

Summary Sheet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Corporate Parenting Panel

Report Title

Right Child, Right Care – First Update

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

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Thomas

Report Author(s)

Ian Walker (Head of Service, LAC)

Ward(s) Affected

All

Summary

The existing budget was predicated on a total of 480 Looked After Children (LAC). However, as at the end of January 2018 there were 603 LAC, having increased from a total of 471 as of the end of January 2017, an increase of almost 130 (27%) over the course of 12 months.

It has to be emphasised that RMBC is not significantly out of step with many local authorities in experiencing a significant increase in the numbers of LAC. Although the rate per 10,000 of population in Rotherham currently stands at 101.8 and the statistical neighbour average being 81.3 this latter figure was the position as at March 2017 and the difference is likely to be less than the 20% indicated in this statistic. For example, Tameside, the only statistical neighbour rated as Inadequate, have reported an 18% increase in their LAC numbers over the course of the financial year thus far increasing from 95.4 to 112.7 per 10,000 of population.

It should also be recognised that throughout the recent four week Ofsted Inspection visit there were no children identified as having been inappropriately brought into care indicating that this rise is not as a result of erroneous threshold criteria being applied. However, the Ofsted Inspection outcome may also give practitioners and managers greater confidence in their decision making processes so that they are

better placed to hold the risks rather than managing them by bringing children into care.

On a national level the Government have reported that 2017 brought the biggest annual surge in the numbers of LAC for 7 years and over this period numbers have increased from 65,000 in 2010 to 72,670 last year. However, the rate of increase has accelerated further since then and currently stands at 90 children becoming looked after every day (32,850 gross per year). A corresponding national decline in the number of children leaving care has led to debate on a national level regarding the underlying causes for, and potential responses to, this exponential rise.

As a result of an increasing recognition of this pressure in Rotherham a Looked After Children Summit was held on the 18th January 2018 the outcome of which was the development of the proposals contained in this report (Cf Appendix for the notes and action plan arising from this meeting).

The implications for this increase in LAC numbers extends far beyond the increasing budget pressures arising from increased placement costs. As a result of the national trend the pressure on placement availability is significant. Not only are in-house resources utilised to absolute capacity thus increasing the reliance on the Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) market but also the IFA market is also saturated making it very much a 'seller's market'. It is increasingly apparent that providers are far less willing to offer a placement to any looked after child with any form of risk taking or challenging behaviour as they can afford to 'pick and choose'. In addition, carers and agencies seem increasingly likely to give notice on placements that they may have worked to sustain several months ago. As a result, the national trend is likely to have some ongoing impact on placement stability and to increase the demand for out of authority residential placements although thus far Rotherham has succeeded in managing this pressure.

The increase in LAC numbers will, however, mean that more LAC will have to be placed further away from the RMBC area and this in turn is likely to have only a negative impact on the experience of looked after children due to :-

- Increased travelling times will reduce levels of social worker and IRO support which is likely only to further reduce placement stability.
- Contact with birth families will be far more challenging to organise and supervise thus raising the potential of legal challenges from birth parents.
- Consistency in school placements will be far more difficult to sustain and as the Rees Report evidences this is likely to impact negatively on educational outcomes.
- Our LAC will be far more reliant on local CAMHS provision rather than the in-house Rotherham Therapeutic Team and due to limitations of provision in some areas their mental health and well-being may be adversely affected.

In addition to the budget pressures caused by the need to secure more placements there will also be a significant increase in the invisible costs associated with increased numbers of LAC. For example, the workloads of Independent Reviewing Officers, Social Workers and Supervising Social Workers will significantly increase thus reducing the capacity and quality of interventions provided. The Contact Service which was established on the basis of 480 LAC does not have the capacity to meet the current demand for supervising contact sessions meaning that 10% to 15% of qualified social work capacity is now spent making up this shortfall which is clearly

an inefficient use of resources. This inefficiency is exacerbated by the increased time social workers have to spend travelling to and from placements which is a further drain on their ability to provide high quality social work interventions for their young people.

This report will highlight some of the pressures that have contributed to this increase in the numbers of LAC. It will also attempt to predict as accurately as possible the possible ongoing future growth in LAC numbers if current practice continues unabated. It will then outline the plans already in place or in the process of development that have been designed to ensure that within Rotherham there are in fact the Right Children in the Right Care.

These plans include details of the Edge of Care provision along with some projections of the number of families/children they will work with over the course of 2018 to support more of them to remain living outside of the care system. It will also detail the five work-streams and processes that have been identified to support more existing looked after children into more appropriate care arrangements.

It should be emphasised that this is not a drive to reduce the numbers of children in care in Rotherham but rather a process to ensure we have the right children in our care and in the right placements for their needs.

Recommendations

Panel is recommended to note the contents of this report and endorse the Action Plan formulated to achieve the Right Child Right Care objectives.

List of Appendices Included

The notes and Action Plan arising from the A 'Right Child Right Care Tracker' has been attached as an appendix to this report. In addition the Performance team have developed a Predictor Tool (attached) that forecast the likely impact on the numbers of total LAC if the monthly average increase varies at all from the current levels.

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Right Child, Right Care.

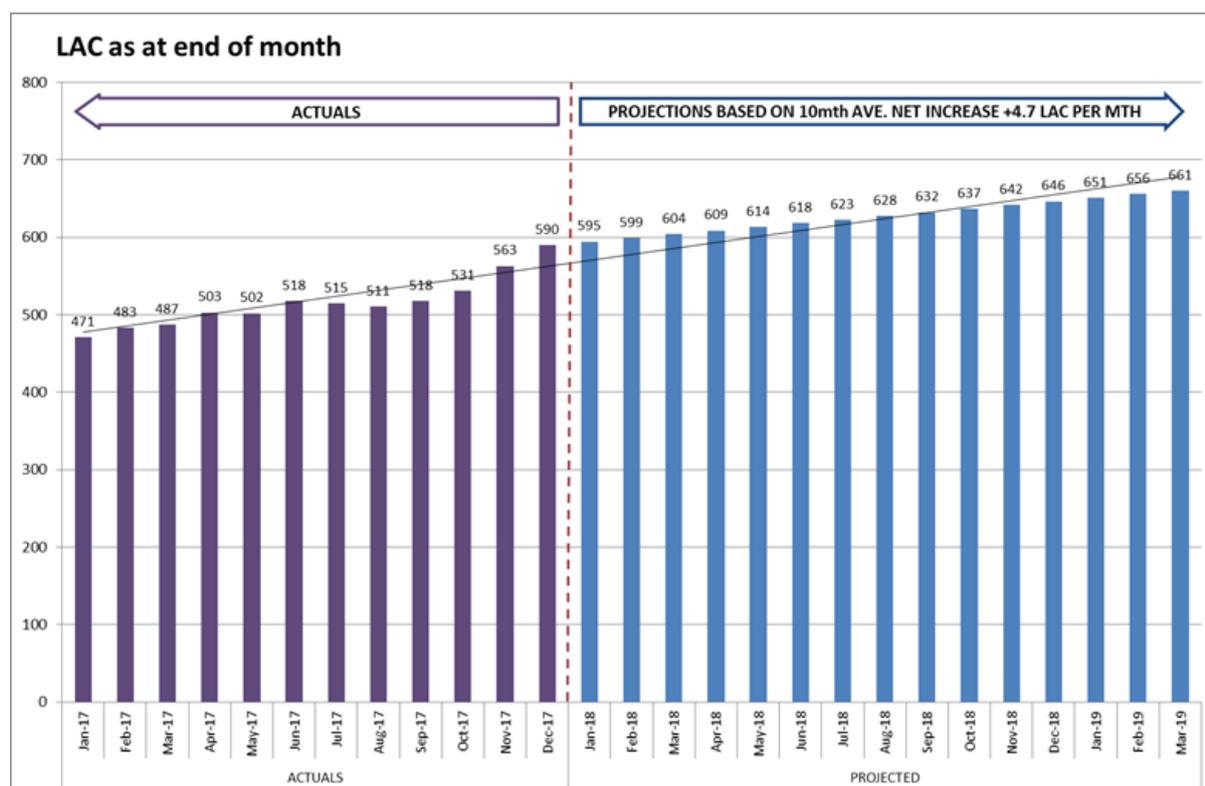
1. Recommendations

- 1.1 DLT is recommended to note the contents of this report and endorse the Action Plan formulated to achieve the Right Child Right Care objectives.

2. Background

2.1 Over the course of 2017 there were 321 admissions to care but over the same period there were only 194 young people discharged from care. As a result the total LAC population has increased from 471 January 2017 to 575 as of 12 months later – an increase of 22% over the course of the year. It is significant to note that whilst there was a 13% increase in admissions over the year there was also a 10% decline in discharges. The situation in Rotherham is also somewhat aggravated by a large number of ‘legacy cases’ that should have been progressed through the PLO process some years ago, along with the large family network involved in the Complex Abuse process which has contributed to in 9% (23 children) of the LAC admissions over the course of the previous 12 months being of Roma/Gypsy origin.

2.2 Whilst it is not possible to provide an exact prediction as to the future increases in LAC it is possible to state that on the basis of an average net increase of 4.7 children in care per month over the course of 2017 there will be a total of 661 LAC by March 2019 if this trend continues. However, as can be seen from the table below the projection is already 7 children behind the actual number which, if continued, will bring an added pressure of 91 children bringing the total predicted number of LAC to 752.



- 2.3 Further to this, it is stated by Legal Services that the current rate of Care Proceedings being instigated is 18 cases per month or a projected 216 over the course of the year. Given that over the course of 2016/17 there was an average of 1.85 children per Care Proceedings the projected number of children involved in Care proceedings over the course of 2018 will be 388. However, of these children only 68% (287) were applications for Care Orders or Placements Orders with the remainder being applications for Supervision Orders or No Order applications. Taking into account the fact that for 215 children the outcome of the Care Proceedings is unknown as the Proceedings are ongoing and anticipating no further growth in the numbers of Care Proceedings the intake of LAC via the Court process over the course of a 12 month period will be 263 children.
- 2.4 If the current rate of discharges from care is sustained this will mean that by the end of 2018 there will be 644 LAC and by the end of March 2019 there will be 661 LAC.
- 2.5 Thus by utilising two different projection processes it can be predicted that unless social work practice is reviewed on a strategic basis the overall numbers of LAC will continue to increase throughout 2018/19 to between 661 and 752 children.
- 2.6 As the numbers of Looked After Children continue to grow then the financial pressure on RMBC will become more significant. This is due to the equivalent increased reliance on the Independent Fostering Agency sector but also, as that market becomes increasingly saturated, the Out of Authority (OoA) residential placement sector. The Fostering Recruitment Team surpassed the stretch target set for it in recruiting 30 new placements over the course of 2017 with this having been further stretched to 35 new placements over the course of 2018. There are a range of initiatives being implemented that gives some confidence that this target can be achieved including the Refer a Friend Scheme, Mockingbird, the Muslim Foster Carer project, and the recruitment of a dedicated marketing officer to make better use of social media in the recruitment campaigns. In addition the number of 'void' placements is being better performance managed and the recruitment and assessment process reviewed to improve the current performance of an 11% conversion rate from initial enquiry to approval.
- 2.7 In addition, whilst there are 96 IFA placements within the RMBC area there are actually only 24 of them that have a Rotherham child placed in it. As a result an approach was made to all of the providers to secure those placements for Rotherham children as and when they become available. This should afford them greater placement stability and reduce some of the demand for OoA placements due to the consistency of education provision, better maintenance of family and peer group relationships and easier access to social work and therapeutic support. Following this approach RMBC has already secured 6 of these placements for its own children.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 It is clear that to ensure that there is the right child in the right care there will be two broad strands of work needing to be successfully implemented; improved practice to support more children to stay out of care and improved practice to safely support more children to be discharged from care.
- 3.2 In respect of the admissions to care, over the course of 2017 there were 49 young people admitted to care over the age 14 despite the fact that it is recognised that such young people do not as a rule achieve good outcomes. Further to this there were 6 x 17 year olds admitted to care (5 via Section 20) and 10 x 16 year olds admitted (5 via Section 20). Supporting more of these young people to remain at home would make a significant contribution to the Right Child Right Care process.
- 3.3 In respect of the work to support more children to stay out of care the following interventions are now in place:-
- 3.4 Family Group Conferencing is an evidence-based model designed to support families to find solutions to problems that are putting children at risk. The family group conference is facilitated to enable family members to plan and make decisions to keep the child or children safe. The focus of the team is on working on families who have a Child in Need plan, particularly if risks are escalating. However, during the initial six months following the service launch, work has been tested with families with a Child Protection Plan, families who are already in a Public Law Outline process and with Looked After Children where there may be an opportunity for a child or young person to return home.
- 3.5 The team is made up for four practitioners and can work with up to 240 families a year. Whilst it is too soon to measure impact across the cohort, the early indications are that this is a significant part of the 'Right Child, Right Care' offer which will be prevent concerns escalating and an increase in the number of children on a Child Protection Plan.
- 3.6 The Edge of Care Team is a multi-disciplinary team made up of practitioners who have complementary skills and experience developed through working with adults with complex needs as well as with families. The team takes a systemic approach that is able to help and challenge families to change to the extent that they are able to stay together or reunite.
- 3.7 At the end of the November the Edge of Care Team was working with 39 children. All of these children were on a trajectory to enter the care system. To date only one child who has been referred to the team has become Looked After and work to support her to return to the family home is ongoing. The team are also working to reunify three young people from two families.
- 3.8 However, the nature of a specialist team is that it will always have limited capacity. Whilst the team is seeking to manage referrals and caseloads

effectively, the level of demand in Rotherham may be greater than the team's current capacity. As a result it is important that the team also work alongside children's social workers to support an increase in skills and confidence across the system.

- 3.9 Multi-Systemic Therapy is an intervention that works intensively with children aged 11-17 who are at risk of entering the care system or custody. Rotherham and Barnsley have team that works across both local authorities; the annual capacity for Rotherham families is 40. There is a strong body of evidence to support Multi-Systemic Therapy, however, there are some local concerns about the sustainability of outcomes. Work is planned with social work teams to ensure that they are in a position to embed learning from the intensive 20 week intervention by providing ongoing support to families to adhere to the plans in place.
- 3.10 Referrals for both Multi-Systemic Therapy and the Edge of Care Team are made via the Edge of Care panel. The panel started meeting in September 2017 and, at the end of the first quarter, panel chairs are in a position to issue full guidance regarding referrals to panel. These will emphasise the importance of professional judgement when making the referral, and will ask social workers to be clear about their hope for change and why outcomes for the child will be better if they do not become LAC. This increased rigour will support the Right Child, Right Care approach and ensure that resources are allocated appropriately.
- 3.11 In addition to the interventions that are currently operational, development work is underway to introduce:-
- 3.12 Pause, to work with women who have babies removed with a goal of avoiding future pregnancies which would lead to repeat care proceedings. This may be of especial relevance to LAC and Care Leavers who are parents who, according to recent data, have approximately only a 50% chance of being a successful parent:-
- 3.13 MST-FIT, an adaptation of the MST model to apply an evidence based model to support young people to return to their parent's care following a period of being looked after;
- 3.14 An expansion of the Edge of Care team which, as well as increasing current capacity, would seek to use Crowden Outdoor Education Centre to work therapeutically with families in the outdoors;
- 3.15 A pilot to explore use of Crowden Outdoor Education Centre to provide short-term, regular respite care for birth parents, and diversionary activities for young people;
- 3.16 Staff training to provide the workforce across the Therapeutic Team, Edge of Care Team, Social Care and Early Help professionals with skills to deliver Non-

Violent Resistance; this model is particularly effective with children and young people who have experienced trauma.

- 3.17 In respect of the discharges from care there has been some marked decline over the course of the last few months of 2017. This may be at least partly attributable to the pressure on social work caseloads caused by the increase in numbers of LAC. Furthermore, as the numbers of LAC have increased the placement market has become increasingly saturated. This then necessitates LAC being placed at increasing distances from the RMBC area and the resulting travelling time which places further pressure on social work capacity. In addition, the Contact Service in its current structure was based on the demand arising from there being 480 LAC. As evidenced in recent an audit undertaken in the LAC Service, on average 20% of each LAC social worker's capacity is taken transporting children to and from and supervising contact.
- 3.18 This drain on social work capacity is likely only to serve to impede the implementation of the Right Child Right Care programme and as a result it will need to be managed in conjunction with the Review of the Contact Service. This formal review is about to commence as a result of which it is anticipated that a number of recommendations will be made to DLT as to how to address the increasing pressures in the short to medium term to enable the Right Child, Right Care work-plan to begin to have the planned impact
- 3.19 In respect of supporting more looked after children to more appropriate permanence arrangements 5 potential work-streams have been identified. It is proposed that each work-stream is allocated one or more manager within the LAC Service to lead the process and that every alternate Performance Clinic is reconstituted to performance manage as many of the young people in the total cohort towards their identified outcome.
- 3.20 As a result of the scoping exercise already undertaken 406 looked after children have been identified as being appropriate for consideration for a move to more appropriate care arrangements in at least one of the identified work-streams (c.f. appendix 1). It should be noted that some of these children will have been included in more than one work-stream but as these numbers are better correlated within the Performance Clinic Meetings greater accuracy will be reported.
- 3.21 In order to more efficiently manage this process the following work-streams have been identified but in addition to these work-streams there will be 54 LAC who will reach adulthood and therefore be discharged from care over the course of 2018.
- 3.22 The following Work-streams have been identified to facilitate the focussed work required to support as many LAC as possible into more appropriate care arrangements.

3.23 Discharge of Placement with Parents Regs (PwP)

There are currently 30 children subject of PwP or S38/6 Placements whose Care Order needs consideration for discharge. The audit of these cases has already commenced and it would appear that there are 18 children for whom the discharge of the Care Order would seem appropriate with the plan for two further children remaining unclear.

Work-stream Lead – Kay Samuels

30 in scope.

3.24 Children on the Adoption Pathway

There are currently 25 children already in an adoptive placement with 15 more with a match identified and 22 more children awaiting a match. There can be no guarantee that even those children with a match identified will be adopted by the end of the calendar year as birth parents are increasingly entering appeals against Adoption Order applications. Although these are rarely successful they do have the impact of significantly adding to the delay in adoptions being finalised. Given that the current A1 Adoption Scorecard performance (timescale between a child becoming looked after and moving to their adoptive placement) is 314 days and it is a further 70 days before adoptive parents can apply for the Adoption Order there are unlikely to be any more children who fall into scope of this Work-stream. However, given that the current A2 performance (dates between Placement Order being obtained and Placement Match identified) is 132 days and therefore an average of 202 days before the Adoption Order can be applied for it is likely that some of the 22 children waiting a match will be adopted by the end of 2018. As a result in the adoption work-stream there is a potential of somewhere between 35 and 45 children who will be discharged from care via the adoption process over the course of 1018.

Work-stream lead – Helen Mangham/Jill Stanley

40 children in scope

3.25 Supporting LAC to Permanence.

There are currently 135 children who have been in the same placement for 2 years and 168 who have been in the same placement for 18 months or more. Furthermore, there are 39 children in Regulation 24 Placements with Family and Friends. Given the personal connection between the carers and young person in these placements it may be that the progression to permanence may be more readily accepted although all of these children would benefit from their long-term fostering placement being progressed to a more permanent form of care such as via an SGO or CAO.

3.26 There is a potential risk to this work-stream in that by moving in-house placements to more permanent arrangements the 'bank' of available foster

carers may reduce which will be reflected in the Fostering Performance reports. Conversely it may also have some small positive impact on foster carer recruitment as, for example, a foster carer approved for 1 placement but with two spare bedrooms could take an additional placement if one foster child is supported to an SGO/CAO.

3.27 Social workers will therefore be tasked to speak to each individual carer to ascertain what would be the required incentive it would take and what are the blockages preventing them to apply for such an Order over the course of 2018. It may be that CYPS will have to re-evaluate the benefits of being a little more flexible in its approach to post order allowances to progress as many children as possible to discharge via this work-stream, whilst still having regard for the Public Purse.

3.28 Placements of 2 years or more standing work-stream lead x 4 – Clive Purnis, Cheryl Long, Megan Decarteret and Carolyn Jones,

135 children in scope.

Placements of 18 months to 2 years standing work-stream lead– Sarah Bennett

33 children in scope

3.29 Regulation 24 Placements –

There are currently 39 children in Regulation 24 Placements (placed with family and friends who have been approved only to care for that specific child). Many of these children will still be mid-proceedings with the potential outcome being a Special Guardianship Order/Child Arrangement Order being made to the carer and the role of the work-stream lead will be to track and project the potential date for these Orders being made.

3.30 However, some Reg 24 placements continued to be in place post the Final Hearing and the role of the work-stream lead will be to support as many as possible towards more permanent arrangements.

Work-stream lead – Yvonne Howe

39 children in scope.

3.31 Reunification of LAC aged 14-16 years old

Whilst it is recognised that the risks posed by the behaviours and choices of a parent while their child is very young are significant these risks will potentially reduce as the child gets older. However, as the data outlining the relatively low number of discharges from care over the course of 2017 illustrates there seems to be little evidence of this re-evaluation of risk within current social work practice. When this has previously been attempted on a more formal basis, such as via the NSPCC Taking Care project, a very risk averse approach has resulted in very little impact being achieved. As a result, it is too common an

experience for young people aged 16+ to drift back home in response to the lack of pro-active planning taking place.

3.32 In addition to this there is clear statistical evidence to prove that young people who are become LAC in Rotherham after their 14th birthday experience a decline in outcomes as compared to their peers who become LAC at an earlier age (cf Appendix). These declining outcomes include:-

- 19% of LAC who were 14+ on admission have had 3 or more placement moves in the previous 12 months as compared to 10% of those who were under 14.
- 19% of 14+ LAC were reported as being missing from care on 2-6 occasions, 13% on 7-12 occasions and 6% on more than 12 occasions as compared to 5%, 2% and 2% respectively
- Only 42% of LAC admitted post 14 are in family based settings as compared to 89% admitted when under 14.
- Only 49% of care leavers who became LAC after their 14th birthday are in Education, Training or Employment as compared to 62% of those admitted under the age of 14.
- Only 88% of care leavers who became LAC post 14 are deemed to be in suitable accommodation as compared to 98% of those admitted under the age of 14.

However, to date there is little evidence to indicate that the worse outcomes and increased costs are routinely and actively considered as part of the admission top care decision making process. . It may therefore be that the objectives set out in the Right Child Right Care work-streams will not be fully achieved until there is a cultural shift within social work practice in Rotherham that is underpinned by the Dartington Research.

3.32 As a result the work-stream lead will be tasked to speak to each respective social worker, team manager and IRO to clarify why reconciliation would not be in the young person's best interests.

Young people aged 14 work-stream lead – Kerry Seaston

39 in scope

Young people aged 15 work-stream lead - Louise Pashley

51 in scope

Young people aged 16 work-stream lead – Louisa Kay

47 in scope

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1 There are no other options being considered as part of this report and DLT is recommended to endorse the Right Child Right Care proposals.

5. Consultation

5.1 All relevant partners within CYPS have been consulted in developing this programme but it may be that further individualised consultation may be required to provide the appropriate packages of support necessary to progress more children out of care.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

6.1 There will be no immediate impact on the number of LAC who could be deemed to be in the Right Care as this will rather be achieved over the course of 2018/19 and most movement is likely to be achieved in Quarter 3 and Quarter 4.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

7.1 The budget is built on 483 LAC at an average unit cost of £50k. The current unit cost has increased to £54k due to increasing complexity of children admitted to care requiring more expensive accommodation and rising prices due to market forces and, as at the end of January 2018, the number of LAC was 601.

7.2 Targeted work to increase the discharge rate from LAC will aim to reduce the cohort throughout the year. The timing, profile and level of discharges will impact on the financial savings to be achieved during the year. Latest forecasts are based on a discharge figure of around 150 above normal 'business as usual'.

7.3 Latest estimates suggest that the saving attached to the discharge of the additional 150 LAC could be between £5.9m (if the number of discharges is achieved and they are frontloaded in the year) to £1.5m (if the number of discharges is achieved but they are back loaded in the year). A constant level of discharge of the 150 during the year will result in a saving of around £3.7m

7.4 The main area of financial uncertainty is regarding the LAC estimates. There are a number of variables which could affect the forecast expenditure on this budget. The main ones are:

- Number of admissions/discharges (i.e. net reduction);
- The timing / profile of discharges i.e. when in the financial year they happen (front loaded, even spread, back end of the year);
- Availability of lower cost placements (to lower the current placement unit cost).

8. Legal Implications

8.1 In terms of practice the proposals contained within this report fall well within the Statutory Guidance. However, there may be some resource implications if the Right Child Right Care initiative is successful in supporting more children to permanence, adoption or discharges from care.

9. Human Resources Implications

9.1 There are no Human Resources implications arising from this report.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

10.1 Supporting more appropriate care arrangements for looked after children can only have a positive on looked after children.

11 Equalities and Human Rights Implications

11.1 The Right Children Right Care programme will only have a positive impact on the Equality and Human Rights for looked after children.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

12.1 It is highly likely that this programme of work will have an impact on a number of partners and Other Directorates. For example, it is reasonable to anticipate that there will be an increased demand on the capacity of Early Help, Edge of Care and Legal Services.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 The risk is that if the current trend of increase in the numbers of LAC is allowed to continue unabated more children will remain in inappropriate care arrangements with all of the inherent financial and positive outcomes risks that this will bring. These risks will be mitigated by utilising a performance management approach to support as many LAC as is assessed as being appropriate towards Right Care arrangements.

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

Approvals Obtained from:-

	Named Officer	Date
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services	Mick Wildman	31.01.18
Assistant Director of Legal Services	Sharon Fleming	31.01.18
Head of Procurement (if appropriate)	N/A	
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	

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