

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	4 JULY 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2016-17		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR JAN GAVIN	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SERVICE:	CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	KATHERINE PEDDIE	TEL:	0118 937 3786 (ext 73786)
JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF TRANSFORMATION AND GOVERNANCE	E-MAIL:	Katherine.peddie@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is to present the refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy to the Adult Children and Education Committee.
- 1.2 The Parenting Panel commissioned the refresh of the strategy in January 2016 and draft versions have been presented to each of their meetings since, including a final draft presented on the 22nd June.
- 1.3 Consultation has been undertaken with children in care, with care leavers and with foster carers to establish what we need to do differently in order to improve their experience of being in the care of the local authority.
- 1.4 The strategy comprises three sections. The first containing the national and local context and needs assessment including findings from consultation with children and young people; the second outlines the key priorities and strategic objectives - what the local authority intends to do to meet the needs of looked after children and care leavers; the third sets out how Reading Borough Council intends to deliver the plan. The draft strategy is attached at Appendix A.

- 1.5 Central to the strategy is the pledge to children and young people in care. This pledge was signed up to by all of the councillors and it is important for our children and young people to see how we intend to support them. The Care Leavers' Charter was also developed by children and young people and this is also part of the strategy. A version of the Pledge has also been created in 'Widget' format to assist in sharing it with children and young people who use that form of communication.
- 1.6 On 8th February the Head of Transformation and Governance and the Head of Safeguarding and Looked After Children met with the Children in Care Council (YDYC) to talk to them about the development of the strategy and to ask them how they would judge the council on the delivery of the objectives.
- 1.7 A children and young person's version of the strategy is to be produced alongside YDYC to share with all children in care.
- 1.8 On the 14th March, the Head of Safeguarding and Looked After Children met with a group of foster carers and discussed the strategy with them and talked about how they might help in the delivery of the strategy. All of these comments have been included in the strategy under each of the objectives. This was a really useful exercise and it was a positive experience to see how enthusiastic our foster carers are for new and innovative ways to deliver services.
- 1.9 On 26th February the Head of Transformation and Governance met with the Unit Manager at Cressingham and Pinecroft to develop the pledge and the Care Leavers' charter in Widget format and how this may be consulted on with children and young people with learning disabilities. A draft of the Widget version of the pledge was produced in the middle of March and the Unit manager has undertaken to use this in the pack given to young people when they arrive at the units. In the consultation group run by the Unit Manager the young people will discuss the pledge and their comments will be incorporated into the strategy.
- 1.10 In the meantime, corporately colleagues have been enthused with supporting our children in care and are looking to take their responsibilities very seriously. Many of the services have stated that they want to offer opportunities to children and young people to undertake work experience or apprenticeships which will be followed up over the next few months.
- 1.11 Monitoring of the delivery of the strategy will be through an Operational Group of officers who will take responsibility for the delivery of each of the strategic objectives and who will report back to the Parenting Panel. Parenting Panel will align its workplan with the strategic objectives and will hold officers and partners to account for the delivery of the strategy.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee agrees the refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- 2.2 It is recommended that the strategy is refreshed annually

2. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 2.1 This report is in line with the overall direction of the Council by meeting two of the following Corporate Plan priorities:
 - 1. Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable;
 - 2. Providing the best start in life through education, early help and healthy living.
- 2.3 The directorate's delivery of the Strategic Aim "To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all" will be monitored through the Quality Assurance Framework and through the oversight of the Children's Services Improvement Board.
- 2.4 The Quality Assurance Framework will test the delivery of the actions in the Corporate Parenting Strategy through audit processes and through the Quality Assurance Board.

3. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 3.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to the decision as a good overview of the quality of service delivery will address any inequalities and seek to remove them.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Whilst there are no legal implications in relation to this report, it is important to note that under Children's Services legislation, we are required under a general duty of the Children Act 2004 to address the quality of services and to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This framework establishes a clear mechanism for doing so.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

COPORATE PARENTING PANEL REPORT



DATE OF MEETING:

22nd June 2016

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THIS REPORT:

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2016-17

OWNER OF REPORT:

Katherine Peddie

WHAT IS THIS REPORT TELLING YOU:

This report says how we are going to support young people who are taken into care. It also says how we will help families where the plan is for children to return home and where that isn't possible, how we will make sure that young people have somewhere to live with people who care for them; how we will make sure we help them to do their best at school, and how we will do our best to make sure that they have healthy, active lives.

As well as the Parenting Panel, officers from around the council will meet together regularly to make sure we deliver the action plan in the document.

WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL THIS MAKE?:

Young people will notice that we are trying to recruit permanent Social Workers who will have more time to see them and to get to know them better.

Young people will be more involved in plans about their future and education, and will be more encouraged to take part in fun activities that can help the council to improve the services they deliver.

We are trying to recruit more carers who live locally to Reading to make sure that young people can keep their links with their families and friends rather than living far away.

ANY SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR YDYC RELATED TO THIS REPORT:

Please tell us how you think this will affect you

Please tell us if there is anything else that you think we should include in our plan.

FEEDBACK & COMMENTS FROM YDYC:

We like this - when recruiting new carers it's important that they know they should keep their promises to us.

It's important that the leaving care process is considered as part of this - there needs to be more support - better emotional and physical support is important. For example, a sleepover at the new place we are going to be moving to would really help. Also, please make sure they don't put lots of delays into us moving out, so that we can just focus on one date.

We don't think the pledge is all happening at the moment, so some more work is needed. We don't all always feel listened to for example (but some of us do, so not across the board)

Reading Borough Council Corporate Parenting Strategy 2016 - 2017

July 2016

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Head of Safeguarding and Long Term Teams

Version Final v1 – July 2016

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Foreword

Children and young people deserve the best start in life, yet, all too sadly some children's experiences includes abuse, neglect and other trauma which leads to them coming into the care of the local authority.

In Reading Borough Council we believe passionately in supporting our children and young people in care and our care leavers. All councillors are committed to being good 'Corporate Parents' to our young people and have signed up to the 'Pledge' promising to do our very best for our young people. This is a promise we take very seriously and one which is shared by our partners in health, education, police and the voluntary sector who join us at the Parenting Panel.

This commitment includes making sure we find carers who can look after children and young people, offering stable, loving homes, who can promote their best interests and who can help them achieve good educational outcomes, leading to good employment opportunities.

This strategy sets out how we will promote the health and wellbeing of children and young people and how we will be 'pushy parents' for them, making sure that they get the best chances we can offer.

It includes comments from some of our young people in care reflecting their experiences and from our foster carers. Some of these comments made us think hard about how we want to improve the services we offer so that children are fully supported and so that they never feel let down by us.

All of us should ask 'Would I accept this for my own child?' if the answer is 'No', then we should do whatever is in our power to make sure that they get what they need.

Councillor Jan Gavin
Lead Member for Children's Services

Councillor Deborah Edwards
Chair of the Parenting Panel

Councillor Tony Jones
Lead Member for Education

Helen McMullen
**Director of Children,
Education and Early Help**

Section One – Introduction and Context

Introduction

Children considered ‘looked after’ can be either accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parent under Section 20 of The Children Act 1989, or looked after due to a legal care order under Section 31 or 38 of the Children Act 1989.

We work closely with families to maintain children within their home environment where it is safe and appropriate to do so but where these issues cannot be resolved easily, children may be brought into the care of the Council in accordance with the legislation of the Children Act 1989.

Where children and young people are looked after by the local authority as opposed to at home by their parents, the local authority have the responsibility to keep them safe, make sure their experiences in care are positive and improve their chances for the future as any good parent would do for their child. This is known as ‘Corporate Parenting’

“Corporate parenting” is for all children not living at home with their family either due to a court order or voluntary agreement with their parents. It is the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies, to provide the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by the council. A child in the care of the council looks to the whole council to be the best parent it can be to that child. Every member and employee of the council has the statutory responsibility to act for that child in the same way that a good parent would act for and for their child.

Children with disabilities are sometimes an exception to this. Whilst there may be a very small number of children with disabilities who cannot live at home because of abuse or neglect, there are some for whom we provide long term residential placements or short breaks who are not necessarily considered to be ‘looked after’. Many of these children including some children in 52 week residential placements¹ are considered to be looked after under the provisions of s20 of the Children Act 1989 which is to say that their parents have made a voluntary agreement with us to provide this type of care and they retain all of their parental responsibility rights. This strategy sets out our intentions corporately to ensure their best interests are met alongside their parents / carers whilst they are in receipt of services.

As Corporate Parents, we want the best for all children who are in care, giving them the opportunities that every good parent would want for their child. We take our legal and moral responsibilities seriously to ensure that children in our care experience happy, healthy and fulfilling lives and we are committed to providing a safe environment for children to grow up, learn and play. Children will have a suitably qualified social worker who will advocate for them and ensure their welfare and development and whether their placement is in Reading or elsewhere, we want to make sure that all children have the same opportunities.

Councillors have a lead role in ensuring that their Council acts as an effective corporate parent for every infant, child and young person in care, actively supporting standards of care and

¹ 52 week placements are not automatically deemed looked after although some parents see the benefits for the child in being looked after under s20 (a voluntary agreement in which the local authority shares responsibility for the wellbeing of the child with parents). Children in 38 week placements are also capable of being looked after for the same reasons as it can provide the child with significant benefits and the placement enhanced scrutiny.

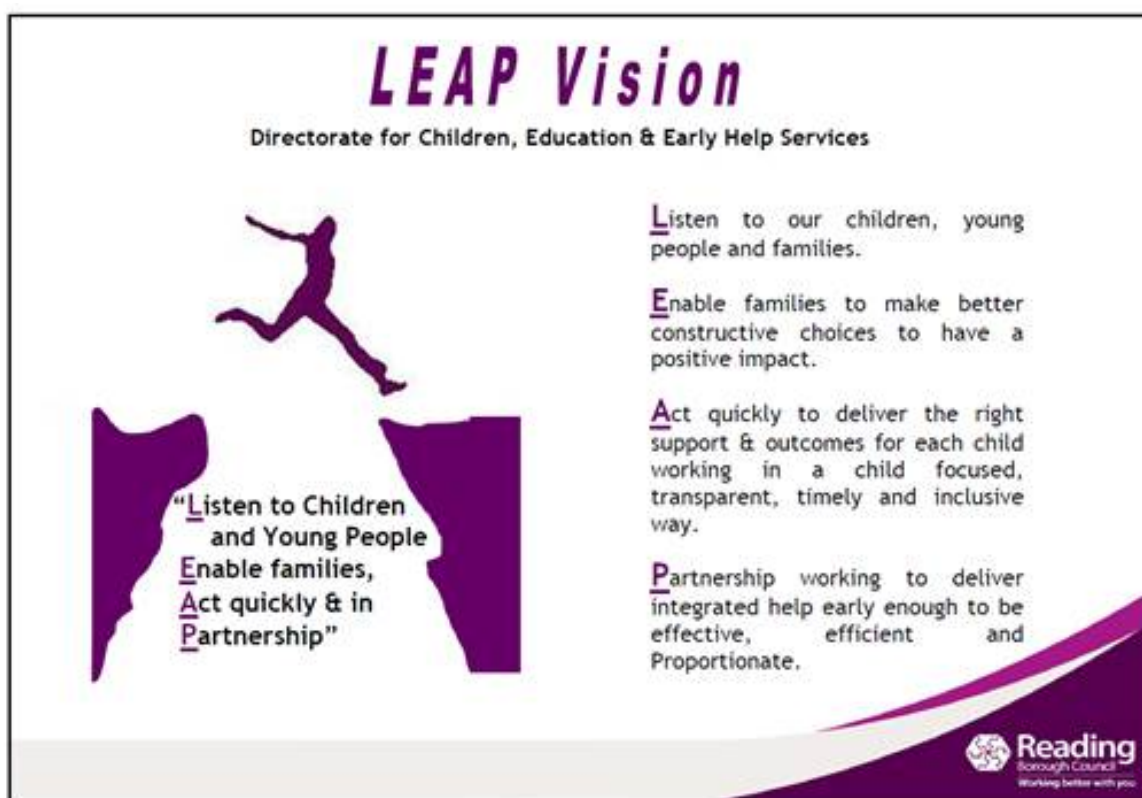
seeking the high quality outcomes that every good parent would want for their child. Reading Borough councillors are committed to ensuring that decisions are made in the best possible interests of families living and working in their area.

This strategy outlines the intentions of Reading Borough Council in helping families to remain together wherever possible, and how it will support children where they are admitted to care and beyond. This document applies to children and young people on the edge of care, children in care, including children in short break overnight accommodation, children in 52 week residential placements, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people, care leavers and those who were looked after prior to an adoption or Special Guardianship Order. We will provide children with as much stability as possible with every effort made to minimise changes of placement.

A number of strategic documents are all linked together under this strategy. It is structured in three sections: the first setting out the national and local context; the second establishing the priorities and objectives; and the third describing the governance arrangements for the implementation and monitoring of the strategy over its three year life.

Vision

Our vision for Children's Services is encapsulated in the diagram below:



Our vision is supported by 7 key objectives in delivering services to children and young people in care and leaving care:

Objective 1: Supporting families to stay together where it is safe to do so by managing risk and children on the edge of care

Objective 2: Delivery of sufficient good quality and affordable placements and permanence options for children who come into our care

Objective 3: Ensuring all looked after children achieve their full potential in education, employment and training

Objective 4: Improving the physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of our looked after children and keeping them safe

Objective 5: Listening to and acting on the views of looked after children and young people

Objective 6: Supporting and navigating our young people through the transition to adulthood and independence within their local communities wherever possible

Objective 7: Encouraging the full engagement of the council departments in their Corporate Parenting responsibilities

Our Pledge shows our commitment to children in care and establishes a firm promise to them of the way we will work with them and how we will ensure that each young person is at the heart of all we do. It was developed jointly between the Children in Care Council and the Corporate Parenting Panel and has been signed up to by our Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services as well as all of our Councillors. It is shared with all children and young people when they become looked after, and is included in the 'LAC pack', a pack of information for all looked after children and young people.

We pledge to:

- **Keep you SAFE:** we will help you to stay safe, and be there for you when you need us
- **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.
- **Help you to enjoy SCHOOL:** we will help you to have fun and achieve great things, both in school and in other activities.
- **Give you a HOME you like:** we will give you somewhere to live where you will feel safe and cared about
- **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
- **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 have FUN and SUCCEED:** we will support you as you get older to successfully leave care, become adults and live on your own.

The Pledge was produced in three different formats, one for children under the age of 11, one for young people 11+ and a version in Widget (see Appendix 1)

Legislative Framework

The Children Act 1989 places a duty on local authorities to protect children from harm. The welfare of the child and safeguarding and promoting this welfare is paramount. Duties are conferred on the NHS as well as housing and education services to assist children and young people's social care services to fulfil their functions under the Act – providing help, support and services as part of the corporate parenting responsibilities. The Children Act 2004 emphasises the role of collaborative service agreements in achieving the right services for children and young people. Key legislation and guidance governing the provision of children and young people's services are detailed in Appendix 1.

The legislative framework sets high expectations for Councils and their partners to improve outcomes for Looked after Children and young people through ensuring placement choice, stability, excellent education and dedicated health services. A raft of new regulations and statutory guidance has been published to underpin this policy direction to support local authorities and other agencies to deliver improved outcomes for children entering the care system.

The Care Planning and Case Review Regulations, SEND reforms and The Children Act 1989 Guidance: Planning transition to adulthood for care leavers gives local authorities a clear framework by which to ensure that:

- Children are placed at the centre of the work;
- We undertake consistently effective care planning;
- A child or young person is provided with accommodation which meets his/her needs; and
- An effective review is conducted of the child's case within the specified timescales.

These responsibilities are designed to support the local authority in its primary duty set out in section 22(3) of the 1989 Act to safeguard and promote the welfare of the looked after child and to act as good corporate parents to enable each looked after child to achieve his/her full potential in life. They also aim to improve the care and support provided to care leavers. This statutory guidance outlines all of our responsibilities and underpins all of our work in promoting good outcomes for children who are looked after.

Children and Families Act 2014

Much of the Government's focus has been on the education system as a whole and for children in care, there are enhanced requirements to ensure that they have access to good to outstanding education and that they are supported by the appointment of a nominated person within each local authority who is accountable for their educational attainment (Children and Families Act 2014).

The Children and Families Act 2014 provides for new statutory assessment and planning arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and creates a new 'birth to 25 years' Education Health and Care Plan (EHC). Those requiring a statutory plan to secure the relevant provision to meet their special educational needs should be issued with an EHC plan. This Act offers families personal budgets so that they have more control over the type of support they get. Where eligible for Adult Services, once the young person is over 18, the 'care' element of the EHC will be provided for by Adult Services under the Care Act.

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the associated regulatory changes have increased focussed service provision on the permanence and stability of placements for Looked after Children and this will form a central premise of policy direction over the life of this strategy.

The Children and Families Act also improves cooperation between all the services that support children with special educational needs and their families. This requires local authorities to involve children, young people and parents in reviewing and developing care for those with special educational needs. Local authorities will also need to publish information about what relevant support can be offered locally.

Care Act 2014

The Care Act 2014 legislates for the transition between children and Adult Services, including the assessment of carers when the child turns 18 to ensure a smooth transition between Children and Adult Services.

The Care Act (and the special educational needs provisions in the Children and Families Act) requires that there is cooperation within and between local authorities to ensure that the necessary people cooperate, that the right information and advice are available and that assessments can be carried out jointly.

Adoption reforms

The Government introduced reforms to adoption to minimise the delay in placing children for adoption by reducing the timescales for assessing prospective adopters.

Regulations provide that an adoptive placement must be identified and approved within 6 months of the decision to place a child for adoption unless it is a baby under 6 months old where the birth parent has requested that the child is placed for adoption, in which case the timescale is 3 months. The Government has provided additional funding for local authorities to deliver adoption support services to adoptive families to ensure that the placement is supported to succeed.

Where this strategy fits in the Corporate Context

This document is the overarching strategy and action plan for Looked after Children and Care Leavers, which draws on the evidence and priorities from implementing and monitoring a number of strategies in Children's Services. A full list of these is included in the appendices.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy links with the Corporate Plan by responding to the needs of vulnerable people, but by ensuring that our corporate partners understand their responsibilities in relation to being 'Corporate Parents' we will ensure that our children and young people do not become the 'troubled families' of tomorrow, developing a sustainable vision for supporting our communities.

Partnership Context

Much of the work we do requires us to work closely with external partners, so whilst having a "Corporate" intention, it is of vital importance that we have strong partnership arrangements with key agencies in order to deliver seamless services to children and young people and their families and that they work with us to deliver this strategy. The Corporate Parenting Strategy, whilst 'owned' by the Local Authority, is a vision that is also agreed by our partners to ensure that all children have consistent and good quality services, particularly for those who are most vulnerable.

Inspection Framework

The legislation has been underpinned and strengthened through the Ofsted inspection framework and the Ofsted publications on the research conducted by the Children's Rights Director for England. These helpful documents clarify the high expectations and emerging best practice for councils, as well as encompassing the views of children and young people in care.

National Context

- The number of looked after children has increased steadily over the past seven years and it is now higher than at any point since 1985.
- There were 69,540 looked after children at 31 March 2015, an increase of 1% compared to 31 March 2014 and an increase of 6% compared to 31 March 2011.
- The percentage of children starting to be looked after aged 10 to 15 has decreased from 31% in 2011 to 29% in 2015 but the number and percentage of children starting to be looked after aged 16 and over has increased steadily each year since 2011. In 2015, 16% of children starting to be looked after were aged 16 and over, compared with 12% in 2011.
- 19% of those starting to be looked after in 2015 were babies aged under 1: the same proportion as in 2011.
- The majority of children looked after are placed with foster carers. In 2015 the number of children in foster care continued to rise; of the 69,540 children looked after at 31 March, 52,050 (75%) were cared for in a foster placement.
- Whilst the reasons why children start to be looked after have remained relatively stable since 2011, the percentage starting to be looked after due to family dysfunction has increased slightly (16% of children in 2015 compared with 14% in 2011). The majority of looked after children – 61% in 2015 - are looked after by the state due to abuse or neglect.
- At 31 March 2015, 42,030 (60%) children were looked after under a care order (either an interim or full care order), a 5% increase compared to 2014 and an 8% increase since 2011.
- A further 19,850 (29%) children were looked after under a voluntary agreement under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 - this number and percentage has increased steadily since 2013.
- However, there has been a drop in the number of children looked after with a placement order at 31 March 2015, from 9,580 (14% of looked after children) in 2014 to 7,320 (11%) in 2015. This is in line with quarterly adoptions data collected by the Adoption Leadership Board, which has indicated that since Quarter 2 2013-14, numbers of Adoption Decision Maker decisions for adoption and numbers of adoption placement orders granted have decreased. The National Adoption Leadership Board has linked this trend to the impact of two relevant court judgments, known as Re B and Re B-S.
- Of all children looked after at 31 March 2015, 67% (46,690) had one placement during the year, 23% had two placements and 10% had three or more placements. There has been a slight change in methodology this year, whereby a child going missing from his/her agreed placement is no longer counted as a separate placement in 2015. Whilst this means the figures for 2015 are not strictly comparable with earlier years, the percentages with 1, 2, 3 or more placements have changed relatively little compared with previous years, suggesting the impact of the methodology change is minimal

- **Source: Department for Education:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption>)

Local Context

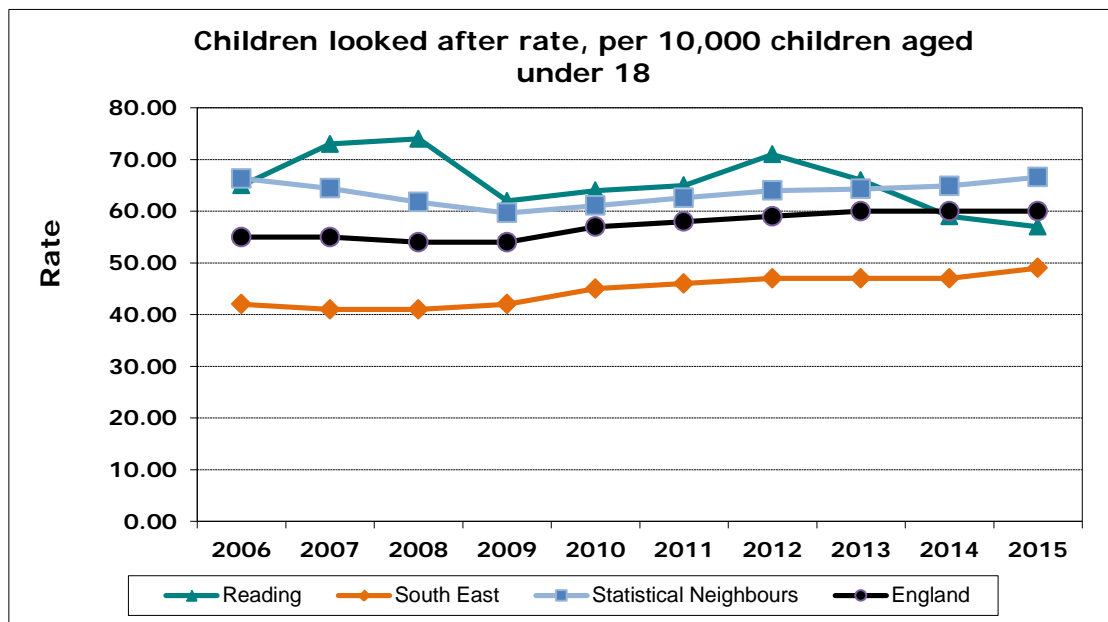
- There were 220 looked-after children at 31 March 2016^[1]
- 49 children were placed under a voluntary agreement under s20 of the Children Act 1989, 54 on interim care orders and 86 on full care orders in 2015-2016.
- 157 children were looked after due to abuse or neglect at 31 March 2016
- 27 children who were looked after had a disability at 31 March 2016
- 100 children who were looked after 12 have an EHCP, 45 have school support and 43 have a statement of special educational needs (all of which are in the process of being converted to an EHCP);
- There were more males (116) than females (104) who are looked after at 31 March 2016, and this has been a long-standing trend nationally.
- There were 124 children who started to be looked after during the year ending 31 March 2016
- There were 123 children who ceased to be looked after during the year ending 31 March 2016.
- Of children looked after at 31 March 2016, 185 were cared for in a foster placement. This represents 82.7% of all children looked after at 31 March 2016, including Friends and Family foster placements but excluding adoption
- There were 25 looked-after children adopted during the year ending 31 March 2016 and 13 placed for adoption.
- Less than 5 young people ceased to be looked after children due to being sentenced to custody in 2015-2016
- 22 children ceased to be looked after because they became subject to a Special Guardianship Order in 2015-2016
- 32 children returned home to their family after a period of being looked after in 2015-2016 32 in total:-
- 11 children left care to live with parents, relatives, or other person with no parental responsibility.
- 15 children returned home to live with parents, relatives, or other person with parental responsibility as part of the care planning process (not under a Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order)
- 6 children returned home to live with parents, relatives, or other person with parental responsibility which was not part of the current care planning process (not under a Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order)

(Source: Reading Borough Council Performance Data 31/03/2016)

Number of Looked After Children

There has been a rise in the number of children looked after since January 2015 from 202 to 220 at the end of March 2016, however this remains in line with statistical and national average numbers per 10,000 population

^[1] Current data is shown for Reading Borough although there may be more or less looked after children at any point during the year



*Source: Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)
Department for Education 11/03/16*

Age and gender of looked after children in Reading Borough

Age at 31 March			
Boys		Girls	
Under 1	11	Under 1	10
1 – 4:	13	1 – 4:	11
5 – 9:	24	5 – 9:	19
10 – 15:	46	10 – 15:	39
16 – 17:	22	16 – 17:	25
18 & over and placed in a community home:		18 & over and placed in a community home:	
Total boys:	116	Total girls:	104

Source: Reading Borough Council Children's Performance Team 31/03/2016

Placement type

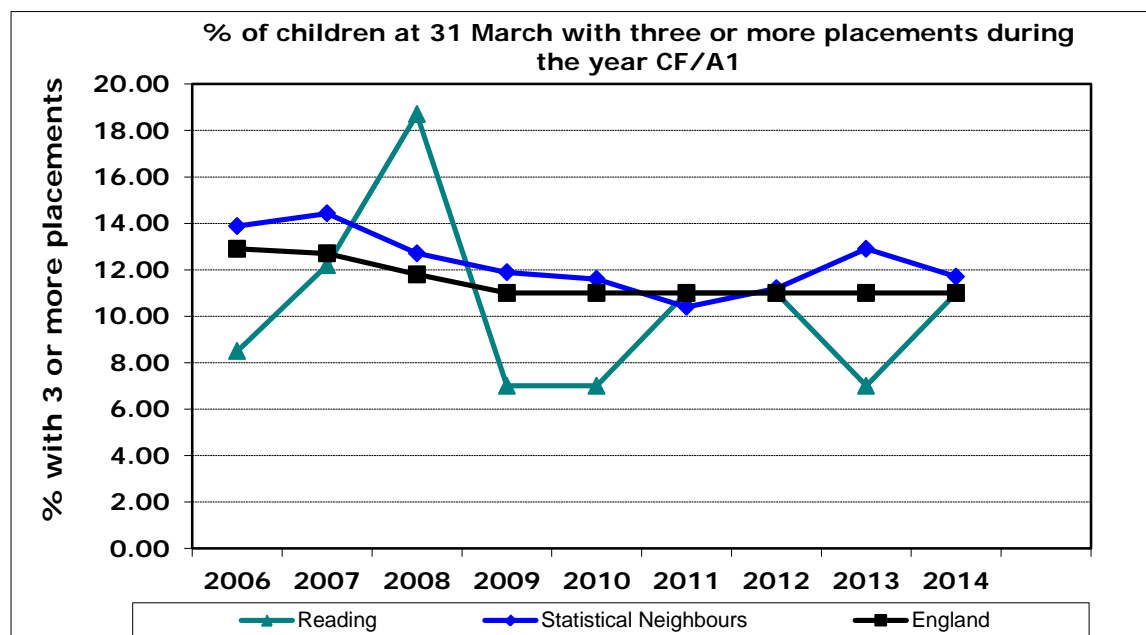
Type of placement		Number of children
Foster placement with relative or friend	Inside local authority	13
	Outside local authority	10
Placement with other foster carers:	Inside local authority	48
	Outside local authority	114
Secure unit		-
Homes and hostels		-
Hostels and other supportive residential placements		-
Residential schools		Less than 5
Other residential settings		16
Placed for adoption (including placed with former foster carer)		7
Placed with own parents		Less than 5
In lodgings, residential employment or living independently		6
Absent from agreed placement		-
Other placement		Less than 5

(Source: Reading Borough Council Children's Performance Team 31/03/2016)

Placement stability is key to improving the outcomes for looked after children and improving educational attainment. Indicators of placement stability have generally been good in Reading Borough and less than our statistical neighbours, however it remains a priority for us to ensure that children, wherever they are placed have a sense of stability.

Those children and young people experiencing multiple moves tended to be those over 11 years. We monitor more closely those children who have had one or two moves, and where the reasons may be due to placement breakdown, put additional support into the placement to minimise the risk of a further move. For some children, moves may be at the direction of the Court as part of care proceedings.

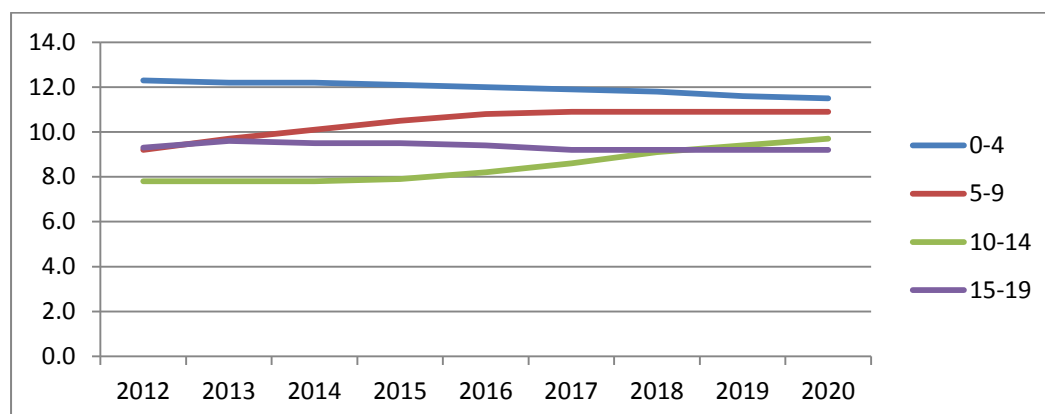
Placement stability



(Source: Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT) Department for Education 11/03/16)

Projected population

It is projected that an additional 1,300 children (16.6%) will be living in Reading Borough by 2020². The main drivers of the rising population are a high fertility rate and birth rate and inward migration. There are significantly more births in Reading Borough than the national average. Based upon evidence of an increasing population within Reading Borough and taking into account the national trends in vulnerable families requiring support we recognise that we will need to plan for a growth in the number of children who will require preventative services, and possibly who will come into the care system.



(Source: Reading Borough Council JSNA March 2016)

² Reading Borough JSNA March 2016

Key achievements

Service Development:

- Restructure to establish smaller social work teams with clearly defined accountabilities for casework and supervision
- Provided safe management spans of control (6:1)
- Creation of a specific team for Looked after children, Care Leavers and Court Work to ensure expertise is developed and consolidated rather than diluted across a number of teams.
- Improved outcomes for children through improved standards of social work practice evidenced in case audit outcomes.
- Improved performance against key performance indicators.
- Managed change and risks in the service amidst service reconfiguration.
- We have a Virtual School who provide support to children in care to help maintain and improve their educational achievement.
- There is a clear commitment to co-production in service design and delivery with parents of children with SEN and/or disabilities.
- There is a commitment to joint annual reviews of children with SEN and/or disabilities across the directorate.

Quality Improvements and Performance:

- Embedding robust performance quality;
- Positive feedback from Court and Counsels;
- Marked improvement on key performance indicators such as health assessments.
- All children in care have a consistent, named Independent Reviewing Officer, who provides ongoing monitoring and review of their care plan.
- We are establishing a cross-directorate approach to participation
- Complaints about children's services are routinely analysed and emerging themes and issues are reported to relevant teams through the Senior Management Team to enable learning from these to improve practice.

Demand and Resource Management:

- Driving greater value for money efficiencies through robust re-tendering of a number of key services: supervised contact and Residential Placements.
- Achieving significant reduction of locum social workers by increasing the number of permanent social workers to 80% by the end of September 2016.

Future challenges

A number of key challenges exist for local authorities in meeting the national policy context and we have positioned ourselves to meet the challenges of the Children and Families Act by restructuring our teams to respond to family justice reforms and to changes in relation to adoption and SEND

Reading Borough Council has recognised the need to restructure its Children's Social Care teams to create a specific team managing Looked after children and care leavers. The rationale for this change included:

- Greater collaboration amongst closely related specialist teams that place the interest of looked after children and care leavers firmly at the centre of service delivery;
- Greater consistency in care planning and management oversight;
- Greater grip on strategic directions and on day to day operations;
- More effective systemic response to both external and internal drivers for change and innovation;
- More efficient deployment of limited resource;
- Greater and clearer accountability.

The common issues often associated with children in care are their increased levels of vulnerability, low self-esteem and poor self-image. Young people who run away are often recognised as being much more at risk of being targeted as a victim of sexual exploitation. Vulnerability is identified and targeted by the abusers, whether the young person is living with their family, looked after away from home or they have run away. The young persons may not see themselves as victims and may claim to be acting voluntarily. In reality this is not voluntary or consenting behaviour.

The particular risks and levels of vulnerability (including SEN needs) associated with looked after children are identified in the Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy and Missing Children Strategy which reports to the LSCB as well as the Corporate Parenting Panel.

As needs of children and families are identified, it will be necessary to identify appropriate services that can meet those needs, some of which may be fairly specialist. It is the role of commissioners to identify emerging trends and to encourage the market to deliver services locally that meet those identified needs, alternatively, to identify appropriate spot-purchasing arrangements.

Being a small unitary authority, one of the key challenges is in developing the market and the provision of locally provided services and placement options. To meet this challenge, we are already working with our neighbouring authorities on joint delivery of services and initiatives to keep our young people safe.

We know that in the vast majority of cases, children's needs are best met within a stable family environment so it is important to ensure that we have sufficient foster carer placements available to our meet the needs of our children in care. Increasing the number of in-house foster carers is a challenge that we are dedicated to meeting and our strategy for doing this is outlined in the Fostering Recruitment Strategy and the Sufficiency Strategy.

The stability of these placements and minimisation of stress factors is equally important for ensuring better outcomes for children in terms of education, health and their social needs and preparation for adulthood.

Our Virtual School plays a key role in delivering support to Looked after children to attain good educational outcomes. It is vital that teams understand the role that the Virtual School can play in promoting continuity and in ensuring that where there are emergency placement moves that education will not be adversely affected.

We are working closely with Housing colleagues to address the housing and accommodation needs of Care Leavers so that any difficulties may be resolved swiftly.

Health outcomes³ for looked after children in Reading Borough have shown some improvement during 2016 with over 90% of medicals being undertaken within timescales. Dental checks remain a challenge although the trajectory shows that the percentage of children receiving a dental check is improving.. We are working closely with colleagues in Health to ensure that all children receive their health assessments, including those who are in placements outside of our local authority.

The completion of Strengths and Difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) remains a challenge and our aim is for a 100% completion rate. The average score⁴ for 2015/16 is 16.6. A new Pathway for support is being designed which includes:

- The SDQ score being part of the PEP review (as well as the Annual Health review)
- ANY 'high' scores mean the social worker comes to a new 'Clinical Consultation Group' for a brief discussion and decision on further mental health assessments being undertaken by a psychologist or Primary Mental Health Worker, and suggestions for interventions. These services will then liaise with the school to ensure appropriate interventions / support is in place in the school.
- This will clarify whether there needs to be further escalation to CAMHS, and provide early intervention.

What do our Children in Care say?

We undertake regular consultation with our children in care, including children with SEND who attend our residential and short stay units, and particularly with the Children in Care Council (Your Destiny Your Choice – YDYC). This group represents the interests of all looked after children and care leavers and regularly presents issues to the Corporate Parenting Panel. Their feedback and views throughout the course of the last year have been central to the development of this strategy and we have incorporated those views and comments throughout the document.

The Pledge was developed in Widget form to facilitate consultation with children and young people who use that particular form of communication (see Appendix 1).

³ Data source: SFR50_2013 LA Table, Department for Education

⁴ Scores are banded in the following way: a score of under 14 is considered normal, 14-16 is borderline cause for concern and 17 or over is a cause for concern.

However, we are concerned that we have very low numbers of children involved in the YDYC group. Independent Reviewing Officers are asking children within their LAC reviews how we can encourage them to participate and to sustain that participation. Those who have been involved in YDYC have provided feedback to this strategy.

The Looked After Children Survey is to be reinstated in 2016 to regularly gather feedback from children and young people and to ensure that there is systematic feedback in relation to service delivery.

The MoMo app is used by Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) to engage children and young people in feeding back on their individual circumstances. An increasing number of children are being encouraged to use the app as a way of participating in their reviews. The 'voice of the child' is central to all looked after children reviews and as well as using the app, children and young people are encouraged to say what their wishes and feelings are through the use of tools following the 'Signs of Safety' methodology. IROs write to children following their reviews to tell them formally what was discussed and what will happen next for them. This is done using language that children and young people can understand. Where necessary, children with communication difficulties are supported to say how they feel using specialised communication methods (for example Widget).

A number of our children and young people have undertaken training to chair their own reviews and to have the confidence to challenge adults involved in planning their care.

One of the key areas of concern for our children in care is knowing what they are entitled to both in terms of support and opportunities. This issue has been a topic of debate nationally. Work has been undertaken to explain their entitlements in a meaningful way and is key to objective 6, 'Supporting and navigating our young people through the transition to adulthood'.

"The majority of kids in care feel that their treatment, while some may not say it, could be improved and can often find themselves struggling"

(YDYC Open letter to Reading Borough Council 13 October 2015)

'I was listened to and my views were heard and understood'

'Social worker left without giving proper reason'

'I don't want any social workers visiting'

'I do not want any contact workers supervising my contact'

'I would like everyone to stop bringing up the past and let me get on with the future'

'That I got to choose how often I want contact'

'I felt it went well because I got my point across'

Comments from Looked After Children in their Reviews 2015 - 2016

Section Two: Priorities & Strategic Objectives

Reading Borough Council has carefully considered how it stands in relation to looked after children and what the future direction will be. Given the context of the demographics and the partnership working, the key emphasis will be on ensuring that children where possible and where it is safe to do so, children will remain in their birth families. Where this is not possible, it will endeavour to provide sufficient, high quality placements locally to meet their needs.

The number of children looked after by Reading Borough Council should not be any higher than the regional or national average or higher than our statistical neighbours, particularly given the local demographic context of the area. Wherever possible, and where it is consistent with the best interests of the child, we will look at placement with family and friends carers or SGO placements as the preferred option. Where this is not possible, we will look towards minimising the time a child spends in the care of the local authority, and where this is not possible looking at achieving early permanence for the child.

In practice, this tiered approach will require early, evidence-based decision-making which will be focussed on the needs of the child and will require consistent application and practice both internally and with a consistent message to partners.

Our Early Help services are structured in a way to already minimise the number of families requiring referral through to Children's Social Care. Intensive intervention using evidence-based approaches supports families who would otherwise access specialist services through Social Care.

Our priorities for children and young people in our care are based on our universal ambitions for every child and young person living in Reading Borough, whatever their background. This is because our children in care and care leavers have the right to expect the same outcomes as other young people.

Our ambition is to protect, promote and respect the rights of every child and young person in our care and to help them to achieve the best possible outcomes in terms of their health, education and future prosperity living in their own communities.

Strategic objectives

Objective 1): Supporting families to stay together where it is safe to do so by managing risk and children on the edge of care

Link to other plans / policies: Family and Friends policy / Early Help Strategy / Education Strategy

What our children in care told us:

'More should be done to help siblings be able to see each other and to see wider family members (where it is safe)'

'If the plan is for us to move back with family when we leave care, we don't want to feel like strangers living in their homes – more needs to be done to help us to get to know family, including wider family members'

'We want to know why sometimes kids come into care temporarily and end up there for a long time – we understand more than you think, so you can tell us!'

What our foster carers told us:

Foster carers consulted have told us that they have the skills and capacity to be more engaged with plans for children and young people to be returned home to their birth families or relatives and friends.

They want to help us ensure that no child or young person stays in care for any longer than they have to

Of course if a child is at risk of harm and going home is not the safest option for them they want to help us secure permanent arrangement's and in some instances become the long term carers themselves which may result in them no longer being looked after.

Foster carers want to help us avoid drift and delay in care planning and are able and willing to be much more involved in the statutory process including report writing and gathering the child and young person's views.

Foster carers are more than willing to be involved proactively in supervised contact arrangements during court proceedings and when appropriate to have contact arranged within their family homes.

In addition they want to help children and young people retain relationships with their families and friends and would like greater autonomy to make judgements about when to support these arrangements particularly during weekends.

In addition they would like to offer parenting support and advice to families to enable them to stay together.

What are we going to do?

We will work with parents and families to ensure that they can access the appropriate help and support that they need, including Drug and Alcohol Services, Mental Health Services as well as supporting children whose parents are affected by these issues. The support we are putting in place will help the eventual return home of the child where it is appropriate.

We recognise that within this strategy, there is a clear emphasis on maintaining children within their home environments where this is possible. We also recognise that this will require additional support to families where a child is rehabilitated home either through family support teams or in accessing universal services available through the Early Help service.

Our Children's Action Teams within the Early Help Service will work with the locality teams and with families through 'step-down' processes where children in care are rehabilitated back home to prevent problems from re-occurring and to make sure that children do not need to be brought back into care. We will also work closely with our Care Leavers to ensure that they are supported to maintain good outcomes and that independent living skills are secured. Where Care Leavers have started their own families, support of the parenting service will be sought for them.

Why are we going to do this?

Research and evidence tells us that when children come into care, the damage caused by separation from their families can affect them for a long time. Not only can this cause further issues as the child is growing up, in many cases it requires expert therapeutic support to help overcome these issues. We also know that the damage caused by abuse and neglect can dramatically outweigh the consequences of separating a child from his or her family. A lack of emotional warmth, stability and care lead to delays in cognitive development, issues with attachment, a lack of empathy and emotional intelligence and can spiral out of control into criminal behaviour if a young person is not supported in the right way.

Early intervention can help to restore some of the damage caused to children and young people's development and to build the family structures necessary to maintain a safe environment for the child. This requires a robust approach to risk management and clear application of the child protection thresholds.

We also know that there is an increasing number of teenage children coming into care but are yet to fully understand the reason for this or why this is an emerging trend. We can see that there is a clear case for supporting parents of teenagers, particularly to avoid them entering the youth offending system.

Impact Measures:

Reduction in referrals to children's social care

Maintaining current performance in respect of the number of children entering care

More children and young people leaving care

Families report being better supported through earlier intervention

Increased number of 'step-down' cases

Increased number of adults accessing appropriate support

Take up of personalised budgets for SEND

Reduction in the number of young offenders

Objective 2): Delivery of sufficient placements and permanence options for children who come into our care

Link to other plans / policies: Permanence Policy / Sufficiency Strategy
Adoption Policy / Fostering Policy / Joint Protocol between Reading Borough Council's Children's Service & Housing Services

What our children in care told us:

"This is important because we need to make sure the young person knows that this is the first point of security and guidance and whilst may not be able to fulfil the same feeling of a family home, should be a place where they feel content, loved and secure."

(YDYC Open letter to Reading Borough Council 13 October 2015)

"When kids come into care, sometimes we just don't get on with the carers we are placed with but we don't have any option and we are placed with them. I got introduced to a foster carer I didn't really like or get on with so I went missing – I never went back to that placement and they put me with someone else."

"We should be able to spend a day getting to know the carer(s) we might be placed with, and if we get on, stay there overnight or maybe a week to see if we like it"

What our foster carers told us:

Foster carers would like their professional fees and skill levels to reflect the different expectations required and want to help children and young people to stay with their families when safe to do so even if they do not have a placement

Foster carers would like to be more proactively involved in recruiting new carers particularly locally and providing specialist placements when required subject to the relevant and appropriate training.

Foster carers will continue to consider if offering permanence to children and young people is right for them and their families long term.

What are we going to do?

Both in line with the Government's agenda and because we know it is the best thing for children and young people, we are committed to securing sufficient accommodation for children within our local area. This requires us to look at a variety of permanence options and being clear about when we consider which options. We will always consider a friends and family placement as the first option when a child comes into care, however there will be circumstances when this is not appropriate.

We also consider Fostering, Fostering for Adoption, Special Guardianship and Adoption where appropriate and will plan for a secure long-term outcome as soon as possible.

The Sufficiency Strategy outlines a number of measures we have in place already to ensure that we have sufficient placements for children coming into care. This strategy and the Fostering Recruitment Strategy set out an ambitious target of a 25% increase of in-house foster carers by 2019.

High quality care planning which understand the needs of our looked after children will help us to place them in appropriate placements that can meet their needs. The Independent Reviewing Officers will monitor the quality of placements in meeting the needs of children and young people as part of the statutory LAC review process. Where there are concerns regarding the sufficiency and/or quality of placements, escalation processes will be deployed.

A Solutions Panel chaired by the Head of Service Safeguarding and Looked After Children, with input from other Service and Team Managers from LAC, Virtual School, Education, Health and CAMHS, has been established to focus on Looked After Children, placement moves and the case management issues that may impact on placement stability in order to identify any additional resources and actions required to reduce the risk of further placement breakdown (NI62) and improve longer term placement stability (NI63).

Short break provision for children with disabilities is available through Cressingham. Pinecroft is our in-house residential unit for children with disabilities. Both establishments have been judged as 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

A very small number who are considered to be looked after children reside in residential schools under SEND. We do anticipate however that the number of residential and overnight placements for children with disabilities required in the coming years will increase, therefore we will ensure that a focussed exercise is undertaken to assess the future capacity of residential provision for children with disabilities and those with complex needs.

We work very closely with our Youth Offending team and SEND team to prevent the behaviours of our looked after children and young people escalating to the point that they would require either a custodial sentence or secure accommodation. Where young people are taken into custody, Youth Offending Services work closely with our Children's Social Care and SEND teams.

Why are we going to do this?

Sufficiency guidance

Securing sufficient accommodation that meets the needs of children who are in care is a vital step in delivering improved outcomes for this vulnerable group. Having the right placement in the right place, at the right time, is a vital factor in improving

placement stability, which in turn is a critical success factor in relation to better outcomes for children. The statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for in care children provides clarification on the 'sufficiency duty' placed on local authorities under 22(G) of the Children Act 1989, to secure sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of children in their care.

The sufficiency duty applies in respect of all children who are defined as 'looked after' under the 1989 Act. An important mechanism – both in improving outcomes for children and in having sufficient accommodation to meet their needs – is to take earlier, preventive action to support children and families so that fewer children come into care.

This guidance requires that from April 2011, working with their partners, local authorities must be in a position to secure, where reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for looked after children in their local authority area. The "Sufficiency Strategy"(2014) demonstrates how Reading Borough intends to achieve this. We will ensure children and young people are involved in all aspects of the commissioning cycle, including the provision and procurement of services, reviews and evaluation.

It is recognised that where children are placed more than 20 miles outside of the local authority area, their relationships with friends and family and with the support networks they might otherwise have created are disrupted, causing stress for the child and on contact arrangements, suitable education and the development of suitable personal education plans, and on health assessments and the delivery of health services.

We recognise that our placement stability has been an issue for our looked after children, particularly long term stability. We expect to see placements supported by a range of interventions to maintain relationships and prevent disruption and placement breakdown. We also recognise that we have a high percentage of looked after children who are in placements more than 20 miles from home (49%) and will seek to address this through a combination of our Sufficiency Strategy and the Fostering Recruitment Strategy with ambitious targets for increasing the number of in-house foster carers.

Impact Measures:

Increase in the number of locally approved foster carers

Increase in the number of children placed within 20 miles of the local authority

Lower unit cost of placements

Increase in the number of children reporting that they are happy in their placement

Objective 3): Ensuring all looked after children achieve their full potential in education, employment and training

Link to other plans / policies: Education Vision / SEND strategy / Apprenticeships

What our children in care told us:

"I didn't get on with my last Leaving Care Adviser and I didn't really take much notice about my qualifications. I wish I could have gone to university and proved them all wrong. I think my new adviser can help me to do that – it's never too late is it?"

"I'm proud to have been helped to go to uni, and even when I didn't believe I could get through, my social worker and the Care Leaver team encouraged me"

"I hate being out of work but I have applied for some jobs and I have interviews coming up. I want to help old people"

What our foster carers told us:

Foster carers would like to be more proactively involved in the PEP process and understand better how they can access Pupil Premium on behalf of their children and young people

They would like to support the Virtual Head and Social Workers to ensure children and young people are able to achieve.

They understand that the life experience of some children and young people may have prevented them accessing education and want to do all they can to help them "catch up" once they become looked after.

Foster carers understand the importance of education and particularly want to be able to instill a sense of vision and purpose into young people enabling them to access opportunities available and be aspirational about their potential.

Foster carers want to celebrate the difference education can make and would like to be more involved in planning for a young person's independence

What are we going to do?

The Virtual School will provide on-going support to children and young people as part of the Corporate Parenting Service. It:

- a) Ensures that there is a system to regularly track, monitor and challenge the attendance, attainment and progress of Looked After Children;

- b) Ensures that each looked after child has a robust and effective personal education plan (PEP);
- c) Works with schools to improve overall attainment of Looked after children by challenging schools to improve the achievement and progress of individual children through good use of the right resources and interventions;
- d) Works with social workers to improved attendance, attainment and progress of looked after children;
- e) Ensures looked after children who are educated in schools outside of Reading Borough receive the right support to achieve the best educational outcomes.
- f) Work to support children and schools to minimise the risk of exclusion.

A range of different learning opportunities are accessible through the Virtual School to help to re-engage children who have become disengaged from learning in the conventional school settings.

We will support foster carers to access good quality Early Years provision that children are entitled to.

Where placement moves are considered, education and the education provision for the young person within the new placement will be a key priority and social workers will consult with the Virtual School in order to ensure a smooth transition.

The Virtual School tracks and coordinates education, training or employment for children and young people in care and for care leavers up to the age of 21 and for those young people with SEND up to the age of 25.

Independent reviewing officers will ensure that all Looked after children have a PEP that supports them in reaching their full potential.

We will offer a range of experiences which support the learning and managed risk taking for children with disabilities.

Why are we going to do this?

Education and raising aspirations is a key area of focus for our Looked after Children and Care Leavers. Reading Borough works in partnership with the University of Reading, Youth Support Team and Virtual Schools to offer support, provisions and resources to be available to meet the educational needs of our children and young people.

The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities to appoint a person who will monitor the educational achievements of looked after children. Reading Borough Council has appointed a Virtual School Head and whilst it is the responsibility of individual schools to support pupils on their roll, the Virtual School plays a role in ensuring that each looked after child achieves optimum educational outcomes at each stage of their schooling.

We know that when children have suffered abuse and neglect that their educational attainment can also be affected, but that there will also be children who disengage

from their education which causes stresses on families which may result in preventable social care intervention.

We also know that as a result of their poor start in life, within Reading Borough there is an attainment gap between those who are looked after and children who have not had any social care intervention. We know that educational attainment is very important to give children and young people security in their future and it is critical that the PEPs are up to date in order to monitor progress and address issues at the earliest opportunity.

The Ofsted report on the impact of virtual schools on the educational progress of looked after children published in October 2012, found that:

- Most outcomes were improving in the local authorities visited, although performance was variable from year to year. There was little evidence, however, that the gap in attainment between looked after children and other children was narrowing. Progress between Key Stages 3 and 4 was slower than during earlier key stages.
- Corporate parents' depth of engagement with issues relating to the education of looked after children were variable.
- Clearly stated roles and responsibilities for virtual schools were not always evident.
- Data management systems were of variable quality, which meant that some local authorities were not able to monitor and report on the progress of children and young people.
- There was evidence that the virtual school not only made a difference to children's educational progress, but also often enhanced the stability of their placements and had a positive impact upon their emotional well-being.
- The quality of personal education plans was variable.
- Children placed outside of the local authority area were less likely to receive good support from the virtual school.

Impact Measures

4-16 pathway plans tracked

High quality PEPs that involve the young person and which is reviewed in timescale

Raised attainment of children in care

Improved school attendance (or alternative provision attendance) of children on the edge of care

Increased number of care leavers in education, employment or training or apprenticeship opportunities

Clear understanding of the use of the Pupil Premium for LAC

Implementation of the SEND Strategy and completion of a Self Evaluation

Objective 4): Improving the physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of our looked after children and keeping them safe

Link to other plans / policies: CAMHS Strategy, Leaving Care Policy

What our children in care told us:

“I had some really low times and I was self-harming, but my Leaving Care Advisers supported me. I don’t know what I would have done without them”

“I was really desperate to have my own place but no-one could have told me what it would be like and the fact that it would be really lonely. I wasn’t expecting that”

What our foster carers told us:

Foster carers want to support children and young people through any emotional distress or trauma but sometimes need a specialist resource to complement their nurturing environment

They welcomed the options team input but had some concerns they may only deal with children and young people where a permanence plan has been agreed and would like to see this expanded to all children and young people

Particular events in the care plan and life of the children and young people can sometimes require additional emotional and therapeutic support and carers would welcome an easier route into the CAMHS service

Foster carers would welcome being able to influence care planning from their perspective living with the children and young people day to day.

What are we going to do?

South Reading Clinical Commissioning Group and the North and West Reading Commissioning Group are responsible for planning and purchasing local health services. Commissioning is the process of assessing local health needs, identifying the services required to meet those needs and then buying those services from a wide range of healthcare providers. Community-based child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) are provided by Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT) (Tiers 3 and 4) and Tier 2 provision is delivered jointly by the local authority and schools. In-patient CAMHS is provided by a range of providers. Children and families access primary care services through one of 29 General Practitioners (GP) surgeries which are provided through the South Reading CCG and North and West Reading CCG.

Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust provide the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children and the Berkshire West health team for looked after children, this

includes a Specialist Nurse who is the lead for Reading Council. The Designated Doctor is provided by the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust.

Ensure that commissioning and spot-purchasing arrangements across Health and Social Care reflect a clear understanding of the needs of LAC both in and out of authority area, primarily to ensure that health assessments and reviews are undertaken effectively and robustly to ensure that children can access a range of universal and specialist health and therapeutic provision wherever they are placed and in whatever type of placement they are in.

Where a placement move is planned, the health team for looked after children and the Virtual School will be informed at the earliest opportunity to ensure that health and education provision is maintained at sufficient quality for the young person.

We will:

- Routinely include the health team for looked after children in discussions about potential out of area placements to ensure continuity of health care and information sharing.
- Arrange for all looked after children to have a timely and high quality health assessment of physical, emotional and mental health needs, regardless of where that child lives
- Understand the emotional and behavioural needs of Looked After Children by using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
- Ensure that every child has an up to date individual health plan, based on the written report of the health assessment, and review these plans at least every six months for children aged under 5 years and at least once a year for children aged over 5 years
- Ensure that transition plans are in place to enable care leavers to continue to obtain the healthcare they need
- Ensure looked after children are registered with a GP and have access to a dentist near to where they are living
- Notify the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the child or young person's GP when a child starts to be looked after, changes placement or ceases to be looked after (and notify both the originating and receiving CCG where the child is placed out of county).
- Ensure a smooth transition from children's to adult services for looked after young people and care leavers so they experience continuing healthcare, if eligible
- Never refuse to provide a service to a looked after child on the grounds of their placement being short-termed or unplanned, including mental health services
- Make arrangements to enable looked after children to participate in decisions about their healthcare
- Take the health needs of looked after children into account when developing the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Health and Well-being strategy

- Publish a local Offer which sets out in one place all information about education, health and social care for children and young people with SEND
- Ensure that children living out of area are not disadvantaged in their health and wellbeing
- Provide training to support foster carers and adopters to effectively understand and support the emotional well-being and development of looked after children
- Consider the health assessment requirements in individual cases for children with disabilities. In some cases a specialist report from involved professionals may be more appropriate than a further looked after health assessment.

Working closely with colleagues in Leisure and in other authorities where our children are placed to ensure that they can access a range of leisure activities safely with a concessionary rate for them and their carers.

We will ensure that life-story work is undertaken at the earliest opportunity when a child comes into care.

Independent reviewing officers to ensure that Looked After Children who are at risk of child sexual exploitation, who go missing or are placed out of the council area are risk assessed, have a care plan which includes provision to keep them safe and that protective action is taken to reduce their vulnerability.

The Missing from care procedure will be adhered to and a team manager attends SEMRAC. Return home interviews will be completed within 72 hours or as soon as possible and shared with the young person's social worker so that they can manage the risks associated with missing episodes.

We aim to have a 100% completion target for Strengths and Difficulties questionnaires and to introduce a weekly CAMHS consultation.

The Options Team support in-house foster carers so that children's emotional needs are better met.

Children with Disabilities service is working closely with colleagues in CAMHS to ensure that their services are timely and appropriate in meeting need.

Why are we going to do this?

It is our duty to ensure that children in our care are safe and well both in terms of the legislative framework and as responsible 'parents' to those children and young people in our care.

We know that when children have been abused or have been neglected in their early years, this can cause trauma to them physically, emotionally and mentally. By intervening and supporting families at an early stage, we hope to minimise this for the majority of children who come into care, however there may still be some children who come to our attention who have suffered in this way, for whom we would intervene.

Looked After Children tend to have more health problems compared with their peers and can result from a range of factors including:

- missed health checks such as dental and optician visits;
- early life experiences leading to a legacy of health problems, physical and psychological;
- limited education and support to both parents and young people so that they understand how health matters are important;
- poor diet, smoking, alcohol or drug misuse within their household;
- mental health or emotional difficulties.
- complex health needs associated with a disability
- understanding why they are, or were, Looked After

Life-story work is critical to psychological wellbeing by helping children and young people make sense of why they are/were looked after and that it is/was not their fault.

It is therefore important that Looked After Children are provided with a holistic health check with annual reviews and that children and young people, parents and carers are educated, trained and supported to lead to healthy lifestyles and help identify and address areas of concern.

In planning for the child/ young person's future, and their move to independence, an individual health plan that sets out their health needs and how they will be met must be completed. In addition, it is important that opportunities to pursue social and leisure interests are provided and promoted to children and young people, whatever their abilities, to help improve their emotional, psychological and physical health and wellbeing.

We need to continue to improve our performance in health assessments and dental checks and meet our target of our 98% performance rate.

We will ensure that all health assessments are completed within statutory timescales.

We will make sure that young people have copies of their health assessments and plans appropriate to their age and levels of understanding.

Where health assessments are delayed, we would expect that this is challenged by the Independent Reviewing Officer.

Impact Measures:

Increased number of annual health assessments / health reviews

100% completion of SDQs

Monitoring the use of SDQs in providing appropriate support and intervention

Monitoring referrals to CAMHS and the length of time in securing provision

Reduction in the incidence of reported self-harm

Reduction in teenage pregnancy rates amongst LAC and Care Leavers

Feedback from carers, children and young people about the timeliness and quality of health assessments and interventions
Percentage of families of children with disabilities accessing short breaks
Reporting of improved access to OT and specialist disability services
Improved fitness and general wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers
Increased numbers of looked after children and care leavers engaged in leisure and cultural activities

Objective 5): Listening to and acting on the views of looked after children and young people

Link to other plans / policies: The Pledge / Care Leaver's Charter

What our children in care told us:

"We feel that this is important because young people do not engage enough in local activities and this can cause the young person to feel low in mood if they are not encouraged to be part of activities; there should be more to prevent young people from feeling this way in the first place. Encouraging young people to take part in activities and meetings will aid in the future of the care service and also the treatment of their care"

(YDYC Open letter to Reading Borough Council 13 October 2015)

"This is also important because we need to know how the young person is feeling, sometimes we feel that the kids in care do not feel like they are being listened to."

(YDYC Open letter to Reading Borough Council 13 October 2015)

"I got to choose how often I want contact"

"I felt it went well because I got my point across"

"Communication is really important – if we build up trust we can communicate better. Social workers should take us out and stuff to get to know us but they don't have time. They should do it because they want to get to know us – not just because it is their job"

"I don't want my social worker to visit me at school – she always turns up when it is my favourite lessons and it is embarrassing in front of my friends"

What our foster carers told us:

Foster carers would welcome the opportunity to assist children and young people to share their views, wishes and feelings so that they can feel listened to and see how we are trying to deliver services as a result.

"Your Destiny Your Choice" is currently thinking about how to really help children and young people to get involved and foster carers would welcome and support any suggested activities or social media avenues for engagement.

Foster carers have suggested a youth group may be a more usual scenario for such a group to meet and would welcome it being age related perhaps 6/11 years and 12/18 years, in addition to continuing the activity days out and Civic Office sessions.

What are we going to do?

We have an expectation that social workers and foster carers will encourage participation and will lead by example in encouraging children and young people to have their say.

We will use opportunities to listen to the needs of children and young people and to act on them. Independent Reviewing Officers will meet all children who become looked after before their first review and will ensure that the views of children and young people are recorded in each review, in between reviews when their circumstances change, when key decisions need to be made or significant events take place which lead to a change of care plan.

The Young Inspectors programme will include children in care and they will be invited to develop a work plan looking at each of the objectives in this strategy and we look forward to their feedback in anticipation of further improvements we can make.

Bi-monthly Challenge and Review sessions are to be established where young people (supported by the Children's Participation Worker) hold the Head of Safeguarding and Looked After Children to account for service delivery.

Supervising managers will carry out bi-monthly observations of direct work being undertaken by a social worker with children and young people.

A steering group is to be established for children and young people with SEND which will be securely linked to other groups within RBC (e.g. Children in Care Council)

Why are we going to do this?

We are going to do this because first and foremost we made a promise to children and young people that we would both within the Pledge and within the Charter for Care Leavers. Involving children and young people in service design and delivery is the only way in which we can make a tangible positive difference to their experience of care.

Impact Measures:

Development and implementation of a cross-cutting Participation and Engagement strategy

Increased number of LAC and Care Leavers participating in specific activities and in general activities promoted by the Council.

Increased number of council meetings where councillors reflect on the impact that decision making will have on children and families.

Evidence of the views of children and young people positively shaping service development and delivery

Objective 6): Supporting and navigating our young people through the transition to adulthood and independence within their local communities wherever possible

Link to other plans/ policies: CAMHS Strategy, / Leaving Care Policy / Transitions pathway consultation / Transitions pilot

What our children in care told us:

“I’m really happy with my Leaving Care Adviser – she helped me to get a flat and made sure I had furniture before I moved in. The furniture’s ok but I don’t like that we can only get furniture from one place – I could get much better stuff that I actually like online, but that wasn’t an option”

What our foster carers told us:

Foster carers would welcome more young people being able to access education and traineeship opportunities that suit their individual needs and interests

This could include work experience, traineeships within the council and local businesses and colleges.

In addition access to advisors and continuing well-being support and advice was welcomed.

When appropriate foster carers will consider “Staying Put “arrangements to enable the transition into adulthood

For those with a disability or requiring adult services support transition planning needs to be secured at an earlier age and foster carers have suggested 15 and 6 months would be a sensible age to begin working together to secure arrangements.

What are we going to do?

Ensure that all of our eligible young people are aware of their leaving care entitlements and that these have been explained in a meaningful way and reflected in their pathway plans.

The Pathway Planning process will be improved to address young people’s needs by the time they reach their 16th birthday, and all young people will be engaged in contributing to their plans and PEPs will continue to be used to support young people into work, traineeships, apprenticeships or further education.

The Looked After Children and Leaving Care Team to be fully operational by the end of 2016 to resolve system issues that prevent smooth transition to young adulthood. This will help us to further enhance our links with Housing colleagues to ensure that young people are able to access housing options suitable to them and our links with Adult Social Care colleagues to ensure that young people who will have continued need for social care support will get the help they need.

Ensure that our arrangements for transitions post 18 identify health needs and further education needs and that there is a smooth transition with Health and Education colleagues for the delivery of these services, setting out clearly for the young person (and their carers where necessary) how these services will be delivered.

Continue to ensure that where young people go to university that they can access Housing opportunities when they leave university. This is recognised in our Housing Strategy and allows for young people to return to Reading and access Housing. Where young people have established their roots elsewhere, we will support them to be able to access Housing locally and will liaise with other agencies and authorities to facilitate this.

We will seek to increase the number and range of suitable accommodation placements for care leavers, including semi-independent supported lodging arrangements.

We will implement a Leaving Care Guide and use it with all Care Leavers in a planned and systematic way in line with their needs.

Why are we going to do this?

As any parent would support their teenage child through the transitions to adulthood, as a Corporate Parent, we have a responsibility to see our young people safely through the key transition to adulthood and potentially to services delivered to adults. This includes helping them to find accommodation, employment or further education and training and in some cases support delivered through Adult Social Care or Health Services.

Impact Measures:

Percentage of young people being aware of their entitlements when asked within reviews

Increased number of young people being able to access appropriate services within Adult Services or Adult Health Services in a timely way

Increased range of housing and supported living options for care leavers

Increased number of carers and young people reporting smooth transition arrangements

Percentage of transition planning for young people with SEND starting at year 9 review

Objective 7): Encourage our corporate colleagues to understand their corporate parenting responsibilities

What our children in care told us:

“Now that I have a child of my own, I think that social workers should think – “If this isn’t good enough for my own child, why should it be good enough for a child in Care? They should fight for the best possible outcomes – I would fight for my child – they should fight for us!”

What our foster carers told us:

They would like a clearer voice within the corporate setting and are committed to continuing Reading Carers Link as the independent support infrastructure and voice of our professional foster carers

Foster carers welcome their position on the Parenting Panel and the recent task and finish group and welcome the opportunity to influence the delivery model for children and young people in care.

What are we going to do?

We will work with colleagues across Reading Borough Council to encourage them to think about how their teams can act as ‘Corporate Parents’ to our children and young people.

Our Parenting Panel will advocate for the needs of children and will act as ‘champions’ when undertaking council activities, encouraging other members to think about how the implementation of policies and strategies across the wider authority will impact on children and families.

The Corporate Parenting Operations Group will report into the Parenting Panel in order to raise awareness of particular issues and to be held to account for the delivery of the objectives outlined in this strategy.

For councillors this means;

- Having a clear understanding and awareness of the issues for looked after children in their authority so that they can ensure that their responsibilities as corporate parents are reflected in all aspects of the work of the Council;
- Communication between Councillors and Looked After Children is facilitated to achieve participation and inclusion, so that children and young people have a say in how decisions are made about the services that affect them, and that they have an opportunity to influence those decisions;
- Members are supported by officers to promote partnership working as a prerequisite for delivering effective services to Looked After Children, and to ensure that the joint planning and commissioning framework continues to deliver to this agenda;

- The Council provides effective scrutiny of corporate parenting duties.

For all staff within Reading Borough, this means;

- Ensuring employee awareness and commitment to the Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Establishing recruitment and employment practices that offer supported work experience, apprenticeships and employment opportunities for young people who are in or have left the Council's care;
- All relevant services promote access for Looked After Children and their carers through both policy and practice; and
- Ensuring the commitment to corporate parenting is realised through a quality of care and range of opportunities that lead to measurable improvement in the life chances of looked after children - enabling them to succeed in line with their peers.

Why are we going to do this?

Every council department has a responsibility to ensure that all staff has an awareness of, and commitment to, the Corporate Parenting Strategy. Every council department will identify ways in which they can ensure they are meeting their corporate parenting responsibility through agreed actions. This includes consultation and participation of looked after children and care leavers. Each department will be held to account for how it has delivered against the Children's Pledge and report on progress and outcomes to the Corporate Parenting Panel in line with the forums forward plan.

Impact Measures:

All members of the Corporate Parenting Panel attend a minimum of 80% of the Panel meetings

"Traffic light challenges" should be issued at each Corporate Parenting Panel by YDYC and responded to no later than the next meeting.

Where officers or partners are asked to write a report, they are required to attend the Parenting Panel to present it.

Section Three: Implementation and Monitoring

Corporate Parenting Panel

We have a Corporate Parenting Panel comprising elected members who consider issues in respect of all children in care (see Appendix 4 – Terms of Reference).

Through our Corporate Parenting Panel, Children's Services is committed to:

Ensuring that the views of children in care are listened to and reflected in service delivery.

Ensuring that all elected members and employees of Reading Borough understand their corporate parenting responsibilities

Acting as an advocate to children in care when setting strategic priorities both within the council and in partnership with other organisations

Considering the Council's role as a Corporate Parent to children looked after by Reading Borough Council, in particular with regard to improving the health, education, employment, training and housing outcomes for children looked after by Reading Borough Council through:

Improving outcomes for young people both in care and previously looked after by Reading Borough Council and:

- (a) Ensuring integrated planning and activity for children looked after
- (b) Ensuring the Council actively promotes opportunities for children looked after by the Council.

Securing effective communication arrangements with the Children in Care Council to ensure the following:

- (a) That their views are listened to and reflected in service delivery
- (b) Monitoring that Reading Borough's Pledge to all children in care is fulfilled.

Commissioning reports as necessary to ensure that Members of the local authority have the information that will enable them to fulfil their role as Corporate Parents.

Corporate Parenting Operational Group

A Corporate Parenting Operational Group that sends quarterly progress reports to the Corporate Parenting Panel has been established that will manage complex cases. This approach will ensure multi-disciplinary management of cases in delivering support and trouble-shooting where cases are 'stuck'. The aims of this group are to:

1. To resolve system and operational issues that hinder care leavers successful transition to independence and early adulthood.

2. To commit resources to support looked after children and care leavers in the implementation of their Care Plan and Pathway Plan respectively.
3. To take steps to ensure effective cooperation/collaboration is embedding in frontline teams across services and agencies; undertake joint assessment where relevant of needs and formulation of Care Plans for looked after children and Pathway Plans for care leavers

Delivery Model

Our approach to delivering this plan will be through a strategic action plan (see Appendix 5) that enables us to deliver the objectives:

What will this look like?

Each year officers will approach the delivery of the objectives through key work streams set out below:

Year one:

- Deliver the restructure of Children's Social Care to ensure that workloads are manageable and that permanent social workers are recruited to help children develop and sustain relationships with their allocated worker.
- Identifying the gaps in policies /strategies and ensuring that strategies and policies align effectively and reflect corporate parenting responsibilities
- Engaging corporate partners and sharing information effectively across the council
- Building on the work already done within the Children in Care Council and within Children with Disabilities Service, the further development of structured children's participation and engagement across the whole department (and parent / carer involvement)

Year two:

- Ensuring that the new structures implemented across the whole of children's services meet the needs of children and young people and families in Reading Borough through a whole system evaluation approach.
- Development of services to meet strategy – commissioning, decommissioning and re-commissioning, joint commissioning

Year three:

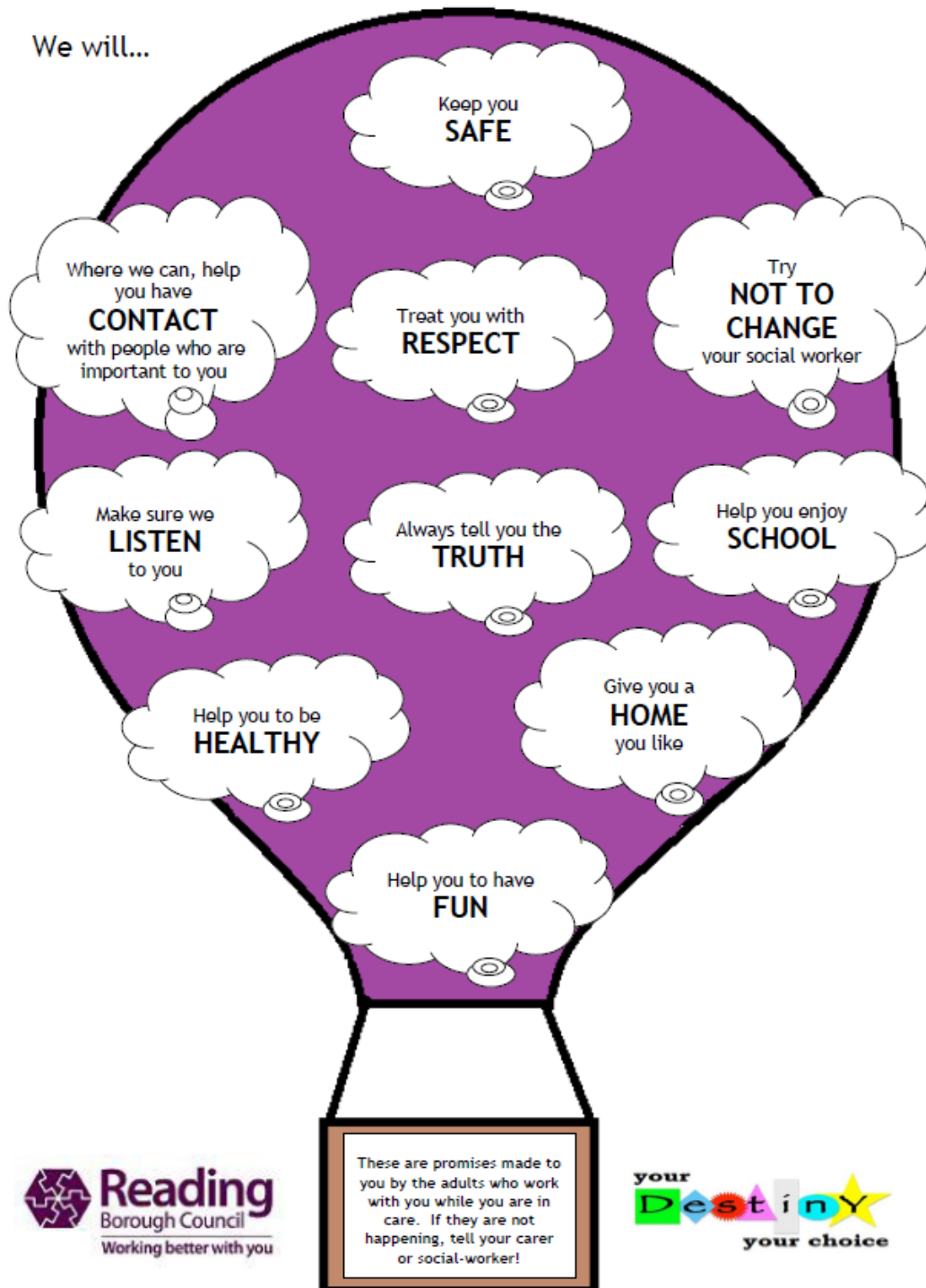
- Review & Audits

The Children's Social Care Senior Management Team will take lead responsibility for the delivery of the objectives within 3 years. They will report six-monthly to the Corporate Parenting Panel who will hold officers to account for the delivery of the objectives.

Appendix 1: Pledge to Children in Care

We have a version of the Pledge for children under 11:

We will...



More detail on each part of the pledge is available from www.readingyouth.com

And we have a version of the Pledge for those over 11:

SAFE
We will help you to stay safe, and be there for you when you need us.

CONTACT
Where possible we will help you to see your family and other people important to you.

RESPECT
We will treat you in a friendly and respectful way.

CONSISTENT
We won't change your social worker unless we really have to, and when we do, we will tell you why.

HOME
We will give you somewhere to live where you will feel safe and cared about.

HONESTY
We will tell you about everything you are entitled to in a clear and open way.

ACHIEVE
We will help you to have fun and achieve great things, both in school and in other activities.

HEALTHY
We will help you live a healthy life, both physically and mentally.

LISTENED TO
We will give you different ways to have your voice heard, will always listen to you and help you deal with your problems.

SUCCEED
We will support you as you get older to successfully leave care, become adults and live on your own.

This is our PLEDGE to you

This pledge is a set of promises to Reading's young people in care, by Reading Borough Council, written with the CiCC. All adults who work with you will ensure that the pledge really is what happens - if it's not, tell us! To see more detail on each part of the pledge, visit www.readingyouth.com

 **Reading**
Borough Council
Working better with you

 **your Destination your choice**

And we have a version for children who communicate using Widget:



We will:



Keep you Safe



Give you a Home you like



Help you to contact the people which are important to you



Help you to enjoy School



Help you to have fun and succeed



Help you to be Healthy



Make sure we listen to you



We Will :



Treat you with Respect



Try not to change your Social Worker

Appendix 2: Charter to Care Leavers

READING CHARTER FOR CARE LEAVERS

We will respect you and who you are

- We will respect your background
- We will accept your culture and beliefs
- We will not judge you

We will listen to you

- We will respect your point of view
- We will be honest with you
- We will be up front with you
- We will help you make your own decisions

We will help you get the information you need and want

- We will inform you in a way you will understand and keep in touch with you

We will support you

- When we can we will give you the support you need and when we can't we will do our best to get it for you
- We will continue to care about you even when we are no longer caring for you
- We will help you keep healthy
- We will not judge you or the decisions you make
- We will help you make decisions about your education, training and employment

With you, we will help you find a home

- We will try to find you the most appropriate place to live
- We will do everything we can to prepare you to live in your own home

We will be your life-long champion

- We will support you in your goals, dreams and aspirations
- We will try to be someone you can trust and rely upon
- We will believe in you even at times when you might not believe in yourself

Appendix 3: Policies and Strategies linked to the Corporate Parenting Strategy

List of related policies and strategies within Reading Borough:

- The Pledge to Children Looked After
- The Charter for Care Leavers
- The Sufficiency Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers;
- The Annual Report of the Virtual Head Teacher
- The Annual Fostering and Adoption Service Plans
- The Annual Report of the independent reviewing officer service
- The Annual Learning from Complaints Report.
- Outcomes from internal and external audits and self-assessments of our services.
- The direct voices of the children and young people in our care
- The Corporate Plan
- Children and Young People's Plan
- Education Vision
- LSCB Business Plan
- Housing Needs Strategy
- JSNA

Appendix 4: Parenting Panel Terms of Reference

17. PARENTING PANEL

1. Purpose

- To act as a focus for the Council's responsibilities as corporate parent by providing a channel of communication between looked after children and young people, council and other agency officers, carers and councillors, providing a forum for LAC policy development discussion and challenge.

2. Scope

The Corporate Parenting Panel

- Will be the champion of children looked after by them.
- Will champion the Children's Pledge in order to ensure the best life chances possible for looked after children.
- Will provide a channel of communication between children and young people who are or have been looked after, carers, officers and Councillors to discuss corporate parenting issues, as appropriate to the need to respect the privacy of looked after children.
- Will proactively engage with looked after children to gain a real understanding of the experience of being looked after as appropriate to the need to respect the privacy of looked after children; and
- Will celebrate the success of looked after children.

Appendix 5: Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan

	Action	Lead officers	Year
Objective 1: Supporting families to stay together where it is safe to do so by managing risk and children on the edge of care			
1.1	Early Help and Troubled Families Offer. Appropriate Interventions including Children's Action Teams, work with Children & YP in households with DV, Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Misuse, to support families where the plan is re-unification		On-going
1.2	Children's Action Teams and Locality Social Work Teams work intensively to strengthen families whilst safeguarding children. They provide intensive interventions with local stakeholders to provide packages of support to prevent children entering care whilst promoting their safety and development at home.		Year 1-3
1.3	Integration of Early Help into the MOSAIC system to ensure good through flow of information between Early Help and Children's Social Care.		Year 1-3
1.4	Provide a range of interventions for disabled children and their families		Year 1-3
Objective 2: Delivery of sufficient good quality and affordable placements and permanence options for children who come into our care			
2.1	Delivery of a refreshed Sufficiency Strategy that reflects the current and future needs of children in Reading		Year 1 - 3
2.2	IROs to monitor the quality of placement in meeting the needs of children and young people as part of the LAC review process. Where there are concerns regarding the sufficiency and/or quality of placements, escalation processes will be deployed.		On-going
2.3	Fee Scheme for RBC foster carers to include challenging targets of net gain of in-house foster carers to be set for delivery by 2017.		Year 1-2
2.4	Undertake a focussed exercise on the future capacity needed of in-house residential placements for children with SEND		Year 1-2
Objective 3: Ensuring all looked after children achieve their full potential in education, employment and training			
3.1	IROs to ensure all Looked After children have a PEP that supports them in reaching their full potential.		Year 1
3.2	In conjunction with the Virtual School, the Looked After Children and Leaving Care Team holds fortnightly joint meeting to review the quality and completion of PEPs.		Year 1

	Action	Lead officers	Year
3.3	Offer a range of experiences which support the learning and managed risk taking for children with disabilities		Year 1-2
Objective 4: Improving the physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of our looked after children and keeping them safe			
4.1	Development of an Emotional Wellbeing Strategy alongside CAMHS and Public Health		Year 1
4.2	IROs to ensure that Looked after children who are at risk of CSE, who go missing or are placed out of the council area are risk assessed, have a care plan which includes provision to keep them safe and that protective action is taken to reduce their vulnerability.		Year 1
4.3	100% completion target for SDQ.		On-going
4.4	Weekly CAMHS consultation.		
4.6	Missing Children from Care procedure is adhered to and return home interviews are undertaken within 72 hours and information shared with the young person's social worker		On-going
4.7	Identified Manager attends SEMRAC regularly		On-going
4.8	Work with colleagues in CAMHS to ensure that their services are timely and appropriate in meeting need.		Year 1-2
4.9	Ensure disabled children and young people have increased opportunities for leisure		Year 2
Objective 5: Listening to and acting on the views of looked after children and young people			
5.1	Social workers to ensure that they use the proformas issued by YDYC to introduce themselves to young people and that they also encourage foster carers to complete them too and share them with the young person they are caring for.		On-going
5.2	IROs to meet with all children who become looked after before their first review		Year 1-3
5.3	IROs to ensure that the views of children and young people are recorded in each review		On-going
5.4	IROs to gather the views of children and young people between reviews when their circumstances change, key decisions need to be made or significant events take place which lead to a change of		On-going

	Action	Lead officers	Year
	care plan.		
5.5	Young Inspectors to be appointed and invited to inspect each of the objectives of this strategy		Year 2
5.6	Bi-monthly Challenge and Review Meeting where young people [supported by the Children's Participation Worker] holds the Head of Safeguarding and Looked After Children to account for service delivery. Minutes of meeting will be kept by YDYC.		Year 1
5.7	Supervising manager will carry out bi-monthly observation where allocated worker undertakes direct work with children and young people.		Year 1
5.8	Secure the links between children and young people placed outside of the local authority area, including those with SEND and other RBC forum (e.g. YDYC)		Year 1-2
Objective 6: Supporting and navigating our young people through the transition to adulthood			
6.1	Set up the Senior Officers Operational Group to resolve system issues that prevent smooth transition to young adulthood.		Year 1
6.2	Ensure that all Pathway Plans involve the young person and reflect their needs and entitlements		On-going
6.3	Ensure that all young people are given the opportunities to access further education, employment and training and that they are supported to do so in a timely way		On-going
Objective 7: Encouraging the full engagement of the council departments in their Corporate Parenting responsibilities			
7.1	Setting up the Senior Officers Operational Group. It reports to the Corporate Parenting Panel 6-monthly		Year 1
7.2	Raise awareness of the role of both the parents and children and young people's forums across the Council		Year 1-2
7.3	Delivery of a 'young person friendly' version of all reports to Parenting Panel in a format agreed by YDYC		On-going