

**Warwickshire County Council: Sufficiency Duty 2013 – 2016
Placement Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children,
Young People and those on the 'Edge of Care' and Custody.**



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Executive Summary

This is the second report to provide an overview of the current placement arrangements for looked after children and young people in Warwickshire. It outlines the Commissioning Plan for 2013-2016 on how the Local Authority intends to meet their 'sufficiency duty' as outlined in '**Sufficiency – Statutory Guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children.**' (2010).

The Guidance has the '*implicit assumption within these duties that the Local Authority must ensure there is sufficient accommodation to meet needs locally ... and to act strategically to address gaps in provision and meet needs through diversity of provision*'. There needs to be a strategic plan around commissioning placements for Warwickshire's looked after population.

The available data and information over the period April 2010 - March 2013 shows the following profiles and trends for looked after children and young people, care leavers and those on the edge of care:

- Population forecasts predict a 3.5 per cent rise in the number of young people (0-19) in Warwickshire over the next five years.
- There has been a 9.7% increase in looked after population in the period 2010-2013
- Young people aged 10-17 years represented the largest group of children in care as at 31 March 2013 (57.6%).
- Legal measures are increasingly used to secure a child's position in care and children aged 4 years or under represent the largest group of children *starting to be looked after* during 2012/13
- Children and young people become looked after due to abuse or neglect, the impact of family stress and dysfunction, absent parenting - neglect, domestic violence and risk of physical injury also feature significantly.
- The number of internal foster home approvals has not mirrored the 9% increase in the looked after children over the 3 year period, despite an average of 45 fostering household being approved each year
- 63% of young people placed out of county are aged 11yrs+, are more likely to experience to have 3+ placement moves and exhibit socially unacceptable behaviour
- The number of young people receiving a leaving care service has increased and over 90% of these young people are reported to be in suitable accommodation
- Against the national indicators Warwickshire continues to be banded highly relation to outcomes for looked after children.

- The majority of children and young people who cease to be looked after return to their families – however there has been a year on year increase in looked after children being adopted or made subject to special guardianship orders
- Warwickshire performance against the adoption score card criteria has shown a year on year improvement
- Many children and families receiving early intervention services present with mental health and domestic violence issues with concerns for the emotional wellbeing of family members'- behavioural issues at home and at school also feature significantly.
- The CAF process continues to support a high number of families and 72% of families who were subject to a Family Group Conference had their child removed from care, care proceedings or a child protection plan.
- Young people in care have identified the following as their priorities – employment, jobs and work, education and qualifications, some to talk to and to listen to you, having a say, life skills.

The Sufficiency Duty Commissioning Plan for the period 2013-2016 places a continued expectation on Warwickshire's fostering and adoption services to recruit more families and approve them within the 6 month timescale. Further consideration needs to be given to the retention of foster carers and enhancing support services, including the provision of a specialist solo placement scheme for young people with the most complex needs.

The strategy and response to young homelessness needs to be improved alongside the development of mediation services and the extension of evidence based interventions to safely reduce the number of looked after children and the need to divert young people from care.

Sub regional developments feature significantly in the provision of fostering adoption arrangements and the commissioning of support services.

Multi-agency decision making processes require review alongside improvements in the completion of Individual Placement Agreements for children and young people placed externally to the Local Authority.

1. Introduction

The 'Sufficiency - Statutory Guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children,' seeks to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people by providing guidance on the implementation of section 22G of the Children Act 1989. This section requires Local Authorities to take steps to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the Local Authority are looking after.

Whilst the sufficiency duty applies in respect of all looked after children, it recognises the importance of earlier, preventive action to support children and families so that fewer children become looked after – those who are on the 'edge of care.'

It calls for a whole system approach to designing universal, targeted and specialist services to improve outcomes for looked after children and children in need or at risk of care or custody. The Local Authority must also be seen to be developing new provision in response to emerging trends and be able to accommodate emergency placements.

2. Context

Warwickshire lies to the south and east of the West Midlands region and has strong links with Coventry, Solihull and Birmingham. The county is comprised of five districts (North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Rugby, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick) and is served by three Clinical Commissioning Groups and the Warwickshire and West Mercia Police Force.

There are approximately 124,300 children and young people aged 0-19 years in Warwickshire, who make up just under a quarter of the total population of the county. Each year approximately 6,000 children are born. Population forecasts predict a 3.5 per cent rise in the number of young people (0-19) in Warwickshire over the next five years. Between 2011 and 2021, numbers of 0 to 9 year olds and 10 to 19 year olds in the County are projected to increase by 8,700 and 1,000 respectively. In 2021, the total Warwickshire population for those up to the age of 19 is projected to be 133,900, an increase of 12,200, or 7.8% on the 2011 population of 124,200. This projected growth has a range of future policy implications in terms of increased demand for those services provided for children and young people.

The majority of the maintained school population in Warwickshire are of White British ethnicity (85%) whilst the largest minority ethnic group is Indian (3%).

At 31 March 2013 there were 550 children subject to a child protection plan in Warwickshire. On this date there were 698 children 'looked after' by the Local Authority. In addition there were approximately a further 2,300 'children in need' known to Children's Social Care Services of which over half are receiving a regular service.

3. Vision, Policies and Commissioning Framework

The Local Authority's approach to its sufficiency duty is underpinned by a range of key policies including the People Group Outcomes Framework, Corporate Parenting Policy and Strategy, the Fostering Statement of Purpose and the Early Intervention Strategy

The People Group Outcomes Framework outlines what services are working to achieve for the people (including children and young people) of Warwickshire, within the context of the vision, priorities, principles and commissioning intentions. The priority outcomes are to ensure

- People are safe
- People are independent
- People are cared for
- People enjoy life
- People are healthy
- People learn
- People contribute
- People are poverty-free

Performance measure will be agreed against these outcomes alongside the development of quality measures which will be used to assess the effectiveness of the services provided or commissioned for users.

The Corporate Parenting Policy approved by the County Council on 12 December 2006 is concerned with:

'Ensuring that children and young people in care are secure and supported to achieve well, that they are encouraged to have full and fulfilled lives that raise their self-esteem and confidence. It is ultimately about preparing them for adulthood and future independence.'

(Corporate Policy, Strategy and Action Plan 2006)

It has been the County Council's policy for approximately 30 years that children and young people in care can benefit most from a family life

experience. This is reflected within the Foster Care Statement of Purpose that aims to:

‘Provide quality and safe care within a family setting for children and young people who are unable to live within their own families.’

(Foster Care Statement of Purpose)

Key objectives for the Fostering Service are to provide:

- A skilled and flexible Fostering Service that is able to meet the wide range of assessed needs of children and their families. This includes short or longer term care, permanent care, parent and baby placements and short stay care specifically for children with disabilities.
- Foster care placements close to the child’s local community, wherever possible, and appropriate for the child/young persons assessed needs.
- A Service that places the child in the centre – that is respectful of, and promotes the child’s heritage, culture and identity through the recognition of their race, culture, religion and language.

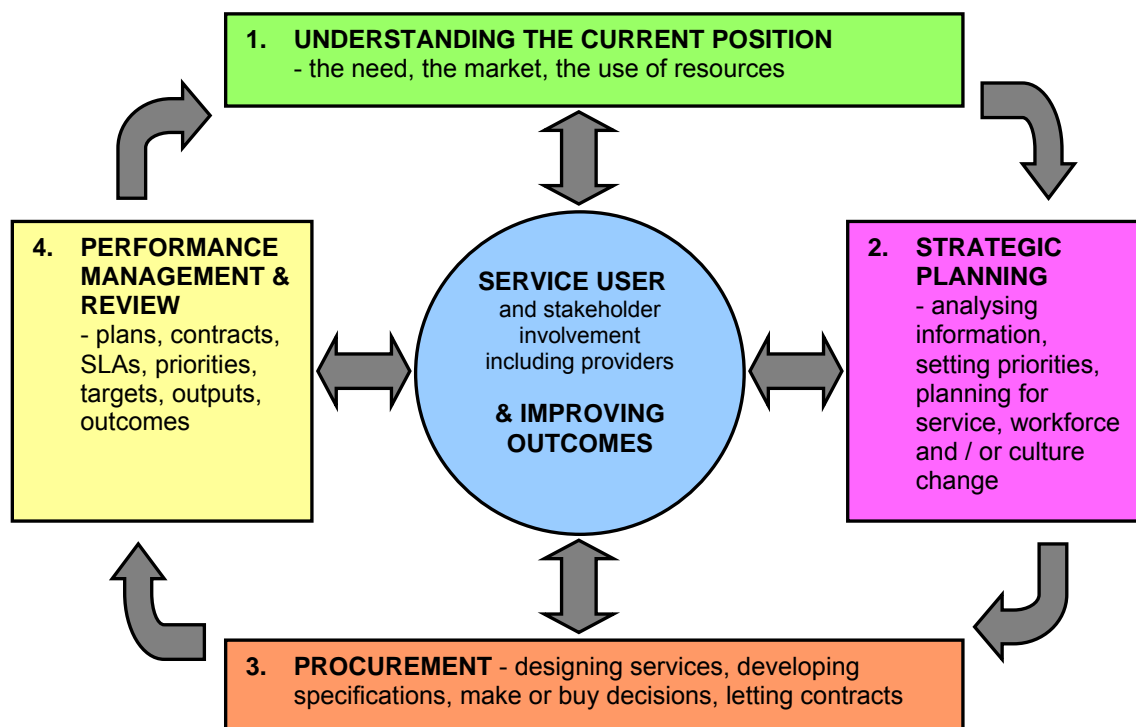
The Warwickshire County Council People’s Group Policy for Early help and Support is concerned with:

‘All agencies that work in the prevention and early intervention arena to work to a set of principles that works for all age ranges so we improve the outcomes for those identified citizens of Warwickshire who need support.’

Early Help and Support is about how, through our prevention and early intervention strategies, we create positive, sustainable, resilient outcomes for Warwickshire citizens of whatever age or circumstance, when they need us most.

Commissioning is about designing services and devising a system which will have the greatest impact on the lives of looked after children within the envelope of available resources. It is the responsibility of anyone who works within looked after children services to contribute to the commissioning process building upon a high quality assessment of the needs, care planning and placement decisions.

The commissioning model follows the four phases of the cycle outlined below



4. What sufficiency would look like – The success measures

The Statutory Guidance (2.7) suggests that good practice in meeting the sufficiency duty can be met through a step change in commissioning practice in which Local Authorities are active in managing their market to:

- Support and maintain diversity of services to better meet the needs of looked after children including through the provision of preventive and early intervention services to reduce the need for care proceedings;
- Place children within their Local Authority where this is reasonably practicable and where it is consistent with a child's needs and welfare;
- Support the market to deliver more appropriate placements and other services locally;
- Provide mechanisms for commissioning high quality placements and services outside of the local area

This requires a whole system approach to early intervention and prevention alongside services for looked after children and those young people leaving care. This is broader than having sufficient beds in certain locations it should remain focused on securing the best possible outcomes for looked after children and young people based upon a comprehensive assessment of their needs.

Placement provision must be supported by a range of social work and other specialist services targeted at meeting the specific health, educational and personal development needs of looked after children and young people.

Since the initial Sufficiency Duty Sufficiency Strategy, Warwickshire County Council has worked in close partnership with the Social Care Research Unit at Dartington and has gained a better understanding of the needs of its looked after population and the reasons why they enter care. Progress is being made in putting into place outcome focused processes and evidence based interventions to meet these needs, and to support the early return of children and young people to their family networks where this is appropriate.

Sufficiency duty commissioning priorities

Commissioning Priority 1

To continue to grow and develop the internal provision to meet need - to have sufficient Warwickshire approved family placements within 20 miles of the Local Authority boundary

Objectives

We will

- Ensure that the annual fostering and adoption recruitment strategies are based upon an assessment of actual and projected placement needs and requirements
- Ensure that the recruitment, assessment and support to placements conforms with regulatory requirements and timescales and to the highest standards of professional practice
- Ensure that all placements and interventions promote the overall safety, care and development of the children and young people in placement.

Outcomes

We expect to see

- Looked after children and young people (who require a family placement) to be placed with Warwickshire approved carers/adopters;
- Levels of placement stability to be in line with the national average
- High level of satisfaction with placement arrangements reported by carers and young people.

Success Criteria

- 85% of children and young people (who require a family placement) are placed with Warwickshire approved carers
- Less than 10% of young people experience three or more placement moves;
- 90% of fostering and adoption assessments are completed within 6 months timescale from application to approval.

Commissioning Priority 2

To have effective arrangements through commissioning processes and partnership arrangements to secure specialist placements including placements for young people aged 18+ years

Objectives

We will

- Be active partners in regional and sub-regional commissioning framework agreement arrangements to ensure the greatest range of placement choice (fostering and adoption) for Warwickshire young people
- Work proactively with housing and other accommodation providers to ensure a suitable range of supported and housing options for care leavers.
- To ensure that the pathway planning for young people living outside the authority boundary engages with all relevant authorities and maximises continuity of arrangements.

Outcomes

We expect to see

- Greater placement choice and a reduction in placement moves for looked after children and young people;
- Young people reporting their successful transition into independent living and having placement and housing choice
- Children and young people placed externally to have outcomes and opportunities equal to those placed with Warwickshire approved carers.

Success Criteria

- That the majority of children and young people whose needs cannot be met within a Warwickshire placement are successfully placed with carers within the sub regional Fostering Framework Agreement
- That all care leavers have fair access to a range of supported housing options across the county.

Commissioning Priority 3

To ensure that targeted and specialist services are available to support the placements of children and young people in care and which prevent placement disruption.

Objectives

We will

- Ensure that children and young people in care receive additional support and services to promote their learning and achievement, health and emotional wellbeing
- Establish clear pathways and protocols for children and young people who have been in care/custody and for their parents and families to receive on-going services and support.

Outcomes

We expect to see

- Improved permanency outcome for children and young people in care and improved levels of placement stability
- Underpinned by Children in Need plans, children and young people are supported within their family networks.

Success Criteria

- Children and young people in care have appropriate assessments and receive support from the Virtual School, designated health and emotional health and well-being services
- Long term placement stability for children and young people in care is better than the national average performance
- Fewer children re-enter care

* Note – The DOE report that only 17% of LAC aged 5yrs-18yrs remain in the same foster home for 5 years or more

Commissioning Priority 4

To have in place a range of services that will meet the needs of children, young people and their families on the 'edge of care' and those who have been discharged from care

Objectives

We will

- Develop an Early Intervention Strategy targeted at the most vulnerable children and young people and those on the 'edge of care';
- Prioritise evidence based interventions for children and families with the greatest needs on the edge of care
- Prioritise services that will enable young people to safely 'step down' from care to be supported within the family networks.

Outcomes

We expect to see

- Children, young people and families offered a range of family intervention services that will prevent the need for accommodation
- Children and families readily accessing services that meet their assessed needs
- Children and young people experience shorter periods in care and are rehabilitated into their family networks in a timely fashion.

Success criteria

- Reduction in the number of children and young people entering care
- Increase use of CAF and other evidenced based interventions as part of the 'step down' provision of services to children and young people who no longer meet social care thresholds.
- High levels of satisfaction reported by children, young people and families who access the early intervention services.

5. Understanding the Current Position – Needs Analysis

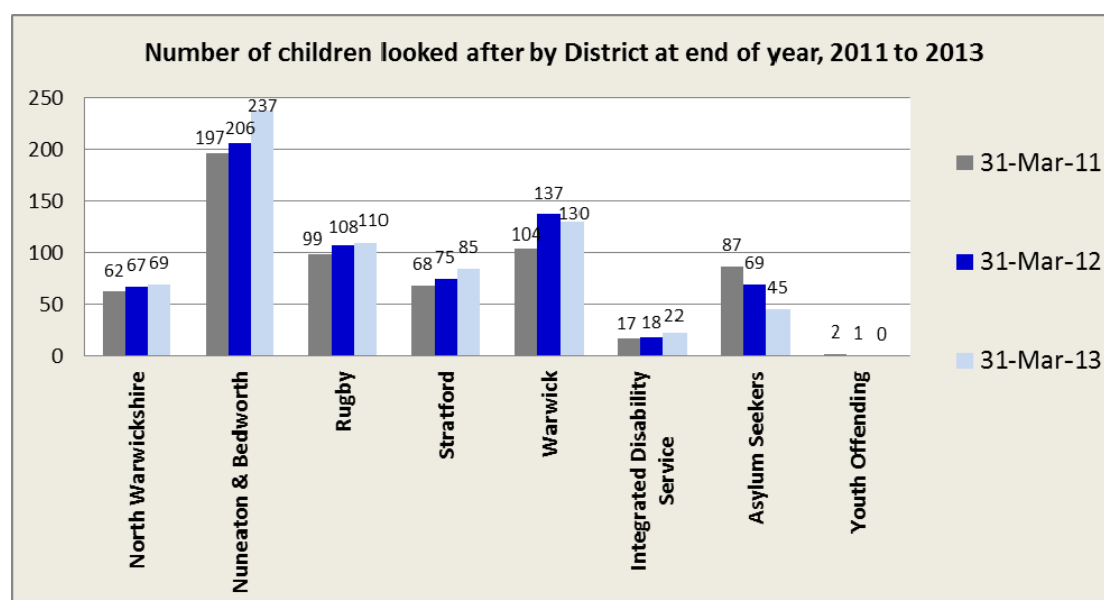
(i) Looked After Children

Business Intelligence (Children) is responsible for collating, verifying and analysing information and data about looked after children and young people.

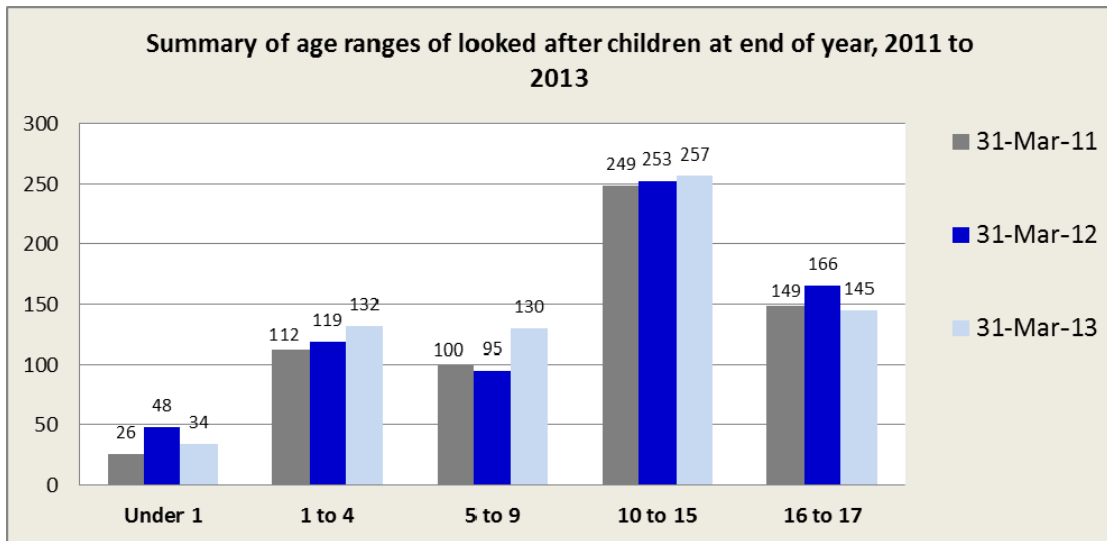
For the purposes of the needs assessment for the Sufficiency Duty – Commissioning Strategy, a 3 year perspective has been used analysing data from the period 1 April 2010 – 31 March 2013. This has considered data about the looked after population by district, gender, age, legal status, new entrants to the care system and primary ‘child in need’ characteristics.

In the 3 year period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2013 there has been an overall **9.7%** increase in the number of children and young people looked after from 636 on 31 March 2010 to 698 on 31 March 2013.

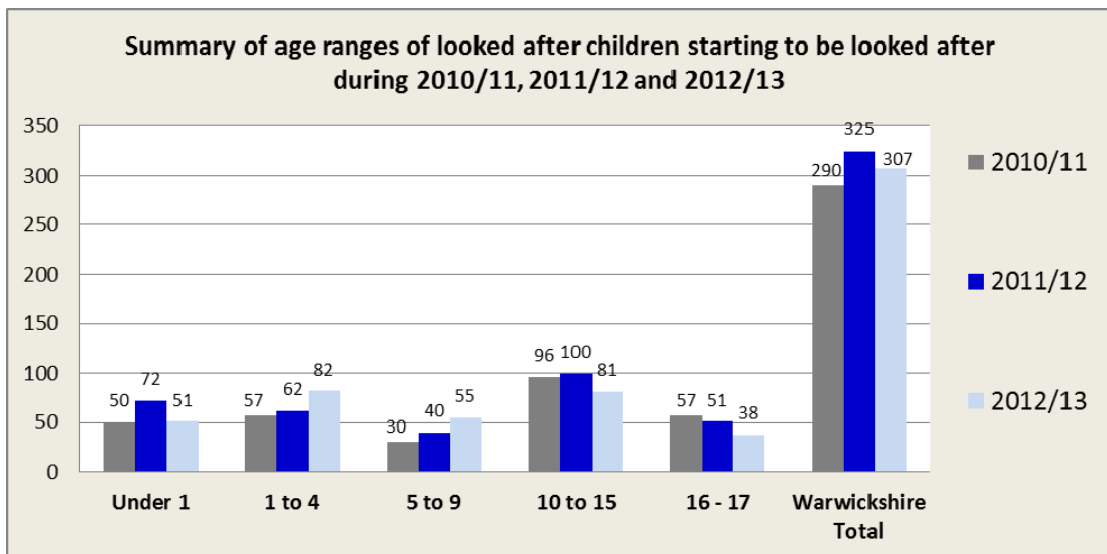
The chart below shows increase by district with the most significant increase being in Nuneaton and Bedworth district, followed by North Warwickshire, Rugby and Stratford. There has been a significant reduction in the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers who are looked after. Warwick District has seen a rise since 31 March 2011 but actually saw a reduction between 31 March 2012 and 31 March 2013.



Males are still more prevalent within the looked after population, with a slight decrease in prevalence from 60.1% at 31 March 2011 to 57.2% at 31 March 2013.



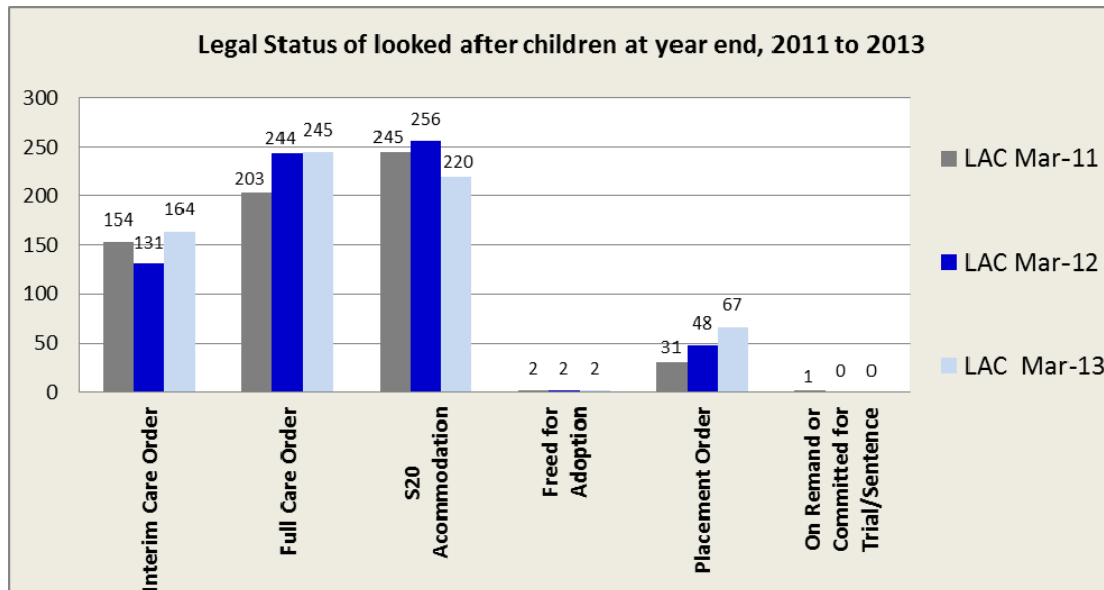
The following diagram shows the ages at which children and young people start to be looked after over the last 3 years.



The largest number of looked after children are within the age range of 10 yrs. -15yrs although proportionately this has seen a decrease over the past three years. Whilst children aged 10yrs -17yrs are the largest group of children in care proportionately this has decreased from 62.6% as at 31 March 2011 to 57.6% as at 31 March 2013.

During this period however there is an increase in the number of children who are looked after at ages 1year to 4 years and aged 5 yrs. - 9 yrs. rising from 16.8% (107) to 19.7% (134) and more recently to 19.1% (133) of the total cohort.

There has been a steady decrease in the number of young people aged 16 yrs. - 17yrs starting to be looked after, reducing from 9.0% in 2010/11 to 5.4% of all children starting to be looked after during 2012/13.



This chart above shows that there has been an increase in legal measures to secure children in care. Most noticeably in the use of Interim and Full Care Orders, which accounted for 54% of the looked after population at 31 March 2010, and 57.7% as at 31 March 2013. There has also been a gradual increase in the number of Placements Orders, accounting for 5.4% of the looked after population at 31 March 2010 and 9.8% of the cohort as at 31 March 2013.



The population characteristic of looked after children shows

- A 9.7% increase in looked after population over a three year period
- Males represent 57.2% of the cohort
- An increase in legal measures to secure children in care;
- Children aged 4 years or under represented the largest group of children starting to be looked after during 2012/13
- However, young people aged 10 yrs. -17 yrs. represented the largest group of children at 31 March 2013 (57.6%).

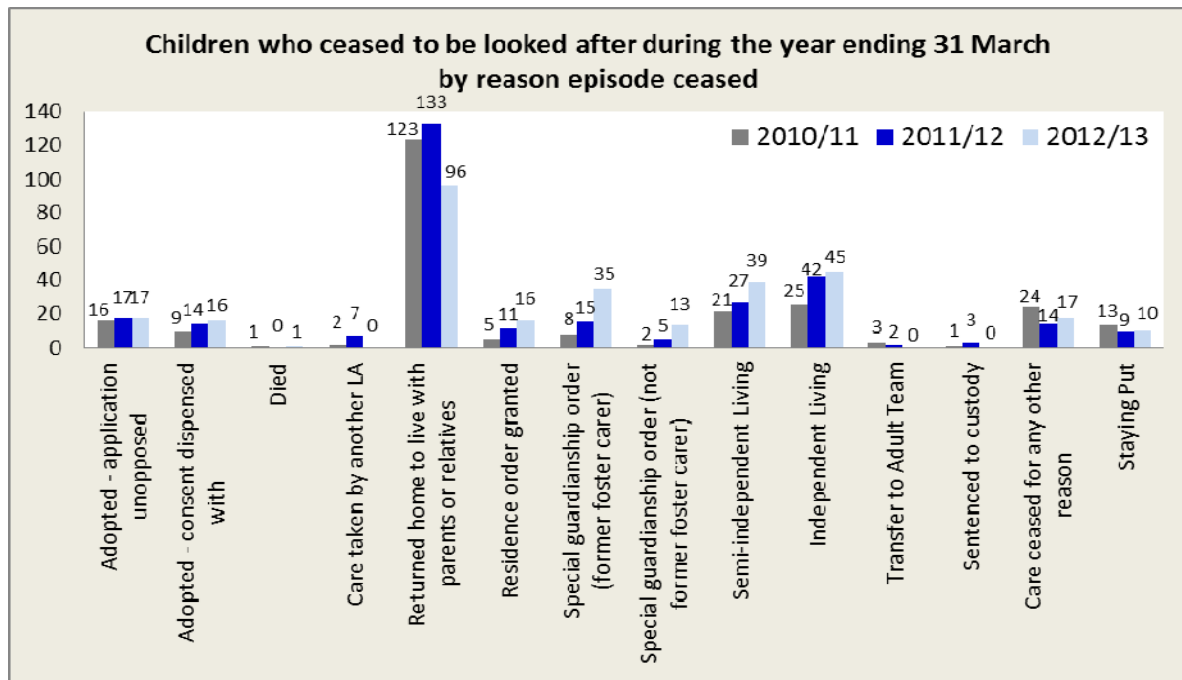
The large majority of looked after children have a main need category of 'abuse and neglect', and this has seen little change over the past 3 years, although proportionately it has increased, up from 54% at 31 March 2011 to 57.7% at 31 March 2013. It is worth noting that the number of children with a main need of 'absent parenting' has decreased in line with the overall decrease in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children being worked with.

The data shows overwhelmingly that children and young people become looked after due to abuse or neglect or the impact of family stress and dysfunction or absent parenting. Neglect, domestic violence and risk of physical injury also feature significantly as secondary needs factors. The 'matching needs and services' exercise completed as part of the Dartington project confirmed this.

Based on a sample of 100 children and young people who became looked after during 2010 it found

- The largest group were families in crisis due to a breakdown in parent-child relationships and significant child behaviour problems (E.g. 80% aged 12yrs+, 1:4 had been looked after previously or subject to a child protection plan, school problems featured as did emotional, conduct or behavioural problems)
- The second group; showed risks related to parent's lifestyles, maturity and mental health which creates doubts about their ability to meet the basic needs of their children (E.g. 2/3^{rds} girls, with 3/4 being new born or under 5yrs, half were subject to legal process, also evidence of developmental delay, neglect or ill treatment)
- The final group showed multiple complex needs relating to the parents' violent relationships and neglectful parenting (E.g. 2/3rds new born or under 5 yrs., previously looked after and/or subject to child protection plans, high incidence of domestic violence and aggression within the community with adults reported to be isolated, stressed or depressed)

The chart below shows the children who ceased to be looked after over the past 3 years by the reasons that they ceased.



The majority of children and young people ceasing to be looked after over the last three years have returned to live with their families. The second largest proportion of children was discharged to semi-independence including those young people who remained with carers under Warwickshire's Staying Put Scheme.

Children who ceased to be looked after due to court orders such as adoption orders, special guardianship orders or residence orders have continued to see an increase over the last three years, accounting 31.8% of all ceases during 2012/13 compared to just 15.8% of all ceases during 2010/11. Special guardianship orders tend to be made in favour of extended family members in respect of young children with the following trend:

2010/11 – 10 orders
 2011/12 – 20 orders
 2012/13 – 47 orders

The increase in special guardianship orders will have implications in terms ongoing financial support to these households and the provision of specific support services.

(ii) Looked after young people placed outside the county boundary

As at 31 March 2013, 238 children (34.1%) of the total looked after population were placed out of county. 90 of these children were placed 20 miles or more from where they used to live.

An analysis of the 103 children and young people placed out of county in residential or independent fostering provision as on the 31 March 2013 shows the following:

- 23 placed in residential care of which 9 (43%) are jointly commissioned with the Assessment Statementing and Review Service (ASRS) and/or health
- 45 children are placed with Independent Fostering providers
- 28 children are placed with providers as part of the sub regional Fostering Framework Agreement.

The age profile of children and young people placed shows that 14 (15%) are aged 5 yrs. -10 yrs. and this includes 2 children in residential care, 42 (45%) are aged 11yrs -15yrs with 18 (19%) of these young people being with independent fostering providers. The remaining 24 are evenly split between residential provision and framework fostering placements. A similar pattern emerges for young people aged 16+ with 20 (21%) with independent fostering providers but a lower number within this age range, 7 (7.5%) of young people in residential provision.

Warwickshire does not place exclusively with particular fostering or residential providers. There are 5 fostering agencies providing 37 placements and a further 9 agencies providing 24 placements between them. From these placements 18 out of 73 (25%) children and young people remain placed within the county boundary. The situation with residential provision is that 11 organisations are providing 1 placement each with 3 residential homes offering 2 placements and 1 unit providing 4 placements

This shows that Warwickshire County Council continues to make low use of residential provision for looked after young people. This reflects the policy commitment that looked after children should be placed within family care wherever possible and appropriate based upon the child/young person's assessed needs.

Finally the increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking young people is having an impact on the availability of teenage placements within Warwickshire and a higher percentage of these young people are more likely to be placed externally.

Young people within independent sector provision are mainly male aged 13+, with significant needs. They are more likely to be exhibiting socially unacceptable and risky behaviours. Experience shows that they tend to succeed better in single placement arrangements where respite is guaranteed for the carers.

(iii) Emergency Placements

The Warwickshire Emergency Duty Team (EDT) has access to 4 foster carers who are specifically approved to meet the emergency placements needs for children and young people 'out of hours'. Workings on a rota basis two households are available to accept placements for up to 48 hours. On occasions this dedicated provision can also support the main fostering provision and vice versa.

Over the past 3 years EDT placement usage has been as follows

| | Placement nights | % usage |
|---------|------------------|---------|
| 2010/11 | 97 | 12% |
| 2011/12 | 112 | 15% |
| 2012/13 | 96 | 13% |

The EDT has sufficient carers to meet the placement needs 'out of hours.'

(iv) Children in need of Adoption

The Adoption Services Annual Report 2012-2013 shows over the preceding 3 years, on average 54 children have an approved adoption plan each year. However in response to the Government's adoption initiatives this is expected to rise as the upward trend shows. (2010/11 - 36 children, 2011/12 - 62 children and 2012/13 - 64 children) The profile shows that the majority will be single children with an increasing number of siblings groups of 2 or 3 children. More recently there have been more male to female children with an adoption decision with 17% of children during 2012/13 being mixed race.

Since the first Sufficiency Duty Commissioning Report 2011-2013 the Government has introduced the Adoption Score Card. This has shown a progressive improvement in the timeliness of adoption decision making for looked after children and the subsequent adoption placement process. The England averages are presented in brackets.

| Average timescales (in days) for:- | 2009 - 2012 | 2010-2013 |
|---|--------------|--------------|
| Time between a child entering care and moving to its adoptive family | 562 (636) | 535 (647) |
| Time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding the match with the adoptive family | 117 (195) | 87 (210) |

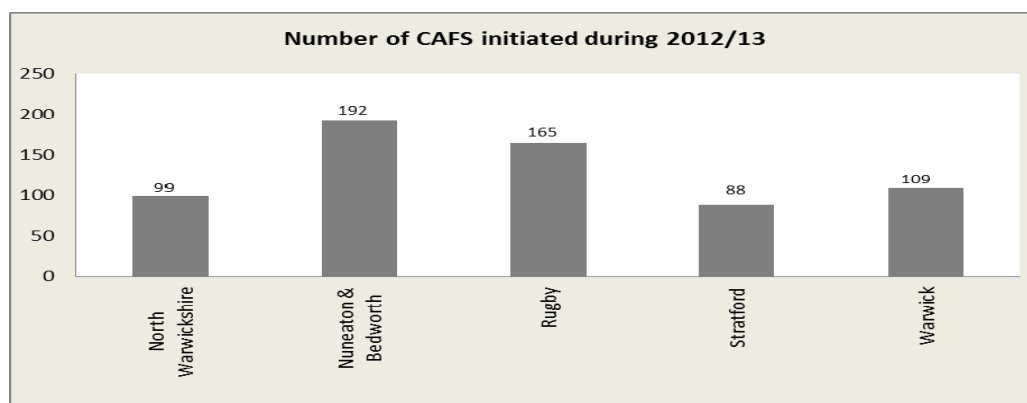
| | | |
|---|--------------|---------|
| Adoptions from care | 85 -11% | 90 -11% |
| Adoption of children from ethnic minority backgrounds | Not recorded | 5 - 3% |
| Adoptions of children aged 5 yrs. or over | 25 – 5% | 20 -3% |
| Number of children awaiting adoption as on 31 March | 30 | 40 |

This data suggests that within the context of an increasing looked after population, adoption remains the preferred permanency placement choice for a number of children and that this outcome is being secured for them in a timely fashion within Warwickshire, against national indicators and comparisons.

(v) Children and young people on the ‘edge of care’

To meet the requirements of the Children Act 1989, section 17, Warwickshire has in place a range of early intervention and family support services provided to children and young people ‘in need’. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is seen as a key process for accessing these services and can be used for all children from pre-birth to 19 years of age.

In the period April 2012 – March 2013, 653 CAF’s were initiated across the county in the following areas.



The CAF dataset shows that the majority reasons for initiating a CAF are

- (i) Behavioural issues within the home
- (ii) Behavioural issues within school
- (iii) Mental health concerns for the young person
- (iv) Parenting concerns
- (v) Domestic violence and emotional well-being issues.

The main areas where families are seeking improvements are in

- (i) Mental and emotional health
- (ii) Nurturing family relationships

- (iii) Managing child behaviours
- (iv) School attendance and enjoyment
- (vi) Raising the parent's self-esteem.

The CAF Family Support Team worked with 139 families during 2012/13. RELATE also provided a mediation service for separated families (STORMS) receiving a total of 39 referrals from various services

These services are augmented by a county wide Family Group Conferencing Service (FGC Service). In the period 2012/2013 of the 53 families who received a service the following outcomes were reported:



72% of families the child/young person was no longer in care, subject to Care Proceedings or a Child Protection Plan
57% of families reporting seeing a positive status change
46% of cases the 'risk of' care has been avoided
76% households reported overall positive outcomes for children %
51% of parents/carers reported overall positive outcomes

Targeted youth services also provide direct intervention to young people who are subject of a CAF process, who are looked after or where there have been safeguarding concerns.

(vi) Young People in Transition 16 +

On 31 March 2013 there were 485 young people receiving a service for the Leaving Care (Get Ready for Adult Life) Teams across Warwickshire. From this cohort, 135 (28%) were in care. A significant number of those receiving a leaving care service are unaccompanied asylum seeking young people, accounting for 29.7% of all care leavers.

The Get Ready for Adult Life workers become involved just before the young person becomes 16 so that a robust pathway planning process can commence with appropriately experienced workers.

The aim is to support young people to remain within a foster care placement until they are 18 years of age. Training is provided to foster carers on they can support young people in developing independence skills. Where young people choose to leave their foster placement early review is held to plan for the

transition into independent accommodation and where required, to assess the suitability of the unregulated accommodation.

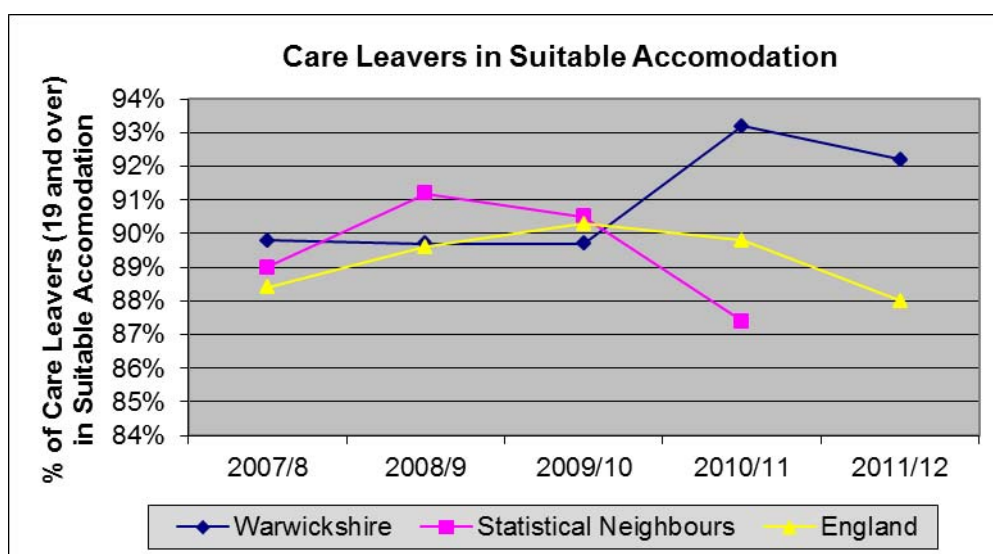
The Staying Put Scheme allows young people who are established in a foster carer's family to remain there until they are 19.5 years or 21 if in Higher Education. At any one time approximately 14 young people are in a Staying Put arrangement.

A Supported Lodgings Scheme also provides safe and secure accommodation within a family setting. Since 2011, 19 providers have been approved of these 8 were previous foster carer, 7 are connected people (e.g. close relative, partners/friends family, advocate) and 3 young people went to live within families previously unknown to them. The average duration of these placements is 15 weeks. This provides the opportunity for a planned transition to more independent accommodation options.

Properties are also rented in the Coventry area for unaccompanied asylum seekers for when they are ready to live independently. These are based in localities that are able to meet their cultural and linguistic needs.

Further the service engages with a wide range of external accommodation providers in order to meet the sufficiency duty requirements. Warwickshire County Council (Supporting People) also commission accommodation provision and floating support through a range of providers.

The chart below represents the suitability of accommodation for looked after young people – the majority of care leavers are reported to be in suitable accommodation arrangements to meet their needs



| | 2007/8 | 2008/9 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 |
|------------------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| Warwickshire | 89.8% | 89.7% | 89.7% | 93.2% | 92.2% |
| Statistical Neighbours | 89.0% | 91.2% | 90.5% | 87.4% | 86.0% |
| England | 88.4% | 89.6% | 90.3% | 89.8% | 88.0% |

(vii) Young people with housing needs

There have been significant policy developments across the UK to clarify where responsibility lies to help deal with the issue of youth homelessness. The most important of these was the Southwark Ruling in 2009. This had major implications for Children's Services and Housing Authorities with regards to the provision of homelessness services for 16 and 17 year olds. Before the ruling, 16 and 17 year olds who presented as homeless would primarily fall under the care of the Housing Authority however the Southwark Ruling sought to clarify the lines of responsibility and made it clear that 16 and 17 year olds who were faced with the threat of homelessness were 'Children in Need' (as per section 17 of the Children Act 1989) and therefore Children's Services had responsibilities towards them.

A joint protocol between Children's Services and the local district Housing Authorities has been in place since February 2011. Since June 2013 it has been evaluated so that greater consistency in its application can be achieved across the 5 districts.

Further a working group of representatives from Children's Services, Community Services, Supporting People and District Council Housing are currently reviewing provision. This includes exploring provision in other local authorities and developing a single process for young homeless people across the county. This model is aiming to implement homeless prevention strategies and improving mediation services prior to statutory intervention. The range of accommodation provision and floating support across the county is also subject to review.

6. Placement and Service Activity

This section examines the resources that are available to meet the identified needs of children and young people in care and those on the edge of care or custody. These are considered under the four commissioning priorities.

To continue to grow and develop the internal provision to meet need - to have sufficient Warwickshire approved family placements within 20 miles of the Local Authority boundary

(i) Fostering

The Marketing and Recruitment Strategy for foster care has a high profile in the public domain which has been established through an effective branding process. This has been supported by the introduction of shorter but achievable assessment timescales. The Fostering Service has also reviewed how carers can be supported in extending their fostering approval range.

The Service has started to use different marketing techniques during this period and have focused on the development of social media opportunities such as the internet, whilst continuing to use radio advertising to good effect and more traditional recruitment methods such as local newspapers and other publications.

| Period | No. of approved carers on 31 March | No. of mainstream carers approvals | Number of family and friends approval | Total | Retirements resignations or de-registrations | Overall Trend |
|-----------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------|--|---------------|
| 31.3.2011 | 334 | 28 | 20 | 48 | 30 | ▲ |
| 31.3.2012 | 352 | 27 | 13 | 40 | 34 | ▲ |
| 31.3.2013 | 339 | 24 | 25 | 49 | 44 | ▲ |

Since April 2011 the number of mainstream fostering assessments completed within the 6 month timescale has improved year on year from 16 (59%) to 19 (79%). Timescale for family and friends carers are often court directed.

Information from Foster Carer Exit interviews over the past 2 years shows that the majority of carers who resign have been fostering for less than 5 years (40/89) with 15 households

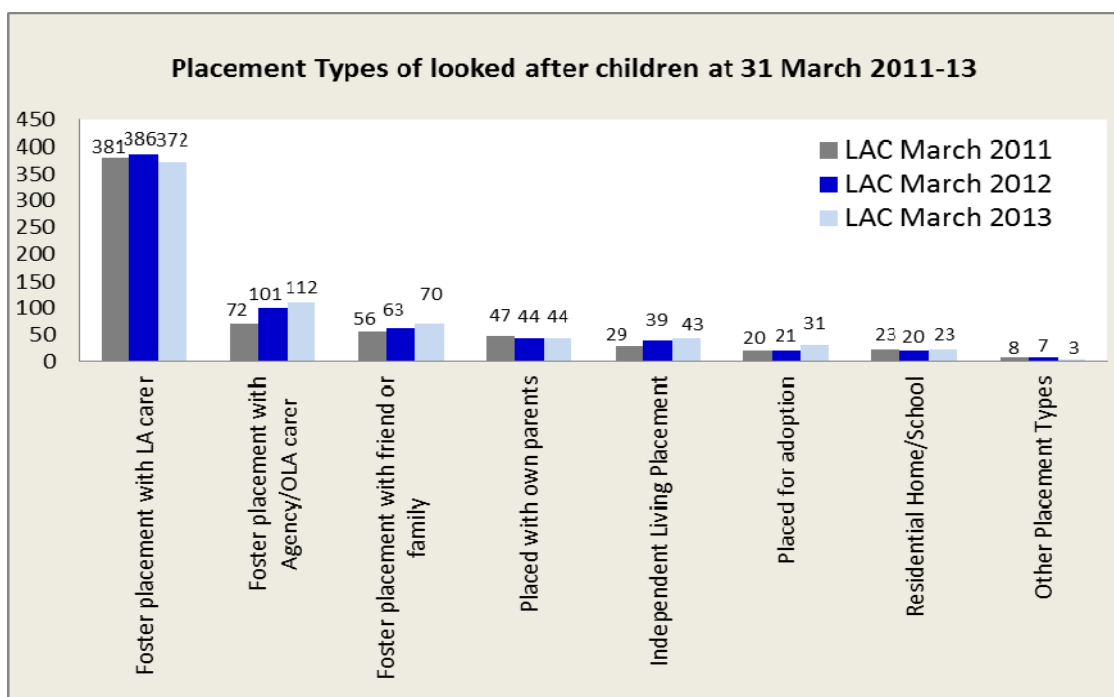
The recruitment priorities over the next 3 years needs to continue to target the recruitment of carers for teenagers, for parent and child placements and placements for sibling groups under 5 years and solo placements for young people with complex needs

fostering for less than 12 months.

Following the internal review the Fostering Service revised managerial arrangements were put into place from 1 October 2011 which included the establishment of a Kinship Care Practice from January 2012. Since this time the number of approved 'family and friends' foster carers has increased from 56 to 70 households, representing a 20 % increase. The Practice has also undertaken 95 Special Guardianship Order assessments between 1.1.2012 – 31.3.2013

As shown below over the past 3 years the number of looked after children placed with Warwickshire approved foster carers have remained steady.

However, there have been increases in children placed with family/friends foster carers approved by Warwickshire and children placed for adoption and made the subject of special guardianship orders to extended family members.



The most recent Annual Performance Support data available for the period 2012/13 shows that against key national indicators Warwickshire is banded highly in relation to outcomes for looked after children, however the increase in placement pressures on the Fostering Service are beginning to impact on the performance measures as follows:

- (i) Placement Stability - Warwickshire reported an improved position at 12.5% of children experiencing 3 or more placement moves, however this is slightly higher than the national average of 11.0%.

- (ii) Family Placements for LAC - This measures deterioration from the previous year from 94.4% to 91.8%.
- (iii) Long Term Placement Stability - This relates to children under 16 yrs. who have been looked after continuously for 2.5 years but who were in same placement for 2 yrs., this decreased to 63.8% in 2013 from 69.5% the previous year. It is worth noting that the 3 year average for 2010, 11 and 12 was 69% compared to the England 3 year average of 68%.

(ii) Adoption

The Adoption Recruitment Strategy has prioritised the following categories for adopter recruitment over the past 3 years:

- Adopters who live within Warwickshire;
- Placements for BME and mixed heritage children;
- Adopters for children with disabilities;
- Adopters for sibling groups;
- Adopters for older children aged 5+ years.

Approved adopters during this period shows that prospective adopters are increasing willing to consider older children and larger sibling groups, consistent with the placement needs and requirements of children waiting for placement. The following chart shows that year on year there has been at least a 25% increase in the number of households approved to adopt.

| Period | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 |
|--|---------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Number of approved adoptive households | 28 | 35 (+2 overseas) | 48 (+1 overseas) |

To have effective arrangements through our commissioning processes and partnership arrangements to secure a range of specialist placements including placements for young people aged 18+ years

Since October 2009 Warwickshire with Coventry City Council and Solihull Metropolitan Council entered a Fostering Framework Agreement with 10 independent fostering providers, assessed on both cost and quality.

The use of independent sector placements has seen an increase over the 3 year period, as at 31 March 2011 these placements accounted for 14.9% of placements compared to 19.3% as at 31 March 2013. There has also been a

continued increase in the number of looked after young people in independent living arrangements.

The Local Authority has representatives on West Midlands Regional Family Placement Consortium and West Midlands Children's Commissioning Partnership. More locally the sub-regional Fostering and Adoption partnership is exploring more effective and efficient joint working opportunities and scope to jointly access and develop services to meet need.

To ensure that targeted and specialist services are available to support the placements of children and young people in care and which prevent placement disruption

The following services are available for looked after children and young people

(i)Health

There is a designated Doctor and nurse who have key roles in ensuring that the statutory responsibilities in terms of health assessments are met. These roles extend beyond this remit and are also concerned with health promotion and training of foster carers and social care staff.

The Service Objectives are:

- To promote the emotional well-being of children who are looked after or adopted by providing a menu of interventions directly to these children, designed to restore and promote their mental health and emotional wellbeing;
- To provide support and interventions to all carers of LAC children to therapeutically parent, so as to address the mental health and emotional needs of these children;
- To enhance multi agency professionals' competence and confidence in supporting and addressing the emotional and mental health needs of LAC;
- To promote the service to allied professionals, referrers and service users so that they are clear about the services offered and how to access them;
- To work in partnership and to fully engage in multi-agency and multi-disciplinary work where it will improve the emotional wellbeing and living environment for Looked After Children;
- To provide a competent, highly skilled, multi-disciplinary team who have sufficient knowledge, training and support to promote the

psychological wellbeing of looked after children, young people and their carers.

The most recent report from the service found that overall, 76.3% of Health Assessments were completed in the period April 2011 – March 2012. Due to the increase the number of adoptions and shorten timescales within the adoption process, adoption medicals in the six months from June to December 2012 showed a 280% increase compared with the preceding 3 months and a 30.1% increase overall for that year, compared with the preceding 12 months.

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) are carried out at the same time as health assessments for all of Warwickshire's Looked After Children aged 4 yrs. -16 yrs. The average score in 2011-2012 was just over 14. Nearly 100% of Looked After Children living in Warwickshire in 2012-2013 have had an SDQ at the time of their health assessment.

The overall score for 2011/12 indicates that the emotional and behavioural health of the looked after population is 'borderline', with the average score being 14.1. The score for 2011/12 is slightly above the national average but below that of the statistical neighbour average. It is also slightly above the 2010-2011 average score of 12.9

Performance against National Trends

| | 2008/9 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 |
|-------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| Warwickshire | 12.8 | 13.9 | 12.3 | 14.1 |
| Statistical Neighbours | 15.7 | 14.8 | 14.9 | 14.3 |
| England | 13.9 | 14.2 | 13.9 | 13.8 |

Through a targeted Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service for Looked After Children called '**Journeys**', an enhanced service is targeted at this group in addition to the mainstream CAMHS provision. The service outcome is for Looked After children to have improved mental health, as measured by their Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) score.

(ii) Education

The Virtual School for Children in Care is a dedicated school that promotes and secures improved educational attainment levels and outcomes for children and young people through the flexible deployment of teaching and educational support resources and effective partnership working. The aim is that the educational attainment and outcomes for children and young people

in care are comparable with that of other Warwickshire children and young people.

The Virtual School for Children in Care has a direct impact on the life experience of children and young people in care through working directly with children/young people, schools, social care staff, foster carers and the full range of support services, acting as their 'champion' in facilitating the best educational opportunities possible.

The school is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate educational arrangements are in place for children and young people placed outside of the county boundary. The school has a key role in monitoring. Educational advice can also be available for those young people placed for adoption or adopted, and special guardianship placements secured through Warwickshire County Council.

As at 31 March 2013, 276 (61.2%) of Warwickshire children who had been looked after for a year or more were of statutory school age. Of those 90 (32.6%) had a full statement of Special Educational Need, compared with 3% of all Warwickshire children. This highlights the gap in learning potential between looked after children and all children of school age. The difference in outcomes between these two groups remains a matter of national concern.

Warwickshire's looked after children performed well above national averages at KS2 during the 2012/13 academic year from a cohort of 35, 53% attained at least level 4 in reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar and maths, of those who had been in care for 12 months the proportion was 50%. Within the statistical group 3 children had statement of special educational needs and a further 5 are on school action plus.

At Key Stage 4, from the cohort of 69 young people the following chart shows continued improvement even though 22 young people had statements for special educational needs and a further 19 were on the special needs register within their schools. 55 students had been continuously looked after for 12 months or more.

| | 5 A*-C incl. EM | 5A*-C | 5A*-G | 1 A*-C | 1 A*-G | Any qual. |
|---|--------------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------------|
| WCC students in Warwickshire Schools | 9 | 10 | 24 | 10 | 29 | 32 |
| WCC students Out of Area (OOA) | 5 | 6 | 14 | 9 | 17 | 19 |
| Total | 14 | 16 | 38 | 19 | 46 | 51 |
| % | 20 | 23 | 55 | 28 | 67 | 74 |

(iii) Foster Carer Support and Training

The Warwickshire Foster Carer Training Programme offers development opportunities to all foster carers. Foster carers have a key role in the life of children and young people and the aim is to provide them with professional training and development opportunities to support them with the children and young people they look after. A range of core and continuing professional development courses has been devised to cover all aspects of the tasks involved in fostering. Each course has an underpinning knowledge or evidence base for the CWDC Training, Support and Development Standards and for the QCF scheme. All the training meets the requirements of the Fostering Services, National Minimum Standards, Standard 20 – Learning and Development of Foster Carers.

The Qualification Credit Framework (QCF) Diploma for the Children and Young Peoples Workforce is aimed at those people already working in the Children and Young People sector. This promotes better outcomes for looked after children as it offers a professional qualification and further learning opportunities for foster carers that in turn raises their self-esteem and confidence and gives recognition to their skills and abilities.



The Fostering Service provides a clear career structure for foster carers and supports the requirement to have a professionally qualified workforce. It further supports foster carers in having raised educational aspirations for the children and young people in their care.

(iv) Adoption Support

The Adoption Services Team provides services to prospective adopters and those who have children placed and adopted. Services are provided in conjunction with Children's Teams and with partner agencies and other services. These include:

- Adoption Duty Service;
- Allocated adoption social worker for 12 months following the granting of the adoption order;
- Newsletter;
- Training
- Advice from targeted LAC service e.g. Virtual School, Journeys
- Adopter Mentoring Scheme and Support Groups.

In any given year the trend has been for the service to receive approximately 40 new requests from adoptive parents for adoption support services. This is supported by almost 500 letterbox exchanges facilitated by the Letterbox Coordinator.

To have in place a range of services that will meet the needs of children, young people and their families on the 'edge of care' and those who have been discharged from care

Since August 2011 Warwickshire County Council has worked in partnership with the Social Research Unit at Dartington to develop a project to improve outcomes for children. This by safely reducing the number of looked after children through the commissioning of evidence based interventions to be delivered at the point when the child/young person is at the 'edge of care'.

Following the 'matching needs and services' exercise that Department was better able to understand the profile and needs of it's looked after population. The majority group of looked after children were aged 11 years plus and the intervention strategy agreed has been to provide Triple P (teen) and in the longer term Functional Family Therapy. In the interim the Family Matters service has been delivered by RELATE aimed at improving the relationships and communications within families where a young person is looked after. This service can continue post discharge from care.

Aligned with this strategy has been development of the 'edge of care' meetings, involving colleagues from early intervention and targeted youth services. Similarly the well established Children's Panels now provide a greater focus on newly accommodated children and care plans have been changed to focus on required outcomes with reference to the 'going home toolkit' that outlines the pre requirements for successful rehabilitation.

During this period the County Council has progressed the Government's Priority Families agenda providing high intensity family support services to those families that meet the national and local criteria. The Common Assessment Framework is well established across the county and working relationships and practices between the Children's Social Care teams and early intervention services have increasingly highlighted the interdependencies between the services and the need to target services at those families with highest needs and where children and young people are most vulnerable.

7. The views of children and young people



Warwickshire looked after children and young people identified the following issues as being important to them

- Employment, Jobs, Work
- Education, Qualifications
- Someone to talk to / listen to you
- Having a say
- Life skills

The active involvement and participation of children and young people looked after and leaving care is underpinned by the Warwickshire County Council Corporate Parenting Strategy, Warwickshire Children and Young People's Plan, The Children Act 1989 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular Article 12 that states:

"Every Child or young person has the right to express his or her views on all matters that affect them and their views should be given due weight in accordance to their age and maturity."

The UK has ratified the UN Convention, and as a Council we are required by law to take seriously the wishes, views and feelings of children and young people.

One young person's feeling:

"My behaviour is my way of being heard. Listen to me".

Participation is the process of involving children and young people in decision making. Participation can happen in lots of different ways, for example, individual conversations, group discussions, questionnaires, art based projects and many more. All participation must influence what we do and how we do it as a local authority.

As a County Council, children and young people are listened to about their experiences of the services they receive and the issues that are important to them. The Council is committed to working creatively with children and young people to deliver improvements that reflect their experiences and views. This is underpinned by a constantly evolving Participation Strategy.

One young person's view:

"Social workers don't always pay attention to what young people have to say".

To encourage involvement by children and young people all participation activities encompass a range of capacity-building opportunities including formal accreditation, training, confidence-building, work experience and/or development of new skills.

Children in Care Council

In 2009 the Government issued guidance for Children in Care Councils (CiCC). This guidance meant that the CiCC would meet directly with senior managers, elected members and other key decision makers, and, that all Local Authorities have to listen to the views of young people in their care.

Warwickshire have been supporting their CiCC since 2008. The CiCC is now an elected group of 12 young people, voted in by children and young people in the care of Warwickshire. The CiCC meet monthly to discuss important issues about their experiences of being in care. The members suggest ways in which services could be improved for young people and how young people could also become involved in shaping services.

The CiCC also checks to see if Warwickshire are delivering on their promises to young people by monitoring progress against the **"Pledge"** and the **"Care Leavers Charter"**. Members of the CiCC are involved in the **Corporate Parenting Panel** where they meet with elected members and senior managers to input their own ideas and the views of other children and young people in care.

8. Summary of key issues arising from the needs analysis and placement and service activity

The key findings drawn from this needs assessment are

- Population forecasts predict a 3.5 per cent rise in the number of young people (0-19) in Warwickshire over the next five years.
- There has been a 9.7% increase in looked after population in the period 2010-2013
- Young people aged 10-17 years represented the largest group of children in care as at 31 March 2013 (57.6%).
- Legal measures are increasingly used to secure a child's position in care and children aged 4 years or under represent the largest group of children *starting to be looked after* during 2012/13
- Children and young people become looked after due to abuse or neglect, the impact of family stress and dysfunction, absent parenting - neglect, domestic violence and risk of physical injury also feature significantly.
- The number of internal foster home approvals has not mirrored the 9% increase in the looked after children over the 3 year period, despite an average of 45 fostering household being approved each year
- 63% of young people placed out of county are aged 11yrs+, are more likely to experience to have 3+ placement moves and exhibit socially unacceptable behaviour
- The number of young people receiving a leaving care service has increased and over 90% of these young people are reported to be in suitable accommodation
- Against the national indicators Warwickshire continues to be banded highly relation to outcomes for looked after children.
- The majority of children and young people who cease to be looked after return to their families – however there has been a year on year increase in looked after children being adopted or made subject to special guardianship orders
- Warwickshire performance against the adoption score card criteria has shown a year on year improvement
- Many children and families receiving early intervention services present with mental health and domestic violence issues with concerns for the emotional wellbeing of family members' - behavioural issues at home and at school also feature significantly.
- The CAF process continues to support a high number of families and 72% of families who were subject to a Family Group Conference had their child removed from care, care proceedings or a child protection plan.

- Young people in care have identified the following as their priorities – employment, jobs and work, education and qualifications, some to talk to and to listen to you, having a say, life skills.

This evidence shows that in many areas the Local Authority is currently meeting its sufficiency requirements, that it performs well comparatively through its investment in the internal fostering and adoption provision and already has extended its placement choice through sub regional framework arrangements and agreements and other partnerships. However internal services continue to be challenged by the increase in the looked after population and the heightened demand for adoption placements.

Targeted services are already well established for looked after children, but there is a need to develop specialist fostering provision for young people with complex needs who are more likely to experience greater levels of placement disruption and be placed outside the local authority area.

Finally the Local Authority needs to continue its commitment to the Dartington project where early intervention and safeguarding services are effectively working together to divert young people from care. This work needs to continue with the investment in a greater range of evidence based services to support vulnerable children and families.

9. Commissioning - Sufficiency Strategic Plan 2013-2016

Priority 1

To continue to grow and develop the internal provision to meet need – to have sufficient Warwickshire approved family placements within 20 miles of the Local Authority boundary.

Actions

- To approve 50 fostering households a year, in line with standards of best practice, and improve the efficiency of foster carer recruitment through the use of on line information and self-screening processes
- To recruit 50 adoptive households a year
- To support foster care retention through enhanced levels of support for carers with less than 5 years' experience
- To develop and implement a 'fostering to adopt' scheme
- To complete 90% of fostering and adoption assessments within 6 months from application

Priority 2

To have effective arrangements through commissioning processes and partnership arrangements to secure specialist services and placements for young people – including those aged 18+yrs.

Actions:

- To commission services with a 'one access' system for homelessness prevention for young people and supported accommodation services.
- To improve emergency accommodation provision for young people across the county.
- To develop a consistent approach to responding to the needs of young people aged 16yrs -7 yrs. presenting themselves as homeless across the county.
- To improve opportunities through sub regional arrangements to extend placement choice and provide placement support services for looked after children and young people and those with an adoption plan
- To develop processes to ensure the quality of Individual Placement Plans for children and young people placed externally.
- To review multiagency decision making and placement arrangements for young people requiring residential care , to include effective discharge plans
- For Strategic Commissioning to develop their relationships and strengthen their robustness in brokering external placements with various placement providers

Priority 3

To ensure that targeted and specialist services are available to support the placements of children and young people in care and which prevent placement disruption

Actions

- To complete an options appraisal as to the most appropriate arrangement for developing and delivering a solo placement scheme
- To increase placement stability by reviewing and ensuring that targeted emotional health and wellbeing services are in place for looked after children and young people, those adopted and subjected to special guardianship orders.
- To develop a strategy that narrows the educational and employment outcomes for looked after children and care leavers including work experience, apprenticeship and employment opportunities.

Priority 4

To have in place a range of services that will meet the needs of children, young people and their families on the 'edge of care' and those who have been discharged from care.

Actions

- To extend the range of evidence based interventions available to divert young people from care
- To divert the need for long term care and family breakdown through the provision of mediation services, emergency short term accommodation or support care provision
- To review the arrangements for supporting the increasing number of special guardianship order placements in line with statutory requirements
- To explore the full potential for extended family arrangements for vulnerable children and young people through the extension of the Family Group Conferencing Service

**Brenda Vincent
Assistant head of Children Services
Strategic Lead – Looked After Children
November 2013**

Appendix A

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| <p>Priority 1 - To undertake a 'Matching Needs and Services' audit</p> | |
| <p>As part of our overall strategy to improve outcomes for children and young people and provide effective interventions as an alternative to care, we will be undertaking an in-depth needs analysis to fully understand the current profile of all children becoming looked after. This will guide our plans for determining which children will be offered community-based alternatives to care and which children can return home safely. In order to do this, we will be able to benefit from the tools of Dartington Research Unit "Matching Needs and Services" and "Aggregating Data" to plan services for looked after children. This method involves analysing data re the needs, services and outcomes of a sample of looked after children to identify needs and services required in order to plan services</p> | <p>COMPLETED The Children's Safeguarding Division and Family and Parenting Support Services have worked with Dartington Social Care Research Unit and have completed the matching needs and services exercise. Arising from this it was agreed that evidenced based interventions would be commissioned that will enable the Division to safely divert young people from care in the 12+ age group. This work has led to the use of the 'going home toolkit' and revisions to the membership, role and function of district based Children's Panels. Further the Care Plan has been revised, to be introduced in July 2013 following training, which will ensure that the purpose of the care episode remains outcome focused</p> |
| <p>Priority 2 - To reduce the number looked after children and young people</p> | |
| <p>To develop and focus an Early Intervention Strategy that is targeted on children, young people and families, those at most risk of care or custody. To be supported by the introduction of multi-disciplinary teams and services working to agreed business processes and referral thresholds.</p> | <p>COMPLETED Through the Parenting and Family Support Service a number of staff within Children's Safeguarding have been trained in Triple P (teen) an evidence based intervention. Operations Managers from P&FSS are represented on Children's Panels and attend all Edge of Care meetings. Whilst this falls short of the establishment of multi-agency teams there is better and more effective working between the services</p> |
| <p>To adopt a strategy that involves taking a series of steps to reduce the overall numbers of looked after children service and to re-direct the</p> | <p>ONGOING As above this strategy is developing. Triple P (teen) is available and Functional Family Therapy is being</p> |

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| priority towards a range of early intervention and evidence-based programmes for specific children who would otherwise become looked after. | commissioned. In the interim rehabilitation has been facilitated through a service from RELATE to parents and young people in care |
| To specifically develop Multi Systemic Treatment or Functional Family Therapy as evidence based interventions for young people with the appropriate risk profile who have reached our threshold for accommodation or are involved with the Youth Justice Service and are at risk of custody. | ONGOING The decision was made based on the matching need and services exercise that Functional Family Therapy would be a more appropriate intervention. Further young people and families who meet social care thresholds are able to access services through the Priority Families initiative |
| Priority 3 - Foster Care Recruitment | |
| To recruit 30 fostering households over each 12 month period and complete 90% of the assessments within 6 months of application. | COMPLETED 2011/12 34 households approved 2012/13 49 households approved. This includes family and friends foster carers. The Fostering Service has been reorganisation during this period - approx. 79% of assessments have been completed within the 6 month timescale during 2012/13 |
| To streamline the approval categories of foster carers so that placement needs can be more easily matched against approval categories. | COMPLETED It is established practice for the majority of foster carers to now be approved for a child/ren within birth – 18 yrs. age range |
| To develop proposals for a Single Placement Scheme for children and young people with complex needs and who are at risk of external placement and as a consequence disruption to their learning and support. | OUTSTANDING Proposals for a solo placement scheme have been considered and an application for funding to the DOE to support this initiative with an IFA was unsuccessful. An options appraisal is outstanding to inform the future direction for this proposal |
| To continue to recruit foster carers who can provide permanency and placements for teenagers | COMPLETED Permanency and teenage placements continue to be prioritised. The internal procedures relating to permanency foster care have been reviewed and it is intended that the responsibility for permanency foster care will rest with the Central Fostering Services from 1 June 2013 |
| To consider opportunities within | OUTSTANDING |

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| existing arrangements to increase access to emergency and STEPs placements. | An analysis of placements to EDT carers showed that a high percentage were of a very short term nature and that a support care initiative should be explored |
| Priority 4 - To reduce the number the number of placement moves | |
| To ensure the timely referral to the Fostering Framework Agreement for permanency placements and those young people at risk of 2 or more placement moves | COMPLETED This practice was agreed by SLT and arrangements with Commissioning have been strengthened with regard to securing the terms for external placements |
| To review our current Kinship Strategy and support services, in line with new regulations and best practice, to ensure a greater use of kinship arrangements where this is in the child or young person's interest and provides a safe and viable alternative to care proceedings in appropriate cases. | COMPLETED A dedicated Kinship Care Practice was set up in January 2012 |
| To develop specific services that will support the preparation of and transition of children successfully into adoptive and other permanency placements thereby reducing the risk of placement disruption through the provision of support and interventions to the carers/adopters and as appropriate the children concerned. | ONGOING Specific therapeutic support is available for adoptive parents during the early placement stages. This will be formally evaluated during 2013 to inform future commissioning intensions |
| Priority 5 - To recruit 25 adoption households | |
| To focus adopter recruitment on meeting the needs of children with developmental delay or challenging behaviours and sibling group placements. | COMPLETED 2011/12 38 households approved 2012/13 49 households approved Recruitment and family finding activity prioritises these groups of children |
| To explore opportunities with Coventry City Council to make the optimum of use of resources in recruiting, supporting and training adopters. | COMPLETED & ONGOING A sub regional adoption forum is in place. This is building on existing joint training events and now includes the sharing of adopter and child profiles leading to timely placement |

| | |
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| | exchanges |
| Priority 6 - Residential provision and external placements | |
| To explore the feasibility of having a Framework Agreement for residential care and educational placements required | COMPLETED |
| To develop a protocol with health for accessing CAMHS services for children and young people placed out of county. | OUTSTANDING A protocol was developed for commissioning CAMHS assessments for out of authority placements. However this will need to be reviewed in light of health services changes from 1.4.2013 |
| Priority 7 - Housing Needs | |
| To develop further supported hostel accommodation for care leavers as placement within any extended family arrangement appears unlikely for a significant number of young people known to Children's Services. | ONGOING In partnership with district and borough councils work is continuing to explore the bringing together of social care and supporting people resources in order to commission housing based options and preventative measures designed to improve the experience and effectiveness of housing related services for young people. It is anticipated that provision will be developed over the next 2 years |
| To develop and implement a strategy with housing providers and Supporting People to provide an equitable range of housing options for vulnerable young people | ONGOING As above |
| To develop and implement supported lodgings arrangements for care leavers. | COMPLETED A supported lodgings scheme has been agreed where the young person is known the provider – this is being augmented with specific recruitment activity in some districts according to need |