

Report for: Joint Meeting of The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee and Children's and Young People's Scrutiny Panel Meeting – 7 April 2025.

Item number: 6

Title: What does Care Mean?

Report

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Lead Officer: Dionne Thomas/Rubina Mazher/Emma Cummergen

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Report for Key/

Non Key Decision: Non key decision

1. Describe the issue under consideration

1.1 The purpose of this report is to highlight to members what being 'in Care' means for children and young people. This report will examine the pathways into care and will review progress made in relation to placement stability. The report will also focus on being a Care Leaver, independent living, and mental health.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members to note the contents of the report.

3. Reasons for decision

N/A

4. Background information

4.1 What does Care mean?

4.2 National research highlights that children and young people who are received into the care of the local authorities have often suffered significant harm, trauma and neglect. The emotional impact of separating a child or young person from his or her family is often minimised, leaving our children to experience feelings of rejection, separation and loss. These feelings are further compounded when our young people experience multiple placement moves (Schofield and Beek 2005).

4.3 For some children and young people 'being in care' can be perceived as stigmatising as you are often judged for not having your parents in your life? Children and young people have reported that some professionals may also not

be as ‘ambitious’ or ‘aspirational’ in terms of your skills and abilities and set lower academic levels in terms of your educational attainment. Children and young people have also commented that ‘your voice in relation to decision making and future life choices is often not heard.’

4.4 What does Care mean for Haringey Council?

4.5 Whilst we acknowledge some of the reported challenges of the public care system, officers at Haringey Council continue to work actively alongside our Children In Care Council (ASPIRE) to ensure that our children and young people are supported throughout their journey in care. From their initial entry into care, we work seamlessly with our partner agencies to ensure the best outcomes for our children and young people.

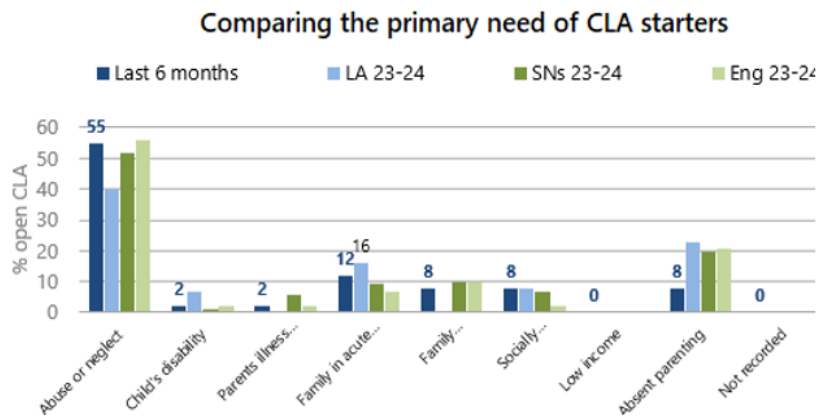
4.6 We are committed as a Council to being the best corporate parents and take our corporate parenting responsibilities very seriously. We are committed to listening to our care experienced young people and are actively taking steps to improve services. We have progressed the Champions model in terms of Health and Wellbeing, Housing and Independent Living skills, Transitional Safeguarding, Education, Training and Employment, and there has been noted progress in these areas.

4.7 We also remain ambitious and aspirational for all our children and young people and value their successes. We continue to ensure that children and young people in our care receive the support early on to help address any adversity or trauma they may have suffered, and to give them the foundations for a happy, healthy, and successful life.

4.8 Reasons for children and young people being accommodated in the last six months.

4.9 According to the Table 1 below the highest category in which children were accommodated within the last six months was a result of abuse and neglect. Fifty-five children were accommodated because of abuse and neglect concerns. This figure shows an incremental rise in comparison with 2023-2024 data. Families in acute distress has fallen compared to last year’s data, 12 children and young people were accommodated in the last six months compared to 16 children in 2023-2024. Family dysfunction, absent parenting, UASC, and social unacceptable behaviours are other stated reasons as to why children have become looked after.

Table 1



5.0 What are the pathways for Care?

5.1 In Haringey, as well as in other local authorities, there are several different ways a child or young person is received into care, which is primarily governed by the Children Act (1989). This legislation places key duties and responsibilities on local authorities to ensure the welfare of children are safeguarded and given paramount consideration.

- **Voluntary Agreement (Section 20, Children Act 1989)**, whereby parents' consent for their child to be accommodated by the local authority. This applies to situations where children are deemed beyond parental control, at risk of missing, affiliated to gangs, at risk of grooming child sexual exploitation and or criminal exploitation.

There may be other situations whereby a parent is having a medical procedure and has no extended family to be able to provide care for the child and this may be temporary arrangement, or if the parent is experiencing a chronic or debilitating illness, or parents having difficulties managing children with complex care needs.

- **Interim Care Order (Section 38) and Care Order (Section 31)**. The court must be satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the circumstances with respect to the child are as reported in Section 31(2) that 'the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm'.

An Interim Care Order (ICO) allows the local authority to take steps to safeguard the child's welfare, such as placing the child in a safe environment, such as foster care, kinship care, and residential care, while the proceedings on the care order are ongoing.

Children and young people who are subjected to abuse or neglect, where the level of parenting is deemed not to be 'good enough' despite support being offered will form the basis of these Court applications.

When reports of such incidents are received by MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub), a child protection investigation is undertaken under

Section 47 of the Children Act 1989. If it is determined that the child has suffered significant harm or if there is a likelihood of harm, they may be removed from the home environment and from the parental care to ensure their safety.

Children and young people may also suffer abuse by parental substance or alcohol misuse. The struggles of parents dealing with addiction can lead to a child's removal from the home. When substance abuse compromises the safety and stability of the living environment, the local authority may need to intervene to share parental responsibility to protect the child under Section 38 of the Children Act (1989).

Similarly, domestic abuse between parents causes significant emotional and physical risks to children. This is one of the most common categories of harm suffered by the children. In such cases, a local authority may take action to remove children from the harmful situations.

Children with significant disabilities who require extensive medical care may enter the care system if their families are unable to provide the necessary support, resources, or expertise to meet those needs adequately.

Local authorities endeavour to work in partnership with the parents and families as far as possible to keep the children within their family environment as long as it is deemed safe and protects the welfare of the children. However, if this is not possible and parents continue to expose their children to harm, Family Courts have the authority to issue orders that place children into care under (Section 38 of the Children Act (1989)).

- **Police Protection and Emergency Protection Orders (EPO)** If a child or young person is at risk of immediate danger the Police can use powers under Section (46) of the Children Act (1989) to remove and accommodate a child to a safe place for up to 72 hours if they have reasonable cause to believe the child would otherwise suffer significant harm. If a police officer believes a child is at risk, they can remove the child to a suitable accommodation, such as a relative's home, hospital, police station, foster placement or residential children's home.

Similarly, in urgent situations where a child faces immediate danger or is at risk of significant harm, an Emergency Protection Order (Section 45 of the Children Act 1989) can be applied for from the Courts to remove the child or young person from the imminent danger. This order would allow the child or young person to be removed from the parents which can last up to eight days, and then can be extended once by the Court for a further 7 days, if there is reasonable case to believe that a child has suffered significant harm.

These various pathways illustrate the multifaceted nature of family dynamics and the array of factors that can lead to a child entering the care system. Each

case is unique, typically involving careful assessments conducted by social workers and other core professionals like health, education and the police to determine the most appropriate actions to safeguard the child's welfare and best interests.

6.0 **Profile of children being received into Haringey Council's Care.**

Table 2 below highlights the demography of the children and young people being received into local authority care. We have seen an increase in the age ranged from 12 -17yrs old of 182 children out of the 316 children currently accommodated which is 53% as noted in the graph. In terms of gender, males 57% are more likely to be received into care, of Black / Black British or global majority heritage.

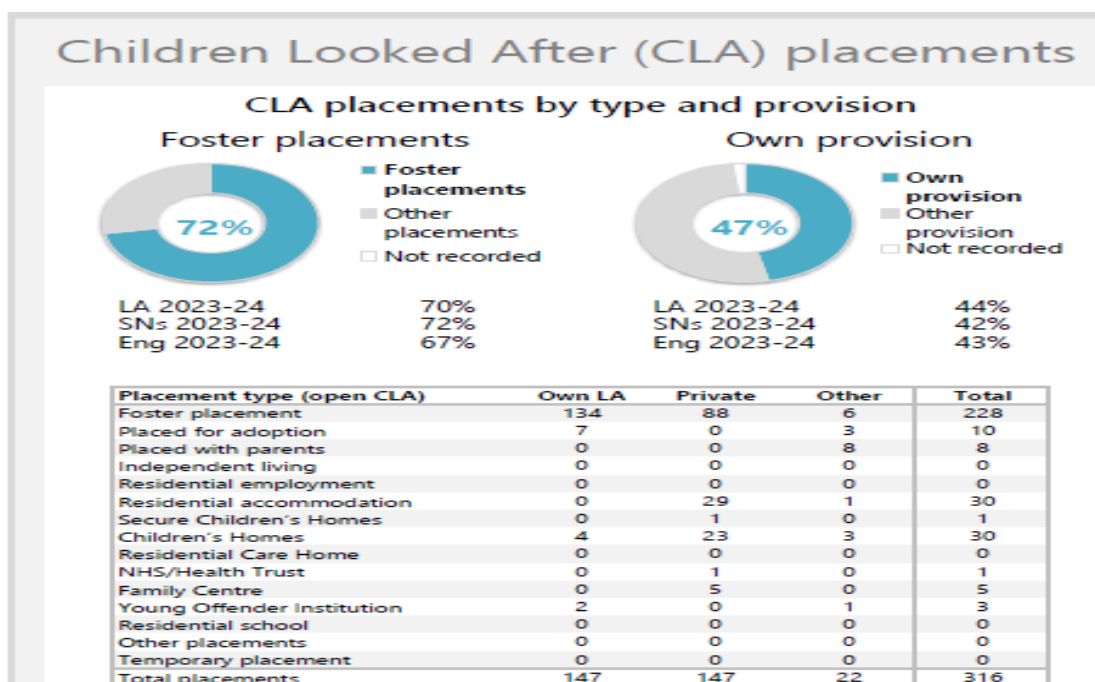
The data also suggests that there are increasing demands for 6–11-year-old with 77 children being accommodated which is 19% as noted in the table, this increases the importance early help strategies and family support services. In terms of the 0–5-year-old category, this accounts for 57 children which is 28% of the 316 children currently accommodated in care.

Table 2 | Demography of Children in Care

Age Band	No. of Children	% of total			
a) 0 - 5	57	28%			
b) 6 - 11	77	19%			
c) 12 - 17	182	53%			
Gender	No. of Children	% of total			
Female	139	43%			
Male	178	57%			
Ethnicity	No of children	% of total			
Asian or Asian British	12	4%			
Black or Black British	132	42%			
Mixed	75	24%			
Other ethnic groups	23	7%			
White	74	23%			

6.1 **Types of placement**

When children are placed into care depending on the level of a child's needs they are placed with kinship carers, foster carers, residential placements / children's homes, support accommodation.



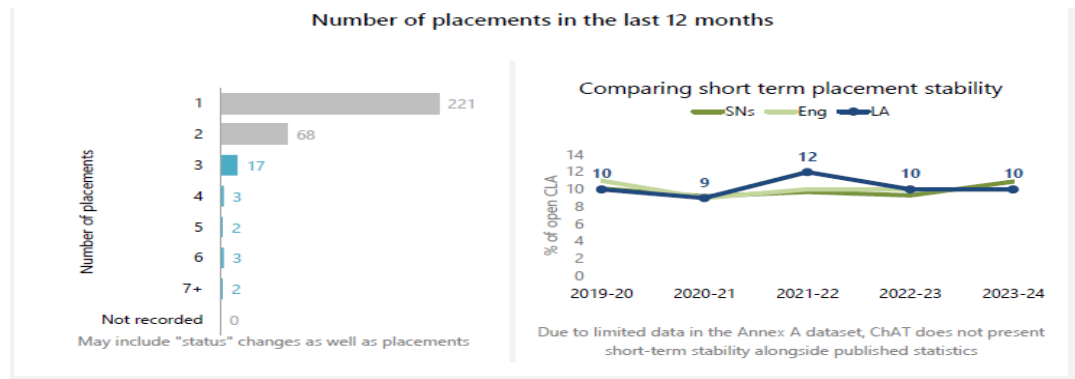
7. **Placement Stability**

- 7.1 Placement stability increases a child's opportunity to develop secure attachments with their carers. It ensures a child or young person has safe and consistent care, minimising frequent moves and disruptions which is crucial for a child's emotional health and development.
- 7.2 Schofield et al (2005) states that placement instability can have 'detrimental effects on the overall well-being and development of children leading to poor outcomes.' Munro and Hardy (2006) reported that frequent placement moves contributed significantly to placement breakdowns and feelings of rejection

Placement Stability Indicators

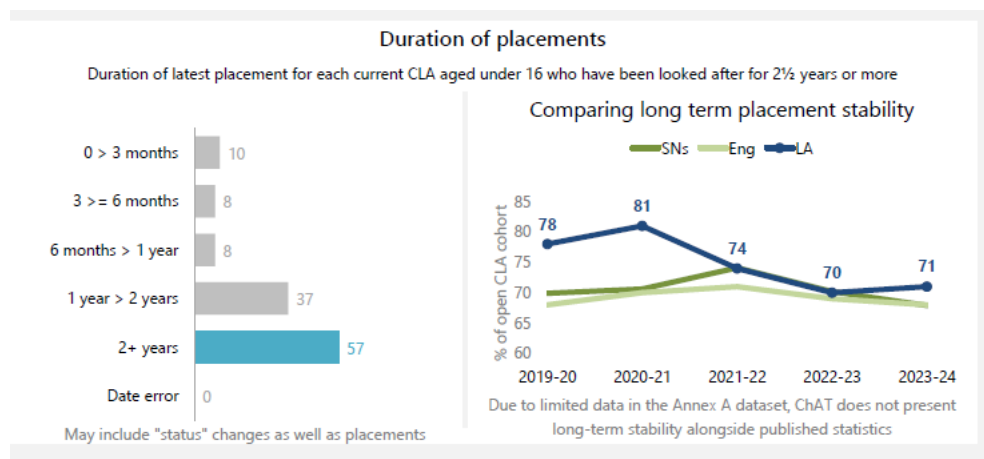
- 7.3 Haringey Council continues to monitor placement stability in terms of both short-term and long-term stability.
- 7.4 Short term placement stability is measured by 'a child having had three or more placements over the year.'
- 7.5 Table 3 illustrates the number of placement moves children in care have experienced during the last 12 months. The table highlights that out of 316 children who are currently accommodated, 289 children have had 0 and 2 placement moves which equates to 91.5 %of children in care
- 7.6 Table 3 indicates that 27 children have had 3 or more placement moves 8.5% which is comparable with statistical neighbours.

Table 3



7.5 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. The data suggests an increase in long term stability and a positive direction of travel compared with 2022-2023.

Table 4



7.6 Further work is needed to create additional capacity within our inhouse foster carers in terms of recruitment and retention, and to upskill our foster carers to equip them to support our most vulnerable children and young people.

8.0 Care Leavers

- 8.1 A care leaver is defined as a young person who was looked after by the local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who was looked after by the local authority at school leaving age or thereafter, and who is under 25 years old.
- 8.2 Young people will be deemed a “relevant care leaver” if they are a child in care between their 16th and 18th birthday. They will be entitled to a social worker who supports financial assistance, advice and guidance, pathway planning every 6 months, support with education, employment and training, support with mental well-being and access to CAMHs and support family time in a manner that is safe and enriching for the young person.
- 8.2 When a young person reaches 18, they become a “former relevant care leaver” and are allocated to a Personal Advisor, to provide support and guidance, financial support and access to permanent housing.
- 8.3 The Young Adults Service (YAS) currently supports 80 young people aged 16-18 and 407 young people aged 18 to 25 years old. We also have an additional 152 young people that live independently and are settled but we continue to maintain yearly contact via our duty team until they reach the age of 25 and intervene when any additional needs arise.
- 8.4 **Education Employment and Training.**
- 8.5 We are ambitious for our care leavers and lead a monthly aspirations panel working in partnership with our virtual school, Haringey Works, Drive Forward, North London Partnership Consortium and the Tottenham Foundation to provide ever increasing opportunities for our care leavers in Haringey and those that reside outside.
- 8.6 We also seek to identify mentorship programs from organizations such as Sister System, Haringey MIND, and Hope for the Young, that can offer additional guidance, support and encouragement to help develop the confidence to overcome challenges and boost self-esteem.
- 8.7 We are supporting 38 care leavers at university.
- 8.8 We have successfully supported 29 into civil service internships during 2018-2025.
- 8.9 We have a task and finish apprenticeship group dedicated to increasing jobs in the family business. We currently have 4 in council employment and developing and further 6 apprenticeship opportunities.
- 8.10 **Independent Living**
- 8.11 During the young person’s care journey from 16 – 18 it is the role of the foster carers and keyworkers to ensure that that young person is given the opportunity to develop their independence skills within their home environment by way of cooking, cleaning, managing their own personal finances and self-care. This is monitored and reviewed using our life skills modules.

- 8.12 All young people are expected to complete the Money House, which is a course in how to manage their money and budget before they are nominated for their permanent tenancy. This is to ensure that all the necessary preparation is provided to support a young person to sustain their own tenancy and reduce the risk of rent arrears and evictions. The course covers managing tenancy agreements, avoiding eviction, online safety and scams, budgeting and spending habits, benefits, banking, planning the future and energy efficiency.
- 8.13 All young people are assessed by their social workers or Personal Advisors as to their maturity and readiness to live independently. Young people are monitored and reviewed via an internal accommodation panel as to their progress towards independence. At 18, Care leavers in Haringey are given priority bidding status which means that they become priority for secure accommodation once they have registered for housing.
- 8.14 Former relevant care leavers are entitled to a 1 bedroom property via Haringey housing quota and a £3,000 setting up home allowance to assist with buying the essential items for their homes.
- 8.15 Where young people live outside of Haringey, they are given 3 housing options
- They can return to Haringey and take up their 1-bedroom quota
 - If they have local connections and networks in the local area outside of Haringey and do not want to return, they can be supported to approach another local authority under a reciprocal housing arrangement
 - Where a reciprocal housing arrangement is not an option, they can be supported to find private rented accommodation via the home finder's route and financially supported with a rent deposit grant.
- 8.16 **Young parents**
- 8.17 We are supporting an increasing number of care leavers who are parents. To support their housing needs we have a small additional 2 bed quota we can nominate our families for. We currently have access to 6, 2 beds dedicated to care leavers who are parents.
- 8.18 **Young people released from prison**
- 8.19 We have a small minority of young people in custody, we have a prerelease resettlement program in conjunction with our Youth Justice and probation service to ensure that young people are fully supported to return to live in the community where they will be safe and able to be supported to engage in education employment or training, support to increase their independent living skills and access to their permanent accommodation. There can be location and post code challenges for this group of care leavers which can make settling to permanence more complex.
- 8.20 **Young people with Additional needs**
- 8.21 Where young people are assessed as having significant additional support post 18, they are presented to our Transitions panel prior to their 18th birthday and referred to adult social care for a care act assessment. If they meet threshold

for adult support based on enduring mental health needs or learning disability, they will be entitled to ongoing adult support and accommodation. We also work closely with shared lives carers which is essentially adult fostering.

- 8.22 For some young people who have more complex needs and are already in their permanent accommodation there is also additional support from our partner agency Housing First, they offer intensive support to assist young people in maintaining their tenancy, whilst supporting them with mental health and wellbeing. This adds to the ability for young people to stay in their homes and maintain their tenancy, avoiding eviction and homelessness. Due to the intensive nature of the work, we can refer 10 care leavers for this scheme via housing related support contract.

8.23 **Reunification with parents or family**

- 8.24 After a period in care some young people make the choice to return to live with their families as adults and we will always plan and assess whether it is safe and in their best interests for them to return. They remain entitled to support and guidance, their leaving care flats and setting up home allowance up to the age of 25 and we continue to work to ensure their independent living skills to sustain a tenancy for when the time is right.

9.0 **Mental Health**

- 9.1 Children in Care and Care Leavers are among the most vulnerable groups in society, with significantly higher rates of mental health difficulties compared to their peers. Despite having high levels of need this cohort of young people experience significant barriers in accessing timely and effective mental health support.

9.2 **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ's)**

- 9.3 When a child is received into care, a strengths and difficulties questionnaire is completed by the main carer i.e. foster carer, friends and family carer (kinship/connected carer) or residential worker within six months in preparation for a child's annual statutory health assessment. The questionnaire helps assess the emotional and behavioural health of the child and identifies any potential areas of concern.

- According to national figures, in 2024, 75% of 43,390 care experienced children who met the criteria had a SDQ score returned.
- 40% of care experienced children who received an SDQ score which was identified as a cause of concern, and a further 13% of the scores were considered on the borderline of cause for concern.
- In terms of Haringey Children's Services, 84% of children in care have had an SDQ. Data is not yet available in relation to the number of children described as 'borderline', and the number deemed to be a 'cause for concern'.

9.3 **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**

The Haringey Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service provides multi-disciplinary assessment and treatment for children aged between 0-17years with mental ill-health or severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. The team also has a crisis line for those who are in need of urgent mental health support. CAMHS provides Tier 2 targeted services for more complex needs, for children experiencing mild and moderate emotional or mental health difficulties. Tier 3 specialist services address more complex and severe mental health needs, such as severe emotional difficulties and functional impairment.

9.4 **First Steps Plus**

9.5 Children who continue to experience 3 or more placement moves during the course of the year will continue to receive support from First Steps Plus. This provision is designed to support children aged between 5-16yr, to minimise and prevent further placement instability by using targeted and assertive outreach support.

9.6 **Conclusion**

This report seeks to highlight that being a 'child in care' or a 'care leaver' is not without its challenges. The trauma of being received into care is significant and needs to be managed with sensitivity and compassion. Being in care is a journey many children struggle with in terms of adapting to new situations which requires careful planning and nurturing to ensure that positive relationships and attachments to new carers can flourish. The pathways into care are unique for different children depending on their circumstances, and placements are identified to meet their needs.

9.7 The issues discussed in relation to placement stability are critical for care experienced children. It is imperative that council officers identify and support placements where there is instability. Frequent changes of placement for children impacts on their emotional health, development, and educational outcomes and the practice is to ensure where appropriate placements are supported early on.

9.8 In relation to Care Leavers we continue to remain ambitious and aspirational for all of our young people and acknowledge that being a care leaver is not without its challenges. We do recognise the importance of relationships in sustaining positive outcomes and are proud of the 38 young people who are in university and 29 young people in civil internships. We also continue to celebrate the smaller wins when our young people make small but sustained changes.

9.9 It is important to recognise that we cannot remain complacent in the delivery of services for children in care and care leavers, and we need to ensure that our Children In Care Council continue to work in partnership with officers in the council to further improve services and service delivery for our most vulnerable children.

10. Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2022-2024 High level Strategic outcomes'?

N/A

11. Carbon and Climate Change

N/A

12. Statutory Officers comments (Director of Finance (procurement), Head of Legal and Governance, Equalities)

Finance

N/A

Procurement

N/A

Head of Legal & Governance [Name and title of Officer completing these comments]

N/A

12. Use of Appendices

None

13. Background papers

None