

Notice of Meeting

Communities Select Committee

Tuesday, 8th November, 2016 at 6.30 pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

Date of despatch of Agenda: 31st October 2016

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Charlene Myers / David Lowe on (01635) 519695 / 519817

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Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk



Agenda - Communities Select Committee to be held on Tuesday, 8 November 2016
(continued)

Councillors: Keith Chopping (Vice-Chairman), Carol Jackson-Doerge, Marigold Jaques, Mollie Lock and Richard Somner (Chairman)

Substitutes: Councillors Peter Argyle and Alan Macro

Agenda

Part I

Page No.

- 1 **Apologies for Absence**
To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any),
- 2 **Declarations of Interest**
To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any personal, disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' [Code of Conduct](#).
- 3 **Communities Select Committee Work Programme**
Purpose: To receive new items and agree and prioritise the work programme of the Committee for the remainder of 2016/2017.
- 4 **Items Called-in following the Executive on 20th October 2016.**
Purpose: To consider any items which an Urgent Decision is required to be taken by the Executive, in exception to the requirements of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 5 **Councillor Call for Action**
Purpose: To consider any items proposed for a Councillor Call for Action.
- 6 **Health and Social Care integration** 1 - 2
Purpose: To introduce to the Select Committee the background to Health and Social Integration.



Agenda - Communities Select Committee to be held on Tuesday, 8 November 2016
(continued)

- 7 **Looked after children placement sufficiency and stability** 3 - 20
Purpose: To update and inform on our progress of West Berkshire ensuring good placement sufficiency and stability for our Looked After Children and Care leavers and the challenges we currently face in ensuring good outcomes are achieved and good care is delivered.

Andy Day
Head of Strategic Support

West Berkshire Council is committed to equality of opportunity. We will treat everyone with respect, regardless of race, disability, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation.

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Moira Fraser on telephone (01635) 519045.



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Health and Social Care Integration

Committee considering report: Communities Select Committee

Date of Committee: 08 November 2016

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 **To introduce to the Select Committee the background to Health and Social Integration.**

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Commission carries out scrutiny on the information provided by Officers.

Executive Summary

3. Introduction

3.1 On receipt of a request for the subject of Health and Social Care Integration to be considered for scrutiny, the Chairman of the Communities Select Committee (CSC) has agreed that the matter should be examined at the 8 November 2016 meeting of the Committee.

3.2 Although Tandra Forster, Head of Adult Social Care, will provide a presentation to the Commission, this report provides a brief introduction to the topic.

4. Background

4.1 The Health and Social Care Act (2012) promoted better integration of health services and provided roles for partner agencies (notably Local Authorities) in order to reform how services are delivered and to improve outcomes for the people who use them.

4.2 Integrating health and social care services means focussing on meeting the challenges of an ageing population by shifting resources to community-based and preventative care at home, or in a homely setting.

4.3 There are some challenges associated with these changes such as agreeing budgets, complex governance arrangements, and workforce planning.

4.4 Tandra Forster will provide a presentation in order to explain the plans to reform health and social care services locally. The presentation will cover the following:

- (1) Legislation
- (2) Demography

- (3) Funding v Demand
- (4) Pioneer Bids
- (5) Better Care Fund
- (6) NHS five year forward view
- (7) Sustainability Transformation Plans
- (8) Challenges

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Commission carries out scrutiny on the information provided by Officers

6. Appendices

NA

Looked After Children – Placement Sufficiency and Stability – Summary Report

Committee considering report: Communities Select Committee

Date of Committee: 08 November 2016

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update and inform on our progress of West Berkshire ensuring good placement sufficiency and stability for our Looked After Children and Care leavers and the challenges we currently face in ensuring good outcomes are achieved and good care is delivered.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee considers the attached report and gives challenge and scrutiny to the arrangements in place and offer any suggestions to further strengthen our placement availability.

Executive Summary

3. Introduction

- 5.1 Every Local Authority has the duty of 'sufficiency' that requires it to ensure, through direct provision or commissioned services, a range of placements to meet the needs of the children in their care. Fundamentally this means providing to our children the right placement, in the right place, at the right time.
- 5.2 This approach is based on accepted commissioning principles. This means understanding and assessing need; anticipating the right number and type of placements; developing the market to meet requirements; ensuring robust procurement methods; effectively managing contracts with providers and monitoring outcomes.
- 5.3 Children and Family Services are committed to 'getting to good' by 2020 alongside the Council commitment. This strategy reflects the recommendations of OFSTED's Single Inspection of Children's Services, March 2015 and the LGA Peer Review, July 2016 which recognises the good progress that is being made in this area and ensures we are prioritising the needs of our Looked After population
- 5.4 This report also describes the activity we are undertaking to ensure that children on the edge of care, that is those children on a Child in Need or Child Protection plan, are given the appropriate support to remain at home if at all possible and all alternative options are exhausted prior to bringing children into the case of the Local Authority.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 It is considered that good progress is being made in the area of placement sufficiency but will continue to need to be a priority going forward.

5. Appendices

- (A) Report on Placement Sufficiency and Stability
- (B) LAC Benchmarking

Placement Sufficiency and Stability Report

1. Current Need and Services

West Berkshire District Council serves a population of 155,500 people. Of these almost 40,000 are children aged between 0 and 19 years. There is an even gender split. The national Census indicates that the majority of the population living in West Berkshire is White British (91.2%). The next largest Ethnic group is Other White, such as White European. There are a lower proportion of people from all Ethnic minority groups living in West Berkshire than there are nationally and in the South East Region.

Five percent of West Berkshire residents as a whole, define themselves as coming from a black or minority ethnic (BME) background compared to 14% of people in England.

It is a District of contrasts, being one of the most affluent areas in the country yet with some communities experiencing high levels of deprivation.

2. Looked After Children

The number of children in care has decreased in the last year to 155 children as of September 2016. Four of these children are under short breaks arrangements and twelve are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

The split does not quite reflect the local population, but does reflect the national Looked After population where 55% are boys.

Gender	Number	%
Male	86	55%
Female	69	45%
Total	155	100%

Age Group	Number	%
Under 1	8	5%
1 to 4	12	8%
5 to 9	25	16%
10 to 15	62	40%
16 plus	48	31%
Total	155	100%

Over 50% of our children are aged 13 to 18. Almost 30% came into care after their 13th birthday. This is in line with the national picture. Key learning from our recent Looked After Children Analysis showed that outside of the UASC the most frequently occurring risk factors for this age group include: missing children and children at risk of sexual exploitation; self harm; neglect; emotional abuse, including domestic abuse. Early attachment difficulties and developmental trauma, combined with early exposure to neglect and the toxic trio (domestic violence, parental substance misuse, parental mental health) are the most consistent features within the cohort. The national evidence base indicates a

link between maltreatment in early years and risk taking/risk of care in adolescence these links have been established between the undeveloped cortex and impulsive behaviour , risk taking and difficulty with tasks that require higher thinking and feeling . Adolescents are less likely to settle in their placements and so experience greater placement breakdown, instability and a greater likelihood of being placed in residential care.

3. Legal status

In the last 12 to 18 months there has been a focus on ensuring children do not drift in care. All children accommodated under section 20 had their cases reviewed and for many the Local Authority made the decision to issue care proceedings to secure the children's futures. In more recent cases any concerns relating to drift or delay is mitigated through the Legal Tracking and Permanency Tracking processes.

For September 2016 the 151 children in care and not on short breaks, have the following legal status:

Legal Status	Number
Care Order Section 31	88
Interim care Order Section	27
Accommodated under Section 20	28
Placement Order and Care Order Section	8
Total	151

The plan for 61 of the looked after children under 16 is to remain in foster care and these children are now served by a dedicated Children in Care team to ensure their needs are prioritised

There are also 47 young people aged between 16 and 17 years in our care and not on short breaks. The legal status of these children are:

Legal Status 16 to 17	Number
Care Order	27
Interim Care Order	1
Accommodated under sec 20	19
Total	47

4. Placement type

The nature of these placements for these children are:

Placement Type	Number
Foster Care In House overall , (including ; <i>Connected Person - Section Foster to Adopt)- Section</i>	98 15 2
IFA – Full	26
Residential – Specialist residential	13
Bramlings - Supported Lodgings	4
Supported Lodgings (Step By Step)	6
Short Breaks	4
Total	155

On 31st August 2016 we had a total of 123 fostering placements comprised of short term, long term, short breaks, Parent and Child and family and friend's placements. 98 of these placements were filled with 18 remaining vacant, 4 of which were for relief care only, 2 are resigning and 6 on hold for health or other reasons. Where carers are not up to their placement capacity, this can be through not being considered the right match between carers availability and the needs of children already placed. Overall 21 foster carers are approved for multiple placements.

The demand for foster placements continues to be met by in house foster carers and independent providers. West Berkshire continues to spot purchase their placements in the independent sector under the governance and contractual arrangements of the South Central Partnership Consortium which is made up of 14 Local Authorities and helps ensure best values and standards are maintained.

The 10-15 year old cohort accounts for 41% of current spend on external placements.

5. Ethnicity

Local demand for culturally matched placements for black and minority ethnic children is significant and the scarcity of provision is a frequent trigger for an out of area search. The ethnicity of our children tends to be more diverse than our population as a whole, at just under not White British.

Ethnicity	Number
White British	131
Any other Asian background	5
Any other ethnic group	4
Any other mixed background	4
Black African	3
Any other white background	2
White & Black Caribbean	2
White & Black African	2
White Irish	1
White and Asian	1
Total	155

6. Sibling groups

There are number of sibling groups placed and at present the local authority is recruiting to address the challenge of placing additional siblings with children who are already securely placed.

7. Children with Disabilities

West Berkshire is served by one integrated service for children with disabilities, which meets the needs of looked after disabled children and young people by providing appropriate local respite care and support for children and their families.

The service uses specialist agencies across both adoption and fostering arrangements within the independent sector to help meet the particular needs of disabled children; there is currently insufficient in-house provision available to meet both the placement and permanency needs for this group.

8. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

West Berkshire currently care for 11 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). These children and young people need placements that meet their cultural needs and also address the trauma and isolation they are likely to have experienced.

They have arrived 'spontaneously' and not through the National Transfer Scheme. These children are cared for in local Foster Care Placements or in Supported Accommodation. 5 are outside of the Local Authority, predominantly in London, which contributes to them to provide being in receipt of the appropriate support network.

West Berkshire receives funding from central government that contributes to the cost of caring for these children and young people until they turn 18. The Rates only cover the costs of 'In House' Foster Care placement arrangements, but we need to ensure we have the right level of skills and knowledge available to ensure all cultural and language needs are met. From July if they qualify for leaving care support there has also been a grant available

The Home Office have requested for all Local Authorities to accommodate UACS at a ratio of 0.07% of their Child Population. For West Berkshire this means 25 children in all , so an increase of 13 children from current levels.

There are 3 Schemes in operation to help oversee the dispersal of UASC and young people:

1. The National Transfer Scheme – dispersal from Kent and now Calais (funded from the grant).
2. The Vulnerable Children's Resettlement to complement SVPR, Middle East & North African families (funding as SVPR – all cost covered).
3. UASC in Europe (unknown funding).

The impact of the asylum process, including age assessments, on resources is significant but there are differing funding arrangements depended on the way these children have been received.

9. Placement area

In order to find suitable placements for our children, searches sometimes need to be outside of our district boundary.

Inside/Outside Boundary	
Inside	99
Outside	55
N/A	1

33 of the 55 outside of West Berkshire are 35 miles or less away. Some of these children are placed with connected persons or are in their adoptive placements, equally some are with West Berkshire foster carers but are just outside of our district boundary.

10. Leaving Care (Section 24)

There are 4 categories of support under Section 24 CA1989 which guides the Local Authority when considering its duty:

Eligible Young People

They are aged 16 or 17, have been Looked After for a period or periods totalling at least 13 weeks starting after their 14th birthday and are still in care. (This total does not include a series of pre-planned short-term placements of up to four weeks where the child has returned to the parent). There is a duty to support these young people up to the age of 18, wherever they are living.

The statutory definition and requirements to undertake a needs assessment, prepare a Pathway Plan, keep the Pathway Plan under review and appoint a Personal Adviser are now covered by Regulations 42, 43 and 44 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010.

Relevant Young People

They are aged 16 or 17 and are no longer Looked After, having previously been in the category of Eligible Young Person when in care. However, if after leaving care, a young person returns home for a period of 6 months or more to be cared for by a parent and the return home has been formally agreed as successful, he or she will no longer be a "Relevant Young Person".

A young person is also "Relevant" if, having been in care for three months or more, he or she is then detained after their 16th birthday either in a hospital, remand centre, young offenders' institution or secure training centre. There is a duty to support Relevant Young People up to the age of 18, wherever they are living.

The statutory definition and requirements to stay in touch with the young person, undertake a needs assessment (unless this was done when the young person was 'Eligible'), prepare and keep the Pathway Plan under review, appoint a Personal Adviser (unless this was done when the young person was 'Eligible') and provide accommodation and assistance to meet his or her needs in relation to education, training or employment are now covered by Regulations 4 to 9 of the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010.

Former Relevant Young People

They are aged 18 to 21 (or up to 24 if in full-time further or higher education), and have left care having been previously either "Eligible", "Relevant" or both. There is a duty to consider the need to support these young people wherever they are living.

The statutory definition and requirements to stay in touch with the young person, keep the Pathway Plan under review, continue the appointment of a Personal Adviser and provide financial assistance near where the young person is employed or seeking employment/to enable the young person to pursue education or training remain unchanged they are now covered by Regulations 4 to 9 of the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010. These duties continue until the young person becomes 21 or, where the Pathway Plan sets out a programme of education or training beyond 21, they continue so long as the young person pursues the programme. The duty to pay a higher education bursary also continues, as before for those who started a course of higher education after 2008.

Qualifying Young People

They are over the age of 16 and under the age of 21, (or up to 24 if in full-time further or higher education), and have been Looked After or, if disabled, have been Privately Fostered after reaching 16, but do not qualify as Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant. They may receive support, advice and assistance wherever they are living. If in full-time further or higher education, this may include assistance in relation to securing vacation accommodation. They may also qualify if they are the subject of a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and were Looked After immediately before the SGO was made.

The Children and Social Work Bill 2016 proposes placing a duty on local authorities to provide a Personal Advisor, an assessment and a pathway plan to all care leavers up to 25. The only situation where this wouldn't apply is where the care leaver themselves chose not to take up this offer.

The Bill doesn't provide for young people in care homes to remain until 21 – but in acknowledging the parity of need for advice and support, perhaps opens the door to negotiations for this. The local authority has a duty to inform care leavers of the support now available to them. The Department for Education is unsure how many existing care leavers will return to claim this but are confident new care leavers will have enough information to claim it.

There are 61 young adults open to our Leaving Care Team.

Age (LCT)	
18	30
19	15
20	14
21	1
Total	61

Placement type (LCT post 18)	
Residential	1
Staying Put (post 18)	8
Supported Lodgings (Step by Step, Alma and Cornerstones)	11
Bramlings (16+)	7
Independent	19
Other	10
University	4

11. Staying Put

A Staying Put arrangement is where a Former Relevant child, after ceasing to be Looked After, remains in the former foster home where they were placed immediately before they ceased to be Looked After, beyond the age of 18.

The intention of Staying Put arrangements is to ensure that young people can remain with their former foster carers until they are prepared for adulthood, can experience a transition akin to their peers, avoid social exclusion and be more likely to avert a subsequent housing and tenancy breakdown.

It is the duty of the local authority to monitor the Staying Put arrangement and to provide advice, assistance and support to the Former Relevant child and the former foster parent with a view to maintaining the Staying Put arrangement (this must include financial support), until the child reaches the age of 21 (unless the local authority consider that the Staying Put arrangement is not consistent with the child's welfare).

Under the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010, Planning Transition into Adulthood for Care Leavers Guidance and Government Guidance Staying Put - Arrangements for Care Leavers Aged 18 and Above to Stay on With Their Former Foster Carers (2013), the Local Authority must provide information about extending foster placements post-18.

In West Berkshire the Staying Put arrangement applies to all young people who were previously eligible children living in foster care, and who were Looked After immediately prior to their eighteenth birthday, regardless of whether the young person is undertaking full or part time education, training or employment or none of these activities. The young person can Stay Put until their 21st birthday or if they are on an agreed programme of education or training on their 21st birthday, when the course is completed.

12. Supported Lodgings

Our supported lodging scheme is provided by Step by Step, Alma and Cornerstones. They recruit, train and support Hosts to bridge the gap between home or being in care, and living independently in the community. The young people who are placed with Hosts benefit from being able to develop their independent living skills whilst living with a responsible adult.

13. Adoption

For the period April 2015 to March 2016 West Berkshire Council placed 10 children, between the ages of 0 – 8 years, in adoptive placements. This is an increase from the previous year when 6 children were placed for adoption.

During this period West Berkshire secured 7 Adoption Orders and a further 7 Orders have been granted since April 2016. The average time between placement for adoption and the adoption order being granted was 7½ months.

During this time, West Berkshire also commenced 3 Foster to Adopt placements. The first baby has now been adopted and the second baby is in the process of being adopted.

West Berkshire Council are part of a dedicated adoption service named Adopt Berkshire. The other contributing local authorities are the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham Borough Council, and Bracknell Forest Council.

Adopt Berkshire actively contributes to ensuring that West Berkshire perform well in terms of placing children for adoption within national timescales, by both recruiting adopters seeking to adopt an unrelated child/ren, and by assessing friends and family and existing foster carers who have applied to be considered as potential adopters for a specific named child/ren.

Adopt Berkshire works with West Berkshire at an early stage to identify those Looked After Children who would benefit from adoption and to achieve the placement of these

children with appropriate prospective adoptive families within timescales appropriate to the needs of each individual child.

Adopt Berkshire works in line with DfE standards and within national timescales except where this is not in the identified interests of the individual child concerned. The service seeks to keep to a minimum any delay in achieving placement for each child and given this the option of Fostering for Adoption is considered for every child referred.

When recruiting and preparing prospective adoptive applicants who are seeking to adopt unrelated children Adopt Berkshire is mindful of the placement needs of the children who are waiting for families both locally and nationally. All applicants are expected to be able to accept the placement of a child(ren) with complex backgrounds and a child(ren) for whom there is not complete background and/or health information. Priority is given to potential applicants who are able to consider the placement of a child/ren with a higher level of additional needs and those able to accept the potential uncertainties inherent in Fostering for Adoption placements.

Adopt Berkshire prioritise achieving applications from potential adopters who are able to appropriately offer placements to:

- Single children aged four years and over;
- Sibling groups of two or more children;
- Children who have identified health or medical problems and who are likely to need a significant level of ongoing health/medical care;
- Children who are significantly developmentally delayed and who may always require a higher level of support than other children of similar age (including in some cases a level of special education provision);
- Children who have an identified physical or learning disability;
- Children who have additional emotional and/or behavioural support needs;
- Children whose background histories include having a parent(s) diagnosed as having significant mental health difficulties and/or a personality disorder or a parent who is diagnosed to be on the autistic spectrum.
- Children diagnosed to have or be at risk of having Foetal Alcohol Syndrome or to be or be at risk of being on the Autistic Spectrum.

While a significant percentage of the children placed for adoption through the Agency are aged under four years; nearly all of these children have difficult or complex background histories and in most cases the children's future intellectual / academic potential and/or emotional and behavioural issues cannot be clearly predicted.

In recent years the vast majority of children placed for adoption by the four contributing authorities have been of White British heritage.

Adopt Berkshire seek to achieve the placement of each child referred for family finding within four months of the placing authority deciding that the child should be placed for adoption or the granting of the Placement Order (whichever is the latter) or within three months if the child is under six months of age and the birth parent(s) is/are requesting that the child be placed, provided that working within these timescales is not likely to be against the best interests of the child.

Adopt Berkshire is part of the Berkshire Local Authority Adoption Agencies' Consortium and the four contributing authorities are moving forward with plans to become part of a larger Regional Adoption Agency (currently known as Adopt Thames Valley) including: Reading, Oxfordshire and Swindon.

In seeking to identify prospective adopters for children requiring placement, the Agency will firstly seek to identify appropriate prospective adopters from within its own pool of approved and waiting adopters unless a child's specific circumstances and placement needs suggest this to be inappropriate. When this is not possible consideration will be given to other potential adopters recruited by the other Consortium agencies [Reading and Slough Borough Councils], or by Oxfordshire, Swindon or PACT Adoption Agency (Reading), prior to consideration of potential adopters recruited by other agencies.

Adopt Berkshire and West Berkshire are mindful of the period of time that older children and those with significant additional needs can wait for placements and seek to be proactive in achieving appropriate placements for all children referred to it for placement, within the shortest possible timescales. To this end, when a child's placement needs are such that it is unlikely that a suitable 'match' will be identified for him/her within Adopt Berkshire or within one of the other RAA associated local authorities or PACT, wider family finding initiatives will be pursued from the earliest opportunity, accepting any restrictions imposed by any ongoing Court proceedings.

Adopt Berkshire has an inclusive approach to the recruitment of adopters and applications will be considered from applicants who appear to meet the Agency's minimum criteria.

Adopt Berkshire will consider general applications from individuals/couples seeking to be approved as prospective adopters who live outside of the geographical areas covered by the four contributing authorities if:

they appear to have the potential to meet the placement needs of the profile of children who the four contributing authorities regularly need to place, but for whom it may be difficult to identify appropriate prospective adopters;

- and they live within two hours travelling distance of the Adopt Berkshire office in Woodley, Reading;
- and they otherwise meet the Agency's normal criteria for prospective adopters.

The Agency has a target for the number of applications that it will process each year, although this is regularly reviewed and revised as the demand for placements changes. The target is based on the number of children originating from the four contributing authorities who have an adoption plan and the agency seeks to maintain a pool of approved adopters who are able to provide a range of placements including applicants able to provide single and sibling placements and placements for children across the usual age range of children requiring placements. The specific placement needs of the four contributing authorities will directly impact on the decisions made.

During the year running April 2016 – March 2017 Adopt Berkshire have out in place a 12 month tailored recruitment campaign to enable the Agency to recruit 30 adoptive families at least 10 of whom are able to provide placement for sibling pairs. Adopt Berkshire will involve the adoption community (Adoption Advocates) in delivering a range of recruitment initiatives. If the numbers of children on referral should increase during the year the agency will review its recruitment target.

14. SGOs

West Berkshire acknowledges the importance of families remaining together by encouraging family members to come forward during court proceeding and considering Special Guardianship Orders

For the period April 2015 to March 2016, West Berkshire placed 21 children under Special Guardianship Orders with 15 family members. This is almost a 50% increase on the previous year when 12 children were placed under special guardianship orders with 7 family members. Since April 2016, West Berkshire have secured a further 7 Special Guardianship Orders.

The Post Adoption Support Service supports 50 Special Guardianship families. The majority of these families live in West Berkshire. Where children have been placed outside of West Berkshire the Post Adoption Service is responsible to support these families for the first 3 years post the order. The Post Adoption Service also takes on responsibility for families living in West Berkshire after three years where children are placed by other Local Authorities.

15. Foster Care Recruitment

Recruitment of foster carers is targeted at those able to consider caring for children in the higher age range , sibling groups and across varying timescales The web site based on-line response form and targeted advertisements are aimed at encouraging interest in Long Term fostering, Teenage fostering and Short Breaks Carers. Short Breaks Care is an integral part of the overall Fostering Advertising and Promotional Plan for the period and the foreseeable future and continues to produce a regular number of enquiries. The focus is on generating web and telephone based enquiries driven by radio, press and social media based activities.

There is also a need to recruit foster carers to meet the needs of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who are currently arriving from areas such as Albania, Ethiopis, Syria and Afghanistan. West Berkshire engages with members of the local Black and Minority Ethnic Forum who provide mentors for foster carers who look after children who are a different ethnicity from themselves.

The Fostering Service operates an equal opportunities policy in relation to all its work and carers, children and their families. Matching procedures attempt first to meet as many of a child's needs as possible and second to identify any unmet needs and to put in place measures to address any shortfall in provision. Carers are strongly encouraged to attend training on valuing diversity. As part of preparation for the foster carers' annual reviews the views of the foster carers are always sought, as well as those of the children in placement, their parents, and the foster carers' own children, regarding the service provided by the Fostering Service and ways that the Service can improve further

In the year April 2015 to March 2016 West Berkshire received 98 fostering enquiries. 55 did not progress due to family circumstances, failure to respond, unsuitable accommodation or personal reasons. 45 information packs were sent out. During that period 24 prospective foster carers requested an initial visit and 21 took place. The remaining 3 that did not take place either withdrew or failed to respond; 10 foster carers were assessed and were subsequently approved, 2 of which are short breaks carers. West Berkshire also assessed 5 connected persons who went on to full approval. 4

fostering preparation groups were held over the year along with 1 preparation group for connected persons and we held 10 recruitment information sessions.

We are currently undertaking 14 fostering assessments (including 7 Connected Persons Assessments). We have had one connected person approval in September and we are in the process of transferring 2 fostering households to our fostering service from other fostering services. Additionally we now have 2 foster to adopt placement.

This year we have made the decision that, to make sure we do not lose momentum when enquiries are made, we no longer wait to meet prospective carers at monthly information evenings but allocate and visit them as soon as they make contact.

The Recruitment activity has also been used to produce enquiries for Supported Lodgings Placement Hosts in conjunction with our main service provider Step by Step.

Advertising continues to be targeted throughout West Berkshire with particular attention paid to the different requirements of the East and Central/West regions of the area. Specific social media advertising through Facebook and Google + has proven very effective and together with radio and press advertising will form the basis of ongoing campaigns .

There is also a community based events programme run by volunteers and foster carers to ensure maximum exposure of the recruitment needs. For 2016 this events programme has been extended to cover the Crafty Craft Race, Hollybrook Festival, Newbury Carnival, Culture Fest, Newbury Agricultural Show and the Englefield Steam Rally, together with pop up stalls at various Newbury and Thatcham markets and events.

We are developing a new, more attractive website with our internal partners

The Family Placement Team has been exploring an intensive fostering placement scheme, provided by an Independent Fostering Agency who recruit foster carers with specialist skills to meet the needs of the most challenging children. This involves a wrap around support network to ensure that a high level of placement support is available at all times.

The introduction of a Placements Officer has proved to be very successful. They have ensured that requests for placements are processed in a timely fashion and backed up with a good quality referral that make clear the children's needs. When an in-house placement has not been available the placements officer has found high quality placements , sought information from other local authorities and negotiating the best value possible. They have also been reviewing our current residential and independent placement , visiting them to ensure they are providing the highest standard care and is working with the social work team to review and implement effective Individual Placement Agreements

16. Our Approach

Placement quality and stability

A key arm of our approach strategy this year is to ensure West Berkshire foster carers are resilient, confident, well trained and considered as a core and valued partner in delivering good care to our LAC.

To this this end a number of initiatives are under way

- A new task and finish group begins in November with social workers and foster carers to ensure good communication and consultation. It will look at recruitment, support and training for our carers.
- Recently 5 of our carers attended a *conference on 'The effect of trauma on a child'* led by Dr Jonathan Baylin and Dr Dan Hughes and we are looking to build on this with more in depth training for those looking after traumatised children and young people
- Plans are being put together with our Emotional Health Academy LAC clinician to provide monthly group sessions for foster carers to share their experiences and be skilled up to cope with increasingly complex children
By understanding the impact of trauma and loss on the developing child and young person is hoped problems will be pre-empted, preventing crises and placement breakdown
- The new Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) pathway will be formally launched in November but targeted work is already underway. A monthly screening meeting attended by the Children in Care team manager, LAC nurse and EHA LAC clinician (soon to be joined by the LACES team manager) looks at all children with a high or very high SDQ score. Plans are the put in place to address this need. For those with lower SDQ scores it is important that emotional health is still part of their care plan. Training is to be provided to carers and workers so that they are able to provide support that may include a 5 Ways to Wellbeing Plan
- All social workers and cares will access training to understand the impact of trauma and brain development
- A key member of staff has been identified to undertake the Play Therapy Diploma and another member of staff to complete DDP level 2. This will enable more timely and cost effective interventions. For some of this work we will also Play able to charge back to the ASF for their time
- We will also be looking at the effects of respite and contact on placement stability
- We will continue to undertake good quality Life Story work

The creation of the new Children Care means that the children long term care are now given higher priority and stability. The provision of a more skilled and informed service means that children will feel safe, less pre-occupied and better able accept care and to make the most of their opportunities. This will lead to placement stability.

We know that one of the most effective forms of foster care recruitment is through 'word of mouth'. Therefore we know if current foster carers are well supported it is likely we will attract more and higher quality carers that are committed to good outcomes for the children for whom we care.

Young People and Leaving Care

A further priority is ensuring we are meeting the needs of older children and young people.

It is hoped that by having a more settled experience of care before approaching adolescence that young people will present with less complex and challenging problems and be able to stay within foster families.

By having informed and skilled foster carers and social workers the response to the young people's behaviour will be measured, calm and authoritative. For those young people coming into care at adolescence this will also mean a safer experience and less likelihood of escalation.

For some of our young people foster care is not the best option, this includes some older UASC. For others there is a need for a bridge from family life to independence. With this mind additional resources have been commissioned from Step by Step

The formation of the Looked After Children Service has already begun to lead to better transitions for children. A more consistent approach as children travel through the system will mean less disruption to their placements and care plans

17. Concluding summary

In conclusion, Children and Family Services are considered that good progress is being made in the area of placement sufficiency but will continue to need to be a priority going forward alongside the projected needs of our Looked After Children population.

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Out of Authority LAC cases as at 31st July 2016

Table 1 shows the breakdown of location of placements of children outside of the local authority. There were a total of 60 LAC cases outside of the LA on 31 July 2016, the postcodes of the young people's addresses were analysed for distance from West Berkshire Council Children's Services (West Street House office). Of the 60 LAC, 7 children were recorded as living outside of the LA, but their primary address is recorded as within the LA – they have not been included within the analysis. The councils shaded darker blue have children living in their authority an average of over 20 miles from the West Street House office and the ages of these children have been included on the table.

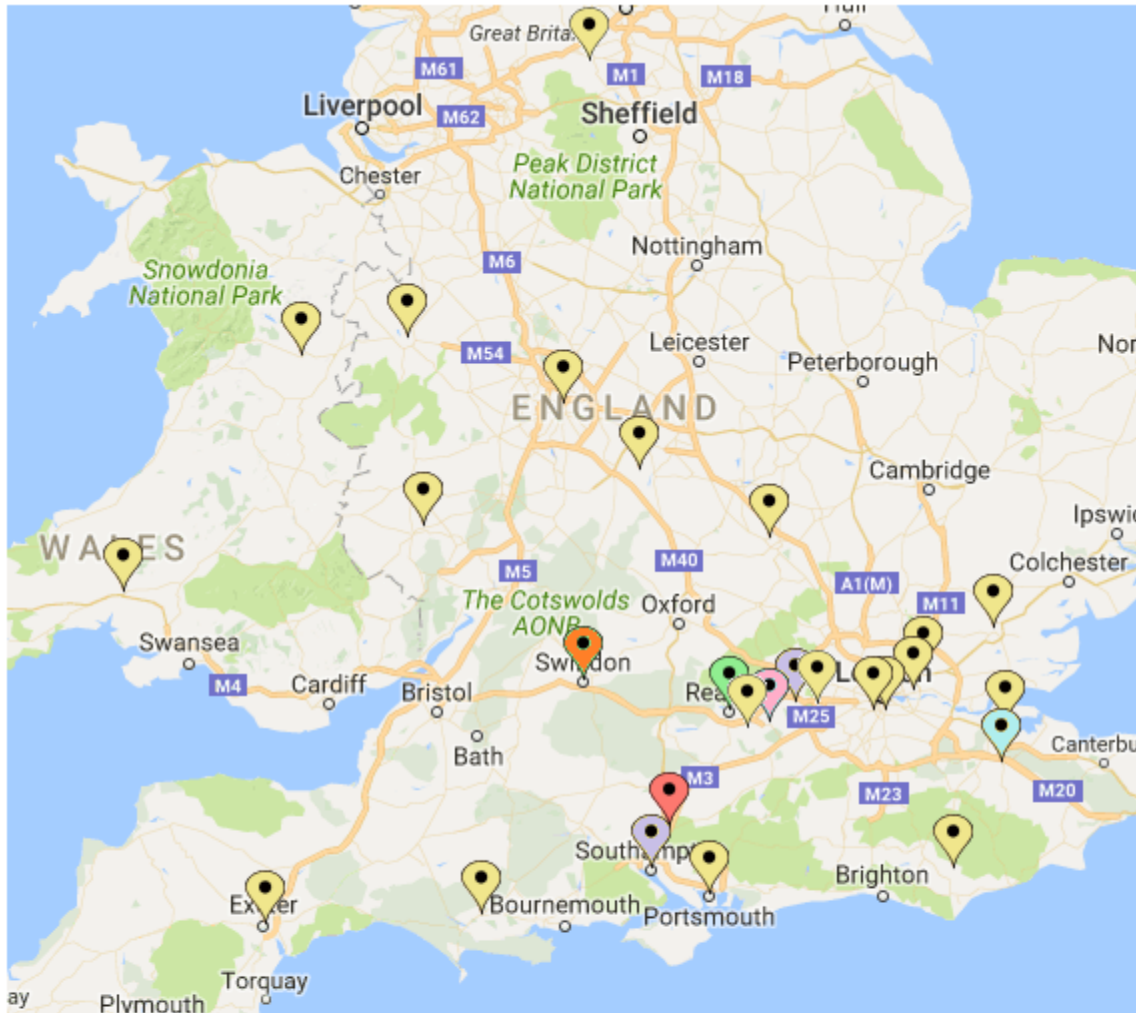
Table 1

Local Authority	Number of LAC inc. UASC	UASC?	Av. miles from WSH	List of ages of YP (if >20miles)
Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council	1		164	10
Essex County Council	1		115	13
Carmarthenshire County Council	1		114	15
Kent County Council	3		113	3, 9, 16
Shropshire Council	1		108	16
Powys County Council	1		101	16
Devon County Council	1		92	17
East Sussex County Council	1		89	7
Medway Council	1		81	16
Birmingham City Council	1		80	14
Herefordshire Council	1		74	14
London Borough of Redbridge	1	Yes (1)	61	17
London Borough of Newham	1	Yes (1)	60	17
Warwickshire County Council	1		58	15
Dorset	1		53	15
London Borough of Lambeth	1	Yes (1)	53	17
Milton Keynes Council	1		52	11
London Borough of Wandsworth	1	Yes (1)	48	17
Portsmouth City Council	1		42	12
Slough Borough Council	1		35	16
Southampton City Council	2		33	16, 17
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead	2		26	0, 2
Bracknell Forest Council	4		24	9, 10, 11, 12 3, 9, 12, 12, 13, 16,
Swindon Borough Council	7		24	17
Wokingham Borough Council	1		20	0
Hampshire County Council	10		17	
Reading Borough Council	5		15	








West Berkshire Council (7)	Yes (1)
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Image 1 shows the locations of the local authorities where the LAC are placed. Please refer to table 1 for more information.

Image 1



Key

-  1 LAC at location
-  2 LAC at location
-  3 LAC at location
-  4 LAC at location
-  5 LAC at location
-  7 LAC at location
-  10 LAC at location