

Appendix 1 – Children in Care

Rate and number of children in care

Figure 1 below shows the comparative rate of children in care per 10,000 of the under 18 population. What can be seen is that Bristol has been decreasing its rate of children in care to a stable point, approximately in-line with the national average.

When compared to similar local authorities either in the core city group or local authorities statistically similar to Bristol the comparative rate of children looked after is low. This evidences the impact of the Strengthening Families programme 2018 – 2021 that focused on improving early intervention and prevention and timely exits from care to permanency.

COVID has seen a change in the care population with an increased rate of teenage entry to care and a reducing rate of exit, plus increased complexity. The rate has increased as a result.

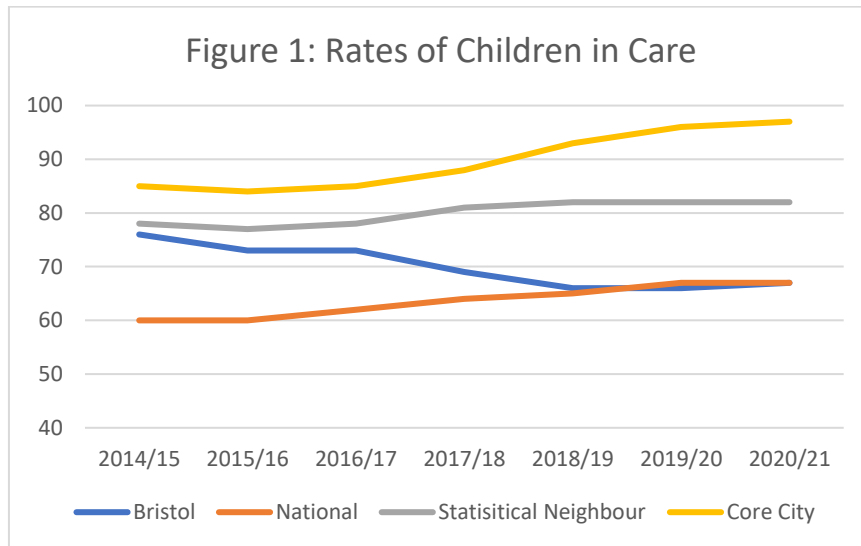
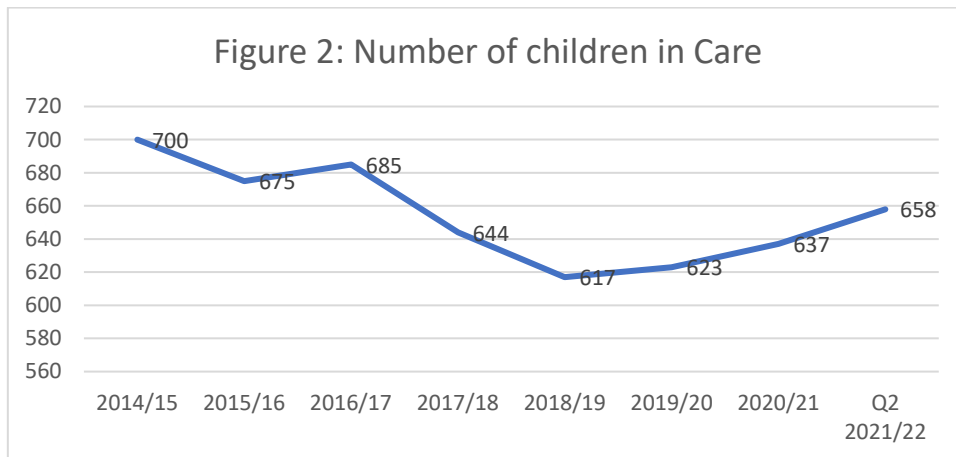
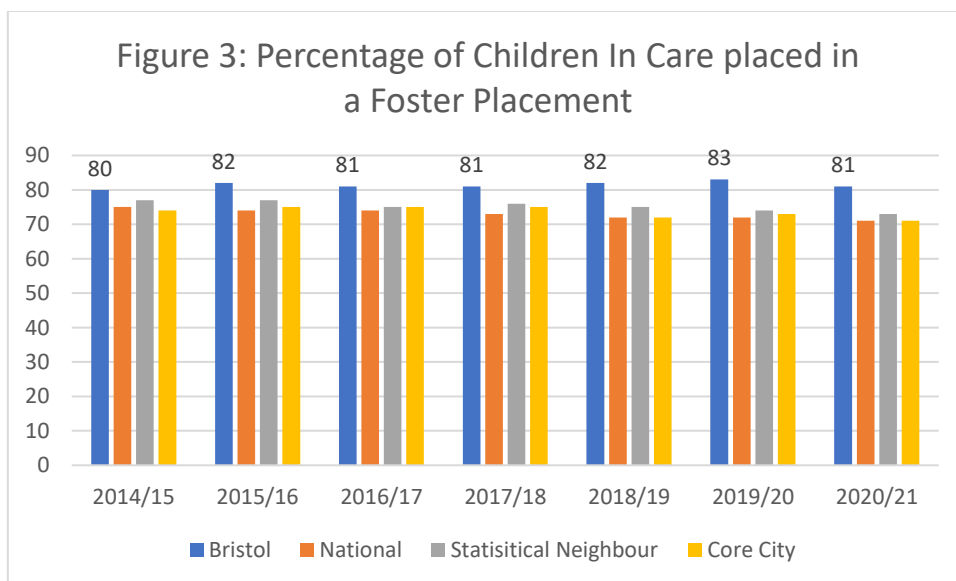


Figure 2 below, shows how Bristol’s overall number of children in care has changed over time. In recent years in the graph above we can see that Bristol’s overall rate had been coming down and for the past 3 years has been close to the national average however Bristol’s overall care population has increased in these years, most recently as a result of COVID with a more significant increase in the first 2 quarters of 2021/22. The percentage increase from March 2020 to the current position is 5.6%.



Balance of placements – where children live

Bristol values its foster carers and has a good record of ensuring the majority of children in care grow up with a foster family. The most recent percentage of 81% of Bristol children in care living in a foster family is 10% higher than the national average, but 2% below the Bristol position in the previous year (**Figure 3**). This is significant as it reflects the complexity of caring for children during the pandemic and signals our increased reliance on more costly residential provision for those children.



It therefore makes sense that Bristol has a slightly lower rate of children placed in residential care comparatively as can be seen below in **Figure 4**. The disparity is larger than you might expect to see and this is due to lower numbers in other community-based placements (independent living pre-18 for example) and fewer children placed for adoption.

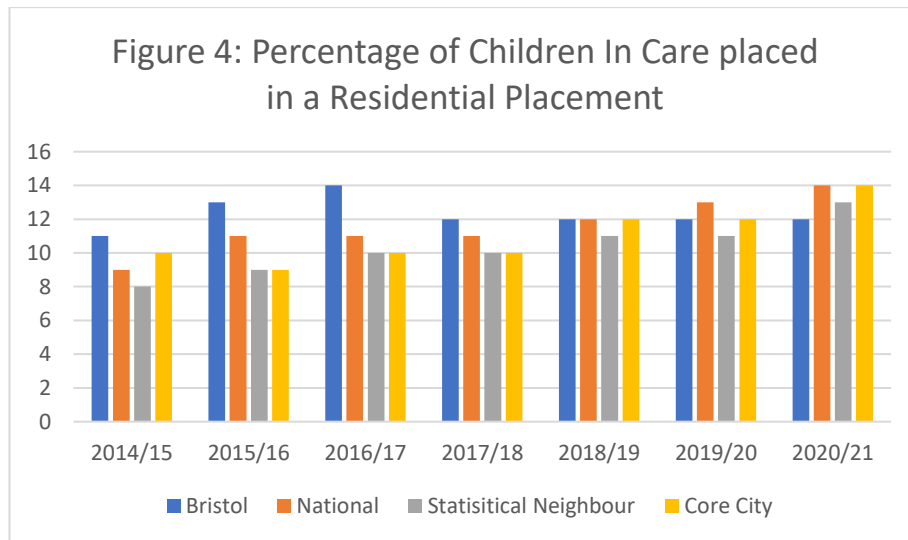
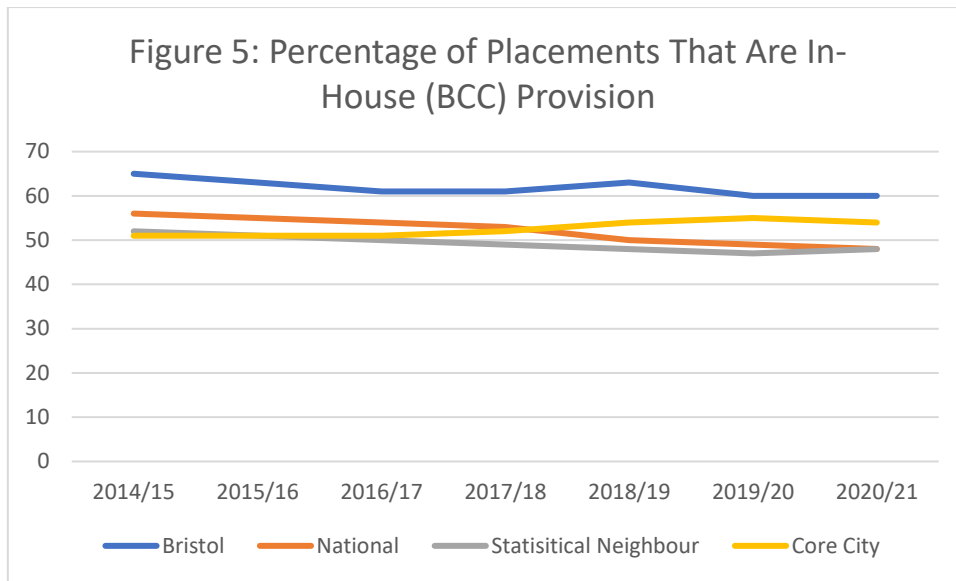
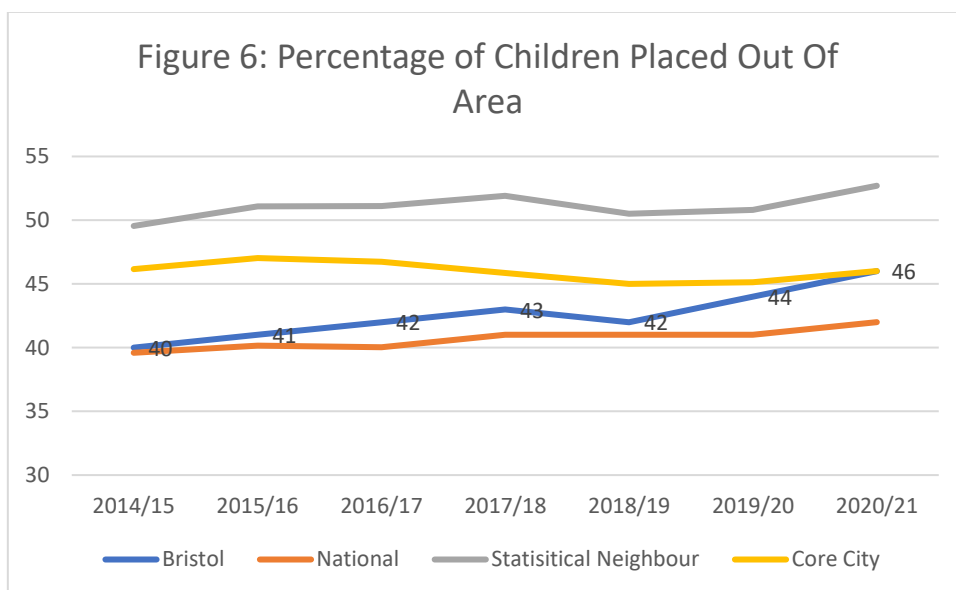


Figure 5 shows breakdown of provision by provider. It is almost always more cost effective for the local authority to provide for its children in care. It also supports investment in the local economy and keeps children in the city to which they belong, close to family, community and at their local school. Bristol has a substantially higher rate of children placed with Bristol providers when compared to national, core cities or statistical neighbours.

Similar to the national and statistical neighbours, Bristol shows a trend over time of a lower percentage of placements being delivered by inhouse provision.

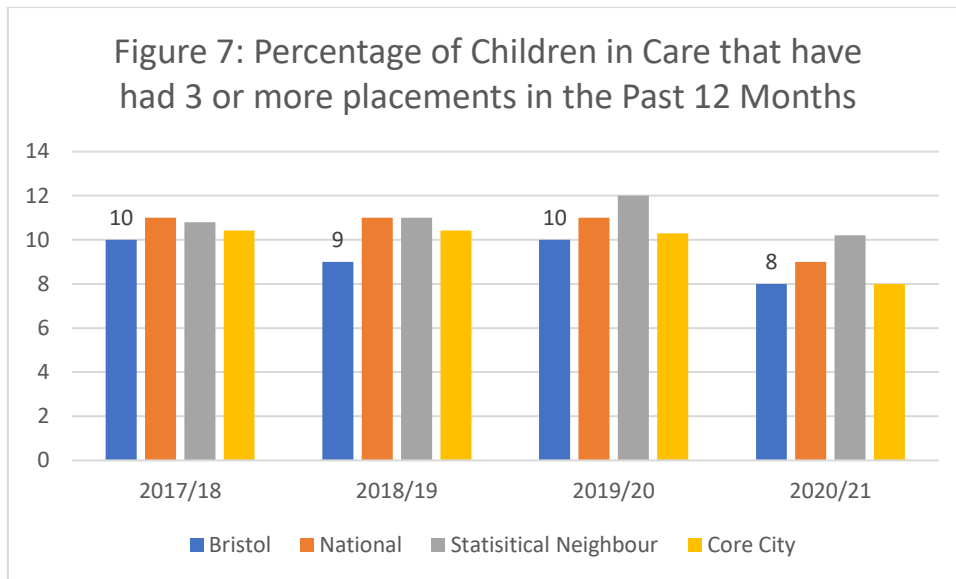


Bristol when compared to its Statistical neighbours and the core city group has been successful at placing a higher percentage of children within Bristol as can be seen in **Figure 6**, however there has been a slowly increasing trend that has brought Bristol up to the level of the core city group. Bristol remains better performing than its statistical neighbours. The national figure is included for completeness but is not a good comparison due to the number of geographically large local authorities it includes.

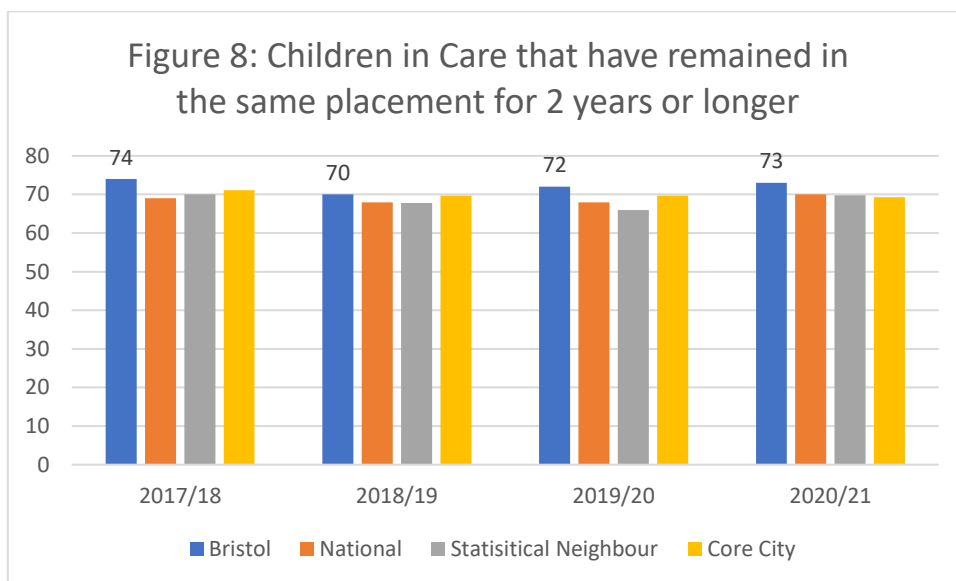


Placement stability

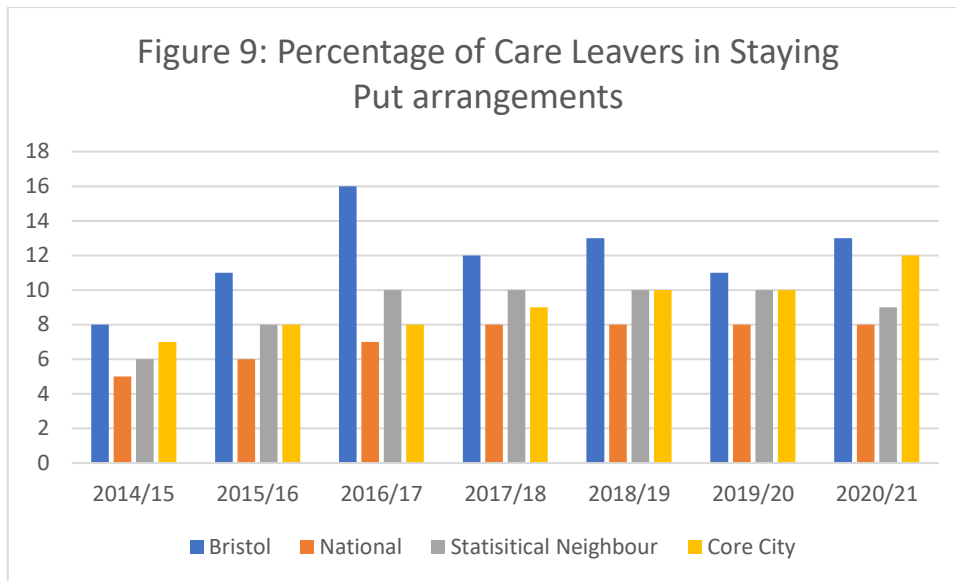
Bristol has good performance in both long- and short-term stability of placements, Short term stability has had a generally improving trend nationally over the past few years however Bristol have managed to stay ahead of this and maintain good performance as shown in **Figure 7**.



Bristol’s long-term stability of placements has also out-performed national and comparator averages for each year published and has increased in each year since 2018/19 but even at this lowest point performance was good in the national context as is shown in **Figure 7**.



Bristol has traditionally had more care leavers aged over 18 remaining with their foster carer in ‘staying put’ arrangements until they are prepared and ready to leave home. Settling from a high of 16% of all over 18-year-olds in 2016/17 the rate has stabilised between 11 and 13% in the past three years and is still above the national, core cities and statistical neighbours rate. Research shows that stability of placement is the single biggest indicator of improved outcomes from children and young people growing up in care.



Demographics of the care population

Figure 10 shows the ethnicity of Bristol's care population. overall care population. 67% of the population is recorded as White British with the remaining 33% comprising children of dual or mixed heritage (16%), children recorded as being Black (6%), Asian (4%) and Other backgrounds (6%). Other backgrounds are largely children of middle eastern origin. The % of non-white children is above that recorded for the city's under 18 population as a whole and reflects the slight increase in the number and percentage of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in our care.

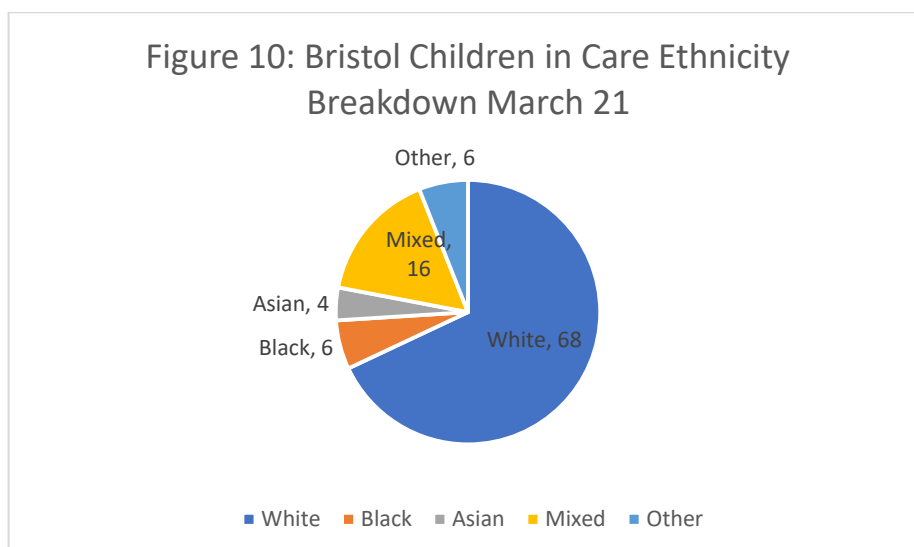


Figure 11 shows that Bristol has a significantly lower rate of White children in care than the national and Bristol’s statistical neighbour’s average and, perhaps unsurprisingly, appears to more closely reflect the Core Cities breakdown.

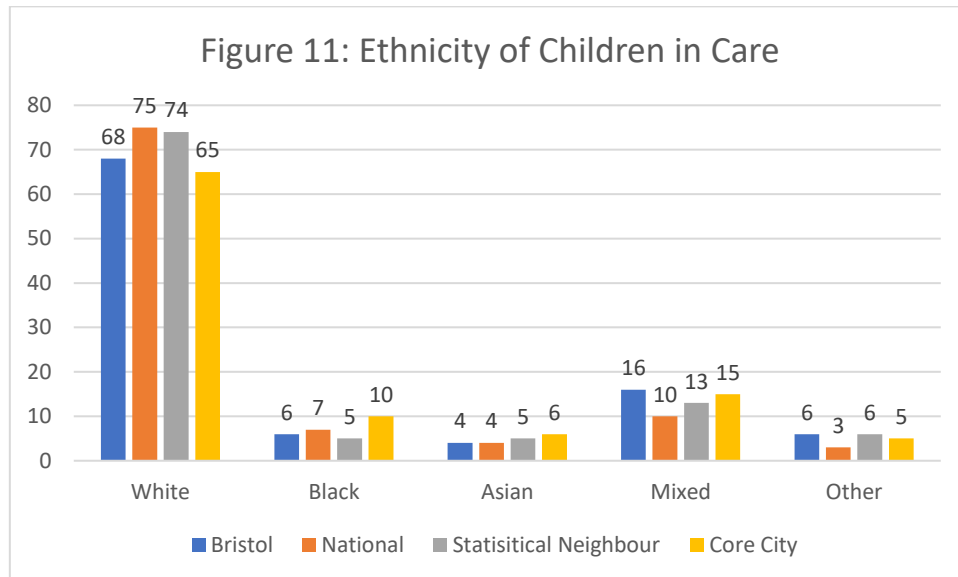


Figure 12 shows Bristol’s UASC population has been steadily increasing over the past few years and at the end of Q2 was at 52 children. It is currently 71 children with Bristol playing its part as a City of Sanctuary, offering a home to children who present in the city as well as those travelling across the channel who need to move under the National Transfer Scheme.

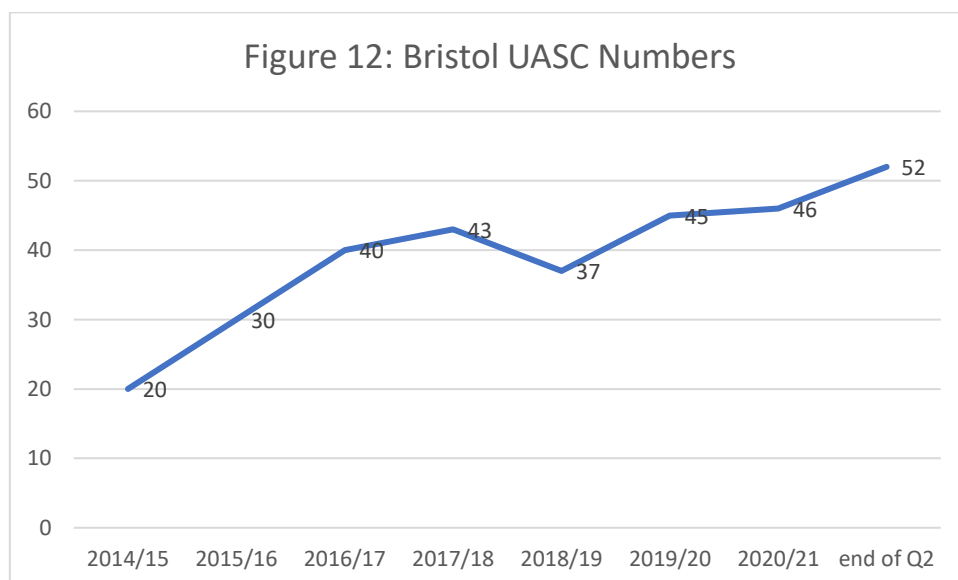


Figure 13 compares Bristol’s percentage of children in care with national, statistical neighbour and core city comparators.

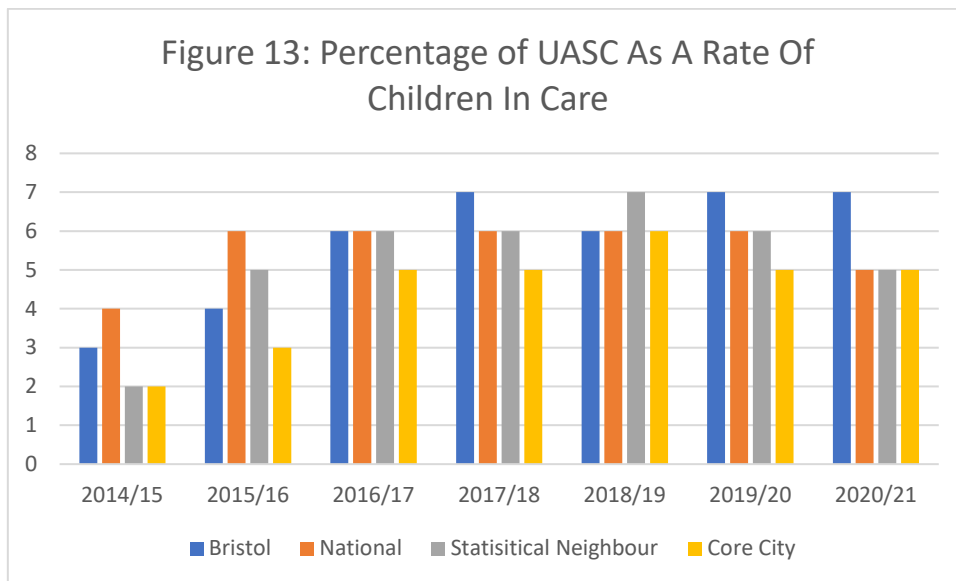


Figure 14 shows that Bristol has a comparatively older care population with an especially high rate of children aged 10-15 when compared to the national, core cities or statistical neighbour picture. This is to some extent impacted by the unaccompanied population but is also the area of focus for further preventative work and the strategic direction set by Bristol’s new Belonging Strategy that focuses on children receiving the best start in life and being able to grow up well in their family and community, in a city where they feel they belong.

