



Cabinet Member (Children and Young People)

Time and Date

2.00 pm on Tuesday, 22nd January, 2013

Place

Committee Room 3 - Council House

Public Business

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interests**
3. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 6)
 - (a) To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 16th October, 2012
 - (b) Matters Arising
4. **Annual Statement of payments to Coventry City Council Foster Carers** (Pages 7 - 26)

Report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People
5. **The Placement Sufficiency Strategy for Children and Young People's Placements** (Pages 27 - 56)

Report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People
6. **Report back from Scrutiny Task & Finish Group on Looked After Children and Apprenticeships** (Pages 57 - 64)

Report of the Chair of Jobs, Skills and Growth Scrutiny Board (Scrutiny Board 3)
7. **Outstanding Issues Report** (Pages 65 - 68)

Report of the Customer and Workforce Services
8. **Any Other Business**

To consider any other items of business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as a matter of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.

Private Business

Nil

Bev Messinger, Director of Customer and Workforce Services, Council House Coventry

Monday, 14 January 2013

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Usha Patel
Tel: 024 7683 3198

Membership: Councillor J O'Boyle (Cabinet Member)

By invitation Councillor Lepoidevin (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Please note: a hearing loop is available in the committee rooms

If you require a British Sign Language interpreter for this meeting
OR if you would like this information in another format or
language please contact us.

Usha Patel

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Agenda Item 3

CABINET MEMBER (CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE)

16th October, 2012

Cabinet Member

Present: Councillor O'Boyle

Employees Present:

V. Castree (Chief Executive's Directorate)
J. Cunningham (Local Safeguarding Children Board)
C. Green (Director of Children, Learning and Young People)
N. Hale (Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate)
A. Hook (Chief Executive's Directorate)
J. Lawrence (Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate)
J. Newman (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)
U. Patel (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
A. Weir (Chair of the Coventry Safeguarding Children Board)

Apologies:

Councillor Lepoidevin (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Public Business

17. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

18. Minutes

(a) The minutes of the meeting held on 4th September 2012, were signed as a true record.

(b) There were no matters arising.

19. Coventry Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) Annual Report 2011-2012 Business Plan 2012-2015

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People which presented the annual report of the Coventry Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) which sets out the activity and the performance of the Board. The document also reported on the financial resilience of the CSCB and key issues arising from recent Serious Case Reviews.

In December 2010, the CSCB reviewed its governance arrangements with the Children's Commissioning Board (CCB). It was noted that the alignment between the Board's priority setting and business planning processes had improved. The communication and linkage arrangements were beginning to embed and would mature over time. Further alignment and communication would be required in respect of the relationship with the Health and Well Being Board and the CSCB.

The 2012/15 Business Plan of the CSCB outlined the following priorities:

- To monitor and evaluate the development of Early Help Services for children, young people and their families.
- To monitor the reduction of the number of sexually exploited young people and make them safer.
- To monitor the further development of multi-agency services to prevent domestic abuse and support children and their families.
- To further review the CSCB performance framework to enable the Board to monitor the effectiveness of current services with a view to shaping priorities for the CSCB.
- Develop an engagement policy and programme with young people.

This was the first year where the Board had had an Independent Chair and ensured the Board's compliance with Working Together to Safeguard Children and Young People 2010. This provided the CSCB with an additional independent monitoring and scrutiny capacity. Two lay members were also appointed in September 2011 who were now beginning to contribute to the work of the CSCB and provide a different perspective from their own experiences and knowledge of the local community.

The CSCB and CCB reviewed the staying safe outcomes and the CSCB maintained responsibility for assuring the effectiveness of the following:

- Safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation, including children subject to Common Assessment Framework
- Safe from accidental injury arising from neglect only
- Safe from death.

The report outlined the strategic goals for the CSCB, the financial challenges that still remained and provided information on the serious case reviews.

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People):

- 1. Noted the annual report of the CSCB and the Business Plan.**
- 2. Considered the financial resilience of the CSCB including the updating information on the financial gap identified in the last report submitted in October 2011 as well as the funding arrangements and forecasted expenditure over the next financial year.**
- 3. Agreed, together with the Chair of the Coventry Safeguarding Children Board to write to the Chairman of West Midlands Police Authority and the Chief Constable of West Midlands Police to express concern about the inadequacy of the West Midlands contribution to the Coventry Safeguarding Children Board.**
- 4. Considered from within the report the progress of the most recent Serious Case Reviews.**

20. Adoption Service Annual report and Statement of Purpose

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People on the work completed by the Directorate in respect of adoption during the year 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012.

The aim of Coventry's Adoption Service was to provide a comprehensive adoption and post-adoption service, including the provision of adoption Support Services to all parties affected by the adoption process consistent with best practice and national standards and requirements.

The Council was committed to achieving the greatest number of adoptions with the best outcomes for the children concerned. In 2011-2012, 25 children were adopted with 32 adopters approved over this period.

The Adoption Service regulations required the Statement of Purpose to be reviewed, updated and modified where necessary at least annually. In the case of Local Authority Adoption Services it requires that the Statement of Purpose is formally approved by the Elected Members.

Officers reported that by Christmas, they would have managed to place three groups of three children for adoption. The Cabinet Member praised the officers for having accomplished such a difficult task.

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People):

- 1. Accepted the 2011/2012 Report.**
- 2. Approved the Statement of Purpose.**
- 3. Requested that the revised Statement of Purpose reflecting the new organisational structure and priority to adoption, including numbers and the speeding up of the process of adoption within the authority, be presented to the Cabinet Member at the earliest opportunity.**

21. Fostering Service Annual Report including Statement of Purpose and Family and Friends Policy

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People which provided information on the work completed by Coventry Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate in respect of fostering during the year 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012.

Coventry's Fostering Service has supported 117 internal foster care households providing placements for 213 of Coventry's looked after children (at March 2012) during a period of high demand for foster placements, with a significant number of looked after children in the city (580 by March 2012).

Under the Fostering regulations every Fostering Agency had to produce a Statement of Purpose which was considered by the executive of the authority on an annual basis.

Coventry Fostering Service was responsible for the recruitment, training, assessment and support of a full range of carers and the placement of children in in-house foster care.

In March 2012, the Coventry Fostering Service provided 47% of looked after children's placements in the city, compared to external placements (excluding friend and family placements). These placements were provided by a wide and diverse range of carers.

The development of Residence Order and Special Guardianship policies, with associated financial support, has assisted the department to offer an alternative to children being placed in long term care through being placed with 'friends and family' carers. This can reduce the length of time such carers continue to be registered as foster carers.

Children may be brought up by members of their extended families, friends or other people who were connected with them for a variety of reasons and in a variety of different arrangements.

The Local Authority has a statutory obligation to ensure that family and friend carers were aware of relevant support services, and that these could be readily accessed by those caring for children whether or not they were looked after by the local authority.

The Family and Friends Care Policy sets out the local authority's approach towards promoting and supporting the needs of such children and covers the assessments which would be carried out to determine the services required and how such services would then be provided.

The Cabinet Member noted that the foster carers budget and expenditure as listed at section paragraph 5.1.1 of the report should indicate an underspend and not an overspend.

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People):

- 1. Accepted the Fostering Annual Report 2011/2012.**
- 2. Approved the Statement of Purpose.**
- 3. Endorsed the Family and Friends Policy.**

22. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no other items of public business.

(The meeting closed at 3.20 p.m.)



Public report Cabinet Member Report

22 January 2013

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) - Councillor J. O'Boyle

Director Approving Submission of the report

Director of Children, Learning and Young People

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title: Annual statement of payments to Coventry City Council Foster Carers

Is this a key decision?

Yes

Executive Summary:

This report considers proposals for the annual review of levels of fees and maintenance payments paid to foster carers for 2013/2014.

All foster carers approved by Coventry City Council receive a 'maintenance allowance' for each of the children and/or young people in their care. This payment is made weekly and is intended to cover all costs associated with caring for a 'Looked after child'.

Maintenance payments are set in line with Government guidance and reviewed annually. Historically in Coventry the maintenance fee was set to match the higher rate that is recommended by the Fostering Network. Local Authorities cannot lower their fees but they do have the option to freeze them.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 – Foster Carers Allowance Letter

Other useful background papers

No

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Annual statement of payments to Coventry City Council Foster Carers

1. Context (or background)

All foster carers approved by Coventry City Council receive a 'maintenance allowance' for each of the children and/or young people in their care. This payment is made weekly and is intended to cover all costs associated with caring for a 'Looked After child'.

Maintenance payments are set in line with Government guidance and reviewed annually. Historically in Coventry the maintenance fee was set to match the higher rate that is recommended by the Fostering Network. Local Authorities cannot lower their fees but they do have the option to freeze them.

Maintenance allowances and fees were frozen last year in Coventry. The recommended national increase last year for maintenance allowances was 5%.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

It is proposed that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People considers and approves the recommended payments to Coventry City Council Foster Carers, set out in the Foster Carers Letter in Appendix 1.

This includes:

- A 2% increase in fees to foster carers
- A 5% increase in maintenance payments and all other child care allowances
- Deleting the Mainstream 1 fee payment foster carers and replacing it with Mainstream 2
- Aligning Friends and Family weekly allowance with internal Foster Carer fees
- Any Foster Carer who is currently receiving the Mainstream 2 fee (who has completed the relevant training), who has 5 years or more experience to receive the Mainstream 3 payment from April 1 2013

See "5.2 Summary of Forecasted costs" for more financial details.

3. Proposals for raising payments to Foster Carers.

Fees

- 3.1** The Fostering Network are recommending a 2% increase on the maintenance payments for 2013/2014 period. If Coventry were to follow this line for child maintenance payments it would increase the shortfall with neighbouring authorities.
- 3.2** It is proposed in order to address some of the shortfall, that the children's maintenance allowances and all other child care allowances are increased by 5% in 2013/2014. See Appendix 1 Foster Carer letter.
- 3.3** All foster carers, except those who are related to children, receive a fee in addition to the child's maintenance allowance. There is no statutory guidance in relation to fee levels paid to foster carers.
- 3.4** In comparison to neighbouring authorities, Coventry's fee to foster carers is set at a competitive rate, with individual payments slightly higher than Warwickshire and Solihull. However, a number of Local Authorities, including Coventry's neighbours, pay the fees 'per child' while Coventry pays 'per household'.
- 3.5** It is proposed that for the period 2013 – 2014, Coventry increases the fee to Foster Carers by 2%.

Review of Foster Carer Fees and Allowances

- 3.6** In recognition of the growing gap between Coventry's payments and allowances to foster carers and those recommended by the Fostering Network and given the difficulty in recruiting foster carers, a practise review of all fees, allowances and benefits is needed.
- 3.7** It s proposed that during 2013/14 a review of fees, allowances and benefits will be completed so that by 2014/15 a full menu of support, both financial and practical, will be available for all foster carers.
- 3.8** As a city council, Coventry is in a prime position to support foster carers in ways which independent fostering agencies cannot. We need to ensure that every potential opportunity is exploited to recruit and retain foster carers.
- 3.9** A review of the above benefits and all payments to foster carers will follow and be presented to full Cabinet for consideration. Included in the review will be the full exploration of further service developments that could potentially save money and improve care for children who display risky behaviour and/or have very high needs.

Financial impact

- 3.10** The increase for this year is necessary to maintain our existing carers to continue supporting our Looked After Children.
- 3.11** It is important to be aware of the fact that most fostering agencies will increase their fees on an annual basis to ensure the retention of carers and standards of care to Looked After Children. These will be higher than the fees paid by the City Council.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

1st April 2013.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Legal Services

5.1 Financial implications

The current number of looked after children (LAC) in internal foster care placements is 172.

These children are placed with 112 foster families, meaning that currently each family offers on average 1.5 beds.

In line with the Fundamental Service Review (FSR) forecast growth for internal foster care provision, the costing assumes that by 31/03/13 there will be 190 LAC placed within the care of 131 families.

The costing also takes into account the planned growth in internal foster carers for the 2013/14 financial year. This is that by 31/03/14 there will be 213 LAC placed within the care of 150 families. In the FSR model it was assumed that any new carers offer on average 1.2 beds. The recruitment of the additional 23 placements in 2013/14 has been spread evenly through the financial year.

The current number of LAC placed with Friends & Family is 41. The model made no assumptions that this level would change by the end of 2012-13 and would remain at the same level throughout 2013-14.

5.2 Summary of Forecasted costs

The following table shows the projected cost of internal fostering for 2013/14.

The first part of the table shows the base rate for the current and additional internal fostering placements. This only includes a part year cost for the 23 internal foster carers who will be recruited in 2013/14 (£199K). The full year cost of this would be £417K. This additional cost of placements has been included in the FSR financial model, and is included in this report for information purposes only.

The second part of the table calculates the cost of increasing maintenance and fees for the 2013/14 financial year. If all proposals are accepted this is an additional cost of £350K 2013/14. This only includes a part year cost for the 23 internal foster carers who will be recruited in 2013/14.

Summary of estimated expenditure on Internal Fostering Fees 2013-14	
	000'S £
Cost based on 2012-13 Rates	
Current placements at P8 (172)	2,957
Additional Placements & Carers recruited by 31/03/13 (18)	347
Additional Placements & Carers recruited through 13-14 (23 part year)	199
Total Forecast cost for 13-14 based on 12-13 Rates	3,503
Estimated additional costs on propose increases	
Cost of % increase in Fees on Current placements & New placements	122
Cost of Proposal 1 (see detail below)	13
Cost of Proposal 2 (see detail below)	85
Cost of Proposal 3 (see detail below)	130
Total Forecast Additional cost for 13-14	350
Total forecast for 2013-14	3,853

Breakdown of Proposals

Proposal 1 - Cost of the movement from Mainstream 1 fee to Mainstream 2 fee due to deletion of mainstream 1. We currently have 3 foster carers in receipt of Mainstream 1 fees.

Proposal 2 - Alignment of Friends & Family weekly allowance with Internal Foster Care.

Proposal 3 - Cost of the movement from Mainstream 2 fee to Mainstream 3 fee for foster carers with 5 years or more experience. Currently 34 Foster Carers would fall into this category.

5.3 Potential to make savings

Any increase in maintenance and fees reduces the savings that have been calculated for the FSR financial model. It is key therefore that we aim to offset any additional costs by additional savings.

As part of the further work that will be done on the internal fostering provision we will be reviewing the specialist foster carer internal provision with a view to expanding this provision. To purchase a placement from an external provider costs in excess of £100K per annum. It is estimated that by developing our specialist internal foster care provision we could save on average £50K per placement. On this basis we would only need to recruit 7 specialist foster carers to recoup the £350K additional cost in 2013/14.

5.4 Legal implications

Statutory guidance states that it is essential that all foster carers are given clear information about the criteria for making financial payments to them, including allowances, fees and other expenses. Allowances must be sufficient to cover the full cost of caring for each child placed with them, and must be reviewed annually.

The Government has put in place a National Minimum Fostering Allowance (adjusted annually) which is the very minimum that should be provided to a foster carer for each child placed. Criteria for calculating allowances must apply equally to all foster carers, whether or not they are related to the child or the placement is long or short term (standard 28).

6. Other implications.

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

One of the Council's key objectives is to make significant savings in public expenditure. The council's spending on looked after children is particularly high; this is primarily due to the high numbers of children and young people placed in foster and residential provision in the private sector, these costs are significantly higher than Local Authority provision. A key saving is the recruitment and retention of Local Authority foster carers.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Failure to increase the fees may impact upon the council's ability to retain foster carers. Foster carers will feel undervalued and this may affect their good will.

Foster carers will not feel supported and will not promote 'Caring for Coventry'; this will have a significant impact upon the recruitment of foster carers.

Coventry City Council must recruit as many in-house foster carers as it is able and make itself as competitive as possible in a very difficult market place. To not do so means the council will be disadvantaging children and incurring further high expenditure by having to secure 'out of city placements'.

Whilst there is an impact on the predicted financial savings for the year 2013/14 the overall savings made by retaining carers and encouraging them to promote Coventry as a

supportive Local Authority with whom to foster will outweigh the additional cost and ultimately produce significant savings in the coming years by increasing numbers of 'in house carers' as per agreed targets.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

The proposed fees and maintenance increase is still lower than that which will be recommended nationally, however foster carers understand the savings that need to be made and will feel appreciated that the Council has made them a priority for expenditure.

Payment levels to foster carers are one factor that influences recruitment and retention, but as important is the support and respect that carers receive. A number of foster carers have felt unsupported by the City Council in recent years.

Following consultation with foster carers it is clear what else needs to be implemented to address these concerns. Changes are being made so that the impact of the relatively low financial increase coupled with the general improved practice and support will result in increased numbers of new carers and the retention of existing carers. (Please see Appendix 1)

6.4 Equalities / EIA

Maintenance and fees have been set in line with National guidance. Payments and support to foster carers have been set to ensure that there is no disadvantage.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

Report author(s):

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Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

Contributor/approver name	Title	Directorate or organisation	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Contributors:				
Nicky Hale	Interim Head of Service, Looked After Children	CLYP	9/1/13	14/1/13
James Lawrence	Programmes and Projects Manager	CLYP	9/1/13	11/1/13
Eileen West	Lead Accountant – Business Partnering	CLYP	9/1/13	11/1/13
Rob Orton	Accountant – Business Partnering	CLYP	9/1/13	14/1/13
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Colin Green	Director of Children, Learning & Young People	CLYP	9/1/13	11/1/13
Andy Pepper	Assistant Director of Children, Learning & Young People – Children's Social Care	CLYP	9/1/13	11/1/13
Rachael Sugars	Finance Manager CLYP	CLYP, Finance & Legal Services Directorate	9/1/13	14/1/13
Julie Newman	Solicitor	CLYP, Finance & Legal Services Directorate	9/1/13	11/1/13
Neelesh Sutaria	Human Resources Manager	CLYP	9/1/13	11/1/13

This report is published on the council's website:

www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings

Appendix 1 – Foster Carers Letter 2013

Children, Learning & Young People's
Directorate

All Foster Carers & Specialist Foster Carers

Fostering Service
Civic Centre 1
Earl Street
Coventry
CV1 5RS

Date: 30th March 2013

Tel: 024 76 83 1873
Fax: 024 7629 4660

Dear Carer

Foster Care Allowances from 1st April 2013

I am pleased to give you information on fostering allowances to be paid from 1st April 2013.

Coventry City Council remains indebted to each and every one of you, for providing safe and inspirational care to our Looked after Children.

As many of you know there have been a number of reviews over the past 12 months and many have resulted in changes.

As a result I am delighted to announce that we have decided that a number of support opportunities that were available a number of years ago will be back on track during the coming year.

These include a paid foster carer mentoring scheme, support groups, funding of the CFCA (Coventry Foster Care Association), a confidential shared web site so we can all communicate with each other over the internet, a revamped recruitment web site, an increase in the recruitment incentive to £500, the development of an interactive support web site and the introduction of six monthly senior manager clinics with foster carers, to name but a few.

I have been concerned that numerous changes have happened to our service, with very little consultation with many of you, we are in the process of changing this, foster carers are now members of the recruitment and retention group, we have consulted with some of you prior to sending this letter regarding the fees and maintenance changes, I am hopeful that as we continue to develop our service, more of you will be enabled to be involved in key development groups.

Over the next 12 months we shall be reviewing a number of forms and processes in order to update them and make them more user friendly, again I am hopeful that you will all contribute to this process by having representatives on the working groups.

The council acknowledges that fees and maintenance payments have been frozen for 2 years. Maintenance payments are now falling behind the Fostering Network's recommended rates. We recognise that and are hopeful that this will be rectified over the coming years. As a guide for 2013/14 the Fostering Network will recommend a rise in maintenance allowance of 2% for existing allowances.

In Coventry we have taken the decision to raise the maintenance allowances including Festivals and birthday allowances by 5% for 2013/14, whilst this does not mean we will completely close the gap, it will go some way towards it. We are also going to raise the fees by 2% for 2013/14.

1. FEES

As you are probably aware there is no statutory guidance as to the fees paid to foster carers, but again I acknowledge and thank you for your patience and understanding in the light of the lack of rises in recent years. This year all fees will rise by 2%.

The fees scheme is open only to carers who are (or have been) approved to care for a range of children, and is not open to carers approved only for specific children. Fees are per household (irrespective of which carer's name is on the remittance slip) and **only** when at least one child is in placement.

Fees are paid that reflect the level of training and skills achieved by at least one carer in the foster carer household, and the ability to care for a range of children.

Carers can move between levels, dependent on achievement of the required skills and training for each of the levels. A copy of the Skills requirements for each of the fee levels is attached to this letter. Please discuss with your supervising social worker any further information you require on details of the expectations of training for each carer for the relevant level. Carers are expected to attend all core training and required to attend refresher training every 3 years as identified within the payment and training framework. Failure to do so may lead to a review of the fee level and a decision to reduce it.

Carers are asked to check the remittance slip when they receive it and inform the Fostering Finance Office immediately of any over or under payments.

There is no guarantee that approved carers will have a placement all the time as the service has to match the carers to the child's assessed needs. Consequently carers should not rely on the fee being paid.

Occasionally mistakes are made, or we are slow to pick up on changes, for which I sincerely apologise, if we do/don't make a payment in error please let us know as soon as possible so we can rectify our mistake. Unfortunately, if we inadvertently over pay you, we have a statutory duty to claim that money back from you, so the sooner we can sort it out the better for you.

2.1 FEE LEVELS

Fees will increase by 2% for 2013/14

Level	Current Weekly Fee £	Fee for 2013/14 £
Limited Approval / Specific Child	No Fee	No Fee
Mainstream 1 (respite or inexperienced)	N/A	N/A
Mainstream 2 (carers working towards the Training, Support & Development Standards)	136.64	139.37
Mainstream 3 (Following successful completion of Training, Support & Development Standards and having fostered for Coventry for 5 years or more from the 1 st April 2013)	210.21	214.41
Specialist Dual Fee (Carers approved for more than one specialist placement)	278.25	283.82
Specialist Solo Fee (Solo placement requirement)	346.78	353.72

2. FOSTERING SCHEMES

Limited Approval / Specific Child:

Foster Carers approved to care for a specific child or who have limited approval from the Fostering panel.

Level 2 - Carers who have been approved for up to five years and who are working towards the completion of/have completed the required training standards.

Level 3 – Experienced Carers with enhanced skills portfolio:

Level 3 Carers who have achieved the Training, Support and Development Standards and meet the required continued professional development requirements of the Fostering Training Framework. Those who have successfully completed all the training, have relevant child care experience, and who have fostered for Coventry for a minimum of five years as of 1st April 2013.

Specialist Carer Scheme Dual Fee:

Specialist Foster Carers who have a proven skills portfolio, including required qualifications at levels 2 and 3 of the Fostering Training Framework and who meet the specified criteria of the specialist scheme for children requiring intensive support.

Specialist Carer Scheme Solo Fee:

Specialist Foster Carers who have a proven skills portfolio, including required qualifications at levels 2 and 3 of the Fostering Training Framework and who meet the specified criteria of the specialist scheme for children requiring intensive support within a solo placement.

Emergency Placement Scheme

This provides for approved foster carers to be paid a 'sessional fee' for 12 hour periods during which they are "on call" and therefore receive children at very short notice, in unsociable hours.

Sessional fee: £25.00 Payable to carers who are able to accommodate 2 children or more, of either sex and within the full age range

£12.50 payable to carers who are unable to accommodate the full age range

(In addition to the sessional fees, the appropriate rate of child maintenance allowance on a pro-rata basis. Carers will also receive payment for telephone line rental per quarter which does not include telephone calls).

Support Carer's Scheme for Young People aged 18+ staying on with their former foster carer.

This is a scheme to support young people remaining with their former foster carer post 18 years of age. Support Carers are not foster carers subject to fostering standards and therefore payments for support carers are not covered within this letter. A separate guide is available that covers arrangements around this within the 'Support Carers Scheme', which can be obtained from your supervising social worker.

3. CHILD MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE

The directorate policy is to pay a maintenance amount based on the age of the child.

Carers should not depend on the fostering maintenance payment allowance for their own income as it is intended to be spent on the care of a child.

The child maintenance allowance is designed to cover the full cost of looking after a fostered child and does not include any form of reward for carers. The child maintenance allowance is made up of a number of elements which include household, clothing, food, transport, mileage and personal/pocket money.

Child Maintenance Allowances are only payable while a child is in placement.

Child's age	Current General Scale £ . p	Allowance for 2013/14 £
0 – 4	125.09	131.34
5 – 10	142.52	149.65
11-15	177.38	186.25
16 +	215.74	226.53

Please Note: That all overpayments of child maintenance allowances must be declared by the foster carer and will be reclaimed by the City Council either by reducing future allowances to carers continuing to foster or by payment from the carer if no other children are placed with the family.

3.1 Mother and Baby Placements

The enhanced child maintenance allowances outlined below are based on the basic maintenance levels of both mother and baby and are payable from 11 weeks before the birth is due until the birth of the baby. These allowances for 2013/14 will be the same as 2012/13.

Mother's age	Enhanced General Allowance £
11 – 15	302.47
16+	340.83

If the mother and baby remain in placement following the birth of the baby, the enhanced child maintenance allowance will continue to be paid. However, if the baby leaves the placement, payments will revert back to the basic child maintenance allowance based on the age of the baby's mother. If the baby's mother leaves the placement at any stage following birth of the baby, the baby must immediately be accommodated and a child maintenance allowance will be paid in respect of the baby at the normal 0 – 4 rate. The child maintenance allowance for the baby's mother will cease on the date that she vacates the placement.

3.2 Pocket Money

The weekly rate includes an allowance for a young person to have pocket money.

We believe it is unhelpful to be too rigid about levels of pocket money, but offer the following guidelines. Further work on suggested pocket money rates is currently being undertaken by the Coventry Foster Carers Association and further guidance will be issue when this work has been completed.

We suggest a **minimum** pocket money allowance of: -

Age	Weekly Amount
5 to 10	£5.25
11 to 14	£7.25
15 to 17	£8.25

Within the weekly rate there is scope to pay more, but this is subject to judgement as in any family e.g. as a reward for jobs done or especially good behaviour, or for special events.

Foster carers are encouraged to open a bank/building society account for young people to teach them how to save and budget. Further work on suggested saving amounts for children and young people is currently being undertaken by the Coventry Foster Care Association and further guidance will be issued when this work has been completed.

3.3 Emergency Clothing

The Child Maintenance Allowance is designed to cover the full costs of looking after a foster child, which includes provision and replacement of clothing. Carers are expected to meet the full clothing costs out of the weekly child maintenance allowance.

If children need clothes on first admission to care, additional funding can be requested through the child's social worker. This will usually only apply to children who are placed on the same day with no clothing. Supporting receipts need to be sent to the child's social worker. The maximum amount that can be considered for emergency clothing is £100.00

Additional funding for clothing can be applied for through the child's social worker where it is necessary to support a particular hobby or out of school activity.

3.4 Transport

Carers are required to provide support and transport to enable the child to attend school. They are also required to take the child to all medical appointments including appointments with CAMHS for assessment or therapy and support the child accordingly. Carers are also required to transport the child to all contact visits and supervise the contact if required. Carers are also expected to provide transport to all other social activities for the child.

Journeys which involve ordinary and reasonable household responsibilities will not be additionally funded as these clearly fall within the remit of fostering allowances. Carers are expected to meet these costs from their weekly child maintenance allowances which includes a proportion for transport for all local journeys, and all journeys that are associated with caring for a child in the family, to school, contact, medical appointments etc.

Payment of mileage claims in exceptional circumstances, after the approval of the supervising social worker and their manager, will be paid at the current mileage rate of 0.45p per mile. The mile-o-meter readings must be completed and in line with Tax requirements, should have a VAT fuel receipt attached.

Where any assistance with the cost of public transport is provided, it is expected that this will be at the cheapest rate possible.

Supervising social workers will continue to review all claims submitted by foster carers.

4. FESTIVAL AND BIRTHDAY ALLOWANCES

Allowances, based on 2 weeks maintenance, will increase by 5% for 2013/14

Child's age	Current General Allowance £	Allowance for 2013/14 £
0 – 4	250.18	262.68
5 – 10	285.04	299.30
11 – 15	354.76	372.50
16 +	431.48	453.06

Birthday allowances are paid 3 weeks in advance of the birthday and are equivalent to one week's basic maintenance. Festival payments, also one week's basic maintenance, are made in November for all placements unless carers wish to be paid at a different time of the year.

Foster Carers are encouraged to keep receipts for all presents bought. The City Council has to keep receipts where ever possible to evidence public expenditure, however this is a very sensitive area for children/young people who are looked after and I would like to ask you to try to ensure that children/young people where ever possible are not aware of this practice.

HOLIDAY ALLOWANCES

Allowances, equivalent to 3 weeks maintenance, will increase by 5%

Child's age	Current General Allowance £	Allowance for 2013/14 £
0 – 4	375.27	394.02
5 – 10	427.56	448.95
11 – 15	532.14	558.75
16 +	647.22	679.59

The payment is made in April for long-term placements and in July for time limited placements. The allowance for 2013/14 is equivalent to three weeks basic maintenance; this is an additional week beyond the level recommended by the Fostering Network. Allowances are expected to be used to take the child on holiday and for entertainment during holiday periods e.g. day trips. The allowances include travel expenses.

Where an overseas trip is planned that may cost above the amount of holiday allowance it is expected that, as with all families, this is budgeted for within the weekly level of child maintenance allowance.

In the exceptional circumstance, where a foster carer cannot take the child with them on holiday, the holiday allowance will be reclaimed.

In a year when a change of placement is planned, entitlement to the Holiday Allowance will be divided between the carers taking into account the dates involved and holiday planned / taken. On occasions this may result in the City Council requesting the reimbursement of Holiday Allowances paid to carers where children have been moved for part of the year unless there are exceptional circumstances. A record of how the holiday allowance is used or retention of receipts may be required for audit purposes.

Please do not pass money between yourselves to divide up allowances.

6. ABSENCES FROM FOSTER HOME

When a child absconds from placement, the basic child maintenance allowance and foster carer fees will be paid for up to seven nights per period, (subject to the maximum of thirty nights per child per year). Any period in excess of seven nights must have approval in advance from the Head of Service, Looked after Children.

If the child is on planned home leave, a phased rehabilitation home or moving on plan with overnight stays / contact, the child maintenance allowance will be paid on the appropriate pro-rata basis. Foster carer fees will only be paid subject to the maximum of thirty nights per child per year.

If a child is in the progress of a planned move e.g. rehabilitation home or adoptive placement, and the plan is for the current placement to be kept open for a short period post placement, this will be for a maximum of two weeks only and must have the approval of the Head of Service, Looked After Children. The fostering fee will continue to be paid for this period however the child maintenance allowance will not be paid for any such periods.

6.1 Respite Care

Looked after Children have already experienced separation and loss in their lives and foster care placements are expected to give them stability. Therefore moves on a temporary basis to carers who are unknown by the child must be minimised and any such move should be planned with introduction meetings to build up a relationship between the child and the temporary carer.

In most situations, it is expected that any breaks or time away from the main carer should be arranged through the foster carer's own support networks and with people with whom the child(ren) are familiar.

Foster care support networks are identified within the assessment process and are monitored through foster home reviews. Where foster carers experience change or reduction in their existing support networks, their supervising social worker will assist carers in strengthening their support networks, which could include other carers.

Where a carer is unable to arrange respite care within their own support network, and requires the child to be placed in respite care with an alternative carer, the general fostering allowance (fostering fees and child maintenance allowance) will be deducted from the main carer on a pro-rata basis for such respite periods.

6.2 Day Care

The General Fostering Allowance covers ordinary costs of looking after a child including holidays, days off school etc. However where exceptionally, day care is arranged through the Supervising Social Worker for respite or other purpose, this is paid at £3.10 per hour for each child.

Day care will be provided on the following criteria only:

- Where the request for day care is based on the child's needs and is clearly evidenced within the child's care plan.
- Where child care is required for other children in placement to enable the foster carer to facilitate home finding meetings for a child preparing for a long term or adoptive placement, and where their usual child care arrangements are not available.
- For the first three days of any school exclusion for a looked after child (after this period it is expected that LACES will be responsible for the provision of an alternative education placement if the child is still without education provision)
- Child care provision to enable foster carers to attend training, where their usual child care arrangements are not available.
- Any other exceptional circumstance will be considered on an individual basis as required.
-

Supervising social workers will monitor all requests for day care and respite to ensure that foster carers do continue to have appropriate support networks in place. Any concerns regarding excessive numbers of requests for respite or day care will be discussed with the foster carer and recorded within the foster home review.

6.3 Allegations

If a child has to move because of an investigation into allegations against the carer, and the carers are not permitted to care for other children during the period of investigation, then only where there is significant doubt around the facts (and only under these circumstances) may the fee element of the fostering allowance be continued for a maximum period of six weeks. Any extension beyond this period would be need to be agreed by the Head of Service, Looked after Children, and if the extension was significant, by the Assistant Director, Children's Services.

However if it is clear from the outset, or at any point during the period of investigation, that the carer has breached their duties, then fee payments will immediately cease.

In all circumstances, the child maintenance allowance will cease from the date the child was moved from the placement.

7. Additional Requirements and Payments in respect of Specialist Carers

Coventry Specialist Fostering Scheme provides a service for a range of Looked after Children whose needs cannot be met within 'mainstream' fostering provision. The children and young people referred to this scheme will often have a high level of need and display a range of extreme behavioural difficulties. Specialist Foster Carers are required to be home-based (if single or one of a couple) and not employed outside the family home. The Specialist carer is required to provide cover education if the child is excluded from school or waiting for a school place. Specialist Foster Carers have skills which will enable them to care for such children and the level of Fees to Specialist Carers reflect this.

7.1 Experience & Skills of Specialist Foster Carers will include:

Child Care diploma (or equivalent)

Minimum 2 years employment experience working with children and young people who display challenging and difficult behaviour - supported by positive references.

Be able to provide a child in placement with their own bedroom.

Have no other birth children at home under the age of 12 years if considered as a Solo Specialist Carer.

Have an ability to provide stimulating activities for a young person with a high level of supervision.

A commitment to attend and contribute to a variety of meetings concerning the young person.

Experience of producing accurate and appropriate recording regarding a young person.

Experience of working closely with a variety of other professionals involved with a young person.

A commitment to engage in on-going training and development, including attendance at appropriate support groups and meetings.

7.2 Specialist Scheme Holiday / Respite Allowance – Payment of Fostering Fee

To promote placement stability for Looked after Children with challenging behaviour / complex needs, an additional 3 weeks (21 days) Fostering Fee is paid to Specialist Foster Carers to enable specialist carers to take up to 21 days respite / holiday. This fee payment is designed to cover the loss of fees to the carer for up to 21 days where the specialist carer requires respite care for the child whilst they are on holiday or using respite care for the young person.

7.3 Specialist Scheme - Unoccupied Fees

When an on-going placement ends, or a young person is rehabilitated back to their family, the Placements Service may not immediately be able to identify a child/young person suitable for the placement. In these circumstances the Fostering Fee will be paid to the Specialist Foster Carer for up to 14 days. Ongoing reviews of the unoccupied fee will be undertaken at subsequent 14 day episodes by the Fostering Registered Manager with a report to the Head of Service requesting any ongoing approval of payment and reason for un-occupancy. On a temporary basis a mainstream short-term placement may then be made if a specialist placement is not required subject to the appropriate approval category. Where a specialist carer refuses a placement, the unoccupied fee will be immediately ceased.

7.4 Specialist Scheme - Retainer Fee Payments

In circumstances where a specialist foster carer is unable to have a child in placement due to sickness, a retainer fee of £100 per week will be paid for up to 4 weeks. Thereafter the retainer payment will cease.

7.5 Transfer of approval from a Solo to a Dual Specialist Foster provision

In circumstances where a child in a Specialist Solo placement is responding to support offered, and attachment difficulties are reducing, consideration will be given to changing the placement designation from a Specialist Solo Placement to a Specialist Dual Placement. Where a solo placement is no longer required, the carer will have the choice to apply for a change of category to take two placements at the dual rate or to remain with one placement at the dual rate. The change of approval category would be via a Foster Home Review to Fostering Panel and the Decision Maker (in line with current practice).

7.6 Additional fee payments to meet identified specialist Needs (e.g. double payments)

In certain circumstances Health/CAMHS or Education may identify within their assessment that the level of need of the young person requires support from two full time carers. This would be incorporated in the Care Plan and endorsed by Coventry's Multi Agency Complex Cases Panel (supported by a CAMHS assessment) where the required additional funding commitment will be given by either Health or Education. In all such circumstances this decision will be reviewed on a 3 monthly basis.

7.7 Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions

Specialist Scheme Foster Carers will be of self-employed status and will be responsible for their own income Tax and National Insurance contributions.

8. INSURANCE

What cover is provided?

The Council provides insurance for foster carers as detailed below:

(a) Liability

- Accidental bodily injuries to third parties by foster children.
- Accidental damages to property of third parties by foster children.
- Legal costs involved in foster carer's defence of negligence claims concerning foster children.

(b) All Risks

- Wilful damage / theft / loss of foster carers' own property caused by foster children in the foster carer's care.

(c) Claims

All claims to be submitted via the supervising social worker to the Team Manager within 30 days of the incident as per the claim form. All damage must be viewed by the supervising social worker.

What is not covered by the All Risks Insurance Policy?

- (i) **“NEW FOR OLD” cover** – the policy only pays the value of the items at the time of loss / damage taking into account wear and tear.
- (ii) **Replacement of items** due to “wear and tear”, even though this may seem excessive because of additional usage.
- (iii) **Property not belonging to the householder** (foster carer).
- (iv) **Car Insurance** is the carers’ own responsibility. Comprehensive cover is required and the insurance company should be informed that foster children are being transported.

9. Payment Queries

Queries about payments should be raised with the CLYP Finance who will do their best to help you. In such circumstances please contact Andrew Bickley on 02476 831641.

Fostering Network also offers a helpline, which covers financial issues such as allowances and benefits. The advice line is open between 9.00am – 17.00pm Monday to Friday and the free telephone number is 0800 040 7675.

Yours sincerely

Nicky Hale
Interim Head of Service (Looked After Children)

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22 January 2013

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) – Councillor O'Boyle

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Children, Learning and Young People

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Title:

The Placements Sufficiency Strategy for Children and Young People's Placements

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

This report introduces the recently completed placements sufficiency strategy for placements for Coventry's looked after children. The strategy forms the basis of the commissioning plan for 2013-14 on how Coventry City Council, along with its Children's Trust partners, intends to meet the "sufficiency duty". It provides an analysis of our needs for placements as well as identifying some gaps in provision types. The Strategy will be used as the basis for developing commissioning plans to ensure we have the correct provision in future. This will enable us to make efficient commissioning decisions and help us achieve value for money when we let contracts.

A detailed action plan appears at the end of the Strategy detailing how issues raised in the strategy will be addressed

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member is recommended to:

- (1) Endorse this strategy as the means for developing sufficient provision of placements for looked after children and ensuring value for money in the types of provision sourced by the Council.
- (2) In particular, endorse the priorities in section 3 and the action plan as the means of developing sufficient provision

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 – The Looked After Children Placements and Sufficiency Strategy

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

The strategy will be considered by Category Panel and Corporate Procurement Board

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: CLYP Placements and Sufficiency Strategy for LAC placements

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 There are currently just under 600 children in care in Coventry. The budget for Placements for Looked After Children is currently £22m per year. Looked After Children have varying needs and therefore need a range of placements to be available to them when they enter care and should their needs change when they are in care.
- 1.2 We have a duty to provide sufficient placements for children who enter our care and this is expressed in Sufficiency – Statutory Guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children’ (2010). This guidance states that:
 - 1.2.1 “Securing sufficient accommodation that meets the needs of looked after children 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 looked after children”.
- 1.3 It is in that context that we have developed the attached strategy to enable us to better deliver good outcomes through the commissioning of the right placements for looked after children.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 The development of a placements sufficiency strategy is the only option we have pursued as it best helps shape our work to meet the statutory duty. The development of this strategy enabled a comprehensive needs analysis to be undertaken and a detailed review of current provision to be carried out. These two activities informed the action plan in the strategy which aims to address areas of shortfall in provision.
- 2.2 The strategy will be reviewed on an on-going basis to ensure that we are still commissioning the care our children and young people need and are achieving good value for money.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 Consultation has not been undertaken on this strategy as a whole, although individual commissioned services within it (such as tenders for supported accommodation for example) are subject to consultation with services users to ensure that the commissioned service is fit for purpose.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 The strategy action plan will be implemented during 2013 and the strategy will be reviewed on an on-going basis to ensure that issues are swiftly addressed where any insufficiency in provision comes to light.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Legal Services

- 5.1 Financial implications

The Fundamental Service Review helped to identify that alongside reducing the number of LAC changing the mix of provision for LAC was key to reducing costs. The initial financial model identified savings in the region of £8M based on reducing the overall number of LAC

and then shifting the provision mix to be much more heavily weighted towards internal fostering provision.

The following table shows the average annual unit costs for different types of provision for LAC:

Type of Provision/Placement	2010/11 (£)	2011/12 (£)
Family & Friends	5,161	5,720
Internal Fostering	18,530	17,263
External Fostering	45,674	41,397
Internal Residential	200,049	228,215
External Residential (NC)	126,430	132,917
External Residential (Other)	117,551	98,019

These unit costs are derived using the FSR methodology and will include other costs (e.g. transport) where appropriate.

The initial baseline position for the FSR worked on 225 internal foster care placements increasing to 286 by the end of 2014/15. We have since lost a number of internal foster carer placements and currently our number of internal foster care placements is approximately 170. The new FSR financial model works on a base number of 190 internal foster carers by the end of 2012/13, and then a net increase of internal foster care placements of 23 per year, taking us to 281 internal foster care placements by the end of 2016/17.

The forecast spend on placements in 2012/13 is in excess of £23M. This is consistent with the level of spend in 2011/12. As part of the FSR we realigned budgets, so there is an additional £4M of budget resource in this area in 2012/13, so although the overspend in this area has reduced the actual levels of expenditure between years are similar.

5.2 Legal implications

Section 22G Children Act 1989 places a general duty on the local authority to secure sufficient accommodation for looked after children that is, so far as practicable, within the authority area and that meets the needs of those children. This "sufficiency duty" also requires local authority's to have regard to the number of accommodation providers in the area and the range of accommodation capable of meeting different needs; such accommodation being sufficient to meet the duty.

Commissioning strategies should include where relevant plans for meeting the sufficiency duty. Appropriate procurement legislation and process will need to be followed.

6. Other implications

Our commissioning of placements will be in line with corporate procurement procedures and where possible and where it improves value for money we will seek to work collaboratively with other Directorates or other neighbouring authorities.

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

This strategy will contribute to the delivery of our obligations as regards ensuring that children and young people are safe, achieve and make a positive contribution;

6.2 How is risk being managed?

The main risk in the area covered by this strategy is around our not meeting the sufficiency duty. This strategy in itself will assist in the mitigation of that risk.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

As the commissioning work under this strategy is already carried out, there will be no additional organisational impacts from this strategy.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

The strategy needs' analysis has identified the characteristics of the looked after children of which we need to be mindful in providing for their needs. Formal EIAs are carried out on larger commissioned contracts in addition to the work in the strategy.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

We commission services from a range of partner organisations and sometimes in collaboration with other authorities. We will continue this work. This strategy may assist partners in meeting our needs when we tender by giving them a wider contextual understanding of the needs we have identified in our cohort of looked after children and young people.

Report author(s): Isabel Merrifield

Name and job title: Assistant Director, Strategy, Commissioning & Policy,

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Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

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Legal: Name	Julie Newman	Finance & legal	3 Jan 2013	3 Jan 2013
Director: Name	Colin Green	CLYP	4 Jan 2013	7 Jan 2013
Members: Name	Cllr O'Boyle		4 Jan 2013	7 Jan 2013

This report is published on the council's website:

www.coventry.gov.uk/meetings

Appendices

Coventry City Council

Looked After Children: Placement and Sufficiency Strategy 2012-14

FINAL DRAFT
NOVEMBER 2012



1. Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the population of children and young people looked after by Coventry City Council, placement trends over a three year period from April 2009 until March 2012 and the interface between internal and external placement provision. It compares local needs and placement patterns with national and regional trends. It also looks at sufficiency of current provision within the local area, both internally and from external Providers.

The strategy reflects on demographic trends to inform targets for recruitment to Coventry's internal fostering service and future arrangements for the commissioning of placements for Looked After Children. It also forms the basis of the commissioning plan for 2012-14 on how Coventry City Council, along with its Children's Trust partners, intends to meet the 'sufficiency duty' as specified in 'Sufficiency – Statutory Guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children' (2010). It will be a 'live' document which will be kept under review and amended as necessary.

It is important to note that this strategy focuses only on provision of placements and sufficiency. It is set in the wider context of, and contributes to, the CLYP Fundamental Service Review and strategy to:

- Safely reduce the number of children becoming looked after through effective early intervention and edge of care services that support children and young people remaining with their family whenever possible
- Achieve a faster exit for children from being looked after through more timely care planning and securing of permanence where appropriate
- Secure better value for money from placements for Looked After Children
- Improve the quality of services and outcomes for Looked After Children

2. VISION AND AIMS

Coventry City Council will seek to ensure provision of sufficient placements for children and young people in need of accommodation and support, including Looked After Children and Care Leavers, which:

- Safeguard children and young people
- Are of high quality
- Focus on improving outcomes for this most vulnerable group of children and young people
- Provide stability and minimise placement breakdown
- Provide a warm and nurturing environment where Looked After Children are encouraged and supported to maximise their potential

- Meet a range of needs, including those of children and young people with complex and challenging needs and behaviours
- Keep Looked After Children at the heart of the service and involve them in decisions about their care and services provided
- Are local, whenever possible and appropriate to need, to enable children and young people to retain links with family, friends and their community
- Enable sibling groups to be placed together whenever possible and appropriate to individual needs and circumstances
- Give children and young people placement choice whenever possible
- Are responsive to the specific and changing needs of Coventry children and young people
- Deliver Value for Money
- Support CLYP priorities within the Fundamental Service Review

3. PRIORITIES

The priorities of Coventry's Placement and Sufficiency Strategy, which support the objectives of the Fundamental Service Review, are as follows:

- Safely achieve a reduction in the number of children starting to be looked after during the year, ensuring that the needs of children and young people are met.
- Ensure that children in care are progressed through the system without unnecessary delay and can achieve timely and appropriate rehabilitation or permanence
- Increase the proportion of looked after children placed with family and friends.
- Ensure timely achievement of permanent placements through dual assessment of fostering and adoption and concurrent planning
- Secure placement stability through adoption, Special Guardianship Orders, Residence Orders, and long term foster care.
- Reduce placement costs through better sufficiency and value
- Divert young people from residential care where possible and provide alternatives which offer better outcomes and greater value for money
- Improve outcomes through provision of stable placements which support continuity of relationships, community links, education and health provision and promote the right conditions for maximising potential
- Increase the proportion of looked after children in placements local to their home address/school.
- Continue to support looked after children and young people to make a successful transition into adulthood through the provision of good quality education, training and employment, suitable accommodation and support.
- Work with Adult Services to ensure clear pathways are in place for young people requiring services as adults.
- To involve children and young people, families, carers and professionals in the design, delivery and monitoring of services to

provide greater quality assurance and improve outcomes for Looked After Children and Young People and Care Leavers.

- Achieve better value for money from placements through:
 - Increasing the number of in-house mainstream foster carers to reduce overall spend
 - Increasing the number of in-house specialist foster carers and more strongly aligning specialist foster care as an alternative to residential care and external foster care
 - Improving sufficiency of local placements
 - Robust commissioning arrangements for placements and supported accommodation which are evidence-based and informed by ongoing analysis of needs, gaps, costs and quality
 - Robust contract management arrangements which ensure quality of service and safeguarding of children and young people, and evidence impact on outcomes for them
 - Reduction in spot purchasing arrangements for provision of all placements
 - Review of unit costs for existing spot purchased placements.
 - A performance management framework

4. Current Commissioning Arrangements

Current placement provision and commissioning arrangements for Looked After Children:

Internal Fostering – Coventry has its own internal fostering service which, as of May 2012, had 111 fostering households approved for 195 placements (based on full occupancy).

Internal Children's Homes - Coventry has 3 registered children's homes, all of which are located within the city:

- Gravel Hill – a 4 bed provision for males and females aged 10-18. The home offers short term placements for up to 12 weeks, with a focus on assessment and intensive support to enable young people to return home whenever possible or move them on to more suitable longer term provision. The home is able to provide emergency, remand and respite placements.
- The Grange – an 8 bed provision for males and females aged 10-18. The home offers short and longer term placements on a planned basis; it does not offer emergency provision.
- Broad Park House – a 4 bed provision offering emergency and respite placements for males and females aged 8-18. It specialises in placements for children with physical disabilities or learning difficulties.

Fostering Framework Agreement – Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Authorities have a sub-regional Framework Agreement for the provision of external foster placements. There are 12 Providers on the Framework, which commenced on 1 November 2009 and will end on 31 October 2013. Providers on the Framework vary from small third sector

organisations to much larger national Providers. Most have some foster carers located in or very near to Coventry and development of local provision to meet Coventry's needs has remained a key element of this contract.

Children's Specialist Residential Service – Coventry has a 10 year contract with an independent Provider for the provision of 30 block residential placements, with the option to purchase additional spot placements. The contract commenced on 1 January 2007 and is due to cease at the end of 2016. There are 6 local homes. 4 are located in the city – two 6 bed boys' homes, one 8 bed boys' home offering 6 EBD placements and 2 semi-independent placements, and 1 mixed home offering placements for up to 6 months. 2 homes are located just outside of Coventry, one 4-bed and one 5-bed homes for girls. Coventry also has access to the Provider's other homes nationally.

West Midlands Residential Framework Agreement - This contract commenced on 9 May 2012 and is for two years, with the option to extend for up to a further two years. The contract is held by 13 Local Authorities within the West Midlands region, with 121 Providers offering a range of children's home provision nationally from one bed to large children's homes, with or without education or therapy. A small number of Providers are residential schools which are also dual registered as children's homes. Coventry utilises the Framework where placements cannot be made through the Children's Specialist Residential Service.

Spot Purchased Placements – Coventry has retained a need to spot purchase both fostering and residential placements in order to meet the needs of Coventry children and young people, although the majority of spot purchased residential placements have now transferred onto the Regional Framework Agreement. Spot placements are made under the West Midlands contracts for residential and foster care services.

5. Coventry's Looked After Children Population

The number of Looked After Children in Coventry increased significantly from December 2008 to June 2010, rising during this period from 518 to 600. Over the next six months there was a gradual reduction to 565 in December 2011, followed by a further upward trend peaking at 603 in September 2012. Looking at the profile of Looked After Children as at 31 March 2010, 2011 and 2012, this indicates the following trends:

Gender - There has been an increase in the number of females who are Looked After. Previous needs analysis identified that between 2005 and 2008 they consistently represented approximately 45% of Looked After Children. From March 2010 to March 2012 this increased to 47% and 50.2% respectively. There has also been a corresponding increase in the number of girls placed in residential and foster placements particularly external placements.

Ethnicity - Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of all Looked After Children are of 'White' ethnic origin. Around 13% are of Mixed heritage and 5% of Asian or Asian British origin. There has been a slight reduction of Looked After Children of Black or Black British origin (7.1% in March 2010 compared to 5.5% in March 2012) and a slight increase in those from 'Other' ethnic groups (0.9% in March 2010 to 2.4% in March 2012).

Age - Looked After Children aged 10-15 have consistently comprised the largest proportion of Looked After Children, though the percentage has fluctuated more in recent years (consistently around 43% up to 2008, reducing to 39.6% in March 2010 and increasing to 48.4% in March 2012). There has been an increase in the number of Looked After Children aged under 1 (3.7% in March 2010 compared to 6.9% in March 2012). In contrast the number of Looked After Children aged 16 and 17 decreased from 18.9% in March 2010 to 6.7% in March 2012.

Disability - The proportion of Looked After Children identified as having a disability has fluctuated - 14.6% in March 2010, 28.4% in March 2011 and 10.9% in March 2012. This may reflect reporting practices rather than a changing trend in need.

Category of Need - Abuse or Neglect has consistently been the largest category of need of Looked After Children. The proportion dropped considerably from 81.1% in March 2010 to 57.5% in March 2012. Conversely, the second highest category of need – family dysfunction – increased from 5.1% in March 2010 to 26.8% in 2012. However, further investigation indicates that this is due to a change in reporting practices, rather a change in need. No Looked After Children were identified as being in need due to low income in March 2010 or 2011, but 0.7% were in March 2012.

Legal Status - The proportion of Looked After Children accommodated under Section 20 or on Interim Care Orders decreased slightly from March 2010 to March 2012 (27.7% to 24.9% and 22.3% to 21.5% respectively). Conversely there was a slight increase in the percentage subject to Full Care Orders and Placement Orders (37.4% to 40.1% and 10.4% to 12.8% respectively).

Placement Type - The most significant change in trend has been the decrease in Looked After Children placed with internal foster carers (42% in March 2010 to 30% in March 2012) and the increase in those placed with independent foster placements (19% in March 2010 and 33.4% in March 2012). This change is further highlighted when considering that the number of external foster placements between 2005 and 2008 was consistently around 11% of the Looked After population. The change reflects a reduction in sufficiency of internal foster carers and the increased number of Looked After Children who require a foster placement.

The percentage of Looked After Children placed with Family and Friends or internal foster carers has decreased (10.9% in March 2010 and 6.4% in March 2012), with an increase in the percentage placed for Adoption (2.9% in March 2010 and 7.1% in March 2012).

There has been a slight increase in the proportion of Looked After Children in residential accommodation, which includes children's homes and residential schools (15.5% in March 2010 and 17.5% in March 2012).

6. Comparison with Statistical Neighbours

Data sets from the Department for Education Statistical First Release (SFR21-2011lav2) have been analysed to provide an overview of key metrics relating to children looked after by Coventry City Council and its statistical neighbours.

The SFR provides statistics on looked after children in England; and for the basis of this report, covers a three year period from 1 April to 31 March 2011, with profile information based on the position as at 31 March 2011.

Summary of key findings:

Coventry, like most other authorities, has seen a rise in the number of looked after children (LAC) with 515 at the end of March 2009, rising to 590 by March 2010 and dropping slightly to 585 at the end of March 2011. Peterborough and Thurrock are notable exceptions with both seeing a small fall in 2011 compared to 2009.

In comparison with our statistical neighbours, Coventry is in the upper quartile with 86 Looked After Children per 10,000 of the local population (March 2011). This figure has risen from 76 in 2009. Leeds has the highest rate and Thurrock the lowest at 95 and 57 respectively.

72% of Coventry Looked After Children are in foster placements (internal or external); Thurrock has the highest proportion in foster care at 83%. Coventry has the highest level of Looked After Children placed in secure units, homes or hostels at 13%. This compares with Sheffield and Derby 12% and 11% respectively. Peterborough has the lowest at only 3%.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) numbers have remained static at 10 while most other authorities have seen a fall in numbers e.g. Sheffield and Leeds have fallen by 71% (35 to 10) and 37% (80 to 50) respectively. However, this needs to be seen in the context that Coventry has consistently had a relatively small number of UASC who are looked after in Coventry.

The 10-15 age range makes up the highest percentage of Looked After Children across all local authorities; Coventry is in the upper quartile with around 42% while Kirklees is the lowest with 32%. Looked After Children aged under 1 make up the lowest group with Coventry at 6% and Telford & Wrekin with 4%.

As at March 2011, 78% of all Coventry Looked After Children were placed within 20 miles of the city, with 50% placed inside the city. Tameside,

Bolton and Leeds have higher percentages of local placements with 94%, 89% and 84% placed within 20 miles respectively.

Tameside, Leeds and Bolton also use the highest percentage of internal provision for LAC with 72%, 68% and 66% placed with internal providers. This compares to 47% for Coventry as at 31 March 2011.

Only 26% of Coventry Looked After Children are from a Black Minority Ethnic (BME) background which is less than the average population of 35% for Coventry children and young people.

Coventry has one of the highest percentages of Looked After Children having 3 or more placements in a year at 11.1% (England average is 10.7%). Derby performs best with 6.7% and Leeds has the highest with 13.3%.

Placement stability has fallen from 68% in 2009 to 65.4% in 2011. A similar pattern is seen across most statistical neighbours; however Sheffield significantly increased placement stability from 66% to 73%. Tameside and Kirklees also had improvements; albeit smaller at around 2% each.

7. Key Issues arising from the Needs Analysis, Placement and Service Activity

Fostering

Financial analysis

In this section costs have been rounded and averaged to protect commercial details.

The average weekly cost of an internal foster placement was between £420 and £430 in 2011/12, taking into account direct overheads. This appears very low but even allowing for any costs not included this remains much lower than external placements. The average price of Coventry's external foster placements as at 31 March 2012 was just above £700 through the Framework and around £800 through spot purchasing (this includes specialist parent and child and solo placements). Even the lowest averages on the framework and through spot purchase, which were for a mainstream placement for a child aged 0-4, were still considerably higher than an internal foster placement.

This indicates a strong financial rationale for developing Coventry's own internal provision and reducing the number of external foster placements to meet Coventry's sufficiency needs.

Analysis of internal foster placements as of July 2012 shows that:

- Almost half (47.8%) of the children were aged 10-15. 26.1% were aged 0-4, 20% were aged 5-9 and 6.1% were aged 16+ (this was

the position as of July 2012 and does not reflect the child/young person's age on admission).

- 53% were male and 47% were female. This trend varies from external placements where the number of females in placement over the last 3 years is higher than the number of males (54% in external fostering, 51% in the Children's Specialist Residential Service and 58% in other external children's homes).
- In respect of children's ethnicity 64% were 'White', 15.6% were 'Mixed' ethnicity, 9.4% were 'Black', 6.1% Asian and 5% Chinese & other origin.
- A high proportion (85.6%) had no recorded disability. Of children who were identified as having a disability, the highest proportion had a learning difficulty (8.9%) and/or a behavioural disability (6.1%). As with all placements types, these figures may not be truly indicative of the disability needs of children in placement due to recording practices.
- 96.7% were British citizens, with the remaining 3.3% being unaccompanied asylum seeking children (1.7%), asylum seekers (1.1%) and children with indefinite leave to remain in the UK (0.6%).
- 74% of children in placement had been in care for a year or more and of these, a significant proportion had been in care for a number of years - 11.1% for 2-3 years, 17.2% for 3-5 years, 18.9% for 5-10 years and 10.6% for 10 years and over. This indicates good stability of placement for almost 60% of children who are placed internally.

It should be noted that this is based on a snapshot day and therefore may not be representative of the wider picture. Further analysis would be required to understand this and to consider the extent to which existing fostering provision is able to meet the specific needs of children and young people more recently referred.

Needs Analysis of all external foster placements over the last 3 years indicates that:

- 65% of all placements were for children of White British ethnicity, with children of African, and White and Black Caribbean heritage, each representing 7-8% of all placements.
- The age of children on admission to placement has been relatively consistent, with 33% aged 0-4, 31% aged 5-10 and 30.5% aged 11-15. Only a small proportion was aged 16+, which is to be expected. However, over 7 months between December 2011 and June 2012 there was a significant change with 55% of all new external foster placements for children aged 0-4. Experience in this field indicates that this is a somewhat unusual trend, with many

local authorities tending to place the youngest children in internal foster placements.

- Children aged 5-10 and, to a lesser extent, aged 11-15 tend to remain in placement much longer than children aged 0-4. This is particularly evident in spot purchased foster placements, where 21% of children aged 5-10, 8% of children aged 11-15 and only 4% of children aged 0-4 have remained in placement for 4 years or more. Therefore the financial commitment to these placements will be high based not only on length of placement but also the higher placement fees for older children and relative costs of internal and external provision.
- There has been a small but growing need for parent and child foster placements, with 8 such placements having been made between December 2011 and June 2012 (8% of all external placements during this time). Most placements have been for one parent with one child; parents have been both under 18 and over 18.
- The average cost of an external parent and child placement (based on placements as of 31 March 2012) was just over £1400 through the Framework and just over £1300 through spot purchasing. This is significantly higher than an equivalent internal placement where cost including direct overheads is estimated at around £700 per week. However, Coventry currently only has one internal parent and child foster placement. Developing further internal capacity to meet this need could potentially deliver an annual saving per placement of circa £32k compared to spot purchasing and £37k compared to Framework placements.
- Half of all external placements are for sibling groups. Some placements have been needed for very large sibling groups of up to 7 children, but actual placements made have been for two (majority), three or four siblings together in the same foster home. Data is not currently available to compare this with internal foster placements.
- 6% of Framework placements and 13% of spot placements have been for children identified as having a disability. Only one placement is regarded as a specialist disability foster placement. However, a number of children with complex needs are being cared for by Independent Fostering Agencies able to offer enhanced services to meet individual needs. Further analysis is required to assess level of need and sufficiency of provision for this group.

Analysis of **internal fostering sufficiency** as of May/June 2012 indicates that:

- Coventry currently has 111 fostering households, 84 located within Coventry and 27 located outside the city. 79 are two carer households, 32 single carer households.
- 98 carer households are of White British ethnic origin.

- Coventry has 97 'mainstream' foster carers, 10 specialist foster carers and 2 respite carers. 2 foster carers provide emergency placements only. However, all carers can potentially provide same day placements and carers with vacancies may provide emergency placements in the event that no dedicated emergency bed is available.
- 53 (27%) of carers are approved for one child, 60 (30%) are approved for two children and 84 (43%) are approved for three children.
- 72% of internal foster carers are located within Coventry, with the remaining 28% within a 20 mile radius of the city.
- Foster carers may be approved for children between the ages of 0 and 18. Under current approvals:
 - 48 (43%) are approved for children within the 0-4 age range
 - 78 (70%) are approved for children within the 5-10 age range
 - 67 (60%) are approved for young people within the 11-15 age range
 - 44 (40%) are approved for young people aged 16+.
 - 18 households (16%) are approved for children of all age ranges.
- At maximum capacity, Coventry has a potential 197 placements. 13 foster carers are approved for a further child if siblings are placed together, which increases potential capacity to 210.
- All foster carers could potentially offer placements to unaccompanied asylum seeking children and children with physical disabilities, learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, ADHD, mental health needs and those at risk of sexual exploitation.
- 72 carers (65%) could offer placements for sibling groups and 83 (75%) could offer solo placements.
- Only 1 foster carer is currently approved to provide parent and child foster placements.

Whilst Coventry appears to offer a range of foster placements, there is not sufficiency to meet local need. Capacity within internal fostering has reduced over time and this, combined with increase in the number of Looked After Children, has resulted in a four-fold increase in the number of external foster placements over the last 4 years. The growth of external placements has had serious impact with overspend on children's placements of £6.5m in 2011/12 and overspend of £2.1m forecast for 2012/13 despite budget realignment. Expansion of internal fostering sufficiency is already being taken forward through the FSR.

Analysis of **external fostering sufficiency** indicates that:

- There are 295 households available through the Framework within 20 miles of Coventry. 77% are two carer households, with females the main carer in 88% of households.
- 99% of households are approved for both male and female children. 21% are approved for 1 child, 41% for 2 children and 38% for 3 children.
- 96% are approved to care for children aged 5-10, 97% for children aged 11-15 and 93% for children aged 16+. Only 74% are approved for children aged 0-4 therefore less sufficiency for this age group though this is a growing area of recruitment within the Framework.
- Only 10% of approved households within 20 miles of Coventry are located within the city.
- Households are potentially able to meet a wide range of need, including sexual exploitation (58%), learning difficulty (93%), physical disability (38%) and mental health (80%). 21% are able to provide parent and child placements.
- A number of other Independent Fostering Agencies have foster carer households located within or near to the city though further data is required to inform analysis of sufficiency.

Coventry's priority in commissioned contracts is to purchase through the Fostering Framework where need cannot be met internally, with emphasis on provision of local placements. Greater sufficiency has been delivered and there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of placements made through the Framework (from 38% of all external foster placements at start of contract, to 60% by December 2011, reducing slightly to 55% by June 2012). However, there are still insufficient placements available to meet Coventry's external fostering needs, particularly within the city, which has resulted in some continued spot purchasing. This is of concern, given the higher average cost of spot placements and impact on ensuring quality and contract management when working with a large number of Providers.

Proposed Actions:

1. Priority to developing internal fostering capacity across all placement types as this option will deliver better value for money, with unit costs significantly lower than external placements.
2. Consideration is given to more strategic development of internal fostering, particularly after the first year of recruitment to increase general capacity, to expand and focus provision on:
 - Ages 5-10 and 11-15 in particular as it is children in these age groups who are more likely to require longer term, and therefore higher spend, placements.
 - Sibling group placements
 - Parent and child placements

This may require specific training programmes for foster carers to develop skills in meeting challenging behaviour and risk management specific to this group (e.g. sexual exploitation)

3. More strategic direction to development of external provision through the Fostering Framework, including potential focus on developing capacity for children aged 0-4. This may require work with Framework Providers to ensure that foster carers are equipped and able to meet the specific needs of this group e.g. supporting high levels of contact, provision of transport, contribution to assessments of need and safeguarding, attendance at court.
4. As per the FSR, review the current in-house specialist fostering programme and re-focus it to more strongly align it as an alternative to residential care and external foster care. This would divert young people from residential care where possible, where outcomes can be poorer for Looked After Children and placements are very expensive for the Council.
5. It is essential that local capacity through the Framework continues to increase given the time period that will be required to expand our internal service. This should be focused on joint work with Tier 1 Providers, whose prices are lower, to ensure Value for Money. Based on average price of actual placements by Tier 1 in May 2012, an indicative efficiency of £10k pa could be achieved by placing through Tier 1 rather than Tier 2.
6. Re-tendering of Fostering Framework Agreement to commence in Autumn 2012:
 - The need for external fostering is clearly evidenced and quality assurance through the Framework has been high, with all Providers currently judged as 'Outstanding' or 'Good' by Ofsted. Value for money has also been evidenced through efficiencies which are estimated to be circa £977k up until June 2013, based on transferring placements and reduction in unit costs, plus circa £230k per annum through reduction in transport spend. Value for money would not be achieved through a return to spot purchasing.
 - A block contract is not recommended due to diversity of need, current sufficiency issues and risks to the Council of having a small market.
 - A single authority tender is unlikely to be the best route forward as greater cost efficiencies through volume are likely to be achieved through partnership with other Authorities. Consideration of a sub-regional or regional tender should be progressed.

Residential Provision

In this section costs have also been rounded and averaged to protect full commercial details.

Financial Analysis of internal and external residential provision indicates that:

Based on analysis for 2011/12:

- At 100% occupancy, the average 2011/12 weekly cost of a placement at The Grange was just under £2500. Actual occupancy was maintained at approx. 90% between 2007 and 2010. However, in 2010-11 and 2011-12 it reduced to 76% and 71%, increasing the actual average weekly price significantly.
- Gravel Hill was established in 2010-11. In 2011-12 its average weekly cost based on full occupancy was about £3750, but based on actual occupancy of 66% was over £5500. This is very high cost in comparison to external residential placements. However, value for money needs to be assessed in the context of outcomes for young people and diversion from longer-term care, given the focus of Gravel Hill is on intensive 12 week assessment and intervention to enable young people to return to family or to fostering or supported accommodation.
- Data received as of November 2012 is that 50 placements have been made at Gravel Hill since its first admission on 9 September 2010, 4 of which are ongoing. Of the remaining previous 46 placements:
 - 19 (41%) returned home within 12 weeks
 - 5 (11%) moved to semi-independent living
 - 6 (13%) moved to foster care
 - 5 (11%) moved to The Grange
 - 10 (22%) moved to the Specialist Residential Service
 - 1 (2%) moved to other residential provision
- Further analysis and monitoring of outcomes over a longer period of time is needed to assess the impact of this service and value for money.
- The average weekly cost of a placement through the Children's Specialist Residential Service is nearly £2450. This is slightly lower than the average cost of a placement at The Grange at around £2500 with full occupancy, though much lower when average cost is based on actual occupancy rates (£3500 in 2011/12). The two are a more comparable service than Gravel Hill, which is a specialist home providing intensive support services.

Financial analysis for 2012/13, based on the period 6 forecast:

- Overall, the total forecast overspend for internal residential care is estimated at about £185k (The Grange is estimated to be £70k of that, Gravel Hill £115k) – in both cases, this is due to higher than expected salary costs.
- The actual weekly unit cost for The Grange is currently just under £3000 (77% occupancy) and about £5,500 for Gravel Hill (76% occupancy)

- It is evident that occupancy rates have a serious impact on unit costs and therefore the need to maintain high occupancy in Coventry's own provision is essential in terms of Value for Money.

LAC data as of 31 May 2012 indicates that:

- Young people placed in internal residential placements were aged 14 and above on admission, whereas those in the children's specialist residential service were aged between 12 and 17 on admission.
- Young people had been placed through the Specialist Residential Service for a longer period of time (currently up to 2.5years) than in internal placements (currently up to 1.5years). This is not necessarily an indicator of stability as young people may move between different homes.
- This is only one point in time and therefore may not reflect the wider picture.

Analysis of all placements through the Specialist Residential Service over the last 3 years indicates that:

- The majority of children placed were of White British ethnic origin (78%). 5% were of White and Black Caribbean origin, 3% of Caribbean origin and 3% of 'other' ethnic groups.
- 61% of all placements have been for males, though females comprised approximately half of all placements in September 2012. This increased need for local placements for girls has resulted in one of the local homes changing its Statement of Purpose from a boys' home to a girls' home.
- 13% of children placed are identified as having a disability. No specialist placements for children with disabilities are available through this contract.
- Looking at young people who have now left the Specialist Residential Service, 80% had placements under 1 year in duration and 14% had placements for 1-2years.
- Review of placement bandings, which are part of this contract, provides a basic indicator of the level of need of young people in placement. Of all placements between July 2011 and May 2012:
 - 35% of children placed had emotional and behavioural difficulties
 - 54% were children with higher level need which may include serious offending, persistent absconding, presenting some

danger to others, a history of self harm or autistic spectrum disorder who present with significant management difficulties.

- 11% had complex needs which may include risky or sexualized behaviour or serious eating disorders.
- Further analysis is required to more fully understand the needs of Looked After Children on referral to the Specialist Residential Service.

Analysis of spot purchased residential placements over the same period shows that:

- Coventry has purchased 62 placements for 45 children/young people
- 58% of placements have been for females, a higher proportion than placements through the Specialist Residential Service and indicates a gap in provision.
- 91% have been for young people of White British ethnic origin, 7% White and Black Caribbean and 2% Indian origin.
- There was a significant increase in the number of spot residential placements made during 2011-12 (23 compared with 14 in 2010-11 and 13 in 2009-10). Analysis of the range of needs at time of referral suggests that young people in spot placements have high level needs including risk of sexual exploitation, mental health, self harm and challenging behaviours such as physical and verbal aggression and risks associated with absconding. There has also been a need for some small bed provision, including a solo home and two and three bed provision. This is not currently available through the Specialist Residential Service. Feedback from the Placements Team is that these are the primary reasons for spot purchasing and it indicates a gap in residential provision for young people at risk of sexual exploitation and/or with high risk behaviours and mental health needs.
- Specialist disability placements continue to be spot purchased, as they are not within the scope of the Specialist Residential Service. The number has reduced over time, with only 1 or 2 placements made each year since 2009 though they tend to be longer term. Work undertaken with CDT suggests the development of a range of short break provision has impacted on the need for residential placements.

Proposed Action Plan:

1. Small bed and specialist provision for young people at risk of sexual exploitation is a current gap in provision. Given relative costs of internal and external provision, and management of vacancy risks, look to this need being met externally. Further research is required to assess and inform strategic direction as to whether such provision should be local or further afield.

2. Configuration of local provision within the Children's Specialist Residential Service to be reviewed in light of the needs analysis, with Statements of Purpose that reflect specialist areas of need and services and skills of staff. Training of staff to develop expertise in specific areas to be taken forward and opportunities for joint training to be considered.
3. Specialist residential provision for children and young people with complex disability needs to be purchased through the West Midlands Residential Framework Agreement (or spot purchasing if unable to identify suitable provision through the Framework). It is not recommended that the Council proactively seeks to expand local residential provision, either internally or with external Providers, as there are two existing homes within the city and need for this type of provision has significantly reduced. However, this should be considered as part of the Fundamental Service Review of disability services to inform future commissioning of services for Looked After Children with complex disability needs, including consideration of specialist fostering as an alternative to residential care which would offer young people a family-based placement and potential for improved outcomes, whilst also reducing costs.
4. Given the high cost of internal provision:
 - Further analysis of the impact and outcomes achieved for young people placed at Gravel Hill, in particular prevention of longer term care, to evidence Value for Money.
 - Continue to monitor and manage occupancy rates for Gravel Hill and The Grange so that occupancy is maintained at 85-90%. This is essential to reduce average unit costs.
 - Ongoing analysis of reasons for placement referrals being rejected to ensure that the service is responsive to local need and any factors acting as a barrier (such as insufficient referral information) are addressed.
 - Initiate a review as to the best options for the provision of this service going forward

DRAFT

Placement and Sufficiency Strategy Action Plan

Action	Further Details/Notes	Timescales	Lead
1 Expand number of internal foster carers for all placement types	To be achieved through FSR recruitment strategy for 2012-2014	Targets and timescales TBC	Fostering Manager
2 Further analysis of placement trends and financial impact of a more strategic approach to internal recruitment strategy for 2014/15	To consider recruitment for specific age groups (and inform potential policy decision to place children aged 0-4 in external placements), sibling, parent and child and specialist placements. Associated carer development needs to be considered and incorporated into workforce development plan as appropriate	June 2013 2013/14	Commissioning & Fostering Service
3 Ongoing market development to increase sufficiency of local provision to meet work Coventry's existing need for external foster placements	Focus on Tier 1 Framework Providers; achieved through 6 monthly reviews and contract management, sharing of needs analysis; wider market development as move towards contract end	Ongoing – with 6 monthly review	Commissioning
4 Re-tendering of Fostering Framework Agreement	Decision to be made on sub-regional or regional tender Project Team to be established including Commissioning, Placements, Finance, Procurement, SW Team If regional tender, potential contract extension to be sought until 2014 to align with regional timescales If sub-regional tender, completion by October 2013	Jan 2013 Jan 2013 Feb/March 2013 October 2013	Commissioning

	Commission sufficient provision for LAC at risk of sexual exploitation and with high risk behaviours	Further analysis of need including small bed children's homes and specialist services; to include consideration of location of provision for young people at risk of sexual exploitation; to be informed by residential contract review Once analysis complete, undertake commissioning activity as appropriate to secure provision	Feb 2013 TBC	Commissioning
6	Review configuration of current services within Specialist Residential Service to meet local need	Placement Strategy and needs analysis to be reviewed with Provider, to inform service development and review of Statements of Purpose of local homes	March 2013	Commissioning
7	Review need for specialist residential provision for children with complex disability needs and consider specialist fostering as a potential alternative	To link in with the FSR on disability services	May 2013	
8	Review of value for money for Gravel Hill	Interrogate data on outcomes to inform value for money analysis	March 2013	
9	Occupancy of internal residential provision to be monitored to ensure value for money and responsiveness to local need	To be included on placements dashboard Reporting to Performance Board	Monthly review Performance Board from Jan 2013	
10	Undertake analysis of reasons for placement referrals to The Grange being rejected and inform a review to address this	Review of individual referrals to be undertaken	Jan 2013	

11	Project Review of 8, 9 and 10 above to inform decisions about future commissioning of internal provision		Commence April 2013	
12	Understand if there is a business culture within internal provision and make recommendations accordingly	Business culture is defined as recognising that the service is a Provider to the LA; it meets need flexibly and responsively; and is proactive in identifying gaps in provision or blockages to enable the placement needs of LAC to be effectively met through internal provision and fully utilise resources	Feb 2013	Commissioning

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22nd January 2013

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) – Councillor O'Boyle

Scrutiny Board Chair Approving Submission of the report:

Councillor Lakha

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Report back from Scrutiny Task & Finish Group on Looked after Children and Apprenticeships

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

As part of elected Members Corporate Parenting Role, Members were concerned that Looked after Children and Care Leavers are missing out on opportunities to undertake apprenticeships at the City Council due to a number of barriers. The Voices of Care Council raised a number of the challenges they face accessing apprenticeships with Elected Members. The Jobs, Skills and Growth Scrutiny Board set up a task and finish group to look at what the City Council can do to help LAC and Care Leavers successfully obtain, and maintain, an apprenticeship.

Recommendations:

- 1.1 That the Council widens the target pool of Care Leavers from those currently Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) to include those in learning and on track to successfully complete Level 2 and Level 3 courses in FE colleges and schools.
- 1.2 That the Council continues to work with those LAC/Care Leavers who are NEET to develop their skills and personal resilience through provisions such as European Social Fund, the Young Persons' Employment Placement Scheme, work experience in the City Council, whilst recognising that for many of these young people the transition from NEET to accessing and sustaining an apprenticeship will not be achieved quickly or easily.
- 1.3 Provide a financial incentive to those Care Leavers on apprenticeship programmes, for example, through a bonus at the end of the first 3 months of an apprenticeship to be paid through the After Care Service. The financial incentive would be £1200 per year per LAC, the same as a care leaver remaining in education receives through the 16-19 Bursary.
- 1.4 Continue to provide ongoing support to Care Leavers to help them find appropriate work at the end of their apprenticeship programme.
- 1.5 That Care Leavers who start an apprenticeship with the City Council, are supported not only by the Council's Entry to Employment Team, but also by a nurturing/peer support mentor within the employing service in addition to links with the relevant Personal Advisor or Social Worker.

- 1.6 That City Council departments who take on a Care Leaver as an apprentice, use the support available to them from the Entry to Employment Team, After-Care Service and the Participation Team to maximise opportunities for the apprenticeship to succeed.
- 1.7 That the Care Leaver and Personal Advisor work with the appointing manager to decide whether preparation may be beneficial for the team who will be working with and supporting the young person.
- 1.8 That the Council actively negotiate with Partners to encourage them to offer apprenticeships, employment and work experience to Care Leavers.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

Yes

Jobs, Skills and Growth Scrutiny Board (3) – 14 November 2012

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

1. Context (or background)

1.1 In view of the low number of Care Leavers who complete an apprenticeship with Coventry City Council (CCC) and progress to positive destination, which was raised with Elected Members, and the Voices of Care Council, Members decided to see if they could do anything to improve the uptake and successful completion of apprenticeships by Care Leavers.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1 *Option 1 – Do nothing*

2.1.1 Members felt it was important that, as Corporate Parents, we offer as much support to Care Leavers as we can. The present system has resulted in minimal success by Care Leavers at gaining and maintaining an apprenticeship and therefore do nothing was not an option.

2.2 *Option 2 – The recommendations put forward to Cabinet Member by the Scrutiny Board*

2.2.1 Recommendation 1 - *That the Council widens the target pool of Care Leavers from those currently Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) to include those in learning and on track to successfully complete Level 2 and Level 3 courses in FE colleges and schools.*

This recommendation has been made to publicise apprenticeship opportunities to as many care leavers as possible as in the past the focus has been on NEETs, for whom an apprenticeship may not have been the most appropriate place.

2.2.2 Recommendation 2 - *That the Council continues to work with those LAC/Care Leavers who are NEET to develop their skills and personal resilience through provisions such as European Social Fund, the Young Persons' Employment Placement Scheme, work experience in the City Council, whilst recognising that for many of these young people the transition from NEET to accessing and sustaining an apprenticeship will not be achieved quickly or easily.*

This recommendation expands on the first and highlights that there are other opportunities for those who are NEET which may be more appropriate than a Council apprenticeship.

2.2.3 Recommendation 3- *Provide a financial incentive to those Care Leavers on apprenticeship programmes, for example, through a bonus at the end of the first 3 months of an apprenticeship to be paid through the After Care Service. The financial incentive would be £1200 per year per LAC, the same as a care leaver remaining in education receives through the 16-19 Bursary.*

The group felt it was important that young people were not worse off financially for choosing to undertake an apprenticeship rather than stay in education. Those care leavers who stay in education are given £30 per week from their school or college from the 16-19 bursary, which amounts to £1200 a year.

The young people on apprenticeships are in employment and therefore, their earnings impact on the level of benefit they receive. Initial pay for an apprentice for the first six months is £100 a week, which after deductions as they're earning leaves a single young person over the age of 18 only £6 a week or so better off than they would be

on benefits. Most apprentices are not living on independently and supporting themselves so are in a different position from the Care Leavers. To offer them this money would be the Authority demonstrating its corporate parenting duty in the same way that a parent would support a child to undertake such an opportunity.

Objectives would need to be agreed jointly by the young person, employer and their after care work to ensure they have met a certain standard (around attendance/ performance) before the money is given to them. The money needs to be in the form of bonus payments through aftercare, as if it was added to the salary, it would impact on the level of benefits the young person would receive.

For budgetary purposes, an apprenticeship lasts between 12 months and 4 years for a technical placement. Care leavers who have completed placements over the past two years have all done so in around 12 months. This year there are currently 3 care leavers undertaking apprenticeships, and last year there were 6.

Customer and Workforce Services have an under spend of PPR money to support apprenticeship so are able to provide funding this year, however, if there is a wish to continue this scheme, ongoing funding will need to be found.

- 2.2.4 Recommendation 4 - *Continue to provide on-going support to Care Leavers to support them to find appropriate work at the end of their apprenticeship programme.*
- 2.2.5 Recommendation 5 - *That Care Leavers who start an apprenticeship with the City Council, are supported not only by the Council's Entry to Employment Team, but also by a nurturing/peer support mentor within the employing service in addition to links with the relevant Personal Advisor or Social Worker.*
Voices of Care supported the idea of an additional mentor within the employing service who a young person could turn to for advice and assistance if needed.
- 2.2.6 Recommendation 6- *That City Council departments who take on a Care Leaver as an apprentice, use the support available to them from the Entry to Employment Team, After-Care Service and the Participation Team to maximise opportunities for the apprenticeship to succeed.*
Members want to ensure that the Council departments who take on a care leaver as an apprentice use the support and resources available to them to maximise the opportunity for a successful placement.
- 2.2.7 Recommendation 7 -*That the Care Leaver and Personal Advisor work with the appointed manager to decide whether preparation may be beneficial for the team who will be working with and supporting the young person.*
- 2.2.8 Recommendation 8 - *That the Council actively negotiate with Partners to encourage them to offer apprenticeships, employment and work experience to Care Leavers.*

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 Voices of Care Council have been consulted. They have provided information on the barriers LAC face to undertaking an apprenticeship and have also been consulted on the recommendations presented in this report.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 The decision will be implemented from January to support the three LAC young people currently undertaking apprenticeship programmes.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Legal Services

5.1 Financial implications

In the current financial year there are 6 LAC/Care leavers on an apprenticeship with the city council, which equates to a full year cost of £7,200. Customer and Workforce Services have an under spend of PPR money to support apprenticeship so are able to provide one off funding until August 2013 to support the 6 apprenticeships currently in place, however, funding is not available from here in future years.

If the outcome of the pilot is to continue with this scheme then funding for future years will need to be secured. The 11-19 Partnership will be feeding into the European Social Fund: NEET Prevention bid put together by CSWP for funding from January 2014. The 11 – 19 Partnership will consider whether it would be appropriate to include this within the bid. In the interim the costs of this will need to be met from the current care leavers budget.

5.2 Legal implications

The public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 came into force on 5th April 2011. Decision makers must have ongoing due regard to avoid discrimination and advance opportunity for anyone with the relevant protected characteristics which are disabilities, age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. "Due regard" requires more than just an awareness of the equality duty. It requires rigorous analysis by the public authority, beyond broad options.

6. Other implications

Any other specific implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

These recommendations contribute to the objective of ensuring that children and young people are safe, achieve and make a positive contribution.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Not Applicable

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

These recommendations help to support the council's corporate parenting responsibilities.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

Looked After Children (LAC) are a priority within the Council Plan, as is supporting young people onto apprenticeships.

The life chances of LAC are significantly lower than other groups of young people in the city. In 2011 there was a 42.2% gap between the average for the city achieving 5 good GCSE including English and Maths and LAC achieving that level.

The break down for LAC who are entitled to support from the aftercare service, as of November 2012, is:

Female 164
Male 204
Total 368

Ethnicity
White British 260
Non-White British 108 (A more detailed breakdown is available on request)

80 Children had one or more disability.

The number of apprenticeships within the Council is: 62
The number of LAC on apprenticeships within the Council is: 3
This number is too small to break down by protected characteristics.

The Council is working to support disadvantaged groups of young people such as disabled young people into work through the Jobs Strategy. There are currently 15 disabled young people engaged in apprenticeships with the Council.

By challenging some of the barriers experienced by LAC in accessing apprenticeships and also by supporting them to complete their placements, the Council will be working towards addressing some of the inequalities experienced by this particular group of young people whilst undertaking their corporate parenting role.

Whilst LAC accessing this provision become financially advantaged as opposed to other persons of the same age the promotion of LAC into accessing apprenticeships in this way is a proportionate means for improving their life chances.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

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Legal: Julie Newman	Solicitor	Finance & Legal Services	11/12/12	14/12/12
Members: Cllr Lakha			11/12/12	09/01/13
Cllr Mal Mutton			11/12/12	08/01/13

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Appendices

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22nd January, 2013

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) – Councillor O’Boyle

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Customer and Workforce Services

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title:

Outstanding Issues

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

In May 2004 the City Council adopted an Outstanding Minutes System, linked to the Forward Plan, to ensure that follow up reports can be monitored and reported to Members. The attached appendix sets out a table detailing the issues on which further reports have been requested by the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) so he is aware of them and can monitor progress.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) is requested to consider the list of outstanding issues and to ask the Member of the Management Board or appropriate officer to explain the current position on those which should have been discharged at this meeting or an earlier meeting.

List of Appendices included:

Table of Outstanding Issues.

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it, or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

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Other Elected Members				
Names of officers and Members approving submission of report:				
Finance				
Legal				
Human Resources				

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	Subject	Date for Further Consideration	Responsible Officer	Proposed Amendment to Date for Consideration	Reason for Request to Delay Submission of Report
1.	<p>Implementation of Multi-Systemic Therapy and KEEP</p> <p>A progress report be submitted to the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) (Minute 22/11 refers – 1st November 2011 meeting)</p>	January 2013	<p>Director of Children, Learning and Young People</p> <p>Kam Kaur</p>	March 2013	
2	<p>Adoption Service Annual Report and Statement of Purpose</p> <p>Revised Statement of Purpose reflecting the new organisational structure & priority to adoption, including numbers and the speeding up of the process of adoption within the authority, be presented at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>CM(C&YP) (16/10/2012, Minute 20/12 refers)</p>		<p>Director of Children, Learning & Young People</p> <p>Nicky Hale</p>		

* Identifies items where a report is on the agenda for your meeting.

