

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 1 February 2017 at 6.00 p.m., Room C1, 1st Floor, Town Hall,
Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London, E14 2BG

This meeting is open to the public to attend.

Members:

Chair: Councillor John Pierce

Vice Chair: Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE

Scrutiny Lead for Resources

Councillor Amina Ali

Scrutiny Lead for Development and Renewal

Councillor Abdul Asad

Councillor Julia Dockerill

Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services

Councillor Clare Harrison

Scrutiny Lead for Adult Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim

Councillor Oliur Rahman

Councillor Helal Uddin

Co-opted Members:

Dr Phillip Rice

(Church of England Representative)

Asad M Jaman

Muslim Faith Community

Fatiha Kassouri

Parent Governors

Christine Trumper

Parent Governors

Shabbir Chowdhury

Parent Governors

Deputies:

Councillor Danny Hassell, Councillor Dave Chesterton, Councillor Ohid Ahmed, Councillor Gulam Kibria Choudhury, Councillor Peter Golds, Councillor Denise Jones, Councillor Md. Maium Miah and Councillor Andrew Wood

[The quorum for this body is 3 voting Members]

Contact for further enquiries:

David Knight, Democratic Services

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Web: <http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/committee>

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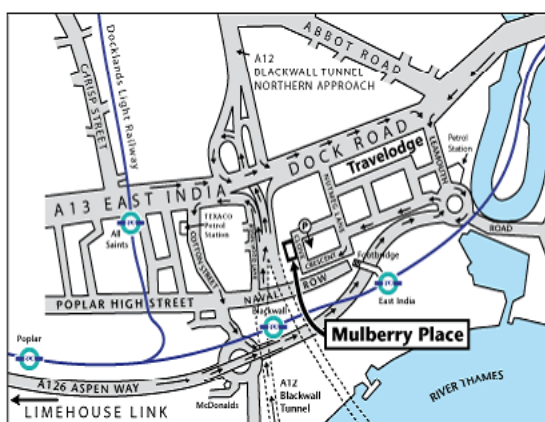
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| SECTION ONE | WARD | PAGE NUMBER(S) |
|--|------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE | | |
| To receive any apologies for absence. | | |
| 2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST | | 1 - 4 |
| To note any declarations of interest made by Members, including those restricting Members from voting on the questions detailed in Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992. See attached note from the Interim Monitoring Officer. | | |
| 3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES | All Wards | 5 - 12 |
| To confirm as a correct record of the proceedings the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 rd January, 2017 | | |
| 4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS | All Wards | |
| To receive any petitions (to be notified at the meeting). | | |
| 5. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN' | | |
| No decisions of the Mayor in Cabinet on 10 th January, 2017 in respect of unrestricted reports on the agenda were 'called in'. | | |
| 6. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE QUERY AND ACTION LOG 2016/17 | All Wards | 13 - 14 |
| The Committee is asked to receive and note an update on the outstanding actions. | | |
| 7. FORTHCOMING DECISIONS | All Wards | 15 - 16 |
| The Committee is asked to receive and note those forthcoming decisions | | |

8. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

8.1 Outcomes for Children in Care **All Wards** **17 - 54**

The Committee will receive a report on the outcomes for Children in Care.

8.2 Update on Tower Hamlets Education Partnership **All Wards**

The Committee will receive a verbal update on the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership

8.3 Post 16 Education **All Wards**

The Committee will receive a verbal update in regards to Post 16 Education.

9. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION **All Wards**

Nil items

10. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF UNRESTRICTED CABINET PAPERS **All Wards**

To consider and agree pre-decision scrutiny questions/comments to be presented to Cabinet.

(Time allocated – 30 minutes).

11. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT **All Wards**

To consider any other unrestricted business that the Chair considers to be urgent.

12. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

In view of the contents of the remaining items on the agenda the Committee is recommended to adopt the following motion:

“That, under the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting for the consideration of the Section Two business on the

grounds that it contains information defined as Exempt in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972.”

EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL SECTION (Pink Papers)

The exempt committee papers in the agenda will contain information, which is commercially, legally or personally sensitive and should not be divulged to third parties. If you do not wish to retain these papers after the meeting, please hand them to the Committee Officer present.

SECTION TWO

13. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Nil items

14. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

No decisions of the Mayor in Cabinet 10th January, 2017 in respect of exempt/ confidential reports on the agenda were 'called in'.

15. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL) CABINET PAPERS

To consider and agree pre-decision scrutiny questions/comments to be presented to Cabinet.

(Time allocated 15 minutes).

16. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

To consider any other exempt/ confidential business that the Chair considers to be urgent.

Next Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 13 February 2017 at 6.00 p.m. to be held in Room C1, 1st Floor, Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London, E14 2BG

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Agenda Item 2

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS - NOTE FROM THE INTERIM MONITORING OFFICER

This note is for guidance only. For further details please consult the Members' Code of Conduct at Part 5.1 of the Council's Constitution.

Please note that the question of whether a Member has an interest in any matter, and whether or not that interest is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, is for that Member to decide. Advice is available from officers as listed below but they cannot make the decision for the Member. If in doubt as to the nature of an interest it is advisable to seek advice **prior** to attending a meeting.

Interests and Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs)

You have an interest in any business of the authority where that business relates to or is likely to affect any of the persons, bodies or matters listed in section 4.1 (a) of the Code of Conduct; and might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial position of yourself, a member of your family or a person with whom you have a close association, to a greater extent than the majority of other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward affected.

You must notify the Interim Monitoring Officer in writing of any such interest, for inclusion in the Register of Members' Interests which is available for public inspection and on the Council's Website.

Once you have recorded an interest in the Register, you are not then required to declare that interest at each meeting where the business is discussed, unless the interest is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI).

A DPI is defined in Regulations as a pecuniary interest of any of the descriptions listed at **Appendix A** overleaf. Please note that a Member's DPIs include his/her own relevant interests and also those of his/her spouse or civil partner; or a person with whom the Member is living as husband and wife; or a person with whom the Member is living as if they were civil partners; if the Member is aware that that other person has the interest.

Effect of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest on participation at meetings

Where you have a DPI in any business of the Council you must, unless you have obtained a dispensation from the authority's Interim Monitoring Officer following consideration by the Dispositions Sub-Committee of the Standards Advisory Committee:-

- not seek to improperly influence a decision about that business; and
- not exercise executive functions in relation to that business.

If you are present at a meeting where that business is discussed, you must:-

- Disclose to the meeting the existence and nature of the interest at the start of the meeting or when the interest becomes apparent, if later; and
- Leave the room (including any public viewing area) for the duration of consideration and decision on the item and not seek to influence the debate or decision

When declaring a DPI, Members should specify the nature of the interest and the agenda item to which the interest relates. This procedure is designed to assist the public's understanding of the meeting and to enable a full record to be made in the minutes of the meeting.

Where you have a DPI in any business of the authority which is not included in the Member's register of interests and you attend a meeting of the authority at which the business is considered, in addition to disclosing the interest to that meeting, you must also within 28 days notify the Interim Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the Register.

Further advice

For further advice please contact: - Graham White

Acting Corporate Director, Governance and Interim Monitoring Officer, 0207 364 4801

APPENDIX A: Definition of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

(Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012, Reg 2 and Schedule)

| Subject | Prescribed description |
|---|---|
| Employment, office, trade, profession or vacation | Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain. |
| Sponsorship | <p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by the Member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of the Member.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p> |
| Contracts | <p>Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority—</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p> |
| Land | Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority. |
| Licences | Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer. |
| Corporate tenancies | <p>Any tenancy where (to the Member's knowledge)—</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.</p> |
| Securities | <p>Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where—</p> <p>(a) that body (to the Member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) either—</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p> |

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LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.00 P.M. ON MONDAY, 23 JANUARY 2017

**ROOM C1, 1ST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE
CRESCENT, LONDON, E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Councillor John Pierce (Chair)

Councillor Amina Ali

– Scrutiny Lead for Development and
Renewal

Councillor Julia Dockerill

– Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services

Councillor Clare Harrisson

– Scrutiny Lead for Adult Health and
Wellbeing

Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim

Councillor Helal Uddin

Councillor Abdul Asad

Councillor Denise Jones

Councillor Md. Maium Miah

Co-opted Members Present:

Victoria Ekubia

– (Roman Catholic Church
Representative)

Dr Phillip Rice

– (Church of England Representative)

Shabbir Chowdhury

– (Parent Governors)

Christine Trumper

– (Parent Governors)

Fatiha Kassouri

– (Parent Governors)

Asad M Jaman

– (Muslim Faith Community)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor David Edgar

Mayor John Biggs

Councillor Rachael Saunders

Apologies:

Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE

– Scrutiny Lead for Resources

Councillor Oliur Rahman

Officers Present:

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Zena Cooke | – (Corporate Director, Resources) |
| Janet Fasan | – (Interim Divisional Director, Legal) |
| Sharon Godman | – (Divisional Director Strategy Policy and Equality) |
| Christine McInnes | – (Divisional Director, Education and Partnership, Children's) |
| Neville Murton | – (Divisional Director, Finance, Procurement & Audit) |
| Peter Quirk | – Senior Strategy, Policy & Performance Officer |
| David Knight | – (Senior Democratic Services Officer) |

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor

2. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were received

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

The Chair **Moved** and it was:-

RESOLVED

That the unrestricted minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4th January, 2017 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

4. REQUESTS TO SUBMIT PETITIONS

Nil items

5. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items

6. SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT

7. BUDGET 2017/18

The Chair summarised for the Committee on Budget Scrutiny journey for 2017/2018 which is set out as follows:

The Committee noted that:

- The initial consideration of Budget approach had been undertaken from September until December;
- On the 4th January the Committee had considered the Strategic Overview of the Budget and identified the focus for in depth review of the key drivers - scale of funding and service changes. Together with the introduction of the Outcome Based Budgeting approach;
- The 4th January, meeting had taken a strategic approach looking at the overall budget package, key drivers for change and the proposed approach to transformation included review and consideration of the Mayors strategic approach and the links between the proposed budget, Medium Term Financial Plan, Treasury Management approach and the refreshed strategic plan, financial resources funding the budget including council tax and business rates, reserves policy, schools funding, Capital and HRA budgets and the robustness of the approach to risk;
- There had been a review of the range of budget pressures and the proposed growth allocations along with an overview of the extensive range of savings proposals;
- The criteria for the selection of specific business cases for more in depth scrutiny had been based on the following key drivers: Prioritising Business Cases with early implementation in the 17/18 budget year; Focusing on larger budget areas and significant elements of change to the existing budget base;
- Business cases which are likely to impact on the wider Tower Hamlets community; the risk to the achievement of the proposal and wider impact on delivering overall budget savings; and those proposals that are likely to have a significant impact on specific sections of our communities and the protected characteristics;
- Tonight's meeting would undertake a further scrutiny of the budget and development of recommendations for initial consideration by Cabinet on 7th February, 2017 and finally to Council on 22nd February, 2017.

The Committee then considered the [Budget Pack](#) and the questions and comments on this pack may be summarised as follows:

- Regarding the widening participation in Early Years what will happen to those employees affected?
- With the changes in the way the services are provided how will this impact upon the user's experience?
- What is in place to ensure that there is a smooth transition to another provider **e.g.** that there will be no gaps in provision?
- With regards to addressing poverty and the hard to reach communities we need to be sure that the resources will be there to address people's needs?
- Is not profitability the main driver for these changes in provision?
- What will be the impact of the reduction in management posts in the Educational Psychology Service?
- The proposed Band D Council Tax is £966.80 for 2017/18?
- What is the funding for addressing drug related crime?

- What will be the impact of the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union?
- What provision has been made to address the recommendations of the Somali Task Force?
- How firm is the assumption of pupil projections?
- What is the rationale for using agency staff in LBTH?
- What was the cost of the consultations on the budget?
- Returning to the widening participation in Early Years it would be of considerable interest if the Committee could have the details that illustrate how Third Sector or Parental Co-operatives will allow access to resources not available to LBTH. This would enable there to be a detailed scrutiny of the options considered and to be developed?
- Will it be possible to have a map detailing the location of the nursery's concerned and consideration needs to be given to the sequencing of the report before Cabinet considers it;
- Regarding outcome based budgeting it would be good to have an indication of the impact the development of services e.g. for the over 50's?
- What is being done to address the impact on the changes on the benefits system?
- Many in our community do not fully understand the benefits process e.g. how overpayments are addressed?
- We would wish to see the Tackling of Poverty in LBTH include in our Work Plan?

The responses to these questions may be summarised as follows:

- ❖ Under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations the employees' rights would be protected when the Nursery they work for transfers to a new employer;
- ❖ The primary means of intervention will be via the Children's Centre and after these proposals have been introduced LBTH will still have one of the best funded services in London;
- ❖ There will be no substantial changes in the services following the introduction of these proposals;
- ❖ The widening of participation in Early Years through provision via the Third Sector or Parental Co-operatives will allow access to resources not available to LBTH;
- ❖ With regards to the commissioning process it will be a key element to ensure that any new provider will be empathic to the needs of the children and their families. The new providers will need to work with the community that they are to serve so as to ensure a positive transition and continuity of provision. Also as this is a 3 year proposal there will be time to develop these proposals in the most appropriate way. In addition, we would be happy to provide details of the ethnic breakdown of staff in the nurseries;
- ❖ The main driver for these changes in provision is to ensure the service meets the needs of the community;

- ❖ The Educational Psychology Service is a present a viable traded service although this may change if fewer schools were to buy into the service;
- ❖ The proposed Band D Council Tax at £966.80 for 2017/18 in regards to LBTH and it will be referred to Full Council for consideration;
- ❖ LBTH spend is comparable to other Boroughs for addressing drug related crimes;
- ❖ Whilst the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union is an unknown LBTH maintain reserves for such eventualities;
- ❖ There have been a number of growth bids which are intended to address the recommendations of the Somali Task Force;
- ❖ There is an increase in the population in the Eastern half of LBTH whilst there is a decline in the Western half;
- ❖ The appropriate use of agency staff means that during restructuring such staff are used to fill vacancies until the structure has been formalised;
- ❖ The costs of the budget consultation were primarily focused on the phone surveys;
- ❖ On the widening participation in Early Years the proposals are about making the Service viable by increasing the number of places available. These developments have been based upon best practice from other areas and they will be subject to further scrutiny prior to more detailed consideration by the Executive; and
- ❖ We are increasing the Tackling Poverty Fund to allow us to have a flexible approach to helping those in need.

Recommendations

Summary Recommendations

General/Strategic approach

- 1) That the Committee supports the application of the Outcome Based Budgeting (OBB) methodology and three year budget planning process allied to the Medium Term Financial Plan. The Committee believes that this approach will enable the Council to deliver more efficient and effective services to the local community.
- 2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are provided with detailed information on scheduling and indicative timetabling for the development of implementation options for all of the Growth and Savings Proposals in the Budget Proposal by 31 March 2017. This will enable the Committee to have early input and scrutiny of the development of business cases and options by effective sequencing of these business case proposals into its annual work programme.
- 3) That prior to implementing changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme that the Council carries out a full risk assessment with a particular focus on the development of mitigation measures and approaches including outreach work to support those affected by the

changes. That the Committee is provided with a copy of this assessment to review and scrutinise.

- 4) That there are no additional changes to Adult Education fees and charges other than inflationary increases.
- 5) That the Council considers the development of options to cross subsidise the Dedicated Schools Budget for school nursery places or examine further investment opportunities to minimise the impact of changes and reductions to this budget. That the Committee are provided with the opportunity to review and scrutinise these options.
- 6) That specific engagement is undertaken with people impacted by savings proposals using a range of channels and approaches to ensure that all sections of the community are able to participate and be represented.
- 7) That in the development of the growth proposals local people are engaged and involved in the co-design and delivery of the options and plans.
- 8) That the Committee is provided with the overall engagement and consultation approach and programme for further review and scrutiny.

Savings proposals

- 9) That any changes to “Helping People with a Learning Disability to live independently” provision reflect the wishes of those in receipt of care and their families and carers, through an effective engagement and consultation programme. A commitment from the Council that no person who is placed outside of the borough and is settled in that community is forced to move back to Tower Hamlets as a result of this proposal.
- 10) That the new service model for Youth Service’s aims to provide greater access for diverse range of young people in particular improving the number of young girls accessing the service.
- 11) That outcome based performance indicators be developed to measure and monitor the impact of the Youth Service on the aspirations, health and wellbeing of young people in the borough.
- 12) That the views of local Ward Councillors are used to inform the development of the options and proposals for the redesign of the Safer Communities function. With particular focus on the role of the Rapid Response team.
- 13) That the needs of children and parents are at the core of the revised Early Years offer, and that effective planning and risk assessment is

carried out in planning the impact of the transition of services for current service users.

- 14) That the development of Early Years delivery models maximises the opportunities for additional external funding.
- 15) That there is a commitment that the future makeup of workforce for the Early Years' Service is representative of local community.
- 16) That the Committee will review the development of Early Years options and proposals at its meeting in July 2017.

8. UNRESTRICTED REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Nil items

9. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

Nil items

10. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The agenda circulated contained no exempt/ confidential business and there was therefore no requirement to exclude the press and public to allow for its consideration.

11. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Nil items

12. EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS 'CALLED IN'

Nil items

13. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL) CABINET PAPERS

Nil items

14. ANY OTHER EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

Nil items

The meeting ended at 8.50 p.m.

Chair, Councillor John Pierce

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE QUERY AND ACTION LOG 2016/17

1 February 2017

| Meeting and agenda item | Question or request for action | Response or current status |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| 8 December -Welfare Reform Spotlight | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we provide clear pathways to advise people especially those in the poverty trap that is preventing them from climbing out of welfare dependency? • How do we work with our partner agencies? • What practical support do we actually offer families regarding Universal Credit? • How can the Council and its partners identify any issues those in receipt of benefits will have with the introduction of direct payments? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fact sheet is being prepared for Councillors to enable them to advise their constituents and their dependents; • There is a Welfare Reform Task Group that is made up of key agencies specifically looking at the impact of welfare reform and the actions that will help to mitigate the impact. It has developed a robust Action Plan to provide information and advice in preparation for the introduction of Universal Credit. Practical Advice is also available from the local Food Banks and other VCS organisations and the Council will be looking to provide personal budgeting and digital inclusion support. • The Council and its partners identify any issues that arise through the joint working between the Council's benefits service and Job Centre Plus. This is being enhanced in preparation for Universal Credit; and • The Council along with other councils, via the LGA is highlighting concerns directly with the Department for Work and Pensions to address the implications of direct payments. |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>4 January 2017 –Budget Scrutiny</p> | <p>Provide information on recent population growth and job creation in the Borough</p> | <p>Information provided for the Committee as part of the additional budget information data set.</p> |
| <p>16 January 2017 –Budget Scrutiny workshop</p> | <p>Additional information requests in relation to specific savings proposals and general benchmarking and comparative cost information</p> | <p>Information provided for the Committee as part of the additional budget information data set.</p> |




TOWER HAMLETS

FORWARD PLAN 2016/17

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Contact Officer: | David Knight Democratic Services |
| Email: | David.knight@towerhamlets.gov.uk |
| Telephone: | 020 7364 4878 |
| Website: | www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/committee |

FORWARD PLAN 2016 - 2017

| REPORT TITLE | BRIEF SUMMARY | LEAD OFFICER | EXECUTIVE LEAD MEMBER | SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBER | CAB |
|--|---|--------------------------|--|---|-----------------|
| Consultation on Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2020 -summary of findings and implications | To consider the recommendations as detailed in the report. | Dr Somen Banerjee | Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services | Scrutiny Lead for Adult Health and Wellbeing | 7 Mar 17 |
| Academy Conversion - Bygrove and Stebon Primary Schools | To approve putting into effect the documentation required to achieve these conversions, including leases and Commercial Transfer Agreements. | Layla Richards | Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services | Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services | 7 Mar 17 |
| Open Space Strategy | Review and comment on the draft Open Space Strategy following consultation and prior to consideration of adoption. | Shazia Hussain | Cabinet Member for Culture | Scrutiny Lead for Development and Renewal | 7 Mar 17 |
| Draped Seated Woman - selection of local hosting partner | The Mayor has committed to bring the Henry Moore sculpture "Draped Seated Woman" (locally known as "Old Flo") back to Tower Hamlets. | Shazia Hussain | Cabinet Member for Culture | Scrutiny Lead for Development and Renewal | 7 Mar 17 |
| Business Friendly Tower Hamlets | This report proposes developing a Business Friendly Tower Hamlets project that will review and refocus business engagement service delivery in line with the Smarter Together transformation programme. | Andy Scott | Cabinet Member for Work and Economic Growth | Scrutiny Lead for Development and Renewal | 7 Mar 17 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Non-Executive Report of the: Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 st February 2016 |  |
| Report of: Debbie Jones, Corporate Director, Children's Services | Classification: Unrestricted |
| Outcomes for children in care scrutiny review | |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Originating Officer(s) | Nasima Patel, Service Head, Children's Social Care |
| Wards affected | All wards |

REASONS FOR URGENCY

The report was not published five clear days in advance of the meeting. The delay was due to report not being in the correct O&S template from the outset. The focus for Overview and Scrutiny for this meeting is Children's Services and therefore it is felt that it would be appropriate and timely to review this report and not delay any further in receiving this review of outcomes for children in care.

Summary

Children and young people looked after are not a homogenous group and come with different experiences and needs. They may be looked after for a few days or for many years. Regardless of these different circumstances we have the same aspirations for the children we are responsible for as any parent would. We want children and young people to develop into resilient, successful individuals, able to form healthy relationships and take advantage of every positive opportunity presented.

Children and young people who are in the care of the local authority are among the most vulnerable in our community. They are entitled to the best services that can be provided and achieving this for them requires understanding, commitment and passion from all agencies and individuals who hold a responsibility to provide services for them.

In Tower Hamlets like in other authorities we are working to the principles of timeliness for children and risk reduction for children, rather than risk management as a result of learning from national and local reviews, understanding new risk such as gangs, family violence. In order to deliver to these principles we have agreed as a Children's Services Directorate Team to make early help more targeted, our thresholds adapt to new risks, work better in partnership with families and our decision-making more robust earlier in the child's journey with us.

Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the contents of the following report and attached appendices and offer comments for input into continuing to improve outcomes for Looked after Children.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

1.1 This is a noting paper as requested by scrutiny members.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

2.1 N/A

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

Children Looked After Strategy 2015/18

Tower Hamlets Children Looked After Strategy describes our responsibilities, lines of accountability, priorities and objectives for the next 3 years and how we plan to achieve them. The Children Looked After Strategy should be considered in conjunction with our Children and Families Plan and our Sufficiency Strategy.

The key principles supporting the strategy are;

- Good parenting is demonstrated through: being loved, listened to, supported, respected and kept safe.
- Every child and young person is inherently a rights holder and should enjoy their universal rights. The local authority will act as the principal duty bearer and take all necessary procedures to guarantee their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Children and young people are usually best cared for within their own families, utilising the universal and where appropriate specialist forms of support that are available.
- Children should only be looked after when this is genuinely the best or only option to safeguard and promote their welfare.
- Care should provide a safe and positive experience for all children and one that preserves and promotes their identity, culture and religion.
- Children should only be kept within the looked after system for the minimum amount of time that is required to make permanent and sustainable plans for them.
- The council should fully exercise our Corporate Parenting responsibilities towards all children in our care and this is most significant for those children who are to remain in our care long term.
- Permanency planning starts from the decision that a child needs to come into care and continues until the child's future is secured.
- The best care experience will be provided when services have been informed and shaped by the views and experiences of children and young people who have experienced those services.
- Children and their families deserve to be treated with dignity, care and respect at all times, regardless of the difficulties they face and the challenges they may present.

In order to deliver our priorities for Children Looked After and our commitment to child rights, an action plan was developed alongside the strategy.

<http://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=86165>

Corporate Parenting

The Council has a duty, embedded within our policies and procedures, to support families to care for their own children, using all universal and targeted support available. However, when children cannot live safely within their own extended families the council acquires a corporate parenting duty towards those children.

Corporate parenting is the term used to describe the role that local authorities and their partners play in relation to children and young people in and leaving care. The concept was first introduced by Frank Dobson MP in 1998 and has since been enshrined in legislation and statutory guidance, most recently in the Children and Young People's Act 2008.

The Lead Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Director for Children's Services hold the overall strategic responsibility. The overall operational responsibility is held by Children's Social Care, with social workers and carers directly delivering corporate parenting on a day to day basis. Other professionals with responsibilities for delivering services to children and young people also hold a responsibility for both safeguarding and improving outcomes for children and young people looked after. All these people need to understand and demonstrate their respective roles and responsibilities in relation to corporate parenting.

All elected members of the council have a role as corporate parents towards children in care which encompasses the following responsibilities:

- To ensure that the council is meeting government objectives and abiding by statutory guidance in relation to looked after children and care leavers
- To ensure that the council is meeting the targets it has set itself in relation to children looked after and care leavers
- To have an overview of operational work plans related to children looked after and care leavers
- To contribute to and facilitate scrutiny of target areas in relation to children looked after and care leavers
- Ensure that the CiCC views are taken into account
- To ensure the members are well equipped to champion the needs of Looked After Children within other forums

Following the development of the Children Looked After Strategy, the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) reorganised itself to put the strategy and child rights at the core of its business. Board meetings follow a thematic agenda based on need, established through the strategy. In 2016/17, the CPB has conducted (will conduct) a spotlight session on;

- Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Positive Activities
- Housing and Supported Accommodation
- Empowering Child Rights




- Employment (jobs and money)
- Education and attainment

The CPB believes that children should be informed and have influence over decisions that affect them and the Board has been more closely aligned to the Children in Care Council (CiCC). Thematic agendas are reflected in the CiCC and insight reports are presented at the beginning of each meeting. These reports provide valuable insight on the views and opinions of young people in (leaving) care. Each report includes a series of recommendations which are discussed at each meeting. Going forward, the Corporate Parenting Board would like to develop its feedback mechanisms, so that young people are more informed about the decisions made at the CPB and information flows between the CPB and CiCC.

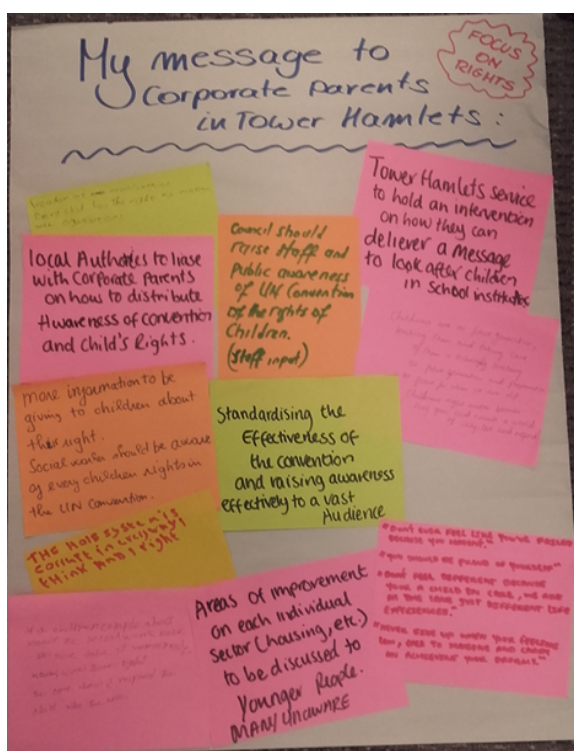
Views and opinions of Looked After Children and young people leaving care

In December 2016, UNICEF UK conducted a number of sessions with the Children in Care Council on behalf of the Corporate Parenting Board. The sessions focused on the children and young people's knowledge and understanding of rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The report additionally shared some insights into children and young people's views and experiences of local services.

Young people were asked to complete a short, anonymous questionnaire to gauge their views and experiences in relation to their enjoyment of sights such as participation, access to information and knowledge of rights;

| |  AGREE / YES |  NOT SURE / SO-SO |  DISA GREE / NO |
|---|--|---|---|
| I feel my social worker listens to me & considers my feelings and wishes | 4 | 3 | |
| I feel my reviewing officer listens to me & considers my feelings and wishes | 5 | 2 | |
| I feel respected and treated with dignity by staff at all times | 4 | 3 | |
| I understand and I am able to explain who my Corporate Parents are in Tower Hamlets | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| I can influence key decisions about me and my life, for instance about health, education, housing, relationships | 5 | 2 | |
| I can influence local policies relating to children and young people, for instance about services for young people | 4 | 3 | |
| I think local decision makers understand the concerns and issues affecting children and young people in Tower Hamlets | 2 | 5 | |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| I know where to access information about my rights * | 7 | | |
| I know how and where to complain if I feel my rights are being breached or disrespected by a member of staff ** | 7 | | |
| I think there is enough information out there for children and young people in Tower Hamlets to learn about their rights | 3 | 3 | 1 |



Key messages for the Corporate Parenting Board included;

“More information to be given to children about their rights. Social workers should be aware of every children’s right in the UN convention.”

“Freedom of association – every child has the right to meet with organisations.”

“Children are our future generation, teaching them and taking care of them is technically teaching our future generation and preparation for our future for when we are old. Children’s rights matter because they grow and create a world of unity, love and respect.”

“Areas of improvement on each individual sector (housing, etc.) to be discussed to younger people... Many unaware.”

“Standardising the effectiveness of the convention and raising awareness

effectively to a vast audience.”

“Council should raise staff and public awareness of UN convention of the rights of children.”

“If children complain about something the social worker [should] make sure [to] take it seriously - know their rights. The carer should respect the child.”

“The whole system is corrupt in every way, I think, and I (am) right.”

“Tower Hamlets service to hold an intervention on how they can deliver a message to looked after children in school institutions.”

“Local Authorities to liaise with corporate parents on how to distribute awareness of convention and child’s rights.”

What do you think questionnaire

The 'What do you think' questionnaires have been designed to engage and gather feedback from children, young people and families in children's social care. The questionnaires allow for children and families to engage with services and provide feedback about the service, it also gives an overview on how we are doing.

The feedback from children and young people shows that young people feel mostly positive about the service they are receiving from their Personal Advisors and Social Workers. When young people were asked whether their Social Worker explained things clearly in a way they could understand, 88 per cent of children and young people said 'Always' and 11 per cent of children and young people said 'Sometimes'. The questionnaire asked children and young people whether they felt that their Social Worker or Personal Advisor listened to them. The results show that 88 per cent of children and young people are more likely to say that their Social Worker or Personal Advisor always listened to them and 11 per cent of children and young people are more likely to say that their Social Worker or Personal Advisor sometimes listened to them.

Young people in the Leaving Care Service were asked whether they felt that their Personal Advisor treated them with respect. 100 per cent of young people responded that their Personal Advisor treated them with respect. 79 per cent of young people said they felt their Personal Advisor 'always' included them when making decisions and 14 per cent of young people said they felt that their Personal Advisor included them 'sometimes' and 7 per cent of young people said they did not know.

When asked whether young people in the leaving care service knew why their personal advisor worked with them, 71 per cent of young people are more likely to say they 'always' knew why their Social Worker worked with them and 14 per cent of young people are more likely to say they 'sometimes' knew why their Personal Advisor worked with them. Young people in the Leaving Care Service were asked whether it was easy to contact their social worker when they needed to, 64 per cent said it was always easy to contact their personal advisor and 36 per cent of young people said it was sometimes easy to contact their personal advisors.

Young people were asked if their Social Worker/Personal Advisors were on time when they met with them. 93 Per cent of young people said 'yes' and 7 per cent of young people said 'not always, but they let me know'. When asked if their Social Worker/Personal Advisor made a difference in their life, 79 per cent of young people said 'yes' their Social Worker/Personal Advisor made a difference in their lives and 21 per cent said 'sometimes' their Social Worker/Personal Advisor made a difference in their lives.

Some of the comments from young people highlight some of the positive aspects of having a Personal Advisor. Some young people commented that they received a lot of good advice, support and respect from their Personal Advisors which made a difference in their lives.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 This is a noting report to inform the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Council's approach towards improving outcomes for Looked After Children. If the Committee decides that changes are required to this approach, then an assessment will need to be carried out on the financial impact of the changes.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Council has a primary duty set out in section 22(3) of the 1989 Act to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children and to act as good corporate parents to enable each looked after child to achieve his/her full potential in life.
- 5.2 There are three routes for children to become looked after by the Council. Section 20 of the children Act 1989 sets out the Council's duties and powers to accommodate children with the consent of their parents, with the agreement of 16-17 year olds (who are able to consent to being accommodated themselves) or where children have no one with parental responsibility in the UK or are lost or abandoned. Sections 31, 38 and 44 of the 1989 Act enable the Council to accommodate children by order of the court, either temporarily or permanently. Finally, children can be remanded to local authority care by the Youth Courts under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012.
- 5.3 Recent developments in case law have required local authorities to reduce reliance on section 20 as a means of accommodating children, both in ensuring that parents have capacity to consent to accommodation and that this is freely given. The courts are also concerned in respect of children remaining in section 20 for lengthy periods, where it is clear that rehabilitation to the parents' care is unlikely and clear plans should be made for their permanent care.
- 5.4 The Council's duties towards children who are looked after are set out in sections 22-23ZB of the 1989 Act, the Care Planning, Placement and Care Review (England) Regulations 2010 and Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 2, updated in June 2015. The guidance is issued under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 so must be complied with by local authorities, unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons that justify a variation. It describes how local authorities should carry out their responsibilities in relation to looked after children, to support the local authority in its duty to act as good corporate parents.
- 5.5 In the exercise of its functions, the Council must with the public sector equality duty to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to have regards to equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic, including ethnicity, and those who do not.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 Children and young people who are in the care of the local authority are amongst the most vulnerable in our community. This paper alongside the LAC strategy seeks to outline our responsibilities to promote positive outcomes for this group and ensure that we meet both our obligations towards them.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 As this is a noting report, there are no best value implications

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 There are no direct implications around environment issues arising from this report.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 As this is a noting report, there are no risk management implications

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct implications around crime and disorder arising from this report.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Corporate Parenting Steering Group LAC Profile Report
- Appendix 2 – Knowledge and awareness of Children’s Rights: The views of Looked after Children and Care Experienced Young People.

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

- N/A

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LAC Scrutiny Data

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report contains information on the number and demographics of looked after children in Tower Hamlets, as well as key performance measures drawn from annual SSDA903 returns and local performance reporting (as of 31st August 2016), broken down by the following categories:
 - LAC Stability
 - LAC Health
 - LAC Education
 - LAC Permanency
 - LAC Care Leavers
- 1.2. The latest 2015/16 comparator data is not yet published for all measures – the outstanding information will not be available until March 2017. Some measures are new or have changed, and therefore tables are sometimes incomplete where data is not available. Some data is not or cannot be calculated locally on regular basis.

2. Executive summary

- 2.1. LAC numbers are increasing over last year, 288 in January to 321 in December, however the general trend over last 10 years is a steep reduction in rate of looked after children in Tower Hamlets, from 79 per 10,000 children in 2005 to current position of 49 per 10,000. This reduction is in line with Inner London, and to a lesser extent the whole of London. The national rate has increased slightly over the same period.
- 2.2. Our age profile has maintained a similar position to London's overall, with an increasing number of 16 and 17 year olds in care – up from 24% in 2011 to 33% in 2016. Currently 170 LAC are male (53%), and 150 female (47%) – this is a more balanced position than nationally or across London. The ethnicity of looked after children broadly reflects the wider TH population, with the two largest groups being Bangladeshi and White British by ethnic origin, in that order.

LAC Stability

- 2.3. Placement stability has been as good as, or better than, the national and London average for the last 5 years. Long term stability has been well above the national and London averages in recent years. The percentage of children placed more than 20 miles from their homes has been in line with or better than performance in London over the last 4 years, though it has been increasing in the last two years. Continued strong performance in review timeliness and participation is evident from the annual performance figures.
- 2.4. The first published performance for new LAC “missing” measure (2014/15) showed Tower Hamlets as having a slightly lower incidence of missing LAC than London and nationally. However, in the last 18 months, there has been a huge increase in focus on children missing from care, home and education. This has led to an increase in awareness amongst professionals

about what constitutes missing or absence from a placement, which is believed to be driving the increase in “missing” episodes recorded for LAC. Nationally and regionally there has also been a slight increase, and data for other London boroughs indicates trend seen in TH is being repeated elsewhere.

- 2.5. LAC offending in 2015/16 remained better than London average (5% compared to 6%) and in line with national position. It is half what was recorded for 2010/11 period.

LAC Health

- 2.6. Annually reported performance for completion of annual health and dental checks has remained in line with England and statistical neighbours over the last few years, though performance for both health and dental checks in 2015/16 has deteriorated. Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire coverage was high in 2016 and average difficulty score remains below the level of concern. Levels of substance misuse amongst LAC have increased in the last two years and are higher than the last published averages for London and nationally.

LAC Education

- 2.7. Historic performance data shows that whilst LAC lag behind other children in terms of educational attainment, Tower Hamlets LAC in general do better than the average for their LAC peers in England and London. In 2016, there was very good performance at KS2 (although with a small cohort of children) and improvement at KS4. Persistent absence rates improved notably, and absence levels remained in keeping with previous years.

LAC Permanency

- 2.8. The percentage of children returning home to parents/family has been increasing in the last couple of years and has generally been higher than London or national averages. Adoption and SGO outcomes for children leaving care in 2016 dropped significantly compared to previous years, but already show signs of improving in April-August data.
- 2.9. Achieving desired timescales for all adoptions has been challenging due a range of factors, particularly a handful of children with special circumstances which have drawn out the process across multiple years. As a result, average timescales have increase in the last couple of years, but in the majority of cases reasonable timescales are being achieved for children and their adoptive parents.

Leaving Care

- 2.10. Children leaving care continue to achieve good outcomes in relation to suitable accommodation and being in employment, education or training. However, due to a drop in performance in 2015/16 for percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation, it is not clear whether we will retain position above London and national average.

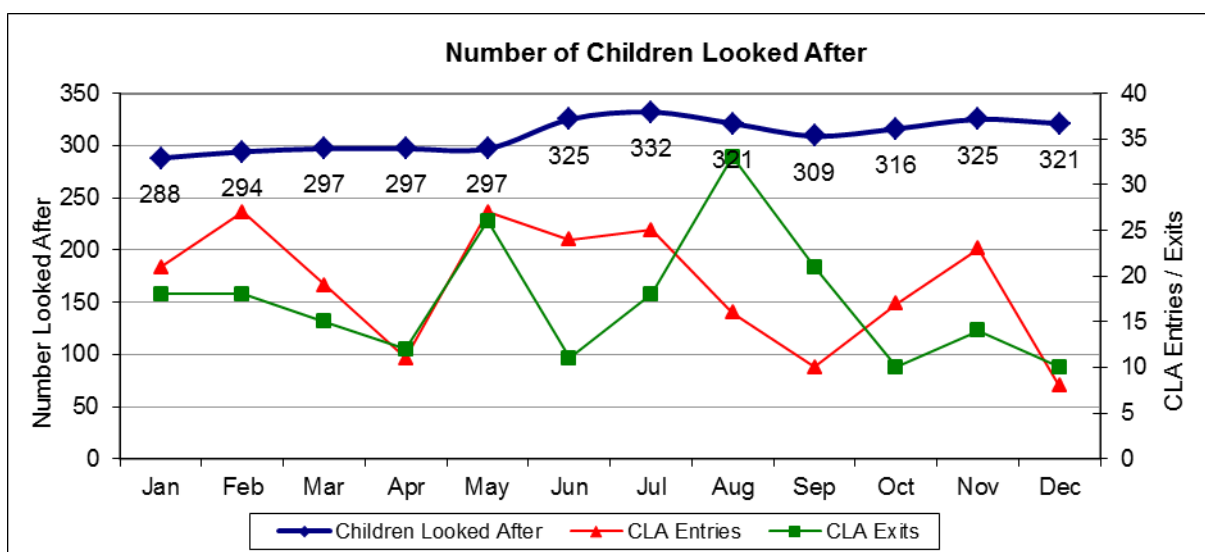
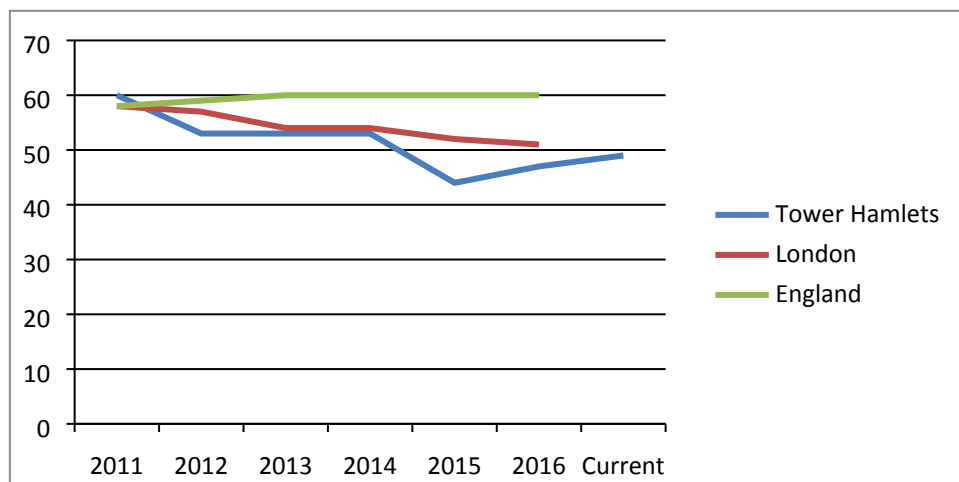
3. Current LAC profile

3.1. LAC numbers and demographics

3.1.1. The rate of LAC per 10,000 children has been reducing in line with reductions across Inner London and London over the last several years. Current rate of 49 per 10,000 is only slightly below London rate of 51 per 10,000

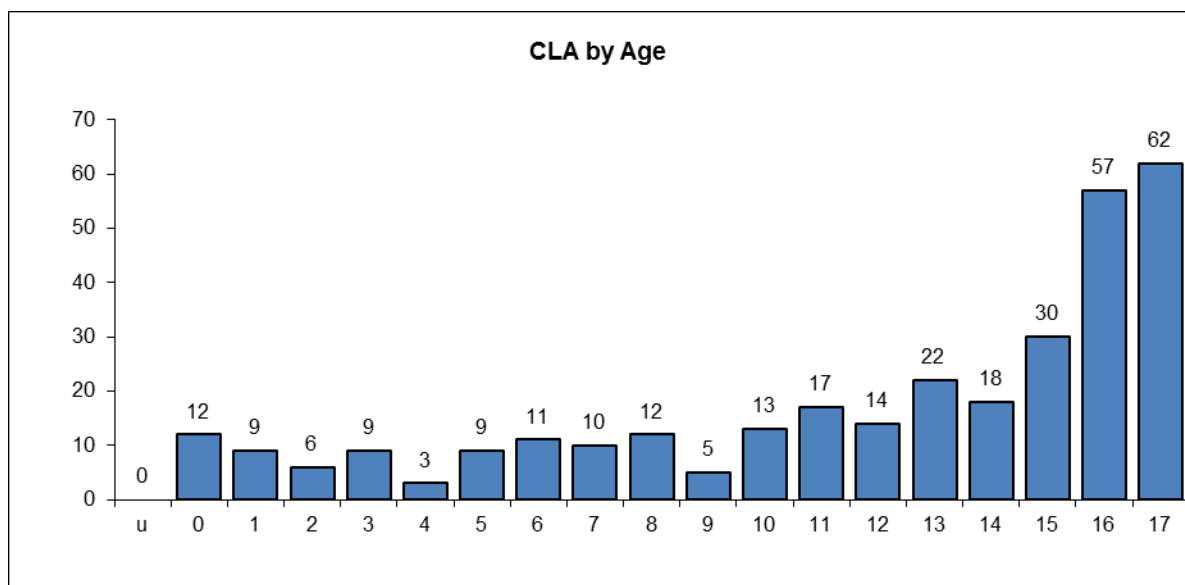
3.1.2. Currently, there are 321 children looked after (as of 31st December 2016) – this is an increase of 33 compared to January 2016.

| Children looked after rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Current |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|---------|
| Tower Hamlets | 60 | 53 | 53 | 53 | 44 | 47 | 49 |
| London | 58 | 57 | 54 | 54 | 52 | 51 | |
| England | 58 | 59 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 | |
| Tower Hamlets- LAC Numbers | 325 | 295 | 305 | 325 | 275 | 297 | 321 |



3.1.3. There has been a shift towards 16+ age category for LAC over the last 5 years, up from 24% in 2011 to 33% in 2016, with corresponding reductions in 1-4 years group and 10-15 years group.

3.1.4. Our age profile has maintained a similar position to London's overall, and distinct from England due to the higher proportion of older teenagers in care.

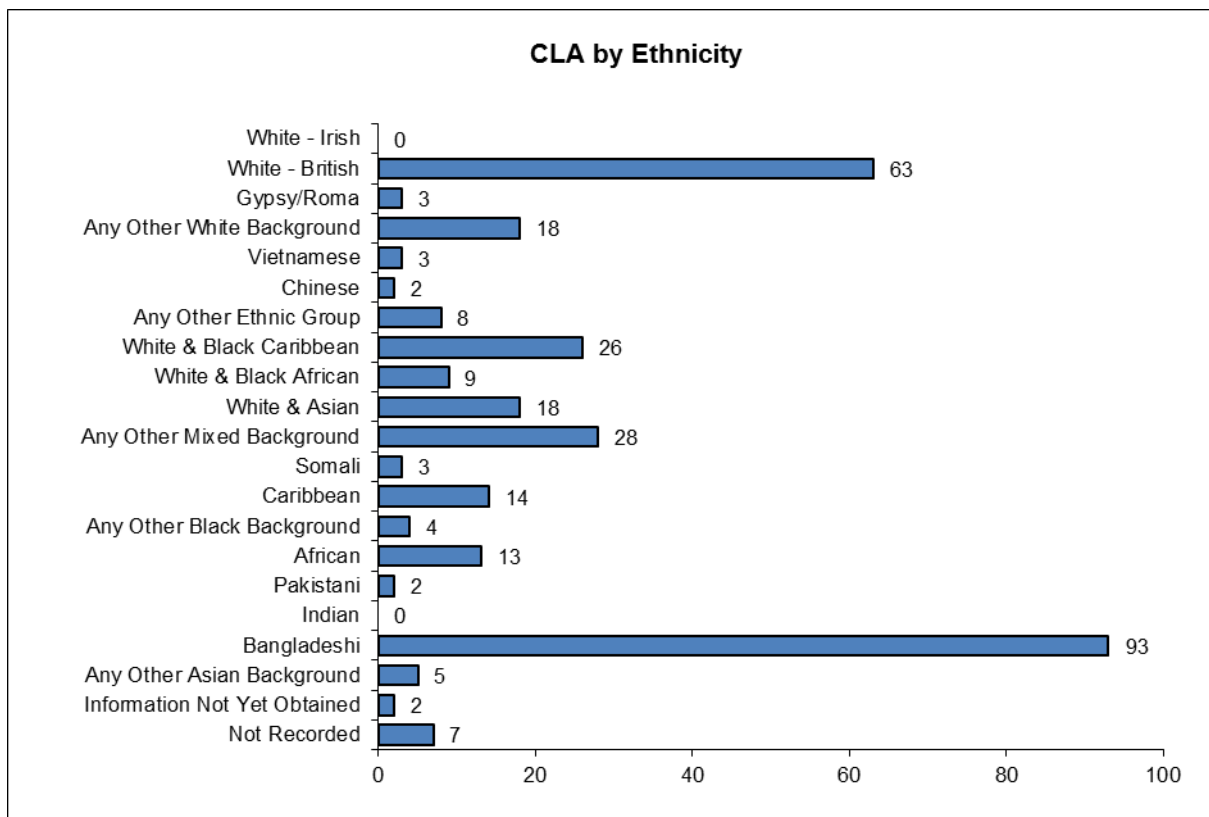


| Tower Hamlets LAC by age category (%) | 2011 | 2016 (current) | Diff |
|---------------------------------------|------|----------------|------|
| Under 1 | 6 | 4 | -2 |
| 1-4 yrs | 14 | 8 | -6 |
| 5-9 yrs | 13 | 15 | -2 |
| 10-15 yrs | 42 | 36 | -6 |
| 16 or over | 24 | 37 | 13 |

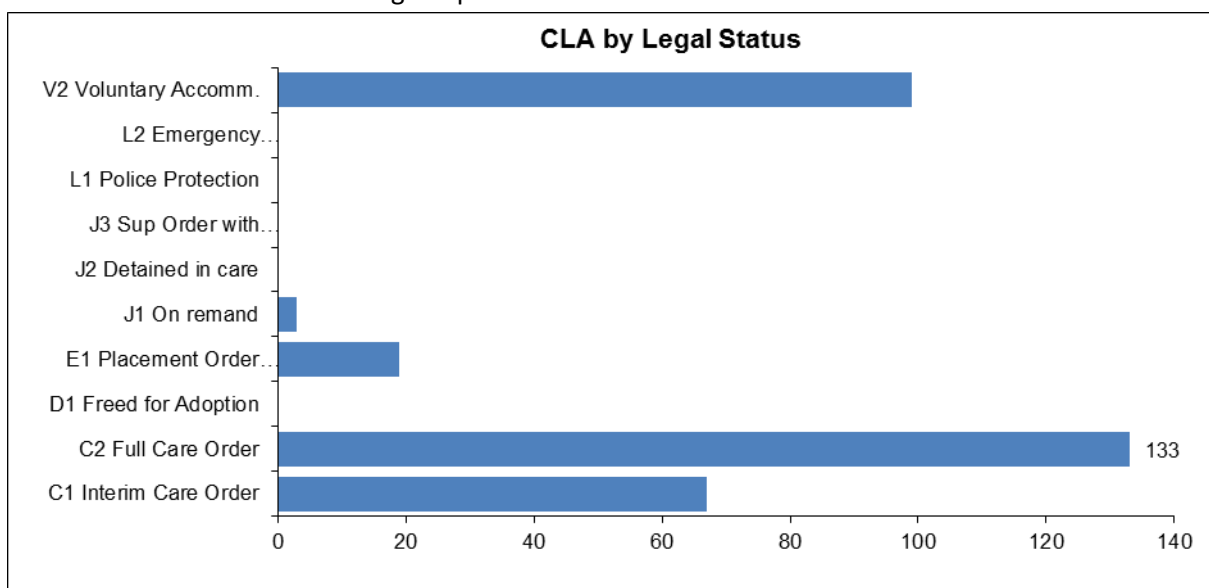
| LAC by age category (%) | TH 2016 (current) | England 2014/15 | TH – Eng Diff | London 2014/15 | TH – Lon Diff |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| Under 1 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 1 |
| 1-4 yrs | 8 | 15 | -6 | 10 | -1 |
| 5-9 yrs | 15 | 21 | -7 | 16 | -2 |
| 10-15 yrs | 36 | 38 | -1 | 38 | -1 |
| 16 or over | 37 | 22 | 13 | 33 | 2 |

3.1.5. Currently 170 LAC are male (53%), and 150 female (47%) (n.b. 1 child currently recorded as unknown) – this is a more balanced position than nationally or across London. Nationally, 55% of LAC are male, 45% are female. Across London, 58% of LAC are male, 42% are female.

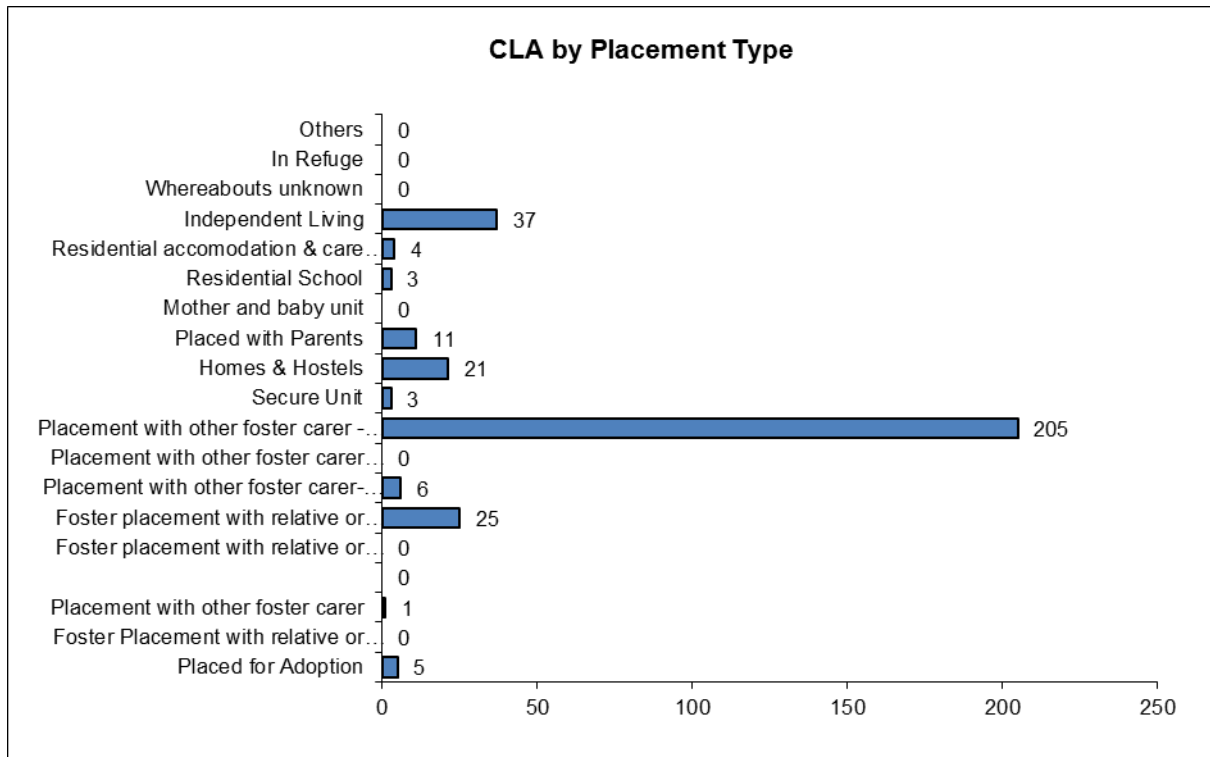
3.1.6. The ethnicity of looked after children broadly reflects the wider population, with the two largest groups being Bangladeshi and White British by ethnic origin, in that order.



3.1.7. 31% of looked after children are currently looked after as a period of voluntary accommodation, 62% of LAC are on an interim or full Care Order, and 6% are currently on Placement Orders awaiting adoption.



3.1.8. The majority of children are placed with foster carers – 74% when included all forms of foster placement.



3.2. LAC Stability

3.2.1. Placement stability, as measured below, has been in line with the national and London average for the last 5 years. Long term stability, as measured in the second table below, has been well above the national and London averages in recent years.

| Percentage children at 31 March with three or more placements during the year | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | 11 | 11 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 11 | 13 |
| London | 12 | | | | 11 | n/a | |
| England | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 10 | n/a | |

| Percentage children looked after for more than 2.5yrs and of those, have been in the same placement for at least 2yrs or placed for adoption | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | 68 | 72 | 69 | 79 | 78 | 80 | 87 |
| London | 70 | | | | 67 | n/a | |
| England | 68 | 68 | 67 | 67 | 68 | n/a | |

3.2.2. The percentage of children placed more than 20 miles from their homes has been in line with or better than performance in London over the last 4 years, and has reduced in 2015/16 to be below regional and national averages (see table).

3.2.3. Published data for percentage of **new placements** placed 20 miles or more away from home during 2015/16 shows TH at 11%, London 15% and England averaging 18%, which is a positive position.

| % of children looked after at 31 March, placed more than 20 miles from their homes, outside LA boundary | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | 21 | 17 | 15 | 13 | 18 | 15 | n/a |
| London | 18 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 | |
| England | 12 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 18 | |

3.2.4. The first published performance of new LAC “missing” measure showed Tower Hamlets as slightly better than London and nationally, with 5% compared to 6% for both comparator groups.

3.2.5. Locally, in the last 18 months, there has been a huge increase in focus on children missing from care, home and education. This has led to an increase in recording which is believed to be driving the increase in “missing” episodes recorded for LAC.

3.2.6. Nationally and regionally there has also been an increase in % LAC going at missing at some point during the year, suggesting similar changes in focus on and recording of this issue. In London, TH was joint 5th highest rate of missing LAC, with Kensington & Chelsea and Merton, the boroughs with greater % LAC missing during year were: Wandsworth (16%), Camden (17%), Brent (20%), Richmond Upon Thames (22%).

3.2.7. Current performance is 17.6% of LAC had a recorded missing episode in the last year (as at 31st December). Performance has been stable at this level for the last several months.

| Percentage of Children Looked after whom had a missing incident during the year | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | | | | | 5 | 15 | 17.6 |
| London | | | | | 6 | 10 | |
| England | | | | | 6 | 9 | |

3.2.8. Please note national comparator figures for this measure are no longer published

3.2.9. Continued strong performance in review timeliness is evident from the annual performance figures, however issues with recording and FWi reports are persistently under-reporting in year performance figures.

| % of LAC receiving all their reviews within statutory timescales | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | | | | | 85.5 | 88.7 | 58.2 |

| % of LAC who participated in their review | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | | | | | 92.4 | 89.4 | 83.2 |

3.2.10. LAC offending in 2015/16 was better than London average (5% compared to 6%) and in line with national position. It is half what was recorded for 2010/11 period.

| % of looked after children subject to a conviction, final warning or reprimand during the year | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | 10.8 | 6.5 | | | 5 | 5 | n/a |
| London | 6.1 | 6.9 | 5.9 | 5.7 | 6 | 6 | |
| England | 7.3 | 6.9 | 6.2 | 5.6 | 5 | 5 | |

3.3. LAC Health

3.3.1. Annually reported performance has remained in line or better than England and statistical neighbours over the last few years, however in 2015/16 performance has deteriorated.

3.3.2. Issues with processes around health and dental checks between LBTH and NHS organisations still lead to recording delays that mean in year figures under-represent performance. Work is being carried out between organisations to agree more efficient and robust processes for tracking and recording this activity.

| % of LAC who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, who had up to date: | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Annual health assessment | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | Current |
| Tower Hamlets | 95.2 | 77.5 | 90.2 | 91.9 | 84.8 | 82.9 |
| Stat Neighbour | 88.2 | 93.3 | 92.8 | 93.7 | 92.8 (Lon) | |
| England | 86.3 | 87.3 | 88.4 | 89.7 | 90 | |
| | | | | | | |
| Development assessment (under 5s only) | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | Current |
| Tower Hamlets | | 83.3 | 100 | 100 | 100 | n/a |
| Stat Neighbour | 86 | 97.7 | 92.3 | 97.1 | 92.7 (Lon) | |
| England | 80.2 | 84.3 | 86.8 | 89.4 | 83.2 | |
| | | | | | | |
| Immunisations | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | Current |
| Tower Hamlets | 85.7 | 80 | 78 | 89.2 | 75.8 | n/a |
| Stat Neighbour | 90.3 | 83 | 90.2 | 89.4 | 84.1 (Lon) | |
| England | 83.1 | 83.2 | 87.1 | 87.8 | 87.2 | |
| | | | | | | |
| Teeth check by a dentist | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | Current |
| Tower Hamlets | 88.1 | 97.5 | 92.7 | 89.2 | 81.8 | 56.0 |
| Stat Neighbour | 82.1 | 88.4 | 83 | 84.0 | 88.2 (Lon) | |
| England | 82.4 | 82 | 84.4 | 85.8 | 84.1 | |

3.3.3. The “total difficulty score” is scored between 0-40, based on answers to the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire conducted annually for all looked after children aged between four and 16 (inclusive) at the date of their latest assessment, who have been looked after for at least 12 months on 31st March that year.

3.3.4. On an individual basis a score of 13 or below is normal and 17 and above is a cause of concern (between 14-16 is borderline). For local authorities, their overall average score will give an indication of the level of "concern" there is across the local authority. Despite an increase in 2014/15, average scores for Tower Hamlets have been generally below the level of concern and lower than London and national averages.

3.3.5. Processes for ensuring all children received SDQs were interrupted during 2015 which has had an impact on coverage during two financial years, this has been rectified and coverage has recovered during 2015/16, and is once again above national and London averages.

| Emotional and Behavioural Health of Looked after Children – average Total Difficulty Score | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | 14.2 | 13.1 | 12.7 | 12.5 | 14.2 | 12.6 | n/a |
| London | 13.6 | 13.6 | 13.5 | 13.4 | 13.2 | 13.3 | |
| England | 13.9 | 13.9 | 14 | 13.9 | 13.9 | 14.0 | |

| % of eligible children for whom an SDQ score was submitted | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | YTD |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | n/a | 74 | 90 | 50 | 58 | 90 | n/a |
| Stat Neighbour | n/a | 73.4 | 80.7 | 70 | 73.3 | tbc | |
| England | n/a | 71 | 71 | 68 | 72.0 | 75 | |

3.3.6. Substance misuse levels have shown signs of increasing in last two years and are above the 2016 London and national averages:

| Percentage identified as having a substance misuse problem during the year | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | 9 | 4.8 | 4.5 | 4.4 | 11 | 12.6 | n/a |
| London | 5.6 | 5.7 | 5 | 6.1 | 6 | 5 | |
| England | 4.3 | 4.1 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 4 | 4 | |

3.4. LAC Education

3.4.1. From 2016 new performance measures have been introduced at both KS2 and KS4 meaning direct comparison to previous years is not possible. The 2016 LAC KS2 cohort size was 9 children (1 with SEN) and the percentage achieving the new measure of having met the expected standard met expected standards in Reading, Writing and Maths was 66.6%, better than the borough average for all children.

| Children in Care reaching level 4 in Reading, Writing and Maths at Key Stage 2 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | n/a | 73 | 71 | 67 | 20 | n/a | n/a |
| London | n/a | 47 | 59 | 54 | 58 | n/a | n/a |
| England | n/a | 42 | 45 | 48 | 52 | n/a | n/a |

3.4.2. The LAC cohort for KS4 was 21 children (8 with SEN) and 24% achieved the 5+ A* to C GCSE's including English and Maths.

| Children in Care Achieving 5+ A* to C GCSE's inc. English and Maths | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | 23.1 | 16.7 | 25 | 11.5 | 19.4 | 24 | n/a |
| London | 16.5 | 17.1 | 20.7 | 15.2 | 16.8 | n/a | n/a |
| England | 13.6 | 14.9 | 15.5 | 12.2 | 13.8 | n/a | n/a |

3.4.3. LAC persistent absence has fallen from a 23% high in 2014/15 to just 10% - the lowest level in 5 years for LAC in care for 1 year or more. This is despite a tightening of the persistent absence threshold to 10%. Overall attendance of LAC in care 1 year or more is 92.39%, relatively unchanged from the previous year. Tables below show historic absence levels by authorised and unauthorised absence for LAC children – TH figures are typically in line with London and England averages.

| % unauthorised absence from school of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | 1.5 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 0.6 | 0.8 | n/a | |
| London | 1.6 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.2 | n/a | |
| England | 1.5 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1 | 1 | n/a | |
| % absence from school of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
| Tower Hamlets | 4.9 | 4.8 | 4.9 | 4.1 | 3.8 | n/a | |
| London | 5.4 | 4.7 | 4.5 | 4.3 | 4.3 | n/a | |
| England | 5.5 | 4.7 | 4.4 | 3.9 | 4 | n/a | |

3.5. LAC Permanency

3.5.1. The percentage of children returning home after a period of being looked after dropped to 37% in 2013/14 but has increased since then to 40.5% in 2015/16. With the exception of 2013/14, Tower Hamlets has persistently returned a higher percentage of children in care home to parents/family than national or regional average.

| Percentage of children returning home after a period of being looked after | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | 48 | 54 | 51 | 37 | 40 | 40.5 | n/a |
| London | 44 | 39 | 40 | 39 | 37 | 34 | |
| England | 39 | 37 | 35 | 34 | 34 | 29.9 | |

3.5.2. The percentage of children being adopted from care or made subject to a special guardianship order has lagged slightly behind London performance over the last few years. Performance in 2015/16 was lower than the previous year, but shows signs of immediately improving based on data for period covering April-December 2016.

| % LAC who ceased to be looked after because of a special guardianship order during the year | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets-Number | 15 | 15 | 10 | 10 | 15 | 6 | 15 |
| Tower Hamlets-% | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 2.4 | 9.6 |
| London | 5 | 7 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 9.5 | |
| England | 7 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 12.1 | |

| Percentage of Looked After Children adopted in year | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets-Number | 10 | 10 | 15 | 15 | 20 | 15 | 9 |
| Tower Hamlets-% | 5 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 7 | 6 |
| London | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 8 | |
| England | 11 | 13 | 14 | 17 | 17 | 15 | |

3.5.3. Historic data is based on three year rolling average, as per the DFE Adoption Scorecard measures

3.5.4. In Tower Hamlets, timescale performance has been impacted by a number of “outlier” cases which have taken multiple years to conclude. For example, a case where looked after children have been abducted and taken out of the country by parents whilst remaining legally in our care.

3.5.5. Time taken to secure a match to an adoptive family have increase over the last few years, though is currently broadly in line with last published adoption scorecard London and England figures.

| Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family | 2008 2011 | 2009 2012 | 2010 2013 | 2011 2014 | 2012 2015 | 2015/16 | Current (annual) |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Tower Hamlets | 513 | 521 | 586 | 549 | 645 | 733 | 559 |
| London | | 720 | 711 | 675 | 635 | | |
| England | 625 | 636 | 647 | 628 | 593 | | |

| Average time between a LA receiving court authority to place a child and deciding on a match | 2008 2011 | 2009 2012 | 2010 2013 | 2011 2014 | 2012 2015 | 2015/16 | Current (annual) |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Tower Hamlets | 52 | 90 | 159 | 173 | 265 | 345 | 285 |
| London | | 181 | 209 | 216 | 228 | | |
| England | 173 | 195 | 210 | 217 | 223 | | |

3.5.6. The average length of care proceedings had begun reducing during the 2012-2015 three year period, and has maintained that for 2015/16 financial year, where the average was only 29 weeks – the national target set is 26 weeks. As of Dec 16 it was 27 weeks (figure to be verified)

| Average length of care proceedings | 2008 2011 | 2009 2012 | 2010 2013 | 2011 2014 | 2012- 2015 | 2015/16 | Current |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Tower Hamlets | 55 | 58 | 56 | 53 | 44 | 29 | 32 (as of September) |
| London | 53 | 55 | 55 | 51 | 44 | | |
| England | 52 | 53 | 51 | 48 | 39 | | |

3.6. Care Leavers

3.6.1. Tower Hamlets has generally exceeded London and national averages for Care Leavers in suitable accommodation. 2014 performance may under-represent true performance for that year due to transitional issues with new recording requirements for 19/20/21 year olds. 2016 performance is equal with best performance locally in last six years, but current performance is slightly lower and in line with national average.

| Care Leavers - Suitable accommodation % | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | 94 | 92.7 | 90 | 67.6 | 92 | 94 | 83.8 |
| London | 90 | 90.7 | 88 | 81.5 | 83 | 82 | |
| England | 90 | 88.3 | 88 | 77.8 | 81 | 83 | |

3.6.2. Percentage of Care Leavers in education, employment or training has remained steady over the last three years, and above both the London and National averages.

| Care Leavers - Education, Employment or Training | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | YTD |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Tower Hamlets | 87 | 65 | 85 | 61 | 56 | 58 | 70.3 |
| London | 66 | 59 | 64 | 54 | 53 | 54 | |
| England | 61 | 58 | 58 | 45 | 48 | 49 | |

KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: THE VIEWS OF LOOKED AFTER AND CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Report for the Tower Hamlets Corporate Parenting Steering Group, December 2016

1. Introduction

1.1. Unicef UK – L.B. Tower Hamlets partnership

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) has been working in partnership with Unicef for the past three years as part of the Child Rights Partners (CRP) programme. The goal of the programme is to place children's rights – as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention) – at the centre of public services to ensure all children have the same opportunity to flourish.

One of the areas LBTH chose to embed children's rights in is corporate parenting. Principles of a child rights-based approach (appendix 1) have been used to frame and underpin the Children Looked After Strategy (2015-2018) and inform the commissioning of the Children's Rights Advocacy Service.

1.2. Purpose of the report

The LBTH Children Looked After Strategy recognises children and young people as inherent rights holders and the local authority as the principal duty bearer responsible for protecting, promoting and fulfilling children's rights. The Strategy also explicitly recognises the importance of listening to children and young people and translating their views and experiences into improved service planning and provision.

This report is the third in the 'Views of Looked After Children' series and focuses on children and young people's knowledge and understanding of rights as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, with a view to identifying existing good practice and any gaps that should be addressed. The report additionally shares some insights into children and young people's views and experiences of local services, including the Children in Care Council.

The report puts forward a number of recommendations for the Corporate Parenting Steering Group's consideration.

2. Methodology

2.1. Primary data

In order to build young people's knowledge and understanding of their rights and gather their views in relation to their experiences in Tower Hamlets, Unicef UK met with the Children in Care Council (CiCC) three times. All sessions took place in November 2016.

Two, 2-hour sessions were held with the older CiCC group (18+). The first session was dedicated entirely to capacity building and a range of interactive activities were facilitated to increase young people's knowledge and understanding of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The second session focused on eliciting and capturing young people's views through individual questionnaires, group activities and group discussions.

The younger CiCC group (12-17 year olds) participated in a single, 1-hour session (this group meets once a month). Participatory activities were planned in a way that allowed for both capacity building and participatory consultation to take place at the same time.

No. of children and young people who participated:

| | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------------------------|------|--------|-------|
| CiCC 12-17 year olds | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| CiCC 18+ | | | |
| Training session: | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Participatory consultation: | 4 | 3 | 7 |

Additionally, to offer an insight into professional knowledge and understanding of the Convention by staff supporting looked after and care experienced children and young people, evidence from Unicef UK-run child rights training is also briefly presented.

2.2. Secondary data

To set the findings in a broader context, a summary of key messages from secondary research has also been included in this report. The literature review focused on child rights-specific publications, such as the annual 'State of Children's Rights in England' report (CRAE) and evidence submissions to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The most recent 'Concluding Observations' – a report by the Committee on the Rights of the Child assessing progress and bottlenecks in relation to UK's implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child - were also examined.

3. Findings

3.1. Messages from secondary research

Research indicates that availability and accessibility of good quality information about children's rights remains poor. Children and young people, both in and out of mainstream education, face a number of barriers to learning about and understanding their rights.

Human rights and international law are part of the Key Stage 4 (secondary school) "Citizenship" curriculum. However, as noted by the Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) in a 2015 submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child¹, this only applies to some state funded schools. Private schools (including those for disabled children), free schools and academies are not obliged to teach pupils about the Convention, nor is it part of any primary school curriculum requirement. Younger children have no right to learn about their human rights under the curriculum.²

A consultation with children and young people in England carried out by CRAE in preparation for UK's examination by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, highlighted a number of concerns in relation to knowledge and awareness of rights as well as children and young people's enjoyment of participation rights.³

- Of 819 children who answered the question "have you heard of the CRC?" 46% said they had not heard of it and a further 10% were not sure. When asked "how much do you know about the CRC?", only 1 in 5 said "a lot". The majority of children (56%) said they only knew "a little".
- Even when children reported that they had been taught about rights they were still unclear about what they really mean, and didn't have full and detailed information.
- Of the children who had a social worker, only 40% thought they were listened to and taken seriously. Of the children who have a Reviewing Officer, only 25% thought they were listened to and taken seriously.

¹ [UK implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; Civil Society Alternative Report 2015 to the UN Committee – 2015](#), CRAE

² [State of Children's Rights in England 2014](#), Children's Rights Alliance for England

³ [See it, Say it, Change it; Submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child from children in England](#), CRAE

- Whilst just over half of the children who completed the CRAE survey said they had heard at least something about children’s rights and the Convention, some children said they did not know anything about children’s rights and didn’t think others did either. Certain groups of children in difficult circumstances felt that at key times they did not have the necessary knowledge about rights that they needed.




Earlier this year, the Committee on the Rights of the Child raised a number of concerns in relation to children’s enjoyment of rights in the UK. These included the failure to systematically hear children’s views in policymaking, including on issues that affect them. The Committee was also concerned that many children in the UK feel that they are not listened to by their social workers, reviewing officers, paid carers, judges, personnel working with children in conflict with the law or other professionals in matters affecting them, including in family proceedings.⁴

3.2. Messages from children and young people in Tower Hamlets

3.2.1. Messages from young people in the 17+ age group

ACTIVITY 1: Questionnaire

Following the initial capacity building workshop, young people were asked to complete a short, anonymous questionnaire to gauge their views and experiences in relation to their enjoyment of rights such as participation, access to information and knowledge of rights.

| |  AGREE / YES |  NOT SURE / SO-SO |  DISAGREE NO |
|--|---|--|---|
| I feel my social worker listens to me & considers my feelings and wishes | 4 | 3 | |
| I feel my reviewing officer listens to me & considers my feelings and wishes | 5 | 2 | |
| I feel respected and treated with dignity by staff at all times | 4 | 3 | |
| I understand and I am able to explain who my Corporate Parents are in Tower Hamlets | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| I can influence key decisions about me and my life, for instance about health, education, housing, relationships | 5 | 2 | |
| I can influence local policies relating to children and young people, for instance about services for young people | 4 | 3 | |
| I think local decision makers understand the concerns and issues affecting children and young people in Tower Hamlets | 2 | 5 | |
| I know where to access information about my rights * | 7 | | |
| I know how and where to complain if I feel my rights are being breached or disrespected by a member of staff ** | 7 | | |
| I think there is enough information out there for children and young people in Tower Hamlets to learn about their rights | 3 | 3 | 1 |

*The sources of information about rights cited by young people were: *Google, online, Unicef, IRO, social work, children’s rights officer.*

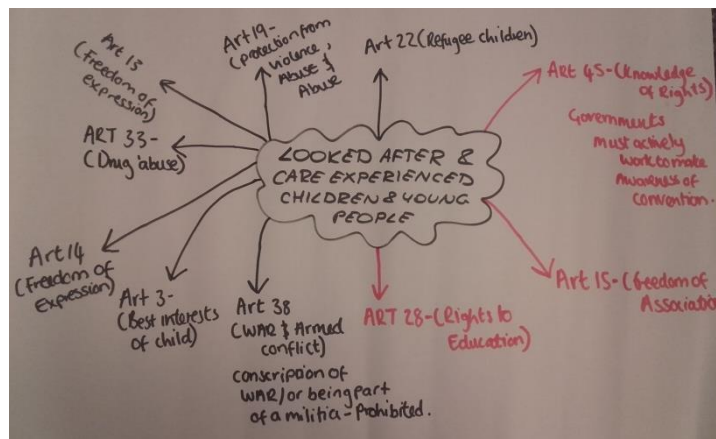
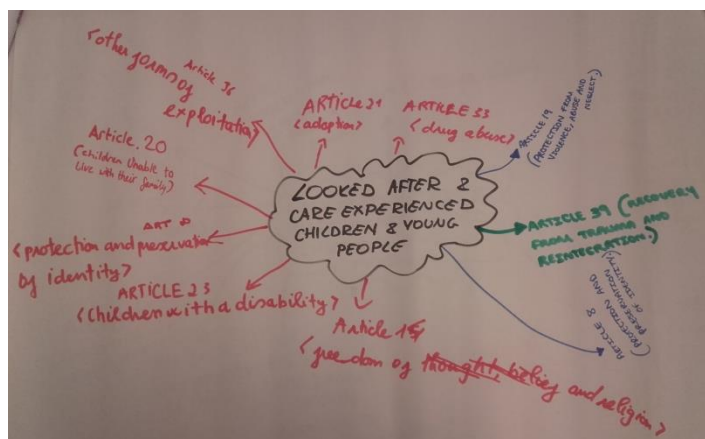
**In terms of knowing where to complain or raise concerns, the following individuals and agencies were identified: *Citizens Advice Bureau, Angie Treby, the Children’s Advocate*

⁴ [Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#), Committee on the Rights of the Child, 12 July 2016

ACTIVITY 2: Placing rights in the context of the experiences of looked after and care experienced children and young people

Young People worked in two groups (3 YP in each group) and mapped out the articles of the Convention they felt were particularly relevant to looked after and care experienced children and young people. This was an opportunity to explore the Convention in more depth, as well as reflect more specifically on how it applies to looked after and care experienced children and young people. Both groups identified a range of articles, covering protective rights (e.g. Art.19, 36), civil and political rights (e.g. Art.8, 13, 15) and economic, cultural and social rights (e.g. Art.28).

One young person said: **“Basically, you could put the whole Convention here.”**



- Art 8: Protection and preservation of identity
- Art 14: Freedom of thought, belief and religion
- Art 20: Children unable to live with their family
- Art 21: Adoption
- Art 23: Children with a disability
- Art 33: Protection from drug abuse
- Art 36: Protection from exploitation
- Art 39: Recovery from trauma and reintegration

- Art 3: Best interests of the child
- Art 13: Freedom of expression
- Art 14: Freedom of thought, belief and religion
- Art 15: Freedom of association
- Art 19: Protection from violence, abuse and neglect
- Art 22: Refugee children
- Art 28: Right to education
- Art 33: Protection from drug abuse
- Art 38: Special care for children affected by war and armed conflicts
- Art 42: Knowledge of rights

During an activity that young people participated in as part of the initial training session (a week before the participatory data collection workshop), they were asked to identify 3-5 issues they would like to highlight as causing them particular concern when thinking about the difficulties faced by young people in Tower Hamlets.

The issues young people highlighted were:

- Privacy
- Having a say in matters that affect them and freedom of expression
- Accommodation – both in terms of access to affordable housing and the quality of housing
- Access to opportunities - educational, work and leisure
- Freedom of religion and belief, in particular in the context of concerns related to discrimination and the negative media coverage of Muslim communities.

ACTIVITY 3: Group discussion about art. 42 of the Convention

“State Parties undertake to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike.”

Art. 42 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Context: the importance and relevance of Art. 42 of the Convention

Rights are of little use to people unless they are aware of them. Article 42 confirms States Parties’ obligation to make the Convention on the Rights of the Child known “by appropriate and active means” to adults and children. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has underlined the importance of disseminating the Convention’s principles and provisions to all sectors of the population. In addition, it has suggested that the Convention should be incorporated into school curricula and into the training of all those who work with or for children. The Committee has emphasized that dissemination of child rights information, including the text of the Convention, can achieve a variety of purposes, including:

- ensuring the visibility of children;
- enhancing respect for children;
- reaffirming the value of children’s fundamental rights;
- enhancing democratic institutions;
- encouraging the protection of the rights of children belonging to minority groups;
- changing negative attitudes towards children;
- combating and eradicating existing prejudices against vulnerable groups of children and harmful cultural practices⁵

Research has identified additional benefits of child rights education (CRE) for children: they become informed of their rights and the nature of the rights; they develop the attitudes and values underpinning democracy and global citizenship; and they become empowered to take positive action to protect the rights of others. CRE facilitates children’s participation in their near environments (school and community) where their opinions and decisions can be properly acknowledged and taken into account. CRE also assists children to understand the national and global environments and provides them with the knowledge and skills to act at a broader level.⁶

Discussion:

Young people participated in a discussion about what Art. 42 means and how it should be protected and realised by duty bearers, i.e. central and local government. The conversation was recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Only 2 out of 6 participating young people knew about the Convention prior to attending the training session run by Unicef at the Care Leaving Service.

When asked about general thoughts in relation to Art. 42, the following remarks were made by young people:

“I think the local authority should put more emphasis in terms of distributing this information to people and young people, like children in care. They need to find effective methods of delivering this messages, whether that be on the internet or somehow else. Billboards is a perfect place to capture this – billboards around the borough of Tower Hamlets. Obviously

⁵ [Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), Unicef

⁶ [Child Rights Education Toolkit: Rooting Child Rights in Early Childhood Education, Primary and Secondary Schools](#), Unicef

brochures, leaflets in places where young people would go – youth clubs, after school clubs, one stop shop, leaving care service.” (2 young people speaking together)

“A local authority should also enforce this kind of knowledge upon social workers and I think local authority should also liaise with other people [the wider community] to increase their awareness of Article 42.”

Young people were then asked to think about reaching children and young people who may find it difficult to access information from mainstream sources and in standard formats, e.g. children who do not attend youth clubs, who are not in contact with services or who may struggle to speak or read English.

“They would hear from their social worker or personal advisor; many people don’t come here (the LCS) – they’d only come for events, like Christmas events or ‘Just for you’ events; If they are out of care then it’s to do with the PA. But saying that, each PA is assigned to 30 young people so they are not going to be available to speak to every young person, or they may be dealing with an emergency. So it’s about balancing that and making the time for other young people who don’t socialise, don’t come here, don’t interact for whatever reason.”

“People might not be able to read English so maybe having it in Bengali (in Tower Hamlets) would be another option. Also, some people don’t really like reading. Like I don’t like reading. Once I’ve reached the end of this paragraph, the other one is out the other ear. Maybe videos, something we can actually see, so it’s not just writing or reading.”

“Also maybe drama and acting, yeah, that would be better. That would also be good because a lot of people haven’t got the confidence to interact and stuff like that. Like you’ll find that some people who come here, for example, they sit in the corner by themselves. So I think if we do this drama piece then a lot of people can open up.”

“The school (should play a part). Put posters in their classrooms. That would make them aware.”

“School yes but there’s a particular time when they’re not doing curriculum activities while at school – the assembly – so why don’t we enforce during that time of the day awareness of rights.”

“Yes, the head teacher can say at the assembly – know your rights.”

Young people were also asked to think about their personal preferences, feelings and wishes in relation to how they would like to be able to access information about rights and support to understand their rights. They shared the following thoughts:

“Memorising it. Spending time with it (i.e. the Convention). And not just one leaflet but different information from different places (i.e. variety of sources and formats).”

“It needs to appeal to an audience. In terms of language, it shouldn’t be too sophisticated. Nor should it be too informal. It needs to be neutral, I think the key thing is how you deliver this message.”

“For me, I need to look at this (i.e. the Convention), read and then for someone to talk to me.”

“Talking to somebody would be best for me.”

“Maybe, also, they could do one-to-ones. Someone from Unicef could talk to the young person on a one-to-one basis so they can get more knowledge and understanding. Because we are doing it as a group now, some people may feel they have questions that they don’t want to ask in front of the whole group. In a one-to-one they can get a better understanding instead of just sitting there, not understanding and not asking.”

Subsequently, young people were asked to reflect on their ideas and proposals for improving access to rights and assess the degree to which rights knowledge is accessible to them and their peers at the moment. They were asked to think about availability and accessibility of information as well as the degree to which they felt staff could support them to understand their rights. They shared the following comments:

“I don’t think it’s that easy. I mean back in my time, when I was in care, most of the active stuff, like drama and performances, were just on events such as ‘Just for you event’ and Christmas event. Angie [the children’s rights advocate], she comes on those event but that’s only like once a year so not everyone gets to meet her and understand what she’s about or to even get to trust her to want to speak to her. The (care) review meetings are only once every 6 months so by the time that comes around the children aren’t even bothered. I wasn’t bothered when I was in care.”

At that point all participants were asked to indicate whether they knew the children’s rights advocate. Half responded affirmatively and half said they were not aware of the service.

Young people also raised the idea of having a dedicated helpline for children and young people in care, somewhere they could call at any time, day or night, to seek help and advice quickly. Some young people were familiar with Childline but felt a Tower Hamlets specific service would be better. Difficulties with foster families were mentioned as an example of a situation when a child or a young person might want to reach out to someone for help or advice immediately.

ACTIVITY 4: Young people's messages to Corporate Parents in Tower Hamlets

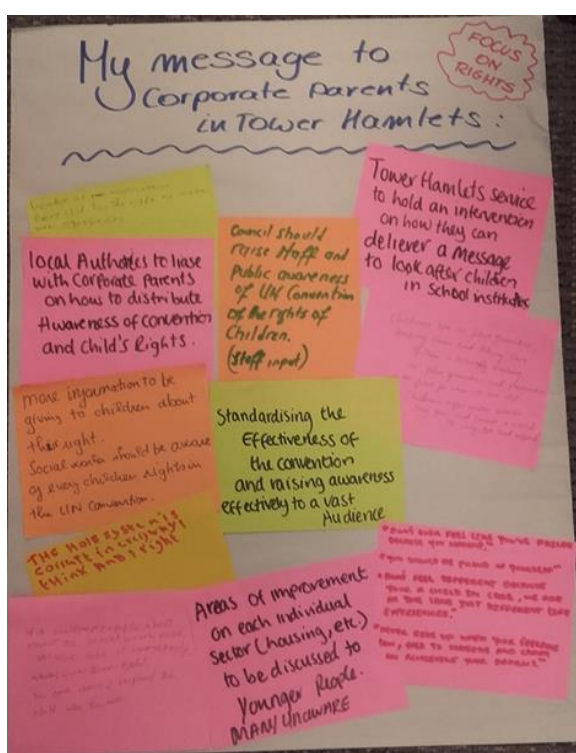
At the end of the session, young people were asked to reflect on both the initial training session and the discussions that took place during the participatory data collection session and write messages to Corporate Parents in Tower Hamlets.

My message to Corporate Parents in Tower Hamlets

"More information to be given to children about their rights. Social workers should be aware of every children's right in the UN convention."

"Freedom of association – every child has the right to meet with organisations."

"Children are our future generation, teaching them and taking care of them is technically teaching our future generation and preparation for our future for when we are old. Children's rights matter because they grow and create a world of unity, love and respect."



"Areas of improvement on each individual sector (housing, etc.) to be discussed to younger people... Many unaware."

"Standardising the effectiveness of the convention and raising awareness effectively to a vast audience."

"Council should raise staff and public awareness of UN convention of the rights of children."

"If children complain about something the social worker [should] make sure [to] take it seriously - know their rights. The carer should respect the child."

"The whole system is corrupt in every way, I think, and I (am) right."

"Tower Hamlets service to hold an intervention on how they can deliver a message to looked after children in school institutions."

"Local Authorities to liaise with corporate parents on how to distribute awareness of convention and child's rights."

One young person chose to share some quotes to illustrate the messages young people with experience of care should hear from the Corporate Parents:

"Don't ever feel like you've failed because you haven't."

"You should be proud of yourself."

"Don't feel different because you're a child in care, we are all the same just different life experiences."

"Never give up when you're feeling low, talk to someone and carry on achieving your dreams"

3.2.2. Messages from children and young people in the 12-17 age group

ACTIVITY 1: Exploring children's rights and their meaning

At the start of the session, young people were given two charts containing a broad selection of rights. They were asked to work in two groups, examining each chart in turn, and identify

- the rights they thought appear in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and therefore they all should enjoy
- and the rights they believed have been made up for the purpose of the exercise.

They were asked to stick green and blue dots on the charts, with blue marking 'false rights'. This allowed the group to start exploring the content of the Convention and the meaning of children's rights. It also helped shed light on existing misconceptions relating to children's rights and areas where more awareness raising is needed.

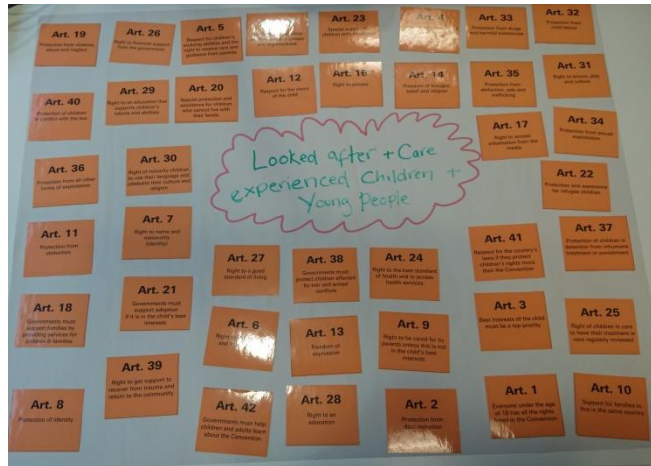
| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| Every child has the right to know and understand their rights | Every child has the right to freedom of expression | Every child has the right to an identity | Every child has the right to join groups and organisations |
| Every child has the right to privacy | Every child has the right to love | Every child has the right to access information from diverse sources | Every child has the right to be protected from degrading treatment or punishment |
| Every child has the right to receive financial support from the government | Every child has the right to a good standard of living | Every child has the right to be protected from abuse and neglect | Every child has the right to an education that develops their personality and talents |
| Every child has the right to make mistakes | Every child has the right to rest and leisure | Every child has the right to receive special support if they can't live with their family | Every child in conflict with the law has the right to be treated with dignity and respect |
| Every child has the right to receive support to recover from trauma | Every child has the right to practice their religion | Every child has the right to access health services | Every child has the right to friendships |
| Every child with special needs has the right to receive additional support | Every child has the right to use their mother tongue | Every child has the right to have a pet | Every child has the right to have a say about issues that affect them |

As shown above, certain rights enshrined in the Convention were thought by some young people to be 'false'. These included: the right to join groups and organisations (Art 15), the right to access information from diverse sources (Art 17) and the right to use one's mother tongue (Art 30).

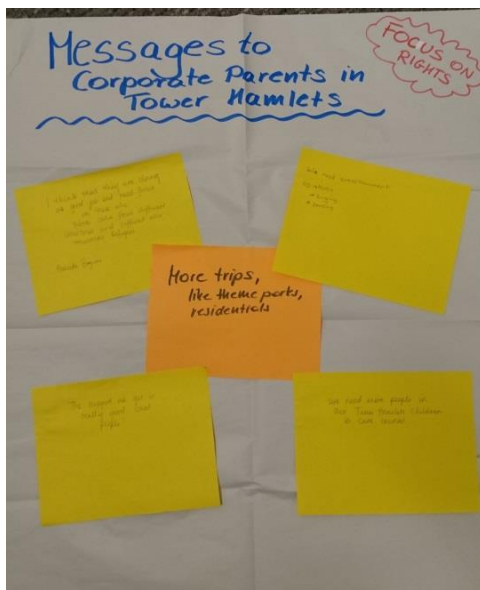
It is also worth noting that none of the young people who participated in this session were familiar with or were able to explain the term 'corporate parenting' or 'corporate parent/s'.

ACTIVITY 2: Placing rights in the context of the experiences of looked after and care experienced children and young people

During this activity, young people were given a flipchart and 'rights cards' – individual articles of the Convention printed on small cards (42 in total). Working as a group, they examined each article one by one and stuck the ones they considered of relevance to looked after and care experienced children and young people. Ultimately, young people pinned all 42 articles to the flipchart.



ACTIVITY 3: Young people's messages to Corporate Parents in Tower Hamlets



My message to Corporate Parents in Tower Hamlets

"We need entertainment, e.g. music, singing, dancing."

"We need more people in our Tower Hamlets Children in Care Council."

"The support we get is really good. Great people!"

"More trips, like theme parks, residentials."

"I think that they (corporate parents) are doing a good job but need focus on those who have come from different countries and suffered war traumas. Refugees."

3.3. Knowledge and awareness of child rights among social care professionals and Corporate Parents – messages from Unicef UK

During the discussions held with the CiCC, the role of staff in supporting children and young people to know about and understand their rights was seen as crucial. Children and young people identified staff as a key source of information and advice in relation to their rights and entitlements. It is therefore important to understand the degree to which members of the children’s workforce are aware of and understand the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It is worth noting that there is no current requirement for social workers or senior Corporate Parents to complete any level of child rights education, and knowledge and awareness of the UNCRC is not incorporated into social work training.

While not enough data is available from staff in Tower Hamlets’ services, we can share evidence gathered by Unicef elsewhere in the UK.

Unicef UK has been delivering child rights training to local authority staff and councillors for the last three years. Our experience tells us the need for child rights training amongst the children’s workforce, including specialist LAC and leaving care staff and senior Corporate Parents, is significant. Our experience also shows that structured, face-to-face child rights training supports reflective practice and provides staff with practical tools and ideas for advocating for and supporting children and young people more effectively.

For example, an analysis of three training sessions delivered in two local authorities exclusively to LAC/leaving care staff and senior Corporate Parents (75 individuals in total) shows the following:

| How relevant do you think the topic of child rights and a child rights-based approach is to your current role? | | | |
|--|----------|------|-----------|
| Not at all | Somewhat | Very | Extremely |
| 1% | 7% | 48% | 44% |

| Please rate your knowledge of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and a child rights-based approach: | | | | |
|--|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| | No knowledge | Some knowledge | A good level | A high level |
| Before training | 20% | 65% | 15% | 0% |
| After training | 0% | 16% | 65% | 19% |

| Please rate your confidence when dealing with this subject in practice: | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| | Not very confident, I would require guidance much of the time | Fairly confident, I would require guidance some of the time | Confident, I would require guidance in more complex situations | Confident and able not only to deal with this subject but also to offer peer support |
| Before training | 43% | 44% | 11% | 2% |
| After training | 0% | 32% | 54% | 14% |

| As a result of child rights training, do you plan to do anything differently in your work with/for children and young people? | | |
|---|----------------|-----|
| No | To some extent | Yes |
| 7% | 35% | 58% |

4. Recommendations

The below recommendations have been developed based on the content of this report. Some originate directly from the CiCC and others draw on the report's general findings.

1. Improving children and young people's knowledge and understanding of 'corporate parenting'

1.1. In partnership with the CiCC, develop accessible, young person-friendly information about the meaning of 'corporate parenting' and the structure and remit of the LBTH Corporate Parenting Steering Group (CPSG).

1.2. In partnership with the CiCC, develop a dissemination strategy for cascading information about the role and remit of the CPSG to looked after and care experienced children and young people in Tower Hamlets.

1.3. Provide an opportunity for children and young people to influence or define the themes of future 'Views of Looked After Children' reports to ensure issues of importance to members of the CiCC are reflected in the Steering Group's agenda.

1.4. In agreement with children and young people, establish a structured feedback loop between the CiCC and the CPSG to ensure meaningful participation, transparency and accountability.

2. Child rights awareness-raising for children and young people

2.1. Working collaboratively with members of the CiCC, disseminate the summary text of the Convention to relevant settings and services; consider developing additional child rights material (e.g. leaflets, posters) to increase knowledge of children's right.

2.2. Consider translating the summary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into Bengali to improve the wider community's access to child rights awareness.

3. Child rights capacity building for the children's workforce

3.1. Consider a baseline study (e.g. a structured, thematic survey) to establish staff knowledge and understanding of the Convention and the meaning of a child rights-based approach.

3.2. Support staff in key services, e.g. the Kitcat Terrace LCS, to access training and information to learn about and understand the Convention and a child rights-based approach.

4. Increasing awareness of the Child Rights Service

4.1. Support all children and young people who are looked after or care experienced to know about, and access, the Tower Hamlets Child Rights Advocacy Service.

5. Increasing the membership and reviewing the format of the CiCC 12-17 meetings

5.1. In partnership with the current members of the 12-17 CiCC, scope opportunities and strategies for increasing the membership of the group.

5.2. In partnership with the current and any new members of the group, review the format of the meetings to action young people's wishes about having music and entertainment as part of the meetings.

5. Next steps

In line with the principles of a child rights-based approach, meaningful participation requires feedback, follow-up and an opportunity for children and young people to ask questions and understand which recommendations can and which cannot be actioned and why.

Young people were asked about their preferences in relation to the feedback loop and the general view was that a representative (or a group of representatives) from the Corporate Parenting Steering Group should attend a future CiCC meeting to discuss the findings and any actions taken as a result of this report. This could be organised at the LCS via one of the LCS staff.

6. Appendix: principles of a child rights-based approach



DIGNITY: Every child and young person, like each adult, has inner dignity and worth that should be valued, respected and nurtured. Respecting children’s dignity means that all children should be treated with care and respect in all circumstances – in schools, hospitals, police stations, public spaces or children’s homes.



INTERDEPENDENCE AND INDIVISIBILITY: All children and young people should enjoy all of their rights all of the time because all rights are equally important. Rights cannot be ‘cherry-picked’ depending on circumstances. Children and young people’s rights to a good standard of living or to be protected from abuse, neglect and violence are as important as the right to get together with their peers or the right to freedom of expression.



BEST INTERESTS: The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children and young people. Decisions can relate to individual children, for example about adoption, or groups of children and young people, for instance when designing play spaces. In all cases, children and young people should be involved in deciding what is best for them.



PARTICIPATION: All children and young people have the right to have a say in matters that affect them and to have their views taken seriously. In order to participate meaningfully in the lives of their family, community and the wider society, children and young people need support and opportunities for involvement. They need information, a space to express their views and feelings and opportunities to ask questions.



NON-DISCRIMINATION: Every child and young person should be treated fairly and protected from discrimination, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, language, family background or any other status. Having access to equal opportunities and best possible outcomes doesn’t mean being treated identically; some children and young people need more support than others to overcome barriers and difficulties.



TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY: Open dialogue and strong relationships between children and young people, professionals and local politicians are key to making rights a reality. For this to happen, everyone needs to be supported to learn about and understand rights. Knowledge of rights also allows children and young people to hold to account the people responsible for ensuring their rights are protected and realised.



LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT: Every child has a right to life and each child and young person should enjoy the same opportunities to flourish so to be safe, healthy, grow and develop. From birth to adulthood, children and young people develop in many different ways – physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually and educationally – and different professionals should work together to help make this happen.



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