

Corporate Parenting in the City of London

Annual Report – 2017/18

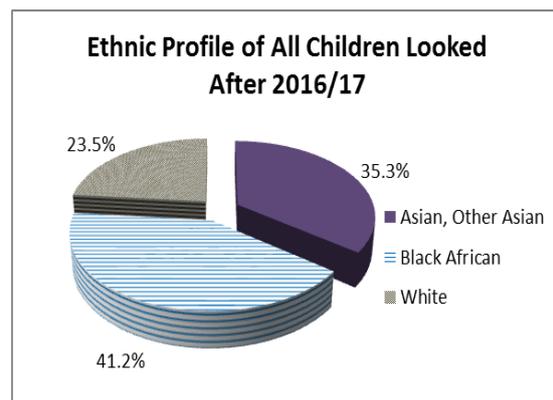
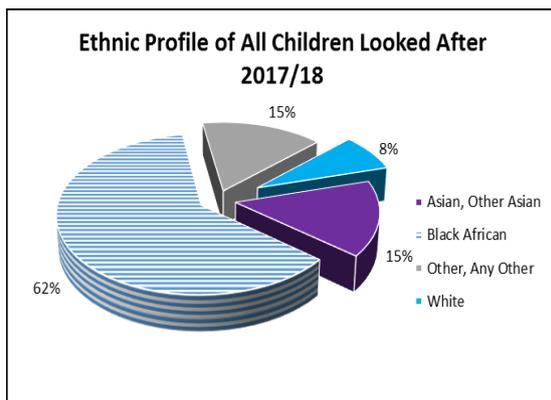
1 Introduction and context

- 1.1 This annual report provides an update on the City of London Corporation's role as a Corporate Parent, and the outcomes that have been achieved for the children in our care.
- 1.2 The City of London Corporation is a Corporate Parent to the children who are in its care. These looked after children are those children and young people aged 0 – the eve of their 18th birthday who cannot safely remain with their family, or those for whom the City Corporation acts as a parent in the absence of family. Children in care (CIC) can include Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), children with multiple disabilities and those who have suffered abuse and/or neglect. As such, looked after children and young people are one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our community.
- 1.3 The City Corporation's legal and financial responsibility to the children and young people for whom it is a corporate parent extends into their lives as care leavers and as they transition to independence.

2 The children in our care

- 2.1 During 2017/18 the City Corporation looked after a total of 26 children and young people under the age of 18. Twelve were in care at the start of the year and a further fourteen came into care during the year. This was the City Corporation's largest recorded annual intake and included seven children and young people who came into care within just one 24 hour-period. 93% of those coming into care this year were unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC).
- 2.2 In total 16 children and young people ceased to be children in care and of these 50% had also come into care in year. Of the eight young people who had already been in care at the start of the year: six transitioned to the City Corporation's care leavers service on their 18th birthdays and one as the outcome of a judicial review of an age assessment; and one was transferred to the services of another local authority. Of the eight who came into our care during the year: five were transferred to the services of other local authorities via the National Transfer Scheme; one was transferred to the services of the National Asylum Support Service; one went missing within one week and did not re-engage with our services; and one was returned to the care of their parent under a supervision order. At 31 March 2018 ten young people under 18-years-old remained in the City of London's care.
- 2.3 The City Corporation's looked after children are predominantly older. 96% of the children cared for during the year were 15 years or older, and 93% of the young people coming into care during the year were at least 16 years old at 31 March 2018.

- 2.4 Our children in care cohort continues to be pre-dominantly male: 96% of those in care at any point in the year were male; as were all the UASC in care, and all those coming into care during the year.
- 2.5 The age and gender profile of the City’s children in care reflect the dominance of children who are UASC among this group. 92% of children looked after in 2017/18 were UASC, including 15 of the 16 children coming into care during the year. For reference the national data for UASC in care on 31 March 2017 tells us that 92% were male, and 78% were aged 16+¹.
- 2.6 The impact of such a high proportion of UASC is also seen within the ethnic profile of our children in care. Of the 26 children looked after across 2017/18 the largest cohort was Black African (16), including ten Sudanese, five Eritreans and one Ethiopian. The second largest cohorts were Asian, Other Asian (4) and Other, Any Other (4), four Afghans; two Libyans, one Iraqi and one Vietnamese.² Two looked after children were white: (Albanian and White British). Of the 13 UASC coming into care in year nine were Black African (six Sudanese and three Eritrean) and four were Other (two Libyans, one Iraqi and one Libyan).
- 2.7 *The tables below compare the ethnic profile of our looked after cohort in 2017/18 to the 17 in care in 2016/17*



- 2.8 For reference, the rate of UASC looked after by the City Corporation on 31 March 2018 was 79.8 per 10,000 City of London population aged 0 - 17, compared to the average rate of 7.7 UASC per 10,000 0-17 population across London at 31 March 2017.
- 2.9 Of the 13 UASC coming into care, one was assigned to City of London via the Pan London Rota, and the rest self-presented as asylum-seekers to City of London Police or British Transport Police within our borough.
- 2.10 During 2017/18 a total of 23 young people aged 18 to 24 years-old received care leavers’ services – including the seven young people mentioned above as transitioning from CIC services during the year, and one other young person who joined the service as a qualifying care leaver. In addition, one former care leaver, who was still eligible to access the service, was briefly re-opened for immigration support.

¹ Children looked after in England year ending 31 March 2017, SFR50/2017 National Tables, table A3

² Due to changes in the Common Basic Data Set in recent years Afghans are now also classified under the headline ethnic group Other, Any Other and any new children coming into our care from Afghanistan in future will be coded Other.

- 2.11 19 care leavers were male, and 20 were former UASC.
- 2.12 At 31 March 2018 18 young people were still open to the care leavers' service, of which 77.8% were male; 83.3% were former UASC and one was a mother. All were in accommodation deemed to be suitable with four independently living (three in City of London social housing units); 10 were accommodated in semi-independent living projects; another two were in other supported provision; and two had 'stayed-put' with their former foster carers. Two were residing with the City itself. During the year two care leavers had been in accommodation deemed automatically to be unsuitable, one had continued in prison and one was briefly held in an immigration detention centre. Both were deported.
- 2.13 Our care leaver population is ethnically diverse, and as with our children in care, is markedly different from that of the City's resident population. Of the 23 supported by the service during 2017/18 eight (34.8%) were Asian Other; seven (30.4%) were White; seven (30.45%) were Black African; and one was Other, Any Other. The nationalities were: Afghan (5), Albanian (5); Eritrean (3); Iranian (3), Sudanese (3), British (2) and other non-British (2).

3 Corporate Parenting Board (Safeguarding Sub Committee)

- 3.1 Within the City Corporation the function of Corporate Parenting Board is undertaken by the Safeguarding Sub Committee which reports to the Community and Children's Services Grand Committee.
- 3.2 The Safeguarding Sub Committee meets four times each year, and in its capacity as the Corporate Parenting Board it is responsible for:
- achieving improved outcomes for children in care and care leavers;
 - developing and overseeing implementation of the City Corporation's Corporate Parenting Strategy to drive improved outcomes;
 - providing challenge to ensure that the Council's duties as Corporate Parent are carried out effectively and consistently.
- 3.3 The Sub Committee formally received two of reports in respect of the Ofsted Inspections of Children's services at the City Corporation and the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board in July 2016. The reports informed members that Children's Services was rated 'Good' with a number of 'Outstanding' features and the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board had been rated 'Outstanding'.
- 3.4 Membership includes the lead member for children, and the Chairman of Community and Children's Services Grand Committee. Over the past year the Sub Committee has considered reports on topics including:
- How Social Workers Engage Neglectful Parents from Affluent Backgrounds in the Child Protection System
 - The CQC inspection looked after children and safeguarding action plan.
 - Suicide prevention
 - The London regional Children in Care Council
 - Quality assurance in Children in Need cases

3.5 The Sub Committee formally received the Annual Report of the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report.

4 Corporate Parenting Strategy

4.1 The Corporate Parenting Strategy set out the City Corporation's commitment to ensure that children and young people have the support, care and encouragement to reach their full potential. The Service Improvement Plan for 2017-2018 sets out objectives for children in care and care leavers. The plan was developed in line with the strategy, listening to children and young people's views, formally obtained via the consultation by Action for Children, from audits undertaken by Aidhour, multi-agency audit, from staff feedback and from recommendations from Ofsted.

4.2 To achieve this, and deliver the City Corporation's roles and responsibilities as a corporate parent the plan includes new actions such as:

- Ensuring every young person seeking asylum is linked with a community refugee organisation, for support with shared experience, improving friendships, independence and boosting resilience
- Ensuring that young people are supported fully in respect of their immigration situations, including ensuring that pathway plans look at practical help and support in case of being held in detention or if there is a risk of return to their home country.
- Children/young people to be visited intensively at the start of a new placement, to help settling in and to try and address any difficulties early on.
- Every young person to have the opportunity to participate in at least one organised leisure activity
- Care plans to be redesigned so they are clearer, and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely).
- Care leavers to be exempt from Council Tax whether they reside inside or outside the City of London.

5 The Children in Care Council (CiCC)

5.1 The City of London's Children in Care Council (CiCC) has been meeting regularly since November 2014. The CiCC meets six times a year in each holiday and half term period. Meetings generally take place in the Guildhall during the morning and are followed by lunch in the Gild and an activity together during the afternoon. Meeting at the Guildhall is a link for CiCC members to come into the City of London, particularly as often they live beyond the City's boundaries.

5.2 We have continued to use Spice time credits to acknowledge members' participation, although it is not always straightforward to find opportunities to spend the credits.

5.3 Participation means more than the 'formal' meeting; they are generally followed by an activity which enables informal time together and which is valued by CiCC members.

5.4 A new CiCC Officer and Deputy CiCC officer were elected in 2017. The Director of Community and Children's Services, joined the CiCC meeting in December 2017, providing an opportunity for informal discussion about the CiCC's activities and focus.

5.5 The main issues addressed together during the year include:

- Keeping safe – information and discussion on personal safety when out and about;
- Preparing interview questions to be used in recruitment;
- Discussion and consultation on pathway plans and changing the approach, introducing 'Mind of My Own' as a potential tool;
- Contributing to the City's children and young people's plan
- Learning and discussion on preparing for living independently, what to expect and budgeting
- Participation by two members in Whitehall Takeover Day – joining a government department and shadowing a minister for the day
- Participation in the new London-wide Children in Care Council which is being developed and led by the City of London, to bring together care experienced young people from across London
- Discussion and decision to start a CiCC WhatsApp group to enable communication between group members between meetings – the existing Facebook group was underused and not popular though can still be useful for news and updates, notice of meetings etc.

5.6 Activities together during 2017-18 have included:

- A week at an outward-bound centre in South Wales in Summer 2017. 13 young people travelled by bus and then embarked on an active week, including hill walking, walking down a river, caving, canoeing, climbing, and a day on the beach playing cricket, football and swimming. Everyone was presented with a certificate of achievement at the end of the week before travelling back to London.
- Bowling at Finsbury Park
- Celebration of achievement event (organised by Virtual Head)
- Lunch at Nando's
- Star Wars – cinema trip
- Boat trip on Thames
- Exploring London 's South Bank
- Opportunity to attend Lord's for a county cricket game

5.7 The CiCC reviewed the welcome pack for newcomers which every young person receives; a backpack containing essential items for the first days as well as information sheets outlining The Pledge and opportunities available to them.

5.8 The Pledge is the City's promise to provide the care and help that children and young people in its care have told the City they want in order to thrive – and sits within the Corporate Parenting Strategy. The Pledge was reviewed by the CiCC during the year and feedback offered to the safeguarding sub group.

5.9 The CiCC is represented at the youth programme board and a member of the team attends meetings and reports back to CiCC meetings.

6 Health and wellbeing

- 6.1 As corporate parents the City Corporation takes responsibility for assessing and promoting good physical and mental health among the children and young people in our care. This is achieved through annual assessments of health and dental health, and by ensuring children and young people are fully immunised. The City Corporation's performance in achieving health and dental assessments and immunisations exceeds national performance.
- 6.2 Our CIC population largely comprises unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who have often experienced very difficult journeys to the UK, involving increased risk of health conditions. A new offer to our young people in 2017-18 arising from regular review with our CIC health service provider, is a referral for infectious disease screening in the paediatric department of UCLH, directly made by the statutory CIC initial medical. As a result of CIC health service review in April 2017, sexual health work needed improving. CIC health reports are now clearer on sexual health recommendations.
- 6.3 During 2017/18 all 25 children who remained in the City's care for more than one week received their statutory health assessment. Discounting the UASC who removed themselves from our services within one week, every child who came into care in year received their initial medical assessment by a paediatrician and all those who had been in care 12 or more months received their annual review by the LAC health nurse. The latest reported national figures show that only 89.4% of children were looked after for at least 12 months had had an annual health assessment.³
- 6.4 All children looked after by the City at 31 March 2018 had up-to-date immunisations or were in the process of undertaking the UASC Booster programme at year end, compared to 84% of those who had been in care nationally for at least 12 months at 31 March 2017.⁴
- 6.5 Annual dental checks were conducted during the year for all those who were in care at the start of the year, compared to nationally reported performance of 83% in for those who had been in care nationally for at least 12 months at 31 March 2017.
- 6.6 No child in care was identified as having a substance misuse issue. For reference, the national average for those who had been in care for at least 12 months at 31 March 2017 was 4% and the inner London average was 7%⁵
- 6.7 Section 7 of the Local Authorities Act 1970 requires that an annual strength and difficulties questionnaire (the SDQ) is completed for all LAC aged 4 to 16 years-old who have been in care over one year at 31 March.⁶ This questionnaire measures emotional health and well-being and the scores are recorded by the DfE as part of the annual census of children who are looked after.⁷ Although the Department for Education (DfE) has not yet published the validated scores for 2018 they identified

³ Children looked after in England, year ending 31 March 2017 SFR 50/2017.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Please note that the City of London extends the SDQ to all its children in care, but the annual bench mark score is based on those within the statutory remit

⁷ The annual SSDA903 census

two City of London CIC for inclusion in this year's calculation, with an average score of 3.5 (low is good: and 0 - 13 is considered the 'normal' range).⁸

- 6.8 All our children received their health histories in 2017-2018 which was an Ofsted recommendation, as well as an objective from our previous service improvement plan.

7 Safeguarding our children

- 7.1 All our looked after children and young people leaving care are allocated a fully qualified social worker. Social workers offer support in areas such as identity, health, leisure, education and friendship.
- 7.2 There was one allegation made by a child in our care against his previous foster carer. This was subsequently dealt with by the LADO in the relevant Local Authority. The City Corporation has received no complaints from the children or young people in its care or its care leavers.
- 7.3 Over the year three UASC, aged between 15 to 17 years-old, went missing from their placements, with a total of four episodes between them. One, who had just come into our care, did not return. Of the other three missing episodes: two returned within 24 hours; but one was for an extended period of five weeks.
- 7.4 Children who go missing can be at risk of serious harm. There are particular concerns about the vulnerability of missing or runaway children to sexual exploitation or other exploitative harm such as violence crime, gang exploitation or drug and alcohol misuse. Looked after children who go missing from placements are at particular risk and vulnerable to sexual and other exploitation. Therefore, the children in the City Corporation's care who went missing were considered vulnerable to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and were reviewed by the Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation group. This resulted in vulnerability factors being addressed in case planning and multi-agency meetings.

8 Education and employment

- 8.1 The Virtual School Head (VSH) reports on education and employment of our children looked after and care leavers on an annual basis following the educational year. The report covering 2017-18 academic year is due for circulation in November 2018.
- 8.2 Improvements over the financial year 2017-2018 include ensuring every young person receives a lap top if this is needed to improve their educational or employment prospects. The attainment in the virtual school meeting now forms a part of the Children and Social Care Team meeting. This ensures full contribution from the children's social workers and ensures that processes are reviewed, cases discussed, and policies are developed. This keeps education and employment at the forefront of social worker's practice. In 2017-2018 all UASC and their foster carers are provided with a toolkit to support language development. This toolkit contains:
- Booklet describing strategies to develop language
 - Picture dictionary

⁸ 2018 SDQ validated data to be published December 2018

- Story boards
- Whiteboards and pens
- Exemplars of ESOL exam papers
- Cards of 100 key words used when speaking English
- List of useful websites

8.3 The first celebration event for our young people was held, praising their educational and employment successes. 12 of our young people attended, along with the Director and Assistant Director and five members. This was an excellent opportunity to celebrate the achievements of our young people.

9 Assessments, case planning and permanency planning

- 9.1 During 2017/18 the quality of assessments, care planning and permanency planning have been kept under review and scrutiny through supervision, tighter scrutiny of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service and the Quality Assurance Framework.
- 9.2 A Permanency Policy and Panel continued to strengthen the oversight of care planning in 2017/2018, this newly included a record of decision whether to issue care proceedings or not. We have not issued care proceedings in respect of any UASC to date. This is on account of the age of young people arriving and not wishing to harm any ties with birth family, wherever they may reside.
- 9.3 The Permanency Panel has led to, for example, a young person having a formal celebration to recognise that his foster placement would be for the remainder of his childhood. Previous social workers and a former Independent Reviewing Officer came back to the City to celebrate.
- 9.4 Case planning is well thought through and the social work team very able. There was one non UASC CIC in care proceedings, and positive feedback was received in Court on timely planning and the quality of assessment.

10 IRO service

- 10.1 The independent reviewing officer's statutory task is to ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child. There is one full time IRO who is responsible for carrying out the functions of the role to all children in the care of the City Corporation.
- 10.2 The IRO sits away from the Children's Social Care Team and is not involved in the preparation of the child's care plan, management of the child's case, or the control over resources to ensure their independence.
- 10.3 The Children's Social Care Team notifies the IRO of all children received into care within 72 hours. The IRO conducted approximately 60 visits to meet children in the last 2 years. The purpose of these visits was to introduce the role of the IRO to newly accommodated children and in all cases to consult children and monitor the quality and progress of their care.

11 Accommodation

- 11.1 Stable and caring home environments help children in care. Children looked after benefit from living with foster carers and are placed with independent fostering agencies judged Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. Foster placements are carefully commissioned on an individual basis in order to meet the needs of children and young people and we systematically monitor these arrangements to ensure they provide stable placements that meet the physical, emotional and social needs of children. The Quality Assurance Manager now reviews placements with the fostering agencies. Semi independent accommodation will be considered based on the young person's needs, wishes and feelings, and any risk identified. Foster care will always be the starting position.
- 11.2 When it is feasible our LAC are placed as close to the City as possible. Although the City Corporation did not have any sibling groups within its care cohort during 2017/18, wherever it is appropriate to do so, siblings that are looked after are placed together.
- 11.3 With regards to placement stability, of the 26 children looked after during this reporting period, 13 were newly accommodated UASC. UASC are often initially placed under time pressure often with little information about the child and their needs, abilities and risks. They are often, therefore, subject to placement changes within the first few months. As so many of our CIC are UASC, placement instability is a particular challenge for us.
- 11.4 Of the 12 new UASC who remained in our care for more than one week: four had one temporary foster care placement each before transfer to another Local Authority; and one older new UASC was placed in a supported shared residential placement⁹ awaiting transfer to NASS accommodation. Of the other six new UASC in year: one remained in their original foster care placement; three remained in their second foster care placements (all three having moved from emergency provisional foster care placements); but two were in their third placements by 31 March 2018. In the case of the latter both UASC's first placement were terminated by the City Corporation due to concerns regarding their care by either the carer or the fostering agency. The one non-UASC coming into care remained in the same foster care placement throughout their period in care.
- 11.5 Of those who had been in care at 1 April 2017: four remained in stable foster placements throughout the year (or until at least their 18th birthday); of this group two young people had been in the same foster placement for at least four years at the point of transition to care leaver. A fifth remained in supported provision through their transition to care leaver; and a sixth moved once, to semi-independent provision in preparation for transition to care leaver services. Another two older UASC, although settled in single placements from 1 April until turning 18, had been in at least two placements in the year to their birthday.
- 11.6 Of the other three young people who were already in care at 1 April 2017 and remained in care for more than six weeks: two had three placements in 12 months before their 18th birthdays and the reasons for changes on placement included: a move to facilitate attendance at specialist education provision; a child's request to

⁹ Supported residential accommodation for older children in care providing semi-independent living accommodation in a shared facility (not subject to Children's homes regulations)

move placement; a carer's request; and a move from foster care to semi-independent provision as part of the transition to care leaver services. A third young person who was still in care at 31 March 2018 had four changes of foster placement during the year as one placement was terminated due to an extended period missing; two placements were temporary emergency provision on their return; and the fourth placement change was at the child's request.

- 11.7 Of our three long-term looked after children¹⁰ at 31 March 2018: none had been in their current placement for over two years, although one would achieve this milestone in the first week of 2018/19. Of the other two: one had recently moved to semi-independent provision as part of their transition to care leaver services; and the other had a period of placement instability after being missing from care.
- 11.8 The City Corporation works to ensure that 100% of care leavers are supported in a range of accommodation suitable to their needs including semi-independent living projects, independent living in social housing units, and some 'stayed put' arrangements with former foster carers. As noted in 2.11 above, one care leaver was in accommodation automatically classified as unsuitable (prison).

12 Areas of development and priorities for the year ahead

12.1 The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out the City Corporation's commitment to ensuring the children in and leaving its care meet their full potential and have lives in which they thrive. We will continue to drive the achievement of this in 2018/19 through continuing and enhanced services and the delivery of targeted actions. These included:

- Dedicated placements officer to be in place to help reduce placement breakdown and continue work to improve placement stability.
- Improve recording of young people's views, including within pathway plans
- Specific measures are in place to safeguard unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people in our care, with all staff to receive training on radicalisation and modern slavery
- Care leavers to have a trusted friend/adult they can talk to – boosting further the linking with refugee groups
- Care leavers to have access to a peer mentor
- Improving our work where we think young people are working illegally
- LAC reviews to be triggered if a young person is at risk of being excluded from school
- Training for social workers to ensure plans are consistently SMART
- Further develop our expertise around education and employment for UASC
- Social workers to attend London Asylum Seekers Consortium training to keep themselves updated on rules and policy to best support the young people through the immigration process
- Service entitlements for CIC and care leavers to be published on our website and shared with care leavers

¹⁰ Long-term LAC are those who have been in care continuously for at least 2.5 years. The national indicator for stability for long-term placements is those who have been in care for 2.5 years or more and have been at their current placement for 2 years or more.