

Tower Hamlets Council Placement Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers: 2019-2022



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Section 1

1.0 Executive Summary

Following OFSTED's inspection of arrangements for the protection of children, looked after children and care leavers in 2017, a comprehensive Children's Services Improvement Plan has been developed and implemented. The creation of the 2017-18 Sufficiency Strategy was a key action so that we could increase our confidence that children are receiving quality services.

The Strategy considered our historical looked after children data, considered the experiences of children and used a range of intelligence to understand demographic and market trends over the past five years. The analysis highlighted the leading sufficiency challenges, and addressed the strategic developments required.

As set out in Section 2.3 of this Strategy, considerable progress has been made against the 2017-18 Strategy. We recognise that much more is required to meet our ambitions for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Tower Hamlets. In order to plan over the longer term, this Sufficiency Strategy sets out our plans over the next three years, building on what has been achieved to date.

Tower Hamlets Council along with our partners want our looked after children and care leavers to have a happy and secure childhood which enables them to become confident and successful young adults. We will help them develop and achieve their aspirations as we would our own children.

The Strategy aims to ensure that there is a range of resources available for children and young people who are becoming looked after as well as ensuring that the placements for our current population are of high quality and support stability and security throughout childhood and into adulthood.

The overarching ambitions of the Sufficiency Strategy are to support this Vision through:

- Supporting children to live with their families where this can be achieved safely
- Acting and preventing drift where it has been identified that it is in the interests of the child to become looked after
- Developing a range of available resources to meet the needs of the whole population of looked after children and care leavers in line with the aims of the Sufficiency Duty. This is through developing our own resources and through market development and a sound commissioning strategy
- Ensuring that looked after children and their placements are well supported to provide happy and secure homes for as long as they remain looked after
- Maximising the opportunities for children and young people to leave care and achieve permanence through legal arrangements such as adoption and special guardianship where this is in their interests

- Providing the best resources for young people leaving care to assist them to grow into confident and successful adults.

Section 3 sets out the key components of the Strategy and develops the individual actions that will be required to achieve these. These are then included within the Action Plan attached as Appendix 1.

Key to supporting children and young people is our ability to effectively listen to them and to understand fully their views, wishes and feelings. We are committed to acting on the views of children and young people, their parents and carers when it is right to do so and empower them to make positive choices over their own lives. This vital feature of the Strategy is referred to in more detail at Section 3.7.

In order to ensure sufficient placements, Tower Hamlets will seek to continue to provide as many placements as possible through our in-house service. However, we recognise that to meet all of the requirements will be extremely challenging and that we will need to work with providers from the independent and voluntary sectors to complement our services.

Section 4 of the Strategy gives the statistical information that will inform the Strategy and will continue to assist the Council, its partners and children and young people in understanding whether or not it is being effective.

Section 5 gives financial information on the current commitments and placements for looked after children and care leavers.

2.0 Introduction

The ‘Sufficiency Duty’ is laid down in Section 22G of the Children’s Act 1989. Statutory Guidance was issued in 2010¹ to support this duty and outline the expectations on local authorities and their partners. This section requires local authorities to take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority’s area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority’s area.

- Allowing the child to live near their home;
- Not disrupting the child’s education or training;
- Enabling the child and a looked after sibling to live together;
- Meeting the particular needs of disabled children;
- Providing accommodation within the local authority’s area, unless that is not reasonably practicable; and
- Respecting the child’s wishes, views and feelings

The previous Sufficiency Strategy covered the period 2017-18 and addressed the immediate challenges facing the authority and its partners in meeting these statutory obligations. The Commissioning Plan 2017-2018 supported the aims of the Strategy. A considerable amount has been achieved during the past year, while some fundamental challenges remain.

As Corporate Parents, Tower Hamlets Council along with our partners want our looked after children and care leavers to have a happy and secure childhood which enables them to become confident and successful young adults. We will help them develop and achieve their aspirations as we would our own children.

As a local authority, we will work with partner agencies to support children to live within their family and community wherever possible.

This Strategy needs to be seen within the overall strategic context of our plans to further improve services to children and their families within Tower Hamlets.

This document sets out a three year strategy to develop the resources required to achieve our aims for looked after children and care leavers. Given the specific challenges of achieving sufficient placements within Tower Hamlets itself, this Strategy seeks to meet the practical implications by securing as many placements as possible within the authority and within neighbouring authorities.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/securing-sufficient-accommodation-for-looked-after-children>

2.1 Strategic fit

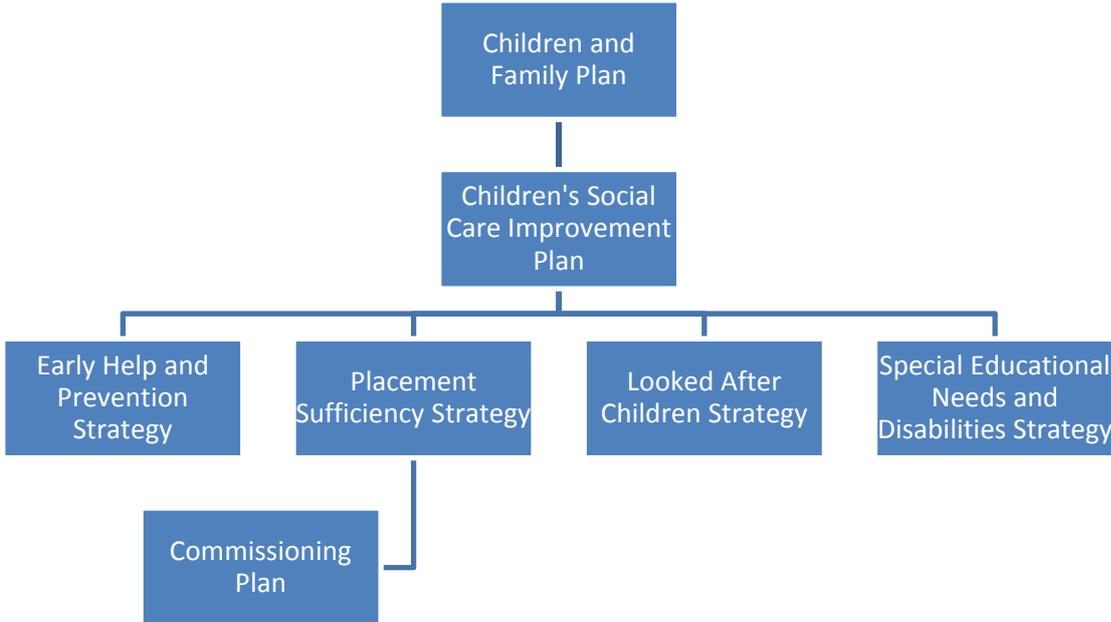
This strategy is informed by applicable legislation; national policy and guidance and local management information, performance data and officer insights. It is linked to and should be read alongside a number of key local planning documents (listed in the diagram below).

This strategy should also be read alongside the Improvement Programme which further sets out the council's aspirations for our children. We are aiming high so that we can ensure that all children receive good or better services. We will be innovative, committed and evidence based so that we fulfil our ambition to be excellent corporate parents for children and young people in care and care leavers.

The provision and planning for appropriate placements is a vital part of discharging our duties as corporate parents.

A Commissioning Plan was developed to support the 2017-18 Strategy and a new Commissioning Plan will support this Strategy.

We recognise the key role partner agencies and independent providers play in the mixed economy which provides placements and support for the needs of looked after children and care leavers. We are committed to work in partnership with good providers to shape and develop the market for sufficiency of placements in Tower Hamlets and surrounding areas to enable us to develop the range of provision that our children need. We will also build our knowledge base of specialist provision so that children with particularly complex needs do not have their life chances compromised by drift and delay or the experience of inappropriate placements.



2.2 Governance and Oversight

The Strategy will be overseen through the Divisional Leadership Team (DLT).

Progress on the outcomes from the Strategy will be presented on an annual basis to the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Corporate Parenting Board includes representatives from the Children in Care Council and from key partner agencies.

2.3 Progress and Impact of the 2017-18 Strategy

- The Edge of Care service was established in November 2017. As noted by Ofsted in their recent visit in September 2018, the team provides wrap around support to children and their families. It has diverted 33 young people from becoming looked after and has assisted in 6 young people returning home.
- The Fostering Service has updated its Recruitment Strategy. It has developed a new Training Programme that gives foster carers additional skills and support to work with challenging young people. This additional support has enabled carers to increase the number of placements available to older adolescents and children with disabilities.
- In conjunction with the Government's Innovation Fund, The Fostering Service has continued to develop the Mockingbird scheme that offers additional support for hubs of foster carers. A third hub is due to be developed. The scheme plays an important role in improving placement stability. The feedback from foster carers is very positive and the scheme was commended in the recent Fostering Stocktake, commissioned by the Department of Education.²
- Foster carers have been supported to offer placements to a wider range of children, reducing the vacancy rate. The service has moved from using less than 60% of capacity to an occupancy rate of 85-95%.
- The CAMHS in Children's Social Care Service has been reviewed to give additional placement support and aid stability. The co-location of a dedicated CAMHS professional with social workers is enabling children in care to access specialist help and support more quickly. This is assisting children and their carers, particularly adolescents with complex needs, to remain in the same placement.
- Improved out-of-hours support and the opportunity to consult with the dedicated child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) psychologist have resulted in more foster carer placements for children locally.
- The performance on short-term and long-term stability has consequently improved. The rate of short-term placement disruption has diminished from 14.2% to 11.5% since January 2018. Long term stability is in line with statistical neighbours.
- The independent placements overview panel (IPOP), chaired by a senior manager, scrutinises existing placements and considers requests for placement moves and for new placements, to ensure that they meet the needs of the children and young people. The IPOP has assisted in reducing the number of children in residential placements from 30 to 17 in June 2017 to 17 placements in November 2018.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foster-care-in-england> (p.41)

- A review was undertaken of the in-house residential children's home at Norman Grove. The outcome of this Review was that Norman Grove was not suitable to meeting the needs of young people at risk of exploitation and gangs. Given that maintaining the unit would not contribute to the long-term strategy for looked after children and edge of care services the facility has been decommissioned. Many of the experienced staff are now working as members of the Edge of Care team.
- The joint commissioning of dedicated provision for residential beds in partnership with other local authorities continues to progress and is due to be tendered by early 2019. This will lead to more suitable good quality residential beds becoming available in East London, reducing the number of children placed at distance because of lack of placement availability.
- The East London Regional Adoption Agency is due to commence operation in April 2019. This will bring together the adoption services across five local authorities. This will aid adopter recruitment, choice for matching and improve adoption support arrangements.
- The commissioning arrangements to procure semi-independent provision and housing for Care Leavers have been reviewed. A new Framework agreement for Semi Independent Living arrangements has been developed and it is aimed to have this in place by April 2019. This will improve the quality and oversight of semi-independent provision
- New arrangements for the procurement of shared accommodation for care leavers have been developed. There will be closer alignment between the Leaving Care Service and the Children's Placement Service.
- The data available to managers and staff has been significantly improved, aiding understanding of progress and where further improvements are required.
- Joint working with the Virtual School has continued, strengthening placement stability and improving outcomes for looked after children
- The Corporate Parenting Board continues to oversee and support the aims of the Sufficiency Strategy, ensuring that there is a strong voice for children and young people, for carers and for Council members in shaping the service.

3.0 Key Strategic Aims

The key strategic aims are summarised below. None of these can be taken in isolation as they are interdependent.

An Action Plan has been developed to take forward the strategic aims. This is attached as Appendix 1.

3.1 Strengthen the delivery of edge of care services

Tower Hamlet Council aims to support children and young people to remain at home wherever possible as we believe that for many positive outcomes are more likely when families receive effective edge of care support rather than entering the care system.

We know from research that in particular for young people aged 15 and over, the outcomes for them if they become looked after are unlikely to be more positive than remaining at home. Other than where there are compelling safeguarding concerns, we will seek to use our edge of care services to divert such young people from becoming looked after.

The term of edge of care is not straightforward to define. It can refer to families where at some point in the future there could be a reactive care episode or it could mean that the child and their family are at a cliff edge where there is an imminent risk of entry into care.

Since November 2017 the Edge of Care Service has provided structured interventions that enable families to develop problem-solving skills, build resilience and achieve positive, sustainable behaviour change. The service provides a rapid response to young people and families in crisis, enabling them to address and overcome the difficulties that have led to the family being at risk of breakdown and prevent further escalation that could result in care proceedings.

The Edge of Care interventions are targeted effectively to prevent avoidable family breakdown and strengthen rehabilitation plans to ensure greater success of family reunification. As a result, children only become looked after when it is right that should and come into care in a planned way. As a result the profile of our looked after children's population has realigned, meaning less older children are coming into care and younger children in need of protection and permanency are the focus of work.

To enhance our edge of care provision, Tower Hamlets has joined four other London boroughs to develop a scalable Edge of Care service using Multi-Systemic and Functional Family Therapies. The therapies are funded via social investment in the form of a social impact bond (SIB) and are commissioned by the Partnership on a payment by results arrangement. The therapies work with children and families over a period of three to five months with the aim to halt the route to into care. Should a child remain out of care following the completion of the therapy then the local authority pays weekly outcomes payment for up to 24 months per child. The projected cost avoidance through successfully supporting young people to remain at home over the three year duration of the contract is £1.4 million.

Key Actions

- Develop a Reunification Framework and toolkit with the support of the NSPCC.
- Further develop the Edge of Care Service and enhance joint working with all partners including the Family Group Conferencing, the Exploitation Hub, St Giles police, housing and health.
- All children and young people assessed being on the edge of care will be presented at the Resource Panel where service through the in house Edge of Care team or MST/FFT will be allocated.
- Recourses panel to track cases receiving edge of care service to help continue to service delivery by evaluating what works.
- Develop an integrated supported housing pathway to ensure where there is a primary for housing as opposed care and support, young people are provide with the correct service.

3.2 Strengthening and Increasing our in-house Fostering Service

Children and young people in care often respond well to living in family home environments as is offered by foster care. Often, the familiarity of a home environment enable children and young people to settle and develop, being supported to work through their problems with their foster carers and in doing so learn to build family relationships.

Where possible, social workers will recommend foster care as the best option for children and young people. In house foster care offers the opportunity for children and young people to remain living locally, in Tower Hamlets or the neighbouring boroughs.

Within our ambition to place as many looked after children in family based settings, there is also the desire to increase the proportion of foster care placements with our internal carers. This presents a number of challenges in terms of increasing the overall number of internal foster carers by improving our recruitment and retention of foster carers as well as ensuring that our foster carers are confident and capable of providing care to the whole range of age groups and complexity of need. At present 21% of foster care placements for looked after children are provided by independent fostering agencies.

Our in-house Fostering Service currently has 116 approved foster carers providing 152 placements. Since the implementation of the 2017-18 Sufficiency Strategy we have maintained occupancy rate between 85% and 95%.

Key Actions

- To increase the net number of 'in house' foster placements by 30 over the course of the next three years
- To continue to specifically recruit carers to meet the needs of children who are more likely to be placed in the independent sector or more than 20 miles from Tower Hamlets. This includes sibling groups; children over the age of 10 including adolescents with challenging behaviours and / or high levels of safeguarding concerns; and children with disabilities.
- To design a specialist fostering scheme that will improve placement choice for young people with complex and challenging needs. This is particularly concerned with providing placements

for teenagers who may be at high risk through becoming missing, concerns regarding Child Sexual Exploitation, running County Lines or similar risks.

- To develop campaigns to recruit foster placements for those children where the Fostering Service is usually unable to meet their needs, for example sibling groups, children with disabilities.
- To seek to recruit foster carers who reflect the ethnic diversity of the looked after population.
- To ensure assessments of connected persons are timely and robust and that children, young people and their carers receive appropriate support. To ensure that assessments are overseen by the Fostering Panel.
- To strengthen and develop our support services to our foster carers.
- To work with all staff to ensure that they understand the key role of foster carers as part of the professional network.
- To support the Mockingbird Innovation Programme and act on the findings of the research programme.

3.3 Improving the support arrangements for Looked After Children and their placements.

Ensuring that placements are secure and stable is a clear priority for any Looked After Children service. In order to fulfil this role, the support offered to foster carers and to other providers needs to be of high quality, as referred to in the previous section. For the in-house Fostering service, this means continuing to develop and strengthen the existing range of support services available. This is aimed at retaining the carers that we have as well as encouraging further applications.

Where children are placed within the independent sector, they should also have access to adequate support services to enable their placements to be secure and stable. Some services may be provided through the placement's own provision, but where this is not possible, additional support should be considered.

Key Actions

- In order to meet the needs of young people with complex needs, to consider the development of bespoke packages, which may include education, therapy and drug and alcohol intervention to improve the stability of placements.
- The emotional and mental health needs of looked after children should be clearly addressed in the Local Transformation Plan for Child Mental Health improvement. All commissioning frameworks should ensure that providers address how they support children with their emotional wellbeing and mental health needs.

3.4 Ensure that children are able to achieve permanence through adoption and special guardianship where appropriate

Where it is in the interests to children to leave care through adoption or special guardianship this will give them additional legal security. The majority of the adoption functions of the local authority will be delegated to the new Regional Adoption Agency, which will commence operation in April 2018.

Children who leave care through such arrangements should be provided with the support that they need to have successful and lasting placements in accordance with the legal requirements to do so.

Key Actions

- To support the establishment of the Regional Adoption Agency and to ensure that it is able to meet the needs of children in need of adoption in Tower Hamlets. To ensure that adoption support arrangements are improved and meet the needs of adopted children.
- To review the Adoption and Special Guardianship Allowances Scheme.
- To realign the Placements Service to strengthen arrangements for the assessment and support of connected carers and prospective Special Guardians.
- To review the functions of the Fostering Panel to support permanent placements through a range of legal arrangements to include SGO
- To regularly review the council's Family and Friends Policy.

3.5 Providing young people who are leaving care with a variety of placement choices and support to independence.

There is a need to further develop effective partnerships with housing providers across the borough and a joint strategy for the provision of cost effective, safe and good quality housing for care leavers, as well as increase the range of supported accommodation options to develop their skills for successful transition into adult life and independence. There is also a need to develop out of borough options for those who are unable to remain in borough and for those who have settled outside of Tower Hamlets.

Key Actions

- To implement the Semi Independent Living Framework for placement commissioning to improve quality of outcomes.
- To implement the Shared Accommodation Procurement Strategy to improve the quality of accommodation and support to young people.
- All procurement of semi-independent placements will take place through the Children's Placement Team
- To ensure that Pathway Planning is robust and that young people are provided with the support that is appropriate to their assessed needs.
- To ensure that the arrangements for Staying Put and Staying Close arrangements are clear and that these have been shared with young people and their carers as part of the Pathway Planning process as early as possible.
- To ensure transition planning for children with complex needs commences at 16 or before and involves partnership working with the adult services.

3.6 Provide a robust commissioning framework which is effectively responding to the sufficiency challenges and driving up standards.

15% of looked after children are placed more than 20 miles from the borough. The majority of these placements are commissioned fostering and residential placements which have been steadily increasing over the past 3 years.

The council recognises that even with a stronger in house fostering service, it will need to work with the independent sector to provide a proportion of the needs of children and care leavers. The Fostering Stocktake³, published in February 2018, found that 3 out of 152 local authorities in England were broadly self-sufficient in recruiting enough foster carers to meet their needs. A mixed economy will be required for the foreseeable future.

The council therefore needs to develop a strong commissioning framework to ensure the supply of sufficient placements of good quality and that the costs of these placements can be managed and transparent. A key strategy development has been partnering with 7 other local authorities in the Northeast of London in a formal partnership, the North East London Commissioning Partnership (NECLP). The initial aim of the Partnership is to engage with the Residential market to commissioning 35 block placements within the Partnerships footprint, for the service to have cost and quality assurances, and for the service to be co-produced with children and young people with lived experience of the care system. The initial programme of work has been supported by the DfE through the innovation fund and is a 3 year project started in 2017. The future aspiration is for the Partnership to collectively commission in key areas where the impact of 8 boroughs will help shape specific marketplaces to the needs of the Partnership.

The council will aim to provide placements to children and young people in Tower Hamlets and its local area (within 20 miles) to ensure they are not isolated from their friends and family and ensure they have access to services and networks to improve their outcomes. If a child has to be placed out of the borough we will ensure they are not disadvantaged and have the same chances as all our children and young people.

The council will introduce a robust commissioning framework for all provision types; to improve arrangements with local providers in order to ensure that they offer good quality placements and support to their carers. Through better relationships with providers the Council aims to significantly reduce its reliance on spot purchased provision.

The commissioning framework along with the current and planned activity is best illustrated through the newly introduced annual commissioning strategy. The strategy outlines the approach adopted when commissioning services for children and young people within the care system, how the local authority will engage with the varied market places to create effective partnerships, as well as taking into account the most effective resourcing of services for children and young people in the care system.

Key Actions

- To work in close partnership with local providers to re-shape the market and increase the availability of all placement types for Tower Hamlets Council's children at the point of need.
- To improve the commissioning and contract monitoring of all care placements through the consideration of a Framework agreement, either as a single authority or in partnership with neighbouring authorities.

³

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/679320/Foster_Care_in_England_Review.pdf

- To reduce the number of residential placements purchased and to develop and increase the number of highly skilled resilient foster placements through closer working with local providers across the mixed economy of council and independent providers.
- To fully implement the plan to secure six local and residential places through the North East London Commissioning Partnership, which will facilitate a greater number of local placements whereby wrap around services can continue to be delivered by the host borough.

3.7 Improve the overall data capture and data management of looked after children to better inform this strategy and improve accurate responses to sufficiency challenges.

The continued development and monitoring of the success of the Strategy is dependent on good quality information. The following actions are therefore aimed at improving the quality and range of information available to the service and to senior leaders to monitor improvement and performance.

Key Actions

- To regularly monitor data regarding the population of children and young people who are currently in receipt of services and those becoming looked after. This will be used to update this strategy and also inform the Early Help Strategy and ensure that it is being as effective as possible.
- A continuing drive to improve the quality of case recording to improve the completeness and accuracy of management information that informs our understanding of sufficiency challenges, issues and developments.
- To improve the information on referrals to the Children’s Placement Team and their outcome in order to understand where it has not been possible to find in-house placements.
- To undertake a programme of ‘deep dive’ and ‘dip sample’ audits to gain a better understanding of the experience of children and families behind the data. For example the reasons for the high number of older children entering care and our high use of secure care provision.
- To improve the management information for the placement service provided through Framework reports and reduce the service’s reliance on spread sheets.
- To continue to monitor permanence planning through Permanence Panels

3.8 Ensure that the voice of children and young people inform plans

Children and young people should have a clear voice and sufficient choice regarding their placements. They should have the means to make appropriate representations when they have concerns. The Children in Care Council should inform the development of this Strategy and its ongoing review.

Key priorities

- convening a children's panel to partake in interviews and training for foster carers and adopters as well as the development of a "young inspectors" scheme which will test out and feedback on the experience of our services from a young person's perspective.
- Ensure that the Corporate Parenting Board actively promotes and responds to the views and opinions of all looked after children and care leavers
- Independent Reviewing Officers will continue to ensure that children and young people have the opportunity to give their views about their placements
- Ensure that looked after children and care leavers understand how to make a complaint and how to contact the independent advocacy service.

4.0 Tower Hamlets demography, child population and future growth

This overall projections for Tower Hamlets are that the population growth that has been seen in recent years is likely to continue. Table 4.0.1 illustrates the expected growth. Given this projection it should be expected that the overall population of children and young people becoming looked after is also likely to rise. However, Tables 4.0.2 and 4.0.3 show that there should be some caution in expecting a linear connection between the overall population of children and the numbers of looked after children in Tower Hamlets.

Table 4.0.1: Projection of child population 2014 – 2028

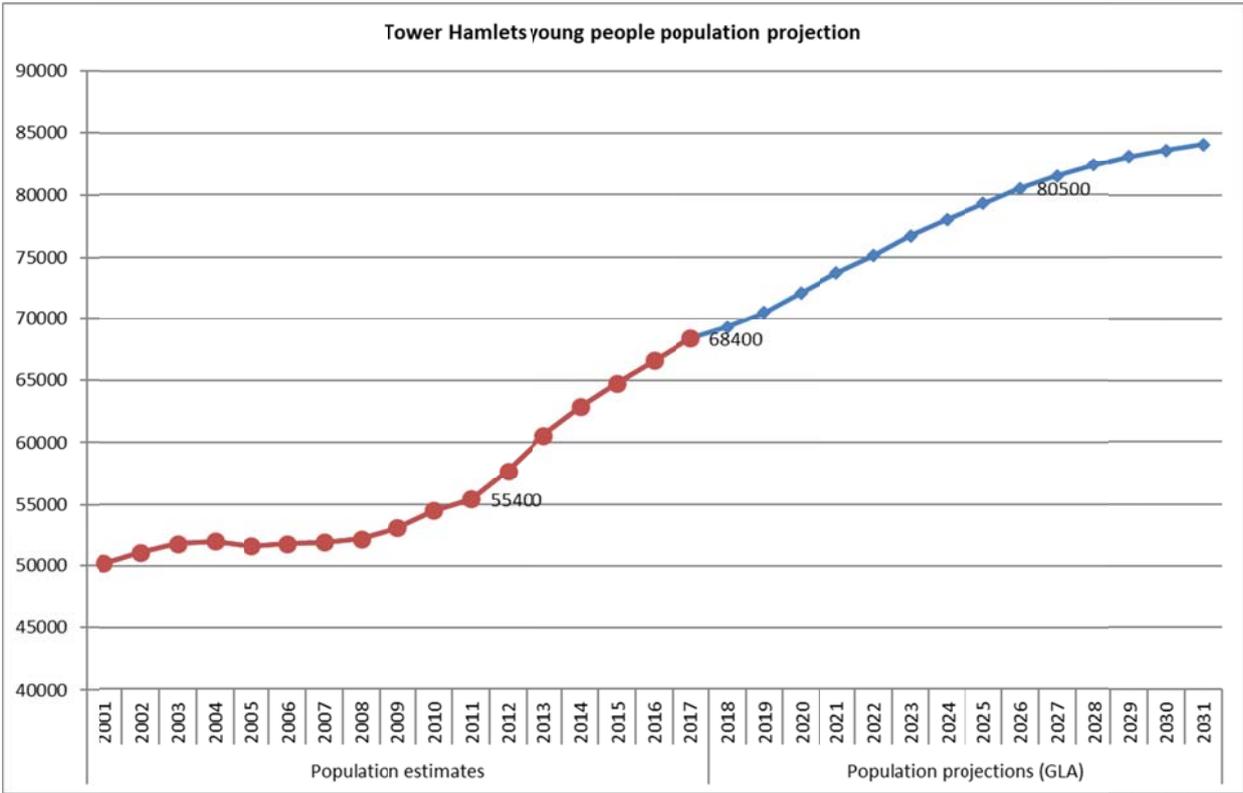


Table 4.0.2 shows the rates of looked after children per 10,000 of the population and a comparison with statistical neighbours, as well as England and Inner London. The timescales are longer than in other charts on this section to give a longer historical perspective. The chart shows that Tower Hamlets has consistently had a lower rate of looked after children as a proportion of the population than any of the comparison groups. The overall trend is downward for all groups, other than that of England as a whole. The proportion of children looked after to the overall population is erratic overall but has shown an overall reduction in the past decade. This is in line with statistical neighbours and with Inner London, whereas England as a whole has experienced a small growth.

Table 4.0.2 Rates of children looked after per 10,000 children

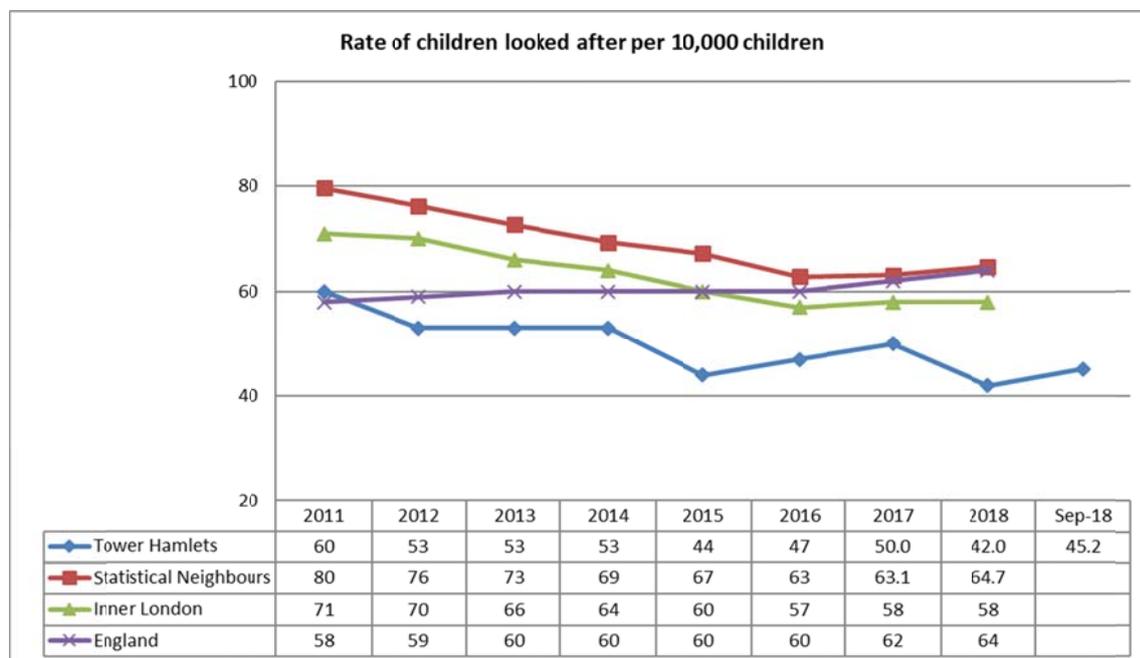


Table 4.0.3

Chart of Looked After children trend and comparison to statistical neighbours (excluding Birmingham and Manchester)

4.1 Looked after children demography

4.1.1 Number and Rates of Looked After Children

Tables 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 show the historical levels of numbers of Looked After Children. Table 4.1.1 shows the total number of children looked after during the financial year and Table 4.1.2 shows the number of children looked after at any one time. In each table there are a set of projections based purely on the size of the child population.

What these tables appear to show is that projections based purely on the overall population of children are likely to be a poor indicator of the numbers of children looked after. Given the overall rise in the population, it is unlikely that numbers of children looked after are going to reduce overall but planning needs to take into account that in any one year, the numbers are likely to be variable and are dependent on a more complex set of factors. Table 4.0.2 might suggest that in other areas there is a more predictable pattern. However, the fact that these changes are across much larger populations may also indicate that more local, short-term changes are less noticeable.

Table 4.1.1.1

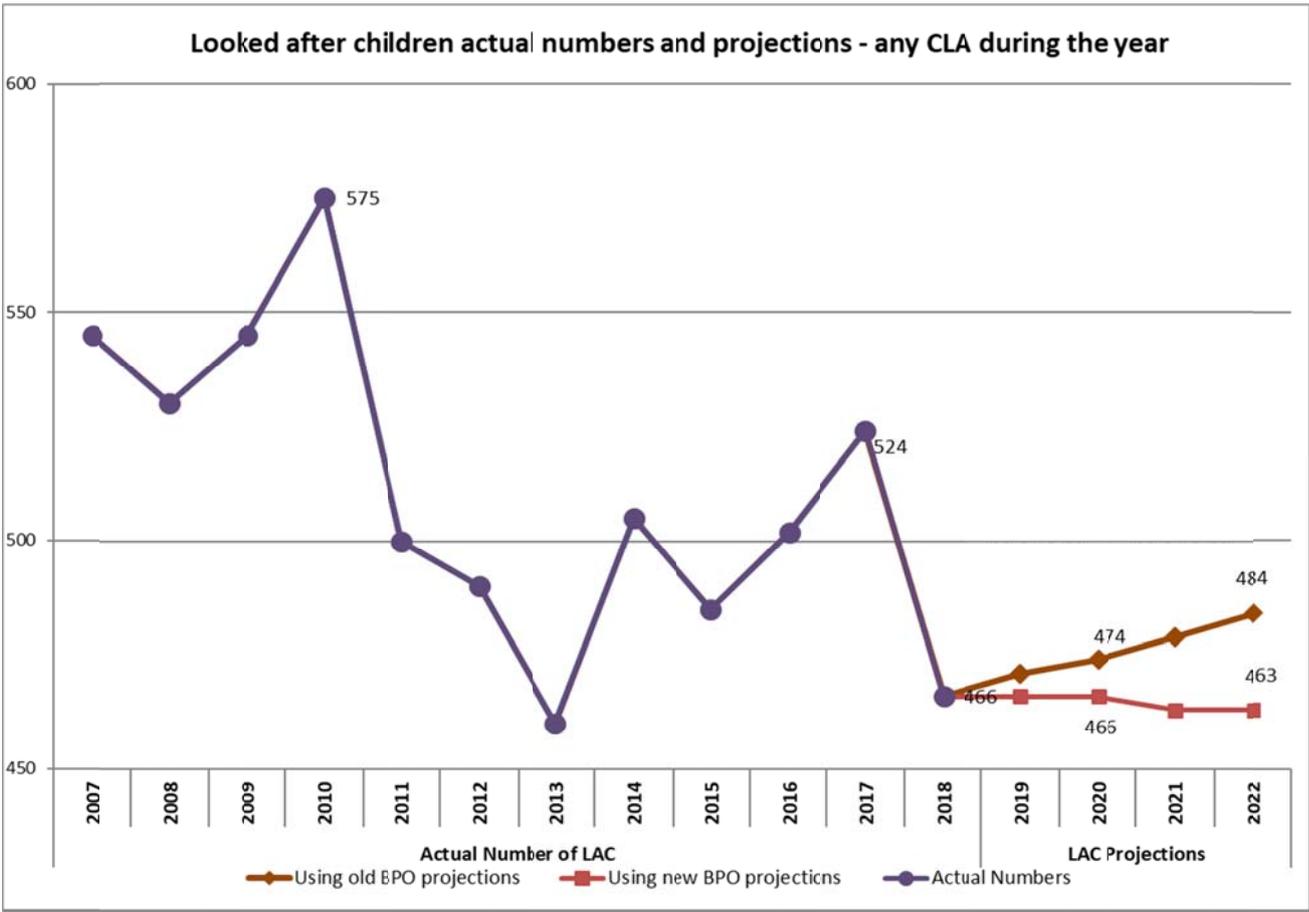
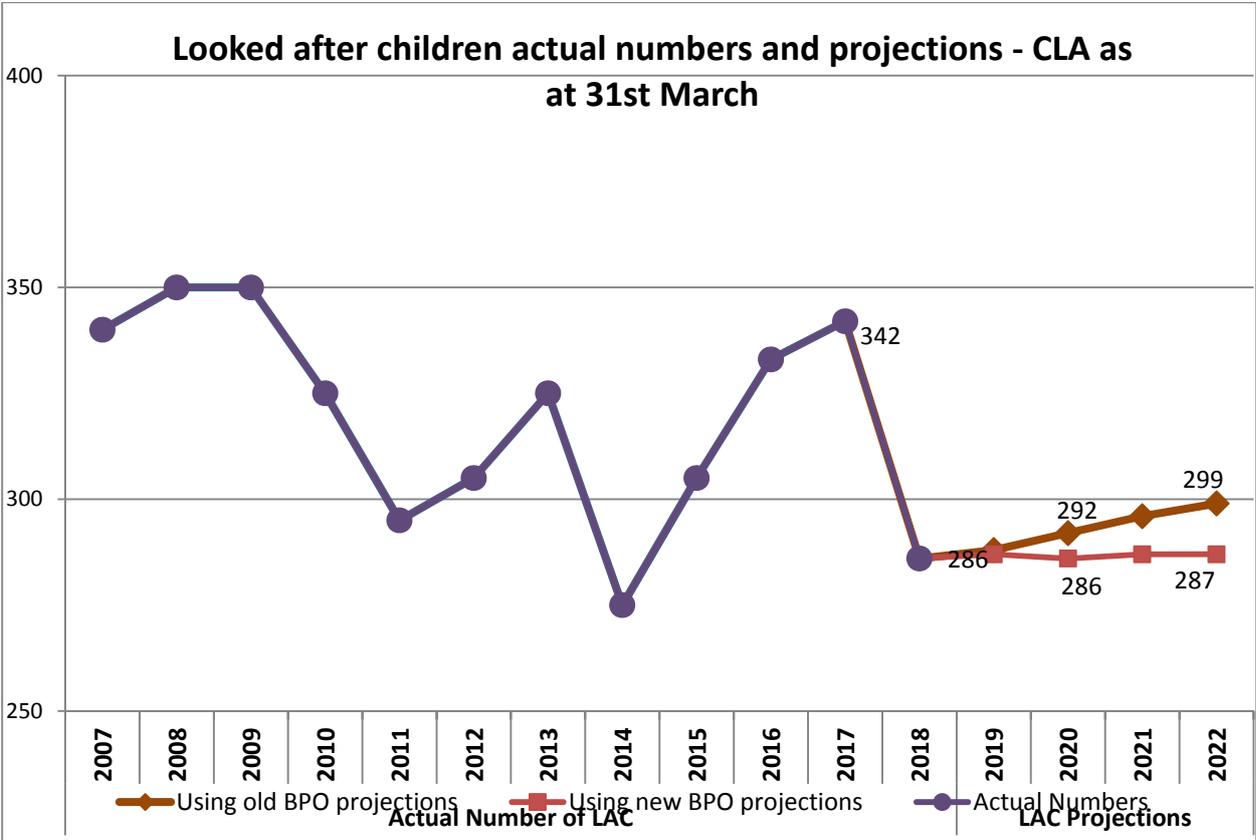


Table 4.1.1.2



4.1.2 Number by Age – total population 2014-18

Table 4.1.2.1 shows the age distribution of children looked after over the past four years and gives a comparison to the rate in England, Inner London and Statistical Neighbours. Overall, the table shows that the age distribution tends to be for an older population than with any of the three comparator groups. Table 4.1.2.2 gives the distribution at 30.09.18 and suggests that there is a reduction in the proportion aged 10-15.

Table 4.1.2.1

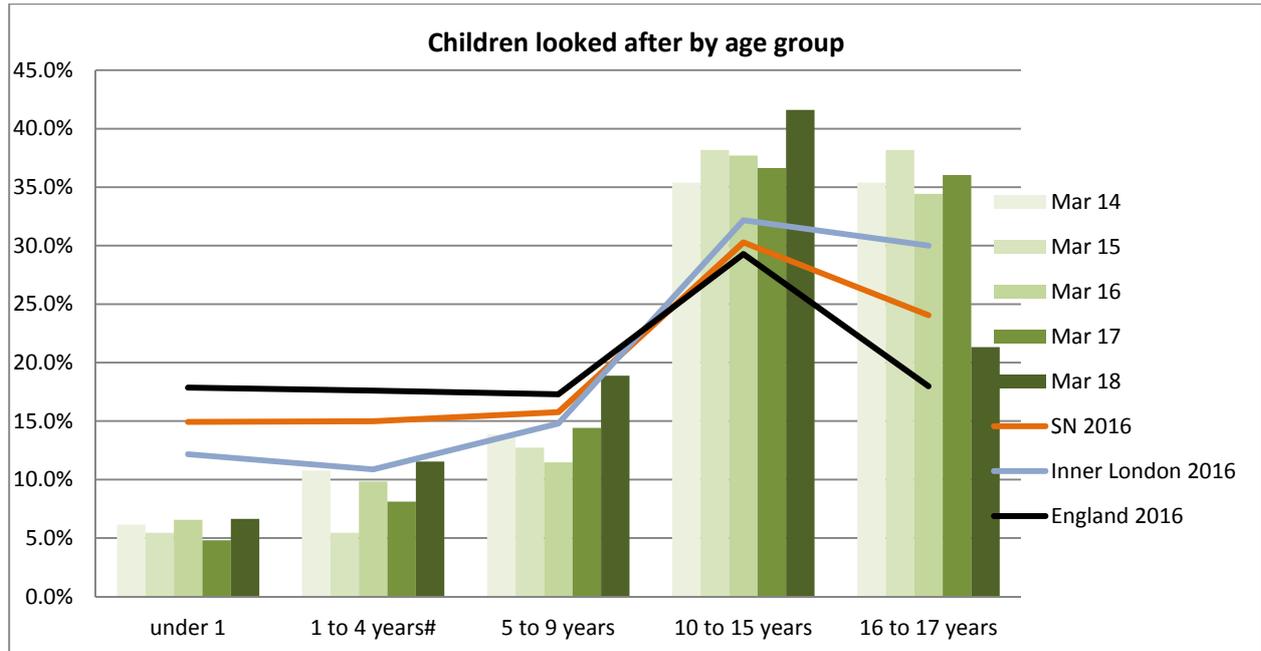


Table 4.1.2.2

Children looked after by age and gender (30 September 2018)

| @ 30 September 2018 | Number | | Percentages | | Total |
|---------------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male | |
| under 1 | 8 | 12 | 5.8% | 6.9% | 20 |
| 1 - 4 | 14 | 8 | 10.1% | 4.6% | 22 |
| 5 - 9 | 15 | 23 | 10.8% | 13.1% | 38 |
| 10 - 15 | 55 | 65 | 39.6% | 37.1% | 120 |
| 16-17 | 47 | 67 | 33.8% | 38.3% | 114 |
| Grand Total | 139 | 175 | 44.3% | 55.7% | 314 |

4.1.3 New entrants by age and gender

Table 4.1.3.1 gives an indication of the age distribution of children and young people becoming looked after in the first six months of the year 2018-19. Although numbers are relatively small, there is an indication that a higher proportion of younger children are entering care. The numbers of 16-17 year olds is likely to be significantly affected by the entrance of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. If these numbers were to continue, there would be a proportionately greater need to recruit and source placements for younger children.

Table 4.1.3.1

Children becoming looked after by age and gender (01 April - 30 Sept 2018)

| Care Entries | Number | | Percentages | | Total |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male | |
| under 1 | 6 | 8 | 20.7% | 13.6% | 14 |
| 1 - 4 | 4 | 4 | 13.8% | 6.8% | 8 |
| 5 - 9 | 3 | 9 | 10.3% | 15.3% | 12 |
| 10 - 15 | 6 | 12 | 20.7% | 20.3% | 18 |
| 16-17 | 10 | 26 | 34.5% | 44.1% | 36 |
| Grand Total | 29 | 59 | 33.0% | 67.0% | 88 |

4.1.4 Number by Ethnic Origin

Table 4.1.4.1 gives a snapshot of the ethnic origin of children looked after, as well as the final column giving the proportion of the overall population in order to aid comparison. The proportion of Bangladeshi children and young people looked after remains significantly below their proportion of the overall population. If they were looked after in direct relation to the numbers in the overall population, it would be expected that 202 children would be looked after. This fact alone may explain why Tower Hamlets has a lower than expected children looked after population than comparitors. Children from Mixed Backgrounds tend to be overrepresented in relation to the proportion of the overall population.

In terms of foster care recruitment, there is likely to be a discrepancy between the likely applicants from the general community, with a large Bangladeshi population, and the population of children looked after.

Table 4.1.4.1**Children looked after by ethnic origin**

| | March 2018 | Sep-18 | March 2018 | Sep-18 | % of U18 Population |
|------------------------------|------------|--------|------------|--------|---------------------|
| African | 37 | 36 | 11% | 11% | 5% |
| Any Other Asian Background | 16 | 18 | 5% | 6% | 2% |
| Any Other Black Background | 6 | 5 | 2% | 2% | 3% |
| Any Other Ethnic Group | 20 | 12 | 6% | 4% | 2% |
| Any Other Mixed Background | 30 | 25 | 9% | 8% | 2% |
| Any Other White Background | 23 | 9 | 7% | 3% | 4% |
| Bangladeshi | 78 | 78 | 22% | 25% | 57% |
| Caribbean | 10 | 10 | 3% | 3% | 2% |
| Chinese | 3 | 2 | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| Gypsy/Roma | | 3 | | 1% | 0% |
| Information Not Yet Obtained | 4 | 4 | 1% | 1% | |
| White - British | 67 | 65 | 19% | 21% | 15% |
| White - Irish | 3 | 1 | 1% | 0% | 0% |
| White & Asian | 19 | 11 | 5% | 4% | 2% |
| White & Black African | 14 | 10 | 4% | 3% | 1% |
| White & Black Caribbean | 19 | 25 | 5% | 8% | 2% |
| Grand Total | 349 | 314 | 349 | 314 | ~ |

4.1.5 Legal Status

Table 4.1.5.1 gives information regarding the current legal status of children looked after. The number of children looked after through Section 20 has been steadily reducing over the past three years and this proportion is now closer to the England average of 19%, and below the Inner London average of 31%.

The numbers of 16-17 year olds looked after through Section 20 is also likely to be significantly affected by the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

Overall, this suggests that there is a greater need to have sufficient placements available to care for children who will be looked after in the longer term and require permanent care.

Table 4.1.5.1

**Legal Status at 30 September 2018
by age group**

| | under 1 | 1 - 4 | 5 -9 | 10 - 15 | 16-17 | Overall |
|--|----------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Interim care order | 4.8% | 2.2% | 2.9% | 3.5% | 1.3% | 14.6% |
| Full care order | | | 8.0% | 28.3% | 15.6% | 51.9% |
| Placement order granted | 0.6% | 4.1% | 0.6% | 1.0% | | 6.3% |
| Remanded to local authority accommodation | | | | 0.3% | 1.6% | 1.9% |
| Accommodated under s20 | 1.0% | 0.6% | 0.6% | 5.1% | 17.8% | 25.1% |
| Total | 20 | 22 | 38 | 120 | 114 | 314 |

4.1.6 Current provision and type of placement – snapshot

Table 4.1.6.1 gives information regarding the placement provision for children looked after by type and by age. Table 4.1.6.2 gives the information regarding the use of in-house placements set against the use of IFA placements. The average proportion of foster placements sourced through IFAs has remained relatively consistent over the past four years and is in line with the national proportion of 34%.⁴ The overall number of children placed within Local Authority provision reduced at the end of March 2018. However, there has been a consistent effort through the Children’s Placement Team to increase the use of Local Authority carers and increase the amount of capacity that is being used, which is demonstrated through the rise in the past six months.

The number of young people placed in residential care is 8.9% (excluding those in YOIs). If those placed within semi-independent provision are added, this amounts to 21.3% of the population, which is well above the England average of 11%.⁵ Numbers of young people placed within independent living arrangements are higher than might be expected because of the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, who are predominantly placed in this type of provision.

The numbers of children placed for adoption is at 2.8%, which is in line with the England average of 3% (source as above).

⁴

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/679320/Foster_Care_in_England_Review.pdf (p.13)

⁵

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/757922/Children_looked_after_in_England_2018_Text_revised.pdf (p.7)

Table 4.1.6.1

Placements of children looked after at the end of September 2018

| | under 1 | 1 - 4 | 5 -9 | 10 - 15 | 16-17 | All |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| A3: Placed for adoption with consent with current foster carer | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| A5: Placed for adoption with placement order with current foster carer | | 2 | | | | 2 |
| A6: Placed for adoption with placement order, not with current foster carer | 1 | 3 | 2 | | | 6 |
| K1: Secure Unit | | | | 2 | | 2 |
| K2: Homes and Hostels | | | 1 | 12 | 8 | 21 |
| M3: Whereabouts unknown | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| P1: Placed with own parents or other person with parental responsibility | | | | 5 | 5 | 10 |
| P2: Independent living , e.g. in flat, lodgings, bedsit, B/B or with friends, with or without formal support | | | | | 40 | 40 |
| R1: Residential care home | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| R3: Family centre or mother and baby unit | 2 | | | | | 2 |
| R5: Young Offender Institution or prison | | | | | 4 | 4 |
| S1: All Residential schools, except where dual-registered as a school and children's home | | | | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| U3: Foster placement with relative or friend- not long term or FFA | 3 | 4 | 8 | 10 | 2 | 27 |
| U4: Placement with other foster carer- long term fostering | | | 4 | 28 | 11 | 43 |
| U5: Placement with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter- FFA | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| U6: Placement with other foster carer - not long term or FFA | 13 | 12 | 23 | 59 | 42 | 149 |
| Total | 20 | 22 | 38 | 120 | 114 | 314 |
| Fostered | 85.0% | 72.7% | 92.1% | 80.8% | 48.2% | 70.1% |

Table 4.1.6.2

Fostering placements between 2015 and 2018 by in-house and IFA

| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 31.03.18 | 30.09.18 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|----------|----------|
| Local Authority Fostering Agency | 131 | 153 | 151 | 119 | 148 |
| Independent Fostering Agency | 65 | 67 | 82 | 63 | 72 |
| Percentage of Fostering Placements from Local Authority | 66.9% | 69.6% | 64.9% | 65.4% | 67.2% |
| Total | 196 | 220 | 233 | 182 | 220 |

4.1.7 Destinations for Leaving Care

Table 4.1.7.1 gives information on the reasons recorded for children and young people leaving care. The large number of those not recorded is a concern. It is likely that these are young people who have left care through reaching the age of 18, but this can only be an assumption. Levels of Special Guardianship are currently in line with the national average of 11%.⁶ However, at a national level, 54% of Special Guardianship Orders are made to unrelated foster carers. This is reportedly lower in Tower Hamlets, and there may be scope for increasing this as a route to legal stability. If a higher number are being placed within extended family members, then this may be having an impact on the adoption proportion, which is reducing as referred to above.

Table 4.1.7.1

**Destination of children ceasing care during the years ending
31 March 2018**

| | Number | | | | Percentage | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
| Adopted | 21 | 14 | 10 | 8 | 9.5% | 6.7% | 4.9% | 4.3% |
| Independent living - with support | 8 | 20 | 11 | 7 | 3.6% | 9.6% | 5.4% | 3.8% |
| Other (not specified) | 82 | 60 | 56 | 64 | 37.1% | 28.7% | 27.6% | 34.4% |
| Residence order | 2 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 0.9% | 1.9% | 2.0% | 3.8% |
| Residential care - Adult S Care | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.0% | 0.5% |
| Returned home | 87 | 97 | 92 | 74 | 39.4% | 46.4% | 45.3% | 39.8% |
| Sentence to custody | 3 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 1.4% | 3.3% | 2.0% | 2.2% |
| Special guardianship | 17 | 6 | 26 | 21 | 7.7% | 2.9% | 12.8% | 11.3% |
| Total (year) | 221 | 209 | 203 | 186 | 221 | 209 | 203 | 186 |

⁶

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/757922/Children_looked_after_in_England_2018_Text_revised.pdf. (p.13)

4.1.8 Stability Information and Performance 2014 -18

Table 4.1.8.1

Placement stability of looked after children over the last 5 years including benchmarks

| Description | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | England Avg | Statistical Neighbour Avg |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Percentage of CLA with three or more placements | 11.2% | 11.0% | 9.7% | 8.0% | 13.0% | 15.0% | 10.0% | 11.0% |
| CLA under 16, looked after for 2.5 years or more and in the same placement for 2 years (LAC long term placement stability %) | 69.6% | 79.0% | 78.0% | 75.0% | 73.0% | 67.0% | 70.0% | 67.1% |

Table 4.1.8.2

Placement stability of looked after children April - September 2018

| Description | Apr 18 | May 18 | Jun 18 | Jul 18 | Aug 18 | Sep 18 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| % of CLA with three or more placements | 11.6% | 11.9% | 11.5% | 9.8% | 7.2% | 6.5% |
| % of CLA in long term stable placements | 59.4% | 58.0% | 59.2% | 62.5% | 55.3% | 58.1% |

Information contained in Tables 4.1.8.1 and 4.1.8.2 gives updates on the performance against both short-term and long-term stability for children looked after. Short-term stability has improved within the current year. Overall, long-term stability is lower within the current year than in previous years, where Tower Hamlets has performed well in comparison to England averages. (This may be caused by a coding issue, which I understand is being investigated.)

4.1.9 Adoption figures

As has been referenced above, the numbers of children leaving care through adoption has been reducing in recent years. This is a national trend, as shown in Table 4.1.9.1. As discussed above, the impact of children becoming subject to Special Guardianship Orders with extended family and friend networks may be a particular factor within Tower Hamlets. Overall, the formation of the Regional Adoption Agency is intended to increase the use of adoption for those children for whom it is most appropriate.

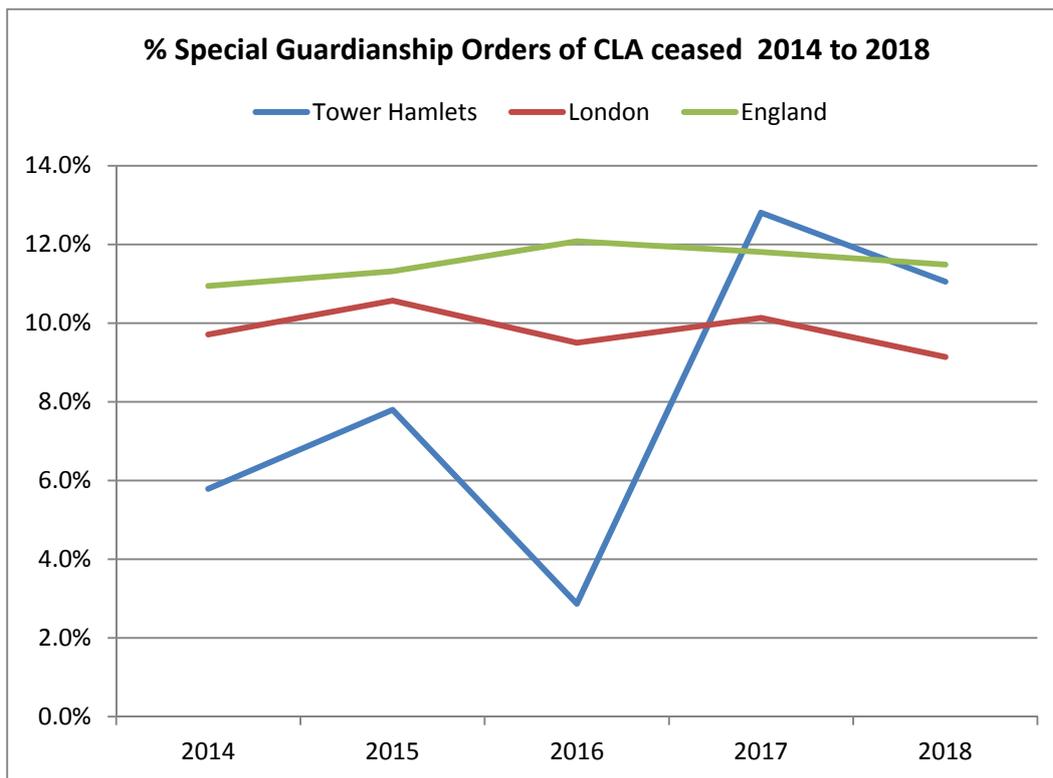
Table 4.1.9.1**Number and Percentage of children that the local authority placed for adoption**

| | Number of Children | Percentage of CLA who ceased in the year that were adopted | | |
|---------|----------------------|--|-------------------------------|-------------|
| | Tower Hamlets (No.s) | Tower Hamlets (%) | Statistical Neighbourhood (%) | England (%) |
| 2013/14 | 15 | 8 | 12 | 17 |
| 2014/15 | 21 | 10 | 11 | 17 |
| 2015/16 | 14 | 7 | 10 | 15 |
| 2016/17 | 10 | 5 | 12 | 14 |
| 2017/18 | 8 | 4 | 7 | 13 |

4.1.10 Special Guardianship figures 2014 -18

Special Guardianship rates have risen in 2017 and 2018. They are comparable to England and above the rates for London. The majority of these placements are with Family and Friends and the rates for unrelated foster carers who apply for Special Guardianship Orders is below the national figure. This leads to the recommendation that the current Allowance Scheme should be reviewed.

Table 4.1.10.1

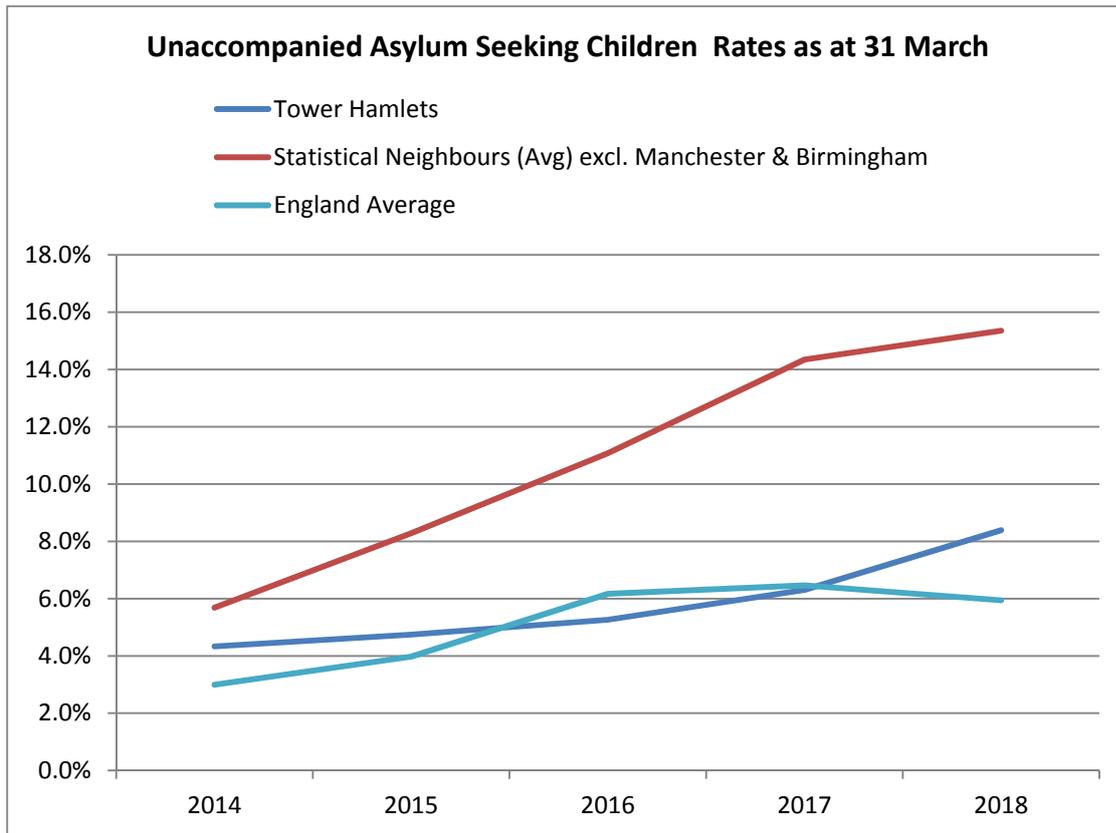


4.11.1 UASC 2014-18

The numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers has risen as a proportion of the Looked After Children population over the past four years. This is mainly through changes across London and the United Kingdom. The introduction of the National Transfer Scheme has set a limit for Local Authorities of a UASC population of 0.07% of the overall children’s population. Over the past two years, and particularly after the demolition of the Calais camps, the majority of London authorities are now over this limit. This means that the distribution of 16 and 17 year old UASCs through the Pan London rota is now spread over a smaller number of authorities. One Tower Hamlets has reached this figure, the population should stabilise.

Table 4.1.11.1 shows the rise in population over the past four years as a proportion of the total Tower Hamlets LAC population.

Table 4.1.11.1



4.1.12 Care Leavers

Table 4.1.12.1 gives information on the type of accommodation that Care Leavers occupy when they become 18. It can be seen that the largest number by some degree is young people in semi-independent accommodation. This emphasises the potential opportunities through the introduction of the semi-independent accommodation Framework to improve the quality and consistency of care that these young people receive.

The numbers extending care through Staying Put are lower than should be aimed for. The aim should be for the numbers of young people benefitting from this ongoing stability to rise in coming years.

Table 4.1.12.1

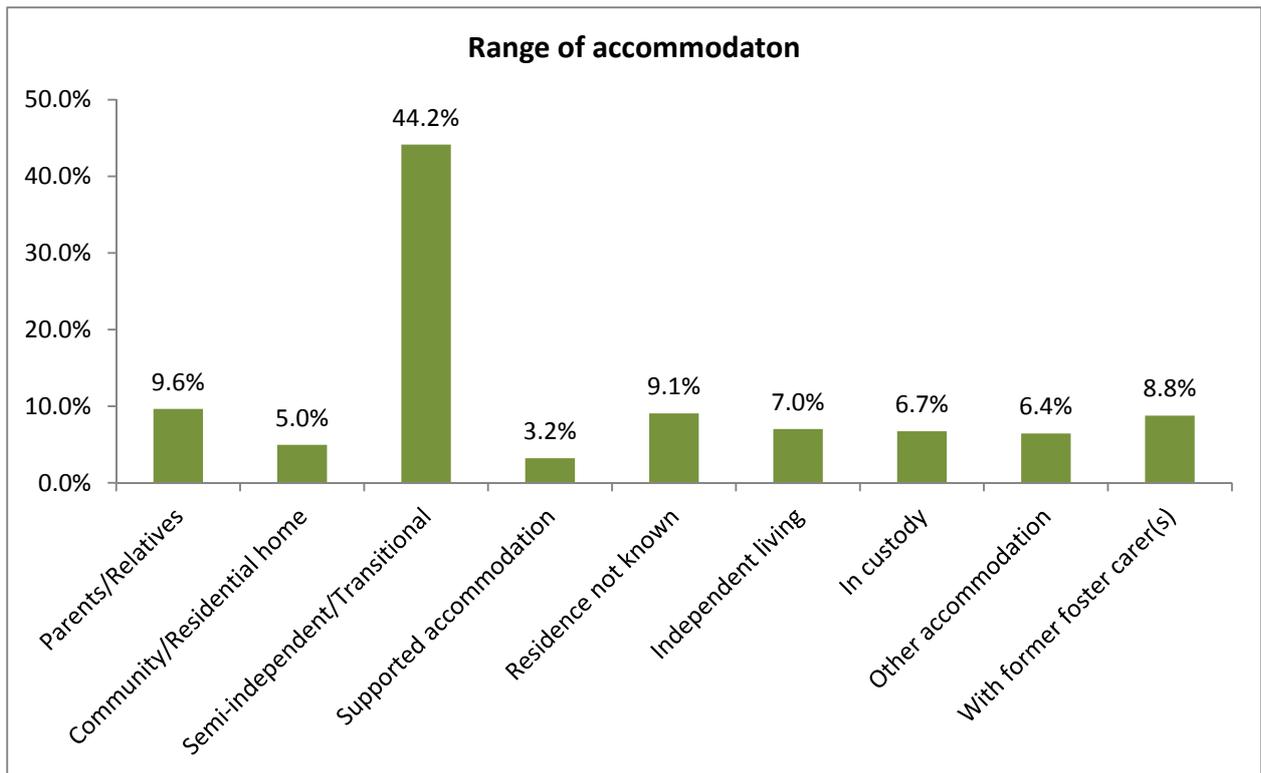


Table 4.1.12.2 confirms earlier signs that the rate of children entering care at later ages is high, although there are some signs that this trend may be changing in the last year. Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers will have some growing impact on this figure, but cannot be attributed to the whole issue. The Edge of Care services that have been developed will continue to be vital in supporting older children to remain at home safely with their families.

Table 4.1.12.2

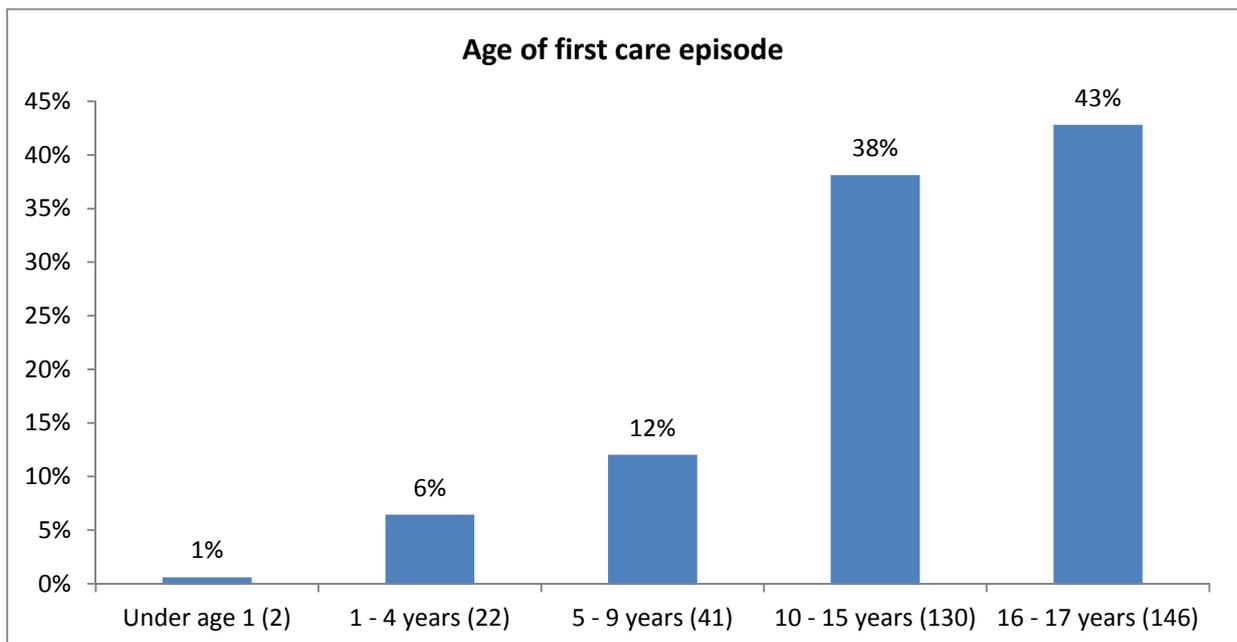


Table 4.1.12.3 gives a distribution of the current allocated Care Leaver population by age. This is supplemented by Table 4.1.12.4, which gives additional information on the gender distribution. Information on ethnicity is not currently available.

The age distribution is likely to grow older following the changes in legislation regarding the provision of support to Care Leavers to age 25, which will also grow the overall population of young people entitled to support.

As can be seen, the number of male Care Leavers is almost twice that of females, which is markedly different to the overall LAC population. The reasons for this are not clear, but may indicate that girls leave the care system prior to becoming 18 through other routes more than boys.

Table 4.1.12.3

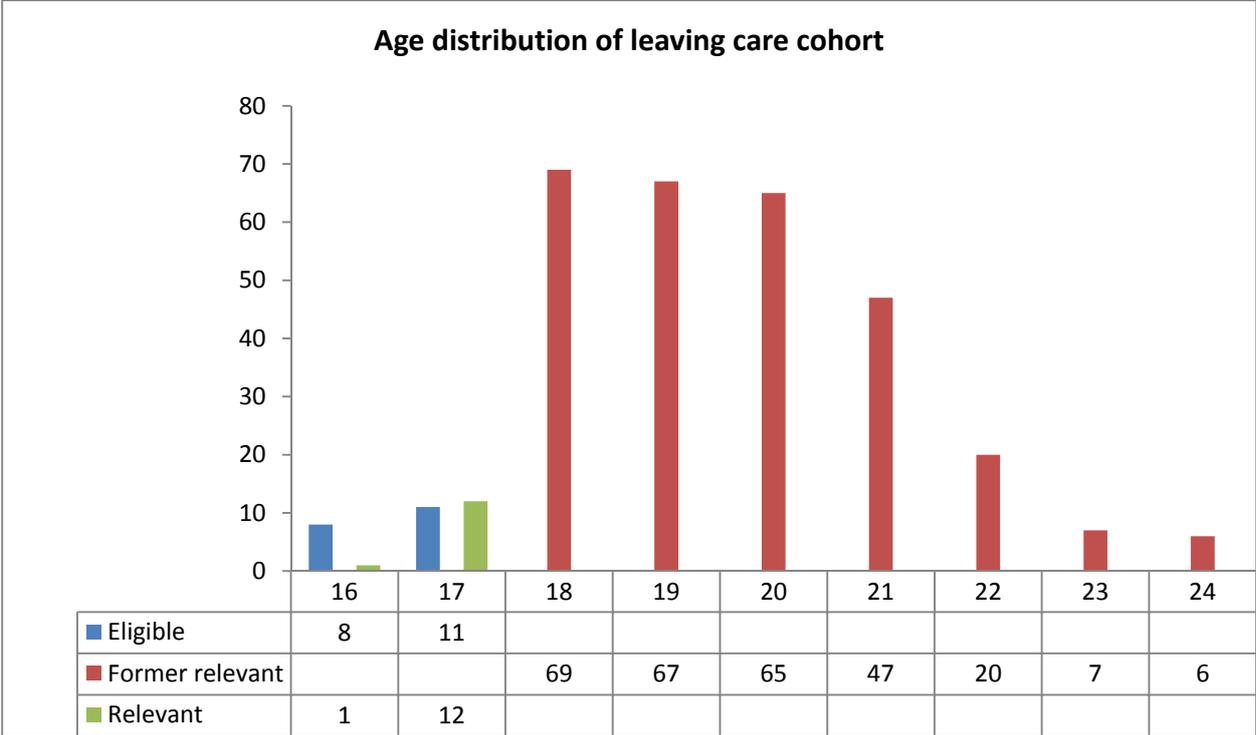


Table 4.1.12.14

| Age | Numbers | | | Percentage Share | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------------|--------------|----------|
| | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male | Total |
| 16 | 5 | 11 | 16 | 1.5% | 3.2% | 4.7% |
| 17 | 10 | 23 | 33 | 2.9% | 6.8% | 9.7% |
| 18 | 24 | 47 | 71 | 7.1% | 13.8% | 20.9% |
| 19 | 24 | 45 | 69 | 7.1% | 13.2% | 20.3% |
| 20 | 27 | 41 | 68 | 7.9% | 12.1% | 20.0% |
| 21 | 21 | 27 | 48 | 6.2% | 7.9% | 14.1% |
| 22 | 8 | 13 | 21 | 2.4% | 3.8% | 6.2% |
| 23 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 0.6% | 1.5% | 2.1% |
| 24 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 0.9% | 1.2% | 2.1% |
| Total | 124 | 216 | 340 | 36.5% | 63.5% | - |

