READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	**ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES & EDUCATION COMMITTEE**		
DATE:	**4 July 2016**	**AGENDA ITEM:**	**9**
TITLE:	**ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING ACTIVITY REPORT – 1st April 2015- 31st March 2016.**		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	**COUNCILLOR GAVIN**	**PORTFOLIO**	**CHILDREN'S SERVICES**
SERVICE:	**CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**	**WARDS:**	**ALL**
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report sets out the work of Reading Borough Council Children, Education and Early Help service (DCEEHS) services for the period March 31st 2015 to 1st April 2016 it includes the challenges and improvement activity that was required and the management action response to concerns raised throughout the year.

1.2 This period includes the data gathered during the quarter 4 period (January to March 2016) and should be considered alongside the recommendations of the November 2015 report to Adult Children and Education Committee (ACE).

1.3 These services deliver a range of interventions to children, young people and their families requiring help, protection and in some cases local authority care. These are our most vulnerable children and young people in the community.

1.4 Based on the current provisional data it also considers key performance for Children in Need and Looked after Children against previous year's performance.

1.5 All comparative and trend data is provisional pending validation locally and nationally and 15/16 data cannot be analysed against national and statistical neighbour comparative data until later in the year.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 Until late 2014 the role of the Director of Children's Services was assumed within the role of the Director for Education, Adult & Children's Services. It was agreed by the council at that time that a Head of Children's Services should be appointed and a new 'Director of Children's Services' role was created in early 2015.

2.2 During 2015/16, the directorate has had a significant number of changes in senior leadership and a subsequent large turnover in social work staff which began in the summer of 2015 and still is requiring constant scrutiny.

2.3 A Children's Services Improvement Board was set up in June 2015 and includes police, health and education partners alongside the managing director, lead member and is independently chaired. Initially it was chaired by Helen McMullen from June 2015 to March 2016. Helen then moved to be the new interim DCS and a new independent Chair, Di Smith, was appointed and began her tenure in April 2016.

2.4 The Director of Children's Services has been in post since 1st February 2016' having previously been the interim Director of Children's Services from February 2015 to June 2015.

2.5 The Lead Member for Children's Services has been in post since May 2013.

2.6 The Independent Chair of the LSCB has been in post since 1st August 2014.

2.7 The year has seen a significant increase in demand for all areas of the safeguarding service which has resulted in higher caseloads for all social workers.

2.8 The contacts into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) have seen a significant increase, and the Access and Assessment teams have seen an 85% increase in workload. The resulting work to safeguard and promote the wellbeing vulnerable children has resulted in the long term locality social work teams experiencing a 24% increase in children subject to child protection plans and an 8% increase in looked after children and care leavers.

2.9 The chart below illustrates the demand difference from year end 2015 to year end 2016

Year-end	May-15	May-16	% increase
Children in Need – All open cases except CP/LAC	870	1231	41%
Single Assessments undertaken	1197	2219	85%
Child Protection Plans	207	257	24%
Looked After Children	216	236	8%
TOTAL	**1293**	**1724**	**33%**

2.10 As a consequence of the increase in demand, timeliness and quality of work has been significantly impacted upon over the previous year, creating a very challenging working environment for frontline operational staff and their line managers.

2.11 Higher caseloads and restrictive time pressures and statutory requirements in relation to particular activities within the service have at times been stretched, resulting in ongoing concerns related to timeliness and quality of interventions.

2.12 The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has seen an almost 100% increase in contacts received and has urgently required additional staffing to be able to manage and respond in a timely manner to information received from referrers. This was put in place in January 2016 and has improved performance around timeliness of the effective management of risk and decision making.

2.13 The impact on the access and assessment teams has resulted in increasing numbers of assessments required to be undertaken within the prescribed 45 day single assessments timeline. With increased demand, the team has continued to complete more assessments in time this year and performance has continued to improve since February 2016.

2.14 However it is acknowledged that the quality of assessments requires improvement overall and 26% have not been done within the 45 days as prescribed due to driving down a backlog of assessments required. This continues to be a challenge for the team who, alongside working within this pressured environment, also require effective management supervision to be consistently in place and robust. Month on month performance management reports show an improving picture in terms of the timeliness and quality of assessments being completed since February 2016.

2.15 High caseloads have also impacted on social workers' ability to close cases, step cases down and secure transfers in a timely manner. This is in addition to child protection and looked after children having to be the priority for the workforce as new work is allocated.

2.16 At times of significant pressure as a result of staff turnover and increasing caseloads, this service has felt overwhelmed. Securing good quality, competent agency staff to increase social work capacity continues to be problematic despite corporate and workforce efforts to secure these additional resources.

2.17 Significant turnover of staff due to poor performance and lack of compliance to management expectations since January 2016 has resulted in particular agency staff being asked to leave and or leaving in some cases within a week of starting. This has contributed to the increasing challenging caseloads and pressure on managers to secure oversight of those cases whilst a replacement is secured. However, Reading's current recruitment strategy is actively addressing this issue and it is anticipated that by October 2016, almost 90% of social workers employed will be permanent.

2.18 As a result of their backlog of care cases that accumulated in Quarter 3 of the year, Locality teams have had to undertake a significant amount of work to clear these cases and secure the right outcomes for children and young people from January 2016. Court work continues to improve with At least 50 sets (families) of care proceedings being completed in Quarter 4 (Jan to March) within an average of 29 weeks with the national indicator being 26 weeks.

2.19 Since April 2015There have been 25 adoptions, 23 children became subject of special guardianship orders, 8 children became subject to Child Arrangements Orders and 133 children ceased to be looked after.

2.20 Performance in this area has significantly improved in the last year and the timeliness at all stages of the process has become more in line with national expectations and will be reflected in the Annual Adoption report being presented to ACE in July 2016.

2.21 In addition to these cases Localities teams have a very complex caseload making this particular area of service very challenging. The mix of caseloads include children in need, children in need of protection, looked after children, adoption, permanence work on the child's behalf and court reports for private law proceedings. However, the move to a revised structure from September 2016 will provide dedicated, specialist teams that will further

stabilise the workforce and improve the quality of practice with reduced caseloads.

2.22 The increase in open cases has created a level of demand on the frontline workforce that currently requires them to prioritise their child protection and court work over looked after children and children in need, resulting in performance that is not compliant with targets set in specific areas.

2.23 This can be seen through the robust performance infrastructure and reports that are produced to secure and underpin challenge and rigour in performance management.

2.24 Timeliness of activities and compliance of workers across the service to secure a consistent and sustainable performance position across the areas required currently remains unsatisfactory in several key areas addressed in the body of this report.

2.25 Quality as a result is too inconsistent throughout the system despite examples of good practice being identified through audit processes and feedback received.

2.26 Supervision of social workers is clearly not being applied consistently enough to secure a level of management oversight required to establish clear advice, guidance and subsequent care planning that is evidenced as timely and influential on the children and young people's intervention.

2.27 Too many children and young people are not yet receiving a timely response that addresses their needs or levels of risks quickly enough resulting in them being or having been in potentially risky circumstances for too long despite them being open for assessment and intervention to children's social care.

2.28 Once we have assessed and determined needs we can evidence that action is quicker now since Quarter 4 (Jan to March 2016) particularly in relation to children and young people accessing care, care proceedings and adoption work but again it is not yet consistent enough to evidence sustainable change.

2.29 Performance reporting and children's records kept on the MOSAIC children's case management system is underdeveloped and requires significant attention to support workers with their cases, reduce duplication and enable the system to produce the level of data and compliance required through the system.

2.30 Priority areas for significant improvement and development as evidenced through the current audit programme and Quality Assurance framework include:

- Consistent social work practice that reflects use of direct work with children and young people
- Consistent use of tools already developed in relation to missing and CSE children and young people to evidence the influence on their care planning and interventions.
- Consistent escalation of Independent reviewing officer's challenges and securing timely response for the frontline officers.
- Quality and consistency of social work practice
- Further development of the MOSAIC children's case management system to secure its use and enable social workers to spend more time with children, young people and their families
- Effectively tackling drift and delay on cases ad improving management oversight

This report sets out the data, evidence and management response to the challenges to date, and the significant work required going forward to continue to improve Children's Social Care services as identified by the Children's Services Improvement Board third quarter report to ACE Committee on 4 July 2015.

3. Ofsted inspections

3.1 The local authority operates 2 children's homes, Cressingham and Pinecroft, which were judged to be outstanding in their most recent Ofsted inspection in 2015 and have retained these judgement in 2016.

3.2 Children's Centre inspections (under new legislation the last two were requires improvement with elements of good) for the North and East Clusters.

3.3 Recent inspection of the Youth Offending Service has also been successful. The inspection report commented positively on a number of areas and highlighted three areas for improvement which had already been incorporated in the Youth Justice and service plans. The inspectors agreed with the YOS self-assessment and were satisfied that sufficient plans were in place to address the three areas of improvement. Overall the YOS has performed well against national and statistical family comparators in this period.

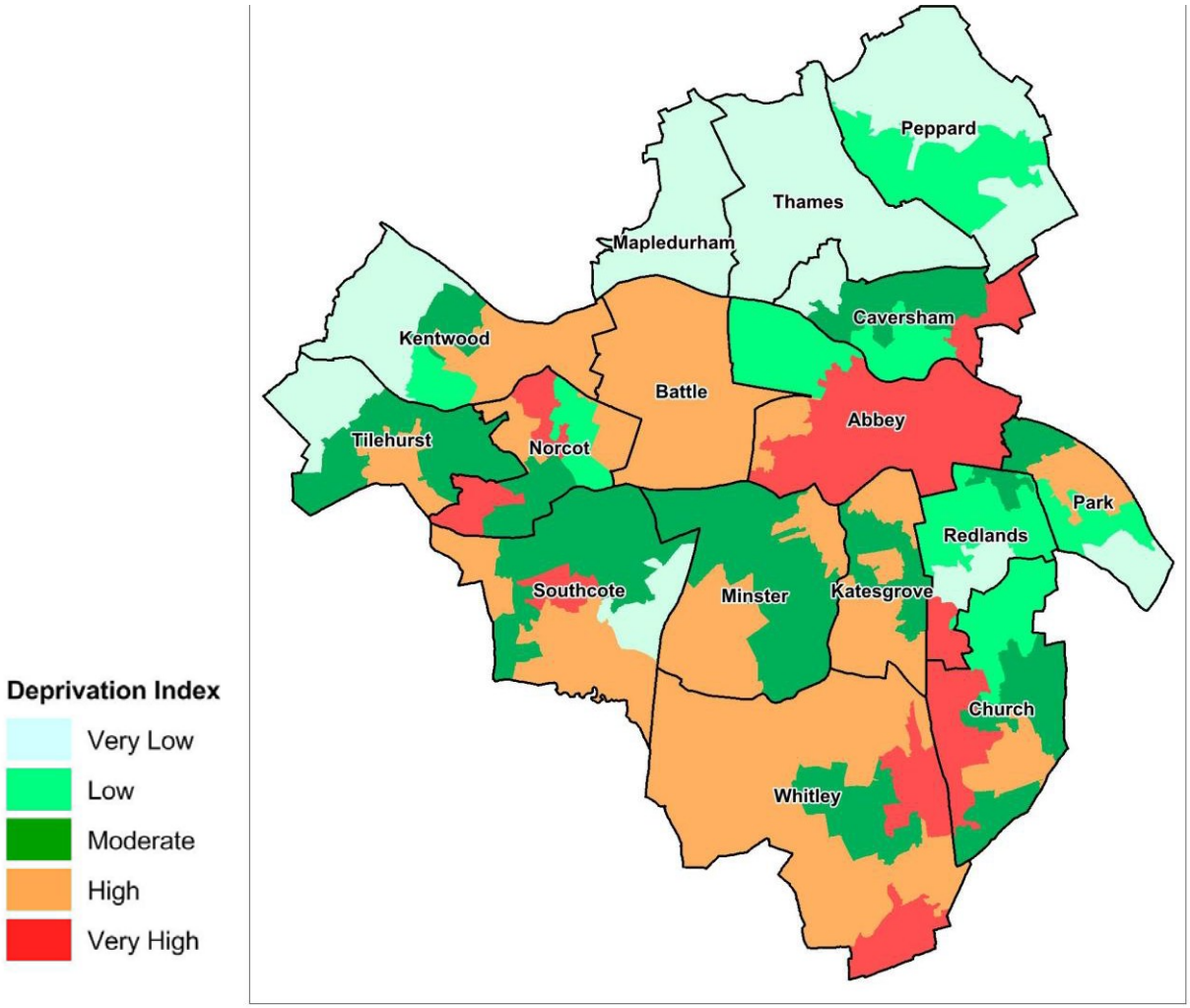
3.4 The SIF Inspection was held between the 23rd May 2016 and the 16th June 2016, the outcomes of which are embargoed to allow for the moderation and factual accuracy checks and balances to be secured. The LA will receive a copy of the draft report on 15th July 2016 with the final version due to be published on the 5th August 2016 pending any remedial actions agreed with Ofsted.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the report is scrutinised and noted.

4. **OVERVIEW**

4.1 Reading Borough Council is home to approximately 35850 children and young people under the age of 18 years. This is 22% of the total population in the area. (ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates 2014). There are pockets of deprivation and approximately 24% of the local authority's children are living in poverty (End child poverty 2014)



4.2 The proportion of children entitled to free school meals in Reading in January 2016 was:

- 15.3% in primary schools compared to the 2015 national average of 15.6%.

- 12.5% in secondary schools compared to the 2015 national average of 13.9%

4.3 Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 52% of all children in school, compared with 29% in the country as a whole.

4.4 The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are White other and Pakistani.

4.5 The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:

- In primary schools is 35%, the national average is 19.4%.
- In secondary schools is 26% the national average is 15.0%.

5. Child protection in this area

5.1 In 2014-15 1197 single assessments were completed and between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016, 2344 assessments have been completed – this is almost a two-fold increase requiring a qualified social work intervention.

5.2 At 31st March 2016, 253 children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. At 31st March 2015 it was 204. Our rate of children (per 10,000 population aged 0-17) subject to a CP plan is 72.9 (March 2016) compared with 56.9 for Reading in 14/15 and statistical neighbour (SN) average of 44.2 in 14/15. This rate has been steadily increasing since November 2015. This illustrates higher demand in the Borough for child protection services compared to statistical neighbours and the England averages.

5.3 At 31st March 2016, 3 children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement. This is an increase from 0 at 31st March 2015. Currently at 16th June 16 this is at 0 known arrangements. We are satisfied that information is shared across the partnership and the community is aware of when to refer these children into Reading children's social care for assessment as required under the statutory guidelines.

5.4 Since the last inspection, 5 serious incident notifications have been submitted to Ofsted. Two of the 5 were subsequently felt not to meet the criteria for serious case review or any other review and a third was subject of a 'Lessons Learnt Review'. This case was submitted to The National Panel of Independent Experts on Serious Case Reviews for advice, where it was decided that it did not meet the criteria for a serious case review. 2 others were not assessed as meeting the criteria by the independent chair for SCR

and are yet to go the LSCB subgroup for consideration as to whether any other type of review is necessary. No serious case reviews have been completed or are ongoing at the time of the inspection.

6. Children looked after in this area

6.1 At 31st March 2016, 220 children were being looked after by the local authority (a rate of 65 per 10,000 children). The rate is within SN and England averages. This is an increase from 203 (57 per 10,000 children) at 31st March 2015. As of the 31st May 2016 there were 236 looked after children at 68 per 10K, which is slightly higher than statistical neighbour and national averages.

6.2 Current information is that 35.6% of looked after children live more than 20 miles outside the local authority area. 30.9% of looked after children are placed inside Reading and 33.4% of looked after children are placed outside Reading but within 20 miles. This remains too high and the local sufficiency strategy is underpinning the work to address this and secure an increased cohort of foster carers for the future. Outcomes for children and young people placed with Reading foster carers are improving and their placements are stable and well supported.

6.3 19 children live in placements that are not foster care and this includes mother and baby assessment units and residential children's homes, some with education integral to the placement. 49% of these placements are out of the authority area.

6.4 192 children live with foster families, of whom 56 live more than 20 miles out of the authority area.

6.5 Fewer than 5 live with parents, of whom some live out of the authority area.

6.6 6 children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

7. CHILDREN IN NEED of HELP and PROTECTION

Early Help Services

7.1 Reading Borough Council has a well-established Early Help Service which includes 13 Children's Centres delivering services to families across Reading. These children's centres have good attendance rates across the clusters, particularly from targeted groups.

7.2 The Early Help Strategy was agreed in November 2013 by the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee. This followed the production of a draft Strategy and a consultation between July and September 2013 that gathered the views of Reading Borough Council staff, schools, statutory and voluntary sector agencies, and parents, carers and young people, to inform the final version. The committee asked to see the resultant action plan. It is being reviewed during 2016.

7.3 The Early Help Strategy is structured around five priority areas:

- Early Identification and Assessment of Need
- Effective Early Help for Children and Families
- Supporting the More Vulnerable and Sustaining the Change
- Listening to and Involving Children and Families
- Quality of Practice

7.4 The Early Help impact data is now showing signs of preventative services and interventions reducing the need for statutory intervention. Across all domains of assessment positive outcomes are demonstrating an increase quarter on quarter. Clear step up and step down procedures are in place, along with clear escalation procedure to resolve professional differences of opinion.

7.5 There were 1260 Early Help Referrals in 15/16 compared to 793 in the previous financial year (14/15). April and May 15/16 experienced a slight referral drop from Schools, which picked up again in June and July 15/16 towards the end of the academic year. Schools, Children's Centres, Early Help and Children's Social Care continue to be the main sources of requests for help.

7.6 The number of Common Assessments (CAF) completed has increased with 422 completed in 15/16 against 373 in the last financial year (14/15). All CAFs continue to be quality assured at point of submission to ensure that the importance of the Voice of Child, multi-agency contributions and clear analysis leading to a plan of support is in place.

7.7 There continues to be evidence of children and young people being 'stepped up' to children's social work services where required, being escalated by Early Help managers who hold a good grip on cases. All 'step up' referrals continue to go through the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to ensure a greater consistency of thresholds. In addition to this the work of the MASH Early Help coordinator is has led to 67 children are now being successfully redirected from MASH into the Early Help hub for preventative support.

7.8 Regular Early Help Audits are on-going and in quarter one 15/16, 29 files were audited. Results saw improvements in timeliness of assessments, offer and quality of supervision and quality of analysis in case recording notes. The 9 month review process continues to tackle any concerns over case drift and in ensuring that the children's outcomes are the focus in any assessment and planning.

7.9 339 cases have been stepped down to Children's Action Teams (year to date March 2016) from the MASH, A&A or Area teams. There is a good rate of CAF initiation locally and CAFs are regularly quality checked for multi-agency involvement. Joint home visits or handover TACs (Team around the Child) are well established so that families do not experience any loss of support when cases are transferred and/or stepped down.

7.10 A revised Early Help pathway implemented in early 2016 means that referrals for all early help services come through 'one front door' and decisions are made as to what support is to be offered building upon the already established multi-agency meeting. Although it is early days, we have already seen an increase in referrals from other agencies e.g. direct from GPs.

7.11 Requests for early help/prevention services within Reading Borough Council uses a contact form, called the Early Help request, accessed through the web and then once submitted it is managed through our Early Help Hub system. Upon allocation for support, this system then supports the completion of an assessment using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) which identifies the strengths and needs of individuals and helps create a support plan for each family.

7.12 The majority of the Council's family support, early intervention and prevention services for children 0 to 19 year old and their families are managed through Reading's Children's Action Teams (CATs). The CATs are multi-professional teams that link into existing local resources to provide holistic family centred support, including services to support the parent(s) as needed. Health visitors are a virtual part of the CAT teams. CATs have a stable workforce, both at management and worker level and the currently have no agency staff.

7.13 Alongside the CATs, the Specialist Youth Services provides more targeted support to the most vulnerable young people, such as those at risk of teenage pregnancy or sexual exploitation, young people with drug and alcohol misuse issues, young parents, young carers and LGBT young people. Early Help Services offering support to teenagers are currently being reviewed to determine Reading's Youth Offer in the future.

7.14 For more vulnerable families where children are close to social care involvement, services and interventions such as the Edge of Care team and Multi Systemic Therapy Team work with families and provide more intensive, high-level support alongside other agencies.

7.15 The Early Help (EH) service is clear about its remit and 83% of referrals into it access a service or intervention depending on the presenting need. All Early Help requests are reviewed by the Children's Action Teams (CATs). Early help workers are secured as lead professionals and assist colleagues from the community to secure their lead role when appropriate. All cases that require a qualified social worker are allocated - this includes Children in need, Child protection and Looked after children. As at March 2016, only 7% of closed CAT cases were referred back to social care within 3 months of closure.

7.16 Assessments follow the Signs of Safety model and this is well established within the Early Help team. Using the Outcomes Star gives the service a clear understanding of the outcomes being achieved. This is monitored regularly.

7.17 Early Help continues to be a service with a positive trajectory, receiving referrals from a range of services and a low level of closed cases being referred back for a Children's Social Care (CSC) assessment in the 9 months following the service ending.

7.18 Work is currently underway to review all services through the lens of early help. The initial work is considering the demand placed upon services and the cohort of services available to meet need at an earlier stage of intervention to prevent escalation into high cost statutory services sooner in the journey of the child, young person and their family.

Thresholds

7.19 The Thresholds were reviewed by the LSCB in 2015 and were subsequently re-issued in September accompanied by multi-agency training workshops. Over 350 staff and partners received training in the revised thresholds and Child in Need procedures. As a result of this training, staff and partners reported that they were clearer about the thresholds and the application of them. This approach is being tested via a multi-agency audit in May to review the effectiveness of the MASH and Early Help pathways and the impact of the thresholds.

7.20 MASH is securing a more consistent approach to the threshold for social care referral to Access & Assessment for that team to do an assessment by the ongoing work with partner agencies and A&A managers. This includes schools designated heads of safeguarding meetings, partnership working with the

hospitals and operational boards. Pathways into Access and Assessment for all Level 3 and 4 cases are clear as well as into the Early Help offer for all Level 2 cases in these are sent to MASH. If required, managers are confident to raise professional challenge however the Head of Service for Safeguarding has the final decision regarding threshold.

MASH

7.21 An Early Help (EH) co-ordinator sits in MASH and the Domestic Violence triage process supports the diversion when appropriate of MASH contacts into other EH and universal services

7.22 The recently appointed permanent new MASH manager has good oversight of all contacts and referrals that are received and ensures a timely response is secured for them all. The MASH re-establishment of a strategic board and operational group is supporting and progressing the service development.

7.23 The multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) has been in place throughout the reporting period with Thames Valley Police co-locating in June 2015. The service received 7104 contacts from professionals, families and members of the public between April 2015 and March 2016.

7.24 During 2015-16 there were 3096 referrals accepted. Of these 74.2% went onto a single assessment that required a qualified social worker to be allocated to undertake this piece of work to be statutorily compliant. An additional 590 referrals were rejected in this period which resulted in NFA, step down or advice and guidance being given only.

7.25 This level of no further action matters will require ongoing oversight as it could suggest a need to undertake further work with partners and referrers about their understanding of thresholds.

7.26 This was an average of 258 referrals a month. This has grown steadily during the year peaking in March 16 at 422 referrals for that month. This volume of referral resulted in per 10K being 885.9 for Reading with Statistical neighbours at 704.5 and England at 548.3 for 14/15.

7.27 The figures for 15/16 are not yet published and will require further scrutiny to understand volumes being progressed by Reading as it is currently a very high level in comparison to 14/15 data.

7.28 However, referrals passed through for assessment are subject to management oversight and rigorous decision making processes and to date there has not been an identifiable level of inappropriate progression to assessment

suggesting that children and young people that require a social work assessment are able to access one in Reading.

7.29 Partners had advised the interim Head of Service for Safeguarding in January 2016 that they felt accessing the MASH had been very challenging prior to December 2015 and are now more content that they can consult and seek appropriate professional advice now when required, and that the responses are more timely and effective.

7.30 The majority of referrals originated from the Police 33.4% (1035 during 2015-16) with schools being the second highest referrer at 19.22% or 595 for the same period. In comparison 2014-2015 schools referred only 204 children, young people and their families in the whole year so it should be reassuring that schools are now more readily accessing the social work service when required. This also highlights a significant increase in referrals from schools year to date and positively reflects the work undertaken by schools to identify children in need or those who may be at risk of significant harm.

7.31 Overall, domestic abuse has remained the highest reason for referral. This constitutes 629 or 20.3% of referrals. The MASH has significantly enhanced the screening of domestic abuse contacts to the MASH with the presence of members of Thames Valley Police co located with social work staff and all domestic abuse contacts are rigorously screened. Referrals concerning physical abuse (13.57%) and Neglect (9.46%) were similarly highly represented.

NUMBER OF REFERRALS TO CSC	
YEAR	**No of Referrals**
2012-13	1681
2013-14	1732
2014-15	1598
2015-16	**3096**

7.32 These referrals received are subject to professional decision making through MASH where a decision is made how to progress them and if they require a statutory social work intervention or not.

7.33 The chart below demonstrates the level of demand progressed through to the children's social care access and assessment team for allocation to a qualified social worker for single assessment.

% OF REFERRALS GOING ON ASSESSMENT	
YEAR	**ASSESSMENT %**
2012-13	96.0%
2013-14	83.0%
2014-15	59.26% Total 1272
2015-16	74% Total 2380

7.34 During 2014/15 there were 4929 contacts received by MASH and in 2015/16 year (March 2016) there had been 7104 contacts this is a substantial increase and has been contributed to by the referral route and expectations about referrals becoming more flexible, alongside training with partners about thresholds for intervention being delivered last year.

Assessments

7.35 Allocation of assessments in a consistently timely manner has not always routinely been actioned when they were received by access and assessment.

7.36 However, with additional and new managers this has made significant improvement and was 96% in February 2016 and is 87% as at March 2016 with a target of 100%. This is monitored more rigorously daily and weekly to secure immediate action particularly for those children presenting at risk of immediate harm.

7.37 Timeliness of assessments has remained challenging since June 2015 although consistent application of management oversight since October 2015 has resulted in improvements (48% of assessments were on time at the end of October 2015 and this was 74% at end of March 2016).

7.38 Since mid-October 2015 the recruitment of interim Team Managers (TMs) and Assistant Team Managers (ATMs) and the recruitment of an additional 5 supernumerary agency social worker posts has significantly contributed to securing the backlog of work and increasing the numbers of assessments completed both in time and out of date.

7.39 The quality and consistency of single assessments still remains too variable for all the recognised reasons above and actions are in place to address this including supervision, audits, case reviews, performance monitoring and support for workers with heavy caseloads.

7.40 The reality of the circumstances requires a significant injection of increased managerial capacity and accountability and qualified social workers to reduce caseloads and secure a permanent management team to build consistency of expectation and approach.

7.41 It is important to recognise that the current caseload continues to include many complex issues for children, young people and their families that need specialist knowledge and robust social work approaches, including forced marriage, teenage self-harm, significant neglect and infants under one year that have suffered significant harm.

7.42 February 2016 saw a marked improvement in the completion of assessments within 45 days 74.3% from a previous average of 50% per month despite an increased number of assessments. We currently undertake more assessments within the statutory timeframes than this time last year and performance in April 2016 was at 81% of assessments completed within the 45 days expected. The increased volume and demand resulting in a 100% increase is putting significant pressure on the service to deliver good quality outcomes.

7.43 During 2015-16, 56.2% of single assessments were completed within timescales against a Statistical neighbours Benchmark of 75.97%.

7.44 This performance dipped during July and August 2015 with staff working on a backlog of out of date cases. This backlog has now been cleared but the increased volume and demand on the service remains high and still causing high caseloads which make quality of work even more challenging. Performance since January 2016 has been improving with current averages of 75% completed on time in a month.

7.45 The quality of assessment has been the subject of ongoing scrutiny as part of the monthly audit process and there is evidence of improving robust management oversight however there is more work to do to ensure it is consistent and responsive to levels of increasing risk.

7.46 The Principal Social worker has identified a comprehensive training course for the Access and Assessment teams around the quality of assessment and analysis as part of her ongoing work to improve practice and which is being delivered over the autumn 2016.

7.47 Children's Services has a duty under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 to conduct enquiries where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This informs any further

intervention including whether the Local Authority should take any action to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. The decision to initiate S47 enquiries is made in conjunction with the Police and partners via a strategy meeting or discussions. There has been increased activity in this area with 945 S47 enquiries in 2015-16 (rate 272.3 per 10K population), an increase from 579 (rate of 161.5 per 10K population) in 2014-15. The statistical neighbour average rate for 2014-15 was 153.4 per 10,000 the comparative data for 2015/6 is not yet available but should be scrutinised when received to secure a view about the current demand on Reading services.

SECTION 47	
YEAR	**Number of S47 initiated**
2012-13	618
2013-14	557
2014-15	577
2015-16	945

7.48 The quality and consistency of strategy discussions is an ongoing piece of work with Thames Valley Police and the other Berkshire local authorities. The need to routinely involve health and schools in strategy discussions needs to be strengthened.

7.49 The increase in S47 Enquiries is reflected in a similar increase in the number of Initial Child Protection Case Conferences (ICPC) held with the plan 416 children and young people were considered at ICPC in 2015-16

S47 recommending Initial Conference	
YEAR	**Number of ICPC**
2012-13	161
2013-14	226
2014-15	301
2015-16	416

7.50 The number of S47 enquires recommending an Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) increased from the last year to 948 from 579 in 2014-15. The percentage of S47 enquires leading to ICPC stood at 42.3% in the year 2015-16. This is still better than the South East Benchmark figure of 40% (available as at May 2016).

7.51 In the year to date, 80% of Initial Child Protection Conferences were held within the 15 day national target compared to 74.77% of Statistical Neighbours in 2015.

Child Protection Plans

7.52 The total number of child protection plans and current breakdown of plans as of 31st March 2016:

Category	0-4 years old	5-19 years old	Total
Emotional abuse	38	56	**94**
Neglect	52	95	**147**
Physical Abuse	2	4	**6**
Sexual Abuse	1	10	**11**
Total	**93**	**165**	**258**

7.53 There has been a significant increase of children and young people subject to child protection plans in comparison to our statistical neighbour and England averages.

7.54 The Service Manager for Reviewing and Quality Assurance is reviewing these plans and will make recommendations about actions required of the operational service.

7.55 The breakdown of categories is currently being reviewed as to ensure that they are relevant to the risk identified and its impact on children and young people. The neglect and emotional harm statistics are higher than expected with lower number of physical and sexual abuse. A review of chairs' practice and Signs of Safety's impact on decision making is underway with chairs and will clarify and re-establish and embed a consistent approach going forward.

7.56 The number of children with a Child Protection Plan has been steadily increasing from 204 at the end of 2014-15 to 253 at the end of March 2016. The breakdown of plans is set out below.

Plan type	31/03/2016
Neglect	55.3%
Physical Abuse	2.8%
Sexual abuse	4.3%
Emotional abuse	37.9%

7.57 The data demonstrates that Neglect is the major reason for Children having a child protection plan. A multi- agency audit was completed on behalf of the LSCB and a Neglect Protocol has been developed to ensure that all partners are working together the tackle this serious issue. This protocol is underpinned by a Neglect Action Plan. The action plan aims to increase the identification of neglect by all RBC employees, facilitate early intervention with families where neglect is identified and increase the skills of children's services staff.

7.58 Child Protection Plans, which ended, but which lasted two years or more decreased and at the end 2015-16, 9 children had been the subject of a child protection plan for over 2 years, a decrease of 5 from 2014-15. There is an audit cycle embedded which includes auditing of Child Protection Plans that are of 18 months plus duration. This demonstrates the robust use of plans to improve the parenting provided to our most vulnerable children and a reduction in drift.

CHILD PROTECTION PLAN LASTING 2 YEARS OR MORE		
YEAR	**Number**	**%**
2011-12	16	8.20%
2012-13	18	8.90%
2013-14	17	8.50%
2014-15	7	3.38%
2015-16	4	1.58%

7.59 Over the year 2015-16 83 (25%) children were subject to a plan for a second or subsequent time. This compares with 17.1% for statistical neighbours. This number remains high. An audit of reasons behind this increase is being undertaken in October 2016, the results of which will inform future practice.

7.60 Child Protection plans require all children to be seen every 10 working days to ensure their safety and protection. Children should be seen alone and their views sought. In 2015-16, 78% of Child Protection visits were successfully recorded and completed within timescale, whilst this data is improving there continues to be a lack of consistency month on month and improvements need to be sustained. Managers are using weekly data to ensure compliance and this is reviewed by senior managers including the Head of Children's Services weekly and at the monthly Challenge sessions. The latest data shows 85% on time and recorded.

7.61 Children who require ongoing social work intervention but who are not assessed as at risk of significant harm are designated as children in need. This has been an area of concern, with performance being below expected locally set standards. Clear standards have now been set which include the visiting pattern and ensuring that every child has a Child in Need Plan. Standards are in place to ensure consistency; social workers are now required to see every child every 4 weeks as a minimum standard. Social workers are also required to update their plan of work for children in need at a minimum of every 6 months. In addition to visits and plans there has been a huge drive to close or transfer relevant cases with regular meetings with the Children's Action Teams have been set up to ensure cohesive step down. The aim of this work is to ensure that the right level of intervention is provided for every child in need and in a timely manner.

Allegations management

7.62 There is a good response to Allegations and the LADO has seen an increase in the number of allegations and concerns about people who work with children. This is forecasted to be at least 60% higher than any previous year of reporting since the process was introduced in 2006.

Children in Need

7.63 58% of our children currently have CIN plans at the end of March 2016 and this figure is increasing. At May 2016 it is reported as 60%.

7.64 As at March 2016, there were 616 children categorised as In Need (rate per 10,000 child population including CP and LAC = 177.5; SN= 343.8 for 14/15). Our performance demonstrates that we conduct 30% of our CIN visits on time (within 4 weeks) however; the majority of these cases have had a visit within the last 2 months when data on the system was analysed.

7.65 We had set a local indicator of a 4 weekly frequency for CIN visits. This was an ambitious target given the current demand and pressures on the service and DMT has agreed that this should be set at 6 weekly in line with good practice until outcomes have been secured for these children.

7.66 The business process within the children's case management electronic system Mosaic had to be updated to implement the CIN visit process so it is the same as CP and LAC. This was rectified as from the 23rd May 2016.

Child Sexual Exploitation and Children who go missing

7.67 In 2015/16, 534 missing episodes were reported to Children's Social Care for 394 individual young people. 495 missing episodes required a return interview. Quarter 2 of 15/16 saw a significant drop in the number of missing episodes reported and requiring interviews. The increase throughout the rest

of the year is likely to be due to more vigilant reporting from parents, schools and social care as well as a more robust process with the Council. The decline in Quarter 2 could also be due to the summer holidays.

7.68 A return interview was refused in relation to 116 missing episodes by either the parent of young person. The number of refusals has decreased monthly since January 2016. Since April 2015, 262 interviews have been completed. Out of these completed interviews, 76 (29%) were completed within the statutory 72 hours from when the young person is returned home and 126 Interviews were completed within 72 hours of Children's Social Care being notified of the missing episode.

7.69 There are common themes identified in return interviews which are "push" factors of family disagreements (often arguments between young people and parent/carer); problems in school; concerns from the young person regarding peers. The "pull" factors are peers who are going missing; substance misuse; seasonal community activities.

7.70 The Reading Borough Council response to child sexual exploitation (CSE) has developed significantly over the last year, with the implementation of several changes to systems and processes both internally and across the partnership. It is recognised that there is still work to do and this is captured within the CSE strategy and action plan and driven strongly by the LSCB.

7.71 There is work to do to ensure that the models implemented are influencing care planning and risk decision making more robustly and more timely.

7.72 The CSE data set allows for tracking of CSE risk level movement: Of 24 children and young people that experienced a level of CSE risk change, 14 cases moved up in risk within that last 14 months and 29 cases moved down in risk.

7.73 SEMRAC (multi-agency oversight group) provides a multi-agency process to review the cases of young people that have a CSE screening tool and go missing regularly. The SEMRAC group triangulates information, oversees and interrogates all cases of high, medium and low risk. Social workers are required to present cases at the meeting and are robustly challenged.

7.74 Disruption and preventative work continues to be developed through partnership information sharing and discussion through SEMRAC. Reading Police use a number of disruption activities including close work with anti-social behaviour teams.

7.75 Information tells us that 53 children and young people have been discussed at SEMRAC over the last 14 months April 15 to March 16.

7.76 6 young people have come into Local Authority care during quarter 4 (Jan 2016 – March 2016) as a result of recognition of increased risk to them following an analysis about their CSE activity levels. Potentially they should have come into care sooner on review of the cases as they all been known for over a year to the service however when the current interim Head of Service was alerted to their circumstances the response was timely and placements secured.

7.77 It is likely this will influence good practice and enable officers to feel more able to seek these decisions through the current model of the children's services solutions panel and have confidence in their assessments.

7.78 CSE training has been provided to more than 400 staff on signs, indicators, completion of screening tool, referral pathway and the SEMRAC process. It is built into the LSCB offer going forwards. It is recognised that auditing is required to check impact and improvement and inform and improve practice and is built into the CSE audit programme. The 'I know how to stay safe' report has informed practice through the delivery of a number of service specific workshops. The CSE training pathway is in place and was launched in April 2016. The pathway provides clear guidance to staff on what level of training they should undertake and what is available.

7.79 Intelligence sharing training was delivered by Thames valley Police to Reading Borough Council staff and will continue as required to ensure that staff know how to pass all critical CSE intelligence to police investigators. Members and corporate partners have been briefed and CSE is a priority area for the community safety partnership and the LSCB. The Lead Member for children and young people is regularly briefed and updated on CSE activity and data and has engaged in awareness raising campaigns.

7.80 A CSE Coordinator has been in post since October 2015 and provides consultation with staff when required to support effective practice. A CSE Champions Group is well established, with 22 representatives from education; health; police; social care; early help; voluntary sector and ASB team. Champions receive specialist training, lead on CSE cases in their teams and act as advisory role within their teams. A post intervention evaluation form has been developed by the Champions group and will be implemented to be used with young people and families to monitor effectiveness of CSE intervention. This data will be combined with the CSE audit findings to improve direct work.

7.81 The Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) are allocated to all Looked After Children to review their care arrangements regularly in Looked After Children Reviews and prioritise the voice of the child, with specific reference to CSE risk. Recent whole service events focusing on the voice of the child revealed significant enthusiasm amongst staff to meaningfully hear the child's voice and reflect this in service improvement plans. There is a need to embed system into day to day practice. Work was undertaken interviewing young people, parents and staff to gather views on CSE services and interventions. A report was written, uploaded to LSCB website and key learning has been shared with managers, teams, staff and services to inform practice ('I know how to stay safe' Work is being undertaken with the IROs to ensure the key learning points are embedded into practice.

7.82 CSE information is imbedded in Universal Safeguarding, online CSE awareness course, targeted face to face training addressing practical application of pathways and tools & challenging victim blaming language, assumptions and how to talk to children. Specialist training is delivered on engaging with/supporting children and working with parents as partners.

7.83 Current care planning processes provide the framework for all CSE actions and staff are trained and developed in CSE practice. Work is underway to identify clear CSE transition pathways for care leavers and young people approaching their 18th birthday and our Specialist Youth Services provide targeted support to vulnerable young people up to the age of 25 where there are learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

7.84 There is a LSCB (joint LA) action plan that is strengthening our response to FGM. This includes a training offer (online) a multi-agency screening tool, linked to a clear pathway for response. Community engagement as a protective approach has been led by a local VCS with LA support.

7.85 The LSCB has challenged in 2015/16 for action in this area which includes supporting the joint LA response as well as facilitating and chairing the review of the action plan to date. The LSCB has requested a maternity audit by public health and a check across to social care involvement. This will enable a review of the effectiveness of practice of identification. This continues to be part of the LSCB priorities for 2016/17.

Children and Young People with Disabilities

7.86 The Children and Young People with Disabilities Team was managed within a 0-25 service managed by Adult Social Care until February 2016 when cases were reviewed and Children's Services resumed line management responsibility for the service. Many of the cases were determined to be

requiring ongoing financial support with no intervention required by Children's Social Care and are therefore now managed through Early Help Services. Any social work oversight is part of the appropriate social work team.

Children's Social Care Caseloads

7.87 Access and Assessment workers' pre-Christmas 2015 caseloads were up to 60 cases and these have been reduced to an average now of 35 (May 2016). The addition of 5 extra social worker posts in Access and Assessment has contributed to this as well as data quality improvements.

7.88 Parenting assessors and case court managers have also been recruited to support the locality teams particularly with progressing court work and complex assessments required for court.

7.89 The implementation of the Children's Services new delivery model will contribute further to the caseloads decreasing to reach more manageable numbers of 18 to 24 children and young people across the specialist teams at any one time.

7.90 A review of capacity, demand and volume underpinned the recent proposal for the new Children's Social Care delivery model and resulted in the recommendation for a specialist approach to statutory social work being re instigated to separate out court work and LAC, care leavers and formation of CP/CIN Teams.

8. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

8.1 At 31st March 2015-16, there were 220 children and young people Looked After which is an increase of 13 compared to last year. This number represents 64 children per 10,000 population. This is lower than the statistical neighbour average rate of 66.6 per 10,000

Looked After Children – numbers in care	
Year	**Total number of children**
2012	**237**
2013	**227**
2014	**208**
2015	**207**

2016	**220**

8.2 Of our Looked after Children, as at 31st Mar 2016, 116 are male and 104 being female. 114 of these children are noted to have special educational needs. 147 are white and 73 are from other ethnic groups. (67% white / 33.2% other ethnic groups). This varies from school census data which shows 54.4% white

8.3 At 31st Mar 2016, the profile of our Looked After Children demonstrated that 45 were aged 4 and under; with 125 aged between 5 and 15 and 44 aged 16 and over plus 6 unaccompanied asylum seeking children. There has been an increase of 13 from last year.

Looked After Children – numbers in age	
Year	**Total number of children**
4 years and under	45
5-10 years	57
11-15 years	68
16+	44
UASC	6
Total	220

8.4 The Looked after Children's Sufficiency Statement Strategy 2015-2017 was considered by ACE on 29th June 2015. The document demonstrates how we plan to "take steps that secure, as far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority is looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area ('the sufficiency duty').

8.5 The Strategy provides the analytical basis by which deficits in suitable accommodation for all children in care can be addressed. This includes Adoption and Fostering targets and associated marketing activity. This document is critical to inform commissioning intentions for future local accommodation provision to meet the needs of Looked after Children.

8.6 The lack of local placements in the Reading Borough Council area is demonstrated by the fact that 34.5% of our Looked after Children are placed more than 20 miles away from their home address. While this may be for a positive reason (such as children in adoptive placements or in specialist residential settings) this overall percentage figure must be reduced. It is important for children and young people to be local so that they can retain stability in education provision receive local health services and remain in contact with their family and community when safe to do so.

8.7 Work has been undertaken to recruit local foster carers including work with local faith groups and a target set to recruit 24 new carers by the end of March 2016. This was revised to 18 in October 2015. Future targets are:

- April 2016 – March 2017: target 35
- April 2017 – March 2018: target 35
- April 2018 – Sept. 2018: target 17

Placement 3 -The percentage of looked after children at 31 March placed outside LA boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live			
Year	**%**	**No. of children**	**Total children**
2012	20.25%	48	237
2013	21.59%	49	227
2014	25.96%	54	208
2015	33%	**61**	207
2015	32%	**67**	230
2016	34.5%	**76**	220

8.8 60% of our children and young people are in stable placements, as at 31st March 2016 (placements for 2 years plus or are placed for adoption). This compares favourably with the most recent South East Benchmark of 65%. However, we also have a cohort of 22 children who have had 3 or more placements (10%) and there has been an increase of 3 children since the end of March 2016. Whilst this compares favourably with the England average of 10.9%% (as at 2015). There is still a need to be mindful of children's requirements for stability and so we will continue to closely monitor this cohort via our commissioning service and through the work of our Reviewing Team.

8.9 There is a recent interim commissioning strategy agreed to support market development to increase capacity, meet need and reduce costs. A full needs analysis is required to secure net years position.

Placement 1 -The percentage of children looked after with three or more placements during the year ending 31 March			
Year	**%**	**No of children**	**Total children**
2012	5.91%	14	237
2013	4.85%	11	227
2014	8.65%	19	211
2015	9.2%	19	207
2016	10%	22	220

9. CHILDREN LEAVING CARE

9.1 At the end of March 2016 there were 103 young people entitled to services under the Children Leaving Care Act 2000 aged 17-21 currently this is 122. As a Local Authority we are committed to ensuring that children leaving our care have a good start as they move towards adulthood. At the end of March 2016, 80% of young people had a Pathway Plan in contrast to 27% in April 2015 and against a target of 95%. This continues to improve and audit has demonstrated some good practice in this area.

9.2 Despite this, there are 39.8% who are not in suitable employment, education or training which is slightly higher than the latest Statistical Neighbour benchmark of 39.0% but remains unsatisfactory. Of 16 to 18 year olds this relates to 5 young people 2 who are refusing support and 3 who are well supported to access employment, education and training. Of the 19 to 21 year olds this relates to 4 young people with the capacity to engage and they are being well supported by their care leaving advisors and 5 young people are in custody so are accessing opportunities within that setting. New targets have been set for Adviza who work with our young people to facilitate their ongoing learning and development.

9.3 Of the 103, 10 young people are in Higher Education and are supported via a bursary from the Local Authority. (87.3%) were in suitable accommodation, this compares to the Statistical Neighbour average of 80.74%. Work continues with independent providers, which forms part of the sufficiency strategy, to remedy this.

9.4 All care leavers have a Personal Advisor and 85% of care pathway plans are up to date. "Staying Put" regulations have been translated into a policy and

implemented from June 2015 currently approximately 6 young people are in this type of arrangement. Over 91% of care leavers are in reasonable accommodation and currently one is B&B (Mar 2016 [statistical neighbour is 80%]). However, we need to develop more supported lodgings for care leavers and a proposal was taken forward in March 2016 for supported lodging providers which includes a needs assessment and an exercise to develop the 16+ accommodation and support.

9.5 Here is feedback on the experience of a young person with a disability:

"Thank you so much for helping me to get to this stage. I really appreciate it. I am so ready to be independent."

This is a comment from a young person diagnosed with autism who came into care aged 4 and after several changes of placement moved to Pinecroft. Now, aged 19, she is living independently.

9.6 All young people leaving care have been offered employment advice from Connexions if needed. As 44% (March 2016) of our care leavers are NEET (SN= 39%), during the last year the Council committed to a significant improvement in its NEET performance (from 8.1% to 2.5% by 2016). The NEET percentage for Reading has been consistently high over the last few years (never below 6.1% and as high as 8.7%) and 2014 reporting put Reading in the bottom percentile and resulted in DCLG monitoring.

9.7 In 2015 a NEET Governance and an NEET Operational Group was established which focused on effective matching of young people and provision. For example, there has been a significant improvement in the 16-18 aspect of the Elevate Reading Service as a consequence of the recruitment of a 14-19 Adviser. This aims to find more training opportunities for 16-24 year olds who are not in education, employment or training along with a joined-up offer of support across agencies. (Elevate is part of the City Deal programme and is place for 16-24 year olds to get help advice and support on employment, work experience, volunteering and mentoring). After these concerted efforts during 2015, Reading achieved its lowest monthly reporting of 4.4% and an expected average of 4.7%. Therefore the interim target of 5% for 2015 was exceeded. There has been a significant reduction in the drop-out rate at Reading College as a consequence of the Council's involvement and support.

10. Placements and Sufficiency

10.1 The Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy 2015-2017 was agreed in June 2015 and it establishes how Reading Borough Council (Reading Borough

Council) will fulfil its "sufficiency" responsibility to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable, that the placement and accommodation needs of Reading Looked After Children and Care Leavers are met locally. Through the strategy we are improving the availability of in house and Reading based placements through our sufficiency strategy

10.2 The vast majority of children are supported in a family based placement where stability is working well and better than statistical neighbours (covering number of placements and time in placement). 9.2% of our children had 3 or more placements in 2014/15 and in 2015/16 (March 2016) this is down to 7%.

10.3 We retain many of our foster carers and have good support in place for them including financial support and have successfully implemented our Staying Put policy to encourage them to continue to look after children past their 18th birthdays. Six young people were in Staying Put arrangements to meet their needs and wishes as of 31st March 2017.

10.4 The Placement Reviewing Officer continues to provide an independent review of Reading Borough Council foster carers, gathering information, in order to thoroughly and systematically assess those carers to raise standards for LAC children. This includes the use of feedback forms for each review and at the end of the placement.

11. Number of looked after children

11.1 In early 2015 as a result of audit work and application of the thresholds the authority saw a steady increase in the numbers of children in care. This increased from 202 in January 2015 to 241 in December 2015 and is 220 in March 2016. This does not make us an outlier for the rate of looked after children per 10k population (Reading 64 per 10,000 as at March 2016; SN is 66.6 and All England is 60.0). We are clear that the thresholds are being consistently applied.

11.2 This increase in numbers of looked after children continue to impact upon the workloads of the teams as has the turnover in staff between June and December 2015. 46% children have experienced 2 or more changes in social workers and this has been declining since January 2016 (55%). The new delivery model is designed to positively impact on the caseloads and therefore the experiences of children who are looked after.

11.3 The fostering team have been working closely with the children's social work teams to come up with a solution to the number of LAC requiring their permanence match being presented to the fostering panel. This has resulted

in plans for 25 children to be successfully presented to matching panel between March and July 2016.

12. The Pledge

12.1 Reading Borough Council has a Pledge for Children and young people in Care that has been agreed and signed up to by the council. The Parenting Panel uses this as the basis to challenge the council on its performance in relation to looked after children and young people and care leavers.

- **Keep you SAFE:** we will help you to stay safe, and be there for you when you need us
- **Give you a HOME you like:** we will give you somewhere to live where you will feel safe and cared about
- **Where we can, help you have CONTACT with people who are important to you:** where possible we will help you to see your family and other people important to you
- **Help you to enjoy SCHOOL:** we will help you to have fun and achieve great things, both in school and in other activities.
- **Help you to have FUN and SUCCEED:** we will support you as you get older to successfully leave care, become adults and live on your own
- **Help you to be HEALTHY:** we will help you live a healthy life, both physically and mentally.
- **Make sure we LISTEN to you:** we will give you and help you deal with your problems
- **Treat you with RESPECT:** we will treat you in a friendly and respectful way
- **Try NOT TO CHANGE your social worker:** we won't change your social worker unless we really have to, and when we do, we will tell you why.

13. Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)

13.1 Most children have had stability with their allocated Independent Reviewing Officer and their care plans are regularly reviewed. All children have a care plan. The business process for updating care plans on Mosaic has been identified for review as this is overly complicated and has been highlighted as a potential cause of the significant decrease in performance in relation to care plans being updated.

13.2 Performance at the end of March 16 stands at 52% and something which we are working to improve. This has further improved in May 2016 to 70%. An audit of these cases and plans is required as we believe a resolution is to ensure the review process and the updating of care plans process should be aligned in the MOSAIC system to secure better performance going forward. Workers are updating the care plan before the review and then not telling the system after the review the plan has been confirmed.

13.3 The team has developed good practice during 2015 and enabled and supported children to lead their own reviews. Where this has not been possible, children are supported to share their views in innovative ways, including the use of surveys, questionnaires and the use of the MoMo app (Mind Of My Own). The use of the app is increasing and children are finding it fun to be able to share their views using this technology. Children are written to by their IRO in simple language following their review to explain the outcomes of the reviews, this reflects the lived experiences of children in our care and there are some good examples of IROs writing clear 'stories' for younger children that they will be able to understand as they grow older.

13.4 A number of our young people have been trained in chairing meetings and have started to chair their own reviews.

14. Looked After Children Health Assessments (LAC)

14.1 We have had a significant improvement in health checks during 2015/16, particularly for children within 20 miles. Current performance stands at 95% and we are working with our colleagues in health to ensure that dental checks are also achieved.

15. Education of Looked After Children

15.1 Results for children who were looked after for a full year from April 2014 to March 2015 show an improved picture at Key Stage 4 where 22% achieved the benchmark of 5+A*-C including English and mathematics. This has been a key area of focus demonstrating an improvement from 19% last year and remains above the 2014 national results of 12%. The top performing student at KS4 achieved 10 GCSEs, has progressed to sixth form and is planning to go to University.

15.2 The Virtual School is supporting our looked after children and young people in and out of Borough. Performance in relation to the PEPs has improved with 78% in 14/15 and 87% at March 2016. Regular audits are picking up issues of quality and these will be reported formally through the Children's Services Management Team meetings and the Performance Boards. Social workers have received training on a regular basis by the Virtual School Head and repeated for new staff.

15.3 Key Stage 2 results remained constant at 33% (National 52%) with 67% of children making two or more levels of progress.

15.4 KS1 average point score declined although 80% of children had an identified special educational need (from 12.8 in 2014 to 10.5 in 2015 with a National score of 13.3).

15.5 Phonics results improved from 33% to 40% (National was 55%).

15.6 In the Early Years Foundation stage no child achieved the expected level in all five areas required to achieve a Good Level of Development and this is an area of focus, working in partnership with the Early Years team and the LAC Education Adviser 0 – 11, when appointed.

15.7 A high proportion of looked after children have an identified special educational need and at the start of the academic year 2014, 67% of primary aged children, 73% of secondary aged children and 57% of post 16 students were in receipt of SEN support.

15.8 Potential university students are identified early and receive support and guidance when selecting and applying for courses. Support is also offered with applications for Pupil Bursaries and other funding sources. There are currently ten students at university.

15.9 Whilst expected levels of progress were achieved across the key stages for a number of individual children particularly from their starting points, further improvement is required to continue narrowing the gap between looked after children and their peers. A range of interventions were implemented through the Pupil Premium Plus funding and the majority of schools worked creatively and collaboratively with the Virtual School to deploy this funding effectively.

15.10 The Virtual School Head is responsible for the delegation of the Pupil Premium Plus grant to schools. Schools have been allocated a core figure for supporting pupil needs and they received documentation and guidance from the VSH to assist with this process. Funding has been allocated through a needs led based model and schools have been asked to complete a Pupil Premium Plus audit form to detail the spend, impact and outcomes, as discussed in the Personal Education Plan meeting and to request additional funding which is tracked and monitored.

15.11 A range of interventions are funded through the Pupil Premium Plus allocation and comprises of 1:1 tutoring, small group interventions, in class support, therapeutic support, educational visits, extra -curricular activities, revision guides and laptops.

15.12 Sixty five children identified by the Virtual School have been involved in a reading intervention programme through the National Letterbox Scheme.

15.13 Children received parcels of books and maths games over a sixth month period. Positive feedback has been received from the children and Foster Carers which indicates an impact on the children's level of engagement in literacy and numeracy.

15.14 The Welfare Call attendance system was successfully implemented in 2015 and has contributed significantly to safeguarding through daily absence reporting to the Virtual School, Social Workers and Designated Teachers. Further development of the Virtual School is planned with the recruitment of two LAC Education Advisers 0 – 11, 11 – 25 and the proposed pilot of ePEPs and Target Tracker.

15.15 83% of children are attending good or outstanding schools in accordance with the Reading Pledge. The remaining children attend schools for which there is no Ofsted judgement due to academy conversion or they were already attending schools which were neither good nor outstanding before becoming looked after.

15.16 The Virtual Head and members of the Virtual School meet with Social Workers, Foster Carers and Designated Teachers to promote the educational achievement of looked after children and update on current educational changes. Education packs are issued at these meetings which include statutory guidance on the timeliness and quality of PEPs. The recruitment process for two Virtual School LAC Education Advisers 0-11 and 11-25 has begun and this will improve the capacity of the Virtual School to offer increased training opportunities and additional support and guidance to Social Workers, Designated Teachers and Foster Carers which in turn will improve the timeliness and quality of PEPs.

15.17 The majority of young people last academic year transitioned successfully from Year 11 on to post 16 courses. There were 19 young people (39.8% with statistical neighbours reporting 39%) not in education, employment or training and further collaboration is required between the Virtual School, post-16 providers and the Leaving Care Team to build a strategy to reduce this. The key is to provide targeted early intervention to prevent disengagement and the dedicated post 16 LAC Education Adviser in the Virtual School, currently being recruited, would support the extended development of this work.

15.18 An Annual Awards Ceremony is held to celebrate achievement. Social Workers nominate children for awards at the LAC Celebration of Achievement Event and this is widely supported and well attended. Events were held on the 31st May 2016 and the 2nd June 2016 at which over 80 children and young people

attended with their carers and positive feedback was received with all attendees really enjoying the events.

15.19 The VSH is a member of the corporate parenting panel and reports through a standing item at every meeting on promoting the educational achievement of Looked after Children, raising attainment and aspiration.

16. The Corporate Parenting Role

16.1 All staff in the council have been challenged to think about their role as corporate parents and how they can ensure that our looked after children have the best start in life. Performance information in relation to looked after children has been shared with the whole staff group across the council and they have been asked to consider how they can improve services within their own areas to ensure the children we look after have the same opportunities they would want for their own children.

16.2 A model has been established to enable consistent and growing voice of young people in care (Your Destiny Your Voice), as evidenced by regular participation in Children-in-Care Council meetings, delivery of youth-led events such as the Christmas Quiz, and involvement in recruitment of staff – there is still work to be done, but much progress has been made.

16.3 In October 2015 and open letter was issued to the staff of Reading Borough Council from "Your Destiny Your Choice". This has been shared with staff throughout the council through Council-wide staff Team Talk sessions and through internal communications. The young people also prepared an audio version of the letter which was very well received. The Head of Safeguarding has written a response to Your Destiny Your Choice on behalf of the authority and this was shared with the children and young people at their meeting in February.

16.4 Children's lived experience of the service has not always been good and whilst stability has improved we must acknowledge that the route to stability has not been easy for children and young people, including high turnover of social workers and delays in permanence. We are fully committed to improving this service going forward. A refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy is currently being consulted on and will go to Committee in July 2016. This will provide a focus on improving the service for looked after children and young people and for care leavers.

17. ADOPTION

17.1 Adoption Performance as evidenced by indicator A1 (the average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family) on the Adoption Scorecard, which is for children who have been adopted, indicates that after a reduction last year the average time has increased in the year 2015-2016. The national target is 420 days.

A1 - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days) (National target of 420 days)			
Year	**Avg. days**	**No of days**	**No of children**
2012	544.44	9880	18
2013	591.72	10651	18
2014	681.27	17713	26
2015	611	11,610	19
2016	696	17,396	25

17.2 For A2 (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) is 398 average days as of 31st March 2016. This is higher than the national target of 120 days.

A2 - 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 (days) (National target of 120 days)			
Year	**Avg. days**	**No of days**	**No of children**
2012	222.06	3553	16
2013	242.31	3877	16
2014	325.96	8475	26
2015	285	5429	19
2016	398	9560	25

17.3 The breakdown of indicator A3 (children who waited less than 16 months-487 days between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family) contains some children with considerably longer timescales in excess of 500 days. There were 11 children who waited less than 16 months as at March 2016, the average number of days between entering care and moving to adoptive placement was 696 at March 2016.

17.4 Further diagnostic work was commissioned with independent providers Coram. This looked at the children placed for adoption compared with the children looked after, those currently needing adoptive families and those who the service has not been able to place. An action plan has been developed by the Adoption service and work started to improve performance in this area.

17.5 The Annual Adoption report for 2016 demonstrates a significant improvement in timeliness and is to be tabled as a separate document to ACE Committee July 2016 for information and reassurance as all the indicators A1, A2 and A3 have significantly improved and are now well within the national expectations.

17.6 25 children were adopted during the year 2015/16 an increase from 19 in 2014/15 for Reading Borough Council. Comparative data is not yet available for 15/16 but previous years can be seen below. Reading % of LAC Population in 2015 was 22% against an England average of 17%.

Benchmarked Performance Re Adoption in the Year as a Percentage of LAC Population

Local Authority, Region and England		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Change from previous year
870	Reading	18.00	12.00	18.00	10.00	17.00	12.00	20.00	19.00	27.00	22.00	-5.00
989	South East	13.00	13.00	14.00	11.00	13.00	10.00	11.00	14.00	17.00	18.00	1.00
	Statistical	13.56	12.88	15.11	15.56	14.90	12.10	12.50	13.80	16.30	16.80	0.50
970	England	14.00	13.00	13.00	13.00	13.00	11.00	13.00	14.00	17.00	17.00	0.00

						Quartile bands			
		Trend	Change from previous year	Latest National Rank	Quartile Banding	Up to and including	Up to and including	Up to and including	Up to and including
870	Reading	↓	-5.00	28	A	12.75	17.00	21.00	37.00

18. AUDIT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTIVITY

18.1 Audit practice and influence on the service was not well embedded during 2015, whilst there was audit activity it was specific and did not form part of an overall quality assurance learning process for all. There was a lack of compliance in getting audits completed and their analysis was the responsibility of operational service managers this is usually undertaken by the independent quality assurance service to ensure learning can be cascaded and evidenced as influencing service development.

18.2 The process and quality of engagement required significant refresh and challenge which was completed and implemented by the interim Head of Service for Quality Assurance.

18.3 A refreshed Quality Assurance Framework was developed, agreed through lead member briefing and ACE committee and implemented in the service from April 2016.

18.4 It provides a much more robust scope and methodology to obtaining performance information**.** Data on trends, performance trajectories and an ability to cross relate to other performance measures are now more easily accessible and should provide a secure learning base for the services development going forward.

18.5 The focus within audit activity is a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative data to ensure process and procedures are being followed and that areas for practice improvement are identified and actioned. The audit

process incorporates the whole of children's Services and is supported by a range of revised audit tools.

18.6 The audit process should create dialogue between the auditor and the worker. Whilst the worker must be open to professional scrutiny and challenge as part of the process, it is important for this to be done in a way that is open, honest and transparent, so that everyone works together to improve the quality of service we deliver.

18.7 A Moderation process is built into the audit process and quality assures the process of monitoring the quality of the auditing carried out. Random cases are, therefore, routinely re-audited by a manager or peer.

18.8 The audit process and moderation which is in place for Children's Social Care has been extended to the Children's Action Teams so Children's Services has one overarching methodology for auditing. Case mapping across teams is planned to further improve practice for the whole of the 'child's journey' across services.

18.9 A quarterly performance and quality meeting is chaired by the Head of Children's Services. The meeting will look at the various strands of quality assurance activity and will agree action plans to be developed as a result of activity. This meeting will act as a challenge meeting where the HOCS can scrutinise activity, receive exception and corrective action reports and call managers to account.

18.10 Quarterly reports continue to be produced that will pull together themes from audits that have been undertaken. The Service Improvement board will then consider the messages and learning from these processes in connection to learning and action planning that emerges from the framework.

18.11 The first quarterly report relating to Quarter 4, 2015/16 under the new agreed 'Quality Assurance Framework' was submitted to the Service Improvement Board 13th May 2016 and this related to audits completed between 1st January 2016 and 8th April 2016.

18.12 There were 23 audits completed during this quarter 4 period out of a possible 98 distributed. This equates to 23% compliance by managers. Compliance has been an issue but has been addressed resulting in quarter 1, 2016/17 producing 100% compliance by managers.

18.13 The audit tool used has a number of sections which includes an 'Ofsted Framework' group of questions. This leads the auditor to give and overall grade in line with Ofsted grading as follows:

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires Improvement
- Inadequate

18.14 The grading of cases audited from the Quarter 4 report were as follows;

None Moderated Grading			**Final Moderated Grading**	
Outstanding	0 (0%)		Outstanding	0 (0%)
Good	3 (13%)		Good	3 (13%)
Requires Improvement	18 (78%)		Requires Improvement	14 (61%)
Inadequate	2 (9%)		Inadequate	6 (26%)

18.15 An analysis of overall findings collated from each of the various sections found the following.

18.1.1 Strengths – What has worked well

- Multi-agency liaison and communication in many cases has been positive

- Intervention by with families by Social Work Assistants has been positive
- The family's changing needs have been recognised and the support package adjusted to allow these needs to be met
- Good insight into families ethnicity and cultural needs

18.1.2 Learning – What has not worked well

- Direct work not taking place to capture the children's wishes and feelings and informing planning
- There is a lack of recording of CIN meetings on Mosaic
- Recording of CP visits are on the whole very brief
- Evidence of case drift over a number of months. Changes in social workers and managers in the past 12 months, which has significantly contributed to drift in cases.
- Assessments on many cases not up to date or analytical in assessing risk and need
- There has been little challenge evident on case files in respect of IROs
- The family's cultural needs are not explored and taken into consideration within the assessments
- Chronologies are not a meaningful and succinct
- No regular supervision recorded when children were subject to CP planning
- No SW visits or reviews have taken place since the CP plan ended

18.1.3 Outcomes

- Action Plans for each 'Inadequate cases' were agreed Service Managers, Team Manager and Social Worker these are being tracked by the Service Manager for Quality Assurance to ensure they were secured and actions done.
- A Supervision record and case notes were all updated with refreshed plans to be reviewed at subsequent supervision
- Operational Service Manager and Service Manager for Reviewing and Quality Assurance to be informed of the plans success and outcomes.
- Operational Service Managers to take responsibility for robust oversight of inadequate cases and report on progress at CSMT
- All audits uploaded on child's file
- Actions from audit reports will inform improvement plan
- Audit findings will be incorporated into the QA Framework process
- All 'Inadequate' cases will be reviewed by monthly case improvement panel until case has reached an acceptable standard
- Audits will be completed 1 every three weeks, to inform a quarterly report

- Quality Assurance page in IRIS to include all auditing taking place and reports for all to access

18.16 Results have been audits will be disseminated across Children's Services. The views/comments of staff are gathered in a range of fora, for instance, focus groups, staff briefings, whole service conferences and induction of new staff. Feedback in respect of the findings of audits and the relevant themes will be disseminated at such events.

18.17 It is acknowledged that the refreshed process implemented from the end of April has not yet had enough time to be able to evidence the significant benefits in improving practice as a result of these frameworks being in place to date.

18.18 However there have been up to 70 audits undertaken that will influence developing practice when subject to the process outlined above.

18.19 The evaluation of the Annual Report for Complaints and Compliments 2015-16 has not yet been received by the service.

19. WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT

19.1 The recruitment of social workers and managers at a number of levels remains a priority for Reading Borough Council. The current workforce development strategy provides a robust infrastructure to support and underpin the improvement of good and excellent practice across children's services inclusive of early help.

19.2 In addition to the robust recruitment and retention activity that is being implemented to secure the workforce required to deliver the new children's social care delivery model.

19.3 The senior leadership team for DCEEHS has been successfully permanently recruited to and will provide a stable and consistent approach to the services development.

19.4 The current permanent recruitment campaign has successfully recruited to 50% of the workforce required for the new Children's Social Care delivery model to date within 6 weeks of the process starting following a tender process to secure recruitment agencies that could assist the authority.

19.5 The following chart sets out our current workforce profile as of 20/05/16 for social care staff working with children in need, children subject to child protection plans, children looked after and care leavers (including: the

number of qualified social workers and their post-qualifying experience; the number of vacancies for permanent staff; the number of locum/agency staff; the extent of staff turnover/stability and sickness levels; and average caseloads of staff by team)

Role	Establishment	Perm Staff	Agency Staff	Vacs	Total Workers	% Agency	% Perm	% Est Vacant
ATM	18.2	8.2	14	10	22.2	63%	37%	55%
HS	15.6	9.6	9	6	18.6	48%	52%	38%
IRO	6	5.2	3	0.8	8.2	37%	63%	15%
SM	5	2	3	3	5	60%	40%	60%
SW	65.1	37.7	45.75	27.4	83.45	55%	45%	42%
TM	8.6	2.6	7	6	9.6	73%	27%	70%
Grand Total	118.5	65.3	81.75	53.2	147.05	56%	44%	45%

19.6 Details on measures and initiatives undertaken to address areas such as agency use and recruitment are contained within the Workforce Development strategy for Children's Services.

20. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

20.1 The permanent appointment of the Principal Social Worker in December 2015 was followed closely by the appointment of the Director that started in February 2016.

20.2 Since December 2015 permanent appointments have been made to all of the services senior leadership team posts including HOS for Early Help December 2015, HOS for Education March 2016, HOS Safeguarding June 2016 and HOS for Governance and HOS for Transformation will be starting in August 2016.

20.3 The dismissal of the Director of Children's Services and the Head of Children's Services in November 2015 prompted immediate action and the Director of Adult Services stepped into the role as the Interim Director of Children's Services until the appointment of a new DCS.

20.4 The Children's Services Improvement Board (CSIB), a partnership board, was established in June 2015 and established an Improvement Plan intended to drive up service improvements and providing strategic challenge on key aspects of service delivery, holding managers to account for the delivery of key improvements throughout the year and providing performance oversight. This proved to be effective and has reported improvements since 2015. An impact report was presented to the Board in June 2016 which captured the

impact the plan has had on delivering improvements to services to children and young people.

20.5 When the DCS and the Head of Service left in 2015, a short term intensive management action plan was implemented (early in December 2015) and delivered to ensure that work was consolidated and delivered to a high standard during this period of upheaval for staff.

20.6 The changes experienced by staff created some initial uncertainty which was also reflected in performance during the autumn of 2015; however the new management team in place from January 2016 established a rigorous approach to ensuring the staff felt increased support to deliver effective and sustainable services.

20.7 Staff development workshops were delivered from January 2016 to introduce staff to the new management team and to build and share a new vision. These have been developed resulting in a programme of Staff Conferences which have continued through 2016.

20.8 The impact of so many rapid changes during 2015 meant that many staff had left the authority and a greater reliance was placed on agency and interim staff. Following the appointment of the new management team, a number of staff who had previously handed in their notice, were persuaded to stay.

20.9 A review and restructure of Children's Services was done which resulted in a proposal for a new delivery model in February/March 2016, which has been subject to consultation with staff and is now at the start of implementation planning.

20.10 The proposal reflected the increase in volume of work, tensions and pressures across the service and seeks to secure robust workflow and outcomes for children, young people and their families.

20.11 Good agency staff who have been working with the authority are being asked to consider taking on permanent roles and permanent recruitment activity is slowly starting to bear fruit. A recruitment campaign in November 2015 resulted in five new Assessed supported year in employment (ASYE) social workers starting in January 2016. Recruitment planning for the next ASYE cohort is underway with recruitment starting in 2016 for an early 2017 start.

20.12 We have also instigated an intensive recruitment campaign during the summer of 2016, aiming to recruit to 60 permanent social work posts 50 % have already been recruited to.

20.13 A refreshed Workforce Development Strategy in January 2016 set out the recruitment and retention activity that will be undertaken alongside key development opportunities for staff within Children's Services.

20.14 The management team since January 2016 have developed workforce profile and caseload monitoring mechanisms and are clear about the need to recruit to a permanent workforce, reducing reliance on agency staff.

20.15 New focus has been given to the authority's approach to key governance arrangements since the appointment of the senior management team in January 2016, in particular to performance management and to quality assurance and putting children at the heart of everything.

20.16 Key documents also required a refresh including the Quality Assurance Framework, Special guardianship policy, Corporate Parenting Strategy and Performance tools.

20.17 New performance dashboards had to be developed to assist in the monitoring of key performance in relation to looked after children and Safeguarding.

20.18 These dashboards are helping to drive up performance and identifying issues where the business processes in Mosaic are not yet secure. Key to a dashboard is the ability to click on individual numbers in relation to the performance of a team and for staff, managers and senior managers able to view the case records of the children to whom it relates. Reports are developed in 'live-time' so managers are able to use this daily to ensure that assessments and visits are undertaken. Data from the dashboard is then used in the context of a Performance Board to challenge performance and undertake remedial actions. A refreshed audit programme will improve our view of the quality of the work being completed.

20.19 The "Getting to Good" meeting was refreshed as a monthly Performance Board and streamlined to secure improvement actions and service development in a more timely way, including Service Managers producing monthly highlight reports following service specific performance boards that then inform the Performance Board about challenges and opportunities, mitigating actions taken, results and remedial actions still outstanding.

20.20 Our new management team has recognised issues in relation to consistent case and personal supervision within Children's Social Care and work is being done to address this immediately, including training and development for managers and support from the Principal Social Worker and Quality Improvement Manager.

20.21 A new Performance and Quality Assurance Framework has been launched which will provide a structured approach to securing good performance and high quality services. Managers are clear about the Quality Assurance, Performance, Audit and Business Planning Cycle.

20.22 Professional challenge is starting to emerge as staff and partners become comfortable with the new management arrangements. This is encouraging and welcomed, particularly in multi-agency fora e.g. Reading LSCB.

20.23 Political Leadership has provided stability with the Lead Member for Children's Services, Councillor Gavin having been in place since May 2013. This role is taken very seriously within the authority and Councillor Gavin has been instrumental in promoting the voice of children and young people at a council level and in encouraging all councillors to complete safeguarding training, working with officers and children to develop the Pledge to children in care and presenting it to full council as a resolution, inviting all councillors to sign the Pledge. She also organised a training session for councillors as corporate parents and has presented to the managers of the organisation on their role as corporate parents using the Team Talk mechanism. Every officer of the Council has been challenged to think about how they can give the best start in life to our looked after children and this will be monitored through the Parenting Panel.

20.24 The LSCB Business Manager has been working towards the LSCB becoming more organised and well-known across the local authority and partner agencies. Good work has taken place to update the guidance on thresholds and these have been cascaded across all services, including running workshops. The CSE strategy has been launched, and with the CSE co-ordinator in post, the action plan has been progressed.

20.25 Commissioning arrangements are maturing within Reading and we are starting to improve the quality of provision through managing relationships with 100 providers, covering £12m spend, achieving £500k annualised savings/cost avoidance since Sept 2014 through challenging quality and challenging costs.

20.26 There is however limited experience of joint commissioning arrangements and market development which we are looking to focus on during 2016-17 particularly with the Transformation of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. We have forged greater joint commissioning with health in relation to youth counselling.

20.27 The Commissioning Service has led placement moves or challenged providers around the quality of over 30 individual placements and has carried out S11

Safeguarding Audit for all providers. It also initiated and co-ordinated Berkshire-wide cost analysis project for SEN FE placements.

20.28 We have set up systems on Mosaic that update e.g. Ofsted ratings automatically.

20.29 The individual cases referred for placement/cost negotiation/quality issues have doubled from 50 in 2014 to over 100 in 2015.

20.30 Further development and improvement work will be done by working alongside iMPOWER, who are coming in to work with the services in the summer of 2016. We also are investing in a programme of leadership development with the Virtual College of leadership for team and service managers as well as the Camden LA twinning programme that is seeking to expose managers to alternative and good models of service provision.

21. NEXT STEPS

21.1 The best place for children to thrive is within their families and within their local environment but where this is not safe enough or possible, RBC will provide the best care for young children by ensuring that we carry through our statutory responsibility with passion and enthusiasm. This will require good partnership working with our partnership agencies, including those from within RBC. We will need to ensure that we all work towards the same objective, which is to bring the best outcomes for our children.

21.2 As part of the continuing improvement journey, the following is being done to enable the council's objectives for children, young people and their families to be achieved:

- We need to ensure that the new directions set are embedded over the next few months and provide the quality of care to young people in our care, those on a child protection and children in need plans.
- We continue to develop our auditing arrangements across all services and act upon their findings by cascading the learning through training events and regular workshops.
- Management oversight needs to become embedded and consistently recorded on children and young people's files and middle managers particularly need to be enabled to strengthen their practice and delivery of supervision to secure timely and improved outcomes.
- That the voice of the child emerges strongly throughout our practice.

- That the core standards are fully understood and the key priorities are adhered to; these include the voice of the child, regular and reflective supervision, performance management, timeliness of our assessments, good analysis of our work and intervention with children and families that is outcome focussed.
- That we achieve stability in staffing, by recruiting good quality staff and retaining them and developing those currently in the Department to their full potential.
- It is essential that all staff have an understanding about our budgetary pressures and learn to live within the budgets allocated but continue to provide high quality services including access to out of borough provision that is cost effective and best value.
- Ensure that residential care is only considered when all their options have been exhausted.
- Secure the children's solutions panel oversight and influence of all high spend, care plans and families requiring intervention additional to that of a social work assessment
- Develop a joint agency panel to secure partnership funding and contribution to children's care packages when required.
- Development of the children's case management tool MOSAIC is crucial as it underpins all of the services functionality and currently is not yet enabling social workers to spend more time with children, young people and their families.
- Management Action to address these challenges has also included recognition that the current infrastructure in place is actively preventing the development of the workforce and their ability to deliver services in a timely and consistently effective way.
- The new Children's Services delivery model to be implemented from July 2016 following consultation and feedback from the staff has been developed to create an infrastructure for the service that will address the issues of concern currently challenging the service.
- This includes an increased workforce that can respond to the current levels of demand resulting in reduced caseloads that will enable increased timeliness and quality, increased managerial oversight and accountability and secure a specialist model of practice that will enable staff development and good quality practice.
- This model and its benefits have been well received and supported by the Council and its partners in safeguarding.
- This model was developed by the interim Head of Service during February 2016 and April 2016 alongside the staff and relevant partners. The current transition plan is securing the staffing , caseload transition process, recruitment of permanent staff and team locations to start implementation from July 2016. (Should we include the paper?)

- The Principal Social Worker has developed quickly a full induction programme that integrates the service and practice standards to underpin the workforce development and retention activity outlined in the newly implemented workforce strategy.

22. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

22.1 The work of Children's Social Care is aligned with the strategic priorities of Reading Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2015 – 2018 and the Reading Health and Wellbeing Strategy and in particular:

'Safeguarding and protecting those that are the most vulnerable'.

23. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

23.1 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.

24. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

24.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

25. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

25.1 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.

26. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

27. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Annual Fostering report attached.
- Childrens Workforce Development Strategy
- Childrens Social Care Delivery Model

27.1 None

GLOSSARY:

CSC – Children's Social Care

MASH – Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub

DfE – Department of Education

LSCB – Local Safeguarding Children's Board

VCS – Voluntary and Community Sector **TVP**

– Thames Valley Police

ICPC – Initial Child Protection Conference

UASC – Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

SN – Statistical Neighbour

FGC – Family Group Conference

MARAC – Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference

Directorate of Children, Education and Early Help Services

Fostering Service
Annual Report

2015/16

Reading Borough Council
Working better with you

FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016

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1. Legislative and Policy Context

Reading Borough Council's Fostering Service is an integral part of the Directorate of Children, Education and Early Help Services. It operates within the legislative requirements of:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and 2013 (Amendments)
- The Care Standards Act 2000, Regulations 2010 and accompanying National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services
- The Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011 and 2013
- The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and accompanying National Minimum Standards
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005
- The Human Rights Act 1998 and Amendments
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Other relevant legislation and Department of Health guidance, circulars and letters.

Reading Borough Council's Fostering Service operates in accordance with the requirements and expectations of:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The United Kingdom National Standards for Foster Care 1999
- The Code of Practice on the Recruitment, Assessment, Approval, Training, Management and Support of Foster Carers 2005
- The Outcomes Framework of Every Child Matters: Change for Children
- The Children's and Young People's Plan
- Other relevant interagency local strategies and plans required by statute
- Reading Borough Council's internal policies, procedures and Corporate Plan 2014-2017

2. Introduction

2.1 This Annual Report will concentrate on the service activity from the 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016. It will incorporate updates for each function within the Fostering Service including action taken both to comply with the Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011 and 2013, and improve the performance reported to Reading's Children's Services 'Performance Board'.

2.2 The Fostering Services Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011 state that:

'The fostering service recruits, assesses and supports a range of foster carers to meet the needs of children they provide care for and is proactive in assessing the current and future needs of the children'

2.3 The Children Act 1989 states that:

'A general duty of a local authority is to secure sufficient accommodation for Looked After Children'

The Care Planning Placement and Care Review (England) Regulations 2010 reinforce this duty placed on local authorities to provide sufficient accommodation for looked after children. Under section 22(g) the responsible authority must take steps to ensure that they are able to provide sufficient accommodation within the authority's area to meet the needs of the looked after children.

The RBC Fostering Service's objectives are contained within the 2015/16 Statement of Purpose, namely:

- People who are vulnerable are cared for and protected; people are supported and protected when they need to be (as per the RBC Corporate Plan 2014-2017).

- Good quality public services are provided by staff working within a learning environment which supports continual improvement in terms of the effectiveness of practice (as per the RBC Corporate Plan 2014-2017).
- Deliver the Directorate Vision, LEAP; **L**isten to our children, young people and families. **E**nable families to make better choices to have a positive impact. **A**ct quickly to deliver the right support and outcomes for each child working in a child focused, transparent, timely and inclusive way. **P**artnership working to deliver integrated help early enough to be effective and proportionate.

- Deliver the pledge to children in the care of Reading Borough Council. This pledge sets out the standard of care children and young people can expect from the council. The pledge details the support and guidance provided under the following broad headings:

  - Being Involved - Participation
  - Permanence
  - Your Education
  - Life Outside of School

- ❖ Transition to Independence

- Provide looked after children with a safe, stable, nurturing family environment which will promote their health, educational achievement and wellbeing, and which will assist them in coming to terms with their life experience and reaching their full potential.

- Provide different types of foster placements to meet the needs of the children being looked after, including temporary, permanent, respite and short breaks.

- To retain a skilled group of foster carers who are able to meet the needs of children who are looked after.

- To recruit and assess foster carers in a consistent and visible manner to engage the right quality and number of carers to meet the demands for placements.

- To meet the key aims of Reading Borough Council and the objectives of the Children and Young People's Plan.

2.4 The Ofsted Inspection of August 2013 gave the RBC fostering agency an overall rating of 'Adequate'. A number of key recommendations were made resulting in an action plan to improve the service.

3. Overall Fostering Service Performance

3.1 Performance monitoring systems have been embedded with monthly performance data being analysed by the management group. The data (as contained in the Appendix 1 and 2) is used to identify any patterns and themes and so inform the management of areas of strength and required development.

3.2 **Performance against Four Performance Indicators:**

The Proportion of children and young people placed with 'in-house' Foster Carers.
At 31st March 2016 the proportion of Looked After Children and Young People placed with 'in-house' foster carers is 29%. With the inclusion of Family and Friends foster carers this figure increases to 40%. This falls significantly short of the target of 50% for March 2016 (the first milestone to reach 75% by September 2018 as established within the Sufficiency Strategy). The numbers placed with Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements increased to 41% of Looked After Children in comparison to 37% the same time last year.

3.3 The overall numbers of Looked After Children increased slightly from 209 to 220 during the year, with a high of 241 in December 2015. Underneath these fluctuations the percentage of Looked After Children by age at 31st March 2016 was as follows:

- 20% under 5 years of age
- 20% 5-9 years of age
- 39% 10-15 years of age
- 21% over 16 years of age

3.4 This meant that the demand for placements of older children/young people significantly increased over the year with the demand continuing to outstrip supply. This resulted in a number being placed in IFA's.

3.5 It is difficult to predict these patterns of placement demand but overall Children's Social Work teams report an increased trend for younger children to be placed with family and friends ("connected persons") under Special Guardianship Orders rather than remaining as Looked After Children.

3.6 **The proportion of Looked After Children in Family Placements**

Reading's performance in relation to the number of children in family placements increased between March 2015 and March 2016 (73% to 83%). The number of young people placed in residential care remains relatively low at 9%, a slight increase from last year (7%).

3.7 The proportion of new admissions to placements further than 20 miles from Reading

Performance related to the total number of children placed within 20 miles from their home has remained static at 67% of LAC from March 2015 to March 2016. 33% of Looked After Children were placed over 20 miles from their originating address by the end of March 2016, again the same figure as last year. The largest numbers of children being placed over 20 miles away are those in the 10 years plus age group (43%). This reflects the increased number of placements being sought for older children children/young people.

3.8 The proportion of children with 3 or more placement moves

Reading's performance in relation to placement stability remained at a good level, increasing slightly from 8.7% to 9% of Reading's Looked After children experiencing 3 or more placements by year end. This figure has remained relatively static in relation to the previous year. Although some of these moves were for good reasons such as to achieve permanency, the ideal would be for them to do so with less prior moves. Use of systemic consultations with the Options Therapeutic Team to either directly provide interventions or "fast track" referrals to CAMHS has limited the number of placement breakdowns. This service is working towards the prevention of placement breakdowns, by providing therapeutic support to LAC and advice, guidance and training to foster carers.

4. Recruitment and Assessment of Foster Carers

4.1 This function is undertaken by a section of the fostering service which includes the following staff:-

Assistant Team Manager	1 FTE
Higher Specialist Social Worker	1.68 FTE
Social Worker	1.5 FTE
Permanency Social Workers (finding long term foster families)	2 FTE
Recruitment Officer (Fostering & Adoption)	1 FTE

4.2 The Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy 2015-2017 sets out how Reading Borough Council (RBC) will fulfil its "sufficiency" responsibility to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable, that the placement and accommodation needs of Reading Looked After Children and Care Leavers are met locally. This Strategy therefore establishes ambitious and challenging targets to increase the recruitment of RBC foster carers who can offer a wide range of placement types.

4.3 The target for August 2015 to March 2016 was set at an increase of 24 fostering households (see Appendix 1). This target was revised to 18 fostering households to reflect the implementation date of the Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy and the need to recruit to an assessing Social Worker post.

4.4 Appendix 1 shows that 9 new "main" carers were approved (including those who could offer placements to teenagers and siblings). At the time of writing this report 3 further fostering households have been approved bring the total to 12. During the last financial year 21 assessments were commenced. Of these 7 were NFA'd (no further actioned) the reasons for which are detailed in Appendix 1. This represents static performance in comparison to 2014-2015 when 9 new fostering households were approved therefore the 'sufficiency target' of 24 fostering households was not achieved. During this period 5 sets of carers ceased fostering. The reasons recorded for those ceasing to foster on the appendix show that there good outcomes for children who achieved permanency through either a Special Guardianship or an Adoption Order. Two carers ceased fostering due to a change of career and one resigned for personal reasons. None of the resignations were as a result of poor support from the team. This is an area which is monitored monthly in performance meetings.

4.5 Appendix 2 demonstrates the high level of recruitment activity required to generate additional approved foster carers because of the filtering/self-determined withdrawal at each stage of the recruitment and assessment process i.e 129 initial enquiries were generated to produce 9 new fostering households.

4.6 Over the year 2015/2016 the Recruitment Team have worked hard to make use of social media, like Twitter and Facebook, developing Reading's own Fostering and Adoption account/profile. However, the main focus has been the development of a 'digital strategy' with an increased web based presence supported by a project plan (Appendix 3). It is anticipated that this will enable the Recruitment Team to engage with the market place in a flexible and responsive manner with a view to creating further efficiencies.

4.7 General advertising on the buses, newspapers and radio has been recognised by

enquirers which led them to contact the Local Authority about fostering. This is evidence of the importance of 'drip feeding' information to the pool of potential carers by means of continuous advertising/ marketing strategies.

4.8 The Team has been active in terms of recruitment stands and throughout the year has attended numerous community events within Reading. These have been well attended and served to raise awareness of fostering in Reading.

4.9 In October 2014 Reading launched a partnership arrangement with the 'Home for Good' project which aims to recruit 40 fostering households from the network of churches in the Reading area over a period of 3 years. The partnership includes the joint funding of a 0.5 social worker post to engage and recruit from this section of the community. The project has generated 7 enquiries and resulted in 2 applications to date. This initiative has reinforced the significance of the size of accommodation typically lived in by people who would otherwise be potential enquirers. This issue is therefore being taken forward as a priority area for service development.

4.10 In July 2013 "Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers" recommended a two stage process in the assessment of Foster Carers. The Recruitment and Assessment Team have chosen to implement the Stage 1 and Stage 2 processes concurrently with a view to efficient and effective progression of Foster Carer Assessments. The team has worked in partnership with Business Support to develop a Checks and References workflow that has been implemented in Mosaic to enable robust performance tracking and management. The Recruitment and Assessment Team are now piloting the completion of Stage 1 being undertaken by a dedicated worker who will respond to enquirers in the evenings and at weekends offering a flexible and speedy response reflecting the market demand in a competitive environment with Independent Fostering Agencies and surrounding Local Authorities operating in the area.

4.11 A system of electronic police (DBS) checks was officially implemented on 30th October 2015 in order to address the delay caused in completing Stage 1 assessments and employing staff. This has produced an improvement from an average of 8 months for returned checks to 3 months for prospective carers and better results for the employment of staff (e.g 2 days in one case). As this still did not meet the 2 month timeframe of Stage 1 assessments, benchmarking was undertaken with other Local Authorities and other online systems. The results achieved in Reading were in line with those elsewhere.

4.12 Initial enquiries are responded to promptly within timescales (3 days). From 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016 of 129 initial enquires received 116 were responded to within 3 days. The current framework and structure of the Recruitment and Assessment Service is producing foster carers that are well informed and prepared for the role.

5. Support and Development of Foster Carers

5.1 This function is undertaken by a section of the team with the following staff dedicated to this activity:

Support & Development Team	
Assistant Team Manager	1 x 0.8 FTE
Assistant Team Manager	1 x 0.6 FTE
Higher Specialist SW	4 x 1 FTE
Social Workers	1 x 0.5 FTE
	3 x 1 FTE
Duty Social Worker	1 x 1 FTE

5.2 These workers provide the placement finding service in response to referrals from the children's social work teams as well as supervising and supporting approved RBC carers - ensuring that the latter continuously develop their skills and knowledge.

5.3 **Placement Finding Service**

The fostering duty system continues to provide a good level of continuity to Foster Carers, Children's Social Workers and Independent Fostering Agencies, resulting in better outcomes for children. We continue to use our system of a fulltime dedicated Duty Officer (qualified social worker) and a back up duty social worker with support from a duty manager; these roles are managed on a rota basis. This service continues to receive very positive feedback from all teams and professional partners and develops very effective working relationships with the Independent Fostering Agencies.

This service also arranges respite placements/babysitting/day care/transport etc to support RBC carers – this work is additional to the activity described below.

5.4 **Profile of Children Requiring Foster Placements:**

127 children moved into new fostering placements between 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016 (some of them had more than one move in this period). This is a significant increase to the previous year (87). Placements are obtained with RBC, other Berkshire Local Authority or, if necessary and when authorised, with IFA carers. This does not reflect the additional placement search activity undertaken in response to emergency referrals which do not actually result in foster placements being used as the Children's Social Work Teams are able to find birth family/extended family alternatives. It does include referrals requiring changes of placement for existing Looked After Children as well as those for children who are just becoming looked after.

Gender	Number of Children referred+placed
Male	61
Female	66
Total children referred	127

Age range	Number of Children referred+placed
0 - 2	36
3 - 5	12
6 - 8	17
9 - 11	14
12 - 15	33
16 - 18	15
Total	**127**

Ethnicity	Number of Children referred+placed
Asian	5
Black African	10
Black British and Caribbean	2
Black Carribean	2
Black Mixed	2
Black Other	1
Mixed Other	4
Mixed White & Asian	4
Mixed White & Bl African	3
Mixed White & Bl Caribbean	11
NOT STATED	1
Other Asian	1
Other Ethnic Group	11
Other White European	3
White British	67
Total	**127**

The tables above illustrate the continual challenge for the fostering team to recruit foster carers from a range of backgrounds and approval categories to address the numbers of LAC in IFA placements and match the demand in terms of age, cultural

background, length of placement required and needs of the individual children.

5.5 Foster Carer Profiles

On 31.3.16 there were 89 carers (households) in total on the register. Of these:

- 58 were short term foster carers
- 10 were long term foster carers
- 2 were supported lodgings carers
- 11 were Family and Friends foster carers
- 3 were respite carers
- 5 were short break overnight carers (see Short Break section below)
- 12 day carers/carers providing community based sessions etc. etc (not included in 89 carer households)

Of the "approved RBC foster carers" providing overnight placements on the register at 31.3.16 (i.e short term, long term, supported lodgings and respite carers).

The number of short and long terms carers has increased from 53 and 9 households respectively in March 2015 to 58 and 10 in 2016.

5.6 Support and Supervision for Foster Carers

Supervising Social Workers continue to provide supervision, support, ongoing training and professional development to foster carers to enable them to offer a range of skills and experience required to meet the diverse needs of Reading's Looked After Children. The support is provided through a variety of methods e.g. individual supervision, support groups, and the development of peer mentoring and buddying. The buddying scheme is jointly run by a foster carer with an ATM. Similarly the mentoring scheme is being overseen by the ATM.

Foster carers also offer mutual support via Reading's well-established Carers Link group. Committee members of this group each have a "ring round" list of foster carers to contact on a monthly basis to check how they are and offer support.
There was a social event for foster carers earlier in the year with another planned for July 2016 to thank carers for all the work they do and recognise their contribution.

Foster carers are well paid and benefit from 14 days paid service break each year. The fee and levels structure is currently under review in order to better meet the needs of Reading children and reward foster carers more equitably.

One member of staff commenced maternity leave in November 2015 and a secondment arrangement was put in place as of January 2016 to cover this period of leave. The interim period was managed within the team. In February 2016 an agency social worker concluded their contract on the appointment of a permanent social worker and a handover was facilitated. Unfortunately this new member of staff has had extensive sick leave during the year and this has led to pressure on the rest of the staff group, who have covered the supervision of her foster carers temporarily. Currently there is one agency social worker covering the work of the full time duty worker, who has been on long term sick leave. The agency worker is someone who previously worked for the fostering team and knows many Reading foster carers. This high level of stability in the team has had a positive impact on foster carers, and a foster carer survey in late 2015 reported that the majority of foster carers felt that the level and quality of support had improved over the year.

Supervising Social Workers are being encouraged through staff supervision and appraisal to prioritise making good quality relationships with the children in placement as added support to the foster carer and to ensure the child has access to caring consistent adults.

5.7 **Individual Supervision**

All Foster Carers have an allocated Supervising Social Worker and receive regular supervision every 4-6 weeks, fortnightly if a newly approved foster carer. The purpose of foster carer supervision is to ensure that all professional practices and procedures (including appropriate recording) are being followed in addition to identifying any issues arising from the placement at an early stage

The stability of Assistant Team Managers has meant that during the year to March 2016, Supervising Social Workers were all receiving regular four weekly supervision.

5.8 **Foster Carer Access To Children's Social Care Managers**

The Fostering Team Manager, Service Manager, Head of Service and lead councillor have attended coffee mornings organised by foster carers when requested. Foster carers are able to raise any pertinent issues at these sessions.

The Carers Link committee also have a regular bi-monthly meeting with the fostering management team up to Service Manager and Head of Service. Foster carers are also regularly invited to attend working groups when processes and service improvements are being considered.

5.9 **Peer Support Group Meetings**

There is a group of baby carers who meet on a regular basis to share their experience of caring for babies and to discuss training needs. The group has been organised by foster carers and is attended by Supervising Social Workers and guest speakers as appropriate. An additional group of carers for teenagers meets to share their experiences and discuss the needs of teenagers.

In addition Reading Carers Link (RCL), which is supported by an annual grant from Reading Borough Council, has organised social activities throughout the year.

5.10 **Children who foster**

The children who foster group – "Foster Squad" has continued to meet monthly and is building an established membership. Group activities over the last year included learning/training as well as fun/social activities. There have been "information" sessions including Cultural awareness, MAKETON, Moving Children On plus fun activities including street dance, a pizza party and trip to a theme park.

5.11 **Telephone Out of Hours (OOH's) Support Line for RBC Carers (provided by RBC Supervising Social Workers**

The Out of Hours support line has been running for 4 years and was recently re-launched clarifying its role and how it fits in with Reading's EDT service. RBC foster carers have been able to access the service from 18.00 – 23.00 on Mondays to Fridays, and from

09.00 – 23.00 on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. On occasions when placements have been made late in the day, the OOH's worker is asked to make the phone call to the carer in question to check all is well and that the child arrived safely.The support line, surprisingly, is not hugely utilised and this may be a reflection of the fact that foster carers feel supported during the day and are confident that problems will be addressed with their own social worker promptly on the next business day.

5.12 Training and Development

We have continued to use a range of trainers either from internal/external sources, and have continued to provide an extensive range of training in line with the needs of foster carers and linked to National Minimum Standards. Feedback from foster carers has generally been positive but we have responded to the few instances of negative feedback by cancelling and identifying alternatives when rescheduling.

All carers are supported to achieve the Training, Support and Development Standards. Those who require additional time or support are provided with additional support by their allocated Supervising Social Worker to ensure they are able to achieve completion.

During the last year we have introduced the opportunity for all those applicants in assessment stage to book themselves onto the core mandatory training so that they feel better equipped for their new role right from the start of their fostering career following approval.

We have also run two rounds of KEEP Safe training for our teenage foster carers, which have proved extremely successful. Feedback from carers is that the 20 week ongoing, closed group format is helpful and this type of course is also being considered for carers of younger children going forward.

5.13 Professional Meetings

SSWs are being encouraged through supervision and appraisal to arrange regular joint meetings with the child's social worker at least 4 times a year in order to maintain stability and help the child feel that the adults caring for them are working together. The Supervising Social Workers also attend statutory Looked After Children's Reviews, Placement Planning/Agreement Meetings and any other professional meeting deemed necessary.

5.14 Complaints

During the period of this annual report there have been 5 complaints, all by foster carers. Two were resolved informally, two were upheld and one was partially upheld. For all complaints actions plans are established.

5.15 Allegations

There have been 13 allegations against foster carers from 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016 where the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) has been informed and subsequently a strategy meeting and/or a Joint Evaluation Meeting convened. Nine resulted in Action Plans, and 2 were unfounded and 2 were ongoing.

5.16 Compliments

There have been 4 recorded compliments regarding Supervising Social Workers and the positive difference they have made to the children in care, particularly in enabling them to make successful transitions to their permanent families. There have also been a

number of compliments from foster carers regarding the support and guidance they have received from their Supervising Social Workers, the Duty Social Worker and Assistant Team Manager, which reflects the improved stability of the staff team and consistent management.

6. Family and Friends Foster Carers & Special Guardianship Carers

6.1 The group of workers supporting Family and Friends Foster Carers & Special Guardianship Carers consists of:

Family and Friends Section:

Assistant Team Manager	1 x 1 FTE (0.8 perm and 0.2 temp)
Social Workers	3 x 1 FTE
	1 x 0.8 FTE
	1 x 0.67 FTE
	1 x 0.5 FTE

6.2 It is well evidenced that children placed within their own family enjoy more placement stability and are more likely to attain better outcomes. Reading Borough Council always strives to keep children with their birth family network wherever possible and safe to do so.

6.3 The core business of this group of workers is to carry out assessments of potential family or friends carers ("connected persons") from referrals received from children's social workers. These assessments are complex pieces of work, as one has to achieve the balance between reinforcing their identity by keeping a child within their extended family and the robust requirements as laid down by Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011. Workers ensure that ongoing support and training requirements for their specific needs, are met for these carers.

6.4 These workers also complete most of the Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and Child Arrangement Order (previously Residence Order) assessments in line with court requirements and deadlines which have been significantly shorter to reflect the objectives of the Family Justice Review. The Family Justice Review has resulted in a significant increase in the team's workload, as all possible family members or connected persons need to be considered, and if appropriate assessed, before the Courts will consider a permanent placement outside the family network for a child. This has resulted, in some cases, in multiple assessments per family.

6.5 All Private Fostering arrangements are also assessed and supported by the Family and Friends staff. A separate annual report is provided regarding this area of activity.

This year the section's work has included:

- **82 Family & Friends Assessments**

  This has resulted in:

  4 newly approved Family & Friends foster carers
  4 carers waiting to go to fostering panel
  21 carers having SGO's granted (28 children)
  21 carers were ruled out or withdrew
  8 cases where child(ren) returned to parents or other family members
  1 carer has opted to apply to adopt
  23 are ongoing cases or awaiting outcomes such as court hearings

- **29 carers have been temporarily approved as Family and Friend's foster carers under Regulations 24/25**

  Of these:

12 had SGOs awarded (included in the number above)
4 were taken to panel and approved and 1 went on to have SGO awarded
5 carers withdrew
3 cases where child returned home
1 case where children were placed in LA care
4 carers are ongoing Reg 24/25 arrangements

- 9 new Private Fostering referrals were received during this year with 1 ongoing from the previous year. Of these 7 arrangements ended and there were 3 ongoing arrangements as of end of March 2016.

- When the Family and Friends section has had previous involvement with the prospective carer, they will undertake the viability assessment. In other cases this is undertaken by the Child's Social Worker and transfers to the Family and Friends worker for the subsequent, substantive assessment.

- 3 families were supported to manage or apply for Child Arrangement Orders. This support has usually been in relation to finances, but in one case the Higher Specialist Social Worker was able to arrange for a carer to have legal advice and support on a pro-bono basis as required following the death of a partner

- The workers have provided post order support to 43 SGO carers, including support with family contact and mediation.

6.6 The Family and Friends workers continue to run a Family and Friends Carers Group on a fortnightly basis. The group attendance increased in this year to an average of 10-12 attendees and the group's focus has continued to provide support and to deliver relevant training sessions covering the National Minimum Standards.

6.7 Each worker in the section is allocated to a specific children's team, to provide advice and support about various matters regarding family and friends work and to update the children's teams on news and changes within family and friends work. Due to significant staff turnover in the children's teams it has continued to be necessary to plan attendance of all the team meetings (next scheduled between June and September)..

6.8 Positive feedback has been received from the Joint Legal Team regarding the worker's practice, and the quality/robustness of court statements and assessments filed. Some children's guardians have given feedback about the good quality of support provided to Reading SGO carers.

6.9 A thorough review of all the SGO allowances currently in place has been undertaken. A new SGO Policy & Procedure has also just been finalised in order to underpin consistent, high quality service delivery.

In summary placements with family members continue to be considered best practice options within Care Planning Regulations. Nonetheless whilst placements with friends and family are seen as one of the most appropriate placement choices, they can also be vulnerable placements which require a high level of targeted support to maintain placement stability.

7. KEEP Safe and Options Therapeutic Team formerly "Directions" (Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care)

7.1 The new Options Therapeutic team was launched in September 2015, after a review and staff consultation in relation to the Multi-dimensional Treatment Foster Care service. The new service was designed to deliver the KEESafe training programme for Foster carers and a therapeutic service for Reading's Looked after children. This service was developed to ensure that placements of looked after children are supported and enhanced to ensure that placements remain stable throughout the child and young person's journey of care.

7.2 **KEEP Safe Programme**

We are currently at the beginning of the third KEEP Safe group for Reading foster Carer's who have young people aged 12-17 years, placed with them. All groups have been well attended with a mix of new and experienced carers (foster carers and Kinship/Family and Friends foster carers). KEEP is a positive parenting programme for carers to improve skills and resilience when looking after challenging children. The programme is an evidence based programme that emerged as a result of work undertaken at the Oregon Social Learning Centre. The programme is supported by the National Implementation Service with the latter providing a weekly basis. This is to ensure fidelity to the programme and to measure outcome success for the cares undertaking the programme. The lead facilitator for KEEP is undergoing the accreditation process and will be an accredited trainer by the summer 2106, with the Co-facilitator currently also being assessed.

At the time of writing Reading had 52 looked after children within this age range who were looked after by in-house foster carers, family and friends carers and agency foster carers. This programme is enabling a large number of Reading Foster carers to be trained to a high standard and will in turn add to placement security for the young person.

The KEEP safe team structure as follows:
Programme Manager 0.25 FTE
Lead Facilitator 0.5FTE
Co-Facilitator 0.25 FTE.

The National Implementation Service provides summary reports from the pre, post and 6 monthly questionnaires, that the Foster carers fill out. We currently only have a summary report of the first KEEP group from 2015. The KEEP summary looks at SDQ scores, Parenting scale and Foster carer Ratings. From the data analysed in relation to the SDQ all scores have improved from the abnormal and borderline range to being in the normal range. This is mirroring the trend that the National Implementation Service hopes to see.

In regards to parenting scale you would expect to see a reduction in the mean scores as carer's parenting efficacy improves throughout the course. In all but one category the pre intervention statistics were in the abnormal range. Post intervention all areas of the parenting score had moved to the normal range, this shows that there had been an improvement in the carers parenting efficacy throughout the course.
And finally the Foster Carer Rating score shows how the foster carers felt in areas such as support, facilitation, learning and group. All score collected from this cohort demonstrated that the facilitators met adherence ratings on the model across all aspects. The scores achieved were statistically significant and provide evidence that all carers felt supported, listened to and that they were able to learn to model from the facilitators.

Qualitative feedback collected at the end of the group from the carers in the form of post it notes included

- "realistic and practical tips"
- "support through difficult times"
- "good to share and listen to other's experience"
- " great for building support network"
- And much more.

7.3 **Options Therapeutic Team**

The Options therapeutic team has been set up to provide Reading looked after children, specific and effective support to address their emotional, social, therapeutic and mental health needs. The workers aim to:

- Promote the emotional and mental health of looked after children and young people who are looked after, or who were looked after but are now in permanent placements, to ensure they achieve their potential.
- Enable children and young people to address their family and care experiences and achieve positive outcomes, by providing therapeutic support when needed.
- Identify those children and young people who require a specialist CAMHS service and ensure appropriate referrals are made.
- Ensure specialist support is provided to assist social workers, foster carers, adopters and other professionals working in the child's network in order to meet the looked after child/young persons identified needs.

The services offered include:

- Psychological assessment of looks after children and young people.
- Individual therapy for a child or young person
- Non-verbal creative therapy
- Family therapy with birth, fostering or adoptive families
- Systemic consultations to professionals working with a complex child or Family.
- Direct work, with children and young people in the community, to enable them to develop positive strategies to manage their emotional and mental health.
- Specialist advice and support to birth families, foster carers, adoptive

parents and other permanent carers of previously looked after children and young people.

- Signposting and assisting with appropriate referral of children and young people with complex needs to other appropriate mental health and therapeutic services, based in Health and other agencies (either locally or to support distant placements).
- Specialist training to Social workers, other professionals, foster carers and adopters to relevant issues.

7.4 **Service delivery**

The aim of the service is to provide therapeutic services at appropriate points in the child or young person's journey, when these services are needed. Not all looked after children or young people will need to access theses services, but when a need is identified, the service aims to respond in a timely manner, depending on demand. Some children and young people, with complex needs, are likely to need the support of this service at key points during their journey through care. In many cases, the work required will be directly with the professional network working with a child or family, or the foster carers or adoptive parents, rather than direct work with the child or young person.

The Options Therapeutic team structure:
Programme Manager 0.25 FTE
Clinical Psychologist 0.5 FTE
Systemic Therapist 0.5FTE
Creative 0.5 FTE
Skills Coach 0.5 FTE

7.5 **Current service provision**

Since September 2015 the Options therapeutic team have had 36 referrals relating to 55 children and young people. This number does not include 8 children and families that the team are continuing to work with. At the point of writing the team were working with 12 children and young people in individual therapy, 7 foster carers, 3 Special Guardians and providing supportive work to 3 Children's social workers.
They had a waiting list with potentially 4 young people who have been identified for individual work, and a further 5 sets of carers that have asked for additional support. On a weekly basis they were receiving between 1-4 referrals and offering twice weekly consultations. As a therapeutic team they also offer phone support to other professionals, sign positing to other agencies and reflective spaces to talk through complex cases.

7.6 **Options feedback**

Options feedback is mostly qualitative in the form of thank you cards and written feedback. As a team we looked at several outcome measures that we could use with the clients. After much deliberation we decided that, if appropriate the practitioners would use a measure called score 15 which asks for assessment before during and after interventions. The score 15 assessments are not being evaluated until the practitioner has closed the case, this is so that the whole journey of the child, young person or carer can be tracked.

We have also just recently started using evaluation forms with the carers, children, young people and social workers. These have been designed to get feedback on the service and are based on questions about the practitioners and the interventions received. Again this data is qualitative in it's nature, so statistical significance will be

difficult to ascertain. The feedback so far has been good with most children filling out the form during the end session with the practitioner. All of the children and young people asked have stated that they found the practitioners easy to talk to, that their worries were taken seriously and that they found the help received to be good.

8. Short Breaks Scheme

8.1 The scheme provides a short break service which includes community based, day care or overnight care. The primary function of the short breaks service is to support families looking after children with disabilities and to enhance the life experience of these children by offering them social opportunities with volunteer families and carers. The policies, procedures and practices of the service fully acknowledge that these children remain the responsibility of their parents and that parental satisfaction is our key performance indicator, (NI54).

8.2 The workers also provide a fostering service involving long term placements for disabled children which reflects the expertise of the workers in relation to the needs of children with disabilities. The policies and procedures of the fostering service are followed.

8.3 In addition the Reading Short Breaks Scheme operates in accordance with the requirements and expectations of:

- Short Breaks statutory guidance on how to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children using short breaks.
- Aiming High for Disabled Children.
- The criteria for eligibility to receive a service from the Children and Young People's Disability Team (CYPDT) Team and defined within the Department of Health's Assessment Framework.
- The Social Model of Disability which recognises that disabled people are disabled not by their impairment, but by social factors and attitudes that create barriers and deny opportunities to disabled people. These factors include prejudicial attitudes and institutional discrimination faced by disabled people.

Legislation

The Short Breaks Scheme continues to work alongside other services for children with disabilities and although the initiative of Aiming High for Disabled Children has now concluded we still work within its framework to achieve the five core offer standards:

- Good provision of information
- Transparency in how the available levels of support are determined
- Integrated assessment
- Participation of disabled children and their families in local services
- Accessible feedback and complaints procedures

The service continues to work to the Training, Support and Development (formerly CWDC) Standards framework for both Short Breaks and Fostering. Although community based carers are not included within the regulations these standards are applied to them as best practice. Carers at all levels are also offered additional training opportunities through the Short Breaks Workforce Training Programme.

Activity and Statistics

Carers:
At March 2016 the team supported 23 carers:

5 Foster carers
5 Overnight carers
12 Day carers
1 Community based carers

During the year:

1 foster carers were approved
2 overnight carers resigned
0 day carers resigned
0 Community based carers resigned

Children:
At the beginning of the year covered by this report a total of 35 children received services from the team:

8 Fostering placements
13 Overnight placements
6 Day care placements
8 Community based placements

By March 2016 this number had changed to:

23 Fostering placements (1 as supported lodgings)
7 Overnight placements
10 Day care placements
4 Community based placements

In addition approximately 10 children were placed in emergencies with short-breaks carers.

This level of provision needs to meet the demand managed by the panel which receives all referrals for services for children with disabilities.

9 Permanency Fostering

9.1 The staffing was as follows:

Assistant Team Manager	1 x 1 FTE
Social Workers:	1 x 1 FTE (on sick leave for 3 months)
	1 x 0.8 FTE
	1 x 0.8 FTE

Recognising the demand and number of referrals for long term foster placements/matches, the resources were increased to ensure permanency for Reading children can be achieved in a timely manner.

The workers have actively been involved with 57 children whose care plan is long term fostering. 12 children were matched with their long term foster carers. 7 of these were with Independent Fostering Agency carers, 5 were matched with RBC carers. 4 of the 12 children required family finding and moved into their long term placement. 1 young person moved from a residential setting into her long term foster placement. All 12 placements have been stable to date with appropriate considered support plans.

At the time of writing this report 45 children remain active, 33 of those are likely to be matched with their current Independent Fostering Agency carers, 5 with RBC carers and 7 require family finding. The permanency process was reviewed during 2015-16 in order to avoid delay for children. It is anticipated that this document will be available on TriX to all social workers and IRO's by the end of June 2016. As a result of this process, the team are planning to present 20 further matches by the end of July 2016 and are confident that the new agreed permanency process will prevent unnecessary delay for children requiring permanency.

10. Foster Panel

10.1 The Foster Panel sits twice a month and its primary legal function is to make recommendations about the approval of foster carers, whether they are general foster carers or family and friends (connected persons) and to recommend any terms of approval. The panel also makes recommendations about the approval of carers providing support to its general foster carers, Short Breaks for disabled children, Supported Lodgings and Staying Put arrangements.

10.2 If the agency decides, within stage two of the assessment process, that an applicant is unlikely to be suitable to foster and they do not wish to withdraw, the assessing social worker will present a Brief Report to the panel, asking it to make a recommendation to the agency decision maker.

10.3 Standards of Care reviews are presented to panel. Terminations of approval are referred to panel for it to make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker for a Qualifying Determination to be made. The panel is also notified of resignations.

10.4 In addition, the Reading Panel is presented with all First Annual Reviews of foster carers, ongoing Annual Reviews, at least every three years and Annual Reviews where there has been a significant event or change of circumstances. The panel advises regarding the suitability and terms of continuing approval of the foster carers.

10.5 A significant area of the panel's work involves consideration of matches for children with permanent foster carers. The panel provides independent scrutiny, offers advice and makes recommendations regarding the suitability of the match and the long term support needs of the permanent family.

10.6 The foster panel is chaired by one of two Independent Chairs. In addition, there are two Vice Chairs who are able to stand in, as required.

10.7 The Authority keeps a central list of panel members, including 3 social work representatives who have at least three years post qualifying experience, in line with the regulatory requirement. There are 10 independent members, who have backgrounds in education, social work, foster care and direct experience of the care system. An elected member, who is also the lead for Corporate Parenting, also sits on the panel. The panel has access to a Panel Adviser who quality assures the paperwork prior to panel and advises the panel on professional issues as they arise. There is a Medical Adviser and access to legal advice as required. A Panel Coordinator arranges administrative support for the panel and provides minutes of the meeting to the Agency Decision Maker, panel members and the appropriate professionals.

10.8 In 2015-16, 1 member resigned and 1 new panel member was appointed. A new Panel Adviser came into the role in January 2016. During the period of this report, there were 21 panel sittings. The panel dealt with 10 applicants of which 9 cases received ADM approval within the year and 6 updated foster carer assessments.

10.9 The Panel has dealt with 33 Foster Carer Annual Reviews. Fifteen of these Annual Reviews were First Reviews and changes of approval. 11 permanent matches were considered and 5 new Family and Friend foster carers were recommended for approval. There were also 5 updates to panel as per panel's recommendation on previous presentations, mainly to check the progress of particular issues.

10.10 There were no Standards of Care Reviews presented during this period. There were 8 resignations from foster carers reported, mainly due to relocating to other parts of the country and changes in their personal circumstances.

10.11 The Foster Panel seeks feedback from foster carers who attend panel as part of the approval process or as part of the Annual Review process. The feedback is collated by the Panel Coordinator into a quarterly report and presented to the panel business meeting.

10.12 Written feedback is also sought from presenting social workers to the foster panel, following each panel meeting and is pulled together and reported in the same way.

10.13 The panel is asked to evaluate the quality of each presentation after it has taken place and the feedback is captured in a written feedback form provided to the social worker and their manager.

10.14 Panel members provide feedback to the agency through their annual reviews and Panel Chairs provide feedback in their reviews and to panel business meetings.

11. **Reading Carers Link (RCL)**

11.1 Reading Carers Link (RCL) is a registered charity, constituted of Reading Borough Council Foster Carers. All RBC Foster Carers are automatically members when they join RBC as a Foster Carer. The RCL committee works to develop services for supporting foster carers and works in partnership with RBC.
RCL members have been involved in RBC Fostering Recruitment Campaigns, preparation group training delivery and members attend the RBC Corporate Parenting Panel with members and officers. They offer peer group assistance and representation regarding the issues experienced by foster carers and proactively work with RBC staff to improve the fostering service.

Work undertaken last year was as follows:

11.2 Support to carers

- Provision of phone line ring round on a regular basis (monthly when possible) and out of hours service, including using a solution focused approach to help support carers further and asking for feedback to help judge what they are already doing well and where further changes can be made.
- Involvement in the induction of new foster carers when invited which has included both attendance at RBC led preparation groups and induction days, where carers have given information on the various RCL supports available to them.
- Offered a buddy process for potential foster care applicants and providing an experienced carer to act as a buddy to new carers for one year. This is monitored by RBC and RCL representatives.
- Continued provision of a mentoring process, whereby any carer can meet with a peer mentor to help develop specific skills and knowledge relevant to fostering, for example a specific age group or specific development need, such as record keeping.
- RCL monthly general support groups have continued, but based on carers feedback new speakers have been added to the agenda and all topics are based on suggestions given by carers. These include Workshops on Teenager and sleep routines.

  A crèche is provided to allow Carers of younger children to attend.
- The monthly baby group has also continued this year, with ongoing success, again basing content on direct input from carers.
- The monthly support group for teenage carers has been established and is developing, and is based on active involvement.
- Continued liaison with RBC and provide input to RBC for any training areas which we believe are not fully represented in the training calendar.

11.3 Communication and Voice

- A basic website which all carers can access via a secure log-in has been developed.
- Provide a regular bi-monthly newsletter (LINK) which offers six issues per year and is sent by post to all Foster Carers. Feedback has been good.
- Conducted an annual survey at the TGI dinner and received an excellent response rate. Feedback was generally very good and action was taken on those areas where specific suggestions were given.
- Continued support to individual carers and generally supporting carers to make and take their own decisions and signposting them to relevant information.
- Representation of RCL and carers at RBC management meetings (Joint Liaison Meeting) to escalate concerns to RBC in line with escalation process and ensure delivery of the outcomes agreed in the RBC Service Level Agreement.
- Input to panels: Corporate Parenting Panel representation and active part in Task and Finish Group.
- Arranged Coffee Mornings for RBC staff to meet Foster Carers and this enables Carers to ask questions and get face to face answers.
- Involvement in development and implementation of the new Foster Carers Fees and Level workshops provided by RBC.

- Group meetings ran monthly for Baby and Teenage Foster Carers. The Teenage carer support group has started to offer workshops specific to the needs of the teenage carers.
- Actively promoted Mo-Mo (the self-advocacy app that helps young people express their views and get involved in decision making). This was achieved via the Link magazine and through discussions with carers.
- Actively promoted the Children's Pledge/Charter via the Link magazine and discussions with carers.
- Promoted the use and understanding of The Fostering Network by inviting one of their representatives to one of the general support groups.
- Provided information and advice on Tax Returns via a support group and a publication in the Link magazine.
- Promoted Fostering Recruitment events in the LINK.
- Worked with RBC to develop the Children who Foster Group. It now has monthly groups with training, support and social activities specifically for these children. It is now called the Foster Squad. Groups are promoted in the Link magazine.
- Supported and promoted Children in Care Council events via discussions and Link magazine.
- Shared fostering team news via the Link eg. Staff changes.
- Promoted the Celebration of Achievement Event in the Link.
- Promoted the Destiny Project events and youth club via the Link.

11.4 Events

- At TGI Foster Carers Annual social event useful feedback was received via questionnaires which was passed onto RBC. Turnout was excellent and feedback on the event good.
- Events specific for age groups have been organized and attended well, e.g a trip to the seaside, Bubble Football and new Car Seat Regulations.
- Planning and development of future events that allow for networking of carers and their families. Obtaining feedback from carers to develop these.

12. **Improvement Plans**

12.1 The following areas of work have been incorporated in plans to improve and update service delivery:

- Review the Sufficiency Strategy and recruitment plan in order to establish challenging targets to increase the numbers of approved Reading Borough Council Foster Carers and target those able to provide the most appropriate placements for BME Looked After Children, teenagers, sibling groups and those requiring permanency.
- Implement a service structure and development review to enable delivery on service priorities and establish efficiencies.
- Implement project plan to deliver a 'digital strategy' in the recruitment and increase of foster carers.
- Evaluation and progression of partnership working with local faith groups via funding arrangements for the Home For Good Project and access to their respective websites.
- Evaluation of dedicated Stage 1 practitioner responding to initial enquiries with great flexibility.
- Deliver training to Supervising Social Workers on marketing and recruitment skills when attending recruitment events.
- Review of the payment scheme for Foster Carer Fees via a working group and formal consultation process.
- Involvement of Foster Carers in working groups relating to the review of Foster Carer Fees.
- Further promotion of "Mo-Mo" to broaden participation and feedback from Looked After Children.
- Further progression of joint working arrangements with Reading Carer's Link.
- An ongoing schedule for updating sections of the Foster Carer Handbook
- Further development of the targeted training for Foster Carers including the delivery of attachment and trauma training to compliment the KEEPSafe programme.
- Evaluation of the evidence based KEEPSafe model of training for Foster Carers.
- Evaluation of the multi-disciplinary Options Looked After Children's Therapeutic Service (based in the Fostering Service, working in conjunction with CAMHS.
- Develop a Fostering Dashboard support by Mosaic data to facilitate the monitoring undertaken of performance and quality of service delivery.
- Ongoing development of Mosaic, in order to capture all the required data from Children's Social Work and Family Placement teams in one place, maintain the data centrally and provide the performance reports routinely.

13. Conclusion

13.1 Increasing the numbers of Reading Borough Council Foster Carers available to offer main placements to our Looked After Children remained one of the top priorities for the new Directorate of Children, Education and Early Help Services. This represents a significant challenge in terms of recruitment and retention of both staff (without whom the service cannot be delivered) and foster carers. Progress has been made in establishing a web based presence but more is needed without delay in order that RBC can be really successful in the current competitive climate. In addition a project plan has been developed to establish a 'digital strategy' that will enable the team to engage with enquiries and applicants via the medium of technology and create efficiencies in service delivery.

13.3 We do now have good information regarding emerging issues for recruitment, breaking performance down to results achieved for carers with different approval categories. In addition all relevant staff are aware of the progress made with each assessment of new carers via a recently adopted tracking tool. Strategies employed are continually reviewed in light of this information. There have been significant achievements within this year in terms of maintaining the consistency of response to the initial enquiries made by potential carers, the timeliness and quality of foster carer assessments and an appreciation of the performance required at each stage in order to achieve the overall objectives of increasing both the numbers, diversity and quality of placements.

13.4 Equally a robust suite of strategies are in place to support the retention of carers with good communication via Reading Carer's Link; annual reviews undertaken by a Family Placement Independent Reviewing Officer which also obtain feedback from carers, birth families and children; learning from complaints; active engagement between Children's Social Workers, Fostering Supervising Social Workers and Foster Carers through working groups; manager attendance of foster carer coffee mornings; high quality training; direct work and consultation delivered by the Options therapeutic team to increase the carers' level of skill/confidence/sense of achievement and quality assurance of work via audits.

APPENDIX 1 - LAC SUFFICIENCY TARGET REPORT 2015-2016

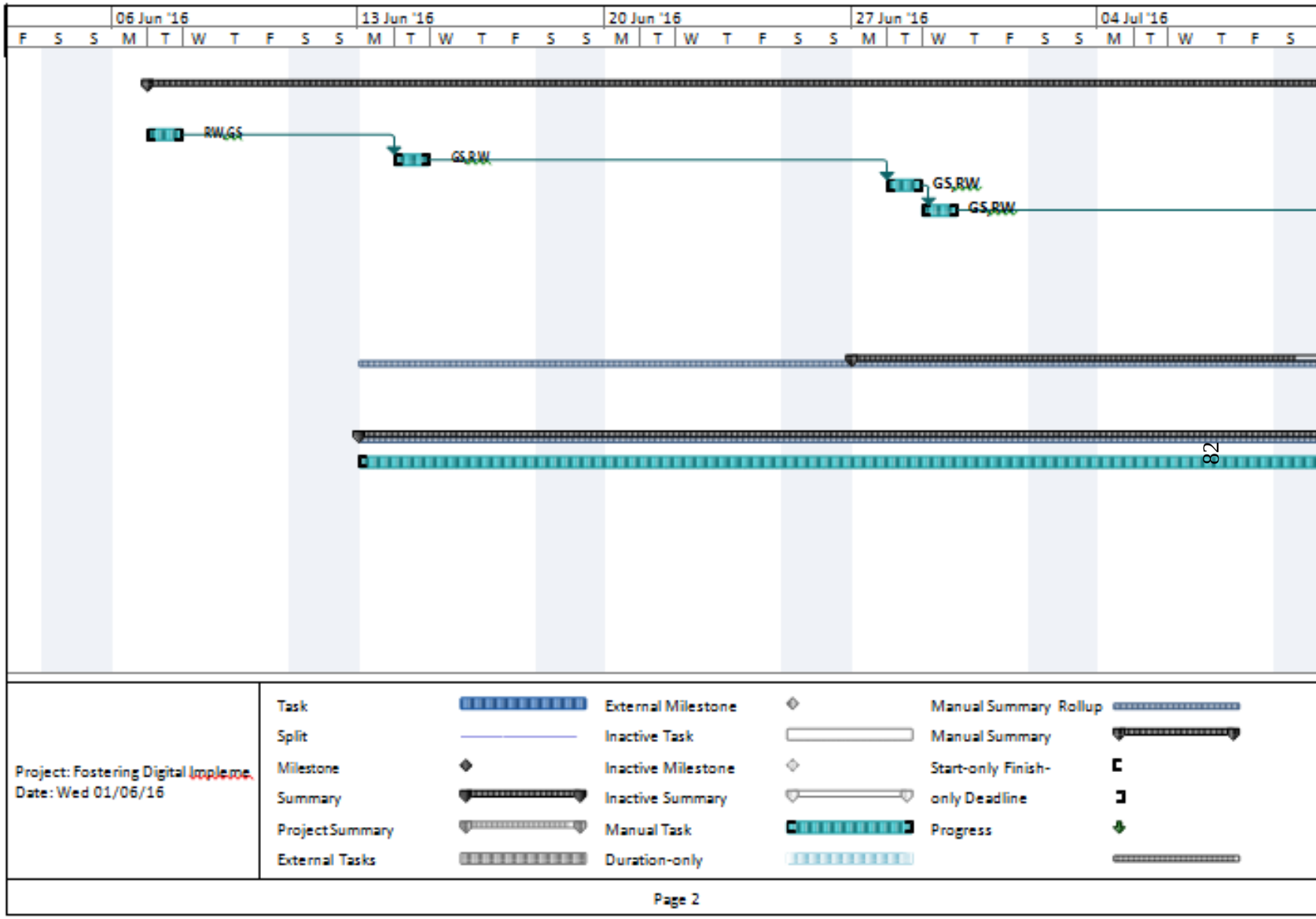
2014-2015	Apr	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	Total
Resignation & Termination of Approval	1 C&A. C	0	3 L. B-W GT & IW M.C	0	0	0	1 M.S	0	0	0	0	0	4
Applications for Approval/ Sufficiency Target	0	0	1	1	0 (2/6 milestone target)	0	2	1	1	0	3	1	10
Short term **Target 12**			J&M. A				D&J.L	J&G. M			E&J. M		4
Long term													
Supported Lodgings **Target 7**													
Short breaks (day) **Target 2/3**											S.H		1
Short breaks (overnight) **Target 2/3**													
Parent & baby **Target 3**													
Short term & long term **Target 3**							D&R.S		L&W.W				2
Respite				K&S.W							L.M	E&J. S	3

APPENDIX 2 - Fostering Performance – Activity and Outcome 2015-2016

Fostering Performance- Activity and Outcome 2015-2016

Performance Indicator	Completed within required timescales	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
Number of initial enquiries received		11	6	15	11	9	12	10	10	5	16	11	13	129
Initial enquires responded to within	3 days	10	6	15	11	9	7	8	9	5	15	9	12	116
Number of Initial visits		5	2	5	3	2	0	3	1	3	2	2	0	28
Number of initial visits arranged within	8-13 days	1	2	1	3	3	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	13
Number of applications received		3	5	0	1	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	2	17
Number of current assessments		6	11	11	11	13	16	14	13	13	11	7	6	11
Number of current assessments Stage 1		3	6	4	4	4	7	3	4	4	2	1	2	2
How many of these have exceeded a timescale of 2 months		0	0	0	2	1	1	1	3	3	2	1	1	2
Number of assessments Stage 1 and 2 concurrently		0	2	7	6	6	6	8	9	8	3	3	4	3
How many of these are within 6 months		0	2	7	6	6	5	7	8	7	3	2	3	3
Number of current assessments Stage 2		3	3	0	1	3	2	0	0	0	6	3	0	6
How many of these are in 1st 6 months of assessment.		3	1	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	3	1

Number of assessments NFA		0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	0
Number of assessments exceeding 6 months		0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	5	5	3	19
Number of New Approvals to Foster Panel														9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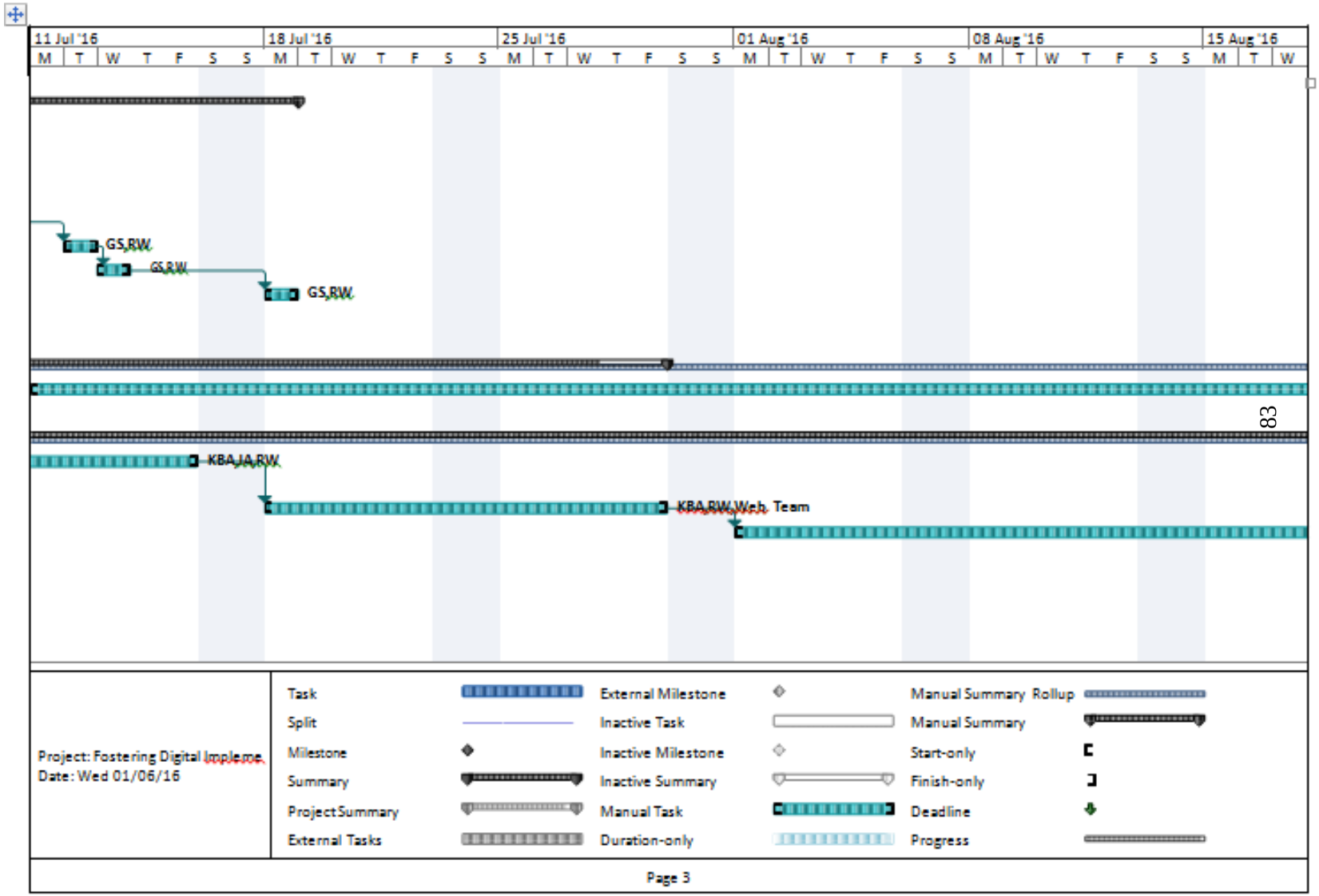
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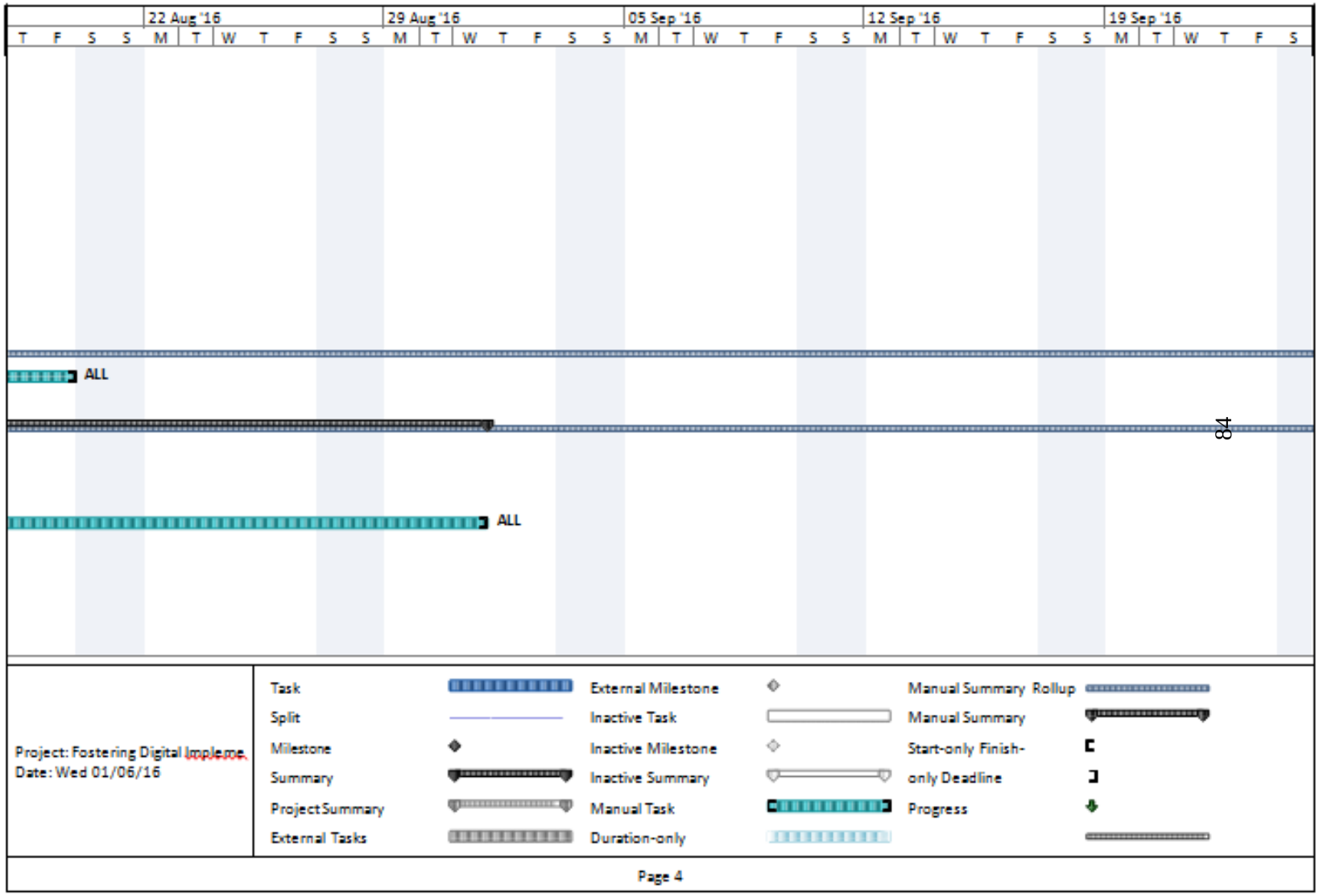
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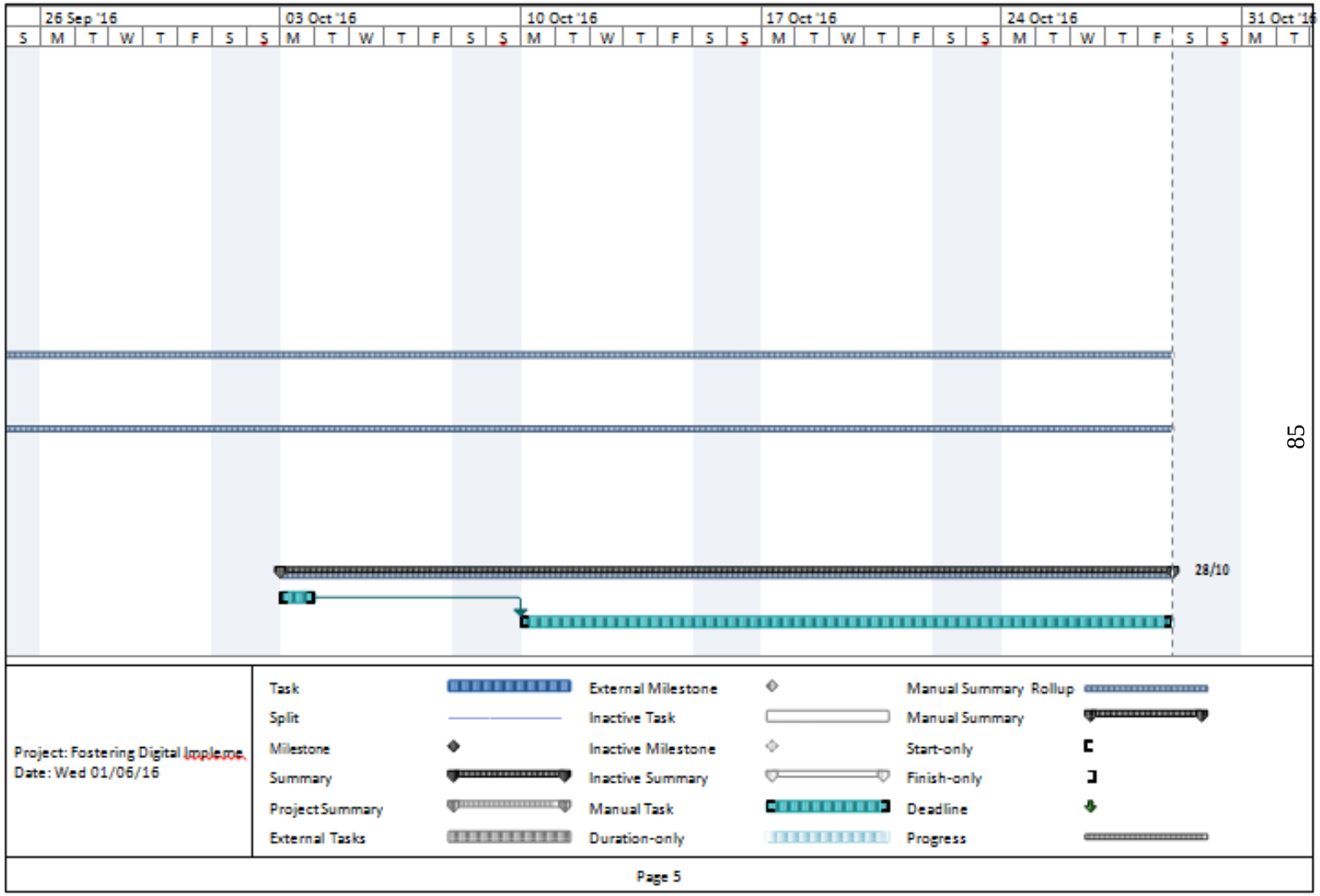
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