

Care Placements for Looked After Children

1 Purpose.

This report provides an update to the Schools Forum in respect of a £800,000 contribution from the Dedicated Schools Budget (DSB) toward the cost of education provision for looked after children (LAC).

2 Context.

The contribution from DSB to the cost of residential care placements for LAC was put in place seven years ago, at a time when there had been a very significant increase in the number of LAC. Whilst these numbers have now reduced (but up on 422 Dec. 15 figure), with 437 looked after children as at November 2016, there is still work to do to continue to reduce our reliance on LAC placements.

3 Haringey Children's Services use of residential care placements for LAC.

Our policy is to place all looked after children in family (fostering) placements and also, wherever possible to place children in or close to Haringey unless there are very specific reasons not to, based upon the child's needs. Only those children with the most challenging behaviour, the most complex needs and with the greatest level of risk are considered for a residential placement. In addition, Children's Services aims to use residential care for the shortest period required in order to stabilise the child, provide intensive support and reduce the level of risk. We would always aim to move children on from residential care at the earliest opportunity, either into fostering, or back to their birth families or with connected persons.

Although overall LAC numbers are reducing, there is a growing trend in residential placement costs increasing. For children with the most complex needs there are only a limited number of providers in the market place. This had led to providers being in a position to dictate placement costs in a market where other local authorities are competing for placements. Over the last year, there have been an increasing numbers of young people due to risks of CSE and gangs having to be placed in specialist residential placement with increase in associated costs of social workers and review managers having to visit further afield for visits and review meetings. Some of these young people have also required 2:1 and occasionally 3:1 staffing ratios. In addition they have required rather expensive transport to transfer them between placements.

4 Numbers of LAC in residential care placements.

Until this year there had been a steady reduction in looked after children overall along with steady and managed reduction in the number of LAC in residential care over the past few years. As at November 2016, there were 30 LAC in residential care placements. However, given the complexity of need involved, this is a volatile and changing group and this year along with increase in the LAC numbers we have seen an increase in the need for residential placements.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17 (projection to Nov 2016)
Total number of LAC in residential placements for all or part of the year	58	41	36	30 (projection for full year 40)
Aged 0 - 15	31	27	20	19
Aged 16 - 17	27	14	16	11

5 Meeting the education needs of LAC in residential care placements.

5.1 Children's Services places great importance on raising the educational attainment of our LAC population. With the support of the Virtual School Team and with excellent work from colleagues in schools both in Haringey and other authorities where children are placed, we have hugely improved the education outcomes for LAC in recent years (evidence via attendance, SATs, GCSE, AS and admissions to Higher Education). Haringey has been one of the highest performing authorities in the country for attainment of 5 GCSEs grades A*-C, including Maths and English, for looked after children for the past three years.

5.2 Children's Services will always try to arrange for LAC in residential care to attend mainstream or special schools or Pupil Referral Units in the area they are staying if appropriate. For some children, however, these are simply not viable options and we then purchase education from the residential provider. Our overarching objective, however, remains to work toward reintegration back to mainstream or community based special school.

6 Cost to Children's Services of meeting the education needs of LAC placed in residential care provision

6.1 The following table shows the total cost of LAC residential care placements over the past three years. Some residential care placements are jointly funded by SEN and this contribution is shown on

the second line of the table:

	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000
Total Spend on Residential Care	4,014	3,443	4,106	4,591
SEN Education Contribution	234	454	289	180
SEN Health Contribution			349	242
Spend for CS Placement Budget	3,780	2,989	3,467	4,169

7 Cost of the education component of LAC Residential Care Placements

7.1 Residential care providers generally cost the education component of their offer at around one third of the total cost of the placement. Therefore, the total amount spent by Children's Services on meeting the education needs of LAC in residential care, where the residential home is also providing education, is as set out in the following table:

	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 (projected to year end) £'000
Expenditure by Children's Services on meeting LAC education needs where education is directly provided by the residential home	578	634	593	475

8 LAC Placed in Independent Fostering Agency Placements

8.1 Our policy is to place the majority of LAC within foster placements (the rest being in residential care, placed with family, semi-independent accommodation or secure accommodation). Clearly Haringey as a corporate parent has a responsibility to ensure that all children receive a full time education from the moment they become looked after.

8.2 Sometimes, children are placed in emergency circumstances with Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) foster carers and are without a school place for a period of time. In these circumstances Children's Services will ask the IFA to provide education as part of the total care package. Some of the larger IFA have their own school provision, the others will arrange for a teacher to work one to one with the child. Children's Services are billed by the IFA for this education component. It is more difficult to provide a precise costing at the present time of this (mainly short term) education provision. We estimate that the full year

cost of providing education / teaching to children in IFA placements, due to their being temporarily out of school, is approximately £262,000. We also spend from the Internal Fostering budget to support children in their education including additional payments covering short term and permanent exclusions.

9 Summary

- 9.1 The Children's Services Placements budget continues to be under significant pressure and the contribution to this budget from the Dedicated Schools Budget is highly valued. This has played a significant role in achieving excellent education outcomes for all our looked after children.
- 9.2 Since the start of 2016, there have been movements both up and down in the numbers of looked after children. We are implementing an ambitious Early Help model which we believe will achieve better outcomes for children and families by supporting early intervention and preventing needs escalating. We further believe this will contribute to a gradual and sustainable reduction in the numbers of looked after children as the model begins to have greater impact.
- 9.3 Although Haringey CYPS are appropriately and safely reducing the number of LAC placements (these attempts are sometimes thwarted by a number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children arriving in the borough or the courts remanding YP to custody or care who then become looked after) this does not directly translate into savings with most of the LAC reductions coming from young people turning 18 or going home. Therefore the educational element and the cost of placements remains high; **it is proposed and requested that the level of funding remain at £800k for 2017/18.**