

NOTICE OF MEETING

**Children, Young People & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Tuesday 18 July 2017, 7.30 pm
Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House, Bracknell**

To: CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Councillors Mrs Birch, Brossard, Ms Gaw, Mrs Hamilton, Ms Hayes, Mrs McCracken, Skinner, Virgo and Mrs Temperton

Church Representatives (Voting in respect of Education matters only)

Two Vacancies

Parent Governor Representatives (Voting in respect of Education matters only)

Mrs L Wellsted

One Vacancy

Teachers' Representative (Non-Voting)

Miss V Richardson

Children's Social Care Representative (Non-Voting)

Ms C Barrett

cc: Substitute Members of the Panel

Councillors Allen, Mrs Ingham, Ms Merry, Peacey and Porter

ALISON SANDERS
Director of Corporate Services

EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 If you hear the alarm, leave the building immediately.
- 2 Follow the green signs.
- 3 Use the stairs not the lifts.
- 4 Do not re-enter the building until told to do so.

If you require further information, please contact: Derek Morgan
Telephone: 01344 352044
Email: derek.morgan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
Published: 10 July 2017



**Children, Young People & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Tuesday 18 July 2017, 7.30 pm
Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House,
Bracknell**

Sound recording, photographing, filming and use of social media at meetings which are held in public are permitted. Those wishing to record proceedings at a meeting are however advised to contact the Democratic Services Officer named as the contact for further information on the front of this agenda as early as possible before the start of the meeting so that any special arrangements can be made.

AGENDA

A pre-meeting for Panel Members will be held at 7:00 pm in Meeting Room 1, 4th Floor, Easthampstead House.

Page No

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

To receive apologies for absence and to note the attendance of any substitute members.

4. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 25 April 2017. Examination and test performance data requested at the last Panel meeting is appended to the minutes.

5 - 14

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

Members are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary or affected interests and the nature of that interest, including the existence and nature of the party whip, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

Any Member with a disclosable pecuniary Interest in a matter should withdraw from the meeting when the matter is under consideration and should notify the Democratic Services Officer in attendance that they are withdrawing as they have such an interest. If the disclosable pecuniary interest is not entered on the register of Members' interests the Monitoring Officer must be notified of the interest within 28 days.

Any Member with an affected interest in a matter must disclose the interest to the meeting and must not participate in discussion of the matter or vote on the matter unless granted a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer or by the Governance and Audit Committee. There is no requirement to withdraw from the meeting when the interest is only an affected interest, but the Monitoring Officer should be notified of the interest, if not previously notified of it, within 28 days of the meeting.

6. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Any other items, which pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman decides are urgent.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive submissions from members of the public which have been submitted in advance in accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

8. CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY PANEL

To receive the minutes of the meeting of the above Panel held on 23 June 2017 which are to follow.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

9. QUARTERLY SERVICE REPORT

To consider the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the QSR for the fourth quarter of 2016/17 (January to March 2017) relating to Children, Young People and Learning, giving particular attention to outcomes of Ofsted school inspections, numbers of children looked after, in need and subject to protection plans, and foster placements and movements.

15 - 44

Panel Members are asked to give advance notice to the Overview and Scrutiny Team of any questions relating to the QSR where possible.

10. STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE FOR 2017/18 AND ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2016/17 FOR THE FOLLOWING:

- Adoption Service
- Private Fostering Service
- Larchwood Short Break Unit

45 - 164

Panel Members are asked to give advance notice to the Overview and Scrutiny Team of any questions relating to the Statements of Purpose and Annual Reports where possible.

OVERVIEW AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

11. WORK WITH YOUNG CARERS

To be briefed in respect of the Council's work with young carers.

12. WORKING GROUP UPDATE REPORT

To receive a verbal update in respect of Panel working group activity.

HOLDING THE EXECUTIVE TO ACCOUNT

13. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

To consider scheduled Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions relating

165 - 172

to Children, Young People and Learning.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Children, Young People & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Panel is scheduled for 7:30 pm on Wednesday 27 September 2017, with a pre-meeting at 7:00 pm.

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
25 APRIL 2017
7.30 - 9.45 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Brossard (Vice-Chairman), Ms Gaw, Mrs Hamilton, Ms Hayes, Mrs McCracken, Skinner and Mrs Temperton
Ms C Barrett, Children's Social Care Representative
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representative

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Virgo

Executive Member:

Councillor Dr Barnard

Also Present:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)
Ian Dixon, Head of Targeted Services
Nikki Edwards, Director of Children, Young People & Learning
Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care
Rachel Morgan, Head of Standards and Effectiveness
Kashif Nawaz, Assistant Virtual School Head
Councillors McCracken and Peacey

41. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Virgo.

42. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 11 January 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Arising from the minutes, it was reported that:

- The LSCB Chair had indicated that Councillor Mrs Birch or Councillor Mrs McCracken would be welcome to attend Board meetings from time to time to observe the proceedings. The Director undertook to circulate details of the meetings.

Further information from the DfE was still awaited as to the final amounts of specific grants payable in 2017/18 but the overall reduction was expected to be confirmed.

43. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest, nor any indication that Members would be participating under the party whip.

44. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

45. **Public Participation**

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

46. **Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel held on 8 March 2017 were noted.

47. **Annual Reports on the Work of the Virtual School 2014/15 and 2015/16**

The Panel considered the Annual Reports on the work of the Virtual School covering the years September 2014 to August 2015 and September 2015 to August 2016. The Virtual School had been established with the remit to ensure that looked after children (LAC) received appropriate education and achieved well.

The reports illustrated how the work of the Virtual School had continued to grow and develop over the last two years. There was a focus on improving educational outcomes for LAC as well as for Care Leavers, undertaken by putting in place high quality Personal Education Plans that had challenging and meaningful targets that were aspirational. Key activities of the service centred on the tracking of attainment, progress, attendance, exclusion, with early intervention to raise attainment and to reduce or remove barriers to education. Continuing to work in partnership with the teams around the children in care was very important, with an ongoing challenge to improve processes, systems and support so that impact could be more effectively measured, provision improved and outcomes raised.

Arising from questions and discussion, the Panel noted:

- The Letterbox Club scheme, which provided children aged 7 – 11 in foster care with a parcel of books, maths activities and stationery every month for six months, had not continued on the same scale but support was being received from local companies for an ongoing literacy programme.
- The Key Stage 1 results for the Bracknell LAC were excellent.
- The key role of the Designated Teacher for LAC in schools was recognised and the Panel was pleased to note the tendency for these to be senior members of staff, who were able to attend appropriate training, for instance on mental health, which could then be cascaded down to other staff.
- While there was a significant number of Care Leavers going on to higher education who continued to be supported, the Virtual School worked to develop the range of pathways available to young people in terms of courses, further education, apprenticeships, placements etc as well as employment in a chosen field.

The Panel congratulated Kashif Nawaz and his team on the achievements of the Virtual School. Similar information in relation to the Council's work with young carers would be of interest to the Panel and a report was requested for the agenda of a future meeting of the Panel.

48. **Summary Report of Examination and Test Performance in Bracknell Forest Schools during the Academic Year 2015/16**

The Panel considered a report that had recently been presented to the Executive setting out the school results for the academic year 2015-16 and the policy developments and priorities for the School Improvement Service. It was important to

note that the assessments at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 changed significantly in 2016 and no comparison could be made to previous years. Ofsted had further indicated that the tests and moderation had not settled sufficiently to rely on accurate comparisons to be obtained from the results expected in 2017.

A summary of the key outcomes showed:

- Early Years Foundation Stage – 74% of pupils achieved a Good Level of Development (national average 69%)
- Year 1 Phonics test – 84% of pupils achieved the required standard (national average 81%)
- Year 2 Phonics test retakes – 71% of pupils achieved the required standard (national average 67%)
- Key Stage 1 – 63% of pupils achieved the required standard in a combined score for reading, writing and mathematics (national average 60%)
- Key Stage 2 – 52% of pupils achieved the required standard in a combined score for reading, writing and mathematics (national average 53%)

Figures were also reported on the Pupil Premium Gap for each outcome. Disadvantaged pupils did not do as well as their peers nationally and this continued to be a priority for the Borough.

Detailed figures were circulated showing Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 results for each primary school in Bracknell Forest, colour coded in green for at least 10% above national average and red for at least 10% below national average. Key Stage 2 was where Bracknell was weaker in some areas, with 7 schools significantly below the national average for combined reading, writing and mathematics. The School Improvement team was working closely with these schools. Arising from questions, the Panel noted the local authority role in monitoring and intervention to ensure high standards, and the targeting of schools scoring poorly in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test.

The Panel received progress data showing the Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 progress in Reading, Writing and Maths for each school, highlighting those significantly above or below the national average. In respect of Secondary Schools, a sheet showing Key Stage 4 performance indicators was circulated.

The Panel was pleased to review all the results and note the work being undertaken to encourage culture change as well as improved teaching and learning in schools, to tackle underperformance and reduce the pupil premium gap. Although Ofsted produced national comparison league tables, Members sought some local comparison data.

49. **Quarterly Service Report**

The Panel considered the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the Quarterly Service Report for the third quarter of 2016/17 (October to December 2016) relating to Children, Young People and Learning.

In introducing the report, the Director highlighted two areas worthy of special attention. The Pay and Workforce Strategy, specifically in relation to the recruitment and retention of children's social workers was beginning to pay real dividends. There was a reduction in the vacancy rate, and a significant drop in the number of agency staff required resulting in a stable and skilled workforce on the frontline ensuring the continuity and quality of casework for children. This was a local trend which was not

reflected nationally. Secondly, the Department had engaged in a clear focus on school performance and children's readiness for school. This involved ensuring that every family that wished to access a place for a two year old was able to and working with system leaders on a learning improvement strategy framework. Inspirational leadership in areas such as curriculum and performance would lead to high quality education provision and improve educational outcomes.

The Panel received a presentation from the Chief Officer: Children's Social Care, outlining the activities of the branch in relation to looked after children (LAC) and those with Child Protection Plans. Although there were always peaks and troughs, the number of children on Child Protection Plans had risen over the last year to a high of 171. This had not been matched by the increase in the number of families affected.

An independent review of child protection plans in place had put forward a number of recommendations as to improvements which could be made. These related to such matters as more joint agency auditing; closer links with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); a review of child protection monitoring plans; and a review of the Educational Safeguarding role. The Panel received answers to questions about child protection plans for unborns and for children at risk of child sexual exploitation.

The Panel received a colour version of the Inspection Outcomes for schools, including published reports up to April 2017. Also, Exclusion data relating to the Spring Term 2016 (and comparative figures for 2015) detailed for each school was circulated. Bracknell Forest was in the top quintile of schools for the fewest number of exclusions. Persistent disruptive behaviour remained the most common reason for exclusion; there were few exclusions for bullying as this was more often dealt with by other means. The Panel noted there was a correlation between the schools with a higher number of exclusions and those with poorer results.

50. Disadvantaged Pupil Premium Summary

The Panel considered a report summarising the Disadvantaged Pupil Premium which explained the funding, use and success of the Pupil Premium.

It was the responsibility of each individual school to decide how best to spend their pupil premium allocation and there was now a requirement (since November 2016) for each school to publish a strategy for their use of the pupil premium. This needed to include a summary of the main barriers to educational achievement faced by eligible pupils and how the pupil premium would be spent to address those barriers. A pupil premium review had been carried out in 13 schools and others were planned.

The report also contained examples of teaching aids produced to help schools draw up their strategies and make effective use of the pupil premium funding. The Panel noted that a school was accountable for its treatment of the pupil premium through the Ofsted reporting process.

51. Transitions - Update on the Review of School Transfers

The Panel received a report containing an update on the outcomes of the previous Overview and Scrutiny review of school transfers.

The educational landscape had changed substantially since the review carried out in 2006 and the report related how this had affected the position. The Panel noted the current practice in relation to transition and were informed that the Common

Assessment Framework (CAF) team was pro-active in supporting information sharing and through the early help hub identifying support with transition if required.

52. **Learning Improvement Strategy Framework**

The Panel considered a report presenting the Learning Improvement Strategy Framework approved by the Executive and noted the related role of Overview and Scrutiny.

The Council had a legal duty to promote high standards in schools and provide for the fulfilment of children and young people's potential. The Learning Improvement Strategy sets out how the Council would work in partnership with schools to achieve this. In particular the Strategy built on the existing good level of support for schools (as recognised in Ofsted reports) and contained a procedure to be followed when standards in a school were not good enough and the Council had a duty to intervene.

The Panel was provided with enlarged colour copies (in diagrammatic form) of the following documents:

- The Local Authority role in Monitoring and Intervention to ensure High Standards in all Schools
- Flowchart of the Process for Schools Causing Concern
- Flowchart of the Process for Academies

Arising from questions and discussion, the Panel noted:

- The process to identify schools on track to become or maintain a good or better ranking.
- The steps to be taken with schools falling below this rank, including early identification of when a 'Declaration of Concern' meeting with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors was required.
- The implementation of a Standards Monitoring Board (SMB) with an independent chair to review progress on improvement.
- The timescales for action at each step of the process.
- The enhanced role for The School and Children's Centre Performance Advisory Panel in monitoring improvement, for onward report to the Panel.

The Panel recognised the crucial importance of inspirational leadership and an excellent record of teaching and learning in the attainment of a good or outstanding outcome for schools. This in turn led to the best possible outcomes and the brightest future for all children.

53. **Executive Response to the Overview & Scrutiny Report on Child Sexual Exploitation**

The Panel considered a report setting out the response of the Executive to the review of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) carried out by the working group.

Of the 14 recommendations in the report, 13 had been accepted in full or in part. The Executive had accepted 6 recommendations in part only, owing to concerns about the additional burdens which would be placed on already stretched resources. The recommendation not yet accepted related to a request to the Named Doctor for Safeguarding on which a response was awaited. Officers were asked to follow this up.

The Panel thanked the Executive for its response.

54. **Working Group Update**

The Chairman reported initial activity on the working group being formed to review Early Intervention Services, including her attendance at a conference on Pupil Premium due to take place 16 June 2017. Councillors Ms Gaw and Mrs McCracken offered to accompany the Chairman on some school visits which were being planned.

55. **Executive Forward Plan**

The Panel considered and noted the scheduled Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions relating to Children, Young People and Learning.

56. **Next Meeting**

The Panel noted that the next meeting, scheduled to take place on 7 June 2017, was likely to be postponed owing to the General Election called for 8 June 2017.

CHAIRMAN

Attainment of KS2 pupils in Reading, Writing and Mathematics - at National, Region, LAs within the South East.

LA code	Region		Number of eligible pupils ²	Percentage of pupils reaching the expected	Percentage of pupils reaching a higher
			All	All	All
E92000001	ENGLAND (state-funded schools) ⁵		581,058	54	5
	ENGLAND (all schools) ⁶		590,930	53	5
E12000001	North East		27,865	57	6
E12000002	North West		80,302	53	5
E12000003	Yorkshire and The Humber		59,568	50	4
E12000004	East Midlands		49,772	52	5
E12000005	West Midlands		65,426	51	4
E12000006	East		64,528	53	6
E12000007	London		88,454	59	7
E13000001	Inner London		30,799	60	8
E13000002	Outer London		57,655	59	7
E12000008	South East		90,875	55	6
E12000009	South West		54,268	52	5
E06000036	South East	Bracknell Forest	1,311	52	6
E06000043	South East	Brighton and Hove	2,396	58	7
E10000002	South East	Buckinghamshire	5,701	57	7
E10000011	South East	East Sussex	5,034	52	3
E10000014	South East	Hampshire	14,043	59	7
E06000046	South East	Isle of Wight	1,327	49	4
E10000016	South East	Kent	16,076	59	6
E06000035	South East	Medway	3,087	49	4
E06000042	South East	Milton Keynes	3,227	56	7
E10000025	South East	Oxfordshire	6,691	52	6
E06000044	South East	Portsmouth	2,007	48	2
E06000038	South East	Reading	1,477	56	9
E06000039	South East	Slough	1,954	55	8
E06000045	South East	Southampton	2,300	54	5
E10000030	South East	Surrey	11,122	60	8
E06000037	South East	West Berkshire	1,675	56	6
E10000032	South East	West Sussex	8,239	45	2
E06000040	South East	Windsor and Maidenhead	1,340	59	8
E06000041	South East	Wokingham	1,868	61	9

This page is intentionally left blank

Region/ Local Authority ¹	Number of pupils at the end of key stage 4	Average Attainment 8 score per pupil ³	A*-C in English and maths GCSEs		English Baccalaureate		Progress	
			Percentage of pupils entered for components	Percentage of pupils who achieved ⁵	Percentage of pupils entered for all components	Percentage of pupils who achieved ⁶	Number of pupils included in the measure	Average Progress 8 score ⁴
Total (state-fu	537,808	50.1	97.0	63.3	39.8	24.8	512,084	-0.03
England¹	600,425	48.5	91.1	59.3	36.8	23.1	.	.
South East	85,618	51.0	96.9	65.8	41.7	27.3	81,199	0.02
Bracknell Forest	1,076	51.4	98.5	61.1	37.8	22.3	1,026	0.09
Brighton and Hove	2,139	50.4	96.5	65.4	39.1	25.0	2,017	0.02
Buckinghamshire	5,622	55.4	97.8	73.7	44.3	36.7	5,139	0.01
East Sussex	4,930	49.3	96.6	63.1	34.6	21.5	4,753	0.04
Hampshire	13,101	51.1	97.6	66.7	41.2	25.9	12,632	-0.03
Isle of Wight	1,305	43.6	94.8	51.8	28.4	13.3	1,271	-0.33
Kent	15,727	50.4	96.1	63.7	43.3	29.5	14,844	-0.04
Medway	2,967	49.9	96.4	64.6	37.1	26.5	2,849	0.05
Milton Keynes	2,800	48.8	97.5	59.9	44.3	21.1	2,623	-0.12
Oxfordshire	5,975	50.4	97.3	65.6	37.9	24.7	5,677	0.01
Portsmouth	1,729	46.3	95.0	58.3	37.9	18.9	1,662	-0.17
Reading	1,169	51.4	97.7	64.1	37.3	29.5	1,051	-0.11
Slough	1,632	54.9	98.2	72.3	41.6	29.4	1,519	0.22
Southampton	1,952	47.5	97.2	57.1	40.3	20.6	1,849	-0.12
Surrey	10,399	52.8	96.9	70.1	46.0	30.6	9,844	0.14
West Berkshire	1,906	51.4	96.9	65.4	48.0	29.9	1,833	0.07
West Sussex	8,118	50.8	96.8	64.9	41.0	26.1	7,751	0.10
Windsor and Maidenhead	1,470	53.1	98.0	72.4	44.1	31.6	1,342	0.16
Wokingham	1,601	53.5	97.9	73.1	53.3	33.8	1,517	0.19

KS4 Summary Data for National, South East and LA's - 2016

ess 8³

<i>Lower confidence interval</i>	<i>Upper confidence interval</i>
.	.
.	.
0.01	0.02
0.03	0.16
-0.02	0.07
-0.02	0.04
0.01	0.07
-0.05	-0.02
-0.39	-0.27
-0.06	-0.02
0.01	0.08
-0.16	-0.08
-0.02	0.04
-0.22	-0.12
-0.17	-0.04
0.16	0.27
-0.16	-0.07
0.11	0.16
0.02	0.11
0.08	0.13
0.10	0.22
0.14	0.24



QUARTERLY SERVICE REPORT

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING

Q4 2016 - 17
January - March 2017

Executive Member:
Councillor Gareth Barnard

Director:
Nikki Edwards






Date completed 11/05/17

Contents




Section 1: Where we are now.....	3
Section 2: Strategic Themes.....	6
Value for money.....	6
People have the life skills and education opportunities they need to thrive.....	7
People live active & healthy lifestyles.....	12
Strong, safe, supportive and self-reliant communities.....	13
Section 3: Operational Priorities.....	16
Section 4: People.....	17
Section 5: Complaints.....	19
Annex A: Financial information.....	21
Annex B: Annual indicators not reported this quarter.....	29

Key

Actions

	Action is on schedule		Action has been completed
	Action may fall behind schedule		Action is no longer applicable
	Action is behind schedule	-	Not yet updated

Performance indicators

	On, above or within 5% of target
	Between 5% and 10% of target
	More than 10% from target

Section 1: Where we are now

Director's overview

As you will read throughout this quarterly report, there has been significant activity within Children, Young People and Learning. It is crucial to understand the direct impact of this activity on outcomes for children. The need to offer enough two year old childcare places to meet demand, is vital to ensuring all children have the best start to life. We have reached 86%, meaning that we are on track for achieving a locally agreed target. We look forward to the further increase in sufficiency which will be generated by the current engagement with the sector particularly the child minders.

Transformation is a key part of all activity within Children, Young People and Learning. We have a transformation manager who is leading this analyse phase of work. This will look at all aspects of work within children's services, in particular education, social care and early help. This appointment has given the directorate the capacity and quality to accelerate our transformation plans.

The work with recruitment and further developing our foster carers demonstrates that when you have key posts recruited to within our directorate, with a clear understanding about what success looks like, it can make a real difference to children. This will have a direct influence on permanency for our children.

The School Improvement Strategy has been agreed with its key themes. The detail of expectations and themes are being co-produced with school leaders and other partners. This is important as rapid improvement can only occur when everyone is working together for the best outcomes for all Bracknell Forest children. The size of our authority and the weighting of each school, particularly at the secondary phase (six schools), means that we have a significant dip in overall performance when only one school declines its judgement during an Ofsted inspection. The work of the school improvement team, the commitment of the leadership including governing bodies have all got to focus as a key priority on outcomes for ALL children. This is our key area for improvement as you can read below.

Highlights and remedial action

Good performance

3.1.02 - Develop sufficient childcare places for all eligible two year olds in line with statutory duty - Efforts have continued this quarter to improve performance in this area with 86% of children being placed in early years setting, indicating a shift from amber to green indicator. A number of child minders have been identified who are willing to offer free places indicative of improved performance in this respect.

3.3.02 Undertake a review of current service provision in response to the latest government legislation impacting on schools and LA services which will require developing a new approach to the delivery of school/academy improvement services - Since the last quarter, a Transformation manager and officer appointed are now in post to oversee the review of current service provision. Service Level Agreements have been redrafted and are ready to be launched to deliver the aims of the new strategy/approach.

3.5.01 Implement a three year transformation plan in the Youth Service to move towards a targeted service, developing services for vulnerable young people - Continued improvements to performance are noted during this quarter. A drop -in service has been developed for Young Carers, Looked After Children and vulnerable young people who are being worked with on a targeted basis. Sexual Health and Relationship sessions have been successfully piloted in a year 6 primary school and age appropriate sessions are now being offered to schools ac ross the borough.

3.5.02 Undertake a review of developing BF Foster Carers to be able to provide care for more complex and challenging young people and implement the findings - Performance in this area has been positive with a target of 10 foster carers being able to provide specialist care to young people with challenging and complex needs being met. A workshop took place in March 2017 to update recruitment and marketing strategy for the year with consideration being given to an external partnership with a focus on specialist recruitment, mentoring and training to enable carers to care for children with various needs.

Areas for improvement

3.3.01 - Ensure schools are judged good or outstanding by Ofsted through the implementation of the School Improvement Strategy. - Performance in this area indicates that this is on target however data indicates that performance is lower than the national target for maintained primary schools, as per the previous quarter. Garth Hill College has recently been inspected with a change in grading from 'good' to 'requires improvement' since the previous inspection. The School Improvement Strategy framework has been agreed and is being implemented although further consultation will inform planning.

3.7.01 Develop accommodation for care leavers working with BFC Housing to oversee the refurbishment of the Waymead site 237 to provide 6 independent bedsits for care leavers - Since the last quarter the tendering process is complete and plans to implement next phase in Q1 of new financial year..

3.2.02 Progress the project for the provision of a new Primary / Secondary Learning Village at Blue Mountain being taken to address 'red' and 'amber' indicators and actions - The project is amber because of risks associated with timely delivery of the access road and drainage works to the site by the landowner Luffs, and because of the possibility of delays caused by the utilities works programme. These are currently work in progress.

Audits and Risks

There has been one limited assurance opinion audit in this period:

1. Easthampstead Park Community School. Three fundamental (priority 1) recommendations were raised concerning financial procedures, invoice authorisation and the post 16 bursary scheme as a consequence of the audit. In addition, nine medium (priority 2) recommendations were raised where controls could be strengthened. These related to the Terms of Reference for the Finance and Property Committee, the Register of Certifying Officers, budget monitoring, use of personal credit cards and loyalty cards, inventory, procurement cards, and fraud control.

There were no significant changes to the risk register this quarter.

Budget position

Revenue Budget

The original cash budget for the department was £16.628m. Net transfers in of £0.041m have been made bringing the current approved cash budget to £16.669m. In addition to this amount, there is a budget for Dedicated Schools Grant and other income of £84.876m to fund the Schools Budget which is outside the control of the Council. Within the Schools Budget, £21.984m is initially managed by the Council on behalf of schools. A breakdown of the budget is available in Annex B1, with Annex B2 showing the budget changes processed this quarter.

The forecast outturn for the department is £17.945m (£1.276m over spend on the current approved cash budget). For the Schools Budget, the outturn forecast is £0.594m credit (£0.807m under spend).

A detailed analysis of the variances this quarter is available in Annex B3.

The department has identified the following as a budget that can pose a risk to the Council's overall financial position, principally because it is vulnerable to significant changes in demand for a service. The current position is as follows:

Service Area	Budget £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Comments
Looked After Children – accommodation, care costs and allowance payments	3,805	5,076	The budget assumed an average of 87.4 high cost placements throughout the year at circa £36.8k each. There are now (28 February) forecast to be 98.4 at circa £41.7k each. The budget assumed in-year cost reductions through revised care packages for some young people and these are currently work in progress.

Capital Budget

The original capital budget for the department was £36.814m. The Executive has subsequently approved the £5.774m under spending from 2015-16 to be carried forward making a total budget of £42.588m. Other minor changes of a net reduction of £0.027m have subsequently been required, making a current budget of £42.561m.

A detailed list of schemes together with their budget and forecast spend is available in Annex B4.


The following schemes are forecast to over/under spend by at least £20k:

Scheme	Over/Under Spend £000	Comments
None	n/a	n/a.

Section 2: Strategic Themes












Value for money





Action	Due Date	Status	Comments
1.7 Spending is within budget			
1.7.04 Implement savings as identified for 2016-17	31/03/2017		Original approved savings targets on course to be met. New in-year savings agreed by Executive in July also on course to be achieved.










People have the life skills and education opportunities they need to thrive










Action	Due Date	Status	Comments
3.1 Children have access to high quality early years provision			
3.1.01 Implement the Every Child a Talker Programme to further develop speech and language skills of children in early years	31/03/2019		9 children and families have attended Children's Centre targeted speech and language sessions (PEEP). 77% of children have made improvements within at least one strand of speech, language and communication. 2 children have been referred for development assessment, 1 signposted to speech and language drop-in, 1 to continue with PEEP next quarter. Schools targeted to improve communication and language outcomes for free school meal children are now engaged and work will continue next quarter.
3.1.02 Develop sufficient childcare places for all eligible two year olds in line with statutory duty	31/03/2019		In Q4 221 (86%) of children were placed in early education settings. We are working with providers to develop new spaces and have a number of child-minders considering signing up to offer free places.
3.2 School places are available in all localities			
3.2.01 Provide sufficient pupil places, through the Education Capital Programme to meet basic need	31/03/2019		Phase 2 of the expansion works at Great Hollands Primary School is on site and on programme for September 2017. The proposed new primary schools at Amen Corner North and TRL, which are being commissioned via the developer construct route, are both in design for delivery in 2018/19. Design of the final Phase 2 of the expansion of The Pines Primary School has now been instructed, and is scheduled for completion for September 2018.
3.2.02 Progress the project for the provision of a new Primary / Secondary Learning Village at Blue Mountain (7 form entry secondary school, a 2 form entry primary school and a nursery provision)	31/03/2019		Mace are progressing with construction of the Binfield Learning Village on site and are currently on programme for delivery of the new school buildings and facilities for September 2018. The project is amber because of risks associated with timely delivery of the access road and drainage works to the site by the landowner Luffs, and because of the possibility of delays caused by the utilities works programme. These are currently work in progress. All other aspects are Green.
3.2.03 Secure sufficient school places to provide for children from planned and future housing developments	31/03/2019		The School Places Plan and Capital Strategy were approved by Executive in January. Since that time the Strategy has provided a baseline for further analyses of demand. Preparations for 2017-based forecasts are underway. The process and timeframes were agreed by the Pupil Place Planning Board in January.

3.3 More children are attending schools that are judged as good or better			
3.3.01 Ensure schools are judged good or outstanding by Ofsted through the implementation of the School Improvement Strategy	31/03/2019		<p>80% of maintained secondary schools are good or outstanding. Nationally this is 77.9%. Garth Hill College has recently been inspected and dropped from good to requires improvement hence the change this quarter.</p> <p>74.2% of maintained primary schools are Good or Outstanding. Nationally, this is 89.9%</p> <p>The new School (Learning) Improvement Strategy framework has been agreed and will be implemented from this term. Some further consultation and work with schools is required to enhance the detail of the strategy.</p>
3.3.02 Undertake a review of current service provision in response to the latest government legislation impacting on schools and LA services which will require developing a new approach to the delivery of school/academy improvement services	31/03/2019		<p>School (learning) Improvement strategy fully agreed through the Council decision making process and shared with Head Teacher's.</p> <p>Transformation manager and officer appointed. SLA's redrafted and ready to be launched.</p>
3.4 Levels of attainment and pupil progress across all phases of learning for all pupils are raised			
3.4.01 Ensure effective use of Pupil Premium grant to close gaps in attainment	31/03/2019		<p>All schools contacted to remind them of their responsibilities with regard to children in receipt of PPG and reporting requirements through publication on their website.</p> <p>Pan Berks Pupil premium conference confirmed for May 17</p> <p>Experienced PPG reviewer commissioned by LA to review identified schools where the gap is greatest</p> <p>3 secondary school reviews now complete and action plans developed.</p> <p>5 primary school reviews completed and action plans developed.</p> <p>5 primary schools still to be reviewed.</p>
3.5 Children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are supported to achieve their potential			
3.5.01 Implement a three year transformation plan in the Youth Service to move towards a targeted service, developing services for vulnerable young people	31/03/2019		<p>The transition to adulthood pathway for young carers is been strengthened by the development of a cohesive approach between targeted youth services, specialist children's services and adult social care.</p> <p>A 'Supporting Young Carers in Schools Award' developed by The Carers Trust is being piloted with support from a targeted youth worker. The self assessment programme offers schools the opportunity to make a culture shift to embed support for young carers within its services.</p> <p>A drop -in service has been developed for Young Carers, Looked After Children and vulnerable young people who are being worked with on a targeted basis.</p> <p>Sexual Health and Relationship sessions</p>

			<p>have been successfully piloted in a year 6 primary school and age appropriate sessions are now being offered to schools across the borough.</p> <p>Latest national statistics show that Bracknell Forest has the lowest under 18s alcohol specific hospital related admissions in England and places Bracknell Forest as having the lowest teenage pregnancy rates in the South East of England and the 4th lowest in the country.</p> <p>The targeted youth worker who is responsible for lower level missing and absent return home interviews has been sitting in the MASH to further develop joint working processes.</p> <p>16 young people attended a weekend at Woodrow High House, Amersham including vulnerable young people. The programme focussed on team work skills and sessions to develop a youth council mental health charter. This work will continue to support their ongoing campaign to raise awareness of young people's mental health.</p>
3.5.02 Undertake a review of developing BF Foster Carers to be able to provide care for more complex and challenging young people and implement the findings	31/03/2017		Target of 10 foster carers met. Workshop took place in March 2017 to update recruitments and marketing strategy for the year. Consideration being given to an external partnership with a focus on specialist recruitment, mentoring and training to enable carers to care for children with various needs.
3.5.03 Undertake a review of targeted work for 9-11 year old primary age pupils to prevent escalation to higher cost services and implement the findings	31/03/2017		Implementation of the recommendations is underway following council approval. Expressions of interest have been received from a small number of HT's to form the SEND strategy group. The first meeting is scheduled to take place in April. Paucity of capacity for data analysis will be considered through transformation including business intelligence review.
3.5.04 Work with schools to identify young people at risk of disengaging in education, employment or training and ensuring appropriate interventions are put in place	31/03/2019		The annual figure for 16 and 17 year olds who are NEET has been recorded as 3.9% - a decrease of 0.1% on the same figure for the previous year. National data is expected to be released in the next quarter. During this quarter, schools have been supported to specifically target those identified who do not have a destination yet planned for September 2017. This is done in partnership with the school lead to ensure that the advice and guidance being offered meets the needs of these young people.
3.5.05 Enhance the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people at tier 2 in partnership with schools and other providers through the delivery of the Emotional Health and Well Being (EHWB) Action Plan	31/03/2019		Multi agency plan is progressing against agreed milestones. Increased uptake of counselling services face to face and online from each secondary school as a result of promotion and relationship building. Both have received further funding through the CAMHs transformation programme

3.5.06 Implement the action plan following the Safeguarding Practice Diagnostic	31/03/2019		
3.5.07 Undertake a review of the Prevention and Early Intervention Service and implement a three year modernisation programme	31/03/2019		Children's Centres developing a new model to cover 0-19 yrs to strengthen transitions and support families in schools.
3.5.08 Undertake a cross-Council/partners (Health and Police) review to provide a more co-ordinated approach to common issues presented by edge of care families with mental health and substance abuse concerns including improved response and financial savings	31/03/2017		This project is now being incorporated within a bigger Children's Services Transformation Project to maximise potential for economies and efficiencies and increase the potential for integrated working
3.6 Children and young people with Special Educational Needs are supported to achieve their potential			
3.6.01 Continue to implement Special Educational Needs (SEND) legislation including ensuring Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) are completed on time and the backlog in transferring from SEN statements to EHCP is progressed	31/03/2019		7 EHCP assessments were concluded during Period 4. All but one of these assessments was concluded within the statutory 20 week period. The assessment which went over the timeline was of a young person whose assessment had begun in a neighbouring authority but who moved into BF over halfway through the 20 week period. Conversions from statements to EHCPs remain on course for all to be completed by April 2018.
3.7 All young people who have left school go on to further education, find employment or undertake some form of training			
3.7.01 Develop accommodation for care leavers working with BFC Housing to oversee the refurbishment of the Waymead site 237 to provide 6 independent bedsits for care leavers	31/03/2019		Tendering process is now completed. Contract will be awarded in Q1. Refurbishment will start later in 2017. 10 beds reserved primarily for care leavers with 24/7 on site support.
3.7.02 Provide focused support for care leavers to enable access to appropriate education, employment and training opportunities	31/03/2019		The Virtual School has been in working partnership with other Virtual Schools and the University of Reading, Oxford University and Oxford Brookes university to develop a protocol for LA's across the South East of England that will specifically support care leavers accessing HE programmes at these establishments. The protocol will be an understanding amongst Virtual Schools across the South East that should an application be received by one these universities for a care leaver who was in the care of an LA in the South East, then they would have met certain thresholds and will be invited to an interview. It is expected that this will be in place during the next

			academic year.
3.7.03 Work in partnership with the Elevate Project through Breakthrough Employment Service in order to support young people with additional needs into employment	31/03/2019		A range of programmes have been developed and offered in collaboration with Elevate partners that cover areas of need as identified through working with young people. Elevate works alongside Breakthrough, Ways into Work, Adviza and Learning to Work to provide targeted support to those young people who have additional needs to secure education or employment outcomes. The challenge however is in securing a sufficient number of employers who will support such young people.

Ind Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure	Current figure	Current Target	Current Status
NI114	Number of exclusions from secondary schools (Quarterly)	1	1	0	
NI117	Number of 16 - 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) (Quarterly)	4.0%	3.9%	5.0%	
L139p	Percentage of Primary schools rated good or better (Quarterly)	74.2%	74.2%	80.0%	
L139s	Percentage of Secondary schools rated good or better (Quarterly)	100.0%	80.0%	67.0%	
L237	Number of apprenticeships starts for 16-24 year olds through City Deal interventions (Quarterly)	4	3	5	
L272	Percentage of children obtaining a place at one of their Primary School preferences (Annually)	97.0%	98.0%	95.0%	
L272a	Percentage of children obtaining their first preference of Primary School (Annually)	84.5%	90.0%	84.5%	
L273	Percentage of children obtaining a place at one of their Secondary School preferences (Annually)	92.0%	98.0%	92.0%	
L373a	Percentage of children obtaining their first preference of Secondary School (Annually)	78.0%	86.0%	79.0%	



People live active & healthy lifestyles




Action	Due Date	Status	Comments
4.7 Accessibility and availability of mental health services for young people and adults is improved			
4.7.02 Work with partners to improve Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provision as detailed in the EHWB Action Plan and CCG Transformation Plan	01/04/2019		The EHWB is progressing against milestones. CCG transformation plan is in final stages of sign off and Bracknell has contributed to its development. Funding opportunities promoted locally and successful bids for counselling services.
4.8 Learning opportunities are available for adults			
4.8.02 Ensure the Post Ofsted Action Plan is successfully implemented	31/07/2017		Monitoring visit by Ofsted, March 2017. As directed by HMI, Action Plan has been "closed" and an Interim Quality Improvement Plan introduced reflecting progress and changes since the Ofsted Action Plan was drawn up. The QIP will be updated following the revision of the Self Assessment report at the end of April 2017
4.8.03 Review and deliver a refreshed annual learning offer in collaboration with children's centres, schools, community and local businesses which meets grant conditions and is financially viable	31/07/2017		Programme for Spring term, including new employability courses and additional Job Club at Bracknell Library delivered successfully; AEB qualification-based income on target. Courses for summer term advertised and changes to curriculum for autumn term in planning.


Ind Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure	Current figure	Current Target	Current Status
L281	Number of individual clients attending Youthline sessions (Quarterly)	329	521	N/A	-
L283	Number of adult learners (over 19s) who have taken part in community learning over the previous academic year (Annually)	-	2,367	1,500	






Strong, safe, supportive and self-reliant communities

Action	Due Date	Status	Comments
6.2 High levels of community cohesion is maintained			
6.2.03 Develop and implement a pilot project of community based support using DCLG 'Delivering Differently' funding	31/03/2019		
6.3 There are low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour throughout the borough			
6.3.04 Work with Thames Valley Police to develop a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Model that is appropriate to local needs	16/05/2016		<p>An independent review of the MASH found that the evidence from the audits indicates that the MASH team perform this function well, with Police staff assessing the risk in domestic abuse cases and the social worker and team manager exercising good professional judgement regarding thresholds. There is currently a dual referral system in operation; Tier Three and Tier Four referrals including safeguarding referrals and contacts go to the MASH, and are then passed on to the Referral and Assessment Team, and Tier Two referrals for early help go to the Early Intervention Hub following the completion of a Common Assessment Framework.</p> <p>This review has concluded that the current system of referral pathways does not enable a consistent application of thresholds and nor does it enable the aspiration expressed in the threshold document for a consideration of the journey of the child through the continuum of services and a common understanding of thresholds.</p> <p>It is recommended that the role of the MASH is expanded to become a single point of entry for all children's referrals, including early help referrals. At present, partner agencies complete a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) before cases go to the Early Help Hub. This means that the completion of the document acts as an Early Help referral form rather than as an assessment.</p> <p>The review recommendations are being considered with CSC / Early Help services planning to visit 2 local MASHs who are fully integrated.</p>
6.4 Safeguarding structures to safeguard children and vulnerable adults are well-established			
6.4.03 Provide access to Advocacy Services for children receiving support through Children's Social Care to enable them to have their views heard	31/03/2016		<p>Independent Advocacy is a statutory duty for children in care/care leavers and the service continues to be available. The service is also offered to children for child protection meetings and this quarter was used at a family group conference. No of YP who have used the Advocacy service in Q4:</p> <p>No of children: 35 No of families: 25 No of on-going cases (per family): 16 No of new referrals received Q4 (per family): 9</p>
6.4.04 Implement Signs of Safety model, system wide,	31/03/2019		The Signs of Safety Approach is embedded in CSC. All CIN, CP Mosaic forms have been up dated with


embedding the Signs of Safety approach across all child protection services and early help			Signs of Safety language. SOS is used in Child Protection Conferences / Child in Need Meetings / Supervision sessions. Direct work tools are used as appropriate in direct work with children and families. The Words and Picture tool has been successfully used with young children who have been placed away from home to help them understand their life story. A number of Assistant Team Managers have been on the 5 day intense training course and will use their knowledge and skills to help the social workers use a wider range of tools in practice.
6.4.05 Implement the Pay and Workforce Strategy specifically in relation to the recruitment and retention of children's social workers and teachers	31/03/2019		A further six recruitment fairs were attended under the Newly Qualified Teacher Pool arrangements resulting in 25 primary applications (17 shortlisted) and 10 secondary candidates (6 shortlisted). From this there have been 6 confirmed appointments – 5 primary and 1 secondary. School Direct number have seen 52 secondary and 19 primary applications received. From this there have been 24 secondary offers made of which 8 have accepted and 2 primary offers which have both been accepted. There is one head teacher vacancy where attempts are being made to recruit by the end of April. Although the incentives introduced for children's social workers have had a positive impact this does continue to be a challenge with the vacancy rate at 7.5% as at the end of the quarter and the agency rate at 7.2%. There have been 7 offers of employment made to newly qualified social workers.
6.5 Early help assessment is in place to identify children and young people with additional needs and provide early help			
6.5.01 Further develop the effective transition between Early Help and specialist services by improving the step up/step down to/from statutory services	31/03/2019		Step up = 0 Step down = 19 (this was 19 children and 16 families) 3 from MASH and the rest from Single Assessment and long term teams This quarter was less busy however there were additional Tier 2/3 meetings to effectively manage cases. The Triage forum was used for MASH contacts and some of the referrals from CSC which wanted FIT only. 139 assessments were taken to Triage for discussion.
6.5.02 Review provision to provide targeted Family Outreach support and early intervention from Children's Centres	31/03/2017		30 families are currently open to FOW. In Q4 6 new cases have opened, 1 declined intervention, 2 stepped up to CSC and 2 disengaged. 64 referrals have been received in Q4 for Early Help through the Children's Centres. 34 families have engaged with CC services, 12 have been referred on to other services, the remainder have been contacted.

Ind Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure	Current figure	Current Target	Current Status
NI062	Stability of placements of looked after children in terms of the number of placements (Quarterly) <i>NB: The number of children looked after at the end of the quarter that had 3 or more separate placements during the reporting year.</i>	10.1%	9.6%	12.5%	

UNRESTRICTED

Ind Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure	Current figure	Current Target	Current Status
NI063	Stability of placements of looked after children - length of placement (Quarterly) NB: The number of looked after children who were (i) aged under 16 and (ii) looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years, who were in the same placement for at least 2 years at the end of the quarter	53.3%	45.5%	60.0%	
L092	Number of children on protection plans (Quarterly)	171	171	N/A	-
L161	Number of looked after children (Quarterly)	109	115	N/A	-
L202	Number of families turned around through Family Focus Project (Quarterly) NB: No claims window in Q3. Next claims window is open in Q4 and we are aiming to submit 15 PBR claims	0	15	30	
L203	Number of Referrals to Early Intervention Hub (Quarterly)	76	55	N/A	-
L204	Total number of CAFs and Family CAFs undertaken (Quarterly)	41	43	N/A	-
L242	Number of cases that step up to Children's Social Care (Quarterly)	4	0	N/A	-
L243	Number of cases that step down from Children's Social to Early Intervention Hub (Quarterly)	50	19	N/A	-
L287	Number of children in need supported under Section 17 of the Children Act (Quarterly)	607	645	N/A	-
L288	Number of foster carers recruited to meet need (Quarterly)	7	10	10	
L289	Average caseload per children's social worker (Quarterly)	18.0	18.0	N/A	-
L290	Rate of referral to children's social care (Quarterly)	137.9	151.1	N/A	-

Section 3: Operational Priorities

Action	Due Date	Status	Comments
7.5 Children, Young People & Learning			
7.5.01 Use monthly budget monitoring reports to identify and address any emerging overspends promptly	31/03/2017		Monthly reports for DMT produced to timetable. Key issues identified with options for DMT decisions.

Ind Ref	Short Description	Previous Figure	Current figure	Current Target	Current Status
L301	Percentage of Education, Health and Care Plans issued within 20 weeks (including those with exceptions) (Quarterly)	100.0%	85.7%	N/A	-

Section 4: People

Staffing levels

	Establishment Posts	Staffing Full Time	Staffing Part Time	Total Posts FTE	Vacant Posts	Vacancy Rate
Director	3	3	0	3.00	0	0.0%
Learning & Achievement (including Education Library Service)	91	36	55	68.29	12	11.7%
Children's Social Care	125	87	38	112.01	13	9.4%
Strategy, Resources & Early Help	154	78	76	118.90	12.5	7.5%
Department Totals	373	204	169	302.21	37.5	9.1%

Staff Turnover

For the quarter ending	31 March 2017	2.42%
For the last four quarters	1 April – 31 March 2017	10.66%

Comparator data	
Total voluntary turnover for BFC, 2015/16:	14.3%
Average UK voluntary turnover 2015:	16.1%
Average Local Government England voluntary turnover 2014/2015:	13.5%

Source: XPerHR Staff Turnover Rates and Cost Survey 2015 and LGA Workforce Survey 2014/15

Comments:

There are a significant number of vacancies this quarter. However many of the posts are subject to review and some posts will be deleted from 1st April.

In Children's Social Care there are 6 Social work front line vacancies, equating to 5 FTE. A number of newly qualified social workers have been appointed to fill these vacancies in due course
Strategy, Resource and Early Help vacancies are dominated by 7 Crossing Patroller vacancies

Staff sickness

Section	Total staff	Number of days sickness	Quarter 4 average per employee	2016/17 annual average per employee
Director	3	2	0.67	3.50
Learning & Achievement (including Education Library Service)	90	141.5	1.57	4.34
Children's Social Care	125	254	2.03	9.34
Strategy, Resources & Early Help	150	429.5	2.86	7.06
Department Totals (Q4)	367	827	2.25	
Totals (16/17)	367	2627.5		7.16

Comparator data	All employees, average days sickness absence per employee
Bracknell Forest Council 15/16	5.9 days
All local government employers 2015	9.9 days
Average Local government England Sickness 2014/15	8.5 days

Source: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development Absence Management survey 2015 and LGA Workforce Survey 2014/15

Comments:

Sickness is higher than in previous quarters, mainly attributed to 12 Long term sickness cases accounting for nearly half of the department's absence

8 cases have been resolved, with 6 employees returning to work. One of the employees has resigned and one was made redundant. The 4 remaining ongoing cases are being managed in line with the absence management policy with support from Occupational Health Service.

Section 5: Complaints

Corporate complaints

Stage	New complaints activity in quarter	Complaints activity year to date	Outcome of total complaints activity year to date
Stage 2	0	1	1 Not upheld
Stage 3	0	0	
Local Government Ombudsman	0	1	1 Ongoing
TOTAL	0	2	

NOTE: The table excludes Stage 1 complaints and those complaints which are dealt with through separate appeals processes. It should also be noted that complaints which move through the different stages are recorded separately at each stage.

Nature of complaints/ Actions taken/ Lessons learnt:

From each complaint upheld a learning experience can be gained which is responded to on an individual basis this includes clearer communication with parents earlier in the process.

Statutory complaints

Stage	New complaints activity in quarter	Complaints activity year to date	Outcome of total complaints activity year to date
Stage 1	14	26	1 fully substantiated 1 partially substantiated 2 not substantiated 3 no finding made 6 ongoing 1 proceed to stage 2
Stage 2	0	5	1 not substantiated 1 partially substantiated 3 ongoing
Stage 3	0	1	1 partially substantiated
Local Government Ombudsman	0	0	
TOTAL	14	33	

Nature of complaints/ Actions taken/ Lessons learnt:

- Communication
- Conduct and Attitude of workers
- Overall Quality of Service
- Sharing of confidential information
- The Complaints Process itself

Complaints Service – Direction of Travel

1. **Stage One Timescales** – Need to ensure all complaints are responded to within the Statutory Timescales – use the 10 days as a target and the 20 days as a safety net.

2. **Communication** – Need to ensure that staff are communicating effectively with customers and that this is contemporaneously recorded.
3. **Learning from complaints** – Need to improve on disseminating the Learning from feedback and complaints and have the evidence to show that we are.
4. **Complaints Investigations** – We have recruited and continue to recruit professionals with the right expertise and experience to undertake Investigations and Panels.
5. **Complaints Quality Assurance** - All Stage 1 letters to be QA'd prior to being sent – All Stage 2 reports QA'd and points challenged where need be, by both the Complaints Manager and Service Areas.

Compliments

Number of compliments received in quarter	Nature of compliments
75	Prevention & Early Years (41) Children's Social Care (34) including from professionals (15); from parents and carers (14); from young people (5)

Annex A: Financial information

Annex B1

Summary Revenue Budget Breakdown

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING DEPARTMENT - FEBRUARY 2017							
	Original Cash Budget	Virements & Budget C/Fwds	Current Approved Budget	Spend to date %	Variance Over/(Under) Spend	Variance This Period	
	£000	£000	£000	%	£000	£000	£000
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING DEPARTMENT							
Director							
Departmental Management Team	589	15	604	0%	-29	25	1
	589	15	604	0%	-29	25	
CO - Learning and Achievement							
School Improvement, Music and Governor Services	647	59	706	0%	-8	-11	2
Advice for 13-19 year olds	470	0	470	0%	0	0	
Adult Education	-53	1	-52	0%	-40	0	
Education Psychology and SEN Team	762	-44	718	0%	-61	-29	2
Education Welfare and Support	250	8	258	0%	-29	-10	2
	2,076	24	2,100	0%	-138	-50	
CO - Children & Families: Social Care							
Children's Services & Commissioning	3,182	120	3,302	0%	-32	-22	5
Children Looked After	4,655	-25	4,630	0%	1,403	121	1, 4, 5
Family Support Services	964	2	966	0%	-53	-57	5
Youth Justice	622	-35	587	0%	-3	0	
Other children's and family services	863	60	923	0%	157	0	
Asylum Seeker Dispersal Scheme	0	0	0	0%	3	0	
Management and Support Services	81	0	81	0%	0	0	
	10,367	122	10,489	0%	1,475	42	
CO - Strategy, Resources and Early Help							
Early Years, Childcare and Play	1,587	-77	1,510	0%	-120	-65	6
Youth Service	642	-47	595	0%	0	0	
Performance and Governance	837	44	881	0%	143	69	6
Finance Team	351	15	366	0%	-22	0	
Human Resources Team	145	19	164	0%	-21	0	
Education Capital and Property	260	-4	256	0%	-17	-10	6
Information Technology Team	308	-15	293	0%	19	19	6
Extended services and support to families	489	-18	471	0%	0	0	
School related expenditure	288	31	319	0%	-8	4	6
Office Services	186	-68	118	0%	-12	0	
	5,093	-120	4,973	0%	-38	17	
Education Services Grant	-1,497	0	-1,497	0%	6	6	7
TOTAL CYP&L DEPARTMENT CASH BUDGET	16,628	41	16,669	0%	1,276	40	
TOTAL RECHARGES & ACCOUNTING ADJUSTMENTS	10,605	0	10,605	0%	0	0	
GRAND TOTAL CYP&L DEPARTMENT	27,233	41	27,274	0%	1,276	40	
Memorandum items:							
Devolved Staffing Budget			13,212		-211	-53	

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING DEPARTMENT - FEBRUARY 2017						
	Original Cash Budget	Virements & Budget C/Fwds	Current Approved Budget	Spend to date %	Variance Over/(Under) Spend	Variance This Period
	£000	£000	£000	%	£000	£000
Schools Budget - 100% grant funded						
Delegated and devolved funding:						
Schools Block						
Delegated Mainstream School Budgets	70,188	-7,083	63,105	0%	0	0
School Grant income	-9,336	0	-9,336	0%	0	0
	60,852	-7,083	53,769	0%	0	0
LA managed items:						
Schools Block						
Retained de-delegated Budgets:	1,250	-145	1,105	0%	-29	-28
Combined Service Budgets:	405	0	405	0%	29	19
Other Schools Block provisions and support services	687	167	854	0%	114	-26
	2,342	22	2,364	0%	114	-35
High Needs Block						
Delegated Special Schools Budgets	3,476	295	3,771	25%	-67	-19
Post 16 SEN and other grants	-412	-88	-500	0%	0	0
Maintained schools and academies	2,179	242	2,421	25%	68	-75
Non Maintained Special Schools and Colleges	6,238	-294	5,944	25%	-860	-270
Education out of school	1,104	30	1,134	0%	60	-13
Other SEN provisions and support services	1,227	-2	1,225	25%	-91	-26
	13,812	183	13,995	0%	-890	-403
Early Years Block						
Free entitlement to early years education	4,641	36	4,677	13%	-133	-98
Other Early Years provisions and support services	532	-84	448	-138%	-101	-1
	5,173	-48	5,125	0%	-234	-99
Dedicated Schools Grant	-82,179	7,139	-75,040	0%	203	182
TOTAL - Schools Budget	0	213	213	0%	-807	-355

Children, Young People and Learning Virements and Budget Carry Forwards

Note	Total	Explanation
	£'000	
		<u>DEPARTMENTAL CASH BUDGET</u>
	44	Amount reported last period
		<u>Intra Departmental virements</u>
a	0	A small number of housekeeping virements have been processed relating to updated school SLA income targets and Devolved Staffing Budgets.
		<u>Inter Departmental Virements</u>
b	-3	Savings have been identified on the new councilwide contract for stationery.
	41	Total
		<u>DEPARTMENTAL NON-CASH BUDGET</u>
	0	Amount reported last period.
	0	Total
		<u>SCHOOLS BUDGET</u>
	213	Amount reported last period.
	213	Total

Annex B3

Budget Variances

Note	Reported variance £'000	Explanation
	1,236	<p><u>DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET</u></p> <p>Total reported to last period.</p>
		<p><u>Director</u></p>
1	25	<p>There has been a recalculation of the saving that will arise from the planned vacancy of the CO: Learning and Achievement. This has reduced after making an allowance for an extension to management back fill and procuring additional specialist expertise to support the Ofsted inspection preparation work.</p>
		<p><u>CO - Learning and Achievement</u></p>
2	-50	<p>Three variances are reported in L&A: based on current information, no former looked after children who have no recourse to public funds are expected to commence a higher education course this academic year, resulting in a further forecast saving of £0.011m; staff turnover is expected to result in savings of £0.030m; and the Education Welfare Service is expected to generate a further £0.009m income from fixed penalty notice fines.</p>
		<p><u>CO - Children's Social Care</u></p>
3	52	<p>Placement costs are forecast to over spend by £1.137m, an increase of £0.052m. The underlying expectation is that the budget will over spend as no provision has been made for any new placements in the budget forecast, as the strategy involves removing the costs of all known leavers, but not adding a provision for any new placements or in year changes in placements as the cost is not known when the budget is set in December 2015. Subject to sufficient funds and agreement from CMT, the in-year over spending is funded at year end through an allocation from the Corporate Contingency.</p> <p>As usual, there have been a number of placement and cost changes, and overall, the number of young people expected to be supported in the highest cost provisions has increased by 0.7 FTE to 98.4 FTE clients. Under business as usual, CSC regularly review placements and will continue to work to achieve savings through active management of support arrangements, making reductions when it is safe to do so. There also remains the possibility of needing to make new placements that would increase costs from the current forecasts.</p>
4	117	<p>An update on cost forecasts has been received on the Childcare Solicitor service (operated by RBC under a Berkshire Joint Arrangement) where it has previously been reported that following the national pattern, the number of cases in court has significantly increased (from 14 in August 2015 to 25 in August 2016). Additional information has now been provided with estimated actual costs for the year and a further over spending of £0.134m is now forecast. This is partially offset by a £0.017m forecast under spending on Public Law Order assessments, which is also part of the work of the Childcare Solicitor Service, but charged for separately.</p>

Note	Reported variance	Explanation
5	£'000 -127	<p>There are also a number of under spendings to report; the social worker agency budget, to cover vacant posts and long term staff sickness is forecasts to under spend by £0.022m; the Advisory Adoption Service Berkshire Joint Arrangement is now forecasting further saving of £0.050m, of which £0.025m relates to a prior year refund; and additional support to families is expected to under spend by £0.040m. There are also a small number of other variances.</p> <p><u>CO - Strategy, Resources and Early Intervention</u></p>
6	17	<p>A number of staffing vacancies are being forecast that net off to a nil variance, with the Early Help Offer forecasting a £0.065m under spending, Performance and Governance an over spending of £0.075m which mainly arises from needing to engage agency staff to fill posts delivering statutory duties, and a £0.010m under spending in Education Capital and Property. There is also a forecast shortfall of income on IT Traded Services of £0.019m, with a review in place to identify areas of cost saving, £0.010m of additional cost on pupil transport that has been agreed as exceptional and outside the standard policy entitlement a £0.006m prior year refund on the Berkshire Joint Arrangement for former teacher pension costs, and a £0.006m under spend on mobile working equipment in Performance and Governance.</p> <p><u>Education Services Grant (ESG)</u></p>
7	6	<p>The DfE pays ESG to LAs for a range of defined central services that are provided without charge to community schools or direct to academy schools to source directly. The ESG has now been confirmed resulting in a £0.006m shortfall on anticipated income.</p>
	1,276	Grand Total Departmental Budget
		<u>DEPARTMENTAL NON-CASH BUDGET</u>
	0	Total reported to last period.
	0	Grand Total Departmental Non-Cash Budget
		<u>SCHOOLS BUDGET</u>
		<p>The Schools Budget is a ring fenced account, fully funded by external grants, the most significant of which is the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Any under or overspending remaining at the end of the financial year must be carried forward to the next year's Schools Budget and as such has no impact on the Council's overall level of balances.</p>
	-452	Total reported to last period.
		<u>Schools Block</u>
8	-35	<p>The main variances this period relate to; increased costs of £0.022m supporting looked after children with their education and related transport; increased incidence of classroom staff on maternity leave at additional cost of £0.014m; £0.039m less support required to schools experiencing financial difficulties; savings of £0.011m on staffing in the Behaviour and Education Support Service; and £0.019m less than expected being paid to schools for the additional costs incurred to meet infant class size regulations.</p>

Note	Reported variance	Explanation
	£'000	
9	-403	<p><u>High Needs Block</u></p> <p>Latest admissions to Kennel Lane Special school, including a pilot for under 5 year olds, indicates reduced costs of £0.019m, with costs at maintained schools and academies for high needs pupils expected to reduce by £0.075m as numbers and needs are firmed up. There have again been substantial changes in placements in non-maintained special schools and FE colleges, where more charges have been agreed and finalised with providers, generally at lower amounts than expected, together with updates on numbers of students placed. Overall numbers have reduced to 160.8 fte (was 168.4 fte), with aggregate forecast costs reducing by £0.270m. There have also been a number of other minor changes across the range of High Needs budgets.</p>
10	-99	<p><u>Early Years Block</u></p> <p>A revised estimate of the cost of take up of the free entitlement to childcare and early years education from the October and January census dates indicates a £0.098m cost reduction. There are also a number of other small variances across a range of services.</p>
11	182	<p><u>Dedicated Schools Grant</u></p> <p>Early Years income through the Dedicated Schools Grant is recalculated in-year based on actual take up at each January head count census. Based on forecast numbers for January 2017, a £0.182m reduction in grant is anticipated, but this will not be confirmed until June, after the accounts have closed. It is partially offset by the reduction in spend in the Early Years Block at note 10.</p>
	-807	Grand Total Schools Budget

Summary Capital Budget Breakdown

CAPITAL MONITORING 2016/17

Dept: Children, Young People and Learning

As at 28 February 2017

Cost Centre Description	Approved Budget 2016/17 £000's	Cash Budget 2016/17 £000's	Expenditure to Date £000's	Carry Forward 2017/18 £000's	(Under) / Over Spend £000's	Next Target / Explanatory Note	Current status of the project / notes
SCHOOL PROJECTS							
Amen Corner Primary (North)	147.1	5.4	5.4	141.7	0.0	Detailed design complete by March '17	Highways works now on site. School anticipated from Sep-18 subject to planning
Amen Corner Primary (South)	10.8	8.7	8.7	2.1	0.0	School/housing programmes match	Developer has outline planning permission for school, negotiating S106
Ascot Heath Schools Relocation	225.6	0.0	0.0	225.6	0.0	Possible Developer Construct Scheme	Planning application being considered
Birch Hill Primary	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	Project on hold	Surge classroom on hold, not required for Sep-16, will review for Sep-17
Cranbourne Primary	331.3	331.3	309.8	0.0	0.0	Completed	Completed
Crown Wood Primary	227.0	-0.2	-1.4	227.2	0.0	Completed	Completed. Extension of Time claim outstanding
Fox Hill Primary	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	Surge on hold. Kitchen complete	Surge classroom on hold. Kitchen completed
Great Hollands Primary	4,214.6	2,681.4	2,132.9	1,533.2	0.0	On site	Phase 1 completed and opened Sep-16. Phase 2 on site
Harmans Water Primary	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	Surge classroom open	Surge classroom open
Holly Spring Infant & Junior	45.3	45.3	24.0	0.0	0.0	Completed	Completed
Jennett's Park CE Primary	7.7	3.2	3.2	4.5	0.0	Additional Classroom in September 2017	Furniture & equipment only required to be provided in summer 2017
Meadow Vale Primary	158.2	0.5	-2.8	157.7	0.0	Completed	Completed. Extension of Time claim outstanding
Ow Ismoor Primary	262.7	262.7	217.0	0.0	0.0	Completed	Completed
Pines (The) Primary	114.9	20.2	19.1	94.7	0.0	Phase 1 completed	Phase 1 completed
TRL Primary	226.9	26.9	4.6	200.0	0.0	School/housing programmes match	In design for possible Sep-18 or Sep-19 opening, subject to planning
Warfield East Primary	22.1	5.0	0.0	17.1	0.0	School/housing programmes match	Developers in negotiation with planners over draft S106 provisions
Warfield West Primary	605.1	527.9	341.1	77.2	0.0	Completed	Completed and opened Sep-16
Wildmoor Heath Primary	79.7	75.8	70.1	3.9	0.0	Project on hold. Kitchen for Sep-15	Project on hold, pending Broadmoor housing. School Meals Kitchen completed.
Wildridings Primary	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	Project on hold	Surge classroom on hold, not required for Sep-16, will review for Sep-17
Winkfield St Marys Primary	368.7	368.7	318.1	0.0	0.0	Completed	Completed and in use from Sep-16
Wooden Hill Primary	15.0	0.0	0.0	15.0	0.0	Project on hold	Surge classroom on hold, not required for Sep-16, will review for Sep-17
Primary	7,063.2	4,363.2	3,450.2	2,700.0	0.0		
Brakenhale Capacity Works	8.0	4.3	4.3	3.7	0.0	Phase 4 complete	Phase 4 Complete
Easthampstead Park	750.2	465.2	70.5	285.0	0.0	Complete refurbishment	Refurbishment in phases over school holidays
Edgbarrow School	866.2	483.2	309.3	383.0	0.0	In design	Awaiting EFA approval of PSBP2 Feasibility
Garth Hill College	28.5	28.5	-18.6	0.0	0.0	Completed	Completed
Sandhurst Redevelopment	500.0	101.4	17.6	398.6	0.0	Masterplan completed	Refurbishment in phases over school holidays
Secondary	2,152.9	1,082.6	383.1	1,070.3	0.0		
Eastern Road SEN	71.3	71.9	71.9	-0.6	0.0	Completed	Completed
Special	71.3	71.9	71.9	-0.6	0.0		

UNRESTRICTED

CAPITAL MONITORING 2016/17

Dept: Children, Young People and Learning

As at 28 February 2017

Cost Centre Description	Approved Budget 2016/17 £000's	Cash Budget 2016/17 £000's	Expenditure to Date £000's	Carry Forward 2017/18 £000's	(Under) / Over Spend £000's	Next Target / Explanatory Note	Current status of the project / notes
Binfield Learning Village	24,555.2	9,328.7	7,243.6	15,226.5	0.0	On site	On site and on programme for opening in Sep-18
Village	24,555.2	9,328.7	7,243.6	15,226.5	0.0		
Fees	324.4	324.4	164.2	-0.0	0.0	To be fully spent by March 2015	To be allocated to projects
Basic Need Grant for Allocation	4,626.3	0.0	0.0	4,626.3	0.0	Unallocated grant	Unallocated grant to be c/f to fund future years' projects
Devolved Capital and other funds held by schools	698.2	283.0	268.0	415.2	0.0	On-going	In progress
Section 106 Developer Contributions	211.6	0.0	0.0	211.6	0.0	To be allocated to projects	Allocated to projects
Other Schools Related Capital	5,536.1	283.0	268.0	5,253.1	0.0		
SCHOOL PROJECTS	39,703.1	15,453.8	11,581.0	24,249.3	0.0		

Percentages 74.9% 0.0%

CAPITAL MAINTENANCE/ CONDITION							
Planned works	2,351.1	2,051.1	1,800.5	300.0	0.0	In progress.	Anticipated reduction in programme slippage. Cf is largely committed.
ROLLING PROGRAMME	2,351.1	2,051.1	1,800.5	300.0	0.0		

Percentages 87.8% 0.0%

OTHER PROJECTS							
Integrated Children's Services	73.1	67.7	33.0	5.4	0.0	Go live Sep-16	Go live date met. Reporting module postponed to 2017/18.
Capita One (EMS) Upgrade	18.6	17.0	17.0	1.6	0.0	Mar-17	Solus upgrade completed. Remaining project elements deferred.
CSC ICT Mobile Working	90.7	35.2	35.2	55.5	0.0	Sep-17	Awaiting new tablets and hybrids.
ICT projects	182.4	119.9	85.2	62.5	0.0		
Youth Facilities	95.3	0.0	0.0	95.3	0.0	Mar-17	Planning for modernisation and ongoing restructuring of the Youth Service.
Retentions - Non Schools	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub	13.5	9.2	9.2	4.3	0.0	In progress	ICT and accommodation fully delivered.
Places for 2 year olds	84.9	84.7	37.7	0.2	0.0	Mar-17	Portal delivered. Project for remainder of works in planning stage.
Priestwood Guide Centre	131.1	130.1	130.1	1.0	0.0	In progress	Works in train. Toilets/cloakroom complete. Roofing works in train.
Other	229.5	224.0	177.0	5.5	0.0		
OTHER PROJECTS	507.2	343.9	262.2	163.3	0.0		

Percentages 76.2% 0.0%

TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME	42,561.4	17,848.8	13,643.7	24,712.6	0.0		
--------------------------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------	------------	--	--

Annex B: Annual indicators not reported this quarter

Ind. Ref.	Short Description	Quarter due
3. People have the life skills and education opportunities they need to thrive		
L153	Percentage of children looked after (as at 31st March) reaching level 4 in Reading at Key Stage 2 (Annually)	Q3
L154	Percentage of children looked after (as at 31st March) reaching level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2 (Annually)	Q3
L155	Percentage of children looked after achieving 5 A(star)-C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and Maths) (Annually)	Q3
L190	Percentage of children looked after (as at 31st March) reaching level 4 in Writing at Key Stage 2 (Annually)	Q3
L195	Percentage of children who achieve or exceed levels of attainment at the end of the Foundation Stage as measured by the EYFSP in all of the Early Learning Goals for Communication and Language, Physical Development, Personal Social and Emotional development, Literacy and Mathematics (Annually)	Q3
NI073	Achievement at level 4 or above in Reading, Writing and Maths at Key Stage 2 (Annually)	Q3
NI075	Achievement of 5 or more A(star)-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths (Annually)	Q3
NI102.1	Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers - Key Stage 2 (Annually)	Q3
NI102.2	Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers - Key Stage 4 (Annually)	Q3
4. People live active and healthy lifestyles		
L283	Number of adult learners (over 19s) who have taken part in community learning over the previous academic year	Q2

This page is intentionally left blank

**TO: CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
18 JULY 2017**

**STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE FOR 2017/18 AND ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2016/17 FOR
THE ADOPTION SERVICE, PRIVATE FOSTERING SERVICE AND LARCHWOOD SHORT
BREAK UNIT**

Director of Children, Young People and Learning

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the Statements of Purpose for 2017/18 and Annual Reports for 2016/17 for the Adoption Service, Private Fostering Service and Larchwood Short Break Unit for the Panel's consideration.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 **That the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel considers the Statements of Purpose for 2017/18 and Annual Reports for 2016/17 for the Adoption Service, Private Fostering Service and Larchwood Short Break Unit.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 To enable the Panel to consider the Statements of Purpose for 2017/18 and Annual Reports for 2016/17 for the Adoption Service, Private Fostering Service and Larchwood Short Break Unit.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None.

**5 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS / EQUALITIES
IMPACT ASSESSMENT / STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES /
CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 Not applicable.

Background Papers

None.

Contact for further information

Peter Hodges, Head of Service for Looked After Children - 01344-351532

e-mail: peter.hodges@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Unrestricted

Sonia Johnson, Head of Specialist Support - 01344-353132
e-mail: sonia.johnson@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Andrea Carr, Overview and Scrutiny officer – 01344 352122
e-mail: andrea.carr@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
Date: 23 JUNE 2017

**APPROVAL OF THE ADOPT BERKSHIRE ADOPTION SERVICE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2017 – 2018 AND ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORTS 2016 – 2017
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING**

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 The purpose of the decision is to approve the Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose for 2017 – 2018 created by Adopt Berkshire on behalf of Bracknell Forest, the Bracknell Forest Adoption Service Annual Report 2016 – 2017, the Adopt Berkshire Annual Report 2016 – 2017 and the Berkshire Adoption Agency Service Annual Report 2016 – 2017.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Bracknell Forest Adoption Agency Annual Report 2016 - 17 [annex 1], Adopt Berkshire Annual Report 2016 – 17 [annex 2] and the Adopt Berkshire Statement of Purpose 2017 – 18 [annex 3] are APPROVED.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The compilation and annual review of the Statement of Purpose for the Adoption Service is a requirement under Part 1, section 4, of the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None. It is a statutory requirement that the Statement of Purpose for the Adoption Service is reviewed annually and approved by the Executive Member.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 The Statement of Purpose is the document outlining the of regulation requirements for Bracknell Forest's practice and procedures, Adoption Agency functions have been held by Adopt Berkshire since December 2014 and the reports are an opportunity to review how this arrangement is going and the impact upon the children of Bracknell Forest who require adoption.

Adopt Berkshire is the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Borough Council who have joined their Adoption Services to provide a dedicated service for adoption across the four Local Authorities.

The main priorities of Adopt Berkshire are:

- to provide high quality adoption services for children who require placement for adoption;
- to provide a service where by applicants who are seeking to adopt within the UK can be prepared, assessed and approved for the adoption task and, where appropriate, achieve the placement of an appropriately matched child(ren) Adopt Berkshire is hosted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, but the main office base is in Wokingham.

The post adoption functions which include support to families of children who are the subject of Special Guardianship Orders remain within the Family Placement Team at Bracknell Forest Council.

Sufficient resources exist to deliver this service.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The relevant legal provisions are addressed within the body of the report.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The Borough Treasurer is satisfied that no significant financial implications arise from this report.

Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.3 Equality Impact Assessment is in place

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 The strategic risk identified is that if the service does not complete an annual review of the Statement of Purpose the Council will be in breach of the National Minimum Standards. There are no changes completed or proposed in the content of the service that will constitute a strategic risk.

Other Officers

- 6.5 The Children's Social Care Management Team has considered and endorsed this Statement of Purpose and annual reports in June 2017.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 The relevant staff from the Family Placement service have contributed to the Statement of Purpose. A copy of the Statement of Purpose is also provided to the Ofsted Inspectorate, and it is available on the Council's public website.

7.2 Method of Consultation

The relevant staff from the Family Placement Team have contributed to this Review.

Representations Received

- 7.2 *There have been no representations received.*

Background Papers

Bracknell Forest Adoption Agency Annual Report 2016 - 17 [annex 1]

Adopt Berkshire Annual Report 2016 – 17 [annex 2]

Adopt Berkshire Statement of Purpose 2017 – 18 [annex 3]

Contact for further information

Peter Hodges
Head of Service, Looked After Children
Children's Social Care
[Peter.Hodges@bracknell-forest.gov.uk]
01344-351532

This page is intentionally left blank

**BRACKNELL FOREST ADOPTION SERVICE
ANNUAL REPORT**

1st April 2016 - 31st March 2017

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This end of year report provides details of adoption activity from 1st April 2016 - 31st March 2017 and the plans for development of the Adoption Service up to 31st March 2018.
- 1.2 This report should be read in conjunction with the Adopt Berkshire Annual report 2016-17 (appendix 1) and the Adopt Berkshire Statement of Purpose 2016-17 (appendix 2) and the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service Annual Report 2016-17. The Statement of Purpose sets out the legislative and regulatory context in which Bracknell Forest Council works together with Adopt Berkshire as an Adoption Agency
- 1.3 Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) works in partnership under a year service level agreement 14 with Adopt Berkshire, who provides an Adoption Agency Service. This service covers the recruitment of adopters as well as family finding for children who have a plan of adoption. The post adoption service requirements remain the responsibility of BFC and its remit falls within the responsibility of the Family Placement Team. The remit also covers post order requirements to families who have children subject to a Special Guardianship Order (SGO).

2. Adoption Inspection - Ofsted

- 2.1 Bracknell Forest Adoption Agency was last inspected by Ofsted in May 2017. The outcome is awaited at the time of writing of this report.

The previous inspection in December 2012 identified areas of strength in the adoption service and concluded that many areas of the service were good or outstanding. However the timescales required for placing children identified as in need of adoption, and the length of time that some assessments of prospective foster carers took to become approved adopters did not meet the requirements set out in the regulations. The numbers of children and prospective adopters involved were very small (both under five) so the impact on percentage figures of those who did not meet the criteria was significant. A copy of the inspection report is available on the Bracknell Forest Council website as well as the OFSTED website. Four recommendations were made which were all appropriately addressed and resolved within the year. Consideration of a shared service with partner adoption agencies followed this and led to the creation of Adopt Berkshire which would be a larger scale adoption agency able to focus entirely on adoption.

The changes in the OFSTED inspection programme mean that the Adoption Service is now inspected as part of the overall Children's Social Care inspection. As part of that inspection the Adoption element will receive an individual grading against the framework. OFSTED's report is due to be published on 14 July 2017

Annex 1

3. Adopt Berkshire

3.1 Adopt Berkshire continue to undertake responsibilities for adoption functions. Four of the Berkshire unitary authorities - Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire, Windsor and Maidenhead and Wokingham - joined to offer one adoption service called Adopt Berkshire. The host authority is the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. This collaborative service commenced on 1st December 2014.

The functions of the Adopt Berkshire Service include:

- 3.2
- Recruiting and assessing a pool of adopters as part of the Berkshire Consortium and presenting them to Adoption Panel for approval.
 - Presenting reports to the Adoption Panel and the Agency Decision Maker on the prospective match of Bracknell Forest children with adopters or other Local Authority children with Bracknell Forest adopters.
 - Supporting Bracknell Forest adopters throughout the adoption process until Adoption Orders are made.
 - Completing in-family adoptions.
 - Sign posting prospective adopters of children from overseas to the service provided by the InterCountry Adoption Centre.
 - Providing all preparation training for prospective adopters.
 - Provide a family finding service for all children who have a plan for adoption.

Other Functions are as follows and remain the responsibility of Bracknell Forest:

- Presenting reports to the Agency Decision Maker for children who are looked after and who have adoption as their care plan.
- Providing post adoption support to any adoptive families living in Bracknell Forest and for three years following the making of an adoption order for those children who have been placed by Bracknell Forest.
- Providing support to families where children have been made the subject of a Special Guardianship Order by Bracknell Forest and of families who live within Bracknell Forest, 3 years after the granting of a Special Guardianship Order.
- Providing counselling for adopted adults.
- Providing mediation services for both adopted adults and birth family members.

3.3 The other functions are provided through the arrangements with the other five Berkshire Unitary Authorities acting as a Consortium and also through the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service (BAAS), hosted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead who also maintain the Adoption Panel. The annual report by the BAAS is attached for reference (appendix 3)

The Family Placement Team

3.4 During this twelve month period the team has remained stable. Rosanne Turner has remained in post as Team Manager. The Assistant Team Manager, Eszter Kovacs, has been on maternity leave since June 2016, and her post has been covered by Sam Howard, a social worker in the team. Sam's post has been covered on a contract basis. One team member moved to the Duty Team in order to obtain frontline experience, and was permanently replaced by a social worker from the Duty Team.

Annex 1

4. Summary of Bracknell Forest Activity

4.1 For the twelve month period 1st April 2016 - 31st March 2017:

- Six children had plans for adoption at some stage in 2016-17.
- Three children were placed with adopters.
- Six children had Placement Orders made.
- Four children had Adoption Orders granted.
- Five children were placed with adopters awaiting the granting of an Adoption Order.
- No child was placed for adoption from overseas.
- There were no disruptions for a child who Bracknell Forest or Adopt Berkshire placed with prospective adopters.
- Bracknell Forest placed one child under a Foster to Adopt arrangement.

4.2 Adoption Scorecard and performance

4.2.1 The Adoption Scorecards were introduced as part of a new approach to address delays in the adoption system, set out in 'An action plan for adoption: tackling delay' (March 2012). There are 152 Local Authorities included as part of this analysis. The scorecard identifies various timeframes related to adoption and benchmarks this against other Local Authorities.

4.2.2 The last adoption scorecard published was in 2016, and is based on data from 2012-15. Therefore only data submitted by Bracknell Forest Council up until March 2015 is included within this 3 year analysis and trend. This is therefore very much a look back on how we have historically performed and we are able to benchmark ourselves against other Local Authorities.

4.2.3 The average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family, for children who have been adopted, had decreased from 630 days in the previous scorecard to 593 days. This number was higher than desired but contextualised by the fact that it was a small cohort and two of the children were a school aged sibling group, in addition to children who have complex histories and additional needs. Section 14 of the Adopt Berkshire annual report for 2016-17 shows a significant decrease to 210 days for the 3 children placed in this period.

4.2.4 It is worth noting that there has been a reduction nationally in the number of younger children achieving legal permanence through adoption. There has continued to be a drive to approve adopters which has led to adopters giving consideration to children who are older and potentially with additional needs who have been in care for a longer period. It is therefore one hypothesis that the benchmarking figures in relation to the above will have shifted in the opposite direction and children may appear to have waited longer to achieve permanence through adoption. However, this does not tell the full story as there is evidence in Bracknell Forest that we have continued with adoption plans for children with additional needs and robust family finding has meant that children have found their forever family and desired outcomes achieved.

4.2.5 Post Adoption

Prior to the creation of the new Adopt Berkshire adoption service it was agreed that the post-adoption service would remain within the Family Placement team. It is provided by an experienced social worker with support from a Family Worker.

Annex 1

4.3 The functions of the Post Adoption Service include:

- a) Providing post adoption support, advice, training to any adoptive families, living in Bracknell Forest and for three years following the making of an adoption order, for those children who have been placed by Bracknell Forest.
- b) Sign posting prospective adopters of children from overseas to the service provided by the Inter Country Adoption Centre in Barnet.
- c) Providing access to adoption records, counselling for adopted adults.
- d) Providing intermediation service for adopted adults.
- e) Providing advice and information as well as signposting for birth relatives of family members.
- f) Providing advice, support and training to families who have a Special Guardianship Order in the Bracknell Forest area and for three years following the making of a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), as well as providing ongoing support for those who live in the Bracknell Forest area 3 years post order.
- g) Direct work with children and families requiring therapeutic intervention.
- h) Provision of children's groups 'SPLAT' and monthly group for families with under 5's.
- i) Advice and support to BFC social workers and family finders in supporting future plans for children requiring adoption/SGO and completing their support plans; transition to new homes; advice regarding Life Books and Later Life Letters; therapeutic support for children and families.
- j) Joint work providing therapeutic support to families via the Berkshire Adoption Advice and Consultation Service (BAACS).
- k) Applications to the Adoption Support Fund.

5. Summary of Post Adoption Activity

5.1 For the year 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017:

There were no disruptions for a child who Bracknell Forest placed with prospective adopters. There have also been no disruptions of children who are living in the Bracknell Forest area who are 3 years post adoption order, and for whom Bracknell Forest now holds responsibility.

- 5.2 Post adoption services include the counselling of adopted adults and mediation services for both adopted adults and birth family members and requests for these services have continued to increase following the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The service continues to provide information and support to a wide and varied population. Post Adoption services range from low level provision such as newsletters

Annex 1

and support groups to more specialised or individual services, such as financial support; support over contact; direct work; therapeutic provision and liaison with schools. Where further specialist services are required the post adoption support worker can signpost adopters to the most suitable resource, such as CAMHS, the Post Adoption Centre and other provision.

- 5.3 During the year, seventeen new requests for a service have been received from adults in relation to access to birth records or mediation. Some cases can be quite complex and the agency continues to offer advice and support to these clients.
- 5.4 Eight adults received a service as a birth relative. Most of these were seeking advice and support around tracing or contact with relatives who have been adopted (now adults) or a relative who is currently a child who has been adopted.
- 5.5 Approximately 70 children and families have received a post adoption support service involving social work support from Bracknell Forest during this period and 34 remain open, including 24 who are in receipt of the Adoption Support Fund. Some families are given a high level of support to prevent adoption breakdown. The work in this area is steady with increased emphasis on the need to support new placements of children. Five have received support pre-Order, and this has included home visits and attendance at meetings, such as the child's review. The authority works with adoptive families to support placements and whilst this may on occasions require individual work the general approach is to work with the family as a whole.
- 5.6 On-going liaison and support for two families from other local authorities (OLA) living in the Bracknell area either pre order, or pre the end of the 3 year support provision, is currently in place. This provides a proactive approach to adoptive families within the area, who may be in difficulty.
- 5.7 Twelve Special Guardianship Order families have requested and received a service to support them caring for their children.
- 5.8 Support to social workers for children who have plans for adoption and SGO is a significant role for the post adoption social worker. Advising on support plans, providing advice for families and workers to support a smooth transition pre-order has been an important factor in securing / supporting plans for older children.
- 5.9 The details of adoptive and SGO families, who are not directly receiving a service, are held on the post order database and these receive invites to training, groups and events.
- 5.10 Adoption allowances are being paid in respect of 20 children due to their specific needs and to 49 children who have a Special Guardianship Order in place. Following the increase in the number of Special Guardianship Orders in recent years there has been a sharp increase in the number of Special Guardianship allowances being paid to families.
- 5.11 Joint work with the social workers for two children where there have been safeguarding concerns have taken place. This has included child protection issues.
- 5.12 The post-adoption worker continues to take a central role with the Berkshire Adoption Advice and Consultation Service (BAACS) which is a collaboration between a clinical psychologist and the post-adoption workers from Bracknell Forest and Wokingham. The costs are shared between the Berkshire authorities. There continues to be a steady number of referrals to this service.

Annex 1

- 5.13 The service is keen where possible to frontload support to families and some of the work involves securing therapy for parents of older children pre-order, which has been a key part of this service and supported the successful placements of children.
- 5.14 The post adoption worker continues to work with schools and the Behaviour Support Team (BST) as and when required to address any issues that arise for children who have been adopted. This service is universally provided to any child who is known to be adopted. Prior to an adoption order, the child is Looked After so the school will invariably be aware of the change of status when the adoption order is granted. However, families who move into the area may choose not to identify the child as adopted and will only seek support if or when it is required. This work is also available to SGO families. The Pupil Premium is now available for schools to use to support Adopted children and those subject to a Special Guardianship Order and schools sometimes require support with this.
- 5.15 Support is also provided in signposting families to independent educational support via the Parent Participation Service. Additional support is given in the form of reports for requests for children seeking to achieve an Education, Health and Care Plan, alongside support at SEN reviews when requested.
- 5.16 Section 6 of the Children and Families Act 2014, inserts a new Section 4B into the Adoption and Children Act 2002 that places a duty on local authorities to provide information to adoptive parents and potential adoptive parents regarding the support services available in the local authority's area. A duty is also placed on local authorities to provide details of all other responsibilities and services offered such as the right to request a needs assessment, under this and other relevant legislation.
- 5.17 The Family Placement Team is involved in the preparation of reports for court in respect of Special Guardianship applications along with the child's social worker (where the child is looked after), and in the provision of Special Guardianship support services once the Order has been granted.

6. Adoption Support Fund (ASF)

- 6.1 In January 2013 the Department of Education published a report 'Further Action for Adoption - Finding more loving homes' which set out further proposals for attracting adopters and to improving the support to adoptive families. This led to the Adoption Support Fund being prototyped by 10 Local Authorities to generate sustainable improvement to the assessment and therapeutic support to adoptive families. In essence it was felt that some families who were in need of extensive therapeutic support in order to adopt some children with complex needs were either being put off or not receiving the support required as the services were often costly. The DfE wished to remove this barrier and in March 2015, with refined funding criteria, the Adoption Support Fund was set up and available to all 152 Local Authorities. In 2016 it was also made available to children of Intercountry adoptions and on Special Guardianship Orders who had been in LA care prior to the making of the Order. A cap of £5000 per child per annum was introduced in 2016.
- 6.2 Local Authorities can apply for funding for families following completion of an assessment and identification of a therapeutic support package for children and/or their adoptive families.
- 6.3 All of the applications made by Bracknell Forest to date have been successful, and at the end of March 2017, 26 children were in receipt of funding for therapeutic services.

Annex 1

In addition some of these children have had updated assessments and further applications for funding.

7. Intercountry Adoption Arrangements

- 7.1 Bracknell Forest has a Service Level Agreement with the InterCountry Adoption Centre to provide an adoption service for those seeking to adopt from overseas. The Centre provides prospective intercountry adopters with information about the overseas adoption process, including an enquiry service so that prospective adopters can make an informed decision as to whether intercountry adoption is appropriate for them. The Centre assesses prospective adopters, who will be presented to their adoption panel for consideration of their application. Post Adoption support is, however, provided by the local authority in the area in which the adopter resides. For a variety of reasons the demand for intercountry adoptions has fallen in recent years.

8. Special Guardianship

- 8.1 The Family Placement Team is involved in the preparation of reports for court in Special Guardianship applications along with the child's social worker (where the child is looked after), and in the provision of Special Guardianship support services once the order has been granted. Alongside this the Family Placement Team endeavours to carry out joint initial home visits with the children's social workers where a family identifies themselves as potential families to care permanently for children as Special Guardians.
- 8.2 In this reporting period, forty Special Guardianship assessments were requested, which was a significant increase on previous years and reflects the increase in Care Proceedings and the courts requirement that any potentially suitable family members are assessed. Of the forty started, eight ceased at different stages, eg applicants' withdrew. Two were not recommended following assessment. Seventeen Special Guardianship Orders were granted during this year. A number of the Orders made included Supervision Orders or Child in Need plans, to provide support to the child and family in the early stages of the placement. The Post Adoption service provides ongoing services as requested.

9. Developments 2016 - 2017

- 9.1 As a result of the national focus on adoption, Bracknell Forest has continued to work towards ensuring the imposed changes to regulations and legislation are adhered to. The aim of these changes has been to reduce potential barriers and reduce delay in approving families as adopters and thereby increasing the placements available for children waiting.
- 9.2 The Adoption Support Fund has been well utilised throughout the year, including for second time applications for children and families with ongoing therapeutic support needs, and has resulted in the provision of support packages that have helped to stabilise placements and improve outcomes for children.

10. Strengths and Plans for 2017-18

- 10.1 - Securing placements for adoption of older children and children with additional needs.

Annex 1

- Effective use of the Adoption support fund for therapeutic support for families of children placed for adoption and adopted.
 - Effective liaison between BFC and Adopt Berkshire include an early warning system to enable searches to be undertaken for children earlier and a reduction in delay.
 - High quality Child Permanence Reports, matching reports and adoption support plans for children.
 - Skilled workforce to be able to deliver adoption support to families.
 - Regular reviews of permanency plans for children to ensure they have the appropriate plan and there is minimal delay in achieving permanence through the appropriate means.
 - Adopters receive Restorative Parenting training to support them to provide consistent parenting.
- 10.2 The Department for Education published 'Adoption - A vision for change' in March 2016. Within this document there is a 4 year plan to improve the timeliness of placements and outcomes for children. There are plans for future legislative changes to ensure that quality and stability of care are prioritised and properly considered. The report makes clear the vision for all Local Authorities and adoption agencies to be part of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) by 2020. The RAA development fund of £14m has been made available between 2016-18 to support the implementation. There will also be support from a centrally procured delivery partner to assist, challenge and coach the RAA. The Department of Education has been very clear that the consortia arrangements that exist between a number of adoption agencies and may include shared training, preparation groups, information events and panels does not constitute a RAA and the requirement is for there to be genuine innovation and collaboration.
- 10.3 Bracknell Forest has been progressive in relation to the regionalisation agenda having collaborated with Wokingham, West Berkshire and Windsor and Maidenhead to form Adopt Berkshire. However, as the request is to seek further regionalisation, a project board was created for the Thames Valley area, and is well underway in the establishment of Adopt Thames Valley (ATV) in December 2017. ATV will be hosted by Oxfordshire, and is a shared service model between seven local authorities (Bracknell Forest, Oxfordshire, West Berkshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham, Swindon and Reading) in partnership with two Voluntary Adoption Agencies (PACT and Barnardos).
- 10.4 ATV will provide adoption, post adoption and Special Guardianship support services across the geographical area of the participating local authorities. It aims to deliver better outcomes for children and adopters whilst also reducing costs through economies of scale for the local authorities participating. Adopt Thames Valley is being developed with the support of the Department for Education, who have also provided grant funding for the set up.
- 10.5 The key benefits of the Adopt Thames Valley Model are:
- a) improved outcomes for children through the availability of a larger pool of adopters;
 - b) improved ability to place harder to place children for adoption (e.g. older children, children with disabilities, sibling groups and BME children);
 - c) improved experience for adopters through quicker matches with children who need placements;
 - d) better value for local authorities through economies of scale in the recruitment and assessment process for adopters;
 - e) potential savings for local authorities through placing children with adopters more quickly (i.e. saving foster care costs);

Annex 1

f) improved adoption and Special Guardianship support services across a wider geographical area.

11. Training and Development

The team has continued to learn and share the procedures and skills related to post adoption and Special Guardianship. Specialist knowledge in the team includes Attachment and Loss, Theraplay and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) Level One. The team also provides and delivers training to carers, which is open to adopters and Special Guardians.

12 Complaints / Allegations / Compliments

No complaints or allegations have been received in respect of adoption and post adoption support in the 12 month period. However we have received a number of compliments regarding the service, the support provided, the experience and skill of the post adoption social worker, and the support groups provided for adopted children and their parents.

13 Summary

- 13.1 2016-17 has seen a number of successes in relation to the timely placement of children for adoption, and the number of Special Guardianship Orders made to provide permanence for children.
- 13.2 Given the government's regionalisation agenda, the adoption service provided by Adopt Berkshire will change significantly with the establishment of Adopt Thames Valley later this year, with the aim of making the adoption system more efficient with shared resources.
- 13.3 The post adoption element of the service, which has remained with Bracknell Forest Council to date, is ever increasing in terms of volume of work, and will also undergo change with the move of both post adoption and Special Guardianship support to Adopt Thames Valley in December 2017.
- 13.4 There continues to be a decline in plans for adoption, usually in favour of Special Guardianship at the direction of the courts.
- 13.5 This year has seen the close working relationship between BFC and Adopt Berkshire continue. This includes monthly meetings where there is discussion regarding the progress of family finding for children who are the subject of a Placement Order and also early identification of children who may have a plan of adoption. This ensures that there is minimum delay and that children are placed for adoption as soon as possible.
- 13.6 Overall, demands on this area of the Family Placement Team have increased over the past year, with an increase in the number of children coming into LA care and the requirements to reduce timescales for children across the range of services. Close monitoring and tracking of the service has been on-going and processes arising from changes in regulations and legislation are already embedded in team practice. In all of this however, we remain ever mindful that the needs of children are paramount and that the quality of assessments and matching of children to the right family remains the priority.

Annex 1

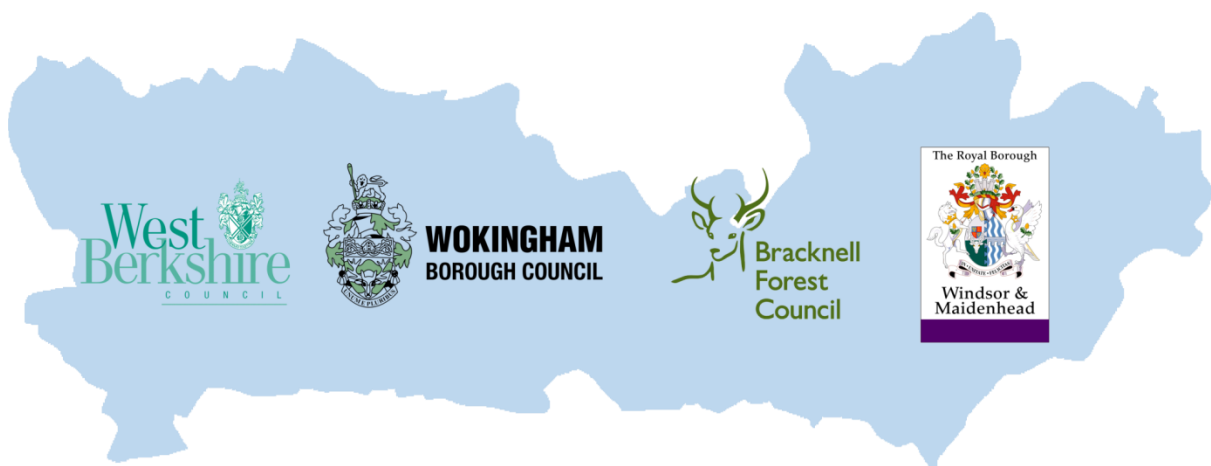
**Rosanne Turner
Team Manager
Family Placement Team**

**Peter Hodges
Head of Service
Looked After Children**

Date: 30th May 2017

Adoption Agency Annual Report 2016/17

ADOPT BERKSHIRE



Working Together...
...Creating Families

Adoption Agency Annual Report 2016/2017

This document should be read in conjunction with the **Adopt Berkshire** Statement of Purpose 2017 and the **Adopt Berkshire** Half Year Report – April / September 2016, which included Quality Assurance Information to enable the contributing local authorities to monitor the quality of their adoption agency services under NMS 25.

Contents

1) Introduction	3
2) Legislation, Regulations and Guidance	3
3) Key Requirements of Local Authority Adoption Services	4
4) Adoption Support Services	4
5) The National Minimum Standards – Adoption	4
6) Organisation	4
7) Staffing	5
8) Collaboration with the Cornerstone Partnership	6
9) The Current Government Review of Adoption / Regionalisation Agenda	7
10) Consortium Arrangement	7
11) Statement of Purpose and Recruitment Plan	8
12) Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) Headline Measures released in January 2017	9
13) Adopt Berkshire Achievements during the last year (2016/17)	11
14) Comparative Data for the Adopt Berkshire Unitary Authorities – 1st April 2016 / 31st March 2017	14
15) Adopt Berkshire – Statistical Information	15
16) Outsourced Services	16
17) Notified Adoptions	17
18) The Inspection of Local Authority Adoption Agencies	18
19) Complaints	18
20) Challenges and priorities for the year ahead	18
21) Conclusions	19

1) Introduction

- **Adopt Berkshire** has now been in operation for nearly two and a half years (since 1st December 2014) and is the shared Adoption Service for The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Borough Council. A service agreement, service specification and three year budget agreement are in place for the service.
- The four contributing local authorities are currently in the process of jointly negotiating to become part of a larger Regional Adoption Agency, which is likely to also include: Reading Borough Council, Swindon Borough Council and Oxfordshire County Council. It is currently anticipated that the new Regional Adoption Agency will 'go live' in Quarter 3 of 2017/18 and **Adopt Berkshire** will cease to exist at that point. The new Regional Adoption Agency will include the contributing authorities' Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Services, which are at the current time hosted in-house by the **Adopt Berkshire** contributing authorities.
- The main priorities of **Adopt Berkshire** are:
 - To achieve the placement of children in care for whom adoption is the Care Plan, with appropriate approved adopters, matched according to the children's specific needs and circumstances and within appropriate timescales.
 - To recruit, prepare and assess adoptive applicants who are likely to be able to meet the placement needs of the children waiting for families both locally and nationally.
 - To manage a Notified Adoption Service on behalf of the four contributing authorities.

The needs of the children requiring placement are the agency's paramount consideration.

2) Legislation, Regulations and Guidance

- There is a range of Legislation, Regulations and Guidance, which influence the working of Adoption Agencies. These include:
- The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 and supporting statutory guidance and regulations;
- The Care Standards Act 2000;
- The Adoption Act 2002;
- The Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (amended 2011);
- The Children and Adoption Act 2006;
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and accompanying statutory guidance;
- The National Minimum Standards for Adoption (2011);
- Adoption Statutory Guidance 2011;
- The Children and Families Act 2014.

3) Key Requirements of Local Authority Adoption Services

- The key requirements of all Local Authority Adoption Services have not changed significantly since the formation of **Adopt Berkshire**. These are that:
 - The focus is firmly on the needs of the child, whose needs will be paramount in all decisions relating to adoption;
 - Highly skilled professionals lead a quality service delivered to National Minimum Standards (revised in February 2011);
 - A permanency plan is identified for all children in care within four months of them coming into Local Authority care. (This may be a return home, or any of a range of different placement options, one of which is adoption);
 - Focused effort goes into finding permanent families for all children in care waiting to be adopted;
 - A range of potential adopters are welcomed and assessed efficiently in an open and fair way;
 - Children and their adoptive families have easy access to adoption support services.

4) Adoption Support Services

- At the current time support to the prospective adopters recruited by **Adopt Berkshire** is provided by social workers within the service up until the granting of the legal Adoption Order.
- As detailed above, at the current time The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Borough Council all provide their post adoption services 'in-house'; this includes provision of birth records counselling for adopted adults and support, where appropriate, to adopted children, adoptive parents, birth parents and others affected by adoption (Adoption and Children Act 2002). It is expected that this will change once the four authorities all become part of the new Regional Adoption Agency which it is anticipated will come into being later this year (see section 9 below).

5) The National Minimum Standards – Adoption

- The Adoption National Minimum Standards came into force in April 2003 and were updated in April 2011. Local authority adoption agencies are expected to fully comply with the Minimum Standards which cover all areas of an agency's responsibilities and function. (The Standards can be viewed at: www.dh.gov.uk).
- **Adopt Berkshire's** Statement of Purpose and procedures are fully compliant with both the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (revised February 2011) and the revised Adoption National Minimum Standards.

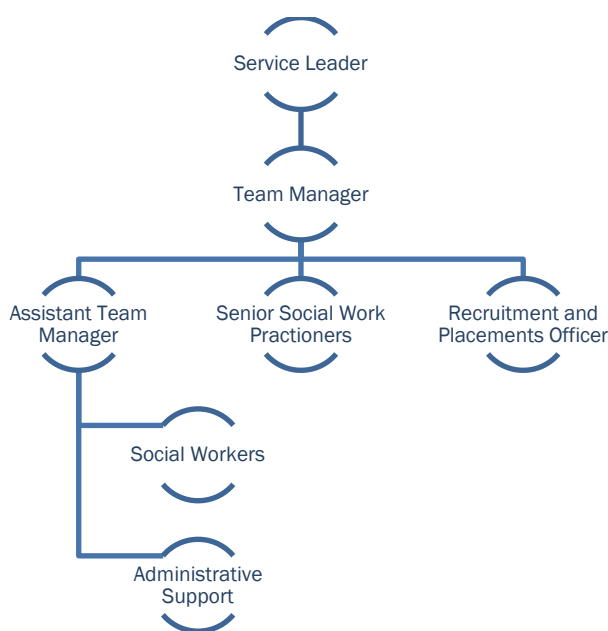
6) Organisation

- The ongoing work of the Service is monitored by a Management Board which includes:
 - The Head of Service from each of the four contributing local authorities;

- The Service Lead;
- An experienced Adoptive Parent (who was previously approved through one of the contributing local authorities and is independent of the Cornerstone Partnership).
- The Management Board meets quarterly, has agreed Terms of Reference and makes decisions about service direction.
- A Service Agreement, Service Specification and Three Year Budget Agreement are in place for the service.
- The Service has all the necessary key document in place including:
 - Statement of Purpose (2017),
 - Policy and Plan on the Recruitment of Prospective Adopters (2017),
 - Customer Care Standards and Working Together Agreement,
- The Service has comprehensive written procedures.

7) Staffing

Current staffing levels



- Following the formation of **Adopt Berkshire** the level of adoption work being undertaken within all four of the contributing authorities reduced (in line with the national picture). While there is evidence that the level of work is now beginning to increase again, this has meant that to date it has not been necessary to appoint to all of the social work posts available to the Service. The current team consists of:
 - Service Lead (Shared with the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service)
 - Team Manager – Full time

- Assistant Team Manager (0.5 f.t.e.)(full time post - 0.5 f.t.e. unfilled at the current time)
 - Senior Social Work Practitioners – 3.9 f.t.e. (2 x full time workers and 3 x part time workers)
 - Social Workers – 2 (full time)
 - Recruitment and Placements Officer – Full time (Unqualified)
 - Admin Support Officers – 2 (part time)
- In May 2016 the Service Lead role was appointed to on a secondment basis, the previous **Adopt Berkshire** Team Manager having since held this role pending the service becoming part of the proposed Regional Adoption Agency (anticipated enactment date of Q3 2017/18 (see section 9 below). For the intervening period, the **Adopt Berkshire** Team Manager role is held by an Independent Social Care Manager employed on a short term contract basis. The current post holder was already well known to the team and the transition was a smooth one.
 - One of the Senior Practitioners within the Team is currently seconded to a half-time Assistant Team Manager role to provide additional management cover during the period of transition into the new Regional Adoption Agency. Her previous hours have been covered by one of the team's other Senior Practitioners increasing her hours as a short term arrangement and another experienced Practitioner being employed on a 5 h.p.w. short-term contract to specifically undertake Notified Adoption assessments.
 - The Service has experienced a change in Admin as our previous full-time Admin Support Officer returned to full-time education in September 2016. Her previous post has now been converted to two part-time Admin Support posts. This should enable the Service to maintain more consistent Admin cover during periods of annual leave.

8) Collaboration with the Cornerstone Partnership

- **Adopt Berkshire** has to date been supported by the Cornerstone Partnership, in achieving its service aims in a number of key areas, including; the recruitment of adopters, the provision of mentor support and the provision of post-approval training.
- **Adopt Berkshire** and the Cornerstone Partnership have over the last year worked to a co-production model in terms of jointly planning and delivering training to potential, prospective and approved adopters at all stages of the adoption recruitment, preparation and approval process; this means that experienced adopters have been involved in supporting and advising us on all aspects of the training provided to potential, prospective and approved adopters from the point of them first engaging with the Service. Preparation Training has as a result been extended to include more information around specific 'matching' factors, in particular common health and developmental issues; the new training also includes more use of input by a range of health professionals and therapists.
- Through our collaboration with the Cornerstone Partnership all potential adopters have been able to access support from a Cornerstone Mentor during both Stage One and Stage Two of the adoption preparation and approval process, through the matching and placement process, and following the placement of a child/ren up to the point of legal adoption.

- **Adopt Berkshire's** contract with the Cornerstone Partnership is due to change in April 2017 to become a franchise arrangement with a separately employed Mentor Manager. This should enable **Adopt Berkshire** to continue to offer the same range of services to prospective and approved adopters whilst achieving an overall saving on the service.

9) The Current Government Review of Adoption / Regionalisation Agenda

- As detailed above **Adopt Berkshire** is moving forward with plans to become part of a Regional Adoption Agency – Adopt Thames Valley. At the current time it is likely that the launch date for the new service will be in Q3 2017/18. It is currently anticipated that the other participating local authorities will be:
 - Oxfordshire County Council.
 - Reading Borough Council
 - Swindon Borough Council
- After a tendering process it has been agreed that Oxfordshire County Council will host the new Regional Agency and the Service Lead post is currently being recruited to.
- PACT Adoption Agency (Reading) and Barnardo's (South-East) are supporting the contributing local authorities in the design and planning of the new Service. The Cornerstone Partnership are also involved in an advisory capacity, providing the adopters' voice.
- The Department of Education paper published in June 2015 and titled 'Regionalising Adoption', first proposed the creation of Regional Adoption Agencies across the UK and anticipated that the creation of larger agencies, which included the participation of Voluntary Adoption Agencies, should serve to:
 - Speed up matching of children with adopters;
 - Improve adopter recruitment to make sure that it is more effective and linked to the needs of children waiting;
 - Ensure that high quality adoption support services are available nationally;
 - Reduce costs;
 - Encourage specialisation;
 - Broaden strategic planning;
 - Encourage innovation and investment.
- This paper can be accessed at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/437128/Regionalising_adoption.pdf
Adopt Berkshire was highlighted in the document as being a model of good practice (see page 9).

10) Consortium Arrangement

- Separate to the creation of **Adopt Berkshire**, the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire

Borough Council all continue to be part of a formal Adoption Consortium arrangement with each other and with Reading Borough Council and Slough Borough Council. This arrangement enables the six local authorities to provide a range of services in line with current requirements on local authorities that it would otherwise be difficult for any of the authorities to provide cost-effectively, due to the low level of demand.

- As part of the Consortium arrangement each of the Berkshire Unitary Authorities contribute to the funding of the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service, which is hosted by the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead.
- The Service provides a number of joint resources for the six Berkshire Unitary Authorities, including:
 - Managing and servicing the Authorities' Adoption Panels;
 - Managing the Berkshire Information Exchange and the Post Adoption Direct Contact Service between adoptive families and birth families;
 - Providing specialist advice and assistance to staff in the six Unitary Authorities on complex adoption matters;
 - Assistance with training of staff, adopters and panel members;
 - Administration and servicing for the closed children's records and adoption records;
 - Hosting the Birth Relative Service (providing independent counselling for birth parents and relatives when children are to be placed for adoption).
- The Service Lead for the Adoption Advisory Service also holds the role of Service Lead for **Adopt Berkshire**, which ensures a dovetailed service for the local authorities which are part of both services.
- The role of the Advisory Service and the wider Consortium Arrangement has remained unchanged by the formation of **Adopt Berkshire**, however given that Slough's Adoption Services are now managed as part of Slough Children's Services Trust and the plan for the other five of the six contributing authorities to move into the proposed Regional Adoption Agency – Adopt Thames Valley – as of later this year; it has been agreed that the Consortium arrangement will end as of the new Regional Adoption Agency being launched. Negotiations are now moving forward with Slough Children's Services Trust and as part of the planning for the Regional Adoption Agency to achieve a smooth transition of Services.

11) Statement of Purpose and Recruitment Plan

- **Adopt Berkshire** has a Statement of Purpose and a written plan relating to the recruitment of adoptive parents both of which are compliant with all current legislation, regulations, standards and best practice guidance. These are available to all four contributing authorities and their Members and to all Service Users who engage with the Service.
- The Statement of Purpose has been reviewed (April 2017) in light of the proposed transfer of Services later this year.
- The Recruitment Plan is reviewed annually.

12) Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) Headline Measures released in January 2017

- The Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) Headline Measures, January 2017, can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-leadership-board-quarterly-data-reports-2015-to-2016#history>
- The **Adopt Berkshire** contributing authorities' individual Adoption Scorecard information can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-scorecards>. Scorecard Information for 2016/17 should be available in April 2017.
- Each individual Authority's individual Placement Information is attached as Appendix 1. These documents enable easy comparison to the national picture.

Summary Information regarding the national adoption picture:

a) Numbers of children awaiting placement: (nationally):

- As of 30 June 2016, there were 2,000 children waiting placement for adoption – this was a 10% decrease from 31 March 2016 when there were 2,210 children waiting with a Placement Order not yet placed with an adoptive family.
- As of 30 June 2016, 28% of children waiting had been waiting 18 months or more, a small decrease from 29% as at 31 March 2016.

b) Timeliness of Placements (nationally):

- The time taken between a child entering care and being placed with a family for children who have been adopted (Adoption Scorecard indicator A1) has decreased by 4 months since 2012-13, from 22 months to 18 months in 2015-16, this is unchanged since 2014-15. The latest quarterly data suggests there has been an improvement to 17 months during the first quarter of 2016-17

Adopt Berkshire LAs

	Bracknell	RBWM	West Berkshire	Wokingham
Average time taken between a child entering care and being placed with a family 2016/17	30 weeks (3 children)	54.1 weeks (3 children)	29.4 weeks (5 children)	39.8 weeks (6 children)

- At 8 months, the average number of days between Placement Order and match for children who have been adopted (Adoption Scorecard indicator A2) in 2015-16 has remained the same as in 2014-15. The latest quarterly data suggests that this has stayed the same at 8 months during the first quarter of 2016-17.

Adopt Berkshire LAs

	Bracknell	RBWM	West Berkshire	Wokingham
Average number of days between Placement Order and match 2016/17	2 days (3 children – 1 placed FfA)	11 weeks (3 children)	5.7 weeks (5 children)	7 weeks (6 children)

c) **Timeliness of adopters' assessments:**

- The latest quarterly data suggests adopter timeliness has been declining. In quarter 2 2013-14, 50% of approvals made by local authorities were made within 6 months of registration, while in quarter 1 2016-17 this had decreased to 31% of approvals. However this was an improvement on the 25% low in quarter 4 2014-15.

Adopt Berkshire

% of adopter applications approved within 6 months of registration – 2016/17

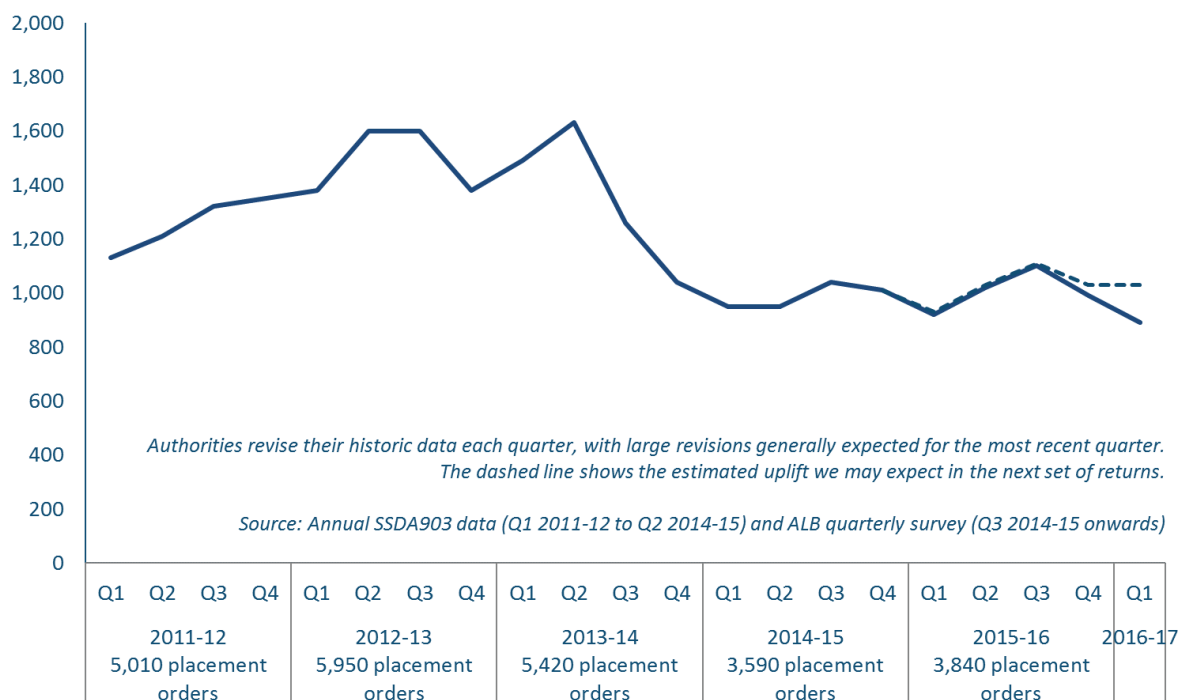
	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
% in Quarter (excluding period when application 'on hold' at applicants' request)	50%	66%	75%	50%
Cumulative for year to date	50%	62%	66%	64%

- The timeliness of matches has declined. In quarter 4 2013-14, 80% of matches were made within 6 months of approval, compared to 45% in quarter 1 2016-17.

d) **New ADM Decisions and Placement Orders granted:**

- The latest quarterly data suggests that the number of new ADM decisions has continued to fall from 1,850 in quarter 2 2013-14 to 1,080 in quarter 1 2016-17, a decrease of 42%.
- The number of new Placement Orders granted have also continued to fall from 1,630 in quarter 2 2013-14 to 890 in quarter 1 2016-17, a decrease of 45%.

Number of new placement orders granted in each quarter since 2011-12



e) **Children adopted from Care:**

- In 2015-16, there were 4,690 adoptions, an increase of 35% from 2011-12, however, this was a decrease of 12% from 2014-15. Quarterly data suggests that there were 1,060 children adopted in Quarter 1 2016-17.
- Of the children reported to have had their ADM decision reversed during Quarter 1 2016-17, 32% were due to the Court not making a Placement Order, the same as in 2015-16.

f) **Adoptive family approvals and registrations:**

- Registrations to become an adopter decreased by 13% from 840 in Quarter 4 2015-16 to 730 in Quarter 1 2016-17. The number of prospective adoptive families approved increased slightly by 1% from 700 in Quarter 4 2015-16 to 710 in Quarter 1 2016-17.
- The DoE’s most recent estimate for the “adopter gap” suggests that the gap has closed, and there are now more approved and waiting adoptive families than children waiting to be matched. However, there are nationally still 1,730 children with a Placement Order not yet matched.

Adopt Berkshire

Registrations and approvals

	2015 – 16	2016 – 17
Total number of new adopters [units] approved	30	14
Total number of new applications received	29	19 (9 received in Quarter 4)

13) Adopt Berkshire Achievements during the last year (2016/17)

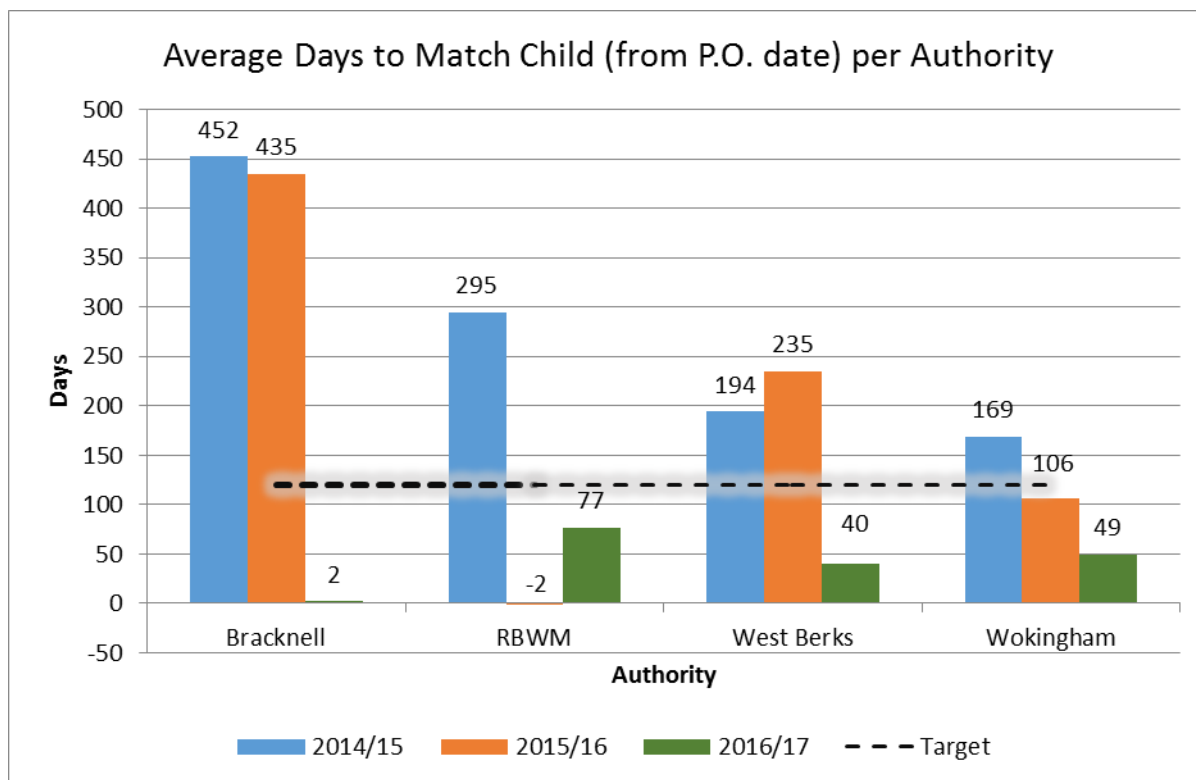
Staffing

- The **Adopt Berkshire Service** has continued to develop with all Team Members continuing to progress within their professional roles.
- The team is adequately staffed with no social work staff having resigned in the last 12 months.
- Our previous Placement Officer role continues to develop with the post holder now taking a more active role in the recruitment of prospective adopters (currently a priority area of work). His job title has been changed to reflect this change of role: Recruitment and Placements Officer.
- **Adopt Berkshire** moved to new office accommodation in May 2016. The staff fully embraced this office move and the move did not significantly disrupt the delivery of services.

Children and adopters

- **Adopt Berkshire** achieved the placement of 17 children with prospective adopters in the period April 2016 / March 2017. The timescales achieved (from Placement Order to formal match) were significantly below the national target and national average for all

four of our contributing authorities, despite a number of the children placed being older children with complex needs.



- **Adopt Berkshire** achieved four Fostering for Adoption placements in the last 12 months – these have served to significantly reduce the average timescales from Placement Order to formal ‘match’ for the associated placing authorities, with one of our contributing authorities achieving an average timescale of just two days over the year [Target timescale 121 days].

Two of our contributing authorities have achieved the placement of very young infants on the day that they were made subject to an I.C.O. [Once a Placement Order is granted, this will significantly reduce the average timescales from Placement Order to Matching for these authorities].

- As of the 31st March only five children from our contributing authorities were subject to Placement Orders and awaiting formal matching; of these four (two sibling pairs) had been linked, with the proposed ‘match’ being due to be considered by the Adoption Panel in April 2017.
- While the number of applicants being prepared/assessed/approved to adopt has reduced, in line with the national picture, we have to date been able to place most of the children referred who have not been identified as having significant additional needs within our own resources, whilst also maintaining a reasonable pool of approved and waiting adopters available for consideration for children needing placement ‘in house’.
- Despite the ‘difficult’ adoption climate reported nationally, **Adopt Berkshire** has been successful in achieving inter-agency placements with a number of our approved and waiting adopters, thus facilitating children being placed by other local authorities achieving successful placements whilst also achieving related income to the Service.

- In the period April 2016 / March 2017 21 **Adopt Berkshire** approved adopters (units) were 'matched' with a child/ren requiring adoption. Of these:
 - 8 adopters were linked to children requiring placement 'in-house';
 - 4 adopters were linked with children being placed by our future RAA partner agencies;
 - 9 adopters were linked with children being placed by other local authorities.

An income of £416,000 was generated through inter-agency placements (although some will be payable in the coming year).

- While six placements have been purchased externally (for two sibling pairs and four single children), two placements met the criteria for the inter-agency fee to be reclaimed from the Adoption Support Fund thus reducing the financial impact on the contributing authorities. The total cost to the contributing local authorities will be £124,000.

Note: The criteria for Placing Authorities being able to reclaim inter-agency fees from the Adoption Support Fund has now changed and it is unlikely that any future placements will be eligible for funding.

The Cornerstone Partnership

- The Service's partnership arrangements with The Cornerstone Partnership has continued to develop throughout the year (see Section 8 above).
- **Adopt Berkshire** has now negotiated to move into a Franchise arrangement with the Cornerstone Partnership thus enabling us to continue to gain the benefits of working with Cornerstone and having a group of experienced adoptive parents working closely with the service whilst also achieving a level of financial saving.

Engagement with Adopters

- **Adopt Berkshire** is mindful of the benefits of engaging with prospective and approved adopters around Service Development at all levels and seeks to do this through:
 - Engagement with the Cornerstone Partnership;
 - Discussions around development issues at the Monthly Support Group for approved and waiting adopters;
 - Seeking written feedback about their experiences of working with **Adopt Berkshire** from adoptive applicants, approved and waiting adopters and legal adopters, at key stages of the adoption process [Feedback questionnaires have been revised in the last six months to better reflect current processes and are now being routinely sent out to adopters once they complete each main stage of the adoption process];
 - Having an experienced adoptive parent as a member of the **Adopt Berkshire** Steering Group.
- In addition the work on developing our proposed Regional Adoption Agency is being supported by two Voluntary Adoption Agencies – PACT (Reading) and Barnardo's (South-East) – as well as by the Cornerstone Partnership.

Practice

- Life Appreciation Days are routinely considered for all children aged 12 months and over who are placed for adoption as well as for younger children if they have experienced changes of foster-carer. Life Appreciation Days are all run by the **Adopt Berkshire Service**.
- The **Adopt Berkshire Monthly Adopters’ Support Group** is now well established, providing an additional avenue of support for approved and waiting adopters and reducing the amount of social work time required in supporting these families prior to linking. Attendance at this group has now been opened up to Reading Borough approved adopters in anticipation of the authorities’ services merging in the future on the creation of our proposed Regional Adoption Agency.
- **Adopt Berkshire** staff have at different levels continued to support adoption workers and managers in Reading Borough Council around practice and development issues as there is less adoption expertise within this team at the current time. In anticipation of the two services’ future merge Reading Borough Adoption staff recently joined an Adopt Berkshire Team Day, which focussed on considering specific aspects of adoption work that were applicable to both services.
- **Adopt Berkshire** has maintained a contract with The Inter-country Adoption Centre (<http://www.icacentre.org.uk/>) to provide Inter-country Adoption Services to residents living in the four contributing local authorities’ areas who want to adopt from abroad (see Section 15 below). The previous contract has now been renewed up until November 2017 in anticipation of a joint Service Contract then being negotiated on behalf of the seven local authorities who are to be part of our new Regional Adoption Agency.

14) Comparative Data for the Adopt Berkshire Unitary Authorities – 1st April 2016 / 31st March 2017

Children for Placement

	Bracknell	RBWM	West Berkshire	Wokingham
Number of new Placement Orders 2016/2017	6 (Incl. 1 x 2 sibs)	5 (Incl. 1 x 2 sibs)	4	4 (2 x 2 sibs)
Number of new ADM (Child for Placement) decisions since 1 st April 2016	9 (Incl. 2 x 2 sibs)	6 (Incl. 1 x 2 sibs)	9 (Incl. 2 x 2 sibs)	4 (2 x 2 sibs)
Number of children placed in FfA placements since 1 st April 2016	1	0	1	2 (Sibling pair)
Children matched in 2016/17 - average no of days between Placement Order and formal match Target – 121 days	2 days (3 children – 1 placed FfA)	77 days (3 children)	40 days (5 children)	49 days (6 children)

Average no of days between entering care and placement 2016/2017 (using FfA placement date if applicable) Target - 487 days	210 days (3 children)	379 days (3 children)	206 days (5 children)	279 days (6 children)
Number of children placed who experienced a placement disruption prior to the Adoption Order being granted	0	0	0	0
Children with a Placement Order waiting matching (31 st March 2017)	3	2 (Sibling pair , provisionally matched)	0	0
No of children adopted since 1 st April 2016	4	6	12	3

15) Adopt Berkshire – Statistical Information

Adopter recruitment and matching/support

2016/17	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
New enquiries	55	42	43	62
Number of new Rol received (units)	5	3	1	9
Number of new adopters approved (units)	2	6	4	2
Average length of time between application and approval (weeks) (excluding period when application 'on hold' at applicants' request) (Target 26 weeks)	21.2 weeks	23.5 weeks Half Year average = 22.9 weeks	22.5 weeks Nine month average = 22.8 weeks	31.2 weeks Full Year average = 24.0 weeks
% of decisions made within six months	50%	66% Half Year average = 62%	75% Nine month average = 66%	50% Full Year average = 64%

Total number of Families in the Adoption Process as of 31st March 2017

Stage One Preparation	Stage Two Assessment	Approved and waiting 'matching'	Matched but pre-placement	Child/ren placed pre-adoption
4	6	16	0	21
(6)	(3)	(5 provisionally linked)	(0)	(19)
		(20)		

(Figure in brackets = figure as of 31st March 2016)

16) Outsourced Services

- As detailed above the four contributing authorities each have a contract in place with the Intercountry Adoption centre (IAC) to provide counselling and information to applicants enquiring about adoption from abroad. The IAC also undertakes the preparation and homestudy assessments of applicants who decide to pursue a formal inter-country adoption application and on completion applicants are considered by the IAC's Adoption Panel.
- Individual Statistics for each contributing Local Authority are available, however in summary:

Assessment Data

Task	Bracknell Forest	RBWM	West Berkshire	Wokingham
Total number of enquiries	1	7	13	2
Initial Interviews held	1	0	2	0
Applications progressed	1	0	2	0
Families in Stage 1 as at 31/03/2017	0	0	1	0
Families in Stage 2 as at 31/03/2017	1	0	1	0
Families approved by the Agency between 01/04/2016 – 30/03/2017	0	0	1	0

Post Approval Data:

Stage in adoption process	Bracknell Forest	RBWM	West Berkshire	Wokingham
Awaiting a match	0	0	1	0
Matched	0	0	0	0
Child in placement	0	0	0	0
Post Placement Reports	0	0	0	0
FER	0	0	0	0

17) Notified Adoptions

- Adopt Berkshire continues to receive a steady flow of notifications in respect of in-family adoptions.
- All inter-country adoption applications are allocated immediately notification is received that a child has been placed / entered the UK in order to ensure that Safeguarding Requirements are met.
- In-family applications that relate to children who are within their birth families and not in local authority care are allocated for completion of the necessary enquiries and Court Report/s as and when staffing allows; it is usual for all application to be allocated within three to six months of the notification being received.

Adopt Berkshire – Notified adoptions

Quarter in which Notification received	2015/16 Quarter 1	2015/16 Quarter 2	2015/16 Quarter 3	2015/16 Quarter 4	2016/17 Quarter 1	2016/17 Quarter 2	2016/17 Quarter 3	2016/17 Quarter 4
Inter-country Adoptions	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
In-family Adoptions	4	4	2	2	4	6	2	2
Number of children	4	4	2	2	9	7	4	3
Total application in year	12 In-Family (Total of 12 children)				14 In- family and 3 ICA (Total of 23 children)			

18) The Inspection of Local Authority Adoption Agencies

- Adoption Services are inspected as part of OFSTED's Single Inspection Framework for Child Protection and Looked After Children which was introduced in September 2013 and which also includes inspection of local authorities' fostering and adoption functions. Adoption Agency work is given a separate judgment within the wider inspection framework.
- Three of **Adopt Berkshire's** contributing authorities have been subject to an OFSTED Inspection of their Child Protection and Looked After Children's Services since the creation of **Adopt Berkshire**. Their respective judgments regarding their provision of Adoption Services were as detailed below:
 - Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead March 2015 'Requires Improvement'
 - West Berkshire Borough Council March 2015 'Requires Improvement'
 - Wokingham Borough Council October 2015 'Good'
- Bracknell Forest Borough Council is due an OFSTED Inspection.

19) Complaints

- In the period 1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017 only two complaints have been received relating to **Adopt Berkshire**: one of these related to the Agency having decided not to progress an application from a prospective adoptive couple while the other was from the relative of an approved adopter protesting that the Agency had decided against pursuing a link with the prospective adopters concerned. Neither of these scenarios constitute grounds for pursuing a formal complaint; however the couple whose application was not accepted are now pursuing a claim against RBWM (their local authority) on the grounds of discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

20) Challenges and priorities for the year ahead

- To continue to support the development of a Regional Adoption Agency (in line with government expectations) ensuring that **Adopt Berkshire** takes a key role in contributing to the design of the new service and the development of future practice in all areas. This will include continuing involvement in:
 - Specific working groups (considering specific aspects of Service practice);
 - The Partnership Profile Sharing Project (aimed at working closely with RAA partner agencies, including the VAAs, to identify early 'matches' for children requiring placement);
 - Participation in the Adopt Thames Valley Specialist Group;
 - Participation on the Adopt Thames Valley Board.
- To establish the Cornerstone Partnership Franchise Model as a way of providing additional adopter led training and support to prospective and approved adopters in a more cost-effective way.

- To continue to develop the **Adopt Berkshire** Team Culture, whilst supporting opportunities for joint working with Reading Borough Council's adoption staff in anticipation of the two teams merging later this year.
- To support Bracknell Forest with their forthcoming OFSTED Inspection (Targeted Inspection of the Authority's Services to Children in Need of help and protection) with the intention of achieving a rating of 'Good' or 'Outstanding' for the Authority's Adoption Service.
- To continue to maintain the service's excellent record regarding the timelines of Adoption Placements.
- To continue to improve the timelines of prospective adopters' assessments.
- To continue to seek feedback from the adopters with whom we work regarding all aspects of the Service and to set up a process for seeking feed-back from older children being placed for adoption about their experience of the adoption process, in order to inform both **Adopt Berkshire** and our future Regional Adoption Agency about potential areas for further development.
- To support staff in adapting to further changes of service and team structure, management and possibly office accommodation as we move into our proposed Regional Adoption Agency.

21) Conclusions

- It must be acknowledged that the landscape of adoption has continued to change both nationally and locally as the number of children with a Placement Order has continued to fall nationally while locally the **Adopt Berkshire** contributing authorities are moving towards becoming part of a larger Regional Adoption Agency – **Adopt Thames Valley**.
- **Adopt Berkshire** continues to strive to be at the forefront of good adoption practice. The Agency has achieved significant success in achieving timely placements for children requiring adoption and is continuing to promote Fostering for Adoption when appropriate to the needs and circumstances of individual children.
- Positive working relationships are well established between the **Adopt Berkshire** Team and all four of our contributing local authorities and shared planning can be clearly evidenced. This has meant that children in need of placement have been identified at an early stage and many children with complex needs have been securely placed for adoption.
- The feedback received from adopters engaged with **Adopt Berkshire** is generally very positive and a number of inter-agency placements have been successfully achieved in the last 12 months, suggesting that the quality of preparation and assessment of our approved adopters, and the training and support package available to them, is being recognised positively by other placing authorities.
- Our four contributing authorities all continue to support innovative practice and this underpins the planning to move into a larger Regional Adoption Agency.
- The coming year will be a period of further significant changes for the Adopt Berkshire Service with the proposed move to become part of a larger Regional Adoption Agency – **Adopt Thames Valley**. However, the evidence to date continues to support that shared

adoption services, with a focussed approach and a culture of continuous improvement and innovation, can be a highly successful form of service delivery.

Hilary Loades

Service Lead – Adoption

6th April 2017

APPENDIX 1

Bracknell Forest – Individual Local Authority Information 1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017

81

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Number of new Placement Orders since 1 st April 2016	None	Two	Two	Two
Number of new ADM (Child for Placement) decisions since 1 st April 2016	None	Five	Two	Two
Number of children placed in Fostering for Adoption placements	None	None	None	One
Children matched since 1 st April 2016 - average no of days between Placement Order and ADM decision to match (using FfA date if applicable) (Target 121 days)	N/a	N/a	One Nine month average – minus 155 days (One child)	Two Full Year average – 2 days (Three children)

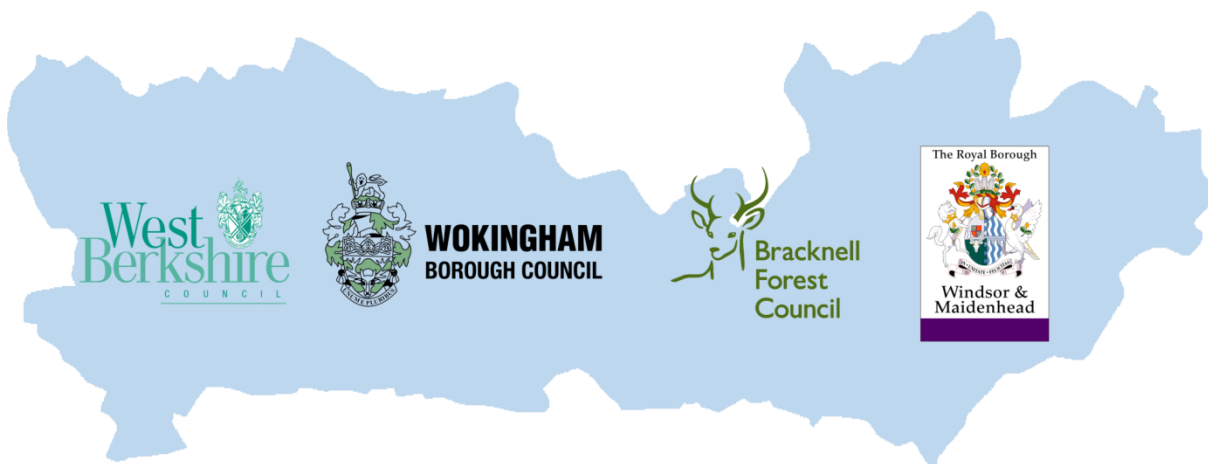
<p>Children matched since 1st April 2016 - average no of days between entering care and placement (using FfA placement date if applicable)</p> <p>(Target 487 days)</p>	<p>N/a</p>	<p>N/a</p>	<p>One</p> <p>Nine month average – 0 days (One child)</p>	<p>Two</p> <p>Full Year average – 210 days (Three children)</p>
<p>Children with a Placement Order awaiting matching (31st March 2017)</p>	<p>One child– PO granted 12/2016</p> <p>Two children– PO granted 01/2017 – Prospective adopters identified and proposed ‘match’ to be considered by Panel on 27th April</p>			
<p>No of children adopted since 1st April 2016</p>	<p>One</p>	<p>Two</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>One</p>

82

HL
06/04/2017

ADOPT BERKSHIRE

Statement of Purpose 2017



Working Together...
...Creating Families

Contents

Introduction.....	4
Part One	5
1. Aims and Objectives	5
2. The Organisation and Management of Adopt Berkshire	6
3. Links to Other Agencies.....	8
4. Systems in place to monitor and evaluate the activities of the service and to ensure quality of performance.....	8
4.1. <i>Children for Placement</i>	8
4.2. <i>Adopters</i>	9
4.3. <i>Staff</i>	9
4.4. <i>Management Oversight</i>	10
4.5. <i>Finances</i>	11
4.6. <i>Evaluating and responding to feedback</i>	11
5. Providing Children with a new start in life which will support them in overcoming the negative effects of any early trauma that they may have experienced and to flourish.....	11
5.1. <i>Helping children to be healthy</i>	12
5.2. <i>Helping children to be safe</i>	12
5.3. <i>Helping children to experience a secure home environment and to develop independence skills</i>	13
5.4. <i>Helping children to have a positive experience of school, learning and leisure</i>	13
5.5. <i>Helping children to grow and develop into adults who are confident and able to participate in society</i>	14
6. The recruitment, preparation, assessment, approval and support of prospective adopters	15
7. The processing of Notified Adoptions.....	15
8. The complaints procedure	16
Part Two	17
1. The Numbers, qualifications & experience of staff	17
Part Three.....	21
1. Cornerstone Partnership – Statement of Purpose	21
Who are we and what do we do?	21
<i>Cornerstone’s Services to Adoption Agencies</i>	21
2. Inter-country Adoption Centre – Mission Statement.....	22
<i>AT IAC we believe that:</i>	22
<i>As an adoption agency we aim to:</i>	22

We ask that prospective adopters and adopters:22

3. The policies, procedures and guidance governing and informing Adopt Berkshire and its service delivery.23

4. The contractual responsibilities of the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service.24

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Borough Council joined their Adoption services on 1st December 2014 to provide a dedicated service for adoption across the four local authorities. This shared adoption service is **Adopt Berkshire**

The main priorities of **Adopt Berkshire** are:

- to provide high quality adoption services for children who require placement for adoption;
- to provide a service where by applicants who are seeking to adopt within the U.K. can be prepared, assessed and approved for the adoption task and where appropriate achieve the placement of an appropriately matched child(ren).

Adopt Berkshire is hosted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, but the main office base is in Wokingham.

This Statement of Purpose is divided into three parts:

Part One sets out:

- the broad aims and objectives of the service;
- the management structure;
- the services provided;
- the outcomes expected for children and young people and the standards of care expected;
- how adoptive families are recruited, trained, assessed, approved and supported.

Part Two gives more changeable information about the numbers, qualifications and experience of staff and their roles.

Part Three consists of details of outsourced Services:

- The Cornerstone Partnership – Statement of Purpose;
- The Inter Country Adoption Centre – Mission Statement;
- details of the policies, procedures and guidance governing and informing **Adopt Berkshire** and its service delivery;
- details of the contractual responsibilities of the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service (which is a separate but related service).

Please Note: The four **Adopt Berkshire** contributing local authorities are currently in the process of jointly negotiating to become part of a larger Regional Adoption Agency, which is likely to also include: Reading Borough Council, Swindon Borough Council and Oxfordshire County Council. It is currently anticipated that the new Regional Adoption Agency will 'go live' in Quarter 3 of 2017/18 and **Adopt Berkshire** will cease to exist at that point. The new Regional Adoption Agency will also provide the contributing authorities' Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Services, which are at the current time hosted in-house by each of the **Adopt Berkshire** contributing authorities.

PART ONE

1. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of **Adopt Berkshire** accord with a number of local and national aims and objectives. These include:

- The National Minimum Standards for adoption (2011)
- The Adoption Act 2002 and Adoption Statutory Guidance 2011
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 and supporting statutory guidance and regulations
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and accompanying statutory guidance
- The Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (amended 2011)

The service actively contributes to ensuring that each of the contributing authorities perform well in terms of placing children for adoption within national timescales, by both recruiting adopters seeking to adopt an unrelated child(ren), and by assessing relatives and friends and existing foster carers who have applied to be considered as potential adopters for a specific named child(ren).

The key functions of **Adopt Berkshire** are to:

1. Support the contributing authorities to at an early stage identify those Looked After Children who would benefit from adoption and to achieve the placement of these children with appropriate prospective adoptive families within timescales appropriate to the needs of each child.

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

2. Recruit, prepare and assess prospective adoptive applicants who are seeking to adopt unrelated children and who are likely to be able to meet the placement needs of the children waiting for families both locally and nationally.

All applicants are expected to be able to accept the placement of a child(ren) with complex backgrounds and a child(ren) for whom there is not complete background and/or health information. Priority is given to potential applicants who are able to consider the placement of a child(ren) with a higher level of additional needs and those able to consider Fostering for Adoption.

3. Undertake the preparation and assessment of relatives and friends and existing foster carers who have applied to be considered as potential adopters for a specific named child(ren).
4. Support approved and waiting adopters in achieving the placement of appropriately matched children.
5. Provide a high standard of post placement support to the children placed for adoption by the contributing authorities and to their prospective adopters during the pre-adoption period and to ensure that robust adoption support packages are, where necessary, in place in order to maximise the long-term success of each child's placement.

6. Provide appropriate support to the prospective adopters recruited by the service following the placement of children and to work effectively with placing authorities in order to maximise the long-term success of each child's placement.
7. Process all notified adoptions occurring in the four local authority areas.
8. Fulfil the contributing authorities' duties under the Adoption (Inter Country Aspects) Act 1999, to provide, or arrange to provide, an Inter Country Adoption Service.

The four contributing authorities all, by arrangement with The Inter-country Adoption Centre, delegate to that agency the work of providing counselling and services to applicants wishing to adopt from abroad. However once a child is placed with prospective or legal adoptive parents who reside within any of the four authorities **Adopt Berkshire** undertakes any required supervision of or support to these placements.

9. Maintain effective systems for recording, managing and keeping safe, information about children placed for adoption and adopters and information received from people affected by adoption.
10. Maintain appropriate data in order to enable the four contributing authorities to monitor their provision of adoption services and compile any associated statistical and/or data returns.

2. The Organisation and Management of Adopt Berkshire

Adopt Berkshire came into being on the 1st December 2014. It is a dedicated Adoption Service working on behalf of The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Borough Council. The Service extends the joint arrangements previously invested in the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service (BAAS) – see [Part Three](#).

The Service Lead's contact details are:

Hilary Loades
 Adopt Berkshire
 First Floor
 Woodley Airfield Youth and Community Centre
 Hurricane Way
 Woodley
 Reading
 RG5 4UX

 Hilary.loades@rbwm.gov.uk
 0118 9746260

The Team Manager's contact details are:

Claire Corcoran
 Adopt Berkshire
 First Floor
 Woodley Airfield Youth and Community Centre
 Hurricane Way
 Woodley
 Reading
 RG5 4UX

 Claire.corcoran@rbwm.gov.uk
 0118 9746260

The structure of the Service is shown in the following structure chart:

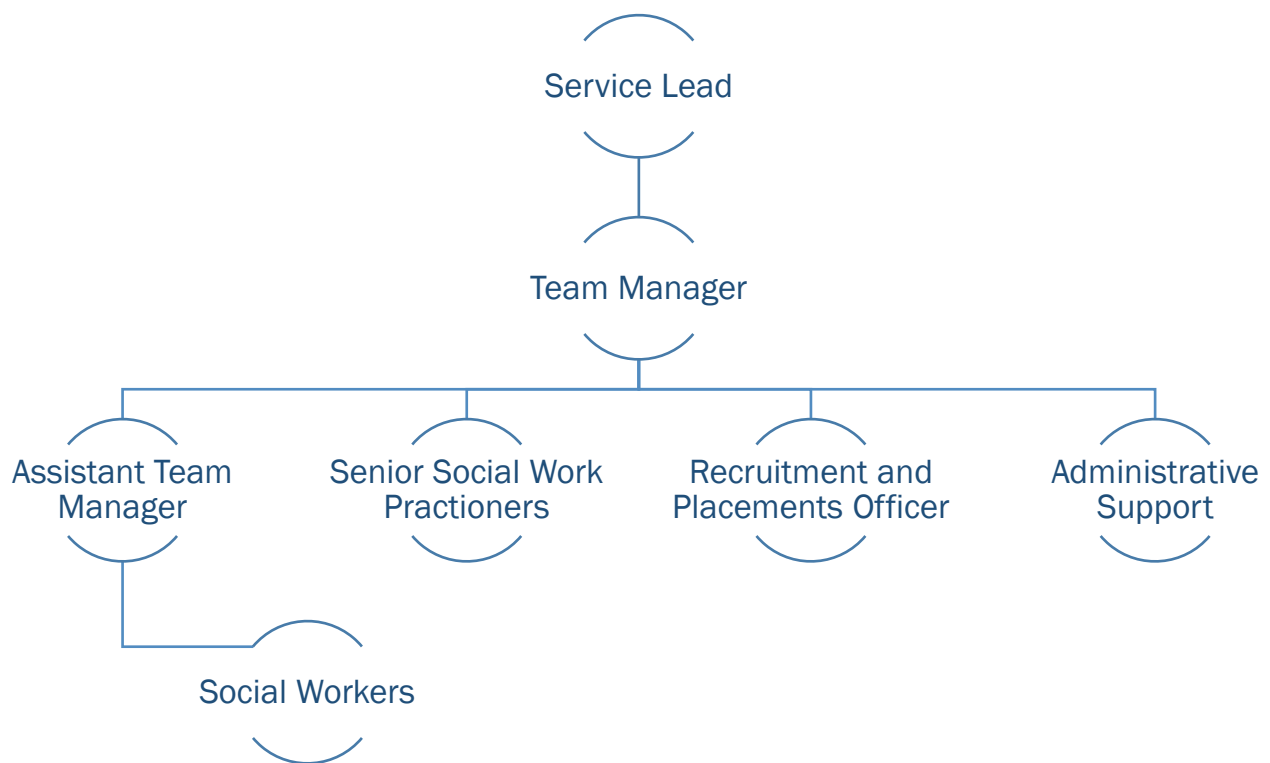
The total staffing of the service consists of:

- The Service Lead (who also holds lead responsibility for the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service)
- The Team Manager
- An Assistant Team Manager [At the current time this post is appointed to on a half-time basis]
- Eight full time equivalent Social Workers [At the current time these posts have not all been filled]
- One Recruitment and Placements Officer
- Two Team Support Officers (Administration) [At the current time one of these posts is not filled]

The qualifications and experience of staff employed in **Adopt Berkshire** are detailed in Part Two.

Adopt Berkshire is supported by the Cornerstone Partnership¹, in achieving the service aims in a number of key areas, including; the recruitment and preparation of adopters, the provision of mentor support and the provision of post-approval training.

Details of the Cornerstone Partnership are given in Part Three.



¹ Cornerstone is a social enterprise and limited company, sponsored by the Department for Education, whose mission is to help adoption agencies (local authority and voluntary) to recruit and support parents for children waiting to be adopted.

3. Links to Other Agencies

The service works closely with the Children's Services staff employed within the four contributing local authorities.

The four contributing authorities are each part of the Berkshire Local Authority Adoption Agencies' Consortium and the service therefore works in close co-operation with the other two Berkshire Unitary Authority Adoption Agencies – Reading Borough Council and Slough Borough Council.

The Service Lead for **Adopt Berkshire** also holds responsibility for the separate management of the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service (BAAS) and the staff employed within **Adopt Berkshire** work closely with those employed within the Advisory Service to ensure that while the two services have different responsibilities the contributing authorities experience the provision of a seamless adoption service. The contractual responsibilities of the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service are attached for reference – see Part Three.

As detailed in section 2 (above) and in Part Three (below) **Adopt Berkshire** works with Cornerstone Partnership in specific areas.

The service works in co-operation with the voluntary adoption agencies that operate within the geographical area covered by the service.

The service works in co-operation with other placing authorities whose children are placed for adoption with prospective adopters approved by the service.

The service works in co-operation with other local authority and voluntary adoption agencies with which placements of individual children are negotiated / achieved.

The service works in co-operation with the Berkshire Joint Legal Team.

Where specific advice or expertise is required in relation to a particular case, this is sought in the first instance from the Berkshire Joint Legal Team and/or CoramBAAF. A referral may be made to a specialist Adoption/Adoption Support Agency depending on the circumstances of the case.

The service will when required, use appropriately qualified and experienced agency workers (qualified social workers) who can be contracted to complete specific pieces of work as required, including the completion of homestudy assessments.

If there is a need for a specific piece of work relating to the recruitment of applicants or the placement of a child to be carried out by staff independent of the service, the service will seek to make arrangements for this to be undertaken, without undue delay, by one of the two other Berkshire Local Authority Adoption Agencies or by an Independent Adoption Agency - PACT (Reading).

4. Systems in place to monitor and evaluate the activities of the service and to ensure quality of performance

4.1. Children for Placement

The Service is committed to seeking feed-back from children being placed for adoption; however since the formation of Adopt Berkshire the majority of children placed by the contributing authorities have been aged under three years when they joined their adoptive families. Where children are of an age and understanding to express a view there is an expectation that the children's allocated social workers will seek the children's views in line with the Berkshire Shared Adoption Procedures and related guidance.

The Independent Reviewing Officers for the children referred for placement and the four contributing authorities' Permanence Monitoring Meetings monitor the children waiting for permanent homes and the progress of Family Finding for them.

The Team Manager (**Adopt Berkshire**) and Service Lead meet regularly with the Children and Families Team and Service Managers within each of the contribution authorities, in order to monitor the permanence planning and family finding processes for all children for whom adoption is likely to become the Care Plan.

The contributing authorities each have procedures in place for reviewing any breakdowns in placements, and hold disruption meetings to which the child's previous Family Finder will be invited and will attend.

4.2. Adopters

Adopt Berkshire promotes working in partnership with prospective and approved adopters, listening to their views and using them to inform practice.

Feedback is sought from prospective and legal adopters at each key point in the adoption process by way of a questionnaire:

- while attending Adoption Preparation Groups;
- following the completion of the preparation and assessment process (Stage One and Stage Two);
- following matching;
- following placement;
- following legal adoption being achieved.

This gives the opportunity for them to express their views on the quality and appropriateness of the services that they have received at each stage of the adoption process.

Note – In addition the BAAS also seeks feedback from all prospective adopters about their experience of attending Adoption Panel, both at the time that their application to be approved to adopt is considered and at the time that the Panel considers any proposed 'match'.

Post approval reviews are also undertaken with all approved and waiting adopters in line with regulations. Reviews take place:

- not more than one year following approval and afterwards at intervals of not more than one year, until a child(ren) are placed with the prospective adopter/s or the period of time for which approval was originally given expires, or they formally withdraw from the adoption process.
- whenever the service considers it necessary;

Reviews are chaired by the Team Manager or Assistant Team Manager and always involve a meeting with the prospective adopter/s. The views of the prospective adopter/s are always elicited and taken into account. If the prospective adopter/s wish to continue to be approved to adopt, a review report is compiled which is shared with them and they have the opportunity to comment on its contents.

Where applicants decide not to proceed after completing Stage One of the adoption process, the reasons for this are ascertained and recorded. Similarly where applicants decide to withdraw during Stage Two of the adoption process the reasons for this are discussed with them and recorded and consideration given to points of learning.

Where approved adopters decide to withdraw from the adoption process prior to achieving a placement, the reasons for this are ascertained and recorded and consideration given to points of learning.

4.3. Staff

All staff employed within **Adopt Berkshire** receive regular professional supervision including the:

- Service Lead

- Team Manager
- Assistant Team Manager
- Social Work practitioners
- Recruitment and Placements Officer
- Administrative and support staff.

This routinely includes:

- reviewing casework tasks,
- monitoring targets and timescales,
- reflecting on practice and outcomes.

Annual appraisals are held with all staff, conducted in line with the host authority's usual HR procedures. Additionally a six month review will take place with all staff half-yearly which will feed into the annual appraisal process.

Social work practitioners are required to keep up to date with changes in legislation, regulations, policies, procedures, and best practice guidance that are relevant to the specialism. Training needs are identified and kept under review through the supervision and appraisal process.

All social work staff are expected to keep a record of their Continuing Professional Development activities in line with the requirements for Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registration.

4.4. Management Oversight

The ongoing work of the Adopt Berkshire Service is monitored by a Management Board which consists of: the Heads of Service in the four contributing authorities, the Service Lead and an experienced adoptive parent.

All aspects of service provision are monitored by either the Service Lead or the Team Manager to ensure that effective management oversight is maintained in respect of monitoring:

- the quality of service provision to all Service Users;
- the time taken to achieve appropriate matches for the children referred for placement;
- the timescales achieved for potential adopters completing the Stage One preparation process;
- the timescales achieved for prospective adopters completing the Stage Two assessment process;
- when statutory checks for approved and waiting adopters need to be repeated;
- when prospective adopters' reviews need to be completed.

Statistical information is gathered to inform the development of the service and to facilitate the completion of Service Returns.

The Heads of Service and Lead Members in the contributing authorities receive half yearly reports detailing:

- the overall functioning of the service,
- any compliance issues,
- any areas for development,

- any complaints received.

4.5. Finances

The Service Lead receives regular reports on the **Adopt Berkshire** budgets including staffing costs.

Regular budget reviews take place with an accountant in the host authority (RBWM).

Interagency costs are monitored in terms of income received and payments made for placements (payments being charged and paid in line with CoramBAAF recommended rates).

The individual placing authorities retain responsibility for the setting up and management of all adoption allowances and the set up costs associated with any particular placement.

4.6. Evaluating and responding to feedback

Where a shortfall in services is identified or an expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of the services provided is received this is referred to/checked out by the Team Manager or Service Lead in the first instance (including where necessary liaison with external agencies/organisations) and where it is reasonable for the service to do so, action will be taken to address the issue.

Where the expression of dissatisfaction constitutes a 'complaint' the matter will be managed through the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead's Complaints' Procedure – see section 8 below.

Information is maintained on feedback from Service Users and is used to inform future service development.

Information about feedback received from Service Users is detailed in six monthly reports to the Heads of Service in the contributing authorities.

5. Providing Children with a new start in life which will support them in overcoming the negative effects of any early trauma that they may have experienced and to flourish

The contributing local authorities all support the basic principles that:

- Every child is entitled to grow up as part of a loving families, which can meet his/her needs during childhood, and beyond.
- It is best for children whenever possible to be brought up by their own birth families.
- Children whose birth families cannot provide them with a safe, secure, stable and permanent home are entitled to have adoption considered for them as one of a range of permanency options.
- The child's welfare, safety and needs must be at the centre of the adoption process.
- Children's views should be listened to, recorded and given due consideration when decisions are made about their placement needs.

Adopt Berkshire works to improve the lives of looked after children by:

- Helping children to be healthy;
- Helping children to be safe;
- Helping children to experience a secure home environment and to develop independence skills;
- Helping children to have a positive experience of school, learning and leisure;
- Helping children to grow and develop into adults who are confident and able to participate in society.

These outcomes and principles are also outlined in each of the contributing authorities' Pledge to Looked After Children.

The four contributing authorities have shared adoption procedures. The procedures that relate to Children for Placement are kept under review by the Service Lead, **Adopt Berkshire**. These procedures are followed for all children who have an adoption plan.

5.1. Helping children to be healthy

Each child with a Care Plan of adoption has a full adoption medical and a health plan and child health report written by the Adoption Agency's Medical Adviser.

Preparation Groups enable prospective adopters to consider a range of issues around the health, medical and developmental needs of Children in Care and the particular issues that they may need to manage in caring for an adopted child in terms of both his/her physical and emotional health and development.

Prospective adopters are encouraged and enabled to meet with the appropriate Agency Medical Adviser before a child is placed, to further their understanding of his/her health, medical and/or developmental needs and the potential implications of the birth parent/s' medical histories.

Prospective adopters are given information about the health of any child to whom they are matched, and it is made clear to them before the child is placed, what responsibility has been delegated to them in respect of making health related decisions.

Social workers and prospective adopters speak to children about their health needs and support and encourage them to live a healthy life style.

Prospective adopters are encouraged to agree to any child placed with them for adoption continuing to be subject to regular Child in Care medicals up to the point of legal adoption, in order to ensure that any emerging issues are identified and any previously existing health, medical or developmental issues continue to be appropriately addressed.

Each child's Adoption Support Plan addresses the issue of the child's presenting and likely future therapeutic needs and how the placing Authority will seek to support both the child and his/her prospective adopter/s in addressing these (including the level of funding that will be made available).

5.2. Helping children to be safe

Promoting and safeguarding the welfare of Children in Care and other children affected by adoption is the service's paramount concern and underpins all work undertaken by staff employed within the service.

The preparation of prospective adopters includes learning about the implications of neglect and abuse and the challenges of parenting children with additional needs, including attachment difficulties.

The preparation of prospective adopters also includes consideration of a parent's responsibility for keeping his/her child/ren safe, including the safe use of the internet and the dangers associated with children accessing social networking sites.

A Health and Safety Check is completed on all prospective adopters' homes at the time of the assessment of their suitability to adopt and this is reviewed following a proposed 'match' being identified. The prospective adopters are then required to address any issues identified prior to the proposed placement being effected.

Prospective adopters are provided with as full information as possible about any child to be placed by the service and time is spent trying to ensure that they fully understand the potential implications of the child's personal history, the birth family background and the child's presenting behaviours and needs,

and that they are able to form a reasonably realistic understanding of the task that they are taking on in terms of the child's likely future care and parenting needs.

All prospective adopters with whom a child is to be placed are provided with written information about what they should do and who they should contact in the event of an emergency including any concern around child protection.

Prospective adopters are encouraged to give due consideration to issues of risk in the areas where they have delegated authority and to encourage children to take appropriate risks whilst also keeping themselves safe, e.g. after the initial settling in period they decide if the child who is placed in their care can stay overnight at a friend or relative's house.

Each child's Family Finder generally attends the child's first post-placement review and s/he supports the child's social worker to ensure that appropriate links are made with relevant professionals in the receiving authority for the child, i.e. health, education, social care and, where identified in the Adoption Support Plan, therapeutic services.

5.3. Helping children to experience a secure home environment and to develop independence skills

All assessments of prospective adopters consider the applicant/s' financial situation and ensure that the applicants are in a position to meet the costs associated with bringing up a child. Where financial support will be required this need is explored and recorded and will be brought to the attention of any potential placing authority so as to ensure that this is addressed in the Adoption Support Plan and if a child is placed he/she will experience a stable financial situation.

Prospective adopters' preparation and assessment also considers the stability and likely long-term security of family relationships and the appropriateness of applicant/s' support networks; all prospective adopters are encouraged to develop links with other adoptive families and to think how they might strengthen their support network to best equip them to manage the additional parenting demands often inherent in adoptive parenting. Prospective adopters are encouraged to be open to seeking support from appropriate health, education and/or social care professionals at an early stage should any issues arise for themselves or their adopted child/ren either post-placement or after the legal adoption of their child/ren.

An Adoption Support Plan is drawn up for each child who is to be placed for adoption by the contributing authorities, prior to prospective adopters being identified, and the Plan is reviewed once a family is identified as the 'family of choice' for the child. Where the child has additional care or parenting needs that are likely to place a financial strain on the prospective adopter/s, this will be addressed within the Plan. Placing authorities are encouraged to consider providing one off or ongoing financial support as necessary to support such placements in order to ensure that the prospective adopter/s are in a position to meet the financial demands of caring for the child and to provide him/her with a financially secure upbringing. Any support agreed will be detailed in the Support Plan.

Prospective adopters are expected to understand the likely benefits to all children of developing age/ability appropriate practical and independence skills at all stages of their development and the importance of parents appropriately preparing their children to achieve independent living in adult life (accepting that children with additional needs may need to continue to receive higher than average levels of parental support as adults).

5.4. Helping children to have a positive experience of school, learning and leisure

The matching process takes into account the child's personality, interests, skills and abilities and also any special needs that the child has or may have. Every effort is made to identify prospective adopters for each child who are likely to be able to support the child in his/her interests and activities and to support him/her to maximise his/her potential in all areas, thus enabling him/her to achieve to the best of his/her abilities and to enjoy his/her achievements.

Prospective adopters are expected to attend all formal meetings associated with their child's education including; Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings, PEP review meetings and parents' meetings at their child's nursery or school, and to become actively involved in their child's education.

Support is provided to the social workers who are responsible for the children placed through the service, to ensure that the Adoption Support Plan for each child placed addresses how the child might be supported to develop age appropriate interests and to achieve to the best of his/her abilities. Where financial support is required to enable the prospective adopter/s to provide appropriate opportunities for the child this is also addressed.

Prospective adopters are encouraged to research their local area to find out what facilities exist for children (and their families) and to become familiar with them prior to a child being placed. Once any child placed is appropriately settled they are expected to support their child to engage in leisure activities that are appropriate to the child's age, development and personality and that will help the child to develop confidence and individual interests.

5.5. Helping children to grow and develop into adults who are confident and able to participate in society

The matching process takes into account the wishes, feelings and personality and needs of each individual child and how each child might be best supported.

It is considered to generally be in the best interests of adopted children for a level of contact to be established and maintained between the child's significant birth family members and his/her adoptive parent/s. The service supports children's social workers in considering the most appropriate future contact plan for each child and works with each child's social worker and the Letterbox Administrator (BAAS) and/or the Contact Service (BAAS) to ensure that appropriate arrangements are set up in a timely manner.

All four of the contributing authorities are committed to ensuring that every child who is placed for adoption is provided with a good quality Life Book and Later Life Letter and that these are provided by the date of the Celebration Hearing following the child's legal adoption. **Adopt Berkshire** provides support and guidance to children's social workers regarding the content and format of Life Books and Later Life Letters and will seek to ensure that they are provided within the target timescales.

The adoption planning process ensures that all children who have an adoption plan and are of sufficient age and ability to understand their situation, receive appropriate information about and support around the matching and placement process, including being provided with written materials if appropriate.

Each child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when a placement is being pursued for him/her. The placement planning process seeks to ensure that each child is supported by his/her carer/s and social worker and, where appropriate, an advocate, during the introductory period.

Prospective adopters are encouraged to take into account the child's ethnicity, religion, language and culture and to consider how they will positively promote the child's heritage in their upbringing of the child so that the child is facilitated to develop a positive view of him/herself which appropriately incorporates his/her birth family origins and his/her adoptive identity. Where the child's culture and/or religion of birth is not reflected in his/her adoptive placement, the Adoption Support Plan will identify what additional support will be provided by the placing authority to enable the child to gain or maintain an appropriate link with his/her heritage.

When children have identified additional needs in terms of emotional and / or behavioural difficulties these are identified through the matching process and the potential adopter/s provided with full information. The Adoption Support Plan then details the additional support that will be provided to support the prospective adopter/s in caring for the child and in meeting his/her parenting needs. This may include the provision or funding of on-going psychological or therapeutic support by the placing authority.

Prospective and legal adopters, are able to access a programme of post-approval training available via the Cornerstone Partnership and the BAAS.

Where there is an active Adoption Support Plan in place, **Adopt Berkshire** will when requested facilitate a meeting between the child's prospective adopter/s and the Adoption Support Worker in the Placing Authority (who will continue to hold responsibility for the provision of Adoption Support Services in the first three years post-order) prior to the legal adoption of the child, in order to ensure a smooth transfer of responsibility for managing the Support Plan.

6. The recruitment, preparation, assessment, approval and support of prospective adopters

Adopt Berkshire has a written Recruitment Plan aimed at enabling the Service to recruit sufficient adopters to meet the placement needs of the range of children waiting for adoption locally; please see **Adopt Berkshire – Policy and Plan on the Recruitment of Prospective Adopters**.

Adopt Berkshire seeks to maintain an inclusive approach to the recruitment of prospective adopters whilst at the same time recognising the need to to an extent concentrate recruitment efforts and financial resources on recruiting prospective adopters who are likely to be able to meet the care and parenting needs of children with complex needs.

The four contributing authorities have shared adoption procedures. The procedures that relate to working with prospective and approved adopters are kept under review by the Service Lead, **Adopt Berkshire**. These procedures are followed for all work around the preparation, assessment and approval of prospective adopters and the support of approved adopters through the linking, placement and post-placement / pre-adoption processes.

Adopt Berkshire works in partnership with Reading Borough Council and Slough Borough Council to run a programme of regular Information Sessions about adoption which are open to any Berkshire resident and to interested parties living further afield.

Adopt Berkshire also works in partnership with Reading Borough Council and Slough Borough Council to run a programme of regular Preparation Groups for potential adopters completing Stage One and Stage Two of the adoption preparation and assessment process.

All prospective and approved adopters who are engaged with **Adopt Berkshire** have an allocated social worker who has responsibility for supporting them through each stage of the adoption process.

7. The processing of Notified Adoptions

Adopt Berkshire has written procedures around the processing and management of Notified Adoption. These procedures are followed for all work with prospective adopters who apply to adopt children who have not been placed for adoption by a local authority within the UK. These will include:

- children who are to be adopted by relatives or family friends,

and in some instances,

- children who are to be adopted by their foster-carers,
- children who have been placed with their prospective adopters via inter-country adoption arrangements

Where a child/ren are to be or have been placed for adoption through an inter-country adoption arrangement the Service becomes involved as soon as it is made aware that approved adopters are in the process of being matched to a child/ren or that a child/ren have entered the UK under an inter-country adoption arrangement; this is in order to ensure that all necessary safeguarding measures are in place.

Where a child is the subject of an adoption application by his/her foster-carer/s the case will be allocated immediately as the child concerned will be a child in local authority care.

Where a child is not a Child in Care and is to be adopted by a relatives or family friend cases will be allocated for completion of the necessary enquiries and related Court report/s as soon as staffing allows. It is usual for such cases to be allocated within a three to six month timeframe.

8. The complaints procedure

All local authorities are required to have a Complaints Procedures under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 and, where children are involved, under the Children Act 1989. The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead's Complaints Service manages and monitors any complaints received about any aspects of the work of **Adopt Berkshire** on behalf of the four contributing authorities.

Copies of the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead's Complaints Process can be obtained from the Authority's Customer Care and Complaints Officer.

The Customer Care and Complaints Officer's contact details are:

Corporate Complaints Officer
Maidenhead Town Hall
St Ives Road
Maidenhead
SL61RF

Tel: 01628 683857

complaints@rbwm.gov.uk

In appropriate circumstances, complainants may wish to draw matters to the attention of OFSTED:

Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

PART TWO

1. The Numbers, qualifications & experience of staff

The following is a schedule of all staff employed in **Adopt Berkshire** with their dates of service and qualifications:

Name	Position held	Hours per week	Year of appointment	Qualifications
Hilary Loades	Service Lead - Adoption	Full time [Secondment from Team Manager post]	Joined Adopt Berkshire as Team Manager in December 2014 having previously held the post of Adoption Team Manager in Wokingham Borough Council since 1992. Seconded to the post of Service Lead – Adoption, since 3 rd May 2016.	Certificate of Qualification in Social Work awarded in 1984. Post Graduate Certificate in Health and Social Care Management awarded in 2006.
Claire Corcoran	Team Manager	Full time [Independent Worker – covering Hilary’s Secondment Period]	Joined Adopt Berkshire in June 2016 as the locum Team Manager having previously held the post of Interim Practice Manager (Adoption and Permanency) in Slough Borough Council and prior to this held a Team Manager post with PACT Adoption Agency (Reading).	Certificate of Qualification in Social Work awarded in 1992. Post - Qualifying award in Child Care level 1 gained in 2006.
Susan Robertson	Senior Social Work Practitioner	Full time	Joined Adopt Berkshire in December 2014 having previously held the post of Social Worker Adoption & Permanence in Wokingham Borough Council since 2012.	Certificate of Social Service (CETSW) awarded in 1989. Post - Qualifying Award in Childcare level 1 and 2 gained in 2006.

66

Name	Position held	Hours per week	Year of appointment	Qualifications
Nikki Douglas	Senior Social Work Practitioner (Currently on Maternity Leave – June 2016 – June 2017)	Full time	Joined Adopt Berkshire in December 2014 having previously held the post of Senior Social Work Practitioner in Bracknell Forest Borough Council since 2013, specialising in adoption.	MA in Social Work with a Diploma in Social Work awarded in 2001. Post - Qualifying Award in Childcare gained in 2006.
Joanne Madden	Senior Social Work Practitioner	28 hours per week	Joined Adopt Berkshire in December 2014 having previously held the post of Senior Social Work Practitioner in the Family Placement Team at the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead since 2010, and prior to this been employed as a social worker in the same team since 1997.	Diploma in Social Work awarded in 1996. Post - Qualifying award in Child Care level 1 gained in 2005. Specialist Child Care award consolidation model awarded in 2010.
Marisa Tredoux	Senior Social Work Practitioner	21 hours per week [Hours temporarily increased to 29h.p.w. since January 2017 as backfill for a SSW colleague who is currently seconded to the ATM role]	Joined Adopt Berkshire in December 2014 having previously held the post of Senior Social Work Practitioner in Bracknell Forest Borough Council since February 2014, specialising in adoption. Prior to this worked in the Adoption Team in LB Ealing as a Senior Social Worker from March 2006.	BA in Social Work awarded in 1998, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. MA in Social Work gained in 2005 through Tavistock and Portman Trust – accredited by University of East London.

100

Name	Position held	Hours per week	Year of appointment	Qualifications
Karen Wood	Assistant Team Manager	15 hours per week [Secondment from SSW Practitioner post]	<p>Joined Adopt Berkshire in December 2014 having previously held the post of Assistant Team Manager Family Placement with Bracknell Forest Borough Council since 2011, specialising in adoption.</p> <p>Seconded to the post of Assistant Team Manager, since 1st January 2017.</p>	<p>Diploma in Social Work awarded in 2003.</p> <p>Post Qualifying Award (Masters Level) gained in 2005.</p>
Deon Ryan	Social Worker	Full time	<p>Joined Adopt Berkshire in December 2014 having previously held the post of Social worker in the Family Placement Team at the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.</p>	<p>BSc in Social Work awarded in 2009.</p> <p>Post - Qualifying Consolidation Module gained in 2015.</p>
Shirley Popat	Social Worker	Full Time	<p>Joined Adopt Berkshire in February 2016 having previously held the post of Supervising Social Worker in the Placements Team in Wokingham Borough Council. Previously employed as a Senior Social Work Practitioner by PACT Adoption Agency (Reading) and prior to this as a Social Worker in the Reading Borough Council Adoption Team.</p>	<p>BA (Hons) in Social Work awarded in 2009.</p> <p>Post Qualification Graduate Certificate in Consolidation and Preparation for Specialist Practice awarded in 2014.</p>

101

Name	Position held	Hours per week	Year of appointment	Qualifications
Sophie Jones	Social Worker	Full time [12 month Maternity cover to June 2017]	Joined Adopt Berkshire in July 2016 having previously worked as a Social Worker in the Reading Adoption Team and as a Child in Need / Child Protection Social Worker for Buckinghamshire County Council.	BA (Hons) in Social Work awarded in 2014.
Jo Stobart	Recruitment & Placements Officer	Full Time	Joined Adopt Berkshire in May 2015, having previously worked in the British Armed Forces.	
Maria Brown	Administrative Assistants	Part-time	Joined Adopt Berkshire in July 2016, initially on a short-term contract. Appointed on a permanent contract in December 2016.	

102

Hilary Loades,
 Service Lead – Adoption
 April 2017

PART THREE

1. Cornerstone Partnership – Statement of Purpose



Who are we and what do we do?

Cornerstone is a social enterprise and Ltd company, sponsored by the Department for Education, whose mission is to help adoption agencies (local authority and voluntary) to recruit and support parents for children waiting to be adopted.

Our aims are:

1. to help reduce the time that children wait for adoption
2. to give adoptive parents the practical support and tools they need and doing so contribute to the quality of life for adoptive families.

Cornerstone was founded and is run by 2 adoptive mums – Helen Keenan and Clare Soares – who between them have 4 adoptive children and therefore have first-hand experience of the challenges and joys of adopting... from the first enquiry to an child being placed (and beyond) Cornerstone is here to listen, support and encourage adopters based on real life experience.

Cornerstone's Services to Adoption Agencies

1. the recruitment of adopters relevant to the profiles of children waiting in a local area - in particular hard to place children including older & BAME children, sibling groups and children with disabilities;
2. peer mentoring for each adopter as they move through the process of being assessed and matched and;
3. providing approved adopters with therapeutic parenting training (3 day course + home study) and ongoing knowledge development (via monthly webinars & tutorials) giving practical parenting strategies, skills and information needed to tackle some of the challenges that come with adoptive parenting.

2. Inter-country Adoption Centre – Mission Statement

AT IAC we believe that:

- Every child has a right to family life, to be loved, kept safe and well and have access to education and opportunity
- For the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, that a child should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding
- Adoption is a service for children who cannot live with their birth family
- If a child cannot be cared for by a permanent family in their country of birth or habitual residence, then adoption should be an option

As an adoption agency we aim to:

- Recruit prospective adopters who can meet the needs of waiting children both in the UK and overseas
- Work positively with prospective adopters to identify potential and opportunity
- Ensure that the preparation and training, the home study assessment, approval and matching process are explained and proceed in a timely fashion and within accepted timescales whenever this is within our power to do so
- Treat adoptees, prospective adopter and adopters with openness, fairness and respect
- Provide prospective adopters, adopters and adoptees with information, counselling and support, as and when needed, throughout the adoption process and beyond
- Provide an efficient, effective, fair and transparent service to all

We ask that prospective adopters and adopters:

- Understand that adoption brings both joys and challenges
- Accepts each child for who they are
- Be willing to work in partnership with the agency in the interests of children
- Be willing to learn and ask for help
- Commit to helping each child to feel loved, secure, to understand their adoption story and to feel proud of their heritage.

The IAC's Statement of Purpose can be accessed at: www.icacentre.org.uk

3. The policies, procedures and guidance governing and informing Adopt Berkshire and its service delivery.

Adopt Berkshire works in accordance with:

- All current legislation, Regulations and Best Practice guidance applicable to Local Authority Adoption Agencies;
- The Berkshire Local Authorities' Shared Adoption Procedures and Guidance;
- The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead's:
 - HR procedures,
 - Child Protection procedures,
 - Complaint's procedure.

4. The contractual responsibilities of the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service.

The Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service is a joint arrangement that was set up in 1998 and is funded by the six Berkshire Unitary Authorities; The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (the host Authority), Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Borough Council, West Berkshire Council, Reading Borough Council and Slough Borough Council.

The original Contract of Quality Standards set out for the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service was as follows:

- Recruit and train Adoption Panel members
- Manage and service the two Berkshire Panels (including attendance by adoption applicants)
- Provide professional and administrative support for the two Adoption Panels
- Manage the Berkshire Information Exchange Service between adoptive families and birth families
- Provide specialist training on adoption issues for staff in the six Unitary Authorities
- Provide specialist advice and assistance on complex adoption matters to staff in the six Unitary Authorities
- Provide specialist counselling for adults seeking access to birth records [This role is now undertaken by the Post Adoption Workers employed in the contributing local authorities]
- Administer the closed children's records and adoption records
- Provide a social work service to the closed children's records and adoption records

These original areas of responsibility have been maintained and many have been further developed particularly in the light of The Adoption & Children Act 2002.

In addition the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service now:

- Provides information and advice appertaining to all areas of adoption including legislation, guidance and Best Practice
- Manages the 'Berkshire Adoption Exchange' – an annual event that brings together social workers from across the region in an effort to achieve the matching of child(ren) with approved adopters
- Facilitates 'Life Appreciation' meetings for children being placed by the Berkshire Unitary Authorities
- Chairs Disruption Meetings for children placed by the six unitary authorities whose placements disrupt
- Co-ordinates the Berkshire Post Adoption Forum – a six-weekly meeting that bring together Adoption Support workers employed within the six Berkshire Unitary Authorities in order to co-ordinate development of some pan-Berkshire Adoption Support Services to which all teams have access (e.g. Birth Mothers' Support Group and Birth Records Workshops) and to promote Best Practice
- Supervises direct contact arrangements that are set up for children placed with adoptive families (Post Order)
- Organises an Annual Adopters' Conference

- Hosts the Birth Parent Project (which aims - to offer both an integrated independent approach alongside consistent support and information to significant birth family members when adoption has been formally identified as the plan for a child)

Hilary Loades
Service Lead – Adoption
April 2017

This page is intentionally left blank

To: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
Date: 6 JULY 2017

**APPROVAL OF THE PRIVATE FOSTERING SERVICE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE
2017 – 2018 AND PRIVATE FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2016 - 2017
Director of Children, Young People & Learning**

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 The purpose of the decision is to approve the Statement of Purpose for Private Fostering Services for 2017 – 2018 and Private Fostering Service Annual Report 2016 – 2017.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Statement of Purpose for Private Fostering Services 2017 - 2018 [annex 1] and Private Fostering Annual Report 2016 – 2017 [annex 2] are APPROVED.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The compilation and annual review of the Statement of Purpose for the Private Fostering Service is a requirement under the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering, July 2005, Standard 1.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None. It is a requirement of the Minimum Standards that the local authority has a written Statement of Purpose in place for Private Fostering Services.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 This Statement of Purpose is a description of private fostering arrangements within Bracknell Forest, and is separate from the mainstream Fostering Services Statement of Purpose. The Statement sets out the Council's key duties in relation to private fostering and how these will be met. These duties include:
- Raising awareness of the legal requirement for private foster carers to notify the Council.
 - Provide a summary of work undertaken by Bracknell Forest in this area.
 - Providing training and support for staff.
 - Ensuring that there are sound arrangements for the assessment of private foster carers and privately fostered children.
 - Providing support and advice to private foster carers and to privately fostered children and their parents.
 - To provide an annual report to the LSCB.
- 5.2 Comprehensive information regarding all regulations governing private fostering arrangements is contained in the Bracknell Forest Private Fostering Policy, 2014 which details all the actions required under the Children Act Regulations 2005 and

includes full details of the legislative requirements, together with comprehensive practice guidance for social workers dealing with the notification and supervision of private fostering arrangements. It also sets out the actions required to ensure that these children are properly safeguarded with regard to the child protection matters, standards of care and welfare concerns. See: <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/private-fostering-policy.pdf>

5.3 Allowances are not paid to private foster carers.

5.4 Sufficient funds exist for the delivery of the Statement of Purpose.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

6.1 The relevant legal provisions are addressed within the body of the report.

Borough Treasurer

6.2 The Borough Treasurer is satisfied that no significant implications arise from this report.

Equality Impact Assessment

6.3 There is an Equality Impact Assessment

Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.4 The strategic risk identified is that if the service does not complete an annual review of the Statement of Purpose the Council will be in breach of the National Minimum Standards. There are no changes completed or proposed in the content of the service that will constitute a strategic risk.

Other Officers

6.5 The Children's Social Care Management Team considered and endorsed the Statement of Purpose and Annual Report in June 2017.

Background Papers

The Statement of Purpose for Private Fostering Services 2017 - 18 [**annex 1**].

Private Fostering Annual Report 2016 – 2017 [**annex 2**].

See also: Bracknell Forest Policy, Procedure and Practice Guidance for Private Fostering, 2014, at

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/private-fostering-policy.pdf>

National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering, at

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/safeguarding/privatefostering/>

UNRESTRICTED

Contact for further information

Peter Hodges
Head of Service, Looked After Children
Children's Social Care
Peter.Hodges@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
01344-351532

Approved by Cllr Dr Gareth Barnard
Executive Member, Children, Young People
& Learning

Signature.....

Date.....

Approved by Nikki Edwards
Director, Children, Young People
& Learning

Signature.....

Date.....

This page is intentionally left blank

**Statement
of Purpose for
Private Fostering
Services
2017-2018**

**Version 1
May 2017**

Document name & file location	g:\Policy and commissioning post holder\Policies Final	
Document Author	Rosanne Turner, Team Manager, Family Placement Team	
Document owner	Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer, Children's Social Care, Children, Young People and Learning, Bracknell Forest Council Time Square, Market Street, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1JD	
Review date	This document is to be reviewed a minimum of every 12 months, the next review to occur no later than May 2018.	
Accessibility	This document can be made available in hard and electronic formats. No copies in other languages are currently available.	
Version	Detail of change	Annual Review 2017
1.0	Document created	April 2017
2.0	Consultation with Staff	May 2017
3.0	Consultation with Children's Social Care Management Team	June 2017
4.0	Approval by Departmental Management Team and Executive Member	
5.0	Public document or Pre-print Design Circulation	

Accessibility

This document can be made available in large print, Braille, audio or in electronic format.
Copies in alternative languages may also be obtained.

Please contact:

Policy and Commissioning Officer
Children's Social Care
Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Time Square
Market Street
Bracknell
Berkshire RG12 1JD

Email: sarah.roberts@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Telephone: 01344 352020

Fax: 01344 351521

Minicom: 01344 352045

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Overview of services	1
3	Legal definition of a privately fostered child	2
4	Boarding Schools	3
5	Duties and Functions of the Local Authority.....	3
6	The Bracknell Forest Policy, Procedure and Practice Guidance for Private Fostering	4
7	Promotion of Public and Professional Awareness.....	4
8	Assessment of the suitability of Private Foster Carers and their household.....	5
9	Advice/support and information available to Private Foster Carers, parents/those with parental responsibility and privately fostered children	6
10	Ensuring the welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted.....	6
11	Information and Support for Privately Fostered Children	7
12	Other notifications	8
13	Support and links with partner agencies	8
14	Monitoring and reviewing arrangements.....	8
15	Comments, compliments and representations.....	9
16	Inspection.....	9

1 Introduction

The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005, Standard 1, requires that a clear description of the Council's services with regard to private fostering arrangements is available for professionals, the public, Council Members and external organisations.

This document defines what is meant by a private fostering arrangement; the requirement for all private fostering arrangements to be notified to the Local Authority, the assessment process; and the support and advice offered to parents, private foster carers and privately fostered children within Bracknell Forest.

2 Overview of services

The Private Fostering Service has key functions:

- To safeguard and promote the welfare of each privately fostered child by securing positive outcomes and by reducing any risks to their safety
- To raise public and professional awareness of the requirement to notify the Local Authority of any proposed or existing private fostering arrangement.
- To respond to any private fostering notifications, assess the arrangements and provide appropriate information and support for the children and adults involved.

There are clear procedures in place for responding to notifications of private fostering arrangements. Any notification is initially considered by the Children's Social Care Duty and Assessment Team. A visit to complete a written assessment will be made by a member of the Duty team, together, where possible, with a social worker from the Family Placement Team.

Where it is confirmed that the arrangement meets the criteria for private fostering, a social worker will be allocated from one of the Children's Social Care social work teams. This social worker is responsible for monitoring the welfare of the child and to maintain contact with anyone holding parental responsibility for the child.

The Family Placement Team will allocate a social worker to undertake an assessment of the suitability of the private foster carer and will offer advice and support where appropriate.

The Assistant Team Manager within the Family Placement Team has designated responsibilities for the private fostering service, including managing the Publicity and Recruitment worker and the Private Fostering designated Family Support Worker to promote general awareness of private fostering, offer advice to professionals and to visit voluntary, professional or other relevant groups with information and promotional material. The Bracknell Forest Council Family Placement Team has overarching responsibility for undertaking assessments in relation to prospective private foster carers.

Statement of Purpose Private Fostering 2015-2016

An annual report on the private fostering service is presented to the Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Children's Social Care meets the requirements of equal opportunity legislation through ensuring services are centred around the needs of the child or young person. All prospective private foster carers are assessed and supported on the basis of the needs of the child or young person regardless of race, religion, class, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

3 Legal definition of a privately fostered child

In the definition provided by The Children Act 1989, a privately fostered child means:

A child, under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) who is cared for, or it is proposed to be cared for, and provided with accommodation by someone other than:

- A parent of his/hers
- A person who is not a parent of his/hers but who has parental responsibility for him/her
- A close relative of his/hers, i.e. aunt/uncle/step-parent/grandparent/sibling but not a cousin or great-aunt/uncle,

and she/he has been cared for and accommodated by that person for 28 days or more, or the period of actual fostering is less than 28 days but the private foster carer intends to foster him/her for a period of 28 days or more.

A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for him/her has done so for a period of less than 28 days and does not intend to do so for any longer period. This 28 day period is intended to ensure that families are able to make arrangements for a child to stay with their extended family or friends without interference from the Local Authority. Clearly such interference would be totally inappropriate where children are having sleepovers or short term holidays /breaks with school friends, for example. The 28 day period ensures that only the most exceptional of circumstances need to be notified.

For the purposes of the Act 'parent' includes unmarried or putative father. Relative means as above stated, whether by full, half-blood or by affinity or step-parent. Affinity refers to the relationship resulting from marriage, between the husband and the blood relations of the wife and also between the wife and the blood relations of the husband. If the child visits her/his parent from the private fostering situation, including an occasional overnight stay, this will not break the private fostering arrangement period as long as the intention is for the child to return to the same private fostering situation. An arrangement is deemed as private fostering if it meets the criteria above whether for reward (monetary or otherwise) or not.

Examples of private fostering arrangements are varied and include:

- children/young people living with host families for a variety of reasons, i.e. attending language schools, undergoing medical treatment etc
- children/young people with families overseas
- black and ethnic minority children/young people with parents working or studying in the UK
- trafficked children/young people and asylum seekers and refugees
- teenagers who are staying with families of friends after a disagreement at home

4 Boarding Schools

A person who proposes to accommodate a child under 16 years at school for more than **two weeks** during school holidays must give written notice to the Local Authority. The child is treated as a privately fostered child with the exception that requirements may not be imposed. Notice must also be given when a child ceases to be treated as a privately fostered child - see Schedule 8 Paragraph 9 Children Act 1989.

There are a number of independent boarding schools within Bracknell Forest. The Local Authority was not notified of any children falling into this category during 2016-2017.

The regulations allow for a school to be exempt from these regulations. To date no school has requested that the Local Authority considers this.

5 Duties and Functions of the Local Authority

The duties of the local authorities in relation to private fostering are set out in the Children Act 1989, the Children (Private Arrangement for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and amendments are contained within the Children Act 2004. The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 set out a number of standards to be met by all local authorities in discharging their duties which cover the following areas:

- ✓ Statement of Purpose
- ✓ Notification
- ✓ Safeguarding and promoting welfare
- ✓ Advice and support
- ✓ Monitoring and compliance

Under the Children Act 2004 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 Local Authorities are required:

- To promote awareness of the notification requirements amongst the general public and amongst professionals who may come into contact with privately fostered children
- To respond to notifications by visiting and assessing whether the welfare of the privately fostered child is being satisfactorily safeguarded or promoted
- To ensure that the placement has the person with parental responsibility's agreement and that the intended duration of the placement has been understood and agreed
- To supervise the welfare of the privately fostered child by visiting in accordance with regulations and keeping a written record of such visits
- To effectively implement a policy and process for prohibiting private fostering arrangements and imposing requirements where appropriate
- To provide advice and support to Private Foster Carers, parents and children as needed
- To monitor the effectiveness of all arrangements in respect of private fostering

6 The Bracknell Forest Policy, Procedure and Practice Guidance for Private Fostering

The Bracknell Forest Policy and Procedure for Private Fostering details all the actions required under the Children Act Regulations 2005. The policy includes full details of the legislative requirements, together with comprehensive practice guidance for social workers dealing with the notification and supervision of private fostering arrangements. It also sets out the actions required to ensure that these children are properly safeguarded with regard to the child protection matters, standards of care and welfare concerns. See: <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/private-fostering-policy.pdf>

7 Promotion of Public and Professional Awareness

In line with the Children Act 2004, Schedule 8 paragraph (7A), Bracknell Forest Council has developed a strategic plan to promote private fostering awareness amongst parents, individuals with parental responsibility, carers, professionals, and the general public. The aim of the plan is to ensure that birth parents, people with parental responsibility, potential and actual private foster carers are aware of the need to notify the Local Authority of any proposed or actual private fostering arrangement. The activity and events plan is regularly reviewed and updated.

Private fostering presentations and written guidance will continue to be provided to all staff members within Targeted and Specialist Children and Families Service and across the council. Awareness of private fostering is part of the induction programme for new social workers and staff recruited to the Family Placement Team. Training for all staff is reviewed annually in line with changing needs and legislation, and all programmes are evaluated by managers.

Private fostering information is also included in:

- Induction sessions
- Child protection training
- Team meetings
- BORIS (the council's intranet internet service)

Relevant staff will gain further understanding and expertise in relation to private fostering through workshops, team meetings and regular supervision.

The range of initiatives included in the 2017 – 2018 Private Fostering strategic plan are:

- Information sessions for professionals who have face to face contact with children and families within the Council and partner agencies. Each service will receive a repeat session at least every two years. These sessions give the legal definition of private fostering and information on services to support privately fostered children, their parents, private foster carers and professionals.
- Updates to the Bracknell Forest Council website, see: <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/living/liv-children-and-families/liv-private-fostering.htm>
- Adverts on the Bracknell Forest Partnership Community TV – which has screens in the library, College, leisure centres, local GP surgeries and health centre; cafés in a town centre bookshop, supermarket and a local garden centre.

Statement of Purpose Private Fostering 2015-2016

- Posters placed in the reception areas of the main council buildings at Time Square and Easthampstead House
- Mail drops with relevant information (e.g. cue cards, leaflets & posters) to GPs, education professionals, designated teachers and social work staff.
- Independent schools requested to provide information each term on any private fostering arrangements
- Celebrate the private fostering week between 3rd and 7th July 2017 with targeted awareness campaign amongst professionals and the general public
- Information can be made available on request in the different languages of the local community.

8 Assessment of the suitability of Private Foster Carers and their household

Notifications of private fostering are initially screened by the Duty and Assessment Team and an initial visit undertaken within seven working days. This visit covers all of the relevant areas set out in the National Minimum Standards Annex A. When it is evident that the arrangement is going to last more than 28 days the case details are passed to the relevant fieldwork team, which will support the child, and the Family Placement Team, which will support the carers. A social worker from both teams visits the child and the carers and wherever possible this visit will be done jointly. In the absence of the social worker, her/his line manager is responsible for ensuring another member of the team will undertake this visit.

An assessment is carried out in relation to all privately fostered children and young people (Single Assessment) and their carers (Family Placement Assessment) within Bracknell Forest. The assessments are completed in accordance with Schedule 3 of the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering¹. All relevant statutory checks are made, including an enhanced disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service, agency enquiries and personal references for all adults in the household.

Written information is provided, through leaflets, for the child, carers and parents of any privately fostered child at the earliest opportunity.

Private fostering assessments include ensuring that the child/young person's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development is satisfactory and that identified needs arising from his/her religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background are being met. In addition, the assessment will include the suitability of the accommodation and an evaluation of the parenting capacity of the prospective/current private foster carer. The report should also conclude whether the child is a 'Child In Need', and therefore entitled to additional support services under Section 17, and if so which services should be provided.

Private foster carers are given advice on the child/young person's individual needs, which may include advice on any medical condition or learning disability, in order to enhance their ability to care for the child/young person. Support services are made available to private foster carers as identified by the assessment. Private foster carers, where necessary, are

¹ See National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering, page 22 at <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/safeguarding/privatefostering/>

Statement of Purpose Private Fostering 2015-2016

encouraged to promote contact between the child/young person and his/her parents, siblings, extended family and significant others.

The assessment is completed and shared with the carers before being presented to the monthly Bracknell Forest Foster Panel. This Panel meets the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and makes recommendations about the approval of foster carers, the matching of children to long-term placements and the suitability of private foster carers. The Panel sets a standard for the quality of care a child should receive in a substitute family.

Having considered the information available, the Panel makes a recommendation to the Head of Service for Looked After Children, Children's Social Care, who will take the recommendation into consideration in deciding whether to continue to support the placement or take further action to secure the wellbeing of the child. The Family Placement Team Manager informs the private foster carer in writing of the Council's decision.

9 Advice/support and information available to private foster carers, parents/those with parental responsibility and privately fostered children

The Family Placement Team provides support, advice and training for private foster carers. The child's social work team provides support for the privately fostered child or young person, acting as an advocate, liaising with the child's parent or person with parental responsibility and the private foster carer in order to ensure that the current and future needs of the child are being met.

Private foster carers (including prospective carers) have access to advice on benefit entitlement, parenting strategies and techniques, and other appropriate training and support as identified. Training is not generally mandatory but is available should private foster carers wish to access it. Private foster carers will have access to the Council's training programme for foster carers and other social care staff.

Whilst undertaking the private foster carer's assessment, the social worker may consider it appropriate to stipulate attendance at a specific training programme for the suitability of a specific placement. If this is the case, the supervising social worker will discuss the matter with the private foster carer/s and will make a clear recommendation in their assessment report to the Fostering Panel. It will be clear in the report if the identified training is a requirement in order for the private foster carer to be deemed suitable. The Agency Decision Maker will make an appropriate decision and the private foster carer/s will be advised accordingly.

All private foster carers, children and parents are informed of their right to make a complaint and how to do so.

10 Ensuring the welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted

All children and young people privately fostered will be given a copy of the leaflet 'Private Fostering - A guide for children and young people' according to their age and understanding. If required the allocated social worker for the child will assist the child in reading it or obtain a copy in other languages if applicable.

Statement of Purpose Private Fostering 2015-2016

The child's social worker is required to visit the privately fostered child at a minimum of six weekly intervals and more frequently should this be appropriate. During the second and subsequent years, visits are required to take place at least every 12 weeks or as frequently as necessary. The social worker should speak to the child on their own and also ensure the child is aware of their right to raise any concerns about their care with a safe adult.

Parents of proposed/current privately fostered children or young people will be advised, if it is in the best interests of the child/young person, of other service provision or other agency help available, which could remove the necessity for the child/young person to be privately fostered.

The Head of Service (Looked After Children) monitors the operational performance of services for privately fostered children and reports annually to the Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board.

An electronic database is used to record all cases that are notified to the Local Authority, and the Performance Analyst collates data and any analysis that is required. The allocated social worker ensures that all statutory work is completed within the required timescales and reports any areas of concern directly to their line manager. Regular meetings are held with relevant people to ensure that the action plan is on target and what departmental action might be required.

In addition to statutory visits, other visits are made at the request of privately fostered children/young people, their parents, or the private foster carers. Interpreters independent of parents and private foster carers will be used where required or requested by the child/young person or where the preferred language is not English.

There is no statutory obligation to visit the parent/s or those with parental responsibility to discuss the progress of their child. However, social workers will consider any necessary advice and support when undertaking their assessment and should visit when at the request of the parents/those with parental responsibility.

Any child protection concerns which may be identified are investigated in line with the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Child Protection Procedures.

Young people who have been privately fostered may qualify to receive advice and assistance from the Children's Social Care Leaving Care service. Where this is the case an assessment and support plan will be developed with the young person by the social worker and leaving care worker.

11 Information and Support for Privately Fostered Children

All privately fostered children/young people will have a named social worker and will be given their contact details and written information about private fostering appropriate to their age and understanding. They will be offered opportunities to attend local activities arranged by the Child Participation Development Officer. There is also a booklet and letter specifically for young people to help them understand what private fostering is.

12 Other notifications

Ending a Private Foster Placement

If the private foster carer ceases to care for the child/ren they must notify the Local Authority. This should preferably be in advance but if the child has left, notification should be not more than 48 hours after the change. They must also tell the Local Authority the name and address of the person who has taken over the care of the child/ren (this does not apply if the child is returning to the foster carer within 27 days).

A notification of ending a private foster placement must state the reasons for termination. The parent or any other person who has parental responsibility for a privately fostered child must notify the Local Authority if the private fostering arrangement is ended.

Change of Address

Any person privately fostering a child must notify the Local Authority of any change of address which is likely to be effective for more than six weeks.

Change in Household

The private foster carer must notify the Local Authority of any person (child or adult) who begins or ceases to be part of the household whether on a permanent or temporary basis. This would include another child who is to be privately fostered for whom notification requirements would apply.

Convictions

The private foster carer must inform the Local Authority of any new convictions relevant to any person living or employed in the household. Such conviction may lead to the private foster carer being disqualified from caring for children.

Death of Child

If a child dies whilst in the care of a private foster carer the Local Authority must be informed immediately.

Notifications of changes must be made in writing to the Bracknell Forest Council Duty and Assessment Team. Under **Section 70 of the Children Act 1989**, persons failing to make the above notifications may be guilty of an offence.

13 Support and links with partner agencies

We aim to work with our partner agencies to provide all privately fostered children/young people with the information they need to access services and to liaise with relevant professionals. All partner agencies will be given information on their responsibilities regarding notification under the Regulations 2005. Information materials continue to be sent out to schools, health organisations, and faith groups following a rolling timetable.

14 Monitoring and reviewing arrangements

A child who is privately fostered is a child in need and the Child in Need Plan in respect of the child should be reviewed in accordance with Child in Need Review schedules and procedures. Child in Need Plans should be reviewed by the child's social worker at a minimum frequency of three months, and should involve contributions from the child, parents and all those involved with the child.

Statement of Purpose Private Fostering 2015-2016

The Authority's Foster Carers' Reviewing Officer holds responsibility for reviewing the placements of privately fostered children who are resident within the Bracknell Forest Council area. The first review will take place within twelve months of the initial sign off by the Agency Decision Maker. More frequent reviews can be arranged if the particular circumstances of a case suggest this to be appropriate.

The review will usually involve a face-to-face meeting between the Reviewing Officer and the foster carer. Where the child who is the subject of the review is of an appropriate age and understanding he/she will also be seen as part of the review process.

Case files of privately fostered children and Private Foster Carers are included in the file auditing schedule which reviews case files to ensure records are accurate, comprehensive, well organised, have management oversight and are up to date and that actions comply with Regulations.

Bracknell Forest Council has good quality management information systems. The following records will be maintained:

- 1) The numbers and placement details of privately fostered children in the area
- 2) The numbers and details of Private Foster Carers in the area
- 3) The number and details of new notifications which are also recorded on the statistical data return and submitted to the Department for Education as required.
- 4) The number and nature of enquiries received by Bracknell Forest Council in relation to private fostering, the responses given and any subsequent action.

The Council's Performance Team and the Head of Service, Looked After Children monitor the timescales affecting children. This includes placement visits to privately fostered children. Reasons for potential or actual delay can therefore be identified, senior manager informed and actions taken to remedy the situation. All reports for children in these arrangements will be presented to the Head of Service within 42 days of the initial notification. A report setting out the impact of the work relating to private fostering is presented annually to the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

15 Comments, compliments and representations

It is the policy of Bracknell Forest Council to actively encourage comments and representations concerning the delivery and nature of its service.

Any child receiving or refused a service from the Children or Family Placement Team, his/her parents, anyone who has parental responsibility for him/her or, any other such person as the Council considers has sufficient interest in the child's welfare, has a right to make a complaint when an issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved.

If more information is required regarding the Compliments and Complaints procedure, please contact: 01344 352020

16 Inspection

The Private Fostering Service is inspected by OFSTED and the Bracknell Forest Service was inspected in July 2011 with an outcome of Good. Details can be found on the OFSTED website - www.ofsted.gov.uk/

Statement of Purpose Private Fostering 2015-2016

Enquiries should be addressed to:

OFSTED
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

03001 1231231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Office of the Children's Commissioner

The Office of the Children's Commissioner
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Tel: 020 7783 8330
Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

ANNUAL PRIVATE FOSTERING REPORT DATE: 30.05.2017

REPORT FROM: ROSANNE TURNER, Team Manager, Family Placement Team
PETER HODGES, Head of Service, Looked After Children

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the LSCB of the Private Fostering activity undertaken by Children's Social Care's (CSC) between 01/04/16 - 31/03/17 and includes the raising awareness actions with the public and professionals who have contact with children in the community. It should be read in conjunction with the Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2017/18.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 For LSCB to note the actions and progress of Children's Social Care in implementing the existing legislation relevant to private fostering set out in Part 9 of, and Schedule 8 to, the Children Act 1989, and regulations made under Part 9 of that Act: The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.
- 2.2 The regulations require local authorities to satisfy themselves of the suitability of a proposed arrangement or otherwise exercise their powers to prohibit, or to impose requirements on, the arrangement before the child is privately fostered, where advance notice of the arrangement is given, thereby providing additional safeguards for privately fostered children.
- 2.3 Together these define the requirements placed on the LA in respect of private fostering, including any arrangements where a pupil remains cared for within a boarding school for longer than two weeks during the holidays (to be treated as a Private Fostering arrangement).
- 2.4 For the LSCB to assist Children's Social Care in the task of raising awareness, ensuring that Partner agencies are aware of their responsibilities towards privately fostered children in the community, particularly during Private Fostering week.

3. DEFINITION OF A PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILD

- 3.1 A privately fostered child is defined as one under the age of 16 (18 if disabled) who is cared for by someone other than a parent or close relative as defined in section 105 of the Children Act 1989. Close relatives are defined as step-parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts (whether of full blood, half blood or marriage/affinity). Private foster carers may be from an extended family, for example, a cousin or great uncle. They may be a friend of the family, another non-relative, or someone unknown who has advertised to offer to privately foster a child. Privately fostered children include children sent from abroad to stay with another family. A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for him or her has done so for fewer

than 28 days and does not intend to do so for longer than that, or the child returns home regularly whilst being cared for by other people. (DfE)

4. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AGAINST IDENTIFIED TARGETS / PRIORITIES

The duties of the LA have two components:

4.1 To assess the suitability of any private fostering arrangements and to provide ongoing monitoring and support to children who are privately fostered.

4.1.2 There is a clear process within Children's Social Care in respect of the assessment and management of private fostering arrangements. The process which follows the legal requirements (for assessment and meeting with the child and carers within defined timescales) is well embedded within the Children's and Family Placement Teams. As a result, notifications of new or potential private fostering arrangements are responded to in a timely manner and children, parents and carers are given clear information.

4.1.3 Where children are not previously known to Children's Social Care, an assessment is undertaken by the Duty Team social worker for the child and a social worker from Family Placement Team to assess the suitability of the carers. Where the child is known to Children's Social Care, the allocated social worker will continue to work with the child and the process of assessment is completed as already described. Completed assessments are presented to the Foster Panel for scrutiny before a senior manager gives final agreement to the 'suitability' of the arrangement.

Children are visited within the first seven days of notification of the arrangement whether this is a proposed or current arrangement where the child is already living with the carer. Following this, visits are at a minimum of six weekly intervals in the first year, and intervals of not more than 12 weeks in subsequent years. Carers can have ongoing support from the Family Placement Team if this is required.

4.1.4 There are currently two ongoing private fostering arrangements within Bracknell Forest. The children in these arrangements are subject to a Child in Need (CIN) plan and during 2016/17 continued to receive visits in line with the Regulations. The assessment of the carers of one of these children is almost complete, and in the interim has been presented to Foster Panel for quality assurance and oversight. A third privately fostered child turned 16 during this period, so the arrangement has ended.

4.1.5 During the last 12 months, there has been 1 new notification of a private fostering arrangement. This notification came from the parent, whose child was already known to Children's Social Care. A further five potential notifications were subsequently found to not be private fostering arrangements. When notified, the situations are always . This is deemed good practice always to ensure all arrangements are thoroughly vetted to ensure they meet the criteria and arrangements for children are safe.

4.1.6 During 2016/17 the number of notifications showed a decrease on the previous year (3 in 2015/16). It is useful to note that over the last three years a number of notifications have been made by Education teams, including the School Admissions team, Education Welfare and individual schools. This seems to evidence that the ongoing publicity and information sharing has had the impact of disseminating knowledge about private fostering and the requirements to inform the Local Authority.

4.1.7 There are five independent boarding schools within Bracknell Forest. The Family Placement Team contacts the Head Teachers within each school each term. This ensures that schools are routinely informed about the requirement to notify the Local Authority about any private fostering requirements where a pupil remains cared for within a boarding school for longer than two weeks during the holidays. Each school is sent a form to provide information about such pupils and is asked to return the form to Children's Social Care even if there are no arrangements in place. This approach has been successful and ensures that no children are overlooked. The team request a nil return and there have been no notifications from the boarding schools of private fostering arrangements in 2016/17.

4.2 To raise public and professional awareness of private fostering and the requirement for parents and carers to notify the LA of any such arrangements or intended arrangements.

4.2.1 The responsibility for arranging publicity and raising awareness about private fostering sits within the Family Placement Team. Currently an Assistant Team Manager (ATM) leads in this area, with assistance from a Family Worker and the Recruitment and Publicity Officer. A rolling programme is followed to meet with professionals and community groups and to distribute information in the form of leaflets, posters, the website and posts on social media including Facebook and Twitter. The ATM attends a social work team meeting within Children's Social Care at least once per year where a quiz or discussion is used to improve knowledge. She is also available to attend team meetings with Education Welfare, Adult Mental Health, School Admissions Team, Family Intervention Project, Life Chances Team, and the Foster Panel.

4.2.2 New workers in Children's Social Care are provided with prompt cards and leaflets as a part of their induction in their new role. The private fostering policy and procedure was updated in August 2014 and will be reviewed again this year. The manager meets with the policy officer to ensure procedures and policies are updated.

4.2.3 Publicity also takes the form of ensuring that posters and leaflets are updated and placed in GP surgeries, schools and Children's Centres, mail drops to various community groups 1 x per year and is included in the Fostering Fortnight activities as well as general fostering recruitment activity. The Bracknell Forest website is in the process of being updated, and the Private Fostering page will include new, attractive and informative material.

4.2.4 In addition to the above, prompt cards are in place for professionals which sets out the requirements of the legislation along with contact details for Children's Social Care. They have also been sent to all GPs in the area by their LSCB representative. A second prompt card for social workers details what is required when they visit a child in a private fostering arrangement. The private fostering cue cards for social workers have been reprinted and reflect current practice guidelines. The cards are laminated and in A5 size for ease of use and durability. There are also four A5 leaflets for professionals, parents, carers and children/young people, which are used to support their understanding of roles and responsibilities.

4.2.5 There are information packs for parents, carers and young people (where deemed appropriate), with the relevant notification forms and information booklets. A specific document for private foster carers to detail the information required and consent to seek relevant checks has been developed. A revised medical reference form is also

in place. This supports the prompt delivery of information to families from the Duty Team to ensure all relevant information is provided and collected.

- 4.2.6 The publicity strategy is embedded within the service. It covers a further range of professionals such as School Nurses, Health Visitors, Nursery Managers, Designated Teachers forum, Education Welfare Officers and Children's centres. A letter outlining the purpose of Private Fostering is sent to the police. This year we have developed the strategy further with visits to teams or leaflet mail-drops to Housing, Drug and Alcohol service, Child-minding services, Educational Psychology Service and Libraries.
- 4.2.7 We have also liaised with a worker from Early Years who works with families whose first language is not English. As a result we have developing information sheets about private fostering to promote understanding in the three key languages identified, Lithuanian, Polish and Nepalese for families. Other families identified will also be provided with this service if required.

5. QUALITY ASSURANCE WITHIN CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

- 5.1 In order to quality assure the decision making, practice and record keeping within the Children's Social Care (CSC) teams, a review of the two private fostering arrangements was completed in March 2017. The overall aim of such a review is to improve the outcomes for children and young people, through monitoring and evaluating the quality of service delivery in relation to private fostering arrangements.
- 5.2 In all cases, visits were carried out within seven days of Children's Social Care being notified of the private fostering arrangement and ongoing social work visits to the child had taken place within timescales. There was evidence of management oversight in 100% of cases.
- 5.3 It has been agreed that an overview of any new private fostering arrangements will be read by the Head of Service for LAC within 42 days and prior to these being presented to the Foster Panel. Therefore management overview can be clearly recorded at each stage.

6. ACTIONS DURING 2016/17

- 6.1 Children's Social Care seeks to ensure as many agencies as possible are aware of their responsibilities around reporting private fostering arrangements. This will enable the local authority to assess and support such arrangements and ensure children are safeguarded.

In addition to the above activity the family placement team have worked in partnership with the Public Health Team to create an animation which it is anticipated will be circulate to agencies via the LSCB and available on the public website.

7. CHALLENGES OR RISKS

7.1 There is a need to ensure that private fostering is 'kept in mind' by public and professionals alike. In a busy and fast paced world, this very small but potentially very vulnerable group of children need to remain the focus of our work. There is a need for all agencies to be aware of the definition of private fostering and that the LSCB support the raising of awareness of the responsibilities for privately fostered children and young people. This will enable social workers to assess the needs of the children and the suitability of the arrangements and therefore safeguard these children.

8. CONSULTATIONS

None for this report.

Background Papers (if any)

None

Appendices (if any)

Statement of Purpose for Private Fostering 2017/18

Contact for further information

Name:	Designation:
Rosanne Turner	Team Manager Family Placement Team
Peter Hodges	Head of Service Looked After Children
Email Address:	Telephone Number:
Rosanne.turner@bracknell-forest.gov.uk	01344 352653
peter.hodges@bracknell-forest.gov.uk	01344 351532

This page is intentionally left blank

TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

Date: 20 JUNE 2017

**APPROVAL OF THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR THE LARCHWOOD SHORT
BREAK UNIT 2017 AND FOR NOTING LARCHWOOD SHORT BREAK UNIT ANNUAL
REPORT 2016 - 2017**

Director of Children, Young People and Learning

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the revised Statement of Purpose for the Larchwood Short Break Unit for 2016 – 2017 and to provide updating information of the Larchwood Short Break Unit by way of Annual Report 2016 – 2017.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the revised Statement of Purpose 2017 for the Larchwood Short Break Unit [annex 1] is APPROVED and the Larchwood Short Break Unit Annual Report 2016 – 2017 [annex 2] is noted.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Statement of Purpose is compliant with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015. These regulations place a requirement on Registered Children's Homes to produce a Statement of Purpose under schedule 1, regulation 16. The statement of purpose should be child-focused, indicating how the home provides individualised care to meet the Quality Standards for the children in their care.
- 3.2 The compilation of the Statement of Purpose for Registered Children's Homes is a requirement in the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards April 2015 (Department for Education).
- 3.3 This version is set out in and includes 'Matters to be included in the Statement of Purpose' schedule 1, regulation 16 of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015.
- 3.4 There is also a Childrens Guide that includes a summary of the Statement of Purpose for Children and Young people.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The completion of a Statement of Purpose is a legal requirement within the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015, which includes a requirement for the Statement of Purpose to be approved at least annually. As this is a legal requirement alternative options have not been considered.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 The Statement of Purpose is essentially a live operational document, which needs to be updated as and when details within the service change, regulations change or practice moves on.
- 5.2 The current Statement of Purpose also incorporates all the learning from previous Ofsted inspections. The Statement of Purpose is a key document which is considered in all inspections. The service is currently rated as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, a grading that has been maintained since 2014.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 This report complies with the requirement under the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 to produce at least annually a statement of purpose setting out the operational arrangements at Larchwood.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The Borough Treasurer is satisfied that there are sufficient resources to meet the requirements of the statement of purpose.

Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.3 As is described in the Statement of Purpose within Larchwood aims to achieve the best possible outcome for any child receiving services, taking into account all factors of ethnicity, religion, language, culture and disability.

Other Officers

- 6.4 The Children's Social Care Management Team (CSCMT) has considered and endorsed this Statement of Purpose in May 2017.

7 CONSULTATION

Method of Consultation

- 7.1 The statement is publicly available at the Unit for perusal and comment and is placed on the Council's public website. Service users and other interested parties are encouraged to make comments regarding both the statement and the service provided at the unit.
Children were consulted for the production of the Children's version (Children's Guide)

Representations Received

- 7.2 There have been no representations received.

Background Papers

Statement of Purpose for the Larchwood Short Break Unit 2017 **[annex 1]**
Larchwood Short Break Unit Annual Report 2016 – 2017 **[annex 2]**

Contact for further information

Sonia Johnson
Head of Specialist Support
Children's Social Care
Sonia.Johnson@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
Tel: 01344-353132

Approved by Cllr Dr Gareth Barnard
Executive Member, Children Young People
& Learning

Signature.....

Date.....

Approved by Nikki Edwards
Director, Children, Young People
& Learning

Signature.....

Date.....

This page is intentionally left blank

LARCHWOOD SHORT BREAK UNIT STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2017



This document fulfils the requirements of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 Schedule 1, and the Department for Education Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards April 2015.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page number
INTRODUCTION	4
QUALITY AND PURPOSE OF CARE	
• Statement of the range of needs	4
• Ethos of the home	4
• Accommodation offered	4
• Location of the home	5
• Arrangements for supporting the cultural, linguistic and religious needs of children	5
• Complaints	5
• Access to the home's child protection and behaviour management policies	6

VIEW'S WISHES AND FEELINGS	
• Consulting with Children and Young People	7
• The home's policy and approach to anti discriminatory practice and children's rights	7

EDUCATION	
• Supporting children with special educational needs	9
• Supporting education and educational achievements	9

ENJOYMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities within the home 	10

HEALTH	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health care provided within the home 	10

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting contact between children, families and friends 	11

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach to monitoring and surveillance 	11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioural support 	12

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers' details 	13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff experience and qualifications 	14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing structure 	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting appropriate role models within the home 	17

CARE PLANNING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission to the home 	17

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The statement of purpose is a requirement of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations, April 2015. The statement is intended to provide a guide to Larchwood Short Break Unit for professionals, the public, Elected Members and external organisations.
- 1.2 This is a key document against which the unit is inspected by Ofsted, and is formally reviewed and approved by the Executive Member and the Director for Children, Young People and Learning on an annual basis

2 QUALITY AND PURPOSE OF CARE

Statement of the range of needs

- 2.1 Larchwood is a short break unit, providing respite care for children with a range of complex needs who have a learning and/or physical disability. The children and young people who access Larchwood require personal care, medication, behavioural management and support with learning and achievements.

Ethos of the home

- 2.2 Our ethos within Larchwood is to make a positive difference to the personal, social and learning lives of the children and young people who attend. We strive to create a positive environment which promotes a 'friendship matters' culture, and where children and young people are offered experiences and opportunities to assist them with achieving their aspirations, and goals in life,
- 2.3 Children and young people are supported through a multi-agency approach to aspire to the continuous development of knowledge, understanding and skills, whilst being safe, socialising with friends and having fun. Larchwood adopts a holistic, person centred approach to the care and development of children and young people and endeavours to ensure that they are enabled to overcome barriers, whatever and wherever these may be.

Accommodation offered

- 2.4 Larchwood is a purpose built resource that has been in existence since 1977 and has evolved over the years to meet the changing needs of children with disabilities and their families. The accommodation is all on the ground floor and there is appropriate access to all areas.
- 2.5 Facilities within the unit include an adapted bath, fixed and mobile hoisting equipment, a sensory room and fully accessible gardens which include specialist sensory and play equipment.
- 2.6 Larchwood provides weekend overnights, weekday overnights, school holiday day care, after-school care, and social community based activities for children and young

people. Larchwood is registered for children of both genders aged 5 and over, up to their 18th birthday.

- 2.7 Larchwood is registered with Ofsted a 5 bedded unit, and can accommodate a maximum of five children or young people overnight. In addition, the unit offers services to other children and young people for after school visits, day care or community based activities.

Location of the home

- 2.8 The unit is based in Bracknell, Berkshire and is situated in a quiet residential area close to the town centre, local leisure resources and facilities. In close proximity to the home there are two supported living houses which accommodate adults with learning disabilities, offices which accommodate council employees and a child protection suite, a number of private residential homes, and above the unit are four flats that provide temporary housing for families. The location of the unit has been formally assessed and there are no known significant risks in regard to location.

Arrangement for supporting the cultural, linguistic and religious needs of children

- 2.9 We strive to be inclusive and sensitive to the individual needs and aspirations of children, young people and their families. We also aim to be family orientated, and culturally competent, respectful of children and young people who have a diverse range of needs and backgrounds. All the children/young people who receive a service from Larchwood are valued as individuals, with different needs and individual rights.
- 2.10 The values deriving from different backgrounds are recognised and respected at all times. Within the care planning process the team recognise different need in relation to ethnicity, culture, religion, diet and sexual orientation where they may exist.
- 2.11 Within the unit there are a number of resources which recognise ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences, and support workers enable the children and young people to explore these through play. They include books, posters, toy figures, games, multi cultural music and cultural evenings. Support workers encourage children/young people to question and celebrate differences, through activities, role modelling and discussions.
- 2.12 Being part of Bracknell Forest Council, Larchwood have access to services that can provide translation of documents in other languages, braille and audio, and interpreters to attend reviews or meetings where necessary.
- 2.13 Special dietary needs and individual preferences are recognised, and are included in the menu planning process.

Complaints

- 2.14 Complaints are dealt with at the earliest opportunity and by the most appropriate person in accordance with Bracknell Forest Council's complaints procedure, copies of which are available in the reception area of the unit, or on the Bracknell Forest Council website.

- 2.15 Within Larchwood we have developed various ways in which our children and young people can make formal and informal comments, observations, or complaints. These include;
- An accessible Children's Guide found at the entrance to the unit, which includes information on how to make a complaint and where to find support in doing so.
 - A posting box system that is freely used within the lounge area, with a range of tools such as symbols and tick boxes to ensure varying levels of communication are catered for.
 - A children and young person's consultation form, which children are supported to complete before their reviews.
 - Children are also visited regularly by their Social Workers which offers a further independent opportunity to feedback in regards to the service they receive.
 - Consultation board in the entrance hall affording opportunities to communication with the use of PECS, pictures and or switch buttons.
 - A visual book for staff to record from observations of non verbal children and young people's unhappiness, worries, and or complaints.
- 2.16 Larchwood is committed to receiving and acting upon feedback from service users, whether this is positive or indicating dissatisfaction with the services provided. Complaints and compliments are monitored by the Regulation 44 visits each month, and by the Complaints Manager.
- 2.17 The unit has a separate telephone line for children and young people to access should they wish to complain directly to the Complaints Manager, or to the Head of Service.

Children and their families are also able to make a complaint to Ofsted or to the Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield (appointed March 2015) at:
Office of the Children's Commissioner
0800 528 0731

advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Or

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
0300 1231231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

[Access to the home's child protection and behaviour management policies](#)

- 2.18 Larchwood adheres to the Berkshire LSCB Child Protection Procedures, a 'live' online document which can be found at:
<http://proceduresonline.com/berks/>

Larchwood have also completed their own internal Section 11, Children Act 2014 audit in 2016

- 2.19 Alongside this Larchwood also has an approved bespoke safeguarding policy, which includes an easy to follow flow chart. This policy is available to staff as a paper document in the policies and procedures folder, on a shared computer drive and available to children, young people, families, carers, professionals and others involved in the care and protection of a child upon request.
- 2.20 Larchwood also has a Behaviour Management Policy, available in the above formats and upon request.

3 VIEWS, WISHES AND FEELINGS

Consulting with Children and Young People

- 3.1 Regular consultation takes place with children and young people regarding their experience of Larchwood and how they would like the service to develop. Larchwood recognises that children and young people should be offered opportunities, choice and control at every appropriate opportunity.
- 3.2 Consultation is part of our everyday work however the below illustrates some of the other methods we use. :
- The 'Larchwood Lions' -This is Larchwood's participation group, providing feedback to the management team about the unit on a regular basis.
 - Interactive consultation board with varying topics
 - Post box system, user friendly informal way to ascertain views
 - Choices in the meals provided
 - Children's consultation booklet
 - Direct observations from staff
 - Analysis of behavioural incidents
 - Annual children's consultation forms
 - Feedback from parents/carers and other involved professionals

The children and young people at Larchwood are also encouraged to attend the newly developed Council for Children with Disabilities – BOOM (Because Our Opinions Matter) to provide an opportunity to share their views about the unit and the wider services they receive.

The home's policy and approach to anti discriminatory practice and children's rights

- 3.3 Larchwood works within the Equality Act 2010. This act protects people in the workplace and in wider society from discrimination. Discrimination can come in any of the following forms:
- Direct discrimination- treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than others

- Indirect discrimination – putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage
- Harassment – unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an offensive environment for them.
- Victimisation – treating someone unfairly because they've complained about discrimination or harassment.

Protected characteristics are described as:

- Age
- Being or becoming a transsexual person
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or having a child
- Disability
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

- 3.4 Larchwood has a policy on anti-discriminatory practice that all staff adhere to. No child or groups of children or their families will be discriminated against. Our staff team will not judge or treat children at Larchwood or their family unfairly or unequally.
- 3.5 Should staff become aware that an individual or a family is experiencing discrimination they will offer immediate support and promptly address the needs of all concerned. This will then be passed on to the Unit Manager to investigate or raised further as necessary.
- 3.6 Anti-discriminatory measures in place to protect children and their families include:
- Careful observation and monitoring
 - Accurate case recording
 - Being vigilant in the link worker role
 - Having an understanding of the families' needs
 - Being aware of the signs and symptoms
 - Raising concerns with others
- 3.7 Bracknell Forest Council and Larchwood are committed to the principles of The Human Rights Act 1998. Children with disabilities are vulnerable. Their needs and interests must be heard and given the utmost consideration in decision making. Larchwood use every opportunity to promote the rights of children with disabilities and to improve children's lives and social status.
- 3.8 Within the principle of equal opportunities, all young people have rights. At Larchwood children and young people have the right to:
- Be treated with respect
 - Be treated fairly
 - Be listened to when people are making plans about their future
 - Be able to go to school
 - Be in good health
 - Be able to complain if they are unhappy or worried about something

- Be able to have an advocate who can advise and help sort out matters when their stay is not going well
- Be looked after by staff who actively promote the above rights

3.9 The concept of the 'best interests' of the child is paramount in the values of Larchwood. The unit is committed to promoting the rights of children with disabilities and ensuring they are able to make a meaningful contribution and achieve their aspirations. Children and young people are involved in decision making and planning about their care and wider service developments. Inclusion is achieved by accessing mainstream activities such as going to the cinema, meals out in restaurants, and youth clubs in the community.

4 EDUCATION

Supporting children with special educational needs

4.1 Children/young people during their stay at Larchwood continue to attend school as part of their daily routine. School transport will be consistent with that at home to ensure continuity. Children's escorts have a good relationship with staff in the unit and ensure that any communication from school or home is fluent to staff.

4.2 Schools attended in the local area include:-

- Kennel Lane School (Bracknell)
- Manor Green (Maidenhead)
- Addington School (Lower Earley)
- Heathermount (Ascot)

4.3 Some families of Children and Young People have a home/ school/ Larchwood diary to help ensure a consistency of care between all carers and to enable information sharing. This enables support workers to gain an insight into the child or young person's day and help to reinforce and praise events and achievements that day/week. There is always close liaison between Larchwood, families and school.

4.4 The importance of education is acknowledged. If children and young people bring homework into the unit to complete, support workers assist with this where necessary and they are encouraged to complete tasks. There is a wide range of books available in the unit, three iPads, a large touch screen television with a wide range of applications, games, toys, art activities, and opportunities for shopping and cooking amongst many other opportunities

Supporting education and educational achievements

4.5 Larchwood staff attend school reviews and make visits to the schools to see their link children. The link worker will maintain good contact, and work together with the teacher and young person to plan their smart star achievements in line with those educational targets set at school. There is an achievement rewards box at Larchwood in which children and young people can choose an item when they have reached or made good progress in working towards their goal ladders. We also recognise and celebrate achievements through the use of our 'WOW' board which is displayed in the dining area.

- 4.6 The Unit Manager meets termly with a member of the school staff to identify areas of concern or improvement with either individual young people or services, and attends the professional liaison meetings held at Kennel Lane School when required.

5 ENJOYMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

Activities within the home include:-

- 5.1 An extensive variety of activities which take into account a young person's individual likes, choices, needs and aspirations. The provision of play equipment and outings is a key aspect of the service. A wide range of play activities are provided, these include, up to date I.T systems (iPads), art, games, puzzles, sensory toys. The indoor sensory room provides a space for children and young people to enjoy a range of sensory activities in a calm and relaxing environment.
- 5.2 A safe and secure garden which provides opportunities for enjoyment with specialist outdoor play equipment such as a wheel chair accessible swing, water play, trampoline and climbing frame with slide.
- 5.3 Access to a mini bus and drivers, which are used to provide a variety of outings such as trips to the coast and enable the children/young people to access local community facilities.
- 5.4 An 'On the Move' service for children or young people where there is an assessed need to have the opportunity to access and enjoy the local community either alone or with their peers with appropriate support. This is particularly valuable to young people approaching adulthood.
- 5.5 A teenage group, that meets fortnightly to have an independent cooking session. This involves decision making, team work, shopping for ingredients, preparing and cooking the main meal for the evening.
- 5.6 Overall the unit works to ensure continuity of care delivery and consistency within the peer group settings to promote social interaction and friendships.

6 HEALTH

Health care provided within the home

- 6.1 The unit is able to provide services for, and assist children/young people who have a range of additional health problems. These include epilepsy, asthma, eczema and gastrostomy feeding. Supporting individual children's health is covered within the child/young person's care plan, and emergency procedures are in place if necessary.
- 6.2 Our local community nursing team delivers specific care plan training for the staff team in the administration of hormone injections, emergency epilepsy medication and procedures, and competencies for gastrostomy feeds. The nurses delivering this training are usually the named specialist nurse for the young people. The health care plans and staff training sheets are located in individual care plans.
- 6.3 Larchwood has access to the Occupational Therapist within the Children's Specialist Support Team who provides support in meeting the needs of children and young people requiring manual handling and specialist equipment. The Occupational

Therapist is fully involved in the care plan and risk profiles of those children and young people.

- 6.4 The unit is able to provide a service for and assist children/young people who are prescribed medication, for which there is a 'Larchwood Safe Administration of Children's Medication Policy and Practice Guidance'. Children and young people who have complex health needs are able to access the service with prior agreement of the Primary Care Trust. It is the responsibility of the Trust and the Unit Manager to ensure a suitably qualified nurse is available to support that young person whilst in the unit. Currently there are no children at Larchwood needing this service. Staff are all aware of the need to promote healthy living, and actively assist children and young people in daily hygiene routines, dental care, food and menu choices. Health is also explored through play, stories and activities.

7 POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Promoting contact between children, families and friends

- 7.1 Larchwood is a Short Break Unit, therefore the aim is to provide children with enjoyable short breaks whilst also giving their families a break – this in itself assist with family relationships and resilience.
- 7.2 Parents are welcome to contact Larchwood at any time during their child's visit. No child or young person can be collected by a person not known to Larchwood staff without prior authorisation from the family and evidence of identity.
- 7.3 Larchwood operates an "open door" visiting policy, and, subject to any legal orders, contact can be made with a child/young person at any time during their stay. As many of our activities include outings outside of the unit, parents and carers are advised to notify staff beforehand if they are intending to visit, in order to ensure the child/young person is in the unit.
- 7.4 Children and young people are able to call their families at any time and staff will support this if necessary.

8 PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Homes approach to monitoring and surveillance

- 8.1 Occasionally, Larchwood has children with health needs that require observation and are monitored during the night using an audio monitor. When this is identified as an assessed need agreement is sought from parents, wherever possible the child/young person, the placing authority and a consent form is signed. The Child or Young Person is made aware when the monitor is switched on and off each time using words, Makaton or symbols as appropriate for them.
- 8.2 The children and young people at Larchwood are provided with support including that of supervision based on their assessed individual needs and as identified in their needs profiles on ratios such as group based, 1:1 or 1:2. The unit is designed so that children and young people can have access to all shared areas of the home, enabling independence and privacy where safe to do so.

- 8.3 The unit has an electronic door alarm on all external doors and key pad exit systems on all 3 external doors that lead to the car park and busy main road. There is unrestricted access to a large garden / play area.
- 8.4 Young people are free to leave / go out at anytime and they have a variety of communication methods available to them to be able to ask a member of staff if they want to go on an outside activity or to be picked up by a parent/carer.
- 8.5 These measures are designed to enhance the children/young person's safety, whilst taking into account issues surrounding deprivation of liberty, enabling free access within the home and its communal areas. These identified risks are reflected in the building risk assessment.
- 8.6 Larchwood staff are aware of the procedures and protocols in place with regard to children who go missing and who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation. A location risk assessment has been undertaken and there are no known risk associated with the location of the unit.

Behavioural support

- 8.7 Larchwood operates within the Bracknell Forest Council Behaviour Management Policy Statement and Guidance. All staff receive training (Team Teach) every two years. The children/young people's care plans are updated every six months and agreed and signed off by parents/carers. Their risk profiles are also reviewed and updated every six months, and more frequently if required, and involve wider multi professional input and agreement. These risk profiles are carried out in conjunction with parents/carers, education, placing social worker and other identified professionals such as occupational therapist where necessary.
- 8.8 The Policy has a strong emphasis on preventative strategies and partnership and the unit liaises closely with the families, the Short Breaks Behaviour Support Specialist and other relevant professionals to look at specific behaviours, and identify the most appropriate way to support children and young people with a range of emotions and behaviours.

Team Teach Aims:

- To promote the least intrusive positive handling strategy and a continuum of gradual and graded techniques, with an emphasis and preference for the use of verbal, non-verbal de-escalation strategies being used and exhausted before positive handling strategies are utilised.
- To enable services to develop acceptable and authorised responses to disruptive, disturbing, angry and aggressive behaviours in a manner that maintains positive relationships and provides safety for all, by training in Team-Teach.
- To reduce the amount of serious incidents involving physical controls in all settings and to emphasise the importance of exhausting behaviour management strategies in the first instance.
- To increase the awareness of staff concerning the importance of recording and reporting, monitoring and evaluating, all incidents involving positive handling.
- To provide a process of repair and reflection for both staff and children.

- 8.9 Support workers at Larchwood will always try to divert the children/young people from behaviour that is unacceptable, using methods agreed in individual care plans and risk profiles. They focus on positive reinforcement, modelling appropriate behaviour and redirection/distraction strategies.
- 8.10 At all times workers are mindful of the need to ensure that the behaviour of one child does not harm another. A distressed young person may be supported by withdrawing them from the group to enable a time for calming down.
- 8.11 The refresher training at a minimum of every two years (as recognised by Team Teach standards) by an external trainer in “Team Teach” re-assesses each individual’s competencies whilst providing opportunities for individual case discussion and a refresher in techniques.
- 8.12 Should any child or young person need any type of physical intervention it is recorded in the physical interventions book, and on their electronic file which alerts their social worker. Parents/carers are notified as soon as practicable and appropriate. Support workers are required to record the young person’s response / views in the physical intervention log, and any impact.
- 8.13 The use of restraint at Larchwood is very rare and detailed records are monitored by the managers at Larchwood, and through the monthly Regulation 44 visits and by the responsible individual (Head of Service).
- 8.14 We promote positive behaviour and our aim is to assist children and young people in restorative conciliatory responses when undesirable behaviours occur. Occasionally it may be appropriate to use a sanction. A child/ young person should be given a warning of an impending sanction and opportunity to alter their behaviour. Sanctions will only be used where it has been clearly identified and agreed in an individual’s care plan and risk profile agreeing that the child/young person has the capacity to understand consequences. The sanctions record book should be completed in full.
- 8.15 A copy of the Bracknell Forest Council’s Behaviour Management Policy Statement and Guidance is available upon request from Larchwood.

9 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Names and work addresses of managers

Registered Provider

Bracknell Forest Council
Department of Children, Young People and Learning
C/O Time Square Market Street
Bracknell
RG12 1JD

Responsible Individual

Sonia Johnson, Head of Specialist Support
Time Square
Market Street
Bracknell
RG12 1JD

Telephone 01344 353132
sonia.johnson@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Registered Manager

Samantha Whitehouse
Larchwood
10 Portman Close
Bracknell
RG42 1NE
Telephone 01344 452315
samantha.whitehouse@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

10 STAFF EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

10.1 The Responsible Individual - The quality and delivery of safe service is overseen by the Responsible Individual, who is a Qualified Social Worker with over 20 years experience in Social care. This includes holding a number of Registered Manager positions and extensive experience in child protection field work.

10.2 The Team Manager, Children's Specialist Support, is responsible for the supervision of the Registered Manager and is accountable along with the Registered Manager for ensuring that a high standard of care is maintained within the unit, and that the unit's resources are effectively deployed within budget.

The Team Manager's Qualifications are:

- Diploma in Social Work
- Diploma in Learning Disability Nursing
- BA (hons) Health & Social Care Studies

Experience: Extensive experience of team management.

10.3 The Registered Manager is responsible for the day to day operational management of the unit.

The Registered Manager's Qualifications are:

- Level 5 Certificate in Leadership Management
- Level 4 Managers in Residential Childcare
- NVQ 4 in Management
- NVQ 3 in Caring for Children and Young People
- BTEC National Diploma in Nursery Nursing

Experience: Extensive experience of managing a respite setting and the team within many years of working with disabled children and children's social care.

10.4 The Senior Residential Practitioner supports the Registered Manager and has the following qualifications:

- Post Graduate Certificate in Education (secondary) with QTS
- Practice Teaching Award

- Diploma in Counselling
- N.V,Q.4 in Management.

Experience: Extensive experience of working with both disabled and mainstream children and young people in education, respite and residential settings

10.5 Qualifications among our staff team include:

- N.V.Q. Level 3 Social Care
- Team Teach qualifications
- Qualification for driving the mini bus.
- Makaton
- Epilepsy

10.6 Experience amongst our staff team includes:

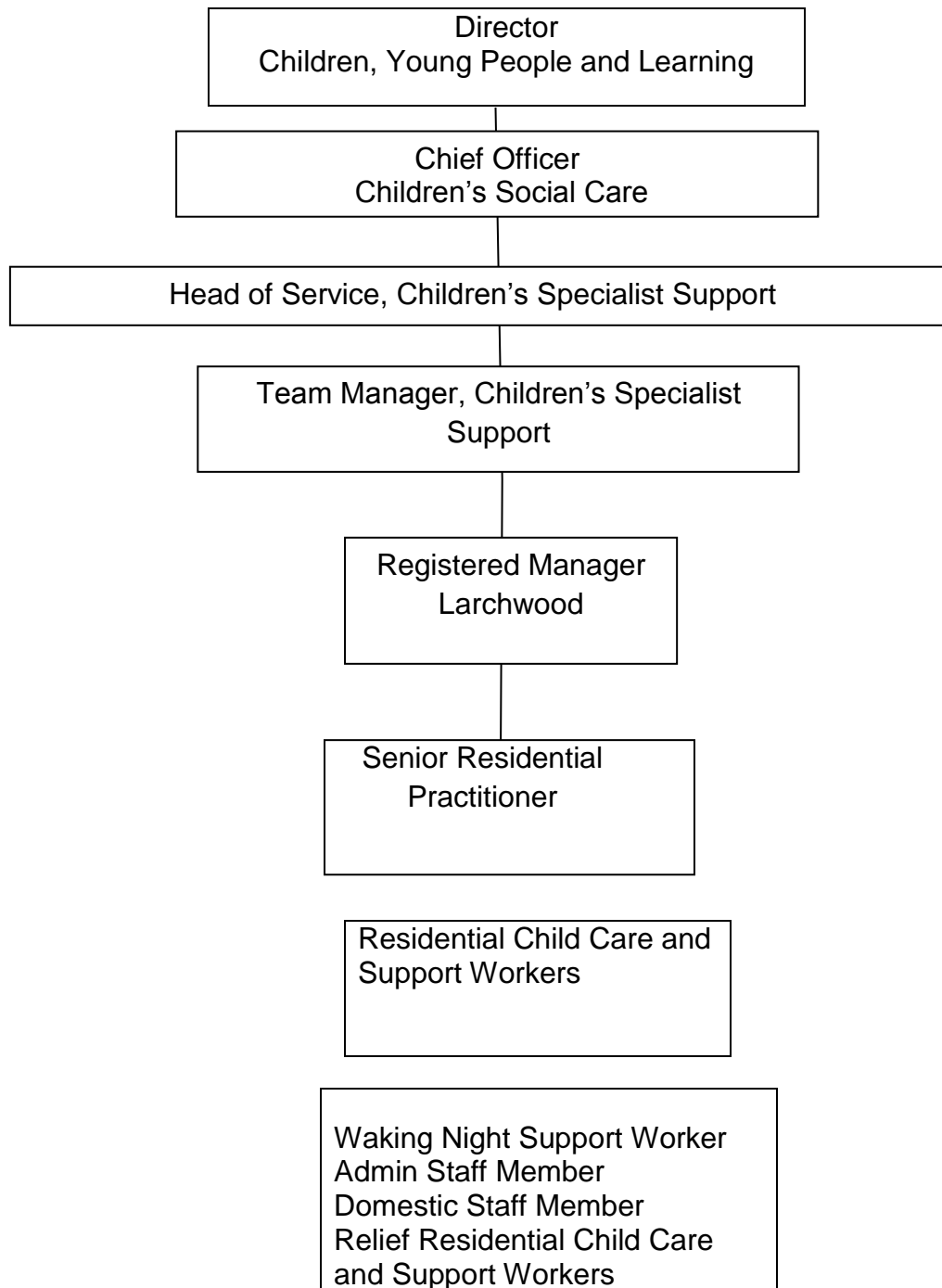
- Mental health awareness
- Knowledge of the Webster Stratton Parenting Course and how to support families to implement the strategies.
- Supporting adults with learning disabilities in their own and group homes to live more independently.
- Extensive experience of working with adults with disabilities in a residential setting.
- Youth work
- Experience in managing challenging behaviours within residential home/school settings

10.7 The Larchwood team is rich with experience of working with children with disabilities and has a proven track record evidenced through Ofsted Inspection of providing services that are of significant value to children / young people and their families.

10.8 Currently there is no requirement for commissioned staff to provide education or health services to the young people.

Staffing structure

10.9 The Leadership Team recognise that staff supervision is an essential component of good quality services. All staff receive supervision in accordance with the Children's Homes Regulations 2015 and within Bracknell Forest Council's Supervision Policy. We use a variety of formats, including team supervision, team meetings and where appropriate, learning events. Staff are provided with individual, direct 1:1 supervision which incorporates reflective practice from the Unit Manager or the Senior Practitioner on a monthly basis. There is an annual appraisal system in place to ensure personal and professional development. Relief staff are supervised regularly by a full time employed Residential Child Care and Support Worker.



Promoting appropriate role models within the home

- 10.10 Larchwood currently has an all female staff group. At present, all six staff are female with one vacant post of 20hrs which will be recruited to in due course. The Unit uses a regular male staff member from a care agency who knows the young people well. We will continue to source male relief and agency workers and will consider both genders when recruiting to increase the range of appropriate role models within the unit. The current team are of a mixed age, religion and sexuality which provide diversity and difference.
- 10.11 Larchwood has a team of experienced and reliable bank staff that are employed by Bracknell Forest Council. The bank staff are used to support the team with annual leave, sickness and gaps within the rota. We also positively engage some regular agency staff to provide a balance of age, ethnicity and experience to our own team.

11 CARE PLANNING

Admissions to the home

- 11.1 Larchwood is a Bracknell Forest provided unit and therefore a significant number of referrals are from Bracknell Forest Children's Social Care. However the unit has capacity to provide services to a larger population and encourages referrals from other local authorities. We currently deliver services to a number of young people from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.
- 11.2 All children eligible to attend Larchwood will have this identified as a need from a social work assessment. Following assessment and in co-production with the child and their family the child/young person's needs and outcomes will be identified, and a proposed support package developed which may include short break, 'On the Move' or day services from Larchwood.
- 11.3 All referrals are discussed with the Unit Manager, Children's Specialist Support Team Manager and Head of Service as part of the multi professional Resource Allocation System (RAS) Panel. Admission to Larchwood must be approved by the Responsible Individual. Alongside this the unit manager will assess the suitability of the referral and evoke a pre-admission plan to aid decision making. Once a decision has been made that the child or young person's needs can be met at Larchwood, a bespoke introduction to the unit will commence. The level of service will depend upon assessed need (agreed at RAS). If the number of visits is under 75 nights per year and no more than 17 consecutive nights, Regulation 48 and either a section 17 or section 20 (4) will apply. If it exceeds 75 night per year or more than 17 consecutive nights, full LAC requirements will need to be observed. A Social Worker will review individual children's needs regularly.

- 11.4 After a referral is accepted, a link-worker is identified from the Larchwood staff team. He/she then makes contact with the family. The child/young person and his or her family are invited to visit the unit, and the link-worker carries out a home visit and school visit to gather the information necessary to write a care plan and formulate an initial risk profile. Following this, a formal multi professional planning meeting will be held. The care plan, risk profile and other relevant documents are finalised at this meeting and introductory visits arranged.
- 11.5 A Social Worker will review individual children's needs regularly. Packages will be reviewed within the 'Looked After' Child (for children who stay more than 75 nights a year or have multiple placements) or 'Child in Need' review system on a (minimum) six monthly basis.
- 11.6 Larchwood is part of the CSST and shares a commitment with others in supporting children and families known to the CSST service who are in crisis, and require short notice stays, providing they meet Larchwood's criteria for admission it may be possible in some circumstances to offer a service.
- 11.7 To enable Larchwood to consider this, the social worker must have assessed the situation and identified the need and Larchwood must be considered the most appropriate option in meeting the child's needs. This means that options such as the child staying with other family/friends, placement with a foster carer, short break carer, or staff working within the child's home have been explored and ruled out or are not considered to be appropriate. Such decisions will also take account of the impact on other children/young people using the service at Larchwood and consider their needs as well, ensuring that Larchwood can continue to deliver high quality care to all those resident on any particular day /night. (This may include a decision to rearrange or if unavoidable to cancel other children's/young people's visits to help with capacity issues or group mix). Decisions around short notice stays will be the responsibility of the Larchwood Management Team in conjunction with the Social Worker and their Manager. Larchwood must not be considered the first point of call when a family is in crisis, but may in some circumstances offer an appropriate best interest solution if other options are not available to meet need.
- 11.8 Prior to any agreement to a child staying at Larchwood (admission) relevant paperwork (Care Plan including all medical information, Risk Profile and Group Impact Risk Assessments) and introductions will need to be completed / reviewed.
- 11.9 Depending on the nature of the crisis being experienced by the child or their family, introductions to the unit may be over more than one visit and will ideally be conducted at the child's pace unless there is good reason not to. Rapid planning for these types of short notice visits will identify and outline a plan.
- 11.10 It must be noted that Larchwood although registered as a Children's Home is a Short Breaks provision. Although we try to be a 'home away from home' we are geared towards children and young people regularly coming and going. As such Larchwood should not be considered an appropriate resource for stays that could not be considered a Short Break (i.e. no longer than 17 consecutive days).
- 11.11 Where a short notice visit cannot be considered a Short Break by definition of the anticipated length of time or there being no clear plan in place a Placement Planning Meeting will take place within 5 days of admission to consider the young person's best interests. Any stay planned for or exceeding 17 days will be notified to Ofsted,

alongside robust planning to move a child to a permanent placement as soon as is practicable.

NOTE: PACKAGES CAN INCREASE OR DECREASE DEPENDING ON ASSESSED NEED AT THAT TIME

Samantha Whitehouse, Registered Manager
Lou Richer, Team Manager
Sonia Johnson, Responsible Individual
Children's Specialist Support Team, Bracknell Forest Council

March 2017

SUMMARY OF THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Larchwood's Children's Guide

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/childrens-guide-to-larchwood.pdf>

A paper format will also be contained within this document

This page is intentionally left blank

LARCHWOOD SHORT BREAK UNIT ANNUAL REPORT April 2016 – March 2017



Larchwood is a short break unit, providing short breaks, respite care and activities in the community for children with complex needs who have a learning and/or physical disability.

Larchwood short breaks provide children and young people with disabilities the opportunity to spend time away from their families in a planned way and for a specified period of time, in accordance with their assessed needs. This could be for a few hours at a time, or overnight stays, on a regular basis.

The time that young people spend at Larchwood is tailored to individual need. Larchwood is a positive environment creating experiences and unlocking opportunities that are aspirational for children and young people, whose achievements are celebrated. Larchwood contributes significantly to Childrens permanency needs being met within their own families to majority.

The outcome of the unit's most recent full Ofsted inspection on the 8th June 2016 was 'outstanding'. The interim inspection which took place on the 5th December 2016 achieved a rating of 'sustained effectiveness'.

1 Context and Finance

1.1 This annual report provides evidence that Larchwood delivers services in line with the Councils narrative of value for money, opportunities to thrive and contributing to safe and self reliant communities. With details of activity over the financial year April 2016-March 2017, it sets out the plans for continuous improvement for the year ahead.

1.2 The report should be read in conjunction with the Statement of Purpose revised in April 2017. Services are delivered under the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and associated Quality Standards which came into effect on 1st April 2015. The Statement of Purpose provides more service delivery detail and sets out the legislative and regulatory context in which Larchwood Short Break Unit operates.

1.3 The number of children receiving a service at Larchwood as at the end of January 2017 is 18 (compared with last year's figure of 24). Whilst the number of children is less, their needs and family circumstances are more complex. Consequently Larchwood are providing more over nights but for fewer children as can be seen below.

1.4 11 children have left over the course of the year, successfully transitioning to adult services or step down to Tier 2 services. Another three young people moved to residential placements, where their needs are being fully met. Four new children have joined, and there has been an increase to two pre-existing care packages within Larchwood.

- The number of overnights during 2016/17: 674 (626 in 15/16)
- The number of tea visits (under 4 hours) : 232 (211 in 15/16)
- The number of day care (over 4 hours) : 315 (266 in 15/16)

1.5 Of the 18 nine children currently receive an overnight provision is nine; three of these are Children Looked After who receive two nights per week each and some additional day care. The remaining provision is a combination of overnights, tea visits, day care, teenage group, and 'On the Move' activities.

1.6 The annual budget for Larchwood staffing and running costs for this period was £441,600, the total spend was £462,078. Positively this is offset by an income target of £102,650 (£30,000 more than the previous year) which was exceed with income generated being £149,062.

- Therefore the actual cost to the Council was £313,016,
- Divided by the 18 children attending is £17,389 per child.
- Three of the 18 children receiving respite are Children Looked After and would most certainly require full time care without the shared care arrangement Larchwood is able to offer. Placing these three children alone in full time residential placements would exceed the annually the annual cost of Larchwood. Additionally all the children attending Larchwood have complex needs and the provision provides services to prevent escalation of need.

2 Referrals

- 2.1 Larchwood is a specialist service for children and young people who meet the criteria for services from the Children's Specialist Support Team (CSST). To ensure fair access and the right offer to meet need, referrals from the CSST are discussed by a multi-agency team at the monthly Resource Allocation System (RAS) Panel. This also offers an opportunity to look at joint arrangements with representatives from Heath and the Special Educational Needs Team (SEN) attending this panel.
- 2.2 Children with additional needs who do not meet the criteria for Larchwood are signposted to the community Short Break Services, also run by the Children's Specialist Support Team.

3 Impact and outcomes

- 3.1 Impact and outcomes are reviewed under the nine Quality Standards (Children's Homes Regulations, April 2015) as follows:
- 3.2 **Quality and purpose of care** – The Unit Manager is required to undertake evaluations of the unit at least every six months under regulation 45. These reports focus on a specific Quality Standard, which is agreed with the Head of Service and Team Manager via the Larchwood monthly management meetings. The last two reports have focused on Quality Standard 7 'Protection of Children' (regulation 12) and Quality Standard 8 'Leadership and Management' (regulation 13).
- 3.3 **Children's views, wishes and feelings** – The children and young people have been actively involved in making decisions and choices in relation to matters within the home. There is a newly created consultation area which captures and evidences this work in a colourful, tactile and child focused manner. The most recent consultations have focused on the updating of the sensory garden.



- 3.4 Education** – Termly meetings are consistent throughout the school year between the Unit Manager and a representative from Kennel Lane School. They continue to afford informal opportunities to facilitate information sharing between Larchwood link workers and school staff. Larchwood staff also attend the Childrens SEN annual reviews and ensure there is continuous liaison with schools regarding transitions and transport. During this period a number of staff undertook joint Team Teach training with the staff from Kennel Lane School providing opportunities to share cost, learn together and further develop relationships.
- 3.5 Enjoyment and Achievement** – The teenage group have been busy this year learning about Bracknell Forest’s Local Offer, consulting and renaming their group to the ‘Larchwood Lions’, planning a Friday night sleep over and taking part in a Keeping Safe workshop, delivered by the CSST specialist workers for CSE and Missing.
- 3.6** The fortnightly independent shopping / cooking sessions continue to see great results with regard to young peoples’ confidence and skills. It is also a way for the children to try new foods.
- 3.7** Larchwood continues to have cultural and diversity evenings which have included an event based on the Rio Carnival and a Hindu meal with themed clothing and activities.
- 3.8** The goal ladder system has been redesigned and replaced this with ‘smart stars’ which are more focused and time limited. There is management oversight in place in which the senior practitioner will evaluate an individual’s progress on a termly basis. This then feeds into their achievement folders and reviews.



- 3.9 Health and well-being** – Staff continue to receive training in individual's health care plans which include gastrostomy feeding, rectal paraldehyde, buccal midazolam and growth hormone injections. One staff member has undertaken training in administering the growth hormone so is competent to train and refresh staff in this procedure. Staff continue to support children and young people with making healthy food and lifestyle choices and in keeping their food diaries up to date.
- 3.10** The report from the full Ofsted inspection in June 2016 states that 'the home's objective to make a positive difference to the personal, social and learning lives of the children and young people is thoroughly demonstrated by progress made in a range of areas, with some children and young people having shown remarkable improvement in skills and behaviours'.
- 3.11 Sleep Clinic** – We have successfully run intensive programmes for five young people and their families during the year. We have delivered a sleep clinic presentation to the Adapted Webster Stratton parenting course and to a Kennel Lane parent/carers forum. We also presented a lunchtime seminar to Children's Social Care.
- 3.12 Positive relationships** – We continue to work closely with parents/carers and professionals. Larchwood promotes 'a friendship matters' culture where children with disabilities are encouraged to make friends and interact with peers as well as paid support workers. Children and young people's transitions are carefully planned and special celebrations are tailored to the individual's interests. The Ofsted Inspector reported: 'Many children and young people attending have considerable difficulty and often little interest in making relationships with peers, nonetheless sterling efforts are made to help them share experiences and to stay overnight when there are others known to them. One mum told me her son had his first friend to visit ever recently.'
- 3.13** Outcome pictures of working together on the sensory garden



- 3.14 Protection of children** – Larchwoods safeguarding policy was updated in June 2016. It contains specific details on the use of the varying forms of communication, guidance on non mobile bruising and management/ on call arrangements. Larchwood currently provides services to one young person subject to a Child Protection Plan.

The Unit Manager attends child protection core groups and conferences, ensuring care plans are kept relevant.

- 3.15 Leadership and Management** – Larchwood is part of the Childrens Specialist Support Service. The full Ofsted Inspection Report, June 2016 quotes ‘ this is very effective leadership which ensures consistently high standards are maintained to meet the needs of the children placed’.
- 3.16** The Registered Manager continues to be supported by the Head of Service for Children’s Specialist Support (Responsible Provider Role), and managed by the Team Manager of the Children’s Specialist Support Team. The management team work closely together to enable continuous improvement. Joint Team meetings are held regularly as well as those just for Larchwood staff. The unit manager attends the RAS and a staff member represents Larchwood at the quarterly front line liaison meetings and another represents Larchwood within the CSC participation group. As a management team we are aware of the importance of good staff supervision to good outcomes for children and 1-1 supervision’s are provided at all levels in accordance with our policy.
- 3.16** The team continues to be fully staff with permanent workers. Supported by the retention and recruitment of a relief pool of staff.
- 3.17 Care Planning** – During the year staff have worked on the introduction of link worker profiles for all the children and young people. This has involved a consultation with all the children who use Larchwood, in regard to what they would like to know about their linkworker and then they complete the profiles with their linkworkers. The aim of this was to build relationships and ensure there was a method in place so that each individual child was able to recognise their linkworker. Children and young people have enjoyed coproducing these with the staff.

Comprehensive risk profiles are in place for all children and young people and Larchwood staff continue to attend C.I.N/ L.A.C reviews and Education reviews.

4 Ofsted Inspections

- 4.1** Larchwood is inspected by Ofsted a minimum of twice a year. As previously stated Larchwood had a full inspection on the 8th June 2016 and the overall outcome of ‘Outstanding’ was achieved. The inspection report stated ‘ the premises are welcoming with lots of displays of children and young peoples’ work and photographs of them participating in activities. The manager has enhanced facilities to ensure that children and young people enjoy their breaks.’
- 4.2** The full inspection was followed by an interim inspection on the 5th December 2016 in which the outcome was ‘sustained effectiveness’. The inspection

report quotes 'the manager and staff at the home continue to provide an excellent service to children and young people, one that is highly valued by parents and professionals alike. Children are helped to enjoy experiences that they may not otherwise have and to make progress. Families manage better because of the short breaks that their children access, these may have averted the need for full-time residential care.'



5 Staffing Profile

5.1 Full time

- Responsible Person
- Registered Unit Manager
- Senior Practitioner
- 5 Care Officers

5.2 Part time

- Waking Night Care Officer – 30 hours
- Administrator – 30 hours
- Domestic – 30 hours
- 2 x Care Officers – 20 hours each

5.3 The Registered Unit Manager Samantha Whitehouse is based full time at Larchwood and is line managed by the Team Manager, Lou Richer of the Children's Specialist Support Team, who is managed by the Head of Service, Sonia Johnson, (the named 'responsible person' for Larchwood).

5.4 All employees have undertaken the required statutory training, and additional training is provided in accordance with need. We have three joint team meetings with the Children's Specialist Support Team per year, and the next one is planned for 27th June 2017.

5.5 The overall training experiences for staff include -

- Child Sexual Exploitation

- E-safety
- Fire Safety
- Team Teach
- Information Security and Data Protection
- Information handling
- Epilepsy
- Food Hygiene
- Safeguarding
- First Aid
- Manual Handling
- Prevent
- Motivation and Team Morale
- Managing Resilience

6 Developments/plans for the year ahead

- 6.1** This year Larchwood will be working more closely with Adult Social Care colleagues to further enhance our provisions for adolescents approaching adulthood and young adults. This will be an exciting piece of work which may result in joint ventures for 16-25yr olds with the potential use of staffing from each team. This forward thinking initiative will benefit those young people and their families approaching adulthood.
- 6.2** Along side this ensuring that Larchwood contributes too embrace the recommendations and opportunities that arise from the CYPL Transformation programme.

Samantha Whitehouse
Registered Unit Manager

Lou Richer
Team Manager

Sonia Johnson
Responsible Individual

Childrens Specialist Support team
01344 354042
Sonia.Johnson@bracknell-forst.gov.uk
May 2017

**TO: CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
18 JULY 2017**

**EXECUTIVE KEY AND NON-KEY DECISIONS RELATING TO
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING
Assistant Chief Executive**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents scheduled Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions relating to Children, Young People and Learning for the Panel's consideration.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 **That the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel considers the scheduled Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions relating to Children, Young People and Learning appended to this report.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 To invite the Panel to consider scheduled Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 Consideration of Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions alerts the Panel to forthcoming Executive decisions and facilitates pre-decision scrutiny.
- 5.2 To achieve accountability and transparency of the decision making process, effective Overview and Scrutiny is essential. Overview and Scrutiny bodies are a key element of Executive arrangements and their roles include both developing and reviewing policy; and holding the Executive to account.
- 5.3 The power to hold the Executive to account is granted under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 which states that Executive arrangements of a local authority must ensure that its Overview and Scrutiny bodies have power to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the Executive. This includes the 'call in' power to review or scrutinise a decision made but not implemented and to recommend that the decision be reconsidered by the body / person that made it. This power does not relate solely to scrutiny of decisions and should therefore also be utilised to undertake pre-decision scrutiny.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

No advice was sought from the Borough Solicitor, the Borough Treasurer or Other Officers or sought in terms of Equalities Impact Assessment or Strategic Risk Management Issues. Such advice will be sought in respect of each Executive decision item prior to its consideration by the Executive.

7 CONSULTATION

None.

Background Papers

Local Government Act 2000

Contact for further information

Andrea Carr – 01344 352122
e-mail: andrea.carr@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME

REFERENCE:	I069711
TITLE:	Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	For the Executive Member to receive the annual report of the LADO function and to note the key messages and recommendations made.
DECISION MAKER:	Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning
DECISION DATE:	18 Jul 2017
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	No financial implications.
CONSULTEES:	Members of Children, Young People & Learning Leadership Team Local Safeguarding Children Board Partners
CONSULTATION METHOD:	Written and oral presentation to key departmental leads

REFERENCE:	I069710
TITLE:	Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	For the Executive Member to receive the annual report of the Independent Reviewing Officer function and to note the key messages and recommendations made.
DECISION MAKER:	Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning
DECISION DATE:	18 Jul 2017
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	No financial implications.
CONSULTEES:	Members of Children, Young People & Learning Leadership Team Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel Local Safeguarding Children Board Partners
CONSULTATION METHOD:	Written and oral presentation to key departmental leads

Unrestricted

REFERENCE:	I069709
TITLE:	Child Protection Conferences Annual Report
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	For the Executive Member to receive the annual report of the Child Protection Case Conference function and to note the key messages and recommendations made.
DECISION MAKER:	Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning
DECISION DATE:	18 Jul 2017
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	No financial implications.
CONSULTEES:	Members of Children, Young People & Learning Leadership Team Members of Corporate Management Team Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel Local Safeguarding Children Board Partners
CONSULTATION METHOD:	Written and oral presentation to key departmental leads.

REFERENCE:	I069708
TITLE:	Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments & Concerns Annual Report
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	For the Executive Member to receive the annual report of the Complaints, Compliments & Concerns function and to note the key messages and recommendations made.
DECISION MAKER:	Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning
DECISION DATE:	18 Jul 2017
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	No financial implications.
CONSULTEES:	Members of Children, Young People & Learning Leadership Team Members of Corporate Management Team Local Safeguarding Children Board Partners
CONSULTATION METHOD:	Written and oral presentation to key departmental leads.

Unrestricted

REFERENCE:	I069712
TITLE:	Participation of Looked After Children Annual Report
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	For the Executive Member to receive the annual report of the Participation function and to note the key messages and recommendations made.
DECISION MAKER:	Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning
DECISION DATE:	20 Jul 2017
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	No financial implications.
CONSULTEES:	Members of Children, Young People & Learning Leadership Team Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel Local Safeguarding Children Board Partners
CONSULTATION METHOD:	Written and oral presentation to key departmental leads

REFERENCE:	I069809
TITLE:	Cross Regional Contract for the Provision of Residential Childcare
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To seek approval for the procurement plan for the cross regional contract for the provision of residential, therapeutic child care, integrated with education.
DECISION MAKER:	Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning
DECISION DATE:	25 Jul 2017
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	Within anticipated resources.
CONSULTEES:	Children's Social Care Management Team Children, Young People & Learning Departmental Management Team Service Efficiency Group
CONSULTATION METHOD:	Written reports

Unrestricted

REFERENCE:	I069810
TITLE:	Free Childcare Places: Changes to operational and administrative arrangements
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	For the Executive Member to approve the changes to operational and administrative arrangements for free childcare places in response to recent changes in government policy and statutory guidance.
DECISION MAKER:	Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning
DECISION DATE:	27 Jul 2017
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	Within anticipated resources.
CONSULTEES:	All providers of childcare in Bracknell Forest
CONSULTATION METHOD:	Meetings and formal consultation

REFERENCE:	I069713
TITLE:	Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Annual Report
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	For the Executive to receive the annual report of the LSCB and to note the key messages and recommendations made.
DECISION MAKER:	Executive
DECISION DATE:	26 Sep 2017
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	No financial implications.
CONSULTEES:	Members of Children, Young People & Learning Leadership Team Members of Corporate Management Team Local Safeguarding Children Board Partners
CONSULTATION METHOD:	Written and oral presentation to key departmental leads

REFERENCE:	I069599
TITLE:	“Unlocking Opportunities for all Children” Special Educational Needs and Disability Improvement Strategy (2017 – 2020)
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	For the Executive to approve the three year strategic direction and priorities for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) for children and young people aged 0-25 years
DECISION MAKER:	Executive
DECISION DATE:	26 Sep 2017
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	There are no significant financial implications arising from the report
CONSULTEES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Parent/Carer groups (open to all) • All Schools, Colleges and Early Years settings in Bracknell Forest. • Headteacher Reference Group • Parent Forum • Young peoples SEND subgroup of the Youth Council. • Bracknell Forest Multi agency SEND Improvement Partnership. • East Berkshire SEND improvement partnership
CONSULTATION METHOD:	This strategy has been co produced with Schools, Early Years settings, Colleges, parents/carers, young people and professionals across education, social care and Health. There has also been an e mail consultation for those unable to get to the workshops.

Unrestricted

REFERENCE:	I069260
TITLE:	Children, Young People & Learning Post Ofsted Action Plan
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	For the Executive to endorse the Action Plan following the Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.
DECISION MAKER:	Executive
DECISION DATE:	26 Sep 2017
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	None
CONSULTEES:	Not applicable
CONSULTATION METHOD:	Not applicable

REFERENCE:	I066346
TITLE:	Children, Young People & Learning Vision
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	For the Executive to endorse the Children, Young People & Learning Vision
DECISION MAKER:	Executive
DECISION DATE:	26 Sep 2017
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	No financial implications
CONSULTEES:	Children, Young People & Learning Senior Leadership Group, other stakeholders such as Local Safeguarding Children Board, Children & Young People's Partnership, Health representatives and other providers for the department.
CONSULTATION METHOD:	Briefing sessions with stakeholders