

London Borough of Waltham Forest

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# Sufficiency Strategy for Children Looked After & Care Leavers 2017-2020



**RELATIONSHIPS**  
*making the difference*

**Final**

**Agreed by Corporate Parenting Board: 13 June 2017**

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## Introduction

All Local Authorities (LAs) are required to take steps to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in care within their local area. In 2010, the 'Statutory Guidance for the Sufficiency Duty' was issued<sup>1</sup>. The guidance is explicit in placing a duty on LAs to act strategically to address gaps in provision by ensuring that they include, in relevant commissioning strategies, their plans for meeting the sufficiency duty.

The Children Act 2004 defines sufficiency as “*a whole system approach which delivers early intervention and preventative work to help support children and their families where possible, as well as providing better services for children if they do become looked after. For those who are looked after, LAs and partners should seek to secure a number of providers and a range of services, with the aim of meeting the wide-ranging needs of looked after children and young people within their local area.*”

The aim of this strategy is to set out how Waltham Forest intends to meet the placement needs of current and future looked after children and care leavers, supporting positive outcomes through understanding their needs and current provision, and identify measures that need to be put in place to ensure that there is an appropriate range of provision to meet future projected need. The strategy outlines the current looked after children profile and placement mix and concludes by highlighting key areas of focus and challenges in achieving sufficiency before setting out a range of actions to address these.

The scope of this strategy is not restricted to just making good quality placements; the intention is to capture the range of activity across Families and Homes Directorate, including a clear focus on supporting families to stay together, wherever it is safe to do so, therefore minimising the need for children to come into care, or supporting reunification with their families.

This approach is consistent with our belief that children are best cared for within their families wherever this can be safely achieved and that investing in providing services that are able to promote change within families is frequently more effective and efficient than removing children and placing them in alternative care. Waltham Forest are currently delivering and continuing to develop and enhance early help and preventative services that aim to reduce the numbers of children and young people entering into care.

We recognise that working in partnership is vital to support our looked after children and young people in each aspect of their life. Particularly relevant to this strategy is our partnership with other LAs and particularly those within East London Sub Region. This emerging arrangement is between 8 East London boroughs Waltham Forest, Redbridge, Havering, Barking & Dagenham, Tower Hamlets, Newham, City of London, and Hackney.

Our partnership is equally important across the Council and with LSCB partners within the borough. We are engaged in collaborative work with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) North East London Foundation Trust (Nelft), the Metropolitan Police amongst others.

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## Legislative Framework

The strategy is set within the context of national policy, legislation and guidance and addresses the needs of children and young people from birth to the age of 21 (or 25 where children's services continue to have statutory responsibility). The following primary legislation governs our commissioning in relation to looked after children (LAC):

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children 2010
- Guidance on the Provision of Accommodation for 16 & 17 year old young people who be homeless and/or require accommodation 2010
- Care Planning Review and Regulations 2010
- Promoting the Educational Achievements of Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2010
- The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012
- Children and Family Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

The strategy is aligned with the Care Leaver offer and to the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

### Waltham Forest's Vision

Our vision is to ensure that Waltham Forest has sufficient high quality placements and accommodation options, both now and in the future, that meet the needs of all looked after children and care leavers, safeguarding them from harm and supporting them in achieving the best possible outcomes whilst ensuring the best use of available resources.

We continually strive to improve practice in respect of care planning to ensure that it can be said, with confidence, which children need to come into care and identify the arrangements that will best improve children's outcomes if they do enter the care system.

In achieving this vision, we seek to support the resilience of families and reduce the need for children and young people to enter into care. We have a range of family support services and interventions that provide a high quality support offer for families in the borough, complementing the core social work offer and additionally providing targeted support to families at risk of escalating into statutory services and those stepping down from Children's Social Care (CSC).

Children and young people will only become looked after when this is genuinely the best or only option to safeguard or promote their health and wellbeing. Care should provide a safe and positive experience for all children and one that preserves and promotes their identity, culture and religion. We will consistently provide high quality placements and/or support packages which take account of the child or young person's wishes and feelings, are outcome focussed and meet their need whilst being cost effective.

Wherever possible, we endeavour to find the right placement the first time through robust care planning and matching processes to support placement stability and will, unless the

needs of the child are of a highly specialist nature or there are legitimate safeguarding reasons for making a placement at a greater distance, try to accommodate the child as close to home as possible. When a decision is made to place a child or young person outside of Waltham Forest, we are committed to giving high priority to meeting any consequential needs arising for the child or young person and, as with all placements, to closely monitor the quality and impact of the care and support they receive.

We will provide placements that can prepare children and young people for their transition to a permanent family environment or adulthood with confidence, a strong sense of self-worth, and the skills and abilities to thrive.

Wherever possible, we will return children to their birth families or support them living with extended family or other people they have an established connection with where this is consistent with the needs and wishes of the child. Our focus on achieving permanence promotes the objective that children can best achieve attachment and emotional stability when they feel that they belong where they are living. To that end we aim to ensure that their experience of being in care is positive but focused on the outcome of supporting them to move to a place that they feel that they belong without unnecessary delay.

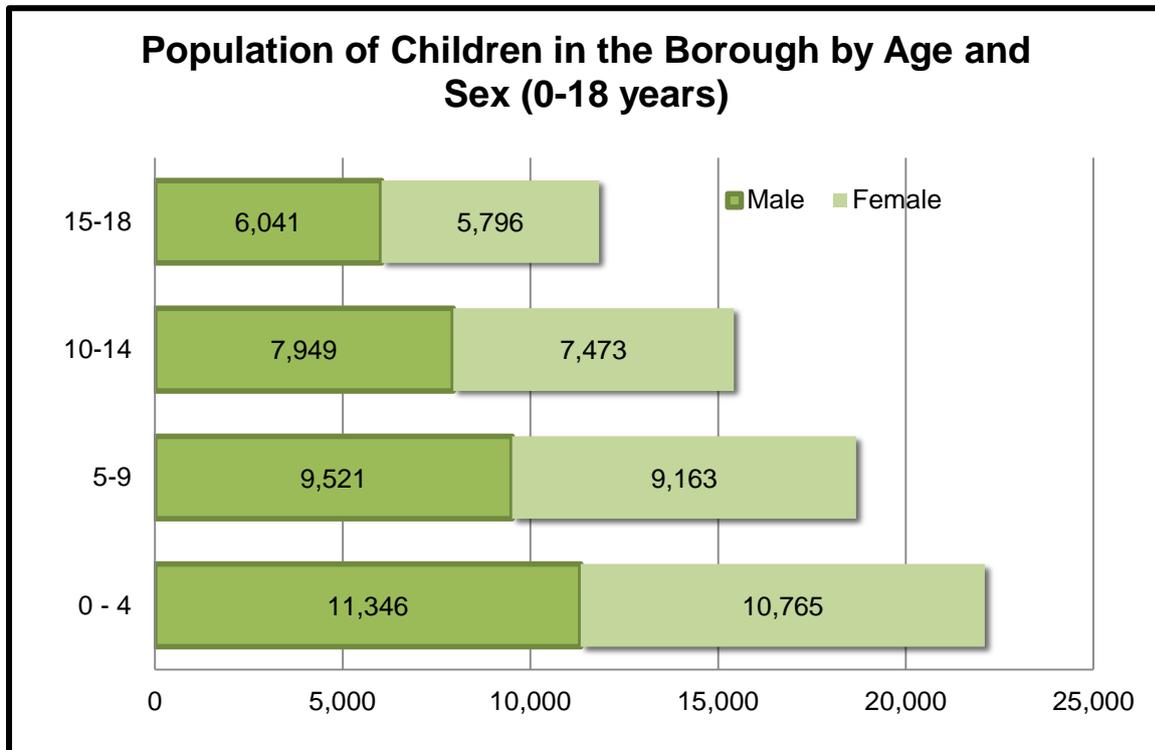
## Demographics of Waltham Forest

Situated in the north east of the city, Waltham Forest is an outer London Borough with inner London characteristics; high population density and high levels of deprivation namely. In 2016, the borough had an estimated population of 275,100 residents, including 66,600 children and young people under the age of 18 (24% of the resident population). It is estimated that this age group will increase by 4,300 children by 2021 and 6,600 children over the decade to 2026.

Waltham Forest is one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in London. In 2016, children and young people from minority ethnic groups accounted for around 78% of all children living in the area, compared with 67% across London.

Waltham Forest is ranked as the 15th most deprived Local Authority nationally (6th most deprived borough in London); 25% of children were considered to be living in poverty in Waltham Forest in 2014. While this has improved from 29% in 2011, it is still above the London average of 24% and national average of 20%.

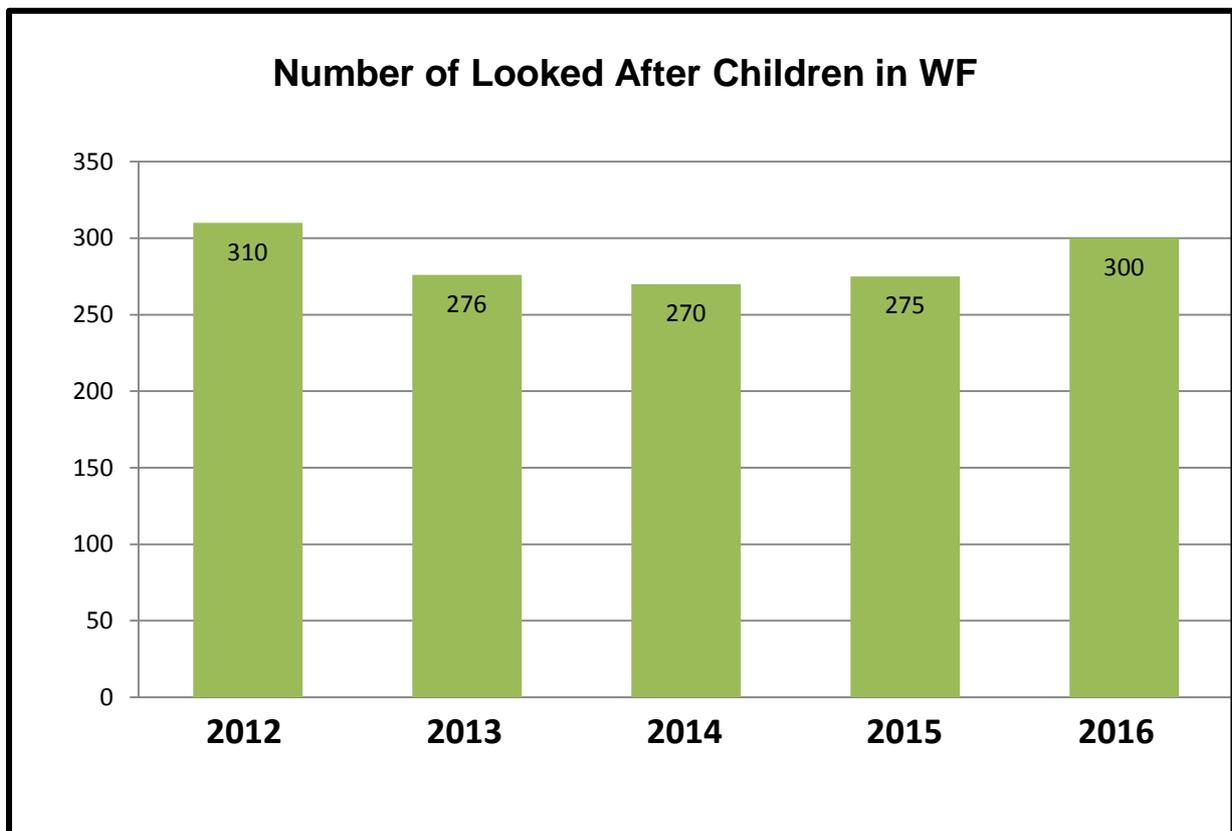
**The age breakdown of this population as at 31 March 2017 is set out in the chart below.**



## Looked After Population Data and Trends

There were 281 children in care in Waltham Forest as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, an increase of 6% in the last 3 years. Of these, 49% are female and 51% are male, a rebalancing since 2014. After a stable number from 2012 to 2015, LAC numbers have increased by 6% in the past 3 years. A pattern of increases to around 300 mid-year is then reduced by a strong focus on permanence planning which helps children and young people to leave care to live with family by year end.

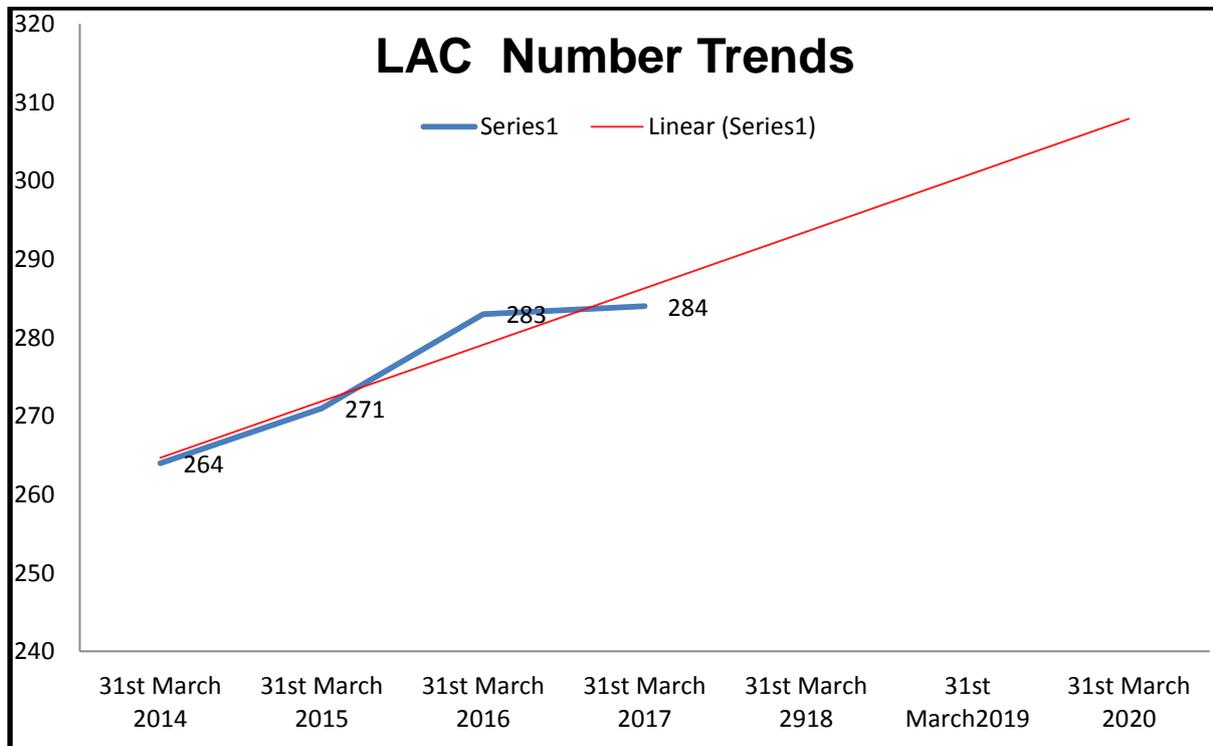
The chart below shows this.



### No. and rate of Looked After Children

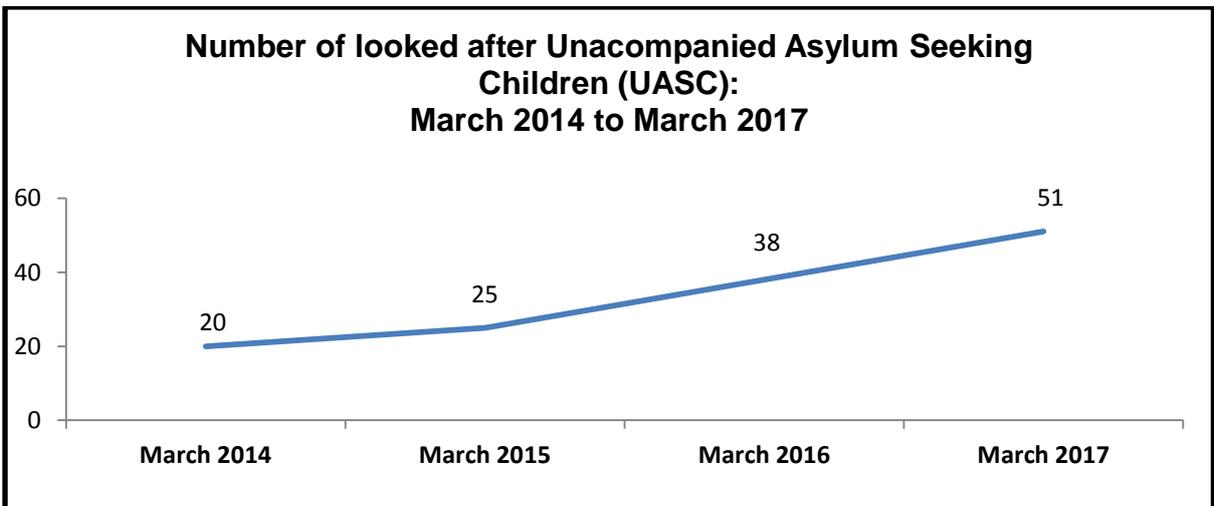
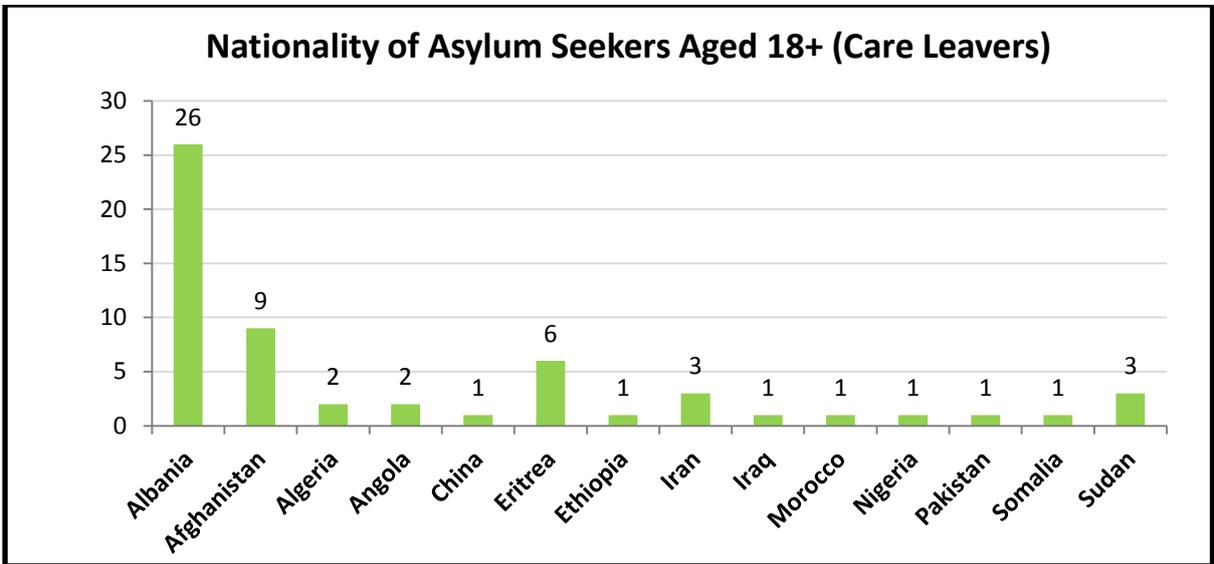
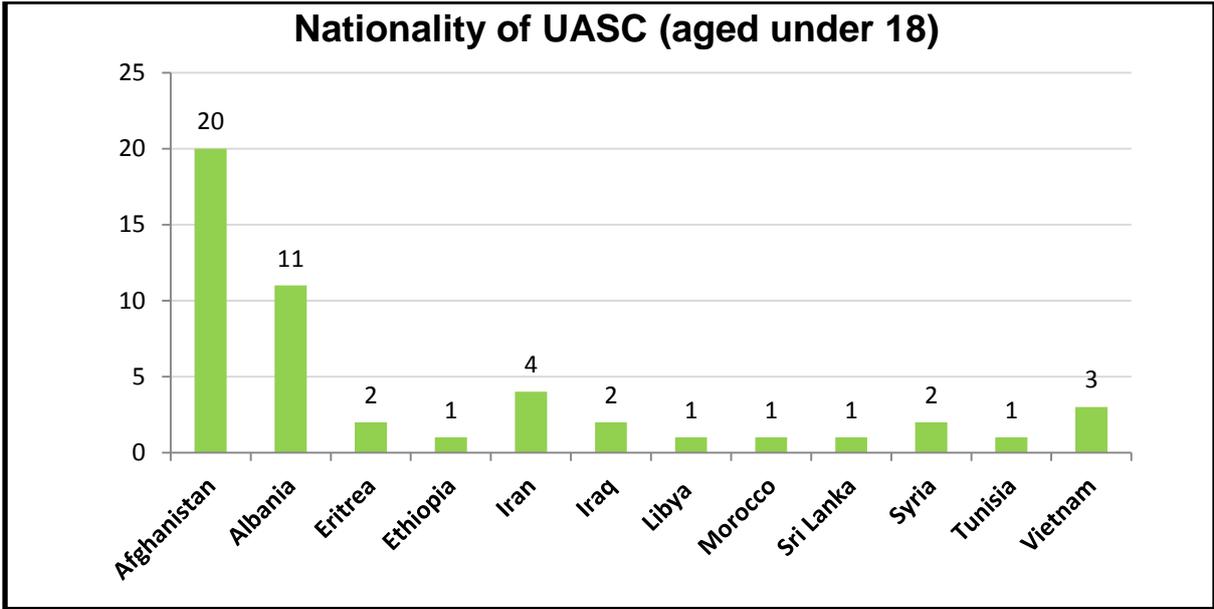
	No. of LAC in WF	Rate of LAC per 10,000 CYP in WF	Rate of LAC per 10,000 CYP in SNs	Rate of LAC per 10,000 CYP in Eng
<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2014</b>	264	41	66	70
<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2015</b>	271	43	66	60
<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2016</b>	283	44	65	60
<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2017</b>	284	43	62	60

Based on the trend at present outline projections of demand would indicate that the LAC and care Leaver population will continue to rise in the lifetime of this strategy. Please see chart below with a trend projection that indicates that without further action to address demand the number of LAC could be around 310 by 2020.



### Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

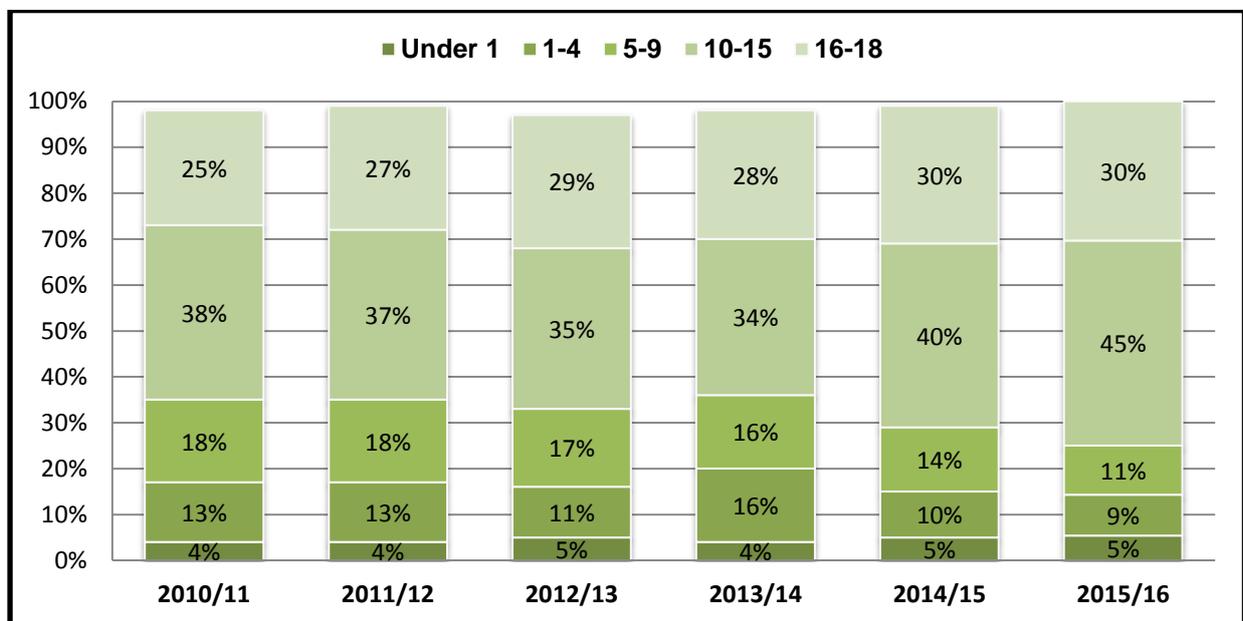
- At the end of November 2016, the total number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in the care of the London Borough of Waltham Forest was 57 (19% of LAC)
- The trend shows a steady increase in UASC since 2013.
- 23 (40%) of UASC were placed within the boundary of Waltham Forest, 31 (54%) were placed outside of the borough.
- The largest nationality of UASC is Afghan, with 21 children from Afghanistan, followed by 14 from Albania.
- There were 48 Asylum Seeking Young people who received services as Care Leavers. Most were from Albania (25) followed by Afghanistan (8).



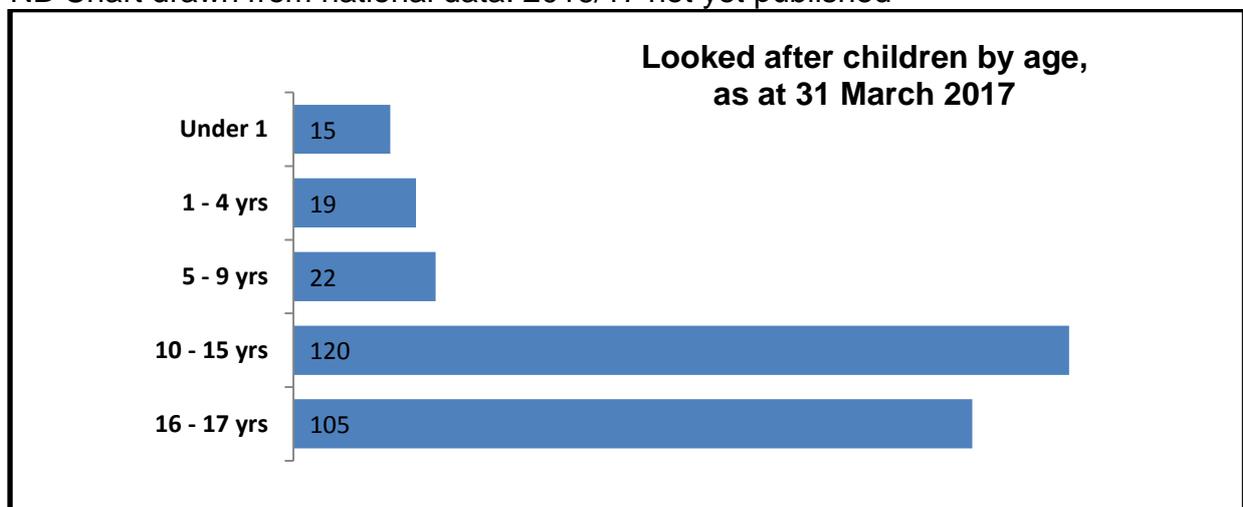
The number and percentage of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in our LAC population has steadily increased over the past 4 years. The percentage increase year on year has averaged 33% over the last 2 years. The difficulty in matching new arrivals with carers who meet their cultural, religious and language needs can be very challenging. Additional efforts have been made to recruit carers who could meet any or all of these needs.

## Age

Current figures show the Waltham Forest LAC age distribution have no radical changes in composition, apart from the lower entry of primary aged children.



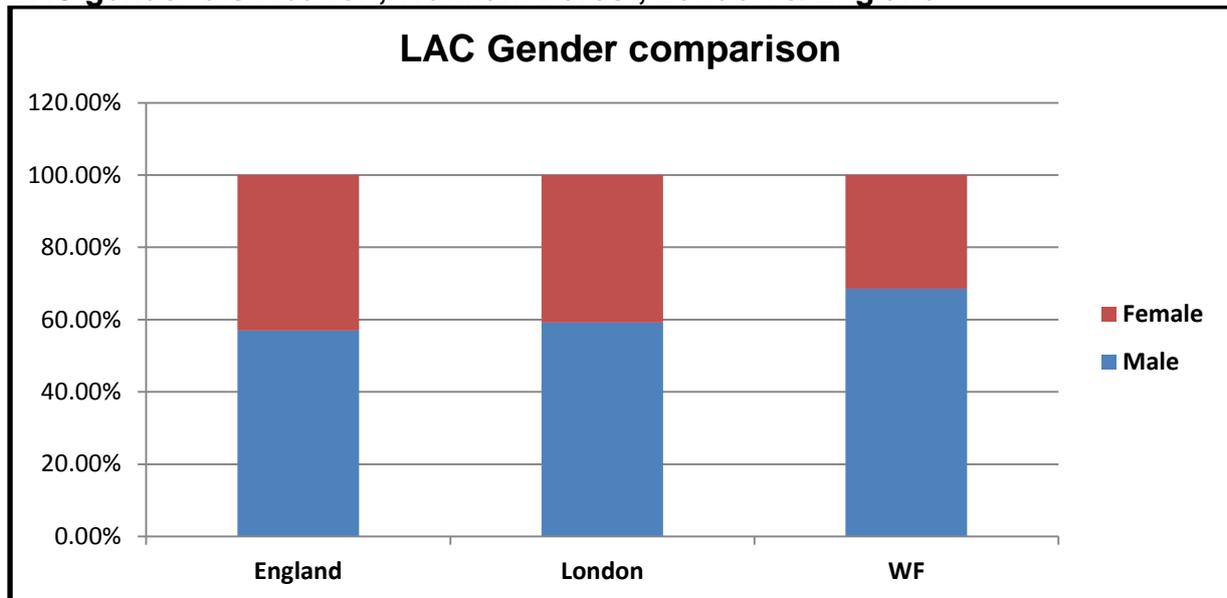
NB Chart drawn from national data. 2016/17 not yet published



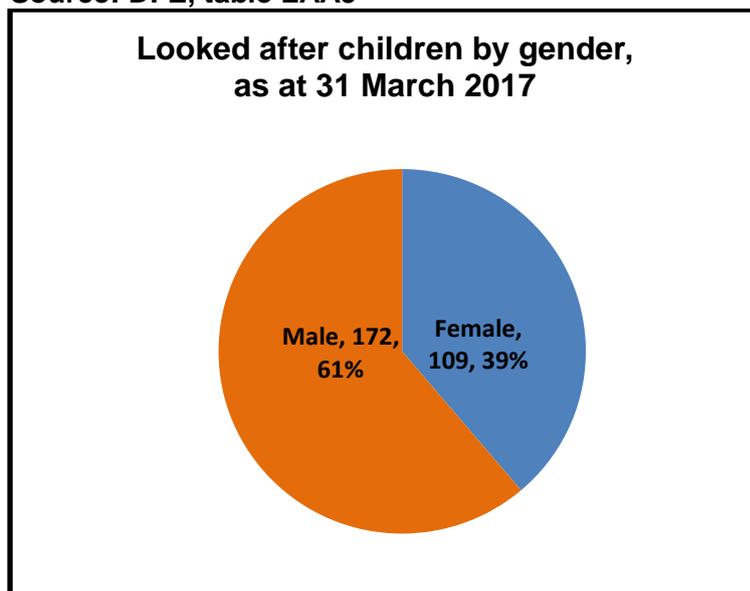
## Gender Distribution

The table below shows that the overall gender distribution of the Waltham Forest LAC population is not aligned to England and London which is likely to be accounted for by the gender imbalance in our relatively high UASC population who are mostly male.

### LAC gender distribution, Waltham Forest, London & England

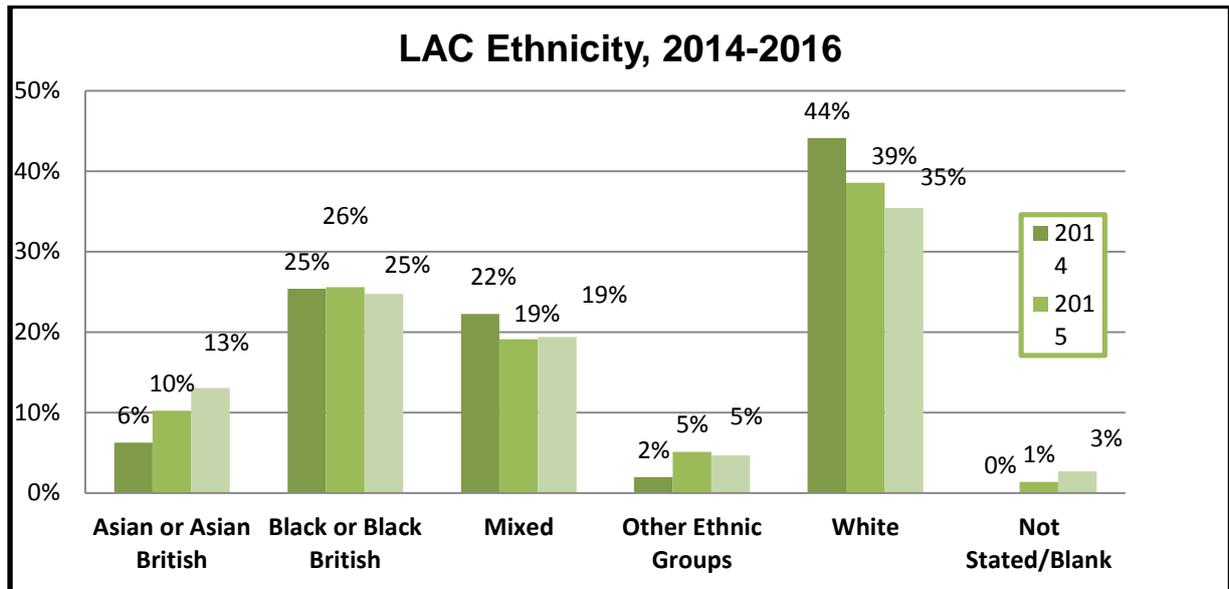


Source: DFE, table LAA5



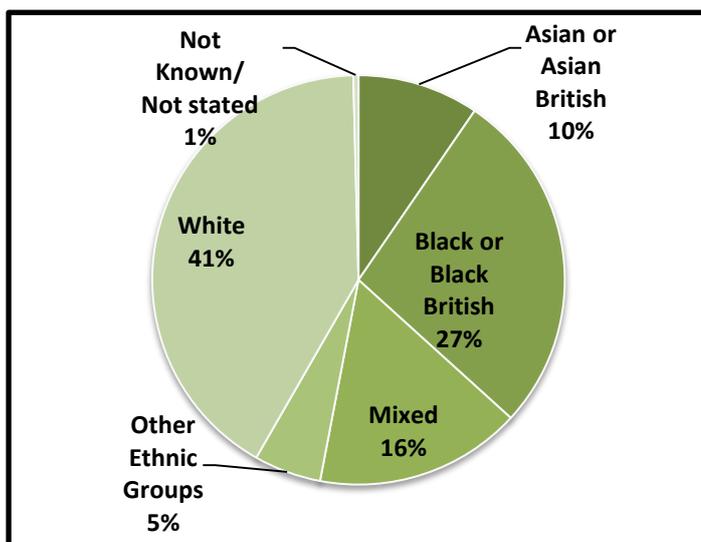
## Ethnicity

The following table shows the ethnicity of Waltham Forest Looked After Children since 2014.

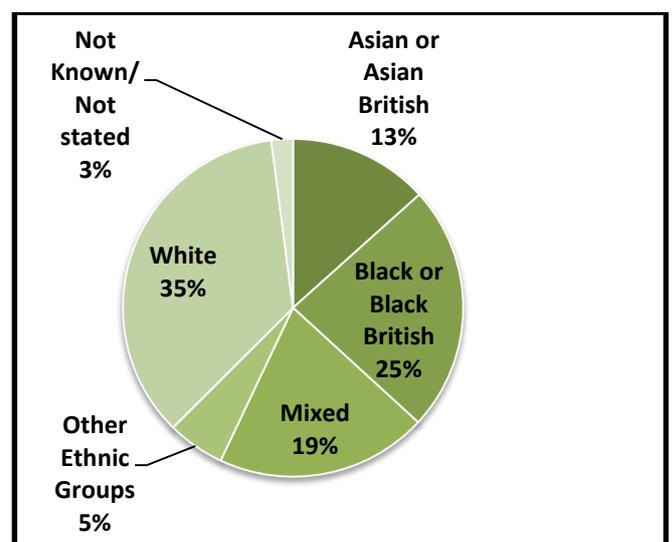


The charts below show the difference between London as a whole and Waltham Forest

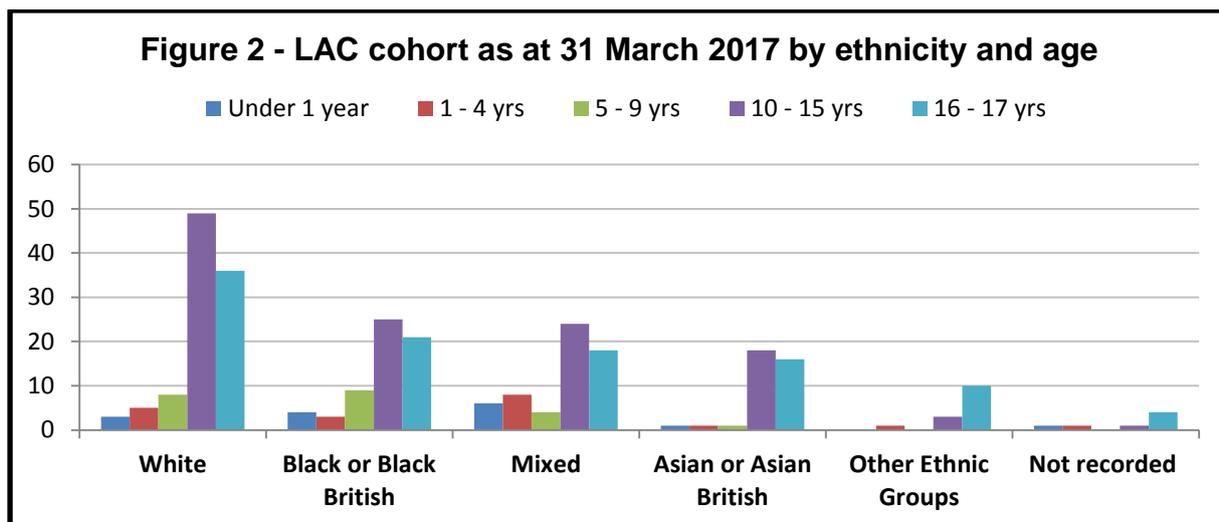
### LAC in London



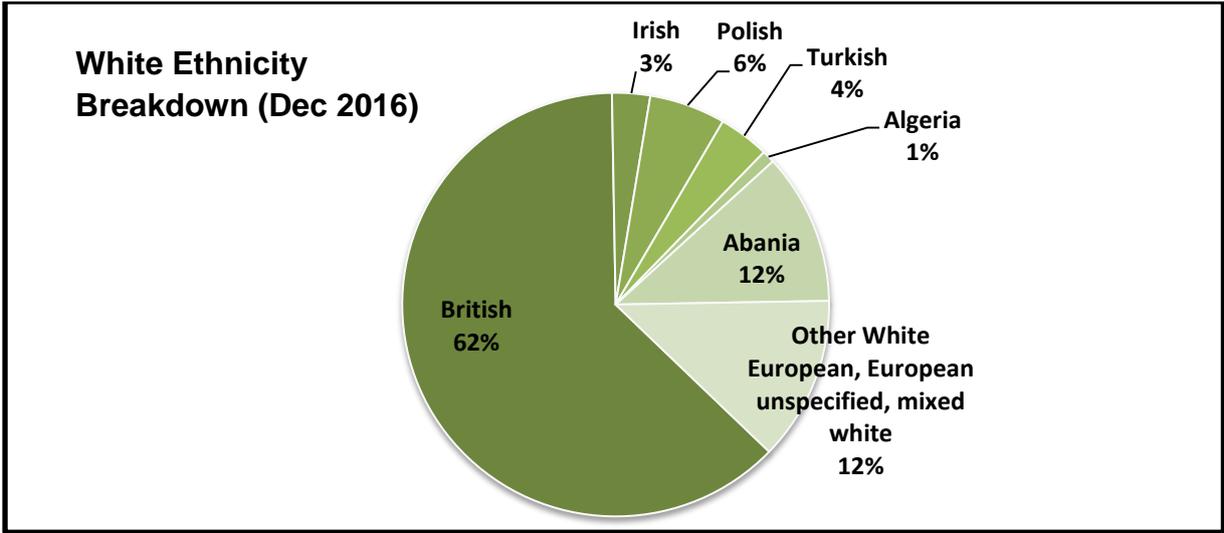
### LAC in Waltham Forest



## Ethnicity v Age

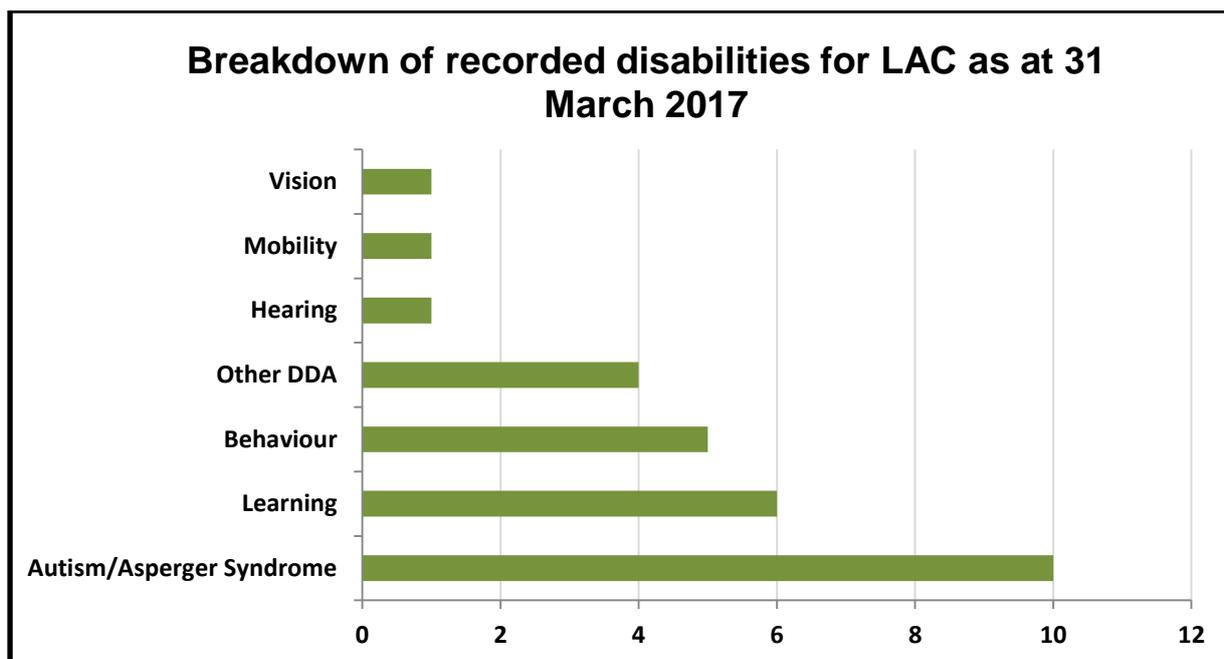


- At the end of 2016, the highest proportion of Looked after Children were of white ethnicity (35%) of the LAC population in WF.
- Whilst the proportion of white children has decreased over the past three years, the proportion of Asian children has doubled over the same time.
- However the proportion of Asian children still remains lower than the white, black and mixed ethnic groups



**Disabled Children and Young People**

There were 18 children in care with a recorded disability on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 representing 6% of the total Looked After Children population. The most significant needs groups are children with Autism and Asperger’s Syndrome (making up 56% of the cohort of disabled children) and Learning Disability (33%). The chart above shows each disability so children with multiple disabilities will appear more than once.



The sufficiency arrangements for Disabled Children and their families must include those for children to whom Short Breaks services based on their needs leads them to qualify for either Regulation 48 assessments and reviews or those who become subject to S20 of Children Act 1989 by reasons of receiving over 75 nights of service away from home. In order that this is not a piecemeal threshold, consideration of the range of services is required.

In 2016 services for most disabled children were amalgamated in a Disability Enablement Service which covers children and young people 0 to 25 years apart from those who are Looked After who will be open to a social worker in Corporate Parenting. Transitions arrangements and pathways are in place to ensure that those young people are co-allocated in DES and can have the same service as other disabled children in terms of planning for adulthood. The main vehicle for this is the Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.

Short breaks are offered including overnight short breaks through the framework contract put in place in early 2017.

Where disabled children are looked after they will be supported by a social worker with the aim of ensuring that they are in a placement that meets the needs identified in their EHC and which maximised their potential to become as independent and resilient as they can be. Plans are in place (see Supply table on Page 28) to develop more local placements to avoid children needing to move away from their home area and to develop services and interventions aimed at supporting family carers to manage challenging behaviour associated with Autism, Learning Disabilities and Aspergers who make up the majority of our disabled children.

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## Siblings

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As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, there were 7 sibling groups totalling 21 children placed with foster carers. Of these, 19 siblings were placed together and 2 apart from one sibling group of 5.

Noting the number of sibling groups looked after against the number of current foster carers who can accept sibling groups (especially 3 or more children) there is a clear development need to recruit more fostering households in bigger properties and continue to work with current carers and social housing landlords to support them to move to larger properties in order to be able to place sibling groups together locally

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### **Young People Aged 16+ who are Vulnerable and at Risk of Coming into Care**

The Southwark Judgement 2009 clarified the responsibility of Local Authorities to assess the needs of a young person who presents as homeless and to provide accommodation under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 if that young person is assessed as a 'Child in Need'. In all but the most exceptional cases, 16 and 17 year olds who present as homeless are, by nature of their homeless status, Children in Need. An assessment, which is carried out by a social worker in Children's Social Care, must determine whether they need to be accommodated under S20 of the Children Act 1989. Where this is not appropriate or the young person refuses, they will be considered a Child in Need and offered services and support as required.

During 2016/17, a total of 59 young people presented to Waltham Forest's 16/17 Prevention of Homelessness Team. Of these, three young people subsequently came into care. This accounts for 4% of number of young people presenting to the team. The progress made in undertaking assessments of need has improved the collaboration and has ensured that work is undertaken to prevent family breakdown where possible. There are no Care Leavers in B&B or homeless

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### **Views of Children and Young People about Choice and Sufficiency of Placement**

We are committed to consulting and engaging with Children and Young People and involving them in the design and delivery of services.

The table below summarises some of the processes we have in place for capturing the views of the Children and Young People we Look After. We also draw on national research. Below are the key messages which Children and Young People tell us are important factors for ensuring that their placement is a positive experience.

<b>Source/Process in Place</b>	<b>Key Messages from Young People</b>
<b>Children in Care Council</b>	Children and Young People tell us that they want to be involved in deciding the placements we arrange for them to live in.
<b>Care Leavers groups</b>	
<b>Voice and Influence Service</b>	They want placements that make them feel safe, valued and protected.
<b>Intensive Adolescent Support Team</b>	Children and Young People want stability in their placement.
<b>Quarterly Fostering Standards Report</b>	
<b>Annual Complaints Report</b>	Being able to stay in contact with friends and their local networks as well as being placed with their siblings.
<b>Research In practice membership</b>	Placements which encourages high aspiration and supports them in achieving their potential at school and college.
<b>Regional and Sub-Regional information sources</b>	
<b>Survey Monkey for Young People placed out of borough</b>	A placement which helps them to develop a strong sense of personal identity and maintain their cultural and religious beliefs.
<b>Annual Survey of Children in Care</b>	Being appropriately prepared for adulthood and independent living is a high priority for young people.
<b>Independent Visitors Service</b>	
	Relationships are very important to both Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

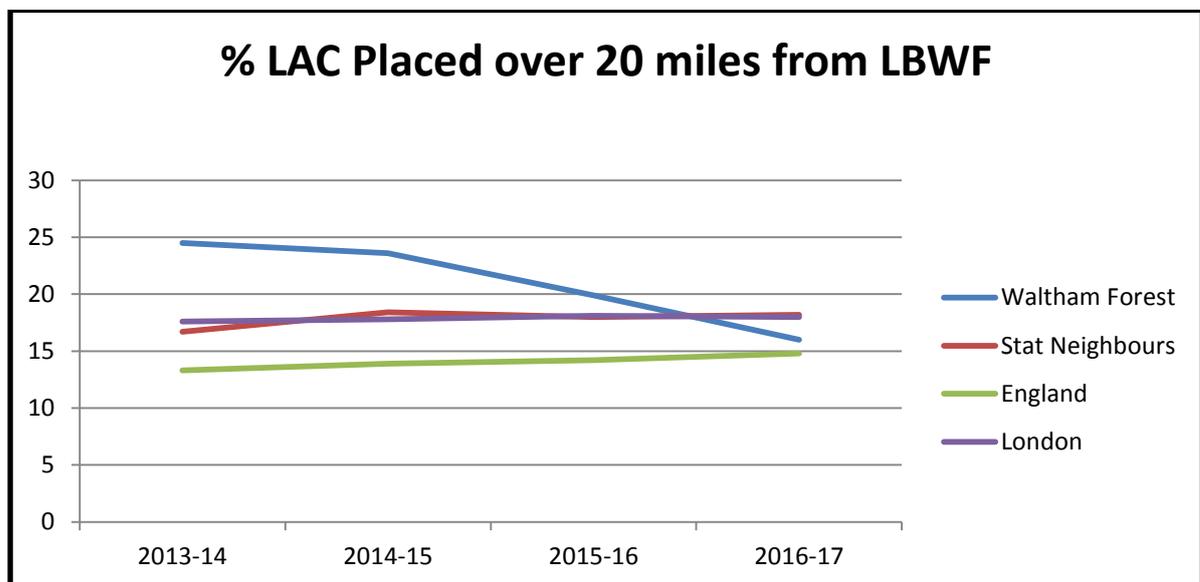
### **Comparison of Key Performance Indicators**

From the indicators below, it can be seen how Waltham Forest is performing against relevant key performance indicators for Looked After Children and Care Leavers compared to both our statistical neighbours and the national average as at 31<sup>st</sup> March for 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.

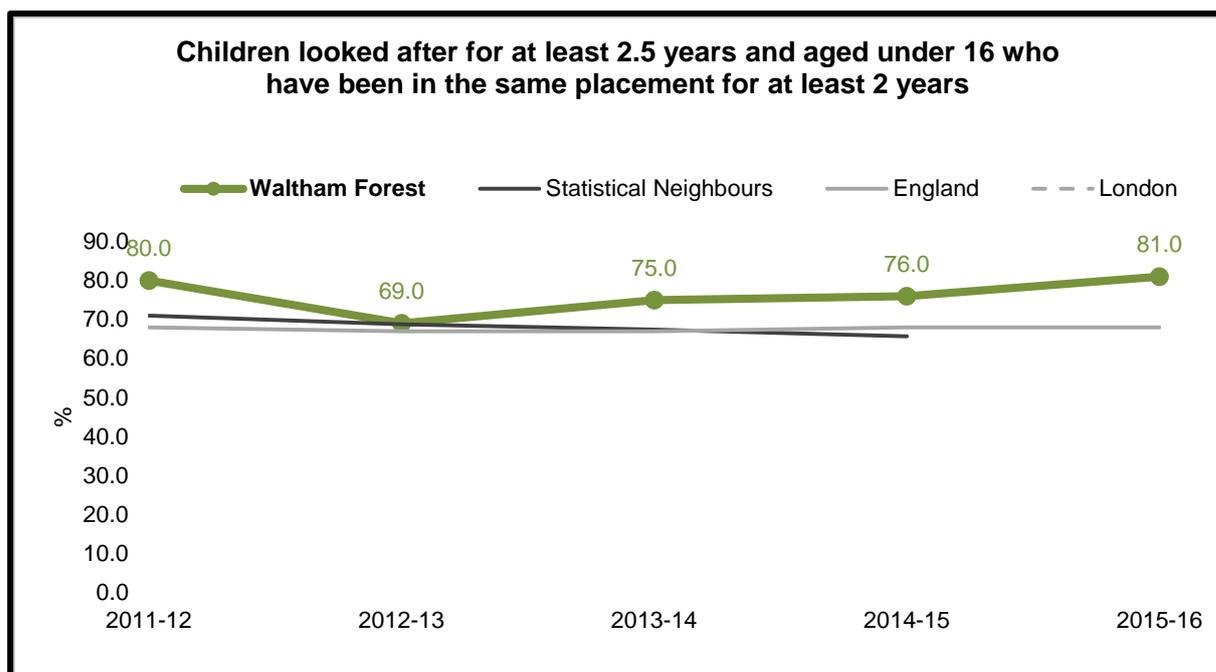
## Placement Stability 3+ moves (percentages)

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Waltham Forest</b>	19	20	24.5	23.6	19.9	16
<b>Stat Neighbours</b>	15.3	16.7	16.7	18.4	18	18.2
<b>England</b>	11.9	12.1	13.3	13.9	14.2	14.8
<b>London</b>	17.4	17.6	17.6	17.8	18.1	18

The above chart highlights the increasing challenge in relation to supporting placements to avoid breakdown, details of our strategic developments are set out later in this strategy.



The above chart depicts the significant progress towards greater local sufficiency since 2013/14



Despite the challenges in preventing placement breakdown for a significant minority of Looked After Children, the majority remain in stable placements.

## 2 Placements in 2.5 years for all LAC

	2011-12 %	2012-13 %	2013-14 %	2014-15 %	2015-16 %	% change since 2014-15
<b>Waltham Forest</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>Up 7%</b>
Statistical Neighbours	71	68.8	67.4	65.7		
England	68	67	67	68	68	- 0%
London				67		

It is clear that the issue of placement stability for a significant minority of LAC remains one of our biggest challenges. Having identified that the placement breakdowns where Carers face challenges in both understanding and managing children and young people's behaviour, we are taking a systemic approach to addressing this issue. The Corporate Parenting Practice Support group approach encourages reflective thinking. The support provided by clinical colleagues both from CAMHS Fast Track and our own Primary Mental Health Workers enables trauma informed thinking. We have recognized that the same support needs to be offered to Carers and care givers. This will continue to happen through training for in-house foster carers and increasingly by direct work delivered by social workers and clinicians. Our social workers need to further develop their understanding of the early signs of placement strain that can lead to breakdowns and we have put in place a process of Placement

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Support meetings (PSM). These PSMs draw the team around the child into identifying how carers can access support both from within their network and where required by additional support being provided.

In addition, we are introducing the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) of peer support for our foster carers in partnership with Fostering Network following the successful national pilot run by them through Innovations Fund.

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## Placement Activity

The total number of LACs has begun to rise again. The number and percentage of children placed with Family & Friends has risen following a refresh of our practice and now accounts for 15% of all fostering placements.

The balance between children placed locally with LBWF approved foster carers has increased from 23% in 2014 to 39% in 2016 following a Sufficiency Project over the past 2 years. We remain ambitious to continue recruitment to 2020 and aim to continue to rebalance this ratio through targeted efforts and developing new inter-authority collaborations. The aim is to ensure that 75% of our Looked After Children are able to live locally with LBWF approved foster carers by 2020.

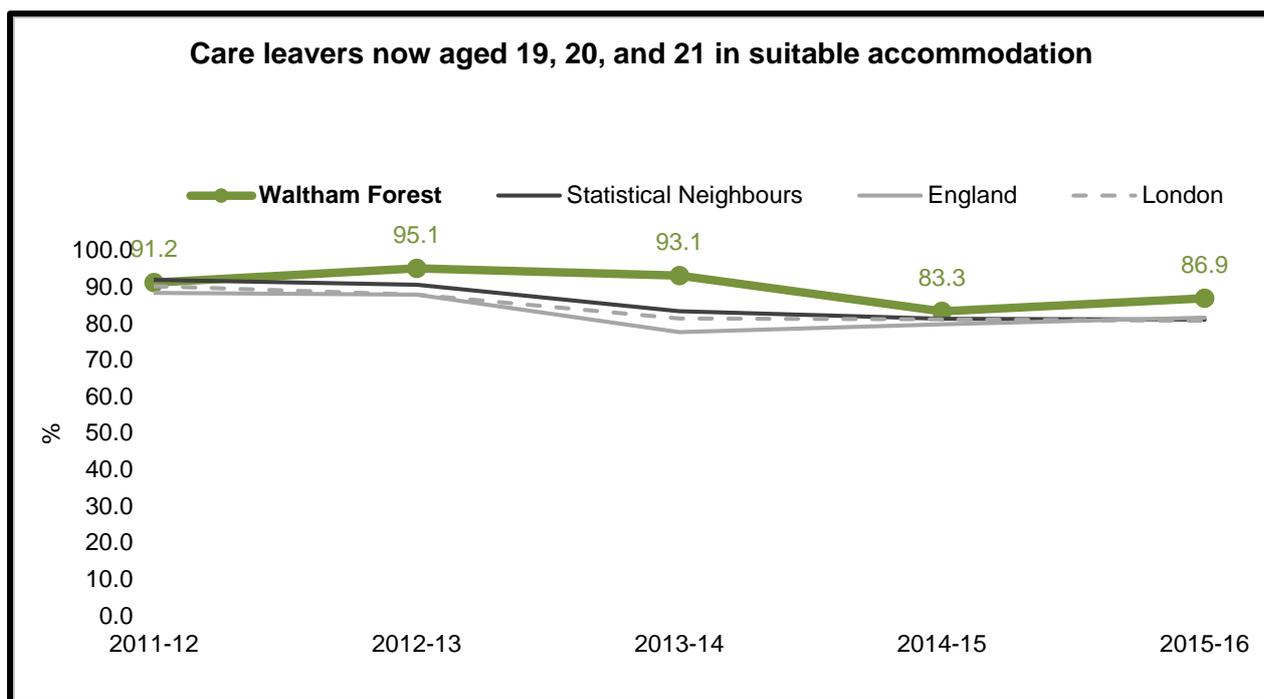
Placement stability continues to be a challenge taking account of the increasing complexities of the older LAC entering care where gang affiliation and CSE are a factor alongside those presenting substance misuse and complex behavioural presentations in both fostering and residential placements. This has the dual pressure of managing the stability of those placements and finding local placements for them. In some cases they are placed at a distance from the borough because of the presenting risks of significant harm. High quality joint work with colleagues in the Youth Offending Service (YOS), Early Help and the Police Gangs and CSE teams contribute to safe placement choices.

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Commissioning approaches are being developed to better manage placement stability which are set out later in this document.

Care Leaver placements have also further developed since 2014. The table below shows the reported performance, but analysis of the cohort demonstrates that there are no Care Leavers in B&B or homeless and that those reported as in unsuitable accommodation are either former UASC who have not been granted leave to remain in the UK and have gone missing or are in custody. The chart and table below demonstrate our performance

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	2011-12 %	2012-13 %	2013-14 %	2014-15 %	2015-16 %	% change since 2014-15
<b>Waltham Forest</b>	<b>91.2%</b>	<b>95.1</b>	<b>93.1</b>	<b>83.3</b>	<b>86.9</b>	<b>Up 4%</b>
Statistical Neighbours	91.9	90.6	83.3	81.2	81	Down 0%
England	88.4	87.9	77.6	79.8	81.6	Up 2%
London	90.2	87.9	81.4	81.1	80.7	Down 0%

**Note: Figures prior to 2013-14 are not directly comparable due to changes in methodology**

The arrangements for using Semi-Independent accommodation have been completely overhauled in this period. Working collaboratively with the 7 neighbouring East London authorities, quality standards for this unregulated market have been developed. By joining the framework contract let by the West London Alliance a framework of terms and conditions require quality standards which are being monitored through the contract. The impact for Care Leavers has been an improvement in both the physical quality of accommodation and the support provided.

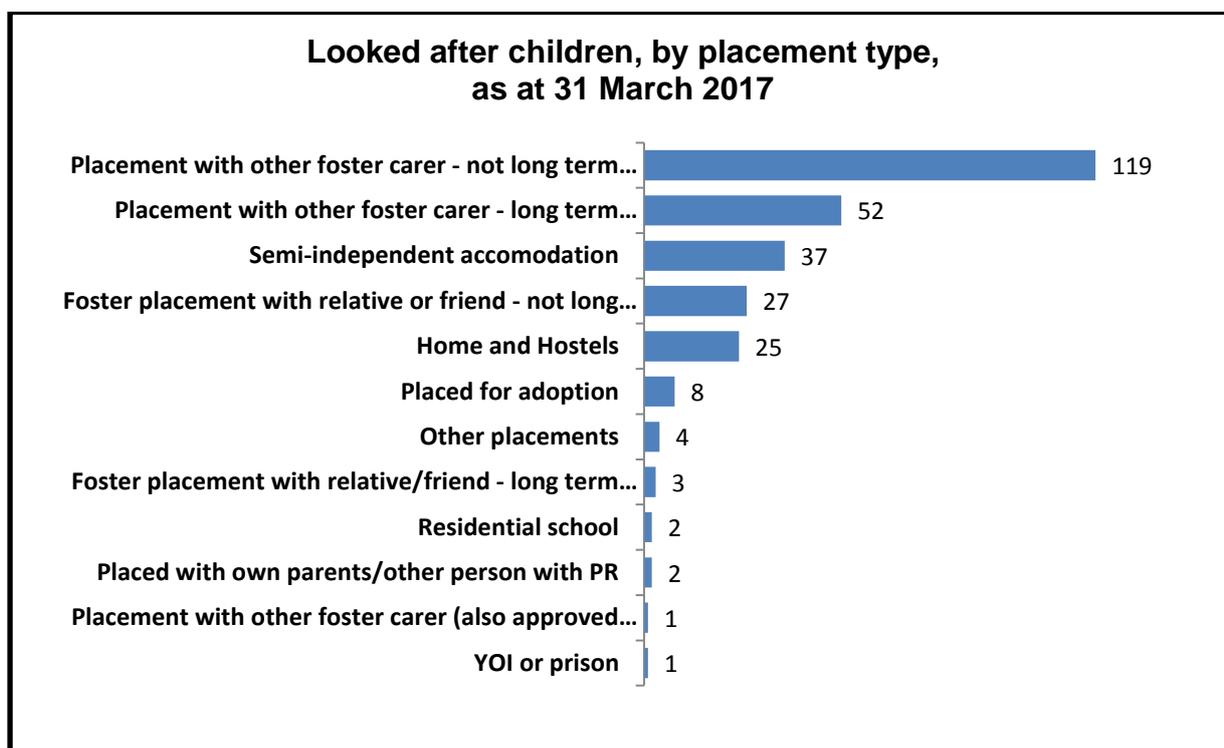
This has been further enhanced in Waltham Forest through a contract (using the West London framework) with Centrepont, a nationally recognised third sector provider who have opened a 16 unit property in Leytonstone. The quality of this provision is of a very high standard and the contract provides added value elements which include support with emotional and mental health problems, a programme to support young people into Education, Work and Training and 24 hour staffing.

The successful work to shape and improve the local market across all categories has provided the platform for the more creative and innovative commissioning approaches including the inter-authority partnerships and the strong local partnerships with other LSCB agencies within the borough.

## Supply Options

Taking account of the data relating to the numbers, age, gender and ethnicity of Looked After Children, and the projections of population, the sections below set out the strategy in each category for moving towards local sufficiency of placements.

The table below shows a snapshot of the placements of children as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017



The table below shows the increase in local placements to meet current demand targets and the projected additional need in 2020 if trend projection is realised.

Placement type	Current LAC Number	Current Local Shortfall (2017 – 2018)	Increase Required by 2020
<b>Fostering</b>	201	39	18
<b>Residential</b>	27	20	4

<b>Semi Independence</b>	37	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>22</b>

The desire is to develop the sufficiency of LBWF foster carers. This has been addressed through Sufficiency Project in each year since 2015. There has been a net gain in the quality of LBWF provision and our ability to place more children locally, but, like most other LAs the complexity of both recruitment and retention in a market dominated by IFAs has meant that it is not possible to rely solely on our own recruitment.

### **Provision for Children on the Edge of Care**

Waltham Forest is committed to promoting the welfare of and protecting the most vulnerable Children and Young People in our Borough. The underlying foundation of any intervention lies in our commitment to ensuring that Children and Young People remain within their families wherever possible. This is what the majority of families want and will achieve the best long term outcomes for most children.

Where children are assessed to be in need or in need of protection a range of support may be identified as needed during assessment to assist with meeting the child's needs or prevent them from becoming Looked After. In Waltham Forest, requests for such support or resources are managed through a panel arrangement.

The range of support and resources we are able to offer may include:

- Services to family members under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to enable them to care for a child who otherwise does not need to be Looked After by the council;
- Child minding or nursery provision
- Early Help services
- Services from the Intensive Adolescent Support Team.
- Services provided by the Functional Family Therapy team
- Crisis or intensive support to assist parents – also known as intensive family support. This is particularly relevant to young people who are gang affected or where CSE risk is an issue
- Short Breaks for Children with a Disability
- Sign posting to community provided services or targeted early intervention services

The recently introduced Edge of Care Panel is attended by Children's Social Care and Early Help staff. Consideration is given to deploying resources quickly to prevent admission to care. This will also include consideration of referrals for Multi Systemic and therapeutic support.

### **Emergency placements**

Waltham Forest, at any one time has a rota of 3 dedicated foster carers able to take Children and Young People across the age ranges in an emergency situation.

In addition, a Framework Contract is also in place with 2 Independent Fostering Agencies (Next Steps & Capstone) for emergency foster care placements.

Where an emergency residential placement is required this is sourced through the London Placements Database which provides access to a wide range of provision.

## **Friends & Family Placements**

Viability Assessments are undertaken on an individual basis as required under Regulation 48 of Care Planning Regulations 2010 (as amended). Our in house Family Group Conference Service works with extended family members who may be able to offer temporary or longer term care to a child who may be at risk if left in their birth family or within their current care arrangements. The service aims to identify members of the extended family who are able to take care of the child, either short term while the birth family stabilises or on a long term basis where it is not deemed in the child's best interests for them to live with their immediate family. As part of the reorganisation of Corporate Parenting Services, there is a dedicated team of staff who will assess extended family members who are offering permanence whilst assessments of Connected Persons as foster carers are undertaken by the Fostering Assessment team. Numbers of "kinship" placements have risen sharply in the last 2 years **from 7 in 2014 to 30 in 2017**

Assessments are presented to either Court in Care Proceedings or to Fostering and Adoption Panel dependent upon whether they are Special Guardian assessments or Kinship Foster Carer assessments.

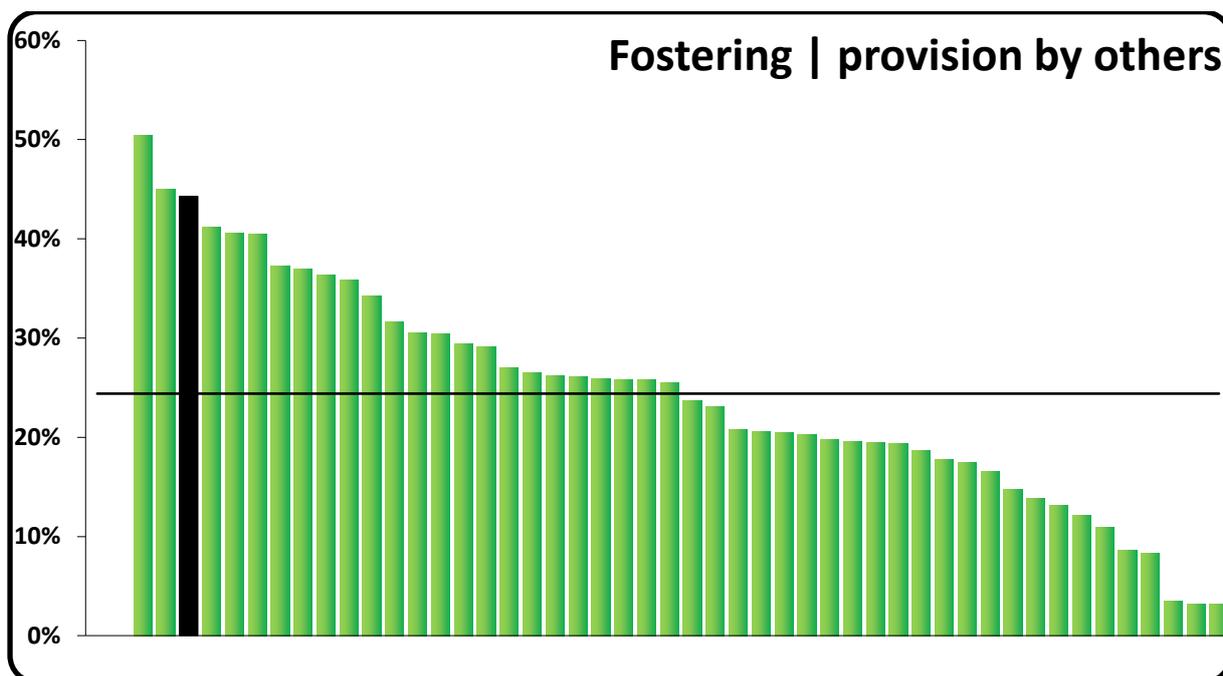
We are continuing to develop processes to assess and support extended family members where reunification with birth family is not an option and where such family members exist. We see this as preferable where children can live as part of their family rather than remaining in care.

## **In-House Foster Care Placements**

The Council has its own in-house fostering service. As of March 2017, there were a total of 96 approved foster places (not carers) with 85 children in placement. This equated to 84% occupancy.

The Council has historically had a low proportion (32.1%) of Children and Young People placed in internal fostering provision as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, which has risen to 47% as at 31 March 2017. The comparison with other Local Authorities in the CIPFA Benchmarking Club, as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 shown below indicates that the Council still needs to increase its in house capacity in order to meet national averages. We have embraced long term fostering as a form of permanence where family placement or adoption cannot be achieved. We match such placements carefully and they are presented to Fostering and Adoption Panel who make recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker so that they are of the same standard as adoption decisions. The breakdown of needs is set out in the Supply table on Page 28

**Looked After Children accommodated in Local Authority Provision (not including kinship)**



Source: CIPFA Children Looked After Benchmarking Club – Final Report 2016

The in-house Fostering Service is implementing a strategy to increase recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers. The service has a target to achieve a net increase of 35 foster placements during 2017/18.

The targets for recruitment are to increase the number of available fostering placements to 150 over a 3 year period. If LAC numbers remained stable this would change the position to having an in house capacity which would mean that a ratio of 70% are placed with Waltham Forest carers.

There is an on-going need to recruit a range of foster carers to meet the needs of the whole LAC population but targeted efforts will focus on placements for adolescents, parent and child placements and increasing the diversity of foster carers to meet the broad diversity of children requiring placements including UASC

Success in recruiting the above carers will further address the on-going need to provide family placements locally which can replace residential placements if carers are supported with strong supervision from the Fostering Support team, therapeutic assistance from CAMHS and Primary Mental Health Workers from Corporate Parenting Practice Support Groups and inclusive school placements which will work to manage challenging behaviours as part of a team around the child approach.

Waltham Forest are working with Fostering Network to develop the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) which builds peer support amongst foster carers. The national research pilot found that this improves both placement stability and recruitment and retention of carers. The programme will be introduced between April and September 2017 and is expected to be

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operational from Quarter 3 & 4 of 2017/18. There is an ambition to grow the use of MFM over the following 3 years and to consider developing it across the East London Partnership.

### **External Fostering Market**

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, the Council had 108 Children and Young People placed with Independent Fostering Agencies. This accounted for 38% of the CLA cohort. The comparison with other Local Authorities in the CIPFA Benchmarking Club, as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 shows that utilisation of the Independent Foster Care Market is high but reducing. The strategic intention is to rebalance the ratio of internal; to external provision to 70% placed with LBWF foster carers locally by 2020.

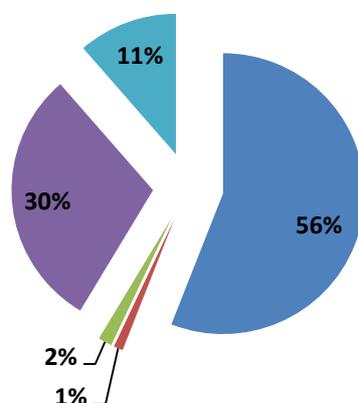
In order to improve capacity to foster carers locally, the Council has agreed to continue the collaborative commissioning exercise with East London Solutions and North East London Alliance Councils to refresh the Framework Contract. This has been a sub-regional rolling 1 year framework (start date 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014), with 9 boroughs engaged in the project. There were 54 providers on the framework, split over 5 lots - general placements, Parent and Child placements, Disabled placements, Remand placements and EBSD placements. The East London partnership are now moving to a position where they will all join the framework and seek to improve both number and quality of provision in the area.

The Commissioning Strategy of the Council is to remain engaged and committed in the development of the IFA framework to supplement our in-house fostering service. This will ensure that Waltham Forest continues to benefit from the combined purchasing powers of the 9 Local Authorities engaged, whilst retaining a commitment to delivering choice in the provision available.

The commissioning strategy recognises that there is an imbalance in the numbers of Waltham Forest LAC placed within the borough and those placed by other LAs. At 1<sup>st</sup> May 2017 there were 384 other LA LAC placed in Waltham Forest. It is our intention to respond to the DfE consultation of the Fostering Stocktake to seek redress to the free market commissioning which forces LAs to place outside their own borders. Our analysis of the OLA placement notifications is that there are 214 fostering placements. If independent agencies were made to offer vacancies to the LA in whose are foster carer lives first, it would seem possible that we could move to a position of almost total local sufficiency in foster care.

## OLA Placement types

■ Fostering ■ Adoption ■ Kinship ■ SIA ■ Residential



### Residential Children's Homes

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 the Council had 37 Children and Young People placed with independent sector Residential Children's Homes and Residential Schools. This accounted for 9% of the CLA cohort down from 12% in 2014.

Residential Children's Home placements have been commissioned on a spot purchase basis under the Pan London Framework Contract.

The East London Partnership has made a bid for Innovations Funding to develop a local contract for the provision of 30 residential beds aimed at providing placements for challenging adolescents. The contract will provide a payment by results element aimed at achieving step down to family placement (birth or extended family, foster care or semi-independence). This ambitious local commissioning partnership bid is supported by all 8 LAs and is aimed to come on-stream by 2019.

Young People in residential care are at highest risk of the poorest outcomes. There is a critical need to create pathways to permanence for Young People who cannot live with an alternative family, and to support the development of residential care as a specialist service for Young People with the most significant or complex needs.

Private, voluntary and independent sector residential provision within the Borough is reasonably well established, and well utilised by other Local Authorities. There are currently eight residential children's homes within the Borough boundary, operated by private organisations.

Through a partnership with Metropolitan Police we have developed a Service Level agreement around missing processes and practice which has now expanded to include restorative practice. This is a vehicle that we have used as a commissioning device to improve the relationship with local providers to shape the market both in preparation for the sub regional contract and to improve our ability to place with local providers

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## **Semi Independent Accommodation**

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, Waltham Forest had 37 Looked After Children and Care Leavers placed in independent sector Semi-Independent Accommodation. These Young People were placed with 28 different providers of which 8 had units inside Waltham Forest, 20 were outside Waltham Forest but within 20 miles. An increasing number of such placements are older young people who arrive as UASC aged over 16. For such young people a fostering placement is often not appropriate when cultural and religious matching is hard to achieve.

There are a broad range of semi-independent accommodation options available for Young People in Waltham Forest to use. The work we have done to develop this market has led to the availability of accommodation where floating support can be used to offer an increasing level of independence. We have also been able to develop provision through a contract with Centrepoint for 16 high quality tenancies in Leytonstone with 24 hour staff support and a range of added value services. Through a collaborative approach with sub regional neighbours and the creative use of the West London Alliance (WLA) framework contract we have been able to improve quality standards and introduce contract management which brings some rigour to this unregulated market. Our commissioning plans are to encourage more providers into the WLA contract and develop a sub-regional contract monitoring approach which shares the responsibility and intelligence in an effort to ensure that young people have a more positive and supportive experience of such placements prior to taking permanent tenancies.

## **Secure Accommodation**

Placements in Secure Accommodation are seen as the last resort. The deprivation of a child or young person's liberty is a serious matter which is closely scrutinised by a court process and Secure Accommodation Orders are only made if all alternatives have been explored and exhausted to keep a young person safe. We have been successful in reducing our use of secure accommodation but remain reliant on such placements where the risk of significant harm is such that no other placement can provide safety. In 2016/17, 3 such placements were used for a total of 316 bed nights, and we are projecting that as the likely level of use annually going forward. The secure estate has shrunk over recent years meaning that sourcing local placements is often impossible, even more so out of office hours. Because of the shortage of placements, children have been had to be placed throughout England and Wales.

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## **Staying Put/ Supported Lodgings for Care Leavers**

The Council has a Staying Put Policy which encourages care leavers to remain in their foster placement post 18. As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, there were 45 Young People who had chosen to take this option with the support and agreement of their carers. This is an increase of 250% in the number of young people staying put since 2014. This growing demand also has an impact on the need to increase available foster placements which has been addressed in recruitment targets.

## **General Needs Housing Provision for Care Leavers**

Housing is provided in Waltham Forest by Waltham Forest Homes within the Families and Homes Directorate. A lot of positive work has been done to ensure that Care Leavers have access to permanent homes when they are ready.

The housing services work closely with both the Corporate Parenting Service and its Leaving Care Coaches and the Children in Care Council to ensure that young people ready for independent living are carefully assessed and supported in the journey from care to independence.

The Council's Children & Young People's Access to Resources Team is the first point of contact on with Housing officers. This process starts when a referral is made to the Housing Register team who then registers the Care Leaver when the Young Person turns 18 years to enable them to be housed. At the point that a referral is made to the Housing Register Team the Housing pathways Manager who is based in the Preventions and Assessment Team is notified of the Young Person who then commences the support process to enable them to bid successfully for a property of their own choice.

Care Leavers will receive additional bidding points to enable them to find a home of their choice however if they are not successful in their bid for a property after three months they will receive a one off direct offer. When the young person is housed into a secure tenancy they will receive on-going support from the Resettlement Team if required. The Temporary Accommodation and Resettlement Officer (TARSO) will carry out an initial settling in visit within six weeks into the tenancy and where additional support is needed then the Community Independent Living Service (CILO) is notified for further support.

To ensure that Young Person transitions to independent living the Pathway workers, alongside the Leaving Care Coaches, monitors them for six months prior to their move from care by advising them on how to sustain their new tenancy and maintain their links with Children Services and provide a resettlement programme for all.

The Pathways Team in the Housing Solutions Group also hold a list of Young People going through the transition process and to ensure that no one falls through the net whilst keeping them connected to the support services responsible for their independence and resettlement.

Due to the shortage in social housing there are delays in Young People receiving their own

tenancies which have impacted on the increased numbers of 18+ Young People remaining in semi-independent provision. The strategy to address this is working with a wider range of Registered Social Landlords who can then offer accommodation to Care Leavers by enabling them to accessing separately (if possible through floating support schemes or frameworks) any support needed, then Young People will be enabled to achieve more successful secure housing options.

For the year ending 2016/17 a total of 24 Young Persons were rehoused by the council.

## Demand and Supply Analysis

Demand	Supply	Gaps	Actions
<p>Need for high quality local placements for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CYP with disabilities eg more on Autistic spectrum, developmental delays,</li> </ul>	<p>Fostering placements in short supply, very few local placements, residential placements available but at distance</p>	<p>Local availability</p>	<p>Plans to redevelop 92 Leyton Green Road to include 3 residential placements and a Positive Behaviour service. Joint ELS/NLSA IFA tender</p> <p>SSP Sufficiency project to build in house and local capacity for fostering placements</p>
<p>Need for high quality local placements for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CYP with complex emotional and behavioural difficulties.</li> <li>▪ CYP involved in the criminal justice system- remands</li> <li>▪ CYP in or affected by gangs</li> <li>▪ CYP at risk of sexual exploitation/trafficked</li> </ul>	<p>Good quality in-house foster carers but insufficient numbers.</p> <p>IFA market not producing the numbers and range of carers to meet need locally. Too many offer placements at distance where that is not the desired placement location</p> <p>Children’s residential homes – High capacity but variable quality and not currently able to meet</p>	<p>Insufficient levels of in-house foster carers, particularly foster carers offering adolescent placements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•(28 new sibling placements around 11 sibling groups)</li> <li>•10 Placements for Eastern European children</li> <li>•15 White UK carers (especially for older young</li> </ul>	<p>Joint ELS/NLSA IFA tender</p> <p>Continued recruitment of in-house carers through Sufficiency Strategy</p> <p>Sub Regional Innovations Fund bid to develop 30 new residential beds in east London for systemic approach with step down to family and payment by</p>

	needs.	people 12+)	results
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•20 placements for teenagers</li> </ul> Provision that can meet the needs of CYP at-risk of sexual exploitation and gangs  Local placements that can work as part of a package of care alongside therapy and education using more Universal services	
Need for high quality local placements for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mother and baby placements</li> </ul>	Limited local supply of fostering options. Some SIA provision	•4 parent and child placements	Joint ELS/NLSA IFA tender  Continued recruitment of in-house carers through Sufficiency Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Preparation for adulthood - independent living skills</li> </ul>	Developing market for SIA life skills  IFA and in-house foster carers in need of support and guidance to develop a systemic approach	Lack of approach that is understood by all care givers and providers	Develop use of My Guide portfolio of independence skills led by Leaving Care Coaches and shared with care providers

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## Review of the Sufficiency of Needs

This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis through formal reporting to Corporate Parenting Board using the performance dashboard and case audit to assess and analyse achievement and identify challenges.

This will be further informed by quarterly review through Sufficiency Board chaired by the Divisional Director reporting to the Directorate Performance Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive.

In all of these the voices and views of children and young people will be heard and used to inform reviews of and improvements to the Strategy and the consideration of new approaches.

As a reflective and learning organisation we will remain open and alive to new opportunities and messages from research to ensure that we deliver our vision that Looked After Children and Care Leavers enjoy and achieve in the placements that best meet their needs and support them to permanence.

### References and data sources

- Families Directorate data.
- Department for Education, SFR 21 (National and Local authority tables).
- GLA Ethnic Group Population projections 2016.
- London Councils “Looked after children in London.”
- SSP Sufficiency Project documents and reports to Cluster Boards.
- Report: Looked after Children in Waltham Forest – An analysis – April 2016.
- CIPFA (2016) Children Looked After Benchmarking Club – Comparator Report.
- Strategic Commissioning Semi-Independent Accommodation and Support service review 2013.
- Ofsted Fostering Quality Assurance Data Form as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.
- Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010.
- Where national data sources have been used, dates will show the latest figures as 15/16. Where possible local data will be for 16/17.

**June 2017**

**To be reviewed in June 2018**