

Ealing Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy

2014 – 2017

Children's and Adults' Services



Introduction

Ealing council and its partners are totally committed to safeguarding the most vulnerable children in the local community and supporting children, young people and their families through our early intervention strategy and through a wide range of early help universal and targeted family support services on offer. This is central to our wider Vision ***to make Ealing a great place for every child and young person to grow up.***

However for some children alternative secure, stable, quality arrangements need to be in place on a short term or permanent basis. This strategy focuses on this group of approx. 400 children aged 0-18 and 245 care leavers aged 18 – 23 and beyond. It sets out the context locally and nationally and the updated legislative framework within which the authority and its partners are seeking continuous improvements in the range and quality of supports on offer and the outcomes available to this important group.

It is recognised that the needs of looked after children and their families cannot be seen in isolation from the needs of wider vulnerable children and families in the community and therefore this strategy needs to be read in conjunction with the Early Intervention Strategy and the wider local context set out in the Ealing Children and Young Peoples Plan 2011 – 2014.

Children who come into care are not a homogenous group and enter the system at widely different ages for widely different reasons and varying periods of time. Some will be able to return home to their families or be placed with their extended families quickly; others will require long term permanent alternatives. Ealing is also a highly diverse borough and therefore our provision needs to match the needs of diverse groups of children. What they all have in common however, is the need at times of acute crisis for quality and caring placements and interventions from skilled and supportive staff. The traumas experienced by these children and young people and the subsequent disruption in their lives and acute challenges they face, should be central to all interventions and interactions with them. A wide range of supportive health, education, employment and leisure services need to be in place to help them come to terms with the trauma they may have experienced in the past and help them prepare to become successful and independent young adults.

The principle aim of this strategy is therefore to put the Child's Journey at its centre, build on the strengths of the existing range of interventions whilst working towards continuously improving the support on offer to this key group of children, young people and their families. Central to its development has been the child's voice and input from current looked after children and young people particularly through the Junior Council and the Horizons ShoutOut Forum and their views influence many of the actions moving forward. Ealing's Corporate Parent Panel has also overseen its development.

This strategy also reflects changing legislative and policy guidance and is supported by an Action Plan that sets out the specific tasks to transform the aspirations for delivering the very best outcomes for all our children and young people into reality.

CONTENTS

Introduction

1. Aims of the Strategy
2. Ealing's Population
3. LAC Population – Breakdown and performance details
4. The Child's Journey
 - i. Prevention and Early Intervention
 - ii. Support to parents
 - iii. Contact and rehabilitation
 - iv. Family Group Conference
5. Services available to looked after children and care leavers:
 - i. Social Work
 - ii. Education Support
 - iii. Extracurricular activities
 - iv. Health Support
 - v. Horizons Education and Achievement Centre
 - vi. Out of borough strategy/Positive Activities
 - vii. Corporate Parent Panel
6. Structure of the LAC and Leaving Care Service
 - i. The LAC Court Team
 - ii. The Long term team
 - iii. Leaving Care Service
 - iv. AROH Panel
 - v. Care Leavers Panel
 - vi. LASPO Act 2012
7. Links to the Troubled Families Agenda (Think Families Plus)
8. Listening to Children and Young People:
 - i. Junior Council
 - ii. Horizons ShoutOut Care Council
 - iii. Corporate Parent Panel
 - iv. LAC Survey
 - v. Reviews
 - vi. Advocacy and Complaints
9. Public Information for Children and Families
10. Additional support for children and young people with specific needs
 - i. Children missing from care
 - ii. Support for children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation
 - iii. Support for children who are unaccompanied minors

- iv. Support for children who are looked after and are care leavers who are parents
- v. Support for young people involved in youth offending
- vi. Support for young people who are involved in gangs and serious youth violence
- vii. Support for children with additional needs: Early Intervention and Intensive support.

11. Preparing for independence and leaving care

- i. Support for Higher Education
- ii. Reducing NEETs
- iii. Accommodation

12. Placements Strategy

13. Adoption and Permanence

- i. Kinship Team
- ii. Adoption and Adoption Support
- iii. Long Term Fostering - TBA

14. Reviews and the role of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)

15. Workforce Development and Training Strategy

16. Learning from Research and Best Practice elsewhere:

17. Budget and Financial Strategy

18. Next Steps, Evaluation and Action Plan

- i. Project Oracle

19. Appendices:

Appendix 1: LAC Strategy Scorecard

Appendix 2: Menu of Interventions

1.Aims of this Strategy

The overarching vision of this LAC strategy is to ensure children and young people develop and are safe, successful, confident, and emotionally secure and achieve their full potential, with a strong sense of personal and cultural identity.

This will be achieved through prioritising the following aims:

- i) To prevent children on the thresholds of care from entering the care system through effective early intervention and family support.
- ii) To ensure that effective care planning and a range of quality provision is in place in terms of suitable placements and multi-agency support services for those that do need to enter the care system.
- iii) To ensure that the care experience is safe and improves outcomes and life chances for the child and young person and that their care journey is a positive one.
- iv) To ensure that the care experience raises aspirations and provides effective education, training and employment support for children through from early years to leaving care.
- v) To ensure that effective health support is in place including specialist support for looked after children with a disability.
- vi) To ensure that the care system reflects the diversity of the borough's children and families population and addresses their religious, racial and cultural and other needs.
- vii) To ensure that children and young people's views and voices are heard on an individual basis to influence their care plan and on a strategic basis to influence the range of provision available to support them, keep them safe and be successful.
- viii) To ensure that children and young people are supported to make an effective transition either to permanency, returning home or semi-independent or independent living. To ensure that they are able to receive ongoing practical and emotional support as they transition out of the care system.
- ix) To ensure that the service is delivered in line with national legislation, guidance and best practice and that the quality of the child's journey is at its centre.
- x) To ensure that services are delivered by a skilled, well trained and supported workforce who place children and young people's safety, views and wellbeing at the heart of practice.
- xi) To ensure that the needs of looked after children and care leavers are prioritised across the authority, led by the Corporate Parent Panel that listens and responds to the views of children and young people.

2.Ealing's Population

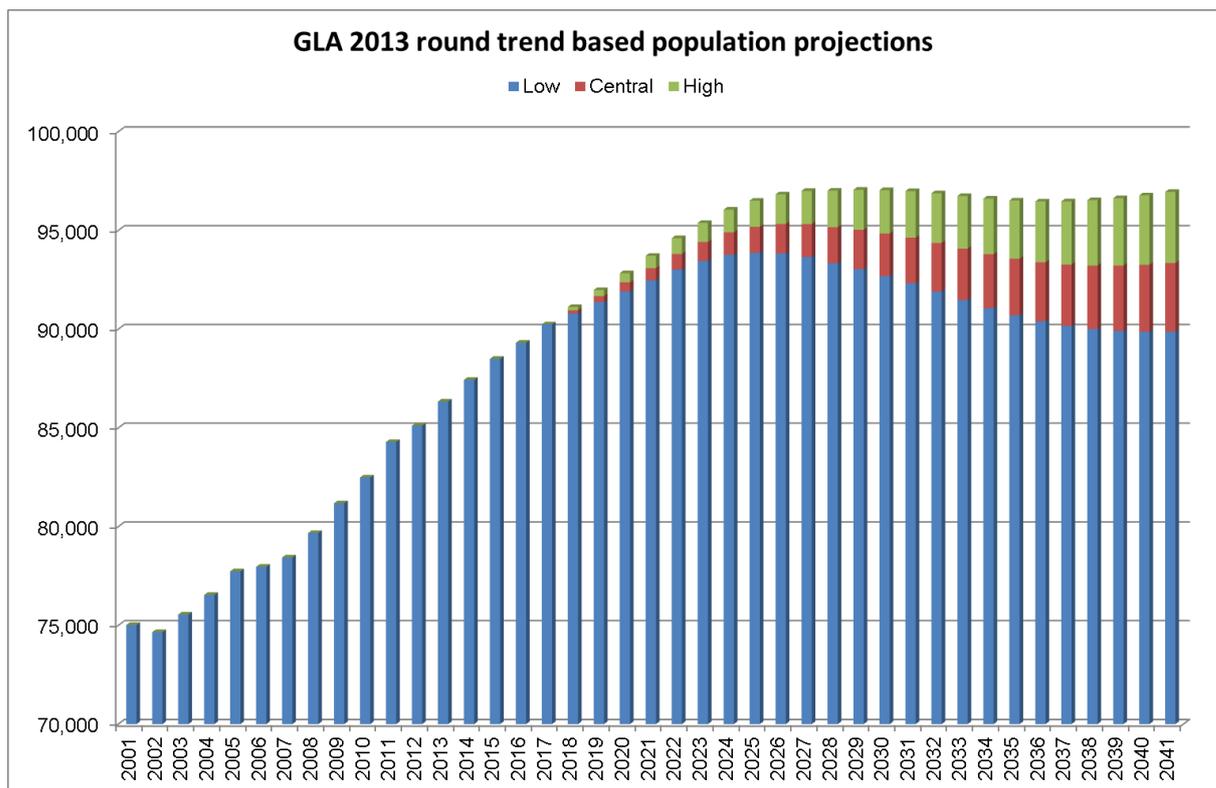
In order to understand the needs of Ealing's looked after children and care leavers, it is important to understand the wider demographic trends of this large and growing young borough population, within which this strategy is set.

Children and Young People: Population projections (GLA 2013 round)

There are currently estimated to be 86,328 children and young people (age 0-19) in the borough (MYE 2013). This is an increase of more than 10,000 children in the last 10 years.

The GLA produce a number of different population projection models based on development and / or trend data. The trend models projects the overall population using recent trends in fertility, mortality and migration and development data is only used to distribute growth between wards. It is currently felt that the trend model best reflects the situation in outer London borough's like Ealing, where much of the growth has been the result of households getting bigger rather than lots of new developments.

The GLA released three variants of trend-based population projections in December 2013. These variants differ in their domestic migration assumptions beyond 2017. The economic crisis has been linked to a fall in migration from London to the rest of the UK and a rise in flows from the UK to London. The variants reflect a range of scenarios relating to possible return to pre-crisis trends in migration.



Based on these models, the population of 0-19 years olds in the borough is projected to rise by around four and a half thousand children (5%) and young people in the next five years (to between 90,788 and 91,119 by 2018) and by somewhere between seven and nine

thousand in the next ten years (to between 93,449 (8%) and 95,375 (10%) by 2023), depending on what happens with migration.

The latest birth data and projections suggest the authority's growth rate may have reached a plateau (10 years since the upturn began) in the region of 5,800 and births in Ealing are now projected to level off before starting to come down over the next five to ten years (back to five and a half thousand by 2024).

Ealing's school population currently stands at 55,265 (January 2013), with just over fifty thousand children in state funded provision and just over five thousand children in independent schools. Three and a half thousand of the children in our state funded schools (aged 4 and 16) live outside of the borough (8%), while nearly six thousand children aged between 4 and 16 attend state funded schools outside of Ealing (13%).

The primary school population (age 4 – 10) has risen by nearly five thousand pupils in the last six years – a substantial 20% increase. It is projected to rise by a further three and half to five thousand pupils in the next five years (12% to 17%) as the increased birth years move into and through primary school. The high school population (age 11 – 15) is currently at a six year low but as the larger birth years reach high school age is projected to rise by up to two thousand pupils (14%) in the next five years and by up to five thousand pupils (36%) in the next ten years.

69% of those in state funded schools are from Black/Ethnic minority (i.e. non-white) backgrounds. This compares to an overall BME population of 51% (based on the 2011 census). Including people from other white backgrounds (such as Polish and Gypsy/Travellers), the figures rise to 81% of the school population and to 66% of the overall population. The most common ethnic groups in Ealing schools are White British (17%), Indian (13%), Somali (9%), Eastern European (8%), Pakistani (7%), Asian Other (7%), Afghan (5%) and Black Caribbean (4%). The biggest growth has been among the Eastern European population which has increased by nearly 2000 children to 4210 in the last five years. Two thirds of these are Polish speaking.

More than a fifth (23%) of children in Ealing schools are entitled to free school meals. This is 24% among 11-15 year olds and 22% among 4- 10 year olds, well above the national figures of 16% and 19% respectively. This rises to 29% when you include all children who have been eligible for free school meals at any stage over the last 6 years (ie. those eligible for the deprivation element of the government's pupil premium).

Sources:

<http://data.london.gov.uk/datastore/package/gla-2013-round-population-and-household-projections>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2013>

Therefore Ealing has a young and rising highly diverse population. The rapid growth in birth rate over the past decade has placed increased demand on social care, health care and early years and schools places. It is against this rising demand with a population that has a high degree of mobility and vulnerability that this LAC and Leaving Care strategy is set.

This next section looks at Ealing's recent LAC and Care Leaver data and its comparison with national data.

3.LAC Population – Breakdown and Performance Details

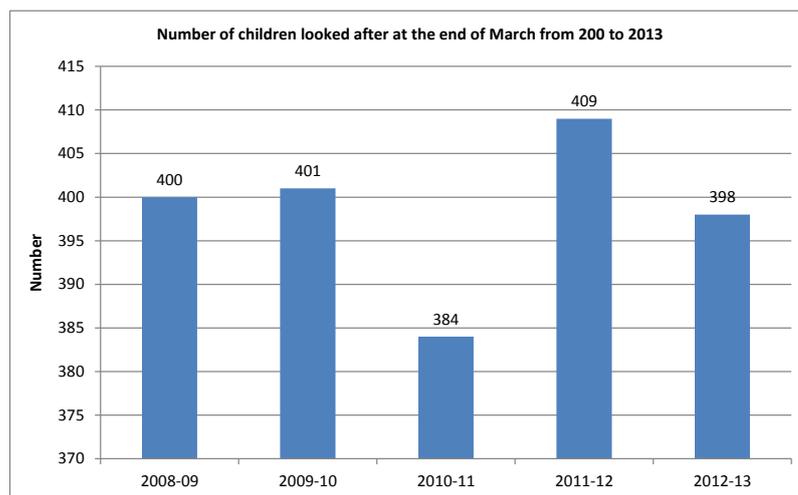
Looked after children (LAC) at the end of year 2012:

As at the end of 2012, there were 67,050 children/young people looked after in the UK. The national figure has been increasing steadily since 2008 with the majority of children coming into care due to abuse or neglect. Ealing's looked after population has remained relatively steady in recent years, despite a 35% rise in the total local population. This reflects the positive impact of many of the early help services on offer such as SAFE and the Family Nurse Partnership. At the end of year 2013, Ealing had 398 children looked after.

LAC Numbers for the past 5 years were 400 and 401 children in 2008-09 and 2009-10 respectively. In 2010-11, the LAC population dropped to 384 whilst in 2011-12 the numbers increased slightly to 409. Over the last five years, Ealing's LAC average per year is 398.

This is shown by figure 1 below.

Fig 1



Ealing's trend data tracking the reasons why children become LAC is broadly in line with national data.

- 56% enter the system due to abuse and neglect compared to 62% nationally
- 13% due to family acute stress compared with 14% nationally and
- 11% due to family dysfunction compared to 9% nationally.

Ethnicity of Ealing's LAC Population:

The borough's diversity is increasingly reflected in Ealing's LAC population. In the authority's maintained schools just over 80% of pupils are from a black or minority ethnic background and this figure rises year on year. This is reflected in the Table below in the steadily reducing percentage of white children (30.5% in 2008-09 reduced to 21% in 2012/13) who became LAC and the rising number of dual heritage young people.

Table 2 shows the breakdown of children looked after by ethnicity as a percentage

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
White British	30.5	27.7	25.0	24.4	21.1
White Irish	1.8	1.5	1.0	1.7	1.5
Traveller of Irish Heritage	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0
Gypsy/Roma	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Any other White background	4.5	6.0	5.2	5.9	6.8
White and Black Caribbean	7.3	9.5	10.2	8.1	9.0
White and Black African	1.3	0.7	0.5	2.2	2.5
White and Asian	2.3	1.7	2.6	2.9	2.8
Any other mixed background	5.3	6.2	6.5	5.6	6.5
Indian	8.0	6.7	6.3	4.6	5.8
Pakistani	2.8	2.2	2.9	2.2	2.8
Bangladeshi	0.5	0.5	0.3	1.0	2.3
Any other Asian background	8.0	8.2	9.4	11.0	9.5
Caribbean	13.0	13.7	14.1	13.4	12.6
African	10.3	9.5	10.9	10.8	11.1
Any other black background	3.5	5.0	4.2	5.1	4.8
Chinese	0.5	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.3
Any other ethnic group	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.5
Information not yet obtained	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Children looked after as at 31 March 2013 and placement type:

Ealing placed 70.6% of children placed in foster placements in 2013 (compared with 75% nationally in 2012). Children/young people placed in residential placements has increased year on year and current stands at 18.8%, children placed for adoption on has increased from 1.8% in 2008-2009 to 4.8% in 2012-2013 (compared to 4% nationally in 2012).

Children looked after and locality of placement:

It is recognised that children need to be kept wherever possible and appropriate close to their local communities. Evidence shows that maintaining local links with friends and family and in particular ensuring continuity of school placement, leads to best outcomes.

However for some children it may not be safe for this to happen. In addition the challenge remains in a densely populated, diverse local borough of securing sufficient, available local placements. This can be a particular challenge in terms of keeping sibling groups together or children with additional, specific needs.

Table 4 below sets out placement, locality trends in recent years

	All LAC	20 miles or less			Over 20 miles		
		All children	Inside boundary	Outside boundary	All children	Inside boundary	Outside boundary
2011-12- National (%)		76	55	22	16	4	12
2011-12	409	293	143	150	85	0	85
%		72	35	37	21		21
2012-13	398	269	130	139	92	0	92
%		68	33	35	23	0	23

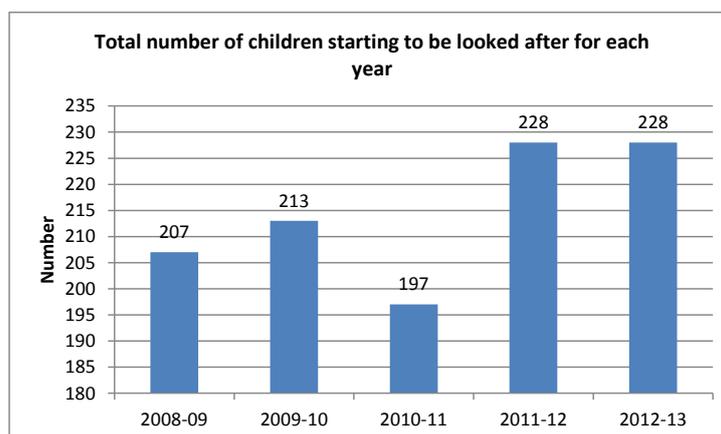
NB "Home" address unknown or unavailable may occur with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children or children missing from main placement. For reasons of confidentiality distance is not recorded for children who were placed for adoption.

During 2011-12, Ealing had 72% of children placed within 20 miles or less from the child's home (compared with 76% nationally). 35% of children looked after were placed within Ealing compared with 55% nationally. However given London's density, the 20 miles indicator is more appropriate e.g. for some children attending school in the North of the borough – placement in Harrow or Hillingdon may be more appropriate than Acton or Southall. This is compared to 21% of children placed over 20 miles or more from their home, which was above the national figure of 16% in 2011-12. In 2012-13, the total placed within 20 miles decreased by 4% points, from 2011-12. Whilst this is a relatively small change it does indicate the need for robust placement marketing and recruitment strategy to increase range of local options and this is detailed elsewhere in this strategy. In addition the commitment to prioritise increased foster carer recruitment and capacity is a key aim of the services demand management strategy for 2014/2016.

Children who started to be looked after during the year:

Nationally there has been a steady increase in numbers of children becoming looked after (20% from 2008/9 to 2011/12) and to some extent this increase is mirrored in Ealing (10% increase for same period). Reasons for increase are varied and include increased public awareness of child safeguarding issues following high profile cases such as the tragic Baby Peter and more recent Daniel Pelka case. Also the impact of the recession on family functioning and breakdown linked to rises in debt, domestic violence and substance misuse. Increased awareness of child sexual exploitation and young people at risk of involvement in gangs and serious youth violence has also had a local and national impact. At the same time the significant 35% rise in the local population is reflected to a much lesser effect. This appears to indicate positive investment in early intervention over the past decade.

Fig 5



In terms of reasons for entering the care system – Ealing's figures are in line with national trend and reflect a near 10% increase in abuse and neglect as the main reason since 2009.

Children starting to be looked after by age:

When the above figures are broken down by age range, the majority of children coming into care in 2013 in Ealing (Fig 6) are mainly young people aged 16 or over as well as children falling into the 5 to 9 age category, accounting for 22% each. Children aged under 1 and between the ages of 10 to 12 account for 12% and 10% respectively whilst children aged 1 to 4 and 13 to 15 are near identical at 16% and 17% respectively.

Fig 6

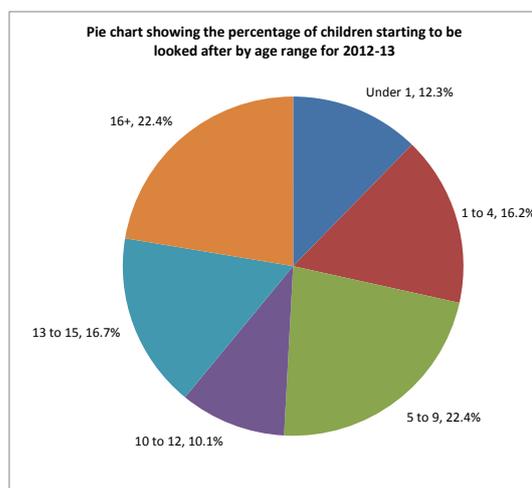
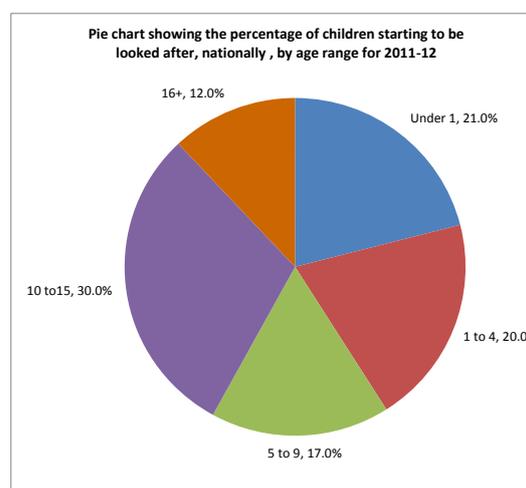


Fig 7



The national picture, as at 2011-12, is slightly different with the majority of children starting to be looked after between the ages of 10 to 15, making up 30% of the total (Ealing in comparison was slightly lower at 26.8%). Children under the age of one account for 21% nationally compared to 12% for Ealing. Please refer to the pie chart (Fig 7) above that shows the national picture. In line with national figures, the rising numbers of older children entering the system is linked to the impact of the Southwark judgement since May 2009 and more recently the changes in the LASPO Act since December 2012.

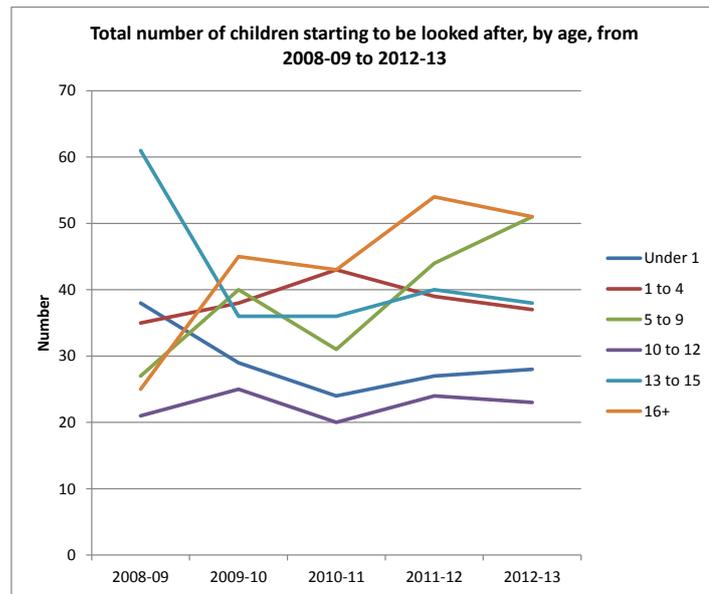
Table 5 looks at the age range (by numbers) of children starting to be looked after from 2008-09 to 2012-13

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Under 1	38	29	24	27	28
1 to 4	35	38	43	39	37
5 to 9	27	40	31	44	51
10 to 12	21	25	20	24	23
13 to 15	61	36	36	40	38
16+	25	45	43	54	51
Grand Total	207	213	197	228	228

When comparing Ealing's 2012-13 figures with 2008-09, the number of children starting to be looked after under the age of one has decreased by over a quarter. Children aged 16 and over have more than doubled from 25 in 2008-09 to 51 in 2013. Children aged 5 to 9 have increased by 88.9% from 27 in 2008-09 to 51 in 2013.

The total number of children aged 13 to 15 has dropped from 61 in 2008-09 to 38 in 2012-13, representing a decrease of 38% (please refer to Fig 8 below).

Fig 8

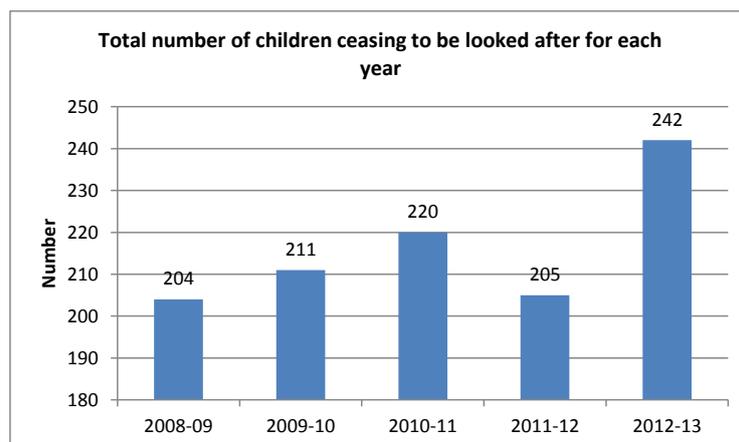


Again this strategy focuses on addressing these trends in the longer term. It is linked to outcomes from a recent joint analytical project with Project Oracle to better ensure available interventions are evidence based, evaluated and linked to emerging need, in particular the rise in number of older young people entering the system. This work is being progressed in considerable detail through joint analytical project with Impower to inform future service patterns and better manage demand locally and efficiently.

Children ceasing to be looked after:

Again Ealing's figures are in line with national trends. Figures for Ealing over the last five years have shown a steady increase in the total number of children ceasing to be looked after year on year (with the exception of 2011-12). For 2012-13, a total of 242 children ceased care, representing an increase of 18.6% from 2008-09 figures (please refer to Fig 9).

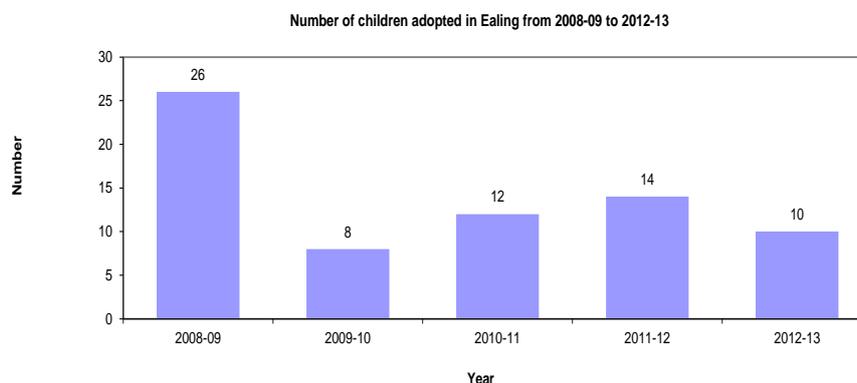
Fig 9



Over a third of those ceasing to be LAC were aged 16 and over, in line with national trends reflecting family rehabilitation and young people moving on towards independence.

Adoption:

Trends re children in need of permanent placements and placed for adoption is detailed below. Below shows the total number of looked after children who were adopted in Ealing over the last five years.

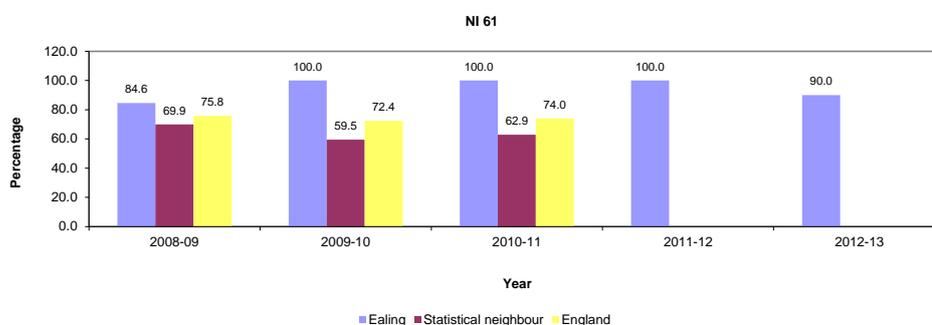


A total of 26 children were adopted in 2008-09, but in 2009-10, this figure dropped to eight before rising to 14 in 2011-12. In 2012-13, a total of 10 children were adopted. Nationally the overall number of children adopted has fallen each year from 2008-2009 to 2010-2011 before increasing in 2011-12. Compared to Ealing, the total number of adoptions decreased from 14 in 2011-12 to 10 in 2012-13. The DfE has predicted that nationally, the total number of adoptions will drop in 2012-13, primarily due to a fall in the total number of children placed for adoption in 2011-12. However, it should be noted that in Ealing, the number of children placed for adoption at the end of 2013 was 19, a big increase over the last few years. It is anticipated that the number of children adopted in Ealing over the course of 2013-14 will increase as a result.

JF – Add info on SGOs.

NI 61 - Percentage of looked after children adopted during the year who were placed for adoption:

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Ealing	84.6	100.0	100.0	100.0	90.0
Statistical neighbour	69.9	59.5	62.9	Not available	
England	75.8	72.4	74.0		

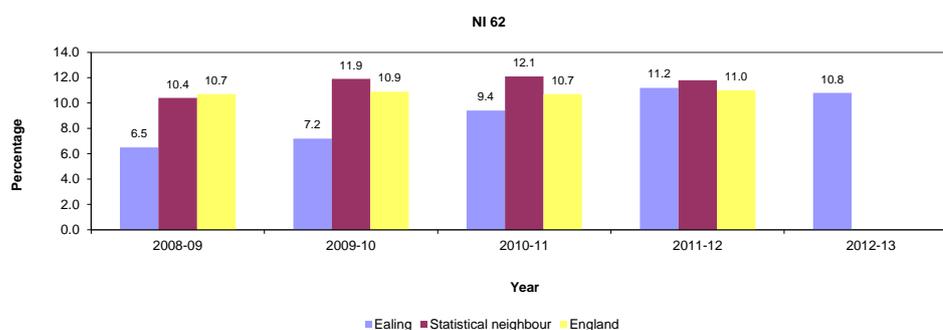


Ealing's performance at the end of March 2012 was excellent at 100% - meaning all children who were placed for adoption in 2011-12 were placed within 12 months of the agency deciding that the child should be placed for adoption. As at the end of March 2013,

there have been 10 adoptions and nine children were placed within 12 months of the agency deciding that they should be placed for adoption.

NI 62 - Stability of placements of looked after children:

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Ealing	6.5	7.2	9.4	11.2	10.8
Statistical neighbour	10.4	11.9	12.1	11.8	
England	10.7	10.9	10.7	11.0	

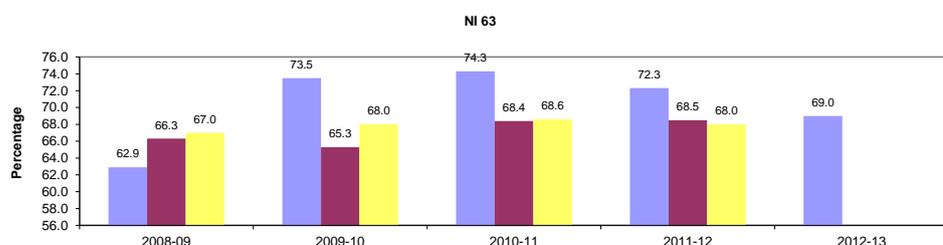


NI 62 measures the stability of care that a child has experienced. Stability as a whole leads to better outcomes for the child as successful, stable placements enable the child's need to be supported. However, some individual children will require three or more separate placements during a year if they and others are to be kept safe. A low percentage represents good performance. Ealing's performance as at the end of March 2013 was 10.8%, equating to 43 out of 398 children having three or more placement moves within the year. This is a slight improvement over 2011-12 figure of 11.2% and is below Ealing's statistical neighbour *and just slightly above* the National average for 2011-12. Although NI 62 has been withdrawn as a national indicator, data on the number of placement moves for all children is still captured and reported by DfE. The target for all local authorities is to achieve less than 16% of children who are looked after who've had three or more placement moves. Ealing's figure of 10.8% exceeds the national target.

Age plays an influential factor in determining whether a child will experience multiple moves. Research has found that babies will experience three or more placement moves before they reach their first birthday. The most at risk group are 11 to 15 year olds, with over 70% of placements breaking down. The risk of placement breakdown increases the older the child is at the start of their first placement. However, it important to note that children who've had a number of placement moves does not always equate to negative outcomes. Some placement changes are positive for example, a child is adopted or is moved to be closer to their birth family. However this strategy focuses on increasing stability and reducing negative moves and disruption for children wherever possible.

NI 63 - Long term stability of children looked after:

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Ealing	62.9	73.5	74.3	72.3	69.0
Statistical neighbour	66.3	65.3	68.4	68.5	
England	67.0	68.0	68.6	68.0	

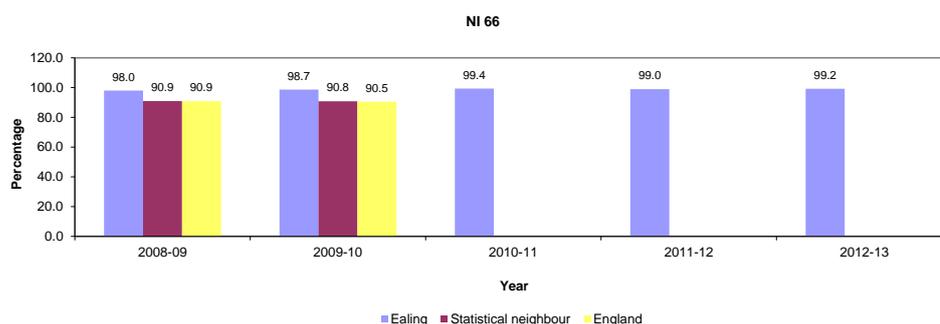


This measure is designed to illustrate the effectiveness of local authorities to achieve long term stability of looked after children. For children who have been looked after for two and half years or longer, it can be expected that looked after children are either spending a substantial amount of time living with foster carers or an adoptive placement is made for the child. Stability and the opportunity to develop and sustain strong attachments in a family setting are fundamental in improving the outcomes of looked after children.

For NI 63, good performance is generally represented by a high percentage. This measure is directly influenced by the performance of NI 62 where any child who has had a placement move (both planned or unplanned) in the year will effect NI 63 negatively. Ealing's performance as at the end of March 12 was 72.3%, which was 2% points lower than 2010-11 performance. However, performance exceeds both Ealing's Statistical neighbour and England averages for 2011-12 by 3.8% and 4.3% points respectively. NI 63 can fluctuate month to month due to children changing placement, children being adopted as well as children/young people ceasing to be looked after. As at the end of March 2013, Ealing's end of year performance was standing at 69.0% placing Ealing in line with its statistical neighbour average for 2011-12.

NI 66 - Timeliness of reviews of children looked after:

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Ealing	98.0	98.7	99.4	99.0	99.2
Statistical neighbour	90.9	90.8	Not available	Not available	Not available
England	90.9	90.5	Not available	Not available	Not available

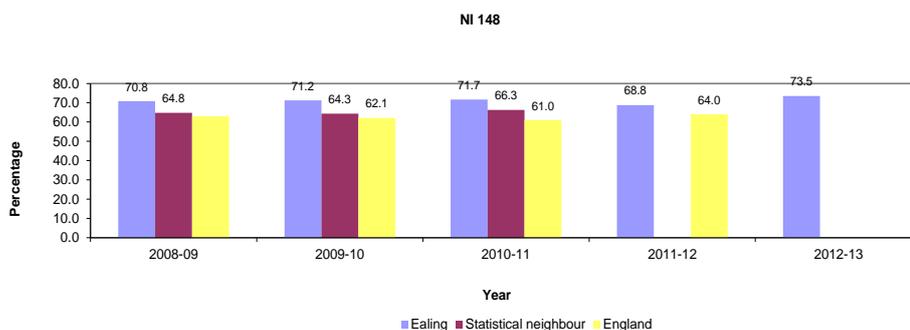


NI 66 uses reviews to measure the effectiveness of the monitoring of the care of looked after children. The review plays an important role in delivering a successful care plan, and therefore, effective and timely reviews help ensure that the care plan is appropriate for the child's needs. A high percentage indicates good performance. Ealing's performance has been excellent over the last several years exceeding 98.0% and exceeds the 95% target set by central government for all local authorities to achieve. At the end of March 2013,

Ealing's performance was standing at 99.2% equating to three children (out of 359) having been reviewed out of timescale.

NI 148 - Care leavers in education, employment or training:

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Ealing	70.8	71.2	71.7	68.8	73.5
Statistical neighbour	64.8	64.3	66.3	Not available	
England	63.0	62.1	61.0	64.0	



Research shows that care leavers experience high levels of unemployment and are at risk of homelessness and social exclusion. NI 148 shows the performance of local authorities in improving outcomes for young people leaving care, so that they are enabled to achieve, to make a positive contribution and to be offered the opportunity to secure their future economic well-being. A high score would represent good outcomes for young people.

NI 148 is calculated as a simple percentage. Ealing's performance as at the end of March 2013 was 73.5% equating to 36 out of 49 care leavers in employment, education or training on his/her 19th birthday. This is an improvement from 2011-12 performance of 68.8% and exceeds the national average (64.0%). As with NI 147, from 1 April 2013, this measure has been expanded, by central government, to include 20 and 21 year olds.

NI 147 for Ealing indicates good performance with 93% living in suitable accommodation (46 out of 49 young people) consistently above the statistical neighbour average of 87% and the national average of 88%.

Sources:

- Communities and Local Government- National Indicators for LA and LA partnerships: Annex 2: Children and Young People
- Department for Education- Statistical First Release- Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2012
- CSCI Social Services Performance Assessment Framework indicators

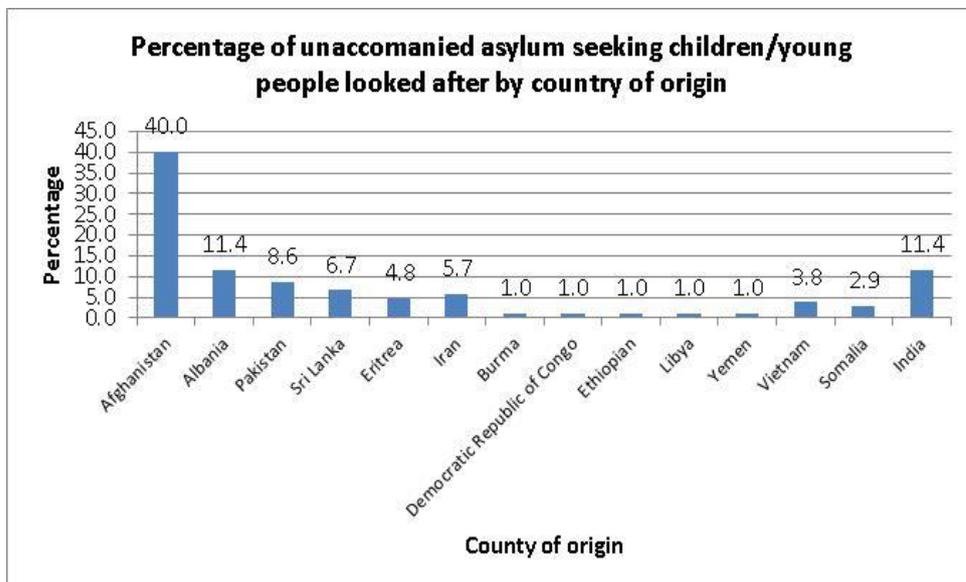
Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) looked after by LB Ealing from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2013:

LB Ealing, on average, has 35 UASC in care per year (excludes young people aged 18 and over). In 2010-11, a total of 31 children were looked after. Of this total, nine new UASC came into care. In 2011-12 this figure increased to 38, of which 18 new UASC became

looked after. In 2012-13, the total decreased slightly to 36; however, 15 new UASCs were registered as newly looked after. Please refer to the table below.

Country of origin	2012-13	2011-12	2010-11
Afghanistan	15	14	13
Albania	9	3	
Pakistan	2	4	3
Sri Lanka	2	3	2
Eritrea	2	1	2
Iran	2	3	1
Burma		1	
Democratic Republic of Congo			1
Ethiopian			1
Libya		1	
Yemen	1		
Vietnam	1	1	2
Somalia	1	1	1
India	1	6	5
Grand Total	36	38	31
Newly looked after in he year	15	18	9

The above table breaks down the country of origin of UASC in care per year. Children/young people from Afghanistan account for the majority of young people looked after. Over the past three years, children/young people from Afghanistan account, on average, for 40% of all unaccompanied minors. The next highest are children from Albania and India accounting for 11.4% each whilst Pakistan and Sri Lanka account for 8.6% and 6.7% respectively. Please refer to the graph below.



Leaving Care team allocations at the end of year and UASC over 18

Ealing's leaving care teams have, on average, 75 UASC allocated to social work staff at the end of each financial year. These numbers include both under and over 18 year olds. This is shown by the table below.

Age	Leaving Care	Leaving Care	Leaving Care and 20+ care leavers
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
15		1	1
16	6	4	3
17	11	10	11
18	10	16	13
19	20	10	17
20	11	17	6
21	7	8	16
22	3	5	6
23	3	2	4
24	0	3	1
Total UASC	71	76	78
Total	361	370	407
% UASC	19.7	20.5	19.2

Generally, UASCs account for a fifth of all children/young people allocated to the leaving care service. Of the UASC cohort, young people aged between 18 and 20 accounts for 50% of all UASC in the leaving care team.

4.The Child's Journey - Services available to support looked after children and care leavers and their families

i) Prevention, Early Intervention and Parenting Support:

A range of initiatives are in place to intervene early and prevent admission to care. This includes 27 Children's Centres across the borough that offer a full range of parenting, play, health and social care support. This is multi-agency early intervention support, including an established Outreach service which targets engaging with the hardest to reach families and new parents and encouraging them to access the Children's Centres. Multi-agency support available at the Children's Centres includes a range of health provision and JobCentre Plus Outreach Welcome programmes.

A Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) project works with highly vulnerable first time mothers aged under 22, providing intensive support from 28 weeks of pregnancy until the child is aged 2. The Ealing FNP Service is provided by Ealing Hospital NHS Trust. It works from the Family Information Service (FIS) Site in Hanwell. Amongst the vulnerable young mothers who are targeted, looked after children and care leavers are a high priority, to break the cycle of the next generation children entering the care system.

Therapeutic short break services are available for families of children with disabilities to prevent family breakdown. This strategy also focuses on retaining children in the local area and in local schools. The project provides an extended short break where required to children and young people at the in-house residential unit Heller House, whilst intensive work is undertaken with the child, the parents and other professionals. The programme began in 2008 and has successfully worked with and prevented admission to highly specialist residential placements for 6-8 young people.

The SAFE 0-18 Service – Intervenes at Tier 2-3 level. It consists of multi-agency teams of health professionals, psychologists, counsellors, social workers, school and family workers, substance misuse workers and family therapists. 3 geographical teams cover the borough.

The ECIRS service acts as a single front door for all concerns about children and young people. It is a multi-agency team, incorporating social workers, a health visitor, housing and community safety as well as the Police. The MASH operates within ECIRS. Short term work is addressed through the ECIRS and then referred either to the SAFE Teams for early help or to the 6 locality based social work teams for more complex safeguarding cases. Those children identified as vulnerable and in need of intervention but who are not LAC or care leavers, are supported through the Locality Teams.

There is also a Housing Support and Unaccompanied Minors Team which manages all private fostering and unaccompanied minor's cases, as well as providing support to homeless families.

The Hospital Social Work Team manages all referrals received from Ealing Hospital and manages the majority of referrals concerning safeguarding assessments of unborn children.

In addition the service has a specialist integrated multi agency service for children with disabilities - ESCAN. Here parents and young people can access a wide range of health, community based and social care support, including medical assessments from a single point – Carmelita House.

There is a strong emphasis across the services in identifying early and targeting parents who may have complex needs that result in their children being on the edge of care. In particular young, vulnerable parents are identified, including those who may have been in care themselves or experienced the youth justice service. Ealing's Parenting Service offers a range of programmes to help assess and develop their parenting skills. These include:

- Intensive support with young parents of new babies in their own homes to assess and support their parenting skills. This work is commissioned through an independent agency. Referrals are usually obtained via the Hospital Social Work Team
- Clinical Psychology and Behaviour Support specialists
- Teenage Parenting with Prospects Scheme. This is a nationally accredited scheme for young parents aged 16-19 and works to support young parents and their children from birth to 3 years of age. The programme has been run successfully in partnership with the YWCA and Horizons Centre for LAC and Care Leavers
- Support for young Fathers through a specific Family Links parenting programme and through specialist programmes run through the Early Years and Play Service. Programmes for Fathers are also run through the Youth Justice Service.
- A well-established parenting Family Ties programme at Horizons for LAC young parents and care leavers
- A wide range of programmes to support parents in parenting teenagers – a key pressure point
- Intensive parenting interventions through the Family Nurse Partnership.

In addition a wide range of Domestic Violence and parenting programmes are in place, including perpetrator focused programmes to support families to address and resolve difficulties and reduce risk of family breakdown.

A range of culturally specific programmes are also in place:

These include Islamic Values for Family Links groups to enable Somali and Asian Parents to connect their parenting strategies to their Islamic values. Parenting services have also supported parents with learning disabilities to try and support the child to remain in their care. In addition there are specific programmes run for the traveller community in Family Links groups to help and support them with strategies to increase their confidence and skills in positive parenting. Language specific parenting groups are available in Southern Asian languages, Somali, and also shortly in Polish and Tamil specific groups.

All these interventions contribute to the prevention of family breakdown by helping parents whose children are on the edge of care and supporting them with managing increasingly challenging behaviour.

ii) Family Group Conferences

FGC's provide an opportunity for families and children to be at the centre of decisions and plans when social services, health authorities, education departments become involved in their lives. The decision makers at a family group conference are the family members as they are often in position to plan for the well-being of their child and extended families can often provide additional support.

FGCs are used to prevent unnecessary admissions into care and target children who are on the edge of care and are a key element of the authority's achieving permanence strategy.

Family Group Conferences are widely used in Ealing and have helped families make plans to:

- Improve a child's situation when there are difficulties at home;
- Help children to attend school;
- Help children who have been abused.
- Care for children when their parents are no longer able to look after them;
- Care for children with disabilities;
- Care for children who are returning home or to a kinship carer after being looked after in foster care.

5. Services available to looked after children and care leavers

Ealing is very ambitious in its corporate parent role. The authority has a very strong focus on improving children's life chances and care leavers transition to successful independent living. This work is overseen by the long established Corporate Parent Committee, chaired by the Council Leader. This has a key focus on hearing directly at all of its meetings from children and young people and responding to their views e.g. recent increase in Leaving Care Grant from £1,500 to £2,000 and additional support to access higher education, training and employment.

Ealing's commitment to prioritise high expectations for all our looked after children and care leavers is reflected in a wide range of support available for LAC and care leavers aged from 0 through to mid-20s.

- i) **Permanence and stability** for looked after children is at the heart of the service's approach.

Ealing is committed to helping to ensure that all children achieve permanent, stable homes with safe, secure caregivers as early in their lives as possible. This will allow them to form strong attachments which will both help them recover from earlier trauma and develop resilience and confidence in their lives going forward. If children are not able to stay in their birth families, then the focus is on securing alternative permanence as soon as possible thereafter.

Children in care proceedings;

Following the Family Justice Review and the subsequent expectations regarding timeliness for children, several changes were made to the way that social work teams were organised and the way that services worked together to ensure that timeliness in decision making for children became a key priority for all children looked after.

Early Planning

A Legal Proceedings Panel has been set up to agree threshold for care proceedings and to ensure that decisions and planning are timely.

A dedicated Legal proceedings Case manager has been employed to support staff in preparation for court and to liaise with all key agencies, including CAFCASS and the courts to ensure that all parties are working effectively to reduce delay.

The LAC social work service has been split into two teams; a Court Team and a Long Term Team. The Court team works closely with the locality based social work teams as soon as a decision is made to instigate care proceedings and the case is transferred to a specialist court worker at the first hearing, so that there is continuity of planning and support throughout the care proceedings. The Court Team is responsible for making permanency plans for all children subject to proceedings and therefore works very closely with the Adoption and Fostering Service and with the Kinship Team.

The Long Term LAC Team focusses on children in long term care and takes the lead on ensuring that children's needs for stability are met.

The Placements service (Comprising Adoption, Fostering, Kinship services) has responsibility for recruiting both short and long term foster carers, for recruiting and supporting adopters and for assessing and supporting families and friends who are taking on the care of children. The teams in this service work closely with children's social workers to plan for children in need of permanent alternative families, and to support foster, adoptive and kinship families meet the needs of children who have often had complex and challenging beginnings.

Social Work Support is available through 2 Looked After Children specialist social work teams based at Acton and Greenford Office. In addition there is a borough wide Leaving Care Team based in Greenford that young people transition to at age 16. The Ealing Service for Children with Additional Needs (ESCAN) provides a multi-agency approach and has successfully implemented the Team Around the Child approach in a number of cases where LAC have complex disability needs.

A clear protocol exists between the Hospital Social Work Team and the Leaving Care Team in respect of LAC and Care Leavers who become parents themselves. It recognises the additional complexity of assessing parenting capacity with this highly vulnerable group. The local protocol has been developed in line with the London Child Protection Procedures and the Working Together Procedures and the Threshold of Need Guidance.

The policy focuses on early identification of referrals re unborn children of young people who are care leavers, including identifying any safeguarding concerns. Where appropriate the Hospital Team will undertake a Child and Family Assessment and relevant conferences and actions follow.

Where the LAC young person or care leaver lives outside of the borough and is pregnant, the Leaving Care service refer the young person to the local Children's Services for an initial assessment to identify any safeguarding risks and support/interventions needed..

ii) **Contact and rehabilitation:**

A key aim of this strategy is to ensure that parenting support is available to families to help them remain together safely wherever possible. Also that where children enter the care system as a result of an emergency or on a short term basis that effective action and support is available to help them get back together as soon as possible.

The Contact Service provides supervised and supported contact for children aged 0-16 who are LAC or subject to a Special Guardianship Order. A weekend sibling supported contact arrangement is in place to enable siblings to have semi-structured activities whilst enjoying time with their siblings.

The Contact Service has a Manager, 5 contact supervisors and 1 contact co-ordinator, as well as approximately 50 sessional contact supervisors. Contact is supervised and the supervisor will often provide transport to and from contact for children. Supervisors provide written records of contact for social workers, the content of which will be based around the requirements of the original referral.

iii) **Education Support**

A Virtual Head Teacher for LAC and a supporting team of 5 highly experienced teachers is in place and well established. The team target by year group all LAC and Care Leavers e.g. Early Years Specialist, Primary Teacher, 2 Secondary Stage teachers and a post-16 teacher. They also work with social workers to lead on the Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and ensure the Pupil Premium is effectively targeted to improve attainment.

During the mornings, the LAC Education Team (LACET) offer one to one teaching at the Horizons Centre to any LAC not currently in a school place. They also offer evening Study Support programmes and holiday study support, positive activities and exam preparation sessions.

The Teachers organise an Annual Education Awards Ceremony each September, where LAC and Care Leavers aged from 3 to mid-20s are presented with Certificates of Achievement by the DCS, Lead Member for Children's Services and Mayor of Ealing. This ceremony helps raise aspirations and celebrates positive role models amongst the whole cohort and has been in place annually for over 15 years.

The LAC Education Team also organise the annual celebration event for younger children and their careers and families at the annual "Rising Stars Day" each June. 2013 was the 12th annual Rising Stars event and was celebrated by a barbeque at Horizons followed by an afternoon out at a local Farm. Aims include building links between carers, children and LAC Education team, raising aspirations and having a fun day.

The post-16 teacher helps young people aim higher and prepare applications for College or University. Ealing currently has 16% or 39 young people at University, compared with a national average of just 6%. Ealing Council provides a grant of £5,500 to cover maintenance and subsistence for any young person who obtains a University place and this acts as a positive incentive in raising aspirations. Once at University Ealing's care leavers have an impressive record of achievement.

The Post-16 teacher post also supports the ME – My Education - Peer mentoring programme. Through ME young people are trained as peer mentors. The mentors are care leavers currently at University or College or in employment who target young people who are LAC in Years 9-11 and encourage them to aim higher and identify and achieve their goals. The service is led by a Lead Mentor who is an Ealing care leaver and graduate.

Summary of activities undertaken by the LAC Education Team

- PEPs – Helping SWs book and complete PEPs, providing training, 1:1 support and attending reviews where appropriate
- Accelerating admissions processes to school places within and external to the borough.
- Signposting on extra-curricular activities
- Supporting schools and colleges to help LAC and Care Leavers achieve
- Direct teaching to enable students to catch up on curriculum areas they may have missed
- Providing advice and targeted interventions
- Supporting Foster carers with education advice and support
- Having regular progress discussions
- Developing exciting and innovative trips and activities
- Working with other specialists such as the LAC Psychologist, LAC Nurse, SEN staff and the Youth and Connexions and Youth Offending Service.

Key priorities for 2013/14 are Measuring pupil's progress:

- Effective use of data re tracking
- Ensuring quality and timeliness of PEPs

Raising the profile and remit of the Virtual School:

- Including joint work with other boroughs as part of a London Schools Excellence Bid and follow up with the GLA

- Cross borough work
- Identifying those students who are at risk of becoming NEET and developing creative pathways.

Challenge and Support:

- Ensure effective use of the Pupil Premium
- Ensuring effective communication channels for all stakeholders
- Joint away days to plan with social workers
- Clear links with Designated teachers
- Support to Foster Carers

Detailed information is available on attainment in 2012/13, in the Virtual Head Teachers annual Report 2012/13.

Use of the Pupil Premium for LAC

The LAC Education Team oversee the use of the Pupil Premium for all our LAC in partnership with their schools.

The Pupil Premium increased in April 2013 to £900 from £623. It is used in a wide variety of ways to support achievement. This includes extra individual tuition and pastoral support, such as Place2Be.

Examples of impact include raising predicted attainment in maths from a D grade to a C. within Primary Schools it has been used to increase depressed levels of attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

Use of the Pupil Premium is discussed at PEPs and recorded as such and its impact on achievement is tracked.

The significant increase in 2014/15 to £1900 pa is very welcome and the LAC education Team will monitor and ensure it is focused on agreed priorities reflected in the PEP.

i) Extracurricular activities:

The LAC Education Team offers a wide range of activities to enrich the education and cultural experiences of children and young people, especially during half term and holiday periods.

In summer 2013, 6 young people from Ealing joined Brent young people at a high quality residential creative writing workshop in Devon. This followed from a highly successful Poetry Superheroes Project held in 2012/13 led by the distinguished poet and former care leaver Lemn Sissay and the children's author Michael Morpurgo. Ealing's young people had a poetry anthology published called Superheroes and 2 young people won prestigious national Poetry competitions (the Wicked Poetry Awards and the Waterstones Young Poets of the Year).

The Team have also worked with all the leading London arts providers – National Gallery, National Theatre, the Old Vic, Ballet Rambert, ENO, Royal College of Art (bronze Casting Project).

During the London Olympics 2012 many young people attended due to tickets prioritised and purchased by the Corporate Parent Committee.

Many of the wider theatre and arts events are jointly funded by the Council and the John Lyons Trust.

The LAC Team have strong joint working and subscribe to the Letter Box project which is targeted at out of borough children who are unable to attend Horizons.

iv) Health Support:

The overall aim is to improve the physical and mental health of children and young people in the care system.

Performance figures at March 31st 2013

- 94.3% - medicals and dentals
- 89% - immunisations
- 98% - SDQ returns - average score 13.4

Aim of increasing the take up of health assessments in the 16 and 17 year olds

Leaving care workers attend appointments with 16 and 17 year olds.

One to one sessions take place with the 2 FTE LAC Nurses. A successful bid was made to Public Health to fund a second LAC Nurse in 2013/14 recognising the high level of health vulnerabilities amongst the cohort and a second LAC Nurse has been in post since January 2014. This has recently doubled the LAC Nurse capacity.

Aim of improving the emotional wellbeing of Looked after Children

A Clinical Psychology service for looked after children consists of 2 full-time qualified Clinical Psychologists supported by a trainee Clinical Psychologist. The aim of the service is to promote placement stability by intervening directly and indirectly with children in care and their surrounding systems where there is a risk of placement breakdown. A wide range of interventions are provided to children and young people and also to foster carers, birth parents, adoptive parents, social workers and other professionals.

An SDQ and Emotional Wellbeing Panel (SEW) - is in place to monitor and review those young people whose SDQ scores are high or above border line abnormal for those aged between 5-16. The Panel meets 6 monthly and consists of the Chair – the Operations Manager LAC, the LAC Psychology Team, the LAC Nurses and a range of cases are presented by Team Managers.

HAP Plans

To ensure the identified health needs of children and young people in their HAP plans are acted upon, IRO's review the HAP plan prior to or at the statutory reviews and record if the health actions have taken place and incorporate ongoing actions into the wider plan for the child.

Substance misuse

The SAFE substance misuse team accept referrals on substance misuse issues for individual young people. In addition they provide a skilled education and awareness service for staff, foster carers and young people in partnership with Horizons staff and the Semi Independent Outreach Team.

Tier 3 substance misuse treatment service is commissioned by NHS Ealing and provided by a voluntary organisation CRI. The name of the local project is EASY. This is based at the local Westside Young Persons Centre and is fully integrated with wider social care support.

Aim to reduce teenage pregnancy in the LAC and Leaving Care Group

Ongoing sexual health and relationships work is delivered by the LAC Nurses, Horizons staff, Semi Independent Outreach Team and a new peer mentoring pilot scheme with St George's hospital as part of a 3 year national pilot. Young men and young women are both targeted for sexual health advice.

In addition the Family Nurse Partnership Scheme prioritises teenage parents who are LAC or care leavers.

The Family Ties project at Horizons for LAC and Care Leavers is a very popular and effective programme in place to support LAC and Care Leavers who are young parents. It also provides sexual health and ETE advice.

Health assessments

An Independent audit of LAC health records in November 2013 examined approximately 300 health assessments. The audit found many areas of good practice and found evidence of recent improvements in the service. A number of areas for improvement were also identified. A service improvement plan has been developed to implement the recommendations from the audit.

There was evidence of good health action plans completed by the Ealing LAC health team. However the quality of health assessments was found to be variable, in particular those completed by GPs were of a poorer standard. The issue of inconsistent standards will be addressed through the recently expanded service.

Investment in the service has provided an additional LAC nurse, 0.5 paediatric consultant and a dedicated business support officer.

The service has implemented an improved tracking system to ensure young people receive timely health assessments and completion of health assessment plans. A system is being developed to monitor implementation of health action plans and ensure the health needs of the most vulnerable young people are monitored and reviewed.

The action plan identifies the need for all professionals including the social worker, Independent reviewing officer, school nurses, carers and other health professionals are engaged and take responsibility for ensuring the health needs of looked after children are a priority.

In future young people leaving care will receive a summary of their health plans when ceasing to be LAC.

v) Horizons Education and Achievement Centre:

As part of developing its LAC strategy Ealing undertook a major consultation over 10 years ago on what LAC thought could help them to have a better experience in care and enable them to become happier, more successful adults.

Children and young people came up with 3 key requirements:

- a) Access to computers
- b) A place to meet
- c) Somewhere quiet to study

As a result Ealing developed an innovative One Stop Shop Service, initially as part of the Quality Protects programme, which has gone from strength to strength and is central to the child's journey through care in Ealing. The project is based on regular consultation with young people and meeting their needs and has evolved over the past 10 years. The One Stop Shop moved to its state of the art new premises 5 years ago at the Horizons Centre. It was officially opened by the Children's Minister and cited as national best practice. The centre is highly dynamic and young person led. It has a strong focus on participation and hearing young people's views and hosts the Junior Council and the ShoutOut Forum who both report regularly to the Corporate Parent Panel and meet with elected Members and Senior Officers.

Horizons provides a range of innovative programmes including education for those not in a school place in the morning, information and advice and a young parents group in the

afternoons. It also provides a range of sports, arts and music events and life skills such as budgeting and cooking during the evenings. It has accessed funding from the Arts Council and the John Lyons Trust for an exciting arts project "Creativity Connects". The centre has recently acquired extended planning consent for weekend opening. It is now providing sports, arts and study support sessions at weekends.

The Horizons Centre has a team of Youth Workers and is managed by a Senior Youth Worker. It is also the base for a team of semi-independent outreach workers (the SOT Team) who go out and visit young people preparing to move on to independent living from foster or residential care and support them throughout this transition and for significant time afterwards. Horizons is very much a young person's base and is key to ensuring that the Child's Journey in Ealing is a positive one and is the focus of all our work. It always provides a welcoming community for young people who are in care or care leavers up to any age who often pop back for a chat or some advice or to introduce their children and partners to staff and friends (one young person aged 30 plus recently popped in after a gap of 5 years, to introduce his partner and catch up with staff and friends). It also encourages older young people to become peer mentors to younger children, especially those in years 10 and 11.

Horizons has been visited and cited as model of best practice by the current and former Children's Minister's (Tim Loughton MP and Edward Timpson MP), Ofsted and the London Mayor's office and frequently hosts visits by neighbouring and national authorities.

vi) Out of Borough strategy: Positive Activities

In addition to the range of positive activities on offer at Horizons, children who are placed out of borough are also prioritised to ensure a range of activities are available to them.....

vii) Corporate Parent Panel

The Corporate Parent Panel is chaired by the Leader of the Council and meets 4 times a year at the Horizons Centre. The Children in Care Junior Council and the Horizons ShoutOut Care Council (HSCC) consult and report back to the Corporate Parent Panel. The Panel has overseen clear outcomes and improvements in young people's support from the authority following consultation with young people. This has included:

- Ensuring financial support for care leavers who obtain a University place is available at £5,500 pa
- Improving access to school places for hard to place looked after children
- Reviewing and approving increasing foster carer allowances
- Recently increasing the Leaving Care Grant from £1500 to £2000
- Overseeing the development of the Pledge to LAC and Care Leavers
- Addressing anomalies in the Pocket Money and children's allowances system
- Monitoring and challenging performance in terms of health, education, youth offending, missing from care, timeliness of visits and reviews and wider performance issues
- Ensuring the whole Council is receptive to providing work experience and prioritising LAC and Care Leavers for work experience, pre apprenticeships and apprenticeship programmes at the Council
- Celebrating achievement.

6. Structure of the LAC and Leaving Care Service:

In order to implement the Family Justice Review and meet required timescales for concluding and improving permanency the LAC and Leaving Care Service was realigned in August 2013 (see page 23 re permanency strategy).

There is now a dedicated Court Team and a long term LAC Team. All cases have been transferred accordingly.

i) The LAC Court Team:

Social workers in this Team, based in Greenford undertake joint initial work and preparation of the first statements and care plan. This avoids previous risk of drift and delay due to separate processes. Joint work now undertaken by the Court Team, the Locality Team and specialist workers in the Placements Service, including kinship and adoption workers, ensures that the first care plan has well thought out and timely consideration of permanency issues and planning.

The realigned approach also takes on board lessons learnt from the Munro approach in terms of reclaiming social work. Staff, have received additional training to improve skills and confidence to carry out all but the most specialist complex assessments. This has reduced reliance on Independent Social Workers and improved timeliness as well as reduced expenditure. A key aim is to conclude proceedings within 26 weeks and place children who require adoption within 6 months of the agency maker's decision.

ii) The Long Term Team:

This Team ensures that those children who require long term fostering receive high quality planning and placements.

Cases are generally transferred within 3 months after the Final Hearing, unless it is in the child's interest for the case not to transfer at that point.

Key aims of the long term team:

- a) Ensure that long term LAC and children accommodated under Section 20 receive the same intensive care planning and level of support as those children in care proceedings.
- b) Ensure continuous improvement and focus on achieving excellent outcomes and life chances for all long term LAC.
- c) Increase the focus on out of borough young people and ensure they receive the same quality of service as children placed in borough.
- d) Continue to increase the child and young person's voice through a partnership approach. Initiatives include LAC involvement in recruitment and selection of staff.
- e) Closer integration of the Long Term Team with Horizons and the ShoutOut Forum and the Children in Care Council to ensure that the child's views influence the way the service is delivered.
- f) Ensure Out of borough children's views also are heard through their strategic participation and at their individual reviews
- g) Ensure the Children in Care Council provide training to the long term team re partnership and the voice of the child.

iii) The Leaving Care Service:

Leaving Care Team (LCT)

The LCT support all looked after young people aged 15 – 17 and all care leavers aged 18 – 19, plus older young people with complex needs, high risk issues or those who are parents themselves.

All other young people aged 20 plus have their cases managed by the 20 Plus Team based at Horizons. This Team provides a young person led specialist service with a key focus on ETE engagement, transitioning to independence and improving outcomes and life chances. This service has an excellent record of achieving positive outcomes with a wide range of young people who had previously disengaged from a social work service. The service is flexible, multi-professional and able to offer appointments 7 days a week and into the evenings to fit in with the young person's needs.

iv) AROH Panel

A revised model has been in place since summer 2012 as part of the authority's response to the Southwark Judgement. It ensures that all 16 and 17 year olds at risk of homelessness receive an assessment and where appropriate an intervention in relation to their accommodation and any wider needs.

A joint Housing and Social Care Panel meets fortnightly to review new referrals. A small dedicated Team assess and plan interventions and packages of support. The Team is closely aligned with the Housing Support Team who lead on assessments of unaccompanied minors and the Team Manager also sits on the Panel. An initial joint assessment of Housing and Social Care needs are undertaken. Those that need to be accommodated are then responded to and their needs addressed. Those who only have a housing need are fast tracked to Supporting People accommodation or directly to the Housing Service, who both have representatives on the Panel.

The AROH service also provides mediation to prevent homelessness and to try and achieve family reconciliation.

All unaccompanied minors cases are also presented to the AROH Panel for ongoing agreement for accommodation, alongside care leavers who are aged 20 plus.

Cases related to young people involved with or at risk of involvement in gangs and youth violence are also addressed through the AROH Panel. For example, under the new LASPO responsibilities, a young person placed on Remand aged 15 plus needs will be considered at this Panel and a Plan developed.

The AROH Panel considers approx. 12 cases per month.

v) Care Leavers Panel:

This reviews every young person on a 6 monthly basis. It examines and collates outcomes in terms of overall progress by looking at:

- Placement
- Specific outcomes
- Mental health, emotional health and self-harm issue
- Substance misuse issues

- Sexual health
- Physical and Learning disabilities and whether needs are being met and plans
- Any domestic violence issues
- Any child sexual exploitation issues
- Gang and youth violence and offending issues
- Engagement in education, training and employment
- Benefits and financial matters
- Positive activities and participation.

A robust plan is then developed to ensure all key areas are addressed and that the child's journey is successful.

vi) **LASPO Act 2012**

The LASPO Act came into effect in December 2012 and as a result financial responsibility for remands to youth detention accommodation transferred to local authorities on 1st April 2013. The new legislation also automatically extends looked after children status to children and young people on remand for more than 13 weeks, which will give them leaving care status up to age 21 or beyond resulting in additional cost pressures.

In Ealing, based on previous years, it is estimated that 8 young offenders will be entitled to LAC/Leaving Care services per year. The authority is well placed to meet the needs of young people eligible under this legislation and improve their life chances. It is recognised that many of them are highly vulnerable with a number of risk factors including family histories of domestic violence, poor parenting, school exclusion, substance misuse, teenage pregnancy and disrupted education. In addition many will have significant involvement in local gangs and youth violence. There is very close joint working between the LAC and Leaving Care teams and the Youth Justice Service and the Youth and Connexions service to ensure the young person's holistic needs are addressed. This includes recent additional input of a CAMHs specialist to the Youth Justice Service 2 days per week and priority access to the Council's Apprentice and pre Apprentice programmes. Ealing's Youth Justice Service has a high record of success in improving engagement of young offenders in ETE. Yet the financial implications of their complex needs, including for many, expensive specialist placements, cannot be overlooked.

7. Links to the Troubled Families Agenda

Think Family Plus is Ealing's response the Troubled Families Programme launched by the government in December 2011

This set out the ambition to turn around the lives of every "troubled family" estimated at 120,000 nationally and 880 in Ealing, by the end of this Parliament in 2015. Ealing recognises that this agenda is a key element of our looked after children strategy, especially for children on the edge of care and as such the two agendas are closely aligned.

Given the estimate of 880 such families in Ealing, in order to maximise benefits from the payments by results model, the authority is expected to have identified and worked with 733 families by the end of the programme in April 2015. The remaining families are expected to be engaged by the Department of Work and Pensions/European Social Fund. As of

January 2014, 95% of year 1 and 2 families have been identified and are being worked with.

The Troubled Families agenda is built around strong multi agency working which cuts across strategic pathways and service delivery areas of Health, Children's Social Care, and Adult services, Mental Health, Probation, Youth Justice Service (YJS), Community Safety, Police, Social Housing Landlords, Education and the VCS. Our work on the TFP in Ealing has engaged all of these partners, and ensured that the profiling of families' needs and our ways of working with them draws on information from a range of services and agencies, and brings together multi-disciplinary teams wherever possible.

The service offer comprises three tiers with increasingly intensive services based on the complexity, risk and level of need presented by each family. It includes:

Think Family Plus Intensive offer:

The following services have been commissioned to address the challenges of the highest need families through a range of evidenced based intensive interventions:

- The expanded Family Intervention Programme (FIP) service is now working with families with complex needs and will offer intensive, extended, multi-agency interventions for the whole family, led by a key worker to identify and address their support needs and also challenge negative behaviour. This service will support up to 48 high need families per year. These are clearly families with children on the edge of care.
- Multi-Systemic Therapy' (MST) service which will work with young people on the edge of care and custody (a licensed evidence-based intensive intervention proven to support improvements in families' and young people's outcomes). The service commenced in April 2013. MST will provide 10 interventions a year, focusing on the 12 plus age group.
- Alongside the above and as part of our wider LAC prevention strategy, we are piloting an intensive model of intervention based on the Intensive Therapeutic Short Break service model developed in ESCAN. The Primary Intensive Intervention Programme (PIIP) is targeted for children ages 3-11 who are at risk of becoming looked after.

The above three services will target and work with 20% of our identified families and all will contribute to the wider LAC prevention strategy

Think Family Plus Targeted service offer includes:

- Building on existing services and providing better integration including a "Team Around the Family" approach.
- A Domestic Violence perpetrator service. This service also integrates with the wider Domestic Violence strategy action plan
- A joint funded post with the Youth Justice Service. This recognises the need for a holistic whole family approach to working with families where young people are involved in criminal activities, including gangs and youth violence.
- A Family Coaching service is available through the charity Family Lives to support families with multiple problems. This will work with up to 150 families per year and interventions include intensive 1:1 support, volunteer led family coaching and parenting programmes – both online and in groups.

Employment offer:

Over 80% of the identified families meet the worklessness criteria and many will be affected by the benefit changes. Therefore a number of initiatives are in place including:

- A Think Family Plus Employment Advisor who leads on the information, advice and guidance aspects of the programme and works intensively with a small number of high need families to support them back, or into, work
- A dedicated Job Centre Plus secondee to support these programmes and give intensive support to families to get them back to work.
- Coordination of the range of employment advice and support available in the borough.

All of the above are supported by a comprehensive “Think Family” training programme that seeks to develop a whole systems approach across children’s and adults services.

The “Helping Families” model has also been commissioned for a much wider range of frontline practitioners. In addition all social workers and SAFE workers are undertaking the Maudsley led Family Partnership programme to develop a consistent, skilled approach that is evidence based.

The overall aim of the investment in staff development is to give practitioners a sound evidence-based theory and framework using key tools that they can integrate into their daily practice. This is enabling the authority to deliver a highly skilled workforce to help families with the most complex needs deliver effective parenting and reduce or minimise the need for in care services.

8. Listening to Children and Young People

As referred to elsewhere in this document, Ealing has a key focus on consulting and listening to the children in its care and care leavers and using their views to continuously improve services and the child’s experiences.

Key features of the approach include the following:

i) Junior Council

This meets regularly led by the LAC Education Team and consults and progresses the views of children primary aged children. They report regularly to Corporate Parent Panel. Their activities include improving materials for younger children to help them better understand processes when they enter the care system. They then helped develop the innovative LAC packs for younger children.

ii) Horizons ShoutOut Care Council (HSCC)

This is led by young people supported by Youth workers from Horizons. It consults and represents the views of older children and young people in care. It oversaw development and implementation of the recent LAC survey completed by 110 children and young people.

The HSCC also regularly attend the Corporate Parent Panel and have influenced a range of local policy changes including the Staying Put agenda, increasing access to training and employment, financial support to attend University, savings policy and raising the Leaving Care Grant from £1500 to £2000.

iii) Corporate Parent Panel

This is chaired by the Council Leader and meets quarterly. Listening to children and young people at each of its meetings is central to its work.

In addition it receives regular performance reports on Education, Health, Offending, Fostering, Adoption and the annual IRO Report and oversees performance and resources.

iv) LAC Survey

A detailed and comprehensive electronic questionnaire was sent out to all Ealing's LAC and care leavers aged 11 and over, with an incentive to complete of participation in a prize draw. When the survey closed on 31st Jan 2014 110 responses were received. These are currently being analysed and an action plan developed to move suggestions forward. The survey will be repeated annually and is particularly useful at gaining the views of young people placed out of the borough.

v) Reviews

Reviews are all independently chaired and provide a good opportunity to gain the views of individual young people, including again those placed out of borough. Based on feedback young people's views consultation forms on the process have recently been redesigned to increase their ability to participate

vi) Advocacy and Complaints

Young people are regularly provided with information on how to make informal and formal complaints about aspects of their care they are unhappy with. Horizons staff are able to support children where informal complaints are made.

For formal complaints, independent advocacy is recommended. The authority continues its longstanding contract with VOICE to provide support and advocacy. All complaints are reviewed quarterly by the Corporate Parent Committee and key issues identified for action.

9. Public Information for looked after children, parents and their families

Information available for children, young people, parents and carers

A variety of information materials are in use in Ealing to help children and young people understand and participate in plans for them and where to get more help and information. Information materials are also available for parents and for foster carers. (Some materials are produced by Ealing Children's Services and some bought in from organisations like BAAF, VOICE etc.)

Information packs for younger LAC

In 2013 Ealing's Junior Council helped with the design of new information packs for younger children new to care. The children wanted to create something that would be more appealing and interactive than a leaflet, so developed a book bag containing a set of information cards, Voice Advocacy information and goodies and a jigsaw 'ice breaker' puzzle/game to be played with foster carers. The cards are colourful and include drawings and messages from the Junior Council to welcome and offer support to any child becoming

looked after. The book bags aim to be a tool that social workers and carers can give to a child at the point of placement and use to facilitate discussion about key matters as appropriate. The cards can be used with very young children and those with additional needs or with English as a second language as they are very visual.

Information packs for older LAC and Care Leavers

In a similar way to the Junior Council, the Horizon's ShoutOut Council and Mentors/Mentees group (teenagers and young adults who are looked after or have left care) have been helping to create new information materials for older young people to replace existing leaflets.

The packs come in the form of an A4 wallet/folder with a photo journal containing key information about what it all means being looked after and where to go for information and support regarding matters such as education, health and keeping safe. Information regarding support for Care Leavers currently in a distinctive Leaving Care Guide, is being included in the new journal to reflect the streamlined process from being looked after to becoming a care leaver. This pack is being developed at present and will be ready in March 2014. Mentors and mentees have worked on design, producing photographs, positive messages and advice and have been keen to ensure information is useful for those looked after children placed out of borough who cannot so easily access the services and support available at Horizon's.

Ealing's Pledge to Children and Young People in Our Care

This leaflet sets out Ealing's commitment as Corporate Parents. It was produced in consultation with young people, staff and carers to ensure that looked after children and care leavers are clear about what to expect from the Council and know what their responsibilities are too.

Advocacy and Complaints

Information concerning Voice independent advocacy service is contained within the Information packs for all looked after children and care leavers. In addition there are information leaflets (one for younger, one for older young people) about what to do if they are unhappy and want to complain (includes Freephone and Freepost)

LAC Review Participation Forms – Children, Young People, Parents and Carers

Forms for looked after children of different ages, parents and carers are in place to obtain views prior to LAC reviews. The children's forms have been designed to be visually appealing to different age groups. They aim to encourage children and young people to tell us what they think about what is happening in their life by drawing or writing things down.

Health Passport

These have been produced in partnership with young people. The Passport provides looked after children and care leavers with a pocket size booklet that can hold key personal medical information that is useful in medical emergencies or when required to fill out health information e.g. job applications.

Information leaflets for parents

An Information leaflet is available for parents explaining what happens and where they can get support when their child becomes looked after. Additional BAAF information leaflets are used regarding Adoption and Permanence. A leaflet for parents on 'Contact' is currently being developed.

Information leaflet on LAC Education Team for carers and staff

A leaflet covering the education support available via LACET for looked after children and care leavers is provided to foster carers, residential staff and others.

CP Conference Information Leaflets and Feedback Forms

Leaflets are in place giving parents and children relevant information about Child Protection Conferences with tear off slips for them to provide their views to the Conference. Additionally there are feedback forms given out after Conferences whereby professionals and parents /carers can give feedback on the Conference process by Freepost.

10. Additional support for children with additional needs

i) Children missing from care

The authority has a clear Missing from Care Policy and an annual report was presented to the Corporate Parent Panel in November 2013. Following the learning from the Rochdale case and other high profile national cases, the authority has revised and updated its policies, procedures, practices and support in this area.

A missing from care risk assessment is undertaken by the allocated social worker and where it is clear that risk exists, rather than that the situation is a lower level unauthorised absence, the case is referred to the Police. Contact is made with all known possible friends and family to try to locate the person as soon as possible. Dependent on the level of risk assessed, a strategy meeting may be convened within 24 hours.

If a child is missing for 7 working days or more, a further strategy meeting is held and child protection procedures are followed. Longer term absences are reviewed by the senior Operations Manager. Wherever appropriate, consideration is given to use of the media to attempt to find the child or young person. Recovery Orders are also applied for through the Courts to enter a named premise and search for a child where there are grounds for concern.

It is recognised that children can go missing for a variety of reasons but any episode is a serious indicator of concern that may reflect wider and often hidden difficulties the young person may be experiencing. A review of the main reasons for going missing over the past year indicated the following features:

- Some children enter care because they are going missing from home and are placing themselves at risk. This pattern may continue once they are in the care system
- Periods of absence, even if short term for a few hours, may be an indicator of child sexual exploitation

- Children may be trying to return to their parents where they have been removed against the family or child's wishes
- Children may be indicating that there is something wrong in their placement or at school or in their local community that needs investigating
- They may be being encouraged to get involved in gangs, crime and serious youth violence. There is increasing recognition of "County Lines" in which vulnerable London based young people (including LAC) are being used to sell drugs and engage in violence in areas outside of London.

During 2012/13 7 young people were reported missing for a period of over 24 hours. Of these 7, 3 were deemed to be at risk of sexual exploitation. All 7 were subject to very detailed, regular multi agency strategy and planning meetings and ensure their safety.

A multi-agency Vulnerable Adolescents Panel is also in place to review complex cases. The Panel includes Children and Adults Services Safeguarding Managers, the Youth Justice Service, the Police, CAMHs, the Youth and Connexions Service, senior managers from social care and the Virtual Head Teacher. The Panel ensures there is a cohesive multi agency approach to care planning and safeguarding for the most vulnerable young people including care leavers aged up to 21 and beyond.

Ealing Safeguarding Children's Board also has a Missing Children sub group which is chaired by the Safeguarding Manager. This group has a strategic overview borough wide of children missing from home, education and care and looks at processes, links and any criminal networks, information sharing, cross borough patterns, action plans and staff awareness training.

The recent online LAC survey of children's views also asked questions about why children and young people may be unhappy in care and some specific questions on sexual exploitation which will enhance understanding and response to this key issue.

ii) **Support for children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation**

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Since 2010 Ealing CSC have identified a number of children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation. It is recognised that looked after children and care leavers are especially vulnerable to this form of exploitation and therefore local policies and practices ensure that this group's needs are prioritised and reflected in training, assessments and interventions. In recognition of the Office of the Children's Commissioners Reports dated November 2012 and November 2013 and the learning from Serious Case Reviews (SCR) in Rochdale and Derbyshire a numbers of measures have been taken to reduce the risk of CSE.

Current work is focused across three areas;

Prevention

- Delivery of awareness training to 204 professionals since 2013 and delivery of level 3 training to 76 professionals since 2012. In addition awareness raising training has been targeted at all LAC/LCT team SWs, local residential care providers and IROs.
- Programme of training for parents and youth/community groups delivered by Ealing Community and Voluntary Service (CVS) is ongoing

- Distribution of OCC vulnerability factors and risk indicators at all Ealing Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB)

Protection

- Use of London Child Protection Procedures supplementary guidance on CSE
- Wherever possible Child Protection Advisers chair strategy/MAP meetings regarding CSE
- Where threshold is met, children suffering significant harm or at risk of harm as a result of CSE, are reviewed at a Child Protection Conference.

Intervention and Support

- Established the Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meetings as part of the Metropolitan Police Pan London CSE Protocol since November 2013. MASE includes input from Youth Justice Service and Gangs/SYV as recommended by OCC.
- Use of Vulnerable Adolescents Panel (VAP) to support staff in managing high risk young people as highlighted by the OCC in her final report dated November 2013
- The Ealing Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) has established a CSE sub group to implement an action plan. This is cross referenced with the Missing Children sub group.
- Referral of children/young people to local support available through Barnardos Sexual Exploitation Project, the Women and Girls Network for girls exploited by Gangs/Gang association and West London Rape Crisis hub.

Future Developments;

- Development of a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy which will incorporate CSE
- Drafting of CSE strategy that links to problem profile
- Completion of a problem profile of CSE across Ealing.
- Delivery of training to parents/community groups including youth groups.
- Mapping exercise in partnership with Operation Trident in relation to girls exploited within gangs.
- Revision of level 3 training when LCPP supplementary guidance on CSE is re-issued.

iii) **Support for children who are unaccompanied minors**

Section 1 provided details on unaccompanied asylum seeking children who are looked after by the local authority. On average this is 35 children out of approx. 400 ie approx. 8.75%.

The largest group are from Afghanistan, followed by India and Albania.

A specialist Housing support and Unaccompanied Minors Team complete full assessments on all children who appear to be under 18. Those that it is appropriate to do so are then offered Sec 20 support.

After the initial LAC Review the cases are then transferred to the Leaving Care Team.

Those unaccompanied minors who are over 18 are referred to the Asylum Support Service to receive support as a single adult.

As the numbers age through year on year, there are on average about 75 UASC per year supported through the Leaving Care Service. This is about a fifth of the total of this cohort.

This group of young people can often have very complex and specialist needs as they work through the cultural transition to life in the UK without support of their families of origin and often after having experienced significant trauma. They are offered specialist support including counselling, ESOL, education, training and employment, CAMHs, accommodation and positive activities. In addition for a significant number, immigration issues are outstanding and take lengthy times to address. This uncertainty can place added pressure on them and good relationships exist with local MPs to support their right to remain, particularly where they wish to continue to progress their education attainment.

iv) Support for children who are looked after/care leavers and who are parents

Recognising the high levels of vulnerability of looked after children and care leavers who become parents themselves, they are a very high priority for assessment of their needs and those of their children. A wide range of interventions are on offer. These include:

- Parenting programmes
- Mother and baby and parental assessments
- Family Nurse Partnership
- Access to Children's Centres
- Horizons Family Ties programme

As referred to elsewhere in this document, a clear protocol is in place between the Leaving Care Team and the Hospital Social Work service to ensure all LAC and Care Leavers who are pregnant have a detailed assessment of their needs in order that they can be offered effective support and any safeguarding issues addressed as early as possible.

v) Support for young people involved in youth offending

Within the main LAC cohort 26 of Ealing's approx. 400 children and young people were convicted at court of an Offence in 2012/13. Offences ranged from violence and robbery through to criminal damage, drug dealing and burglary, handling stolen goods and breaching statutory orders. This is a reduction to 6.5% from 8.25% i.e. 33 young people the previous year reduced to 26 young people in 2011/12.

Young people who are involved or at risk of involvement in offending are assessed and able to access a wide range of interventions. These include CAMHs assessment and support, family and parenting work, education, training and employment support and access to a wide range of outreach and accommodation support.

Following implementation of the LASPO legislation from May 2012 the service has strengthened joint working across the Youth Justice and Leaving Care service in order to provide an integrated approach to support these vulnerable young people and improve their life chances.

A key change is that all young people held on Youth Detention Accommodation aged under 18 will now have LAC status. In addition if they are remanded into custody for a period in excess of 13 weeks they will be entitled to leaving care support up to age 21 or beyond.

Recognising the often detrimental impact of custody on young people's life chances, Ealing was part of a 2 year Custody Pathfinder bid with the Tri-boroughs to reduce Custody levels through implementing practice changes and learning from best practice. The Custody Pathfinder exceeded its performance targets and has been congratulated by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) on its performance. This was a payment by results model and all targets were achieved. As a result Custody levels in Ealing have fallen in recent years.

The Table below highlights key changes from Sept 2011 to August 2012

	2011/2012	2012/2013
a) Number of LAC young people convicted at Court	33	26
b) Number of young people remanded into Custody	31	15
c) Of (b) how many young people were remanded for more than 13 weeks (LASPO) and become eligible for Leaving Care services	5	3

Based on the above it is estimated that over a 5 year period there could be between 15-25 additional young people who become eligible for leaving care status with significant financial implications for the Council beyond the allocated resource, as these young people often have the most complex needs. Prioritising the needs of this group and building on significant progress over past 2 years, remains a priority for this strategy.

vi) **Support for young people at risk of involvement in gangs and serious youth violence**

Ealing was one of 33 authorities nationally selected for involvement in a Home Office programme “Ending Gangs and Youth Violence” programme that began post riots in 2011/12 and continues on an on-going basis. Involvement in this programme helped the authority significantly to understand the impact and way in which gangs in this area operate and how vulnerable young people including looked after children and care leavers may get involved and focus on how to improve safeguarding for this vulnerable group of young men and young women.

As part of the programme the authority was subject to an intensive peer review by a Home Office led review team and following the review a comprehensive action plan is being implemented. This helped build and develop very close working and intelligence sharing, including in areas of sexual exploitation between the local authority, Police and health. An overarching steering group - Operation Milvus, oversees activity in this area.

In addition the authority accessed additional Home Office resource of £245,000 in 2011/12 to improve partnership working and develop more effective interventions to support this group. Whilst this was one off funding, building on this the partnership has now accessed 4 year funding from the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) from 2012/13 for a range of programmes including:

- 2 specialist Gangs Outreach workers within the Youth Justice Service
- An additional specialist Gangs Outreach workers from St Giles Trust
- A specialist Somali Gangs outreach project
- An early intervention programme in partnership with Brentford FC
- Substance Misuse programme
- Girls and Gangs awareness programmes
- Schools awareness programmes
- Public health funding supports a half time dedicated CAMHs worker within the Youth Justice Service.

This group of young people are also prioritised for access to the authority’s nationally recognised pre-employment support Pathways Programme (Finalist in LGC Children’s Awards 2014).

Recognising the vulnerability of looked after children and care leavers, both groups are prioritised for access to all of the above support. Increasing Staff awareness of risks to both young men and young women is an on-going priority.

The authority is currently in discussion with the Met Police Trident Team about developing a clearer joint analysis of girls and young women who are involved or associated with Gang members in order that support and interventions can be more effectively targeted and safeguarding increased.

vii) **Support for children with disabilities: Early Intervention and Intensive Support**

A range of effective programmes are in place to support families and children with disabilities. These include the ITSBS and EIP programmes and targeted child in need and

parenting support. This has helped to reduce the number who need to become looked after children. Where they do need to come into care, either Foster Care or Kinship Care are the preferred options.

As at January 2014, there are 21 looked after children who are the responsibility of the Children with Disabilities Team. Placements are as follows:

- 7 in Residential School placements
- 4 in Residential care placements
- 10 in Foster care

Of the group:

- 11 are subject to Sec 31 of the 1989 Children Act and
- 10 are subject to Sec 20 of the 1989 Children Act.

It is a priority to ensure all this group receive the specialist medical interventions they need in addition to bi annual Medicals co-ordinated by the LAC Nurse and 6 monthly PEPs co-ordinated by the LAC Education Team.

Early Intervention Project:

In order to meet the needs of the wider group of those aged 5-13 with a learning disability or ASD or an emotional and behavioural difficulty an early intervention project is in place which helps prevent family stress escalating and avoids more children entering the care system.

The early intervention project provides a rapid response, needs led support package to prevent family breakdown or school exclusion, particularly permanent exclusions. It enables close collaborative working between families, short break services, social care, educational psychology, paediatricians, occupational therapy and the voluntary sector.

A behaviour management intervention is developed which can be used at home or at school as necessary. The intervention is evaluated pre and post intervention and this evaluation includes family feedback. A lead professional is then identified from the school, social care, SEN or specialist Child health to co-ordinate the package and take it forward.

The Intensive Therapy Short Break Service (ITSBS)

This successful service has been in place for a couple of years to reduce the risk of family breakdown and prevent children entering the care system. It is collaboration between CAMHs and Social Care. A wide range of support services are available following a comprehensive assessment. This includes Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, CAMHs, Psychiatry, Paediatrics and youth work. Typical referrals can involve high levels of physical aggression, destructive and risky behaviours, self-harm, obsessions/compulsions, soiling and smearing, high anxiety and low mood. Interventions can last from 4 months to 36 months. Intensive clinical psychology, short breaks and parenting interventions are offered. The short breaks provide the parents with time to reflect and reorganise their home and review their plans for their child.

Following completion of the intensive interventions a step down to generic provision is provided. The project is successful and has attracted a lot of national interest.

11. Preparing for independence and leaving care:

i) Support for Higher Education

Ealing has a key focus on education achievement as central to helping young people prepare for a successful independent life

During 2012/13 the percentage of Yr. 12 students in ETE increased to 82%, a 3% improvement on the previous year

The percentage of Yr. 13 students in ETE has also increased to 79%, compared to 77% the previous year; there has also been a slight decline in NEETs.

Led by the Corporate Parent Panel and in consultation with young people's wishes, Ealing has a strong focus on supporting its LAC to attend Higher Education. This policy has been in place for over 10 years and is now embedded into the aspirations of the LAC group. Annual outcomes are very encouraging. Care Leavers who access a university place are entitled to £5,500 a year towards subsistence and costs as well a laptop and support from a dedicated post 16 LAC teacher.

Graduates:

10 students graduated in 2011, 13 in 2012 and 10 in 2013.

The 2013 graduate group succeeded with the following outcomes:

1st Class Degree BSc (Hons) - Business Studies – Westminster University

1st Class Degree BSc (Hons) - Civil Engineering – Kingston University

2:1 Degree BSc (Hons) Pharmacy – Kings College University

2:1 Degree BA (Hons) Photography – West London University

2:1 Degree BSc (Hons) Sport and Exercise Science – London Met University

2:2 Degree BA (Hons) Social Work – Brunel University

2:2 IT for Business - Kingston University

3 other students achieved post graduate qualifications.

As at September 2013 there are 38 care leavers (16%) studying at University. In line with national trends this is slightly down from a peak in 2009/10 of 44 students – 18%. However the cohort can vary year on year and is anticipated to rise again in 2014/15.

Post-graduation the employment outcomes for Ealing's care leavers are very impressive including the Graduate Teacher Training programme, Chartered Accountancy, Digital Marketing, Nursing, Midwifery, the pharmaceutical and beauty industries.

As part of the support package to enable more care leavers to aim high and achieve a Higher Education place, the LAC Education Team offer a range of support. This includes:

- Making appointments for young people to visit universities and helping them to complete and send their applications in on time.

- Additional support with understanding and planning for the financial implications of higher education.
- Support to complete personal statements.
- Specialist advice for refugee young people with immigration issues in partnership with the Refugee Support Network
- On-going support with coursework and wider emotional support throughout their courses
- Careers advice post University.

ii) **Reducing NEETs:**

Ealing also has a strong commitment to supporting young people who may not have been successful in formal education to aim high and reach their goals.

As indicated in the opening section Ealing's figures on numbers engaged in education, employment or training are consistently above both the statistical neighbour and the national average. Over the past 5 years eg 2012/13 – Ealing's figure was 73.5% engaged compared with the national average of 64%.

A range of initiatives are targeted at care leavers to try to continuously improve performance in this critical area.

- The semi-independent (SOT) Team based at Horizons undertakes outreach visits to engage care leavers living in their own accommodation
- Connexions Personal Advisers based at Horizons undertake long term preparation for employment and intensive short term support eg identifying courses or training opportunities, accompanying young people to interviews etc
- The Council's range of pre apprentice and Apprentice programmes prioritise care leavers and other vulnerable groups to provide supportive entry level employment opportunities
- Close links exist with the Early Years Service and Ealing's 27 Children's Centres to identify childcare opportunities for young parents children to facilitate their engagement in ETE
- Horizons continues to provide young people with ETE support and advice long term – many take up this offer into their mid and late 20's.

iii) **Accommodation:**

Ealing's performance is good in terms of young people living in suitable accommodation. There are strong and effective links with the Council's housing service and also a dedicated social work led Housing Support Team. There are also good links with housing providers such as Catalyst and Notting Hill Housing, the YMCA and other semi independent local providers such as Centrepont. A good supply of independent quota accommodation is also available.

In 2012/13 NI 147 re Suitable Accommodation for Care Leavers was 93% - consistently above the statistical neighbour average of 87% and the national average of 88%.

It is recognised that sustaining a tenancy long term is a real challenge for young care leavers and a number do not succeed. The authority is currently working with Housing and

regeneration to address this issue across West London and try to identify more effective support and solutions.

Horizons continues to have an open door for any former care leaver who may experience housing difficulties or be at risk of homelessness and again many young people use this service well into their mid and late 20's.

12. Placements Strategy

In January 2011 Ealing published its first LAC sufficiency strategy. This signalled to the market what the borough needed to purchase as well as providing an analysis of trends and an action plan for the next three years. In 2014 Ealing is publishing its second LAC sufficiency strategy.

This strategy is built on an analysis of LAC numbers, needs and trends, the impact of local and national policy and legislative change and how we plan to change what we do for the future. The strategy is built on a commitment to a mixed economy of provision – for foster care the market share of the in house service and external provision are comparable whereas for residential care, the majority of provision is purchased externally.

In the 2014 to 2017 LAC sufficiency strategy key issues to be addressed are:

- Improving the supply of foster carers in the west London area and particularly within easy reach of Ealing
- Increasing the volume, quality and variety of residential care in a 20 mile radius of Ealing
- Negotiating more capacity with good quality local providers of leaving care services

An action plan sets out the steps to be taken to achieve the above. Value for money and affordability are key factors in all commissioning activity coupled with an understanding of the particular challenges for London in relation to high property prices, a higher cost of living - and how the impacts on the care sector.

Another key factor is an increased emphasis on ensuring that providers help to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Partnership working with other boroughs:

Nine boroughs in central and west London are working together under the auspices of the West London Alliance with the aim of improving efficiencies in services for looked after children, care leavers and parent and child assessments and increasing the supply of quality placements.

The nine boroughs, of which Ealing is one (the others are Hillingdon, Harrow, Brent, Hounslow, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster), have already:

- Analysed data and need across the nine boroughs to inform planning
- Set up a framework contract for independent foster agencies – this will help the boroughs to achieve better value for money and it should lead to improvements in capacity and greater diversity in terms of specialist provision

- Negotiated better rates with providers of parent and child assessments and residential care providers
- Worked with residential care providers to encourage them to set up services in West London with at least four new services coming on stream in 2013

Projects currently under development include:

- Setting up an approved list for semi-independent providers
- Further increasing residential capacity in the area
- Creating an IT based system to analysis placement data, to work as a service directory, to help monitor discounts and to help identify placement vacancies.

Out of Borough strategy:

All placement requests coming through the ART team are agreed by an Operational manager. At this point a decision is usually made to try in borough placements in the first instance unless there is an immediate risk and it is better for the child to be placed further away

Risks considered in making decisions to place children further away include: Child sexual exploitation, gang membership, young person absconding and placing themselves at risk etc Other issues taken into consideration in making an assessment of need include contact arrangements, language and keeping siblings together.

If a placement cannot be provided in house, then IFA's will be sought within the borough. If there is not a suitable local placement to meet the identified needs, then the placement search would extend to surrounding boroughs and greater London and then further out if required.

In terms of residential requests the needs would be considered in the first instance by the Operations Managers and Assistant Director. Some highly specialist needs cannot be met in London provisions e.g. Specialist sexual perpetrator residential units. Only Ofsted rated good or outstanding placements are used.

When placing children out of borough consideration is given to ensuring that the child's key needs can be met e.g. health and education. Some OOB placements are closer to the child's home and local area e.g., some semi-independent accommodation is on the outskirts of neighbouring boroughs and geographically closer to their parental address.

All LAC and care Leavers have an Ealing allocated worker regardless of the distance they live away from the borough and the authority undertakes all statutory duties in relation to them. Occasionally other boroughs are asked to provide local support eg Cornwall for a kinship placement, but Ealing still undertakes all key statutory duties.

It is recognised that too many children are placed away from the borough but priority is given to ensuring they receive regular visits and that they are safe and happy and their needs fully addressed. However increasing the supply of local, quality placements is a key aim of this strategy and the work being undertaken with neighbouring authorities is central to this strategy.

13. Adoption and Permanence

The ethos underpinning Ealing's Adoption and Permanence is that all children need to grow up in a stable nurturing family, where they feel they belong and where the impact of earlier trauma and neglect can be reduced. It is recognised that the vast majority of parents/carers taking on a child who has experienced significant loss, separation and trauma will need significant support at some stage of the child's life, if they are to be able to continue to provide good parenting and it is a key aim of this strategy to ensure this is available.

While adoption can often provide the most stable and long term alternative family for a child, there are many children for whom permanent placement with a relative or placement with a long term foster carer are the most suitable options. Ealing seeks to ensure that planning and support for all children across adoption, kinship or foster care is equally robust and mindful of the child's needs for stability, repair and growth.

i) Kinship Team

The Kinship team is working successfully towards targets in relation to permanence.

The team is increasing the number of social workers in the team in order to ensure timely assessments in line with the FJR recommendations. We offer statutory support and review to our approved foster carers and a SGO support service. This includes access to regular carer trainings, NW London training, consortium trainings and support, allocation of a named Social Worker, Special Guardianship Orders, financial packages, support with family contact, bespoke training opportunities, and mediation to families where specific needs are identified.

The Team Manager participates in the Legal Planning Panel in order to have an early indication of possible kinship assessments, Family meetings and Family Group conferences.

The Kinship team delivers a Family Meeting service in order to empower families towards their own decision making in relation to who has the best capacity to provide a permanent and safe home for a child. These meetings occur pre-proceedings and are held within a 2-3 week period.

Referrals for both Family Meetings and Family Group Conferences are allocated within a 24-48 hour time period.

The Kinship Team is utilising a template for permanence reports which is adaptable for Special Guardianship and Fostering Panel in order to expedite statutory requirements without a loss in quality and analysis. The majority of assessments take place within a 10 week period. Where possible they conclude assessments early if there is evidential information that the assessment will be negative.

Additionally there is now a full time administrator who accelerates the statutory check processes.

ii) Adoption and Adoption support

The adoption team continue to recruit and assess a range of adopters to meet the needs of the Ealing LAC population and to ensure children are placed with adopters within 6 months of agreement to an adoption plan.

Where children's needs cannot be met with Ealing approved adopters they are matched with adopters approved by other agencies.

All assessments and preparation of adopters are now done under the new two stage assessment procedures.

The authority is working closely with the West London consortium to run more frequent preparation groups in order to ensure adopters are assessed within 6 months.

The principle of concurrent planning and Foster to Adopt strategies are used during preparation and assessment and a child has recently been placed with concurrent carers approved by the in house team. Additionally, Ealing purchase Concurrent Placements from Coram as required. The authority has also made links with external agencies offering expertise in these areas for specific cases i.e. PACT, Coram

A contract is in place with After Adoption to provide Safe Base training for adoptive families. There is also an ongoing contract with PAC and a training programme: "Enhancing Adoptive Parenting" from PAC so that workers can provide better quality support to adopters.

An additional SW post was created from monies raised from interagency fees in order to ensure that the borough can meet the need for swifter assessments and timely placements of children.

There is a robust Adoption and Permanence Panel that tracks cases and ensures timescales are being met.

A range of dynamic family finding strategies are used to ensure children are matched swiftly including Profiling Events and Activity Days.

Robust individualised support packages are offered to adopters to support the placements. This includes packages of therapeutic support.

Regular Permanency Planning Meetings are held to ensure proactive family finding and the Operations Managers for Placements and for LAC and Leaving Care chair a panel that tracks permanency plans for children in order to ensure that drift is minimised.

Adoption performance:

Performance in this area is strong, although it continues to be a key challenge to ensure that timescales both for approving adopters and for placing children with adopters are met within the 6 month target.

2013/14 has seen a marked increase in number of adopters approved from 13 in 2012/13 to an anticipated 39 by end of 2013/14.

In terms of adoption orders, 10 were granted in 2012/13 but this is anticipated to rise to 25 by end of 2013/14.

As at November 2013, 19 children were placed in adoptive placements.

There are currently 29 children with placement orders awaiting adoption placements as at November 2013.

iii) **Long term Fostering and Permanency Planning:**

The recruitment and assessment team are responsible for permanency planning for children and young people generally between the ages of 7 – 14. Where a child under 7 is to be placed with older siblings then that child will also be referred to the team, we would also plan for a child over 14 where they are to be placed with a younger sibling. Where appropriate we work jointly with the adoption team.

There has been a vast increase in the number of children referred and over the last year this has risen from around 40 to 70 children. Currently there are 71 children in 38 sibling groupings and as not all siblings are placed together we are planning for 48 separate placements.

There are 4.5 social workers allocated to do this work the social workers also have responsibility for foster carers assessments, supporting new carers into their first placement, foster carer preparation training covering the Freephone in the absence of the carer recruitment coordinator, attending information sessions, attending recruitment events.

Planning process

Permanency planning meetings are held approximately every 6 weeks. Over the recent 6 months there have been 72 meetings held, averaging 12 per month. Meetings take an average of 1.5 – 2 hours though can be longer where there are large sibling groups. Meetings are attended by the child's sw, foster carer and other people as relevant including supervising social workers, teachers, psychologists, guardians.

Meetings aim to:

- Consider a child or young person's history and current situation
- Assess the young person's needs and discuss how best to meet those needs in the future
- Decide on a long-term plan for their future, family find to identifying a stable placement to see the child or young person through to their minority.
- Advise SW's on best practice possible the options and realities
- Ensure each child or young person has a greater sense of security, and, if possible, a family for life.
- Ensure timeliness

Plan in parallel to other possibilities e.g. return home, placement with connected person or come to the decision that fostering is not appropriate for the child or young person at that point.

Outcomes

The outcomes of permanency planning may result in a long term foster placement match or children may go home or to another family member or a decision may be made that the young person would be best in residential care.

Key Issues

Permanency planning can be complex, the number of large sibling groups have increased and children may present with very complex needs and behaviours due to the trauma they have previously experienced.

The key challenge ahead continues to be to find quality suitable, local placements for children with complex needs and those from large sibling groups. These issues are prioritised within the Action Plan for the service and this strategy.

14. Reviews and the role of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)

The authority is committed to the independence and monitoring function of IRO's and in order to ensure this independence, contracts with an external Agency – Aidhour, to chair all its statutory reviews. In line with the revisions to the IRO role contained in the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the accompanying IRO handbook Ealing reviewed and amended its contract. The revised model increased contracted hours per young person to allow for follow up action and midway review checks.

The authority has also amended the supervision arrangements with Aidhour to ensure that supervision is provided by Ealing to IROs on an individual and group basis and also that they are encouraged to take up training within the authority on key practice areas such as child sexual exploitation, girls and gangs and advanced safeguarding issues.

A clear escalation process is in place through to senior managers where IROs have concerns that care plans are not appropriate or are not being implemented effectively. Bi-monthly meetings take place chaired by the Assistant Director to review progress, effectiveness, timeliness and quality issues.

The total number of reviews carried out in 2012/13, are broken down by type in the table below

Review Type	2012/13
4 Week review	177
2 nd review	142
Subsequent review	882
Total no of children requiring reviews	359
Total No. of reviews	1201
% of reviews held on time	99.2%
% of LAC communicating their views to their last review in the year	99.6%

Ensuring the child and young person's views are central to the review is a key priority. Feedback is sought through the HSCC, Junior Council and through the 2013/14 LAC and care leavers' survey. Comments are generally very positive about the IRO process:

N – Life is going really well and I feel part of this family. My review helped make this my permanent placement!

H – I like my reviews. I meet my IRO beforehand and we talk about the issues I want to raise.

Y – I usually attend my reviews. I want to know what people think about plans for me

X – I couldn't make my last review but the IRO phoned me and the review was held like a conference call. I really liked that.

IRO service priorities for 2014 - 17

- i) To ensure compliance with national standards following implementation of the Family Justice review requirements, particularly re achieving timescales and quality of planning.
- ii) To address any issues arising from the new LASPO regulations
- iii) To continue to encourage all LAC to participate in their reviews
- iv) To develop a portfolio of communication tools to enable children with communication needs to be supported and express their wishes and participate more fully.
- v) To continue to focus on direct work with children and the child's journey in order to ensure that they better understand what is happening to them eg Life Story work and that they participate and express their views re the care planning process
- vi) Ensure compliance with additional requirements of the IRO handbook eg timeliness, mid review checks, supervision and training.

15. Workforce – Training and Development

Recruitment, retention and development of a skilled, sensitive and empathic workforce is central to this strategy. In order to achieve this young people are increasingly involved in recruitment.

The recruitment and retention strategy has recently been reviewed and a new dynamic recruitment micro-site specifically for social workers created to compete and address the London wide shortage of experienced, qualified Children's Social Workers.

In order to continuously improve quality and develop staff a broad range of continuous professional development programmes specifically tailored to the Looked after Children and the Leaving Care service are on offer. We have an exciting series of modular courses which have been developed across the West London Alliance (WLA) for Newly Qualified Workers including Court work and Care planning.

Specialist in depth programmes for experienced social workers and senior practitioners are also available including:

- Care Planning and Preventing Drift,
- Court work and the PLO,
- Looked after Children and Direct work and leaving care and transitions.

Bespoke programmes have been developed in response to the Family Justice Review (FJR). In 2012/13 courses were developed on:

- Sibling Assessment in permanency planning
- Understanding Special education needs to improve outcomes for children in care
- Working with vulnerable and hard to reach adolescences
- Managers Legal Forum on FJR
- Joint managers and lawyers forum on FJR

During 2014/15 a programme on Life History/Story Work module specifically looking at skills in developing the child's narrative and a permanency planning programme is being developed in consultation with our Looked after Children, Recruitment, Development and Training Strategy.

16. Learning from Research and Best Practice elsewhere

The partnership is always keen to learn and contribute to national best practice and this is reflected in the following current initiatives:

- **Horizons**
This has been cited nationally by Ministers and by Ofsted as a model of best practice. Recent visitors have included Hillingdon and Edinburgh Councils who have brought senior Officers and lead Members to view the approach.
- **Alliance**
The Authority has been a member of the Voluntary Sector Alliance for Care providers for several years. This group led by the WhoCares Trust and VOICE identifies key policy areas such as education, health and emotional well-being to campaign around national improvements.
- **All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)**
The authority has been regularly invited by the APPG to participate in key debates with national policy leaders and children and young people to improve outcomes nationally for all looked after children and care leavers. The APPG includes Ministers, local political leaders and the Commissioner for Children.
- **GLA – London Mayor's Office**
The authority is working with lead officers at the GLA re improving outcomes for care leavers in London such as increased employment opportunities and support to increase foster carer capacity across the capital.
- **Cabinet Office Commissioning Academy**
The authority is a regular contributor to this national commissioning workshop programme for senior commissioners in the civil service and local government with a key focus on improving outcomes.

- **Project Oracle**
The authority is actively engaged with the GLA London Mayor's evaluation and evidence based Project Oracle initiative and is embedding this approach within this authority.
- **Dartington/Lankelly Chase Action research**
The authority is also engaged in this pioneering action research currently underway nationally. The approach is challenging the dominance of outcome focused models and is based on feedback from young people with complex needs who have experienced services over many years. The model is developing an approach that is relationship based primarily as the best way to improve opportunities for vulnerable young people. The model includes close working with London based Kids Company and other widely recognised young person focused projects such as the Liverpool based First Solutions.
- **Bright Spots**
Led by VOICE and Cardiff University researchers, this is a 3 year programme focused on improving outcomes for looked after children and improving the care experience
- **Met Police Trident**
The authority is participating along with Southwark Council in a pilot project led by Trident to increase understanding of involvement of girls and young women with gangs and gang members. Action includes starting to identify the scope of their involvement which to date is very unclear right across London. If successful the approach will then be rolled out across other boroughs.
- **Custody Pathfinder with the Tri boroughs**
This focused on trying to reduce the number of bednights of young people in custody through development of community based alternatives. A 28% reduction was achieved over the 2 year period. This exceeded the original targets and the invest to save funding was retained.
- **Home Office Ending Gangs and Youth Violence (EGYV) programme and peer review.**
Ealing was one of 33 authorities nationally to take part in this programme. This included developing a gang's strategy and undergoing an intensive 2 week peer review. Participation helped the authority considerably to strengthen its partnership working with Police, Health, Community groups and the wider council to better identify and intervene with young people at risk of involvement in Gangs. This includes young people in care and on the edge of care.
- **LGC Awards 2014**
The authority is a Finalist at the 2014 Awards in the Best Children's Service category. Judges for the competition include the Children's Commissioner. The entry focuses on the authority's innovative Pathways pre-employment programme for vulnerable and NEET young people. The programme prioritises care leavers, young people with additional health needs, young offenders, young parents and young carers and has an over 80% record of success.

17. Budget and Financial Strategy – To be added

18. Next Steps, Evaluation and Action Plan

Please see Action Plan attached as Appendix 2

19. Appendices

- i) **Appendix 1: LAC Strategy Performance Scorecard**

- ii) **Appendix 2: Action Plan (Draft)**