

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 20 June 2017

Subject: Improving Outcomes for Care Leavers

Report of: Strategic Director of Children's Services

Summary

Over the last 12 months Manchester's Children's Services has worked closely with Barnardos as the Council's commissioned provider of our Care Leavers Service to make significant improvements.

This report provides an overview of how the service has developed and summaries the progress and outcomes Care Leavers have made against those areas requested by the Committee when we last reported on this area of practice in September 2016.

Recommendations

That Scrutiny Committee note the content of this report and endorse the ongoing planned service development as we continue to develop our Care Leavers offer, the ambition and intent being clear to offer an excellent service.

Wards Affected: All

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of the contribution to the strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Raising aspirations of young people and improving young people's access to work, education and training.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Supporting children for whom we are the corporate parent to obtain great outcomes and prepare them to engage in the future development of our City
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Closing the gap between Looked After Children and Care Leavers to empower them to make a positive contribution to our communities.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth.	

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

None

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

- Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy 2017 – 2020

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 It is a statutory duty of the Local Authority to provide a Leaving Care service to Looked After Children aged 16 plus, and for all Care Leavers aged 18 to 21, and for those aged up to 25 if they are in full time education or training.
- 1.2 Barnardos are commissioned to provide a leaving care service to Manchester's Care Leavers on behalf of the city council. The Service is commissioned to work with a maximum of 720 young people at any one time.
- 1.3 The Council has previously operated a specialist Care Leavers' service, staffed and managed internally, for those 75 Care Leavers who are unaccompanied asylum seeking children. We are currently in the process of integrating these two services to provide a single service offer, and consistent and common practice standards.

2.0 Service Offer:

2.1 Personal Advisor Service

- 2.1.1 Both the Barnardo's Leaving Care Service and the service for unaccompanied asylum seeking children deliver a Personal Advisor service to our Care Leavers. Each care leaver has a named Personal Advisor. Personal Advisor's meet Care Leavers on a regular basis, providing advocacy and support, and assisting them to achieve their aspirations in their journey through adulthood to independence.
- 2.1.2 The teams work closely with Social Workers, residential staff, supported lodgings providers, foster carers and a range of other key workers from partner agencies to assist in the transition of Care Leavers to independent living.

2.2 Pathway Plans

- 2.2.1 It is a requirement that all Looked After Children aged 16 plus and Care Leavers aged 18 to 21 have a Pathway Plan setting out their route to independence and the support that they will be offered on their journey.
- 2.2.2 Looked After Children aged 16 and 17 in Manchester retain an allocated Social Worker from our Looked After Children's team. The Social Worker is responsible for continuing to fulfil statutory duties such as Statutory Visits, Personal Education Plans and Health assessments. Young people at 16 ¼ are also allocated a Personal Advisor who works alongside the Social Worker to develop the young person's pathway plan.
- 2.2.3 For Care Leavers aged 18 plus, the personal advisors from the Barnardos service and the unaccompanied asylum seeking team draft the Pathway Plan.

2.3 Services to support young people in custody

2.3.1 There are currently 29 Manchester Care Leavers in custody. This is a reduction when compared to the 33 reported to Scrutiny in September 2016. It is important they are supported to secure and sustain suitable accommodation; two key initiatives in this area are as follows;

- Staff from Youth Justice, Probation Service and Children's Services have developed a protocol which has been approved by the Senior Management Team that improves arrangements for notification, planning and discharge. It outline clear responsibilities and will improve collaboration.
- A 'complex needs' panel has been established, attended by relevant agencies, including Youth Justice where appropriate and this is improving arrangements for young people released from custody. The objective of consideration at this panel is to prevent homelessness at the point of release, identify other relevant services related to health and training and reduce the risk of reoffending. One recent example is that of a young person with an imminent parole hearing where joint work helped to secure an accommodation offer, and the young person was able to outline details of the post release address at the hearing.

2.4 **Looked After Children and Care Leavers who are parents**

2.4.1 Our offer to Care Leavers who are parents includes support with accommodation and support to access to all universal services for the child. Assessments are completed if the Care Leaver requires additional support for the child to enable a targeted support programme for the care leaver to support them to parent their child.

2.4.2 Where a Care Leavers birth child needs statutory Social Work intervention we now ensure both the Care Leaver and the child are allocated their own Social Worker / Personal Advisor whereas historically the same worker had supported both parent and child.

2.5 **Services to Support Education, Employment, and Training**

2.5.1 In Manchester we have high aspirations for young people and this is reflected through the high numbers of our Care Leavers who attend Higher Education.

2.5.2 Currently 10.6% of Care Leavers are attending University, double the national average.

2.5.3 There is a continuing generous financial package of support offered to support our young people in Higher Education. The total annual value of this package is over three times the £2000 a year that the Government require Local Authorities to provide their Care Leavers.

2.5.4 Care Leavers attending further education or completing a traineeship, apprenticeship or voluntary work are supported to access an incentive allowance.

- 2.5.5 For those young people furthest from work we have developed strong partnerships with education and training providers. This has led to the development of a fortnightly Education Employment and Training Panel that brings together partners to explore targeted and phased approaches to supporting 'NEET' Looked After Children and Care Leavers to access opportunities. This initiative has made an effective contribution to reducing young people who are not in education, training or employment.
- 2.5.6 Barnardos offer a weekly drop in at The Curve which is attended by a range education or training providers, alongside quarterly employment and training open days with other providers. The last event was attended by 42 young people.
- 2.5.7 We are in the process of developing pilot programmes with two large employers and several voluntary organisations in the City to help offer opportunities for young people leaving care. This will lead to good quality work opportunities going forward.
- 2.5.8 Our Virtual School supports the development of high quality Personal Education Plans for our Looked After Children aged 16 and 17 years.
- 2.5.9 The result of these initiatives is that over the past year those young people who are NEET has dropped from 41.5% in April 2016 to 33.9% at this time.

2.6 **Services to Support Care Leavers with Accommodation**

- 2.6.1 There is a range of financial support to support young people with their accommodation and maintenance needs. This includes a 16 plus maintenance allowance for Looked After Children or Care Leavers aged 16 or 17 living independently. In addition Care Leavers can access a setting up home allowance of £2,000 to help furnish their independent accommodation.
- 2.6.2 We know that young people who remain with their foster carers or in well supported living arrangements have much better outcomes. Whilst 'Staying Put' in foster care became a duty in 2014 for local authorities, Manchester has historically always had a commitment to maintaining Looked After Children for young people who turn 18 with their ex-foster carers. The Staying Put Policy has however now been well promoted and we currently have 79 Care Leavers who have 'Stayed Put' with their Foster Carers.
- 2.6.3 Manchester has a successful supported lodgings scheme where providers are recruited to support young people who lodge in their home. This scheme provides quality supported accommodation for young people who are not ready to live in a fully independent setting. The scheme is also successful in re-engaging young people who have struggled in previous living arrangements and most young people are engaged in education, employment or training activity or have a plan to re-access this. This scheme is currently accommodating 68 young people.

- 2.6.4 Centrepont (formerly Young Person's Support Foundation) offer targeted support to Looked After Children and Care Leavers to improve their independent living skills, delivering a course where upon successful completion young people are able to increase their housing priority group from band 3 to 2.
- 2.6.5 Since our last report to Scrutiny Committee progress has been made in our work with Housing colleagues and we have mapped the opportunities and challenges that impact on suitable accommodation and potential homelessness. This has led to several key initiatives:
- A planned a pilot scheme for 15 young people that will see Care Leavers receive Band 1 priority. Work is underway to identify young people who are 'tenancy ready' to form this pilot cohort being provided priority housing.
 - An operational group has been established, meeting fortnightly, to consider young people with complex needs, exploring potential housing, health and other solutions to support better outcomes.
 - Access to a range of accommodation providers for young people over the age of 18 to support those who have experienced accommodation breakdown and provide a 'second chance'.
 - Work with colleagues from health and adult services to develop improved referral pathways and support for young people who have mental health and/or substance use needs.
 - Developing a refreshed medium to long term Care Leavers Strategic Housing Strategy to ensure a sufficiency of housing options for Care Leavers, based on the endorsed Council position that no care leaver should ever need to present as homeless.

2.7 **Health Services for Care Leavers**

- 2.7.1 Care Leavers can experience a range of health issues, particularly in relation to their emotional well-being and as an adult may struggle to access services. Some Care Leavers can often ignore their physical health needs or have a poor diet, self-harm or engage in risky behaviour. Some young people report feeling lonely and isolated with the subsequent impact on their confidence and self esteem.
- 2.7.2 A number of options and services are available to Care Leavers to access health and wellbeing support that provides a level of flexibility:
- 2.7.3 The health passport for Care Leavers is used widely across Manchester to provide young people with their full health history, 88 of 92 young people have received this information. As not all Care Leavers live in the city, there is work being undertaken to ensure this information is systematically monitored, tracked and reported on.
- 2.7.4 A named Looked After Children Nurse attends the Curve on a weekly basis to provide advice and guidance to staff and can meet with young people irrespective of their age. This team can trace the GP that the young person is

registered with and also assist in identifying dentists and GP's in their local area.

- 2.7.5 An innovative partnership with the GP service based at Moss Side Health Centre has been established. This enables young people who are not registered with a GP to have immediate access to a 30 minute appointment with a GP, providing improved access for some of the most vulnerable young people.
- 2.7.6 Care Leavers have priority access to Eclipse our Drug and Alcohol service. Young people and staff are currently involved in providing feedback to health commissioners to inform the future development of substance misuse services in the City.
- 2.7.7 We have recently confirmed a joint approach with our Adults team in which all Care Leavers over 18 that we are concerned about will be referred through our Adults MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) service for prompt screening and referrals to the appropriate organisations for support. This is extended to Care Leavers who self-refer for support to our Adult Services.

2.8 **Listening to Care Leavers**

- 2.8.1 Manchester is fortunate to have engaged Care Leavers who want to work with the service to improve and develop the service further and for future Care Leavers in the City. There are many Care Leavers who are enthusiastic about having their voice heard, and helping to improve services for young people. They have developed a programme and ambition to support our engagement strategy, 'Our Manchester, Our Say' and routinely provide challenge to the Corporate Parenting Panel in respect of 'Our Promise'.
- 2.8.2 Barnardos group work coordinator along with Manchester's Engagement Team facilitates a Care Leavers' participation group. In addition there is a Care Leaver who co-chairs the Voice and Influence subgroup of the Looked After Children's Strategic Board and also attends Corporate Parenting Panel.
- 2.8.3 Young People have led sessions at Corporate Parenting Panel, opened a regional conference for Reviewing Officers, and spoken about their experiences to social work staff at a number of our staff engagement sessions.

3.0 **Outcomes**

- 3.1 Our services and activity are aimed at supporting Care Leavers to be successfully independent. There are some key aims and performance measures that support Care Leavers to become successful adults and reflect how well or not the Council are partners are fulfilling our corporate parenting responsibilities.
- 3.2 The current performance data set is attached at appendix a, however it is worth highlighting the progress which has been made in the following key areas;

- **Care Leavers in suitable accommodation** - 91.2% of our Care Leavers are judged to be living in suitable accommodation, an improvement on last years performance which was 89.4% in April 2016.
- **Care Leavers attending University** – We currently have 10.6% of all Care Leavers attending University, which is positive when benchmarked against comparator data of 6% national average.
- **Timeliness of case allocation** – 93.3% April 2017, against 43% in June 2016
- **Percentage of young people in houses of multiple occupancy** – 7.7% in April 2017 against 17.1% May 2016
- **Percentage of young people with a pathway plan** - remains positive at over 90%, and pathway plan reviews within 6 months is up from 50.5% in Apr 16 to 78.5% in April 17.
- **Percentage of young people who are NEET** - is down from 41% Apr 16 to 31.8% April 17.

The overall performance in relation to Manchester City's Care Leavers now compares favourably with national averages.

4.0 Ongoing service developments

- 4.1 At an operational level, Children's Services are working closely, with the homeless department, Strategic Housing, Transitions Service, YOS, Mental Health service, Looked After Children Health, Education, Adult services and the Substance Misuse Service, to develop a robust priority multi agency response to Care Leavers, who present with a multitude of issues. The subgroup reports to the Looked After Children Strategy Group. The group will continue to work on a number of operational priority areas for further improvement, including;
- Personal Advisors being fully trained in our model of practice - Signs of Safety
 - Personal Advisors fully utilising the MICARE recording system to ensure we have one single case management system and case record for Care Leavers.
 - Improving the Quality Assurance and Audit arrangements in the Curve
 - Training to Social Workers to ensure effective Pathway Planning.
 - Promoting closer collaboration and joint working between Social Worker and Personal Advisors for effective pathway planning.
 - Improvements are needed in our engagement with Care Leavers, we are planning to purchase an APP 'Mind of My Own' (MOMO) that will aide more regular communication. We are also planning a Care Leavers survey 'Bright Spots' supported by Coram.
 - Affordable Housing - availability and access.
 - Developing and implementing a service led agreement on pathways for Care Leavers ensuring 'priority' support from partners agencies.
 - Monitor, Track and feedback effectiveness of Complex Needs Panel/EET Panel.
- 4.2 At a strategic level, the Corporate Parenting Panel, Chaired by Cllr S Newman, is driving forward the agenda for greater focus on supporting and achieving positive outcomes for Looked After Children as they transition to adulthood and successful independence, aligned to the principles of the

Government's Policy Paper 'Keep on Caring: supporting young people from care to independence' and the Council's own, "Our Manchester Strategy". This includes:

- Developing a refreshed medium to long term Care Leavers Strategic Housing Strategy to ensure a sufficiency of housing options for Care Leavers, based on provision specific to meet Care Leavers often complex and challenging needs.
- Developing Mental Health services to extend the offer of support beyond the typical age limits of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to deliver an equally strong support offer to Care Leavers.
- Establishment of a cross-sector partnership Social Value Board, with a priority focus on opportunity for Care Leavers. The Board will hold both the public and private sector partners to account on the access, support and opportunity to succeed particularly in EET (Education, Employment and Training) that they provide to Care Leavers.

5.0 Summary

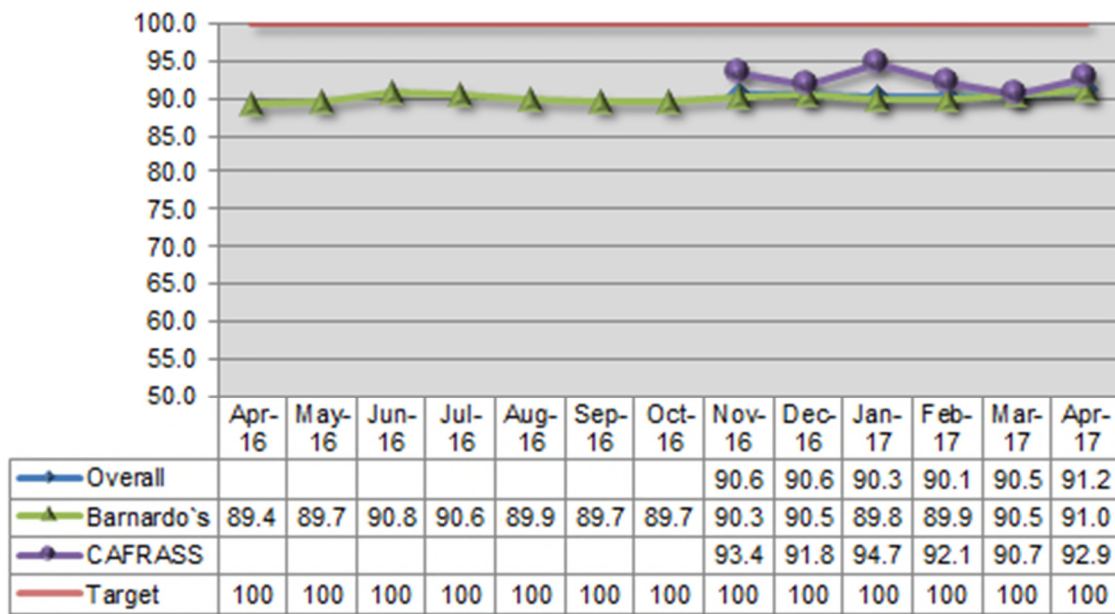
- 5.1 There has been good progress in the services we provide to Care Leavers in the City, reflected in an improving performance dataset. We have developed effective performance monitoring arrangements and have seen improvements in several key measures.
- 5.2 In areas where there are continued challenges there are both strategic and operational priorities to improve outcomes for young people such as with housing and NEET initiatives.
- 5.3 The increased oversight and particularly the continuing direct scrutiny of the service by the Director of Children's Services, coupled with the revised service specification, and renewed focus and drive on improvement from within the Service, has redefined the baseline for a confident self-assessment of performance. Work over the last year has been on getting the basics right, driving up and sustaining compliance. This is beginning to be achieved in a number of key areas and is allowing a shift towards a focus on driving up the qualitative aspects of the service and the strategic and priority issues affecting the outcomes for Care Leavers. However, there remains key areas within their service that must not lose focus on the drive for improvement.

6.0 Recommendations

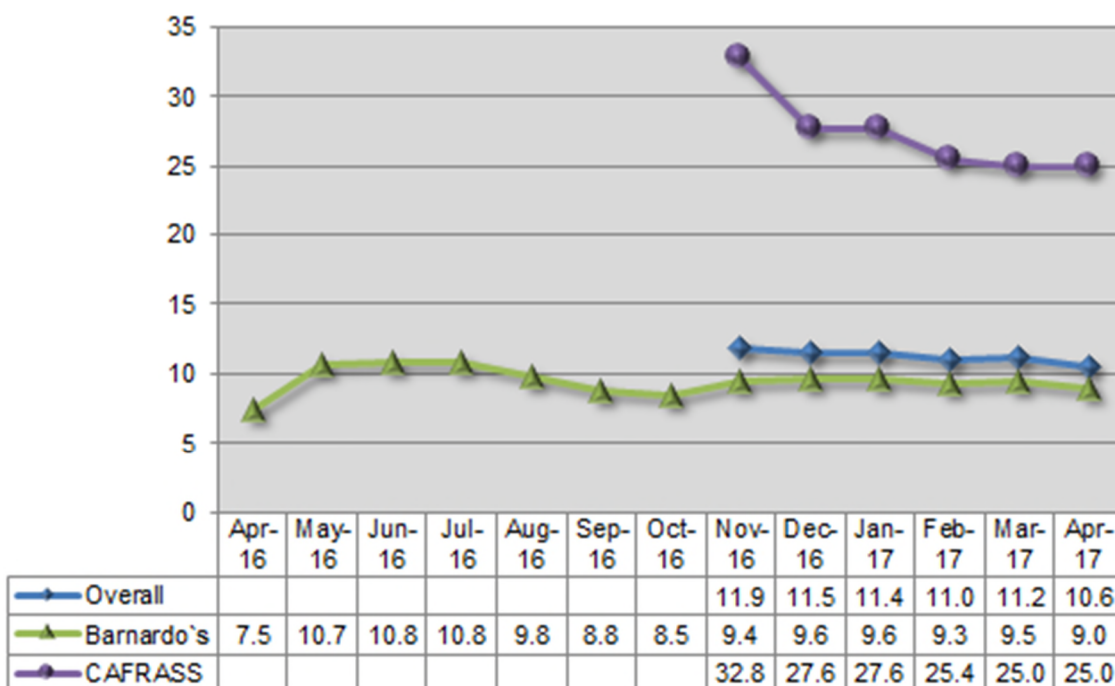
- 6.1 That Scrutiny Committee note the content of this report and endorse the ongoing planned service development as we continue to develop our Care Leavers offer, the ambition and intent being clear to offer a 'world class' service.

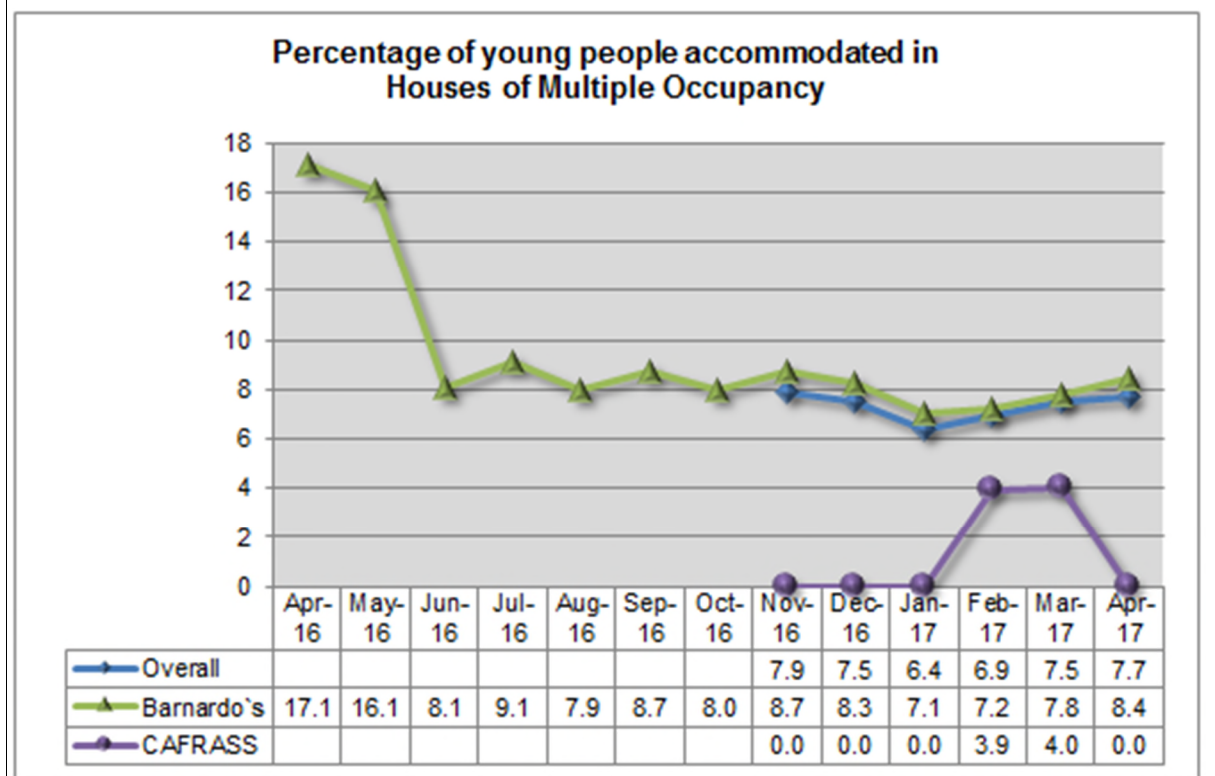
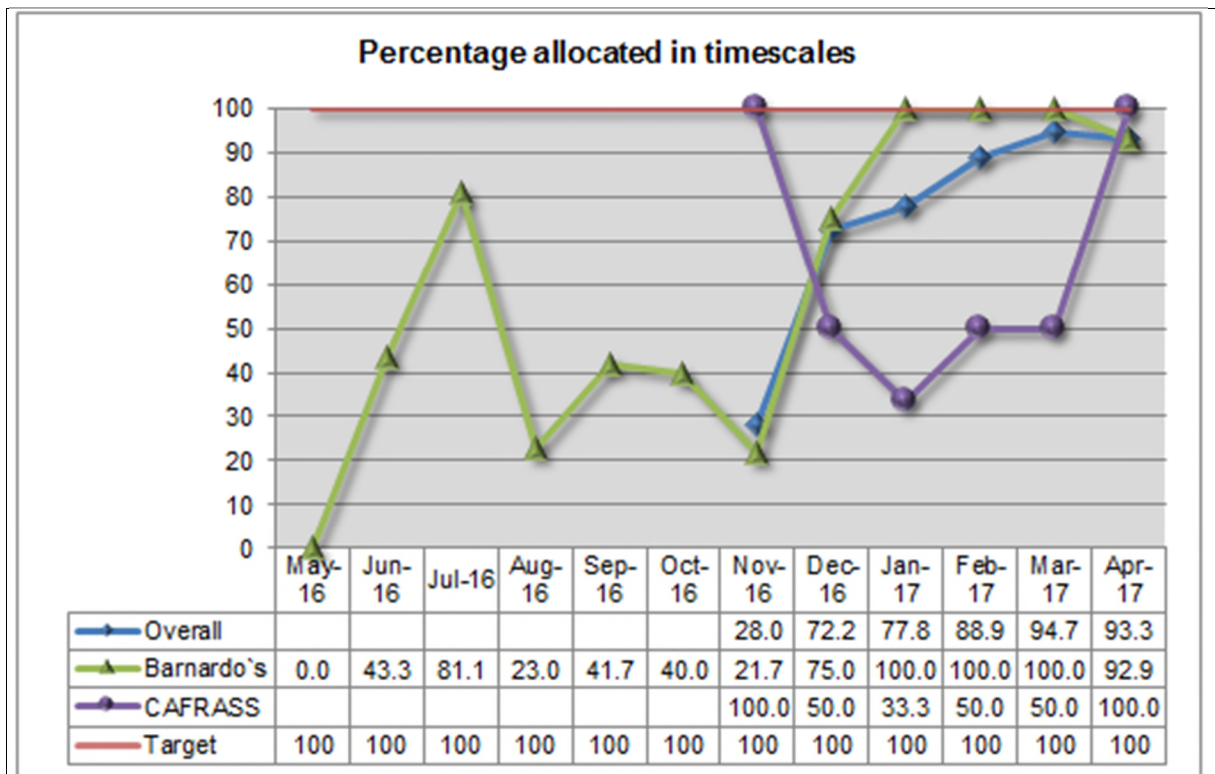
Appendix A

Percentage of young people in suitable accommodation

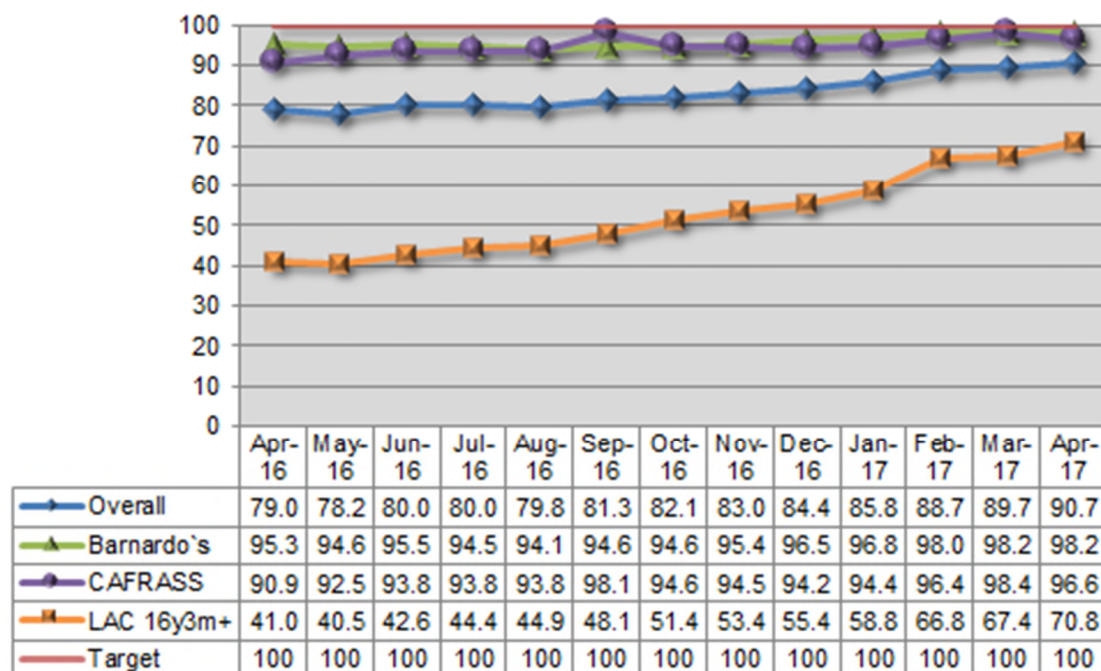


Percentage of young people who are in Higher Education





Percentage of young people with a Pathway Plan



Percentage of young people whose Plan has been reviewed within the past 6 months

