

London Borough of Enfield

Scrutiny Panel 8th March 2022

Subject: Leaving Care Service Review

Cabinet Member: Cllr Mahtab Uddin
Executive Director: Tony Theodoulou

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this briefing is to provide members of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Panel with an update on the work of the Leaving Care Service and the progress of the young people we work with.

Relevance to the Council Plan

2. Care Leavers are an extremely vulnerable group, the majority of our young people have experienced past trauma, abuse and neglect and/or a range of other challenges.
3. It is recognised that Care Leavers have the same needs as other young adults, but additionally, that there are unique challenges that Care Leavers face. Research shows that the outcomes of Care Leavers nationally are consistently poor.
4. Care Leavers continue to be a priority for Enfield Council. The current Care Leavers Strategy (2020-2023) sets out our ambitions, plans and actions in place to continuously improve the experiences and outcomes for our young people. All the strategies and action plans relating to Care Leavers are overseen and monitored by the Corporate Parenting Board, chaired by the Lead Cabinet Member and with the delegated authority to carry out this function on behalf of the Council.

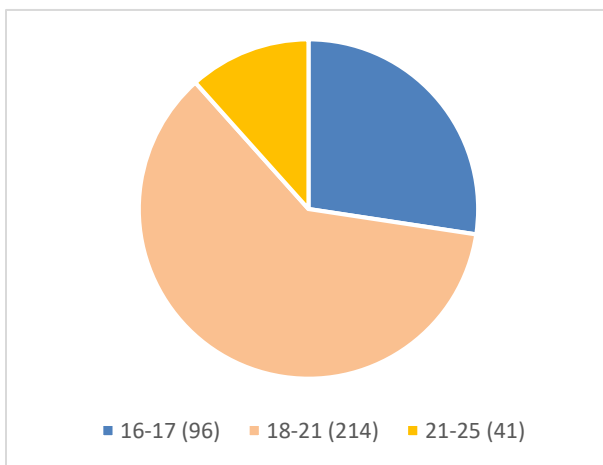
Background

5. Enfield Adolescents and Leaving Care Team is an inclusive and welcoming Team that works with young people that have been in care or currently still are from the age of 16 up to the age of 25. This include young people who were born in the UK and those who entered the country as Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. The Team consists of a mix of Social Workers and Personal Advisors. The main difference is that Personal Advisors will start working with young people only when they become an adult after turning 18 years of age.
6. At Enfield's Adolescent and Care Leavers Team we are responsible for supporting and preparing young people for independence.

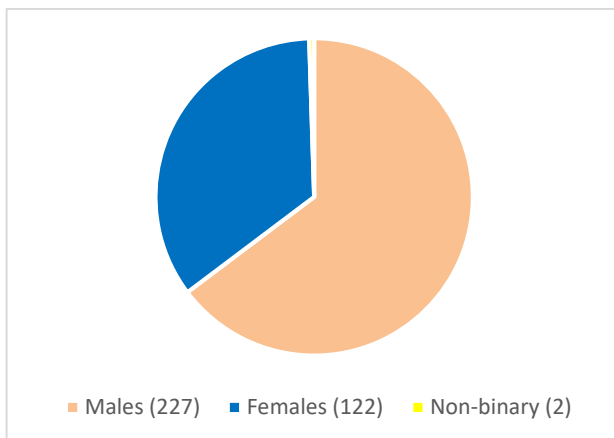
- Enfield Council is committed to providing young people with the necessary tools and support that they will need in preparation for independent living. In doing this we work alongside partner agencies and young people in the completion of their Pathway Plan to help them decide what they want to achieve when they leave care, including their future goals and what help they will need to achieve them.

Demographics

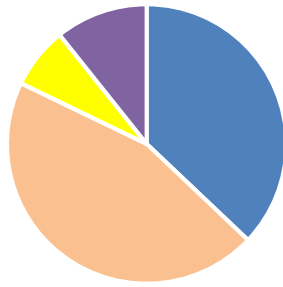
- The total number of young people currently being actively supported by the Leaving Care Team is 351. This include young people who are British Citizen and those with a different immigration status.
- A breakdown of this number gives us the following information:



BY AGE	2021	2020
16-17 (LAC)	96 (27.35%)	105 (27.1%)
18-21 (Care Leavers)	214 (60.9%)	256 (66.1%)
21-25 (Care Leavers)	41 (11.6%)	26 (6.7%)
TOTAL	351	387

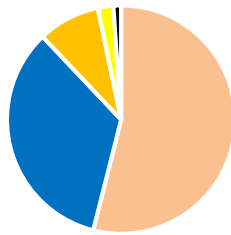


BY GENDER	2021	2020
Males	227 (64.6%)	250 (64.5%)
Females	122 (34.7%)	135 (34.8%)
Non-binary	2 (0.5%)	2 (0.5)



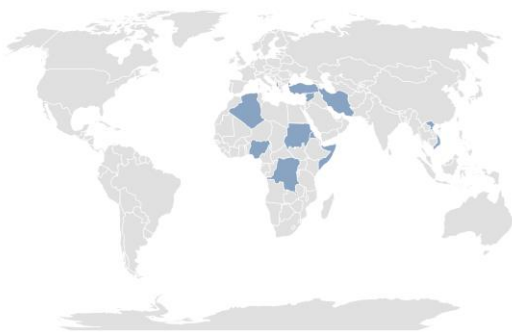
- White British/Other (158)
- Black British/Other (130)
- Other Ethnic Groups (38)
- Dual Heritage (25)

BY ETHNICITY	2021	
Black British/Other (not differentiated in the system)	130	37%
White Other	98	27.9%
White British	60	17%
Other Ethnic Groups	28	7.9%
Dual Heritage	25	7.1%
Asian	10	2.8%



- British Citizens (190)
- Former UASCs 18+ (120)
- UASC (31)
- EU Citizen (8)
- Other (4)

BY IMMIGRATION STATUS	2021	
British Citizens	190	54.1%
Former UASCs (18+)	120	34.1%
Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)	31	8.8%
EU Citizen	8	2.2%
Other	4	1.1%



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BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (UASCs and FORMER UASCs)	2021	
Albania	76	21.6%
Eritrea	42	11.9%
Afghanistan	9	2.5%
Sudan	5	1.4%
Vietnam	4	1.1%
Turkey	3	0.8%
Iran	3	0.8%
Syria	2	0.5%
Algeria	2	0.5%
DR Congo	1	0.2%
Kosovo	1	0.2%
Kurdish	1	0.2%
Nigeria	1	0.2%
Somalia	1	0.2%

10. We analyse data regularly in order to identify evolving trends and needs and to develop appropriate responses to these. The tables below show how data is used to monitor how well performance supports the 6 life GOALS that we believe are key in our Care Leavers' pathway towards independence. These goals are embedded in both our Local Offer for Care Leavers and the Service's Strategy (2020-2023). Below data relates to last year, 2021.

STAY HEALTHY		BUILD UP LONG LASTING, POSITIVE AND SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS	
Young people (16-17) who accessed the support of HEART CAMHs support	8	Number of young people who have accessed a service from Leaving Care in 2021	118
Young people (18-24) who accessed HEART CAMHs Psychological Therapy.	24	Number of young people over the age of 21 closed to the Service who have requested a service back.	15
Number of young people that have had their annual dental check completed in the last year.	42	Number of Care Leavers who have joined KRATOS in 2021	9
Number of young people with up to date immunisations.	62	Young Parents within the Team	26
		• Mothers	19
		• Fathers	7
		• Young parents under 18	1
ENGAGE IN EDUCATION, TRAINING OR EMPLOYMENT		ACCESS AND SUSTAIN LONG TERM ACCOMMODATION	
Total of young people in Education, Training, Employment	265	Living in semi-independent provision	257 (50 LAC)
YP engaged in an apprenticeship with the Council in 2021	5	Staying Put Placement	33
Higher Education	25	Foster Care including Family and friends' placement	27
In employment	59	Number of Young People who have accessed their own Council Tenancy in 2021	54

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PARTICIPATE IN SOCIETY AND INFLUENCE		BE IN CONTROL OF YOUR FINANCES	
Young People supported to access Advocacy	49	Number of Care Leavers supported to access Benefits in 2021	67
Number of young people who have participated directly in different forums (i.e. internal surveys, round tables, interviews with external assessors) to provide their opinion about the service received by the Leaving Care Team.	37	Number of Care Leavers supported financially to ease them into the new UC rate	110
Number of EU young people supported to access settled status in the UK	13	Number of rent deposits provided to Care Leavers to best avoid rent arrears from the beginning of a new tenancy and support long term accommodation arrangements for them.	63
Number of UASC and Former UASC granted Leave to Remain in the UK	61		

Main Considerations for the Panel

Challenges faced in 2021

11. The Pandemic has proved very challenging for our young people and our staff and had an unavoidable impact on performance in some areas. Nationally, and for a significant period of time, it reduced the number of dentist appointments available for routine check-ups and the take up of immunisations. The Service, together with the LAC Heath Team have worked hard to address this backlog and take up is now improving. The percentage of young people open to Leaving Care with up to date Immunisations has gone up from 53% last August (2021) to 85% this month (February 2022). Dental check-ups have gone from 30% in August 2021 to 80% in February 2022.
12. Staff appreciated more opportunities to work from home, but some also struggled with feelings of isolation. A number of strategies were developed to overcome this including; more frequent service and team meetings via Teams, regular 'check in phone calls' and wellbeing sessions, a buddy system and a duty rota for different small teams of people working in the office, with PPE.

13. The pandemic reduced the opportunity to fully utilise the Care Leavers Hub within Charles Babbage House. As restrictions loosen, we are looking forward to making far more use of this space to promote participation and hold support activities.
14. Financial support was made available to Care Leavers to mitigate the financial constraints that Care Leavers claiming state benefits had experienced.
15. The Covid related delays experienced by the Home Office in dealing with the asylum claims made by our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) population has resulted in far longer periods of uncertainty for our young people and has meant they need to be financially supported by the Service for an extended period. Some of these costs have been mitigated by the reduction in the number of UASC approaching Enfield for support and additional emotional support is provided to those affected. We are currently supporting (Feb 2022) 74 young people (49% of the total UASC population) who are waiting for an outcome on their immigration claim by the Home Office.

Achievements in 2021

16. Robust plans remained in place throughout the pandemic to ensure we continued to provide a service of a high standard that meets the needs of our Care Leavers.
17. An internal audit exercise conducted on the service in May 2021 was robust and extremely comprehensive. While a small number of improvements were recommended, the overall findings were that the Service was likely to be judged as 'GOOD' in any external inspection. Staff reported being extremely satisfied with the management and supervision they received and appreciated all the extra support they had received to help them through the pandemic. The inspection was a good opportunity to showcase the joint work and partnership in place with other relevant Teams including Cheviots and Youth Offending.
18. An Action Plan was developed following the audit, responding to the recommendations made. All the recommended actions have been completed.
19. The Service supported the implementation of a recovery plan in line with the Government's decision to ease lock down restrictions, setting out expectations of resuming face to face visits with young people. Staff are very happy to be seeing their young people face to face.
20. The Service updated and published the Local Offer for Care Leavers for 2021.
21. Four more Care Leavers were supported to access Apprenticeship opportunities within the Council. One of the apprenticeships is being completed within the Leaving Care Service.
22. Two new specialist posts were created within the Leaving Care and the HEART Teams to facilitate young people's access:
 - to therapeutic (trauma informed) support. This is aimed for Care Leavers over the age of 18 who do not meet the criteria for Adult Services but would benefit from this intervention and
 - to Education, Training and Employment opportunities. Currently (Feb 2022) over 75% of our young people are engaged in either education, training and/or employment.

23. The Care Leavers Hub was re-launched in July 2021 to promote participation, as well as to provide Care Leavers with the opportunity to access and engage with different services face to face. A representative from partner organisations have a weekly presence at the Hub to support young people in different areas including benefits, substance misuse, tenancy management, Education, Training and Employment and advocacy.
24. The Asylum and Immigration Leads Working Group (AIL) has been operational since March 2021 with the purpose of promoting professional development in this highly technical area. This group is supporting best practice and is allowing the Leaving Care Team to better understand and address the specific needs that young people who are seeking asylum, have otherwise insecure immigration status or are recognised as refugees. Amongst other achievements, through the AIL Group, we have supported our EU Looked After Children Nationals to access settled status as well as to apply for their UK Citizenship.
25. In October 2021, to mark last year's Care Leavers Week, Enfield took part in a joint Celebratory Event alongside other Greater London Authorities. The theme was "Just a Care Leaver: Your Past does not define your Future".
26. An online survey was distributed amongst Care Leavers to aid gathering young people's views on the quality of the semi-independent placements they were living in as well as their overall opinion on the service they were getting from our Team. The data collected in the survey provided very positive and reassuring data. This included:
 - 82% of the young people confirmed they are either satisfied or very satisfied with their current placement.
 - 97% of the young people say that their key worker is supportive to their needs.
 - Nearly 90% confirming they felt safe in the placement they were living in
 - 88% confirming they felt fully supported by their Social Worker/Personal Advisor.
 - 85% of the young people that took the survey are either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service that they are getting from the Leaving Care Team. The remaining 15% of young people have had their cases checked and their comments addressed where necessary.

Conclusions

27. Care leavers continue to be a priority for the Council.
28. Enfield Leaving Care Service, together with its partner agencies, are working well together to ensure that Care Leavers have all the support they need to live safe, and successful lives.
29. Some of the areas we are focusing our efforts on are:
 - 29.1. Maximising the use and impact of the Care Leavers Hub.
 - 29.2. Reviewing and updating of relevant internal policies (i.e. Finance Policy, Staying Put Policy) as well as our Local Offer for Care Leavers.
 - 29.3. Working on asylum and immigration matters, led by the Team's AIL Group.

- 29.4. Engagement and liaison with Adult Services and Enfield Housing to continue developing joint plans that support Care Leavers pathways.
- 29.5. Continuing to raise awareness and promote the corporate parenting duties owed to our Care Leavers by the different departments of the Council.

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Appendices: N/A

Background Papers: N/A