



**Report to Children, Young People
and Family Support Scrutiny
Committee
3rd April 2014**

Report of: Jayne Ludlam Executive Director CYPF

Subject: Sheffield’s Looked After Children and Care Leavers Annual Report

Author of Report: Jon Banwell, Assistant Director Children and Families Service.

Summary:

- Update on the progress of Sheffield’s Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	X
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

- To provide members with an update on the progress of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
- Note the proposed publication of 2014 LAAC Strategy

Background Papers:

- Ofsted Report - Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/sheffield>
- Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report
- The Sheffield Pledge to children and young people in our care

Category of Report: OPEN

Report of the Director of CYPF

Update on the progress of Sheffield's Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The number of Looked After Children (LAC) in Sheffield 31st March 2014 was 540
- 1.2 The proportion of Sheffield's 0 -17 year old population who are Looked After Children is currently 47 per 10000. This is below the national average of 60 LAC per 10000 and significantly in contrast to the statistical neighbour and core city averages of 84 and 88 per 10000 respectively.
- 1.3 Approximately three out of every five Sheffield LAC are male compared with the roughly 50:50 gender profile of the 0-17 year old population as a whole. Similarly, there are differences with the age profile too, 58% being 10 or above compared with 43% for the city as a whole.
- 1.4 The ethnicity profile of the LAC population is much more in line with that of the city; 26% BME compared with 30% for the 0 - 17 year old population as a whole. The small difference can mostly be explained by the difference in the profile for one particular ethnic group, Asian Pakistani/Pakistani British, where the proportion of LAC is a fifth of that for the general populous.
- 1.5 Numbers of LAC have continued to reduce as a consequence of placing focus on delivering permanence for children. This has resulted in, the number of children who ceased to be looked after during the year decreasing from 225 in 2010/11 to 315 in 2012/13. Of these, the number of children who have ceased to be looked after due to permanence, either through adoption, residence orders or special guardianship orders, has increased from 72 in 2010/11 to 116 in 2012/13.

2. Looked After and Adopted Children Strategy

- 2.1 The Sheffield City Council Looked After and Adopted Children Multi-agency Strategy 2010-2013 set out partners' commitment to improving the life chances of Looked After and Adopted Children and Young People, and those leaving care. The strategies ambitions and actions were defined under six key priority themes:
 - Priority 1 - Engagement and Influence of children and young people
 - Priority 2 - Education Achievement and Attainment
 - Priority 3 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Priority 4 - Permanence
 - Priority 5 - Integrated Placements and Placement Stability
 - Priority 6 - Safeguarding and Vulnerability
- 2.2 A new 1 year Looked After and Adopted Children Strategy is currently being developed for launch in April 2014. This strategy will have an additional care leavers priority.

3. 2013 Progress Report / 2014 Proposed Actions

Priority 1 – Engagement and Influence of Looked After Children and Young People

3.1 During 2013 the Sheffield Care Council (SiCC) was rebranded and developed. SiCC is a voluntary group of young people who have experience of being in care. They represent the voice of Sheffield's children and young people in care and recently met with Ofsted during the recent inspection.

The group aim to:

- Voice the needs of children and young people in care
- Raise awareness of children and young people in care
- Promote a positive image of children and young people in care
- Work with agencies and professionals to promote change
- Ensure the Sheffield Pledge is understood and followed.

3.2 A new Sheffield Pledge to the children and young people in our care has been written and designed by the SiCC in consultation with Children's services. There are 6 key promises/expectations of us as a local authority.

These being:

- We promise to keep you healthy
- We promise to keep you safe
- We promise to help you enjoy life and achieve goals
- We promise to give you a voice
- We promise to help you remember your history
- We promise to help you get ready for the future.

3.3 A dissemination plan is in place to ensure that all current children in care receive a copy of the Pledge and that they understand what it means. The dissemination plan also includes how children that become accommodated in the future will receive the Pledge. We are committed to raising the profile of the Pledge across the Children, Young People and Families Service. SiCC will use this pledge as a benchmark to measure the effectiveness of the services children and young people in care receive.

3.4 All Looked After Children have an allocated Independent Reviewing Officer whose role is to chair Review meetings but also to monitor the child's Care Plan on an on-going basis and challenge the Local Authority where they think that a child's assessed needs are not being met. For further information please see attached Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2013.

3.5 A pilot has been undertaken of Person Centred LAC Reviews in 2013 and an independent evaluation produced. These reviews are structured to be child centred and to prioritise discussion on matters which are most important to the child or young person.

3.6 Other key developments

- Children in Care and Young Carers have been involved in the recruitment process for social work managers and social workers.
- SiCC members, Care Leavers and foster carers birth children are involved in social work training and Skills to Foster Training
- Kid of Foster Carers 'R' Us Group continues and is well established. The group are consulted with as and when appropriate in regard to service developments or initiatives and on-going self-evaluation of the group is in place.
- A peer advocacy project is being run by NYAS. NYAS are also commissioned to provide advocacy for children in care, children with a disability and care leavers.
- Consultation with children takes place, for children in care, at the LAC Statutory Review.

2014 Priorities

- 3.7 Embed the Sheffield Pledge to Looked After Children and Young People and provide progress report in June 2014 and February 2015 to the Corporate Parenting Panel with the Sheffield In Care Council in attendance.
- 3.8 Promote the Sheffield in Care Council across all services within Children and Families Service and increase the membership of the SiCC.
- 3.9 In consultation with the Sheffield in Care Council undertake a survey of Looked After Children. This is to assist the development and embedment of the promises within the Pledge to Children and Young People in care and ensure that the views of children and young people influence service development.
- 3.10 Develop a further phase of the Person Centred LAC Review model, focusing on children & young people whose plan is permanence. This will aim to include 10% of all Looked After Children and will be evaluated to allow necessary refinements to the process. A new Consultation Booklets for children & young people and for birth parents & carers will be produced and used across all Reviews. These booklets have previously been piloted within the Person Centred Review process.

Priority 2 - Educational Achievement and Attainment

- 3.12 During 2013 the Virtual School for Looked After Children was developed to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children, and to challenge schools and providers to ensure that Looked after Children have the best possible education. The Virtual School is not a provider of education services for LAC, but acts as an advocate on their behalf. It focuses on:
- Access - ensuring all LAC have a school place, are educated in good schools and that there is no delay in accessing their education, both in city and out of the city.
 - Attendance – monitoring the attendance of all LAC and working with schools, social workers and carers where there are attendance issues and commissioning support for individual children from the appropriate agencies, including from MAST.
 - Achievement - challenging schools and providers to ensure that LAC have the best possible education and make good progress. The Virtual School is not to be a provider of education for LAC, but an advocate on their behalf.

- Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and LAC Reviews - working with young people, Designated Teachers, Social Workers, Independent Reviewing Officers and Carers to ensure that PEPs and LAC reviews are meaningful and useful to the child or young person.
 - Pupil Premium - monitoring how the Pupil Premium is being used to ensure that LAC make good progress. This includes managing the termly payment of Pupil Premium to schools.
- 3.13 The Virtual School has established a high quality electronic Personal Education Plan. It allows schools and social workers to share information quickly and easily. It enables the Virtual School to deliver its advocacy role efficiently and effectively.
- 3.14 The Virtual School is also heavily engaged in training for teachers, social workers and carers on their roles and responsibilities for the education of Looked After Children.

2014 Priorities

- 3.15 Access - ensure that each Looked After Child is being educated within a school that best meets their needs. This will be explicitly confirmed at LAC Reviews and where the school is not rated as 'Good' by Ofsted the rationale for it being the right school for that child will be recorded.
- 3.16 Pupil Premium Plus – challenge schools to make effective use of the Pupil Premium Plus for Looked After Children for the benefit of each child. The first level of challenge will be through the Personal Education Plan; the second through contacts and networks with individual schools; the third through the escalation of the challenge in those cases where the school is not making it explicit how the funding is being used.
- 3.17 Attendance and Exclusions – challenge schools and care professionals to improve the engagement of Looked After Children in education provision by increasing attendance and reducing exclusions. The first level of challenge will be through close monitoring of data and intelligence; the second through delivering advocacy on behalf of the child; the third through working in partnership with MAST and others to address barriers.
- 3.18 Personal Education Plans (PEP)
- a. Monitor pupil progress consistently against clear targets in personal education plans and work with schools to take immediate action where children's learning is compromised.
 - b. Develop the ePEP so that it becomes a more child friendly document.
- 3.19 Free Early Learning – challenge care and education professionals to ensure that all 2, 3 & 4 year old Looked After Children have access to Free Early Learning, as appropriate to their needs & circumstances, and acknowledge this on-going entitlement in any plans for these children to move on to permanence through a return home, or to adoption, Special Guardianship or Residence Order.
- 3.20 Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) – challenge care and education professionals to ensure that each Year 11 Looked After Child is able to progress into post-16 learning appropriate to their individual needs and aspirations.

Priority 3 - Health and Well Being

- 3.21 During 2013 there has been a focus on ensuring the health assessment information reflects the child and young person's current circumstances.
- 3.22 Children and young people have access to GP and the services of a school nurse, Health Visitor or a specialist LAC nurse. A dentist is available at Star House for young people and there is a midwife who supports young people as appropriate.
- 3.23 A 'Health Handbook' that assists social workers and health professionals in understanding their roles and responsibilities in meeting the health needs of children in care is in the process of being developed

2014 Priorities

- 3.24 To ensure that all health assessments are robust, timely and meet quality standards for all Sheffield Looked After Children.
- 3.25 To improve the dental health of Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
- 3.26 To ensure that all Looked After Children and Care Leavers are adequately immunised.
- 3.27 To improve prevention and early identification of substance misuse problems amongst Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
- 3.28 Undertake qualitative audits of:
 - Placement Consent Forms
 - Health Assessments - Initial & Annual Immunisations
 - Engagement & timeliness of engagement in Substance Abuse Services (where applicable).
- 3.29 To work jointly with CAMHS, MAPS & Forensic CAMHS at a strategic, and on an individual case basis, to ensure services are targeted according to need.

Priority 4 - Permanence

- 3.30 The service has implemented the new adoption assessment process. The training programme for prospective adopters has been adapted to ensure it complies with the new assessment process and is continually evaluated to ensure the practice is within the appropriate timescale, value for money and offering the best opportunities for the prospective adopter.
- 3.31 The Adoption Reform Grant has funded additional staff across Children & Families Service. This has included the appointment of an Agency Advisor to Adoption Panel who also has been a consultant to staff; increase in the capacity of the Family Finders; additional social work capacity to ensure robust plans for children are being made in a timely way and increased management support.

- 3.32 The Adoption Service is working in partnership with Yorkshire and Humber Adoption Consortium. This consists of 15 local authorities across the region. The Consortium is using funds, from the Adoption Reform Grant, at a regional and sub-regional level over a 3 year period using the regional adoption consortium contract and network as the framework. The purpose of this is to improve the quality of service for children and adopters through faster delivery, sharing best practice, and improved performance management and data reporting.
- 3.33 The Consortium has developed a regional marketing campaign that will compliment marketing activity within each local authority. Information Evening dates across the sub region are being promoted by all the relevant LA's.
- 3.34 The number of children subject to Special Guardianship Order has increased throughout 2013/14. This figure has increased from 191 in April 2013 to 241 in February 2014.
- 3.35 The Family, Adopters and Carers Team (FACT) continue to provide extensive support to families with the range of support services that are available to children and their families. This has been expanded to include children who have been placed on alternative permanence court orders, for example, Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's). FACT is a well-established team that deliver innovative packages of support to families through varied approaches dependent on the assessment of need, for example, group work as well as individual work.
- 3.36 As at 31.03.14 53 children have been adopted.
- 3.37 The service is continuing to place 'hard to place' children or provide additional support to adopters with children that are placed but not yet adopted. This has included for example, the recent adoptive placement of seven and nine year old boys, and eleven sibling groups. There have been no adoption placement disruptions for almost 3 years.

2014 Priorities

- 3.38 Continue to develop adoption reforms –in response to the government's Action Plan for Adoption
- 3.39 Continue to develop regional and sub-regional adoption support mechanisms through the Yorkshire and Humber region Adoption Consortium Partnership.
- 3.40 Revise, develop and implement Sheffield's permanence procedures to support staff in ensuring that all permanence options are explored and progressed in a timely manner.
- 3.41 Number of adopted children target April 1st 2014 to March 31st 2015 is 55.
- 3.42 Number of adopter assessment target April 1st 2014 to March 31st 2015 is 54.
- 3.44 Continue to increase the use of Special Guardianship Orders
- 3.45 To audit & review children subject to a SHOBPA and/or Placement Order to ensure that their plan remains adoption or to amend SHOBPA & discharge Placement Order as appropriate.

3.46 To audit contact plans for children & young people with a permanence plan to ensure that the level of contact is consistent with the Child's Plan.

Priority 5 Integrated Placement Strategy

3.47 The Fostering Service Business Case was implemented in October 2010 following a review of the Fostering Service. The Business Case recommended:

- reviewing the payment structure to foster carers
- improving the training and support given to foster carers
- improving the marketing activity.

3.48 Actions implemented under the Fostering Business Case have increased the choice, range, number of placements available and the number of foster carers.

As at 31 st March of each year	Total number of approved foster carers	Number of LAC in placement
2009/10	223	233
2010/11	250	256
2011/12	272	271
2012/13	282	280
2013/14	295	288

3.49 Development of foster carer recruitment and the home enhancement project is ongoing with 9 foster carers currently going through the process that will increase capacity in regard to number of placements available.

3.50 We have undertaken a sufficiency placement mapping exercises to ensure Sheffield is able to provide the appropriate range of placements within Sheffield for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers. We are proactive in placing children in or near Sheffield wherever possible and /or appropriate to do so. 84% (466 children) are placed within 20 miles of their address on becoming looked after.

3.51 A regional framework (White Rose) has been put in place to collaboratively commission and quality assure a range of children's services with the aim of achieving: quality assurance; robust information sharing protocols; a consistent regional contract management framework; provider markets responsive to demand and need; regional strategic commissioning, and; value for money. This covers independent fostering agencies, residential homes and care leavers.

3.52 The Staying Put Policy is currently being revised. The "Staying Put" initiative is in regard to extending children/young people's transition to adulthood within a family and household supported environment. The intention being to ensure 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. We now have 28 Staying Put placements.

3.53 Youth Justice Service and the Fostering Service have worked collaboratively in regard to a remand fostering initiative. This has been successful with the target of 6 remand foster carers having been achieved by the end of March 2014.

2014 Priorities

3.54 Undertake 2014 sufficiency mapping exercises to ensure Sheffield continues to provide the appropriate range of placements for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers within Sheffield.

3.55 Continue to engage with the White Rose Regional Procurement Project to enable the procurement of a range of placements within external placement providers:

- Independent Fostering Agencies
- Residential Children's Homes
- Care Leaver Accommodation
- Continue to increase the number and range of in house foster placements

3.56 Develop and implement the 'Staying Put' agenda.

3.57 Continue to increase number of foster placements available – see table at point 3.48.

Priority 6 Safeguarding and Vulnerability

3.58 In response to the report from the Joint Inquiry into Children who go Missing from Care APPG (2012), Missing Children (Ofsted, 2013), Running Away: young people's views on running away from care (Ofsted 2012), and the recently revised DFE guidance - Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care, Sheffield carried out a multi-agency review of its Missing from Home or Care and Runaways protocol and carried out a pilot study of the revised protocols.

3.59 A result of this review a new clear procedural pathway has been created to assess risk and where appropriate escalate cases of particular concern. Thresholds for concern are clearly identified in the protocol and strategies to manage these are clearly defined. Named missing person leads have been created from within the Children and Families Service; Community Youth Teams; Youth Justice Service; Missing from Education; Safe@Last; Police; CSE. Effective communication between agencies when a young person goes missing are in place to ascertain whether the child is known to them and if there is any information that will need to be passed on to the police.

3.60 Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service continues to support young people who have been sexually exploited and those at risk of being exploited. It is a multi-agency team with staff from Sheffield Futures, South Yorkshire Police, Sheffield City Council social care staff, a family intervention worker and a Barnardo's worker.

3.61 As a result of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 the management of the Looked After Children social workers within the Youth Justice Service has been taken on by a team manager within Permanence and ThroughCare. A Detention placement plan has been developed and care first is reflective of these young people remanded and now LAC. Again, adding value to the joint working relationships. Training across YJS and P&TC on the LASPO Act was delivered earlier in the year.

2014 Priorities

- Revise and develop our multi agency Tackling Offending protocol.
- Continue to develop our Youth Justice Service /Fostering Service remand fostering initiative.
- Continue to develop the Child Sexual Exploitation Service for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

Priority 7 Care Leavers

- 3.65 Sheffield City Council has signed up to the Department for Education (DfE) Charter for Care Leavers, a young person led document which focuses on improving the quality of support provided to care leavers as they make the transition to adulthood.
- 3.66 A care leavers group has been established to assist with feedback regarding the services they are receiving, assisting with service formulation and consulting other young people leaving care. As part of this initiative the care leavers group will be taking part in a national survey regarding their care experiences.
- 3.67 The National Care Advisory Service Care2Work initiative has offered support to local authorities to help place employability on the corporate parenting agenda and enable local and national employer engagement. In Sheffield a comprehensive work plan has been written with a group of partners across the city: colleges, virtual school, the inclusion and learning service, FC2W and Sheffield Futures. We are working with FC2W to establish a series of training/raising awareness sessions internally; with leads from each Directorate as corporate parents and externally with employers locally.
- 3.68 There are positive links with the Virtual School and Lifelong Learning and Skills service to identify children and young people from age 14 years who may be at risk of becoming NEET and to ensure they get additional support and input.
- 3.69 We have worked closely with the local authority housing department to identify up to 25 dwellings a year for young people aged 17 and a half years in their transition to independence. Access to the scheme will require young people to complete a pre-tenancy course which will be launched in May 2014. All the properties will be sourced in areas where young people can access support from their foster carers, residential home or other supports such as birth family.

2014 Priorities

- 3.70 Continue to develop a Care Leavers Council and launch a Sheffield Charter for Care Leavers.
- 3.71 Embed the 25 dwellings across the City to ensure our young people are supported in safe and sustainable accommodation.
- 3.73 Continue to develop Care2Work initiative.
- 3.74 Develop a Care Leavers Annual Survey to assist in the development of services for Care Leavers.

4. Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

- 4.1 Ofsted announced plans in April 2013 to inspect local authority arrangements for services for children in need of help and protection and children looked after and care leavers under a single combined framework that includes local authority fostering and adoption inspections. The new framework was launched in November 2013, and will be rolled out over a three year period, with every local authority inspected within that timeframe.
- 4.2 Sheffield's inspection was in the first cohort of LAs inspected, alongside Derbyshire, Hartlepool, Hillingdon and Slough the inspection starting on 19th November 2013, and finished on 11th December 2013. Ofsted's internal moderation process led to the need for them to invoke their "flawed inspection" protocol, and a further inspection visit to Sheffield, with different inspectors, followed between 28th and 30th January 2014.
- 4.3 The areas inspected were judged as follows:
 - Overall judgement – **requires improvement**
 - Children who need help and protection - **good**
 - Children looked after and needing permanence – **requires improvement**
 - Adoption performance – **requires improvement**
 - Experience and progress of care leavers – **good**
 - Leadership, management and governance – **good**
- 4.4 The report evidences significant areas of strength, which there are many, and some areas for improvement. There were no areas of priority or immediate action.
- 4.5 An action plan in response to the recommendations within the Ofsted report is currently being developed. This will be implemented and lead by the newly appointed Director of Children and Families, Dorne Collinson, who starts in the role on 14th April 2014.

5. Corporate Parenting Oversight

- 5.1 From April 2014 the Corporate Parenting Board will meet bi-monthly. This is an increase from the previous quarterly Board meetings. This will allow a more detailed review and challenge and a focus on specific areas of performance.

5.2 Corporate Parenting Board dates have been set for the next 12 months (April 2014 – March 2015). Each of the Boards will have a specific main topic and / or receive a specific report.

- **April** - Annual Looked After Children Health Report
- **June** – In Care & Care Leavers Council in attendance
- **August** - Annual Youth Justice Plan (LAC / Care Leaver issues)
- **October** - Education Progress Report - Virtual School Report
- **December** - Annual Report Independent Reviewing Service
- **February** – In Care & Care Leavers Council in attendance

5.3 Adoption and Fostering performance is reported to the Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny Committee on a six monthly basis.

6. **What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?**

6.1 It is important that Sheffield's Looked After Children and Care Leavers are cared for and supported within the city.

6.2 The continued support to Looked After Children and Care Leavers through the 7 priorities and operational working groups described within this report assists the stated aims and intentions within the Sheffield 2011 – 2014 Children and Young People's Plan and gives additional support for this vulnerable group of children and young people.

7. **Recommendation**

7.1 The Committee is asked to consider the progress made and note the priorities set for 2014.