

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

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

Date: Tuesday, 25th April, 2017

Time: 5.00 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 28th February, 2017 (Pages 1 - 12)
6. LAC Council - Destination Poland
Presentation by the LAC Council on the recent visit to Poland
7. LAC Council Updates
8. Corporate Parenting Performance Report - February 2017 (report herewith)
(Pages 13 - 33)
9. Virtual School Head Teacher Report 2016 (herewith) (Pages 34 - 61)
10. Regulation 44 Report - The Independent Person's Report (herewith) (Pages 62 - 72)
11. The Mentoring Scheme for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (report herewith) (Pages 73 - 80)
12. Staying Put (report herewith) (Pages 81 - 102)
13. Rotherham Adoption Service Performance Report 2016-2017 (herewith)
(Pages 103 - 123)

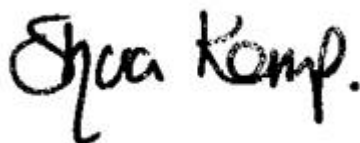
14. Rotherham Adoption Statement of Purpose 2017-2018 (report herewith) (Pages 124 - 138)
15. Rotherham Fostering Service Performance Report 2016 - 2017 (herewith) (Pages 139 - 168)
16. Rotherham Fostering Statement of Purpose 2017-2018 (report herewith) (Pages 169 - 198)
17. Discretionary Council Tax Discount for Care Leavers (report herewith) (Pages 199 - 206)
18. Early Help Offer for Looked After Children (report herewith) (Pages 207 - 217)
19. Apprenticeship Strategy 2017 - 2020 (herewith) (Pages 218 - 230)
20. Date and time of the next meetings:-

Wednesday, 27th June, 2017
29th August
24th October
19th December

All commencing at 5.00 p.m.

Membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel: -

Councillors G. Watson (Deputy Leader and Children and Young People's Services Portfolio holder), M. Clark (Chair of the Improving Lives Select Commission), V. Cusworth (second representative of the Improving Lives Select Commission), M. S. Elliott (Minority Party representative), S. Sansome (Elected Member) and J. Elliot (representative on the Fostering and Adoption Panels).



Sharon Kemp,
Chief Executive.

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
28th February, 2017**

Present:- Councillor Sansome (in the Chair); Councillors Clark, Cusworth and Elliot.

Also present were Sharon Fenoughty, Karen Holgate, Deborah Johnson, Mel Meggs, Emma Royale, Ian Thomas and Ian Walker.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Elliott and Watson, Lorraine Dale and Rebecca Wall.

D40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

D41. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 6TH DECEMBER, 2016

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

D42. ROTHERHAM LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S COUNCIL UPDATE

Mel Meggs, Deputy Strategic Director, presented an update on the work of the Looked After Children's Council (LACC) which had enjoyed another exciting, busy and productive period November, 2016 to January, 2017.

Their work included:-

- Suicide Prevention Logo consultation
- Early Help Looked After Children Post Card
- Remembrance Sunday Service and Parade
- Fixers – 'Rotherham Proud' DVD development
- LACC Pantomime at the Civic Theatre
- Holocaust Memorial Day Event
- Training and Education sessions including Remembrance Sunday and personal remembrance awareness, LACC working together with the Leaving Care Forum, seasonal craft session and Christmas Party – Youth Voice
- Destination Poland

Recruitment of new young people was vital to keep the group fresh and evolving to have a voice and help shape services for Looked After and Leaving Care young people. A recruitment drive was underway to widen participation of the LACC. Young people had created leaflets and a poster to promote their group and had been widely distributed through Early Help Managers, Social Care Managers, VAR newsletters, Virtual School and hand delivered to all LAC Designated Teachers and heads of each School year in all Rotherham secondary schools. LACC members had done everything they could to support recruitment but it was now up

to the Corporate Parents to take this forward and ensure the opportunities were communicated to the Looked After Children they worked with.

Ian Walker, Head of Service Children in Care, reported that it was important that a budget was secured as currently the LACC was limited in its activities and recruitment. There were plans in place for the young people to provide training for Elected Members and professionals once they were trained themselves. It was being discussed as part of the Workforce Development Plan.

The LACC had received funding for the 2016/17 financial year but it was not known it was a rolling budget.

Discussions would take place with the Directorate's Finance Team.

Resolved:- (1) That the update be noted.

(2) That the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services continue his discussions with the relevant officers with regard to a budget for the Rotherham Looked After Children's Council.

D43. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Mel Meggs, Deputy Strategic Director, presented a summary of performance for Key Performance Indicators across Looked After Children Services.

It was noted that this was the first performance report for the Panel since the implementation of the new Liquid Logic case management system at the end of October, 2016. As with any major change in system the changeover had created a number of challenges in terms of data quality and reporting. Significant progress had been made, however, teams were still adjusting to new recording requirements and addressing data migration gaps. Caution, therefore, needed to be applied when comparing performance to that achieved earlier in the year.

The report highlighted:-

- Overall Rotherham had an increasing Looked After Children profile. At the end of January there were 482 children in care which equated to a rate of 85.5 per 10,000 population compared to the 2015/17 year end position of 76.6 and statistical neighbour average of 75.8.
- Progress had been with the proportion with a plan increasing from 55.6% in December to 79.4% in January, however, it was significantly behind previous performance levels of 95-99%.
- Timeliness of LAC reviews remained high and monthly performance was relatively stable at above 98%. Slightly lower performance during the summer had impacted on the year to date figures (96.7%).

- Visit data had been successfully migrated into the new system, however, since November performance had been declining. Performance against National Minimum standards at the end of the month was 78.7% and against local standards 65.8%.
- In January the proportion of children who had had 3 or more placements (2 moves) had slightly improved from 12.8% to 11.7%. Whilst it reduced it continued to be higher than all other benchmarks. The target of reducing to less than 10% remained and was still achievable.
- The proportion of long term children in care who experienced a stable placement for over 2 years was 66.2%. This was a declining picture and placed Rotherham below statistical neighbours and the national average.
- There were known delays in the data input for both Health and Dental information. It was likely that performance may change when statistics were re-run in future reports.
- The timeliness of dental checks was declining at 66.1% compared to previous performance of above 71% and a target of 95%.
- Health Assessment reviews in the previous three months had been good at over 95%. It was expected that the fall in January to 92.7% would be linked to data inputting issues. This would need to be monitored in future months.
- Initial Health Assessments remained an area of concern with the number completed each month not reflecting the increase in LAC admissions.
- 90.1% of eligible children had had a Personal Education Plan (PEP) recorded on their social care record. Only 63.7% of children had a PEP which was up-to-date.
- The number of Care Leavers was stable at 224. However, as the data had not migrated on all young people's files there was an inability to report direct on accommodation or Education, Employment and Training (EET) status. The Performance Team was working closely with the Service and systems support to ensure the gap was addressed.
- As of 1st February 10 young people were not in suitable accommodation, four of which were in custody. Of the remaining 6, the Service was in touch and supporting all but 1 who had abandoned their tenancy and wanted by the Police.

- 71.3% of care leavers were in EET. For those aged over 18 this dropped to 64.7% although this still compared well against the benchmarking averages of 50.4% (statistical neighbours) and 48% (national average).
- There were 9 adoptions in January, the highest figure for a single month in over 12 months. It was hoped that there would be a further 6 adoptions completed before the end of the reporting year giving a total of 35 (43 in the previous year).
- The rising number of LAC had resulted in an increase in the number of average number of cases per LAC Team Social Worker to 12.9. The maximum was now 18. A management review of all children with a Section 20 legal status had identified the potential to return home for up to 15 children.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- Liquid Logic covered Early Help, Social Care and Adult Social Care – all Departments and Services that could take advantage of the system were doing so
- Liquid Logic was also accessed by the Rotherham Foundation Trust
- Good progress had been made with the system with the workforce developing the skills to use it. As the workforce became more confident in its use, the need to manually check the data will reduce. There was a further training session for Social Workers
- Suggested training session for Elected Members
- There were monthly meetings with Health administrators to look at the health data to cross reference the information
- The system was totally reliant on manual input of the information so there would always be a need for checks and balances, however, there were some efficiencies expected e.g. enable Social Workers to spend more time with the children and families and better quality assessments
- Improved staff levels had reduced caseloads and enabled a better quality of work
- 5 Social Workers had been recruited to the LAC Service together with 3 new Team Managers. It was hoped to recruit shortly to the Service Manager post from the candidates that had applied
- 14 Advanced Practitioners had been appointed. These postholders would have smaller caseloads and support the newly qualified Social

Workers and work with the more complex children

- The outcome of the recent Ofsted monitoring visit would be published on 13th March in which there would be a specific comment about the positive culture in Rotherham and Social Workers feeling valued and well consulted on changes
- A project with voluntary organisations which would provide a twelve weeks programme for a number of young people leaving care and preparing them for the world of work. Running in parallel work had been carried out with the Chamber of Commerce offering a range of work experience and day release opportunities. Wilmott Dixon were looking to offer 16 apprenticeships a year, with financial remuneration, with ringfencing for care leavers. The GCSE Maths requirement would be waived and would support the young person to achieve the qualification during the course of the apprenticeship
- The Council, as Corporate Parent, still had no care leavers undertaking an apprenticeship
- The Communications Team would be issuing a press release once the Ofsted outcome was released
- A Looked after Child in employment/training would be allocated a Personal Adviser and a dedicated EET Worker who would liaise regularly with the place of work/educational placement to ensure the support package was in place. They would work with the young person to sustain their commitment to the work environment as well as the work placement to ensure they sustained their commitment to the young person
- Ofsted was returning to carry out a monitoring visit of care leavers on the 3rd/4th May. A Peer Review would be undertaken prior to the visit

Resolved:- (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That a training session be held for Elected Members on Liquid Logic.

(3) That the issue of Corporate Parent expectations with regard to apprenticeships for care leavers be raised at the Senior Leadership Team by the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services.

(4) That a deep dive of Care Leavers take place at the April meeting.

(5) That a report on the Regional Adoption agency be submitted in May/June.

D44. OVERVIEW OF CORPORATE PARENTING TRAINING FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Discussion ensued on the further training that Elected Members would wish to undertake.

Resolved:- That training take place on:-

Care Regulations

The different people in a "life" of a Looked After Child.

D45. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER OVERVIEW

Sharon Fenoughty, Independent Reviewing Officer, presented an overview of the number of Escalations by IROs via the formal Challenge and Escalation process.

The IRO Handbook and Care Planning Regulations (2010) clearly placed responsibility upon the IRO to 'monitor the child's case' on an ongoing basis. There was the expectation that the IRO would challenge managers where necessary and 'champion' positive care planning which was timely and relevant in respect of individual children. As part of the monitoring function, the IRO also had 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 sought to ensure good outcomes for children were identified and seek to support this on an individual basis through the quality assurance role they had within the LAC Review process.

Rotherham Escalation and Challenge process was re-launched following review in September, 2016. There were five stages which could be commenced at any point and at any stage. The level was determined by the IRO and Operations Manager for the IRO's. Determining factors would be the urgency and level of authority needed to make decisions to progress the issues identified.

The process should provide for no more than twenty working days to resolve the issue. In practice, however, it could take longer due to the complexity of the issues raised via the process.

The IRO activity from October, 2016 to the end of January, 2017 was as follows:-

| | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 | Stage 4 | Contact with CAFCASS |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| October | 14 | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| November | 19 | 2 | 2 | - | - |
| December | 10 | 2 | 3 | - | - |
| January | 1 | - | 2 | - | - |
| Total | 54 | 5 | 8 | | 0 |

Key themes and issues raised via the Escalations were:-

- Concerns over care planning or drift and delay
- Delay in progressing Care Proceedings and lengthy periods of care under Section 20
- A lack of supervision leading to a lack of management oversight and grip
- Concern around decision making, Safeguarding issues and risk being managed in placement
- Delay in finding a long term placement despite ongoing assessment highlighting the placement cannot meet the needs of the child
- Delay in permanence planning in respect of SGO's
- Concerns regarding transition to Adults Services and delay in the Adult assessment process commencing
- Delay in the provision of therapeutic support
- Concerns around the regulation of placement with parents and management of risk related to this
- Lack of health assessment
- Lack of PEP and or appropriate education provision
- Progression of contact
- Placement suitability
- Lack of appropriate written assessment given current level of need and risk

Discussion ensued with the following points raised/clarified:-

- IROs were an emerging strength in the organisation and recognised by Ofsted
- The IRO's prioritised their work with the priority being to complete the reviews
- There was a heavy workload and every effort was made to ensure that all the reviews were on time, that all children were seen before reviews and that the reports and recommendations were completed
- The complement of IROs had been increased due to the increase in LAC
- The average caseload was between 50-70 cases – the target was 70 as set out in the national Statutory Handbook
- Issues were increasingly addressed in the lower end of the escalation process indicating that the IRO and LAC Worker were working more collaboratively

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

D46. MISSING FROM CARE

Ian Walker, Head of Service Children in Care, presented a report regarding Looked After Children missing from care.

There had been a recent improvement in the quality of the data available relating to this issue. The data evidenced a significant improvement in the numbers of missing incidents, the numbers of children involved and the length of time those young people went missing. The reduction would have a positive impact upon other performance measures and the general safeguarding of Looked After Children.

The report highlighted:-

- 50 LAC missing incidents (reduced from 91) involving 24 young people (12 to 17)
- Number of young people involved – 24 (reduced from 47)
- Average time missing – 4 hours (reduced from 6.5 hours) with the longest time missing of 21 hours 30 minutes (reduced from 23 hours 15 minutes)
- 18 Return Interviews completed

The Local Safeguarding Children Board was completing a multi-agency audit relating to 1st-30th September, 2016. The early findings showed there was evidence of real strength in multi-agency partnership working. There was evidence that the voice of the child was apparent in more of the interventions and that the children were influencing decision making in their lives.

There was also evidence that the new process for children who went missing (the tracker, trigger plan, operational meetings, screening through MASH, designated RHI Officers) had strengthened the focus on these children and helped to make better decision around their risk and safety. There was also evidence that the Early Help Services were beginning to impact positively on these services.

The South Yorkshire Missing from Home and Care Protocol was currently under revision and still in draft form. Rotherham was part of the South Yorkshire Missing Group which was currently developing a revised protocol. It was anticipated that this would be submitted for consideration to senior management in Spring 2017. This was, in conjunction with the College of Policing Briefing and Guidance, would further ensure best practice and that all missing person were investigated.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

D47. ROTHERHAM LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVER'S STRATEGY 2017-2020

Ian Walker, Head of Service Children in Care, presented the final version of the Looked After and Care Leaver's Strategy 2017-20 for formal

approval which provided a framework for the improvements that were essential if the legacy was to be addressed and better outcomes achieved.

The document had been considered by the Panel previously as well as a number of other Boards/Panels.

Resolved:- (1) That the Looked After and Care Leaver's strategy 2017-20 be endorsed for adoption by the Council.

(2) That the Corporate Parenting Panel review the Strategy and support its key objectives.

(3) That the Corporate Parenting Panel monitor the implementation of the Strategy and hold individual officers/partner agencies to account for any delays or barriers being experienced.

D48. GUIDE TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE IN ROTHERHAM

Ian Walker, Head of Service Children in Care, presented a guide as to how the Authority would provide young people leaving care with financial support to enable them to make a successful transition to adulthood and how the Leaving Care Team would help them gain confidence in managing their money.

The guide outlined all of the sources of income available to care leavers depending upon their own particular individual circumstances and provided information as to how they could access the income. It also outlined the additional support that the Local Authority, as a good Corporate Parent, would offer to its care leavers and what in return was expected of the young person.

All care leavers who were ready to move onto independence would receive an allowance to set up home together with financial help with education and training courses including higher education or help to get/keep a job.

Care leavers had been fully consulted in respect of the contents of the guide and had contributed to the detailed financial commitments.

The new Policy was expected to work within the 2017/18 cash limit for Leaving Care Allowances. The 2017/18 budget would be increased to take into account this budget pressure.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- This had never been done in Rotherham before
- A leaflet and booklet would be developed for care leavers

- The financial support included a whole range of offers including offer of accommodation support, support in education accommodation during the time they attended university, driving lessons
- It would be run in conjunction with the development of Chatham Villages drop-in sessions that care leavers would be able to access
- It would have the same principles of the Transitional Housing Benefit but was what a good parent would do for their child
- The need for work nationally around preparing care leavers for parenthood

Resolved:- That the Guide to Financial Support for Young People Leaving Care in Rotherham and the accompanying financial commitment be endorsed.

D49. ROTHERHAM LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2017-2020

Ian Walker, Head of Service Children in Care, presented the Rotherham Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2017-20 which had been developed in line with the duty to provide or procure placements for Children Looked After (CLA) by the Local Authority. This included a duty of 'sufficiency' that required Local Authorities and Children's Trust partners to ensure that there was a range of sufficient placements which met the needs of children and young people in care and to take steps to develop and shape Service provision to meet the needs of all children and young people in care at a local level as far as it was reasonably possible.

The Strategy set out how Rotherham's Children's Services would fulfil its role as a Corporate Parent and meet its statutory duty by providing good quality care, effective parenting and support to children and young people in and leaving its care.

The outcome of the Strategy would be to safely and appropriately reduce the number of young people requiring care by the Local Authority, responding to the challenges identified and improving outcomes for children.

It was expected that the 'one market' approach to the commissioning and provision of secure, safe and appropriate accommodation and support to children in care and care leavers over the next 4 years together with the strategic intentions of the Strategy would provide significant cost avoidance and opportunities for savings and were essential to the sustainability of improved outcomes and the budget.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- 13 expressions of interest had been received in January from potential foster carers
- Range of innovations within the Fostering Recruitment Service and it was hoped that the advertised post of Marketing Officer would further increase the profile on social media

It was noted that the report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 17th February, 2017.

Resolved:- That the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2017-21 be noted.

D50. OFSTED UPDATES/REGULATION 44 VISITS

Ian Thomas, Strategic Director, Children and Young People's Services, reported that under the new regime for inadequate authorities, Ofsted conducted monitoring visits on a quarterly basis.

There had been 2 monitoring visits to Rotherham; the first focussed on Looked After Children with the second taking place on 3rd/4th May.

There would be a further visit in September.

Liberty House had been rated Outstanding when Ofsted had visited. A further interim inspection had taken place in January, 2017, and found that it was Outstanding with "improved effectiveness".

From next year Ofsted would be replaced the Single Framework Inspection with a 2 week programme of inspections focussing on practice.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

D51. HEALTH/CAMHS

Karen Holgate, Named Nurse Looked After Children and Care Leavers, presented a report on Looked After Children's Statutory Health Assessments.

The Foundation Trust had been informed of eleven children/young people becoming Looked After the notification of which was received on average 4.9 working days from the child becoming looked after. Of the 11, 9 had had their initial Health Assessment undertaken (with 1 young person within 6 days of becoming Looked After), 2 appointments were booked but not yet undertaken due to a delay in the notification process.

As at the end of January, the completion of Review Health Assessments within the statutory timescales remained stable at 95.1%. Dental attendance was recorded at 89.5% and children/young people with up-to-

date immunisations at 87.9%.

There was close working between Health and the Local Authority with a strict pathway devised stipulating what should happen on day one through to day twenty identifying which agency was responsible for that part of the pathway. Work was taking place to ascertain where the gaps/issues were and how they could be improved. The notification process had been an issue but access to Liquid Logic had hopefully resolved the situation.

Another area of concern was the length of time it took for the reports of the Paediatricians to be typed and returned to the Council. A Peer Review was to take place shortly.

It was noted that the CAMHS element of the report had not been submitted due to the Presenting Officer having been involved in an accident and currently not at work.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

D52. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETINGS: -

Resolved:- That further meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel be held as follows:-

Wednesday, 25th April, 2017
27th June
29th August
24th October
19th December

All commencing at 5.00 p.m.

Council Report

Corporate Parenting Performance

Title

Corporate Parenting Performance Report – February 2017

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan? No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**Report Author(s)**

Deborah Johnson (Performance Assurance Manager – Social Care)
Ian Walker (Head of Service Children in Care)

Ward(s) Affected

All

Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of performance for key performance indicators across Looked After Children services. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying performance data report at Appendix A which provides trend data, graphical analysis and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages where possible.

Recommendations

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to receive the report and accompanying dataset (Appendix A) and consider issues arising.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix A – Corporate Parenting Performance Report (February 2017)

Background Papers

Ofsted Improvement Letter
Children's Social Care Monthly Performance Reports

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required No

Exempt from the Press and Public No

Title: Corporate Parenting Performance Report – February 2017

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to receive the report and accompanying dataset (Appendix A) and consider issues arising.

2. Background

- 2.1 This report provides evidence to the council's commitment to improvement and providing performance information to enable scrutiny of the improvements and the impact on the outcomes for children and young people in care. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying performance data report which provides trend data, graphical analysis and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages.
- 2.2 Targets, including associated 'RAG' (red, amber, green rating) tolerances, are included. These have been set in consideration of available national and statistical neighbour benchmarking data, recent performance levels and, importantly, Rotherham's improvement journey.
- 2.3 The narrative supplied within the report has been written by the Deputy Director for Children's Services

3. Key Issues

3.1 Service Overview and Context

- 3.1.1 This is the second performance report for Corporate Parenting Panel since the implementation of the new Liquid Logic case management system at the end of October 2016.
- 3.1.2 As with any major change in system this changeover created a number of challenges in terms of data quality and reporting. Significant progress has been made however teams are still adjusting to new recording requirements and addressing data migration gaps. Therefore caution needs to be applied when comparing performance to that achieved earlier in the year.
- 3.1.3 As anticipated the dip in performance caused by the introduction of Liquid Logic has begun to correct itself with most of the key indicators showing an improvement over the course of recent weeks. However, there remains some shortfall in performance especially in respect of Initial Health Assessments, placement stability and Care Plans that will remain a focus of performance management processes.
- 3.1.4 Following a long period of management instability there is now a full complement of team managers available to drive the performance of the service. In addition three of the five team managers in the LAC social work teams are permanent with 2 of the agency interim managers in the midst of the permanent recruitment process. In

turn the Service Manager to focus more on the strategic developments and less on day to day operational matters.

3.1.5 The permanent Service Manager for LAC Teams will be recruited to on the 23rd March and the permanent Service Manager for the Leaving Care Service will be commencing in role at the start of April. The Fostering Recruitment Team Manager is also currently being recruited to meaning that there is likely to be a full complement of permanent managers in post in the LAC Service by the summer.

3.1.6 In addition to this, as part of the Improvement Partner relationship Lincolnshire CYPS have agreed to second one of their managers to the LAC service for an initial 12 month period to support the performance improvement process. It is not intended that they will have any role in case management processes but will rather focus on:-

- General performance management processes which will enable the permanent team managers to focus on better quality case management processes.
- Implementing the plan to reduce the numbers of LAC with 3+ placement moves which currently stands at 12% of the cohort (58 young people) as compared to the national average of 9%.
- Overseeing the Beyond Audit action plan.
- Performance managing the remaining 34 in-house and Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements of more than 2 years standing to a long-term match via the Foster Panel process. Once completed this will mean that 27% of the total LAC cohort will be in long-term matched placements.
- The next drive for this secondee will be to support as many of these 60 in-house placements and 71 IFA placements towards Special Guardianship Orders or Child Arrangement Orders. On average Rotherham only achieves approximately 20 such transitions to permanence per year so there should be scope to significantly improve Rotherham's performance in this respect. This process should be further facilitated by the appointment to the post Special Guardianship Support Worker post.
- Taking management oversight responsibility for the Initial Health Assessment process.
- Representing the LAC Service in any Complex Abuse Investigations.

3.2 Looked After Children Profile

3.2.1 Overall Rotherham has an increasing Looked After Children (LAC) profile. However at the end of February numbers had increased to 485 children in care which equates to a rate of 86.1 per 10,000 population this is high when compared to the 2015/16 year-end position of 76.6 and statistical neighbour average of 75.8.

- 3.2.2 Table 1 provides a breakdown by age of the LAC population at the month end by age group against the latest national comparator data. This shows that overall Rotherham's LAC age profile follows a similar distribution to the National. However we have a higher proportion aged under one (7.4% compared to 5%) and a lower proportion aged over sixteen (20% compared to 23%).

Table 1 – Age distribution of Looked After Children

| Age Band | Number | % of total | Latest National comparative data (Mar-16) |
|----------|--------|------------|---|
| Under 1 | 36 | 7.4% | 5% |
| 1 – 4 | 59 | 12.2% | 13% |
| 5 - 9 | 101 | 20.8% | 20% |
| 10 - 15 | 194 | 40.0% | 39% |
| 16+ | 95 | 20% | 23% |
| Total | 485 | | |

- 3.2.3 Table 2 demonstrates the current legal status of Looked After Children at the end of the month. Almost half of our children re on full care orders (49%), 34% are on an Interim Care Order and 9% are Section 20 (Voluntary care agreements). Unfortunately there is no clear national data to benchmark this distribution against.

Table 2 – Current Legal Status of Looked After Children

| Legal Status | Number | % of total |
|--|--------|------------|
| Interim Care Order | 165 | 34% |
| Full Care Order | 238 | 49.1% |
| Placement Order | 36 | 7% |
| On remand, or committed for trial/sentence | 3 | 0.6% |
| Under police protection | 1 | 0.2% |
| Single period of care under Section 20 (Voluntary agreement) | 42 | 8.7% |

3.3 Plans

- 3.3.1 Due to technical reasons 'plans' data could not be migrated into Liquid Logic. Therefore workers are required to manually input the information for each child. This no longer relates just to the date of the plan but includes the full details. Performance demonstrates initial progress made to place a plans on the system has slowed with performance falling from 78.4% in January to 77.6% at the end of February. It is however acknowledged that performance within the month had at times reached 80% but still this remains previous performance levels of 95-99%.

3.4 Reviews

- 3.4.1 Timeliness of LAC reviews remains high and monthly performance is relatively stable at above 98%. Slightly lower performance in the summer however is impacting on the year to date figure which is slightly lower but still good at 96.9%.
- 3.4.2 It is also noted that the number of reviews completed each month is declining which, given the raising LAC numbers, requires monitoring to ensure future performance does not deteriorate and children's cases are reviewed in a timely manner.

3.5 Visits

- 3.5.1 Visit data was successfully migrated into the new system. However since the November performance has been declining. This is, in part, connected to the high turnover of staff across the LAC service, this should improve following the latest round of recruitment and once a stable permanent team management is secured.
- 3.5.2 Performance against National Minimum standards at the end of the month was 87.9% and against local standards 81.5%. This is an improvement on the previous month (85.5% and 79.5% respectively) and operational performance meetings are driving further targeted improvements to ensure standards reach targets and previous performance levels are achieved.

3.6 Placements

- 3.6.1 Although some placement moves are in the best interests of the child the provision of a good stable home is known to be essential for children to achieve good outcomes. Placement performance statistics demonstrate that we need to improve our preventative work to reduce placement disruption.
- 3.6.2 At the end of the month the proportion of children who have had three or more placements, (two moves in the previous 12 months), continued to improve to 10.9% from previous in year highs of 14.7%. Our target of reducing to less than 10%, which is also the National average, remains and is still achievable.
- 3.6.3 In 2015/16 Rotherham achieved national top quartile performance for the proportion of our long term children in care who experience a stable placement for over two years. Since June this has seen a significant decline. At the end of February this performance was 65.5% which is a further decline on the January position of 66.7% and last year's outturn of 72.7% now placing Rotherham below statistical neighbours and the national average.

3.7 Looked After Children Health and Dental

- 3.7.1 Please note there are known delays in the data input for both Health and Dental information therefore it is likely that performance may change when statistics are rerun in future reports.
- 3.7.2 Current statistics demonstrate that the timeliness of dental checks continue to decline at 65.6% compared to January's performance of 67.3%, last year's outturn of 95% and a target of 95%.
- 3.7.3 Following previous good performance Health Assessment reviews are similarly declining at 90.5% compared to a validated January figure of 93.8%.
- 3.7.4 Of the number of IHAs completed in February 20% were completed within 20 days of the child entering care. A child level review of performance and system recording is being undertaken by the performance team and the findings will be reported within the next Corporate Parenting performance report.

3.8 Personal Education Plan (PEP)

- 3.8.1 PEPs are now produced termly and are led by the Virtual School Team. 93.6% of eligible children have a PEP recorded on their social care record but only 54% of children have a PEP which is up-to-date on Liquid Logic (produced within the last term).
- 3.8.2 This fall in performance has been linked to QA process issues within the Virtual School. This issue has now been addressed and more than 100 PEPs have been signed off since this data report and sent to the LAC team to input onto the respective case files.
- 3.8.3 In addition only 5 of the 308 compulsory school age looked after children do not as yet have a PEP meeting organised for this current term and all of these 5 young people are very recent admissions to care.
- 3.8.4 The Virtual School state that by the end of the Spring Term PEPs performance will be in the high 90% with 81% of completed PEPs being audited at a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' level of quality.

3.9 Care Leavers

- 3.9.1 The number of Care Leavers is remains relatively stable at 223.
- 3.9.2 Unfortunately at this time we are unable to report direct on accommodation or Education, Employment and Training (EET) status as the data was not migrated during Liquid Logic implementation and requires manual input on all young people's files. The performance team is working closely with the service and

systems support to ensure this gap is addressed in the next months report.

- 3.9.3 Whilst the systems developments are being addressed the Leaving Care Team are still ensuring that they can track performance and outcomes for each young person with an internal tracker.
- 3.9.4 This tracker showed that at the end of February 91% of the 223 care leavers maintained *meaningful* (i.e. not text or emails) contact with their Personal Advisors over the previous 8 weeks.
- 3.9.5 The Leaving Care Team knows of the whereabouts of all bar one of its care leavers and he remains in touch but refuses to disclose the address of his girlfriend with whom he is living. 98% of care leavers are deemed to be in suitable accommodation (national average is 77%)
- 3.9.6 70% of our care leavers are currently in Education, Training or Employment (national average is 48%). Discounting those care leavers not available for work due to pregnancy, parenting or illness/disability there still remain 34 care leavers who are NEET and available for work. With 12 care leavers currently accessing Higher Education (9% of the post 18 cohort).
- 3.9.7 Since the last panel three RMBC apprenticeships have been ring-fenced to allow care leavers the opportunity to apply before general advertisement. Seven young people have expressed an interest and all have been offered an interview. At the time of this report the outcome of these interviews is not yet known but a future update will be provided.
- 3.9.8 Additionally a proposed Mentoring Programme for LAC and Care leavers is currently being developed. This will enable young people to access advice and guidance from senior managers and elected members to support them into the world of work and training.

3.10 Adoptions

- 3.10.1 There was one adoption in February taking the total number of adoptions for the year to 29. There are two more adoptions to be completed in March taking the total to 31 which is a drop on last year's achievement of 43.
- 3.10.2 A number of this year's adoptions were for 'hard to place' children which has impacted on the timeliness measures summarised below;
 - % adoptions this year to date where the adoption was completed within 12 months of the decision to adopt (SHOBPA decision) is 41.4% this is drop of 12% on last year's performance of 53.5%

- A1 measure (rolling 12 months) – the average time between entering care and moving to the adoptive placement in Rotherham was 374.7 days compared to the end of January figure of 368.8 (England average at 593). This worsening performance is as a direct result of two sibling groups being adopted for whom searches had been quite prolonged given their additional needs.
- A2 measure (Rolling 12 months) – the average time between the Placement Order being obtained and an adoptive match being identified in Rotherham was 208 days down from 211 last month (England average at 223 days).

3.10.3 The development of the Regional Adoption Agency is intended to further accelerate the adoption process. However, the uncertainty arising from this government led initiative is having an impact on the retention of experienced adoption social workers and there is a risk this may impact negatively on performance in the short-term.

3.11 Caseloads

3.11.1 The average number of cases per LAC team social worker has reduced to 11 (12.9 at the end of January), similarly the maximum caseload has also reduced by one to 17. A management review of all children with a section 20 legal status has identified the potential to return home for up to 15 children. If this is achieved, combined with new edge of care interventions, this will result in a significant decrease in workload.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 4.1 The full corporate parenting performance report attached at Appendix A represents a summary of performance across a range of key national and local indicators with detailed commentary provided by the service director. Commissioners are therefore recommended to consider and review this information.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Not applicable

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 Not applicable

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications to this report. The relevant Service Director and Budget Holder will identify any implications arising from associated improvement actions and Members and Commissioners will be consulted where appropriate.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct legal implications to this report.

9. Human Resources Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct human resource implications to this report. The relevant Service Director and Managers will identify any implications arising from associated improvement actions and Members and Commissioners will be consulted where appropriate.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 The performance report relates to services and outcomes for children in care.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 There are no direct implications within this report.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1 Partners and other directorates are engaged in improving the performance and quality of services to children, young people and their families via the Rotherham Local Children's Safeguarding Board (RLSCB). The RLSCB Performance and Quality Assurance Sub Group receive this performance report within the wider social care performance report on a regular basis.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 Inability and lack of engagement in performance management arrangements by managers and staff could lead to poor and deteriorating services for children and young people. Strong management oversight by Directorship Leadership Team and the ongoing weekly performance meetings mitigate this risk by holding managers and workers to account for any dips in performance both at a team and at an individual child level.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Mel Meggs, Deputy Strategic Director (CYPS)
Mel.meggs@rotherham.gov.uk

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- Named Officer -

Director of Legal Services:- Named officer

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):- N/A

Name and Job Title.

This report is published on the Council's website or can be found at:-

<http://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?Categories=>

Corporate Parenting Monthly Performance Report

As at Month End: February 2017

*Please note: Data reports are not dynamic. Although care is taken to ensure data is as accurate as possible every month, delays in data input can result in changes in figures when reports are re-run retrospectively. To combat this at least two individual months data is rerun for each indicator. **In addition the data migration undertaken to facilitate the implementation of the new social care (LCS) and early help (EHM) systems at the end of October 2016 will have impacted on the data validity and recording processes. Therefore there may be data discrepancies present when comparing this report to that of the previous month.***

Document Details

Status: Issue 1

Date Created: 21st March 2017

Created by: Deborah Johnson, Performance Assurance Manager - Social Care

Performance Summary

As at Month End: February 2017

*'DOT' - Direction of travel represents the direction of 'performance' since the previous month with reference to the polarity of 'good' performance for that measure. Colours have been added to help distinguish better and worse performance. Key Below:-

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ - increase in numbers (no good/bad performance) → - stable with last month (no good/bad performance) ↓ - decrease in numbers (no good/bad performance) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ - improvement in performance → - decline in performance but still within limits of target ↓ - decline in performance, not on target | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → - no movement but within limits of target → - no movement, not on target |
|--|---|---|

| | NO. | INDICATOR | GOOD PERF IS | DATA NOTE (Monthly) | 2016 / 17 | | | | | DOT (Month on Month) | RAG (in month) | Target and Tolerances | | | YR ON YR TREND | | | LATEST BENCHMARKING - 2014/15 | | | |
|-----------------------|------|--|---------------|--------------------------|-----------|--------|--------|-------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|---------|---------|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------|-------------------------|
| | | | | | Dec-16 | Jan-17 | Feb-17 | YTD | DATA NOTE | | | Red | Amber | Target Green | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | STAT NEIGH AVE | BEST STAT NEIGH | NAT AVE | NAT TOP QTILE THRESHOLD |
| LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN | 6.1 | Number of Looked After Children | Info | Count | 484 | 471 | 485 | | | ↑ | | | | n/a | | 407 | 432 | | | | |
| | 6.2 | Rate of Looked After Children per 10,000 population aged under 18 | Info | Rate per 10,000 | 85.9 | 83.6 | 86.1 | | | ↑ | | more than +/-5 | +/-5 | up to +/- 2 of 73.5 | 70 | 70 | 76.6 | 75.8 | 56.0 | 60.0 | - |
| | 6.3 | Admissions of Looked After Children | Info | Count | 21 | 9 | 26 | 244 | Financial Year | ↑ | | | | n/a | 147 | 175 | 208 | | | | |
| | 6.4 | Number of children who have ceased to be Looked After Children | High | Count | 17 | 21 | 12 | 193 | Financial Year | ↓ | | | | n/a | 136 | 160 | 192 | | | | |
| | 6.5 | Percentage of LAC who have ceased to be looked after due to permanence (Special Guardianship Order, Residence Order, Adoption) | High | Percentage | 29.4% | 45.0% | 10.0% | 23.2% | Financial Year | ↓ | | <33% | 33%> | 35%+ | 40.4% | 37.5% | 40.1% | | | | |
| | 6.6 | Percentage of LAC who have ceased to be looked after due to a Special Guardianship Order | High | Percentage | 17.6% | 0.0% | 10.0% | 8.3% | Financial Year | ↑ | | range to be set | | | | | | | | | |
| | 6.7 | LAC cases reviewed within timescales | High | Percentage | 99.1% | 97.6% | 98.5% | 96.9% | Financial Year | ↑ | | <90% | 90%> | 95%+ | 98.6% | 94.9% | 83.3% | | | | |
| | 6.8 | % of children adopted | High | Percentage | 5.9% | 42.9% | 8.3% | 15.0% | Financial Year | ↓ | YTD | <20% | 20%> | 22.7%+ | 26.5% | 26.3% | 22.9% | 18.8% | 27.0% | 15.0% | 21.0% |
| | 6.9 | Health of Looked After Children - up to date Health Assessments | High | Percentage | 94.8% | 93.8% | 90.5% | | | ↓ | | <90% | 90%> | 95%+ | 82.7% | 81.4% | 92.8% | | | | |
| | 6.10 | Health of Looked After Children - up to date Dental Assessments | High | Percentage | 68.6% | 67.3% | 65.6% | | | ↓ | | <90% | 90%> | 95%+ | 42.5% | 58.8% | 94.5% | | | | |
| | 6.11 | Health of Looked After Children - Initial Health Assessments carried out within 20 working days | High | Percentage | 12.5% | 0.0% | 20.0% | | | ↓ | | range to be set | | | | | | | | | |
| | 6.12 | % of LAC with a PEP | High | Percentage | 92.5% | 95.4% | 93.6% | | | ↓ | | <90% | 90%> | 95%+ | 65.7% | 68.7% | 97.8% | | | | |
| | 6.13 | % of LAC with up to date PEPs | High | Percentage | 83.1% | 76.9% | 54.0% | | | ↓ | | <90% | 90%> | 95%+ | 72.9% | 71.4% | 95.0% | | | | |
| | 6.14 | % of eligible LAC with an up to date plan | High | Percentage | 55.7% | 78.4% | 77.6% | 64.1% | Financial Year | ↓ | | <93% | 93%> | 95%+ | 67.0% | 98.8% | 98.4% | | | | |
| | 6.15 | % of completed LAC visits which were completed within timescale - National Minimum standard | High | Percentage | 93.2% | 85.5% | 87.9% | | | ↑ | | <95% | 95%> | 98%+ | | 94.9% | 98.1% | | | | |
| | 6.16 | % of completed LAC visits which were completed within timescale - Rotherham standard | High | Percentage | 82.4% | 79.5% | 81.5% | 60.0% | Financial Year | ↑ | | <85% | 85%> | 90%+ | | 64.0% | 80.2% | | | | |
| CARE LEAVERS | 7.1 | Number of care leavers | Info | Count | 223 | 224 | 223 | | | → | | | | n/a | | 183 | 197 | | | | |
| | 7.2 | % of eligible LAC with an up to date pathway plan | High | Percentage | - | - | - | | | | | <93% | 93%> | 95%+ | | 69.8% | 97.5% | | | | |
| | 7.3 | % of care leavers in suitable accommodation | High | Percentage | 97.3% | 95.1% | 98.2% | | | | | <95% | 95%> | 98%+ | 96.3% | 97.8% | 96.5% | 85.1% | 98.0% | 81.0% | 90.0% |
| | 7.4 | % of care leavers in employment, education or training | High | Percentage | 71.3% | - | - | | | | | <70% | 70%> | 72%+ | 52.3% | 71.0% | 68.0% | 50.4% | 76.0% | 48.0% | 56.0% |
| PLACEMENTS | 8.1 | % of long term LAC in placements which have been stable for at least 2 years | High | Percentage | 67.6% | 66.7% | 65.5% | | | ↓ | | <68% | 68%> | 70%+ | 68.8% | 71.9% | 72.7% | 68.2% | 79.0% | 68.0% | 72.0% |
| | 8.2 | % of LAC who have had 3 or more placements - rolling 12 months | Low | Percentage | 13.2% | 12.3% | 10.9% | | | ↑ | | 12%+ | 12%< | 9.6%< | 11.2% | 12.0% | 11.9% | 9.2% | 6.0% | 10.0% | 8.0% |
| | 8.3 | % of LAC in a family Based setting (Corporate Plan 2016 Indicator) | High | Percentage | 80.2% | 83.5% | 84.0% | | | ↑ | | range to be set 87.5%> | | | | | | | | | |
| | 8.4 | % of LAC placed with parents or other with parental responsibility (P1) | Low | Percentage | 6.0% | 6.1% | 5.9% | | | ↑ | | range to be set | | | | | | | | | |
| ADOPTIONS | 9.1 | % of adoptions completed within 12 months of SHOBPA | High | Percentage | 0.0% | 33.3% | 0.0% | 41.4% | Financial Year | ↓ | YTD | <83% | 83%> | 85%+ | 55.6% | 84.6% | 53.5% | | | | |
| | 9.2 | Average number of days between a child becoming Looked After and having a adoption placement (A1) (Rolling 12 months) | Low | Rolling year - ave count | 335.7 | 368.8 | 374.7 | | Rolling Year | ↓ | YTD | 511+ | 511< | 487< | 661 | 417.5 | 338.5 | 546.5 | 336.0 | 593.0 | 520.0 |
| | 9.3 | Average number of days between a placement order and being matched with an adoptive family (A2) (Rolling 12 months) | Low | Rolling year - ave count | 221.3 | 211.0 | 208.4 | | Rolling Year | ↑ | YTD | 127+ | 127< | 121< | 315 | 177.3 | 137.9 | 220.6 | 47.0 | 223.0 | 172.0 |
| CASELOAD | 10.2 | Maximum caseload of social workers in LAC | Low | Average count | 19 | 18 | 17 | | | ↑ | | 21+ | 20< | 18< | | | | | | | |
| | 10.3 | Average number of cases per qualified social worker in LAC | Within Limits | Average count | 12.5 | 12.9 | 11 | | | ↓ | | over 1% above range | 1% above range | 14-20 | | | | | | | |

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

DEFINITION

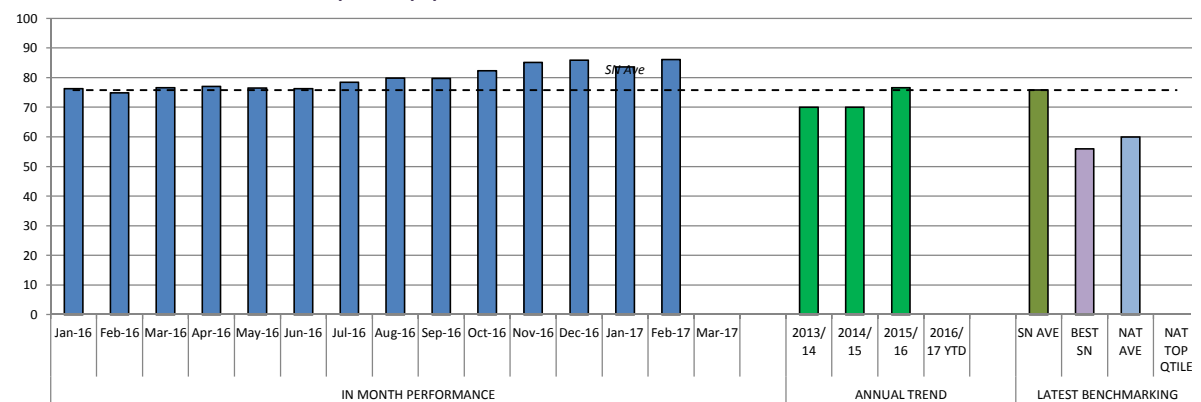
Children in care or 'looked after children' are children who have become the responsibility of the local authority. This can happen voluntarily by parents struggling to cope or through an intervention by children's services because a child is at risk of significant harm.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

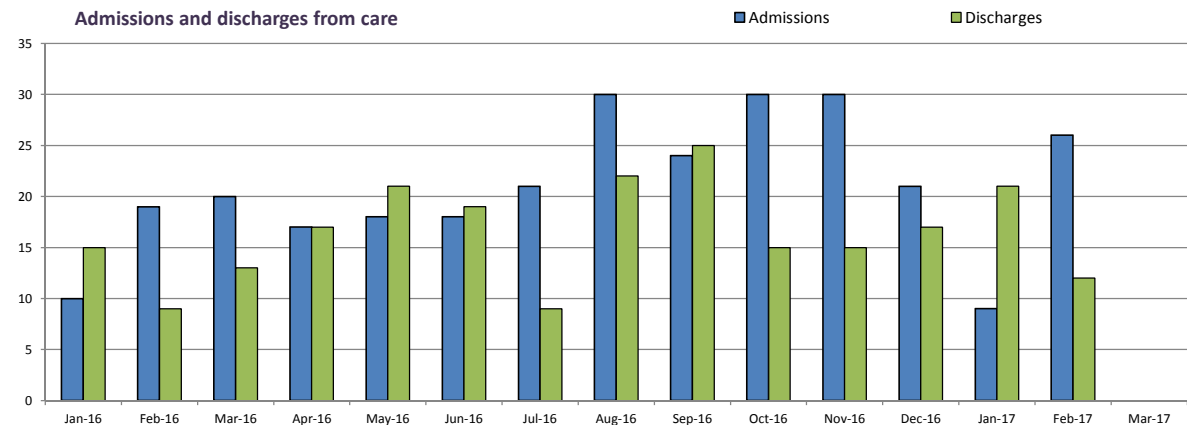
The overall trend of admissions to care continues to rise. In the last four months we have seen a significant rise of children (stock) with the number of children leaving care being lower than those being admitted to care (flow). The overall rate for Rotherham remains significantly higher than that of our statistical neighbours. Outcomes are rarely improved for young people coming into care in adolescence who make up the most significant proportion of our care population. Work has commenced to develop a range of services that will address this such as an Edge of Care intervention team, Family Group Conferencing and an expanded Therapeutic Team. This will enable more adolescents to remain and/or return home. It is not unusual for numbers of LAC in an authority in intervention to rise as action is taken to address cases which have been drifting previously. The rise in the numbers of care proceedings in Rotherham is testimony to this happening locally. There is no feedback from the courts to suggest that any children are being brought before them unnecessarily.

| | | 6.2 | 6.1 | 6.3 | 6.4 |
|----------------------|----------------|---|---------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| | | Rate of children looked after per 10K pop | Number of LAC | Admissions of children looked after | No. of children who have ceased to be LAC |
| IN MONTH PERFORMANCE | Jan-16 | 76.2 | 430 | 10 | 15 |
| | Feb-16 | 74.8 | 422 | 19 | 9 |
| | Mar-16 | 76.6 | 432 | 20 | 13 |
| | Apr-16 | 77.0 | 434 | 17 | 17 |
| | May-16 | 76.5 | 431 | 18 | 21 |
| | Jun-16 | 76.3 | 430 | 18 | 19 |
| | Jul-16 | 78.4 | 442 | 21 | 9 |
| | Aug-16 | 79.8 | 450 | 30 | 22 |
| | Sep-16 | 79.7 | 449 | 24 | 25 |
| | Oct-16 | 82.3 | 464 | 30 | 15 |
| | Nov-16 | 85.2 | 480 | 30 | 15 |
| | Dec-16 | 85.9 | 484 | 21 | 17 |
| | Jan-17 | 83.6 | 471 | 9 | 21 |
| | Feb-17 | 86.1 | 485 | 26 | 12 |
| | Mar-17 | | | | |
| ANNUAL TREND | 2013/ 14 | 70.0 | | 147 | 136 |
| | 2014/ 15 | 70.0 | | 175 | 160 |
| | 2015/ 16 | 76.6 | 432 | 208 | 192 |
| | 2016/ 17 YTD | | 485 | 244 | 193 |
| LATEST BENCHMARKING | SN AVE | 75.8 | | | |
| | BEST SN | 56.0 | | | |
| | NAT AVE | 60.0 | | | |
| | NAT TOP Q TILE | - | | | |

Rate of Looked After Children per 10K pop



Admissions and discharges from care



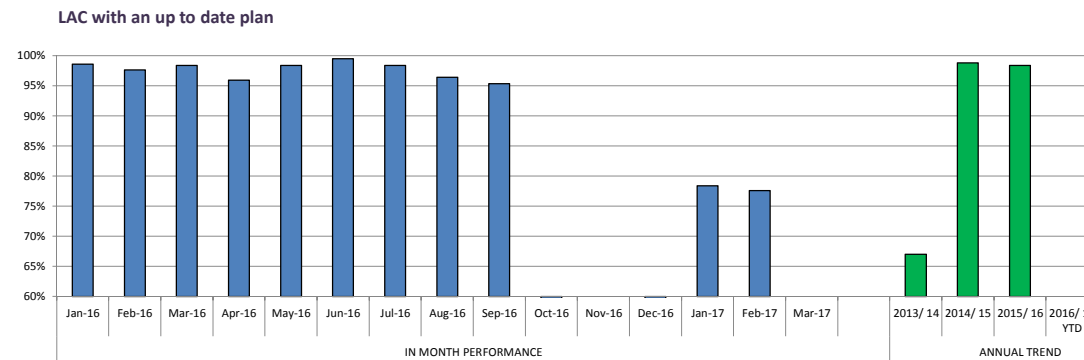
PLANS - IN DATE

| | |
|------------|--|
| DEFINITION | A child's plan is to be developed for an individual child if they have a "wellbeing need" that requires a targeted intervention. Each type of plan has a completion target. When a Looked After Child reaches 16 years and 3 months they become eligible for a 'Pathway Plan' - this plan focuses on preparing a young person for adulthood and their future (For example; future accommodation, post 16 Education/Training and Employment) |
|------------|--|

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS | <p>Creation of a new plan on the system is a far more intensive piece of work than on the previous system as the new database will contain the full content of the plan and not just the date. However once the first plan is created any subsequent plans are much easier to update. As the previous system data was unable to be migrated teams had to 'start again' with plan creation and continue to input the backlog of plans.</p> <p>The LAC team performance did improve towards the back end of January, the start of February (10.02.17 - 80%) but it has seen a fall again at the end of February. It is known that this is being affected by a backlog of outstanding reviews which need completing before plans can start. This is still being monitored via operational performance meetings.</p> |
|----------------------|--|

DATA NOTE: Issues identified in previous reports have now been rectified and the December, January & February data has been updated.

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| IN MONTH PERFORMANCE | 6.14 | |
| | LAC with an up to date plan | |
| | Jan-16 | 98.6% |
| | Feb-16 | 97.7% |
| | Mar-16 | 98.4% |
| | Apr-16 | 96.0% |
| | May-16 | 98.4% |
| | Jun-16 | 99.5% |
| | Jul-16 | 98.4% |
| | Aug-16 | 96.4% |
| | Sep-16 | 95.3% |
| | Oct-16 | Data was unable to be migrated and is being manually updated |
| | Nov-16 | |
| | Dec-16 | 55.7% |
| | Jan-17 | 78.4% |
| | Feb-17 | 77.6% |
| | Mar-17 | |
| ANNUAL TREND | 2013/ 14 | 67.0% |
| | 2014/ 15 | 98.8% |
| | 2015/ 16 | 98.4% |
| | 2016/ 17 YTD | |
| LATEST BENCHMARKING | SN AVE | |
| | BEST SN | |
| | NAT AVE | |
| | NAT TOP QTILE | |



LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - REVIEWS & VISITS

DEFINITION

The purpose of LAC review meeting is to consider the plan for the welfare of the looked after child and achieve Permanence for them within a timescale that meets their needs. The review is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

The LA is also responsible for appointing a representative to visit the child wherever he or she is living to ensure that his/her welfare continues to be safeguarded and promoted. The minimum national timescales for visits is within one week of placement, then six weekly until the child has been in placement for a year and the 12 weekly thereafter. Rotherham have set a higher standard of within first week then four weekly thereafter until the child has been permanently matched to the placement.

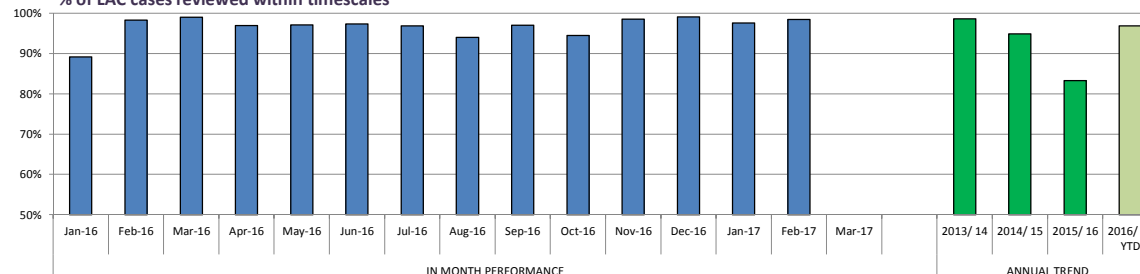
PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Current performance on LAC visits are monitored by the head of service daily and at weekly performance meeting. Any visit exceeding statutory minimum timescales is examined on a child by child basis to ensure they have been subsequently visited and to ensure the reason for lateness is understood. In addition to statutory minimum standards, Rotherham has set a local standard that exceeds the National one, performance in relation to local standard is still not good enough and will continue to be the focus of sustained management attention. There are some children in care however who are visited more often than the Rotherham standard according to their need at any particular time. There is now a clear process in place for social workers to ensure the Rotherham standard is proportionate to need but remains within the national standard. This will ensure that those LAC in greatest need receive appropriate levels of social workers support. Lac cases reviewed on time remains good.

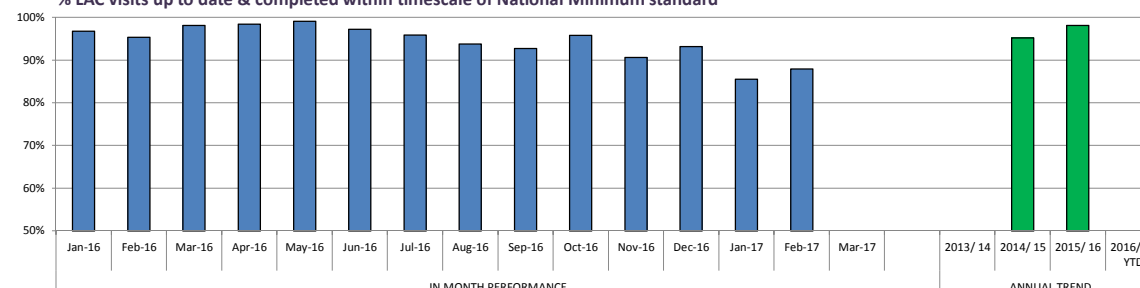
Lac visits on time remain an area of concern due to the high turnover of staff . this should improve after this latest round of recruitment which is starting to see a move to increase the ratio of permanent staff

| | | 6.7 | | 6.15 | 6.16 |
|----------------------|--------------|--|---|---|--|
| | | No. LAC cases reviewed within timescales | % of LAC cases reviewed within timescales | % LAC visits up to date & completed within timescale of National Minimum standard | % LAC visits up to date & completed within timescale of Rotherham standard |
| IN MONTH PERFORMANCE | Jan-16 | 74 of 83 | 89.2% | 96.8% | 80.2% |
| | Feb-16 | 114 of 116 | 98.3% | 95.3% | 77.8% |
| | Mar-16 | 104 of 105 | 99.0% | 98.1% | 80.2% |
| | Apr-16 | 96 of 99 | 97.0% | 98.4% | 78.9% |
| | May-16 | 101 of 104 | 97.1% | 99.1% | 78.8% |
| | Jun-16 | 111 of 114 | 97.4% | 97.2% | 76.7% |
| | Jul-16 | 93 of 96 | 96.9% | 95.9% | 73.8% |
| | Aug-16 | 79 of 84 | 94.0% | 93.8% | 71.6% |
| | Sep-16 | 98 of 101 | 97.0% | 92.7% | 70.7% |
| | Oct-16 | 188 of 199 | 94.5% | 95.8% | 82.0% |
| | Nov-16 | 133 of 135 | 98.5% | 90.6% | 80.5% |
| | Dec-16 | 107 of 108 | 99.1% | 93.2% | 82.4% |
| | Jan-17 | 81 of 83 | 97.6% | 85.5% | 79.5% |
| | Feb-17 | 66 of 67 | 98.5% | 87.9% | 81.5% |
| | Mar-17 | | | | |
| ANNUAL TREND | 2013/ 14 | | 98.6% | | |
| | 2014/ 15 | | 94.9% | 95.2% | 82.6% |
| | 2015/ 16 | | 83.3% | 98.1% | 80.2% |
| | 2016/ 17 YTD | | 96.9% | | |

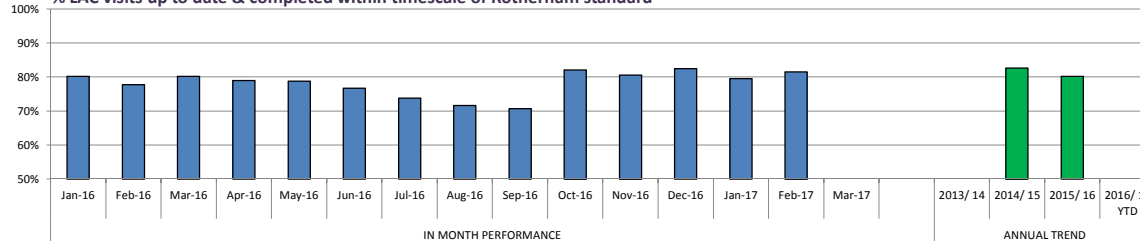
% of LAC cases reviewed within timescales



% LAC visits up to date & completed within timescale of National Minimum standard



% LAC visits up to date & completed within timescale of Rotherham standard



LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - PLACEMENTS

DEFINITION A LAC placement is where a child has become the responsibility of the local authority (LAC) and is placed with foster carers, in residential homes or with parents or other relatives.

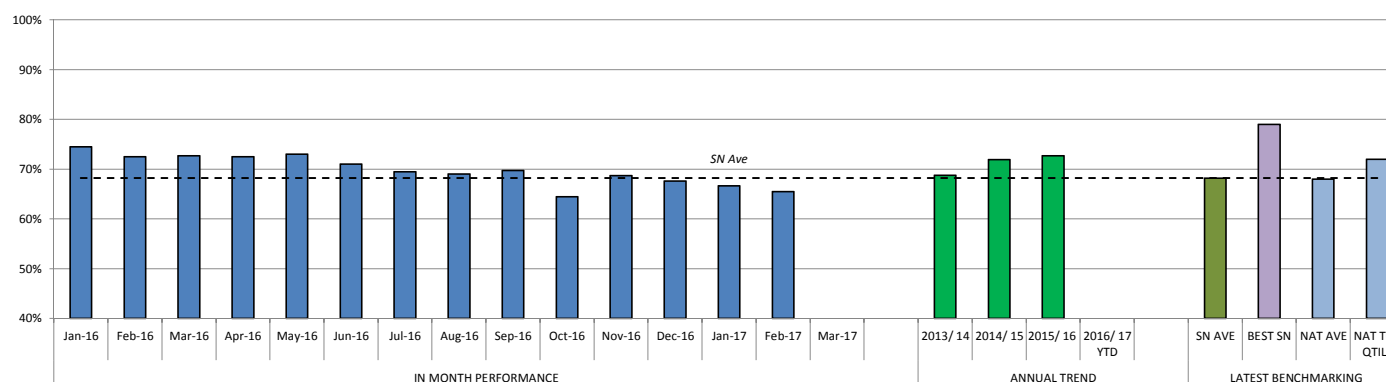
PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

The February performance for children who have had three or more placement moves has seen a further improvement, whilst it has reduced, it continues to be higher than all other benchmarks. Our target of reducing to less than 10% remains and is still achievable.

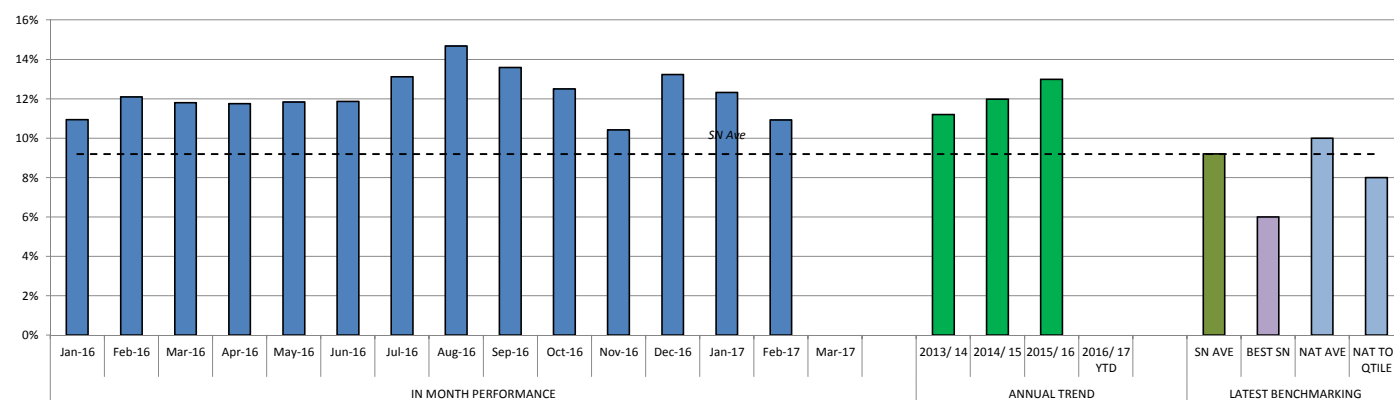
The number of children who experience a stable placement for over two years is just below that of our statistical neighbours and the national average. These two statistics could suggest that we need to improve our preventative work to reduce initial placement disruption. If a child experiences a disruption they are more likely to disrupt again. It will also be important to consider the impact of our return home programme our wish to return children to live in rotherham which will increase the number of children experiencing placement moves. There is good progress being made in reducing the numbers of children placed in residential care. While the change for them signifies a disruption, and will have some impact on these performance measures, they are only being moved if the new arrangement is demonstrably in their best long term interests. The Fostering Allowance and Support Scheme has recently been approved which should increase the growth of in-house foster carers. This in turn will support placement stability - a recent audit evidenced that over the past six months 18 Independent Fostering Agency placements disrupted whilst only four in-house placements disrupted over the same period. Whilst there can be no direct correlation more in-house placements should support placement stability. In addition the proposed expansion of the in-house LAC therapy team should also ensure greater support to carers and intern the stability of the placement.

| | | 8.1 | | 8.2 | |
|----------------------|---------------|---|--|--|---|
| | | No. of long term LAC placements stable for at least 2 years | % long term LAC placements stable for at least 2 years | No. of LAC who have had 3 or more placements - rolling 12 months | % LAC who have had 3 or more placements - rolling 12 months |
| IN MONTH PERFORMANCE | Jan-16 | 108 of 145 | 74.5% | 47 of 430 | 10.9% |
| | Feb-16 | 108 of 149 | 72.5% | 51 of 422 | 12.1% |
| | Mar-16 | 109 of 150 | 72.7% | 51 of 432 | 11.8% |
| | Apr-16 | 103 of 142 | 72.5% | 51 of 434 | 11.8% |
| | May-16 | 103 of 141 | 73.0% | 51 of 431 | 11.8% |
| | Jun-16 | 98 of 138 | 71.0% | 51 of 430 | 11.9% |
| | Jul-16 | 98 of 141 | 69.5% | 58 of 442 | 13.1% |
| | Aug-16 | 98 of 142 | 69.0% | 66 of 450 | 14.7% |
| | Sep-16 | 99 of 142 | 69.7% | 61 of 449 | 13.6% |
| | Oct-16 | 136 of 211 | 64.5% | 58 of 464 | 12.5% |
| | Nov-16 | 101 of 147 | 68.7% | 50 of 480 | 10.4% |
| | Dec-16 | 98 of 145 | 67.6% | 64 of 484 | 13.2% |
| | Jan-17 | 94 of 141 | 66.7% | 58 of 471 | 12.3% |
| | Feb-17 | 93 of 142 | 65.5% | 53 of 485 | 10.9% |
| | Mar-17 | | | | |
| ANNUAL TREND | 2013/ 14 | 108 of 157 | 68.8% | 44 of 393 | 11.2% |
| | 2014/ 15 | 110 of 153 | 71.9% | 49 of 409 | 12.0% |
| | 2015/ 16 | 109 of 150 | 72.7% | 56 of 431 | 13.0% |
| | 2016/ 17 YTD | | | | |
| LATEST BENCHMARKING | SN AVE | | 68.2% | | 9.2% |
| | BEST SN | | 79.0% | | 6.0% |
| | NAT AVE | | 68.0% | | 10.0% |
| | NAT TOP QTILE | | 72.0% | | 8.0% |

% long term LAC placements stable for at least 2 years



% LAC who have had 3 or more placements - rolling 12 months



LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - HEALTH

DEFINITION

Local authorities have a duty to safeguard and to promote the welfare of the children they look after, therefore the local authority should make arrangements to ensure that every child who is looked after has his/her health needs fully assessed and a health plan clearly set out.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

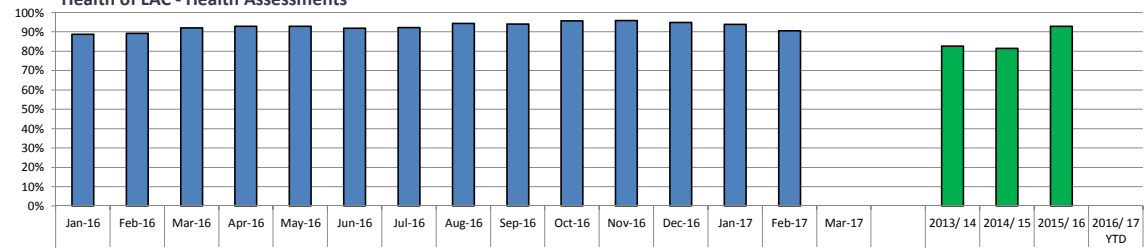
Performance in relation to health and dental assessments was poor and has been the focus of concerted joint effort and has shown improvement. Close monitoring means that any dips in performance are understood. The overall number of health assessments completed remains at a good level and the number of initial health assessments has risen. This is due to the access health services have to the new case management system that has improved the administration of the process. From our reviews we know that in the main, those not having health or dental checks are the older young people who are recorded as 'refuses'. This is no longer going to be accepted on face value and we will be actively exploring with health colleagues how we can promote the reviews as something useful and 'young person friendly'. This will focus on the things that interest most young people such as weight, hair and skin as well as other aspects of health. We will also make sure that we are creative in thinking about how we can actively engage young people and 'reach out' to them rather than expecting them to attend a standard clinic appointment. Performance will continue to be very closely monitored. Health colleagues have identified that early contact in a non-clinical setting may prove to be the best way to sustain young people engagement in the process. As a result they will be running a pilot whereby they visit newly admitted young people in their placement to support them to attend their health assessment. Joint intervention between Health and LAC Head of Service to support locality teams to better performance in respect of Initial Health Assessments.

| | | 6.9 | 6.1 | 6.11 |
|----------------------|--------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| | | Health of LAC - Health Assessments | Health of LAC - Dental Assessments | Health of LAC - Initial Health Assessments In Time |
| IN MONTH PERFORMANCE | Jan-16 | 88.7% | 70.5% | 22.2% |
| | Feb-16 | 89.3% | 64.7% | 29.4% |
| | Mar-16 | 92.1% | 86.6% | 0.0% |
| | Apr-16 | 92.9% | 65.3% | 0.0% |
| | May-16 | 92.8% | 67.2% | 20.0% |
| | Jun-16 | 91.8% | 69.9% | 40.0% |
| | Jul-16 | 92.2% | 71.4% | 37.5% |
| | Aug-16 | 94.3% | 71.3% | 20.0% |
| | Sep-16 | 94.0% | 70.6% | 20.0% |
| | Oct-16 | 95.7% | 69.5% | 9.1% |
| | Nov-16 | 95.9% | 69.1% | 10.0% |
| | Dec-16 | 94.8% | 68.6% | 12.5% |
| | Jan-17 | 93.8% | 67.3% | 0.0% |
| | Feb-17 | 90.5% | 65.6% | 20.0% |
| | Mar-17 | | | |

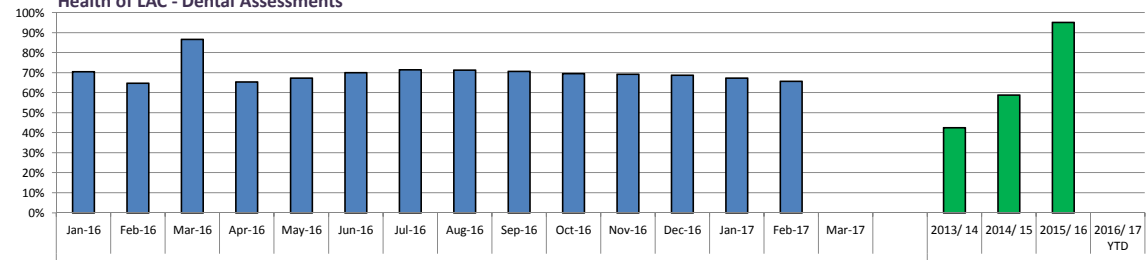
| ANNUAL TREND | 2013/ 14 | 82.7% | 42.5% | 16.5% |
|--------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 2014/ 15 | 81.4% | 58.8% | 16.1% |
| | 2015/ 16 | 92.8% | 95.0% | 6.4% |
| | 2016/ 17 YTD | | | 12.7% |

| LATEST BENCHMARKING | SN AVE | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|--|--|--|
| | BEST SN | | | |
| | NAT AVE | | | |
| | NAT TOP QTILE | | | |

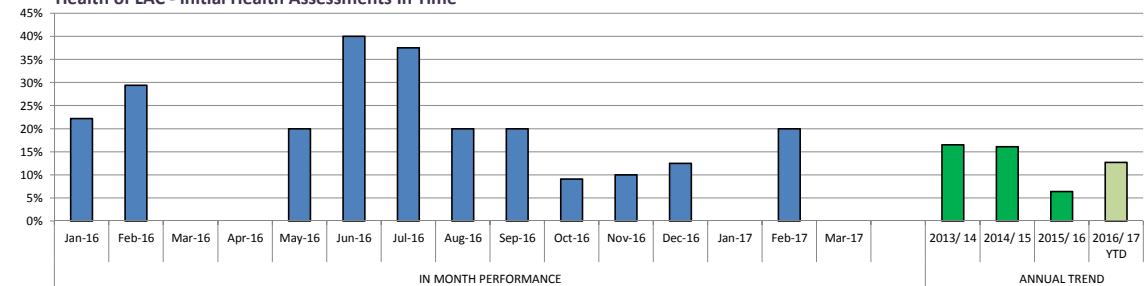
Health of LAC - Health Assessments



Health of LAC - Dental Assessments



Health of LAC - Initial Health Assessments In Time



LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANS

DEFINITION

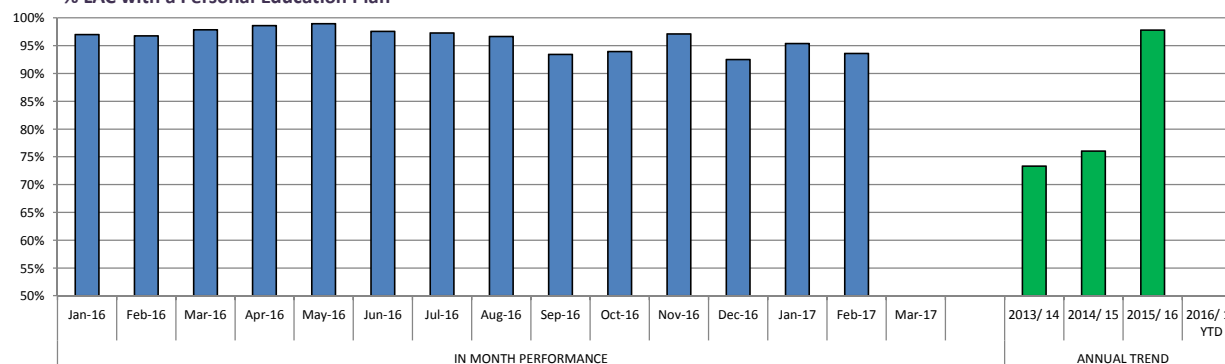
A personal education plan (PEP) is a school based meeting to plan for the education of a child in care. The government have made PEPs a statutory requirement for children in care to help track and promote their achievements.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

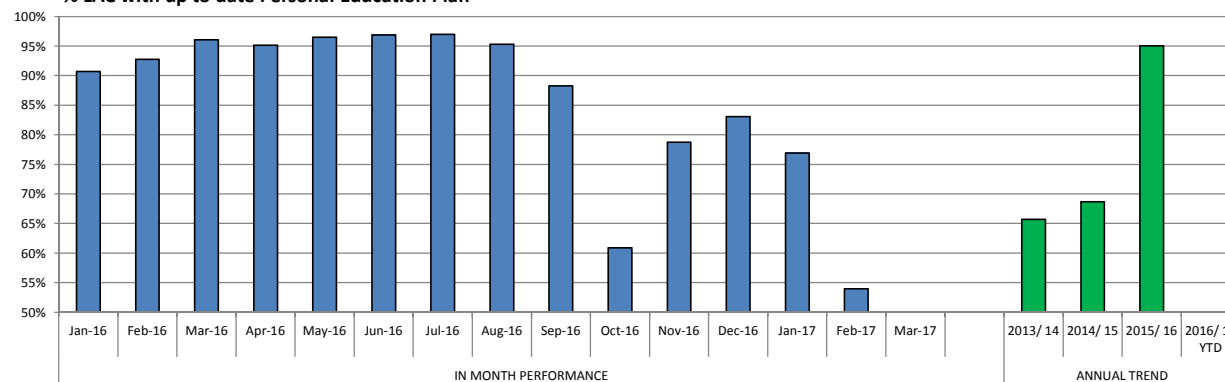
Prior to September 2015 PEPs were in place for compulsory school-age children only. PEPs are now in place for LAC aged two to their 18th birthday. The number of children with an up to date plan appears to have fallen to an annual low point. However we know that this is an issue with the authorisation process and that the actual rate is much higher, plans are in place to remedy this for next month. The focus on quality is now shifting to address the numbers of children and young people who are not in full time education and those whose school place is known to be fragile. The virtual school governing body will take responsibility for driving this improvement area. Exception reporting has been provided for the children who are without an up to date pep.

| | | 6.12 | | 6.13 | |
|----------------------|---------------|---|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| | | Number of Eligible LAC with a Personal Education Plan | % LAC with a Personal Education Plan | Number of LAC with up to date Personal Education Plan | % LAC with up to date Personal Education Plan |
| IN MONTH PERFORMANCE | Jan-16 | 260 of 268 | 97.0% | 243 of 268 | 90.7% |
| | Feb-16 | 267 of 276 | 96.7% | 256 of 276 | 92.8% |
| | Mar-16 | 272 of 278 | 97.8% | 267 of 278 | 96.0% |
| | Apr-16 | 283 of 287 | 98.6% | 273 of 287 | 95.1% |
| | May-16 | 282 of 285 | 98.9% | 275 of 285 | 96.5% |
| | Jun-16 | 282 of 289 | 97.6% | 280 of 289 | 96.9% |
| | Jul-16 | 287 of 295 | 97.3% | 286 of 295 | 96.9% |
| | Aug-16 | 287 of 297 | 96.6% | 283 of 297 | 95.3% |
| | Sep-16 | 255 of 273 | 93.4% | 241 of 273 | 88.3% |
| | Oct-16 | 216 of 230 | 93.9% | 140 of 230 | 60.9% |
| | Nov-16 | 233 of 240 | 97.1% | 189 of 240 | 78.8% |
| | Dec-16 | 235 of 254 | 92.5% | 211 of 254 | 83.1% |
| | Jan-17 | 248 of 260 | 95.4% | 200 of 260 | 76.9% |
| | Feb-17 | 248 of 265 | 93.6% | 143 of 265 | 54.0% |
| | Mar-17 | | | | |
| ANNUAL TREND | 2013/ 14 | | 73.3% | | 65.7% |
| | 2014/ 15 | | 76.0% | | 68.7% |
| | 2015/ 16 | | 97.8% | | 95.0% |
| | 2016/ 17 YTD | | | | |
| LATEST BENCHMARKING | SN AVE | | | | |
| | BEST SN | | | | |
| | NAT AVE | | | | |
| | NAT TOP QTILE | | | | |

% LAC with a Personal Education Plan



% LAC with up to date Personal Education Plan



CARE LEAVERS

| | |
|------------|---|
| DEFINITION | A care leaver is defined as a person aged 25 or under, who has been looked after away from home by a local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14; and who was looked after away from home by the local authority at school-leaving age or after that date. Suitable accommodation is defined as any that is not prison or bed and breakfast |
|------------|---|

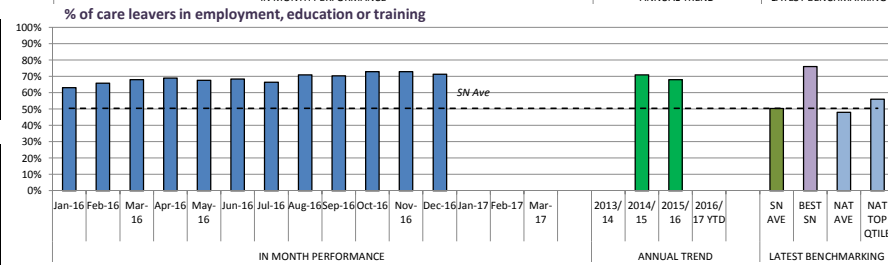
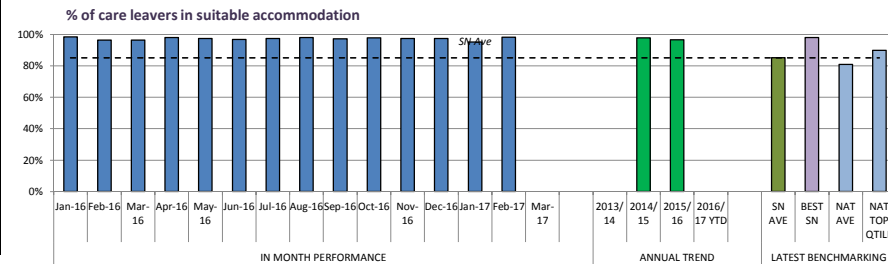
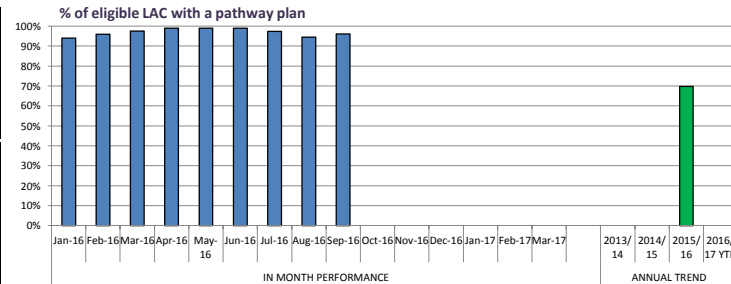
| | |
|----------------------|---|
| PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS | See note below. Team managers continue to report performance at fortnightly performance meetings so that compliance can be assured. |
|----------------------|---|

DATA NOTE: Care Leavers information was not part of the automated data migration, service are in the process of manually inputting full cohort information. Any data provided for Oct 16 onwards has been supplied from the highlight reports that team managers provide for the fortnightly performance meetings. Monthly monitoring via Liquid Logic will be re-established once the manual inputting is

| | | 7.1 | 7.2 | 7.3 | 7.4 |
|----------------------|--------|------------------------|--|---|--|
| | | Number of care leavers | % of eligible LAC with a pathway plan | % of care leavers in suitable accommodation | % of care leavers in employment, education or training |
| IN MONTH PERFORMANCE | Jan-16 | 198 | 93.9% | 98.5% | 63.1% |
| | Feb-16 | 196 | 95.9% | 96.4% | 65.8% |
| | Mar-16 | 197 | 97.5% | 96.5% | 68.0% |
| | Apr-16 | 192 | 99.0% | 97.9% | 68.9% |
| | May-16 | 188 | 98.9% | 97.3% | 67.6% |
| | Jun-16 | 187 | 98.9% | 96.8% | 68.5% |
| | Jul-16 | 185 | 97.3% | 97.3% | 66.5% |
| | Aug-16 | 200 | 94.5% | 98.0% | 71.0% |
| | Sep-16 | 201 | 96.0% | 97.1% | 70.3% |
| | Oct-16 | 221 | Currently unable to report (see data note above) | 97.8% | 73.0% |
| | Nov-16 | 223 | | 97.3% | 73.0% |
| | Dec-16 | 223 | | 97.3% | 71.3% |
| | Jan-17 | 224 | | 95.1% | No data |
| | Feb-17 | 223 | | 98.2% | No data |
| | Mar-17 | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| ANNUAL TREND | 2013/ 14 | | | | |
| | 2014/ 15 | 183 | | 97.8% | 71.0% |
| | 2015/ 16 | 197 | 69.8% | 96.5% | 68.0% |
| | 2016/ 17 YTD | 224 | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|--|--|-------|-------|
| LATEST BENCHMARKING | SN AVE | | | 85.1% | 50.4% |
| | BEST SN | | | 98.0% | 76.0% |
| | NAT AVE | | | 81.0% | 48.0% |
| | NAT TOP QTILE | | | 90.0% | 56.0% |



ADOPTIONS

DEFINITION

Following a child becoming a LAC, it may be deemed suitable for a child to become adopted which is a legal process of becoming a non-biological parent. The date it is agreed that it is in the best interests of the child that they should be placed for adoption is known as their 'SHOBPA'. Following this a family finding process is undertaken to find a suitable match for the child based on the child's needs, they will then be matched with an adopter(s) followed by placement with their adopter(s). This adoption placement is monitored for a minimum of 10 weeks and assessed as stable and secure before the final adoption order is granted by court decision and the adoption order is made .

Targets for measures A1 and A2 are set centrally by government office.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Performance each month can vary significantly given the size of the cohort which is always very small.

Given the small numbers it is most useful to look at a rolling 12 months than a month snapshot and overall performance in this area over the last three years has shown an improving trend. Importantly, all children awaiting adoption are reviewed in the fortnightly performance meeting and the reasons for delay examined and understood. The work of the new 'permanence' team which has been in place since January 2016 is really starting to show impact in terms of both reducing the length of care proceedings and ensuring timely matching and placing of younger children with prospective adopters. The good quality of the work of this team is attracting regular positive feedback from the courts and the impact on outcomes for children is tangible. The introduction of the Regional Adoption Agency in 2017 should further speed up the adoption process due to the pooling of resources in respect of assessments and adoptive parents.

It is known that a number of children will have their final adoption approval decision before the end of the financial year, the service are projecting another 15 adoptions before the end of March 2017.

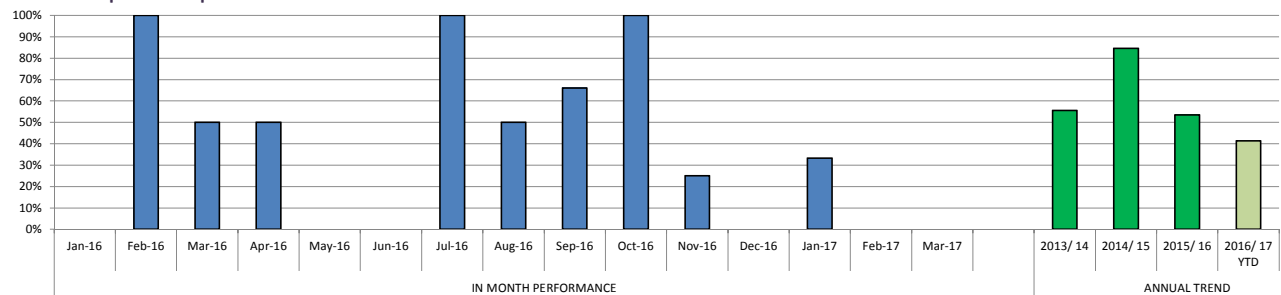
Data Note: Taken from manual tracker. Data requires inputting into LCS

| | | | | 9.1 | 9.2 | 9.3 |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------------|--|--|--|--|
| | | Number of adoptions | Number of adoptions completed within 12 months of SHOBPA | % adoptions completed within 12 months of SHOBPA | Av. No. days between a child becoming LAC & having a adoption placement (A1) (rolling yr.) | Av. No. days between placement order & being matched with adoptive family (A2) (rolling yr.) |
| IN MONTH PERFORMANCE | Jan-16 | 3 | 0 | 0% | 368.0 | 159.5 |
| | Feb-16 | 7 | 7 | 100% | 348.4 | 141.7 |
| | Mar-16 | 4 | 2 | 50% | 338.4 | 137.9 |
| | Apr-16 | 2 | 1 | 50% | 362.5 | 145.5 |
| | May-16 | 2 | 0 | 0% | 546.8 | 213.3 |
| | Jun-16 | 1 | 0 | 0% | 500.4 | 197.0 |
| | Jul-16 | 2 | 2 | 100% | 430.1 | 161.8 |
| | Aug-16 | 2 | 1 | 50% | 395.7 | 150.7 |
| | Sep-16 | 3 | 2 | 66% | 398.3 | 142.4 |
| | Oct-16 | 2 | 2 | 100% | 372.3 | 138.6 |
| | Nov-16 | 4 | 1 | 25% | 354.3 | 143.4 |
| | Dec-16 | 1 | 0 | 0% | 335.7 | 221.3 |
| | Jan-17 | 9 | 3 | 33% | 368.8 | 211.0 |
| | Feb-17 | 1 | 0 | 0% | 374.7 | 208.4 |
| | Mar-17 | | | | | |
| ANNUAL TREND | 2013/ 14 | | | 55.6% | 661.0 | 315.0 |
| | 2014/ 15 | | | 84.6% | 417.5 | 177.3 |
| | 2015/ 16 | 43 | 23 | 53.5% | 338.4 | 137.9 |
| | 2016/ 17 YTD | 29 | 12 | 41.4% | | |
| LATEST BENCHMARKING | SN AVE | | | | 546.5 | 220.6 |
| | BEST SN | | | | 336.0 | 47.0 |
| | NAT AVE | | | | 593.0 | 223.0 |
| | NAT TOP QTILE | | | | 520.0 | 172.0 |

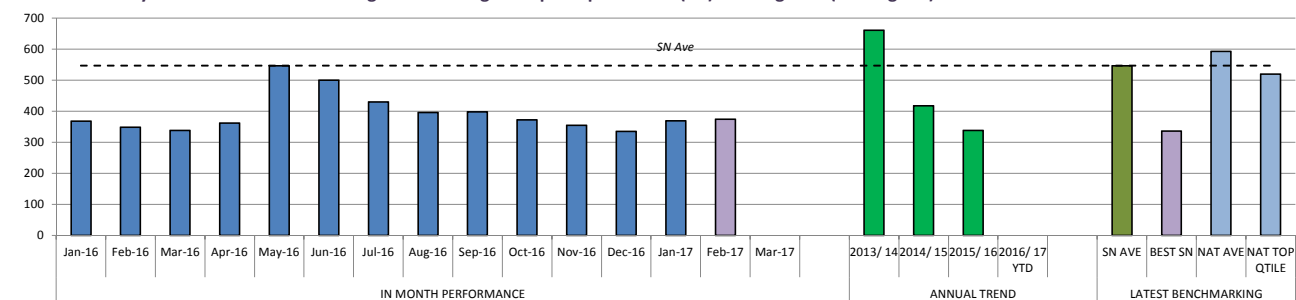
*Annual Trend relates to current reporting year April to Mar - not rolling year

**adoptions have a 28 day appeal period so any children adopted in the last 28 days are still subject to appeal

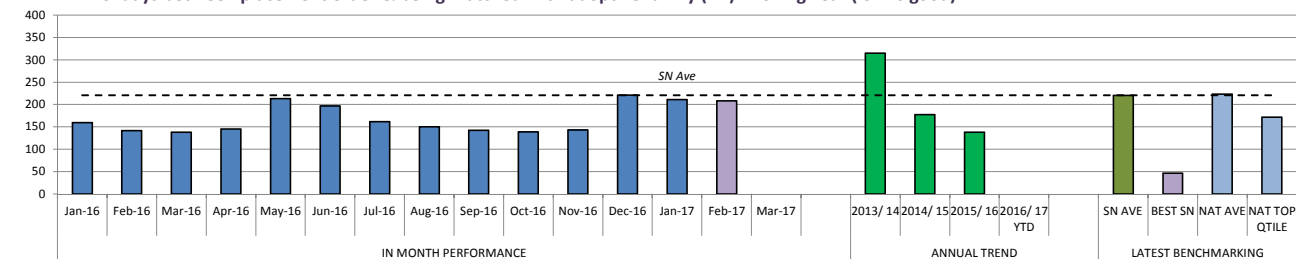
% adoptions completed within 12 months of SHOBPA



Av. No. days between a child becoming LAC & having a adoption placement (A1) - Rolling Year (low is good)



Av. No. days between placement order & being matched with adoptive family (A2) - Rolling Year (low is good)



CASELOADS

DEFINITION

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

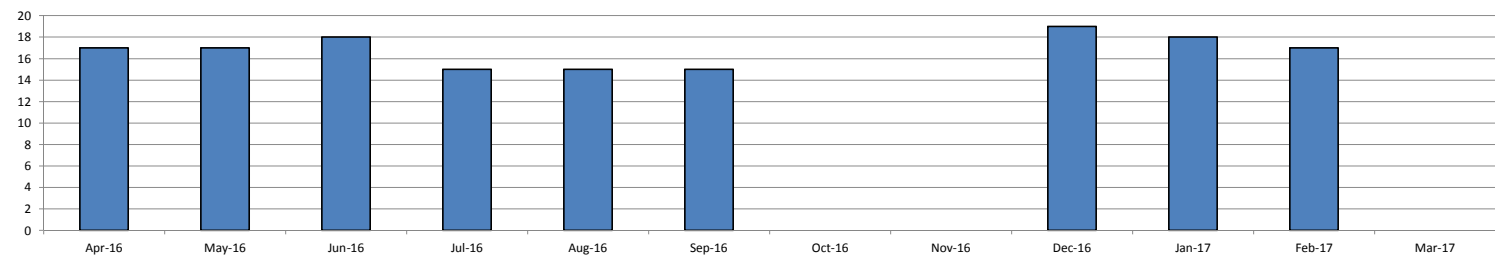
Caseloads are all within acceptable limits . Performance meetings continue to examine caseloads in detail.

The impact of rising LAC has been a rise in the number of average cases per SW to 11 however the maximum is now at 17 well within accepted limits. A management review of all children with a section 20 legal status has identified the potential to return home for up to 15 children. If this is achieved, combined with new edge of care interventions, this will result in a significant decrease in workload.

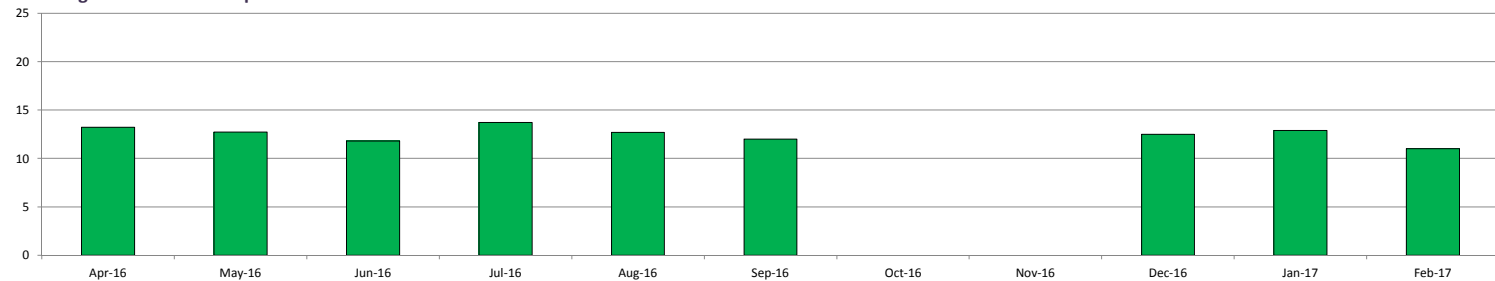
| IN MONTH PERFORMANCE | 10.2 | | 10.3 | |
|----------------------|---|---|----------------------------|------|
| | Maximum caseload of social workers in LAC Teams | | Av. no. cases in LAC Teams | |
| | Apr-16 | 17 | | 13.2 |
| | May-16 | 17 | | 12.7 |
| | Jun-16 | 18 | | 11.8 |
| | Jul-16 | 15 | | 13.7 |
| | Aug-16 | 15 | | 12.7 |
| | Sep-16 | 15 | | 12.0 |
| | Oct-16 | Impacted by Liq. Logic implementation - Not historically reportable | | |
| | Nov-16 | | | |
| | Dec-16 | 19 | | 12.5 |
| | Jan-17 | 18 | | 12.9 |
| | Feb-17 | 17 | | 11.0 |
| | Mar-17 | | | |

| ANNUAL TREND | 2013/ 14 | | |
|--------------|----------|----|------|
| | 2014/ 15 | | |
| | 2015/ 16 | 19 | 14.1 |
| | 2016/ 17 | | |

Maximum caseload of social workers



Average number of cases per team

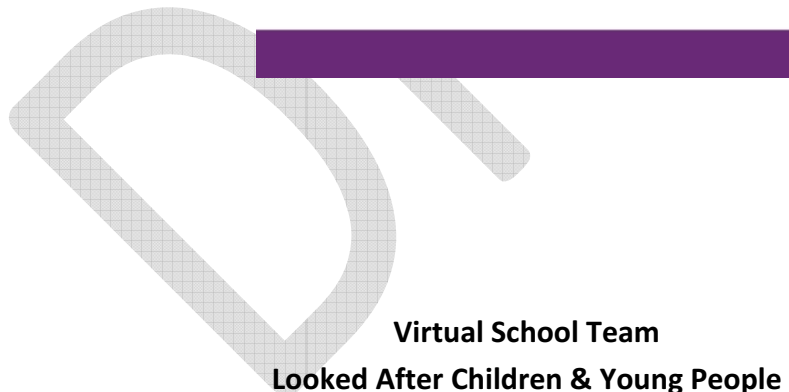


■ Av. no. cases in LAC Teams

Virtual School Headteacher Report 2016



Rotherham
Metropolitan
Borough Council



Virtual School Team
Looked After Children & Young People
March 2017

Introduction

The Purpose and role of the Virtual School

The purpose of the Rotherham Virtual School for Looked After Children is to raise educational achievement, promote emotional wellbeing, and improve the life chances of children and young people in care and care leavers.

The Children and Young People's Improvement Plan has several actions for which the Virtual School is responsible. These include continued improvement in the quality and effectiveness of practice, building strong and supportive partnerships, providing support and challenge to schools and social care, and offering extensive training.

Operationally, the Virtual School has overall responsibility for monitoring, supporting and providing interventions to ensure that looked after children (LAC) achieve the best possible educational outcomes.

It strives to achieve this by:

- Coordinating and quality assuring all Personal Education Plans
- Monitoring and challenging schools to making effective use of Pupil Premium Plus
- Tracking the academic progress, attendance and exclusions of LAC
- Ensuring Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) needs are identified and supported appropriately
- Implementing a range of targeted interventions to raise academic standards
- Providing support and challenge to students, schools and carers
- Offering a range of opportunities outside the classroom for LAC to build self-esteem and life skills
- Ensuring effective transition between schools or specialist providers
- Encouraging young people to have high aspirations about their futures and remove barriers to further and higher education
- Promoting Attachment Friendly Schools
- Leading training for foster carers, designated teachers, school governors and bespoke training for alternative learning providers and staff in schools
- Celebrating LAC achievements

The work of the Virtual School for Looked After Children is guided by the principles laid out in the DfE document 'Promoting the Education of Looked After Children' (2014). This sets out a key requirement for all looked after children to have Personal Education Plans which are reviewed each school term.

In order to properly support the education of looked after children and to narrow the attainment gap between them and their peers, Virtual School Advocates attend PEP meetings for every looked after child aged 2-18 each term. Over the coming months, in conjunction with the LAC Nurse and Health colleagues, the Virtual School is exploring ways of expanding the PEP process to cover children from birth.

It is recognised that, for children and young people in care, there are significant emotional and mental health barriers to educational progress. To this end the Virtual School has recruited 2 Educational Psychologists (1 full time equivalent) to support its work in promoting Attachment Friendly and Emotionally Aware Schools **(see Appendix A)**. Its prominence and importance is also reflected in a plethora of recent reports from the Consortium for Emotional Well Being in Schools, the NSPCC, the Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training, the Attachment Aware Schools' Project and the DfE. **(see Appendix B)**

The increase in numbers of looked after children has posed a major challenge for the Virtual School, from 405 in March 2015, to 430 in March 2016, and 484 in March 2017. In Yorkshire and the Humber, since 2012 the number of LAC has declined by 4% and the rate per 10,000 under 18 has declined by 6%. In sharp contrast, in Rotherham, the number of LAC has increased by 13% and the rate/10,000 has increased from 68 to 76.

In order to cope with the additional demand for services and the increased complexity of cases, the Virtual School has recruited an additional advocate with effect from March 2017.

The Virtual School measures of success are:

- All pupils (2-18) make accelerated progress, with more pupils reaching age-related expectations and the gap between the outcomes for all pupils and LAC is narrowed
- The number of pupils achieving 'A Good Level of Development' at the end of EYFS increases to match their peers
- Outcomes at Key Stages 1 and 2 show a rising trend of improvement in terms of attainment and progress over time and in relation to national and statistical neighbour comparators, as well as all pupils nationally
- Improvement in contextualised GCSE outcomes in relation to national and statistical neighbour comparators and in relation to outcomes for all other pupils in Rotherham
- Wherever possible pupils attend 'good' or 'outstanding' schools
- Ensuring that as many pupils as possible remain in mainstream educational settings
- Education transitions take place only when absolutely essential with the virtual school being involved in all transition planning
- Minimal delay in start dates for new educational settings
- Minimal number of days lost to education through exclusion and attendance issues
- Increased number of Care Leavers engaging with education and training and successfully entering employment
- Increased number of young people in care participate in higher education
- Improvements in schools' knowledge and understanding of how to most effectively support children and young people who have experienced abuse and neglect and have been removed from their birth families

It is important, however, that outcomes are interpreted intelligently. For example making sense of GCSE outcomes requires that outcomes are measured taking into account the many risk and protective factors which affect educational progress. The invaluable research undertaken by the Universities of Oxford and Bristol helps to quantify these factors. For example, their analysis found that young people in care who changed schools in Years 10 or 11 scored over 5 grades less at GCSE than those who did not, and that those in PRUs **compared with those with the same characteristics** as those in mainstream schools, scored almost 14 grades lower at GCSE.

(See Appendix C: The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data. University of Oxford and the University of Bristol. November 2015. <http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/research/educational-progress-of-looked-after-children>)

The LAC population is characterised by a high level of turnover as a result of admissions and discharges (c.20%p.a.), a disproportionate number of children and young people in care have statements of SEN/Education & Health Care Plans, and many attend non-mainstream educational settings. Clearly this is part of the context within which educational outcomes need to be placed, in order to make intelligent judgements.

Key achievements in the last 12 months

- An increase in both the quality and completion rate of PEPs, with most recent quality assurance indicating that well over 80% of PEPs are good or outstanding.
- In September 2016, 84% of LAC attended good or better schools and almost 1 in 5 attended outstanding schools.
- Overall attendance for the Virtual School during the last school year was 96%.
- Progress 8 scores at GCSE in 2016 are above national and regional comparators
- Attainment 8 scores are broadly in line with national and regional comparators.
- Between 2011 and 2016 Rotherham has consistently, and in several years by significant margins, outperformed national, regional and statistical neighbour comparators in terms of those 19, 20 and 21 year olds in employment, education and training. In 2016 Rotherham was ranked 16th nationally, placing it in quartile band A.

(See Appendix D: 2016 Education Performance Outcomes Explanation of Key Stage Information)

Challenges for the Virtual School and wider service for Looked After Children

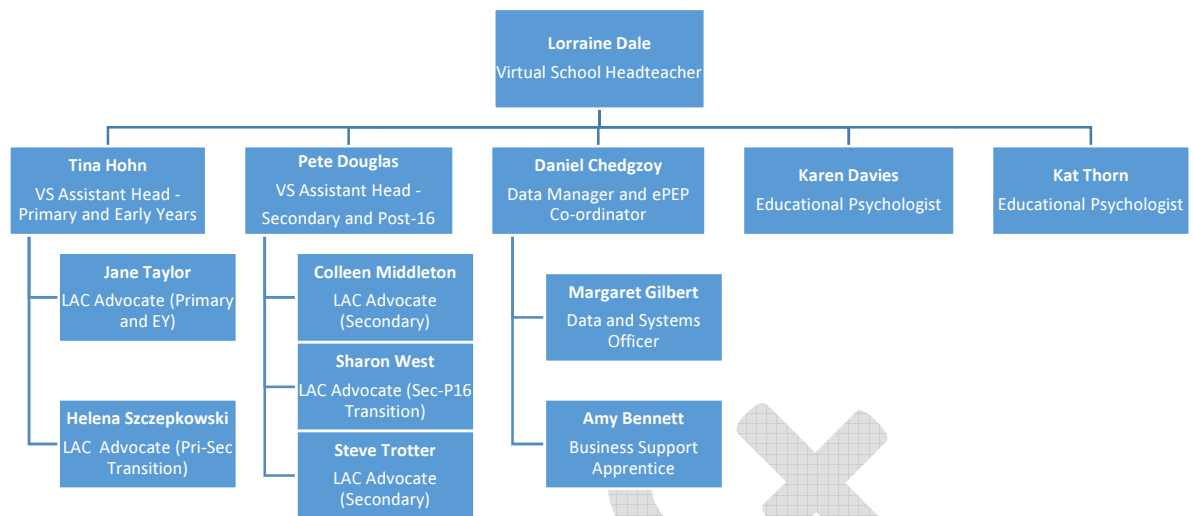
- Maintaining stability of placements
- Offering suitable provision (both care and education)
- Responding effectively to the increase in numbers of looked after children
- Improving the use of data to raise attendance, minimise exclusions, and to raise attainment and progress
- Ensuring as many LAC as possible remain in mainstream educational settings
- Promoting attachment friendly schools

Clearly responding to these challenges requires a high level of collaboration with colleagues in schools (headteachers, designated teachers, and governors), social care (social workers, team managers, IROs), foster and residential carers, Educational Psychology, Speech and Language, CAMHS and other specialist services, the Leadership Team in Children's Services, the Virtual School Governing Body, the Corporate Parenting Panel, and, last but not least, the Children & Young People in Care Council.

The Virtual School is also aware that, through this collaboration, its achievements are key to the delivery of the Council's priorities as outlined in the Council Corporate Plan:

1. Every child making the best start in life
2. Every adult secure, responsible and empowered
3. A strong community in a clean, safe environment
4. Extending opportunity, prosperity and planning for the future
5. Modern, efficient Council

Virtual School Structure (March 2017)

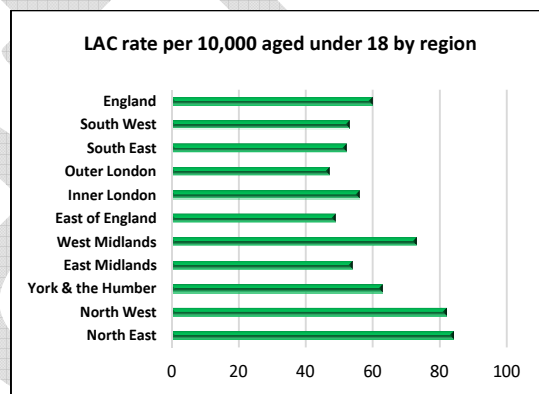
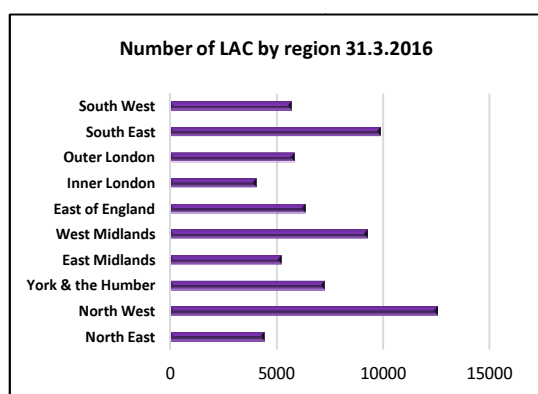


The Context: regionally and nationally

The distribution and concentration of LAC regionally and nationally

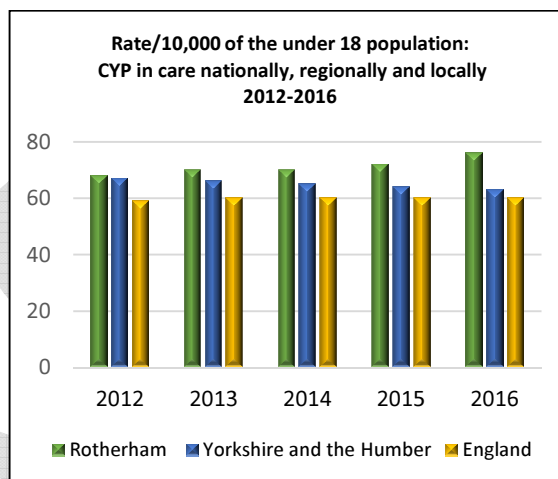
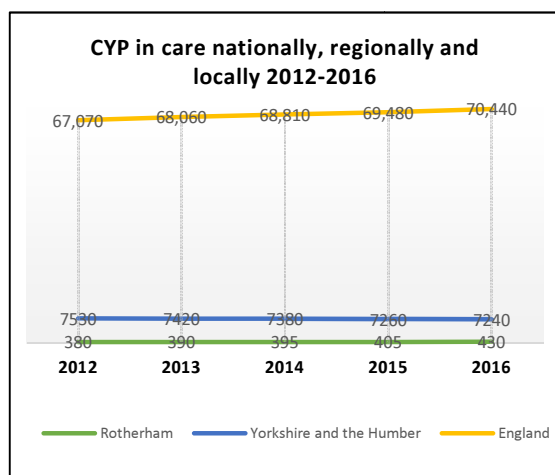
March 31st 2016

| Number of LAC in England and by region 31.3.2016 | Number of LAC | %age | Per 10,000 aged under 18 |
|--|---------------|-------|--------------------------|
| England | 70440 | | 60 |
| North East | 4400 | 6.25% | 84 |
| North West | 12550 | 17.8% | 82 |
| York & the Humber | 7240 | 10.3% | 63 |
| East Midlands | 5230 | 7.4% | 54 |
| West Midlands | 9240 | 13.1% | 73 |
| East of England | 6330 | 8.9% | 49 |
| Inner London | 4050 | 5.7% | 56 |
| Outer London | 5810 | 8.2% | 47 |
| South East | 9880 | 14.0% | 52 |
| South West | 5710 | 8.1% | 53 |



- There were 70,440 LAC in England in March 2016 with the largest number in the North West (17.8%).
- Just over 1 in 10 LAC were in Yorkshire and the Humber making it the 4th largest region by number of LAC.
- In terms of concentration, Yorkshire and the Humber with 73 LAC per 10,000 of the under 18 population in the region, was the 4th highest rate per 10,000 in England.
- The highest was in the North East with 84/10,000 and the lowest was in Outer London with 47/10,000. This compares with a national average of 60/10,000.

| Number and rate of children looked after/ 10,000 of the under 18 population: 31 March 2016 | | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
| Rotherham (number) | 380 | 390 | 395 | 405 | 430 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber (number) | 7530 | 7420 | 7380 | 7260 | 7240 |
| England (number) | 67,070 | 68,060 | 68,810 | 69,480 | 70,440 |
| Rotherham (rate) | 68.0 | 70.0 | 70.0 | 72.0 | 76.0 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber (number) | 67 | 66 | 65 | 64 | 63 |
| England (rate) | 59.0 | 60.0 | 60.0 | 60.0 | 60.0 |



- There has been a 13% increase, 2012-2016, in the number of children & young people in care to Rotherham and an increase of 12% in the rate/10,000 of the under 18 population from 68/10,000 to 76/10,000.
- In England while the number of CYP in care has risen by 5% the rate/10,000 has remained constant at 60/10,000
- Regionally there has been a decline in the overall number by 4% and a decline in the rate/10,000 by 6%.
- Of the 15 LAs which comprise the Yorkshire & Humber region, Rotherham has the 3rd highest LAC rate after North East Lincolnshire and Kingston Upon Hull.

The current school age looked after population in Rotherham (March 2017)

By gender and local authority

| | Rotherham schools (RMBC) | | Out of Authority schools (OOA) | | ALL | |
|--------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|--------|------|
| Gender | Number | %age | Number | %age | Number | %age |
| Female | 101 | 49% | 51 | 43% | 152 | 47% |
| Male | 105 | 51% | 68 | 57% | 173 | 53% |
| Total | 206 | | 119 | | 325 | |

By ethnicity

| Ethnic Group | RMBC | OOA | ALL | %age |
|---|------|-----|-----|------|
| Asian - other | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1% |
| Asian - Pakistani | 3 | 2 | 5 | 2% |
| Black African | 5 | 1 | 6 | 2% |
| Black - Other | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1% |
| Dual Heritage - Other | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1% |
| Dual Heritage - White & Asian | 18 | 11 | 29 | 9% |
| Dual Heritage - White & Black African | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.6% |
| Dual Heritage - White & Black Caribbean | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1% |
| Gypsy/Roma | 6 | 9 | 15 | 5% |
| Other - any | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1% |
| Pakistani | 3 | 0 | 3 | 1% |
| White - Asian | 3 | 0 | 3 | 1% |
| White - British | 154 | 91 | 245 | 75% |
| White - other | 4 | 2 | 6 | 2% |
| Total | 206 | 119 | 325 | 100% |

By Special Educational Needs (SEN)

| SEN | RMBC | OOA | ALL | %age |
|----------------|------|-----|-----|------|
| EHCP/Statement | 35 | 45 | 80 | 25% |
| SEN support | 57 | 30 | 87 | 27% |
| No SEN | 95 | 41 | 136 | 42% |
| Not known | 19 | 3 | 22 | 7% |
| ALL | 206 | 119 | 325 | 100% |

Primary LAC by NCY and local authority

| | Rotherham schools (RMBC) | | Out of Authority schools (OOA) | | ALL | |
|--------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|--------|------|
| NCY | Number | %age | Number | %age | Number | %age |
| Year 0 | 15 | 14% | 2 | 5% | 17 | 11% |
| Year 1 | 14 | 13% | 2 | 5% | 16 | 11% |
| Year 2 | 15 | 14% | 7 | 16% | 22 | 14% |
| Year 3 | 13 | 12% | 5 | 12% | 18 | 12% |
| Year 4 | 16 | 15% | 5 | 12% | 21 | 14% |
| Year 5 | 16 | 15% | 10 | 23% | 26 | 17% |
| Year 6 | 20 | 19% | 12 | 28% | 32 | 21% |
| ALL | 109 | | 43 | | 152 | |

There are 152 LAC in 97 primary schools. 71% are in Rotherham primary schools & 28% are in OOA primary schools.

| Secondary LAC by NCY and local authority | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|--------|------|
| | Rotherham schools (RMBC) | | Out of Authority schools (OOA) | | ALL | |
| NCY | Number | %age | Number | %age | Number | %age |
| Year 7 | 16 | 16% | 12 | 16% | 28 | 16% |
| Year 8 | 15 | 15% | 13 | 17% | 28 | 16% |
| Year 9 | 17 | 18% | 14 | 18% | 31 | 18% |
| Year 10 | 27 | 28% | 18 | 24% | 45 | 26% |
| Year 11 | 22 | 23% | 19 | 25% | 41 | 24% |
| ALL | 97 | | 76 | | 173 | |
| There are 173 LAC in 85 secondary schools. 56% are in Rotherham primary schools & 44% are in OOA secondary schools. | | | | | | |

| Number of LAC attending primary schools by Ofsted category and local authority | | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------|-------|------|
| LAC attending | Rotherham schools | OOA schools | Total | %age |
| Outstanding | 17 | 7 | 24 | 19% |
| Good | 61 | 26 | 87 | 68% |
| Requires Improvement | 7 | 5 | 12 | 9% |
| Inadequate | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4% |
| ALL | 88 | 40 | 128 | 100% |
| 87% of pupils attend primary schools judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding. | | | | |

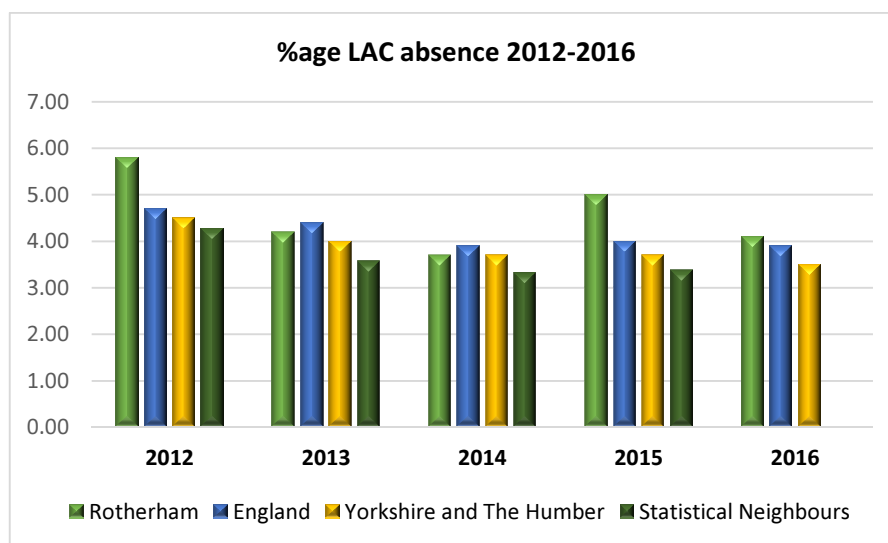
| Number of LAC attending secondary schools by Ofsted category and local authority (September 30th 2016) | | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------|-------|------|
| LAC attending | Rotherham schools | OOA schools | Total | %age |
| Outstanding | 10 | 17 | 27 | 19% |
| Good | 56 | 31 | 87 | 62% |
| Requires Improvement | 5 | 15 | 20 | 14% |
| Inadequate | 5 | 2 | 7 | 5% |
| ALL | 76 | 65 | 141 | 100% |
| 81% of pupils attend schools judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding. | | | | |

The current school age LAC population in Rotherham in March 2017 in summary:

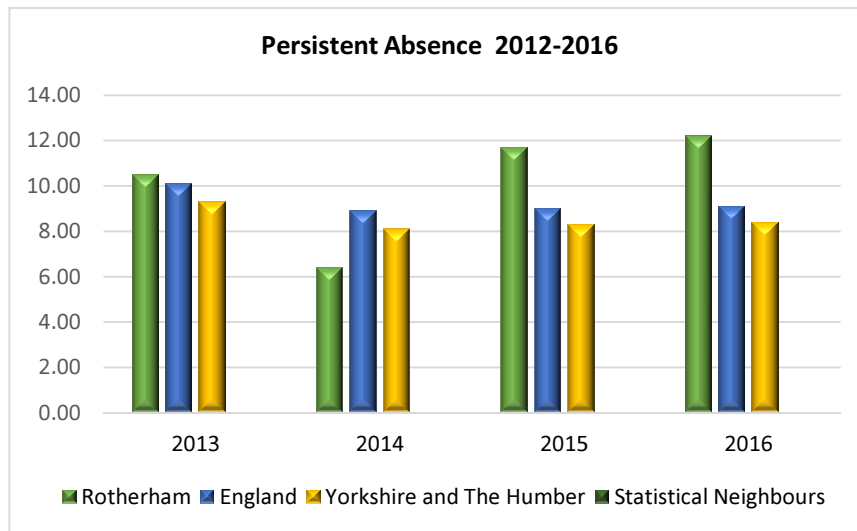
| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Number: | 308 |
| Phase: | 152 primary 173 secondary |
| Gender: | 166 male 142 female |
| Ethnicity: | 75% White British, 9% Dual Heritage White & Asian, 5% Gypsy/Roma |
| SEN: | 52% have special educational needs; 25% have statements/EHCPs |
| Local Authority: | 30 Local Authorities |
| Number of schools: | 182 schools |
| Ofsted school category: | 84% in good or better schools; primary 87%, secondary 81% (Sept.30 th 2016) |

| Overall Absence 2012-2016 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| Rotherham | 5.80 | 4.20 | 3.70 | 5.00 | 4.1 |
| England | 4.70 | 4.40 | 3.90 | 4.00 | 3.9 |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | 4.50 | 4.00 | 3.70 | 3.70 | 3.5 |
| Statistical Neighbours | 4.27 | 3.57 | 3.32 | 3.38 | n/a |
| %age difference Rotherham and England | 1.1 | -0.2 | -0.2 | 1 | 0.2 |
| %age difference Rotherham & Stat. Neighbours | 1.5 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 1.6 | n/a |

Attendance 2012-2016



| Persistent Absence 2012-2016 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---------------------------------------|-------|------|-------|------|
| Rotherham | 10.50 | 6.40 | 11.70 | 12.2 |
| England | 10.10 | 8.90 | 9.00 | 9.1 |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | 9.30 | 8.10 | 8.30 | 8.4 |
| %age difference Rotherham and England | -0.40 | 2.50 | -2.70 | -3.1 |



Commentary:

The trend for overall attendance is one of improvement over the last 5 years. Overall attendance 2015-2016 at 96% was in line with the national average and marginally lower than regional and statistical neighbour averages.

Overall absence rates in England in 2015 are lower for LAC (4%) than for all children (4.6%) and much lower than children in need (9.6%)

Persistent absence has risen significantly nationally as the threshold for persistent absence has been raised from below 85% to below 90%

Persistent absence 2015-2016 at 12.2% was higher in Rotherham compared with national, regional and statistical neighbour averages

Virtual School Actions:

According to the Rees Report, for every 5% of possible school sessions missed due to unauthorised school absences, young people in care scored over 2 grades less at GCSE.

From the start 2016/17 academic year, the Virtual School have commissioned Welfare Call to monitor and report on the attendance of all Rotherham looked after children of statutory school age.

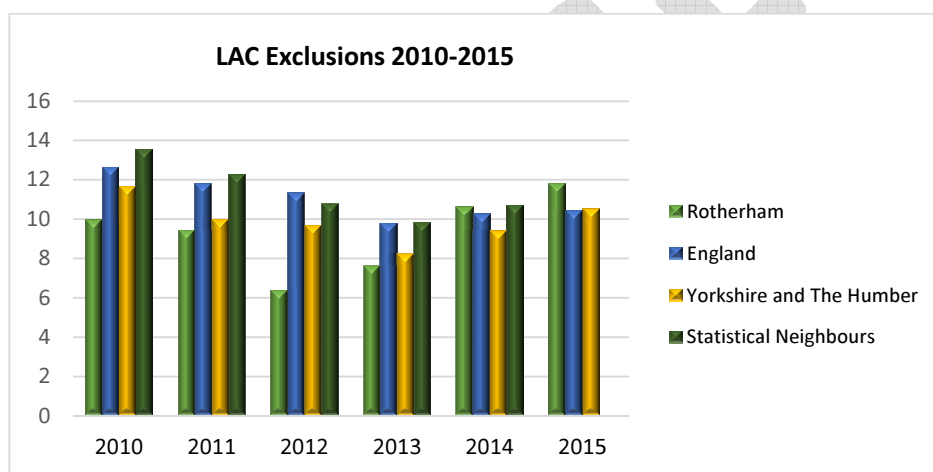
Welfare School contact schools, education providers and tutors on a daily basis to ask whether each looked after child is accessing education that day. Attendance monitoring reports are provided to the Virtual School on a daily and weekly basis, and issues where children are not in attendance can be investigated in a timely manner and inform interventions.

This will provide the basis for a much more robust strategy to improve overall attendance and to tackle persistent absence particularly in Years 9, 10, and 11.

Exclusions 2010-2015

| Fixed Term Exclusions 2012-2015 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|
| Rotherham | 9.95 | 9.42 | 6.38 | 7.61 | 10.61 | 11.79 |
| England | 12.62 | 11.79 | 11.32 | 9.77 | 10.25 | 10.42 |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | 11.65 | 9.97 | 9.66 | 8.22 | 9.38 | 10.35 |
| Statistical Neighbours | 13.54 | 12.26 | 10.77 | 9.81 | 10.71 | Not Available |
| %age difference Rotherham and England | -2.67 | -2.37 | -4.94 | -2.16 | 0.36 | 1.37 |
| %age difference Rotherham & Stat. Neighbours | 3.59 | -2.84 | -4.39 | -2.21 | -0.1 | Not Available |

Note: Exclusions data are collected two terms in arrears, so the latest exclusions data available is from the academic year 2014/15. This is matched to the looked after children from year ending 31 March 2015.



Commentary:

Looked After Children and Young People are five times more likely to have a fixed period exclusion than all children and one and a half times more likely than children in need. Fixed term exclusions were on a downward trend 2010-2012 locally, regionally, in Rotherham's statistical neighbours, and nationally. This trend would appear to have gone into reverse since 2013.

Fixed term exclusions in Rotherham in 4 out of 6 years between 2010 and 2015 were significantly below national, regional and statistical neighbour comparators and broadly in line in 2014. They were 1.37 percentage points above the national average in 2015.

Virtual School Actions:

Minimising fixed period exclusions is a major priority for the Virtual School. It impacts negatively on placement stability, on emotional wellbeing, and on educational attainment. For every additional day of school missed due to fixed term exclusions, young people in care scored one-sixth of a grade less at GCSE (Rees Report).

Promoting attachment awareness in schools through central and school-based training is a key element in the endeavour to reduce fixed term exclusions, as is early intervention and ensuring that young people have access to any additional support that is identified through the PEP process.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Results 2016

Since 2013, children are defined as having reached a good level of development (GLD) at the end of the EYFS if they achieve at least the expected level in:

- the early learning goals in the prime areas of learning (personal, social and emotional development; physical development; and communication and language) and
- the early learning goals in the specific areas of mathematics and literacy.

In 2016 the cohort of 7 comprised 6 in Rotherham schools and 1 out of authority. 2/7 (29%) achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD). This compares with 0% of LAC in 2015.

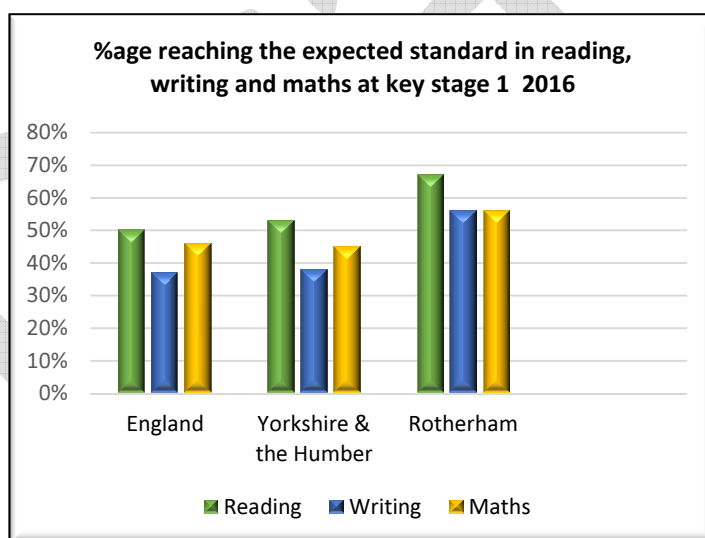
70% of all Rotherham children in 2016 achieved a GLD.

Year 1 Phonics 2016

The Year 1 phonics test cohort comprised 9 children, 6 in Rotherham schools and 3 in out of authority schools. 6/9 (67%) passed the test compared with 20% in 2015.

LAC Outcomes at Key Stage 1, 2016

The Year 2 cohort comprised 9 children. 3/9 had a Statement or Education & Health Care Plan. 6/9 reached the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, placing Rotherham above national and regional comparators.



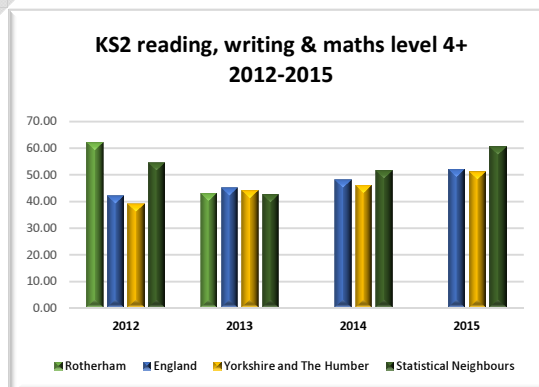
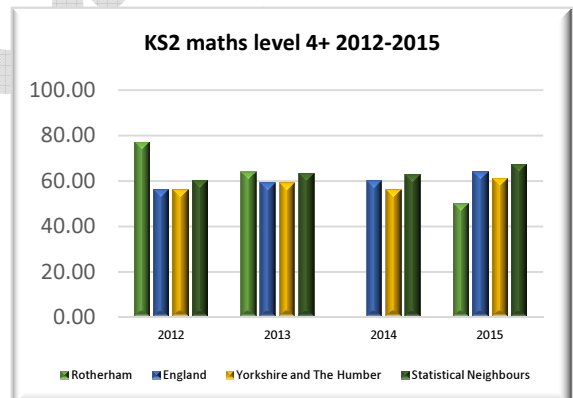
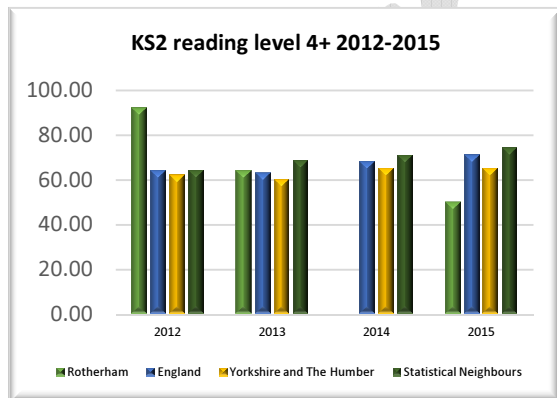
The 2016 key stage 1 assessments are the first which assess the new, more challenging national curriculum. The expected standard has also been raised to be higher than the old level 2. As a result, figures for 2016 are not comparable to those for earlier years. The new expected standards were designed to be broadly similar but are not equivalent to an old level 2b.

LAC Outcomes at Key Stage 2 2012-2016

| KS2 reading level 4+ 2012-2015 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Rotherham | 92.00 | 64.00 | - | 50.00 |
| England | 64.00 | 63.00 | 68.00 | 71.00 |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | 62.00 | 60.00 | 65.00 | 65.00 |
| Statistical Neighbours | 64.20 | 68.50 | 70.83 | 74.20 |
| %age difference RBC & England | 30 | 1 | - | -21 |
| %age difference RBC & Stat. Neighbours | 27.8 | -4.5 | - | -24.2 |

| KS2 maths level 4+ 2012-2015 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Rotherham | 77.00 | 64.00 | - | 50.00 |
| England | 56.00 | 59.00 | 60.00 | 64.00 |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | 56.00 | 59.00 | 56.00 | 61.00 |
| Statistical Neighbours | 60.20 | 63.17 | 62.67 | 67.20 |
| %age difference RBC & England | 21 | 5 | | -14 |
| %age difference RBC & Stat. Neighbours | 16.8 | 0.83 | | -17.2 |

| KS2 reading, writing & maths level 4+ 2012-2015 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Rotherham | 62.00 | 43.00 | - | - |
| England | 42.00 | 45.00 | 48.00 | 52.00 |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | 39.00 | 44.00 | 46.00 | 51.00 |
| Statistical Neighbours | 54.33 | 42.50 | 51.50 | 60.40 |
| %age difference RBC & England | 18 | 2 | | |
| %age difference RBC & Stat. Neighbours | 7.67 | 0.5 | | |



Attainment and Progress at Key Stage 2 2016

This year's figures are the first to emerge following a major overhaul of the primary curriculum 2014, which involved a raising of expected literacy and numeracy standards – to the extent that the 2016 test results **are not directly comparable with test results from previous years.**

LAC Attainment and Progress at Key Stage 2 in 2016 in Rotherham

There were 21 in the KS2 cohort in 2016.

8/21 (38.1%) of the cohort had statements of special educational needs/EHC Plans.

3/21 (14.3%) attended non-mainstream schools

6/21 (28.6%) did not sit the end of key stage assessments

The figures include the pupils who did not sit the tests

Reading: 8/21 38% of LAC in Rotherham achieved the new expected standard
41% of LAC in England achieved the new expected standard
39% of LAC in the region achieved the new expected standard
64% of all pupils in Rotherham achieved the new expected standard
66% of all pupils in England achieved the new expected standard

Maths: 7/21 33% of LAC in Rotherham achieved the new expected standard
41% of LAC in England achieved the new expected standard
40% of LAC in the region achieved the new expected standard
72% of all pupils in Rotherham achieved the new expected standard
70% of all pupils in England achieved the new expected standard

Reading 5/21 24% of LAC in Rotherham achieved the new expected standard
Writing & 25% of LAC in England achieved the new expected standard
Maths 25% of LAC in the region achieved the new expected standard
54% of all pupils in Rotherham achieved the new expected standard
53% of all pupils in England achieved the new expected standard

- Statistically each child is worth 4.8% so small shifts are magnified in %age terms
- The cohort had 16/21 with special educational needs of which 8 had statements EHCPs
- Outcomes are broadly in line with national and regional LAC comparators

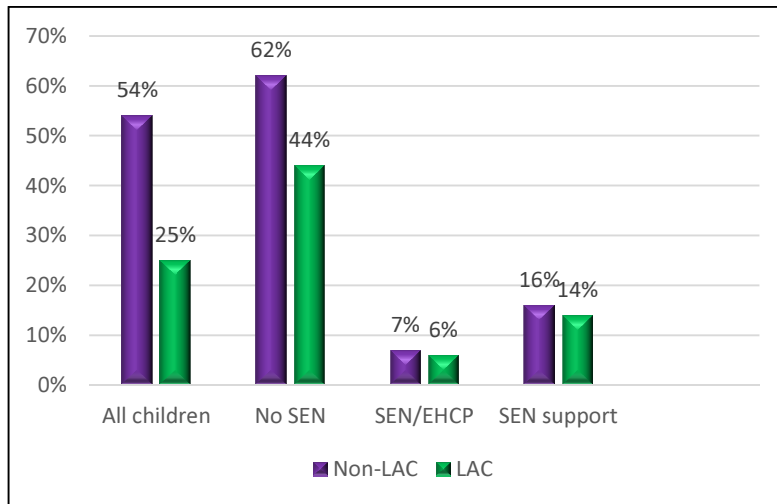
Filtering by SEN (excluding those with statements/EHCPs) gives the following outcomes:

Reading: 6/13 (46%)
Writing: 5/13 (38%)
Reading 4/13 (31%)
Writing &
Maths

2 of the pupils with statements/EHCPs reached the expected standard in reading, writing and maths but not the same 2.

Filtering the results of LAC by special needs shows marked differences in performance in England between those with and without identified special needs (see below)

Percentage of children achieving the expected standard or above in the headline measure reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2, for looked after children, non-looked after children and children in need, by SEN, 2016, England.



In 2016, 57% of looked after children at the end of key stage 2 have a special educational need (SEN) identified, compared to 17% of non-looked after children and attainment rates for children with a SEN are much lower.

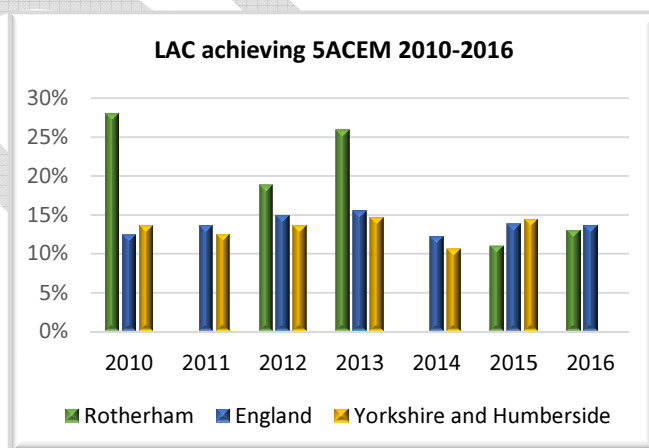
Looking at children with no identified SEN, the attainment difference between looked after children and non-looked after children is less than for the overall total. For example, 44% of looked after children with no identified SEN achieved the expected standard or above in the headline measure reading, writing and mathematics, compared to 62% of non-looked after children, which reduces the attainment difference for this measure by 11 percentage points from the overall total attainment gap. In addition, attainment for looked after children with an identified SEN is more similar to non-looked after children. This is similar to 2015 when attainment by SEN for looked after children and non-looked after children was published for the first time.

Key Stage 4 GCSE Outcomes 2010-2016

Headlines 2016

- Rotherham LAC outcomes are marginally below national outcomes in terms of those achieving C+ in both English and maths 17.5% compared with 15.6%.
- Rotherham LAC outcomes in English and maths are in line with regional outcomes (15.8%)
- Rotherham LAC outcomes are marginally below national outcomes in terms of those achieving 5ACEM; 13.6% compared with 12.5%
- Filtered by SEN, Rotherham LAC outcomes in English & maths and at 5ACEM are exactly in line with national outcomes at 36% and 29% respectively
- Filtered by school type (mainstream/non-mainstream) Rotherham LAC outcomes in English & maths (21%) and at 5ACEM (17%) are below national outcomes at 27% and 21% respectively
- In terms of Attainment 8 Rotherham LAC outcomes are in line with national outcomes and above regional outcomes
- In terms of Progress 8 Rotherham LAC outcomes are above both national and regional comparators

| 5 A*-C inc. English & Maths (5ACEM) | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| Rotherham | 28% | - | 18.80% | 25.90% | - | 11.00% | 12.5% |
| England | 12.40% | 13.60% | 14.90% | 15.50% | 12.20% | 13.80% | 13.6% |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 13.60% | 12.50% | 13.60% | 14.60% | 10.60% | 14.40% | |
| Stat. Neighbours | 34.30% | 23.60% | 30.50% | 15.60% | 10.70% | 22.20% | |
| %age diff. Rotherham & England | 15.60% | - | 3.95% | 11.40% | | -2.80% | |
| %age diff. Rotherham & SNs - this data is only the average of 1/2 LAs as most data is suppressed because of small numbers | | | | | | | |



Over the 4 years, where comparative data is available and not suppressed, Rotherham's results at 5ACEM are significantly better than national and regional comparators in 3 out of 4 years. In 2016 results are broadly in line with national outcomes.

In 2016 of the RMBC cohort of 32:

- 5/32 (15.6%) achieved both English and maths GCSE at grade C+; this compares with 17.5% nationally for LAC
- 4/32 (12.5%) achieved 5+ A*-C including English and maths; this compares with 13.6% nationally for LAC

SEN and type of school (mainstream/non-mainstream):

Cohorts are comparatively small and outcomes are need to be contextualised by key variables such as SEN and school type (mainstream/non-mainstream) given the disproportionate numbers in the Virtual School who are in non-mainstream schools and who have high levels of SEN.

In 2016 of the cohort of 32:

- 12/32 (38%) had special educational needs
- 5/32 (16%) had statements of special educational needs
- 6/32 were not classified - 3 were in mainstream schools, 1 was in secure and 2 were not on roll.

Of the 14 with no identified SEN:

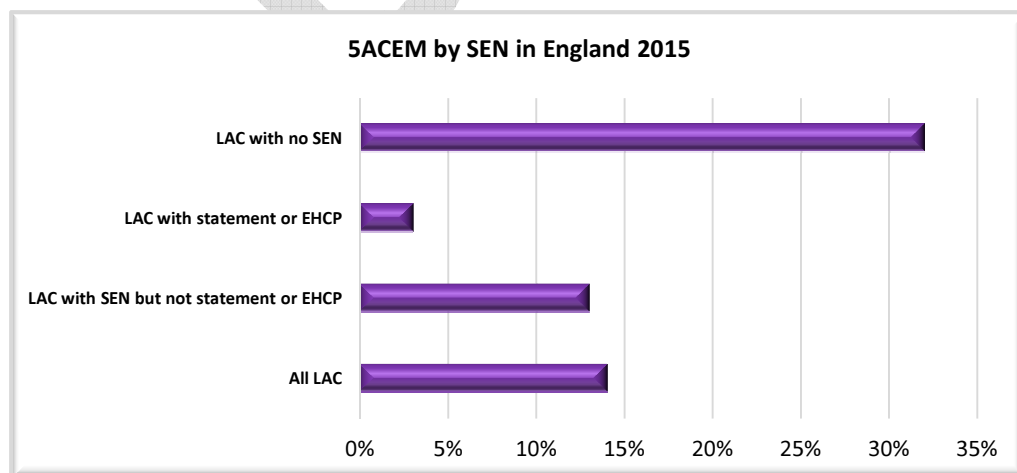
- 5/14 (36%) achieved C+ in both English and maths; this compares with 36% for all LAC in England
- 4/14 (29%) achieved 5ACEM; this compares with 29% for all LAC in England

Of the 24/32 in mainstream schools:

- 5/24 (21%) achieved C+ in both English and maths; this compares with 27% for all LAC in England
- 4/24 (17%) achieved 5ACEM; this compares with 21% for all LAC in England.

The table and graph below show the GCSE outcomes for LAC in England in 2015 contextualised by SEN. There is still a significant gap between LAC and all young people but the gap is considerably narrower for pupils with no SEN. 1 in 3 achieved 5ACEM.

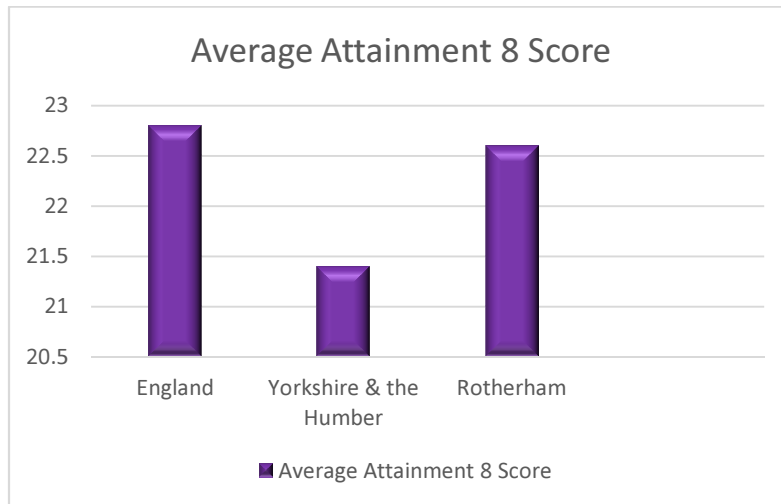
| LAC GCSE 5ACEM outcomes in England by SEN 2015 | |
|--|-----|
| All LAC | 14% |
| LAC with SEN but not statement or EHCP | 13% |
| LAC with statement or EHCP | 3% |
| LAC with no SEN | 32% |



Attainment 8 and Progress 8 2016 (See Appendix E: Attainment 8 and Progress 8)

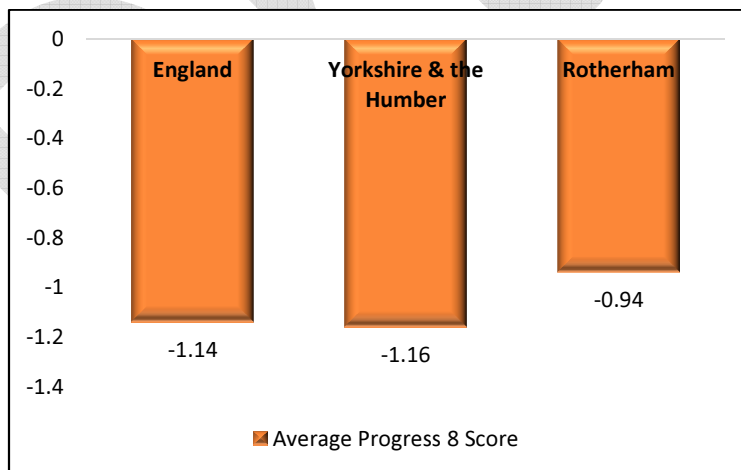
Attainment 8

- The Average Attainment 8 score for Rotherham LAC was 22.6
- This compares with 21.4 for LAC in Yorkshire and the Humber and 22.8 for all LAC in England
- It compares with 48.3 for all pupils in Rotherham and 48.1 for all non LAC in England



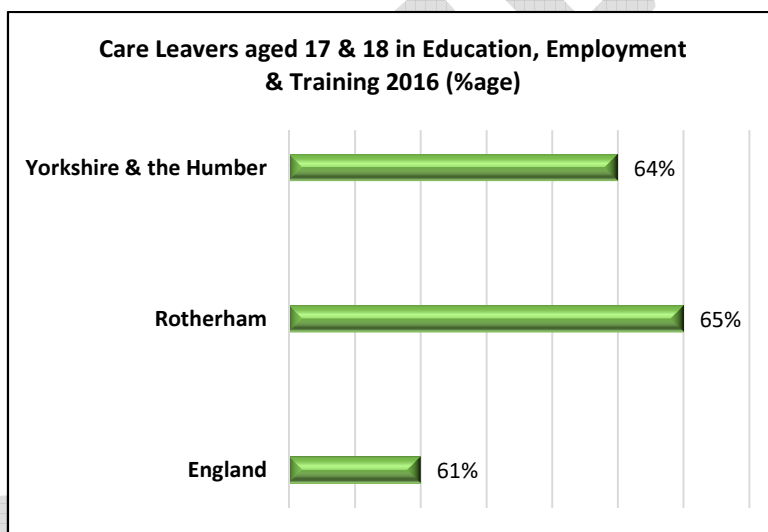
Progress 8

- The Average Progress 8 score for Rotherham LAC was -0.94.
- This compares with -1.14 for LAC in Yorkshire & the Humber and -1.16 for all LAC in England



Care Leavers (aged 17 & 18) - Education, Employment or Training (%): 2016

| | Total | Higher Education | Education other than HE | In Employment or Training | Total EET | NEET: illness/disability | NEET: other reason | NEET: pregnancy or parenting | No Information |
|-----------------------------------|-------|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| England | 9290 | 260 | 3670 | 1720 | 5650 | 390 | 2300 | 370 | 570 |
| | | 3% | 40% | 19% | 61% | 4% | 25% | 4% | 6% |
| Rotherham | 45 | 0 | 20 | 10 | 30 | x | 10 | x | x |
| | | 0% | 46% | 2% | 65% | x | 20% | x | x |
| Yorkshire & the Humber | 740 | 10 | 280 | 170 | 470 | 40 | 150 | 40 | 50 |
| | | 2% | 38% | 23% | 64% | 5% | 20% | 5% | 6% |

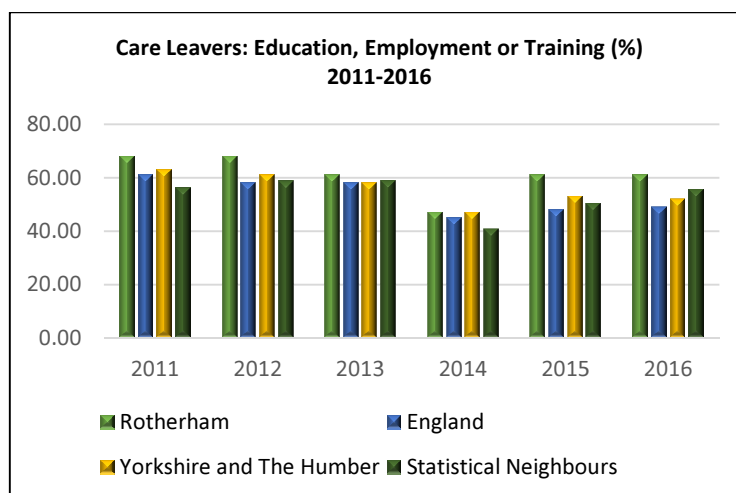

Commentary:

This data was collected for the first time in 2016. They are experimental statistics and need to be treated with caution. Nonetheless it is gratifying to see that Rotherham's performance compares favourably with national and regional comparators with 2/3 care leavers aged 17 and 18 in education, employment or training.

Care Leavers (19, 20 and 21 year olds) - Education, Employment or Training (%): 2011-2016

| | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Rotherham | 68.00 | 68.00 | 61.00 | 47.00 | 61.00 | 61.00 |
| England | 61.00 | 58.00 | 58.00 | 45.00 | 48.00 | 49.00 |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | 63.00 | 61.00 | 58.00 | 47.00 | 53.00 | 52.00 |
| Statistical Neighbours | 56.20 | 58.60 | 58.80 | 40.80 | 50.40 | 55.60 |

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| National Rank 2016: | 16 |
| Quartile Banding 2016: | A |



Commentary:

Between 2011 and 2016, Rotherham has consistently outperformed national, regional and statistical neighbour comparators and, in several years by significant margins, apart from 2014, when Rotherham and its statistical neighbours were in line.

In 2016, with 61% of 19-21 year old care leavers in education, employment and training, Rotherham's national ranking was 16th which placed it in quartile band A.

Appendix A: Educational Psychology working in the Virtual School

In December 2016 the Virtual School secured a fulltime equivalent post for an Educational Psychologist (EP), which is job-shared between two experienced EPs seconded on a two year basis from Rotherham Educational Psychology Service. This post is funded through Pupil Premium Plus.

The EPs have been appointed to encourage whole school development around raising attainment and understanding the Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs of Looked After Children (LAC).

A key role is to shape and drive an innovative Attachment Friendly Schools Project. Eleven Rotherham schools have been offered the opportunity to take part in 7 day Yellow Kite Attachment Lead Practitioner Training. The EPs are supporting these schools and providing additional opportunities to link their learning on this course to whole-school developments, through:

- Completion of an Attachment Friendly Schools Audit
- The development of a network to provide support and supervision to professionals
- High quality training on 'Embedding Attachment' which is designed to be delivered in a full day or as bespoke modules relevant to the school's stage of awareness and knowledge in relation to issues of Attachment, Trauma and Toxic Stress
- Solution-focused activities

The EPs are bringing Emotion Coaching to Rotherham schools and are being trained to trainer level which enables them to provide development opportunities on an approach which is both universal and cost-effective in nature. High quality training will be created, alongside the development of supervision mechanisms to effectively embed practice.

The EPs are also able to engage in complex case work when the need arises.

Appendix B: Promoting Emotional Wellbeing

Consortium for Emotional Well Being in Schools

The Consortium for Emotional Well Being in Schools represents the views of a wide range of education practitioners, research academics and trainers. **It argues that accredited training in children's emotional development and attachment is an essential entitlement for all who work in our schools.** The case for this has been supported by the Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training which has acknowledged the case put forward by the Consortium and made this one of its recommendations to the DfE.

CEWB Manifesto 2015

- Championing outstanding practice in schools
- Establishing a national register of trainers
- Widening the role of Virtual Headteachers to provide whole staff training in children emotional development and attachment.
- Securing the support of children's organisations for accredited training of the children's workforce in children's emotional development and attachment
- Making whole school training in children's emotional development and attachment an inspection issue within the Ofsted Framework

http://southoverpartnership.com/wpcontent/uploads/2015/04/EX_Final_Report_for_CEWBS.pdf

Achieving emotional wellbeing for looked after children: A whole system approach – new report from the NSPCC June 2015

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) has released this latest report, published June 2015. **Authors:** Louise Bazalgette, Tom Rahilly and Grace Trevelyan

<http://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/achieving-emotional-wellbeing-for-looked-after-children.pdf>

Research has shown that children in care are 4 times more likely to have a mental health problem than children living with their birth families. These mental health needs are often unmet, which increases children's risk of a variety of poor outcomes including placement instability and poor educational attainment. This report provides recommendations and evidence for how the care system can be changed to prioritise and achieve good emotional wellbeing for all looked after children and care leavers. It is part of the NSPCC's Impact and evidence series.

Carter review of initial teacher training (ITT)

Sir Andrew Carter OBE. January 2015

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/399957/Carter_Review.pdf

Child and adolescent development – ITT should provide new teachers with a grounding in child and adolescent development, including emotional and social development, which will underpin their understanding of other issues such as pedagogy, assessment, behaviour, mental health and SEND. ITT should also introduce new teachers to strategies for character education and supporting pupil wellbeing.

Attachment Aware Schools

Attachment Aware Schools is a partnership between Bath Spa University, Bath and North East Somerset Council, the National College for Teaching and Leadership, a range of third sector organisations, attachment specialists and schools.

Appendix C:

The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data. University of Oxford and the University of Bristol. November 2015

http://www.attachmentawareschools.com/in_school.php

A growing number of children and young people have emotional and behavioural needs that go beyond the strategies we have learned through our training and experience. Whilst these children and young people can be hard to reach, they need our greatest nurturing and care.

Research indicates that an awareness of how to support children and young people's emotional needs and development can promote better learning and health outcomes. National policy and guidance, like the Marmot Review, confirms this.

Marmot Review

<http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review>

In November 2008, Professor Sir Michael Marmot was asked by the then Secretary of State for Health to chair an independent review to propose the most effective evidence-based strategies for reducing health inequalities in England from 2010. The final report, 'Fair Society Healthy Lives', was published in February 2010.

Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing: a whole school and college approach. March 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-children-and-young-peoples-emotional-health-and-wellbeing>

Guidance for head teachers and college principals on the 8 principles for promoting emotional health and wellbeing in schools and colleges.

Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked-after children. March 2015

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-health-and-wellbeing-of-looked-after-children--](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-health-and-wellbeing-of-looked-after-children--2)

[2](#)

This guidance is for, among others, designated and named professionals for looked-after children. It aims to ensure looked-after children have access to any physical or mental health care they may need. Statutory guidance is issued by law; you must follow it unless there's a good reason not to.

| Key Factor | Significance |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Time in care | Young people in care who have been in longer term care: (i) do better than those 'in need' but not in care, and (ii) better than those who have only been in short term care So it appears that care may protect them educationally. |
| Placement Changes | Each additional change of care placement after age 11 is associated with one-third of a grade less at GCSE. |
| School Changes | Young people in care who changed schools in Years 10 or 11 scored over 5 grades less than those who did not. |
| School Absence | For every 5% of possible school sessions missed due to unauthorised school absences, young people in care scored over 2 grades less at GCSE. |
| School Exclusions | For every additional day of school missed due to fixed term exclusions, young people in care scored one-sixth of a grade less at GCSE. |
| Placement Type | Young people living in residential or another form of care at age 16 scored over 6 grades less than those who were in kinship or foster care. |
| School Type | Young people in special schools at age 16 scored over 14 grades lower in their GCSEs compared with those with the same characteristics who were in mainstream schools. Those in PRUs with the same characteristics scored almost 14 grades lower. |
| Educational Support | Young people report that teachers provide the most significant educational support for them but teachers suggest that they need more training to do this effectively |
| Feeling secure and cared for | Young people can engage with learning better when they feel secure and cared for in a placement |
| Birth family issues | Young people can engage with learning better when their birth family issues are also being addressed. |
| Teachers' understanding | Teachers need better understanding of children's social, emotional and mental health problems |
| Social workers' understanding | Social workers need better understanding of the education system |

Appendix D: 2016 Education Performance Outcomes Explanation of Key Stage Information

Primary and Secondary National Curriculum

The National Curriculum is divided into Key Stages that children are taken through during their school life.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFS)

The EYFS Profile is assessed when children reach the end of Foundation Stage (age 5) through ongoing and summative teacher assessment. Rotherham's Early Years performance in many areas relating to children's outcomes has been on an upward trajectory since 2009. The framework was revised in 2012 and due to the changes in the way children are assessed at the end of the Foundation Stage it is not possible to make comparisons between 2013 assessments and historical data.

The expected level to achieve at the end of EYFS is a 'good level of development' (GLD). A pupil is defined as achieving a GLD if they achieve at least the expected level for all eight goals within the three prime areas of learning: communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development, and in all four of the literacy and mathematics goals.

Key Stage 1

- 1.3 Key Stage 1 is taught during Years 1 and 2 of primary school when pupils are aged between 5 and 7. This includes the phonics screening check which is administered to all children in Year 1. It also includes tasks and tests which can be performed at any time during Year 2, so children may not know that they are being formally assessed. These tasks and tests are designed to be administered informally as part of normal classroom activity. The results inform teachers' overall assessments in English, mathematics and science, which are reported to parents and the DfE.

Phonics Screening Check

- 1.4 This is a short assessment that was introduced in 2012 and designed to confirm whether pupils have learned phonic decoding to an appropriate standard by the age of 6. All year 1 pupils in maintained schools, academies and free schools must complete the check.
- 1.5 The phonics check will help teachers identify any children who need extra help so they can receive the support they need to improve their reading skills. These children will then be able to retake the check in year 2.
- 1.6 The standard mark is released each year after the check has been administered. It has remained 32 out of 40 from 2012 to 2016.

End of Key Stage 1 Teacher Assessments

- 1.7 The statutory Key Stage 1 tasks and tests in reading, writing and mathematics are designed to test children's knowledge and understanding of the associated programmes of study. They provide a snapshot of a child's attainment and help inform the final teacher assessment judgement reported for each child at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2, aged 7).
- 1.8 There were significant changes in Key Stage 1 TA for 2016. The levels have gone and replaced by a range of performance categories for each subject, namely reading, writing, maths and science. These are described as "interim" performance categories for 2016 while the government decides the future of assessment for this Key Stage.

- 1.9 2016 assessments are reported as working at the expected standard (EXS+), working at greater depth (GDS), and those working lower than the expected standard (working towards the standard (WTS), has not met the expected standard (HNM), pre-key foundations for the expected standard (PFK), below the standard of the pre-key stage (BLW)).

Key Stage 2

- 1.10 Key Stage 2 is taught during Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 of primary school when pupils are aged between 7 and 11. Programmes of study set out what teachers should cover in every subject during the Key Stage. The Key Stage 2 national curriculum tests are designed to test children's knowledge and understanding of specific elements of the Key Stage 2 programmes of study. They provide a snapshot of a child's attainment at the end of the Key Stage.
- 1.11 In 2016, tests and teachers assessments were revised to reflect the new and more challenging curriculum. New accountability measures were introduced for the statutory assessments at the end of Key Stage 2.
- 1.12 There are still national tests at the end of key stage 2 in: mathematics; reading; grammar, punctuation and spelling; and a teacher assessment of mathematics, reading, writing, and science. The writing TA will be reported through the new performance descriptors. The new tests will be a higher expected standard. A scaled score of 100 will always represent the 'national standard'. The range is 80-120.
- 1.13 The progress measure between KS1 and KS2 will be based on value-added in each of reading test, writing TA and mathematics test. Pupil's scaled scores in each area at key stage 2 will be compared with the scores of pupils who had the same results in their assessments at KS1.

Key Stage 4

- 1.14 Key Stage 4 is taught during Years 10 and 11 of secondary school when pupils are aged between 15 and 16. At the end of this stage, pupils in Year 11 (usually aged 16) are normally entered for a range of external examinations. Most frequently, these are GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) exams and a range of other qualifications, including National Vocational Qualifications.
- 1.15 A new secondary school accountability system has been implemented in 2016. The headline accountability measures for schools from 2016 are: Attainment 8, Progress 8, Attainment in English and Maths (A*-C, grade 5 when new GCSEs in English and mathematics are first reported in the 2017), and English Baccalaureate (EBacc) entry and achievement.
- 1.16 Attainment 8 measures the average grade of a pupil across 8 subjects including mathematics (double weighted) and English (double weighted), 3 further qualifications that count in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) measure and 3 further qualifications that can be GCSE qualifications (including EBacc subjects) or any other non-GCSE qualifications on the DfE approved list.
- 1.17 Progress 8 aims to capture the progress a pupil makes from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school. It is a type of value added measure, which means that pupils' results are compared to the actual achievements of other pupils with the same prior attainment.
- 1.18 Grades will be measured on a 1-8 point score scale in 2016 and 1-9 in 2017, rather than the current GCSE grades of A*-G.

Appendix E: Attainment 8 and Progress 8

Attainment 8:

- Attainment 8 measures the achievement of a pupil across 8 qualifications including mathematics (double weighted) and English (double weighted), 3 further qualifications that count in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) measure, and 3 further qualifications that can be GCSE qualifications (including EBacc subjects) or technical awards from the DfE approved list.
- In measuring Attainment 8:
 A* = 8 points
 A = 7 points
 B = 6 points
 C = 5 points
 D = 4 points

Points are doubled for English and Maths

So a pupil with 5 grade Cs including English and Maths would attain 35 points.

Progress 8:

- Progress 8 aims to capture the progress a pupil makes from the end of key stage 2 to the end of key stage 4.
- It compares pupils' achievement (attainment 8 score) with the average Attainment 8 score of all pupils nationally who had a similar starting point (prior attainment).
- A school's Average Progress 8 score is calculated as the average of its pupils' Progress 8 scores. It gives an indication of whether, as a group, pupils in the school made above or below average progress compared to similar pupils in other schools.
- An Average Progress score of zero means pupils in the school on average do about as well at key stage 4 as other pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.
- A score above zero means pupils made more progress, on average, than pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.
- A score below zero means pupils made less progress, on average, than pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.
- A negative progress score does not mean pupils made no progress, or the school has failed, rather it means pupils in the school made less progress than other pupils across England with similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Regulation 44 report**The Independent Person's report**

Unique reference number of children's home: SC037521

Liberty House- announced visit.

Liberty House (LH) provides planned short break overnight respite care seven days a week for up to eight children, aged between 8 to 18 years, of either gender who have physical or sensory disabilities, complex health needs and challenging behavior as a result of their disability.

There is provision to also offer on an emergency basis care to a young person. This bed is currently in use by young person A.C.

LH provides support under S.17 of the Children Act to young people who stay for less than 75 days. Young people are accommodated under S.20 if they spend more than 75 days in the unit.

Name of person completing the report:

Independent Person Regulation 44- Kay Garvey – Independent Reviewing Officer- Foster Carers

Date of visit:

Announced 14.3.17. Time 9.35 to 1pm

General Issues

This was an announced visit.

There were no young people in the building through the duration of my visit. During the visit on 27.2.17 I spent time as follows :-

- discussion with DH – Unit Manager-
- Short discussion with Marian Unit deputy manager
- Looking at records
- Coffee morning – starting at 10am
- Inspection of some of the bedrooms
- Discussion with RSW staff in the communal kitchen area
- Discussion with domestic staff

Staff Present over the time of the visit.

Darren Higgin - Unit manager-

Richard Fisher- Deputy Unit manager working 9am to 2.30

Philip Kay — senior on duty providing cover the previous night

Uzma Bibby- - meeting with RF to review her PDR

Lisa Ball working till 3pm – attending a children in need meeting

Leighann Blackett – working till 3pm – attending a CIN meeting at 1pm

Zowie- Agency staff working a 7am to 10am shift

Nicky Hornsby doing a 7am to 10am shift
David Gouldbough- finished his shift at 12.10
Two domestic staff.

There were 4 staff in the communal kitchen area when I arrived – completing paper work

Three staff in the night station when I arrived.

Young People in the unit

No young people in the unit – all had left for education.

Use of the emergency bed

The emergency bed is being used by a young person A.C. This young person was previously placed with foster carers approved by an Independent Agency and receiving a short break at LH . This young person's placement at LH is a planned arrangement. Placed on 16.1.17.

The young person has a Looked After status. This is a planned use of the emergency bed. Longer term plans are yet to be agreed

Previous Actions from the last Regulation 44 inspection visit

Managers are required to evidence actions completed and/or planned in response to the recommendations made by the Regulation 44 Visitor.

These are the actions from the visit dated the 27.2.17. This is the status of the actions from the submission of the last report. Within this report I will comment on any actions that have not been progressed or any that have been implemented since the last report.

Note- these actions are taken directly from the previous report.

| Issues | Actions by relevant Person | Timeframe |
|---|--|---|
| 1. That there is consideration for some system of keeping personal items those children can identify as theirs in the building. | Progress in this area is slow but progressing. Staff continue to promote the use of the boxes at CIN meetings. | <u>Update</u> This piece of work to personalise the experience of young people accessing LH is ongoing. Personal items being brought in to the building for young people is still in progress. In some cases children will bring certain items with them when they stay. |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| | | |
| 2. All recording must be consistent and in line with the recording policy and subject to Quality assurance by a senior. | Embedding this in practice. | <u>Update</u> There has been some delay to quality assurance by a senior manager see violence to staff report dated 11.3.17 |
| 3. Creation of a Facebook Page | The development of this is ongoing, a member of staff has been tasked to take this forward | <u>Update</u> No update at this visit Ongoing discussions with members of the I.T department regarding the details of how either a webpage or Facebook account could be implemented, to be overseen by LH staff are ongoing. |
| 4. Further work to the activities board – discussed with Marianne | Replace and duplicate to some the visual aids | <u>Completed</u> |

Update of actions from last month- To be completed by Registered manager/Service Manager-

- The violence to staff report was verbally passed over on the 13th March. The incident occurred on the 11th March. On the 10th March a TAC meeting was held for this particular young person (Z.A) in which discussion took place on the increased challenging behaviour being observed both within the community and at Liberty House. Although VTS reports require completing both the RMBC health & Safety policy 2016 and the Positive Behaviour Management policy 2009 make no reference to timescales. It must be taken into account that when reports are completed owing to the shift structure, immediate forwarding of reports may not occur as staff involved may have to be contacted regarding written accounts. Wherever possible reports will be passed over to the health and safety team as soon as management have provided their comments. The risk assessment for this child is already set at high status owing to challenging behaviour- this child is also

supported with 2-1 staffing Team Teach trained staff.

- The Facebook status appears to have become stagnated owing to the complexities around safeguarding a social media site. The member of staff tasked with overseeing this procedure will be requested to finalise a request to our I.T department with a definitive outcome on whether this is the best method to employ.

Interviews with children - discussion and key issues identified- No young people have been seen

Voice of young people

It is clearly evident in the inspection visit for this month the continuing progress that LH makes in respect to the voice of the child.

The young people in Liberty House have a range of need and Makaton is used by a number of the young people. In the dining area there are pictures on the walls of some Makaton signs which would offer some help to a person like me unfamiliar with this language. The sign of the week this week is table, it is evident that this is frequently changed.

The unit has now embedded the practice of producing a monthly newsletter called La Liberte Voice of the Child. Issue 10 for February has been produced and is on display. All young people have opportunity to contribute to this.

There are images around the unit of young people engaged in activities provided by LH which promote a sense of homeliness and belonging.

An Activities book of photographs is now available for the young people and visitors with photographs of the young children and activities undertaken since the start of 2017. This was introduced in January 2017 and presents a positive visual display of the young people engaged in activities at LH. This was shared with parents at the coffee morning.

Direct Feedback from young people and evidence of consultation – This is an area where LH are evidencing of going improvement – LH has now introduced a 'My activities and My thoughts book'. Since the last visit on 28th February comments from young people are recorded as follows

- 28.2.17 – three comments re plans around pancake day
- 3.3.17 – two comments
- 5.3.17 – one comment
- 7.3.17- 2 comments

- 10.3.17 – 1 comment
- 11.3.17 – 2 comments

Young people have also provided feedback on the activities undertaken as follows

- 7.3.17 two completed feed back forms, one young person declined
- 5.3.17- 1 feedback
- 6th march – one feedback
- 4th march – one feedback
- 1st March – 5 feedbacks

There is a complaints and Compliments Letterbox in the entrance to LH for the use of young people and carers and professionals.

Activities Calendar

This continues to be used on a daily basis. Some cards have been duplicated and replaced following the last visit.

IPads- LH have had more made available to them

Interviews with parents/relatives.

This inspection was planned to take place to meet with carers and parents attending the coffee morning. Only one set of parents came to the coffee morning. No apologies received from other parents. This is a disappointing turn out as attendance at the planned coffee mornings has increased over the last year with some parents/ carers attending regularly. The parents who attended report of late notification of the invitation receiving this on Friday 10th March for an event on 14th March.

The parents who attended are parents to a young man J. who will be 18 in October. J has complex needs in respect to his health resulting from injuries sustained in a house fire. J has just returned to school following surgery and did not attend LH for his last stay in February. Following his surgery his current nursing needs mean that LH would not be a suitable environment for him to come into.

This young man's parents spoke very positively about how much their son enjoys coming to LH and how they value the respite that this provides them; he stays just one evening a month. They feel he would benefit from an additional stay but this has not been agreed, coming to LH provides for him opportunities for socialisation outside of his family and to meet with other young people and his peers.

The parents were given information about the outcome of the recent full Ofsted inspect and an unannounced visit by Ofsted in February, plans around sustaining the improvements at LH and the recent activities undertaken with

the young people.

Some of the young people comments in respect to the activities undertaken were shared.

What was clearly evident in this meeting was the enthusiasm of these parents to work with LH and to use the connections that they have in the community and through the volunteering that they do to link with LH and provide opportunities for the young people to benefit from these contacts. These parents have contacts in the fire service and at the fire museum in Sheffield and with Sheffield Steelers ice hockey team.

A theme of this visit and previous visits has been the concerns of parents in respect to post 18 support – LH is able and does provide limited post 18 support to some young people whilst alternative arrangements and support is agreed and established. Currently providing this for one young person.

Interviews with staff – discussion and key issues identified.

During this visit I had opportunity to engage in general discussion with staff. Coming from these discussions it is evident that:-

- Training and personal development is high on the agenda of LH management- two members of staff meeting with RF today to review their PDR in line with policy
- That staff at LH attend multiagency CIN need meetings when this is possible- staff today attending two meetings.
- That any agency staff that is used is someone who has worked at LH previously – all efforts are made to ensure consistencies in respect to the use of agency staff.

Improvement plan –

- LH has a plan in place around improvement. There is clear evidence of management and leadership and an expectation in respect to the training and development of staff and compliance with a provision of a high standard of care. Liaison with other services including HR is part of the manager's role and this is evident.
- The provision of opportunities for socialisation and activities- the young people who attend LH all have additional needs, the staff team seek to provide activities that are fun both within LH and out in the community and are creative in their thinking. Support from carers and relatives is welcomed to further improve provisions in this area and clearly evidenced in this visit. Contacts are established with local service providers including Dearn Valley college and Rotherham united.

Training and personal Development

It's clear that there is a clear expectation that all staff maintain and demonstrate a commitment to training and personal development. All staff are required to have an NVQ level three or equivalent in line with regulations. Where this is

not the case staff have been offered the opportunity to access relevant training. Management liaise with HR and training providers to support compliance with this requirement.

Inspection of the premises including assessment of the physical condition of the building and furniture and equipment of the home.

Certificate of excellence following a full Ofsted inspection is on display in the entrance are to LH where visitors are asked to sign and in and out.

Two domestic staff were working during the time of my visit allowing more easy access to bedroom. The bedrooms that had been used the previous night were being thorough cleaned for future use and bed linen replaced with either personal linen for this evening or general linen if the room was not going to be in use. There are two domestic staff that work in the week and just one at a weekend.

Rooms being prepared with name plaques for the evening visitors were as follows:-

S. – female room 3

B.C. male – room 5

Room 6 Z. A. This young man has a looked after status and where possible stays in the same room. Evident from previous visits.

AC who is placed in the emergency bed has room on the other wing which has an ensuite facility.

All the bedrooms were ready for the young people and all had their personal name plaque on their door.

Internet- LH like other council facilities has experienced some difficulties around internet provision. These are being resolved on an authority wide basis.

General Décor

Communal areas and bedrooms in LH are appropriately decorated with neutral colours appropriate to the type of care provided. In communal area the décor is made homely by the adding of pictures, wall decorations, cushions and child centred objects including a range of toys.

Biometrics

All in working order.

Garden area-

Plans are progressing to look at improving the enclosed secured garden space through grant funding. Tenders for this work are being submitted and it is hoped that this work can be completed for the summer. A summer garden party

is planned for the young people and their carer's and siblings when this is ready - . in line with a suggestion put forward by a parent at a previous coffee morning who felt it would be beneficial for her child who doesn't attend LH to visit to see where her sibling comes to with a view to reducing some of her anxiety,

Trees to the front of LH have been cut back as planned.

Inspection of daily log of events

These were not inspected on this visit.

Young Peoples files

These are kept in safe storage. Recent Work has been undertaken on the files to transfer all the file contents into a new file. This task has now been completed for all the young people.

The parents of J. who had attended the coffee morning gave permission for me to see his file. This file was noted to be up to date and last reviewed on 2.11.16, well order, risk assessments up to date. Consent for activities, photographs and the use of sun cream on file and daily logs completed for when J has been at LH, his last visit is recorded as 24th – 25th January – this is confirmed by his parents in discussion, February's visit cancelled due to his health. Last Cin N was 14.6.16. A meeting is scheduled in line with improving practice around regular review.

All the young people now have a new file- all red, clearly labelled with their details and a photograph with a new file lay out.

Accident Recording.

Accident recordings since February 27th 2017 inspection visit.

Number 68- 1.3.17 Young person OS fell off a scooter when out in the garden – accident report completed by RN signed off by DH- 4.3.17

Violence to Staff

There have been no further incidents of violence to staff recorded and filed since the last inspection the last one recorded is number 192.

Unit manager DH verbally reports that violence to staff report has been opened up and is awaiting his comments. A report has been opened up on 11.3.17 involving ZA- Some delay in completing the management quality and assurance role is noted

Significant Incident Recording

There have been no further records of any incident recorded since the last inspection visit on 27.2.17. The last one recorded is Number 154- Date 31.1.17 involving ZA.

Near Misses

4.3.17 involving ZA

5.3.17 involving ZA- Unit manager DH verbally reports that a violence to staff report has been opened up and is awaiting his comments.

Incidents of missing

There are no reported incidents of missing

Medication Administration

No medication errors

There have been no further medication errors or near misses since the last inspection. The flexibility of the two deputy managers in respect to providing additional oversight and support on a shift is clearly making a difference.

LH has continued to improve practice that hasn't been sufficiently robust in the past. Improving practice in this area is evidenced.

Inspection of record of complaints/disciplinary measures/use of restraint

Incidents of restraint

These are recorded in the Bound and Numbered book.

No further incidents of restraint. The last one is Number 77- This occurred as part of the significant incident involving ZA on 31.1.17 when the young person was self-harming and being violent towards staff.

Complaints

Since the last inspection there have been no reported new complaints- please note this question not specifically asked

Fire safety

Documents seen all seem to be in order and checks in place as required. DH reports a full fire safety inspection was undertaken by the fire service last month

The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's

report”) which sets out, in particular, the independent person’s opinion as to whether—

- (a) children are effectively safeguarded; and**
- (b) the conduct of the home promotes children’s well-being**

The young people at LH have complex needs and it takes skilled intervention to manage the challenges they can present. The actions of staff in safeguarding young people and themselves appear to be proportionate to the potential level of risk and incidents of restraint are very few. There is a growing concern about young person ZA and the management of risk to the young person and to staff. A multiagency meeting has taken place on 10.3.17 to consider this young man’s increasingly challenging behaviour and some new risky behaviour which he has started to present. As this young person grows and matures the level of risk increase proportionate to this. When there are significant concerns about a young person LH are seen to be proactive in driving forward plans around multiagency planning – in the case of ZA there is evidence of an increasing number of incidents at LH and also when this young person has been in the care of other professionals who support his care.

A member of staff from LH will attend all CIN meetings when this is possible—clearly evidencing a commitment to working as part of the multiagency team around the child. Young people receiving a service from the children’s disability team are now having 4 weekly multiagency meetings; these are usually at school but can take place at LH. A report is provided to these meetings every three months.

A theme of this visit has been the continuing evidence of management commitment to the growth and personal development of the staff team, PDR’s are reviewed regularly and expectations in place and opportunities provided to support engagement in training and personal development.

LH management are committed to supporting people post 18 where there is an assessed need

I am satisfied that the young people at LH are effectively safe guarded while having opportunity to engage in activities in and out of the unit. Staff seek to work in partnership with parents and carers to provide an increasing range of activities for young people to improve their stay at LH and that staffing levels are sufficient to ensure the safety of young people and staff. There is a degree of flexibility within the staffing team with a willingness to change shift patterns to ensure the safety of young people.

Children accessing LH I would conclude that on balance are being effectively safeguarded both within the building, garden out in the community. They are supported and encouraged to enjoy activities and to socialise and to have fun. Staff are working in partnership, together as a team and within safeguarding procedures to ensure that children are safe in the wider community.

I am satisfied that LH is providing a short break to young people in a children

friendly environment which safe and is welcoming and which staff seek to improve. It provides support to families to ensure ongoing care within a family setting. Staffing levels are sufficient to ensure the safety of young people and the full time care of A.C.

Scrutiny in respect to medication has been increased and levels of incidents are very much reduced. It is clear that the introduction of two people signing for, preparing medication and the checking has supported staff to be more robust in safeguarding in this area.

Staff clearly continue to look at ways to ensure the voice of the child is heard.

Conflicts of Interest For Independent Person

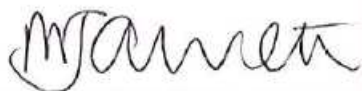
No conflict

Comments by Responsible Individual

Really positive report regarding progress at Liberty and particularly in relation to capturing Voice of the Child. Some outstanding actions to work on are:

1. D.H. to email Social Work team Managers to ensure that Personal Boxes are used and that this is a standard discussion as part of Short Breaks planning
2. Facebook issue to be resolved within the next month as this has been an outstanding action over successive months and needs to be shut down or progressed.
3. D.H. to make Liberty House improvement plan available to Reg. 44 visitor at her next visit.
4. Discussion about ways to involve families as coffee morning had poor attendance- consideration to open afternoon or similar during easter Holidays?

Signature:



Date: 20/3/17

Signed

Kay Garvey

Date 17.3.17

Summary Sheet

Council Report

Title: The Mentoring Scheme for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

("The Fairy Godparent Scheme" as set out in the LAC and Care Leaver's Strategy 2017-20)

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan? No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report: Ian Thomas, Strategic Director CYPS

Report Author(s): Ian Walker, Head of Service, Looked After Children

Ward(s) Affected: All

Summary

Despite current good performance in respect of Looked After young people being in Education, Training or Employment there remains a significant number who, for a variety of reasons, remain Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or who are in a work or training placement that may not be their preferred option or the limit of their aspirations.

As result of this supporting more of our young people into EET is an objective set down in the LAC and Care Leavers Strategy 2017-20.

By offering them the support of a Mentor who will bring with them a high degree of commitment and resilience as well as expertise, experience and local connections, it is proposed that more of these young people will be supported and encouraged to access the EET environment and/or move to a work/training placement more suited to their skills and ambitions.

Recommendations

It is proposed that Rotherham MBC introduce a mentoring programme and offer a mentor for all looked after young people over the age of 16 and care leavers up to the age of 21 who express an interest. The young people who will be offered a mentor will be:-

- Those who are currently NEET and available for work.
- Those members of the Year 11 cohort who don't plan to be access Further Education after July 2017 and would benefit from the support and advice of a mentor to guide them through the transition to the world of training, apprenticeships and employment.
- Young people who may be in EET but who would benefit from some additional support to attain their career ambitions.

It is further proposed that a pool of mentors is recruited from the senior management level (Director/Assistant Director) and elected members across RMBC and that these mentors will receive formal induction and ongoing support in the role.

List of Appendices Included: The Mentor Handbook

Background Papers: None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel: No

Council Approval Required: Yes given we are looking to the whole of the senior management team across the Council and Elected members to become part of the Mentoring programme.

Exempt from the Press and Public: No

Title: The Mentoring Scheme for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

1. Recommendations

- 1.1** It is proposed that Rotherham MBC introduce a mentoring programme and offer a mentor for all looked after young people over the age of 16 and care leavers up to the age of 21 who express an interest. The young people who will be offered a mentor will be those who are currently NEET and available for work and those members of the Year 11 cohort who don't plan to be access Further Education after July 2017 and would benefit from the support and advice of a mentor to guide them through the transition to the world of training, apprenticeships and employment. In addition it will be offered to those young people who are in EET but who would benefit from some additional support to attain their career ambitions.
- 1.2** It is further proposed that a pool of mentors are recruited from the senior management level (Director and Assistant Director level) and elected members across RMBC and that these mentors will receive formal induction and ongoing support in the role.

2. Background

- 2.1** The current performance in respect of Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is comparatively positive with approximately 67% of the cohort being EET as compared to the national average of 48%. Taking into account those young people who are not available for work due to physical or mental health issues, pregnancy or parenting responsibilities or being in custody there remains a cohort of c. 34-40 young people who remain NEET and who are at risk of being excluded from the working environment for much of their adult lives. In addition there are currently 20 Year 11 young people who leave school in the summer and who appear to have no confirmed EET plan in place. There is another cohort of young people who are in EET but who would benefit from some additional support to enable them to achieve their career ambitions.
- 2.2** These young people will already have an allocated social worker in the LAC Teams and/or a Personal Adviser (P.A.) allocated from the Leaving Care Team. However, the relationship with these professionals can be quite different to that of a mentor as social workers especially may have had to re-enforce boundaries and levels of expected behaviours with the young person. There may also be some issues with previous placement moves and a poor relationship with the young person's birth family. The mentor will not have any of these legacy issues to consider and therefore will be able to focus on the pathway to employment process in a very much more unconditionally supportive manner. Further to this Mentors will be recruited with a range of experience and expertise in order to give young people the most rounded levels of support and guidance.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1** A Mentor can be defined as being, “A more experienced individual willing to share knowledge with someone less experienced in a relationship of mutual trust.” (Clutterbuck).
- 3.2** A Mentor is an expert in a particular field with a wider range and wealth of experience. They will share this experience and give advice and guidance as part of a development path which will open doors and widen the Mentee’s networking systems – in this case in respect of supporting progress to EET opportunities. Ordinarily this will be a longer-term relationship that will see the Mentee through many stages in their ‘journey’ as opposed to being of a time bound defined duration focussing on short-term needs. There will be three main people involved in the process; the young person (Mentee), the Mentor and the Mentee’s key adult (social worker or personal adviser).
- 3.3** The benefits to the Mentee will include:
- An increased confidence and self-awareness, which will help them to build their skills, knowledge and outcomes.
 - Increased knowledge, technical skills and/or improving aspects of behaviour that could help them with their training and future work.
 - Better management of their time and actions to help achieve their goals.
 - Networking opportunities and the chance to utilise the connections and influence of the Mentor to receive formal introductions to training or employment prospects.
 - Specific advice and guidance and ‘tuition’ in respect of certain aspects of the employment process such as the writing of a C.V., interview techniques and managing the working environment.
- 3.4** The benefits to the mentor include:
- The chance to improve their own personal learning.
 - The chance to practice and develop interpersonal skills which can lead to enhancing leadership skills.
 - The enjoyment and satisfaction of sharing their knowledge, skills and expertise and helping someone to make progress in their lives.
 - Organisational learning.
 - Expanding their horizons and stepping out of their ‘comfort zone’.
- 3.5** The aim will be to recruit and induct a pool of Mentors from across the Council and at the same time identify a number of Mentees who would benefit from the scheme and encourage them to participate. As part of the induction programme the Mentees and the Mentors will be asked to provide some information about their hobbies, interests and experiences so that they can be best matched. A further matching consideration may be between the Mentor’s area of work and the expressed employment interests of the Mentee although this is not absolutely essential as it is more the connections and support provided that would be of more value to the young person. This matching process will be modelled on the good

practice currently being implemented in respect of the Independent Visitor programme.

3.6 A small panel of managers within the LAC Service and Leaving Care Service will then review the respective pen pictures to ensure, as far as possible, that a good match is made. Once matching has taken place information will be provided to both parties and the Mentor will then contact the Mentee to arrange the first meeting. Should the match be deemed to be inappropriate or unworkable by either party then it can be ended but only following a discussion with the social worker or PA and their line manager. It will be emphasised to the prospective Mentors in the induction programme that many of these young people will have already experienced a series of rejections and losses throughout their childhood and time in care and so if they cannot give this process their absolute commitment then this role may not be right for them at this time. If the Mentee/Mentor relationship does break down then the matching process can be revisited and the young person could be matched with a different mentor.

3.7 The mentoring process will comprise of regular meetings agreed by the Mentee and the Mentor which will probably last approximately an hour and take place on approximately a 3-4 weekly basis. For safeguarding reasons these meeting would be best to take place in a public space such as the Riverside café or similar venues. During the first meeting, a joint agreement will be made about what the relationship will involve. This will include the following:

- What each party hopes to achieve from the meetings i.e. the expected outcomes
- How often they will meet, the length of time and where they will meet
- A review date to check progress and the anticipated end date.

The length of the mentoring relationship will vary for each person and will depend on how long it may take to achieve the agreed objectives but mentoring relationships usually last between 6 and 9 months. Both parties will be expected to maintain confidentiality of discussions during the mentoring relationship unless the young person discloses information of a safeguarding nature. The Mentor will be expected to complete a recording form with the Mentee, during, and at the end of the programme to check agreed outcomes have been achieved. There will also be a formal review of the scheme at 3 and 6 months after the initial round of matching has taken place which will afford the young people the opportunity to express how useful the mentoring programme has been and if it could be improved to meet the needs of everyone taking part in the future. If the programme is deemed to be a success then it is planned that it will take place on an annual cycle between June and the following Spring.

3.8 It may be that there is a mis-match between the numbers of Mentors and Mentees in which case a stand-by list will be maintained by the Leaving Care Team until a suitable match is identified.

3.9 In more specific terms the role of the Mentor will be to:-

- To act as a sounding board by giving the young person a chance to develop new ideas and approaches in a safe environment.
- To support the development of self-confidence.
- To explore reality, rather than offer advice
- To explore options, rather than offer solutions.
- To help the young person structure ideas on how to define, analyse and tackle issues and opportunities.
- Challenge assumptions and offer a wider perspective on issues.
- Signpost and develop connections to gain knowledge and new experiences.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1 This proposal arises from a commitment made in the LAC and Care Leavers Strategy 2017-20 that was endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Panel on the 28th February 2017. As a result there are no alternative options being considered.

5. Consultation

5.1 The Care Leavers Council have been consulted regarding this proposal and although it was generally thought to be a good idea the numbers of young people who would request a mentor were felt to be relatively small in the first instance.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

6.1 It is planned that Mentors will be identified and inducted into the role and be ready to offer support to young people by July 2017. Ian Walker, Head of Service, will be the accountable person for this scheme.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

7.1 There are no significant financial implications arising from this report. The only cost implication will be where mentors have to undergo a full Advanced Disclosure Check prior to working with the young person in order to mitigate safeguarding risk. These costs will be contained within existing budget provision.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this proposal other than the need for all mentors to have an Advanced Disclosure Check in place. Local Authorities have broad duties to encourage, enable and assist young people in their area to participate in education or training and the

recommendations in this report will contribute to the Council complying with those duties.

9. Human Resources Implications

- 9.1** Mentors may have to negotiate with their line manager to be given time from their mainstream duties to undertake the mentoring role within working hours in order to facilitate contact with the mentee. I would recommend that mentors elicit the support of their line manager before signing up to the programme so as to best ensure that they can sustain the necessary commitment to the role and to the young person.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1** This Scheme will be designed to support more young people into work and training opportunities and thus improve their outcomes and their prospects as adults.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1** By providing LAC and Care leavers with an additional level of support it is intended that their Human Rights will be protected and the disadvantage they experience as children in care will be reduced.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1** The implication for Other Directorates and Elected Members is that those who are matched as Mentors will be supported and encouraged to provide the mentoring role at times and venues that are most convenient to the young person. As such it may require Mentors to be allowed some small amounts of time out from their substantive roles.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1** There is a risk that few/no young people will take up this offer but this will be mitigated by the Leaving Care Team working pro-actively to engage young people in this process.
- 13.2** There is also a small safeguarding risk so all mentors will have to undergo a full Advanced Disclosure Check prior to working with the young person.

14. Accountable Officer(s) Ian Walker, Head of Service

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services: - Mick Wildman

Director of Legal Services: - Neil Concannon

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):- N/a

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Summary Sheet

Council Report

Title: Staying Put Report

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan? Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report: Ian Thomas

Report Author(s) Ian Walker, Head of Service, LAC and Leaving Care

Ward(s) Affected: All

Summary: Changes in legislation and guidance for children in care and care leavers requires an updated Staying Put policy. This policy will underpin our efforts to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to remain living with their foster carer(s) after they leave care at age 18. This policy ensures that the offer to young people and their carers is fairly applied and that planning for Staying Put begins as soon as the pathway planning process begins.

Recommendations: DLT is requested to consider the contents of this report and approve its implementation as policy.

List of Appendices Included: Living Together Agreement; Information for young people and carers; projected costs; process document.

Background Papers: None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel:
None

Council Approval Required: Yes

Exempt from the Press and Public: No

Title (Main Report): Staying Put Policy

1. Recommendations

1.1 That this proposed policy is approved and implemented immediately.

2. Background

2.1 At present the average age in the UK for people to move out of their parent's home is 25 and yet young people in care have been expected to make a successful transition some 7 years before this and without the emergency support of their parents.

2.2 The Care Matters White Paper contained a significant focus on improving the support for children preparing for adulthood including a pilot programme enabling young people to remain with their foster carers beyond the age of eighteen. This was introduced as formal guidance in May 2013 in order to emphasise a more graduated approach to planning transition to adulthood. The intention of the initiative was to ensure young people could remain with their former foster carers until they were prepared for adulthood, could experience a transition akin to their peers, avoid social exclusion and be more likely to avert a subsequent housing and tenancy breakdown. Initially, the duty was restricted to young people already in education, training and employment or to those who were assessed as vulnerable or disabled. Revisions to the law have removed any qualifying criteria beyond the requirement that a young person will have lived with a foster carer as a looked after child immediately before reaching 18 and was an "eligible child" entitled to leaving care services under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. Our policy has recognised these changes and in addition provides a fair and equal level of funding to carers regardless of their status as either in-house or independent. The term Staying Put is therefore used to define the following arrangements where:

- A young person who was looked after immediately prior to their eighteenth birthday (as an eligible child) continues to reside with their former foster carer/s;
- The carer/s were acting as foster carers to the child immediately prior to the young person's eighteenth birthday (that is, the carers were approved as foster carers in accordance with the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011 and the child had been placed with them by the local authority, or via an Independent Fostering Agency);
- A young person is deemed an eligible child, within the meaning of paragraph 19B(2) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989, immediately before he/she reached eighteen;
- The "Staying Put" arrangement is set out in the child/young person's Pathway Plan;

- A proportion of the allowance paid to the “Staying Put” carer/s is paid by the Local Authority Children’s Services under section 23C of the Children Act 1989;

2.3 The “Staying Put” arrangement extends until:

- The young person first leaves the “Staying Put” arrangement; or
- The young person reaches their twenty-first birthday, if continuously, and still living in the arrangement; or

2.4 The young person completes the agreed programme of education or training being undertaken on their twenty-first birthday, if continuously living in the arrangement since their eighteenth birthday. The DfE Staying Put arrangements can therefore cover all young people who were previously eligible children living in foster care and who were looked after immediately prior to their eighteenth birthday, as long as the arrangement meets the above criteria, regardless of whether the young person is undertaking full or part-time education, training or employment or none of these activities.

3. Key Issues

3.1 At present Rotherham is supporting 19 Staying Put arrangements. This amounts to approximately 15% of the total current care leaver cohort aged 18+. It has been generally recognised that the longer a young person remains in a foster placement and can defer their move to independent/semi-independent living then the more successful that transition to adulthood is likely to be. The success of these elongated transitions is enhanced by the fact that by this stage the carers have such an investment in the young person that they will continue to be a major source of support well into adulthood. We would therefore like to increase the number of Staying Put arrangements by up to 29 by the end of the year 2017/18.

3.2 In addition to this a clear and appropriate route to a Staying Put placement will be one of the key lines of enquiry in the next Ofsted inspection of the Leaving Care Service. It is therefore in the best interests of both the organisation and the young people themselves to develop our Staying Put offer.

3.3 One of the barriers to increasing the number of young people Staying Put has been a lack of clarity regarding the process and the levels of general and financial support a carer can expect to receive via this arrangement. This can cause significant challenges especially in the discussions with Independent Fostering Agency placements where carers frequently expect to receive the same level of financial support they had received via their fostering agency. This policy should provide the requisite clarity and encourage more young people and carers to access the Staying Put arrangements. Where carers are not in a position to offer a Staying Put arrangement due to the levels of financial or other support they will receive, this policy will ensure that an alternative Pathway Plan is identified at an early point.

3.4 The policy sets a rate of financial support to former foster carers based on the reward element of a RMBC foster carer's allowances. This rate should be applied equally to former carers from both RMBC and the independent sector.

3.2 The policy requires planning for Staying Put to start as soon as the pathway planning process begins at age 16.

3.3 The policy provides clearer guidance to carers, young people, social workers, personal advisers and independent reviewing officers.

3.4 The policy ensures that independent fostering agencies accept RMBC terms at the point of accepting a Rotherham child.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1 No options were considered. The policy complies with government policy and guidance.

5. Consultation

5.1 The policy has been circulated to independent fostering agencies. A consultation event took place in January 2017 and agreed amendments have been included in the final draft.

5.2 Care Leavers have been consulted in the formulation of this policy and, subject to approval, a young person's guide will be provided to ensure they fully understand their entitlements and responsibilities arising from it.

5.3 The commissioning team was consulted and agreement for this policy achieved

5.4 RMBC fostering services were consulted and a consultation event took place in January with foster carers after the draft policy was circulated to all carers. Agreed amendments have been included in the final draft.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

6.1 Once approved by the Corporate Parenting Board it is recommended that the policy be implemented with immediate effect.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

7.1 A detailed financial projection of costs is attached.

7.2 The cost of each Staying Put arrangement is based on the same amount previously paid to RMBC carers as foster carers minus the clothing and pocket money allowance which the carers provided to the child. The

clothing and pocket money allowance being replaced by the young person's earnings or benefit entitlement from age eighteen. The remainder of the allowance paid to carers being made up of a payment entirely from a) Children's Services or a combination of funding from 1) Children's Services, 2) a contribution from the young person for rent, service charges (utilities) and food, some of which may come from Housing Benefit.

7.3 There has been significant variance in the amounts paid to former foster carers (usually those from the independent sector) due to lack of clarity in the allowances available and an expectation that similar payments to those appropriate for children in foster care will continue. This policy confines any negotiation to a limited number of decision makers to ensure that decisions to increase the accepted standard rate are consistently applied. The forecast predicts a reduction in the average cost of future arrangements.

7.4 In keeping with government policy and guidance and the benefits of Staying Put for young people, we will be promoting this policy at an earlier stage in an attempt to encourage more young people and their carers to enter into Staying Put arrangements. The projected increased take-up will increase the overall cost for Staying Put in the 2017/18 financial year compared with previous years. However, it is a significantly more cost-effective to prepare young people for independent adult life in Staying Put arrangements than in semi-independent accommodation in the private sector. The Staying Put budget will be realigned within the existing Leaving Care Allowances budget with the additional budget funded from income relating to the government's Staying Put grant.

7.5 Independent Fostering Agencies will be made aware of and will accept the terms within at the point that a foster placement is commissioned.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 Section 23CZA of the Children Act 1989 places a specific duty on local authorities to advise, assist and support (which includes financial support) both the young person and their former foster carers when they wish to stay living together after the young person reaches their 18th birthday. Statutory guidance clarifies that under this duty the level of financial support payable will depend upon individual needs and circumstances, and local authorities should pay former foster carers an allowance that will cover all reasonable costs of supporting the care leaver to remain living with them. This Policy sets out how the Council will comply with the duty.

9. Human Resources Implications

9.1 None

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 This policy provides a clearer framework for the implementation of Staying Put arrangements and promotes earlier planning to offer stability during and after foster care.
- 10.2 This policy should support more looked after young people to remain in their foster placement into their adulthood and therefore make a more successful transition to independence.
- 10.3 The policy will increase the average age that young people leave home, closing the gap between care leavers and young people from the wider community
- 10.4 Research informs us that a young person in a stable home environment is more likely to achieve well in employment, education and training. An increase in the number of Staying Put arrangements will reduce the number of young people not in employment, training and education.

11 Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 The policy provides a fair and equal level of funding to carers regardless of their status as either in-house or independent.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1 Independent fostering agencies have been consulted and accept this policy.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 It is anticipated that the implementation of this policy will increase the numbers of care leavers who will remain in Staying Put arrangements. This will bring some increased financial pressure to the Leaving Care Service. However, this is likely to be offset by the reduced costs in respect of supported tenancies some of which can be high cost placements for the more vulnerable care leavers.
- 13.2 Some foster carers may not be prepared to accept the financial terms of the arrangement. Early planning, a more detailed assessment of the young person's needs and consistent decision making will help to prevent an arrangement from going forward. For young people with enduring complex needs, early referral to the Transitions Team will facilitate an assessment under the Care Act and potentially the conversion of a foster placement to Shared Lives rather than Staying Put where support to the carer and young person is enhanced and the financial support increased.

14. Accountable Officer(s): Ian Walker, Head of Service for LAC and Care Leavers

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- Mark Chambers

Director of Legal Services:- Neil Concannon

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):- N/A

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Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Staying Put Policy

| | |
|--|---|
| Service area | Looked After Children's Services |
| Date effective from | TBC |
| Responsible officer(s) | Ian Walker, Head of Service, LAC and Care Leavers |
| Date of review(s) | TBC |
| Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory (all named staff must adhere to guidance) <input type="checkbox"/> Optional (procedures and practice can vary between teams) | Mandatory |
| Target audience | All Children's Social Care staff Foster carers |
| Date of DLT decision | TBC |

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 - 5. Implications for Foster carers**
 - 6. Preparation for a Staying Put Arrangement**
 - 7. Extending Placements**
 - 8. Professional Roles**
 - 9. Financial Issues**
 - 10. Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)**
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1. Legal Framework

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3 (Revised Jan 2015): Planning transition to adulthood for care leavers.
- Staying Put: Arrangements for care leavers aged 18 and above to stay on with their former foster carers which is joint guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). This provides more detail relating to many of the financial aspects of Staying Put arrangements.
- Staying Put – Good practice guide (the Children's Partnership, 2014)

2. What is a Staying Put Arrangement?

2.1 The Care Matters White Paper contained a significant focus on improving the support for children preparing for adulthood including a pilot programme enabling young people to remain with their foster carers beyond the age of eighteen. This was introduced as formal guidance in May 2013 in order to emphasise a more graduated approach to planning transition to adulthood. The intention of the initiative was to ensure young people could remain with their former foster carers until they were prepared for adulthood, could experience a transition akin to their peers, avoid social exclusion and be more likely to avert a subsequent housing and tenancy breakdown. Initially, the duty was restricted to young people already in education, training and employment or to those who were assessed as vulnerable or disabled. Revisions to the law have removed any qualifying criteria beyond the requirement that a young person will have lived with a foster carer as a looked after child immediately before reaching 18 and was an "eligible child" entitled to leaving care services under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. Our policy has recognised these changes and in addition provides a fair and equal level of funding to carers regardless of their status as either in-house or independent.

2.2 Staying Put arrangements should replicate as far as possible normal family life. Foster carers are required to care for any child placed with them as if they were a member of their family, and this expectation should carry through into Staying Put arrangements. Families all have different rules, expectations and ways of doing things, and Staying Put arrangements should take account of this and be sufficiently flexible to be tailored to individual circumstances and needs.

2.3 An eligible child is someone who:

- is looked after by a local authority;
- is aged 16 or 17, and;
- has been looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14

It is a term meaning that they are eligible for support as a care leaver, and does not refer specifically to Staying Put support.

2.4 Once they become 18 an eligible child is known in law as a 'former relevant child'. Whenever a young person continues to live with their former foster carer in these circumstances, it is referred to as a Staying Put arrangement. Staying Put arrangements

continue until the young person becomes 21, or stops living in the household before then, or when the young person completes the agreed programme of education or training being undertaken on their twenty-first birthday, if continuously living in the arrangement since their eighteenth birthday.

2.5 Local authorities have a duty to monitor and support Staying Put arrangements, and these are reflected throughout this policy.

2.6 Local authorities have significant statutory obligations to support care leavers whether or not they participate in Staying Put, and these are explained in the Children Act 1989 statutory guidance already referred to. A former relevant child who is pursuing an agreed course of further education or training may be entitled to support until the age of 25.

2.7 It is important to understand that government departments have differing approaches to defining Staying Put within the statutory framework applicable to their area of responsibility. The definition given above comes from the Children Act 1989 and is the one which gives local authorities a duty to monitor and support, as explained in this policy.

3. Guiding Principles

3.1 Staying Put arrangements will be most effective if they are underpinned by clear principles. This practice guidance is based on the principles listed below, but there may also be others which are important to local services.

3.2 Best interests

The best interests of the young person should be at the heart of decision making about Staying Put, enabling them to have the best possible opportunities to lead successful lives. Research informs us that a young person in a stable home environment is more likely to achieve well in employment, education and training. An increase in the number of Staying Put arrangements will reduce the number of young people not in employment, training and education and closes the gap between our young people and those in the wider community who tend to leave home when it is right for them to do so, rather than at a set age.

3.3 Support

Support to both carers and young people should be geared to their specific circumstances and needs. Carers should be enabled to develop the skills required to best help the young person to do well in life and keep safe from harm. Ideally, no young person should lose out due to lack of financial support to themselves or their carer so every effort will be made to find solutions to financial barriers.

3.4 Clear information

Foster carers and young people should be provided with clear information about the support available from local authorities and fostering services to help them to make choices about whether or not to enter into Staying Put arrangements. This will always include information about financial arrangements and implications for benefits and tax.

3.5 Early planning

Early planning for Staying Put is crucial and arrangements should be considered as part of the care and permanence planning process, from the time that a long term placement is

planned or any new placement is made of a young person aged 16+. Decisions in principle about whether or not Staying Put is an option should be taken as early as possible in the placement, and written into the young person's pathway plan.

If a foster placement is considered permanent or long term, carers and young people should be informed that Staying Put is an option at the time that a decision regarding permanence is made. There is an expectation that

Discussion regarding the foster placement changing to a Staying Put arrangement when the young person reaches the age of 18 years should be included at all statutory review meetings for young people aged 15 and above. This will ensure that arrangements are in place well before the young person's 18th birthday. This will ensure a smooth transition for the young person and mirror 'normal family life' as far as this is possible.

3.6 Equality of opportunity

In order to maximise the opportunity for young people to participate in Staying Put, fostering services – both local authority and independent agencies - should do everything possible to ensure that all foster carers have an equal opportunity to become Staying Put carers. This includes family and friends foster carers and foster carers approved by independent fostering providers. A young person's immigration or asylum status does not affect their entitlement to enter into a Staying Put arrangement but may affect the duration. A Staying Put arrangement should be the norm, not the exception, and no young person should miss the opportunity to participate in Staying Put because the carer cannot afford to do so.

3.7 Flexibility

Arrangements should be sufficiently flexible to enable support to be provided over and above the minimum legal duty, recognising that the relationship between carer and young person will not always end at age 21 or when the Staying Put arrangement ceases.

4. Criteria for Staying Put arrangements

4.1 There are no eligibility criteria for entering into a Staying Put arrangement, other than the young person being an 'eligible child' for care leaver support. If on the day before their 18th birthday the young person was a looked after child placed with a foster carer, and had been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, then by continuing to live with their former foster carer this constitutes a Staying Put arrangement. This applies whether the foster placement was long term or short term, and includes placements made at any time up to the young person's 18th birthday.

4.2 We have a general duty to do all we can to support care leavers into further and higher education, training or employment, but these are not preconditions for starting or maintaining a Staying Put arrangement. The legislation does not permit local authorities to introduce their own eligibility rules.

4.3 There is no reason to put foster carers through any sort of assessment or approval process to become Staying Put carers because the arrangements are made between adults and are not regulated.

4.4 Arrangements for disabled young people

Young people who have an enduring disability which is likely to have an impact on their ability to live independently, should be referred to RMBC Transitions team after age 14. If following assessment the disability meets the Fair Access to Care criteria, the former foster placement should convert to an Adult Services placement known as Shared Lives once the young person becomes 18, at which point case and financial responsibility transfers to Adult Services. A Shared Lives assessment will need to take place through Adult Services as the placement will be regulated.

5. Implications for Foster carers

5.1 RMBC and independent fostering services need to ensure that their carers are given clear information about how they can expect to be supported if they enter into a Staying Put arrangement, and how this may impact on their continued fostering.

5.2 Becoming Staying Put carers only

When foster carers plan to become Staying Put carers they will need to discuss with the fostering service whether or not they wish to remain approved as foster carers, either to continue with an existing placement or to take new placements. If they decide that they no longer wish to foster they should submit their resignation in writing to the fostering service, in which case their approval automatically ends 28 days after this is received. This is an opportunity for the fostering service to acknowledge and celebrate their contribution as foster carers. They will continue to support them as Staying Put carers.

5.3 Becoming Staying Put carers in addition to fostering

When foster carers wish to continue as both approved foster carers and Staying Put carers, the impact of the new arrangements will need to be considered. The young person who is Staying Put will no longer be considered as a foster placement once they become an adult, so the foster carer will be able to take another placement within any terms of their approval. This may not always be possible or appropriate due to lack of accommodation, the demands of the Staying Put arrangement, or other factors.

5.3.1 The change in the foster carer's circumstances, including the looked after child becoming an adult member of the household, means that a review of the foster carer's approval should be undertaken before a Staying Put arrangement begins. This will provide the opportunity to discuss the impact of the Staying Put arrangement on the role of the foster carer and to think carefully through all the implications of the change in the legal status of the relationship with the young person. The need for any further training or additional support needs should also be discussed. The review should be carefully planned at a stage which enables discussion of all the relevant matters and also allows time for the fostering service's decision maker to consider its recommendations, including any changes to terms of approval.

5.3.2 Sometimes Staying Put carers are not able to take another foster placement whilst the young person remains living with them, but wish to remain approved as foster carers in order to resume fostering in the future. If the fostering service agrees that it is appropriate to continue approval then it must continue to meet the statutory requirements regardless of the

fact that no child is placed. This includes regular visits by the supervising social worker (including an annual unannounced visit); reviews of approval; provision of training, advice, information and support; and support for continuing professional development.

5.4 DBS checks on young people

5.4.1 Since the young person who is Staying Put becomes an adult member of the foster carer's household, to comply with fostering regulations an enhanced disclosure must be obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). This shouldn't reveal anything of surprise to the fostering service or the carer, but may need handling sensitively, particularly with the young person themselves. It is appropriate to obtain the enhanced disclosure before the young person becomes 18, so that it may be considered at the review of the foster carer's approval before the Staying Put arrangement begins.

5.4.2 There is no requirement to seek further DBS disclosures, however fostering services have a policy of updating checks at regular intervals through the DBS update service. If this is the case the young person will need to agree to this if their Staying Put carer remains a foster carer. The foster carer will also be bound by their foster care agreement to notify the fostering service of any circumstances which might make their household unsuitable to foster and this might include criminal offences committed by the young person who is Staying Put.

5.4.3 Known issues which may impact on the continued approval of the foster carer should be included in early discussions about Staying Put, as these will be crucial to the ability of the foster carer and the fostering service to make an informed decision.

6. Preparation for a Staying Put Arrangement

6.1 To ensure sufficient time is available to make the necessary planning arrangements for extending a placement beyond a young person's 18th birthday, a professionals meeting should take place three months before a young person's 16th birthday or 3 months after a young person becomes Looked After if this is after they are 16. The Staying Put meeting and needs assessment should include the foster carer/s, the carer's supervising social worker, allocated social worker and leaving care social worker/personal adviser and should establish the viability, appropriateness and likelihood of a Staying Put arrangement occurring. The meeting should identify all key tasks and roles and responsibilities related to extending the former fostering arrangement. The meeting should explore the impact on the foster carers' financial circumstances should the placement continue after the young person's 18th birthday.

6.1.2 The Staying Put professionals meeting should be repeated when the young person reaches the age of 17 and should ensure any final arrangements and requirements are in place by the young person's 18th birthday. A review meeting should be held 3 months before a young person reaches the age of 18 years to ensure that all requirements for the Staying Put arrangement are in place.

6.1.3 All meetings should make reference to the criteria and financial framework for extending the Staying Put arrangement and the National Insurance, Income Tax and Welfare Benefits issues for the foster carer/s and welfare benefit issues for the young person. The outcome of these meetings should be discussed at the subsequent statutory reviews.

6.2 Foster carer

6.2.1 A meeting to discuss the option of Staying Put should be arranged with the foster carer when their foster child has reached their 16th birthday. At this meeting the process and the funding should be explained to the foster carer. The expectation is that young people can remain with the foster carer up to their 21st birthday and that the foster carer is preparing the young person fully for independence and that they are supporting the young person in employment, education or training. This will be included in the care/pathway plan.

6.2.2 The carer should be fully informed of the implications of agreeing to a Staying Put arrangement and identify the differences between caring for a child and supporting an adult. Although there is an expectation of a seamless transition and the maintenance of existing rules and household/family norms carers should be encouraged to consider how they will react to impending adulthood and the young person's expectation of greater independence. For example, a young person may enter into contracts in their own right which in the case of default, could affect a carer's credit rating.

6.2.3 If the foster carer does not wish to sign up to the Staying Put arrangement then the Fostering Social worker will inform the young person's Social worker or Personal Adviser. A needs-led assessment will be carried out and formulated into a plan which will be drawn up in order to prepare the young person to acquire their independent living skills and included in the Pathway Plan. The move on options would be discussed and included in the Pathway Plan.

6.2.4 The reasons describing why a foster carer has chosen not to sign up to a Staying Put arrangement need to be clearly recorded and provided for the responsible service manager. This will allow for analysis and consideration of any changes that need to be made to support foster carers in feeling better able to move to a Staying Put arrangement for the young people in their care.

6.3 Young Person

6.3.1 A meeting to discuss the option of Staying Put should be arranged with the young person when they reach their 15th birthday by their social worker or personal adviser, or if supported by the disability team the transitions worker. At this meeting the changes and process should be explained to them. The expectation is that young people can remain with the foster carer up to their 21st birthday. Following this meeting, young people need to be given the opportunity to think about the options that may be available for them and to consult with other professionals or family members should they wish to do so. They should be provided with written information and where possible linked with other young people who have benefitted from a Staying Put arrangement who will be able to discuss on more of a peer level the pros and cons of the arrangement from the young person's perspective.

6.3.2 If the young person does/does not wish to sign up to the Staying Put arrangement then the young person's social worker, personal adviser or transitions worker will inform the foster carer if they were not part of that joint discussion

6.3.3 A needs assessment will be carried out and formulated into a plan which will be drawn up, in order to prepare the young person to acquire their independent living skills, and included in the young person's Pathway Plan.

6.3.4 Young people who say they do not want to remain in a Staying Put arrangement should have the opportunity to revisit this decision at any time, and as many times as they need to, before their 18th birthday in discussion with the foster carer. Even where a young person may initially say they do not want to remain in a Staying Put arrangement, discussions need to be had with the young person's carers to ensure that if the young person changes their mind, arrangements are already in hand to ensure the smoothest transition possible for when the young person reaches the age of 18 years.

7. Extending Placements

7.1 There are circumstances where placements can be extended beyond a young person's 18th birthday without becoming Staying Put arrangements. It may be that alternative accommodation is not available as planned, requiring a brief extension. The financial terms and conditions of the extension will remain unchanged. Extensions should only be approved on a month by month basis. Payments to the young person and the carer/fostering agency should be maintained at the existing rates. A written agreement to this effect should be on file and approved by the service manager.

7.2 If a young person will be completing a course of education at the end of the academic year following their 18th birthday and regardless of whether a decision has been made that a Staying Put arrangement will be in place thereafter, consideration can be given to extending the current arrangement until 1st September. Payments to the young person and the carer/fostering agency should be maintained at the existing rates. A written agreement to this effect should be on file and approved by the service manager by the time of the 1st review following a young person's 17th birthday.

8. Professional Roles

8.1 All Staying Put arrangements will be supported by a personal advisor, social worker and the Staying Put/Supported Lodgings Coordinator. In situations when the household continues to foster, a supervising social worker will remain allocated and should support the carer in their combined role as Staying Put carer and foster carer.

8.2 Fostering Supervising Social Worker

8.2.1 The fostering social worker will support the foster carer throughout the Staying Put process. Twelve months before the young person reaches their 18th birthday they will undertake a review of the foster carer and make any recommendations and present them to the fostering panel.

8.2.2 The fostering supervising social worker will provide support through regular supervision and identify any additional training that may be required in order that the carer has the skills to support the young person.

8.3 Young Person's Social worker, Personal Adviser or Transitions Worker

8.3.1 The social worker, personal advisor or transitions worker will support the young person throughout the Staying Put process in keeping with leaving care legislation and guidance. They will assist the young person in applying for benefits or any other finance for which the young person is entitled to claim.

8.4 Staying Put/Supported Lodgings Coordinator

8.4.1 The Staying Put/Supported Lodgings Coordinator will be the first point of contact when considering Staying Put arrangements. They will provide:

- Information to young people and foster carers about how Staying put works in Rotherham
- The detail regarding payments to former foster carers and the young person's contribution
- Advice, support and information. This may include advice about money, jobs, benefits, and employment, training and housing options
- Completing Housing Benefit applications
- The link between Children and young People's Services and other agencies, such as Housing Benefit departments and Independent Fostering Agencies
- To lead on the development of the Staying Put arrangements, including consultation with interested parties
- Data regarding the use of Staying Put arrangements

8.5 The Commissioning Team

The Commissioning Team will ensure that a copy of this policy is made available to independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) at the time a foster placement is commissioned. There should be an explicit expectation that an IFA accepts the terms of this policy. The commissioning team should also ensure that payments to a Staying Put carer are made.

9. Financial Issues

9.1 Funding

9.1.2 The funding of the Staying Put arrangement is derived from a number of sources: housing benefit; the young person's personal contribution; personalised budget and the local authority looked after budget.

9.1.3 Where applicable the young person will apply for the maximum housing benefit for which they are entitled.

9.1.4 The young person is expected to make a financial contribution from their personal benefit allowance towards the cost of food and utilities. This is currently set at a maximum of £20.00 per week; however the actual amount will be agreed between young person and the provider in advance of the Staying Put arrangement starting, incorporated into the Living Together Agreement and reviewed either when circumstances change or at the pathway plan review.

9.1.5 Where a young person is working, they will be expected to contribute towards their upkeep and in addition to the initial £20.00, the young person should be contributing an agreed % of their net earnings towards the household costs (this needs to be agreed between the carer and young person – with the support of the personal adviser and the Staying Put/Supported Lodgings Coordinator). These amounts should be reviewed at least annually and earlier if there are significant changes and should not be at a level that

prevents the young person from saving. This is to be paid by the young person directly to the carer. This will be laid out in the Living Together Agreement.

9.1.6 The Staying Put payment to the foster carer from RMBC's children's services is set at £189 per week. These payments will be reviewed annually. If a carer will not accept this level of funding, the matter is to be referred to the Head of Service for looked after children and care leavers.

9.1.7 The Staying Put payment covers all: accommodation, support, utilities, food and associated costs, it does not cover pocket money and clothing as this will be replaced by the young person's personal benefit allowance or earnings.

9.1.8 Staying Put carers will continue to receive the above payment for 56 weeks of the year paid over 52 weeks. This will cover one week for Christmas/Festival, one week for birthday and two weeks for a holiday as the Staying Put Carers will continue to treat the young person as a member of the family, taking them out etc. This does not apply to the young person's contribution.

9.1.9 As set out above all young people are required to claim a personal benefit allowance or be earning money to be able to fund their clothing and pocket money needs.

9.1.10 All young people are required to claim housing benefit. In situations where young people are working part-time, and do not claim a means tested personal benefit they will still need to claim housing benefit. Earnings over £57.90 will result in a reduction of housing benefit which will need to be made up by a contribution by the young person and RMBC (see finance policy. Housing benefit will be paid directly to RMBC children's services.

9.1.11 When the carers are already in receipt of means tested benefits and that income is reduced should a young person claim housing benefit, RMBC Borough Council children's services will become responsible for paying the equivalent amount based on the Local Housing Allowance rate.

9.1.12 When a young person has no recourse to public funds (NRPF) RMBC Borough Council children's services will become responsible for paying the equivalent amount based on the Local Housing Allowance rate, provided that the young person is not in receipt of income which could be taken into consideration.

9.1.13 The Staying Put/Supported Lodgings Coordinator will help young people complete housing benefit applications. This will be laid out in the Living Together Agreement. If a young person does not claim benefits they are entitled to or pay their contribution, they will be in breach of their Living Together Agreement.

9.1.14 When housing benefit or the young person's contribution is not made available to the carers a meeting will be called to review the Living Together Agreement. RMBC will compensate for a young person's failure to pay their contribution or claim housing benefit for a period of three months from the start date of the arrangement. Thereafter the carer should decide whether they wish to continue providing the accommodation.

9.1.15 Housing benefit is now determined by Local Housing Allowance or Local Reference Rates based upon the area in which the applicant lives and may change each month. However, these rates are fixed in the month of application until the end of the financial year.

Up to date Housing benefit levels are published each month on the area LHA website: directgov.

9.1.16 The young person's housing benefit application should be made by the young person with support from the Staying Put/Supported Lodgings Coordinator. To ensure that there is a smooth process the application should be made at least 4 weeks prior to the young person's 18th Birthday.

9.1.17 Carers receiving a Staying Put payment have a duty to inform the Local Authority of any changes in circumstances.

9.2 Young People at University

9.21 Young people at university are not normally able to claim housing benefit but can apply for student finance, out of which they are expected to pay the rent element of the Staying Put arrangement if they are living with their former foster carer while studying. Any contribution from RMBC should be in keeping with the finance policy.

9.22 If a young person is at university some distance from home and living in university accommodation during term time, a Staying Put arrangement can still be made to ensure that they can return home for the university holidays and weekends. However, different funding arrangements will apply to reflect the fact that the young person will not be at home for most of the year. If a young person will be returning to live at home during university holidays, we will pay the former carer the Staying Put rate for each week that the young person is at home. If the former carer is maintaining significant contact with the young person during term time in the form of weekly phone calls; contact as and when needed with the university; at least one visit each term to the young person; an open invitation to the young person to spend weekends at home - up to £100 per week can be paid (subject to negotiation based on the level of involvement).

10. Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)

10.1 Young people placed in Independent Fostering Agency placements will be considered against the same criteria as RMBC foster carer placements. The local authority will ensure that the process as detailed in sections 4 and 5 of this policy involves the IFA at all key stages.

10.2 Once a young person becomes 18, the fostering placement ends and thereafter the IFA is not a formal party to the Staying Put Arrangement. The financial arrangements for Staying Put are made between the local authority and the carers in keeping with that which a RMBC foster carer receives, not what the IFA carer is used to receiving. There should be no expectation that the IFA continues to receive a fee.

10.3 The post age 15 planning meetings, professionals meetings and child care reviews will be the medium by which all IFAs will be involved in the Staying Put process. There will be occasions where the decision by the young person and their carer/s to enter into a Staying Put arrangement will not follow the processes in Section 4, for instance the young person may have come in to placement post 15, however at whatever point discussions occur, the IFA will be fully involved. The local authority expects that those representing the IFA at meetings/reviews have the authority to agree with the decisions made by the carer/s and the young person when considering Staying Put arrangements.

10.4 Once the decision is made by the young person and their carer/s to enter into a Staying Put arrangement post 18, the IFA will be notified and asked to ensure that their carers formally notify the IFA of their change in circumstances. The IFA may be continuing to provide a supervising social worker where a child in care remains placed with the carers. In keeping with government good practice guidance, that same supervising social worker could provide support in the carer's Staying Put role. If this is not possible, RMBC will offer the support of a supervising social worker.

10.5 It is expected that IFAs with whom the local authority commission placements will fully embrace the legislative and good practice guidance associated with the Staying Put initiative. A copy of this policy will be sent to the IFA at the point of commissioning a placement by the Commissioning Team.

11. Benefits for Young People

11.1 Young people remaining in a Staying Put arrangement can claim means tested benefits for their personal needs from their 18th birthday. These benefits replace the pocket money and clothing allowance previously contained in the foster carer's maintenance allowance.

11.2 Personal advisers will be responsible for assisting care leavers in understanding their benefits and will assist them using the [Benefit Adviser tool on www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/benefit-adviser). As every case is different and there are different entitlements, this tool is vital in understanding the exact entitlement for that individual. Further benefits advice is available from Citizens Advice Bureau.

12. The Treatment of Benefits

12.1 Personal payments from Children's Services to young people and carers under section 17, section 20, section 23, section 24 and section 31 do not count as income for benefit purposes.

13. Income Tax and National Insurance Issues for Staying Put Arrangements

13.1 Tax

13.2 All foster carers and Staying Put carers must register with HMRC as self-employed.

13.3 The Simplified Tax Arrangements apply and Foster carers and Adult Placement Carers will continue to be able to claim under their existing simplified tax arrangements. Full Tax details are provided in the HMRC help sheet 236.

13.4 Where young people remain living with their former foster carer/s under a Staying Put arrangement, the Income Tax and National Insurance framework and liabilities that apply are set out in the new "Shared Lives Carers" Guidance. The 'Shared Lives' - 'Qualifying Care Relief Guidance' sets out that Staying Put carers receive tax exemptions up to a given qualifying amount for each Staying Put young person living with them. The Staying Put qualifying rate mirrors the system and amounts that applied when the placement was previously a foster care placement.

13.5 The Staying Put exemption does not affect any income from other sources, for example, from employment or from investments. Such other income will be taxed in the normal way.

13.6 Staying Put carer/s as well as foster carer/s should note that they may be able to claim Working Tax Credit which is administered by HMRC. Fostering/Staying Put care is counted as work for tax credit purposes. The carer's taxable income is used to assess the amount of tax credits that they are entitled to. So, where the carer receives less in Staying Put personal payments than the tax free allowance is, their income from caring for Working Tax Credit purposes is treated as nil, which means they get the highest rate of WTC.

14. National Insurance

14.1 The same Class 4 National Insurance contributions apply as for fostering.

15. Staying Put Arrangement Guidance - Living Together Agreements

15.1 Young people, Staying Put carer/s, leaving care personal advisers and supervising social workers should meet to develop a 'Living Together Agreement' prior to a young person's 18th birthday. The agreement should set out the expectation of all personal advisers and clarify roles and responsibilities.

16. Health and Safety

16.1 The same health and safety principles including household/car insurance that applied under the Foster Placement will continue. The car must have a current MOT certificate.

17. Household Insurance

17.1 The Staying Put providers will continue to be covered by RMBC's "All Risks Carer's Contents" policy.

This insurance policy covers Foster Carers, Staying Put Providers and Supported Lodgings Providers against damage caused to home contents by the direct actions of the young person.

17.2 Claims should be submitted either via email to insurance@rotherham.gov.uk or in writing, marked for the attention of the Insurance & Risk Manager at the RMBC Riverside House address. The policy does not carry an excess but providers will subsequently be asked to produce documentation to support any claim made (e.g. purchase receipts; estimates).

17.3 Providers should ensure that they continue to maintain their own full household and liability insurance policy to provide cover against damage that is unconnected to the young person.

18. Monitoring and Reviewing Arrangements

18.1 The Staying Put Arrangements should be reviewed as part of the Permanence Plan, Pathway Plan, Review or Care Plan at least every six months. This should record any problems or difficulties that have emerged and what is working well in the arrangement. A

review can be arranged earlier if needed by agreement between the young person, the carers and the personal advisor involved.

19. Safeguarding Measures

19.1 The same safeguarding measures that apply under the foster placement will continue to apply to a Staying Put Arrangement. In addition, safeguarding policies and procedures as they apply to vulnerable adults will also be observed.

20. Ending the Staying Put Arrangement

20.1 The Staying Put arrangement can be ended at any time before the young person reaches their 21st birthday, by either the young person or the carer by giving a minimum of 28 days' notice. This period can be shortened in exceptional circumstances.

20.2 When planning to end a Staying Put arrangement it is worth remembering that as the young person reaches their 21st birthday they may no longer qualify as having a "priority need" under housing legislation for social housing. Therefore it is essential that plans are made in advance in order to maximise the opportunity to be considered for social housing.

20.3 If the young person wishes to remain with the carer post 21 then it will become a private or informal arrangement and no longer funded by the Local Authority. However, funding may be considered to support an agreed course of education but not necessarily at the level agreed as part of Staying Put.

20.4 There will be circumstances whereby a planned move-on from a Staying Put arrangement doesn't work and a return to the Staying Put arrangement is in the young person's best interests. Subject to prior agreement and within an 8 week period a young person can return to their previous Staying Put household and the original payment arrangement will resume. In these circumstances the arrangement will continue to be considered as Staying Put.

Summary Sheet

Council Report

Corporate Parenting Panel – 25th April 2017

Title: Rotherham Adoption Service Performance Report 2016-2017

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan? No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Mel Meggs (Deputy Strategic Director CYPS)

Report Author(s)

Helen Mangham (Team Manager – Adoption)

Ward(s) Affected All

Summary

- 1.1 This report is an annual report to brief on the business and activity within the Council's Adoption Service in 2016/17.
- 1.2 The report provides performance and activity data on the service, reports on the activity and functioning of the Adoption Panel and details service developments that have occurred in the year and those that are planned moving through 2017/18.

Recommendations

That the Corporate Parenting Panel receives this report and considers and comments on any issues arising

List of Appendices Included: N/A

Background Papers: None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Corporate Parenting Panel

Council Approval Required: No

Exempt from the Press and Public: No

Title: Annual Adoption Service Report 2016/17

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Corporate Parenting Panel receives this report and considers and comments on any issues arising.

2. Background

- 2.1 This report is an annual report to brief on the business and activity within the Council's Adoption Service in 2016/17.
- 2.2 The report provides performance and activity data on the service, reports on the activity and functioning of the Adoption Panel, and details service developments that have occurred in the year and those that are planned moving through 2017/18.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 Rotherham Borough Council Adoption Service operates within the regulatory framework of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (as amended); Adoption Agency Regulations; the associated Statutory Guidance 2014 and the National Minimum Standards 2014.
- 3.2 Prior to September 2013, Adoption Agencies were inspected separately by Ofsted. Since then, inspection of adoption work is incorporated into the Single Inspection Framework which includes a graded judgement on adoption. In October 2014, Ofsted undertook an inspection within the Single Inspection Framework and the Children's Services overall rating was 'Inadequate' with adoption performance rated as 'Requires improvement'.
- 3.3 The Adoption Service undertakes the recruitment, assessment and approval of prospective adopters, family finding and matching children and approved adoptive parents, supports and supervises adoption placements and provides post adoption support services.
- 3.4 In line with the Regulations, the service has an Adoption Panel chaired by a skilled and experienced independent social work professional. The panel considers and makes recommendations about the suitability of adopters and on the matching of children requiring adoption with approved

adopters. The panel also considers the SHOBPA decision for children relinquished by their birth parents.

- 3.5 The Assistant Strategic Director for Children's Social Care performs the role of Agency Decision Maker for the Adoption Service. The Agency Decision Maker considers and makes decisions on whether or not children should be placed for adoption, and following consideration and recommendation by the Adoption Panel, on the suitability of applicant adopters and the suitability of a match between a specific child and approved adopters, having considered the Adoption Panel's recommendation in each case.

4. Activity in the Adoption Service in 2016/17

4.1 Should be placed for Adoption Decisions

4.1.1 The decision by a Local Authority that a looked after child 'should be placed for adoption' (referred to as the SHOBPA decision) is a decision made by the Local Authority's Agency Decision Maker for Adoption based on the social worker's report, known as the 'Child's Permanence Report', legal and medical advice and any other relevant supporting evidence.

4.1.2 In 2016/17 53 SHOBPA decisions were made. This is a slight increase in the number of children having an adoption plan compared 2015/16 when 46 children received a SHOBPA decision.

4.2 Placement Orders

4.2.1 A Placement Order is an Order made by the Court which endorses a child's plan for adoption (following the SHOBPA decision made by the Local Authority) and allows for the child to be legally placed with approved adoptive parents.

4.2.2 In 2016/17 Placement Orders were made in respect of 31 children compared with 41 Placement Orders made in 2015/16. Reasons for reduction in Placement Orders include 4 children where the Court did not grant a Placement Order and ordered that the children were placed with family members and a sibling group of 3 children where the Court ordered rehabilitation home to parents. Following further sibling

assessment, one child's Placement Order was not granted and was placed in Long Term Foster care with his brother. Of the 53 children who had SHOBPA decisions made 2016/17 (reported in 4.1.2), 16 children are still in proceedings and therefore Placement Orders have not yet been granted, a sibling group of 3 had a Court decision of rehabilitation home and 3 children had a Court decision to be placed with family members.

4.3 Adopter Approvals

- 4.3.1 Individuals or couples who wish to adopt a looked after child must first be approved as suitable to adopt. Applicant adopters are assessed by the adoption team and the Adoption Panel makes recommendations on the applicant's suitability and provides advice to the agency on matching criteria. The Agency Decision Maker makes the final decision on suitability.
- 4.3.2 Performance on recruiting prospective adopters who wish to adopt a looked after child has been maintained this year with a calendar of recruitment events throughout the year. The number of enquiries to the agency in 2016/17 was 151 compared to 97 in 2015/16. A refreshed recruitment campaign, a press article on the number of babies with an adoption plan and regular publicised monthly drop in sessions have all contributed to the increase in adopter enquiries. However once further information has been shared at an information event or visit the number of 'Registration of Interests' received has decreased from 30 in 2015/16 to 25 in 2016/17.
- 4.3.3 The Agency is ensuring that whilst prospective adopters enquiring are being given a positive welcome, the messages being shared about adoption and the children available for adoption is realistic. The agency is clear about the qualities and skills needed by prospective adopters in order to successfully parent children who have experienced separation, loss and early childhood trauma and use this knowledge and experience to counsel out prospective adopters at the earliest stage.
- 4.3.4 The number of adopters the agency has approved in 2016/17 is 18 compared to 14 approved in 2015/16. This is a slight increase however the agency recognises that there is a need to recruit and approve more

adopters but is mindful these need to be able to meet the needs of children with an adoption plan. National trends are not yet available for 2016/17, however information from the other 3 Local Authorities in the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency, Doncaster, Sheffield and Barnsley indicates that similar numbers of adopters have been recruited and approved. Sheffield is a larger authority, has recruited and assessed 21 adopters. Total number of adopter approvals across the South region is 62.

4.3.5 In addition Stage 2 assessments have commenced or been completed for 5 other prospective adoptive families which have not resulted in approval. The rigorous assessment and approval process resulted in 4 of the families withdrawing prior to Panel and 1 family withdrawing following Panel deferment. Whilst this may appear a loss to the service, and a strain on resource in terms of social worker assessment time, the aim of this assessment process is to ensure that the adoption service is confident that adopters approved are resilient to care for Rotherham children throughout their childhood and into adulthood. At the same time, potential adopters are guided through this process in a thorough but empathic way to enable them to come to the decision, in partnership with the service that adoption at this time is not right for them.

4.3.6 Rotherham Adoption Team remains committed to increasing the number of adopters approved. To achieve this, there has been a refreshed recruitment campaign utilising social media to recruit adopters for individual children and sibling groups of all ages with an adoption plan and an increase in adoption recruitment activity around Rotherham, and this is ongoing throughout 2017/18.

4.4 Timeliness of assessment of prospective adopters

4.4.1 The average time between Registration of Interest and Agency Decision in 2016/17 was 192 days, an improvement on the previous year's average of 239 days. Since the introduction of the two stage process the timeliness for adopter assessments has declined although this year's figures show a slight improvement in timeliness. The main delay continues to be in Stage 1, where the agency has no control over the

timeliness of medicals, DBS or availability of referees. The timeliness of Stage 1 is adopter led and includes an opportunity for adopters to take a break of up to 6 months between Stage 1 and Stage 2 which impacts on the overall timeliness. In 2016/17 one family took a break between Stage 1 and Stage 2.

- 4.4.2 56% of adopter assessments were completed within the 6 month timescale in 2016/17 compared to 46.6% in 2015/16, which is an improvement in performance.

4.5 Matches Approved

- 4.5.1 Rotherham Adoption Service has two Family Finders who work in partnership with the child's social worker to identify the most suitable approved adopters for each child needing adoption in a timely manner. Before a child can be placed with approved adopters the suitability of the match must be considered at the Adoption Panel, with the final decision resting with the Agency Decision Maker.

- 4.5.2 In 2016/17 the service matched 30 children with adoptive families. This compares with 39 matches in 2015/16. Fewer matches were made as fewer children were granted a Placement Order.

4.6 Children Placed for Adoption

- 4.6.1 Once a match between a child and approved adopters has been approved, the service may proceed to legally place that child with those adopters. In 2016/17, the number of children who were placed for adoption was 31. In 2015/16, the number placed was 36 children.

4.7 Children Adopted

- 4.7.1 Once a child is placed for adoption, the adopters must wait a minimum ten week period before they can apply to the Court for an Adoption Order to legally adopt the child. Once an Adoption Order is granted the adopters obtain full parental responsibility for the child.
- 4.7.2 In 2016/17 there were 31 looked after children adopted in comparison to 43 in the previous year. This reflects the reducing trend of Placement Orders being granted and therefore fewer children being placed.

4.8 The Percentage of Children Leaving Care via Adoption

4.8.1 As of the 27th March 15% of children left care via adoption in Rotherham in 2016/17. The service is achieving adoption for a high number and percentage of looked after children. The children's tracker meetings continue to be held to measure performance of children with an adoption plan, to prevent drift and delay. This information is shared in fortnightly performance meetings, and has had a positive impact in forward planning for children whose plan is adoption. It is likely that the number of children adopted will reduce with the introduction of the edge of care 'offer' outlined in Rotherham's sufficiency strategy 2016/17.

4.8.2 The table below demonstrates the number and percentage of children adopted from care in 2016/17 as compared to statistics from previous dataset year. The table also examines the adoption of 'difficult to place' children.

4.8.3 Of the 31 children adopted, 13 were female and 18 were male. 28 children were of white British origin and 3 children were of BME backgrounds. 5 sibling groups of 2 (10 children) and 4 of the children had disabilities. 11 children were aged 5 or over. 2 of the children of BME backgrounds were matched with families which reflected their ethnicity, the third and older child adopted of BME background was placed with an adopter who could promote his ethnicity and could meet his emotional and behavioural needs.

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|--|-------|
| Number of children adopted in Rotherham in 2015/16 | 43 |
| Number of children adopted in Rotherham 2016/17 | 31 |
| Percentage of children leaving care via adoption in Rotherham in 2015/16 | 22.4% |
| As of 27th March 2017 The percentage of children leaving care via adoption in Rotherham in 2016/17 | 15% |
| Percentage of children from the 31 adoption orders who were 'harder to place' | 52% |

5.1 Timeliness of Adoption

- 5.1.1 The service has been striving to achieve adoption for children for whom it is in their best interests, in a timely manner. Children should be supported through their journey through care and to their adoptive family without delay so they can benefit from being placed with their adoptive parents at as young an age as possible, enabling the bonding and attachment process to begin.
- 5.1.2 The Government recognises the need for timeliness in adoption and has been measuring Local Authority performance on timeliness with their 'Adoption Scorecard' measures for several years now.

5.2 Adoption Scorecard Measure 1

- 5.2.1 Adoption Scorecard Measure 1, measures the number of days on average that it takes for children who have been adopted to move from first coming into care to being placed for adoption with adoptive families. The Government target on this measure is 426 days.
- 5.2.2 Rotherham's performance in 2016/17 was 379 days. In 2015/16 for children adopted it was 296 days. The increase in the number of days is due to Rotherham having a high percentage of children being adopted in 2016/17 (52%) who are harder to place. Due to the complex needs of these children, 31% met the A1 measure with the average days between becoming looked after and placed for adoption being 556 days. Of the remaining 48% of children, 80% met the A1 measure with the average number of days between becoming looked after and placed being 241.

5.3 Adoption Scorecard Measure 2

- 5.3.1 Adoption Scorecard Measure 2, measures the number of days on average it takes for adopted children to move from being made subject to a Placement Order to them having a match with adopted parents agreed by the Agency Decision Maker. The Government target on this measure is 121 days.
- 5.3.2 Rotherham's performance in 2016/17 for children adopted was 232 days. As with scorecard measure 1 this is a drop in timeliness due to the additional needs of the 52% children adopted. Of the harder to place children only 6% met the A2 measure with the average time between

Placement Order and Match Agency Decision being 356 days. Of the remaining 48% of children adopted 73% met the A2 measure and the average number of days for these children was 99, which is 22 days better than the DfE target of 121 days.

- 5.3.3 One child in particular has impacted on Rotherham's scorecard measure 2 this year. This child has complex health and developmental needs which resulted in a number of families not wishing to proceed to a match. His A2 measure was 1623 days. However, this child has now been adopted by his foster carer who has cared for him since birth, providing him with an extremely positive outcome.

6. Family Finding

- 6.1 The service has two family finding social workers who are supported by a family finding co-ordinator.
- 6.2 The service strives to provide as many adoption placements as possible from its own recruited adoptive families but where there is a shortfall of in-house adopters, or a child's needs cannot be met by RMBC recruited families, this is identified prior to the SHOBPA decision so that regional and national family finding can commence. The team will strive to find a suitable family in the region and across the whole country through families approved by other Local Authorities and by Voluntary Agencies.
- 6.3 Rotherham utilises all resources available to secure adoptive placements for children where this is their plan. This includes Adoption Match (previously known as the National Adoption Register), Link Maker, Children Who Wait, Exchange days, Activity days and arranges profiling events.
- 6.4 In this adoption year, the service has been successful in achieving adoption for a wide range of children including older children, children with disabilities, sibling groups and BME children. Five sibling groups; eleven children over the age of 5 years; three children from BME background and three children with additional health needs/disabilities were adopted in 2016/17.
- 6.5 When placing a child with adopters approved by another Local Authority or a Voluntary Adoption Agency we are required to pay an inter-agency

fee of £27,000 for one child, £43,000 for a sibling group of two, and £54,000 for a sibling group of three children. If another local authority places a child with one of our adoptive families they are required to pay us that fee. In 2016/17 Rotherham Adoption Service had no adopters where children were placed from other Local Authorities. Potential inter-agency matches are being explored for 2 RMBC approved adoptive families which will be reported on in 2017/18.

6.6 Of the thirty children matched for adoption in 2016/17:

- 14 were matched with in-house approved adopters
- 12 were matched with voluntary adoption agency adopters
- 4 were matched with other Local Authority adopters

6.7 As of 31st March 2017 there were 27 children with an adoption plan where family finding was ongoing. Of the 27 children 16 have a Placement Order. The child waiting the longest has had an adoption plan for 20 months. He is an older child with disabilities. A potential match has previously been identified however the family withdrew following a bump into meeting when the extent of his complex needs became a reality for them. Family finding continues for this child. For children with a Placement Order the average time waiting in days for a match is currently 233. This is due to the number of older children with disabilities and complex health needs and sibling groups of 3 children.

7. Early Permanence Placements (Fostering to Adopt Placements)

7.1 Rotherham Adoption Service continues to promote Early Permanence Planning and the use of Early Permanence placements. Early Permanence is extremely positive for the child and the Adoption Agency ensures that the adopters are comprehensively prepared and supported to manage the risks. The use of Early Permanence has contributed to overall performance in improving timeliness.

7.2 Rotherham Adoption Service were innovative in appointing a dedicated early permanence champion in the team who works closely with the Adoption Team Managers and LAC Permanence Manager to identify and promote early permanence planning and embed this as part of

Rotherham's practice when considering a Plan for Adoption. Rotherham's pro-active approach to EPP has resulted in RMBC being a leader in this area within the Region.

7.3 There are currently 4 children in Early permanence placements. 3 of the children adopted in 2016/17 experienced early permanence placements. The average time from becoming looked after to being adopted for these children is 257 days, demonstrating the positive impact EPP has in securing permanence at the earliest opportunity.

8. Adoption Panel

8.1 Panel Member Training

8.1.1 It is a legislative requirement that there is at least one training day annually for Panel members. Panel member training in 2016/17 included:

- Learning from Disruption
- Preparation Training for Adopters including Attachment

8.1.2 The Adoption Panel members are committed to their learning and development. Training offered is always well attended and well received.

8.2 Panel Business

8.2.1 During 2016/2017 the Adoption Panel considered and made recommendations in respect of matches for 30 children and 19 prospective adopters.

8.3 Quality Assurance of Reports to Panel

8.3.1 The Adoption Panel plays a key quality assurance role for the service, providing feedback on the quality of reports it is asked to consider. The reports include Child Permanence Reports, matching reports and post adoption support plans and Prospective Adopter Reports.

8.3.2 During 2016/17 there was one adoption disruption in Rotherham; a single child. A disruption review has been completed and the findings

shared with the Adoption Panel, the Adoption Team and the LAC Permanence team. The Adoption agency has reflected on the learning and a 'pause and reflect day' is now included in every transition plan.

8.3.3 The assessment toolbox including Adult Attachment Interviews continues to be utilised. Consultation is available with Clinical Psychologist, Dr Sara Whittaker.

8.3.4 A robust approach is taken with regards to Registration of Interests and progression to Stage 2 with clear managers decisions and areas identified where additional assessment is required.

8.4 Quality of permanence planning, The Child Permanence Report, Preparation of Children and Post Adoption Support Plans

8.4.1 The Child Permanence Report is the application to Court for a Placement Order. Regular training is offered to social workers on permanence planning and writing CPR's.

8.4.2 The quality of CPR's continues to be inconsistent. There has also been a discrepancy in the quality of direct work completed with children around their Care Plan including life story work and preparation for adoption. A Life Story work template has now been introduced. Advice and guidance is available from the Therapeutic Team including bespoke narratives and guidance on transition planning and preparation of children. The Court Permanence teams and Adoption team work closely together with the aim of improving quality of assessments, permanence planning, quality of reports and the preparation of children and their adoptive families.

8.4.3 In the last 12 months the number of CPR's being submitted to the adoption team to enable quality assurance by the adoption team managers has reduced. This has been due to staffing issues within the Court Permanence teams. As a result the Agency Decision Maker has had to request further information to enable a SHOBPA decision to be

made. The introduction of a second court permanence team and additional staff should improve this.

8.4.4 The Adoption Team Managers work closely with the managers of the court permanence teams to develop and improve practice around permanence planning. The family finders in the adoption team consult with the social workers in the permanence teams to commence family finding, once a child is referred for a SHOBPA decision. This ensures earliest opportunity to identify potential matches for the child and promotes timeliness. Due to staffing issues within the Court Permanence team this early family finding has not always been possible. In February 2017 an additional court permanence team has been introduced in recognition of the high number of Care Proceedings for children with permanence plans. Adoption team manager and court permanence team managers are tracking progress of children and quality of work.

8.4.5 The Adoption Support Fund was introduced by the Government to improve access to therapeutic support services for adoptive families. This has enabled twenty-eight therapeutic support packages to be provided for adopted children pre/post adoption order in 2015/16. In March 2016, this was extended to include funding for therapeutic packages for children up to the age of 21. Applications to the fund are made following an assessment of the child's therapeutic needs which is reviewed by Rotherham's Therapeutic Team. In 2016 the Government introduced a maximum of £5000 per therapeutic package. If the cost of the therapeutic package exceeds this then the Local Authority Have to commit to funding the excess, (see also paragraph 10 adoption Support Services).

9. Staffing

9.1 The Adoption Service is responsible for recruiting, assessing, training and supporting adoptive families as well as family finding for children with an adoption plan. There are two full time team managers and 10.5 full time equivalent social work posts, comprising 13 part-time/ full-time social workers. Currently there are 2 full time and 1 3 day social work vacancies in the adoption team plus one social worker is taking 12 months maternity

leave. In addition, there are 3 full time support workers, who cover family finding support, adoption support and letter-box co-ordination.

9.2 The two team managers' report to the Service Manager for Adoption and Fostering who reports to the Head of Service for Children in Care.

9.3 There has been a level of uncertainty within the adoption service regarding regionalisation. As a result three experienced social workers have left to take up posts elsewhere.

10. Adoption Support Services

10.1 Rotherham's Therapeutic Team is an in-house service that has developed extensive knowledge around the emotional wellbeing of children in care, and the needs of adopters and foster carers. Led by a Consultant Psychologist this specialist service provides training and support specifically for children in care and adoption and this best practice service had led to better outcomes for children and adoptive family experience. The service provides input from point of assessment of adopters, work with foster carers and children in care, and through to adoption and beyond to promote stability and permanence. With regards to adoption, the team offers a repertoire of services to adoptive parents, which includes:

- Assessment of children with complex needs,
- Attachment training
- Training around transitions and moving on
- Training, consultation and advice on sibling assessments
- Training on life story work
- Direct work regarding narrative
- Direct work with families
- Therapeutic parenting course
- Theraplay

10.2 The Therapeutic Team have a pre-adoption worker who is available to foster carers, child, social workers and adopters to support during/ and advise on the transition plan to enable a positive adoption experience. This can include preparation work with the child, including narrative therapy, attachment understanding and therapeutic parenting techniques.

10.3 Post adoption support is provided by the Therapeutic Team. The team has a dedicated Post Adoption Therapeutic Social Worker who supports and assesses adoptive parents and submits applications into the Adoption

Support Fund, (ASF) where it is necessary to do so. In 2016 – 2017 the team successfully secured £260022.23 which has funded support for 59 Rotherham families.

10.4 Of this amount an ASF application was made to fund a young person's therapeutic residential stay which was part of a joint venture with Sheffield Local Authority. This came about following a previously successful initiative that Sheffield Local Authority led on, where 5 Rotherham children enjoyed a similar experience.

10.5 The adoption team also run a range of support groups. These include 'Tiny Tuesdays,' which is a group for new adoptive families with children under the age of 5 years, and 'Big Apples,' which targets adoptive families of 5 – 11 year old children. Teenager events are also held, and in July 2016, a group of teenage adoptive children enjoyed a summer camp, hosted by After Adoption, which was funded through the ASF as detailed above.

10.6 RMBC Adoption Services also commission PAC-UK to provide a range of post adoption support services to adults including birth parents, adult adoptees and relatives of adopted children.

10.7 Yorkshire Adoption Agency undertakes inter-country adoption assessments when requested to do so.

11. The Regional Adoption Agency

11.1 In May 2015, the Government announced changes to the delivery of adoption services. By 2020, all adoption services would need to be delivered on a regional basis. The Government advised that where Local Authority services did not form or become part of a regional adoption agency by 2020, it would legislate to force them to do so. The rationale from the Government for this was a belief that a smaller number of larger regional agencies would be better placed to deliver an increase in the number of children adopted, to reduce the length of time children wait to be adopted, and to improve post adoption support services to families who have adopted.

11.2 In 2016 – 2017 Rotherham had been working towards a regionalised adoption agency; 'One Adoption'. This was in partnership with:

- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Adoption Service
- Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Adoption Service
- Sheffield Metropolitan Borough Council Adoption Service

- Doncaster Children's Trust
- Alliance of Voluntary Agencies

11.3 At time of writing this report Rotherham remains committed to the principle of a South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency. However, until there is a fit for purpose Business Case in place that specifies that adoption services will be provided at no extra cost to Rotherham and that the current performance will not decline as a result of its implementation then Rotherham will not be in a position to formally commit to a regional adoption agency.

12. Summary

12.1 The service continues to achieve adoption for a high number of Looked after children including harder to place children with 31 children being adopted in 2016/17. Tracking and monitoring of adoption plans continues to ensure a timely response to adoption and early identification of areas of delay so swift action can be taken to address this.

12.2 In this adoption year, the service has been successful in achieving adoption for a wide range of children who are considered 'harder to place' due to age, disability, ethnicity or part of a sibling group. 52% were children considered to be harder to place.

12.3 Rotherham Adoption Team has continued to promote early permanence planning for children, with seven Early Permanence Placements (EPP) being made in 2016/17. Rotherham continues to be a leader in this area within the region.

12.4 Whilst Rotherham has not performed as well on the 2 key Adoption Scorecard measurements this year timeliness for children adopted for the A1 measure is still below the DfE measure of 426 days and a high percentage (52%) of the children were harder to place.

12.5 Rotherham Adoption Service has successfully supported adoptive families by accessing the Adoption Support Fund, with 59 families benefitting from therapeutic support packages in 2016/17 equating to 6. £260022.23 secured funding from ASF.

12.6 One adoption placement disrupted in 2016/17. An independent disruption review identified lessons learned and these have been implemented. This child has successfully placed with an adoptive family and the Adoption Order will be granted imminently.

12.7 The Panel has operated successfully and plays a key quality assurance role. The quality of CPRs has been variable and the adoption team manager continues to work with the court permanence team managers to improve consistent quality.

13. Improvement and Development for 2017/18 onwards

13.1 We will continue to strive to improve and develop our service over 2017 – 2018. Adoption has a key role to play within our overall Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy. Key improvement actions include:

- Recruit more adopters who are able to meet the needs of children with an on plan.
- Increase number of Early Permanence Placements available and the use of EPP to include consideration for older children.
- Improve the timeliness of the adoption journey for both children and applicant adopters through robust tracking.
- Improve the quality of assessments.
- Improve the quality of post adoption support plans.
- Continued access to Adoption Support Fund to ensure that adoption therapeutic support needs are best met.
- Use training, supervision, tracking meetings, legal gateway meetings and Public Law Outline to promote adoption best practice and ensure that timely planning and achieving permanence is prioritised.

14. Options considered and recommended proposal:

Not applicable

15. Consultation

Not applicable

16. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

Not applicable

17. Financial and Procurement Implications

17.1 There are no direct financial implications to this report. The Adoption Team, in conjunction with Service Manager and Head of Service continues to monitor the Adoption Team spend in line with RMBC finance team. Rotherham Adoption Team's current projected spend is within budget, but there may be overspend on the interagency budget. The mitigating factor here is that Rotherham are committed to making timely placements to ensure that there is no drift for children in care when the plan is adoption.

18. Legal Implications

18.1 There are no direct legal implications to this report, save to say that the Adoption Team operate within appropriate legislation, such as the Children Act 1989, Adoption and Children Act 2002, Adoption Regulations, Statutory Guidance and RMBC policy and procedures.

19. Human Resources Implications

19.1 There are no direct human resource implications to this report.

20. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

20.1 The Adoption Team Performance Report 2016 – 2017 relates to services for looked after children where the plan has been adoption, the recruitment and assessment of adopters, matching and placing adoptive children and securing permanency for children with their adoptive families.

21. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

21.1 There are no direct implications within this report, other than to say that the Adoption Team are compliant with the Human Rights Act and Equal Opportunities Policy.

22. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

22.1 Not applicable.

23. Risks and Mitigation

23.1 Inability and lack of engagement in performance and management arrangements by managers and staff could lead to drift and delay for looked after children where the plan is adoption. There needs to be continued ongoing good managerial oversight and quality assurance, for example in terms of legal processes, the Child's Care Planning arrangements and the Child's Permanence Report to alleviate this risk. In addition, there needs to be good management oversight regarding the recruitment and assessment of adopters to ensure smooth running of the adoption process. Rotherham Adoption Scorecard and scorecard tracking meetings enables clear planning for children where the plan is adoption. Strong managerial oversight by Directorship Leadership Team along with fortnightly Performance Management Meetings mitigates risks by holding managers and workers to account for practice and enabling a climate for managers to check and challenge practice across services.

23.2 The impact of regionalisation has raised a level of uncertainty within the Adoption Service and with workers in general. This has been mitigated by reassurance from the RMBC HR Team that due processes will be followed. Monthly regionalisation meetings are taking place and two Universities, University of East Anglia, (UEA) and Leeds Beckett are involved in this process to ensure the smooth running of this process, in particular with regards to ensuring a good quality service during this period of change, and with regards to change management for staff. There is also oversight on a Directorship Leadership level across the region.

24. Accountable Officer(s)

Mel Meggs, Deputy Strategic Director CYPS
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Ian Walker Interim Head of Services, Children in Care
Ian.Walker@rotherham.gov.uk

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- Mark Chambers is content with the content of this report and for it to be progressed to DLT and CPP.

Director of Legal Services:- This report has been sent to Legal Services (N.C.) for their comments but as at the date of submission no comments have been received.

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):-N/A

Theresa Caswell (HR) has also had access to this report and is content that there are no implications from her perspective.

Name and Job Title.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Helen Mangham | Team Manager, Adoption |
| Jill Stanley | Team Manager, Adoption |
| Anne-Marie Banks | Service Manager, Adoption, Fostering and Therapeutic Team |
| Ian Walker | Head of Services, Children in Care |

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**ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

Safeguarding, Children and Families

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

2017 – 2018

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Rotherham MBC Adoption Service
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Main Street
ROTHERHAM
S60 1AE

Telephone Number: 01709 254005

The information in this Statement of Purpose can be made available in other language, in large print, Braille or on audio tape. Please telephone **01709 254005** If you need any of these or to access Rotherham's services.

This Statement of Purpose has been produced in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Adoption. It explains the aims, objectives and services provided by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Adoption Service. It is made available to staff and the general public.

1. Introduction

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Adoption service provides a fully comprehensive service for both adoption services and adoption support services. This Statement of Purpose covers both areas of service delivery.

This statement can be used as a guide to the Adoption Services provided. It is available to all members of staff, children, adopters and birth parents and is also available on our website.

This document is produced in compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2003; Local Authority Adoption Services (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2005; Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005; Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005; Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations, Regulations 2005 and the Statutory Guidance on Adoption 2013.

All information is correct as of 1st April 2017 and has been approved as required.

This document will be revised annually.

The Adoption Service is registered with OFSTED, who can be contacted as follows:-

OFSTED
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
MANCHESTER
M1 2WD

Telephone No: 0300 123 1231

E-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Adoption Service is committed to ensuring children are safe, their needs are identified and met and they are provided with security and stability in order to help them achieve their full potential.

Every effort is made to support children to remain with their birth family. However where this is not possible, adoption is considered to be a positive option in providing permanence and security for children.

We recognise that the Adoption journey is lifelong and provide adoption support services to maintain relationships throughout childhood and beyond, including support for adopters and birth family members to promote the child's identity needs.

The Adoption Service has direct access to Therapeutic Services via the Rotherham Therapeutic team. The team provides consultation, assessments and direct work from an early stage in the permanence planning for children. It also provides guidance, support and training for prospective adopters and

adoptive parents. This approach supports the agency to identify a child's therapeutic needs, match appropriately to adopters who can understand and meet their needs and provide preparation and early intervention.

2. Priority Outcomes of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Children and Young People's Plan

The principles upon which we work together with our customers and partners are underpinned with the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2017 – 2021, and Looked After Children and Care Leavers Plan 2017 – 2018. These makes clear our strategic priorities and ambitions to meet the needs of children, young people and their families across Rotherham.

Our Vision, Values and Principles

Rotherham's vision has been developed as follows and includes:-

- Working with Children, Families and our partners for Rotherham's Children's Services to be rated outstanding by 2018.
- Our Key Outcomes will be:
 - Children and Young people are healthy and safe from harm.
 - Children and young people start school ready to learn for life.
 - Children and young people and their families are ready for the world of work.

3. Values and Principles of the Adoption Service

- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council will ensure that children are placed in a timely manner without delay with prospective adopters who can meet their identified needs.
- Treat prospective adopters and adopters with openness, fairness and respect.
- Provide a welcoming and helpful approach to prospective adopters at first point of contact.
- Take an encouraging and supportive approach to adopter recruitment.
- Recruit prospective adopters who can meet all the needs of children and young people with an Adoption Plan locally, regionally and nationally,
- Explain to prospective adopters the needs and profiles of the children and young people waiting to be adopted.
- Ensure preparation and training, the assessment and approval processes are timely and flexible.
- Pro-active matching with prospective adopters, including referral to National Adoption Register.
- Provide adopters and prospective adopters with information, training, counselling and support throughout the adoption journey and beyond.
- Provide prospective adopters with information about the Independent Review Mechanism.

Adoptive Parents must:

- Be aware that adoption often brings challenges, as well as rewards and be realistic about the needs of children and young people awaiting adoption. Support and training is available to assist them with this.
- Make the most of opportunities to develop their parenting skills and seek support when needed at the earliest stage. Be prepared to undertake additional training as necessary.
- Do all they can to provide a stable and secure family home where the child feels loved and has a sense of belonging.

4. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Council in providing care for children Looked After by the Local Authority is to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children and young people. The provision of an Adoption Agency is a key factor in the strategy of achieving this aim.

The Adoption Agency's primary aims are to work towards and achieve:-

- Safe, secure, high quality adoptive placements for children who cannot be raised by their own family.
- Comprehensive support for adopters, adopted children and adults and birth families.
- To make decisions about whether adoption is a suitable plan for a child in a timely manner, being mindful of the child's development
- To achieve partnerships with other Agencies, including health and education, to ensure that comprehensive support packages can be made available.
- Every effort will be made to match children with adopters who reflect their ethnic origins, cultural background, religion and language but placements will not be delayed if the prospective adopter does not match the child's ethnicity but is able to meet all the child's other needs.
- Children are prepared, have their wishes and feelings considered and that they are listened to and their feedback informs the service's continuous recruitment and approval of adopters.
- Provide a positive and welcoming approach to prospective adopters, treating them fairly and with respect. The Agency welcomes enquiries from all sectors of the community and does not discriminate on the grounds of age, marital status, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Close working with all sections of the Children and Young People's Service to ensure that the best interests of the children are paramount at all times,
- To provide appropriate training, advice, encouragement and support for adopters.
- Contribute to the development and continuous improvement in the delivery of a child care service within the Authority.
- To advise on welfare benefits and entitlements in relation to adoptive families.

Outcomes

As a service, we have shown improvement in our performance and the Adoption Annual Report 2016-2017 reflects this. In 2016-17 the adoption service approved 18 adoptive families, this compares with 14 adopters approved in the previous year. 31 looked after children were adopted which compares to 43

children in the previous year. This reflects the reducing trend of Placement Orders being granted and therefore fewer children being placed. In 2016 – 2017 Placement Orders were made in respect of 31 children compared with 41 placement Orders made in the previous year.

Rotherham has implemented the changes brought about by the Adoption Reform Agenda. The changes are now embedded in practice and include:-

- Referral to National Adoption Register for children with an Adoption plan and approved adopters.
- A two stage adoption process.
- A fast track process for second time adopters and foster carers adopting a child in their care.
- Early Permanence planning.
- Approved adopters have access to Adoption Link, so they can seek out their own matches with children waiting to be adopted.

5. Rotherham Aims of 2017-2018

To encourage more people to adopt and in particular, to consider early permanence placements and also provide placements for harder to place children.

To continue to reduce the time it takes for children to be placed with an adoptive family.

To provide bespoke packages of adoption support.

We will do the above by ensuring:-

- The recruitment campaign and branding is refreshed. The campaign will focus on social media, Facebook and website. Monthly drop in sessions are advertised on Radio.
- The Early Permanence Champion will provide information at an early stage and additional training for adopters willing to consider this.
- Work closely with prospective adopters and approved adopters to help them understand the profiles of those children who are waiting for an adoptive family. The Family Finders work alongside the assessing social workers to provide information on Harder to Place children.
- A procedure is in place for early identification of children for whom Early Permanence is an option.
- Rotherham's Therapeutic team provide support to children, pre and post adoption including consultation, theraplay and narrative work. They undertake assessments and referrals to the Adoption Support Fund.
- Continue to work closely with the Yorkshire and Humber Consortium and to participate in regionalisation of adoption services.

6. Staff and Organisation Structure

The Adoption Team maintains good links with the Locality Teams and is accessible to all sections of the service and in particular has developed good working relationships with the Looked After Children's Team. Social Workers and Managers within the service are all experienced in adoption work and are

committed to maintaining the child at the centre of the service. Retention of staff is excellent, providing consistency for adopters and children.

The current staffing of the Adoption Team is as follows:-

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Team Managers | 2 Full time |
| Adoption Social Workers | 5 Full time |
| Adoption Social Workers | 5 Part time |
| Family Finding Social Workers | 2 Full time |
| Post Adoption Support Social Worker | 1 Full time |
| Family Finding Assistant | 1 Full time |
| Family Support Worker | 1 Full time |
| Direct and Indirect Contact Co-ordinator | 1 Full time |

The team is supported and managed through the Children and Young People's Services line management structure. The Service Manager for Family Placement is responsible for the Adoption Service and supervises the Team Managers. The Head of Service for Looked After children is the Registered Manager.

All social workers and the Managers within the Team have a social work qualification (either CSS, CQSW or Dip SW) and hold a degree level qualification. All social work staff have at least 3 years' post qualifying experience and experience of adoption. All are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

Administrative support is primarily delivered by the Adoption and Fostering Business Support Team. The Business Support team works in partnership to support the Adoption Agency.

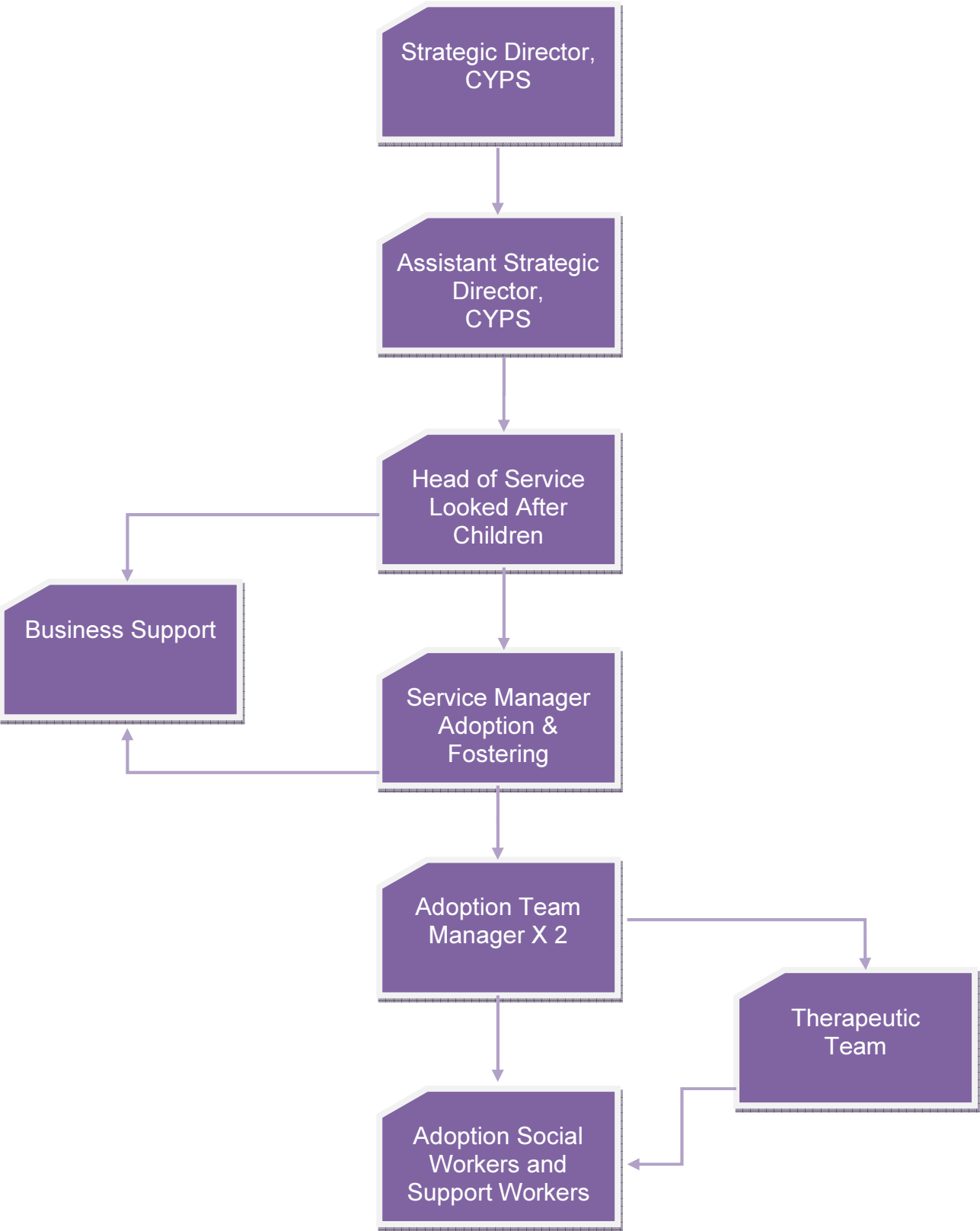
The Agency Decision Makers for Rotherham are the Assistant Strategic Director and the Head of Safeguarding.

The Family Finding Social Worker role was introduced to improve the timeliness of adoption placements for children by offering experienced support and guidance to the child's social worker and to co-work the Family finding, matching and transition process.

The post adoption support worker is based in the Therapeutic team and managed by the Clinical Psychologist.

All staff are subject to the Council's policy on recruitment, staffing, equal opportunities and discipline. All staff are subject to enhanced DBS checks, including Business Support staff.

Organisational Structure



7. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Service

The service is regularly monitored by reports being presented to the Strategic Director, Assistant Strategic Director and Elected members. These reports detail the activity and progress of the Adoption Team.

In addition, the quality of work is monitored by regular file audits, customer satisfaction surveys and regular supervision and Individual Performance Development Reviews carried out with staff by the Team Managers. Adopters are listened to and their feedback is used to develop the service. The feedback has highlighted many positive examples of good practice and any areas of improvement are carefully considered and appropriate changes made.

The number and content of complaints within the Adoption Service are reported in a six monthly Service report which is also presented to the Director of Safeguarding, Children and Families, Strategic Director and Cabinet Members.

The methods we use to monitor and evaluate the service are as follows:

Adoption Panel

- Panel reports are quality assured by the Adoption Team Managers.
- Panel comments on the quality of reports and this is recorded in Panel minutes.
- An annual summary report is presented to the Panel with managerial comments on performance.
- Quality issues raised at Panel are fed back via the Panel Advisor to the relevant social work team and follow up is reported to subsequent Panel meetings where required.
- Reports to the Adoption Service are completed by the Adoption Panel Chair incorporating Panel Members feedback. The feedback given includes comments on the quality of reports; the meeting of standard timescales and the meeting of the requirements of the Regulations on the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005. This information is used to identify service quality issues and to inform the annual review of the Panel Chair.
- Quarterly information on the Agencies performance in respect of timeliness for children is provided to Adoption Panel.

Service User Consultation

The feedback we receive as a service is important and we use this feedback to develop our services.

Feedback includes:-

- Verbal feedback via support groups and social events that we hold.
- Adoptive parents give written comments about their assessment and preparation and the quality of their prospective adopters report within body of the Prospective Adoption Report (PAR).

- Adoptive parents and their social workers who attend the Adoption Panel are invited to complete a questionnaire about their experience of attending the Panel.
- Preparation Groups and training events are evaluated using feedback forms completed after each training event.
- Prospective Adopters are consulted following approval to provide feedback on their experiences to date.
- Service users accessing PAC-UK are asked to complete a service user form by PAC-UK.
- Annual Adopter Forum introduced. The first one was held in November 2015.
- Annual Celebration Event. Feedback from adopters and children is requested.
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has a formal comments and complaints procedure and it is available to those who may wish to comment or complain about an aspect of the service.
- Invitation to attend and be involved in workshops to provide the adopter voice in relation to developing a Regional Adoption Agency.

Lessons to be learned are identified at the point of feedback being received. Ways to improve performance are shared.

Supervision and Management

- Staff supervision takes place on a monthly basis.
- Staff training and professional development is monitored through the Annual Performance Development Reviews.
- Case files are audited on a monthly basis. Actions arising are followed up and lessons for improvement are shared with the social worker teams.
- CPRs are QA'd by Adoption Team Managers and regular workshops on permanency planning and completing CPR's is provided.
- The performance for children and prospective adopters is monitored through fortnightly performance meetings chaired by the Assistant Strategic Director.
- The Adoption Managers monitor progress on a monthly basis with the Team Managers for Children with an Adoption Plan.
- The Adoption Performance Report and Adoption Panel reports are provided and presented to senior managers and Corporate Parenting Panel.

8. Complaints

- The Adoption Agency operates within the framework of the RMBC Complaints Policy. All adopters, children and young people and all other persons have access to this procedure.
- An emphasis is placed on resolving complaints at an immediate local level, ie. Stage 1, Informal Problem Solving and these are dealt with by the Team Manager. Stage 2 complaints are those where resolution at Stage 1 level has not been possible or where a complainant has elected to invoke Stage 2 of the procedure.
- Children and Young People's Services has a Children's Rights Service (Rotherham's Right to Rights Service which develop links with children and young people who are, or who have ever been looked after. They are

able to raise issues on behalf of young people and to support and advocate for them as appropriate.

- Further details can be obtained from the Complaints Service.

There have been two formal complaints received via the Council's formal complaints procedure during 2016-2017. These have been resolved at Stage 1.

9. **Recruitment Strategy**

The Adoption Service Recruitment Strategy for 2016-2017 has been updated in collaboration with the Corporate Communication Team. The recruitment strategy is based around understanding the profile of children who are likely to require an adoptive placement both locally and nationally.

A timetable of recruitment events across the year includes attending local community events and advertising. Monthly information events are held where those interested in adoption can come along and find out more.

The branding and Logo has been refreshed and events are advertised on radio and social media. .

Increased use of Social Media and the Website to promote Adoption Recruitment. 2017-18 will see the regionalisation of adoption agencies in Yorkshire and Humberside and a recruitment campaign is currently being designed.

10. **Procedures for Recruiting, Approving, Training, Supporting and Reviewing Carers**

- Upon receiving an enquiry from potential adopters, the service provides written information within one working day, including information on the monthly drop in sessions. An initial visit is provided to all prospective adopters within ten working days of them requesting further information.
- An initial discussion will then take place in the home of the prospective adopter(s) with an Adoption Social Worker. The Registration of Interest form is provided.
- The Team Manager decides, with the Adoption Social Worker, whether to accept a ROI giving reasons. This takes place within five working days of receipt of the Registration of Interest form. (ROI).
- If the prospective adopters are accepted on to Stage 1 of the adoption process, they are asked to complete a workbook and attend a one day initial training course.
- References are obtained from:
 - Disclosure and Barring Service
 - The Local Authority in which the prospective adopters live and where they have lived previously within the last two years.
- Enhanced DBS checks are obtained on all members of the household aged 18 years and over and other regular adult visitors.

- The prospective Adopter is required to have a medical examination completed by their GP and the report is made available to the Agency's Medical Adviser for comments about the prospective adopters' health.
- The prospective adopters are asked to identify at least three personal referees, (one of which can be a family member reference) who will provide written references and be interviewed as part of the assessment process. Employment references are also taken up as well as previous partners, if they have parented a child together.
- Prospective adopters are allocated a social worker at the beginning of Stage 1, to offer support and guidance.
- Once all checks are completed, a decision is made about their suitability to be assessed as adopters and a Manager's Decision Meeting is held. If they are felt to be unsuitable at the end of Stage 1, then the prospective adopters are informed in writing of the reasons why. If they are accepted on to Stage 2, they can undertake this at any point within six months of the Managers Decision Record and their checks are still valid.
- Upon receipt of the prospective adopter application to commence Stage 2, the assessment stage begins and is to be completed within four months'. The prospective adopters are also asked to attend four days preparation training. The information gathered and the social workers analysis of this forms the basis of the Prospective Adopter report (PAR). The report is quality assured by the Adoption Team Manager and signed before presentation to the Adoption Panel. The report is shared with the prospective adopter prior to Panel and an opportunity to discuss with the assessing social worker and include their comments provided.
- Adopters are invited to attend Adoption Panel and are supported at Panel by the assessing social worker and the support worker based in the Adoption Team.
- The Panel Chair meets the prospective adopters before Panel and provides the questions Panel members have for them.
- The Prospective Adopters are informed verbally by the Panel Chair of the Panel's recommendation and reasons.
- The prospective Adopters are informed verbally on the day of Agency Decision maker's decision.
- Applicants are then informed in writing about the Agency decision with reasons within five working days.
- Second time adopters and foster carers are immediately progressed to Stage 2.

11. **Training provided to Adopters**

Training is provided to:-

- Help adopters develop skills and have a better understanding of the adoption task.
- Improve knowledge and assist the prospective adopter in promoting the physical, social and emotional development of children and young people.
- Establish an explicit, positive framework of values which promotes equality of opportunity.
- Understand the impact that past experiences have on a child's emotional wellbeing and attachment style and behaviour.

12. **Support Services**

- All potential and approved adopters are allocated a social worker in the Adoption Team who will assess, support and match appropriate children with them.
- Support is available to adopters and to the child to ensure stability, security and permanence.
- Monthly support groups are held for adopters facilitated by Adoption Team and Therapeutic team
- A fortnightly Toddler Group for adopters and their children is facilitated by the Adoption Team.
- A duty system is in operation via the Adoption Team to provide advice and information and signpost to other Agencies if appropriate.
- An Out of Hours Service will support and advise adopters on request.
- A fortnightly play and stay group for adopters and children aged up to 11 years.
- Specialised staff within the therapeutic team offer an in-depth support service including Therapeutic parenting training and a wide range of workshops.

13. **Inter-Country Adoption**

A regional inter country Adoption Service has been established via the Yorkshire and Humber Consortium provided by Yorkshire Adoption Agency. Enquiries regarding Inter-County Adoption are signposted to this Agency.

14. **Foster Carers who wish to adopt their fostered child.**

Foster carers who make a formal application to adopt children that are in their care are entitled to the same information and preparation as other prospective adopters.

Where foster carers are accepted as potentially suitable to adopt a child in their care, they can be expected to be assessed in the same way as other prospective adopters. The assessment request will be fast tracked to Stage 2. The assessment will focus on the specific long term needs of the child in question and will consider the following:-

- The quality of the attachment between the child and the Foster Carers.
- The wishes and feelings of the child.
- The assessed ability of the foster carers to provide permanent care for the child through adoption.
- The impact on the child now and for the rest of their lives, of being adopted by these particular carers.

15. **Early Permanence Planning**

The Agency has developed a successful Early Permanence Planning procedure and has placed 19 children in early permanence placements to date.

Early permanence allows a child to be placed under Fostering regulations with approved adopters who are temporarily approved as foster carers for the child.

Additional training and support is provided for prospective adopters who have the skills and guidance to provide an Early Permanence Placement.

16. Adoption Support – General

After the making of the Adoption Order, support may also be provided if a support plan is in operation or it is decided to provide services as a result of an assessment of needs. Rotherham retains responsibility for any Rotherham child for three years following the making of the Adoption Order. A child placed in Rotherham from another area remains the placing Authority's responsibility for three years following the making of the Adoption Order. After 3 years it is the Local Authority in which the child lives who has responsibilities for assessing adoption support needs and providing services.

Adoptive parents, adopted children or any member of the household, including any other children of the adopters are entitled at any time to request an assessment of their needs for Adoption Support Services under the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005.

Adoption support services are accessed via a formal assessment of need where the request will involve on-going provision of services. Where one off support is the likely outcome, this will be provided without a formal assessment.

A significant amount of therapeutic support to adoptive families is provided in house via the Rotherham Therapeutic Team. The Manager of the Therapeutic Team is a Clinical Psychologist with an excellent understanding of the support needs of adopted children and their adopters.

Adoption Support Fund

The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was launched nationally on 1 May 2015. The aim of the fund is to reduce the gap between adoptive children needing therapeutic services and receiving them (ultimately to improve outcomes for young people and families).

The fund is available for children up to and including the age of 21. The fund will support Therapeutic Services after the Adoption Order.

Rotherham has been successful in achieving funding for Therapeutic packages of support for 59 adopted children and their adoptive families equating to £260022.23 funding in 2016 – 2017 .

PAC-UK

We commission PAC-UK (formerly After Adoption Yorkshire) to provide services to birth families and adopted adults, including birth records counselling.

Post Adoption Contact

Rotherham manages the post adoption contact arrangements for children placed in their adoptive placement and following the making of the Adoption Order.

Post Adoption Contact is facilitated via the dedicated Contact Co-ordinator.

The co-ordinator facilitates the direct and indirect contact between children, adoptive families and birth families throughout the adopted child's childhood.

The contact co-ordinator provides guidance and support to birth family members and adopters including:-

- Intermediary work
- Support to write letters
- Supporting direct contact arrangements

Financial Support

Adopters can be assessed for a means tested allowance based on the needs of the child placed and this is reviewed annually.

A start up grant of £300 is paid to facilitate the placement of every child.

Services for Birth Families

Rotherham Council recognises that adoption is a life-long process for all those involved and will provide support to birth families at all stages of the process, both during adoption and afterwards.

Counselling and support for birth families is available from PAC-UK with whom Rotherham has a Service Level Agreement.

Intermediary Services and Vetoes

Adopted adults who were adopted before 30 December 2005 are able to request that there is an absolute or qualified veto placed on their records and on the Adoption Contact Register should they wish for no contact or no contact with specified people.

Adopted adults can request Intermediary services to provide for mediated contact with birth relatives. This service is provided by PAC-UK.

Signed:
(Mel Meggs, Assistant Strategic Director)

Signed:
(Councillor Watson, Cabinet Member for Safeguarding)

Date:

Summary Sheet

Council Report

Corporate Parenting Panel April 2017

Title: Rotherham Fostering Service Performance Report 2016 – 2017

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan? No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Mel Meggs (Deputy Strategic Director, CYPS)

Report Author(s)

Anne-Marie Banks, Service Manager, Fostering and Adoption

Ward(s) Affected All

1. Summary

1.1 This report is an annual report intended to brief Corporate Parenting Panel on the business and activity within the Council's Fostering Service in 2016/17.

1.2 As well as providing data about activity in the service, this report will also detail service developments and improvements that have occurred in the year and those that are planned moving through 2017/18.

2 Recommendations

2.1 That the Corporate Parenting Panel receives this report and considers and comments on any issues arising.

List of Appendices Included:

None.

Background Papers: None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
Corporate Parenting Panel

Council Approval Required: No

Exempt from the Press and Public: No

Title (Main Report)

Rotherham Fostering Service Annual Report 2016 – 2017

1. Background

- 1.1 This report is an annual report to brief on the business and activity within the Council's Fostering Service in 2016 – 2017.
- 1.2 The report provides performance and activity data on the service, reports on the activity and functioning of the Fostering Panel, and details service developments that have occurred in the year and those that are planned moving through 2017/18.

Key Issues

2. The Fostering Service

- 2.1 Rotherham Borough Council Fostering Service operates within the Fostering National Minimum Standards, the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (the "2011 Regulations"), and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, which form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of fostering services.
- 2.2 Prior to September 2013, local authority fostering services were inspected separately by Ofsted. Since then, inspection of local authority fostering services work is incorporated into the Single Inspection Framework which takes into account the role of fostering in the wider children's services department.
- 2.3 In 2015 – 2016, the fostering service in Rotherham comprised two teams; the 'Recruitment Team' and the 'Support and Supervision Team'. In 2016 the service successfully recruited a third team manager in order to provide additional management oversight, and the team have now been separated into three teams, 'Recruitment'; which focuses on the recruitment and assessment of prospective foster carers, "Mainstream Support"; which focuses on the support and supervision of foster carers

and 'Specialist Support'; who support, supervise Foster Plus carers, Staying Put arrangements, carers providing short break care for disabled children, Private Fostering and Connected Carers.

2.4 In line with the Regulations, the service has a Fostering Panel chaired by a skilled and experienced independent social work professional. The Panel considers and makes 'recommendations' about the suitability of foster carer applicants and on the matching of children requiring long term placements.

2.5 The Head of Service for Looked After Children performs the role of Agency Decision Maker for the fostering service. The Agency Decision Maker considers and makes decisions (qualifying determinations) on Panel recommendations. The Agency Decision Maker also has responsibility to agree the continued suitability to foster following a foster carer's annual fostering review.

3. Panel Functions

3.1 Regulation 23(1) of the 2011 Regulations states that *"the fostering service must maintain a list of persons who are considered by them to be suitable to be members of a fostering Panel ("the central list"), including one or more social workers who have at least three years' relevant post-qualifying experience"*.

3.2 Regulation 23(4) states that *"...the fostering service must constitute one or more fostering Panels, as necessary, to perform the functions of a fostering Panel under these Regulations, and must appoint Panel members including:*

(i) A person to chair the Panel who, in the case of any appointment made after 1st October 2011, must be independent of the fostering service provider, and;

(ii) One or two persons who may act as chair if the person appointed to chair the Panel is absent or that office is vacant ("the vice chairs") from the persons on the central list.

3.3 Rotherham Foster Panel has the following primary functions (under Regulation 25(1) of the Fostering Regulations 2011 It is to consider each

application for approval and to recommend whether or not a person is suitable to be a foster parent (including “connected persons” under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010)

- Where it recommends approval of an application, to recommend any terms on which the approval is to be given
- It is to recommend whether or not a person remains suitable to be a foster parent, and whether or not the terms of their approval (if any) remain appropriate - (i) on the first review and (ii) on the occasion of any other review, if requested to do so by the fostering service (e.g. following allegations or complaints against foster carers)
- It matches children who have a plan for long-term fostering with suitable foster carers

4. Panel Composition

4.1 The Panel maintains a comfortable number of panel members on a central list. Each panel member who served for a year had an annual appraisal within the year 2016-2017. The panel membership includes members with a range of professional backgrounds and interests including elected members social workers, foster carers, and adopter and virtual school members. Each member has many years of experience of public service and fostering in particular. The table below provides the details of the Central List as at 31st March 2016

| Name of Panel Member | Type of Member |
|----------------------|---|
| Fred Lillie | Independent Chair |
| Jenny Hosker | Social Work Member (Locality Team Manager) and Vice Chair |
| Sue Pickering | Social Work Member (fostering team) |
| Roberta Lyne | Social Work Member (fostering team) |
| June Watson | Independent Member (foster carers for Sheffield City |

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| | Council) |
| Betty Brothers | Independent Member (foster carer for Sheffield City Council |
| Karen Holgate | Designated Nurse for Looked After Children |
| Lorraine Dale | Virtual Head (education) for Looked After Children |
| Tina Hohn | Virtual School (education) for Looked After Children |
| Jane Sandland | Social Work Member (adoption service). |
| Katie Duffield | Social Work Member (fostering team) |
| Andrew Bosmans | Independent Member |
| David Pickering | Independent Member |
| Cllr Victoria Cusworth | Elected Member |
| Sara Thomson | Social Work Member (adoption service). |

4.2 Recent recruitment to Panel in 2015 - 2016 has been Cllr Victoria Cusworth and Andrew Bosmans who joined the panel earlier this year. At the time of writing this report, a further Elected Member has expressed an interest in joining panel, and this is being progressed by business support. The panel would still benefit from:

- A young person with “care” experience (e.g. care leaver)
- A representative of the BME community

4.3 Last year a decision was taken to share the role of Panel Advisor role across the fostering management team to ensure that each manager had the opportunity to develop their skills and experience around panel matters and decision making processes. However, it quickly became apparent that this impacted on consistency around decision making and so it was decided to separate this role and delegate to the Recruitment Team Manager.

5. Panel Business 2015/16

- 5.1 There were 21 Foster Panels convened in 2016 – 2017, with 104 agenda items discussed, an average of 5 items per Panel. The table below categories these items:

| Agenda Item | Statistics |
|---|------------|
| Skills to Foster Assessment | 23 |
| Re-assessment as a single foster carer | 1 |
| Regulation 24 (connected carer) including extension, assessment update and assessment. | 9 |
| Foster carer First review | 10 |
| Review following practice issues | 2 |
| Annual Review (Biannual presentation to panel) | 13 |
| Deregistration (including resignations/retirements and end of connected carer placements. <i>*a number of presentations to panel pertained to registrations from the previous reporting year</i> | 21* |
| Long Term Matching (In House) | 6 |
| Long Term Matching (IFA) | 5 |
| Allegations / Investigations/ Disruption Reports | 12 |
| Change of category | 2 |

- 5.2 The Panel Advisor receives the draft reports to panel and gives written feedback on the quality of the reports, where appropriate, as well as practise advice. The paperwork submitted to panel is always shared seven days before Panel meets to comply with National Minimum Standards. Panel minutes are completed on a weekly basis and available for the Agency Decision Maker in a timely manner.
- 5.3 The Panel are highly motivated to check and challenge by appropriately maintaining the role of 'critical friend' to the Department with equal emphasis

on both aspects. Where appropriate the panel will offer flexibility without compromising standards. In 2016 – 2017

- 5.4 The feedback from Panel Chair indicates that the quality of reports presented to panel is generally good, with good compliance with statutory requirements, detailed information and reasonable level of analysis of information. For new approvals, all of the statutory checks are completed before presentation to panel and the practice of asking prospective foster carers to nominate more than the minimum number of personal references demonstrates good safeguarding practice. Foster carer reviews are invariably held within timescales and have detailed reports from the supervising social workers and detailed summaries and record of discussion on the part of the Fostering Reviewing Officer. Where carers are jointly approved it is normal practice for both carers to attend their review and it is rare for this not to happen. Most foster carers make a written contribution to their annual review and a good proportion of foster children and birth children also contribute. A Key focus of development in 2017 – 2018 will be to support more children's social workers to actively contribute to foster care reviews by providing written contributions to the foster care review process.
- 5.5 Most primary foster carers maintain a satisfactory training record and the fostering 'offer' to carers in 2016 – 2017 was extended to increase training opportunities to all foster carers which will be rolled out in 2017 – 2018.
- 5.7 The decision was taken earlier this year to present foster carer reviews at panel on a biannual basis. This is in-line with best practice as it enables more transparency, oversight and scrutiny of the service.
- 5.8 Training events for the Foster Panel scheduled in 2017 includes:

22nd May 2017: Private Fostering Arrangements

3rd July 2017: Reg 24 Connected Carers Training

Panel Member Training (Roles and Responsibilities) (Date to be confirmed)

Safeguarding Training (Date to be confirmed)

6. Fostering Families – Placements

- 6.1 The Fostering Service is an integral section of Children and Young People's Services, providing fostering opportunities to children in care through a range of fostering placements, which include:

Day care for foster carers who need to attend meetings or training events

Task Centred Placements which are placements for children entering care

Long term permanence placements are for children and young people who cannot return to birth family and where adoption is not the plan. Children in permanent placements remain with their foster carers up to the age of 18 years and beyond under 'Staying Put' arrangements.

Family and friends foster care (Connected Carers) enabling children and young people who are unable to live with their parents, to be cared for by extended family members, friends or other people who are connected with them

Fostering Plus is a Rotherham Borough initiative to accommodate Rotherham's most vulnerable children, typically teenagers. Fostering Plus carers receive a weekly fee and high levels of support and therapeutic intervention in managing and sustaining placement, and in developing meaningful relationships to enable children in their care to achieve better outcomes. Within this reporting year, Rotherham had recruited 4 Foster Plus carers, with 5 children in placement and 2 additional emergency foster carers within the scheme who provide emergency out of hours support for children entering carer in an emergency.

South Yorkshire Empower and Protect was a fostering scheme established through an innovation funding bid then co-produced by the four neighbouring authorities, Rotherham, Barnsley, Doncaster and Sheffield. The project provided placements for children at risk of, or subject to child sexual exploitation. Rotherham successfully recruited 4 foster carers to this scheme, providing placements for 6 of Rotherham's children in care. The local authority decided to end this arrangement in March 2017 as it is confident that Rotherham can provide this service with a high level of support and supervision from the fostering service, the therapeutic team and wider social care services. From 2017, this scheme will sit within Rotherham's Foster Plus Scheme. Intensive therapeutic provision will be provided by Rotherham's Therapeutic Team, and as Foster Plus carers, they will a higher level of supervision and a higher remuneration rate.

Aiming High for Disabled Children Families Together Scheme provides short break care for children with disabilities. The aim of this fostering provision is to provide respite for children with a disability to give a break to a family in order to enable the child to live at home. In 2016 – 2017, Rotherham had 14 Families Together carers.

7. Approvals, Deregistration and resignations

- 7.1 The negative media attention following the publication of the Jay Report and child sexual exploitation continued to impact on the recruitment of foster carers during 2015 – 2016, despite the Local Hero campaign. In the year 2014 – 2015, there were 147 enquires culminating in 18 foster carers being approved, a conversion rate of 11%. The National Average is 12%. In 2015 - 2016, there were 195 initial enquiries into the service, but this culminated in only 13 foster carers being approved a conversion rate of 7%.
- 7.2 The Fostering Service are pleased to report that in 2016 – 2017 there were 191 enquires into fostering culminating in 23 foster carer approvals, with potential placement capacity for 30 children (placements - excluding respite and short break care for disabled children); a conversion rate of 12%, putting the Fostering Service in line with the National Average.
- 7.3 There were 13 resignations during the year 2016 – 2017, which equates to 7.6 % of the in-house population; the national average being 13%. The reasons for deregistration are outlined below:

| Reason for Resignation/Deregistration | Number |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Child in care turned 18 years and remained under 'Staying Put' arrangements ' | 1 |
| Carer secured SGO for child/ren in placement This involved 3 children; a sibling group of two and a child with complicated health needs | 2 |
| Changes in circumstances, including: Moving to a smaller property without bedroom space Began working full time, (carer approved for baby placements) Retired after a long career of fostering Looked after a child under Short Break Care for Disabled Children from being a child into adulthood Respite foster carers no longer able to provide a service | 5 4 |

Of foster carers who left the service:

| Placement Type | Number |
|-----------------------|---------------|
|-----------------------|---------------|

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Family and Friends | 1 |
| Fostering mainstream | 8 |
| Respite/ day care | 4 |

- 7.4 In reference back to approvals and resignations, in 2016 – 2017; 23 new foster carers were recruited by Rotherham Fostering Service, but the service 'lost' 13, which is a net gain of 10 foster carers. In terms of placement capacity, provision increased by 31 additional potential placements, (excluding short break care for disabled children and respite only carers) and lost 9 placements, (excluding short break care for disabled children and respite foster carers); a net gain of 21 potential placement opportunities.
- 7.5 All fostering services lose carers during the year to retirement, deciding fostering is no longer for them, or that their family circumstances have changed, so there is a need to continually recruit significantly just to maintain capacity.
- 7.6 In reviewing the resignations from 2016 – 2017; 3 children had their permanency secured through Special Guardianship arrangements, (SGO), whilst this was at a loss to the fostering service, it was the best outcome for these children. In particular this permanency included a young sibling group of two children and a child with significant health needs. Another fostering family resigned as the child they were looking after had reached 18 years of age and was remaining with the family, which again is a good outcome for this young person who remains committed to him, and whilst a loss to the service is in this child's best interests. One foster carer decided to resign after committing to over 20 years of fostering for the authority. This equates to five of the nine mainstream foster carers who left the agency in 2016 -2017. In addition 4 respite only foster carers left the agency due to their family circumstance; they were not able to commit to the agency. These carers had not been able to offer a service to the agency in 2016 – 2017 but still required the statutory visits and reviews expected as foster carers. 1 'families together' carer retired after the child they had offered short breaks to turned 18 years.

7.7 Comments by carers who have left the agency have included:

"We have enjoyed fostering for Rotherham since 1994 and the decision has not been taken lightly... Thank you to everyone in fostering for giving us your support over the years".

"It has been an honour to provide foster care for Rotherham children"

"I can only sing the praises of Rotherham's fostering team...I hope to return to fostering for Rotherham at some point in the future"

"We would like to place on record our sincere thanks for the support offered by the department over the past sixteen years"

"We would like to thank RMBC for their support over the last 5 years ... for both providing us the opportunity to help and for the support you have provided us over the years".

"Due to (child) needs we are not sure when we will be able to return to fostering, but be assured ... we will definitely be back in touch... Our overall experience with Rotherham fostering has been really amazing".

"We have thoroughly enjoyed being foster carers for RMBC and we would recommend it to friends and family"

"We would very much like to return to fostering for RMBC in the not too distant future".

"We have enjoyed the experience ... We would like to thank RMBC Fostering Services for their support and encouragement and wish everybody well"

"It has been a pleasure knowing you and working with you, thank you"

7.8 At year end 2015 – 2016, the number of children placed in RMBC foster placements was 180 children. This has increased to 201 in 2016 – 2017 with

an increase in fostering households to 169. In addition to this, there are a further 8 Regulation 24 (temporary approved foster carers) looking after 10 connected children, and 1 child in the fostering stage of a fostering to adopt (early permanence placement) equating to 213 children in RMBC foster care, (44% of total number of children in care). Many of the temporary approved foster carers will go on to secure alternative permanency arrangements for the children that they are caring for, such as Special Guardianship Orders or Child Arrangement Orders, whilst the child in the early permanent placement is likely to be adopted meaning that these children will be no longer looked after children.

7.9 In 2013 – 2014 there were 163 children (41% of all looked after children) in Rotherham in-house foster care, whilst in 2014 – 2015 this had increased to 180 children (45% of all looked after children). At the time of writing this report there are 201 children placed in RMBC foster placements, (42% of all looked after children), with additional children being placed in other types of fostering provision including temporary approved foster carers and early permanency, when this is factored in, the % of children in Rotherham placements increases to 44% of the looked after population. As can be demonstrated above the numbers of children being placed with RMBC foster carers has increased year on year. However, it should also be noted that the number of children entering care continues to increase and so whilst the number of children within in-house provision increases, so too does that of children placed within IFA foster placements.

7.10 Rotherham's Sufficiency Strategy 2016 – 2020 is designed to address this matter, placing more young people within in-house foster placements, increasing placement stability and supporting young people to achieve better outcomes. Within this strategy, there are a number of themes, which include:

- Carer payment and support
- Therapeutic provision
- Edge of care support
- Regionalisation of adoption
- Reunification

- 7.11 This combined approach aims to reduce the number of children entering care, reuniting children with their families where it is safe to do so, and providing training and therapeutic provision for foster carers for children who do enter care. The foster carer enhanced payment was introduced at the end of 2016. Additional training and support will be rolled out through 2017 – 2018 whilst edge of care developments will be established in 2017. Whilst these initiatives were agreed in October 2017, the full impact has not yet been embedded.

8. Children Placed in Foster Care - Information 2016 – 2017

- 8.1 As stated above one of the significant issues that Rotherham faces is the high number of children and young people that have been placed in Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements. At the time of writing this report there were around 480 children in care compared with 442 at year end 2015 – 2016.
- 8.2 As of March 31st 2017 there were around 176 children in IFA placement which equates to 37% of the children in care population. Rotherham fostering service, however are on the right trajectory to redress this placing more Rotherham children with more Rotherham fostering families as Rotherham's in-house fostering population either live in/on the fringes of the borough which is not necessarily the case with independent fostering placements. Of those 176 children in IFA placements, despite 115 (65%) being within a 20 mile radius of their home postcode, only 39 children (22%) lived within borough. This is of concern as it is well understood that the needs of children and young people can only be met effectively if they live in an environment that provides a high quality of care and support, generally within a family home setting and in a geographical location that is familiar. Wherever possible, children and young people should be placed within their own community which enables them to continue to have contact with the people and community of the most importance to them, thus promoting identity and a strong sense of self, fundamental to resilience in later life. In addition, placing children in the RMBC area ensures a better oversight and control over

educational provision and other support services such as health and Community Adolescent Mental Health Service, (CAMHS).

8.4 The Council has recognised that it will not meet its sufficiency of placement provision for looked after children without attracting additional carers to foster for Rotherham and ensuring existing foster carers are retained and developed. As a result of this, Rotherham Borough Council has significantly invested in the support and allowances offered to foster carers to attract and retain carers as noted above, and whilst in its early stages, the fostering service are already benefitting from this 'offer', which is evidenced in the significant increase of approvals and placements 2016 – 2017.

8.5 With the increased 'offer', the commitment of the fostering service, fostering families and Rotherham's communications team, it is envisaged that the service will continue on its upward trajectory, recruiting more new carers and losing less in 2017/18.

9. Placement Stability

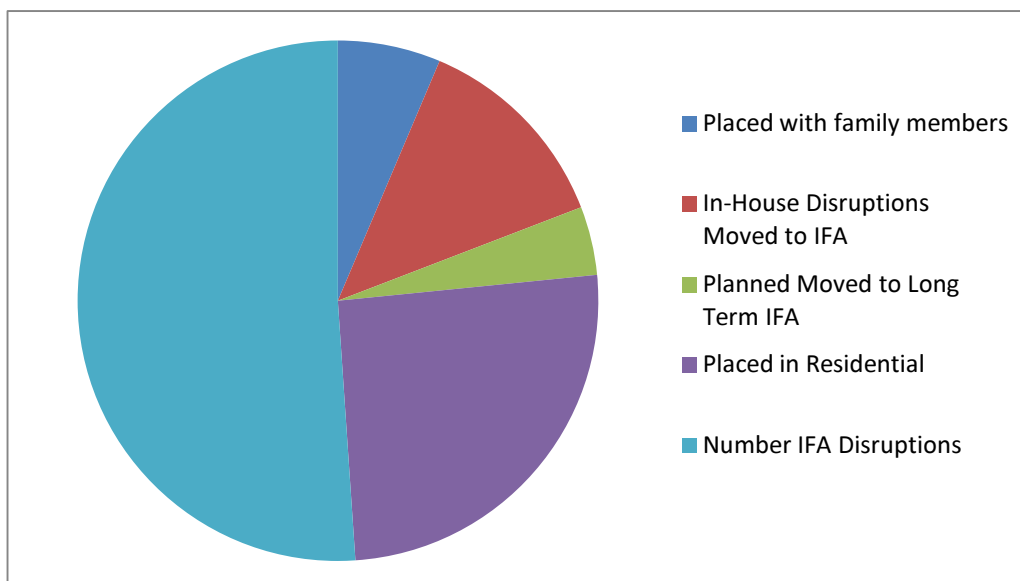
9.1 Placement stability continues to be a factor in offering an effective Fostering Service and crucial to ensuring that the Council delivers good outcomes to each looked after child. Stability is measured by 2 national indicators, NI062 relating to children who experience 3 placement moves within 12 months and NI063 which relates to children looked after for 2.5 years who have been in the same placement for 2 years.

| | Roth 2013/14 | Roth 2014/15 | Roth 2015/16 | Roth 2016/17 | England 2015/16 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| No. of long term LAC placements stable for at least 2 years (NI063) | 108/157 | 110/153 | 109/150 | 100/147 | - |
| % long term LAC placements stable for at least 2 years (NI063) | 68.8% | 71.9% | 72.7% | 68% | 67% |
| No. of LAC who have had 3 or more placements - rolling 12 months (NI062) | 44/393 | 49/409 | 56/431 | 55/487 | - |
| % LAC who have had 3 or more placements - rolling 12 months (NI062) | 11.2% | 12.0% | 13.0% | 11.29% | 11.0% |

- 9.2 There has been a decrease in performance around placement stability in 2016 – 2017 as demonstrated above. Last year the NI063 placement stability figure which was 72.7% at year-end, this year the figure is 68%.
- 9.3 Of those 47 children who have not experienced placement stability within the two year timeframe, 3 children moved out of foster placement to live with family members, two were planned moves into permanent placements, 6 were in-house fostering disruptions where the children later moved into IFA foster placements, 12 were residential placement moves, and 24 were IFA foster placement disruptions. The age range of these 47 children is profiled below:

| Age Groups | No of Children |
|--------------|----------------|
| 0 – 5 years | 2 |
| 6 – 10 years | 11 |
| 11 + years | 34 |

Children in care for 2 ½ years who have not been in stable placement for 2 years.



9.4 The national indicator NI062 has evidenced improvement in performance at end of year reporting, but at 11.29% at March 2016 is outside of the target of 10%, higher than the national average, (11%). Whilst higher than Rotherham's target, it does represent improved performance from 13% figure last year, but does need to improve further.

9.5 In terms of permanency for children in care, in 2016 – 2017, 11 fostering permanency matches were recommended by fostering panel and approved by the ADM, this compares with 26 in 2015 – 2016; a reduction in performance. This is an area that needs to be improved upon in 2017 – 2018 to avoid drift in care. Rotherham recognises that there is still work to be done around placement stability and the timeliness of permanency planning for children in care. The high turnover of locality social workers has had a detrimental impact on permanency planning, as workers have not known children well enough to confidentially progress long term matches. The fostering service did recruit a permanency worker in 2015 which improved performance in that year. However, the post is currently being dedicated to developing practice, awareness and assessing private fostering arrangements which has

previously sat outside the fostering service. Once this is embedded, the worker will lead on both areas jointly. The intention is to build a specialist knowledge in the area of permanence for children in care outside of adoption and work with the locality services and Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure that permanency planning is considered when a child enters care to avoid the drift and delay noted by OFSTED in 2014.

10. Unplanned Endings & Disruptions

- 10.1 Unplanned endings are when a foster placement ends outside of the child's care planning arrangements. A disruption occurs when a child who has been permanently matched long term within that placement moves as a result of the placement breakdown.
- 10.2 In 2015 -2016, there were 12 unplanned endings of placement involving 15 children in Rotherham foster care. In 2016 – 2017 there were 11 unplanned endings involving 12 children and 10 Rotherham fostering families. One carer left the agency following a disruption of two children. Five carers had their category of approval amended as a result of the disruption. Two carers were placed on hold until a review of the disruption could be explored and to consider their terms of approval, one carer is providing respite care for the agency.
- 10.3 Of the 11 children, 6 were long term matched, the remaining 5 children were in task centred (short term) placements. Key themes include:
 - The necessity for good matching, and information sharing even in emergency placements
 - Child's significant needs and complexity of placement
 - Communication between locality social workers, fostering and foster carers
 - The age of the child. (Of the 11 placement ends since April 2013, 8 children were 11+ years, 2 were under ten years of age, and the placement ended as a result of the carers ill-health, which led her to leave the agency, the other was younger child placed in an emergency placement with a newly approved foster carer)
 - Change of social worker
 - Over-optimistic expectations

- 10.4 This compares with 67 placement disruptions that took place, during the same timeframe from within independent fostering agencies. 8 of these children had been in placement for two years.
- 10.5 Rotherham Fostering Service take permanency for children seriously, and as a result of this the main stream fostering team manager took lead responsibility for chairing all placement disruption meeting, and began presenting these to panel. The findings of which will be presented to Corporate Parenting Panel highlighting any thematic issues and action plans later this year.

11. Staffing in the Fostering Service

- 11.1 It has been a year of change and development within the Fostering Service, which has seen the appointment of a Head of Service for Children in Care and a Service Manager. Rotherham's recruitment team manager also took the decision to retire from fostering after giving over 30 years to Rotherham Borough Council Children's Service. The foster service has also recruited a third team manager, which will increase management oversight. In terms of social workers, the service has seen the retirement of two long standing members of staff who offered many years of service to the authority. Their departure will invariably resonate with foster carers, but with the recruitment of a new generation of workers into the service, new ways of thinking and practice and the continued high level of support offered to carers, the service will go from strength to strength.

12. Fostering Supervision and Support

- 12.1 Foster Care is a demanding task involving significant responsibilities. Support to foster carers begins at the point they make contact to the service, which includes telephone support, training and assessment from the recruiting team.
- 12.2 From the point of approval, foster carers all have a dedicated supervising social worker. Best practice includes formal handover from recruitment worker to supervising social worker with the foster carer. The recruiting social worker will be consulted around matching, and in some circumstances will undertake

joint visits with the supervising social worker to support the first placement where it is appropriate to do so.

- 12.3 Foster Carers require a level of support and supervision commensurate with the tasks they perform on behalf of the Local Authority. Foster Carers are visited every six weeks, with newly approved foster carers visited / supported more intensely at the start of their fostering journey.
- 12.4 The supervising social worker continues to support and guide the foster carer through their journey through fostering, by providing guidance, support and development to the foster carer. There are no foster carers within the fostering service who do not have a Supervising Social Worker.

13. Activities and Events

- 13.1 The Fostering Service host an annual diary of events to fostering families and this is foster carer led in consultation with the department. In 2016 – 2017, this included:
- Fostering family Christmas celebration
 - Local Hero party to mark the end of the fostering fortnight
 - A Halloween Party
 - Easter Party
 - Parties in the park run throughout the summer vacation
 - Pride of Rotherham – achievement celebration for children in care
- 13.2 These events offer an opportunity for foster carers to network, normalise a child in care's experience by enabling them to spend time with other children in care, and provides informal support to foster carers. Rotherham Fostering also contributed to the Children in Care council's Eid celebration this year.
- 13.3 Rotherham host an annual celebration event for foster carers, which is generally hosted by the service in November, and in 2016, this was held at the Consort Suite. As always looked forward to, and well attended.

13.4 **Support Groups:** there are four formal support groups hosted across Rotherham and facilitated by supervising social workers and foster team manager:-

- An induction support group for carer in their first two years of fostering (Unity Centre) (morning)
- Dinnington (evening)
- Rockingham (afternoon)
- Listerdale for carers with children aged 0 – 4 years (morning)

The aim of the four support groups is to provide a greater opportunity for foster carers to participate and gain support.

Peer support: foster carers are routinely buddied up with other carers, who provide coaching and peer support to other foster carers.

Sons and Daughters groups: were run monthly, but due to the low take up of the offer, this has been reviewed to be facilitated on a quarterly basis, and targeted at children aged 11 – 16 years. Each meeting will incorporate an activity and consultation element to listen to the views of birth children involved in fostering.

14. Consultation:

14.1 In 2016 – 2017, there have been 3 foster carer forums around fees and payments, which culminated in a 'you said – we did' presentation to foster carers. Changes to the service as a result of this were:

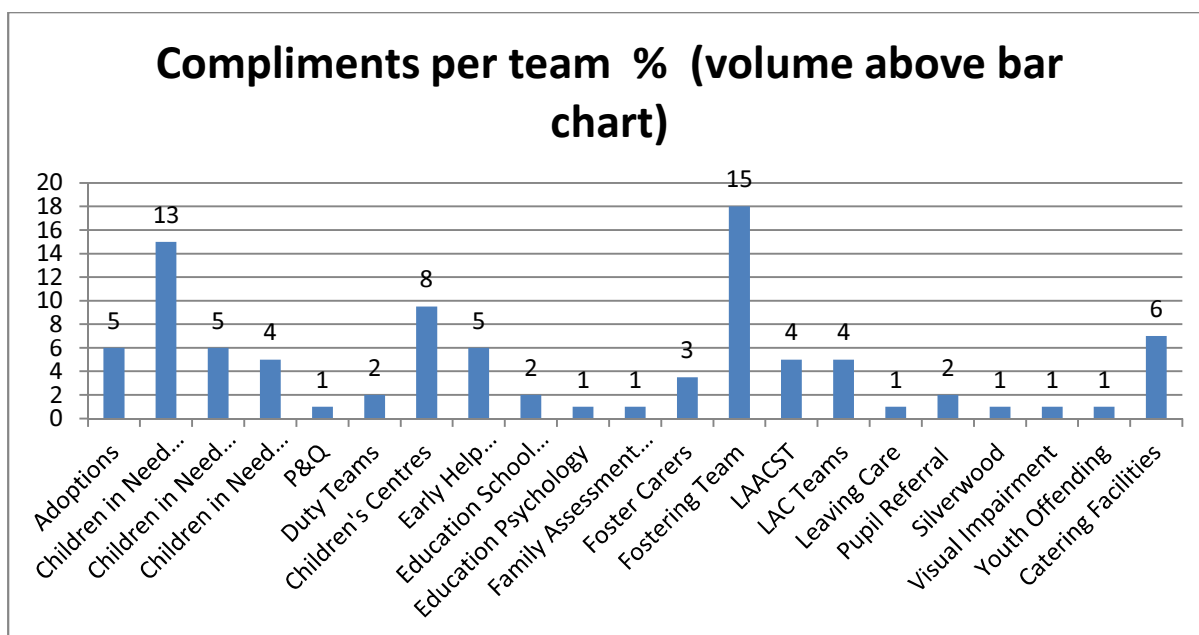
- Revised foster carer payments to attract and retain foster carers
- Introduced better training provision to be rolled out in 2017
- Introduce better support to carers in crisis with the provision of a fostering support worker to be rolled out in 2017

14.2 Rotherham foster carers were also consulted and highly involved in the 2016 Children in Care 'Pride of Rotherham' event which may in part have led to the success of this. At this event the contributions of sons & daughters in fostering was also acknowledged and celebrated with an award and certificate.

14.3 Foster carers were also consulted on a recent Oxford University research project which Rotherham Fostering were invited to contribute to. The project was entitled 'Perspectives on assessing foster carers: A cross-country comparison of the factors that are associated with successful placements'. A consultation with foster carers was held on 3rd February 2017 where 25 foster carers attended representing 20 fostering households. In addition to this another 6 foster carers were involved in a similar research project in March 2017 with Oxford University surrounding the matching process. Findings from these projects will be shared with foster carers and the Fostering Service and be used to develop the service.

15. Complaints and compliments:

15.1 There is a higher percentage of compliments about foster carers and the fostering service as compared with the wider council, and a lower percentage of complaints during the period 2016 – 2017 as demonstrated below.



15.2 The majority of the compliments are associated with Fostering and Adoption service.

- Adoptions 5
- Foster Carers 3
- Fostering Team 15

15.3 The analysis shows that 27% of all compliments received were associated to the Fostering and Adoption service. Examples of compliments as follows:

Compliment for worker: "...has been extremely supportive and is always available to discuss any issues."

"... is highly motivated and is an inspiration to all who are lucky enough to work alongside her. Thank you for your much needed support."

Compliment for Foster Carers from an adopter: "We were instantly welcomed with open arms which made all of our worries and apprehensions wash away. It felt like we had known them both forever. Straight away they made it clear that they would help us no matter what time of day it was or how far along the process we were, they would be there to support and guide us. The love and affection they have shown our child goes above and beyond what they are asked to do as Foster Carers and it amazes me how they have both put their heart and soul into our child and every child after"

Compliment for Foster Carer from a social worker: "I gave carer time with the parents in which she spoke and reassured them and they are now accepting of her caring for their baby. I am hoping this will make the discharge and handover a more positive experience for the baby and easier for the parents."

Compliment for Fostering Recruitment: "Thank you for all you have done, we are so proud and excited to be part of the Fostering Service."

Quality of service: "Congratulations a sterling piece of work for my young man."

Another good news story: "One of our foster carers received a call last week from a child that she looked after when he was two years of age. The child was rehabilitated to birth Dad, and is still with him. He has just joined the army and wanted to see her before he went away, and so she arranged for him and his Dad to visit her over the weekend. The young person says that he has no recollection of being in care, however, he also said that he felt like he has always known her and her family through the life story work and memory box that she gave to him and his Dad when he went home, so much so he wanted to meet her and see her before he went off to the army and thank her for looking after him."

15.4 Complaints. Of all the complaints into children's social care, 2% were allocated to Fostering and Adoption Team (4 in total) as detailed below:

| Stage 1 Complaints Fostering & Adoption | | |
|---|--------|----|
| Team | Volume | % |
| Fostering Team | 2 | 50 |
| Foster Carer | 1 | 25 |
| Adoption | 1 | 25 |
| Category | Volume | % |
| Quality of Service | 3 | 75 |
| Delay in Service | 1 | 25 |

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Total | 30 | 100 |
| Outcome | Volume | % |
| Upheld | 2 | 50 |
| Partial Upheld | 2 | 50 |

15.5 Lessons learned: You said – we did

| You Said | We Did | Impact |
|--|---|--|
| Child complained about Foster Carer | Support and reiteration of protocols Supervision provided to Foster Carer. All RMBC Foster Carers have received a reminder about the process of reporting a child missing. Foster Carers training planned for the missing child protocol. | Missing children will be reported following the missing child protocol. Foster Carers will be trained on this protocol |
| Unhappy that foster carers leaflet has been sent out with council correspondence | Apology was given and an explanation given why we need to advertise as widely as possible for foster carers and apologised for him receiving such information. | Apology accepted and reason understood. |
| Delay in payments to foster carer | Effective communication between locality social worker and fostering social worker. Everyone understands of the importance of getting finance and equipment right for fostering. Restructuring of fostering service – specialist team manager to manage temporary carer and families together. | The task of finances for Foster Carers is a priority. This delay should not occur in the future. |

16. Training

16.1 Rotherham Fostering has a training coordinator who plans and coordinates training and ensures that mandatory training is in place for foster carers. The table below represents examples of the training and development evidence by foster carers in 2014 -2015.

| Qualification | Number |
|--|---------------|
| CWDC Training, Support & Development Standards for Foster Care | 13 |
| Introduction to The Role of Foster Carer/Record Keeping | 19 |
| Emotional Health and Wellbeing | |
| Attachment of children in care | 33 |
| Therapeutic Parenting course | 20 |
| Managing Challenging Behaviour | |

| | |
|---|----|
| Life story work | 32 |
| | 11 |
| Safeguarding: CSE training/ E-safety for Foster Carers/SYEP 4 day course | 64 |
| Education: Epep and other courses provided by the Virtual school | 93 |
| Health: | |
| Foetal Alcohol syndrome Disorder | 27 |
| First Aid Course & Paediatric First Aid | 55 |
| Drugs and Alcohol Awareness | 20 |
| Eating Disorders | 20 |
| Cultural Awareness /Equality and Diversity | 30 |

17. Fostering Recruitment Activity and Outcomes

- 17.1 The service enjoys an excellent relationship with the Communications Team and employs its own part-time recruitment officer who covers fostering and adoption. As part of the fostering payments and support review, it was agreed to recruit a full time fostering specific marketing officer whose role would be analyse the demographics of Rotherham and build a marketing plan that not only promotes fostering, but zones into the area's most likely to generate more foster carers to Rotherham.
- 17.2 The Service hold a 6 weekly 'Foster Carer's What's On What's New' meeting with a hub of 10 foster carers who help with the recruitment activities by promoting fostering recruitment across Rotherham. They are also highly involved in promoting placement stability and fostering cohesion through a calendar of fostering family activities, parties and events as detailed previously in the report.
- 17.3 Through the year 2016 - 2017 there was a calendar of monthly recruitment activity, where the fostering service attended events to promote fostering. There are monthly drop in sessions, adverts in the local press, radio

campaigns, on line, social media and posters, postcards in and around Rotherham. Fostering is advertised in Rotherham United Football Club's match programmes, roundabout signs and bus shelter advertising.

- 17.4 The Fostering Service promotes fostering via the internet, using Fostering website www.facebook.comhttp://fosteringinrotherham.org.uk/
Facebook www.facebook.comhttp://fosteringinrotherham.org.uk/
Twitter <https://twitter.com/fosterrotherham>
<http://fosteringinrotherham.org.uk>
- 17.5 In 2016 – 2017 there was a refresh recruitment campaign to promote foster carers for older children and sibling groups, which was done in collaboration with Barnsley, Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster Trust). The filming for this was completed on 11th October 2016. Three of Rotherham Foster Carers were interviewed as part of this campaign along with foster carers from across South Yorkshire, and is now used within the live recruitment campaign on Facebook. Following filming of this a group of Rotherham foster carers were brought together to discuss the effectiveness of the video, which led on to a further filming event involving young adults who had had been looked after children. The video and images will be utilised within part of the next campaign in recruiting foster carers for teenagers/siblings which will be developed in 2017/18. Both events were funded through South Yorkshire Empower and Protect budget.
- 17.6 There is also ongoing consultation around recruiting foster carers to care for children with a disability, and this will be developed through 2017/18.
- 17.7 In order to recruit more foster carers, it is essential to maximise fostering marketing campaigns by capitalising on modern IT resources, such as Facebook, google and other intranet and IT marketing tools to reach out to more people and stimulate interest in fostering for Rotherham along with traditional recruitment events that can be streamlined to keep fostering in Rotherham on the agenda, whilst maximising our resource to recruit and assess foster carers. In this way we will be a more effective and efficient service and the marketing officer will help us to understand our marketing potential and develop a plan that build upon this year's success.

18. Key Challenges, Developments, Targets and Actions for 2016 – 2017

18.1 Whilst the service has had a successful recruitment and approval year this year, the ongoing demand will continued in 2017 – 2018, and there is no room for complacency. Rotherham Fostering Service need to continually review practices and consider innovative ways of recruiting and attracting foster carers to Rotherham to meet its target of 20 new foster placements by 2018. New schemes planned for 2017/18 include:

- Ongoing development of the STAR parties (start thinking about recruitment)
- The induction of the fostering support worker in April 2017 and ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of this in terms of fostering support and placement stability
- Out of hours – fostering specific
- The development of a better database to follow foster carers on their journey from initial enquiry to approval to be rolled out from April 2017
- The recruitment of a fostering resource worker to help recruit and retain foster carers by developing a plan that reviews
 - The strengths and vulnerabilities of the service
 - A targeted review of initial enquires into the service in the previous year to understand barriers to proceeding to assessment for potential applicants, and
 - A targeted review of carers who left the agency in the last 3 year period to understand any lessons to be learned by the service to improve practice, and
 - Consultation event with foster carers (May 2017)
- Refer a foster carer to be rolled out across RMBC
- Develop and implement a virtual assessment team
- Introduce the Mockingbird family based model of fostering to Rotherham, which is an exciting innovative way to support carers and children in care, and which will be developed in partnership with the Fostering Network to be implemented in 2017 -2018
- Raising awareness of Private Fostering

19. Summary.

- 19.1 The year 2016 – 2017 has been a successful year for Rotherham Fostering Services, with a high level of recruitment activity, foster carer approvals, and a significant increase in the numbers of Rotherham children in care being placed in Rotherham placements.
- 19.2 As with Rotherham Borough Council, Rotherham Fostering Service is on an improvement journey. There is an acknowledgment that in order to reach the sufficiency plans, Rotherham Fostering need to recruit and retain more foster carers, enabling Rotherham Looked After Children to be placed within the community which they know and where they belong. The Fostering Service are motivated and up to the challenge. The recent review of the fostering service has enabled the service to better know its strengths and challenges and along with a renewed recruitment and marketing strategy the service is confident that its ambitions will be realised.

20. Options considered and recommended proposal

That the DLT accept and recommend this report.

21. Consultation

Not applicable

22. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

Not applicable

23. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 23.1 There are no direct financial implications to this report. The Fostering Team, in conjunction with Service Manager and Head of Service continues to monitor the Fostering Team spend in line with RMBC finance team.

24. Legal Implications

24.1 There are no direct legal implications to this report, save to say that the Fostering Team operate within the relevant statutory framework set out earlier in this report, together with Statutory Guidance and the Council's policy and procedures.

25. Human Resources Implications

25.1 There are no direct human resource implications to this report.

26. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

26.1 Not applicable.

27. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

27.1 There are no direct implications within this report, other than to say that the Fostering Team are compliant with the Human Rights Act and Equal Opportunities Policy.

28. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

28.1 Not applicable.

29. Risks and Mitigation

29.1 Strong managerial oversight by Directorship Leadership Team along with fortnightly Performance Management Meetings mitigates risks by holding managers and workers to account for practice and enabling a climate for managers to check and challenge practice across services.

30. Accountable Officer(s)

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Ian Walker Interim Head of Services, Children in Care

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Approvals Obtained from:-

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HR Business Consultant (if appropriate):-Theresa Caswell

Name and Job Title.

Anne-Marie Banks Service Manager, Adoption, Fostering and Therapeutic Team

Ian Walker Head of Services, Children in Care

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Summary Sheet

Council Report

Corporate Parenting Panel –2017

Title: Rotherham Fostering Statement of Purpose 2017-2018

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan? No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Thomas (Deputy Strategic Director)

Report Author(s)

Anne Marie Banks (Service Manager – Fostering & Adoption)

Ward(s) Affected All

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report comprises Rotherham's Statement of Purpose 2017 – 2018.
- 1.2 The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (Standard 16) and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (Regulation 3(1)) state that Fostering Service Providers must compile a written statement in relation to the Fostering Service; a 'Statement of Purpose', which details the aims and objectives of the Fostering Service and the services and facilities provided by the Fostering Service.
- 1.3 This Statement of Purpose has been prepared in accordance with these requirements of the standards and regulations and will be a useful source of information to Members of the Council, staff, foster carers and prospective

foster carers and children and young people who are placed with Rotherham carers. It will also provide a comparator benchmark for Rotherham children placed with Independent Fostering Agencies.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Corporate Parenting Panel receives this report and considers and comments on any issues arising

List of Appendices Included: Fostering Service Statement of Purpose
2017 -18

Background Papers: None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Corporate Parenting Panel - 25th April 2017

Council Approval Required: Yes

Exempt from the Press and Public: No

14. Options considered and recommended proposal:

Not applicable

15. Consultation

Not applicable

16. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

Not applicable

17. Financial and Procurement Implications

17.1 There are no direct financial implications to this report.

18. Legal Implications

18.1 There are no direct legal implications to this report, save to say that the Fostering Team operate within appropriate legislation, such as the Children Act 1989, Fostering National Minimum Standards and requirement and RMBC policy and procedures.

19. Human Resources Implications

19.1 There are no direct human resource implications to this report.

20. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

20.1 The Fostering Statement of Purpose relates to services for foster carers and children in care and sets out Rotherham's commitment to placing Rotherham children with Rotherham families.

21. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

21.2 There are no direct implications within this report, other than to say that the Fostering Team are compliant with the Human Rights Act and Equal Opportunities Policy.

22. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

Not applicable.

24. Accountable Officer(s)

Mel Meggs, Deputy Strategic Director CYPS
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Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Children and Young People's Services

Fostering Service Statement of Purpose



2017/2018

This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirements of Standard 1 of the Fostering Services Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act, 2000) and Regulations 3 and 4 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

Forward by Councillor Watson

“As Corporate Parents, all Councillors are part of the team around the child in Rotherham and it is vital that we listen to the views of young people. They know the issues they face and how services can support them, so young people’s input continues to be at the heart of how we shape our work to meet their needs.”

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Rotherham Fostering Service

1. Introduction

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (Standard 16) and the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (Regulation 3(1)) state that the Fostering Service Provider must compile a written statement in relation to the Fostering Service, a 'Statement of Purpose', which details the aims and objectives of the Fostering Service and the services and facilities provided by the Fostering Service. The National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Service Regulations govern the work of the Fostering Service Providers throughout England and will be used in inspecting and registering Fostering Agencies. The work of the Fostering Service is underpinned and guided by legislation and by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's policies and procedures.

This Fostering Statement of Purpose has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the standards and regulations and will be a useful source of information to Members of the Council, staff, foster carers and prospective foster carers and children and young people who are placed with Rotherham carers. It will also provide a comparator benchmark for Rotherham children placed with Independent Fostering Agencies.

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, at least annually and modified as necessary. In accordance with Fostering Regulation 4b, the Fostering Service will notify the Chief Inspector of any revision within twenty-eight days, for the purposes of this Statement the twenty-eight days will be taken from the point of ratification by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (or Lead Member for Children and Young People's Services)

2. Principles and Values of the Fostering Service

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Looked After Children Statement sets out a number of principles and these principles underpin and inform the Fostering Service:-

- A child or young person should only become Looked After by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council if it is clearly in their best interest and there are no other suitable options;
- As a general principle, the provision of accommodation for a child/young person is on the assumption that the arrangements are short-term and aimed at uniting the child/young person with their parents or other person with parental responsibility within a short timescale, unless contrary to safeguarding their health and well-being;
- The Authority is committed to meeting the needs of vulnerable children and families through the use of resources, according to agreed protocols and procedures;

- No child or young person will become Looked After if it is considered to be contrary to their longer term needs or best interests;
- No child or young person will become Looked After solely because a cost-effective material resource has not been made available;
- No child or young person will become Looked After solely for reasons of family homelessness, inadequate housing or educational problems;

In addition, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Fostering Service:-

- Recognise that the needs of Looked After Children are paramount;
- Recognise the value, skill and commitment required of foster carers and treat them, their families and homes with respect;
- Aim to provide a range of quality placements to meet the identified needs of children who require substitute care;
- Are committed to maintaining siblings together wherever possible and promoting positive contact with family members;
- Are committed to engaging other agencies in the assessment of the needs of children and working together to clarify roles and ensuring that their needs are understood and prioritised;
- Recognise that many children will have had damaging experiences prior to placement in substitute care, as well as the effects of separation and loss;
- Recognise their mental health needs may be complex and their need for understanding of their past and access to therapeutic input is essential;
- Recognise that foster carers caring for damaged young people will encounter unknown situations on a daily basis and their own support needs need to be assessed and appropriate support systems deployed;
- Recognise that foster carers who are caring for the majority of Rotherham's Looked After Children are very valuable assets and that their time and commitment is worthy of a reasonable remuneration system;
- Recognise that all staff and carers involved in meeting the needs of children with complex needs require a robust commitment to training and learning opportunities;
- Recognise that foster carers are an integral part in supporting Looked After Children in reaching their educational potential;
- Recognise children with disabilities as children first. The same principles of service apply, while accepting that additional support services will be required to meet all their needs;

- Recognise the transition into adulthood is a major step requiring positive daily living support and enhanced connections with the adult world of opportunity and responsibility;
- Are committed to facilitating young people remaining in the foster placement into early adulthood wherever possible and that a flexible range of accommodation and support options to meet different levels of need will be a factor in the services for young people leaving care;
- Are committed to implementing the Children's Workforce Development Council's standards for foster carers and will support carers in achieving the standards.

3. Aims and Objectives

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Fostering Service are committed to working with service users, carers, the wider community and partner agencies to promote the welfare of the Looked After Children and improve their life chances by providing services which:-

- Support families;
- Provide stable, safe effective alternative care at the right time and for the right length of time and which are responsive to individual needs, circumstances and choice;
- Maintain continuity of educational provision.

In meeting these aims and objectives, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council will work to secure 'sufficient accommodation' as required by Section 22G of the Children Act, 1989 (as inserted by the Children and Young People Act, 2008) which places a general duty on Local Authorities to secure sufficient accommodation within their boundaries to meet the needs of Looked After Children. Accommodation should be sufficient, not only in number of beds provided but also in respect of diversity and quality of provision available. Local Authorities need to demonstrate that they are taking steps at a strategic level to secure accommodation as is 'reasonably practicable'.

Reasonably practicable is defined as:-

- Appropriate;
- Near the child's home;
- Does not disrupt the child's education or training ;
- Enables the child to live with accommodated siblings;
- Within the area and suitable.

The key objectives in providing quality placements are underpinned by the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011 and are:-

- To provide placement choice and positive matching of a child with a placement through identification of child's needs and taking account of any wishes and feelings of the child. (NMS 1, 10);

- To, where possible and appropriate provide a placement that is in reasonable proximity to a child's home and addresses the child's culture and heritage. (NMS 2);
- To, where possible, provide and support a placement within the child's extended family network. (NMS 2, 9);
- To promote an environment that ensures adequate safeguarding measures are in place for the child and the culture within the foster home promotes models and supports positive behaviour through adherence to policies and the skills of the foster carer. (NMS 3, 4, 5);
- That where possible and in the best interests of the individual children, as identified within assessed needs, siblings should be placed together. (NMS 2, 9);
- To allow the promotion of proactive, positive health care and well-being thorough Safer Care policies, promotion of child interests and aptitudes, access to relevant leisure opportunities and Health professionals. (NMS 6,7);
- To promote the maximisation of educational opportunities and achievements for children through access to relevant support and professionals. (NMS 8);
- To ensure placements wherever possible have planned beginnings and endings. (NMS 11);
- The promotion of positive contact with family and friends through effective care planning. (NMS 9);
- To listen to the children and young people and involve them in decision making. (NMS 1);
- To work in partnership with parents. (NMS 8);
- To provide stability of placement - a minimum number of moves for each child. (NMS 11);
- To minimise the length of time between a child becoming looked after and moving to a permanent placement, if this is required. (NMS 11);
- To prepare young people for independence and facilitate a smooth transition into adulthood (NMS12);
- Standards of care for effective planning for the transition of care to independence. (NMS 12).

4. Services Provided

The Fostering Service is an integral section of Children and Young People's Services and offers a comprehensive service to Looked after Children and Young People, operational teams, approved and prospective mainstream and family and friends foster carers.

The Fostering Service aims to provide suitable placements for all children and young people who are looked after in Rotherham and offers a range of foster placements:-

Task centred foster placements for children of all ages needing emergency and short term placements;

Respite care, offering time-limited breaks to families;

- Day care for foster carers who need to attend meetings or training events;
- Long term permanence placements for children and young people who cannot return to birth family and where adoption is not the plan;
- Family and friends foster care to enable children and young people who are unable to live with their parents, to be cared for by extended family members, friends or other people who are connected with them;
- Fostering Plus - a scheme to accommodate young people with the most complex and challenging needs including children subject to or at risk from child sexual exploitation. Fostering Plus carers will receive a weekly fee and a higher level of support, including wraparound support from our Looked After and Adopted Children Therapeutic Support Team.

The needs, wishes, welfare and safety of Looked After Children are at the centre of the Rotherham Fostering Service. We believe that all children and young people needing substitute care, have the right to live within a safe and nurturing family environment which meets their needs throughout childhood and which enables them to realise their full potential.

The Fostering Service is designed to operate within the corporate vision and values of the Council.

- A person may not foster more than three children in each foster home, except where all children are siblings. Applications for exemptions will usually be made because of the following exceptional circumstances:-
- The child concerned was previously placed with the foster carers and his or her placement elsewhere has disrupted;
- The foster carers have special skills to meet the child's needs which are not available elsewhere;
- The placement of the child over the limit is the most appropriate way of meeting the child's needs arising from disability, race, religion, language and/or culture;
- The placement is required to keep the siblings together.

The application can only be made with the agreement of the foster carers and the application is made to and agreed by the Agency Decision Maker. All exemptions will be reported to the next available Fostering Panel for ratification. The Fostering Panel will have responsibility for the ongoing monitoring of the exemptions.

5. Recruitment, Approval and Assessment of Foster Carers

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Fostering Service has a recruitment and retention strategy which is based upon the needs of Looked After Children.

The aim is to have a choice of placements to meet the individual needs of every child; recruitment of foster carers is a major priority for the service and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

The recruitment and retention strategy is reviewed annually.

Foster carers are recruited by a variety of methods, including personal recommendation or media campaigns highlighting a particular area of need. Adverts or articles placed in newspapers, on television or radio, use of posters, distribution of information leaflets, attendance at local shows, fetes and other public access centres.

There are two stages to the assessment process:

- Stage 1 (this should take no more than two months and commences when an enquirer's registration of interest in fostering is accepted.)
- Stage 1 of the assessment process provides the enquirer with sufficient information to decide if fostering is suitable for the family; it also provides the Fostering Service with sufficient information about an applicant's suitability to progress to a more detailed assessment without unnecessary bureaucracy or expenditure of time and resource for either the enquirer or the Fostering Service; this includes a medical assessment, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, Local Authority checks and two references.
- Stage 2 (this stage should take no longer than four months) is a more detailed assessment of an applicant's suitability to foster. It determines the applicant's capacity to meet the needs of any child/children likely to be placed with them.
- The assessment is completed using the Fostering Network Skills to Foster template and guidance via a social worker, undertaking a series of visits to the applicant's home.
- Applicants are encouraged to undertake self-assessment during the process and are given regular feedback throughout the process. The assessment is carried out in line with National Minimum Fostering Standards 2011 and Fostering Services Regulations 2011.
- Applicants are expected to attend the Skills to Foster Pre-Approval Training course; this provides the applicants with an opportunity to learn much more about fostering on a programme facilitated by fostering social workers and approved foster carers.
- The Fostering Service recognises and values the contribution of existing foster carers to the recruitment process and actively supports their involvement in recruitment activity. As such, foster carers co-facilitate the pre-approval training

with Fostering Service social workers. The course runs over three days and is an integral element of the assessment process.

- The course introduces applicants to the challenges of foster care, the kinds of experiences children may have had and why they may behave in certain ways; it provides information about professionals that foster carers work with and sets out expectations of being a foster carer.

6. The Fostering Panel

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has two Fostering Panels a month. The Panel is convened in accordance with the National Minimum Standards and Fostering Services Regulations 2011. The Panel considers all matters relating to fostering, family and friends care and matching children to long term placements. The assessing social worker completes a report and presents the report to the Fostering Panel, which will consider the application and make a recommendation about the applicant's suitability to foster. The Panel makes a recommendation to either approve or not approve as a foster carer.

The Panel's recommendation is considered by the Agency Decision Maker. The Agency Decision Maker for Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council is the Head of Service for Looked After Children, Fostering and Adoption. The National Minimum Standards 2011 (14.10) states that the Agency decision must be conveyed orally within two working days of being made. The assessing social worker will be responsible for conveying this decision. The Panel Administrator will inform the applicants of the decision in writing within five working days.

On approval, a supervising social worker will be allocated to the foster carer.

Where an applicant does not agree with the Agency Decision, the applicant may make representation to the Agency within 28 days of the decision or make representation to the Independent Review Mechanism for the Agency decision to be reviewed independently by an alternative independent panel. The independent review panel does not have the power to change the decision but can refer the matter back to the Local Authority Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker for reconsideration if the independent panel disagrees with the Agency decision.

7. Supervision of Foster Carers

The service recognises that supervision and support for carers is vital. It is important that the carers' work is recognised as providing the major component in meeting the needs of Looked After Children in Rotherham.

Carer satisfaction and retention is essential for a healthy Fostering Service.

All carers (including family and friends carers) have an identified supervising social worker. The supervising social workers visit carers regularly (NMS21) to monitor the

standards of care provided, assist the carer to play their part in the child's Care Plan and identify any training and development needs.

Supervising social workers are responsible for ensuring that the care offered to children in foster care meets the required standards.

The supervising social worker visits and telephones the carer regularly whilst the child is in placement. Home visits to the foster carers take place at a minimum of six weekly intervals. These can be increased as assessed need determines, for example, fostering households where there are exemptions, newly-approved foster carers who require a higher intensity of support, placements where more challenging and complex children and young people are placed, or placements where additional support, guidance, training or education is required by the carer.

As part of the monitoring of the work of foster carers, there will be at least one annual unannounced visit by the Supervising social worker to the foster carers' home (as stipulated in NMS 21:8).

8. Foster Carer Reviews

In accordance with Fostering Service Regulation 28, all approved carers undergo an annual review, which is chaired by the Foster Carer Reviewing Officer. The Foster Carer Reviewing Officer is independent of the Fostering Service, and is situated and managed within the Safeguarding Team. The first review following approval is always presented to the Fostering Panel (Regulation 25(5)). Subsequent annual reviews may also be presented to the Fostering Panel in situations where termination of approval is sought, when significant changes in the terms of approval are being considered, where there are major concerns about suitability of the carer or following the investigation of any allegations against the carer. Rotherham has recently implemented the practice standard of the review being formally presented to panel on at least a bi-annual basis in order to re-enforce the safeguarding aspect of this process.

The main aim of the review is to determine whether the carers' approval continues to be suitable and whether there should be any changes in the terms of the registration.

The review is an opportunity to look at the progress the carer has made and to set targets and goals for the next year; within the Personal Development Plan, training, learning and development needs are also assessed and identified; a recommendation for future approval is made by the Supervising social worker and IRO.

Quarterly meetings take place between the Fostering Service and the Independent Reviewing Officers to identify any quality assurance issues and as a means to monitor and review.

9. Family and Friends Foster Carers

A social worker is identified in the Recruitment Team to undertake Family and Friends Assessments, including those placed under Regulation 24 (Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010). Regulation 24 placements are approved by a nominated person (the Agency Decision Maker) at the point of placement.

The Fostering Panel is notified of all placements made and full assessments are returned to the Fostering Panel for a recommendation to be made.

Recommendations from the Panel are then considered by the Agency Decision Maker.

There is an identified social worker in the Supervision Team who supports and supervises carers approved under the Family and Friends category. Family and Friends foster carers access the foster carer support groups. In addition, there is a facility for a specific support group for family and friends foster carers as and when the need arises.

10. Training

The Fostering Service Regulations 2011 (17 (1)) states that the Fostering Service must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them.

Standard 20, 'Learning and Development of Foster Carers': Outcome and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011 states that 'Foster carers receive the training and development they need to carry out their role effectively'.

A clear framework of training and development is in place and this is used as the basis for assessing foster carers' performance and identifying their training and development needs. Training, learning and development of foster carers are also key elements of the Foster Carers Charter 2011.

The role of all foster carers is valued by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council; there is a strong commitment to ensure that foster carers have access to the right support and development opportunities. Training and development is an intrinsic part of fostering. Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has a clear expectation that all foster carers will participate in training offered by the Authority as fully as possible. There is an expectation that foster carers will complete the CWDC Training, Support and Development Standards portfolio and this expectation is endorsed by Fostering Panel on approval.

These opportunities enable foster carers to meet the often complex needs of the children and young people for whom they care and to develop skills and knowledge to keep the foster family and the fostered children safe and protected.

It is also important that foster carers are able to document and evidence their skills and knowledge throughout their fostering career.

Learning and development within Rotherham Fostering Service is comprised of three tiers:-

- Pre-approval;
- Induction;
- Continual personal development.

The training policy details the elements contained in each of these tiers, the requirements of the Children's Workforce Development Council, the associated standards as well as outlining the variety of training methods employed.

Foster carers' training needs are constantly monitored by supervising social workers and formally evaluated through annual reviews of the carers' terms of approval.

Each foster carer has a Personal Development Plan, as required within Section 7 of the CWDC standards, drawn up in conjunction between the Fostering Supervising social worker and foster carer.

The Personal Development Plan is reviewed annually at the Foster Carer Review by the Independent Reviewing Officer, the foster carer and the Fostering Supervising social worker.

All foster carers are provided with their own Continual Professional Development Portfolio. This is used to record evidence of training undertaken, record self-reflection on what has been learned from each developmental activity and how it affects the carer's care and practice.

The Portfolio includes the following:-

- Foster Care Training Policy and Agreement;
- Initial PDP;
- Subsequent Reviews of the PDP;
- Reflective learning logs;
- Certificates;
- Other relevant documents (ex. questionnaires) ;

It is a requirement that foster carers access a minimum of three development activities annually.

A Payment for Skills Scheme is in operation and foster carers can progress through the Skills Levels 1 to 3 by developing a portfolio of evidence of skills, abilities and knowledge they have in meeting the required criteria. One element of the criteria is that carers must have completed specified training or development activities, such as CWDC training, support and development standards for foster carers.

11. Support to Foster Carers

11.1 Fostering Supervising Social Workers

Each foster carer is linked with a supervising social worker, who visits regularly to provide support and supervision.

They monitor standards of care, encourage high standards and help the carer manage problems which arise. They are also available for telephone consultation and liaise with the social worker for the child.

11.2 Independent Support

Foster carers are eligible for individual membership of The Fostering Network. This allows them access to advice and support, including legal advice, independently of the service. In respect of support during serious allegations or complaints against foster carers, independent support is provided via Foster Talk.

11.3 Support for Foster Carers and their families

There are four support groups facilitated across the borough, which are run at various times of the day to maximise foster carers opportunity to attend one of these. Each provides expert speakers on matters of interest and an opportunity for carers to share and problem solve together. One of the support groups is specifically aimed at newly approved foster carers to support their learning and development in their first year of fostering.

There is also a support group for the sons and daughters of foster carers.

In addition, newly approved foster carers are supported by being linked up with an experienced foster carer as 'buddies'.

11.4 Websites

Information is available on Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's website about the fostering task, with clear links to the recruitment sites.

There is also a specific fostering website for people interested in fostering, (www.fosteringinrotherham.org.uk)

Rotherham Fostering also has an active Facebook and Twitter account, which are used to share information about fostering and events, share success stories, and promote recruitment:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/fosteringinrotherham.org.uk

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/fosterrotherham>

11.5 Out of Hours Service

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has an Out of Hours Team and foster carers can contact this team of social workers outside of office hours, should the need arise.

11.6 Rotherham Therapeutic Support Team

Therapeutic services/advice/support is provided by Rotherham's Therapeutic Support Team and by other CAMHS providers through a single point of access. Rotherham's Therapeutic Support Team is managed by a Clinical Psychologist and is made up of three qualified therapeutic staff, a social worker and usually has within the team an additional two trainee Psychologists who provide therapeutic support and consultation under the supervision of the Clinical Psychologist. Regular consultation is given to the Fostering Service by this team, who also provide training to staff and foster carers. This team will expand through 2017 to two Clinical

Psychologists and one post Special Guardianship Order Social Worker, one post Adoption Support Social Worker and four Therapeutic Workers

11.7 The Virtual School

Education is a key priority for Looked After Children in Rotherham. Improving educational outcomes for Looked After Children is actively supported by the Corporate Parenting Panel. Foster carers are expected to support and encourage children in their education and develop good working relationships with the foster child's school. Rotherham has a 'Virtual School' which provides guidance and support to Looked After Children and their carers in relation to education. This team recognises that education is life-long learning, and thus provides training to foster carers on Personal Education Plans and the education of Looked After Children, including pre-school, primary, secondary education, and beyond.

11.8 Leaving Care Service

The Fostering Service works closely with the Local Authority Leaving Care Service, which is responsible for providing support and guidance to all Looked After Children post-16 years and those leaving care.

The Local Authority has recently transferred the Staying Put/Supported Lodgings Co-ordinator post to the Fostering Service with a view to increasing the number of foster carers converting to supported lodgings carers to offer Staying Put placements to young people in their care when they reach age 18. The Local Authority is committed to providing Staying Put placements to as many care leavers as possible and we see the transfer of this post into the Fostering Service as a positive development in helping us to achieve this.

In addition, the Local Authority also manages a Post-16 Accommodation Project, which includes two semi-independent homes for care leavers providing sixteen placements in total as well as several dispersed properties and an outreach service for care leavers in their own tenancies.

11.9 Health

Rotherham has a named nurse to promote the health of Looked After Children. Carers are expected to actively promote the well-being of children in their care. The Looked After Nurse provides a link into a wider LAC Health Team to ensure effective co-ordination and delivery of Health Services to Looked After Children.

In addition, Rotherham also has a named nurse specifically to meet the health needs of children subject to CSE.

11.10 Child's Social Worker

Social workers for children in placement have an important role to play in supporting foster carers. The dedicated Looked After Children's Social Work Team ensures this support is consistent. They provide essential information about the child and family background, inform the foster carer about the plans for the child and involve them in the care planning process. It is an important part of their role to represent the wishes and feelings of the child, especially where the child is very young and less able to do this him/herself.

The child's social worker carries out statutory requirements in relation to the child, including statutory visits, ensuring reviews and medicals take place and that the plans for the child are progressed without delay.

11.11 Annual Events

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has four annual events for foster carers. The first event is the Celebration Party for foster carers and children as part of Fostering Fortnight in May. The second event (generally in November) is the Foster Carer Celebration Dinner. The third event is the Christmas Party for foster carers and children in December, and the fourth is the Fostering Easter Event.

In addition to this, Rotherham Fostering Families are very proactive in working with the service to promote an annual calendar of events, including family activities during the summer holidays and recruitment events.

The purpose of these events is to thank carers for all their hard work and acknowledge their dedication to children and families. It is also an opportunity for carers to meet with one another, with Children and Young People's Services' staff and Elected Members in a pleasant and informal setting.

11.12 Consultation with Foster Carers

Consultation with foster carers takes place on a number of levels, at training events, at support groups and in surveys focusing on specific topics.

One recent example of a consultation with carers was a consultation meeting called for all carers about the development of additional foster carers support groups. Foster carers told us that they wanted:

- A choice of which support group they could attend
- Attendance linked to progression

- Time and space to informally chat to and support each other

In addition, carers participating in the consultation supported the Service's plan to develop two new support groups.

11.13. Right2Rights Service

Rotherham's Right to Rights Service (R2R) actively seeks to work directly with all Looked After Children; they provide an individual advocacy service, facilitate involvement in voice and influence opportunities and provide information in creative and imaginative ways. Their work includes supporting Young Rights Representatives, such as the Orchard Flyers, which is a rights group for children and young people who access Disability Short Break Services at the Orchard Centre.

Looked After Children entering the service are visited by the R2R service and are given a Promise Pack containing useful information booklets and resources which aids the capture of important information and experiences as these children journey through care.

R2R encourage Looked After Children to contribute to their statutory review by supporting their attendance and the development of personal skills and understanding of the process. They have developed initiatives such as the Online Review Form, where each child receives a letter prior to their review encouraging them to fill in a consultation paper and the process to follow. Looked After Children can communicate with this service via telephone, text messaging, communication cards and e-mail links via the R2R website.

12. Structure of the Fostering Service

The Rotherham Fostering Service reports to the Members of the Council. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services is Councillor Gordon Watson. The Chief Officer responsible for the Service is Ian Thomas, Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services.

Responsibility for Social Care is delegated to Mel Megs, Director of Safeguarding, Children and Families.

The Head of Service for Looked After Children, is Ian Walker, who takes strategic lead for Children in Care, including Fostering and Adoption.

The Service Manager for Fostering and Adoption is Anne-Marie Banks.

There are two Fostering Team Managers, one for recruitment and the other for support and supervision of foster carers. There are three managers covering these posts presently, namely Yvonne Howe, Carol Stickland and Clive Purniss. There are also plans to appoint a third manager within the fostering service.

All managers in the service hold a social work qualification, as well as management qualifications and post-qualification experience in services for children.

13. Staff in the Fostering Service

The Fostering Recruitment Team is made up of ten social workers, one training officer, and the Supported Lodgings Co-ordinator.

The Fostering Supervision Team is made up of twelve social workers

The Service also has a marketing officer who works across both the Fostering and Adoption Service.

The staff of the Fostering Service are recruited and managed following the principles of positive selection, supervision, induction and appraisal processes of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and incorporating practice outlined in the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards 2011.

The service has social workers and administrators. A training officer based in the team leads on the training and the development of foster carers and completion of the CWDC training, support and development standards workbook. The service also has a marketing officer who is responsible for the Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy and Plan (as well as that of the Adoption Service).

All social workers within the team have a social work qualification and previous experience of working with children and families and are subject to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's corporate standards for continuous professional development.

All staff are subject to the Council policy on recruitment, staffing, equal opportunities and discipline. All social workers are subject to enhanced D.B.S. checks; administrative staff have D.B.S. checks.

Administrative support is primarily delivered by the Fostering Team clerks, who are managed within a small Administrative Team for the Family Placement Service.

A full list of the social work staff of the service (together with qualifications and experience) is included in Appendix 1.

14. Monitoring, Evaluation and Management of the Service

Regular performance and statistical information is collected in relation to the work of the Fostering Service. Performance information about the Service is reported to the Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker, the Director of Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting and Elected Members via the Corporate Parenting Panel.

In 2015 – 2016 13 foster carers were assessed and approved, and in 2016 – 2017 this increased to 23 fostering families being successfully assessed and approved as Rotherham Foster Carers.

At the end of year 2015 – 2016 the number of children in RMBC foster placements was 180 children. This has increased to 201 children being placed with 169 fostering households.

A number of quality assurance measures are in place to monitor the quality of the Fostering Services.

- Fostering Panels are Chaired by an Independent Person and regular liaison takes place between the Chair of the Panel and the Fostering Service to identify any quality assurance issues and training requirements;
- Reviews of foster carers are undertaken by a Foster Carer Reviewing Officer and these are presented to Foster Panel bi-annually. This was a change in practice in 2016 – 2017 when previously Reviews were presented at panel in line with National Minimum Standards, namely following the first year of fostering, change in circumstances or following a safeguarding investigation. The aim of this is to ensure best practice with Panel having greater scrutiny over the practice and compliance of the service.
- All papers presented to the Panel are quality assured by the relevant Team Manager and the Fostering Panel Advisor;
- Foster carers have access to the complaints procedure;
- File audits are undertaken by the Fostering Managers within a Quality Assurance Framework;
- A Supervision Performance Audit Tool has been devised and is placed on the front of each foster carer's file to ensure relevant checks are up-to-date and that actions from reviews have been completed;
- The Fostering Service has and will continue to undertake periodic satisfaction surveys of foster carers; in addition, the CYPS Performance Team undertakes satisfaction surveys of newly-approved foster carers and 'journey mapping' activity of both prospective and registered foster carers;
- All staff have regular supervision and annual Performance Development Reviews.

15. Equalities and Diversity Issues

The Rotherham Fostering Service is committed to promoting Equal Opportunities in every aspect of its service. Training on equality and diversity is strongly promoted during the preparation process for new foster carers and forms part of the assessment. Ongoing training on equality and diversity is provided to all approved foster carers.

The need to recruit foster carers who are representative of the general population is reflected in the recruitment and retention strategy for foster carers, with a particular emphasis on the developmental work with the black and ethnic communities of Rotherham. All promotional material makes it clear that foster carers from across the population are needed, including same sex carers, older carers and carers from the black and minority ethnic communities. Management information in the gender, race and disability of existing foster carers is analysed on a regular basis.

The Service has succeeded in recent years in increasing the number of carers in the Service who are from different ethnic minority backgrounds and in recruiting same sex foster carer couples.

Specialised Fostering Services for children with disabilities are provided through the Families Together Scheme. Management information on race, gender and disability of the children requiring a fostering service are analysed on a regular basis.

16. Allegations against Foster Carers

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Fostering Service:-

- Recognise the crucial role that foster carers play in looking after its most vulnerable children;
- Acknowledge that Looked After Children may exhibit behaviour that can be damaging, both to themselves and those around them;
- Acknowledge that dealing with Child Protection concerns, serious incidents and complaints is a stressful and difficult time for foster carers and their families;
- Will ensure that enquiries are progressed in a way that is fair and open to the carer and their family as well as to the child;
- Will ensure that decisions and actions are taken without delay and in line with legislative and Local Authority timescales;
- Ensure that foster carers have immediate access to information and advice from an independent support if there is an allegation against them or the Fostering Service has informed them that they have a serious concern about their practice or standards of care. (NMS 22);
- Ensure that foster carers are prepared, through pre-approval training and assessment, of the possibility that allegations could be made against them.

All allegations of abuse made by children against foster carers, or members of the foster carers' family, are thoroughly investigated in an unbiased way. Local procedures for handling child protection allegations are followed.

The investigation is evidenced based and takes a balanced view of the allegation; unfounded allegations are sometimes made. A decision as to how to proceed will be made which will be in the best interests of the child.

Where a complaint against a foster carer constitutes a safeguarding allegation, this is dealt with as a safeguarding enquiry under Section 47 of the Children Act, 1989, and is investigated under safeguarding procedures.

17. Complaints and Compliments

The Children Act, 1989, requires Local Authorities to have a robust procedure for investigating complaints made by young people receiving Social Care services or complaints made by adults on their behalf.

The complaints procedure is viewed as a useful tool for indicating where services may need adjusting. It is a positive aid to inform and influence service improvements, not a negative process to apportion blame.

The complaints procedure consists of three stages;

- Stage 1 is based on local resolution, where staff and the complainant discuss and attempt to address the complaint within ten working days with an additional ten working days for more complex issues or if an advocate is required.
- Stage 2 involves an investigation into the circumstances of the complaint. This is carried out by the Children's Complaint Investigating Officer who reports their findings and conclusions and makes recommendations to an Adjudicating Officer. In addition, an Independent Person is engaged to oversee the investigation to ensure that the process is open, transparent and fair. The Adjudicating Officer is responsible for deciding on the report recommendations. This process should take twenty-five working days with a permitted maximum of sixty-five working days.
- Stage 3 involves a Review Panel giving further consideration to the complaint. The Panel consists of three independent people. The Panel must be convened and operating within thirty working days, it has five working days to issue findings and the Local Authority must respond within fifteen working days.

Wherever possible, complaints are dealt with informally. Where appropriate, in the first instance, any complaint by or against a foster carer will be dealt with on a problem-solving basis. There is a written procedure given to all foster carers as part of the Fostering Handbook. The Council has both corporate and Children's Services Complaints Procedures that operate if no resolution can be achieved at the problem solving stage.

Where a complaint against a foster carer constitutes a safeguarding allegation, this is dealt with as a safeguarding enquiry under Section 47 of the Children Act, 1989, and is investigated under Safeguarding procedures.

Our children's guide is specifically designed for children and young people which advise them what to do if they have a complaint.

Regular monitoring reports on the numbers and outcomes are presented to Children and Young People's Services' Management Team and an annual report is received by the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Between 1st April, 2015 and 31st March, 2016, 3 complaints were received by the service. All of which were dealt with at stage one of the complaints process.

Compliments: The fostering service also received 18 compliments, 3 regarding foster carers, and 15 regarding the wider fostering team. Further details can be obtained from the Complaints and Compliments Service.

18. Fostering Service Details

The Fostering Service is based at:-
Riverside House
Main Street
Rotherham

S60 1AE

Tel 01709 382121

Email – Fostering@rotherham.gov.uk

Websites – www.fosterinrotherham.co.uk

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Fostering Services are regulated by Ofsted. Their contact details are:-

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 4234

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Signatures:-

Signed: Date:
Mel Meggs, Director of Safeguarding,
Children and Families

Signed: Date:
Councillor Watson, Cabinet Member

Signed: Date:
Foster Carer Representative

Appendix 1

| Name: | Qualification: | Experience: |
|---|---|--|
| Ian Walker Head of Service Children in Care | Diploma in Social Work. Diploma in Management | Social Work Experience since 1994 Vast experience in a variety of settings. Senior Management in three local authorities. |
| Anne-Marie Banks Service Manager Fostering & Adoption | BA (hons) Degree in Social Work Studies and Diploma in Social Work PQ Child Care Award & Advanced Award in Social Work Post Graduate Diploma in Professional Practice (Management & Leadership) | Social work experience since 2002, including 6 years management experience in fostering and therapeutic provision in fostering and adoption. |
| Carol Stickland Team Manager Fostering – Recruitment | Certificate in Social Work MA in Professional Practice | Social work experience since 1984 in children's residential services and fostering services; previously, a foster carer for 5 years. |
| Yvonne Howe Team Manager Fostering – Specialist Team Manager | BA Honours Degree in Social Work Studies. Practice Educator Award Level 1 & 2 | Social Work experience since 2008 including working in Child Protection/Child in Need and within Looked After Children's Team and then within Fostering. Management Experience. |
| Clive Purnis Team Manager Fostering – Main Stream | Diploma in Social Work (CQSW) | Social work experience since 1986. 8 years child protection experience in England, Scotland and in Germany. 12 year's experience in fostering including; management of both a local authority fostering service as well as an Independent fostering agency. 3 years experience of managing an out of hours |

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| | | local authority team. |
| Maureen Connolly | CQSW Diploma in Social Work Post Graduate Diploma in Advanced Professional Practice Advanced Award in Social Work | Social work experience since 1980 in children's residential services as a worker and manager; subsequent posts of Resource Office (Residential Services) and Children's Complaints Officer, Children's Social Worker and Fostering Social Worker (2009-2010) and Deputy Manager (since 2010). |
| Amie Scaife | Batchelor in Social Sciences with a specialisation in SW. MA in Professional Practice | Two years experience working in the Voluntary sector in South Africa Social Work experience since 2006. Worked in Adult Physical Disabilities, Child Protection Team and the Looked After Children's Team and Fostering. |
| Sue Arnold | CQSW BA(hons) in Social Science with Geography and Politics PQ Award | Social work experience since 1973 in a variety of settings, including children's social work teams and fostering VSO in FIJI (training office in social work department) |
| Shauna Smith (Agency) | BA Honours in Social Work | Social Work experience since 2007. Working in Child Protection and Fostering also working with Children with Disabilities |
| Lisa Ledger | BA Honours in Social Work | Social Work experience since 2005 working in Child Protection and then Looked After Children's team and then also Fostering experience. |
| Simon Dewick | BA (hons) in Applied Social Sciences CQSW | Social work experience since 1988, including 'generic' social work, children in need work, child protection, looked after children, mainstream and specialist fostering, including the Shirt Breaks for Disabled Children |

| | | |
|--------------------|--|--|
| | | Scheme. |
| Sue Pickering | Diploma in Social Work NVQ 3 Assessor | Social work experience since 1989 in a variety of settings, including children's residential services and fostering. |
| Anne Lindsay | BA Hons in Social Work Post Graduate certificate in Professional Practice. | Social work experience since 2008 plus 5 years as a social work assistant. Experience of duty and assessment, youth offending and leaving care as well as child protection and looked after children. |
| Debbie Willis | BA Hons in Social Work | Social work experience since 2008 working in Local Authority and Independent Fostering settings. Practice educator since 2015. |
| Michelle Dolman | BA (hons) in Social Policy and a PGDIP in social work. A Post Graduate certificate in Social Studies. | Social Work experience since 2003 including working in Duty & Assessment. Child Protection through too Looked After and Adoption. Also experience of working with children with acquired brain injuries. |
| Yasmina Fynn | BA (hons) in Social Work Studies. Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Practice in Family Placement and Looked After Children | Social work experience since 2009, including working in both Child Protection and Looked After Children's Teams |
| Elizabeth Sinclair | DipSW in Social Work. Post Graduate Certificate in Social Services Management. | Social Work Experience since 2000 previous experience as an unqualified SW prior to undertaking the DipSW. Experience in Frontline Child Protection Work. Worked with the voluntary sector at Management level. Managed a locality SW team. Also experience in fostering both in IFA and LA. |
| Louise Atkinson | BA (hons) in Social Work and Diploma in Social | Social work experience since 2004 in children's |

| | | |
|----------------------|--|---|
| | Work | social work team, substance misuse and fostering. |
| Rhondda Davies | Diploma in Social Work BTec National Diploma in Social Care | Social work experience since 1990, including children's residential services, fieldwork, Action for Children Supported Lodgings Co-coordinator and Fostering. |
| Katie Duffield | BA (hons) in Social Work and Diploma in Social Work | Social work experience since 2002 in: fieldwork services, maternity services, Leaving care services, residential services and fostering. Also worked in Australia with aboriginal families. |
| Roberta Lyne | BA (hons) in Social Work Studies Diploma in Social Work PQ Award | Social work experience since 1998 in fieldwork setting and fostering service. 2 years previous experience as a court welfare office in (now) CAFCASS. |
| Joanne Nutton | Diploma in Social Work MA in Professional Practice | Social work experience since 1996 in a fieldwork setting and Family Assessment Team (Support Worker); since qualification as a social worker (from 2003) in the fostering service. Previous employment as a social services nursery nurse for 15 years. |
| Sue Carroll (Agency) | DipSW in Social Work and a BA Honours in Social Work. PQ Level 1 | Social Work Experience since 1997. Initially in Child Protection and then moved in 2000 to Fostering then Adoption 2003 -2014 and then moved into Agency Work doing Adoption and Fostering. |
| Sadia Alam | BA Honours in Social | Social Work Experience |

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|---------------------|--|--|
| | Work. Diploma in Professional Practice | since 2010. Worked in Child Protection, Therapeutic Team and Fostering. Adoption Panel Member. |
| Nicola Flanagan | BA Honours in Social Work. | Social Work experience since 2008. Worked in Voluntary Sector and LA Child Protection team. Fostering Supervisory Social Worker since June 2015 |
| Dawn Riley (Agency) | BA Honours Degree in Social Work including the DipSW PQ level 1 & 2. Children and Families and stand-alone Practice Teaching Award. Level 4 Health & Social Care Assessor. Cognitive & Behaviour Development HND. | Social Work Experience since 2003 in Fostering, Adoption and Child Protection. Worked in Adult Services including Direct Payments. Child Witness Advocate for Criminal Prosecutions. Independent Form F assessor and Reviewing Officer. |
| Barry Donnellan | Diploma in Applied Social Sciences, (CQSW) | Social work experience since 1987 in a variety of settings; children's residential, generic child-care, LAC team, a preventative project, leaving care services and as a supported lodgings co-ordinator. |
| Suzanne Cassidy | BA Honours Degree in Psychology & Sociology. Diploma in Social Work MA in Professional Practice with Children & their Families | Social Work experience since 1997. Working in Field Work including Family Support, Court/Care proceedings and Looked After Children. Also experience includes working within a Family Centre environment. Deputy Management of a Children's Centre for Action for Children and also working within a Therapeutic role for the NSPCC. |

Summary Sheet

Council Report

Title:

Discretionary Council Tax Discount for Care Leavers

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Thomas – Strategic Director

Report Author(s)

Ian Walker – Head of Service, Looked After Children

Ward(s) Affected

All

Summary

The Council has the discretion to reduce the Council Tax liability for individuals or prescribed groups. The Council exercises this discretion in accordance with section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, in respect of local Council Tax support and for ad hoc cases of extreme financial hardship.

It is proposed that the Council exercise its discretionary powers to award a 100% discount for Rotherham's care leavers aged between 18 and 21 years residing within the Borough boundaries. It is further proposed that a 100% discount is made available for care leavers up to the age of 25 and in full-time Higher Education who are resident in the Rotherham area or have dual residency and are liable for Council Tax to Rotherham Council.

Finally it is proposed that those eligible care leavers who reside outside of the Rotherham area receive a full reimbursement from the Leaving Care budget.

The rationale for supporting care leavers in this way is to help them make an effective social and financial transition from Local Authority care and, ultimately, to help to improve the life chances of looked after children.

Recommendations

DLT is recommended to approve the request of the Council to exercise its discretionary powers to award a 100% discount for Rotherham care leavers between the ages of 18 and 21 (and up to 25 for those care leavers in full-time Higher Education) residing in the borough based on the principles set out in this report and

that those care leavers from Rotherham living outside of the Borough receive a full reimbursement of those costs.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

This proposal will also need to be considered by SLT, the Corporate Parenting Panel and Cabinet.

Council Approval Required

Yes

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

DRAFT

Title: Discretionary Council Tax Discount for Care Leavers

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 DLT is recommended to approve the request of the Council to exercise its discretionary powers to award a 100% Council Tax discount for Rotherham care leavers between the ages of 18 and 21 (and up to 25 for those care leavers in full-time Higher Education) residing in the borough based on the principles set out in this report and that those care leavers from Rotherham living outside of the Borough receive a full reimbursement of those costs.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council has the discretion to reduce the Council Tax liability for individuals or prescribed groups. The Council exercises this discretion in accordance with section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, in respect of local Council Tax support and for ad hoc cases of extreme financial hardship.
- 2.2 Some Councils use Section 13A discretion to prescribe Council Tax reductions for certain classes of tax payer. One such class is care leavers and several local authorities already offer this level of additional support to their care leavers. Councils can provide up to 100% discounts for their residents for whom the respective council has previously held corporate parenting responsibility. Where a care leaver moves from Local Authority care into private or social accommodation, and where the care leaver is liable to pay Council Tax at the new property, the Council can provide up to a 100% discount through the application of section 13A discretion. The period for which the exemption applies is at the discretion of the Council.
- 2.3 The Children's Society has been lobbying councils in relation to this following a report that suggested that care leavers are a particularly vulnerable group for Council Tax debt. It found that, when care leavers move into independent accommodation and begin to manage their own budget fully for the first time it can often be a challenging time for them, particularly if they are falling behind on their Council Tax. The rationale for supporting care leavers in this way is to help to support them in making an effective social and financial transition from Local Authority care to independence. Ultimately, this is to help to improve the life chances of looked after children – principles clearly consistent with the Council's Corporate Parenting objectives and responsibilities.
- 2.4 The government has set out its intentions in the 'Keep on Caring' paper published in July 2016 to extend existing entitlements to care leavers up to the age of 25. Although this hasn't been fully implemented yet, and there is no clarity on the exact expectations, some local authorities that have introduced Council Tax exemption for care leavers have done so for care leavers until their 25th birthday for those care leavers in Higher Education. These local authorities include Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Coventry, Rochdale, Cheshire East and Islington. As a result Rotherham has the opportunity to be an early adopter of this scheme.

3. Key Issues

3.1 It is proposed that the Council exercise its discretionary powers to award a 100% Council Tax discount for Rotherham care leavers residing in the Borough and reimburse the full costs for those care leavers living out of Borough. The principles of the proposed scheme are as follows:-

- The young person is a care leaver and is between the ages of 18 and 21 or 25 if in full-time Higher Education, and is not exempt on any other basis.
- Where a Rotherham care leaver moves out of the Local Authority area the discount can be reclaimed should they return before their 21st birthday otherwise they will be supported to be reimbursed these monies via the Leaving Care Service budget.
- Where a Rotherham care leaver not in Higher Education is between the age of 21 and 25 and does not qualify for a discount on some other basis they can also apply for an exemption if suffering financial hardship.

3.2 The exemption will operate as follows:

- The discount will apply to residents for whom Rotherham Council held corporate parenting responsibility at the point at which the young person left care.
- The care leaver resides, and is liable to pay Council Tax, in Rotherham.
- Where the care leaver resides outside of the Borough they will have to pay the amount of Council Tax due but will be eligible to a full reimbursement from the Leaving Care Team budget.
- The level of discount applied will be 100% of residual Council Tax liability after taking account of any other discounts/exemptions to which the resident may be entitled.
- Where a care leaver is jointly liable with other tax payers, the discount will be applied to the household and so non care leavers may benefit inadvertently.
- The discount would be awarded against any Council Tax liability arising from 1st April 2017 and the council will have the discretion to backdate any future awards to 1st April 2017.
- The discount will not be means tested or responsive to the individual circumstances of the care leaver if s/he is between the ages of 18 to 21(25 if in full-time Higher Education).
- For those Rotherham care leavers not in Higher Education and aged 21-25, resident in the Borough who do not qualify for a discount on

some other basis, the application for discount will be considered on an individual basis.

3.3 The scheme will be administrated by the Council's Revenues, Benefits and Payments section.

3.4 It is proposed that the impact of this discount is reviewed within the first six months of operation and any proposed changes to the arrangements will be subject to a future Cabinet or Cabinet Member decision making process.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1 There are no alternative options being considered and the recommendation is that all care leavers up to the age of 21 (25 if in full-time Higher Education) are given an exemption from Council Tax in line with the legislation if resident in the Borough or receive a full reimbursement if residing elsewhere. For those care leavers aged 21-25 and not in full-time education this discount will be considered on an individual basis.

5. Consultation

5.1 No direct consultation has been undertaken in respect of the proposed implementation of this scheme although the Children's Society has been lobbying Councils in relation to this.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

6.1 It is proposed that, if approved, the Council Tax discount for care leavers will be implemented from the beginning of the financial year 2017/18 and, as a result, any Council Tax payments made by eligible care leavers from the 1st April 2017 will have to be reimbursed to them.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

7.1 The financial implications arising from this proposal will vary depending on the exact offer agreed and the numbers of care leavers in scope although there may be problems in identifying a number of the care leavers who may be entitled to the discount. The process for waiving the Council Tax for residents in the Borough is comparatively straightforward in that can be addressed at source once those care leavers entitled to the discount have been identified. However, for those care leavers residing outside of the Borough, there will have to be arrangements in place for them to be paid a re-imbursement from the Children's Services Leaving Care budget. Depending on the financial impact over the course of 2017/18 the budget may have to be reviewed for future years.

7.2 As of 4th April 2017, there were 136 care leavers in the 18-21 age bracket (18-25 if in full time education), and 91 of them resided in Rotherham. 31 of these had a Council Tax liability. The cost of providing a discount for these individuals is estimated to be £9,000 per annum. It should be noted

that this figure is subject to change dependent upon the number of care leavers identified each year. These figures are based on those care leavers we have been currently been able to identify as being eligible for the scheme and there is a small risk that the costs could be higher than this estimation although the difference is unlikely to be significant. This local discount scheme will be funded through the existing general fund by effectively reducing the Tax Base.

- 7.3 Of those living out of the Rotherham area (45) 14 are living independently. The approximate cost to these care leavers liable to pay Council Tax is £4,000. This will be funded through the Leaving Care budget in Children's Services.
- 7.4 The additional cost of awarding discretion in cases of financial hardship for the 21-25 year old cohort that are not in full time education is difficult to forecast. Based on the experiences of other local authorities that have implemented a similar scheme it is not envisaged that this will create a significant pressure on existing budgets within Children's Services.
- 7.5 The total cost to the Council would therefore be approximately £20,000 per annum. This cost will be offset by a reduction in emergency payments to care leavers in crisis. There will also be a further reduction in their dependency on other Council services.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act allows councils in England to reduce liability for Council Tax in two circumstances:
 - Section 13A (1) (a) allows the Council Tax for any dwelling to be reduced in accordance with the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme which councils are under a duty to have (as set out in section 13 A (2)). Schedule 1A and supporting regulations set out more provisions in respect of these schemes, including a duty to consult on the scheme or any changes and to have any changes in place by 31 January in the financial year before the Scheme takes effect.
 - (b) Section 13A (1)(c) gives all councils a power to reduce liability in cases where they think fit, even if liability has already been reduced under Section 13A(1)(a) (and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme detailed above, must include details of how to apply for this discount.)
- 8.2 The discount that is proposed would be implemented under Section 13A (1) (c).
- 8.3 The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 at paragraph 9 of Schedule 7 allows an application to an authority for a reduction under Section 13A (1) (c) to be made in writing, by means of an electronic communication or, where the authority has published a telephone number for the purpose of receiving such applications, by telephone. As stated above, Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires that the Council Tax

Reduction Scheme of the local authority includes information about how an application under Section 13A (1) (c) can be made. The Council's currently published scheme includes this information.

- 8.4 The proposal to reduce care leavers' liability to Council Tax can therefore be implemented under Section 13 (1) (c) using the Council's power to make discretionary reductions in Council Tax in cases where it is considered appropriate.

9. Human Resources Implications

- 9.1 There are no Human Resources implications arising out of this proposal.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 This directly supports the Council's key objectives of supporting people to lead independent lives, and ensuring that children and young people are safe and make a positive contribution.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 This proposal is intended to enhance the equality and Human Rights of care leavers.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1 The proposal contained in this report will support the drive of the Council to become a Child Centred Borough.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 There will be a risk presented to the budget of the leaving Care service arising from proposal to reimburse those care leavers residing outside of the Borough. This does look to be manageable on current projections but the overall budget allocated to the Service may need some review if the impact increases to a significant degree.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Ian Walker, Head of Service

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:-

Mick Wildman, Finance Manager, CYPS Finance Business Partnering

Rob Cutts, Service and Development Manager, Revenues, Benefits and Payments

Director of Legal Services:- Neil Concannon

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):- N/a

Name and Job Title.

This report is published on the Council's website or can be found at:-

<http://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?Categories=>

DRAFT

| |
|-----------------------|
| BRIEFING PAPER |
|-----------------------|

| | | |
|-----------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. | Date of meeting: | 25th April 2017 |
| 2. | Title: | Early Help LAC Offer |
| 3. | Directorate: | CYP |

4. Background

The offer to looked After Children in Rotherham has been documented to clearly outline what is available and to support awareness and understanding of how the service can support children that are looked after.

The Early Help & Family Engagement Service is committed to contributing to the support of LAC young people and deliver on priorities defined by the Looked After Children's Council:

- We will help you to live in a safe place where you are protected from harm.
- We will listen to what you have to say and make sure that your views influence how we work with you.
- We will help you to learn and do your best at school and college.
- We will help you to be happy and healthy.
- We will help you to learn new skills as you grow up and become an adult.
- We will ensure that you are in control with plans and decisions about you and your future.
- We will help you take part in activities that you enjoy or that you are interested in.
- We will help you to explore and be ready for the world of work
- We will help you to be proud of yourself and celebrate your individual beliefs.

5. Key actions and relevant timelines

- The report is to be disseminated once appropriate ratification from relevant boards is secured (DLT and Corporate Parenting Board)

6. Recommendations

- To review the Early Help LAC offer.
- DLT to have the opportunity to scrutinise the offer and offer comments and/or suggestions
- DLT to ratify the offer prior to submission to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

7. Name and contact details

Susan Claydon Head of Service Early Help & Family Engagement
Strategic Lead Family Support
E-mail: susan.claydon@rotherham.gov.uk

Telephone: 01709 822422



The Early Help & Family Engagement Offer for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Rotherham

2017

Early Help Offer to Looked after Children and Care Leavers

Introduction

The Early Help and Family Engagement Service is based in nine Locality Teams, that are based across three areas of Rotherham; North, South and Central. These multi-disciplinary teams provide intensive, focused support to children and families in order to support them address issues such as:

- Parenting
- Issues related with behaviour
- Mental and emotional wellbeing
- Substance misuse issues.
- Domestic abuse
- Debt, benefits and housing related issues
- Risky behaviour online and actual.
- Issues related to attendance, and education employment and training (NEET)
- Relational based issues.
- Family dysfunction.
- Child Sexual Exploitation.
- Crime and anti-social behaviour.

The service holds a range of expertise to support families who are experiencing issues and are relevant for a range of different age groups such as the early years; teens, young adults and parents/carers.]The service uses the Early Help Assessment at the heart of intervention in order to understand holistic need across a family and create a plan that effects long term, sustainable change. This plan then has the capacity to involve community based resources, for example schools and the voluntary sector. (www.rotherham.gov.uk/earlyhelp)

Early Help contributes to the corporate Rotherham Priorities to ensure that:

- Children and young people are healthy and safe from harm
- Children and young people start school ready to learn for life
- Children, young people and their families are ready for the world of work

The Early Help & Family Engagement Service is committed to contributing to the support of LAC young people and deliver on priorities defined by the Looked After Children's Council:

- We will help you to live in a safe place where you are protected from harm.
- We will listen to what you have to say and make sure that your views influence how we work with you.
- We will help you to learn and do your best at school and college.
- We will help you to be happy and healthy.
- We will help you to learn new skills as you grow up and become an adult.
- We will ensure that you are in control with plans and decisions about you and your future.
- We will help you take part in activities that you enjoy or that you are interested in.
- We will help you to explore and be ready for the world of work
- We will help you to be proud of yourself and celebrate your individual beliefs.

Early Help Offer to Looked After Children and Families and Care Leavers

When there are young children in families, Early Years work can be carried out by Childrens Centres and Family Support workers in the service. This type of intervention can provide the opportunity for children to learn through play and be ready for school through a range of activities e.g. baby massage, stay and play etc.

Early Help Family Support Workers and partners from health are based in localities and work closely with Early Help providing support to children and families that may require help with a range of issues, for example:

- General family support to help with issues affecting the family.
- Support with accessing nursery or school.
- Return to work courses – CV writing and interview skills
- Debt and benefit advice
- Healthy eating weight management.
- Support and advice around parenting
- Advice and support to access free entitlement to early education for their children

Details of Childrens Centres and activities can be found here: www.rotherham.gov.uk/childrenscentres

Early Help can offer support to parents/carers/ foster carers to improve their children's attendance at school, address behaviour and relationship difficulties and promote positive family relationships.

Requests for support can be made by young people or their families by telephoning 01709 334905 or completing a self-referral via the website; https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/forms/form/586/en/early_help_request_for_support or directly by schools or Social Workers with the consent of the foster carer and their child.

The Early Help lead manager (LAC and Care Leavers); Assistant Head of the Virtual School and the LAC and Care Leaver Managers meet half termly to:

- Review the needs of LAC /CL young people resident in Rotherham and ensure that co working arrangements are in place in localities to support children and young people and contribute to their Personal Education Plans e.g. behaviour, attendance post 16 transitions.
- Review the needs of young people educated out of borough, and identify post 16 transition requirements, coordinate input from the host local authority or provide direct support to young people if they are planning to return to Rotherham.
- Track progress and support outcomes of individual looked after children and Care leavers and destinations of 16-to 19 year olds.
- Ensure that Early Help Locality Managers are made aware of their LAC/CL cohort and that this is updated and shared on a regular basis to enable visibility of need and to ensure that LAC/CL are supported appropriately.

Workers in localities can support LAC and care leavers in education by:

- Providing specific interventions identified within the PEP to support young people to engage in learning e.g. confidence building, support with emotional wellbeing.
- Marketing the annual careers employer event and offering support to young people and carers to attend.
- Provide written updates to the Virtual School and where required attend PEP reviews.
- Attend PEP reviews for LAC young people in year 10 and 11 identified by the Virtual school as requiring additional support to make a successful transition to post 16 learning
- Attend post 16 PEP reviews to as requested by the Virtual School to support young people to remain in learning.

Support for Young people Not in Education Employment and Training(NEET) Up to The Age of 20 (25 for people with learning difficulties and disabilities)

The Early Help Locality Manager (LAC /CL), Virtual School, LAC and Care Leaver Service regularly review all LAC and care leavers who are NEET (aged 16-20) in order to identify young people who are able to move into learning and employment.

Social Workers and Personal Advisers (Care Leaver Service) lead on supporting young people to identify key actions to be included in their PEP and Pathway Plan to achieve successful education and employment outcomes. Where young people need additional support to engage in education employment and training they can be linked to an Early Help worker via a co-working request to Early Help.

The Early Help Worker (LAC / CL) will hold a caseload of young people NEET and work closely with Social Workers, Personal Advisers and the Virtual school to provide a range of support including

- Careers advice and guidance
- Developing an action plan and offering support to engage in a learning or employment opportunity
- Support to access group work programmes to develop self-efficacy and employability skills
- Support to access to work tasters or work experience
- Identifying and advocating with employers and learning providers to secure opportunities to match the young people's needs

LAC and Care leavers aged 16-19 who are pregnant or parents, resident in Rotherham and NEET will be supported to access Children's Centre and Early Help services whilst exploring informal and formal learning opportunities.

Early Help also provides a range of borough wide youth work personal development programmes including art, drama, targeted youth work programmes and youth voice projects including Youth Cabinet and Looked After and Care Leavers Council groups. These groups can be accessed by any LAC or Care leavers and more information is available on the Youthi website (www.youthi.org) or via Early Help Locality teams

Outcome -Every Looked After Child/ Care Leaver Enjoys Learning and Achieves Their Full Potential

Objectives

1. Enable foster carers to access resources to support their children to be ready to learn.
2. To provide Looked After Children and Care Leavers with accurate, up-to-date and objective information about personal and lifestyle issues, learning and career opportunities, progression routes, choices, where to find help and advice, and how to access it.
3. Young people (Looked After and Care Leavers) have a robust personal education plan up until their 18^h birthday which incorporates clear and realistic learning and career goals and provides excellent opportunities for transition to adulthood.
4. Ensure that young people (Looked After or Care Leavers) receive appropriate high quality advice and support to engage and succeed in learning and employment.

The Early Help Service is underpinned by a whole family ethos and has a range of professionals that work as 'Lead Professional' to coordinate the right support at the right time for children and their families. Whilst the service does not differentiate across age groups, the following table identifies the support that would be available for different age children across families as part of their package of support. This would generally be coordinated by one person from the service.

Support in Early Years

| Activity | Lead | PI |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of_ to foster parents of the Early Help Children's Centre offer within their local area and engage them in the offer ; Work with Early Years to ensure that all Looked After Children access their free entitlement to early education; Work alongside Social Care colleagues to provide support to foster families who are facing challenges in supporting their children and who need a bespoke support packages to get back on track. | <p>Early Help Children's Centre Lead</p> <p>Early Help Locality Manager</p> <p>School Effectiveness – Family Information Service.</p> <p>LAC Fostering team and Early Help</p> | <p>Increased attendance of foster parents and LAC at children's centres</p> <p>Increase in take up of two year old places by LAC children.</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| | | Increased stability of fostering placements |
| Support in Compulsory Education | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works alongside Social Care colleagues to provide support to foster families who are facing challenges in supporting their children and who need a bespoke support packages to get back on track in learning. | LAC Fostering team and Early Help | Increased stability foster care placements. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Help and Youthi website is available to all young people and carers Implement co-working arrangements to localities for children and young people who are identified requiring additional support to engage in learning. Support LAC to use UCAS search and apply to apply for post 16 opportunities and application to universities One to one careers guidance and action planning from year 9 -13 for all LAC and Care leavers delivered by appropriately qualified staffed Engage and support LAC in key stage 3 to attend university and college open days Review of Educational Health and Care plans for LAC /CL with learning difficulties from year 10 onwards Half termly review meeting Locality manager lead with Virtual school to review PEP and identify “at risk” NEET students and coordinate co working arrangements where additional needs are identified. Attendance of Early Help workers at annual personal education plan reviews of LAC young people who are receiving support from EH Delivery of an annual aspirations/ careers event for young people and their carers/ care staff (Borough wide). Ensure that LAC and care leavers access bursary advice | <p>Early Help and Family Engagement Service</p> <p>Social Care and Virtual School</p> <p>Schools and Colleges</p> <p>Schools and Colleges</p> <p>Virtual School EH Locality Lead manager</p> <p>Schools</p> <p>Locality manager and Virtual school</p> <p>Early Help Workers</p> <p>Early Help and LAC /Care Leaver teams</p> | <p>Improved Attendance</p> <p>Reduced Fixed term exclusions</p> <p>Improved GCSE attainment</p> <p>Year 11 destination for LAC in line with borough average for all young people</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that foster carers are made aware of role of Early Help in the provision of information advice and guidance and access to personal development opportunities | Virtual School/Fostering (on behalf of EH) | |
| Support Services Post 16 - Partnership with Schools, Colleges and Educational/ Employment support services. | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a post 16 forum to support transitions and re-engage NEET LAC and Care leavers Provide data to colleges to inform the development of appropriate provision and support for vulnerable learners Work with post 16 learning partners to support a change of education offer managed moves to prevent LAC /Care leavers from becoming NEET. Provide careers guidance and one to one advocacy and support to enable suitably qualified young people to enter apprenticeships, make applications to university or gain necessary qualifications.(Schools lead) Ensure that young people are able to access financial support Provide support to young people to access National Citizenship service (Early Help) | <p>Virtual School</p> <p>Early Help and Virtual School</p> <p>Early Help and Virtual School</p> <p>Early Help and Virtual School</p> <p>Post 16 Learning Providers</p> <p>Schools and Learning Provider and social worker</p> | <p>Year 11 / 12 guarantee met</p> <p>t</p> <p>LAC Care Leaver 16-18 NEET (Corporate responsibility) Percentage LAC and Care Leavers remain in learning until their 18th birthday</p> <p>Achievement LAC and Care Leavers Level 2 Level 3 at 19</p> |
| Support for Looked After Children and Care Leaver's Not in Education Employment or Training aged 16 -21 to re-engage in learning or employment | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake one to one careers guidance and action planning in relation to achieving career goals Delivery of evidence based group work programme to support young people to develop self-efficacy and employability skills. Provide sustained support to young people NEET to engage and retain | <p>Co delivered by Care leaver Service Virtual School and Early Help Service</p> <p>Early Help Service / Care Leaver Service</p> <p>Early Help and Care Leaver Service</p> | <p>16-18 Care leavers / LAC NEET in line with borough average</p> <p>Reduction in NEET care</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|----------------------------------|
| <p>them in learning or employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broker and support a meaningful work experience for every LAC or care leaver including bespoke work experience through the Council (HR and Schools) • Provide all care leavers with support to prepare for interview and an opportunity undertake mock interviews with the Council or a local employer (Schools). • Guaranteed interviews for care leavers to Council apprenticeships (RMBC) • Work in partnership with Rotherham credit union to develop young people's skills in financial management including allowances, welfare benefits and investments. • Work proactively with Job Centre Plus to provide additional support and mentoring to Care leavers aged 18-21 on JSA support them to secure employment • Identify and advocate tailored employment with learning and apprenticeship vacancies to match the needs of individual unemployed young people | <p>Care Leaver Service and RMBC Human Resources</p> <p>Care Leaver Service Early Help and RMBC HR</p> <p>RMBC Human Resources</p> <p>Early Help and Care Leaver Service</p> <p>Early Help and Care Leaver Service</p> <p>Early Help and Care Leaver Service</p> | <p>Leavers / LAC aged 18 -21</p> |
| <p>Support for Looked After Children and Care Leavers Youth work Curriculum -Personal Development Opportunities</p> | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage young people in the LAC Voice and Influence annual peer consultation • Ensure that young people's views are clearly expressed in PEPS and action plans • Support young people to be involved in borough wide youth work offer, the PEER review and young inspectors | <p>Early Help Service</p> <p>Schools and social workers</p> <p>Performance Team RMBC</p> | |

Rotherham MBC

APPRENTICESHIP STRATEGY 2017-2020



Big hearts

Big Changes

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1 Introduction

Historically apprenticeships have offered millions of young people and adults in the UK an effective route to gain valuable skills and find work. For public and private sector organisations, apprenticeships provide a trusted route for unlocking talent, plugging skills gaps, gaining commercial growth and increasing productivity.

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has offered apprenticeships in a range of areas for a number of years, but more recently the number of places available has remained static at around 30.

From April 2017 the Government has introduced a new Apprenticeship scheme to fund its 3 million new apprenticeships policy. The Apprenticeship Levy is set at a rate of 0.5% of an employers' gross pay bill.

Public Sector Targets for the number of apprentice starts annually will match 2.3% of the total employee headcount. For the Council this will mean that we will aim for 150 apprentices by 2020 and each year thereafter..

It is important to note that the Levy, accessed via a Digital Apprenticeship Account, may be used for training costs but not for the employment costs of an apprentice.

This change also means that apprenticeships are no longer just for entry level posts. The Levy offers great new training opportunities for current employees – jobs with an identified training route. These could be used for management development or professional qualifications, from level 3 /4 up to graduate status.

As a result of these changes, in October 2016 the Council agreed to expand the number of apprenticeships across the Council to maximise the drawdown of the Apprenticeship Levy which will be imposed from April 2017.

In the current economic climate, there is a need for public sector organisations to play a leading role in developing the skills for the future and set an example to other employers in the region.

Our approach is designed to ensure that managers are aware of the Council's vision for apprenticeships, their role in supporting the strategy and the valuable contribution that apprentices can make to organisational performance. It illustrates a firm commitment to the identification of appropriate posts for apprenticeships and to ensure appropriate training and support is in place.

The strategy also recognises that we cannot do this alone and that we need to proactively work with a range of partners.

2 Where we are in Rotherham

The Council faces a number of challenges, which need to be addressed through our Apprenticeship Strategy. These are:

- ▲ Raising the profile of the Council as an attractive employer
- ▲ Recruiting suitably qualified young people
- ▲ Supporting young people in care/leaving care into employment
- ▲ Ensuring that the workforce is appropriately qualified through development apprenticeship opportunities
- ▲ Supporting the retention of a skilled workforce
- ▲ Responding to the current economic climate.

Children and young people growing up in workless households are more likely to suffer long-term consequences in terms of school performance, later unemployment and other social problems. We therefore need to build on our links with local schools and Colleges to raise awareness of the opportunities we offer.

We also need to increase the aspirations and motivation of local people, breaking the cycle of unemployment by improving real work experience opportunities and employability.

In addition we aim to increase our use of graduate placements and internships, specifically linked to the planned HE provision in Rotherham due in 2018.

To ensure that we are making a positive contribution to support the needs and aspirations of young people in the Borough, we must be agents for change to improve the range of apprenticeship opportunities throughout the authority.

How we deliver the strategy

This strategy links closely to a range of other workforce-related strategies and plans. These are:

The Council Plan

Workforce Strategy

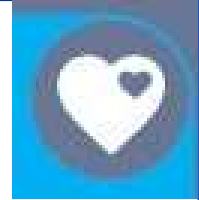
Workforce Plan

Directorate and Service Plans

In particular Key Priority 4 of the Workforce Strategy and the Workforce Plan is relevant to this strategy

Key Priority 4

Recruit and Retain a Skilled and Capable Workforce



What this looks like

- People want to work for the Council
- The workforce reflects the diversity of our communities
- Future managers are identified, developed and supported
- We work together to innovate and develop shared solutions

Where we want to be:

- Recruitment is efficient and effective
- New joiners have a positive experience when joining the Council
- Apprentice numbers increase both in the Council and across the Borough
- More entry level posts enable apprentices to transition into employment
- Succession planning is embedded in business planning practice
- Employees work across boundaries with partner organisations

3 Vision, Aims and Objectives

This strategy underlies the following vision, aims and objectives for apprenticeships in the Council:

Vision

The apprenticeship programme will offer high quality learning and development to a wide cross section of the community, enabling the local authority and the Borough to benefit from a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce.

We will particularly work to focus on providing opportunities for hard to reach communities and for Care Leavers.

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's vision for apprenticeships is that they will raise the aspirations both of young people in the Borough, and of its community and workforce. We recognise that, as an employer, everything we do depends on the quality of our workforce, their commitment and skills.

Aims

Through increased partnership working across a range of education and training providers, the Apprenticeship Strategy aims to:

- ◆ Increase the number of new start apprenticeships available and identify work opportunities so that the Council has 150 apprentice places by 2020
- ◆ Increase the range of apprenticeships available in the Council, with a specific focus upon skills shortages, looked after children and those under-represented from our community
- ◆ Ensure that young people, parents and carers are aware of apprenticeships and the financial support offered
- ◆ Actively promote apprenticeships within the Council as a valuable vocational and recruitment option
- ◆ Unlock our own talent by identifying existing job roles within the Council which will lend themselves to development apprenticeships
- ◆ Increase skills and productivity levels within the Borough's workforce

Objectives

The main objectives for the Council are to:

- Raise the quality and number of apprenticeships so that all our apprentices gain skills and competencies which support their future employability whether this is through a new starter apprenticeship or a development apprenticeship.
- Ensure that we improve on the range of apprenticeships on offer. We envisage increasing the apprenticeship offer in areas where there are skills shortages during the life of the strategy
- Increase the number of people taking up apprenticeships with the Council year on year between 2017-2020 up to 150
- Ensure that our apprenticeship frameworks meet with our needs and provides all learners with the skills they need. Working with Training Providers and colleges, we will ensure that they are able to deliver the standards and quality we expect, to enable us to realise the benefits to the organisation that are required to maximize our investment.
- We will embed our approach into our aim for career pathways and progression routes in all areas of the Council.

4 The Council Apprenticeship

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council believes apprenticeships are programmes of learning that give an individual the competence, knowledge and transferable skills for work and progression. To gain this full range of employment and development needs, an individual will train and learn in the classroom and in the workplace.

An apprentice should be in employment whilst completing the programme so that they can practice what they have learned.

There are aspects of training and learning that can take place within a college or simulated environment. Also there are aspects of training and learning that should take place in the workplace but it is important that the assessment of an apprentice's ability to "do the job" takes place in the workplace. It is this and the full development of an individual that makes the apprenticeship distinct from other qualifications and programmes of learning. This applies equally to new start apprenticeships and development apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships are about achieving standards rather than placing people for a set period of time. The Council envisages an average completion period of 18 months to two years for most programmes. However, it is recognised that this may not be the case in all situations, for example, craft apprenticeships and adult apprentices may complete the programme in a longer or shorter periods.

We have demonstrated our commitment to the Apprenticeship programme by providing all apprentices with the opportunity to be considered for redeployment 12 weeks prior to the end of their apprenticeship. This now means that all existing apprentices, who 3 months prior to completing their NVQ will be eligible to apply for jobs up to Grade C in the council on the redeployment register.

5 Conversion of Entry Level Posts to Apprenticeships

The process of ring-fencing entry-level posts at Grades A to C would be to convert these to apprenticeships, and enable the individual to gain a qualification and be better prepared for a career in local government.

Job descriptions would reflect the need to complete either an NVQ level 2 or 3 to satisfy the job requirement. Discussions will take place with appropriate Training Providers

To enable us to make a significant contribution to up-skilling the people of Rotherham, we must ensure that our skills agenda is cascaded into the operational planning processes. To do this effectively, each Directorate should include in their service area strategic plans details of the skills required to achieve delivery of their plans and how they intend to meet the challenges for the future.

This approach would enable each Directorate to have a better understanding of the importance of systematic and robust workforce planning which is pivotal to the success of the organisation. A key driver for change will require managers to think differently in terms of how people are recruited and in preparation for succession planning, particularly in areas where skills shortages are evident and where a career pathway is unclear.

Directorates will be asked to identify entry level posts which could be converted into apprenticeships and the Workforce Management Board which currently approves the release of all vacancies will oversee potential vacancies for conversion.

In addition, Directorates are asked to consider all jobs which would lend themselves to development apprenticeships.

6 Developing a skilled workforce

The implementation of an Apprenticeship Strategy will enable the organisation to plan the investment made in its people and help managers to think more strategically about career pathways both for new entrants and also for existing roles. The benefits to the organisation will be realised over the lifespan of this strategy and beyond.

7 Workforce planning, development and addressing skills gaps

To effectively deliver services now and in the future the right employees need to be in place. To achieve this we need to know what is needed for the future; what workforce we currently have; where our skills gaps are; the areas of recruitment difficulty; and what the supply of labour is likely to be – and plan accordingly.

Pivotal to the success of developing our workforce we would need to consider the apprenticeship offer to both new entrants and also in existing roles.

To do this effectively we will align our corporate priorities by offering qualifications in appropriate disciplines to individuals to enable them to do their job more effectively; gain a qualification and become more employable as the demand for qualifications increases. One way to do this would be to convert the existing CMI management qualification programme to an apprenticeship standard, thereby maximising use of the levy. Clearly this is very different approach in terms of time commitment where an apprenticeship –based programme is around 2 year's duration, as opposed to the current 3 month programme. Consideration would therefore need to be given to organisational impact versus cost benefit.

8 Pre-Apprenticeship Programme

Recognising that some young people who may not be high achieving academically in particular some 'looked after children' (LAC) we aim to explore the possibility of a pre-apprenticeship programme. The aim of the programme would be to equip young people with work ethics, develop their functional skills and develop confidence and self-esteem.

9 Funding requirements

In order to fulfil the Council's ambition to significantly increase the number of new start apprenticeships across the council there will be a need to invest to support the number of conversions of entry level posts. This will be overseen by the Workforce Management Board, where evidence will be required of the ability of services to support the on-going development of the apprentice, including their time away from the workplace, and any transitional issues arising out of their change to employed status, if appropriate.

Where development apprenticeships are identified we will draw down funding to support the qualification obtained. However, the service will also need to be able to demonstrate their ability to manage workloads appropriately in the absence of the apprentice whilst undertaking off-site training (20%)

Apprenticeship Strategy action plan

Objective:

To increase the number of apprenticeships offered by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Actions completed to date:

To work with senior managers across every directorate to identify areas where apprenticeships can be created, building on the work so far which includes

- ◆ Engagement with Directorates by presentation to Directorate L&D co-ordinators to explain about the Levy
- ◆ Presentations at Manager forums by Directorate
- ◆ Assistant Director with responsibility for schools/HR BP working together to ensure a consistent approach.
- ◆ Contacted all existing training providers in respect of their intentions and portal registration
- ◆ Registered on the Digital Apprenticeship Account Portal
- ◆ Met with other neighbouring authorities to discuss their approach and ensure consistency.
- ◆ HR Business Partners working with DLTs to identify areas of work that could ideally be converted to either new entry level apprenticeships or development apprenticeships (supporting career development) and if entry grade or lower level vacant posts could be transformed into one or more starter apprenticeships.
- ◆ Amendments made to Business Case forms to Workforce Management Board to consider if roles could be suitable for Starter or Development Apprenticeships.
- ◆ Amendments made to PDR process to prompt discussion and consider development opportunities.

Next Steps

| ACTION | TIMESCALE AND ACTION OWNER |
|--|--|
| Identify infrastructure support requirements as part of the HR re-structure | April 2017 – Head of HR |
| Embed the process to procure, manage, pay and audit approved training provider services via the Digital Account | April 2017 – Finance BP/HR Officer |
| Consider how best to procure services – consideration of our options to either collaborate regionally or procure provider(s) | April 2017 – OD Manager |
| Creation of Contracts for services between RMBC and provider – identify who will be responsible for interpretation of funding rules and manage draw down of funds. | May 2017 – Legal, HR and Finance/Procurement |
| Identify methods by which we ensure quality and sufficient capacity of training providers and assessors. | May 2017 – OD Manager |
| Draw up a marketing plan to attract young local school and college leavers to apply for apprenticeships; we pay the min rate for apprenticeships £3.50 per hour for first year | June 2017 – OD Manager/Communications lead |
| Establish RMBC as an employer of choice | June 2017 – Head of HR/OD Manager |
| Build on this strategy to support Care Leavers and those with Education, Health and Care Plan by a specific and focussed initiative to identify opportunities, including a pre-apprenticeship programme | July 2017- OD Manager/AD CYPS |
| Ensure Trade Unions are informed and actively promote and support our approach. | April 2017 – Head of HR |
| Consider if and how can work collaboratively with Rotherham NHS Hospital Trust. | August 2017 – Head of HR |
| Further work with maintained schools and how we ensure they have some access (albeit managed) to the levy. For example individually a schools contribution to the levy will in many cases not be sufficient to fund training for 1 apprenticeship, so we would promote working across clusters | April 2017 – HR BP/AD CYPS |

