

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Venue: Town Hall, Moorgate
Street, Rotherham, S60
2TH

Date: Tuesday, 21st October, 2014

Time: 2.00 p.m.

A G E N D A

1. To determine if the following matters are to be considered under the categories suggested in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972
2. To determine any item which the Chairman is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency
3. Apologies for absence
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 2nd July, 2014. (Pages 1 - 5)
6. Matters arising from the previous minutes (which are not included elsewhere on this agenda)
7. Care Leavers' Week - For Information - Verbal.
8. Headline Figure of GCSE and 'A' Level Results - Verbal.
9. Performance Report - Quarter 1. (Pages 6 - 10)
10. IRO Service - Year End Report. (Pages 11 - 27)
11. Update - LAC Strategy Statement. (Pages 28 - 53)
12. Sufficiency Statement for Looked After Children. (Pages 54 - 90)
13. Fostering Plus Update - How This is Developing - Verbal.

14. Impact on the White Rose Framework - Financial Year End Report. (Pages 91 - 93)

15. Exclusion of the press and public.

The following items are likely to be held in the absence of the press and the public as being exempt under Paragraph 4 of the Local Government Act, 1972, Schedule 1 of Section 12A (Trade Union Consultations).

16. Invest to Save - Children's Homes Savings - Proposal Report for Silverwood. (Pages 94 - 100)

17. Options Report on the Future Role of Liberty House in the Provision of Short Break Care for Disabled Children. (Pages 101 - 106)

18. Date and time of the next meeting -

- 21st October, 2014, 2.00 p.m. in the Rotherham Town Hall.

All other meetings on a Tuesday and starting at 9.30 a.m.

- 11th November, 2014;
- 20th January, 2015;
- 10th March, 2015;
- 19th May, 2015;
- 7th July, 2015.

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
Wednesday, 2nd July, 2014**

Present:- Councillor Lakin (in the Chair); Councillors G. A. Russell and Sharman.

Also in attendance were: - S. Wilson, C. Sneath, C. Pyper, Yvonne, L. DuValle, J. Rabbite, M. Barton, L. Grice-Saddington, P. Dempsey.

D30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

No Declarations of Interest were made.

**D31. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING
HELD ON 10TH APRIL, 2014.**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 10th April, 2014, were considered.

Resolved: - That the previous minutes be agreed as a correct record.

D32. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S COUNCIL.

Councillor P. Lakin, Deputy Leader, welcomed representatives from the Looked After Children's Council, along with Lisa DuValle, to the meeting.

The LAC Council and Lisa provided some background into the 'Have Your Say' survey that had taken place, along with visits to Children's Homes. The LAC Council had collated and analysed all of the responses and communications and had pitched to Joyce Thacker and Cllr Lakin the idea of having a 'proper' holiday. The LAC Council had costed their idea and had thought about the risks involved and how to mitigate them.

The pitch was successful and extra funding was secured.

A presentation about the holiday, showing what happened on each day was presented by Abbey, Zoe and Henry. The presentation covered a lot of the holiday, what the group did, what they enjoyed and did not enjoy, the weather, the celebrations that were thrown for Mark and Paislie on their birthdays, the shopping, the volunteers (Reece, Dale and Zoe).

The presentation was brilliant and really energetically and positively presented. All in attendance really enjoyed listening and looking at the pictures. Councillor Lakin thanked Abbey, Zoe and Henry for their presentation and said what a worthwhile trip it had been. Some of the young people who attended had never been abroad before or experienced a holiday.

Discussion and questions and answers followed between the LAC Council and the CPP about the holiday and the young people's experience of it.

The main comment was how well the young people had represented Rotherham. Special thanks were made to the volunteers within the group, slightly older/past members of the LAC Council.

Zoe asked for the extra funding to be made available again so that a second holiday could be planned. As this was a fantastic investment, it would be good to repeat the experience.

All thanked the young people, Abbey, Zoe and Henry, and Lisa, for attending the meeting and for their informative presentation.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) That consideration be given to securing funding so that members of the LAC Council could take another holiday.

D33. CORPORATE PARENTING PROTOCOL AND CORPORATE PARENTING TERMS OF REFERENCE.

Items 7 and 8 were considered together. The documents had been created to outline and confirm the functions and responsibilities of Rotherham's key strategic partnership for Safeguarding Children and the Local Authority's Corporate Parenting Panel in relation to the services and outcomes for Rotherham's Looked After Children; and the relationship between them.

The documents outlined the role and responsibilities of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Resolved: - That the Corporate Parenting Protocol and Corporate Parenting Terms of Reference be agreed.

D34. CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT - QUARTER FOUR PERFORMANCE.

Sue Wilson, Performance and Quality Manager, presented the Quarter Four performance report, which was the Annual Report and showed the performance during 2013/2014 to 31st March, 2014.

The report illustrated: -

- The total number of LAC and the direction of travel;
- The balance between independent and in-house foster placements;
- Rotherham was working to improve the range of in-house foster carers for older children;
- Key pieces of work around leaving care and voice and influence;
- The next steps a- the work plan, a LAC Strategy, the relationship with the Local Safeguarding Children Board, Personal and Education Plans, Voice and the Pupil Premium;

- The development of the in-house Leaving Care Service;
- Launch of the pilot to ensure that the children placed furthest away were supported well;
- Missing from Care and children going missing.

Resolved: - (1) That the 2013/2014 Annual Performance Report be noted.

(2) That the list of items to be included in the performance reports be accepted.

D35. FOSTERING TO ADOPT.

Consideration was given to the report presented by Paul Dempsey, Service Manager for Residential and Family Placements, that outlined the new Government led Fostering for Adoption initiative and the progress being made implementing it in Rotherham.

The report and discussion outlined the benefits and risks of the Fostering to Adoption approach with regards to outcomes for children, less placement disruptions for the child/ren and earlier age bonding and attachment in the family.

The report outlined the process that would be followed under the proposed scheme.

Progress in Developing Fostering for Adoption in Rotherham: -

A policy for and process about the implementation of Fostering for Adoption has been drafted and agreed. As at 23.6.14 one child had been placed with Fostering for Adoption carers, with the case having followed the process set out in the submitted report. Also as at 23.6.14 three additional adoptive families had expressed a desire to offer a Fostering for Adoption placement for a child.

Discussion ensued and the following points were raised: -

- Risks of the process – could children be adopted that would eventually have been able to return to their birth family?;
- Potential for keeping sibling groups together in the Fostering to Adopt scheme.

Resolved: - (1) That the report be received and its content noted.

(2) That the overall aims, benefits and risks of Fostering for Adoption be noted.

(3) That the good progress being made in developing Fostering for Adoption in Rotherham be noted.

D36. REGULATION 33 UPDATE.

Paul Dempsey, Service Manager for Family Placements and residential, gave an update on the new Regulations that came into force on 1st April, 2014 regarding Regulation 33 visits.

In accordance with the new Regulations, Rotherham had an Independent Person undertaking the visits on a temporary three-month contract, who was visiting the five homes every month.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) That the Corporate Parenting Panel continue to receive updates on the Regulation 33 visits.

D37. MEMBER VISITS TO CHILDREN'S HOMES.

Councillor P. Lakin, Deputy Leader and Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel, reiterated his expectation that every Elected Member be participating in their Corporate Parenting duties.

He also expected every member of the Corporate Parenting Panel to attend the scheduled visits to Children's Homes where appropriate.

Resolved: - That the information shared be noted.

D38. LAC SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN.

Clair Pyper, Director for Safeguarding Children and Families, presented the report that outlined a LAC Service Improvement Plan, 2014/2015. The report outlined the progress to date and the initial feedback from staff.

Discussion covered: -

- Ensuring wishes and feelings were recorded on childrens' records.

Resolved: - That the information shared be noted.

D39. PUPIL PREMIUM.

Claire Sneath, Virtual Headteacher for Looked After Children, provided an update on the actions she had been putting into place as part of her work:

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- The use of the Pupil Premium Plus: -
 - Expectations from the Local Authority to Schools;
 - Deployment/release of funding;
 - Use of funding centrally – options.
- Role of LAC Designated Teachers;
- Using the Pupil Premium to support LAC who were high achievers;

- Raising aspirations and helping to make them achievable.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) That the Corporate Parenting Panel continue to receive updates from the Virtual Headteacher at future meetings.

D40. COLLEAGUES LEAVING AND RETIRING FROM ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL.

All noted that this would be the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel that Clair Pyper, Claire Sneath and Joanne Rabbite attended before they left the Local Authority.

All wished them well in their future endeavours and thanked them for their contribution and commitment to Rotherham's children and young people.

D41. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING -

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel take place on Tuesday 23rd September, 2014, to start at 9.30 a.m. in the Rotherham Town Hall.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	Corporate Parenting Panel
2.	Date:	21 st October, 2014
3.	Title:	2014/15 Quarter 1 Report
4.	Directorate:	Safeguarding, Children and Families

5. Summary

This report provides an update on the status of looked after children as at the end of June 2014. The report should be considered alongside the data tables provided. Please note that this is the first quarter for this year and that the previous period on the data table was the year end for 2013/14, therefore, the numbers will some times be considerably different because they will be for the whole year, not just one quarter.

6. Recommendations

- That the panel note the performance information.

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Key Performance Information

7.1.1 Looked After Children

From April to June 2014, we had 37 children and young people admitted to care. This was the same as the average for each quarter last year. 41 children were discharged, which was slightly above the average number per quarter last year.

67.9% of the long term looked after children were in stable places, which was the same as the previous year. We had only 1% with three or more placements.

All of our LAC were allocated to a key team with a qualified key worker and 94% of LAC had a care plan recorded on Swift. 97.1% were reviewed within the required timecales. 91.9% of LAC that were over 4 years old had participated in their LAC review.

As at 30th June, 56.5% of LAC had received LAC visits within the previous 6 weeks.

The Independent Reviewing Officer service had 79 dispute resolutions that were informal concerns, 21 that were taken to stage 1 and 5 were taken to stage 2. None were taken to stage 3. This is a new section to our Corporate Parenting report so we will track the direction of travel next quarter.

7.1.2 Placements and Mainstream LAC

Of our LAC, we had 44.9% in Rotherham fostering placements and 25.4% in out of authority fostering placements. The number in Rotherham placements had increased in this quarter by 4.4%.

We had 3.6% of LAC placed within Rotherham childrens homes; 4.9% in out of authority childrens homes and 3.8% in other residential accommodation. There was an increase in out of authority placements.

We had 4.1% placed with parents and 2.6% in independent living. We had 8.2% placed for adoption.

7.1.3 Commissioned Placements

We had 100 children in commissioned fostering placements in the period of April to June 2014. 12 were new fostering placements commissioned this financial year. 20 placements had ceased in this quarter.

The projected cost of commissioned fostering placements so far this financial year is lower than the previous period at £4,633,337.

For residential placements, we had 29 children in a commissioned placement. There were 8 new placements for this financial year, and 9 that had ceased. The projected commissioned total cost has increased from the last period of £3,600,475 to £4,64,847.

7.1.4 Health

We had 85.2% of LAC with an up to date health assessment and 60.1% with an up to date dental assessment. The dental assessments had increased by 15% since the last period.

7.1.5 Fostering

We recruited 8 foster carers in the first quarter, which is on average the same as last year (35 for the whole year). We had 5 deregistered, which was a little higher than the average for last year (15 for the whole year).

We had a total of 176 foster carers and 1 of those had placements over the regulatory numbers due to a sibling group.

7.1.6 Adoptions

In the first quarter, we placed 80% of LAC for adoption within 1 year of their agency decision, which is an increase of 25% from the previous period.

We had 47 children with a SHOBPA decision and we were actively family finding for 26 of those. 32 children were placed for adoption at the end of June.

12 children were placed whose SHOBPA decision was over 12 months old. We were family finding for 5 children of those children. Of those 5 children, 3 children had links identified and were waiting to go to panel for matching. The foster carers of the other 2 children had come forward to adopt them, therefore, adoption assessments were being started for the foster carers. This means that all 5 children had placements identified at the end of the quarter.

7.1.7 Education

90.4% of LAC have an up to date personal education plan. This is an increase of 1.5% on the last period.

The GCSE results have not changed as the results will be released in the next quarter. We have 6 out of 25 LAC achieving 5 A-C GCSC or equivalent at key stage 4.

7.1.8 OFSTED Ratings for Children's Residential Establishments

The Ofsted full inspections are due at most homes in the next quarter. We have had an excellent change in rating for St Edmunds after their inspection this quarter. They have been rated as Good. This is excellent progress as the home had previously been rated as making inadequate progress. The team have worked hard to overcome the issues and bring the quality of the home and rating up to a higher standard.

Children's Homes	Rating
Cherry Tree	Adequate
Liberty House	Adequate
Silverwood	Good
St. Edmund's	Good
Wood View	Good

7.1.9 Care Leavers

170 (96%) of care leavers were in suitable accommodation and 111 (63%) were in employment, education or training.

Of those not in EET, 20% were seeking work. 17 were on sickenss benefit, 10 were parents and 3 were pregnant.

7.1.10 Children Missing from Care

We had 158 instances of 59 LAC missing from care and 156 instances of 93 children missing from home.

7.1.11 Youth Offending

We have had 7 children looked after over one year, between the age of 10-17 who have been involved with Youth Offending Services.

7.1.12 Voice of the Child

Review meetings for looked after children and young people provide a systematic approach to ensuring the thoughts and feelings around placements; health; school; work or college; and their relationship with their social worker are captured. Each review meeting is dealt with on an individual basis and addressed appropriately. However during May 2014,

analysis of the consultation that took place at the March reviews was carried out to look for any overarching or recurring themes.

The analysis of the reviews has been shared with the Corporate Parenting Board previously, showing that the contact arrangements was the main area of concern and that the age group of 14-18 year olds were harder to engage with. It has been agreed that the Performance and Quality team will undertake a second analysis exercise during September 2014.

It has been agreed that Rotherham are due to take part in the annual Children's Commissioners National Survey, which will be an electronic survey open to young people to take part in from November 2014. Discussions are taking place with relevant teams to maximise engagement in completing the survey.

The results from the survey will be published in March 2015 and will enable us gain views specifically for Rotherham looked after children and young people but will be anonymised.

Rotherham MBC - Corporate Parenting Report Q1

[Date of Report: 2014] [Data as at: 30th June 2014]

1. Looked After Children	Number	Total	%	Prev. Period	DOT
Total Number of looked after children	391			400	
Looked after children with three or more placements (NI 62)	4	393	1.0%	11.1%	↗
Long-term looked after children in stable placements (NI63)	110	162	67.9%	67.9%	↘
LAC cases which were reviewed within required timescales (NI66)	202	208	97.1%	98.6%	↘
LAC not allocated to a key team	0	391	0.0%	0.0%	→
LAC not allocated to a qualified key worker	0	391	0.0%	0.0%	→
LAC with a care plan recorded on Swift	377	401	94.0%	93.2%	↘
Admitted to care since 1st April	37			147	
Discharged from care since 1st April	41			135	
Participated in LAC Reviews (over 4 years old)	192	209	91.9%	91.4%	↗
Complaints received from LAC	4			2	
% of LAC with visits in the last 6 weeks	222	393	56.5%	New	
Dispute Resolutions - Number of Informal Concerns	79			New	
Dispute Resolutions - Number of Stage 1's	21			New	
Dispute Resolutions - Number of Stage 2's	5			New	
Dispute Resolutions - Number of Stage 3's	0			New	

2. Placements of mainstream LAC	Number	Total	%	Prev. Period
Rotherham fostering placements (F1,2,3)	175	390	44.9%	40.5%
Out of authority fostering placement (F4,5,6)	99	390	25.4%	26.8%
Rotherham childrens homes (H3)	14	390	3.6%	4.8%
Out of authority childrens homes (H4)	19	390	4.9%	3.5%
Other residential accommodation (H5, R1)	15	390	3.8%	4.8%
Placed with parents (P1)	16	390	4.1%	4.3%
Independent living (P2)	10	390	2.6%	2.3%
Placed for adoption (A4,5,6)	32	390	8.2%	10.0%
Other	10	390	2.6%	3.3%

3. Commissioned Placements	Number	Prev. Period	DOT
Children in a commissioned fostering placement	100	102	
New fostering placements commissioned this financial year	12	35	
Commissioned fostering placements that have ceased this financial year	20	43	
Projected total cost of commissioned fostering placements so far this financial year [£]	£4,633,337	£4,906,527	↘
Children in a commissioned residential placement	29	31	
New residential placements commissioned this financial year	8	43	
Commissioned residential placements that have ceased this financial year	9	37	
Projected total cost of commissioned residential placements so far this financial year [£]	£4,064,847	£3,600,475	↗

* please note the last period was looking at a full 12 months. This period is only the first quarter of 2014.

4. Health	Number	Total	%	Prev. Period
LAC with up to date health assessments (rolling year)	248	291	85.2%	88.5%
LAC with up to date dental assessments (rolling year)	175	291	60.1%	44.7%

5. Fostering	Number	Total	%	Prev. Period	DOT
No. of Foster carers active	147			145	↗
No. of Foster carers	176			184	↘
Foster carers recruited this financial year	8			35	
Foster carers deregistered this financial year	5			15	
No. of carers with placements over regulatory numbers	1	176	0.6%	0.6%	↘

6. Adoptions	Number	Total	%	Prev. Period	DOT
LAC placed for adoption within 1yr of agency decision (NI 61)	8	10	80.0%	55.6%	↘
Children with SHOBPA decision (not inc. those already placed)	47			53	
No. of children we are actively family finding for	26			23	
Children currently placed for adoption	32			37	
Children placed whose SHOBPA decision is over 12 months ago	15			21	
Children we are family finding for whose SHOBPA decision is over 12 months ago	5			5	

7. Education	Number	Total	%	Prev. Period	DOT
LAC with up to date personal education plan	244	270	90.4%	88.9%	↘
Looked after children achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and Maths)	6	25	24.0%		

8. Children's Homes	Rating		Prev. Rating	DOT
Cherry Tree (SC037371)	Adequate		Adequate	→
Liberty House (SC037521)	Adequate		Adequate	→
Silverwood (SC369339)	Good		Good	→
St. Edmund's (SC033587)	Good		Adequate	→
Wood View (SC375540)	Good		Good	→

9. Care Leavers	Number	Total	%	Prev. Period
NI 147 - Care leavers in suitable accommodation*	170	176	96.6%	96.3%
NI 148 - Care leavers in employment, education or training**	111	176	63.1%	52.3%

10. Children Missing and Youth Offending	Children	Instances	%
LAC missing from care	59	158	
Children missing from home	93	156	
Children looked after for over one year and aged 10-17 involved with Youth Offending Services	7	198	3.5%

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date:	21st October, 2014
Title:	Rotherham Independent Reviewing Officer Service - Annual Report for the Year April 2013 - March 2014
Directorate:	Safeguarding, Children and Families Children and Young People's Service

1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of practice in relation to children looked after by Rotherham Local Authority. It will highlight the progress made during 2013-14 within the IRO Service in Children and Young People's Service, whilst also providing some examination of the challenges posed, and recognising and planning around the areas for development. The report will look at achievements and successes in respect of the outcomes for our children and young people. It is hoped this report also serves as a voice for Rotherham's looked after children and young people.

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), along with other Officers has a duty to fulfil their corporate parent role in respect of individual children. The role involves regular thorough review of the child's Care Plan, it means negotiating for best outcomes, at times challenging practice and decision making, operating in a timely way, working in partnership and solidly encouraging the participation of children and young people and those with legal parental responsibility for the child, as appropriate.

Over the past few years there has been discussion and national debate about how it is best to ensure IRO's are able to fulfil their role.

2. Purpose of the Service and the Legal Context

IRO's work within the wide statutory framework of the legislation which governs children's social care. Their specific role in regard to looked after children however, is governed by a suite of statutory guidance namely the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010, which came into force from 1st April 2011.

The Guidance places statutory duties on the IRO:-

- To monitor the local authority's performance in respect of their functions in relation to the child's case (not just the Review).

- To participate in any review of the child's case.
- To ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority.
- To perform any other function which is prescribed in the regulations

In undertaking these duties, the IRO has specific responsibilities:-

- To promote the voice of the child (child at the centre of the work).
- To ensure that plans for looked after children are based on a detailed and informed assessment, are up to date, effective and provide a response to each child's needs.
- To identify any gaps in the assessment process or provision of service.
- To make sure the child understands how an advocate could help, and also understands their entitlement to one.
- To offer a safeguard to any 'drift' in care planning for looked after children and the delivery of services to them.
- To monitor the activity of the responsible authority as a corporate parent in ensuring that care plans have given proper consideration and weight to the child's wishes and feelings and that, where appropriate, the child fully understands the implications of any changes made to their care plan

Through 2013 and early 2014 the changes to the role of the IRO have been the subject of an Ofsted thematic review in (March 2013) closely followed by the NCB publishing research in 2013 and 2014 around the efficacy of IRO services (March 2014). The NCB and Ofsted reports look closely at the ability of the IRO to be the voice of the child in Care planning and challenge LA's where appropriate, in terms of their corporate parenting role and decision making. The foreword to the NCB research was written by Mr Justice Peter Jackson and within this he makes a comment highlighting what an effective IRO and IRO service needs to be:

'The Independent Reviewing Officer must be the visible embodiment of our commitment to meet our legal obligations to this special group of children. The health and effectiveness of the IRO service is a direct reflection of whether we are meeting that commitment, or whether we are failing.'

3. Profile of the IRO Service

The Rotherham IRO Service is situated within the Safeguarding Unit and has grown to cover the Foster Care IRO. Other teams and services within the Unit include Child Protection Conference Chairs, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Rights 2 Rights Service (Children's Rights Service), including Independent Visitors.

In addition to the core function of the role; monitoring and reviewing Children's Care Plans, the IRO Service is also involved in:

- Meetings on individual cases such as strategy meetings, planning meetings, meetings under LADO procedures, network meetings.
- Wider consultation on issues relating to looked after children.
- Auditing work as part of the Quality Assurance Framework (across the range of casework, not solely LAC).
- Training and development, including inputting to the training of Independent Visitors and Volunteers, and delivering a presentation to the Family Courts Forum.
- Assisting with addressing of complaints and investigations.
- Supporting staff induction and awareness raising across the service.
- Providing opportunities for shadowing by other staff and students, to assist learning and development of the wider workforce.
- Highlighting good practice (by workers/partner agencies/carers), as well as feeding back evidence of poor practice, concerns about placements or safeguarding issues (through Dispute Resolution process; see later in report, or for example, through liaison with LADO in cases of safeguarding issues and professionals/foster carers/residential staff).
- Working jointly with Child Protection Conference Chairs on cases where children are subject to a CP Plan and become Looked After, to gain clarity of status. As part of this work a streamlined process was developed to manage such instances. The process is in line with both the IRO Handbook and the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Staffing - Developing a Stable and Permanent Team

There has been considerable change and development within the Rotherham IRO team since 2010. In 2011 The implementation of the Care Planning and Placement Review Regulations, and the IRO Handbook has had national impact on the role of the IRO setting out clear additional duties in relation to visiting / communication with children before reviews, 'monitoring' the case between reviews, being kept up to date on key changes in the child's or

families circumstances and creating a clear process for IRO's to raise and address challenge. This led to the recommendation from Government that the appropriate IRO caseload is between 50-70 children

By September 2011 the IRO team was operating with 5.6 IRO's plus a full-time Manager (Assistant Safeguarding Manager/IRO Manager). At this period caseloads of the full-time IRO's were around 65-70, in line with the IRO Handbook.

Through 2012 there were changes within the team management structure and an agreed reduction in a full time IRO post, this created an increase in IRO workload and agreement was achieved for a further 0.5 post within the IRO team. Through 2013 there has been a period of some limited agency cover and recruitment to the Senior Safeguarding Officer Role (manager for the IRO's) and to a vacant IRO post in October and current staffing stands at 5.1 IRO's (4 full time posts, 1 x 0.6 post, 1 x full-time 'split' post which provides around 0.5 capacity to the IRO team). In March 2014 the average IRO Case load stood at 78 per IRO with the number of LAC standing at 394.

As mentioned in the last IRO annual report, there was development of and recruitment to a full-time IRO post to cover Foster Carer Annual Reviews in July 2013. This post now sits within the IRO team.

The recruitment drives described above have resulted in successful recruitment of staff in compliance with the Care Planning Regulations. Across the team there is a wealth of relevant experience and knowledge. The team is also now more representative of the children and young people in care in terms of gender; however, the ethnic mix of the permanent team does not reflect that of children in care in Rotherham.

Caseloads

The Care Planning Regulations 2010 are clear in suggesting an average caseload of between 50-70 cases per full-time IRO. This was largely achieved in Rotherham late 2011 through to mid-2012. With the staffing changes described above, caseloads rose in 2012 to 70-80+ per full-time IRO and while they were at times lower through 2013; they have been above the recommended 70 per IRO throughout 2013 and into 2014. This impacts on the IRO's capacity to undertake all the required tasks and responsibilities of the role to a consistently high standard, and at times affects the capacity to fulfil all requirements. The key area where this can be seen is in that a number of notes from meetings are not written up within the 20 working days timescale. It has also impacted on the team's ability to be involved in development and other work across the wider children's service.

A key part of the IRO's role is the work in between each LAC Review that takes place for a child – tracking cases and issues in order to improve the quality of casework and to ensure drift and delays for children are avoided, and to increase the level and quality of participation of children and young people in the process of their Review. At times this can be less at the forefront than would be desired, due to caseload pressures:

Average caseload per full-time IRO

April 13	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 14	Feb	Mar
79	78	79	79	78	78	76	75	74	76	77	78

Numbers of children in care

April 13	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 14	Feb	Mar
396	393	396	394	390	390	382	376	369	384	388	394

Training and Development

All IRO's have attended training days and opportunities for development, in line with their HCPC registration, as a minimum. Changes in staff, including at times use of temporary agency IRO's means that there have been periods of revisiting core IRO skills and working towards achieving a consistency of practice across the IRO team. The appointment to the role of Senior Safeguarding Officer in July 2013, has allowed for some consolidation work around key areas of practice within team meetings and an away day has meant that there is a clearer and sharper focus on the DRP process. There have been developments in terms of gathering and following up on informal and DRP concerns and this remains an ongoing key area of practice that the whole IRO team work on developing themselves but also supporting all professionals around understanding and working through the process to promote better outcomes for our LAC children.

The IRO team have regular weekly 'Keep in Touch' meetings where allocation of any new cases is undertaken. Additionally, there are once monthly (2.5 hour) team meetings where practice and performance issues are discussed, and opportunity is taken to distribute and discuss any relevant information such as changes in legislation, new initiatives, and share practice and training experience. This time is often used to form and maintain appropriate professional links with partner agencies, and other professionals within children's services.

In terms of specific training, in the period 2013 - 2014, IROs have attended training sessions on:-

- Child Sexual Exploitation (awareness raising).
- SDQ/Attachment training.
- BAAF Adoption Activity Day workshop
- Delegated Responsibilities (foster carers).
- Personal Education Plans.

- Conference on Improving Educational Outcomes for Looked After Children.
- Work of the Looked After and Adopted Children Support Team (LAACST).
- Attended the Regional IRO conference/event, which included a legal expert and opportunities to share good practice and developments.

4. Performance

Consistency of practice delivery

At the point a child becomes looked after, the IRO manager oversees the allocation of an IRO, which takes place within one week maximum, generally much sooner. Weekly allocation meetings ensure this happens in a timely way. In line with the IRO Handbook and good practice, changes of IRO are avoided wherever possible, and **there is consistency of IRO allocation across sibling groups. We provide continuity** of IRO if children leave care and then become looked after at a later time, ensuring the same IRO is re-allocated wherever possible.

LAC Reviews

From April 2013 to March 2014 the IRO's managed **1065** LAC Reviews, with **1062** recorded as taking place within the required timescale.

Date Review Completed	Review in Timescale	Total No. of Reviews
April 2013	86	86
May	97	97
June	60	60
July	138	138
August	47	47
September	80	80
October	107	109
November	90	91
December	81	81
January 2014	100	100
February	74	74
March	102	102
TOTAL	1062	1065

In respect of the Reviews which are recorded as having taken place outside of statutory timescale, upon further analysis it was identified:

- That one review was out of timescale following the IRO having leave - the review being planned to take place on the latest date possible (due date). The SW was then absent on sick leave (10 days out of timescale).
- A second review went out of timescale due to multiple meetings happening where the case was discussed and the IRO completing one siblings review, but not another's (3 weeks out of timescale)
- The third and final review was due to an earlier review being completed as a series of meetings and then the planned review being rearranged out of timescale, when it had to again be cancelled due to SW sick leave (3 days out of timescale)

A number of Reviews were completed as a series of meetings to support gathering the views of all parties and seeing children in their placements. Over the next year I expect to collate clearer data to explore some of the trends behind this.

Participation of Children and Young People

At the time of writing this report there is further information required in relation to the participation codes / data of Looked after children and their Reviews. This seems to be linked to a systems issue, following the change over from Swift to CCM in the July / August period. This data is expected shortly and will be offered in an addendum report as soon as this is received.

The voice of the child

As part of the working group developing the RMBC strategy for looked after children in Rotherham, one of the key themes is the voice of the looked after child and how this is heard and acted upon within their reviews and care planning. Whilst all feedback and input from children and young people is managed on an individual basis within each LAC Review, it is also important to consider this information from a more strategic viewpoint. It was agreed that because each child (over 4 years) is sent a consultation booklet prior to their LAC Review, these could offer some direct insight into if our looked after children are happy with the support and services they are being offered and if their views are being heard and responded to. There are 2 separate types of booklet, one for primary school age children and one for young people of 11+ years. Those returned are included within the Review record and placed on the child's file.

It was agreed that a snapshot would be taken of the year, and the reviews taking place in the month of March 2014 were chosen. The feedback was analysed and provided some important feedback. In respect of the reviews held in March 2014, **41 children and young people** returned their forms

From this feedback it was found:-

- 90% of Looked after children and 77% of young people are happy where they are living
- 90% of Looked after children and 80% of Young People feel they can talk to their social worker
- 89% of Looked after children and 100% of Young People understand what contact means
- 60% of Looked After children and 57% of Young People are happy with their contact arrangements
- 100% of Looked after children and 84% of Young People are not worried about their Health
- 20% of Looked After children are unsure and 40% of Young People sometimes having problems with bullying
- 89% of Looked After Children and 87% of Young People understand why they are looked after

This information allows us as an IRO service and our colleagues within the LAC service as well as other who are corporate parents, to know where we need to focus our support and services. It also allows us to reflect on what is working positively for some of your young people. It is important to reflect the 41 children who provided the feedback do represent 10 % of our current LAC population.

Further work is to take place following the next reviews of these young people, to see if they have the same positives to share or same worries, and to see if appropriate actions have been taken to support them. We also hope to develop regular collation and analysis of the young people's views, so this can be monitored on a quarterly basis to consider any ongoing or emerging themes.

Advocacy for children and young people and Independent Visitors

Advocacy for looked after children and young people is provided within Rotherham through the Rights to Rights Service, which is based within the Safeguarding Unit. The (volunteer) Independent Visitor service is also based within Safeguarding. Both services are managed by the Children's Rights Manager, who in turn is managed by the Safeguarding Unit Manager.

Independent Reviewing Officers play a vital role in liaising where necessary, with the Children's Rights Service, to ensure children and young people are in receipt of a service from an Advocate, or an Independent Visitor, as appropriate.

In regard to the provision of Independent Visitors, the IRO has a particular role, and responsibilities. The appropriateness of the continuing appointment of the particular Independent visitor and indeed of any Independent Visitor for an individual child or young person is considered at each statutory review:

- The IRO must be satisfied that the appointment is in the child/young person's continuing interest.
- The IRO must also ensure that effective liaison and communication arrangements are in place between the Independent Visitor and others involved in the child and young person's care.

- In such circumstances, the IRO plays a vital role, within their communication with the child/young person in establishing the child's views

Within Rotherham, we have 17 young people who are receiving a Volunteer Independent Visitor service and 2 further matches have also been made.

Participation of Parents/those with Parental Responsibility

Alongside facilitating and ensuring children's participation in the Review of their Care Planning, IRO's also work hard at supporting parental participation in the process. This includes occasions where there is a conflict of interest and perhaps the young person's attendance at a meeting is prioritised; in such circumstances the IRO will arrange a separate meeting/discussion with the parent. IRO's will also meet separately with parents on the occasions when a decision has been made to exclude one parent, for example, due to conflict or domestic abuse between parents. Information is input to the records/database in respect of parental involvement in LAC Reviews, detailing invitations sent, exclusions and attendance. There has been liaison with the performance/data team in respect of achieving reporting of this area, however, for the purpose of this report it has not been possible to gain any detailed data/analysis. This will be an area for continued consideration with Performance Section/Analyst colleagues, and it is anticipated will be part of future Annual and Interim reports.

Complaints

During the year 2013-14, there has been 1 complaint received, relating to the LAC Independent Reviewing Service. The complaint was made by a father, unhappy with the IRO that Chaired his child's review. This was explored by the Senior Safeguarding Officer and the YP did not wish to progress this issues and the father then did not wish to progress with this complaint.

There has also been one complaint with regard to the Foster carer IRO. This related to the conduct of the foster Care annual review. This was explored by the Senior Safeguarding Officer and not upheld, however learning points around bringing up issues of concerns in a timely way was taken from this complaint for future service development.

5. Conduct of the Local Authority in relation to children's cases

IRO Monitoring and Challenge

The IRO Handbook and Care Planning Regulations, 2010, clearly place responsibility upon the IRO to 'monitor the child's case' on an ongoing basis. There is the expectation that the IRO will challenge management where necessary and 'champion' positive care planning which is timely and relevant in respect of individual children. As part of the monitoring function, the IRO also has a duty to monitor the performance of the local authority's function as a corporate parent and to identify any areas of poor practice. IRO's seek to ensure good outcomes for children. They do this on an individual basis through the quality assurance role they impose within the LAC Review

process. Some examples are; in reviewing a child's care plan they will ensure diets are healthy and culturally appropriate, statutory health assessments are taking place, that the child is receiving appropriate support within school/education, and that plans and arrangement for their contact with relevant people is appropriate.

Much work is generally undertaken within individual review processes, in prompting and encouraging carers and workers on such issues, rather than such resulting in formal escalation/dispute processes. This level of scrutiny, monitoring and challenge is part of the QA role undertaken by the IRO, and routinely applied within the casework of the IRO.

In the event of issues such as concern relating to resources, poor practice, or the implementation of a care plan, IRO's will undertake liaison with the team to seek resolution, often participating in professionals meetings, or bringing Reviews forward, to an earlier date.

Dispute Resolution Process

A key function of the IRO is to resolve problems arising out of the care planning process.

The IRO Handbook and Care Planning Regulations outlines the requirement of each Local Authority to have in place a local 'Dispute Resolution Process' This is a formal process through which an IRO can escalate their concern to the appropriate management level. Rotherham's Dispute Resolution Process (DRP) was formulated and implemented from January 2011, prior to the statutory requirement for such from April 2011. **(DRP policy, guidance and relevant forms are Appendix to this report).**

As outlined above, the IRO's undertake considerable work in seeking to resolve informally, and at the lowest possible level, any issues of concern in respect of planning for children. Such 'informal concerns' are communicated in writing to the Social Workers, Team Managers and on occasion if appropriate the Service Manager, on the same document as the Review decisions and recommendations (Key Actions), within 5 working days of the Review meeting taking place. This record is placed on the child's file.

If matters are placed in the Dispute Resolution Process in order for the IRO to escalate their concern to the appropriate management level, in Rotherham this means to Team Manager at Stage One, Service Manager at Stage Two and to Director of Safeguarding, Children and Families if Stage Three.

The dispute resolution process details timescales of 20 working days maximum to resolve 'disputes'/problems with care planning.

The IRO has the power within Care Planning Regulations to refer a matter to CAFCASS at any point in the dispute resolution process if they feel such is appropriate.

IRO Activity from April 2013 to March 2014 in respect of resolving 'Informal Concerns', and matters which are progressed through the Dispute Resolution Process

	Informal Concerns	Stage 1 DRP	Stage 2 DRP	Stage 3 DRP
April 2013	11	-	-	-
May	14	1	-	-
June	9	-	3	-
July	22	2	-	-
August	9	1	1	-
Sept	17	3	1	-
October	10	4	-	-
November	18	4	3	-
December	9	1	-	-
January	10	-	-	-
February	14	5	-	-
March 2014	16	14	12	-

As noted in the above table, the majority of the concerns raised by IRO's in respect of care planning for children were dealt with at the 'Informal stage'. However following an IRO Team away day in February 2014 and a refocus on using the DRP process consistently across the team there has been an increase in the use of the DRP stage 1 in February and then DRP stage 2 in March (a number of which were escalations from stage 1)

Analysis of the work undertaken in resolving Informal Concerns and matters which have been progressed through the formal Dispute process reveals the following themes:

Issues and themes dealt with under 'informal concerns':

- Absence of LAC statutory visits – 97
- Deficits in recording/key documents – 4
- SW report for LAC Review and/or Care Plan not on file – 36
- Placement with Parent's assessment not on file/not authorised – 1
- PEP's not up to date, or not on file – 14
- Lack of up to date Health Assessment – 11
- Concerns around care planning, including around contact issues – 13
- Concern around decision-making around safeguarding issues and risk being managed in placement - 6
- Instability of placement – 6
- Suitability of placement – 7
- Lack of Risk assessment / assessment due to specific changes in circumstances of placement - 4

- Lack of clarity around legal status – 3
- Delay in commencing legal proceedings regarding revocation of Placement Order / Care Order - 11 / 1
- Delay in progressing permanency, eg through long term links in foster placements – 2
- Delay in service provision, eg CAMHs and education - 1
- Delay in resources/planning, eg for building extensions – 1
- Delay in child or carer/parent receiving explanations/information regarding decisions, eg life story work/letterbox arrangements – 2
- Concern about provision of specific specialised support to young person / placement – 3
- Concerns around how a YP's identity needs were not being met in placement and required additional support -3
- Concerns around the provision of placement post 18 (young people wanting to remain in their foster placements) – 2
- Delay in progressing the LT match of YP with current carers – 4
- Suitability of placement – 1
- Care planning issues from Jan 2014 - 24

Since the end of December there has been a change in the way that DRP's are recorded on the central spreadsheet and this has impacted on some of the data and means that issues around care planning are recorded more generally and the 24 reflects a number of issues around the quality of care plans, if there is a care plan/ LAC review report on file or prepared for the report. Consideration needs to be given to how this data is recorded in the future to ensure the themes are reflected more accurately.

Issues raised under Stage One of the Formal Dispute Process:

- Lack of Statutory Visits (more than one visit) - 18
- Concern over care planning – regarding a child being returned home without a clear assessment or plan
- Concern around decision-making; safeguarding issues and risk being managed in placement.
- Delay in health assessment taking place – 2
- Delay in an updated PEP - 2
- Delay in application to revoke Placement Order - 3
- Delay /lack of progress in care planning
- Delay in permanence planning in respect of SGO
- Lack of updated Care Plan (escalated from informal concerns)
- Delay in progressing long term match with foster carers -4
- Concerns around the provision of placement post 18 (young person felt to be at significant vulnerability due to not meeting adults criteria)

Issues raised under Stage Two of the Formal Dispute Process:

- Concern around decision-making; safeguarding issues and risk being managed in placement.(escalated from stage 1)
- Delay in permanence planning in respect of SGO (escalated from stage 1)
- Concerns around the provision of placement post 18 (impact emotionally and on education).

- More than one statutory visit missing from the file and raised through DRP1 but then escalated due to LAC of response – 8
- Placement suitability and effective long term planning for a YP before and after a placement breakdown.
- Delay in therapeutic provision for a YP and the impact on his LT placement stability
- Contact concerns not being assessed following expressed wishes of the children.
- Delay in revocation of placement Order – 5
- Concerns around delay of revocation of Placement Order on Long term Match - 4

Comparison to the figures from last year and identifying themes:

- There have been a significant number of informal concerns raised around statutory visits: 54 by the end of November 2013 with a further 43 in the final quarter of the year. In the previous year this had been 56 for the whole year. Please note if a matter is raised via informal concerns this should reflect that only 1 statutory visit has been missed or that it has taken place but not been recorded.
- There has also been a significant increase with regard to cases where more than one statutory visit is missing for some children, and from February 2014 this has been rigorously addressed via DRP stage 1. This accounts for some of the increase in the use of DRP stage 1's in February and March 2014
- There have been 60 concerns around care plans either not being on file available for the review of the quality of care planning; this was at 36 for the full year previously.
- This year there were 159 informal concerns raised (143 last year). There were 35 issues raised via DRP stage 1 (22 last year). There have been 20 issues raised via DRP stage 2 (5 last year). As highlighted and visible from the above chart a large number of the DRP Stage 1's and Stage 2's have been since February 2014, highlighting a significant period of intense work around issues.
- There has been a sustained increase in concern around Placement Orders not being revoked within an appropriate timescale and these have been escalated through the process and are currently at DRP 2 being addressed via Service Managers.
- The issues around PEPs and Health assessments continue to be around the same level from the year previously however due to a delay in them being addressed there has been increase in increase in this issue at the DRP stage 1.
- There has been an increase in concerns around care planning and statutory visits that has escalated at times due to a lack of feedback from team managers at all points of the process.

- On a positive note there were no concerns raised for the 12 month period around delays in children being placed for adoption; the transfer of cases between workers or criminal injuries compensation.
- New issues for this year are around addressing issues around identity, therapeutic provision, timely assessment around contact and a rise in concern around the stability of placements.

Feedback in respect of positive practice

Alongside the challenge when faced with areas of concern in respect of practice and care planning for children, IRO's also provide positive feedback when appropriate.

During the period April 2013-March 2014, there have been occasions when IRO's have sent written information to Social Workers and Managers complementing and in recognition of particularly good quality practice.

6. Foster Care IRO

The Foster Care IRO is a newly established permanent post dedicated to Reviews of foster carers, and based in the Safeguarding Team. This full-time role has no responsibility for children's reviews. The line management of the Foster Care IRO allows this role to sit alongside children's IRO's, and to enable better communication and linking up of issues for Looked after children, who are fostered by Rotherham carers, and to support independence from the fostering service.

Achievements since July 2013:

- Dedicated admin support has increased the efficiency of foster care reviews and supported a better level of written consultation for Foster Care reviews. Child's consultation booklets are also being associated to the child's file
- The Foster Care IRO is invited to all strategy/LADO meetings relating to Rotherham foster carers, to support a robust service in terms of following through on safeguarding issues and revisiting these within the carers Annual review.
- Reviews are taking place in time scale from April 2013 to March 2014 – 2 foster care reviews are outside of the required of timescale.
- There is an emphasis on good quality Reviews, including preparation. Some Review have been being stood down when reports not received in advance, and the quality of reports is being challenged where appropriate
- The foster care IRO is an established member of regional Fostering IRO forum with RMBC hosting the last forum.

7. Summary

During 2013-14, there have been further changes in the IRO team and management structure, which is viewed as positive. Such has supported the IRO team and service to continue to provide an effective review and monitoring of Care Planning for Rotherham's looked after Children. The team has also worked positively to raise the profile of children where there are issues and concerns at times, due to wider issues within the authority. The

more robust and visible mechanism that is now in place around informal concerns and DRP's allows the IRO 's to highlight their knowledge and insight into what is important for the looked after young people in Rotherham, and to highlight what is working well and what needs to be addressed. By collation, this information in one place, such also supports senior management to consider and see if there are any wider patterns around service provision or practice that may need to be addressed on a more strategic level.

The service has contributed to improved outcomes for Looked after Children through supporting the participation of children and young people, their parents and carers and other relevant people in the decision making about the children's care. The IRO team has continued to work positively with wider agencies and with the changes in the legal climate and the implications for when young people become LAC and when decisions around their future need to be made, the IRO's continue to work closely with Guardians.

Strengths

- Reviews indicate a good level of child participation and evidence of the voice of the child, including through links with the Advocacy service (children's rights service) and links with Independent Visitors.
- IRO's are providing challenge in respect of a range of practice, resource and care planning issues. In working to raise the profile and consistency of this challenge across the borough, the IRO service is able to highlight gaps in provision and areas of need for individual children, whilst also highlight more widespread 'themes and patterns'
- The number of statutory LAC Reviews held on time has increased. However, this needs to improve further, and with increased management capacity, weekly monitoring will assist this. The issues around miscalculation need to be eradicated.
- The IRO team now consists of permanent and experienced staff and with recent management capacity changes the areas for development are receiving the necessary attention.
- The Foster Care IRO role within the Safeguarding unit is already proving to be very positive in terms of managing complex issues and safeguarding issues around carers. There is also a positive commitment from the Fostering Team to work together with the Foster Care IRO to further improve the quality and timeliness of Foster Care Reviews.

Areas for Consideration/Action Plan – Next Steps

1. Development of a QA framework around the IRO activity, including qualitative audit of the IRO activity, direct observations and peer evaluation. This work has commenced under a 'pilot' through May and will be in place from **October 2014**.
2. Ongoing robust individual and team evaluation of the Dispute Resolution Activity. There is agreement in place that this will be shared

with SMT and with Team manager's on a monthly basis from **June 2014**, to support an understanding of the areas where there are concerns around provision or practice across Rotherham, and also within locality Teams.

3. The Foster Care IRO to work with the Senior Safeguarding Officer and Fostering to develop a bespoke DRP for Foster care Reviews by **October 2014**
4. To put in place strategies for ensuring Reviews are held within timescale (**this is monitored on a weekly basis and discussed across the team monthly**).
5. For the Senior Safeguarding Officer/Manager to work with IRO's around the timeliness of reports produced from the review meeting, and the timely distribution of such reports. This involves reviewing the current length of the IRO report and working with the IRO team to develop a report style that is focused and succinct, and remains fit for purpose. Work on the Review Agenda's and IRO audits will support work around this over the next 3 months (**by October 2014**).
6. Consideration needs to be given to capacity and IRO caseloads; since July 2012 they have been over the upper limit determined within the IRO Handbook/Care Planning Regulations – this is a risk factor and continues to impact on service delivery.
7. The IRO team will work with social work teams to develop a joint understanding around the monitoring role of the IRO. The IRO team will work to develop a more formal agreement around a 'monitoring meeting / discussion' on cases, wherever the IRO has concerns around key actions / informal concerns being progressed, or potential issues around drift and delay. (**Post July 2014**) This cannot currently be in place on all cases due to high IRO caseloads.
8. To work with Performance Section colleagues to improve team/Review data collection and analysis processes. To provide a clearer picture regarding outcomes of IRO activity. To confirm the data set and ensure that the manner in which data is collated and input leads to effective data/reporting which can be analysed.
9. To follow up on the feedback offered from children and young people in March 2014, and to expand on this work and build in feedback from younger people, carers/parents and other agencies about the Review experience, and for such to be evaluated and reported upon. (Next cohort to be reviewed is Reviews in **July 2014**). To also explore the collation of the Foster Carer IRO consultation's and how these can be used to further evidence the voice of the child and improve the service.
10. To further explore the development of a protocol for Young People chairing their own reviews. This will be supported by the development of the review agenda document (**September 2014**)

11. IRO Manager/Safeguarding Manager's involvement in the Rotherham LAC Strategy Group, to focus on progressing a range of issues which will impact and support lives of looked after children. (**Ongoing**)
12. Regular attendance of designated IRO at the regional IRO practitioners group. Regular attendance of the IRO Manager/Safeguarding Manager at regional IRO Managers meetings. (**Ongoing**)

Rebecca Wall
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Rotherham Safeguarding Children Unit

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August 2014

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Corporate Parenting Panel
2.	Date:	21st October, 2014
3.	Title:	Looked After Children Strategy Progress Report September 2014
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

This report provides a progress report on actions taken to implement the Looked After Children Strategy.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting :

6.1 Note the progress made in implementing actions detailed in the Looked After Children Strategy

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Introduction

The Looked After Children Strategy was drafted in January 2014 and has been considered and approved previously at Corporate Parenting Panel and at the Improving Lives Committee. The strategy document has since been amended and updated slightly and is attached for information at Appendix 1.

7.2 Strategic Priority Objectives

The strategy identifies five Priority Objectives as follows:

Priority Objective 1:

To improve the degree and timeliness of placement stability and permanence and ensure children are able to enjoy continuity of relationships.

Priority Objective 2:

To improve the emotional wellbeing and physical health of looked after children.

Priority Objective 3:

To improve educational progress and attainment and narrow the gap between attainment of looked after children and their non-looked after peers.

Priority Objective 4:

To improve the support for and opportunities open to care leavers sufficiently to increase the number and proportion of them who are in employment, education or training (EET)

Priority Objective 5:

To listen to children and young people so as to ensure that their views influence their own plans, as well as wider service delivery and development.

7.3 Progress made Against Actions in the Strategy

For each priority objective the strategy identified a number of actions required to get the service from 'where we are now to where we want to be'. The following section will list those actions and detail progress made on implementing them.

7.3.1 Priority Objective 1:

To improve the degree and timeliness of placement stability and permanence and ensure children are able to enjoy continuity of relationships.

Action

- Development of a new Sufficiency Strategy to improve the number and range of placement options for looked after children and young people.

Progress

- **Significant progress had been made in this area. The Sufficiency Strategy has been developed and good progress has been made in implementing it. Higher numbers of foster carers and adopters have been approved, more children are fostered locally and in-house, new plans have been made to provide more long term residential provision in borough at Silverwood, new schemes such as Fostering Plus and Fostering to Adopt have been established, Staying Put arrangements have more than doubled in number, and timeliness of adoptions is improving considerably.**

Action

- Development of roadshow workshops on placement stability for staff. The workshops will be delivered to children's social workers and staff in family placement and residential services over the early months of 2014. The workshops focus on good practice in achieving placement stability and are informed by theory and research findings.

Progress

- **Completed**

Action

- Restructuring the model of service delivery for care leavers and for looked after children aged 16 and 17 to ensure that organisational structures promote continuity of relationships. The current LAC service for 16 and 17 year olds and the leaving care service are provided by Action for Children. The plan is for the service to come back in house.

Progress

- **Completed**

7.3.2 Priority Objective 2

To improve the emotional wellbeing and physical health of looked after children.

Action

- We will systematically use the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire as a means to measure children and young people's emotional wellbeing on entry to care and periodically to measure progress.

Progress

- **The system has been amended so that initial S & D Questionnaires are completed 3 months after entry to care and then follows up are annually after this. The LAACTST staff have been analysing aggregate results and outcomes**

Action

- We will use collated results for the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire to inform our commissioning and delivery of therapeutic services.

Progress

- **This work is being undertaken now by our Clinical Psychologist LAACTST manager and will inform commissioning practice.**

Action

- Commissioners will work with the local CAMHS to ensure there is provision of sufficient services to meet the needs of our looked after children population.

Progress

- **Commissioners and operational managers have been working with the Clinical Commissioning Group to develop a CAMHS strategy.**

Action

- The Looked After and Adopted Children's Support and Therapeutic Team(LAACST) will support the new Fostering Plus foster care placements to ensure placements for adolescents and children with complex needs benefit from therapeutic input. We need to maintain and improve on this.

Progress

- **The LAACTST have supported the development of the scheme. The first carer was approved in September with two more projected for October.**

Action

- Managers and commissioners will work with CAMHS, the Looked After and Adopted Children's Therapeutic Support Team and other identified services to develop therapeutic support services for young people who have been sexually exploited.

Progress

- **Additional funds have been approved by the Council for the provision of additional therapeutic service to support young people who have suffered sexual exploitation.**

Action

- Joint work will take place between social care and the Looked After Children's Nurse and other health service professionals to improve timeliness of initial health assessments

Progress

- **Further action and progress is needed in this area**

7.3.3 Priority Objective 3:

To improve educational progress and attainment and narrow the gap between attainment of looked after children and their non-looked after peers.

Action

- Our Virtual School Head Teacher is now deployed full time in this role and can from now on focus exclusively on it.

Progress

- **The new Virtual School Head does now have other responsibilities. However the post holder is in a senior position in the authority with sufficient leverage to push through change and development.**

Action

- Revising Personal Education Plan templates to ensure the document more requires clear details about educational progress and attainment.

Progress

- **Templates have been amended.**

Action

- Establishing a new procedure for the completion of Personal Education Plans which involves the Designated Teacher in the school taking the lead role.

Progress

- **A new process has been established which requires Personal Education Plans to be reviewed and revised on a termly basis. Progress monitoring returns and implementation of the plans will be linked to the allocation of the Pupil Premium.**

Action

- Establishing a new joint education and social care panel, chaired by the Virtual School Head Teacher, to address individual admissions/exclusion cases. Panel to meet monthly and include Virtual School Head Teacher, Service Manager looked after Children, Get Real Team Manager and Admissions Officer/Manager.

Progress

- **A new Raising Attainment Group has been established which meets monthly and is chaired by the Virtual School Head.**

Action

- Work towards extending the remit of the Virtual School so that it spans age 0 to 25.

Progress

- **The Virtual School is currently moving from a compulsory school age model to a 0 to 18 model and will look to develop onwards from there.**

7.3.4 Priority Objective 4:

To improve the support for and opportunities open to care leavers sufficiently to increase the number and proportion of them who are in employment, education or training (EET)

Action

- The LAC service for young people aged 16 and 17 and the leaving care service is being transferred on April 1st 2014 to become a service run in-house directly by the local authority again. The new model of service proposed will enable young people to maintain their existing social worker up to age 18, rather than having to change social worker at age 16 in the current service, and to retain the same personal advisor from age 16 to 25 rather than having one before age 18 and a different one beyond 18.

Progress

- **Completed**

Action

- We will develop our ability to enable young people in foster care to stay living with their foster carers through enhancement of a range of 'Staying Put' and supported lodgings arrangements.

Progress

- **The Supported Lodgings/Staying Put Coordinator has been re-located into the Fostering Service and Supported Lodgings/Staying Put arrangements have increased from 5 in January to 13 as at September 2014.**

Action

- We will look to work with voluntary organisations to enable young people to take advantage of opportunities to volunteer that will develop their confidence, skills, experiences and employability.

Progress

- **Work to be developed.**

Priority Objective 5:

To listen to children and young people so as to ensure that their views influence their own plans, as well as wider service delivery and development.

Action

- Development and support of the LAC Council so that it is as representative as possible of looked after children and takes a key lead role steering and championing looked after children's involvement and influence on service development and service delivery.

Progress

- **The LAC Council has met with members and officers throughout the year. It has worked as a forum for discussing service developments and consulting with young people. The Council has undertaken some of its own consultation work and presented it to the Local Authority.**
- **The LAC Council members were supported by the Local Authority to undertake an overseas trip to Portugal, having worked on the planning and organising of the trip themselves as a group.**
- **Efforts will be made to support the Council to have members involved that are more representative of the whole looked after children population.**

Action

- Regular collation and review of consultation papers completed by children and young people for their statutory looked after children review and the review of the foster carers.

Progress

- **A management exercise collating children and young people's review consultation documents over a 3 month period was undertaken and analysed. There were many positive findings from undertaking the work about how children and young people experience being in care. The same exercise will be undertaken at different points throughout the year.**

Action

- Annual survey of looked after children covering same issues as those covered by the national annual survey undertaken by the Children's Commissioner, so as to allow for comparison with what young people across the country are saying about being in care.

Progress

- **Decision made to wait for annual Children's Commissioner Survey and promote and encourage participation in that by Rotherham looked after children.**

Action

- On-going involvement of young people in staff recruitment, and staff and foster carer training.

Progress

- **Young people are involved in training of foster carers and have been involved in staff recruitment.**

Action

- On-going training for staff and carers on listening and engaging with children and young people.

Progress

- **Ongoing**

Action

- Regular meetings between the Elected Members on the Corporate Parenting Panel and the LAC Council.

Progress

- **The LAC Council have met with Corporate Parenting Panel members and presented a powerpoint presentation of their overseas trip.**

Action

- Supporting the LAC Council to review the extent to which the local authority and partner agencies are delivering on promises made in the Pledge to Looked after Children.

Progress

- **The recent work undertaken by the LAC Council consulting with looked after children about the care they receive will be analysed to measure service performance against the promise made to looked after children.**

Action

- Involvement of the LAC Council in the development of this LAC Strategy.

Progress

- **This has only been undertaken informally and the ongoing strategy implementation needs to be discussed with and involve the LAC Council and looked after children further.**

Action

- Communication strategy to be developed to ensure that all children and young people know about their 'entitlements' as looked after children and care leavers.

Progress

- **A survey of looked after children and young people was undertaken some months ago asking them to what extent they know about their entitlements as looked after children and care leavers. Whilst the young people were relatively aware of their entitlements there were some areas where there was less awareness. Further work is needed on awareness raising.**

8. Finance

8.1 There are no financial matters to report.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

9.1 This is an information report only. The risk of not developing services to looked after children is that their outcomes do not improve and in addition there is the risk of reputational damage to the Council

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

10.1 There is an increasingly high profile on looked after children and in particular there has been a lot of policy initiatives in the areas of adoption, leaving care and children missing and at risk of sexual exploitation. This strategy is looking to address looked after children's outcomes across all areas

11. Background Papers and Consultation

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ROTHERHAM LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN STRATEGY – 2014 to 2017

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council takes its role as Corporate Parent to Looked after Children very seriously. Members and officers understand that looked after children as a group are more vulnerable than their non-looked after peers and that in general, outcomes and life chances are poorer for looked after children than for other children.

1.2. At the same time, it is also recognised that children and young people in care, like their non-looked after peers, need additional support to overcome disadvantage, and have the potential to succeed and prosper in life, so long as they are afforded the right support and opportunities, and the awareness that they as a group are more vulnerable to poor outcomes does not translate into a self-fulfilling prophecy of low aspiration.

1.3. This strategy is an ongoing initiative, rather than a completed piece of work. It sets out improved outcomes for all our children and young people in care and what needs to be done by all those involved in the development and delivery of services to looked after children. Whilst the local authority is the lead agency in developing and implementing this strategy, it has and is being developed and implemented by a range of professionals working in the local authority and key partner agencies, such as, for example, colleagues in health and schools. For a full list of group members see 1.6 below.

1.4. This document and the strategy are separate to but linked to and informed by the following:

- The Corporate Parenting Strategy
- The Children and Young People's Plan 2013-16
- The Looked After Children Statement
- The Corporate Parenting Promise to Looked After Children
- The Pledge to Looked After Children

1.5. A Looked After Children Strategy Group has been established to develop and implement this strategy. The group meets regularly to take the work forward, and has developed smaller sub project groups to take the lead on individual priority areas.

1.6. The Looked After Children Strategy Group is made up of multi-agency professionals working with looked after children in local authority services and professionals working with looked after children in key partner agency services. Membership of the group is as follows:

Paul Dempsey – Service Manager, Family Placements and Residential Services, RMBC, CYPS.

Phil Bradley – Service Manager, Children in Need North and Looked After Children, RMBC, CYPS

Lorraine Lichfield – Virtual School Head – Education

Martin Smith – Get Real Team Manager – Education

Sara Whittaker – Team Manager, Looked After and Adopted Children Support and Therapeutic Team, RMBC, CYPS

Karen Holgate - Looked After Children Nurse, Health

Adrian Hobson – Commissioning, RMBC, CYPS

Paul Stinson – Commissioning, RMBC, CYPS

Morri McDermott – Operations Manager, Residential Services, RMBC, CYPS

Lisa Duvalle – Voice and Influence Officer, RMBC, CYPS

Andy Symcox – Fostering Recruitment Team Manager, RMBC, CYPS

Helen Mangham – Adoption Team Manager, RMBC, CYPS

Rebecca Wall – Independent Reviewing Team Manager, RMBC, CYPS

Mark Connolly – Service Manager, Action for Children Looked after Children and Leaving Care Service.

Anne Hawke – Performance and Improvement Officer, RMBC, CYPS

2. STRATEGY DRIVERS

2.1. There are a number of key drivers for developing an updated strategy for looked after children, as follows:

- The local authority and partner agencies are responsible for making sure that outcomes for Looked after Children are as good as possible in all aspects of their lives as children, young people and in achieving successful independence as adults. This needs to be reviewed and refreshed in conjunction with looked after children.
- The need for a shared vision and agreed priority objectives for all those working with looked after children, both within the local authority and with partner agencies and professionals.
- The requirement and aspiration to improve outcomes for our looked after children.
- The need to ensure our services match up to the new requirements set out in the new Ofsted inspection framework for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers.
- The need to ensure that looked after children services are good value for money, such that we achieve maximum benefit to children's wellbeing and outcomes from our budget, and we invest in services that are evidence based and have a positive impact.

3. STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

3.1. The work in developing and implementing this strategy is essentially centred on answering four key questions:

3.2. As a service, (the word ‘service’ here is used to refer to the whole package or range of services provided by the local authority and partner agencies to looked after children) where do we want to be?

This is about our vision for the service and for looked after children, and identifying priority objectives.

3.3. Where are we now?

In order to answer this question we need to understand how well we are performing in improving children’s outcomes in all the key areas. Where are we strong and where are we less strong? Have we already taken sufficient action to improve outcomes or services for the future or is further action or new initiatives required? What do children and young people say about our services? What about foster carers, adopters, and parents?

3.4. How will we get from where we are now to where we want to be?

What strategies and action programmes do we need to initiate in order to improve services and outcomes? From reviewing services around the country and learning from theory and practice, what should we be doing differently? What are children and young people telling us to do in order to improve services? We will need to identify and focus on what works.

3.5. How will we know we are there?

This is about setting clear goals and targets at the outset so that we can measure our progress. Examples include our performance against national performance indicators, outcomes from Ofsted inspections of looked after children services, and the extent to which feedback from children and young people indicates that services are improving and that they are involved in decisions about their lives and service delivery and service development.

4. WHERE DO WE WANT THE SERVICE TO BE?

4.1 Vision

As a group of multi-agency professional involved in developing and delivering services to looked after children we asked ourselves:

What kind of service do we want to be?

And, how do we want to approach our work?

We have resolved to:

- **Have high aspirations for looked after children**
- **Be strong and inspiring leaders**
- **Have a clear and consistent focus on education**
- **Do all that is possible to ensure looked after children enjoy stable, safe and permanent relationships**
- **Listen and account for the voice of looked after children and young people**
- **Understand and implement what works in improving outcomes**
- **Provide the kind of care and support for looked after children that we would expect and would be good enough for our own children**

4.2. Priority Objectives

The above vision statements set out some key principles about how we will deliver looked after children's services. The following priority objectives define what key achievements and improvements we will be striving to make over the next two years in relation to looked after children's outcomes.

All of the objectives are measureable and they relate to key aspects of children's development. They have been identified as it is clear that success in achieving them will have a significantly positive impact on children during their childhood and in their ability to develop successfully and happily as adults.

Priority Objective 1:

To improve the degree and timeliness of placement stability and permanence and ensure children are able to enjoy continuity of relationships.

Priority Objective 2:

To improve the emotional wellbeing and physical health of looked after children.

Priority Objective 3:

To improve educational progress and attainment and narrow the gap between attainment of looked after children and their non-looked after peers.

Priority Objective 4:

To improve the support for and opportunities open to care leavers sufficiently to increase the number and proportion of them who are in employment, educations or training (EET)

Priority Objective 5:

To listen to children and young people so as to ensure that their views influence their own plans, as well as wider service delivery and development.

5. ACHIEVING OUR PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

In taking the strategy forward we have asked ourselves those four key strategic questions, where do we want to be, where are we now, how do we get from where we are now to where we want to be, and how will we know when we get there, in respect of each of the five priority objectives we have identified.

In addition, key services and teams working with looked after children will develop their annual service development plans based around how they develop to meet the five objectives.

The following sections look at these questions for each of our objectives.

6. PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 1:

To improve the degree and timeliness of placement stability and permanence and ensure children are able to enjoy continuity of relationships.

6.1. Where do we want to be?

6.1.1. We want a Sufficiency Strategy that delivers the necessary number and range of accommodation options for looked after children in and local to Rotherham.

6.1.2. We want our organisational structures to promote continuity of relationships for looked after children with staff and carers and not to create barriers to continuity.

6.1.3. We want our fostering service to provide placements for the range of children and young people requiring them and to leave us less dependent on independent sector fostering and residential provision, much of which is at a distance from Rotherham.

6.1.4. Where children cannot safely be cared for in their immediate birth or extended families, we want to achieve early permanence for as many children as possible via adoption.

6.1.5. We want placement breakdowns to be reduced to a minimum, and support for placements to prevent breakdown to be increased and to include therapeutic input, and planned wraparound support.

6.1.6. We want to be using innovative methods to recruit adopters for sibling groups, disabled children, and older children so that we can secure adoption for as wide a group of children as possible.

6.1.7. We want to proactively seek legal permanence for looked after children through supporting extended family, foster carers, and other connected persons to secure Special Guardianship Orders.

6.1.8. We want our performance against national performance indicators in respect of placement stability for looked after children to improve compared to now and to be better than the national average performance and that of our statistical neighbours.

6.2. Where are we now?

6.2.1 In relation to sufficiency of accommodation, there are currently significant gaps in local provision.

- Significant strides have been made in increasing in-house fostering resources but more progress is needed to recruit local foster carers for teenagers
- Too many children and young people are placed outside and at distance from Rotherham in independent fostering and residential provision
- There is insufficient placement choice for placements made in an emergency
- We have been successful at achieving adoption for difficult to place children but still need to do more.
- A new sufficiency strategy is being drafted and action is being taken to implement it

6.2.2 We will make progress with our organisational structure with the proposed transfer of the Action for Children post 16 LAC and Leaving Care Service into the Local Authority. The Service will transfer on 1st April 2014 and it will improve the 'journey' for young people by removing the need for a change of social worker at age 16 and a change of personal advisor at 18.

There are still other points in a child's journey when they are forced to have a change of social worker by our organisational structure, as children move through the 'Duty Team', the 'Children in Need Team', and then the 'LAC Team'.

Contact for looked after children with their birth families is managed and supervised by a team of unqualified workers, organised and located centrally.

6.2.3 Reliance on high cost and mostly out of borough independent fostering agency placements has reduced from a high of **133** placements in April 2012 to **111** in December 2013 but further progress is needed. The number of in-house fostering placements in December 2013 is **146**. Significant progress is needed ensure that the in-house service is able to accommodate a larger proportion of our looked after population.

6.2.4 We currently have a very high percentage of children leaving care via adoption at **21%** for 2012/13 against national performance of 13%. Progress is needed to increase timeliness of adoptions so that children are placed with their adoptive families without unnecessary delay. Current performance against Adoption Scorecard Measures 1 and 2 is poor. On scorecard measure 1 for 2012/13 it took on average **659 days** between a child becoming looked after and being placed with their adoptive family. On scorecard measure 2, it took on average **309 days** between a child being made subject to a Placement Order and an agency decision on a match for that child in 2012/13. As well as seeking to reduce delay in the adoption process we will be particularly looking to establish early permanence through implementing Fostering to Adopt.

6.2.5 Disruption rates are not high but support for foster carers could be improved, as could systematic learning from disruption meetings.

6.2.6 We have low numbers of kinship foster carers, with **9** currently, and low numbers of children leaving care via Special Guardianship Orders compared to the national average.

6.2.7 Placement stability for looked after children is relatively low with **11%** of looked after children experiencing three or more placements in the year in 2012/13 and just **64%** of children looked after for 2.5 years or more being in the same placement for the last two years.

6.3. How will we get from where we are now to where we want to be?

The following are actions that are already being taken to move the service from where we are to where we want and need to be.

6.3.1. Development of a new Sufficiency Strategy to improve the number and range of placement options for looked after children and young people. Work is on-going on development and delivery of this strategy but the following key actions have been identified:

- Development of a new in-house fostering resource, 'Fostering Plus' to accommodate adolescents and children with complex needs in local family placements. The service will provide more intense placement support, including therapeutic support, in order to reduce placement breakdown and

improve stability. It is intended that the service, as it grows, will reduce the need to place young people in residential accommodation and to place them at distance from Rotherham.

- Maintaining additional staffing in our adoption service in order to build and improve upon our success in 2013/14 in increasing the number of children placed for adoption and adopted.
- Development of a new 'Fostering to Adopt' initiative, in line with Government and Ofsted requirements. Fostering to Adopt aims to place children whose plans are very likely to be adoption with prospective adoptive parents who are also approved as foster parents before the child's plan for adoption has been legally endorsed by the Court. This allows for children to be placed with their forever parents at a younger age.
- Reviewing and revising our commissioning strategy in relation to independent residential accommodation. Commissioners will work with the market to develop more independent provision for our use in and much closer to Rotherham.
- Review of the service and remit of Silverwood Local Authority Children's Home to explore number and nature of placements offered.

6.3.2. Development of roadshow workshops on placement stability for staff. The workshops will be delivered to children's social workers and staff in family placement and residential services over the early months of 2014. The workshops focus on good practice in achieving placement stability and are informed by theory and research findings.

6.3.3. Restructuring the model of service delivery for care leavers and for looked after children aged 16 and 17 to ensure that organisational structures promote continuity of relationships. The current LAC service for 16 and 17 year olds and the leaving care service are provided by Action for Children.

Currently, when Looked after Children reach age 16 they have to have a new social worker and move to the Action for Children service. They also have to change to a new personal adviser when they turn 18 and move from Action for Children's under 18 team to their over 18 team. We think these changes are not helpful for young people at these key transition points in their life and can be avoided. From April 1st 2014 the service detailed above will be run in-house directly by the Council. The new model will allow for young people to keep the same social worker up to age 18 when they leave care and the same personal advisor from age 16 to 25.

These changes will help us to achieve continuity of relationships for young people.

6.4. How will we know when we get there?

6.4.1. Placement stability statistics for looked after children according to Government performance indicators will be significantly improved compared to now, higher than the national average, and higher than statistical neighbours.

6.4.2. The proportion of our looked after children placed in family placements compared to residential placements will have increased compared to now, and will be above the national average and higher than statistical neighbours.

6.4.3. The number of percentage of children adopted from care will have increased compared to now

6.4.4. Our performance on timeliness of adoptions as measured against Adoption Scorecard Measures 1 and 2 will have improved significantly and will be much closer to or meeting Government targets.

6.4.5. Our performance on all measures of the adoption scorecard will be improved compared to now and will be higher than the national average and statistical neighbours.

6.4.6. The proportion of our looked after children placed out of borough will have decreased significantly and be below the national average and statistical neighbours.

6.4.7. Children and young people tell us that they have good stable relationships, they feel safe, have people they can talk to if worried or feeling unsafe, and they feel attached to and part of the family/residential home that they live in.

7. PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 2:

To improve the emotional wellbeing and physical health of looked after children.

7.1. Where do we want to be?

7.1.1. We want to be able to improve children and young people's emotional wellbeing from when they first become looked after and to be able to demonstrate that we are doing so. We will need to make systematic use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire to measure progress here.

7.1.2. We want to have a good understanding of the needs of our looked after population in relation to emotional wellbeing and have therapeutic services and placements options to respond to and meet all such need.

7.1.3. We need a CAMHS strategy and service for looked after children that allows for looked after children in need to have prioritised and timely access to services.

7.1.4. We need all staff and carers involved with looked after children to understand normal and abnormal child development, theories on attachment theory and separation and loss and for their work parenting and caring for looked after children to be informed by such knowledge and understanding.

7.1.5 We want high performance on the percentage of children and young people accessing health assessments and dental appointments regularly and timely.

7.2. Where are we now?

7.2.1 We are not systematically collating and evaluating outcomes across the looked after children population from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires. The questionnaires are currently completed around each looked after child's birthday. This does not always allow for an early assessment of the child's emotional wellbeing on entering care, which in turn would allow us to measure the impact on emotional wellbeing of the new care placement over time.

7.2.2 We need to develop a greater understanding of need in order to inform planning and delivery of services.

7.2.3 The Clinical Commissioning Group are currently drafting a new CAMHS strategy.

7.2.4 Training for staff and carers across the service on attachment is good and the in-house Looked After and Adopted Children's Therapeutic Support Team is an excellent resource for delivering service wide training and case consultation

7.2.5 Progress is needed in increasing timeliness for initial health assessments for children on admission to care and for accessing dental appointments

7.3. How will we get from where we are now to where we want to be?

7.3.1. We will systematically use the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire as a means to measure children and young people's emotional wellbeing on entry to care and periodically to measure progress.

7.3.2. We will use collated results for the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire to inform our commissioning and delivery of therapeutic services.

7.3.4. Commissioners will work with the local CAMHS to ensure there is provision of sufficient services to meet the needs of our looked after children population.

7.3.5. The Looked After and Adopted Children's Support and Therapeutic Team(LAACST) will support the new Fostering Plus foster care placements to ensure placements for adolescents and children with complex needs benefit from therapeutic input. We need to maintain and improve on this.

7.3.6. Managers and commissioners will work with CAMHS, the Looked After and Adopted Children's Therapeutic Support Team and other identified services to develop therapeutic support services for young people who have been sexually exploited.

7.3.6 Joint work will take place between social care and the Looked After Children's Nurse and other health service professionals to improve timeliness of initial health assessments

7.4. How will we know when we get there?

7.4.1 We will have a system in operation for systematically monitoring, reviewing and collating outcomes overtime of Strengths and Difficulties questionnaires.

7.4.2 Such a system will allow us to measure the changing Strengths and Difficulties outcomes for individual children on their 'journey' in care and the overall level of need and demand for support services for the whole population.

7.4.3 Analysis will show that children's emotional wellbeing will have improved as a result of being looked after.

7.4.3 There will be a CAMHS strategy in place that will set out how need in relation to emotional wellbeing will be met from Tier 1 to Tier 4.

8. PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 3:

To improve educational progress and attainment and narrow the gap between attainment of looked after children and their non-looked after peers.

8.1. Where do we want to be?

8.1.1. We want all children to progress and achieve in education to their full potential.

8.1.2. We want to reach a position where almost all of our looked after children progress at least 2 levels between key stages

8.1.3. We want to maximise the proportion of looked after children who achieve 5 A to Cs at GCSE level including English and Maths.

8.1.4. We want the gap between attainment of looked after children and attainment of their non-looked after peers to reduce.

8.1.5. We want all staff and carers involved with looked after children to have a good understanding about education and to act as champions and advocates promoting children's involvement, progress and attainment.

8.1.6. We want key educational staff in the local authority and in schools, for example Designated Teachers, to understand about the particular needs of looked after children.

8.1.7 We want to support as many of our young people as possible to go to university.

8.1.8. We want our Virtual School to cater for children and young people aged 0 to 25.

8.2. Where are we now?

8.2.1 Performance at GCSE level in summer 2013 was high, with 23% of looked after children achieving 5 A – C grades including English and Maths. This was significantly higher than the national average for looked after children.

8.2.2 Progress monitoring systems for the Virtual School need improvement so that we are more fully aware of children's progress and able to challenge and take corrective action where progress is not in line with expectations.

8.2.3 There is a high rate of Personal Education Plan completion but the quality of plans is variable. We need to raise the overall quality to ensure plans contribute to improved progress and attainment.

8.2.4 The Virtual School is currently focussed on the education of children aged 4 to 16, and is not yet focussing on 16 to 18 year olds and beyond.

8.3. How will we get from where we are to where we want to be?

8.3.1. Our Virtual School Head Teacher is now deployed full time in this role and can from now on focus exclusively on it.

8.3.2. Revising Personal Education Plan templates to ensure the document more requires clear details about educational progress and attainment.

8.3.3. Establishing a new procedure for the completion of Personal Education Plans which involves the Designated Teacher in the school taking the lead role.

8.3.4. Establishing a new joint education and social care panel, chaired by the Virtual School Head Teacher, to address individual admissions/exclusion cases. Panel to meet monthly and include Virtual School Head Teacher, Service Manager looked after Children, Get Real Team Manager and Admissions Officer/Manager.

8.3.5. Work towards extending the remit of the Virtual School so that it spans age 0 to 25.

8.4. How will we know when we get there?

8.4.1 Looked after young people in year 11 will achieve predicted grades at GCSE and the proportion of pupils achieving grades A-C including English and Maths will be consistently equal to or higher than the national average.

8.4.2 Progress monitoring systems will enable us to analyse each child's progress on a term to term basis and this information will be used to develop the Personal Education Plan and to agree with the school how the Pupil Premium will be used to support the child's progress.

8.4.3 Most looked after children will be progressing in line with national expectations.

8.4.4 Personal Education Plans will be high quality, will be informed by data about the child's progress, will identify actions to support future progress, and will detail how the Pupil Premium will be used to contribute to progress and attainments.

8.4.5 The Virtual School will have the capacity to focus on looked after young people's education at age 16 to 18 and beyond.

9. PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 4:

To improve the support for and opportunities open to care leavers sufficiently to increase the number and proportion of them who are in employment, educations or training (EET)

9.1. Where do we want to be?

9.1.1. We want a more integrated service for older young people looked after and care leavers and one that promotes continuity and stability of relationships.

9.1.2. We want a higher number of care leavers aged 19 in education, employment or training compared to now and to have a proportion higher than our statistical neighbours.

9.1.3. We want all care leavers to be living in suitable accommodation.

9.2. Where are we now?

9.2.1 We currently have a separate service run by Action for Children as a commissioned service which provides the Looked after Children social work service for 16 and 17 year olds and the Leaving Care and Leaving Care Accommodation Service. A proposal has been approved to transfer all of these services in-house to be directly operated by the Local Authority.

9.2.2 As at January 2014 53.6% of care leavers aged 19 were in education, employment or training.

9.2.3 As at January 2014 96.4% of care leavers were living in suitable accommodation.

9.3. How will we get from where we are now to where we want to be?

9.3.1. The LAC service for young people aged 16 and 17 and the leaving care service is being transferred on April 1st 2014 to become a service run in-house directly by the local authority again. The new model of service proposed will enable young people to maintain their existing social worker up to age 18, rather than having to change social worker at age 16 in the current service, and to retain the same personal advisor from age 16 to 25 rather than having one before age 18 and a different one beyond 18.

9.3.2. We will develop our ability to enable young people in foster care to stay living with their foster carers through enhancement of a range of 'Staying Put' and supported lodgings arrangements.

9.3.3. We will look to work with voluntary organisations to enable young people to take advantage of opportunities to volunteer that will develop their confidence, skills, experiences and employability.

9.4. How will we know when we get there?

9.4.1 The percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training will match or exceed the national average.

9.4.2 The percentage of care leavers living in suitable accommodation will match or exceed the national average.

9.4.3 More young people in foster care will be enabled to stay living with their foster carers when they turn 18 in Staying Put/Supported Lodging arrangements.

10. PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 5:

To listen to children and young people so as to ensure that their views influence their own plans, as well as wider service delivery and development.

10.1. Where do we want to be?

10.1.1 We want a well-functioning Looked after Children Council

10.1.2 We want children and young people's views to properly influence service delivery and service development

10.1.3 We want looked after children and young people, where appropriate, to participate in the delivery and development of the service.

10.2. Where are we now?

10.2.1 We have a Looked after Children Council that functions well but could be improved by being more representative of the looked after population

10.2.2 We collect the views, wishes and feelings from individual looked after children from many sources, for example, statutory looked after children reviews, but are not systematically collating and analysing it as whole in order to identify patterns and trends and to use such analysis to inform service development

10.2.3 We have a children's rights service, Right2Rights

4.10.2. Disabled children using Liberty House and Cherry Tree children's homes meet regularly as a group, Orchard Stars, with a children's advocate. Regular residents meetings are held for young people residing at our three mainstream residential children's homes

10.3. How will we get from where we are now to where we want to be?

10.3.1. Development and support of the LAC Council so that it is as representative as possible of looked after children and takes a key lead role steering and championing looked after children's involvement and influence on service development and service delivery.

10.3.2. Regular collation and review of consultation papers completed by children and young people for their statutory looked after children review and the review of the foster carers.

10.3.3. Annual survey of looked after children covering same issues as those covered by the national annual survey undertaken by the Children's Commissioner, so as to allow for comparison with what young people across the country are saying about being in care.

10.3.4. On-going involvement of young people in staff recruitment, and staff and foster carer training.

10.3.5. On-going training for staff and carers on listening and engaging with children and young people.

10.3.6. Regular meetings between the Elected Members on the Corporate Parenting Panel and the LAC Council.

10.3.7. Supporting the LAC Council to review the extent to which the local authority and partner agencies are delivering on promises made in the Pledge to Looked after Children.

10.3.8. Involvement of the LAC Council in the development of this LAC Strategy.

10.3.9. Communication strategy to be developed to ensure that all children and young people know about their 'entitlements' as looked after children and care leavers.

10.4. How will we know when we get there?

10.4.1 The Looked after Children Council will be much more representative of the looked after population and it will play a key role in service development and calling the service to account. Its representatives will include children and young people who live in foster care, residential care, in house and in borough placements and those who live in independent sector placements and those who live out of borough. The Council will have both males and females as representatives and have a young person who uses our services for disabled children

10.4.2 Systems for collating and analysing individual children's feedback from existing consultation activity such as reviews will be in place and the resulting analysis will be used to inform service development

10.4.3 Where appropriate, young people will be involved in service delivery via participation in activity such as staff recruitment and training and training for foster carers

10.4.4 The Looked after Children Council will have good links and easy access to the Corporate Parenting Panel and the two bodies will work together to monitor and support and challenge those managing services for looked after children

10.4.5 Looked after children via the Looked After Children Council will be able to monitor and measure the service on progress in delivering on this Looked after Children Strategy and on meeting our promises as made in the Pledge.

Paul Dempsey,

Service Manager, Family Placements and Residential Services

14.1.14

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	Corporate Parenting Panel
2.	Date:	21st October, 2014
3.	Title:	Sufficiency Strategy Progress Report September 2014
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

5.1 This report aims to provide an update on the progress the Local Authority is making in implementing the strategic recommendations and achieving the goals identified in the Sufficiency Strategy 2014 -17.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Panel:

6.1 Note the content of the report and the progress made in implementing the Sufficiency Strategy recommendations and the progress made towards achieving the goals set out in the strategy.

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Introduction

It is a legislative requirement for local authorities to provide sufficient local accommodation for looked after children. The Sufficiency Strategy 2014 -17 was drafted in January 2014. The strategy sets out a number of strategic recommendations that the Local Authority should implement in Rotherham in order to improve its capacity to provide sufficient accommodation locally and identifies a set of goals it aims to achieve. The Sufficiency Strategy document was considered at Corporate Parenting Panel and the Improving Lives Committee previously. The full strategy document, which has been updated from the original draft, is attached to the progress report as Appendix 1.

7.2 Strategic Recommendations and Progress Made

The strategic recommendations identified in the strategy were as follows:

7.2.1 Recommendation 1:

To develop the Fostering Plus scheme to recruit fee paid and therapeutically supported foster carers for older children and those with complex needs. Develop the scheme so that it caters for a wide range of specialist need, to include, for example, sexualised young people, children at risk of sexual exploitation, young people remanded to local authority care, parent and child placements, disabled children.

Progress Made:

The Fostering Plus scheme has been developed and approved for implementation by the Directorate Leadership Team and the Corporate Parenting Panel. Resources are in place and a dedicated social worker in the Fostering Service is leading the work. One Fostering Plus carer has been approved with three further applications in assessment. Two of these will be presented to the Fostering Panel for approval in October.

7.2.2 Recommendation 2:

To review and revise the existing payment for skills scheme for in-house foster carers so that it more closely rewards carers for caring for children we most need placements for rather than skills payments being determined by experience and training record.

Progress Made:

Work has yet to be completed and approved on this recommendation. Amending the Payment for Skills Scheme will require additional funds to be identified. Work will be ongoing to draft a proposal that will evidently pay for itself through increasing carers capacity to reduce spend on independent agency fostering placements.

7.2.3 Recommendation 3:

To review the remit and size of Silverwood children's home. Options will include a reduction in capacity and maximum duration of stay from 20 to 12 weeks or change of remit to long term.

Progress Made:

A proposal to change the remit of Silverwood Children's Home from offering emergency and short term care to offering long term placements has been developed and approved by the Directorate Leadership Team. The proposal will lead to more appropriate emergency accommodation being provided through in-house and independent agency foster care and provide an additional five long term residential placements local and in borough. There is a demand for more local long term residential placements as evidenced by the high number of young people placed in independent residential care out of borough.

7.2.4 Recommendation 4:

To engage with the market and develop smarter commissioning to ensure independent providers make provision available in or very close to Rotherham. In particular to explore the possibility of residential providers opening new homes for our use in or very close to Rotherham

Progress Made:

Commissioners have communicated the Local Authority's needs for more local independent residential and fostering provision. Since the drafting of the Sufficiency Strategy one new independent residential children's home has opened and been used by Rotherham. However more work and progress is needed in this area.

7.2.5 Recommendation 5:

To establish smarter commissioning of out of borough placements which should involve liaison with multi-agency services in the commissioned placement area, so as to secure suitable therapeutic, health, and education services, and include a location risk assessment in relation to the risk and prevalence of child sexual exploitation.

Progress Made:

Work is currently ongoing to establish more robust processes for consulting with multi-agency services in local authority areas where out of borough placements are being commissioned, in line with recent legislation and guidance. The Virtual School Head is involved in developing new processes for having an involvement in assessing education placements for children placed out of borough.

7.2.6 Recommendation 6:

To maintain investment in the Adoption Service and to recruit an increased number of adoptive families both from within Rotherham and the region, with a view to providing families for our own looked after children and those of other local authorities regionally. To use innovative marketing and recruitment activity to recruit adopters for difficult to place children and continue on-going use of new family finding events such as consortium wide Adoption Activity Days.

Progress Made:

Additional staff employed temporarily for one year in 2013/14 in the Adoption Service and funded by the Adoption Reform Grant have been retained for 2014/15 despite a cut in the Adoption Reform Grant of over £700,000.

The Adoption Service set a target to recruit 42 adoptive families in 2014/15 compared to the 31 approved in 2013/14. As at September 2014 the Service had approved 15 adoptive families in 2014/15 and had a further 20 in assessment. This is currently slightly below being on target for 42 but on target to surpass last year's 31. The service needs to attract 7 or more applications in the next month to be in a position to meet the target for 42. Additional marketing activity to attract interest has been put in place.

7.2.7 Recommendation 7:

To establish a Fostering to Adopt scheme to enable some children to be placed with prospective adoptive families before a court has granted a Placement Order, thereby meaning they will begin living with their forever family at a younger age and begin making attachments earlier.

Progress Made:

A Fostering to Adopt process has been developed, approved and established. Children are identified as suitable for Fostering to Adopt via the legal gateway Multi-Agency Support Panel or in looked after children reviews. The Adoption Service is leading the way on Fostering to Adopt in the Yorkshire and Humberside region and has to date placed three children in Fostering to Adopt placements.

7.2.8 Recommendation 8:

To review and potentially revise the financial and practical support arrangements for Special Guardians and Residence Order holders to ensure that we are doing all that we can to promote these legal forms of permanence.

Progress Made:

Work on this recommendation has yet to commence but will do so in the second half of 2014/15. Development on Fostering, Adoption and Residential Provision at Silverwood has taken priority in the first half of the year

7.2.9 Recommendation 9:

To deliver education and guidance to social workers about the duty to place with extended family members where possible, and explore any other potential reasons for the very low numbers of connected persons/relative foster carers in Rotherham.

Progress Made:

The legal gateway panel, Multi-Agency Support Panel(MASP) has increased the robustness of challenge around extended family member options and the requirement for pro-active identification of and engagement with extended family members and subsequent viability assessments to rule possibilities in or out.

7.2.10 Recommendation 10:

To promote the existing Supported Lodgings scheme to existing foster carers to increase the number of care leavers who can stay with their foster carers after turning 18.

Progress Made:

The Supported Lodging/Staying Put Co-coordinator has been located within the Fostering Team so as to make better links with the service and existing foster carers who may want to convert into Staying Put carers when young people in their care reach 18. More carers have become Staying Put carers over the last six months and there are now 13 young people in Supported Lodgings/Staying Put arrangements.

7.3 Progress Made Against Goals Identified in the Strategy

7.3.1 To provide a sufficient range and number of local placements for Rotherham's looked after children that contribute to improved outcomes and increased value for money.

Progress Made:

- The in-house foster carer pool grew by 19 foster carers in 2013/14 compared to 2012/13. As at September 2014 176 children were placed with in-house foster carers compared to 150 in January 2014.
- The number of in-house adopters approved increased from 18 in 2012/13 to 31 in 2013/14, with a stretch target of 42 set for 2014/15.
- The number of independent residential homes located in Rotherham Borough has increased from none to one.
- Plans have been approved to change Silverwood Local Authority Children's Home from emergency provision to long term provision so as to provide more long term residential placements in borough.
- The number of Supported Lodgings/Staying Put Carers has increased from 5 accommodating 5 care leavers in January 2014 to 13 carers accommodating 13 care leavers as at September 2014.

- Increased in-house fostering and adoption placement resources are contributing to significant cost efficiencies and cost avoidance.
- The plans for using Silverwood as a long term home will increase the occupancy rates in the home and therefore reduce the weekly unit cost per placement.

7.3.2 To reduce the number of children placed outside of the borough and at distance from their families and community.

- Of children placed with in-house foster carers, the percentage placed in borough has increased from 88.5%, that is 133 out of 150 children, in January 2014, to 90%, 158 out of 176 children, as at September 2014.
- At the end of January 2014, 14 out of 134 independent sector placements were in borough. That is 7.5%, compared to an improved 19 out of 137, or 14% that were in borough as at September 2014.

7.3.3 To ensure that where children are placed out of the borough, they are able to access education, health and therapeutic services to meet their needs, via sound and improved commissioning practices.

- In line with recent changes made to care planning, placement and case review guidance, processes and checklists are being developed to ensure that consultation is carried out with children's services in the potential host Authority and key agencies in the area such as the CCG, Virtual Heads, CAMHS etc.. to ensure effective planning, engagement and information sharing takes place with services likely to be required to meet a child's needs.

7.3.4 To increase the proportion of children in family placements and reduce the proportion placed in residential care.

- At the beginning of January 2014 77.2% of the looked after population was placed in a family based (fostering or adoption) placement. At the beginning of September 2014 this had steadily increased to 82.2%, a very positive improvement of 5%.

7.3.5 To increase in-house fostering provision.

- In-house foster carer numbers increased by 19 in 2013/14 compared to 2012/13. This is part of an expansion in foster carer numbers of 50 over three years up April 2014. Numbers have stabilised between April and September.

- The number of foster children placed with in-house foster carers increased from 150 in January 2014 to 176 as at September 2014 with a high of 186 children placed with in-house foster carers in August 2014.
- The percentage of looked after children placed with in-house foster carers increased from 39.2% (146 out of 372 LAC) at end of December 2013 to 46.2%(187 out of 405 children) at its highest in August 2014, a very positive improvement of 7%.

7.3.6 To reduce the number of children placed both in independent residential and independent foster care.

- The number of children placed with independent fostering agency foster carers reduced from 108 at end of December 2013 to 103 as at beginning of September 2014. The service was successful in reducing the numbers further to a low of 97 in June 2014.
- At the same time as numbers of independent fostering agency placements have reduced, the looked after population has increased. The additional capacity needed has largely been provided by the in-house Fostering Service. Of all children in foster placements, the percentage placed with in-house carers, as opposed to independent fostering agency carers, increased from 57.5% at end of December 2013 to 64.5% at end of August 2014. This is a positive improvement of 7%.

7.3.7 To increase placement stability for looked after children.

- Long term placement stability as measured by National Indicator 63 improved in 2013/14 compared to 2012/13. The percentage of children in care for at least 2.5 years who had been in their current placement for at least the last two years increased from 64% in 2012/13 to 67.9% in 2013/14, an increase of 3.9%.

7.3.8 To achieve the most secure form of permanence for children without unnecessary delay in particular through Adoption, Special Guardianship and Residence Orders.

- The Local Authority performs very well in securing adoption for a high number and percentage of children who cannot return home to birth parents or extended family as detailed by the figure below
- Timeliness of adoptions is improving significantly as detailed in the figures below.
- The early permance initiative, Fostering to Adopt, has been established in Rotherham and three children hacve so fat been placed in Fostering to Adopt placements

- Special guardianship and Child Arrangement Orders are promoted in Rotherham but numbers are lower than in other authorities. Work will be undertaken to explore this and to develop further actions to address it.

7.3.9 To increase the percentage of children adopted from care and to improve the timeliness of such adoptions.

- The number of children adopted from care increased from 35 in 2012/13 to 36 in 2013/14.
- The percentage of children leaving care via adoption increased from 25% in 2012/13 to 26.7% in 2013/14. The 25% achieved in 2012/13 was very significantly higher than the national average and most statistical neighbours and further improvement on this in 2013/14 is excellent performance.
- Timeliness for children adopted and placed for adoption is improving considerably.
- On Adoption Scorecard Measure 1, the number of days between a child becoming looked after and being placed with an adoptive family reduced from 659 days up to 2013 to 634 for children adopted in 2013/14.
- For children adopted between April 2014 and September 2014, 16 out of 21 children met the new Government target for Scorecard Measure 1 of 487 days, which is good and improved performance against an average of 634 days for all children adopted in 2013/14.
- Of the 10 children matched and placed for adoption (but not necessarily adopted) between April and September 2014, all 10 met the 487 day target for measure 1.
- On Adoption Scorecard Measure 2, the number of days between a child being made subject to a Placement Order and the Agency Decision on a match reduced from 309 days up to 2013 to 284 days in 2013/14.
- For children adopted between April 2014 and September 2014, 4 out of 21 met the new Government target of 121 days for Scorecard Measure 2
- For children matched and placed for adoption (but not necessarily adopted) between April and September 2014, 7 out of 10 met the target of 121 days for measure 2. That is an increase from 20% for children adopted this year to 70% for children matched, indicating the Local Authority is succeeding in reducing delay.

7.3.10 To increase the number of care leavers who are offered the opportunity to stay living with their foster carer in a Staying Put/Supported Lodgings arrangement after they turn 18.

- The Leaving Care Accommodation Service came back in-house on April 1st 2014 and the Supported Lodgings/Staying Put Coordinator has been located within the Fostering Service to best promote and facilitate the conversion of existing foster carers into Supported Lodgings/Staying Put carers for looked after children once they turn 18.
- The number of Supported Lodgings/Staying Put arrangements has increased from 5 in January 2014 to 13 as at September 2014.

8. Finance

8.1 Cost efficiencies and cost avoidance is being realised from the increase in the number of approved in-house foster carers and adopters.

8.2 The average weekly unit cost for a foster placement in the independent sector is £795, The average weekly unit cost for an in-house foster placement is below £400. Increasing the proportion of children placed in in-house foster carer compared to independent agency foster care has achieved significant cost avoidance.

8.3. Each adoptive placement commissioned from another local authority or a voluntary adoption agency costs £27,000. Increasing the number of adopters approved in-house means less funds are used commissioning adoptive placements from other agencies. In 2013/14 the Local Authority commissioned 29 adoptive placements from other agencies and provided 2 of its own to other local authorities. The Local Authority has set a target to approve 42 adoptive families in 2014/14 compared to 31 last year, to commission no more than 20 adoptive placements from other agencies and to provide no less than 5 adoptive placements for other local authorities.

The Local Authority is on target to achieve this currently. This will mean a difference in the balance of adoptive placements commissioned and provided of minus 15 in 2014/15 compared to a balance of minus 27 in 2013/14. This will result in reduced spending this year compared to last of £324,000.

8.4 Achieving higher occupancy rates at a Silverwood Children's Home offering long term placements that would otherwise be provided in the independent sector will achieve cost avoidance of £207,000 over a full year.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

9.1 The current financial climate and resource limitations mean that it is more important than ever the spending is justified and best value is achieved. However, continued investment in in-house Fostering and Adoption Services is absolutely essential to achieve compete with independent and voluntary sector placements services as in-house placements can be both high quality and delivered at significantly better value.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

10.1 It is a legislative requirement set out in the 'Sufficiency Duty ' that all local authorities provide sufficient local accommodation for looked after children, and compliance with this is scrutinised through inspection by Ofsted

10.2 The Local Authority is most unlikely to have success in improving outcomes for looked after children if it cannot provide suitable and sufficient accommodation locally for them.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

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ROTHERHAM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN 2014/15

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Overview

Where children in Rotherham are unable to live with birth parents or extended family, the Local Authority, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, is responsible for accommodating and caring for them. When children first enter local authority care, it is the legal responsibility of the Council to work with the birth family to return the child as soon as possible if and where this is consistent with the child's best interests. If it is not possible and safe for the child to live with the birth parents, then every effort should be made to enable the child to live with extended family members, preferably outside of the care system.

Where no alternative family members can be identified to care for the child, the Local Authority has a responsibility to plan an alternative 'placement' for that child. Legislation dictates that the Local Authority must consider adoption for all children who cannot return to birth parents or extended family.

Where adoption is not consistent with the child's best interests, or not achievable, alternative permanence arrangements must be made by the Local Authority. In such circumstances the Local Authority will look to secure a long term permanent placement for the child with a foster family or in a children's residential home.

The Local Authority in Rotherham makes provision of adoption, fostering, and residential placements directly through its own placement services and through placements commissioned from the voluntary and independent sector.

It is a legislative requirement for all local authorities to 'secure 'sufficient' accommodation for looked after children, so far as is reasonably practical, in their local authority area'.

This strategy sets out how the Local Authority in Rotherham intends to meet this requirement.

1.2. Sufficiency Strategy Aims

This strategy aims to:

1.2.1 Set out how the Local Authority will meet the legislative requirement to 'secure, so far as is reasonably practical, sufficient accommodation for looked after children in their (our) local authority area.'

1.2.2 Make a significant contribution to improving outcomes for looked after children.

1.2.3 Ensure that the Local Authority in Rotherham meets all of the requirements related to sufficiency of accommodation for looked after children detailed in the Ofsted inspection framework, 'Framework for the Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After, and Care Leavers'.

These are as follows:

- Children and young people live in live in safe, stable, and appropriate homes or families with their brothers and sisters when this is in their best interests. They do not move frequently.
- Children and young people who live away from their 'home' authority have immediate access to education and health services that meet their needs as soon as they begin to live outside of their 'home 'area'.
- The placement of children and young people into homes and families that meet their needs is effective because there is a comprehensive range and choice available.
- Family finding strategies are informed by the assessed needs of children and young people.
- Carers recruited to care for children are safe and sufficient in number to care for children and young people with a wide range of needs.
- Early planning and case management results in appropriate permanent placements, including Special Guardianship or Residence Orders.
- Children and young people are helped to develop secure primary attachments with the adults caring for them.

1.3. The Importance of the Sufficiency Strategy

The sufficiency strategy sets out our strategic approach to ensuring that we can provide the right kind of accommodation in the right places to meet the differing needs of all our looked after children. As such the strategy is essential for improving outcomes for looked after children.

It is a statutory requirement under Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 for local authorities to secure, so far as reasonably practical, sufficient accommodation for looked after children in their local authority area.

There are a number of 'requirements' set out in the new Ofsted inspection framework related to sufficiency of accommodation that local authorities have to meet in order to receive a judgement of at least good. These are set out above in section 1.2.3.

1.4. Summary of Goals and Recommendations

1.4.1 Goals

The overarching goal, objective, aim of this strategy is to 'secure, so far as is reasonably practical, sufficient accommodation for looked after children in our local authority area'.

In achieving this, we will aim:

- To provide a sufficient range and number of local placements for Rotherham's looked after children that contribute to improved outcomes and increased value for money.
- To reduce the number of children placed outside of the borough and at distance from their families and community.
- To ensure that where children are placed out of the borough, they are able to access education, health and therapeutic services to meet their needs, via sound and improved commissioning practices.
- To increase the proportion of children in family placements and reduce the proportion placed in residential care.
- To increase in-house fostering provision.
- To reduce the number of children placed both in independent residential and independent foster care.
- To increase placement stability for looked after children.

- To achieve the most secure form of permanence for children without unnecessary delay in particular through Adoption, Special Guardianship and Residence Orders.
- To increase the percentage of children adopted from care and to improve the timeliness of such adoptions.
- To increase the number of care leavers who are offered the opportunity to stay living with their foster carer in a Staying Put/Supported Lodgings arrangement after they turn 18.

1.4.2 Recommendations

The strategy recommendations are:

Recommendation 1:

To develop the Fostering Plus scheme to recruit fee paid and therapeutically supported foster carers for older children and those with complex needs. Develop the scheme so that it caters for a wide range of specialist need, to include, for example, sexualised young people, children at risk of sexual exploitation, young people remanded to local authority care, parent and child placements, disabled children.

Recommendation 2:

To review and revise the existing payment for skills scheme for in-house foster carers so that it more closely rewards carers for caring for children we most need placements for rather than skills payments being determined by experience and training record.

Recommendation 3:

To review the remit and size of Silverwood children's home. Options will include a reduction in capacity and maximum duration of stay from 20 to 12 weeks or change of remit to long term.

Recommendation 4:

To engage with the market and develop smarter commissioning to ensure independent providers make provision available in or very close to Rotherham. In particular to explore the possibility of residential providers opening new homes for our use in or very close to Rotherham.

Recommendation 5:

To establish smarter commissioning of out of borough placements which should involve liaison with multi-agency services in the commissioned placement area, so as to secure suitable therapeutic, health, and education services, and include a location risk assessment in relation to the risk and prevalence of child sexual exploitation

Recommendation 6:

To maintain investment in the Adoption Service and to recruit an increased number of adoptive families both from within Rotherham and the region, with a view to providing families for our own looked after children and those of other local authorities regionally. To use innovative marketing and recruitment activity to recruit adopters for difficult to place children and continue on-going use of new family finding events such as consortium wide Adoption Activity Days.

Recommendation 7:

To establish a Fostering to Adopt scheme to enable some children to be placed with prospective adoptive families before a court has granted a Placement Order, thereby meaning they will begin living with their forever family at a younger age and begin making attachments earlier.

Recommendation 8:

To review and potentially revise the financial and practical support arrangements for Special Guardians and Residence Order holders to ensure that we are doing all that we can to promote these legal forms of permanence.

Recommendation 9:

To deliver education and guidance to social workers about the duty to place with extended family members where possible, and explore any other potential reasons for the very low numbers of connected persons/relative foster carers in Rotherham.

Recommendation 10:

To promote the existing Supported Lodgings scheme to existing foster carers to increase the number of care leavers who can stay with their foster carers after turning 18.

2. Contents

3. Situational Analysis

3.1 Care Population Analysis

3.2 Current Placement Supply

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3.4 P.E.S.T. Analysis

3.5 S.W.O.T Analysis

4. Strategy

5. Strategic Actions/Recommendations

6. Financial Implications

7. Controls and Evaluations

3. Situational Analysis

The situational analysis essentially explores and sets out 'where we are now' and the environmental factors we need to account for in making plans for moving forward.

So, to what extent are we providing 'sufficient' local accommodation for looked after children at the time of writing?

What is the demand for care placements and how does our supply of placement resources match up to the demand?

What are our gaps in provision?

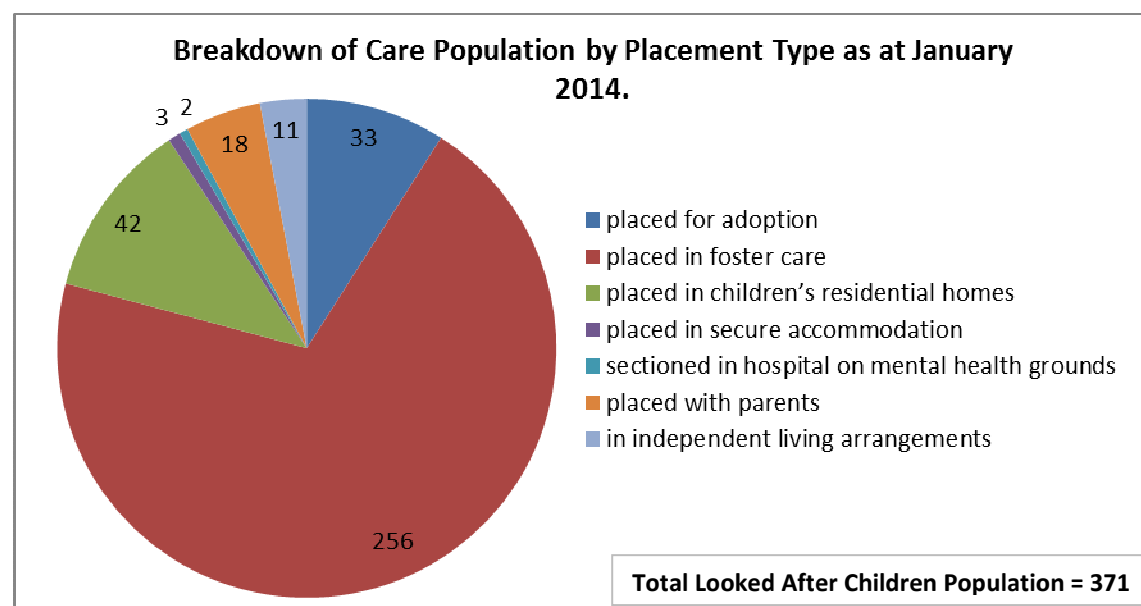
Are there any national or local policy developments we need to consider that might impact on how we provide sufficient accommodation?

3.1 Care Population Analysis

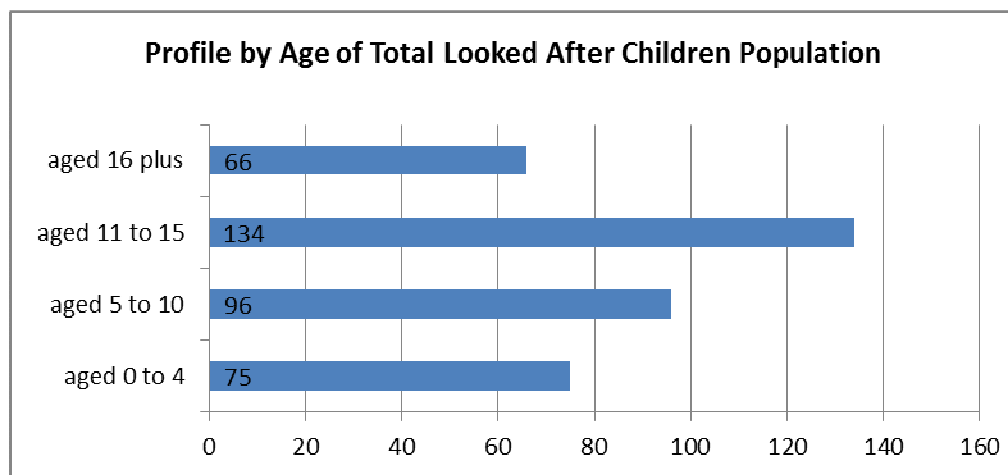
The following section provides a number of graphical illustrations profiling the current looked after/care population in Rotherham at the time of writing in January 2014.

The illustrations themselves should be self-explanatory. A summary analysis of the information provided in all of the following illustrations is provided immediately after the illustration section.

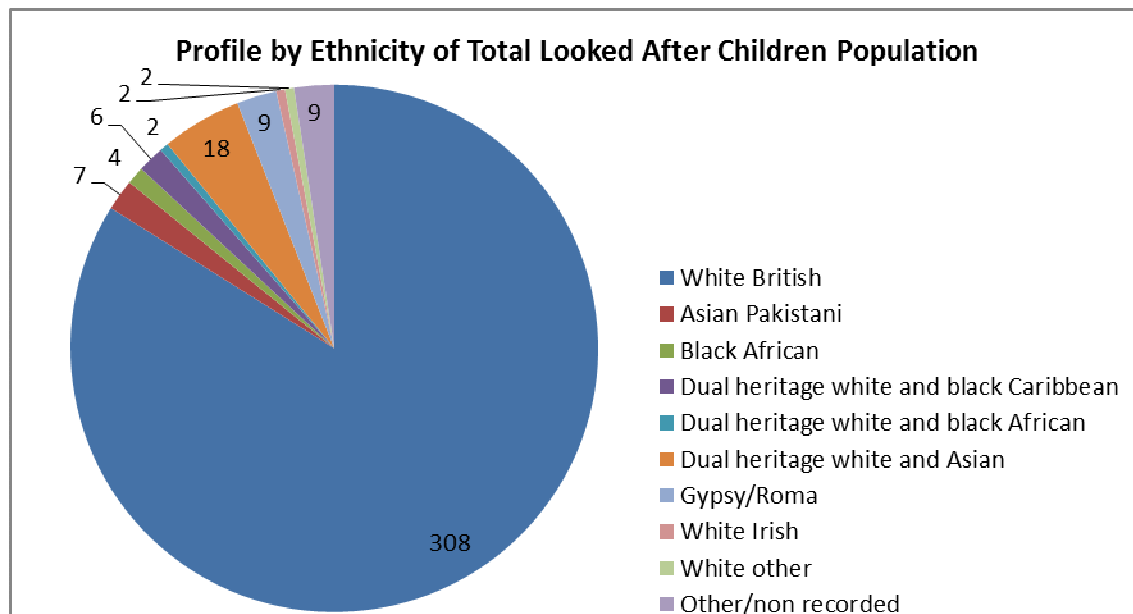
3.1.1 Care Population by Placement Type:



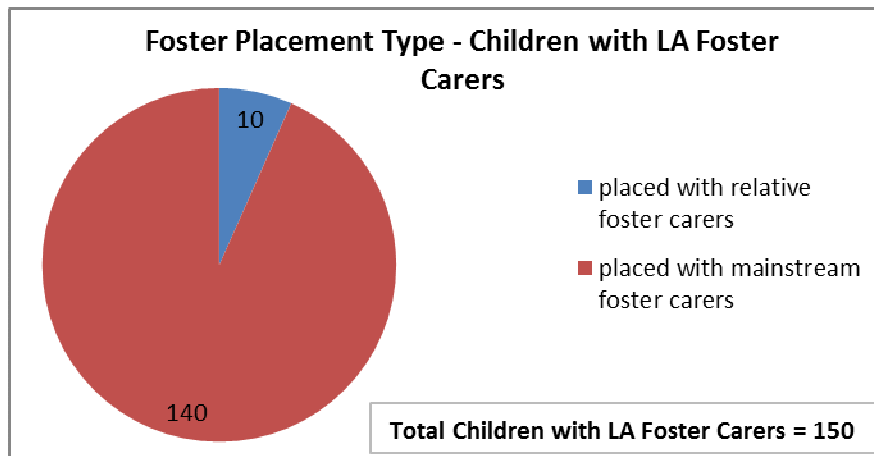
3.1.2 Profile by Age:



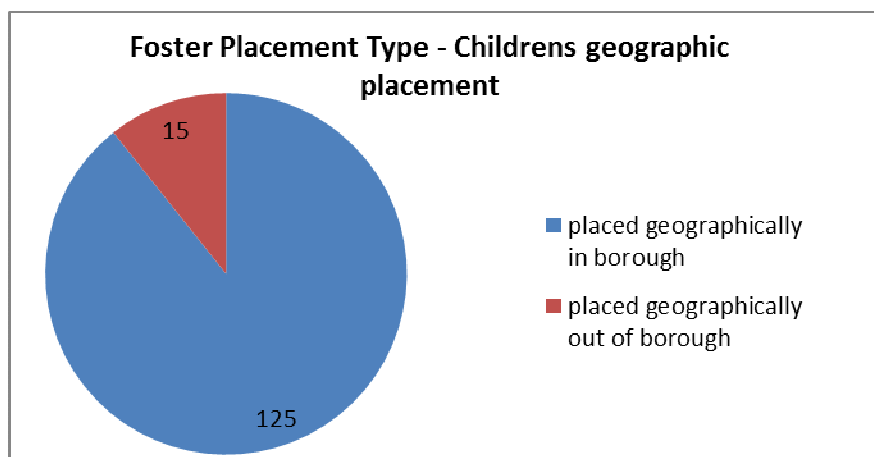
3.1.3 Profile by Ethnicity:



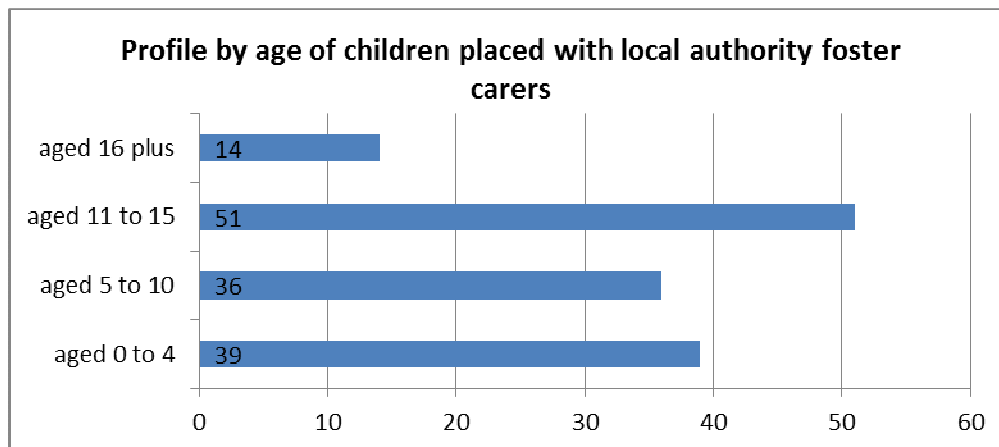
3.1.4 In-house Foster Placement Type:



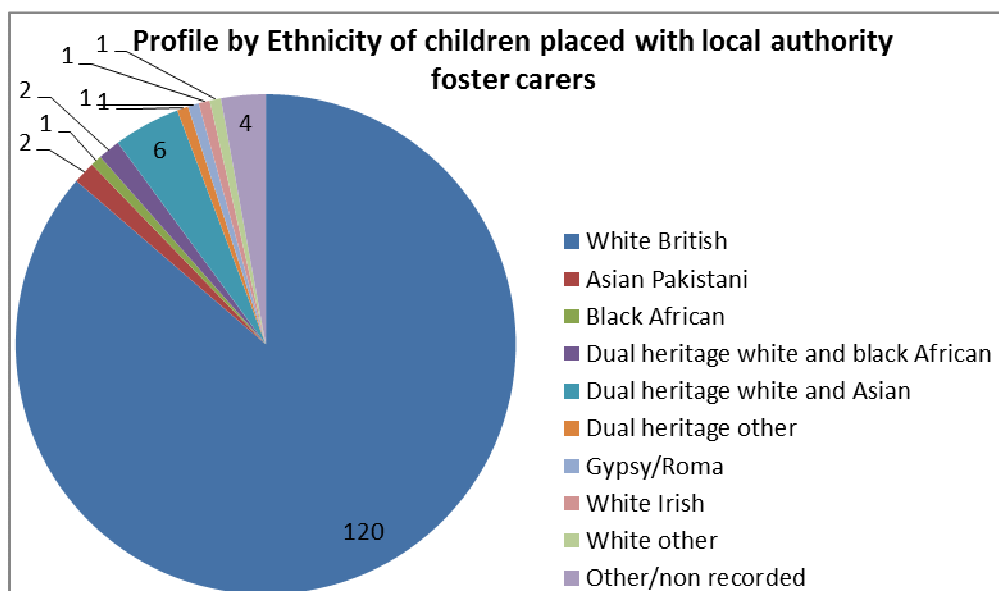
3.1.5 L.A. Foster Placement Location:



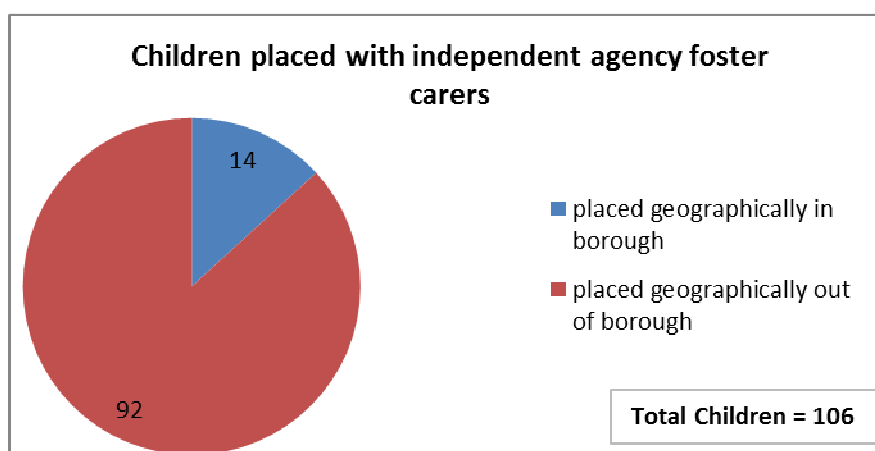
3.1.6 Age Profile with L.A. Carers:



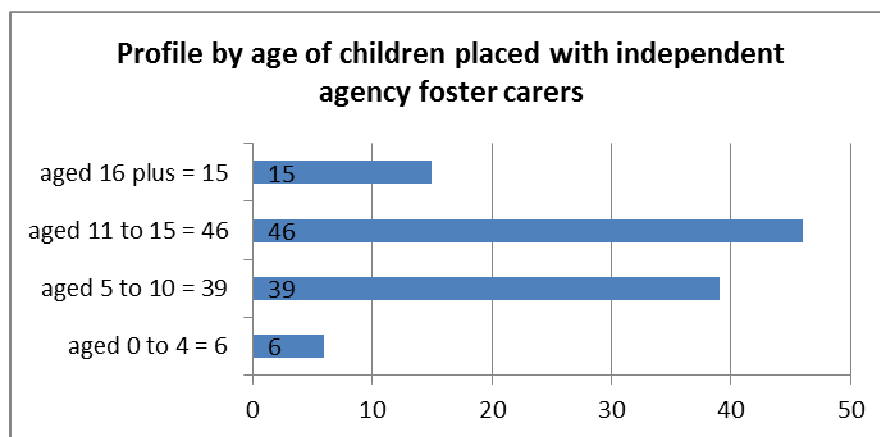
3.1.7 Ethnicity Profile with L.A. carers:



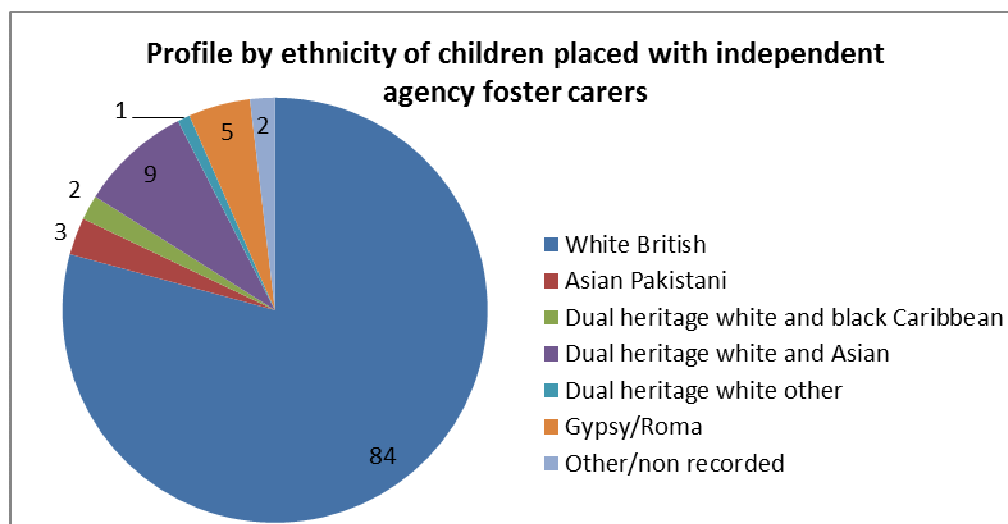
3.1.8 Independent Foster Placement Location



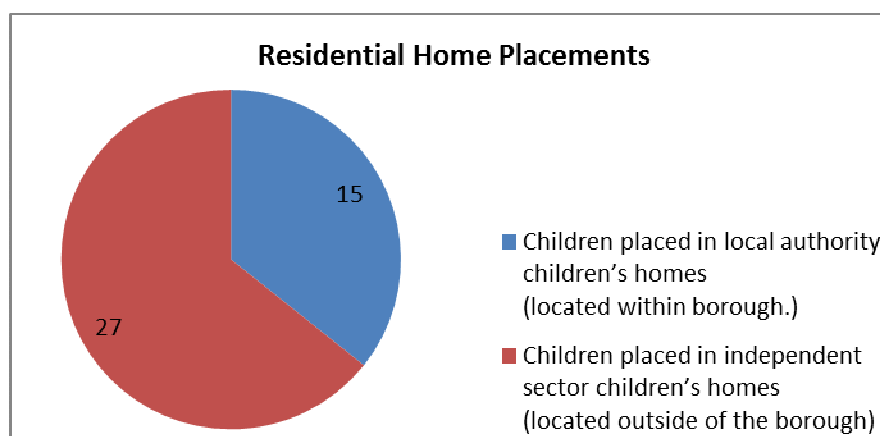
3.1.9 Age Profile with Independent Carers:



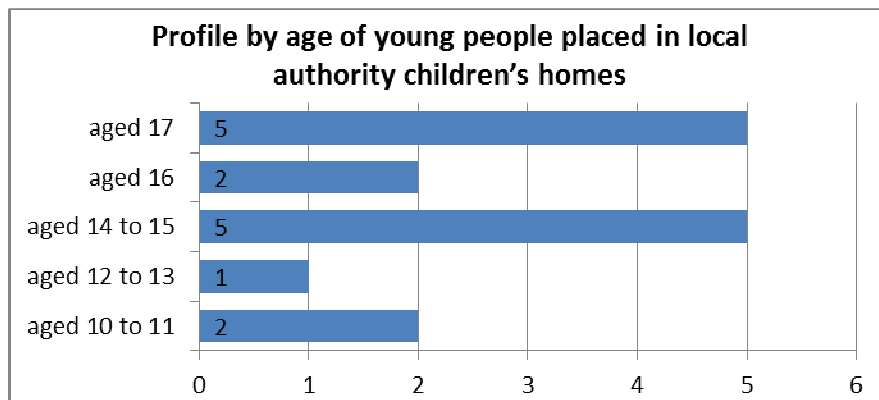
3.1.10 Ethnicity Profile with Independent Carers:



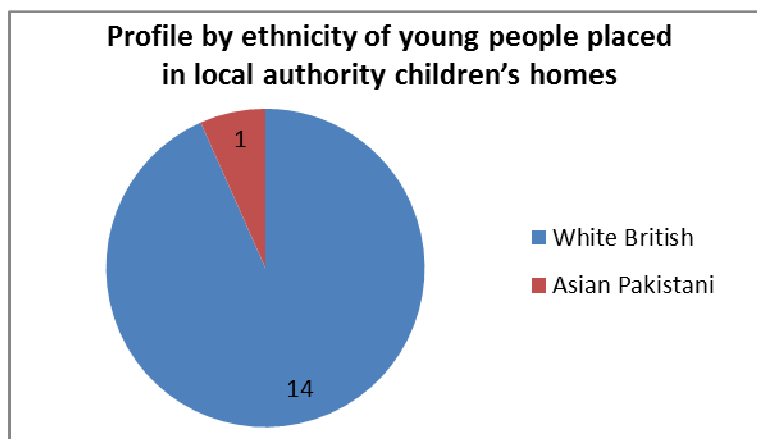
3.1.11 Residential Placements:



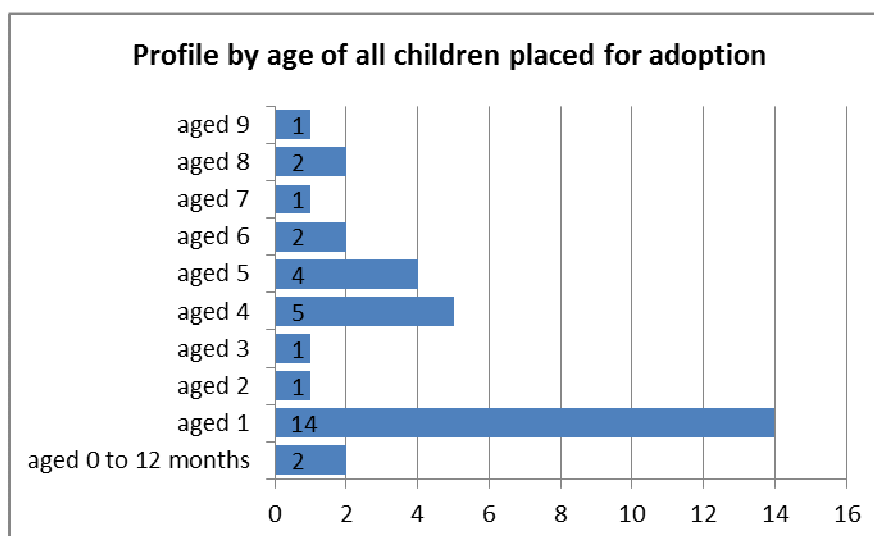
3.1.12 Age Profile in L.A. Homes:



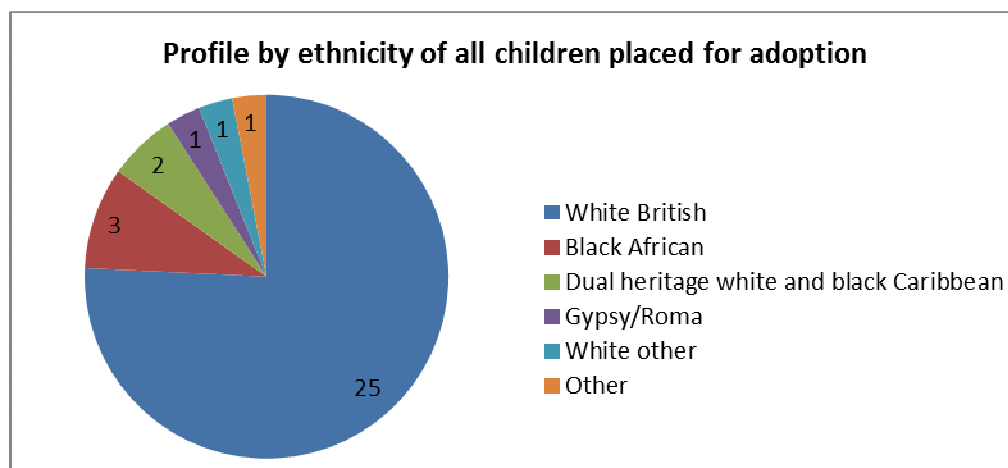
3.1.13 Ethnicity Profile In L.A. homes:



3.1.14 Age Profile of Children Placed For Adoption:



3.1.15 Ethnicity Profile of Children Placed for Adoption:



3.1.16 Summary Analysis:

Analysis of the above indicates the following:

- Of the 256 children placed in foster care, 150, or 59%, are placed with in-house local authority foster carers. The remaining 106 or 41% are placed with independent fostering agency foster carers.
- Of the 150 children placed with in-house foster carers, 125, or 83% are placed within Rotherham. Of the 106 children placed with independent fostering agency foster carers, just 14, or 13% of them are placed within Rotherham and 87% are placed outside of the Rotherham borough boundary.
- This suggests increasing the percentage of children placed with in-house carers as opposed to independent agency carers would be one clear route to increasing the number of children who are placed locally. A second route would be for commissioners to work with the market to increase the supply of local, in borough foster placements from independent agencies.
- The age profiles show us that independent sector carers care for less children aged under 10 than children aged 11 plus, whereas in-house carers care for more children aged under 10 than children aged 11 plus. We know that we have been gradually improving our ability in-house to care for younger age children and many of the children placed in independent placements now who are under age 10 will have been placed some time ago and have plans for permanence with those carers. However, we still have too limited an ability to place older young people in in-house foster care. Efforts will be made to increase the number of in-house carers who can care for older and more

complex children, through new recruitment activity and progressing existing foster carers.

- The majority of looked after children are white British, representing 83% of the total. However there is a notable dual heritage white Asian population with 18 children amounting to 5% of the total and a growing number of Gypsy/Roma children in care with 9, or 2.5%.
- Of the 42 young people placed in residential care, (not including secure accommodation) 15 are placed in in-house local authority children's homes and 27 in independent residential homes. All of the independent residential home placements are geographically placed outside of the borough, some at considerable distance. There are no independent residential homes located in Rotherham, so any independent provision will necessarily always be out of borough.
- Capacity for in-house residential placements is 22 (excluding short break beds for children with disabilities). Therefore there is considerable under-occupancy with just 15 children placed in-house. Efforts should be made to increase in-house occupancy rates so as to achieve best value and to offer more young people local placements. In addition, commissioners will need to work with market providers to increase the proximity of independent sector provision.
- Whilst we place a high number and percentage of children for adoption, approximately two thirds of our adoption placements are purchased from other local authorities or voluntary adoption agency providers. In addition, at the time of writing, Rotherham's Adoption Service had provided no adoptive families for other local authorities in 2013/14. We need to increase the proportion of children placed for adoption with our own approved adopters and increase the number of adoptive families we are able to provide for other local authorities in the region.
- Encouragingly, 8 of the 33 children placed for adoption are from non-white British backgrounds and 10 of the 33 are aged 5 or over. This indicates that we are achieving well on finding adoptive placements for some of the more difficult to place children. Efforts to maintain and build on this will continue, with more targeted adopter recruitment activity.

3.2 Placement Supply

3.2.1 In-house Provision

Local Authority Foster Care

Total number of approved foster carers	174 <i>(Following significant net increase of 40 carers to date over the last two years)</i>
Number of children in placement	150
Number of approved mainstream non-relative foster carers	164
Number of children in placement	140
Ratio of children in placement to carers	0.85 children placed per carer
Number of approved relative / connected person foster carers	10
Number of children in placement	10
Ratio of children in placement to relative carers	1 child in placement per carer.
Current Vacant Approved Placements in Total for Local Authority Mainstream Foster Carers	60 full time 22 for respite

Full time vacancies by age category	
Vacancies for children aged 0 to 4	36 including 8 for sibling groups of 2
Vacancies for children aged 5 to 10	19 including 8 for sibling groups of 2
Vacancies for children aged 11 to 15	5 including 1 for a sibling group of 2
Respite vacancies	22

Local Authority Residential Provision

Rotherham has a total of five in-house residential homes. Two of these are specifically for children with disabilities and are detailed under the Placement for Children with Disabilities section. The three mainstream children's homes are as follows:

Silverwood – Maximum of 7 beds for the provision of emergency residential placements for mainstream/non-disabled young people aged 12

to 17. The maximum stay for young people in this home is 20 weeks.

- Woodview** – 6 bed home for the provision of long term accommodation for non-disabled young people aged 12 to 17.
- St. Edmunds** – 6 bed home for the provision of long term accommodation for young people aged 12 to 17.

3.2.2 Independent Fostering Agency Provision

The Local Authority has a contract for the provision of independent fostering agency placements which is exclusive to six providers who were selected via a competitive tendering exercise. Such placements are commissioned on an individual basis by the Children's Services Commissioning Team. The team meet regularly with managers of provider agencies on the contract to undertake performance and contract management.

With 106 placements with independent agency providers we are over reliant on this sector. However placement numbers have reduced from high of 133 in 2012 and the direction of travel is positive.

This provision is generally higher cost than in-house fostering and also, as noted above most placements are not in borough. The commissioning team will need to work with providers to secure more local provision.

3.2.3 Independent Sector Residential Provision

We currently have a total of 27 young people placed in independent sector children's homes, plus 3 young people placed in secure accommodation. All of these are placements outside of Rotherham and only 7 of these are placements in South Yorkshire. The rest, 23 young people, are placed at distance from Rotherham in places ranging from Southampton to Derby to Gateshead.

In addition there are 3 children sectioned in hospital in relation to their mental health needs and two children placed in residential schools.

Independent sector residential placements are commissioned by the commissioning team. Rotherham is part of a regional partnership commissioning residential placements via the White Rose contract. Regular contract and performance management meetings are undertaken as part of the quality assurance process.

3.2.4 Adoptive Placement Provision

The Adoption Service has invested in increasing staffing with the team in 2013/14 using Adoption Reform Grant funding. This has contributed to an increase in recruitment activity and higher numbers of adopters being approved. In 2012/13 the Service approved a total of 18 adoptive families. We have already exceeded this in 2013/14 and are on course for a projected total of 31 adoptive families approved in the year by the end of 2013/14.

At the time of writing, January 2014, the following details key projected year end adoption placement statistics for 2013/14 and targets set for 2014/15:

Key Adoption Statistics for 2013/14	
Number of Children Adopted in 2013/14	35
Adoptive Families Approved in 2013/14	31
Children Placed for Adoption in 2013/14	45
Children Placed with In-house Adopters in 2013/14	16
Children Placed with External Adoption Agencies in 2013/14	29
Adoption Service Targets for 2014/15	
2014/15 Target for Adoptive Families Approved	42 (up from 31)
2014/15 Target for Reduction in External Agency Placements to	20 or less (down from 29)
2014/15 Target for Provision of Adoptive Families for Other LA children	5 or more (up from 2)

Efforts will be made to meet further stretch recruitment targets in 2014/15 with recruitment specifically targeted at families to adopt sibling groups, older children, children with disabilities, and children from ethnic minority backgrounds. The Adoption Service will aim in 2014/15 to increase recruitment of adopters from a projected 31 for this year, 2013/14, to 42, to reduce the use of adoption placements commissioned from other local authorities and the voluntary sector, and to increase the number of adoptive placements we are able to provide for other local authorities in the region and beyond.

3.2.5 Placement Provision for Children with Disabilities.

Fostering

Task Centred and Long Term Placements

Many of our mainstream foster carers care for and offer task centred and long term placements to children with varying degrees of disability ranging from mild learning disabilities to severe learning and physical disabilities.

Short Break Fostering

Our 'Families Together' scheme provides short break care for children with disabilities as part of a support service to families in the community. Access to the Families Together Scheme is agreed via the Local Authority's Short Breaks for Disabled Children's Panel. Families Together carers care for children from age 0 to 17.

At the time of writing in January 2014 there are 19 approved Families Together offering short breaks to a total of 23 disabled children.

Residential

Long Term:

Cherry Tree – Cherry Tree is a 5 bed home for the provision of long term accommodation for severe learning and/or physically disabled children aged 8 to 17.

Short Break:

Liberty House – Liberty House is a 9 bed home for the provision of 8 short break beds for children with severe learning and/or physical disability and in addition has one emergency bed for the placement of a disabled child in an emergency for up to 12 weeks.

3.2.6 Accommodation Provision for Care Leavers

Accommodation provision for care leavers in Rotherham is made up of two Local Authority run semi-independent units, several dispersed properties, and outreach service to support care leavers in their own tenancies and Supported Lodgings/Staying Put provision as follows:

Nelson Street

Nelson Street is a semi-independent unit with a capacity to accommodate 6 care leavers age 16 to 18. Nelson Street is almost always full to capacity.

Hollowgate

Hollowgate is a semi-independent unit with a capacity to accommodate 10 care leavers. Hollowgate is also almost always full to capacity.

Dispersed Properties

The Care Leaver Accommodation Service has access to up to 5 dispersed properties for care leavers. The service provides and outreach support service to care leavers in their own tenancies.

Supported Lodgings/ Staying Put Provision

The Local Authority has a Supported Lodging scheme co-ordinator who is now located within the Fostering Service. The service is working hard to increase the number of care leavers who have the opportunity to remain in Supported Lodgings/Staying Put arrangements with their foster carers once they turn 18 and we currently have 13 care leavers in such arrangements.

Summary Analysis

- The high number of independent sector fostering placements indicates that despite significant growth in the in-house foster carer pool over the last two years further progress is needed.
- It is particularly noteworthy that at the time of writing there were very low numbers of in-house foster placement vacancies for placements for children aged 11 plus, with 5, compared to 36 for children aged under 5 and 19 for children aged 5 to 10. In addition we currently have no in-house carers able to offer parent and child placements and commission these from independent agencies.
- This reflects the positive work done addressing a lack of provision for younger children and the need now to refocus on creating more foster carers for adolescents.
- The number of young people placed in independent residential placements is high at 27. The strategy needs to address the need for more local placements and for additional capacity in the in-house Fostering Service to care for some of these young people
- The number of children placed for adoption, at 45 in 2013/14 is high. However there has been a significant reliance on inter-agency placements with a projected 29 in 2013/14. The Service has set itself a target to increase

adopter approvals in 2014/15 and to use less interagency placements and provide more of our own placements to other local authorities.

- Placement provision for short breaks for disabled children is relatively good, with need being met for short breaks via both in-house fostering and residential provision. Whilst long term placements to meet disabled children's needs are also provided for through in-house fostering and residential provision, there is still a need to commission some placements from the independent sector. The new Fostering Plus scheme being launched will seek to recruit carers for young people with a range of complex needs including children with disabilities.
- There is a good range of accommodation options for care leavers and almost all care leavers are in suitable accommodation. There are 13 care leavers in Staying Put arrangements and we will be striving to offer this opportunity to as many care leavers as possible moving forward.

3.3 Placement Costs:

Unit costs per placement per week:	
Overall average unit cost of a child in care in Rotherham	£883
National average overall unit cost of a child in care	£838
Local authority foster care	£360
National average	£428
Independent sector foster care	£942
National average	£864
Local authority residential care	£2481
National average	£2866
Independent sector residential care	£3231
National average	£2960

Summary Analysis

- The placement cost information above sets out how in Rotherham the average cost of a placement per week per child is higher than the national average by £45.
- Whilst the unit costs for Rotherham's own foster care and residential placements are lower than the national average local authority unit costs, our unit costs for commissioned placements in independent sector fostering and residential are higher than the national average.
- **We have an overall higher unit cost for children in care because we use proportionately more independent sector placements than the national average. These placements are more expensive in almost all cases than local authority provision and in addition Rotherham pays more for independent sector placements than the average local authority does.**

3.1. P.E.S.T. Analysis

This section lists political, economic, social and technological factors that may need to be accounted for in developing and delivering the strategy.

Political Factors:

- Sufficiency duty legislation
- New Ofsted framework for inspection
- View in the community and the political view amongst councillors about in-house versus external provision.
- Community view about the siting of existing and additional residential accommodation in Rotherham

Economic Factors:

- Our need as an LA to make significant savings on the cost of accommodation for looked after children and to achieve best value.
- The need to work in partnership with other local authorities in the region to achieve cost efficiencies and reduce costs on commissioning of placements.

- The reduction in the Adoption Reform Grant amount for 2014/15 compared to 2013/14. (We are currently awaiting confirmation of the amount Rotherham will receive)
- The reality that if we want to increase the number of in-house carers for older and more complex children we have to compete in the mixed economy for potential foster carers with independent fostering agencies. This means providing an attractive package of financial and practical support.

Social Factors:

- The potential impact of austerity measures on the community and care population now and in future.
- The increasing number of children and young people with increasingly complex needs requiring local authority accommodation.

Technological Factors:

- Need to make the most of technology for management information/performance and contract monitoring.
- Need to make the most of online recruitment and marketing for new foster carers and adopters.

3.2. S.W.O.T. Analysis

The section is an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of our services and any opportunities for and threats to our success in improving sufficiency.

Strengths

- High numbers of children placed for adoption including difficult to place children.
- Improving trend in timeliness for adoption.
- Recent Ofsted rating of good for the Fostering Service.

- Significant recruitment of new foster carers for younger children over the last two years has eradicated our need to use the independent sector for children aged under 10.
- Sufficient existing staff resources in the Fostering Service to deliver new initiatives to improve recruitment of carers for older children and to improve support and supervision of carers.
- Lower unit costs in local authority residential care than councils nationally.
- The existence of our own Looked After and Adopted Children Support and Therapy Team to support care and adoptive placements.
- Dedicated Supported Lodgings Co-coordinator.
- Good range of accommodation for care leavers
- Skilled and motivated social work practitioners and managers in Fostering and Adoption Services who are enthusiastic about driving change and improvement

Weaknesses

- Uncompetitive financial and practical support package for foster carers means we have difficulty recruiting carers for older children and those with complex needs.
- Whilst it may appear a strength that our unit costs for our own foster care are significantly lower than the national average, it is a reflection of the fact that our package for carers is uncompetitive and this in turn results in our high use of much more expensive independent sector placements, and so it is therefore a weakness.
- Our payment for skills scheme for foster carers does not reward carers for taking on the more difficult fostering roles.
- As a result of inadequate fostering resources in-house we commission too high a proportion of placements from the independent sector.
- The independent sector placements we commission, both in fostering and residential sectors, are more expensive than councils nationally are being charged for.
- In addition, the market is not working for us in terms of providing local placements. As a result far too many children are placed outside and at

distance from Rotherham. As well as not being in the child's interests in most cases, these placements are much more difficult and expensive financially and in staff travelling time to support and monitor.

- Our own emergency residential children's home, Silverwood, is at maximum a seven bed home. This is large even for a long term home and it might be argued that even a five bed home for emergency placements is too large to operate successfully. This is perhaps reflected in the occupancy rates, with Silverwood only rarely over the last year having five children in placement. Under occupancy results in higher unit costs.

Opportunities

- Development of new scheme, Fostering Plus, using existing staff resources and 'pay as you go' funding from the out of authority budget that would otherwise have to be used to commission independent sector placements, to provide placements for older children and those with complex needs.
- Implementation of Fostering to Adopt scheme to increase timeliness in relation to adoption.
- Proactive re-engagement with the market to look creatively at how to provide more local independent sector placements.
- Review and revision of residential provision, and in particular Silverwood, to provide accommodation that better meets the needs of our looked after population and compliments the rest of our accommodation resources.

Threats

- Increasing pressure on local authority budgets and reduced central government funding.
- Increasing need to provide placements for young people with very complex needs that necessarily involve high cost.

4. Strategy

In moving to a position where we provide sufficient accommodation of the right type in the right place, which will almost always be in or very close to Rotherham, and

where we can provide such accommodation whilst achieving cost efficiencies on the current spend on accommodation, the following strategies will be applied:

4.1 We will strive to ensure that we manage the demographics of the care population such that we make good early decisions to bring younger children into care rather than delaying decisions where there are unsustainable or unsafe family arrangements. This will mean children spend less time in difficult family circumstances and when they enter care at a younger age we have a better opportunity to secure good forms of permanence for them such as adoption or special guardianship. A different approach of support to sustain family arrangements for adolescents is required so that fewer adolescents come into care.

4.2 We will move towards changing the composition of our placement types. We need to have more children in foster placements and less in residential. We need to have many more of our children and young people placed in Rotherham than is currently the case. And we need to move towards providing many more placements through our own fostering service and less via independent fostering agencies.

4.3 We will pro-actively engage with independent sector residential and fostering providers and develop smarter commissioning which results in significantly more independent sector placements being provided in and very close to Rotherham.

4.4 We will strive to maintain and improve upon the very high numbers of children we secure adoption for, we will continue to speed up our processes for moving children through the adoption process and we will improve timeliness of adoption through further innovative recruitment activity for families to adopt difficult to place children.

4.5 We will actively promote legal permanence through Special Guardianship and Residence Orders where adoption is not achievable or suitable.

5. Strategic Actions

5.1 Development of Fostering Plus scheme to recruit fee paid and therapeutically supported foster carers for older children and those with complex needs.

5.2 Review and revision of existing payment for skills scheme for in-house foster carers so that it more closely rewards carers for caring for children we most need placements for rather than skills payments being determined by experience and training record alone.

5.3 Review and possible revision of the remit and size of Silverwood residential home. Options to include reduction in capacity and maximum duration of stay from 20 to 12 weeks and/or change of remit.

5.4 Engagement with the market and development of smarter commissioning to ensure independent providers make provision available in or very close to Rotherham. In particular we will explore the possibility of residential providers opening new homes for our use in or very close to Rotherham.

5.5 Use of innovative marketing and recruitment activity to recruit adopters for difficult to place children and on-going use of new family finding events such as consortium wide Adoption Activity Days.

5.6 Establishment of Fostering to Adopt scheme to enable some children to be placed with prospective adoptive families before a court has granted a Placement Order, thereby meaning they will begin living with their forever family at a younger age and begin making attachments earlier.

5.7 Review and potential revision of financial and practical support arrangements for Special Guardians and Residence Order holders to ensure that we are doing all that we can to promote these legal forms of permanence.

5.8 Deliver education and guidance to social workers about the duty to place with extended family members where possible, and explore any other potential reasons for the very low numbers of connected persons/relative foster carers in Rotherham.

5.9 Maintain on-going promotion and development of Supported Lodgings/Staying Put scheme and arrangements to ensure increasing numbers of care leavers have the opportunity to 'stay put' with their foster carers.

6. Financial Implications

6.1. All new initiatives and strategic actions discussed above will need to be more than offset by resulting reduction of spending from other areas of the placement budget, given that one of the key aims of the strategy is to reduce overall spend.

6.2 Delivering the strategy recommendations will require the current staffing establishments in placement services, including temporary posts originally funded via the Adoption Reform Grant, to be maintained.

6.3 Maintaining existing resources in the Adoption Service will be cost effective, allowing the recruitment of even higher numbers of adoptive families in 2014/15

and enabling the service to achieve some income from providing adoptive placements for other local authorities.

6.4 Investment in the Fostering Service in initiatives like Fostering Plus will result in reduced use of high cost external placements and thus be cost effective.

7. Controls and Evaluation

7.1 Monthly monitoring meetings will be held to record and analyse placement supply and demand in adoption, fostering and residential provision.

7.2 Monthly monitoring of budget spending and activity in independent sector placements is undertaken.

7.3 Monthly monitoring of foster carer and adopter recruitment activity and success against targets.

7.4 On-going monitoring and promotion of Supported Lodgings/Staying put arrangements

7.5 Quarterly monitoring of performance against national performance indicators such as those relating to placements stability.

7.6 Termly monitoring of children's educational progress.

7.7 Monthly monitoring of the make-up of the care population by placement type and proportion of placements that are local/not local and those that are family based compared to residential, and those that are local authority provision compared to independent sector provision.

7.8 Monthly monitoring of number of children placed for adoption in-house and in inter-agency placements

7.9 On-going monitoring of timeliness of adoptions as measured against the Adoption Scorecard Measures 1 and 2.

7.10 On-going monitoring of the number of children placed in Fostering to Adopt placements

7.11 On-going monitoring of the number of young people placed in Fostering Plus placements

Paul Dempsey

Service Manager, Family Placements and Residential Services

January 2014

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER

1.	Meeting:-	Corporate Parenting Panel
2.	Date:-	21st October, 2014
3.	Title:-	Impact of the White Rose Residential Framework – Financial Year End Report
4.	Directorate:-	NAS

5. Summary

The White Rose Residential Framework is a consortium approach by 12 of the 15 Authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber Region to procure better value in independent residential placements for young people looked after.

The contract was let in July 2013 and this report outlines the impact the framework has had on Rotherham placements for looked after children in the financial year 2013-14.

6. Recommendations

That Cabinet Member:

- 6.1 Note the achievement of a framework for residential placements
- 6.2 Receive further reports as appropriate

7. Background

RMBC currently has a requirement for 25-30 independent residential placements for Looked After Children (LAC) at any one time. These are for LAC whose needs cannot be met within our own residential provision or who need to be placed outside of the borough for their own safety.

These placements were previously spot purchased as and when required. Whilst there had never been any major issues in sourcing appropriate provision in this way it is not best commissioning practice nor best value for money to secure such placements.

Whilst reviewing the current arrangements for the commissioning of independent residential provision for LAC, RMBC was invited by the White Rose Consortium of Local Authorities to take part in a regional commissioning exercise to develop a framework of independent providers of residential provision for LAC. The White Rose Consortium now consists of Rotherham and representatives from all the other local authorities in South and West Yorkshire as well as York, Hull and North East Lincolnshire.

The framework specification asked potential bidders to express an interest in delivering one or more of four categories of provision. These were:

R1 – Core Residential Provision

R2 – Specialist Residential Provision (this is core provision with the addition of a therapist(s) on site)

R3 – Specialist Residential Care with Education (this is R2 with school provision on site)

R4 – Parent and Child Assessment.

Each category operates on a tiered approach with the 40% of submissions scoring highest across both quality and price being placed in tier 1, the next 40% in tier 2 and the final 20% in tier 3. When a referral is issued it will initially only be sent to those providers in tier 1 and only if they cannot meet the need will it be issued to those in tier 2 and so on.

8. Finance

In 2013-14 Rotherham had between 19 and 31 placements in independent residential provision at any one time.

When the framework was let we had 20 independent placements, of which 8 were in provision with providers who had been successful in gaining a place on the framework. Subsequent to the framework going live we were successful in negotiating all of those 8 placements onto the lower White Rose price quoted in their tender submissions. This resulted in a saving over the course of the financial year of £211,387.

Subsequent placements made via the framework over the course of the financial year saved £63,673 against prices we would have been charged prior to the framework.

Therefore the total saving resulting from participation in the framework in 2013-14 was £275,060. The majority of these savings will be ongoing and cumulative as long as the young person remains in that placement.

Since the contract was let there were 29 placements made to the end of March 2014 (not including secure placements) and of these 25 were made via the White Rose Framework of which only one broke down and that was due to the young person assaulting a member of staff from the home.

9. Risks and uncertainties

Failure to participate in this or a similar tendering exercise would have risked no further savings being made on current independent residential expenditure.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

This work impacts particularly on one of the four Big Things within the recently revised Children and Young People's Plan namely Tackling Inequality as well as both the Enjoy and Achieve and the Making a positive contribution Action Plans.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

N/A

**Contact Name:- Chrissy Wright, Strategic Commissioning Manager, Ext. 22308,
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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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