

CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT 2022- 2023



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Foreword

Our children in care and care experienced young adults have over the last year continued to show such impressive grit and resilience as they face a complex world that is harder than ever to navigate. Our Corporate Parenting responsibilities across the whole council has continued to strengthen over the last year with even more collaboration with colleagues across the council and partner agencies in Education, Health and the voluntary sector. We have seen progress in placement stability despite the significant national challenges in placement sufficiency, permanency planning for our very young children has been more timely with court timescales improving and for our older children work experience projects have expanded, education outcomes continue to improve despite our children having lost so much learning during the pandemic and our local offer for care experienced young adults demonstrates the partnership working that is delivering on our Independent Living Programmes with Education, Housing, Revenue and benefits, the Live Unlimited Charity and Adult service. I am very proud of what services have achieved for our children and young adults but that would not be possible without the strength of the child and young person's voice that directs us to develop services and opportunities that respond to them and show that what they say matters.

Brigitte Jordaan – Director of Corporate Parenting and Disability

Introduction

Across 2022/2023 we progressed our blueprint developed over the previous years in how we have delivered services to ensure children and young adults continue to feel held, supported and making progress to achieve their individual successes. As a service we efficiently and effectively continued with our model of hybrid working ensuring direct working with children, families, and professionals when it was considered in the child's best interest, while offering the flexibility of remote working when a creative approach was needed. Staff returned to and remained in their work environments, ensuring the seamless approach to intervention and support. We ensured that vulnerable children remained connected to their families and wider social networks to promote their sense of safety, well-being and belonging.

During their June 2021 focussed visit, Ofsted highlighted two areas of social work practice that need to improve:

- Case recording, including the recording of supervision, visits and direct work with children and the rationale for decision-making on placements.
- The completion and quality of 'All About Me' plans.

In response to these recommendations, we have consistently audited case files to identify examples of good practice and highlight where improvement is needed. Team managers and auditors have worked alongside practitioners to ensure that information from the audits inform practice, and the case files effectively represent the excellent practice that teams are producing.

The most recent quarterly report shows ongoing improvements and evidence that the audit actions are being used in supervision to reflect on practice. The audits graded as Requires improvement indicate that supervision recordings and management oversight need to show more of the reflective discussions that take place and the rationale for decisions.

For all children and young people in care, the 'All About Me' assessment and plan is an essential piece of direct work and planning that social workers complete with the child and young person. Dip sampling shows that the quality of these plans is mostly good, are child focussed and written from the child's perspective. Consistency and ensuring all plans and actions for a child are aligned would strengthen practice.

Placement sufficiency nationally and locally continued to be a concern throughout the year. Finding the right care option for each child first time is our aim however it was not always possible to do so for sibling groups and adolescents with complex behaviours. The social work teams together with the Placements Team worked consistently to find creative solutions for children and families.

Whether sibling groups were placed together or apart was assessed and reviewed and if separated a rationale for this decision was communicated. Every attempt was made to keep children close to their connections within Barnet, when it was safe to do so, and for children who were previously placed a far distance away a plan to bring them back to Barnet was agreed where appropriate.

Placement stability continues to improve and since April 2023 194 children and young people have remained in their homes, 76 children have had 2 placements, and 35 young people have had 3 or more placements. The low number of multiple placement moves is a result of intensive work to understand the needs of the child, supporting carers with comprehensive packages including clinical support and working closely with external providers to ensure good quality of care. Many of these young people have moved addresses with the same provider or in the case of infants have moved from the hospital to a parent assessment unit to either foster care or home with parent. These moves are planned and in line with the permanency planning for a child.

In 2021 we commissioned the Bright Spots Survey in partnership with Coram Voice and the Rees Centre. This survey undertaken in May – June 2021 saw 176 (54%) of children and young people and 116 (33%) of care experienced adults share their views anonymously. The survey indicated that the majority of children and young people know and trust their social worker, feel involved in decisions made about their lives and feel safe where they live. The report indicated that for care leaver, the majority of young adults have a positive and trusting relationship with their Personal Advisors The full report highlighted the need for:

- Stronger focus on lifestory work to ensure children and young people understand their reasons for being in care
- Children and young people's contact with their birth family needs to remain an area under regular review
- Embedded pathways for young people developing the necessary life skills to support their transitions to independent living
- Continued partnership work with partner agencies and housing services to ensure the appropriate, safe and stable accommodation options available for young people moving to independent living
- Stronger pathways for young people transitioning to leaving care services requiring support with their mental health

What they told us formed the foundation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021 – 2023 and as corporate parents we make a pledge to our children and young people to hold ourselves to account

against the 6 promises within our strategy, to ensure their voice is central to our planning and that we strive to always be ambitious for them.

Progress against the 6 key pledges within the Corporate Parenting Strategy

We will support you to fulfil your dreams

According to the Bright Spots survey, all of the children (4-11 years) liked school and 83% of the young people (11-18yrs) liked school or college 'a lot' or 'a bit' – slightly higher than young people (80%) in the general population. Children and young people liking school is a Bright Spot of practice in Barnet.

Throughout 2022/23 we have:

- Continued to provide a virtual school that is dedicated to helping children and young people get the best from their educational experience in order for them to have exciting choices later in life through additional educational support and a variety of enrichment activities. We have ensured all children have access to a laptop or tablet.
- Barnet Education, Employment and Training Support (BEETS) has continued to provide careers guidance, information and advice for young people in Barnet after leaving Year 11 until the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with statements/EHCP).
- Launched a 18-25 NEET to EET panel as part of the Care Experienced EET project, which will be extended to include 16 and 17 year olds with support from the Virtual School, supporting young people's progression into Education, Employment and Training.
- Developed a horticulture programme for care experienced young people at our leaving care hub. This bespoke 12-week programme is for UASC/former UASC young people to gain skills in horticulture, as a pathway to employment
- Developed an onsite English as a Second Language provision delivered at the Leaving Care Centre; 12 young people have enrolled and will graduate in June 2023.
- Bridging the Gap and Thrive programs have continued to run throughout the 2022/2023 and 127 young people have participated on the program, with 57 successfully completing the program; 3 young people commenced a traineeship, 5 young people commenced an apprenticeship and 37 started employment.
- With our charity Live Unlimited, we have supported 46 young people through the imagination unlimited fund, supporting young people with items to help them reach their potential and improve their health and well-being, including purchasing bicycles and training courses in football, boxing and cricket, a keyboard and a sewing machine.

The Bright Spots survey, 'Your life Your care' (June 2021) showed that nearly all (98%) of the children and young people (8- 18yrs) reported that the adults they lived with showed an interest in their education. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

We will be there for you when you need us

We know from our Bright Spots completed in 2021 that survey: “Young people aged 11 – 18 years in Barnet are statistically more likely than young people living in other boroughs to have the same social worker in the past 12 months.”. Audits completed across the year also demonstrated that social workers have continued to work hard engaging with children and young people and listening to their wishes and feelings, with 86% of audits graded as Good in the domain of Child Voice and Engagement.

Bright Spots also told us that for care experienced young adults; “Most young people (89%) had someone who listened to them. A similar proportion (88%) had someone who told them when they’d done well. Nine in ten (90%) young people had someone who believed that they would be a success.”

Over the past year, we have:

- Promoted the Think Care Leaver ethos across Family Services and more widely across the Council
- Continued to maintain positive relationships, supporting children and young people in navigating the continuously changing world through spending time with them in their home and out in the community, whilst also engaging in virtual communication on occasion in line with young people’s wishes and feelings.
- Developed the life-long offer of support for care experienced young people embedded within our revised and updated Local Offer; young adults are contacted at 6-monthly intervals and reminded of this offer available to them.
- Continued to provide safe and secure home environments for children, young people, and adults through child-centred planning for care arrangements that take into consideration children and young people’s views and wishes, including their cultural background, relationships and connections in the local area.
- Continued to offer support for children and young people to have their voices heard and views listened too. In partnership with our commissioned advocacy service Action for Children we completed 52 referrals and provided advocacy support to 98 children and young people. Faced the challenge of placement sufficiency with creativity and joint working to ensure wherever possible we identified the right placement for every child and when a child moved it was planned and supported the child.
 - In the Bright Spots Survey, all but one of the youngest children (aged 4-7 years) felt settled where they live and amongst the children and young people aged 8-18 years, just over two thirds felt settled ‘all or most of the time’.
- Enhanced our placement offer ensuring children and young people are supported through ‘rocky’ periods, including promoting our out of hours offer to foster carers every weeknight and over the weekend.
- Developed the Barnet TEAM (Transitioning Everyone to Achieve More) Hub, supporting children new to care and children in care experiencing a transition in home/school placement; through the Virtual School Mentoring program, 13 referrals were received and 18 young people supported.

- Adapted and developed the training and support offer to foster carers and family carers through a variety of means to ensure the adults trusted to care for our children have the best support available to them to provide the warmth, care and love children and young need to thrive.
- Worked together with our colleagues in Youth Justice to ensure young people have the right support available to them when they need it, from police officers to family support workers to psychologists.
- Progressed plans for a pan-London alternative to custody scheme in Barnet where young people live together in a shared house supported by staff to make positive life changes due to open in Spring 2023.
- Expanded our children's home provisions with plans to develop a solo-placement for one young person, acting as a 'circuit breaker' accommodation to provide them with a place of stability and safety whilst we assess and better understand their needs to identify their longer-term accommodation option.
- Continued to support children with our internal residential accommodation options, including a therapeutic children's home, regular children's home and semi-independent accommodation.
- We have developed a bespoke offer of care and support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and former UASC young adults through the provision of a specific UASC team.
- We are developing a Through Care Team to strengthen support offer for vulnerable 16 and 17 year old requiring more support to achieve independence;
- In partnership with Barnet Homes, we have developed 22 Woodhouse Road, a shared accommodation provision for former -UASC young, supporting them through key worker support to develop the necessary independence skills whilst waiting for their asylum claim to be progressed allowing them to access their permanent accommodation.
- Refurbished the Onwards & Upwards care leaver hub in our continued efforts to make the centre more accessible to young people and partners delivery services and providing a home for young people to return to.

We will support your mental and physical health

Throughout 2022/2023 we have:

- Continued to provide different activities, from gym membership and cooking classes, to volunteering opportunities for children, young people and care experienced young adults.
- Maintained mental health support services for children, young people and care experienced adults that meets their needs, including:
 - online support, for everyone up to the age of 25.
 - In-person and more comprehensive support through Barnet Integrated Clinical Service (BICS) and through our key mental health partners such as Terapia.
- Developed a mental health pathway for young people transitioning out of care and requiring support from adult mental health services through the multi-agency Mental Health Transitions panel which now includes a referral pathway for young people at 17.5 years into adult services.

- For care experienced adults we have enhanced our mental health offer through a bespoke Mental Health transitions practitioner and 4 MH pathways for a trauma informed approaches to working with and supporting young people.
- Enhanced our training offer for Personal Advisors working with young people displaying trauma-informed behaviour, including the completion of KUF to better support young people with Personality diagnosis and/or presentation and mentalisation training with the Early Years Parenting Hub
- Enhanced the wrap-around support through our bespoke therapeutic support in a home environment at Greenbank House, our 6-bed therapeutic children's home with onsite clinicians developing a therapeutic community with staff and will include foster carers to establish an effective step down into foster carer for residents.
- Progressed our Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy and our response to the national Autism Strategy to ensure that children who have additional needs are appropriately supported.
- In partnership with our charity Live Unlimited, we provided 448 hours at the Outdoor Club for 17 children aged between 6-18 years through 1 6-weeks and 2 7-week programs allowing children and young people to connect with nature, learn new skills, take risks, build confidence, improve their well-being, reduce anxiety and make new friends.
- Progressed a number of positive activities with our children in care council (BOP) including go-karting, bowling and launched a football team with training sessions in preparation for a tournament against LBB staff team.

We will listen, communicate, and make decisions together with you

Throughout 2022 / 22 we have:

- Work to further embed the 'All about me' assessment and plan for all children in care that represented the child's wishes and views and set out in a way that they can understand the rationale for their plan and how their needs will be met. Enhanced our commitment to consistently record children and young people's voices and promoting their wishes and feelings focussing on ensure their voice is at the centre of care planning.
- During the year we supported 25 children and young people to return to care arrangements with their birth family.
- We have continued to meet with children, young people and care experienced adults in person and when required, virtually, ensuring the significant relationship with social worker and/or personal advisors remained strong and supportive to those who needed it most throughout the year. Personal Advisors remained in touch with 100% of young people and visits to children in care remained strong at 73%.
- Child in Care reviews continued within timescales providing consistent oversight from the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO). All About Me and Pathway Plans continued to be reviewed when circumstances changed and captured the lived experience of those they reflect.
- We have continued to provide an improved advocacy service in response to the Ofsted recommendation and seen an increase in children and young people accessing this service with 98 children and young people accessing advocacy services in the last 12 month period and 52

referrals made. Advocacy service for care leavers continues to provide an onsite provision at the Woodhouse Road Care Leaver Hub.

We will support you to become independent and prepare for adulthood

The Bright Spots survey, Your Life Beyond Care, states that 62% of care leavers in Barnet reported 'living comfortably' or 'doing alright': a figure slightly more favourable than that reported by care leavers in other LAs (56%). However, it is somewhat lower than that reported by young people (16-24yrs) in the general population, where three quarters (75%) report 'living comfortably' or at least 'doing alright'.

In comparison to young people in the general population, care leavers in Barnet were over twice as likely to report financial difficulties. 25 (22%) care leavers identified fun stuff they wished they could do more of and 19 (16%) care leavers identified things that stopped them from having fun. Not having enough money was the reason most often cited. Others identified poor mental health, covid lockdown, and a limited social network.

Throughout 2022/23 we have:

- Strengthened the Expert by Experience post in Onwards & Upwards to promote feedback loops and co-production of service design and delivery with care experienced young adults.
- Ensured the Strengths and Resilience Group has continued to run throughout the year, both in person and virtually depending on the wants on the attendees and primarily delivered online and co-facilitated by the Expert by Experience.
- Continued to promote Staying Put and Support Lodgings care arrangements with 12% of 17-18 years olds living with their former foster carer and a further 7% of 19-21 year olds living with their former foster carers and supported lodgings hosts.
- Meadow Close our 16+ semi-independent provision for 16-21 year olds to support young people preparing for adulthood. Throughout the year, it maintained good occupancy rate with 7 young people residing in the provision throughout the year.
- Developed the independent living project 'We Built This Home'; a series of workshops that will support independent living skills through both practical skills training alongside health, personal care, nutrition, cooking, budgeting and finance. O&U has become an accredited ASDAN provider, and will be launching the first ASDAN module for independent living in April 2023
- Continued promoting the Barnet Supported Living Service helping young people with disabilities to live as independently as possible in their own home.
- Continued to provide financial education to 15-17 years through the Step-ladder program; 57 young people have registered and 14 care experienced young adults have completed the program. 9 young people are currently active in completing the steps (1-5).
- Continued our commitment that whereby all care experienced young adults have access to their health histories to support them in their adult years with their Health Passport
- Developed a specific pathway of independence for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) including developing a specific UASC team embedded in Onwards & Upwards, working collaboratively with the Home Office on the Children's Streamlined Asylum Process (SAP)

- Continued our positive partnership working with Barnet Homes to ensure that all young people aged 16.5 are supported with housing nomination forms to assist their transition to independent living upon their 18th birthday or when they are appropriately ready. As part of this ongoing partnership, we plan to launch the Care Leaver Housing Panel in Summer 2023.
- Increased our offer to provide direct housing offers to young people in partnership with Barnet homes to 66 young people, up from a target of 56.
- Raised the need for more housing for care experienced young adults with the Housing & Growth Committee and obtained agreement for Barnet Homes to acquire 30 units for our young adults. This acquisitions programme has generated a review of options for care experienced young adults and has resulted in care experienced parents being moved to 2-bedroomed properties and their original smaller property being ring-fenced for care experienced young adults.
- Maintained the services of a designated work coach in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions based at the Onwards and Upwards building offering advice and guidance to care experienced young people.
- Provided driving lessons to 20 young people through our partnership work with the charity, Live Unlimited's Driving Ahead scheme, with 7 young people / young adults taking their driving test and 6 successfully passing, despite ongoing difficulties booking diving tests.
- Maintained an average of 65% (up from 61%) of care experienced young adults remaining in education, employment and training, despite the significant hardship young people aged 18-24 experienced living through the Covid pandemic.

We will celebrate children & young people, their achievements, identity, and culture

Throughout 2022/2023 we have:

- Continued to implemented recommendations from the Barnet wide Anti-Racism Strategy promoting a work environment that is committed to equality and diversity.
- Continued to run our program of celebration activities in person, including
 - The Children in Care Summer Celebration event attended by over 200 children, carers and staff volunteers in July
 - The annual summer BBQ for care leavers in August, the inaugural Care Leaver Conference as part of National Care Leavers Week, an Eid Celebration and a Christmas Party.
 - Foster Care Fortnight in May, Foster Care Appreciation Day in October and 2 long-term matching celebrations for children and young people matched with their permanent carers throughout the care and a Christmas party in December
- Continued to ensure that children and young people's individual care plans acknowledge their difference and reflect nationality, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and disability.
- Progressed our commitment in providing a rolling training program supporting all staff and managers to develop the skills to have confident conversations about race to enable social workers and personal advisors to promote children and young people's life story through a racial and cultural lens with confidence and sensitivity.

- Despite national challenges to recruitment, we have remained committed to recruiting foster carers from diverse backgrounds to support children and young people settling into their homes and feeling safe, secure and understood.
- Developed a specific UASC pathway for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people and asylum seeking adults, including partnership work with education, health and mental health services through the bespoke UASC team
- Supporting LGBT Youth in Care to attend online engagement session for care experienced children and young people as part of the contract with The Department for Education and Coram Voice. This session is focused on **'Being me' How can social workers support my identity (LGBTQ+)**.

Voice of the Child

Feedback loops with children, young people and care experienced adults continued in their development, reinvigorating our Children in Care Council Barnet on Point (#BOP) with several in person events and development of our engagement strategy, My Say Matters. We have progressed the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2023 ensuring that voice of young people remains central to our corporate commitment to achieving an excellent service. We have continued to provide an improved advocacy service as part of the Ofsted recommendation with 98 children and young people accessing advocacy services throughout the year. This is being reflected in practice, with most audits under the domain Child's Voice and Engagement being graded as 'good'.

On 26 July 2022 Barnet held a Family Fun Day for young people, their carers and Family Services staff to celebrate the achievements of our children in care. Over 200 children, parents and carers attended and many staff volunteers from across Family Services worked tirelessly to ensure everyone had a great time. The event included an awards ceremony where children of all ages received a certificate which was presented by Barnet's Mayor and senior leaders. Certificates recognised a range of achievements from passing exams, being kind or brave and excelling in activities like dance or sport. Excellent feedback has been received from children and their carers many of whom travelled from outside London to attend. Feedback from carers noted positive reflections on the range of activities available for children and young people, the opportunity for children and young people to spend time with their social worker and the pride young people felt at the awards ceremony. The theme for the day was "Belonging" and the event had the feel of an authentic family get together with all parts of the Family Services system coming together to collectively contribute in some way. This has left a legacy of great memories and shared experiences and we are already looking forward to next year's event.

In November as part of our celebration of National Care Leavers Week, we hosted the inaugural Care Leaver Conference focusing on the theme of Black History month which took place at StoneX Stadium in Hendon. The day was coproduced by young people who throughout the year had requested an opportunity to come together with peers and be provided with inspiring and information stalls and guest speakers showcasing both opportunities available to them, alongside celebrating the diversity and beauty of the global majority. The day featured both guest speakers and stalls, alongside Caribbean lunch, steel pan workshops, art-making workshops and featured performances from our talented care experienced. Feedback from one of the guest speakers;

The event was well organised, staff members were welcoming, was great to see the BHM displays, I enjoyed the entertainment and of course the food. But most importantly, all the guest speakers shared a powerful message and there was plenty of time in the programme for people to reflect and connect. I spoke to a young person and was impressed by his wisdom, keen to facilitate more opportunities for him and others to express their talents.

Plans are underway to ensure a care leaver conference is an annual event embedded within our calendar of events celebrating Barnet’s community of care experienced adults.

Throughout the year, the events planned included the views and contributions from the children and young people and the Expert by experience was instrumental in planning the Care leaver events. BOP has also been involved in the development of services;

- BOP members attended virtual Skills to Foster training, where they shared their experience and needs in care, advising new foster carers how to develop good relationships with children.
- BOP Children in Care Council Chair contributed to the ASYE training program for newly qualified social workers and their practice educators.

Children in Care Profile

Barnet has continued to have a stable figure of children coming into care with 335 children in care on 31st March 2023. Although the numbers have stayed stable the cohort has changed over time with an increasing number of UASCs, vulnerable adolescents entering care in their late teens as a result of the risks of exploration and youth violence while the younger children coming into care are increasingly being placed with family members as their connected carers, allowing them to continue living within their familiar family network.

Children having to leave their family homes and coming into the care of Barnet family services do so for a number of different reasons, however for the majority (52%) of these children and young people, it is on account of abuse and neglect,

The following table shows our cohort of children in care (335) as at 31st March 2023:

		LAC	UASC	Total
Gender	Male	53%	98%	61%
	Female	47%	2%	39%
Ethnicity	Any Other Ethnicity	7%	47%	14%
	Asian	3%	33%	8%
	Black	14%	7%	13%
	Gypsy/Roma	1%	0%	1%
	Mixed	31%	0%	26%
	White	43%	9%	37%
	Not Stated	1%	4%	2%
Age on Starting Care	0 to 10	57%	0%	36%
	11 to 13	14%	0%	13%
	14 to 15	12%	15%	14%
	16 to 17	18%	85%	37%

There has been a continued decline in children aged 0-10 coming into care currently at 36%, previously at 48% in 2021/2022, 64% in 2020/2021 and 67% in 2020/2019. This was previously attributed to a decrease in referrals from the early years provisions and school due to Covid restrictions. The older adolescents are coming into care with complex presentations from years of living in complex and traumatic home environments, with challenging behavioural needs requiring additional support packages to provide them with the much needed stability and security.

Older young people aged 16-17 has continued to represent a larger proportion of our children in care population at 37%, the majority (85%) of these young people being unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Older children, aged 16 -17, have continued to struggle in the care of their parents and have sought assistance and support outside of their family network which has led to referrals into social care. Young people that come into care when they are older tend to become looked after due to complex reasons, from escalating mental health concerns to family breakdown. In many cases there have been missing episodes and some substance misuse, and in some cases child sexual or criminal exploitation.

Care arrangements for children and young people continue to be through three different legal pathways; 38% of children were voluntary accommodated under S.20 of the Children's Act (1989), 35% were subject to Care Orders and in our care for the duration of their childhood and 22% of children were subject to Interim Care Orders with their care arrangements continuing to be determined by the Courts. These figures evidence no significant change from the previous 2 years. 3% of children had been granted placement orders and were waiting either for the Court to endorse their forever family with the making of an Adoption Order or for family finding to identify and match them with adopters. Throughout the year Barnet had 6 children in early permanence placements, whereby young children, usually babies are placed with dual approved adopters and foster carers. The benefit of this care arrangement is that children are placed at the earliest opportunity with carers who have been identified and matched to meet their needs and provide them with their permanent home. While the adoption is not guaranteed, this arrangement ensures children are provided with the stability of one potential separation from their primary caregiver, usually their birth parent, reduces points of transition and aids their lifestory journey, as their first non-family member carer is potentially their last.

Case study: Daisy and Marco's story

Daisy was known to the local authority as part of a pre-birth assessment given concerns for her mother and father's learning difficulties and their limited support network, suggesting it would be a challenge for them to identify the needs of a baby and respond appropriately.

Daisy was referred to Adopt London North initially as a part of parallel plan for adoption. At the time she was living with her mother in a residential mother and baby unit. Following the positive assessment, she then moved to a mother and baby foster placement for a further period of review and monitoring. Sadly, while in the foster placement, Daisy was injured in the care of her mother, and was immediately removed from her parent's care and placed in foster care. At the same time, her mother was pregnant with her brother Marco, and it was likely, given the professionals' worries for the parents' ability to safety care for their children that Marco would also be removed and require alternate carers outside the family network.

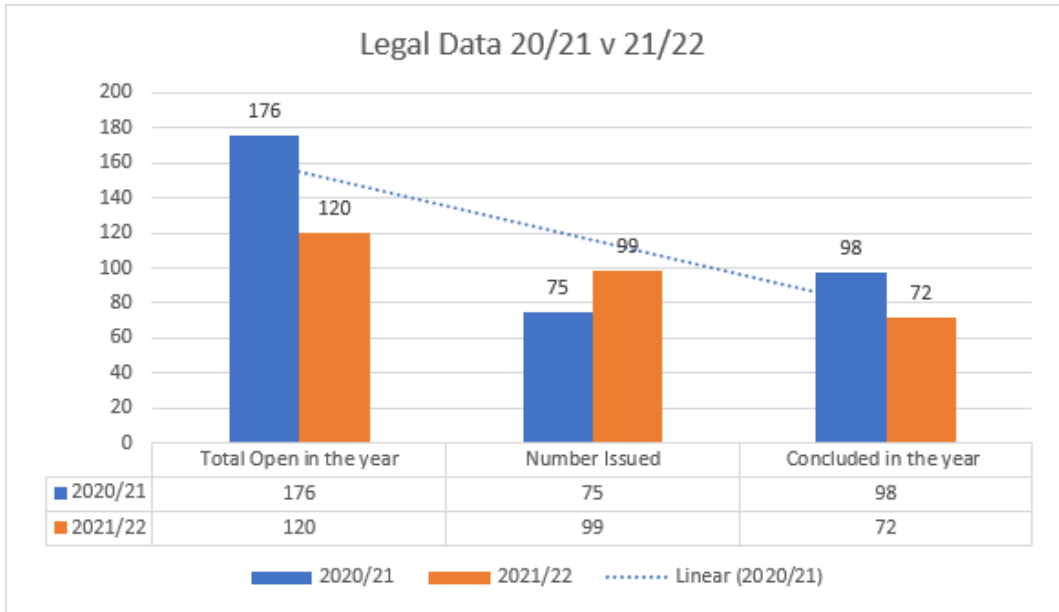
Early permanence carers were identified for Daisy and Marco whereby the children would be able to remain living together as siblings. Daisy moved in with her carers Ben and Holly in August 2022 and Marco moved in to live with his sister in November when he was aged 3 days.

Marco and Daisy continue to live with Ben and Holly, where they are well integrated into family life with their prospective adoptive parents. Daisy is attending nursery and Marco is thriving aged 6 months. Ben and Holly have met Daisy and Marco's birth parents during contact sessions which is a strength for these children to know their life story as they grow.

Continuing with our resilience-based approach social work practice, our teams across Family Services remain committed to all children remaining within their birth family where possible and safe to do so. In the last year we entered care proceedings in respect of 79 children, a significant decrease from the 99 children in the previous year.

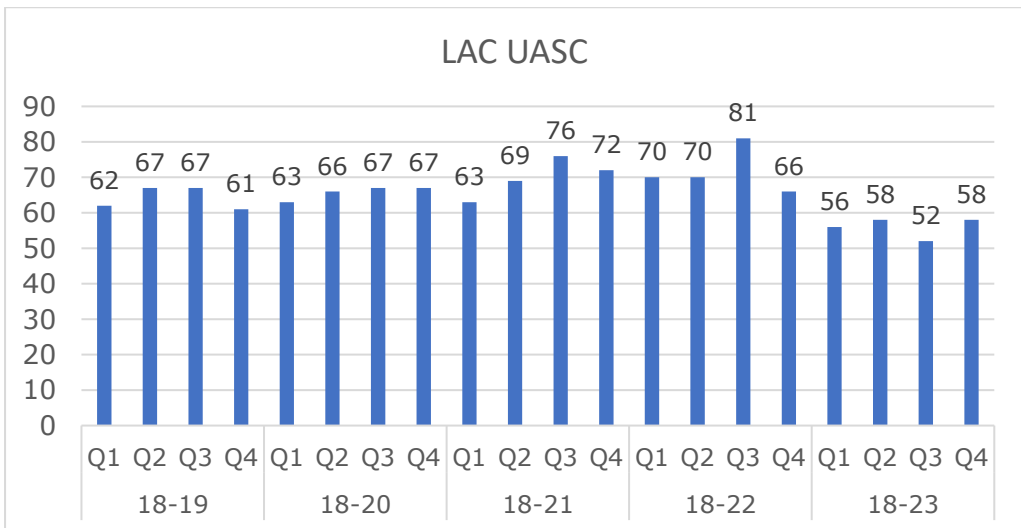
72 children had their care proceedings concluded within the Court, similar figures to 2021/2022, achieving permanence in their care arrangements, through the following:

- 44 children (61%) achieved permanence through alternative care arrangements outside of the care of their birth families, up from 52% in previous year.
 - 3 children (4%) achieved care plans of adoption through the granting of a placement order
 - 21 children (29%), generally older children, were provided with permanence through long term care orders, the majority of whom will remain in foster care, a steady figure over the years
 - 20 children (27%) were placed in the care of their wider families by virtual of Special Guardianship orders, an increasing upward trend
- 38 (53%) children remain or have returned home to their birth families and will remain subject to continued intervention and monitoring by Family Services, however they are no longer children in care.
 - 22 children (30%) were returned home to the care of their parents under a Supervision Order, up from 23% in 2021/2022
 - 10 children were returned home to their families under No Order, including a group of 7 children who were rehabilitated to their mother's care in Germany
 - 3 children were subject to a Forced Marriage Protection Order
 - 3 children were withdrawn from care proceedings
 - 5 children (6%) were returned home to their families under a Child Arrangement Order



Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Throughout the year, Barnet has continued to see a decrease in number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) coming into care (see below table) from previous years. At the end of March 2023, 56 of our children in care were UASC, a significant decrease of 68 from 2021/2022. In response to the changing need of our young people and the referral process, with the majority of children being referred into Barnet through the mandated National Transfer Scheme (NTS) rather than presenting in borough or through being placed as adults in hotel accommodation at one of the 5 Home Office contingency sites, we developed a bespoke Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Team based within our leaving care service. The UASC team works with all unaccompanied asylum seeking children and is comprised of social workers and personal advisors, embedded within Onwards and Upwards. This team accepts referrals directly from MASH which ends unnecessary transition points for these young people, it holds expertise and experience in relation to age assessments and immigration processes and law and it ensures a smooth transition for asylum seeking young people to asylum seeking adults, many who will continue to experience an uncertain immigration status due to delays with the Home Office.



In March 2023, we launched on-site ESOL provision for UASC/former UASC. 2 CIC and 18+ young people completed the inaugural ESOL course. It ran from 20/3/23 to 21/6/23. Prior to this programme, 12 of this group of young people had been Not Engaged in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The impact of the onsite provision is measurable beyond their educational achievements. The class formed close and supportive friendships, or as they have self-described the group, a “brotherhood” has been formed. Onwards and Upwards plan to hold a Graduation Ceremony to celebrate their achievements later in the year.

UASC Housing

Seeking to replicate a similar model of minimised transitions, we partnered with Barnet Homes to acquire a stand-alone property of studio accommodation for young people who were looked after as children seeking asylum and who are ready to develop their independent living skills as adults. The model developed allows the young people to remain at the property until they receive a substantive decision from the Home Office, and where this is positive, until they are nominated for their permanent accommodation by Barnet Homes. The vision was to offer a local accommodation option close to the office for no recourse asylum-seeking young people approaching their 18th birthday, so that there would be increased oversight, support, contact and welfare checks for the residents. A property on Woodhouse Road, Easy Finchley was identified and the first young person moved in to the property in November 2022. As at March 2023, 2 young people have moved in and there are plans for all 6 available rooms to be occupied by Summer 2023. All young people have access to floating support key work hours weekly.

Resident young people have given the following feedback:

- *it's great that we can see our PA who works on the same road, it has saved me time and money*
- *we are a small family and all have become good friends*
- *we don't have to pay bills and this gives us the chance to save our money for our future*
- *we all are care leavers which is nice as we understand each other*

Education / The Virtual School

The Virtual School acts as a champion for Children in Care by fulfilling the responsibilities of being a highly ambitious, proactive, and effective Corporate Parent. There is a clear emphasis on the need to raise aspirations and improve rates of progress and to close the attainment gap between looked after children and their peers. As noted in feedback from the Ofsted focus visit in June 2021:

The virtual school acted swiftly at the start of the first national lockdown to work with school leaders to identify and support vulnerable pupils. School attendance for children in care has been closely monitored and has significantly improved over the lockdown periods. Social workers have maintained close liaison with carers and the virtual school to ensure planned returns to school for pupils following lockdowns. Children's educational experiences have been further supported through the use of additional tuition, distribution of laptops and development of online learning resources to support foster carers. COVID-19-specific personal

education plans (PEPs) have been developed to focus on supporting children during this period.

Over the year there has been minimal changes to the data previously reported in 2021/2022. There has been an increase in children receiving SEND support with 45 (24%) children and young people up from 34 (17.8%). There has also been an increasing trend of children and young people receiving support through an Education and Health Care Plan over the past three years. 32.8% of all looked after children have been assessed as having additional needs requiring the support provided through an EHCP, compared to 24.9% in 2019/2020. This is likely a result of the trauma many children experience prior to coming into care, and the adverse childhood experiences (ACES) which subsequently impact on their capacity to learn, socialise and settle in a school environment. The UASC cohort of statutory school age children have continued the reduction trend seen in previous years, now at 21 compared to 28 in 2021/2022 and 35 in 2020/2021, whereby UASC young people are entering care as older adolescents and requiring the support and service of college education opposed to statutory secondary schooling.

The below table illustrate the key performance indicators the education provision for our young people:

		2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	
	Nursery		11	12	13	14	
	% of children SEN support			2	1	3	
	% of children with EHCPs			3	1	2	
Statutory age group	Statutory age	191	196	195	191	186	
	Reception		4	7	8	8	
	Key Stage 1		16	14	15	21	
	Key Stage 2		43	37	45	45	
	Key Stage 3		51	53	52	48	
	Key Stage 4		82	84	71	64	
	Male/female	111/80	113/83	109/86	108/83	115/71	
	% of children from ethnic minority groups		70.6%	73.3%	68.1%	67.2%	
	% of children SEN support		19.8% (39)	21.5% (42)	17.8% (34)	24% (45)	
	% of children with EHCPs			24.9% (49)	24.6% (48)	30.9% (59)	32.8% (61)
				O/B I/B 33 16	O/B I/B 30 18	O/B I/B 38 21	O/B I/B 41 20
	Number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)	18	25	35	28	21	
Children without a school place		0	2	5	6		
Post 16 age group	Post 16	157	135	152	155	147	
	Male/female	113/44	96/39	113/39	111/44	102/45	
	% of children from ethnic minority groups		78.5%	79.6%	79.4%	83%	
	% of children with EHCPs		14%(19)	13.8%(21)	14.8% (23)	16.3%	

								(24)	
		O/B	I/B	O/B	I/B	O/B	I/B	O/B	I/B
		11	3	16	5	7	16	14	10
Number of UASC	39	67	76	75	66				
Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) Year 12		11	19	15	18				
NEET Year 13		14	14	22	20				

Not In Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

At Post-16 the young people not in education, employment or training present a significant challenge and engaging them is no easy task. The category includes those in psychiatric units, pregnant or who frequently go missing, who are even harder to engage in education or training.

In 2022, 38% of care leavers were NEET nationally (LAIT). Currently, we have 24.4% of our Year 12 and 13's who are NEET.

Supporting young people who are NEET is a key area and caseworkers work closely with them to support reengagement into education, employment, or training. The BEETs team support with connections within various industries whereby companies head hunt young people who are searching for either a work placement or apprenticeship. Construction and motor vehicle apprenticeship/placement have been of interest to young people.

Looking at the cohort of young people who are NEET at the end of the year, there are some who have been involved in education/employment during the year but have disengaged. Some of these young people had been NEET for a significant time and their engagement in smaller opportunities of activities this year has been hugely significant. These young people are reviewed termly by the virtual school and will be further reviewed at the revised care leaver NEET to EET panel later in the year to ensure multi-agency tracking and consideration of their imminent transition to adulthood.

Over the year, the Virtual School has continued to support young people's well-being, engagement, and achievement through the support of the John Lyons Foundation, in several different ways including:

- Reading Club including a visit to the British Library
- Residential trip to Jamie's Farm for 5 UASC young people
- Visit to Kew Gardens for child and carer for 'Kew in Focus' activity
- Residential trip to Arvon with creative writing focus for 4 young people
- Strength and Learning through Horses
- Springboard Youth Academy – 3 week ESOL summer provision

In addition, 100 young people receive 6 Letterbox book packages across the year, provided by The Book Trust. 13 young people have instrumental lessons funded in their schools by Barnet Education Arts Trust. 22 young people also received theatre tickets to attend a West End production with their families.

Placement Sufficiency

Adhering to our *Who We Place Where* commitment of placing the children in the right care arrangement at the right time, 201 children (60%) of children are living with foster carers, a significant increase from 2021/2022 (52%). Within this arrangement 100 (30%) of these children live with Barnet foster carers and further 97 (29%) children live with independent foster carers, registered with independent fostering agencies. This evidences an increase of children living in a foster care arrangement up from 52% in 2021/2022 and a return to 2020/2021 figures (60%). Despite the continuation of shortage of foster carers nationally, internally we have 136 fostering households who can offer a home for 188 children. Although recruitment has continued, we have not been able to increase the number of foster care placements available for our children, sadly impacting placement choice and availability for more children. However, despite these ongoing challenges our recruitment drive has remained strong. There is also a continued focus of optimising the capacity of our inhouse carers.

Combining outreach events with online recruitment and using social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram has remained beneficial and this flexible approach has provided effective and aspirational high-quality campaigns. Through our creative and dynamic use of Facebook live events and Instagram stories we successfully recruited 4 fostering households and a further 6 supported lodgings hosts. This is a reduction from the 11 fostering households recruited in 2020/2021.

In July 2022 we released our fostering film, *The Difference is You* which was streamed across social media and London-based television channels channel 5, Barnet TV and local cinemas. This was followed by the UK-wide John Lewis Christmas advertisement supporting the need for more foster carers across the country.

34 family and friends carers were approved in 2022/2023, and 2 as temporary, non-permanent carers for children. This is a similar number to 2021/2022, where 34 carers were approved as family and friends and an additional 4 as non-permanent carers. These carers are assessed to be appropriate carers for a named child and are supported by the Fostering Support Team. They are provided with the same level of training opportunities and social work intervention as an approved registered foster carer and it is an opportunity for a child to safely remain in the care of their family with the support and monitoring of the local authority. In the long term these arrangements are often converted to Special Guardianship.

The below table outlines the breakdown of placements for children in Barnet as at 31st March 2023:

Internal		
LBB Fostering	70	56%
Connected Persons (kinship)	35	28%
Placed for Adoption	5	4%
Internal Residential	7	6%
Parental	7	6%
All Internal	124	37%

Agency Fostering	106	49%
Semi Independence	59	31%
External Residential	42	18%
Secure/YOI	4	2%
All External	211	60%
Overall Total	335	

Placement stability

The majority of children continue to live in homes with foster carers, in line with our Who We Place Where principles and our commitment to ensure that children are living in arrangements that best meet their individual needs. As outlined in the above, the profile of Barnet's looked after children has shifted, whereby older adolescents are entering the care system, often in crises and having traumatic life experiences displayed thought difficult and complex behavioural needs. A consequence of this is that professionals have a limited understanding of the young person's needs, and identifying the right placement initially is not easy. As highlighted in Ofsted's research, 'How local authorities plan for sufficiency that meets the needs of children in care and care leavers' (published November 2022) noting that:

The complex and unpredictable nature of children's needs means the demand for places for children with some kinds of needs is difficult to forecast. As a result, too much time is spent responding to cases as they arise. This often leaves little time to think strategically (that is, with long-term aims, and how to achieve them, in mind). Even when local authorities can plan, there is often a lack of available accommodation and care for more complex needs.

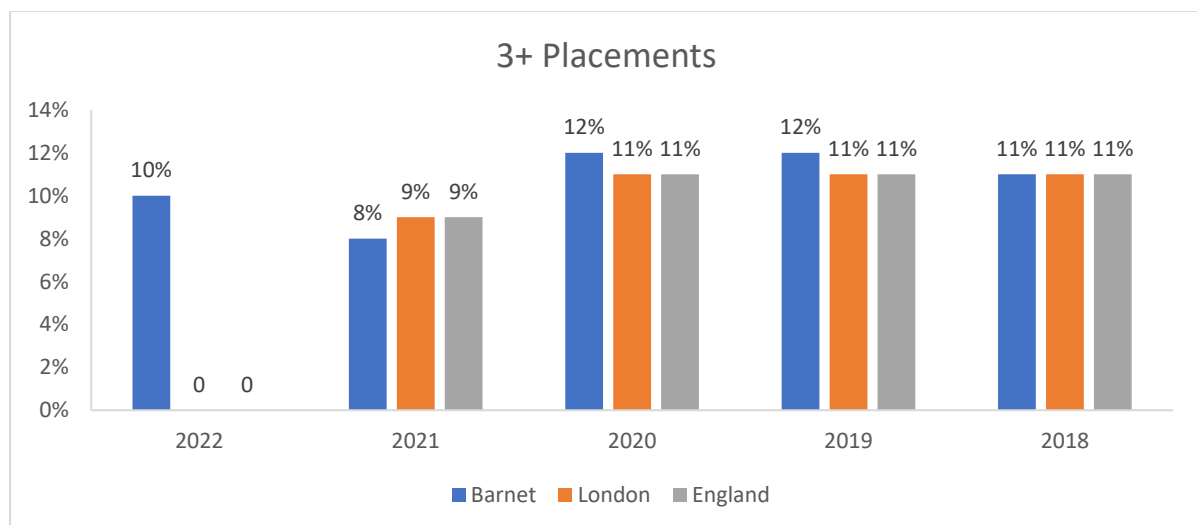
The report highlighted the challenges of placement sufficiency across a national landscape, noting the complexities of an older profile of children, those requiring specialist provision supporting complex mental health needs, limited availability of secure accommodation for children and issues with the recruitment and retention of foster carers. Our placement sufficient strategy is to be reviewed later in the year in response to these known and emerging factors.

Despite this local and national landscape, we have successfully ensured that the majority of children and young people (194 children, 58%) experienced the stability of the same home, representing a decrease from 65% in 2021/2022 and 66% in 2020/2021. This shift is likely linked to the relatively stability of placements due to Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions in movement. 76 children moved placement up from 55 in the previous year while 35 children experienced 3 or more placement moves throughout the year, up from 29 in 2020/2021, however a decrease from the pre-pandemic years of 2019-20 (37) and 2018-19 (37). Most children who experienced 3 or more placement moves can continue to be categorised into three cohorts, those coming new into care in a crisis and tend to move from an emergency placement to medium or long term placements quite quickly, those experiencing an unplanned move because their escalating needs, and those moving back to within their birth family or their permanent care arrangement.

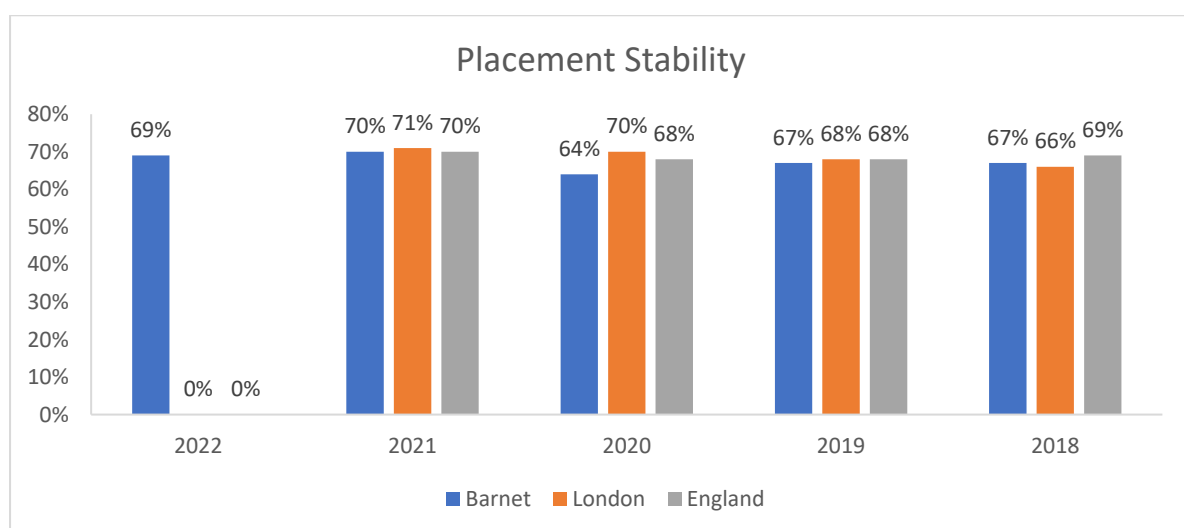
We recognise that children and young people need stability and permanency in their lives and to know their care arrangement is the right home for them. As part of our 'Who we place where'

protocol, all children and young people who move placements are now routinely reviewed within our permanency tracking meeting to ensure their next move, as far as possible, is their final destination. Some moves continue to be undertaken in order to ensure a child or young person's needs are best met and where they are safeguarded effectively. Older young people, those 15 years and over and who have come into care as an adolescent continue to be more likely to experience 3 or more placements, as their needs change in line with their shifting neurodevelopment and behaviours.

The chart below outlines the number of moves children and young people experienced during 2022/2023 with a yearly comparison across Barnet, London and England of children in care who have had 3 or more placements in the year:



Below is the comparison of children in care under 16 years old who have been in care continuously for 2.5 years and have been living in the same placement for at least 2 years, or are placed for adoption and their adoptive placement together with their previous placement, last for at least 2 years:



Internal Residential Provisions

New Park House

New Park House is one of two children's homes run by Barnet. This home looks after up to six young people between the ages of 11 and 18 and is a medium to long term provision. The home also provides emergency accommodation for children.

New Park House was inspected by Ofsted 21-22 February 2023, with an outcome of requires improvement to be good for the overall experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered that the home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people, however there were no failures identified that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. The recommendations have been considered and the necessary actions completed to ensure compliance with the Ofsted requirement and regulations.

Meadow Close

Meadow Close is a 6 bed 16+ semi-independent provision that supports 16-21 year olds develop their independent skills in preparation for having their own tenancy and moving to independent adulthood. Meadow Close was repurposed from a children's home to 16+ provision in July 21 and has supported X young people throughout the year with some moving on into alternative care arrangements and/or their own accommodation living independently following their 18th birthday. The property has been undergoing renovations to ensure we provide a homely-feeling of shared accommodation for young adults where they can develop into confident adults.

Greenbank House

Greenbank House is a 6 bed therapeutic Ofsted registered children's home that officially opened in August 2021. All admissions are planned, and children are assessed as to whether the home will meet their needs and if they will match well with other children in the home. Throughout the year there have been 4 children who have called Green Bank House home.

Ofsted undertook their first inspection of Greenbank House on 25 – 26 January 2023 and the outcome was graded with an overall rating of Good. The report noted:

Children like living in the home. One child said that staff are 'cool and helpful'. Children engage in activities that they have not had the opportunity to experience before, for example, going for a meal in a restaurant. One child likes to keep fit and attends a local martial arts club.

Children benefit from the integrated therapeutic model of care provided by two inhouse therapists. The clinical team provides individual sessions to children. When necessary, clinicians have brought in external professionals to complete specialist assessments. This ensures that drift and delay are minimised and children receive the correct support for their individual needs.

Moving Forward Provisions

This project maintains the eligibility criteria for care experienced young people who identify as male, are aged over 18, who have access to public funds, and where their Section 24 Housing Nomination Form has been completed.

Between April 2022 and May 2022 there were 2 tenants, with one moving into his long-term accommodation in June and 3 new tenants moved into the property in summer 2022. From August 2022 to 31st March 2023 there were 4 tenants, therefore the property maintained 100% occupancy.

Throughout the year, the project has maintained the integrity of its exit pathway with 80% of the young people progressing to their permanent accommodation. One care leaver tenant was supported to access a period of transitional accommodation to further develop his ability to sustain the liability of independent living.

Feedback from residents at the Moving Forward project accommodation is that they feel supported. They experience supported opportunities to develop independence and manage the day-to-day responsibilities of managing a tenancy within a supported environment, including negotiating repairs and managing access requirements for contractors.

This project also has a 'the training flat', is a standalone provision and was the original moving forward project property. From April 2022 to March 2023 this project has maintained 100% occupancy. In December the property was vacated to enable refurbishment works to take place. Until these are completed, an alternative property has been provided by Barnet Homes, ring-fenced as the 'training flat'.

The flat is currently occupied by a young person who has additional care and support needs and requires a Care Assessment to be undertaken to support her progression to long-term accommodation. Before moving to the 'training flat', this young person was in denial about her care needs and unable to recognise that she would benefit from ongoing support to manage independence. The period of time at this accommodation has enabled her to test independent living skills in a supportive environment, and to have a better understanding of the realities of the liabilities of independent living.

Special Guardianship Children & Carers

Case Study: Jay's story

Jay is 11 and lives with Grandfather Pat (78). Jay suffered neglect due to parents drug abuse and domestic violence and was removed from his parents care aged 3. Sadly, Jay's mother died when he was 8 and his grandmother died last year. Jay has suffered the loss of his two significant female care givers before this 10th birthday, and Roger was struggling to cope with his own grief while supporting his grandson.

Pat contacted the Carer Support Team initially requesting support regarding obtaining Jay's passport, however from that conversation, it became apparent the family may benefit from further Special Guardian support.

Jay and Pat were allocated to social worker for a support assessment and over the following 10 months a number of services and supports were identified and arranged for the family, this included:

- Developing rapport and trusting relationship between Pat and his allocated social worker, supporting him around identifying his feelings of grief and loss, including a referral to Kinship care for grief work and working with him to support Jay's needs;
- A referral to Grief Encounter and Jay is now accessing therapeutic support 1:1 at school
- Jay is now accessing positive activities through Barnet Young Carers and is engaged with Chicken Shed theatre and other positive activities.
- A multiagency team around the child meeting was held with Jay's school following concerns for how the family were coping. From this meeting, the school drew up a morning and bedtime routine for the family, and Pat was motivated to declutter the home creating more space for Jay.
- Support for Jay and Pat around father's contact including a contact review meeting and boundaries implement, following Jay becoming distressed after contact with father
- Supporting Pat to engage with Barnet's Special Guardian community and encouraging him to attend the support group.

In 2022/2023, 20 children achieved stability through going to live with their wider family members under a Special Guardianship Order, up from 13 in 2021/2022. Throughout the year there were 151 Special Guardians who received a financial allowance from the Local Authority to support them in caring for 233 children.

In 2021/2022 we undertook a peer learning review regarding our Special Guardianship care arrangements and have reviewed and updated our Special Guardianship Procedures and our Financial Policy, which is due to be published later this year.

Following the review of our procedures, we have now committed to undertake an annual review of all Special Guardians, undertake 3 social work visits to the children and family in the first year following the making of the Special Guardianship Order and to provide all children with the opportunity of engaging in lifestory work. We have reviewed our Special Guardianship Policy and our Financial policy, both due to be published later in the year. In response to the Children's Social Care Reforms, and their strategy Stable Homes Built on Love (published February 2023), we have strengthened our service provision.

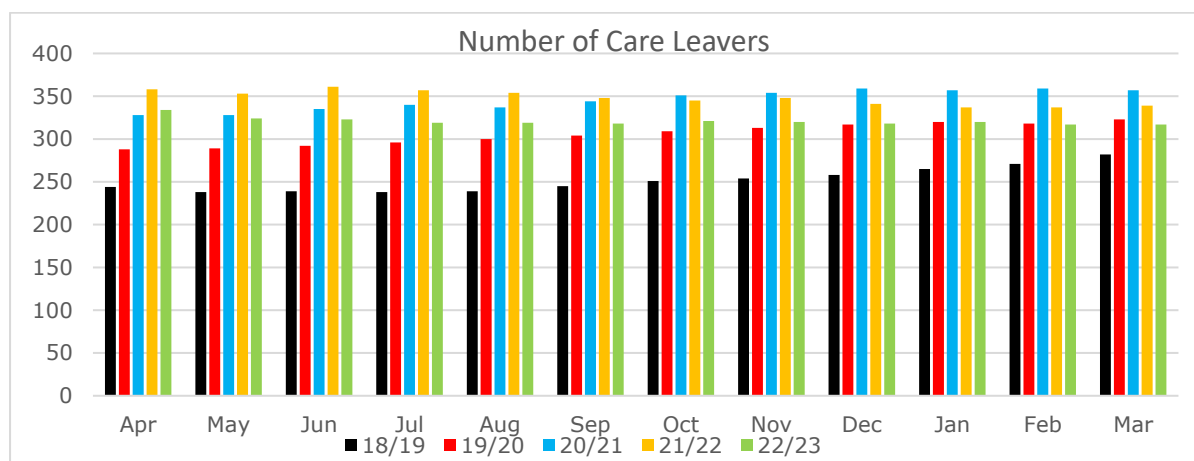
In 2022/2023 we have:

- Embedded our preparation group run jointly by the Carer Assessment and Carer Support Team, making this a mandated element for prospective carers to attend as part of their assessment.
- Extended the training offer to Special Guardians, mirroring the therapeutic training provided to foster carers specifically around trauma-informed behaviour, alongside Great Behaviour Breakdown and Non-Violence Resistance training
- Hosted 3 special guardian support brunches with plans for a summer celebration event in August 2023
- 29 families were supported over the year, with a further 11 waiting for support
- 40 lifestory books and letters were completed
- 5 referrals for contact support between special guardians and birth parents were completed

Care Experienced Adults

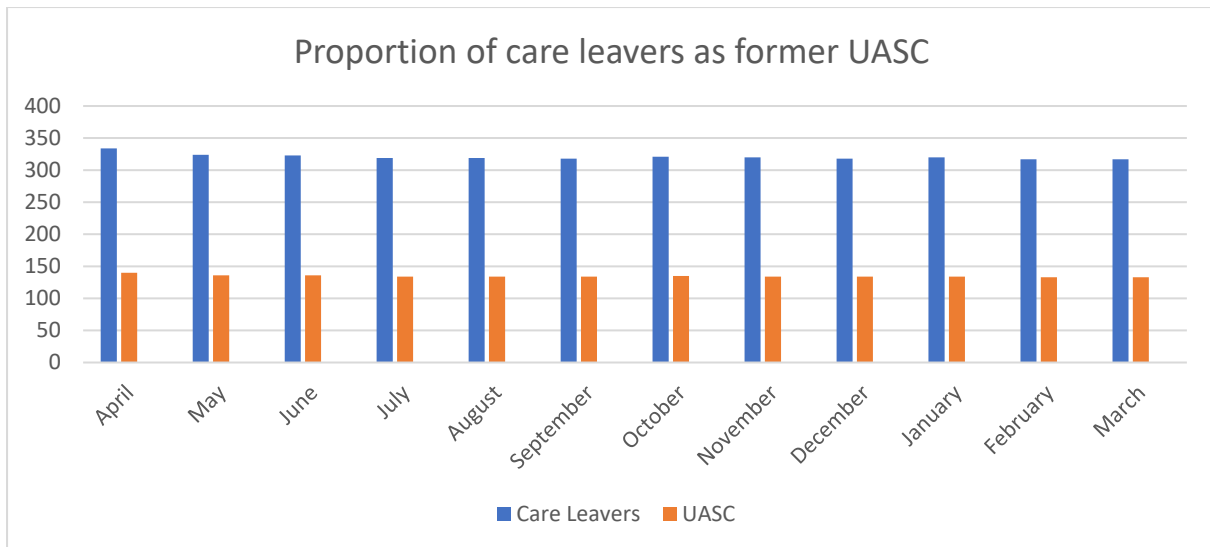
“Barnet continue to improve their offer to care leavers. The local authority continued to prioritise care leavers through the pandemic and are absolutely clear what things are now needed to develop further the care leavers improvement journey.”

During 2021/22 the number of care leavers remained steady, a slight decrease from 2021/2022 (341), offering support and guidance to 315 care experienced young people as at 31st March 2023. While our care experienced population remains steady, the number of young adults who are former asylum seeking children (UASC), continues to increase, making up 42% of our care leaving cohort, up from a third in 2021/2022.

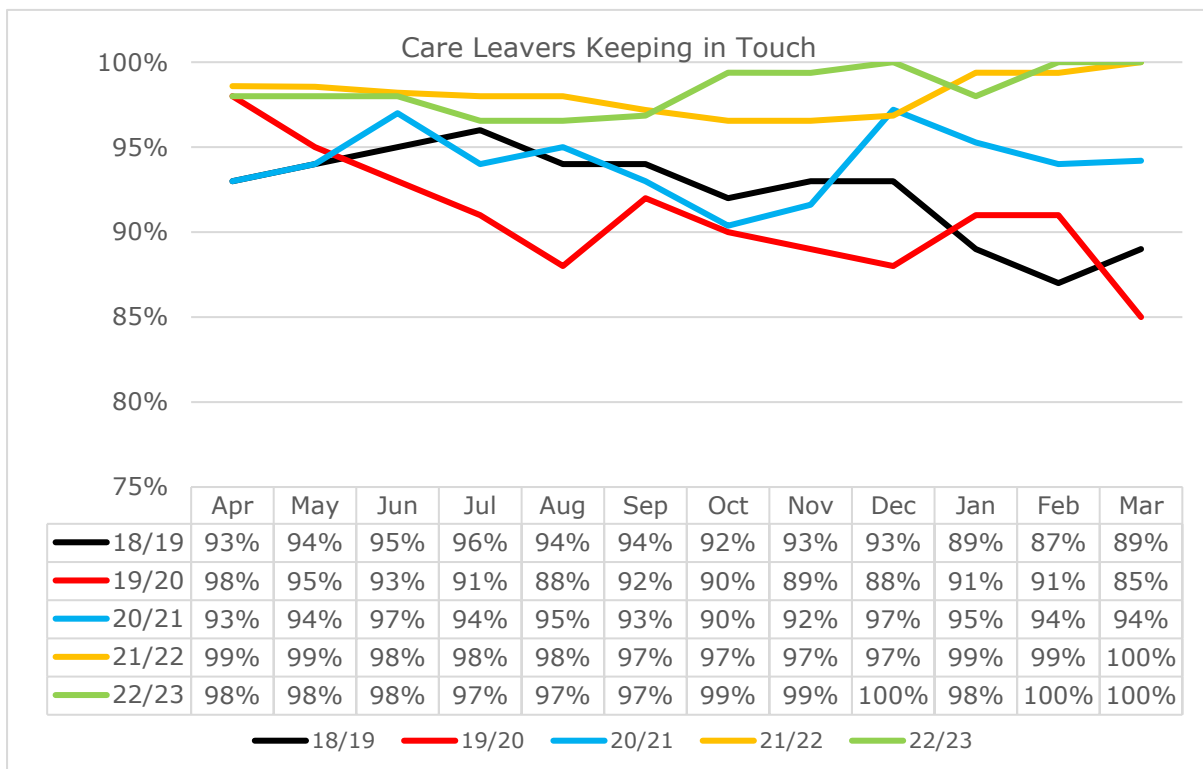


Most of our care leavers are aged between 18 - 20 years old (219; 64%) with 16% (55) aged 21 years old and 20% (67) 22 years or older. This correlates to the data from the previous 2 years and evidences a limited change in the demographic. The concerns noted for care experienced young adults during the 2020/2021 years of the global covid pandemic has remained a similar challenge with the cost of living crises and young people continue to express concerns about their mental health, their finances and their housing.

These shifts continue to be attributable in-part to the increased former UASC cohort, who continue to need support from the Leaving Care service for accommodation and subsistence until their asylum application has been resolved. The pandemic, together with delays caused by outstanding National Referral Mechanism (NRM) decisions have, as expected, continued to have an impact on the timeliness of conclusive grounds decisions.



This year has seen the restructure of the Onwards & Upwards service with the establishment of a dedicated UASC team, and appointment of 3 permanent Team Managers and an Assistant Head of Service. A revised audit program has been rolled out with specific focus on the pathway for over 18 care experienced young adults which will enable all managers in the service to participate in auditing and embedding good practice across the teams. We have also commenced a refurbishment project at the start of 2023, designed to improve service provision to young people provided by staff and partner organisations as we all returned to office-based working and delivery of face to face services. Young people continue to be seen at the Leaving Care hub at Woodhouse Road, in community or in their homes, maintaining the vital connection of relationship between the young person and their personal advisor with 98% of young people seen within timescales (see Table)



We launched the Empower21+ project, offering support, advice and guidance to Barnet care experienced young adults when requested, extending the 20+ Progression and Resource Forum. These pathways allow practitioners to consider the needs of care experienced young adults as they approach 21 years of age bringing together key professionals to consider how best they can support young adults who may be transitioning from the one-to-one service to duty-based support and/or to universal services, or in some cases, on to Adults Social Care support and/or other specialist provision. We have increased our offer of clinical support with partner agency Terepia to ensure that all those in need have access to high quality therapeutic and clinical intervention. Following an increase in self-harming concerns for young adults, further training was provided to the personal advisors to ensure they were upskilled to meet the needs of those they work with in identify risks and developing response strategies. In response to feedback from young people we also plan to launch the Getting Ready to B 18 support group in partnership with Terepia, supporting 17 and 18 year olds manage the anxiety around transitions to adulthood was set up. This is further supported by the plan to develop the Through Care Team, to be launched in the Spring 2023.

The high-risk case forum returned to a face to face panel with partners from across the Council and partner colleagues from health, housing and charity organisations. The complexity of need for young people transitioning into adulthood with an increase in vulnerability and need has invited us to reconsider how we better work with young people through this transitional period into adulthood. Plans are underway to amalgamate the High Risk Case Forum with the Serious Adult Violence Panel, with the newly developed Adults at Risk Panel to be launched in summer 2023.

The Expert by Experience role continues to progress from strength to strength over the past two years. With a new worker in post, the remit of the role has extended beyond co-facilitating the Strengths and Resilience group and supporting the development of a peer support group for care experienced parents. The role now includes organising social events and meetups for care experienced adults in response to the concerns for social isolation, low motivation and poor mental health, and supporting the inaugural Care Leavers Conference which took place in November 2023.

The annual summer BBQ took place in August and was another great success, attended by many young people who enjoyed the food and the music! This was followed by the launch of our Care Leaver Conference centred on the theme of Black History during National Care Leavers week in November 2022.

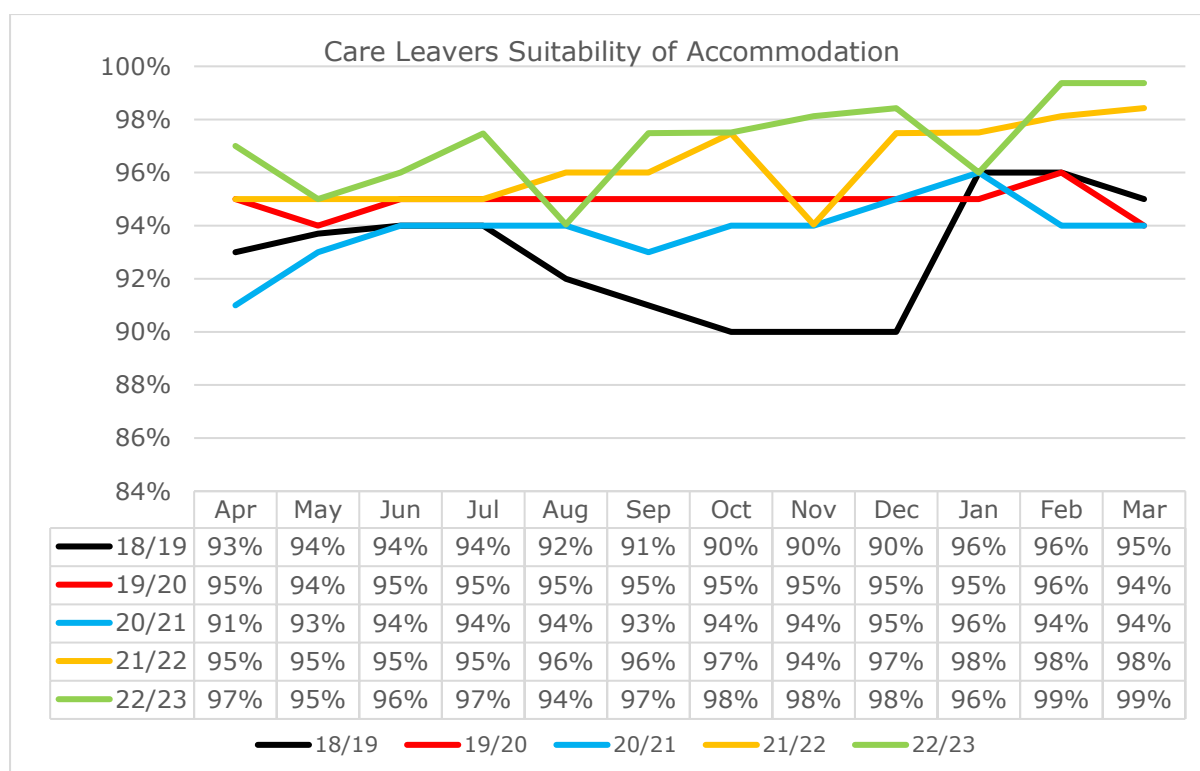
On 27 & 28th September 2022, Mark Riddell, the National Advisor for Care Leavers completed a 2-day visit to Onwards and Upwards, Barnet's Leaving Care Service. Feedback from this visit noted:

"I was very impressed by the leadership and management approach that was ambitious, aspirational and I got a real sense of passion and commitment to have a better offer for care leavers across the whole service area. What I also saw and heard was many examples where I felt an exceptional approach was being offered and in particular the team approach which stood out with workers who were highly responsive to the needs of care leavers. The local authority are in a good position to get to being great for care leavers."

The refreshed Local Offer was launched in February 2023, coproduced with young people and inclusive of the renewed offer from the whole council.

Housing

Our care experienced young adults have previously told us that some of the semi-independent providers have not prepared them sufficiently for the future and in response we have strengthened our partnership work with Barnet Homes, refreshing our Care Leaver Joint Housing Protocol with Barnet Homes confirming expanding the second chance offer ensuring no care experienced young person can be found intentionally homeless and embedding the Council Tax exemption for all care leavers up to the age of 25. We have also committed to strengthening our housing offer for care experienced parents, with the opportunity of accessing a larger 2-bedroom property to provide additional space for their children. This offer will be formally published in parallel with the Care Leaver Housing Panel in summer 2023. As part of this commitment in 2022/2023, 11 care leaver parents were supported to access a larger 2-bedroom property. Throughout the year, we supported 55 young adults to access and move into their permanent homes and supported another person through the Pan London rota to access their permanent property in another part of London.



The majority of 18 year olds (56%) and 19-21 year olds (80%) of our care experienced adults continue to live independently. This is a positive trajectory showing that young people are living in accommodation that meets their needs, and that proactive care planning is now undertaken with young people approaching their 18th birthday. We have continued the floating support offer introduced in 2020, providing additional support for the minority of young people requiring this to ensure a successful and smooth transition to independent living.

A small number of young people continue to remain living in their child in care arrangement post 18, reflecting both their level of need and the reduced availability of suitable properties in the housing market. As a direct consequence of both the global pandemic and placement insufficiency, there has been, in some instances, a lack of appropriate housing for young people assessed as ready to move into their independent property. Social Workers and Personal Advisors continue to advocate for

these young people and strong partnership work between Onwards and Upwards has seen creative solutions to addressing and supporting young people's housing needs. Almost all care experienced young adults are living in suitable accommodation (97%), a slight decrease from 96% in 2021/2022. Staying put remains to be a positive accommodation arrangement for some with 19 (6%) care experienced young adults remaining with their former foster carer, a slight decrease from previous years. As part of our fostering recruitment strategy, we have recruited a number of supported lodgings hosts and now are able to offer support lodging accommodation with a host who will aid their transition to independent living in their own tenancy. As at 8th April 2023, there were 3 (1%) care experienced young adults living in this care arrangement, which is a decrease from previous years.

The need for additional housing units earmarked for care experienced young adults was agreed and we are continuing to work with the Barnet Group to identify the most effective route to purchase 30 x 1 and 2-bedrooms units to be available to young people ensuring they are paying social rent, rather than affordable rent.

Case Study: Sapphire and Grey's story

Sapphire is a care experienced parent whose son Grey was born in August 2021 and is now 2 years old. Sapphire and Grey initially lived in a 1 bedroom flat in Cricklewood. As part of a project to support care experienced parents, in early 2023 they were offered a 2 bedroom new build in Colindale, where they are currently living. Sapphire's relationship with Grey's father has caused some concerns about domestic abuse in the relationship and the resultant risk to their son. Sapphire has historically found it difficult to trust professionals, which had caused her to not always be open regarding her relationship status with Grey's father. Grey was initially on a CIN plan, however, after a serious incident in public (where both parties claimed the other assaulted them), concerns were escalated and Grey was made subject to a Child Protection in November 2022. Whilst Sapphire initially struggled to engage with the increased intensity of professional involvement, this has improved over time. She is no longer in a relationship with Grey's father, is open in visits with his social worker, has attended DV interventions and is now at an address unknown to Grey's father.

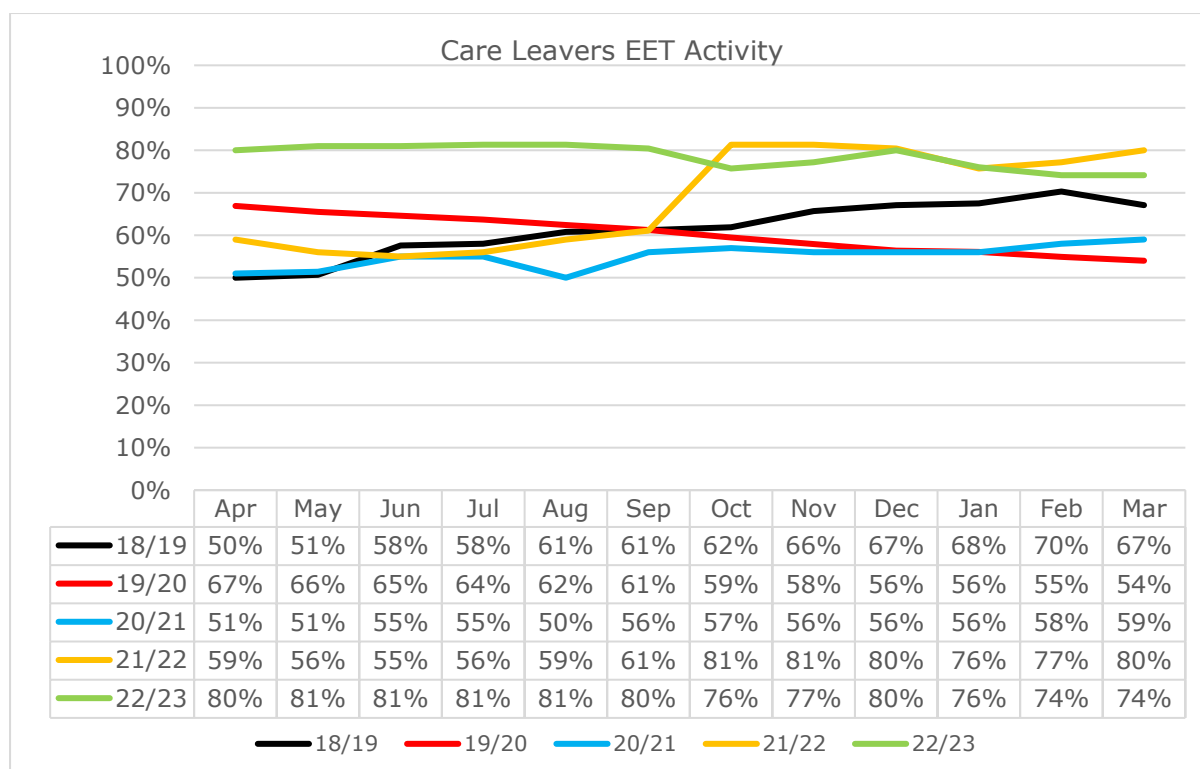
Grey is progressing well and there are no concerns regarding his development reported by his health visitor. He is due to start at nursery under the free nursery hours program and Sapphire has been observed as a warm and responsive mother, with a good familial support network around her.

Whilst there are still some concerns regarding Sapphire's vulnerability in relationships, her progress is such that Grey's social worker is considering stepping him back down to the less intensive support under a Child In Need Plan.

Education, employment, and training

The percentage of care experienced young adults who were accessing Employment, Education and Training remained steady at 74% throughout the year, continuing to evidence an improving picture from the 66% recorded in the previous year. Throughout the year, Barnet continued to fund the Care Leavers Project through the 16+ service within Family Services, with multiple projects focussing on enabling care leavers to move into education, employment, and training opportunities. Despite the

challenges as we emerged from periods of lockdown restrictions and social distancing, intervention and support continued to be available to care experienced young adults through the ongoing partnership with Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS).



The Bridging the Gap course continued to successfully run throughout the year offering training opportunities for young people to gain access into education and employment. Alongside this, the RON project was launched in early 2021, seeking to provide mentoring support underpinned by principles of life coaching to NEET young people aged 16-19 including care leavers. This follows the identified barrier for longer-term NEET young people being a lack of confidence something we aim to reduce for our care experienced young adults as a good corporate parent. 127 young people participated in various RON projects and 57 young people (44%) successfully completed the program.

- 3 young people commenced a traineeship
- 5 young people commenced an apprenticeship.
- 37 young people commenced employment, 12 of whom remained employed after 3 months
- 25 young people returned to Education or Training.

Emotional Wellbeing of our Children in Care and Care Leavers

Barnet Integrated Clinical Services (BICS) works with children, young people, and families in schools, in the community (e.g., libraries, youth centres, children’s centres, GP surgeries, home) and within social care and youth justice services, to promote mental health, wellbeing and resilience.

BICS offers a range of evidenced-based therapy to children, young people and their families through individual therapy, family therapy, groups, and workshops. BICS also produces free online podcasts, workshops and learning resources on mental health and wellbeing. BICS practitioners are embedded

in social care teams providing consultation, group supervision and training to social workers including recent training on working with self-harm.

Throughout the year, BICS practitioners have provided support to social workers and supervising social workers to think stability during period of instability in placement, providing therapeutic support to children living in placements in Barnet, including those in the children's homes, and providing systemic supervision for social workers and practitioners to inform care planning and thinking about children and their individual circumstances and needs.

Terapia continued to offer 1:1 counselling support to young people and care experienced adults. Given the increasing challenges of living through a global pandemic in social isolation, the support offer from Terapia was increased to ensure more young people are able to access the service in 2021/2022. In the year, 7 trainee Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists provided 290 contact counselling sessions to 20 young people. 431 sessions were offered, with 290 sessions attended (67%). Young people were referred for multiple presenting needs, including relationship issues, anxiety / stress and depression being the most notable recognised needs, following by difficulties with managing anger and processing experiences of trauma and abuse.

Of the young people supported, 68% reported to show improvement in their capacity to express feelings / problems in a healthy way, 60% developed and demonstrated the use of more positive coping strategies/methods and better subjective well-being, 4% had improved day-to-day functioning and were able to explore their feelings/problems more easily and 29% expressed improved personal relationships.