



Newham London

# Looked After Children and Care Leavers' Strategy 2016 – 2020

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## FOREWORD

In Newham, we're passionate about improving the lives and life chances of our looked after children and care leavers. We recognise that our role is that of any good parent, to help children and young people to access opportunities and have high aspirations, but also to step in when things are not going well or when there's that need for extra support to get things back on track. We want all of the services we offer to enable children to develop the life skills and qualities they need to lead independent lives. This will help us to achieve our ambition, where every looked after child or care leaver is happy, healthy and has a promising future.

There is evidence to show that the challenges children who come into care often face can lead to poorer outcomes. This means that as corporate parents, alongside our strategic partners, we have to increase our focus and attention to ensure positive outcomes are especially achieved for children and young people in or leaving our care.

That is why within this strategy, we have not simply used local intelligence to identify the issues, we have listened to what young people are telling us about their care experiences, and then outlined which outcomes we will want to see improvements on each time they are reported back to Corporate Parenting Board. Our strategy will help to ensure that we are doing everything we can across the council and with our partners, to listen and respond to what's important to children and young people, bring real improvements in their experiences of care, and significantly contribute to enhancing life chances.

As an addendum to the strategy, we have added a set of commitments that we have made in the Newham Pledge. This is based on what young people who form a part of our two Children in Care Councils (for younger and older children) have said are particularly important to them.



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## INTRODUCTION

Newham's 'Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy' (2016 – 2020) has been produced by Newham Council and its partners to set out our ambitions for all children and young people in our care, for whom we are a Corporate Parent.

### What is a Corporate Parent?

'Corporate parent' refers to the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by the council.

### Who are the council's partners?

The council has lots of strategic partners who also deliver services to children and young people. They include schools, charities, health providers and the Metropolitan Police.

It is split into four sections:

- a) Health and wellbeing
- b) Learning, progress and achievement
- c) Safety and stability
- d) Resilience and responsibility

These are the overall outcomes we are seeking for all children and young people in Newham.

Children and young people in our care have been consulted as part of the development of this strategy. Together we decided this strategy should be reader friendly, and contain clear and uncomplicated language. We decided to write one version of this strategy that everyone could understand and contribute to.

The strategy is informed by the 'Newham Pledge'. This is the council's pledge to all children and young people in our care. Children and young people from the Children in Care Councils tell us that if honoured, the pledge will:

- "Enable us as 'looked after' children, young people and care leavers to live in a society that is fair and where we will feel safe, happy and secure."
- "Make us feel more empowered to integrate into and even contribute to the development of communities where we live."
- "Ensure that we are treated fairly."

The council will report on delivery and progress, through a range of outcome statements and outcome measures achieved as a result of delivering this strategy. Each year, there will be an annual review of delivery, so the council is checking what is working and what needs to be improved, and this will be shared with children and young people through our Children in Care Councils.

The Deputy Director for Children's Social Care and the Service Manager for Looked After Children and Care Leavers will be responsible for delivering this strategy to a high standard and ensuring that outcomes are achieved. The Independent Reviewing Officer Service will be responsible for offering scrutiny and challenge to ensure plans for Looked After Children (LAC) offer the best support to achieve the desired outcomes and reflect the aspirations of this strategy.

## BACKGROUND TO THIS STRATEGY

We have used lots of information and public documents to develop this strategy, including:

### The Newham Pledge (2016)

This is an important set of responsibilities that the council has agreed to deliver in order to help children to feel safe, happy and secure, and to ensure that their voices are heard. A copy of the Pledge is attached as an addendum to this strategy.

### The Newham Children and Young People's Plan (2015 – 2018)

The Children and Young People's Trust (a combination of the council and key partners involved in improving outcomes for children and young people) developed this plan in 2015. It outlines the Trust's three main priorities for all children and young people: improving health and emotional wellbeing, keeping children safe, and supporting learning and skills. These priorities were developed alongside young people. It is available on the Newham Website.

### The Children's Commissioner's Children in Care Monitor (2015)

The Children's Commissioner has a special focus on children in or leaving care. Each year they produce a "children in care monitor", which tells us a little more about children and young people's experiences of care and what can make it better. In 2015, the Children's Commissioner produced a State of the Nation Report based on their findings from a survey with looked after children and care leavers.

### The Children and Families Act (2014)

There is a Young Person's Guide to the Children and Families Act. The Act provides important guidance to commissioners on placements of looked after children with prospective adopters and on promoting the educational achievement of all LAC.

### Putting Children First, and Keep on Caring: Supporting young people from care to independence (July 2016)

These documents set out the Government's vision for children's social care, and local authorities' obligation to act as good corporate parents for children in care, and in supporting care leavers.

### Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection Frameworks

These are the frameworks under which services that the council delivers to children in care and care leavers are inspected.



## **VIEWS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS**

In recognition of the fact that we need to more systematically explore what children and young people have to say about their experiences of care, this year we have formulated a survey which we plan to run on an annual basis.

We distributed a questionnaire to both children in care and those who have recently left our care and we had a 10% (of our current LAC cohort) response rate. We have several ideas for how we can improve the response rate next year, but we are confident that the findings give us useful information that we can use alongside our data and practitioner feedback, to build our strategy upon.

We have incorporated the findings of the questionnaire within each of the four sections outlined below. Please note that we chose to include nil responses on particular questions so we will know which questions may need to be adapted in the future. Those outcome measures marked in the tables below with an asterisk are the measures we need to prioritise this year based on what the data and our children in care and care leavers are telling us.

## **IMPROVING OUTCOMES**

### **a) Health and Wellbeing**

Children in care and care leavers share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but often to a greater degree. They often enter care with a worse level of health than their peers in part due to the impact of deprivation, abuse and neglect.

Local authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups and other partners have a responsibility to ensure children's health needs are met. This includes commissioning health services such as CAMHS for LAC in Newham, and monitoring to ensure the health needs of children placed out of borough are also met.

Local data to inform our actions:

- The majority of Newham's LAC are up to date with immunisations, annual health check, as well as having their teeth checked regularly by a dentist.
- LAC and young people have consistently been found to have much higher rates of mental health difficulties than the general population.
- Clinically significant conduct disorders are the most common disorders among our current LAC cohort (37% of LAC), while 12% had emotional disorders (anxiety and depression) and 7% were hyperactive.

#### Views of children in care from our survey:

Overall, the majority of children and young people responding to our survey said they felt happy or very happy and healthy (57% of respondents), and they know how to access health, mental health and sexual health services. However, almost a third of respondents (31%) said although they could identify how to access mental health services i.e. counselling, they felt they couldn't get this help (counselling) when they needed it. In addition, 26% of respondents said they only exercised once a fortnight or less, which is far lower than what we would expect.

#### Respondents' advice on what to improve:

*"I think you should introduce some more fitness activities while children are still young so that they're able to stay healthy from a young age."*

Female, aged 17

*"(Access to) food and nutrition classes."*

Female, aged 14

We will improve the following outcomes in this area:

According to the above we need to do more to improve health and happiness among all children in care. We also need to explore whether our mental health provision is appropriately reaching those in need.



# Looked After Children & Care Leavers Strategy

<b>OUTCOME STATEMENTS</b>	<b>OUTCOME MEASURES</b>
Feel happy about: -school/college -where they live -relationships with friends and family	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
Have good emotional health	Have good strength and difficulty questionnaire (SDQ) scores
*Have support with their mental health needs when they need it	Access to CAMHS
Have health needs assessed when they enter care	Completion of initial health assessments
Have ongoing access to health services	GP registration
Do not misuse drugs and alcohol	Children identified as having a substance misuse problem
Have good sexual health and access to contraception	C-card registration and teenage pregnancy rates
Have access to support around female genital mutilation	Health assessments among at risk groups Medical interventions
Have good oral health	Regular dental checks completed
Have received immunisations	Immunisation rate
Have meaningful opportunities to give feedback about relevant health services	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire and any service consultations
Know where to get help if they have a health related question or concern	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
Have opportunities to enjoy physical activities and exercise	Children in healthy weight range and BMI
*Exercise regularly	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire

\* Measures we need to prioritise this year (based on what the data and our children in care and care leavers are telling us).

## b) Learning, Progress and Achievement

The Children's Act (2004) places a duty on all local authorities to promote the educational achievement of all LAC. In Newham the Virtual School Headteacher must champion the education of children in care as if they all attend the same school. This has been shown nationally to have a positive impact on educational progress.

Local data to inform our actions:

- At the end of primary school (Key Stage 2), 50% of children in care achieved a Level 4 in combined Reading, Writing and Mathematics. Performance was behind national (-2% points) and London (-8% points) and in the third quartile for England.
- The percentage of children achieving 5 GCSEs at A\*-C including English and maths was 25.9% in 2015 compared with 18.6% the previous year. This is above the England (13.8%) and London (16.8%) average.
- LAC make good progress in education from KS2 to KS4 in English and maths. Over the last five years a greater percentage of Newham LAC made the expected progress than nationally. In 2015, 60% of children made the expected progress in English and maths, compared with 38% nationally.
- N.B assessment methodology has changed in 2015/16.

Views of children in care from our survey:

Respondents were clearly aspirational. In the main they felt strongly supported in their learning (62%), a good proportion (46%) said they were happy or very happy in school or college. In addition a good proportion felt a part of making plans about their future education, training and employment options at 35%, (note that a high proportion of respondents chose not to answer this question; 19%) they also felt they received at least "good" information and guidance about education and training. However, similar to what children and young people across Newham told us more broadly in the Children and Young People's Plan, respondents of this survey said they wanted more work experience opportunities – 15% of respondents said current work experience opportunities were poor.

Respondents' advice on what to improve:

*"Support with school/college."* Anonymous

*"(I have) skills and training to support me to live independently because my foster carers have done everything related to that for me."*

Male, aged 12

We will improve the following outcomes in this area:

Based on the above, we need to do more to improve our KS2 results in particular, and we need a renewed focus on enhancing work experience opportunities for children in care and care leavers.

# Looked After Children & Care Leavers Strategy

<b>OUTCOME STATEMENTS</b>	<b>OUTCOME MEASURES</b>
Have access to good quality education that meets their needs	Education placements Virtual School approved - the right place for the child Places for unaccompanied asylum seekers
*Leave primary school with good results	KS2 results
Supported to transition from primary to secondary school	Personal education plans
Leave secondary school with good results	KS4 results
Make good progress between KS2 - KS4	Progress KS2 - KS4
Remain in education or training or move into employment after leaving school	EET figures for care leavers
Have the opportunity to access university education	University attendance among care leavers
Enjoy learning and school life	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
Are involved in making plans about their education, training and employment	Participation in PEPs/EHCs and feedback from questionnaire
Feel supported to achieve their learning potential	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
Have access to information, advice and guidance	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
*Have access to work experience opportunities	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire

\* Measures we need to prioritise this year (based on what the data and our children in care and care leavers are telling us).

### c) Safety and Stability

Local authorities have specific duties towards children who are or have been looked after in relation to assessments, care plans, accommodation, advice and support and ensuring children and young people's safety. In Newham, we work together with a range of partner agencies including schools, health providers and the police to build safety and stability for children in care and care leavers.

Local data to inform our actions:

- Overall school absence rates for LAC increased from 3.9% in 2014 to 5.3% in 2015. The vast majority of absences were authorised with 0.3% unauthorised. The equivalent absence rate for all school pupils is 4.3%.
- Persistent absentees are defined as pupils who have missed 15% or more school sessions through authorised or unauthorised absence. Around half (8.1%) of LAC have been persistently absent and this is almost double the percentage for England and statistical neighbours.
- In Newham 13.8% of LAC have at least one fixed period exclusion, the total for all children is 2.15%. LAC are more than six times likely to be excluded than all children.
- 11.9% of LAC had 3 or more placements (living arrangements) at the end of 2015/16. While the in-year stability of placements has improved from last year, the proportion remains higher than the 2014/15 London (11%) and England average (10%).
- In 2014/15, nearly 50% (28) of young people identified as at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation were Looked After and 36 were in the age range 14-16.
- In 2015/16, the percentage of children experiencing high levels of placements and social worker changes decreased from 6% to 2%.

Views of children in care from our survey:

A really positive finding from our survey is that the vast majority of respondents said they felt OK, safe or very safe in their area (77%), out and about in the community (85%), and especially online (88%). Some respondents chose not to answer this question and we need to explore further why. This finding is in direct contrast to some of the data above, and what children and young people more broadly said when we collated information for our Children and Young People's Plan about feeling safe. Respondents also said they had a really good relationship with their carers and social workers, although some respondents said they would like to see their social workers more often.

Problematically, a high 16% of respondents said they were unhappy or very unhappy with their accommodation. This may be connected to another question we asked about decision-making in relation to accommodation, where some respondents also expressed some dissatisfaction.

Respondents' advice on what to improve:

*"More placements at somewhere I want."*

Female, aged 14

*"...social workers keep changing... it can get very frustrating."* Female, aged 17

*"Seeing my siblings more."* Female, aged 11

We will improve the following outcomes in this area:

Alongside the data in our findings above, and our recent Placements Sufficiency Needs Analysis, we have identified accommodation as a key area for improvement, and are working towards delivering our new Strategy for Placements Sufficiency. This will involve improving the quality of provision at our disposal and ensure there is more choice around suitable accommodation going forward.

# Looked After Children & Care Leavers Strategy

OUTCOME STATEMENTS	OUTCOME MEASURES
Have a safe place to live	Allegations against carers
Feel safe - about where they live - out and about in the community - online and on social media - about friends and relationships	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
Have appropriate support to stay at home (if they have left care)	Repeat care episodes
Are enabled to stay in the same home placement	Placement stability
*Have access to high quality residential care placements and choice in relation to accommodation	Placements sufficiency needs and commissioning analysis Placements 10 miles+ Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
Timeliness in reaching permanency	Adoption scorecard
*Receive support from outreach workers (linked to accommodation) and foster carers who are aware of risky behaviours	Outreach workers and foster carers completing dedicated training e.g. e-safety
Are safe from sexual exploitation	Referrals to multi-agency panel or MASE
Resist invitations to go missing from care	Missing from care
*Have good attendance at school	Attendance, absence and exclusions
Are not involved in offending behaviour	Offending rates
Are not involved in youth violence	
Are not inappropriately criminalised	IROs reviewing process
Are safe from self harm	Hospital admissions for self harm
Are safe from avoidable injuries	A&E admissions
Have few changes of social worker	Changes in social worker
Feel positive about relationships with friends and family	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
*Are supported to maintain meaningful contact with their birth families (where appropriate)	LAC reviews/pathway plans
Are supported to maintain positive relationships with the people they live with	Placement breakdowns Placement difficulties CAMHS supported interventions
Have a good relationship with their social worker	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
*Have consistency in their social worker	3+ social workers in 12 months

## d) Resilience and Responsibility

A good corporate parent supports children and young people to gain the skills and confidence they need to lead independent lives. This includes:

- supporting young people to live independently
- improving access to education, employment and training
- helping young people to feel safe and secure
- improving access to health support
- helping young people to achieve financial stability.

Local data to inform our actions:

- Looked after children's voices are critical to Newham's approach to supporting their care planning and in making service improvements. In 2015/16, 99.4% of LAC participated in their reviews.
- 64.3% of current care leavers were recorded as being in education, employment or training (EET) at the end of 2015/16 which is significantly above the London and England average. This is a significant improvement from 2014/15 when only 43% were in EET.
- 87.4% of current care leavers are recorded as being in suitable accommodation. Care leavers may be considered to be in unsuitable accommodation for a range of reasons, including if they are in custody or if their accommodation status is unknown.

In the main, respondents who were also care leavers, said they felt good about the future, and felt they had the skills they needed to live independently. However, the responses we received on "feeling involved about decision-making in the future" were inconsistent with 34% saying they felt mostly or always involved in decision-making about their future versus 31% saying they only sometimes felt involved, and 21% saying they either did not or didn't really feel involved.

Respondents' advice on what to improve:

*"Outreach workers should visit more."*

Female, aged 20

*"Help with budgeting/money."* Female, aged 15

We will improve the following outcomes in this area:

We strongly believe that children in care should feel listened to and involved in decision-making, both in relation to their own care plans and our service improvement. In 2017, Children's Services will deliver a Participation Year, where we will further prioritise and report on how we are engaging children and young people in decision-making and where we are feeding back to them after taking their views. This has already started with the feedback from the LAC/CL survey in 2016.

# Looked After Children & Care Leavers Strategy

<b>OUTCOME STATEMENTS</b>	<b>OUTCOME MEASURES</b>
Are supported to make meaningful plans and to give feedback about their care	Pathway/EHC plans (completion rate and quality) Participation in LAC reviews
Understand pathway plans	Feedback from young people at leaving care review
*Give feedback about the support they have received/their experiences	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
*Feel listened to when they give feedback	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
Have somewhere safe to live after leaving care	Care leavers in suitable accommodation Complete housing tenancy course Breakdown of tenancy agreements
Are able to get the support they need into adulthood	Transition plans for young people leaving care
Are able to manage their own money responsibly when they leave care/know where to get help if they need it	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
*Have the practical skills they need to live independently	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
Know how to access health services after they leave care	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
Feel supported to engage in positive activities (EET) after a significant setback	Children who are on remand/have left prison
Feel positive about the future	Direct feedback from annual questionnaire
Can access support to prepare for parenting at the right time	Attendance at children's centres
Unaccompanied asylum seekers are supported with their immigration status	

## REVIEWING PROGRESS

There are four broad outcomes in this strategy:

- 1) Health and wellbeing
- 2) Learning and achievement
- 3) Safety and stability
- 4) Resilience and responsibility

We will monitor the delivery of the outcome measures listed above at quarterly Corporate Parenting Board meetings. Each of the four areas will be allocated a work stream lead, and they will begin with delivering the outcomes listed with asterisks by them, as they were the most prominent issues arising from our data and feedback from children in care/care leavers, and practitioners. The council and partners will also review delivery of the commitments we have made in the Newham Pledge. Corporate Parenting Board will report back to the Children in Care councils on the progress they are making in delivering Newham's Pledge.

Each year, the Corporate Parenting Board will review what children and young people who are looked after or leaving care have to tell us about their experiences and where we can make further improvements.

At the end of each year, a new set of outcome statements will be selected that will be the focus of delivery next year. We will select the areas where we need to make the biggest improvements as our priorities.

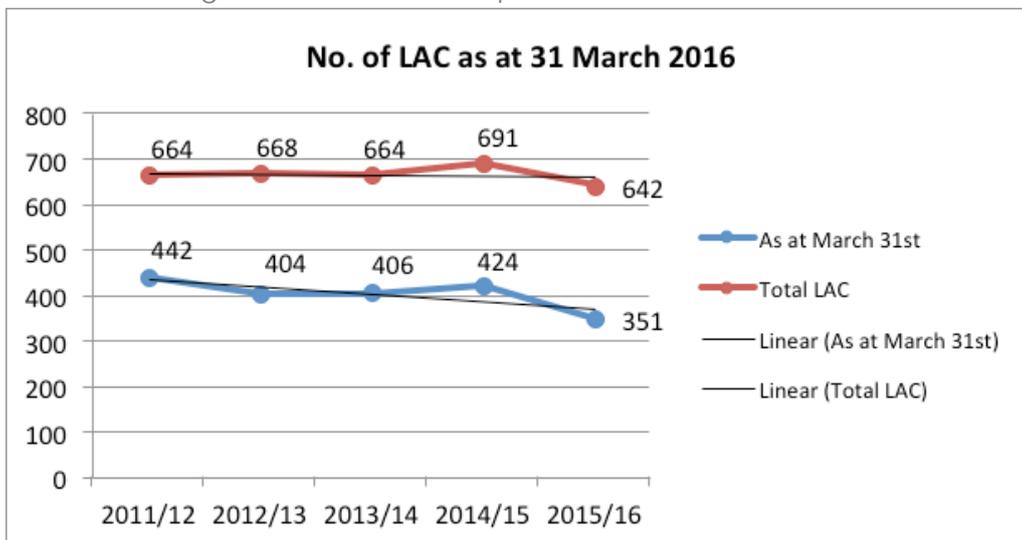


## APPENDICES

### A profile of Newham's children in care

#### Number of looked after children in Newham

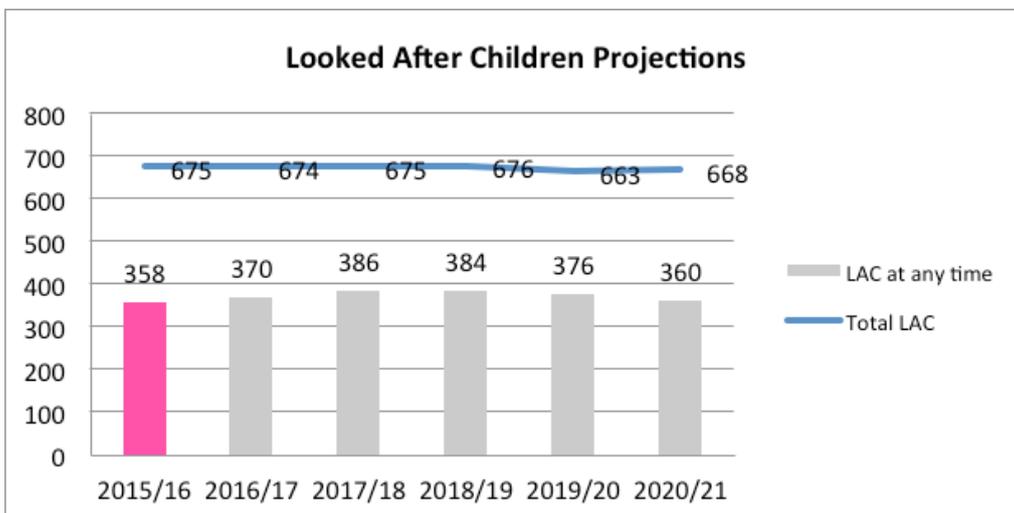
In Newham, the number of LAC at any time has been on a downward trajectory since 2011/12 and this bucks the national trend. The absolute number of children coming into care over the course of the year however has broadly remained at the same level. This would suggest that there are a high number of children coming into care for a short period of time.



Source: Carefirst

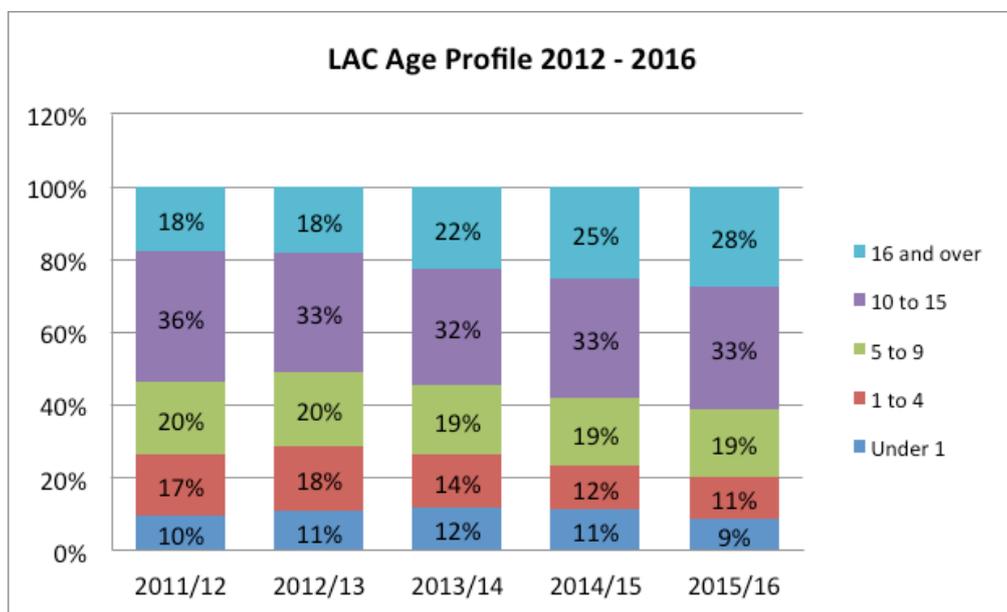
#### Population projection

However based on recent trends and future population statistics, projections show that the number of LAC at any one time will slightly increase over the next four years. This is the result of a growing birth rate experienced in Newham that are ageing through and the increase in number of older children coming into care.



## Age breakdown

The largest age group is 10-15 year olds and this has been consistent over the last five years. The age profile of LAC is getting older, with a greater percentage of 16-17 year olds coming late into care. This percentage has grown year on year since 2011/12. In contrast the percentage of 0-4 years has been declining over the last three years.



Source: Strategic Commissioning, Placements Report

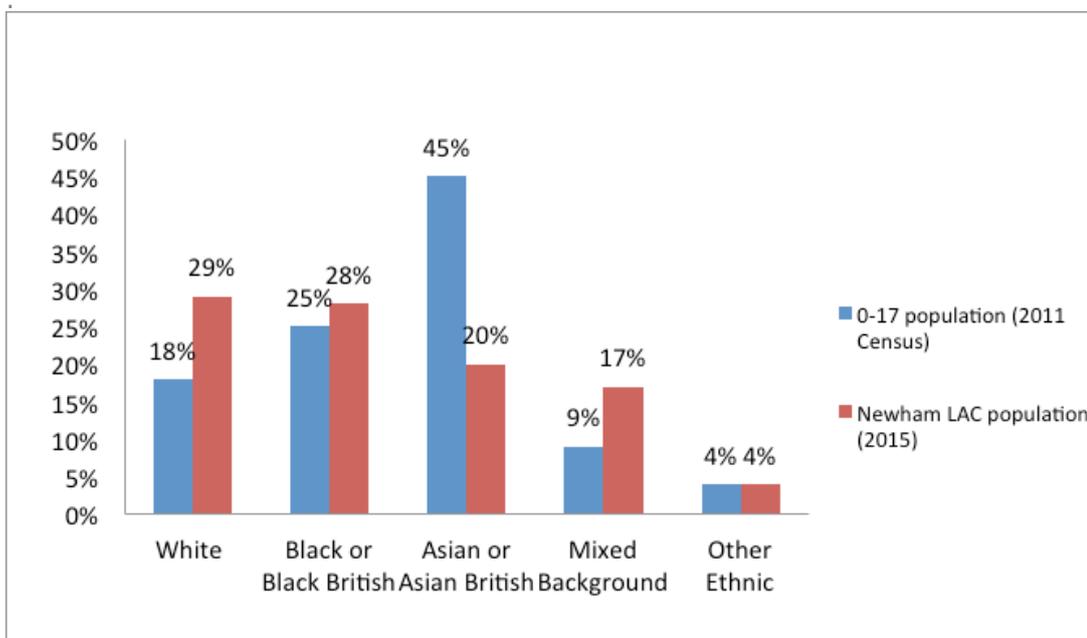
# Looked After Children & Care Leavers Strategy

## Gender breakdown

There are more boys in care than girls; they make up 55% of total placements in 2015/16. This has been the picture for the last five years and reflects the trend nationally.

## Ethnicity breakdown

Asian children (Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi) make up the largest ethnic groups in Newham, but they are underrepresented in the LAC population. White British children are over-represented in the LAC population, but this has reduced year on year over the last five years. The ethnic make up of our LAC profile is changing. Over the last five years there is a growing percentage of Black other, Asian other and White other groups that are now over-represented in the looked after population compared with all children and young people.



Source: Strategic Commissioning, Placements Report

### Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

The number of UASC has been rising since 2013 in both Newham and nationally. While the numbers are small in Newham, this has increased by 40% from 2013 to 2015. Nationally there has been a 26% increase from 2013 to 2015.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Newham	20	15	15	20	25
London	1050	920	880	970	1190
Statistical Neighbours	22.5	21	19.5	21.5	26.5
England	2740	2230	1940	2030	2630

### Placements 20 miles or more

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Newham	27%	25%	23%	23%	19%
London	18%	17%	18%	18%	18%
Statistical Neighbours	17%	17%	18%	19.5%	20%
England	12%	12%	12%	13%	14%

The proportion of out of borough placements we have is falling and we are working to maintain this trend.

## NEWHAM PLEDGE

The full outline of the Newham Pledge can be found on the Newham website, but we have included the commitments here for ease of reference:



### BE HEALTHY:

- Provide leisure passes so you can access local leisure and sport facilities
- Support you to access out of school activities, paying specific attention to disabled children and young people
- Provide workshops and classes on healthy eating, cooking, budgeting and new experiences, like yoga
- Provide information on sexual health, drug and substance misuse awareness and emotional wellbeing



### STAY AND FEEL SAFE

- Consult you and give you choices about where you are placed, be it a foster or residential care placement
- Provide information about and tell you how you can access the Children's Rights Service, so you know your rights whilst in care and who to contact if you need to know more or want to complain
- Look for the most suitable and stable placement for you, from the start
- Ensure that agreed placements meet your individual needs, be they cultural, complex, physical, religious etc., and check that the carers/staff are equipped to support you
- Ensure that all carers (e.g. kinship, foster) and practitioners (e.g. social workers, personal advisors, outreach workers, reviewing officers etc.) undertake Children's Rights and safeguarding training as mandatory training
- Ensure you have access to out-of-hours help from the Emergency Duty Team



### ENJOY AND ACHIEVE:

- Recognise your achievements, such as good exam results like other parents do with their children e.g. Annual Awards Ceremony: to celebrate your successes, aspirations and achievements
- When leaving care, make sure your plans leading up to this are clear, agreed and supportive of your needs
- Support you to participate in positive activities that help you to increase your confidence and overall wellbeing



### **POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION:**

- Make sure you have access to the Children's Rights Service so you understand what your rights are and how you are able to contribute to our views
- Senior managers and elected members who make decisions with responsibilities for children and young people will regularly attend the Children in Care Council meetings and be accountable for items agreed in this Pledge. Managers will update the Care Council annually regarding the Pledge
- Publicise summer and other work experience opportunities more widely, so that all looked after children and care leavers can access the information and make informed choices
- Support your development as individuals by helping you with passports, bank accounts, becoming a citizen, national insurance numbers, birth certificates and your immigration status



### **ACHIEVE ECONOMIC WELLBEING:**

- Inform you about any savings you have, how they are saved and by whom. This includes any regular payments into your NewCred saving account
- Tell you what your weekly allowance should be
- Give you assistance, support and encouragement to find work placements and jobs
- Encourage you to enter and remain in further and higher education, employment, and training, and support you to make progress in these areas

