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## BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL

### LIFE CHANCES TEAM

#### ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

#### **Introduction**

- 1.1 The Life Chances Multi Agency Team was established at the end of 2012. The key factors that were identified to address were to promote the health, education and placement stability for looked after children. The approach benefits from multi agency work to prevent silos. It is a virtual team comprised of representatives from a number of agencies and specialist services in the Children's Workforce who have a responsibility for looked after children. The Life Chances Team has improved the co-ordination of professional advice and support provided for looked after children. As well as working directly with children in care, the team supports local foster carers to care for children with more complex needs and provides more integral support for children within their educational setting.

#### **Vision**

- 1.2 To improve the quality of life and outcomes of all looked after children and young people whilst growing up and in preparation for adulthood.

#### **Mission Statement**

- 1.3 To co-ordinate professional solution focused advice and support for looked after children, whilst predicting and responding quickly to placement, health and educational issues and supporting local foster carers to care for children with more complex needs.

## **2 THE LIFE CHANCES TEAM (LCT)**

- 2.1 Members of the Life Chances Team are accountable to their individual management streams and organisations and are mandated by their line managers to commit resources to ensure that their respective teams are clear about their responsibilities in respect of looked after children.

- 2.2 The Life Chances Team consists of the following members

|                   |                                           |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Peter Hodges      | Head of Service for Looked After Children |
| Kashif Nawaz      | Virtual School Headteacher                |
| Clare Glennerster | Over 11's Assistant Team Manager          |
| Carolyn Carter    | Under 11's Assistant Team Manger          |
| Pip Stubbs        | Special Education Needs Case Officer      |
| Camila Spicer     | Education Support Officer                 |
| Sam Howard        | Family Placement Assistant Team Manager   |
| Sharon Leadbetter | Education Support Officer                 |

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|                   |                                    |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
|                   |                                    |
| Aphra Fisher      | Youth Offending Service            |
| Cherry Hall       | Children's Centre                  |
| Marianne Paul     | Learning Achievement Manager       |
| Marcus Nedd       | Learning and behaviour coordinator |
| Fiona Nyquest     | LAC Nurse                          |
| Lillian Dickinson | Social Worker for CSE and Missing  |
| Jenny Feeney      | Educational Psychologist           |
| Emma Churchill    | Family Placement Family Worker     |
| Carol Lampkin     | Independent Reviewing Officer      |

- 2.3 The team reports annually to the Children and Young People's Partnership, the LSCB and the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel and is co-chaired between the Head of Service for Looked After Children and the Virtual School Head.
- 2.4 Few children or young people choose to become looked after. A high percentage enter the care system as a result of abuse or neglect, but even these children and young people usually continue to love their families and want to remain with them. Whilst many remain in the care system only for brief periods, a considerable number spend a significant proportion of their childhood in care. Since the introduction of the Life Chances Team our efforts have increased on improving the stability and quality of placements offered to them as well as educational, health and other outcomes for individual children to enhance their life chances. The key outcomes, which can be linked to the vision for all children and young people, and which should be priority areas for all of us as corporate parents are detailed within this report.
- 2.5 There are no simple solutions for children and young people who are looked after. Needs are complex and services should be tailored to the individual. Nonetheless, the Life Chances Team has taken the approach to look more carefully at the potential for and support of carers, to maximise the range of local family placements, to look beyond the 'placement' alone and secure timely access to a range of support services to secure the best outcomes. The team have been able to identify joint areas of concern which has enabled services to be put in place promptly.
- 2.6 Significant levels of positive impact have been noted across each area of service that is represented through the Life Chances Team. Details of how this has been achieved are described below by each team.

**LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN DATA**

## Number of Looked After Children in Bracknell Forest

|                                                        | <b>Mar<br/>11/12<br/>Actual</b> | <b>Mar<br/>12/13<br/>Actual</b> | <b>Mar<br/>13/14<br/>Actual</b> | <b>Mar<br/>14/15<br/>Actual</b> | <b>Mar<br/>15/16</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Number of Looked After Children</b>                 | <b>100</b>                      | <b>103</b>                      | <b>113</b>                      | <b>104</b>                      | <b>98</b>            |
| <i>Bracknell Forest rate per 10,000 U18 population</i> | <i>37.6</i>                     | <i>38.7</i>                     | <i>41.7</i>                     | <i>37.4</i>                     | <i>35.3</i>          |
| <i>South East rate per 10,000 U18 population</i>       | <i>47.0</i>                     | <i>47.0</i>                     | <i>47.0</i>                     | <i>49.0</i>                     | <i>Not available</i> |
| <i>England rate per 10,000 U18 population</i>          | <i>59.0</i>                     | <i>60.0</i>                     | <i>60.0</i>                     | <i>60.0</i>                     | <i>Not available</i> |

- 2.7 The presence of the LCT has meant that professionals working with children in care and their families are able to collaborate with others by taking on an 'informed approach' – they know who to contact and which member of the team is responsible for which area. For these young people the plan is likely to be either adoption, special guardianship order or long term fostering with an emphasis on providing safe and stable placements until they either return to their family or move on into independent living.
- 2.8 At the end of March 2016, there were 98 children and young people looked after by Bracknell Forest Council. In addition, 71 young people are eligible for Care Leaving status and will be supported into independence until the age of 21 years, or, if disabled, until 25 years. Recent proposed legislation now enables eligible young people between the ages of 21 - 25 to request a Pathway Plan assessment should they wish to access education or training.
- 2.9 The number of looked after children has remained relatively consistent with the exception of a spike in 2014. Bracknell Forest has a low percentage of Looked After Children compared with the national picture of child population as well as the South East picture. This is primarily as a result of effective permanency planning and early help services that have been provided. There has been greater focus on achieving permanency for children. This can be in the form of legal permanence through Special Guardianship Order and Adoption and also ensuring that research based consideration is given to reunification to the care of birth family.
- 2.10 Bracknell Forest Council and other agencies have statutory or local responsibility towards vulnerable groups, including looked after children and those who have left care. The Council as a whole has a 'Corporate Responsibility' for children who are looked after and for eligible care leavers. Within the Council, Children's Social Care had overall responsibility for implementing effective care plans. Schools, Early Years providers and the Youth Service are also measured on the impact of their services for vulnerable groups, including looked after children. The Youth Offending Service has a stake in diverting looked after children from offending; care leavers have housing rights for the provision of accommodation; the Health

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Service have statutory responsibilities towards meeting the physical and mental health needs of looked after children. All of these agencies are members of the LCT.

### RESOURCES

- 2.11 A part time Life Chances Team Co-ordinator, managed by the Head of Service, Looked After Children, administers the team. They arrange meetings, maintain the database, monitors and follows up performance data, minute meetings regarding looked after children and covers other administrative tasks. The Coordinator also supports and monitors the timeliness of health assessments, Strengths and difficulties questionnaires, optician and dentist examinations for Looked After children in order to promote physical and mental health.
- 2.12 Over the last year, the LCT has benefited from the support of the Educational Psychology service who have attended meetings since September 2015. This has led to increased support from this service to looked after children including assessment, attendance at professionals meetings and liaison with schools to support the education of looked after children. This has been a positive impact from the Life Chances Team.
- 2.13 There is still a gap within the team in relation to representation from the children's mental health service (CAMHS). In spite of frequent requests CAMHS have not been able to provide a worker from their team to attend citing that they do not have the resources. This is particularly concerning given the fact that a number of Looked After Children have a mental health needs. There are a number of children placed in Bracknell Forest and out of the area where there have been challenges in either accessing mental health services for assessment or provision of therapy. There has been some progress this year as the LAC nurse has access to the CAMHS database and is able to provide some information on children open to local CAMHS. This however does not enable the team to have a holistic oversight of the child's mental health needs. Given that when a child is placed out of area it is the placement when they reside that are responsible for the provision of this health services which can lead to a delay in the service being provided. This is an area that needs further focus over the next year.
- 2.14 A further addition to the LCT this year has been the Social Worker for Missing and Child Sexual Exploitation. This enables risk factors to be identified shared and actioned through Sexual Exploitation and Missing Risk Assessment Conference (SEMRAC) where required.
- 2.15 Every member of the LCT has access to a range of information held by various agencies on all Bracknell Forest looked after children. Members of the LCT are responsible for maintaining the data for their section.
- 2.16 Access to data is restricted to members of the virtual team who each sign a confidentiality agreement. Team members may share information on a need to know basis with their own team/agency but cannot download or save the document. Observers to the team meeting are required to sign a confidentiality agreement.
- 2.17 A small budget is available for an annual conference.

## PROCESS

- 2.18 The Life Chances Team meets monthly and has maintained good attendance from agencies at each meeting. The agenda is to discuss team updates and then focus on children who have been nomination by LCT members. Following this there is a discussion on all RAG rated children (Red and Amber and Green). The referrer begins by clarifying the reasons for referral including risk factors in relation to health, education and placement. Following this, there is a discussion and an action plan for each child including clarification regarding agencies will lead on key actions. The agenda was refined in December 2015 to ensure that conversations focused on what achievable change the team could provide to the child and reviewed to evidence outcomes.
- 2.19 The LCT has developed and follows a detailed action plan, which focuses on the aims and objectives of the team, how these will be measured by whom and to what timescale. There is an added a section on capturing the impacts of the LCT.
- 2.20 A RAG (Red, Amber and Green) system is used to highlight the risk or concern identified by the LCT on the database. If two or more domains are highlighted as being an issue for a particular child then the child's name is given a Red status. A plan of action is identified by relevant LCT members, updated onto the database and Frameworki by the Life Chances Co-ordinator and reviewed by the LCT the following month.
- 2.21 Examples of when a domain is given a RED status are:

### Placement

- High risk of a placement breaking down soon
- Early identification of concerns that, if not addressed now, may lead to break down
- Questions about whether the placement is meeting the current, or future needs of the child
- Action needed to promote positive progress in the placement

### Health

- Health medicals or dental and optician checks being overdue
- Difficulties in implementing the Health plan
- Need for specific action to address need – e.g. sexual health counselling
- Unmet emotional or mental health needs
- Emotional well being concerns that are leading to placement or educational concern.

### Education

- Problems with attendance at school
- Concerns about implementing the Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- Weaknesses with the co-ordination of professional input into a school
- Issues about a carer's support for education
- Problems in education provision out of Borough

**PLACEMENTS****Number of children placed with Bracknell Forest approved carers**

|                                                                                               | Mar-12       | Mar-13       | Mar-14       | Mar-15       | Mar-16       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Placed for Adoption                                                                           | 3            | 4            | 4            | 6            | 6            |
| Foster Care (Bracknell Forest approved carers)                                                | 47           | 51           | 60           | 46           | 43           |
| Fostered with relative/friend                                                                 | 8            | 7            | 8            | 11           | 9            |
| Agency Foster Care                                                                            | 19           | 17           | 22           | 23           | 19           |
| Secure Unit                                                                                   | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 1            |
| Homes/Hostels                                                                                 | 16           | 16           | 14           | 12           | 13           |
| Placed with parents                                                                           | 3            | 5            | 2            | 1            | 1            |
| Independent Living                                                                            | 4            | 1            | 2            | 4            | 2            |
| Residential School                                                                            | 0            | 1            | 0            | 1            | 3            |
| Other                                                                                         | 0            | 1            | 1            | 0            | 1            |
| <b>Total number of looked after children</b>                                                  | <b>100</b>   | <b>103</b>   | <b>113</b>   | <b>104</b>   | <b>98</b>    |
| <b>L140 - % children looked after placed with BFC foster carers, adoption or with parents</b> | <b>61.0%</b> | <b>65.0%</b> | <b>65.5%</b> | <b>61.5%</b> | <b>60.2%</b> |
| <b>% children in foster care (includes in house/connected/IFA) or placed for adoption</b>     | <b>77.0%</b> | <b>76.7%</b> | <b>83.2%</b> | <b>82.7%</b> | <b>78.6%</b> |

2.22 The data above illustrates the number of children being placed with Bracknell Forest approved foster carers has slightly decreased, as the number of children in care has reduced. This figure includes connected persons carers, who are approved foster carers and provided with the same support as recruited carers. The number of children placed with independent fostering agencies had steadily risen but showed a slight decrease in line with the reduction of the number of Looked After Children. There has been a slight rise in relation to children in homes or hostels.

2.23 Foster carers are supported by their supervising social workers and the Life Chances Team to manage complex and challenging behaviours. The Life Chances Team, through predicting problems and responding quickly to problems as they arise has improved timescales for arranging appropriate support for carers and young people. The family worker is to offer practical support to foster carers who may be experiencing challenges in caring for children. The LCT meetings are a good opportunity to ensure the professional network are aware of what strategies are being put in place to avoid any duplication.

Looked After Children outside of Bracknell Forest Council

2.24 The Life Chances Team work with Looked after children placed at distance as well as those locally. The challenges here are that responsibility to health and some education provision falls to the authority where the child is currently living. However, the team are able to liaise with their counterparts in the local

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area to prevent drift or delay for children. This has been evidenced via SEN, Educational Psychology and youth service.

|                                                                                                      | Mar-12 | Mar-13 | Mar-14 | Mar-15 | Mar-16 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Total number of children placed outside the LA                                                       | 39     | 41     | 40     | 38     | 42     |
| Of this, number of children placed OLA <i>within Berkshire (excluding those placed for Adoption)</i> | 11     | 12     | 9      | 9      | 9      |
| % of children placed OLA <i>within Berkshire (excluding those placed for Adoption)</i>               | 28.2%  | 29.3%  | 22.5%  | 23.7%  | 21.4%  |
| Total number of children placed <i>within Berkshire (excluding those placed for Adoption)</i>        | 60     | 70     | 71     | 69     | 59     |
| % children placed <i>within Berkshire (excluding those placed for Adoption)</i>                      | 61.9%  | 70.7%  | 65.1%  | 70.4%  | 64.1%  |

Stability in placements

- 2.25 The LCT contributes to the improvement in the length of time that a child stays in placement, especially over the year 2016. This is measured where a child has been LAC for more than 2 ½ years and remained in the same placement for two or more years. The % for this has increased in the past two years from 51.6% in 2014 to 63.0% in 2016.

| <b>Placements: Stability</b>                     | Mar-12       | Mar-13       | Mar-14       | Mar-15       | Mar-16       |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Number of LAC in current placements for 2 years+ | 16           | 13           | 16           | 19           | 17           |
| Total LAC aged under 16 and in care 2.5 years+   | 21           | 19           | 31           | 31           | 27           |
| <b>% in long term stable placements</b>          | <b>76.2%</b> | <b>68.4%</b> | <b>51.6%</b> | <b>61.3%</b> | <b>63.0%</b> |

- 2.26 There are several factors for the increase in this performance indicator, including the monitoring of fragile placements within the life chances team meetings. This has led to actions by various professionals to support placements through difficult periods and ensure placements have flourished.
- 2.27 The other placement stability indicator is the number of children who have had three placements or more. Children thrive best if they do not experience unplanned moves of placement. Analysis shows there are a range of reasons why children are recorded as having placement moves. The majority are teenagers. Placements that are fragile are discussed at the Life Chances Team Meeting and plans are put in place to support the child and the carer to minimise placements ending in an unplanned way. When risks of placement breakdown are highlighted when there is no team meeting to support then an email is sent to the Life Chances Team members so that immediate support can be offered. This has been successful in sustaining some placements. However, there are concerns that too many children are having 3 or more placements and plans to address this are within the action plan. The chart

below demonstrates the data for children who have experienced 3 or more placements over the past five years. The national average for this is 11% and Bracknell Forest is at 17.3% as of March 2016. Given the low numbers of looked after children a small number of children can skew the figures. Reducing the number of placements for children is a key priority of the life chances team and forms a part of discussion at each meeting.

| <b>Placements: Number</b>                  | <b>Mar-12</b> | <b>Mar-13</b> | <b>Mar-14</b> | <b>Mar-15</b> | <b>Mar-16</b> |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Number of LAC with 3+ placements           | 10            | 12            | 15            | 14            | 17            |
| Number of LAC (exc. Short term placements) | 100           | 103           | 113           | 104           | 98            |
| <b>% of LAC with 3+ placements</b>         | <b>10.0%</b>  | <b>11.7%</b>  | <b>13.3%</b>  | <b>13.5%</b>  | <b>17.3%</b>  |

## 2.28 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN CASE STUDIES

### Case Study 1

- 2.29 A was at a Bracknell Forest secondary school but had not attended since being in care. Instead, he would abscond and pose a risk to himself. A's views were sought by the social worker and he mentioned that he was anxious about change, it was agreed he would make a start at the same school on dual roll for the first few weeks.
- 2.30 Following a positive couple of months and having benefitted from a positive induction at school, A's attendance at school declined again. He would often stay up all night in order to avoid being late to school the next morning, had spent a considerable amount of time deciding which GCSE options he should select and was becoming more socially reserved. A was supported by Education Welfare to address attendance concerns, was offered additional tutoring by the Virtual School to catch up on the lessons he had missed. Virtual School also liaised with the school to offer an alternative time table by the school. The social worker sought to address his social isolation through a personal trainer and he had visits at home from the Family Support worker three times a week and had met with CAMHS on several occasions. With limited sign of progress despite the level of support, A was again discussed at the monthly Life Chances Team meeting and it was decided to arrange a needs meeting which would include all the professionals currently involved as well as from Adviza.
- 2.31 Raising the matter with the Life Chances Team, it became clear that there were a number of professionals working with A, who in different ways were striving to achieve similar outcomes. These frequent interactions were not only placing pressure on his capacity to engage but were also proving to be a barrier to enable A in having a clearer view of his own development needs and preferred pathway for this purpose. Members of the Life Chances Team met to discuss these aspects, roles and responsibilities and a time line of events moving forward. The most significant decision that was made was a change in school. The frequency of the Life Chances Team meetings meant

that there were regular follow ups to these discussions and hence decisions and plans weren't left unconsidered.

- 2.32 Following A's move to a new local secondary school, transition plans were constantly shared and discussed at the monthly Team meeting to ensure everyone was aware of it. The outcome was that A was able to engage with education and the careers guidance advisor. He received additional support to catch up with learning he had missed out on for his GCSE subjects and managed to attempt all of his exams – this was significant as previous to the move A was at risk of completely disengaging from education. The outcome meant that he was able to access a further education course at the local college. This is clear evidence that this model is successful in improving the life chances for this looked after children as without this joined up working it is unlikely that A's attendance and social isolation would have been improved for him to be able to access education and access a local college.

## **Case Study 2**

- 2.33 B is a 15 year old female who became looked after at the age of 12 years due to concerns regarding sexual abuse. She has lived with in house foster carers since becoming looked after although the carers lived outside of the Bracknell Forest boundaries.
- 2.34 The LAC nurse sees her monthly discussion at the Life Chances Team to support with her sexual health. The health nurse developed a relationship with B following a health assessment and has been able to discuss sexual health and contraception with her. B expresses that she likes to discuss these things with the LAC nurse as she is not a social worker and therefore feels able to talk freely. This work has also extended to cover B's relationship with her parents which has been fragile.
- 2.35 The inclusion of the Social Worker for Missing and Child Sexual Exploitation has enabled there to be discussion regarding B. The Social Worker for Missing and CSE who saw B every 2/4 weeks to develop a relationship. B contributed to developing direct work tools. This enabled 'keep safe' work to be undertaken and enabled B to not feel she was at risk but that she was helping other young people. The continued work enabled B to build trust which eventually led to her making a disclosure of abuse that she had suffered leading to an arrest.
- 2.36 Whilst this work was ongoing, support was given to B to enable her to focus on her education and she is currently attending college with a career path mapped out. B is a member of the SilSip Children in Care Council and has developed her confidence to deliver the 'Do you know?' training about what it is like to be in care.
- 2.37 The family worker was able to keep the foster carer informed of the work that LCT partners were undertaking and ensured that the foster carer reported all concerns enabling a triangulation of information. The family worker has also been able to build a trusting relationship and B is able to text her if she is worried about something.
- 2.38 Information was also shared using the link from YOS and this supported another child to be safeguarded from harm.

### **3 IMPACT OF PROFESSIONALS**

- 3.1 The multi-agency and professional forum brings a wealth of expertise and perspectives together. Members of the LCT were asked to consider the impact that the LCT had on their work and their responses are as follows:

#### **Youth Offending Service**

- 3.2 The impact of the LCT includes closer working relationships with other services. Circumstances of our Looked After Children (LAC) can change quickly and regular LCT meetings provide an opportunity for the YOS and other services to share up to date information as it occurs. For example, the benefit of the YOS's involvement includes advising on matters relating to the youth justice proceedings; ensuring members have up to date information regarding outstanding court matters, advising on Court and Police Bail and advising members on the young person's progress of Court Orders etc. Adding to this, the impact of the LCT on Bracknell YOS includes that up to date information regarding Looked After Children placed out of area, who have been involved in offending in the area where they are residing, is provided by other services including Social Care. This can help Bracknell YOS monitor these cases and liaise with other YOS's as and when required.
- 3.3 No single agency has a view of the overall needs of a child and working together as a LCT provides the opportunity to achieve a holistic view. As a result, more immediate responses are taken to address the needs of a child through joint working. For example in relation to some of the LACs who are at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, the YOS were able to provide information regarding the Love and Lies Girls Group (Keep Safe Group) being delivered at the YOS which addresses the risk of CSE.

#### **Early Years Team**

- 3.5 Being part of the LCT has enabled the early years team to identify looked after children aged two years who are eligible to access up to 15 hours per week of early education in a nursery, pre-school or with a child-minder. Numbers of children accessing Early Years service has increased. Currently six looked after children are accessing this entitlement and feedback from the settings so far has been very positive and the children are making good progress.
- 3.6 The early years member is able to share information with the Children's Centre managers to enable them to be aware of looked after children who are registered with their centres and offer packages of support where appropriate. This is one of the target groups for Children's Centres and is reported within their statistics for registration and engagement which forms part of the information OFSTED will require during inspection.
- 3.7 A review is underway to look at whether a representative only attends if a child in their service is due to be discussed. This is due to the fact that many of the RAG rated children are over the age of 10 years old.

#### **Children Social Care**

- 3.8 The monthly Life Chances Team meetings are attended by a designated Assistant Team Manager (ATM) from the Under 11's Team and the Over 11's

Teams. The Assistant Team Managers act as the main contact point of communication between their team and the multi-disciplinary forum and can provide up to date information on the young people in care. Discussion in the LCT gives a wider perspective upon experiences and what potential actions may be in place to address risk than may otherwise be available. The team has also offered creative ideas and potential solutions, which would have been far more difficult to achieve through the social worker alone. The LCT also invites allocated social workers to present on particular high risk cases which has been positive and encouraged productive discussion.

- 3.9 The Family Placement Team is represented by the Assistant Team Manager and the FPT family worker. This enables a close working relationship between the LCT and Family Placement Team social workers who provide the regular advice and contact with foster carers

### **Education**

- 3.10 The Virtual School has made significant progress in supporting schools to understand how best to meet the educational needs for Looked After Children'. The Virtual School Head co-chairs the LCT and one member of the Virtual School regularly attends the meeting. Engagement with the LCT team has led to a greater collaboration between the Virtual School and other agencies that play a pivotal role in the life of a young person.
- 3.11 Members of the Virtual School chair and record all statutory PEP meetings for Bracknell Forest looked after children, including those placed out of the Borough. These meetings involve the child, parents, carers, a designated teacher from the school and the social worker. Meetings to ensure good communication, assess the levels of progress made by the young person and set and monitor appropriate targets to ensure good progress continues to be made.
- 3.12 During the period from April 2015 to March 2016, 100% of PEPs were held within the statutory time frame. This was a successful outcome despite there being a number of factors beyond their control.
- 3.13 Personal Education Plans provide a clear record of the progress made by individual LAC as well as an outline of what the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) has been used on. PEPs are recorded on Frameworki.
- 3.14 For children in care schools can be very challenging places. Gaps in learning due to various reasons and their complex needs are often not always fully understood. This can lead to a lack of sufficient challenge from lessons and unplanned school moves and other transitions can also cause problems. The Pupil Premium is therefore a valuable tool in ensuring that children in care are well supported and that some of the known issues, such as low levels of educational attainment and progress and low attendance levels are mitigated. The Virtual School uses the Pupil Premium to help build children's confidence and provide opportunities for tailored support. We aim to use the Pupil Premium Plus to improve outcomes for children in the following areas:
- Academic achievement and progress
  - Wider achievement e.g. in an area in which the child is gifted and talented
  - Attendance
  - Inclusion (by reducing internal and external exclusion)
  - Transition (e.g. between key stages or between schools)

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- Mental health (overcoming the effects of attachment and developmental trauma) where this affects learning

- 3.15 This is done through support for learning and providing personalised learning resources.
- 3.16 One of our key aims is to maintain a degree of stability in the life of a child in care. During the 2015/16 academic year, 65 LAC (78%) remained in the same school and 6 attended 2 schools. This ensured our young people in care continued to benefit from their friendship groups and established set routines – in some cases despite a change in their placement.
- 3.17 Consideration of the educational progress of looked after children are a standing item on the agenda for meetings between school advisers and Head teachers. The Virtual School Head attends a meeting with advisers to provide information on current issues and raise any items of concern related to the provision of education for looked after children.
- 3.18 A termly Designated Teacher forum is held to support relevant staff in schools as well as other professionals to share examples of good practice. This has enabled schools to have a platform to discuss the challenges they face in removing barriers to academic progress and attainment and plan their practices accordingly. These sessions have been well attended – particularly by those schools that have LAC attending their setting.

### **Education Welfare Service**

- 3.19 The Education Welfare Officer role carries a wider relationship with schools whilst at the same time enabling close monitoring of attendance through the LCT. Education welfare are able to provide up to date information on any school attendance issues or information for Looked After Children which may be a contributing factor as to why the risks have risen. The education welfare offer is able to undertake any actions in relation to these children.
- 3.20 No looked after children have been permanently excluded in recent years.

### **Special Education Needs**

- 3.21 The SEN team is represented on the LCT by a senior case worker. Increased understanding of the issues around LAC has led to the promotion of their needs in other forums. Children with special educational needs (SEN) are often over-represented in the LAC population. 43% (29 out of 67) of 4 – 16 year old LAC in Bracknell Forest either had a statement for SEN or an EHCP in 2015/16 compared with a national rate of 60% for all LAC and 2.9% for all pupils in Bracknell Forest Schools.

### **Targeted Youth Service**

- 3.22 Following a period of transition there is now a dedicated Youth Worker leading on Looked After Children. The youth worker has attended LCT since September 2015. This worker sits on the Life Chances team and is developing relationships with looked after children in order to engage them in universal youth provision and targeted support where appropriate.

- 3.23 The youth worker is able to identify local youth service provision for children placed locally and link in with services where children are placed who are at distance.
- 3.24 During the period April 15– to Sept 1st 2016 the Youth service have had specific targeted interventions with 34 individual looked after young people:
- 17 Young people required help and support specifically in Substance misuse teaching or Sexual health teaching or attendance at the clinics. This gives young people the knowledge and advice they need to make informed choices that will improve their mental health and well-being
  - 13 targeted Young people have attended a residential course and have shown better engagement and personal development in the skills needed for independency, ie cooking, budgets, as well as gaining a formal First aid certificate which can be used for employee references and CV writing to find employment and or training.
  - 5 Young people have felt supported through the work with Targeted Youth workers on a 1-1 basis, including, sexual health, substance misuse and placement transition which has helped to stabilise the placements.
  - 5 young people have achieved skills that will support them with their future education and work prospects through training and Volunteering
  - 4 Young people have engaged with the Duke of Edinburgh award, which shows commitment and resilience. Two of these young people have successfully achieved a bronze award which is a significant contribution for them.
  - As the service is now established further evaluation is planned to build a stronger evidence base and assess the impact of services.

## Health

- 3.25 The Looked After Children and Young People Health Team covers East Berkshire. Bracknell Forest has a part time Specialist Nurse dedicated to the health needs of Bracknell's Looked After Children. The Specialist Nurse undertakes all Review Health Assessments for Bracknell Forest Looked After Children and Young People placed within a twenty mile radius of the Berkshire border. This has led to better understanding and involvement with any children and young people placed within this radius, ensuring their health needs are met in a timely manner. The Specialist Nurse continues to find creative ways in encouraging young people to have their routine annual health assessments, which they may have previously declined.
- 3.26 Life Chances Team continues to help the health representative to keep up to date regarding any issues that are raised as a concern at an early stage. It also allows open discussion and the opportunity to share any concerns regarding individual cases within a multi-agency setting. This allows health to have a better knowledge of the Looked After Children and young people

within Bracknell Forest along with any needs they present with, resulting in more effective early interventions.

3.27 In view of their earlier experiences, looked after children can have a higher need for health care than their peers. It is important that health assessments and plans are reviewed regularly (annually for children over five years and twice a year for under 5 year olds). The LCT Coordinator plays a valuable role in the process of both initial and review assessments ensuring checks are followed up in a timely manner.

### 3.28 Health Assessments

|                                                                                      | Mar-12       | Mar-13       | Mar-14       | Mar-15       | Mar-16       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Number who have had Health Assessments on time (regardless of how long looked after) | 88           | 97           | 105          | 97           | 92           |
| <b>% of Health Assessments on time (excluding newly looked after)</b>                | <b>92.6%</b> | <b>97.0%</b> | <b>95.5%</b> | <b>95.1%</b> | <b>96.8%</b> |
| Number refusing to have a Health Assessment                                          | 3            | 3            | 2            | 2            | 3            |
| Number of newly looked after (i.e. less than 28 days before end of March each year)  | 5            | 3            | 3            | 2            | 3            |
| Number with Health Assessments overdue                                               | 4            | 0            | 3            | 3            | 0            |
| <b>Total number of looked after children</b>                                         | <b>100</b>   | <b>103</b>   | <b>113</b>   | <b>104</b>   | <b>98</b>    |

3.29 The Life Chances Coordinator and the LAC nurse work effectively in partnership to monitor compliance with statutory timescales of health assessments. In March 2016 it shows that 86.8% of health assessments took place on time. 3 children refused to have an assessment which is something that the team have tried to be creative in encouraging children to attend appointments and there were no overdue health assessments.

### EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL HEALTH OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

3.30 One of the measures used to monitor the wellbeing of looked after children are the completion of a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) by the carer. This is given a score, the higher the score the greater the concern. The result of the questionnaire is a factor which can lead to a concern being raised in the LCT meeting.

3.31 The SDQ scores have increased from an average of 13.6 in 2015 to 17.9 in 2016. However, these scores are not entirely reliable as even though SDQ's are already sent out for all children, the SDQ has not been returned for every

child, the score can depend on the time when the questionnaire has been undertaken or the person undertaking it.

- 3.32 There are approximately 100 Looked After Children in BFC at any one time all of whom will have experienced a level of physical or emotional trauma. There are also approximately 10 children at any one time who are living at home but are at high risk of becoming looked after and are provided with services to divert them.
- 3.33 The lack of a representative from the mental health team means that the Life Chances Team are not updated on the actions of children referred to the service or any medication that may have been suggested. There has been some progress so that for children referred to the LCT for discussion the health nurse is able to access the CAMHS database for information on children.

### **LIFE CHANCES CONFERENCE**

- 3.37 The LCT team holds an annual conference and invites a range of staff from schools and across the children's workforce. Each year the conference has a specific focus.
- 3.38 The key note speaker for the conference was **Dr Margot Sunderland** who is Director of Education and Training at The Centre for Child Mental Health London. Dr Sunderland has over twenty years experience of working with children and families and is the author of over twenty books in the field of child mental health.
- 3.39 The other guest Speaker was **Tom Duffin** Tom Duffin is the National Development and Training Officer for Pace (Parents against child sexual exploitation). He works with partner statutory and voluntary sector agencies to create capacity and capability to support parents and carers and promote learning among professionals.
- 3.40 **KOOTH** also attended to give an overview of online Counselling Service for young people.
- 3.41 Feedback from the conference included:  
*I thoroughly enjoyed last year's conference and was really pleased to attend this one too. It's always a well attended, well planned and well thought out opportunity to link with other agencies and to look at improving LAC. Excellent and highly recommended.*  
Foster carer
- I found Dr Sunderland to be a very engaging speaker and I have purchased some of her books now to help with in my role as a teacher.*  
Teacher
- Tom's presentation regarding CSE was thought provoking and has made me thought more about boys who may be at risk of exploitation.*  
Health professional

## **4 OTHER LIFE CHANCES TEAM ACTIVITIES April 2015 – 2016**

## UNRESTRICTED

- 4.1 The Life Chances Team will link more closely with the Children in Care Council to enable greater learning to be shared and their 'Voices' heard. The LCT Family worker will attend the SiLSiP meetings and feedback issues raised by the Council for response by the LCT.
- 4.2 The LCT organised the annual Looked After Children Achievement Award ceremony held at The Easthampstead Park Conference Centre in September 2015. Awards for academic and social achievements were presented to children between 4 and 18 years.
- 4.3 New Local Authority staff to attend as part of their induction.

### **5 PLANS FOR 2016/2017**

- 5.1 To raise the profile of the Life Chances Team and it's work by being part of the bigger picture of services to children and young people in Bracknell Forest and links with the Children and Young People Plan 2014-2017. This includes promoting the sense of collective responsibility for Looked After Children.
- 5.2 Visits to Children's Social Care Team Meetings are being arranged in order to highlight the work of the Life Chances Team whilst seeking their assistance in ensuring our statutory responsibilities are met in terms of health and dental care.
- 5.3 To develop processes to further improve the timeliness of initial and health reviews. This includes work being done to measure the impact of health plans for children.
- 5.4 To review processes to ensure that the dates that dental checks have taken place are recorded and tracked. Work is being done to measure the impact of dental checks in improving dental care.
- 5.5 The LCT membership will be reviewed to ensure appropriate representation. This will also consider the need for attendance by a team member in the capacity of a deputy to represent the service.
- 5.6 Opportunities to observe the Life Chances Team will continue to be given to all social workers and other professionals who wish to gain a better understanding of the process and value of the group.
- 5.7 Invitations to observe and 'meet and greet' the team following meetings will be extended to all foster carers. This invitation will form part of a foster carers induction programme.
- 5.8 The annual achievement ceremony will be held in September 2016, for children and young people who have achieved academically and gained accreditation via the life skills project.
- 5.9 Develop better links with the Virtual Care Leavers Team to ensure there are no gaps in sharing information.
- 5.10 Review and introduction of placement stability as part of the LCT meetings to monitor 3 plus moves for looked after children

## UNRESTRICTED

- 5.11 Innovation bid to DfE to look at the creation of a Virtual CAMHS service to support children in care which includes children placed locally and at a distance.
- 5.12 To extend the Life Chances Team to include the Police service.

### Contact for further information

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