

London Borough of Bromley

PART 1 - PUBLIC

Briefing for Care Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee  
Tuesday 11 November 2014

**ANNUAL CORPORATE PARENTING 2013/14**

Contact Officer: Kay Weiss, Assistant Director Safeguarding and Social Care  
E-mail: [kay.weiss@bromley.gov.uk](mailto:kay.weiss@bromley.gov.uk)

Ian Leadbetter, Head of Social Care, Care and Resources  
E-mail: [ian.leadbetter@bromley.gov.uk](mailto:ian.leadbetter@bromley.gov.uk)

Chief Officer: Executive Director of Education, Care & Health Services

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the work of the Council as a corporate parent during 2013 – 2014. The term Corporate Parenting is used for the collective responsibility of the whole Council, elected Members, employees and partner agencies to ensure the best care and protection of children and young people looked after, as well as care leavers.
- 1.2 The report examines the ways in which the Council’s role as corporate parent has been discharged, and includes a summary of the progress made in key areas of performance, significant developments in services for these children, as well as the work of the Executive Working Party for Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting.

2. **THE BRIEFING**

2.1 Placement Data

2.2 During 2013/14 the number of looked after children reduced slightly from the year end 2012/13 figure (by 9). However, throughout the 2013/14 year the number of new admissions was 175 compared to 142 in 2012/13 and the number of care leavers was 189 in 2013/14 compared to 144 in 2012/13. On the 31 March there were 268 looked after children, which represents 39 children per 10,000 of the under 18 population (compared to 40.3 per 10,000 in 2012/13), placed as follows:

	2013 - 14	2012 - 13
With foster carers	184 (68.7% )	(71.1%)
of these: in house carers	129 (69.7%)	(70.6%)
IFA	39 (21.1%)	(14.7%)
kinship carers	1 (9.2%)	(14.7%)
residential accommodation	34 (12.7%)	(16.2%)
placed with parents	5 (1.9%)	(1.4%)
placed for adoption	20 (7.5%)	(2.4%)
independent accommodation	2 (8.6%)	(7.6%)
other	1 (0.6)	(1.3%)

2.3 Compared with national figures Bromley has a smaller percentage of children placed with foster carers:

	Bromley	National
Fostered	68.7%	75%
(fostered by family & friends)	9.2%	11%

2.4 However, in comparison, Bromley performs equally or better than the national average in other placements types:

	Bromley	National
Residential	12.7%	12%
Placed with parents*	1.9%	5%
Placed for adoption	7.5%	5%
Independent accommodation**	8.6%	3%

\* the lower % is better

\*\* the higher % is better

2.5 There were two areas of significant improvement during 2013/14, firstly the reduction in the number of children and young people placed in residential accommodation and secondly the number of children in pre-adoptive placements.

2.6 The number of children made subject to a Special Guardianship Order during 2013 /14 was 38. This compares to 10 in 2012 /13. The number of children being considered for adoption as a permanency plan reduced during 2013 /14 as a direct result of two (significant) Court of Appeal Judgments which stated that adoption should only be considered where there were absolutely no other alternative available. It was suggested that where there was a possibility that the child would continue to benefit from contact, albeit with the child living away, from birth parents that extended family placements secured through the use of Special Guardianship Orders or long term fostering arrangements should be used in preference to adoption placements. Therefore, whilst adoption performance has continued to improve the number of children who may previously have been adopted has reduced.

2.7 It should be noted that unlike the majority of adoption placements which have no ongoing cost to the local authority, special guardianship arrangements do have a cost, often at the same rate of ongoing fostering arrangements. We have seen a 228% rise in SGO expenditure since 2011/12 to the end of March 2014 (£148,999.60 in 2011/12 to £488,437.76 in 2013/14).

## 2.8 Performance

2.9 Several key performance indicators continued to improve during 2013/14: (2012/13 figures in brackets)

- % of children with 3 or more placements in the year reduced to 7.8% (13.4%)
- % of children achieving 5 A\* - C GCSE's, including English and Maths – 16% (11%)
- % of reviews held on time – 96.8% (95.8%)
- % of children looked after for more than 2 years in stable placements – 70.1% (70%)
- % of care leavers aged 19 who are EET – 54.6% (46.7%)
- % of children who has an annual health check and dental check – 86.3% (84.9%)
- % of children participating in their review – 98.8% (95.8%)

2.10 Other key performance indicators dipped slightly from 2012/13 (with the England average for comparison)

- % of LAC placed more than 20 miles from home – 13.6% (11.7%) (England 12%)
- % of 19 year olds in suitable accommodation – 85.5% (86.7) (England 88%)

2.11 There were two areas of performance that were of concern, the % of children leaving care who were adopted – 8.3% (12.7%) (England 13%) and the % of children missing 25 days or more of school –

16.9% (7.7%). The drop of performance for both of these areas has been investigated and strategies put in place to improve performance in 2014/15.

#### 2.12 Key Developments in 2013/14

2.13 The service recruited 11 new foster carers in 2013/14, which were a combination of mainstream, respite and kinship carers. This figure was disappointing particularly as 23 carers resigned or retired during the same period. A review of our recruitment activity was undertaken and a strategy developed to support recruitment in 2014/15. During the summer of 2013, a new two part foster carer assessment was introduced, whereby both part one and two of assessment process had to be completed within eight months.

2.14 In contrast, we recruitment 17 new adoptive units during 2013/14, an increase of one unit from the previous years. At the 31 March we had 20 children in a pre-adoptive placement, which is likely to lead to at least 20 new adoption Orders being made during 2014/15. A new two part assessment process was introduced as part of the adoption reform agenda. This was designed to speed up the recruitment of adoptive families meaning that children waited less time to be matched to a family. The average time from a child being taken into care and being placed with its adoptive family reduced from 749 days in 2012/13 to 612 days in 2013/14.

2.15 Bromley was part of a pilot introduced to ensure that, wherever possible, care proceedings were concluded within 26 weeks. The pilot was designed to test out whether this would be achieved prior changes in legislation that introduced in the Children and Families Act 2014 which was enacted on the 13 march 2014. As part of the pilot the local authority saw a significant rise in the number of assessments being completed with connected person carers (previously known as kinship carers). As reported in 2.6 the number of children being placed with extended family members increased significantly during 2013/14. All of these arrangements required that a robust assessment of the 'connected person's' ability to care for the child was undertaken and presented to Court. This additional activity necessitated resources being diverted from both the fostering team budget and use of the adoption reform grant. Moving forward, it is now a statutory requirement that all care proceedings are completed within 26 weeks, unless to do so would be detrimental to the needs of the child.

2.16 In July 2013 the Court of Appeal ruled that it was unlawful to have any pay differential between mainstream and connected person foster care. Our foster carer allowance policy was updated to reflect the changes in legislation.

2.17 During 2013/14 the Government announced its intention to introduce into legislation a requirement for all local authorities to have a policy that supported young people remaining with their foster carers post 18. This is an acknowledgment that for some young people who are settled with their foster carers it is often extremely disruptive and potentially distressing for them to have to move on from a placement in which they are supported to facing independence when they are not ready for this transition. The policy change is also designed to ensure that those foster carers who wish to offer a young person a placement post 18 are not financially disadvantaged through the loss of their fostering allowance.

#### 2.18 Executive Working Party

2.19 The Executive Working Party for Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting meets each term and its main function is to oversee the Corporate Parenting Strategy to ensure outcomes fulfil the Council's responsibilities towards Looked After Children.

2.20 The Executive Working Party met in May and September 2013 and January 2014. An integral part of the meeting is for the living in care council representatives to raise issues with Members and to discuss their contribution to the development or review of services.

2.21 Corporate Parenting Strategy Group

2.22 The Corporate Parenting Strategy Group is chaired by the Assistant Director – Children’s Social Care. Other members of the Strategy Group are represented by lead professionals from agencies within Bromley and their partners. During 2013/14 the group reviewed its strategic priorities for 2014 – 16, building upon the successes to date and areas for further work.

2.23 The priorities are:

- Securing permanency for looked after children at the earliest opportunity
- Improve placement stability and the number of moves children and young people experience
- Improve the involvement of children and young people in shaping services that positively enhance their care plans to improve their life chances
- Develop commissioning arrangements to promote good outcomes and achieve best value
- Improve education outcomes and ensure that young people have access to education, employment or training post statutory education
- Celebrate and value our looked after children’s achievements, to build self confidence and esteem
- Ensure that children and young people have timely access to a range of appropriate services that support their health needs, including emotional and mental health needs
- Enhance elected Member and officer involvement in delivering the strategic priorities

2.24 The Corporate Parenting Strategy Group will ensure that the roles, function and contributions of individual stakeholders are widely understood to deliver the strategy

The principle objectives of the group are:

- To develop and promote a range of resources and opportunities available from or wealth of community networks to promote and develop our looked after children and care leavers;
- To develop and monitor a comprehensive work programme to develop practice and take forward service development to promote the outcomes and opportunities for our looked after children and care leavers;
- To develop a corporate parenting training programme for Elected Members to understand and develop their roles and responsibilities as corporate parents;
- To collate emerging issues and feedback to relevant management teams to support service development

2.25 The Living in Care Council (LinCC)

2.26 Officers continued to support members of the living in care council (LinCC) to both increase their membership and to deliver on a range of projects. LinCC had a productive year including the design of looked after guides for primary and secondary aged children, the development of a website for all looked after children and contribution to a recruitment DVD.

2.27 LinCC members (and some non-LinCC members) undertook training to participate in the recruitment and selection of staff and participated in a number of interviews for social workers and managers.

2.28 Conclusion

2.29 Improvements have been made in 2013/14 in the quality of care looked after children experience and their outcomes. However, much remains to be done. The biggest challenge remains narrowing the gap in outcomes between looked after children and their peers – in educational attainment and

achievement, including accessing higher education, in health, and in making a positive transition to adulthood. Our corporate parenting strategy 2014 – 2016 identifies the key strategic priorities for helping us ensure that these challenges are addressed collectively with our partners and stakeholders.

- 2.30 The annual corporate parenting report provides a snapshot of the achievements and areas where performance has fallen short of expectation during 2013/14. This report is supplemented throughout the year by more in-depth reports that highlight performance in individual service areas. These include the annual reports of the fostering and adoption agencies, educational outcomes for looked after children, the annual IRO report and the annual safeguarding children board report.