

Meeting: Schools Forum

Date: 14 June 2022

Subject: Item 4: Update on BBCH Project

Responsible Officer:

David Harrington, Head of Business Intelligence

Sarah Douglass, Community Safety Officer

Section 1 – summary

1. This report updates Schools Forum research and findings of the Boys of Black Caribbean Heritage Project.
2. Schools Forum is asked to:
 - Note and discuss the report

LIFE STORIES REPORT

The journey of 9 boys of Black Caribbean Heritage,
all permanently excluded from Education

Research to explore the factors leading to Boys of Black Caribbean
Heritage being significantly more likely to be permanently excluded
from education

Sarah Douglass

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Background	5
3. Summary and Recommendations	9
Recommendation 1	9
Recommendation 2	9
Recommendation 3	9
Recommendation 4	10
Recommendation 5	10
Recommendation 6	11
Recommendation 7	11
Recommendation 8	11
Recommendations 9	12
Recommendation 10	12
Recommendation 11	13
Recommendation 12	13
4. Race and disproportionality	14
5. Key trends	17
6. Further reading and interviews	23
7. Life stories	27
7.1 Child 1	27
My views and summary of Child 1	27
7.2 Child 2	29
My views and summary of Child 2	29
7.3 Child 3	32
My views and summary of child 3	32
7.4 Child 4	33
My views and summary of Child 4	33
7.5 Child 5	34
My views and summary of Child 5	34
7.6 Child 6	36
My views and summary of child 6	36
7.7 Child 7	38
My views and summary of Child 7	38
7.7 Child 8	39

My views and summary of Child 8	39
7.9 Child 9	40
My views and summary of Child 9	40

1. Introduction

- 1.1. National News including The Guardian and BBC highlighted the racial disparities in the education system. The statistics emphasised the disproportionality in exclusion rates for boys of black Caribbean heritage showing the need for this to be investigated, to address the inequalities in Education. The Director of Education at Harrow Council commissioned this report to investigate the life stories of 9 Black boys of Caribbean Heritage, permanently excluded from education in 2018-19 or 2019–20. Using Harrow Council records from Social Services, The Youth Offending Service and interviews with schools and the voluntary sector, the timeline of these young people has been created with the purpose of exploring all factors leading to the exclusions of the children.

- 1.2. The statistics nationally and in Harrow reflect that boys of black Caribbean heritage are more likely to be permanently excluded from education than other groups. However, we must bear in mind that many black Caribbean students are successful throughout their education. Tony Sewell the chair of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: The Report states *“geography, family influence, socio-economic background, culture and religion have more significant impact on life chances than the existence of racism.”* This is an area of exploration within this report as other cohorts also experience poor outcomes. This report will aim to establish and explore key themes, using a holistic approach and taking into consideration all characteristics.

- 1.3. This report was commissioned at the end of 2020, amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The government lockdown stated that all schools would close at the start of 2021 for all but a minority of children. Schools were dealing with unprecedented times teaching students remotely and responding to last minute government guidance. It is fair to say that schools were going through a huge amount of pressure. Despite this, the importance of this work was recognised, with only one school not being available for interview.

2. Background

2.1 The table on the following page shows that between 2015 and 2019 a significantly higher proportion of permanent exclusions are given to Harrow's Black Caribbean pupils in comparison to all the other ethnic groups in Harrow.

2.2 The rate of permanent exclusions for the Black Caribbean and Black Other pupils is significantly above Harrow's 'all pupils', as well as above both the national 'all pupils' and Black Caribbean and Black Other pupils.

2.3 The decision was made to focus this research on the Boys of Black Caribbean Heritage who were excluded from High Schools in years 2018-19 and 2019-20, the statistics showed a greater level of disproportionality for these boys.

2.4 The Equality Act 2010 sets out that those subject to the general equality duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This research directly addresses the need to advance the equality of opportunity for boys of black Caribbean heritage.

2.5 The life stories of the identified young people go beyond the education system and therefore Local Authority services are part of this project to learn how the Local Authority's services can be more effective in improving outcomes and life chances.

2.6 The purpose of this review is to research the life stories of 9 boys who lived in or have schooled in Harrow, to establish lessons learnt and next steps to reduce exclusions for this group and others.

2.7 This report will be published to Local Authority officers and schools / partners. All schools, young people and support services will remain anonymous.

Table 1 – Percentage of Pupils Permanently Excluded, by Ethnic Group**(source: LB Harrow Education Management System)**

Higher than national

Same as national

Lower than national

Characteristics	Harrow				Harrow			
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
All pupils	35	35	48	35	0.10%	0.10%	0.13%	0.09%
Bangladeshi	0	0	0	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.33%
Indian	0	0	0	0	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Pakistani	0	0	2	2	0.00%	0.00%	0.11%	0.11%
Asian other	4	2	8	6	0.06%	0.03%	0.12%	0.09%
Black African	5	3	4	2	0.20%	0.13%	0.17%	0.09%
Black Caribbean	5	8	8	8	0.46%	0.75%	0.79%	0.80%
Black other	0	3	2	2	0.00%	0.70%	0.50%	0.50%
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Mixed other	3	2	5	3	0.27%	0.16%	0.41%	0.23%
Mixed White Asian	0	0	2	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.22%	0.11%
Mixed White Black African	1	0	3	0	0.32%	0.00%	0.95%	0.00%
Mixed White Black Caribbean	2	3	2	1	0.34%	0.52%	0.36%	0.18%
Any other ethnic group	2	3	1	3	0.13%	0.17%	0.06%	0.16%
Unclassified	0	0	1	0	0.00%	0.00%	0.23%	0.00%
White British	4	7	5	3	0.09%	0.18%	0.13%	0.08%
White Irish	0	0	0	0	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
White Irish Traveller	1	2	0	0	1.27%	2.53%	0.00%	0.00%
White other	8	2	5	3	0.16%	0.04%	0.09%	0.05%
White Roma	0	0	0	0	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Unknown	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

2.8 Not all agencies contacted for support with this report engaged due to concerns about the impact that this could have upon trust with the young people identified.

2.9 The report aims to consider the life stories using a Contextual Safeguarding approach. This is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Dr Carlene Firmin from the University of Bedfordshire has researched this area and it is an approach used by Harrow Council.

2.10 For this report the views have been taken from:

- School Headteachers
- Designated Safeguarding Leads
- Referral and Assessment Team
- Learning Mentors
- Social Workers
- Youth workers
- Special Educational Needs Assessment and Review Service
- Early Intervention
- YOTs
- Educational Psychologists
- Pupil referral unit
- Patrick Vernon OBE
- Black Lives Matter Staff Group
- Voluntary Sector (Youth Service and Drug and Alcohol)
- Head of Early Support & YOT
- Police

2.11 For the anonymity of the young people this report will keep the details of all the children and professionals anonymous.

2.12 As a second phase of the report, all of the families involved were contacted to request their participation in the research. Two letters were sent to the last known addresses for each of the 9 families. One family member contacted me however the young person did engage and return calls and therefore we were unable to obtain the life story from the perspective of the families.

3. Summary and Recommendations

3.1 Information sharing

Contextual Safeguarding is key to providing the best outcomes for children and families. Often schools are not privy to what would be critical information when dealing with the child and would be reliant on the child or adult sharing this information. Other agencies may not always be aware of the circumstances,

[Recommendation 1](#) is that within the legal framework services share major incidents (such as a sibling going into prison, a parent getting arrested) to allow schools to offer support and care based on this. This could be improved with a stronger presence of social services and police in schools. Whilst this is happening in some schools, not all are engaged in the same way.

Cross Borough referrals and information sharing was a common theme. Whilst Harrow has done some great work introducing an Education Lead in the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub, the same level of engagement was not evident for children living in a different Borough.

[Recommendation 2](#) proactive work to bridge the gaps to ensure that children living out of Borough are getting the same level of support and care.

[Recommendation 3](#) schools consider the lines of communication with parents to ensure that parents feel safe and supported to share information which may impact the child's welfare.

3.2 Family support and engagement

Some of the families appear to have found contact from the school overwhelming and were evidently worried about the impact of exclusion and criminality on their lives. Whilst it is important that the school is sharing concerns to parents the impact on the family should also be considered. It was noted in two of the cases that the parent got to the point of saying to the child they couldn't cope anymore, explaining the child needed to go to an army boot camp or they would be unable to live at home, if they were excluded. This is a sign of the level of stress on the parent but

the words of rejection to the child from both home and school is potentially scary and damaging to the wellbeing of the child, it was evident that this led to behaviour spiralling further. Therefore, I recommend support to the family unit to prevent parents hitting a breaking point to prevent a long-term impact on Mental Health, for both adult and child.

Recommendation 4 - Schools should ensure that families are offered support with referrals to Mental Health Services, Early Support, Keeping Families Together or Supporting Families Together Coach when a child is at risk of exclusion.

The research suggests that this feeling of being overwhelmed was more intense in the single parent household and where the parent had limited support from family members. Schools should speak with parents about well-being and engage the parent to seek support from family or friends where this is available to them. Some parents may not share their stressors due to the feeling of being ashamed or fear of being judged, furthermore they may be overwhelmed by the process and be unaware of their rights.

Recommendation 5 – The creation of an advocacy service (Black Voices) to support Black Caribbean families within Harrow with concerns about Education, Housing, employment, and Domestic Violence. The service will inform and empower families assisting them with knowing their rights and providing support at meetings.

3.3 School transition

The life stories highlight that many of the children had attended multiple schools and within that journey information about a young person will have been lost. Put into the perspective of the child, they are entering a new school with new friends, rules, and expectations. Schools tend to side on the view of giving the child a fresh start without any preconceived ideas with only children on an Educational Health Care Plan getting a greater level of support as part of the transition. What did become apparent was that schools did feel that not all concerns were fairly raised and that in some cases the Primary School would manage the issues rather than formalising them.

Recommendation 6- Preventative work in primary schools. To work with Primary Schools to assess children and raise an awareness to the high school of the children who may require extra support when transitioning into high school due to known 'risk' factors (educational need/socio-economic/lifestyle etc).

Recommendation 7 – Review of the EHCP process transferring between education establishments. Concerns were raised over the length and complexity of the process as schools are expected to evidence all interventions first, this may start in Primary but High Schools felt they were starting on the back foot when they are building relationships and knowledge of the child and having to restart the process with new evidence.

3.4 School Policies

Recommendation 8 Schools to proactively review policies with the view of becoming anti-racist through the removal of terms who can cause indirect discrimination. This work should be completed with input from staff, governors, children, and parents to ensure that the work represents the community it is serving.

For example, policies forbidding hoodies to be worn in and around school premises and specifying hairstyles.

Val Gillies within the Runnymede Perspectives, Did They Get It Right? A Re-examination of School Exclusions and Race Equality Report 2010 explains that within her research *“a school ethos of inclusion often conflicts these days with more dominant and pressing concerns over discipline”* adding *“Universal models of the ideal ‘disciplined’ school best suit the white, middle class pupil for whom the rules have more often than not been designed. Other pupils can find the system more exacting and less forgiving and there is rarely much consideration of how black and white students might be differently positioned. For example, rules in place in each school forbidding hats and hoods in the playground were strongly resented, but more often resisted by black pupils. Hair and its styling could be a sensitive subject for black pupils, and hats or hoods were highly valued by some. The*

confiscation of hats, particularly by white teachers, was often characterized by an unspoken racialized narrative. Neither pupils nor teachers addressed the subject directly, but frustration and resentment could bubble under the surface feeding into or provoking future problems”.

It is evident from my interviews that the children within this research were often caught in a spiral of over disciplining for relatively minor incidents and the focus moved from encouragement to learn, to a focus on lateness and uniform. When put into context of what the child may be dealing with at home, the achievement of being in school and attending should have been the focus rather than the trainers or lack of equipment. One interview highlighted that during lockdown detentions had been stopped. Behaviour in school was not particularly impacted however the adults in the school were uncomfortable in not having this form of discipline and punishment available to them.

[Recommendations 9](#) Equalities Policies to be reviewed to cover disproportionality. Some Harrow School are already doing this.

3.5 Inclusive teaching

Whilst it was clear that all the schools were proactive in being inclusive to all children and equality was highly regarded, certain language and comments suggested that more could be done.

[Recommendation 10](#) A programme of training and development for teachers and support services (Local Authority) to understand and identify racism, create an understanding of the lived experiences of the Black Caribbean community and to implement anti-racist practices. Training to cover stereotyping and institutional racism, micro-aggressions, and the impact of this on children and parents.

3.6 Educational Psychology

Of the nine children researched in this study, only 4 were referred to and discussed with an educational psychologist. It was perceived in schools that this support was for the assistance of educational learning barriers rather than behaviour.

Furthermore, schools felt that the service was not readily available, and referrals were slow due to staffing levels. Due to the experiences lived by many of the children, it would have been beneficial for Educational Psychologist to have provided an independent assessment of the young person and offered advice on interventions.

[Recommendation 11](#) Schools to employ the support of Educational Psychologists at an earlier stage, where children are showing behavioural challenges to give an independent assessment of the child and recommend support strategies for learning and behaviour. For example, a standardised approach for all children who have received 3 fixed term exclusions.

3.7 Mental Health Services

It was clear from speaking with professionals that support and engagement from Mental Health Services was challenging. The life stories of the children show that mental health challenges would play a part in the life of most of the children, either for themselves, the family or both.

[Recommendation 12](#) An investment in support for Mental Health Services and build upon information sharing between services

4. Race and disproportionality

The intention of this report is not to blame and point fingers, nor is it to accuse staff of acting in a racist manner. The statistics show disproportionality and highlight the need for learning and change within the system. All the professionals who input into this research were engaged and passionate in improving the life chances of the Black Caribbean Community and were keen to know where they could improve.

The report highlights that several factors play into the life stories of the nine young people including lifestyle and socio-economic factors outside of the education system. However, it is hugely important to recognise that this report does not capture the history of Black communities. The effects of slavery, colonialism, and class in forming identity and self-worth cannot be minimised or forgotten.

The racial element of the life stories is limited when speaking to professionals. My research involves speaking with staff to take their perspective on the circumstances leading to the exclusion, which will naturally have elements of implicit bias. Please note, I am not discounting myself in this statement as a white female researching for the purpose of this report.

The life stories from the perspectives of the children and families will provide a different viewpoint and challenge to what has been documented so far. Harrow is a diverse Borough with many of the schools noting that they have large numbers of children from ethnic minority backgrounds and the teaching cohort is also diverse (although not proportionate to the population). Many years of Equalities and Diversity Training in schools will be informing decisions and actions to positively make them more inclusive. However, despite this, research does show that young black people do still report racism in school. Research from the YMCA in the report “The young black experience of institutional racism in the UK” (October 2020) highlights that 95% of young Black people report that they have heard and witnessed the use of racist language at school. In addition, half of the young Black people surveyed believed that teachers’ perceptions of them are one of the biggest barriers to their achievement in school.

It is notable some of the children identified in this research were disciplined for making racial remarks. In the information provided to me only one of the children challenged

the education setting about the staff acting in a discriminative manner due to race. It was not apparent that these allegations of racism were acted upon and was deemed something he did to create trouble/conflict in the classroom.

Language

Throughout my research it was clear to see that all professionals showed high levels of compassion for the children, all actions were taken with the young person's best interests at heart. It would be unfair not to mention the pressures placed upon Headteachers who are responsible for drawing the line when a permanent exclusion is the only option for the safety and benefit of the school and students. All Headteachers were fully aware of how a permanent exclusion is a turning point in a young person's life that puts them at considerable risk of underemployment and negative interaction with the criminal justice system.

However, it was evident in some of the language used that there were stereotypes, micro aggressions and implicit bias within the system, this includes schools and partners:

"He was a tall lad and some teachers will have been afraid of him"

"Had slits cut into his eyebrows"

"They (Black Caribbean) don't have any trust in the system"

"No strong male role model"

"Strong connection to his cultural heritage"

Derald Wing Sue Ph.D. in his book *Microaggression: More than Just Race* states "*Racial microaggressions are buried in everyday slights, insults, indignities and denigrating messages to people of colour by well-intentioned white people who are unaware of the hidden messages being communicated.*" He further claims that "the most detrimental forms of microaggressions are usually delivered by well-intentioned individuals unaware that they have engaged in harmful conduct toward a socially devalued group. These everyday occurrences may on the surface appear quite harmless or trivial, or be described as "small slights," but research indicates they have a powerful impact upon the psychological well-being of marginalized groups and affect

their standard of living by creating inequities in health care, education, and employment". It is important as professionals that we recognise that we all hold implicit bias and it is our individual duty to challenge this.

The BBC documentary "Subnormal: A British scandal" explores the education system in the 1960's and 1970's, the documentary highlights that a key element of Black Caribbean people being identified as 'intellectually inferior' at the time was culturally biased testing. Professor Gus John explains that *"A key element was language, if you grew up in a Jamaican household, you'd use Jamaican English – patois or creole. The problem most Caribbean students had was that because it was a derivative of standard English, nobody believed that black students needed language support."*

The negative impact of cultural bias was huge upon the life chances of those individuals who were removed from mainstream education. Beyond the cultural bias, this emphasises the importance in acknowledging our history. The parents and the grandparents of the children who attend our schools today will have experience of a system which has failed and excluded them and will therefore still hold a level of distrust in the education system.

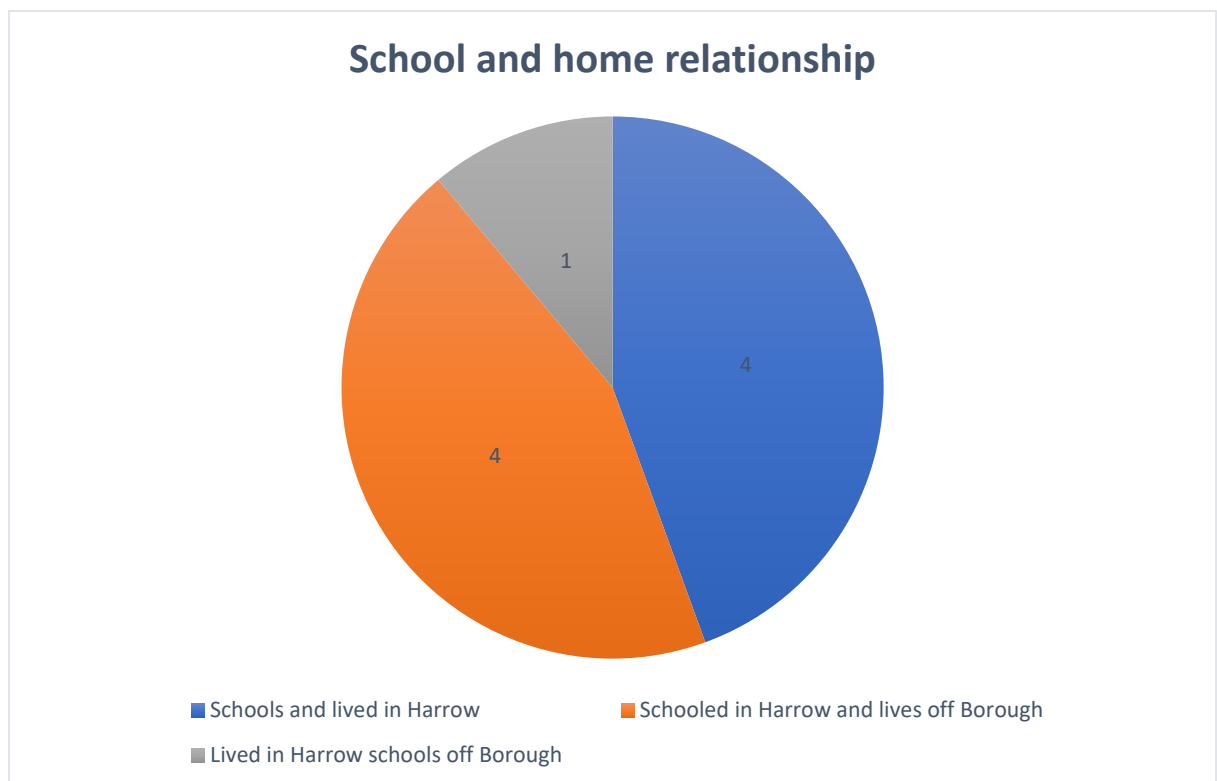
To ensure that the life chances of Black Caribbean families are not disadvantaged by systematic racism we are all responsible for challenging our own behaviours and the systems in which we work.

5. Key trends

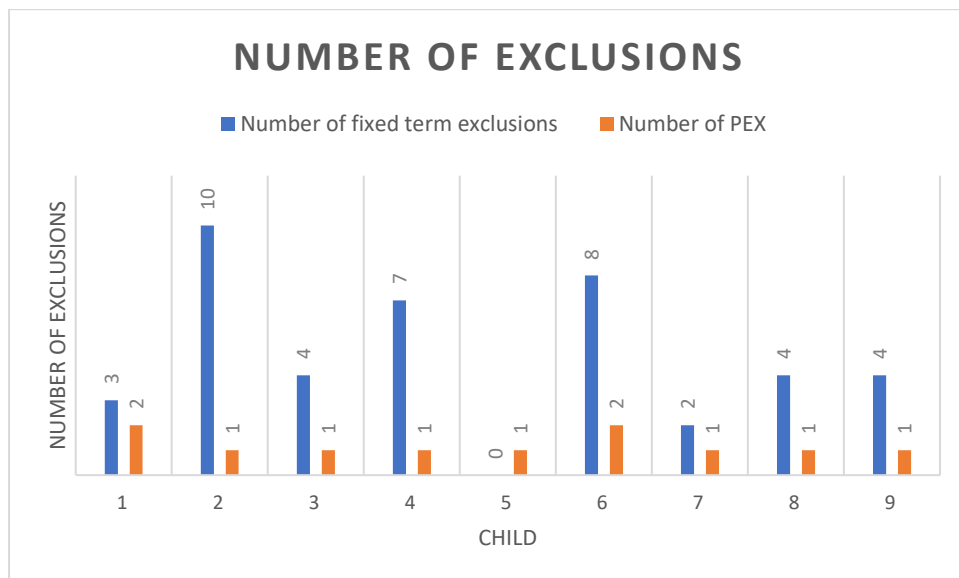
5.1 Cross Borough relationships

Of the 9 children permanently excluded from education, more than half of those children were living in a different Borough to where they schooled.

Schools noted that cross borough working is always more difficult as the same close working relationships are not in place.



5.2 Exclusion History



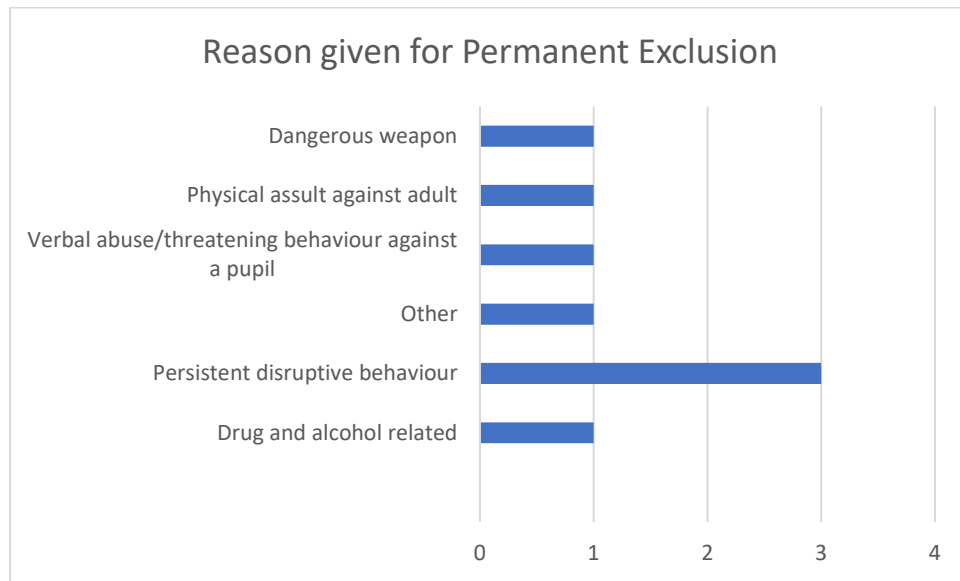
Only 1 of the 9 children had never received a fixed term exclusion prior to the permanent exclusion. This child was receptive to the support provided at the PRU and was quickly moved back into a mainstream school and is doing well.

6 of the children received 4 or more Fixed Term exclusions prior to the permanent exclusion showing a pattern of behaviour.

3 children were excluded with less than 4 fixed term exclusions. Of the 3, two of the children were excluded for an incident involving a weapon and 1 was for possession of drugs. These incidents breached school policy and result in an instant exclusion.

What is particularly concerning is that 2 of the children were on their second permanent exclusion from mainstream education. Furthermore 2 of the children had a sibling known to be excluded and 1 had a sibling excluded which was later rescinded.

5.3 The reason for Permanent Exclusion

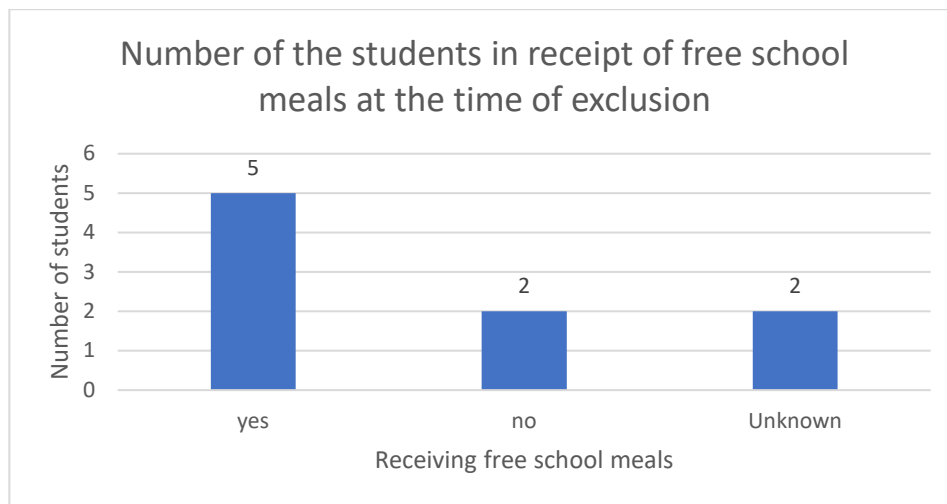


There are no clear trends in the reason for the permanent exclusions, however persistent disruptive behaviour is the main reason provided with 3 of the children excluded for this reason.

The reason for one of the exclusions is provided as Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil, however this research presents that this pupil threatened another student with a knife. This suggests that two of the 9 children were in possession of a dangerous weapon in school. It is not known why the school did not present the reason as a dangerous weapon and this could not be explored with the school as they were not engaged in the research.

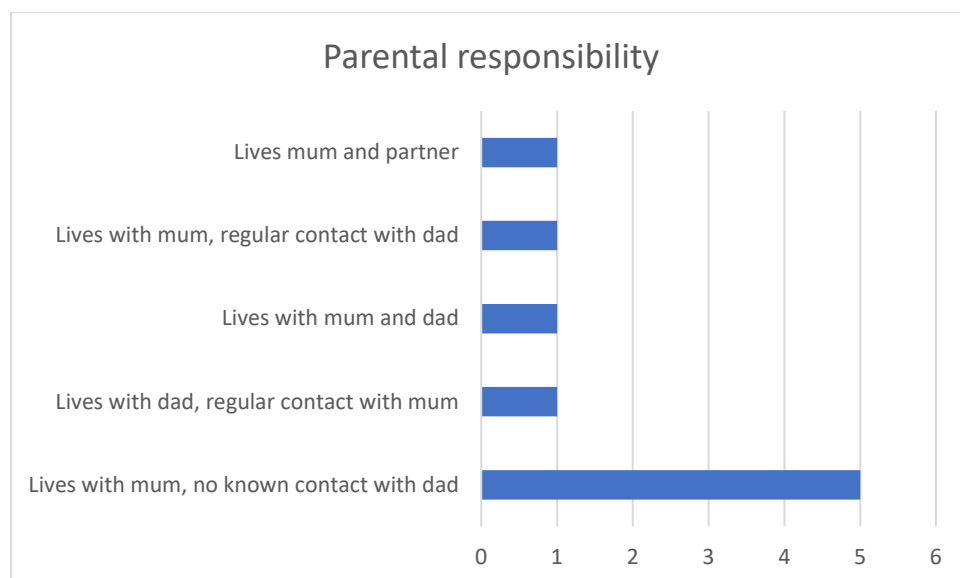
The categories dangerous weapon, physical assault against an adult, and verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil all display behaviours which put children and staff at risk of harm. 4 of the 9 children were excluded within these categories.

5.4 Free school meals



Most of the children were in receipt of free school meal at the time of exclusion suggesting parents may have been dealing with additional financial concerns.

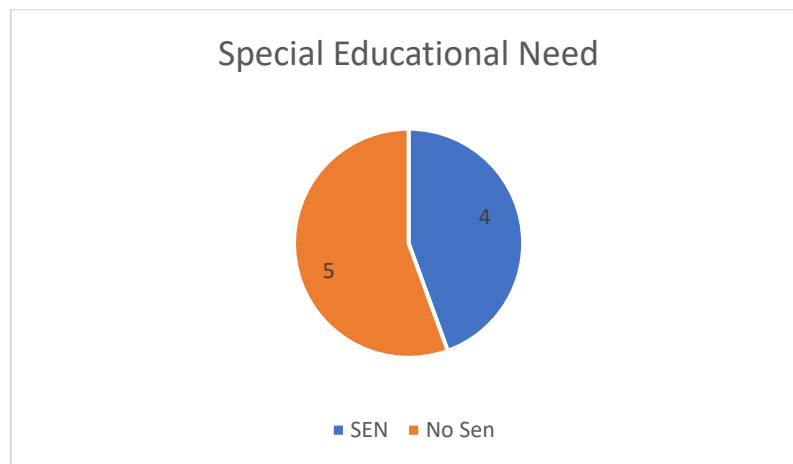
5.5 Parental responsibility



Only 2 of the children lived in a two adult household and most of the children were not in contact with one of the parents.

Within the life stories research it is notable the pressures and strains on the parent's life. This will have been intensified for parents living alone and with minimal support.

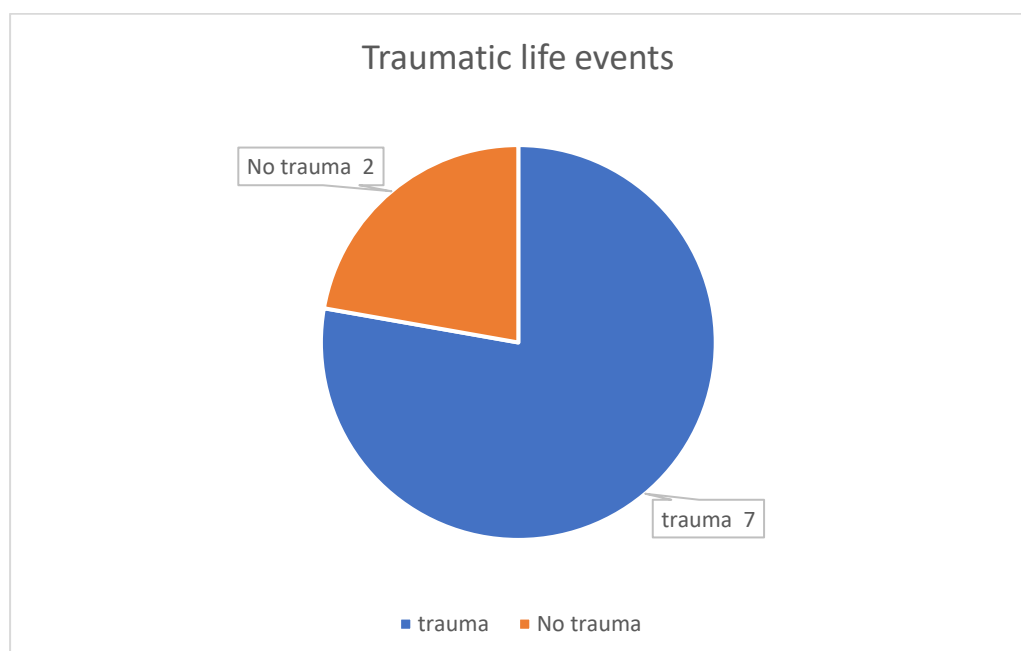
5.6 Children with SEN



Four of the nine children had a Special Educational Need, one of those four children were given a plan after the Permanent Exclusion. Two of the children went on to attend independent specialist schools.

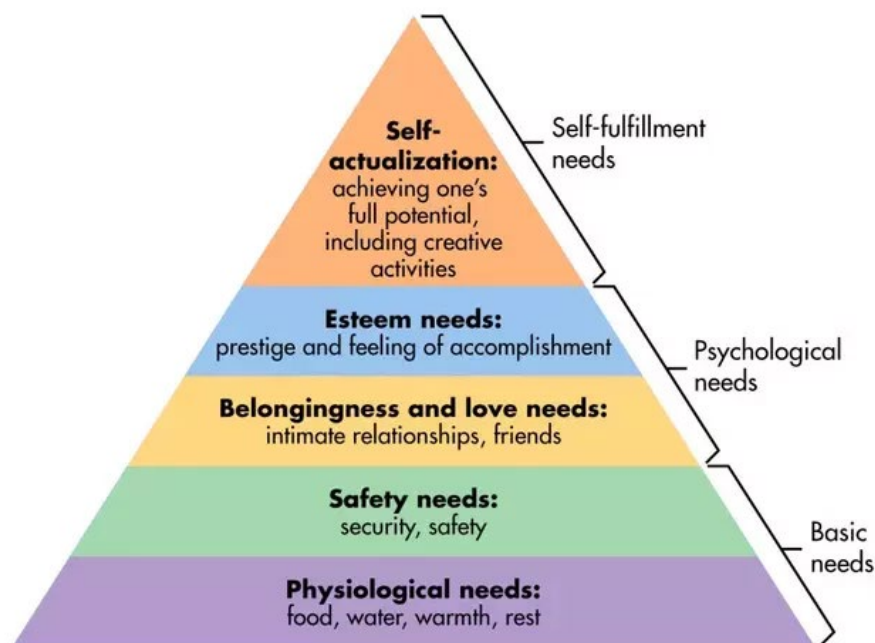
Only 4 of the 9 children were referred to or discussed with Educational Psychologists at the review meetings prior to the exclusion.

5.7 Traumatic life events



Of the 9 children included in this research, 7 of them were known to have what would be deemed significant events in their life which would have impacted their sense of belonging and self. These were family events which show that the parent would have been dealing with these extra stressors alongside the day-to-day challenges of life.

Maslow's Hierarchy of need outlines that before cognitive needs can be met, basic physiological needs must be fulfilled first. Without the basic psychological needs being met, motivation and growth is unattainable. The life stories research shows that many of the children were dealing with external factors outside of education which would have impacted motivation and growth and in some examples, education was not a priority.



(www.simplypsychology.org)

6. Further reading and interviews

For this research further reading and interviews took place with professionals to build an understanding of the education structure and some of the challenges faced when trying to support young people and their families.

I spoke with Patrick Vernon OBE, Pupil Referral Unit, SEN Assessment & Review Service, Educational Psychologists, Early Intervention and Youth Offending Team, Referral and Assessment Team, Black Lives Matter Staff Group, Alternative Education Provisions.

I highlight below some of the key points taken from those interviews:

- **Information Sharing**

A theme throughout all interviews was the view that information was not shared enough.

- High Schools being under the impression the severity of a child's needs was not made clear enough from the parent/ previous school through fear they would reject the application
- That social workers and child, adolescent and mental health services request information to be provided to them, but the information is not shared back in the same way

- **Misconceptions**

- A very varied view about the Pupil Referral Unit and Alternative Education Provisions. A bad name has been given to them due to a belief that the children who attend will be a bad influence and lead the child to be vulnerable to criminality. The focus has been removed from the support and guidance that can be provided to the children and families when in a smaller setting.

- **Policies**

- If the policies within Education settings and support services reflect the statistics? Where disproportionality is apparent policies should reflect and assist to provide Equity

- A review of policies to ensure a positively anti-racist institution. Examples include no hoodies in and around school premise, haircuts, strict uniform policies (imply unconscious bias)
- **Contextualising Behaviour**
 - It was identified during conversations within schools and with social workers that some teachers level of expectation of a child became a barrier to learning. Punishment for missed equipment rather than assisting the child to source them.
 - Openness that some teachers would fear a child and their behaviour
 - A child being deemed naughty or a bad child rather than the behaviour being a sign of other issues occurring in the child's life
 - Report and monitoring would become a spiral of negativity.
 - A child's or a family's injustice is not always acknowledged as serious, thus impacting relationships, trust, and self-esteem between families and the services
- **Support and intervention**
 - Level of support and interventions differs between schools and children.
 - Inconsistency around discipline and acceptable levels of behaviour within school and between schools.
 - Speed of referrals and assistance (this includes after the exclusion and the amount of time at the PRU when trying to find alternative placements)
- **Education Health Care Plan**
 - A feeling that only schools make the requests and that Social Workers and CAMHS are not doing this.
 - Feeling from High Schools that primary schools are not starting the process for an Education Health Care Plan as they have a greater level of resource available to manage the child in the school setting. Leading the transition into High School more difficult for those children who do have an additional need.
- **Race**

- The Education system needs to acknowledge and be aware of cultural history when building relations with families. Schools need to acknowledge that the education system may have failed the parents of the children they teach. The contact with parents made trigger difficult emotions with parents. This negativity will inform future generations.
- Consider the history and imbalance in the lives of some Black people and put a support structure in place to bring up, those who are disadvantaged.
- Oppressed through micro aggressions – feelings are belittled
- **Primary to Secondary Transition**
 - The transition to High School for many children requires adapting to new routines. For some children this is overwhelming and is a trigger for negative behaviour.
 - Primary school do not always provide a comprehensive handover and complexity is not communicated. Likewise, some high schools prefer the idea of a fresh start.
 - Interventions should start at an earlier stage; primary schools and social services could identify potentially high-risk children to offer Early intervention support.
 - Many of the children attended multiple schools
- **Multi agency working**
 - It was apparent that some schools are more willing to engage with partners than others.
 - Feeling from schools that they are providing all the information but not getting the same level of information sharing back
 - Feeling that some schools will only seek support once the situation is at breaking point.
- **Mental Health**
 - An ongoing theme throughout each case were potentially traumatic events which has occurred in the family unit. Furthermore, the stress on the family due to the behaviours shown by the child. The mental

health of the children and parents needs careful consideration and support provided.

- Engagement with Child, Adolescent and Mental Health Service highlighted as a concern within schools and Local Authority

I completed a case review for each child using information retrieved throughout my research. Here I will provide a summary of key factors I have taken from my research under the headings, Trauma, Education, Home life, Relationships.

7. Life stories

7.1 Child 1

My views and summary of Child 1

Trauma:

Child 1 disclosed seeing sexualised behaviour from a young age and physical chastisement from his mother and father. There is a possible feeling of abandonment due to his relationship with his mother who he would only see him on the weekend.

Both parents were clearly experiencing stressful lifestyles as single parents with the additional concerns regarding British Citizenship and financial strain.

Child 1 was a victim of robbery.

Relationships:

Mum and dad clearly loved and cared for Child 1 however it was commented from professionals that the relationship between Dad and Child 1 lacked a level of nurture. He was viewed as charming boy who lacked confidence, it was felt by professionals that Child 1 craved acceptance hence leading him to be a follower and easily exploited.

Child 1 would speak about wanting to live with his mother and would be emotional after a visit to see her.

Would talk a lot about cousins in South London, a feeling that this was a status boost.

Education:

Child 1 was excluded from education from a young age (Primary) and had large gaps in his learning.

Child 1 had complex educational and emotional needs. After the permanent exclusion child 1 was placed in a Specialist School setting, the behaviour shown by Child 1 could have been an expression of his inability to cope in the mainstream setting.

Child 1 worked with Educational Psychologists and SEN assessment and review service from an early age. The school provided an intensive level of support to the child.

The school clearly worked hard to provide Child 1 and his dad with the required support prior to the exclusion. External professionals expressed that the school may have become too emotionally invested to always make the right choices and the focus was based on protection over need.

Home Life

Dad was working hard to provide financially for his family however this meant that Child 1 would not have constant supervision at home or support with his Education.

Dad was very keen to support his son and the school with concerns. He was very open to all the support offered and seemed to show trust in the system and the professional who supported him.

He feared the trouble his son may get into and at the point that the permanent exclusion took place it was noted that dad was at a loss of what to do and openly stated that he couldn't cope with his son anymore. No apparent adult support in the home to assist dad to deal with the behaviour and the conflict that this may have created.

Dad did not have British Citizenship and had a criminal record, and this too will have created additional strains on the home.

***Whilst writing this report, Child 1 was a victim to knife crime on another Borough. The evidence from professionals highlighted the vulnerability of this child.**

7.2 Child 2

My views and summary of Child 2

Trauma:

From a young age witnessed Domestic Violence in the home. Information to suggested that one of his older brothers had threatened to commit suicide and the other brother was in prison.

No active father.

When issues intensified in the home mum was open to say that she could not cope, she also had occasions when she had to contact the police on her son. No evidence to suggest that mum was ever offered support for her own mental wellbeing.

All the above traumas would leave feelings of abandonment. A pattern of self-sabotaging behaviour from Child 2 which could have been a symptom of this feeling.

Child 2 expressed his emotions through anger, the school offered external counselling and internal anger management tools to attempt to deal with this however Child 2 still struggled to manage this emotion.

Relationships:

Mum was very supportive and loving towards Child 2. It was commented that Child 2 had a huge amount of respect for his mum however there was a notable change before the permanent exclusion.

The heightened level of upset when placed in respite suggest that Child 2 was worried about letting his mum down and feared he was following the same path as his brother and father.

In contrast records show he would show disrespect towards women in authority, would make accusations of racism and show disrespect towards people of his own culture. This shows he may have struggled with his own identity and that this could have been a cry for help to the school.

He had a strong relationship with a grandparent and an Aunt who later became the main care provider and the turning point in his behaviour.

Education:

Child 2 had low attainment levels for his age. Whilst in school they offered support in the classroom and tools for assisting with Child 2's dyslexia. However, there is no record of a referral to an Educational Psychologist or Special Educational Needs Assessment. These referrals came after the permanent exclusion.

Child 2 was diagnosed with ADHD by CAMHS two weeks prior to the permanent exclusion.

Mum stated in Child 2s EHCP after the exclusions that "Teachers have told him he is going to amount to nothing so he believes it". Further Child 2 adds "When I ask teachers for help for specific things, they don't help. So I just sit down and mess about because I can't do the work without help" adding "I want someone to help me. I have no confidence in myself or the system" It is not known if or when in his education this happened but will have had a huge impact on his confidence and self-worth.

Child 2 stated in his EHCP that he aspires to become an architect. Social Services file notes show that his Keeping Families Together worker requested an art lesson for Child 2 in the alternative provision however this was rejected following conversations with the alternative provision and main school.

The school stated they were aware that Child 2 did have an older sibling who was in prison. They were not told when this happened. It was clear from doing the research for this report that the change in Child 2s behaviour happened at the same time his sibling was put into prison. This suggests that rather than being a bad child, the behaviour was a symptom of his situation and external stressors.

The older sibling attended a PRU, the exclusion from school will have had an emotional impact on Child 2 for fear of following the same route as his brother and a knowledge that the system had not prevented his outcome.

Received a respite placement in an alternative provision however returned on a permanent basis after many incidents in the mainstream school in a space of two weeks. When looking at the file it displays a picture that Child 2 was on a mission of self-destruct and his behaviour was disruptive every day on the return to mainstream schooling. The reasons for this behaviour are unknown, it could be

because he wanted to return to the alternative provision (they stated that he has asked to return since the permanent exclusion) or a test of security in the school whereby Child 2 pushed boundaries to see if they would show him the stability he was craving.

Home Life:

Mum was very supportive of her son; the choice of school was in a quiet area with a small intake of children and a caring ethos. This was probably an intentional move to prevent poor friendship groups and to ensure her son was able to receive a high level of care following on from a difficult journey with her older son. Mum engaged well with the school and any support offered showing trust in the care system.

The home circumstances would have been very challenging and stressful. Mum was the care provider to 3 children whilst dealing with the known traumas of Domestic Violence, a son in prison and a suicidal son. She was watching as her son was becoming violent and controlling towards her and her daughter. As a single parent household, she did not have the support of another adult who could remove one of the children from the situation during a volatile situation leading to her contacting the police. Furthermore, it is apparent that when mum felt she was no longer able to cope and she told her son this his behaviour spiralled further. Supporting again the feeling of abandonment felt by Child 2 and the need to push others away to avoid rejection.

7.3 Child 3

My views and summary of child 3

Trauma

Due to Child 3 living in another Borough, the full extent of his life story is not known. It is noted during the Governing board discipline committee that mum stated that “[Child 3] has gone through a lot in his life. A permanent exclusion affects his self-esteem, leaving him sad and isolated”.

Relationships

The school stated that most of the children in the school were afraid of Child 3. Child 3 started the school not knowing any other children. The school were unable to build any meaningful relationships with him and felt they were constantly chasing Child 3 around and unable to establish any triggers or strengths to encourage him to settle within the school.

Education

The letter from the Governing board discipline committee stated that an Education Health Care Plan was put in place after he was excluded from another school. The school reviewed the Education Health Care Plan 2 weeks prior to the permanent exclusion. It was noted that mum informed the school that Child 3 was registered disabled, suffers from anxiety, and doesn't like change.

No Educational Psychologist was requested to assess support for Child 3.

Child 3 has since been enrolled in a specialist school suggesting that mainstream schooling may not have had resource to support Child 3 effectively.

Homelife

Single parent family, mum was the only contact. No details on siblings.

7.4 Child 4

My views and summary of Child 4

Trauma

Child 4 lived out of Borough and was not known to social services and it has not become apparent within this research that he had suffered any significant traumatic events

Relationships

The research shows Child 4 to be a personable and friendly child who had no issues building relationships with adults and children. It was noted that he bullied other children and took status from his peers by acting up and miss behaving. He was disciplined for displaying racist behaviour towards other black peers.

Whilst at the respite setting, information to suggest he involved himself in a 'bad crowd' He was involved with drugs and crime.

Home life

The research identifies that mum is well engaged with education. She is a single mum with work commitments, Child 4 has no known siblings. Mum attends all meetings alone.

Education

Child 4 had no additional educational needs identified and it was stated that he was on course to complete 10 GCSEs.

Records do show that despite the managed move and the respite placement no advice was taken from an Educational Psychologist. Furthermore, no external support was sought to engage Child 4. The only known referral was to Compass. It feels that the underlying issues for this behaviour were never explored and that discipline was the main method used to manage the behaviour.

Upon attending the alternative placement Child 4 did become involved in criminality, including drugs and robbery. This escalation in behaviour may not have happened in the mainstream placement. This young person now lives and schools outside of Harrow and therefore there is no local record of his outcomes.

7.5 Child 5

My views and summary of Child 5

Trauma

Child 5 will have experienced trauma in his life resulting from the domestic violence witnessed within the family home. Further he will have felt impact from his father spending time in prison.

Relationships

Child 5 was seen to be a follower and therefore easily influenced by his peers. Shy introvert character who lacked confidence. Would hardly notice him. He would take praise but was shy about it. There were concerns about peers and influences if he remained in the PRU following his exclusion.

Professionals stated that they did not think Child 5 would use the knife and was carrying as a threat following an altercation online. Child 5 had hidden the knife in the school bushes before school through fear his bag would be searched. He was remorseful for his actions.

Home life

Child 5 was described as polite, respectful, and clearly had underlying issues that were unresolved. At the Pupil referral Unit, he would not get into trouble, he was well dressed and always on time. The PRU witnessed strong parenting and both parents were reluctant to send him to the PRU due to a fear that he was very vulnerable and may get picked on or coerced into bad behaviour.

Mum requested extra support from social services due to the additional needs of siblings showing she was able to acknowledge difficulties and act based on the needs of the family.

Education

A concern was noted about literacy in school however Child 5 seemed to be settled into education. Concerns of bullying, spitting and truanting prior to the to the permanent exclusion.

The school identified that she he was deemed to be vulnerable to exploitation by peers.

Following the exclusion Child 5 attended 2 weapons awareness sessions, a session on managing conflict more safely, a session on peer influences and a session on who has been affected by Child 5s behaviour. All of the courses assisted him in getting a place in another mainstream school relatively quickly. No further concerns regarding behaviour have been highlighted.

He has since been moved to a new mainstream school where he has been referred to an Educational Psychologist who has identified difficulties in relation to verbal comprehension and speed of processing, alongside low self-esteem.

7.6 Child 6

My views and summary of child 6

Trauma

Mum informed the school at she was being treated for cancer, this would have placed strain and pressure on the family. Child 6 is off for a second time at High school due to mums' medical needs

Parents separated placing further stressors on Child 6, the circumstances were unknown, but parents would attend appointments separately.

It does not seem that the parental illness or the relationship breakdown was approached with Child 6 at school. The school did make attempts to offer support to Child 6 through mentors and counselling however he was always reluctant to engage.

Lifestyle

No evidence of crime or substance misuse. No concerns over wellbeing and EP stated that he had a positive attitude towards himself and school.

Primary school raised concerns about parental care as the child was left to be cared for by his 9-year-old brother. The school uniform was in poor condition, yet the family were perceived to have money due to the clothing and cars of the parents.

Home life

The inability to engage with the family raised concerns with the school. The lack of engagement was also noted by Harrow Council, Social Services and Brent who never met with the family. This does raise some concerns, relating to the care of Child 6 at home, especially in early years when pickups were late, and the sibling would be involved in the childcare. Furthermore, it was never certain where Child 6 was residing as no address was known for mum. The address given looked unlivable and an auntie's address was given. Child 6 never said or acted in a way to suggest any safeguarding concerns.

Mum explained that she was ill on two occasions and that the parent's relationship broke down. No support was accepted, and it is not known what support network was in place for the family.

Education

Child 6 accessed education however his ongoing disruptive behaviour led to two permanent exclusions. Parents did not show support for the education system and this may have led to the disrespectful behaviour of Child 6 who would have seen that the parents did not prioritise education.

It is not known why the parents were difficult to engage, however this could be due to previous experiences of the family with the Education System.

Educational Assessments indicate no concerns regarding the cognitive and academic ability of Child 6 and he has a positive attitude towards self and school

Parents were able to enrol Child 6 into a second school on two occasions. The family lived in Brent and the children attended two schools in Harrow, they enrolled Child 6 into a school in Brent and in Hammersmith and Fulham. The reasons the family did this are unknown, but it does show a strong willingness to work with the schools when required.

Parents would be very engaged to prevent attendance at the PRU but were not involved with the school otherwise.

I spoke with 3 schools in total, each school relaying concerns about home life and the engagement from the family. It was clear that they were all concerned however were unable to get additional support as the evidence of a need was not available.

The child now attends a specialist school in Westminster.

7.7 Child 7

My views and summary of Child 7

Trauma

It is noted that Child 7 was related to a young boy who had been stabbed in Harrow, it is unknown the impact this had on his wellbeing and perceptions. No other known family traumas or concerns identified.

Relationships

The view of Child 7 was that he was a very personable child who had no issues building relationships. Was viewed that he was probably following peer pressure when involving himself in criminal activity.

Education

The school were not willing to input into the research due a conflict of interests. No notable educational concerns raised. The school did not involve Educational Psychology or SENAR. Younger sibling is still at the school. The sibling has been a victim of knife crime whilst this report was being compiled.

Home life

Evidence shows that the family was very supportive and engaging however the record does show they did not attend the Governing board discipline committee meeting

7.8 Child 8

My views and summary of Child 8

Trauma

Child 8 was struggling to come to terms with his adoption and records suggest that he was informed about this in the year of the exclusion. Whilst at the PRU he disclosed that he smokes cannabis to deal with his emotions. He had a lot of unanswered questions and it was believed that he never found a sense of belonging.

Child 8 was a victim of assault.

Relationships

The research highlights that Child 8 struggled with his identity. The PRU stated that he had a limited friendship group but always showed respectful behaviour. This is different to that witnessed at the previous school.

Education

After the exclusion Child 8 was raised in termly Educational Psychologist Planning and Review Meetings at the PRU. It was concluded that his writing speed was extremely slow and disadvantaged him from demonstrating his knowledge and skills effectively.

At the PRU attendance was hit and miss and he would often be late. He was smoking cannabis before school. He would not engage with drug and alcohol support.

His attainment levels were low and struggled in some subject areas. The behaviour at the previous school may have been a symptom of his academic struggles. The previous school was an all-boys establishment with high academic expectations of students.

It was noted that he was musically gifted and wanted to pursue a career in music. He was shy but showed confidence when involved in music.

Home life

Child 8 was an only child. His parents were seen to be a strong unit and very supportive.

Following on from the exclusion Child 8 was stopped by the police a lot however he was never arrested or charged.

7.9 Child 9

My views and summary of Child 9

Trauma

Child 9 lives a life filled with external stressors and education will not be his priority. It was stated in one interview that Child 9 was once categorised as a young carer. The family has received on/ off support from social services however the resource was mainly focused on the two older siblings.

Child 9 has witnessed to Domestic violence, depression, and attempted suicide from his mum. Furthermore, mum admitted to locking herself in a room away from the children when struggling

His older sibling disclosed sleeping with a knife, it is not known the exact reason for this however it could be due to an experience leading her to be fearful of her personal safety.

His older sibling attempted to jump from a window.

Education

Education was not a priority in Child 9s life. His mind will have been consumed with concerns about his home life.

This case does raise the concerns about handover from Primary and High School whereby it was felt that support should have been put in place well before Child 9 was at High School. The primary school, social workers or CAMHS should have raised an EHCP ready for high school.

Child 9 experienced several school changes and mum withdraw the children from education to home school. Her ability to home school was questionable considering her poor mental health. Child 9 has a diagnosis of ADHD and presents emotional dysregulation in school, anxiety disorder, borderline ASD and attachment difficulties.

At the PRU Child 9 was offered a course on Mental Toughness, attendance is still poor, and he shows some odd behaviours. Child 9 has now been offered a place at an independent, specialist school since the exclusion.

Home life

The home life is chaotic and concerning. The relationship between his older siblings was violent and volatile. Mum and siblings have severe mental health concerns, and this will impact upon Child 9 and his own emotional securities. Many barriers in his life and few positives.

Child 9 has never come to the attention of the police for his behaviour and since attending the Pupil referral unit attendance has been good and punctual. He is described as a friendly, happy, chatty young man.

Relationships

Mum openly admitted to struggling to social services and stepped forward to ask for help. Child 9 would have been worried for his mum's wellbeing and between him and his siblings picked up some of the household roles when mum was unwell. Furthermore, mum openly admitted to keeping the children away from education for her own safety, this would impact the mental health of a child.

Social services support was available however the case was closed regularly and reopened after serious incidents. Mum was very open about her mental health and need for help. When she first moved to Harrow and requested support Mosaic shows that following an assessment the case was closed with advice given. This was reassessed following an NHS referral.

The school stated that Child 9 was away from school a lot and therefore missed out on building strong friendships. Seems that he is lacking an external support network away from home life.