

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

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

Date: Tuesday, 18th July, 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. Voice of the Child - LACC Takeover
6. LAC Council Update - April-June 2017 (Pages 1 - 6)
7. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th April, 2017 (herewith) (Pages 7 - 16)
8. Corporate Parenting Plan Work Plan 2017. (Page 17)
9. Performance Management
10. IRO Report
11. Strategic Commissioning Review of In-House Foster Care (Pages 18 - 51)
12. Disrupted Placement Update
13. Missing from Care

14. LAC Strategy and Sufficiency Strategy Updates
15. Ofsted Updates/Reg 44 Visits
16. Improvement Plan Updates
17. CAMHS
18. Date and time of the next meetings: -
Wednesday, 29th August, 2017 (possible change of date)
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) and J. Elliot (representative on the Fostering and Adoption Panels).



Sharon Kemp,
Chief Executive.

Rotherham Looked After Children's Council (LACC) – Corporate Parenting Panel - Update Report APRIL to JUNE 2017

Summary

Over this period our LAC Council volunteers have been busy as ever, actively and successfully meeting the core 3 aims of their Voice & Influence Project. Young people have engaged in meaningful consultations and co-production work that is helping to shape the services looked after and leaving care young people use. This body of work has included the group engaging in a Focus Group with Oxford University around Improving Matching and Placements in Foster Care, co-producing of LAC friendly Early Help literature, supporting the co-production of the Lifestyle Survey 2017, adapting the Right Care First Time Booklet for NHS CCG, providing LAC voices within the Rotherham Town Masterplan consultation and have provided LAC specific information to Virtual School to improve their understanding and improve services in future.

The LAC Council have; undertaken substantial work on their Destination Poland Project, learning more about hate crimes, the importance of love, peace and community cohesion by participating in Destination Poland engaging in the five day residential. Upon returning to Rotherham our young people held a presentation event to thank all funders and friends of Destination Poland.

The numerous experiences and opportunities offered to young people at the LAC Council are specifically designed to increase social capital, self-awareness and self-esteem, to foster resilience and support better outcomes for our vulnerable young people. Here are some of the things we would like to share with you:-

LAC Council – Shaping Services in Rotherham & beyond

Lifestyle Survey 2017

The LAC Council have also contributed in the co-production of the Lifestyle Survey 2017, alongside officers from Commissioning, Performance & Quality. Young people considered how Looked After young people should be addressed within this survey to ensure wording was appropriate and young people could identify as being Looked After. This is the first time LAC will be identified within the Lifestyle Survey and is important to the LAC Council as it will allow for LAC voices to be captured and analysed as a distinct group. This feedback from LAC may help to develop services to best fit their needs in future.

Virtual School –Dr Kathryn Thorn & Dr Karen Davies

The aim of the session was to explore Looked After young peoples experiences of school focusing on the themes of friendship, feeling safe and secure and recognition of talents and hobbies. Young people really enjoyed participating in the activities and engaging in discussions, the group provided LAC specific information to Virtual School to improve their understanding of LAC experiences to enable them to improve services for Looked After young people in future.

Improving Matching and Placement Process in Foster Care

The LAC Council welcomed Dr Ellie Ott, Research Fellow from the University of Oxford. Dr Ellie's research focusses upon trying to improve the matching and placement process for Looked After Young People and Foster Families. The LAC Council held a focus group to capture Rotherham young people's experiences, perceptions and voices around matching and placement to contribute to the national research which they are hoping may improve future experiences for Looked After young people within the care systems not only in Rotherham but across the country. This was a fun and informal focus group who actively engaged in the topic and generously shared their experiences both good and bad and put forward ideas around improving the matching process. Young people also asked some challenging questions of Dr Ellie too, with a couple of young people asking her:



Why has it taken so long for someone to start asking us these questions?
(LACC member aged 17)

This question was asked as it seemed obvious to young people that the process was not satisfactory for them most of the time telling Dr Ott that usually:

You get what you're given! (LACC member aged 13)

Overall the Rotherham LAC Council agreed that an ideal model for matching and placement process would ensure that young people have a say throughout the process from start to finish. Here is the basic outline:

1. Young people should have the option to see pictures and a video of potential Foster Carers, their house, their biological children, any pets and their potential bedroom so young people may choose which ones they prefer.
2. Young people should be invited to visit their preferred choice of Foster Families and stay with them each for a week to see how they all get on living together
3. After these trial weeks the young person should be allowed to decide who they want to live with.

Doctor Ott will collate and analyse her findings and write a report during July which will include Rotherham LACC's contributions towards this Academic body of work for the University of Oxford's Research in Fostering and Education. The LAC Council intend to work further on their ideal model of Matching and Placement Process in Rotherham.

Right Care First Time Booklet

Young People from the LAC Council have helped the NHS Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group by co-producing the Right Care First Time Booklet. The LAC Council worked to ensure the booklet was young person friendly and adapted it to meet young people's needs. The booklet provides contact details for Advice Information and Support for young people around physical & mental health issues and specialist group details within local healthcare services. These booklets are to be distributed widely to young people's groups and practitioners, the School Nurses have found them very beneficial to support young people they work with.

Rotherham Town Masterplan LACC Consultation

The LAC Council engaged in a consultation with Andrew Clarke and Mike Shires regarding the Rotherham Town Masterplan. This was an exciting evening where young people had the opportunity to see existing plans and have a voice about what they thought their Town Masterplan should contain. Andrew fed back:

'I was impressed by the feedback and the interest the group took in the project. They really grasped what we are trying to do and what the masterplan could do for the town centre. I found their ideas and input inspiring. The young people are a credit to themselves and to your organisation. Please do pass on mine and Mike's thanks to the LAC Council for their contribution'



COMMUNITY, CULTURAL & SEASONAL EVENTS

Fixers – 'Rotherham Proud' DVD Development

As part of the LAC council's ongoing commitment to promoting Rotherham in a positive way and challenging negative stereotypes of their town, they have been working collaboratively with other young people as part of the Youth Voice Group and the charity 'Fixers' to develop their ideas to create a Rotherham Proud DVD. The LAC Council worked alongside the Youth Cabinet to create scripts, identify locations for filming and rehearse their delivery to camera. Filming for the day at various locations around Rotherham, including the Town Centre, Wentworth, Clifton Park, the Mosque and Minster young people delivered their scripts to camera. It was an exciting and exhausting day. The film has now been edited by the Fixers Team and will be shared at the Young Peoples Event on July 27th at Carlton Park Hotel. You can access the film on: <http://www.fixers.org.uk/news/15815-11208/rotherham-diversity.php>

Armed Forces Day

The LAC Council were invited to the Armed Forces Day by Madam Mayor Eve Rose Keenan. Young people enjoyed refreshments at the Town Hall, engaged in the parade down to All Saints Square and watching the soldiers on parade, had fun spending time in the town centre talking to the Police, Fire Service and Army before going on to the barracks and having lunch with the Armed Forces men and women.

Town Hall



Here is what some Young People had to say about their experiences at Armed Forces Day:

'The Mayor kissed me and Africa!!!!'

'The Mayor remembered my name!'

'Just enjoyed the whole day I liked everything about it'

'I liked it that there was a lot more stuff (than last year) like Fire Cadets, the Fire Motorbike and the stalls and the Armed Police who let us look at their guns'

'It was really interesting, I liked spending time with Tilly, Africa and Kiran 😊'

WIDENING LAC VOICE

Recruitment Drive for LAC Council

The LAC Council at present have 9 members who attend the group on a weekly basis. Membership reduces over time as older young people go off to work/university or move out of authority. So recruitment of new young people is vital to keep the group fresh and evolving to have a voice and help shape services for looked after and leaving care young people. Therefore, we are engaging in a recruitment drive to widen participation of the Looked After Children's Council. Young people have created leaflets and a poster to promote their group, saying who they are, what they do and contact details if any young person is interested in joining them. This promotional literature has been widely distributed through Early Help Managers, Social Care Managers, VAR Newsletter, through virtual School and hand delivered to all LAC Designated Teachers and Heads of each school year in all Rotherham Secondary Schools. We are exploring all avenues to give other Looked After young people opportunities to engage and have a voice and make a positive difference to things for young people in care.

DESTINATION POLAND

Fundraising - After 9 months of numerous fundraising events by the LAC Council and our partners to raise £9,000 to send 14 Looked After and Leaving care young people from the LAC Council to Poland for an educational residential we finally achieved our goal. Alongside our funders and friends of Destination Poland we have collectively and tirelessly pursued our fundraising target by engaging in sponsored walks, cycling, climbing, bake sales, raffles, sponsored events, rattling our buckets at Rotherham Show and a partnership Marathon at Herringthorpe Stadium etc. The LAC Council have promoted Destination Poland through Social Media, Local Press releases, have spoken on Radio Sheffield and engaged in a promotional film with Journalism Students from Sheffield University. Support for the project has been truly widespread across Rotherham and we have seen RMBC Cllrs give money from their Community Funds, seen present and past Foster Carers of our young people pledging money, RMBC Services and Voluntary & Community groups holding fundraising raffles, vulnerable groups of young people holding fundraising events, it has been heart-warming to see the Rotherham communities come together for a common goal. The young people of the LAC Council are very grateful for this overwhelming support.

Destination Poland – The LAC Council on Tour! –

On 10th April, the 5 day Destination Poland Tour began at 6am, with 18 young people and supporting staff travelling from Rotherham to Krakow. Over the next few days young people experienced the culture of Poland through the food, language, architecture, images, artwork and museums. During the tour young people visited Wawel Castle, Krakow Old Town, engaged in a guided tour of Jewish quarter, synagogues, and the former Jewish ghetto. They also visited Schindler's Factory, and Wieliczka Salt Mine, the culmination of the educational residential was our visit to Auschwitz and Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial and museum. Here young people engaged in a study tour of both parts of the former concentration camp which included the gas chambers and exhibition of items found when the camps were liberated. This was an emotional and moving day which at times was overwhelming for some young people. The stark reality of the cruelty, torture, brutality, starvation and mass murder of over 6 million human beings by other human beings recorded in photographic images, displays and mountains of personal items such as shoes, hair, glasses etc was shocking.



As a mark of respect young people placed roses of remembrance at the wall of death, this was a reflective and sombre experience which young people said they would 'always remember'.



During their visit the young people wrote their own personal journals recording their experiences, feelings, thoughts and learning.

This information together with a reflective workshop is currently being used to create a presentation to share their journey and thank 'Funders and Friends' of Destination Poland for helping them achieve their goal, this will be held on 11th May @ Myplace.

I feel emotional but I feel like its something everyone should see and visit

I have learned that 23 countries lost people who were killed in Birkenau

I feel upset cos Jews carried the dead bodies (of their friends) from the gas chambers

In Addition, the LAC Council will also deliver their presentation about their experiences and share their Voices at the Holocaust Memorial Day event at the Town Hall next January.

Thank You - Fundraisers and Friends of Destination Poland

In May the LAC Council invited all the Fundraisers and Friends of Destination Poland to Myplace to thank them for all their support and efforts in fundraising to help the LACC realise their dream. Young people had created a presentation with the help of Photographic Student Beth Hopkinson to share their experiences of the whole Poland experience from fundraising through to their activities in Poland. Young people thanked the audience saying *'We could not have done it without you!'*



LAC Council Guests - Young people from the LAC Council would like to thank all of our guests, friends and supporters who have visited the LAC Council or invited us to visit them over the past few months. These are:-

Jan Walker – Head of Children in Care
Sharon Kemp – Chief Executive RMBC
Mayor Eve Rose Keenan
Shokat Lal – Assistant Chief Executive
Dr Kat Thorn – Educational Psychologist
Dr Karen Davies – Educational Psychologist
Bev Pepperdine – Commissioning, Performance & Quality
Dr Ellie Ott – Research Fellow University of Oxford
Beth Hopkinson – Photographic Student
Andrew Clarke-Director Urban Design WYG
Mike Shires – WYG Environment Planning & Transport

Thank You All 😊

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LACC Rotherham

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
Tuesday, 25th April, 2017**

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

Also present were Anne Marie Banks, Deborah Johnson, Jenny Lingrell, Ian Thomas and Ian Walker.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Collette Bailey, Mary Jarrett and Mel Meggs.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

54. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 28TH FEBRUARY, 2017

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

Further to Minute No. 42 (Rotherham Looked After Children's Update) it was noted that work was ongoing in relation to the Looked After Children's Council and the current budget would be supplemented by the funding received as a result of training activity.

With regards to Minute No. 43 (Performance Management) clarification was sought on the training on Liquid Logic and whether this could be extended to Members. It was suggested that Ian Walker, Head of Service Children in Care, liaise with James McLaughlin, Democratic Services Manager, to incorporate this into the member development programme of training.

It was also noted that the outcome of the recent Ofsted monitoring visit had been published and would be circulated to all Members. Preparations were now being made for the upcoming monitoring visit.

At Minute No. 48 (Guide to Financial Support for Young People Leaving Care in Rotherham) the final draft of the leaflet and booklet would be distributed shortly.

55. LAC COUNCIL - DESTINATION POLAND

The Panel received a presentation on the visit to Poland by the Looked After Children's Council following an intensive period of fundraising for the trip.

The presentation shared photographic activity on:-

Day One – Krakow.
 Day Two – Auschwitz and Wavel Castle.
 Day Three – Jewish Quarter and Schindler's Factory Museum.
 Day Four – Wieliczka Salt Mine and Free Time in Krakow.
 Day Five – Reflecting on the Journey.

The hard work involved in the arrangements for and facilitation of the trip was acknowledged and the presentation well received.

56. LAC COUNCIL UPDATES

Ian Walker, Head of Service Children in Care, confirmed:-

- The Looked After Children's Council had now returned from the Visit to Poland.
- The work programme would be included as an agenda item for the next meeting.

Resolved:- That the information be noted.

57. CORPORATE PARENTING PERFORMANCE REPORT - FEBRUARY 2017

Deborah Johnson, Performance Assurance Manager Social Care, introduced the report which provided a summary of performance for key performance indicators across Looked After Children services and read in conjunction with the accompanying performance data report at Appendix A which provided trend data, graphical analysis and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages where possible.

Key issues were highlighted which included:-

- Implementation of Liquid Logic.
- Recruitment to the Looked After Children Teams.
- Lincolnshire Improvement Partner Secondment.
- Looked After Children Profile, Reviews, Visits and Placements.
- Placement movements and reduction in placement disruption.
- Delays in the data input for both health and dental information.
- Timeliness of dental checks.
- Performance of health assessment reviews.
- Completion of the health assessments within the twenty day target.
- Production of Personal Education Plans and recording on the child's social care record.
- Numbers of adopted children.

Discussion ensued and the following issues were raised and clarified:-

- Migration of information from the old system to the new and the need for manual input.
- Operational performance decline and action plans for improvement.
- Targeted improvements to ensure standards reached targets on visits.
- Impact on performance with the decline in the stability of placements and the action plan for improvement.
- Identification of people vulnerable to placement disruption and the investment to prevent disruption.
- Options within the Sufficiency Strategy and increase in capacity.
- Proactive planning in the transition for out of authority placements.
- Feedback on the investment to prevent placement disruption and increase recruitment at the next meeting.
- Early intervention and upstreaming support networks.
- Challenges to commissioned placements to ensure the right child was placed in the right placement at the right time.
- Numbers of recently recruited and approved foster carers and the increase in the remuneration package available.
- Looked After Children breakdown and the higher proportion of children under one being cared for.
- To maintain stability of placements extended family members were always considered first before a foster placement was sought.
- Numbers of family members registered as connected carers.
- Analysis evidence of placements.
- Reasons for delays in the input of data for health and dental information.
- Tracking performance and outcomes for care leavers.
- Ringfencing apprenticeship programmes for care leavers.
- Caseload management.

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

(2) That the accompanying dataset (Appendix A) content be noted.

(3) That feedback be provided on the investment to prevent placement disruption and foster carer recruitment and analysis evidence of placements at the next meeting.

58. VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEAD TEACHER REPORT 2016

Consideration was given to the report of the Virtual School Head Teacher which outlined the number of schools currently involved in the scheme, the high level of turnover in the looked after children population, performance and key achievements in the last twelve months.

The context both regionally and nationally were set and attention drawn to the graphs set out within the submitted report. The position, whilst presenting challenges, would continue to promote attachment in mainstream schools.

Discussion ensued on early intervention methods to prevent school exclusion and the work taking place to prevent this happening where possible.

In terms of fixed term exclusions, whilst the trend had appeared to have gone into reverse, the numbers were relatively low. The suggestion of real number data being used instead of percentages was acknowledged.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the information noted.

59. REGULATION 44 REPORT - THE INDEPENDENT PERSON'S REPORT

Consideration was given to the submitted report which detailed the outcome following the visit to Liberty House, a short break overnight provision.

The visit was positive regarding progress and particularly in relation to capturing the voice of the child. Four actions were identified, which required attention and implementation.

In terms of action four it was acknowledged that more notice was required on events involving families.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the contents noted.

60. THE MENTORING SCHEME FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS

Consideration was given to the report which detailed, despite current good performance in respect of Looked After young people being in Education, Training or Employment, there remained a significant number who, for a variety of reasons, remained Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or who were 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 young people into NEET was an objective set down in the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2017-20.

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

The Panel welcomed the further support being offered and the planned training packages and suggested a pen portrait of the mentor be supplied once a proposed person was identified.

Resolved:- (1) That a mentoring programme be introduced and a mentor be offered for all looked after young people over the age of sixteen and care leavers up to the age of twenty-one who expressed an interest. The young people who would be offered a mentor would 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.

(2) That a pool of mentors be recruited from the senior management level (Director/Assistant Director) and Elected Members across the Council and that these mentors receive formal induction and ongoing support in the role.

61. STAYING PUT

Consideration was given to the report which detailed how the changes in legislation and guidance for children in care and care leavers required an updated Staying Put policy. This policy would underpin efforts to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to remain living with their foster carer(s) after they left care at the age of eighteen. This policy ensured that the offer to young people and their carers was fairly applied and that planning for Staying Put begin as soon as the pathway planning process commenced.

At present Rotherham was supporting nineteen Staying Put arrangements. The success of these elongated transitions was enhanced by the fact that by this stage the carers have such an investment in the young person that they would continue to be a major source of support well into adulthood.

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

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

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

The Panel welcomed this report and the positive support this would bring to young people.

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

(2) That the implementation of the policy be approved.

62. ROTHERHAM ADOPTION SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2016-2017

Consideration was given to the annual report which provided a detailed brief on the business and activity within the Council's Adoption Service in 2016/17, performance and activity data on the service, activity and functioning of the Adoption Panel and service developments that have occurred in the year along with those planned moving through 2017/18.

Further information was made on the numbers of Placement Orders made, the numbers of hard to place children, timeliness of assessments of prospective adopters, matches approved, children placed for adoption and the numbers of the children adopted.

Regular drop in sessions had been arranged at the Town Hall and five prospective families were now being considered.

The robust practices and the reintroduction of the initial assessment visit was assisting with people getting onto the adoption journey.

Rotherham's Therapeutic Team had a pre-adoption worker who was available to offer support to enable a positive adoption experience.

Further information was also provided on the Regional Adoption Agency, which Rotherham was part of and would hopefully lead to an increase in the number of children adopted and reduce the length of time children were waiting to be adopted.

The Panel welcomed the report and sought clarification on the numbers of children in Rotherham currently waiting to be adopted, the progress of the collaborative working arrangements, life story work and the disruption trends for placements.

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

(2) That further information on disruption trends for prospective adoptions be provided to the next meeting.

63. ROTHERHAM ADOPTION STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2017-2018

Consideration was given to the Rotherham Adoption Statement of Purpose 2017/18, which covered areas of service delivery with the aim of providing care for looked after children and to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children and young people.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the contents noted.

64. ROTHERHAM FOSTERING SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2016 - 2017

Consideration was given to the Rotherham Fostering Service Performance Report, which detailed the business and activity within the Council's Fostering Service in 2016/17.

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

Details about the Fostering Panel composition were shared along with the challenges being faced.

It was noted that there had been thirteen foster carer resignations, which equated to 7.6% of the in-house population and their reasons for their decisions were outlined.

There had been a decrease in performance around placement stability in 2016 – 2017 as demonstrated in the report.

Of those forty-seven children who have not experienced placement stability within the two year timeframe, three children moved out of foster placement to live with family members, two were planned moves into permanent placements, six were in-house fostering disruptions where the children later moved into IFA foster placements, twelve were residential placement moves, and twenty-four were IFA foster placement disruptions.

Placement stability continued to be a factor in offering an effective Fostering Service and crucial to ensuring that the Council delivered good outcomes to each looked after child. The accuracy of the looked after children placements for at least two years had been amended which indicated the decrease was not as significant.

Rotherham recognised that there was 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 had had a detrimental impact on permanency planning, as workers have not known children well enough to confidently progress long term matches.

Rotherham Fostering Service was on an improvement journey. There was 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 belonged. The Fostering Service were motivated and up to the challenge. The recent review of the Fostering Service had enabled the service to better know its strengths and challenges and along with a renewed recruitment and marketing strategy the service was confident that its ambitions would be realised.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the contents noted.

65. ROTHERHAM FOSTERING STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2017-2018

Consideration was given to the Rotherham Fostering Statement of Purpose 2017/18, which detailed the aims and objectives of the Fostering Service and the services and facilities provided by the Fostering Service.

This Statement of Purpose had been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the standards and regulations and would be a useful source of information to Members of the Council, staff, foster carers and prospective foster carers and children and young people who were placed with Rotherham carers. It would also provide a comparator benchmark for Rotherham children placed with Independent Fostering Agencies.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the contents noted.

66. DISCRETIONARY COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNT FOR CARE LEAVERS

Consideration was given to the report that sought support for the Council exercising 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 was further proposed that a 100% discount be made available for care leavers up to the age of 25 and in full-time Higher Education who were resident in the Rotherham area or have dual residency and were liable for Council Tax to Rotherham Council.

It was also suggested that those eligible care leavers who resided outside of the Rotherham area receive a full reimbursement from the Leaving Care budget.

The rationale for supporting care leavers in this way was 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.

Discussion ensued on the determination of household arrangements, payment of finances/benefits and the reciprocal arrangements sub-regionally.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and the contents supported in principle.

(2) That the report be submitted to the Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision Making meeting for approval.

67. EARLY HELP OFFER FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Consideration was given to the report which detailed the offer to looked After Children in Rotherham which had been documented to clearly outline what was available and to support awareness and understanding

of how the service could support children that were looked after.

The Early Help and Family Engagement Service was committed to contributing to the support of LAC young people and deliver on priorities defined by the Looked After Children's Council.

Further information was provided on the contributions of Early Help to the corporate Rotherham Priorities and would look to upstreaming proactive work rather than crisis management and focus on school attendance.

There was also universal support in children's centres and avoiding a child becoming a NEET, as well as dedicated officers for targeted interventions; all of which made innovative and positive contributions.

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

(2) That the Early Help Offer be approved.

68. APPRENTICESHIP STRATEGY 2017 - 2020

Consideration was given to the report presented by Sue Palfreyman, Head of Human Resources, which outlined how the Council had offered apprenticeships in a range of areas for a number of years, but more recently the number of places available remained static at around thirty.

From April 2017 the Government introduced a new Apprenticeship scheme to fund its three million new apprenticeships policy. The Apprenticeship Levy was set at a rate of 0.5% of an employers' gross pay bill.

Public Sector Targets for the number of apprentice starting annually would match 2.3% of the total employee headcount. For the Council this would aim for 150 apprentices by 2020 and each year thereafter.

The Council faced a number of challenges, which needed to be addressed through the Apprenticeship Strategy. These were:-

- 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.

The vision, aims and objectives of the Strategy were referred to and would give individuals the competence, knowledge and transferable skills for work and progression.

In order to fulfil the Council's ambition to significantly increase the number

of new start apprenticeships across the Council there would be a need to invest to support the number of conversions of entry level posts. This would be overseen by the Workforce Management Board, where evidence would 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 were identified funding would be drawn down to support the qualification obtained. However, the service would 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%).

Discussion ensued on the opportunities for short pre-application courses, the duration and the support offered. Every effort was to make courses run, attractive, easy to engage with and motivating.

The apprenticeship period averaged between eighteen months to two years and within the last three months the apprentice's name would be included on the Council's redeployment register to seek a more permanent role.

Discussions remained ongoing with Human Resources. The success of the schemes moving forward would be evaluated in due course.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the information be noted.

69. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair of the Improving Lives Select Commission advised the Panel that as part of the work programme for 2017/18 a scrutiny review would be undertaken looking specifically at corporate parenting, including fostering, looked after children and placement stability.

70. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel be moved on one week from the 27th June, 2017 to the 4th July, 2017 at 5.00 p.m. at the Town Hall.

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PLAN 2017**STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**

Performance Management Report

LAC Council updates

IRO Report

Disrupted Placement update

Missing from Care

LAC Strategy and Sufficiency Strategy updates

Ofsted updates/Reg 44 Visits

Improvement Plan updates

Virtual Head updates for Virtual School Governing Body

Virtual School Governing Body minutes

Specific Agenda Items

February 28th 2017

Health/CAMHS

April 25th 2017

Fostering and Adoption Annual Report

Virtual Head Annual Report 2015/16

July 18th 2017

Voice of the Child – LACC Takeover

August 29th 2017

Leaving Care Annual Report

October 24th 2017

Verbal input on Education outcomes (summer 2017)

December 19th 2017

Missing from Care/CSE

Summary Sheet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP)

Report Title The Strategic Commissioning Review of 'In-House' Foster Care.

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

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report Ian Thomas

Report Author(s) Ian Walker – Head of Service

Ward(s) Affected All

Summary

- 1.1 This report should be considered alongside and in conjunction with the LAC Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2017-20. The findings in this Review demonstrate the Service is going some way towards a successful implementation of the Strategy but that there is a risk of a lack of capacity and capability within the in-house fostering service to deliver against the increased demand for placements and the improved offer to Foster Carers.
- 1.2 The findings highlight key issues around organisation, support and a culture of performance and learning, all of which are directly impeding the Service's ability to operate effectively in the market and improve the quality of practice.
- 1.3 There is a continued lack of a joined up approach across the In-House and external market. This means there is a lack of clarity in relation to the respective functions and focus which subsequently fails to maximise quality of provision/ optimum matching of placements.
- 1.4 Detailed recommendations are included in the Review which are aimed at ensuring that the Fostering Service can deliver to the intentions set out in the LAC Sufficiency Strategy investments and the CYPS Medium Term Financial Sustainability Plan.

Recommendations

The recommendation is that CPP considers and approves this report and agree its presentation to the Fostering Panel for information and consideration. Once the approval process has been completed a full action plan will be developed, the implementation of which will be overseen by a newly established Foster Care Service Improvement Group in order to accelerate pace and grip.

List of Appendices Included

The Strategic Review is included as an Appendix to this report

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

N/a.

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Insert Title of Report here

1. Recommendations

1.1 The recommendation is that CPP considers and approves this report and agree its presentation to the Fostering Panel for information and consideration. Once the approval process has been completed a full action plan will be developed, the implementation of which will be overseen by a newly established Foster Care Service Improvement Group in order to accelerate pace and grip.

2. Background

2.1 Since the completion of this report the numbers of looked after children (LAC) have continued to rise from the 488 as at the end of December to 508 as at the end of May 2017. As of the 1st July 2016 there were only 433 LAC and despite the marked improvements achieved in the recruitment, retention and efficient utilisation of in-house foster carers this trend will continue to place increasing pressure on the Sufficiency Plan.

2.2 The Strategic Commissioning Review was developed in recognition of these significant risks and the financial pressures that they will present. It was one of the recommendations of this Review that the report should be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel and to the Foster Panel in order to evidence governance of the service and of the Plan. This proposal was endorsed by the Foster Care Service Improvement Group meeting on the 25th April.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 There is increasing evidence to indicate that the recruitment of in-house foster carers within Rotherham is an emerging strength:-
- In 2015/16 only 13 new foster carer families were recruited but in 2016/17 this had increased to 22 approvals arising from 191 enquiries albeit at a conversion rate of only 12%.
 - By undertaking more targeted initial visits and by a more forensic analysis of 'leakage points' in the Fostering Performance Clinic, plans are being formulated to increase the conversion rate to 15% which should increase the number of approvals by c 5 placements p.a.
 - In 2017/18 there have been 26 enquiries over the course of Fostering Fortnight alone. There are already 10 prospective approvals booked onto Foster Panel between now and October with another 3 also likely to be booked onto panel for consideration for approval making a total of 13 new foster families (26 additional foster families on full year projection). Thus, it is looking likely that last year's performance will be at least matched and by far exceed the original target set of a net increase of 15 foster placements per year.
 - As of the 9th June there were 203 children placed in in-house foster placements including short-breaks placements with a further 13 children in temporarily approved placements (Reg 24 Family and Friends Placements).

This number of 216 in-house foster placements is an all-time high within Rotherham.

- As of the 1st May there were 265 children in in-house placements overall – up from only 219 as of the 1st July 2016.
- 85% of LAC are living in family based placements.

3.2 In addition to this there are a number of initiatives being progressed to improve foster care recruitment and therefore achieve the objectives set out in the Sufficiency Plan:-

- Recruitment of a full time Recruitment & Marketing lead (currently being advertised) to increase the visibility of Fostering in Rotherham on social media.
- A more targeted marketing campaign to address specific shortfalls in placement provision including for adolescents, large sibling groups and young people described as having ‘challenging behaviour’.
- A business case to recruit a Virtual Assessment Team to supplement the permanent assessment team and to minimise any delays in the approval process. This is especially significant given the success of the work undertaken to raise the awareness in the LAC and Locality Social Work teams regarding Reg 24 Placements which was an identified issue of concern in the previous full Ofsted Inspection. The significant increase in Reg 24 Assessment referrals is likely to have an impact on the Fostering team’s capacity to undertake ‘mainstream’ fostering assessments.
- A business case to introduce ‘Refer a Fostering Friend’ across RMBC whereby employees will be financial remunerated on the successful recruitment and approval of a foster carer that was referred into the service.
- Introduction of the Mockingbird Family Based Model of Fostering which has been approved and will be rolled out in 2017/18.
- Amendments to Terms and conditions of RMBC employees who foster who are interested in fostering to enable them paid time off from work to attend at fostering relevant events, such as training, reviews and panel.

3.3 However, the Commissioning Review also identifies a number of risks and threats to the Sufficiency Plan including:-

- A lack of clear promotion of the ‘foster care offer’ although this should be addressed by the appointment to the vacant marketing post.
- A lack of appropriate Business Support with the provision proposed in the most recent Business Support Review reducing even further from that set out in the Commissioning Review from two dedicated admin workers and one Business Support Manager to 1 Full Time Equivalent at Grade D.
- Greater scope for a closer working relationship with the Independent Fostering Agencies.
- The need to develop a learning culture in the service.
- A shortfall in analysis as to what conditions contribute to good outcomes being achieved by certain placements and not in others.

- Developments needed in the provision of Team Around the Placement Meetings with greater degrees of co-operation and co-working between the children's' social worker, the supervising social worker and the foster carer.
- The need for Liquid Logic to be developed to facilitate a more performance orientated culture within the service. Until very recently the Fostering Service have not been able to accurately report even the number of in-house foster placements but they have been tasked to performance manage this as well as:-
 - Number. of IFA placements.
 - Number of dormant/unused placements and plans to make them 'live'.
 - Supervisory social work visits.
 - Unannounced visits.
 - Foster carer reviews presented to Panel within a two year cycle.
 - Recruitment process map identifying key drop-out points.
 - Private Fostering placements
 - Reg 24 placements.

These will be managed via an in-service data-base pending the development of Liquid Logic.

- Better co-working of the Team Around the Child between the child's social worker, the supervising social worker and the foster carer.
- Developing a learning culture from unplanned placement disruptions.
- A more forensic analysis of outcomes by placement type both internal and IFA.

3.4 As stated above these developments will be managed via the Foster Care Service Improvement Group.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 4.1 There are no options being proposed at this stage and CPP is recommended to adopt the recommendations contained in this report and the Strategic Commissioning Review.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Strategic Commissioning Review underwent full consultation with the Fostering Team, the Foster Carer network, the LAC Service and a variety of partner agencies.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 The Strategic Commissioning Review is to be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel on the 27th June 2017 and Ian Walker, Head of Service will be responsible for its implementation.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 There are significant financial implications which are apparent from the information contained in the review of the in-house fostering service.
- 7.2 The additional investment approved by Cabinet in September 2016 has proven successful in retaining existing foster carers, attracting new foster families and meeting the target net increase of 15 places per year in 2017/18 set out in the Children's Services Sustainability Strategy approved by Council in December 2016.
- 7.3 The net increase of 15 in-house placements was supposed to enable step-down for children in less suitable and more expensive settings, namely out of authority residential and independent foster agencies. The transfer of children into Rotherham's in-house provision had significant implications regarding cashable savings which were expected to be in excess of £1m.
- 7.4 However due to the continued growth in the number of looked after children, additional local authority fostering placements have not been used as originally planned and instead have been required for new children entering care.
- 7.5 If children placed within in-house fostering are new entrants, rather than existing children in care, the savings proposed and built into the 2017/18 budget will not materialise; and there will be the budget pressure associated with additional demand. However successful recruitment of new foster carers will mean that there is more low cost provision to manage the demand which would otherwise automatically default to placement in IFA or residential provision.
- 7.6 The monitoring of progress and accurate analysis during the year will be essential through the new Foster Care Service Improvement Group which will need to report regularly to the Business Savings Delivery Group and provide a detailed breakdown regarding the potential pressures highlighted above.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

9. Human Resources Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct HR Implications applicable at this moment in time, however I would comment that any structural changes as a result of this will need to be done with full staff consultation.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 Strengthening the fostering recruitment process should enable more of our looked after children to be placed within family based setting where they are more likely to achieve positive outcomes. As a result the implications arising from this report are wholly positive ones.

11 Equalities and Human Rights Implications

11.1 By improving the outcomes for looked after children their Human Rights and equal opportunities will be promoted.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

12.1 None noted.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 There is a significant financial and reputational risk

14. Accountable Officer(s)

14.1 Ian Walker, Head of Service.

Approvals Obtained from:-

	Named Officer	Date
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services	Mark Chambers	12/6/17
Assistant Director of Legal Services	Neil Concannon	20/6/17
Head of Procurement (if appropriate)	N/a	
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	Rebecca Boyle	12/6/17

Report Author: *Ian Walker, Head of Service*

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

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

**ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

**STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING REVIEW OF
'IN-HOUSE' FOSTER CARE.**

March 2017

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - 2016/17 Current budget and current forecasts compared to 2015-16
Appendix 2 – LAC Placement by placement type - trend

Background Papers

- Statement of Purpose 2016/17 – Rotherham RMBC Fostering Service
- Fostering Team Service Development Plan
- Workstream lead individual review reports
- Benchmarking IFA's and Other LA
- Foster Carer consultation group and questionnaire feedback
- Fostering Team Performance Scorecard
- Provision in the foster carer market

Commissioning Project Group
March 2017
(Author: Angela Tracey)

1 NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

National Context

- 1.1 The review of the In House Foster Care Service was completed against a backdrop of significant national and local strategic change. The Association of Directors of Children's Services longitudinal study (Phase 5 Executive Report) describes the clear reduction in resources between 2010 and 2016, the increasing and more complex needs of children, young people and their families and the increased expectations of the regulatory regime. All are set to continue and require a strategic and financially sustainable response if good outcomes are to be achieved for children in care. The sufficiency of in-house foster care placements is a key response to these challenges.
- 1.2 The National Minimum Standards (NMS) apply to the provision of fostering services (both in-house or independent). The NMS, together with Regulations relevant to the placement of children in foster care such as the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (the 2011 Regulations), form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 (CSA) for the conduct of fostering services. They aim to enable, rather than prevent, individual providers to develop their own particular ethos and approach based on evidence that this is the most appropriate way to meet the child's needs. Where it is helpful this review will refer to them.

Local Context

- 1.3 As set out in the Corporate Plan 2016-17, the Council has prioritised Rotherham becoming a child-centred borough, where young people are supported by their families/carers and community, and are protected from harm. The pledge is that every child gets the opportunity to make the best start in life. The Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy 2017-21 sets out an intention that for those children who remain in our care we will ensure that we have good quality placement in a family setting in or close to Rotherham.
- 1.4 There has been a consistent upward trend year on year in the numbers of children and young people looked after by the Local Authority. This is in common generally with the national and regional sufficiency trends and challenges. Rotherham, in common with local authorities across the Yorkshire and Humber region, has a shortage of all foster care placements, in particular in relation to placement sufficiency for:
 - Older children - adolescents aged 12+
 - Larger sibling groups
 - Children and young people described as having 'challenging behaviour'
- 1.5 However in Rotherham the number of children in care has increased from 424 as of January 2016 to 488 as of December 2016 (15% increase in a 12 month period) and is expected to increase until the investments in services made by the Council start to have an impact. Historically poorly performing services have left a legacy of more complex need as well as a legacy of rising numbers.
- 1.6 Growing the in-house foster care placement provision is central to closing gaps in the provision of sufficient local placement accommodation and increasing the number of looked after children in a family setting and is an important element of the financial sustainability of the Directorate.

- 1.7 In response to this the Council and Commissioners approved a significant investment in the In House Foster Care in August 2016, improving the offer to Foster Carers on the expectation that the number of foster care placements will increase.
- 1.8 There is further work to be done to ensure that the in-house Fostering Service is improved and capacity is increased to complement and indeed lead the role played by the external market. A key Strategic priority of the Children and Young People's Services Directorate is to shape and develop a 'one market' approach to the commissioning and provision of localised family based support, for which the fostering offer is no exception.
- 1.8 As at the end of December 2016 Rotherham Fostering Service had 163 in house foster carers registered caring for 199 children and young people, equating to 41% of the placement market. (Appendix 2).
- 1.9 This joint review of the in-house service is undertaken to inform its future position in the 'one market' approach, to maximise and increase its capacity and quality of offer to achieve an estimated 70% of the market share moving forward.
- 1.10 In order to achieve the Directorates vision of outstanding by 2018 it needs to ensure that the Fostering Service in Rotherham is improved and transformed to meet the current and future sufficiency challenge and is befitting of a child centred borough.

2 METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

- 2.1 The review started in August 2016 and was completed at the end of November 2016. The scope of the review was the In-House Fostering Service.
- 2.2 A Project Team was established to undertake the review and leads allocated to each workstream and reports with findings prepared for all.
- 2.3 The methodology included:
 - The completion of an 'as is' desktop exercise which looked at current budgets, staffing structure, training, engagement with partners, voice and experience, innovation.
 - Face to Face meetings were held with a cross section of key stakeholders which included but was not limited to the current staff team, a group of current carers, the LAC Council, Independent Fostering Agencies, the Shared Lives Team from Adult's social care and a range of people in Children's Social Care.
 - Views were also received by email from the Police, the community and voluntary sector and Adult Services Commissioning.
 - An analysis of performance information was completed which included complaints and compliments.
 - Clarification meetings with the In-House Fostering Management Team.

3 REVIEW FINDINGS

THE IN-HOUSE FOSTER CARE OFFER

- 3.1 This review will focus on the In-House 'Offer' to Foster Carers and Children. It is a requirement of Standard 1 of the Fostering Services Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act, 2000) and Regulations 3 and 4 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, 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 Fostering Service has a comprehensive Statement of Purpose 2016/17 however, the status of the document in terms of sign off is unclear.

The In House Fostering Team Structure/ workforce analysis

- 3.2 The In-house Fostering Service sits within the CYPS Directorate of the Council, and specifically in Children's Social Care. The Cabinet and Lead Executive Member is Councillor Watson and the Chief Officer responsible for the Service is Ian Thomas, Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services. The responsibility for Social Care is delegated to the Deputy Strategic Director, Mel Meggs, who has line management responsibility for the Head of Service, Ian Walker, who takes the Strategic lead for Children in Care, including Fostering and Adoption. The Head of Service has line management responsibility for the Service Manager for Fostering, Anne Marie Banks.
- 3.3 Rotherham Fostering Service comprises of 23.38 FTE across three separate teams:
- Recruitment Team - 6 FTE including 1 Marketing Officer working across Fostering and Adoption and Supported Lodging Coordinator
 - Fostering Supervision team - 11 FTE Supervising Social Workers
 - Specialist team - 6 FTE social worker posts and 1 training coordinator
- 3.4 Within this there are now three team managers, each managing one specific area. Two managers (supervision and specialist) are permanent, and one is stepping up on a temporary basis. All the managers are new to the post, two were externally appointed. Although new to their posts, they all bring with them a mix of skills from within and outside RMBC, which provides opportunities for fresh learning. All have some experience of managing people and/or leading in fostering development programmes.
- 3.5 The service is dealing with a legacy of insufficient managerial oversight. Whilst the Service has recently recruited externally to two vacancies which helps to provide fresh ways of thinking and working, the team is made up of workers who have worked within fostering for a number of years. This has provided stability but there are long established working practices which require improvement/update if the service is to deliver improved outcomes for children and lead the local market. This now places a high priority on managing performance, and supporting and coaching staff to drive up the quality of practice.
- 3.6 The Specialist Team have recently recruited a permanency worker to focus on Special Guardian Orders and fostering permanency and lead responsibility for private fostering arrangements. This is an area for development given the potential it has to reduce the number of children in care.

THE OFFER TO THE FOSTER CARERS

- 3.7 An improved financial package was implemented in October 2016 following significant effort from the Service Manager to consult with Foster Carers and benchmark against the sector. Foster Carers are now generally happy with the financial package and are paid promptly notwithstanding some immediate issues following 'go-live' of the Liquid Logic system.
- 3.8 Providing foster carers with the best support possible directly helps them provide quality care to children, and helps them have a better future. This support extends beyond the financial package they receive to the support for the child in their care, their training and development, crisis help and professionalisation of the foster carer role.

Supervisory Visits

- 3.9 Supervision and support to Foster Carers is provided by qualified and experienced supervising social workers (SSW). Each SSW holds a manageable caseload of 15/16 cases. Workers are expected to attend reviews, Personal Education Plan and other meetings pertaining to the children in care in any placement they support and any issues relevant to foster carers.
- 3.10 The Fostering Service performance is monitored in fortnightly performance meetings and shows that supervisory visits are currently sustained around 80%. Workers visit foster carers 6 weekly (local measure) and the aim and purpose of these meetings are to support, stretch and develop foster carers. Some workers do this more fully than others. Workers upload their visits onto the electronic recording system and write up the visit on the SSW visit report. However, whilst the visits are recorded, the timeliness of uploading reports onto the system across the team is questionable. Some workers do this in a more timely way than others.
- 3.11 Evidence suggests that the SSW have strong relationships with their respective foster carers, some of which are longstanding. Whilst this is a strength there is evidence that SSW do not consistently bring the necessary level of challenge to Foster Carers. This is not only from a practice perspective but our 'ask' of foster carers - placement availability, training attendance, being a 'pushy' parent and the child's educational potential. Recent work to improve the quality of supervision of the SSWs by the Team Manager in this area has brought the necessary management oversight to SSW practice at a case level, but this is not yet embedded.
- 3.12 Relationships in respect of those professionals around the child (Foster Carer, SSW, the child's locality social worker, LAC team etc) are essential to achieving placement stability and permanence and ensuring children are able to enjoy continuity of relationships. Having the social worker and SSW within the same authority is a key advantage over the IFA provision and there is evidence that effective joined up planning and delivery is not being maximised. Eg within the Team Around the Placement meetings. Work is required to improve internal relationships across the various Social Care disciplines for the benefit of the child.
- 3.13 Until January 2017 placement disruption meetings were chaired by a social worker and were not routinely taken back to panel, nor an analysis made of the outcomes on any meaningful level. From January 2017, all disruptions meetings have been chaired by a Team Manager and will be presented back to fostering panel. It is too early to assess impact yet, but this is an area of weakness which where focus needs to be maintained.
- 3.14 Locality Social Workers view was that there is a lack of visibility for them when placements were in danger of breaking down and a lack of clarity about what resources were available from the Fostering Service with SSWs to support

placements potentially breaking down. Both Locality and IROs felt that the service were too quick to offer respite to carers rather than address the underlying issues when breaking down and that when respite is offered it is done without consultation with the Locality Social Worker.

Duty System

- 3.15 SSW also resource a duty system where they cover duty calls predominantly for placement requests. The high demand for placements means that when on duty workers day are fully taken up with duty matters and often other team members are pulled in to helping secure placements as often placement requests are required on that date without pre-planning. As the number of Children in Care has risen there is a capacity issue for the service and a strategic organisational issue. The placement matching process is wider than the In-House provision. The Duty SSW has particular knowledge for In-House provision but not necessarily across other providers and the market. Alternative solutions to support the placement matching process should be considered.
- 3.16 Duty social work cover is from 9.30am until 5.30pm. An out of hours team provide cover from 5.30pm until 12.30am with a social worker being on call from 11.00pm until 8.00am. There is anecdotal evidence of poor transference of information from out of hours cover to the duty social worker.

Training and Development & Annual Reviews of Foster Carers

- 3.17 As part of the foster carer Annual Review process, carers personal development plans are updated, and this is used to plan training needs for the year. Currently, this is not utilised as rigorously as it should be. This needs to be developed further to ensure that the foster carers are a skilled up work force. Historically the level of training provided has been sufficient to at least meet the National Minimum Standard. Funds have been secured during 2016 to improve the training offer to foster carers and a training programme is currently being developed. In addition to this, Annual Reviews of Foster Carers are presented to Foster Panel on the national minimum requirement.

SUPPORT FOR THE CHILD

- 3.18 The Rotherham Therapeutic Team (RTT) provide advice to carers and professionals working with the foster child to support the emotional wellbeing of young people in their care. Contact and access to support is via the carer's supervising social worker. Additional provision is currently being developed to meet the need of children in foster care thus contributing to placement stability.
- 3.19 The adequacy and sufficiency of respite care was raised as an issue. Some carers are registered for respite care which would include taking a child whilst the regular carer was on holiday. Holiday Support is sometimes available as respite as occasionally a looked after child cannot or does not wish to go on holiday with a foster carer. Respite Support is also available hired in to undertake an activity with a Looked After Child for a few hours to give carers a break. There is no clear information about the quality of this support but it is largely undertaken on a spot purchase basis with agencies, representing poor procurement practice and poor value for money.

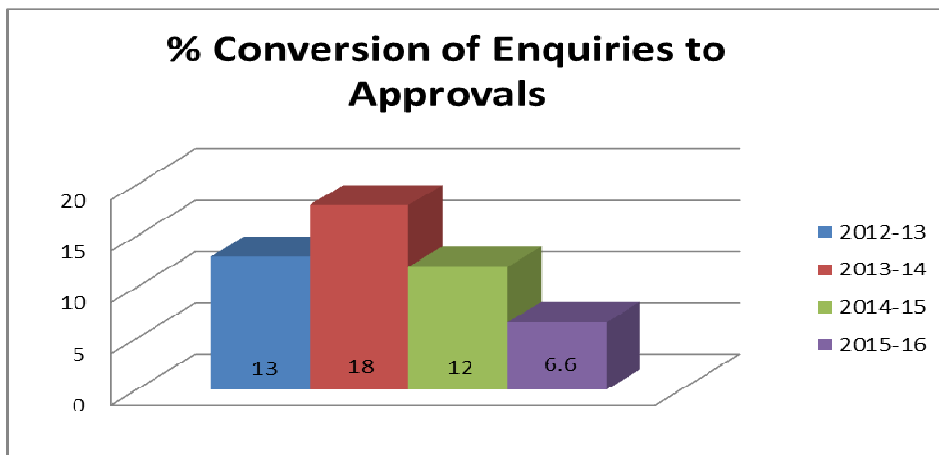
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FOSTER CARERS

- 3.20 Part of the investment in the In House Foster Care in August 2016 included making sure recruitment and retention programmes are fit for purpose in order to meet targets on market share, cost reduction and improved outcomes for children.

- 3.21 The Council needs to increase the numbers of people who can foster children in the care system, and in particular needs to increase the number of foster carers who can look after teenagers and those with complex needs. The target is a net increase the Council's filled foster placements of at least 15 places each year to 2021.
- 3.22 In order to meet this challenge the Council needs to make sure anyone considering fostering in Rotherham contacts the local authority ahead of other fostering agencies. Not only will this benefit the local authority in terms of value for money and cost reduction, but it will reduce the need to place children out of the local authority area.
- 3.23 Whilst the service holds regular recruitment days, uses local radio, and the initial 'Be a Local Hero' campaign in 2016 had some impact on recruitment, the service is currently underdeveloped in its approach to recruitment of foster carers. There is no clear promotion of the new 'offer' to prospective foster carers using a variety of channels in order to get the message out.
- 3.24 By way of example, the 'Statement of Purpose' is a requirement on all foster care providers. When compared with a number of independent fostering providers Rotherham's document meets what is required but misses a real opportunity that others have taken to set out their 'offer' in a way that it can be readily digested by the primary audience, i.e. prospective foster carers. This clearly would help in terms of recruitment but also of understanding of other stakeholders including Ofsted and partners. There is scope for improvement of marketing to accelerate the rate of recruitment.
- 3.25 A number of foster carers sit on the Marketing Group to inform and support recruitment of new carers and work is in early stages to establish a team of recruiting foster carers to help with recruitment events and new initiatives.
- 3.26 The investment by the Council in the service included the appointment of a Marketing Officer for the service. The Corporate Communications Lead for CYPS is working to develop this with the Service Manager. A Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy has been drafted and the job role for the Marketing Officer. The Fostering Service needs to be more responsive in working together with Corporate Communications at pace to deliver and develop a clear project implementation plan.
- 3.27 Alongside this, the Corporate Communications and Marketing Team are supporting the Fostering Service to retain existing foster carers. This will include promoting networking sessions, foster parties and other events planned by the fostering service.

APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PERFORMANCE

- 3.28 Follow up by the Service to initial enquiries from prospective carers is timely. The Recruitment Team respond to the enquirer within 72 hours.
- 3.29 The time frame from initial enquiry to becoming an approved foster carer is approximately 8 months. Only a small percentage of enquiries result in approved foster carers, with the national average being 11%. Rotherham had historically achieved an above national average conversion but Diagram 1 shows a dip in 2015/16. This corresponds with a reduction in applications in that year. It is thought that this reduction was an impact from the Jay and Casey Reports with a number of potential carers already in the application process leaving. Conversion rates to date in 2016/17 stand at 12%. Much needed information which provides visibility across the conversion process as prospective carers pass through from enquiry to assessment approval is not available.



- 3.30 The Foster Care team are making good progress against the target of 15 in 2016/17, having exceeded this at the time of writing. However some of the recruitment can be attributed to the placement review of all Foster Carers undertaken by the Service Manager which aimed to look at existing placements, managing them from latent placements into active foster caring. This was absolutely the right course of action but assurance is required that the service can sustain the increased numbers and in the target area of teenagers into 2017/18 and beyond.
- 3.31 There is capacity issue associated with reaching the target. Recruiting a net 15 foster carers per annum would mean that the service would need to receive in excess of 140 enquiries each year increasing the number of formal assessments. Around 11% of enquiries (in line with national average) would result in an applicant being successful in their formal assessment and approved as a foster carer.
- 3.32 The recruitment process has changed relatively recently and potential carers take part in training and speaking to existing foster carers prior to the formal assessment being undertaken. This was seen as very positive by carers as it gives potential carers the opportunity to better understand the role and whether it would suit them prior to time and resources being spent on the formal assessment. The service believes it could do more earlier to filter out those assessments that may be unlikely to progress.
- 3.33 Currently the Assessment Team staff are not able to clear the number of assessments required in an appropriate timescale. At the time of writing there are 6 applications awaiting formal assessment. Beyond the impact it may have on achieving the target, the regional market is competitive and Rotherham runs the risk of losing potential foster carers to neighbouring boroughs or Independent Fostering Agencies.
- 3.34 Foster Carers were consulted with regard to the process for assessment and approval. Foster Carers understood the assessment process was necessarily personal, intrusive and intense. The assessment process was noted to be easier if there is a good relationship with the recruitment social worker; the age and gender of the social worker can also make a difference.
- 3.35 Existing foster carers noted that a longer transition period at the time they become approved in terms of changing social workers (from recruitment SW to SSW) would be beneficial to facilitate relationship building and handover. This was an issue also raised by the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs). Foster carers suggested that it may be beneficial for newly approved carers to initially provide only respite care as a way of easing into caring rather than the sudden shock of having a child full time.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

- 3.36 The Senior Leadership ambition is clearly reflected in the Directorate's Improvement Plan. The vision is ambitious in its commitment to be received as outstanding by 2018. However, the strength of vision and ambition has been diluted historically as it cascades to the specifics of the Fostering Service. The service does not appear to mirror the same level of expectation and ambition with no finalised Vision, Business Plan or Service Development Plan. This was further compounded by an inconsistency of leadership at Head of Service level which more recently has been stabilised and has resulted in an evidenced focus on the leadership and improvement of the service.
- 3.37 The Service Manager brings a passion to the service and is progressing the historical lack of Strategic Plans, but there remains much work to do. The Service is extremely aware of the challenges and the areas for improvement. A considerable amount of work has been completed recently in relation to the sufficiency of the Service provision. This will support the leadership team to develop its strategic and operational offer and its position in the wider market. A number of Service Development Days have been held recently which will again strengthen leadership visibility and direction.
- 3.38 The visibility and profile of the Service is not a noticeable feature of the wider LAC Service. In addition, there is also a Service Development Plan, which is attached, however, again the status is unclear and does not appear to reflect the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.
- 3.39 The developing strategic documents (business plan etc) lack a positioning of the national and regional context, with limited reference to national policy and national minimum standards. There appears to be a gap in relation to outcome evidencing of the quality of life experienced by the young person.
- 3.40 The Service has a wealth of performance data which feeds into the Looked After Children and Care Leavers weekly Performance Report. However, it is unclear how such data is used and maximised by the service to improve performance and outcomes and how different sources of data and service activity are brought into one place to support service planning, improvement and development.
- 3.41 There appears to be a lack of qualitative data and outcomes reporting and little analysis with a focus on statistics. The engagement with Commissioning strategically in the sharing of the data to shape a 'one market' approach is again unclear.
- 3.42 There are a series of highlight reports which are presented to the Deputy Director and Heads of Service and shared with all teams across Children's Services as part of the 'check and challenge', namely fostering supervisory and a recruitment tracker. Again this activity information appears fragmented.

PROCESSES AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

- 3.43 The fostering placement process starts with a referral form received by the Placements Team and is sent on to duty social worker. The duty social worker reviews the vacancy list and contacts any potential carers to see if they are interested in fostering the child. If they are the duty social worker will speak to the child's social worker for full matching and the child's social worker and foster carer's social worker progress the placement. The foster carer's social worker is responsible for arranging and undertaking the 72 hour meeting following placement.

- 3.44 The high demand for placements means that when on duty the worker's day is fully taken up with duty matters and often other team members are pulled in to helping secure placements as often placement requests are required on that date without pre-planning. The co-location of the Fostering Team with the Placements Team has brought much closer working relationships and helped with twin-track searches, as has attendance at Fostering Service team meetings by members of the Placements Team.
- 3.45 The placement search process and duty processes are functioning but the approach is not joined up approach across the In-House and external provision, so the opportunity to build up a knowledge base of placement choice/ matching across the provision is not being optimised.
- 3.46 The Service Manager is reliant on manual spreadsheet lists to keep a record of in House foster placements at the present time. Data issues and changes in process following the implementation of the Liquid Logic Social Care System in October 2016 are preventing a real time view of provision.
- 3.47 There is a lack of appropriate business support in Fostering. There are two dedicated fostering admin workers with a business support manager. This is not just a matter of capacity but a matter of level and skill. This creates a barrier to smooth running of processes, and effective day to day grip of the service for the Service Manager.
- 3.48 Specific technical tasks such as the administration and effective governance around the fortnightly foster care panel are being undertaken by a resource that is spread thinly across the service with no consistent person involved. This is having an impact on the effectiveness of the panel. Similar scenarios exist around business support of up to date to oversight of foster carer DBS checks and medicals and payments to Foster Carers.
- 3.49 There are significant financial targets associated with the work and progress in this Service for the Directorate and a lack of grip or visibility of performance in this area will have serious implications for the budget. Priorities around Liquid Logic developments, business support and project resource is not aligned proportionately to the level of financial risk associated with the financial investment.
- 3.50 The Fostering Service is competing in a market with other IFA's and having robust business arrangements in place are essential to performance. This should be reviewed and resolved as part of the Business Support Review.
- 3.51 Process issues still exist from recent changes to commissioning placements. The Placements Team do not have access to the Fostering Service Duty mailbox and as some referrals still going there and it not being constantly monitored this can lead to delays. This is a straightforward issue and should be resolved.
- 3.52 It would be helpful if an A4 carer profile was available for in-house carers as it is for IFA carers so locality staff could compare like with like.

CONSULTATION/ENGAGEMENT

- 3.53 There are strong relationships between the SSW, the Service Manager and Foster Carers. Foster Carers are responsive when asked to be involved in any initiative. However much more needs to be done to find an effective way to consult and engage foster carers. Four locality Support groups are poorly attended, appear to be ad hoc and there is no information available on regularity. A new foster carer group,

which new carers can attend for 12 months, is more popular but it was not felt that this helped new carers to integrate with existing groups.

- 3.54 Foster carers feel much more needs to be done to facilitate natural developments such as a buddy system and perhaps information being shared on who else fostered in each area. Informal networks are in place between foster carers but these are where friendships have naturally developed.
- 3.55 Foster carers consulted during this review felt that locality social workers did not appreciate or value their views, despite their experience and knowledge of the children they care for. An example was given where foster carers are asked to provide information to social workers for Team Around the Placement meetings but not allowed to attend. Similarly carers are not always made aware of strategy meetings etc where they felt they could attend and offer insights and information on the behaviour and feelings of the children they care for.
- 3.56 Foster carers felt that they were consulted with but that they did not receive feedback on what changes had or had not occurred as a result of their consultation. Carers specifically requested feedback from this consultation.

VOICE AND INFLUENCE OF THE CHILD

- 3.57 Foster carers felt that the voice of the child could sometimes be lost to processes and best practice, with the individual needs of the child and what they wanted being overlooked. The Directorate's intentions and approach to ensuring voice and influence of the child prevails have been set out in the LAC Sufficiency Strategy 2017-2021 but this is yet to be embedded in practice. This is an area of weakness.
- 3.58 Work has been undertaken to produce a new referral form which puts the views of the child at the forefront of the process. These views are to be borne in mind when social workers are undertaking matching for placements but there is currently no feedback loop to ensure that the placement continues to be in line with the views of the child on an ongoing basis.
- 3.59 Looked After Children fed back that when a SSW visits their carers they are usually not informed of the purpose of the visit, often not spoken to by the SSW, not introduced and always asked to leave the room. They are aware they are being spoken about and left to wonder what is being said. One YP said he is usually left to sit on the stairs until the SSW leaves.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND KEY RELATIONSHIPS

- 3.60 The existing Service Plan is disappointing in terms of partnership working. Whilst there is mention of the need for development work with carers and young people and certain other functions within Children's Social Care there is no mention of work with any other partners either internally or externally. This gives the impression that the culture within the service is, or certainly has been historically, an introspective and silo based one rather than one which is outward looking.
- 3.61 There are clearly issues with how the Fostering Service staff are perceived by the rest of the Children's Social Care workforce. The staff team's perception was that they are seen as separate to social care and viewed as of lesser importance than locality when they often see the young person (YP) more often than the Social Worker (SW). Fostering social work is not part of the training a social worker receives and the staff team fed back that whilst student social workers did use to spend some time with the service this practice appears to have stopped

- 3.62 Concerns were expressed by IROs, MASH/Out Of Hours and Locality Team Managers that on occasion the relationship between Supervising Social Worker's (SSWs) and the carers they supervise had become skewed to the Foster Carers. It has become more child focussed since the new Service Manager was appointed but is still too focussed on the needs of the carer rather than the child with not enough challenge provided to carers, particularly at point of placement. The relationship is described as "...not a business like one and often too friendly".
- 3.63 Attendance at meetings was seen as an issue from all involved. Locality Team Managers fed back that SSWs are poor attenders at Looked After Child (LAC) reviews and other meetings. By contrast Fostering staff felt they were given little notice to attend review meetings and when they attended felt their views were not valued.
- 3.64 Carers did not feel valued by locality social workers and wanted to be regarded as part of the workforce, indicating that they would routinely like to be invited to professional meetings e.g TAP meetings, as they often know the child best.
- 3.65 Matching, and long term matching was another issue raised by all parties. IROs expressed the view that carers were being pushed to accept young people beyond their skill level and that assessments of carer capacity appeared to be poorer recently than in the past. There was a sense that all those capable of having teenage placements had already been pushed to accept them and that now the service were pushing those that weren't.
- 3.66 The Service also fed back that matching forms within the Service and Locality are different but that both should be completed jointly.
- 3.67 Representatives of the Virtual School felt that whilst much of the practice within the team was good there still remained a sense that staff still did not fully understand the importance of education and did not give it a high enough priority.
- 3.68 It was felt that not all SSWs appear to be encouraging carers to attend educational training (e.g. mandatory PEP training) and that stability of school placements is not always given a high enough priority particularly when a placement becomes long-term or an adoptive placement.
- 3.69 At times it was felt that some Supervising Social Workers lose sight of the professional relationship which should exist with carers and support their carer rather than remaining impartial or challenging the carer when there is an educational issue.
- 3.70 There is clearly a need for the Fostering Service and the Virtual School to develop a greater understanding of each other's work and perspectives and to work more closely in partnership to put the needs of the YP at the centre of what they do together.
- 3.71 Health felt that the Local Authority need to consider the outcomes from a gold standard Foster Care Service alongside health colleagues rather than doing this individually. There is a need to develop a Fostering Service that understands the importance of health, dental and optician appointments, that ensures that Foster Carers attend appointments and follow up health needs in a timely manner. Children in care should have a robust health plan in place and Foster Carers need to be supported by their SSW in demanding appropriate and effective delivery of healthcare when health needs have been identified. Health would like to see confident Foster Carers able to articulate the child's health needs as an outcome measure.

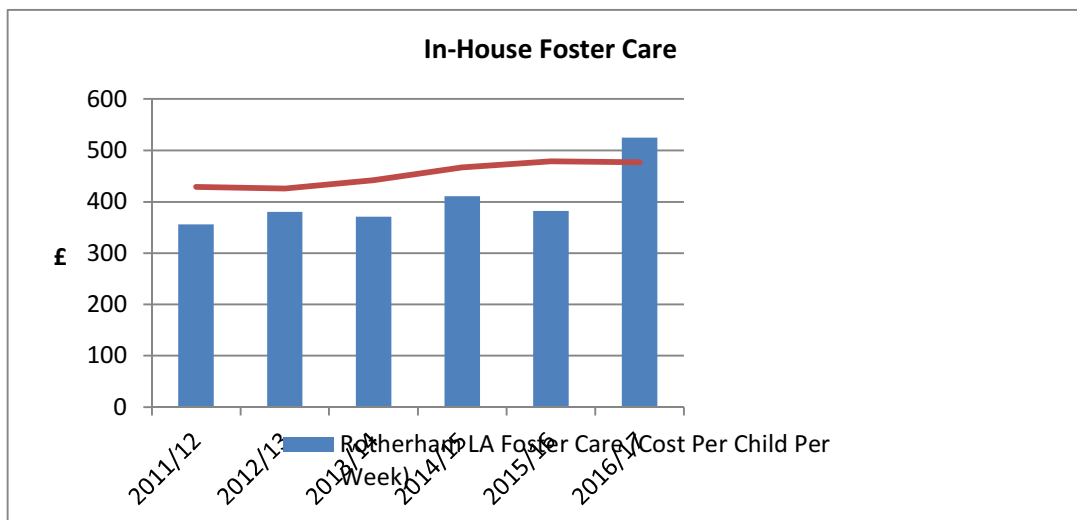
- 3.72 Health believes there is a need to improve the status of Foster Carers nationally. There is a need to view them as a professional support worker working on our (public) behalf to care for children and young people. We need to demonstrate our gratitude to them for doing such an important job. The impact of getting 'health outcomes' achieved is in breaking the cycle of vulnerability and long term health consequences. We know that children in care are more likely to become parents at an earlier age, their children are more likely to be removed and they often have long term self-harm and/or mental health challenges.
- 3.73 IFAs do not currently work closely with the in-house service as they are in competition with them but there is still scope for more closer working. Joint recruitment might be difficult as there is huge potential for issues around trust and concerns around the poaching of carers. Whilst difficult it would not necessarily be impossible as long as very clear parameters were in place and work could be done jointly on wider issues such as what attracts carers.

FINANCE

- 3.74 The current total foster care budget for 2016/17 is £10.9m of which £3.1m is made up of fostering allowances and £5.1m independent fostering placements. A full breakdown of the 2016/17 current budget and current forecasts compared to 2015-16 is shown at Appendix 1.
- 3.75 The in-house foster carer's package has been reviewed and improved with new foster carer payments being increased from October 2016. The current projections for 2016-17 expenditure include estimates for this increase.
- 3.76 The Fostering Service staffing budget is currently projected to overspend by £105k in 2016/17, this is mainly due to the need to recruit 3 agency staff to cover for staff sickness.
- 3.77 Current budgeted staffing comprises 23.38 FTE comprising:

Job Title	Grade	FTE	Budget (£)
Co-ordinator	G	0.8	26,597
Marketing Assistant	G	0.7	23,227
Social Worker	I	3	130,600
Social Worker	J	15.88	774,935
Team Manager	L	3	176,636
TOTAL		23.38	1,131,995

- 3.78 In previous benchmarking reports Rotherham has been consistently below the average weekly cost per child for in-house foster care. This corresponded to a low market share of In House Foster Care of 41%. From 2016-17 this below average weekly cost per child changes following an improved payment scheme introduced in October 2016. The current gross unit cost for in-house provision (including overheads) is £525 per child per week.



Invest to Save Proposals

- 3.79 The implementation of an improved allowances offer and subsequent expected rise in placements with in-house foster carers will lead to long term savings on the overall Looked after Children budget. Assuming overall LAC numbers remain broadly static, there would be a corresponding fall of fifteen in the number of LAC being placed in more expensive settings; a saving of £1.3m per annum.
- 3.80 Additional resource has been invested in a wraparound service for current and new in-house foster carers. This is designed to increase retention of in-house foster carers.

Support Worker	£35,000
Carer Recruitment Resource	£35,000
Out of Hours Support – Foster Care duty team	£54,750
Training and fostering network membership	£30,000
TOTAL WRAP AROUND COST PER YEAR	£155,250

- 3.81 Recruitment of in-house foster carers is a key element of the Sufficiency Strategy and the Directorate financial sustainability plans. The main investment has been in an improvement of the financial offer in terms of skills payments for local authority foster carers. Whilst an improved offer has increased costs increasing the numbers of in-house foster carers, this will help to reduce the reliance on more expensive independent fostering placements.
- 3.82 The placement costs used in 2017-18 budget setting, per child, per week are shown in table below:

Setting	£
In-House Fostering *includes full year effect of new scheme, placement costs only. Including overheads (Budget set on £343 which excludes overheads)	525
Independent Fostering Placements *based on current placements in December monitoring but a full year effect	877
Difference IFA vs In House per week	+352

PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

- 3.83 The number of complaints with regard to the In-House Fostering is low (2 out of 473 in 2015/16 and 4 during 2016/17 to date. Where complaints have been made and upheld they have been about the quality of service. No information was available on lessons learned or any changes made to procedures or working practices following the upheld complaints. This shows that a learning culture is yet to be developed within the service.
- 3.84 During the year 2015-16 around 72 (20%) of the CYPS Directorate compliments related to the Fostering Team and two (3%) to Foster Carers.
- 3.85 A scorecard is currently in development to facilitate a one market approach showing the same performance information for in house and IFAs.
- 3.86 The review found that information is not captured against outcomes of placements by either the in house fostering or commissioning teams for external or internal placements with the expectation being that these are monitored by the child/young person's social worker, which is outside of the remit of this report.
- 3.87 Recent improvements have been made to the quality monitoring framework. Questionnaires are used by the Commissioning Team to gather the views of in House and IFA foster carers on their foster placements. However, the questionnaires do not cover all the areas needed to inform the new requirements of the new service specification, for example how safe a child feels. The questionnaires formed part of the contract in respect of the IFAs, following wide consultation, this is a barrier to a one market approach and will require consultation with all the IFAs on the framework.

4 BENCHMARKING/ NEW MODELS

Benchmarking

- 4.1 Benchmarking data described below applies to the in-house and independent providers. Availability of a split information to compare and contrast across the sector has been impacted by the implementation of the new electronic case recording system.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 There has been steady improvement over the last 3 years in the placement stability NI063 placement stability figure which was 72.7% at March 2015. There has been a small decline in year at December 2016 to 68.9%. However the longer term trend is upwards and remains higher than statistical neighbours (67%).
- 4.4 Foster placement disruptions happen when the placement has had an unplanned ending outside of the child's care planning arrangements. In 2015/16 within RMBC in-house fostering service there were 15 foster placement disruptions involving 17 children in care. This compares with 40 placement disruptions that took place, during the same timeframe from within independent fostering agencies. It could be argued that the higher number of breakdown in IFA placements is attributable to the tendency for IFAs to have some of the more
- 4.5 The national indicator NI062 shows steady increase to 13% in 2015/16 in placement breakdowns. This trend has continued into 2016 and is higher than statistical neighbours and higher than Rotherham's target of 10%. This show that placement stability is still an issue for the In House service.

Comparison with Others

- 4.6 Independent Foster Care agencies were asked to share information on the carers they had in Rotherham and the surrounding areas for comparison, with 15 agencies responding. The number of carers in Rotherham and the rest of the South Yorkshire are shown in Appendix 3 below.
- 4.7 The age categories for IFA foster carers are much wider than those of Rotherham's in house carers. Within South Yorkshire 134 IFA carers are registered to take children aged 0-18 years and 34 aged 5-18 years. Only 23 are registered for narrower categories; information for 29 carers was provided without the age categories they work with. This demonstrates a challenge across sector regionally with regard to sufficiency of placements for adolescents.

New Models

- 4.8 The Service is actively looking at new models to meet its sufficiency challenge whilst seeking the best outcomes for Rotherham children in its care. One such model being considered is the Mockingbird Family Model, an alternative method of delivering foster care with the potential to improve placement stability, safety and permanency for children and young people in care and to improve support for, and retention of, foster carers.

- 4.9 The Mockingbird model is based on the idea of the extended family as a network of support. It uses the concept of a 'constellation' which is where six to 10 'satellite' families of foster and kinship carers live in close proximity to a dedicated 'hub' home of specially recruited and trained carers who offer peer support, regular joint planning and social activities to the satellite fostering families.
- 4.10 That the Service is looking to new models is to be welcomed but assurance that the Service has the capacity and grip in terms planning and delivering the new model is required. i.e. given the identified issues relating to project and business support.

5 SUMMARY

- 5.1 The findings demonstrate the Service is going some way toward improving but that there is a lack of capacity and capability within the in-house fostering service to deliver against the increased demand for placements and the improved offer to Foster Carers.
- 5.2 The findings highlight key issues around organisation, support and a culture of performance and learning, all of which are directly impeding the Service's ability to operate effectively in the market and improve the quality of practice.
- 5.3 There is a lack of a joined up approach across the In-House and external market. This means there is a lack of clarity in relation to the respective functions and focus which subsequently fails to maximise quality of provision/ optimum matching of placements.
- 5.4 Detailed recommendations follow which are aimed at ensuring that the Fostering Service can deliver to the intentions set out in the LAC Sufficiency strategy investments and the CYPS Medium Term Financial Sustainability Plan.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 This report should be considered by the Foster Care Panel and Corporate Parenting Panel. Recommendations, set out by each theme in the review, are as follows:

THE IN-HOUSE FOSTER CARE OFFER

- 6.2 That consideration be given to employing a dedicated Interviewing Officer who can work across IFA and In-House fostering and Commissioning to prove a more responsive delivery of placements for Rotherham children. This would be a technical role (not social work qualified) and responsibility would include ensuring all necessary matching processes were followed and paperwork completed appropriately.
- 6.3 Team around the placement meeting to be chaired by Team Managers (either within fostering or locality) but fostering service to take lead responsibility to ensure that this happens.
- 6.4 The provision of respite care is considered and improved as part of Foster Carer placement sufficiency.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FOSTER CARERS

- 6.5 . An implementation plan should be developed which includes the urgent appointment of the marketing officer, the development of a targeted marketing strategy for the recruitment of new foster carers. The Service should receive appropriate project support resource to help drive implementation plans in a structured way.
- 6.6 This should include a refresh/redesign of the Internet site to create a rich Rotherham presence of information for existing and prospective foster carers.

- 6.7 Ensure that capacity is in place to clear the backlog of unallocated assessments. On an ongoing basis ensure the capacity is in place to flex to process the expected number of assessments. E.g. establishment of Virtual Assessment Team.
- 6.8 Create performance reporting to track progress of each enquiry to better identify conversion rates and understanding of reasons for prospective carers dropping out of the process. Proactive follow up where further support might increase the numbers going through to full approval.

PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS

- 6.9 Robust Business Support arrangements should be put in place. The level and skill of Business Support Resource should be reviewed as part of the current Business Support Review.
- 6.10 Issues with regard to the input of data to Liquid Logic by the social workers/ business support and its consequent impact on the quality of management and performance information should be resolved.
- 6.11 That the same approval be sought for an in-house placement as for an IFA search.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

- 6.12 Provide an additional resource to the Service to ensure the refresh, completion and publication of all Strategic Documents by June 2017. Apply the National Minimum Standards to the Strategic refresh to ensure consistency and compliance.
- 6.13 That a Service and Market Improvement implementation Plan be developed having regard to projects related to the investment made by the Council. Ensure within this that plans exist for all the investments made in the Service, that issues and risks are identified, effectively managed and escalated as appropriate. This should be supported with project resource.
- 6.14 A Foster Care Service Improvement Group including key officers across the Service, Corporate Communications and Finance should be established to accelerate the pace and grip. Progress and assurance should be reported monthly to DLT.
- 6.15 Develop a Performance Reporting co-ordinated scorecard which is outcome based and measurable to ensure visibility of service performance and that this is in one place.
- 6.16 Produce an up to date Service Structure for Fostering.
- 6.17 Provide leadership learning and development and mentoring support to the Fostering Service.
- 6.18 That the operation of Foster Care Panel be the subject of a separate review.

CONSULTATION/ENGAGEMENT

- 6.19 Better use should be made of consultation with fostering families and children in our care. This will enable the service to be more accountable, and will better support the development of the service, by providing a listening ear to the voice of the child and fostering community.

VOICE AND INFLUENCE

- 6.20 That SSWs should routinely begin each visit, as appropriate, by explaining to both the carer and young person what the purpose of the visit is, This will assist in maintaining a more balanced relationship with carers as well as keeping the young person better informed as to what is happening to them.

PARTNERSHIPS AND KEY RELATIONSHIPS

- 6.21 The refreshed service plan should seek to build on skills and best practice developed elsewhere and to make best use of the contribution other partners could potentially make to improve the overall quality of the service.
- 6.22 Sessions should be arranged with staff from the Fostering Service to attend other staff team meetings or have a specific themed event to increase understanding of the role they undertake. The practice of placing student social workers with the team should be revisited.
- 6.23 That staff from the Shared Lives Team are invited to regularly attend Fostering Service Team meetings, say monthly, to increase understanding between the teams to promote closer working relationships and to develop an information sharing protocol between the two teams.
- 6.24 The Fostering Service Manager and Virtual Head to work together with their staff teams to develop closer understanding and joint working protocols.
- 6.25 The Fostering Service Manager to explore how the Service can work more closely with Health colleagues and involve them in, and keep them informed about, the work of the team.
- 6.26 Continue to explore potential opportunities to work more closely in partnership with IFAs through the regular framework partner meetings.

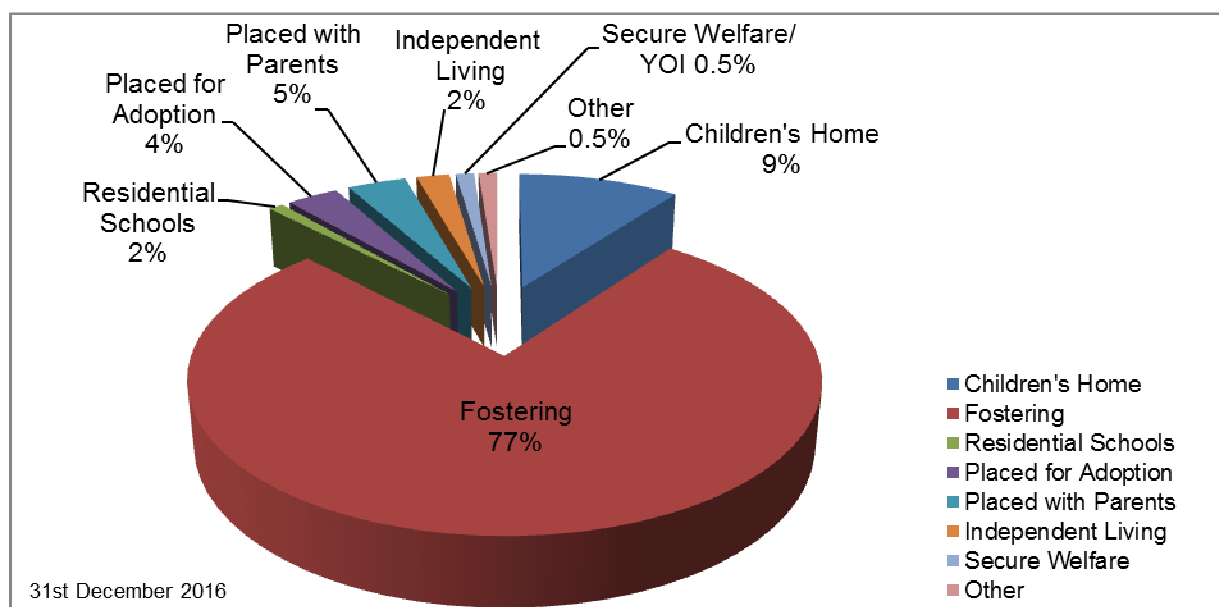
QUALITY ASSURANCE

- 6.27 That the quality assurance framework is further developed to ensure that a joined up approach is in place with the external market to maximise quality of provision.
- 6.28 That there is an increasing focus on outcomes for the children within the QA framework.

Appendix 1 – Benchmarking provision

Numbers of Looked After Children by Placement Type as at Period End

Placement Type	31 st March 2014	31 st March 2015	31 st March 2016	31 st Dec 2016
Children's Home in-house provision	19/ 5%	16/ 4%	3/ 1%	0
Children's Home provision by others	22/ 6%	30/ 7%	41/ 10%	45/ 9%
Fostering in-house provision	155/ 39%	167/ 41%	178/ 41%	179/ 36%
Fostering with 'connected people' (relatives or friends)	10/ 3%	16/ 4%	20/ 5%	20/ 5%
Fostering provision by others (IFAs & other LAs)	102/ 26%	110/ 27%	136/ 32%	176/ 36%
Residential Schools	3/ 1%	3/ 1%	4/ 1%	9/ 2%
Placed for Adoption (with prospective adoptive parents)	37/ 9%	24/ 6%	14/ 3%	21/ 4%
Placed with Parents (and subject to a FCO or other Order of the court)	18/ 5%	14/ 3%	16/ 4%	23/ 5%
Independent Living	10/ 3%	11/ 3%	9/2%	11/ 2%
Secure Accommodation (Welfare grounds)	4/ 1%	2/ 0%	5/ 1%	1/ 0%
Young Offender Institute or Prison	3/ 1%	1/ 0%	0%	1/ 0%
Other	11/ 3%	13/ 3%	5/ 1%	2/ 0.5%
Total	394	407	431	488



The breakdown of placements by type indicate that the vast majority of LAC are placed in foster care (77%) which is consistent with the department's commitment to place children in family based arrangements. Of the 77%, 41% are in-house placement (including connected people, relatives or friends) and 36% with Independent Fostering Agencies.

Appendix 2 - 2016/17 Current budget and current forecasts compared to 2015-16

Cost Centre	Description	Actual 2015-16	Budget 2015-16	Variance 2015-16	Actual 2016-17 (to 01/02/2017)	Estimated YE Actual (as at 01/02/2017)	Budget 2016-17	Estimated Variance 2016-17
371110	Fostering Team	1,110,811	1,108,300	2,511	1,123,550	1,352,491	1,246,748	105,743
371120	Fostering Equipment	120,844	110,000	10,844	116,537	131,056	113,240	17,816
371130	Fostering Allowances	2,758,901	2,353,643	405,258	2,562,464	3,099,651	3,098,573	1,078
371170	Independent Fostering Placements	5,496,503	4,951,529	544,974	5,656,012	6,993,484	5,071,529	1,921,955
371150	Families Together Care Packages	101,041	107,130	-6,089	55,317	74,878	110,368	-35,490
371160	Foster Carer Home Adaptations	69,709	75,584	-5,875	74,951	74,951	77,733	-2,782
371180	Child Arrangement Orders	1,297,652	1,185,029	112,623	1,126,585	1,370,511	1,220,580	149,931
TOTAL		10,955,462	9,891,215	1,064,247	10,715,416	13,097,022	10,938,771	2,158,251

