

Agenda item **7**

Briefing for:	Schools Forum 28 February 2014
Title:	Care Placements for Looked After Children
Purpose of briefing:	To provide further information to Schools Forum in respect of a £1m requested contribution from the Dedicated Schools Budget.
Lead Officer:	Lisa Redfern Director, Children's Services (Acting)

1. Purpose

The Schools Forum Meeting on 16th January 2014 requested further information from Children's Services in respect of a £1m contribution from the Dedicated Schools Budget (DSB) toward the cost of education provision for looked after children (LAC). A report was requested to provide the Forum with more information and a request was made for an officer from Children's Services to attend the next meeting to provide further details.

2. Context

The contribution from DSB to the cost of residential care placements for LAC was put in place five years ago, at a time when there had been a very significant increase in the number of LAC. Whilst a great deal of progress has been made there is still work to do to continue to reduce our reliance on LAC placements. I am pleased to have the opportunity to provide information now for colleagues in the Schools Forum.

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

Our policy is to place LAC 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. Children placed in residential care are the children with the most challenging behaviour, the most complex needs and with the greatest level of risk. 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, either into fostering, or back to their birth families, at the earliest opportunity.

4. Numbers of LAC in residential care placements

There has been a steady and managed reduction in the number of LAC in residential care over the past few years. On 18th February 2014, there are 23 LAC in residential care placements. However, this is a volatile and changing group and over the course of the full year 2013/14 we expect that a total of 47 LAC will have spent some time in residential care placements.

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14 (projection to year end)
Total number of LAC in residential placements for all or part of the year	73	63	47
Aged 0 - 15	43	38	29
Aged 15 - 17	30	25	18

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

5.1 Children's Services places great importance on meeting the education needs of our LAC population. With the support of the Virtual School Team and with excellent work from colleagues in Haringey's schools, we have hugely improved the education outcomes for LAC in recent years (evidence via attendance, SATs, GCSE, AS and admissions to Higher Education). Haringey is currently the third best local authority in terms of LAC education outcomes for all authorities in England.

5.2 Children's Services will always try to arrange for LAC in residential care to attend mainstream schools or Pupil Referral Units if appropriate. For some children, these are simply not viable options and we then purchase education from the residential provider. However we would always aim 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

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:

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14 (projected)
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	£'000	£'000	to year end) £'000
Total spend on residential care placements	5,879	5,400	3,937
SEN contribution	397	364	234
Spend from Children's Services Placements Budget	5,482	5,036	3,703

7. Cost of the education component of LAC Residential Care Placements

Residential care providers 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:

	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 (projected to year end) £'000
Expenditure by Children's Services on meeting LAC education needs where education is directly provided by the residential home	901	877	578

8. LAC Placed in Independent Fostering Agency Placements

- 8.1 The majority of LAC are placed 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.

9. Summary

The Children's Services Placements budget continues to be under significant pressure and your contribution to this budget from the Dedicated Schools Budget is highly valued. This has contributed significantly to achieving excellent education outcomes for our looked after children. Since the start of 2014, LAC numbers have been increasing. If the LAC numbers continue to reduce and if this stabilises then the level of contribution required could be reviewed with a view to reducing the contribution in 2015/2016.

In the event that the full £1m is not required during 2013-14 or 2014-15, a further report will be brought to the Forum for consideration of options.