

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SCRUTINY SUB-PANEL

**Venue: Town Hall, Moorgate
Street, Rotherham.**

Date: Wednesday, 13 December 2006

Time: 2.00 p.m.

A G E N D A

1. Apologies
2. To determine if the following matters are to be considered under the categories suggested, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972
3. To determine any item which the Chairman is of the opinion should be considered later in the agenda as a matter of urgency
4. Declarations of interest
5. Questions from members of the press and public

FOR DISCUSSION

6. Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children in Care - Consultation on the Government Green Paper (report herewith) (Pages 1 - 22)

Pam Allen and Katy Hawkins

Attached for Information-the LGIU briefing: Care Matters

7. Section 52, Children Act 2004. Duty to promote the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children and Young People

Katy Hawkins to report

FOR MONITORING

8. Education Outcomes for Looked After Children, Academic Year 2005 / 06 (report herewith) (Pages 23 - 26)

Katy Hawkins

9. Post-16 Achievements (report herewith) (Pages 27 - 30)

Katy Hawkins

10. Fostering Services (report herewith) (Pages 31 - 34)

Katy Hawkins

11. Profile of Looked After Children in Rotherham (report herewith) (Pages 35 - 39)

Katy Hawkins

12. Regulation 33 Visits (report herewith) (Pages 40 - 43)

Katy Hawkins to report

13. Access to Benefits for Care Leavers - Progress Update

Caroline Webb

MINUTES

14. Minutes of Previous Meeting (herewith) (Pages 44 - 48)

Membership:-

Chairman – Councillor G. A. Russell.
Vice-Chairman Councillor McNeely.
Councillors Barron, Gosling, J.Hamilton, Jack, R.Russell, Whysall.

ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

1.	Meeting:	LAC Scrutiny Panel
2.	Date:	Wednesday 13th December, 2006
3.	Title:	Green Paper - 'Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care'
4.	Programme Area:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

Although outcomes for children in care have improved in recent years, there remains a significant and widening gap between these and the outcomes for all children. The Green Paper sets out a radical package of proposals for change. 'Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care' sets out a number of key proposals in improving the care offered and after-care for Looked After children. There are ambitious aspirations within the proposal which are welcome but challenging. There are major implications for the way Children and Young People's Services organise its Looked After children and Care Leaver Services and the resources available.

6. Recommendations

That Members note the content of the paper and agree their comments to the questions proposed in the consultation document, (outlined in Appendix 1) attached

7. Proposals and Details:

The paper has 6 major themes developed into proposals.

- (i) The Role of the Corporate Parent
- (ii) Ensuring Children are in the Right Placements
- (iii) A First Class Education
- (iv) Life Outside School
- (v) The Transition to Adult Life
- (vi) Making the System Work

(i) **Role of Corporate Parent**

The paper states, "As the corporate parent, like a good parent, it should put its own children first. This means being a powerful advocate for them to receive the best of everything and helping children to make a success of their lives. Children's Social Workers embody the corporate parenting role on a day to day basis but high turnover rates mean they are often an inconsistent parent. They can also lack the autonomy to be a strong advocate for the child". The Green Paper wants to change this and help social workers fulfil the role of an excellent corporate parent. The proposals to achieve this are as follows:-

- Pilot a model of social care practices; small groups of social workers holding individual budgets and commissioning placements for children in care wholly independent of Local Authorities.
- Building on existing pilots and budget holding lead professionals to see how effective the role can be for children in care.
- Issuing revised guidance to all Local Authorities, making clear how care plans should be prepared, used and maintained and what their contents should be, including a requirement to set out long term ambitions.
- Building on the existing Independent Visitor Scheme to provide independent advocates to act as mentors and advocates to children in care.

(ii) **Ensuring Children are in the Right Placements**

The paper states that we need to radically improve children's experiences of placements, responding directly to what children themselves have said within the consultation and putting their views at the heart of placement decisions. The proposals include:-

- Piloting new regional commissioning units.
- Develop treatment foster care pilots and test out the model with younger children.

- Develop a national tiered model of placement types underpinned by National Qualifications Framework for fostering and residential carers. This would include specialist professional modules for working with vulnerable groups, e.g. disabled and unaccompanied asylum seekers.
- Invest in locally delivered campaigns to recruit foster carers from a diverse range of backgrounds.
- To introduce a new special measures regime to ensure swift action where standards are not met in children's homes.

(iii) **A First Class Education**

The proposals set out to assist improved educational outcomes include:-

- Enabling carers to access early years support and foundation stage guidance. Providing information about the free early education entitlement.
- Providing Local Authorities with the power to direct schools to admit children in care, even when the school is fully subscribed through the Education and Inspector's Bill currently through Parliament.
- Creating a presumption that children in care should not be at schools in Years 10 to 11 unless it is clearly in their best interests.
- Offering a free entitlement to school transport for children in care to allow them to remain in the same school following a placement move.
- Encouraging schools to offer personalised education to children in care using the £990 million Personalisation Fund provided to schools. This would entail providing social workers with a personalised budget of around £500 per child per year to support the child's education.
- To introduce a "Virtual Head Teacher" in every Local Authority to support schools in their work with children in care and build networks between education providers, carers and social workers.
- Introduce mandatory training on children in care for new further education college principles as part of their qualification criteria.
- Introduce a new apprenticeship programme to help young people gain skills required to start an apprenticeship.

(iv) **Life Outside School**

The focus within this proposal centres around access for children to recreational facilities. Proposals include:-

- Local Authorities to provide free access for children in care to the facilities they own and manage, e.g. leisure centres, sports grounds and youth clubs.
- Encouraging all local areas to use a model of excellent physical and mental health services for children in care.
- Offering every child in care a named Health professional to ensure their individual needs are met.
- A Personal Advisor to every young woman in care who becomes pregnant.
- Introducing screening for substance misuse as a routine part of regular health assessments.
- Providing extra help for young people in care who enter youth custody. More would continue to receive support including Leaving Care support for older young people.

(v) **The Transition to Adult Life**

The view within this theme centres around a young person being helped and assisted to remain in care beyond the age of 18. The proposals include:-

- Piloting a veto for young people in care over any decisions about legally leaving care before they turn 18 and piloting allowing young people to continue to live with foster families up to the age of 21.
- Improving housing options for young people through establishing a capital investment fund to support dedicated supported accommodation.
- Providing a top up to the children's trust funds of young people in care.
- Introducing a national bursary of £2,000 for each young person in care who go onto higher education.
- Targeting young people in care, for example, within the 'Aimhigher' programme to ensure they are encouraged to attend Open Days at higher education institutions and take part in Summer Schools under the outreach work

(vi) **Making the System Work**

The proposals here include:-

- Requiring OFSTED to carry out a regular inspection of how each Local Authority is meeting the educational needs of the children in its care.
- Introducing an annual national stocktake of the outcomes of children in care led by Ministers and reporting to Parliament.
- Making clear in statutory guidance the responsibilities of Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services to children in care.
- Expecting every Local Authority to set up a Children in Care Counsel through which children's views would be provided directly to the Director of Children's Services.
- Achieving a greater autonomy for Independent Reviewing officers, possibly through their employment by an agency external to the Local Authority.
- Making the education of children in care one of the key national priorities for local Government in the new national framework to be introduced in the forthcoming local Government White Paper.

8. Finance

There are significant financial implications of this Green Paper.

At the recent launch of the paper the Minister, Beverly Hughes, stated there would be no additional monies but that the spending review would have to give due consideration to the proposals set out in the paper. Some of the specific financial implications are:-

- Young people remaining in foster care until 21 will have major impacts in a number of areas (although this would improve outcomes).
- Our shortage of appropriately skilled and approved local foster carers means that extending placements would create a further shortage for other youngsters requiring foster care. This would be the case for Fostering and Residential Services. Currently in Residential Services, most youngsters would move on between 16 - 18 years of age and the Units are registered for up to 18. The majority of youngsters would be supported through to other accommodation around 17 years of age due, in the main, to resources. We need to develop more community supported living provision which will have financial implications.

Foster care allowances increase as the young person gets older and that would also have an impact.

- The provision of social workers holding an individual budget for a Looked After child and commissioning placements independent of the Local Authority.
- Increasing the availability of the independent visitor scheme to provide independent advocate to act as mentors and advocates for children in care.
- Use of independent social workers to case manage Looked After children and purchase educational care packages, although the £990 million personalisation fund is provided to schools. Systems would need to be in place to ensure the accessibility of this money.
- There will be a financial implication for the Local Authority providing free access for children in care to leisure centres, sports grounds etc.
- Offering free entitlement to school transport to allow children in care to remain in the same school will incur additional costs.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The proposals set out are unequivocally designed to improve the experience of a young person who has been cared for by the Local Authority. The proposals challenge current ways of working with this vulnerable group. Children's Social Care needs to review its provision, in particular, to post 16 Looked After children and together with major stakeholders and providers, e.g. Care Leavers Services, Housing Services and Education Services.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

A number of the proposals have already had a significant focus and planned developments for Rotherham's provision of services to Looked After children. We will, however, need to review our current organisation of services and produce a coherent strategic plan to address the implications of the Green Paper. The Local Authority would be held to account by OFSTED the paper states "the Director of Children's Services will prioritise children in care across Children's Services undertaking regular reviews of individual children's progress; supporting and challenging schools on how they are driving up children's achievements, implementing statutory guidance on how to promote the educational achievement of children in care. Securing an appropriate range of placements working other Local Authorities to ensure children placed out of authority are supported; working with partners in the Children's Trust and beyond; to improvement outcomes monitoring the performance of Local Authority professionals in delivering the services for children in care and appointing a suitably qualified 'Virtual School Head'".

"The Lead Member for Children's Services will support the Director of Children's Services (D.C.S.) in all of the above, holding him/her to account for his/her performance in carrying out these functions, making direct contact with children and actively seeking their views. Championing children in care with other agencies and holding political accountability for delivering good services and outcomes for children in care."

Performance will be managed by OFSTED who will carry out a 3 year programme of proportionate inspection of performance in relation to each Local Authority.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Green Paper: 'Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care'. The consultation period began on 9th October, 2006, and ends on 15th January, 2007.
- Launch of Green Paper Conference on 12th October, 2006. Overwhelming view of conference in support of principles. Issues of concern were finance/resources and use of independent social workers.
- Consultation will be needed to be undertaken with Members, Joint Leadership Team and other stakeholders. A series of events will be planned over the forthcoming weeks.

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Appendix 1

Consultation Questions

1. Are the elements we suggest for our 'pledge' the right ones?
2. Are there any other key barriers to attainment which we should address in order to transform outcomes/
3. What can be done to reassert the responsibility of parents and help them fulfil those responsibilities?
4. Do you agree that there is a need for a more systematic approach to sharing effective practice in children's services? If so, how can we ensure maximum impact on supporting evidence-informed commissioning and practice?
5. What more could be done to support links between adults and children's services, particularly in relation to substance misuse and mental health support?
6. What more can be done to support family and friends carers?
7. Is it right for us to work towards an increase in the number of children supported in families and, as a result, a smaller, younger care population with more complex needs?
8. Do the proposals in this chapter (The role of the corporate parent) add up to a sufficient strengthening of the corporate parenting role? If not, what more should be done?
9. Would a 'social care practice' model help give social workers more freedom to support children?
10. Should the independent visitor role be revitalised and renamed as Independent Advocate to introduce advocacy as a key element of this role/
11. Should a tiered approach to fostering placements be developed? If so, should this be underpinned by a formal qualification framework?
12. How can we increase placement choice without increasing financial burdens on the system?

- 13. Should Local Authorities be required to consider whether disabled children in 52 week specialist residential provision should have "looked after" status?**
- 14. How might the role of the designated teacher for children in care be strengthened further?**
- 15. How would a virtual head teacher best raise standards for children in Care**
- 16. What more can be done to reinforce the educational role of the carer?**
- 17. Are the measures proposed in relation to Further Education sufficient to achieve a step change in outcomes for young people in and leaving care?**
- 18. Have we set the right features in the comprehensive model of health care for children in care?**
- 19. What more could we do to help young people in care to participate in sporting, leisure and cultural activities?**
- 20. Is the approach to supporting children in care who enter youth custody the right one?**
- 21. What more can be done to support the role of carers in managing behaviour within the team?**
- 22. Should young people be allowed to remain with their foster families up to the age of 21, including when the young person is at university?**
- 23. What is the best way of ensuring greater availability of dedicated supported accommodation for young people making the transition to adult hood?**
- 24. Are there other ways in which we can increase the number of children in care progressing to university?**
- 25. Should we introduce a new power for local authorities to intervene in schools performing poorly for children in care?**
- 26. What more should we do to give children in care a greater say in decisions which affect them?**

27. How can IRO's be made more independent and their roles strengthened?

28. What key outcomes should we measure to assess whether we are being successful in transforming the lives of children and young people in care?

LGIU Briefing: Green Paper, *Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care*,

The Green Paper, *Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care*, was launched on 9 October and sets out a radical package of proposals for transforming the lives of children in care. *Care Matters* runs to 120 pages but its Executive Summary is available as a separate 12-page document; there is also a 'young people's guide' (see 'Related links').

The document indicates that, although outcomes for these children have improved, they have not kept pace with those for other children, and that this is unacceptable: "these are children for whom the state, as corporate parent, has a special responsibility and we must demand the same for them as we would for our own children". The Green Paper therefore sets out proposals for:

- better support for **those on the edge of the care system**
- making sure there is **a more consistent adult in each child's life** to fulfil the state's responsibilities as corporate parent
- giving every child in care **a stable, high quality placement**
- getting every child in care **a place in a good school**, helping them to get the most out of it and supporting them to continue in education post-16
- securing support for all aspects of **children's lives outside school**
- supporting children better to make the **transition into adult life**
- ensuring **clear, strong accountability** to make the whole system focus on the needs of children in care.

Each of the above is the subject of a separate chapter with its own set of proposals.

The Green Paper proposals are the subject of consultations which run until **15 January 2007**. For details of how to respond, see 'Additional information'.

This briefing also covers other related documents published recently (also see 'Additional information').

Briefing in full

Chapter 1 – The need for reform

An annex to the Green Paper provides, mostly in graphic form, some of the key data on children in care, including outcome indicators. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 1 but some of the main points are:

- by March 2005, there were 60,900 children in care, an increase of 10,000 over the past decade, due to an increase in the number on care orders; 63% come into care because of abuse or neglect
- the average length of time spent in care has increased gradually, as those under care orders are likely to spend much longer in care than those in care on a voluntary basis
- over two-thirds live with foster carers, 9% are placed with parents, and 13% in children's or residential homes, hostels, schools and Secure Units
- the achievement of children in care has improved over the past few years, but the proportion of those obtaining at least 5 good GCSE has not increased at the same rate as other children

- for all children changing school, particularly in years 10 and 11, can be a significant barrier to academic achievement
- the proportion of children in care receiving their annual health check, dental check up and immunisations has improved year on year since this data was first collected
- children in care are more likely to receive a warning, reprimand or conviction than other young people
- the proportion of young people leaving care at 16 has decreased significantly and the proportion continuing in care until 18 is increasing
- the proportion of care leavers remaining in touch with their local authority and participating in education, employment and training has increased year on year.

Whilst acknowledging the progress made over recent years, the thrust of the Green Paper is 'to transform both the way in which the care system works for children and the quality of experience they and others on the edge of entering or leaving care actually receive' – in other words, to make a significant and sustainable difference.

All local authorities are asked to develop a pledge for children in care, which will set out those things that all children in their care will receive:

- a choice, made with their social worker, of high quality placements
- 24/7 support from their social worker or an out of hours contact
- a minimum entitlement to sport and leisure activities – for example, 4 hours a week
- a chance to take part in volunteering
- twice yearly health assessments for under 5's and annual health assessments and twice yearly dental check ups for older children
- an independent advocate
- the choice of when to move on to enter adult life, up to the age of 18
- the right to have their voice heard and influence the work of the local authority through participation in a 'Children in Care Council' which are explored through the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 – Children on the edge of care

This chapter's theme is that the aim should be for a smaller population of children in care, with only those most in need of its support entering care. The message from children and young people themselves is that more should be done to prevent the need for care and help them stay with their families. There should be no hesitation about bringing children into care where safeguarding or other concerns mean that is the right thing to do, but children should be supported in their families unless this is against their interests. This means identifying problems earlier and responding quickly and effectively to them; practitioners sometimes fail to identify neglect because of the absence of a specific incident that triggers intervention.

The key characteristics of effective interventions are that they are

- multi-disciplinary and multi-agency
- centred around the child
- sustained
- evidence based, grounded in robust evaluation of what works.

The Information Sharing Index (see 'Related briefings') and Integrated Children's System (ICS) will support better communication among practitioners across education, health, social care and youth offending teams, and provide a more comprehensive information handling system.

There is a particular need to improve the way in which adults' and children's services work together, in recognition that the problems of adults can have a damaging impact on their families, and it is essential that the commissioning strategies of adult social care services and Primary Care Trusts respond to the needs of vulnerable parents.

Key proposals:

- Publishing new research on identifying neglect early and effectively, and offering a training resource for practitioners on how to do this
- Testing out a model of intensive whole-family therapy (Family Functional Therapy) with the aim of keeping families together where possible
- Issuing guidance to health and social care providers on effective practice in joint working between adult and children's services
- Exploring the implications of and models for extending access to the integrated children's system (ICS), on a 'read-only' basis, to partners outside the local authority such as schools and health services
- Creating a centre of excellence for children's and family services to deliver a systematic approach to sharing best practice
- Promoting the use of family group conferencing through a programme of national events and training
- Establishing a working group on the future of care to set a clear vision for the next ten to fifteen years centred on a determination to support children in their families where possible.

Chapter 3 – The role of the corporate parent

The Green Paper reiterates Frank Dobson's message that all those working for the State at a local level (councillors, Directors of Children's Services, social workers and teachers) should demand no less for each child in care than they would for their own children. That means being a powerful advocate for them to receive the best of everything and helping children to make a success of their lives.

Children's social workers, who will normally also carry the 'lead professional' role, embody the corporate parenting role on a day to day basis, but high turnover rates (11%) mean they are often an inconsistent parent, and can also lack the autonomy to be a strong advocate for the child. Children in care wish to see this situation change, especially as the number of people in their lives can feel confusing and chaotic to them.

Problems in the recruitment and retention of social workers are acknowledged but addressing these is seen as the heart of the Options for Excellence Review, the final report of which will be published shortly, and will include help for employers in remodelling their workforce, the introduction of 'Newly Qualified Social Worker' status, and a strengthening of Continuing Professional Development.

The Green Paper also proposes much greater scope for independence and innovation for social workers. Although child protection must be the first priority, it argues that they need the freedom to work with children on a sustained basis to improve their long term outcomes. It posits a model of 'social care practices': small groups of social workers undertaking work with children in care commissioned by but independent of local authorities. Each practice would hold a budget, provided through the contract with the authority, and would use it for individual social workers to fund the placement, support and activities that they believe 'their' children should have. Practices would be able to develop multidisciplinary teams including staff such as education welfare officers as well as social workers to develop a unique offer in response to particular needs. As different styles

evolved, it would be increasingly possible to offer authorities, children and families a choice of which practice is best able to meet their needs. Successful practices would be able to expand and grow and to invest in better support services through a model of performance contracting. Local authorities would continue to play a key role, retaining responsibility for care proceedings, making the assessments, determining the budget for each practice, and monitoring the quality of the care being provided.

Given that it is unlikely that such a model would become commonplace across the country quickly, the report proposes the piloting of budget-holding by social workers as the lead professional for children in care, offering them far greater freedom in how they address the needs of children, and to agree with children themselves how the budget should be spent.

Key proposals:

- Piloting a model of 'social care practices': small groups of social workers holding individual budgets and commissioning placements for children in care, wholly independent of local authorities
- Building on existing pilots of budget-holding lead professionals to see how effective the role can be for children in care
- Issuing revised guidance to all local authorities making clear how care plans should be prepared, used and maintained and what their contents should be, including requiring them to set out long term ambitions
- Building on the existing independent visitor scheme to provide independent advocates to act as mentors and advocates for children in care.

Chapter 4 – Ensuring children are in the right placements

It is vital that each child is in a placement which meets his or her individual needs. For many children care is a positive time in their lives, over half indicating that their present placement was definitely the right one for them. However, the number of placement changes for many children is still high, with a predictable impact on educational attainment.

The Green Paper states that all local authorities should be able to offer children in care a choice of placements, and comprehensive details about the placements in advance, in order that they can be more meaningfully involved in deciding where they will live, although it is noted that the shortage of foster placements has been estimated as 8,000 placements across England.

Nearly a third of children in care (and significantly more in London) are in placements outside the local authority area which cares for them. For some, this is a sensible and child-centred choice but, generally, those placed far away from their home are less likely to succeed in education (though it is accepted that in some cases this will reflect the more complex needs of the child).

Commissioning problems are particularly acute in relation to very challenging children; guidance will be published in 2007 for managing local placement markets, and there will be work with individual local authorities who are experiencing difficulties with commissioning, for example through regional commissioning pilot schemes. There may be a requirement introduced that local authorities can place children out-of-authority only if no suitable placement exists.

The quality of placements is also of concern: not enough local authority fostering services or independent fostering agencies meet the 'matching' standards, and there is a shortage

of skills and qualifications in both foster and residential care. The Green Paper therefore proposes to pilot Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care, there being evidence that such an approach can increase placement stability, and to consult on developing a national 'tiered' model of placement types underpinned by a national qualifications framework for foster and residential carers, structured around the needs of children and offering a ladder of career progression for carers. There would also be a revised framework for fees, building on the national minimum allowances for foster care, and a mandatory national registration scheme for foster carers.

Key proposals:

- Piloting new regional commissioning units with interested local authorities to secure better value for money and make sure children are offered a choice of placements
- Developing new Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care pilots to test the effectiveness of this model with much younger children as well as adolescents
- Developing a national 'tiered' model of placement types to respond to different levels of need, underpinned by a national qualifications framework, fee structure and minimum standards for foster and residential carers
- Improving the recruitment of foster carers through specially-tailored recruitment campaigns, for example to recruit foster carers from a diverse range of backgrounds
- Including specialised professional development modules on working with vulnerable groups such as disabled young people and unaccompanied asylum seeking children within the proposed national training framework
- Extending the use of specialist foster care for children with complex needs
- Revising the assessment processes and support for family and friends carers to recognise that most will only ever care for one child
- Introducing a new 'special measures' regime to ensure swift action where standards are not met in children's homes.

Chapter 5 – A first class education

A lack of qualifications is strongly linked to poor outcomes in adult life, and those in care believe they do not always get a fair deal in school because the links between school and the care system are not good enough. This chapter explores ways to give children better support in schools to help them realise their ambitions without making them feel stigmatised, to promote stronger relationships between schools, social workers and carers and to ensure they can access the full benefits of proposals in the White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All*, the *14-19 Implementation Plan*, and the introduction of Extended Schools provision.

There is a need to ensure that foster carers and others responsible for children in care are made aware of the new entitlements to early years education, and that early years settings reach out proactively to these groups. Local authorities now have a duty, under the Childcare Act 2006, to work with their partners in the health service and Jobcentre Plus to improve outcomes for all young children in their area and to reduce inequalities between them.

Children in care are disproportionately less likely than their peers to be in high-performing schools and from January 2007, subject to Parliamentary approval, local authorities will have the power to direct schools to admit children in care, even where the school is already fully subscribed. The new Choice Advice service will be available to social workers and foster carers as corporate parents.

A high proportion of children in care, especially at the secondary stage, join a new school outside the normal admissions (e.g. 15% of children in care in years 10-11 compared with only 3% of all children). A presumption will be created that young people in care do not move schools in years 10-11, unless it can clearly be demonstrated to be in their best interests. It is also proposed to offer a free entitlement to school transport for children in care to allow children to remain in the same school after a placement move.

It is critical that that every child in care is given a personalised education which suits their own particular needs (this is particularly important for the 27% who have a statement of special educational needs). To this end there will be a personalised annual budget of around £500 per child per year for social workers to spend on each child in care to support their education, drawn from the existing Dedicated Schools Grant provided to local authorities. A pilot project, funded by HSBC, will be facilitated a to provide private tutoring for children in care, and the innovative use of ICT (for example the potential of an on-line learning resource for children in care) will be considered as a key means of offering personalised support to this group of children.

In order to ensure that the system is delivering for children in care, and to identify and disseminate best practice, it is planned to pilot the introduction of a 'virtual head teacher' in a number of trailblazer authorities.

Given that children in care are less likely to go on to further education and training post-16 than their peers, it is proposed to create a new entitlement for all children in care/care leavers to have access to support through a personal adviser until the age of 25, starting in pathfinder areas.

Key proposals:

- Enabling carers to access early years support for children by developing specialised training, providing information about the free early education entitlement, and including support for children in care in the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance
- Providing local authorities with the power to direct schools to admit children in care, even where the school is already fully subscribed, through the education and inspections bill currently before Parliament
- Creating a presumption that children in care should not move schools in years 10-11, unless it is clearly in their best interests
- An enhanced entitlement to free school transport to ensure that where children do move placement they do not necessarily also need to change school
- Encouraging schools to offer an excellent personalised education to children in care, using the £990 million personalisation funding provided to schools for all children, supported by providing social workers with a personalised budget of around £500 per child per year to support children's education
- Better support in school to prevent exclusions of children in care
- Introducing a 'virtual head teacher' in every local authority, initially in a number of pilot authorities, to support schools in their work with children in care and build networks between schools and other education providers, carers and social workers
- Introducing mandatory training on children in care for new further education college principals, as part of their qualification criteria
- Introducing a new pre-apprenticeship programme to help young people gain the skills needed to start an apprenticeship.

Chapter 6 – Life outside school

Care should be a positive influence in a child's life, offering them all the opportunities any parent would want for their child. Children in care must have the chance to participate in sports, volunteering and the arts, and be supported to remain healthy and safe, and to avoid damaging or anti-social behaviour. All local services have a responsibility to offer the best possible support to these children, and to make sure they have access to the services they need for care to be a positive and enjoyable part of their childhood.

Key proposals:

- Encouraging local authorities to provide free access for children in care to the facilities they own and manage such as leisure centres, sports grounds and youth clubs
- Setting out and encouraging all local areas to use a model of excellent physical and mental health services for children in care
- Offering every child in care a named health professional to ensure their individual needs are met
- Better training for a range of professionals including paediatricians on how to work with children in care
- Improved access for children in care and their foster parents to Children's Centre provision
- Enhanced opportunities for them to participate in stimulating and rewarding personal development activities and volunteering
- Providing toolkits for carers and designated teachers, setting out their responsibilities for offering sex and relationship education to children in care and effective techniques for offering this education
- Offering a Personal Adviser to every young woman in care who becomes pregnant
- Introducing screening for substance misuse as a routine part of regular health assessments, so that young people can receive appropriate support and interventions
- Building approaches to managing behaviour, based on evaluated practice such as restorative justice, into the framework of training and qualifications for carers
- Providing extra help for young people in care who enter youth custody, so that more continue to receive support, including leaving care support for older young people.

Chapter 7 – The transition to adult life

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 gave young people an entitlement to financial assistance, accommodation during holidays from further and higher education, and access to a personal adviser to support them in education and training. The proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training has increased, but still compares poorly with that for other young people.

28% still leave care at 16 at a time when most young people are focused on their education, not on having to learn to fend for themselves. Many young people believed that they were made to leave at the wrong time, with poor planning made for their accommodation and little practical advice. There are therefore proposals to pilot giving young people a veto over any decisions about legally leaving care before they turn 18, and allowing care leavers to continue to live with foster families up to the age of 21, to evaluate the support required and the impact on their longer term outcomes. Training modules for carers will be developed on how to teach children and young people practical life skills.

In order to ensure that, as far as possible, finance is not a factor for the young person in making the choice to stay with their foster family after they turn 18, payments made to carers in relation to young people who have legally left care will not be taken into account in calculating their entitlement to benefits as this can act as a disincentive to fostering older children in care. Local authorities, in many places the largest employer in their area, are encouraged to offer work related placements to their own care leavers.

For those in residential care or those who simply do not want to stay in foster care, supported accommodation provides an important alternative, and to increase the range of such provision a range of measures is proposed, including the establishment of a capital investment fund. Good practice guidance will be issued to children's services and housing authorities on co-operation to support young people and families with children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Financial support for young people in care to enter adult life is highly variable between local authorities and often far from adequate. The Government will provide extra money (£100 per year for every child who spends the year in care) for the Child Trust Fund accounts of young people in care.

The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) will be asked to raise awareness of the under-representation in higher education of children in care. The University and College Admissions Service (UCAS) will identify applicants coming from a care background to ensure the right support can be arranged both during the admissions process and once they begin their course. Given that children in care finish higher education with an average of £2,000 more debt than their peers, a national bursary will be introduced, requiring local authorities to provide a minimum of £2,000 for all young people in care who go on to higher education.

Key proposals:

- Piloting a veto for young people in care over any decisions about legally leaving care before they turn 18, and piloting allowing young people to continue to live with foster families up to the age of 21
- Developing training modules for carers on how to teach children and young people practical life skills
- Improving housing options for young people through establishing a capital investment fund for dedicated supported accommodation, underpinned by an evaluation of models of supported housing
- Providing a top-up to the Child Trust Funds of young people in care
- Introducing a national bursary of £2,000 for each young person in care who goes on to higher education
- Targeting young people in care, for example within the Aimhigher programme, to ensure they are encouraged to attend open days at higher education institutions and to take part in summer schools and other outreach work.

Chapter 8 – Making the system work

As part of the Every Child Matters framework, there are key performance indicators relating to children in care which are the basis for Joint Area Reviews (JARs) and annual performance assessments, but the Green Paper states that these mechanisms are not working well enough for children in care. There are currently limited levers over other children's trust partners to deliver good outcomes for children in care, outcomes are considered only at a high level in JARs, and there is no statistical correlation between the outcomes of children in care and the star ratings of local authorities. The overall rising tide

of attainment can mask their poor outcomes, resulting in an authority doing well overall despite these children's poor performance.

The forthcoming Local Government White Paper will set out new arrangements for assessment and inspection of local authority functions, and these will be more risk-based and proportionate. However, the poor outcomes of children in care, as well as the unique nature of the State's relationship to them, warrant an increased focus on this group in inspections, and Ofsted will be asked to carry out a three year programme of proportionate inspection of how each local authority is performing in relation to the education of children in care.

To ensure priority is given to children in care in schools, Ofsted will be asked to pay particular attention in school inspections to how the needs of children in care are being met, and School Improvement Partners (SIPs) to provide effective challenge to schools whose performance data suggest the needs of children in care are not being adequately met. There will be a new power by which local authorities could issue a warning notice to a school failing in this area.

All local authorities, as part of the pledge set out in chapter 1, will be expected to set up a 'Children in Care Council', made up of a rotating group of children in care, and to develop an annual feedback mechanism, through which children's views would be collected and passed directly to the DCS. The consultation will also seek views on how Independent Reviewing Officers can achieve a greater degree of independence, including the option of employment by an independent agency.

The Local Government White Paper will set out our proposals for a revised national framework for setting targets and expectations based on a smaller, more focused set of core national priorities, which will include improved outcomes for children in care and will concentrate particularly on education. There needs to be a debate, however, about the best way to measure success, through young people's attainment, progress, or other key factors such as their health, wellbeing or participation in positive activities such as sports or volunteering.

Key proposals:

- Requiring Ofsted to carry out a regular inspection of how each local authority is meeting the educational needs of the children in its care
- Introducing an annual national stock-take of the outcomes of children in care, led by Ministers and reporting to Parliament
- Making clear in statutory guidance the responsibilities of Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for children's services to children in care
- Expecting every local authority to set up a 'Children in Care Council' through which children's views would be provided directly to the Director of Children's Services
- Achieving a greater degree of autonomy for Independent Reviewing Officers, possibly through their employment by an agency external to the local authority
- Making the education of children in care one of the key national priorities for local government in the new national framework to be introduced in the forthcoming Local Government White Paper.

Chapter 9 – Delivering our vision

A range of ways to respond to the consultation is offered. As well as the response form, there will be active engagement across the country, on a regional and national basis, working with a range of partners in the public, voluntary and community sectors to arrange

seminars and conferences. The Secretary of State is writing to all local Councillors urging them to look again at how they can better support children in care, and to all MPs encouraging them to use their role to improve the lives of this group. The Children's Rights Director is organising discussion groups; Ministers will speak to groups of local authorities, SHA and PCT chief executives and Directors of Children's Services; and there will be consultation events and roadshows across the country.

In particular, however, there will be four working groups of interested stakeholders set up covering the issues raised in chapters 2-5 respectively:

- future of the care population
- social care practices
- placement reform
- best practice in schools.

After the consultation an initial response document will be published. Final decisions on proposals with cost implications from 2008/09 onwards will be taken in the context of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review. There will also be an announcement about those local authorities which have been identified as 'Beacon Councils' in relation to services for children in care, chosen to act as centres of excellence in delivering the vision of local service delivery outlined in the Green Paper. The intention is to make the change programme workable for local authorities and their partners by providing as much flexibility as possible.

Annex A – Children's views on care

The main issues arising in all discussions with children and young people, and in research and other evidence are that:

- children in care want to be treated as individuals, listened to, and helped to realise their ambitions
- social workers should listen to children more, and take their views seriously in key decisions
- children want an ordinary, supportive school experience, and do not want to be stigmatised or singled out because they are in care
- young people want more support leaving care, and more choice about when and how they leave.

Comment

This Green Paper has been long awaited, its production being delayed by a number of factors, including a reassignment of ministerial responsibilities in May 2006. There is much in it that will be familiar to those who have worked for some time to improve outcomes for children in care, and many of the extensive list of proposals cannot be regarded as new, although there are some radical measures which will require close scrutiny and consultation. It is a comprehensive document which rightly focuses on preventative measures designed to reduce the size of the care population, and initiatives to promote good outcomes for those of all ages remaining within it. Its ambitious proposals also need to be considered closely in relation to the requirements of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, notably in relation to young people who were previously accommodated.

It states: 'there is no doubt that there is an absolute commitment to delivering better outcomes for children in care both from national and local government and from the professionals and others working directly with children in care'. However, it is clear that, although progress has been made in many areas, overall this has been slow, and in some

instances outcomes for those in care have worsened in relation to those for children and young people generally. The Green Paper can therefore be seen as a stocktaking exercise, coupled with a determination to make a significant difference to the life chances for those in care.

A particular feature of the Green Paper is an acknowledgement that the level of diversity both in the population and in children's experiences of care means that a 'one size fits all' solution to closing the gap in outcomes is not appropriate. The DfES seems to have accepted that there are no 'easy' solutions. Although some local authorities are to be identified as 'Beacons' or 'centres of excellence', it would be fair to say that no single local authority can demonstrate good outcomes for this group in all areas, and all have the capacity to learn from others. Authorities and their partners will find the wide range of proposals interesting or relevant according to their particular circumstances which vary considerably, as evidenced by the equally wide range in performance according to the indicators within the Every Child Matters framework.

A number of specific issues are worth noting. The proposals to develop independent practices, at arms length from the local authority, need careful scrutiny; some of the 'market'-oriented language used in the paper (choice, expansion and growth of successful practices, profit and reinvestment) is akin to that surrounding school status, and may prove to be equally controversial. Although these proposed changes are designed to promote sustained work with children in care, it is also acknowledged that child protection is the first priority, and further thought needs to be given to the effect of 'freeing up' social workers in the way suggested. In addition, the extension of the budget holding lead professional role could prove effective but needs to be considered in relation to the continuing workload of social workers.

The Green Paper indicates a number of areas in which additional funding will be made available, but there is ambiguity in the case of the funding of other proposals, including increased fostering allowances, and these will need to be examined further. It is not clear whether the proposed 'personalisation' budget represents an average figure which would be allocated as appropriate by local authorities, or some kind of entitlement for each child; those young people with complex needs, or unaccompanied minors, could well warrant annual funding in excess of the proposed sums.

The tiered model of placement types and proposed national qualifications framework represent a bold approach to the quality of foster placements and can perhaps be seen as parallel to developments in the children's workforce generally (e.g. childcare). However, the Green Paper is less convincing in addressing the overall shortage of placements which is acute in some areas. There is an emphasis on the value of a 'choice' of placement for young people which indeed is a worthwhile aim, but the effect of some of the proposed remedies is unlikely to be felt in the short term.

Chapter 2 identifies a need for adult and children's social services to work together to support those on the edge of the care system but, organisationally, many authorities have recently been in the process of separating them, and effective co-ordination is therefore necessary.

Overall, the Green Paper represents a welcome opportunity to engage further with the issues. Given the likelihood of this becoming a Government priority, on a sustained basis, and the linkage to the Comprehensive Spending Review, it may indeed be the driver for the 'step change' in outcomes which is at the heart of the paper's proposals. Authorities

are therefore encouraged to engage with the consultation process by the various means outlined in Chapter 9.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services
2.	Date:	Tuesday, 12th December, 2006
3.	Title:	Education Outcomes for Looked After Children Academic Year 2005/2006
4.	Programme Area:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

This report outlines the academic achievements of children Looked After by Rotherham Borough Council for the academic Year 2005/2006.

6. Recommendations

That Members receive this report

7. Proposals and Details

Key Stage 2 SATS

2005/6 - Year 6 cohort was a total of 24 children.

All of this year group were monitored by the Get Real Team and support provided where necessary to raise outcomes. An Information, Communication and Technology (I.C.T.) club took place in February 2006 aimed at those children who had the potential to meet level 4 and required extra support. This club is run in conjunction with the Children's Library service.

Individual support packages were developed for twelve children, in order to support them through this important year.

Results

50% gained level 4 in Maths
41.66% gained level 4 in English
66.6% gained level 4 in Science.

The overall percentage of children who gained Level 4 or above in English, Maths or Science is 52.7%,

The target for 06/07 (reported in March 07) is 45%

GCSE Results

The table below outlines the 2006 G.C.S.E. examination results and provides a comparison with the previous two years.

Year	Cohort	No not sitting	Not entered	1 A* -G	5 A* - G	5 A* - C
2004	27	15	12	12 44%	7 26%	4 15%
2005	38	10	28	26 68.4%	11 28.9%	2 5.6%
2006	30	8	22	21 70%	14 46.6%	5 17%

Although all young people did very well in their examinations this year, of particular note are the following three cases;

- 1 young man gained 10 GCSE's all A* and B grades
- 1 young woman who had had a particularly traumatic time prior to becoming 'Looked After' by the Local Authority (received a secure order on care grounds and then was placed in a specialist residential unit outside the borough) gained 3 G.C.S.Es.

- 1 young woman who's father died resulting in her returning to Ireland for a three month period during Year 11 and then coped with the illness and subsequent sad death of her younger sibling earlier this year, gained 9 G.C.S.Es. Grade A* - C

Information on the young people who did not gain a GCSE qualification is as follows:-

4 attend special schools

4 refused to attend education (significant individual packages of work by the Get Real Team were undertaken with these young people in order to support them to access education)

1 Young person failed to turn up to the examination and therefore received a failed grade.

Post 16 Awards

Members are aware that a very successful Post 16 Awards ceremony was held on 22nd November at the Town Hall to celebrate achievements referred to in this report, together with those of other young people in post 16 education, employment and training.

Attendance

A significant improvement has been achieved in the 'absence from school' figures this academic year. Although the target was not met we have narrowed the gap from last year's performance. The improvement can be attributed to the implementation of the new procedures for monitoring within the Get Real Team and schools being encouraged to contact the team on the first day of absence. Every child whose absence hits the critical stage has an individualised assessment followed by the development of a plan where appropriate to address this.

The target for this indicator was 13.5% the performance was 14.4%

Last year our performance was 17.5%

8. Finance

The support element of this work is carried out through the Children and Young People's Services' Get Real Team who also supply the vouchers for the young people at the presentation ceremony. There are no further financial implications in this area.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Members are aware that achievements by Looked After children can vary each year, depending on the ability of particular cohorts. In addition, given the small numbers involved, individual results can have a significant impact on outcomes.

Absence from school figures have seen a decrease this year, however often young people enter the Care system with a significant background of non school attendance which can be difficult to re-direct once they become Looked After. The Get Real Team identifies non-school attenders and has a specific action plan for each child in order to combat this.

The reporting target for this indicator is very specific and has tight deadlines; unlike school reporting it specifies absence for any reason so does not differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence.

Schools are improving in the first day reporting to the Get Real Team; however we are still finding a number of absences which are not being reported until the register copy is sent through to the team.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

There is a number of Performance indicators linked with this outcome

- PAF A2 - The number of young people Leaving Care aged 16 or over with 1 or more passes at GCSE Grade A* - G.
- DIS1403 - Percentage of Young People Leaving Care aged 16 or over with 5 or more passes at GCSE Grades A* C.
- % of Children Looked After in Year 11 who sat at least 1 GCSE or equivalent.
- Increase in Average SATs outcomes; % of Looked After Children who achieve level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 SATs in English or Maths or Science.
- PAFC24- Children who have been Looked After continuously for 12 months or more of compulsory school age who have missed 25 days or more of schooling for any reason.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Green Paper; Care Matters.
- Section 52 of the 2004 Children Act Duty on Local Authorities to Promote the education of Looked After Children.
- Every Child Matters; Change for Children (H.M. Government 2004).
- Safeguarding Children in education (D.f.E.S. Sept 2004).

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ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1. Meeting:	Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Panel
2. Date:	1 st December 2006
3. Title	Monitoring Procedure of Post 16 Qualifications
4. Programme Area:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

This report outlines the processes in place to monitor the results and progress of all Looked After Young People and Care Leavers in respect of Post 16 education and provides Members with information on 2005/06 achievements.

6. Recommendations

That Members receive the report.

7. Proposals and Details

Monitoring

Pathway Plans are pivotal to the process of enabling every young person, with advice and support from their Personal Adviser, to set out and achieve their ambitions and aspirations for their future. Pathway Planning builds upon the foundation of educational progress already made by the young person and, in all cases, young people receive encouragement to challenge themselves to achieve their potential in any education, training or employment opportunities available.

Pathway Plans and outcomes are recorded on the database at N.C.H. (Bridges) Leaving Care Services and are reviewed/updated at least 6 monthly. This information is used to underpin the data required to calculate the national indicator related to Performance Assessment Framework (P.A.F.) A4 - Employment, Education and Training for Care Leavers.

Transition meetings have been established between the Get Real Team, N.C.H. (Bridges) Team and Lifetime Careers. These meetings take place three times per year and ensure that one or more service is involved or aware of the progress and destination of all 15 - 19 year olds who are Looked After or Care Leavers, ensuring that no young person is left unsupported in their transition to adulthood.

2005/06 Achievements

- 1 student achieved 3 'A' Levels and has deferred a University place until 2007
- 2 students achieved 3 C grades and 2 C Grades 1 E Grade at 'A/S' Level
- 1 student achieved Diploma in Game Keeping and Land Management
- 1 student achieved Health and Beauty NVQ Level 3
- 1 student achieved Travel and Tourism NVQ Level 1
- 1 student achieved Performing Arts NVQ Level 1
- 1 student achieved Diploma in Health and Social Care

Current Position

In the 16 - 18 year old age group there are 65 young people, of these:-

- 41 (63%) are engaged in education, employment and training:-
 - 29 are attending college or further education.
 - 3 are in employment.
 - 9 are on training schemes.

- Of the 24 not currently engaged in education, employment and training:-
 - 6 young people are not available due to custody, pregnancy, disability or illness.
 - 5 are currently engaged with the Connexions Worker within the N.C.H. (Bridges) Team exploring their options.
 - 13 are not engaged. N.C.H. (Bridges) Team are intensively trying to engage with this group of young people in order to improve their outcomes.

In the 18 - 20 year old age group there are 57 young people, of these:-

- 32 are engaged in education, employment or training.
- 12 young people are not engaged in education, employment or training, but are currently engaged with N.C.H. (Bridges) exploring their options.
- 13 are not engaged in education, employment or training, due to custody, pregnancy, disability or illness.

8. Finance

When Looked After children and Care Leavers continue or undertake recognised training they qualify for an Education Maintenance Allowance. This is in line with other young people at a similar stage. Project workers assist young people in completing their applications for this grant.

For those young people not eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance the Local Authority, through the N.C.H. (Bridges) Team, assists with an incentive payment. This tends to be the 'older' group of Care Leavers who did not continue in education at 16 but decided to return to education at a later date.

9. Risk and Uncertainties

Looked After children and Care Leavers traditionally find the transition from statutory education a difficult time. Many begin college placements and training courses but very quickly drop out due to the additional pressures associated with coping with independent living. The staff at the N.C.H. (Bridges) Team offer support and guidance for all young people in this transitional phase and very often many of them enter education at a later stage than their peer group.

Historically there have been very few (less than 1% nationally) Care Leavers who have continued into Higher Education.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

PAF A4 collects the data on the ratio of the percentage of those young people who were Looked After on 1st April in their 17th year (aged 16), who were engaged in education, employment or training at the age of 19.

Current performance for this indicator is as follows:-

- 2003/04 outcome = 43.5%
- 2005/06 outcome = 62.2%

11. Background and Consultation

- Children (Leaving Care) Act, 2000
- Education Maintenance Allowance

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ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

- 1. Meeting:** Children and Young peoples service Looked After Children’s Scrutiny Sub Group
- 2. Date** 12th December 2006
- 3. Title** Fostering Services
- 4. Programme Area:** Children and Young People’s Services

5. Summary

The fourth annual C.S.C.I. inspection of Fostering Services in Rotherham under the Care Standards Act 2000 will take place on the week beginning 7th January 2007.

The outcome of the previous fostering service inspection in March 2005 was generally positive. The recommendations were incorporated into an action plan, which was monitored closely.

The most significant recommendation in respect of fostering services contained within the JAR Inspection report and the previous fostering service inspection was to improve choice in foster placements through recruitment of foster carers.

Significant improvements have been made in the recruitment process. Local research into recruitment amongst the BME community has been undertaken, together with a review of national research into best practice in recruitment. A full audit of needs is underway. A recruitment plan is in development based on research and the audit of need. Prioritisation will be given to recruitment for permanence placements, for adolescents and for children with complex needs.

6. Recommendations

That Members receive the report and endorse the proposals for foster care recruitment as detailed within the report.

7. Proposals and Details

Current position

The Fostering Service was last inspected in March 2005. The outcome of this inspection was generally positive. The report includes comments from the C.S.C.I. Inspector relating to “The views of young people interviewed were very positive about their experiences and they held their foster carers in high regard”

The inspector also indicated that “there are positive efforts being made to recruit foster carers and promote the service, as well as providing support and training for current carers”.

The Fostering service is though committed to continuous improvement in service delivery and the following areas are subject to ongoing review

1. Recruitment and Selection – 1.5 experienced social workers have been ring-fenced to work solely on recruitment and selection of Foster Carers. A further 0.5 social worker will shortly be re-deployed to bring the compliment to 2 full time workers. This has already borne fruit in increasing the numbers of new foster applications to panel. The number of Children Looked after has though also risen recently and this has placed further stress on the fostering service.
2. Provision of Foster Carers from the BME community. A project group has undertaken some initial work on development of links to the BME community and an “Equip” trainee has undertaken initial research into barriers to recruitment amongst the BME community. This work will be incorporated into the Recruitment plan.
3. Improve flexibility of Training provision to Foster Carers – In recognition of the work and care commitments of foster carers, the feasibility of provision of training out of normal working hours or provision of a crèche will be explored.
4. Response to Comments and suggestions by Foster Carers – Feedback from the previous foster care consultation was positive, 83% of all carers stated they were either extremely satisfied or satisfied with the Family Placement service as a whole. All Foster Carers were consulted in late October 2006. The final responses are being collated and initial indications are of a preponderance of positive responses. An action plan to respond to suggestions will be developed.

Recruitment Action Plan

1. The development of specialist recruitment worker posts has already brought dividends in respect of an increase in the numbers of new carers approved. The quality of assessments has been viewed by the fostering panel to have improved considerably and now to be “excellent”. This team will be further strengthened in the New Year with the addition of at least 0.5 workers.
2. The team has been further strengthened through support from specialist workers in other fields. These include the communications manager, workers from the policy team and input from the BME community. This will be formalised with the establishment of a “virtual team”.

3. A full audit of need is underway and will inform the ongoing development strategy. Prioritisation will be given to increasing the numbers of carers who offer
 - permanence placements
 - support to young people with complex needs
 - placements for children and young people aged 13 to 18
 - Placements from within the local BME population
4. The current progression scheme is to be further reviewed to explore means of linking payments to foster carers more closely to ongoing learning, and to support placements for children and young people with the most complex needs.

Support to foster carers

Support to Foster carers meets all Fostering National Minimum Standards. All foster carers are visited within guidelines and offered support and supervision. An Annual Review monitors progression, learning and training needs. Health and safety and safeguarding needs are also monitored through the supervision and review processes. Feedback from foster carers in respect of their support from the fostering team is generally positive.

Support to foster carers in crisis is given, where possible through increased frequency of visits from their Fostering social worker. Planning meetings may be called by the child's social worker to agree support packages. These may include input from the Get Real Team, CAMHS services, activity support or respite. Foster carers undertake a difficult and demanding role and it is recognised that although there are some good resources to support carers, improvements could be made, especially in respect of CAMHS input.

Though most foster carers give positive feedback regarding their support, some comments have been received from foster carers about inconsistent responses from the children's social workers. Improvements have been made in strengthening the Planning and Protection Officer Team, who hold an important function in independent review of each child's needs and care planning. Statutory visits to placements are monitored closely and each child is made aware of the role of the Rights 2 Rights team in provision of independent support.

5. Finance

There are no specific financial implications identified.

6. Risk and Uncertainties

The main risks to maintaining a high quality fostering service continues to be the difficulty in recruiting and retaining both carers and qualified social work staff. Both of these challenges are replicated at national level. Whilst the service has made commendable efforts with recruitment to both areas, this remains a continuing challenge.

7. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

There are a number of linked performance indicators and targets associated with the Fostering Services, including the stability of placements of children looked after by the Local Authority, the number of children Looked After in foster or Adoptive placements and the stability of long term placements.

8. Background and Consultation

This report has been prepared with reference to

- Pre-Inspection Questionnaire February 2005
- C.S.C.I. Inspection report March 2005
- Inspection Action Plan June 2005
- Children and Young Peoples Service Cabinet Member report September 2005
- Inspection Action Plan Review 2006
- Family Placement Questionnaire and feedback 2005
- National Foster Care Standards
- C.S.C.I. Inspection Guidance
- Fostering Recruitment plan

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Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Children and Young People's Services

Report for Looked After Scrutiny Panel

Profile of Numbers of Looked After Children, Current Placements and School Attendance

As of 15.11.2006 Rotherham currently has 331 children in our Care, of these children and young people 19 are allocated to the Children's Disability Team.

Types of Care

Type of Care	Age 0-5	Age 6-10	Age 11-15	Age 16+	Total	Comparison (31.8.2006)
Placed for adoption	1	4	1		6	9
Foster Care	57	60	96	28	241	251
Independent Living				3	3	3
Residential inside Rotherham			9	5	14	15
Residential outside Rotherham		1	3	3	7	6
Residential School			3	1	4	4
Other Residential	2		2	4	8	9
Secure Unit outside Rotherham			1		1	1
Placed with Parents	8	6	13	11	38	35
Other Placement	5	3	1		9	5
TOTALS	73	74	129	55	331	338

Gender Breakdown

Type of Care	Female	Male	Total
Placed for adoption	2	4	6
Foster Care	116	125	241
Independent Living	2	1	3
Residential In Rotherham	10	4	14
Residential outside Rotherham	4	3	7
Residential School	1	3	4
Other Residential	2	6	8
Secure Unit outside Rotherham	1		1
Placed with Parents	9	29	38
Other Placement	4	5	9
TOTALS	151	180	331

Ethnicity Breakdown

Type of Care	White British	White Irish	White Other	Asian - Pakistani	Black - African	Mixed White & Asian	Other Any	Dual Heritage White & Black Caribbean	Dual Heritage White & Asian	Dual Heritage Other	Total
Placed for adoption	5							1			6
Foster Care	223	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	4	1	241
Independent Living	3										3
Residential In Rotherham	14										14
Residential outside Rotherham	7										7
Residential School	4										4
Other Residential	7						1				8
Secure Unit outside Rotherham	1										1
Placed with Parents	37								1		38
Other Placement	8	1									9
TOTALS	309	3	2	1	2	2	3	3	5	1	331

L.A.C. with 25 Days or More Absence as at end of Term 1 2006 (20/10/06)
(absences are recorded in half days)

Name	Year Group	Date of Birth	Excluded	Auth.	Unauth.	Total Number of Half Days Absence	Placement	Comments
Child A	Y6	23-Oct-95	31	0	0	31	Foster Carer	Excluded a further 24 half-days up to 14/11/06, total now 56 half days. Teaching Support and Year 6 monitoring are in place by the Get Real Team. Started at St. Ann's Pupil Referral Unit 15/11/06, timetabled for 4 days per week. This is a temporary measure and he will then move to Laughton J & I School.
Child B	Y9	05-Feb-93	0	24	18	42	Residential	Since half term has been absent a further 10 half-days, making a total of 52 half-days absent. Get Real Team Learning Mentor Support.
Child C	Y11	01-Dec-90	2	0	43	45	With Grandmother	Since half term has been absent a further 19 half days, making a total of 64 half day absences , Get Real Team providing teaching support, EWO been out to visit home.
Child D	Y8	23-May-94	50	0	0	50	With Parent	Issues around school placement due to challenging behaviour, threats of permanent exclusion, compounded by school being out of Rotherham Area, SEN panel to make recommendations regarding school placement within Rotherham.
Child E	Y9	15-Oct-92	0	0	51	51	With Parent	Support by Get Real Team now attending school

Name	Year Group	Date of Birth	Excluded	Auth.	Unauth.	Total Number of Half Days Absence	Placement	Comments
Child F	Y10	04-Mar-92	1	1	56	58	Out of Authority Foster Placement	Child exhibiting Challenging behaviour in school and difficult to place, SEN panel have recommended residential school process in place
Child G	Y11	28-Sep-90	0	21	40	61	Foster Carer	Long term school refuser, Get Real Team are working to re-engage
Child H	Y10	25-Sep-91				61	Foster Carer	Not on school roll due to coming from neighboring borough school have been approached
Child I	Y10	31-Jan-92	0	5	58	63	With Parent	Persistent school refuser, working now on a modified time table support package in place
Child J	Y10	25-Jun-91	0	64	0	64	Foster Carer	Bail conditions will not allow him on any school grounds. Placed in Hull, no input from GRT.
Child K	Y10	16-Jan-92	0	64	0	64	Out of Authority Residential Specialist Unit	Long term non-attender compounded by repeated absconder

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	Looked After Children Scrutiny Sub-Panel
2.	Date:	Wednesday, 13th December, 2006
3.	Title:	Regulation 33 Inspections in Residential Children’s Homes
4.	Programme Area:	Children and Young People’s Services

5. Summary

The Care Standards Act, 2000 (Section 23), sets minimum standards of care to be provided to children and young people, and provides a set of standards which form the basis for judgements made by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (C.S.C.i.) an independent non-departmental public body.

Standard 32 and Regulation 33 of the Children’s Homes Regulations, 2001, prescribes the frequency and requirements of the registered provider in relation to visits of inspection.

This report summarises the main themes arising from the Regulation 33 visits to the children’s homes in Rotherham during the period September 2006 to November 2006.

6. Recommendations

- (a) That Members receive this report.**
- (b) That further reports are provided on key themes emerging from future Regulation 33 visits.**

7. Proposals and Details

Regulation 33 visits (at least once per month to each Unit) are carried out predominantly by the Operations Manager for Residential Services. From November 2006 one Regulation 33 visit each month will be completed by the Service Manager for Looked After Children's Resources as a quality assurance exercise.

A summary of the inspection themes are as follows:-

Creswick Road

Creswick Road is a five bedded short stay unit (up to six months) for mixed gender children aged 12 and 16 years; young people in this unit are predominantly there following the breakdown of foster placements or family placements. During the young person's stay, assessments are carried out in order to advise on long term planning. Themes emerging are:-

- A need to better evidence the degree to which young people are consulted and contribute towards the day to day running of the home.
- A need to ensure safe and secure storage of medication and personal belongings (lockable cabinets to be installed in bedrooms).
- To strengthen relationships with Community Police to manage the groups of young people in the community who congregate outside the home.
- The need to give increasing priority to refurbishment and repair.

St. Edmunds Avenue

This unit is a five bedded unit for females only, aged between 12 and 18 years, who need long term residential care. Themes emerging are;

- A need to better evidence the degree to which young people are consulted and contribute towards the day to day running of the home.
- A need to ensure safe and secure storage of medication and personal belongings (lockable cabinets to be installed in bedrooms).
- To strengthen relationships with Community Police to manage the groups of young people in the community who congregate outside the home.
- The need to give increasing priority to refurbishment and repair.

Goodwin Crescent

This unit is a five bedded unit for mixed gender children aged between 12 and 18 years who need long term residential care. Themes emerging are;

- A need to better evidence the degree to which young people are consulted and contribute towards the day to day running of the home.
- A need to ensure safe and secure storage of medication and personal belongings (lockable cabinets to be installed in bedrooms).
- The need to give increasing priority to refurbishment and repair.
- The need to develop and implement more detailed transitional plans for young people.
- To strengthen education provision in appropriate cases.

Studmoor Road

This unit is a five bedded unit which offers respite care for children aged between 12 and 16 years of mixed gender. The unit currently has nine children who receive respite care to prevent the breakdown of family placements. Support packages are offered for up to a period of eight weeks and can be extended if the provision is still required following a review. Themes emerging are:

- A need to better evidence the degree to which young people are consulted and contribute towards the day to day running of the home.
- The need to give increasing priority to refurbishment and repair.
- The need to ensure safe and secure storage of medication and personal belongings (lockable safes installed in bedrooms)
- The need to improve care plans for some young people.

8. Finance

Regulation 33 visits are funded through current revenue.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

It is essential that Regulation 33 visits are maintained to ensure that all units continue to provide National Minimum Standards for children and young people.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

National Minimum Standards S.23(1) of the Care Standards Act, 2000.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- National Minimum Standards (Children's Homes Regulations).
- Children Act, 1989.
- Care Standards Act, 2000.

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LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SCRUTINY SUB-PANEL
Wednesday, 20th September, 2006

Present:- Councillor G. A. Russell (in the Chair); Councillors Barron, Gosling, J. Hamilton and Jackson.

11. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. Gabbitas (Cooptee), Councillors McNeely and R. Russell.

12. SERVICES FOR CARE LEAVERS - ACCESS TO BENEFITS

Further to Minute No. 3(iii) of the meeting held on 12th July 2006, consideration was given to the content of a briefing note which outlined discussions between officers from Revenues and Benefits Service and NCH Bridges Leaving Care Project on emerging actions to improve how housing benefit is processed for care leavers.

The briefing paper set out:-

- the purpose of the meeting which was to discuss perceived delays in processing Housing Benefit claims for care leavers, and whether anything could be changed to alleviate the 'perceived' delays
- issues raised during the discussions
- what was agreed to improve the processing of claims and payments
- how the service will improve due to the changes agreed

Also submitted was a paper on difficulties experienced in accessing DSS payments for young people who have been in Local Authority Care. Case examples were given.

Particular reference was made to the phone in system which was inappropriate for most young people, particularly for young people who have left care.

The summary accepted that an improved system was required and work on a solution was being progressed.

Subsequent discussion/comments raised the following points:-

- how claims are made and care leavers identified in order to process claims;
- dealing with and channelling of claims classed as emergency;
- when the process for care leavers begins, some weeks prior to their 16th birthday;
- the ways in which applications for benefit can be made and the reasons why carers cannot be supplied with appropriate forms;

- the need for offices to be opened at times other than at present;
- Government legislation which is fairly rigid and does not allow special dispensation for care leavers.

Officers acknowledged that more consultation was required between the appropriate departments, providing a better flow of information and communication between them. It was also accepted that the teleclaiming process needed to be improved.

Consideration was to be given to the lobbying of MPs on the issues raised, particularly on the interpretation of guidance and having some degree of flexibility for care leavers.

Agreed:- a) That the reports be received and the action being taken be supported.

b) That a report on progress be submitted in 12 weeks time.

13. COMPLAINTS - LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Children's Complaints Manager submitted a comprehensive report which detailed the complaints made by children and young people.

The basis and outcome of each complaint was set out, and the themes that have arisen from the complaints and representations made by children and young people on a repeated basis were outlined in the report submitted.

In response to a question, members were informed of how issues of bullying were addressed, the work done on this being outlined and how policies relating to bullying were reconsidered and consulted upon.

Reference was made to the work done with schools, on bullying, involving multi-agency working.

In the main, timescales for action on complaints were met, the process being outlined, as set out in the information submitted.

With regard to the outcomes of complaints made, members were informed of the reasons for outstanding issues.

Agreed:- That the report be received and an update submitted in 6 months time.

14. PROFILE OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Service Manager for Looked After Children, reported that as at 31st August 2006, Rotherham had 338 children in care.

The details submitted set out:-

- the number of looked after children in the various types of care available
- the gender and ethnicity breakdown of the children in care
- the school attendance record of children in care along with commentary on reasons for them missing school.

It was clarified that if a child was not on a school roll, they could not be included in the data, but if in hospital, a child would be on the hospital tuition roll. Other situations were also clarified such as those children in out of authority placements and the responsibility of carers to get children to school.

Members were informed of the excellent GCSE achievements of looked after children this year, being much improved compared with last year.

It was noted that a celebratory event was to be held on the 22nd November 2006.

Agreed:- a) That the report be received.

b) That comparative figures of previous years for the school attendance data submitted be provided at the next meeting.

c) That the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services be requested to give consideration to the post 16 examination achievements of looked after children and to ways in which they can be improved.

15. REGULATION 33 INSPECTIONS OF RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES

The Service Manager, Looked After Children's Resources, reported that the CSCI had recently completed inspections of four Residential Children's Homes against the National Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act 2000).

The report submitted set out the Function of Purpose for each of the Homes and the themes and recommendations which have arisen from the inspections.

The Homes inspected were at:-

Creswick Road
Goodwin Crescent
St. Edmunds Avenue
Studmoor Road

Particular comments related to the involvement of young people within the homes and the condition of the premises at Goodwin Crescent.

The age range of young people in the Homes was discussed and issues surrounding how they mix.

It was acknowledged that there could be issues but there was a comprehensive risk assessment process to address them.

Agreed:- That the report be received and feedback on action to be reported on a quarterly basis initially.

16. MEETING WITH RIGHT 2 RIGHTS GROUP AND MEMBERS - UPDATE ON PROGRESS

Further to the Scrutiny Review "The Role of Councillors as Corporate Parents" undertaken in May 2005, one of the recommendations was that Rotherham's Right 2 Rights Service and Young Rights representatives would work with a small group of elected members to design a leaflet in respect of Corporate Parenting and a Corporate Parenting Pledge/Promise for the Looked After Children & Young People of Rotherham.

The leaflet had been completed and copies were distributed at the meeting.

A more in-depth 'child friendly' document was being produced which will be sent out on request and also published on the website along with the leaflet and the Corporate Parenting Promise.

Also being developed are ways in which young people can comment on how well the Promise is holding up and suggest ways to improve the service.

Agreed:- That the leaflet be welcomed and it be distributed to all members of the Council.

17. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SCRUTINY SUB PANEL HELD ON 12TH JULY 2006

Agreed:- That the minutes of this Scrutiny Sub Panel held on 12th July 2006 be received and reports on the following be submitted to future meetings:-

a) the work placement situation for looked after children, this report to the March 2007 meeting at the latest.

b) the situation on foster carers' support and advertising for more, and on respite care to the next meeting.

18. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Looked After Children Scrutiny

Sub Panel would take place on Wednesday, 13th December 2006 at 2.00 p.m.