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# **Looked After Children**

## **Annual Report of the work of the Virtual School**

**September 2015 – August 2016**

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## 1 Introduction

The Bracknell Forest Virtual School has a focus on improving educational outcomes for looked after children as well as for Care Leavers. This is undertaken through ensuring that high quality Personal Education Plans (PEP) that have challenging and meaningful targets which are aspirational and includes the support needed to enable the plan to be achieved are in place. The tracking of attainment, progress, attendance, exclusion, with early intervention to raise attainment and to reduce or remove barriers to education is a key activity of the service, whilst ensuring all children in care have access to a high quality education.

In addition to fulfilling their educational potential and increasing life chances through academic achievement; it is a priority for young people leaving care to be positive and contributing members of their communities. Celebrating and recognising achievements is an important role that encourages high aspirations and raises self-esteem. Safeguarding children and young people in care is a priority that is threaded through all activities of the Bracknell Forest Virtual School.

The Virtual School model in Bracknell Forest extends to supporting other vulnerable groups of children and not just those in care. This includes those who speak English as an Additional Language, are from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller family, have a parent in the armed forces and are hence a Service Child as well those that are either of school age and at risk of disengaging from education hence becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) or are NEET. A structure chart for the Virtual School has been included as Appendix 1.

For the purpose of this report, the focus will remain on Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

## 2 Statutory Role of the Virtual School

There are 4 main strands of focus for improvement of the Virtual School:

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress for children in care across all key stages;
- Improve school attendance and reduce exclusion;
- Improve the quality of Personal Education Plans and;
- Support school leadership to enhance a shared objective of improving life opportunities through education and experiences at school.

**The Children Act 1989:** The 1989 Act places a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. This duty is set out in statutory guidance. The authority must give particular attention to the educational implications of any decision about the welfare of a looked after child.

**The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Statutory Guidance (DfE 2015):** When a child becomes looked after, the responsible local authority will arrange a suitable care placement and minimise any disruption to the child's education. When a child is in Key Stage 4 everything possible should be done to maintain the child in their existing school. Where it is impossible for the child to remain in his/her current educational placement there should be discussion with the Virtual School Head.

**Promoting the Education of Looked After Children (DfE 2014) Statutory**

**Guidance:** The statutory guidance sets out in detail the duties and responsibilities on Local Authority to promote the education of children in care.

**The School Admissions Code:** The Admissions Code provides a framework for the school admission for children in care in regard to their priority admission and the process to directing a school or Academy to admit a child in care to the school roll.

**3 Profile of the learners in Bracknell Forests Virtual School:**

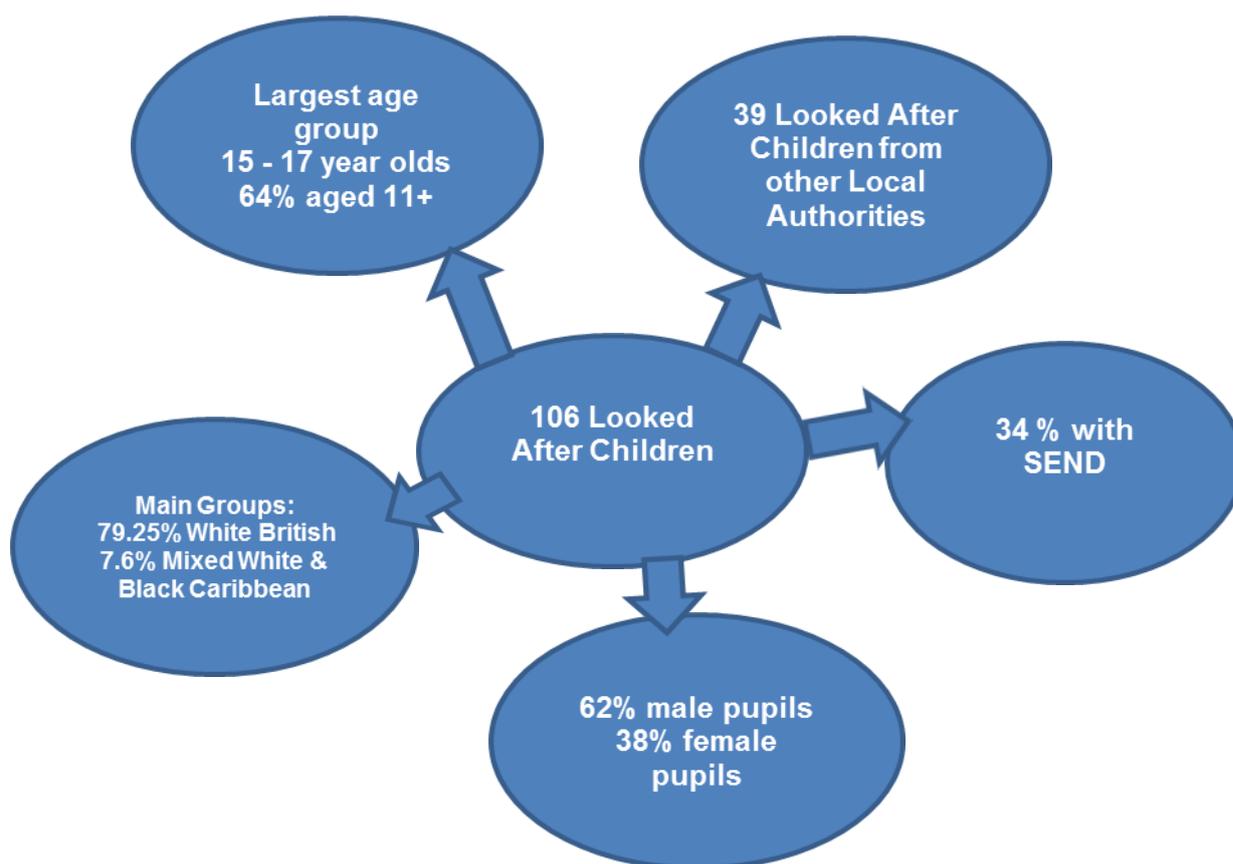


Table 1 shows the 67 school aged and 25 older LAC broken down by Key Stage and Table 2 shows the number in each year group. Out of the 92 children, there were 25 (27.2%) in the primary phase and 67 (72.8%) in the secondary phase.

**Table 1: Number of LAC by Key Stage in 2015/16**

Key Stage	Number of LAC	% of Total
Early Years	4	3.77%
1	8	7.55%
2	23	21.70%
3	26	24.53%

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4	29	27.36%
5	16	15.09%

*Figures correct as of September 2016*

**Table 2: Number of LAC by Year Group in 2015/16**

<b>Year Group</b>	<b>Number of LAC</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Nursery	2	1.89%
Reception	2	1.89%
1	4	3.77%
2	4	3.77%
3	5	4.72%
4	9	8.49%
5	4	3.77%
6	5	4.72%
7	10	9.43%
8	10	9.43%
9	6	5.66%
10	15	14.15%
11	14	13.21%
12	15	14.15%
13	1	0.94%

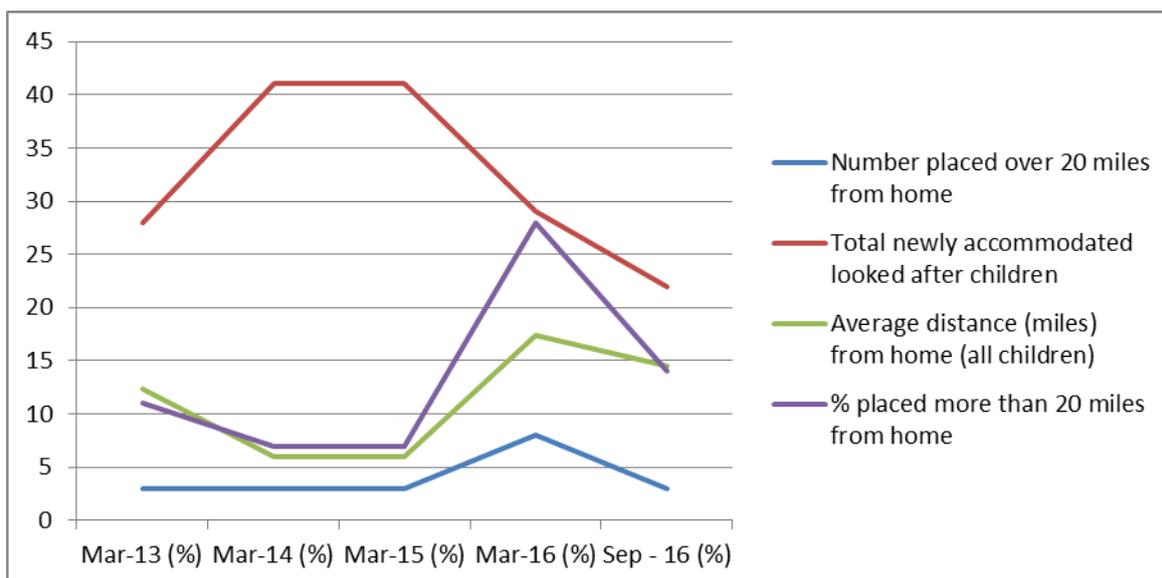
*Figures correct as of September 2016*

**Distance looked after children are placed from home**

Nationally, as at 31st of March 2015, 76.9% of all looked after children were in placements which were 20 miles or less from their originating home address. 17.9% of children looked after were in placements which were over 20 miles; South East figures were 68.9% and 21.8% respectively whilst in Bracknell Forest, these figures were 66.7% and 10% respectively.

The number of children being placed with Bracknell Forest approved foster carers remains high. As a small number of Bracknell Forest approved foster carers live outside of the Borough, a handful of children are recorded as being placed more than 20 miles away. The figures may include infants who have been placed in mother and baby placements or children placed in residential settings as part of their care plan. This may be as a result of there being no existing provision within the local area.

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Unfortunately, there are occasions where teenagers come into care with highly complex needs, aggressive behaviour and mental health concerns which makes it challenging to identify carers locally. Work is ongoing to try and recruit more in house foster carers who are able to manage this behaviour with support from the social work teams.

Experience suggests that disruption may undermine a child's well-being and feelings of self-worth. Nevertheless, a placement move may be in the child's best interests at a certain time. In some cases children may want to be moved and some moves may be necessary for other reasons. Not all moves cause and are caused by serious disruption.

As part of our work with social care professionals, the importance of a planned move is always encouraged as we have found that it is what happens as a result of the move, rather than the move itself, which has a negative effect. Furthermore, we have noticed in individual case that the association between placement moves and poor outcomes disappears if an allowance is made for the child's difficulties.

#### 4 Ofsted Ratings for Schools

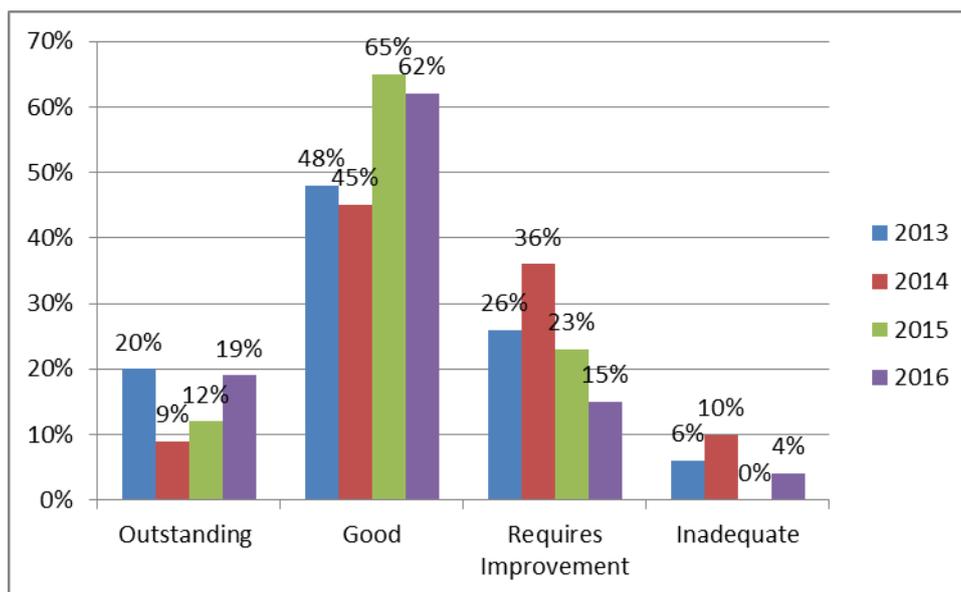
One of the key priorities for the Virtual School is to ensure all our looked after children are receiving an education which correlates to our ambition. Where a school move is necessary, we endeavour to make applications to schools that are inspected by Ofsted to be either good or outstanding. Table 3 shows the Ofsted inspection profile for all schools and a breakdown for in and out borough schools. The majority of Bracknell Forest LAC (81%) attend a school judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding. For LAC attending a Good or better Bracknell Forest schools the figure is 77% while the figure is 86% for out borough schools attended by our LAC.

## Autumn 2016

<u>Primary</u>				Total
Ofsted Grading	Description	OLA	BF	
1	Outstanding	1	0	
2	Good	4	7	
3	Requires Improvement	4	6	
4	Inadequate	0	3	
				<b>25</b>
<u>Secondary</u>				
Ofsted Grading	Description	OLA	BF	
1	Outstanding	5	3	
2	Good	12	11	
3	Requires Improvement	1	0	
4	Inadequate	0	0	
				<b>32</b>
<u>6th Form/College</u>				
Ofsted Grading	Description	OLA	BF	
1	Outstanding	3	2	
2	Good	5	7	
3	Requires Improvement	0	0	
4	Inadequate	0	0	
				<b>17</b>
<b>Total</b>				<b>74</b>
Grand Total		OLA	BF	% of total LAC
	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19%</b>
	<b>Good</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>62%</b>
	<b>Requires Improvement</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15%</b>
	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4%</b>

There has been a significant effort to ensure that the education provision for LAC meets their individual needs. This is also to ensure that they are in an effective setting which also reflects our aspirations for our children in care. During the 2015 – 16 academic year, there was one primary school in Bracknell Forest that was graded from a good school to one requiring improvement and another one that moved from requiring improvement to inadequate by Ofsted during the same period. Following the PEP meeting for each child based at these schools, there were no concerns raised related to the provisions made by the school or the education professionals on the progress being made by the young people. It is however, worth noting that as of September 2016, all of Bracknell Forest's mainstream secondary schools were either good or outstanding. Chart 1 shows the number of Bracknell Forest looked after children attending schools judged to be either Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate and the trend for the past four years.

Chart 1



## 5 Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire

In order to better understand the challenges our children and young people face we are mapping the outcomes of our children to the number of schools attended, the number and timing of placements and the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) score. This follows recent research by the Rees Centre. The SDQ is a behavioural screening questionnaire of children aged between the age of 3-16 and identify 25 attributes relating to:

- Emotional symptoms
- Conduct problems
- Hyperactivity/inattention
- Peer relationship problems
- Prosocial behaviour

There has been little change in the emotional and behavioural health of looked after children over the last three years based on their SDQ scores. Nationally, a higher proportion of boys (40%) than girls (33%) scored 17 or above indicating cause for concern with their emotional health. The average figure for Bracknell Forest as of September 2016 was 16.2. Across all ages looked after boys scored higher than looked after girls, except for children aged 16 years.

## 6 Special Needs

Children with special educational needs (SEN) are often over-represented in the LAC population. 45% (33 out of 74) of 4 – 18 year old Bracknell Forest LAC either had a statement for SEN or an EHCP in 2015/16 compared with a national rate of 58% for all LAC and 2.6% for all pupils in Bracknell Forest Schools.

We have occasionally worked with children who have undiagnosed special needs when they start to be looked after. Their needs are captured as part of the PEP process to ensure robust arrangements are in place to ensure any undiagnosed special educational needs are addressed through the SEND Framework as soon as possible. Another element of this approach is to ascertain that set targets are

aspirational and encourage challenge for young people as well as their school where any special educational needs do not constitute a reason for them not achieving.

## 7 Attainment

This section of the report covers a detailed analysis of the attainment of LAC. The numbers in each cohort are often very small, therefore the outcomes for one or two children can have a significant impact on results expressed as a percentage. Care should be applied when analysing and comparing the results, which are based on small numbers of children.

### Early Years

There were no Bracknell Forest LAC who attempted National Assessments at this level for 2015/16.

### Key Stage 1

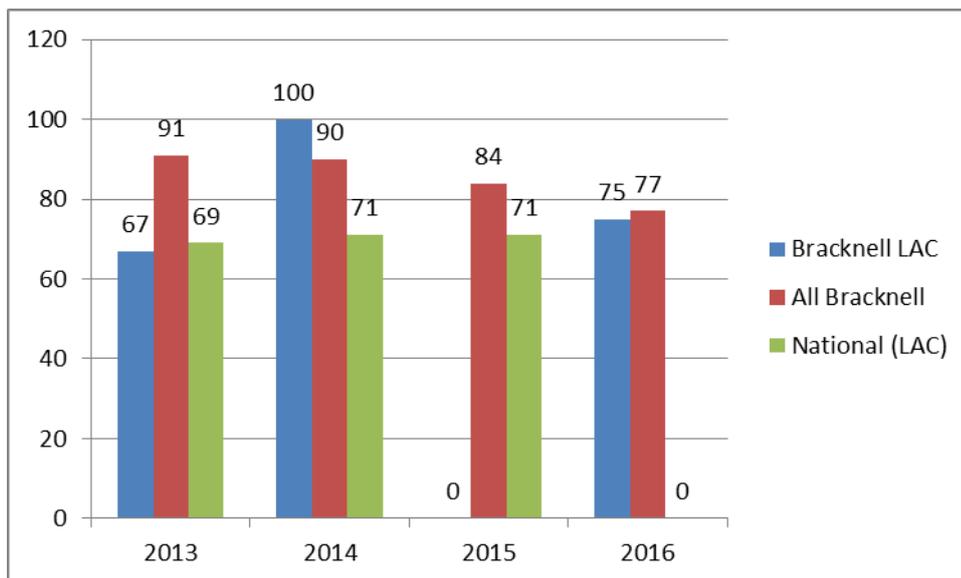
There were 4 LAC in the cohort who attempted National Assessments at this level for 2015/16. It is difficult to compare year – on – year performances for this cohort at this stage as there was no one who attempted these assessments last year (2014 – 15) and were in the care of Bracknell Forest Council. Comparing the performance of our small cohort against that of their peers across the borough presents a largely positive outcome where performance is either broadly in line with or above that of their peers.

The main threshold measures at Key Stage 1 are the percentage of children working at the Expected Standard or at Greater Depth. Table 4 shows the end of Key Stage 1 reading test results, comparing the performance of Bracknell Forest LAC with the LA and national cohorts.

% KS1 Reading Expected Level or Above				
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bracknell LAC	67	100	N/A	75
All Bracknell	91	90	84	77
National (LAC)	69	71	71	TBC

Chart 2 shows the percentage performance of the LAC cohort in the Key Stage 1 reading test against that of their peers during this period:

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*Note: currently awaiting national data for 2016.*

Table 5 shows the Key Stage 1 writing assessment results. In comparison with outcomes for the national cohort from the previous year, this years results would be higher than the national average if the figures were to be broadly similar for 2016 as well.

% KS1 Writing Expected Level or Above				
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bracknell LAC	67	0	N/A	75
All Bracknell	89.0	87.8	71.1	68
National (LAC)	61	61	63	TBC

Chart 3 shows the percentage performance of the LAC cohort in the Key Stage 1 writing assessment against that of their peers for this period:

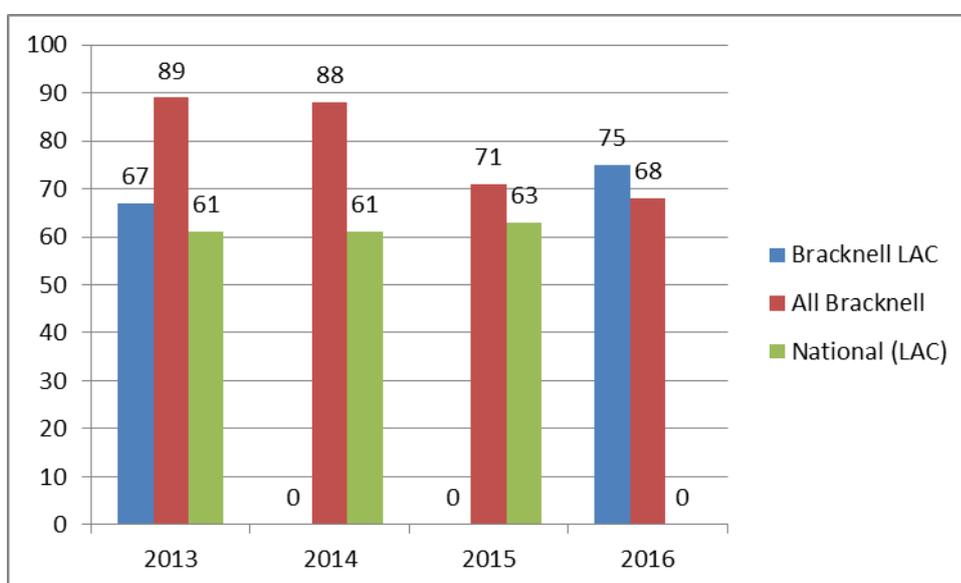


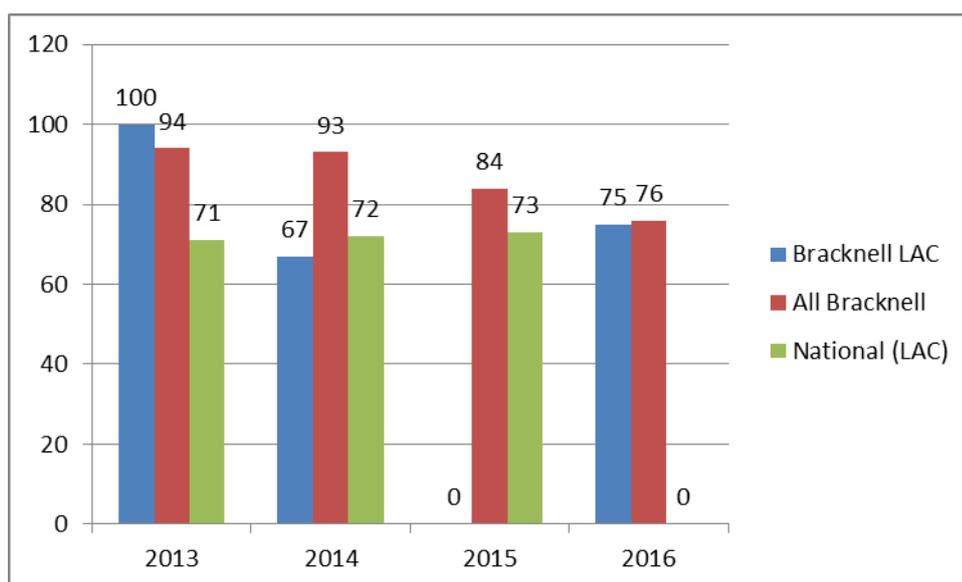
Table 6 shows the Key Stage 1 mathematics test results for the last four years.

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% KS1 Maths Expected Level or Above				
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bracknell LAC	100	67	N/A	75
All Bracknell	94	93	84	76
National (LAC)	71	72	73	TBC

The performance variance is evident again from these results owing to the size of the cohort. The national average is a reasonable measure to assess the performance of the cohort. As data for 2016 is still to be released, analysing this against the national figure for the cohort for 2015 at this stage reflects a positive outcome.

Chart 4 shows the percentage performance of the LAC cohort in the Key Stage 1 mathematics test against that of their peers for the last four years:



The Key Stage 1 results can be analysed by whether or not the children were placed in-borough or out-borough and Table 7 shows Key Stage 1 performance in 2016, broken down on this basis. The numbers in the cohort are quite small at 4 overall with a 50% divide. Children placed in borough performed slightly better across all assessed areas:

Key Stage 1	In/Out-borough		
	In	Out	Total
Number in LAC cohort	2	2	4
Reading (Expected Level or Above)	100%	50%	75%
Writing (Expected Level or Above)	100%	50%	75%
Maths (Expected Level or Above)	100%	50%	75%

As has been the case across Bracknell Forest primary schools, the teaching of phonics has been a key priority for 2015/16. The Virtual School closely monitors the support provided to LAC to ensure they have the requisite language skills at this

early stage in their life. Whilst there is a local gap in the percentage of children working at or above the expected standard both in year 1 and 2 who are in receipt of a free school meal in comparison to their peers who are not, this is not the trend for LAC. Both LAC in Year 1 and all 4 in Year 2 achieved a score above the phonics screening threshold mark. The table below shows the percentage of children in years 1 and 2 who achieved a score above the threshold:

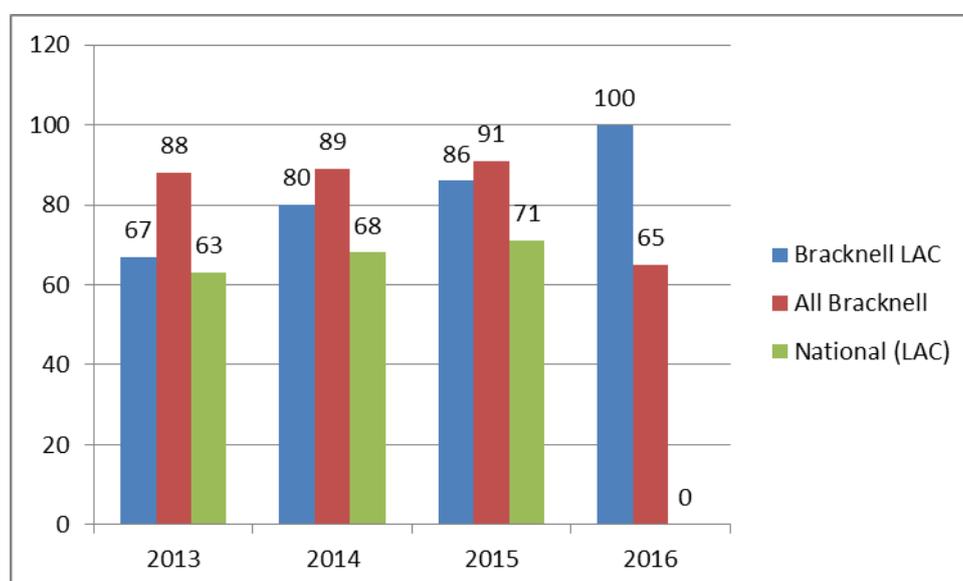
Year 1 Phonics		Year 2 Phonics	
2016		2016	
Non disadvantaged	85.5	Non disadvantaged	72.3
Disadvantaged	67.9	Disadvantaged	64.5
LAC (2)	100	LAC (4)	100

### Key Stage 2

There were 2 LAC in the cohort eligible for tests and teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015/16. This is the same number as in 2014/15. The main threshold measures at Key Stage 2 are the percentage of children working at the Expected Standard or at Greater Depth across each assessed area. Table 8 shows the Key Stage 2 reading test results, comparing the performance of Bracknell Forest LAC with the LA and national cohorts. Performance for the percentage achieving the required threshold in reading in 2015/16 was higher than the previous year at 100%.

% KS2 Reading Expected Level or Above				
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bracknell LAC	67	80	86	100
All Bracknell	88	89	91	65
National (LAC)	63	68	71	TBC

Chart 5 shows the percentage performance of the LAC cohort in the Key Stage 2 reading test against that of their peers for the last four years:



Note: currently awaiting national data for 2016.

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Table 9 shows the Key Stage 2 writing teacher assessment results. Performance in writing was higher than in 2015.

% KS2 Writing Expected Level or Above				
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bracknell LAC	67	80	57	100
All Bracknell	88	88.1	88	75
National (LAC)	63	68	61	TBC

Chart 6 shows the percentage performance of the LAC cohort in the Key Stage 2 writing teacher assessment against that of their peers for the last four years:

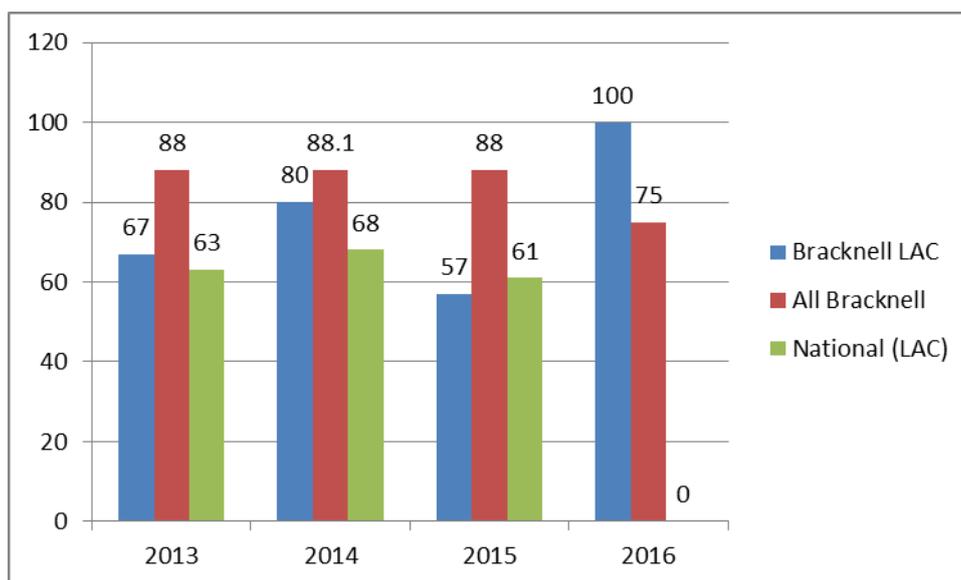
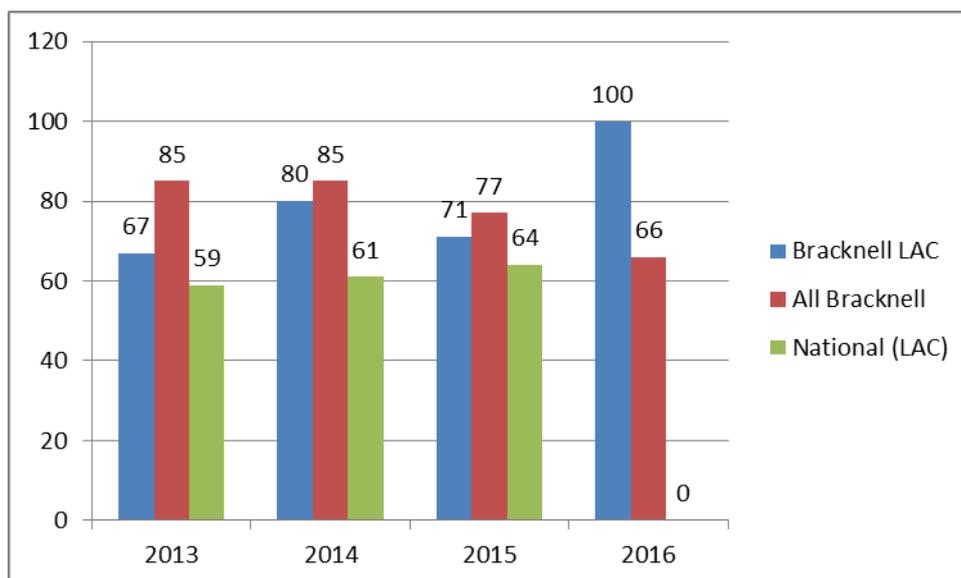


Table 10 shows the Key Stage 2 mathematics test results for the last four years. Performance in mathematics was higher than previous years at 100%.

% KS2 Maths Expected Level or Above				
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bracknell LAC	67	80	71.43	100
All Bracknell	84.9	84.8	77	66
National (LAC)	59	61	64	TBC

Chart 7 shows the percentage performance of the LAC cohort in the Key Stage 2 mathematics test against that of their peers for the last four years:

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As both LAC attended Bracknell Forest primary schools, there isn't the opportunity to compare their performance against any peers from the same cohort that would have attended schools in other Local Authorities.

### Key Stage 4

There were 6 LAC in the cohort that attempted GCSE and equivalent examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2015/16, compared with 12 in 2014/15 and 8 in 2013/14. There are a wide range of performance measures at GCSE. This report focuses on the headline threshold and progress measures for which national and regional benchmarks are available and against which the performance of LAC in Bracknell Forest can be compared.

Table 11 shows the percentage of the looked after cohort achieving 5+ A\* - C (Incl. English & maths) over the last four years, comparing the performance of Bracknell Forest LAC alongside all children in Bracknell Forest schools and nationally. The performance of Bracknell Forest LAC on this GCSE measure continues to improve where a performance at 33.3% (two young people) matches the performance for 2014/15 – we continue to remain above the national average for this measure.

% 5+ A* - C (Incl. Eng & maths)				
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
<b>Number in LAC Cohort</b>	14	8	12	6
<b>Bracknell Forest LAC</b>	7.10%	12.50%	33.30%	33.30%
<b>South East LAC</b>	11.60%	14.40%	13.7	TBC
<b>National LAC</b>	14.90%	14.40%	13.8	TBC
<b>Bracknell All</b>	61.40%	57.00%	58.90%	58.90%

Chart 8 shows the percentage of the looked after cohort achieving 5+ A\* - C GCSEs (Incl. English & maths) compared with their peers across the LA and region in the last three years.

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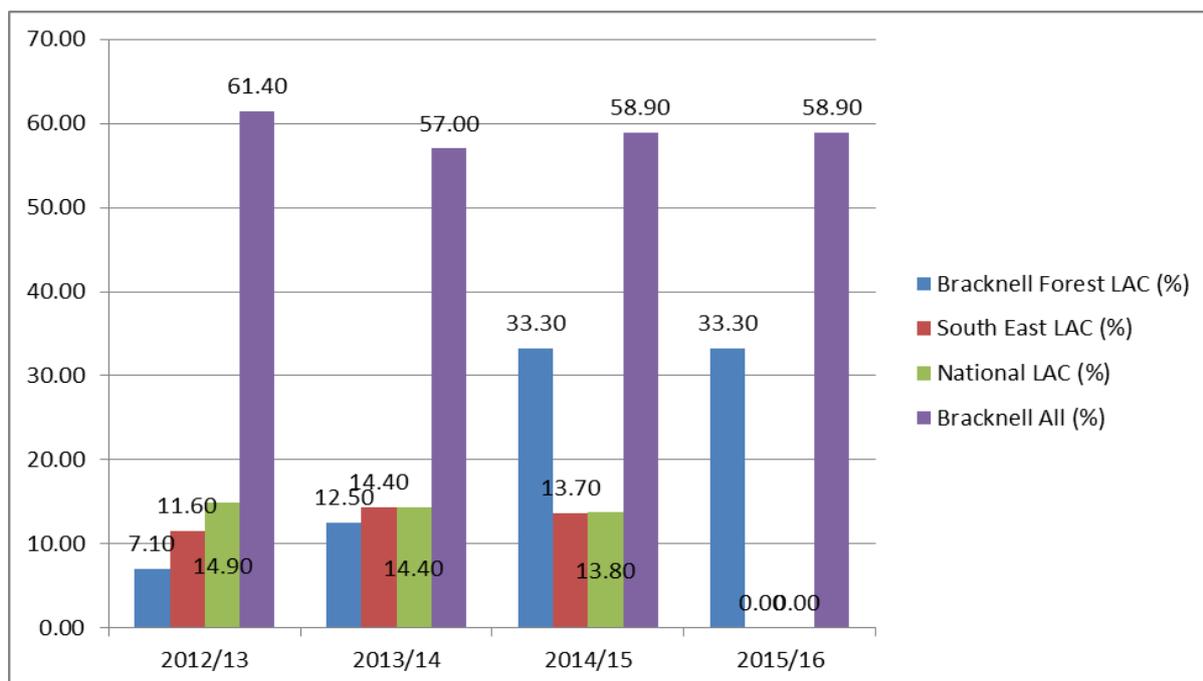
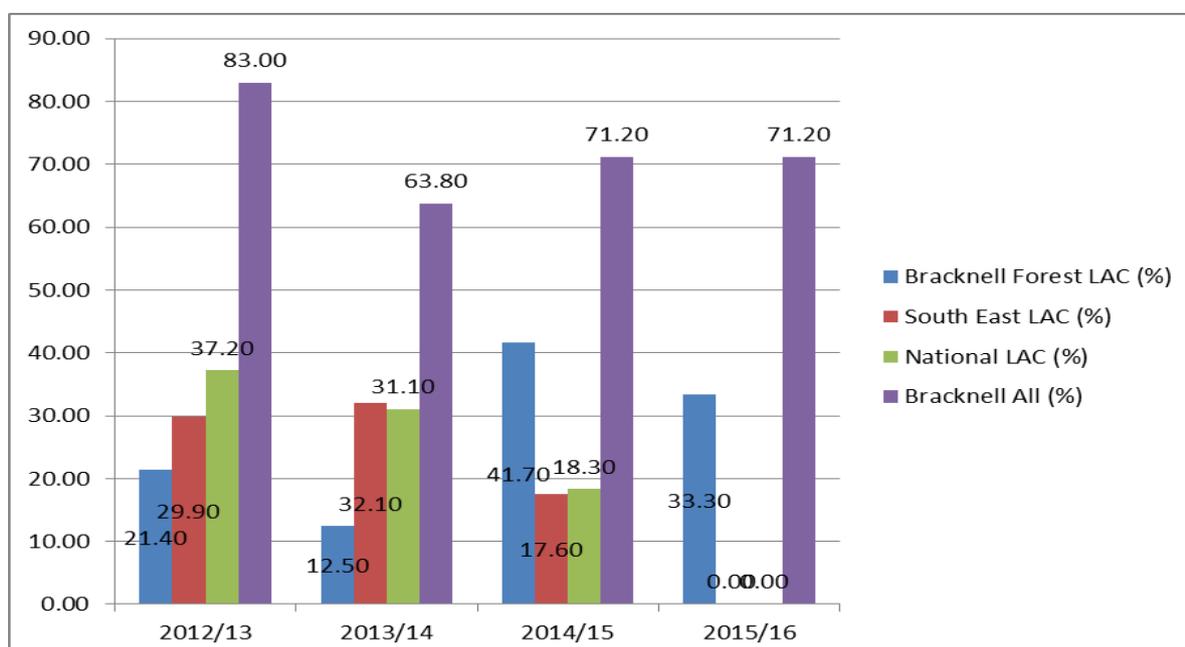


Table 12 shows the percentage of the looked after cohort achieving 5+ A\* - C GCSEs over the last four years.

	% 5+ A* - C			
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
<b>Number in LAC Cohort</b>	14	8	12	6
<b>Bracknell Forest LAC (%)</b>	21.40	12.50	41.70	33.30
<b>South East LAC (%)</b>	29.90	32.10	17.60	TBC
<b>National LAC (%)</b>	37.20	31.10	18.30	TBC
<b>Bracknell All (%)</b>	83.00	63.80	71.20	71.20

Chart 9 shows the percentage of the looked after cohort achieving 5+ A\* - C GCSEs compared with their peers across the LA and region in the last four years.



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GCSE results can be analysed by whether the children were placed in-borough or out-borough. Table 10 shows GCSE performance in 2014/15 broken down on this basis. The numbers in the cohort are slightly higher than at Key Stage 2 where half the cohort were placed in-borough. Children placed in-borough performed significantly better, based on the percentage achieving 5+ A\* - C (Inc English & maths) and the percentage achieving 5+ A\* - C grades.

	2014/15			2015/16		
	In/Out-borough			In/Out-borough		
Key Stage 4	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
Number in LAC cohort	6	6	12	3	3	6
% 5+ A* - C (Inc Eng & maths)	50%	17%	33.30%	33.3%	33.3%	33.30%
% 5+ A* - C	67%	17%	41.70%	33.3%	33.3%	33.30%

### 8 Attendance and Exclusions

Bracknell Forest Virtual School monitors data on the exclusion of LAC from school. Table 12 shows the percentage of permanent exclusions for the three years from 2012/13 to 2015/16 which was 0%. The number of days lost to missing school for more than 25 days over the past four years has remained low. During 2015/16 we have also improved our tracking processes to effectively record fixed term exclusions. There were a total of 8 LAC recorded who had a fixed term exclusion. This was broken down as follows:

In/Out Borough	1-3 days	4-8 days	8+ days	Total days
In	2			3
In	1			2.5
Out	1			1
In	2			4.5
Out	1			1.5
In	3	1	1	20
In	1		1	11
In	5	1		14
<b>Total</b>	16	2	2	57.5

There were various reasons behind each of these incidents. A member of the Virtual School and the child's social worker was always present at the reintegration meetings at school to not only advocate for the young person but also to support the school to ensure they had the resources to meet their needs.

The attendance data for LAC is collected by Welfare Call who we commission for this purpose. Attendance figures are routinely monitored and scrutinised and relevant concerns are raised with social workers immediately where these emerge. During 2015/16, we have also started to record attendance figures broken down by primary and secondary schools to have a better understanding of performance around these indicators. Our aspiration remains unchanged on continuing work to further improve attendance figures for all of our LAC.

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	<b>Jul 12/13</b>	<b>Jul 13/14</b>	<b>Jul 14/15</b>	<b>Jul 15/16</b>
% with permanent exclusion from school	0%	0%	0%	0%
% who missed at least 25 days schooling	5.90%	0.00%	1.40%	0%
% LAC attendance in primary school				95.73%
% LAC attendance in secondary school				94.57%
% annual school attendance for LAC	94%	93%	94%	95.15%

## 9 Changes of School Placement

The Virtual School monitors school placement changes as these can have a significant impact on their educational outcomes. The reasons for changes include a breakdown of placement but also a planned move to a permanent or more suitable placement. Placements include foster and residential placements. The Virtual School is supported by Childrens Social Care on placement change notifications. Where possible, we look to minimise moves during Key Stage 4. The Virtual School generally takes on the responsibility to identify suitable schools by liaising with Admission Teams in Bracknell Forest and other local authorities, searching against information held by Ofsted and having discussions with foster carers about their local knowledge of schools.

Table 13 shows the number of LAC with changes of school placement in 2014/15 school year. There were 27 changes in total in 2015/16 which relate to 26 children and were due to various reasons. The Virtual School worked alongside social care on each move to ensure education related matters were addressed and managed in an informed way.

	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
<b>Reason for changing school placement</b>	<b>Number of LAC</b>	<b>Number of LAC</b>
Starting school	1	1
Moving on to Primary or Secondary	5	6
Post 16	5	3
Managed move to PRU	2	2
Change of placement (adoption)	1	3
Change of placement	4	12

## 10 Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

There is a great deal of significance placed upon the PEP. In Bracknell Forest, PEPs are monitored very closely and are reviewed on a six monthly basis. Generally, social workers seek the advice of the Virtual School on complex issues and a member of the Virtual School attends and chairs PEP meetings at important junctures, such as transition points, e.g. transfer to secondary school. We take immense pride from the fact that 100% of all PEPs were arranged for new LAC within the statutory 20 day timeframe. To further support this effort, PEPs are reviewed termly rather than the

standard 6 month interval. These indicators directly correlate to our aspirations for our LAC where crucial systems around the child must continue to work effectively and improve (where needed) to the individual needs of LAC.

Newly qualified social workers are supported by the Virtual School at PEP meetings for their cases so that they can observe good practice. Comprehensive guidance has been written by the Virtual School to help social workers, schools and other practitioners. This is titled 'Supporting Looked After Children – A Guide for Schools'. This details the planning that is required before a PEP meeting, how to conduct a PEP meeting and the information required from schools and what to do after a PEP meeting, to ensure completed PEPs are disseminated to schools and foster carers in a timely fashion. There are clear messages on the collection of vital strands of information such as the tracking of children's progress in speaking and listening as this is a critical development in the early years and for children with SEN. The child's views are considered to be central to the PEP process. To document this, the child's voice is demonstrated through the 'Pupil View' and is shared with the school, carer and social worker.

The Virtual School record PEPs and any interventions related to the education of LAC on Mosaic. This enables easier access to education records for social workers. PEPs are a record of the meeting and it reviews previous targets and actions, attendance and punctuality, quality of homework, social skills and behaviour in and out of class, a review of attainment and what can be done to support the child. New targets and actions will be set based on the discussion. Any decisions about transfer between the Key Stages, e.g. the transfer from primary to secondary school, will also be discussed.

This single document also monitors the child's progress on a termly basis and the child's individual plan for the spend of their allocated Pupil Premium Grant. The PEP is the vehicle for discussing with schools any additional support that is needed. If it is clear that the school has appropriately used the Pupil Premium Grant to support the child and that more support is needed, then the Virtual School will provide further financial support. This could include extra tuition with a qualified teacher in the relevant subject area or higher level teacher assistant support. Other support includes music, drama, sport lessons, books, equipment and school trips. All Bracknell Forest LAC have benefitted from support through the Pupil Premium Grant in 2015/16. The Virtual School also provides extra resources for schools to support newly admitted LAC or any LAC who is experiencing challenges in school and those children who are struggling to engage with education. This includes additional visits from the Virtual School (other than those scheduled for the PEP), support from the dedicated LAC Learning & Behaviour Coordinator and opportunities to engage in projects developed and delivered by the Virtual School.

## **11 Tracking and Monitoring**

Individual education targets for LAC in school are collated on a termly basis from schools and this information is used to monitor a child's progress against their targets. The tracking of children's progress is an enormous challenge and is both difficult and time consuming. Although some schools have responded to the request to send the authority updated information on a termly basis, we do not always receive a return of 100% within specified timescales. The difficulties with this regular process of monitoring pupils' progress are largely down to having to collect data from many schools who use a wide range of different data systems. This means that the data often come into us in many different formats and require further manipulation before they can be effectively collated and reported on. Members of the School

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Improvement Team advise of any changes to the national assessment framework and changes to attainment measures, which ensure that the correct information is being collected at every key stage and that the reporting of performance is in line with national reporting guidelines and standards.

When Virtual School staff attend a PEP meeting, they ensure that realistic but challenging targets are in place for our children. The information about progress is used to target support for LAC to raise attainment and case workers will query with schools about what they can do to support a child or young person if good progress is not being maintained. The Virtual School will also work with the school to provide support and ensuring that realistic but challenging targets are in place for our children. The information is used to target support for LAC to raise attainment. PEPs and other education related information (including notes of visits to schools and LAC) are updated routinely on Mosaic.

Table 14 summarises progress data for Bracknell Forest LAC over 2015/16. As aforementioned, data is collected from schools on a termly basis. This is then analysed against the three criteria as outlined below. A point to note is that although there were 86 LAC across years 1 to 11, 56 of these were in care and in school across the whole of the academic year (20 in primary and 36 in secondary schools). The figures below reflect the progress of this group:

### Primary

	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Maths</b>
<b>Below end of Year Target</b>	5.00%	5.00%	0.00%
<b>Met end of Year Target</b>	90.00%	90.00%	95.00%
<b>Exceeded end of Year Target</b>	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%

### Secondary

	<b>English</b>	<b>Maths</b>	<b>ICT</b>
<b>Below end of Year Target</b>	12.20%	17.07%	2.44%
<b>Met end of Year Target</b>	82.93%	78.05%	92.68%
<b>Exceeded end of Year Target</b>	4.88%	4.88%	4.88%

Those that have been assessed as working below their end of year target are well-known to the team. The reasons behind this performance ranges from life experiences before coming into care, lack of emotional literacy, placement change as well as cognitive challenges as reflected through their SDQ scores. We continue to work closely with Social Care as well as other relevant professionals and services to ensure the most appropriate provision is available for these young people specifically and all of our LAC. Often, the young person is not ready to engage with education for a number of reasons. However, we persevere to have an offer for education in place despite this with the expectation that the young person would engage following a period of pastoral care and support.

## 12 Pupil Premium

In the 2011/12 financial year, the government introduced the allocation of a Pupil Premium Grant for Looked After Children who have been looked after continuously for at least six months and who are in Reception to Year 11 during the financial year. The full year premium for LAC in the financial year 2011/12 was £488 and this rose to £623 in 2012/13 and to £900 for 2013/2014. In 2014/15 the Department for Education introduced a higher rate of £1,900 for LAC and extended the eligibility criteria to include those pupils who have been in care for one day or more, compared with the six months in care. For 2015/16, £174k was allocated to Bracknell Forest to account for the LAC element of the Pupil Premium Grant. 100% of this was either transferred to schools or spent on pupil related activities in partnership with schools.

The Pupil Premium Grant in 2015/16 was allocated to the school on a pro-rata basis from the first school term following the date on which the child became looked after for a period more than 24 hours. The money comes through the local authority that the child is in care to and is disseminated to the maintained school or academy that our children mainly attend, whether this is in or out of Bracknell Forest. If a child leaves care they are no longer eligible to receive the grant through their looked after status, although this stipulation may be relaxed in future years.

Transfer of the LAC Pupil Premium Grant is made in two instalments at two specific junctures in the financial year. The first payment is made at the end of Autumn Term to account for the most recent Summer and the current Autumn Term (hence includes payments for two terms). There are concerns that if the money is paid as a lump sum then it excludes those children who may become eligible later in the term. Similarly there may be LAC who change education placements after payment of the grant. It is not possible to pay the grant twice for any looked after child. Therefore, we make payments to settings that a LAC attends at the start of each term. This practice has been shared at the regional Virtual School Heads meeting and has been adopted by a number of other Virtual Schools as a result of being cited as good practice. Support for the child should be agreed with the Virtual School and the social worker, using the PEP as the key vehicle. If a child is struggling with an identified subject, usually a core one, then the Virtual School will request that the school use the allocated Pupil Premium Grant to support 1:1 or small group work preferably with a qualified teacher. If the school have justifiably used the grant in appropriate ways to raise achievement then the Virtual School will fund extra support on an individual basis.

Increasingly, more examples of the effective use of pupil premium are being reported. One of these is reflected through the case study below.

M came into care at the start of the 2015/16 academic year and joined year 8 at a Bracknell Forest secondary school. Within the first couple of weeks, there were challenges in M settling in the new placement.

	<b>Observations</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>Oct '15</b>	Initial meeting and PEP indicated M working below the expected level. Signs of low self esteem were displayed with extreme disruptive behaviour frequently observed.	Balance of class disturbed. Inexperienced class teacher (NQT) for two subjects unable to manage behaviour.

<b>Nov '15</b>	TA to work with M on a 1-1 basis for majority of the day. Behaviour plan in place, strategies to restore calm and positively engage M.	Relationship breakdown with assigned TA. Beginning to establish relationship with form tutor and respond to requests to leave classroom for several lessons.
<b>Dec '16</b>	PEP review - established need for support and consider a managed move. Extreme behaviour outbursts, 2 day fixed exclusion enforced following violent outburst towards staff. New teacher for one subject.	M observed by Educational Psychologist. Referral made to CAMHS
<b>Jan '16</b>	Just Around the Corner (JAC – providers of equine therapy) funded through the pupil premium grant to work with M to address issues arising. Sessions held twice a week for an hour in the afternoon after school for one half term.	M developed empathy for peers. Moderate levels of improvement in interactions during the school day leading to a reduction in behaviour incidents and completing set work more regularly.
<b>Mar '16</b>	PEP review - M now engaging with TA in class in a small group. Developed a positive relationship with the teachers.	M in class for all but two hours per week (when working with a different TA). No fixed term exclusions since end of Jan' 16.
<b>May '16</b>	Pupil Premium used to fund a mentor to support M with aspiration development and greater engagement with education. Support to consist of 1 hour a week for 6 weeks and tasks for M to complete between each session.	M has 100% school attendance for the summer term, rate of progress is observed to be improving (reported by form tutor), maintains good level of focus and attitude to work, has developed a positive relationship with the form tutor and selected KS4 options to commence studying from September 2016

The above case study reflects a creative use of the pupil premium grant. Whilst there are cases where the common uses of the grant e.g. 1-1 tutoring, intensive subject support, nurture groups etc are still appropriate for certain young people, through our bespoke approach we enable schools and professionals to effectively plan and access opportunities for LAC that otherwise wouldn't have been the case. In addition to this, we also monitor and maintain close links with a commissioned provider to ensure the young person is benefitting from the intervention in the way we have planned for them to be able to.

### 13 Training

The Virtual School continues to offer multi-disciplinary training to social care staff, school governors, foster carers and designated teachers. Feedback is very positive although the take up does vary. The training for social workers covers an understanding of changes in the education system, the importance of high quality and timely PEPs.

The training for foster carers titled 'Supporting Children's Learning - A training programme for foster carers' covers an understanding of changes in the education system, the importance of, and their contribution to, the PEP process, needs of LAC and their responsibilities towards them. Although this was delivered this year (June

'16) we are now planning to adopt a different approach for next year and amalgamate this as part of a broader training programme.

From October to December 2016 we delivered our first Paired Reading programme to 10 foster carers. The aim of this was to not only further strengthen our relationship with carers but also to support them on education matters through a simple strategy. We (Virtual School) firmly believe that good, long term carers can be a factor that sometimes reverses some of the early damage done to a looked after child's ability to attach securely with adults (and peers) which will help them considerably to form better relationship and succeed with their education.

Our approach has been adapted from the same concept used in a number of primary and secondary schools. In paired reading, young people work in pairs where one is the tutor and the other is the tutee. There are a number of stages to a Paired Reading lesson. The tutee chooses a book for reading. It can be anything – a comic, a novel, a non-fiction book or a magazine.

The tutee and tutor talk together about the book before they begin reading.

The tutee starts reading. If the tutee gets stuck, the tutor waits for up to 4 seconds and then tells them the correct word.

If they make a mistake, the tutor corrects the mistake. The tutee repeats the word and then carries on reading. When the tutee makes a mistake, the tutor and the tutee read together.

When the tutee is ready, he or she makes a simple signal to the tutor that they want to read alone.

The tutor is encouraged to praise the tutee when they are doing well.

Foster carers were encouraged to follow the method described above and found these hints useful:

- Before reading, talk about the pictures and the title of the story. During and after reading, talk about what's in the book and ask them questions about what they have read.
- Keep reading time fun. Use lots of praise when your child is doing well.
- When the child reads a word wrong, just tell them what the word says. You say the word correctly, then they say it after you.

Another important message from the programme was that they would be able to decide best how often they should read at home. Little and often is usually better. For example, with younger children, it might be better to do Paired Reading for around 5 minutes, 3-5 times per week. For older children, it might be better to do Paired Reading for slightly longer (e.g. 15 minutes) but only 2-3 times per week.

We aspire to support other professionals to develop the skills needed to match their educational ambition for our LAC. To be able to read and write are basic yet fundamental life skills. The group of carers who attended the 10 week programme were all in unanimous agreement on this where one carer commented:

*"I have always wanted to read a bedtime story whenever we have had a child with us. But as we would usually run out of time, I didn't think there was much use in reading for a couple of minutes. Coming on to this programme has changed the way I think and I now realise how important even a couple of minutes can be when it comes to a child's education. I won't be dismissing these opportunities so lightly now".*

## 14 The Life Chances Team (LCT)

The Life Chances Multi Agency Team was established at the end of 2012. It is a virtual team comprised of representatives from all the agencies and specialist services in the Children's Workforce who have a responsibility for looked after children. The Life Chances Team has improved the co-ordination of professional advice and support provided for looked after children. As well as working directly with children in care, the team supports local foster carers to care for children with more complex needs and provides more integral support for children within their educational setting. The teams core objective is to co-ordinate professional solutions focused advice and support for looked after children, whilst predicting and responding quickly to placement, health and educational issues, as they arise and supporting local foster carers to care for children with more complex needs.

The Virtual School has made significant progress in supporting schools to understand how best to meet the educational needs for Looked After Children. The Virtual School Head co-chairs the LCT and one member of the Virtual School regularly attends the meeting. Engagement with the LCT team has led to a greater collaboration as well as improved awareness between the Virtual School and other agencies that play a pivotal role in the life of a young person.

The Virtual School has continued to evolve its remit and provision to support those LAC who are either going through adoption, are already adopted or have a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) in place. This is done through developing a bespoke support plan and effective communication with the school and other professionals for a learning purpose. The following case study summarises this approach in practice:

D is the 2<sup>nd</sup> eldest of a group of four siblings and the only girl in the sibling group. The children became looked after in 2012 and D was placed in a foster placement with her older brother whilst her two younger brothers were placed together in another foster home.

The permanency plan for the three younger children was adoption with the older brother wishing to remain in long term foster care.

D remained in the same foster placement with her brother up until the move to her adoption placement in 2015. She continued to attend the same infant school, transferring to the link junior school in September 2014.

Once adopters had been found for D, a meeting was held with school, social worker, foster carer and the Virtual School to plan for D's transition to her adoptive placement and new school.

Introductions between D and her adopters were planned to start towards the end of the Spring term of 2015 with a view to D moving to the adopters before the end of term. It was agreed that D would finish school a fortnight before the end of term to allow her time to prepare for the upcoming introductions and move. The Virtual School would oversee D's education provision during her time out of school as well as manage the application process for the new school.

During the meeting the Virtual School representative suggested that the adopters visit the school and meet the class teacher and key staff to enable them to have a good understanding of D's educational needs and have an insight into her school experience to date. The social worker took the prospective adopters to the school at the end of the school day following their first visit with D. During their time at the

school they were able to meet with the class teacher, the TA, the SENCo and D's keyworker. The social worker took photos of the adopters in key areas around the school to put in D's life story book. Both the adopters and staff at school were positive about the meeting, especially D's keyworker who commented that not only had it been helpful for the parents it had also provided closure for the school.

The Virtual School submitted an application to the local authority following discussions with the prospective adopters on the preferred school. It was agreed that the local school would be beneficial for D as it would allow her to live near to friends and socialise after school, something which she had not been able to do so easily since being placed in care. A school place was confirmed before the end of the Spring Term with a start date for after the Easter break.

D's current school was concerned that remaining on roll but being absent would affect their attendance scores. The Virtual School liaised with the EWS and it was agreed that M would be marked as code C (i.e. exceptional circumstances – authorised leave).

D moved successfully to her adoptive placement and was able to have quality time with her new parents before starting at her new school on immediately after the Easter break. Prior to D starting school her social worker hand delivered them her school file. D settled well into her new school. This was noted in her PEP as was the use of the pupil premium to support D through play therapy. This continued until the end of the autumn term after the adoption order had been granted.

## **15 Designated Teachers**

The Virtual School maintains a list of all Designated Teachers for LAC. Regular communication is maintained with all Designated Teachers through a termly forum. The purpose of this forum is to provide a professional outlet for discussion around broader themes that have been identified as barriers to progress for LAC. There is a collective understanding that these include:

- Stability and continuity of home and school placements – where possible remaining in the same school when a placement change is unavoidable
- The educational background and expectations of carers
- Peer support of friends who do well at school
- A significant adult – a role model or mentor (not necessarily a parent or carer) who offers consistent support, encouragement and advocacy
- Early reading
- Regular school attendance
- Developing out of school interests

During the autumn and spring term Designated Teacher forum for 2015/16, the agenda was focused on the role that schools and teachers play in ensuring the mental health needs for LAC are met. Broad discussions were had on whether this should be limited to administering specialist advice or acting as a source of support for their students. A key outcome from these discussions was the lack of local services available in a timely manner. Although there are options available by way of

Kooth as well as the usual CAMHS and GP routes, accessing these within a brief time frame to further prevent any escalation of incidents of concern.

We advocate a ‘whole-school approach’ to mental health. All teachers should have access to and be trained in mental health and well-being and have knowledge of practical strategies to support LAC in schools. We are planning on developing our training programme further in partnership with the Educational Psychology service which will be made available through the termly forums.

School Governors are also now invited to the termly forum. The summer term session was attended by governors from five different primary schools and one secondary school – along with four teachers. The programme for this forum was delivered by the boroughs children in care group – Say It Loud Say it Proud (SiLSiP). Three young trainers delivered the ‘Do You Know’ training – the objective is to enable participants to experience what it feels like to be in care. Not only was this positively received but the trainers were encouraged to return to do further sessions at future dates.

## 16 Work Experience

A significant advantage of the set up of our Virtual School are the range of opportunities not only we have access to but are also able to benefit from their economies. The most significant one of these being able to offer bespoke work experience for all of our LAC who are at least 12 years old. Although there are a limited number of opportunities available, we work with external organisations to offer a lighter touch support package for Year 7 students that develops into more intensive and tailored support for students in Years 8 and 9 and can be extended into Key Stage 4 as required. Below is a brief over view of these programmes:

Year	Activity / Duration	Description
Year 7	1-1 Mentoring Delivered over consecutive weeks or spread out over the academic year (where appropriate)	World of Work Insight Sessions Example Programme for sessions: > 1-1 interview with Key Worker > Team Building > Working with Others > World of Work Insight Session 1 > World of Work Insight Session 2 > Reflection & Debrief Session
Year 8	1-1 Mentoring	Through a series of mentoring sessions and a volunteering opportunity, the key worker will build a rapport on a 1-1 basis that will help breakdown some of the barriers preventing the student in engaging with school. Example Programme for sessions: > Ice Breaker Activity > Rickter Scale Assessment Part 1 – Social, Personal & Academic > Rickter Scale Assessment Part 2 – Health & Lifestyle > Preparation for Volunteering > Volunteering Session > Reflection on Volunteering

<b>Year 9</b>	1-1 Mentoring	<p>Through key sessions, mentoring, volunteering and an opportunity to engage face-to-face with local business volunteers, the Key Worker will build rapport on a 1-1 basis and address the issues that are causing barriers to engagement.</p> <p>Example Programme for sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Ice Breaker Activity &amp; Rickter Scale Assessment – Social, Personal, Academic, Health &amp; Lifestyle</li><li>&gt; Preparation for Volunteering</li><li>&gt; Volunteering Session 1</li><li>&gt; Reflection on Volunteering</li><li>&gt; Business Volunteer – Role Model Session or Volunteering Session 2</li><li>&gt; Reflection &amp; Debrief</li></ul>
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This is then extended on to Key Stage 4 to reflect the following programme:

<b>Year 10 &amp; 11</b>	12 weeks	<p>A programme of tailored support and activities that helps inspire and engage young people, who are struggling in school, and empower them to realise their full potential.</p> <p>This programme lasts for a maximum of 24 weeks and will be split into 2 phases:</p> <p>Phase 1 offers intensive support for the young person over a 12 week period and consists of a combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Weekly 1-1 coaching and support from a key worker including independent advice and guidance (IAG) where necessary</li><li>&gt; An Extended Work Experience placement – 1 day per week</li><li>&gt; Work Ready activities including Insight Days, Company visits or Guest Speakers as appropriate</li><li>&gt; Preparation session to help get ready for work experience.</li></ul> <p>Phase 2 will allow the young person to continue on Extended Work Experience for an additional 12 weeks. During this time the key worker will be in regular contact with the young person and the employer to check progress and support both where necessary.</p>
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A total of 18 LAC benefitted from this offer in various forms. Some of these experiences have been captured to reflect the impact this has had on them as individuals as well as aided their life chances:

<b>Child</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of hours</b>	<b>Pupil summary</b>	<b>Career Aspirations</b>	<b>Outcomes Achieved</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	1:1 weekly support in school - Rickter Scale Assessment to identify support needed: Personality profile, National Careers Service job profiles, Career sectors, Preparation for volunteering, Volunteering 2 afternoons at local primary school, Reflection on volunteering, Future ideas and career support	A wasn't sure about what he wanted to do when we started the project, he had limited knowledge of job opportunities and ideas about his future career path	A is not 100% sure about what he wants to do when he leaves school but he has more knowledge of his options. Different job roles (most of which he wasn't previously aware of) were discussed as well as the difference between College and Apprenticeships. A improved his motivation throughout the sessions and seemed to engage better as they went on. Self worth improved especially when working with the younger children, he really enjoyed this. Raised aspirations about his future.
<b>B</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	1:1 weekly support in school - Rickter Scale Assessment to identify support needed: Personality profile, National Careers Service job profiles, Career sectors, Preparation for volunteering, Volunteering 2 afternoons at local primary school, Reflection on volunteering, Future ideas and career support	B had various ideas about her future, main idea hairdresser or beauty related. Also the Police force.	B engaged positively with the key worker and progressed significantly during the project. B progressed with volunteering and came out of her shell with all the children she worked with. She was really enthusiastic and said that she wanted to go back every week! Her ideas have changed slightly and she is now thinking about hairdressing or childcare. Raised aspirations and confidence.

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<p><b>C</b></p>	<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>3.5</b></p>	<p>Completed the Application pack to discuss work experience with C. Very hard to engage, wasn't interested in what the key worker had to offer. He only wanted Theatre work and mentioned that he had contacts in London and that he could get there. We tried all the local theatres, to no avail nor did C get back with the contacts.</p>	<p>Wants to work in movies/theatre. Loves performing on stage.</p>	<p>Met with C the second time and he engaged better and was a little more flexible with placement ideas but has his heart set on theatre. He mentioned the London contacts again. The meeting was close to the end of term so a follow up will be arranged early in the new academic year.</p>
<p><b>D</b></p>	<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>6</b></p>	<p>1:1 weekly support in school - Rickter Scale Assessment to identify support needed: Personality profile, National Careers Service job profiles, job match activity, Career sectors, My future, Before they were famous, job roles, different pathways into education, Reflection.</p>	<p>Footballer, maths teacher</p>	<p>D engaged well and participated in the sessions in school with enthusiasm. He often wanted to talk about his life and what are his passions, maths being one of them. D looked into sports related careers ideas, coaching and footballer - helping to raise his aspirations and understand that being a footballer isn't the only sport he can do. He loves maths and is keen to go up in his class to be challenged a bit more. D looked at both careers in detail and discussed other opportunities such as college and apprenticeships.</p>

E	10	8	E started his placement at a local primary school - the feedback from the school was great, he started off quite shy and wasn't confident with the children but this grew over the duration of the placement. They enjoyed his charm and sense of humour. Thomas then continued his work experience after stating that he would like to try somewhere else, a different school, just for experience. This started at another local primary school helping in the PE dept. This was a big success and he supported both the staff and children really well.	Sports related	Improved behaviour and aspirations. E has a sense of achievement helping others and working with strong male role models in both primary schools. Due to E's health conditions he tends to feel that he can't achieve things and has a 'what's the point' attitude. This has been improved through his work experience and he seems to have developed in confidence and social skills.
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## 17 South East Virtual School Network

The Virtual School Head regularly attends and contributes to the Virtual School Network, which is an important source of information sharing and service planning. Where previous areas for discussion have included the implementation and administration of the pupil premium and the challenges in communication with schools in other LA's where our LAC are placed, recently this has extended to further areas of strategic development for Virtual Schools and Virtual School Heads. Understanding the role Ofsted as a means of changing practice where it is considered to be poor (amongst schools particularly academies) and developing a regional protocol for care leavers progressing onto Higher Education and partnering with groups of universities across the South East to achieve this are other areas we have contributed to.

## 18 School Effectiveness

The Virtual School Head closely monitors the progress of LAC against that of their peers. This includes ensuring any LAC that require a new school placement, either Bracknell Forest or out of borough are placed in good or outstanding schools, or appropriate alternative provision. The Admission Service prioritises LAC and they are placed at a school with the aim of starting full-time education within 10 school days. The Virtual School Head regularly reviews and discusses provision for each LAC with

relevant team members. This includes academic progress meetings, as well as attendance and exclusion monitoring. Where a pupil's progress is slow or achievement is lower than expected, Looked after Children Education Support Officers provide evidence of actions taken to improve achievement which will be taken following the meeting to address poor progress and attendance.

## **19 Corporate Parenting and Curriculum Enrichment**

The Virtual School is very much part of Bracknell Forest's successful corporate parenting process which takes a holistic and organic approach to improving the life chances of LAC. Virtual School team members work very closely with the LAC Participation Officer, the Fostering Service, Educational Psychology Service and the Life Chances Team to provide an integrated service to LAC. This includes taking a considered view of input from Independent Reviewing Officers where appropriate and engaging with other professionals in a proactive way.

Following on from the success of 2015, we held our second art exhibition. As before, 100% of the work completed was either by looked after children or Care Leavers. In total 17 young people contributed 20 pieces of art for the exhibition which was held at South Hill Park. Our experience from both exhibitions and the workshops leading up to them have suggested that art therapy is an effective way to supporting young people demonstrate their range of ability as it has a low barrier to entry (anyone can be creative in some form or another). Art therapy can be especially beneficial to children as younger people are usually less capable and less comfortable expressing themselves via words. Art therapy can also help people with their social skills. The benefits of art therapy in these types of situations can help with people that are withdrawn or shy, or who, for some reason or another, have a difficult time functioning within social situations. A number of Bracknell Forest Elected Members, council staff and young people attended the event which was warmly received and provided a snapshot of the immense talent our young people have. Their achievements were formally recognised at the Annual Achievement event in September 2016. A selection of these works are included in Appendix 2 of this report.

At Bracknell Big Ballot 2015 young people voted on 'Being bullied for being in care' as their top issue for SiLSiP to work on. In partnership with Childrens Social Care, the Virtual School supported a group of LAC in April 2016 to work on a stop motion animation project at South Hill Park. This explored the themes around being a child in care and bullying. The film intends to raise awareness and stimulate discussion about the issues, is titled 'Just The Same' and is available to view at:

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/lookedafterchildren>

## **20 Children placed by other Local Authorities**

There are approximately 39 children from other local authorities placed in Bracknell Forest schools in 2015/16. It is worth noting that it is becoming harder to track these numbers as we rely on the placing local authority to notify us of any placements. We (both as the LA and the Virtual School) notify our colleagues in other LA's when placing young people with them which has been identified as good practice by Ofsted. We continue to support out of borough professionals to adopt similar practices as a consistent approach.

The aim of the Virtual School is to ensure that LAC have the opportunity to fulfil their educational potential. This includes our committed support for LAC placed in

Bracknell Forest Schools from other LA's to ensure that their chances to progress and achieve are not compromised by not being placed in their original LA.

## 21 Young People Aged over 16 and Care Leavers

The Virtual School Head has responsibilities to every looked after child, whatever their age. This includes eligible older children (who remain 'looked after'), but not relevant or former relevant young people. A child is looked after by a local authority if they have been provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, in the circumstances set out in sections 20 and 21 of the Children Act 1989, or is placed in the care of a local authority by virtue of an order made under part IV of the Act.

A **Care Leaver** is a person who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who was in care on their 16th birthday. A young person's status as a care leaver can be divided into the following:

- **Eligible Child:** a young person who is 16 or 17 and who has been looked after by the local authority for at least a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who is still looked after;
- **Relevant Child:** a young person who is 16 or 17 who has left care after their 16th birthday and before leaving care was an eligible child;
- **Former Relevant Child:** a young person who is aged between 18 and 21 (or beyond if being helped with education or training) who, before turning 18 was either an eligible or a relevant child, or both.

With these particular groups in mind, the following figures reflect the current position on the number of young people in the Bracknell Forest who are in a form of Education, Employment or Training (EET).

		2015/16		
		Total	EET	% EET
<b>Former Relevant Qualifying Relevant Eligible</b>		47	32	68%
		3	3	100%
		1	1	1
		26	21	81%
<b>Total</b>		<b>77</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>74%</b>

Looked after young people and care leavers aged 16 plus are supported by the Virtual School irrespective of where they are placed. There is a gradual transfer process with a dedicated member of the Virtual School beginning their involvement during Year 11 through a handover period from other members of the Virtual School. This ensures that there is a continuation of support and service throughout the educational life of the young person.

Table 15 breaks down the numbers down by their age groups and whether they were in a form of Education, Employment or Training (EET) during 2015/16 or not (NEET) as well as reflect the trend for this category over the past couple of years:

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2014/15				2015/16			
Age	EET	NEET	Total	Age	EET	NEET	Total
Apr-16	100.00%	0.00%	56	4 - 16	100.00%	0.00%	70
16 - 18	95.24%	4.76%	21	16 - 18	82.14%	17.86%	28
18 - 21	79.17%	20.83%	48	18 - 21	68.09%	31.91%	47
<b>Total</b>	91.20%	8.80%	125	<b>Total</b>	91.03%	8.97%	145

Despite an increase in numbers for this category, LAC and care leavers in an appropriate form of education, employment or training has remained similar over the past couple of years. One of our core objectives is to ensure that all of our young people are in either education or a form of employment.

A distinct difference that the Virtual School has advocated for is the need to stimulate new approaches and methodologies when working with LAC and care leavers. Delivering more of the same is definitely not our prerogative. Our support for LAC and care leavers particularly across the 16 – 25 age range consists of greater flexibility and responsiveness to their needs. Our experience suggests that older LAC and care leavers move at a faster pace particularly when they are studying or working. Repeating the same framework for them as we do for younger LAC has often led to a negative experience for the young person particularly when it comes to delivering support that they have been expecting.

A significant area of progress at Bracknell Forest Council over 2015 – 16 has been the allocation of £15k to specifically fund apprenticeships and work placements for Care Leavers. Securing this agreement from the Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team is another innovative example of how corporate parenting is a shared responsibility across the organisation and not just the role for one branch. Benefitting from this step, the Virtual School appointed its first apprentice in April 2016 to a Business Support Administrator post. In partnership with the Leaving Care Service, the Virtual School now line manages a second care leaver who is employed by the Council as a Participation Officer for care leavers. These appointments are further examples of the difference that the Virtual School is making in partnership with other services to the individual lives of our LAC and care leavers. In addition to this, summer results for 2016 produced our first care leaver to graduate from university with a first class law degree. There are a further 5 at university who will be completing their courses over the next couple of years and two more who started in September 2016. Work continues to support young people who are NEET to secure sustainable education, employment and training. Data for 15/16 shows that 14 care leavers (cohort relates only to those who had their 19, 20 or 21 birthday in the year) were NEET. There are various reasons for NEET status which can include (i) no leave to remain and therefore prohibited from working; (ii) Learning Disabilities and Difficulties (LDD) - high range of need; (iii) limited access to supported employment and appropriate training and educational opportunities (iv) maternity etc. Support for care leavers from the Virtual School extends to the whole cohort and irrespective of whether or not they are in education or employment. Specifically, support for care leavers who are NEET includes bespoke careers guidance interviews, intensive job search and coaching sessions with qualified and experienced advisors, collaborating with business and education establishments as an advocate for our care leavers and more frequent contact by the Virtual School. This support continues up to age 25.

At the end of statutory schooling the Personal Education Plan is linked into the Pathway Plan which will assist the young person in planning their education beyond

statutory school age. All young People from 13-19 years (or 25 if the child has SEN) will have access to a Personal Advisor who works with Looked After Children to provide advice and support. The Virtual School continues to support young people into and through Further and Higher Education. At the time of writing this report, 100% of LAC and Care Leavers are still on the same course they started in September 2015.

In addition to tracking pupil progress, we also work with relevant settings to ensure their designated teacher is provided with suitable professional development opportunities. They will form an integral part of the termly Designated Teacher Forum which is coordinated and delivered by the Virtual School.

Members of the Virtual School provides focused support to Care Leavers. This is to ensure that young people are not only supported in making appropriate education choices when leaving school but are also constantly advised during the course of their chosen program of study. One of the significant aims of the work of the Virtual School is to increase numbers of care leavers entering and staying on in Higher Education. The trend for recent years has been:

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Care Leavers in HE</b>
2011 -12	3
2012 -13	2
2013 -14	4
2014 – 15	8
2015 – 16	6

The above figures show a significant and stable number of Care Leavers at University. We continue to work with our young people to support their pathway to further and higher education. The range of pathways available to young people that do not have the same level of financial pressure attached by way of tuition fees has deterred a small number of LAC and care leavers considering studying at university. They have instead opted to seek either employment or further training.

As part of our commitment to care leavers, we strive to deliver support and opportunities that are bespoke to the needs of the young person. We value our relationships with our LAC as well as care leavers and take care when devising plans to ensure they reflect our ambition as well as the young persons own aspirations. This can be reflected through this case study which has been produced by one of our care leavers:

*I was in care for approximately 10 years. At school, although I wasn't disengaged, I still struggled with most of the work I had to do. That made me disruptive. In my last years of school I settled down and managed to get my GCSE's.*

*I met Mark from the Virtual School when I applied to go to University. Mark was passionate and an enthusiastic individual who went out of his way on numerous occasions by driving me to Kingston for interviews and being an active body (like a parent). I began to trust Mark and respect his efforts. He would also come to my training sessions at the weekends, I remember Mark coming as far as Norwich as well as Bethnal green to watch my games. When I ruptured my Achilles, Mark set up a French tutor to come and teach me French as I have family who live in France and he thought this might be a good way to develop a skill.*

*At work, a large part of my role is to contribute to and influence decisions made in relation to services for care leavers. Through this I get to hear their stories and*

*experiences. I am passionate about the work I do because I have been there and know what it's like on the other side. I know this may be too big but I want to open a mentoring/ life skills service where young people and care leavers can come to get information, help and guidance so they can build the confidence they need to be able to be successful.*

*My future plan is to become champion of the world and hopefully come back to Bracknell and talk about my experiences so younger people can see that no matter what you've come from anything is achievable and even if I don't make it as world champion I will be successful in what I do – the support of people like Mark has reassured me that I have the support of others which helps me to believe in myself.*

## **22 Learning & Behaviour Coordinator**

The Learning & Behaviour coordinator is an essential member of the Virtual School. The focus of this role is to help to increase emotional resilience and problem solving skills leading to outcomes related to either education or employment. This work involves supporting young people with positive activities, independent living, physical and mental health, thinking skills and social support and working closely alongside carers, teachers, tutors, social workers, youth offending team case managers, birth family and CAMHS.

From experience of working with LAC and care leavers the main challenges are attachment difficulties reflected through anxiety and depression. Another challenge is where a number of LAC are supported into either education or employment but due to emotional health issues many struggle to sustain their placement. As a result, the approach is based on attachment theory, cognitive behaviour therapy, and problem based learning. A total of 98 LAC and 78 different care leavers were met by the Learning & Behaviour coordinator between November '15 and August '16. Evaluation forms were completed for these sessions which were scored from 0 to 10 (where 10 is high to reflect the level of satisfaction from the experience). The main comments received included:

1. *'I felt heard, understood, and respected'*: 95% rated between 8-10 out of 10
2. *'We worked on and talked about what I wanted to work on and talk about'*: 95% rated between 8-10 out of 10.
3. *'The approach is a good fit for me'*: 95% rated between 8-10 out of 10
4. *'Overall, today's session was right for me'*: 95% rated between 8-10 out of 10

These results included emotional resilience interventions to 11 LAC in secondary school, supporting two LAC to move between secondary schools who were at risk of dis-engaging, supporting 5 LAC in Year 11 into post 16 options who were previously undecided about their destinations which was causing increased levels of anxieties and a barrier to their end of year exam preparations. 5 care leavers into either education, employment or training were also supported during this period who were previously NEET – they have sustained their placements 6 months after their start date.

## **23 Education Achievement Event**

Recognising and rewarding success is a key element of the drive to improve educational attainment as well as raise aspirations in general. We continue to arrange and hold an annual awards event to recognise and celebrate the achievements and contributions of young people in care. This is proven to be an effective source of motivation both for the young people and their foster carers as it

gives all those involved a good opportunity to reflect on the positive experiences of the past 12 months and share these with others in a similar situation to them.

## 24 Progress against Objectives

A number of objectives were set in the 2014/15 Annual Report. These were generally on-going in nature as we always strive to develop the best possible practice across each of them. The same objectives will be carried forward to 2016/17. Table 16 shows the progress made during 2015/16:

	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Progress Made</b>
1	Continue to develop a robust system to track progress and attainment and monitor attendance for all LAC and Care Leavers. This will continue to enable us to better identify those children in need of additional support.	On-going in partnership with Welfare Call. The provider is developing further iterations in partnership with other LA's to the system they use that will provide more accurate data for this purpose.
2	Improving collaborative practices between the Virtual School and Social Care to enhance learning opportunities and broaden educational experiences.	On-going: significant progress has been made as reflected by the range of case studies included in this report. A structured training programme is being developed which will be delivered in partnership with Social Care and other services to further strengthen this.
3	Develop further training and network opportunities for Designated Teachers and other relevant professionals.	School Governors routinely attend termly forums. The content varies from CPD to whole school development. Sessions are jointly delivered by the Virtual School and the Educational Psychology service to achieve consistently high standards.
4	Monitor the use of the Pupil Premium Grant and support schools in understanding how to implement and account for their plans.	All school heads with our LAC on their roll are contacted at the start of the academic year to outline the plan for the grant. They then have 7 weeks to complete and return an appropriate spend plan for each individual child. The process of auditing and monitoring is strictly applied to ensure that the grant is being used as set out by its conditions.
5	Support schools to ensure they all have a nominated governor for Looked After Children and are kept aware of the latest developments affecting their role.	The Virtual School is developing a guidance for school governors to reflect their roles and responsibilities towards LAC as well as how best to develop learning opportunities at their school so that all young people enjoy and achieve. This will be available in early Spring 2017.

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6	Continue to ensure that all Looked After Children are effectively supported at point of transition (irrespective of its nature) so that the most appropriate plan is developed for them. This is also relevant for Looked After Children when making post 16 decisions so that they make informed decisions and the choices made to enhance their life chances.	On going: PEPs for all LAC are now held termly to track and monitor progress against targets, incorporate any changes to the young persons situation and plan for next steps. Permanency is at the core of this approach where we recognise that an earlier preventative model based on actions and impact would achieve improved outcomes for our LAC and care leavers rather than retrospective ones.
7	Developing enrichment activities to enhance educational opportunities	5 LAC benefitted from a visit to Oxford University and a further two to the University of Reading. These were arranged with respective settings as part of their widening participation programme. The Virtual School is working alongside other Berkshire LA's to achieve a regional offer from universities in the South East. This would mean that should one of the partner universities receive an application for study from a Berkshire care leaver, then they would be more closely supported through this process by the university than other applicants. The Virtual School also supported 17 LAC and care leavers to contribute to our second art exhibition. This remains an area of on going development.
8	Continue to support other Virtual Schools when they place their Looked After Children in Bracknell Forest Schools.	Bracknell Forest remains committed to ensuring all LAC - regardless of where they are placed from - benefit from the same range of support as our own do when they are placed at a school in the borough. This remains a priority area.
9	Review the delivery of training to all partners to ensure they receive the best possible advice and guidance.	Continued feedback received from attendees at the termly forum and the Paired Reading programme have led to the development of further training opportunities. A key objective for 2016/17 and 2017/18 is to not only develop our partnership with foster carers and other social care professionals but also to effectively support them on education and employment matters for LAC so that they experience improved life chances.

<p>10</p>	<p>Develop systems to increase the number of looked after children and care leavers into Employment, Education and Training</p>	<p>Bespoke careers information, advice and guidance is provided to care leavers in recognition of their individual and varying needs. The development of the town centre, Elevate and the Councils own increased emphasis on supporting care leavers means that more opportunities are available for them to progress onto than before. A key barrier to accessing these opportunities for a number of care leavers is either their mental health, care responsibilities (for their own child), substance mis use or earlier negative experiences. We continue to work with other services to develop a similar bespoke approach to support care leavers in over coming these challenges and hence improve their life chances.</p>
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**25 Conclusion**

The education of LAC is a corporate parenting responsibility and involves a wide range of schools, social workers, foster carers, professionals and teachers across a variety of areas. Young people in care often have fractured educational histories and challenging needs which can adversely affect learning, attendance and attainment. This complexity presents a challenge, but one which Bracknell Forest embraces enthusiastically through a holistic and systematic approach. We recognise that each child and young person needs a bespoke plan which is targeted, ambitious and both supportive and stretching. Our challenge is to continue to improve outcomes at all key points. We continue to work in partnership with the teams around the children in our care to improve our processes, systems and support so that we can more effectively measure impact and improve our provision.

Appendix 1

