

Report for: Corporate Parent Advisory Committee: 5 October 2015

Item number:

Title: Disabled Looked After Children

Report authorised by :



Jon Abbey, Director, Children's Services

Lead Officer: Vikki Monk-Meyer, Head of Integrated Services for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
020 8489 3205, Vikki.monk-meyer@haringey.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: All

Report for Key/
Non Key Decision: Non-key

1. Describe the issue under consideration

The Committee requested in the meeting of 6 July 2015, a report on Looked After children who are disabled. The committee requested information as to who was in the council's care and what the issues and challenges are with Looking After Disabled children. The committee was minded that one of the functions of the Board is to 'ensure that the voice and needs of disabled children are identified and provided for'.

2. Background information

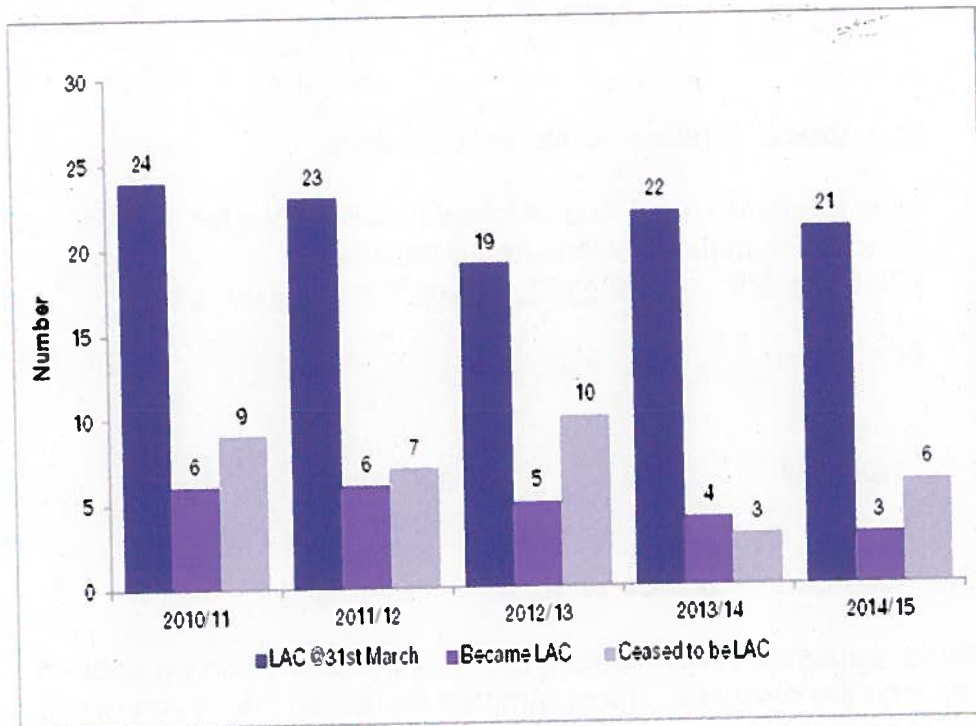
2.1 The Disabled Children's Social Work and Early Support Services are specifically arranged to offer a specialised service to those children who have an undisputed disability that can be defined as 'a permanent severe / profound learning and / or physical disability and / or profound sensory impairment'.

Within this context a disabled child will have one of the following:
Neurodisability (i.e. Cerebral palsy, physical disability, genetic conditions and syndromes), Neuro-Developmental disorders (i.e. ASD, Severe developmental delay – unknown origin), Profound and multiple disabilities and Severe sensory impairment (blind or deaf).

2.2 The Disabled Children Social Work Team (DCT) is part of the Integrated Service for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. It is a specialist service that sits within the mainstream Children and Young People's Service. The team's primary function is safeguarding disabled Young People (0-18 years of age) who meet the criteria of the DCT. The work that the DCT undertakes is as follows: Safeguarding, Child Protection, Child in Care (CIC), Child in Need, court proceedings, Duty. The team comprises of a small team of Social Workers (8.4 positions).

There are 22 children who are currently 'Looked After' by Haringey who have a permanent and substantial disability.

2.3 The figures below are based on the data for 2014/15 when there were 21 children looked after by Haringey allocated in the Disabled Children's Team.



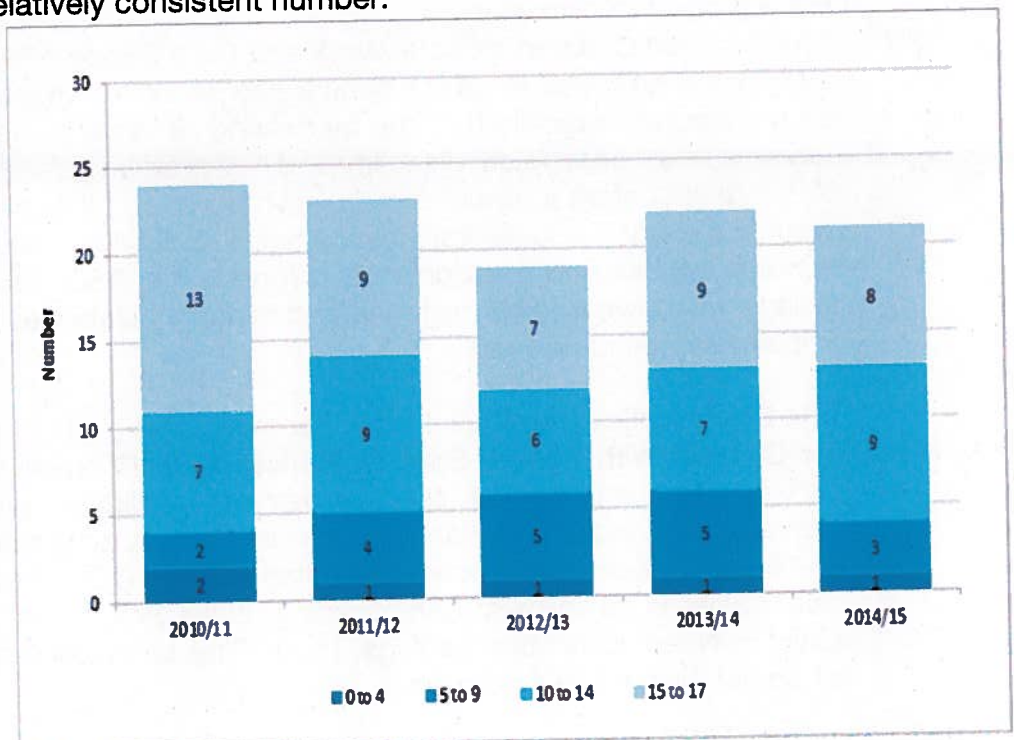
21 children with disabilities were looked after at 31st March 2015, representing 5% of all children looked after at year ending 2015.

There has been a gradual reduction in the number of children starting to become LAC over the last 5 years.

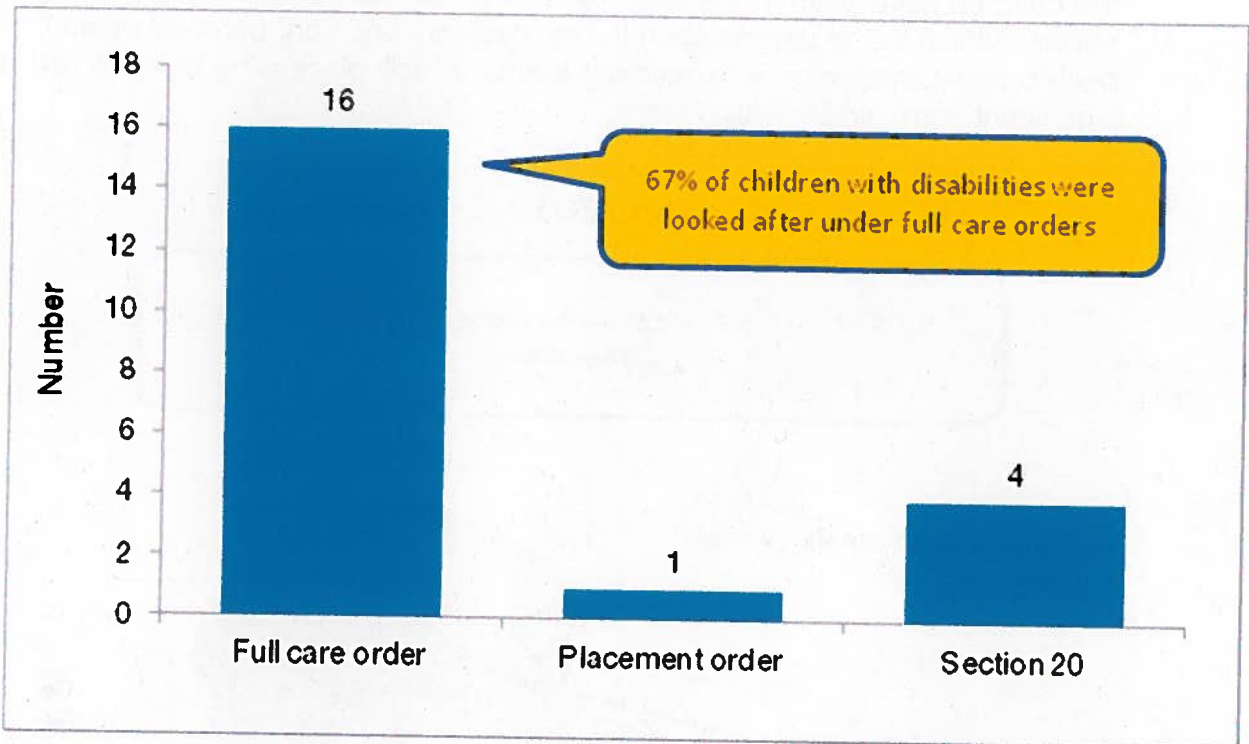
Since 2012/13, there has been a 40% decrease in the number of children ceasing to be LAC.

2.4 The current number of children who are looked after is 22. This shows that the number accommodated over the past 5 years, although showing a small reduction, is a relatively consistent number.

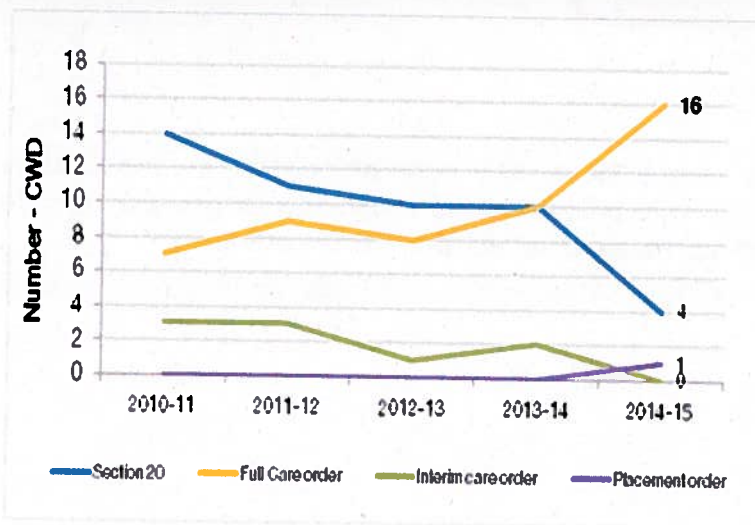
In year ending 2015, 43% of children with disabilities looked after were aged between 10 to 14, 38% were between 15 to 17 years, 14% were between 5 to 9 and 5% (1 child) was aged between 0 to 4.



2.5 The data evidences that the Disabled Children's Team current LAC cohort are in the 10 – 17 age bracket – this age group accounts for 81% of the Disabled Children's Team LAC population. Twelve of the twenty one children looked after were previously subject to child protection plan which may account for the time allowed for the plan to work, and to then issue proceedings. Three of the children were accommodated before 2005, five were accommodated between 2005 and 2010 and 13 children have been accommodated between 2011 to date.



LAC legal status' by years



At year ending 2015, 67% of children with disabilities were looked after under full care orders

Of the 16 LAC subject to full care orders 12 children (75%) were placed with a foster carer; the remainder were placed in a residential home/hostel.

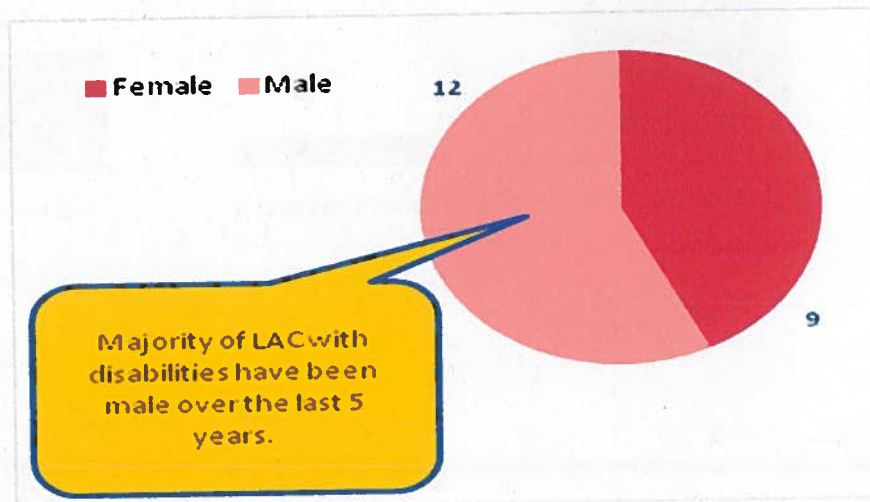
1 child subject to a placement order was placed with a foster carer.

3 of the 4 children subject to Section 20, were placed in residential care home/hostel whilst 1 was placed with a foster carer

- 2.6 The data shows that the status of intervention for Disabled children in need of accommodation has been proportionate to their need to be safeguarded. Historically DCT had a larger number of children who were accommodated under S20 with parental agreement rather than issuing applications to court. The evidence above illustrates that safeguarding issues have been addressed appropriately. The remaining children under S20 have significant issues affecting their education and learning and have presented as being beyond parental control.
- 2.7 The issues that have led to the DCT making applications to court on behalf of the children have been in the main regarding neglect e.g. non-engagement by parents which led to deterioration in the medical condition, parental mental – ill health, non-compliance with medical advice which places the child at risk of significant harm, and physical harm.

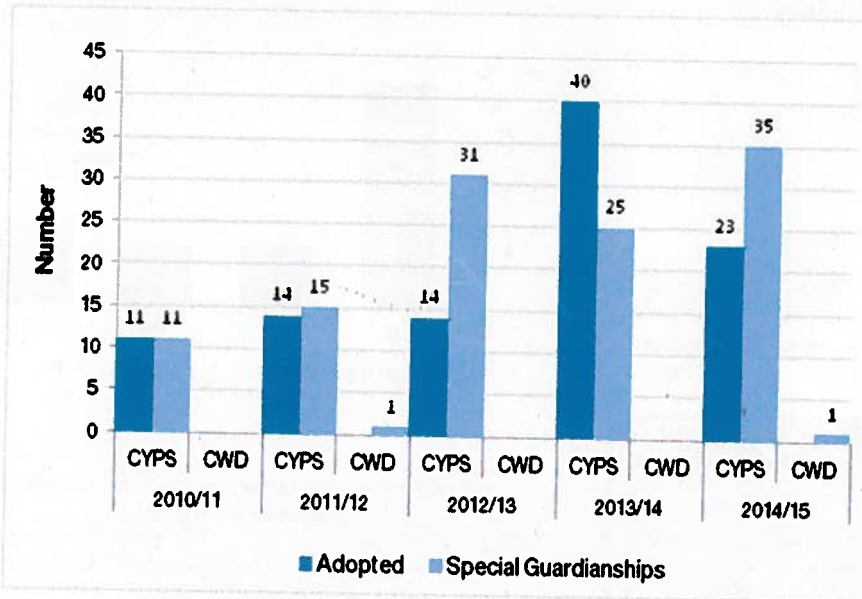
LAC at 31st March 2015, by gender

57% of LAC with disabilities were male; 43% were female.



- 2.8 The data indicates that more boys are accommodated in the Disabled children's team than girls. This prevalence is likely due to genetic disorders that disproportionately affect males, or affect them more severely.

Number of SGO's and Adoptions



Although there has been an overall increase in the number of adoptions and special guardianships across CYPS since 2009/10, there has only been 2 special guardianship orders made for children with disabilities over the 5 years. Both orders were made to former foster carers.

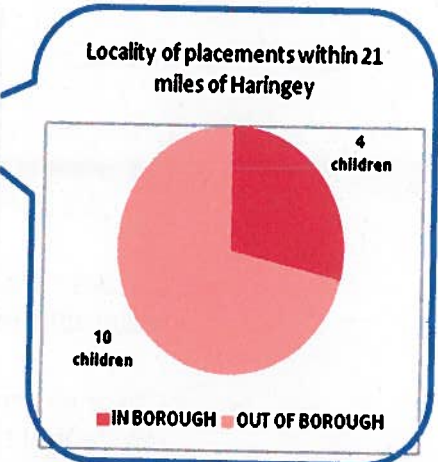
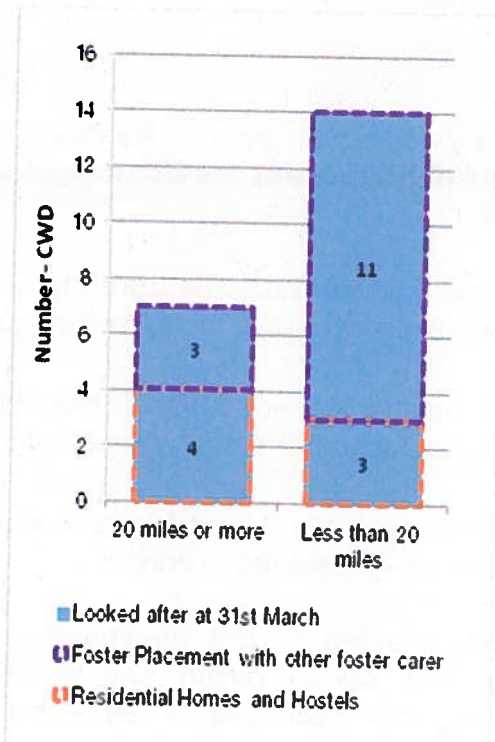
No children with disabilities have been adopted since 2010/11.

- 2.9 Foster carers who were considering the option of applying for SGO status have not pursued the option due to concern that the support identified in the SGO plan, would not be sufficient to meet their needs compared to the allowance they receive through their fostering allowance.
- 2.10 At the end of the year there were no LAC children in the Disabled Children's team who were placed with connected persons. Connected persons may be more willing to apply for a SGO as they would not be relinquishing a fostering allowance in so doing.

LAC Placements at 31st March 2015

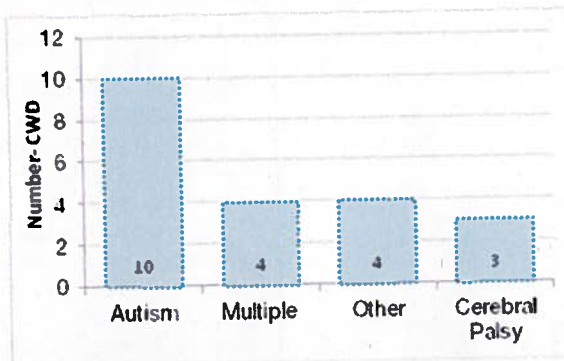
Of the 21 children with disabilities looked after at 31st March, majority (14 children) were placed less than 20 miles of Haringey; of which 4 children were placed within the LA boundary with other foster carers.

7 children were placed over 20 miles from Haringey; of these 3 children were placed with other foster carers and 4 children were placed in residential homes/hostels.



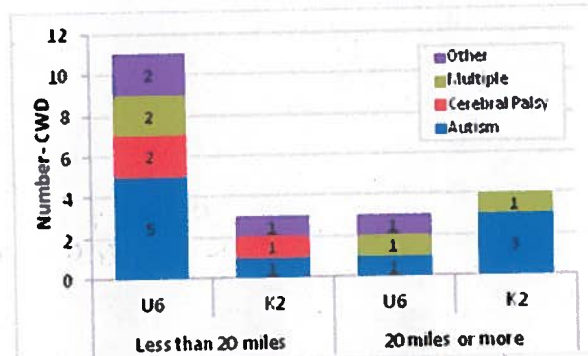
At 31st March, 7 children were placed with internal placements providers and 14 children were placed in private provisions.

LAC at 31st March, by disabilities



Of the 4 children who had multiple disabilities recorded, 1 child was autistic and 1 child was diagnosed with cerebral palsy.

'Other' disabilities included Charcot Marie Tooth (CMT) Neuropathy, Global Development Delay and physical disabilities. Please note, 1 child with no recorded disabilities was accommodated by the disabilities team with her sibling.



75% of children in residential placements over 20 miles of Haringey were autistic.

All children with cerebral palsy were placed less than 20 miles of the LA

2.11 One third of the Disabled Children's Team's LAC are placed over 20 miles from Haringey, with four of the seven children placed in residential homes or schools. Three of the 4 children placed over 20 miles in residential homes or schools are Autistic. The children placed outside of the 20 mile radius live between 33 miles and 139 miles from Haringey.

2.12 The children placed in foster care out of the 20 mile radius live between 57 and 65 miles from Haringey.

2.13 The issues:

- Cross boundary equipment where Haringey agrees to fund the equipment but work is not undertaken by the Borough of Ordinary Residence as they are CIC to Haringey.
- Children travelling some distances from their residential home in order to maintain their placement in the local Haringey special school.
- Children not having an educational placement identified when their residential home placement/foster placement is identified.
- Lack of available specialist foster carers that are local and that can meet the needs of severely disabled children.
- Promoting safeguarding through the young people's Health Assessments by ensuring that sexual health and other safeguarding issues are communicated and discussed in an appropriate way with Disabled children.

2.14 The challenges:

- Identifying appropriate placements for Disabled children which meet the needs arising out of the disability.
- Identifying appropriate placements for Disabled children which not only meet the needs arising out of the disability but also meet their cultural needs.
- Identifying appropriate placements that address the above and are within 20 mile radius of Haringey.
- Ensuring that our most vulnerable children are safeguarded in placements especially ones that are residential and miles from Haringey with children who may not have the vocabulary to disclose abuse or who's testimony is easily minimised.
- Promoting permanency plans through SGOs which will provide a favourable support package for Disabled children so that they do not become a disincentive.

2.15 Next Steps:

- This exercise of collating the data and compiling the narrative that sits behind the data has been an interesting and informative process for this service.
- There have been many examples of how outcomes have been improved for children looked after by DCT.
- The service has evidence of how children have thrived in care; examples such as how children have grown out of their equipment at an accelerated pace due to the good care they are receiving. Children have required less medical intervention, less medication and have subsequently required less hospital admissions. One young person who previously had a very unstable chaotic relationship with her parents, has now for the past two years settled into her residential home whilst maintaining her special school place in Haringey. In addition there are two siblings placed in Hastings whose language development since being accommodated has improved significantly along with their ability to form positive relationships and attachments with their carers. For some LAC in the Disabled Children's Team access to a 24 hour curriculum that incorporates their need for shared routines across their school and care facilities, has made a positive significant difference to their lives. Of note also is that some of Haringey's most multiply disabled children are placed in foster families and not in residential homes / schools.

- The evidence of outcomes and how different placements make a positive difference to children with differing needs will be systematically collected in order to plan for future placements and to learn from what works for Disabled LAC and what promotes the best outcomes.
- The borough has one unit in Haringey where three of our LAC live, cared for by a foster carer. They live locally, have local friends, access local special schools and can have access to family. As these three young people will all be age 18 by May 2016 and under Staying Put Regulations may wish to remain in the placement, we are hoping to develop plans to create a new unit locally for Disabled children and young people.

3. Contribution to strategic outcomes

Priority 1 : Outstanding for All

4. Use of Appendices
NA

5. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
NA