



Haringey Council

Agenda item:

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 22 OCTOBER 2007

Report Title: **RAISING THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN – A FEASIBILITY STUDY**

Forward Plan reference number (if applicable): N/A

Report of: **The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Wards(s) affected: ALL

Report for: **NON KEY**

1. This feasibility report on Raising the Educational Achievements of Looked After Children was undertaken to allow the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to determine whether a full scrutiny review could be beneficial and value to the services provided for this group of young people by the Children & Young People Services.

2. Recommendations

1 That the Children's & Young People Department be commended for raising educational achievements of Looked After Children over the past three years. They are urged to continue the improvements made.

2 In light of the achievements of the Department in raising the educational achievements of Looked After Children, the Committee agree that a full scrutiny review would not be beneficial or add value to the service at this time.

3 However, the Committee wish to recommend the following to the Cabinet:

[a] That the Cabinet consider re-establishing the Step to Employability Scheme. The Council is one of the largest employers in Haringey and is able to offer a wide range of work experience and placement opportunities in a supported and safe environment. Work experience can give them positive support in their endeavours to fulfil their hopes and aspirations to gain meaningful employment.

[b] That as Corporate Parent the Council provides challenging and supportive work experience for looked after young people in all sections of the Council with the aim of:

- Increasing their skills, knowledge and confidence in their abilities.
- Enhance their opportunities for appropriate training and further education
- Get more information about job opportunities and areas of work of interest to them.

[c] Establishing a section on the Council's website dedicated Looked After Children (The Looked After Children Page) to include question and answer section, provide information on what the Council is doing; details of other partners and organisations where Looked After Children can get additional advice guidance and ensure the involvement of looked after children in the development and content of the site.

[d] Developing a Corporate Parent Strategy to cover all young people 0-24 who are looked after by the Council or are care leavers. The strategy should identify the development requirements to ensure the outcomes for these children improve in line with their peers. Children and young people should continue to be active participants in planning and development of policies and practice in connection with looked after children and should be a framework, requiring the active engagement of all service departments of the Council and elected Members.

[e] Ensuring that all Members are made aware of their responsibility as corporate parents by encouraging members to take advantage of training and development opportunities offered by the Council.

Report Authorised by: The Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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3.0 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

3.1- Overview & Scrutiny work programme 2007.2008

- A better Education for Children in Care
- Statutory Guidance on the duty of Local Authorities to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004.
- Supporting Looked After Learners – A practical guide for school governors (2006)
- White paper Care Matters: Time for Change (2007)
- Improving behaviour and attendance on exclusion from schools and pupil referral units (September 2007). Children in Care paras. 64-70.
- School Admissions Code 2007

4.0 RAISING THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN FEASIBILITY STUDY

BACKGROUND

- 4.1 When a child enters the looked after care system it is usually as a consequence of abuse, neglect or family breakdown, and these negative experiences often have long lasting and sometimes adverse effects on their health and general wellbeing. They have a higher degree of physical and mental health issues than their peers in the general population and their risk of developing mental health problems is estimated to be five times greater, it is widely accepted that they are disproportionately more at risk of becoming socially excluded.
- 4.2 Looked After Children have a right to expect the outcomes for every child – that they should be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being. To achieve these five outcomes for Looked After Children, local authorities as their ‘corporate parents’ must demonstrate the strongest commitment to helping every child they look after, wherever the child is placed, to achieve the highest educational standards he or she possibly can. This includes supporting their aspirations to achieve in further and higher education.
- 4.3 Although some individual children do well, generally Looked After Children as a whole have poor experiences of education and very low educational attainment. Their educational outcomes, in terms of the proportion who reach the average levels of attainment expected of seven, eleven, fourteen, and sixteen year olds, remain significantly lower than for all children. A relatively small number of Looked After Children progress to higher education.
- 4.4 **Corporate Parent**
- 4.5 Corporate parenting is a collective responsibility of the Council, with Councillors having a distinct role to play in ensuring that the outcomes and life chances of Looked After Children are maximised and all Councillors have a basic level of responsibility for the children in the care of the authority. With the support and encouragement of corporate parents, looked-after children are able to take advantage of opportunities available to them and develop their lives to their full ability. For those people working directly with the children, the corporate parenting task will be on a practical day-to-day basis, from providing them with a safe, stable and happy home with nurturing carers to ensuring they lead a fit and healthy lifestyle.
- 4.6 In supporting the role and responsibility of corporate parent, there is a wealth of regulations and guidance to accompany the new duties. DCSF (formerly DfES) statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children (December 2005) states that local authorities: *should be doing at least what any good parent would do to promote their child’s educational aspirations and support their achievements.*

4.7 School Admissions for Looked After Children

4.8 ¹The law and the School Admission Code also make special arrangements for the most vulnerable children. Schools continue to be required to admit children with statements of Special Educational Needs where the school concerned is named on the statement. Children who are in public care (looked after children) must now be given top priority in the oversubscription criteria for all schools. And because these children often have to move school during the school year, the law gives their corporate parent the crucial right to direct any school to give them a place, even where the school is full. These regulations apply to the normal school admissions round.

5.0 THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

5.1 Over 61,000 children and young people are looked after at any one time in England.², 42% of whom return to home within six months. A number of studies have concluded that children and young people who are looked after, face serious challenges in their lives and are often disadvantaged as a result, in particular educationally.

5.2 The Social Exclusion³ Unit identified a range of barriers that prevent Looked After Children and young people from achieving their educational potential. These include placement instability, time out of school or other learning settings, insufficient help with their education if they get behind, insufficient support and encouragement at home and not enough help with emotional, physical or mental health and wellbeing.

5.3 Over the last few years children's services have increasingly come under scrutiny, not least as a response to the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. This has led to the Every Child Matters Green Paper, the Children Act 2004 and the Change for Children Programme which sets out the agenda for change to achieve the objectives of Every Child Matters.

5.4 Every Child Matters – Change for Children sets out the five mutually reinforcing outcomes that are most important to children and young people: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being.

5.5 Children in care – Key National Statistics

- In 2001/02 only 8% of children in care achieved five or more A*-C grades at GCSE, compared to half of all young people.
- Children in care have poor results in Key Stage tests at age 7, 11, and 14 and only 1 percent go on to university.

5.6 In May 2000 the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Health jointly produced 'Guidance on the Education of Children in Public Care.' The purpose of this guidance is to bring the education attainments of looked after children closer in line with that of their peers.

¹ School Admissions Code

² Children Looked After in England, DfES 2005

³ A better Education for Children in Care, Social Exclusion Report, ODPM Sept 2003

5.7 Government public service agreement (PSA) target

5.8 The Public Service Agreement targets for education attainment of children looked after, set by the Spending Review 2002 for the period 2003-6 and subsequently revised by the Special Exclusion Unit focuses on three elements (1) engagement in education as well as attainment at key stage 4 (2) narrowing the gap in educational achievement between Looked After Children and their peers, and improve their educational support and the stability of their lives, so that by 2008, 80% of children under 16 who have been looked after for two and a half years or more will have been living in the same placement for at least 2 years, or are placed for adoption.

5.9 National performance indicators:

5.10 National Performance Indicators measures success against the following:

- 1) To improve absolute performance and narrow the gap between looked-after children their peers on the following measures:
 - Percentage of children aged 11, looked after for at least 12 months, who obtain level 4 in Key Stage 2 English and Math,
 - Percentage of young people, looked after for at least 12 months, who reach school leaving age without having sat a GCSE equivalent exam
 - Percentage of young people, looked after for at least 12 months and in Year 11, who achieve five or more GCSEs graded A*-C or equivalent
- 2) To improve the rate of adoption orders and special guardianship orders

6.0 THE HARINGEY CONTEXT

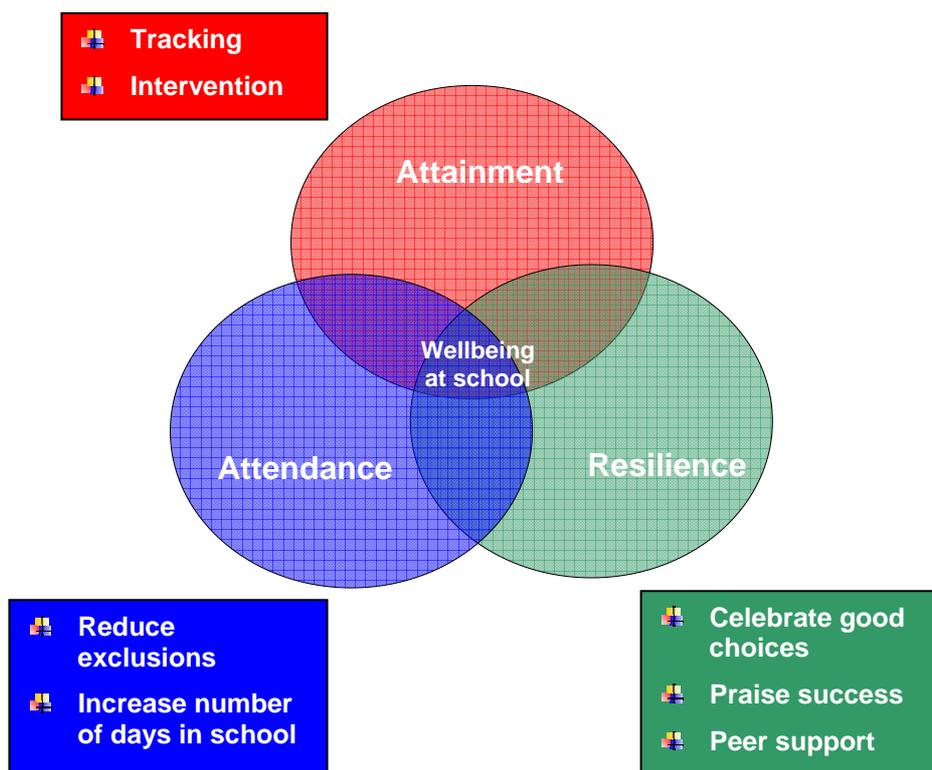
6.1 Haringey looks after approximately 445 children who are unable to remain in the care of their parents. When a child becomes 'looked after', the tasks of their parent become the responsibility of everyone working for the council and elected members of the council. It is the collective responsibility of the council to provide the best possible care and protection for children who are 'looked after'.

6.2 The Deputy Director, Children and Young People's Service provided comprehensive information about the improving education attainment of children in care in Haringey and the measures in place which support them in their achievements. The educational attainment at Key Stage 4 for this group of young people has doubled over the past three years. Their attainment is now well above the England average for children in care.

7.0 ACHIEVEMENTS

7.1 In the past three years, significant and sustained gains have been made in raising the educational attainment of children in the care of Haringey. This has been achieved by adopting a strategic and coordinated response to raising attainment. Three key areas are focused on: attainment, attendance and resilience.

Model to show the key contributing factors impacting on the educational attainment of Children in Care



7.2 By comparing existing school tracking data with the assessments of educational professionals, including those written by members of the Children in Care Education team, we ensure that the educational expectations of individual pupils are realistic and appropriate. Where specific needs are identified, tailored support is provided, and individual progress monitored. Alongside this work, the Children in Care Education team works to build relationships with young people, and cultivate a positive group identity, building social networks, which support them as a group. Children in Care are invited to take part in various study and education linked activities, organised by the Children in Care Education team, in conjunction with specific organisations within the local community, these activities also help the young people foster links with community-based Out of School Hours Learning (OSHL) provision.

7.3 Key Stage 2

7.4 The Key Stage 2 SATs results for Haringey Children in Care show a significant improvement on schools predicted results. There were 21 young people in year 6 of whom 20 took the assessment tests, one pupil was in hospital for a considerable period during year. 57% achieved Level 4 and above in English, 48% in maths, and 62% in Science. Several children achieved Level 5 (above average) 10% in English, 10% in maths, and 29% for Science.

% LAC Achieving L4 & Above - 2007:

English	57%
Maths	48%
Science	62%

Year on Year Comparison Data:

	2005	2006	2007
ENGLISH	57%	26%	57%
MATHS	43%	35%	48%
SCIENCE	57%	57%	62%

% LAC Increasing on Predicted Levels:

ENGLISH	19%
MATHS	24%
SCIENCE	33%

Factors Impacting on 2007 KS2 Results:

% LAC with Statements	19%
% LAC in Special Provision	5%
% LAC on SEN Register	33%
% LAC with EAL	33%
% Transience – 1 or more Care or Educational Placement Move since initial move into Care	95%
% LAC with 94% + Attendance	81%

Factors Impacting on 2006 Cohort:

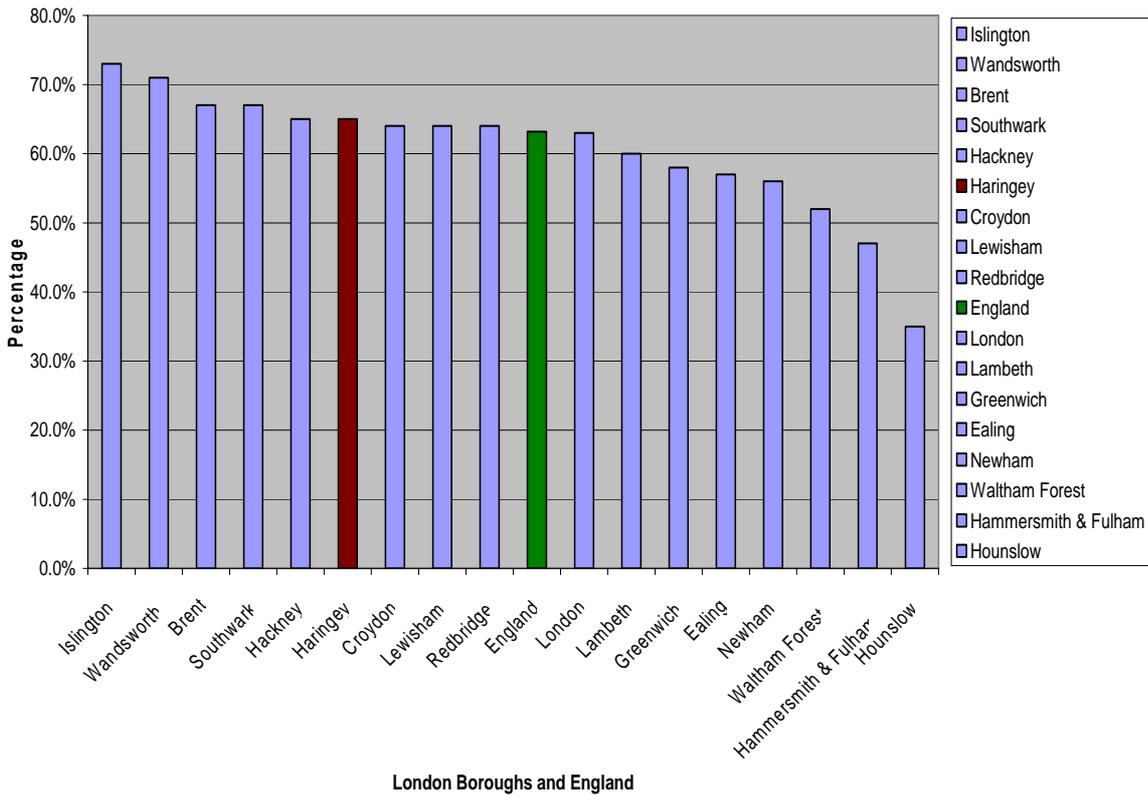
% LAC with Statements	41%
% LAC in Special Provision	18%
% LAC with 94% + Attendance	64%

- 7.5 As a result of interventions, many children achieved a higher level than initially predicted by their school, using the National formula, based on previous Key Stage attainment. 19% increased on their predicted level in English, 24% increased on their predicted level in Maths and 33% increased on their predicted level in Science.
- 7.6 All children in Year 6 were screened, using recent pre-existing reports, when available. Those without a recent assessment were assessed by a teacher on the Children in Care Education team at their school ('Learning Style Assessment Reports'). Following these assessments, 12 schools were offered £500 funding to provide pre SATs booster support. Feedback from schools has been very positive. Foster carers were also invited to training on how to support their children through Yr 6 and this was well received.
- 7.7 Following the assessment and Key Stage results of Year 6 Children in Care, four children were identified as having the potential to benefit from 1-1 specialist support. Two of these young people took up this support. The support was intended to raise literacy levels, and increase confidence in reading. It involved 8 x 1 hour sessions and took place over the summer holiday. The first and last sessions involved a baseline and final assessment to measure progress. Both young people made 21 months (1 year 9 months) progress in reading in two weeks, following 7 x 1 hour long sessions. They now have greatly increased confidence and enjoyment in reading. This will positively impact on their ability to access the KS3 curriculum.
- 7.8 As a result of targeted interventions, two thirds of our children in care have moved into secondary schools having achieved average, or above average attainment in one or more of the core subjects. One of our children did particularly well, achieving Level 5 (Above Average) in the three core subjects, and another achieved Level 5 in English and Science. Five children scored Level 5 in one of the Core subjects.
- 7.9 Key Stage 3**
- 7.10 Of the 36 young people in care who took KS3 SATs tests, 50% of them received Level 5 or above in one or more of Maths, English or Science and 33% achieved Level 5 or above for all three subjects. In this cohort, 22% have a statement of Special Educational Needs, with 8% disapplied for all three subjects.
- 7.11 Two specialist Maths and Science teachers are established in the Children in Care Education team. This has enabled the now well established homework club for Year 10 and Year 11s to be extended to Key Stage 3 pupils. Key Stage 3 pupils are being targeted particularly this year to maximize their academic attainment during this important stage.

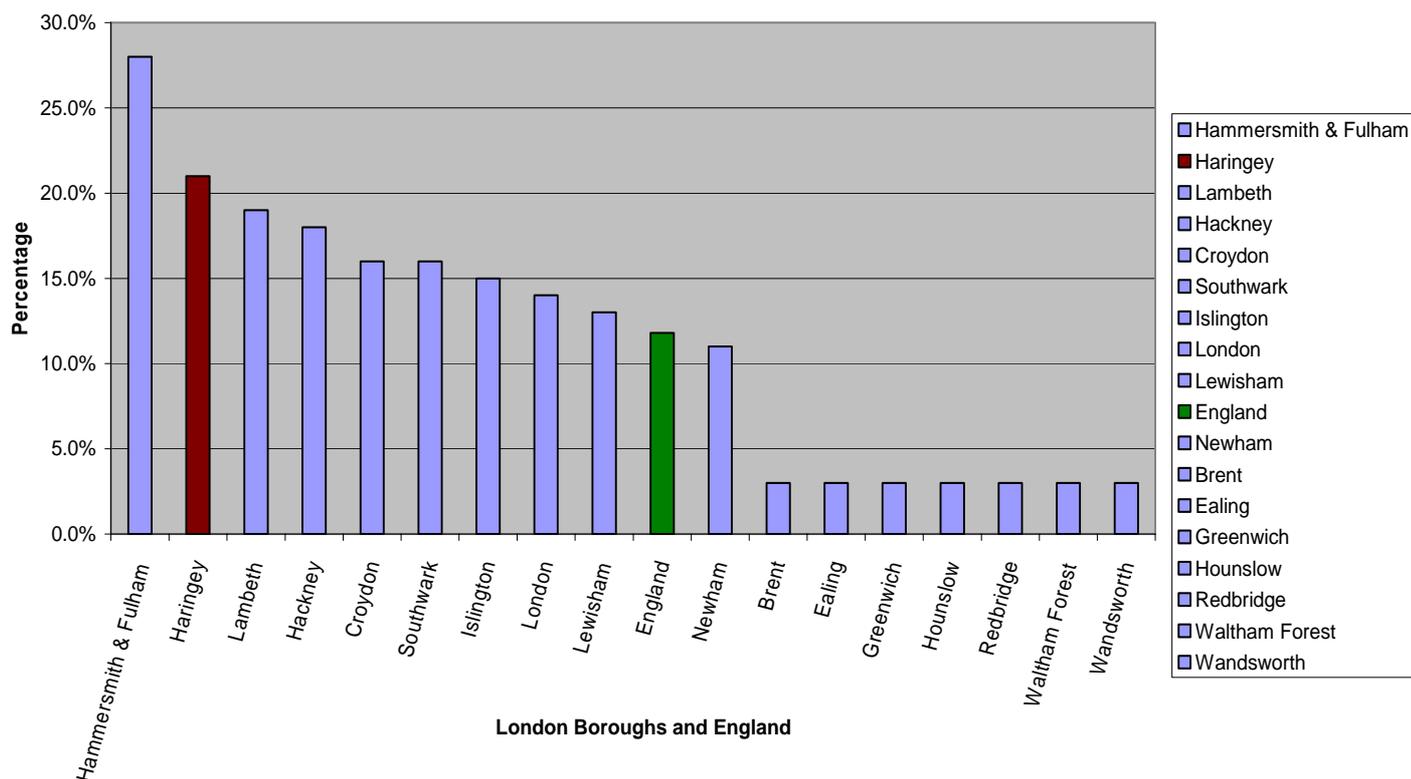
7.12 GCSE examination success

7.13 Haringey's 2006 GCSE examination results compared favourably with other matched London Authorities as well as with the National Average for Children in Care. The GCSE comparison for 2006 is shown in the tables below. The boroughs are sorted from the highest achievers to the lowest.

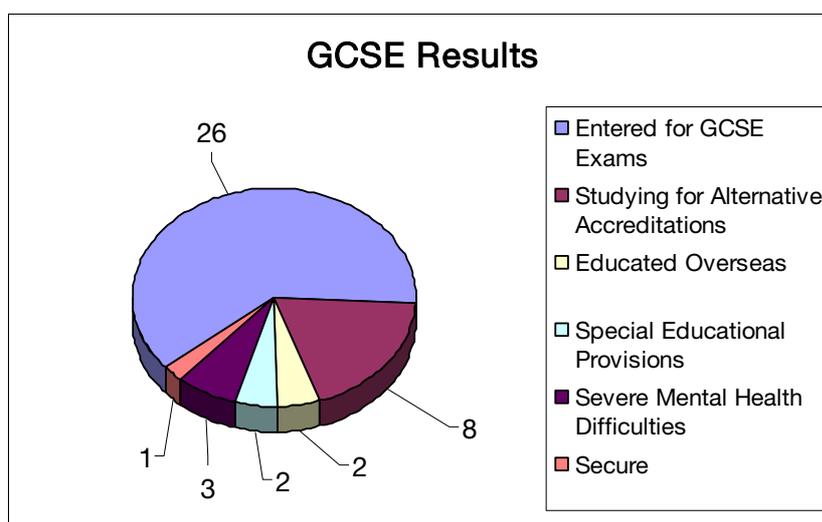
Comparing Haringey Children in Care who achieved 1 A*-G GCSE grade 2006



Comparing Haringey Children in Care who achieved 5 A*- C GCSE grades 2006



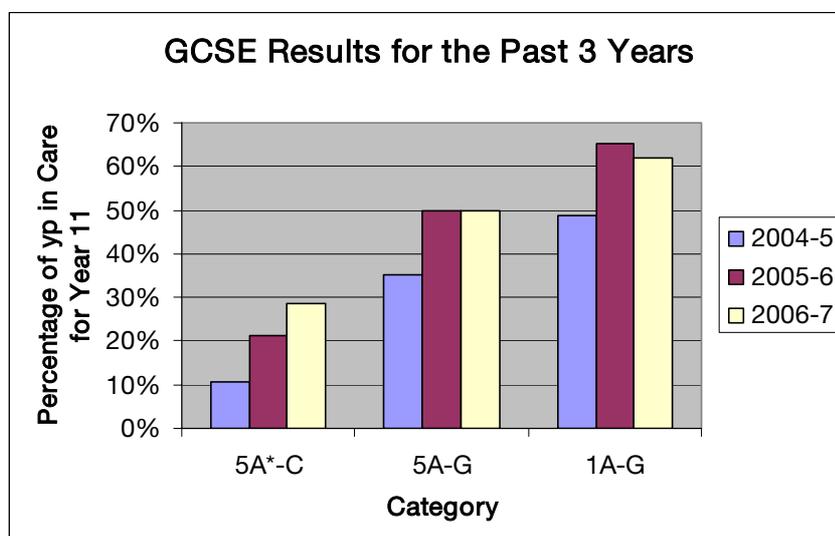
7.14 The pie chart below shows the GCSE results for the children who were in care continuously from October 2006 to September 2007. Of the young people entered for GCSE examinations, 29% achieved at least 5 A*-Cs, 50% achieved at least 5A-Gs and 62% achieved at least 1A-G.



7.15 Of the 42 young people who have been in continuous care, 26 of them were entered for GCSE exams – all of them achieving at least one GCSE. Eight young people studied for alternative accreditations e.g. City & Guilds Certificate Level 1, Entry Level English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) Courses, Horticulture, and Construction. Two young people are educated overseas, currently in Year 9 classes. Two young people were in Special Educational Provisions for students. Three 3 young people had serious Mental Health Difficulties requiring a high level

of specialist intervention and one young person was in a Secure Unit serving a custodial sentence.

7.16 The table below shows the improvement in GCSE results over the last three years.



7.17 All young people in Year 10 and 11 who are following a GCSE course are offered 20 hours of after school home tuition. Last year (2006-2007), more young people than ever accepted this offer. The Children in Care Education team also run a weekly after school homework club for the young people studying GCSEs. Five young people in Year 11 came to the Homework Club, three of those achieved five A*-Cs.

7.18 In the 5A*-C category, one young person with English as a second language did extremely well by achieving 2 A*s, 3 Cs, 2 Ds, an E and a F. This young person regularly attended the Homework Club and also received 20 hours of after school home tuition. One Year 11 sat and achieved an E at A Level standard.

7.19 As of September 2007, of the 42 young people in Year 12 (i.e. 16 years of age), 38 have gained a qualification during their secondary education to allow them to progress to a college placement. This is tremendous achievement.

7.20 The work in Yr 10 and 11 is focussed on maximising the range of opportunities to ensure that young people are successfully engaged in educational training post- 16. There has been considerable success in this area particularly as a result of the close partnership work in place with Connexions; an example of this is set out below.

7.21 One Yr 11 pupil, who had been a persistent absconder from care placements was linked to Rainer Break Free for numeracy and literacy support whilst still on school roll. He was entered for three GCSEs and supported to attend exams by Connexions; he gained one GCSE and is now a regular attender at Southgate College planning a career in plumbing.

7.22 Further and Higher Education

- 7.23 In Year 13, 14 Young people achieved Level 3 National Qualifications i.e. A-levels and BTEC National Diplomas. These are advanced level courses preparing young people for employment and higher education. Of these 14 students, 10 are continuing with higher education at various universities while one student will continue her education at the London College of Fashion.
- 7.24 Five young care leavers gained the following degrees at universities across the country: Medicine, Cinematics, Nursing, Aeronautical Engineering and Law.
- 7.25 Sustained improvement in attainment has been achieved over the last four years. Proportionally more young people are leaving care with qualifications which will bring them into further education. This should have a significant impact on their futures. Several of these young people express an interest and enthusiasm for making a difference through becoming involved in local politics, social care, education and law.

8.0 STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Educational attainment by children in the care of the council is a key performance indicator which contributes to the Annual Performance Assessment and has a critical impact on the overall rating of the work of the Children and Young People's service.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Children in care are a significantly disadvantaged group; nationally education attainment for the group is low. These children when leaving the care of the authority are over represented in prison population, homeless groups, unemployed and workless. It is also of significance that groups of children who feature as disadvantaged and have low attainment across the whole of the school population.

10.0 LEAVING CARE - SOME INITIATIVES IN HARINGEY.

10.1 New Start Scheme

- 10.2 It is recognised by the Department for Health and other professionals that care leavers underachieve in terms of education and employment. Many young people leaving care have poor educational outcomes and limited employment opportunities.
- 10.3 The leaving Care Act 2000 requires local authorities to provide support to Looked After Children and those leaving care, particularly in the areas of education training and employment.
- 10.4 In undertaking this feasibility study we were told about the New Start Scheme. The scheme is Haringey's training programme that offers training for one year in Business Administration and Construction to young people between the ages of 16 and 25 living in the Borough. However, it appeared that care leavers have not been successful in accessing New Start. The programme course lasts for one year during which all trainees were expected to attend training for one full day each week to study for the Framework Apprenticeship Qualification Business Administration NVQ 2.

10.5 Steps to Employability Scheme

- 10.6 In a briefing paper to Chief Executive Management Board in September 2004 the Leaving Care Team put forward a proposal for a pilot scheme which would take place over a four week period during October 2004. The paper detailed how this opportunity would give care leavers a chance to obtain high quality work experience in a safe environment within the council enabling them to be better prepared for successful employment. The Council in acting as corporate parent can develop strategies to reverse the trends of low attainment and unemployment among care leavers and support them to live independent and sustainable lives.
- 10.7 The operation of the scheme was a clear indication of the Council's commitment to this group of young people and Officers in the Leaving Care and Asylum Service were disappointed at the termination of the programme. The briefing paper recommended the introduction of a Pilot 'Work Experience – Step to Employability Scheme" and that each directorate within the council provided a minimum of 2 administrative job placements for four week work experience to Haringey care leavers.
- 10.8 The initiative was established in 2004 when a total of 8 young people participated in the pilot programme. In 2005 12 young people took part and this increased to 30 in 2006. The aim was that the programme would continue into 2007 however due to staff resource issues this has now been postponed.
- 10.9 The Leaving Care team believed that this work experience along with other initiatives would enhance the employment opportunities of care leavers. The briefing paper went on to outline the financial implications for the scheme and showed that there would be no additional direct costs as the cost for each placement would be the equivalent to subsistence payments that each care leaver would receive if they were in education. The total cost would be funded from the Leaving Care Budget.

Total weekly cost for 12 care £44 & subsistence & travel £17.00	£61.00
The total cost for 12 care leavers over a 4 week period	£2,928.00
The cost to run the pilot on a quarterly basis for one year	£9,000.00
Minus regular subsistence payment for 1 year	£6,500.00
The additional cost to the service	£2,500.00

11. CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 Educational achievement is an important indicator of children's overall life changes. Looked after children generally do significantly less well than other children at every key stage in school. The government has taken various steps to seek to tackle this disparity. The Every Child Matters programme of reform has brought a renewed focus on improved multi-agency support and improved accountability which will have an impact on the way that services are co-ordinated for looked after children.
- 11.2 It is apparent that Haringey is committed to improving the outcomes of children who are looked after and believes that a positive and productive educational experience is key to helping these young people escape disadvantage. Education professionals from the Looked After Team work in partnership with social work and school colleagues to help raise their educational achievement.
- 11.3 There is clearly some excellent work taking place with Looked After Children and young people across the Council, with a number of services performing consistently well, there is also commitment to improving all services for Looked After Children and Young People in Haringey and the Service is to be congratulated in achieving over and above its targets and performance in raising the educational achievements of children in care.
- 11.4 Haringey's achievements were highlighted in the recent Joint Areas Review of Children's Services in October 2006. The inspectors commented that Looked after Children are well supported in their education. The effective tracking and monitoring of their attainment, progress and attendance has led to creative interventions to support their learning and to provide support for carers. Events to promote their education and celebrate success are organised in partnership with Tottenham Hotspurs Football Club, which was described during the review as the 'corporate aunt and uncle' to looked after children. Absences from school although reducing remain higher than in comparator authorities. Increasing numbers of looked after children have personal education plans; however some were of varying quality.
- 11.5 But, what more can the Council do for Looked After Children? Statistics indicates that care leavers⁴ experience high levels of unemployment and are at risk of social exclusion. Based on the research the Government set a Public Service Agreement target in the 2002 spending review to improve the level of education, training and employment outcomes for care leavers aged 19, so that levels for this group are at least 75% of those achieved by all young people in the same area by 2004. This target was not met in 2004, 55% of young people aged 19 who were looked after aged 16 were engaged in education, training and employment. This level of performance meant that care leavers engagement was only 65% of the level of all young people. In 2005, education, training and employment rates for care leavers was 70% of the rate of all young people, which as in improvement but still below the target nationally.

⁴ The Children Act 1989 Report 2004 and 2005

12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 That the Children's & Young People Department be commended for raising educational achievements of Looked After Children over the past three years. They are urged to continue the improvements made.
- 2 In light of the achievements of the Department in raising the educational achievements of Looked After Children, the Committee agree that a full scrutiny review would not be beneficial or add value to the service at this time.
- 3 However, the Committee wish to recommend the following:
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 - [b] That as Corporate Parent the Council provides challenging and supportive work experience for looked after young people in all sections of the Council with the aim of:
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 - Get more information about job opportunities and areas of work of interest to them.
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