
Officer	8
Facilitators	2

Attendee directorate	#
Strategy & Resources	12
Public Health	8
Customer & Place	6
Children & Families	5
Barnet Group	5
Adults	3

1. Based on the below, what is the best definition of poverty in Barnet? If none of the provided options seem suitable, please provide an answer in 'Other'

- 0 % People in relative low income – living in households with income below 60% of the median in that year.
- 0 % People in absolute low income – living in households with income below 60% of (inflation-adjusted) median income in some base year.
- 20 % Poverty is when your resources are well below your minimum need.
- 60 % Poverty entails more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, as well as the lack of participation in decision-making.
- 20 % Other

		SOLUTIONS				CONSIDERATIONS			
L O C A L		<p>Joined up approach</p> <p>Harness local assets to benefit the community</p> <p>Unlock more funding for VCSE</p> <p>Easy access to info / advice / support schemes residents may be entitled to</p> <p>Focus on providing opportunities for young people (training – soft skills, work experience, and education)</p>	<p>Using local people to fill the gaps</p> <p>Business improvement points</p> <p>Offering work experience</p>	<p>Social value in procurement</p> <p>Ward based drop-ins with community based partners – focus on addressing poverty and a new focus on reducing/getting out of poverty long-term</p> <p>Better partnership working; local opportunities, skills, workspace, recruitment, more apprenticeships programmes</p>	<p>Skills / employment / training support</p> <p>Adult social skills support those with health issues / barriers to work</p> <p>Immediate financial support</p>	<p>Getting better insight / data</p> <p>Unexpected expenses</p> <p>Job security</p> <p>Training / communication / easy access of existing opportunities / support schemes residents may be entitled to</p> <p>Low paying jobs</p> <p>Lack of ambition</p>	<p>Understanding data – who is affected, what problem are we aiming / needing to solve</p> <p>Education barriers</p> <p>Spatial inequality</p> <p>Non-attractive work opportunities</p> <p>Gambling</p> <p>Perception</p> <p>Domestic abuse</p> <p>Universal credits not doing its job</p> <p>Housing market</p> <p>Negative perceptions of job centre</p> <p>Lack of careers advice</p> <p>Failure of basic safety net</p>	<p>No access to upskilling</p> <p>Stigma / not talking about it</p> <p>Mental health</p> <p>Age barriers gaining employment</p> <p>Lack of financial resilience</p> <p>Housing affordability</p> <p>Economic crisis</p> <p>Inequality</p> <p>Cost of living crisis</p>	<p>Transport around LBB / ULEZ</p> <p>How can we address disempowered people to look for work</p> <p>Language barriers</p> <p>Asking questions at all touch points with residents. All staff trained to do this.</p> <p>Poor governance</p> <p>Drug abuse</p> <p>Out of our control at a local level</p> <p>Benefit changes / stopped</p> <p>Not on National agenda</p>
	N A T I O N A L	<p>More affordable housing</p> <p>Utilising our London wide networks. I.e. WLA, LGA, London Councils, GLA</p> <p>Coordinating resource eg. Foodbank resources</p>	<p>Raising awareness of the issue</p> <p>Talk to people about lived experience of poverty / integrate service users when we design programmes</p> <p>Exploiting available funding options</p> <p>Good education</p>	<p>Financial planning workshops to young people in schools at early stage</p> <p>Help families get into work affordable childcare with skills & training routes</p> <p>Reducing stigma</p>	<p>Political representation to central government</p> <p>Addressing health inequalities</p> <p>Promotion of London-wide opportunities (bootcamps)</p>	<p>Its not talked about / stigma</p> <p>People have just accepted it. I.e. Can we ever eradicate poverty?</p> <p>Addiction</p>	<p>Its not talked about / stigma</p> <p>People have just accepted it. I.e. Can we ever eradicate poverty?</p> <p>Addiction</p> <p>Housing market</p> <p>Negative perceptions of job centre</p> <p>Lack of careers advice</p> <p>Failure of basic safety net</p>	<p>Greed (personal and corporate)</p> <p>Transient population</p> <p>Economic crisis</p> <p>Inequality</p> <p>Cost of living crisis</p>	<p>Poor governance</p> <p>Drug abuse</p> <p>Out of our control at a local level</p> <p>Benefit changes / stopped</p> <p>Not on National agenda</p>

		SOLUTIONS			CONSIDERATIONS		
LOCAL	<p>convey an empowering message, be accountable but also challenge residents - Higher % of social value required in contracts / procurement more social housing</p> <p>Place-Based hyper support in our deprived areas</p>	<p>Better partnerships with businesses to offer things like free fruit or healthy food</p> <p>Free School Meals</p> <p>Working locally with residents to access things like benefit calculator</p>	<p>Reducing business rates/taxes to childcare companies</p> <p>Action plan and demonstrating progress</p> <p>Encourage Barnet businesses to employ locally</p> <p>Adapting threshold requirements for activities like BACE</p> <p>taking action to engage residents to build trust, empathy and understanding</p>	<p>Thinking proactively rather than reactively e.g. better education = better life chances</p> <p>Education barriers</p> <p>Lack of education about support</p> <p>Trapped in benefits cycle</p> <p>Housing affordability in Barnet</p> <p>Lack and/or removal of funding</p> <p>Poor health</p>	<p>We are reactive rather than enabling people out of poverty</p> <p>Lack of engagement or knowledge about support</p> <p>Lack and/or removal of funding</p> <p>Poverty reduction should also involve things like transport links, access to local services and safer communities - not just housing</p>	<p>Differing needs based on individual circumstances</p>	
	NATIONAL	<p>support for start up businesses - creating economic growth and more opportunities</p> <p>Could provide services to help adults upskill, increase and improve training and education</p> <p>Pan-London initiatives / services that operate across neighbouring boroughs</p> <p>Targeting our universal services in a smarter, more proactive way</p>	<p>Change policies / lobby</p> <p>there are systemic problems that keep people in poverty then these need to be discussed and challenged transparently</p> <p>People are mistrusting of government, we need to take steps into getting people to see the council as a supporting 'friend'</p> <p>More corporate sponsorships</p>	<p>Support with Childcare provision</p>	<p>Socio-economic external impacts (Brexit, COVID 19, Recession)</p> <p>Rising food insecurity</p> <p>Low paying jobs</p> <p>In work poverty</p> <p>Cost of living crisis</p> <p>Multiple factors</p> <p>Lack of incentive to work</p>	<p>Greed (personal and corporate)</p> <p>Education barriers</p> <p>Stuck on stats, lack of action</p> <p>No access to upskilling</p> <p>No one definition of what poverty means, it's relative</p>	<p>Ambition to eradicate poverty for future generations is unrealistic</p> <p>Lack and/or removal of funding</p>

		SOLUTIONS		CONSIDERATIONS	
LOCAL	<p>Choose to commission services / procurement practices that support reducing poverty</p> <p>MECC - ensure all frontline staff are aware of support available / able to signpost ppl</p> <p>Using data available to identify 'communities' who may be impacted</p> <p>Partner relationships, both strategic and operational</p>	<p>Supporting ppl to make sure claim benefits entitled to / benefit take up campaigns / signposting to other support - not just financial.</p> <p>Council / social housing / providers - have responsibility to give people access to support</p> <p>Utilising technology, data and insight to be more strategic in our approach</p> <p>NCL NHS - working in partnership, BC PH has influence</p> <p>Policies - reduction schemes / support schemes</p>	<p>London living wage - commit to our staff / all contractors to pay</p> <p>Work more effectively with partners to produce a joined-up offer</p>	<p>30 town centres mean we rely on retail and food and beverage businesses</p> <p>Large number of micro businesses and small charities - can't afford to pay more (even if they want to) - minimum wage as opposed to Living Wage</p> <p>Low paying jobs low LLW employers</p> <p>Administrative complexity</p>	<p>High number of residents on benefits</p> <p>Ageing population</p> <p>Lack of large businesses - reducing the amount of money coming into the borough which can be reinvested into the borough</p> <p>Transport - hard to move horizontally across the borough</p> <p>Digital exclusion</p> <p>Lack of trust of the council from some communities</p>
	NATIONAL	<p>Adult education programmes</p> <p>Education in schools on 'financial health'</p> <p>London Living Wage - procurement of services to ensure this is in place and in supply chain - REACTIVE for contracts already in place - PROACTIVE for new ones</p>	<p>Horizon scanning - upcoming legislation so we can put a plan in place to support groups that might be impacted</p> <p>More childcare support</p> <p>Council's working better with VCSE to fill those gaps/gap that council can't i.e mental health provision</p>	<p>Can influence wider bodies for funding to support regional projects to reduce poverty</p> <p>Lobbying and campaigning government</p> <p>Delivering holistic services</p>	<p>Mortgage rises</p> <p>Economic inequality</p> <p>Funding - i.e., 100% Council Tax benefit funding removed and local Support Schemes introduced placing significant burden on authorities.</p> <p>Access to affordable childcare</p>

Priority areas identified

- Procurement and social value
- Evaluate and improve our CoL programme
- Skills, employment and apprenticeships
- Business and economic growth
- London Living Wage borough

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Cabinet

Title	Updated Social Value Policy
Date of meeting	18 October 2023
Report of	Councillor Anne Clarke, Cabinet Member for Community Wealth Building
Wards	All
Status	Public
Key	Yes
Urgent	No
Appendices	Appendix 1: Social Value Policy Appendix 2: Barnet Themes Outcomes Measures Appendix 3: Updated Social Value Policy Action Plan
Lead Officer	Anisa Darr Executive Director of Strategy and Resources Anisa.Darr@barnet.gov.uk Liz Cowie Assistant Director Strategy & Communication Liz.Cowie@barnet.gov.uk
Officer Contact Details	Lwazi Ngubane, Social Investment Officer, Lwazi.Ngubane@barnet.gov.uk

Summary

The council introduced a Social Value policy in December 2021, we now need to update that policy, following establishment of new corporate priorities, as set out in Our Plan for Barnet 2023-2026 – particularly the effective and engaged and reducing poverty/community wealth building priorities – and the publication of the Sustainable Commercial Strategy.

This report sets out proposed changes to the Social Value Policy, including the introduction of measures to strengthen our approach to the management and benefit realisation of Social Value outcomes, a streamlined number of Themes Outcomes Measures (TOMs) and an action plan to structure the implementation of this policy.

Recommendations

That Cabinet approves and agrees to:

Update the Social Value Policy (Appendix 1) and that the following measures are included in the new policy

1. A minimum expectation of 5% is reinvested in social value initiatives by suppliers on contracts over £100,000.
2. A minimum expectation of one employment outcome for each £1 million (per contract)
3. That Liquidated Damages Clauses are introduced to contracts to compensate the council for the non-delivery of Social Value commitments.
4. Condense Barnet Themes Outcomes Measures (TOMs) from 83 measures to circa 40 and attach monetary values for each measure.
5. The new set of TOMs (Appendix 2).
6. To allow financial or in-kind material contributions from suppliers to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSEs) but should not exceed 10% of the Total Proposed Commitment.
7. That a Social Value Matrix is embedded in the Invitation to Tender/Quote, replacing the social value question in the tender documents.
8. Amend the rules of the Social Value Impact Fund to allow for the reinvestment of funds from liquidated damages and financial contributions back into the community.

1. Reasons for the Recommendations

Background:

- 1.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act (2012) requires all public sector organisations (and their suppliers) to look beyond the financial cost of a contract and consider how the services they commission and procure might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of an area.
- 1.2 In 2021, the council introduced the first social value policy. This:
 - Set the weighting for the tender evaluation of 20% - this was an increase from 10%.
 - Introduced a set of TOMs [developed in consultation with colleagues from across the council] to ensure our then priorities were being supported through Social Value initiatives.
 - Introduced the Social Value Toolkit – which was a self-help guide for suppliers and bidders.

The aims of the refreshed Social Value Policy:

- 1.3 During the 2022/2023 fiscal year, the council earmarked £1.3 billion for contracts exceeding £100,000, as outlined in the Annual Procurement Forward Plan 2022-2023 (APFP 22-23). Despite this sizable allocation, our current policy and framework lack the mechanisms to quantify the prospective social value derived from those contracts or provide essential tools to track outcomes. However, envisioning the adoption of our proposed framework, the potential would have been vast - generating a minimum of £69 million in social value

commitments, equipping contract managers with outcome tracking capabilities, and establishing a robust infrastructure to rectify non-deliverables.

1.4 Aside from aligning social value to our new corporate plan and strategies to ensure we are delivering on our corporate priorities, the intent behind refreshing the policy is to:

- improve compliance from suppliers
- set clear benchmarks for social value offers
- implement simple but robust monitoring and reporting processes

1.5 The proposed changes below will help to achieve greater positive outcomes for our communities by leveraging more social value from our contracts. Updating the policy and enhancing our framework will ensure social value has a clear structure, and better positions the council to create significant social, economic and environmental impact in the borough.

1.6

Proposed change/addition	Rationale
<p>A minimum expectation of 5% reinvested in social value initiatives by suppliers on contracts over £100K.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum expectation will allow the council to quantify social value project the total social value suppliers have committed to and track annual basis. • The lowest amount committed to will still have a significant impact • Based on the contracts in the aforementioned APFP 22-23, the minimum expected reinvested in the community is c. £69m (of our monetary value would be equal to one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 17,250 new full-time jobs paid at London Living Wage ○ 34,500 tonnes of CO2 emissions saved through decarbonisation ○ £6.9m in financial or materials contributions to support VCSEs ○ 138,000 weeks of work experience or placements • It will allow the council to be more transparent when reporting SV. • It quantifies social value commitments which makes it easier for LBE objectively. • Not all local authorities have minimum expectations in their policies do have stated they now see more consistency in the commitments Those local authorities have an equal or higher minimum expectation • We are proposing a 5% minimum to mitigate any commercial risks value to our communities.

<p>A minimum of one employment outcome expectation for each million pound (reviewed on a tender-by-tender basis).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the priorities in the new corporate plan is to reduce poverty; been identified as a key solution to reducing poverty, in particular if at a London Living Wage or above. Therefore, this requirement will be a tangible commitment to reducing poverty in the borough. • We recognise this may not be appropriate for all contracts, thus discretion will be permitted, subject to contract managers providing reasoning. A minimum of one employment outcome would be our default position for procurement. • Additionally, this requirement is consistent with most local authority providers including The Barnet Group.
<p>Liquidated Damages Clauses (LADs) for non-delivery of Social Value commitments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including LADs in our policy will provide assurance against suppliers not to uphold their SV commitments. Where there are genuine reasons for non-delivery we would work with the supplier to find a solution which could include a different measure. • It promotes transparency and ensures accountability. • The new social value framework is built around monetary values for commitments therefore it is easy to quantify commitments, calculate the liquidated damages and then write them into contracts. • Harrow Council has Liquidated Damages Clauses in their Social Value Framework worthy to note because we share legal services making the process more straightforward. • Whilst implementing LADs does pose some risks such as potentially making contracts to fail and the complexity in drafting clauses, how they will ensure the risk level remains low. HB Public Law, who have experience with LAD clauses, will work with our procurement team to ensure the council follows legal procedures for every step on the process. Procurement and HB will from the commencement of the procurement process consider the application of requirements in the specification, how this is reflected in the tender documents, in particular how it will be scored and how it aligns with the requirements of the Contracts Regulations 2015 and the contract. • Also, LADs would only be used as a last resort – mainly for businesses that do not meet social value commitments and choose not to engage with LBB.

<p>Condense Barnet TOMs from 83 measures to circa 40 and attach monetary values for each measure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reduced list of TOMs will enable us to focus on our priorities in a more targeted way. • Although, a broad list of measures gives suppliers variety of options, it can have a scattergun effect as resources are spread and that can dilute impact. • Furthermore, measuring the impact of numerous social priorities by a single measure, as data collection becomes fragmented, making it harder to assess the impact of measures/interventions. Therefore, this will make it easier to monitor and measure impact. <p>Monetary values (weighting system)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For all documents and proposed changes and additions to be aligned in unison, we need to assign a monetary value to each measure. • Suppliers would be unable to quantify their SV commitments to meet our expectations if we used a different evaluation method. • The values have been agreed by the Social Value Task Group, and they will be used to highlight highly we prioritise a measure. • This would be used as our weighting system and will be accompanied by a weighting system to further highlight our priorities.
<p>Allow financial or in-kind material contributions but should not exceed 10% of the Total Proposed Commitment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will give us more resources to invest into our communities to meet our needs. Although, we want suppliers to understand the landscape of our VCSE communities, the council has a greater understanding of those needs. • It limits undirected spending and ensures funds go to causes and projects that will benefit most from it. • It can be a catalyst for local development as it can help bolster the financial health of VCSEs, enabling them to continue their valuable work. • In-kind contributions can help suppliers build better connections with our communities. • Contributions being capped at 10% gives smaller businesses a chance to compete with larger corporations, who generally have more spending power, can't always meet their social value responsibilities with financial transactions.
<p>Embed Social Value Matrix in the Invitation to Tender/Quote and replace social value question in the tender documents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the tool suppliers will use to fill out their commitments. It guides them to produce clearly defined commitments where crucial information such as milestones, the method to be applied and responsible person(s) are clearly stated. • The tool quantifies the commitments, making it easier for the evaluation of bids objectively. • It will give a structure to how suppliers present their SV offers as, currently, they can be convoluted. • It works in unison with the TOMs and will make it easier for us to track progress from the stated commitments, to a contract, and to the monitoring and reporting. <p>Method Statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Method statements are crucial in evaluating offers as it gives insight into how suppliers plan to deliver their commitments. A strong method statement should give the evaluator feeling confident that offers are realistic and attainable. • "Any other benefits" section gives the supplier the opportunity to present benefits not in the remit of the refreshed TOMs. This will ensure that we are not prescriptive and gives suppliers the opportunity to be innovative.

<p>Social Value Impact Fund to reinvest funds from liquidated damages and financial contributions back into the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This fund was written into the existing policy; however, it was not in looking to introduce it following the publication of this updated poli cabinet approval. • Liquidated Damages and financial contributions will feed into this fu • Funds will be reinvested to facilitate community growth including su initiatives. • The Social Value Panel, a multiagency group that will be formed con residents, VCFS partners and local businesses, will decide the eligibil a portion of the funds will be redistributed. • As the criteria has not been decided, the fund can be shaped to targ as tackling inequalities and reducing poverty.
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2. Alternative Options Considered and Not Recommended

2.1 Alternative approaches were considered, including proceeding with the current policy or replicating another local authority’s framework; however, the general consensus between the Social Value Task Group was that would limit our opportunities of extracting as much value as possible from our supply chain as we felt most frameworks were not ambitious enough. The proposed policy and framework will be unique to Barnet Council but influenced by best practices from other organisations.

3. Post Decision Implementation

3.1 Following approval, the Social Value Policy will be published and will enter the implementation stage detailed in the Social Value Policy and Framework Action Plan in appendix 3. This identifies the key actions as:

- Communication will be made to internal and external stakeholders to announce adoption.
- The new TOMs and the updated Toolkit will be published.
- Training will be developed and rolled out across the organisation to support existing and new contract managers to ensure everyone understands the framework and importance of social value.
- Establishing monitoring and reporting expectations

4. Corporate Priorities, Performance and Other Considerations

Corporate Plan

4.1 Our Plan for Barnet 2023-2026 puts Caring for People, our Places and the Planet at the heart of everything we do. The Social Value Policy has been designed to support every facet of our vision as it will create employment, learning and procurement opportunities for residents and local businesses, contribute to reducing poverty and community wealth building, resource Borough of Fun initiatives and advance our journey to net zero. It will also empower our residents as they will be part of the decision-making process for how funds in the Social Value Impact Fund will be reinvested back into the community.

Corporate Performance / Outcome Measures

4.2 The Social Value Policy will facilitate a diverse range of initiatives, therefore it requires a monitoring tool that captures all activities. We have developed a monitoring tool that works

in tandem with our TOMs (see appendix 2). It collects quantitative and qualitative data which will enable us to demonstrate impact in diverse and creative ways.

Sustainability

- 4.3 Sustainability measures make up 31% of the new TOMs which is a considerable increase compared to our previous TOMs where they only accounted for 8%. This increase demonstrates our ambitions to achieve carbon neutrality through our supply chain by no later than 2042. In our Sustainability Strategy, we highlighted that over 95% of the organisation's footprint was through our supply chain. Therefore, we feel this drastic shift in the TOMs percentage is justified.
- 4.4 Although suppliers cannot be prescribed the social value measures they need to commit to, they will be encouraged to consider the environmental impact of their activities and will be supported to develop a sustainable organisational model.

Corporate Parenting

- 4.5 This purpose of this policy is to create opportunities for the people and places in the borough, and eradicate our environmental footprint. On that premise, this policy has the potential of having an impact on looked after children and care leavers, as it may generate employment and learning opportunities for them. However, it is unlikely to have a negative impact.

Risk Management

- 4.6 The proposed additions and changes have countless benefits, but they are not without any risk. Below illustrates how the risks will be managed:
- a) Implementation of some elements in this policy such as Liquidated Damages Clauses will be phased as they will take longer to develop. This will enable the council to focus other elements of the framework and ensure they are fully functional prior to introducing a component that requires more attention.
 - b) Liquidated Damages Clauses will be written by our legal services and our procurement team. They will be carefully crafted to ensure the measures used for quantification are structured and reasonable.
 - c) Bids will have to remain competitive, so suppliers are unlikely to increase the value of their quotes, particularly that price and quality have a higher weighting in tender evaluations. However, the procurement team will monitor any increases in price offers in tenders and any decline in the number of suppliers submitting bids. Discussion about what needs to be adjusted following conclusive evidence will be had.
 - d) Benchmarks are consistent with other local authorities, but they will be reviewed annually to ensure we are striking the right balance of extracting maximum social value whilst receiving offers that are great value for money.
 - e) The TOMs will be reviewed annually by the Social Value Task Group to ensure they continue to reflect our priorities.
 - f) Introducing a panel decision over an individual recommendation, will mitigate risks associated with awarding funding.
 - g) All organisations funded through the Social Value Impact Fund are subject to due diligence checks to mitigate risks further.

Insight

- 4.7 The proposed additions and changes are a combination of the best practice in Social Value from local authorities across the UK, with a hyper focus on London boroughs, and mechanisms we have developed that we are confident will enhance our Social Value framework.
- a) The recommendations do not have direct impact on data used by other services. However, the social value outcomes from suppliers will be shared with relevant service areas across the organisation.
 - b) Social value outcomes will be continuously monitored and evaluated to ensure that the highest impact is achieved for Barnet residents.

Social Value

- 4.8 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires all public sector organisations (and their suppliers) to look beyond financial cost of a contract and consider how the services they commission and procure might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of an area.
- 4.9 This paper and policy highlights how we will maximise our opportunities of creating social value for our communities.

5. Resource Implications (Finance and Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT and Property)

- 5.1 The proposed additions and changes will strengthen our governance and awarding system, and will identify whether we are receiving great value for money.
- 5.2 The only recommendation that will have a financial cost is implementing the Liquidated Damages Clauses as they need to be developed by HB Public Law. The total cost is expected to be circa £2,000 and will be paid from the existing council budgets.
- 5.3 The proposal is not reliant on any additional support from other services

6. Legal Implications and Constitution References

- 6.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 (the Act) requires public authorities to have regard to the economic, social and environmental well-being of their local area through their procurement activities. The requirement under the Act applies to all above Public Contracts Regulation 2015 threshold procurements. Public authorities are only required to consider matters that are relevant to what is proposed to be procured and, in doing so, must consider the extent to which it is proportionate in all the circumstances to take those matters into account.
- 6.2 The Council's Social Value Policy is much wider and extends beyond the requirements of the Act. The Council can rely on their wellbeing powers pursuant to the Local Government Act 2000 to put into place a wider Social Value policy.
- 6.3 Care has to be taken to balance the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Social Value policy when undertaking a procurement. This is to ensure that public procurement rules are not infringed by scoring social value beyond the contractual requirements of the procurement.
- 6.4 The proposals will have legal implications, in particular the Liquidated Damages Clauses. The contracts will contain liquidated damages clauses that will reasonably reflect the monetary loss to the Council arising from a failure to deliver on contractual social value commitments.

In the event that contractors fail to comply with their social value commitments the liquid damages clauses will be enforced. HB Public Law will guide us on the legal practice for every recommendation.

6.5 Under the Council's Constitution, Part 2D the terms of reference states that Cabinet is responsible for the following functions:

- Development of proposals for the budget (including the capital and revenue budgets, the fixing of the Council Tax Base, and the level of Council Tax) and the financial strategy for the Council;
- Monitoring the implementation of the budget and financial strategy;
- Recommending major new policies (and amendments to existing policies) to the Council for approval as part of the Council's Policy Framework and implementing those approved by Council;
- Approving policies that are not part of the policy framework;

6.6 Management of the Council's Capital Programme;

7. Consultation

7.1 The proposals do not require any formal consultations as we are setting the foundation for Social Value, however we plan to share the new framework with our partners Barnet Together who represent the VCFS sector, The Barnet Group, local businesses and residents, with the view to collaborate with them to further develop it when we have sufficient data.

7.2 Three businesses, who submit tenders to local authorities, were met at the Unlocking Social Value Conference 2023, and they provided insight on what challenges they face when submitting tenders and how the process can be made easier for them. Therefore, as well as looking to make the most of our social value potential, we also wanted to simplify the process for bidders.

8. Equalities and Diversity

8.1 Equality and diversity issues are a mandatory consideration in the decision-making of the council.

8.2 Decision makers should have due regard to the public-sector equality duty in making their decisions. The equalities duties are continuing duties they are not duties to secure a particular outcome. The equalities impact will be revisited on each of the proposals as they are developed. Consideration of the duties should precede the decision. It is important that Council has regard to the statutory grounds in the light of all available material such as consultation responses. The statutory grounds of the public-sector equality duty are found at Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and are as follows below.

8.3 A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, 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.

8.4 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:

- d) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- e) 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;
- f) 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.

8.5 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.

8.6 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

8.7 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

8.8 The public sector equality duty considerations are key for the development of our programme of activity as well as our Corporate Plan.

8.9 The proposed additions and changes to the Social Value Policy will positively contribute to the elimination of discrimination and will advance equality within our communities. The policy focuses on creating opportunities for people in the borough, minimising disadvantages suffered by people, tackle prejudice, reduce inequalities and promote understanding amongst our diverse communities.

8.10 For employment opportunities, the Barnet TOMs have a higher weighting for people considered to be in a disadvantaged position when seeking employment, which includes people with protected characteristics. This is in place to address systemic inequalities, encourage equal opportunities and expand talent pools.

8.11 The monitoring tool used by suppliers and contract managers will track the characteristics of the people presented with opportunities. Tracking this data will enable us to measure inclusivity, identify disparities, set benchmarks and identify success strategies.

9. Background Papers

9.1 None

Appendix 1

London Borough of Barnet

SOCIAL VALUE POLICY 2023- 2026

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Introduction

This is our updated Social Value Policy. The Council's intent in refreshing this policy is to enable our existing framework to grow by incorporating the best practices from organisations that have been successful with their social value journeys and to align social value with Our Plan for Barnet and our Reducing Poverty and Community Wealth Building approach. This policy sets out our renewed approach to sourcing goods and services that goes beyond the principles of competition and outstanding value-for-money.

Over the three-year period from 2018-2021, the council's supply chain equated to over 95% of the total emissions of the council itself. This policy will also work in unison with our Sustainability Strategy and Sustainable Commercial Strategy to address environmental concerns.

Furthermore, from January 2016 to September 2021, the council incurred £6 billion through its supply chain, and the total amount reserved for contracts in the council's Annual Procurement Forward Plan for 2022/23 exceeded £1.3 billion. There is clearly potential to generate significant positive outcomes for our communities by leveraging more social value from these contracts. The strategic additions we are implementing will enable us to maximise our potential of creating positive outcomes for the planet, places, and people of Barnet.

Additionally, the procurement team moving in-house will give the council more autonomy in how we evaluate, monitor and report on social value.

In our previous policy (2021-2025), we implemented:

- A maximum of 20% weighting for social value at the evaluation stage.
- A menu of social value themes outcomes and measures (TOMs) that will be made available to suppliers as part of a social value toolkit.
- Additional capacity in the council to ensure social value delivery was captured and monitored.

Following publication of this policy, we will further implement:

- A minimum expectation of 5% reinvested in Social Value initiatives by the supplier for every contract over £100,000.
- A new set of TOMs that are aligned with our new corporate objectives.
- A Social Value Matrix that will simplify the process for suppliers and make it easier for the council to objectively evaluate bids.
- A robust remedies process that enables Barnet Council to apply liquidated damages for non-delivery of commitments.
- A Social Value Impact Fund to ensure financial contributions and liquidated damages from undelivered social value commitments are reinvested back into the community.

Life in Barnet

The London Borough of Barnet is home to a population of around 389,300 people residents, making it the second most populous borough in the capital. The borough's overall population is projected to increase by around 5% by 2030, taking the number of residents to approximately 408,765.

Barnet has more than 26,000 registered businesses employing 134,000 people. The borough's economy is heavily dominated by small businesses, in particular micro-businesses, with 94% having fewer than nine employees. Around 17% of Barnet's workers are self-employed.

Barnet is one of London's least deprived boroughs but is not without disadvantage or challenge. Significant levels of deprivation can be found in the west of the borough, with pockets of disadvantage scattered elsewhere. In these neighbourhoods the life expectancy of residents can be 7.5 years less than in more affluent areas. Four wards in the west and south of Barnet's have a third or more of their children living in poverty after housing costs are considered¹. The COVID-19 pandemic and the rising cost of living have exacerbated these inequalities.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on education, people's health and the economy. Three lockdowns, furlough, people losing their jobs and income, pushed more residents into hardship². The unemployment rate peaked at 8% in Barnet in 2021 – 2.2% higher than the London average at the time³. Additionally, as businesses were forced to close, many consumers diverted their expenditure to e-commerce, leading to less money being spent on Barnet-based businesses.

However, a key feature in the last couple of years, in Barnet, is the role the local voluntary community and faith sector (VCFS) has played in supporting residents affected by the pandemic and the rising cost of living. Working in genuine partnership with the council, Barnet Together and health services, the sector has shown that it is well-connected and has reach into the Barnet's diverse communities. This provides a firm foundation for an asset-based approach to improving communities, with many structures already in place where social value outcomes can be delivered.

This policy aims to confront deprivation and environmental issues in the borough by implementing a framework that will create more opportunities for residents, VCFSs and local businesses, and support our journey to Net Zero through our supply chain.

¹ End Child Poverty Coalition, data collected July–September 2017.

² Coronavirus pandemic: the impact on Barnet three years on (a news article reporting the latest figures from the UK coronavirus dashboard as per 24 March 2023).

³ Varbes: Economy of Barnet, 2022

Policy context

The council, at its core, develops people and places. It seeks to empower residents and the community to reduce the need for accessing council services whilst improving outcomes in the Borough.

In 2023 the council launched its new four-year strategy for the borough: Our Plan for Barnet. The plan provides the underpinning strategic direction for the Social Value Policy. It sets out the council's approach to work in genuine partnership with residents and partner organisations for the benefit of the borough and its communities. Key to this is a commitment to social value and ensuring that suppliers, as partners, play their part in contributing to social outcomes.

The council's vision, set out in the plan is:

We want everyone in Barnet to have a good quality of life; to be healthy and active, with access to excellent education, fulfilling employment, good housing, social connection and community. We will develop our town centres and neighbourhoods, creating safe, clean and welcoming places with quality homes people can afford. As a borough of fun, we will be a destination, a place to visit, live and enjoy ourselves, where people connect to each other and feel a sense of belonging. We will work together with local people, communities and businesses across the borough to become net zero carbon in Barnet by 2042, and for the council by 2030.

Our Plan for Barnet

Our Plan for Barnet is divided into four themes, which the council will focus on over the life of the plan:

- **Caring for people**
We will address inequalities and work to improve life chances for a good, healthy, happy and long life. We will work tirelessly to reduce poverty in our communities, boost incomes and reduce costs.
- **Caring for our places**
We will develop our town centres and neighbourhoods, create places that are clean, safe and welcoming. We will provide good quality homes in the right places that meet residents' diverse needs and are affordable. We will become a borough of fun.
- **Caring for the planet**
Put sustainability at the heart of everything we do. We will become a net zero council by 2030 and improve the quality of our local environment – enhancing our green and open spaces.
- **Engaged and Effective Council**
Collaborate, listen and build a dialogue with our residents and communities, working together to co-produce our strategies and services.

What is social value?

The Social Value Act

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 came into force on 31 January 2013. Under the act, local authorities and other public bodies have a legal obligation to consider the social good that could come from the procurement of services as part of the commissioning cycle.

The aim of the Act is not to alter the procurement processes, it is designed to ensure councils give due consideration of the wider impact of their procurement and commissioning activities to enhance their outcomes and outputs from the services delivered.

It enables authorities to assess submissions not only based on selecting the most economically advantageous tender but also on the broader community benefits that the supplier commits to delivering.

Together, the Act and this policy provide an opportunity to integrate economic, environmental, and social sustainability into our procurement processes, delivering a cohesive yet flexible and innovative approach to generating social value through public procurement.

Barnet Council's definition of Social Value

The Social Value Act does not specifically define what is meant by social value. Therefore, the council will adopt the following definition of social value as set out by the UK Sustainable Procurement Taskforce:

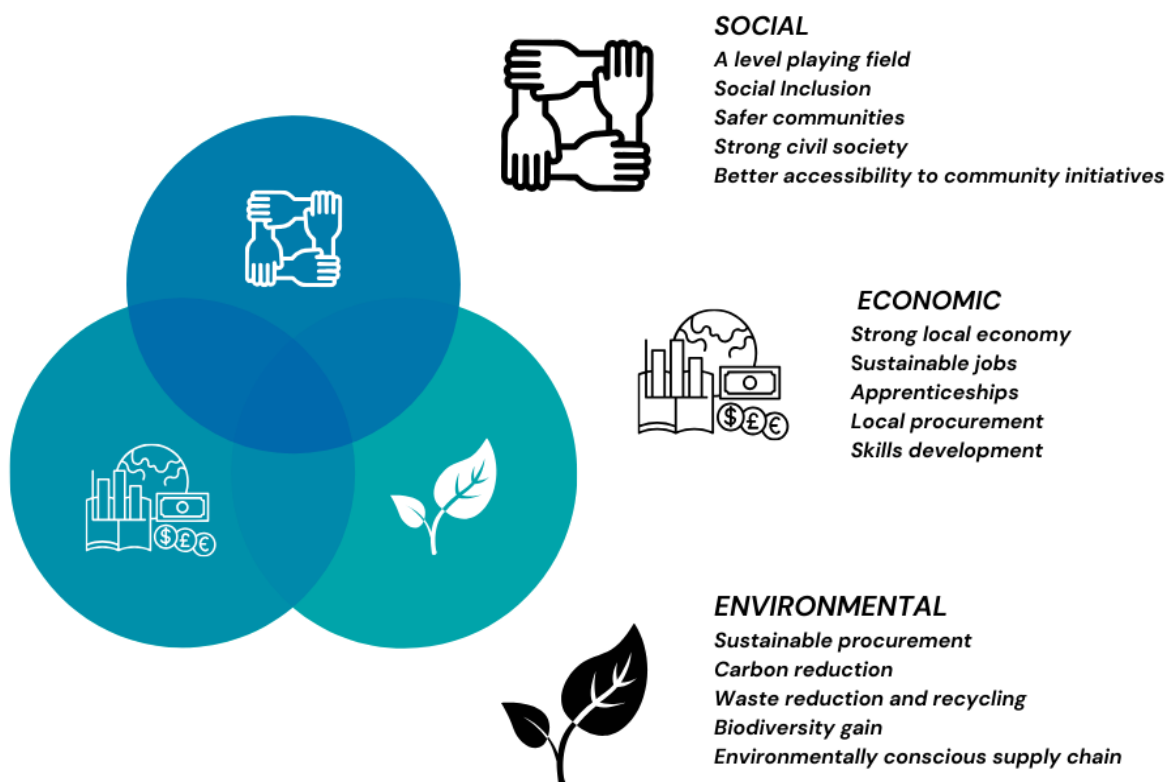
A process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation but also to society and the economy whilst minimising damage to the environment.

Taking this further, the Local Government Act 2000 outlines that a local authority should have the fundamental objective of promoting and improving the area across economic, social, and environmental outcomes.

Therefore, as a council we must get the maximum possible value from every item of expenditure we can. Working to deliver this value in an integrated, coherent manner helps us to deliver Our Plan for Barnet priorities.

Underpinning sustainable procurement are economic, social, and environmental outcomes. They can be defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future. Where an activity can deliver on multiple, or all, of these outcomes we will see greater sustainability and social cohesion in the Borough (although delivery against any is to be welcomed and encouraged).

Examples of these social value outcomes can be seen in the diagram below:



Outcomes needn't be confined to one of these areas and can intersect across several areas of work and types of benefit.

Social Enterprise UK offers the example where a mental health service is delivered by an organisation that actively employs people with a history of mental health issues to help deliver the service; a practice currently employed by our partners at Inclusion Barnet.

Not only does this approach guarantee a job for a local resident, but there is also further social value in that it enables a person with mental health issues to:

- Have a job where they may otherwise have been unemployed
- Become more socially included
- Potentially have a say in how mental health services are run

Through investing in a service to improve mental health, the council is also having a positive impact on two other strategic objectives: increased employment, and social inclusion. This will better promote an integrated, and coherent approach to the delivery of local priorities.

Some good examples of social value in our own borough can be found with BOOST, who are an employment, financial, and digital support service helping Barnet residents, and The Barnet Group.

BOOST: From September 2022 to September 2023, they collaborated with Barnet Council, 2econd Chance and Good Things Foundation to gift 85 laptops and tablets to residents and VCSEs in the borough. They also supported 47 homes with vulnerable residents to become better connected by installing high-speed fibre broadband.

The Barnet Group: They were able to secure a commitment from their gas contractors to donate £1 for every time they were given access to a property at the first request to conduct an annual safety check. This amounted to approximately £7000 in the first year of the contract. This money is made available for community groups to apply to fund local initiatives.

Social Value Principles

The council considers social value to extend to everything we do, across all services provided to residents and businesses, in order to support the delivery of Our Plan for Barnet.

We have developed the following set of principles that are the foundation of the Social Value Policy:

We seek to maximise opportunities to work with partners and stakeholders
Plans are designed to be inclusive with a focus on supporting future generations and reducing inequalities across the borough
We prioritise long-term improved outcomes over short-term 'fixes', prioritising prevention and targeted early intervention
We build stronger, safer communities with cohesive neighbourhoods, which have zero-tolerance for abuse or crime in any capacity
We create borough resilience to cope with future environmental and socio-economic stresses
We use our assets effectively to generate returns for the borough – both social and financial. This is underpinned by the council's Growth Strategy and Asset Acquisition Strategy.
We secure value for money in all we undertake and align this to our wider strategic and corporate objectives including the delivery of our medium-term financial strategy.

Aims and objectives of the Social Value Policy

- Delivery of real social value will be a default position in all our contracts, where it is relevant and appropriate.
- Ensuring our procurement activities will promote the local economy and reduce or remove barriers that prevent micro, small and medium sized businesses trading with the council.
- Promoting environmental sustainability through our social value outcomes. For example: waste reduction, positive decisions relating to climate change, reducing energy consumption and, wherever possible, procuring materials from sustainable, renewable sources.
- Advancing equalities, diversity and inclusion in the borough.
- Promoting the local voluntary community and faith sector (VCFS) and supporting them in delivering the strategic outcomes they share with the council.
- Building capacity and sustainability in the local VCFS through active support and engagement with the council's supply chain.
- Co-designing and co-producing social value outcomes with residents where it is suitable and appropriate to do so.
- Promotion of active citizenship and resident involvement to inform how we meet the needs of communities and actively deliver place-shaping outcomes.
- Creating and/or promoting local employment and training opportunities and using this to tackling local unemployment and drive inclusive growth.
- Providing training and skills to disadvantaged groups.
- Focussing social value outcomes on areas of highest deprivation
- Working with our supply chain to identify key roles and careers that may suffer skills shortages in the short to medium-term and/or those emerging sectors that require new entrants.
- Encouraging our supply chain to use local labour, i.e. from within the Borough's boundaries, and to pay a competitive wage to facilitate an increase in living standard and maximising their employees' access to entitlements and guidance.
- Supporting fair and ethical trading throughout our supply chain. We expect our suppliers, service providers and contractors to demonstrate similar levels of commitment to ensure the maintenance and improvement of local and global ethical practice.

How we will ensure social value is delivered

All suppliers wishing to bid for contracts with the council are required to state what social value measures they want to contribute to alongside the services they are bidding to provide, however the measures have been refined and aligned to our new corporate plan to ensure outcomes are directly linked with our objectives.

This prescribed menu of measures highlights to suppliers our priorities and enables us to monitor performance of the suppliers against their social value commitments. However, we are not entirely prescriptive, and we welcome offers that are not in the remit of the Barnet TOMs.

Usually, social value is calculated at the government's minimum weighting of 10% in tenders. Barnet Council will continue to have a 20% social value weighting when evaluating bids.

We are now implementing:

- A refined menu of social value themes outcomes and measures (TOMs) with defined monetary values for each measure and a guideline for evidence required.
- A minimum expectation of 5% reinvested in social value initiatives by suppliers on contracts over £100,000.
- A minimum of one employment outcome expectation for each million pound a contract is valued at (reviewed on a tender-by-tender basis).
- A Social Value Matrix to simplify and clarify supplier commitments, and to make it easier for Barnet Council to objectively evaluate bids.
- A structure to remedy non-delivery of commitments from suppliers.
- A Social Value Impact Fund that will enable the council to redistribute financial contributions and liquidated damages.

Embedding social value in our procurement processes

At the beginning of every procurement exercise, the specifications and designs being procured are analysed to identify social value outcomes that might be sought. Contract managers are guided by our toolkit to determine relevant social value outcomes that meet key commitments in Our Plan for Barnet. Contract managers determine proportionality and weightings applied to social value on a procurement-by-procurement basis to maximise deliverability of both the core contract and social value commitments.

The council encourages, and will continue to encourage, organisations to provide opportunities for the delivery of direct social value that is impactful and measurable.

The council will encourage the scale of deliverable social value to be proportionate to:

- The length of the contract awarded
- The scale of the contract awarded

The council will ensure social value is referenced in the Local Plan to ensure positive social outcomes are generated wherever there is development in the borough.

The council has always been open to alternative delivery models where they represent added value to residents. Where arrangements such as social enterprises, mutuals or not-for-profit joint ventures may deliver greater social value, the council will consider these.

The council commits to ensuring all internal approvals and governance processes will document social value when undertaking a procurement exercise. Where, under exceptional circumstances, it is not appropriate to include social value this must be recorded prior to approvals being granted.

The council will apply a scoring methodology that ensures social value is considered on its own merits and importance. The council's default weighting to social value will be 20% of the overall assessment. The level of importance applied to social value can be amended both upwards and downwards, however. This will be done after considering the contract length, subject matter and whether there is sufficient competition to deliver core services at the default commitment. This will enable social value to be relevant and proportionate across all procurements.

Social Value Toolkit

To support the implementation of this refreshed policy, the council has produced a toolkit for suppliers that sets out our expectations and requirements of them in relation to social value and explains how we social value works in Barnet. At the heart of this is the Barnet's Social Value TOMs. This is a menu of the various ways that suppliers can fulfil their social value commitments. It sets out a range of activities and investments listed under the three themes in Our Plan for Barnet. These include things like the creation of apprenticeships, providing training or advice to unemployed young people or committing to carbon neutrality in the delivery of a service.

The TOMs are included as an appendix to this policy. They have been co-designed by the council's internal Social Value Task Group. This is a pan-Council group comprising representatives from various service areas across the council and its delivery partners. The TOMs are reviewed annually by the task group and the Social Value Panel. The members of the latter group will be council staff, residents, VCFS partners and local businesses. This is to ensure that they are regularly informed by the most up to date insight into community needs and priorities.

The Social Value Matrix (SVM) has been introduced to ensure supplier commitments are

quantifiable, making it easier for the evaluating panel to assess bids in an objective manner. It is a form embedded within the Invitation to Quote/Tender document that guides suppliers to produce clearly defined commitments where crucial information such as quantities, milestones and responsible person(s) are stated. This form must be used in tandem with the Barnet TOMs, and similarly to the TOMs, the SVM will be reviewed regularly to ensure it is serving its purpose of being a simplified evaluation method for both the supplier and the council, and is included as an appendix to this policy.

In addition to the TOMs and SVM, the toolkit includes guidance documents explaining how social value is calculated, assessed and monitored through our procurement systems. The toolkit is used in all procurement exercises and helps to ensure social value is embedded and implemented in how we do business. The whole toolkit is also reviewed annually.

Monitoring social value

The refreshed TOMs include a blend of weighting and monetary values for measures, to reflect the council's priorities and enables social value commitments to be quantified.

The monitoring tool that will be introduced will be used by the contract managers and suppliers, and will support both in tracking outcomes. The outcomes from each contract will feed into a large worksheet that holds data about all contracts. This data will then be used to demonstrate the impact our supply chain has had on our communities.

The Strategy and Engagement team holds the corporate relationship with the VCFS and has overall responsibility for the council's community engagement and consultation functions. The recent Community Participation Strategy proposes that the council involve residents and community groups wherever possible in our work to improve the borough. This is particularly important to ensure the effectiveness of our Social Value Policy.

Community engagement will not only inform the TOMs, but we will also use it to provide richer evaluation of the outcomes - not just relying on monitoring data to report the success of social value, but to also record personal stories and case studies.

Evaluation of the council's approach

The council will produce an annual public report on the benefits secured and performance against social value proposals in our supply chain. This report will be presented to Cabinet. The first report will be published after the 2023/2024 financial year and will follow the same pattern in the proceeding years.

The council also aims to include benefits secured through our strategic partners within the borough to present a fuller picture of social value in the borough.

Transparent reporting through Cabinet allows the council to adjust our approach as we begin to receive feedback through the reporting process and our proposed annual reviews.

Within the annual public report, the following information will be made available (at a minimum):

- Performance monitoring information on all social value outcomes delivered through contracts in the financial year. This will include feedback from our communities, local education sector, providers, and other relevant stakeholders.
- Direct expenditure with businesses categorised as micro, small or medium-sized and our VCFS. This expenditure will be measured against the in-year benchmarks agreed as part of the Procurement Forward Planning process.
- Evidence as to how we have engaged locally in determining our social value outcomes and that they represent value to our communities.
- Case studies of procurement process where this policy has been applied and a full view of outcomes achieved across quality, price, and social value.
- A cost-benefit analysis of the impact of the policy. The council aspires for this to be in the form of Gross Value Added.

In determining an organisation's size, we will use employee headcount as a proxy as follows:

Organisation Category	Number of Employees
Micro	0-9
Small	10-49
Medium	50-249
Large	250+

The council measures its local expenditure across postcodes in Barnet. Expenditure locally in 2019/20 was £38.2m (7.1%). The council will continue to use this as a baseline from which to measure future performance.

As part of our commitment to improving social value in the borough, the council will seek to share, and learn from, best practice with other local authorities. The council will be working as part of the pan-London Procurement Network and nationally through established networks such as the Local Government Association.

Social Value is a continuously evolving metric, and many organisations – both nationally and internationally – measure outcomes differently. As part of our drive to learn and improve, we will work with strategic partners, stakeholders, and our communities to refine how we measure and define social value.

As the council learns, we will embed continuous improvement into the heart of our social value methodology. The council will maintain a co-produced approach to social value as we improve and will ensure the voice of the communities we serve reflects

the social value we define and measure.

Remedies

There may be genuine and justifiable reasons for the non-delivery of a social value offer from the winning supplier. In these circumstances, London Borough of Barnet will initially seek to engage with the winning supplier to determine what issues are impeding social value delivery. It will expect the winning bidder to have a coherent rectification strategy. This could include other social value proposals to a measure that has equivalent or higher monetary value.

In the event that the supplier is not able to deliver any or some of its social value obligations as per the commitments in the tender submission, or otherwise commits a breach in that regard during delivery of the contract; the London Borough of Barnet reserves the right to apply liquidated damages for the failure to deliver in whole or part of the social value commitments stated in the tender documents.

The Liquidated Damages for non-delivery of Social Value Commitments document will be made accessible for suppliers through the Social Value Toolkit. It will detail how liquidated damages are calculated.

It will be at the sole discretion of London Borough of Barnet, as to whether it grants relief to the supplier in respect of liquidated damages.

Social Value Impact Fund (SVIF)

The council will introduce a Social Value Impact Fund (SVIF) to ensure financial contributions and liquidated damages from undelivered social value commitments from suppliers are reinvested back into the community. With the agreement of the council, suppliers can:

- Offer financial contributions amounting up-to 10% of the total social value contributions.
- Make a cash contribution to the SVIF when unable to deliver on a social value commitment and all other equivalent or higher valued alternatives cannot be achieved. This will be considered liquidated damage.

The council will ensure expenditure incurred on the SVIF is linked to our core aims and objectives outlined in this policy and in the TOMs.

Governance arrangements will be transparent and ensure accountability to the council's stakeholders.

Annual reporting on the use of the SVIF will be published as part of reporting social value to Cabinet. It will include:

- A list of projects and initiatives that have received funding.
- The level of funding allocated to the projects and initiatives.
- Delivery reports and evaluation reports from successful projects.
- Tracker for ongoing projects.

Social Value Panel

To ensure ongoing coproduction of social value, the council will commit to the creation of a social value panel. This will be a multiagency group comprising residents, VCFS partners and businesses. The panel will enable the council to engage local micro and SME, voluntary and community sector groups and resident to allow for co-design of social value outcomes that matter to the community.

Working with the VCFS will be particularly important, as some organisations in the sector may be direct beneficiaries of social value from council suppliers. We will also seek to understand where strategic projects in the VCFS align to Our Plan for Barnet outcomes and, where these are unfunded or have match-fund requirements, publish them to our social value webpage for prospective bidders.

Community involvement is a vital part of place-based delivery, and the panel could be a vehicle for enabling community stakeholders to assist with shortlisting procurements that are specific to their local areas.

Communicating the Social Value Policy

The council will communicate this policy widely across all internal and external stakeholders; amongst staff; strategic partners and elected Members. In doing so, we will prepare and deliver a comprehensive programme of training and development to ensure our approach to social value is understood and that our approach and practice is transparent. We will ensure that social value expertise becomes embedded in evaluation panels and support contract managers to build robust evaluation criteria as they relate to social value.

Information about social value and the implementation of this policy will be communicated externally through the council website and social media channels. This will help promote the toolkit and TOMs and spread awareness of Barnet's commitment to a socially beneficial supply chain.

All information will be hosted on the council website, listing information about local suppliers and upcoming pan-London opportunities on the 33 portal and our own local procurement portal. As monitoring and evaluation takes place, we will add case studies and examples of good practice to the communications about social value.

BARNET COUNCIL TOMs

Barnet Plan theme	Theme outcomes	Ref	Measure	Unit to measure Social Value	Proxy Value	Monetary Value of TOM	How to evidence outcomes
Caring for our Places	Communities that are thriving and well-funded	BT1a	Support our Borough of Fun ambition by sponsoring local culture, arts and heritage events, public speaking , or by setting up exciting activities that tackle isolation and loneliness, particularly with the elderly and young people. Costs can only amount up-to 10% of the total contributions.	£ Value	£1	£ pledged	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A written statement detailing activity 2. Written feedback from recipients 3. If funds have been pledged, please provide proof of transaction.
		BT1b	Financial or in-kind material contributions to support local community projects and VCSEs across the borough. Financial contributions can only amount up-to 10% of the total contributions.	£ Value	£1	£ in contributions NB: Equipment donations will be valued at their current market value	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proof of transaction. 2. For in-kind material donations, please provide quote and written feedback from the recipient.
		BT1c	Labour provided to help maintain, refurbish or redevelop community assets.	£ Staff hourly wage X number of hours of labour		1 Day = £200	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A written statement detailing activity and the number of days spent. 2. Feedback from person responsible for the community asset.
		BT2	No hours volunteering time provided to support local community projects and priorities.	Staff volunteering hours	£16.93	1 Day = £150	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A written statement of what a member(s) of staff participated in. 2. Feedback from recipients of said support.
Caring for People	More local people in employment	BT3a	No. of full-time equivalent direct local employees (Barnet postcode & FTE) hired on the contract for one year or the whole duration of the contract, whichever one is shorter. Employee must be paid a London Living Wage (£11.95 per hour) or above.	No. of people X average FTE	£35,716	1 FTE contract = £4000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
		BT3b	No. of full-time equivalent local employees (Barnet postcode & FTE) hired on the contract for one year or the whole duration of the contract, whichever one is shorter, paid less than the London Living Wage (£11.95 per hour). Barnet Council is a "fair pay employer" paying all staff a London Living Wage or above. We want our supply chain to be likeminded, but we understand it is not possible for all businesses. Therefore, if you select this TOM, please provide reasoning as to why you are unable to pay the London Living Wage.	No. of people X average FTE	£27,756	1 FTE contract = £3000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
		BT4a	No. of part-time local employees (Barnet postcode & 0.5 FTE) hired on the contract paid a London Living Wage (£11.95 per hour) or above.	No. of people X average 0.5 FTE	£17,858	0.5 FTE contract = £2000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
		BT4b	No. of part-time local employees (Barnet postcode & 0.5 FTE) hired on the contract for one year or the whole duration of the contract, whichever one is shorter, paid less than the London Living Wage (£11.95 per hour). Barnet Council is a "fair pay employer" paying all staff a London Living Wage or above. We want our supply chain to be likeminded, but we understand it is not possible for all businesses. Therefore, if you select this TOM, please provide reasoning as to why you are unable to pay the London Living Wage.	No. of people X average 0.5 FTE	£13,878	0.5 FTE contract = £1500	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
		BT5	No. of direct local employees (Barnet postcode & FTE) hired on the contract for one year or the whole duration of the contract, who are registered as unemployed .	No. of people X average FTE	£2,899	1 person = £1000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
		BT0a	No. of closed recruitment – offer opportunity to a pool of candidates identified by Barnet Council commissioned Employment teams (i.e. BELS and BOOST) first. If there are no suitable candidates, open to the wider public.	No. of closed recruitments		1 closed recruitment = £1000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notification of vacancy sent to the team leaders of the commissioned services via email (contacts will be provided when contract is awarded).
		BT0b	Contract of the hired person is permanent.	No. of permanent contract		1 permanent contract = £1000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 2. Confirmation letter or statement from the employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
		BT6	No. of employees (Barnet postcode & FTE) hired on the contract who are local residents who are long-term unemployed (unemployed for a year or longer).	No. of people X average FTE	£20,429	1 FTE = £2000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from the employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
		BT7	No. of employees (Barnet postcode & FTE) hired on the contract who are local residents who are armed forces veterans and facing specific barriers to transitioning to civilian employment that do not qualify them as disabled (e.g. long-term service).	No. of people X average FTE	£20,429	1 FTE = £2000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).

More opportunities for people who are disadvantaged	BT8	No. of homeless employees who are local residents (Barnet postcode & FTE) hired on the contract.	No. of people X average FTE	£20,429	1 FTE = £2000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
	BT9	No. of full-time equivalent employees (Barnet postcode & FTE) hired on the contract that are survivors of modern slavery .	No. of people X average FTE	£20,429	1 FTE = £2000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
	BT10	No. of full-time equivalent employees (Barnet postcode & FTE) hired on the contract that are single parents/lone parents .	No. of people X average FTE	£20,429	1 FTE = £2000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
	BT11	No. of employees (Barnet postcode & FTE) hired on the contract who are local residents who are Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEETs).	No. of people X average FTE	£20,429	1 FTE = £2000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
	BT12	No. of Full Time Equivalent (Barnet postcode & FTE) local 16–25-year-old care leavers hired on the contract.	No. of people X average FTE	£15,382	1 FTE = £1500	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
	BT13	No. of local 18+ year old employees (Barnet postcode & FTE) hired on the contract who are due to be released from a custodial sentence into the borough, who are rehabilitating or are ex-offenders .	No. of people X average FTE	£24,269	1 FTE = £2500	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
	BT14	No. of disabled employees (Barnet postcode & FTE) who are local residents hired on the contract.	No. of people X average FTE	£16,605	1 FTE = £2000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
Improved Skills	BT15	No. of staff hours spent on local school and college visits e.g. delivering careers talks, curriculum support, literacy support, safety talks (including preparation time).	Staff hours	£16.93	1 session/day = £150	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Post-session feedback from the school or college. 2. Completed documentation detailing activity delivered and numbers attended
	BT16	No. of Level 2 of above training (BTEC, City & Guilds, NVQ, HNC) that have either been completed by local residents (Barnet postcode) during the year, or that will be supported by the organisation until completion.	Weeks	£317.82	1 qualification = £2000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Registration documents/written confirmation from the training provider detailing course of study, duration and qualification. 2. Or completion certificates.
	BT17	No. apprenticeships on the contract that have either been completed during the year by local residents (Barnet postcode), or that will be supported by the organisation until completion in the following years.	Weeks	£251.79	1 apprenticeship = £4000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of consent form which includes EDI and personal data of the employee (form will be provided by Barnet Council when contract is awarded). 2. A copy of offer of employment detailing contract length and employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time). 3. Confirmation letter or statement from employer following six-months minimum employment (qualifying period).
	BT18a	No. of supported internships (26 weeks minimum) on the contract that have either been completed during the year by local residents (Barnet postcode), or that will be supported by the organisation until completion in the following years.	Weeks	£251.79	1 SEN = £4000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Written confirmation from a Human Resources representative of the resident's participation at the end of activity.
	BT18b	No. of T-Levels (45 weeks) on the contract that have either been completed during the year by local residents (Barnet postcode), or that will be supported by the organisation until completion in the following years.	Weeks	£251.79	1 T-Level pm = £2000	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Written confirmation from the employer of the resident's participation at the end of activity.
	BT19	Support a 'just transition' for local residents employed in traditional high carbon industries to retrain .	hrs (total session duration) *no. attendees	£105.58	1 session = £500	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 A copy of the registration form. 2 A written statement of what was delivered.
	BT20	No. of weeks spent by local residents (Barnet postcode) on meaningful work placements or pre-employment course; 1-6 weeks student placements (unpaid)	weeks	£194.50	1 week = £500	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Written confirmation from the employer of the resident's participation in the activity.

Reduced Digital Exclusion	BT21	Meaningful work placements completed by local residents (Barnet postcode) that pay London Living wage according to eligibility - 6 weeks+	weeks	£194.50	1 week = £800	1	Written confirmation from the employer of the resident's participation in the activity.
	BT22	No of digital champions (DC) placed in the community and/or digital workshops, webinars or training for residents and/or staff delivered to reduce digital deprivation.	No. of sessions	£101.00	1 Session = £200 1 DC = £200	1.	Description of the event/sessions. 2. Copy of the registration or monitoring sheet.
	BT23	Provision of software, data packages, digital networks or recycled devices to residents or our VCFS partners.	No. of units	£101.00	1Unit = £200	1.	Description of the activity. 2. Copy of the monitoring sheet.
	BT24	Increased no of homes with high-speed fibre broadband installed and other activities supporting digital connectivity within our communities.	No. of homes	£101.00	1Home = £200	1.	Description of the activity. 2. Copy of the monitoring sheet.
More opportunities for local SMEs and VCSEs	BT25	Provision of expert business advice to VCSEs, MSMEs community projects and council services and properties based in the borough (e.g. financial, legal, HR and HSE advice, bid writing, how to achieve net zero carbon, built environment and development).	staff expert hours	£101.00	1 session/day = £500	1.	A copy of the registration form. 2. A written statement of what was delivered.
	BT26	Total amount spent contracting businesses based in the borough into the supply chain through the contract.	£	£2.25	£1	1.	Proof of transactions (e.g. receipts).
Carbon emissions are reduced	BT27	Savings in CO2e emissions on contract achieved through de-carbonisation (i.e. a reduction of the carbon intensity of processes and operations) against a specific benchmark.	tonnes CO2e	£244.63	1 tonne = £2000	1.	Details of embodied carbon emissions reduced against a specific benchmark or baseline and copy of carbon assessment carried out.
	BT28	Carbon emissions reductions through reduced energy use and energy efficiency measures in places of work in the borough.	tonnes CO2e	£244.63	1 tonne = £2000	1.	Details of energy efficiency measures put in place including total number of buildings and the total number of buildings reaching energy saving targets. Provide details of the emissions/energy use reduction target and how it has been reached against the baseline.
	BT29	Car miles saved on the project as a result of a green transport programme or equivalent (e.g. cycle to work programmes, public transport or car pooling programmes, etc.)	miles saved	£0.06	1 mile = £1	1.	Provide details of corporate green transport program implemented to reduce passenger car miles drive, including a breakdown of the number of car miles saved and how they have been saved. 2. Specify the baseline that is used (i.e. car miles driven before the program was implemented)
	BT30	Car miles driven using low or no emission staff vehicles included on project as a result of a green transport programme.	miles driven	£0.03	1 mile = £1	1.	Fleet report and mileage log.
	BT31	Freight miles saved as a result of a green logistics plan (e.g. reduced trips to site).	miles saved	£0.06	1 mile = £1	1.	Provide details of the green logistics place. 2. Provide breakdown of freight miles saved, including the baseline that is used.
Safeguarding the natural environment	BT32	Resources dedicated to creating green spaces, improving biodiversity and/or helping ecosystems in the borough.	£ invested	£1.00	£ pledged	1.	Provide a list of donations and projects supported on the contract, together with the information on what the anticipated impacts were and the explanation of the monitoring and evaluation process in place.
	BT33	Volunteering time for environmental conservation and sustainable ecosystem management initiatives in the borough.	staff volunteering hours	£16.93	1 day = £150	1.	For each initiative supported, provide a breakdown of volunteering and staff time invested, alongside other investment.
	BT34	Total volume of reduced plastics used on the contract against a relevant benchmark.	Kilograms	£158.02	1 kg = £20	1.	Provide a breakdown of the total amount of plastic used on the contract and the total amount that has been recycled 2. Provide details of any plastic-reduction measures against a baseline. 3. Provide baseline and methodology.
	BT35	Activities to influence staff, suppliers and customers on the contract as well as residents of the borough to support environmental protection and improvement.	staff expert hours	£101.00	1 day = £250	1.	Breakdown of staff hours aspect providing expert advice to staff, suppliers, customers and residents, including details of who the advice has been provided to.
Resource efficiency and circular economy solutions promoted	BT36	Support provided internally and to SMEs and VCSEs in the supply chain of the contract to adopt circular economy solutions.	staff expert hours	£101.00	1 day = £250	1.	Breakdown of staff hours aspect providing expert advice VCSEs/MSMEs, including the names that have been supported. 2. Specify the number of expert staff hours spent with each VCSE, MSME and the type of expert advice given. Information provided should be GDPR compliant.
	BT37	In-kind contributions to circular economy initiatives in the borough.	£ value	£1.00	Per £	1.	Details of the initiative that has been supported and how it encourages or contributes to the circular economy in the borough. 2. Breakdown of financial equivalent of contribution.
	BT38	Hard-to-recycle waste created in the contract diverted from landfill or incineration through recycling partnerships (e.g. Terracycle or equivalent).	tonnes	£96.70	1 tonne = £2000	1.	Report the total amount of hard to recycle waste on the contract that has been diverted through a dedicated scheme. 2. Provide details of any partner organization on the contract for the programme. 3. Provide information on the nature of the waste recycled to evidence the nature of recycling difficulties.
	BT39	Reduce waste created on the contract through reuse of products and materials.	tonnes	£96.70	1 tonne = £2000	1.	Provide evidence on the adopted benchmark/baseline and indicate how much of your total waste has been diverted from landfill. Provide both your waste diverted and your waste diverted above the benchmark/baseline. 2. Provide a breakdown of the waste diverted and describe the measures you have implemented to achieve this. Include supporting evidence such as waste certificates.
Sustainable procurement is promoted	BT40	Requirements or support for suppliers in the supply chain of the contract to demonstrate climate change and carbon reduction training e.g. SDG Academy courses and Supply Chain Sustainability School bronze or higher, or equivalent.	hrs (total session duration) *no. attendees	£105.58	1 session = £500	1.	Specify the total number of procurement contracts on this contract and the total number of contracts that have included sustainable procurement commitments on this contract including training. 3. Provide a copy of your sustainable procurement policy or equivalent statement.

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Updated Social Value Policy and Framework Action Plan

Objective: To build on our social value foundation by incorporating innovative systems and tried-and-tested practices from organisations with successful social value models to maximise the opportunities of creating positive outcomes for the planet, places, and people of Barnet through our supply chain.

Refreshing the policy will better align social value with Our Plan for Barnet and our Sustainability Strategy, Sustainable Commercial Strategy and Reducing Poverty and Community Wealth Building Strategy.

Timeline:

Item	Deadlines
Update TOMs	31 August 2023
Develop SV Matrix and monitoring tools	31 August 2023
Update Social Value Policy	8 September 2023
Leaders Cabinet Briefing	19 September 2023
Final cleared report	9 October 2023
Cabinet meeting	18 October 2023
Start of Implementation	27 October 2023
Social Value Report shared with CMT	26 April 2024
Cleared Social Value Report shared with Cabinet	2 May 2024

Responsible Parties:

Name	Job Title	Role
Lwazi Ngubane	Social Investment Officer	Lead officer for Social Value
Liz Cowie	Assistant Director Strategy, Communications & Engagement	Lead officer for Reducing Poverty and Community Wealth Building
Tim Campbell	Interim Assistant Director (Commercial and Procurement)	Procurement Lead
Susan Lowe	Senior Business Partner	Procurement Specialist
Oli Pinch	Business Engagement Manager	Lead officer for Business Engagement
Ellen Jennings	Senior Workstream Coordinator - Sustainability	Sustainability contact for Social Value initiatives
John Bryson	Welfare, Employment and Skills Programme Manager	Lead officer for Employment and Skills
Barry May	Assistant Director, Resident Experience & Digital	Lead officer for Digital Inclusion

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

Step 1: Establish a cross-functional team.

Objective: Assemble a team representing various service areas to oversee the policy and framework update.

The Social Value Task Group (SVTG), a pan-council group comprising of 26 representatives from various service areas, developed the existing policy and will be heavily involved in refreshing this policy and framework.

Step 2: Review existing policy and assess corporate objectives.

Objective: Assess the current social value policy and framework to identify areas that need to be updated or improved.

Tasks:

- Review the existing policy and framework.
 - Identify its strengths and weaknesses.
 - Identify areas that are not in-line with our new corporate objectives and strategies.
 - Document areas requiring updates.
-

Step 3: Stakeholder engagement.

Objective: Gather input and insights from internal and external stakeholders to inform the policy update.

Tasks:

- Schedule individual meetings and focus group sessions with key internal and external stakeholders to inform the policy. Internally will be SVTG members and externally will be peers from other local authorities and housing associations.
 - Analyse feedback and identify key priorities.
 - Attend Social Value network meetings and conferences to become more informed on the best practices and challenges other organisations face.
-

Step 4: Define updated objectives.

Objective: Establish clear objectives for the updated policy and framework.

Tasks:

- Incorporate stakeholder feedback into defining objectives.
 - Ensure objectives address the shortcomings of the current policy.
 - Set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals.
-

Step 5: Policy and TOMs modification.

Objective: Modify the social value policy and TOMs based on the defined objectives and stakeholder input.

Tasks:

- Draft the updated social value policy including new strategic additions and changes.
 - Update TOMs to align with corporate themes, objectives and priorities.
 - Ensure alignment with current regulations and standards.
-

Step 6: Develop measuring and reporting mechanisms, and the Social Value Matrix.

Objective: Establish measurement methods, and tools to monitor outcomes and impact of social value.

Tasks:

- Identify relevant social, economic, and environmental metrics (National TOMs).
 - Develop monitoring tools and a reporting process.
 - Develop Social Value Matrix to capture crucial granular details in tenders such a quantities, milestones, responsible persons, and method statement.
 - Determine the frequency of data collection and reporting.
-

Step 7: Approval and Adoption

Objective: Gain formal approval from the council leaders and officially adopt the updated policy and framework.

Tasks:

- Present the final draft of the refreshed policy and framework, along with requisite papers, to CMT and Cabinet.
 - Policy and framework must go through clearance between CMT and Cabinet meetings.
 - Consultation with external stakeholders such as residents and local businesses may be required.
 - Develop a communication plan for internal and external stakeholders to announce the adoption.
-

Step 8: Implementation

Objective: Implement the updated policy and framework across the organisation.

Tasks:

- Provide training and guidance to existing and new contract managers to ensure everyone understands the framework.
 - Establish monitoring and reporting expectations.
 - Start developing Social Value e-learning for colleagues across the council.
 - Publicise the resources – TOMs, Updated Toolkit.
 - Allocate resources and budgets as needed for implementation – procurement will provide funds.
 - Monitor progress and make adjustments as necessary.
-

Step 9: Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Objective: Continuously assess the effectiveness of the updated policy and framework and make improvements as needed.

Tasks:

- Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of social value framework and if it is achieving its purpose.
 - During the implementation stage, evaluate monthly. Once framework is fully functional, evaluate annually.
 - Solicit ongoing feedback from stakeholders - mainly businesses in the supply chain or those that have bid for contracts.
 - Make adjustments and enhancements based on data and insights.
-

Step 10: Social Value Reporting and Transparency

Objective: Communicate social value progress and outcomes transparently. Social Value Report produced annually.

Tasks:

- As part of the training for contract manager, expectations regarding reporting should be established.
 - The Social Investment Officer must receive bi-annual reports of progress from contract managers.
 - Halfway through and at the end of the fiscal year.
 - Contract manager must request reports from suppliers in-line with the organisation's reporting timeline.
 - Share outcomes with colleagues, stakeholders, and the public on an annual basis – end of fiscal year.
 - Internal colleagues will be informed bi-annually.
 - Celebrate successes – work closely with comms team on campaigns.
-

Step 11: Review and Iterate

Objective: Periodically review and iterate on the social value policy and framework to remain responsive to changing needs and challenges.

Tasks:

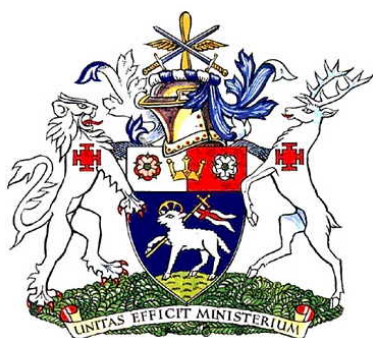
- Schedule annual reviews of the policy and framework.
 - Consider emerging social, environmental, and economic trends and adjust approach accordingly.
 - In particular TOMs as they should always reflect our priorities at a given time.
-

Step 12: Prepare for the next reporting period.

Objective: Ensure all tasks at the end of the fiscal year are completed, documents are stored for future reference and a new monitoring worksheet is prepared.

Tasks:

- Social Value Report produced at the end of the fiscal year as aforementioned.
 - Shared with colleagues, external stakeholders and publicly.
- Archive all relevant documents, feedback, and reports.
- Produce a new SV monitoring worksheet which should be clear of data.
- Identify suppliers that are struggling with their commitments and provide support to contract manager to ensure progress is made.

Cabinet

Title	Corporate Parenting Annual Reports
Date of meeting	18 October 2023
Report of	Councillor Pauline CoakleyWebb, Cabinet Member for Family Friendly Barnet
Wards	All
Status	Public
Key	Non-key
Urgent	No
Appendices	<p>Appendix A – Corporate Parenting Annual Report</p> <p>Appendix B – Fostering Annual Report</p> <p>Appendix C – Adopt North London Annual Report</p> <p>Appendix D – Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report</p> <p>Appendix E – Virtual School Annual Report</p> <p>Appendix F – CLCH LAC Health Annual Report</p>
Lead Officer	Chris Munday, Executive Director Children & Families
Officer Contact Details	<p>Brigitte Jordaan, Director of Children Social Care</p> <p>Brigitte.jordaan@barnet.gov.uk</p> <p>Kate Jeffery, Head of Service Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Kate.jeffery@barnet.gov.uk</p>
Summary	
<p>The reports provide an update on activity and performance of Children and Families, Education and Health services for 2022 - 23 to demonstrate the progress that is being made on delivering against Barnet Council’s pledge to the children in our care and care experienced young adults.</p>	

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet note the contents of Corporate Parenting Annual Reports
2. That the reports be referred to Council for noting, to ensure understanding of their statutory role as corporate parents and to be aware of progress and challenges for services to children in our care and care experienced young adults

1. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 1.1 The services providing care and support to the children in our care and care experienced young adults prepare the annual report that sets out the activity, performance and achievements of services and most importantly of the children and young adults. As corporate parents, the councillors must be kept informed on how the services are meeting the wholistic needs of the children and young adults.
- 1.2 Our children in care and care experienced young adults have over the last year continued to show such impressive motivation and resilience as they face a complex world that is harder than ever to navigate. Our Corporate Parenting responsibilities across the whole council has continued to strengthen over the last year with even more collaboration with colleagues across the council and partner agencies in Education, Health and the voluntary sector. We have seen progress in placement stability despite the significant national challenges in placement sufficiency, permanency planning for our very young children has been more timely with court timescales improving and for our older children work experience projects have expanded. Education outcomes continue to improve despite our children having lost so much learning during the pandemic and our local offer for care experienced young adults demonstrates the partnership working that is delivering on our Independent Living Programmes with Education, Housing, Revenue and benefits, the Live Unlimited Charity and Adult Services. We are very proud of what services have achieved for our children and young adults but that would not be possible without the strength of the child and young person's voice that directs us to develop services and opportunities that respond to them and show that what they say matters.
- 1.3 In June 2021 Ofsted completed a focussed visit looking at service to children in care and 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 and 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. The most recent quarterly report shows ongoing improvements and evidence that the audit actions are being used in supervision to reflect on practice.
- 1.4 The Corporate Parenting report sets our progress against the 6 pledges within the Corporate Parenting Strategy
- 1.5 The Fostering report informs on the recruitment activity that is ongoing to increase the number of Barnet foster carers, the support that is in place for our foster carers and initiative being worked on to improve the capacity to ensure that when children cannot remain with their family they are placed locally, in the right place first time.
- 1.6 Legislation requiring local authorities to deliver adoption services through Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA) was passed in 2016 in the Education & Adoption Act. London RAA's were

launched in 2019. Adopt London North is a partnership between the six London boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, and Islington. The adoption functions of the six boroughs officially became part of Adopt London North on 1st October 2019, hosted by the London Borough of Islington as the lead partner. Adopt London North has responsibility for all adoption led services, delivering these on behalf of the local authorities. These include: • Recruitment and assessment of adoptive parents • Family finding for children in need of adoptive parents • Adoption support to adoptive families, adopted adults, and others impacted by adoption. The annual report provides details on these services for the year 2022/23.

1.7 Every child who is in our care has an independent reviewing officer assigned to them and they work alongside the child, the carers and the professional network to ensure that the child’s needs are fully understood, that their care arrangement is appropriate and meets the needs and provides an independent view on the progress of the care planning in place for the child. The report attached gives the overview of this work for the last year. 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: they meet regularly to review any practice concerns independently.

1.8 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

Consistent progress is being made to improve the educational outcomes and the report informs on these achievements across the academic year of 2022/23.

1.9 The Looked After Children Health team is a jointly commissioned serviced between Barnet Family Services and the ICB. The report attached sets out the activity and outcomes of the provider CLCH for 2022/23. The report reviews the delivery of health services to Barnet’s children in care, and discusses achievements made for the year in accordance with statutory guidance, as well as service improvements and plans for further developments. It reviews performance indicators and summarises the data in relation to Initial and Review health assessments, indicating where assessments have not been achieved and provides rationale for this.

2. Alternative Options Considered and Not Recommended

None

3. Post Decision Implementation	
None	
4. Corporate Priorities, Performance and Other Considerations	
<p>Corporate Plan</p> <p>4.1 Corporate parenting services to children in care and care experienced young adults that keeps children safe from harm and enables them to thrive into adulthood is part of the council’s Family Friendly vision ‘where children and young people have the best start in life with the best education, the right support and safeguarding when they need it, and the right tools to live their lives successfully into adulthood’.</p> <p>Corporate Performance / Outcome Measures</p> <p>4.2 Not applicable for this report</p> <p>Sustainability</p> <p>4.3 Not applicable for this report</p> <p>Corporate Parenting</p> <p>4.4 In line with Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Council has a duty to consider Corporate Parenting Principles in decision-making across the Council. The outcomes and priorities in the refreshed Corporate Plan, Barnet 2024, reflect the Council’s commitment to the Corporate Parenting duty to ensure the most vulnerable are protected and the needs of children are considered in everything that the Council does.</p> <p>Risk Management</p> <p>4.5 Not applicable for this report</p> <p>Insight</p> <p>4.6 Not applicable for this report</p> <p>Social Value</p> <p>4.7 Not applicable for this report</p>	
5. Resource Implications (Finance and Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT and Property)	
None	
6. Legal Implications and Constitution References	
6.1	(legal)
6.1	Under the Council’s Constitution, Part 2D the terms of reference states that Cabinet is responsible for the following functions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of proposals for the budget (including the capital and revenue budgets, the fixing of the Council Tax Base, and the level of Council Tax) and the financial strategy for the Council;

- Monitoring the implementation of the budget and financial strategy;
- Recommending major new policies (and amendments to existing policies) to the Council for approval as part of the Council's Policy Framework and implementing those approved by Council;
- Approving policies that are not part of the policy framework;
- Management of the Council's Capital Programme;

7. Consultation

No consultation required for this report

8. Equalities and Diversity

8.1 Decision makers should have due regard to the public sector equality duty in making their decisions. The equalities duties are continuing duties they are not duties to secure a particular outcome. The equalities impact will be revisited on each of the proposals as they are developed. Consideration of the duties should precede the decision. It is important that Cabinet has regard to the statutory grounds in the light of all available material such as consultation responses. The statutory grounds of the public sector equality duty are found at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and are as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, 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.

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:

- a) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- b) 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;
- c) 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.

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.

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:

- a) Tackle prejudice, and
- b) Promote understanding.

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:

- a) Age
- b) Disability
- c) Gender reassignment
- d) Pregnancy and maternity
- e) Race
- f) Religion or belief
- g) Sex
- h) Sexual orientation
- i) Marriage and civil partnership

9. Background Papers

None

CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT 2022- 2023



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Foreword

Our children in care and care experienced young adults have over the last year continued to show such impressive grit and resilience as they face a complex world that is harder than ever to navigate. Our Corporate Parenting responsibilities across the whole council has continued to strengthen over the last year with even more collaboration with colleagues across the council and partner agencies in Education, Health and the voluntary sector. We have seen progress in placement stability despite the significant national challenges in placement sufficiency, permanency planning for our very young children has been more timely with court timescales improving and for our older children work experience projects have expanded, education outcomes continue to improve despite our children having lost so much learning during the pandemic and our local offer for care experienced young adults demonstrates the partnership working that is delivering on our Independent Living Programmes with Education, Housing, Revenue and benefits, the Live Unlimited Charity and Adult service. I am very proud of what services have achieved for our children and young adults but that would not be possible without the strength of the child and young person's voice that directs us to develop services and opportunities that respond to them and show that what they say matters.

Brigitte Jordaan – Director of Corporate Parenting and Disability

Introduction

Across 2022/2023 we progressed our blueprint developed over the previous years in how we have delivered services to ensure children and young adults continue to feel held, supported and making progress to achieve their individual successes. 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, while offering the flexibility of remote working when a creative approach was needed. Staff returned to and remained in their work environments, ensuring the seamless approach to intervention and support. We ensured that vulnerable children remained connected to their families and wider social networks to promote their sense of safety, well-being and belonging.

During their June 2021 focussed visit, 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.

The most recent quarterly report shows ongoing improvements and evidence that the audit actions are being used in supervision to reflect on practice. The audits graded as Requires improvement indicate that supervision recordings and management oversight need to show more of the reflective discussions that take place and the rationale for decisions.

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. Dip sampling shows that the quality of these plans is mostly good, are child focussed and written from the child's perspective. Consistency and ensuring all plans and actions for a child are aligned would strengthen practice.

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 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 where appropriate.

Placement stability continues to improve and since April 2023 194 children and young people have remained in their homes, 76 children have had 2 placements, and 35 young people have had 3 or more placements. The low number of multiple placement moves is a result of intensive work to understand the needs of the child, supporting carers with comprehensive packages including clinical support and working closely with external providers to ensure good quality of care. Many of these young people have moved addresses with the same provider or in the case of infants have moved from the hospital to a parent assessment unit to either foster care or home with parent. These moves are planned and in line with the permanency planning for a child.

In 2021 we commissioned the Bright Spots Survey in partnership with Coram Voice and the Rees Centre. This survey undertaken in May – June 2021 saw 176 (54%) of children and young people and 116 (33%) of care experienced adults share their views anonymously. The survey indicated that the majority of children and young people know and trust their social worker, feel involved in decisions made about their lives and feel safe where they live. The report indicated that for care leaver, the majority of young adults have a positive and trusting relationship with their Personal Advisors 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 Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021 – 2023 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 2022/23 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. We have ensured all children have access to a laptop or tablet.
- 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).
- Launched a 18-25 NEET to EET panel as part of the Care Experienced EET project, which will be extend to include 16 and 17 year olds with support from the Virtual School, supporting young people's progression into Education, Employment and Training.
- Developed a horticulture programme for care experienced young people at our leaving care hub. This bespoke 12-week programme is for UASC/former UASC young people to gain skills in horticulture, as a pathway to employment
- Developed an onsite English as a Second Language provision delivered at the Leaving Care Centre; 12 young people have enrolled and will graduate in June 2023.
- Bridging the Gap and Thrive programs have continued to run throughout the 2022/2023 and 127 young people have participated on the program, with 57 successfully completing the program; 3 young people commenced a traineeship, 5 young people commenced an apprenticeship and 37 started employment.
- With our charity Live Unlimited, we have supported 46 young people through the imagination unlimited fund, supporting young people with items to help them reach their potential and improve their health and well-being, including purchasing bicycles and training courses in football, boxing and cricket, a keyboard and a sewing machine.

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

We know from our Bright Spots completed in 2021 that 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.". Audits completed across the year also demonstrated that social

workers have continued to work hard engaging with children and young people and listening to their wishes and feelings, with 86% of audits graded as Good in the domain of Child Voice and Engagement.

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:

- Promoted the Think Care Leaver ethos across Family Services and more widely across the Council
- 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, whilst also engaging in virtual communication on occasion in line with young people’s wishes and feelings.
- Developed the life-long offer of support for care experienced young people embedded within our revised and updated Local Offer; young adults are contacted at 6-monthly intervals and reminded of this offer available to them.
- 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.
- Continued to offer support for children and young people to have their voices heard and views listened too. In partnership with our commissioned advocacy service Action for Children we completed 52 referrals and provided advocacy support to 98 children and young people.
- 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 ensuring children and young people are supported through ‘rocky’ periods, including promoting our out of hours offer to foster carers every weeknight and over the weekend.
- 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; through the Virtual School Mentoring program, 13 referrals were received and 18 young people supported.
- 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 due to open in Spring 2023.
- Expanded our children's home provisions with plans to develop a solo-placement for one young person, acting as a 'circuit breaker' accommodation to provide them with a place of stability and safety whilst we assess and better understand their needs to identify their longer-term accommodation option.
- Continued to support children with our internal residential accommodation options, including a therapeutic children's home, regular children's home and semi-independent accommodation.
- We have developed a bespoke offer of care and support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and former UASC young adults through the provision of a specific UASC team.
- We are developing a Through Care Team to strengthen support offer for vulnerable 16 and 17 year old requiring more support to achieve independence;
- In partnership with Barnet Homes, we have developed 22 Woodhouse Road, a shared accommodation provision for former -UASC young, supporting them through key worker support to develop the necessary independence skills whilst waiting for their asylum claim to be progressed allowing them to access their permanent accommodation.
- Refurbished the Onwards & Upwards care leaver hub in our continued efforts to make the centre more accessible to young people and partners delivery services and providing a home for young people to return to.

We will support your mental and physical health

Throughout 2022/2023 we have:

- Continued to provide different activities, from gym membership and cooking classes, to volunteering opportunities for children, young people and care experienced young adults.
- 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.
- Developed a mental health pathway for young people transitioning out of care and requiring support from adult mental health services through the multi-agency Mental Health Transitions panel which now includes a referral pathway for young people at 17.5 years into adult services.

- For care experienced adults we have enhanced our mental health offer through a bespoke Mental Health transitions practitioner and 4 MH pathways for a trauma informed approaches to working with and supporting young people.
- Enhanced our training offer for Personal Advisors working with young people displaying trauma-informed behaviour, including the completion of KUF to better support young people with Personality diagnosis and/or presentation and mentalisation training with the Early Years Parenting Hub
- Enhanced the wrap-around support through our bespoke therapeutic support in a home environment at Greenbank 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.
- Progressed our Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy and our response to the national Autism Strategy to ensure that children who have additional needs are appropriately supported.
- In partnership with our charity Live Unlimited, we provided 448 hours at the Outdoor Club for 17 children aged between 6-18 years through 1 6-weeks and 2 7-week programs allowing children and young people to connect with nature, learn new skills, take risks, build confidence, improve their well-being, reduce anxiety and make new friends.
- Progressed a number of positive activities with our children in care council (BOP) including go-karting, bowling and launched a football team with training sessions in preparation for a tournament against LBB staff team.

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

Throughout 2022 / 22 we have:

- 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 record 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 25 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. Personal Advisors remained in touch with 100% of young people and visits to children in care remained strong at 73%.
- 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.

- We have continued to provide an improved advocacy service in response to the Ofsted recommendation and seen an increase in children and young people accessing this service with 98 children and young people accessing advocacy services in the last 12 month period and 52 referrals made. Advocacy service for care leavers continues to provide an onsite provision at the Woodhouse Road Care Leaver Hub.

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 2022/23 we have:

- Strengthened 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 12% of 17-18 years olds living with their former foster carer and a further 7% of 19-21 year olds living with their former foster carers and supported lodgings hosts.
- Meadow Close our 16+ semi-independent provision for 16-21 year olds to support young people preparing for adulthood. Throughout the year, it maintained good occupancy rate with 7 young people residing in the provision throughout the year.
- Developed the independent living project 'We Built This Home'; a series of workshops that will support independent living skills through both practical skills training alongside health, personal care, nutrition, cooking, budgeting and finance. O&U has become an accredited ASDAN provider, and will be launching the first ASDAN module for independent living in April 2023
- Continued promoting 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; 57 young people have registered and 14 care experienced young adults have completed the program. 9 young people are currently active in completing the steps (1-5).
- Continued our commitment that whereby all care experienced young adults have access to their health histories to support them in their adult years with their Health Passport
- Developed a specific pathway of independence for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) including developing a specific UASC team embedded in Onwards & Upwards, working collaboratively with the Home Office on the Children's Streamlined Asylum Process (SAP)
- Continued our positive partnership working with Barnet Homes to ensure that all young people aged 16.5 are supported with housing nomination forms to assist their transition to independent living upon their 18th birthday or when they are appropriately ready. As part of this ongoing partnership, we plan to launch the Care Leaver Housing Panel in Summer 2023.
- 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. This acquisitions programme has generate a review of options for care experienced young adults and has resulted in care experienced parents being moved to 2-bedroomed properties and their original smaller property being ring-fenced for care experienced young adults.
- Maintained the services of a designated work coach in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions based at the Onwards and Upwards building offering advice and guidance to care experienced young people.
- Provided driving lessons to 20 young people through our partnership work with the charity, Live Unlimited's Driving Ahead scheme, with 7 young people / young adults taking their driving test and 6 successfully passing, despite ongoing difficulties booking diving tests.
- Maintained an average of 65% (up from 61%) of care experienced young adults remaining in education, employment and training, despite the significant hardship young people aged 18-24 experienced living through the Covid pandemic.

We will celebrate children & young people, their achievements, identity, and culture

Throughout 2022/2023 we have:

- Continued to 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 in person, including
 - o The Children in Care Summer Celebration event attended by over 200 children, carers and staff volunteers in July

- The annual summer BBQ for care leavers in August, the inaugural Care Leaver Conference as part of National Care Leavers Week, an Eid Celebration and a Christmas Party.
- Foster Care Fortnight in May, Foster Care Appreciation Day in October and 2 long-term matching celebrations for children and young people matched with their permanent carers throughout the care and a Christmas party 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.
- Progressed our commitment in providing a rolling 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.
- Despite national challenges to recruitment, we have remained committed to recruiting 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 services through the bespoke UASC team
- Supporting LGBT Youth in Care to attend online engagement session for care experienced children and young people as part of the contract with The Department for Education and Coram Voice. This session is focused on **'Being me' How can social workers support my identity (LGBTQ+)**.

Voice of the Child

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 several in person events and development of our engagement strategy, My Say Matters. We have progressed the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2023 ensuring that 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 with 98 children and young people accessing advocacy services throughout the year. This is being reflected in practice, with most audits under the domain Child’s Voice and Engagement being graded as ‘good’.

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. Excellent feedback has been received from children and their carers many of whom travelled from outside London to attend. Feedback from carers noted positive reflections on the range of activities available for children and young people, the opportunity for children and young people to spend time with their social worker and the pride young people felt at the awards ceremony. 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.

In November as part of our celebration of National Care Leavers Week, we hosted the inaugural Care Leaver Conference focusing on the theme of Black History month which took place at StoneX Stadium in Hendon. The day was coproduced by young people who throughout the year had requested an opportunity to come together with peers and be provided with inspiring and information stalls and guest speakers showcasing both opportunities available to them, alongside celebrating the diversity and beauty of the global majority. The day featured both guest speakers and stalls, alongside Caribbean lunch, steel pan workshops, art-making workshops and featured performances from our talented care experienced. Feedback from one of the guest speakers;

The event was well organised, staff members were welcoming, was great to see the BHM displays, I enjoyed the entertainment and of course the food. But most importantly, all the guest speakers shared a powerful message and there was plenty of time in the programme for people to reflect and connect. I spoke to a young person and was impressed by his wisdom, keen to facilitate more opportunities for him and others to express their talents.

Plans are underway to ensure a care leaver conference is an annual event embedded within our calendar of events celebrating Barnet's community of care experienced adults.

Throughout the year, the events planned included the views and contributions from the children and young people and the Expert by experienced was instrumental in planning the Care leaver events. BOP has also been involved in the development of services;

- BOP members 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.

Children in Care Profile

Barnet has continued to have a stable figure of children coming into care with 335 children in care on 31st March 2023. 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 while the younger children coming into care are increasingly being placed with family members as their connected carers, allowing them to continue living within their familiar family network.

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 (52%) of these children and young people, it is on account of abuse and neglect,

The following table shows our cohort of children in care (335) as at 31st March 2023:

		LAC	UASC	Total
Gender	Male	53%	98%	61%
	Female	47%	2%	39%
Ethnicity	Any Other Ethnicity	7%	47%	14%
	Asian	3%	33%	8%
	Black	14%	7%	13%
	Gypsy/Roma	1%	0%	1%
	Mixed	31%	0%	26%
	White	43%	9%	37%
	Not Stated	1%	4%	2%
Age on Starting Care	0 to 10	57%	0%	36%
	11 to 13	14%	0%	13%
	14 to 15	12%	15%	14%
	16 to 17	18%	85%	37%

There has been a continued decline in children aged 0-10 coming into care currently at 36%, previously at 48% in 2021/2022, 64% in 2020/2021 and 67% in 2020/2019. This was previously attributed to a decrease in referrals from the early years provisions and school due to Covid restrictions. The older adolescents are coming into care with complex presentations from years of living in complex and traumatic home environments, with challenging behavioural needs requiring additional support packages to provide them with the much needed stability and security.

Older young people aged 16-17 has continued to represent a larger proportion of our children in care population at 37%, the majority (85%) of these young people being unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Older children, aged 16 -17, have continued to struggle in the care of their parents and have sought assistance and support outside of their family network which has led to referrals into social care. 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 through three different legal pathways; 38% of children were voluntary accommodated under S.20 of the Children's Act (1989), 35% were subject to Care Orders and in our care for the duration of their childhood and 22% 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 the previous 2 years. 3% of children had been granted placement orders and were waiting either for the Court to endorse their forever family with the making of an Adoption Order or for family finding to identify and match them with adopters. Throughout the year Barnet had 6 children in early permanence placements, whereby young children, usually babies are placed with dual approved adopters and foster carers. The benefit of this care arrangement is that children are placed at the earliest opportunity with carers who have been identified and matched to meet their needs and provide them with their permanent home. While

the adoption is not guaranteed, this arrangement ensures children are provided with the stability of one potential separation from their primary caregiver, usually their birth parent, reduces points of transition and aids their life story journey, as their first non-family member carer is potentially their last.

Case study: Daisy and Marco's story

Daisy was known to the local authority as part of a pre-birth assessment given concerns for her mother and father's learning difficulties and their limited support network, suggesting it would be a challenge for them to identify the needs of a baby and respond appropriately.

Daisy was referred to Adopt London North initially as a part of parallel plan for adoption. At the time she was living with her mother in a residential mother and baby unit. Following the positive assessment, she then moved to a mother and baby foster placement for a further period of review and monitoring. Sadly, while in the foster placement, Daisy was injured in the care of her mother, and was immediately removed from her parent's care and placed in foster care. At the same time, her mother was pregnant with her brother Marco, and it was likely, given the professionals' worries for the parents' ability to safety care for their children that Marco would also be removed and require alternate carers outside the family network.

Early permanence carers were identified for Daisy and Marco whereby the children would be able to remain living together as siblings. Daisy moved in with her carers Ben and Holly in August 2022 and Marco moved in to live with his sister in November when he was aged 3 days.

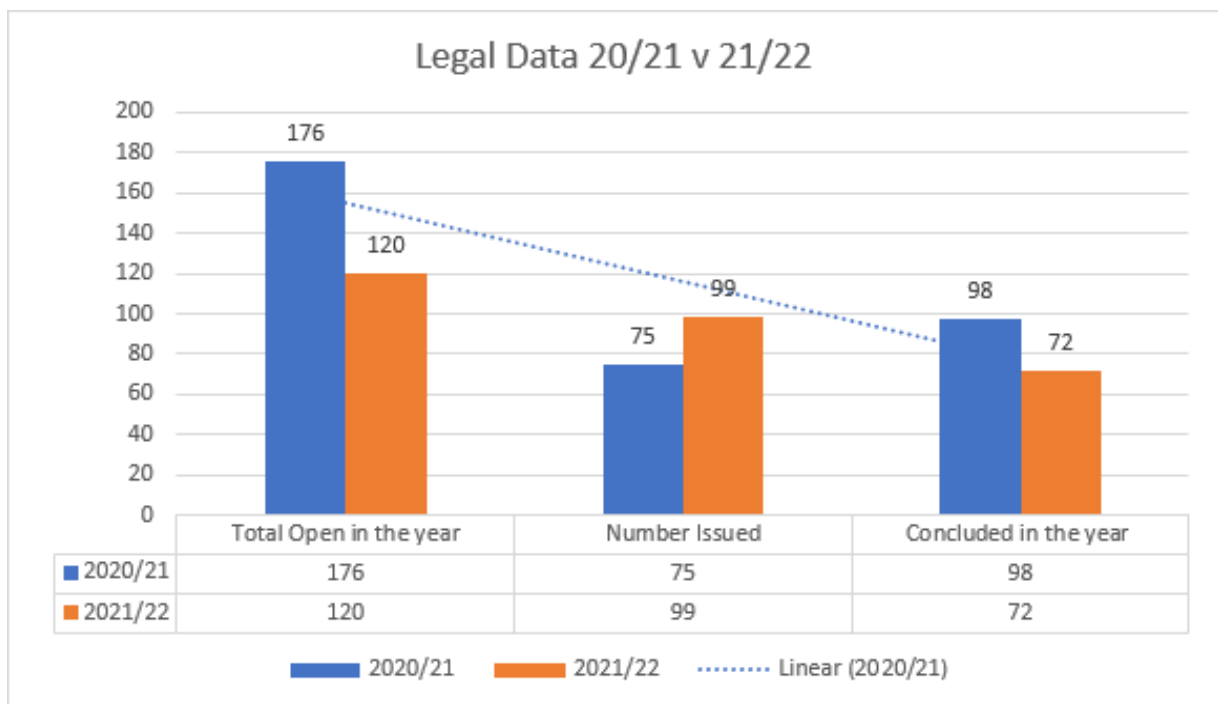
Marco and Daisy continue to live with Ben and Holly, where they are well integrated into family life with their prospective adoptive parents. Daisy is attending nursery and Marco is thriving aged 6 months. Ben and Holly have met Daisy and Marco's birth parents during contact sessions which is a strength for these children to know their life story as they grow.

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 79 children, a significant decrease from the 99 children in the previous year.

72 children had their care proceedings concluded within the Court, similar figures to 2021/2022, achieving permanence in their care arrangements, through the following:

- 44 children (61%) achieved permanence through alternative care arrangements outside of the care of their birth families, up from 52% in previous year.
 - 3 children (4%) 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, a steady figure over the years

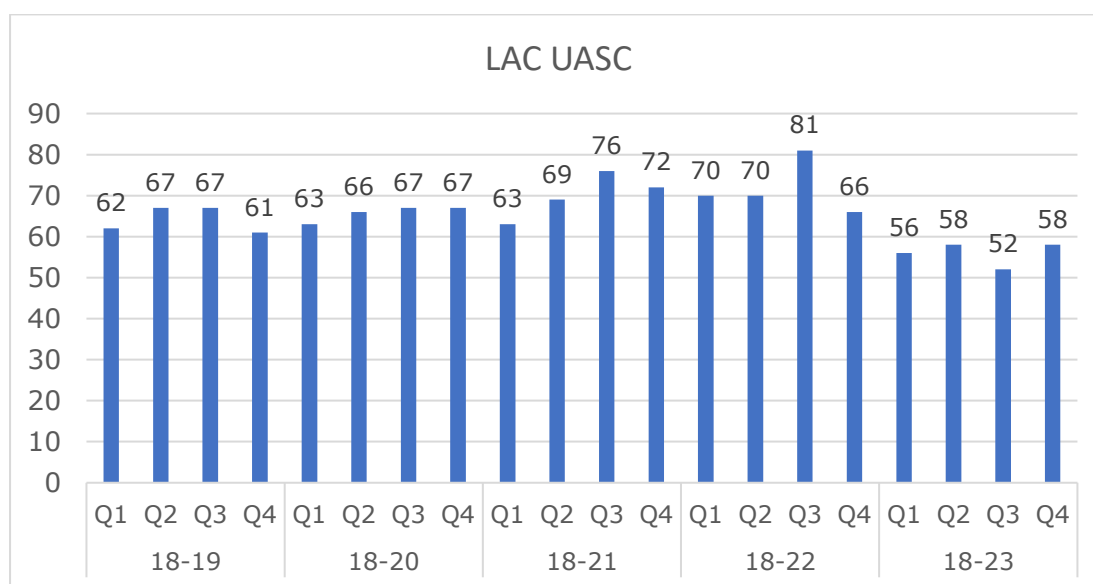
- 20 children (27%) were placed in the care of their wider families by virtual of Special Guardianship orders, an increasing upward trend
- 38 (53%) children remain or have returned home to their birth families and will remain subject to continued intervention and monitoring by Family Services, however they are no longer children in care.
 - 22 children (30%) were returned home to the care of their parents under a Supervision Order, up from 23% in 2021/2022
 - 10 children were returned home to their families under No Order, including a group of 7 children who were rehabilitated to their mother’s care in Germany
 - 3 children were subject to a Forced Marriage Protection Order
 - 3 children were withdrawn from care proceedings
 - 5 children (6%) were returned home to their families under a Child Arrangement Order



Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Throughout the year, Barnet has continued to see a decrease in number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) coming into care (see below table) from previous years. At the end of March 2023, 56 of our children in care were UASC, a significant decrease of 68 from 2021/2022. In response to the changing need of our young people and the referral process, with the majority of children being

referred into Barnet through the mandated National Transfer Scheme (NTS) rather than presenting in borough or through being placed as adults in hotel accommodation at one of the 5 Home Office contingency sites, we developed a bespoke Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Team based within our leaving care service. The UASC team works with all unaccompanied asylum seeking children and is comprised of social workers and personal advisors, embedded within 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



In March 2023, we launched on-site ESOL provision for UASC/former UASC. 2 CIC and 18+ young people completed the inaugural ESOL course. It ran from 20/3/23 to 21/6/23. Prior to this programme, 12 of this group of young people had been Not Engaged in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The impact of the onsite provision is measurable beyond their educational achievements. The class formed close and supportive friendships, or as they have self-described the group, a “brotherhood” has been formed. Onwards and Upwards plan to hold a Graduation Ceremony to celebrate their achievements later in the year.

UASC Housing

Seeking to replicate a similar model of minimised transitions, we partnered with Barnet Homes to acquire a stand-alone property of studio accommodation for young people who were looked after as children seeking asylum and who are ready to develop their independent living skills as adults. The model developed allows the young people to remain at the property until they receive a substantive decision from the Home Office, and where this is positive, until they are nominated for their permanent accommodation by Barnet Homes. The vision was to offer a local accommodation option close to the office for no recourse asylum-seeking young people approaching their 18th birthday, so that there would be increased oversight, support, contact and welfare checks for the residents. A

property on Woodhouse Road, Easy Finchley was identified and the first young person moved in to the property in November 2022. As at March 2023, 2 young people have moved in and there are plans for all 6 available rooms to be occupied by Summer 2023. All young people have access to floating support key work hours weekly.

Resident young people have given the following feedback:

- *it's great that we can see our PA who works on the same road, it has saved me time and money*
- *we are a small family and all have become good friends*
- *we don't have to pay bills and this gives us the chance to save our money for our future*
- *we all are care leavers which is nice as we understand each other*

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 in 2021/2022. There has been an increase in children receiving SEND support with 45 (24%) children and young people up from 34 (17.8%). There has also been an increasing trend of children and young people receiving support through an Education and Health Care Plan over the past three years. 32.8% of all looked after children have been assessed as having additional needs requiring the support provided through an EHCP, compared to 24.9% in 2019/2020. This is likely a result of the trauma many children experience prior to coming into care, and the adverse childhood experiences (ACES) which subsequently impact on their capacity to learn, socialise and settle in a school environment. The UASC cohort of statutory school age children has continued the reduction trend seen in previous years, now at 21 compared to 28 in 2021/2022 and 35 in 2020/2021, whereby UASC young people are entering care as older adolescents and requiring the support and service of college education opposed to statutory secondary schooling.

The below table illustrate the key performance indicators the education provision for our young people:

		2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	
	Nursery		11	12	13	14	
	% of children SEN support			2	1	3	
	% of children with EHCPs			3	1	2	
Statutory age group	Statutory age	191	196	195	191	186	
	Reception		4	7	8	8	
	Key Stage 1		16	14	15	21	
	Key Stage 2		43	37	45	45	
	Key Stage 3		51	53	52	48	
	Key Stage 4		82	84	71	64	
	Male/female	111/80	113/83	109/86	108/83	115/71	
	% of children from ethnic minority groups		70.6%	73.3%	68.1%	67.2%	
	% of children SEN support		19.8% (39)	21.5% (42)	17.8% (34)	24% (45)	
	% of children with EHCPs			24.9% (49)	24.6% (48)	30.9% (59)	32.8% (61)
				O/B I/B	O/B I/B	O/B I/B	O/B I/B
				33 16	30 18	38 21	41 20
	Number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)	18	25	35	28	21	
Children without a school place		0	2	5	6		
Post 16 age group	Post 16	157	135	152	155	147	
	Male/female	113/44	96/39	113/39	111/44	102/45	
	% of children from ethnic minority groups		78.5%	79.6%	79.4%	83%	
	% of children with EHCPs			14%(19)	13.8%(21)	14.8% (23)	16.3% (24)
				O/B I/B	O/B I/B	O/B I/B	O/B I/B
				11 3	16 5	7 16	14 10
	Number of UASC	39	67	76	75	66	
	Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) Year 12		11	19	15	18	
NEET Year 13		14	14	22	20		

Not In Education, Employment or Training (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, who are even harder to engage in education or training.

In 2022, 38% of care leavers were NEET nationally (LAIT). Currently, we have 24.4% of our Year 12 and 13's who are NEET.

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. These young people are reviewed termly by the virtual school and will be further reviewed at the revised care leaver NEET to EET panel later in the year to ensure multi-agency tracking and consideration of their imminent transition to adulthood.

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

- Reading Club including a visit to the British Library
- Residential trip to Jamie's Farm for 5 UASC young people
- Visit to Kew Gardens for child and carer for 'Kew in Focus' activity
- Residential trip to Arvon with creative writing focus for 4 young people
- Strength and Learning through Horses
- Springboard Youth Academy – 3 week ESOL summer provision

In addition, 100 young people receive 6 Letterbox book packages across the year, provided by The Book Trust. 13 young people have instrumental lessons funded in their schools by Barnet Education Arts Trust. 22 young people also received theatre tickets to attend a West End production with their families.

Placement Sufficiency

Adhering to our *Who We Place Where* commitment of placing the children in the right care arrangement at the right time, 201 children (60%) of children are living with foster carers, a significant increase from 2021/2022 (52%). Within this arrangement 100 (30%) of these children live with Barnet foster carers and further 97 (29%) children live with independent foster carers, registered with independent fostering agencies. This evidences an increase of children living in a foster care arrangement up from 52% in 2021/2022 and a return to 2020/2021 figures (60%). Despite the continuation of shortage of foster carers nationally, internally we have 136 fostering households who can offer a home for 188 children. Although recruitment has continued, we have not been able to increase the number of foster care placements available for our children, sadly impacting placement choice and availability for more children. However, despite these ongoing challenges our recruitment drive has remained strong. There is also a continued focus of optimising the capacity of our inhouse carers.

Combining outreach events with online recruitment and using social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram has remained 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 4 fostering households and a further 6 supported lodgings hosts. This is a reduction from the 11 fostering households recruited in 2020/2021.

In July 2022 we released our fostering film, *The Difference is You* which was streamed across social media and London-based television channels channel 5, Barnet TV and local cinemas. This was followed by the UK-wide John Lewis Christmas advertisement supporting the need for more foster carers across the country.

34 family and friends carers were approved in 2022/2023, and 2 as temporary, non-permanent carers for children. This is a similar number to 2021/2022, where 34 carers were approved as family and friends and an additional 4 as non-permanent carers. These 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 and it 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.

The below table outlines the breakdown of placements for children in Barnet as at 31st March 2023:

Internal		
LBB Fostering	70	56%
Connected Persons (kinship)	35	28%
Placed for Adoption	5	4%
Internal Residential	7	6%
Parental	7	6%
All Internal	124	37%
External		
Agency Fostering	106	49%
Semi Independence	59	31%
External Residential	42	18%
Secure/YOI	4	2%
All External	211	60%
Overall Total	335	

Placement stability

The majority of children continue to live in homes with foster carers, in line with our *Who We Place Where* principles and our commitment to ensure that children are living in arrangements that best meet their individual needs. As outlined in the above, the profile of Barnet's looked after children has shifted, whereby older adolescents are entering the care system, often in crises and having traumatic life experiences displayed thought difficult and complex behavioural needs. A consequence of this is that professionals have a limited understanding of the young person's needs, and identifying the right placement initially is not easy. As highlighted in Ofsted's research, 'How local authorities plan for

sufficiency that meets the needs of children in care and care leavers' (published November 2022) noting that:

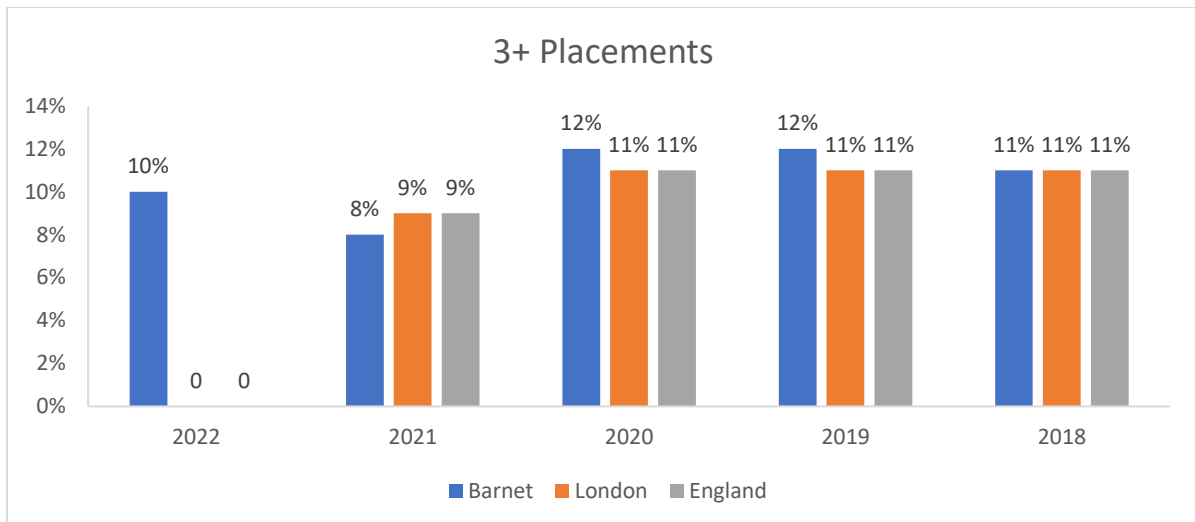
The complex and unpredictable nature of children's needs means the demand for places for children with some kinds of needs is difficult to forecast. As a result, too much time is spent responding to cases as they arise. This often leaves little time to think strategically (that is, with long-term aims, and how to achieve them, in mind). Even when local authorities can plan, there is often a lack of available accommodation and care for more complex needs.

The report highlighted the challenges of placement sufficiency across a national landscape, noting the complexities of an older profile of children, those requiring specialist provision supporting complex mental health needs, limited availability of secure accommodation for children and issues with the recruitment and retention of foster carers. Our placement sufficient strategy is to be reviewed later in the year in response to these known and emerging factors.

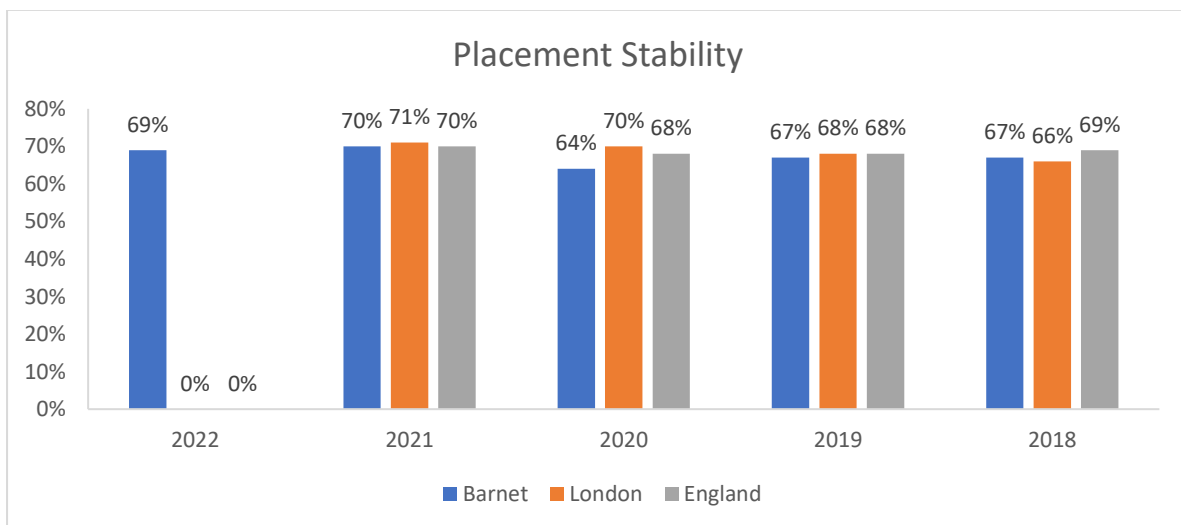
Despite this local and national landscape, we have successfully ensured that the majority of children and young people (194 children, 58%) experienced the stability of the same home, representing a decrease from 65% in 2021/2022 and 66% in 2020/2021. This shift is likely linked to the relatively stability of placements due to Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions in movement. 76 children moved placement up from 55 in the previous year while 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 continue to 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 chart below outlines the number of moves children and young people experienced during 2022/2023 with a 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:



Internal Residential Provisions

New Park House

New Park House 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. The home also provides emergency accommodation for children.

New Park House was inspected by Ofsted 21-22 February 2023, with an outcome of requires improvement to be good for the overall experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered that the home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people, however there were no failures identified that result in their welfare not being safeguarded

or promoted. The recommendations have been considered and the necessary actions completed to ensure compliance with the Ofsted requirement and regulations.

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 was repurposed from a children's home to 16+ provision in July 21 and has supported X 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-feeling of 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. Throughout the year there have been 4 children who have called Green Bank House home.

Ofsted undertook their first inspection of Greenbank House on 25 – 26 January 2023 and the outcome was graded with an overall rating of Good. The report noted:

Children like living in the home. One child said that staff are 'cool and helpful'. Children engage in activities that they have not had the opportunity to experience before, for example, going for a meal in a restaurant. One child likes to keep fit and attends a local martial arts club.

Children benefit from the integrated therapeutic model of care provided by two inhouse therapists. The clinical team provides individual sessions to children. When necessary, clinicians have brought in external professionals to complete specialist assessments. This ensures that drift and delay are minimised and children receive the correct support for their individual needs.

Moving Forward provisions

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

Between April 2022 and May 2022 there were 2 tenants, with one moving into his long-term accommodation in June and 3 new tenants moved into the property in summer 2022. From August 2022 to 31st March 2023 there were 4 tenants, therefore the property maintained 100% occupancy.

Throughout the year, the project has maintained the integrity of its exit pathway with 80% of the young people progressing to their permanent accommodation. One care leaver tenant was supported to access a period of transitional accommodation to further develop his ability to sustain the liability of independent living.

Feedback from residents at the Moving Forward project accommodation is that they feel supported. They experience supported opportunities to develop independence and manage the day-to-day responsibilities of managing a tenancy within a supported environment, including negotiating repairs and managing access requirements for contractors.

This project also has a 'the training flat', is a standalone provision and was the original moving forward project property. From April 2022 to March 2023 this project has maintained 100% occupancy. In December the property was vacated to enable refurbishment works to take place. Until these are completed, an alternative property has been provided by Barnet Homes, ring-fenced as the 'training flat'.

The flat is currently occupied by a young person who has additional care and support needs and requires a Care Assessment to be undertaken to support her progression to long-term accommodation. Before moving to the 'training flat', this young person was in denial about her care needs and unable to recognise that she would benefit from ongoing support to manage independence. The period of time at this accommodation has enabled her to test independent living skills in a supportive environment, and to have a better understanding of the realities of the liabilities of independent living.

Special Guardianship Children & Carers

Case Study: Jay's story

Jay is 11 and lives with grandfather Pat (78). Jay suffered neglect due to parents drug abuse and domestic violence and was removed from his parents care aged 3. Sadly, Jay's mother died when he was 8 and his grandmother died last year. Jay has suffered the loss of his two significant female care givers before this 10th birthday, and Roger was struggling to cope with his own grief while supporting his grandson.

Pat contacted the Carer Support Team initially requesting support regarding obtaining Jay's passport, however from that conversation, it became apparent the family may benefit from further Special Guardian support.

Jay and Pat were allocated to social worker for a support assessment and over the following 10 months a number of services and supports were identified and arranged for the family, this included:

- Developing rapport and trusting relationship between Pat and his allocated social worker, supporting him around identifying his feelings of grief and loss, including a referral to Kinship care for grief work and working with him to support Jay's needs;
- A referral to Grief Encounter and Jay is now accessing therapeutic support 1:1 at school
- Jay is now accessing positive activities through Barnet Young Carers and is engaged with Chicken Shed theatre and other positive activities.
- A multiagency team around the child meeting was held with Jay's school following concerns for how the family were coping. From this meeting, the school drew up a morning and bedtime routine for the family, and Pat was motivated to declutter the home creating more space for Jay.
- Support for Jay and Pat around father's contact including a contact review meeting and boundaries implement, following Jay becoming distressed after contact with father

- Supporting Pat to engage with Barnet’s Special Guardian community and encouraging him to attend the support group.
-

In 2022/2023, 20 children achieved stability through going to live with their wider family members under a Special Guardianship Order, up from 13 in 2021/2022. Throughout the year there were 151 Special Guardians who received a financial allowance from the Local Authority to support them in caring for 233 children.

In 2021/2022 we undertook a peer learning review regarding our Special Guardianship care arrangements and have reviewed and updated our Special Guardianship Procedures and our Financial Policy, which is due to be published later this year.

Following the review of our procedures, we have now committed to undertake an annual review of all Special Guardians, undertake 3 social work visits to the children and family in the first year following the making of the Special Guardianship Order and to provide all children with the opportunity of engaging in lifestory work. We have reviewed our Special Guardianship Policy and our Financial policy, both due to be published later in the year. In response to the Children’s Social Care Reforms, and their strategy Stable Homes Built on Love (published February 2023), we have strengthened our service provision.

In 2022/2023 we have:

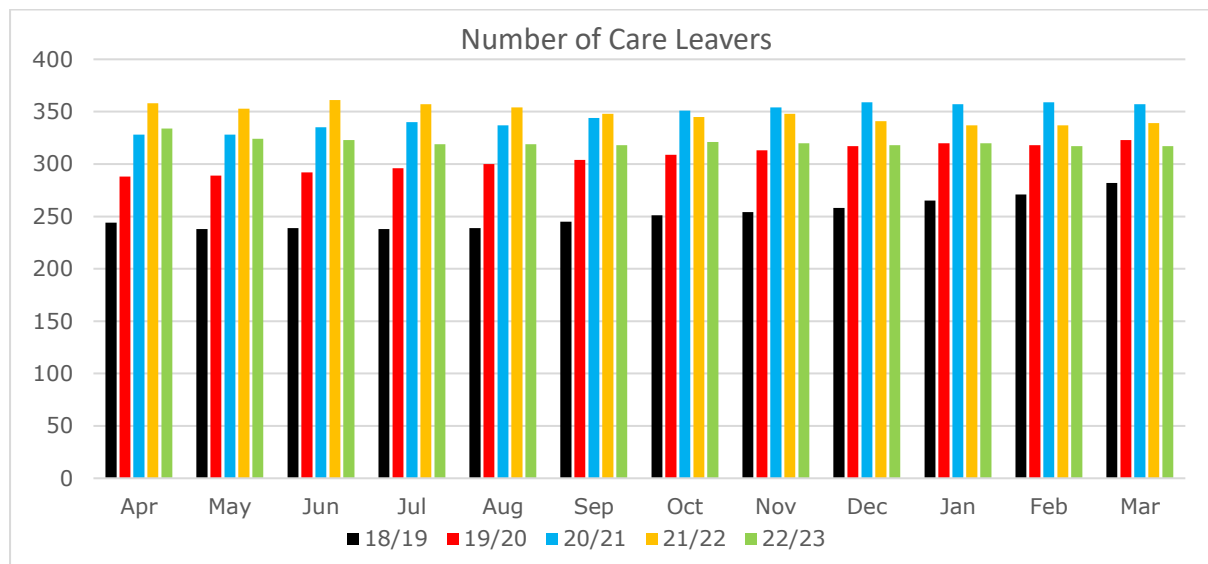
- Embedded our preparation group run jointly by the Carer Assessment and Carer Support Team, making this a mandated element for prospective carers to attend as part of their assessment.
- Extended the training offer to Special Guardians, mirroring the therapeutic training provided to foster carers specifically around trauma-informed behaviour, alongside Great Behaviour Breakdown and Non-Violence Resistance training
- Hosted 3 special guardian support brunches with plans for a summer celebration event in August 2023
- 29 families were supported over the year, with a further 11 waiting for support
- 40 lifestory books and letters were completed
- 5 referrals for contact support between special guardians and birth parents were completed

Care Experienced Adults

“Barnet continue to improve their offer to care leavers. The local authority continued to prioritise care leavers through the pandemic and are absolutely clear what things are now needed to develop further the care leavers improvement journey.”

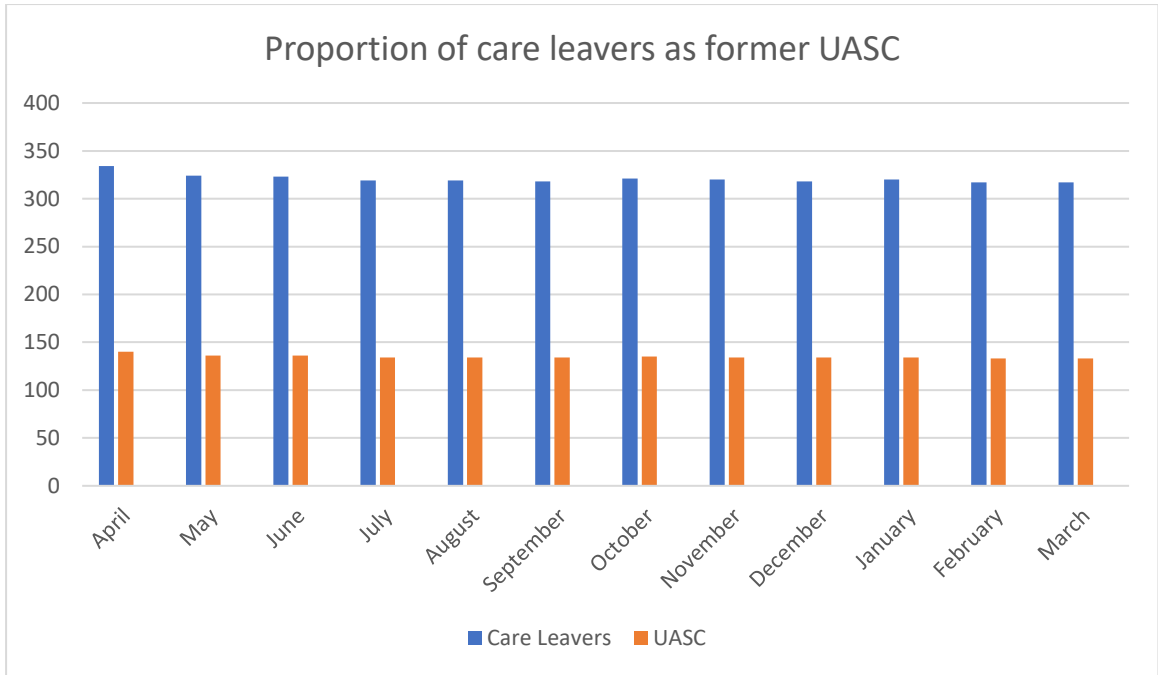
During 2021/22 the number of care leavers remained steady, a slight decrease from 2021/2022 (341), offering support and guidance to 315 care experienced young people as at 31st March 2023. While our

care experienced population remains steady, the number of young adults who are former asylum seeking children (UASC), continues to increase, making up 42% of our care leaving cohort, up from a third in 2021/2022.

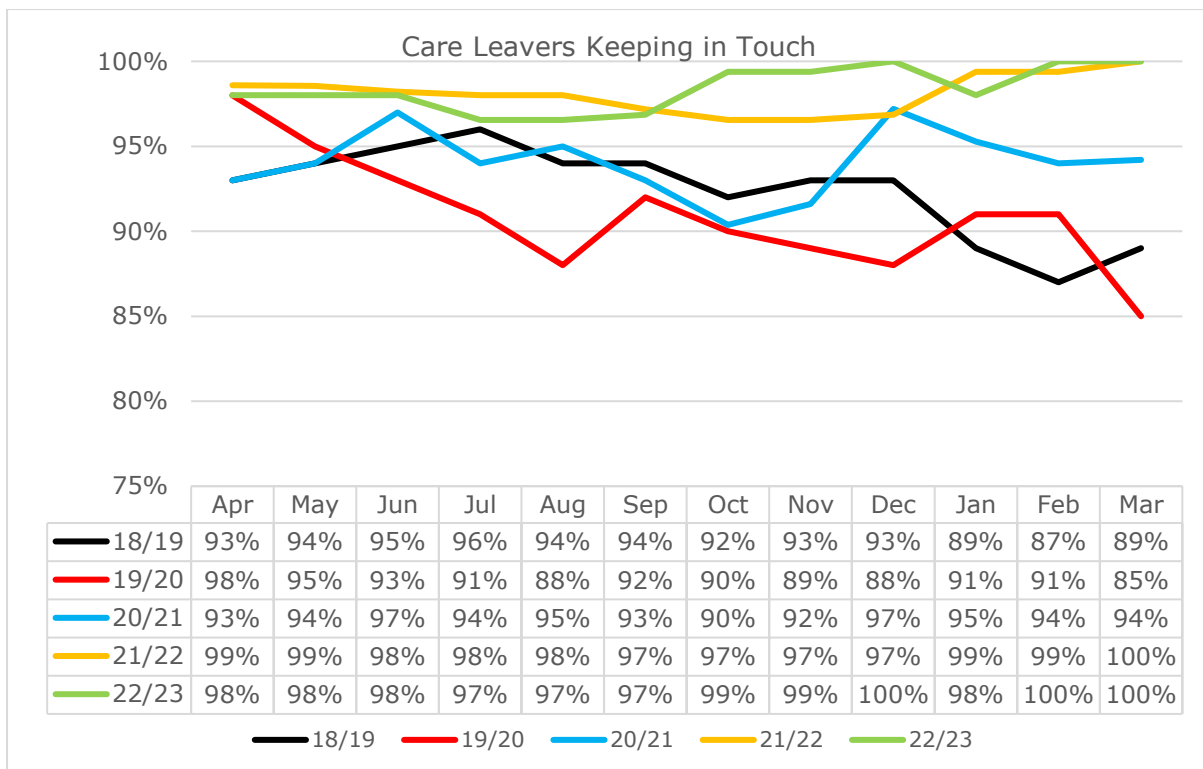


Most of our care leavers are aged between 18 - 20 years old (219; 64%) with 16% (55) aged 21 years old and 20% (67) 22 years or older. This correlates to the data from the previous 2 years and evidences a limited change in the demographic. The concerns noted for care experienced young adults during the 2020/2021 years of the global covid pandemic has remained a similar challenge with the cost of living crises and young people continue to express concerns about their mental health, their finances and their housing.

These shifts 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.



This year has seen the restructure of the Onwards & Upwards service with the establishment of a dedicated UASC team, and appointment of 3 permanent Team Managers and an Assistant Head of Service. A revised audit program has been rolled out with specific focus on the pathway for over 18 care experienced young adults which will enable all managers in the service to participate in auditing and embedding good practice across the teams. We have also commenced a refurbishment project at the start of 2023, designed to improve service provision to young people provided by staff and partner organisations as we all returned to office-based working and delivery of face to face services. Young people continue to be seen at the Leaving Care hub at Woodhouse Road, in community or in their homes, maintaining the vital connection of relationship between the young person and their personal advisor with 98% of young people seen within timescales (see Table)



We launched the Empower21+ project, offering support, advice and guidance to Barnet care experienced young adults when requested, extending the 20+ Progression and Resource Forum. These pathways allow practitioners to consider the needs of care experienced young adults 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. 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. In response to feedback from young people we also plan to launch the Getting Ready to B 18 support group in partnership with Terepia, supporting 17 and 18 year olds manage the anxiety around transitions to adulthood was set up. This is further supported by the plan to develop the Through Care Team, to be launched in the Spring 2023.

The high-risk case forum returned to a face to face panel with partners from across the Council and partner colleagues from health, housing and charity organisations. The complexity of need for young people transitioning into adulthood with an increase in vulnerability and need has invited us to reconsider how we better work with young people through this transitional period into adulthood. Plans are underway to amalgamate the High Risk Case Forum with the Serious Adult Violence Panel, with the newly developed Adults at Risk Panel to be launched in summer 2023.

The Expert by Experience role continues to progress 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 supporting the inaugural Care Leavers Conference which took place in November 2023.

The annual summer BBQ took place in August and was another great success, attended by many young people who enjoyed the food and the music! This was followed by the launch of our Care Leaver Conference centred on the theme of Black History during National Care Leavers week in November 2022.

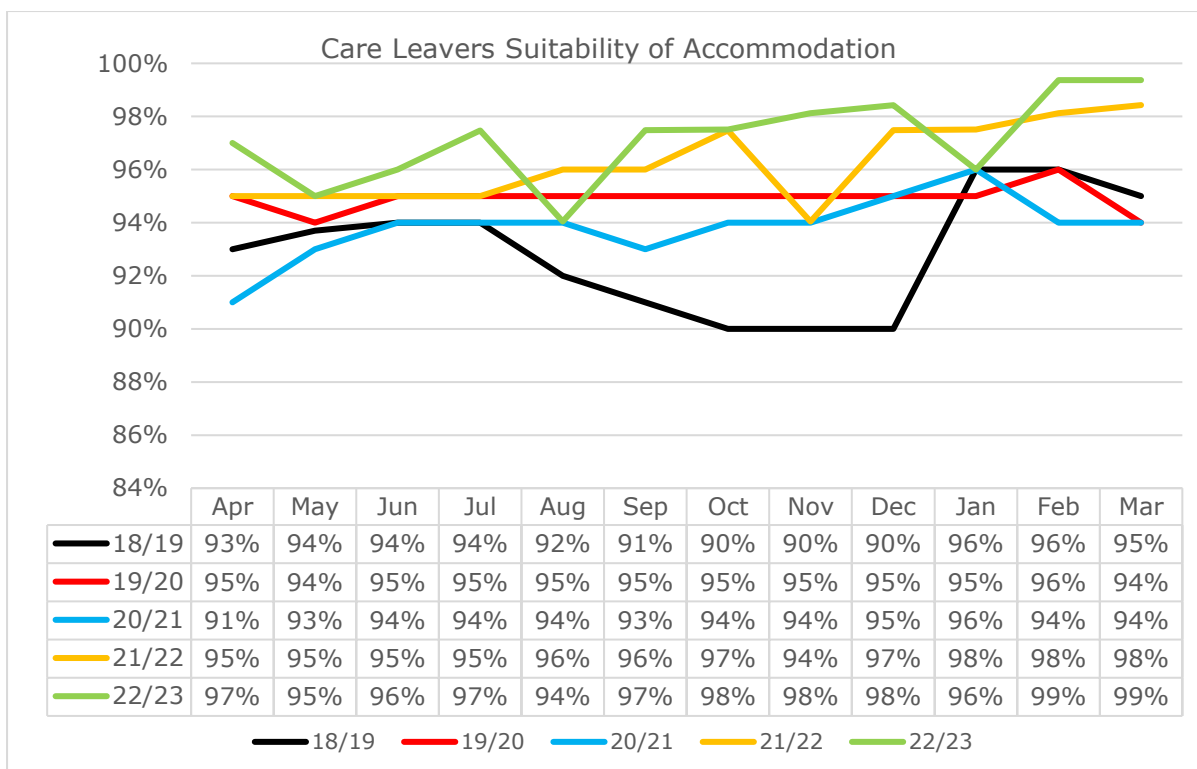
On 27 & 28th September 2022, Mark Riddell, the National Advisor for Care Leavers completed a 2-day visit to Onwards and Upwards, Barnet's Leaving Care Service. Feedback from this visit noted:

"I was very impressed by the leadership and management approach that was ambitious, aspirational and I got a real sense of passion and commitment to have a better offer for care leavers across the whole service area. What I also saw and heard was many examples where I felt an exceptional approach was being offered and in particular the team approach which stood out with workers who were highly responsive to the needs of care leavers. The local authority are in a good position to get to being great for care leavers."

The refreshed Local Offer was launched in February 2023, coproduced with young people and inclusive of the renewed offer from the whole council.

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 and in response we have strengthened our partnership work with Barnet Homes, refreshing our Care Leaver Joint Housing Protocol with Barnet Homes confirming expanding the second chance offer ensuring no care experienced young person can be found intentionally homeless and embedding the Council Tax exemption for all care leavers up to the age of 25. We have also committed to strengthening our housing offer for care experienced parents, with the opportunity of accessing a larger 2-bedroom property to provide additional space for their children. This offer will be formally published in parallel with the Care Leaver Housing Panel in summer 2023. As part of this commitment in 2022/2023, 11 care leaver parents were supported to access a larger 2-bedroom property. Throughout the year, we supported 55 young adults to access and move into their permanent homes and supported another person through the Pan London rota to access their permanent property in another part of London.



The majority of 18 year olds (56%) and 19-21 year olds (80%) 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. 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 both the global pandemic and placement insufficiency, 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 and strong partnership work between Onwards and Upwards has seen creative solutions to addressing and supporting young people’s housing needs. Almost all care experienced young adults are living in suitable accommodation (97%), a slight decrease from 96% in 2021/2022. Staying put remains to be a positive accommodation arrangement for some with 19 (6%) care experienced young adults remaining with their former foster carer, a slight decrease from previous years. 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 2023, there were 3 (1%) care experienced young adults living in this care arrangement, which is a decrease from previous years.

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 to young people ensuring they are paying social rent, rather than affordable rent.

Case Study: Sapphire and Grey's story

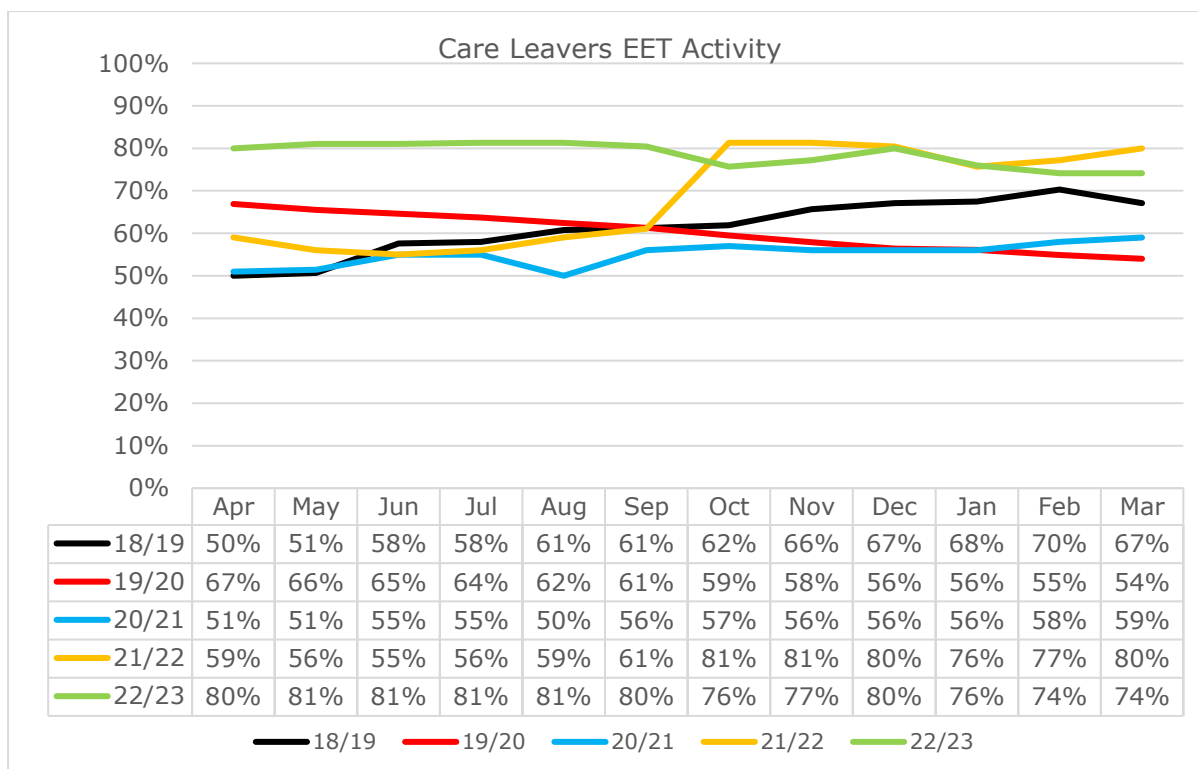
Sapphire is a care experienced parent whose son Grey was born in August 2021 and is now 2 years old. Sapphire and Grey initially lived in a 1 bedroom flat in Cricklewood. As part of a project to support care experienced parents, in early 2023 they were offered a 2 bedroom new build in Colindale, where they are currently living. Sapphire's relationship with Grey's father has caused some concerns about domestic abuse in the relationship and the resultant risk to their son. Sapphire has historically found it difficult to trust professionals, which had caused her to not always be open regarding her relationship status with Grey's father. Grey was initially on a CIN plan, however, after a serious incident in public (where both parties claimed the other assaulted them), concerns were escalated and Grey was made subject to a Child Protection in November 2022. Whilst Sapphire initially struggled to engage with the increased intensity of professional involvement, this has improved over time. She is no longer in a relationship with Grey's father, is open in visits with his social worker, has attended DV interventions and is now at an address unknown to Grey's father.

Grey is progressing well and there are no concerns regarding his development reported by his health visitor. He is due to start at nursery under the free nursery hours program and Sapphire has been observed as a warm and responsive mother, with a good familial support network around her.

Whilst there are still some concerns regarding Sapphire's vulnerability in relationships, her progress is such that Grey's social worker is considering stepping him back down to the less intensive support under a Child In Need Plan.

Education, employment, and training

The percentage of care experienced young adults who were accessing Employment, Education and Training remained steady at 74% throughout the year, continuing to evidence an improving picture from the 66% recorded in the previous year. 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. Despite the challenges as we emerged from periods 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. 127 young people participated in various RON projects and 57 young people (44%) successfully completed the program.

- 3 young people commenced a traineeship
- 5 young people commenced an apprenticeship.
- 37 young people commenced employment, 12 of whom remained employed after 3 months
- 25 young people returned to Education or Training.

Emotional Wellbeing of our Children in Care and Care Leavers

Barnet Integrated Clinical Services (BICS) works with children, young people, and families in schools, in the community (e.g., libraries, youth centres, children’s centres, GP surgeries, home) and within social care and youth justice services, to promote mental health, wellbeing and resilience.

BICS offers a range of evidenced-based therapy to children, young people and their families through individual therapy, family therapy, groups, and workshops. BICS also produces free online podcasts, workshops and learning resources on mental health and wellbeing. BICS practitioners are embedded in social care teams providing consultation, group supervision and training to social workers including recent training on working with self-harm.

Throughout the year, BICS practitioners have provided support to social workers and supervising social workers to think stability during period of instability in placement, providing therapeutic support to children living in placements in Barnet, including those in the childrens' homes, and providing systemic supervision for social workers and practitioners to inform care planning and thinking about children and their individual circumstances and needs.

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.

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Family Services

Document control	
Document title	Annual Fostering Service Report
Document description	This report provides an overview of service delivery for 2022/2023.
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	September 2023



The Fostering Service Annual Report 2022/23

Executive Summary

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 require that the Fostering Services provides written reports on the management, outcomes, and financial state of the fostering service. This Annual Fostering Service Report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the Fostering Services in Barnet.

For the purpose of this document, the word 'placement' and 'home' is used interchangeably throughout. Barnet recognises 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, however home for others can have powerful connotations and therefore for the purpose of this report both words are used.

This report details the progress that the fostering service has made between April 2022 and March 2023, with a particular focus on securing our out of hours support service, the developments of our supervision policy and the embedding of our support groups. The service has also been able to recruit permanent staff (95%) which has provided stability and continuity to the families we work with. The national challenge in the recruitment of foster carers caused by the cost of living crisis, the Ukrainian crisis (potential carers providing homes to refugees) alongside the progression as we move on from the Covid -19 global pandemic has impacted significantly on Barnet's cohort of carers and recruitment of new carers. Despite these challenges, the service has risen to the challenge through the provision of uplifting foster carer skill fees, developing an online foster carer handbook, facilitated participation events for carers and their children, securing permanency for 40 children, becoming an accredited 'Foster Friendly Employer' with the Fostering Network and launching the fostering awareness film, 'The Difference is You'

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the work of the Barnet Fostering Service for the year 2022/23 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 2022/23.

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 it is of significant importance for our looked after children and young people to be placed in the best provision to meet their diverse and individual needs, as informed by our Placement Sufficiency Strategy and Barnet's guidance document, *Who We Place Where* (2020).

1. Covid –19 pandemic

2022-2023 saw the lifting of all restrictions in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic. Life returned to a way many of us were used to, albeit with some changes. Within fostering services, the pandemic signified many challenges including a national shortage of carers and a significant reduction of enquiries nationally, alongside approximately 12% of current foster carers leaving fostering or retiring across the country. Despite this, some positives in the ways in which we work were fast-tracked, especially in the context of hybrid and remote working. The pandemic saw Barnet shift advertising to informed through an increased digital advertising recruitment strategy, whereby traditional recruitment methods previously used such as newspapers and banners, were no longer the central element, but used in conjunction with a wider social media presence and updated website and analytics. Throughout the year as restrictions lifted, we were able to adapt and embed Barnet's practice model for hybrid flexible working whereby online outreach work took place in parallel with in person activities, generating enquiries and undertaking our holistic, thorough, and dynamic assessments in line with our practice standards.

This year Barnet successfully recruited 7 carers. As of 31st March 2023, there 87 approved fostering households, totaling 171 placements for children.

2. Recruitment and Assessment

The Fostering Recruitment Team are involved with prospective carers from the point of initial enquiry through to when they are formally presented to the Fostering Panel for approval, when their approval as foster carers is ratified by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). Once approved, fostering households are allocated a supervising social worker within the Fostering Support Team, who oversees their development as carers, providing them with regular supervision and supporting them to care for 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. Within this program of development, the foster care services have undergone a review focusing on a needs-led analysis of the service. The analysis has enabled the service to implement systemic changes to how we deliver services across fostering, utilizing virtual working mechanisms such as virtual fostering panels and hybrid models of assessment and supervision, alongside continuing to develop our online social media presence through Instagram and Facebook as both a recruitment tool and a support service. The demand for carers to provide warm and loving homes for the most vulnerable children has continued to increase, and despite the

challenges of the pandemic the Fostering Recruitment Team has continued to recruit foster carers utilizing social media platforms alongside more traditional means of print advertising.

3. Enquiries

Throughout 2022/2023 we received 169 enquiries, and increase from 2021/2022 which saw 121 enquiries, and similar figure to 2020/2021 with 168 enquiries. Despite lower levels of enquiries received from prospective fostering households during 2021/2022, the proportion of those enquiries converting into applications was at an all-time high at 9%. Barnet’s conversion rate from enquiries to approval has steadily increased from 3.98% in 2019/2020 to 8.92% in 2020/2021 with the approval of 16 households and in 2021/22 this increased to 9% with the approval of 11 households.

The challenges of global pandemic and more recently the cost-of-living crisis, has compounded the challenges of recruiting foster carers for Barnet’s children across the country. Despite such challenges, However, through the use of creative and dynamic approaches on social media platforms, our more usual campaigns and increased outreach activities, resulted in the recruitment of 5 foster carer households and 2 supported lodgings hosts, with conversion rate of 11.83%

The downward trend applications for mainstream fostering over the last 5 years is a national picture. As noted in Ofsted annual fostering statistics April 21 – March 22:

There has been a downward trend of applications for mainstream fostering over the last 5 years. In both sectors a relatively large number of enquiries are not translating into applications. The number of mainstream fostering applications has fallen from 10,520 in 2018 to 8,280 in 2022. This year, IFAs reported a ration of 23 initial enquiries per application and LAs report a ration of 8 initial enquiries per applications.

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

Enquiries	Total
2019/20	201
2020/21	168
2021/22	121
2022/23	169

Table 1: Barnet Fostering Enquiries 2019 – 2023

Barnet has seen a steady increase in the numbers of enquiries with the re-introduction face to face outreach activities and continued social media and digital advertising, indicating that a hybrid approach to recruitment is positive development within our strategy. Of the 169 enquiries, 35 were through outreach activities and 35 through our website. The remaining 129 enquiries were received from a variety of sources, see Table 2 for a break down the source of all 169 enquiries.

Table 2: Enquiry Source to approval

Source	Approved (FC/SL)	Enquiries	Screening/IV	Stage 2
Bus Stop Ad	1	3	1	1
Consortium	0	3	1	0

<i>Facebook</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Internal Comms</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Leaflet</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Press</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Poster</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Outreach</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Previously enquired</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Publication</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Referral</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Search Engine</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Previous FC</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Website</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>WOM</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Unknown</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>169</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>13</i>

Research has indicated that there is a 2-year process between first enquiry to approval for a prospective foster carer (Westco 2022). It is not unusual for an individual to make an enquiry to casually explore the option and not progress further to an assessment, reflecting the significance of the decision to become a foster carer.

Other explanations for an enquiry to not progress includes limited space in the home, financial instability, an inability to adhere to the tight fostering requirements, or individuals' own views or wishes in respect of their prospective fostering career being at odds with the requirements of the local authority and the children we care for.

For those prospective carers who need time to reflect and consider their options, the Fostering Recruitment Team remain in contact with across the year, them, communicating regular information about the outreach activities and the newsletter ensuring that they are well informed and supported in their decision making.

4. Campaigns



Social Media Campaigns



Film Launch

July 2022 marked the launch of Barnet’s new fostering film “The Difference is You!” viewed over 37,000 across the country. This is the first professional fostering film Barnet has created in more than

10 years with the aim increasing national awareness of the need for foster carers both in Barnet and more widely across the UK. The film highlighted how every 20 minutes another child in the UK needs of a foster family and that Barnet is on a mission to provide the best possible care for our looked after children through 8 short vignettes illustrating the various experiences of children and young people who need care outside of their family network. The message of the film is that foster care transforms lives and "The Difference is You".

See below for details of images:



Foster care Friendly employer



Fostering Friendly is The Fostering Network's programme to encourage employers to support fostering and the recruitment of foster carers. Barnet successfully became accredited as a Fostering

Friendly employer this year with the introduction of a Fostering Friendly policy. According to the Fostering Network in 2022, approximately 40% of foster carers work and therefore as part of Barnet's accreditation it was agreed that any employees who are foster carers are eligible to receive up to an additional 10 days annual leave to support them in their caring role.

Foster Care Fortnight



Foster Care Fortnight took place from 9th -25th May 2022. As part of Barnet's celebrations and awareness raising, and a number of activities took place. This included a foster carers walk throughout Hampstead Heath on a sunny Tuesday, a picnic and a chance for carers and staff to come together. The walk was a wonderful way of developing our fostering community, and attended by over 20 carers. Feedback from the day was positive with carers sharing how much they enjoyed the opportunity to be outside in the fresh air with their supervising social workers and the wider fostering service.



5. Fostering Households

As of 31st March 2023, Barnet had 87 approved foster carers, with an additional 25 connected carers who care for children within their family network. The majority of Barnet fostering households are

residents of Barnet with 59 (68%) foster care households living in the borough and a further 11 (13%) living in neighbouring boroughs. The remaining 17 (19%) reside across London and outside the capital. For the carers living wider afield, the majority are former Barnet residents who have relocated following becoming approved foster carers. 85 (98%) of primary foster carers are female and 35 (40%) carers are of White British origin, with second largest groups being of Caribbean origin and African.

Barnet, similar to most local authorities across the country has an older age-range of foster carers, with the 52% being over the age of 55. See table 3 for a further breakdown.

Age Ranges	Foster Carers	%
55+		
55-60	23	20%
61-65	21	18%
66-70	10	9%
71-75	4	3%
76+	2	2%

Table 3: foster carer aged 55 and above.

Barnet has an aging fostering community and the majority of foster carers who have resigned are those who have retired from fostering following many years of caring for our children. For some carers who are downsizing and retiring out of London, they have requested to pause their fostering career, waiting to settle in their new neighbourhoods before consider fostering in their new homes. Careful planning is done with the carers to ensure that there is minimal disruption for the children in their care that that there are positive endings for the children.

Some foster carers leave fostering as they have adopted the child in their care or taken on the permanent care of a child under a Special Guardianship Order. Neither of these care arrangements were endorsed in the year 2022/2023. Connected Carers, who are considered outside of mainstream carers, as they a carer who is assessed specifically in relation to a child within their family network. Often these carers become the child’s permanent carer through adoption or Special Guardianship, or if they child returns home to their parents, the carer is deregistered as they are no longer a connected carer.

Of the 11 supported lodgings hosts recruited since 2020, 6 hosts live within Barnet, 3 living just outside the border within neighbouring authorities and 2 living out of borough. In consideration of diversity, 8 are female and 3 male, 5 are White British, 3 are of mixed heritage and 3 are Asian.

As at 31 March 2023, Barnet has 17 care experienced young people who remain living with their former foster parent. The data evidences a slight decrease in the number of young people who remain living with their carers under Staying Put arrangements, in comparison to 2021/22, when 18 young people remained living with their foster carers post 18. Staying Put remains a pathway for young people to remain living with their permanent foster carers as they transition into independence and adult-living. Many of our young people who remain living in this arrangement are those attending university, or who are working and prefer to remain at home before moving into their permanent housing. This living arrangement replicates the journey many young people undertake when living within their birth family.

6. De-registrations

Throughout the year there has been a total of 24 de-registrations, a significant reduction on the year before. This includes both internal foster carers and connected carers, who no longer had children in their care. 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.

Of the **16** Foster Carers who deregistered:

- 11 foster carers resigned
- 5 other reasons, including deregistration

Of the **8** Connected Carers who were deregistered

- 4 were deregistered on account of no longer having a child in their care
- 3 connected carers became Special Guardians for the child in their care
- 1 became a foster carer in another borough

7. 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 the 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.

CASE STUDY: N and G story

Khadija and Mohammed have been fostering for Barnet for the past 19 years, with an approval criterion of short term/ permanent carers for three children/young people ages 11 -18 (males only). They had been caring for three young unaccompanied asylum seeking children aged 15 years old, 16 years old, and 17 respectively.

Aamir had been living with Khadija and Mohammed since March 2022 and in August through social media, he discovered his young brother Hamza was in the UK living in foster care in Portsmouth. With the support of their respective social workers, Aamir and Hamza were reunited, initially with contact and later overnight stays at each other's foster homes.

At the brothers request, Barnet and Portsmouth began to consider how to reunify the children together to enable them to live as siblings in the same home. Both Aamir and Hamza had requested for them to live with Khadija and Mohammed, which was supported by Hamza's social worker. Krishna and Arjun were also in support of this plan, and their supervising social worker began considering with them what additional support was required in the caring for four young people. These reflective and constructive discussions aided the carers to prepare and identify any support they needed to make this plan happen. Khadija and Mohammed continue to be part of the professional network around both children, and are strong advocates for children, and are proactive, resilient foster carers. They had discussions with both social workers for Aamir and Hamza in support of Hamza moving in with his brother and ensured

an appropriate joined up plan of reunification was in place. Hamza moved in with his brother Khadija and Mohammed in December 2022, reuniting the brothers.

Barnet prioritises cultural matching alongside other individual factors unique to each child and the carer(s) to ensure that the secure base relationship promote not only their identity but their sense of security, confidence and resilience. Barnet's 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, in their provision of care for Barnet's children. The team of 9 social workers who each 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, enable the entire fostering network around the child to work in a trauma informed and therapeutic way.

Reflective Fostering study

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.

Training for foster carers

Training for foster carers has progressed at pace, moving from online to a hybrid model. During the pandemic all training was provided via virtual platforms and e-learning courses, resulting in a consistently high attendance rate. Many carers expressed a preference for this style of learning, citing the flexibility it enabled when they were at home caring for small and vulnerable children. Training opportunities for Barnet foster carers is also accessible in conjunction with 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. This level of support has been reduced in 2022- 2023 due to sufficiency within the BICS service. It is anticipated that this will resume with staffing increases during 2023-2024.

A new foster carer handbook was published on Tri.x Procedures on-line May 2022. This has provided more accessibility for all carers with regular reviews and updates provided throughout each year. The Foster Carer Charter, an agreement between Barnet, in our role as corporate parents and the foster carers, representing the commitment and partnership between Barnet and our Foster Carers as corporate parents. The Charter was reviewed throughout the year and has been shared with all carers. Additionally, there have been changes in Barnet's Foster Carer Association (BaFCA) with a new Chairperson and changes in other roles and the committee members. BaFCA has provided a strong message of collaboration with the fostering service and support to foster carers. December 2022 BafCA arranged an event for foster carers and children at Alexandra Palace and worked together with Barnet Fostering to facilitate a Christmas Celebration event for foster carers. Both events were highly

successful and plans are underway to make both celebrations an annual event as part of Barnet's participation strategy 'You Say Matters'.

8. Staying Put

The 'Staying Put' Scheme allows care experienced young people to remain living with their foster carers after they turn 18. As of 31 March 2023, Barnet has 17 care experienced young people remain living with their former foster parent. The data evidences a slight decrease in the number of young people who remain living with their carers under Staying Put arrangements, in comparison to 2021/22, when 18 young people remained living with their foster carers. This represents a steady decrease of this living arrangement for young people moving into their independence and adult lives. This is likely attributed to the 27 young people living in this arrangement in March 2020 remaining in their home due to the early beginning of the covid pandemic, alongside a changing demographic in recent years to our children in care profile. Over the past three years there has been a steady increase of older adolescents coming into care aged 16 and 17. Many of these young people are keen to move into independent living accessed through their own accommodation. The development of Supported Lodgings as a stepping stone to independence as also impacted on the number of young people remaining in Staying Put.

9. 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



10. Support groups

This year saw Barnet increase their support group offer to carers, with the development of specific support groups. Carers had mixed views following the lifting of covid restrictions in regard to support groups being virtual or face to face. Therefore, support groups during 2022-2023 have been a mix of in person and virtual.

Group	Frequency
Mainstream Support Group - Open to all Mainstream Foster carers	Once and month
Support group & Forum (attended by HOS/AHOS) - Open to all Mainstream Foster carers	Once every 3 months
Children with Additional Needs Support Group – Open to carers caring for children with additional needs	Every 2 months
Therapeutic Support Group – Open to all carers	Every 2 months
Reg 24/ Connected carers Support Group – Open to specific carer groups	Every 6 weeks
TSD Training Support group - (Foster Carer Led) – Open to carers needing assistance in completing their training Standards Folders	Twice a month
Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) Support Group – Open to carers caring for a UASC	Once a month
Barnet Foster Carers Association (BAFCA) group meetings – Open to all members of BAFCA	Once a month
Male Foster Carers Support Group - Hosted by North London Fostering and Permanence Consortium - Open to LBBarnet Male Foster Carers	Once a month

11. 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.

12. Review of Objectives for 2022-23 - What have we achieved?

- Develop robust recruitment partnership working with local businesses, the Barnet community and faith groups as well as schools and colleges.
- We have increase social and digital media activity.
- Successfully achieve and be accredited as a 'Foster Friendly Employer' with the Fostering Network.
- The recruitment focus:
 - Increased our online presence including an expansion of our website.
 - Produced a targeted fostering video to educate and raise awareness of the need for more carers.

Foster Carer Support focus:

- We have reviewing matching processes, permanency planning and further developed the use of early permanency planning with 6 children in an early permanence care arrangement.
- Maximised the use of in-house placement, through 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.
- Continued to explore ways of capturing the child's voice and the carers voice for service development and individual plans

13. Service Priorities for 2023 - 2024

Aim - To increase local foster care placement choice and stability for children and young people in Barnet, particularly for teenagers, parent and child and sibling groups through recruiting more carers.

- To increase the number of in-house foster placements, reduce our reliance on independent fostering agencies and residential care.
- To recruit an additional **15** foster carer households over this strategy period (2023-2025) which equates to 5 households per year.
- To recruit **5** Supported Lodgings Hosts per year.
- To maintain a consistent presence throughout the London Borough of Barnet's Community both in person and via social media.
- To create an Events and Outreach Calendar which includes the activities planned and organised by Fostering Service. This is a flexible activities calendar as items can be added throughout the year including innovative ways to attract new foster carers to Barnet.
- To offer creative solutions to placement sufficiency challenges by review each carers career progression and skills level.
- To consider enhancing carers capacity through the use of home improvements, extensions, annex (for staying put or supported lodgings if in young person's best interest) loft extensions.

Aim - To ensure that our carers continue to enjoy being carers for Barnet and know that we appreciate them for all that they do.

- Strengthen our offer to carers to ensure they have access to highly skills practitioners that provide them with the highest quality support.
- To continue to review our support offers to carers.
- Ensure that foster carer, feel valued for the contributions that they make and the role they play in our fostering community. We will listen to everyone and improve what we do as a result.
- Ensure that we analysis objectively what has happened when foster carers choose to resign through a robust exit interview analysis protocol.
- To review placement stability at the earliest possibility to increase our support offer and reduce the risk of carer fatigue and placement breakdowns.
- To ensure foster carers feel they have a voice in the delivery of our service through regular opportunities for foster carers to share their thoughts and views.
- To review foster carers opportunities to progress within their fostering career.

Aim - To continually improving our quality of Practice and ensure everyone has a voice about how to strengthen Barnet's fostering service.

- We are committed to engaging with all foster carers to seek their views on what is working well and what could be strengthened via surveys, feedback, forum's with senior management attendance, BAFCA, reviews and discussions.
- We will continue to review our internal processes, ensuring that fostering is run efficiently and makes use of the latest technology to streamline processes for everyone in the service.
- To ensure a robust quality assurance programme is imbedded within the service to scrutinise and enhance practice of workers.
- Ensure that everyone on the Team has easy access to the highest quality training, learning and development opportunities both online and in the classroom, and feels empowered to take responsibility for continually updating their skills and knowledge.
- To improve our use of data reporting to ensure that we are robustly monitoring our performance
- To be each other's critical friend and feel confident to challenge and be curious with each other about our practice.

Aim - To create specialist foster care placements so that we have the right placement at the right time for our children and young people

- To support children to step down into inhouse foster placements.
- To create parent and child placements service through career progression for level 3 carers.
- To target recruitment of carers for sibling groups and children with additional needs.
- We want to further promote staying put arrangements and encourage where it is a young person's interests to stay with their foster carers up until the age of 25 where needed.
- To offer supported lodgings as a placement option for young people age 16-25 by registering as a provider with Ofsted.

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Annual Report

April 2022 – March 2023



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About Adopt London North

Context and responsibilities

Legislation requiring local authorities to deliver adoption services through Regional Adoption Agencies was passed in 2016 in the Education & Adoption Act. London RAA's were launched in 2019, around the middle of the national RAA change programme.

Adopt London North is a partnership between the six London boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, and Islington. The boroughs previously worked together successfully for over a decade as the North London Adoption & Fostering Consortium.

The adoption functions of the six boroughs officially became part of Adopt London North on 1st October 2019, hosted by the London Borough of Islington as the lead partner. The ALN Partnership Agreement covers the legal and financial terms of the arrangement. There is shared oversight of the RAA through a Governance Board and Quality Assurance Board.

Adopt London North has responsibility for all adoption led services, delivering these on behalf of the local authorities. These include:

- Recruitment and assessment of adoptive parents

- Family finding for children in need of adoptive parents
- Adoption support to adoptive families, adopted adults, and others impacted by adoption

Responsibility for the child (including corporate parenting responsibilities) remain with the local authority. The borough is therefore responsible for the progress of the child's case through the court system and for decisions in respect of care and adoption planning.

Governance arrangements

All service functions and partnership arrangements are detailed within the Partnership Agreement. As a result of changes to the division of financial contributions from April 2023, the Agreement is being reviewed and updated during 2023/24.

The ALN Governance Board meets every 2 – 3 months and has Director level representation from each of the six partner boroughs. This Board has responsibility for all partnership decisions that need to be made above Head of Service level, and for monitoring the performance and budget of ALN.

A Quality Assurance Board (QA Board) meets monthly and has membership at Head of Service and / or Service Manager level from each partner borough. The QA Board has responsibility to monitor and improve partnership working across the boroughs and ALN, including making decisions and proposals about practice and procedures that relate to adoption work across the agencies. The QA Board also considers emerging information about differences in practice between the six boroughs, and where best practice can be implemented across all partners. During 2022/23 some of the areas of focus for the QA Board have been:

- Learning from a Cumbria Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review into the death of Leiland-James Corkill, who was murdered by his prospective adoptive parents.
- Effective information sharing processes.
- Developing an audit to understand more about the number of adopted children and young people who are open to local authority services or re-enter care due to difficulties after an Adoption Order.
- Introducing and monitoring the implementation of the ALN training programme for local authority social workers.
- Learning from legal advice and case law relating to Agency Decision Maker (ADM) processes.

- Managing enquiries during care proceedings from foster carers and connected people who want to adopt.

Staffing

ALN employs 38 members of staff who work across specialist teams focused on the different practice areas within the service. The service is managed by a Head of Service, Service Manager, and Adoption Business Manager. We have a stable staff group, with no one leaving the service during 2022/23. We do not carry any vacant permanent posts and find that there is a strong response when we do occasionally have permanent posts available to advertise. We only use agency staff to cover short or fixed term posts, and during 2022/23 had just one agency staff member in post as a Business Coordinator. In addition to our core staff, we manage a small pool of sessional social workers who increase our casework capacity in a flexible way.

Inspections

ALN support and participate in the adoption elements of any partner local authority inspection including ILACS and focused inspections looking at permanency or children in care. In 2022/23 we were involved in the ILACS inspections that took place for Camden and Haringey.



As adoption inspection regulations have not been updated to reflect the creation of RAAs and local authority inspections only look at some areas of adoption work, the Department of Education and Ofsted have announced plans to pilot direct inspections of Regional Adoption Agencies towards the end of 2023. Ofsted have not yet published an inspection framework but we understand they intend to inspect six RAAs nationally as part of the pilot, and to publish one composite report which focuses on emerging themes rather than naming findings in relation

to individual RAAs. When the pilot is complete Ofsted and the DfE will consider possible regulatory change to normalise RAA inspections.

Outcomes

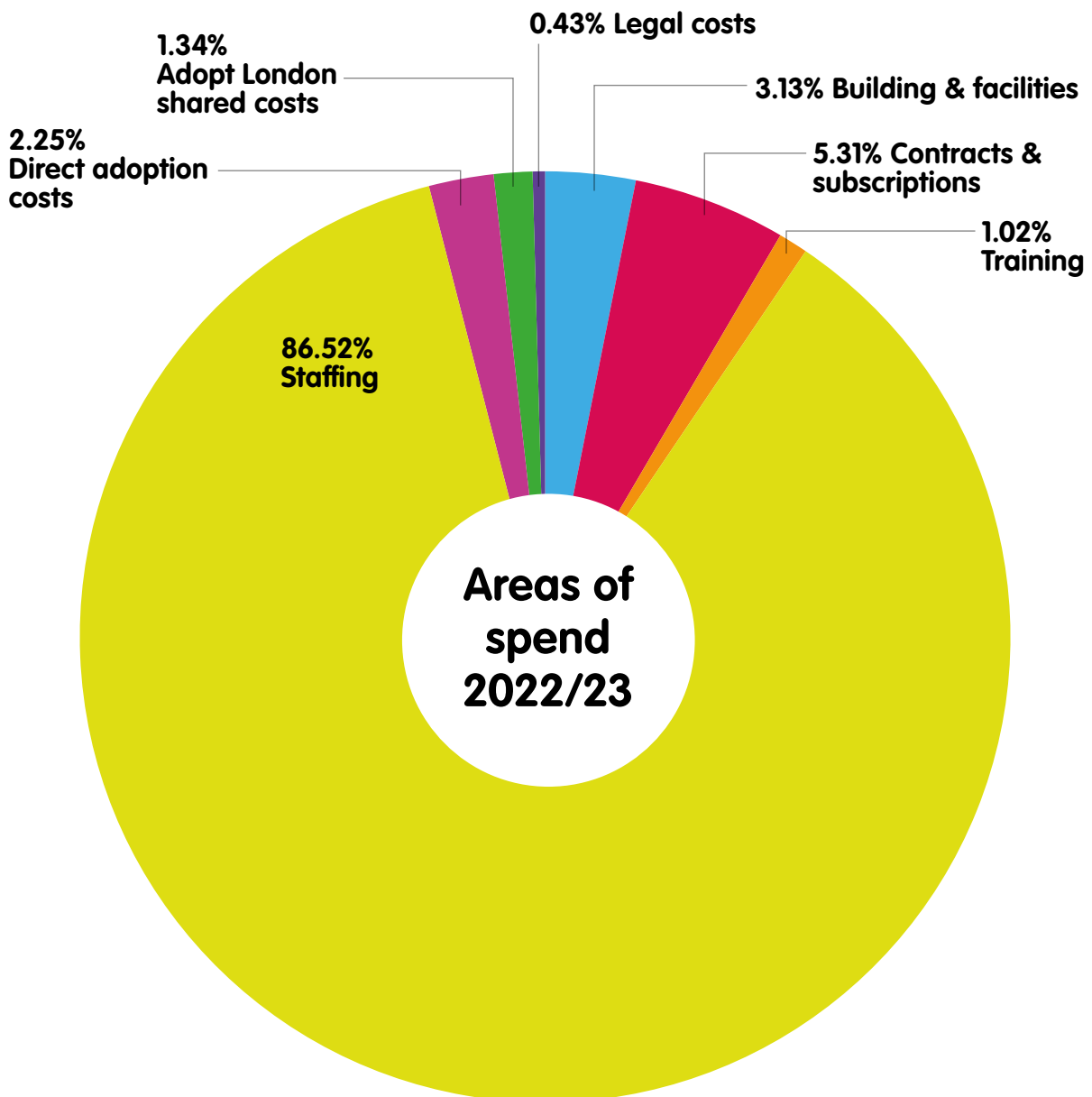
Adopt London North aims to improve outcomes for children who have a plan for adoption and those living in adoptive families in the following specific ways. The linked sections in this report provide more information about the work that is happening in these areas.

Finding prospective adoptive parents	<p>Increase the proportion of prospective adopters who are of Black and mixed Black ethnicity, in line with the needs of our Black and mixed Black ethnicity children in north London.</p>
Preparing and approving adoptive parents	<p>Improve timeliness and effectiveness in matching in-house approved adopters with children.</p> <p>Assess, prepare, and support prospective adopters to a high standard so that they are fully equipped to successfully parent an adoptive child.</p>
Planning for children	<p>Ensure all children who would benefit from adoption are identified appropriately during Permanency Planning processes.</p> <p>Ensure that children who would benefit from an Early Permanence placement are identified early and matched with adoptive parents who have been prepared for Early Permanence.</p>
Placing children with adoptive parents	<p>Ensure effective and time-sensitive family finding for children with a plan for adoption.</p> <p>Increase the proportion of in-house and local adoptive placements.</p>
Providing support to adoptive families and others	<p>Improve consistency and timeliness in providing support for adoptive families.</p> <p>Increase awareness and uptake of support services amongst adoptive families to build resilience and reduce the need for crisis support.</p> <p>Provide specialist and targeted support to adoptive families with the most acute needs to reduce family breakdown.</p>

Financial spend 2022/23

The total budget for ALN in 2022/23 was £2,807,245. Of this, 86.52% (£2,428,886) was spent on staffing costs – including permanent and agency staffing, sessional workers, Adoption Panel members, and maternity costs.

Financial contributions to ALN were renegotiated between the partner boroughs in 2022/23, with an equal split contribution model being agreed for implementation from 2023/24.



National adoption landscape

National RAA Leaders Group

The 32 Regional Adoption Agencies in England work together under the umbrella 'The National RAA Leaders Group', soon to be rebranded in Autumn 2023 to 'Adoption England'. The Leaders Group has a Strategic Lead and several project leads focused on developing particular areas of practice nationally and coordinating the work of RAAs. The Leaders Group has been tasked by the Department of Education with developing the priorities it identified within its adoption strategy 'Achieving Excellence Everywhere' (2021) and provided with funding to progress this work. These priorities focus on developing national standards in recruitment, matching, and support; looking at alternative models of matching practice; increasing the use of early permanence placements; developing multi-disciplinary support; and considering models for national and pan-regional commissioning in adoption support. In addition, the Leaders Group is focused on raising the voices of those with different lived experiences of adoption, and on increasing representation of all forms of diversity within adoption services. Whilst much of this work is being progressed nationally, Adopt London have also been successful at accessing grant funding from the National RAA Leaders Group to progress priorities that align with the DfE strategy.



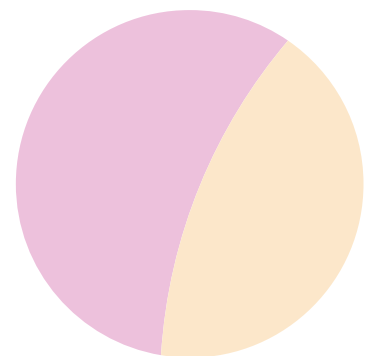
regional
adoption
agencies



Death of Leiland-James Corkill in Cumbria

Leiland-James was placed for adoption aged 7 months in August 2020. He had been removed from his birth family through care proceedings and placed with foster carers from the age of 2 months. In January 2021 Leiland-James died as a result of a catastrophic head injury at the hands of his prospective adoptive parents. In May 2022 the prospective adoptive mother was found guilty of murder. During the trial she was found to have lied about her alcohol use, mental health, physical health, family debts, and attitude to physical chastisement. In July 2022 Cumbria Safeguarding Children's Partnership published their report following a Child Safeguarding Practice Review, and recommendations for Regional Adoption Agencies have recently been published. There is significant learning from this horrifying case and RAAs are working collectively to implement changes to practice which will reduce the risk of a similar set of circumstances occurring in future. These changes include:

- Ensuring medical practitioners understand their safeguarding responsibilities in adoption cases, and that updating information is sought from medical records at different stages of the process.
- Providing opportunities to listen to the voice of the child at different stages of the adoption process (in this case the adoptive parents had a birth child who would have been old enough to speak with social workers and might have provided some insight).
- Letting personal referees know that they have a safeguarding responsibility and should make contact with the adoption agency if they have concerns.
- More strenuously seeking references from therapeutic providers with an emphasis on their role in safeguarding, as some providers refuse to provide a reference on the grounds of patient confidentiality.



Adopt London



Adopt London structure

Four RAAs work closely together under the Adopt London umbrella covering the different geographic regions in London, and providing services to 24 boroughs in total. Adopt London are unique nationally in working in such a close partnership across a large number of local authorities.

Through this partnership we aim to develop a London-wide profile for the recruitment of adoptive parents, improve services that benefit from economies of scale, and share and standardise best practice. The host boroughs for Adopt London are Islington, Southwark, Havering, and Ealing. Heads of Service, Service Managers, Team Managers, Panel Advisors, and Marketing & Communications leads all work closely with their peers across Adopt London to develop shared services and practice standards.

Heads of Service and the host borough Directors and Directors of Children's Services meet quarterly as the Adopt London Executive Advisory

Board chaired by a non-host partner DCS. The Executive Advisory Board oversees the joint project work of Adopt London, supports with problem solving, and considers Adopt London issues that need the support of other senior leaders to resolve.

In 2021 the Executive Advisory Board wrote to all member boroughs to request agreement to work towards an Adopt London legal partnership agreement linked to local agreements. This agreement would formalise the responsibilities of the Executive Advisory Board and protect the ownership of the Adopt London shared brand and online resources. This work was paused in 2022/23 due to legal complexities and capacity, but is hoped to restart during 2023/24.



Adopt London activity

The Adopt London Heads of Service work towards a strategic work plan that is supported by the Executive Advisory Board. The plan covers governance and commissioning arrangements; operational and practice development of priority areas including opportunities to access national funding; marketing and communications arrangements; and the voice of adopters, adopted children, adopted adults, and birth family members. A Pooled Budget is held to fund shared activity. These were some of our shared areas of work in 2022/23:

Matching project: Adopt London have been awarded funds from the National RAA Leaders Group to test methods for improving shared practice for matching children in need of adoption with adoptive families. This has led to the creation of Adopt London Matching Manager and Matching Coordinator posts to lead the shared work.

Early Permanence: We have also been awarded funds to strengthen Early Permanence practice across London, working across Adopt London and another non-Adopt London RAA. In 2022/23 a research report was prepared looking at the barriers to Early Permanence in London, which included interviews with Family Court Judges, managers from CAFCASS, local authority Agency Decision Makers and legal advisors, and RAA practice leads.

Black Adoption Project: We completed the first phase of this large, long-term project to improve adoption for Black children and families and have started preparing to initiate and evaluate practice pilots.

Adult adoptee support: We are working with adult adoptees to expand the availability of support groups in London. A new group specifically for transracially adopted adults was set up in this period in partnership with the Transracial Adult Adoptee Network (TAAN).

Agency Decision Maker workshops: Funded by the National RAA Leaders Group, Adopt London ran a development workshop for London Agency Decision Makers to reflect on case law, guidance, and best practice around Best Interests Decisions.

Adopt London choir: Founded during the 2020 pandemic, the choir is made up of London adoptive parents who meet weekly online to sing and network, and sometimes meet in person to perform at events. The choir has proven to be a strong source of support for many parents. You can watch some of their videos on the Adopt London YouTube channel.

Marketing & Communications: Our marketing and communications leads pool their time and resources to provide a shared Adopt London public presence, including our website and social media. A single public profile is particularly effective for the recruitment of prospective adoptive parents.

Adopt London staff event: We hosted our second annual in-person event for 150 Adopt London members of staff to increase relationships and co-working across the Adopt London RAAs. The event focused on the importance of our use of language in our work.

We Are Family: We continue to have a strong partnership with adopter peer network charity We Are Family, which provides support groups across London, a specialist webinar programme, and podcast.

In addition to continuing work in these areas, our priorities for further shared work in 2023/34 are:

Adopter voice: We are developing a strong mechanism for gathering and responding to adoptive parent feedback, and for consulting with parents on service developments.

Adopted children and young people's groups: We are planning to expand social groups for adopted children and young people across the Adopt London area to provide social opportunities and invite participation.

Shared commissioning arrangements in adoption support: We have received funding from the National RAA Leaders Group to scope potential improvements to commissioning arrangements, particularly in relation to provision under the Adoption Support Fund. In the long term this work could increase the effectiveness of our arrangements whilst reducing the currently extensive administration.

The Black Adoption Project



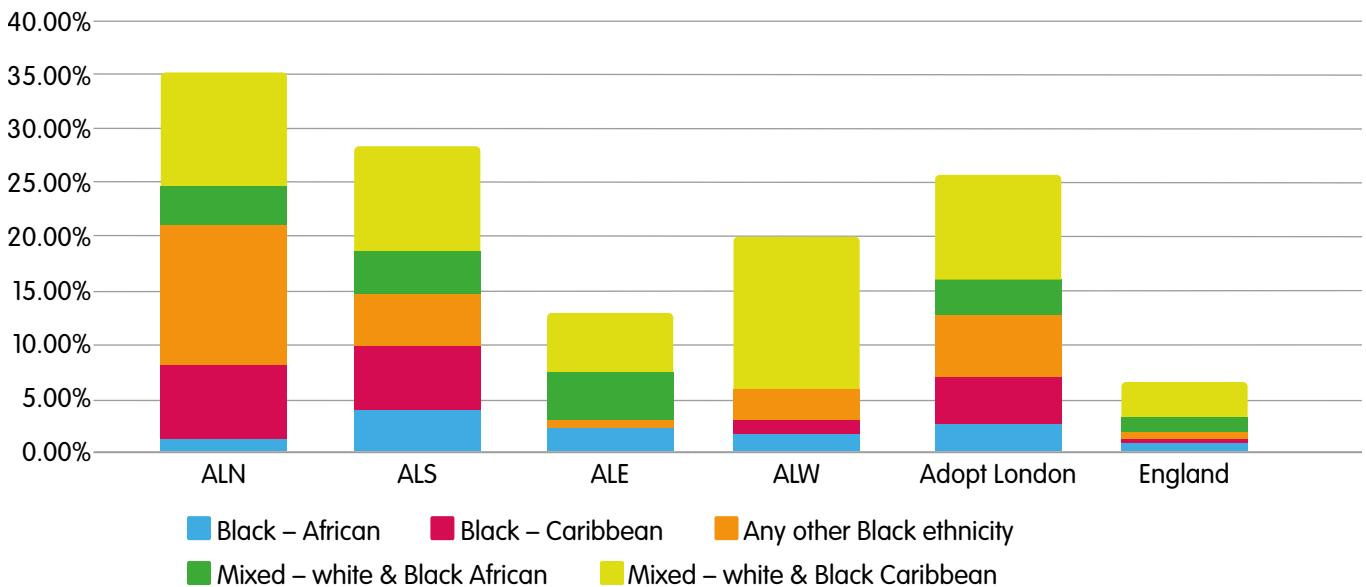
The Black Adoption Project aims to improve adoption for Black children and families and is a partnership project between Adopt London and Laurelle Brown Training & Consultancy. We have now completed phase 1 of the Project and have a strong governance structure established with a wide range of representatives covering professional, community, and lived experience of Black adoption – including adult adoptees, care experienced adults, and adoptive parents.

Our initial research is detailed in our Phase 1 Report, which evidences the disparities for Black children in the adoption system and pinpoints where these disparities are occurring. It also looks at the experiences of Black prospective adoptive parents, and Black community

perceptions of adoption. Some of our key findings are:

- Black children who have a plan of adoption agreed by the court are much less likely than other children to go on to be adopted, and this seems to be most often because suitable adoptive parents couldn't be identified.
- Black children who are adopted wait much longer to move into their adoptive family.
- Black prospective adopters are more likely to drop out during the assessment process and not go on to adopt a child.
- Some of the most significant barriers to adoption for Black prospective adopters are financial factors, negative experiences

Black children placed for adoption as a proportion of all children placed for adoption in the 5 years from 2016/17 - 2020/21



or perceptions of the assessment process, the need for more support after adoption (including culturally informed support), and the impact of racism.

In the five year period studied, Adopt London North placed the highest proportion of Black and mixed Black ethnicity children for adoption compared to other Adopt London RAAs. Across Adopt London on average 25.8% of children placed for adoption were of Black or mixed Black ethnicity backgrounds. We found that Black children with a Placement Order were 20% less likely to have been successfully placed for adoption than children of other ethnicities. Black Caribbean children particularly were 12 times more likely than other children to have 'prospective adopters could not be found' given as the reason for a change of care plan away from adoption. When other factors were held constant, Black children spent on average 6½-8 months longer in the adoption process before moving in with their adoptive family, and the most substantial delays occurred during the family finding process – again suggesting that significant delay is caused by difficulties identifying suitable prospective adopters.

Within the research we also looked at the journey for Black prospective adoptive parents and found that Black-only households were 5-6 more likely than white-only households to leave the adoption process without adopting a child, indicating that there are difficulties during the assessment phase that need to be considered further.

During 2022/23 we organised workshops with a wide range of stakeholders, including adopted young people, to develop a Theory of Change – a document which articulates the things that aren't working currently, and the goals of the project. The research findings and Theory of

Change process led directly to some options for creating change. The pilot proposals target different areas of practice including:

- Services to increase retention of Black prospective adopters both at the initial enquiry stage, and later during the assessment process.
- Exploring ways to reduce the economic barriers to adoption.
- Specialist learning and development programme for adoptive parents of Black children.
- Community-led approach to raise awareness of adoption and ultimately to recruit more Black adoptive parents.
- Research into the significance and availability of Black therapists providing support under the Adoption Support Fund.
- Social, participatory, and educational groups for Black adopted young people.

In the next phase of work we will be initiating a number of pilot projects across these different areas of practice, and evaluating the impact these changes have on Black children and families.

Alongside the research and practice change is activity focusing on the importance of workforce development and support for Black staff members. We have been running monthly 'Safe Space Sessions' for Black staff to reflect on their work within adoption and discuss experiences that impact and shape the workplace and practice.

We have run whole-staff development training, and a series of workshops focused on learning from Black adoptees on their experiences of adoption. In the next phase of work we will be developing more ongoing programmes of support for staff to help create and embed change.

Black Adoption Project goals

- Levelled playing field for Black **families**.
- Reimagined **system** for Black children.
 - Black **communities** understand and care about adoption.
 - Black adopted **children** have the support they need.
 - Confident, anti-racist and culturally-competent **workforce**.

The Adoption Panel

Structure of the Adoption Panel

Adopt London North run one central Adoption Panel which oversees all:

- Matching decisions relating to the choice of adoptive family for a child
- Best Interests Decisions for voluntary adoption (relinquished babies)
- Approval of prospective adoptive parents
- Review or rescindment of approval of prospective adoptive parents

Panel recommendations relating to individual children are presented to the Agency Decision Maker in the child's borough for a decision. Prospective adopter approval and review of

approval decisions are presented to the Agency Decision Maker in ALN.

The ALN Panel meets twice per month, with capacity to run additional meetings if required. There is one independent Panel Chair and central list membership to ensure consistency of decision making and robust oversight of the work of ALN. The independent Panel membership is diverse in terms of their experiences of adoption, their age, gender, relationship status, and ethnicity. Social workers from ALN and partner boroughs also sit on the Panel regularly however it has been harder to ensure gender and ethnic diversity in the social work representatives and this is something we hope to improve in future as those positions are rotated. The Panel have regular training and there is a programme of annual appraisals. The Panel provide quality assurance feedback to ALN and the relevant local authority for every case they consider.

Views of the independent Adoption Panel Chair

The Panel Chair, Josephine Scorer, provides a report of Panel business every six months. The report covers the activity of the Panel, a summary of quality assurance feedback, and areas for improvement and development. Recommendations arising from Panel Chair reports are reviewed in quarterly meetings between the Panel Chair and Head of Service. In her most recent report covering the period September 2022 – March 2023, she provided the following conclusion:



6 The Adoption Panel is settled and stable, and the Panel membership is diverse and well balanced, containing broad and wide-ranging personal and professional expertise. Panel members are focused, collaborative, and mutually respectful, and clearly able to use critical thinking to robustly scrutinise cases being presented to the Panel, make safe recommendations, and feedback and appropriately challenge standards of practice.

Gaps in Panel membership have been identified and addressed, particularly in relation to increasing the number of social work members on the central list.

The working relationship between the Panel chair, Panel advisor and Panel coordinator, continues to be strong.

Virtual Panels continue to work well, with clear advantages; however, a review process is underway to look more closely

at the disadvantages, and to see where improvements can be made.

There is a clear training program for the Panel with future training dates already in place.

Annual reviews of Panel members are up to date, with no major concerns identified.

Panel business remains steady overall, and the quality assurance process is effective.

The strengths across Adopt London North are also clearly apparent. Standards of practice are very high, with robustly analysed assessments and strong, well evidenced matches being consistently presented to the Adoption Panel. Although CPRs in particular still need some work, the overall standard of reports is extremely high. The presentation from social workers is also consistently high, and social workers are well supported by team managers who attend every Panel."



Training for local authority social workers

In early 2023 ALN were able to launch the first in a number of planned training sessions designed to support local authority social workers and direct managers to develop confidence in adoption and permanency work.

The first training provided guidance in preparing a Child Permanency Report (CPR). The CPR is a crucial document which has multiple uses as evidence for court when a Placement Order application is made, for information-sharing with prospective adoptive parents during the family finding process, and as a crucial life-long record for the adoptee. The in-person training was attended by social workers and managers from

across the ALN partner boroughs and strong positive feedback was received and evaluated by the Quality Assurance Board. Many attendees reflected on the benefit of learning together with practitioners from other boroughs. As a result of the success of the training, the CPR training will run twice in 2023/24 and then on an ongoing basis as demand requires.

The second topic in the programme, 'Permanency Planning and the Legal Process', has now been prepared and will run for the first time in September 2023. Five other topics have been agreed and will be developed gradually to run alongside the existing topics.



"This was really important information, I think all social workers should do this training."

Social Worker, Child In Need, Hackney

"[The training had] open, reflective, and free-flowing conversations."

Senior Practitioner, Family Intervention, Camden

"[I will take away learning about] keeping the child in mind at all times when writing the CPR and being respectful."

Social Worker, Intervention & Planning, Barnet

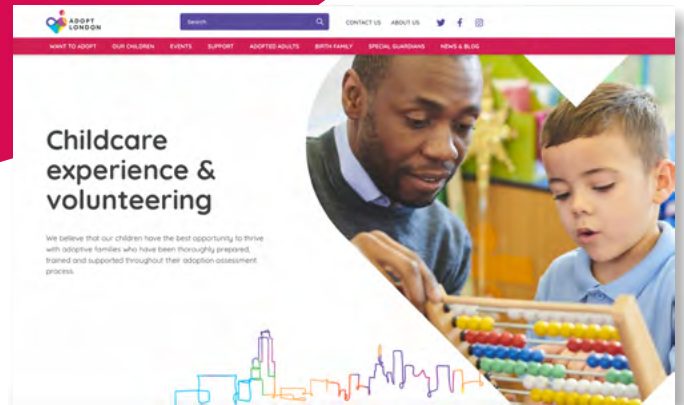
"The videos gave me an understanding of how important and how helpful the information we put on the CPR is to the child and the adoptive parent."

Social Worker, Looked After Children, Enfield

"Learning about how different [boroughs] work with families and how they would capture information..."

Social Worker, Children Looked After, Islington

Finding prospective adoptive parents



Adopt London brand

Our single Adopt London public face is successful at making Adopt London easy to find for anyone considering adoption in London and provides prospective adopters with a clear and transparent choice between agencies. Pooling communications resources means that Adopt London can spend less whilst still maintaining a professional, creative, and current online presence.

We have a shared recruitment and communications strategy. Through the Adopt London brand we aim to celebrate the diversity of London, to demonstrate that London children are central to our agencies, and to highlight a range of voices impacted by adoption.

The **website** is at the heart of Adopt London's communication and usually the first contact point for people considering adoption. Articles, blogs, news, and up-to-date information is accessible on the website with several new pages and content reviews being introduced during the year. In 2022/23 we undertook significant development work in the systems side of the website to ensure it is compliant with local government standards and began a programme of work to improve accessibility.

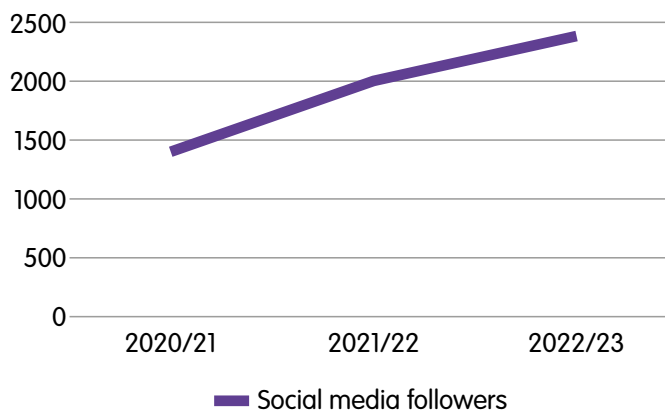
Visits to the website are most often initiated by an organic search online (50% of visits), people entering the address directly into the browser (27%) and through links from other websites (20%). In total there were 46,647 website sessions during the year, a decrease from 58,696 in

2021/22. Other website engagement measures such as number of new users and page views were also reduced this year. This may be due to our focus on systems development this year with deliberately less promotion of new articles and features on the site as we have tried to manage high demand in our Recruitment & Assessment Team; but also may in part reflect wider patterns in adoption recruitment driven by the 'cost of living crisis'. From those who provided feedback after attendance at an Information Session this year, 49% said they chose to attend an ALN session because they live in one of the partner boroughs, and 39% said they made the decision after searching online – emphasising the importance of a strong website presence.

The Adopt London social media channels post regularly to communicate and inform a range of audiences impacted by adoption. Our social media followers continue to organically increase and using these channels can be an effective way to engage and support people in London who are considering adoption but not yet ready to begin an assessment.

In 2022/23 ALN ran workshops for our partner borough communications leads to increase their awareness of the work of ALN and the importance of recruiting adoptive parents. This has led to the development of a local communications plan for 2023/24 which will see ALN working closely with one borough at a

Social media followers



time in a chosen month to raise local knowledge of adoption through bespoke articles, adverts, and use of social media.

For the second year we have produced an original podcast series 'Adoption Shared' in partnership with We Are Family, our adopter peer support partners. In 2022/23 we published the third season, with episodes focused on Black adoption from different perspectives. The podcast has been successful at providing another way for us to engage, support, develop, and build loyalty with those considering adoption who are not yet ready to begin an assessment. Episodes are also used in preparing and training prospective adopters and in building community for adoptive parents.



The first three seasons of Adoption Shared have now been downloaded 8,284 times. A fourth season is being prepared for release in 2023/24 focused on adoption experiences for children with additional support needs.

Enquiries and providing information

We have continued to run Information Sessions virtually this year due to the positive feedback we have received about these sessions being easier to access and effective at sharing a large amount of information. However, in Autumn 2022 we developed a waiting list of prospective adopters who had attended initial meetings and were ready to start their assessment. In the same period we had a temporary drop in our capacity within the Recruitment & Assessment team, and an increase in other areas of this team's work. We therefore did not run Information Sessions from November 2022 – March 2023 to ensure we could allocate and begin assessments for households who were already on our waiting list. For this reason, the numbers attending sessions is reduced significantly this year.

From those who attended and provided feedback after an Information Session, 100% rated the session as highly informative, and 98% would recommend the session to a family or friend who was interested in adoption.

“Really informative and friendly – beyond my expectations. Thank you!”

“Everything was really useful and well presented... [the speakers] clearly have a passion for adoption and a wealth of information, this came across throughout the session.”

“A great overall overview – felt like the start of a journey. And a solid one, a good dose of optimism and positivity mixed with realism too – good balance.”

“Being a critic, I felt the session was perfect to me.”

“...It was clear that this is a competent and experienced team.”

“We really enjoyed it and felt very strongly that ALN would be brilliant to work with.”

“It was overall exceptionally great and informative.”

We have also continued to deliver our popular monthly Meet the Adopter sessions virtually this year, with 201 households attending a session. The virtual delivery means that it is possible for us to have a wide range of diverse adoptive parents speaking about their experiences, as childcare demands would limit speakers if sessions were delivered in person. Our adoptive parent speakers have a wide range of experiences including those who have adopted younger and older children, had siblings placed at the same time and siblings who have joined the adoptive family separately; some have adopted through Early Permanence, as a single parent, or as a couple in a same-sex or heterosexual relationship, or as an older parent. Two or three speakers attend each session and questions are thrown open to those considering adoption. Due to the wide range of speakers, these sessions highlight to prospective adopters that there is not just one valid 'adopter experience' and provide a realistic and balanced view of the joys and challenges of adoption. Some of our prospective adopters have attended sessions regularly throughout their assessment and this has enriched their preparation.



"I was grateful for the event and that I can attend more of these sessions if I want to. It helped to alleviate any fears of judgement e.g., if a person wants to [adopt as] a single parent and so on."

"The adopters were amazing and really helpful because they were so honest."

"The session was fantastic and beyond my expectations... The environment (despite being on Zoom) felt a safe space to speak freely and honestly."

61% of Information Session attendees, and 65% of attendees at Meet The Adopter sessions live in one of the six ALN boroughs, whilst other households attending live in neighbouring London boroughs and bordering areas such as Essex and Hertfordshire.

Due to our pause in running Information Sessions and accepting applications during the second half of the year, there were many households who made an enquiry with us but were unable to take the process further. Overall enquiry numbers were higher than last year, which may reflect the difficulty some prospective adopters have experienced in finding an adoption agency in London who is actively recruiting new families. Of those who attended an Information Session, 35% went on to submit an Expression of Interest application compared to 39% in 2021/22 and 36% in 2020/21 – so the proportion of those attending a session who go on to submit an application has remained reasonably consistent, but the overall number has reduced as a result of pausing our sessions.

"Very well done session. It felt like a really relaxed session, no pressure, and good opportunity to hear from adopters and to hear questions from other prospective adopters."

"These sessions are so honest, they show the good the bad and the ugly but all your speakers come back to how adoption has changed their lives for the better and that they are capable of dealing with the situations as they arise."

Prospective adopter enquiries

Number of households who...	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Made an enquiry	714	827	873
Signed up to an information session	493	516	214
Attended an information session	351	349	143
Submitted an Expression of Interest application	128	136	50
Started Stage 1 assessment	26	18	14
			166

Preparing and approving adoptive parents

After an increase in 2021/22, the number of approvals of new adoptive families has decreased again this year primarily due to capacity challenges within the Recruitment & Assessment Team, alongside increased demands from other areas of work. In addition there has continued to be a change, reflected nationally, in the average complexity of assessments since the Covid-19 pandemic. This appears to be due to increased difficulty and challenge in family life – for example more applicants have experience of mental health difficulties, disordered eating, fertility treatment

which has been cut short, recent bereavement, and redundancy. These complexities impact the assessment process in different ways but can mean that the assessment needs to be slower, that families might need to take a break or drop out of the process, or that professional counselling support may be needed before an assessment can progress.

Assessments have continued to be of a high standard as evidenced by the quality assurance feedback from our Adoption Panel, and most adoptive parents are matched soon after

Adoptive household approvals

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
41	31	27	33	19	12	24	13



Referrals for foster carers & connected people to be assessed as adoptive parents

Borough	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Barnet	1	1	2	3
Camden	0	0	1	1
Enfield	0	3	4	3
Hackney	1	2	3	2
Haringey	0	0	2	2
Islington	0	0	5	6
Total	2	6	17	17

approval. At the end of March 2023, only 4 approved adoptive households not matched with a child had been waiting for over 12 months, and 3 of these households had had significant periods on hold since approval for different reasons, accounting for this delay. This shows that the adopters who are approved are usually suitable for the needs of our North London children, and where it is necessary for them to consider children from outside the ALN partnership, they are able to be successfully matched.

The ALN Governance Board have closely monitored and reviewed levels of approvals and capacity of the Recruitment & Assessment Team. Due to the high level of enquiries ALN continue to receive, the capacity of the team will be increased on a pilot basis through seconded social workers in 2023/24 to assess the impact on approval levels.

Referrals from boroughs for adoption assessments of foster carers and connected people (who wish to adopt children known to them or already in their care) have remained very high this year. A process for referral and joint decision making between the borough and ALN for foster carer assessments is being used well. Foster carer assessments tend to be particularly complex and often encounter delays.

On behalf of the boroughs, ALN are legally required to provide advice and assess any resident who wishes to privately apply for an Adoption Order for a child in their care (non-agency adoption). This can include adoption by a step-parent, by a same-sex partner where both partners were not registered as parents on the birth certificate, in surrogacy cases,

for Special Guardians who wish to convert to an Adoption Order, and in some family care arrangements. A high proportion of these cases involve international elements because an Adoption Order is often advised by solicitors as being a way to formalise the legal status of a family arrangement when resolving immigration difficulties. Many of these cases are extremely complex legally.

ALN offer meetings with those who enquire about non-agency adoption to advise on the suitability of an adoption application and in many cases to suggest alternative ways of gaining the legal security needed. Despite this, there are an increasing number of cases which do go on to require allocation for full assessment.

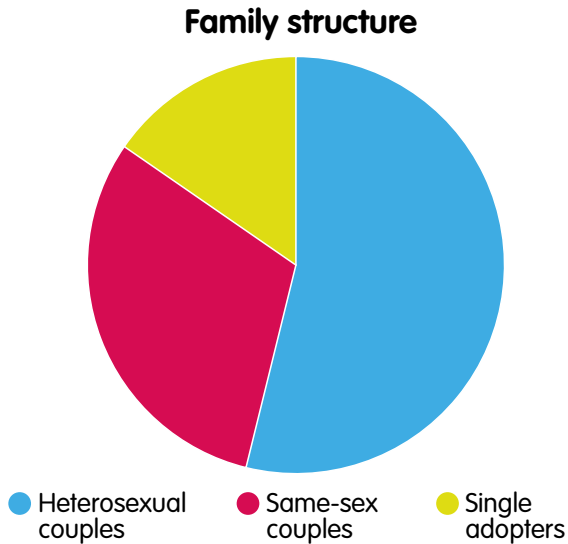
New non-agency assessments started each year

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
4	4	6	8



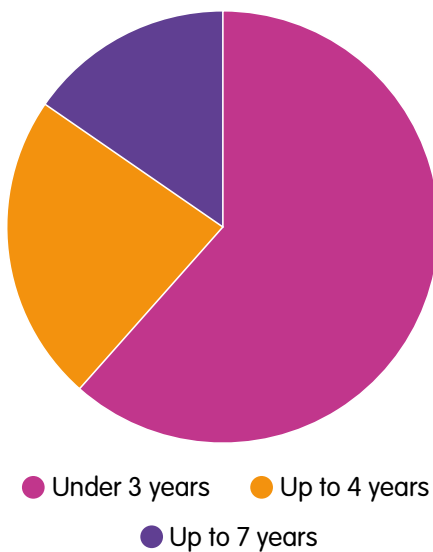
Characteristics of approved adopters

Approved adoptive households were diverse in terms of family structure, with 54% being heterosexual couples, 31% same-sex couples, and 15% single adopters.



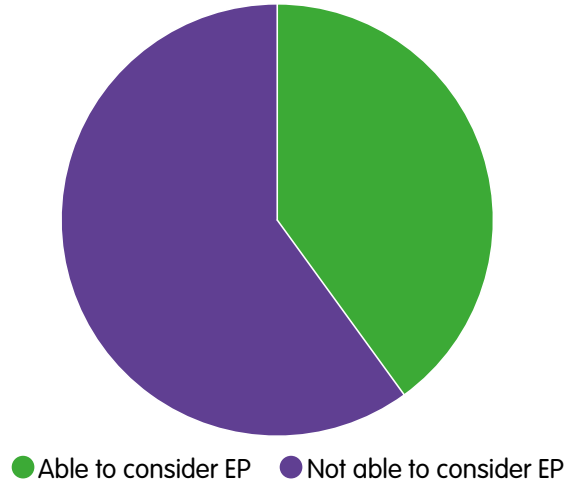
In total 62% of approved households wanted to consider children up to the age of 3 years, 23% up to the age of 4 years, and 15% up to the age of 7 years.

Approval criteria – age of children



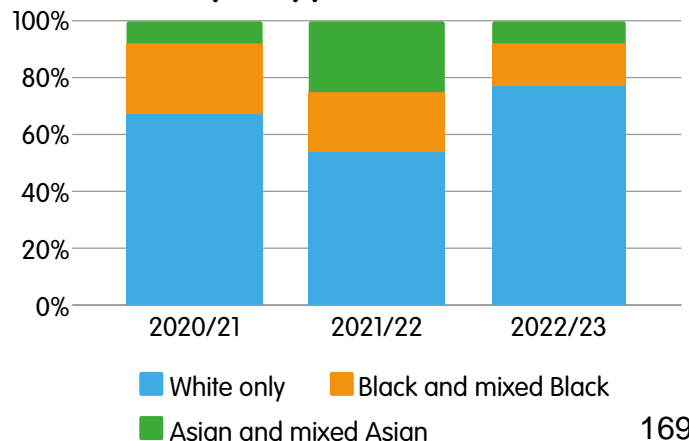
3 of the approved households were foster carers for the child they hoped to adopt. When these households are taken out of the figures, 40% of approved households were able to consider an early permanence placement.

Approved adopters able to consider early permanence



This year only 23% of approved households had at least one person of a global majority ethnicity and 77% of households had adopters only of white British or other white ethnicities. This is a decline from last year, when 46% of households had at least one person of a global majority ethnicity. There is no clear reason for this decline, although our research undertaken within the Black Adoption Project highlighted how Black individuals are statistically more likely to be unable to adopt due to socio-economic factors, which is of particular concern in the current 'cost of living crisis'. Whilst increasing overall numbers of approved adopters remains essential, it is critical that we use the learning and pilots from the Black Adoption Project to ensure the proportion of approved Black adopters increases significantly.

Ethnicity of approved households



Planning for children

Adoption permanency planning

Each partner borough is responsible for permanency planning and tracking of their children. A Family Finder from ALN attends planning meetings and is able to provide advice and guidance about adoption plans. Referrals for children are made to ALN when the plan is likely to be adoption and the case is allocated at the point that early Family Finding work can begin, usually around the time the Best Interests Decision is made by the borough Agency Decision Maker.

Many referrals do not result in a Placement Order and therefore a final adoption plan for the child, however referral levels can be indicative of increases and decreases in the amount of new family finding work that ALN will be undertaking. The table shows that after a dip in 2021/22, referrals were again higher in 2022/23 and the overall picture emerging over the 3 full years is of consistency when figures from all boroughs are

considered together. At an individual borough level there is more significant variation. It is worth noting with all placement figures that overall numbers for ALN provide a stronger indication of a trend in the data, as individual borough's figures alone are low and therefore do not indicate trends reliably.

When family finding referrals are compared to matches over a 3 year period, we can develop an estimate of how many referrals on average result in children being matched and placed for adoption. Across ALN, around 1 in every 4 referrals over the last 3 years has resulted in a match (27% of referrals), although there is wide variation by borough, likely the result of different permanency planning processes.

Children with a plan for adoption

After a 45% reduction in 2021/22 in the number of adoption plans being formalised by the borough

Family finding referrals into ALN

Borough	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Barnet	25	19	36
Camden	21	18	25
Enfield	26	24	21
Hackney	22	15	13
Haringey	49	19	32
Islington	12	30	17
Total	155	125	144

Agency Decision Makers (ADM), there has been a return to 2020/21 figures this year. Placement Orders have also increased although have not been as high as in 2020/21 – this could mean that a lower proportion of ADM Best Interests Decisions are resulting in Placement Orders, or that care proceedings with Decisions made in the second half of 2022/23 have not yet concluded. Numbers of children placed for adoption are lower than last year but significantly higher than 2020/21. In all cases some time lapses between the Best Interests Decision, the Placement Order being made, and the child being placed for

adoption; therefore it is possible that the high level of Best Interests Decisions is an indicator of increased Placement Orders and adoptive placements in 2023/23. Significant court delays have now been a feature particularly in adoption cases since 2020, and these delays complicate the picture that the data shows.

This year the ASG national adoption data collection have provided data showing the proportion of children taken into care before turning 5 who go on to have a Best Interests Decision made (this data is not yet available for 2022/23). These figures suggest that the

Number of referrals resulting in a match over a 3 year period 2020/21 – 2022/23

Borough	Referrals	Matches	% of referrals that result in a match
Barnet	80	16	20%
Camden	64	17	27%
Enfield	71	30	42%
Hackney	50	18	36%
Haringey	100	24	24%
Islington	59	9	15%
Total	424	114	27%



proportion of children within ALN who come into care under the age of 5 and go on to have a Best Interests Decision has been reducing annually, however given the increased Best Interests

Decisions in 2022/23, this figure may increase when data for the most recent year is available.

Best Interests Decisions – data provided by borough’s own ASG national returns

Borough	Total ADM Best Interests Decisions				% children taken into care before turning 5 with a Best Interests Decision			
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Barnet	27	13	5	14	47%	24%	24%	-
Camden	9	5	4	11	38%	12%	22%	-
Enfield	13	15	11	16	29%	23%	24%	-
Hackney	18	12	2	4	32%	12%	5%	-
Haringey	13	16	7	14	33%	44%	19%	-
Islington	5	4	7	9	26%	22%	23%	-
Total	85	65	36	68	34%	24%	20%	-

Placements and Placement Orders – data provided by borough’s own ASG national returns

Borough	Total adoptive placements				Total Placement Orders			
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Barnet	15	2	8	5	11	10	5	2
Camden	4	8	3	5	7	2	5	5
Enfield	7	3	12	14	11	9	11	10
Hackney	9	5	10	2	14	9	3	2
Haringey	9	8	10	5	9	17	8	15
Islington	6	3	3	5	2	1	2	3
Total	50	29	46	36	54	48	32	37

Placing children with adoptive parents

Family finding

Strong connections between the Recruitment & Assessment team and the Family Finding team mean that by the time a Placement Order is made we can establish whether there is a potential in-house adoptive family available. If an in-house family may be a good match for a child, they will be considered initially before the search is broadened to look for prospective adopters from other RAAs and Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs).

Within the Adopt London matching project we are exploring ways to build stronger and quicker family finding links between the four RAAs – this includes regular networking meetings where practitioners can share profiles of children and adopters, Adopt London play sessions where prospective adopters can informally meet and play alongside children and their foster carers, and enhanced Adopt London profile booklets to ensure information about potential Adopt London adopters is readily available to family finders.

Regular family finding review meetings are held between the family finder and the borough social work team after a Placement Order is granted to monitor and progress family finding decisions.

In-house placements

There are a number of reasons why it is a priority for ALN to place as many children with our own adoptive parents as possible. Firstly, we can be confident that in-house adopters have been assessed, trained, and approved to a

high standard. We cannot guarantee the same standards when considering external adopters and in many cases we find there have been significant gaps in their preparation. Secondly, we understand the strengths, weakness and vulnerabilities of our own adopters. This means we can carefully link children and adopters with a greater level of understanding than is often possible with external adopters. Thirdly, it is easier to problem-solve and escalate issues when concerns arise about a child being placed with in-house adopters. We have strong relationships between supervising social workers and family finders which enable difficulties to be identified and supported. Fourthly, it is easier and quicker to provide support to in-house adopters when this is needed in the early placement stage. Where our own adopters have experienced difficulties, we have been able to identify the need and provide support quickly and effectively, preventing the escalation of concerns. For all these reasons, in-house placements are more stable and less likely to experience early disruption. All the disruptions that have occurred in ALN prior to an Adoption Order have been for children placed externally. None of our adoptive parents have been involved in a disrupted placement. Over a period of 3 ½ years across Adopt London's 24 boroughs, only 1 adoptive placement out of 12 total disruptions was with in-house adopters. Finally, there is also a high financial cost to external placements, with the cost of VAA placements rising each year.

We have been successful in maintaining a high proportion of in-house placements this year, 173

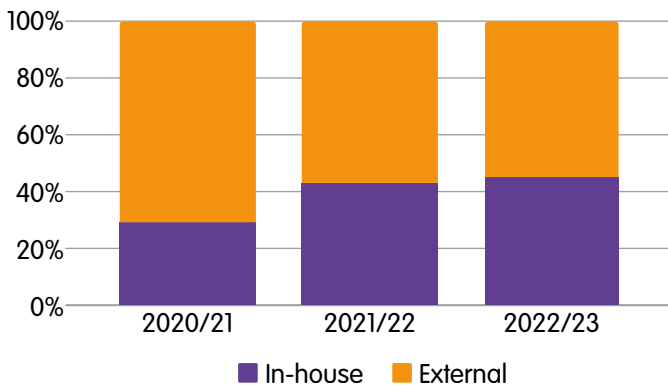
despite adopter approval levels being low. 45% of children matched during 2022/23 went to live with an in-house family. This compares to 43% in 2021/22 and 29% in 2020/21.

To increase in-house placements further we need to ensure we assess the adopters who are most likely to be matched with our children and talk to them from the earliest stages about the benefits of waiting for a link internally. We know that not every adopter will be matched in-house and we therefore support adopters who are ready to begin family finding on a wider basis, particularly where they have very specific matching requirements. However the majority of adopters appreciate the benefits of an in-house placement and are prepared to wait.



children by only considering local placements before looking at placements further afield, however we consider the location of a placement as an important factor when weighing up the strengths or vulnerabilities of potential adoptive families. This year 88% of children matched for adoption went to live with adoptive families in London and the South East.

Type of adoptive placement for children matched



Children waiting for an adoptive family

The family finding team and children’s social work team in the borough meet regularly for Family Finding review meetings for each child to closely monitor progress, provide updates, and to ensure the plan for adoption remains right for the child. ALN are also invited to attend tracking meetings in the borough to provide information for senior managers who are monitoring permanency planning. ALN and borough senior managers speak regularly to escalate delays or concerns.

Location of placements

Regardless of whether an in-house placement is possible, we aim to place as many children as we can within London and the South East as this enables ALN and the child’s social workers in the borough to provide the best possible support and to quickly pick up any difficulties that arise post-placement. We do not create delay for

In 2021/22 there were a particularly high number of matches alongside low Placement Order numbers, which meant that only 9 children with a Placement Order had active family finding taking place at the end of March 2022. This year Placement Orders are slightly higher and matches lower, which means there are a higher number of children waiting with active family finding at the end of March 2023. These figures exclude children who are already linked, whose foster carers are being assessed as adoptive parents, and whose plan for adoption has been changed or put on hold).

Location of adoptive placements



Children with a Placement Order where there is active family finding taking place on 31 March

Borough	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Barnet	2	1	1
Camden	4	1	2
Enfield	8	0	4
Hackney	11	1	1
Haringey	11	6	10
Islington	1	0	1
Total	37	9	19

Adoptive matches made

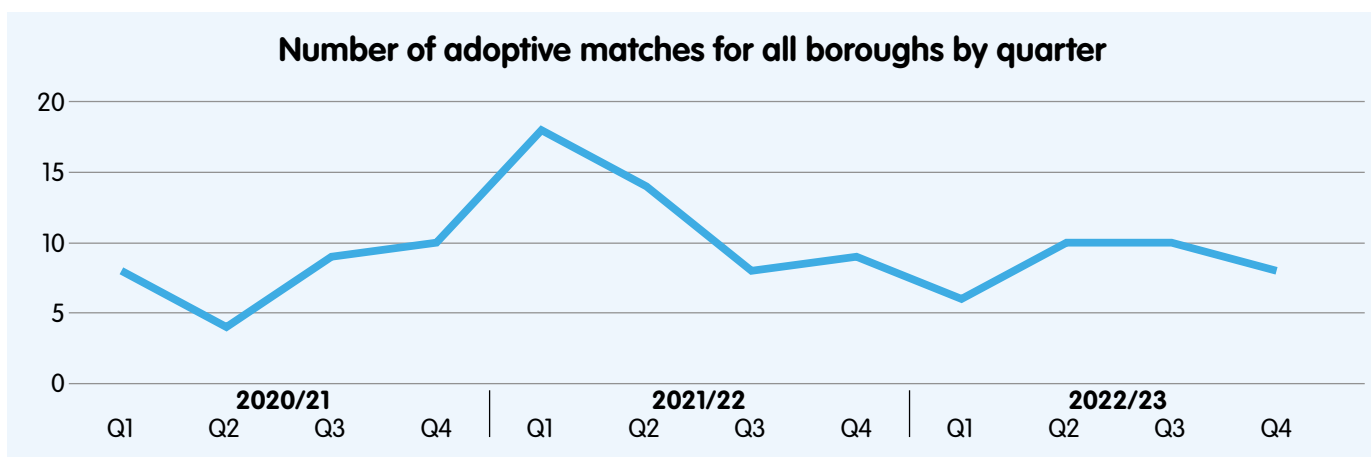
After a peak in matches in the first half of 2021/22, the number of matches this year has been lower but in line with 2020/21 figures. The 2022/23 reduction in matches was expected as there were only 32 Placement Orders made in 2021/22. The overall number of matches for ALN

provides a better indication of placement trends than the number of matches in each borough, which can seem volatile due to small numbers when viewed for a single year. As there were 37 Placement Orders made in 2022/23 and an increase in Best Interests Decisions, it is possible that adoptive matches may increase slightly in 2023/24.

Number of adoptive matches for all boroughs

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
55	50	29	31	49	34

Number of adoptive matches for all boroughs by quarter



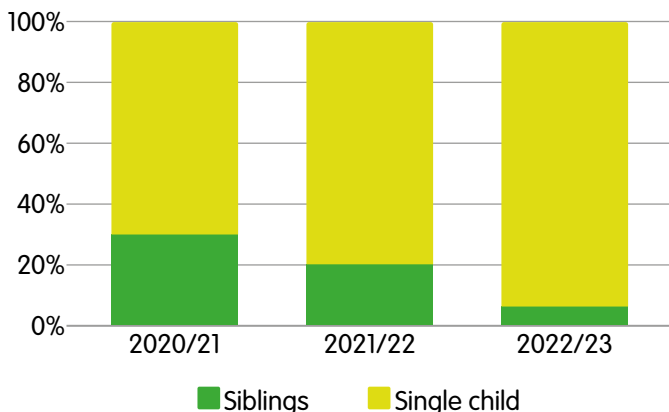
Number of adoptive matches

Borough	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Barnet	2	10	4
Camden	7	4	6
Enfield	4	12	14
Hackney	8	8	2
Haringey	6	13	5
Islington	4	2	3
Total	31	49	34

Characteristics of children matched for adoption

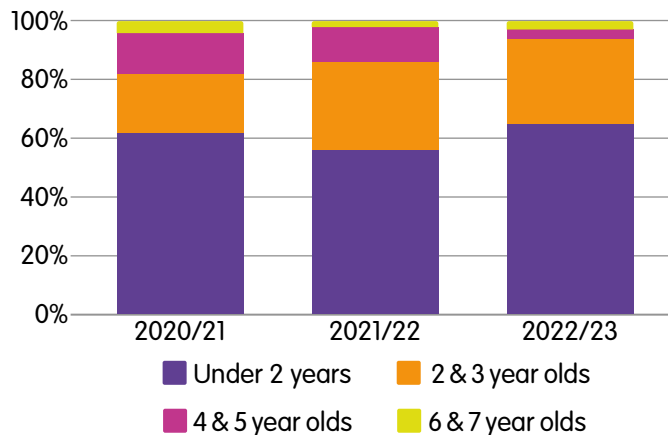
There has been a significant drop in the proportion of children who were matched for adoption with a sibling in 2022/23 compared to previous years, with only 1 sibling group being matched for adoption compared to 5 sibling groups in 2020/21 and 2021/22. These figures do not include children who were matched with the adoptive parents of a sibling who had already been earlier placed for adoption. It is unclear why this number has reduced however there are not a high number of sibling groups waiting for a match; of all the children waiting with a Placement Order at the end of March 2023, there was one sibling group of 3 children with significant complexities and another of 4 children who had only just received a Placement Order. It therefore appears that there have been fewer sibling groups receiving a Placement Order rather than specific difficulties in matching sibling groups with adopters. ALN will monitor and consider this further during 2023/24 to understand whether this is an anomaly or pattern.

Children matched for adoption in sibling groups



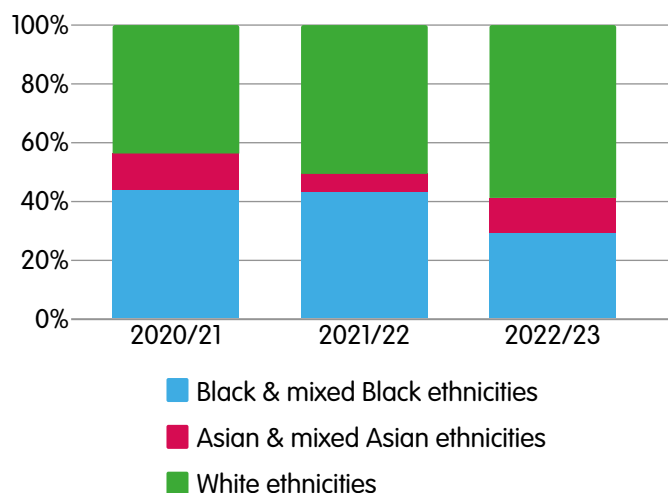
There are some minor changes this year in the ages of children matched for adoption, with an increase in the overall proportion of younger children. 94% of children matched fell within the 'under 2 years old' and '2 & 3 years old' categories compared to 86% in 2021/22 and 82% in 2020/21. The oldest child to be matched for adoption was aged 7 years, slightly older than in previous years (6 years old).

Ages of children matched for adoption



In this data children's ethnicities have been grouped into broader categories to illustrate the types of adoptive placements that are needed for us to be able to consider placements for children that are not fully trans-racial. There has been a reduction this year in the number of children of Black and mixed Black ethnicity matched for adoption and an increase in children from white ethnic backgrounds, however these remain the most prominent ethnicities with Asian and mixed Asian ethnicity children making up a small proportion. When we look at the ethnicities of the children waiting for a match with a Placement Order, 42% of these children are from white backgrounds, 42% are from Black and mixed Black backgrounds, and 16% are from Asian and mixed Asian backgrounds – this suggests that the proportion of Black children may not be significantly reduced from previous years, however these children are more likely than children from White backgrounds to be waiting for an adoptive match.

Ethnicity category of children matched for adoption



Early Permanence placements

There were 7 children placed for Early Permanence with prospective adoptive parents during 2022/23, 1 more than the previous year. There has been a significant increase in referrals for Early Permanence in early 2023/23, with 5 Early Permanence placements made in the first part of the year, so we expect these figures to rise. All of the Early Permanence placements that have concluded their court processes have resulted in the children remaining with their Early Permanence carers for adoption. However all adoptive parents are trained and prepared for the possibility that the outcome of care proceedings may be for the child to return to live with birth parents or a connected person.

As part of the London Early Permanence project, research has been undertaken into the barriers to Early Permanence in London. The researchers carried out 41 interviews with those involved in Early Permanence decision-making in London, including Agency Decision Makers, Heads of Service, legal representatives, members of the judiciary, CAFCASS Guardians, and Regional and Voluntary Adoption Agencies. The research highlighted that London is consistently the region with the lowest use of both adoption and

Early Permanence in England, but also used Special Guardianship Orders below the national average – suggesting low levels of adoption are not directly related to high levels of Special Guardianship placements. Some of the key barriers to Early Permanence identified in the research were:

- Low levels of confidence in Early Permanence practice partially because adoptions themselves are so rare.
- Care proceedings delays which are acute in London increase the uncertainty and risk in Early Permanence placements.
- The strong emphasis on adoption as a last resort within London courts has an impact on both adoption and Early Permanence rates.
- Gaps in case tracking and Early Permanence planning can result in missed opportunities for the use of Early Permanence.
- A shortage of Early Permanence carers ready for placements, so not all referred children can be placed through this route.

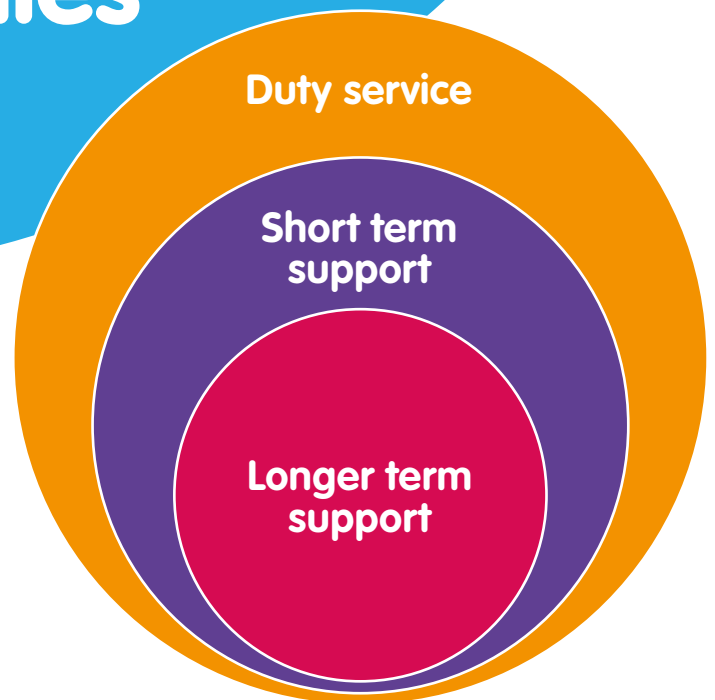
A number of recommendations have been made which will be taken forward in the next phase of the project, including workshops for borough staff and engagement with judiciary and Cafcass.



Providing support to adoptive families and others

The Adoption Support team provide support to adoptive families and adult adoptees living in our boroughs, and provide contact support between adoptive families and birth families for all adoptive children and young people that were previously placed by one of our boroughs. Access to support is through the duty service who are also able to offer short-term support such as standalone applications to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) and access to specialist training. Families requiring longer-term or more complex social work support are allocated to a social worker who completes an assessment of their needs and recommendations for support. Many of the situations requiring longer-term social work support and coordination are at risk of family breakdown.

Demand for support has been consistently high since the last national Covid-19 lockdown in early 2021, with an increasing level of need and complexity in adoptive family's lives. Families are also impacted by pressures on other specialist services such as CAMHS and specialist mental health support, which means that they are increasingly dependant on the support they can access through ALN and the Adoption Support Fund. As a result of the level of demand, there is a waiting time for families to have an assessment of need completed by a social worker (at the end of March 2023 this was approximately 3 months) and we have created waiting lists for non-urgent types of support including reviews of contact and access



to records for adult adoptees. Every attempt is made to prioritise responding to adoptive families with immediate support needs as quickly as possible to prevent family breakdown, which means that waiting lists for adult adoptees (access to records requests), and contact support are hard to reduce. Waiting lists and demand levels are closely monitored by the ALN Governance Board and we are undertaking work to consider other services that families may be able to access in addition to ALN support, and to reduce the need for cases to remain open over a long period of time.

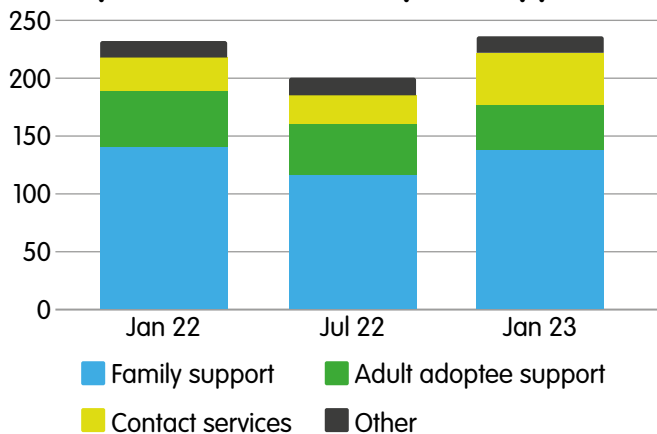
Despite pressures facing our Adoption Support Team many families value having an adoption-informed approach to support, and the team work hard to build supportive, trauma-informed relationships with families that increase their ability to manage the difficulties they face.

We have introduced a snapshot audit monitoring system to understand the level and types of adoption support casework in the service and this has provided us with greater insights into the types of need that are most prevalent. This system is now being piloted by other Adopt

London RAAs with the intention of developing a common dataset that we can use to consider adoption support demand across the partnership.



Open casework in adoption support



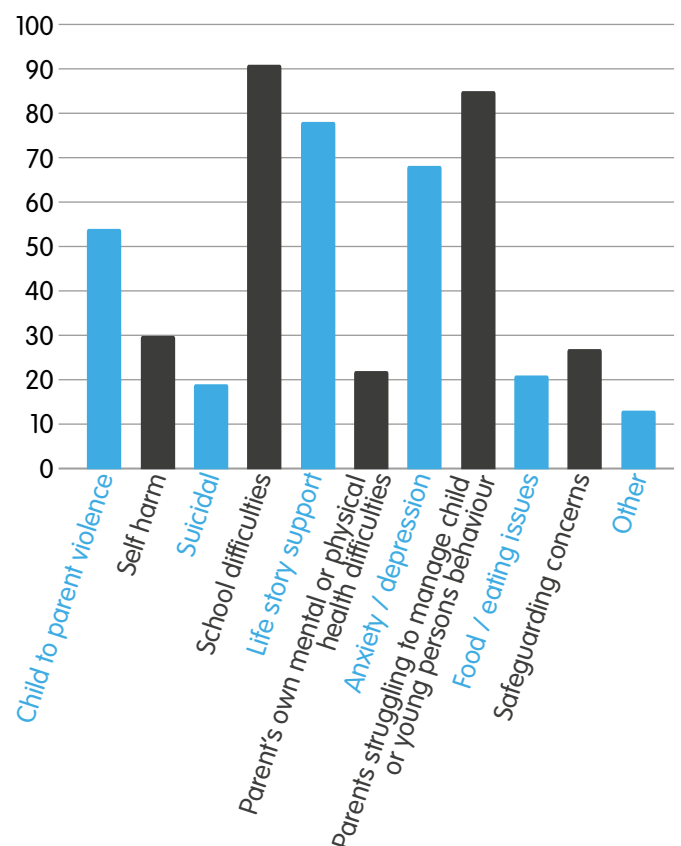
Open casework in adoption support

Type of support	January 2022	July 2022	January 2023
Family support	140	117	138
Adult adoptee support	49	44	39
Contact services	29	24	45
Other	15	16	15

At the time of the most recent audit in January 2023, 52% of family support cases required significant social work support in addition to ASF therapeutic provision and signposting – this proportion is slightly lower than in the last audit (60% in July 2022). 38 families had active CAMHS involvement (compared to 30 families in July 2022), and 18 families were open to the borough’s social work teams in addition to ALN (compared to 20 families in July). There were some notable changes in the proportion of open cases with some of the most significant difficulties – for example 54 open cases where child to parent violence is a factor, compared to 38 in July 2022; 68 cases where the child or young person’s anxiety or depression is a factor, compared to 41 cases in July 2022, and 27 cases where there are safeguarding concerns compared to 21 in July 2022. There are also significant increases in the number of cases where school difficulties or life story work needs are factors.

This data is now being used to consider how our services can be best targeted to meet the needs identified.

Main presenting factors in family support cases



Adoptive parent peer support

2022/23 has been our third year working in formal partnership with We Are Family, a London adoptive parent peer support charity who started as a single group in Hackney & Islington 10 years ago. We Are Family are adopter-led and provide a wide range of peer support to adoptive parents free-of-charge. Their overall membership has now grown to 1157 members, an increase from just over 1000 at the end of 2021/22. Through We Are Family our adoptive parents are connected to social networks of other adoptive parents from the earliest stages of adoption, providing parents with a place to seek advice, normalise parenting challenges, and reduce the potential for isolation.



“I was lucky that I found We Are Family early into our placement, my husband & I were struggling a great deal with the challenges with no family or support close by and being part of We Are Family changed that. I don't believe we would have the relationship with our children that we have now if it were not for the help, support and understanding that other WAF members gave to me.”

We Are Family member and adoptive parent

There are currently seven locality-based We Are Family groups running across London, as well as a group for single adoptive parents and for prospective adopters still being assessed. The groups hold meetings both virtually and in-person, organise family gatherings, and have annual celebration picnics. We Are Family also run a playgroup for adoptive parents with pre-school children and have recently begun to initiate some common interests groups – such as for parents of teenagers.

We Are Family groups are run by adoptive parent volunteers, supported by a small staff team. In 2022/23 We Are Family have started providing professional peer support training to their volunteers which assists with the sustainability and development of their voluntary roles.

“I have gained so much from being a We Are Family volunteer. As well as making new contacts and meeting people from different walks of life, I get the chance to use my professional skills from my previous working life in education to run activities.”

We Are Family volunteer and adoptive parent



Adoptive parent training

We provide expert webinars to our adoptive parents twice per month through our partnership with We Are Family. Adoptive parents can choose whether to attend webinars live and have the opportunity to ask questions, or whether to watch on demand in the member hub for up to a year

after the event. This way of offering learning, development, and support has been popular with adoptive parents who need flexibility to manage childcare demands. In 2022/23 we provided 23 expert webinars on a wide variety of topics. Over 400 adoptive parents attended webinars live this year, and since the programme started over 3100 webinars have been watched on demand.

- Child to parent violence
- Executive functioning
- Self-care for parents
- Adoption support available through Adopt London
- Special Educational Needs
- Supporting contact with birth families
- Non-violent resistance parenting strategies
- Adoptee experiences
- Life story work
- Birth parent experiences
- Sensory processing
- Childhood anxiety
- Parenting teenagers



“I found it tremendously valuable and interesting, thank you!”

Webinar on childhood anxiety

“Brilliant, insightful and helpful”

Webinar on life story work

“Fantastic. So knowledgeable. I know more from Eleanor’s webinar than I’ve known for the entire year this has gone on for.”

Webinar on Special Educational Needs

“Great presenter, very engaging, experienced with specific tangible techniques.”

Webinar on non-violent resistance parenting strategies

“It all confirms my gut feeling about contact being so important going forward.”

Webinar on supporting contact with birth families

Parents of adopted teenagers therapeutic group

This group was created in the North London Adoption Consortium around 13 years ago and continues to be run through ALN. The group supports adoptive parents with the impact of parenting teenagers who have experienced trauma. It provides an opportunity for parents to reflect and gain support from those with similar parenting experiences, and is co-facilitated by ALN social workers and an independent therapist. The group meets monthly on a Saturday for three hours and discussions follow themes agreed by the group. In the last year some of the topics covered in the group have been:

- How children moving towards adulthood impacts parents
- The emotional impact of your child’s life story
- Interplay of child and parent identities
- Experience of being in a family that is ‘different’
- The impact of adoption on couple relationships
- Emotional impact of contact with birth families
- Adoptive parents’ feelings about birth parents

The group has proven to be effective at helping families sustain relationships through some of the most complex adolescent challenges, and therefore reduce the likelihood of family

breakdown. As support is needed for a reasonably long-term period for many of the attendees, spaces within the group are not frequently available. A challenge for ALN is therefore how to ensure this support is available to more families in the future.

“The support of a group means that you have the emotional space to think and focus on really difficult issues. In that space, solutions often bubble up, or you find actually you are not doing as bad as you thought. The group is like a breath of fresh air, or a pause in busy, difficult, and challenging times that we often have with our children. It gives you perspective and space to think. This means that you go back for the next month feeling much more comfortable and confident about the challenges.”

“Lots of our children are at different ages and stages. This is really helpful because either you, or someone else, can give some thoughts or ideas to someone who has got a younger child than you, or you get positive support and ideas from people who have had experience of older children.”

“Our parent group is invaluable. There is no other place that I can go where I am amongst parents who fully appreciate and understand all of the issues of having an adopted child. Friends and family are great but a parent group is irreplaceable because we are all struggling and juggling with the same kind of issues. They are not identical so we learn different things from each other. The facilitators are absolutely amazing. They are sensitive and always helpful. They raise relevant and helpful ideas, always bringing really relevant topics and support for us to use and discuss as a group. We each have a short space to tell the group what we have been challenged by, or tackling lately. Often in that space ideas come to me or an understanding that simply wouldn't have happened outside the group environment.”

Adult adoptee peer support groups

ALN have a long-standing peer support group for adult adoptees that meets on alternate months in Islington. The group has long-term committed members but also regularly welcomes new attendees. Adoptees are different ages and have a wide range of experiences of adoption. Adoptees highly value having a space where they can meet with other adoptees and share experiences without judgement. The group is facilitated by an adoptee and supported by an ALN social worker who provides coordination and takes responsibility for supporting anyone in the group who is vulnerable or needs additional assistance outside the group meeting. Some meetings are left open for group reflection whilst others are led by a speaker of the group's choice. A number of the adoptees who attend the group sit on a steering committee with ALN to ensure the group continues to adapt and grow to the needs of the adoptees who attend.

In Spring 2022, Adopt London started a new adoptee group specifically for trans-racially adopted adults in partnership with TAAN

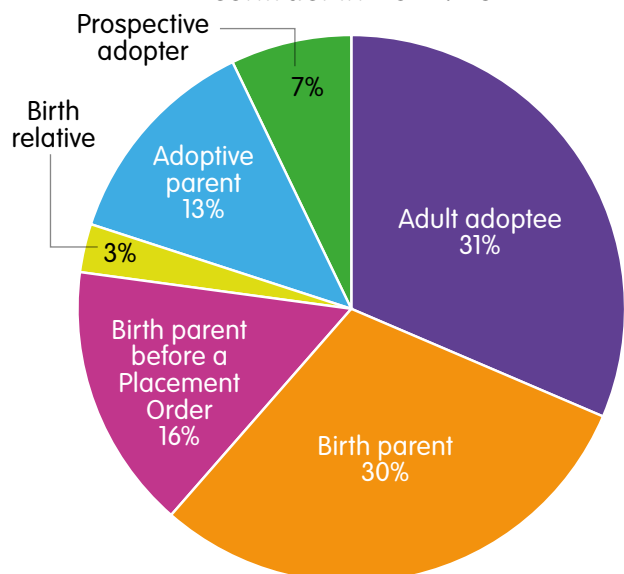
(Transracial Adult Adoptee Network), following a similar model to the original ALN group.

Working in partnership with adoptees, Adopt London hope to initiate new groups in different locations in London and on different days / times of the week so that all adult adoptees in London have a group that is accessible for them to attend.

Specialist counselling support for adult adoptees and birth family members

ALN have a long-standing contract with PAC-UK, a specialist adoption and permanency support agency, to provide an advice line and independent counselling on our behalf. This contract has been used to provide counselling services to adoptive parents, adult adoptees, and birth family members impacted by adoption. Due to a high level of demand which had created waiting times for support and an increase in requests for support from adult adoptees, management of the contract was reviewed for 2022/23 and a decision taken to prioritise use of the contract for adult adoptees and birth family members as these groups often have no other form of counselling support available. In most cases adoptive parents can have the same or similar support funded by the Adoption Support Fund through an ALN assessment of need and where this isn't possible ALN can still refer to PAC-UK for support to be provided under the contract. The contract is also used by ALN for prospective adopters to access some counselling during assessment, usually to focus on a particular

Clients referred to the PAC-UK counselling contract in 2022/23



issue which has become a barrier or cause for concern. The changes made to the contract have been successful at ensuring support to adult adoptees and birth family members can be met within the contract limits. The contract currently offers 6 sessions of counselling to an individual, although where there is a high level of need and a good use of counselling, ALN can agree to a second set of 6 sessions. Many clients find the counselling sessions supportive and helpful,

although some feel that the limited number of sessions is not adequate to meet their need. Effective use of the contract is reviewed quarterly by ALN and PAC-UK.

PAC-UK also runs two birth parent support groups, one virtually and one in person. Birth parents who access support from PAC-UK advice line or counselling service are invited to join one of the groups and this can become a more sustainable form of support for individuals.



“Initially I was experiencing overwhelming feelings regarding my experiences as an adopted person, it’s been building and causing me emotional distress. Contacting PAC-UK was my first step to seek support and I felt apprehensive... [The PAC-UK advice line therapist] really made me feel safe in these first steps and optimistic about engaging with the counselling. I have also handed in my notice at work and so will need to budget more than usual so the free counselling sessions are a blessing and means I don’t have to worry about the usual expense of therapy, I don’t have to delay until I’ve secured a new job, this is my window of opportunity and feeling ready and I don’t need to delay. I’m ready and PAC-UK funding for the free 6 counselling sessions is a light and blessing for me. I have tears in my eyes, just relieved, ready and so happy I don’t have to delay knowing that if I take my foot off the accelerator, I may lose this readiness and motivation and the shadow will return. I’m not looking for a magic bullet, just an opportunity to work through this, decades in the waiting. Thanks so much, honestly.”

“Through counselling I’ve changed my thought patterns and felt totally supported and assisted.”

“I found the PAC contract invaluable. There is very little even general support out there, and have [my PAC-UK therapist] who understood both adoption and cultural aspects of my life. I have not had access to any support from anyone that has specialist knowledge or experience of either before. Whilst I felt the time I had did help me to move forward in improving my mental health, and I was fortunate enough to have 12 sessions instead of 6, I do feel that I needed more sessions to get the most benefit from it.”

“Although my feelings about early separation and mistrust have not changed, having support through a difficult period was very nourishing and helped me get through my weeks and feel supported. So more positive things could come into my life.”

“PAC-UK has supported me through the most challenging and difficult time of my life after a reunion with my child. They have helped me to process and navigate a very complex emotional landscape providing me with the support needed to understand and develop coping strategies. Their ongoing support is invaluable.”

Review of 2022/23 recommendations

Finding prospective adoptive parents

- 1. Grow and further establish the Black Adoption Project to better understand the needs of Black and mixed Black ethnicity adopters, and to improve our services to them for the long term.**

The Black Adoption Project has grown and become further established in 2022/23 and is now ready to begin piloting and evaluating changes to our practice, which will include improving services to Black prospective adopters.
- 2. Build Adopt London reach and engagement on social media.**

Social media reach has increased this year, although due to the capacity issues in our assessment service we have used this to focus on raising awareness rather than increasing numbers of people making enquiries about adoption.
- 3. Work further with borough communications teams to improve our reach in our local communities.**

Workshops have been held with borough communications leads which has led to the development of local adoption communications plans for 2023/24.
- 4. Increase the rate at which those submitting an Expression of Interest go on to start an assessment.**

Due to the capacity difficulties in the assessment team we have not been able to start assessments for all those who have expressed an interest in adopting, therefore we have not made progress towards this recommendation this year.

Preparing and approving adoptive parents

- 5. Increase the number of approvals whilst maintaining high standard of assessments.**

Although the standard of assessments has been maintained, the number of approvals has dropped this year due to capacity difficulties in the assessment team. A pilot to increase capacity in the team is being implemented in 2023/24 so that the impact on approval levels can be assessed.

Planning for children

- 6. Increase awareness of Early Permanence in children's social work teams.**

Awareness has been increasing of Early Permanence, evidenced by an increase in referrals and an indication that Early Permanence placement levels are likely to be higher in 2023/24. Research into the barriers to Early Permanence in London will lead to further targeted work in this area in 2023/24.

Placing children with adoptive parents

- 7. Continue to focus on the number of children who move to in-house and local adoptive families.**

The proportion of children who move to live with in-house adopters has remained high this year, with the hope that this will increase further when approval levels increase. The proportion of children who go to live with adoptive families in London and the South East has increased.

Providing support to adoptive families and others

8. Increase access to support resources for everyone impacted by adoption through development of the Adopt London website.

Updates and improvements on all major sections of the site have been completed this year. Significant work on the systems side of the website has been completed to prepare the site for structural changes in 2023/24 that will assist us in making the site more user-friendly for all clients, not just prospective adopters.

9. Implement regular monitoring of adoption support work so that changes in demand can be reported.

A regular snapshot audit of adoption support casework has now been in place for 18 months and is providing us with useful monitoring data and insights into the needs within the service so that support can be designed to target the most significant areas.

Working as part of Adopt London

10. Strengthen arrangements through a legal partnership agreement for Adopt London.

The legal partnership agreement has stalled this year due to complexity and capacity in the legal department leading on this work. It is hoped this can be progressed further in 2023/24.



Recommendations for 2023/24

Finding prospective adoptive parents

1. Continue to progress the aims and objectives of the Black Adoption Project, including implementation of new pilot projects to improve services to Black prospective adopters.
2. Re-establish strong adopter information sessions and enquiry processes as the capacity in the assessment team increases.
3. Implement new local communications plans to test the impact on awareness of ALN and adoption in borough areas.

Preparing and approving adoptive parents

4. Through greater capacity in the assessment team, increase the number of approvals whilst maintaining high standard of assessments.

Planning for children

5. Implement recommendations from the Early Permanence research report into barriers to Early Permanence in London.

Placing children with adoptive parents

6. Continue to focus on the number of children who move to in-house and local adoptive families.

Providing support to adoptive families and others

7. Implement changes to the website which make it more accessible to all those accessing support, including adult adoptees, birth parents, and families with adopted children.
8. Begin to use audit data for Adopt London to compare and understand different levels of demand and models of adoption support to improve services across Adopt London.

Working as part of Adopt London

9. Strengthen arrangements through a legal partnership agreement for Adopt London.

Adopt London North

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Family Services

Document control	
Document title	Annual Independent Reviewing Service Report
Document description	This report provides an overview of service delivery for 2022/23
Document Author	Samantha Maynard, Principal Independent Reviewing Officer
Contributors	Donna Swanberg, Head of Safeguarding, Quality Assurance & Workforce Development.
Director Early Help & Children's Social Care Services	Tina McElligott
Document production date	20 June 2023

Introduction

An annual report of the Independent Reviewing Service for looked after children is required in accordance with the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, and statutory guidance published in the Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO) Handbook (published by the department for Children, Schools, and Families 2010.)

The report provides a summary of the service activity and delivery by the IRO Service in Barnet for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

Service 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: 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 Parent for the children it looks after 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 peoples' 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 Looked After Children. They do this by chairing the child's reviews and monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis with particular attention to:

- Monitor the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to the child's case.
- Alert senior managers of identified areas of poor practice or patterns of concern.
- Recognise and report on good practice
- Participate in any review of the child's case.
- 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.
- 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.

- Prevent drift in care planning and delivery of services to children
- Make sure that children's care plans given proper consideration and weight to their wishes and feelings, and that they understand the implications of any changes made to his/her care plan.
- Ensure 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 need to be managed effectively to allow for midway review tracking responsibilities, placements Out of Borough, large sibling groups, disability, unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and complexity of individual children's circumstances. To ensure capacity for our IRO's to provide high quality services caseloads have remained within statutory guidelines at an average of 60-65 cases per permanent IRO and an agreed maximum of 35 cases per contracted IRO.

Service Structure

The IRO Team in Barnet is comprised of four permanent full-time Independent Reviewing Officers and one Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO) who chairs annual foster carer reviews who are supervised by the Principal Independent Reviewing Officer. The FIRO reports to the fostering service and does not review any review any cases held under the IRO function.

In addition to the permanent IRO's, there are currently four IRO's working via our contracted provider, Aidhour, and one long-standing freelance IRO who provides additional support as and when required. Contract meetings take place quarterly and are well attended by the Operations Managers of Aidhour, the Head of Safeguarding and the Principal IRO. Agenda items focus on the key performance indicators, integration, service development and information sharing.

The flexibility of the contract allows for cover of a permanent IRO position that has not yet been successfully recruited to (a long-term IRO was redeployed to a Quality Assurance role due to a significant change in her personal circumstances). Another permanent role was filled with an internal appointment when another long-term IRO left to pursue an alternative career. These two changes in permanent staffing meant a change in IRO for approximately one third of looked after children who had previously enjoyed consistency in their IROs for a number of years. This has been managed as sensitively as possible for children and young people.

Administrative support to the IRO Service is provided by the Conference and Review Manager with additional part time support from a dedicated Conference and Review Administrator.

Annual Performance 2022-23

For the 357 children that were in care in the reporting period 2022/23; the data and performance indicators show:

- 97.9% of Children in Care Reviews were held within statutory timescales.
- 95.7% of children and young people participated in their Children in Care reviews.

The performance of reviews held within statutory timescales is a 2% increase from 2021/22 (95.6%). This can be attributed, in part, to utilising a degree of flexibility afforded by the reviewing process. A small number of reviews were held in two parts or were held virtually to accommodate occasional late notifications of children becoming looked after, change of placement requiring an initial review, IRO availability, or illness.

Participation is recorded as children who have attended the review meeting and spoken for themselves or contributed to the review process by means of a consultation form, observation in the case of a very young child by the IRO, having their views presented by an advocate or interpreter, or a direct conversation with their social worker or IRO.

There was a slight 0.2% increase in child participation (from 95.5%). 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.

The highest number of children in care in the reporting period 2022/23 reflects numbers in 2021/22 which was 357. In the last quarter reporting period this number has reduced to 347 – this is a small increase on the average figure (338) reported in the 2021/22 annual report.

The rise in the number of children looked after resulted in a temporary increase in the caseloads of both the permanent IRO's and the commissioned IRO's. Currently caseloads are operating at the annual average reflected in the 2021/22 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.

- All About Me/Assessment and Care plan is mostly (80-85%) updated with a child's current needs and available for the IRO prior to each review. Discussions between the IRO and the social work team take place prior to the review to ensure the information sharing is up-to-date and the IRO is aware of any developments in the child's circumstances. Performance, audit data and tracking and quality assurance activity reflect the positive efforts being made by social work practitioners to ensure All About Me assessments are updated before reviews.

-All About Me assessment/care plans require the voice of the child to be evidenced throughout their care planning, alongside updating any changes in the child's circumstances or needs. The IRO service notes that children and young people's plans mostly reflect current needs and that the participation and contribution of young people in their care/pathway plans is clear and well evidenced.

- Where needed, IRO's provide challenge which is generally well received and responded to by social work teams. Challenge is respectful, clear, and consistent and is evidenced in discussions which are recorded on case files, emails, and virtual meetings with the social work teams and where necessary, in escalation reports.

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

-Where there is the need for formal escalation, this is tracked, and monitored by the Principal Reviewing Officer and where necessary, escalated to Heads of Service.

- The increased communication and consultation between the IRO's and social work teams in this reporting period has continued. However, there has been a slight increase in practice alerts and formal escalations relating to care planning and a decrease in escalations relating to processes.

-In the reporting period there were 12 formal escalations. Of those escalations (5) were related to processes, i.e., care plans not being updated by the social workers, preventing IRO's from completing planning outcomes on LCS. The remaining escalations (7) were in relation to social work practice and planning with a notable increase in formal escalations to senior management level; from zero (0) cases during the previous reporting period to five (5).

However, most practice alerts and formal escalations when raised, are swiftly addressed although and there has been renewed focus by IROs to ensure any unresolved escalations are responded to in a timely way.

Of the cases escalated: -

- One was a sibling group of two, where a placement agreement meeting, and a statutory visit had not taken place prior to the initial review and where the carer had not registered the children with health services local to the placement.
- One escalation was in respect of another sibling group of two whereby the review needed to be rescheduled due to the social worker not providing an updated assessment/care plan.
- One escalation in relation to a sibling group of two was due to the cancellation of a joint CP/CiC review on three occasions by the social work team as they were unclear about the legal status of the children. A joint review is chaired by either the CRO or IRO to end the CP status of a child that has become Looked After. This

was escalated to AHoS level but the delay in resolving the issue resulted in a three-month delay in the joint review taking place.

- One escalation was due the IRO's concerns about a proposed final care plan written without the social work team having sight of the SGO assessment or having sought the views of the IRO.
- In one the All About Me Plan had not been had not been updated on LCS for over a year. CiC reviews were taking place with the social work team providing a verbal update to the IRO prior to each review. This meant the CiC meeting outcomes could not be completed by the IRO following each review and the up-to-date care plan was not recorded on the child's record.
- The other escalation was for a sibling group of two where the CP plan was ended through a joint review chaired by a Conference Reviewing Officer (CRO), but an up-to-date plan to end the CP process had not been recorded, preventing the CRO from completing the CiC outcomes from the joint review. This meant an up-to-date care plan was not recorded on the child's record for over one year.

Also, an audit of children in care by a new team manager identified three occasions where the CiC workflow was significantly behind and the allocated IRO's had failed to escalate these concerns; this was addressed with the IRO.

Where there is care planning that is contrary to the wishes and feelings of the child, there is evidence of IRO's challenging and ensuring children and young people's voices are well represented.

The Principal Reviewing Officer provides focused feedback and support to ensure that IRO's provide appropriate, respectful challenge to professionals when children's plans are not sufficiently addressing or progressing the support children need to achieve good outcomes.

Additionally, the IRO service is focused on preventing drift in care planning and delivery of services. Examples of this can be evidenced and include IRO's challenging what they consider to be unsuitable placement arrangements to achieve stability and security for children who require permanency in care.

Overall, the continued collaboration between the IRO service and the social work teams ensures most care plans are updated in a timely manner which supports the progression of plans and positive outcomes for children. Joint working is well established and IRO's are routinely invited to permanency planning meetings, professional meetings, the Tackling Violence & Exploitation Panel (formerly VARP) and Child Exploitation and Missing (CEAM) assessment and planning meetings.

A focus on strengthening the working relationship between the IRO's and social work teams in the Assessment, Intervention & Planning Service (AIP) has been needed due to changes in staff in both services. Linked IRO's to the AIP service need to establish relationships with newly appointed managers in the service and the Principal IRO is also mindful of how the

support provided by link IRO's to this service area has been inconsistent due to the use of Aidhour and newly appointed agency workers whilst recruitment to permanent IROs is underway.

Child Participation

Promoting 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.

This reporting year has seen a slight increase in children attending and/or participating in their reviews. The IRO service has resumed face to face reviews and most children and young people have welcomed this, but a small number of older children who have expressed a preference for virtual reviews over face-to face reviews. For babies and very young children the quality of observations by their IRO, their placements and care arrangements were greatly improved with a physical presence at reviews.

Hybrid and virtual reviews are used flexibly where there is a need to schedule an urgent initial review due to late notifications, and the option of a virtual review or a two-part review is utilised to keep the review within timescale.

A priority for the IRO service was to continue to develop and embed our child participation model (bi-annual events) and resume age-appropriate activities in the community, chosen by them. A Go Ape ziplining event, followed by lunch, for children aged 12-17 years took place in April 2022 during Easter break. In April 2023 six children and young people went trampolining and for a meal with their respective IRO's. A further event was planned to take place during the October half term but was cancelled due to a scheduling conflict with activities planned by Barnet on Point (BOP), Barnet's Children in Care Council.

Completion of the review consultation booklet with children and young people has not been routinely completed by children for their reviews and feedback indicates that professionals (carers and practitioners) are not always using this tool. Refreshed information and ways to share information will be the focus of events going forward and co-produced with children and practitioners. Children's verbal feedback and views are being obtained outside of and during reviews and these are recorded and appropriately responded to at every opportunity.

The personalised record of review written to children in letter form has been embedded since December 2020 and feedback of this format written in child friendly, age-appropriate language and personalised content continues to receive positive feedback from both children and partner agencies.

Review Meetings: child centred practice.

The IRO Handbook states, 'for many older children and young people, particularly plan for independence that it is hoped the IRO will hand over at least part of the chairing role to them so that they can take an increased ownership of the meeting.' Many of our young people have told us they do not feel they want to chair their reviews as it can be a challenging process. We are working to encourage an enhanced level of ownership and participation for our children and young people by sharing invitational tools with them, i.e., an invitational letter with tips and advice from our BOP children for other children and young people and voice notes.

Also, skill-based workshops for children to increase confidence and communication will take place during the summer break which will be co-facilitated by other young people in BOP.

Ensure children understand how an advocate can help.

The IRO service, alongside the social work practitioners, explain the advocate role and the role of the independent visitor to children and young people. The matter is routinely raised and recorded in the record of review by most IROs. We are supporting some IROs to routinely offer this service again even if it has been declined at previous opportunities. Feedback during reviews from children and young people who have an advocate or independent visitor, 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.

The Principal IRO is assured there is clear evidence of IRO oversight on children's records by regular review of cases, particularly those where there has been uncertainty regarding a child or young person's CLA status and/or a discussion between the IRO and Principal IRO has taken place, to ensure the IRO's are appropriately recording their views and concerns, ensuring the IROs footprint is clearly visible on the child's record.

IRO's 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 but need to take place more consistently and recorded on children's files. This includes any discussions involving the IRO and social worker.

The Principal IRO attends the weekly Permanence Tracker Meeting, and 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.

2022/23 Priorities

1. Child Participation

- A key priority for the year ahead is for children to be supported to participate in their reviews in ways that they feel comfortable, to feel empowered and hold professionals to account for their actions in the care planning process. We will be encouraging children and young people to facilitate/lead the reviewing of their plans in reviews.
- To increase the of children attending participation events by providing more individual opportunities and age-appropriate activities and linking more closely with the Participation Leads and Service Development Officer to use child and parent feedback to help improve how reviewing services are offered.
- To ensure the invitation and explanation of the role and benefits of having an advocate and/or independent visitor are consistently offered at each review with the aim of increasing and encouraging greater take up of the advocacy service.

2. IRO Practice Development

- A key priority for the Principal Independent Reviewing Officer will be increased oversight over the midway review process to ensure these are taking place routinely and recorded on children's records.
- 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 progressing.
- The IRO's are being supported to achieve these aims through both formal and informal supervision and group supervision. Safeguarding training provided for the workforce is attended by the IRO's to keep their practice up to date.
- To ensure practice alerts are raised routinely where there are concerns about the reviewing process, and where necessary escalated to the Principal IRO in accordance with the Safeguarding and Escalation Protocol to prevent drift in the reviewing process.
- 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.
- The Principal Reviewing Officer will continue to support the IRO's practice through performance data, quality assuring the IRO's case recording and the letters of review and live observation of the IRO's 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.

3. IRO Workshops

- CIC workshops facilitated by IROs' resumed during this reporting period. The workshops focus 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. The workshops are advertised on the Learning POD and there was additional promotion on FS News but uptake was low. A workshop scheduled for 19.10.22 was cancelled due to having only one attendee express interest and another workshop scheduled to take place on 8.2.23 was cancelled.

Workshops will be reviewed, and feedback sought from practitioners to develop the workshop material into a webinar and to enable the workshop to be delivered at team meetings. We will invite young people to help develop our webinar and record the session for dissemination to new starters.

Conclusion

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

The IRO footprint is evident in children's records: challenge is recorded but midway tracking needs to improve. Mostly, challenge to drive improvements in care planning for children is positively received but here has been a need for practice alerts and formal escalations to be escalated to senior management in this reporting period. The delivery of IRO workshops will be reviewed to provide insight into the role and expectations of the IRO service at team meetings

A key focus for the IRO's is to promote participation opportunities to develop their relationships with their children and young people and promote their confidence to chair their reviews. Refreshed consultation processes will be co-produced and practice development specific to the role of the IRO, training, child participation, and using children's feedback to shape service delivery will be the key priorities for 2022/23.

BARNET VIRTUAL SCHOOL

ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 2023

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.

N.B. Some figures for groups may appear different through the report as they can change daily.

1. Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicator	Outcome
Average Progress 8 score of looked-after children in the top 10% when compared to CIC nationally.	Average Progress 8 score was -1.79 in 2022, lower than national and London. See on for details
Gap between (i) A8 for Barnet CIC and A8 nationally for all pupils and (ii) P8 for Barnet CIC and P8 nationally for all pupils is in the top quartile. (2021/22 results)	Both Attainment 8 and Progress 8 dipped in 2022 and was lower than national and London so Barnet is not within the top quartile.
90% of 0–16-year-olds PEPs are good or better	July 2023 – 92.3%
75% of 16–17-year-olds PEPs are good or better	July 2023 – Years 12 and 13 - 98.3%
RWM in KS2, at the expected standard, is in the top quartile	Numbers of pupils was too small for all attainment metrics.
The percentage of 16–17-year-olds who are NEET is below 20% by the end of March 2022	July 2023 – 20% of 16/17year olds are NEET. This is higher than the previous year.

2. School Context (as of 18/7/23)

		2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	
	Nursery		11	12	13	14	
	% of children SEN support			2	1	3	
	% of children with EHCPs			3	1	2	
Statutory age group	Statutory age	191	196	195	191	186	
	Reception		4	7	8	8	
	Key Stage 1		16	14	15	21	
	Key Stage 2		43	37	45	45	
	Key Stage 3		51	53	52	48	
	Key Stage 4		82	84	71	64	
	Male/female	111/80	113/83	109/86	108/83	115/71	
	% of children from ethnic minority groups		70.6%	73.3%	68.1%	67.2%	
	% of children SEN support		19.8% (39)	21.5% (42)	17.8% (34)	24% (45)	
	% of children with EHCPs			24.9% (49)	24.6% (48)	30.9% (59)	32.8% (61)
				O/B I/B	O/B I/B	O/B I/B	O/B I/B
				33 16	30 18	38 21	41 20
	Number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)	18	25	35	28	21	
Children without a school place		0	2	5	6		

Post 16 age group	Post 16	157	135	152	155	147				
	Male/female	113/44	96/39	113/39	111/44	102/45				
	% of children from ethnic minority groups		78.5%	79.6%	79.4%	83%				
	% of children with EHCPs		14%(19)	13.8%(21)	14.8% (23)	16.3% (24)				
			O/B	I/B	O/B	I/B	O/B	I/B		
			11	3	16	5	7	16	14	10
	Number of UASC	39	67	76	75	66				
	Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) Year 12		11	19	15	18				
NEET Year 13		14	14	22	20					

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	2022	-	Change from previous year
302	Barnet	-	5.50	3.30	6.50	-	10.40	10.30	-	-0.10
988	Outer London	-	5.10	5.20	5.00	-	8.70	7.90	-	-0.80
	Statistical Neighbours	-	4.48	4.37	4.61	-	8.26	8.10	-	-0.16
970	England	-	4.70	5.00	5.10	-	9.10	7.80	-	-1.30

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

% of children looked after who are classed as persistent absentees

Local Authority, Region and England			2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	-	Change from previous year
302	Barnet	-	10.60	6.90	12.30	-	35.50	24.50	-	-11.00
988	Outer London	-	13.60	12.70	11.60	-	31.20	21.00	-	-10.20
	Statistical Neighbours	-	12.37	12.60	11.39	-	28.95	21.62	-	-7.33
970	England	-	11.20	11.80	12.10	-	32.10	19.10	-	-13.00

Quartile bands

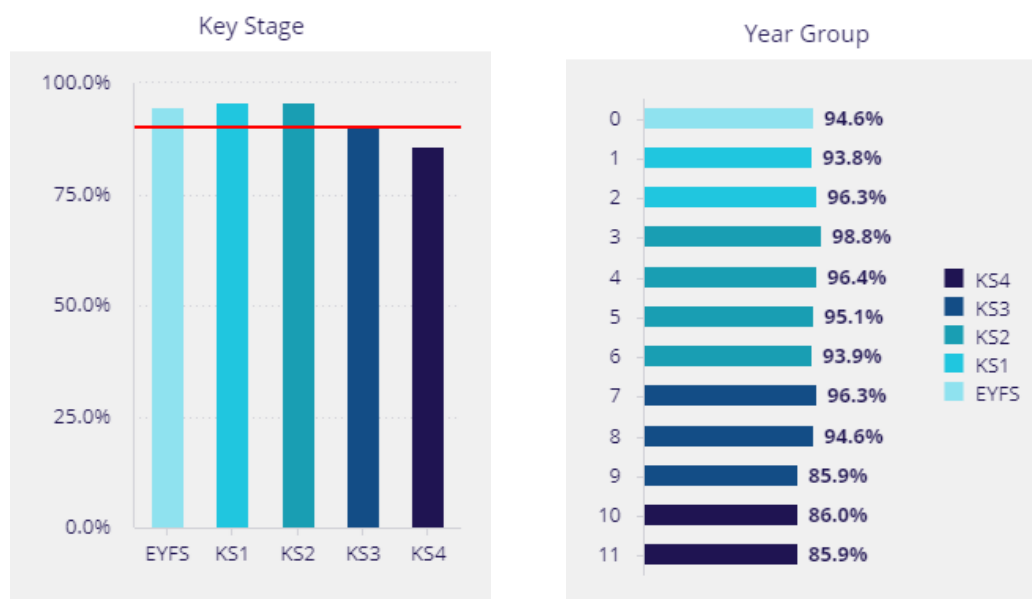
Official Data Release for Children Looked After (CLA) for more than 12 months 2021/22

LA	Barnet	Rank (Out of 153 LAs)	England	London
Total Number of Pupils	98		35130	3370
Attendance Rate	89.7%	141	92.2%	92.2%
Authorised Absence	6.6%	132	5.5%	5.2%
Unauthorised Absence	3.8%	143	2.3%	2.6%
PA	24.5%	131	19.1%	20.1%

- Low cohort sizes in this measure will have an impact on the outcomes of attendance and absence.
- Across 2021-22 Barnet's attendance rate was below the London and national averages, but within 2.5% of both.
- Authorised, unauthorised and persistent absences were all higher than the London and national averages.

Current Attendance – 2022/23

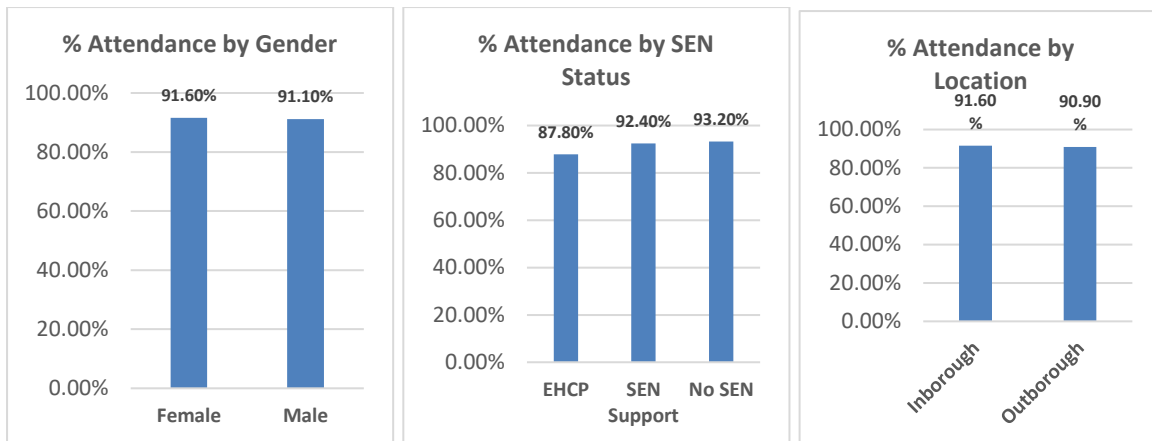
Barnet whole school attendance of statutory looked after children is 91.29% which is a significant increase from this time last year (89.54%). It is also above the annual figure of 88.3% from Welfare Call who monitor the attendance of children in care in a large number of local authorities. DFE data indicates that across all schools nationally, the attendance rate for all statutory age children this year was only 92.5%.



Attendance over the year has been strongest among our primary aged children, specifically Year 2,3 and 4. Attendance drops in KS3 but remains slightly above 90% which is an improvement on last year. Attendance is lowest in KS3 (specifically year 9) and KS4 (specifically year 11). To provide a greater context, there are also larger numbers of young people in the older year groups:

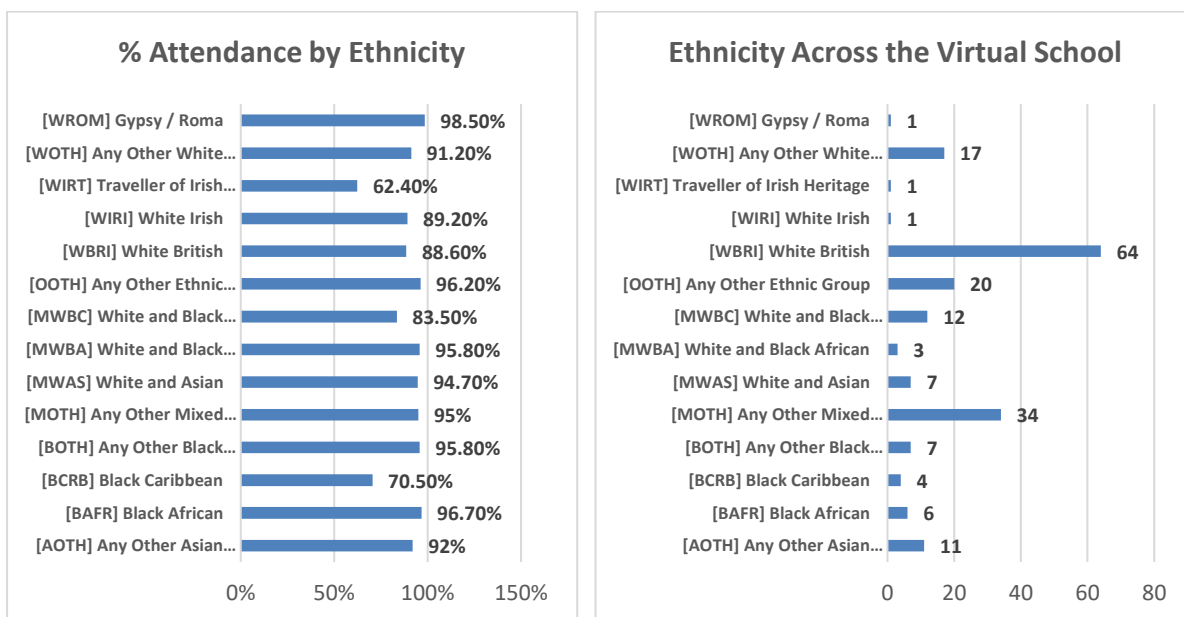
- 75 students from Y0-Y6
- 49 students in Y7-Y9
- 64 students across Y10-Y11

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 41 students. This impacts considerably on overall attendance.



Across the whole school, there has been little variation when analysing by gender and location. The attendance of students with an EHCP is lower at 87% compared to students without an EHCP. However, the national average attendance rate for all students with an EHCP was 86.7% so Barnet young people had slightly better attendance. It is also of note that many of our young people with EHCP have SEMH needs which impact on attendance.

The data provided on persistently absent students (see on) gives some further context.



Contextual information relating to ethnicity data

WIRT (Traveller – white Irish) (1 YP) – this is one young person, a Yr 8 student with an EHCP (SEMH) – placed in a special school. He had a period of suspension from school, missed school due to his placement in Barnet breaking down and has had several placement changes since then across different LAs and is currently waiting for a special school to be named on his plan.

BCRB (Black Caribbean) – (4 YP) The data is impacted by 1 Yr 11 student with an EHCP (SEMH) placed in a special school. This YP has been frequently missing from placement and gravitating towards her mother’s home. EP is supporting.

1 other Yr 11 student also with an EHCP (SEMH) placed in a mainstream secondary school attendance deteriorated towards the end of the school year.

2 other students have attendance above 94%.

MWBC (mixed white and black Caribbean – (12 YP) Data relates mainly to 1 student in Yr 11 with an EHCP (SEMH) who was previously placed in a special school but moved back in to mainstream at his request. Despite being persistently absent, he has improved his attendance considerably this year.

1 other Yr 11 student with an EHCP (SEMH) was new in to care mid-year and had a placement change and found it very difficult to settle into new school.

7 of the 12 YP had attendance above 94%.

Attendance Comparison

	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022 (whole year)	Autumn 2022	Spring 2023	Summer 2023 (Whole Year)
Numbers (all)	169	178	189	170	184	188
Attendance (all)	90.55%	90.02%	89.54%	90.25%	90.98%	91.29%
Number with 100% (all)	38	22	11	29	23	16
Number of eligible children (in care for 12 months plus)	115	121	134	117	126	129
Attendance (in care 12 months plus)	92.22%	90.15%	90.16%	92.28%	92.58%	91.8%

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

The Persistent Absence rate for Barnet children who have been in care for 12 months or longer was **20.93%** compared to the Persistent Absence rate across all statutory aged pupils nationally which was **22%**.

Looking at the 129 children who have been in care for more than 12 months:

7/129 - 100% attendance across the whole year

77/129 - above 95% attendance across the whole year

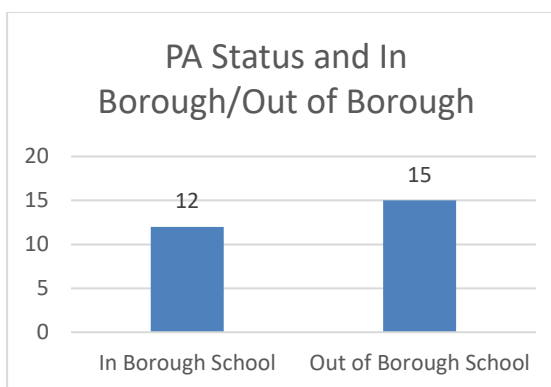
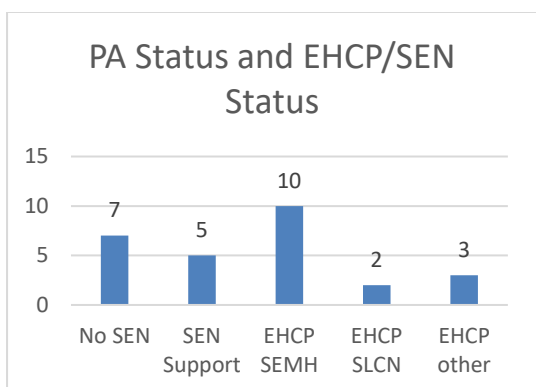
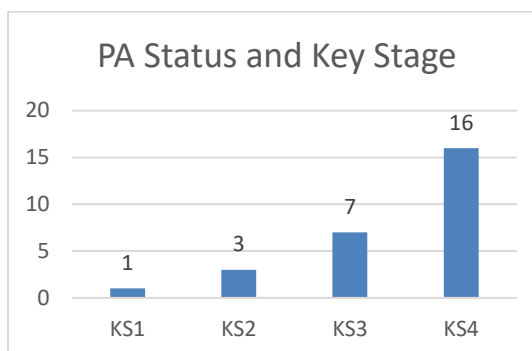
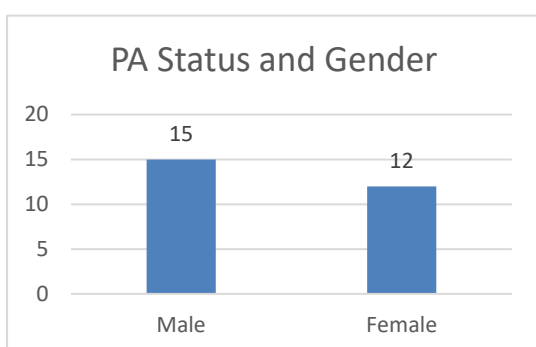
102/129 - more than 90% attendance across the whole year.

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

Of these 27 children, 5 are considered severely absent (attendance below 50%)

PA attendance Ranges	Number of Students
70-90%	17
50-70%	5
Below 50%	5 (3 x EHCPs 2 x EHCP applications underway) (1 x in <i>Emergency Respite Placement out of borough</i>) (4 x <i>Emotional Based School Avoidance</i>)

To provide a context to those that are persistently and severely absent:



Most of our young people with persistent absence are in secondary school and have complex needs. Many of these young people will also have an EHCP with the main area of need being SEMH and are placed in out of borough special schools and placements.

Reason for PA Status	Number of Students (with EHCP)	How is this is being addressed by Virtual School
Emotional Based School Avoidance	6 (5 EHCP)	Involvement from VS EPs, BICS/CAMHS, VS Transition Mentors, targeted support and funding through PEP. EBSA assessment and action plan completed.
Unauthorised absence / missing episodes)	6 (6 EHCP)	Targeted support and funding through PEP, Attend SEAM meetings with family services, EP involvement if appropriate.
Genuine illness	6 (3 EHCP)	Ensure absence from illness is appropriate and proportional and monitor
Placement Changes	8 (6 EHCP)	<i>Where YP have an EHCP, SEN will keep them on roll at previous placement until new schools have been consulted with resulting in additional absence. VS unable to influence placement moves.</i>
Suspensions	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 KS4 (3 students in Year 10 and 13 students in Year 11), comprising almost two thirds of the entire cohort of persistently absent students. Within this KS4 cohort of 16 students, 10 have EHCPs, 6 of whom have entrenched patterns of emotional based school avoidance and mental health concerns requiring specialist professional input from EPs and other professionals.

It is important to note that 2 of the persistently absent year 11 students with emotional based school avoidance have made enormous progress this year:

Pupil A - Year 11 Male – EHCP SEMH – Was initially placed in a special school for SEMH and was severely absent over year 9 and 10. Following another placement change, he requested to be placed in a mainstream setting and whilst he is still persistently absent, his attendance has increased from almost 0% up to 60% this year resulting in him being able to sit some of his GCSEs which is an incredible achievement for him.

Pupil B – Year 11 Male – EHCP SEMH – Was also placed in a special school for SEMH and was severely absent resulting in him refusing to attend at all in year 10. We were able to work closely with SEN and get him home tuition throughout year 11. He sat his maths GCSE at his home placement this summer with external invigilators organised by the virtual school which was an incredible achievement for him.

4. Exclusions over time

% of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months with at least one fixed term exclusion from school

Local Authority, Region and England	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change from previous year
302 Barnet	18.58	9.16	8.11	10.34	7.14	6.50	-0.64
988 Outer London	10.65	10.45	10.29	10.40	9.75	9.44	-0.31
Statistical Neighbours	10.24	12.22	11.36	10.30	8.86	10.19	1.34
970 England	11.04	11.44	11.25	11.32	9.35	9.80	0.45

Exclusions 2020/21

Year	Measure	Barnet	Rank (Out of 153 LAs)	England	London
2020/21	Number of Pupils	123		39170	3990
	% of Pupils with One Plus Suspension	6.5%	10	9.8%	9.6%
	% of Pupils Permanently Excluded	0%	1	0.03%	N/A

- Official data relates to the 2020/1 academic year as this is latest official data available. The data is from a year impacted by the pandemic and 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. CLA pupils in Barnet were lower than the London and national averages for pupils with more than one suspension and permanent exclusion.
- Barnet has 0 permanently excluded CLA pupils.

Barnet Exclusions over time

There have been no permanent exclusions of Barnet children in care. One school did permanently exclude a young person in 2022/23 but following the governors hearing, where the child was represented by the Virtual School and his social worker, he was reinstated.

	Number of suspensions			
	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
No of pupils	18	18	26	21
No of suspensions	30	25	35	53
No of days suspended	79.5	89	130.5	89.5
No of suspensions with day 1 provision	29	24	31	52

	In Borough			
	Suspensions			
	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Total number of pupils suspended	7	8	13	11
Total number of days lost	34	58.5	72.5	41
	Out of Borough			
Total number of pupils suspended	11	10	14	10
Total number of days lost	45.5	30.5	58	48.5

Of the children who received a suspension, 76% were boys and four out of the 21 were primary age. 57% of young people suspended were from Years 9 to 11. The highest ethnic group to receive suspensions was White British – 61.9%. This group is the largest in the Virtual School, but the number suspended is disproportionate – almost double the percentage in the school. 43% of the children who received a suspension have an EHCP with the majority having a primary need of SEMH.

Typical reasons for suspensions continue to be:

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

Suspensions enforced without clear reason are challenged by the Virtual School and schools are expected to provide alternative education from the first day of the suspension, 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 suspend or exclude. Schools are supported to look at alternatives to exclusions and with putting in place preventative measures e.g. the Virtual School will involve Educational Psychologists to support the school where necessary, refer to MOPAC or to the Pavilion Mentors, as well as meeting with schools more regularly to look at strategies to avoid suspensions.

5. School Places

Number of children without a school place as of 18/7/23: 6

Number of directions for a school place: 0

Of the children currently without a school place, one has moved placements twice in quick succession and is now in a short term crisis placement, 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 2023 (brackets Summer Term 2022)

No. of pupils:	Same School Place	Change in school place
Same placement	165(177)	4(4)
Change in placement	9 (14)	4(2)

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

- Moved placements so needed to change schools
- Moved schools within the same group to meet needs better

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	101	99 (98%)	2 (2%)	Children already attending prior to coming into care
Out of Borough school	70	67 (96%)	3(4%)	Child already attending before RI grading Only specialist SEMH provision available Voice of the child – wanted mainstream provision and this was the only one that could meet need

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.

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	987	37 (3.7%)	938 (95%)	9 (0.91%)	3 (0.30%)
EYFS	34		34 (100%)	0	0
Statutory	546	37 (6.8%)	504 (92.3%)	3 (0.55%)	2 (0.37%)
Post 16	407		400 (98.3%)	6 (1.5%)	1 (0.25%)

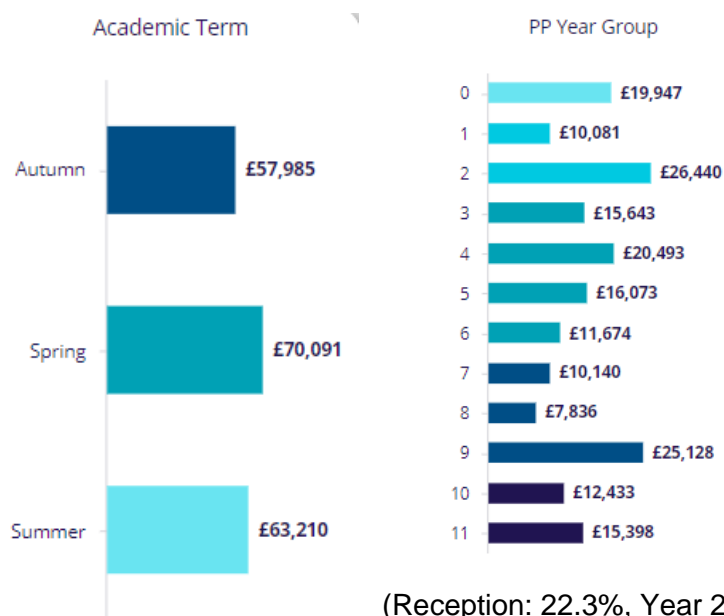
Over the year there have been 3 PEPs RAG rated red, two of these were Statutory aged PEPs and one was a Post 16 PEP. Two of these was due to the DT not completing any sections within the PEP and the third was because no targets were included, despite persistent reminders. The Virtual School Head has followed up with the three settings regarding this.

There have been nine amber rated PEPs over this academic year (6 Post 16 PEPs and 3 Statutory PEPs) which is an improvement on the previous year. There are several reasons for amber ratings, but the majority have been due to missing information such as no pupil voice, no achievement data, no attendance information, no review of previous targets or no new targets set.

Feedback has been given to the settings where PEPs require improvement and a guide on how to complete high quality PEPs will be included in the Autumn term newsletters to DTs. Additional training around the use of Welfare Call when completing PEPs is also included within the 'New to DT training.'

1. Pupil Premium Spend

This academic year £191,286 was allocated directly to schools in relation to targets set in the PEPs. This was a 21.8% increase on last year. Of the total funding, £150,439 came from Pupil Premium Plus funding and £40,847 came from recovery funding. This funding supported 158 pupils across 111 provisions with a split between in borough and out of borough schools of 60.7% v 39.3%. The charts below show breakdowns by terms and year groups.



Reception, Year 2 and Year 4 cohorts saw proportionally larger funding allocations this academic year. In Reception, larger amounts of funding were mainly due to requests to support children where schools have started the process to apply for an EHCP. In all 3 cohorts, over half of the funding was used to support emotional health and wellbeing (Reception: 60.5%, Year 2: 52.9% and Year 4: 55.1%) and a large proportion of the remaining funding was used to target academic progress

It should be noted that whilst Year 9 also saw higher funding in relation to other year groups, this year group is the second largest cohort within the Virtual School. 40% of this funding was allocated to support academic achievement and progress, of which over 51.7% was used for 1:1 tuition.

Breakdown by ethnicity

Ethnicity	PP+ Approved	Funding contribution	Virtual School cohort
[AOTH] Any Other Asian Background	£6,365	3.3%	6.0%
[BAFR] Black African	£2,790	1.5%	3.3%
[BCRB] Black Caribbean	£2,820	1.5%	2.2%
[BOTH] Any Other Black Background	£8,569	4.5%	3.8%
[MOTH] Any Other Mixed Background	£51,798	27.1%	18.5%
[MWAS] White and Asian	£10,791	5.6%	3.8%
[MWBA] White and Black African	£5,280	2.8%	1.1%
[MWBC] White and Black Caribbean	£12,768	6.7%	6.5%
[OOTH] Any Other Ethnic Group	£12,892	6.7%	10.9%
[WBRI] White British	£55,469	29.0%	33.2%
[WIRI] White Irish	0	0%	0.54%
[WOTH] Any Other White Background	£21,094	11.0%	8.7%
[WROM] Gypsy / Roma	£650	0.3%	0.54%
[WIRT] Traveller of Irish Heritage	0	0%	0.54%
[YTC] Yet to confirm	0	0%	0.54%

Breakdown of spend by type

Category	Pupils	Contribution to PP+
Emotional health & wellbeing	96	41.2%
Academic achievement and progress	117	34.4%
Social Skills	55	9.3%
Wider Achievement	51	7.6%
Transition	16	2.7%
Other	22	2.3%
Attendance	5	1.4%
Inclusion	5	1.1%

Pupil premium money was allocated to a variety of areas, supporting children in education. Emotional health and wellbeing continues to account for a large proportion of the total spend (41.2%) and there continues to be an increase in requests for funding to support social and emotional learning interventions (24.4% of funding for the academic year 2022/2023 v 21.2% in 2021/2022). One-to-one tuition continues to be one of the other main areas pupil premium funding is used to provide additional support.

When comparing the main funding areas in Primary and Secondary cohorts, 52.5% of Primary aged funding is used to support emotional health and wellbeing v 19.7% in Secondary. Whereas 47.1% of funding is used to provide academic support for secondary aged pupils.

PP+ Intervention	Pupils	Total Cost	Contribution to PP+
Social and emotional learning	70	£46,596	24.4%
One to one tuition	53	£28,547	14.9%
Other	66	£20,048	10.5%
Individualised instruction	37	£13,375	7%
Metacognition and self-regulation	28	£13,155	6.9%
Behaviour Interventions	19	£12,081	6.3%
Arts participation	35	£10,729	5.6%
Sports participation	33	£7,011	3.7%
Small group tuition	18	£5,807	3.0%
Mentoring	12	£5,431	2.8%
Reading comprehension strategy	22	£4,207	2.2%
Mastery learning	14	£4,056	2.1%
Collaborative learning	10	£3,889	2.0%
Outdoor adventure learning	12	£3,157	1.7%
Oral language interventions	9	£2,771	1.4%
Digital technology	10	£2,417	1.3%
Phonics	10	£2,035	1.1%
Homework	14	£1,905	1.0%
Early years interventions	5	£1,700	0.89%
Attainment Grouping	3	£1,045	0.55%
Summer schools	1	£424	0.22%
Parental	3	£374	0.20%
Peer Tutoring	2	£360	0.19%
Feedback	2	£166	0.09%

7. Achievement

Children Looked After (CLA)– Statistical First Release 2021/22

The Statistical First Release (SFR) was published at the end of March 2023. The data relates to Children Looked After for 12 months or more on 31st March 2022.

CLA KS4 Attainment data 2022

Year	Category	Barnet	Rank (out of 153 LAs)	England	London
2020	Number of pupils	29		6110	910
2021		34		5930	810
2022		19		5980	740
2020	Attainment 8	21.8	72	21.3	22
2021		22.6	77	23.2	24.7
2022		18.1	108	20.3	22
2022 (not available for 2020/21)	Progress 8	-1.79	129	-1.3	-1.37
2020	5+ E&M	N/A	N/A	10.8%	14%
2021		23.5%	4	12.6%	16.3%
2022		N/A	N/A	11%	16.2%
2020	4+ E&M	24.1%	64	24.3%	26.4%
2021		35.3%	33	28.8%	31.8%
2022		N/A	N/A	22.1%	25.4%

Revised figures for 2021 show that Barnet was ranked 4th for the proportion of CLA students attaining a Level 5+.

In 2022, the number of children in care for 12 months plus who were entered for GCSEs was very small, almost half the previous year and the results were very different with Barnet's Attainment 8 scores and ranking dropping. 2022 figures for English and Maths at 4+ and 5+ are currently unavailable due to cohort size. This cohort had a significant number of young people who were new to the country and a high number had EHCPs in it.

In addition to the above, one young person passed 6 full Scottish National Qualifications (GCSE equivalent). A particular notable result was from one of our unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people who achieved excellent results:

- 5 GCSEs at L4+ including a L8 in Persian plus other qualifications.

Current achievement 2022/23

Reception

8 Reception children were in care at the end of the Summer Term
4 of these children had identified special educational needs – SEN Support (SENS)
4 had been in care for less than 12 months
2/8 children reached a Good Level of Development (GLD)

Phonics – Year 1

7 Year 1 children were in care at the end of the Summer Term
3/7 are SENS
2/7 have EHCPs
4 have been in care for less than 12 months
2/7 children met the standard
1 was disapplied
1 was without a school place
1 child's results have not been received
One child scored maximum marks

Of the 3 who did not meet the standard, all have been in care for less than a year and two are SENS. One was four marks away from meeting the standard so should be successful in Year 2.

Multiplication check – Year 4

13 Year 4 children were in care at the end of the Summer Term
3/13 are SENS
5/13 have EHCPs
3 have been in care for less than 12 months
7/13 children scored more than 20 out of 25
3 did not take the check
4 children scored maximum marks

Key Stage 1 SATS - Year 2

13 Year 2 children were in care at the end of the Summer Term.
1/13 has an EHCP
6/13 have SENS
4 have been in care for less than 12 months

The results were:

	Pre-key stage	Working towards the expected standard	Working at the expected standard	Working at greater depth
Reading	2	4	5	2
Writing	2	7	2	2
Maths	1	8	3	1

Key Stage 2 SATS - Year 6

13 Year 6 children were in care at the end of the summer term.

5/13 have EHCPs

3/13 are SENS

7 have been in care for less than 12 months

8 of the children are White British

7/13 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 of these children have EHCPs and two are in specialist settings.

Results for the other 10 children:

	Working below the expected standard	Working at the expected standard	Working at greater depth
Reading	3	6	1
Writing	4	6	0
Maths	4	5	1

Predicted Results GCSEs - Year 11

Year 11

No in cohort – 40

Context:

14/40 young people have an EHCP

5/40 are on their school's SEN register – SENS

30/40 are male

15/40 are UASC

17/40 have been in care for less than 12 months

Four were new to care UASCs in the Summer Term.

Two will be taking their GCSEs next year.

One was in a specialist setting and did not take any exams.

One had been missing and then moved placement so was not on roll with a school.

One had been in secure accommodation but did achieve some Functional Skills qualifications whilst there.

One child moved placements so was not on roll to take exams.

Three were on pre-entry ESOL courses

Of the 25 who have been in care for more than 12 months:

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

Of the remainder, 7 are UASC and 11 have EHCPs. One is without a school place having been missing for a significant amount of time. He is now in a placement and receiving education.

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. All Year 11s taking GCSE were offered additional tuition in the Autumn Term if they wanted it and for many, it was extended.

8. Planned Destinations – Year 11

Destination	Number
College– A levels	3
College- vocational course	8
College – other course	19
Staying on at school – A levels	3
Staying on at school – special school	2
Changing to another school – A levels	2
Apprenticeship	2
Working	0
Other - please specify	0
Unclear on plans	3

9. **Post 16 Cohort**

Engagement with education, employment and training

	In Borough	Out of Borough
Apprenticeship	1	
Working	3	5
College/6th Form/SEN Provision	43	51
NEET due to being new to care UASC	2	4
NEET - other	20	8
NEET - pregnant	2	
In secure unit		4
In mental health setting/hospital	1	3

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 2022, 38% of care leavers were NEET nationally (LAIT). Currently, we have 24.4% of our Year 12 and 13's who are NEET.

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, CVs etc.
 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.

Plans for end of Year 13 September 2023

Destination	Number
Higher Education – university	7
College	34
Staying on at school	
Educated at home	
Illness	2
Pregnancy	1
Specialist provision	2
Re-engagement provision	
Work training programme	2
Apprenticeship	1
Working	9
Other - please specify	2 – Youth offending institution
Unknown	11

Number currently likely to be NEET in September: 11

Higher Education

Number considering higher education 2024: 4

10. Staffing

a. Current Staffing

Staff member's name	Position	Additional comments
Sarah Deale	Headteacher	0.8
Julie Locke	Deputy Head of School	
Jane Thrift	School Business Manager	
Caroline Gladkow	PEP Coordinator	2 days termtime only
Nicola Axford	Senior Education Lead for Children with a Social Worker (CWSW)	0.9
Allan Newby	Caseworker	
Hannah Hudson	Caseworker	
Sejal Patel	Caseworker 0.6/CWSW 0.4	
Isabella Underhill	Caseworker	0.4
Ornella Rochfort	Caseworker	
Frasier Stroud	Caseworker	
Aiysha Iqbal	Caseworker	Maternity leave
Amy Wight	Senior Learning Mentor	
Jhana Mills	Outreach Learning Mentor	0.6

b. Professional Development

Training attended by members of the team during the year included:

NAVSH training sessions and conference
Welfare Call attendance and analytics training
How to increase educational outcomes for children with a social worker
Excluded to Included
Know me to teach me
Managing disciplinaries and grievances
Core Skills in Coaching
Analysing attendance and absence data
The Anti-Racist school
Essential Management Skills
Trauma and Attachment
Respecting biology – trauma responsive approaches
Suicide prevention training
UASC – higher education support

The whole Virtual School team has had training on:

Anti-racist practice
Working when things are stuck
Understanding and supporting young people who experience anxiety

Staff were also given the opportunity to apply for additional project work which led to a new website being built for the Virtual School www.barnetvs.org and improvements made to our social media presence, work being completed around our UASCs including changes to the Post 16 PEP and work to support on transitions from nursery to reception and Year 6 to Year 7.

c. Supervision

Caseworkers had 1:1 supervision with their line manager at least termly 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. A termly work discussion group is held for the caseworkers and mentors. The mentors receive supervision as part of their role, from an E.P.

11. Engagement with Stakeholders

a. Children

Enrichment Activities

Over the year there have been a vast number of enrichment activities on offer with the majority of funding coming from John Lyons Charity. This was the last year of a 3 year funding allocation but an extension has now been agreed. Enrichment activities have included:

- Reading Club including a visit to the British Library
- Residential trip to Jamie's Farm for 5 UASC
- Visit to Kew Gardens for child and carer for 'Kew in Focus' activity
- Residential trip to Arvon with creative writing focus for 4 young people
- Strength and Learning through Horses
- Springboard Youth Academy – 3 week ESOL summer provision

In addition 100 young people receive 6 Letterbox book packages across the year, provided by The Book Trust. 13 young people have instrumental lessons funded in their schools by Barnet Education Arts Trust. 22 young people also received theatre tickets to attend a West End production with their families.

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 £32000. The ringfenced balance set aside for registered young people to complete all 6 steps is £10,150. The balance remaining is £27,850.

Total number of young people registered – 57

Total number of young people over 18 who have completed the programme in full – 14

Of these 57

- 17 young people has achieved step 5
- 20 young people have achieved step 4
- 23 young people have achieved step 3
- 27 young people have achieved Step 2
- 32 young people have achieved step 1

Total number of young people under 18 who are active on the programme – 9

Total number of young people under 18 who have completed the programme in full – 0

Of these 9

- 1 young person has achieved step 5
- 0 young people have achieved step 4
- 0 young people have achieved step 3
- 3 young people have achieved Step 2
- 4 young people have achieved step 1

Of these 9, 5 registered in July, 1 in June and 1 in May this year so the number of steps completed should increase over the summer.

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 meets 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 will be shared 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 Attachment and Trauma
- The Speech and Language needs of looked after children and other vulnerable young people
- Body based approaches to working with children and young people who have experienced trauma
- Understanding and supporting young people who experience anxiety
- Inside I am hurting

d. Foster Carers

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

- Supporting children and young people with their emotions
- Supporting young people through their GCSE studies
- Speech, language and communication needs in children and young people in the care system
- Understanding specific learning difficulties
- Supporting young people in Year 11 during their GCSE exams
- Supporting transitions
- An introduction to ADHD
- Understanding Personal Education Plans
- Emotions, Behaviour and Communication: what we see and what we understand

Additional drop in workshops were offered to carers of children transitioning into Reception and Year 7.

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

Feedback from training has been very positive including comments such as 'impactful and interesting', 'This training really helped me to think more deeply about why things get stuck and how different people's views, feelings and priorities can impact the situation which in turn helps me think about how to move things forward' and 'Time to reflect and think of practical activities to support student regulation, greater understanding of behaviours that challenge'.

E.P.s have also collaborated in delivering training in connection with the Post 16 funding and have been involved in the children with a social worker focus.

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 (see above) and collaborated on work with the extended duties of all children with a social worker and the Post 16 Pupil Premium Plus Pilot. Feedback from the foster training has been very positive.

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.

Across the year, different organisations have attended including the DfE and Breadwinners Charity. A further video has been produced aimed at helping asylum seeking young people understand the expectations of them in college and school. This will shortly be finished ready for the new school year.

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 for a second year. The project was rolled out in a similar way to the previous year.

Training was delivered by Barnet Educational Psychologists to different colleges to ESOL staff on Trauma and Attachment and to 50 + people on Anxiety based school non-attendance. Both of these received really positive feedback. A webinar is being produced in conjunction with the Inclusion Advisory Team to support colleges with good practice in PEPS and supporting children in care. Funding had been allocated for an enrichment project at Barnet and Southgate College, but this did not go ahead. 18 young people have benefited from Boxing Mentoring. The videos explaining the education system for Post 16 UASCs was

expanded with the addition of an Albanian one and a new series of films focussing on supporting UASCs with the expectations of school and college has been developed and translated into a variety of language. Interpreters have also been funded when needed. The rest of the money was allocated to be used in a similar way to pupil premium for statutory age children, but this has provided challenging as colleges are not really set up to make use of the relatively small amounts of money involved. However, the amount of tuition offered has been increased and where young people requested it to continue over the summer, this was fulfilled.

13 Virtual School Mentoring

From October 2019, were part of a project with Achieving for Children's Virtual School (Kingston, Richmond, Windsor and Maidenhead), and St Mary's University, Twickenham implementing 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 project finished in December 2022 and funding was secured through to March 2024 to build on the learning from it. In January 2023, the three members of staff moved over to work directly as part of the Virtual School and from April 2023 there has been 1.6 mentors.

During this academic year, the hub has supported 18 young people, receiving 13 new referrals. Five young people have exited the programme. Three received extensions of mentoring support due to unforeseen circumstances and greater need for support. Two received mentoring for a brief period after support from the programme ceased due to a placement move and need for intensive therapeutic support. In the Summer term three Year 6 young people were identified for additional support with the transition into secondary school and this will continue into Year 7. One of these recently received a positive contribution award from school in his last week of Year 6 and attended school every day in the last few weeks and engaged with multiple visits to his new secondary school. He also participated in the school leavers play and presented with an excellent mindset towards perfecting his role and in supporting his peers. His school and residential staff recognised and celebrated his efforts.

All the young people who remain on the programme, continue to successfully engage with their mentors and have made progress. Three young people are experiencing changes in placement or emotional dysregulation resulting in a significant impact on their school attendance. The mentors continue to make visits to these young people within their foster and residential placements in these cases.

Case study

The student is a 14-year-old Black/Black British Other going into Year 10. She was referred to the mentoring program in June 2022 after being taken into care. During the time working with this student, she moved placements 3 times due to an increase in need and difficulty in finding a suitable placement. Fortunately, the student remained in the same school throughout the changes. However, after multiple placement moves there was a decline in her attendance and she became emotionally school avoidant as well as regularly engaging with self-harm. The student had been emotionally dysregulated during the school day and found it difficult to communicate her needs with adults and peers. The baseline SDQ assessment indicated high levels overall.

Intervention

The student was matched with a mentor and always engaged well. The mentor focused on helping the student to develop key life skills; to better focus on communicating her needs, focused decision-making, accessing healthy routines and regulatory strategies that would

enable her to access her education and extra-curricular activities. In turn, this would enable her to better manage her emotions inside and outside of school, to feel confident in her school placement. Building positive relationships with key adults and supportive peers was essential to the work with the student, as her motivation to attend school was her closest friends. Through the mediums of art, sport activities and walks in the community, the student developed a trusting relationship with her mentor, sharing helpful ways that the network could better support her. The mentor attended various meetings to share best practice and the voice of the student.

Outcomes

The student made considerable progress since joining the mentoring program, in terms of her sense of self, communication style and developing relationships with trusted adults. The student has settled into her current placement and built relationships with most staff there. She also identified two key adults at school who she feels comfortable to go to when she dysregulated. The student had extended periods where she did not self-harm, instead went to trusted adults to support her. She used flash cards to communicate her needs whilst in school when she felt unable to speak, she also obtained a break-out card for regulatory breaks, when needed. Where the student would not speak to anyone about her needs in school, she has since demonstrated that she can strongly communicate her thoughts and feelings, written and/or verbally. She became an advocate for mental health; in a letter to her school, she encouraged her school leaders to participate in supporting young people with additional needs. She increasingly became more confident and understanding of her capabilities and looks to successfully complete her final GCSE year in school, with the support of the network around her.

Conclusion

This case study demonstrates the positive impact of mentoring on a student who was struggling with school attendance and emotional regulation. Although there was a decline in the student's attendance towards the end of the program, the student has made considerable progress in terms of her communication and relationships. The mentoring program was successful in supporting the student to adapt to the changes and further develop positive relationships with key professionals that will continue to support her with her mental health and access school in a bespoke way to her needs.

Sarah Deale July 2023

Appendix 1

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

CWSW cohort as of 20th July 2023	
No of children (4yrs+) subject to child in need plan:	360
No of children (4yrs+) subject to a CP plan:	154

Attendance

Current attendance:

In the second year of the project, work has continued on refining the systems and processes of identifying and sharing data relating to the cohort and their educational placements. A third-party company is used to collect the attendance and exclusions data for young people who have been on a Child Protection Plan this academic year currently 251.

Weekly attendance reports are shared with 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 has been transferring this data into an Attendance tracker to monitor attendance over time and has used consultation meetings with the link Educational Psychologist to target the severely persistently absent cohort.

Attendance for the year is 86.89% with strongest attendance in the primary phase, dropping off in Key Stage 3. Year 11 shows the lowest attendance at 61.17%. Persistent absence for this cohort was at 41.4%. The table below shows a further breakdown of attendance and highlights that 7.5% of the CP cohort for 2022-23 were severely persistently absent.

Absence attendance ranges	2022-23 Number of Students
100%	4
95%-99%	74
90%- 94%	69
70-89% Persistently absent	76
50-69%	9
Below 50% Severely absent	19

Attendance over time

Looking at the comparative data taken from LAIT for 2021/22, persistent absence in the CIN cohort has risen significantly since the pandemic, with Barnet's rate of persistent absence just below the national average.

% of Children in Need who are persistent absentees 6 Half terms							
Local Authority, Region and England	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Changes from previous year
302 Barnet	35.00	36.70	31.80	-	46.40	46.80	0.40
988 Outer London	30.00	31.00	30.90	-	44.20	43.30	-0.90
Statistical Neighbours	31.10	33.04	32.63	-	47.19	44.50	-2.99
970 England	31.50	32.70	33.40	-	47.30	48.50	1.20

However rates of persistent absence were significantly down for children subject to a CP plan in 2022.

% of Children in Need subject to a Child Protection Plan who are persistent absentees 6 Half terms							
Local Authority, Region and England	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Changes from previous year
302 Barnet	42.30	56.50	36.40	-	56.90	38.00	-18.90
988 Outer London	39.40	40.70	37.60	-	55.20	53.10	-2.10
Statistical Neighbours	37.45	38.91	39.48	-	56.66	56.78	0.12
970 England	37.50	39.70	39.40	-	57.20	56.20	-1.00

% of Children in Need who missed a session through overall absence							
Local Authority, Region and England	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Changes from previous year
302 Barnet	12.10	12.60	11.00	-	14.40	16.10	1.70
988 Outer London	9.70	10.10	10.30	-	12.20	14.00	1.80
Statistical Neighbours	10.12	10.70	10.81	-	12.95	14.56	1.61
970 England	10.50	11.10	11.50	-	13.70	16.40	2.70

Attendance 2021-22

The Statistical First Release (SFR) has data related to: Children In Need, excluding children on a child protection plan and children looked after (CINO) at 31st March 2022; and children on a child protection plan, excluding children looked after (CPPO) at 31st March 2022. Where data is either not available or incalculable by the SFR, an "N/A" has been recorded.

CINO Attendance and Absence 2021-2022				
LA	Barnet	Rank (Out of 153 LAs)	England	London
Total Number of Pupils	395		119950	19080
Attendance Rate	83.9%	77	83.6%	86.1%
Authorised Absence	9%	72	9.5%	8%
Unauthorised Absence	7%	80	7%	5.9%
PA	46.8%	62	48.5%	42.6%

- Barnet ranks consistently in line with national rates across attendance and absence data for Children in Need.
- The attendance rate of Barnet's CIN pupils is exceeding the national average and falls within 2.5% below the London average.
- CIN pupils that are persistently absent is below the national average.

CPPO Attendance and Absence 2021-2022				
LA	Barnet	Rank (Out of 153 LAs)	England	London
Total Number of Pupils	137		26130	3640
Attendance Rate	88.3%	6	80.5%	82.2%
Authorised Absence	6.7%	16	9.1%	7.9%
Unauthorised Absence	5.1%	7	10.4%	9.9%
PA	38%	6	56.2%	53.5%

- Barnet is above both London and national averages in all CPP attendance measures.
- Barnet ranks within the top 10 LAs for attendance, unauthorised absences and persistently absent CPP pupils.

Building on the work from last year, action was taken to address the issue of persistent absence within the cohort and look at ways to affect systemic change. During the Autumn and Spring terms we carried out a series of training events with social workers to raise awareness about what constitutes good school attendance and how social workers and schools can work together to improve school attendance. The training looked at different ways that social workers could support with attendance and what they could expect partners in schools to be doing to support young people and families. The training gave lots of practical advice and outlined examples of SMART targets that could be used on plans with actions to support. Training was also provided to IROs/Conference Chairs on attendance to ensure consistency. Feedback surveys showed that 100% of participants felt that the training improved their practice and skills.

In September 2022 the Virtual School worked with Social Care managers to implement changes to the CP and CIN plan templates, updating them to include mandatory targets around school attendance where attendance was below 95%. The Virtual School has started the process of auditing the plans to look at how target setting is impacting attendance and in order to inform attendance training for social workers over the coming year.

During the Spring and Summer term, the Virtual School met with Lewisham, Greenwich, Enfield and Waltham Forest Local Authorities in order to research best practice on ways to tackle persistent absence for Children with a Social Worker. During the Summer term in partnership with the EWO team, the Virtual School has drawn up terms of reference for a monthly Child Protection Attendance Forum beginning in Autumn 2023 where a multi-agency team will agree actions to target the severely persistently absent from this cohort.

Suspension and Exclusion data

Looking at the data collected on our CP cohort for 2022-23 it is evident that 9% of the cohort received a fixed term suspension.

	2022-23	
	Suspensions	Permanent Exclusions
No of pupils	23	0
No of suspensions/exclusions	47	
No of days excluded	83	

Of these 23 children, three are of primary age and four were on roll in schools out of borough schools.

The rates of fixed term suspensions for Children in Need is higher than statistical neighbours and nationally during 2021 (latest data available - LAIT).

% of school-age Children in Need with at least one suspension							
Local Authority, Region and England	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Changes from previous year
302 Barnet	9.32	8.31	7.33	10.54	6.59	9.34	2.75
988 Outer London	8.02	8.58	7.49	8.41	7.09	6.67	-0.42
Statistical Neighbours	8.20	8.54	8.65	8.36	7.08	7.60	0.52
970 England	8.87	9.42	9.52	10.34	8.97	8.73	-0.24

However the picture with permanent exclusions is more positive.

% of school-age Children in Need with at least one permanent exclusion							
Local Authority, Region and England	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Changes from previous year
302 Barnet	-	-	1.56	-	-	0.00	-
988 Outer London	0.53	0.69	0.59	0.63	0.36	0.30	-0.06
Statistical Neighbours	0.91	1.11	0.87	0.74	0.20	0.00	-0.20
970 England	0.61	0.68	0.73	0.75	0.50	0.38	-0.12

Looking at the Statistical First release Barnet is ranked first out of 153 LAs in % of CINO and CP pupils permanently excluded.

CINO Suspensions/Exclusions 2020-2021					
Year	Measure	Barnet	Rank (Out of 153 LAs)	England	London
2020/21	Number of Pupils	332		133320	23330
	% of Pupils with One Plus Suspension	9.34%	93	8.73%	6.69%
	% of Pupils Permanently Excluded	0%	1	0.38%	0.25%

- CINO pupils in Barnet were higher than both the London and national averages for pupils with more than one suspension, but lower than both the London and national averages for pupils with permanent exclusions.
- Barnet had 0 permanently excluded CINO pupils.

CPPO Suspensions/Exclusions 2020-2021					
Year	Measure	Barnet	Rank (Out of 153 LAs)	England	London
2020/21	Number of Pupils	83		29800	4090
	% of Pupils with One Plus Suspension	7.23%	15	10.85%	9.05%
	% of Pupils Permanently Excluded	0%	1	0.55%	0.42%

- CPPO pupils in Barnet were lower than the national averages for pupils with more than one suspension and permanent exclusions.
- Barnet has 0 permanently excluded CPPO pupils.

In the case of children on a Child Protection plan, the Virtual School has contacted social workers where an exclusion is recorded on the attendance monitoring to check that the

guidelines outlined in [Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) are being followed and social workers are contacted by schools in the case of a suspension. The Virtual School is liaising with the BELs exclusion lead on a monthly basis to cross reference CWSW against suspensions reported by schools. This information is then shared with social workers on a monthly basis by the exclusions team. There are some inaccuracies and continue to work towards a system where this can be provided to social workers in a more timely way.

Attainment data

CINO KS2 Attainment Data 2022					
Year	Category	Barnet	Rank (Out of 153 LAs)	England	London
2022	Reading - % reaching the expected standard	51%	32	45%	47%
2022	Reading – average progress score	1.22	2	-2.02	-1.44
2022	Writing - % reaching the expected standard	46%	21	38%	41%
2022	Writing – average progress score	-0.57	4	-2.0	-1.27
2022	Maths - % reaching the expected standard	51%	17	39%	43%
2022	Maths – average progress score	0.80	2	-2.44	-1.64
2022	GPS - % reaching the expected standard	57%	8	41%	45%
2022	Science -% reaching the expected standard	57%	20	47%	49%
2022	R/W/M combined - % reaching the expected standard	40%	11	28%	32%

- Barnet ranks in the top 5 LAs for KS2 CINO pupils in average reading progress score, average writing progress score, and average maths progress score individually.
- CINO pupils in Barnet are above the London and national averages in meeting the expected standard of all subject measures.

CPPO KS4 Attainment Data 2020-2022					
Year	Category	Barnet	Rank (Out of 153 LAs)	England	London
2020	Number of pupils	N/A		1920	300
2021		N/A		1900	290
2022		12		2020	320
2020	Attainment 8	N/A	N/A	21.9	25.6
2021		N/A	N/A	22.9	24.3
2022		23.1	41	20.4	25.1
2022	Progress 8	-1.33	23	-1.89	-1.59

- Children on a Child Protection Plan data does not exist currently for English and Maths at 4+ and 5+.
- However, Barnet pupils on CPP are exceeding the national average in Attainment 8, and only 2 points short of the London average.
- Barnet is above the London and national average for CPPO pupils' average Progress 8 score. Ranking within the top 25 LAs in the country.

CPPO KS2 Attainment Data 2022					
Year	Category	Barnet	Rank (Out of 153 LAs)	England	London
2022	Reading - % reaching the expected standard	N/A	N/A	48%	57%
2022	Reading – average progress score	-1.56	67	-1.95	-0.75
2022	Writing - % reaching the expected standard	N/A	N/A	40%	46%
2022	Writing – average progress score	-0.04	31	-1.87	-0.67
2022	Maths - % reaching the expected standard	N/A	N/A	41%	47%
2022	Maths – average progress score	-1.33	45	-2.30	-1.41
2022	GPS - % reaching the expected standard	N/A	N/A	43%	51%
2022	Science -% reaching the expected standard	53%	41	49%	56%
2022	R/W/M combined - % reaching the expected standard	N/A	N/A	28%	36%

- Total pupil count that met expected standard was too low when compared to the total (totals in following brackets) for reading (14), writing (15), maths (15), GPS (15), and R/W/M (14) was too low for the SFR to provide the resulting percentage.
- Barnet is above the London and national averages for CPPO pupils in average writing and maths progress scores.
- Barnet is above the national average for CPPO pupils in average reading score.

The Virtual School has also been working with the BELS data team to improve use of NEXUS to provide accurate attainment data of cohorts. To support data collection for the extended CiN cohort, including school placement and attainment data available on DfE databases, the Virtual School continues to work with Family Services to improve the collection of UPN data at the point of referral. This remains an ongoing process and BELs Data Manager will support with training for the MASH team to record UPNs at the point of referral during the Autumn term.

	November 2021	July 2022	July 2023
% with no UPN recorded on LCS Child Protection Cases	77%	2%	8%
% with no UPN recorded on LCS Child in Need Cases	55%	5%	14%

Because of the size of the cohort, the collection of CiN attendance and exclusion 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. The DfE does not currently have a timeline on when data may be extracted from their portal and so the Virtual School has been exploring alternative ways to access the data. During the Summer term meetings were held with Studybugs, Mime, Wonde and data consultants currently working with Family Services to look at different ways to collect and record data from schools so that it is accessible to other teams in BELs as well as social care.

There is still work to be done to ensure that data for CIN students including protected characteristics is readily available and accurate. A strategic group has been set up to move

this forward and has met twice during the summer term working with data teams across BELS and Barnet to ensure information on a young person is available in one place, e.g. YOS involvement, FSM, SEN status etc., and that all teams have access to it.

As well as providing attendance training for social workers, the Virtual School has visited team meetings to answer queries around attendance, suspensions and signpost relevant support. The Virtual School website has been created with information available to support social workers covering areas such as attendance and exclusions, admissions, SEN and the national curriculum.

[Home | Barnet Virtual School | London Borough of Barnet | England \(barnetvs.org\)](http://barnetvs.org)

Work is being carried out during the Autumn term to provide an education training module for social workers who are new to post. The Virtual School continues to raise awareness of relevant training opportunities for parents from the School Circular and support social workers with advice, signposting and liaising with schools over education issues.

Schools continue to be updated on evidence-based approaches that work for children with a social worker through newsletters and training targeted at Safeguarding Leads in schools as well as D.T.s. Governors have been updated 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 can access the information on the website.

The Virtual School has completed the first year of a pilot project focusing on trauma informed practice in Barnet schools. The pilot project was developed with a primary and secondary school and implemented over the course of the 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 was used to allow schools to access online audit and development tools and be part of a wider research community. After completing their audits, each school worked on a development plan using Pupil Voice and a staff MAP activity to inform their actions. Whole school training was designed in response to the development plan and carried out by the Virtual School link EPs. The response to the training has been very positive with staff welcoming the opportunity to understand more about the impact of trauma on young people's wellbeing, relationships and learning.

'I think the Trauma training has been really useful and beneficial. There are lots of children with trauma and it is incredible that we are being given the tools and knowledge to help make a difference for these children.'

The Virtual School also worked with the Inclusion Advisory team and a team of champions in each school to target an intervention to be carried out in each school. One school has focused on the development of a safe space within school for young people to emotionally regulate. The other focused more on developing the ability of staff to employ emotion coaching consistently within their community.

During the summer term the process of recruiting more schools started to the project and there were many expressions of interest from Barnet schools. Ten schools were chosen to take part next academic year. This developing programme hopes to create a mutually supportive network of schools in Barnet, committed to being safe and nurturing learning communities and will build on work carried out during the pilot phase of the project this academic year. Representatives from schools will attend workshops to plan their actions and create unique action research projects targeting interventions in their schools. Planning has started for a Trauma Informed Schools conference in Spring 2024 and a celebration event during Summer 2024 with the opportunity for schools involved in the project to share their experiences with others.

The Virtual School has worked with St Marys University, Twickenham on a project looking at evaluating the impact of the trauma informed schools project and the wider extension duties. During the Summer term social workers were surveyed and interviews held with schools and education and social care managers. The results of this study will be published in September informing the work that will be undertaken during 2023-4. The report will also be shared with the DfE, contributing to the wider national evidence base for children with a social worker.

CLCH Clinical Quality Group

Report title:	Looked After Children Annual Report 2022/2023
Agenda item number:	
Lead director responsible for approval of this paper	K Issac, Director of Operations North Central Division
Report author	Sahida Begum, Named Nurse for Looked after Children
Strategic priority	Quality
Freedom of Information status	Available upon request

Executive summary:

This report provides an annual review of the health assessments provided by Barnet Looked after Children's health team, covering the period from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. The report forms part of the ICB's assurance arrangements, in relation to Looked after Children, as part of the wider Safeguarding Children Arrangements.

This report reviews the delivery of health services to Barnet's LAC, and discusses achievements made for the year in accordance with statutory guidance, as well as service improvements and plans for further developments. It reviews performance indicators and summarises the data in relation to Initial and Review health assessments, indicating where assessments have not been achieved and provides rationale for this.

It is the responsibility of the Specialist GPs in Barnet and the Community Paediatricians to complete all Initial health assessments (IHA) and for the LAC nurse to oversee the review health assessments (RHA). An Independent GP completes Out of Borough RHA for Children/Young people who are placed in Barnet area.

Whilst CLCH report on the Initial Health Assessment activity, the Community Paediatrician provision is provided by the Royal Free Hospital and the Specialist GPs are all independent from CLCH.

This report aims to assure the ICB that it is commissioning high quality services for Looked after Children and that statutory requirements are being met.

Key messages:

- The ICB can be assured that the statutory arrangements are in place for Barnet LAC population
- This report identifies the extent to which the organisation and the commissioned health services for LAC are effectively discharging their safeguarding functions for this population, working in partnership with Barnet Local Authority

- This report highlights areas where improvements are required, to better ensure that Barnet has effective systems in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of the LAC population and maintain oversight of the health of Barnet's LAC population

Assurance provided: Ongoing quarterly monitoring at CQG.

Report provenance: Quarterly reports to CLCH Safeguarding Committee

Report for: Decision Discussion Information

Recommendation: For information only.

Annual Report
2022/2023
Looked after Children's [LAC] Health Service
Barnet

Written by:

Sahida Begum - Named Nurse for Looked after Children

Contributions by:

Simon Cherry – Performance Analyst Barnet

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1. Introduction

1.1 The National Picture

Looked after Children and young people share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but often to a greater degree. They often enter care with a worse level of health than their peers in part due to the impact of poverty, abuse and neglect.

A child who is looked after by a local authority is defined in Section 22 of The Children Act 1989 and means a child who is subject to a care order [or an interim care order] or who is accommodated by a local authority. DfE/DH [2015]

Local Authorities are responsible for making sure a health assessment of physical, emotional and mental health needs is carried out for every child they look after, regardless of where that child lives.

The local authority that looks after the child must arrange for a registered medical practitioner to carry out an initial assessment of the child's state of health and provide a written report of the assessment. The Initial Health Assessment [IHA] must happen within 20 working days from when the child starts to be looked after [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010, Regulation 7]

The number of children entering care is at an all-time high nationally with 90 young people entering the system every day. The majority of cases are due to parental abuse and neglect, however, household issues, such as poverty, poor housing and substance misuse are significantly contributing to the figures. There are claims that austerity, changes within the benefits system with the introduction of Universal Credit and the slashing of essential children and family services are partly responsible for the record number of children now living in care. [Coram BAAF 2017]

There is growing awareness nationally of the Looked-after child agenda, with several key papers and policy drivers published in the past few years, these include:

- 'Pass the Parcel, Children Posted Around the Care System [Children's Commissioner 2019]
- 'Not Seen, Not Heard' [CQC 2016]
- Coram BAAF [2017]
- HM Govt. Working Together to Safeguard Children [2015]
- NICE PH28 Promoting the Quality of Life of Looked after Children and Young People [2021]

NICE PH28 Promoting the Quality of Life of Looked after Children and Young People [2021] highlights that as of 31st March 2022 there were 80,080 looked after children and young people in England with this number increasing every year since 2010. Most of these children are cared for in foster placements [72%], with 14% in connected care, 13% in residential care, secure units or semi-independent living and 7% placed with birth parents

1.2 National Profile of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children [UASC]

Overall, in the UK, UASC represent less than 10% of the looked after children population however In Barnet this figure is 36% (120 during this review period, information taken from Social care system). This group of young people often attend initial appointments without a registered GP or NHS number. This can mean that communication does not reach necessary professionals. The majority speak no English at all. This creates challenges in completing health encounters, it also means that in placements there is difficulty communicating – for example to explain the purpose of various appointments, and discussing the outcome of health appointments, to ensure a young person's understanding.

The commonest age at arrival is 17, meaning that, many young people have an initial health assessment only with no follow up assessment, thus the opportunity for this safety net of a review prior to discharge to routine adult care is not in place for many young people.

Studies show unaccompanied young people are at high risk of infectious diseases. This vulnerable group of young people are referred at Initial health Assessment to specialist clinic. Following screening by specialist clinic, a child/young person may be diagnosed with a significant infectious disease which they may struggle to understand the significance of, and additional health input will be required to understand these conditions and the need to complete the treatment course.

2. The Local Picture

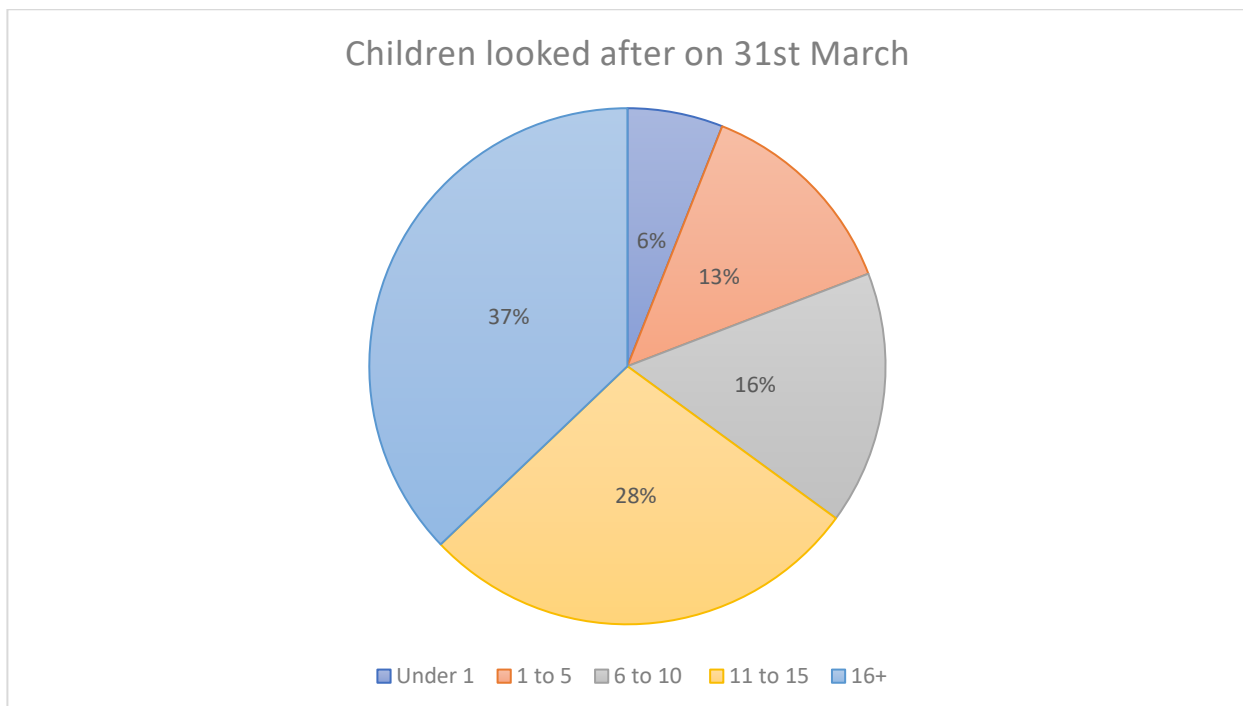
In total there were 334 (an increase of 4) children who were LAC at the end of the year as of 31st March 2023 (this figure also includes children who have recently entered carer and are therefore below 12 month).

Borough	Number 2021/2023	Number 2022/2023
Barnet	330	334

CLCH are commissioned to provide the LAC nursing service and Royal Free Hospital provide the LAC doctors.

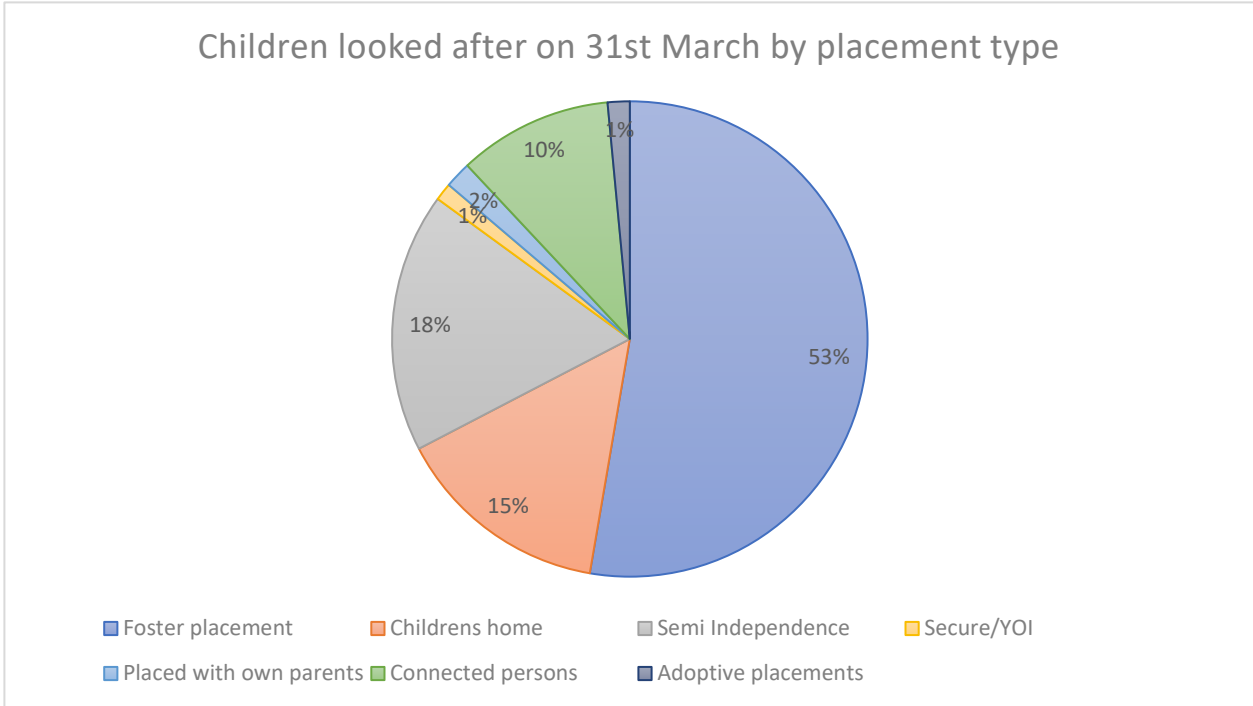
2.1 Barnet LAC by Population by age

At the 31/03/2023 37.1% of the cohort was age 16 and over and 60.7% were boys.

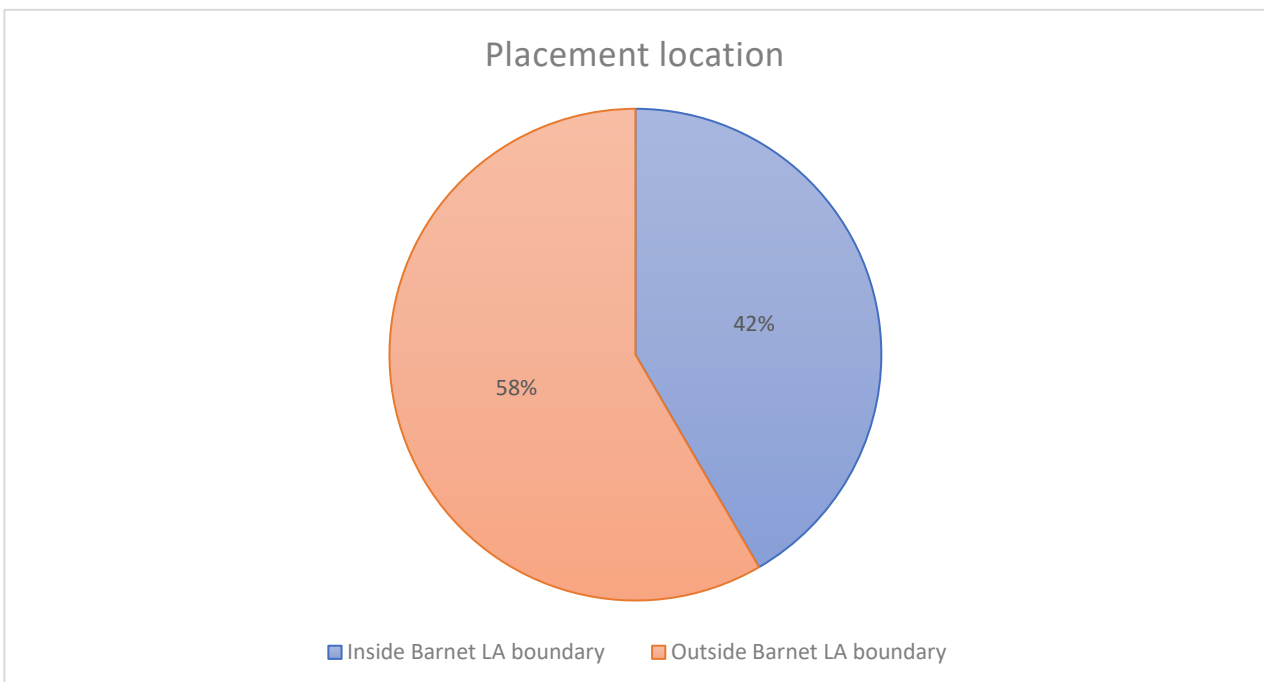


2.2 Barnet LAC by placement Type

Of the looked after children as at 31/03/2023, 53% were in foster placements.



More than half Barnet looked after children are placed outside of Barnet Local Authority boundary. The LAC health team continue to see all Barnet's LAC despite their location. Although this provides children with continuity of care and an allocated caseworker, it continues to have an impact on capacity and additional journey time.



3. LAC Health Team Clinical Activity

3.1. Health Assessments

The CLCH LAC health team is required by statutory guidance to ensure that all children looked after by the Barnet Local Authority have an initial health assessment (IHA) within 28 days of becoming looked after, and thereafter every 6 months (under 5 years) or annually (over 5 years).

The CLCH LAC Administrator is responsible for booking the IHA appointments, however getting this to work efficiently depends on working proactively with key stakeholders, to ensure notification of LAC and consent paperwork/information is received and sent for the children and young people in a timely fashion.

Initial Health Assessments (IHA) for Looked After Children aged 0-9 are performed by community paediatricians provided by the Royal Free Hospital, based at Edgware Hospital. North Central London Integrated Care System (ICS) commissions the Royal Free to complete IHA's for 42 weeks of the year. CLCH are responsible for the IHA administrative processes such as appointment management.

For Looked After Children aged 9-18 years old, the IHA's are completed by Specialist GPs based across Barnet. Currently there is one practice (Oak Lodge GP) and the agreement is that the ICS pay for each IHA completed.

The ICS also commissions a GP for 8 hours a week (equal to 3 slots every week not including annual leave). This GP completes all Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children IHA's and Out of Borough Initial and Review Health Assessments that are requested through the CLCH Looked After Children Health team and funding is claimed by the ICS from the requesting Boroughs. We have recently seen an increase in out of borough health assessment which continues to have direct impact on admin capacity.

All review health assessments are completed by the CLCH LAC Health team, with some exceptions. The LAC health team do not complete health assessments for children who are placed out of the Borough and cannot be completed within 7.5 hours due to the distance.

3.2 Initial Health Assessment

A total of 190 requests for IHA's were received during the period 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, compared to 169 requests the previous year.

Table 1: Number of IHA's completed during the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023	Total Number
Number of IHA requests	182
Number of children ceased to be LAC during 28 day period	27
Number of Initial health assessments due	155

Initial health assessments completed in timescale	55 (35%)
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We have seen a significant decline in the number of IHA's being completed within the 20-working day statutory requirement. There is not a robust process of how Barnet LAC team are informed children/young people are new into care. Within this review period 86 (55%) LAC IHA's breached due to late notification, paperwork not received within timeframe and incorrect consent resulting in a delay in children/young people being seen within timescales. This subsequently impacted on availability of IHA appointments, appointments gone unused, and not enough medical slots available to meet demands once 'batch' consents are received, as the medical team only cover 42 weeks of the year.

An IHA multi agency meeting has been set up between health, social care, and commissioners to discuss the ongoing challenges around timely assessments and develop a pathway to ensure all key partners agree regarding the IHA/RHA consent process. Further sessions are scheduled to improve joined up working and reduce fragmentation between providers.

Table 2: Comparative data IHA's 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

Month	Apr - 22	May - 22	June - 22	July 22	Aug 22	Sep - 22	Oct 22	Nov - 22	Dec 22	Jan - 23	Feb - 23	Mar - 23
No. of LAC due to be seen within month	16	8	7	24	10	19	14	21	15	20	21	7
No. of LAC who became no longer LAC during month	0	0	0	7	1	1	2	3	1	4	4	4
Total cohort	16	8	7	17	9	18	12	18	14	16	17	3
No. (%) seen in timescale s	7 (43%)	2 (25%)	4 (57%)	5 (29%)	4 (44%)	8 (44%)	3 (25%)	4 (22%)	2 (14%)	8 (50%)	6 (35%)	2 (66%)

No. breach exceptions	7	2	4	5	4	8	3	4	2	8	6	2
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3.3 Review Health Assessment

A total of 353 Review Health Assessments requests during the period 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, compared to 330 the previous year.

Table 3: Number of RHA's completed during the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023	Total Number
Number of RHA requests	353
Number of children ceased to be LAC during the year	56
Review health assessments due	297
Review health assessments completed	283

Table 4: Comparative data RHA's 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

Month	Apr - 22	May - 22	June - 22	July - 22	Aug - 22	Sep - 22	Oct - 22	Nov - 22	Dec - 22	Jan - 23	Feb - 23	Mar - 23
No. of LAC due to be seen within month	32	18	24	22	31	28	25	26	23	18	17	33
No. (%) seen in timescales	31 (96%)	18 (100%)	23 (96%)	20 (90%)	30 (96%)	27 (96%)	25 (100%)	26 (100%)	22 (96%)	15 (83%)	17 (100%)	29 (87%)
No. (%) breach exceptions	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	3	0	4

Issues contributing to the overall performance:

- Refusal/non-engagement
- Missing from care
- Change of placement
- Did Not Attend (DNA)/Was not brought (WNB)
- OOB requests

4. Childhood Immunisations

The Local Authority [LA] should act as a ‘good parent’ in relation to the health of Looked after Children. Within that role it has the right to approve the immunisation of children within its care against vaccine preventable diseases as per the national immunisation schedule

The national immunisation schedule recommends that children should have received the following vaccinations:

- **By four months of age:** Three doses of Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis [whooping cough], polio and Hib [DTaP/IPV/Hib]. Two doses of Rotavirus and Meningitis B [MenB] and one dose Pneumococcal [PCV]
- **By 14 months of age:** A booster dose of Hib/MenC and PCV and the first dose of measles, mumps and rubella [MMR] and Men B booster [MenB]
- **By school entry:** Fourth dose of Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis [whooping cough], polio [DTaP/IPV or dTaP/IPV] and the second dose of MMR
- **Before leaving school:** Fifth dose of tetanus, diphtheria and polio [Td/IPV]. Two doses of Human Papillomavirus (6-24 months apart) and a Meningitis ACWY Booster

Table 5: Number and % of LAC with up-to-date immunisations

1 st April 2021 to 31 st March 2022	1 st April 2022 to 31 st March 2023
188/215 (87%)	180/206 (87%)

- The immunisation status of all LAC having health assessment is reviewed; information is requested from their GP and recommendations about outstanding immunisations are made
- A copy of the health recommendations is then shared with the GP, Carer and young person
- Health promotion is always given by the LAC health team regarding immunisations at every health assessment. Signposted to the relevant vaccinations at <https://www.nhs.uk/>
- The Lac health team also work closely with the Infectious Diseases Screening Clinic at University College London Hospital to implement a process for all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children with the introduction of Hepatitis B vaccinations to be offered to this group of young people due to high risk of exposure from journey to UK.

Reasons given for not having had immunisations in this year:

- Young people scared of needles
- Young person has refused

- All asylum seeking young people require immunisations as per HPA guidelines for 'Incomplete Immunisation Status'. This programme of immunisation is given over three-month period. Despite young people having this as a clear action on their health plans, not all are actioned by carer/social worker. Refusals, non-attendance and insufficient key worker staff at residential units to accompany the UASC to their appointments all contribute to poor uptake. As part of the Community Service Review funding has been granted for an additional Specialist Nurse with the view of following up any unactioned health needs from initial medicals. This will ensure any challenges with uptake of immunisations are addressed and supported.

5. Dental Care

Dental health is an integral part of the Health Assessment. The Local Authority and Central London Community Health Care NHS Trust are required to ensure that LAC receives regular check-ups with a dentist. Within the LAC health assessment, discussion routinely takes place to promote good oral hygiene and young people are advised to attend for regular dental checks as recommended by their dentist. The Community Dental service in Barnet supports the service where children/young people have difficulty engaging with dentist/high cost/cannot find a NHS dentist.

Table 6: Number and % of LAC with up-to-date dental

1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022	1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023
135/215 (62%)	144/206 (69.9%)

There has been an increase of 7% in dental attendance during the period 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023. This correlates with the gradual opening of dental practices after the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to the launch of the Healthy Smiles Pilot. Social workers and health practitioners are now able to refer children and young people to dental practices within London for a routine check-up.

6. GP Registration

Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust is required to implement systems to ensure children and young people who are looked after are registered with GPs and have access to dentists near to where they are living, even during temporary placements, and that primary care teams are supported where appropriate in fulfilling their responsibilities to Looked after Children.

Mechanisms are in place to ensure that all LAC are registered with a GP. Some young people over 16 years of age refuse to be registered and although this wish must be respected, the LAC health team continues to work with social services and the young people to help remove barriers and facilitate registration with GP in the long term. The LAC Health team advises social services that young people who refused to be registered with GP can access health services via walk in centres, pharmacies or accident and emergencies services.

On 31st March 2023 100% of LAC in Barnet were registered with a GP.

7. Other clinical activity

7.1 Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Due to the nature of their experiences prior to being placed in care many LAC will have poor mental health. This may be in the form of significant emotional, behavioural and/or mental health problems or attachment disorders or attention deficit disorder [ADHD].

Mental health services for children and young people are provided by either the in-house mental health team, Barnet Integrated Clinical Services (BIC's) or the local CAMHS [children and adolescent mental health services] teams if children are placed out of Borough.

Care for those with mental health problems continues over several months or years and for some even into adulthood. On average children and young people are under the care of CAMHS team for at least 18 months if they are in engaged psychological and psychotherapeutic intervention.

The number of unaccompanied minors is increasing. The emotional well-being of the unaccompanied minors is likely to be extraordinarily challenging and the likelihood of clinically significant disorders especially post-traumatic stress disorders, depression and anxiety very high. Many of the sources of stress are located outside of the young person including contact with the border agency, children's services and other state services. However, the impact may be primarily felt inside the young person and manifested in the kinds of disorders identified. Added to this complexity is the culturally situated construction of the causes and explanations of mental distress which may radically differ to that commonly used in Western and U.K. settings.

Due to the needs of this group of young people, Barnet are looking to offer the initial medical jointly with a clinical psychologist from BIC's to ensure the right support and help is identified from the offset. This ensures the young persons story is not repeated to numerous professionals which can bring about further deterioration and trauma. BIC's is yet to identify the lead clinician for this role.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires [SDQ's] are completed by young people aged 11-18 years old. This process has slightly changed over the review period and Barnet no longer complete carer SDQ's but solely young people SDQ's. The child/young people's social worker continue to complete carer SDQ's and the Virtual School complete with education. The scores are then triangulated and used for the child's statutory health assessment. The scores also inform the below;

- To inform whether a child/young people requires a referral to BIC's
- To evaluate progress against emotional wellbeing outcomes as part of the overall health needs of looked after children
- To provide commissioners of services a better understanding of the emotional wellbeing needs of Barnet's LAC

The distribution and scoring of the strengths and difficulties questionnaires to children, young people and foster carers is dependent on the LAC health team.

In Barnet, the LAC nurse completes the SDQ at health assessment, scores this and uses the report to inform the health care plan, this is then shared with the Local Authority and uploaded to their recording systems. If a child/young person scores above 15 a referral is made into BICS' and the social worker informed. Within this review period 158 SDQ's were completed out of 173 (91%) compared to 148 out of 173 (85%) in the previous year.

7.2 Training

The LAC team supported training to other professionals, foster carers, key workers:

- Foster carer training around oral hygiene, medicine management, understanding basic health needs and first aid
- Social Worker training around the service we provide and health needs of LAC
- School Nurse training around the service we provide and health needs of LAC
- Designated Doctor for LAC delivered training on Schedule of Growing Skills (SOG's) to all of CLCH LAC nurses
- Designated Doctor for LAC delivered training to social workers covering the statutory requirements with regard to health when a child becomes looked after.
- Designated Doctor LAC delivered training for Royal Free NHS Trust (for the doctors who complete IHA's) on the health needs of care-experienced young people including the specific health needs and support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people

7.3 Working together in Partnership

- Quarterly interagency meetings are held to discuss joint business issues of service provision.
- Bi -Monthly Safeguarding Adolescents at Risk Panel
- Weekly tracker meetings with Local authority
- Bi-weekly meetings permanency panel with Local authority
- Monthly LAC Administrators and Nurses meetings
- Quarterly meetings with the LAC Nurses across CLCH
- Corporate Parent meeting
- Weekly allocation/team meetings
- 6 weekly meetings with Named Nurse, Designated Doctor and Designated Nurse

7.4 Staffing and Supervision

It is expected that all ICSs commission a Designated Doctor and a Designated Nurse for LAC. The Designated Doctor within the provider services provided by Royal Free Hospital and CLCH LAC nurses work very closely with them. The Designated Doctor is also the Medical Advisor to the adoption panel in Barnet. Monthly consultations take place with the LAC nurses and the Designated Doctor to provide service updates and discuss cases. Six weekly meetings continue between Named Nurse and Designated Nurse and Doctor to service plan and promote joint up working.

The Intercollegiate Framework outlines the role and capacity of LAC nurses [Intercollegiate Guidance: Knowledge, skills and competencies of healthcare staff, Intercollegiate Framework, March 2015]

- A minimum of 1 WTE* specialist nurse per 100 looked after children
- A minimum of 1 dedicated WTE Named Nurse for looked after children for each looked after children provider service
- If the Named Nurse has a caseload the maximum caseload should be no more than 50* looked after children in addition to the operational, training and education aspects of the role

The current staffing provision in Barnet LAC team is as below

- 1 WTE Named Nurse (holding average of 70 looked after children)
- 2 WTE Specialist Nurse (holding average of 125 looked after children each)
- 0.8 WTE Lac co-ordinator

During this review period the team have been extremely challenged due to staff shortage as one practitioner has been on a secondment with no substantive cover in the team. Despite this shortage, the

team has managed to complete more than 90% of RHA's within timescales with the support of bank staff.

Up until recently the LAC nursing service has been working with more children and young people every year with no increase in nursing hours to reflect this. As part of the Community Service Review Barnet additional funding has been granted for 1 WTE Band 7 Specialist Nurse and 0.4 WTE Band 4 Lac administrator. It is expected that once the posts are recruited into, the LAC nursing team will offer health assessments to all looked after children placed in Barnet from other Local Authorities and offer a 3 month telephone review to all new into care.

The current staffing provision is as below.

The LAC Health team has supervision as per NMC Guidelines and the team enjoys robust Safeguarding Supervision:

- Quarterly Safeguarding Supervision with the Named Nurse for Safeguarding, this is group supervision using the 'Voice of the Child' format where cases are brought for discussion with the wider team
- 1:1 Management supervision from both CLCH
- Clinical supervision

8. Service Improvements

8.1 Service improvements and team achievements

Despite the ongoing challenges faced by the LAC health team, we have demonstrated resilience and continue to ensure the health needs of all Barnet LAC are being met.

- The Local authority care homes are allocated aligned/link Specialist Nurse that offers bespoke support ranging from dental, contraceptives, diets etc to the young person
- Implementing the YP SDQ to capture their voice and emotional health
- Triangulation of SDQ scores with young persons, carers and education
- Quality assurance of health assessment to ensure health needs of LAC are captured and actioned
- Attendance at Interim Care Board Annual Learning Disability Forum health checks working group – plan to make reasonable adjustments to improve the experience of people with Learning Disabilities e.g., alerts of records, extra consultation time etc
- Continuum of needs now added to all LAC health records as Level 3
- Despite the ongoing challenges with timely notification the LAC co-ordinator has worked relentlessly to ensure all IHA's are being met within timescales

8.2 Challenges

- Intercollegiate Framework outlines the role and capacity of LAC nurses [Intercollegiate Guidance: Knowledge, skills and competencies of healthcare staff, Intercollegiate Framework, March 2015]
 - A minimum of 1 WTE* specialist nurse per 100 looked after children
 - A minimum of 1 dedicated WTE Named Nurse for looked after children for

each looked after children provider service

- If the Named Nurse has a caseload the maximum caseload should be no more than 50* looked after children in addition to the operational, training and education aspects of the role

The LAC nursing service continues to work with more children and young people every year with no increase in nursing hours to reflect this.

- Work is ongoing with the ICB, CLCH, the providers of the IHA service and the Local Authority to improve referrals and timeliness of IHA's. This continues to be a huge challenge, preventing CLCH to ensure IHA timescales are met.

8.3 Audits and Challenges

Designated nurse and Designated Doctor completed audit of Initial Health assessments completed by doctors on 11th May 2022. The audit noted continued high performance in terms of documentation, and considering emotional wellbeing concerns. The audit identified an area for development around identifying and responding to sexual health needs of care experienced people. This covered particular needs relating to unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people. The training was delivered by the whole Looked After Children's Health Team by Sarah McCarthy, Safeguarding Lead and Domestic Abuse Ambassador, Integrated Sexual Health & HIV Barnet & Camden CNWL - Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust. The session was a brilliant training experience for the whole team and involved lots of team participation and support.

9 Forward Planning for 2023/3024

- To work with the placement and fostering teams to ensure that all children and young people are supported to attend the dentist, complete immunisations and register with a local GP
- Foster carers have identified a need for specific training around babies and their development. A training package will be delivered by Barnet LAC health team to cover safer sleep practices, current weaning guidance and safety in the home for babies and toddlers.
- To work with the ICB and other partners around care leavers and commissioning a care leavers health service that meets the needs of young people post 18 years of age and guidance suggests 0-25 service
- CLCH LAC health team to work alongside BICS to undertake joint initial health assessments with medical doctor and member of psychology support
- BICS and LAC health team to work together to deliver sleep support for young people
- As part of the Community Service Review Barnet LAC health team have received additional funding to recruit 1 WTE Specialist LAC nurse and 0.4 WTE administrator. It is proposed following this recruitment the CLCH LAC team will then complete all Care of other Local Authority review health assessment and offer a 3 month follow up review to look at the health care plans of all LAC and try to address unmet needs.
- It would also be good practice for LAC health team to be commissioned to provide a Care Experienced service, as guidance suggests 0-25 service.

- ICB to support LAC health team to receive monthly data of LAC cohort to allow cross-referencing between LA data and CLCH data to ensure all systems are kept up to date and accurate

Appendix 1- Glossary of Terms

BAAF- British Adoption and Fostering

BICS – Barnet Integrated Clinical Service

CAMHS- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

IHA- Initial Health Assessment

LAC- Looked after Child

LA- Local Authority

RHA- Review Health Assessment

SDQ- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

References

HM Govt [1989] The Children Act Crown Publications

DfE/DH [2015] Working together to Safeguard Children. Crown Publications

DH [2010] Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations. Crown Publications

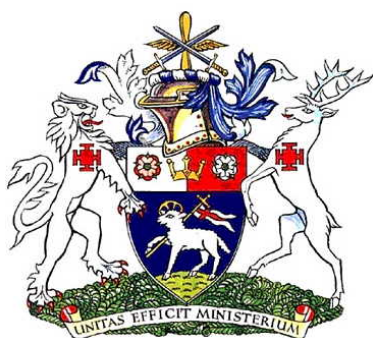
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Cabinet

Title	Introduction of Play Streets
Date of meeting	18 October 2023
Report of	Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change
Wards	All
Status	Public
Key	Non-key Decision will impact communities in all Wards but not significantly
Urgent	No
Appendices	None
Lead Officer	Cath Shaw, Deputy Chief Executive, cath.shaw@barnet.gov.uk
Officer Contact Details	<p>Ian Edser, Director of Highways and Transportation, ian.edser@Barnet.gov.uk</p> <p>Alice Nugent, Operations Director alice.nugent@barnet.gov.uk</p> <p>Jackie Staples, Member Liaison Manager Jacqueline.staples@barnet.gov.uk</p>
Summary	
<p>The report seeks approval for the approach to the introduction of Play Streets.</p> <p>Play Streets enable children a safe and secure environment for supervised outdoor play, achieved by means of a timed road closure, supported by a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and the necessary approved signage for up to two hours once a month.</p> <p>A Play Street is a community led short road closure which helps to build and encourage active play and help with the social and physical development of children. The organisation of a Play Streets by the community also builds cohesion and ownership whilst encouraging families to reclaim the street (where eligible) near their home as public space, instead of a space used exclusively by cars/car drivers.</p>	

This report proposes using Section 16A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 as a means of facilitating the road closures, including the introduction of a new Play Street application process for residents coupled with draft guidance for those who wish to explore a Play Street in their road.

Recommendations

1. **That Cabinet approves the approach to facilitating Play Streets using section 16A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act.**
2. **That cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Highways and Transportation to finalise the drafting of the process, draft and publish the Guidance and training material for the Stewards for the organisation and implementation of the Play Streets.**

1. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 1.1 The provision of a Play Street will create a strong community, facilitate, and enable play, physical activity, leisure, and sport opportunities at a neighbourhood level, by children, young people, and families. Furthermore, Play Streets can help people get to know their neighbours and foster a strong sense of community, whilst improving air quality and increase active travel.
- 1.2 In June 2019 the relevant Government Minister within the Department of Transport (DfT) wrote to all local authorities setting out the legislative basis for Play Streets.
- 1.3 In March 2023 the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change approved a Play Street trial for two locations, these being Lodge Lane and Leopold Road.
- 1.4 The trial Play Streets were monthly events over a six-month period. This included road closures for two hours on the last Sunday of the month. The trial ended in August 2023.
- 1.5 During this six-month trial officers worked closely with the Play Street organisers collating feedback after each event. The feedback received included 'overwhelmed with a sense of community, would be great if more streets were involved, great to see children playing together, was like going back to my childhood'.
- 1.6 In the development of a Play Street process for the London Borough of Barnet, Officers drew on the good work already undertaken by other local authorities including Hackney, Camden, and Islington, and by the parent organisations, Playing Out and London Play.
- 1.7 A Play Street will not be suitable for all streets - bus routes, distributor or primary roads, roads which serve industrial or commercial premises, or roads which have a junction inside the proposed closure, for example. The Council will assess all applications to ensure suitability prior to approval.
- 1.8 Through the application process, individual dates may not be approved where known planned works are programmed. Furthermore, an agreed date may be cancelled if road works have been agreed through the Highways Permitting Team.
- 1.9 If objections are received through the organiser/resident consultation, Officers will be responsible to consider and approve/reject the application.
- 1.10 Road closures for Play Streets can be facilitated via either Section 29 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (RTRA) or a Special Events Order under section 16A of the RTRA.
- 1.11 Section 29 requires a statutory consultation with lead times, advertising the draft and making of a Traffic Regulation Order which is timely and costly.

- 1.12 Section 16A requires Secretary of State approval for repeated special event closures. This allows for a single application to be made by the Highways Authority for several road closures in different locations on multiple dates. This power does not require advanced advertising or a statutory consultation to be carried out and therefore does not attract any of the associated advertising/consultation costs. On approval the Highways authority can make a single TRO for all locations.
- 1.13 The DfT view is that section 16A of the RTRA is the most appropriate power as an alternative to section 29 and therefore Officers propose to use this power to facilitate road closures for Play Streets.

2. Alternative Options Considered and Not Recommended

- 2.1 To continue with the current approach of processing a Play Street as an event or Street Party using Section 29 of the RTRA. Due to the nature/regularity of Play Street events, it is considered that Section 16A offered a better alternative approach.

3. Post Decision Implementation

- 3.1 Subject to Cabinet approval of the recommendation to adopt the approach to facilitate Play Streets, officers will progress the following actions ahead of launching Spring 2024:
- Finalise the process including the production of guidance documents, application form, consultation letter (with neighbours) for the introduction of Play Streets
 - Prepare a campaign with the Corporate Communication Team to include the creation of a web page, press release, Barnet First, social media, school circular
 - Dedicated email account/templates/information sheets for organisers
 - Prepare dedicated material and declaration document for stewards to include links to video training created by Playing Out <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rclVildm56U> and Sustrans <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rclVildm56U>
 - Prepare a Ward Councillor communication for information.
 - Make an application(s) to the Secretary of State under Section 16B of the RTRA

4. Corporate Priorities, Performance and Other Considerations

4.1 Corporate Plan

Caring for our People:

Play Streets will create a more family friendly borough, bring communities together where people can meet that reflect our diverse communities, whilst working closely with organisations at a local level.

Caring for our Places:

Create a borough of fun; a place where people can meet whilst enabling residents to breathe life back in their streets.

Caring for the Planet:

Create a car free space where children can play, improve air quality, and increase active travel.

An engaged and effective council:

Creates stronger partnerships between the council and local organisations whilst giving more power to community groups to own planned activities in their road.

4.2 Corporate Performance / Outcome Measures

Resident satisfaction surveys will be undertaken every month for all approved Play Streets. Officers will use these surveys to measure attendance and where required make improvements to current processes.

4.3 Sustainability

Play Streets will generate an environment for play with no emissions and may encourage active travel initiatives.

4.4 Corporate Parenting

Play Streets will be inclusive of all children within the extent/local area of the approved road closure.

4.5 Risk Management

The Council has an established approach to risk management, which is set out in the Corporate Risk Management Framework.

Play Streets are a resident/community, and it is the responsibility of the organiser to complete a risk assessment. The council will not accept responsibility for it.

More information about Play Street risk assessments can be obtained from the Playing Out website provides templates for use [Template-Risk-Benefit-Assessment-2019-LC- Update.docx \(live.com\)](#)

4.6 Insight

Not applicable

4.7 Social Value

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.

This report does not relate to the procurement of service contracts.

5. Resource Implications (Finance and Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT and Property)

5.1 Small 'start up' costs of per Play Street location inc. "play street road closure" signage, high viz coats, street notices, staff time for initial assessment and approval of application.

5.2 On-going DLO costs for delivery and collection of shared reusable signage.

5.3 The activities set out in Sections 5.1 and 5.2 will be covered through the approved Highways Budgets.

5.4 No Value for money, procurement, staffing IT or property implications.

6. Legal Implications and Constitution References

- 6.1 The council are responsible for arranging a Traffic Order to close the road to facilitate a Play Street via section 16A of the RTRA.
- 6.2 The Council will not be liable for any injury, loss or damage arising from the organisation of an event. Any claims made against the Council regarding damage or injuries caused by play street events will be passed on to the relevant organiser(s). Play Street organisers should be aware that there may be circumstances in which they would be held liable for any accidents. Council encourages everyone involved to be sensible and respectful about other people and their property. It is strongly recommended that organisers should consider taking out Public Liability Insurance.
- 6.3 Under the Council's Constitution Part 2D, the functions of Cabinet include the following responsibilities: Development of proposals for the budget (including the capital and revenue budgets, the fixing of the Council Tax Base, and the level of Council Tax) and the financial strategy for the Council;
- Recommending major new policies (and amendments to existing policies) to the Council for approval as part of the Council's Policy Framework and implementing those approved by Council;
 - Approving policies that are not part of the policy framework

7. Consultation

- 7.1 The application process will require the organiser to communicate/consult with neighbours and submit evidence with their application.
- 7.2 If objections are received that cannot be resolved by the organiser, they will be forwarded to the Highways Service to review/resolve prior to approval of the application.
- 7.3 The application will not be approved if an objection cannot be resolved.

8. Equalities and Diversity

- 8.1 Decision makers should have due regard to the public sector equality duty in making their decisions. The equalities duties are continuing duties they are not duties to secure a particular outcome. The equalities impact will be revisited on each of the proposals as they are developed. Consideration of the duties should precede the decision. It is important that Cabinet has regard to the statutory grounds in the light of all available material such as consultation responses. The statutory grounds of the public sector equality duty are found at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and are as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, 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.

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:

- a) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- b) 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;
- c) 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.

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.

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:

- a) Tackle prejudice, and
- b) Promote understanding.

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:

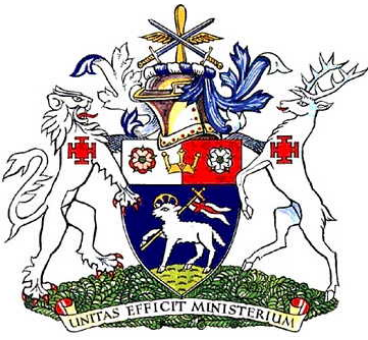
- a) Age
- b) Disability
- c) Gender reassignment
- d) Pregnancy and maternity
- e) Race
- f) Religion or belief
- g) Sex
- h) Sexual orientation
- i) Marriage and civil partnership

Advice on completing Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) can be found [here](#).)

- 8.2 Accessibility will be a consideration when implementing a road closure via section 16A of the RTRA for play streets. Road closure for play streets are normally for two hours on Sundays
- 8.3 Whilst there is a positive impact on children playing on street, officers considered the impact on residents including disabled, pregnant, elderly, emergency services and deliveries. This will be mitigated by the requirement to have two dedicated stewards at each closure point who will be responsible for clearing the road of children/activities and guide vehicles through.

9. Background Papers

Not applicable

Cabinet

Title	Brent Cross Update Report
Date of meeting	18 October 2023
Report of	Councillor Ross Houston Cabinet Member - Homes and Regeneration
Wards	Cricklewood
Status	Public with Exempt appendix (Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended as it relates to Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information))
Key	Key
Urgent	No
Appendices	Brent Cross Update appendix - EXEMPT
Lead Officer	Cath Shaw, Deputy Chief Executive cath.shaw@barnet.gov.uk
Officer Contact Details	Luke Ward, Brent Cross Programme Director luke.ward@barnet.gov.uk

Summary

This report provides an update to the Cabinet on the progress being made across the Brent Cross Programme in recent months.

Notably, the report provides updates on the commissioning and bringing into use process for the Brent Cross West Station ahead of the formal opening of the station later this year, which will represent a significant moment for the borough and for Brent Cross Cricklewood Regeneration.

Further updates are also provided on the good progress being made across Brent Cross Town, including the update to the Brent Cross South Business Plan and Next Phase Proposal, continued progress on site, and ongoing community engagement activity.

Updates are also provided on council delivered infrastructure relating to new homes for the Whitefield Estate residents, replacement Waste Transfer Station, and an update to the approach to CPO land assembly for infrastructure plots around Staple Corner roundabout, as explained in paragraphs 1.39 to 1.42.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the contents of the report and the exempt appendix and;
2. Delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes and Regeneration to approve the land acquisition strategy for the remaining plots in relation to the CPOs already made and for the Deputy Chief Executive to implement it, once the strategy has been finalised, as explained in paragraphs 1.39 to 1.42 of this report and the exempt appendix.

1. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 1.1 The last update report on Brent Cross was submitted to the Cabinet on 18th July 2023. That report can be read here [Committee Report \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/committees/transport-and-infrastructure/committees-reports/2023-07-18-brent-cross-report)
- 1.2 This report provides updates to progress on the Brent Cross Programme since the last report and seeks to inform Cabinet of the ongoing activity within the development area, including community engagement, physical works update, and upcoming events.
- 1.3 Notable physical progress since the last update includes the following:
 - Near completion of the remaining physical works for the Brent Cross West station including snagging and handover of assets.
 - The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) have provided authorisation for entry into service for the station.
 - Confirmation that the Brent Cross West station is targeted to officially open in the coming months.
 - Opening of the public realm area outside the eastern entrance of the Brent Cross West station connecting Brent Terrace South with Brent Terrace North.

Brent Cross West Station Update

Construction

- 1.4 Construction on the new Brent Cross West station is nearing completion with the delivery team closing out the snagging programme. Once complete, the principal contractor, VolkerFitzpatrick, will remain in control of the station and provide security up until the official opening.

Brent Cross West Station



- 1.5 On 20th September 2023 the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) issued an authorisation letter which, subject to completing the Network Rail entry-in-to-service and asset management plans processes, grants authorisation for bringing the station into use. This is an important milestone and confirms that the station complies with required industry standards for operational railway stations.

Station Opening

- 1.6 A number of 'Go/No/Go' sessions have been held with all stakeholders involved in opening the station (Network Rail (NR), Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), Department for Transport (DFT) and Brent Cross Town (BXT)) to ensure all workstreams remain on target for station opening which is expected to take place later this year.
- 1.7 A launch video has been produced to help build excitement and visibility around the station opening. The video has been posted on project and council social media channels as part of the station opening communications strategy and can be viewed at the following link. <https://youtu.be/axRPY3K34-Y?feature=shared>.

Brent Cross West Station



Operational Arrangements

- 1.8 Work continues to finalise the maintenance and leasing agreements for the station. This will ensure clear responsibilities for are assigned to each distinct element of the internal and external structure, once it is operational.
- 1.9 During the development of management plans for the station, it became apparent that the previously proposed arrangements created a number of overly complex management interfaces between the Brent Cross Estate Manco and Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR). This arrangement proposed the Estate Manco would manage both entrances and the overbridge, with a cost sharing arrangement with the station operator.
- 1.10 A more simplified arrangement has been agreed, which will see the station lease area expand to include the overbridge and the western entrance building with NR/GTR managing these areas. This means only the eastern entrance, which interfaces with the wider Brent Cross Town estate, will be the responsibility of the Brent Cross Estate Manco.
- 1.11 Importantly, the intention is that the council will retain control of the western entrance public realm. This will protect the ability to develop the retained land interests on this side of the station, without impacting on day to day railway operations.
- 1.12 The Housing & Growth Committee on 5th September 2022 delegated authority to the Brent Cross Programme Director, in consultation with the chair of the committee, to finalise and enter into the operational maintenance and lease agreements required to bring the station into use. Once the maintenance, leasing and funding agreements have been settled a delegated powers report will be drafted to provide approval to enter into these agreements prior to station opening.

Station Commercial position

- 1.13 As construction moves towards completion, much of the focus now moves to project close out, which includes reaching a final account on the station contract. Mace, who are managing the station contract on the council's behalf, have been working closely with VolkerFitzpatrick and have closed out all major disputed items bringing cost certainty to the station contract. There will still be the need to review any claims or disputes in the final stage of delivery, but these are expected to be minor.

Community Engagement

- 1.14 Following concerns raised to us by residents regarding anti-social behaviour taking place in the vicinity of Purbeck Drive (between Cotswold Gardens and Clitterhouse Playing Fields), planters have been installed and a road closure has been put into place to dissuade people congregating in this location. CCTV has also been installed to monitor the area and ensure the planters are not tampered with. The solution has been successful and positive feedback has been received from local residents, who will maintain the plants with support from the council moving forward. ASB across the wider local area are also being monitored to manage the risk that antisocial behaviour that had been taking place on Purbeck Drive is displaced to another part of the Golders Green Estate.

Planters at Purbeck Drive



- 1.15 The project team continue to run a monthly drop-in session on the third Thursday evening of every month at the Brent Cross Town Visitor Pavilion. Teams from Related Argent, Barnet Council and L&Q are on hand to answer questions from residents in the local area (particularly those most impacted by construction). This is in addition to regular opening hours at the Visitor Pavilion where Welcome Hosts are available daily to answer questions about the programme.
- 1.16 Teams across the programme continue to deliver community-focused initiatives. Most recently this has included officers working with Related Argent's all-staff volunteering day at Claremont School where together, the teams painted a new mural along the wall that faces Claremont Road. Other council teams have been involved in litter picking in the area including along Brent Terrace.

Brent Cross Town Update

Summer in the Park

- 1.17 Brent Cross Town hosted a range of free weekly activities in Claremont Park over the school holidays. The programme covered a total of 21 days of events with 8 different types of activities and 44 sessions including arts and crafts, sports, wellbeing activities and social games. There were an estimated 1,300 attendees across the various sessions throughout this period.



Site Works Update

- 1.18 Brent Cross Town continues to take shape with works progressing well on the early development plots. Plot 12 has now reached final height and a topping out ceremony took place on the 19th September, followed by a community BBQ evening at the pavilion on the 20th September with residents of the Whitefield Estate who will be moving to plot 12.
- 1.19 Physical progress can be seen in the latest drone video available on the Brent Cross Town website at the following link <https://www.brentcrosstown.co.uk/2023/08/21/august-2023-drone-footage>



- 1.20 Works have also completed on the public realm outside the station eastern entrance. This area is now open to the public and re-introduces the route through from Brent Terrace North and South. When the station opens later this year this area will form a key transport interchange with access to the station, new bus stops, and a new walking route across the railway linking communities on

either side of the tracks. Once opened the station will be served by bus routes 189 and 326 on the east, and route 316 on the west. The new public realm can be seen in the image below.



- 1.21 Further good progress has been made in connecting utilities for the development. Notably the primary substation has been powered up for the first time. The electricity available will now be used to provide construction power supplies to forthcoming residential and office sites, as well as providing permanent supplies initially to offices in Station Quarter, to the Main Energy Centre and ultimately to the rest of the Brent Cross Town site.

Clitterhouse Playing Fields

- 1.22 The planning application for the upgrade to Clitterhouse Playing Fields was approved at strategic planning committee on 4th October 2023. Following committee and the incorporation of amended obligations and informatives, a detailed design phase will commence ahead of physical works which could start in late 2024 or early 2025. Notably the works on the park will be undertaken in phases so parts of the playing fields will always be available for use by the public.

Brent Cross Town (BXS) Business Plan

- 1.23 As reported to cabinet in July 2023, the Brent Cross South Business Plan provides the over-arching strategy, to which the joint venture partners (LB Barnet and Related Argent) are working towards delivering Brent Cross Town (BXT). As the project comes forward and BXT evolves, it is envisaged that the Business Plan will be updated on a periodic basis (notionally every year or so) to reflect progress with phase delivery, changes in market activity and current economic conditions and forecasts.
- 1.24 The Business Plan review process began roughly 4 months ago, informed by current market circumstances and an emerging Second Phase Proposal, which is detailed below. The cabinet may be aware that the first phase proposal includes the early residential plots of Brent Cross Town and is already under construction. The updated content and individual chapters are being produced by Related Argent, with the process of LBB review and feedback ongoing.
- 1.25 An update paper was presented to Cabinet in July 2023, with finalisation of the new Plan being delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes and

Regeneration. The final draft Business Plan will be reported in more detail prior to adoption by the Partnership.

- 1.26 While the business plan foresees the development of the scheme in a number of phases, the joint venture will continue to assess individual plot opportunities as and when they become available in response to difficult market conditions.

Next Phase Proposal

- 1.27 Phase proposals are a requirement of the BXS Project Agreement and under-pin the process by which Brent Cross Town regeneration comes forward, in clearly planned and financially viable phases that achieve the objectives of the adopted Business Plan. Under set Project Agreement procedures, these phase proposals are presented by the Development Manager, ahead of relevant plot drawdown, for consideration and approval by the joint venture partners.
- 1.28 Following Phase One going unconditional in June 2022 and the subsequent drawdown of several residential plots, which are now under construction, the Second Phase Proposal is now being prepared.
- 1.29 It is possible that Plot 1 (the first office building) may be the subject of a site-specific Phase Proposal and that several other plots around the station and north of the new High Street, will constitute the following phase.
- 1.30 Plot 22 may also form part of an upcoming phase proposal following the announcement in August of a new partnership that will deliver Brent Cross Town's first retirement village in Plot 22. The 150 homes designed for later living will add to the growing mix of housing options available as part of the transformation of the area. The plot is subject to detailed planning permission and will likely form part of the next development phase of Brent Cross Town.
- 1.31 These detailed phase proposals typically incorporate a group of individual development plots, together with the new infrastructure, services and public realm that is needed to support them and deliver the 'joined up' BXT which the scheme Masterplan envisages. Each phase proposal sets out the range and mix of uses, specific plot components and accommodation schedules, together with a timetable for development of that phase and the Council's projected land receipts based on Phase viability appraisals.

Brent Cross Infrastructure (Delivered by the Council)

Plots 53/54 / Whitefield Estate Low Rise

- 1.32 Works on the first replacement homes of the programme are nearing completion. These plots will house residents who have chosen to relocate from the Whitefield Estate low rise units. The units were scheduled to complete in October 2023, however due to delays in utility connections completion is now expected to take place in November 2023.
- 1.33 As the completion date falls close to December, the re-housing process will now commence in the new year to avoid any clashes with the Christmas holidays and to prevent unnecessary disruption to residents. Once all residents have moved into their new homes, the demolition of the low-rise units will take place.

Plots 53 and 54



- 1.34 As part of the rehousing process, the Council is establishing the rents and services charges for residents in their first year of occupation with L&Q, as per the terms of the Residential Relocation Strategy (Condition 1.10 of S73 Planning Application), which was approved by the Local Planning Authority. The Council is averaging rents for the new homes to ensure that all secure tenants are treated fairly by charging the same rents and services charges for the same sized properties.

Waste Transfer Station

- 1.35 As reported to the Cabinet meeting on the 18th July 2023, the council have an obligation to construct a replacement Waste Transfer Station (WTS) for the now decommissioned Hendon Waste Transfer Station. The long-term proposal has been for the site on Geron Way to be utilised for this purpose and planning permission has been granted for this site.
- 1.36 The first stage of the design and build contract for the Geron Way site has been instructed, and the council is due to instruct the contractor to proceed with stage 2 and commence construction on the site in early 2024.
- 1.37 Concurrently, the council officers continue to meet with the North London Waste Authority (NLWA) and London Energy Limited (who will be the end users of the site) to review an alternative option proposed by NLWA. The Council continues to take a pragmatic and proactive approach in these discussions, while ensuring it does not take on unfair risk in delaying the Geron Way site which is continuing through the design stage. Should a resolution not be reached on the alternative site in the coming months, the council will proceed with instructing the build phase at the Geron Way site as originally planned.
- 1.38 Work continues to assess the options for securing the early demolition of the decommissioned Hendon Waste Transfer Station, which remains liable for Business Rates. Some meanwhile / temporary uses have been identified and a simple business plan is being worked up to assess viability.

Infrastructure

- 1.39 As reported to Cabinet in July 23, the Section 73 planning permission envisages several road infrastructure investments which were originally to be delivered by the Brent Cross Shopping Centre owners (previously referred to as Brent Cross North). Many of these improvements relate to increasing capacity on the road network around the shopping centre in order to accommodate the increased traffic associated with the previously proposed scheme. Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) are in place accordingly to enable the acquisition of land as required to implement that scheme.
- 1.40 Since the S73 approval, there have been changes to policy relating to highways capacity improvements in and around London, with a bigger focus on promoting active and sustainable travel options while attempting to reduce the use of private cars and road transport.
- 1.41 The Brent Cross Regeneration team are working with the Brent Cross Shopping Centre owners to review the land requirements based on an updated scheme. A strategy is being developed relating to the remaining plots within the CPO which have yet to be acquired.
- 1.42 The cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes and Regeneration to approve the land acquisition strategy for the remaining plots in relation to the CPOs already made and for the Deputy Chief Executive to implement it once the strategy has been finalised.

Brent Cross South Retail Park

- 1.43 The Retail Park remains fully let.
- 1.44 Heads of Terms and the subsequent variation to the project agreement have been completed to provide the framework for bringing the Retail Park into the Brent Cross Town Joint Venture. Progress incorporating the Retail Park into the wider scheme will be reported to future Cabinet meetings.

2. Alternative Options Considered and Not Recommended

- 2.1 None other in the context of this report

3. Post Decision Implementation

- 3.1 The council and its advisors will continue to progress all work streams to ensure delivery of the Brent Cross regeneration programme as outlined in this report. Delegated Powers Report and Officer Decision Reports will be drafted as required and recorded on the Brent Cross decisions register to ensure a good audit trail of decisions relating to the scheme.

4. Corporate Priorities, Performance and Other Considerations

Corporate Plan

- 4.1 The Brent Cross Cricklewood regeneration scheme seeks to embody the key themes of the corporate plan including people place and planet.
- 4.2 The Brent Cross Town development will have an on-site energy centre and the largest air source heat pump installation in Europe. It will provide low carbon heating the planned 6,700 new homes and all energy supplied will come from 100% renewable sources.
- 4.3 New and improved parks and greenspaces are being delivered with the local community at the heart of the development. The recent summer of fun programme held in Claremont Park was

attended by over 1,300 people and further community activities are planned throughout the year encapsulating the Borough of Fun strategy.

- 4.4 The Brent Cross Town community fund has now been running for over 5 years and supports local community groups each year with funding towards improvement projects, yet again putting local people at the heart of the development.

Corporate Performance / Outcome Measures

- 4.5 A benefit realisation plan is in place to measure the numerous benefits being delivered by the Brent Cross development. Many of these have been baselined from the original business case and include tangible benefits such as new homes, school places, sq. ft of open/green space and numerous other measures.
- 4.6 In addition to the above, the Brent Cross Town Joint Venture have worked with Manchester University to develop the Flourishing Index, which seeks to measure how well the people at Brent Cross Town and the surrounding communities are doing. Baseline data has been recorded and future surveys will provide insight into health and wellbeing of residents as the development comes forward.

Sustainability

- 4.7 Brent Cross Town will address the urgent challenge of the global Climate Crisis, achieving net zero carbon by 2030 at the latest.
- 4.8 The development is addressing this with low-carbon construction, renewable power, circular economy principles, carbon offsetting — and by empowering everyone who lives and works in Brent Cross Town to make low-carbon lifestyle choices of their own.

Corporate Parenting

- 4.9 None in the context of this report.

Risk Management

- 4.10 Risk management has been applied across all levels of the programme. Owners and mitigation plans are identified, and risks are measured against impact and likelihood to give an overall rating. High rating risks are escalated and reported through the defined reporting procedure with top risks reported to the Brent Cross Governance Board. Currently the high-level risks and mitigations are summarised below:
- 4.11 Infrastructure Requirement – Brent Cross North is in a state of deferral. Infrastructure currently required within the planning permission that was the responsibility of the shopping centre owner currently has no programme for delivery. The regen team are working with the shopping centre owner on a strategy to review planning requirements and triggers. Some funds may need to be spent on land to protect scheme delivery in the short term.
- 4.12 Station Delivery Date – there is the risk that the station opening date may be delayed. While the station construction is nearing practical completion, there remains a number of live workstreams to bring the station into use. The project team and Network Rail continue to work closely together with other stakeholders to monitor the programme for station opening with meetings on a weekly basis.
- 4.13 Brent Cross West delivery costs – as with all major programmes there is the risk that costs will increase during programme delivery. As reported to previous Housing & Growth Committees, the Brent Cross West budget is under pressure and this risk is being actively managed with public sector partners and contractors. A funding strategy has been developed and was approved by

Policy & Resources Committee on 29 September 2022. Since then, the project team has been working closely with the station contractor to close out outstanding claims as detailed in this report. There does however remain a risk around a number of claims with Network Rail pertaining to historic programme delays. Following close out of the station contract, focus will move to resolving the NR disputed items.

- 4.14 Brent Cross West Station Operating Costs – As part of the original station business case and grant agreement, it was agreed that the Council would take on the shortfall in operational cost of the station until it became profitable. Income generated from the purchase of the Retail Park has been identified as a source cover shortfall, however until the station opens, and actual revenues are measured the budget position remains at risk. Dialogue remains ongoing with the DfT on the structure of any payments.
- 4.15 Resources - The most important control mechanism for the council is to employ experienced staff who will provide diligent review and challenge contractor costs and reject any costs which are not reasonably and properly incurred. The council's Client and Brent Cross West delivery team comprises professionals used to working on the railway within Network Rail and are experienced in delivering large railway projects. There is a need to ensure resilience within the programme in the event that key persons depart the project as well as to update the succession planning strategy.
- 4.16 Economic Change – The wider economic situation presents a challenge to both delivery and marketability of the development. Brent Cross Town development partners are exploring/reviewing diversification of offer within the Brent Cross development area and the business plan is being reviewed and updated in light of the challenging economic conditions. For the council, increased construction costs for the remaining scope is likely for the Waste Transfer Station expected to be impacted. The programme team continues to assess the changing situation and are taking a pragmatic approach, considering alternative materials where possible if lead times are becoming an issue.
- 4.17 Retail Park Acquisition - The key risk associated with the acquisition of the Retail Park is ensuring that the acquisition has no negative impact on the General Fund. The council has in place the required structures and will update as required to enable it to manage the Retail Park against these short-term variables while also working with Related Argent to ensure the timing of bringing the Retail Park into the development works in the best interest of the council.

Insight

- 4.18 None in the context of this report

Social Value

- 4.19 On Brent Cross Town, Midgard are seeking to recruit a London Region Social Value manager.
- 4.20 Galliford Try have hit the ground running and have moved Barnet residents over to site to help Local Labour stats and have started engaging with the community and planning activity with schools.
- 4.21 Brent Cross Recruit (BXR) – Related Argent are working on cost appraisals for the Plot 13 site. BAM Nuttall are scheduled to start on site in December/January so RA are aiming to recruit the BXR officer/manager for a January start once fundings has agreed.
- 4.22 Skills Centre – RA are awaiting a costed feasibility study to support the setup of the Construction and Green Skills Centre at Edgware and then relocate to Brent Cross in 3 years.

4.23 Performance - Gallidris have been able to retain their local workforce despite scaling down activities, with 20% from Barnet, Brent, and Camden. Galliford Try commenced onsite in May and are reporting 19% of the workforce from Barnet. Whilst Midgard are still in the process of recruiting their Social Value Lead, progress is slower than anticipated, however by end of June, 11% of their workforce were from the three boroughs. Midgard are planning to recruit 6 work experience placements across multiple disciplines. Mulalley have so far been unable to provide stats but are pulling together their first report now, which should include Chase Homes site data.

4.24 Monthly Employment and Skills Sub-Group (ESSG) meetings will become operational developer forums and performance meetings, but with the addition of quarterly strategic meetings with more senior stakeholders present. Various construction trades will need work experience (block or day release) for 16 and 17 year olds from January 2024, with an employer support fund available to pay for equipment and other costs. Galliford Try plan to offer structured placements on Plot 14.

5. Resource Implications (Finance and Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT and Property)

5.1 The council has put in place procedures to ensure the effective monitoring of the financial performance of the Brent Cross Programme. The Brent Cross Governance Board comprising senior officers of the council, including the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance, receives a detailed report each month setting out the financial performance of the Brent Cross Programme. This report includes a breakdown of the performance against the approved budgets and details of the individual Officers responsible for managing the budgets included within the Brent Cross Programme.

Land Acquisitions

5.2 The approved budget is £65.962m. Cumulative spend to date is £61.270m. The current year forecast for 2023/24, inclusive of in-year spend, is £5.338m.

Brent Cross Town Land Acquisitions

5.3 The approved budget is £33.657m. Cumulative spend to date is £17.163m. The current year forecast for 2023/24, inclusive of in-year spend, is £15.238m.

Brent Cross West Station

5.4 The approved budget is £388.945m. Cumulative spend to date is £337.911m. The current year forecast for 2023/24, inclusive of in-year spend, is £29.786m.

Critical Infrastructure

5.5 The approved budget is £55.966m. Cumulative spend to date is £49.369m. The current year forecast for 2023/24, inclusive of in-year spend, is £4.350m.

DLUHC Grant Funding

5.6 The total £416.573m grant has now been received (as of July 2022). The council continue to work with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on closing off the DLUHC funded elements and will be updating further on the repayable element of the grant once income from the Brent Cross Town scheme starts to materialise.

6. Legal Implications and Constitution References

- 6.1 All of the activity and legal transactions contemplated in this report will be carried out pursuant to and in compliance with all relevant statutory and legal requirements, including all procurement activity which will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended) or any replacement public procurement regime that may become law in the UK as applicable.
- 6.2 The terms of reference of Cabinet includes the following responsibilities:
- Development of proposals for the budget (including the capital and revenue budgets, the fixing of the Council Tax Base, and the level of Council Tax) and the financial strategy for the Council.
 - Monitoring the implementation of the budget and financial strategy.
 - Recommending major new policies (and amendments to existing policies) to the Council for approval as part of the Council's Policy Framework and implementing those approved by Council.
 - Approving policies that are not part of the policy framework.
 - Management of the Council's Capital Programme.
- 6.3 Under Part2D of the Council's constitution, Cabinet is responsible for key decisions, namely:
- an executive decision which is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
 - an executive decision which is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area of two or more wards of the Borough.

7. Consultation

Consultation and engagement on the Brent Cross Cricklewood programme is ongoing

- 7.1 We continue to work with our delivery partners to ensure residents living in the development area are kept up to date on the project and are aware of opportunities available to them from employment and skills, funding, and new amenities.
- 7.2 Our print and digital channel strategy aims to ensure residents are informed about the project including any disruptive construction works and can have their say on important parts of the regeneration.
- 7.3 Transformingbx.co.uk (which launched in February 2020) continues to be a well-used resource with over 77K unique users visiting the site to date and our July and August e-newsletters were sent to over 400 people.
- 7.4 The latest three-month [construction update](#) was issued in September 2023 providing an update to residents on Brent Cross West, Plots 53 and 54 (replacement homes for Whitefield Estate residents) and the Experimental Controlled Parking Zones currently in place in the area.
- 7.5 Brent Cross Town also distributed its Summer community newsletter in July covering the latest updates on the development. Their next newsletter will be the October 2023 edition. Updates on Brent Cross Town construction activity will be included in the newsletter.
- 7.6 Both community@brentcrosstown.co.uk and transformingbx@barnet.gov.uk also continue to be channels that residents can contact us with any questions, requests or concerns about the

project. While our monthly drop in sessions, held the third Thursday of the month are also in place for residents to come and speak to the project team.

7.7 Good news stories from across the development are regularly published on the project website and you can read all of these in full at [Transformingbx.co.uk/news](https://transformingbx.co.uk/news)

Press Coverage

7.8 The significant milestone of announcing The 108 indoor baseball centre put the regeneration programme trending online and in print media papers, some include:

- [The Evening Standard](#) and [Yahoo](#)
- [Hampstead and Highgate](#), [Times](#) and [Brent and Kilburn](#)
- [Property Week](#), [BE News](#) and [CoStar](#)

7.9 The [Evening Standard](#) highlighted the Brent Cross Cricklewood regeneration scheme as one to watch out for in the coming years, with new homes and a new station being built.

7.10 Brent Cross West station passing tests was picked up by a few outlets as an exciting step closer to station completion. Outlets included [Rail Business Daily](#), [Rail Advent](#) and [IanVisits](#).

7.11 The approval of Plot 19 plans were also a milestone that hit media coverage, including [Architects Journal](#), [Property Week](#) and [FixRadio](#).

7.12 The announcement of the new retirement homes at Brent Cross Town created a buzz online, with articles from [Laing Buisson News](#); [BE News](#); [Co Star](#); [Professional Pensions](#); [Property EU](#); [Europe Real Estate](#), [Construction Index](#), [Care Talk Business](#), [Institutional Real Estate News](#), [React News](#).

7.13 The topping out of Plot 12 and 202 received trade coverage with articles from [Europe Real Estate](#) and [Bdaily \(UK regional business news\)](#):

7.14 The local Times newspaper series has carried several stories over the past couple of months about the project, alerting readers to events and announcements across the programme.

- [Claremont Park's prestigious award in The Pineapples 2023](#)
- [New bike storage installed at Brent Cross West](#)
- [UK's first indoor baseball centre](#)
- [New footpath opening from Brent Terrace](#)
- [Brent Cross West passes tests](#)
- [Sustainable Office given the green light](#)
- [Drone footage of Brent Cross West](#)
- [Summer Fun at Brent Cross Town](#)
- [Provider to develop retirement village](#)

8. Equalities and Diversity

8.1 Decision makers should have due regard to the public sector equality duty in making their decisions. The equalities duties are continuing duties they are not duties to secure a particular outcome. The equalities impact will be revisited on each of the proposals as they are developed. Consideration of the duties should precede the decision. It is important that Cabinet has regard to the statutory grounds in the light of all available material such as consultation responses. The

statutory grounds of the public sector equality duty are found at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and are as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the 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.

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, the need to:

- a) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- b) 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.
- c) 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.

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.

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:

- a) Tackle prejudice, and
- b) Promote understanding.

Compliance with the duties in section 149 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 the Act. The relevant protected characteristics are:

- a) Age
- b) Disability
- c) Gender reassignment
- d) Pregnancy and maternity
- e) Race
- f) Religion or belief
- g) Sex
- h) Sexual orientation
- i) Marriage and civil partnership

9. Background Papers

9.1 Report to the LBB Cabinet 18th July 2023

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s79063/PUBLIC%20-%20Brent%20Cross%20Cabinet%20Report%20-%20July%202023.pdf>

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

AGENDA ITEM 18

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