

# Looked After Children in London

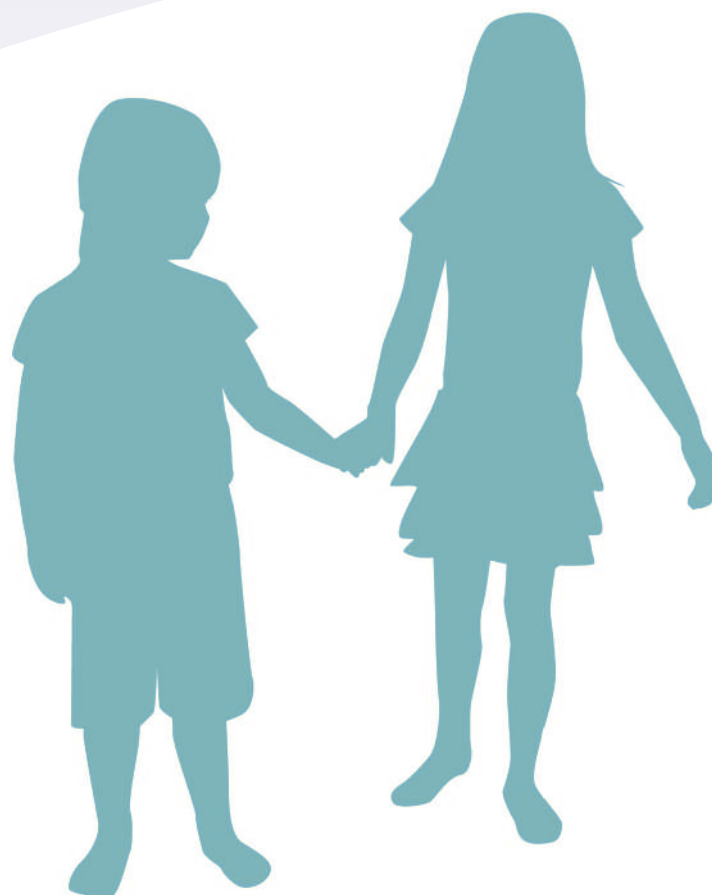
An analysis of changes in the numbers of  
Looked After Children in London



# contents

<b>01 introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>02 quantitative analysis</b>	<b>3</b>
baseline	3
period from 2007	5
unaccompanied asylum seekers	6
changes to the numbers starting and ceasing to be looked after	6
demand	8
differences between local authorities in London	8
<b>03 qualitative analysis: key findings</b>	<b>10</b>
Approach	10
Looking after the 'right' children at the right time	10
knowledge and understanding the LAC population	11
controlling entry	11
encouraging exit	12
decreasing the duration	12
alternatives to care	12
age patterns and increase in 16/17 year olds	13
early help and child protection	13
<b>04 regional differences</b>	<b>14</b>
Inner/Outer London	14
other regions in the country	15
<b>05 conclusions</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>appendices</b>	<b>17</b>

# 01 introduction



London Councils commissioned this study to find out the factors influencing the reduction of numbers of looked after children (LAC) in London. Department for Education (DfE) figures indicate that the number of children looked after by local authorities has been rising steadily across England in recent years, but that by contrast, the number of children who were looked after in London had decreased since 2007. This trend appeared to be continuing.

The aim of the study was to develop a more detailed understanding of the reasons for the decrease of numbers of London's looked after children. The intention was to build a more nuanced picture of trends across the region, particularly with regard to an apparent disparity between Inner and Outer London, and to help share good practice.

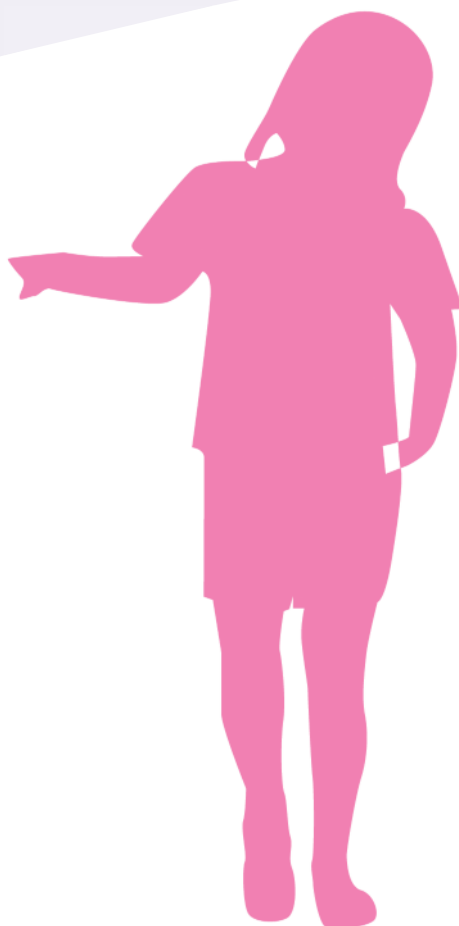
The study incorporated:

- an analysis of the DfE quantitative data
- the findings from a London wide survey (23 London boroughs returned a detailed questionnaire)
- a series of in-depth interviews in nine London boroughs
- and telephone interviews with senior managers in five other regions of the country.

This report outlines the findings of the study.

## 02

# quantitative analysis



To provide a broad picture of the development of LAC services in London, and to provide background information to the detailed interviews with senior managers, we undertook an analysis of the data returns submitted by the boroughs<sup>1</sup> to the DfE. While the figures below mask significant differences between authorities, they seek to provide this broader picture.

### Baseline

We first wanted to establish the baseline from which the decrease in numbers occurred. If that was high, then perhaps the decline was simply a return to the normal trend line.

For England as a whole, the average rate of LAC per 10,000 was rising from the late 90s. This was, at the time, a cause of some concern<sup>2</sup>. But it peaked at 55 per 10,000 in 2003, where it remained to 2007, with regions other than London ranging from the low 40s to the high 60s per 10,000.

For London, over the same period, there was a similar picture, but with a sharper rise around the millennium and starting from a higher baseline. The figure peaked at 75 LAC per 10,000 in 2004, after which the numbers began to fall. In the period up to 2004 London did indeed have a higher number of LAC per 10,000 children under 18 than other regions; but by around 2007, when other regions were once again seeing rising numbers, London figures had been relatively steady, or in the case of Inner London, had already been falling for several years.

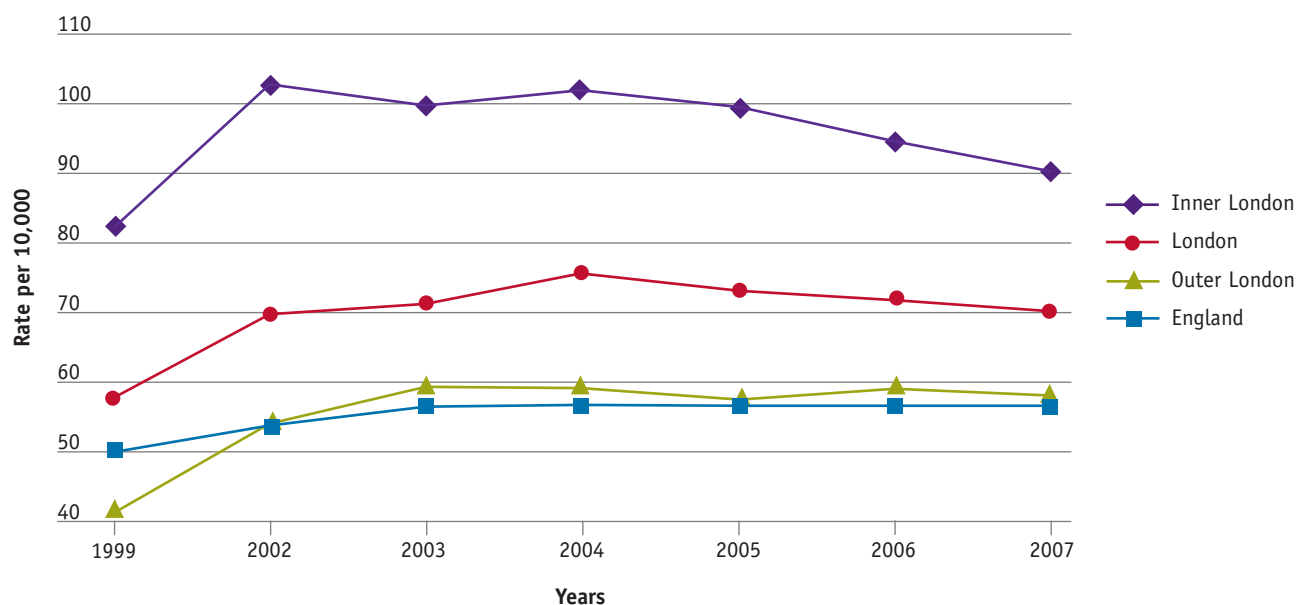
There was, however, a significant difference between Inner and Outer London, a common theme throughout our findings. The higher rate per 10,000 children was, by and large, an Inner London feature, with Outer London largely at the same levels as the England average from about 2002, and remaining relatively steady to 2007. Inner London, meanwhile, had a much higher rate per 10,000 but had begun to fall from 2004.

<sup>1</sup> London Councils and the National Statistics Office use different clusters for boroughs that are in Outer and Inner London. Where practical, we have adjusted the NSO tables to align with the London Councils format. Inner and Outer London Boroughs in the London Councils format is attached in an appendix

<sup>2</sup> The DoH commissioned a report from the Thomas Coram Research Unit and many LAs took steps to better manage the LAC numbers.

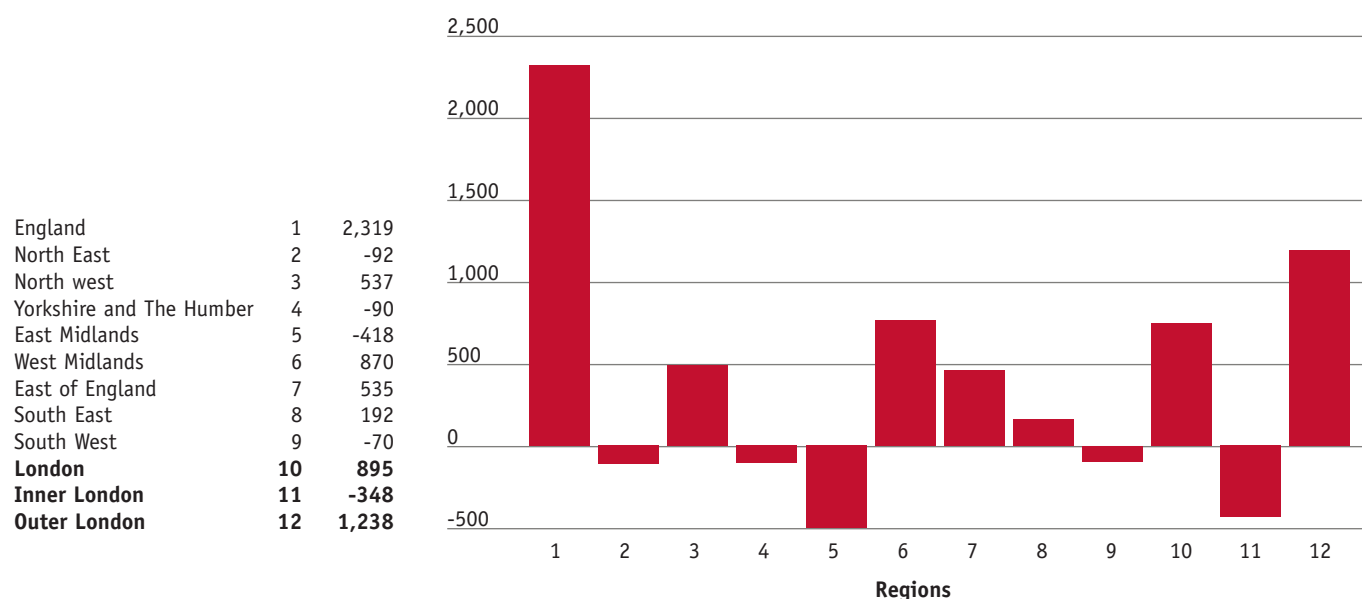
The diagram below outlines the picture up to 2007.

Figure 1: Looked after children per 10,000



In absolute LAC numbers rather than rates, from 2000 to 2007, London did see a larger increase than any other region. But this was because Outer London numbers had risen during the early years of the period and remained high, while Inner London, having risen to 2004, had then begun to fall. Figure 2 below represents the numbers.

Figure 2: Change in LAC numbers 2000-2007



One key reason for the increase in Outer London was the rise in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). Of the 1,238 increase in Outer London LAC numbers illustrated in Figure 2, Croydon accounted for 593 and Hillingdon for 116, two boroughs which historically look after large numbers of UASC.

## Period from 2007

After the numbers of looked after children in London peaked in 2004, overall they began to fall, more sharply in the years 2007 and 2008. Numbers increased in 2010 (the year following the death of Peter Connolly) before falling back in 2011. But, as Figure 3 below shows (total number of LAC counted each year at 31 March), it is largely an Inner London story during the year from 2004-12.

Figure 3: Change in number of LAC 2000-2012

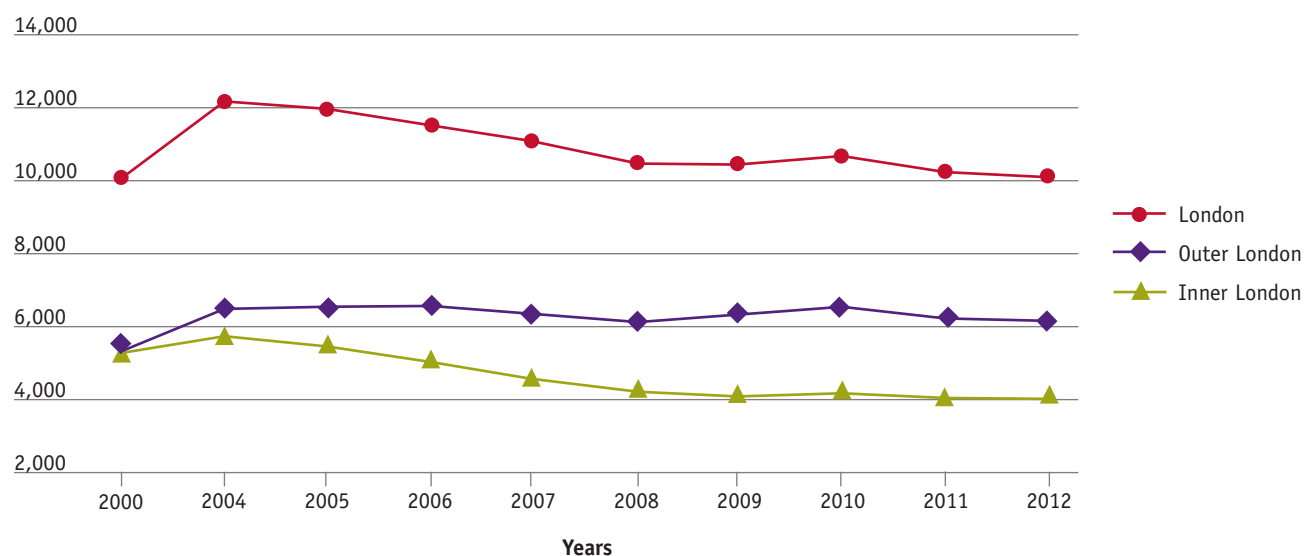
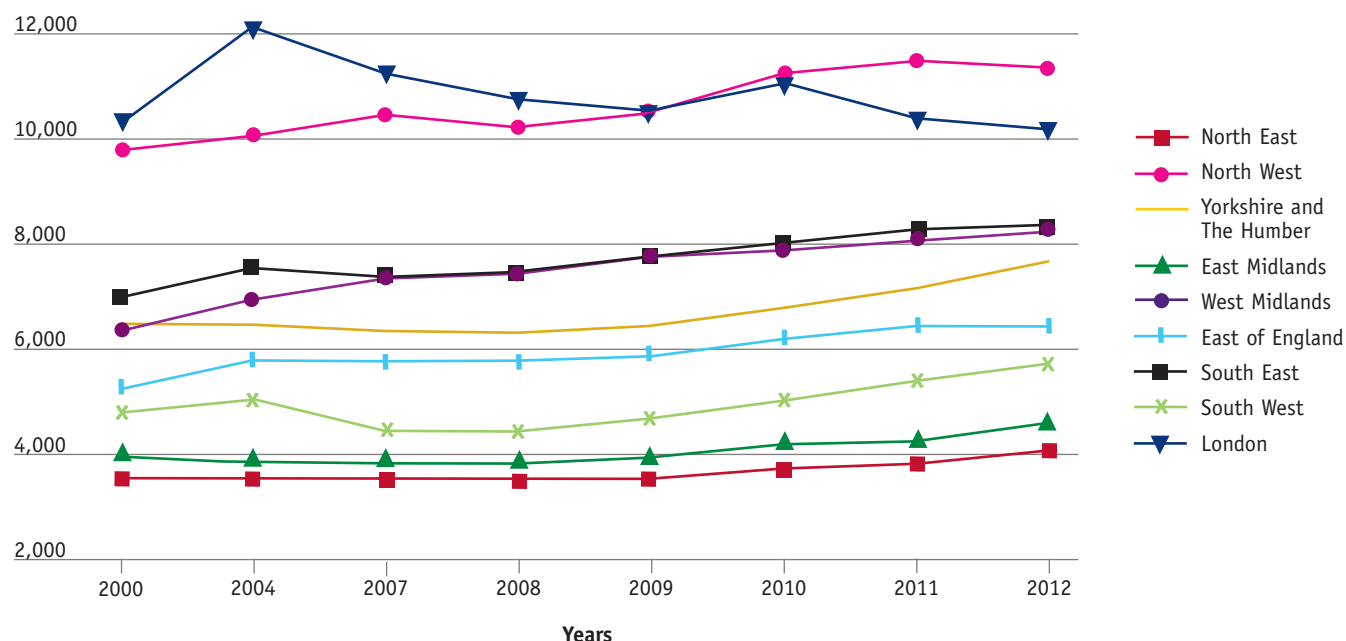


Figure 4 below gives the picture for England as a whole (see also Appendix 3)

Figure 4: LAC numbers 2000-2012



For most regions the story is of a rise to around 2004, with numbers remaining relatively steady until a sustained increase from 2009-10. In London, however, the fall from the peak of 2004 rapidly accelerated around 2007 and, although seeing an increase around 2009-10, has once more fallen back.

Two key factors may well lie behind this picture: firstly, the reduction in unaccompanied asylum seekers around 2007, and secondly, that the increase following Peter Connelly's death has not continued in London, unlike in other regions.

## Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

In March 2007 the government published a consultation document outlining fundamental changes to the support system for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). The main proposals were for 50-60 local authorities to take over the care of all unaccompanied asylum seeking children to relieve pressure on London and the South East, which had previously cared for most of them.

At the 31st March 2011, London was looking after 1,735 fewer children than it was at the same time in the peak year of 2004, to a significant degree because London was looking after 1,055 fewer UASC. But again there is a significant difference between Inner and Outer London. In Inner London, the largest decrease in UASC was in 2007 and 2008, and in no year did decreases in UASC account for more than about 50 per cent of the fall in LAC numbers. While in Outer London, although achieving significant reductions in LAC numbers in 2007 and 2008 without a large fall in UASC, the decrease in UASC has been very largely felt in 2010 and 2011. Table 1 below provides the outline.

*Table 1: Changes in overall LAC and UASC on the previous year*

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Totals
London change in LAC	-320	-150	-510	-580	20	265	-545	-1730
London change in UASC	0	-5	-90	-224	-90	-295	-345	-1049
Inner London change in LAC	-225	-220	-315	-375	-155	5	-230	-1425
Inner London change in UASC	-45	-50	-115	-179	-80	-95	-90	-654
Outer London change in LAC	-5	70	-195	-205	175	170	-315	-305
Outer London change in UASC	45	45	25	-45	-10	-200	-255	-395

## Changes to the numbers of children starting and ceasing to be looked after

Figures 5 and 6 (over page) show that there has been no great decrease in the number of starters, comparing 2012 to 2008, but with a larger percentage 'in care', i.e. subject to a Care Order. The latter, coupled with the increased percentage of younger children (noted later in the report), implies that local authorities may be intervening earlier, for example in cases of neglect, to safeguard children.

Figure 5: Changes in the number of children who became LAC per year

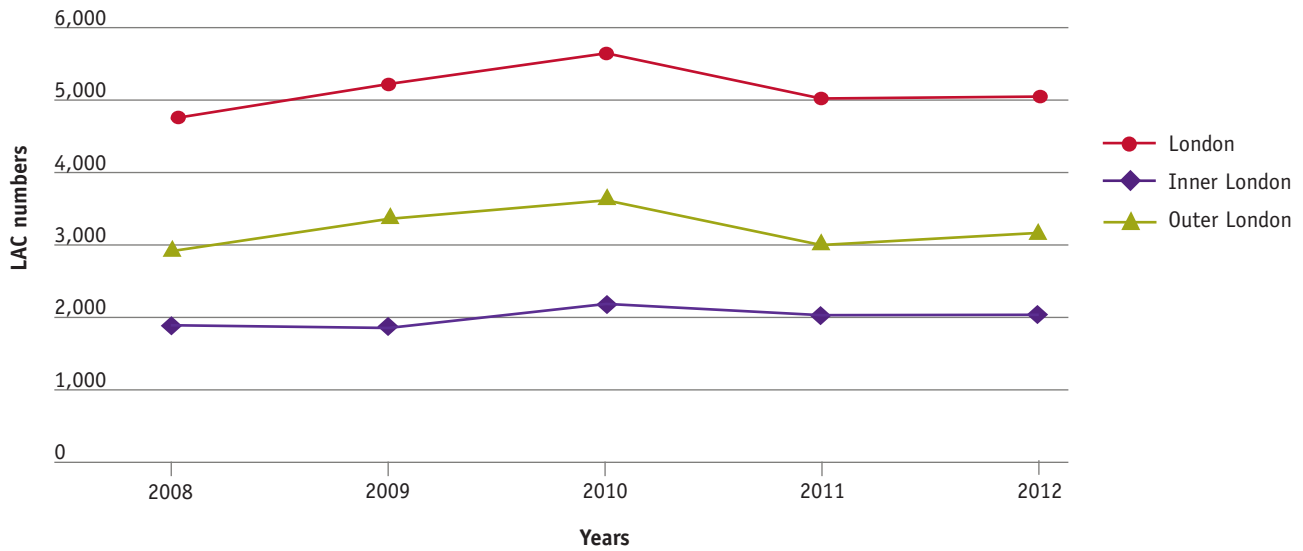
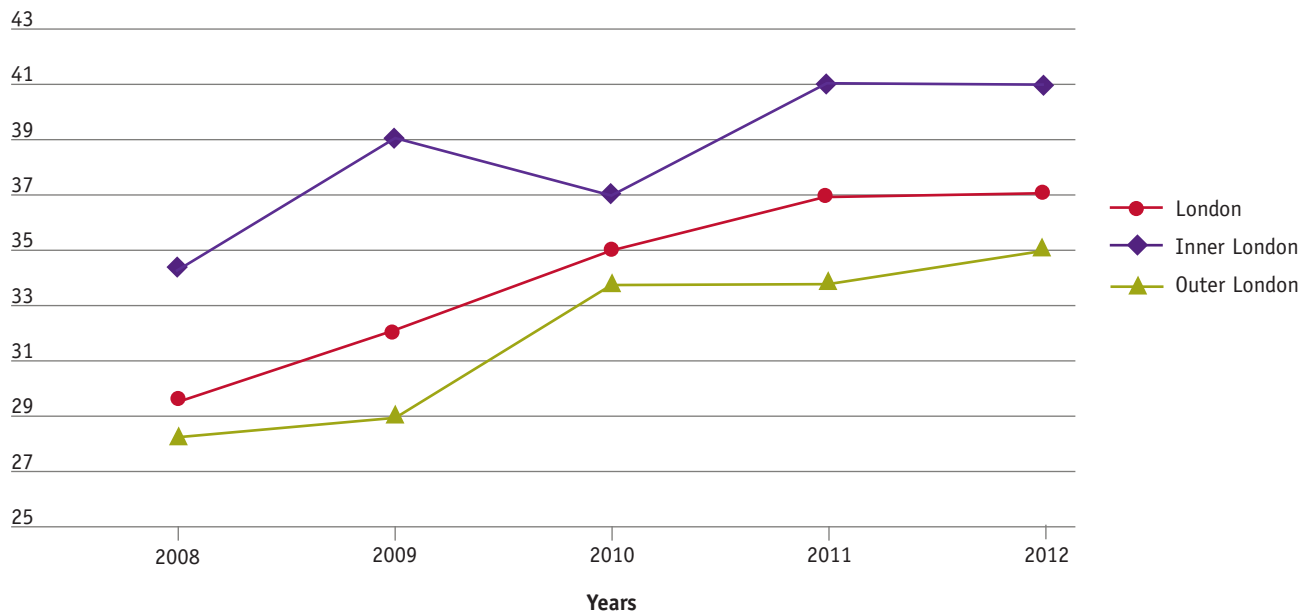


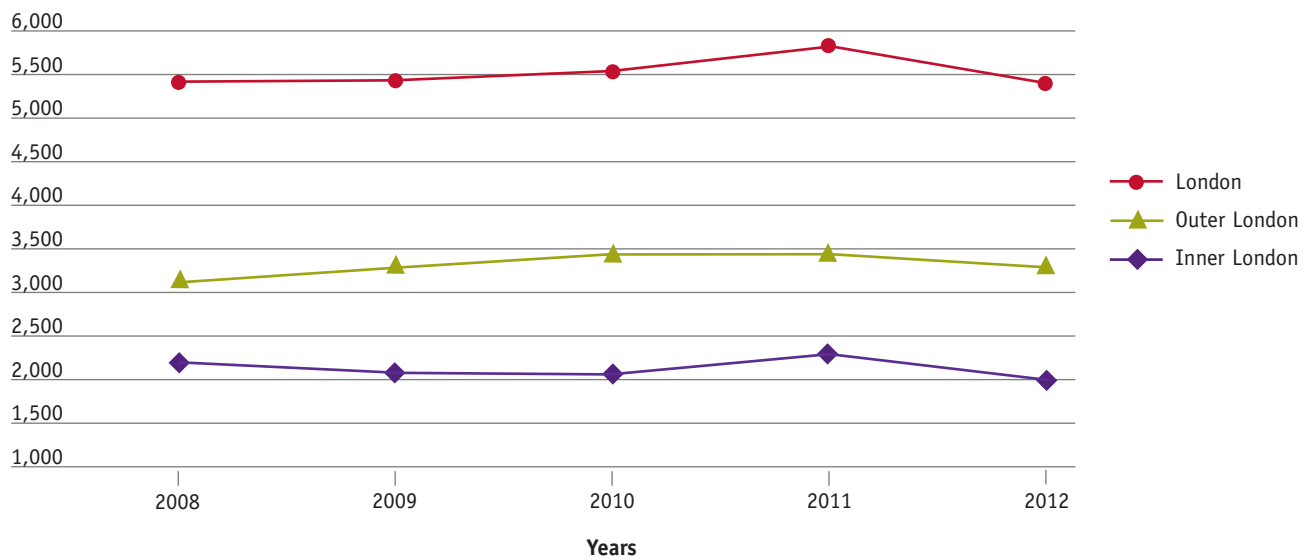
Figure 6: Percentage of LAC starters on a care order



Similarly, there was not a large change in the number of children ceasing to be looked after each year. Figure 7 (ober page) below shows the change from 2008 to 2012. The bottom two lines show the totals for Inner and Outer London.



Figure 7: Changes in the number of children ceasing to be LAC per year



The significance of these diagrams is that, if changes in the numbers of starters or leavers cannot explain the decrease in the LAC numbers recorded at the 31st March in a given year, then it must be that children are being looked after for a shorter duration.

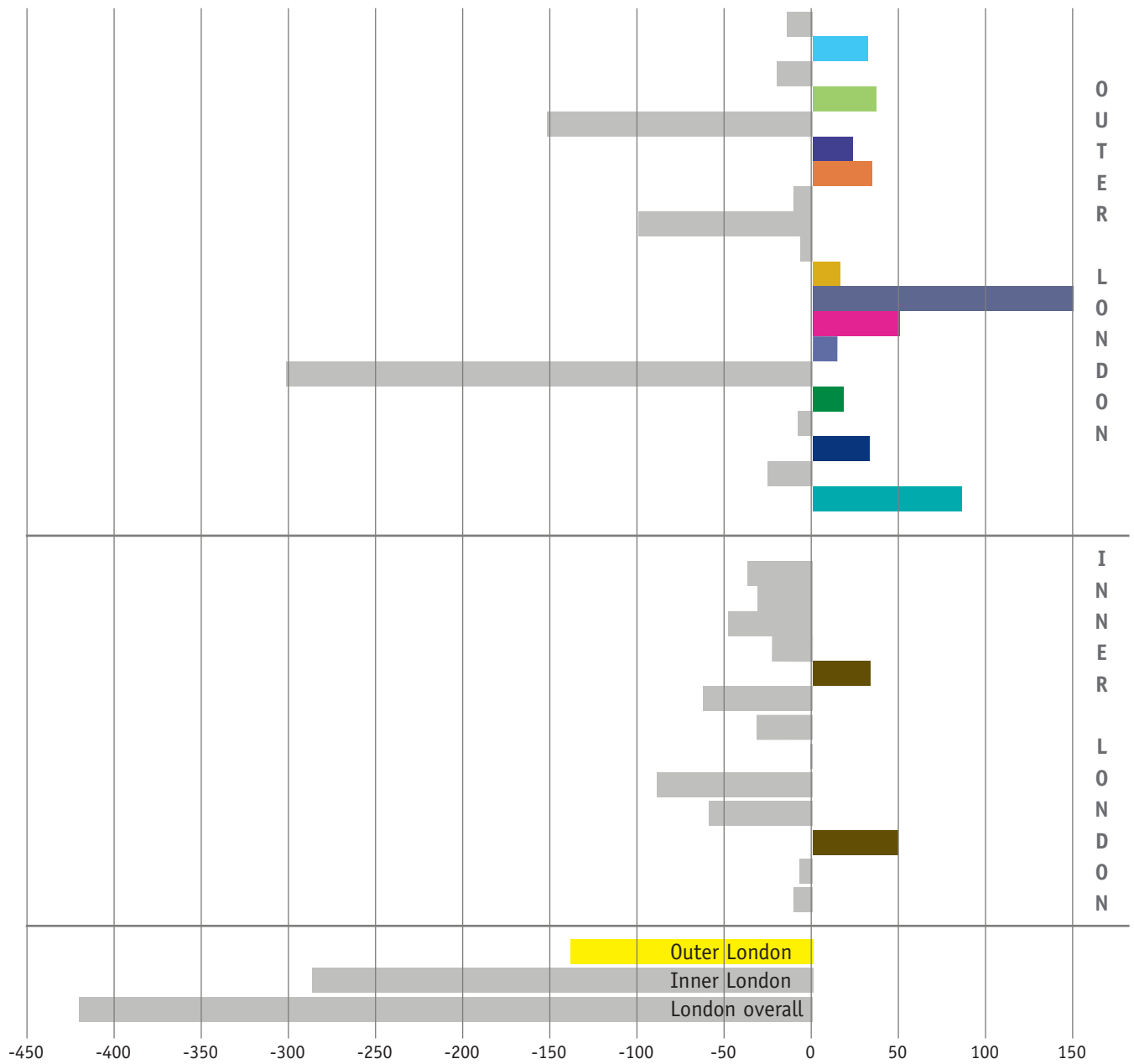
## Demand

To examine whether changes in the levels of demand could account for changes in LAC numbers, we also looked at the change in the number of referrals to children's social care services, and the numbers of children subject to a child protection plan. Government figures indicate that any decrease in LAC numbers were not due to falling demand over the period. Although the number of referrals to Inner London children's social care services fell by about 5,000 per year between 2007 and 2012, the number of children who became the subject of child protection plans rose by about 500 per year. In Outer London, referrals increased by about 2,000 per year and the number subject to child protection plans rose by about 1,000 per year. See Figures 8 and 9 in Appendix 1 for details.

## Differences between Local Authorities in London

The analysis above has provided an overview of the picture across London as a whole. However, while the broad difference between Inner and Outer London holds true, some boroughs do have a different pattern. To indicate the variation, Figure 11 below presents the difference in the numbers of children looked after at the 31st March 2012 in comparison to the same figure in 2008. The first series at the top of the diagram is for Outer London, then for Inner London and finally at the bottom of the diagram are the summary figures for London. The most significant variations from the Inner/Outer pattern are indicated.

**Figure 8: Borough comparison of changes to LAC numbers 2008-2012**



# qualitative analysis: key findings

## Approach

On the basis of the quantitative analysis, initial hypotheses were drawn up about reasons for an increase or decrease in numbers. A survey by questionnaire was undertaken (23 questionnaires returned) and in-depth interviews were held. We examined the understanding held by senior managers about the story in their own boroughs and any actions they had taken. The sample of boroughs where in-depth interviews were held included those who had experienced a significant rise or fall in numbers and also those where numbers had remained relatively stable. In total we interviewed assistant directors from 10 Inner and Outer London boroughs and also held telephone interviews with five senior managers from regions outside London.

The survey and individual interviews with assistant directors covered a range of areas including: understanding of the reasons for rises and falls in their LAC numbers; patterns in relation to age; proportions of accommodation and Care Orders; any correlation with the numbers of children with Child Protection plans; changes in threshold decisions; and the effectiveness of early help services in preventing children from becoming looked after.

## Looking after the 'right' children at the right time

In our discussions there was frequently talk of looking after the 'right' children at the 'right' time. This statement masks the complexity of identifying precisely who the 'right' children are in this context. In the majority of cases, thresholds and decisions about looking after children are clear, particularly those where there is compelling evidence of serious abuse and neglect. However, in situations where there is family conflict and/or teenagers who refuse to go home, the best service response is not so clear cut. In these instances, looking after a child may not be a purposeful intervention. There was recognition that threshold decisions about whether to look after children are influenced by a range of factors: the prevailing culture and direction from the government of the day; the local political context; the differing population make-up and local cultures, including differences in family and extended family patterns; and the shared value base adopted within the department.

This last factor we found to be very influential in determining the numbers of looked after children locally. While all assistant directors work in the context of the philosophical base outlined in the Children Act 1989 i.e. that children should remain with their families wherever possible, this position is held with differing conviction by local leaders. This context is important – we spoke to a number of assistant directors who were explicit and purposeful about their strategy to drive the numbers down, thus ensuring that children could remain with their families wherever possible. There were others who took a much more generalist position, believing that individual assessments of families would determine the number of children in the LAC population.

Some senior managers were highly focused on the numbers of looked after children whereas others felt that smaller or greater numbers than comparators was not a matter for concern. The former believed that the operating system was the most important factor in determining the number, while the latter believed the numbers were mainly influenced by demographic factors which were independent of organisational practice.

A wealth of information was gathered and, as is often the case, the more we asked, the more questions we had. The LAC population in any borough includes children who are looked after for a variety of reasons and the

overall numbers mask the diversity within the whole group. From this complicated picture we have attempted to distil the key findings which are outlined in the paragraphs below.

## Knowledge and understanding of the LAC population

The boroughs which had experienced the greatest decrease in numbers of LAC had one overriding feature in common, which was that the senior managers had a very detailed knowledge and understanding of their LAC population. The assistant directors we spoke to in these boroughs gave accurate information about, for example, age patterns, proportions accommodated or in care, and the impact of actions that had been taken to reduce numbers of children who they felt were either not benefitting, or not likely to benefit, from being looked after. These senior managers were highly focused on the subject and readily provided an analysis of their own data which they regularly reviewed through various mechanisms.

In the majority of boroughs that had experienced a decrease, the senior managers had implemented a proactive strategy to manage the numbers of looked after children. These strategies comprised a combination of management action and service provision, including the following:

- a confident approach and vision about which categories of children would benefit from being looked after and for how long;
- clear alternatives to care at the point of entry and importantly also at exit
- senior management involvement in decision making about entry and exit
- clear lines of accountability for decisions
- a position on drift and active pursuit of extended family or other permanency options for children who were already looked after.

The intention in these boroughs was to provide social work intervention and other services which it was believed would promote the child's welfare more effectively than being looked after by the local authority.

Two examples of good practice in ways of understanding the LAC population were:

- The assistant director in one borough held the detail about length of stay for all age groups and was able to demonstrate a detailed analysis of patterns for the younger children in the LAC population, in order to ensure that permanency options were vigorously pursued for this group.
- In one borough the head of service for looked after children holds a quarterly surgery that examines the plans for every looked after child in that borough (around 500 children). All social workers attend and discuss their plans with the head of service and a small group of key managers. The process is lengthy and detailed but is well received by social workers.

## Controlling entry

The quantitative analysis of the London data indicated that there has not been a huge reduction in numbers of numbers of children starting to be looked after over the last five years and that the main reason for low numbers is a shorter duration for children in the care system in London. Despite this fact, many London assistant directors focused their attention on trying to reduce the number of children who were looked after by controlling entry to care - gatekeeping was a major preoccupation.

In the main, the decision to look after a child in all boroughs was made at assistant director level and often undertaken via some kind of panel structure, which was in some cases chaired by a head of service. In one

borough the director of children's services was the decision maker. This level of seniority across the board recognises the enormity of the decision to remove a child from his or her family and appropriately shares the risk with the frontline social worker. To a greater or lesser degree, this centralised decision making is used as a control mechanism for numbers entering the care system.

## Encouraging exit

Boroughs who had successfully decreased their numbers had a clear focus on permanency plans for children who were looked after, particularly younger children. Active pursuit of Special Guardianship Orders and other long term arrangements with foster carers or extended family had led to demonstrable data about numbers of children exiting the system.

Good examples of this included one borough with a Special Guardianship team which undertakes assessments and where the breakdown rate has been very low. In another borough the assistant director has set an annual target for the number of children to leave the care system via a permanency route. The assistant director here is aiming to create a cultural change to ensure all social workers are highly focused on permanency and, to support this, he is actively involved in progress chasing such cases, gives a 'no quibble' endorsement for long term financial packages and, as a result, they have been successful in increasing the number of children in stable long term placements.

## Decreasing the duration

Attention to the flow of children in and out of the care system was surprisingly not a key activity for many of the assistant directors across London. While the data indicates that shorter duration in care is the most likely reason for an overall reduction in numbers, in fact this was not commonly known and many London Assistant directors believed that the key reason for successful control of LAC numbers was improved gate-keeping i.e. controlling the number of starters.

Proactive attention to decreasing the time children spend being looked after was a rare feature, but did occur in a minority of boroughs. In these instances, there was understanding of the differing groups of children within the LAC population, how long they were looked after and what the options might be to decrease that period of time. The assistant directors spoke of good social work with families to enable children to successfully return home to improved circumstances. The quality of the social work intervention in this context is a key factor. For newly looked after children, return home quickly has proven to be a highly influential determinant of how long a child remains in care and the social work undertaken with families to enable this to happen is a crucial factor.

## Alternatives to care

The boroughs who had successfully implemented strategies to control the numbers of children who were looked after were clear that this could not be achieved without provision of substantial and purposeful alternatives to care. In most of these boroughs there was some kind of 'edge of care' type team who worked intensively with families to reduce family conflict or avoid breakdown.

These teams were of varying make-up, some predominantly social workers and others comprising more of a skill mix, including clinical practitioners and education qualified staff. Some worked to a specific methodology about which there was evidence of effectiveness, such as systemic family therapy or solution focused interventions. The common feature of these teams was a more intensive, flexible approach with agreed objectives formulated in an inclusive way with families, frequent contact, and a pattern of evening and weekend work on top of contact during working hours. A number of boroughs were in the process of commissioning evidence based programmes for children on the edge of care, particularly Multi-Systemic Treatment projects.

## Age patterns and increase in 16/17 year olds

There is a discernible trend of a reduction in the proportion of children, particularly 10-15 year-olds, who are accommodated under Section 20 agreements, and an increase in numbers of younger children who enter the care system via applications for Care Orders. It was the perception of London assistant directors that the actual age patterns, not just the proportions, within the London LAC population have altered, which receives some support from the quantitative analysis:

*Table 2: Age and gender for the year ending 2012*

	Male	Female	Under 1	1 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 15	16 and over
London 2011	52	48	14	17	16	36	17
London 2008	56	44	15	14	13	42	15
Inner London 2011	52	48	16	16	17	36	15
Inner London 2008	53	47	17	15	14	39	13
Outer London 2011	52	47	13	17	16	36	19
Outer London 2008	58	42	14	13	13	44	17

Many of the assistant directors we spoke to said they believed that social workers were intervening earlier and with younger children in neglect cases and that this was related to the aftermath of the Peter Connolly case and a national drive to be less tolerant of families where neglect is a feature. It might also be related to a greater involvement of partner agencies such as schools, children's centres etc. in provision of additional services to children which then leads to the problems faced by families being brought to the attention of children's services.

A major feature is an increase in numbers of 16/17 year-olds who are now looked after. This is likely to be partly due to the 'Southwark judgment', which determined that homeless young people in this age group should be assessed for their eligibility to be looked after by the local authority, and partly due to a change in attitude about the vulnerability of these young people. It may also be connected to the reduction in the proportion of 10-15 year-olds in the care system, with the possible consequence that the problems presented by the 10-15 year age group are averted, only to re-emerge at a slightly later age. These are hypotheses which would need further detailed study to confirm or refute.

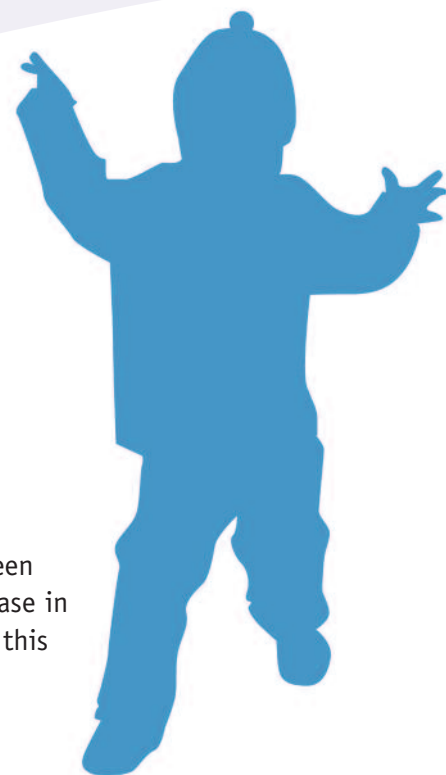
## Early Help and Child Protection

Finally in this section, it is of interest that very few London assistant directors reported a relationship between LAC figures and the numbers of children subject to a child protection (CP) plan. While some boroughs who had experienced a rise in LAC also had evidence of a similar rise of children subject to CP plans, there were no discernible patterns in relation to reductions in numbers.

Perhaps of more interest in this study, is that there were even fewer respondents to the questionnaire who could demonstrate a correlation between increased availability of early help services and a reduction in the number of looked after children. This may be related in part to the stage of development of early help services in most boroughs, but in general London assistant directors felt that such services were targeted at a different group of families and that those where children were at risk of harm would still come to the attention of children's social care. In short, there was no evidence to suggest that such risks were being averted by earlier intervention.

## 04

# regional differences



### Inner/Outer London

A striking feature of the quantitative analysis was the different patterns between Inner and Outer London, with Inner London seeing a much more marked decrease in numbers of LAC over the last five years. We discussed the possible reasons for this in our interviews but we could not find any hard evidence to explain the difference. There are, however, two well supported arguments.

Firstly, there is evidence that Inner London budgets tend to be larger than those in Outer London. While this is justified in relation to levels of deprivation, arguably larger totals enable more flexibility in prioritising spend on additional services. This makes it easier for Inner London boroughs to find funds for threshold of care type teams and also specialist posts to help establish and pay for Special Guardianship arrangements to give two examples.

These larger budgets translate to a higher rate of spend per child in Inner London boroughs. Again this can be explained by estimates of higher levels of deprivation, but the differentials per head are striking<sup>3</sup>. According to CIPFA figures published in 2011, in Outer London spending on children's social care ranged from £298 per head to £757, with the majority of boroughs falling around the three to five hundred figure. By comparison, in Inner London the range was from £718 to £1,205. This is of note given that many Inner and Outer London boroughs have similar numbers of looked after children.

To further highlight this spending differential, there is some evidence that social workers' caseloads in Inner London are smaller than those in Outer London. Routine comparative data is not collated about caseloads, but a snapshot, from data gathered in 2009, shows that indicative caseloads in Outer London were close to 21 children per social worker, while those in Inner London were closer to 17 children per social worker. Undoubtedly, a smaller number of allocated children will contribute to social workers being more effective, both in preventing children becoming looked after and also in ensuring those that could return home safely, can do so with social work support.

Secondly, again anecdotally, it was suggested that Outer London boroughs have historically had more difficulty in filling social work vacancies. Two assistant directors from Inner London boroughs told us that they had received 60 applications for social work posts that had been advertised recently. A more stable workforce and continuity of social worker for families will be more likely to help children return home speedily. More detailed research would elicit whether there was a difference in experienced staff in Inner and Outer London, for example by comparing the numbers of Newly Qualified Social Workers in different boroughs.

<sup>3</sup> *Smart Cuts? Public spending on children's social care*. A report produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) for the NSPCC. 2011

## Other regions in the country

The quantitative analysis in Section 2 of this report demonstrated that the pattern in London is markedly different from other regions in the country. The survey and interviews with London assistant directors provided more information about the reasons why some boroughs have reduced the numbers of children who are looked after. We were not able to undertake the same level of exploration for local authorities outside London, but we undertook telephone interviews with directors and assistant directors from five regions outside London (South East, East, South West, North West, East Midlands) to get their perspective.

It is worthy of note that the patterns and trends per region hide quite considerable variation between local authorities, with some experiencing a similar decrease in numbers to those in Inner London. Furthermore, a number of those we spoke to are implementing similar strategies and focusing on entry, exit and alternatives to care in their areas. We found a similar pattern as in London i.e. that where there has been a proactive approach to reducing the numbers, with attention to different aspects of the system, the strategy to reduce numbers has been in the main successful in having an impact.

Looking at the impact of the budget available to authorities and taking one example, we looked at spend per child in the North East of England, a region where there has been an overall rise by 25 per cent in looked after children numbers over the last five years and where only one of the 11 local authorities in the region has experienced a drop in numbers. The average spend per head in this region in 2011 was £546 per child, more like the Outer London figures above than those in Inner London, where the lowest spend was £718. The range of spend per head in the North East was from £386 per head (Northumberland, which paradoxically was the only authority in the region whose numbers fell) and £842 per head (Newcastle).

The overall picture remains one of a differing pattern between Inner London and both Outer London and other regions of the country. From our telephone interviews, a few hypotheses emerged and are described below, a cautionary note being that none of these hypotheses could be confirmed by hard evidence.

Senior managers talking about authorities in their local regions commented on a direct correlation with rise of LAC numbers following either a poor inspection or a high profile Serious Case Review. These patterns appeared clear in a number of regions and were connected with an overall loss of confidence coupled with children's social care departments which had lost the trust of their safeguarding partners. Such departments might then have experienced changes in leadership and unstable staffing situations, all of which lead to a more risk averse approach and likelihood of rise in numbers.

During the period studied, London enjoyed a run of inspections with 'good' ratings from Ofsted that would have helped to build confidence in the workforce and thus maintain tighter control over rising demand and promoting a more risk management rather than risk averse approach.

One assistant director who had worked both within London and outside in a more rural setting believed that he sees a different attitude to adolescents outside London. In rural settings and smaller towns, there is possibly less tolerance of high risk situations for young people and a tendency to bring this group more readily into the care system when there is evidence of family conflict or rejection of teenagers. This hypotheses is supported by our telephone interviews, where the risks to young women and 16/17 year-olds were more frequently cited by senior managers outside London.



## 05 conclusions

The aim of this study was to develop a more detailed understanding of the reasons for the decrease of numbers of London's looked after children, which was apparently in contrast to the trend of a rise in numbers outside London. We have explored a number of factors as described in the detail of the report above. On the basis of the evidence provided by the Department for Education statistics and the views of senior managers in and outside London, we have concluded that there are two key factors in effective management of the looked after children population.

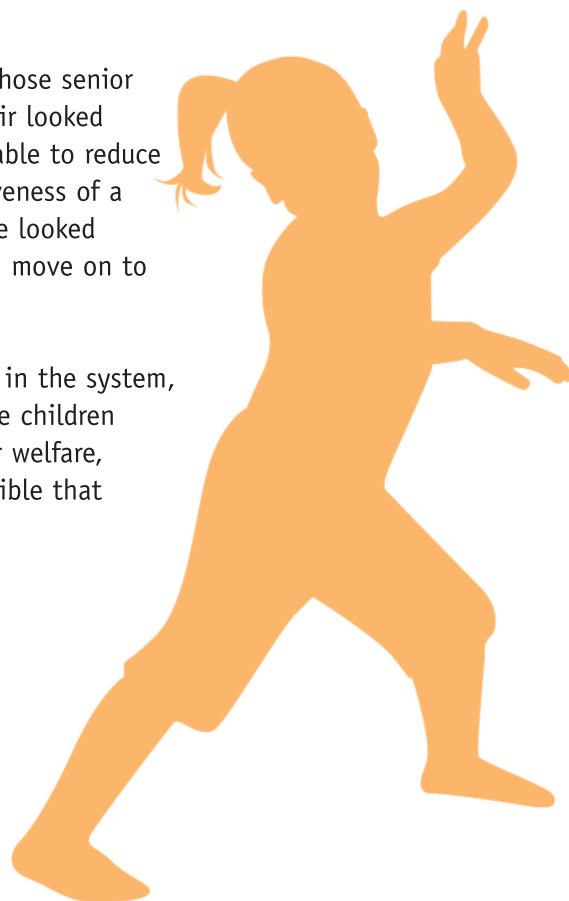
Firstly, the need to provide sufficient resource to enable good social work to take place, and secondly, leadership in provision of a focused and nuanced approach to the flow of looked after children in and out of the system.

Looking at the overall budget for children's social care, there is a clear connection between a well resourced, stable and confident children's social care department and effective management of the number of looked after children within the authority. Within the context of the austerity measures currently facing local authorities, it is worth highlighting that a reduction in social work capacity risks producing a rise in the number of looked after children which may in fact cost more in the long run. It is not simply about having more money to spend, but spending it in a focused way on services that will benefit children, which may or may not include being in care.

Secondly, we cannot underestimate the strength of our finding that those senior managers who have paid attention to understanding the detail of their looked after children populations and then acted on that detail, have been able to reduce the numbers of looked after children. We saw evidence of the effectiveness of a proactive approach to knowing and controlling which children become looked after, how long they stay, minimising drift and ensuring that children move on to stable and permanent placements.

Our conclusion is that focused attention to the detail of the children in the system, coupled with provision of real alternatives to care will ensure that the children concerned receive services and interventions which will promote their welfare, ensure family ties are maintained where possible, and where not possible that alternative permanent routes are established quickly.

**Clare Chamberlain and David Ward**



# Appendix 1

## London councils – Inner and Outer London

### Inner London boroughs

Camden  
Greenwich  
Hackney  
Hammersmith and Fulham  
Islington  
Kensington and Chelsea  
Lambeth  
Lewisham  
Southwark  
Tower Hamlets  
Wandsworth  
Westminster  
City of London\*

### Outer London boroughs

Barking and Dagenham  
Barnet  
Bexley  
Brent  
Bromley  
Croydon  
Ealing  
Enfield  
Haringey  
Harrow  
Havering  
Hillingdon  
Hounslow  
Kingston upon Thames  
Merton  
Newham  
Redbridge  
Richmond upon Thames  
Sutton  
Waltham Forest

\*City of London - this is not a 'borough' - it is governed by the City of London Corporation, but is an inner London 'council'

## Appendix 2

Figure 9: Number of referrals to LA children's social care

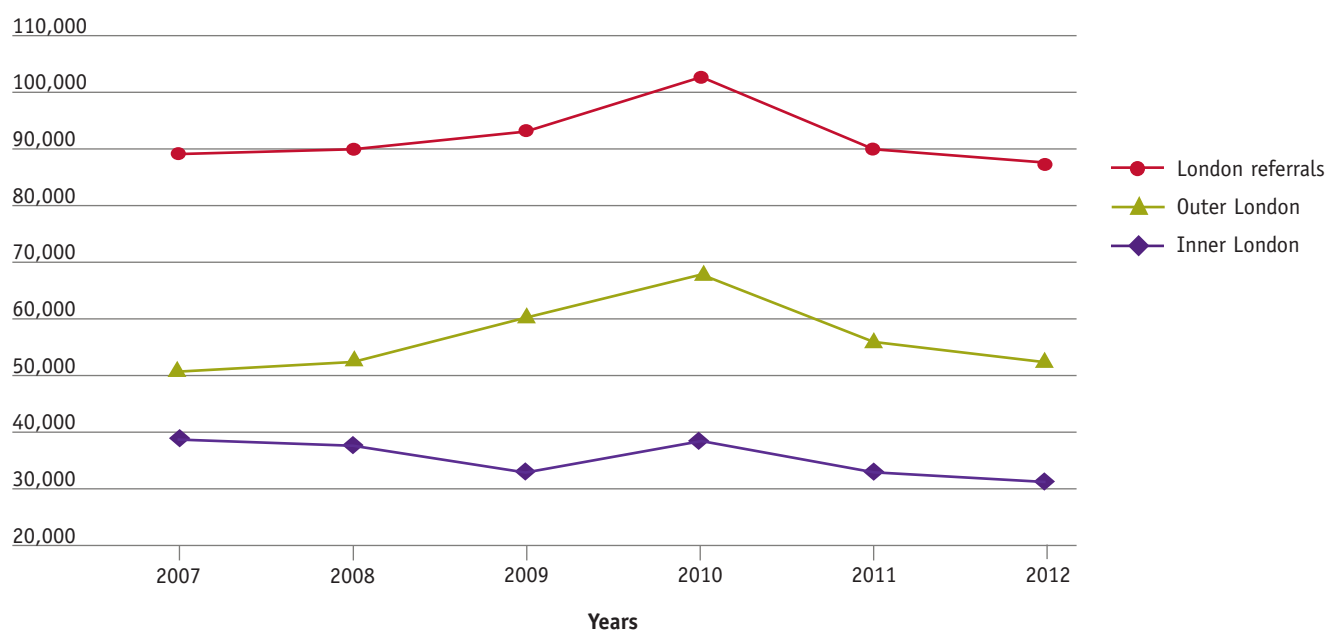
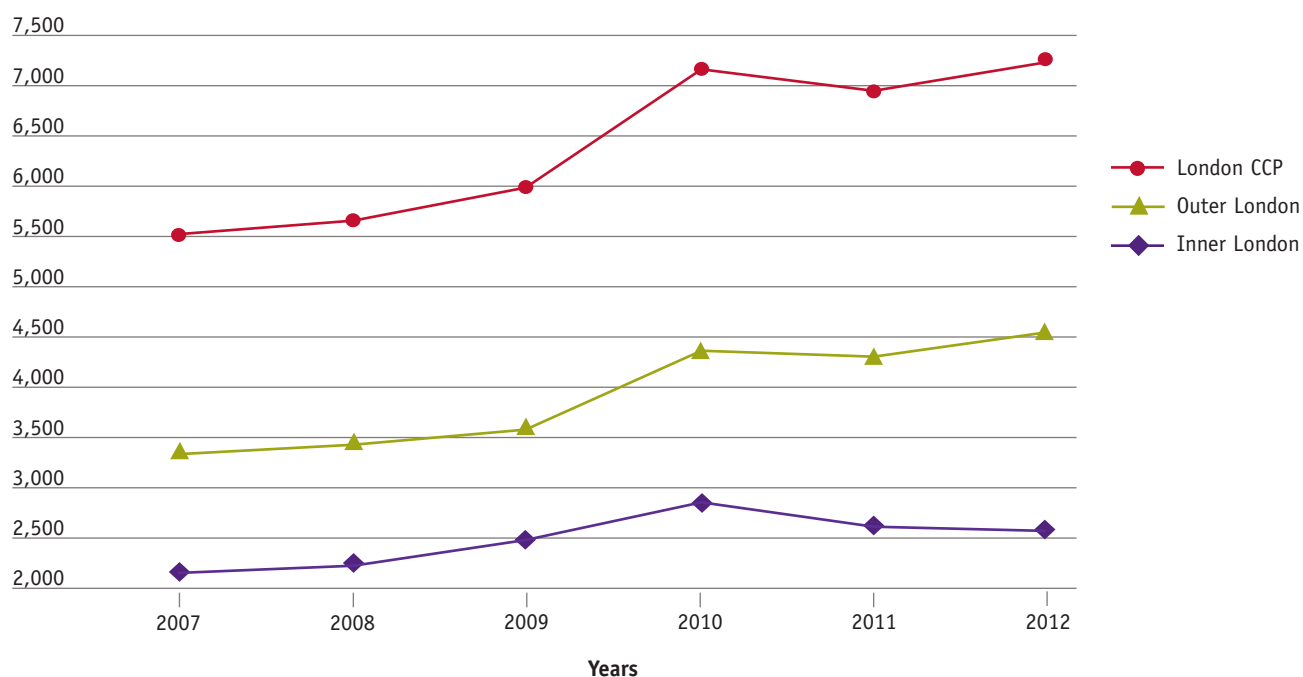


Figure 10: Number of children subject to a child protection plan



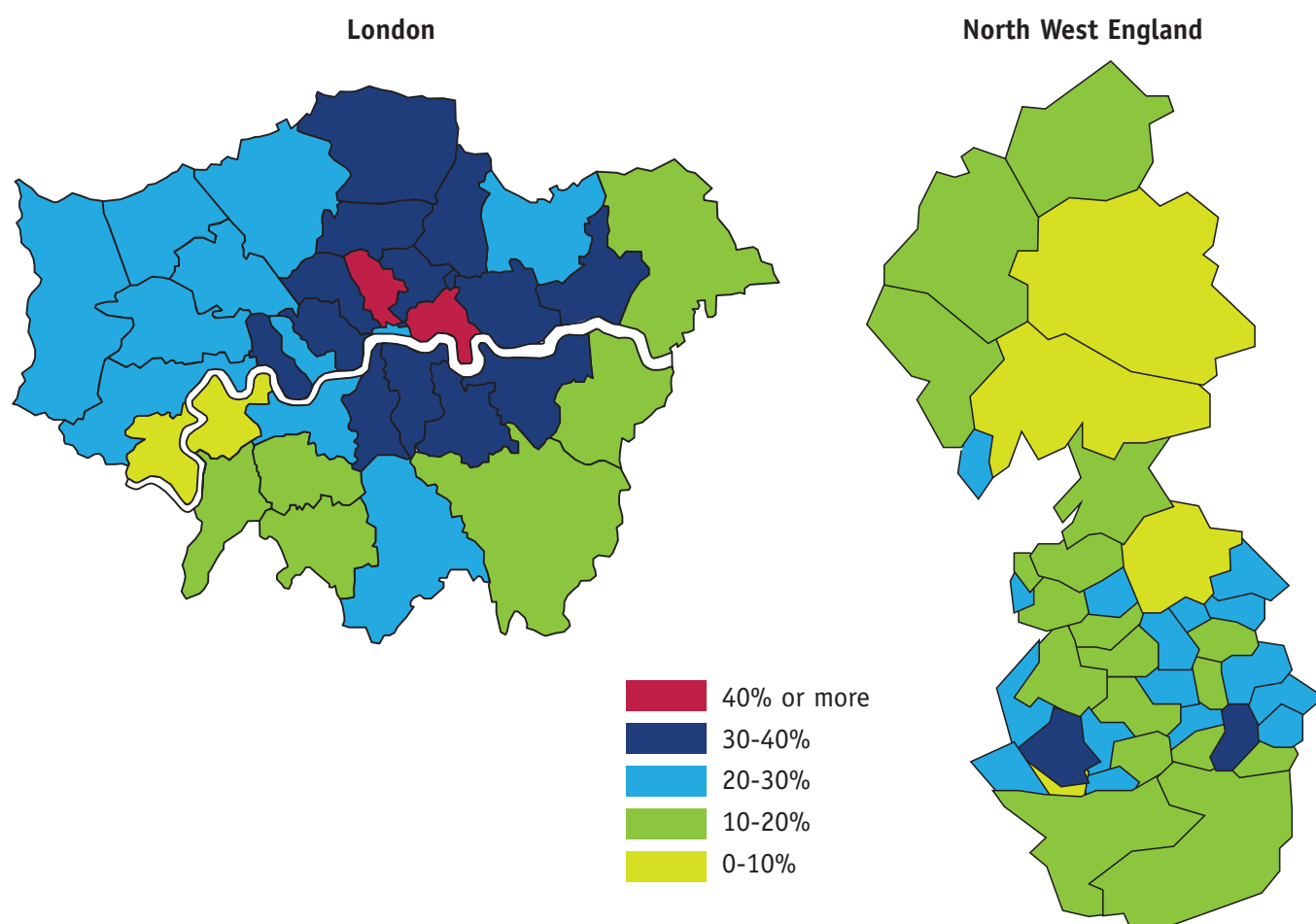
# Appendix 3

## Levels of need

Even with the reduced numbers of looked after children, London, Inner London especially, still looks after far more children per 10,000 than the average for England, and indeed more in absolute numbers than for any other region except the North West. But it is worth putting such high numbers in some context of local need, rather than against an undifferentiated child population. Child poverty is one valuable indicator of need. The Millennium Cohort Study, tracking about 19,000 children born in 2000, found a close correlation between parents out of work and multiple risk factors that other research has indicated are associated with poorer outcomes for children; and work by local authorities in the West Midlands has found a close correlation with changes in the number of claimants for Job Seekers Allowance and, 12 months later, a similar change in the numbers of children looked after.

One way of representing this is to look at a map of poverty. Figure 10 below compares London with another region with high LAC numbers, the North West. The darker colours show the areas of highest poverty in each region based upon 2011 data.

Figure 11: percentage of children in families on out-of-work benefits



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