



London Borough Bromley

Annual Corporate Parenting Report.

2019 -2020

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 ***“Good, responsible parents hold together the many strands of their child’s life. They care about their child’s safety, health, education, identity, hobbies, interests, friendships and futures. They protect and support them. They are ambitious for them. They continuously know about their developments and talents. They listen and talk to their children, celebrate and share their achievements and are aware of their needs and concerns. Good corporate parenting is about mirroring this as best as we can.”***

Bromley Corporate Parenting Strategy 2017 -2019

- 1.2 The London Borough of Bromley recognises the central duty of the local authority and corporate parenting partners to ensure young people in care and leaving care are given every opportunity to experience a safe, healthy and happy life in which they achieve their potential. We will make every effort to ensure they are able to grow up in a stable and supportive home with a sense of belonging, where they can feel cared for and cared about. Our role as corporate parents is significant and far reaching and we will exercise this with commitment and accountability across all areas of the council and partnership. Through this we will consistently ensure all our children and young people develop into independent, self-confident adults and enjoy their place in society. We need to always be reflecting on services offered and asking ourselves: ‘is this good enough for our children’. We also have a duty to ensure when young people are struggling that we challenge ourselves as agencies to work collectively and creatively to deliver services more flexibly in order to find tailored solutions and support.
- 1.3 Being the best (corporate) parents we can be, has been at the heart of our improvement journey and it clear that the quality and impact of our service delivery is making a real difference to children and young people. Bromley children’s services were inspected in November 2018 and found to be good with outstanding leadership. The experience of children in care and care leavers were also found to be good. This report will summarise the progress made to build on and sustain this progress to deliver ambitious and creative services for our young people over the 2019-2020 period.
- 1.4 Bromley has set itself the target post inspection to working towards becoming outstanding in all areas and as such set themselves a mission statement to achieve excellence by:

‘CONSISTENTLY GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND, ENABLING OUR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES TO GROW AND FLOURISH, BEING ASPIRATIONAL AND BUILDING RESILIENCE FOR THE FUTURE.

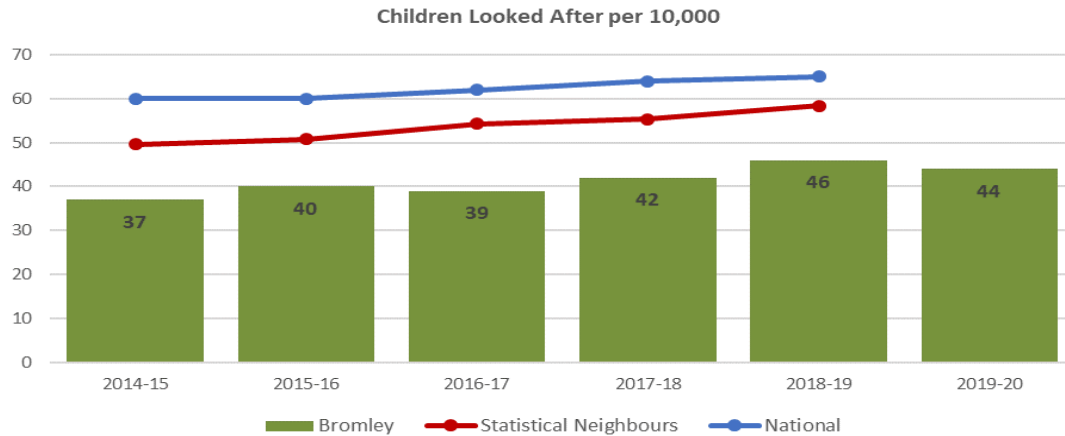
WE STRIVE TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO BE INNOVATIVE AND REFLECTIVE WITHIN AN ORGANISATION THAT NURTURES

2. Context

- 2.1 This report sets out an annual update on the corporate parenting arrangements in Bromley focusing on activity and performance from April 2019 – March 2020. This report will need to be considered alongside the annual IRO Report, the annual Fostering and Adoption Report and the annual Virtual School Report to better understand the local context of service delivery in Bromley.
- 2.2 There have been a number of staffing changes over the twelve months 2019-2020. A new permanent Head of Service Children Looked After and Care Leavers came into post in August 2019. At that stage we had six agency workers in the service including two TM posts. The Leaving Care Group Manager also left in September 2019 and we successfully recruited a new GM in Dec 2019. As of March 2020 the Looked After Children and Leaving Care Teams became fully permanent staffed and have experienced limited staff turnover. This allowed for growth and development of the service and staff.
- 2.3 It was in January 2020 that the world became aware of dangerous new coronavirus that was causing huge disruption in China and it was at the end of this reporting year in March 2020 that we initially went into lockdown in the UK This report needs to read with that context in mind. Some areas of service development including a planned government review of the national care system were put on hold to concentrate efforts on the response to what became a global pandemic.

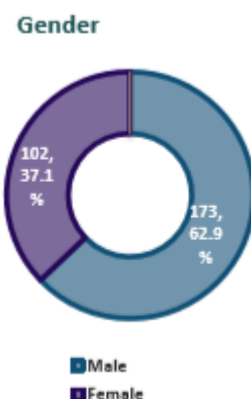
3. Characteristics and Demographics of Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

- 3.1 Bromley's rate of Children Looked After per 10 000 has historically always been significantly below the national average. In 2019-20, our rate was 44 per 10 000 compared to the national average of 64. This represents a slight dip from 46 in contrast to 2018-2019 and a departure from the previous year on year increase in our Children in Care population since 2015. As at the 31st March 2020, we had 328 children in care compared to 348 children in our care on 31st March 2019.

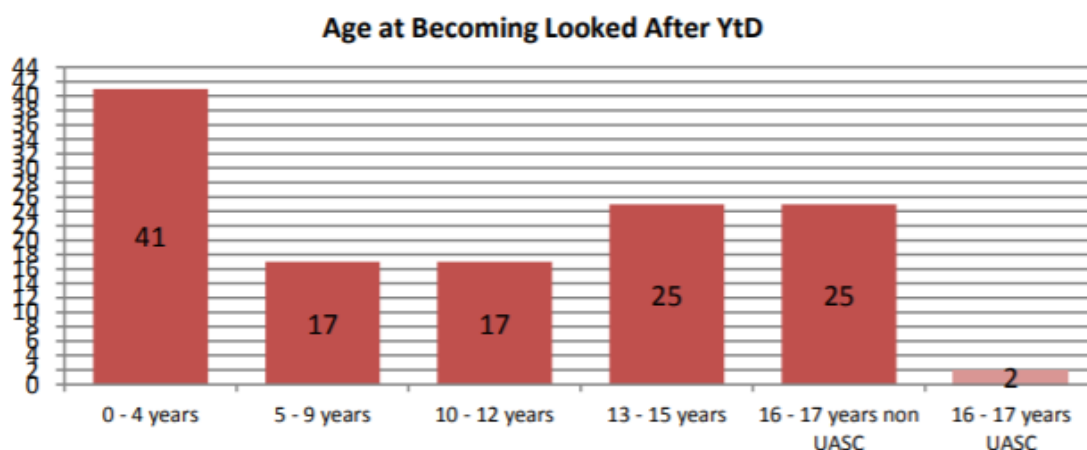


3.2 Of our looked after children 59% were male and the other 41% were female. In terms of ethnicity 60% of our children are white, 7% Black African, 8% Black Caribbean and 4% are Black other, 15% are from mixed heritage, 2% Asian and 4% other (comprising 40% being of BAME heritage). In Bromley 77% of our population are white British and a further 6 % of residents self-classifying as of White Irish, Traveller or White Other heritage. We have 5% of Asian heritage, 3% Black African, 2% Black Caribbean and 1% Black British, 4% of mixed Black African Caribbean or Asian and white heritage (23% in total from BAME groups). This clearly shows a disproportionate number of children from BAME groups in our community being represented in our care population which will require further examination with partner agencies in safeguarding services.

3.3 Males are also disproportionately represented in our care population. This is most likely linked to males coming into care due to criminal exploitation and offending behaviour. We experienced three young men remanded to secure accommodation in 2019-20 but several others have suffered family breakdown as a result of going missing and/or offending behaviour.



3.4 In terms of ages of our children we have 15% 0-4 year olds in care, the number of 5 to 9 year olds is 13% both of which are in line with national averages. The number of adolescents (10-15 years) increased to 43%, remaining above the London average of 39%. Our 16 /17 year old cohort represents 30% of our in care population which is below the London comparator (37%).



Reasons for coming into care 2019-2020;

NETE/ETE3.4 There was an increase in the number of children who became looked after due to a breakdown in a previous Residence Order or a Special Guardianship Order being in place. 5 Children were accommodated in 2018-19 compared to 11 children in 2019-20.

3.6 Legal Status of Children Looked After 2019-2020

- 177 children are subject to full care order (51%)
- 64 are subject to Interim Care Orders (19%)
- 12 children are on a placement order awaiting adoption (4%)
- 72 are subject to section 20 voluntary accommodation -this number includes 20 UASC (21%)
- 3 on remand (1%)

3.7 Placement Types

- 32% (110) of our children are placed with in house foster carers.
- 28% (97) are placed with Independent Foster Agency carers.
- 15% (51) are placed with relatives
- 20% (69) are in residential settings
- 5% (12) are placed for adoption

3.8 A key area for development over 2018-2019 was placement stability. The short term placement stability indicator measure the percentage of children who have experienced two or more moves in a calendar year was at 9% as of March 2019 and rose slightly in 2019-20 to 10% in line with national averages. In term of long term stability only 57% of looked after children in Bromley had been in the same placement for over 2.5 years in 2018-2019. The new head of service established a task force around this issue looking at strengthening practice to promote support for carers to promote placement stability. This indicator rose slightly to

60% by March 2020. However national benchmark is in fact 69% and this remained a priority area for 2020-2021. The stability data in fact was massively impacted by the covid lockdown and placement moves considerably slowed down over March -Sept 2020- see covid response. This resulted in an upturn in this data with long term stability being achieved for 71% of CLA by Dec 2020 and short term stability dropping to 4% which is hugely positive. Further work will need to be undertaken to unpick what the impact of covid on placement moves and whether there is some positive learning for us regarding achieving stability.

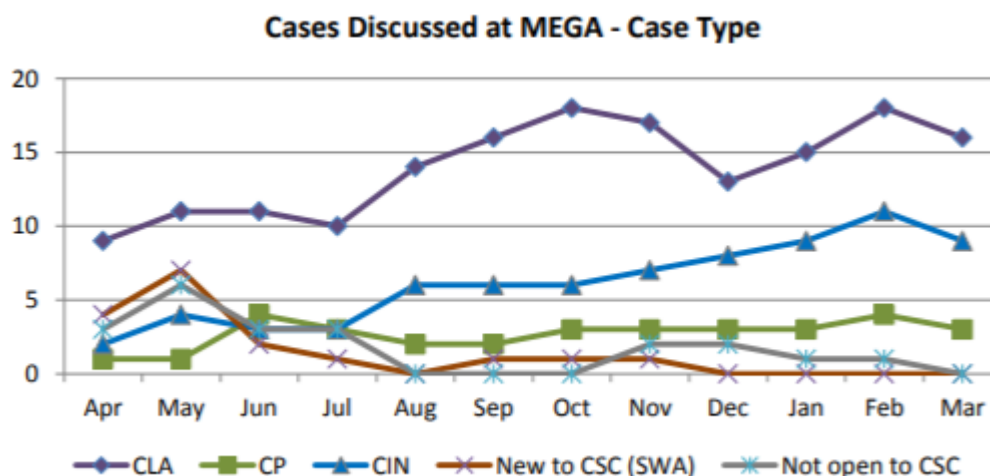
- 3.9 At end of year March 2020 133 children (41%) were placed in Bromley, with 179 children in placements outside of Bromley (55%). 55 children were placed over 20 miles from their home, which is a consistent number of children from November 2019. We still feel this is number is too great high and continue to work with the fostering team and commissioning to develop relationships with providers closer to the borough.

4. Vulnerable adolescents

- 4.1 Of the 127 young people coming into care between March 2019 and March 2020 41% between 13 and 17. Generally young people being received into care in later adolescence have more complex needs which often relate to contextual safeguarding issues such as criminal or sexual exploitation and subsequent family breakdown. These young people have often also experienced education disruption and social exclusion which can also make it harder to achieve stability in care. Over 2019-2020 we received three children into care via remand and we had 2 young people placed in secure accommodation which is a slight rise from two young people in custody in 2 young people in custody across 2018-2020. We also experience a significant rise in the number of missing from care episodes from 2018 to 2020. In 2018-2019 we had 66 young people who went missing at least once in the calendar year. This rose to 82 over 2019-2020. The number of missing incidents across the cohort also rose from 353 to 546 over the reporting year.
- 4.2 Many of these young people may have been missing from home which lead to reception into care. We have also tightened practice in this area and ensured all children are reported missing from care without a formal risk assessment and agreement for them to stay elsewhere, rather than recording young people as 'unauthorised absence'. This has created a rise in number of recorded missing episodes but greater assurance around safeguarding arrangements for our young people.

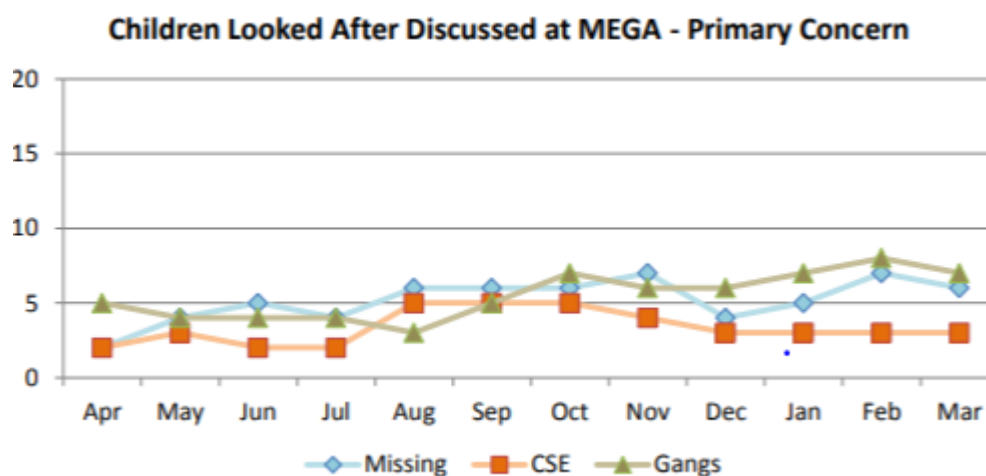
There are also clear policies and procedures around multi agency strategy meetings being held for all young people missing from care within 24 hours and a clear escalation policy to ensure senior management oversight for young people who remain missing over three days.

- 4.3 Children who are at risk of missing exploitation and gang affiliation are also presented to the MEGA panel which is attended by corporate parenting partners in health, education police, CAMHS, sexual health and substance misuse services. The majority of cases heard at MEGA are looked after children as shown in the table below. This will be as a result of children who entered care in adolescence due to identified contextual safeguarding concerns. However there are some children who have failed to achieve stability during their time in care and are additionally vulnerable to exploitation in the community due to adverse early childhood experiences such as physical and sexual abuse whose needs will also be discussed at MEGA.



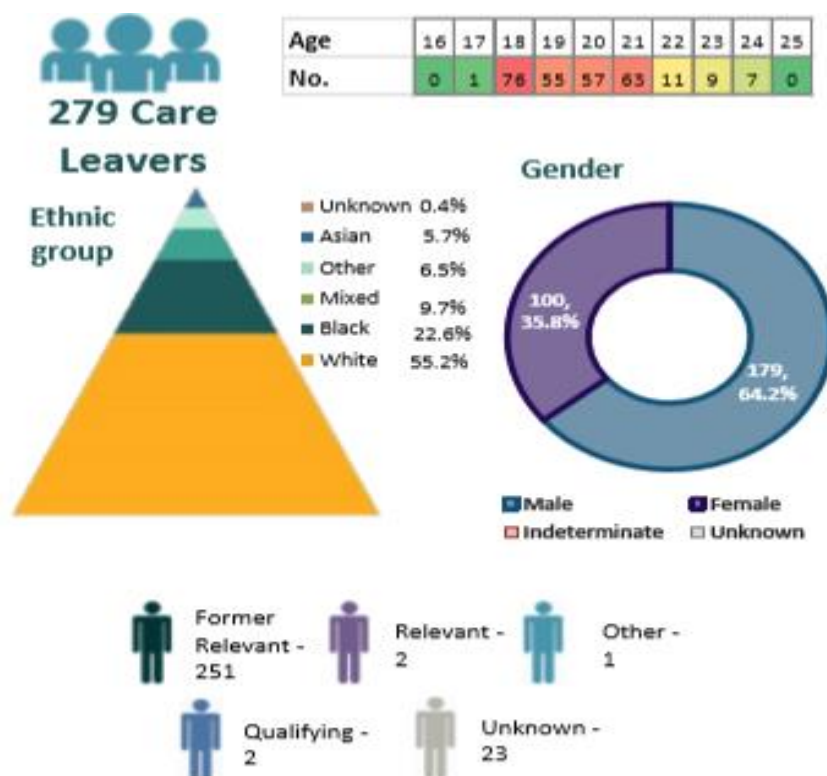
- 4.4 The next table shows the reasons for children being discussed with a clear rise in concerns regarding gang affiliation being evidenced over the past 12 months. This is in line with national concerns regarding the growth of county lines activity where children are used to move drugs around the country. Bromley work closely with the police to gather intelligence to disrupt exploitation and grooming of our young people. We also commission specialist services such as mentors and voluntary sector partners such as St Giles rescue and respond to create trusting relationships between young people and safe adults. We work hard to offer safe and suitable alternative activities linking in with Virtual School, active involvement team and placement providers to build young people's confidence and increase the 'push factors' to placement

to resist the 'pull factors' of increased status and the lure of money/goods/drugs from criminals in the community.



5. Young people leaving care

- 5.1 As at the 31st March 2019, we also had corporate parenting responsibilities for 254 Care Leavers up to the age of 25, although only 193 care leavers chose to access services. For 2018-19, the Local Authority was therefore the corporate parent to 602 children, young people and young adults. The number of care leavers however has risen over 2019-2020. At March 31st 2020 279 care leavers were eligible for a leaving care service from Bromley up to the age of 25. Of that number, 234 are actively receiving services. 64% are male and 35% female. 55% of our care leavers are white heritage and 11% Black African 11% are Black Caribbean, 10% mixed heritage, 6% Asian and 7% other. This is a significant rise in numbers and does reflect better engagement from the leaving care team with young people, better joint work with adult services, identification of risk and vulnerability for young adults beyond the age of 21 and greater outreach through the active involvement and leaving care for young adults. All young people who have chosen not to remain involved with the service are contacted annually and can return for bespoke support which does generate renewed contact with the service. Young people who are not in touch are phoned by leaving care duty around their birthday to remind them of the local offer. This does mean currently we have corporate parenting responsibility for 607 young people.



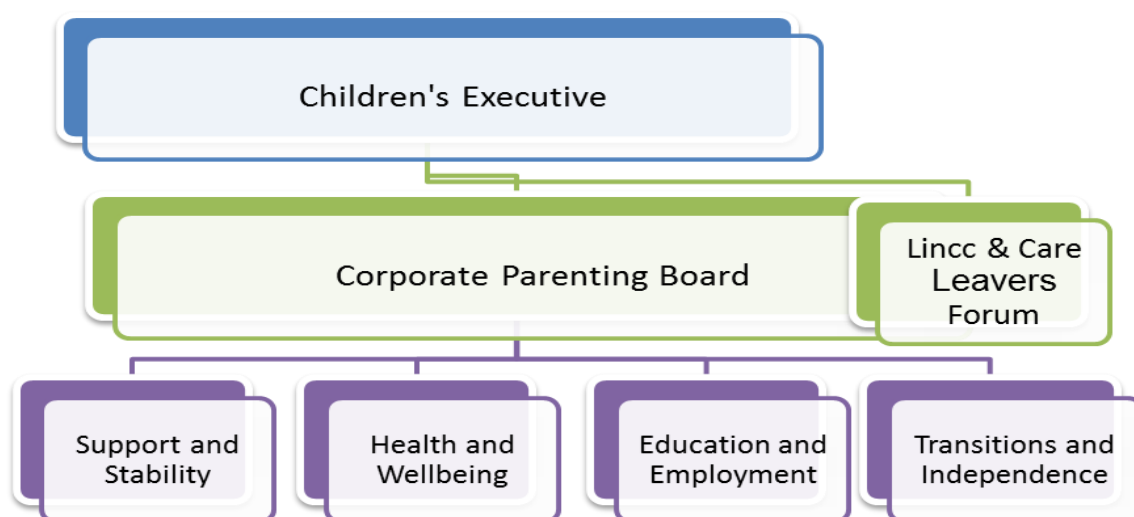
- 5.2 Our numbers of UASC have decreased and as of March 2020 we were supporting 20 young people under the age of 18 and 67 young people over the age of 18. This is in comparison to 50 UASC children that we were supporting as of March 2019 that were under the age of 18. Many of these young people have now become adults and are supported in the Leaving Care Service and the rise in numbers in LCT reflects the drop in numbers in CLA.

6. Delivering our Corporate Parenting Duties.

- 6.1 In Bromley we have a well-established Corporate Parenting Board. The Board is chaired by the Deputy Leader of the Council, who is also the portfolio holder for Education, Children and Families. Children and Young people are represented by Bromley's Children in Care Council (LinCC). The Chair of LinCC is also the co-chair of the Corporate Parenting Board.
- 6.2 Membership of the Board is made up of senior council officers, partner agencies and organisations that are responsible for those areas which have a direct impact on the lives of children in care and care leavers. All board members must hold responsibility as key decision makers within their organisation. The current board membership includes:
- Portfolio Holder for Education, Children and Families (Chair)
 - Chair and Vice Chair of LinCC
 - Director of Education, Children and Families

- Assistant Director – Children Social Care
- Assistance Director of Housing
- Director of Education
- Assistant Direct of Strategy, Performance and Business Support
- Head of Integrated Commissioning CCG
- Designated Doctor for CLA, CCG
- Director Bromley Y
- Operational Director Bromley CAMHS
- Designated Nurse CLA
- Head of Service, Children Looked After and Leaving Care
- Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption
- Head of Service, Youth Offending Service
- Head of Service, Quality Assurance
- Head Teacher, Bromley Virtual School

6.3. In 2019-2020 meetings took place bi-monthly, however there was a gap from Jan to July 2020 when the board was initially put on hold due to covid. The “new” Corporate Parenting Board was launched on the 24th April 2019. Key partner agencies agreed to chair operational sub-groups and work on an action plan per sub group that would be signed off by the board. The Care Leavers Forum and LinCC would have sight of the documents prior to the board and would have the opportunity to question strategic leaders in each service area as part of a ‘strive’ session at each Board Meeting.



6.4 In delivering against the key priorities set out in the following strategic documents:

- Children and Young People's Plan 2018 – 2021
- Corporate Parenting Strategy 2017 – 2019
- Children Looked After Strategy 2018 – 2020
- Care Leavers Strategy 2017 -2019

- The Bromley Pledge

6.5 All four strategic documents broadly cover the following themes:

1. Having a Say
2. Support, Stability and Security
3. Health and Wellbeing
4. Education, Training and Employment
5. Transitions and Independence

6.6 These thematic areas (2-5) have now been established as the Corporate Parenting Board's sub-groups. A specific subgroup has not been created for *Having a Say*, as this priority features in every aspect of the work we do. The service response to each strategic aim is outlined in the body of the report.

6.7 Each subgroup had key priorities as set out by the young people in their 'strive' session at the board and the progress made is outlined below.

6.8 **Subgroup One : support and stability** were given a key priority to focus on better placement matching and choice for young people. The young people asked to see the new placement referral which was shared and clearly includes a space for young people's views. Bromley has also joined the commissioning alliance which has increased placement choice for fostering and residential care. The young inspectors scheme will also support young people being involved in quality assurance of placements in the semi-independent market and offering young people the opportunity to feedback to senior leaders and commissioners about the quality of accommodation and lived experience of young people using the placement.

6.9 **Subgroup Two: health and wellbeing** were asked to focus on apprenticeships for young people in a health setting. Although there is an established link into the CCG to provide work experience this priority has not progressed.

6.10 **Subgroup Three : Education, Training and Employment** were also asked to focus on apprenticeships for young people and asked how these were supported.

6.11 In 2020 Bromley offered five apprenticeship opportunities over 2020 and one which was ring fenced meaning only care leavers could apply. Two young people successfully completed apprenticeships within the council, one in IT and one in the registry office. Both were supported by a named worker in HR.

6.12 **Subgroup Four: transitions and independence** were asked to focus on providing clear support to develop independent living skills and acquire essential items for their new home.

- 6.13 Over 2019-20 care leavers have been supported through the use of an independent living skills tool kit. This is being updated over 2020 by the senior YPAs. Housing also offer access to white goods and household items at a reduced rate. All young people moving into their own tenancy also receive a moving in gift from Lincc.
- 6.14 The corporate parenting board will have a refresh in 2020-21 to offer young people greater opportunity to share their stories and enhance the corporate partners understanding of young people's lived experiences in care. The board will also be tasked with reviewing the local offer for young people leaving care to strengthen partnership working and improve outcomes for our young people. The corporate parenting strategy for 2021-2023 will also be rolled and should also be read in conjunction with the ETE strategy for LCT.

7. Priority 1: Having a Say

Young people have a right to share their views, wishes and feelings. They will be listened to so that they shape decisions made about their lives and the services they receive.

- 7.1 The Living in Care Council (LinCC) and the Care Leavers Forum (Change for Care Leavers) continue to engage children and young people to ensure that their voices are at the heart of what we do. Members regularly meet with senior managers, elected members and partner agencies in order to strengthen the relationships with corporate parents as well as offer challenge around service delivery.
- 7.2 Annual corporate parenting fun day ran in July 2019 with activities and games for all looked after children and opportunities to meet senior leaders and elected members
- 7.3 Active involvement ran a successful summer programme for young people in care and care leavers in summer 2019. This involved a week-long residential for 8 young parents staying on an organic farm enjoying outdoor play and bonding with their children. The team also offered day trips for care leavers and a music project which involved young people creating a song and a video.
- 7.4 Lincc members contributed to the staff conference in 2019 to support staff learning about the importance of relationship building with young people.
- 7.5 Young people continue to be part of recruitment panels for posts at all levels in the organisation and Active Involvement are writing a training manual to prepare young people to conduct interviews.

- 7.6 Young people continue to attend the corporate parenting board and challenge partners during the 'Strive' session to extend their offer and support for our children.
- 7.8 Young people are offered opportunities to meet with senior management and council leaders to discuss service delivery either through young people attending management meetings within the service or council leaders and attending Lincc and engagement events
- 7.9 The Active Involvement team was expanded in November 2019 from one participation worker with sessional support to a team manager post and four workers. The team now has two full time youth workers, one ETE worker and one Income and Tenancies worker. They have been able to hugely expand the active involvement offer over 2019-2020. This has included the following :
 - 7.10 Active involvement lead the celebration of success of care leavers held in Oct 2019 during care leavers week with our best ever turn out of over 30 young people and 20 staff. The young people also gave recognition to the staff working with awards for our young person's advisors which was a very moving event. This event was run online October 2020 with over 70 nominations of young people who have recognized for achievements in education, becoming great parents, securing their own tenancy and/ or developing personal resilience.
 - 7.11 Lincc and CFCL hosted a coffee morning in Care Leavers week during October 2019 attended by staff across the council to raise money which has been used for housewarming gifts for care leavers achieving their own tenancy.
 - 7.12 We held our first ever end of year party for care leavers 2019 with songs and games and Santa delivering presents to the children of our care leavers. We also ensured no one was alone at Christmas who didn't want to be - we partnered with Sutton Leaving Care Team in 2019 and 2020 with several young people attending their Christmas day lunch in person in 2019 and online in 2020.
 - 7.13 The Celebration event for children in care was held in February 2020 just before lockdown, led by Virtual School Head teacher Helen Priest prior to her retirement and attended by over 50 young people and their carer's to acknowledge and celebrate their personal and academic achievements. Staff, lead members and young people joined together to record a song together to celebrate supporting each other.
 - 7.14 Group work was delivered to 5 care leavers around developing financial literacy by MyBank in March 2020.

- 7.15 During the initial March lockdown Active Involvement team delivered daily activities including cooking clubs, quizzes, competitions to offer a sense of belonging and connectedness.
- 7.16 97% of children who have attended their LAC Review and participated. Children and young people are regularly visited by their IRO, social worker and an independents advocate (if required) to ensure that their views are heard and acted on.
- 7.17 We consulted with children in care and care leavers about the impact of the Pledge for Children in Care and they have been instrumental in providing feedback. Their feedback has helped us to revise our Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers.

7.2 Covid Response

- 7.2.1 Sadly due to the restrictions of the coronavirus pandemic the corporate parenting fun day 2020 was cancelled as was the annual residential for Lincc members in April. However, Lincc and CFCL ran throughout the pandemic on line and in person as soon as restrictions permitted.
- 7.2.2 Active Involvement redeveloped the website for our children and young people which acts as a noticeboard of information as well as introduction to the 'local offer' for young people leaving care. The website also contains links to online counselling and information for young people coming into care. Please see: www.linkinbromley.
- 7.2.3 Active Involvement held a 6 week face to face summer programme of events in 2020 including well-being week, a photography project focusing on race and identity and a creation of a short film. We were supported by early help services by permitting us use of their family centres to facilitate the group work. The film is being used for training for carers and staff in children's social care. Active Involvement are also looking to develop a forum for learning and training around race and identity to roll out across children's services in 2021.
- 7.2.3 The team also held activities for care leavers including a Go Ape trip and a trip to Brighton. All of which were oversubscribed and well attended.
- 7.2.4 Active involvement are running --a 'Girl Power' group focusing on self-esteem and body confidence which was attended by 7 girls aged between 11 and 16 over 6 weeks in September 2020.
- 7.2.5 Active involvement ran a NETE group for young people who are NETE in Oct 2020 which has been attended by 8 young people. The group offers sessions around goal setting with a life coach, and the opportunity to attend work experience at the end of the programme.

- 7.2.6 Active Involvement lead monthly ‘conversations on race and racism’ online and developed the first ever Black History Month events programme for the young people including a drumming workshop, poetry event and fashion show.
- 7.2.7 Creation of Young Inspector’s Programme to support young people visiting providers in semi independent placement market and providing feedback to senior leaders and commissioners.
- 7.2.8 Creation and delivery of young mums theraplay group to understand trauma and attachment.
- 7.2.9 Bromley are working in partnership with Coram again to deliver the Brightspots Survey for the second time. This survey will offer our children and young people the chance to feedback how they have experienced working with our service. There are two surveys:
- i. My Life, My Care – For Children Looked After- which is due to begin Feb 2021
 - ii. My Life Beyond Care – For Care Leavers- which ran in Nov 2020
- 7.2. 10 CORAM will provide analysis of the data which will be fed back to council leaders and senior managers via a dissemination event in 2021. The service will also follow up and use the findings to discuss with the young people and build their views and recommendations into our service plan moving forward.

7.3 Action for 2020-21

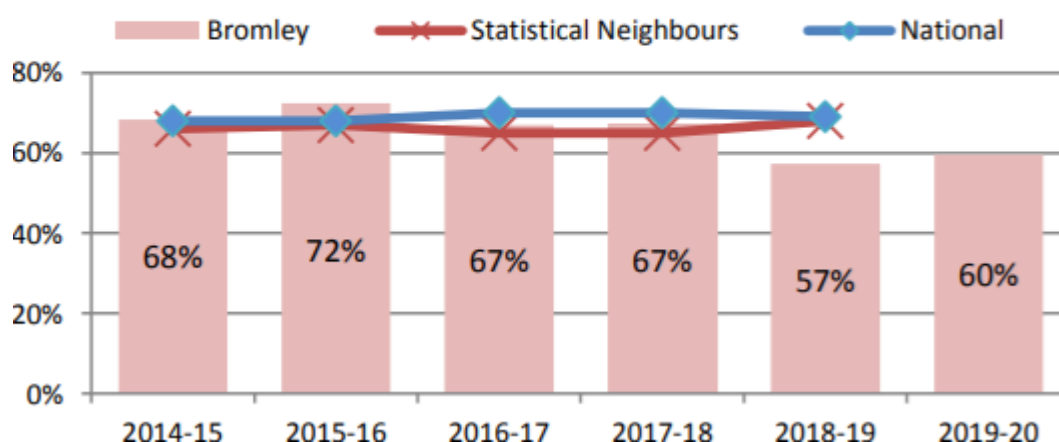
- Respond to the findings of both Brightspots Surveys.
- Creation of recruitment and interview training schedule for young people run in conjunction with HR.
- Establish a standard expectation that young people will be involved in key recruitment events and interviews.
- Ensure that young people continue to have opportunities to shape their care plans and pathway plans.
- Creation of training schedule around race and identity for children’s social care
- Delivery of Young Inspector’s programme
- Delivery of Young Parents attachment and trauma training

8. Priority 2: Support, Stability and Security

Having stable home lives, relationships and education as well as necessary support helps children and young people to achieve good outcomes in their lives.

- 8.1 Social workers & YPAs in the CLA and Leaving Care Service continue to have manageable caseloads. This allows social workers / YPAS the opportunity to visit more frequently and to undertake more direct work and deliver interventions when necessary. We also achieved a fully permanence staff group by March 2020 which also allowed us to maintain greater consistency of relationships between staff and young people.
- 8.2 Permanency Planning for all children up to the age of 17 continues to be a priority. All children who have been looked after for more than 8 weeks are presented at permanency panel by the Head of Permanence to ensure their permanence plan is being progressed. Once the care proceedings have concluded and the case transfers to CLA the case is reviewed by the Head of Service in Care and Head of Virtual School and allocated IRO also attends to ensure joint oversight. In between CLA reviews the Team Managers chair achieving permanence meetings with the professional network to ensure actions to achieve permanence are being progressed.
- 8.3 There has been a sustained performance in the number of children ceasing to be looked after due to a Special Guardianship Order being made. In 2017-18 - 25 children were made subject to an SGO. In 2018-19, 21 children were made subject to an SGO. This has risen again to 27 in the reporting year 2019-20.
- 8.4 During 2018/19, the average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family was 450 days. This was an improvement in the performance of the 3-year average from an average of 560 days (2015-18) to 438 days (2016-19). There has been sustained improvement in this area and the number of days between entering care and moving in with adopters has reduced again in 2019-2020 to 374.
- 8.5 During 2018/19, the average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family was 201 days. The three-year average (2016-19) is 171 days. The national average for 2015-18 was 201 days. This dropped again in 2019-2020 to 147 which is evidence of sustained progress in this area.
- 8.6 58% of children (2016-19) waited less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. This is slightly above the 2015-18 national average of 56%. This rose again to 64% in the reporting year which is positive.
- 8.7 Placement stability has been a cause for concern. Although some improvements were seen during 2019-2020 the long term stability as shown below continued to be well below the national benchmark. Similarly we had roughly 10% of our cohort experiencing 2 or more moves in a calendar year for the last three reporting years.

Children Looked After aged under 16 who have been in care for 2.5 years and in the same placement for 2 years



- 8.8 A stability task force set up by new Head of Service in 2019 to look at improving practice around placement matching and support for carers to improve placement stability. We offered secure base training to fostering and care staff to be undertaken jointly and improved the referral template to include children's views and offer better matching.
- 8.9 As of December 2020 we currently have less than 1% of our children who have experienced 2 or more moves in 12 months and 69% of our children who have been in the same placement for over 2 years which shows huge improvement over the last 6 months. This has been hugely impacted by COVID and restriction on movements slowing down placement, but we will need to examine over the coming twelve months how this progress can be sustained.
- 8.10 In 2018-2019 15.8% of Children and Young People are placed more than 20 miles away from their home. Whilst this is an improvement from 2017-18, where over 20% of children were placed more than 20 miles out of borough, we still feel that this number is too high. This number has sadly risen again to 18% in the reporting year. Our Children in Care tell us that they would like to be closer to home and we agree. While the number of young people placed in inhouse foster placements remained stable at 30% of the care population, both the fostering and commissioning teams are working on strategies to recruit more carers, and secure placements closer to home.
- 8.11 Weekly resource panel chaired by head of service for CLA is also attended by managers in SEN and CCG to ensure placements are tightly monitored to ensure they remain appropriate to need and are considered for joint funding.
- 8.12 Transitions between the CLA and Leaving Care Service is bespoke and in line with the needs of the young person rather than determined by

age. We aim to offer a YPA for all young people aged 17.5 to allow a smooth handover of support.

- 8.13 Pathway Plans are updated at least every 6 months and improvements are being made to ensure that they are updated when circumstances for young people change. Review social work assessments for younger children are also completed to reflect changes in contact plans or following significant life events.
- 8.14 Introduction of later life letter for young people moving from care to leaving care to help them better understand their care journey
- 8.15 Consistent Group Manager attendance at MEGA panel and feedback incorporated into supervision. Every case heard at MEGA was audited over the summer 2020 to ensure risk assessments and safety plans were in place.
- 8.16 Creation of senior YPA posts to create progression pathway for YPAs. Each YPA has a specialism in practice including offending and substance misuse, SEND and mental health, group work and participation, and transitions and independence. Each senior worker will lead on creating relationships with corresponding partner agencies in adult services and champion best practice in these areas.
- 8.17 Training programme to be embedded for YPAs. They have received training on secure base model of building resilience, Bromley Relationship Model, Immigration, life story work, mental health awareness, health training and writing PEPs in 2020.

8.2 Covid Response

- 8.2.1 Visiting was increased during lock down to weekly face time calls with some creative ways of engaging online or meeting outdoors for bike rides and walks and taking children to the park.
- 8.2.2 We delivered food parcels and play activities for young parents to our most vulnerable young people and parents during the height of lock down.
- 8.2.3 Face to Face visiting was offered during lock down for potential placement breakdowns and emergencies for example around young people with mental health difficulties. Routine face to face visiting was resumed as soon as permitted with covid regulations. All staff were provided with appropriate PPE.
- 8.2.4 Despite lock down in March 2020 the service has continued to progress permanency planning including transition to adoption to avoid delay for children. Since March to date we have matched:
 - 17 young people via our virtual fostering panel.

- 2 children with adopters
- 4 children have been placed into their forever homes
- 7 Adoption Orders have been obtained

8.2.5 All young people in Care and in Leaving Care service were provided with lap tops and wifi routers when needed to ensure internet access during lock down.

8.3 Actions for 2020-2021

- Sustain improvements in long term placement stability by offering support as soon as placements become fragile and learning positive lessons from lockdown
- Recruit more foster carers who are able to manage children with higher levels of need.
- Improve placement sufficiency and choice particularly in relation to placing children and young people closer to home.
- Creation of pathway for young people with complex needs as they transition to adulthood
- Strengthen training offer for YPAs around adult safeguarding
- Work with SEN/VS to create new post to oversee cohort of CLA with SEN to bolster monitoring and review of EHC plans
- Work with CWD and adult services to support young people with additional needs transitioning to adult

9. Priority 3: Health and Wellbeing

Each child and young person should enjoy good health and emotional wellbeing through a range of health services and activities

- 9.1 Every looked after child has a health assessment within a month of being received into care which is reviewed annually. 88% of looked after children had a review health assessment within a calendar year in 2019-20 compared to 91% in 2018/2019 and 91% of children in care for a month had an initial health assessment compared to 100% in 2018-2019. Both figures represent a slight dip in performance in this reporting period. Some of this can be explained by a number of older children refusing to see the nurse. There has been ongoing work with the CLA health team and CLA administrators to ensure assessments are carried and recorded accurately to ensure this picture improves. We have also worked to change the recording so when young people refused this is acknowledged so we can determine if there has been delay for children who are in need and willing to engage.
- 9.2 95% of young people are up to date with their immunisations which again is near to the 96% last year. 88% of young people in care had seen

a dentist in the last 12 months in relation to 91 % in the previous year which again represents a slight dip. Sadly this is unlikely to be rectified in 2020-2021 given the extent of the pandemic on dental services in particular.

- 9.3 All young people in care are also subject to a strengths and difficulties questionnaire and an average score determined to reflect the extent of the young person's difficulties. A score between 0-13 indicates a normal range. In 2017-2018 this score was 16.7 and in 2019 the dropped to 13 and in March 2020 this dropped again to 12. This should reflect that fewer young people are experiencing more extreme emotional difficulties.
- 9.4 CAMHS have offered the CLA and LCT services support via clinical staff attending monthly group reflective supervision sessions with the staff on a monthly basis which has been well received. In 2019/20 65 referrals have been received by Bromley Y for children in Care and Care Leavers. 16 of these young people are rising 18 and 2 are over 18. 55 of those children are Bromley CLA while a further 8 are children from out of borough. There is no waiting list for a service and CLA cases are given priority. Young people in Bromley schools experiencing tier 1 and 2 level difficulty can also access the emotional wellbeing practitioner that is in place as part of the Mental Health trailblazer scheme.
- 9.5 CAMHS practitioners have been attending monthly group supervision with practitioners in CLA and LCT to support reflective thinking particularly around issues pertaining to mental health. Staff feel this has been beneficial and the support has been well received.
- 9.6 25 CLA were identified to have some concern around substance misuse in 2018-2019. This rose to 34 CLA in 2019-2020. This may be in line with an older cohort of CLA as well as indication that staff are assessing risk of substance misuse more proactively. Of the 25 young people where there are concerns, 17 have been offered interventions, and 16 have taken up this offer.
- 9.7 There is still concern that the offer for support with emotional wellbeing for young people over 18 could and should be stronger. Many of our care leavers who might be well supported by CAMHS struggle to transition successfully to adult services and face having their case closed if they miss appointments. Many of our young people who have experienced significant disruption in early life struggle to engage consistently and need robust and proactive outreach. CCG and Designated nurse are exploring whether additional funding can be sought for additional nursing capacity to sit within LCT to support the older cohort. The YPAs also received bespoke training in mental health awareness to help them spot early indicators of risk around MH.
- 9.8 All Children Looked After aged under 18 and their carers had access to the Bromley Mytime Leisure Pass in 2018-2019 This offer was extended

until September 2019 and was under review when we entered lockdown in March 2020. 138 young people took out membership in 2019-2020 with a small minority (14%) not using the card at all. Generally, the memberships were well used with activity concentrated over the school holidays. However, Mytime felt administration costs were high and didn't necessarily represent best value. They were keen to review the package and introduce a nominal £25 charge per membership to cover the administration. However, from March 2020 the leisure centres have closed and only reopened briefly.

9.9 Care leavers were also not routinely eligible for the scheme which meant the Leaving Care Team were spot purchasing leisure passes for older young people. However, Bromley Mytime did extended passes to children of young parents (care leavers). This offer was well received by our young parents who have taken up opportunities to use the soft play area. This will need review into 2021 with MyTime to determine what the offer could be post covid restrictions. In the meantime the leaving care team have been supplied with information about social prescribing via the GP who can offer support with free access to exercise classes and swimming for example.

9.10 Care Leavers had also reported in the Ofsted Nov 2018 that they do not find the current format of health histories helpful and it was recommended they needed more support to access their health information to support them developing emotional resilience. The CLA health delivered training to the YPAs in February 2020 and have redeveloped the leaving care health summary to include information about serious illnesses, immunisation history and also provides links to relevant health services such as smoking cessation, weight loss. The summary is also provided by email and the links are offered electronically.

9.2 Covid Response

9.2.1 Bromley changes is under new management and now offer an integrated service to adulthood. Since the lock down they are able to offer virtual support and are able to offer intervention to children outside the borough boundary for the first time. They have also offered virtual training to CLA and LCT staff around issues relating to substance misuse, county lines and exploitation.

9.2.2 Since the lock down the leisure centres have predominantly been closed and staff furloughed so the future of the mytime offer remains uncertain. It is likely for our children to receive support we will need to incur some administrative costs but if the offer is extended to care leavers up to 25 which would be a departure from the current offer this could offset some of the LA costs.

9.2.3 During lockdown we also distributed information about online counselling via Kooth. This is available to all young people in and out of borough and up to age 25.

9.2.4 Exploration of extension of emotional support through mentoring scheme being explored with Bromley Y and exploratory discussions being held with CCG to explore additional funding.

9.3 Actions for 2020-21

- Improved health interventions for Care Leavers in relation to physical health and mental health services. Consideration to be given to extending services of the CLA nurses in line with the extended duties to care leavers.
- Exploration of emotional support via mentoring scheme with Bromley Y
- Substance misuse training for all staff to include information about new drugs and risks relating to county lines activity
- Extended Leisure offer for Care Leavers to be considered.

10. Priority 4: Education, Training and Employment

Young people will be helped to achieve their full potential in education and leisure activities and participate in training, work experience and employment.

10.1 Our children are some of the most vulnerable in the borough have suffered multiple adverse childhood experiences prior to reception into care. As a result, some are falling behind in terms of educational achievement by Key Stage 2 in writing, maths and grammar although our children are achieving above national averages in reading and are making good progress.

10.2 In Summer 2020 key stage one SATS were cancelled for 7 year olds but 77% of our children in Key Stage 1 were making expected progress during the spring term. This is a small cohort of children so represents a couple of children not making expected progress. One is a very complex little boy. He is being well supported in school through a range of strategies paid for by the Pupil Premium Plus.

10.3 Similarly Key Stage 2 Summer 2020 for 11 year olds were also cancelled due to the lockdown but 91% of Key Stage 2 pupils were making at least expected progress during the spring term which is really positive.

10.4 41% of our children have an EHC Plan compared to 27.2% CLA nationally. We also have 18% of children receiving SEN support in schools which is lower than the national average of 28.7%. This could

be that children looked after are more likely to have achieved an EHC Plan to have their needs met in Bromley. During the 2019 calendar year 16 EHC Needs Assessment requests were received and all requests were agreed to assess; all 16 young people will have an EHC plan.

- 10.5 We are working on a growth bid with colleagues in SEN to ensure single oversight of all CLA with EHC given the specific need in Bromley. This post holder will be able to monitor every EHC plan and ensure each child has an annual review in timescales and advocate for children out of borough where they are experiencing delay in identifying appropriate resources.
- 10.6 Our attendance for children under 16 is 91%. In 2018/19 there were 17 young people who had a fixed term exclusion from school. This totalled a number of 118 lost days of school. In 2019/20 18 young people had a *fixed term exclusion* and this represented a total of 66 lost days from school. This is a huge improvement and correlates with having another education advisor and an education support officer who monitors attendance and exclusions. We have also not had any *permanent exclusions*. When we are notified early of behaviour issues, we can negotiate with a school to ensure that exclusions are minimised and where possible alternatives can be suggested. We are also able to support going forward to ensure that there are less likely to be repeat exclusions.
- 10.7 All young people in care have three PEPs per academic year. PEP performance is strong and 93% of young people had a PEP completed and authorised by the end of the spring term 2020. The social work staff are supported by Virtual School and education staff to support young people in thinking through their academic options, receive additional support in school when necessary and work to ensure all our children are in school and learning successfully. The social work team also look to support extra-curricular activities to increase confidence and build self-esteem. However, some of our children may have very complex needs, challenging behaviour, substance misuse, offending history or MH needs. They may have experienced multiple placement disruptions and have struggled in education resulting in them being at risk of NEET at 16 plus. We have reworked our ETE strategy to target attention for this cohort.
- 10.8 For GCSE we had 46% of students achieve 5 GCSEs and 71% achieve at least one GCSE which is an improvement on 2019 reporting year. However, 12 young people in the cohort have an EHC plan and a further 5 were receiving additional support in school without recourse to an EHC plan, and one was under assessment making a total of 64% with identified special or additional needs.

	2020 Reporting cohort of 28 pupils	2019 Reporting cohort of 31 pupils	2018 Reporting Cohort of 20 pupils	2017 Reporting Cohort of 19 pupils
5 at grade 4 and above incl. English and Maths	21% (6 pupils)	29% (9 pupils)	15% (3 pupils)	26% (5 pupils)
5 at grade 4 and above	25% (7 pupils)	29% (9 pupils)	20% (4 pupils)	26% (5 pupils)
5 GCSEs	46% 13 pupils	45% 18 pupils	65% (13 pupils)	47% (9 pupils)
1 GCSE	71% (20 pupils)	58% (18 pupils)	80% (16 pupils)	84% (16 pupils)

- 10.9 As of March 2020 36% of our young people who are NEET (not in education employment or training) compared with 39% of care leavers nationally. We have 11% young people in higher education in 2019-2020. This is in comparison to 38% of care leavers being NEET in 2018-2019 and 7 % of young people being in higher education in the same reporting year. Of 28 young people in key stage 5 all bar 2 succeeded in gaining at least entry level qualifications, 4 gained level 3, 7 gained level 2 and a further 12 achieved entry level of ESOL qualifications. 43% of this cohort were in fact UASC and had varying degrees of English. There are additional young people who were also studying level three through an apprenticeships and will gain qualifications through their course.
- 10.10 All young people remaining in statutory education in year 13 also receive three PEPs in their final academic year to support them planning for age 18 plus. In 2019/20 we also have 22 young people in higher education including some top flight universities such as Nottingham and Liverpool. We have a further 69 in education or training including a number of young people who are in apprenticeships. We have had two young people successfully complete apprenticeships with the council, one in the registry department and one in IT. as well as another two young people received recognition from their contribution to the Covid-19 response in both health care and hospitality sectors. We also have a further 14 young people in part time work or training.
- 10.11 As of March 2020 we had 123 young people who are NEET. 9 were NEET due to illness and disability, 17 were NEET due to pregnancy or parenting commitments but this leaves 97 young people who were NEET due to other circumstances. Of these 97, 11 were in custody and unable to seek work but should be in receipt of support around education and learning support. We would like to work towards reducing NEET in our care leaver population by a further 10% and work towards 75% of our care leavers being ETE within the next 2 years.

- 10.12 There is considerable concern on the impact of the coronavirus on the employment market and that this may disproportionately affect young people with entry level roles disappearing and certain industries such as retail and hospitality being at risk. There is an education training and employment strategy for Leaving Care Team that should be read in conjunction with the corporate parenting strategy to specifically target this issue. The leaving care team have created a NETE panel which is chaired by the Head of Service and/or Group Manager for LCT to oversee all cases within 28 days of a young person becoming NETE. We have also updated the role of the ETE worker within LCT to provide greater oversight of the whole NETE cohort and offer more targeted support to young people. We are also partnered with the DWP and Bromley education business partnership to identify opportunities within the business community and specialist employment agencies.
- 10.13 Bromley successfully bid to join Social Impact Bond funding for the I-Aspire programme in partnership with Lewisham, Greenwich, and De Paul. As of the end of October 2020 there were 62 young people signed up with I-Aspire to receive a personal progression coach and another 3 in the process of signing up for a total of 65. However, there have been some issues with the organisational delivery. There have been repeated changes in terms of staff members and so resulting in a lack of consistency which has negatively affected young people trying to build relationships with staff. More recently De Paul have engaged a specialist ETE advisor and have had a more stable staffing and management group but it has been hard to unpick the specific impact that joining the programme has brought. We have also identified alternative providers such as Maximus who are already established in the community who are able to offer more experienced staff and more rigorous processes. It is hoped with better reporting on the NETE cohort and more structured processes in LCT we can target support more successfully and limit the impact of coronavirus on employment opportunities for our young people.

10.2 Covid response

- 10.3 During covid the virtual school made weekly calls to carers to ensure children had clear plans about returning to school, or supporting online learning when necessary.
- 10.4 Active involvement ran clubs and competitions online to support learning and minimise social isolation with schools being shut.
- 10.5 Laptops were distributed to all young people including care leavers experiencing digital poverty to support online learning.

- 10.6 PEPs continued to run but were held virtually. VS held PEP training for YPAs. VS and SEN also ran training for SW staff around EHC processes.
- 10.7 Relaunch of ETE strategy for young people 16-25
- 10.8 Two young people receive recognition from their contribution to the Covid-19 response in both health care and hospitality sectors.
- 10.9 Online celebration of achievement for care leavers held in October 2020 with over 70 young people being nominated and receiving vouchers and certificates to recognise their achievement.
- 10.10 Bromley offered five apprenticeship opportunities in Nov /Dec 2020 with one ring fenced opportunity offered in Dec 2020. Care leavers were guaranteed interviews for all.
- 10.11 Creation and delivery of group work targeting young people who are NETE in Oct 2020. 7 young people attended and 5 have a forward destination. Sadly the work experience placement for each young person was put on hold due to covid response.

10.2 Actions 2020-2021

- Launch Bid to DWP for additional funding for young people at risk of NETE
- Establish NETE group work programme to run twice yearly and establish work experience offer
- Work with SEN/VS to create new post to oversee cohort of CLA with SEN to bolster monitoring and review of EHC plans

11. Priority 5: Transitions and Independence

Young people need to be supported at all stages of transition especially when moving to adulthood. This includes helping them to develop the skills to live independently

- 11.1 All Care Leavers have an allocated YPA. Pathway Plans are updated at least every 6 months. YPAs also continue use the Independence Tool Kit to assess readiness to live independently. In 2018-19 over 85% of Care Leavers had an up to date Pathway Plan. This has risen to 87% over 2019-2020.
- 11.2 LCT created four new created senior YPA post holders each with a practice specialism to support the development of the service. The specialisms are Offending and Substance misuse, MH and SEND, transitions and independence, and group work and engagement. The senior YPA's have revised the tool kit in 2020 to make it more user friendly. They are also introducing new group work aimed at support

young people moving on from Care to Leaving Care team and from placements to independent tenancies. Each post holder is creating links in the relevant adult services that can strengthen communication between teams and support YPAs to determine a pathway of support for each young person.

- 11.3 The local offer to care leavers was disseminated in Sept 2018 and care leavers are written to annually to remind them of their rights and entitlement, The offer will need to be renewed to remain current and will be a key focus for work of corporate partners over the next 6 months,
- 11.4 As of March 2020, 94% of our young people are in suitable accommodation which excludes 8 young people who are in custody. There are three young people whose circumstances are unknown- this is due to young people who have been unsuccessful in seeking asylum going missing and disengaging from the service. We do not have any young people in B and B accommodation.
- 11.5 We have had a rise from 17 young people to 24 remaining in foster placements under 'staying put' arrangements which is hugely positive and indicates a greater proportion of young people achieving a sense of permanence within their placement to be able to remain post 18.
- 11.6 The new head of service introduced a fortnightly post 18 placement panel which is attended by placement providers and colleagues in housing to examine the suitability of support and move on plans for young people. The purpose is also to ensure young people are moved to their own tenancy in a timely way in line with their independent living skills. The group manager and benefit providers also meet monthly to discuss young people who are at risk of rent arrears and possible homelessness. Currently performance around ensuring young people in suitable accommodation is strong and benefits from positive joint work.
- 11.7 A new placement officer has also completed QA visits to our main providers and ensured appropriate contracts are in place which had been highlighted as an audit priority in 2019. LCT are also rolling out the Young Inspectors programme in 2020/21. This will involve young people completing placement visits with our placement team and providing feedback to senior management/leaders about the quality of accommodation and experience of support for young people.
- 11.8 Supported lodgings carers are now supported by the fostering team as of Spring 2020 to bring the offer of oversight, support and training and subject to annual review by QI in line with the offer for foster carers.

- 11.9 There has been an improvement in the number of care leavers who remain in touch with the LA. Improvements in service delivery and relationships with YPAs has meant that young people have opted for continued Leaving Care Services. Ongoing support helps young people transition more successfully to independence. Of the 196 Care Leavers with an open allocation to the service 187 are in touch with the local authority and are currently receiving a service:
- 11.10 A local protocol is in place with DWP which means all young people have an interview with a specialist work coach and arrangements are in place to ensure a 'no sanctions' approach for care leavers. At age 18, advance claims for benefits, and transitional payments to support the transfer on to Universal Credit if necessary are currently in place. The group manager in LCT meets with the benefits providers on a monthly basis and alerts are in place should any care leaver start to fall behind in their rent account.
- 11.11 Work has been done with adult learning disabilities and MH services to create a transitions panel and discuss young people who may be in need of a Care Act assessment to support them into adulthood. Discussions are taking place into 2021 to consider additional health funding within LCT to create a post 18 nursing post. We have low numbers of young people allocated in adults services- roughly 2%. Considering the impact of trauma on their emotional wellbeing and their ongoing vulnerability to contextual safeguarding risks this remains low.
- 11.12 The YPAs were offered bespoke training in MH awareness in October 2020 to support them in identifying need early and managers are holding network meetings for young people post 18 to create safety and support plans for young people who are vulnerable to MH issues. Bromley Y are also in discussion about offering mentoring for young people post 18 who are vulnerable to anxiety and depression. LCT has also done work with The Thrive team within fostering to create a therapy group for young parents to support them in forming strong more confident attachments to their children.

11.2 Covid Response

- 11.2.1 All care leavers initially contacted weekly and vulnerable young people living alone were offered doorstep visits and food parcels
- 11.2.2 Play materials distributed to young parents
- 11.2.3 Creation of senior YPA posts with specific practice specialisms to add to the service development.
- 11.2.4 Distribution of laptops for all care leavers experiencing digital poverty.
- 11.2.5 Establishment of transitions panel for young people with complex needs transitioning to adulthood.

11.3 Actions 2019-20

- Revise and Relaunch a Multi-Agency Local Offer for Care Leavers.
- Deliver a moving on group work programme to support young people who are transitioning to leaving care service and to independent living.
- Bright spots survey for care leavers to be disseminated November 2020 and feedback collated and built in to service plan
- Discussions with CCG and Bromley Y about building on the offer for emotional and MH support for care leavers.
- Young Inspectors Scheme to launch
- Launch of young mums theraplay group

12. Conclusion

- 12.1 2019-2020 has seen a rise in our Care Leavers Population and a slight drop in CLA numbers. As a service we have benefited from staff stability as the workforce is fully permanent. This has allowed us to grow and develop our response to need. We have continued to make progress in achieving positive outcomes in all areas for children and young people in our care and care leavers. Performance in all areas remains strong and we have delivered on all priority areas as set out in corporate parenting strategy. It has obviously been a difficult time for everyone in our community since the pandemic began to hit in early 2020. We have had to adapt our services to be able to meet the needs of young people by supporting staff, young people and carers to master new technology. We have delivered work face to face wherever possible and developed the service and continued to innovate and be creative despite the challenges whilst ensuring the core day to day business remain in focus.
- 12.2 It is hoped that we can revise and strengthen the local offer for care leavers over the coming months and build on existing relationships within adult services. We also hope to create opportunities for young people to be involved in the corporate parenting board to ensure their stories are heard and experiences understood by corporate parenting partners over the coming year.

