

# Corporate Parenting Panel

## Agenda **Wednesday 11 September 2013**

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel will be held on Wednesday 11 September at 10.00 am, SHIRE HALL, WARWICK

### 1. General

#### (1) Apologies for Absence

#### (2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Members are required to register their disclosable pecuniary interests within 28 days of their election of appointment to the Council. A member attending a meeting where a matter arises in which s/he has a disclosable pecuniary interest must (unless s/he has a dispensation):

- Declare the interest if s/he has not already registered it
- Not participate in any discussion or vote
- Must leave the meeting room until the matter has been dealt with (Standing Order 42)
- Give written notice of any unregistered interest to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting

Non-pecuniary interests must still be declared in accordance with the new Code of Conduct. These should be declared at the commencement of the meeting.

#### (3) Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2013

To approve the enclosed draft minutes

Matters Arising from Previous Meeting(s)

1. Corporate Parenting Panel leaflet – To be tabled
2. CinCC and Corporate Parenting Panel Workshop October Workshop - Draft agenda attached
3. Three and more placement moves – Comparison data attached
4. Legal status of looked after children – Attached
5. Playing cards – To be tabled
6. Member Induction

**2. (10.10) Young People's Questionnaire**

*To follow*

**3. (10.20) Data Set**

*Enclosed*

**4. (10.30) Adoption Services – Annual Report**

*Report enclosed.*

**5. (11.20) Report of the Independent Reviewing Officers Service**

*Report enclosed*

**6. (11.40) Report of the Complaints Service**

*Report enclosed*

**7. Any other Business**

Children in Care Council Leaflet

**Future meeting dates and agenda items**

The next meeting is scheduled for 30 October (proposed workshop with CiCC)

Possible future dates (to agree): 9 December 2013, 10 February 2014 and 14 April 2014.

**Corporate Parenting Panel Membership**

**Councillors:** Yousef Dahmash, Peter Fowler, Bob Hicks, Jenny St John, John Whitehouse and Chris Williams (Chair).

**Relevant Portfolio Holder**

Councillor Heather Timms – Children and Schools

**General enquiries**

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## **Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 10 July 2013**

### **Present:**

### **Members of the Panel**

Councillors:

Yousef Dahmash  
Peter Fowler  
Jenny St John  
Bob Hicks  
John Whitehouse  
Chris Williams

### **Officers**

Brenda Vincent, Service Manager - Safeguarding  
Janet Purcell, Democratic Services Manager

### **1. Appointment of Chair**

Councillor Peter Fowler proposed that Councillor Chris Williams be appointed Chair of the Panel and was seconded by Councillor Yousef Dahmash.

Councillor Bob Hicks proposed that Councillor John Whitehouse be appointed Chair of the Panel and was seconded by Councillor Jenny St John.

The proposal that Councillor Williams be appointed Chair was put to the vote and was agreed 3 votes for, 2 against and one abstention from Councillor Whitehouse.

### **Resolved**

That Councillor Chris Williams be appointed Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

### **2. General**

#### **(1) Apologies**

None

#### **(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

None

#### **(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2013**

The minutes were agreed as a correct record and the following points were discussed:

### Minute 1.3 - Charter for Care Leavers and related issues

Brenda Vincent reported that the CiCC elections had taken place, with all those in care over 8 years being eligible to vote, and the new members were undergoing induction. The membership is a mixture of care leavers and those still in care (with an age range of around 16-21). The Panel was invited to consider how they wished to link with the CiCC.

Brenda reported progress on the points listed:

- The Charter had been displayed in Group Rooms
- Dates of CiCC meetings had been circulated but would be re-circulated to this Panel, given the new membership.
- The results of the young people's questionnaire will be brought to the Panel in full but to date the key issues have focussed on employment; the transition on leaving school/care and having someone who will listen.
- The previous Panel had agreed that there be a leaflet to promote the purpose of the Corporate Parenting Panel but this had been kept on hold until after the county council elections. The Panel's views were now sought on the content and approach to this.
- Corporate Parenting awareness training had been included in the induction programme for new members (in September).
- The CiCC had been invited to attend a full Council meeting (this will probably be the December meeting).

The Panel agreed the following:

CiCC – dates and details of meetings to be circulated to the Panel.

The Panel confirmed that it would welcome regular contact with the CiCC including attendance at some of its meetings.

Corporate Parenting Panel Leaflet:

The leaflet should be accessible to young people and clearly communicates the purpose of the panel, identifies the members of the Panel (including photos), and could include what particular issues the Panel will focus on (in the light of what young people have raised as concerns). The leaflet/information should also be accessible on the Council's website and distributed to both young people and carers. It could include a tear off response slip to encourage young people to raise issues.

The Panel agreed that a draft leaflet be developed and could form the basis of a workshop between the Panel and the CiCC.

### Young People's Questionnaire – key findings

The results of the questionnaire will be brought to the Panel. The Panel welcomed the offer of information on the destinations of those leaving care and in particular the apprenticeship scheme. (Colleagues who are involved with the Tiffin Club which is involved with the apprenticeship scheme will be invited to attend a future meeting).

In relation to school issues and, in particular the virtual school, the Panel was advised that a new head had now been appointed (Steve Pendleton) following retirement of Anne Hawker. Each district has an area lead from the Virtual School who focuses on education for looked after children and every looked after child has a personal education plan.

### Corporate Parenting - Member Induction

Councillor Jenny St John proposed that thought be given to an alternative approach to member induction other than providing a seminar for all members.

The Panel agreed that officers provide smaller group sessions (possibly by area of the county) that would allow members to have discussions, including involving young people.

### Charter for Care Leavers

It was envisaged that this will be put to full Council for adoption. The Panel agreed that the Charter could be a focus for the Panel's engagement with CiCC.

### Minute 2 – Advocacy Services

The Panel noted that there was a proposal to have representatives of Barnardo's (who operate the Advocacy service) to attend with the CiCC representatives when they attend the Panel – if required.

### Minute 4 – The Dartington Project

Brenda Vincent explained that this project arose from national analysis that showed that there is not a strong correlation between high deprivation factors and the numbers of children in care and that, in fact, there is little evidence of 'what work' from a research basis in terms of looked after children. Warwickshire had been chosen (alongside South Gloucestershire and Sandwell) to look at alternatives to placing children into care. Analysis in 2010 revealed that out of 100 children, the largest group (40%) were teenagers. The project has looked at commissioning alternative service that will divert young people from care where this is safe and appropriate. One is through the 'Triple P' parenting programme, which focuses on one to one work and another was through commissioning functional family therapy. The approach requires a meeting of all relevant agencies/parties

to determine immediately whether there is an alternative to care. Some of these children may have already been identified as being in a priority family for intervention. Brenda explained that there is a lot of processes and procedures to follow when a child/young person enters care, as determined by the Regulations, and it is difficult to focus on the family at that time. This new approach requires a cultural change and, although it requires a high level of early intervention (and cost up-front), it is envisaged that it will be more cost effective in the long run.

#### Minute 4 – children who experience three or more placements

The previous Panel had noted that this is around 12% in Warwickshire, slightly higher than the national target Brenda Vincent tabled a paper that set out some analysis of Warwickshire's figures at March 2013. This showed that the highest level was in Nuneaton and Bedworth area (18.1%) and lowest in Warwick (6.9%). The Panel was advised that the number of moves was the same as the previous year (87 out of 681) but proportionately the number of moves of children saw a slight decrease. The moves also covered all types of moves, including move to adoption. Teenage boys make up the largest single cohort of three or more placements and this can be due to a range of causes, including placement breakdown. Brenda explained that although there is a large fostering service that works well, there is not a lot of placement choice. Warwickshire was developing new approaches – such as the solo placement scheme to provide enhanced levels of support. Discussions were taking place with an independent fostering agency to have a scheme, similar to the Barnado's approved scheme. Some carers also provide emergency placement.

The Panel noted that of the 87 children, 30 placements had been with a local authority foster carer and 21 placed with agency or other non Warwickshire approved carer/voluntary agency.

It was noted that every effort is made to keep a child at the same school, regardless of changes in their placement, particularly at Key Stage 4, but there would be some cases where circumstances meant a child changed school.

The Panel requested further benchmarking information that would enable the Panel to see how Warwickshire stood in comparison to other local authorities and also a breakdown of placement types by district area.

### **3. Terms of Reference of the Panel**

The Panel's Terms of Reference, as set out in the report considered and agreed by the County Council in July 2012, were noted. The main points of this would be summarised in the leaflet for young people as referred to in minute 2 above.

#### **4. Corporate Parenting and the Voice of the Child**

The Panel noted a recent letter from Edward Timpson MP, Under Secretary of State for Children and Families highlighting the importance of embedding the voice of the child in local practice.

##### *CiCCs and communication*

The letter highlighted the importance of lead members and Directors of Children's Services holding regular meetings with their CiCC and also to regularly review and improve information given to children in care so that they are aware of their legal entitlements. Brenda Vincent assured the Panel that regular meetings were held and that there was a range of information given through various methods – including packs of playing cards that include contacts such as the NSPCC helpline. Carers are engaging with the We-Learn platform which will provide another opportunity of passing information to looked after children through their carers. The Panel agreed that information should be included there (including information on the Panel).

##### *Role of Independent Review Officers*

The letter also referred to the role of Independent Review Officers and Brenda outlined how these operate in Warwickshire to meet the aspects of good service promoted in the letter. Every child in care is assigned an IRO who is a qualified social worker to a standard required for this role. They are in a team that is separate from the care managers. They meet the child regularly, chair reviews and ensure the care plan is appropriate, safe and is progressed. A traffic light rating system on action is used (red alerts would be escalated to Brenda or another on her level to deal with). The IRO will also check that the child has been given information on their rights in care.

##### *'Freezing' of decision whilst a complaint is investigated*

Brenda explained that it was a requirement to freeze a decision if a child objects to a decision, whilst the objection is investigated. Every effort is made for this process to take place quickly to avoid a child being 'in limbo'.

#### **5A Improving Outcomes for Care Leavers**

The Panel noted a letter that had been sent by Edward Timpson in 2012 during Care Leavers Week that highlighted a number of areas local authorities should be addressing. The Panel was advised that these areas were being addressed as follows:

- Charter for Leaving Care – developed and publicised as mentioned above.
- information packs for those leaving care
- Employment – this is an area that is being progressed (as referred to above a report will come back to the Panel).
- 'Staying Put' – support to help those at 18 stay with their foster carers (Warwickshire piloted and maintain this development).

- Financial Support - The Government promote the provision of a leaving care grant of around £2000 but Warwickshire operate a scheme whereby long term savings are accrued. Plans are being made for this to be deducted from foster carers allowances at and twice a year will put into Junior ISAs so that savings are built up. There will be more choice when the young person is 16yrs on how to use this element of the allowance (e.g. for driving lessons, to buy a PC for education/work purposes). This has been found helpful in developing the habit of saving and provides money for them to make the move to independence. In addition the authority works to an essential equipment list when a young person sets up independent living. The Panel welcomed this innovative approach although it may have to be reviewed if there is insistence in future that the Council go down the grant line described in the letter.

## **5b Looked after Children – Flowchart -Care Planning Regulations and Guidance**

Brenda Vincent referred to the flowchart in the papers and explained each of the main stages of assessment, placing options and review required for looked after children.

40-50% of looked after children fall under, voluntarily care where the parent retains all parental responsibility. Asylum seekers are included in this category. The other 50-60% fall under Section 31 where an interim or full care order has been issued and parental responsibility is shared with the local authority.

Since 1 July section 31 orders have to be processed within 26 weeks which has compressed the assessment process into 8 weeks. This should be better in terms of getting long term plans for the child secured sooner but is putting pressure on teams. It also means that assessments need to be done before going to court which means increased costs up front for local authorities. For example courts may ask for a psychological assessment that may be joint-funded between the local authority and other parties, but undertaking assessments prior to court requires payment by the local authority up front, and that may not be recouped. There may, however, be less legal and care costs with the reduced court timescale.

## **5c 10 Questions to ask if you are scrutinising services for looked after children.**

The Panel noted the guidance from LG Improvement and Development/ Cap's on what to ask when scrutinising services for looked after children. The Panel recognised that there would be some information that would come to the Panel and to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that the Panel may sometimes wish to ask the Committee to look in detail at a particular area. The Panel agreed it was important not to duplicate effort and keep a watch on the programme of work to ensure this did not happen.



Brenda Vincent reminded members that the key question to keep in mind was always 'is this good enough for my child?'

## **6 Looked After Children – Dataset**

The Panel noted the data as at May 2013. Figures over the six months from December showed a decrease in the total number of looked after children. There were, however, increases in some individual team areas. The Panel was reminded that there were some family groups within these figures, for example 6 siblings were in care from one family.

The number of asylum seekers had reduced from 60 to 40. Warwickshire had received its first from Syria. Brenda Vincent explained the funding was provided by Government for direct costs (accommodation, food) and indirect support (including team costs) subject to a ceiling. For 0-15 year olds the allocation was £95 maximum a day but this reduced at 16-17 to £71. This stops at 18 although there are on-going costs for the Local Authority in terms of leaving care responsibilities up to the age of 21.

Warwickshire has claimed back £1.7m for 2012/13 but this will reduce as the numbers drop.

Janet Purcell undertook to circulate a colour version of the data.

## **7 Actions and Work Programme**

The following points will be taken forward from this meeting:

### Information to circulate:

- (1) Dates and venues of meetings
- (2) LAC Dataset in colour
- (3) Playing Card packs for new members

### Information to go to next/future meeting

- (4) Benchmarking information (against other local authorities) on look after children with three or more placements and a breakdown by area of placement types.
- (5) Full results of young people's questionnaire.

### Actions

- (6) Member induction – investigate sessions with groups of members, perhaps by district area, and involving young people in care/ representatives
- (7) Develop a draft leaflet – the panel to be invited to work on this with representatives.
- (8) Leaving Care Charter – to be adopted by Council in December?

(9) Representatives of to be invited to attend with representatives when they attend future meeting?

Items to include in Work Programme

The following items have also been mentioned at this or previous meetings:

Corporate Parenting Strategy – to be updated reviewed with the  
Adoption Services Annual Report (for next meeting)  
Introduction to the Complaints Service (for next meeting)  
Report of the Independent Reviewing Officers

**8 Dates of future meetings**

The Panel agreed to meet at 10.00 am on:

**11 September 2013**

Adoption Services Annual Report  
Complaints Service  
Young Peoples Questionnaire  
First draft leaflet?

**30 October 2013 – proposed date for workshop with the CiCC to be look at drafting leaflets and/or consider the Corporate Parenting Strategy?**

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Chair

The meeting closed at 11.45 am

## **CinCC and Corporate Parenting Panel Workshop**

**30 October (time and venue to be confirmed)**

### **Draft Agenda**

- 1. Getting to know you exercises**
- 2. Feedback on the Elected Member leaflet**
- 3. Arrangements for young people's attendance at the C. P. Panel**
- 4. Progressing young people's priorities – what, who, when**
- 5. Reviewing the Pledge and Corporate Parenting Strategy – what has been achieved and what is outstanding**
- 6. Next steps and future meetings**



Warwickshire County Council

Number of Children who had 3 placement moves during 2012/13 by Placement Type as at 31 March 2013

Placement Type at 31 March 2013	North Warwickshire	Nuneaton & Bedworth	Rugby	Stratford	Warwick	Asylum Seekers	Warwickshire (Total)
Foster placement with friend or family	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
Foster placement with LA carer	0	17	8	2	1	2	30
Foster placement with Agency/OLA carer	3	10	4	2	2	0	21
Health Establishment providing medical care	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Independent Living Placement	3	4	0	2	5	3	17
Placed for adoption	0	2	2	0	1	0	5
Placed with own parents	0	3	0	1	0	0	4
Residential Home/School	0	5	0	0	0	0	5
Other Placement (BRICS Scheme)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>WARWICKSHIRE TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>As % of all LAC at 31 March 2013</b>	<b>10.1%</b>	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>14.5%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>6.9%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>

As at 31 March 2013, the largest proportion of children who had experienced 3 placement moves or more during the year were placed with WCC Foster Carers at the end of the year, accounting for 30 (34.5%) of all placements. The largest proportion of these 30 placements were for children allocated to a team in Nuneaton & Bedworth.

**Warwickshire County Council**

**Placement Type of all placement moves during the year of children who had 3 placement moves during 2012/13**

Placement Types during 2012/13	North Warwickshire	Nuneaton & Bedworth	Rugby	Stratford	Warwick	Asylum Seekers	Warwickshire (Total)
Foster placement with friend or family	0	4	2	3	1	0	10
Foster placement with LA carer	5	80	26	11	13	15	150
Foster placement with Agency/OLA carer	5	44	11	3	4	0	67
Health Establishment providing medical care	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Independent Living Placement	16	11	0	6	24	5	62
Missing from Care Episode	0	2	9	3	0	0	14
Mother & Baby Unit	1	0	3	0	0	0	4
Placed for adoption	0	2	2	0	1	0	5
Placed with own parents	0	13	1	1	0	0	15
Residential Home/School	2	12	6	0	0	0	20
Secure Unit	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Other Placement (BRICS Scheme)	6	5	3	1	1	0	16
Y.O.I. or Prison or Police Custody	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
<b>WARWICKSHIRE TOTAL</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>366</b>

**The 87 children who had 3 or more placements during the 2012/13 year resulted in 366 episodes of care. Of these 366 episodes:**

- 150 (41.0%) of these episodes were with a WCC Foster Carer.
- 173 (47.3%) of these episodes were for the 43 children who saw 3 placements or more in Nuneaton & Bedworth.
- The largest proportion of episodes of care amongst the 3 placement or more cohort, were 80 children allocated to teams within Nuneaton & Bedworth who were placed with a WCC Foster Care, accounting for 80 (21.9%) of all placements amongst the entire 3 placements or more cohort during the year.

**LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PERFORMANCE TABLES - PLACEMENT 1**

The percentage of children looked after at 31 March with three or more placements during the year ending 31 March

Latest data

2012

A low percentage represents high performance

Rank	LA Code	LA Name	Indicator value for the 3 year average in 2010, 2011 and 2012 (%)	Percentage of looked after children with three or more placements during the year					Number of looked after children					Number of looked after children with three or more placements during the year				
				2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
	<b>ENGLAND</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>59,380</b>	<b>60,910</b>	<b>64,460</b>	<b>65,520</b>	<b>67,050</b>	<b>7,030</b>	<b>6,780</b>	<b>7,320</b>	<b>7,220</b>	<b>7,380</b>
92	301	Barking and Dagenham	12	16	18	10	13	13	340	385	375	410	425	55	70	40	50	55
28	302	Barnet	9	12	10	10	6	10	325	325	310	300	300	40	30	30	20	30
10	370	Barnsley	8	12	12	9	8	8	260	265	245	245	225	30	30	20	20	15
10	800	Bath and North East Somerset	8	12	7	9	6	9	130	120	140	160	165	15	10	15	10	15
41	822	Bedford Borough	10	.	.	11	10	9	.	.	165	165	215	.	.	20	15	20
66	303	Bexley	11	11	10	9	10	13	210	215	220	210	240	25	20	20	20	30
125	330	Birmingham	14	13	13	16	14	12	2,095	2,095	2,030	1,890	1,895	280	280	330	255	225
10	889	Blackburn with Darwen	8	13	7	7	7	8	305	320	365	365	360	40	20	25	25	30
41	890	Blackpool	10	10	8	10	11	8	275	325	375	395	435	25	25	40	45	35
10	350	Bolton	8	14	13	9	8	5	420	435	480	520	515	60	55	45	45	30
28	837	Bournemouth	9	12	6	9	10	7	160	180	205	200	250	20	10	20	20	20
92	867	Bracknell Forest	12	12	13	19	8	10	75	80	90	85	100	10	10	15	5	10
10	380	Bradford	8	11	9	8	10	8	840	875	890	885	895	90	75	70	90	70
140	304	Brent	15	17	16	16	16	14	365	360	370	385	360	65	55	60	60	50
116	846	Brighton and Hove	13	15	14	11	13	15	370	395	465	485	485	55	55	55	65	70
92	801	Bristol, City of	12	11	13	13	11	13	665	650	645	680	685	75	85	85	75	85
140	305	Bromley	15	12	10	18	13	16	260	250	285	265	275	30	25	50	35	45
41	825	Buckinghamshire	10	6	9	11	11	10	295	330	345	390	370	20	30	35	40	35
92	351	Bury	12	9	11	11	14	12	295	290	290	325	325	30	30	30	45	40
10	381	Calderdale	8	11	15	8	8	7	250	275	270	325	355	30	40	20	25	25
2	873	Cambridgeshire	4	11	7	5	1	5	410	450	475	470	470	45	35	25	5	20
92	202	Camden	12	10	12	9	11	15	275	270	265	285	265	30	35	25	30	40
41	823	Central Bedfordshire	10	.	.	10	7	13	.	.	165	180	210	.	.	15	10	25
116	895	Cheshire East	13	.	.	14	15	10	.	.	435	445	435	.	.	60	65	45
41	896	Cheshire West and Chester	10	.	.	13	10	8	.	.	330	350	365	.	.	45	35	30
1	201	City Of London	0	0	0	0	x	x	10	15	15	10	5	0	0	0	0	0
140	908	Cornwall	15	15	17	13	18	14	415	460	450	470	480	65	80	60	85	70
66	331	Coventry	11	11	12	10	11	12	535	515	590	585	580	60	60	60	65	70
66	306	Croydon	11	12	7	11	10	11	1,045	1,070	1,005	845	745	120	75	115	80	80
10	909	Cumbria	8	10	8	9	6	9	480	450	510	510	600	45	40	45	30	50
125	841	Darlington	14	11	14	15	15	14	135	130	145	190	205	15	20	20	25	30
10	831	Derby	8	9	8	8	7	10	405	425	420	460	480	35	35	30	30	45
28	830	Derbyshire	9	13	12	10	10	8	545	550	630	660	700	70	70	60	65	55
147	878	Devon	17	15	13	16	16	18	555	540	615	645	710	85	70	95	105	125
150	371	Doncaster	18	18	15	19	18	16	400	425	470	450	510	70	65	90	80	85
28	835	Dorset	9	11	12	9	10	8	280	265	275	280	300	30	30	25	30	25
41	332	Dudley	10	13	11	12	9	8	510	545	610	610	680	65	60	75	55	55
147	840	Durham	17	11	15	17	16	19	410	440	510	530	660	45	65	85	85	120

41	307 Ealing	10	8	8	9	10	11	395	395	405	385	410	30	30	35	35	45
41	811 East Riding of Yorkshire	10	14	9	12	11	8	260	255	275	305	315	35	20	35	30	25
41	845 East Sussex	10	9	6	9	10	9	445	480	530	590	620	40	30	50	60	55
116	308 Enfield	13	12	11	12	17	12	255	260	280	300	310	30	30	35	50	35
28	881 Essex	9	12	10	10	9	9	1,270	1,330	1,465	1,585	1,485	150	135	145	150	130
66	390 Gateshead	11	11	12	10	10	14	290	290	300	365	385	30	35	30	35	55
92	916 Gloucestershire	12	13	14	13	13	11	390	465	490	480	460	50	65	65	60	50
125	203 Greenwich	14	12	8	13	16	12	515	530	595	595	565	60	45	80	100	65
92	204 Hackney	12	8	9	16	9	10	360	340	295	270	305	30	30	50	25	30
66	876 Halton	11	9	7	14	8	10	150	160	145	125	125	15	10	20	10	10
41	205 Hammersmith and Fulham	10	9	8	14	6	8	315	290	255	250	225	30	20	35	15	20
140	850 Hampshire	15	17	17	14	14	16	1,015	1,085	1,105	1,080	1,105	175	180	160	155	170
116	309 Haringey	13	15	15	14	16	10	425	490	590	610	575	65	75	80	95	60
140	310 Harrow	15	10	9	12	16	17	140	150	160	140	155	15	15	20	20	25
3	805 Hartlepool	6	14	9	7	6	5	150	150	165	165	175	20	15	10	10	10
147	311 Havering	17	13	15	16	16	20	190	200	200	200	185	25	30	30	30	35
10	884 Herefordshire	8	7	6	10	8	7	155	165	165	200	210	10	10	15	15	15
116	919 Hertfordshire	13	11	13	13	14	12	910	980	1,135	1,095	1,055	100	125	145	150	130
10	312 Hillingdon	8	11	11	9	8	5	475	445	420	385	375	50	50	40	30	20
125	313 Hounslow	14	11	9	15	13	14	335	340	355	345	320	35	30	50	45	45
125	921 Isle Of Wight	14	12	13	13	15	12	200	195	180	175	160	25	25	25	25	20
NA	420 Isles Of Scilly	..	..	..	..	..	..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
41	206 Islington	10	10	10	14	8	9	330	305	315	325	330	35	30	45	25	30
116	207 Kensington and Chelsea	13	14	15	13	14	11	175	160	155	130	140	25	25	20	20	15
66	886 Kent	11	10	10	8	8	15	1,355	1,420	1,480	1,695	1,800	140	145	125	140	275
92	810 Kingston Upon Hull, City of	12	14	11	13	12	12	540	525	570	620	615	75	60	75	75	75
66	314 Kingston Upon Thames	11	12	9	13	10	10	90	110	125	115	125	10	10	15	10	15
28	382 Kirklees	9	10	9	11	8	9	445	505	555	585	640	45	45	60	45	55
28	340 Knowsley	9	8	7	9	8	11	305	305	295	285	255	25	20	25	25	25
66	208 Lambeth	11	13	13	11	11	13	570	545	565	500	510	75	75	60	55	65
66	888 Lancashire	11	13	11	10	10	13	1,275	1,255	1,285	1,295	1,325	160	140	125	135	170
92	383 Leeds	12	10	10	11	14	11	1,360	1,335	1,415	1,450	1,475	135	130	160	200	165
116	856 Leicester	13	12	12	11	15	13	450	455	480	500	520	55	55	55	75	70
41	855 Leicestershire	10	13	12	10	12	8	310	325	325	355	375	40	40	35	40	30
66	209 Lewisham	11	6	12	13	9	11	465	465	525	480	500	25	55	70	45	55
10	925 Lincolnshire	8	11	7	8	8	7	530	540	525	490	500	60	35	45	40	35
41	341 Liverpool	10	15	16	14	9	7	845	860	920	940	900	125	135	130	90	65
92	821 Luton	12	13	12	12	13	12	385	345	340	390	385	50	40	40	50	45
41	352 Manchester	10	11	9	8	11	10	1,430	1,410	1,425	1,385	1,310	160	130	120	150	135
28	887 Medway Towns	9	9	8	8	8	11	330	310	355	425	445	30	25	30	35	50
125	315 Merton	14	19	16	13	15	15	105	120	140	135	130	20	20	20	20	20
66	806 Middlesbrough	11	11	12	12	10	11	270	275	320	330	350	30	35	40	30	35
125	826 Milton Keynes	14	12	12	14	13	17	210	225	260	270	280	25	30	35	35	45
41	391 Newcastle Upon Tyne	10	10	14	6	11	11	455	460	525	530	550	45	65	35	60	60
140	316 Newham	15	14	15	17	15	13	595	560	565	490	445	85	85	95	70	55
41	926 Norfolk	10	12	10	9	10	10	830	840	890	960	1,010	95	80	80	100	100
3	812 North East Lincolnshire	6	11	7	7	x	6	150	150	155	145	155	15	10	10	x	10
28	813 North Lincolnshire	9	8	10	9	10	10	155	155	160	165	170	10	15	15	15	15
66	802 North Somerset	11	10	14	12	11	12	170	195	225	230	230	20	30	25	25	25
66	392 North Tyneside	11	13	17	14	10	9	225	210	275	280	300	30	35	40	30	25



28	815 North Yorkshire	9	8	7	10	9	7	410	415	470	465	480	35	30	50	45	35
92	928 Northamptonshire	12	16	13	13	12	13	555	645	705	745	795	85	85	90	85	105
6	929 Northumberland	7	8	6	8	5	10	300	270	280	270	280	25	15	20	10	30
41	892 Nottingham	10	11	10	10	10	11	475	475	520	525	540	55	45	50	55	60
6	891 Nottinghamshire	7	9	7	7	7	8	455	480	575	675	800	40	35	40	45	60
10	353 Oldham	8	8	7	8	8	8	340	325	345	335	325	30	20	30	25	25
92	931 Oxfordshire	12	14	9	12	12	11	405	415	450	425	450	55	40	50	50	50
10	874 Peterborough	8	13	8	9	8	7	350	315	300	310	335	45	25	30	25	25
146	879 Plymouth	16	16	15	17	16	15	370	380	435	375	385	60	55	75	60	55
66	836 Poole	11	8	11	12	10	11	105	115	120	135	160	10	15	15	15	15
28	851 Portsmouth	9	7	9	8	9	10	260	285	290	315	300	20	25	20	25	30
41	870 Reading	10	19	7	7	11	11	215	195	205	215	240	40	15	15	25	25
66	317 Redbridge	11	11	9	10	11	11	180	215	230	210	215	20	20	25	25	25
10	807 Redcar and Cleveland	8	12	12	10	10	5	140	140	155	150	170	15	15	15	15	10
125	318 Richmond Upon Thames	14	9	11	15	16	10	95	90	95	90	75	10	10	15	15	10
66	354 Rochdale	11	14	10	12	10	11	345	400	425	455	450	50	40	50	45	50
66	372 Rotherham	11	12	14	11	11	11	345	405	410	390	380	40	55	45	45	40
NA	857 Rutland	x	x	0	x	x	x	15	20	30	35	30	x	0	x	x	x
92	355 Salford	12	10	8	12	10	13	530	490	495	580	555	55	40	60	60	70
66	333 Sandwell	11	9	6	9	13	10	480	475	510	550	575	45	30	50	70	55
92	343 Sefton	12	14	14	12	10	12	315	360	375	380	400	45	50	45	40	50
92	373 Sheffield	12	14	10	14	12	9	635	590	580	625	610	90	60	80	75	55
92	893 Shropshire	12	14	10	10	13	12	195	200	220	220	205	30	20	25	30	25
92	871 Slough	12	7	10	16	11	9	120	135	175	165	170	10	15	30	20	15
125	334 Solihull	14	14	15	16	14	12	340	405	410	400	365	45	60	65	55	45
125	933 Somerset	14	16	15	15	14	12	375	395	430	450	495	60	60	65	60	60
66	803 South Gloucestershire	11	10	12	10	13	10	170	180	185	210	210	20	20	20	30	20
41	393 South Tyneside	10	13	16	12	9	9	260	260	295	320	315	35	40	35	30	30
41	852 Southampton	10	16	14	9	10	10	270	290	375	385	430	45	40	35	40	40
92	882 Southend-on-Sea	12	14	9	14	12	10	280	275	265	270	240	40	25	40	30	25
125	210 Southwark	14	12	15	15	13	13	570	535	555	525	550	70	80	80	70	70
6	342 St Helens	7	8	6	6	7	7	315	325	355	345	335	25	20	20	25	25
125	860 Staffordshire	14	14	14	14	13	14	660	695	745	790	875	95	95	100	105	125
66	356 Stockport	11	13	10	11	11	10	310	315	315	295	300	40	30	35	30	30
41	808 Stockton-On-Tees	10	10	12	8	12	9	225	235	285	290	335	25	30	25	35	30
116	861 Stoke-On-Trent	13	15	14	13	14	12	415	395	405	410	440	65	55	55	55	55
28	935 Suffolk	9	9	10	9	9	11	725	715	785	790	780	65	75	70	70	85
41	394 Sunderland	10	11	11	8	10	12	390	395	390	410	390	40	40	30	40	45
92	936 Surrey	12	12	14	14	11	12	795	820	765	730	805	95	115	105	80	100
125	319 Sutton	14	15	14	17	14	11	125	125	145	165	155	20	15	25	25	15
41	866 Swindon	10	10	8	9	11	11	220	240	245	235	255	20	20	25	25	30
66	357 Tameside	11	11	14	8	12	12	310	330	355	375	390	35	45	30	45	45
66	894 Telford and Wrekin	11	13	11	13	11	8	230	250	270	270	300	30	25	35	30	25
41	883 Thurrock	10	16	10	12	10	9	205	220	235	210	240	35	20	30	20	20
116	880 Torbay	13	18	14	11	13	15	175	185	180	220	250	30	25	20	30	40
92	211 Tower Hamlets	12	11	10	13	11	11	340	350	350	325	295	40	35	45	35	35
6	358 Trafford	7	16	15	7	7	7	235	235	250	255	280	40	35	15	15	20
41	384 Wakefield	10	8	11	11	10	8	320	345	375	395	435	25	40	40	40	35
10	335 Walsall	8	10	9	7	7	9	445	465	495	520	490	45	40	35	40	45
66	320 Waltham Forest	11	11	11	11	12	11	320	340	340	315	310	35	35	35	40	35

66	212 Wandsworth	11	11	10	11	11	11	240	230	210	210	215	25	25	20	25	25
92	877 Warrington	12	11	13	12	13	11	200	245	265	245	235	20	30	30	35	25
92	937 Warwickshire	12	13	13	12	12	13	485	540	585	640	680	60	70	70	80	85
3	869 West Berkshire	6	x	x	6	7	6	115	95	125	125	125	x	x	5	10	5
92	938 West Sussex	12	10	8	12	12	12	755	750	785	750	675	70	60	95	95	80
66	213 Westminster	11	9	14	9	13	12	240	215	245	210	210	20	30	25	30	25
10	359 Wigan	8	11	11	8	9	7	425	485	510	460	480	45	50	45	40	35
125	865 Wiltshire	14	11	9	14	14	15	335	340	355	385	415	40	30	50	55	60
10	868 Windsor and Maidenhead	8	x	10	8	7	10	75	90	105	105	95	x	10	10	5	10
28	344 Wirral	9	13	11	7	9	11	610	625	630	680	675	75	65	45	60	70
10	872 Wokingham	8	16	12	x	x	13	70	65	80	75	70	10	10	x	x	10
66	336 Wolverhampton	11	13	10	14	11	9	350	370	405	490	575	45	35	55	55	50
92	885 Worcestershire	12	14	11	13	11	11	480	530	580	590	600	65	60	75	65	65
125	816 York	14	11	10	12	13	16	170	200	225	235	255	20	20	25	30	40

Source: SSDA903

## Warwickshire County Council

### Legal Status of Looked After Children at end of year, 2010 to 2013 compared to current position at 31 July 2013

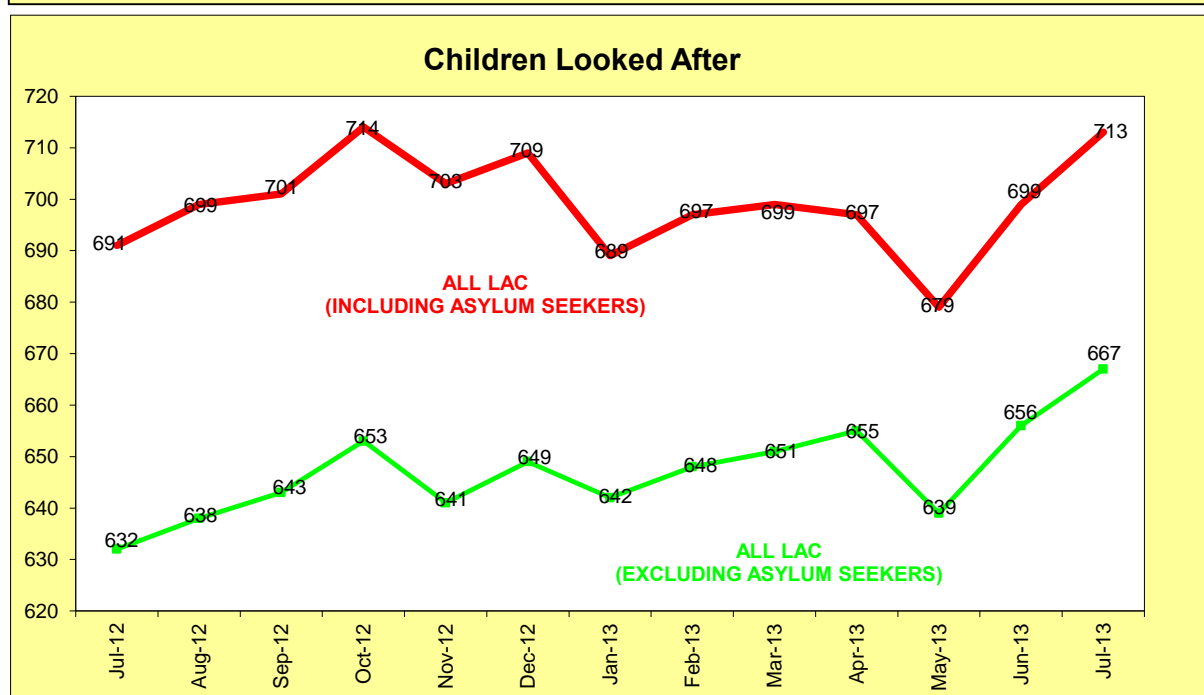
Legal Status	LAC March 2010	LAC March 2011	LAC March 2012	LAC March 2013	LAC at 31 July 2013
Interim Care Order	108	154	131	164	148
Full Care Order	202	203	244	245	264
S20 Accommodation	225	245	256	220	227
Freed for Adoption	5	2	2	2	2
Placement Order	31	31	48	67	70
On Remand or Committed for Trial/Sentence	3	1	0	0	0
Emergency Protection Order	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Warwickshire Total</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>713</b>

This table shows that there has been an increase in legal measures to secure children in care. Most noticeably in the use of Interim & Full Care Orders, this accounted for 54% of the looked after population at 31 March 2010 but now accounts for 57.7% as at 31 July 2013. There has also been a gradual increase in the number of placements orders, this accounted for 5.4% of the looked after population at 31 March 2010 but now accounts for 9.8% of the looked after population as at 31 July 2013.

In comparison and as expected due to the apparent rise in legal measures to secure children, the proportion of children who are voluntarily accommodated under Section 20 has seen a reduction, down from 39.2% of the looked after population at 31 March 2010 to 31.8% of the looked after population at 31 July 2013.



## CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER



At 31 July 2013, Warwickshire's looked after population increased by 14 to 713, whilst the number of looked after children excluding asylum seekers increased by 11 to 667. This was as a result of 47 starts in July (including 8 that were recorded late by teams) and just 33 ceasing to be looked after.

### Number of Looked After cases allocated by team

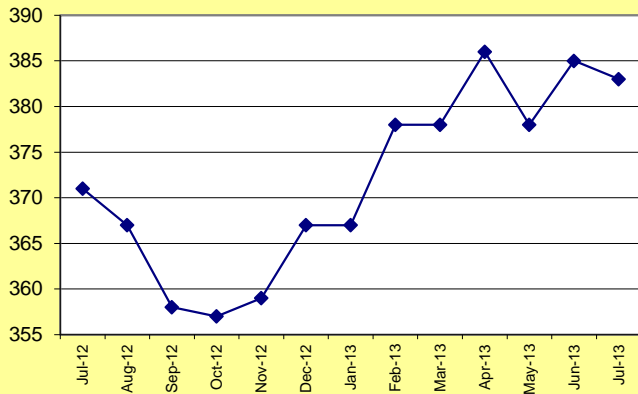
	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13
N. Warks Ch&F Team	69	69	64	60	58	63
<b>North Warwickshire (ALL)</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>63</b>
Bedworth Children's Team	162	157	159	161	164	169
Nuneaton Children's Team	75	78	80	77	82	88
<b>Nuneaton &amp; Bedworth (ALL)</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>257</b>
Rugby Childrens Services Team	111	112	112	107	107	108
<b>Rugby (ALL)</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>108</b>
Stratford District Children's Team	77	83	84	83	84	82
<b>Stratford (ALL)</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>82</b>
Warwick District CAT	5	5	6	5	2	2
Kenilworth/Warwick	58	58	60	58	64	58
Leamington Ch&F Team	67	66	66	64	70	72
<b>Warwick (ALL)</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>132</b>
N/W, Nun & Bed Integrated Disability	7	7	7	6	7	7
Rugby Integrated Disability	1	1	1	1	1	1
Stratford Integrated Disability	2	2	2	2	2	2
Wark & Lm Integrated Disability	8	7	8	9	9	8
IDS Autism Team	5	5	5	5	5	6
<b>Integrated Disability Service (ALL)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>
Asylum Seekers	49	48	42	40	43	46
Other Countywide Services	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Warwickshire (TOTAL)</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>713</b>

**Looked After Children by Placement Type by Team at 31 July 2013**

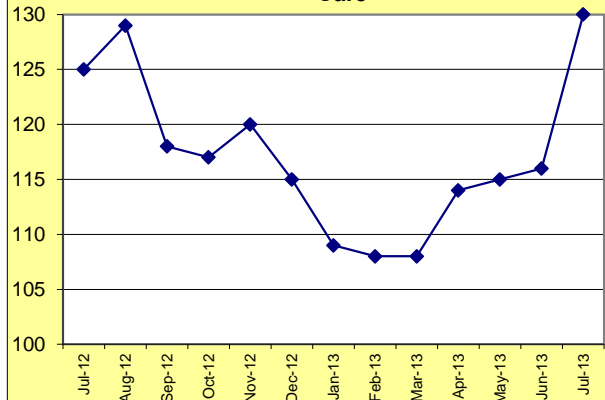
	WCC Foster Care	Placed for Adoption	Residential Home/School	Agency/O LA Foster Care	Relative/Friend Foster Care	Placed with Parents/Person with PR	Other Placement <small>e.g. Independent Living, Mother &amp; Baby Unit</small>
N. Warks Ch&F Team	40	5	2	13	1	0	2
Bedworth Children's Team	86	3	8	46	14	7	5
Nuneaton Children's Team	48	11	2	9	13	5	0
Rugby Children's Team	68	5	1	17	9	5	3
Stratford Children's Team	43	5	3	17	8	5	1
Warwick District CAT	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kenilworth/Warwick	32	1	1	4	7	6	7
Leamington Ch&F Team	36	2	2	15	9	7	1
N/W, Nun & Bed Int Disab	1	0	0	4	1	0	1
Rugby Integrated Disability	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Stratford Integrated Disab	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Wark & Lm Integrated Disab	7	0	0	1	0	0	0
IDS Autism Team	2	0	4	0	0	0	0
Asylum Seekers	16	0	0	4	1	0	25
Other Countywide Services	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Warwickshire (TOTAL)</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>45</b>

## Children Looked After by Placement Type

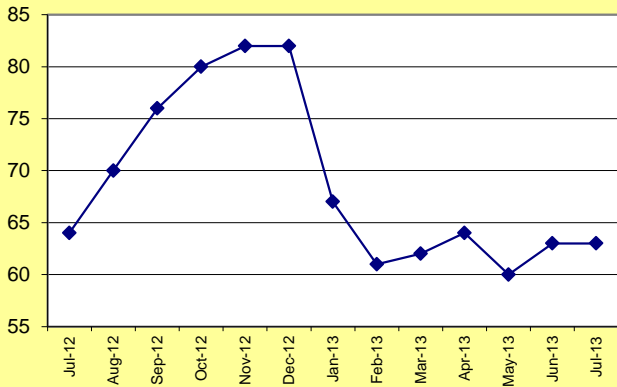
**Children Looked After in WCC Foster Care**



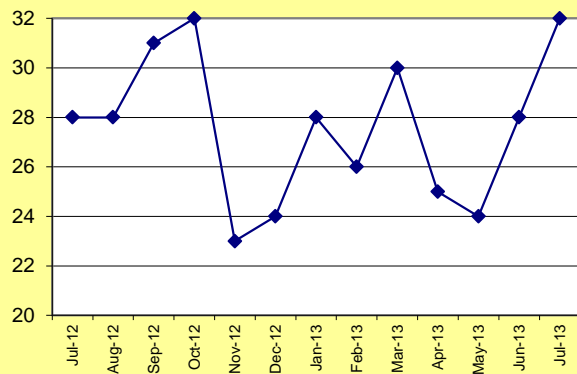
**Children Looked After in Agency/OLA Foster Care**



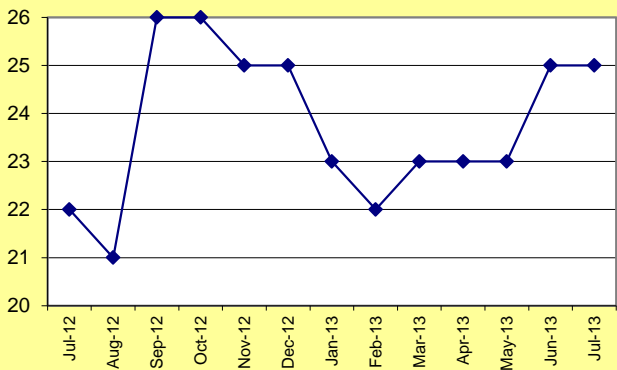
**Relative/Friend Foster Care**



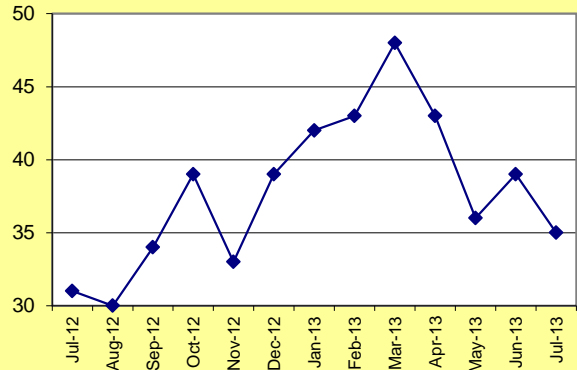
**Placed for Adoption**



**Residential Home/School**



**Placed with Parents or Person with P.R.**



At 31 July 2013, an increase was seen in children placed in agency/OLA foster care (up 14 to 130), children placed for adoption (up 4 to 32) and children placed in other placements (up 2 to 45).

Decreases were seen this month in children placed in WCC foster care (down 2 to 383), children placed with parents or person with P.R. (down 4 to 35)

No change was seen in children placed in residential home / school (25) or children placed with relative/friend foster

## FOSTERING

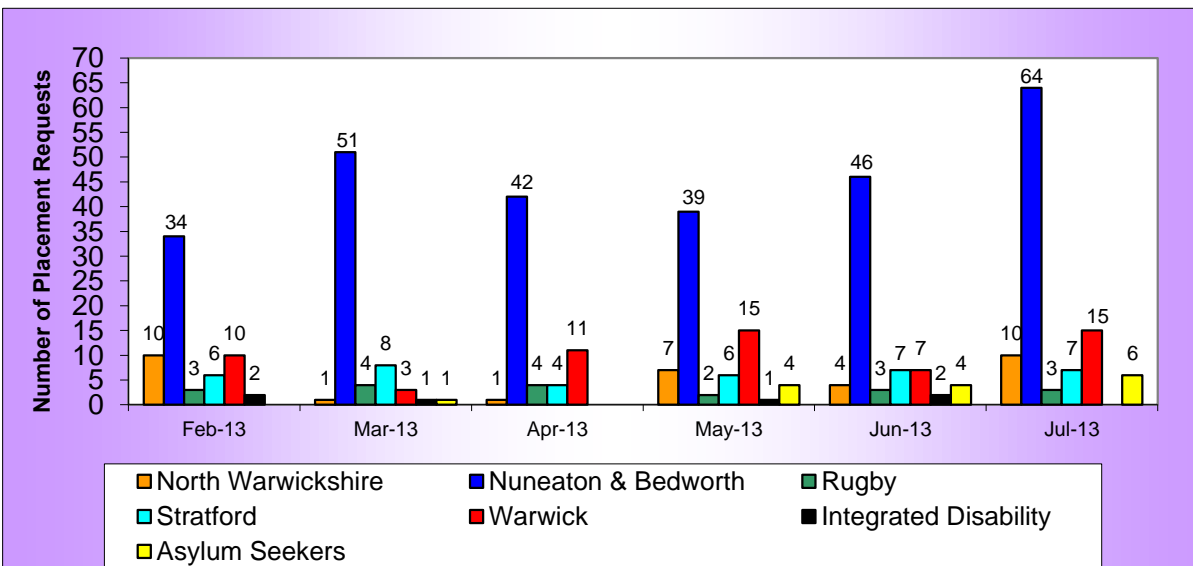
### Approval Categories of Foster Carers at 31 July 2013 by Team

	Family & Friends	Family Link	General/ Mainstream	Contract Fostering	Staying Put
Stratford	0	0	1	0	0
Rugby	0	0	3	0	0
EDT	0	0	4	0	0
North Fostering	0	0	135	0	7
South Fostering	0	0	115	0	4
Fostering Kinship	51	0	2	0	0
Short Break Care Service	0	21	0	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>

As at 31 July 2013 there were **335** foster care households in Warwickshire recorded on Carefirst.

There are currently **11** carers who are approved to provide 'staying put' placements for young people aged 18+. Of these **11, 5** are approved solely for 'staying put' placements whilst the other **6** are also approved for foster care.

### Foster Care Placement Requests during the month by District

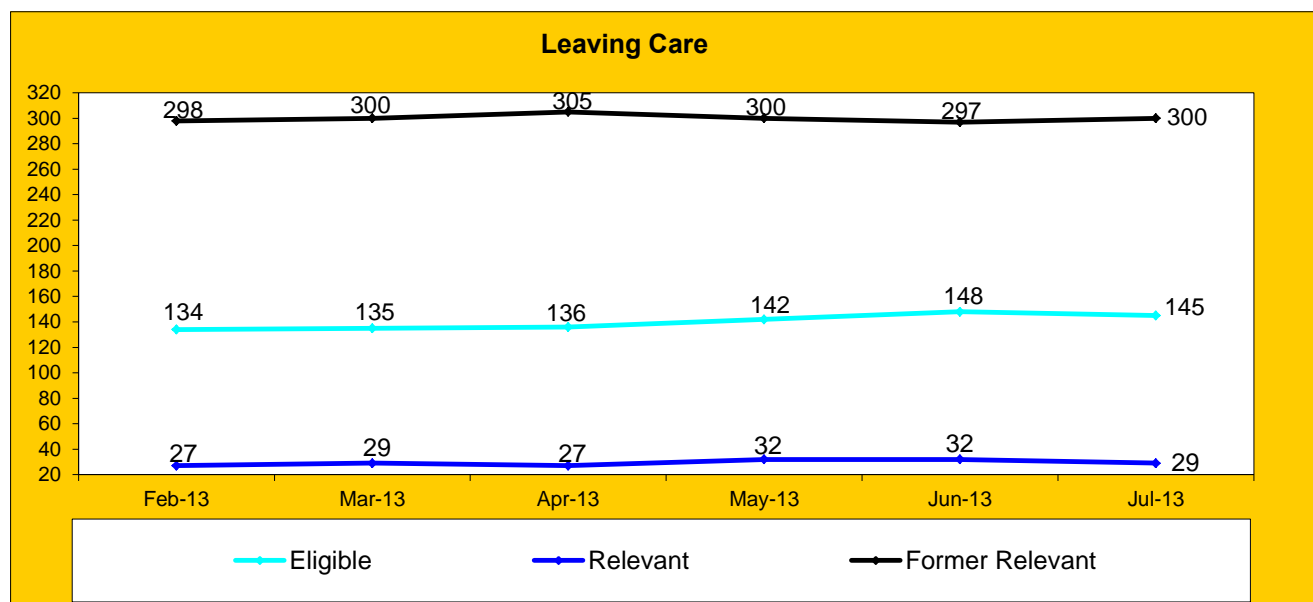


Please note that this report pulls through where a 'placement request part 1' form has been completed by a children's team on Carefirst 6.

During July 2013 there were 105 placement requests recorded compared to 73 placement requests in the previous month.



## LEAVING CARE



At 31 July 2013, Warwickshire's 16-21 leaving care population decreased by 3 to 474. Of these, 145 were eligible and still in the care system while a further 329 were either relevant or former relevant. All of these children have been looked after for 13 weeks or more since the age of 14 and were looked after at some point of their 16th year. Please note we have included an additional column (see table below) which details Post 21 Support being provided by an allocated worker within a leaving care team.

### Number of Leaving Care Cases by District as at 31 July 2013

	Eligible (16/17 yrs but still Looked After)	Relevant (16/17 yrs previously looked after)	Former Relevant (18-21 who were either previously Eligible or Relevant)	Post 21 support (in Education / Training)	District Total
North Warwickshire (ALL)	9	3	15	3	30
Nuneaton & Bedworth (ALL)	31	0	45	1	77
Rugby (ALL)	16	7	45	2	70
Stratford (ALL)	14	5	21	3	43
Warwick (ALL)	35	3	44	1	83
Asylum Seekers	33	3	109	1	146
Integrated Disability	7	0	0	0	7
Youth Offending	0	0	2	0	2
No Allocated Team	0	8	17	0	25
Allocated to Adult Services	0	0	2	0	2
<b>Warwickshire (TOTAL)</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>485</b>

### Number of Young People aged 18+ in a Staying Put Placement as at 31 July 2013

	Staying Put with Former Foster Carer	Staying Put but not Former Foster Carer
North Warwickshire (ALL)	0	0
Nuneaton & Bedworth (ALL)	2	0
Rugby (ALL)	7	0
Stratford (ALL)	2	0
Warwick (ALL)	0	0
Integrated Disability Service (ALL)	0	0
Asylum Seekers	0	0
No allocated team	0	0
Allocated to Adult Services	0	0
<b>Warwickshire (TOTAL)</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>





**Warwickshire People Group -  
Safeguarding**

**Adoption Services  
Annual Report  
2012-2013**

Adoption Services



# **ADOPTION SERVICES TEAM ACTIVITY REPORT**

**April 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013**

## **1. Introduction**

This report will provide detail of the work of the Adoption Services Team in the year 2012- 2013. It will detail the work of the Service in the last twelve months and highlight positives in practice alongside areas that require continued development. The work of Warwickshire County Council as an adoption agency is governed by the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

## **2. The Adoption Service Team**

The Adoption Service Team currently has an establishment of 13 social workers and three Managers. Currently social work posts are filled by 8 full time workers and the remaining 5 are part time workers. 2 of these full time posts are temporary 12 month posts funded by the Adoption Support Grant. The manager posts are filled by the Operations Manager and on full time and one part time Practice Leader. Within this there is a Practice Leader and a full time social work post and part time post ring fenced for providing Adoption Support.

The Service is supported by an excellent clerical team.

The Adoption Team is based at Saltisford Office Park and works county wide, working closely with Children's teams in the 5 districts. This requires a great deal of travelling time given the size of the county. In addition to this children have been placed in Out of County placements and Warwickshire adopters have been matched with out of county placements,

The core business of the Adoption Service is

- An Adoption Duty System five days a week.
- Recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective adopters
- Completing Non Agency Private Adoptions
- Overseas Adoption Assessments and support post placement
- Family Finding for all children with an Adoption Plan, the majority through Warwickshire Placements
- Identification of children awaiting adoption in other Local Authority areas for approved adopters who are unable to take Warwickshire children
- Advice to the child's social worker on the preparation of a child for adoption
- Placement matching and careful planning of the child's move to adopters

- Providing reports for Court
- Post approval support through individual work, training groups and workshops and support groups.
- Birth Records Counselling for Adopted Adults
- A Letterbox Scheme to facilitate exchanges of information between adoptive and birth families
- Advice to social workers and carers on adoption issues
- On-going development of the service that reflects legal and regulatory guidelines and standards
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the service
- Development work in partnership with other agencies
- An independently chaired Adoption Panel to approve adopters and agree matches of specific children with specific adopters
- The role of Agency Advisor is held within the Team and supports the Agency Decision Maker to reach best interest decisions
- An Adoption Support Service (as detailed in the report) for all adoptive families in Warwickshire

### **3. Recruitment, Adoption Preparation and Assessment**

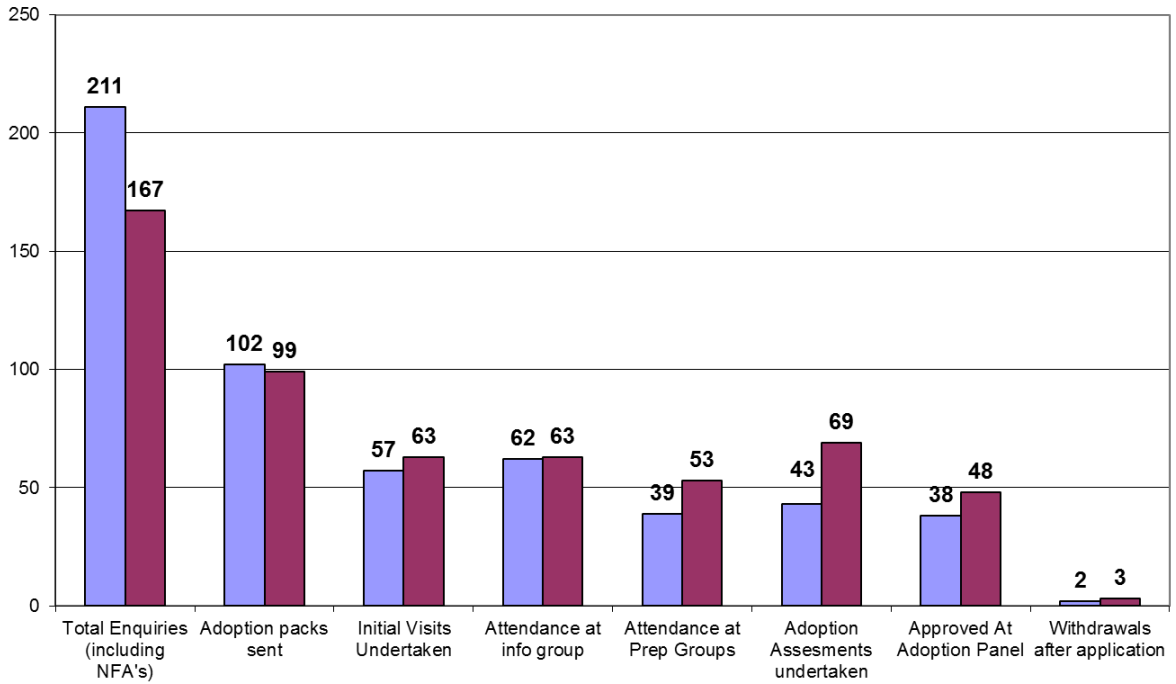
In the last year the Team have dealt with 167 telephone and web enquiries. These covered a wide spectrum of adoption issues. This has been a reduction of 54 enquires from the year previously

From this initial contact 99 Adoption Information Packs were sent, a reduction of 3 from the previous year.

63 households went on to attend our Adoption Information Meetings. The Team held 6 sets of 3-day Adoption Preparation Groups (an increase of 2 from the previous year) that involved 53 households.

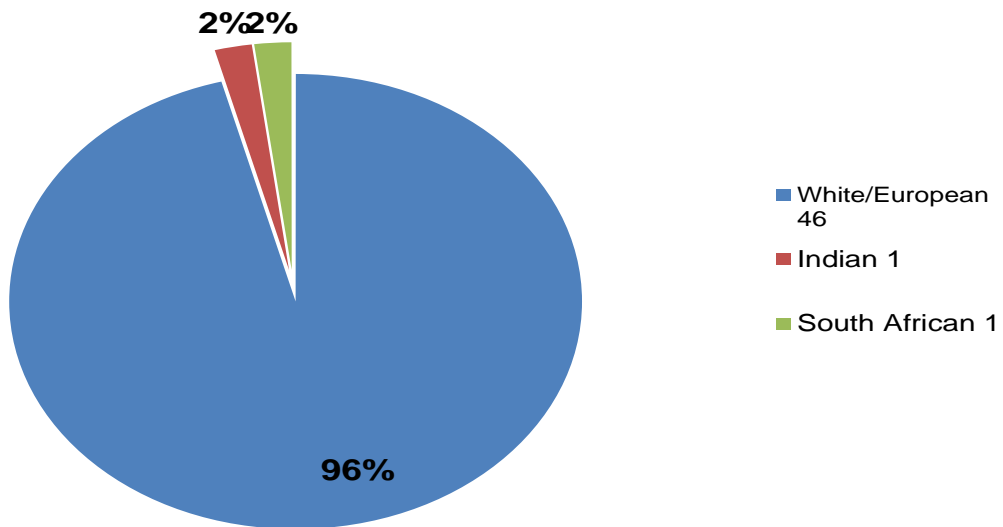
Information Meetings and Preparation Groups are held on different days and at varying times including evenings and Saturdays in order to provide as much flexibility as possible.

Adoption Activity April 2012 - March 2013



Figures for 2011/2012 displayed in blue.  
 Figures for 2012/2013 displayed in purple.

Ethnicity of Approved Adopters April 2012 - March 2013



There has been an increase in the recruitment of prospective adopters, despite Warwickshire being targeted by Coventry Adoption Services who need to recruit adopters from outside their own area because of geographical/anonymity issues and Independent Agencies also working in our area.

The Recruitment Strategy for the service continues to be reviewed annually and is based on the profile of the children in the care of Warwickshire that need to be placed for adoption. The Recruitment Strategy details the fact that priority is given to applicants that are interested in sibling groups, older children and children with disabilities. The Service has continued to advertise in local newspapers and display posters in public places.

When the agency is unable to identify appropriate placements within Warwickshire, details of children are added to the West Midlands Family Finding database and the National Adoption Register. In addition to this, details of children seeking placements are sent to all agencies on a 3 monthly basis. The Service has attended 3 National Exchange days in London, Bolton and Walsall facilitated by the National Adoption Register in this year.

The Adoption Service has continued to attend Children's Panels to ensure that they can track and identify children who are likely to need adoption earlier in the planning process. Being alerted to children who may need adopting shortly after they are accommodated, and certainly by the four month review will enable us to take positive action to recruit families for potentially "hard-to-place" children and thus minimise delay for them.

Preparation Groups have been increased and have been held every 2 months in comparison to every 3 months in the year 2011-12. This has meant that the waiting time for adopters has reduced from 6 months to an average of 2-3 months. Warwickshire County Council applies a rigorous and thorough assessment of adopters in order to safeguard and promote children's welfare. Priorities are set to ensure that the service recruits adopters for the types of children needing placements and priority will be given to prospective adopters who can meet the needs of children who are waiting for adoption.

48 households were approved as potential adopters between April 2012 and March 2013, with 3 families withdrawing from the assessment process. This was an increase of 10 from the year 2011/12 and 22 from the year 2010/11. It appears that although initially there were less enquiries in respect of adoption, a higher proportion of the enquirers progressed to assessment and approval.

1 couple approved during this period was of Indian ethnicity, and 1 couple was of South African ethnicity. The remaining households were of White European origin. This is in line with the children who are waiting for adoption within Warwickshire where again the majority of children are of White British origin.

8 of the households approved were recruited from out of county, 19 households from the South of the county, 11 from the North and 10 from Rugby. 1 overseas assessment was completed.

The average time taken to complete assessments from receipt of the application form to Adoption Panel is 6 months - this is a significant decrease from the previous year which was 8.2 months. The shortest assessment was one month (2<sup>nd</sup> time adopters) and the longest was 20 months, this was due to legal issues that needed resolving before the matter could be presented to Adoption Panel. This is very encouraging as it is in line with the requirements of the 2 stage process of adoption which commences in July 2013, and is a significant achievement by the team.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 there were 23 households approved and waiting for a placement. A further 31 were under assessment with no households awaiting allocation. There were 11 households waiting for Preparation Groups and 6 for Information Meetings.

## Family Finding

There were 33 Adoption Orders made in respect of Warwickshire children in the year April 2012 to March 2013.

Of the children adopted, 21 were single children, and 6 sibling groups of two.

The ages of the children at adoption were

Under 1 year	Under 2 years	Under 3 years	Under 4 years	Under 5 years	Under 6 years	Under 7 years	Under 8 years	Under 9 years	Under 10 years
1	13	6	4	6	0	2	1	0	0

1 child was of African Caribbean ethnicity, and the remaining children were of White European ethnicity.

In line with national trends the service continues to experience difficulties in recruiting adopters for large sibling groups, and children with disabilities. The Adoption Recruitment Strategy continues to attempt to address this, with specific advertising in local publications and newspapers, Be My Parent, Children Who wait, attending National Exchange Days and commissioning professional photographs of our children to be used for profiles which are sent to all Adoption Agencies in the country on a 3 monthly basis.



The service was successful in placing an 11 year old female child (awaiting Adoption Order), and a sibling group where the older sibling was 9 years of age .We also successfully placed 2 children with disabilities. In addition to this 2 sibling groups of 3 children were placed for adoption in this period.

The number of children placed within 12 months of their adoption decision was 75% compared to the previous year which was 79%. Although there has been a slight decrease in this area we have seen a rise in the amount of children being placed, the placement of older children and 2 siblings groups of 3 children who inevitably take longer to place. The success in this area is due to regular attendance at Children's Panels therefore enabling us to identify children's needs at an early stage and to begin planning for permanency, and social workers regularly attending our Placement Allocation Group.

A further 30 children were in adoptive homes with an adoption application pending.

As of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 a further 53 children had an approved adoption plan, but were not yet placed in adoptive home. For some of these children this was due to on going court issues that had resulted in the delay of Placement Orders being made.

When potential placements cannot be identified within Warwickshire's pool of approved adopters the next step is for social workers to refer their child to the West Midlands Consortium and the National Adoption Register. A social worker from the Adoption Team will accompany a child's social worker on all out of county visits to prospective adopters and will encourage the making of a DVD for prospective adopters to view.

If, following these visits, potential adopters are still not identified, a family finding advisor will be allocated from the Adoption Team to spearhead any advertising required. In addition to featuring children in national adoption publications such as Be My Parent or Children Who Wait, the Team has designed a quarterly booklet featuring children and adopters who are awaiting placements and send this out to all Local Authorities and Voluntary Agencies. We have received several enquires and successful matches from this including the placement of a sibling group of 3 children.

As part of the Preparation Groups we have actively featured some of our children who are waiting adoptive placement and have been able to "fast track" adoptive families for a sibling group of 3 children, and 2 sibling groups of 2 children.

If potential adopters are identified out of county the social worker from the Adoption Team will remain involved in an advisory capacity until a match is presented to the Adoption Panel. The Operational Manager of the Adoption Team assumes a quality assurance role in all out of county adoption placements, and pre-placement support meetings are held to identify immediate and future placement support needs.

In 2012-2013 the service made 3 inter-agency placements involving Warwickshire children, placing a White British/Asian child within a London Borough, and a sibling group of 3 children and a sibling group of 2 children with a private Adoption Agency. In return 5 Warwickshire families were matched with 7 children from other Local Authorities.

The over-riding difficulty with out of county placements continues to be the provision of appropriate support to the adoptive families especially when Children Adolescence Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are required.

The Service has continued to successfully facilitate a regular support group for adopters and children based in Warwick. Following an increase in the number of adoptive parents in the North of the county a similar group was set up in Nuneaton, with plans to facilitate a further group in Rugby from July 2013.

In addition to this we hosted an annual picnic (which 140 people attended) and an Adoption Fun day in conjunction with Coventry Adoption Service; this is open to anyone who has adopted, or is in the process of adopting.

We have developed a successful working relationship with "Inspired Foundations" who have facilitated several successful courses in respect of Introductions and Early Days of Placement and Managing Contact. Jenny is an experienced adoptive parent and the feedback from prospective adopters has been very positive.

We continue to run a duty service on a daily basis which supports many adopters who are facing difficulties and need telephone support and guidance.

## **Training**

Social Workers within the team continue to attend relevant training with three members of the team undertaking training with Kim Golding and Dan Hughes regarding attachment. Managers within the team have kept abreast of managerial courses offered through the department. The Operations Manager and a social worker from the team presented Family Finding at the Legal Conference.

The team has also offered a placement to a first year social work student, and shadowing experiences to new employees of Warwickshire and students. One social worker completed the Assessed and Supported Year of Practice Programme, with another social worker undertaking this scheme. Several members of the team have also commenced the EPD programme undertaking PQ modules.

## **Non- agency adoptions**

15 non-agency adoption assessments were allocated during 2012-13. These continue to be intricate pieces of work, including Step Parent Assessments, surrogacy arrangements and same sex adoptions.

### **Summary**

The last year has seen an improvement in:

- Increase in the number of adopters approved
- Reduction in the timescales for applicants attending Information Groups
- Reduction in the timescales for applicants attending Preparation Groups
- Timescales in matching children following a Best Interest decision being made
- An increase in the amount of Adoption Orders granted
- An increase in training for adopters and prospective adopters
- Introduction of a support group in Nuneaton

### **Plans for the service**

- To continue to recruit adopters for those children deemed harder to place i.e. older children, sibling groups and children with disabilities
- To continue to facilitate and increase the amount of workshops for approved adopters
- To review the Preparation Groups in line with the guidance issued by the Department of Education to ensure that adopters are fully prepared for adoption using the proposed 2-tier assessment which means that adopters will be approved in a more timely manner
- To continue to develop and co-facilitate relevant training with Coventry Adoption Services, including half-day workshops in respect of Life Story Work, Adopting When You Already Have a Child, Managing Contact and Developing Attachment Through Play
- To continue to foster good working relationships with Children's Teams to ensure that adoption plans are progressed.
- To continue to raise the profile of adoption as a permanency option for looked after children
- To develop common adoption practices throughout the West Midlands through membership of the Adopt West Midlands Consortium
- To develop our support groups by introducing a group in Rugby in addition to the ones in Nuneaton and Warwick.

## **Warwickshire Adoption Panel, Annual Review April 2012– March 2013**

### **1. Membership**

Adoption Agencies statutory guidance updated 2011 requires that each agency must maintain a list of persons whom it considers suitable to be a member of an Adoption Panel. The Panel's business can only be conducted if at least 5 members are present, including the Chair or Vice-Chair and a social worker with at least three years relevant post qualifying experience.

In summary, as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, Panel membership is constituted as follows: -

- **Rose Ruddick:** Independent Chair, Social Worker with background in family court welfare, independent evaluation and youth justice
- **Jo Davies:** Vice-Chair, Operations Manager, County Leaving Care Service
- **Peter Follett:** Independent Member, Adoptive Parent
- **Dr Lucy Coker:** Medical Adviser
- **Maggie King:** Independent Member, previously an Adoption Social Worker
- **Margaret Luthert:** Independent Member, Adoptive Parent
- **Kit Leck:** Independent Member, Drug and Alcohol Strategy Manager
- **Dawn Preece:** Independent Member, Educational Psychologist
- **Chris Williams:** Elected County Councillor, Adoptive Parent

In addition to the core group of members we have a pool of members that can be called on to cover sickness and annual leave

Panel continues to benefit from members with personal adoption experience.

#### **Non-Voting Panel Advisers:**

- **Sharon Shaw:** Adoption Panel Adviser, Operations Manager, Adoption Services
- **Sarah Trundley:** Legal Adviser to Panel, Senior Solicitor
- **Sylvia Harvey:** Secretary to Adoption Panel, Team Administrator (Fostering and Adoption Team)

The current Panel has an excellent mix of skills and experience, and all Panel members have a strong commitment to improving Adoption Services in Warwickshire.

As always, Sylvia Harvey's secretarial support to Panel is excellent

## 2. Summary of Adoption Panel Activity

- The Adoption Panel met on 19 occasions,
- Since September the Best Interest Decision has been removed from Adoption Panel - however the work of the Adoption Panel has increased significantly in terms of approving adopters and matching during this period, and considered
- 118 items compared with 117 items of business in 2011/12, 85 items of business in 2009/10, 83 items of business in 2008/9, 100 items of business in 2007/8 and 108 in 2006/7

### Panel considered

24 recommendations for children to be adopted (sibling groups counted as single children)  
 From September 2012 to March 2013 the Agency Decision Maker made 40 Best Interest Decisions  
 37 recommendations for children to be matched with prospective adopters (involving 46 children)  
 49 recommendations for approval of adoptive parents  
 3 change of plans for children  
 4 resignations of approved adopters, (including 1 overseas adopter)  
 0 change of approval categories  
 0 disruption reports

### Adoption Panel activities and trends are summarised below

Year	No of children approved for adoption	No of matches	No of families approved to adopt
2005 – 6	39	23	35
2006 – 7	33	30	23
2007 – 8	38	26	29
2008 - 9	33	19	31 + 1 overseas
2009-10	34	22	24 + 1 overseas
2010-11	36	21	28
2011-12	62	30	35 + 2 overseas
2012-13	64	37	48 + 1 overseas

### 3. Children Approved for Adoption

64 children had an adoption plan approved during this period, however 3 children have had a change of plan noted

Of the children who had an adoption plan made ;

- 34 are single children
- 12 sibling groups of 2 children
- 2 sibling groups of 3 children
- 42 are male
- 22 are female
- 53 are White European
- 1 dual heritage , White/Asian
- 1 dual heritage White/Pakistani
- 3 Asian/British
- 3 White/Black African
- 3 White /Black African Caribbean

### 4. Children matched with Adopters

The Adoption Panel considered 36 matches including 45 children. Of these matches, 4 involved an out of county placements involving a single placement, and 2 placements of sibling groups of 3 children, and one sibling group of 2 children.

Ages of children matched

<b>Under 1</b>	<b>Under 2</b>	<b>2-5 years</b>	<b>Over 5 years</b>
11	10	15	8

- 3 children were matched with foster carers
- 2 children were matched with a single carer

Ethnicity of children matched:

45 White/European  
1 WhiteBrit/Asian

## Sibling Groups

- 6 sibling groups of 2 children placed together
- 2 sibling groups of 3 children placed together

### **5. Approval of Prospective Adopters**

Of the households approved as adopters for Warwickshire

- 2 households were foster carers
- 3 were single applicants
- 11 were 2<sup>nd</sup> time adopter

### **6. Training and Development Events**

During the year Panel welcomed a number of new social workers and social work student observers, the Chair and Adviser providing an opportunity for informal discussions and feedback at the end of the morning.

Panel continues to benefit from opportunities at the end of meetings to reflect together on emerging areas for procedure and/or practice development and for being updated on new research and policy developments.

More formally, Panel members attended Family Justice Council training “The Adopted Child’s Journey”.

They also met with Adoption Social Workers for feedback on cases.

Future plans are for members of the Panel to attend training with BAAF in respect of placing a child for adoption when there is a child already in placement and the Adopt West Midlands Training on Adoption Reform.

### **7. Appraisals and Feedback**

During 2012/13 the Chair and Advisor conducted annual appraisals with each Panel member. The Decision Maker and Panel Advisor also completed the Panel Chair’s annual appraisal, which included drawing on feedback from Panel members. This provides the opportunity for Panel members to receive feedback about their contributions in Panel, but also for the Chair and Advisor to look at the functioning of the panel as a whole and to look for on-going development opportunities.

Arrangements are also in place to ensure on-going feedback from professionals and prospective adopters to Panel. Everyone who attends panel is provided with an evaluation form. If there are comments on the form about

a particular Panel member's contribution, this will be followed through by the Panel Advisor. Comments received this year have been extremely positive.

## **9. Practice developments during the year**

The role of Adoption Panel has changed since September 2012 when the responsibility for making Best Interest Decisions was removed from Adoption Panel and responsibility given to the Agency Decision Maker.

The number of Adoption Panels has increased during the year, to meet the increased demand for panel time. Warwickshire have Panel members who are committed to attending panel, and always come prepared. It has been necessary to increase panels from once a month to twice a month to manage the work demands and this has been managed by developing a pool of Panel members who can support the core group of Panel members. It is acknowledged that Panel attendance has needed a huge commitment from it's members.

- Panel continues to find ways of stressing its commitment to ensuring that children's own feelings and views are represented and heard. Panel does this through regular challenging of social workers and Panel itself around practice and expectations. Panel has observed a number of times that social workers attending Panel often share much more about the child/ren's feelings and wishes than is always represented in the written reports. We are aware that further training needs to be offered to social workers in this field
- Panel have introduced adopters attending Panel for matching. This is common practice in many adoption agencies and has given Panel members the opportunity to discuss matches in far more detail
- Panel is keen to keep abreast of on-going developments within Adoption Services. Articles from BAAF, newspapers etc., are shared with Panel members and if time allows they are discussed. The Panel is keen to participate in any training regarding the changes to the Adoption Service following the Nearey Report. Several Adoption Panel members were able to attend the Adoption Reform Training.
- Panel Chair, in discussion with Panel members, establishes early on the extent to which Panel needs to explore the strength of evidence to support the matching plans for the child. This enables Panel members to focus on the relevant areas of the reports



- Panel minutes now record any actions requested regarding amendments, or additions to the paperwork. This is extremely helpful when adopters return to panel for matching

## **9. Future Developments**

- Panel is keen to make the most of all opportunities during the next year to train/develop alongside wider social work staff and stakeholders, finding this a valuable experience. They particularly recognise the importance of this with the many changes that the adoption service is facing
- Training has been agreed in respect of placing a child when there is already a child in placement. In addition to this Panel members have been invited to attend Adoption West Midlands Adoption Reform Day
- Panel members will need to work with the Registered Manager to ensure that the new regulations and guidance are implemented, in particular the changes that will be made to adoption following the report Adoption - Avoiding Delay
- To review the practice of Panel in relating to the weighing up of information presented to Panel when considering a match
- To provide quality assurance feedback to the agency every six months on the quality of the reports presented to panel

Rose Ruddick Independent Chair

Sharon Shaw Operations Manager, Adoption Services – Advisor to Panel

## Corporate Parenting Panel – 11 September 2013 Item 5

### Independent Reviewing Service in Warwickshire

#### Summary

- The IRO HANDBOOK and Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 sets out how local authorities should carry out the full range of responsibilities in relation to care planning, placement and review for looked after children.
- This report fulfils the requirement of the manager of the Independent Reviewing Service to provide an annual report to the Corporate Parenting Board for the scrutiny of members.

#### Recommendation:

That the content of this report is noted and a decision made regarding the timing of future reports

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The IRO HANDBOOK *Statutory guidance for Independent Reviewing officers and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for looked after children* states that the IRO Manager is responsible for the production of an annual report for the scrutiny of members of the corporate parenting board.
- 1.2 The purpose of the report is to:
  - Provide both quantitative and qualitative information about the functioning of the service.
  - To highlight areas of good practice and areas that require improvement within care planning processes.
  - To identify any emerging themes and trends.
  - To describe areas of work that the service has prioritised during the year and will focus on in the coming year.
- 1.3 The handbook emphasises the need for authorities to utilise the information generated by Independent Reviewing Services to inform service developments and ultimately improve outcomes for looked after children.

## 2. Purpose of the service and legal context

- 2.1 The core purpose of the Independent Reviewing Officer is to ensure that the care plan for a looked after child fully reflects the child's needs and to ensure that each child's wishes and feelings are given full and due consideration.
- 2.2 The IRO also has a duty to monitor the local authorities overall performance as a corporate parent and to bring any areas of poor practice in the care and planning for looked after children to the attention of senior managers.
- 2.3 The Independent Reviewing Service in Warwickshire was set up in March 1995.
- 2.4 The Independent Reviewing Officers are all qualified social workers managed at arm's length from the operational arm of the business unit. The team is centrally located and has county wide responsibility for independently chairing all child protection conferences and the statutory reviews of all looked after children.
- 2.5 The legal framework that underpins the work of Independent Reviewing Services has changed significantly since the team was set up in Warwickshire in 1995. The team has therefore developed and refocused its work in response to the legislative change.
- 2.6 The Children and young Persons Act 2008, followed by revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance came into force in April 2011. The Act extended the responsibilities of the IRO from monitoring the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to the child's review to monitoring the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to a child's case.
- 2.7 THE IRO HANDBOOK *Statutory guidance for Independent Reviewing officers and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for looked after children* was issued as part of a suite of statutory guidance which, together with the regulations sets out how local authorities should carry out the full range of responsibilities in relation to care planning, placement and review for looked after children.
- 2.8 Together they provide an overall framework the aim of which is to provide looked after children with the most appropriate placement to meet their needs and improve outcomes for them.
- 2.9 The IRO HANDBOOK is issued under two legal provisions
  - The Children and Young Persons Act 2008, which created a power for the Secretary of state to issue statutory guidance to IRO'S and
  - Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 , which requires local authorities ,in the exercise of their social services functions ,to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State; unless there are exceptional reasons local authorities must follow the requirements set out in the guidance.
- 2.10 The statutory guidance seeks to improve outcomes for looked after children by providing guidance to Independent Reviewing Officers about how they should discharge their distinct responsibilities to looked after children.

- 2.11 It also provides guidance to local authorities on their strategic and managerial responsibilities in establishing an effective IRO service. The aim is to give all looked after children the support and services that each one requires to enable them to reach their potential.
- 2.12 The guidance has been fully operational within Warwickshire since April 2011

### **3. Structure of the Team**

- 3.1 Since 1995 the Independent Reviewing Team has undergone a number of changes as a consequence of organisational restructures but has in essence the structure of the team has remained the same. The team currently consists of a group of nine and a half full time Independent Reviewing Officers, one operational manager and team of administrative support. We are currently operating with a full time IRO vacancy.
- 3.2 The statutory guidance requires that the service is line managed separately to operational teams in order to maintain independence from the case management decision making and resource allocation processes. The service is therefore line managed through the Service Manager for Child Protection within the safeguarding business Unit of the people group.
- 3.3 We have a good record for staff retention within the team so the majority of young people will have experienced continuity of IRO throughout their time in care.
- 3.4 We have managed the allocation of work by different methods over the years to meet the twin requirements of consistency for the child but independence from the operational teams. Reviewing Officers are responsible for chairing child protection conferences and the statutory reviews for all looked after children. Where the child is subject to both looked after and child protection processes the same IRO is allocated. Where a looked after child is also a parent a different IRO is allocated to the parent and child to ensure there is a clear focus on the plan for the child in each case.
- 3.5 Reviewing Officers have all taken on particular areas of specialism i.e. adoption, leaving care, residential provision or reviews for Asylum Seeking young people. In this way they can contribute towards service developments in key areas and also act as a source of specialist knowledge and advice for colleagues, other agencies and social workers.
- 3.6 The service is represented on a number of departmental service development groups and fully contributes to the work plan of the Safeguarding Children's Board.

### **4. Quantitative information about the IRO Service**

- 4.1 The guidance specifies caseloads of 50 - 70 looked after children per IRO. This has not been achieved in Warwickshire but as a service we have focused on developing systems, processes and interrelationships that enable us to implement the guidance with integrity based on current resources.
- 4.2 There has been an overall increase in the numbers of children looked after as shown in the table below.

	<b>31 March 2012</b>	<b>31 March 2013</b>
Children subject to CP plans	534	550
Looked after children	681	698
<b>Total</b>	<b>1215</b>	<b>1284</b>

- 4.3 The team is also responsible for the continuing reviews of all relevant children. At 31 March 2013 this amounted to **29** children. Relevant young people are those young people who choose to leave regulated placements but become eligible for services under the Leaving Care Act as a consequence of being a looked after child for a cumulative period of over 13 weeks from age 14 years to over 16 years. In most authorities continuing reviews of their pathway plan is conducted by the leaving care worker or a personal advisor. A decision was made some years ago that in Warwickshire the Independent Reviewing Officer would continue to chair these reviews to ensure that the young person was adequately safeguarded and supported.
- 4.4 The team is also responsible for chairing the annual reviews of all children placed in Residential schools (**26**) to ensure their educational provision remains appropriate and to ensure their care arrangements are appropriate to the child's needs.
- 4.5 This requires the team to facilitate as a minimum 2,600 meetings in a year.
- 4.6 The location of placements varies as does the type of placement. There is therefore a significant team pressure in terms of travel and costs given the overall size of the county and the number of young people placed out of county.
- 4.7 The different types of placements and care plan will determine differing statutory requirements in terms of reviewing frequency. The table below provides some detail of the variation in placement type.

<b>Placement type</b>	<b>LAC March 2012</b>	<b>LAC 2013</b>
Foster placement with friend or family	63	70
Foster placement with LA carer	386	372
Foster placement with agency or OLA carer	101	112
Independent living placement	39	43
Placed for adoption	21	31
Placed with own parents	44	44e
Residential home /school	20	23

- 4.8 The guidance recommends a maximum allocation of 70 looked after children per IRO. We currently have the equivalent of 9.5 full time IRO's in post and one and a half vacancies. Despite extra resources being allocated to the team staffing levels still fall well below the nationally recommended levels.
- 4.9 If combined numbers of children are calculated ie children looked after and children subject to a child protection plan each IRO is responsible for 140 children. If broken down into child protection and looked after figures the numbers are:
- 76 Looked after children per IRO
  - 57 Children subject to child protection plans.

- 4.10 Over the last year there has been a 10% rise (606 in 2012 - 668 in 2013) in the numbers of initial conferences held and this has meant that our current administrative support arrangements have been insufficient to meet the demand. A number of these conferences were as a result of children on care orders being placed back with parents as part of a rehabilitation plan. In these cases there is a procedural requirement for the plan to be considered by a multi - agency conference to ensure that the care plan is sufficiently robust and focused on reaching a point where the care plan can be revoked. .
- 4.11 There has therefore been a decrease in the numbers of conferences held within the 15 day time frame, a decrease in the number of minutes sent out within the required timeframes and sometimes an inability to respond to an operational request to bring a conference forward as a result of changed circumstances or a need to dispense with a child protection plan early.
- 4.12 Given the overall caseloads, rising numbers of both LAC and child protection work and the fact that the team has been operating with vacancies it has been impossible to fully meet all of the requirements of the regulatory guidance.
- 4.13 The areas of work within statutory reviewing processes that are most affected is the ability to produce minutes within the required timeframes and the availability of time to meet young people separately if they choose not to attend their reviews.

## 5. Performance Information qualitative information

- 5.1 Despite staffing issues our performance in key areas has remained good. Some highlights are listed below and relate to data at March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013:

	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>% of Child protection reviews held within timeframes</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>98%</b>
<b>% of Statutory reviews held within timeframes</b>	<b>91.2%</b>	<b>91.4%</b>
<b>% of Conferences held within 15 days of the strategy meeting</b>	<b>94.7%</b>	<b>92.8%</b>
<b>% of children subject to a second or third child protection plan</b>	<b>16.5%</b>	<b>13.3%</b>
<b>% of looked after children who participated in their review</b>	<b>96.5%</b>	<b>98%</b>

- 5.2 The drop to 98% in respect to child protection reviews on time equated to two reviews that the Reviewing Officer had simply miscalculated timeframes. The reviews were only a few days over the specified timeframes. Alongside maintaining this good performance in key areas we have developed significant areas of practice. It may be helpful to highlight a few of those areas and also the areas requiring further development.

## **6. Participation**

- 6.1 The care planning regulations emphasise the need to keep the child central to planning and to ensure their views are reflected within plans. Reviewing Officers and social workers need to evidence the strategies used to achieve this.
- 6.2 Within Warwickshire young people are encouraged to attend their reviews or meet the Reviewing Officer separately alongside trying to adapt review venues and processes to facilitate this. We have devised a leaflet to send to all young people that explains the role of the independent Reviewing officer.
- 6.3 The current indicators for young people's participation is high but via the supervisory process Reviewing Officers have reported an increase in the numbers of young people they are able to see directly and who make meaningful contribution to their review process. A number of the Reviewing Officers have received positive communications from young people and their carers about their experiences of good support from the reviewing Officer within care planning processes. Some example quotes are listed below:

"Thank you for taking care of me"...young person adopted by her foster carer.

"Just wanted to say a big thank you for the support you have given me over the years. I will so miss our six monthly chats.....young person reaching eighteen.

"Thank you for everything....you have made a difference".....long term foster carer.

- 6.4 One of our key areas of work over the coming year will be to work more closely with the participation officer for looked after children and the children's in care council. The aim will be to keep young people better informed about themes and issues emerging for IRO 's and to develop a menu of participation methods that will further encourage young people to be involved in their review processes. Some young people have already expressed an interest in being involved in this work.

## **7. Dispute resolution and scrutiny of Care Plans**

- 7.1 One of the key functions of the Independent Reviewing Officer is to resolve any problems arising out of the care planning process that impact on the progression of the plan for the child.
- 7.2 It is expected that positive working relations are developed with social workers and Managers to resolve any emerging concerns informally however if this does not prove possible the IRO must consider taking more formal action.
- 7.3 All authorities are therefore required to have in place formal dispute resolution processes to ensure that resolutions are reached in a timely way. These processes should also enable the service to evidence its impact on improved outcomes for looked after children young people.
- 7.4 Drawing on models that have been developed regionally, Warwickshire have developed a system that enables a systematic approach to tracking the progress of

care plans.

7.5 Following each statutory review a monitoring form is completed noting the judgement or RAG rating considered appropriate by the Independent Reviewing Officer.

7.6 The judgements are described below:

- Red – Delay seriously impacting on the plan.
- Amber- Specific issue of concern in care planning but overall plan is progressing.
- Green – plan is progressing well.

7.7 The monitoring form feeds a data base that enables the collation and analysis of information relevant to care planning processes or quality assurance systems.

7.8 Where blocks to planning are identified, clear actions are agreed. Management response times have also been agreed and if the issues are not resolved in a timely way the matter is escalated internally with ultimate consideration of a referral back to the courts.

7.9 The following table shows some of the data emerging from this system over the last two years:

	2011	2012
RED	1%	1%
AMBER	22%	24%
GREEN	77%	75%

7.10 The system is relatively simple but does allow us to evidence that the Independent Reviewing Officers are systematically raising issues of concern through the escalation process and that managers are responding appropriately and ensuring resolutions are reached.

7.11 Some examples of cases referred on the basis of serious concerns are:

- Concerns about appropriate support arrangements to an adoption placement that was considered to be threatening the stability of the placement. An appropriate support plan was agreed.
- A delay of over a year in the local authority applying for the discharge of care orders on a sibling group. This matter was finally put before the courts.
- The IRO was in disagreement with the local authority care plan for a child to remain in her mother's care subject to a full care order. This matter was resolved at the issues resolution hearing when the local authority reconsidered assessments and changed their final care plan.
- Concerns about the breakdown of a permanent placement for an eleven year old with concerns about his needs not being at the centre of planning. A review was held within two months of this notice by which time the young person was placed in an appropriate therapeutic residential placement with the aim of supporting him to an eventual return to a family placement.
- Two cases were referred on the basis of consistent concerns about statutory visiting requirements not being met. In both instances the issues were resolved.

7.12 The overall collation of the information generated by this report can be used to improve practice and service developments. The report will be shared with operational districts in order to inform team planning processes and resource allocations.



- 7.13 Most importantly we can now identify the key issues that impact generally on achieving stability for looked after children. These issues often relate to the challenges faced by the local authority in meeting the needs of young people who, by virtue of their experiences prior to care, are often very complex. The competition for placements often means that a range of services, often involving complex cross border issues, needs to be successfully co-ordinated if the child is to be supported to achieve stable permanent care arrangements.
- 7.14 The following issues have emerged for Warwickshire's care planning processes and area mix of issues emerging from the review process or overall progress on the case.
- 7% were issues of placement provision
  - 6% were concerns re health provision
  - 37% incomplete documentation presented to the review
  - 10% previous decisions had not been progressed
- 7.15 The provision of life story work for children with a plan of adoption has emerged as an issue for a particular district. This is being addressed by adopting a new approach to providing life story work.

## **8. Children and Families Court Advisory Service**

- 8.1 There are two distinct areas in which the IRO is expected to work in conjunction with CAFCASS:
- As part of family proceedings when the child is looked after ;and
  - When an IRO makes a referral to CAFCASS as part of the formal escalation process
- 8.2 The public law outline (PLO) refers to 'the timetable for the child'. The guidance states that the IRO should feel confident that they are kept fully informed of the progress of the child's case, during and at the conclusion of proceedings This will involve:
- Close liaison with the children's guardian; and
  - The legal department for the Local Authority providing the IRO with all relevant court documentation.
- 8.3 In order to achieve this outcome a joint protocol has been agreed between Warwickshire and Coventry IRO services and both legal departments to ensure consistency of approach within the local family court system.
- 8.4 The protocol also ensures that the Reviewing Officer has access to Independent Legal advice if it is required.
- 8.5 The protocol has proven to be very effective in the management of issues or disputes arising within court proceedings and has been acknowledged nationally as an example of effective practice.

## **9. Annual work programme of the service.**

9.1 The overall work programme of the service over the last year has entailed:

- focused attention to team developments and maintaining good performance in meeting statutory requirements and key national performance indicators
- Contribution to Business Unit and People Group objectives.
- Regional developments to support service improvements.
- National developments via contribution to the work plan of the National group.

### **9.2 Team developments**

This report details the developments that have been made in terms of scrutiny of care plans, collaborative work with legal services and the children's guardians and in the area of participation of young people. Good performance has also been maintained in key areas of the service.

### **9.3 Contribution to Business Unit and People Group objectives**

The overall purpose of the Independent Reviewing Service is to contribute to improved outcomes for looked after children on a case by case basis but also to contribute towards departmental objectives aimed at improving outcomes for looked after children.

The work of the Service over the current year has focused on the following areas in support of these objectives.

#### *To keep children safe from harm*

We have focused on:

- Ensuring child protection conferences are convened and managed in accordance with the safeguarding boards procedural requirements.
- Ensuring Child protection plans are based on clear risk assessments, have SMART objectives and remain focused on the outcome for the child
- Ensuring the Safeguarding boards escalation process is consistently applied to child protection cases so that plans are progressed appropriately and there is a reduction in the number of children subject to second plans

#### *To safely reduce the numbers of looked after children by evidenced based programmes of intervention*

We have:

- worked with operational managers to develop outcome focused formats for care plans
- devised Research based standards to be applied within the statutory review process to support successful rehabilitation plans for looked after children.

#### *The continuous professional development of staff*

We have:

- contributed to induction processes for new staff.

- contributed to the development and delivery of level 3 child protection multi agency training.

### Scrutiny of care plans

The development of the RAG system and formal dispute resolution process has ensured systemic monitoring and challenge of care plans and a means to identify themes and issues impacting on care planning processes.

## 9.4 Regional Developments

The team has actively contributed to the work plan of the regional IRO group. A regional conference was held with a focus on the challenge of maintaining the child at the centre of planning. With input from young people the conference devised a regional pledge to looked after children.

One of the recognised challenges to IRO services is the provision of appropriate training for Independent Reviewing Officers. The regional group have worked in collaboration with Birmingham University to devise a post qualifying programme of study specifically tailored to Independent Reviewing Officers. The first cohort will begin in May 2014. This will be the first of its kind in the country and the National group are keen to follow the model and seek partnership arrangements with Universities in their various localities.

## 9.5 National Developments

The regional IRO group feeds directly into the National group with a reciprocity and synergy of work programmes aimed at raising standards in the the service generally and acting as a direct consultative group for the DFE.

## 10 Areas for Further Development

- 10.1 The IRO service in Warwickshire is currently contributing to a research project with the National Children's Bureau. The research is using a range of research methods to test the effectiveness of the IRO role. The outcome of this research will help to inform future service developments.
- 10.2 Ofsted have recently published a report on the effectiveness of Independent Reviewing Officers in discharging their responsibilities towards looked after children. The report draws evidence from themed inspections in 10 local authorities.
- 10.3 Although there were many examples of positive practice there was also evidence that in many authorities IRO's had struggled to take on the full scope of their enhanced responsibilities as determined by the revised regulations.
- 10.4 This report will provide a useful framework from which we can objectively scrutinise our service in order to inform areas of service developments.
- 10.5 In addition the following areas of the service will be developed over the coming year:
  - To further develop and utilise the information generated by the RAG process to influence outcomes for looked after children.

- To develop a menu of methods of participation intended to encourage young people to be meaningfully involved in their reviews including the option of chairing or part chairing their reviews.
- To further develop our relationship with Children's Guardians to ensure IRO are effectively involved during and at the conclusion of court proceedings.
- To work more closely with the Children's in Care Council
- To support the implementation of the revised care plan formats and to develop the review documentation to make it more fit for purpose.

## **11 Key Challenges**

- 11.1 The new Public Law Outline process will require greater oversight of cases by IRO's during court proceedings and at the hand over process. Cases are also more likely to result in final permanency options being decided post proceedings so there will be a greater emphasis on the IRO'S developing the confidence of the courts that effective oversight will be achieved or cases referred back to the courts.
- 11.2 The current challenges to the service have been the ability to meet the full requirements of the revised regulations in the face of current workloads. Increased responsibilities through the revised public law outline processes and increasing numbers of both looked after children and children subject to child protection plans can only exacerbate this issue.
- 11.3 An essential element of quality care planning is to evidence the voice of the child both within care planning review processes and the development of services. We need to focus attention in the coming year on how we improve and develop the effective participation of young people and evidence how their feedback has been utilised in the development of services and their own plan..

## **12 Conclusions**

- 12.1 The Independent Reviewing Service in Warwickshire has maintained good performance in key areas of work over the last year and also made significant developments within the service.
- 12.2 Despite an increase in resources the team continues to struggle with achieving full compliance with the statutory guidance. We will continue to review team systems and processes to ensure we are operating efficiently and as effectively as possible within the context of current resources.

**Mary Eccleston**  
**Children's Reviewing Manager**

# Warwickshire County Council Children's Social Care

## Compliments and Complaints Progress Report 2012/13

Corporate Parenting Panel  
11<sup>th</sup> September 2013  
Karen Smith  
Customer Relations Manager

**How we encourage feedback about Children's Social Care services:**

The Council wants to hear from people when we get things right. This helps us to:

- understand what services people value and why;
- share best practice;
- make sure we learn and develop in a way which keeps providing a good service to our customers;
- recognise and reward when our staff “go the extra mile”.

A healthy working relationship with service users and their carers, however, will also mean customers feel able to challenge decisions and actions they do not understand or perhaps disagree with.

Our service users and their carers may find it difficult to talk about their views or concerns. They may:

- be worried that complaining will lead to a reduction in services or “repercussions” from staff providing an important service to them;
- find it difficult to speak out this could be for a number of reasons including: disability, level of communication skills, racial, cultural or religious background or age, gender or sexual orientation.

The Council wants all our customers to feel confident that their views will be taken seriously, and that there will be no “repercussions” if they need to raise genuine concerns.

Young people who are in the care of the Council may feel particularly vulnerable, need additional support and encouragement to raise any concerns they have, and have different expectations for how quickly and in what way they would like to see their problems resolved.

We are in the process of refreshing the current leaflet for young people in care, and have consulted with young people about this through the Children in Care Council.

Details of our feedback process are available on the Council’s website.

Our Customer Relations Officer link regularly attends the Children in Care Council.

### **What procedures are in place to deal with feedback from young people:**

The children, young people and families social care representations procedure is designed to comply with the Children Act 1989 as set out in the Representations Procedure (Children) Regulations 1991, Section 117 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, and the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003, the Representations Procedure (Children) Regulations 2006, and the policy guidance “Getting the Best from Complaints” issued by the Department for Education and Skills 2006.

Our procedure is designed to:

- Protect vulnerable children from abuse and lack of care
- Confirm the right of customers to make a complaint and to disagree
- Enable those denied a service to challenge that decision

- Allow customers or their representatives to complain about the quality of service
- Ensure that complaints or suggestions are acted upon
- Provide extra feedback from our customers on the quality and appropriateness of our services
- Inform planning, resource allocation and quality assurance mechanisms.

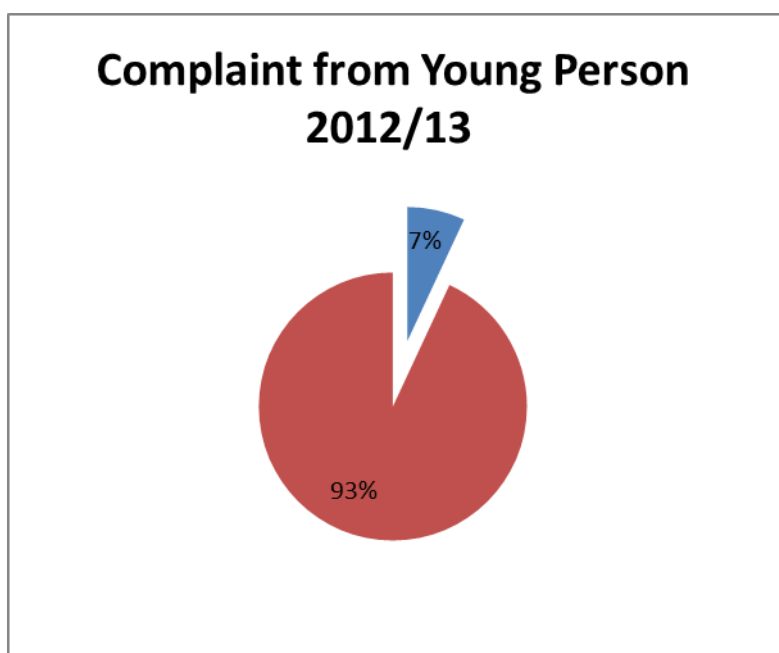
We prioritise the way in which feedback from young people in the Council's care are handled, because we recognise the need to support young people, and to try to make sure they get the answers they need as quickly as possible.

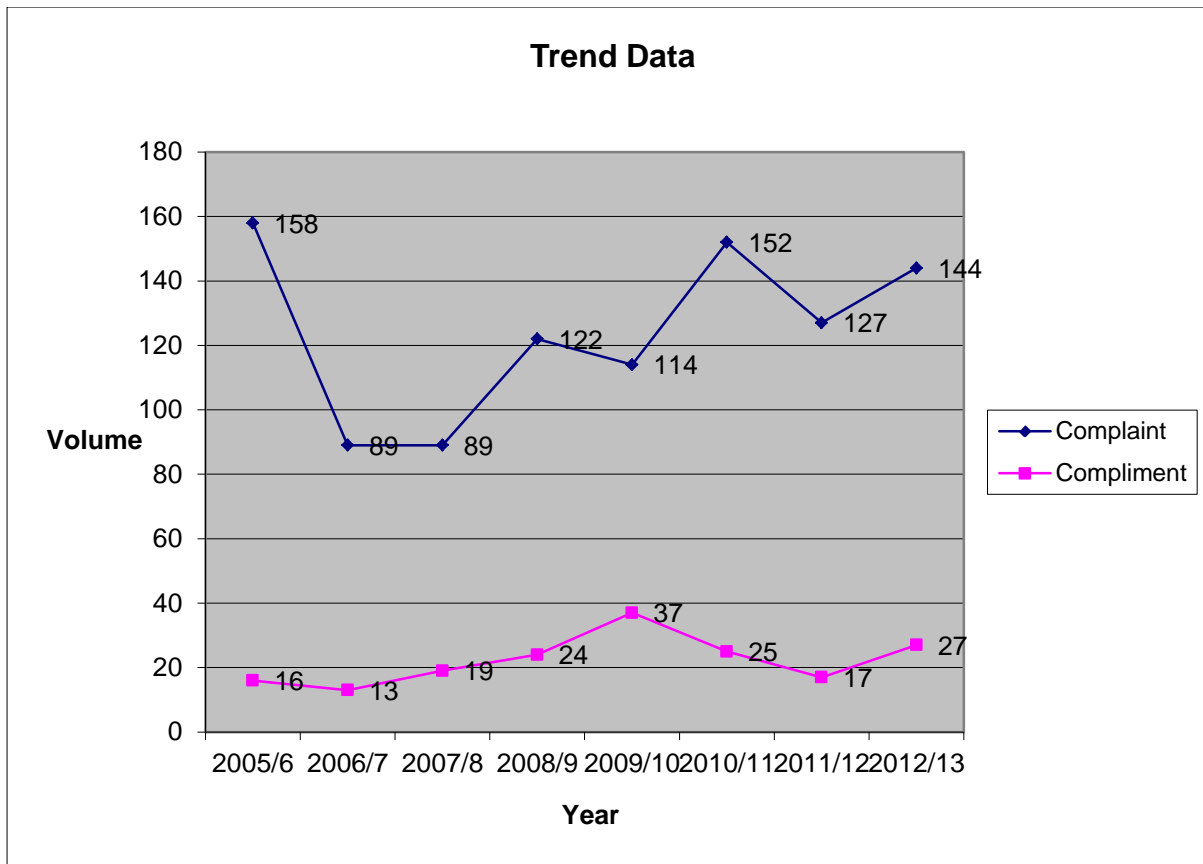
This means that within the Customer Relations Service we will ensure that our linked Customer Relations Officer speaks directly to any young person who makes a complaint, and visits them if they would like.

We also check to make sure that a young person is aware that they can get advocacy support and guidance, and will put them into contact with the Barnardo's Advocacy Service, if they are not already linked.

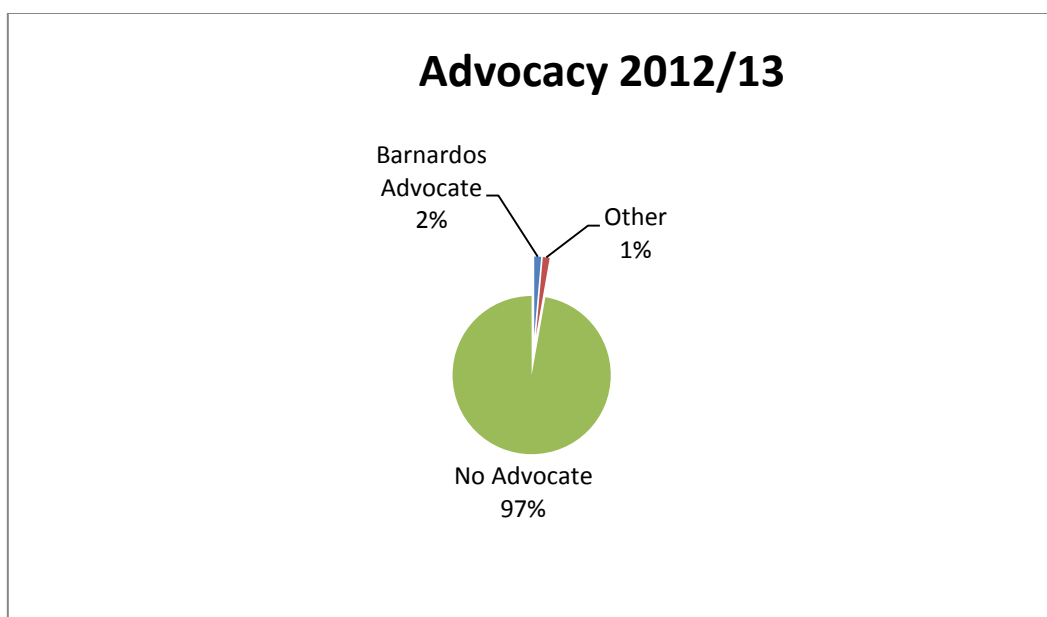
### **How much do young people use our complaints procedure?**

Historically, the complaints procedures are used primarily by adults rather than young people (less than 10% of complaints come directly from young people). The chart beneath illustrates the usage made in 2012/13, which is quite typical.



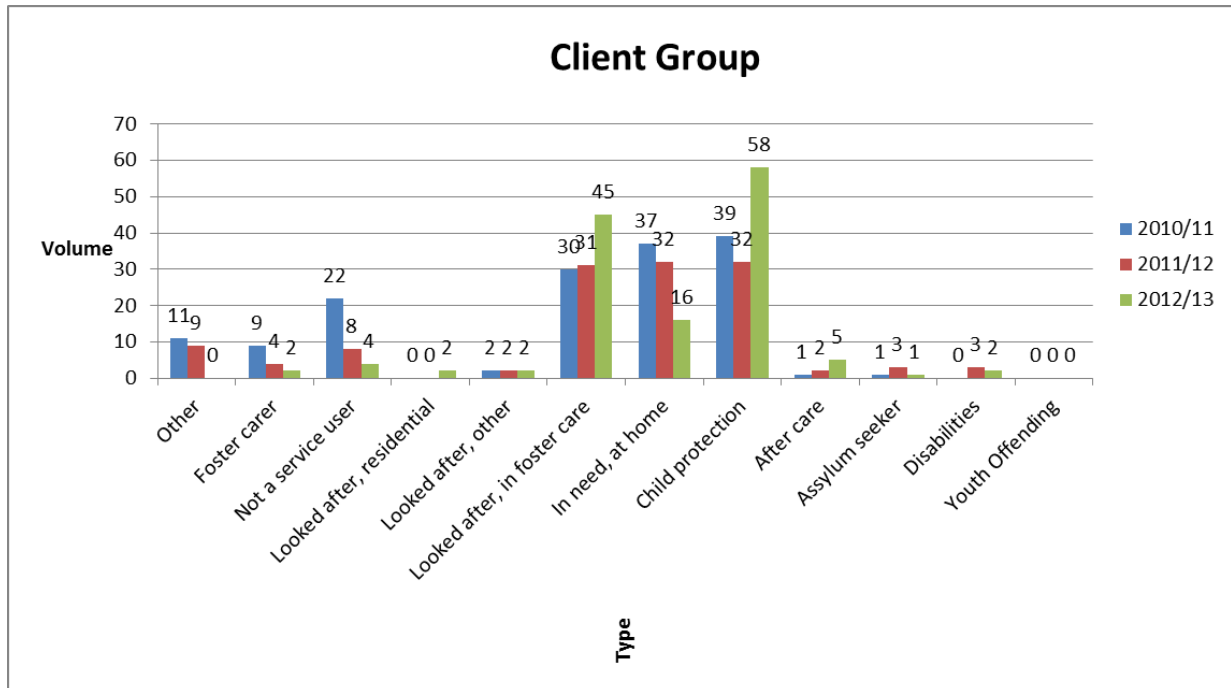


Whilst the young people who do use our procedures often make use of Barnardos, they sometimes use alternatives, or choose not to have an advocate at all. Our Customer Relations Officer link is a member of the Barnardo's Management Board, and plays an active role in supporting the use of this advocacy service by young people. We often spend a lot of time liaising with the Barnardo's advocate to help to take the complaints issues forwards in a way that works for the young person.

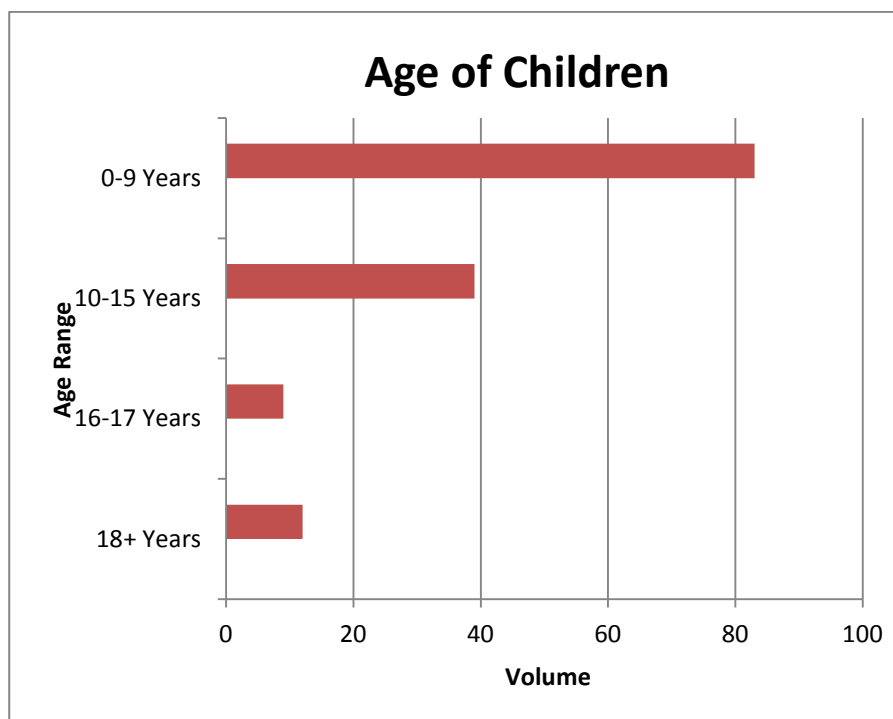


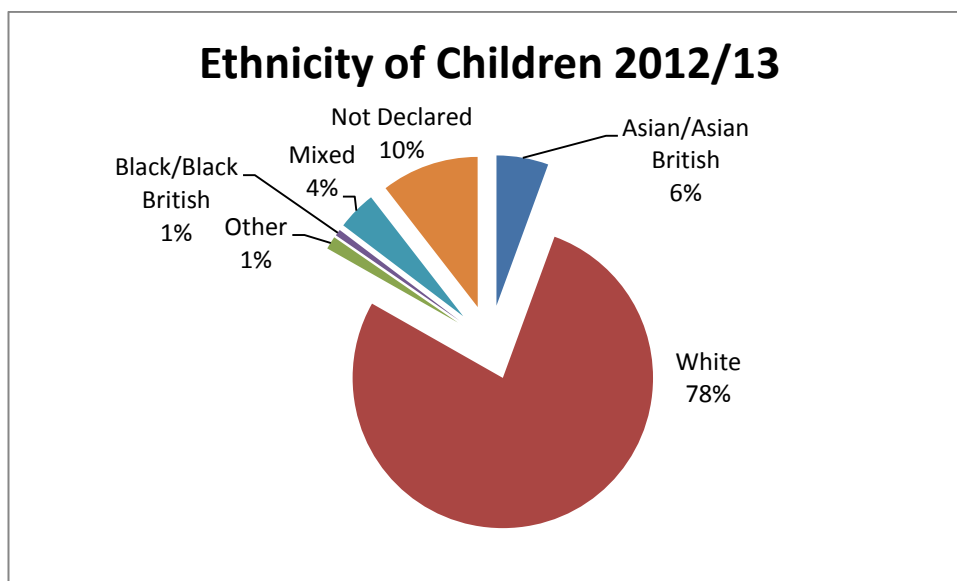


The most frequent area for complaints that relate to young people, are in relation to those young people who are in foster care. It is usually teenagers who are either in foster care or are leaving care who are most likely to use the complaints procedures directly themselves.



However, it is usually families with younger children within the care system who make most complaints. There has been a noticeable increase in complaints relating to kinship assessments, and from relatives of children such as grandparents, rather than just parents.





Relatively few complaints relate to young people from ethnic minorities.

#### Learning from complaints:

Some examples of cases where there has been organisational learning include -

WCC/02712CYPF – complaint from a young person about how his difficult behaviour was managed whilst he was in foster care	Review of the Council's arrangements with the Adolescent Mental Health Service to ensure there are adequate processes to review the advice provided to foster carers with regard to behaviour management techniques. To make it easier for young people to challenge professional advice with a second opinion.
WCC/02695CYPF - complaint about the lack of empathy in a foster care placement for a sibling group	The Operations Manager for the Fostering Service has arranged a training session that will ensure that all social workers are clear about how to handle 'causes of concern' in relation to foster carers. Critical to this is the recording of the outcome of these investigations and sharing of information with parents. The 'matching matrix' process that is a tool used to assist in the decision making as to the most appropriate foster placement for children has been reviewed so that impact of having children with multiple needs placed together can be more thoroughly considered and addressed.
WCC/02870CYPF - lack of support to complainant's son, despite family/main carers being at crisis point.	The Children's Team now follow the Joint Housing / Children's Services Protocol for Homeless 16 / 17yr olds which should have happened in this case.

**Compliments:**

These are often difficult and turbulent times for young people. It is not surprising that making compliments is not high on their list. However, the ones who do make it all worthwhile for staff. When good practice is recognised and applauded, it can make a great difference. Below is an example of some positive feedback received last year:

**Looked After Children**

*A Practice Leader recorded:*

*"I had supervision with [Foster Carers] last week and they reported that they believe you are an excellent Social Worker and one of the best that they have worked with. They went on to say that you have a very good relationship with C. who is in placement with them. They explained that C. has faced a number of difficulties and that you have worked through them with him and that you have earned his trust and he will now open up to you and them. They also stated that you are honest with C. and tell him when you think he has done something he should not and that you turn a negative into a positive."*