



## Children and Young People Select Committee

### Children's Social Care Annual Corporate Parenting Report

**Date:** 11 January 2021

**Key decision:** No.

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:**

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### Outline and recommendations

Provide the CYP select committee with an overview of our children in care and care leaver population and how Lewisham;

- Is fulfilling its Corporate Parenting responsibilities.
- Children's Services have kept our children in care and care leavers safe and supported through 2020 and the Covid 19 Pandemic
- Has continued to improve the service through 2020 and responded to the recommendations from the July 2019 Ofsted ILACS inspection.

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 “Corporate Parenting” is the term used to describe our collective responsibility to ensure the best outcomes for children in the care of Lewisham Council, and those young people who have left our care. ‘Children Looked After’ (CLA) and care leavers are amongst the most vulnerable children and young people in our society. As corporate parents, it is our role to ensure that they are safe, happy and given every opportunity to achieve their full potential. The responsibility of a 'corporate parent' for providing the best possible care for children and young people is a responsibility that is shared between the council, the elected members, all of its employees and partner agencies (such as education services, health services and housing).
- 1.2 Lewisham is currently the corporate parent for 476 children in care and 427 Care Leavers. This report provides an overview of how Lewisham;
- Is fulfilling its Corporate Parenting responsibilities.
  - Children’s Services have kept our children in care and care leavers safe and supported through 2020 and the Covid 19 Pandemic
  - Has continued to improve the service through 2020 and responded to the recommendations from the July 2019 Ofsted ILACS inspection.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are recommended to note and comment upon the contents of this report.

## 3. Policy Context

- 3.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time, in law, the responsibilities placed upon councils to ensure the best outcomes for Children Looked After (0-18 years old) and Care Leavers (18 – 25 years old). The Act outlines these duties as a set principles i.e.

- (a) *to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;*
- (b) *to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;*
- (c) *to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;*
- (d) *to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;*
- (e) *to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;*
- (f) *for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;*
- (g) *to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.*

In addition, the cross Government Guidance (July 2016): Keep on Caring, supporting young people from care to independence, sets out how the state, as corporate parents will support care leavers to achieve 5 key outcomes. These outcomes underpin the Care Leaver Covenant, which Lewisham has made a commitment to.

- ✓ Living independently
- ✓ Stability, safety & security
- ✓ Access to health support
- ✓ Financial stability
- ✓ Access to education, employment and training

- 3.2 In response to Covid, the Government published the: “Coronavirus (Covid-19): guidance for children’s social care services.” in April. This document outlined the regulatory changes that were made, relaxing some statutory requirements in relation to Corporate Parenting, which expired in September 2020. Through 2020 Lewisham Children’s Services made use of some flexibilities offered in this temporary legislation. Primarily the conversation of some face to face visits, to ‘virtual’ contact with children and families.

## 4. Background

- 4.1 In July 2019, Children’s Services was subject to an inspection under the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) framework. Ofsted judged services to children in care and care leavers required improvement, in line with the council’s own self-assessment and said “*Services to children in care had deteriorated since the previous inspection in 2015*” and “*Care leavers’ service improvements are recent and slow and need to accelerate*”.

The Ofsted report can be found online: <https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50101634>

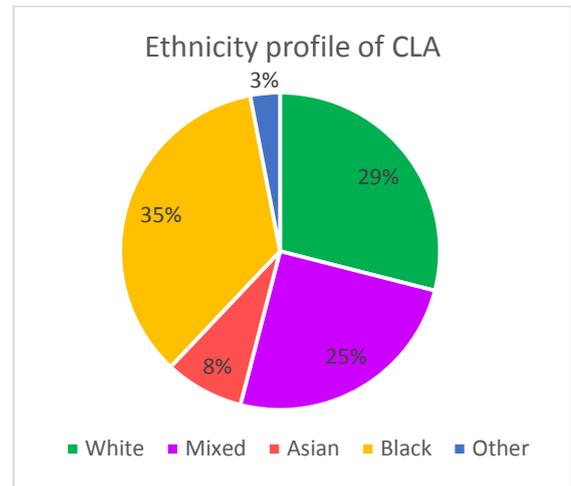
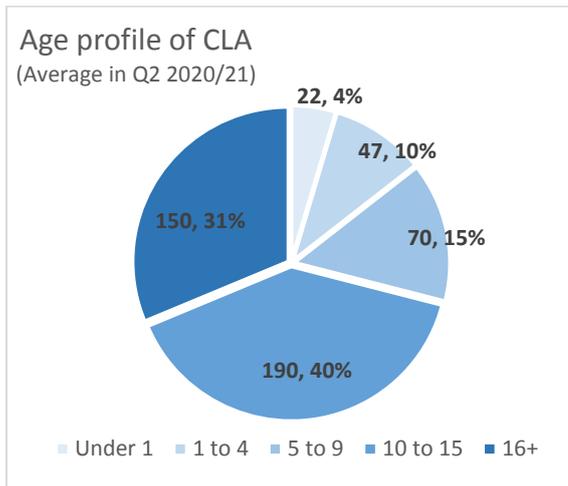
- 4.2 Since the summer of 2018 the improvement plan for Children’s Social Care has sought to address the issues identified in the inspection. The progress was recognised by Ofsted and since then the Children’s Services Directorate has revised the strategic improvement plans to map out the journey to delivering great services. This report summarises the improvement activity through 2020 to strengthen our corporate parenting services, in the context of adjusting our way of working to manage through the Covid pandemic.
- 4.3 The Corporate Parenting Service in Children’s Social Care comprises four Children Looked After (CLA) teams who work with the majority of our children in care aged 0-18 years. Three Leaving Care Teams working with young people 18-25 years old. Two Special Guardianship assessment/support teams. Three fostering recruitment/assessment/support teams and Placements team (commissioning external placements).

## 5. Profile of our children in care

- 5.1 The overall number of children in care at November 2020 was 476. Of these 51 are unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) which represents 11% of our CLA, higher than the national average (6%). The overall number of CLA has remained stable through 2020, it represents a rate of 69, per 10,000. This is higher than our statistical neighbours (62) but has reduced from 71 since 2018/19. Significantly, the number of children entering care is falling, as a result of a new practice framework being introduced in Children’s Social Care (Signs of Safety). Contrary to what we anticipated in March, we have not seen a surge of children coming into care for reasons connected to Covid.

Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	
			YTD (8 mnths)	EoY Forecast
Children coming into care	196	179	82	120

- 5.2 The majority of children who come into care do so due to abuse or neglect, which requires the Local Authority to apply its statutory duties of intervention. In England 77% of children in care are subject to a Care Order and 17% are CLA by parental agreement (Section 20 Children Act 1989). In Lewisham 70% are under an order and 34% are S20, this difference is mainly as a result of a higher proportion of UASC, but also a different practice approach which applies the Children Act 1989 ‘no order’ principle wherever possible. The child’s legal status does not alter our corporate parenting responsibilities.



### 5.3 Demographics of our Children in Care

Our CLA population is approximately 50:50 male, female. 71% is aged over 11 years old. The age profile is largely in line with England, with the exception of the 16+ age group, Lewisham is 7% higher. These are young people who became looked after at a younger age and have remained in care. Only 13 (15%) of children who came into care in 2020 were 16/17. We have about 150, 16/17 year olds in care, who will be eligible for care leaving services in the coming years and approximately half that amount of existing care leavers aged 23/24, who will be leaving the system. If practice continues in this way, we forecast over the next three years a further reduction in the CLA population of approximately 30 children, but an increase in the care leaver population of approximately 60. This projected increase is a consequence of our historically high numbers of children in care.

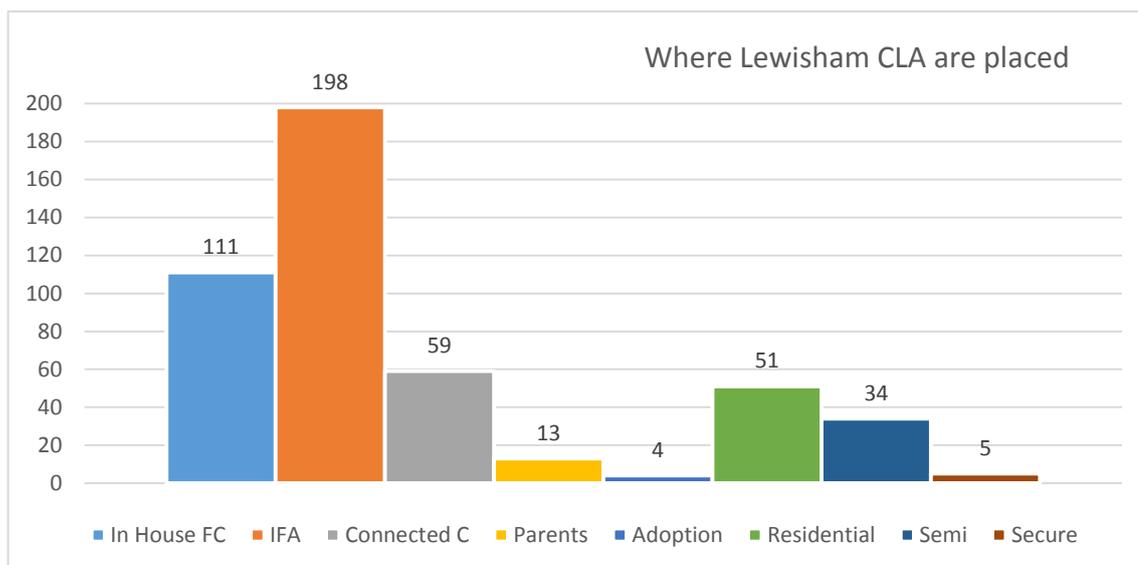
The ethnicity profile using Department of Education categories tells us that compared to the school aged population in Lewisham, children with a mixed heritage are over-represented in the care system and white children are under-represented. Whereas in the care leaver population, it is black children who are over-represented. The reasons for these differences are not fully understood, but attention is being paid to promoting anti-discriminatory practice and how we address disproportionality.

### 5.4 Visiting our children and young people

Face to face visits to CLA and care leavers has been significantly impacted by Covid. In the first lockdown (March – May) all our children and young people were risk assessed and only those most at risk/need were visited in person, approximately 20%. All other contact was done by virtual means. As lockdown restrictions eased in June, face to face visiting gradually resumed, from July we were attempting to see all of our CLA and care leavers in person. Since August 70-80% of our CLA were being visited face to face within timescale. However our performance on visiting in timescale (Every 4 or 6 weeks dependent on care plan) has been effected by staff sickness, self-isolation and staff vacancies.

5.5 CLA Review meetings chaired by Independent Reviewing Officer's (IROs) were converted to virtual meetings at the beginning of lockdown and have since become a blend of face to face and virtual. This has been one of the positive outcomes of the pandemic and has enabled better participation, especially for those children placed at a distance. Throughout 2020, CLA Reviews continued at the same frequency and 97% were held within the required statutory timescale.

## 6. Placements for children in care



6.1 In England 72% of CLA live in foster placements, in Lewisham this is 67%, but only a quarter live with Lewisham's in-house foster carers and this is nearer to 40% in other London Boroughs. Recruitment activity through 2019/20 to increase our pool of in-house carers had only limited success and simultaneously existing carer capacity was lost. This was often for positive reasons i.e. becoming permanent carers, or providing staying put arrangements, this meant no net gain of carers. A big drive for 2021 and beyond is to expand our pool of in-house carers and provide additional support to enable them to care for more complex and challenging young people.

### 6.2 Fostering

The fostering service currently has 100 mainstream carers, 4 connected carers (family and friends) and 34 temporary approvals where children are placed with family and friends but assessments have yet to be completed. There are 12 assessments for new carers underway at the moment and there have been 10 new enquiries this month.

6.3 Supporting foster carers through Covid has been a significant challenge, on the whole they have fed back to us that they have felt supported and they have valued the increased virtual contact from their supervising social workers. The Foster carer's award ceremony, which was held in November, was a huge success and attended by over 100 people including carers, link workers and social workers. However through feedback it has emerged that the partnership working between the Local Authority and some foster carers needed to change. Subsequently we are in the process of establishing a new fostering advisory board, chaired by the Head of Service with multi-agency representation as well as lead foster carer representatives.

6.4 To expand our pool of Foster Carers we are refreshing the recruitment strategy, to increase activity and marketing via partnership working with local businesses, community groups as well as using our existing foster carers as advocates in our publicity. We will be focusing on 'Word of mouth' recruitment and increasing our social media profile.

6.5 To equip our foster carers to better manage children and young people with complex and/ or challenging behaviours. The Foster Carer training programme was updated in April, commissioning a new training provider specialising in trauma informed approach. Training attendance has substantially improved as a consequence. From September for a 6 month trial, foster carers and supervising social workers now have weekly therapeutic

support via an in-house systemic therapist, this is working towards our plan to develop a therapeutic fostering service.

- 6.6 One of the biggest challenges facing Children's Services nationally has been the shortage of good quality and value placements. 12% of our CLA are placed in residential children's homes, which is in line with the national average. Whilst our numbers entering care is falling, those 'in care' are increasingly complex. A third of those in residential placements have complex additional needs and disabilities. Also some of our young people present danger to foster carers, such as connection to gangs, serious violence, criminal and sexual exploitation. We have seen an increase of CLA being placed in residential settings, which are the most expensive, on average costing £4000 per week and this puts significant pressure on the placements budget. In April 2019 there were 48 CLA in residential placements, this gradually increased to reach a peak of 62 in March 2020. However with new process introduced, a renewed focus on placement planning, creative ways of managing placement stability and a more established service working with young people on the edge of care, this has fallen back down to 51 since August.
- 6.7 Placement stability in Lewisham compares well to other London Boroughs and has not been significantly impacted by Covid, 72% of our long term placements have been stable for at least two years and only 8% of CLA have had multiple placements. Our Foster carers on the whole have showed incredible resilience and as a consequence there have been very few breakdown in placements due to Covid-19. Nationally 73% of CLA are placed within 20 miles of their home and 58% are placed in their Borough/Council. 79% of Lewisham's CLA are within 20 miles of their family, but 66% are not in Lewisham, which is not atypical of London Boroughs.

#### 6.8 **Unregulated placements**

Poor outcomes for young people in unregulated placements has recently received media attention. This section provides an overview of how many young people we have in unregulated placements and how we ensure they are well looked after. The terms 'unregulated' and 'unregistered' provision, can often be conflated, they are two different things. Unregulated provisions are legal, but not regulated by Ofsted. This most commonly relate to CLA (usually over 16 years old) who are placed in supported semi-independent accommodation, rather than in foster care or a children's home. This is frequently used as transitional stepping stone towards living independently by almost every council in the country. Unregistered provision is not legal and relates to when a child in care is placed in a provision which is providing a 'care' element and it is not registered with Ofsted. In February 2020 Ofsted published a research report on unregulated and unregistered provision. They reported:

*"...the growth in the use of unregulated and unregistered provision for children with complex needs and/or challenging behaviour is being driven by two interrelated factors. The first is that demand for registered places is currently outstripping supply. This is consistent with indications from Ofsted that supply is not keeping pace with demand (Cowen and Rowe, 2018) ...The second factor ... is that registered children's homes are becoming increasingly reluctant to accept children with highly complex needs and challenging behaviours..."*

- 6.9 Lewisham currently has 93 young people aged 16/17 in unregulated placements as part of their plan for independence. In addition there is currently just one child, aged 15, in such provision. This child's history is complex resulting in it becoming very challenging to identify a regulated placement willing to care for them. A search of over 200 units has been made and we continue to seek alternative provision. We also have one 14 year old in an unregistered placement which is a bespoke placement Lewisham has established itself in response to being unable to secure a suitable placement. We have been in the process of getting the provision registered with Ofsted.

- 6.10 It is important that young people placed in unregulated provisions are safe and supported. For our young people it is a positive choice and part of their care and pathway plan towards independence. The provisions we use have an existing relationship with us, they are staffed 24 hours a day and a minimum of 10 hours bespoke support from a key worker is provided. All the young people have an allocated social worker who visits a minimum of once every 20 working days and an Independent Reviewing Officer who routinely reviews their plan. They also have access to an advocacy service. Young people have routine health assessments and are supported with education, employment and training by the Virtual School.

## **7. Achieving permanence for our children and young people**

### **7.1 Permanence planning**

Permanence is the term used to describe the long term care plan for where the child will live through the remainder of their minority. It is critical that children and young people have the security of knowing where they will live and who will be caring for them. Permanence planning should start at the point a child enters care and be regularly reviewed until they are either rehabilitated home, adopted, matched with long term foster carers or transitioned into a special guardianship arrangement. For a small number of young people they may not want to live with another family, or be suited to it, so the long term plan will be to stay in residential care until adulthood.

- 7.2 A key principle underpinning our children's social work vision is valuing the importance of families and keeping them together wherever it is safe to do so. Children come into care when there is no other option and only remain in care for as long as they need. Through the introduction of Signs of Safety, our practice has been improving. Not only are fewer children coming into care, but 46% now have permanency plans that involve being with family, compared to 24% in January 2020 and those placed in Connected Carer arrangements (with Friends and Family) has increased from 40 in January 2020 to 54 in November 2020.

### **7.3 Special Guardianship**

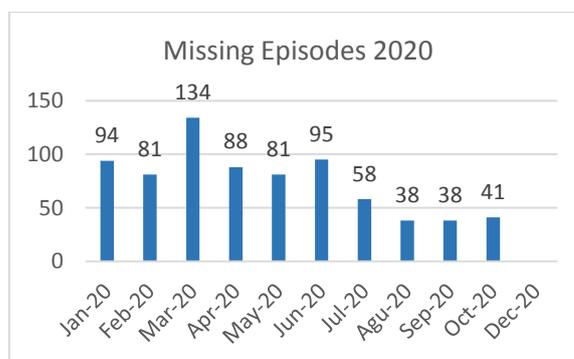
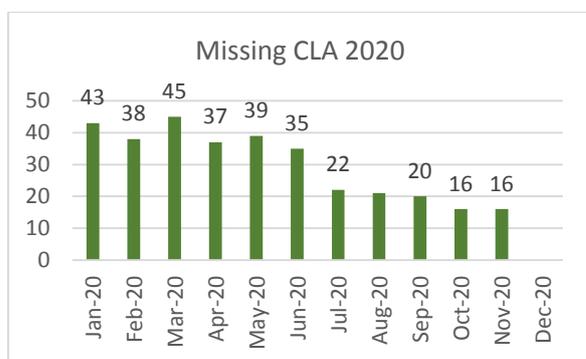
To support more permanence plans with family networks, we have been developing more support for Special Guardians. The service was expanded in March, policies are being refreshed and practice is being improved. Since January 2020 there have been 139 referrals to assess family members as potential Special Guardians. Of these 16 families progressed, resulting in 4 where a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) was granted. 27 progressed to a Connected Carers fostering arrangement (Placement with family or friends). Furthermore, 10 SGO's have been made to former foster carers. The positive of this is it provides permanence and means the child is no longer 'in care', the downside is that we lose some of our in-house foster carers.

### **7.4 Adoption**

After the Regional Adoption Agency (Adopt London South) went live in October 2019, the responsibility of managing adopters and the family finding process transferred to the RAA. The Local Authority works closely with the RAA and remains responsible for the child and the decision about matching the child with the right adopters. In 2020, 12 children were adopted and there are a further 9 children where we are family finding. Covid has impacted on family finding (e.g. activity days paused) and slowed down the adoption process. It remains a challenge to find adopters who would consider sibling groups, older children, and children with complex health needs. Also prospective adopters of BAME heritage remain in short supply. ALS are running a targeted campaign to attract more BAME carers in 2021.

## 8. Health, wellbeing and missing.

- 8.1 Both Initial and Review Health Assessments have continued throughout 2020. Conducted both virtually and face to face where it has been safe to do so. The CLA Nurses have continued to have oversight of the health assessments and health plans of our children/young people. As at November 2020, 95% of CLA have had their health assessments, 46% have had dental assessments, which have been impacted by Covid.
- 8.2 KOOTH which offers on line mental Health support to young people was extended in June to include those up to the age of twenty five. CAMHS and Symbol continued throughout the pandemic to offer face to face support to those young people in crisis and extended their crisis line. Initially the use of these services dropped but as the pandemic has continued the calls have increased and there is a real concern about young people's anxiety and resilience.
- 8.3 Through Covid lockdown, in line with our expectations there has been a decrease in the number of CLA reported missing to the police. When comparing CLA with the general population of children in Lewisham, CLA are more likely to go and be reported missing. This year to date, 17.5% of CLA have been reported missing at least once (No.85 of 550 CLA). The majority went missing on 1 or 2 occasions, however there is a small cohort reported missing more regularly, e.g. one young person was missing 18 times in 2020.



- 8.4 Of CLA reported missing for more than 24hrs, 29 were missing for under 2 days, 13 had episodes lasting 5 + days. Young people who go missing frequently or for longer periods have multi agency safety plans and the associated risks are closely monitored by the Concern Hub and/or local equivalent if placed out of borough. There are more episodes of missing over 24 hours, from CLA in placements outside of Lewisham. This is not unexpected give 66% of our CLA are placed out of borough. But also, those complex CLA for whom exploitation and violence are a feature, are more likely to go missing and are more likely to be in specialist placements outside the borough.
- 8.5 In December 2019 Lewisham's contract with an external provider to deliver Return Home Interviews ended. (RHIs are a specific interview exploring reasons for going missing, to inform planning to reduce risk) RHI responsibilities were assumed by the new Safe Space Service, a dedicated young people's exploitation team, in Children's Social Care. Safe Space includes missing co-ordinators who track all episodes and offer RHI's. Missing co-ordinators work closely with the social worker, foster carer or placement provider to put in place a plan for every CLA which aims to reduce missing episodes and safeguard them from associated risks e.g. exploitation. RHI's are offered within 72 hours of a young person returning, to all CLA irrespective of where they are placed.
- 8.6 Whilst RHI's are routinely offered, take up will be more limited. Currently data shows only approximately a quarter of RHI's take place within 72 hours and there are a few reasons for this. Multiple missing episodes in quick succession do not need multiple RHI's for

every episode, young people do not always want to take up the offer. Also our recording and data needs more refinement before it can capture an accurate picture of practice.

- 8.7 These changes made thus far have led to some practice improvements, which will need to be further strengthened when our refreshed missing policy and procedures is launched in February 2021. Our new arrangements for safeguarding young people who go ‘missing’ have been created in collaboration with Lewisham’s Safeguarding Children’s Partnership and will sit underneath a wider Multi-Agency Exploitation Strategy due to be launched in Spring 2021.

## 9. Education

- 9.1 In line with Department for Education guidelines the Virtual School supported students to continue their learning either remotely, or by accessing a school place under the ‘vulnerable cohort’ group. The offer of a school place was given to all CLA with the suitability being determined in consultation with the social worker, school and foster carer. For medically vulnerable children, home schooling was provided. Contact was made with the family on a weekly basis Virtual School and welfare contacts made with schools to monitor attendance and assess the needs of the primary cohort. Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings continued, which also enabled a tailored approach for a small number of children struggling in COVID climate. The Key highlights for the year have been;

- Year 11 students achieved the highest ever proportion on 5 Good GCSE results (expected to be 30% after resits)
- No drop in school attendance for CLA this academic year.
- Despite a national spike Fixed Term Exclusions for CLA remains constant 0.2% of days lost to exclusion.
- Highest no. of students either starting University or on course to start in 2020/21

## 10. Our Care Leavers

- 10.1 We have 427 Care Leavers in total, 280 aged 18 – 21 and 147 aged 21 – 25 for whom we are continuing to provide support. Of this group 82 are UASCL. As the Care Leaver Service, created in 2019 has begun to establish itself and permanent senior managers have been in place, performance and practice has been improving.

18 – 21years	Jan 2020	Nov 2020	
Suitable Accommodation	90%	90%	
EET	61%	55%	
Registered with a GP	57%	87%	
Up to date pathway plan	51%	78%	
Visited in 8 weeks	65%	82%	
21 – 25 years			
Suitable Accommodation	93%	91%	
EET	65%	43%	
Registered with a GP	60%	85%	
Up to date pathway plan	35%	70%	
Visited in 8 weeks	59%	74%	

- 11.2 One of the most significant effects of Covid on our Care Leaver population has been the loss of employment. Even with additional support from the I-Aspire programme, a number of our young people have found it very challenging to keep or find employment,

which is reflected in the Education, Employment and Training figures. This will be a focus through 2021 and features as a priority in our Corporate Parenting Strategy.

- 11.3 A key project to expand housing options and improve pathways for Care Leavers has been underway through 2020. Whilst there is still more to do, the impact thus far is:
- Housing benefit will be claimed for all commissioned placements for all eligible young people in semi-independent provision.
  - Potential accommodation has been identified to extend the housing provision for care leavers and work is underway with Commissioning and Housing to develop an invest to save bid for more accommodation.
  - We are reviewing our framework for preferred providers for supported housing and have extended our reciprocal arrangements for 'move on' accommodation for care leavers who want to live in another borough.
  - We are also working with Lewisham Homes and London Quadrant Housing to refurbish our 5 training flats and develop a training programme to prepare young people for adulthood.
  - We also have 59 young people in 'Staying Put' arrangements with their former foster carers, which is a very positive outcome.

## **12 The impact of Covid-19 on service delivery.**

- 12.1 Throughout 2020 the Children's Social Care Senior Management Team have needed to adapt the way of working in response to Covid and the various restrictions. At the beginning of lockdown (March) in accordance with government guidance to 'stay at home', approximately 70% of our workforce started to work from home full time and were not undertaking face to face work. Therefore the service was unable to continue operating as we would normally have done.
- 12.2 New operational guidance was put in place with immediate effect and all children and young people were risk assessed. Some legislative flexibilities were applied and face to face visits were restricted to the most vulnerable. Our general approach was to continue maintaining the same frequency of statutory activity, but temporarily convert some face to face activity to 'virtual' contact, for all but the most vulnerable. CLA were being seen on a 'virtual visit' video call once a month with fortnightly phone calls in-between. Virtual contact was maintained with all Care Leavers who consented, on a fortnightly basis. All supervised family contact were also converted to virtual arrangements, except for a minority of court ordered arrangements. To ensure that children could still have contact, we supplied smart phones to those who had none. Through lockdown, food parcels and laptops have been distributed to those who needed them and financial assistance has been provided for those who have lost their employment.
- 12.3 In addition to the effect on our ability to visit children face to face, virtual court proceedings were challenging and took far longer. Our ability to permanence plan was slowed, for example introduction meetings for potential adopters, special guardianship and parenting assessments and rehabilitation home work all proved difficult to undertake virtually with the same degree of quality and assurance. All these factors have meant through 2020 some children have been in the care system for longer than might ordinarily be expected, which also has cost implications for the Local Authority.
- 12.4 As restrictions eased, face to face activity resumed as noted previously. Working remotely demanded creative ways to communicate and there have been some positive ways of working to come from this, which we plan to take forward. In response to the new restrictions imposed in January 2021, we are in the processes of reverting to mainly virtual working as in March, until restrictions relax and the vaccination programme allows

normal business to resume. However we have learned a great deal from the first lockdown, effective virtual working techniques has developed and we already have the technology to support that. All this allows us to mobilise different ways of working more quickly, however we do however anticipate pressures and disruption, as we are already experiencing higher levels of staff sickness due to Covid and more staff, carers, children and young people needing to self-isolate.

### **13. Service improvements in Corporate Parenting through 2020**

13.1 The arrival of a new permanent Head of Service for Corporate Parenting in January 2020 enabled us to take forward improvement planning. Despite the Covid challenges slowing the pace of improvement, a number of developments have happened. In summary:

- a) A Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-24 has been developed, setting out our ambitions and plans for how Lewisham will improve its services for children in care and care leavers. The Lewisham Pledge has been refreshed by our Child in Care Council and these are both scheduled for discussion at the forthcoming Corporate Parenting Group and will be launched in March 2021.
- b) A joint project between Children's Services and Housing is reviewing commissioning arrangements and housing pathways for Care Leavers, so far resulting in an expansion of capacity to provide suitable accommodation and over time, reduce spend on placements and accommodation for Care Leavers.
- c) A comprehensive review has been undertaken to reorganise how we manage and monitor placements. New mechanisms are in place to better track placements; a placements review panel chaired by the Executive Director, budgets have been realigned and finance systems redesigned (ContrOCC). These measures in combination with improvements in practice, are starting to take effect to have better placement planning and reducing spend on placements.
- d) Early permanence planning strengthened by re-establishing permanency planning meetings and introducing a fortnightly tracking panel (April 2020). A Permanency Strategy is in development and we realigned two social work posts to specialise in adoption planning, working closely with the Regional Adoption Agency - ALS.
- e) A Fostering Strategy and the Placements Sufficiency Strategy are both being refreshed to improve how we recruit, train and retain Lewisham carers and commission sufficient, good quality and good value external placements for our children in care and suitable accommodation for our care leavers. These will be launched in April 2021.
- f) The Corporate Parenting Operational Group has become established (Q1 2020), bringing lead officers from the key partners together, to develop and deliver the Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- g) The Special Guardianship team has been expanded (March 2020), to strengthen support to connected carers looking after children.
- h) A range of policies and procedures have and are being updated, to ensure our practice is in line with regulatory requirements and the latest practice guidance.
- i) More permanent Personal Advisors have been recruited and we have established the UASC section of the Care Leaver & UASC Service. All UASC now receive specialist support from a dedicated team as soon as they present to Lewisham.
- j) Child in Care Council (CICC) group membership and work programme has been refreshed, a participation committee has been established involving young people and foster carers, to look at planning activities and celebration events.

- k) A Care Leavers Financial Entitlement Policy has been created, to provide clarity and a consistent approach to how we financially support young people. This will be published alongside the Corporate Parenting Strategy in March 2021.
- l) New providers have been commissioned to provide advocacy and Independent visiting services, to improve quality.
- m) Development of a transitions service for young people with complex needs, transferring from children's to adults services

## 14. The Corporate Parenting Strategy

14.1 We aspire to deliver great Children's Services, building on the work that is already taking place to improve services, the Corporate Parenting Strategy (Draft) sets out our ambitions and the plan for how we will collectively become the best corporate parents we can be. We have drafted six key ambitions for how we intend to make sure our children and young people have a positive care experience and we make a bigger difference in their lives, both now and in the future. These are based on their feedback about what matter to them.

<b>WE ARE PROUD PARENTS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Committed to Corporate Parenting</li> <li>2. Promoting Inclusivity and diversity</li> <li>3. Living in a safe and caring community</li> <li>4. Improving our plans for children and young people</li> </ol>
<b>THIS IS MY HOME</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowing where I will grow up</li> <li>2. Receiving good quality care</li> <li>3. Staying in the same place</li> <li>4. Feeling safe and secure in my home</li> </ol>
<b>HEALTHY &amp; WELL</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Being fit and well</li> <li>2. Feeling happy and hopeful</li> <li>3. Having hobbies and interests</li> <li>4. Keeping connected to people that matter</li> </ol>
<b>HAVING A VOICE</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Making a difference</li> <li>2. Listening to my experience</li> <li>3. My plan</li> <li>4. Helping to grow good social work</li> </ol>
<b>ASPIRATIONS &amp; AMBITIONS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reaching my potential and celebrating my successes</li> <li>2. Being the best version of myself</li> <li>3. Getting involved and having fun</li> <li>4. Skills for work</li> </ol>
<b>BEING INDEPENDENT</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Managing my money</li> <li>2. Ready to look after myself</li> <li>3. Knowing where to get advice and help</li> <li>4. Getting the right support and services</li> </ol>

14.2 Measures of success have been set out and our next step in the development of this strategy is consultation with the Corporate Parenting Group, Children in Care and Care Leavers and completion of the associated action plan. We intend to complete the strategy by March 2021.

- 14.3 The strategy will be delivered primarily by the Corporate Parenting Operational Group, which is a new multi-agency group of senior leads across the council and its corporate parenting partners. The Corporate Parenting Board/Group, chaired by the Lead Member for School Performance and Children’s Services will support and monitor progress on delivering the strategic ambitions.

## 15. Financial Implications

The current budget allocation for the Children Social Care Directorate is £44.1m, of which £31.7m is dedicated to the delivery of Corporate Parenting. The table below shows the broad areas of spend allocated in the budget in 2020/21.

	Directorate	Department
	CSC	Corporate Parenting
	£k	£k
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Placements Budget	28.5	28.5
Employee costs	18.8	5.0
Associated costs (e.g. legal etc.)	5.9	1.3
No recourse to Public Funds	2.9	0.0
	<b>56.1</b>	<b>34.8</b>
<b>Funded by</b>		
Grant and other funding	12.0	3.1
General Fund (Net cost to the Council)	44.1	31.7

As part of the strategy Lewisham will also be exploring new ways of working and engagement with partner organisations to support the delivery of the strategy within the allocated funding.

## 16. Crime and disorder implications

- 16.1 Investment in the Safe Space, Leaving Care and additional Domestic Violence services are specifically aimed at reducing rates of crime and violence.

## 17. Equalities implications

- 17.1 The Council’s Comprehensive Equality Scheme for 2016-20 provides an overarching framework and focus for the Council’s work on equalities and helps ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010. Foster carer and adopter recruitment activity is actively seeking to diversify our pool of carers and placements in line with the profile of our looked after children. A key ambition for the Corporate Parenting Strategy is ‘Promoting inclusivity and diversity’. Promoting anti-discriminatory practice is core to our workforce development plans ensure services are providing culturally sensitive and equitable services.

## 18. Health and Wellbeing implications

Not applicable

## 19. Social Value implications

Not applicable

## 20. Climate change and environmental implications

Not applicable

## 21. Legal implications

Not applicable

## 22. Report Author and Contact

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## Glossary

Term	Definition
ILACS	Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services. Details of the framework for inspection can be found here: <a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government</a>
CLA	Child Looked After, refers to a child under the aged of 18 who is in the care of the Local Authority either through court order or parental agreement.
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child, a person under the age of 18 who has arrived without any adult in the UK that is exercising parental responsibility for the child.
Signs of Safety	The practice framework for children's social work that guides a particular approach to working with families. More information can be found here: <a href="https://www.signsofsafety.net/signs-of-safety/">https://www.signsofsafety.net/signs-of-safety/</a>
RAA Regional Adoption Agency	A service that recruits, assesses, matches and supports prospective adopters, operating on behalf of; Lewisham Richmond, Kingston, Sutton, Merton, Croydon, Wandsworth, Lambeth and Southwark. More information can be found here: <a href="https://www.first4adoption.org.uk/agency/adopt-london-south/">https://www.first4adoption.org.uk/agency/adopt-london-south/</a>
ControCC	ControCC – Electronic Finance management system linked to LCS