

Report for: Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee - 11 July 2024

Item number: 7

Title: Placements stability panel annual report 2023-2024

Report

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Ward(s) affected: N/A

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the stability of our placements for children in care to Haringey.
- 1.2 This report covers the activity between April 2023 to March 2024.
- 1.3 The report will contain an analysis of the themes and patterns of placements where there has been a lack of placement stability. The report will also signal the issues with purchasing residential care.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members to note the contents of the report.

3. Reasons for decision

N/A

4. Background information

- 4.1 Research highlights that children and young people who are removed from their families suffer both rejection, separation and feelings of loss, even if they have been mistreated. These feelings are further compounded when they experience multiple placements (Schofield and Beek 2005).
- 4.2 Placement instability reduces a child's opportunity to develop secure attachments. It may also exacerbate any existing emotional and behavioural difficulties (Schofield et al 2005) making it more difficult for a child or a young person to establish relationships with care givers contributing to further placement breakdowns and feelings of rejection (Munro and Hardy, 2006).
- 4.3 Placement instability refers to the frequent movement or disruption of children in their foster homes, residential care, and in semi-independent or supported accommodation. It can have detrimental effects on the overall well-being and

development of children leading to poor outcomes. The report aims to explore the themes and patterns observed in children's placements and to improve outcomes for children in care.

4.4 Legal framework and Policies

- 4.4.1 Councils' duties in relation to the placement of children in care are outlined in the [Children Act 1989](#) highlighted below:
- 4.4.2 Section 20 in the Children's Act allows for the accommodation of children with parental permission or where there is no person with parental responsibility. Councils do not have parental responsibility for these children but have a duty to provide and meet needs.
- 4.4.3 Section 21 places a duty on councils to provide accommodation for children in police protection, detention or on remand.
- 4.4.4 Section 31 gives the court the power to make a care order where a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm which is attributable to the care given to the child or the child being beyond parental control. This places a child in the care of the council applying for a care order and gives that council parental responsibility for the child.
- 4.4.5 Councils are corporate parents to all children who are looked-after by the local authority, even where they do not have parental responsibility for them.
- 4.4.6 The [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review statutory guidance](#) outlines issues that a council must consider when placing a child:
- Preference should be given to a placement with a connected person (e.g. a friend or relative).
 - Placements should be close to home, should not disrupt education (especially at key stage 4), enable siblings to live together, be suitable to a child's needs if they are disabled, and is within the local authority area, unless a "distant" placement is the most suitable option, for example if a child has complex treatment needs that cannot be met by services in the area or where this is necessary to effectively safeguard the child.
- 4.4.7 Section 22G of the Children Act (1989) places a duty on councils to take steps to ensure that they can provide sufficient accommodation within the authority's area to meet the needs of children in care.
- 4.4.8 The [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2021](#) came into force on 9 September 2021. These regulations banned the placement of children under the age of 16 in unregulated settings. The [Supported Accommodation \(England\) Regulations 2023](#) introduced regulations and quality standards for supported accommodation for 16–17-year-old children in care and care leavers. These cover settings which were previously unregulated and mean that no children in care or care leavers under the age of 18 may now be placed in unregulated settings. Children under 16, under the Children Act 1989 and the 2021 regulations, should be placed in foster care, a children's home or a small number of other settings including a hospital; they should not be placed in unregulated supported accommodation.

5. Placement Stability Indicators

- 5.1 Haringey Council monitors placement stability in terms of short-term stability and long-term stability.
- 5.2 Short term placement stability is measured by children or young people having had three or more placements over the year. Table 1 notes that in 2023, 10 children were identified which was an improvement from 2020-21 and is in line with the national average but slightly above statistical neighbours.
- 5.3 In terms of long-term placement stability, this is measured by a child under the age of 16 years, who has been in placement for 2.5 years or more. In 2023, 71 children experience long term placement stability which is in line with the statistical neighbours but slightly lower than the national average.

Table 1

	Haringey					Statistical Neighbours			
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
CiC Performance Table Placement 1 (Short term stability)									
Percentage of looked after children with three or more placements during the year	10	9	12	10	10	10.1	9.2	9.7	9.3
Number of looked after children	403	391	387	370	334	426.9	410.5	405.4	390.3
Number of looked after children with three or more placements during the year	39	36	45	36	33	42.2	36	38.7	36.8
CiC Performance Table Placement 2 (Long term stability)									
Of the looked after children continuously for at least 2.5 years and aged under 16 at 31 March, the percentage of looked after children in the same placement for at least 2 years	78	81	74	70	71	69.9	70.6	74.1	70.2
Number of children looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years and aged under 16 at 31 March	158	142	125	130		117.1	119.3	121.1	119.8
Of these, the number of looked after children in the same placement for at least 2 years	123	115	93	91		82	85.8	89.5	84.2

6. Placement Stability Panel

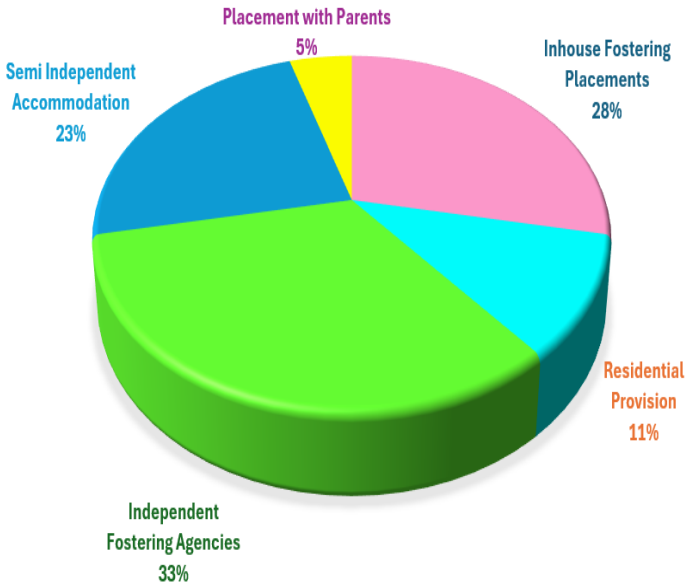
- 6.1 The Placement Stability Panel was formulated in (2020) to improve the experiences for children in care to minimise both placement disruption and placement breakdowns. The panel was initially set up during the Covid19 Pandemic to support placements where children and young people were experiencing challenges with issues around their mental health, non school attendance and the consequences of isolation. However, considering its success it has now be applied to all children in care.
- 6.2 The panel consists of designated leads, from the Virtual School, First Steps (Health), Designated Nurse for CIC, Designated Teacher for CIC, Supervising Social Workers, allocated Social Workers, the Independent Reviewing Officers,

Residential providers, Independent Fostering Agencies. Where possible young people also attend and advocate their own views about their placements, however it is acknowledged that further work is needed in this area to obtain the voices of our young people.

7. Source of Referrals to the Placement Stability Panel

- 7.1** There are five main areas where referrals are received for the placement stability panel. Independent fostering agencies (IFA), are the highest referrers to the panel at 33%. 21 children and young people referred were from April 2023 to March 2024. The referrals are made by the social worker allocated to the child at the request of the IFA's or the foster carers.
- 7.2** The children and young people placed within these placements have suffered significant trauma because of parental abuse and neglect. The behaviours are described as challenging and increased in complexity, many young people have EHCP's or are being assessed. Some young people are not in school and the independent foster carers report difficulties in managing the behaviours and the challenges in the placement
- 7.3** The primary request from Independent Fostering Agencies is respite support. Many Independent Fostering Agencies do not have Back up Carers and are limited in staffing capacity. This provides additional costs to the local authority if inhouse foster carers cannot be identified to bridge the gap.

Table 1. Sources or referrals to Placement Stability Panel.



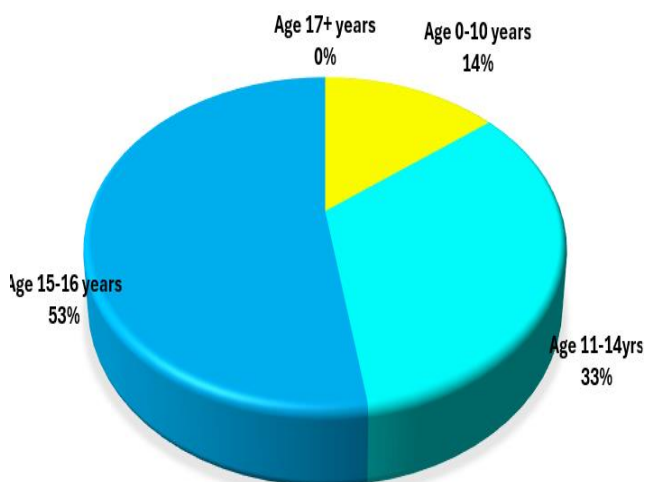
8. Independent Fostering Agencies

- 8.1** The IFA in this referral cohort have eighteen young people placed in their care, the ages range from 11-16 years. This cohort is higher than those placed with

our inhouse foster carers. There are three children between aged between 0-10 years referred from in house foster carers. Overall the adolescent cohort is described as more challenging.

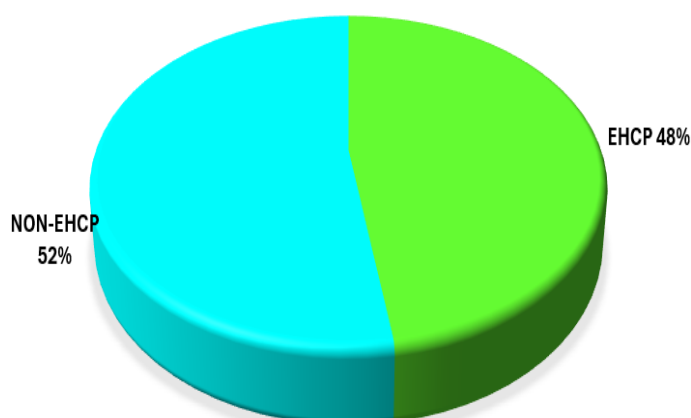
8.2 Eleven young people are female, and ten are male.

Table 2. Age and Placement Instability



9 Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) | Children with Education Health Care plan (EHC)

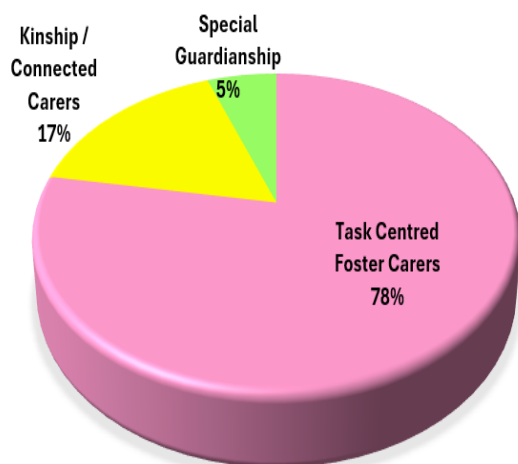
9.1 Ten young people placed in the IFA provisions have an EHCP which is 48% compared to 33% of children placed with in house foster carers. An Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is a legal document for children and young people aged up to 25 years of age who need more support than is available through usual educational methods. The plans set out the additional support to meet those needs. Table 3 below: EHC cohort.



10 Inhouse Fostering |Placement Instability

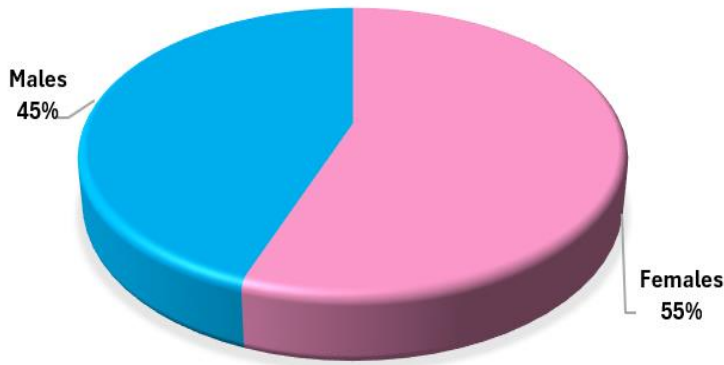
- 10.1 The second highest referrer to the placement stability panel is from Inhouse Fostering. Allocated social workers make the referrals to the panel when they observed a likelihood of disruption or instability in a placement. Inhouse Fostering consists of Task Centred foster carers, Kinship/Connected/ Friends of Family Carers, and Special Guardianship Carers. There were 18 children identified in this cohort.
- 10.2 Research suggests that when placements are identified with family members, they are least likely to disrupt or breakdown. This view is supported by Josh MacAlister (2022) Stable Homes Built on Love Government Review.
- 10.3 The primary themes being highlighted at the stability panel was additional support for the children if they remained out of school to prevent placement breakdown. The children were reported to have challenging behaviours, deteriorating mental health, complexity of need. Partner agencies were able to mobilise support from within the child's or young person's networks.

Table 4. Inhouse Fostering Breakdown



10.4 Inhouse fostering placements | Gender and Placement Instability

Table 5.

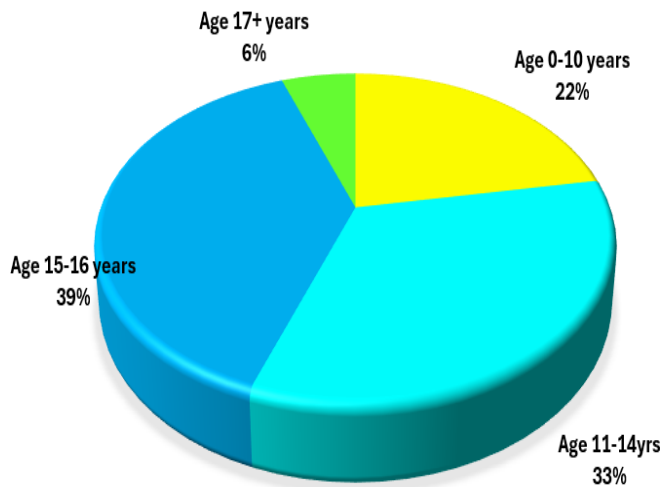


10.5 Table 5 illustrates that there is a higher percentage of females being placed with inhouse carers than males.

11 Inhouse Fostering Placement | Age and Placement Instability

11.1 In comparison with independent fostering agencies our inhouse fostering service has a more variable age range in terms of the cohort. However, the 11–16-year-olds are the largest cohort.

Table 6

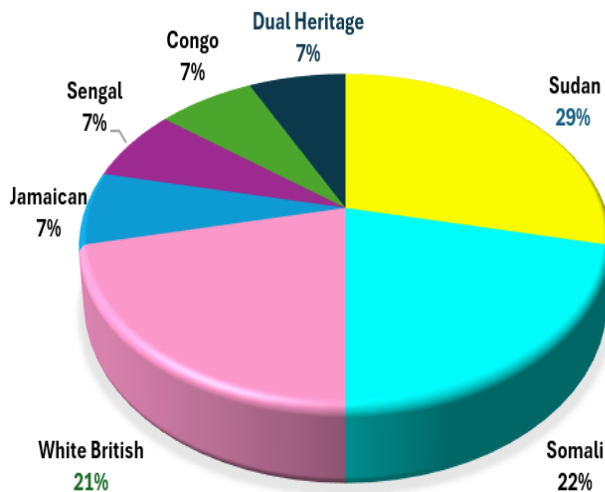


12. Semi Independent & supported Accommodation | Ethnicities of Young People

12.1 The semi-independent accommodation is the third highest cohort being referred to Placement Stability Panel. Whilst 15 young people were referred to the panel it is not an indicator of placement instability. Many young people are being accommodated at the age of 16 and 17years of age. Many young people are arriving

from abroad and claiming Asylum. The increase in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young people has inflated the placement stability figures. Some UASC young people have had two or more placement moves and would be automatically included into the placement instability reporting. Table 7 shows the ethnicities of those young people being presented to placement stability plan. Many of the presentations made are positive planned moves. It should be noted that not all placement moves are negative. Young people moving into supported accommodation in line with their needs is a positive transition.

Table 7



13. Conclusion

13.1 The Stability Panel has significantly progressed and addressed the issues around placement instability. The reported figures for short term stability are in line with National figures, and long-term stability is in line with our statistical neighbours.

13.2 Further work is needed to create placement sufficiency with our inhouse foster carers in terms of recruitment and retention, and to upskill our foster carers to equip them to support our most vulnerable adolescence.

14. Contribution to strategic outcomes

N/A

15. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Background information

16. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

None

Appendix 1

A. The Residential Market | Competition and Markets Authority

In 2022, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) published its [market study into children's social care](#) in England, Scotland and Wales in response to concerns about how the placements market was operating.

The review considered two key issues: the availability of placements to meet children's needs, and the prices paid by councils for those placements.

The CMA identified that "there are significant problems in how the placements market is functioning, particularly in England and Wales." The residential market was described as broken. Among its findings, the CMA noted:

- a lack of placements of the right kind and in the right places
- higher prices and higher levels of profit than would be expected in a well-functioning market
- concerns about the levels of debt carried by the largest providers
- limitations on the ability of councils to engage effectively with the market
- difficulties for councils to accurately forecast need due to the relatively few placements bought by each council
- challenges in the out-dated regulatory system in England
- recruitment and retention challenges, and low wages, amongst children's homes workers.

The CMA recommended a more collective approach to engaging with the placements market and additional support for local authorities for forecasting, market shaping and procurement.

In 2024, the findings of the CMA remain the same with residential providers and independent fostering agencies increasing the prices of their services leaving local authorities with little manoeuvrability but to agree absorbent costs. The regulation of semi-independent provision has also impacted on providers increasing costs significantly and placing them back onto the local authorities who need to identify placements for children at the right time.

B. Independent Review of Children's Social Care

The [Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#) ("the Care Review") was launched in January 2021 with Josh MacAlister as the lead reviewer. The final report was published on 23 May 2022.

The review stated that “without a dramatic whole system reset, outcomes for children and families will remain stubbornly poor...and a flawed system will cost over £15 billion per year (up from £10 billion now).” The review recommended a “fundamental shift” to improve family help and child protection, work to enable more children to remain with family networks, and action to “fix the broken care market”, as well as ensuring children have a powerful voice in the decisions that affect them and improving outcomes for care experienced people. It was calculated that £2.6 billion in new spending over four years was needed to deliver the improvements proposed by the review.

Regarding placements for children in care, the review made a range of recommendations including:

- the development of new universal care standards for all types of care to guarantee care for every child in care, and provide the flexibility needed to ensure homes can meet the needs of children;
- moving the commissioning and running of children’s homes, recruitment and training of foster carers into new Regional Care Cooperatives to bring a wider choice of homes for children closer to where they live;
- a ‘new deal’ for foster care, involving recruiting thousands more foster carers, making more foster homes feel like loving family environments for children and providing significantly more support for foster carers.

C. Stable Homes, Built on Love

[Stable Homes, Built on Love](#) is the Government’s children’s social care reform strategy and was published on 2 February 2023. Its proposals were backed by £200 million of additional investment over two years, and were organised under six ‘pillars’ of reform:

- family help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive with their families
- a decisive multi-agency child protection system
- unlocking the potential of family networks
- putting love, relationships and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care
- a valued, supported and highly skilled social worker for every child who needs one
- a system that continuously learns and improves and makes better use of evidence and data.

The strategy includes specific plans in relation to placements for children in care:

- a fostering recruitment and retention programme, including regional recruitment hubs and rollout of the [‘Mockingbird’ programme. £36 million has been invested](#) in supporting over 60 per cent of councils to deliver this, with less intensive support also available to councils not engaged in the full programme.
- support for the children’s homes sector including exploring professional registration of the workforce and a leadership programme
- introducing a financial oversight regime for the largest providers of children’s homes and fostering agencies

- running two Regional Care Cooperative pathfinders
- set up an expert group to review standards of care, regulations and guidance.