

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SCRUTINY SUB-PANEL

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

Date: Wednesday, 10 December 2008

Time: 2.00 p.m.

A G E N D A

1. To determine if the following matters are to be considered under the categories suggested, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.
2. To determine any item which the Chairman is of the opinion should be considered later in the agenda as a matter of urgency.
3. Apologies for absence
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 24th September 2008 (copy attached) (Pages 1 - 5)
6. Percentage of Looked After Children who have been looked after continuously for twelve months and who have missed 25 days or more of schooling in 2007/2008 (report attached) (Pages 6 - 9)
7. Care Matters Update (report attached) (Pages 10 - 21)
8. Looked After Children's Council - Update and Minutes (report attached) (Pages 22 - 26)
9. Exclusion of the Press and Public
The following items are likely to be considered in the absence of the press and public as being exempt under Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended (information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual)
10. Work Placement and Work Opportunities (report attached) (Pages 27 - 31)
11. Educational Achievement of Looked After Children 2007/2008 (report attached) (Pages 32 - 34)

12. Offending by Looked After Children (report attached) (Pages 35 - 37)
13. Looked After Children Profiles and Update on Regulation 33 Visits (report attached) (Pages 38 - 45)

**Date of Next Meeting:-
Wednesday, 25 March 2009**

Membership:-

Chairman – Councillor The Mayor (Councillor G. A. Russell).
Councillors Austen, Dodson, Doyle, J. Hamilton, Jack, McNeely, P. A. Russell and Swift.
Together with Co-optees:- Mr. P. Howe, Mr. D. Trickett, Mrs. A. Lidster and Mrs. A. Wild

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SCRUTINY SUB-PANEL
Wednesday, 24th September, 2008

Present:- The Mayor (Councillor G. A. Russell) (in the Chair); Councillors Austen, Doyle, Jack and Swift.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dodson, J. Hamilton, McNeely, P. A. Russell and from Mr. P. Owen.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12TH DECEMBER 2007

Agreed:- (1) That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Looked After Children Scrutiny Sub-Panel, held on 12th December, 2007, be approved as a correct record.

(2) That, with regard to Minute No. 6 (Performance Indicators Affecting Looked After Children), the Scrutiny Sub-Panel noted details of the current position concerning the recruitment, appointment and retention of qualified social workers, as well as the use of the multi-disciplinary Locality Teams.

(3) That progress reports about the following items be submitted to the next meeting of the Looked After Children Scrutiny Sub-Panel:-

minute number 4 – Offending by Looked After Children

minute number 5 – Work Placements for Looked After Children

3. LAC COUNCIL

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Looked After Children Service Manager, stating that the Care Matters agenda contained a number of recommendations which were to be incorporated into the forthcoming amendments to the Children Act 1989, due in 2009. An Action Plan and Implementation guidance had been published, giving clear timescales for development.

The report stated that a key requirement was the development of a Looked After Children's Council, which will meet with Directors and Elected Members, including Members of this Scrutiny Sub-Panel, in order to ensure their involvement in shaping and developing all aspects of the Borough Council's service to Looked After Children. This work should begin with the development of the Borough Council's "promise" to all of the Looked After Children.

A number of issues were discussed:-

- the composition of the Looked After Children's Council and the representation of the young people themselves (including care leavers);
- the first meeting of Looked After Children's Council would take place during the Autumn, 2008;
- ways of ensuring that the Borough Council would be informed of and would respond to the issues raised by the Looked After Children's Council;
- the role of the Looked After Children Scrutiny Sub-Panel in regularly monitoring the progress of the Looked After Children's Council.

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

(2) That the establishment of the Looked After Children's Council be welcomed.

(3) That a meeting of all members of this Scrutiny Sub-Panel and the Looked After Children's Council (including care leavers) be arranged to take place during one evening in January, 2009.

(4) That progress reports about the Looked After Children's Council be submitted at regular intervals to this Scrutiny Sub-Panel.

4. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in those paragraphs, indicated below, of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

5. LEAVING CARE AND ACCOMMODATION TENDER OUTCOMES

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Looked After Children Service Manager concerning the Leaving Care Service and Care Leavers Accommodation service, which have been subject to a service tender.

The report stated that Action for Children (formerly NCH, the National Children's Homes charity) is the current provider of the Leaving Care service and part of the accommodation service. In order to provide a more streamlined and best value accommodation provision, the accommodation service currently managed by Action for Children and the post 16 residential provision at Hollowgate, off Moorgate, Rotherham (currently managed by the Borough Council) were all amalgamated into one Accommodation service and tendered as a whole.

The Scrutiny Sub-Panel noted that Action for Children had been successful in their tender for both services (minute references No. 67 of the meeting of the Cabinet Member and Advisers for Children and Young People's Services held on 17th October 2007 and No. 80 of the meeting of the Cabinet Member and Advisers for Children and Young People's Services held on 31st October 2007).

The report described both the existing service provision and the outcome of the tendering process. The new supported accommodation building at Hollowgate would receive Housing Corporation grant funding. The care leavers who would eventually be resident in the new building were currently staying in other accommodation nearby, for a temporary period until completion of the construction work in 2010.

The Scrutiny Sub-Panel welcomed Mary-Ann Barton, representing Action for Children, who explained the role of the charity in this service provision.

During consideration of this item, the Scrutiny Sub-Panel discussed the entitlement of care leavers to various state benefits and it was agreed that foster carers ought to be informed of the current entitlement.

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

(2) That arrangements be made for members of the Looked After Children Scrutiny Sub-Panel to make a visit of inspection of the new supported accommodation for care leavers at Hollowgate, on completion of the construction work in 2010.

(Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act – information relating to financial or business affairs)

6. INSPECTION OF FOSTERING SERVICES

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Looked After Children Service Manager concerning the OFSTED inspection of Rotherham's Fostering Services, which had taken place during the week commencing 19th May, 2008. The report summarised the findings of the inspection. Also submitted to the Scrutiny Sub-Panel was the action plan of the actions required (statutory requirements) and the recommendations made to improve provision. The resource implications of the required actions were contained within the report.

The report stated that there were currently 382 Looked After Children with the Borough Council, of which 267 were in foster care placements with 111 foster carers. The Scrutiny Sub-Panel's consideration of this item included discussion of the following issues:-

- the placement of children and young people with carers, using discretionary regulations to allow placement;

- resource issues and the practice of placing children and young people 'over numbers' in foster placements (eg: keeping sibling groups together and the alternative of having to seek independent fostering placements);
- the further inspection of Rotherham's Fostering Services, by OFSTED, which was scheduled to take place during November, 2008;
- the need to recruit additional foster carers and alternative ways of achieving such recruitment;
- the arrangements for social workers' statutory inspections of the placement homes of Looked After Children.

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

(2) That the contents and the implementation of the Action Plan and recommendations be noted.

(3) That further reports be submitted to the next meeting of the Looked After Children Sub-Panel:-

(a) detailing the outcome of the further inspection, by OFSTED, of Rotherham's Fostering Services; and

(b) describing the operation of the existing arrangements for social workers' statutory inspections of the placement homes of Looked After Children.

(Exempt under Paragraph 2 of the Act – information likely to reveal the identity of an individual)

7. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - STATISTICS AND REGULATION 33 REPORT

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Looked After Children Service Manager containing a statistical profile of Looked After Children in the Rotherham Borough area. The report provided the following details, as at 11th September, 2008:-

- 382 Looked After Children in the Rotherham Borough area (compared with 337 reported at the December, 2007, meeting);
- 29 of these children were allocated to the children's disability team;
- the number of children placed in the various types of care available;
- the incidence of absence from school;
- Out of Authority placements;

- information about the themes and trends resulting from the Regulation 33 visits to residential children's homes.

Further to Minute No. 7(b) of this Sub-Panel's meeting held on 12th December, 2007, the report included information about the education being received by the Looked After Children who were currently absent from school.

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

(2) That the contents of the Regulation 33 Report (visits to residential Children's Homes) be noted.

(3) That a further report be submitted to the next meeting of this Scrutiny Sub-Panel detailing the educational provision for Looked After Children.

(Exempt under Paragraph 2 of the Act – information likely to reveal the identity of an individual)

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
--

1.	Meeting:	Looked After Children Scrutiny Sub-Panel
2.	Date:	Wednesday 10th December, 2008
3.	Title:	% LAC who have been looked after continuously for 12 months who have missed 25 days or more of schooling for any reason 2007/2008
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services All Wards

5. Summary

The Get Real Team (GRT) was set up to raise the attainment, achievement and aspirations of Young People in care in Rotherham, mainly via short term intervention work. It monitors and supports attendance at school across all key stages.

6. Recommendations

1. That the contents of the report are noted

7. Proposals and Details

This is one of the performance indicators as set by the Government to support the raising of attainment of LAC

- 20.1% of the 2007/8 cohort have had 25 absence or more. There had been high proportion of school exclusions among this group.
- 38% of this group were placed with parents or relative.
- 15.8% were placed out of authority.
- 21% were placed with foster carers.
- 2.6% were placed for adoption.

Current Procedure for School Attendance Monitoring of Looked After Children by the Get Real Team:

- All secondary schools send a weekly report to the GRT detailing attendance of their LAC
- A request is made directly to out of authority schools that have a Rotherham Looked After Child. This information is entered onto a database by the GRT in order to keep a record of all attendance. A copy of each child's record is sent to each Social Worker, together with a note of any concerns.
- Additionally a letter is sent on behalf of the director of learning services, to all schools, asking each school to report to the Get Real Team on the first day of absence of any Looked After Child. On receiving a phone call from school, GRT then contact the parent/carer to ensure that they are aware of the absence, ascertain the reason and input the information onto SWIFT in order to also bring it to the attention of the Social Worker. If there is cause for concern, a phone call will also be made to the Social Worker. If a member of the GRT is working with a child, they will also be informed of the absence.
- When a child reaches a total of 10 days absence, a letter is sent to the parent/carer, with a copy sent to the Social Worker and school. If absence persists, a further letter is sent out at 15 days absence. This also triggers an assessment by the GRT based on information gathered from school, social worker, parent/carer.
- A leaflet which promotes the benefits of maintaining good attendance at school is sent out with future letters.
- All attendance issues are reported to the Get Real Internal Management Team, at their meeting every Friday morning. If any children are identified as having increasing absences, the GRT will do an assessment. A member of the GRT will then be allocated to address concerns. The Personal Education Plan (PEP) is then reviewed to plan ways of improving poor school attendance.
- Residential units send in a weekly summary of school attendance to GRT. Any absences are investigated and noted on SWIFT. Schools are kept informed of details of any off-site timetables.
- In recognition of any LAC achieving 100% school attendance, a certificate is sent out each half-term, together with voucher entitling them to an activity funded by the LAC Activity Co-ordinator.

What additional short, mid and long term action and improvements have and will be taken and their expected outcome.

a) Long term:

When a decision is made to place a child with relatives, a clear structured plan for care and education needs to be developed that gives support to parents or relatives in maintaining school attendance. This includes the school, social worker, Get Real Team, young person, carers and other relevant professionals (e.g. Special Educational Needs) as relevant. The obvious forum for this is within the Personal Education Plan (PEP).

New PEPs should be undertaken in line with changes in circumstances. This is a simple procedure if the initial PEP is thorough.

b) Medium term:

In order to drive effective intervention regarding attendance, PEPs must be kept up to date. Closer liaison with EWOs within Locality Teams is planned.

GRT is to have termly meetings with Locality Managers to discuss individual attendance issues for children placed in their locality.

The GRT plans to provide training to Designated Governors and Teachers the new statutory guidance to be released in the New Year.

c) Short term:

The Get Real Team has recently improved the format of the PEP to include a section on school attendance

GRT manager has raised awareness of the performance Indicator statistics and their implications at a Residential Managers' meeting.

New legislation on exclusions (6 day rule) should have a substantial impact on absence figures.

Recent performance Clinic outcomes September 2008

Get Real team to carry out detailed analysis of the children with a further breakdown of the reason for day missed. To link work with Parenting officer to work with Parents and foster carers regarding attendance. To await guidance to be issued on the role of designated Teachers to develop further advice and guidance including termly reports to Designated Governors

8. Finance

The budget is secure.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Impacting factors out of service control.

- The GRT team is unable to provide intervention for LAC placed out of authority. The completion of Personal Education Plans is the responsibility of the child's Social worker and is overseen by locality managers.

- Refusal to attend school of persistent non attendees
The effectiveness of schools in recording attendance varies. Designated teachers lack the authority to implement effective interventions for LAC. Timetables for LAC are not flexible enough to meet needs.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

This report has been compiled with reference to Every Child Matters and Section 52 of the Children's Act 2004

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Reports from GRT members.

GRT attendance database.

Contact Name : Martin Smith

Telephone: 01709 334613

E-mail: martin.smith@rotherham.gov.uk

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
--

1.	Meeting:	Looked After Children Scrutiny Sub-Panel
2.	Date:	Wednesday 10 December 2008
3.	Title:	Care Matters
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

A briefing on the Care Matters agenda was presented to Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's services in June 2008 a further report was timetabled for November 2008, to present work to date and the results of an initial gap analysis of current provision in respect of the Care Matters agenda.

The agenda contains a range of required actions for Local Authorities together with timescales for implementation.

This report follows a full review of the Care Matters agenda and gap analysis of service provision within Rotherham. This agenda has implications for Directorates across Children's and Young peoples services. On the whole service provision is good and many aspects of the proposed legislation are incorporated within existing practice. Where gaps have been identified, action plans are being developed to ensure compliance.

6. Recommendations

- **That the contents of the report are noted and the proposals contained within this report are endorsed**
- **Note that a cross directorate task and finish group is being established to undertake preparation work to ensure the service meets expectations within this agenda**

7. Proposals and Details

Background

Care Matters: Time for Change (Department for Education and Skills) aims to improve the lives and life chances of Looked after Children. The executive summary states *“Despite high ambitions and a shared commitment for change, outcomes for children and young people in care have not sufficiently improved.... Tackling this requires urgent, sustained action across central and local government”*.

The agenda takes the form of a series of proposals to affect change. Some proposals have been implemented and some will require legislation [the proposed Children and Young Peoples Act 2009]. Others are still in the pilot stages and some are concerned with amendments to the inspection regime. Links are also made to other agendas, including the 14 to 19 agenda and ‘Youth Matters’.

In order to assist Local Authorities, the Government has put proposals within the agenda into a timetabled implementation plan and action log. Not all aspects of the agenda are complete as yet and we await key documents regarding Foster Care Training and the Ofsted integrated inspection regime.

Rotherham M.B.C. Actions

The DCSF action log has been used as a basis for a full scale review of service provision and gap analysis against the government agenda involving input from across all directorates within Children and Young People’s Services. Much of the planning concerns detailed aspects of service provision and work will continue to ensure that we respond appropriately to all aspects of the agenda. A brief summary of key aspects of the changed agenda and our response to date follows:

Corporate Parenting – Getting it right.

- **All Councils must have a Looked after Children’s Council whose members work with elected members and directors to develop service provision.** The Rotherham Looked after Children’s Council had its first meeting with Elected Members and Directors on Friday 31st October. Further work is necessary to ensure representation from all Looked after Children and to embed systems to ensure change is speedily implemented as a result of the children’s input.
- **The Care matters agenda should be reflected within the LAA.** This has been discussed with the performance team and should be considered in our next LAA review
- **An integrated OFSTED inspection of Looked after Children’s services is to be developed.** We will need to address this new agenda when the inspection framework is published. It is anticipated that the new framework will be the subject of a specific report to Members and the C&YP Board.

Family and Parenting Support

- **Each Local Authority must provide intensive support for families where care is not the right option, including good quality assessment of need, support to enable families to be reunited and clear child in need plans for all children returned home.** This is a clear priority within the integrated services agenda. A comprehensive and robust Parenting Strategy, utilising a number of specific funding streams, has been established and is operational.

- **Friends and Family Carers should be encouraged and well supported, including support for relatives to apply for Residence order and Special Guardianship orders.** A recent review of support to Friends and Family carers has improved service provision. These carers are also supported to apply for other orders and means tested allowances are available.
- **Short Breaks for Families with disabled children are to be promoted (linked to the Disability Matters agenda).** We have an existing and well used short breaks service and are considering further expansion, using funding from within the Aiming High for Disabled Children agenda.

Care Placements – A better experience for everyone

- **The Government will place a new statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide sufficient good quality placements within the local area. Placements of children outside the area should not be made except where this is clearly in the best interests of the child. Regional commissioning pilots and guidance on managing the markets will be given.** An increased number of children are in agency placements; however, the majority are within the local region. In response to this agenda, a regional commissioning pilot is in development and the Fostering Services strategy to recruit and assess more foster carers within Rotherham has commenced.
- **CWDC guidance for both the Fostering and residential services has been issued and further guidance will soon be available, including National Occupational Standards.** A new temporary post of Training development worker, within the fostering team has been established, through virement of the workforce, to assist the team to develop a coordinated training strategy to meet the emerging requirements. Some foster carers are reluctant to attend formal training and where appropriate individual training will be given through supervision. An emphasis on ongoing learning is essential to the modern fostering task but may lead to the loss of a small number of Foster Carers who are unwilling to accept a learning environment.

Delivering a first class education

- **This contains a range of measures to improve the quality of education and support to Looked After Children, including an early years PEP, monitoring of exclusions and absences and improvements in Home-school agreements.** Monitoring is undertaken thoroughly and reported regularly to members and work on an Early Years PEP is underway. Training is also given to Foster Carers on partnership working with schools.
- **Roles and responsibilities within the education services will be made explicit including the requirement to have a designated teacher for Looked after Children, a designated school governor and a virtual head responsible for all Looked after Children.** The Get Real team has moved into the Education Support Directorate in order to ensure ease of compliance with this aspect of the agenda. Some further work is necessary to ensure full compliance, however all schools have a designated teacher and governor.
- **A personal Education allowance of up to £500 must be made available to all LAC who are at risk of failing in their education.** This has been implemented in Rotherham. All PEP's now contain an application section. This has only recently been implemented and no figures are available for numbers of applications. It is anticipated that demand will be in excess of the funding.

Promoting Health and Well-being”

- **“Promoting the Health of Looked after Children” will be re-issued in 2008 and placed on a statutory footing.** We have followed this guidance in developing our LAC Health provision, however a full review against these requirements will be necessary
- **The mental health needs of all LAC must be addressed. Use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) has been made compulsory for all LAC.** We have commenced using the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire. We will use this to direct resources and monitor progress. Initial pilot work has given a strong indication that the mental health support needs of LAC are high and resources will be inadequate to meet need. Capacity building is being undertaken through training of staff and carers in attachment work and therapeutic techniques.

Transition to Adulthood

- **Young people should be allowed to remain in Foster Care over the age of 18 if they so wish.** Currently legislation determines that foster carers cannot receive boarding out allowances for young people over the age of 18 and the government proposes to amend the legislation. In Rotherham, foster carers may convert to supported lodgings providers in order to receive ongoing funding.
- **Young people should also not move into unregulated placements (eg. independent tenancies) without a clear assessment and plan.** Pathway plans do inform placement move in Rotherham, this is part of the contractual arrangements with the Action for Children Leaving Care Services.
- **Foster carers should be provided with the right tools to assist young people to prepare for independence training.** Action for Children will provide training on independence skills for Foster Carers and this will be written into the new training plan.
- **Each child, Looked after for more than a year will have £100 per year in care invested in a Child Trust fund.** We have a system in place for administering this.

The Role of the Practitioner

- **Pilot projects operating “Social Work Practices”, (specialist social workers for Looked after Children), are in operation to test the risks and benefits of the model.** This model runs counter to the Rotherham model of integrated service delivery from within the locality. We will review practice when the results of the model are known and further guidance issued.
- **A named IRO must meet with the child individually and ascertain their views about their care.** This is current practice within Rotherham, and a review of the IRO system has resulted in it being further developed into the establishment of a dedicated team of IRO's
- **All children who do not have regular contact with their family should be encouraged to have an independent visitor.** We currently have an Independent Visitor Scheme but will review its capacity to provide independent visitors for all Looked after Children, particularly in the context of further promotion of the benefits of an independent visitor being made as a result of Care Matters.

8. Finance

Government grant funding has been allocated to implement the Care Matters agenda, over a three year period, the funds are as follows

2008/9 - 182,221
2009/10 - 248,993
2010/11 - 286,603

The Care Matters Agenda indicates that the grant funding should be primarily used to ensure good quality placements for all within the local area and would indicate a need to fund ongoing quality media campaigns and to provide a focus on the recruitment, selection and Training of Foster Carers.

Expectations of local provision of high quality fostering and residential placements will have ongoing financial implications, especially given the clear Ofsted judgement in respect of overcrowding in Rotherham Foster Placements. Utilisation of some of this funding to develop service provision will be necessary to ensure a lessening reliance on Out of Authority placements. Current expenditure on Out of Authority Foster placements is high and this funding, in the interim, may be utilised to offset some placement costs.

We await the outcome of the pilots in respect of young people remaining in Foster Care over the age of 18; however as we currently support conversion to supported lodgings, the full financial implications of this will be tempered.

Development of the Health provision to meet all requirements within "promoting the Health of Looked after Children" may have financial implications. An overview of service provision will be undertaken and a Cabinet Member briefing prepared.

There is a high expectation of excellence in service provision across the board and it is likely that the prioritisation agenda will be informed by the Ofsted inspection regime.

The LAC Cabinet has commenced working with Service Directors and Elected Members to develop service provision and the group have made some low cost suggestions to improve their support and that of Foster Carers and these will also be considered.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Response in full to the detailed Government implementation plan and action log will require commitment from across directorates and other sectors. The next stage in the response to this agenda is to present this report to the Joint Leadership Team for Children and Young Peoples services, a Task and Finish group will then be established in order to continue to drive forward the implementation of this agenda.

The new integrated inspections of Looked after Children's Services and National Occupational Standards for Foster Carers and Residential Staff will require close scrutiny as these will set the benchmark for judgements on our service provision.

Some funding is available from the Government to implement this agenda, however, early indications are that this will not be sufficient.

Regular progress Briefings will be given to Cabinet Member.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

This report has been written with reference to

Care Matters: Time for Change
Care Matters, Implementation Plan and Action Log
Aiming High for Disabled Children
Ofsted Report , Rotherham Fostering Services
Rotherham M.B.C. Response to Care Matters and Gap analysis

Performance implications for all Looked after Children's indicators

Contact Name : Sue May
LAC Service Manager
sue.may@rotherham.gov.uk

Care Matters Gap Analysis

Chapter 1: Corporate Parenting – Getting it Right

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
1. We expect every LA to establish a Children in Care Council. This will be monitored within inspection framework. We expect every LA to have a pledge for children in care.	From April 2008	There are 10 identified young people who are currently working on a pledge, and will be meeting with Elected Members in October. LAC involved in recruitment of Strategic Director. Already have the RMBC Corporate Parenting Promise.	The involvement of young people in the recruitment of key staff needs to be more consistent. LAC Council are reviewing the promise	Brian Sampson (Activity Co-ordinator LAC and Adoption Support)
2. We will bring together all requirements for care planning in one set of regulations and guidance in 2009.	From 2009	-	Monitor progress against guidance when published	Sue May (Service Manager – Provider Services) Ruth Bastin (Manager, Policy and Planning Team)
3. Reflecting Care Matters priorities in LAAs.	From April 2008	No 'Care' NIs made the list for the LAA although "NI 64 Child protection plans lasting 2 years or more" made the Corporate Plan. 3 Indicators on the Education of LAC are in both the LAA and the Corporate Plan.	May need to review for next LAA	
4. Ofsted will lead a	Starting	Service gaps as identified in recent	Continue with service	Ruth Bastin

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
programme of inspection of services to children in care.	2009	Ofsted inspections are being addressed	action plans. Address integrated inspection framework when more information is available	(Manager, Policy and Planning Team) Mike Carter (Team Manager – Fostering Team) Morri McDermott (Operational Manager – Provider Services)
5. We want to ensure that each child's views on who they do and don't want to have contact with are heard.		Views on contact are elicited in review paperwork	Decision on whether this needs further emphasis in paperwork	Annie Redmond (Assistant Manager Safeguarding Children Unit)

Chapter 2: Family and Parenting Support

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
1. We will fund a programme of regional training events on Family Group Conferencing.	2008/09	Not currently practice in Rotherham. Need to complete a briefing paper on the Governments expectations and the implications for Rotherham.	Need more information on the Governments' expectations and the implications for	Mary Anne Barton (Service Manager – Action for Children)

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
2. We will provide £280 million for short breaks for disabled children.. The guidance will set out the circumstances in which it would be expected that a child would be looked after.	2008-11	Developments taking place with regard to short break provision as part of preparation for Aiming High for Disabled Children funding 2009 – 10, 2010- 11. Funding to be allocated through Joint Commissioning Framework from 2009 subject to DCSF approval of the delivery plan.	Rotherham. Monitor progress and ensure action plans are coordinated	Simon Dewick (Social Worker – Fostering Team) Peter Rennie (Children and Families Special Needs Manager)
3. We will provide proper support and recognition through a new framework for family and friends care which will set out expectations of an effective service to enable children to live with the wider family; and Introduce a requirement that family and friends should be considered in all cases as potential carers.	2008/2009	Friends and family carers are considered as part of the “Challenge to Care” protocol Procedural guidance will need review. Boarding out payments are made to friends and family carers, and Residence Order Allowances and Special Guardianship Allowances are also considered.	Family and Friends carers – review of assessment format and best practice. Review of protocol	Mike Carter (Team Manager – Fostering Team, Supervising Social Workers) Andy Symcox (Team Manager – Fostering Team, Recruitment and Assessment) Locality Managers Team
4. We will legislate to entitle relative carers to apply for residence orders and special	2008/09	Support given to relative carers to apply for RO and SG with means tested financial support.	To develop procedure re assessment for support needs.	Sue May (Service Manager – Provider Services)

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
guardianship orders without leave of the courts after 1 year and raise the age at which residence orders end from 16 to 18.		There is also entitlement to an assessment of support, and a support plan if identified as necessary. At 16 there is eligibility for a Leaving Care Service for those on Special Guardianship.		Pam Allen (Director of Children's Social Care)
5. We will ensure that all children who return home have a Child in Need plan.	2008/09	Need to introduce monitoring of this.	Establish monitoring of numbers of children returning home with a Child In Need Plan.	Anne Deeney for advice.
<p>6. Local partners should ensure that they:</p> <p>are able to undertake high quality assessments to support good decision-making about when to admit children in care;</p> <p>ensure the provision of specialist intensive multi-agency family support services where care is not the right option; and</p> <p>provide intensive and</p>		Families with children in need receive family support services through various providers, e.g. Children's Centres/Children's Fund, CAMHS, to assist the prevention of admissions to care. Investment in these services continues to rise but remains well below statistical neighbours and the national picture.	<p>Link with Chapter 1 point 13.</p> <p>Integration of services aims to improve coordination of early intervention service and reduce rate of LAC. This will require monitoring</p>	<p>Anne Deeney (Locality Performance and Quality Manager)</p> <p>Pam Allen (Director of Children's Social Care)</p> <p>Locality Managers</p>

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
responsive rehabilitation and support where care is a short term option.				

Chapter 3: Care Placements – a better experience for everyone

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
1. We will put a statutory duty on LAs to secure a sufficient and diverse provision of quality placements within their local area.	2008/2009	Although designated complete, we continue to focus on the 2006 JAR recommendation to improve the number and range of foster carers and this issue was reconfirmed by the recent fostering inspection. There has been a comprehensive restructure of the fostering service to ensure a clear focus on recruitment, selection and retention and provide additional funding.	Improving the number and range of foster carers is still a priority. Matrix of Commissioning and increasing fostering in Rotherham.	Commissioning – Nicole Chavaudra (Commissioning Manager) Fostering – Sue May (Service Manager – Provider Services) Andy Symcox (Team Manager – Fostering Team, Recruitment and

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
				Assessment)
2. We are launching Regional Commissioning Unit pilots.	October 2007	A regional approach to developing a Fostering service provider list is being developed. Rotherham is investing £4000 in developing the regional approach.	Check this has a Social Work focus as well as a Commissioning focus.	Nicole Chavaudra (Commissioning Manager) Sue May (Service Manager – Provider Services)
3. We will issue guidance to help LAs manage local placements markets and publish research on optimal local supply of residential care.	2008/2009	We currently have 16 children placed in residential provision out of the RMBC area, it would appear that there is not currently sufficient provision within the authority's boundaries. Some of these children and young people are in specialist provision.	Monitor Guidance and liaise with regional commissioning group	Nicole Chavaudra (Commissioning Manager)
4. We will develop National Occupational Standards for service commissioners with Skills for Care and CWDC.	2007/2008	Training officer post (Temp) within fostering working closely with team to develop response	Develop program	Darron Stone (Social Worker – Fostering Team) Sarah Harpham (Training Co-ordinator Fostering)
5. We will require agencies to publish details of their payment structures.	2009	Payment structures are not currently published.	Need to publish payment structures when required	Karen Potts (Service Manager – Business Development)

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
6. We will extend the existing Independent Review Mechanism for prospective adopters to prospective foster carers.	2008/2009	Will need to develop a policy once the Bill is published.	Develop policy on IRM for prospective foster carers. Examine implications for individual advocacy.	Ruth Bastin (Manager, Policy and Planning Team) Andy Symcox (Team Manager – Fostering Team, Recruitment and Assessment)
7. We will consider with CWDC how best to support residential workers in fulfilling their role.	2008/2009	All managers of children’s homes should be Social Work qualified and hold a management qualification at level 4. Currently running at over 80% with this standard. Developing a new induction programme which will meet national standard.	Need update on the induction programme.	Morri McDermott (Operational Manager – Provider Services)
8. We will give Ofsted an express power to issue a notice setting out action needed and timescales for improvement in cases where a provider is failing to comply with relevant regulatory requirements and to prevent further admissions from taking place to children’s homes	Bill		Monitor implications	Simon Perry (Director of Targeted support Services) Morri McDermott (Operational Manager – Provider Services)

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
and other residential settings.				
9. We will strengthen the statutory framework so that the LA cannot place a child out of the LA area unless this is in the child's best interests.	Bill	This is a challenge for placement availability.	Link to Chapter 3, Point 1.	Simon Perry (Director of Targeted support Services) Sue May (Service Manager – Provider Services)
10. Local authorities will need to identify not only the basic management reports but the range of outputs that managers and practitioners require from their information systems in order to carry out their daily work, to improve outcomes for all children in need and to find out whether such improvements have been realised.		As highlighted with the DCSF, the Integrated Children's System (ICS) has been impacted by supplier problems and is a cause of concern for us and other authorities. We remain firm in our stance that we only install a product that is fit for purpose and does not compromise the safety of our children and young people even if this impacts on mandatory targets.	Coordinate ICS system with LAC requirements	Sue May (Service Manager – Provider Services) Neil Armstrong (CYPS Systems Development Officer)

Chapter 4: Delivering a first class education

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
1. We will introduce an expectation in care planning arrangements that, for children under five, the social worker will work with the carer and local authority to arrange high quality early years education as part of the child's care plan.	2009	Work ongoing on a Pre-school PEP. Have recently employed an Early Years mentor who will be taking the lead role in developing our work within this area.	Develop resource and complete work on pre school PEP	Martin Smith (Manager – Get Real Team)
2. We will legislate to put the role of the designated teacher on statutory footing. . We will set out guidance on the role of designated teacher including how they should consider gifted and talented provision.	By 2009	Designated teacher in all schools. Training being developed	Role out training	Martin Smith (Manager – Get Real Team)
3. We will pilot a new role of virtual school heads to inform a national roll out.	2007-2009	Get Real team now in Education Directorate, Virtual Head may be invested in a senior manager	Decision re how to proceed	Martin Fittes (Advisor)
4. From 2008 we will provide £500 a year for each child in care who is at risk of not reaching the expected standards and we will set out how LAs will be expected to use this money.	May 2008, depending on consultation results	The usage of the personal education allowance is to be identified through a Personal Educational Plan. Need to be identified and how it can be best met resources allowing.	Resource issues needs considering. Now in PEP.	Martin Smith (Manager – Get Real Team)
5. We will work with the Training and	ongoing	Young People's Services as part of	Consider whether further	George

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
Development Agency (TDA) to ensure that support provided to local areas of Targeted Youth Support helps to involve social workers in new structures.		Targeted Services is working, in partnership with the Integrated Children and Young People's Locality Teams, to develop locality targeted 'mini-teams'. When appropriate and caseloads allow social workers will be involved in and contribute to these and vice-versa.	actions required in order to bridge the gap	Simpson (Acting Head of Young People's Services)
6. We will ask all schools and LAs to monitor absence and exclusion of children in care and put in place strategies for improving attendance and reducing exclusions.	2008-09	Attendance and exclusions are showing significant improvement overall.		
7. We will strengthen home school agreements, ensuring full consideration for foster carers and residential care workers.	2008-09	Carers/ residential workers encouraged and supported to work closely with schools	Requires monitoring and some individual problem solving	Martin Smith (Manager – Get Real Team)
8. We will provide training for school governors to help them understand needs of children in care.	2008	Each school has a Designated Governor for Looked After Children.	Training for Designated Governors is in development	Martin Smith (Manager – Get Real Team)

Chapter 5: Promoting health and well-being

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
1. We will reissue “Promoting Health of Looked After Children” in 2008 on a statutory footing (for LAs will be part of Children Act guidance rewrite)	2008	The multi agency LAC Health Group gives strategic direction to meeting LAC health needs. High performers in Health and dental checks. CAMHS access has been improved by implementing a Single Point of Access. The Looked After and Adopted Children’s Therapeutic Support Team has been developed. Currently achieving on all national key performance indicators with regard to Substance Misuse.	Gap - need to identify a system for young people over the age of 16 years and have a process where all LAC are registered on entry to care. Health Assessment performance has decreased slightly remedial work is in place.	Sue Gittins (Rotherham PCT) LAC Health Group
2. We will consider how best to ensure that the mental health of children in care is reflected in future LA performance management	2008	Work ongoing to develop the use of the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire. Baseline year – send out to all Foster Carers from the LAAC	Baseline year, to monitor closely	Anne-Marie Banks (Team Manager LAC and Adoption Support Team)
3. We will set out in guidance how schools can support the sex and relationships education (SRE) needs of children in care. We will ensure all foster carers have appropriate training and social workers	2008	The School Nurse within the Healthy Schools team has made raising awareness about sexually transmitted diseases, including in Sexual Relationship Education lessons, a priority Sexual Health in Care training is	Ensure training attendance monitored closely	Louise Bishop (Nurse – LAC and Adoption Support) LAC Health Group

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
understand the importance of this issue		available to all carers		
4. We will ensure that young women in care who are pregnant have a lead professional who coordinates a comprehensive package of support.	2008	In 2008 additional Antenatal and Postnatal support workers will be employed, focusing on high need areas identified by the equity audit and working with the most vulnerable groups of women.	We need to consider who will be the lead professional. Where does the assessment process fit with	Louise Bishop (Nurse – LAC and Adoption Support) Anne-Marie Banks (Team Manager LAC and Adoption Support Team) Sue Gittins (Rotherham PCT)
5. We will ensure that foster carer training includes an understanding of the importance of play and leisure activities and that all LAC have access to a range of opportunities	2008	LAC access a range of opportunities including specific funded activities, targeted youth service activities and general community activities	Review and monitor training of Foster carers	Sarah Harpham (Training Co-ordinator Fostering) Darren Stone (Social Worker – Fostering Team)
6. We will explore how the portfolio of the senior lead for children and young people in PCTs can be developed to address the needs of vulnerable children including children in care.	2008	LAC Health group spearhead developments within the PCT integration of services will ensure consistent approach	Need to ensure system for briefing senior leads within new structure	Sue May and Sue Gittins to discuss.

Chapter 6: Transition to Adulthood

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
1. We will pilot Right2BCared4 – ‘involvement of young people in the decision-making process that influences when they leave care.	Ongoing	All young people leaving care in Rotherham have the opportunity to be involved in the pathway planning process which would include the discussion about when a young person should ‘leave care’		Maryann Barton (Service Manager – Action for Children)
2. We will pilot arrangements – the Staying Put: 18+ Family Placement pilots – from 2008/09 for young people who have established familial relationships with their foster carers to enable them to stay with them to age 21. We will amend benefits/tax guidance accordingly	2008	Foster Carer placements are converted into Supported Lodgings to enable all children who wish to remain within their home to be supported to do so.	Monitor new guidance and financial implications	Sue May (Service Manager – Provider Services)
3. We will legislate to ensure that young people aren’t moved from regulated to unregulated placements unless the proposal has been properly scrutinised.	Bill	All placement moves are incorporated and planned for where possible through the care / pathway planning process. Placement moves to semi independent or independent living are presented to and reviewed by a multi agency 16+ resource panel.	Requires further quality assurance.	Mary Anne Barton (Service Manager – Action for Children)
4. During the course of the Staying Put: 18+ Family	2008	Currently only 1 young person in Rotherham remained in children’s home	Monitor	Morri McDermott (Operational)

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
Placement pilots, we will look to see if there is demand by young people in children's homes to stay in their homes beyond 18.		beyond 18. Discussion with young people through the pathway planning process does not suggest that young people are requesting to remain in children's homes post 18. Good post 16 facilities being developed to offer positive alternative.		Manager – Provider Services)
5. We will provide training for foster carers so that they can help young people learn the practicalities of living alone.	2008	The Leaving Care service is working with the fostering team to establish an independent living skills training program for Foster carers.	Establish an independent living skills training program for Foster carers.	Mary Ann Barton (Service Manager – Action for Children) Mike Carter (Team Manager – Fostering Team, Supervising Social Workers)
6. We will disseminate evidence about the outcomes of models of volunteering-based work for young people in care.	Ongoing	Young people leaving care are encouraged to explore volunteering opportunities and are supported by their project worker and the connexions service in doing so. Positive Contribution Co-ordinator post across Leaving Care and Accommodation.		Maryann Barton (Service Manager – Action for Children)
7. We will extend the provision of a PA to and maintain	2008/09	All our Looked After Children are referred to the NCH Bridges project at 16 and have		

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
pathway plan for (a) every young person who still has to achieve educational qualifications or training and (b) any young person up to 25 who asks for assistance with Further Education or training.		pathway plans completed within three months. In 2007/08 90.4% of care leavers developed a pathway plan ensuring good quality personal and welfare support. 88.73% of care leavers were allocated a personal advisor.		
8. We are commissioning work to identify models of best practice in delivering housing support services to vulnerable young people.	2008	The percentage of care leavers living in suitable (safe, secure and affordable) accommodation has increased each year from 56.5% in 2003/04 to 83.3% in 2006/07.	New post 16 Accommodation project for LAC in development	
9. We will invest £100 per year in the Child Trust Fund of every child who spends a year in care from 2008.	From April 2008	There is a system in place to deliver this.		Karen Potts (Service Manager – Business Development)
10. We are committed to introducing a national bursary requiring LAs to provide a minimum of £2,000 to all young people in care who go to higher education.	Bill	Higher education package within Rotherham currently offers higher levels of payment and support		

Chapter 7: The role of the practitioner

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
1. We will legislate to establish a variety of two-year pilots across a diverse range of local authorities to test the social work practices (SWP) model.	Ongoing	Integrated social work case loads within locality teams	Monitor progress of pilots and subsequent practice guidance	Sue May (Service Manager – Provider Services)
2. We will require LAs to appoint a named IRO for each child who will spend time with each child individually, and will undertake a review when a significant event has occurred.	Bill	Rotherham currently appoints an IRO for each Looked After Child. Where a child is part of a larger sibling group, the IRO is allocated to all of the children. All IRO's spend time with each child individually.	Current practice meets requirements but requires ongoing monitoring for quality and consistency	Annie Redmond (Assistant Manager Safeguarding Children Unit)
3. We will update guidance so that referral to CAFCASS is not seen as last resort.	2009	RMBC has a clear procedure for referring matters to CAFCASS where there are significant concerns regarding the care plan. Since 2007 RMBC has been part of a pilot project encouraging and promoting regular contact between GAL's and IRO's.		
4. We will legislate to extend the opportunity to have an independent visitor to all children who would benefit. . We will work proactively	2009	Rotherham currently operates an Independent Visitor scheme.	Funding may be an issue for further development/promotion of the scheme	Margaret Drinkall (Volunteer Co-ordinator)

Commitments in the Care Matters White Paper	Timing	Rotherham Position	Action Needed	Nominated Lead Person
with LAs to increase the pool of volunteers who wish to become Independent Visitors.				

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
--

1.	Meeting:	Looked After Children Scrutiny Sub Panel
2.	Date:	Wednesday 10th December 2008
3.	Title:	Looked After Children Council - first report
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

The Looked after Children's Council has been developed in response to the Care Matters agenda. The Council comprises a group of 12 looked after children aged between 11 and 17 who have been working together to represent the voice of the Looked after Child in Rotherham. They had their first meeting with Elected Members and Children and Young Peoples service Directors on 31st October 2008. This is the first report from the LAC Council.

6. Recommendations

- **That the contents of the report are noted and the work of the LAC Council endorsed**

7. Proposals and Details**Background**

The Government agenda, "Care Matters: Time for Change places a statutory duty on all Local Authorities to develop a Looked after Children's Council to act as representatives of all Looked after Children. The Council will work with Elected Members and Directors to develop service provision. All councils must also develop a promise or a pledge to Looked after Children. Rotherham M. B.C. has recognised expertise in Corporate Parenting and this development has been welcomed by all.

Rotherham LAC Council

The first meeting of the Looked after Children's Council was on 31st October. Attended by 9 members of the LAC Council, the Lead Member for Children and young people's services, the Chair of Children and young peoples Scrutiny Group and LAC Scrutiny Sub Group, The strategic director of Children and Young Peoples services and Directors of Locality and Targeted services and supported by three staff members.

The meeting was chaired by a member of the LAC Council and commenced with introductions. The LAC Council members undertook a brief presentation on their work to date including initial work on their proposals to the directors and elected members on the contents of the Corporate Parenting promise to them as Looked after Children. (Attached). The meeting was then opened up for discussion.

The work undertaken on the promise was praised by Directors and Elected Members and the requests felt to be reasonable.

The Council represented the views of Looked after Children, who in general wanted to see their social workers more often than every 6 weeks. They wanted to be taken out for activities by them and to have a real relationship with their worker. They wanted to cut down on the number of changes of allocated worker and to have a means of contacting their worker when they felt it necessary. Some workers routinely give out their mobile telephone number but this practice is not consistent practice. As ease of communication was a vitally important issue to the LAC Council, options for communication were discussed, some form of Help line or contact point perhaps using texting was suggested.

The LAC Council felt that it was embarrassing to require police checks on family and friends prior to an overnight stay. Some form of assessment is required but this process will be reviewed to take into account these comments

Pocket money was also an issue and specific issues about money for bus fares and for toiletries within the residential children's homes will be looked into. Delays in decision making for funding for school holidays had meant some children reported missing deadlines.

The LAC Council felt that Foster Carers should be praised and the meeting suggested options such as, giving money to all fostered children to buy their carer a present for Christmas, giving foster carers some form of pamper session or perhaps a meal out without the children. These suggestions will be considered.

Agreements

It was agreed that, the LAC Council will meet with elected members and service Directors at least 4 times per year. Agenda items may be suggested by the LAC Council or any other member.

The LAC Council has committed to developing a means to ensure they have consulted with all Looked after Children and will be supported to do this. Similarly they will commit to ensuring some means of election to the council.

The LAC Council will be supported to develop their own control of the group and will be assisted to write their own reports when ready to do this.

LAC Council members will be issued with a council ID card for meetings within the Town Hall

All comments and actions suggested above will be considered and a response made to the LAC Council.

8. Finance

The group development work is being undertaken in conjunction with the Lindley Education trust, based at Hollowford, funded by the lead member for Children and Young Peoples Services.

There are no additional expenses associated with this group. Some of the actions proposed by the meeting may have a financial cost and these proposals will be brought before Cabinet Member prior to any further action.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The LAC Council is committed to working in partnership with elected members and Directors to ensure positive service development. Their commitment to working together may be affected if they fail to see action based on their recommendations.

The ongoing commitment of Directors and Elected Members to Corporate Parenting and the reasonable recommendations made by the group should militate against this eventuality.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

This report has been written with reference to
Care Matters: Time for Change

Performance within the forthcoming integrated Ofsted inspection of Looked after Children's services will include inspection of LAC Council arrangements.

Contact Name : Sue May
LAC Service Manager
sue.may@rotherham.gov.uk

**Rotherham M.B.C. LAC Council Meeting
Friday 31st October 2008**

Present:-

Councillor Shaun Wright	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services
The Mayor of Rotherham (Councillor Ann Russell)	Chair of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel (and of the LAC Scrutiny Sub-Group)
Joyce Thacker	Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services
Pam Allen	Director of Locality Services
Simon Perry	Director of Targeted Services
Sue May	LAC Service Manager
Brian Sampson	Activity coordinator

Nine members of the LAC Council

Apologies for absence : (none)

The meeting was chaired by a member of the LAC Council

1. Introduction

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

2. The Role and Work of the LAC Council - Presentation

The LAC Council members undertook a brief presentation on their work to date, including initial work on their proposals to the directors and elected members on the contents of the Corporate Parenting promise to them as Looked after Children. (a copy of the presentation is attached).

3. Discussion about the Role and Work of the LAC Council

After the presentation, the meeting was opened up for discussion and the following key points were made:-

(a) the work undertaken on the promise was praised by Directors and Elected Members and the requests were considered to be reasonable;

(b) Looked after Children wanted to see their social workers more often than every six weeks and wanted to be taken out for activities by them, to have a real relationship with their worker. They wanted to cut down on the number of changes of allocated worker and to have a means of contacting their worker when they felt it necessary. Some workers routinely give out their mobile telephone number, but this practice is not consistent amongst all workers;

- (c) Looked after Children wanted to be listened to and to feel that any complaint would be resolved as quickly as possible;
- (d) because ease of communication was a vitally important issue to the LAC Council, options for communication were discussed; some form of Help line or contact point, perhaps using text messaging, was suggested;
- (e) the LAC Council felt that it was embarrassing to require police checks on family and friends prior to an overnight stay; some form of assessment is required, but this can be reviewed;
- (f) pocket money was also an issue; specific issues about money for bus fares and for toiletries within the residential children's homes will be examined;
- (g) delays in decision making for funding for school holidays had meant some children reported missing deadlines.
- (h) the LAC Council felt that Foster Carers should be praised and the meeting suggested options such as: (i) giving money to all fostered children to buy their carer a present for Christmas; (ii) giving foster carers some form of pamper session; or (iii) perhaps a meal out, without the children.

4. Action Points Agreed

The meeting agreed the following action points:-

- (1) the LAC Council will meet with Elected Members and Service Directors at least four times per year;
- (2) agenda items for these meetings may be suggested by the LAC Council or by any other member;
- (3) the LAC Council commits to developing a means to ensure they have consulted with all Looked after Children and will be supported to achieve this consultation;
- (4) further to (3) above, the LAC Council will commit to ensuring some means of election to the LAC Council;
- (5) the LAC Council will be supported to develop their own control of the group and will be assisted to write their own reports when they are ready to do this;
- (6) LAC Council members will be issued with a Borough Council ID card for attendance at meetings within Rotherham Town Hall;
- (7) all comments and actions suggested above will be considered by Elected Members and Service Directors and a response made to the LAC Council.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

By virtue of paragraph(s) 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

By virtue of paragraph(s) 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

By virtue of paragraph(s) 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

By virtue of paragraph(s) 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted