

Decision Maker: CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES PDS COMMITTEE

Date: 13 September 2023

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT

Contact Officer: Cathy Lloyd-Williams, Head of Service for Children in Care and Care Leavers
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Chief Officer: Richard Baldwin, Director of Children, Education and Families

Ward: All Wards

1. REASON FOR REPORT

This report is to provide a mid-year update of the progress of Children in Care in Bromley and identify progress made against the outcomes identified in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Committee is asked to note and comment on progress made towards the actions identified in the Corporate Parenting Strategy, as laid out in the outcomes and evaluation section of this report.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: Our looked after children and care leavers remain one of the most vulnerable groups in our community due to their adverse childhood experiences. The report details work undertaken to offer services and support to improve outcomes for these children and young people.
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Transformation Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
 2. Making Bromley Even Better Priority (delete as appropriate):
(1) For children and young People to grow up, thrive and have the best life chances in families who flourish and are happy to call Bromley home.
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
 2. Ongoing costs: Recurring Cost:
 3. Budget head/performance centre:
 4. Total current budget for this head: £
 5. Source of funding:
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional):
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
-

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non-Statutory - Government Guidance:
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable: No Executive Decision
-

Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: N/A
-

Property

1. Summary of Property Implications: N/A
-

Carbon Reduction and Social Value

1. Summary of Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications: N/A
-

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users or customers (current and projected):
-

Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

3. COMMENTARY

The year July 2022-2023 has been a busy, varied, and productive year for the Children Looked After service. Following the restriction of the 'covid years' and repeated lockdowns, working with our children face to face again, seeing them regularly in 'Our House' dedicated hub and enjoying many activities with them including the summer programmes has been really enjoyable again for our staff. As well as this staff have enjoyed learning from one another by being back working regularly in the Civic Centre which allows us more opportunities to meet parents, carers, as well as our children and young people.

Our corporate parenting strategy 2021-2024 states that :

'We recognise that children and young people in the care of the Council will have experienced disruption in their childhoods and are amongst the most vulnerable in our community. All too often our children fall behind in education and struggle to achieve their potential due to their earlier life experiences.'

This report sets out the work we have completed in 2022-2023 to support our children and young people develop and thrive.

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN:

Children Looked After

On the 22nd of July 2023 Bromley had 344 Children in Care, which is an increase from 326 at the end of May 2022. 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 figure remained static over 2020-21 although there has been a slight increase to 45 per 10,000 in in the reporting year. The vast majority of our children enter care due to abuse or neglect.

Of our Children Looked After, 58% are male and 42% are female. The majority of young people coming into care are older adolescents. There has always been a greater proportion of boys in care. Several older teenagers being accommodated have been to the risk of Extra Familial Harm. The majority of our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) are also male. We currently support 17 UASC aged under 18 and 16 are male. UASC are now representing 5% of our in care population.

As of July 2023 we had 40 children aged 0-4 years in care, 58 children aged 5-9, 137 young people aged 10-15, and 89 are 16 and 17 year olds. The number of adolescents (10–15-years-old) is currently 40% of our cohort, remaining slightly above the London average of 39%. Our 16–17-year-old cohort represents 26% of our in-care population which is 12% below the London comparator (38%). This is partly in testament to our Staying Together Team which leads on supporting young people to repair relationships with their birth family and remain in the family home despite challenges that are causing family unrest and unhappiness at the time.

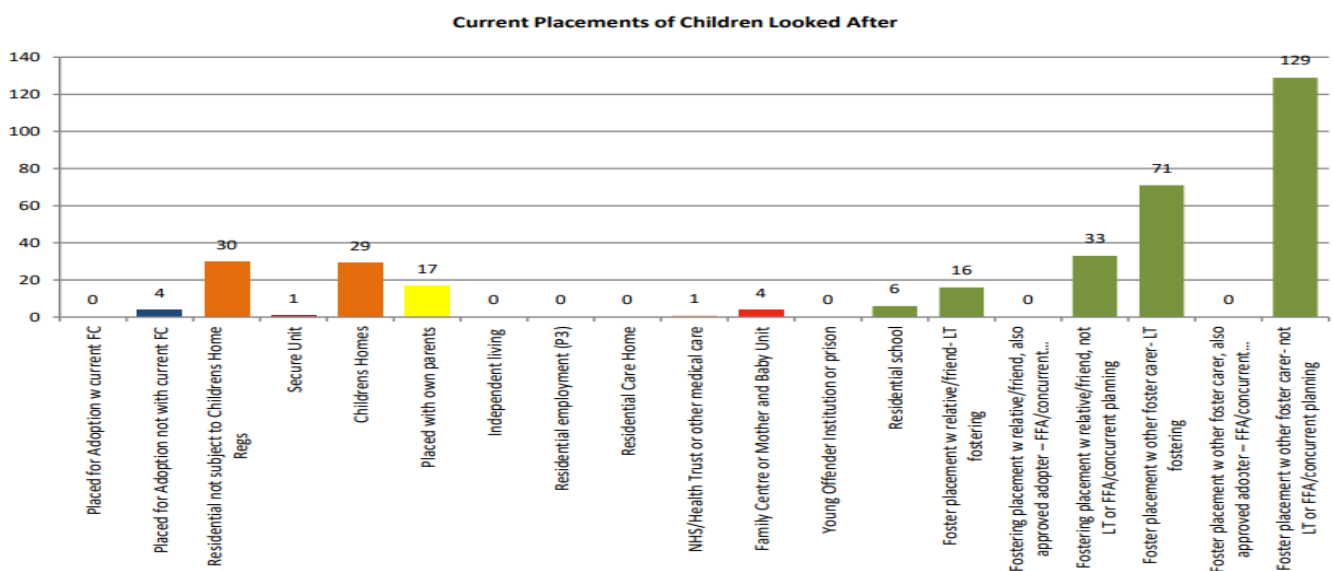
Currently 55% of our in-care population are White compared to 53% this time last year. We are currently caring for 13.5% of children with mixed White / Black Caribbean heritage, 9% of children with Black African heritage, 9% of children with Black Caribbean heritage, 5% of children with Other White heritage, 3% of children with Asian heritage, and another 8% of Mixed backgrounds. In Bromley, 77% of our population are White British and a further 6% of residents self-classify as White Irish, Traveller, or White Other heritage. We have 5% of people with Asian heritage, 3% Black African, 4% Black Caribbean and 1% Black British/Other, 4% of mixed Black African

Caribbean or Asian and White heritage (23% in total from Global Majority groups). This clearly shows a disproportionate number of children from Black, Asian or mixed heritage groups in our community being represented in our care population.

There has been work completed by the Bromley Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (BSCP) Board and the Youth Justice Board to address disproportionate representation of Citizens of the Global Majority in statutory services. CLA services have also extended training and staff development to ensure we are addressing the culture and identity needs of young people who do become looked after.

As a Service we have remained committed to recruiting and retaining 100% permanent workforce as we recognise the importance of a stable staff group in order to be able to deliver relationship-based practice. Performance remains strong. Visits to Children Looked After happen within statutory guidance at 97% across all the Services. 98% of Care Plans have been completed within the last 6 months.

We currently have 251 children in foster placements (72%) compared to 233 last year (69%) and 241 and (73%) in 2021 which does represent a slightly improving picture. Of that number 87 (25%) are with in-house foster placements, 109 (32%) in Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements, and 55 (16%) with connected persons / family placements. It is positive that we are supporting more young people to be placed with family and friends as this has risen from March from 42 to 55 over the reporting year.



Our residential population in July 2023 has slightly decreased to 75 from 76 in June 2022. Three of these are families in assessment centres, 38 are in a residential children’s home, 18 of whom are children with disabilities with complex learning needs and physical disabilities. The other 20 are placed in residential care due to complex emotional and behavioural needs. A further 31 children (aged over 16) are placed in semi-independent accommodation that supports young people who may struggle to settle within a family setting and are working towards independent living. All these placements are kept under frequent review for suitability to meet need through a weekly Placement and Resource Panel which is chaired by the Head of Service and supported by partners in Health (ICB) and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Service to promote better joint working and explore shared costs.

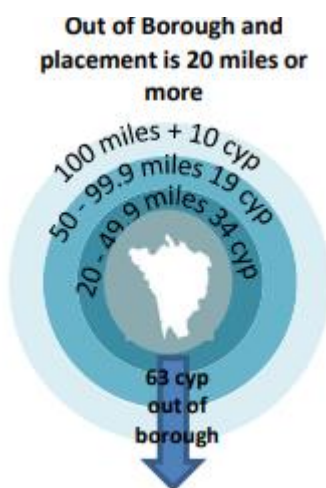
We remain ambitious in our search for placements in what has increasingly been a challenging market. In January 2023 the children’s commissioning team moved line management to become part of the Children’s Services Directorate as part of our ongoing improvement journey. The team are co-located with the CLA service enabling greater communication and joint work between the services. In our annual disruption report it is evident the placement break downs are sometimes

attributable to poor matching. By working alongside placement officers, we will achieve better matching and strengthen stability.

Our QA framework is strong, and we have the benefit of a contract and compliance officer within the team. She can respond flexibly to visit new placements to strengthen relationships or visit providers in the event of a concern to provide assurance. A promotion event took place in April with providers of semi – independent accommodation and our commissioning team. This enabled us to consult with our partners around the new regulatory framework that is being introduced in 2023 from Ofsted for this type of provision to ensure readiness with new compliance measures. In October 2023 we are reconvening the meeting with our providers to ensure they are making progress to be fully compliant.

We remain ambitious about long-term fostering options as a step down from residential settings for children with emotional or behavioural needs that may make significant progress in residential care and can be ready for a return to family life offered within a fostering placement. The New Horizons Project within the Permanency Service is being supported by practitioners from the THRIVE Therapeutic Service to look at up-skilling carers who can support children exiting from residential care. The stability work force has also undertaken engagement events in March and November 2022 with IFA fostering partners to strengthen relationships and promote placement choice for children with complex needs.

The percentage of young people placed 20 miles or more from the borough has remained static at 19%. We also have 60% of our young people living outside of Bromley. Whilst every effort is made to keep children closer to home some children are placed at a distance due to safeguarding concerns, particularly those who were being exploited in the community. Bromley only commission placements that are rated ‘Good’ or above by Ofsted. Given the increasing demand of placements for children with extremely complex needs this does mean at times we need to extend the search nationally to find a suitable match for the child. There continues to be pressure nationally around the sufficiency of placements and this area has been highlighted as requiring some innovative solutions in the Government’s Children’s Social Care Review which was published in May 2022.



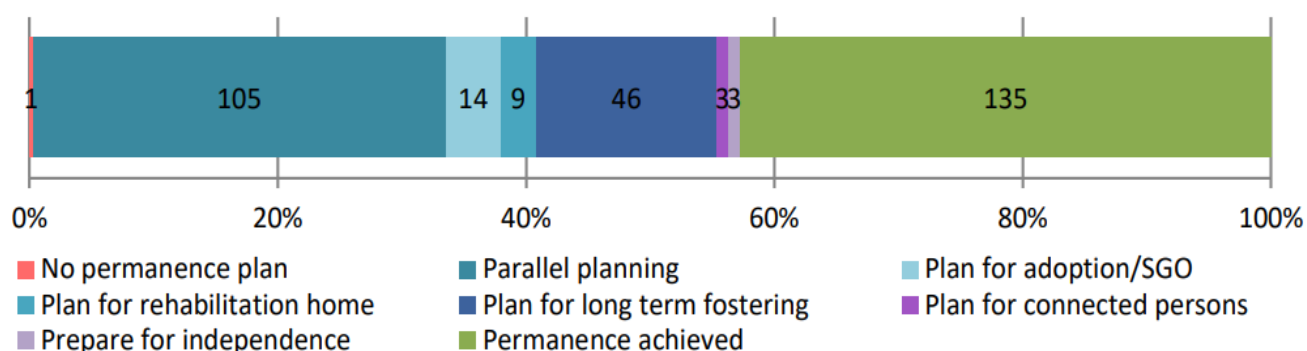
Bromley are members of the Commissioning Alliance to improve our opportunities to quality assure providers and centralise referrals, the pandemic and cost of living crisis has seen several providers struggle to recruit staff to be able to run placements safely leaving Local Authorities competing over scarce resources. Bromley are running profiling workshops with all staff to improve our quality of referrals and strengthen matching practice.

We have continued to make improvements in achieving long-term stability for our children. It is vital for children who have already experienced significant harm, disruption and loss to have a sense of belonging in their care setting. This is measured by DfE by the number of children aged 16 and under who have been in their placement for two years or more. As of March 2020, this was true of 54% of Children Looked After. This percentage rose over the course of the year to 66% in March 2021, and as of July 2023 is 70% which is line with national parameters. This is testament to the huge amount of work we have undertaken in training staff in the ‘secure base’

model of care and positive joint work with colleagues in the Permanency Service to create thoughtful and effective support plans for carers when placements become fragile.

We also benefit from a strong Virtual School who support us in identifying suitable education providers to minimise disruptions in placement change and support social workers in challenging potential exclusions given the significant correlation between placement and education stability. Our Virtual School Head teacher sits in our weekly Permanence Panel which is chaired by the Head of Service for CLA and attended by allocated social workers and reviewing officers. This meeting has a strong role in driving joint work to achieve stability and progressing work to achieve permanence for our young people. All looked after children have a permanence plan by the second looked after review – within 3 months of entering care. For many young people we continue to explore the possibility of rehabilitation whilst supporting alternative care arrangements. Children placed for long term fostering are required to be presented at a matching panel to ratify the suitability of the match and underline the commitment from the carers to look after the child throughout their childhood. Our bimonthly stability and sufficiency working group also supports colleagues in commissioning, fostering and children’s social work teams to work together to learn from placement disruptions, communicate and plan strategies to engage with the placement market and drive proactive practice to promote stability.

Permanence plans for current children looked after



The number of young people who have experienced two or more placement moves has reduced to 8% in July 2023 which is below national benchmark of 10%. We have a small cohort of young people who are hugely vulnerable and may be harder to match to a suitable resource. Some of these young people may experience multiple placement break downs because of challenging behaviours that lead to a provider serving notice. This can lead to some children moving to ‘bridging placements’ whilst we continue to search for a suitable long-term placement which again impacts on the short-term stability indicators. Staff work hard to avoid placement disruption and ensure we are doing everything possible to promote a sense of stability and security for our young people.

The number of children leaving care for adoption has remained fairly static for the last three years. We achieved 10 adoptions in 2020-21 compared to 11 in 2022-23. Similarly, the number of days between a child entering care and being placed for adoption has varied from 427 to 431 since 2019. In 2022-2023 this number has risen to 509. This has been slightly skewed by a much older child (17) achieving adoption with his long-term foster carers in response to his own wishes and feelings. Similarly, there were 11 SGOS achieved in 2021-22 and 10 in 2022 -2023.

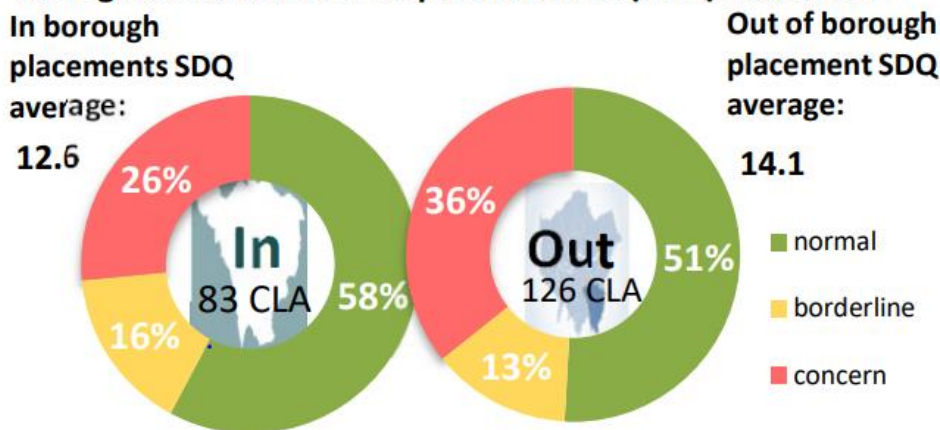
There was a noticeable drop in the number of children placed for adoption and placed with carers under Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) since we concluded 27 in 2019. This is in part due to an unprecedented delay in court proceedings being finalised due to the pandemic. New practice guidance was published in March 2021 by the Public Law Working Group which underlined the importance of the child having lived with the relative for one year prior to the making of the Order. This has led to the lengthening of care proceedings as these arrangements are monitored and reviewed to ensure they meet the child’s needs.

Health

As reported in our year end data to Department of Education in March 2023 94% of our Children Looked After had received a health assessment in the reporting year. 95% of young people were up to date with immunisations by July which is in fact an increase from 78% at end of year March 2020. The percentage of young people with an up-to-date dental appointment which dropped to 64% by January 2022 as part of covid recovery is increasing and now 91% of young people have had a dental check in the last 12 months. The Service is working hard with Health colleagues to improve this figure and we have now built an alert into our database so Social Work staff are also aware of the annual renewal date of the dental check and therefore able to prompt carers to complete. Our admin support is collecting data on all children's health appointments and the Head of Service meets quarterly with CLA Health staff to review the information and ensure a proactive resolution for any child who has not attended their appointments.

8% of our young people were identified as having a substance misuse issue. Change Grow Live provided training to all CLA staff in 2022-23 and continue to work flexibly and online to try to engage young people. A strengths and difficulties questionnaire is completed for all children who have been in care more than 12 months. The returned data suggests that children placed outside of the borough are more likely to be struggling with their mental health than those who live in Bromley. This is perhaps unsurprising as it is generally the more complex young people who are more likely to be placed at a distance.

Strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) score 2022



Waiting lists for Bromley CAMHS have been a challenge in line with the national picture over the last 12 months. Demand has risen post pandemic and we are supporting more young people with complex mental health needs, self-harm and suicidal ideation. However, they have benefitted from 50% increase in staffing and are working creatively to reduce wait times and meet demand. As outlined, most of our young people also live outside of the borough which would inhibit them from receiving services at Bromley CAMHS. We have an effective relationship with the ICB who attend our weekly resource panel to consider commissioning tailored packages of therapeutic support that can be delivered local to placement or as part of a residential care package. The ICB also fund an additional post in our Thrive service to deliver support to our young people with their wellbeing. We have also invested in therapeutic life story work training for a social worker in CLA to take a lead in co working with young people with significant trauma to understand their lived experience. This work is already underway with a small cohort of young people who are being offered intensive 1:1 work.

Education

CLA Services work closely with the Virtual School to ensure best outcomes for Children in Care. Attendance is back to pre-pandemic levels and Bromley continues to exceed national averages in terms of attainment at GCSE level. This is in part due to initiatives such as Fresh Start and First Star Scholars that we have commissioned to provide opportunity for additional learning and tutoring to raise ambition and improve confidence. This is particularly impressive given 41% (72) of our young people have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which is above national averages of 29%. A further 18% (26) of young people require SEN support in school which is below national benchmarking at 27%. This could indicate looked after children with Bromley are more likely to achieve an EHC plan if they are identified as having additional needs.

The majority of our children make expected level of progress at every stage of learning. This is driven by PEP meetings which set out a personalised education plan for each child which is held in partnership with schools, social workers and virtual school staff every term. Performance reporting on PEPs shows 88% are happening within timescales as of Spring term 2023.

	Summer Term 2021/22 Progress	Cohort size as at end of July 2022	CLA with available progress data (No)	Making Expected Progress - English (No)	Making expected progress - Maths (No)	Making Expected Progress – English (%)	Making expected progress – Maths (%)	CLA making Expected Level of overall progress based on end of July 2022 cohort (No)	CLA making Expected Level of overall progress based on end of July 2022 cohort (%)
Statutory School Age CLA	KS1	34	31	20	21	65%	68%	26	76%
	KS2	52	47	37	41	79%	87%	46	88%
	KS3	80	73	57	54	78%	74%	66	83%
	KS4	67	56	33	36	59%	64%	48	72%
	In borough	146	130	92	92	71%	71%	114	78%
	Out borough	85	77	55	60	71%	78%	72	85%
	Those with EHCP	82	73	53	55	73%	75%	71	87%
	Those with SEN (not EHCP)	54	48	32	32	67%	67%	41	76%
	Those with No SEN	97	86	62	65	72%	76%	74	76%
	All Pupils	233	207	147	152	71%	73%	186	80%
Post -16	Post 16 (Years 12 and 13)	111	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	71	64%

The virtual school as part of pilot project with the DfE have provided additional support to children aged 16 and 17 to ensure they have clear transition plans as they leave secondary school and put intensive support to young people in year 12 and 13. 92% of this cohort are currently in education or training showing impact of this project.

Extra Familial Harm/Exploitation

Over 66% of our Children Looked After are secondary school age and over and 67 children coming into care for the first time were aged between 13 and 17 last year. Older adolescents are sometimes received into care due to concerns of extra familial harm due to identifiable risks from peers or exploitative adults in the community. This cohort of children are tracked through MEGA (Missing, Exploitation, and Gang Affiliation) Panel.

55% of children presented to the MEGA Panel are Looked After. This is primarily due to the additional vulnerability of children living away from their birth family who have experienced previous trauma and abuse. The primary reasons for CLA being presented to MEGA is child criminal exploitation which continues to be one of greater challenges. The numbers are low (6 currently open) but associated risks of youth violence are significant. We work with statutory and

voluntary sector partners to ensure multi-agency plans are in place to increase safety. We are working with 8 young people also known to Youth Justice services, but we work in close conjunction with police and youth justice staff.

Bromley entered a programme of support and intervention for this cohort of young people, known as Your Choice which ensures young people get intensive visiting and Cognitive Behaviour Therapeutic (CBT) support. Initially our Youth Justice Service (YJS) staff were trained in these techniques and one CLA team have been trained to deliver this intervention to support some of four of our most vulnerable young people as part of the initial research. This is an initiative in partnership with the Youth Endowment Fund, the London Improvement and Innovation Alliance (LIIA), the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), and the Anna Freud Centre. The cohort is small but one young man supported in this programme has gone from 20% school attendance to a full time place with the Prince's trust. The other three are also all engaged with ETE full or part time. Other CLA teams are now due to embark on the Your Choice initiative in the autumn.

The number of missing episodes for CLA has remained fairly static. In July 2023 children in our care experienced 75 missing episodes taken up by 25 young people. This usually rises in summer months due to warmer weather and increased social activities and longer evenings. The cohort of young people going missing has also remained similar compared to 22 young people went missing in April 2022. There can be a complex mix of push and pull factors that encourage children to work with carers and key workers to reduce risk of harm in the community. Some of these missing episodes are tied to concerns regarding extra familial harm and some are also linked to unauthorised contact with family members. We risk assess all family contacts to ensure children are having positive contact and work with police, legal, and providers if we need to take emergency safeguarding action. All children who do go missing are offered a return home interview by a professional who are not their social worker, to offer them a chance to share feelings and experiences with a trusted adult.

91% of these interviews were offered within 72 hours of the child returning to placement. Ofsted noted during the Focused Visit in September 2021: 'Risks to Children Looked After are clearly understood and responded to well. Strategy meetings are held as required. Children who go missing receive a bespoke response according to their need'. We believe this is still the case.

CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

As of 9th July 2023, 274 young people were open and allocated in the Leaving Care Service (LCS) in contrast to 244 who were actively receiving services in March 2021, and this is rising exponentially. The role of the allocated young person's advisor is to advise, befriend and assist the young person as they transition to adulthood. It is indicative of a strong Service that young people are more routinely choosing to stay in touch post-21. We are currently supporting 109 young people that are aged between 21 and 25. Much of this work involves supporting young people who may be completing university courses but also young people leaving custody or navigating between Adult Mental Health (MH) and Learning Disability (LD) Services. We recognise that the average age of moving out of the family home in London is 24 and with 25% of Care Leavers nationally becoming homeless at some stage in their lives we need to work with our corporate parents to support young people more effectively over a longer period of time.

We are required to report on 243 Care Leavers between the ages of 18 and 21. We are in touch with 218 (89%). Of The 25 we are not in touch there are 7 qualifying young people after their status has changed, as they returned home or were made subject to an SGO. There are 7 former UASC who are either missing and/or Appeal Rights Exhausted. There are 5 serving long term

prison sentences and 3 who disengaged and are now closed. Three transferred from the Children with Disabilities Service to Adult Learning Disability but not to the Leaving Care Service .

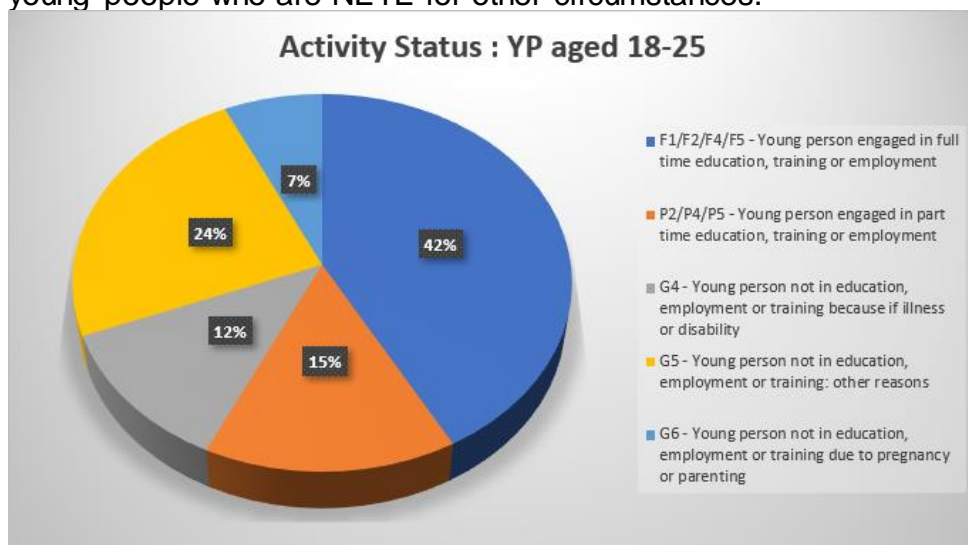
We reach out to all young people aged 18-25 on an annual basis to remind them of the potential to return for support and signpost young people towards our local offer. This was recently extended to become open ended for any Bromley care experienced person to seek advice and guidance.

Of our total cohort in July 2023 83% have a visit within statutory timescale. This is despite our rising numbers. We are also working hard to introduce the YPA to young people sooner in their leaving care journey by allocating a named worker to attend CLA reviews and offer joint work to young people aged 16 and 17. In response we have created three new young person's advisors posts in Leaving Care to manage demand.

The CLA and Leaving Care team fall under the same line management and benefit from joint training and regular joint service meetings and training events.

The handover from social worker to YPA has been a bespoke offer in Bromley with all young people being allocated a YPA by age 17 to offer joint work ahead of transfer. We run a 16 plus leaving care service with mixed teams of social workers and YPAs with a qualified SW as TM. The team receive young people coming into care in later adolescence and we manage the handover from CLA service according to need and wishes and feelings of young people. Some of our most complex young people remain allocated to a leaving care social worker post 18. The Leaving Care Service and the young people we support benefits from a 100% permanent workforce that enables young people to retain helping relationships with trusted staff where this is beneficial to their progress. A 'Real Talk' group created by the senior YPAs for young people preparing to transition to the Leaving Care Service has been held twice in school holidays, which enables young people to get to know staff from the Leaving Care Service.

As of June 2023, we had 116 out of 278 young people employed in either full time work or study (42%). 19 are in higher education (beyond A level study). 4 are in full time apprenticeships and another 48 young people are in full time employment (17%). We have a further 42 in part time higher education, employment, or apprenticeships (15%). 19 (7%) NETE due to pregnancy or childcare, and another 32 (12%) NETE due to illness or disability. Overall, we have 66 (24%) young people who are NETE for other circumstances.



Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People

Our Care Leaver population is also 60% male and therefore young men are disproportionately represented. Young people from Black, Asian, or Mixed heritage origin also represent 48.5% of our leaving care population which is also not representative of the wider demographics of Bromley. This is in part due to our growing UASC population. It is almost exclusively young men that arrive seeking asylum due to the perilous nature of their journey. Citizens of the Global Majority have greater representation in our care leaver population as most young people who present are older adolescents and quickly transition to adulthood. We are currently supporting 84 young people who arrived unaccompanied to claim asylum in the UK. 18 are under 18 and a further 66 are over 18. The numbers of the younger cohort have risen since we commenced receiving from the National Transfer Scheme in November last year. We are also supporting the London Borough of Hounslow and have received four young people who were placed in hotels in that area and have agreed to take 12 more over the next 12 months. They have a large population of UASC who were placed in hotels after the closure of Manston reception centre in October last year. We have also ensured all our staff are age assessment trained and have completed one age assessment where the young person was found to be over 22 and returned to the home office for support.

Of the 18 young people under the age of 18, 11 arrived from Afghanistan since conditions in that country deteriorated. Of the other young people, three are from Iran, one from Turkey, one from Egypt and two from Albania. Of the over 18s only 5 are from Afghanistan, 9 are from Albania, 19 are from Eritrea, one is from Ethiopia, 7 are from Iran, 6 are Iraqi, one from Kuwait, 3 from Sudan, one from Syria, one from Uganda 14 from Vietnam.

All young people who are received as asylum seekers are supported in the same way as all our other looked after children. They are all allocated social work support and placed in appropriate quality assured accommodation. We have made strong links with Bromley college in terms of offering ESOL support and we have made additional efforts to support children / young people with their cultural faith and identity needs. We have supported young people with therapeutic needs and worked with the refugee council to access counselling as well as sports clubs- for example they run a cricket club and some of our Afghani boys have attended. Some of our UASC take part in our care leaver, staff monthly football sessions.

We also support young people gain access to legal instructions to support their immigration claim and offer support to attend home office interviews. We ensure all asylum-seeking young people have triple planning built in their pathway plan so any young person who has been refused status and has lost all further appeals can either be supported with repatriation or referred on to community services.

On the 28th April, 13 of our young people from our Muslim community attended an EID celebration meal with our Assistant Director of Performance and Strategy attending alongside, allocated workers and other professionals. The evening created a sense of belonging and community. We ran a follow up cooking session for this group on the 31st of May at Our House.

Suitability of Accommodation

We have 96% of young people in suitable accommodation which has improved from 86% last year and 78% in the previous reporting year. Young people in custody are regarded as not in suitable accommodation and this accounts for all 9 of our young people in this cohort. They will

remain supported by their YPA and in receipt of a Pathway Plan to help prepare them for release back into the community. We continue to offer financial support given the vulnerability of this group, many of whom are completely estranged from their family and friends.

Our commissioning team run a Young Inspectors Programme supporting young people to work alongside the placement officer in visiting providers and providing feedback for young person led feedback. So far 10 young people have been trained and two young people have completed 10 visits between them since April 2023 to a variety of different placements. The feedback is shared with social care staff and commissioning managers to ensure we continue to commission high quality placements. On April 19th Children's Commissioning Team and Leaving Care team invited our providers into our Civic Centre to engage with them around the new regulatory framework. 9 different agencies attended, all but one intends to comply and gave positive feedback about the event. A further information session will be held with providers on 5th October to confirm their progress in Ofsted registration and offer the Young Inspectors a forum to feedback the themes identified in their research.



We ensure young people are supported to move on to their independent living when they are ready to do so. Bromley has a positive story around ensuring all our care leavers achieve a social tenancy. We currently have 24 young people aged 21 or over who are still in placements and step down gradually on a need led basis. The senior YPAs run a move on group to support young people gaining skills to manage their own home. This ran for the second time in Easter 2023 and was attended by 9 young people who learned about financial literacy as well as how to put up flat pack furniture. We have regular meetings with colleagues in housing who partner on our Leaving Care panel and are having a built in alert on our housing benefit system should our care leavers fall behind on rent so we can offer budgeting support and prevent tenancy breakdown.

Mental Health Practitioner

Some of our young people struggle to engage with statutory community mental health teams due to their own adverse childhood experiences which has left them struggling to form trusting relationships and manage regular appointments. We have been fortunate to obtain funding from the ICB and from Public Health to create a full time Mental Health Practitioner post who sits within the Leaving Care Service. This project is now in its second year. The post holder offers support to young people who may struggle to engage with clinic-based support. To date 48 young people have been referred for a variety of interventions such as support and safety planning around anxiety and depression, planning around hospital discharge, and identification of future therapy.

The worker also supports the Come Dine With Me group to support young people talking about mental health and wellbeing over a meal. The Come Dine With Me group operates out of 'Our House'. Feedback has been hugely positive about the impact of the role for young people. The funding has now been agreed for a further 12 months by the ICB.

Education Training and Employment (ETE)

Our ETE work sets out our ambition for young people to secure employment training of education opportunities as a means of securing financial security but increasing social capital, gaining life skills and improving self-esteem. Our established partnership with Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), partners in the Bromley Education Business Partnership (BEBP), as well as the Virtual School helps us identify bespoke opportunities for our young people who are presented at our weekly Leaving Care panel chaired by the Head of Service. An ETE worker meets all young people ahead of panel to capture their talents and ideas in order to match to relevant openings. The Panel also promote holistic planning to address any potential barriers to ETE such as unresolved immigration status substance misuse or unmet mental health needs.

Our end of year return to Department of education for 2022-2023 reported 55% of our young people were engaged in ETE. This is in line with national trends and an improvement from 42% in 2020-2021. As of July 2023 we have 116 out of 276 young people employed in either full time work or study (42%). 20 are in higher education (beyond A level study). 4 are in full time apprenticeships and another 44 young people are in full time employment (17%). We have a further 41 in part time higher education, employment or apprenticeships (14%). This represents 56% in total in ETE. 18 (6%) of young people are NETE due to pregnancy or childcare, and another 31 (11%) NETE due to illness or disability. Overall, we have 67 (24%) young people who are NETE for other circumstances. This could be due to offending behaviour, unresolved immigration status, or learning / MH need. We continue to offer these young people a high level of tailored support in recognition of the benefits of the role of learning and development in improving wellbeing, increasing financial stability, and building social capital. Bromley's regeneration team are currently supporting us in a bid to commission bespoke work coaching support from Drive Forward to strengthen our offer which we hope will go live in September.

Our New Beginnings pre-employment group work programme supports young people aged 17 plus who have been Not in Education, Training, or Employment (NETE) for over three months. This group ran for the sixth time in April and 23 young people have attended with 9 young people having secured and maintained full time education or employment subsequently and another three having gone on to secure work experience. The group offers pre-employability skills, interview training and an opportunity to complete a first aid course for an accredited qualification.



Young person on the first aid course

In conjunction with HR, we have created a Care Leaver youth work apprenticeship in the Active Involvement team. This is a fixed term contract offering one young person youth worker training

during an 18-month placement in the team. This has gone out to advert and has attracted a strong field of candidates.

In year 2021-22 we employed a care leaver in a DWP funded Kickstarter role for 6 months. She has gone on to achieve full time work in the Premier Inn and also maintained a casual post working on face-to-face projects with younger children. We also have two Care Leavers that have completed their Assessed Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) in Social Work, based in the Youth Justice Service in August 2022 and another Care Leaver completed a Social Work placement in CLA in May 2022. All three young people are currently employed by Bromley and have returned to offer mentoring support to our Care Leavers aspiring to university at an event curated by the Active Involvement Team.

Care leavers attending university are offered financial support for books equipment and living costs. YPAs visit young people during term time and liaise with teaching staff if the young person wishes. Staying put arrangements are kept on retainer during term time if suitable and we have a mentoring programme specifically for young people aspiring higher in education to match them to professionals within their area of interest. Our local offer was extended in March 2023 to include financial support to students completing an access to university year or a Masters course.

Young parents are also offered ongoing learning and training opportunities such as online courses and functional skills training if needed. Active Involvement have established a young parent's group with outings and activities to provide an inclusive space for young parents to gain support. The group was launched 4.7.23 and we are looking forward to our zoo outing and group work moving forward. A practitioner from Thrive and our CLA nurse support the project to offer advice guidance and therapeutic input.

AIM Event- Aspire, Inspire and Motivate



AiM
ASPIRE * INSPIRE * MOTIVATE

*** EVENT FOR *
PROFESSIONALS
AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Supporting our young people aged from 16 to 25 with

*** EDUCATION * TRAINING
* EMPLOYMENT * FINANCES**

24th April 2023

9.30am to 1.30pm

**LSEC Bromley, Rookery Lane,
Bromley, BR2 8HE**

An event for:

- Social workers
- Young Person Advisors
- Staying Put and Supported Lodgings carers
- Placement Keyworkers
- Young people aged 16-25

There will be presentations and an opportunity to get detailed information on what Bromley Council and our partners have on offer. Key partners such as LSEC Bromley, DWP, Bromley Education Partnership, and Princes Trust.

We will have a tour of key departments at Bromley College, including: construction, motor mechanics, and hair and beauty.

If you will be attending please register with:

Melissa Bob-Amara
Email her at melissa.bob-amara@bromley.gov.uk
Or call her on 020 8461 7869



Bromley
THE LONDON BOROUGH

Allied professionals such as providers, carers and support and social care staff were invited to highlight and signpost workers and young people to the different opportunities within the community around education, employment and training and finance. We had over 40 attendees including 8 young people, who had the opportunity to hear from partners such as DWP, Bromley College, Palace for Life, The Education Development Trust and the Lewisham and Bromley Credit Union. On the day of the event 3 of our young people signed up for further services, 2 of whom started courses the same week.



Bright Spots - Coram

Children Looked After and Leaving Care Services ran a survey for all young people called 'Bright Spots' in conjunction with Coram. The survey is run nationally and allows us to benchmark our results against other Local Authorities. Senior leaders, young people, and social care staff met at dissemination meetings last year to discuss ideas for practice improvement and the Living in Care Council and Change for Care Leavers Forum have tracked progress on suggestions highlighted below. The survey for Care leavers 18-25 went out in Oct- Dec 2022 to fall over care leavers week. The CLA survey went out in Feb/ March and the findings have now been returned. A dissemination meeting will be held on October 9th with the staff, young people and senior leaders to consider how to progress the findings.

32% of our care leaver population responded and highlighted many 'bright spots of practice'. The survey demonstrated the impact of a stable work force and showed positive trusting relationships between staff and young people.

Leaving care support

Continuity

- Care leavers in Bromley enjoyed greater stability of worker than care leavers in other LAs: Seven in ten (70%) of Bromley's care leavers had kept the same leaving care worker in the previous year, compared to 60% of care leavers in other LAs. **This is a Bright Spot of practice.**

Trust

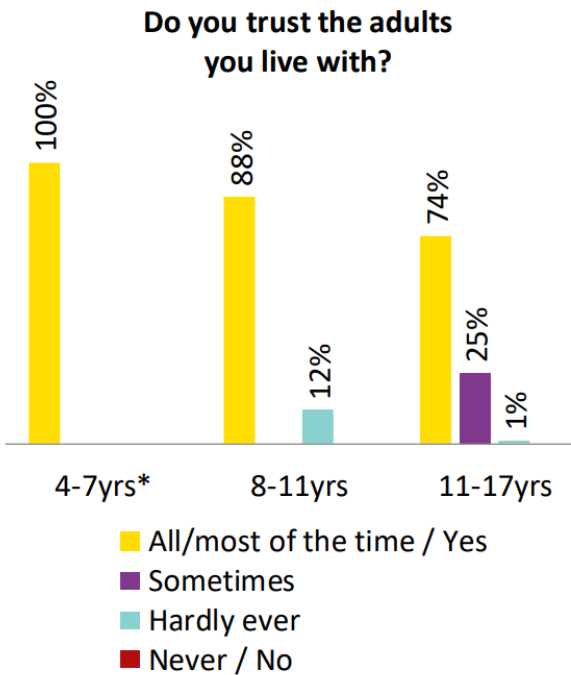
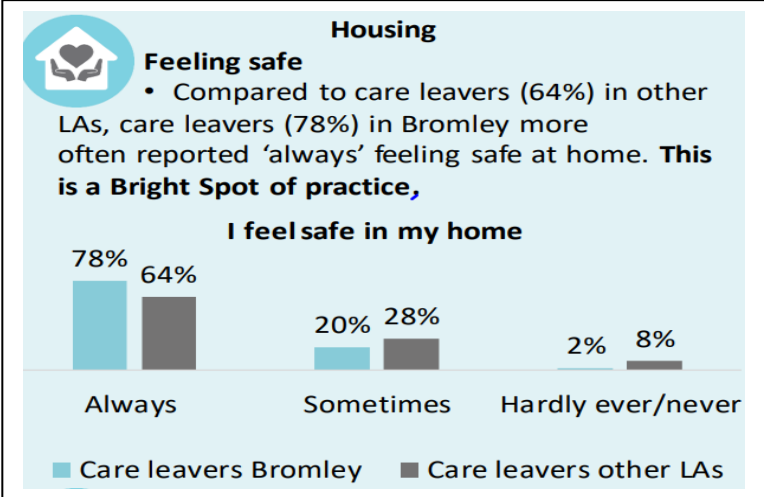
- 99% of the young people trusted their leaving care worker ('all or most of the time' or 'sometimes').

We saw proportionate rises in the number of young people reporting they had good friends, had a trusted person and someone to listen to.

There were also increases in the number of young people who said they felt involved in their pathway planning and felt satisfied with their life overall.

Whilst the majority of care leavers nationally report low wellbeing – this was proportionately lower in Bromley

The main area for improvement is around supporting young people to understand their care journey. Leaving Care Service has commissioned trauma informed practice training for all the staff to support them in undertaking this challenging work which started June 2023.



30% of our CLA population answered the Bright Spots Survey which was returned June 2023. Again it highlighted several key results such as 100% of children who responded felt safe where they lived and trusted the adults caring for them. 92% of young people said they trusted their social worker said they always spoke to them alone. This represents a bright spot of practice and an improvement since the last survey. The results were also encouraging in terms of overall wellbeing with 88% of young people saying their life was getting better and 92% of children reporting having at least one really good friend.

Another area we have demonstrated improvement was placement stability. 46% of our young people said they have been in the same placement for more than a year compared with 34% in other LAs. Although less than half of our young people said they were seeing enough of their birth family. This will be an area of development for the service moving forward.

PROGRESS OF PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN CORPORATE PARENTING REPORT 2020-21

Co-production has been at the heart of our corporate parenting strategy. It is important that young people feel heard with respect to their own care plan and feel empowered to chair their looked after reviews but that they also invited to impact on service delivery and design.

The subgroups that had traditionally led on the activity coming out of the Board were reworked into task and finish groups to produce clear outcomes that would make a tangible difference for young people. These outcomes were co-created between the subgroup leads and the young people at the Living in Care Council (LinCC) / Change for Care Leavers (CfCL). LinCC and CfCL that ran for 2 years from Easter 2021 -2023. The priorities and subsequent actions are outlined below.

Priority 1: Having a Say

The Active Involvement Team in conjunction with our young people have created and delivered a training package for all staff across Children's Social Care and foster carers to focus on the quality of relationships. The session included films the young people had made about race and identity as well as about their care journey. The training has been delivered to social workers across the directorate during 2022-23. It has subsequently been delivered to our foster carers, reviewing officers and has been shared with elected members for their learning. The training was also delivered to the Fostering Panel. Lincc and CFCL also delivered training to the Designated teachers conference in July. This has proved a powerful tool to highlight the importance of putting children's wishes and feelings at the centre of care planning.

The savings and pocket money policy has been reviewed and new guidelines created in response to concerns raised about young people being able to manage financially into the future. It was agreed all children's savings will be paid directly into savings accounts held by the council to ensure young people have a financial cushion on leaving care in addition to their Setting Up Home Allowance. Previously it was an expectation of carers that they set up and managed a child's savings account. This new approach went live in September 2022 will mean that savings will be guaranteed even if a child has a disrupted placement history.

Young people continue to be involved in recruitment activity across Children's Services. Young people were involved in the recruitment for the new Placement Officer, Young Person's Advisors, Group Manager and Team Manager in the Leaving Care Service throughout 2022-23. Our relaunched Young Recruiters project was launched at the Corporate Parenting Board July 12th. This will ensure care experienced young people will share their lived experience to support workforce development.

The Group Manager from the Leaving Care Service has also developed the Local Offer for Care Leavers in discussion with the Change for Care Leavers Forum. This can be accessed via our website: www.linkinbromley.co.uk. This involves consideration of revision of funds for the small cohort of young people at university. This will slightly reduce the grant to be more in line with other Local Authorities but also allow us to extend the offer to young people taking access or entry level courses pre-university. With this adjustment we will create an additional discretionary fund for the

wider cohort of young people to set towards driving lessons or alternative training courses. The young people felt this was a fairer distribution of funding and were happy to endorse these suggestions. Since its inception young people have used the support to access a variety of opportunities such as driving lessons, or swimming sessions to support wellbeing, and gym memberships.

Active Involvement will lead a dissemination event in September to invite senior leaders and young people to consider the feedback from Bright Spots Survey and choose some areas to take forward as projects to improve the service to ensure young people are engaged in impacting on service delivery and design.

Priority 2: Support, Stability and Security

The support and stability group chaired by the Head of Permanence specifically commissioned a training video by the young people to use as part of the skills to foster training in 2022-23. The young people created a film during the summer programme called 'Same but different at the same time' and reflects their experience and what they would want from prospective carers.

Young people had also asked for greater support for their birth parents. Thrive service ran a support group for parents in response to the feedback to promote better contact and repair relationships. This group has now evolved into 1 - 1 support but has made a positive impact in supporting rehabilitation and re-establishing family time. We are also in the process of recommissioning our contract for Family Group Conferences to be offered to families where children are returning home from care as well as for older young people wanting to explore support within extended family networks.

The Leaving Care Service and Permanency Service worked together to develop better support for Staying Put Carers. This has involved a training programme and monthly support groups to ensure more carers are willing to support young people post-18 to remain in family-based placements. We currently have 27 young people in staying put arrangements which has risen slightly from 25 last year.

Moving forward the group are working on creating trusting relationships between carers and young people and are looking at reviewing placement plans to be more child friendly that offer children greater chance to demonstrate greater responsibility.

Priority 3: Health and Wellbeing

The health and wellbeing subgroup have two major work streams. These include a project around achieving free prescriptions for young people in care. This is being led by the Designated Nurse for CLA and partners across London and was launched in June 2023. All our young people have been written to with details of how to apply and can register for a card to take to the pharmacy for those who would otherwise be charged for medication.

The subgroup supported the Come Dine With Me club for Care Leavers. The project was created to reduce social isolation and create opportunities for young people to come together over a meal with Health professionals and talk about healthy eating and positive wellbeing. This has run monthly since Easter 2022. Session times have alternated to offer different groups a chance to attend. We have hosted Sunday roast lunches and weekend barbecue events as well as evening meals and lunch time sessions. We have been supported by sexual health nurses, substance misuse teams and the MH worker. The new priority involves empowering young people to take ownership of their health and health history, which has included learning ways to access their health records and training around use of the NHS App.

Priority 4: Education, Training, Employment and Achievement

The Education and Achievement subgroup have also successfully created a mentoring scheme for young people aspiring to professional careers or university education called 'Motivating Young Minds' run by Bromley Mentoring Programme. We have successfully matched a number of young people with a professional who matches their chosen career path.

The Virtual School and Active Involvement team also piloted a weekly revision session for young people preparing for exams. The young people that attended benefited in different ways, one young person commented that the sessions enabled him to learn how to read a clock, whilst others commented on the space and support to undertake A level revision .

Lincc and CFCL are looking forward to working with the Virtual School head teacher on involving children and young people in creating trauma informed practice training for teaching staff in schools as their new priority. They delivered their first session to a teacher conference at the civic centre on 28.6.23 which was universally well received.

Priority 5: Transitions and Independence

The Leaving Care Service have created a 'moving on group' which has now run twice over the last 12 months. The Senior YPAs devised the group and offered sessions focused on support for young people moving into their own tenancy. This included workshops around budgeting, managing relationships, and housing rights and entitlement. The seniors also deliver the 'Real Talk' group for young people moving from the CLA Service to the Leaving Care Service in October 2022 to meet the team and offer advice and support around transitions to adulthood.

The Senior YPA's also redesigned the Independence toolkits, designed to support our young people to learn practical living skills in their placements. The toolkits were reviewed and signed off by our CFCL group.

The project CFCL chose to take forward with this sub group is around supporting young people with financial management and aims to work with partnerships within the community such as Lewisham and Bromley Credit Union.

Active Involvement/Participation

The Active Involvement team ran a packed agenda of events over 2022-23:

Corporate Parenting Fun day

We were excited to hold our first in-person Corporate Parenting Fun Day at London South East College (LSEC) in July 2022. This offered workers, carers and children and young people to share food fun and games in a family barbecue style event. We had over 140 young people and carers at the event. We hold an annual photography auction at the event to fundraise for luxury housewarming gifts for care leavers, this year we raised over £1200 as a result of the auction. The next fun day event is being held on 30.7.23 again at LSEC with a sports day theme.



Summer Programme

We ran a programme of in-person social events over summer 2022 including a film project, a photography project, a residential trip, a trip to Brighton and another to Thorpe Park. We also partnered with the Churchill Theatre to run a drama project where young people created a drama piece to present to their carers. We ran a young men's group a speed boat on the Thames trip and a gentleman's tea with senior leaders. The girls group 'Fierce and Flaysome' offered a trip to Buckingham Palace and 'crafternoon' tea session. We also delivered a poetry project with Lemn Sissay, where 5 of our young people attended weekly sessions with Lemn and then performed at the London Poetry Cultural Evening in the Churchill Gardens in Central Bromley.

We are delighted to have Lemn back to have lunch with our young people on the 1st June 2023 at Our House before he gives a reading to our young people and staff. Our young people will then provide their own presentation to staff and hold a Q&A session with staff.

Poetry Workshops and Performance with Lemn Sissay OBE

About Lemn Sissay:

Lemn Sissay OBE is an award winning poet, playwright, performer, author and broadcaster who has read on stage throughout the world. Lemn was the official poet for the London 2012 Olympics. Lemn is a trustee of the Foundling Museum and has created many opportunities for looked after children including establishing and running the first Lemn Sissay PhD scholarship for Care Leavers at the University of Huddersfield. Having been a care leaver himself, Lemn strives to provide opportunities for looked after young people and as part of his residency with Bromley Libraries, is offering workshops for looked after young people. To learn more about Lemn's experiences, you can visit his website: <https://www.lemnissay.com/>



The Project:

Lemn will run two workshops to support young people to create their own poetry. There will also be a performance workshop/ rehearsal before participants either perform themselves at the Young Poet Festival on Saturday 30th July or their work is read aloud by Lemn.

Key Dates:

Monday 27th June 5.30pm – 6.30pm (workshop)
 Monday 4th July 5.30pm – 6.30pm (workshop)
 Monday 25th July 5.30pm – 5.30pm (rehearsal for performance)
 Performance Slot Saturday 30th July 5.30 – 7pm (performance)

Venue

Bromley Central Library
 High Street Bromley
 BR1 1EX

Celebration of Success – 28th October

Our annual celebration event for our wonderful care leavers was held at the Civic Centre in the Old Palace, over 100 young people were nominated and attended to collect their awards. Awards included achievements in Higher Education, Parenting and making healthier life choices. The young people enjoyed a BBQ feast followed by Karaoke. The entire event was planned and hosted by CFCL. To close the awards ceremony young people also presented their workers with awards.



Care Leavers Christmas Party – 20th December 2022

As part of the Mayors funded Come Dine with Us project we delivered a Christmas Party for our young people. They all received gifts on the night and had a fantastic time on the karaoke. We collected charitable donations for Christmas presents, such as clothing, books and beauty products. We received so many, workers were able to collect gifts for some of our other vulnerable young people.

LinCC and CFCL Christmas Dinner 22nd December 2022

It is a tradition that at the end of the year to say thank you to the members of LinCC And CFCL for their hard work throughout the year with a traditional Christmas dinner. This year we stayed in the Old Palace and had caterers serve them their dinner, we played family games and gave speeches of appreciation.

International Women's Day – 8th March 2023

Last year we introduced an International Women's Day event, where our female Senior management team dine with some of our young women, this year the Mayor of Bromley Cllr Hannah Gray also joined the group. The evening allowed young women to have conversations with women in leadership roles and consider their own ambitions.



Young Men's Football

We host a monthly Young men's football session which is an opportunity for our young men and our male workers and managers to hit the pitch. We have delivered 4 sessions to date and it has been a great way to building positive relationships all round.

City Hall Visit – 13th April

14 young people attended City Hall at the invitation of our GLA member and former portfolio holder Peter Fortune. The young people held a debate in the chamber considering the benefits and challenges of being care experienced. It was a moving and thought provoking event.

LinCC and CFCL Joint Training Residential – 3rd-6th April 2023- Skreens Park Chelmsford

This was our first joint LinCC and CFCL training residential. 17 young people that attended the trip aged 12-22. The aim of the training residential was to deliver training and teamwork sessions to prepare the groups for the next years work programme and ran workshops such as:

- The care system, this year 2 of the CFCL members delivered this and included a quiz and role playing foster carers and social workers
- Change, Challenge and Choice – supporting the group to think about their own experiences and how they will need to embrace these elements of life in order to achieve the groups aims

During the residential the young people held elections for the new chairs and vice-chairs.

There was also dedicated time for the Corporate Parenting Subgroup leads to dial into the residential and pitch ideas for the next set of co-produced priorities. Once the residential was over the LinCC left with 3 new priorities and CFCL 4 for 2023-2025.

They also participated in team building activities such as orienteering, raft building, bridge building a food challenge and a talent show.



Come Dine with Us

Once a month we deliver a cooking session at Our House, the evening provides an opportunity for young people to cook and eat together alongside health professionals on hand to offer support. The last financial year the Mayor of Bromley chose the project as her charity and therefore frequently attended the sessions. The young people have made lots of international dishes and had support around topics such as mental health and sexual health.

Summer Programme 2023

We are about to launch our summer programme for Summer 2023 which includes a trip to Margate for our care leavers, a studio music project which will create a piece of music which will be performed at next year's care leaver celebration. We are running a collaboration with Southwark to create a film about their care experience. We are re running our girls group Fierce and Flawsome to build self esteem and confidence amongst our teenage young women. Our photography project will offer the young people a chance to compose pictures for public display in our new office following our move and our residential in August will offer our young people a trip outside of London to gain new experiences and challenge themselves outside of their comfort zone.

CONCLUSION

It has been a year of continuous development and improvement for the CLA and Leaving Care Services in response to feedback from young people. 'Our House' on the civic site has been a fantastic addition to our service and allowed us to offer creative ways to engage our young people. Our Local Offer and participation programme demonstrate Bromley's commitment to improving outcomes for our young people. Our full programme of group work has allowed staff and young people multiple opportunities to put relationships at the heart of our practice and reflect Bromley's Relationship Model.