

To: Councillor D Edwards (Chair);
Councillors Ballsdon, Eden, Ennis, Gavin,
Jones, McElligott, O'Connell, Orton,
Pearce, Singh, Stanford-Beale, Vickers,
White and R Williams.

27 June 2014

Your contact is: Richard Woodford - Committee Services

NOTICE OF MEETING - ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 7 JULY 2014

A meeting of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee will be held on **Monday 7 July 2014 at 6.30pm** in the **Council Chamber**, Civic Offices, Reading.

AGENDA

	WARDS AFFECTED	PAGE NO
1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the items for consideration.		
2. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 5 MARCH AND 24 APRIL 2014		A1
3. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES - Children's Safeguarding Panel - 27 February 2014 Children's Trust Partnership Board - 8 April 2014		B1 B6
4. PETITIONS Petitions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been received by Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.		-

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5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS -
- Questions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been submitted in writing and received by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.
6. DECISION BOOK REFERENCES -
- To consider any requests received by the Monitoring Officer pursuant to Standing Order 42, for consideration of matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been the subject of Decision Book reports.
7. PRESENTATION - URGENT CARE AND A&E -
- A presentation by Cathy Winfield, Chief Officer, Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Federation.
8. UPDATE ON CHANGES TO SEN PROVISION 2014 - 16 BOROUGHWIDE C1
- Further to the meeting of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee meeting on 24 April 2014 a report providing the Committee with an update on the changes to Special Education Needs provision 2014-2016.
9. SAFEGUARDING ACTIVITY REPORT - Quarter Four (Jan - Mar 2014) BOROUGHWIDE D1
- A report providing the Committee with an update of the key activity areas within Children's Social Care and related services between January and the end of March 2014.
- Note:** This report has been written by Karen Reeve, former Head of Children's Services, and will be presented by Vicki Lawson, Interim Head of Children's Services.
10. INTRODUCTION OF UNIVERSAL INFANT FREE SCHOOL MEALS BOROUGHWIDE E1
- A report outlining the steps, and costs involved in ensuring that infant age children will receive a hot free school meal from September 2014.
11. NEW EARLY EDUCATION/CHILDCARE PLACES FOR TWO YEAR OLDS IN READING BOROUGHWIDE F1
- A report providing the Committee with an update on progress to date of new early education/childcare places for two year olds in the Borough and seeking approval on the principles of funding on quality measures and the

proposals to develop further work with Schools in Reading.

12. ANNUAL ADOPTION REPORT 2013-2014 BOROUGHWIDE G1

A report outlining the work carried out by the Adoption Service from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

13. ACCESS TO SCHOOLS FOR SEPTEMBER 2014 BOROUGHWIDE H1

A report outlining the allocation of places to pupils starting school in September 2014 in either primary (year R (Reception)) or secondary (year 7) on the national offer day which gives rise to the published statistics and asking the Committee to note the position on 16 June 2014 after the normal turbulence and a stream of late applications.

14. ROYAL BERKSHIRE NHS FOUNDATION TRUAT - CQC INSPECTION BOROUGHWIDE -

Please see the link below to the Care Quality Commission website where the report detailing the findings of the CQC inspection of the Royal Berkshire Hospital carried out from 24 - 26 March 2014 can be found:

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/RHW01>

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE
5 MARCH 2014**

Present: Councillor T Jones (Chair)
Councillors Ballsdon, Eastwood, Eden, D Edwards, Ennis, Gavin, P Jones, McElligott, O'Connell, Orton, Rynn, Vickers (for part of item 29 and items 30 to 32) and Williams.

Apologies: Councillors Anderson and Ralph.

The Chair referred to the recent death of Jamie Chowdhary who had been a Reading Councillor from 2008 to 2012. The Committee stood in silence as a sign of respect.

26. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of 7 November 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

27. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were submitted:

- Children's Safeguarding Panel, 21 November 2013
- Children's Trust Partnership Board, 26 November 2013 and 28 January 2014.

Resolved: - That the Minutes be noted.

28. LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD: ANNUAL REPORT

Avril Wilson, Director of Education, Adult and Children's Services, submitted a copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Annual Report.

The report stated that the Reading LSCB had been operating within a challenging context over the previous year as the public sector and NHS had undergone significant changes due to shifts in political expectations and funding. This had impacted on many services including those delivered by the voluntary sector. New Working Together Guidance had presented a framework for child protection work with a renewed emphasis on the role of the LSCB in scrutinising and challenging local practice and there was a renewed focus on ensuring that children and families received help early before a crisis occurred.

The LSCB had seen evidence of a great deal of good practice in safeguarding across all agencies in Reading and of innovative practice in multi-agency work. Audits carried out by the LSCB during the year had given the Board a broad understanding of safeguarding practice relating to children who had parents with mental health issues, the core group for child protection planning, responses to the health needs of looked after children (LAC), cases where domestic abuse was present and self harming in young people. All audits had produced action plans for improvement.

In the previous year the Board had asked the Royal Berkshire Hospital Foundation Trust to introduce a system of performance management which would allow figures to be produced by area of origin of presentation of children to Accident and

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Emergency and this was now in place. The Board had also asked the Trust to ensure that case details of children given forensic sexual examinations at the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) were passed to relevant local authorities and this was also happening satisfactorily.

The report stated that further work was needed to raise standards across all agencies for people experiencing domestic violence. Training records needed to be maintained more robustly in all agencies in order for them to demonstrate compliance with minimum standards for safeguarding training and all agencies needed to commit resources to support staff to attend multi agency training on safeguarding, recognising the benefits to improved practice when staff trained together. Work had begun on reducing referrals into Children's Social Care and there had been a focus on child sexual exploitation during the previous year with a need for all agencies to improve their practice in this area.

The report included messages for a number of bodies such as Chief Executives and Directors, the children's workforce, Thames Valley Police (TVP), Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust, Clinical Commissioning Groups and the following messages for local politicians:

- They must ensure that reductions in staffing did not jeopardise the allocation of effective resources to safeguarding and promoting children's welfare;
- They must continue to promote inter agency working particularly through the Health and Wellbeing Board;
- Through their links with local communities they must ensure community concerns about safeguarding and children's welfare were brought to the attention of all those with duties to respond.

The report explained that an Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) inspection had taken place in March 2013 and in the resulting report the following recommendations had been made specific to the LSCB:

- Reading Safeguarding Children Board (RSCB), in conjunction with TVP, improve the current police arrangements for screening and assuring the quality of domestic abuse referrals to Children's Social Care;
- RSCB to review the application of the threshold criteria in practice within agencies to ensure agreed levels were understood and being consistently applied;
- The Council and RSCB to establish effective arrangements to enable children and young people to participate in meaningful ways in protection planning processes.

Avril Wilson informed the Committee that a large volume of referrals were still being generated by TVP, generally around domestic violence, and despite having written to the Chief Constable the quality of the referrals remained poor and the conversion rate low. Incidents had been referred where there had been no question of domestic abuse and where there were no children in the property the police had been called to.

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The Committee discussed the report and expressed their concern over the amount and quality of referrals from TVP and agreed that a further letter be sent to TVP to seek closer and improved working in respect of safeguarding children. The Committee also requested that future reports be submitted to the Committee as soon as possible after publication, that the Chair of the LSCB be encouraged to attend the meeting to present the report and that the report contain more detailed information in respect of Black and Minority Ethnic children.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That in future the LSCB Annual Report be submitted to the Committee as soon as practical after its publication and the Chair of the LSCB be encouraged to attend the meeting in order to present the report;**
- (3) That the Director of Education, Adult and Children's Services write to Thames Valley Police to seek closer and improved working in respect of safeguarding children;**
- (4) That the LSCB be asked to include more detailed information in respect of Black and Minority Ethnic children in future Annual Reports.**

29. EDUCATION STANDARDS IN READING

Further to Minute 15 of the last meeting Kevin McDaniel, Head of Education, submitted a report focusing on the groups that had been achieving less well than the average in the Borough, along with identifying the underlying issues for Key Stage 2. Tables setting out equalities data were attached to the report at Appendix 1 and a graph showing the Ofsted inspection outcomes for all Reading schools as at December 2013 was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The report considered equality and language progress which had demonstrated some areas of noticeable improvement, along with areas which had continued to fall behind the Reading averages. It also considered the progress of the Borough's schools as judged by Ofsted and identified potential contributing factors to the Key Stage 2 performance.

The report outlined the shared goals that all schools had set to see Reading achieving well on a national comparison basis by the summer of 2017. The goals had been developed with schools at a recent Landscape Leadership Conference that had been attended by leaders from the Borough's schools, they had represented a re-stated partnership ambition for all schools and the Council and some key performance measures had already been developed in order to enable measurement against the goals.

The report stated that this represented a determined and purposeful approach by the education community, including the Council, to ensure that children in Reading developed greater learning skills and achieved the very best of their potential. The

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Council would move resources and capacity to supporting the achievement of these measures and would specifically commit to additional funding, to be found within existing budgets, to support this.

The report stated that there were many complex issues at play across the Borough and recommended that a task and finish group be set up to carry out an in depth assessment of the issues with the aim of improving educational attainment in the Borough.

Resolved -

- (1) That the recommendations set out in the report to strengthen the Council's focus on: those pupils on the edge of education; leadership in writing; and further support for improved governance and for officers to submit a fully resourced plan to support this additional work to a future meeting;
- (2) That a task and finish group be established, with the membership as set out below, to consider in detail the work being undertaken to 'narrow the gap' and to determine how effectively these groups were being served, especially in the light of the overall level of performance in Reading, as set out in the report:

Councillors Ballsdon, D Edwards, Gavin, O'Connell and Williams;

- (3) That the shared goals created during the 2013/14 Landscape Leadership Conference, as set out below, be endorsed:

'We believe that in Reading, the education system will:

- Raise attainment through high quality leadership and focused collaboration;
- Delight and inspire children, all of whom are included and achieve well;
- Education practitioners take a shared responsibility for children's futures;
- Engage with families and each other to seek the provision for every child;
- Attract, train and retain outstanding teachers;
- Be attractive to families, parents and businesses.

30. UPDATE ON CHANGES TO SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS PROVISION 2014-16

Further to Minute 22 of the meeting of Policy Committee on 15 July 2013, Avril Wilson, Director of Education, Adult and Children's Services, submitted a report setting out the current position in relation to national changes to Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision which were due to commence in September 2014 and flow from the Children and Families Bill. A proposed draft poster to summarise the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) journey for use with young people, parents and carers, schools and partners, was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

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The report stated that the pace of change programme nationally had been slower than initially expected because of the complexity of the changes that had been proposed. The Department for Education (DfE) had indicated that the transition to Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans would be phased in from September 2014 over three years instead of an in-year transition at that point.

The DfE had also extended the resources that had been provided with a one-off, ring-fenced, allocation of £250k for the three years 2014-2017 to support the process of transition in the SEN system. This was in addition to the £75k that had been provided in 2013/14 for support. The Council had used the initial support to bring in some national expertise to work alongside officers on two aspects of the consultation. The first strand of work had been with schools, using financial information to assess the overall sustainability of the system and to recommend an approach which aligned with the draft SEN strategy principles. The second strand of work had been consultation work with parents and other stakeholders to ensure that the full range of voices had been heard. The consultation had been open to all via an online survey on the Council's website and the Family Information Service and Parent Partnership had been promoting it to all of those who used their services.

The report explained that the consultation had identified that the range of changes were confusing to people and that communication would need to be careful, comprehensive and regular. A generic poster had been produced which attempted to set out the timescale for changes along with the strategic approach which put the child and their family at the centre of the system.

The sustainability review had identified that the current system was considered opaque to schools and long-winded by parents. This had led to a feeling of inequality and the risk of inconsistency in terms of the level of resources applied to different children of comparable need.

The report explained that the Schools Forum had noted the pressures on the resources in the High Needs Area and had increased the budget share for 2014/15.

The Committee discussed the report and it was suggested that if the draft poster was to be used with young people, parents and carers, schools and partners it needed to be simplified so that it was clear and easily understood by its target audience. The Committee also agreed that if necessary an 'out of cycle' meeting be held to consider the action plan and communication plan before the next scheduled meeting in July 2014.

Resolved -

- (1) That changes in legislation at national level driving change within the Reading system be noted;
- (2) That the Director of Education, Adult and Children's Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Education, publish a detailed action plan once the information from the consultation exercise could be reported and synthesised;

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- (3) That the need to engage and inform parents, children and young people and schools be noted;
- (4) That the poster, attached to the report at Appendix 1, be simplified so that it was clear and easily understood by its target audience;
- (5) That the Director of Education, Adult and Children's Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Education, be given delegated authority to take any decision about how to allocate ring-fenced funding provided by the Department for Education to support the changes in the law;
- (6) That an Action Plan and Communication Plan be submitted to a future meeting at the first possible opportunity, possibly to an 'out of cycle' meeting, and all attempts are made to inform parents about when changes were likely to be implemented.

31. EARLY HELP STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

Further to Minute 22 of the last meeting, Karen Reeve, Head of Children's Services, submitted a report presenting the Early Help Strategy Action Plan. A copy of the Action Plan as at January 2014 was attached to the report.

The report explained that following publication of the Early Help Strategy work had begun to develop an Action Plan with the service managers responsible for areas covered by the Strategy. The Plan set out how the key actions that had been identified in the Strategy would be delivered. As an overarching Strategy the Action Plan covered the high-level actions only and would be updated regularly to reflect ongoing developments in Early Help services during the life of the Strategy; progress in delivering the actions would be monitored by senior managers. The LSCB would receive reports on progress to enable them to fulfil their role in scrutinising the effectiveness of Early Help Services.

The Committee discussed the report and it was suggested that extra columns should be added to the Action Plan for timescale and achievement against each objective.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Early Help Strategy Action Plan be endorsed;
- (2) That the Action Plan be amended to include columns for timescale and achievement against each objective.

32. ANNUAL REPORT ON CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL ACTIVITY

Averil Kathan, Service Manager - LAC, submitted a report providing an update relating to the activities of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2013. A copy of a guide that had been commissioned by Local Government Improvement and Development and written by the Centre for Public Scrutiny entitled 'ten questions

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to ask if you're scrutinising services for looked after children' was tabled at the meeting.

The report explained that the Parenting Panel met four times during the Municipal Year and considered a number of items as standard; an update on the progress of the Reading LAC Children in Care Council/Implementation of the Pledge, a performance report in relation to services for LAC, reports from the two residential units, a report from the Virtual School headteacher and a report from the Health Lead on the provision of health services to LAC. The meetings also considered thematic issues and received any feedback from any inspections, including receiving the Annual Independent Reviewing Officers report.

The report detailed the activities of the Panel during 2013 under the following headings:

- Children in Care Council and Youth Work Development;
- Education;
- Health;
- Key Performance Indicators.

The Committee discussed the report and requested that a report be submitted to the next meeting detailing the authority's position in respect of the guide commissioned by Local Government Improvement and Development and written by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

Resolved -

- (1) That the work of the Parenting Panel be endorsed and Councillors encouraged to attend Parenting Panel meetings during 2014;
- (2) That the commitment to the principles of corporate parenting, as detailed in the report, be affirmed;
- (3) That a report be submitted to the next meeting detailing the authority's position in respect of the guide commissioned by Local Government Improvement and Development and written by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.52 pm).

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24 APRIL 2014

Present: Councillor T Jones (Chair)
Councillors Ballsdon, Eden, D Edwards, Ennis, P Jones, McElligott, Orton, Vickers and Williams.

Apologies: Councillors Anderson, Gavin, O'Connell, Ralph and Rynn.

33. UPDATE ON CHANGES TO SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN) PROVISION 2014-16

Further to Minute 30 of the meeting held on 5 March 2014, Avril Wilson, Director of Education, Adult and Children's Services, submitted a report providing the Committee with an update on the current position with regard to changes to SEN provision 2014-16 in relation to national changes which were due to start from September 2014, and would take up to three years to implement, and outlining the direction of travel required in order to meet the short and medium term requirements of the Children and Families Bill.

The report summarised the new legislation and provided the Committee with an update with regard to the current position in respect of both national and local requirements. An Action Plan would be drafted that outlined the broad direction of travel. The Berkshire SEN / LDD lead officers had been working together, along with parents and Berkshire Health agencies, to plan the operational delivery of the five requirements of the Children and Families Bill to ensure a common approach as far as possible.

The report stated that a review of the local SEN funding approach by an external consultant had indicated that greater clarity was required in order to ensure that parents and schools had a good understanding of how Special Educational Needs funding was allocated and the impact that it had on the child. To achieve this, the Council would have to establish systems for reviewing and monitoring both the cost and outcomes for the wide range of existing provision. It was anticipated that a short life working group of officers, schools and parents would propose recommendations for achieving this by the end of July 2014.

The report explained that the Local Offer was a term introduced in the legislation and was used to describe a concept of both information and services that would help families understand what provision was available to them in the local area. It contained the following elements:

- early years;
- school and college provision and transport to and from it;
- social care services available, including short breaks;
- health services, including speech and language therapy;
- how to access specialist support; and special and specialist school provision available - including training providers and apprenticeships.

In order to have a published Local Offer by 1 September 2014 additional work would need to be carried out to create "pathways" for families to follow when they would be seeking information. Currently the Local Offer database was being populated.

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Questionnaires had been sent to all providers for them to complete online and return. Schools had been provided with a system for completion of the questions and Health Authority officers had also been asked to complete and return a questionnaire.

Ramona Bridgeman and Tara Robb, of Reading Families' Forum, attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the parental perspective of having a child with special needs.

Resolved -

- (1) That the commitment to providing opportunities for children and young people with additional needs be confirmed and children and parents being at the heart of these changes be recognised;
- (2) That the Director of Education, Adult and Children's Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Education, ensure that the Council was able to meet the statutory requirements of the Children and Families Act that must be in place by September 2014, including a process for generating Education, Health and Care plans being in place and the Council having a published Local Offer;
- (3) That an action plan be written, co-produced with parents, setting out the direction of travel for officers, schools and parents to follow, which may require further decisions to be taken by Committee;
- (4) That a short life working group of school staff, officers and parents publish recommendations by the end of July 2014 that defined a system that ensured that SEN finances were delegated, allocated and monitored in a transparent way that met the needs of pupils and was understood and 'owned' by both schools and parents. The working group include in its membership Councillors D Edwards, McElligott and either Councillors Ballsdon or Vickers;
- (5) That the SEN Strategy for Reading 2014-2017 be submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Committee recommend that representatives of the Reading Families' Forum be invited to attend the meeting.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.45 pm).

Present: Councillor Gavin (Chair)
Councillors Ballsdon, D Edwards, Ennis, O'Connell,
Ralph and Rynn.

Also in Attendance: Penny Cooper, Avril Wilson and Karen Reeve.

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 21 NOVEMBER 2013

The Minutes of the meeting were confirmed as a correct record.

2. CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE AND QUARTERLY SAFEGUARDING REPORTS

Karen Reeve, Head of Children's Services, submitted a copy of the Safeguarding Activity Report for the third quarter of 2013/14. This report provided an update of the key activity areas within children's social care between September 2013 and the end of December 2013 using an overview of how social care was performing with regard to its core quality and performance framework.

The service had rated itself as amber across the board against a 'good' benchmark on the key Quality Indicators (QIs) with some areas of continuing improvement. This judgement was reached using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. The ratings given against each QI were detailed in a table attached to the report at Appendix A, the External and Internal Case File Audits were attached to the report at Appendix B and C and the Supervision Audit of Service Managers Records was attached to the report at Appendix D.

Children's Services Key Quality Indicators

Children's Social Care now used a set of seven key QIs to complement the performance indicators (PIs) underpinned by the new practice standards that had been introduced to social workers in September 2013. These standards acted as a tool for managers supervising front line social work, a benchmark for practice and focused scrutiny on the child's lived experience and tracked the child's journey through the whole of the children's system.

Quality and Performance meetings (QAPM) were held quarterly and chaired by the Head of Children's Services (HoCS). These meetings scrutinised activity, agreed actions arising from quality assurance with team managers and held managers to account for performance in the previous quarter. The meetings also collated the evidence used to make judgements on the RAG rating given against each of the following indicators:

- QI1 - Timeliness, progression and quality of Child Protection Plans;
- QI2 - Purposeful and timely visits to children allocated to Children's Social Care;
- QI3 - The timeliness, progression and quality of Looked After Children (LAC) Care Plans;
- QI4 - The timeliness and progression of children's Permanency Plans;

- Q15 - Percentage of cases with up to date, good quality assessments completed;
- Q16 - Percentage of cases where the child's lived experience was clearly recorded on the child's Social Care file;
- Q17 - Timeliness and quality of social work supervision.

Children's Performance Indicators

The report stated that 168 children had been the subject of a Child Protection Plan at the end of December 2013. Work continued to ensure that thresholds remained consistent and that partner agencies completed work at the earliest stage to prevent escalation of issues into child protection concerns.

There had been 213 Looked After Children (LAC) at the end of December 2013, including five unaccompanied asylum seeking children. This continued the reducing trend from a total of 226 LAC at the end of March 2013.

The number of LAC who had experienced more than one social worker within 6 months had increased from 25.5% to 31.1%. This was an area of focus for the Recruitment and Retention strategy to ensure that children were able to form trusting working relationships with their named social worker.

Peer Safeguarding Review

A Peer Safeguarding Review had been undertaken in December 2013 by four peers from outside the authority. They had scrutinised a number of safeguarding cases and the feedback had been positive, especially in relation to the staff. The review concluded that the Service was clear about what needed to be done to ensure consistent improvement in front line practice and their recommendations would be incorporated into the Service Plan.

Principal Social Worker Project

The purpose of this project was to ensure that the voice of frontline social workers was channelled to Senior Managers and to the Government. It had been decided that it would be more effective to have a group of social workers rather than just one principal social worker as this would access a broader view across the service.

Service User Evaluation

A pilot of planned straw polls had been carried out in January 2014 with three parents of children with Child Protection Plans and three foster carers. The pilot had given valuable insight into the methodology and plans were underway to carry out 18 straw polls each month across the Service.

Audits

Regular case file audits were carried out by an external auditor and by managers. Some were chosen at random and others were thematic reviews. Work was

underway on benchmarking to ensure consistency of assessments across the management team.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

3. FAMILY PLACEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

Jean Ash, Service Manager - Family Placement, submitted a report providing the Panel with information regarding the performance of the Council's Fostering and Adoption Services.

The report stated that at the end of November 2013, 79% of LAC were in family based placements, which was high when benchmarked with statistical neighbours. Close liaison between the Fostering duty service, Children's Social Work teams and the Commissioning section had enabled 71.4% of LAC to be placed within 20 miles of their home address. The number of children in long term care had fallen from 69.7% in April 2013 to 53.3% in December 2013, but the number of children having had more than three placements in the current reporting year had been 10 in December 2013, compared to a monthly average of 7.9.

The Fostering Service Performance

The age profile for LAC within the Council had changed so that there were fewer children under the age of 5 and more children aged 16 and over. The numbers of children aged 5-15 had remained constant. The increase in older children had not been matched by the profile of foster carers and so resources had been transferred within the Fostering Service to add another dedicated worker to the expansion and re-launch of the Supported Lodgings Scheme for these children. A review of the Multi-dimensional Treatment Foster Care programme was looking at how best to support more foster carers, particularly those offering placements to teenagers.

A new target had been established to produce a net increase, over the financial year, of 10 more foster carers offering main placements. This had been supported by intensive recruitment activity during Fostering Fortnight in May 2013 and Black History month in October 2013 and by sustained timeliness of assessments of new carers. This target would not be met this year as although carers had been recruited, they could not be approved until after April 2014.

The significant fall out rate of potential foster carers at each stage identified the need to maintain a high level of initial contact to generate actual approvals, which had been difficult with four staff vacancies within the team. Recruitment in both Fostering and Adoption Services had continued to be challenging, especially with neighbouring authorities offering more competitive salaries.

The Adoption Service Performance

The team were fully staffed for the first time in two years and so retention was a key priority. There had been a 30% increase in the numbers of adoptions and Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) since December 2012, but timeliness of adoptive placements had increased with a higher percentage taking more than eight months to be placed. This reflected the history of the children, many of

whom had been 'hard to place' and the fact that most children required adoptive placements out of the Borough.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

4. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - HEALTH UPDATE

Penny Cooper, Head of Children and Families - Reading, Berkshire Health Care Foundation Trust, submitted a report on the health component of the LAC service for the period from October to December 2013, Quarter Three.

The report gave an overview of the staffing, roles and responsibilities of the LAC Health Team. The main objective for the service continued to be to complete 100% of all Initial Health Assessment (IHA) and Health Care Plans within 20 days of the child or young person coming into care. 100% of the IHAs had been completed within the 28 day timescale, but only 74% of Review Health Assessments. The latter figure had been affected by delayed assessments for children placed out of the area (OOA) as removing these children from the figures increased this statistic to 92%.

The report detailed a number of key highlights for the period including the following:

Care Leavers - The LAC Health Team had established 'Health Drop-in' sessions fortnightly at Hamilton Road Children's Centre, where the Leaving Care Team was based. These sessions enabled young people and their carers to see the specialist nurses for information and resources to promote healthy lifestyles and also actively supported young people who were reluctant to access health services.

Engagement with Foster Carers - The team had provided five training sessions for foster carers in Reading and had been invited to the induction of new foster carers. They continued to actively promote access to the LAC Health Team for foster carers to feel appropriately supported in being able to meet the needs of the children and young people in their care.

Professional Collaboration - The LAC health team had been proactive in establishing and building good working relationships with a variety of professionals to support shared knowledge and skills and also shared experiences.

Participation - Wherever possible the LAC health team ensured that they had a presence at all the local celebration events for LAC and at the National Care Leavers week.

Audit - The service was to audit Health Assessments and Health Care Plans on a six monthly basis to ensure they continued to improve and achieve the standard in line with national guidance. The audit for the third quarter of the current year had been completed and had evidenced improvements with regards to the way in which documentation and information gathered at the Initial Health Assessments was used to inform the Health Care Plan.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

5. ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE - EFFECTIVE SCRUTINY AND GOVERNANCE

Avril Wilson, Director of Education, Adult and Children's Services, submitted a report that proposed changes to the future role of the Children's Safeguarding Panel and the Adult's Safeguarding Panel.

The Children's Safeguarding Panel was a body that had been established as part of the overall improvement plan following the Joint Area Review in 2009. Its purpose had changed so that it now focussed on building backbench expertise in children's safeguarding, developing a cross-party consensus on 'difficult' issues and as a scrutiny mechanism that held the lead Councillor and Director to account.

The Adult Safeguarding Panel had been developed in 2012 to mirror the functions of the Children's Safeguarding Panel, but it was anticipated that the new Care Bill would lead to guidance or regulation on accountability at both member and officer level.

Feedback from both the Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) Inspection of February 2013 and the Local Assurance Test of March 2013 had advised that the Council moved to a system of public scrutiny of children's safeguarding functions, which could be provided within the current Committee system that had been implemented in May 2013.

It was proposed to retain the two safeguarding panels and call meetings as required for the purposes of discussing serious case reviews or scrutinising internal or external providers where complex whole systems issues arose. The Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education (ACE) Committee would receive performance information and reports on safeguarding issues, some of which might be Part II agenda items, and as a decision making body would be able to hold the lead Councillor and Director to public account for the robustness of local child protection systems.

The Panel discussed the report and expressed their concern that safeguarding would not be given sufficient consideration with the ACE Committee only meeting three times during the Municipal Year and whether the Committee had the capacity to deal with the additional responsibility. Councillor Gavin agreed to consider the issues raised.

AGREED:

- (1) That the report be noted;
- (2) That Councillor Gavin consider the issues raised.

(The meeting started at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.10pm)

N:/Children'sSafeguardingPanel/Minutes/140227

CHILDREN'S TRUST PARTNERSHIP BOARD - 8 APRIL 2014



Present:

Councillor Jan Gavin (Chair)	Lead Councillor for Children's Services and Families, Reading Borough Council
Stephen Barber	Chair, LSCB
Esther Blake	Partnership Manager, Reading Borough Council
Penny Cooper	Head of Children and Families, BHFT
Ben Cross	Development Worker, RCVYS
Ellie Emberson	Reading Member of Youth Parliament
Jonathan Hill-Brown	Children's Commissioning Lead, Reading Borough Council
Sarah Holland	Senior Probation Officer, Thames Valley Probation
David Langridge	Chair of Reading Youth Cabinet
Kevin McDaniel	Head of Education Services, Reading Borough Council
Sally Murray	Head of Children's Commissioning Support, CSCSU
Beth Sercombe	Deputy Member of Youth Parliament
David Seward	BACYP
Mark Spencer	Detective Chief Inspector, Reading Police
Tom Woolmer	Participation Co-ordinator, Reading Borough Council

Also in attendance:

Sally Poole	Committee Services, Reading Borough Council
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Apologies:

Councillor Ballsdon	Reading Borough Council
Gerry Crawford	Berkshire Healthcare NHS

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2014 were confirmed as a correct record.

2. YOUTH CABINET UPDATE

Ellie Emberson, Member of Youth Parliament for Reading, Beth Sercombe, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament and David Langridge, Chair of Reading Youth Cabinet, reported on the Reading Youth Cabinet's campaigns for 2014/15, which were as follows:

- Mental Health - to standardise the level of education surrounding mental health in schools in Reading;
- Child Abuse - to develop the understanding of existing services;
- Your Future, Your Way - to improve pathways for young people to access advice regarding future education and work.

They also planned to deliver an annual event in October or November, to develop a directory of supporters for the Youth Cabinet, to produce a monthly newsletter and to develop links with the UK Youth Parliament.

CHILDREN'S TRUST PARTNERSHIP BOARD - 8 APRIL 2014

The UK Youth Parliament's national campaigns were Votes at 16 and Curriculum for Life, both of which would be adopted by the Reading Youth Cabinet. Votes at 16 had also received support by Councillors through a motion passed at the Council meeting on 25 March 2014.

AGREED:

- (1) That the work of the Youth Cabinet be commended;
- (2) That all suggestions and offers of assistance from members of the Board be sent to the Youth Cabinet via the Communications Officer (email- rycpres@gmail.com).

3. PROTOCOL AGREEMENT WITH HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD AND THE LSCB

Esther Blake, Partnership Manager, Reading Borough Council presented a copy of the Protocol Agreement that set out the expectations of the relationship and working arrangements between Reading Local Safeguarding Children Board (RSCB), Reading Health and Wellbeing Board (H&WB) and Reading Children's Trust (RCT).

The report outlined the statutory framework, current role and the responsibilities for all three Boards and the shared principles for consideration within a working protocol. The shared principles were detailed as follows:

- The Boards would work together to minimise the duplication of reports and actions and to ensure that there were no unhelpful strategic or operational gaps in policies, protocols, services or practice;
- The Boards would share a commitment to a strategic approach to understanding needs that included analysis of data and effective engagement with practitioners and service users;
- The Partnerships were committed to developing a joined up approach to understanding the effectiveness of current services and identifying priorities for change;
- All three Boards would work together to provide constructive challenge to Partners and to each other.

The report proposed that the Protocol should also be agreed at the full Board meetings of the RSCB and the H&WB and that it should be subject to an annual review.

AGREED: That the protocol between the Children's Trust, the Health & Wellbeing Board and the Reading Safeguarding Children Board be agreed.

CHILDREN'S TRUST PARTNERSHIP BOARD - 8 APRIL 2014

4. WORKSHOP TO IDENTIFY THE PRIORITIES FOR THE CHILDREN'S TRUST

Councillor Gavin explained that the aim of the workshop was to identify the priorities for the Children's Trust for the next three years, which would be used to write a new Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) based on outcome aims and impact rather than on activity.

Sarah Holland stated that the current priorities for the Children's Trust were:

- Keeping Children safe
- Intervening early
- Learning and ambition

The Board agreed that these areas still effectively captured the priorities for the Children's Trust but that the exact wording required updating and the outcomes refined to ensure that they were still measurable with the limited resources of the Board.

The priorities for the following organisations and strategies were taken into consideration to help to inform the discussion:

- Reading Borough Council Corporate Priorities 2014
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013
- A Shared Goal - shaping a good education for every young person in Reading
- Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) priorities for 2014
- Reading LSCB priorities 2013-2016
- Community Safety Partnership priorities 2013-2016
- Reading Early Help Strategy 2013-2016
- NSPCC
- Barnados

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) brought together data and statistics on the health needs of the local population from a number of sources and was a useful tool to inform the priorities of the Children's Trust.

The JSNA showed that the population in Reading had increased due to international migration and with more births than deaths. The population was more ethnically diverse than the national average.

Approximately 25% of reception year and approximately 35% of year six children in Reading were classified as overweight or obese. Both age groups were greater than the South East Region averages (and national average for reception year) but comparable to the averages of Local Authorities with similar levels of deprivation to Reading.

CHILDREN'S TRUST PARTNERSHIP BOARD - 8 APRIL 2014

Teenage pregnancy rates were at their lowest level for over 20 years, but young people continued to report that they did not know what services were available and how to access them. Support was required for the delivery of Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) in schools and a co-ordinated SRE training programme for the young people's work force.

The percentage of 16 to 18 year olds living in Reading who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) had been 7.4% in May 2013, which was at its lowest level since the new statistical measure was introduced in April 2011. A revised NEET strategy would be developed as part of the City Deal Strategy with a focus on labour market interventions to simplify pathways and systems and thus deliver better outcomes.

In 2012/13 there had been 762 referrals received by the local mental health trust, of which 586 had been passed on to Reading CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service) tier 3 and 4 services. The majority (66%) of these referrals came from primary health care and 22% of referrals were waiting over 18 weeks for a first appointment, although 9% of cases did not attend their appointment. In 2013/14 the number of 5 to 19 year olds in treatment with mental health disorders in Berkshire had increased by 17.5% to 4,214.

The 5 to 19 year old group made up 6% of the population within Reading but accounted for 29% of all casualties involved in killed or seriously injured collisions (KSI) within the three year period (2010-2012), which was higher in Reading than in neighbouring local authorities. The Council had offered a cycle training programme in partnership with the national cycling charity, CTC, but some schools had not supported the offer or encouraged participation.

Overall, the report concluded that the three key areas of inequality continued to be:

- Pupils eligible for free school meals;
- Those from underperforming ethnic groups;
- Those with special educational needs.

Following group discussions, the following priorities and outcomes for the Children's Trust were suggested:

1. Keeping Children Safe
 - Protect and look after ALL children and young people and in particular those that need our care:
 - Protection from others - in particular domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, on-line abuse and cultural abuse;
 - Protection from themselves - self-inflicted abuse.
2. Having the Best Start in Life and Throughout
 - To ensure that children and young people were empowered and informed to make positive life choices;
 - To build emotional wellbeing and improve health;

CHILDREN'S TRUST PARTNERSHIP BOARD - 8 APRIL 2014

- Having a positive experience of services.

3. Learning and Employment

- All children and young people have a fair (equal) chance to achieve and have access to information to make informed decisions about their future, regardless of heritage, income or disability.

The Group also agreed that the issue of poverty in Reading should be included in the overall vision as it encompassed all of the above priorities.

AGREED:

- (1) That the three priorities for the Children's Trust Board would be Keeping children safe, Having the best start in life and throughout, and Learning and Employment (final wording to be agreed);
- (2) That the draft priorities be refined by Esther Blake and circulated to the Board members for final agreement;
- (3) That all partners contribute to the Action Plan to ensure that their organisations were full engaged with working collaboratively to achieve these priorities.

5. EARLY HELP STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

The Early Help Strategy had previously been presented to the Board (minute 5 of the meeting of 17 July 2013 refers). As a result of the consultation with stakeholders, the Early Help Strategy Action Plan had been developed. This Action Plan outlined the main objectives to support the Strategy, the actions required to meet these objectives and those responsible for implementing the actions.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

6. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board noted agenda items for future meetings as follows:

- SEN Action Plan
- Development of the CYPP.

Date and Time of Future meetings

- Wednesday 23 July 2014 (4 - 6pm), Tilehurst Suite B, The Avenue Centre

CHILDREN'S TRUST PARTNERSHIP BOARD - 8 APRIL 2014

(The meeting started at 2.00pm and finished at 4.00pm).

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE.		
DATE:	7 JULY 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	8
TITLE:	UPDATE ON CHANGES TO SEN PROVISION 2014 - 16		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR ENNIS	PORTFOLIO:	EDUCATION
SERVICE:	INCLUSION AND SEN	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	CHRIS STEVENS	TEL:	0118 9372351
JOB TITLE:	SEN SERVICE MANAGER	E-MAIL:	Chris.stevens@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report follows the ACE Committee meeting April 24th 2014 at which the committee reaffirmed its commitment to providing opportunities for children and young people with additional needs and recognised that children and parents must be at the heart of these changes.
- 1.2 The local authority has to meet a number of statutory requirements of the Children and Families Act by September 2014 as set out in the ACE committee papers of April 24th 2014.
- 1.3 The council set out two immediate actions in April and this paper updates on progress towards those actions:
 - A SEND strategy action plan is co-produced with parents and the Local Authority.
 - A short life working group of Head Teachers and parents is established to agree a system for ensuring that SEN finances are delegated, allocated and monitored in a transparent way.
- 1.4 Appendix 1 details the current draft "Special Educational Needs and Disability Action plan" as co-produced so far and Appendix 2 contains the leaflet sent to all parents who have a child with a Statement of Special Educational Needs. It has also been distributed to all schools and preschool settings.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the progress made to date with regard to the actions previously agreed by the Committee.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The national policy context was set out in section 3 of the previous report to the ACE committee in April 2014.
- 3.2 The ACE committee, in April 2014, noted that the first requirement for the local authority was to have systems in place for 1st September 2014 for both "the local offer" and for "Education, Health and Care plans for new claimants".
- 3.3 The Council committed to engage families as close partners in the development of both SEND strategy and provision and officers are expected to work actively to achieve this co-production.

4. PROGRESS

Action Plan

- 4.1 Based on the SEND strategy consultation document produced via a process of lengthy consultation with all stakeholders, a SEND action plan has been drafted by representatives from Parents Forum and Local Authority Officers. The draft action plan is currently being reviewed by officers, parents and schools ahead of completion and the version as at 13th June is included in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 This Action plan includes what needs to be done to meet the Statutory requirements of the Children and Families Bill. It also describes the objectives that need to be completed in order to meet the agreed 4 SEND strategy priority areas.
- 4.3 The Action Plan will be populated with owners and dates once the tasks listed under each priority area have been finalised. The Action Plan will then be circulated to stakeholders for information, an SEND action planning operations group will be formed and progress will be reported to both the SEND strategy group and ACE.

Mainstream Funding

- 4.3 A short life working group has been established to report, by the end of July, on a transparent system for the allocation of SEN funding beyond that provided in base budgets. This group consists of five primary school head teachers, one secondary school head teacher, three SENCOs, two Councillors and the external consultant who worked with schools and parents to seek their views around allocation of SEN finances. The group meetings are chaired by the SEN Service Manager.
- 4.4 The group have agreed to produce a draft procedure for consultation by 1st September 14. This procedure will initially introduce a process for the distribution of 'Top up' SEN funding for children and young people who have a current Statement of Special Educational Need. Over time it is envisaged that there will be a reduction in children with statements or plans, with this procedure offering additional resources for schools facing exceptional

demands. The budget reserved for the High Needs Block will not alter but it is expected that the working group will suggest a model of allocation that has greater Head Teacher accountability and ownership.

- 4.5 This group have representatives on the Schools Forum funding formula group who are considering changes to the formula for April 2015 and the representatives have already requested consideration of "prior attainment" be part of the next discussion.

Local Offer

- 4.6 The Local Offer is well on track for being in place by 1st September 14. All Reading's schools, Colleges, Nurseries are currently in the process of completing our on line questionnaire that will become their Local Offer as published within the Reading Local Offer website. They will complete this exercise by 7th July. Similar on line questionnaires have been sent for completion to the Family Information Service, colleagues in Health, Voluntary Organisations and teams within RBC.

Education, Health and Care Plans

- 4.7 The Education, Health and Care plan has been completed. Parents Forum and SEN /LDD leads across Berkshire have been involved with the creation of this plan. This has been led and coordinated by Reading. The agreed format has come after extensive discussions with families and with representatives from Local Authorities who have been appointed as Pathfinders to develop the Plan, the Local Offer and the process for the allocation of Personal Budgets. The Education, Health and Care Plan has been signed off by our Health colleagues. Currently a trial is underway with two families and the SEN team to complete the Plan. This process will help to iron out any last procedural or content issues by September 1st 2014.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 This report directly contributes to a healthy population and the development of good educational attainment.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 There have been specific consultation events which have informed the proposals in this paper. Meetings have been held with families, mainstream schools, SENCO's and special schools along with colleagues from Health and the Voluntary sector, to seek their views on the organisational and financial aspects of the changes.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This report does not require an EIA as it deals with those people who already share a protected characteristic. An EIA will be undertaken as part of the development of the detailed action plan referred to in the main body of the report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 A grant of £250k has been allocated by central government to support the implementation of these changes and to ensure the effective communication with parents, carers, schools, voluntary organisations and young people themselves.

9.2 A number of the financial decisions required will either be: made by, or consulted on with, the Schools Forum as the expenditure is predominantly from the Dedicated Schools Grant. Recent regulatory changes require that more decision making is devolved to this group which reports in public.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 ACE Committee paper - April 2014 - SEN Update

10.2 SEND Consultation Report - RBC - April 2014

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) 2014



Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Action plan to address:-

The requirements of the Children and Families Act.
The 4 priority areas of the Special Educational Needs strategy post consultation.

The four priority areas are:-

Priority 1.

Every child including those with SEND in Reading should have their needs met, in Reading if possible, but the priority is to ensure that each child's needs are met.

This priority refers to establishing a range of specialist provision for CYP with Statements or EHCPs.

Priority 2. Develop provision within Reading, or in partnership with our neighbouring Local Authorities which reduces reliance on the most expensive and remote options.

This priority refers to establishing a range of provision and resources to intervene to support families and their children at Universal, Targeted and Individual levels (usually within the context of mainstream, college or preschool provision) and preventative / early intervention provision such as training programmes and working with young mothers. Both assume that interventions will include how we develop social capital and community wealth as a way of developing skills and resilience.

Priority 3. Work with families to enable them champion better outcomes for their children.

Priority 4. Work with schools and other services to provide resources (this includes financial) in order that all children, including those with SEND, are given the opportunity to reach their full potential. This includes the development of their academic, social, emotional and communication skills.

This priority makes reference to clarity of resource allocation which includes 'SEN finances'.

Context. This draft action plan needs to incorporate both the changes required by the Children and Families Bill and RBC SEND strategy post the consultation process.

The consultation requests that the SEND Action plan include:-

1. The implementation of the national requirements
2. How we create effective forums with schools and parents to share information and ideas which report on the quality of provision for CYP with additional needs
3. The creation of a leading partnership to shape local policy and provision over time which improves the outcomes for children and young people with additional needs aged from 0 - 25.
4. How we develop an objective approach to the funding of effective provision to drive demonstrably improved value for money, raised standards and inclusion.

The consultation process has identified four recommendations.

1. There needs to be a much more coherent and joint up approach to pulling various initiatives together to avoid duplication and ensure information is fairly and easily accessible to all.
2. Develop neighbourhood SEND initiatives which will include all agencies including Private and Voluntary sector and incorporate the skills of the families within neighbourhoods.
3. To create more collaborative approaches to learning, development and capacity building based on audits of local need and strengths and RBC wide audits of trend.
4. That every child is in receipt of their entitlement to a full time education once they reach statutory school age.

Objective	Actions	lead	Evidence of Success / Outcome	Milestones	Comments
Meet the requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014					
Short and Medium national requirements resulting from Children and Families Act are met	1. Confirm the role of Assessment Co-ordinator.	CS	Current SEN team plus two additional members are renamed Assessment Co-ordinators. They chair AR and EHCP meetings.	1 st September	
	2. Develop the skills to carry out this role.	CS			
	3. Agree new statutory assessment process and timelines including role of Annual Reviews and where Personal budgets are initiated.	CS	Timeline published and shared and agreed with parents (especially Personal budget decision making process)		
	4. Convert all Statements into Education Health	CS	By August 2017 all current Statements converted	August 2017	

	<p>and Care plans.</p> <p>5. Work with Practitioners to agree common assessment format with outcome focused assessments.</p> <p>6. Resource allocation system agreed for allocation of Personal budgets.</p> <p>7. Joint commissioning process and criteria for allocation of personal budgets agreed with Social Care, Health and Education.</p> <p>8. Letters and information about the planned changes to be sent to schools and families who have a child with a Statement of Special educational need</p>	<p>CS</p> <p>CS and TF</p> <p>CS and TF</p> <p>JT</p> <p>CS</p>	<p>By December 14 all Practitioners use the same format</p> <p>Resource Allocation System agreed and practiced and implemented.</p> <p>Criteria for allocation of personal budgets agreed with all agencies.</p> <p>Resource management process in place in all school settings</p> <p>Letter and Booklet sent</p>	<p>December 2014</p> <p>January 2015</p> <p>March 2015</p> <p>December 2014</p> <p>May 2014</p>	
Local Offer in Place by 1 st September	<p>1. Schools, providers and agencies(including Health) complete the statutory questions and send 'on line' to G.S.</p> <p>2. Project officer to work with parents and G. S to develop pathways on the Open Objects data base based on the most commonly asked</p>	<p>CS</p> <p>TF</p>	<p>Local Offer in place via RBC website.</p>	<p>1st September 2014</p>	

	<p>questions regarding SEND issues.</p> <p>3. LA sends schools document outlining what should 'normally be made available' at Universal, Targeted and Individual levels.</p> <p>4. Annual reviewing cycle process agreed</p>	<p>CS</p> <p>CS and JT</p>			<p>November 2014</p>
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Priority 1. Every child including those with SEND in Reading should have their needs met, in Reading if possible, but the priority is to ensure that each child's needs are met.

Objectives	Actions	Lead	Evidence of success/outcome	Milestones	Comments
To complete an audit of current needs and provision (including SPLD) against overall achievement, patterns and trends of exclusion rates, population trends and destination once leaving school. (via NEET information)					
Draft recommendations recorded in an action plan.					

Priority 2. . Develop provision within Reading, or in partnership with our neighbouring Local Authorities which reduces reliance on the most expensive and remote options.

Objectives	Actions	Lead	Evidence of success/outcome	Completion/review date	Comments
To establish 'wrap around' preventative services for children and families with a			(Need to make sure we link with Health, Housing and Transport))	

<p>neighbourhood bias (such as via Children Centres) as appropriate and record in the Local Offer when established.</p>			<p>(Developing a commissioning strategy</p>		
<p>A lead is commissioned to coordinate the development of resources and provision to promote emotional health and social skills for those children who present with Social, Emotional and Mental Health issues leading to challenging behaviours.</p>					
<p>To work with all agencies, including Health, to ensure the correct level of skill and expertise is available to schools and families to assist in meeting the holistic needs of children with SEND.</p>					
<p>To create a spectrum of provision and a philosophy of practice that ensures full time education for all children with SEND, with the commitment that no children with a Statement /EHCP is</p>					

excluded.					
Based on the Audit of need, develop the spectrum of provision and resource to meet the needs of CYP with ASD and with Social, Emotional and Mental Health issues.					
For schools to develop a range of skills and service to promote inclusion such as Move, TEACCH and PECS. This is to ensure that there are the skills to meet the predictable needs of children including those with ASD, SPLD, SEMH issues and Social Interaction and Communication difficulties.					
Priority 3. Work with families to enable them to champion better outcomes for their children.					
Forums for partnership working between Schools, Families and RBC are established	1. Parent / school's charter drafted. 2. Through Reading Families Forum to create parent support groups attached to every school via the work of a School Group Facilitator by May 15 3. LA and Parent's	CS CS and RB CS and RB	Charter in place and forums in place.	September 2014 January 2015 November 2014	

	Forum have agreed procedures for co-production and engagement				
Strategic Partnership responsible for shaping policy and provision for those between 0 - 25 who have additional needs is in place	Members to be identified with renewed terms of reference agreed at first meeting	CS	Dates of meetings agreed along with membership and chair	September 2014	
Communication strategy written, including improvements to RBC website					
Via the Local Offer and coproduced with families to provide clear consistent information for families of children with SEN.					
To develop a training strategy for all school staff and Governors that covers the spectrum of needs encountered in mainstream schools.					
Brochure written for families that describes Short Break provision available (including holiday clubs), criteria for entry and carers assessments.					

Priority 4. Work with schools and other services to provide resources (this includes financial) in order that all children, including those with SEND, are given the opportunity to reach their full

potential. Potential means the development of their academic, social, emotional and communication skills.

<p>Procedures for communication, allocation and review of resources to meet the needs of CYP with SEN are in place</p>	<p>Short life working group of HT, Parents, LA is set up with timescales and terms of reference agreed at first meeting.</p>		<p>Communication strategy agreed and published. Leaflet written for schools and parents outlining allocation and reviewing process for all SEND funding both within schools and within specialist provision and specialist teams</p>	<p>October 2014</p>	
<p>Schools to agree a provision mapping and resource allocation process for all those children with SEND</p>					

DRAFT



Your Child's Statement & the new Education Health & Care Plans



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

The Government is reforming the way we work together to support children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

The vision:

1. Children's Special Educational Needs (SEN) are picked up early and support is routinely put in place quickly.
2. There is greater control for parents and young people over the services they and their families use.
3. Parents know what they can reasonably expect their local school, college, Local Authority and local services to provide without having to fight for it.
4. Practitioners have the knowledge, understanding and skills to provide the right support for children and young people who have SEN or are disabled.
5. Aspirations for children and young people are raised through an increased focus on life outcomes, including employment.
6. For more complex needs practitioners will work together with families. This can lead to a single Education, Health and Care Plan that can be in place from birth to 25.

**Special
Educational
Needs &
Disabilities (SEND) 2014**



How will this effect your child's Statement?

- From the 1st September 2014 we will not be writing Statements. We will be writing Education, Health and Care plans.
- We have three years (by September 2017) to change all our current Statements into Education, Health and Care plans.
- Education, Health and Care plans will have the same legal status as Statements.
- While we alter our Statements into Education, Health and Care plans your child's Statement will not change and will remain a legal document.

What are we going to do next?

- We have over 900 Statements to change into Education, Health and Care plans.
- We will change all these over three years.
- We will rewrite your child's Statement at their Annual Review to become an Education, Health and Care plan.

Therefore:

- Between September 2014 and July 2015 all the Statements for children with ***dates of birth before and including 31/08/00*** will be changed via their annual review
- Between September 2015 to July 2016 all the Statements for children with ***dates of birth between and including 1/9/00 - 31/8/04*** will be changed via their annual review
- Between September 2016 to July 2017 all the Statements for children with ***dates of birth including and after 1/9/04*** will be changed via their annual review

You do not need to do anything now.

- When we change your child's Statement into an Education, Health and Care plan we will contact you and your child's school. This will be done through the annual review process.
- We will be asking your child's school to arrange an Annual Review and will be sending them and you the new Education, Health and Care plan form that will be completed, with you, at the Annual Review.
- This will replace your child's Statement.
- The new Education Health and Care plan will be a legal document.

For more information please discuss with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator at your child's school.

**Special
Educational
Needs &
Disabilities (SEND) 2014**



 **Reading**
Borough Council
Working better with you

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES & EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	7 JULY 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	9
TITLE:	SAFEGUARDING ACTIVITY REPORT - Quarter Four (Jan - Mar 2014)		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR JAN GAVIN	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN & FAMILIES
SERVICE:	CHILDRENS SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	VICKI LAWSON	TEL:	0118 9374163
JOB TITLE:	INTERIM HEAD OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES	E-MAIL:	Vicki.lawson@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update of the key activity areas within children's social care and related services between January and the end of March 2014. Previous safeguarding activity reports were reported to the Children's Safeguarding Panel which is held in private; it was decided to bring these reports into the public domain to ensure open scrutiny.
- 1.2 The service has rated itself as amber overall against a 'good' benchmark on the key quality indicators with some areas of continuing improvement.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the report is scrutinised

2. OVERVIEW

- 2.1. As approved by the ACE (committee in October, Children's Social Care is now using a set of key quality indicators (QI's) to compliment the performance indicators (PIs) underpinned by practice standards introduced in September 2013. These act as a tool for managers supervising front line social work, a benchmark for practice and focuses scrutiny on the child's lived experience and tracking the child's journey through the system.

The benchmark being used to measure performance is now 'GOOD' as now the acceptable benchmark being used to measure performance. Hence if we report something as not reaching our required standard in the QI's this means it is not reaching a good standard as opposed to an acceptable standard.

- 2.2. Quality and Performance meetings (QAPM) are being held quarterly, chaired by the Head of Children's Services (HoCS) and her team who scrutinise activity, agree actions arising from the various strands of quality assurance and call managers to account for performance in the previous quarter.
- 2.3. The updated rating for the seven overarching QIs is attached (appendix A). It demonstrates that Children's Social Care continues to be self-rated as amber (against a good rating) across the board with positive progress still being made, although some areas remain a challenge to ensure each and every activity undertaken is of a good standard all of the time.
- 2.4. The new social care database was introduced in this quarter and staff are now required to keep their files very differently. As to be expected, it will take some time for staff to become familiarised with the changes, and some adjustments to the way the system works is needed and underway.

3. KEY QUALITY INDICATORS

- 3.1. The key quality indicators are calculated using all of the qualitative and quantitative data collected and available in the quarter. The key lessons and actions required are shared with staff so that they are aware of what they need to do to improve and to ensure consistently good practice.
- 3.2. In this quarter the QIs were all rated as amber (against a 'good' benchmark) with progress in the right direction on most of them. The detail of each is given in Appendix A for reference.
- 3.3. Child Protection Plan numbers have reduced to 153 (from 168); there continues to be some issues with regard to evidencing SMART planning and consistent recording. The position has improved particularly regarding the evidencing of children and young people's lived experience and voices on file. To ensure this moves to good, workers will need to ensure that they are evidencing on file the direct work they do with children and young people during their visits and to ensure that their visits are recorded well on every case file rather than the majority. Good progress is being made in terms of permanency for children - numbers of adoptions are good but we need to continue to work to ensure that we are assessing adopters more quickly than now.
- 3.4. Whilst we have noted the good progress in recording the child's lived experience, this is not yet being noted by Child Protection Chairs and IROs in the protection plan reports and LAC review reports, hence the performance group decided this should remain rated as amber.

4. AUDIT ACTIVITY

- 4.1. Over the last quarter 56 cases were audited by managers in social care (appendix B). Of these cases, 96.5% were rated as adequate or better, with 3.5% needing immediate improvement. Immediate feedback has been given to each social worker involved and corrective action plans are in place where needed. No child was found to be unsafe/at risk during the audit process.

- 4.2. The internal audit results over the last year show that there are distinct improvements in the evidencing of children and young people's lived experience on files, with 94% of files rated as 'good' in this respect.
- 4.3. Further work is needed to better evidence the work undertaken by social workers and managers on their case files and to ensure that plans for children in need are SMART and consistently reviewed.
- 4.4. An additional 16 case files were audited internally in the fostering and adoption teams with recording in case files needs particular attention. This in the context as noted before of the introduction of the new database.
- 4.5. Children's Social Care continues to have a programme of external audit as described in Appendix C. Six cases are examined in depth, by an external auditor each quarter. This is a qualitative audit of the case file, supplemented by discussion with the social worker and manager. Of these cases one child protection case was rated as adequate and the second needed immediate improvement to bring the case up to the standard needed. Two child in need cases were rated as adequate. One looked after child case was rated as good and the other as adequate.
- 4.6. The audit found that looked after children files showed that there were good outcomes for the children and that the lived experiences of the children were evidenced on file.
- 4.7. Three of the cases needed immediate attention to make sure that the files sufficiently evidence the depth or frequency of supervision and management oversight. Social workers also needed to make sure that the case file was always up to date within 24/48hours of activity.
- 4.8. Following the audit corrective action plans have been agreed with workers who are aware of the actions they need to take and these actions will be checked for compliance in due course.
- 4.9. Whilst recording continues to be an area of focus, (noting that the new database was introduced in December so this quarter has seen workers getting to grips with new recording and process systems) there has been clear improvement in ensuring that chronologies are of good quality and are up to date in case files. The Access and Assessment Team, Locality Teams and Fostering and Adoption teams have worked hard to ensure that all files have chronologies. In the next quarter, work will continue to make sure that chronologies on file meet the standards expected. Regular updates are expected at the performance board.

5. SERVICE USER EVALUATION

- 5.1. In the last 2 quarters the service has been introducing a new more robust way of capturing 'real time' service user feedback. This includes taking random surveys from service users, families and foster and adoptive carers who are contacted by telephone each month as described in Appendix D, and a small number of questions asked about their recent experience of the service.

In the last quarter the feedback from service users has been that the long term locality teams, have received largely positive feedback in relation to individual workers.

Individual workers in the long term locality teams have received largely positive feedback from service users in the last quarter."

- 5.2. However, frustration arises when service users feel they are not being kept as up to date as they wish to be. Foster carers have also been positive in relation to individual workers but think that our own internal communications could be improved. Carers going through the adoption process have been positive about workers and have found delays frustrating.
- 5.3. Overall, there has been much valuable learning from the new qualitative process and feedback given to individual workers and to teams, and it is hoped that a number of service users will participate in future focus groups to help further support the development of consistently good services.

6. PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER PROJECT - SOCIAL WORKER FEEDBACK

- 6.1. Feedback is gained from frontline social workers through the Principal Social Worker group. This group aims to identify areas of good practice - and to share these - and to also identify blocks to improvement. Higher specialist social workers identified administration support as a key to freeing up social workers and one particular social work team which had been able to use their administration team to support their work. As a result, a review of practice is taking place with the aim of sharing good practice across all teams. The Service Manager Improvement links with the national group of Principal Social Workers on a bi-monthly basis.
- 6.2. As the group progresses, it aims to share its experience and expertise with less experienced social workers through seminars, coaching and mentoring. The group is also planning for a visit by the Chief Child and Family Social Worker to Reading in July.

7. OTHER ACTIVITY

FOSTERING AND ADOPTION QUALITY UPDATE

- 7.1. The 2013/14 fourth quarter report (appendix E) presents information from the fostering and adoption teams and highlights some core performance indicators.
- 7.2. The percentage of looked after children placed in family placements continues to be positively high compared with our statistical neighbours. However, we continue to rely on independent fostering providers with a consequently higher cost. This demonstrates the importance of our continued focus on recruiting local carers to be matched with our own looked after children (including BME children, adolescents and sibling groups).
- 7.3. Work is underway to ensure that we are able to offer stability in placements - whilst some placement moves are unavoidable e.g. moves to an adoptive placement. The work related to foster care recruitment is identified through the data with 225 initial enquiries resulting in 11 approved short term foster carers in 2013/14. (This number does not include recruitment of other types of carer). Carer retention has also been positive with only 4 carers ceasing to care in the year.
- 7.4. Permanency and continuity of care continues to be achieved for significant numbers of children via Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's) and adoptions. However, the demand for adoptive placements continues to exceed the number of adopters available - this is a challenging environment particularly when attempts are made to match children who are

deemed harder to place (e.g. older children, sibling groups, BME children etc). Despite this, there are good outcomes for children and Reading continues to perform very well in comparison with other local authorities.

- 7.5. An adoption activity day was held in February 2014 (held with other Berkshire teams). Overall, 40 sets of adopters attended, and 18 children for whom adopters are being sought. From this day, 6 enquiries were received including 2 for whom links have progressed. This is very successful and it is planned to hold more such events in 2014.

8. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1. There continues to be a strong focus on ensuring consistent quality across Children's Social Care. The quarterly Quality and Performance meeting is a demanding forum for managers attending and they are being very actively challenged to be good the vast majority of the time in every case. Given the very nature of their work, this is a tough challenge and should not be underestimated. The focus on quantitative and qualitative information enables the senior management team to scrutinise performance and to call managers to account.
- 8.2. Actions required from individual audits, overarching lessons and themes arising are shared with practitioners and managers to enable them to make the improvements necessary to ensure consistent, good practice with children, young people and families.

9. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

The work of children's social care is aligned with the strategic priorities of Reading Borough Council and the Reading Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-16.

10. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

A wide range of partners and parents, carers, young people and families accessing social services were actively involved in the planning around their own case but are also engaged in the development of the work as a whole, and it is our ambition to further improve this through the work of the service user evaluation programme.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications to this report, although the children's social care work enables the Council to meet the statutory duties set out in the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004 and the Childcare Act 2006.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS


10.1 There are no new financial implications outlined in this report.

11. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

Appendix A
Children's Services Key Quality Indicators

(available on A3 sheet)

Quality and Performance Report Internal Audit			
Date	21 April 2014	Lead	Pat LeRoy
Reporting To	QAPM	Reporting Period	Feb- April 2014
Date of last report	Feb 2014		


Introduction	<p>A total of 56 generic audits were completed by the social work teams in the period February - April 2014 using the agreed format.</p> <p>15 CIN and 1 private fostering case was audited 16 CP cases 24 LAC cases</p>
Methodology	<p>Team managers and assistant team managers audited cases across their own teams using the generic audit tool. Team managers used their own methodology to select cases to audit and actions were shared with the supervising managers.</p> <p>Each audit has an action plan which has been shared with the social worker and supervisor to ensure improvements where needed.</p>
Results	<p>In the last quarter, 94% of child protection cases were rated as requiring improvement (adequate) or better, with 29% rated as good overall or better.</p> <p>In the last quarter, issues were noted regarding Core Groups, the frequency and quality of supervision and the quality of chronologies.</p> <p><u>It must be noted that a generic audit tool is being used this quarter.</u></p> <p>However, the following overarching results were noted:</p> <p><u>Children in Need:</u> 73% rated good or better overall <u>Child Protection:</u> 56.3% rated good or better overall <u>Looked After Children:</u> 67% rated good or better (7.6%; 2/26 were noted to need immediate improvement)</p>
Themes arising	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Children in Need</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are a number of gaps in reviewing CIN plans for longer term cases - whilst the TAC process fills this gap for some cases, 45% of cases needed to evidence on file how the plan was being reviewed. CIN Plans are not always SMART/ outcome focused - in 2 cases, the plan needed immediate improvement to ensure that it was focused on improving the outcome for the child. <u>Child Protection</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social workers and managers need to make sure that they record child protection visits, Core Groups and case notes more clearly - the audits showed that

	<p><i>56% of cases audited needed some improvement with one case needing immediate improvement.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>In three cases, the child protection conference minutes did not clearly evidence that the plan had been thoroughly reviewed.</i> <p>3. <u>LAC</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Children's lived experiences and views are well recorded in 87.5% of files. However, social workers need to make sure that the electronic record shows that they are completing and reviewing education plans and health checks in a timely way.</i> <p>4. <u>Overarching</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>There is more evidence of better quality and timely chronologies but social workers need to make sure that they keep these up to date. Work is also needed to make sure that the electronic system supports this task.</i> <i>Workers do not all use the same forms to write up child protection and LAC visits - social workers need to make sure that the file shows the work that they are doing.</i> <p><u>KEY STRENGTH OVERALL</u></p> <p><i>There is a clear improvement in the recording of children's views/ lived experience on the child's file. This would be further improved by ensuring that all SoS documents are scanned and therefore available on the child's file.</i></p>
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ACTIONS RECOMMENDED

Social Work Standard/ criteria	Issue identified	Action(s) needed	By who	By when
2.3 All Plans for children will be focused on improving outcomes and the child's daily lived experience. Plans will be SMART and written in language that is understood by parents, carers and partners.	1. Longer term CIN cases do not all have clear, SMART plans evidenced on file. For 45% of cases, reviews were not clearly identified on file.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All CIN cases open to teams to be looked at by the responsible manager. Review date and review frequency to be set. Service Manager to spot check. 	TMs SM	30/6 10/7
As 2.3 and 7.1 Work is in accordance with legislation, guidance and local policy and procedure. 7.2 Work is undertaken with due regard to the national minimum standards, best	2. Cases need to better evidence the role that Core Groups and Conferences play in reviewing the plans for children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core Group action plan in place. Supervisors to check efficacy of core groups (and CPCs) when supervising CP cases. 	SWs ATMs	Immediate At least 3 monthly Each

practice guidance and is informed by the best evidence available including research findings.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CP Chairs to escalate any cases where Core Groups have not fully carried out their functions Spot check to be carried out. 	CPCs DG	CPC 10/7
Standard 8 Our records are accurate, complete and demonstrate the child's story.	3. Child protection and LAC visits are not all completed on the file using the agreed form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers to complete all CP and LAC visit recording according to the Fwi guidelines. Supervisors to check that this is happening when cases are reviewed. Team managers to interrogate the reports from Fwi and ensure that recording enables performance to be accurately recorded. 	SWs ATMs TMs	Immediate Every 3 months Every week
Standard 8 Our records are accurate, complete and demonstrate the child's story.	4. In the audits completed, not all PEPs are completed and signed off.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Fwi group to make sure that the adjustments made for PEPs meet the needs of the service 	FUG	30/6
Standard 8 Our records are accurate, complete and demonstrate the child's story.	5. Chronologies are present, but 30% are 2/3 months out of date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronology action plan in place Supervisors to check when cases are reviewed 	SWs ATMs	Immediate Every 3 months
Standard 8 Our records are accurate, complete and demonstrate the child's story.	6. Recording is not consistent across teams/ processes - some recording is out of date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers to ensure that case notes, recording of visits and supervisions are up to date on file. Supervisors to check when cases are reviewed 	SWs ATMs	Immediate Every 3 months

Quality and Performance Meeting External Case Audit Report			
External Audit			
Date	25 April 2014	Lead	Pat LeRoy
Reporting To	QAPM	Reporting Period	Dec 2013 - March 2014


Date of last report	Feb 2014
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BACKGROUND	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 cases are selected quarterly for in-depth/ deep dive audit by an external auditor using Reading's agreed audit tool. • The auditor undertakes a total of 6 audits randomly selected from CIN, CP and LAC cases. • The auditor undertakes a case file audit alongside working with the social worker/ ATM where possible. • The auditor provides judgements on the last 18m of work and an overall judgement for each case. 	
Results	<p>One LAC case was graded as a 2 (good). Four cases were graded as adequate. This was one CP cases and two CIN cases and one LAC case. One CP case was graded a 4 (needs immediate improvement) No cases were graded as a 1 excellent.</p> <p>Feedback has been given to all social workers and supervisors and action plans are in place where needed.</p> <p>The auditor will be conducting a re-audit in the next quarter to review previous action plans from external audit.</p>
Lessons to be learned	<p>In previous audits, themes arising included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of evidence of joined up work between the family placement teams and the front line social work teams. - The recorded threshold for s47 investigations were less clear in long term teams compared with the access and assessment team. - Some gaps in evidencing reflective supervision and management oversight. <p>In this round, the following issues emerged</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recording on case files in all types of cases continues to be the key area requiring improvement. - Both Child Protection cases demonstrated that whilst managers and social workers can talk persuasively about the case (and demonstrate in-depth case

	<p>knowledge), this is not as well evidenced in the file though.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management oversight and supervision (frequency and depth) are not sufficiently demonstrated in casework files. - The 2 LAC cases both demonstrated good outcomes for the child/ young person (however, this is not consistently evidenced as well on the case file). - One LAC child had been adopted, but some work was needed to make sure that all documents were available to the adopters within timescale.
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ACTIONS RECOMMENDED

Standard/ criteria	Issue identified	Action(s) needed	By who	By when
<p>Standard 9</p> <p>Work with children is managed and supervised to achieve the best possible outcomes.</p>	<p>Management oversight and supervision (frequency and depth) are not sufficiently demonstrated in casework files.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All cases to be supervised in line with agreed supervision policy. • All discussions/ observations/ agreements to be immediately logged on the file and labelled as management oversight. • Team managers to spot check and report back to QAPM. 	<p>ATMs</p> <p>ATMs TMs</p> <p>TM</p>	<p>As agreed per case type</p> <p>10/7</p>
<p>Work is in accordance with legislation, guidance and local policy and procedure.</p> <p>Work is undertaken with due regard to the national minimum standards, best practice guidance and is informed by the best evidence available including research findings.</p>	<p>There was an issue where one child did not have a life story book/ later life letters prior to the adoption order being granted. This was not adequately monitored/ checked via supervision/ LAC reviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social workers to ensure that life story books and later life letters are completed prior to a child being adopted. • ATMs to check this in supervision once permanency outside the family is established as the plan. • IROs to ensure that this is a part of routine checking (and monitoring) once a child is placed for adoption. 	<p>SWs</p> <p>ATMs</p> <p>IRO</p>	<p>Immediate</p> <p>At least 3monthly</p> <p>Each review</p>
<p>Standard 8</p> <p>Our records are accurate, complete and demonstrate the child's story.</p>	<p>4. Case notes and other records are not always up to date in CIN, CP and LAC cases</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers to ensure that recording is completed contemporaneously. • Supervisors to check when cases are reviewed. 	<p>SWs</p> <p>ATMs</p>	<p>Immediate</p> <p>Every 3 months</p>

Quality and Performance Report Service User Experience			
Date	21 st April 2014	Lead	Rose Blackadder
Reporting To	QAPM	Reporting Period	Jan - March 2014
Date of last report	None Previous		

Introduction	Stakeholder Engagement is universally recognised as being a key ingredient in service improvement. The Service User Experience (SUE) project is undertaking a range of activities to encourage direct feedback from our Service Users, Foster Carers and Adopters at various stages of their individual journeys through our systems to provide real time feedback to staff and help us adapt services to better meet the needs of our customers.
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Methodology	
Access & Assessment Team	All Families are sent a paper based questionnaire with Stamped Addressed Envelope on case closure following Assessment. A random sample of 6 families are contacted by telephone following the closure to A&A of cases.
Area Teams x3	A random sample of 6 families per team are contacted by telephone where their cases have been open to the team for 6 months.
Fostering	A random sample of 6 carers on a monthly basis covering Main Placements, Short Breaks and Respite and Family and Friends on a rolling basis until all carers have been contacted.
Adoption	Monthly calls to all Adopters/Potential Adopters as they reach one of three stages in the Adoption Process (Initial Contact, Approval Panel, 1 month after Adoption Order)

Results	
A&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There have been 0 returns of the paper based A&A questionnaire against a total of 184 cases closed Jan - March. Of the 11 returns received the previous quarter (as yet unreported) 10 families (91%) either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that "The best outcomes for my family were achieved" by CSC Involvement'. It has proved difficult to make contact with families randomly selected via 'A&A case closed' data. This has been due to a range of reasons including changes in phone number, users not answering phones, or users asking callers to ring back at a specific time and then not answering phone or again re-arranging. Of two Service Users who answered our call, both responded positively to all questions asked. <p>When asked whether they would be happy to be contacted in the future for further SUE activity, both said yes.</p>

<p>Area Teams x3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the 8 Service Users who answered our call eight felt that their SW always arrived when they said they would and seven felt listened to by the SW. • One Service User did not feel listened to and this was followed up directly with the ATM. The Service User feedback was noted in context of the current family situation (children in Friends and Family care). • Three positive comments were received when asked ' Anything else you would like to tell us': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "People say that working with social workers is a negative experience but I found it positive which is helping me to be a better mum". ○ "I am happy with the work that xxx does - I think she deserves a medal for the work that she has done with my son." ○ My SW is very supportive. Any problems I always felt I could contact her and if I wasn't around she would always reply to a message. • One negative comment was received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "Whilst I'm kept up to date, social workers fail to stick to their deadlines, for example I don't receive the report 48 hours before a CP conference. I also feel like the SW sometimes puts words into my child's mouth rather than letting him speak openly. We often don't agree with the report but don't get to see the revised version. People often relay message (such as health visitors) directly to my social worker without informing me - as a parent I feel like I should be informed at the same time." <p>When asked whether they would be happy to be contacted in the future for further SUE activity all eight said yes.</p>
<p>Foster Carers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calls have been made to the groups of Long Term Foster Carers and Short Break/Respite Foster Carers Only. Family and Friends Carers are being contacted w/c 21st April • Of the 10 LTFCs contacted, three responded. Comments from this group were mixed, especially when asked 'Do you feel you are kept up to date' 2 out of 3 were not happy with effectiveness of communication (within RBC) • Of the 10 SB/RFCs contacted, two responded. Comments from this group were 100% positive. • All FC's across the two groups were happy with their SSW, disappointment came from lack of notice around meetings and decisions. <p>When asked whether they would be happy to be contacted in the future for further SUE activity all five said yes.</p>
<p>Adopters Phase 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five adopters are currently in Phase 1 of our process (First Enquiry through to Stage 2) and four have responded to contact. • The questions asked provided a large amount of qualitative data which varied depending on each individual adopter's experience. • My feeling having conducted the initial four surveys is that the adopters were happy with the input from their Social Worker (and there are many positive comments about the flexibility and responsiveness of particular workers). However most had experienced different frustrations within stages of the process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One couple reported that the process had taken 16 weeks to this point rather than 8.


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Two couples specifically mentioned the length of time taken for DBS to be returned, and one the length of time taken for the Medical Assessment ○ One couple had had a particularly negative experience in relation to references being taken up before they had given permission. ● All potential adopters remain engaged in the process and are looking forward to the next stages and getting their panel dates.
Adopters Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Six adopters are currently in Phase 2 of our process (Stage 1 - Approval Panel) and one has been contacted and responded. A further adopter has requested the form by post as they do not want to be contacted out of hours. ● Satisfaction was rated at 7/8 out of 10. ● Very positive comments were made about both Social Workers allocated to them "All Social Workers have been brilliant ..." ● The adopters experienced some frustration during the time they were 'between' Social Workers however, as one worker left the service. ● They also felt frustration with the process and make the comment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "Sometimes we feel like we are left to drive the process. Things get done when we call and ask if they have been done, everything done at the last minute which is stressful. They wonder if they didn't push all the time if the process would move at all. They feel that other adopters they have spoken to feel the same."
Adopters Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Three adopters are currently in Phase 3 of our process (1 month Post Adoption Order) and two have been contacted and responded. ● The questions asked provided a large amount of qualitative data which varied depending on each individual adopter's experience. ● One Adoptive Couple were unhappy with aspects of their process. The SM will contact them directly w/c 22 April as they wanted to understand how their feedback would be given to the team. ● One Adoptive Couple gave a response which was more balanced by both positive and negative experiences. The positive relate to the honesty they experienced from their Social Workers, and the relationship they have with their current Social Worker. ● Frustrations once again arise through the speed of the process and also the number of changes in staff. These adopters have had three workers all together, with gaps in between appointments.
Themes Arising	
A&A and Area Teams	<p>Making contact with Service Users in A&A and the Area Teams has been very challenging, resulting in fewer responses than anticipated.</p> <p>Feedback received has largely been positive in relation to individual workers.</p> <p>Frustration arises when Service Users feel they are not kept up to date and given enough notice of key processes.</p> <p>The majority of Service Users have not expressed any dissatisfaction with the timekeeping of their Social Workers.</p>

Fostering	<p>Making contact with Foster Carers by phone has proved more difficult than anticipated.</p> <p>Feedback received has been very positive in relation to individual workers</p> <p>Carers feel that an area of improvement for RBC would be internal communication.</p>
Adoption	<p>Feedback received is very personal to the individual service users.</p> <p>Feedback received has been positive in relation to individual workers.</p> <p>Potential adopters were impacted by turnover in staff and gaps in access to individual workers.</p> <p>Potential adopters find that delays within the process are extremely frustrating. It is not always clear to them what the cause of these delays is. DBS has been mentioned on more than one occasion.</p>

ACTIONS RECOMMENDED *This is the recommended list of items that will be taken forward as a result of the audit - it will be adjusted (if required) and signed off at the meeting you are reporting to. The following format should be used:*

Observation	Issue identified	Action(s) needed	By who	By when
<p>Contact is not being made with the agreed number of Service Users each month</p> <p>In the first month only 8 calls were successful from a total of 18 parents and foster carers called. In the second month 10 calls from a total of 32 called. 42 and 31% respectively.</p>	<p>FWi has an issue with the storage of phone numbers & SW's need reminding to enter phone numbers on the system.</p> <p>Users do not welcome the contact</p> <p>Users do not answer their phones to calls so we do not know if they would be happy to talk with us or not.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calls to be undertaken by BA within the teams so they can link more closely with SW before making calls • Consideration to be given to amount of time it takes to receive the amount of information elicited. 	SM Team	Immediate
<p>Feedback from BA Managers is that by the time we get through to parents the questions asked are very quick.</p>	<p>It feels as if the people being called would be open to being on the phone for longer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration to be made to whether we contact fewer people but have a more qualitative questionnaire. 	SM Team	By end of May
<p>As body of feedback grows TM's will need to identify key messages from individual feedback.</p>	<p>Overall, service users seem happy with their individual contacts. Issues arise over communication and delays in process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service to identify methods of improvement and evidence change. 	All	By end June
<p>The Service Users contacted have all expressed an interest in continuing to work with us.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RB to liaise with management team to understand whether it would be useful to devise workshop/consultation day to obtain 	RB/PLR	Summer 2014

		more qualitative feedback from group.		
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Quality and Performance Report Fostering & Adoption Update Q4			
Date	17.4.14	Lead	Jean Ash
Reporting To	29.4.14 Quality and Performance Board	Reporting Period	January-March 2014
Date of last report	N.A		

Introduction	Standard 25.7 of the National Minimum Standards 2011 (unchanged in 2014) stipulates that the “executive side of the local authority.../trustees, board members or management committee members: receive written reports on the management, outcomes ...of the fostering service every 3 months”. The report relating to the performance of both the Fostering and Adoption Services is provided quarterly for presentation at the ACE Committee.
Methodology	<p>Sources of information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team performance is reviewed monthly in the Fostering and Adoption Performance Meetings (involving the ATM Recruitment + Assessment, Fostering and Adoption Team Managers, Service Manager and HOCS). • The detailed tracking of progress for every child whose plan includes adoption (& earlier notifications) as reviewed in the monthly Adoption Liaison Meeting (involving Children’s Social Work teams, IROs and Adoption Service managers). • Statistical data from the “Purple Book”
Results	<p>Fostering</p> <p>LAC: At end of March 2014 80% of LAC were in family placements. Of these: 42% were in IFA placements and 38% were in RBC foster placements.</p> <p>Placement stability: For LAC in long term care, the number in the same placement for more than 2 years was 48 (64%) in March '14 compared to 46 (69.7% in April '13. There were 19 (9% of LAC) however needing more than 3 placements in the current reporting year compared to 11 (4.9%) the previous year</p> <p>Foster Carers:</p> <p>In 2013-14:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 225 initial enquiries from prospective foster carers were received. Of these 198 were responded to within 3 days. ○ 46 initial visits were undertaken. Of these 42 were arranged within 8-13 days ○ 10 applications were received. ○ 11 new foster carers were approved to offer “main” placements compared to 7 in 2012-13. ○ 4 of the 11 were assessed within 6 months <p>b) Adoption + Permanence</p> <p>Benchmarked information shows that in terms of the performance for</p>

	<p>percentage of LAC adopted : Reading is currently 28th best performing nationally + third best in the cohort of 11 statistical neighbours.</p> <p>LAC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2013-14: 26 children have been adopted exceeding the performance of the last 2 consecutive years when 18 adoptions were achieved p.a. • As of March '14: the full range of family finding activity is required for 30 children, early work for 5 early notifications + work to support adoptive placements proceeding to orders for 15 children. • The numbers of adoptions + SGOs reported in Q3 of the respective years show that 31 were achieved in 2013-14 compared to 24 in 2012-13 and 20 in 2011-12 <p>Adopters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From October 2013-March 2014: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 51 initial enquiries from prospective adopters were received. Of these 46 were responded to within 2 days. ○ 16 initial visits were undertaken. Of these 10 were arranged within 10 days. ○ 5 applications were received • In 2013-14: 14 new adopters were approved (with 2 more going to panel in March but the ADM decision in April) compared to 14 in 2012-13. • There are 6 outstanding assessments started before July 2013 (under old Regulations). 5 will have gone to Panel by the end of May + 1 is on hold due to serious family illness. <p>In March 2014 there are 6 assessments under way (under the new Regulations): four in Stage 1 + two in Stage 2.</p>
<p>Themes arising</p>	<p>Fostering Looked after children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The percentage of LAC placed in family placements has been consistently high when benchmarked with statistical neighbours. This has relied heavily on use of IFA placements. This is why there is a focus on recruiting RBC foster carers able to offer "main" placements to children. To match our LAC population there has been particular emphasis on recruitment for those offering placements to children over 5 yrs (particularly adolescents, siblings and BME carers.) • The results in terms of placement stability are mixed. There has been a recovery in performance in terms of the numbers of children remaining in long term placements for more than 2 yrs. However, more children (who may not have been in care for as long) have more than 3 placements. Though some of these move for good reasons (to achieve permanency) the ideal would be for them to do so with less prior moves. <p>Foster Carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial enquiries and visits are progressed efficiently overall • Despite the increase in Nos of foster carers recruited to offer main placements compared to last year, the target of achieving a net increase of 10 "main" RBC foster carers was not met due to 4 "main" carers

ceasing to foster (2 moved a long distance out of the area and 2 were de-approved).

- The level of recruitment activity picked up again after a lull in July and August including targeted attendance of different faith groups and participation in a local radio programme during the designated Black History fortnight in November. To date this has not produced an increase in BME applicants however. The impact of a lengthy period of vacancy for the Recruitment Officer post is being felt.
- Assessment: In common with other L.A's Reading has experienced difficulties in obtaining the necessary references, checks and information from carers within the 2 month target for the carer-led Stage 1 of the new assessment process. Practice has been amended to try to address these.
- Carer Retention: This has remained positive (with 4 carers ceasing to foster for unavoidable reasons as identified above). This was a major achievement in light of staff turnover (including the Team Manager and both Assistant Team Managers) and an inability to recruit agency/independent worker cover which meant that 13 carers had duty officer cover only for several months until Sept '13. Feedback from carers clearly indicates that staff retention (providing continuity of support for carers) is important.

b) Adoption

LAC

- Permanency and continuity of care are being achieved for significant numbers of older children via SGOs as well as adoptions.
- Demand for adoptive placements continues to exceed the number of RBC recruited adopters.
- Although RBC is performing well in comparison to other L.A's. It is not meeting the government's increasingly challenging targets in terms of timeliness. In 2013 only 36 local authorities were successful in meeting both targets compared to 71 in 2012. In common with many other L.A's therefore timeliness of placement remains an area for improvement both because of the high demand and a mismatch between carers' wishes and the profile of children in terms of age, history etc. Despite this, positive permanency outcomes are being achieved for individual children.
- Analysis of the plans for children in adoptive placements awaiting placement orders has not identified planning drift but rather the placements are less than 10 weeks in duration or carers are experiencing difficulties and require considerable support.

Adopters

- Initial enquiries and visits are progressed efficiently overall.
- In common with other L.As, Reading has experienced difficulties in obtaining the necessary references, checks and information from carers within the 2 month target for the adopter-led Stage 1. Practice has been

	<p>amended to try to address this. These difficulties have been identified as issues by all the Local Authorities in the S.E BAAF Region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the stage 2 assessments is on track for an ADM decision within 4 months. It remains a challenge to achieve this for the 2nd assessment. • Analysis of approved RBC adopters has identified 7/9 of those available at the end of March have proposed links and these have generally been progressed quickly.
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ACTIONS RECOMMENDED

This is the recommended list of items that will be taken forward as a result of the audit - it will be adjusted (if required) and signed off at the meeting you are reporting to. The following format should be used:

Standard/ criteria	Issue identified	Action(s) needed	By who	By when
Targeted recruitment + retention to achieve net increase of 10 new "main" foster carers - 80% to offer placements to children over 5 yrs (particularly adolescents), siblings and BME carers.	Under-representation of carers vis-à-vis Nos of LAC in these groups	Discussion with Marketing re strategies to recruit Recruitment Officer Progression of new models of supporting carers e.g Mockingbird	JA + KBA/SR JA, VS + KBA	15.5.14 Sept '14
<i>Improving Placement stability (As per N163 + N162 in Purple Book)</i>	<i>As above</i>	<i>Conclusions from the analysis of LAC 11 exercise</i> <i>Development of Foster For Adoption in conjunction with BAAS</i>	<i>DAG, JA + AK</i> <i>DG + JA</i>	<i>May '14</i> <i>End June '14</i>
<i>Improving Permanency Planning</i>	<i>Continued improvement of performance for SGOs and adoptions quoted above</i>	<i>Publish updated Permanency Planning Strategy Policy + Procedures</i>	<i>AK, JA + DAG</i>	<i>End of May</i>
<i>July 2013 Regulations -assessments of foster carers and adopters achieved within a total of 6 mths (Stages 1 + 2)</i>	<i>As above</i>	<i>Continued detailed tracking of reasons for delay in monthly performance meetings and addressing issues</i>	<i>KBA, SR, DG and JA</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
<i>Improving timeliness of adoptive placements as per the Adoption Scorecard in the Purple Book</i>	<i>As above</i>	<i>Work with 7 L.As to explore membership of an extended Hants, Oxon, Surrey consortium as well as continued membership of Berks-wide consortium</i>	<i>JA</i>	<i>End of May</i>

Children's Services Key Quality Indicators - Quarter 4 Jan -March 2014

	Key Quality Indicator for 2013-2014	Quantitative measures used to inform judgement	Qualitative measures used to inform judgement	Commentary points this quarter	RAG for GOOD benchmark	To get to GOOD every social worker & ATM needs to focus on;
1	Timeliness, progression and quality of Child Protection Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purple book: Number of CP Plans Duration of CP Plans Re-registrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routine monthly case audits précis 'Straw poll' monthly survey of parents Feedback from Core Groups Quarterly external audit of cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have reduced child protection plans to 153 & 5 with CPP for 2+years External audit found one case to be needing immediate improvement Straw polls data generally good Core groups -still need evidence of SMART plans 	A >	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure CPPs are reviewed at Core groups, Ensuring parents know what they need to do ATMs ensure good record of supervision on case file ATMs to check cases are progressing at 10months
2	Purposeful and timely visits to children allocated to children's social care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purple book CP visits on time by team LAC visits on time by team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Straw poll' monthly survey of parents (CP and LAC) LAC survey Routine monthly case audits précis Quarterly external audit of cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Straw polls showed need for improvement on keeping parents informed but generally positive Views of child better recorded Visiting improved SMART action plans improving 	A ^	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record that the child has been seen in the right place on FWi Ensure you record the child was seen alone & you saw their bedroom You write a sentence to say what the child felt/thought/wants
3	The timeliness, progression and quality of LAC Care Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purple book: Number of CPlans 'up to date' 26 week data in court Duration post PO Number robust challenges needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S&QA quarterly reports evidencing timeliness and progression, other key themes (including trends for robust challenges) Routine case audits précis Quarterly External audit of cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Straw polls showed generally positive Views of child better recorded Visiting improved SMART action plans improving Reducing trend on LAC due to better progression of permanency plans 	A ^	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every Care Plan is up to date and in the right place on FWi SSW links to SW to do a joint visit to carers in the next quarter
4	Timeliness & progression of children's permanency plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See 3 above ALM data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purple book PI S&QA quarterly reports evidencing timeliness and progression, other key themes Report back from ALM including child's/ parent's voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption numbers positive Timeliness of adoption assessments needs improvement IRO better at tracking what's needed at 2nd review 	A ^	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IROs to track and challenge as needed Adoption assessments to ensure are in time All 2nd LAC Reviews record clearly the plan for permanency
5	Percentage of cases with up to date, good quality assessments completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purple book Timeliness of assessments Up to date assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routine case audits précis Quarterly External audit of cases Service user straw polls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Still working out benchmark for new single assessment No report presented to QAPB Not able to evidence change either way this quarter 	A >	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ATMs sign off every S47 step All S47s in Locality Teams are correctly recorded Ensure ATMS are timely in setting timescales for assessments Keep parents informed
6	Percentage of cases where the child's lived experience is clearly recorded on child's social care file	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative check (potentially via new FWi reporting) - child's view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routine case audits précis Quarterly External audit of cases Sample monthly check of 10 case files across area teams and A&A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving internal audit picture CP reports show improvement and no adverse reports from CP Chairs Case files seen have been better at this Some audits still show gaps however, holding us back from getting to good 	A >	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ATMs to check in supervision that its happening Chronologies are up to date & good quality
7	The timeliness and quality of children's social work supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantitative audit timeliness of supervision Frequency of supervision Sample monthly check of 10 staff files across area teams and A&A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routine case audits evidence précis Quarterly External audit of cases Qualitative audit of supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit still picking up issues on a minority of cases Frequency appears ok but quality of recording not evidencing reflection for all staff Caseloads being monitored 	A >	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every ATM ensures 4 weekly supervision to every social worker Practice recording reflective discussion.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE , CHILDREN'S SERVICES & EDUCATION COMMITTEE.		
DATE:	7 JULY 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	INTRODUCTION OF UNIVERSAL INFANT FREE SCHOOL MEALS		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR ENNIS	PORTFOLIO:	EDUCATION
SERVICE:	EDUCATION	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	MYLES MILNER	TEL:	72904
JOB TITLE:	SCHOOL SERVICES MANAGER	E-MAIL:	myles.milner@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In December 2013 the government announced that every child of infant age in England should be entitled to a hot free school meal from September 2014. This report outlines the steps, and costs involved in ensuring that infant age children will receive a hot free school meal from September 2014.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the proposals to prepare schools to meet the demand for increased numbers of school meals, as outlined in paragraph 3.6 be approved.
- 2.2 That the Committee note the need for parents to continue to register their entitlement for low income support so that schools can access additional Pupil Premium funding in addition to the now free, to all infant children, school meal.
- 2.3 That the Committee note the scale of work going on across the borough and the inherent risks as set out in section 9.

3. BACKGROUND AND PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The move to Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) is a statutory requirement placed on local government. These changes are in response to a recommendation in the School Food Plan, which is an independent review published in July 2013. Existing arrangements for free school meals for disadvantaged pupils in nursery and key stages 2-4 will continue as now.
- 3.2 Results from pilot projects held elsewhere nationally between 2009 and 2011, showed that universal free school meals can have significant benefits both for individual children and for the broader life of the school. Pupils in the pilot areas were found to eat more healthily and perform better academically - and these improvements were most pronounced among the poorest pupils. Schools also reported improved behaviour

and atmosphere, as a result of all pupils (and an increasing number of teachers) eating together every day.

3.4 FUNDING

- a) In a joint letter to all schools the Government confirmed that revenue funding will be allocated at £2.30 per meal, with local funding per school based upon school census numbers.
- b) Capital funding to ensure school kitchens are equipped with sufficient equipment taken together with associated building costs, has been provided in addition to the revenue funding. In Reading the Council is working with both community and voluntary aided schools to ensure that kitchens are ready for the increased demand in meal production

3.5 In Reading we have established an ambitious capital programme to ensure that all schools within the scope of the programme have the kitchen capacity and suitable equipment to deliver the increased number of meals required to meet the demand. The basis of this calculation is that 80 % of the school population in years R, 1, and 2 will require a hot meal. This is based on experience with pilot schemes elsewhere in the country.

3.6 The estimated cost of the works is £591k, with UIFSM capital grant supporting £384k, the remaining £177k being made up from elsewhere, from within the Education Capital Programme.

3.7 WORKING WITH OUR SCHOOLS

Given the Government's ambitious timescale to introduce this expansion in the school meals service it has been essential to work closely with individual schools. The response has been very positive but with major changes necessary to the school lunchtime arrangements in almost all cases. The Council is supported in this by Chartwells, the Council's school meals contractor, who have attended meetings and worked collaboratively to ensure that required changes to current operational arrangements are discussed and adopted wherever necessary.

3.8 Academy schools are provided for separately and it is not part of the Council's remit to assist or fund modifications to their buildings or equipment.

3.9 PUPIL PREMIUM

Pupil Premium allocations will continue to be calculated using data collected during the January census of schools and pupils. The amount a school receives in the financial year 2014 to 2015 will depend on how many eligible pupils are registered for free school meals on the day of the school census. Schools must continue to encourage parents of eligible children to register their child for free school meals to ensure each school receives the maximum pupil premium allocation for that year.

3.10 As part of these discussions with schools, we are collating examples of ways schools are planning to encourage parents of infant aged pupils to still complete the FSM application. Some examples are:

- Offering free uniform package (if eligible for FSM)
- Discounted school trips (if eligible for FSM)
- Considering asking all parents to complete application on admission.

3.11 A pupil will still be able to have a free infant school meal even if an eligible parent does not register, however the school will not receive the pupil premium element of £1,300 that the school can use to improve educational support.

- 3.12 In preparation, a contract variation has been raised to ensure that Chartwells will be permitted to make a change to the standard menu on census days in January, May and October to allow flexibility when promotions are planned for September 14 - July 15. The menu on all days must meet nutritional guidelines and support the range of dietary requirements set out in the contract. The School Meals team will also work with individual schools to offer incentives such as 'star on plate' (where those who have a school meal could win a prize) to ensure maximum uptake

3.13 Pupil Numbers Involved

The UIFSM programme represents a significant increase in the number of children expected to participate in taking a hot meal at a Reading School. Currently daily uptake stands at 3,227 rising to an expected 7,222 in September 2014.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 4.1 This report directly contributes to a healthy population and the development of good educational attainment.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 5.1 The expectation of this initiative and the School Food Plan is that all eligible pupils will be offered a hot school meal (rather than a packed lunch). This will be met at all schools within the central Reading contract and works are scheduled to ensure kitchens will be ready to provide this on the first day of term.
- 5.2 Schools have advised parents of pupils affected by the revised service, of the changes involved at school meal times.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Every infant aged school pupil will be able to obtain a free school meal as a right.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Spend approval for the overall work programme was obtained at policy committee in February 2014, and relates to the current financial year.
- 7.2 There are limitations to the choice of new equipment available for school catering, and major limitations in the time available to place orders and ensure that equipment is delivered and installed. A waiver of contract procedure rules will be sought on the basis of contract procedure rules 5 (d) and (g), reflecting both the limited equipment market and the urgency associated with ensuring delivery.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report are set out below:-

Revenue Implications

- 8.1 Individual school revenue funding for UIFSM will be provided through the schools block based on a census taken three times a year.

8.2 Capital Implications

Capital Programme reference from budget book	2013/14 £000	2014/15 £000	2015/16 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure		591	
Funded by Grant (a) UIFSM Funding (b) Capital Maintenance Section 106 (specify) Voluntary Aided capital Funding (LCVAP)		300 207 84	
Total Funding		591	

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 As noted in section 7, there is a large amount of equipment on order from a limited range of suppliers. While we are not aware of any current issues it is prudent to recognise that schools across the country are undertaking similar work and therefore, it is possible that some shortages may occur as September approaches.
- 9.2 There is building work required in most schools ranging from simple electrical supplies to major building remodelling, being undertaken by several contractors. The current schedule shows that the kitchens are handed over to the catering contractor during August 2014. Clearly this is already a tight programme with the associated risks of this type of conversion projects.
- 9.3 There are several schools where the electricity supplies are inadequate to meet the revised kitchen power demand. This is a largely historic problem as all schools in Reading were built over 40-50 years ago when power demand was much less than today. The statutory providers of electricity in Reading the SSE have to be given lengthy notice and payment up front before they will carry out new connections. This is a significant risk.
- 9.4 A sum of £50k has been included to manage contingencies which include the electrical supplies and any other urgent unforeseen building works.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 *DFE Capital Funding , technical note for universal free school meals financial year 2014/15.*

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

TO:	ADULT SERVICES SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	7 July 2104	AGENDA ITEM:	11
TITLE:	NEW EARLY EDUCATION/CHILDCARE PLACES FOR TWO YEAR OLDS IN READING.		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	JOHN ENNIS	PORTFOLIO:	EDUCATION
SERVICE:	EARLY YEARS' SERVICE	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	THERESA SHORTLAND	TEL:	0118 939 0957
JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF EARLY YEARS AND EXTENDED SCHOOLS SERVICES	E-MAIL:	theresa.shortland@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 In May 2012 the Government confirmed that two-year-olds that live in households which meet the eligibility criteria for free school meals would be entitled to a free fifteen hours early education place, along with children who are looked after by the state. These set out the national eligibility criteria for the first phase of the two-year-old entitlement to free early education from September 2013. This is intended to extend the free early education offer to 20% of the least advantaged two-year-olds from September 2013 and 40% by September 2104.
- 1.2 This report updates members on progress to date, seeks approval on the principles of funding on quality measures and the proposals to develop further work with Schools in Reading.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the progress of the early education places for two year olds in Reading be noted.
- 2.2 That the proposed work with schools to create new places for two year olds on school sites be approved.
- 2.3 That the principles of funding for new places for two year olds within the context of the Ofsted Inspection framework be approved.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Achieving 2 Year Olds project is a key element of the Coalition Government's social mobility and foundation year's strategies and aims to counter the impact of poverty on the development of very young children.
- 3.2 In May 2012 the Government confirmed that two-year-olds that live in households which meet the eligibility criteria for free school meals would be entitled to a free fifteen hours early education place, along with children who are looked after by the state. These set out the national eligibility criteria for the first phase of the two-year-old entitlement to free early education from September 2013 to September 2014.

The criteria to receive this entitlement is:

- Income Support
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- An income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit - provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income that does not exceed £16,190 (as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs)
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child subject to a Child Protection Plan
- Looked after Child

Additional criteria set locally by RBC for September 2013:

- SEN- A child that is currently subject to a Special Education Needs Statement
- A child that has a registered disability and is currently in receipt of Disability Living Allowance
- A child who has been referred to a Pre-School Support Teacher or the portage team through the Early Intervention Panel (This will only continue until the end of March 2015 as its funded from the grant funding.)

- 3.3 The criteria are going to extend this free early education offer to 40% of the least advantaged two-year-olds from September 2104. The eligibility criteria for this extended entitlement will be:

- In receipt of the Working Tax Credit provided you have an annual income that does not exceed £16,190 as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs they are looked after by the local authority;
- they meet the criteria used to determine eligibility for Free School Meals;
- the family receives Working Tax Credits and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 per year;
- the child has a current statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care plan;
- they are entitled to Disability Living Allowance;

- they are no longer looked-after by the local authority as a result of an adoption order, a special guardianship order or a residence order.
- 3.4 A new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was implemented in September 2012; this is the framework for children from birth until the 31 August after their fifth birthday. The new EYFS meant that Ofsted changed how they register and inspect providers on the Early Years Register. The changes in the revised early years Ofsted framework introduced in September 2012 had an impact on some providers and the judgments made by Ofsted.
 - 3.5 The statutory guidance to local authorities for early education funding also changed in 2013 and is changing again in September 2014. Local authorities are no longer able to apply any local quality requirements on the funding of early education places. Ofsted judgements are now considered the only measure of quality. This is the measure that is used to fund all early education places. The funding for two year old places should only be given to early years settings that are deemed 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted.
 - 3.6 The funding guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) indicates that children that meet the eligibility criteria for a funded place for two year olds can only be allocated places in settings that are deemed 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. In Reading this aligns with our aspiration to fund children within 'Good' or 'Outstanding' providers only.
 - 3.7 Schools wishing to take 2 year olds currently need to register as an early years provider with Ofsted, in addition to their school registration. Proposals to change this are expected from the DfE in 2015.

4. THE PROPOSAL

Progress so far:

- 4.1 The allocation of funding for places for two year olds to local authorities from the DfE is based on estimates of the number of the least advantaged children living in Reading. This is sourced from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the data gives details of the parents that may be eligible for their child to take up a place.
- 4.2 The initial estimates established that there were 440 children in Reading from September 2013 when the eligibility criteria was the 20% least advantaged children. When the eligibility criteria extends to the 40% least advantaged children in September 2014 it was estimated that 857 children will be eligible in Reading.
- 4.3 From April 2015 the funding for two year old places will move to being participation based, which is the same as the early years single funding formula (EYSFF) for 3 and 4 year olds. Until then 2 year olds are being funded on a place led basis which depends upon estimates of children eligible to take up the places.

- 4.4 In June 2014, 238 children aged two had taken up a new place. See table 1 for performance breakdown from September 2013.

End of quarter	Target	<i>2 year old funded Places available</i>	Places taken up
Dec 2013 - Q3 Autumn Term	488	260	174
March 2014 - Q4 Spring Term14	488	298	215
June 2014 - Q1 Summer Term 2014 (to 17/6/14)	488	434	238

- 4.5 The funding available from 1 April 2014 is noted in the table shown in section 9 of the report.
- 4.6 In Reading difficulties arose in setting the rate for funding places for two year olds initially, due to the rates paid for 3 and 4 year old funded early education places from the EYSFF. There were protracted negotiations to resolve this issue which impacted on the decisions to create more places and resulted in a delay in creating new places for funded for 2 year olds. An interim funding rate was set from April 2013 of £5.00 per hour. The funding rate for two year old places was agreed at Schools Forum in July 2013 and set at £5.36 per hour which is the rate we receive from the DfE in this financial year.
- 4.7 A bidding process was implemented in autumn 2013 which invited early years providers in Reading to bid for funding to create new places for two year olds. The bids were assessed against a set criteria and it was agreed that 9 bids would receive funding. This created 187 new places for eligible two year olds at a cost of £273,636. A decision book was approved for the allocation of funding in February 2014.

The future:

- 4.8 The number of children taking up places in September 2013 against the DfE targets was initially slow, but there is currently very little unmet demand for places, there are currently sufficient places for two year olds available across Reading. However, some settings are very popular with parents and they are choosing to wait for a place for their child at these settings. New settings and those that have not taken two year olds previously are slowly increasing their take up. We aim to incentivise settings that have not taken two year olds previously by offering place led funding for one term in the autumn term 2014. This should enable these settings to put in place the staff ratios they require to make the place provision.
- 4.9 In September 2014 the criteria for entitlement extends to 40% least advantaged two year olds. The funding allocation for 2014-5 was based on an estimated 857 children that will be entitled to a place. The most recent DWP data indicates that there are 748 parents with eligible children. Some of these

children will already be attending early years settings and will already be taking up a place.

- 4.10 The current assessment of demand for places indicates there are some areas that require a greater share of the new places for September 2014. This assessment will be used to provide a weighting for the second round of bids to ensure that any gaps in supply are addressed.

Places for two year olds in schools

- 4.11 The government are pressing local authorities to work with schools to enable them to take two year olds, and offer childcare from 8am to 6pm. We have had little proactive interest from schools so far and propose that we use some of the trajectory funding to actively work with schools to establish a number of 2 year old places. This, in principle, will also cover the issues of place led funding and funding of places for rising 3s in schools. Schools forum would be consulted as part of this proposal. It is proposed to undertake further work with schools to support those that want to develop places for two year olds.

Marketing and the role of children centres.

- 4.12 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data that is provided to all local authorities includes information on the potentially eligible families that are entitled to a free place for their two year olds. Use of this data is becoming firmly embedded in the initial stage of the application process for targeted families. The DWP data is being used in Reading to make initial contact with families if they are not already taking up a place.
- 4.13 The children's centres have been proactive in using the data within the protocols established by early years for sharing this. The children centre outreach staff use the DWP data to contact eligible parents and provide a wider outreach programme to support parents to take up the offer.
- 4.14 Children's centres are inspected by Ofsted. Within the Ofsted framework the children's centres are judged on the provision and facilitation for targeted children to take up the free entitlement to early education, especially two year olds from the least advantaged families.

Developing an on line application process and marketing

- 4.15 The application process is currently being reviewed with a view to making the whole process available on line. This would mean a parent can check eligibility and place availability on line streamlining the process and making it easier for them to secure a place. The service will be one of the first across the Council to work with the new website and the transformation project to accelerate the process.
- 4.16 We have also reviewed the marketing action plan. A broad reach media programme has been planned for the summer from June 2014 with the aim of getting parents interested and taking up the entitlement. The RBC media team have worked with early years to develop clear and concise marketing

messages. This promotes the offer to all families not just the targeted list provided by the DfE.

- 4.17 Not all eligible parents want to take up their place. The reasons that parents have given for not taking up the offer of the entitlement have been monitored. In general, the majority of those parents not taking up a place are of the opinion that their child is too young and not ready. Other parents have indicated they have family reasons or issues on either the health of a parent or a child. We need to raise the profile of child-minders as an option for parents to take up the offer as that take up is currently very low.
- 4.18 The role of the local authority is to change parent perceptions of the free entitlement from one of childcare to early education. National research clearly shows that early education can play a pivotal role in supporting the development of children. The first major European longitudinal study of a national sample of young children's development was the EPPE project. This research project focused on the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE). EPPE has demonstrated the positive effects of early education on children's intellectual and social/behavioural developmental. High quality provision shows the greatest benefits. New longitudinal research has been commissioned by Government in 2013 to look at how effective early education is for two, three and four year olds in England.

The DfE

- 4.19 The take up of funded two year old places is being monitored by the DfE. In May 2014 Reading Council and 15 other councils were invited to a meeting with the parliamentary Under -Secretary of State for education and childcare at the DfE. The purpose of this meeting was to explore what was holding back take up in these, mainly urban, areas.
- 4.20 The DfE indicated that it is possible for RBC to convert unspent place revenue to capital. In April 2013 an application to do this we sent to the DfE. We are still awaiting a decision on this. In April 2014 we have implemented a second round of procurement to create new places for two year olds.

Quality

- 4.21 A small number of early years settings in Reading have received Ofsted judgements that are 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' since the new Ofsted framework has been implemented in September 2012. Where this has happened these settings have not been able to offer places to two year olds. Currently we have 32 places for two year olds that are in this category. We have been undertake work with these settings to improve the quality, and will continue to do this so that the places are available for two year olds when they are re-inspected. Two of the settings have since been re-inspected and received good judgments so are now able to provide places for two year olds.
- 4.22 We have not had to remove funding from a setting falling below the quality judgement threshold in Reading so far, however, a procedure is in place that is

in line with statutory guidance, should we need to take such action in the event that actions to improve are not effective.

- 4.23 The early years resources team will undertake monitoring and compliance visits and develop an ongoing programme to do this. We need to ensure providers are meeting the grant conditions and comply with the statutory guidance.

Risks

- 4.23 There risks that should be considered and noted that may impact on the supply and demand for places for two year olds. The greatest risk is that early years settings do not get a 'good' or 'outstanding' outcome from their Ofsted Inspections. This has potential to limit the number of places available. Other risks include:

- Parents not taking up the offer despite a full media campaign.
- Place availability is not close enough, some travel may be required
- Schools do not have space to take two year olds
- Childminders do not engage with the two year olds programme
- There may be delays in the delivery of the capital bids to create new places
- The numbers of entitled children will always fluctuate and impact on the sufficiency in the sector, resulting in an increase or decrease in demand for places

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all is at the heart of the work with early education.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 A range of media and marketing activity has been delivered to date to provide information to eligible parents on the entitlement. This has included on line information and advice from the family information service, alongside the outreach work undertaken by the children's centres staff.

- 6.2 A number of promotional events have taken place in parks over schools holidays and there have been other events in Broad Street Mall. A range of literature, leaflets and posters have been distributed to early years providers and other public services.

- 6.3 The media action plan has been reviewed with the extension of the entitlement to 40% least advantaged children in September 2014. A media campaign has been planned from July 2014 with the 40% criteria to promote the entitlement to eligible parents.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The statutory guidance for early years and childcare requires that providers promote equality and inclusion, particularly for disadvantaged families, looked after children, children in need and children with disabilities or special educational needs by removing barriers of access to early education and working with parents to give each child support to fulfil their potential. Local authorities must ensure they meet their duties under the Equality Act 2010 when securing early education places.
- 7.2 The procurement process for the individual bids to create new places for two year olds assessed the equality impact of those individual bids.
- 7.3 A full sufficiency report in the autumn 2014 will consider these issues on early education on a Reading wide basis.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Local Authorities have a statutory duty under sections of the Childcare Act 2006 to provide free early education to eligible 2 year olds from September 2013. This entitlement is an extension to the existing entitlement for three and four year olds, whereby any 3 or 4 year old child can claim a maximum of 15 hours early education per week. This entitlement is free to the children and funded by a government grant.
- 8.2 Allocation of funding to provide places is set within the compliance requirements of the Dedicated Schools Grant. The details of the requirements for receiving funding for the provision of early education are provided in the 'early education statutory guidance for local authorities'. The guidance for 2014 is currently in draft but expected to be confirmed by July 2014.
- 8.3 Local authorities are expected to limit the requirements they place on any early years provider or child-minder to those which ensure:
- early education places are delivered completely free of charge to parents;
 - early education places are provided flexibly in a pattern which meets the needs of parents;
 - that the funding provided is used properly and in accordance with any arrangements made with providers;
 - that the provider meets the needs of disabled children and children with special educational needs; and
 - that providers keep children safe.

Each provider is required to sign a providers agreement with RBC to state they will comply with the conditions. A programme of visits is undertaken by the early years team to monitor the compliance.

- 8.4 The sharing of DWP data has been agreed following advice from legal services. A memorandum on data sharing is in place and a protocol exists for all RBC staff to adhere to in handling the data.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The funding available is shown in the table below.

					Note 1	
	2013/14	Capital	2014/15	2014/15	2014/15	2014/15
	C/fwd	Committed	Original	Rev to Cap	Revised	
	£000		£000	£000	£000	£000
Place Funding (DSG)	915		2,223	- 500		2,638
Trajectory Fund (DSG)	367	-	270	-		637
Capital (non DSG)	236	- 77	-	500		659
Total						3,934
Note 1: £500k transfer is subject to Secretary of State Approval						

9.2 This expenditure relates to specific funding provided via a grant through the Dedicated Schools Grant. The value for money of the approach has been reviewed by Schools Forum and the EYSFF sub group of Schools Forum with reference to national benchmarks.

9.3 Capital and revenue bids are subject to scrutiny by the local authority, via a multi-disciplinary team and result in separate approval via the decision book process.

9.4 The key financial risks going forward will be sufficiency of places once capital funding is used and the move from place led to participation funding

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 The following papers have been referenced to underpin this report.

- *Early education and childcare statutory guidance for local authorities. Draft September 2014*
- *Statutory framework for the early years foundations stage. Published March 2014, effective from September 2014.*
- *Framework for the regulation of provision on the Early Years Register. 2013*
- *Early Years Block Report to Schools Forum 20 March 2014 setting rates, agreeing funding carry forwards and approving central retentions*



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ADOPTION AGENCY**

ANNUAL REPORT 2013 - 2014

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report outlines the work undertaken by the Adoption Service from 1 April 2013 - 31 March 2014. The main objective of the service was to ensure that all children in Reading who require permanent placements through adoption are provided with an adoptive family who can meet all of their identified needs. The key priority is to ensure that children are placed with families who will offer security and stability within a loving environment. The team also seeks to ensure that there are sufficient adopters available to meet the diverse needs of these children and aims to offer a high standard of post - placement and post adoption support to ensure the ongoing stability and duration of the placement. This also includes assessing potential adopters for other areas children who may need them.
- 1.2 The report updates the actions in relation to the National Minimum Standards for Adoption (Performance Indicators: CF/C23 *percentage of looked after children placed for adoption or with Special Guardianship Orders* and NI 061 - *Percentage of children adopted placed within 12 months of decision that 'child should be placed for adoption'*) as well as having continual regard for meeting children and young people's health, safety and educational needs as previously laid out by the Every Child Matters agenda.
- 1.3 The report also addresses two national targets established within Adoption Scorecards (from the 2012 Action Plan for Adoption) namely:
- *The average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (for children who have been adopted). As of January 2014 the threshold was 20 months.*
 - *The average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family. As of January 2014 the threshold was 6 months.*

2. POLICY CONTEXT

- Adoption Service Regulations 2005
- Statutory guidance on Adoption 2013
- The Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011 and 2013

- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Action Plan for Adoption 2012
- Family Justice Review 2011

3. CHANGES WITHIN THE SERVICE

3.1 There have been a number of significant changes to the service during the period of this report. The following is an outline of the staffing changes in the Adoption team:

- April 2013: 1 part-time RBC permanence fostering social worker (18.5 hours) commenced a period of maternity leave.
- April 2013: 1 part time agency social worker joined the team for 3 months to cover a vacancy until this post was filled in May by a full time RBC social worker.
- May 2013: 1 part time agency social worker (21 hours) had covered a full time vacancy until this post was filled in May by a second full time RBC social worker starting.
- June 2013: 1 full time RBC Assistant Team Manager joined the team replacing the temporary locum Assistant Team Manager who had been covering the vacancy.
- July 2013: 1 part time (25 hours) RBC post adoption social worker joined the team.
- Feb 2014: 1 full time agency social worker left the team. This vacancy will be covered by the full time RBC social worker starting in May 2014.

3.2 There has therefore been a fair degree of staff turnover during the year which produced the challenge of ensuring that work was progressed in a timely fashion. Overall however the staffing situation eased in that for the past year it was generally possible to recruit new substantive workers, albeit that this took some time to achieve and a number of adverts on some occasions.

3.3 Since June 2013 the service became solely an Adoption Team. The permanency fostering family finders transferred to the Recruitment and Assessment section of the Fostering team

4. LEGISLATION

4.1 The Adoption Agencies (miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 came into effect on the 1st July 2013. The 2 stage adopter assessment process has

been established within the service as a result. All adopter assessments now need to be completed within six months.

5. OFSTED INSPECTION

5.1 Ofsted carried out their last adoption inspection of Reading's adoption service in 2010. This was graded as 'good' in all outcomes with an overall rating of 'good'. All actions as recommended were undertaken and work continues to address these issues including;

- The adoption panel continues to offer advice in relation to contact for all children presented with plans of adoption. This advice is clearly recorded in the panel minute extract and recorded on the child's file;
- All recruitment documentation (including that for agency or independent workers) includes details of references and DBS checks having been taken up. Business Support for Family Placements now coordinate this aspect of recruitment activity relating to agency and independent workers to ensure consistency across the service;

5.3 The inspection of local authority adoption services is now integrated into a new Single Inspection Framework and covers all aspects of local authority Safeguarding and Looked After Children's services. These inspections are unannounced and it is unclear when next readings adoption service will be seen.

6. ADOPTION PANEL

6.1 A separate report on the Adoption Panel is compiled by the Adoption Panel Adviser as part of her role within the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service and Consortium. This report provides an overview of adoption activity across the whole of Berkshire.

6.2 Panel activity for Reading this year included the following:

Children: 22 individual children were presented for recommendations of '*should be placed for adoption*'.

Adopters: 16 sets of adopters were approved during the year.

Matches: 24 children were matched with adoptive families.

Type of Placements: children were matched with adopters approved by Reading, other local authorities, other Berkshire local authorities (within the Berkshire Consortium) and with Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

Further analysis of these figures is represented below.

7. STATISTICS - CHILDREN

Adoption Activity

- 7.1 The Adoption Service's performance was judged against two national performance indicators.
- 7.2 **The Percentage of looked after children placed for adoption or with a Special Guardianship Order** - this is a cumulative figure, and the year-end figure now stands at 16.85% with 26 children adopted and Special Guardianship Orders for 11 children). This is well above the target for the year of 12%. This represents a continued year on year increase in the total numbers of children adopted e.g. 26 adoptions in 2013-14 compared to 18 in 2012-13.
- 7.3 **The Percentage of adopted children placed within 12 months of the decision that 'child should be placed for adoption'** - 56% of the 26 children adopted in 2013-14 had been placed within this timescale. This is a slight improvement in performance from 50% for 2012-13. The target had been set at 80%. Performance against this target has been adversely affected by the success in placing children who are older, part of a sibling group, have disabilities, behavioural issues or parents with mental health issues. Of the 10 children for whom it took longer than 12 months to place, 9 had at least one such factor in their profiles which makes find placements more difficult to find. For example 6 of the children were aged 5 to 9 years of age. Hence we are clear that not meeting this target should not be seen as a negative for these children.
- 7.4 The Government has set two increasingly challenging year on year targets. As of January 2014 these were to achieve:
- an average timeframe of six months (183 days) between receiving court authority to place a child and matching children with adoptive parents. The England 2010-13 average was 210 days. RBC's average was 218 days.
 - an average of 20 months (610 days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family. The England 2010-13 average was 647 days. RBC's average was 625 days.

Placement of older children, sibling groups or those with complex needs has also impacted on the performance for these targets. Due to the relative low figures for children who are adopted, each child makes a significant difference to the performance. This situation reflects the current situation nationally in terms of the difficulty recruiting sufficient prospective adopters who will consider children in these categories. Having said this however detailed tracking systems are in place to monitor family finding activity and promote timely decision making for individual children.

7.5 The Adoption Team was also supporting the placements for 15 children placed with adoptive parents awaiting adoption orders at 31st March 2014. Their age range was as follows:

- 0 - 12 months: 0 Children
- 12 months - 3 years: 8 children
- 3 years - 5 years: 4 children
- 5 plus years: 3 children

Their profile in terms of ethnicity was as follows:

- White UK: 8 children
- White Other: 2 children
- White UK -Caribbean(Mixed Black & White) : 3 children
- White / African:1 child
- White UK/ Asian: 1 child

7.6 By the 31st March 2014, 22 Reading children had received an Agency Decision Maker decision of 'should be placed for adoption'.

7.7 As of March 2014 the full range of family finding activity is required for 30 children. This represents a 50% decrease from the year before. The Children's Social Work teams have indicated that since the middle of 2013 there has been a reduction in the number of active care proceedings and Court Orders. The Family Justice Review had effectively front-loaded work with families prior to the issuing of proceedings. An increase in the numbers of children placed with extended family members and connected persons with Residence and Special Guardianship Orders has also been indicated.

7.8 In addition to these children early work is under way for five children who are likely to have adoption as their care plan.

7.9 In February 2014 an Adoption Activity Day event was held whereby prospective adopters met children requiring families whilst participating in child friendly activities. From this event two children were linked with families. At the time of writing this report one of the children had started introductions with their adoptive family. Two more Adoption Activity Days are planned for 2014.

Monitoring

7.10 A tracking system was used to monitor the children with plans for adoption from an early stage through to placement and final Adoption Order. The Adoption Liaison Meeting met monthly to monitor the plans, to ensure that these did not drift, and to identify any children and placements that needed

extra support. This group comprised of the Children's Social Work Team Managers, the Adoption Team Manager, an Independent Reviewing Officer and the Service Manager (Family Placements).

Predictions for the year ahead

- 7.11 Compared to some other Local Authorities there continues to be a high number of referrals for children with plans of adoption despite the number of referrals reducing here too since the proceeding year. The relatively high numbers of children combined with the national picture of a mismatch between potential adopters preferring placements of babies without an identified risk of health or behavioural issues and the children whom local authorities are needing to place, means that it is unlikely that the number of children placed within timescales will be 100%. In the past it has not been uncommon for 60-100 plus matches to be explored in order to obtain an adoptive placements for some of the children who are harder to place. It is still too early to see whether the recent decline in numbers of Reading children awaiting adoptive placements means that it becomes more possible to recruit adopters or find inter-agency placements that will meet their needs. There are a significant number of children with a high level of special educational and health needs who will require additional levels of multi-agency, ongoing support. Alongside the cross-agency costs involved here, there is likely to be a continued financial and staffing implication within the Adoption Service for post adoption support as our year on year success in placing more children for adoption has a cumulative effect on the level of demand for post adoption support.

Consortia Membership

- 7.12 In March 2014 a joint feasibility study was undertaken with a consultant researcher regarding the viability of merging 2 existing consortia and the inclusion of Reading in the creation of an enlarged adoption consortium for the South of England (with a total of eight Local Authorities). The study was largely positive and there is a proposal for a new consortium to be launched at the end of 2014. The mutual benefits will be as follows: to improve the pool of available adopters for children, reduce the cost of monitoring and supporting long distance adoptive placements and finally the ability to joint fund specific initiatives such as recruitment campaigns for adopters and training events for workers.
- 7.13 In addition to membership of this new consortium Reading will continue to contribute to the pan-Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service and the associated consortium arrangements.

8. STATISTICS - ADOPTERS

Adoption Activity

- 8.1 The Adoption Service applied a rigorous and thorough assessment of adopters in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. There was consistent effort to ensure that the service continued to recruit adopters to meet the needs of the children we are currently family finding for.
- 8.2 Current recruitment guidelines reflect practise in progressing enquiries from prospective adopters who meet basic eligibility criteria
- 8.3 There were 83 initial enquiries between April 2013 - March 2014 from people interested in adopting.
- 8.4 Sixteen prospective adopters have been approved this year (an increase of 2 compared to last year).
- 8.5 63% of Reading children were placed with adopters assessed by Reading Borough Council. This was achieved in part by assessing a cohort of adopters from the Basingstoke area. As more adopters living in Reading are now being assessed this pattern may change next year creating more inter-dependency with consortia partners.
- 8.6 The service received on average 3 - 6 new enquiries per month. All of these are invited to attend Information Days.
- 8.7 At the time of writing this report there were 3 outstanding adopter assessments that were started under the old regulations. One of these assessments will go to the May 2014 Adoption Panel. One assessment has just been re-started after being on hold due to serious family illness. For the remaining assessment additional information has been required which has led to significant delay. In March 2014 there were 6 assessments under the 2013 regulations. Four were in Stage 1 (adopter led self learning) and two were in Stage 2 (Social worker led adopter assessment). In common with all the other Local Authorities in the South England BAAF regional group, difficulties have been experienced in completing Stage 1 within 2 months as outlined in the 2013 Regulations. Changes have been made in practice to ensure that inter-agency checks and also reference checks are started right at the very beginning of the process (as of the carers formal application). However this remains a challenging area. So far the two assessments that are in Stage 2 are on track to be completed within the four month specified timescale.

Ethnicity of adopters

- 8.8 15 of these adopters were White/UK couples and one was a White UK and Asian couple. This is a similar pattern to last year. There is clearly more

development required in increasing the number of adopters from different ethnic backgrounds. The Recruitment and Assessment workers have recently undertaken some targeted work with local faith groups. Unfortunately, to date this had not resulted in an increase in the number of Black and Minority Ethnic adoption applicants. Supplementary activity is being considered in partnership with Reading Churches e.g. as part of the nationwide 'Home for Good' initiative which encourages adoption from all faith groups. Alternative options for distributing adoption information to a wide audience both within and outside the Reading area will be evaluated.

Location

- 8.9 The majority of the adopters approved were non- Reading residents. This meant that more of Reading children requiring adoptive placements were placed with Reading approved prospective adopters.

9. RECRUITMENT

- 9.1 There was a joint recruitment campaign for Black History month in October and Adoption Week in November with Slough Borough Council. The Adoption and Fostering Teams also attended the Royal Berkshire show. In addition there was some advertising in specialist magazines for children with special needs. Although there has been some initial interest from these campaigns the numbers have been small. The biggest impact on adoption enquiries has been when programmes about adoption have been televised. In those circumstances the adoption enquiries increased to double figures in a month compared to the usual 3 to 6. All initial enquires are asked where they heard about adoption. The ongoing challenge is to ascertain what is the most effective recruitment method for future campaigns.

10. DISRUPTIONS

- 10.1 There has been no known disruption of Reading children in adoptive placements this year. There was one disruption during introductions. After 2 days the Agency supplying the adopters made the decision not to proceed with the placement. The child concerned was subsequently adopted by her foster carers.

11. POST ADOPTION SUPPORT

- 11.1 The post-adoption work undertaken in the team continues to expand with the numbers of referrals, particularly in relation to birth relative counselling. The work is covered by 1.5 Post Adoption Workers and there are five distinct legislative areas of work to address:

- Contact arrangements

- Counselling of adopted adults
 - Work with birth parents
 - Supporting adoptive placements
 - Mediation Service (BRIC)
- 11.2 Reading, along with the other Berkshire Unitary Authorities, continues to work in partnership with the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service to administer the Adoption Panel and carry out much of the post adoption work such as Letter Box and Direct Contact, and work with birth parents. Other activities and groups are run jointly with the local authorities within the Berkshire Consortium. The Berkshire Adoption Advisory service provides a separate annual report on their activities.
- 11.3 The team received an average of 17 new referrals for counselling for adopted adults (*Schedule 2 - Adoption and Children Act, 2002*) per month; the Post Adoption Worker has facilitated 4 reunions this year.
- 11.4 Support for children placed with adopters outside of the borough has levelled over the year. In line with the requirement for the placing agency to provide post-placement support for 3 years following Adoption Order (Adoption Support Services Regulations, 2005) the Post Adoption service is currently supporting 21 children/young people.
- 11.5 The Post Adoption Social Workers continue to support adoptive families and those affected by adoption by facilitating a number of groups. A bi-monthly support group for adopters was reinstated in August 2013. Demand for support for people affected by adoption is increasing and reinstating the support groups has been beneficial to those affected by adoption. Approximately 20 adopters have attended the support group. The group has provided the opportunity for peer support and also opportunity to focus on topics identified by adopters such as trauma/nurture time lines and attachment styles of children. The feedback from adopters has been very positive so far. Informal networks of support are also being developed by adopters.
- 11.6 Reading continues to take the lead for the Berkshire Consortium on the 'Tracing Workshop' for adult adoptees in the process of searching for relatives and after a break will be reinstated by July 2013 and will be run twice a year.
- 11.7 Education: The Post-Adoption Workers maintains the link with CAMHS and schools along with a representative from Education. The Post Adoption Worker continues to work with schools with children affected by adoption. The work with schools is to support teachers and staff to appreciate the importance of Attachment and Adoption and its impact on adopted children.
- 11.8 There were 6 requests from adoptive families for formal adoption support

assessments. They all resulted in the provision of continued post adoption support.

12. PARTICIPATION AND INFORMATION

12.1 The Adoption Service routinely obtains feedback from service users at various stages of the adoption process, and incorporates this within service development. Since February 2014 a new set of questionnaires have been devised to obtain the feedback. As part of the Children's Social Care Quality Framework monthly calls are made to all Adopters/ Prospective Adopters as they reach one of three stages in the adoption process. The three stages are initial contact, approval at the Adoption Panel and one month after the Adoption Order. On the whole the feedback received from service users has been positive. The biggest frustration was largely around the length of time it has taken for the DBS checks to be returned and the delay caused by the number of staff changes for their assessments. The adoption team have amended practice to try to address the issue of delayed statutory checks. The staffing situation was discussed earlier in section 3 of this report.

12.2 Questionnaires were also used for obtaining feedback from the adopters of children in relation to the Family Finding aspect of the work. It is envisaged that this will become part of an ongoing process and information will be shared with the children's teams within the Directorate in order to update and improve practice.

12.3 An Adoption Diagnostic exercise was undertaken by BAAF external consultants in July 2013 and was very positive about the Reading adoption service. The following areas of work were undertaken to improve the service following their recommendations.

- Improving the initial contact experience with the agency for prospective adopters by:
 - Providing additional, temporary worker capacity to quality assure the responses and information given to those making initial enquiries regarding adoption. To work alongside the adoption team to implement changes to the first point of contact offered to prospective adopters.
 - Working with the Marketing section to update recruitment, advertising and information pack materials.
- Improving post-adoption support by:
 - Shifting a post within the service to provide additional capacity
 - Continuing to use grant funding to offer flexible support packages

- Training staff to deliver specific input to adopters in order to support placement stability

Performance Monitoring also identified the need to focus on the following :

- Improving assessment timescales with adopters by providing additional training to the adoption team and changing work practises as required
 - Achieving adoptive placements for older children, sibling groups etc.
 - Using a consultant researcher to explore complementarity/membership with a second consortium
- 12.4 Reading Borough Council's Participation Strategy aims to assist individuals, services, and organisations to be involved in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of services. Participation is monitored according to the Strategy and consideration to improving this is high on the Adoption Team's agenda.
- 12.5 Reading Adoption Agency provides full information for members of the public and users of the service, including leaflets and a Statement of Purpose, all of which can be accessed on Reading Borough Council's website or in hard copy.

Dawn Gardner
Adoption Team Manager
May 2014

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE.		
DATE:	7 JULY 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	13
TITLE:	ACCESS TO SCHOOLS FOR SEPTEMBER 2014		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR ENNIS	PORTFOLIO:	EDUCATION
SERVICE:	ADMISSIONS	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	KEVIN MCDANIEL	TEL:	0118 9374240
JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF EDUCATION	E-MAIL:	Kevin.mcdaniel@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the allocation of places to pupils starting school in September 2014 in either primary (year R) or secondary (year 7) on the national offer day which gives rise to the published statistics.
- 1.2 The report also notes the position at 16th June 2014 after the normal turbulence and a stream of late applications.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the continuing high level of primary school demand which has been met for the third successive year by Reading's schools.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Admissions to school is covered by the national Admissions Code which sets out many of the regulations that all admission's authorities have to work within, when setting an admissions policy and oversubscription criteria.
- 3.2 Applications received after the national deadlines are considered "late" applications. Such applications are still ranked alongside all other applications when applying oversubscription criteria and they do cause changes in the order of waiting lists which are not application order dependent.

4. PROGRESS

Primary Schools

- 4.1 The 2,210 on-time applications for primary school places was the largest number ever received. All of those applicants received an offer on national offer day, 16th April 2014. The following table shows the breakdown of allocated preferences.

	1st Pref	2nd Pref	3rd Pref	4th Pref	Divert
Allocation by preference band	75.7%	10.8%	5.0%	2.9%	5.6%
Cumulative allocation	75.7%	86.5%	91.5%	94.4%	100%

- 4.2 The initial offers included 50 places at The Heights primary school following the Department for Education's decision to enter a funding agreement on April 8th 2014 for an opening date of September 2014.
- 4.3 While the overall demand was in line with the council forecast, there were variations across the five planning areas used to ensure that the council meets its statutory duty to provide sufficient spaces. There was lower than expected demand in the east and south of the borough while the demand in the north was higher than expected. This shift resulted in the provision of an additional class at The Hill in Caversham to ensure that all initial offers were made in line with planning areas or parental preference.
- 4.4 Since the initial offer day, there continues to be many parents seeking alternative offers and the independent appeals process is in progress.
- 4.5 There have also been a large number of late applications, and they continue to arrive. By Friday 13th June, the council have provided 71 offers for these late applications. Our reception year is now very full, with only five places left in Yr R. We know however that some children will not appear in September, there were 20 "no shows" last year, with 13 at one school alone.

Secondary Schools

- 4.6 The 1,496 on-time applications for secondary school places was an increase on the 2013 cohort and reflects the general rise in the population. All of those applicants received an offer on national offer day, 16th April 2014. The following table shows the breakdown of allocated preferences.

	1st Pref	2nd Pref	3rd Pref	4th Pref	Divert
Allocation by preference band	74.6%	15.4%	3.9%	1.2%	4.9%
Cumulative allocation	74.6%	90.0%	93.9%	95.1%	100%

- 4.7 The improved educational achievement of the schools has made many of them more popular than in previous years.
- 4.8 There continues to be a number of late applications, and while some schools are full, there are plenty of unallocated year 7 places across all of the schools which serve the area.

- 4.9 It is likely that pupils starting school in September 2015 will have even more choice as the Department for Education is planning to open two new secondary Academy schools in Reading. One will be in the central west area, sponsored by the WREN group and the other will be in the east, sponsored by Maiden Erlegh Academy. They are expected to provide another 360 places between them each year.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 This report directly contributes to a healthy population and the development of good educational attainment.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 Through the Let's Talk Education events, many communities have shaped the choice of schools being expanded on a permanent basis to meet the forecast level of demand. This programme should lead to increased predictability for parents about the availability of spaces.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This report does not require an EIA as school applications cannot consider protected characteristics and the LA duty is one of general sufficiency.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Schools Forum has confirmed the continued revenue funding for new classes from September 2014 through the approval of its budget line known as "Growth Fund".