

Children, Sports and Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	17 th October 2016
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Annual Looked After Children and Care Leavers Report 2015-16
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Cabinet Member Portfolio	Councillor Danny Chalkley, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	City for Choice / Heritage / Aspiration
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report highlights the significant responsibilities the local authority has in relation to Looked After Children and Care Leavers, and how it discharges these.
- 1.2 Generally, outcomes for looked after children are poorer than those who have not been in the care system. Despite the good work and dedication of professionals and carers, challenges still remain in improving the experiences and outcomes for looked after children. Locally, we closely monitor the profile and outcomes of our care population in order to effectively plan services. Section 4 outlines the profile of our current care population, Section 5 focuses specifically on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs) and the following sections highlight outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

1.3 Section 6 highlights Westminster's strategic priorities for looked after children services and future developments in services.

1.4 This report is for information.

2. Introduction

2.1 In this report, the term Looked After Children refers to those children for whom Westminster City Council has assumed Parental Responsibility through a care order, by an agreement with their parent(s) or for UASCs.

2.2 Westminster also has a duty and responsibility to those young people who leave care after the age of 18 years until they reach the age of 21 years, or 25 if they are in higher education.

2.3 The majority of looked after children need alternative care and accommodation due to the inability of their primary care giver to offer safe and effective care within the family home. Many looked after children are able to return to their parent(s) or extended family members speedily and do not require long term services or interventions. Many who remain in care are likely to have suffered neglect or abuse, prior to coming into our care, and are likely to require support from a range of services.

3. Corporate Parenting

3.1 Corporate Parenting is the term used to refer to the collective responsibility of the Council to provide the best care and protection for children and young people who are 'looked after', that is, who are in public care. Effective corporate parenting will need the commitment from all Council employees and elected Members and an authority wide approach. These responsibilities for Local Authorities were first laid out in the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004 and reinforced in the Children and Young People's Act 2008.

3.2 The Corporate Parenting Board has a key role in monitoring how the Council discharges its corporate parenting responsibilities. Over the past year the Board has continued to meet with looked after children and care leavers on a quarterly basis. Topics are highlighted in Section 11. The membership and structure of the Board has also been reviewed to improve the ability of young people to recommend topics and ask questions of the Board.

4. Numbers of Looked After Children

4.1 Nationally, there were 69, 540 children and young people in care on 31 March 2015, a slight increase on the previous year of approximately 1%. This national figure is the highest figure of children in care since the implementation

of the 1989 Children Act. The national year-end figures for 2016 are scheduled to be published by DfE on 29 September 2016.

- 4.2 Within Westminster City Council the number of looked after children has steadily declined over the last seven years, from 247 in March 2009 to 166 children in March 2016. Numbers at March 2016 represent a 7% decrease when compared with the same point in 2015. The number of children looked after as a proportion of the population in Westminster City Council is around 41 LAC per 10,000 population. This is lower when compared to our statistical neighbours and nationally (60).

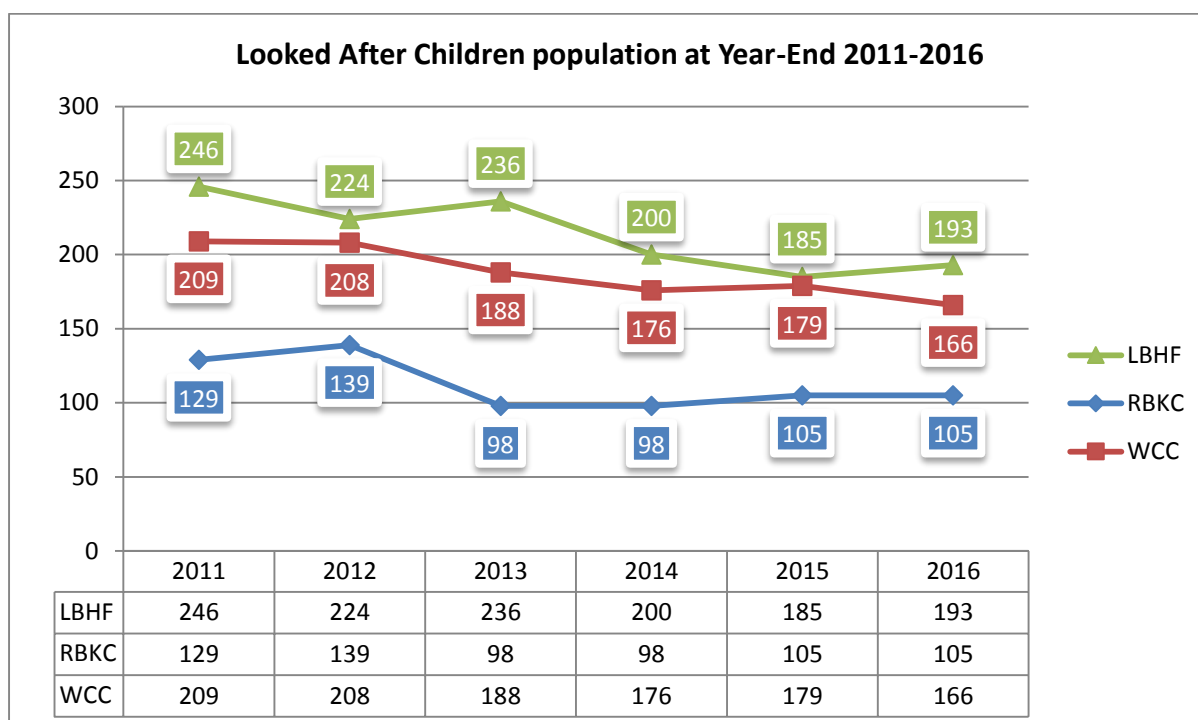
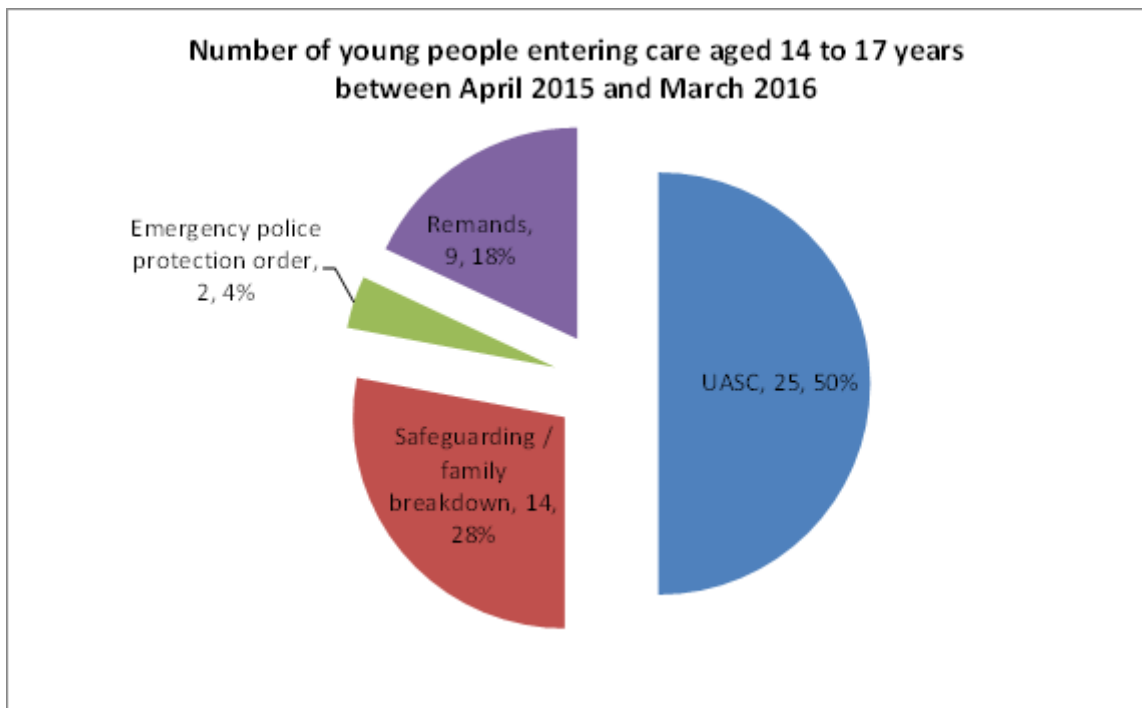


Table 1: Looked After Children population (year-end): 2010/11-2015/16

- 4.3 The majority (127, 77%) of looked after children at the 31 March 2016 were aged 10 and over, with 58 (35%) children aged 16 and above and 69 aged 10 to 15 (42%). Only 20 looked after children were aged under 5 years (12 aged under one and 8 aged between one and four). The low numbers for children aged under 5 years is attributed to care proceedings reaching timely permanence decisions and those with an adoption care plan being placed in adoptive families without delay.
- 4.4 The overall decrease in Westminster children in care numbers at 31 March 2016 is attributed to a number of factors, including the impact of the range of interventions linked to our Focus on Practice programme, the range of services provided to support families and avoid adolescent care entry, robust rehabilitation home support packages when it is assessed that it is safe for

children to return to live at home, robust age assessments of UASC young people to prevent those assessed to be over 18 years of age entering care, alternatives to remand being implemented and a decrease in young offenders remanded by the Youth Courts and significantly improved timescales for care proceedings resulting in permanency plans or children being placed with extended family members. Between April 2015 and March 2016, 25 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children became looked after by Westminster. This represented 26% of the new care entrants in this year and contributes to the number of looked after children being aged 10 and over. Section 5 considers the UASC population in greater detail.

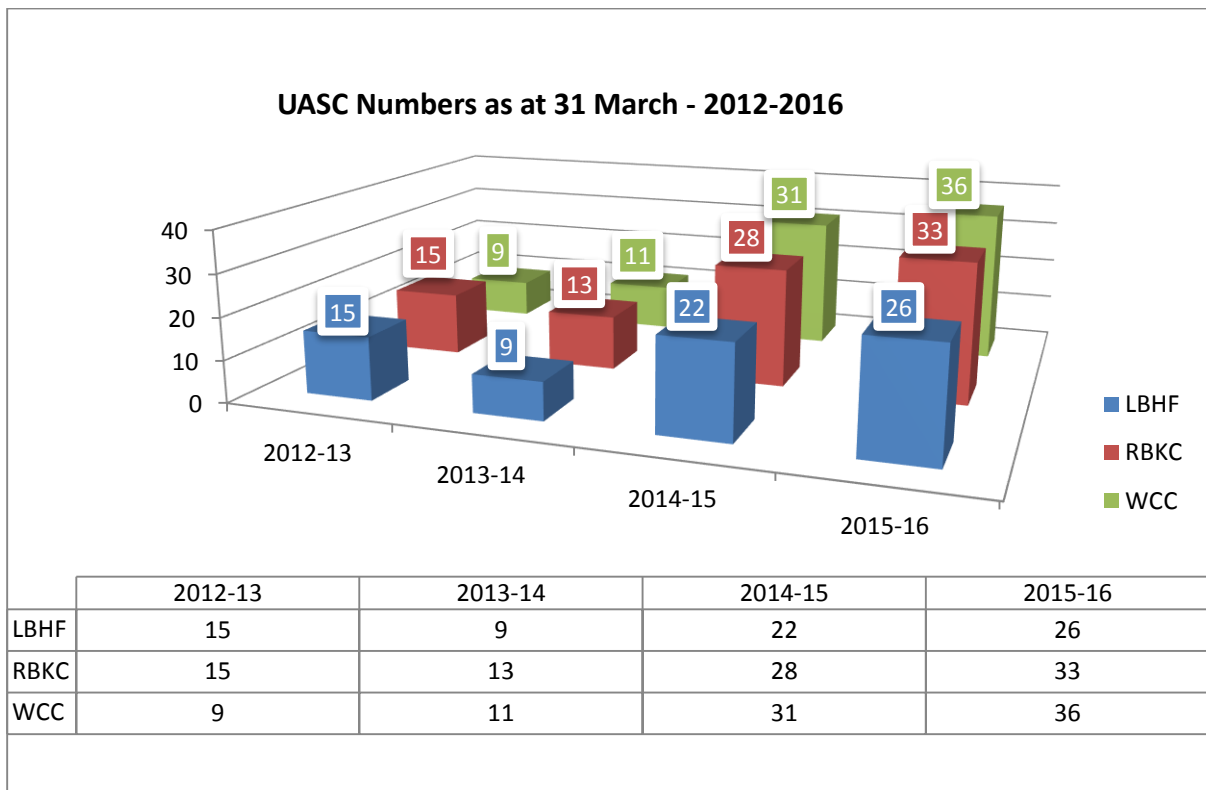
- 4.5 The chart below provides a breakdown of the reasons for new care episodes for 14-17 year olds during 2015-16. This cohort represents 49 children, of which the highest proportion (50%) were classified as UASC (25 children). Safeguarding/Family breakdown represented 14 children (28%) of which eleven were 16 and 17 years old. A significant proportion of this cohort do not remain looked after longer term and return to live again with their families following interventions being provided to address the conflict and dynamics.



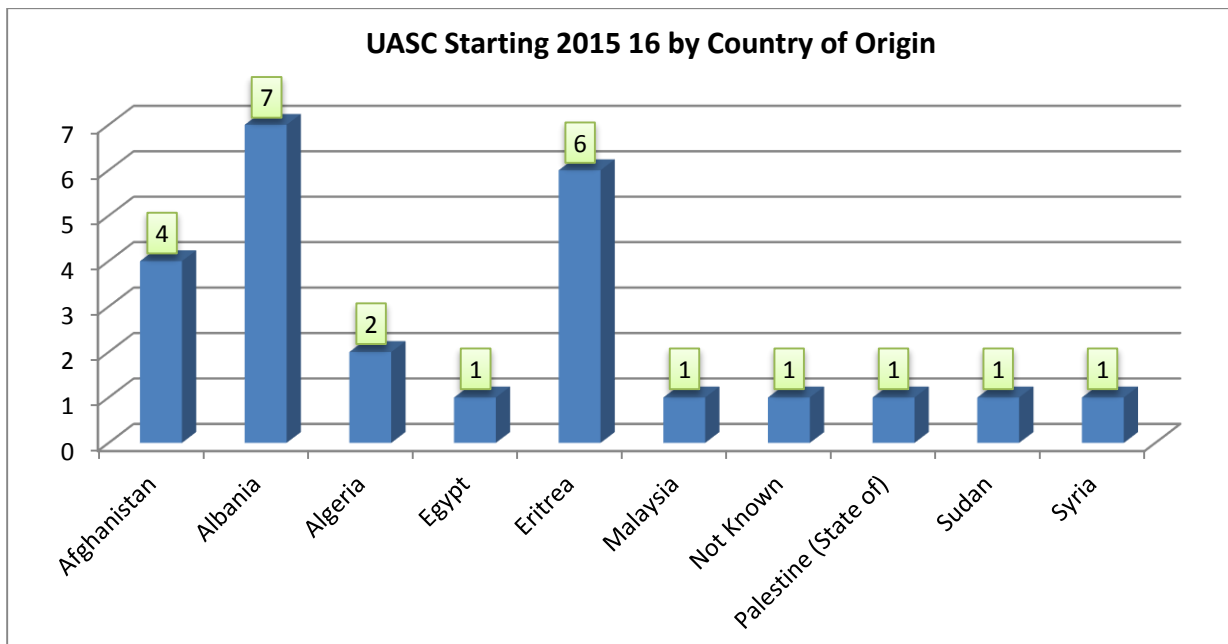
5. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

- 5.1 Within Westminster there has been a significant increase in the number of UASC LAC entries during 2014-15 (33 young people) and 2015-16 (25 young people). Nearly half of the current UASC and former UASC care leaver population have arrived within the last two years. The majority (77%) of the

referrals over the last two years have come via the rota referral scheme that LB Croydon manages, whereby UASCs making asylum claims in Croydon are distributed amongst the local authorities within London. However, given Westminster’s central location 20% have also been referred via the police, with three young people being arrested for criminal activity, being identified as UASC during interview and then released into local authority care.



5.2 Mirroring the experiences of other London boroughs, most new UASC were from Albania (7/25), followed closely by Eritrea (6/25). Others arrived from Afghanistan (4), Algeria (2), Egypt (1), Malaysia (1), Palestine (1), Sudan (1) and Syria (1). One young person’s country of origin is still awaiting confirmation.



5.3 There is notable consistency in the age of UASC on arrival with the vast majority (92%) aged between 15-17 years. However, we do occasionally experience much younger children such as a 9 year old. Given the age trends the UASC population have a significant bearing on Westminster's care leaver numbers. In 2015-16 42 (25%) of Westminster's care leavers were former UASCs. A significant number of UASCs are ultimately unsuccessful in their claims for asylum into adulthood and in some cases (5 currently) this has a bearing on UASCs going missing as a means of avoiding deportation. Negative asylum claims relate to the majority of UASCs originating from Albania and the Home Office concluding that they have not proven genuine persecution. The largest number exit care by receiving their permanent leave to remain (11 young people in 2015-16) and exiting the service in the same way as indigenous children. Former UASC care leavers continue to be supported by the Leaving Care Service whilst they await a decision by the Home Office in line with our statutory obligations. The age of those awaiting a decision ranges from 18 to 24 years old.

5.4 UASCs experience a range of physical and emotional difficulties as a result of prolonged journeys in insanitary conditions with inadequate supplies of food and water and/or what they might have been subjected to in their home countries prior to leaving. The effects of separation, bereavement and uncertainty about their families' wellbeing and own immigration status can have a negative emotional impact on UASCs. These range of needs are addressed through their LAC Health Assessments and involving LAC CAMHS.

5.5 In May 2016 the Immigration Act, 2016 was introduced from which the UASC National Transfer Scheme launched in July 2016. This introduction means that any new UASCs entering England and Wales will be distributed evenly between the local authorities rather than primarily London and the South East by virtue of where they enter the country and seek asylum. How many UASCs each local authority will have a duty to look after is based on calculating 0.07% of their indigenous child population. As such Westminster needs to have a maximum of 28 UASCs and only if we fall below that threshold would any new UASCs be referred via the transfer scheme. We are currently reaching that threshold and will become eligible to take any new UASCs when any of our current UASC population reaches 18 years. Westminster will therefore not experience the surge in UASCs as seen in 2014-16 in future years. Across Tri-Borough work is underway to scope the development of a joint accommodation provision for UASC care leavers who can live independently in order to free up supported accommodation for care leavers, including some UASCs, who need a higher level of daily support. A Tri-Borough post is also being created to maximise funding streams and Home Office claims for UASCs.

6 Ofsted Inspection

6.1 Children’s Services in Westminster was subject to an inspection under the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework between 11 January and 4 February 2016. Simultaneous inspections took place in Hammersmith and Fulham and Kensington and Chelsea, and services shared between the three boroughs were also inspected. Westminster received an overall single judgement of ‘Outstanding’, making us the first Council in the country to receive this rating under the single inspection framework (alongside Kensington and Chelsea). This is the highest possible judgement under the Single Inspection Framework and to date no other local authority has achieved an ‘Outstanding’ judgement. Approximately 114 Councils have been inspected under this framework to date, with over 50% receiving an overall judgement of ‘Requiring Improvement’. These inspections mean that Westminster (and Kensington) has been judged to be the highest performing Children’s Service in the country. The report highlights that significant and sustained improvements have been made since the last inspection in October 2011, when services were judged to be ‘Good’.

6.2 Relevant to this report Ofsted made a number of sub-judgements as follows:

Children looked after and achieving permanence:	Outstanding
Adoption Performance:	Outstanding
Experiences and progress of care leavers:	Good
Leadership, management and governance:	Outstanding

- 6.3 The report found that Children's Services in Westminster are made up of *"well-trained and impressive social workers"* who are *"patient, tenacious and respectful"* and make a *"vast difference"* in keeping children safe from harm. The Council is a *"highly ambitious corporate parent"* and Looked After Children in Westminster see *"exceptionally good outcomes"*. Ofsted found that our children in care had *"enduring relationships with committed, skilled and determined social workers"*, resulting in children and young people doing well in education and feeling stable and safe. Adoption services in particular were found to be Outstanding.
- 6.4 Furthermore, the report outlined that Westminster's leaders and managers demonstrate *"a strong track record of effective, high quality service delivery...within a mature culture of appropriate challenge...(and services) benefit from outstanding, highly ambitious and confident operational and political leadership"*. The report further highlighted that *"senior leaders and elected members demonstrate care and compassion, and a rigorous approach to achieving excellence at all levels"*.
- 6.5 One of our identified strengths was our ability to undertake rigorous self-assessment leading to continuous improvements without complacency. Therefore, whilst this is an excellent result that we are proud of plans are in place and being implemented to address the areas for improvement to achieve continuous progress. This includes engaging young people and care leavers placed in custody through consultation work as part of the Service Development Group for Children in Care and the Corporate Parenting Board and ensuring that all young people who go missing are offered a high quality interview when they return to better understand their reasons for absconding, trends, and what services are required to further support them.

7 Strategic Planning

- 7.1 A Tri-borough strategy for Looked After Children continues to be implemented and sets out the vision and intended outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in the three boroughs in the period 2014 to 2017. A new strategy for 2017-20 will be launched in 2017.
- 7.2 The strategy has six strategic objectives:
- Children on the edge of care are better supported to remain within their families and community
 - Looked After Children and Care Leavers are provided with security, stability and are cared for
 - Looked After Children and Care Leavers are safe from harm and neglect

- Looked After Children and Care Leavers are supported in reaching a good standard of education
- Looked After Children and Care Leavers health needs are promoted and supported
- All Looked After Children and Care Leavers have a voice in decisions which affect their lives.

7.3 To support the delivery of the strategic priorities, and progress towards shared outcomes, an annual borough specific Looked After Children and Care Leavers improvement plan is developed and delivered with partners. The plan is monitored and further developed through Tri-borough multi-agency service improvement groups, which link directly with the Children in Care Councils and are able to respond to the issues that these councils raise.

7.4 The Tri-borough Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has a significant role in ensuring effective multi-agency work and safeguarding for Looked After Children. The LSCB has requested an annual report on progress made with achieving outcomes outlined in the Tri-borough Looked after Children's Strategy.

7.5 The Children, Sport & Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee is also involved in monitoring the quality and effectiveness of services, via the scrutiny of this annual report on services and outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. A report on the work of the Tri-borough Fostering and Adoption Team is also presented annually with a focus on the range, quality and choice of available placements.

7.6 Other relevant performance indicators are reported quarterly through the Family Services Management Group and then to the Cabinet Member via their weekly Cabinet Briefings.

8 Safeguarding Outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

8.1 Children who are subject to frequent placement moves are less able to form positive attachments with carers which makes them more vulnerable to forming unsafe relationships with other adults or their peer group and disengagement from education and positive activities. The number of placement moves that children have is carefully monitored to ensure plans are adapted and additional services introduced to make placements more resilient where required. In 2015-16, 11% (18 children) of looked after children experienced three or more placement moves, a slight increase on the previous year where there were 10% (17 children) of children with three or more placements (with performance remaining in line with the national average of 11%).

- 8.2 As a geographically small borough, not all looked after children are able to live within Westminster when they are in care. Of the children and young people Looked After at 31 March 2016, just under 80% were placed in London boroughs, including within Westminster, and 46% were placed with Tri-Borough in-house foster carers within Tri-Borough and surrounding London boroughs. There are currently 162 in-house fostering households offering placements across Tri-Borough. Additionally, there are currently 14 care leavers who continue to live with foster carers under a “Staying Put” arrangement, an initiative which enables care leavers to continue to live in their foster placement when they become young adults. We also have 19 (11%) looked after children placed with relatives who have been assessed as kinship foster carers, thus enabling these children to reside with extended family. A proportion of these children will become subject to Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) within these placements rather than remain looked after by the local authority in the coming months.
- 8.3 Looked after children are at greater risk of going missing than their peers, and therefore vulnerable to child sexual exploitation (CSE). Children with frequent placement changes are more likely to go missing and this behaviour also impacts upon the stability of their current placement. There were a total of 56 episodes of missing children in care in 2015-16, which included a small number of individual young people who had frequent repeat missing episodes. A robust process is in place that ensures missing children are visited and interviewed in order to address any potential safeguarding issues that the child may be encountering.
- 8.4 With specific reference to children at risk of CSE there have been a number of developments to identify those assessed to be at risk and to provide a comprehensive support package to ensure that risks are reduced. The Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB) oversees this work. Local developments have been informed by the publication of London Child Sexual Exploitation Operation Protocols. These include:
- a. Agreement of a CSE Strategy by the LSCB.
 - b. The implementation of a monthly Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation meeting chaired by the Police and Children’s Services.
 - c. A shared risk assessment tool.
 - d. A common pathway to services coordinated through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
 - e. Development of data sets and problem profiles
 - f. A range of training and awareness-raising initiatives.
 - g. Trialling a specific CSE screening tool.
 - h. The creation of a Tri-Borough strategic lead role

8.5 Currently Westminster has a total of 27 children identified at risk of CSE and these children are categorised from the assessment on how serious the risk is. The majority of children in Westminster are within the blue category, which following an assessment has identified them as potentially vulnerable to CSE but with no actual evidence of CSE taking place. With specific reference to looked after children there are currently four children assessed to be in Category 1 and two assessed to be in the Blue Category. Whilst the number of looked after children assessed to be in Category 1 has increased from last year this relates to improved identification of risks, assessment and clearer CSE mapping. There was one child in 2015-16 who was brought into local authority care and care proceedings commenced due to CSE and missing concerns and her family's ability to keep her safe.

CSE Concern	LBHF	RBKC	WCC	Grand Total
CSE Blue	27	13	15	55
CAT 1	19	7	12	38
CAT 2	6	2	0	8
CAT 3	0	0	0	0
Grand Total	52	22	27	101

8.6 In 2014-15 the legal framework supporting and protecting care leavers aged 18 and above changed. Children aged 16–18 who leave care continue to be supported and safeguarded through the application of child care legislation. Under the Care Act 2014, implemented in April 2015, local authorities now have a duty to conduct transition assessments. This is where there is a likely need for care and support when the young person turns 18 and when that assessment would be of significant benefit. Statutory guidance cites some examples relevant to the care leaving population for those young people:

- whose needs have been largely met by their educational institution, but who, once they leave, will require their needs to be met in some other way (e.g. those with autism, learning disabilities);
- detained in the youth justice system who will move to adult custodial services and
- receiving child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) who may also require care and support as adults even if they did not receive children's services from their local authority.

The Act also makes enquiries to safeguard adults a statutory duty, if they are thought to be at risk.

9 Health Outcomes for Looked After Children

- 9.1 Looked after children and young people share the same health risks and problems as their peers but often to a greater degree. They often enter care with a worse level of health than their peers in part due to the impact of poverty, abuse, neglect and chaotic parenting.
- 9.2 Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that health assessments are carried out for every looked after child in their care. Of the 106 Annual Health Assessments (for children who have been in care for a year) 100% were carried out on time.
- 9.3 The Local Authority should act as a 'good parent' in relation to the health of looked after children. Within that role it has the right to approve the immunisation of children within its care against vaccine preventable diseases as per the national immunisation schedule. The proportion of children with up to date immunisations continues to rise: 99% in 2015-16 compared with 91% in 2014-15. The continued improvement is related to a drive to ensure that young people receive their school leaver booster (diphtheria tetanus and polio) and to ensure that eligible girls are receiving the human papilloma vaccination (HPV).
- 9.4 Dental health is an integral part of the Health Assessment. The Local Authority and NHS Trust are required to ensure that looked after children receive regular check-ups with a dentist. 97% of all children in care for twelve months at 31 March 2016 had their teeth checked by a dentist.
- 9.5 Due to the nature of their experiences prior to and during being looked after, many looked after children will have poor mental health. This may be in the form of significant emotional, psychological or behavioural difficulties. A total of 71 looked after children received a service from the specialist LAC Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) during 2015-16.
- 9.6 89% of children in care for twelve months aged 4 to 16 years had a strengths and difficulties questionnaire completed, this represents an improvement from 73% in 2014-15, although an area in which we wish to achieve continued improvements.

10 Educational Outcomes for Looked After Children

- 10.1 Firstly, it is important to note the significant changes in the assessment, marking and reporting procedures used by schools and Local Authorities that were introduced in 2015/16. The expected standard has been raised and the accountability framework for schools has also changed. Therefore, the DfE

has advised schools and Local Authorities that it would be incorrect and misleading to make direct comparisons showing changes over time.

10.2 Detailed analysis of each cohort of pupils in 2016 indicates Westminster looked after children and care leavers continue to make good progress in most areas and have obtained their predicted levels and grades. In light of the above context attention should be paid to individual stories and progress each child/young person rather looking at the headline outcomes.

10.3 Progress and attainment at Key Stage 1

There were 2 pupils in the reporting cohort. One of these pupils has a statement of SEN/EHCP and attends a Special Day School. The other pupil attends an out of authority mainstream school. Neither pupil met the “expected standard” This was as expected. The pupil in a mainstream primary school has a complex care history, with number of placement and school changes. Nevertheless, there is evidence over time both pupils are making good progress.

10.4 Progress and attainment at Key Stage 2

There were 12 pupils in the reporting cohort. Analysis of national tests results reveals a mixed and complicated picture.

	New expected standard reading	New expected standard grammar, punctuation and spelling	New expected standard Maths	New expected standard in all areas
WCC LAC	33.3%	58.3%	25%	25%
All pupils	66%	72%	70%	53%

10.5 Initial analysis of this year’s results would appear to show a widening of the gap between looked after children and all pupils. However, it is important to note the likely impact of the new assessment arrangements on looked after children. Analysis of attainment for these pupils at KS1 would seem to have indicated that the majority would have achieved higher results; 70% of this cohort achieved at least a level 2 in all areas as KS1. Despite not achieving the expected standard in some areas many pupils achieved a scaled score in reading and Maths of only a few marks below the expected standard scaled score of 100.

10.6 It is also significant that many of the pupils experienced considerable disruption and difficulties over the previous two years; 7 of the 13 had one or more placement move in the last two years. Two pupils were assessed as having significant Special Education Needs and now attend residential Special Schools. Ten of the pupils are educated in out of borough primary schools.

10.7 Progress and attainment at Key Stage 4

It is difficult to compare this year's grades to previous years due to the introduction of Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measures brought in by DfE to replace the five A* to C grades including English and maths, which was the previous method of reporting results.

10.8 There were 16 pupils in the reporting cohort.

	5 A-C including English and Maths	5 A-C	5 A-G	1 A-G
WCC LAC	18.75%	25	50	100

10.9 Initial analysis of the statistics indicates a decrease in the percentage who achieved 5 GCSE grades A* to C including English and Maths. However, changes in the nature of GCSEs means any comparison with previous years should be treated with caution. 2015-16's Year 11 cohort included a range of pupils. It included a number of highly motivated and able pupils, who achieved excellent results (one child obtained 11 A*-As and another 12 A-Bs), but it also included 4 pupils with Statements/EHCP who were not expected to achieve as highly. There were also 5 UASCs who entered care in KS4, whose level of English meant they were unable to achieve the higher GCSE grades.

10.10 Post 16 and Care Leavers: End of academic year performance

	Westminster
% of 16 and 17 year olds who are EET	76%
% of 18-25 year olds who are EET (breakdown below)	69%
% and number attending university	16% - 26
% and number attending education and further education	37% - 55
% and number in training, employment or apprenticeships (6 on apprenticeships)	16% - 26

10.11 Steady progress has been made in addressing the issues and barriers around sustaining education, training and employment for post 16 looked after children and care leavers. NEET/EET levels fluctuate but analysis of EET performance at the end of the 2016 academic year shows performance is better than for care leavers nationally (58% EET). The Virtual School

continues to provide a lot of input to young people to address when they are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET.

10.12 Attendance and Exclusions

	Westminster			
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Average attendance R-11		91%	88%	92%
Number with one or more fixed term exclusion	16	14	11	14
Number with permanent exclusion	1	1	0	0

The attendance figures for 2016 show increase in performance over the past year. There were no permanent exclusions in 2015/16. This reflects the work the Virtual School undertakes directly with schools, social workers and carers in developing strategies to avoid permanent exclusion. There were 14 pupils with one or more fixed term exclusion in 2015/16, this is roughly the same proportion as previous years.

11 Engagement and Participation

- 11.1 Westminster offers an extensive programme of participation for both looked after children and care leavers, providing them with opportunities to participate and engage within the service. This programme includes a variety of groups, consultation events, projects as well as recreational and enrichment activities. In doing so, it is recognised that the children and young people we work with want to participate in different ways and in varying degrees. Some young people want direct involvement in consultation and decision making whilst others might want to attend a group or activity. This means that we have a core group of looked after children and care leavers that frequently participate within all aspects of the programme and more specific opportunities that attract many of the wider population. This includes reaching those not living in London and 23% of looked after children and care leavers that participated in consultations during 2015-16 did not live in London.
- 11.2 Part of the core group of looked after children and care leavers that frequently participate are members of the Children and Young People's Panel (CYPP). It has eleven members ranging from the ages of 14-19 years old who meet every six weeks, whereby sessions are a mixture of consultation and recreational activities. In January 2016, the CYPP met with Ofsted Inspectors as part of Children's Services' inspection. The feedback from the inspectors about the CYPP was extremely positive referring to the group in its report as '*reflective, committed and proactive*'. More generally they also referred to consultation and participation as '*outstanding*' recognising the collaborative

efforts of the whole department in supporting the delivery of the participation programme.

- 11.3 Over the past year the CYPP, have been involved in attending the Corporate Parenting Board, where they present the findings of consultations carried out with looked after children and care leavers. They have taken part in delivering training to foster carers as well as planning and delivering LAC events. Overall, the CYPP have a significant profile throughout Children Services, whereby they are well known by corporate parenting members, other professionals and by a number of the Tri-borough departments.
- 11.4 Westminster's family therapy clinical team is increasingly involving the CYPP, where members have been involved in 'The Going Home Project', which is focusing on developing reunification plans for some looked after children to return to the care of their birth families. The CYPP have been consulted around how professionals can engage with and support families to improve outcomes for looked after children who may return home, as well as in developing more collaborative ways of working.
- 11.5 There has also been a significant increase over the past 12 months of looked after children and care leavers participating in recruitment interview panels including for the Tri-borough Executive Director, Deputy Service Managers, Social Workers, Family Therapists and Family Practitioners. It is recognised that their involvement helps with recruiting a more child focussed workforce that values the participation of young people.
- 11.6 There has also been an increase in the number of consultations that have been completed with looked after children and care leavers. A thematic approach has been adopted whereby they are consulted quarterly based the 6 strands of the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy. Over the past 18 months looked after children and care leavers have been consulted on
- Placement Stability
 - Staying Safe
 - Young people having a voice in decisions made in care planning
 - Education Support
 - Health
 - Care Leavers' experience of custody
 - Training and Employment
- 11.7 The findings of these consultations are presented at the Corporate Parenting Board by the CYPP Panel and influence the development of various work streams within the Service Development Group.

11.8 Other groups, activities and events which are part of the participation programme include a Tuesday cooking group, Winter Festivities Party, annual Sayers Croft Residential trip, holiday activities programme and an annual Education Awards Ceremony.

12 Outcomes for Care Leavers

12.1 The Leaving Care Service assists, befriends and advises young people to make a successful transition from the Council's care to independent living in the community.

12.2 Care leavers move into the service at the age of 18 when they officially leave care and become an adult. At this point, they are allocated a Personal Advisor who takes full case responsibility. The Pathway Plan sets out the support available for all aspects of their life, with a particular emphasis on securing settled accommodation and appropriate education, employment and training (EET). The Plan is reviewed every six months until the young person is 21, or later if they are completing an agreed course of education, training and employment. If, however, a young person wishes to remain allocated to their Social Worker post 18 years and this is assessed to be in their interests a flexible approach is adopted.

12.3 The Leaving Care Service supported up to 168 young people in the current year, including a rise in care leavers who came into care as Unaccompanied Minors seeking asylum and in high need, complex cases where the young person came into care over the age of 14 from the indigenous population.

12.4 From April 2011 a former care leaver over the age of 21, but under 25, will be able to return to ask for their case to be reopened in order to complete a course of EET up to the level of a first degree. At the end of March 2016, 69% of care leavers were in education, employment or training (those not included young parents and those in custody). This includes 26 care leavers that are attending university and 5 that are off to university in Autumn 2016. This is above the national average for care leavers. Five care leavers obtained university degrees in Summer 2016, including one who is now travelling to teach English in South Korea and one who has secured employment in a bank following the completion of a business and finance degree.

12.5 A key priority is improving the availability, choice and promotion of apprenticeships and employment for care leavers. Westminster's Virtual School publicises vacancies on a weekly basis to care leavers, provides drop in sessions and individualised packages to support care leavers in accessing and sustaining employment and training. This includes support with writing CVs, interview preparation and accompanying young people to interviews.

They are also involved in a Council wide initiative to promote and develop apprenticeships and work closely with employers outside the Council to access apprenticeships for care leavers. Current apprenticeships include within Westminster Council, the NHS, as a sous chef and car manufacturing.

- 12.6 All but 2 care leavers are in suitable accommodation (this excludes those care leavers that are in custody or missing UASCs) and no care leavers were evicted from their final stage accommodation. Westminster's Housing Service has recently confirmed that the supply of final stage local authority social rented accommodation for eligible care leavers will increase from 12 to 24 properties for 2016-17 thus enabling more care leavers to access suitable accommodation. Additionally, a collaborative initiative between Children's, Housing and Economy Services has resulted in the creation of a joint funded Care Leaver Housing and Employment Coach. This post will support care leavers to access and sustain employment and affordable and suitable accommodation and support them to become economically active and financially self-reliant via sustainable employment. It is also planned that during 2016 the Virtual School will develop a coaching programme and recruit employment coaches from local businesses to work with care leavers that are in employment, apprenticeships and training with the aim of achieving and sustaining their employment.
- 12.7 In June 2016 the government introduced a new strategy, "Keep on Caring", which sets out their plans and aspirations for improvements in the support provided to care leavers. These plans are ambitious and wide ranging and encompass legislative changes, innovation in the way leaving care services are delivered and a vision for a Care Leaver Covenant which encourages private sector and voluntary organisations to make commitments to supporting care leavers in the same way local authorities and central government do now. Included in the strategy is the government's intention to legislate that all care leavers will be supported by a Personal Adviser up to the age of 25 (currently this is 21 for all care leavers and 25 for those who continue in higher education) which will require Leaving Care Services, including within Westminster, to extend their offer to a wider cohort.

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**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the
Background Papers please contact Report Author x5341
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APPENDICES:

For any supplementary documentation; especially from external stakeholders or documents which do not fit this template.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

This section is for any background papers used to formulate the report or referred to in the body of the report.