

The Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children

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Striving for excellence



Objectives

- To highlight the specific health and wellbeing needs of LAC
- To highlight the statutory obligations we have to the needs of LAC.
- To raise awareness of the role of the LAC Health Service

Plan for this session

- Corporate Parents
- Risk of abuse in Care
- The effects of abuse and neglect
- The significant challenges that LAC face
- How we work to improve outcomes

Collective Responsibility as Corporate Parents

The term Corporate Parent means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care for Looked After Children in order for them to grow towards adulthood equipped to lead happy, healthy independent lives

Corporate Parenting Principles

- Considering the best interests of the child or young person
- Keeping them safe, and fostering stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- Promoting high aspirations and seeking to secure the best outcomes for them
- Promoting their physical and mental health and well-being
- Helping them to access and make the best use of services provided by the local authority and relevant partners
- Encouraging and considering their views, wishes and feelings
- Preparing them for adulthood and independent living.

LAC and Care Leavers

DofE

2015/2016/2017/2018/2019/2020/2021/2022/

2023:

69,540/70,440/72,670/75,420/78,150/80,000/

80,250/82,170/83,840 LAC in England.

- Main reason - Abuse/neglect, 66%.
 - Changed little in last 5 yrs.
- 73% Foster Placements.
- 9%/11% Residential Placements.
- 2630/4210/4560/5070/5570/7200
Unaccompanied/ Asylum Seekers (90% male).

Serious Case Reviews

Hackney SCR – Dec 2015

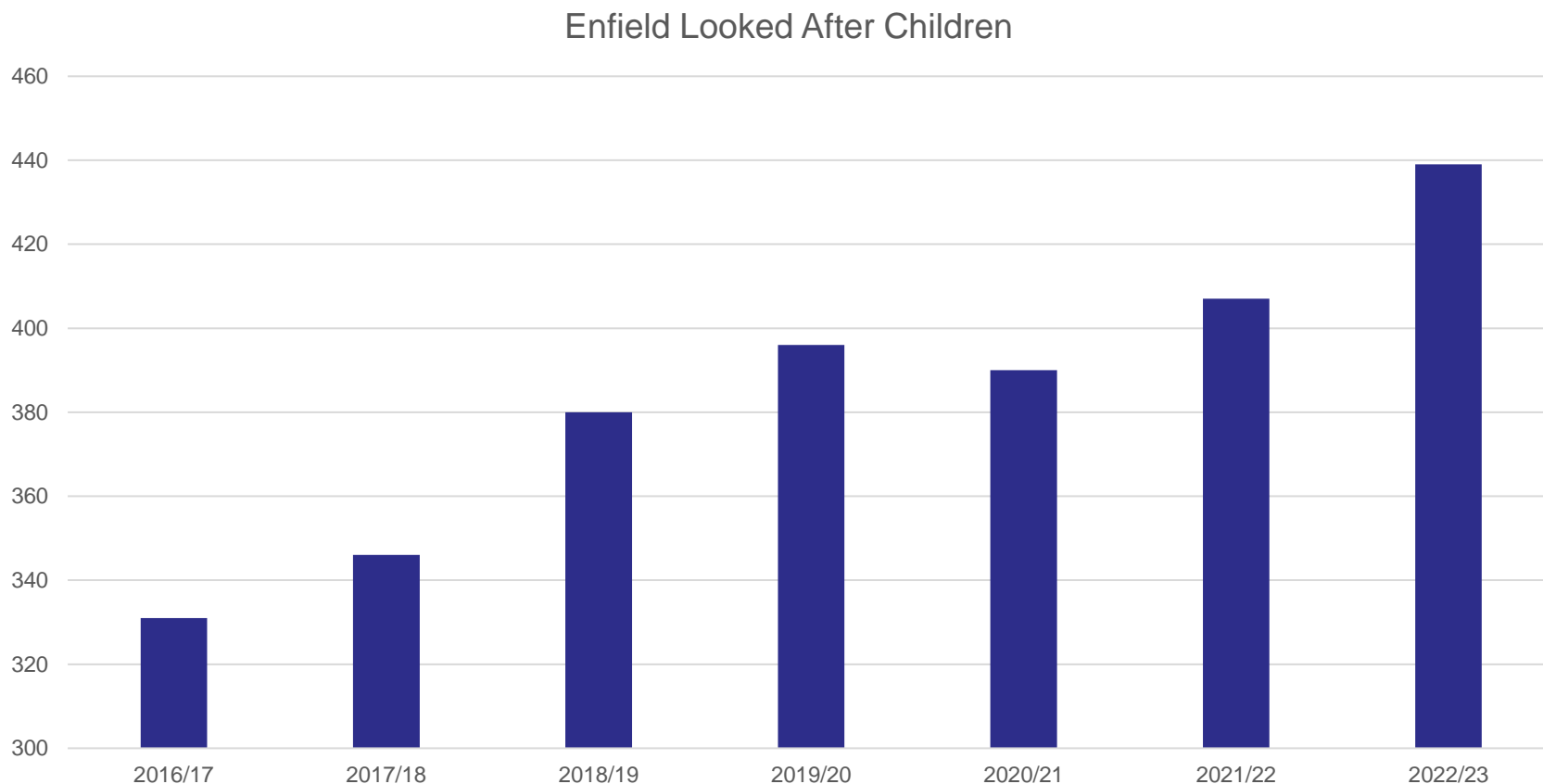
Between September 2013 and November 2014, the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board conducted a Serious Case Review about the sexual abuse of a number of children by two men. One was an approved foster carer, the other a member of his family. The abuse of foster children is known to have taken place between 1999 and 2008

Serious Case Reviews

Croydon SCR - Jan 2017

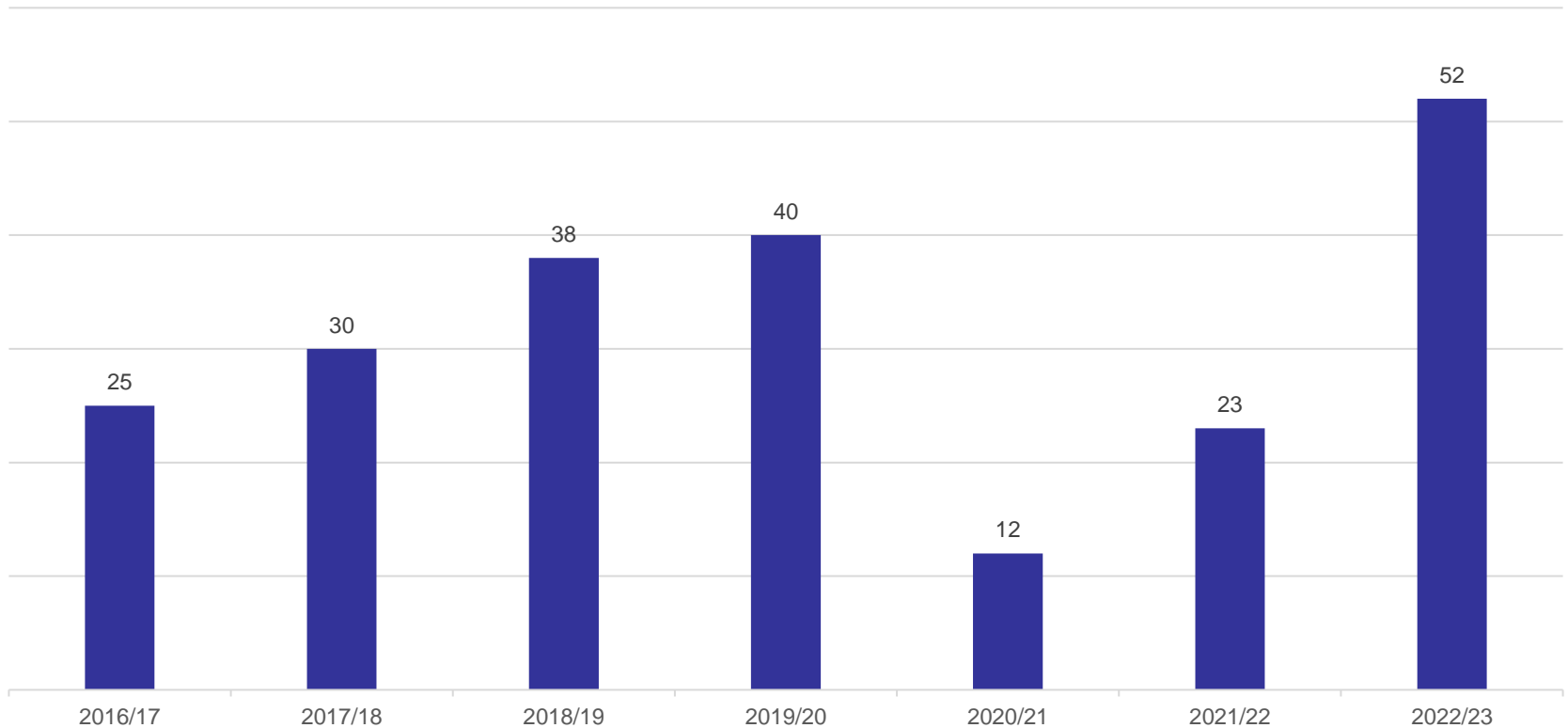
Seven year old sexually abused by her foster carer and found to have 2 STIs - decision to keep 'Claire' at the foster carers home after the GP expressed concerns that she had an STI found to be particularly worrying

Enfield Looked After Children



Enfield UASC Numbers

New UASC Entrants into Care



The effects of Abuse and Neglect

*Chaotic home environments during the early years have been associated with poorer cognitive and social outcomes at age 5
(Berry et al 2016)*

Attachment – a definition

a significant bio-behavioural feedback mechanism that evolves during the first and second years of life in response to early parenting and plays a key role in the development of emotional regulation both in the early years and across the life span

Attachment is the emotional bond that typically forms between infant and caregiver, and it is the means by which the helpless infant gets primary needs met. It then becomes an engine of subsequent social, emotional and cognitive development

| Attachment Styles | % of population | The child's general state of being | Carer's responsiveness to child's signals and needs | Why the child acts the way it does |
|-------------------------|-----------------|---|--|--|
| Secure Attachment | 65% | Secure Explorative Happy | Quick Sensitive Consistent | Believes and trusts that needs will be met |
| Avoidant Attachment | 20% | Not very explorative Emotionally distant | Distant Disengaged | Subconsciously believes needs won't be met |
| Ambivalent Attachment | 10-15% | Anxious Insecure Angry | Inconsistent Sometimes sensitive Sometimes neglectful | Cannot rely on his/her needs being met |
| Disorganised Attachment | 10-15% | Depressed Angry Passive Non responsive | Extreme Erratic Frightened/ning Passive. Intrusive | Severely confused with no strategy to have his/her needs met |

- **Short, medium and long term impact on individual and population health:** Overall, health, education and care outcomes are worse for LAC than for other children. The long term costs avoided to the health system by ensuring highest quality healthcare support to LAC and care leavers are significant.
 - Nationally, the rate of mental health disorders in the general population aged 5 to 15 is 10%. For those who are looked after it is 45% and 72% for those in residential care.
 - LAC are at greater risk of poor educational outcomes than their peers. Nationally, in 2019, 55.9% of LAC had a special educational need compared with 14.9% of all children. They are 5 times more likely to offend than the general population, more likely to become a single parent and are at greater risk of teenage pregnancy and poor pregnancy-related outcomes. These include smoking during pregnancy, having a low birth weight baby, and depression (<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/gid-ng10121/documents/draft-scope>).
 - Longitudinal studies show that care leavers are 70% more likely to die prematurely than their peers. Adults who were in care are also more likely to experience an unnatural death (suicide, violence, accident). They are between 1.3 and 4 times more likely to report their health as 'not good' than their peers ([The-lifelong-health-and-well-being-of-care-leavers.-Nuffield-Foundation-and-UCL-policy-briefing.-Oct-2021.pdf](#) (nuffieldfoundation.org))

- Despite the gap in health and educational outcomes between looked-after children and young people and the general population outlined above, research suggests that, accounting for disadvantages experienced, they can do better than children not in care (<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/gid-ng10121/documents/draft-scope>). So providing the right healthcare support plays an important role in helping our young people achieve their potential

LAC – impact of abuse and neglect

- Long term impact on health and development
- Health Inequalities e.g. missed immunisations, developmental checks, incomplete health records
- Separation from Family:
 - Emotional trauma
 - Impaired formation of trusting adult relationships
 - Compounded by frequent moves in care and placement breakdown

The significant challenges that Looked After Children face as a group

- Emotional and Behavioural problems
- Neuro-physiological deregulation
- Lower academic achievement
- Higher rates of SEN
- Higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse
- More likely to have poorer health
- More likely to be unemployed
- More likely to experience prison, psychiatric institutions, homelessness

Comparison of rates of mental disorder among British children aged 5–17

| Category of disorder | Non-disadvantaged children (n = 1,253) | Disadvantaged children (n = 761) | Looked after children (n = 9,677) |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Any disorder | 8.5% | 14.6% | 46.4% |
| Anxiety disorders | 3.6% | 5.5% | 11.1% |
| Post-traumatic stress disorder | 0.1% | 0.5% | 1.9% |
| Depression | 0.9% | 1.2% | 3.4% |
| Behavioural disorders | 4.3% | 9.7% | 38.9% |
| ADHD | 1.1% | 1.3% | 8.7% |
| Autistic spectrum disorder | 0.3% | 0.1% | 2.6% |
| Other neurodevelopmental disorders | 3.3% | 4.5% | 12.8% |
| Learning disability | 1.3% | 1.5% | 10.7% |

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores

- The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire should be completed for every child looked after for at least 12 months and aged 4 to 16 years-old as at the end of March.
- A score of:
 - - 0 to 13 is considered normal
 - - 14 to 16 is borderline, and
 - - 17 to 40 is a cause for concern.

Lower Educational Outcomes than Children not in care

- By age 7 - 25% behind in National Tests
- 4 x more likely to have an SEN
- 10 x more likely to have a statement or EHCP
- Five GCSEs at a pass grade 64% / 18%
- 4 x more likely to have a fixed term exclusion
- 9 x more likely to be permanently excluded
- Higher Education 50% / 7%

Special Educational Needs of Looked After Children 2014

Two-thirds (66%) of looked after children have a SEN which consists of -

- 29.0 per cent with a statement (EHCP) of SEN and 37.6 per cent without a statement.
- These figures are much higher than the total population
- 17.9 per cent of all children had a SEN which consisted of 2.8 per cent with a statement and 15.1 per cent without a statement

Special Educational Needs of Looked After Children 2014 (2)

- The most common SEN was 'behavioural, emotional and social difficulties'
- The second most common was Moderate Learning Difficulty
- Speech, language and communication needs has become a more common primary SEN type amongst looked after children with SEN over time
- Fast track procedures for LAC and SALT

Personal Education Plans - PEPs

- All schools have a Designated Teacher for LAC
- PEPs should be performed within 20 days of a child coming into care
- Targets are set, monitored and reviewed termly
- Views of the child taken into account
- Virtual School agrees targets and releases the Pupil Premium

Care Leavers who are NEET England

- of the 26,340 former care leavers aged 19, 20 and 21 years old, 10,460 (40%) were not in employment, education or training (NEET),
- compared with 14% of all 19 to 21 year olds.
- The percentage of care leavers who are NEET has risen by one percentage point in each of the last 2 years.
- The increase is seen in the categories for NEET due to illness or disability, and NEET due to pregnancy or parenting.

Care Leavers

- 3x's more likely to become teenage parents
- 3x's incidence post-natal depression
- 25% low birth weight babies
- 60% higher infant mortality
- 44% incidence of other health problems e.g. asthma/weight loss/ allergies/flu/ drug or alcohol related.

Offending rates for children looked after

- 5% aged 10 years or over (1,640 children) looked after for at least 12 months were convicted or subject to a final reprimand or warning, similar to 2015 (also 5%)
- LAC are five times more likely to offend than all children.
- Males were twice as likely to offend as females and older children were more likely to offend than younger children, similar to previous years.

Other Risks for Looked After Children

- Research has also found children in care are also at greater risk of being bullied or abused by other children ([Barter and Berridge, 2011](#)) and are more likely to be the target of sexual exploitation ([Office of the Children's Commissioner and Berelowitz, 2012](#)).

Children and Social Work Act 2017

An act to make –

- Provision about Looked After Children
- Other provision in relation to the welfare of children
- Provision about the regulation of social workers

Care Leavers

- Local Offer for Care Leavers
- PA for care leavers until age 25

Opportunity : if care leavers are young parents potential for PA to work with health professionals/midwife/health visitor to provide supportive package

Children and Social Work Act

Chapter 1 Looked After Children

- Corporate Parenting Principles
- Care Leavers
- Educational Achievement in England
- Care and Adoption Procedures in England and Wales
- Secure Accommodation

Educational Achievement

- Designated Education Staff in Schools re former LAC eg adopted children, SGO
- Designated Education Staff for LAC and former LAC in academies

Opportunity : if health need to liaise with school designated staff for former LAC may have increased knowledge and understanding

Joint Working

- The Health Service works with social workers, fosters carers and health professionals to identify and improve the health of LAC
- The Virtual School works with foster carers social workers and teachers to develop the educational achievements and attendance of children in Enfield's care and oversee PEPs
- CAMHs works to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children in children in Enfield's care