

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

CHILDREN'S SERVICE DIRECTORATE

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER STRATEGY 2015-18

I am delighted to introduce Tower Hamlets Children Looked After Strategy. It is of great significance to the Council and the wider partnership in Tower Hamlets and the breadth of our action plan is testament to this.

All Council Departments and Officers are part of the Corporate Parenting task and have a duty of care towards Looked After Children. This strategy therefore is of concern to them as well as staff in social care and education. Care is a vital part of our child protection system. The majority of young people in care say that their experiences are good and that it was the right choice for them. But we know that more needs to be done to ensure that our children in care are healthy and safe, have the same opportunities as their peers and can move successfully into adulthood.

In Tower Hamlets, we believe that all children can do well and we want all Looked After children and young people to grow and belong, have a fulfilling, healthy, happy life, pursue interests and goals and more.

We will ensure children and young people have time to relax, spend time with family and friends, think about what they want to do with their lives, and have a sense of achievement and purpose.

In Tower Hamlets we believe that children in care should be able to wish, dream, and plan with purpose, supported by teachers, foster carers and social care workers and personal advisors who can help them to believe in themselves and reach their potential. Being believed in costs nothing and can't be legislated for. It's often the single thing that makes the difference.

As the Corporate Parent for children that can't live at home, we want to create the right framework for front-line staff and carers to do a good job, so we continue to hold the system to account.

This strategy has been developed using a Child Rights Based Approach and is grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We believe the Convention stands as a unifying mandate for professionals and provides a framework that will ensure all children and young people feel safe and nurtured, are treated with dignity and respect, and are listened to.

We believe that the care of Looked After Children is everyone's business. As Chair of Tower Hamlets Children and Families Partnership Board I also know that the wide range of partners represented on the Board - from health, schools and colleges, police, housing as well as voluntary and community sector organisations have the same high level of commitment to these children and young people.



Cllr Rachael Saunders
Chair of The Corporate Parenting Steering Group

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1. Introduction

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 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. The LAC strategy action plan will be regularly reviewed in line with this direction.

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. The council also has a duty to ensure sufficient accommodation is available for children looked after and that services are provided to children at risk of entering care or custody – the 'sufficiency duty'.

This 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.

In May 2015, a group of children in care spent a day together to give their ideas about the Tower Hamlets Pledge¹. Their views and opinions have been paramount in the development of this strategy and will inform our practise going forward. Our young people told us that they want;

"I want to see my family every day"
Jay

"Tower Hamlets to keep me safe and keep me happy"
Hanna

"To keep in touch with friends and family"
Hamida

"Foster Family to be safe and caring"
Habibah

¹ LBTH (2015) Book of Thought: Children in care draw their thoughts on the Tower Hamlets Pledge

“To have a good education and get my GCSE, being safe and care” [sic]
Shuhna

“Tower Hamlets should listen to our ideas so we should listen to them”
Anna

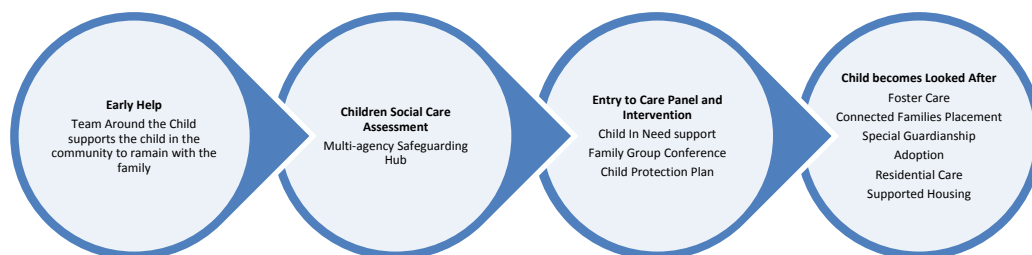
We want “Access to sports club’s and good eating” [sic]
Carlos and Mo

“Making sure I go to school every day”
Abdullah

1.1 Vision

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.

The illustration below provides a simplified diagram to show a child’s journey in Tower Hamlets into care.



Our practice statement in relation to the above journey is:

A belief that our universal services, especially health and education, offer a standard of service that meets the needs of the vast majority of children and families in Tower Hamlets. For those families who need that extra support, (Early Help) services will be offered as soon as they are needed, delivered in

ways that families find helpful and families will be supported to be self-sufficient as early as possible.

For those children and families that come into Children Social Care, staff have adopted Signs of Safety as their practice framework. This is an established framework to enable staff and families in partnership to agree levels of harm and what actions need to be taken to reduce harm. Using this we believe that we will be able to maintain most children who come to our attention safely with their birth families; for a small number this may not be possible and in these instances we will work with extended family members to offer permanent homes (early permanency option). For an even smaller number this may not be possible so these children will enter care with an adoption or rehabilitation plan for long term care. As we get more confident in our use of Signs of Safety over the coming year we estimate that key decisions about a child will be made earlier in their journey with us and therefore our LAC profile should get younger in age. This assumption has a number of implications that we will use to adapt and flex our overall service offer.

1.2 Principles

- 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 accompanying action plan has been developed as part of this strategy. This action plan can be found within Appendix A.

Tower Hamlets approach to child rights has been developed with UNICEF UK. Working in partnership we have developed seven key principles to act as a framework to consider when putting rights into practice within public services. The action plan is framed around these principles:

- **Dignity**; each child is valued and respected
- **Participation**; children are informed and have influence over decisions that affect them
- **Life, Survival and Development**; children thrive and flourish
- **Non-Discrimination**; each child is treated fairly and protected from discrimination
- **Transparency and Accountability**; children can be confident that services work for them
- **Best interests**; children get the best possible outcome
- **Interdependence and Indivisibility**; each child enjoys all of their rights

1.3 Strategic responsibility and aims

The overall strategic responsibility for Corporate Parenting lies with the Lead Cabinet Member for Children Services and the Corporate Director for Children's Services.

At an operational level 4 strategic groups are focused on the highest priority areas:

- The multi-agency Health of Looked After children steering group
- The multi-agency Education Steering group
- The Adoption Summit (single agency)
- LAC Track Panel (Senior Management Quality Assurance Panel)

Tower Hamlets Council believes that an effective corporate parent needs a comprehensive strategy and joint working arrangements with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Our over-arching strategic aims are:

- Prevention of care/accommodation unless clearly required for safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare
- Provision of high quality and timely planning for those children who enter care
- Provision of high quality care for those children who we are looking after
- Provision of high quality and timely permanency planning for all children in and leaving care

1.4 Corporate parenting duty

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. As noted above the Lead Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Corporate Director for Children's Service 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 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 that encompasses the following responsibilities:

- To ensure that the council is meeting its corporate parenting responsibilities towards the children and young people it is responsible for
- To ensure that the council is meeting government objectives and abides 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.

In order to ensure that these responsibilities are met and to promote corporate parenting at the highest strategic level in the council we have an established Corporate Parenting Steering group.

The group has been in place since April 2004. It meets on a quarterly basis, in April, July, October and January.

The group:

- Acts as a monitor of performance by officers of the council by calling in and critically questioning performance reports
- Provides a forum for identifying priorities of children looked after and care leavers
- Provides a forum for communication between children looked after, care leavers, Members and Officers

- Seeks to influence policy and practice for the benefit of children and young people looked after and leaving care.

Membership of this group is:

- Lead Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Chair)
- Cabinet Member for Resources
- Two additional co-opted Members
- Corporate Director Resources
- Young people representatives (from the Children in Care Council – Young People's Group)
- Foster Carer representative

In addition the following Officers are in attendance to report to the group:

- Service Head, Children's Social Care
- Service Manager, Children's Specialist Services
- Virtual School Head, Learning and Achievement
- Barts Health, Children Looked After representative

Other Officers and partners may be called in to specific meetings. However, the Corporate Parent Steering group will do more to engage partner agencies to support the wellbeing of all Looked After Children. This will include partners from education, mental health, Jobcentre Plus (inc DWP), housing and the youth offending service.

1.5 Our Pledge to children and young people looked after and leaving care

The London Pledge to children and young people who are looked after was developed through a consortium of London local authorities and children and young people and was published in November 2008.

Young people from Tower Hamlets contributed to this consortium and since then we consulted with further groups of children and young people to develop a local version of the Pledge. The Pledge is available to all children and young people either through their Social Worker, Personal Advisor or Independent Reviewing Officer.

In conjunction with the Pledge and in partnership with children and young people we have also produced Communication Standards for social workers. The Pledge Booklet was designed by and for children looked after under the age of 12 years and was published in 2015.

Tower Hamlets Council has also signed the Care Leavers Charter², pledging to provide young people leaving care with comprehensive support and advice until they reach their 25th birthday. The Care Charter, launched in October

² Department for Education (October 2012), Care leavers' charter, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-leavers-charter>

2013, sets out a wide range of commitments to improve the help and support available to young people leaving care across all areas of life. The Charter for Care Leavers is designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what the local authority should do to be a good Corporate Parent.

Having a Pledge and standards will have limited impact unless they are known and understood by those who are acting as Corporate Parents as well as the children and young people they are intended for and regular promotion of them needs to take place. The Pledge is reviewed at consultation events held by and with young people.

1.6 Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children

An inspection of Tower Hamlets safeguarding and looked after children's services last took place in June 2012³.

The overall effectiveness of looked after children services was rated as good, with a number of areas highlighted as performing well:

- Leadership within children's social care, supported by elected members, demonstrates commitment to looked after children and care leavers that is effectively articulated within the Tower Hamlets children looked after strategy
- The council has demonstrated sustained improvement in a number of areas including placement stability and the achievement of educational outcomes.
- The recent inspection of the fostering service undertaken in May 2012 was judged to be good overall, including for staying safe. Outcomes for children and young people were judged to be outstanding. Within the council's two children's homes, staying safe was judged as good.
- Partnership working is effective in delivering improved outcomes and opportunities for looked after children and care leavers.

The inspectors did identify areas for development in some key areas of practice, including the absence of up to date care plans for a small number of cases. Similarly not all children and young people in long term care have had their needs formally reassessed. The integrated children's system and the arrangement of dual recording poses a challenge for the council in ensuring all records are on the electronic record. The council recognises this and has taken action to improve recording processes. We are no longer dual recording, and all recording is now done electronically.

³ Ofsted (2012) London Borough of Tower Hamlets Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children.

http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/tower_hamlets/050_Safeguarding%20and%20looked%20after%20children%20inspection%20as%20pdf.pdf

The capacity for improvement within looked after children was rated as outstanding.

2. Legal and statutory framework

Children become looked after through three routes:

- Accommodation at the request of the parent or child under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989
- Interim care orders under Section 38 of the Children Act 1989
- Via the youth justice system under Section 21 of the Children Act 1989

The vision and principles above apply to children and young people looked after under all three routes.

The Children Act 1989 remains the primary legislation directing the provision of services for looked after children, with the Children (Leaving Care Act) 2000 remaining the primary legislation for young people in and leaving care aged 16-21 year olds

The Children and Young People's Act 2008 further reinforces this key role and responsibility for corporate parenting. The Act introduced:

- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
- Children (Leaving Care) Regulations 2010
- Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- Children's Homes Regulations 2011

Subsequent changes under the Children and Families Act 2014 introduce a number of reforms including:

- encouraging 'fostering for adoption' which allows approved adopters to foster children while they wait for court approval to adopt.
- introducing a 26 week time limit for the courts to decide whether or not a child should be taken into care. In some cases, this limit may be extended by eight weeks.
- formalising the 'staying put' arrangements which enables children in care to stay with their foster families until the age of 21 years, provided that both the young person and the foster family are happy to do so.

In addition, statutory guidance⁴ outlines action that local authorities and their partners should take to stop children going missing from home or care and to protect those who do. This covers agency roles and responsibilities; multi-agency working; access to support; risk assessment; safe and well checks; independent return interviews; emergency accommodation; children who

⁴ Department for Education (2014) Children who run away or go missing from home or care. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care>

repeatedly run away and go missing; and additional actions to protect looked after children.

Volume 2 of the Children Act (2014) outlines guidance and regulations for care planning, placement and case review [supplement]: looked after children and youth justice.

It also sets out how local authorities should ensure looked after children in contact with youth justice services are provided with appropriate support. This updates previous guidance following the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.

3. Profile of looked after children and young people in Tower Hamlets

Accurate management information and analysis underpins strategic development. We know a great deal about our looked after population, with the most recent annual data attached in Appendix B.

From our analysis we know:

- In 2013/14 there were 325 children looked after at 31st March. This was down from 350 children looked after at 31st March 2010/11⁵. Local data would also suggest that the number of children looked after reduced further in 2014/15 with 277 children looked after, though there has been a recent spike with an increase to 292 in January 2016
- Overall there is a national downward trend in the overall looked after population and in the number of longer term looked after children. however the reduction in numbers is not as significant for the looked after population across inner London
- Children looked after in Tower Hamlets tend to be slightly older than children elsewhere in the country. 77% of the looked after children population are older than 10 years of age compared to 58% nationally. There is also a greater proportion of young people 16 years and over in Tower Hamlets compared to other boroughs within inner London.
- The percentage of young people who turned 18 and remained in their foster care placement under an arrangement, 'Staying Put' supported by the local authority has increased.
- Whilst the number of Bangladeshi children is increasing, this group remains slightly under-represented against the local population . Children with a Caribbean heritage (or White/Caribbean) are over-represented within this cohort.
- The percentage of children in the same placement for at least 2 years continues to grow and the percentage of children placed within 20 miles of their home is better than the national average or our statistical neighbours

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption--2>

- Appendix C shows that while our young people are normally placed within 20 miles of their home, this will often mean being placed outside the borough and 36% will be placed outside London.
- There remains an over representation of children subject to Section 20. However, the average length of care proceedings has reduced and performance is in-line with our statistical neighbours and there has been an increase in cases taken to court as a result of case law and changes in judicial practice.
- There has been an improvement in immunisation rates, however there is a reduction in the percentage of children looked after who had dental checks.
- The percentage of eligible young people achieving 5 plus A*-C (inc English and Mathematics) has improved in 2014/15 and is above average performance in England and our statistical neighbours. However, performance dipped in 2013/14 and we have not returned to 2012/13 levels.
- In 2014/15 there were 155 care leavers in Tower Hamlets between the ages of 19 and 21 years of age. Local data suggests that in January 2016 there were 189 care leavers in Tower Hamlets.
- Tower Hamlets care leavers have a high percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training: 38.5% of care leavers are NEET compared to 32.8% within our statistical neighbours.

4. Projection

Projections of the number of looked after children in future years is influenced by a number of factors, some of which are unpredictable. However, it is possible to give an estimated projection, based on local trends and activity, of whether the overall number is likely to fall, rise or remain stable.

Since 2011 the size of the 0-17 year old resident population in Tower Hamlets has increased by 11%. This growth is not reflected in the size of the LAC cohort, which as of 2015 is 15% lower than in 2011. This demonstrates that changes in the LAC cohort is not directly linked to growth in the 0-17 population.

Factors which are likely to influence the Children Looked After population within a local authority are:

- change in size of child population
- change in demographics
- economic climate (both in terms of pressure on families and impact on public services)
- the number of children subject to child protection plans
- the number of children and young people seeking asylum
- the effectiveness of early intervention and family support services

- local or national media coverage of significant concern relating to child protection or care services.
- local or national research or reviews related to child care services
- The Council's involvement in the Signs of Safety as a practice framework

The current national and local contexts that could increase our looked after population is:

- The projected rise in the national child population for the foreseeable future
- The potential increase in unaccompanied children and refugees, arising from the conflict in Syria, Libya, Iraq and Eritrea.
- National economic downturn
- Changes to the welfare benefits system which could lead to financial disadvantage for families
- Government spending review resulting in loss of public sector funding – initial assessments show that the total savings gap between 2016/17 and 2018/19 is estimated to be £63m which would require an average of £21m of savings to be delivered each year. Deleted as it has passed. There is a chance that local government funding could be squeezed even further than expected.⁶
- A child who is remanded to youth detention accommodation is now treated as a child who is looked after by the designated authority.
- Staying put' arrangements which allow children in care to stay with their foster families until the age of 21 years

The graph below shows the number of children and young people looked after in Tower Hamlets and the projected growth in LAC population. The red line shows the actual number of looked after children over the last five years.

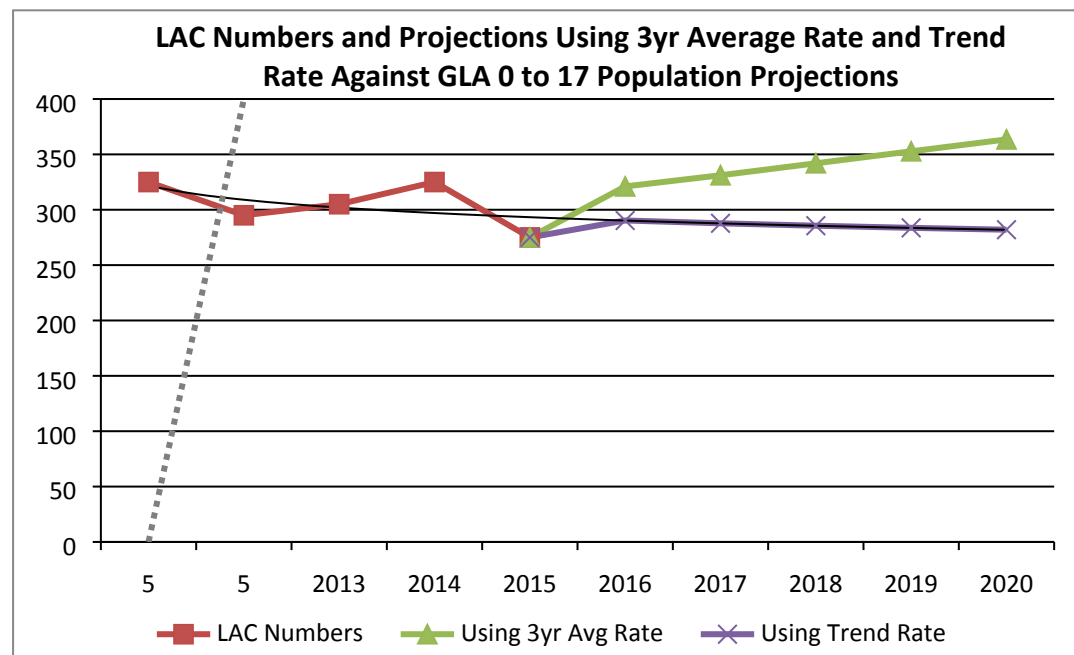
The green line represents projected growth in the LAC cohort based on a three year average of LAC rates (per 10,000 of the 0-17 population) and GLA population projections. We do not believe that this is a realistic projection as it has an implicit assumption that the LAC rates will remain the same in perpetuity.

The purple line, however, shows projected growth based on GLA projections and a marginally reducing LAC rate derived from trends over the past five years. It is suggested that this is based on a more reasonable assumption that rates will decline in line with local, London and national rates.

This does not account for other externalities including the number of residents within a youth offending institution nor the implications of the staying put

⁶ London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Strategic and Resource Planning 2016/17 to 2018/19.
<http://moderngov.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/b16429/Pack%20Two%20Items%205.7%20Appendix%202%20Monthly%20Budget%20Monitoring%20and%20Item%205.10%20Strategic%20and%20Resource%20Plannin.pdf?T=9>

arrangements. While our projections are based on headline data, we will develop our projection model to include an analysis of inflows and outflows for the duration of care.



Practice can be an important factor. We are aware that the numbers of looked after children living out of borough are lower than our Statistical Neighbours and our profile of Looked After Children is older than it should be. We will, during the course of this strategy, constantly review this as part of the Quality Assurance Framework. A separate report with comprehensive data will explore the underlying practice issues. This will contribute to our collective understanding about what the data is telling us about thresholds applied across the Family Well Being Model. This will ensure there are no drifts or delays in decision making processes for children and young people looked after. We will undertake focused pieces of work including audits to check the consistency and quality of our decision-making and its impact on LAC profile.

Our Signs of Safety work planning has led to the following assumptions that will be tested in the course of the years ahead:

1. More concise and clearer London Borough of Tower Hamlets assessments where parents/ carers are aware of what we are worried about and what needs to change
2. Improved parent/ carer/ child satisfaction in the social work we offer
3. More confident decision making in Looked After Children cases and less drift in case planning and case trajectory
4. A shift in placement types to more family and friends placements for emergency care and short term care options
5. An increase in Special Guardianship Orders as an option for permanency
6. Potentially more children in care because our analysis will improve

7. A decrease in reassessment as a 'stop-start' approach, and improved cumulative analysis when the allocated social workers change for any reason. .
8. Improved timeliness in family court proceedings due to improved analysis and clear case trajectory
9. Improved family involvement (and extended family via Family Group Conferences) at the first instance of Children's Social Care involvement thus leading to less delay in court

In our previous strategy, we outlined our approach to reducing the rate per 10,000 within two years. This was achieved through a number of factors including demographic change, the Entry to Care Panel and preventative work that supports families before disruption. There may also be links to children passing through the system more quickly and moving into placements not as looked after children.

One consequence of a reduction in the number of children and young people looked after is that those who remain looked after are likely to have greater complexity of need and present more significant challenges to overcome – this in itself makes maintaining a downward trend more difficult to manage given the financial implications in meeting the complexities of this cohort and may impact negatively on performance outcomes.

5. Our strategies to prevent children and young people entering care unnecessarily

5.1 Timely, analytical and focused assessment of children who may enter care

Tower Hamlets Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is a multi-agency safeguarding hub, which brings together a variety of agencies into an integrated multi-agency team, where they can share intelligence on vulnerable children, families and adults. MASH was formally launched in Tower Hamlets in February 2014.

The key objectives of MASH are as follows

- Identify risks to children and adults at the earliest possible point
- Ensure better information sharing and therefore more effective interventions
- Deliver cashable efficiencies in the longer term
- Identify and reduce harm, crime and anti-social behaviour

5.2 Early intervention and family support services

5.2.1 No Wrong Door

The Council is currently developing proposals to re-shape services for vulnerable children and young people and families (all ages) which builds on an evidenced based service model and evidenced based interventions. This has been developed by children's commissioning and children's social care managers. The service model will require the re-configuration of family intervention and specialist services under a single management umbrella and co-location of key partner services such as CAMHS. It will also require a standard approach to assessment through signs of safety, integrated care plans and joint training and management of the integrated team.

It is envisaged that the proposed service model and common approach across agencies will better support children and young people and will reduce entry to care, secure placement stability and improve the safeguarding of children and young people. It is anticipated that this service can be developed within existing resources by reconfiguring services and working more effectively with partner agencies.

Our recent thematic review, *Troubled Lives, Tragic Consequences*⁷, acknowledges that we need to change the way we work by identifying children earlier and intervening as appropriate. We also know that children and young people have a multitude of services/agencies involved in their lives and that a more integrated approach would produce better outcomes across the continuum of need.

The borough has a significant resource to support our most vulnerable children and families. However, services are arguably fragmented across children's social care and these and others are under different management structures. There is also inconsistency in our approach to supporting families and areas of duplication have been identified. It is therefore timely to consider developing a new integrated service model in order that we can better respond to the needs of our most vulnerable children, young people and families.

Our proposal recommends that services are reconfigured so that children and young people have a single point of access to a specialist, highly trained team and the delivery of a core offer of support based on the 'No Wrong Door'⁸ model which has been built on evidence based practice with a specific focus on restorative and therapeutic approaches. The service will be available to children and young people on the edge of care, looked after children (including those in residential and external placements – the service will

⁷ Chard, A (2015) *Troubled Lives Tragic Consequences*.
<http://www.childrenandfamiliestrust.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Troubled-Lives-Summary-Report-Final1.pdf>

⁸ North Yorkshire Council, *No Wrong Door*,
<http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/24409/Residential-care-for-children>

support young people wherever they move to), those leaving care and other vulnerable children at risk.

5.2.2 Young people on the edge of care

Adolescent entrants to the care system tend to experience a larger number of placements, a more disrupted experience of care, poorer outcomes in education and are at increased risk of struggling when they leave care.⁹ There is also a greater proportion of young people 16 years and over in Tower Hamlets compared to other boroughs within inner London.

The Council invests considerable resources within our early help offer, and activity is underway to redesign services across the partnership to support children and families to manage conflict and associated difficulties they face during adolescence, with a new focus on using an evidence based model inclusive of “ No Wrong Door” , Multi Systemic Therapy or Family Focused Therapy, with a strategic workforce plan.

We want to understand our adolescents on the edge of care and innovative ways to improve and re-design service delivery to achieve higher quality, improved outcomes and better value for money. To this end, we will work with the Greater London Authority to explore the possibility of creating a Pan-London solution for delivering and funding Edge of Care services.

One potential area of focus would be the use of Social Impact Bonds (SIB) to fund projects to focus on prevention of care, preventing escalation or encouraging de-escalation. SIBs are a financial mechanism in which investors pay for a set of interventions to improve a social outcome. If the social outcome improves, the local authority will repay the investors for their initial investment plus a return for the financial risks they took. If the social outcomes are not achieved, the investors stand to lose their investment.

5.2.3 The Family Wellbeing Model

The Family Wellbeing Model provides a framework for the early identification and provision of support to vulnerable families, who do not meet the threshold for referral to Children’s Social Care. The model supports children, young people and families to achieve their full potential by setting out in one place our approach to delivering services for all families across all levels of need. Relevant services include health, early years, education, youth, social care, crime and justice and housing services and any other service impacting on a child or young person and/or their parents or carers.

This Family Wellbeing Model sets out how we work to respond to different levels of need in Tower Hamlets, and gives practical descriptors which anyone can use to help families and children get the most appropriate help and support. The model also clearly sets out our structure for consultation,

⁹ Sinclair et al “The Pursuit of Permanence; A Study of the English Child Care System” 2007

co-ordination and co-operation between agencies to promote family wellbeing, and to ensure that the children of Tower Hamlets get the best deal from what is on offer to support them.

Conceptually this model focuses on early support and targeted help by putting in place robust responses to identified needs earlier, with the aim of enabling vulnerable children and their families to lead positive lives without the need for statutory intervention such as entering the care system.

5.2.4 Family Intervention Service

The current Family Intervention Service in Tower Hamlets has been redesigned to cover two strands of the early intervention strategy, Family Intervention Project (FIP) and the Family Support Cluster. FIP provides early intervention to families below the threshold for referral to CSC. The Family Support Cluster multi-disciplinary team targets families where there are complex and entrenched problems with longstanding social work involvement. The aim of the team is to provide intense intervention for children subject to child protection and children in need where families are “stuck”, where the social worker with other professionals are unable to effect change. The Family Support Cluster became operational in September 2011.

5.2.5 Outreach Service

The Outreach Service, operating from Mulberry Place, is reconfiguring its service to offer a multi-agency family support service targeted at children and young people on the cusp of care.

5.2.6 Short Breaks

The Local authority is required under the Children Act 1989 to provide services designed to give breaks for carers of disabled children. The ‘Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations’ (2010) sets out what local authorities should do to meet their duties in relation to the provision of short breaks. Services for children and young people with a disability are also developed in the context of other related Acts such as the Children and Families Act 2014, the Carers Act 2014, the Children Act 2004 and the Equality Act 2010.

Tower Hamlets’ local offer for short breaks is that all disabled children and young people have access to one short break of choice, within available resources. In 2014/15, 513 children and young people accessed our specialist short break services (an increase of 28 young people since 2011/12).

Short breaks enable disabled children and young people to access the kind of activities that are open to non-disabled children, so that they can lead ordinary lives. They help them have fun, try new activities, gain independence and make friends. Short breaks are one of the services most commonly requested by parents of disabled children. These services also offer parents and carers the much-needed break they need from their additional caring responsibilities.

By providing short breaks to children with disabilities and their families, the Council and its short break partners are supporting these families to cope with the additional pressures they experience in family life. A regular short break can be a lifeline to parents, building their resilience and helping them to continue to care for their child with a disability at home, preventing problems escalating and reducing the likelihood for the child needing to be taken into care.

5.3 Clear and consistent method of entry to care

The Entry to Care Panel was established in October 2009, in response to increasing concerns about the number of teenagers entering care in an unplanned manner and the overall instability that they experienced after they became looked after. The Entry to Care Panel meets on a weekly basis to consider all children requiring Section 20 accommodation and/or the initiation of care proceedings.

The objectives of the panel are:

- To ensure that only those children who genuinely need to become looked after do so
- To stabilise the number of teenagers becoming looked after
- To effectively focus legal activity
- To increase the consistency and quality of care planning
- To identify and commit resources
- To share information on specific cases
- To develop a strategic senior management overview regarding trends
- To share risk and identify accountability throughout the organisation

Annual reviews are completed to establish whether the Panel's objectives remain relevant and are being met. A review was completed in May 2015, and a detailed report looking at the panel's decision making for assurance purposes was received and approved by Children Social Care Senior Managers in Oct 2015.

6. Our strategies to provide high quality and timely planning for children who become looked after

6.1 Sufficient suitable placements

The Children Act 1989 gave all local authorities a statutory duty to provide or procure placements for looked after children. The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (March 2010) guidance and regulations, came into force on the 1st April 2011. This placed a duty on all local authorities to ensure sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of looked after children and an accompanying duty to develop a strategy laying out how this duty will be met.

The sufficiency strategy is designed to minimise the risk to children looked after by the council and manage the cost within available resources. The Council's Sufficiency Strategy was last published in May 2015.

The quality of a child's placement is the most crucial factor in securing a positive experience for looked after children and therefore demands particular attention. The aim is to be able to match a child's particular needs with the most suitable placement from the beginning of their journey through care, to support that placement to the level required but also to intervene in the placement if it ceases to meet the needs¹⁰.

The Council's vision has been to provide, through our in house provision or, where a suitable in house provision is not available, through external providers a range of high quality care placements, sufficient to meet the needs of Tower Hamlets children and young people when it is decided, at the council's Entry to Care Panel, that bringing them into the care of the council is the best and last resort to safeguard their welfare.¹¹

To support the Sufficiency Strategy, the Council will continue to;

- Work collaboratively with other East London Boroughs (Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Newham and Havering) and the North London Children's Efficiency Programme to identify joint commissioning opportunities that can manage markets more effectively
- Continuing to develop the Tower Hamlets permanence policy, in partnership with the court work project, to ensure that every effort is made to prevent delay in finding children a permanent family through permanent fostering, residence orders, special guardianship and adoption
- Enabling the participation of children in care and care leavers in the design and improvement of care services, including the development of a LAC Pledge and appropriate staff, member and carer training led by young people themselves
- Supporting the Tower Hamlets Foster Care Association to take a lead role in promoting fostering, representing foster carers and improving the effectiveness of foster carer support services
- Working collaboratively with education and health partners to ensure that they can fulfil their additional responsibilities to children in care and to jointly procure specialist placements
- Reviewing the fees and allowances for foster carers and family and friends foster carers
- Regularly reviewing our Family Finding Strategy

¹⁰ See: Sinclair, I., Baker, C, Lee, J and Gibbs, I. (2007) 'The Pursuit of Permanence: A Study of the English Care System' London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

¹¹ London Borough of Tower Hamlets, The Sufficiency Duty, May 2015

6.2 Active planning and intervention before, during and immediately after becoming looked after

Direct support to the child in the placement is provided by a co-ordinated package that is directed by the allocated social worker and monitored by the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). Under the 2010 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review regulations the IRO becomes responsible not only for the progress of the child's Care Plan, but is also responsible for monitoring the function of the local authority in relation to its duties towards a looked after child. The regulations introduce a specific responsibility to hold a review if the placement is identified by any person as no longer meeting the needs of the child.

- Whilst not all entries to care can be planned we know that the majority of children and young people who become looked after are already known to CSC. Nationally, research indicates that around 40% of children coming into care had been looked after before¹². The Entry to Care Panel process has encouraged a stronger focus on the planning for these children when they are reaching a point of needing to become looked after. This includes consideration of all alternatives including family and friends care and also proactive consideration of plans for them, rather than seeing becoming looked after as a plan in itself.
- The Council is currently working in partnership with the CCG to embed CAMHS within Children's Social Care in Tower Hamlets. A dedicated CAMHS team for looked after children will enable CAMHS workers to work closely with Social Care workers on a range of issues, beginning with a more accessible and dynamic referral process and the development of a joined up assessment and intervention for any given case. The service model will support this in line with a succession of policy papers from the Centre including Future in Mind¹³ (2015) and good practice models UK-wide.
- The CAMHS service within Children Looked After will have a key relationship with DCOS (Disabled Children's Outreach Service). DCOS is an established integrated team funded by Children's Social Care.
- The briefings held in relation to the regulations have highlighted the concept of permanency planning. Understanding and application of this concept is to be a key driver for our work over the next year.

¹² Farmer, E., Sturgess, W. and O'Neill, T (2008) 'The Reunification of Looked After Children with their Parents: Patterns, Interventions and Outcomes'. Report to the Department for Children, Schools and Families, University of Bristol

¹³ Department of Health (2015), Future in Mind: Promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414024/Childrens_Mental_Health.pdf

6.3 Placement stability

Unsurprisingly we know through our own feedback from children and young people and from national surveys that the provision, quality and stability of placements is one of the most important issues for children and young people looked after¹⁴. Placement stability is focal to the achievement of our overall CLA strategy and has been a priority over the past 5 years.

Achievements during this time include:

- Quality Assurance through the Placement Stability Strategy group
- Raised profile and understanding of placement stability through the social work workforce
- Audits and reviews regarding the profile of teenagers entering the care system, leading directly to the establishment of the Entry to Care Panel
- Audits and analysis of placement breakdowns to identify any possible profile indicators of risk
- Trend of improved performance in both stability indicators
- Revised matching format to improve the placement finding process

Our sufficiency strategy is aimed at providing the right placement for each child at the right time. Unfortunately, this is not always possible in all cases, especially when there is a need for an emergency placement. However, once a child has been placed we need to maintain constant vigilance that the placement is continuing to provide the right care and that it is meeting the child's needs, including safeguarding the child. We also know that, for older children, contact with their birth families can strongly influence placement stability either positively or negatively and this therefore needs to be subject to regular review and scrutiny.

The Care Planning regulations provide a framework for enhancing the monitoring of each placement. In addition to this our strategies for improving placement stability are:

- To maintain provision of bi-monthly tracking of children reaching 2 placements to operational managers
- To audit placements of children placed in external residential resources, to ensure that they are the most appropriate resource
- To maintain Placement Stability meetings when placements are under risk
- To maintain the involvement of a CAMHS worker with Children's Placement Team for advice and intervention for children in Foster and Residential Care
- To undertake an audit of Placement Planning Meetings to ensure that they are taking place as required and meeting each child's identified needs

¹⁴ 'Children's messages to the Minister' 2009 Ofsted www.rights4me.org

- To increase social workers understanding of the range of permanency options and contact and its influence on placements
- Learning from complaints and representations
- To increase the use of Family Group Conferences to assist with management of contact
- Audit secure applications and to learn from disruptions
- Implement the Mocking Bird Programme

7. Our strategies to provide high quality care for those children we are responsible for

7.1 Participation of children and young people

We want children and young people to be at the centre of the way that we work and everything we do. This not only provides a quality assurance check on our services but also provides children and young people with an opportunity to inform and contribute to services, which in itself provides opportunities to gain valuable and lasting skills, experience and confidence. Under the Children Act 1989, the Council has a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child/young person inclusive of an advocacy service to all children who may be unhappy with the services they have received from the Council. This requires the provision of support from an external provider in order to ensure a level of independence. Provision of the service also addresses the national responsibilities of the Council under the Children Act 2004, as well as contributing to 'a Healthy Community'.

Independent advocacy plays a vital role in ensuring children in care have their views heard and acted upon. The Children's Service Directorate has continued to commission Action for Children to provide a Children's Rights Advocacy Service. The service provides support to children and young people aged 0-21 years old. Its aim is to promote the rights of children looked after and care leavers in Tower Hamlets by:

- Participating in the day to day decisions about their care
- Being involved in service development designed to improve outcomes for young people in and leaving the Council's care

Separately, the government funds the National Youth Advocacy Service and Voice (Coram) to provide an advocacy service for children looked after and care leavers. This is through information and advice via telephone enabling young people to access and obtain advice when they want it.

The new Child Rights Advocacy Service will incorporate services for looked after children, children with disabilities and independent return interviews. The Child Rights Advocacy Service contract will be expanded to incorporate our obligations under 'staying put' and the Care Leavers Charter. The Child Rights Advocacy service ensures children are empowered to participate in their care planning and are able to fully participate in the development of

children's social care. Our needs assessment has shown greater need for an advocacy service that will meet the needs of all children and young people, regardless of their age or where they have been placed. To support this we will commission an advocacy service that will deliver an additional Children in Care Council, specifically for younger children. We will also require a service that will actively engage with children and young people, regardless of where they have been placed in the country.

Our methods of keeping children and young people informed and involved are:

- A quarterly magazine for both the younger and the older age groups
- Care leavers are key members of any recruitment panel for both Social Workers and Personal Advisors
- We facilitate the involvement of children and young people in national consultations – 3 over the past year
- Care leavers are actively involved in the production of information leaflets and in reviewing policy
- Care leavers contribute directly to foster carer training
- We hold two annual consultation events for children in care and care leavers
- We run a range of activity, participation and celebration events throughout the year. In the last year we have put on a barbeque, with certificates of achievement given to young people.
- Care leavers participate in events held for younger children looked after, such as the Summer School and consultation event, acting as role models

To promote and maintain meaningful participation and involvement we have identified a lead manager for Children's Specialist Services. We also ensure Care Leavers have the option to pursue the Council's apprenticeship programme and engagement activities.

Our priorities over the next 3 years are to:

- Improve the operation of the Corporate Parenting Steering group by linking it more effectively with Members, Chief Officers and children and young people
- Maintain the level of participation and consultation events in the context of reduced budgets

We will achieve this by:

- Reviewing the CICC arrangements
- Reviewing the terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Steering Group
- Repeating training on corporate parenting training for Members and Chief Officers

- Awareness of the Pledge and Communication Standards for children, young people, staff and carers
- Launching this CLA strategy through corporate parenting arrangements

The participation action plan for each year can be found within the CLA/LCS Service Plan.

7.2 Health

Research has shown that children and young people in care are at an increased risk of poor health (using the widest definition) due to a number of causal factors including:

- Compromise of their physical and emotional health both pre and post birth whilst in the care of their families
- For some, the accumulative effect of abusive or neglectful parenting
- Lack of attention to routine health care eg immunisation, health education, health monitoring
- Negative experiences whilst in care eg through placement disruption; unmanaged behaviour problems that can result in health care being further disrupted¹⁵

This confirms the importance of continuing to monitor that basic health checks are being completed in respect of children looked after. The percentage of looked after children with an up to date health check has improved year on year since 2012/13. 91.9% of children and young people had an annual health check in 2014/15.

The mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people looked after is vital. The risk factors associated with teenage pregnancy, such as socio-economic deprivation; limited involvement in education; low educational attainment; limited access to consistent, positive adult support; being a child of a teenage mother; low self esteem; and experience of sexual abuse, are to be found more often in the looked after population than among children and young people who are not in care.¹⁶

Nationally, almost a quarter (22%) of girls in care become teenage mothers. This is about three times the national average. Furthermore at least one in 10 care leavers aged 16–21 who are parents have had a child taken into care in the past year.¹⁷ Within Tower Hamlets we have very few girls in care who become parents but many more who become parents after they leave care.

¹⁵ Hill, CM 'The Health of Looked After Children' in Schofield, G & Simmonds, J (eds) 2009 The Child Placement Handbook London BAAF

¹⁶ SCIE Research briefing 9. (2004) Preventing teenage pregnancy in looked after children. <http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/briefings/briefing09/>

¹⁷ Centre for Social Justice (2015), Finding their feet, equipping care leavers to reach their potential. http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/UserStorage/pdf/Pdf%20reports/CSJ2834_Care_Leavers_01.15_Executive_Summary_WEB.pdf.pdf

Over the past three years there have been 23 children looked after who had a child. However, we also know that 10.8% (7.2 percentage points higher than our statistical neighbours) of care leavers were not in education, employment or training due to pregnancy or parenting. Whilst this is not necessarily indicative of problems in itself, the younger the parent the more likely it is that the outcome for their own child is going to be limited, with a high percentage becoming looked after themselves.

Specific health priorities over the next 3 years are to:

- Improve the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people in and leaving care
- Improve the outcomes for young people in and leaving care who become parents

We will achieve this by:

- Implementing the health passport for all Children Looked After
- Maintaining our partnership with Lifeline Renew providing focused substance misuse advice and support to children and young people in care; we will explore the possibility of including Lifeline as part of our weekly drop-in sessions with care leavers in the borough.
- Maintaining our strong partnership with health providing dedicated LAC nurse support to children in care and focused access to sex and relationship education and support
- Maintaining a focus on children and young people looked after and leaving care within the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy
- The Council will work with Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to review its emotional health and wellbeing services. The CCG has committed to invest additional funding into an outcomes based integrated offer for children and young people.
- Explore the possibility of developing dedicated mental health support for young people leaving care.
- Maintaining our contract for our Independent Visiting Service, which has seen an increase in use over the past year and received extremely positive feedback from children. We have increased the target number of matches from this year
- Ensure that Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires are undertaken for all looked after children within the first six months of care
- Raise awareness of LGBT needs to support the identity of young people

7.3 Educational achievement

Tower Hamlets has an established Virtual School for Looked After children which carries overall responsibility for the educational achievement and well-being of our looked after children and young people. The service is an integral part of Children's Social Care.

Reflecting the trend nationally, performance at Key Stage 4 for all children in Tower Hamlets has dipped slightly in 2013/14. This decline in performance is also apparent within children looked after in the borough. Attainment of our children and young people looked after has improved over the past 5 years across all key stages, with particular improvement in GCSE attainment. We have continued to maintain permanent exclusions of children looked after at none.

However, our key strategic aim of narrowing the gap between children looked after and their peers has proved challenging. Although performance has improved in respect of 5 or more GCSE's, including the more challenging target of including English and Maths, a high percentage of young people do not sit one GCSE. This mirrors the national picture but is a major concern given that GCSE attainment remains a significant factor for young people entering the jobs market at a later point.

With regard to those who do attain GCSE's we feel that some of our young people are not being sufficiently challenged within their school and home environments. Arguably, greater support and active encouragement and belief in young people will make a difference.

The Virtual School Team will strengthen their partnership approach, working directly with schools on a day to day basis, in line with statutory guidance for local authorities¹⁸. This means that:

- The virtual schools teachers and social worker will chair The Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings twice yearly
- Ensuring the educational needs of our looked after children are of the highest priority in schools
- The Pupil Premium is used for the purpose of raising attainment as stated in the PEP
- Raising attainment is focused sharply on how schools will utilise resources to ensure academic progress

Specific education priorities over the next three years are to:

- Maintain year on year improvement in Key stage 2 and Key Stage 4 attainment
- Engage the most challenging and disaffected young people in education or vocational activities so that they may be able to access GCSE or equivalent qualifications at a later stage.

We will achieve this by;

- Focusing on the role of the designated teachers in schools in setting challenging and appropriate learning targets for pupils in their PEPs

¹⁸ DFE (2014) Promoting the education of looked after children.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335964/Promoting_the_educational_achievement_of_looked_after_children_Final_23-....pdf

- Providing dedicated SENCO and PA time to the Virtual School
- Providing a named Educational Psychologist to act as a link and adviser to the Virtual School
- Maintaining representation of the Virtual School on the Joint Commissioning Panel and Fostering Panel
- Extending the Virtual School remit to post 16 services, up to 25 years of age
- Achieving placement stability
- Pilot the PEP approach, applying the Signs of Safety framework
- Review the relationship or correlation between attainment and duration in care

Whilst attendance of children looked after who are registered at a school has improved and compares extremely well with non-looked after children's school attendance at Tower Hamlets schools, there is a significant number of children who miss school either through not having a school place, unauthorised absence or through taking holidays in term time.

Attendance of LAC pupils is monitored closely and regularly. Where attendance drops below 92%, the Attendance and Welfare Advisor contacts the child's social worker to raise the concern and discuss strategies to improve attendance. Where attendance drops below 87%, the AEWA follows the escalation procedure alerting the Virtual School Headteacher, team managers and the service manager for Children Looked After.

The actions below have been identified to improve attendance of LAC pupils:

- Increase day's allocations for AEWA
- Follow Attendance Escalation procedure when working with social workers
- Ensure process of placing a LAC not on roll is followed through within 20 days.
- Reduce the number of LAC 1yr+ under 87 days attendances
- Continue to address unauthorised absence, particularly among pupil attending PRU

8. Our strategies to provide high quality and timely permanency planning for all children in and leaving care

8.1 Permanency planning

The Care Planning regulations define permanence as:

- Emotional permanence – the child having one or more people to whom she or he is securely attached
- Physical permanence – the child living in a stable and safe environment

- Legal permanence – the child having a carer who can exercise parental responsibility and the child feeling secure in the knowledge of who this person is

The first two of these are met within our strategies around placement stability but we need to develop a more rigorous approach regarding the securing of legal permanence for each child.

For a minority of children long term care may be either the most appropriate or the only option and in this case every effort must be made to secure a long term foster placement, unless the particular needs of the child make this unsuitable. Some children's needs are better met in residential homes with a range of provision as it is necessary to promote choice and personalisation within care planning.

The adoption figures are understood in the context of the age profile of children looked after being predominantly older, and above the adoption age range. Court directions often promote connected family placements in the first instance (also known as friends and family placements) so children are placed with relatives. This could be a grandparent, close relative or even a family friend. Special Guardianship Orders have increased. Research¹⁹ demonstrates that this is a positive alternative to permanency route providing children with stability within the wider family. Special Guardianships provide the opportunity to remain within their extended family network. We have also seen an equivalent rise in commencing court proceedings, comparable with our statistical neighbours. Local data shows that the children looked after numbers have increased to 292 in 2016. Our focus in Tower Hamlets is to ensure that the most appropriate permanent plans are made for children and we continue to manage robustly the interface with the judiciary and the changing legal context to ensure this happens.

In line with government priorities we have a strong focus on timely placement of children in adoptive families, where this is in their best interests. Tower Hamlets provides a good service to adopted children and their families. A key performance measure for the Council is the average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. The number of days for the period April 2012 – March 2015 is 645 days. This is just outside our aspiration for children and young people in the borough. Performance for this indicator is affected by the small size of the cohort, individual circumstances of one or two children and young people can adversely affect performance.

Our improvement plan includes tracking the progress of some of the children where permanency is the care plan. We can achieve this by increasing numbers of adopters in order to have sufficient carers for the children needing permanent families. Our recruitment strategy is focussed on recruitment for older children, sibling groups, children with special needs and development uncertainty and children from different ethnic backgrounds. In line with the

¹⁹ Bullock et al (2010) 30 years of childcare practice and research - an overview.
<http://corambaaf.org.uk/info/kinship-care-and-special-guardianship>

government agenda we are mindful of having sufficient adopters that may be used by other agencies.

In Tower Hamlets there are varieties of forums which oversee and monitor the appropriateness of our care planning decisions. This includes Looked After Children reviews, the Looked After Children TRAC quality assurance panel, the Adoption Summit, Placement Planning Meetings and ultimately the Entry into Care Panel.

London-wide analysis of the data confirms that the biggest factor preventing adoption is the ethnicity of those children. There are a high number of white adopters who want children of a similar ethnic group, whilst the smaller numbers of children waiting for adoption are from a broader diverse range of ethnicities. Tower Hamlets 2014 - 15 analysis indicates an improvement in the adoption of Black and Minority Ethnic children (15 for 2014-15 as opposed to 3 for 2013 -14). We intend to continue this focussed improvement. We are successful in our recruitment of adopters from a broad range of ethnic groups. In fact we are one of the best performing boroughs in London on this measure.

Specific priorities over the next 3 years are to:

- Reduce the proportion of children in care for between 6 and 18 months
- Reduce the percentage of care proceedings cases going beyond 50 weeks
- Maintain the percentage of children placed for adoption within 12 months of the adoption decision at 82%
- Increase permanency for Looked After Children with disabilities

We will achieve this by:

- Maintaining the Adoption Summit
- Utilising the IRO alert system
- Raising awareness of permanency issues and options throughout Children's Social Care through training and briefings
- Scrutinising the care plans of children aged 8 to 12 to ensure that clear plans are in place and being progressed
- Monitoring legal cases going over 26 and 50 weeks at Service Manager/Service Head level quarterly with legal services

8.2 Returning home

We also need to continue to review, via the Entry to Care Panel, those children and young people who are returned home from Section 20 accommodation and who then become re-accommodated, as this is a high risk group. The most common outcome for children leaving care is to return home to a parent or relative. However, research shows that around half of children who come into care because of abuse or neglect suffer further abuse

if they return home, with up to half of those returning to care. Over 70 per cent of children consulted by the NSPCC²⁰ said they were not ready to return home. Those children who remain at home can also continue to face significant risk. Research shows that two thirds (62 per cent) of children who returned home remained with a suspected abuser even after concerns had been identified, with 16 per cent of children even remaining at home after confirmed incidents of abuse or neglect. There is also the assumption that the improved provision of both social care support and appropriate services for children and families could result in a reduction of the reunification breakdown rate. As such, packages of additional support and services that could be provided to children and families on return home to achieve this have been analysed. Research²¹ also tells us that these risks can be mitigated by active planning about which services to include, the proportion of families that may need them and the intensity of the provision.

A specific priority over the next 3 years is to:

- Reduce the number of children looked after under Section 20 of the Children Act

We will achieve this by:

- Raising awareness of permanency issues and options throughout Children's Social Care through training and briefings
- Ensuring that all children and young people returning home from Section 20 accommodation are subject to a Child in Need/Child Protection Plan and that this is monitored for at least 6 months, unless this is evidently not required
- Undertaking a review of children de-accommodated and the outcomes

8.3 Transition to independence

Our Leaving Care Service is well established and achieves good outcomes for care leavers against national indicators. The service has evolved in response to changing profile and need, with the aim being to provide as seamless a journey as possible for young people moving from childhood to independence.

The service achieves very well in relation to user engagement and involvement, supporting take up of education, training and employment and securing and maintaining suitable accommodation. This has been achieved by:

²⁰ NSPCC(2012) Returning home from care: What's best for children
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/returning-home-from-care-best-children.pdf>

²¹ Holmes, L (2014) Supporting Children and Families Returning Home from Care: Counting the costs.
<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/media/www/lboroacuk/content/ccfr/publications/Supporting%20children%20and%20families%20returning%20home%20from%20care.pdf>

- Valuing and promoting a positive ethic by engaging with the workforce
- Securing positive and mutually beneficial partnerships with related council departments and external agencies (ie housing and employment)

However, over the past year it became apparent that planning for young people was inconsistent, which not only had an impact on the young people themselves but also exposed the local authority to challenge through the complaints and inspection process and the courts. This is particularly the case for young people with distinct needs, including those seeking asylum and young people with disabilities.

In addition the Children (Leaving Care) Regulations 2010 extended responsibilities towards former children looked after, requiring the revision of procedures and protocols.

Specific priorities over the next 3 years in relation to care leavers are:

- To maintain good outcomes in the context of reduced budgets
- To improve the quality and consistency of Pathway Planning
- Implement the Staying Put policy

We will achieve this by:

- Maintaining our existing partnerships and brokering new ones that can offer opportunities and services for care leavers particularly in the areas of supported housing, entry to employment and immigration services including legal specialists
- Implementing and reviewing a new system of Pathway Planning with a shift in responsibility for drawing up the plan being transferred from the Leaving Care Personal Adviser to the existing allocated Social Worker, with the PA retaining oversight of the plan and taking over responsibility for delivering it when the young person becomes 18. The Pathway Plan will take over from the Care Plan as the predominant method of planning for the young person, with the IRO therefore taking a more active role in monitoring and reviewing the plan.
- Developing and reviewing protocols and guidance for young people seeking services under the new regulations

The plan for the current year addressing issues for care leavers can be found in the CLA/LCS Service Plan.

9. Leaving Care

National research shows us that the journey of care leavers through the first decade of adult life is often disrupted, unstable and troubled. Being in the care of the local authority is significantly associated with having emotional well-being

and mental health problems²². Children and young people in public care are four to five times more likely to have a diagnosable or diagnosed mental disorder than their peers who are not looked after. Diagnosed conduct disorders appear particularly prevalent among this group of children and young people²³.

Care leavers are a vulnerable group of young adults who have particular needs in relation to housing and homelessness. National research shows that around a quarter of those living on the streets have a background in care²⁴. The majority of care leavers leave care by the age of 18 and rising demands on social housing and other accommodation is making it increasingly difficult for young people to find suitable accommodation as they enter adulthood.

The term 'cut off care' has been used to capture, the abrupt reduction or removal of institutional care systems and safety nets, that can leave people vulnerable to exploitation from controllers and may result in engagement in sex work through necessity or habit. In many cases, those who have been discharged from a particular care system may experience a lack of money, housing, employment, social capital and appropriate networks of support, which can drive people into greater social exclusion and may lead to engagement in sex work as a survival technique and/or as a way out.

22 % of female care leavers become teenage parents , about three times the national average. 1 on 10 care leavers age 16- 21 who are parents have had a child taken into care in the past year.²⁵

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Home Office (HO) recognise that young adults who have been in care can be particularly vulnerable as they transition into adulthood, particularly if they are in the criminal justice system²⁶. Research on children in the youth justice system demonstrated the links between offending and vulnerability. Children who have suffered abuse, neglect or trauma may present with some challenging behaviour, and are more likely to come to the attention of the criminal justice system than their peers²⁷.

A literature review for the Department of Health²⁸ also tells us that neglect by either the family and/or the care system can lead to, or exacerbate, the vulnerability of some young people. An example of this type of neglect has

²² McCann et al, 1996; Audit Commission, 1999; Meltzer et al., 2003b; Blower et al., 2004; Teggart & Menary, 2005

²³ McCann et al., 1996; Meltzer et al., 2003b

²⁴ HM Government (2013) Care Leavers Strategy, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/266484/Care_Leaver_Strategy.pdf

²⁵ FOI Centre for social Justice 2014

²⁶ HM Government (2013) Care Leavers Strategy, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/266484/Care_Leaver_Strategy.pdf

²⁷ Prison Reform Trust (2011) A stepping stone to custody

²⁸ UCL Institute of Health Equity (2014) A Review of the Literature on Sex Workers and Social Exclusion.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/303927/A_Review_of_the_Literature_on_sex_workers_and_social_exclusion.pdf

been highlighted by the recent high-profile case in England of nine men in Oxford facing trial for various crimes relating to sexual violence and exploitation. In this case, British girls who were trafficked and prostituted by groups of men, tended to be young, vulnerable, in care or from chaotic households. They were coerced into sex work due to their vulnerable situations.

There is a need for continued improvement, with the corporate parent being more pro-active in providing effective and sustained support to address a broad range of needs. This is particularly important for young people moving into adulthood where targeted, consistent and age appropriate support is required.

9.1 Financial Assistance

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 made a significant impact on the way services are provided to young people moving towards independence. The legislation creates four categories of children and young people, each category has a different level of service eligibility for financial assistance.

LBTH has a statutory obligation to provide some financial assistance to all care leavers, depending on their eligibility.

The Financial Assistance policy outlines the level of award and entitlement for young people leaving care. The types of support available to young people include;

- Education, Training and Employment Support Grant:– A maximum payment of £150 per academic year to support young people with course work, field trips, special equipment or clothing for job interviews.
- Higher Education Bursary: Under the Government's Care Leavers Strategy (2013)²⁹ local authorities have a duty to provide care leavers a Higher Education Bursary of £2,000 if they are attending a university.
- Living Allowance: Agreed as part of the Pathway Planning Process to young people in education.
- Accommodation Payments: Some young people can apply for accommodation costs (18+ young people must be in EET)
- Setting up home allowance: £2,200 to support young people to set up home

9.2. Care Leavers Not in Education, Employment and Training

The Social Justice Strategy, Social Justice: Transforming Lives, sets out the importance of work not just as the best route out of poverty, but as a means of delivering positive change for individuals and for whole communities. The benefits of work are far wider than just remunerative. Employment can provide

²⁹ HM Government (2013) Care Leavers Strategy: A cross-departmental strategy for young people leaving care,
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/266484/Care_Leaver_Strategy.pdf

our care leavers with structure, a sense of purpose, progress, achievement, self-confidence and personal responsibility.

In recent years we have seen an increase in the number of care leavers that are NEET. While young people are more likely to engage in services, we have seen an increase in care leavers who are new parents, with mental health issues, care leavers in prison and those that have restrictions to work due to their immigration status.

There are currently significant challenges for many young people taking their first steps into the world of work. Tower Hamlets has, however, an innovative Leaving Care Service which is recognised nationally for its creative and purposeful programmes that support care leavers to improve their economic wellbeing.

The majority of young people engaged in employment schemes offered by the Council and its partners have conveyed how influential their experience has been. Feedback illustrates the importance of these programmes and the impact on young people's self-esteem and purpose. This has been achieved by realising a level of responsibility and developing their skill sets to improve their prospects.

The Leaving Care Service provides a range of Education and Employment opportunities for young people leaving care, including:

- Care Leavers in Higher Education – supporting 26 care leavers both financially and practically to engage in higher education
- Traineeships – we have supported a programme of 6 month work placements, work based route learning across various services with functional skills
- Apprenticeships – 7 care leavers undertaking apprenticeships, within the Council, charity and private sector
- Summer Internships – 10 week work programme within the Council
- Functional Skills – accredited courses focusing on developing young people's basic literacy, numeracy and employability skills

Specific priorities over the next 3 years in relation to supporting care leavers into education, employment and training are:

- To ensure continuation of funding to support a broad range of programmes To mitigate the adverse impact of Universal Credit on care leavers, particularly around the processing of Job Seekers Allowance applications and Housing Benefit payments by strengthening our relationship with the Department for Work and Pensions.

9.3 Housing: suitable accommodation for the transition to independent living

When young people leave their care placement the local authority must ensure that their new home is suitable for their needs and linked to their wider plans and aspirations, for example located near their education or work. Moving directly from a care placement to living independently will often be too big a step for young people. It **is** therefore good practice for **the** local authorities to commission a range of semi-independent and independent living options with appropriate support.

Tower Hamlets Children's Services will continue to work with housing strategy, housing options, and housing related support functions and other partners to secure a range of suitable housing and support options for young people leaving care to achieve the following outcomes for young people:

- Planned moves towards independence, using clear and flexible accommodation and support pathways, for every care leaver;
- Maintained or developed family support where safe and appropriate;
- On-going support to ensure young people are able to maintain their accommodation;
- A personalised support package, based on a full assessment of needs and involving all appropriate agencies, to help young people achieve their aspirations and make a positive transition to adulthood;
- Access to safe, secure and appropriate emergency accommodation if, exceptionally, accommodation arrangements do break down, followed by quick re-entry into more settled housing and support services.

As of March 2015, over 90% of young people in Tower Hamlets were in suitable accommodation³⁰. This compares to 84% of young people in London placed in suitable accommodation. Although we perform well in placing young people in suitable accommodation, we know that the level of support provided to meet additional need is inadequate.

We also know that more needs to be done to ensure that we identify and secure suitable, market-tested accommodation and other provisions for young people.

We recognise that semi-independent accommodation across private providers and registered providers could improve. This will contribute to a tangible improvement in their prospects and resilience, given the adversity they have previously experienced. We are committed to improving practice by modernising our approach to commissioning, drawing on the experience and success of the existing supported housing scheme. We are currently reviewing our offer and exploring funding opportunities to secure a wrap-around professional support model, in partnership with social landlords,

³⁰ Children looked after in England including adoption: 2014 to 2015. Table LAF3: Care leavers now aged 19, 20 and 21 by suitability of accommodation, by Local Authority. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2014-to-2015>

health and the Department for Work and Pensions. This has the potential to reduce our spend on private accommodation.

Our quality assurance mechanisms will be strengthened to match the expectations and standard we want for care leavers. We are planning to address this by strengthening our safeguarding requirements. We will increase our capacity to quality assure accommodation inclusive of health and safety standards.

We have strengthened our approach to young people missing from semi-independent accommodation. We will also apply a de-escalation response to improve our ability to manage conflict between care leavers sharing accommodation. This will prevent disruption, unplanned moves and reduce the risk of becoming intentionally homeless. We seek to reduce the risk of sexual exploitation and impact of substance misuse in semi-independent accommodation. To support this we will need a workforce that is skilled and equipped to listen to and guide care leavers into adulthood. It is our priority to establish greater resources to improve commissioning and develop a workforce that can be fair, understanding, confident, ambitious and compassionate to improve our response to care leavers who through no fault of their own.

Specific priorities over the next 3 years are to:

- Review the accommodation pathway for children and young people leaving care
- Re-commission our accommodation offer to ensure that young people have access to appropriate support
- Review our governance arrangements to ensure that the Housing Panel is sufficiently resourced
- Work with local housing providers, inclusive of social landlords, to ensure quality housing within the borough is available for young people leaving care
- Reduce the reliance on private sector accommodation

10. Conclusion

We believe that our Children Looked After Strategy sets out the Council's ambition and commitment to making a real difference to the most vulnerable of our children, those that cannot live with families.

We know that children's early experiences have significant impact on their development and future life chances. As a result of their experiences before entering care, and during care, children in care are at greater risk than their peers. Their progress and experience whilst in our care then is a key factor for longer term outcomes, that is if their progress and experience is of a good quality they are more likely to do better in adulthood.

Looked After Children are, and will remain, at the forefront of everything we do in Tower Hamlets. The children in our care deserve the best we can deliver for them. We must treat every looked after child as if they are our own.

The accompanying Action Plan outlines what we will achieve over the next three years to improve the outcomes for all children and young people in our care.

This rigorous partnership Action Plan has been based on a Child Rights Based Approach. We will strengthen the Action Plan further to ensure that our activity includes the contribution of all Departments from across the Council. We want to ensure that through a CRBA every Looked After Child feels safe and nurtured, is treated with dignity and respect, and is listened to.

The delivery of the Children Looked After Strategy will be overseen by Tower Hamlets Corporate Parenting Steering Group. Together they will support the partnership to ensure that we deliver on our promises to children and young people in care.

We would like to thank everyone that contributed to the development of this strategy including our young people, partner agencies, front line staff, foster carers and carers.

Khalida Khan
Service Manager – Children’s Specialist Services
Children’s Services Directorate

Wesley Hedger
Community Engagement, Quality and Policy Manager
Children’s and Adults Resources

February 2016

Appendix A: Children Looked After Action Plan

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Milestone</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>RAG Status</i>
Dignity				
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				
To improve the wellbeing and esteem of children looked after and care leavers	Develop a training programme to support the Team around the Child to work towards problem solving strategies and provide choice with boundaries (inc defusing tension with humour and de-escalation techniques)	Sep-16	Workforce Development	
	When a placement breaks down, children and young people are supported to move with dignity. Financial policy to include support for appropriate luggage etc.	Sep-16	Finance and Resources/ Corporate Finance	
	Elected member engagement - Annual award ceremony in partnership with the children in care council	Jan-16	Corporate Parenting Steering Group	
	Deliver a series of LCS workshops around dignity and self-esteem based on the Vikasku programme in Denmark	Sep-16	Employment and Enterprise with Children's Specialist Services	
Enable children and young people to have a greater sense of identity and belonging	Explore identity and belonging through group supervision and workshops (who am I) with Children Looked After and Care leavers	Dec-16	Child Protection & Reviewing/CAMHS	

	Review contact arrangements and SDQs and implement recommendations	Dec-16	Children's Adolescent Mental Health/ Clinical Commissioning Group	
Participation				
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				
Promote positive day to day interaction and choice with children and young people	Work with children and young people to implement our communication standards to promote day to day interaction and choice	Dec-16	Children's Specialist Services	
	Co-produce communications material with children and young people (including children with disability)	Dec-16	Corporate Communications Team	
Making sure that the rights of children looked after are respected, and their views and wishes are heard and acted upon by decision-makers.	Re-commission our advocacy services for children looked after and children with disabilities using a Child Rights Based Approach	Apr-16	Children's Commissioning and Voluntary Sector	
	Audit/Monitor to ensure that the views and wishes of LAC children and young people are heard and acted upon	Dec-16	Voluntary Sector and Children's Social Care	
Support younger children in care to participate	Working with younger children, social workers and carers to develop and publish a young person's pledge	Mar-16	Children's Rights/Voluntary Sector	
	Working with children with disabilities to develop and publish a Children With Disabilities pledge and friendship book	Mar-16	Children's Specialist Services	

	Using Pecs, pictures and play tools to help children understand why they are not living at home and any contact arrangements	Apr-16	Children's Specialist Services	
	Establish mechanisms to ensure life story work is undertaken with young people by Social Workers and Foster Carers	Apr-16	Child Protection & Reviewing	
Care Leavers are listened to and have a say in service development as feedback from Children in Care Council is implemented	Establish trainee involvement post with the Children in Care Council, to be filled by a young person who has been in care (CICC)	Apr-16	Children's Specialist Services	
	Establish mechanisms to ensure user feedback is incorporated into the corporate parenting structure	Mar-16	Children's Specialist Services	
	Support older young people looked after understand their care history. For example, undertaking age appropriate life story work and exploring the possibility of access the Judges Summary.	Mar-16	Legal Services Children's Specialist Services	
Life, survival and development				
Good parenting is demonstrated through: being loved, listened to, supported, respected and kept safe.				
Improve our response to signs of trauma/violent behaviour by supporting attachment with parents and carers to improve permanency	Working with the Pan London Edge of Care Group, explore the potential of Social Impact Bonds as a mean of supporting children and young people at the edge of care	Apr-16	Policy, Programmes and Community Insight Service	
	Evaluate the interface between LAC review and Family Group Conferences	Mar-16	Child Protection & Reviewing	
	Pilot family group work with parents of children and young people in residential settings (CAMHS and Social Care)	Apr-17	Youth and CAMHS	

	Mocking Bird project- hub of foster carers supporting each other for mutual respite- pilot project for 19 children looked after	Apr-16	Children's Resources/CAMH	
	Review support and guidance available to Foster Carers	Sep-16	Children's Resources/CAMHs	
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				
Build resilience and support networks available to looked after children and care leavers	Coaching approach (education and employment), use of eco maps and apprenticeships	Jun-16	Employment and Enterprise/Workforce Development	
	Revise the internal allocation guidance and ensure that all Looked After Children are allocated to the LAC Service	Dec-15	Children's Social Care	
Non Discrimination				
Care should provide a safe and positive experience for all children and one that preserves and promotes their identity, culture and religion				
Investigate the over-representation of children of a Caribbean heritage (inc White/Caribbean)	Creative consultation events with Carers, Children and Young People.	June 16/17	Culture Learning and leisure /Sports and Physical activities Children's Services	
	Implement recommendations and monitor progress	Jun-17	Children's Resources/ Children's Specialist Services	

Supporting children and young people looked after and care leavers who become parents	Explore the possibility of complimenting existing services with targeted support from the Family Interventions Service	Apr-16	Strategy and Resources Children's Services	
Transparency and Accountability				
Every child and young people is inherently a right 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.				
Review commissioning and contractual arrangements for out of borough placements	Improve quality assurance framework for semi-independent accommodation (care providers/supporting people)	June 16/17	Children's and Adults Commissioning / Development and Renewal Corporate Finance	
Develop a summary version of the Looked After Children Strategy	Work with children, young people and practitioners to develop a accessible version of our Looked After Children Strategy	June 16/17	Policy, Programmes and Community Insight Service	
Interdependence and Indivisibility				
We will work together to ensure that children and young people grow and belong, have a fulfilling life, live a healthy, happy life; pursue interests, goals and more.				
Enhancing the offer available to young people leaving care	Act on the Care Leavers Charter, provide young people leaving care with comprehensive support, advice and activities until they reach their 25th birthday	Sep-16	Youth & Community Learning Communities Localities and Culture Adult Social Care	
	Review the role, skills and cost implications of workers within the service	Apr-16	Strategy and Resources/ Children and Adults Resources with Children's Social	

			Care	
	Scope capital build for 14-25 year old delivery hub	Apr-18	Development and Renewal/ Corporate Finance	
Improve the accommodation options available to Care Leavers	Commission enhanced supported housing with on-site staff to provide practical and emotional support as young people transition to adulthood	Dec-16	Commissioning and Health - Adult's Services	
	Coordinate our accommodation offer so that it is aligned to the Supporting People Commissioning Strategy	Dec-16	Children's Commissioning	
	Explore how we can support children and young people to remain safely at home, subject to accommodation decisions	Apr-16	Children's Commissioning	
	Ensure greater representation and governance within the Leaving Care Housing Panel	Dec-16	Children's Specialist Services	
Support children and young people in custody	Complete a full review (inc the views of young people) of children in custody and implement recommendations to improve practice	Dec-17	Local Children's Safeguarding Board	
	Explore the relationship between the types of placements and missing children. Review practice and learning from return interviews	Apr-16	Police and Children's Services/ Voluntary Sector	

	Continue to work with the police to improve the experience of young people running away from care	Dec-16	LSCB and Children's Services/Police	
	Explore risk management procedures and alternatives to secure accommodation	Dec-16	Children's Commissioning Safer Communities	
	Work with the police to improve the experience of young people that have experienced sexual exploitation	Ongoing	Child Protection & Reviewing and CCG	
Development of the corporate parenting model	Revise the corporate parenting groups Terms of Reference	Mar-16	Children's Specialist Services	
	Review governance arrangements to support partners to play a greater role in the corporate parenting model	Mar-16	Children's Specialist Services	
	Establish key relationships with Jobcentre Plus (DWP) and explore the possibility of developing surgeries within the Leaving Care Service.	Apr-16	DWP /Skills Match and Employment and Enterprise	
	Work with UNICEF UK to develop a training programme for Elected Members to actively promote corporate parenting	Apr-16	Policy, Programmes and Community Insight Service	
Lifting education achievement (in partnership with virtual school and careers)	Learn from good (eg.Trafford) Ofsted reports under the new framework	Apr-16	Children's Social Care	
	Implement local offer of early help to support educational achievement	Sep-16	Virtual School	
	Appoint Virtual School Head	Apr-16	Lead Member with head of Children's Social Care	

Health of children looked after is better supported with a more dynamic and accessible referral process	Embed a dedicated CAMHS team within Children's Social Care in Tower Hamlets.	Apr-16	Barts Health/ CAMHS	
	Update transition protocol to improve access to services to support emotional wellbeing for young people up to the age of 25 years old	Sep-16	Adult Social Care CAMHS	
	Ensure that health care plans/passports are in place	Apr-16	Barts Health	
	Joint learning away day for CLA/LAC including LAC nurses, virtual school, CAMHS, children's resources, Child Rights Service, YOS, IRO's and Foster Carers	Jul-16	Children's Specialist Services	
Empowering young people looked after and care leavers to have healthy personal and sexual relationships	Work with UNICEF UK to develop meaningful guidance on safer risk taking eg sex and relationships for young people and carers	May-16	Policy, Programmes and Community Insight Service, Drugs and Alcohol Action Teams	
	Explore the possibility of providing targeted sexual health programmes to young people leaving care	Dec-16	Public Health/Barts Health	
Best Interest				
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				
Ensure there are no drifts and delays in decision making processes for children and young people looked after.	Audit of young children (pre-school) subject to a child protection plan	Apr-17	Child Protection & Reviewing	
	Complete the LSCB report on s47 with LAC and CWD.	Apr-16	Children's Specialist Services	

	Track Panel to monitor those children that come to our attention as being of significant risk	Nov-16	Barts Health and Children's Social Care	
	Improve practice by considering legal options for voluntary s20 accommodated children	Dec-16	Legal Services	
	Monitor the impact of the IRO alert system where drift and delays have occurred	Dec-16	Child Protection & Reviewing	
Ensure children and young people have a stable placement	Review the Entry to Care Panel	Sep-16	Children's Resources	
	Issue guidance on the s20 in light of new case law	Feb-16	Legal Services	
	Engage wider partners to actively identify their contribution to enrich the lives of children looked after and care leavers	Sep-16	TH Partnership	

Appendix B: Looked After Children Profile

OVERVIEW

Number and rate of Looked After Children as at 31st March					
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Tower Hamlets (number)	325	295	305	325	277
Tower Hamlets (%)	60	53	53	55	44
Stat Neighbour	80	76	73	70	
England	58	59	60	60	
Age band (%)					
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Under 1	6	6	6	6	5
1 to 4	14	14	12	11	6
5 to 9	13	11	10	13	13
10 to 15	42	41	41	35	39
16 and over	24	27	32	35	38
Gender (%)					
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Male	55	54	55	54	54
Female	45	46	45	46	46
Ethnicity (%)					
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15		
Asian (Any Other Asian Background)	2%	1%	1%		
Asian (Bangladeshi)	35%	36%	36%		
Asian (Indian)	0%	0%	0%		
Asian (Pakistani)	1%	1%	0%		
Black (African)	3%	4%	5%		
Black (Any Other Black Background)	2%	2%	1%		
Black (Caribbean)	2%	4%	5%		
Black (Somali)	2%	3%	1%		
Mixed (Any Other Mixed Background)	10%	7%	8%		
Mixed (White & Asian)	3%	4%	2%		
Mixed (White & Black African)	1%	2%	2%		
Mixed (White & Black Caribbean)	8%	6%	7%		
Other (Any Other Ethnic Group)	2%	1%	2%		
Chinese	0%	1%	0%		
Vietnamese	0%	0%	0%		
Other (Information Not Yet Obtained)	0%	1%	0%		
White (Any Other White Background)	4%	6%	5%		
Gypsy/Roma	0%	0%	1%		
White (White - British)	26%	21%	21%		
White (White - Irish)	0%	0%	0%		
Not Recorded	1%	0%	1%		

ENGLAND					
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Under 1	6	6	6	6	
1 to 4	18	19	18	17	
5 to 9	18	19	19	20	
10 to 15	37	36	36	37	
16 and over	21	20	20	21	
ENGLAND					
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Male	56	55	55	55	
Female	44	45	45	45	
Ethnicity (no)					
	Mar-13	Mar-14	Mar-15		
Asian (Any Other Asian Background)	5	2	2		
Asian (Bangladeshi)	104	119	99		
Asian (Indian)	0	1	0		
Asian (Pakistani)	2	2	0		
Black (African)	9	13	14		
Black (Any Other Black Background)	5	6	4		
Black (Caribbean)	5	14	15		
Black (Somali)	6	9	3		
Mixed (Any Other Mixed Background)	29	22	22		
Mixed (White & Asian)	10	12	6		
Mixed (White & Black African)	4	7	6		
Mixed (White & Black Caribbean)	23	21	19		
Other (Any Other Ethnic Group)	6	2	6		
Chinese		2	1		
Vietnamese		1	0		
Other (Information Not Yet Obtained)		4	1		
White (Any Other White Background)	11	19	14		
Gypsy/Roma			3		
White (White - British)	79	70	58		
White (White - Irish)	1	1	0		
Not Recorded	2	1	2		

DISABILITY

Children looked after by legal status as at 31 March	Tower Hamlets								Stat Neighbour				England			
	Number				Percentage				Percentage				Percentage			
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Interim care orders	60	45	45	30	20	14.9	15	11	21.6	17.2	11.2	20	16.9	12		
Full care orders	115	117	115	105	40	38.6	36	38	44.9	45.3	48.7	40	42.1	46		
Freed for adoption	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.1		0.2			
Placement order granted	-	20	20	24	-	6.6	7	9	9.3	10	11		13.6	13		
Accommodated under S20	105	115	135	113	35	38	41	41	27	27.1	29.1	29	26.7	28		
Detained on cp grounds in LA accommodation*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	-	0	-		
Youth justice legal statuses	-	6	-	5	-	2	-	2	0	0.8	1.3	-	0.5	-		

* Children under police protection and in local authority accommodation, children subject to emergency protection order and children under child assessment order and in local authority accommodation.
Source: DfE Children looked after in England including adoption

Placement types (%)						
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	
Foster placements	73	76	76	76	74	
Placed for adoption	2	4	3	4	4	
Placement with parents	x	2	x	0	2	
Other placement in the community	4	7	6	8	8	
Secure units, children's homes and hostels	12	8	9	5	6	
Other residential settings	4	x	x	3	3	
Residential schools	2	x	4	4	4	
Missing - Absent for more than 24 hours from agreed	x	0	0	0	n/a	
Other placement	0	0	0	0	0	
Average length of care proceedings in weeks						
	2009-12	2010-13	2011-14	2013-14	2014-15	
Tower Hamlets (weeks)	58	56	53	42	35	
Stat Neighbour (weeks)	59	58	54	43	35	
England (weeks)	53	51	48	37	30	

PLACEMENT STABILITY

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
LAC Placed 20 miles or less (all LAC during year)			
Tower Hamlets (%)	76	84	83.1
Stat Neighbour (%)	69	74.8	
England (%)	76	71	

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
% of LAC in the same placement for at least 2 years					
Tower Hamlets	68	72	69	79	87
Stat Neighbour	68.3	69.3	68.2	68	
England	68	68	67	67	

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
"Staying Put"			
Number of young people in foster care who turned 18 in year	8	16	13
Number of young people who turned 18 and remained in the same placement	3	4	9
% of young people who turned 18 and remained in the same placement	37.5	25	69
England %	55	52	

HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

% of LAC who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, who had up to date:		2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Annual health assessment	Tower Hamlets	95.2	77.5	90.2	91.9
	Stat Neighbour	88.2	94.9	92.9	
	England	86.3	87.3	88.4	
Development assessment (under 5s only)	Tower Hamlets	-	83.3	100	87.5
	Stat Neighbour	86	97.7	92.3	
	England	80.2	84.3	86.8	
Immunisations	Tower Hamlets	85.7	80	78	88.2
	Stat Neighbour	90.3	82.3	90.1	
	England	83.1	83.2	87.1	
Teeth check by a dentist	Tower Hamlets	88.1	97.5	92.7	87.6
	Stat Neighbour	82.1	88.9	85.6	
	England	82.4	82	84.4	

Percentage of eligible children for whom an SDQ score was submitted	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Tower Hamlets	74	90	50	50.3
Stat Neighbour	73.4	82.5	77.8	
England	71	71	68	

SDQ Scores	Tower Hamlets				Stat Neighbour			England		
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Average score per child	13.1	12.7	12.5	14.3	12.7	13.2	13	13.9	14	13.9
Percentage of eligible children with an SDQ score considered:										
Normal	63	60	64	56	56.2	54.6	54.4	51	50	50
Borderline	8	10	12	10	12.6	11.6	13.5	13	12	13
Concern	29	31	25	34	32	33.8	32.1	36	38	37

EDUCATION

Percentage who achieved at least Level 4 in Reading, writing and mathematics	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 (p)
Tower Hamlets (number eligible)	10	5	15	5
Tower Hamlets	73	71	62	20
Stat Neighbour	43	52	52	
England	42	45	48	

5+ GCSEs at grades A*-C including English & mathematics	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 (p)
Number eligible to sit GCSEs (TH)	35	25	25	31
Tower Hamlets %	16.7	25	11.5	19.4
Stat Neighbour %	19.6	23.1	18.5	
England %	14.9	15.5	12	

ADOPTIONS

Average number of days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family	2008-11	2009-12	2010-13	2011-14	2014-15
Tower Hamlets (days)	513	521	586	549	750
Stat neighbour (days)	675.8	698.4	731.6	704.6	566
England (days)	625	636	647	628	533

Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the match to an adoptive family (days)	2008-11	2009-12	2010-13	2011-14	2012-2015	2014-15
Tower Hamlets (days)	52	90	159	173	265	425
Stat neighbour (days)	126.1	164.6	201.3	221.5		227
England (days)	173	194	210	217		234

Number and percentage of children adopted during the year and over a 3 year period	Year Only			Three Year Average		
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2009-12	2010-13	2011-14
Tower Hamlets (number)	14	15	21	30	35	40
Tower Hamlets (%)	8	8	10	5	6	7
Stat neighbour (%)	9.9	11.7		8	8.8	10.4
England (%)	14	17		12	13	14

CARE LEAVERS

	In Education, Employment or Training (EET)				Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)				
	In higher education i.e. studies beyond A level	In education other than higher education	In training or employment	Total number EET	Illness/ disability	other reasons	pregnancy or parenting	Total number NEET	
Tower Hamlets (%) 2013/14	8	22	31	61	-	22		28	11
Tower Hamlets (%) 2014/15	11.4	21.1	23.5	56	3	24.7	10.8	38.5	4.8
Stat Neighbour (%)	10.1	23.4	18.7	52	6.3	24.4	3.6	32.8	19.1
England (%)	6	19	20	45	6	26	5	38	17

Care leavers now aged 19, 20 and 21 by accommodation type	Tower Hamlets %		Stat Neighbour %	England %
	2014	2015	2014	2014
In suitable accommodation (Total)	67.6	86.1	82.3	77.8

LAC Mothers	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Number of LAC who had child as of 31st March	9	9	5

MISSING FROM CARE		
Number of children missing from care in 2014/15		25
Ethnicity		Mar-15
Asian (Any Other Asian Background)		
Asian (Bangladeshi)		11
Asian (Indian)		
Asian (Pakistani)		
Black (African)		
Black (Any Other Black Background)		
Black (Caribbean)		2
Black (Somali)		2
Mixed (Any Other Mixed Background)		2
Mixed (White & Asian)		1
Mixed (White & Black African)		
Mixed (White & Black Caribbean)		2
Other (Any Other Ethnic Group)		
Other (Information Not Yet Obtained)		
White (Any Other White Background)		2
White (White - British)		3
White (White - Irish)		
Not Recorded		
Grand Total		25
Age Group		Mar-15
0. - 5		
6. - 11		
12. - 16		15
17+		10
Total		25
Gender		Mar-15
Female		15
Male		10
Total		25

Appendix C: Children Looked After Placements by District

