

National and Local Context

1.0 National context

- 1.1 The vast disparities and inequalities faced by Care Leavers and Asylum-Seeking Looked After Children nationally represent a critical issue demanding urgent attention. For instance:
- Only 10% achieve 5 good GCSEs compared to the national average of 40%.
(Source: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c531fe5274a2041cf33ea/Care_Leaver_Strategy.pdf)
 - 41% are NEET at 19-21 years old compared to the national average of 10%.
(Source: <https://www.education.ox.ac.uk/care-leavers-considerably-less-likely-to-be-in-education-employment-or-training-analysis-shows/>)
 - LAC (including UASC): Data limited, but likely face challenges due to language barriers, disrupted education, and trauma.
 - 60% experience mental health issues. Source: <https://ayph.org.uk/ayphs-health-inequalities-programme-2/>)
 - Care leavers are 4-5 times more likely to attempt suicide compared to their peers in the general population. Source: <https://ayph.org.uk/understanding-health-inequalities-for-young-people-who-are-care-experienced>
 - Compared to the general population, care leavers are more likely to experience homelessness after leaving care. Estimates suggest that around 25% of care leavers experience homelessness at some point in their lives. Source: https://www.feantsaresearch.org/public/user/Observatory/2021/EJH_15-3/EJH_15-3_A10_v01.pdf). UASC may face additional challenges securing housing due to limited documentation, immigration status, and lack of familiarity with the housing system.
 - Care leavers are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, with estimates suggesting they are 7-10 times more likely to be incarcerated compared to their peers. Source: <https://www.careleavers.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/CJS-Report-2019-edit.pdf>
- 1.2 The policy landscape for care leavers has evolved nationally, impacting councils, service users, and provided services. The independent review of children's social care in May 2022 identified care experience as a civil rights issue, proposing measures like making care experience a protected characteristic and increasing leaving care grants.
- 1.3 The government's "Stable Homes, Built on Love" social care strategy in February 2023 focuses on improving accommodation, reducing homelessness, and enhancing overall support for care leavers. [Children's social care: stable homes, built on love](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/childrens-social-care-stable-homes-built-on-love) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). Research published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCGL) in 2020 identified care leavers as facing barriers to securing and maintaining affordable housing, with a third becoming homeless within two years of leaving care. The UK government's initiatives, such as the rough sleeping strategy, Housing First, and the 'Staying Put' program, aim to combat care leaver homelessness by expanding programmes, funding personal advisors, increasing leaving care allowances, and exploring national entitlements. Recent developments include the mandatory Ofsted registration for supported accommodation providers, with inspections starting in April 2024.

2.0 Local Context

- 2.1 Locally Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) shows Islington's 16-19 population at 8,835 with more 18–19-year-olds moving into Islington for work or study. Not in Education Employment and Training (NEET) rate for 16–17-year-olds (4.6%) is higher than London (3.4%). Islington's 18–24-year-olds claiming benefits (7%) is lower than London (11%) and England (10%).
- 2.2 In March 2022, 29% in Youth Justice were NEET. Education, health and care plans (EHCPs) for 16+ increased 5% to 384 in Jan 2022, projected to rise by 7% in 3 years. Black-Caribbean and Black-African groups are over-represented in EHCPs. In 2022/23, out of 34 referred as homeless, 13 were not homeless, 10 stayed with families, and five became looked after.
- 2.3 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) rose in 2021/22 (59) and decreased in the first half of 2023/24 (23). Challenges include new young people presenting directly to the local authority or via hotels.
- 2.4 The Leaving Care Service assists 534 care leavers, up 33% since 2020. They mainly reside in the borough (50%), other parts of London (25%), or outside the capital (25%). About 64% entered care at ages 16 or 17, and nearly 30% were formerly unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. Most (55%) are engaged in employment, education, or training. 80% are not on recognised health pathways, with 20% having social, emotional, and mental health concerns.
- 2.5 It is estimated that 1 in 3 carers have a mental health issue¹² and the Census 2021 estimates that in Islington there are 1365 young carers (aged 5-24). Children and young people living in social housing are significantly more likely to have a mental health disorder than the national average and over twice as likely as those living in a house owned by parents or caregiver(s). 63% of children in Islington live in social housing, more than twice the London average¹³. Nationally, over half of children with SEND have a probable mental disorder, compared to just over one in 10 children without SEND¹¹. According to Islington Children's services data 2021 since 2015, the number of children with an identified social, emotional or mental health need as part of an educational health and care plan (EHCP) in Islington has increased from 72 in 2015 to 210 in 2021. Children in care are at an increased risk of poor mental health. It is estimated nearly half have a diagnosable mental health disorder¹⁴. From this it is estimated that there are 202 children in care and 262 care leavers in Islington with a mental health disorder. Source: Islington Annual Public Health Report 2023/4.
- 2.6 Around 1 in 5 (19%) of 11–16-year-olds in Islington are estimated to have a mental health disorder. This figure increases to 22% for 17–19-year-olds. Emotional disorders are the most common type of mental health disorder among young people in Islington, affecting 12% of 11–16-year-olds and 19% of 17–19-year-olds. Anxiety disorders and depressive disorders are less common, but still affect a significant number of young people in Islington. Around 10% of 11–16-year-olds and 17% of 17–19-year-olds are estimated to have an anxiety disorder, while 4% of 11–16-year-olds and 6% of 17–19-year-olds are estimated to have a depressive disorder.