

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

**Name of Committee** North Warwickshire Area Committee  
**Date of Committee** 24<sup>th</sup> January 2007  
**Report Title** Warwickshire Looked After Children

**Summary** This paper provides a general overview of the profile of looked after children from North Warwickshire and outlines some of the services available to support them and the outcomes that they have achieved.

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**Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? [please identify relevant plan/budget provision]** No

**Background papers** None

**CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-**

Details to be specified

Other Committees  .....

Local Member(s)  .....

Other Elected Members  Spokespersons for information:  
 Cllr Richard Grant – “noted”  
 Cllr Jill Dill-Russell  
 Cllr John Whitehouse

Cabinet Member  Cllr Izzi Seccombe – “welcome the report and look forward to the views of the Committee”

Other Cabinet Members consulted  Cllr John Burton

Chief Executive  .....

- Legal  Victoria Gould – comments incorporated in the report
- Finance  .....
- Other Strategic Directors  .....
- District Councils  .....
- Health Authority  .....
- Police  .....
- Other Bodies/Individuals  .....

**FINAL DECISION YES**

**SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:**

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee  .....
- To Council  .....
- To Cabinet  .....
- To an O & S Committee  .....
- To an Area Committee  .....
- Further Consultation  .....

North Warwickshire Area Committee – 24<sup>th</sup> January 2007

Warwickshire Looked After Children

Report of the Strategic Director for Children,  
Young People and Families

**Recommendation:**

That Members note the report and make any comments they wish.

**1. Background information**

- 1.1 The recently published Green Paper “Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Public Care” heralds the Government’s way forward for improving the life chances of looked after children.
- 1.2 This has opened up the debate in the public domain about the experiences for children who are looked after and the differences for them in the outcomes that they achieve in comparison with their peers.
- 1.3 Prior to this, the Government’s “Quality Protects” programme was the first radical Government intervention in this domain. Legislation around looked after children has been modernised to reflect the government’s increased interest in this area.
- 1.4 Looked after children are of particular concern to elected members as “corporate parents”.

**2. Responsibilities of the Local Authority**

- 2.1 Children become looked after when they are placed in accommodation provided by the local authority, either with the consent of their parents or by virtue of a statutory order. Such accommodation includes foster care or residential care.
- 2.2 The Children Act 1989 (s20) determines that the local authority has a duty to accommodate children where there is no-one with parental responsibility to

care for them, the child is lost or abandoned, or the person who has been caring for the child is unable to provide suitable accommodation or care.

- 2.3 The local authority has a duty to make enquiries with friends and relatives of the child to determine whether they are able to provide care for the child. If no suitable carers are found, the local authority has a duty to provide a suitable placement for the child. This is undertaken with the consent of the parent.
- 2.4 On some occasions, it is not possible to reach agreement with parents about the need for their child to become looked after, if the child is believed to have suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm and an application can be made to the Court to seek an Order enabling the local authority to remove to accommodation provided by or on behalf of the local authority (s31, and in urgent situations s44).

### **3. Profile of looked after children from North Warwickshire**

- 3.1 In Warwickshire there are 455 children who are looked after (207 male and 248 female). Of these 455 looked after children, 35 are from North Warwickshire (17 male and 18 female).
- 3.2 The majority of the children who are looked after in North Warwickshire became looked after due to issues of abuse either perpetrated by their family or from which their family failed to protect them.
- 3.3 All of the children are of white British origin and are able-bodied. Seven of the children attend special education provision and either have a statement of special educational needs or are awaiting completion of one.
- 3.4 Ten of the children are aged 0-4, seven are aged 5-10, 14 are aged 11-15 and four are aged 16-18; an additional six young people are aged 18+ and are classed as care leavers.

### **4. Services for looked after children**

- 4.1 There are a number of services available to looked after children living in Warwickshire to support them and to improve their life chances. This report highlights some services that are significant in improving outcomes for looked after children.
- 4.2 All looked after children have an allocated social worker who visits them in accordance with statutory guidelines.
- 4.3 All Warwickshire foster carers have an allocated fostering social worker who is responsible for visiting the carer, supporting them in caring for the child in accordance with the child's care plan and for reviewing their approval as a foster carer.

- 4.4 The care plans for looked after children are reviewed at statutory intervals. An Independent Reviewing Officer is appointed for every looked after child to take part in the statutory review process and to monitor the functions of the local authority in respect of it. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 has strengthened the role of Independent Reviewing Officers giving them increased independence and the right to refer concerns about care planning arrangements for children to the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS).
- 4.5 All looked after children are eligible for a service from The Education of Looked After Children (TELAC) service which provides educational support for looked after children living in Warwickshire.
- 4.6 In Warwickshire all looked after children receive an assessment of their health from the designated doctor or nurse when they first become looked after children and annually thereafter. This has been successfully implemented in North Warwickshire and is a significant factor in improving the outcomes for looked after children whose health needs are often unmet at the point of accommodation.
- 4.7 Partnership working between the County Council and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has led to the creation of the CAMHS/LAC service. This service has been introduced to support the mental health needs of looked after children and ultimately to assist them in achieving placement stability.
- 4.8 The care planning arrangements for looked after children are considered at specific points by a multi-agency panel of professionals to consider any additional supports or care planning that may be required.
- 4.9 There is an advocacy service available for looked after children and they are regularly consulted about specific issues within the County Council.
- 4.10 Care leavers receive support from the district teams and district forums have been established to support their needs as a group.
- 4.11 Partnership working is a key factor in supporting the needs of looked after children. In North Warwickshire there is a protocol established between North Warwickshire Borough Council, North Warwickshire Children's Team and Connexions to provide a more effective service to young people seeking support with their accommodation needs. This protocol is to be updated early in 2007.
- 4.12 A multi-agency partnership has been established to support the housing needs of vulnerable young people and explorations are underway to identify supported lodgings arrangements for vulnerable young people living in the north of the county.

## 5. Outcomes

- 5.1 In North Warwickshire, six children are accommodated without an order, 22 are subject to a statutory order and seven are placed with adopters under a placement order prior to being adopted.
- 5.2 Of these 35 children, 21 of them are placed with foster carers for Warwickshire County Council, 14 are placed with friends or relatives, parents (under a statutory order), in independent residential or fostering provision outside Warwickshire, or placed for adoption.
- 5.3 The looked after children from North Warwickshire achieved stability in their placements with 15 children having only one set of carers and no moves within the year. Sixteen children had a placement move which was consistent with their care plan. Only one child experienced a high number of placement moves as we were unable to locate a carer who could meet his needs. This was resolved by purchasing a placement from an external placement provider.
- 5.4 All of the looked after school-aged children in North Warwickshire are registered with a school and the majority are on roll in schools based in North Warwickshire, consistent with their placement. Seven children are receiving special education provision. All looked after children are eligible to receive support from the TELAC service as appropriate.
- 5.5 The educational achievements of looked after children are reported to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) annually and relate to children who have been looked after for an entire year (without a break) and therefore does not include the entire looked after population of Warwickshire.
- 5.6 For the whole of the looked after population in Warwickshire:
- 50% of pupils achieved level 4 in English at Key Stage 2
  - 55% of pupils achieved level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2
  - 68% of Year 11 pupils sat at least one GCSE
  - 4% of Year 11 pupils gained A\*-C at GCSE or equivalent  
(this relates to one child out of 25)
  - 52% of Year 11 pupils gained A\*-G or equivalent.
- This data does not provide any context to the educational experience of the children prior to becoming looked after. It is of note that a number of children experience difficulties in their education prior to becoming accommodated and in some cases this is a contributory factor to children becoming looked after.
- 5.7 All looked after children should have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is updated annually. This is being achieved for children who are placed with carers in Warwickshire attending Warwickshire schools but is less successfully achieved for children who are placed outside Warwickshire.

- 5.8 All looked after children are offered an initial health assessment with the designated doctor or nurse and an annual health assessment thereafter. This has successfully been achieved in the north of the county.
- 5.9 In North Warwickshire, 13 young people are eligible for leaving care services in accordance with the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.
- 5.10 Seven of these 13 young people are in education or training.
- 5.11 Six of these young people have remained living in North Warwickshire. Two are living with foster carers in North Warwickshire and four are housed with housing associations either in North Warwickshire or outside Warwickshire. Two young people have no fixed address.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 This paper has sought to provide some general information to North Warwickshire Area Committee Members about looked after children and care leavers, their circumstances and services available to support them and the outcomes that they have achieved.
- 6.2 This is obviously a very general overview and specific information can be made available to Members as appropriate.

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9<sup>th</sup> January 2007