

Cabinet**Thursday, 6 April 2017, 10.00 am, County Hall, Worcester****Agenda**

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Worcestershire Children, Families & Communities

Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy for Looked after Children and Care Leavers

2017-2020



1. Vision and context

To ensure children feel safe and have the care and support they need to be healthy, happy and to live successful lives.

Worcestershire's Vision

Children have better outcomes if they can be enabled to live within secure, stable homes and their lifelong welfare needs can be addressed. For the majority of children and young people this will be at home with their birth family, using community-based resources, universal services and targeted early help services when needed. Worcestershire has an Early Help Offer for families who may need extra help and Worcestershire County Council has commissioned a number of services including community-based provision for children with disabilities. The local authority works in partnership with health services to assist parents who may need support with their own needs.

Some children may be at risk of harm or they may have significant additional needs that cannot be met through early help and community services alone. At such times Children's Social Care will assess the child's situation and ensure services are in place to support the family and safeguard the child if needed. This will include aiding the family to look at their own extended networks to identify whether they may be able to help and support. The Council has developed a Kinship Strategy which, if needed, seeks to support other family members or non-related carers to provide the necessary care.

If extra support for the family does not change the situation and the risk of harm or family breakdown is too great, then the local authority may look after a child or young person on behalf of their family. The aim will always be to try to recover the situation with the family so that the child can go home or live with someone else in their wider network. Our aim is to ensure that children do not remain looked after if they do not need to. However, if they do need to be looked after, we aim to have the majority of children and young people looked after within Worcestershire in suitable placements that meet their needs.

For some children it will be better for them to be found an alternative permanent family through adoption, so that they can develop secure and safe attachments.

For some children the local authority needs to look after them through to adulthood because they cannot live with their birth family and adoption is not the right plan for them. For most of these children, an alternative long-term foster family will be found and the Council has a Fostering Strategy to ensure there are sufficient foster carers for these children.

A few children may need access to specialist care that can only be provided in a residential home. This Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy ("the Strategy") plans for the provision of sufficient suitable homes for these children.

This Strategy also addresses the needs of young people in transition to adulthood. The County Council and District Councils will work in partnership to identify suitable accommodation and support young people into independence as adults.

This Strategy aligns with commissioning of services for children and young people with special educational needs in line with the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) reforms.

When a child or young person becomes looked after, the Council becomes their corporate parent and will provide ongoing advice and assistance, if eligible, until at least the age of 21, with a duty to keep in touch until a young person is 25, and in higher education. Best practice is an offer to keep in touch with all care leavers up to 25 years.

The Strategy helps to ensure that we understand, plan and meet future demand for looked after children and care leavers within Worcestershire in order to improve their outcomes. It also helps us to reduce demand on services and ensure effective planning at an early stage.

Wider strategic objectives relevant to this Strategy are:

1. Prevent and reduce the number of children who need to be looked after through provision of earlier and targeted help to families
2. Ensure the right children are looked after in the right way, in the right placement, at the right time at the right cost
3. Ensure there are sufficient placements that meet the assessed need of children who are looked after in Worcestershire
4. Enable children to exit the care system at the right time into a safe and loving home
5. Improve the outcomes for all children who use the services provided by Worcestershire County Council

2. Progress against 2014-17 Strategy

The last Strategy was developed in 2013, and covered the period to 2014-2017. Key areas of focus were agreed and services have been designed and commissioned to meet forecasted needs.

Capacity was increased and services commissioned that are more cost-effective:

- Maintained the same number of children in residential care but decreased the % of children placed in residential. (At the start of 2014-15 there were 11% of children looked after placed in residential care. This peaked at 12.4% in April 2015 and stands at 10% in February 2017).
- Slight increase in number of children adopted each year
- Increase in the number of conversions to Special Guardianship Order (SGO) from 85 at the start of 2014-15 to 114 in February 2017 - a rise of 34%
- Development of the Placement Plus service
- 1 new 3-bed residential unit
- New supported living unit for children with complex needs
- New short breaks home for children with complex needs
- 17 new in-house supported living units
- Revised external fostering framework agreements with external providers
- Family Group Meeting service brought in-house
- Refreshed fostering recruitment strategy
- Redesigned Family Front Door into early help services and social care
- Updated and redesigned financial monitoring and forecasting processes, and dashboard developed

The number of placements, with a cost, at December 2016 was 682. The number of LAC was 732, with the remaining children being placed with parents/friends at no direct cost to the Council. However the weekly spend was similar to that in March 2015 when there were 38 more children. The average weekly cost per placement was £964 (it was £1,021 at its highest in July 2015). The total weekly spend at the highest point was £638k when we had 662 children. We now have 20 more children and are spending £36k less per week i.e. we are spending less per placement.

A new method was agreed for tracking and forecasting the costs and sufficiency of provision for looked after children and care leavers. This was based on the number of children based on age and plan for the child in the context of the number of days, on average, the children in each cohort are looked after and the average cost of this on an annual basis. The Council used the average number of looked after children days/average cost in addition to the overall number of looked after children as a monitoring, forecasting and performance management tool.

This was then developed into a placements dashboard in July 2015 to give managers oversight and to monitor the plan against actual activity. This was used to indicate whether the plan was on or off track and to give managers information on which to make decisions for future investment or developments.

A revised placements budget of £35.3m has been set for 2017/18 based on the analysis of trends and forecast of effectiveness of new initiatives, alongside the need to make corporate savings.

This refreshed Strategy builds on the previous strategy and reflects **the commitment of the Council to invest in the right services at the right time for the right children.**

3. Summary of our strategy for the provision of suitable and sufficient accommodation 2017 - 2020

- 3.1 We will ensure that sufficient high quality provision is available for all of our looked after children and young people, and care leavers, in order to support their achieving best possible outcomes**
- 3.2 Our aim is to ensure cost effective provision whilst not compromising on the quality. Worcestershire County Council will be the provider of choice if this is the most cost effective solution or if no external provider is able to demonstrate better outcomes
- 3.3 Resources will be directed to interventions that enable children and young people to remain with their birth families (or return to their birth families) where this is safe and meets their needs
- 3.4 Interventions will be evidence-based and staff will be skilled in their use
- 3.5 Resources will be targeted towards families who need it most
- 3.6 Children and young people will be enabled to remain within Worcestershire unless this does not keep them safe or it is not possible to meet their needs in the county
- 3.7 Young people will be supported on leaving care through Staying Put and staying Close arrangements where it is appropriate and possible to do so
- 3.7 We will work in partnership at a local and regional level with other local authorities, partner agencies and the external market to maximise shared resources and create economies in provision

4. Wider activity within Children, Families & Communities which supports the delivery of this strategy

- 4.1 Progress the Social Care Workforce Strategy to recruit, develop and retain a suitably skilled and sufficient workforce
- 4.2 Ensure that services for children in need, especially those on the edge of care, are aligned with the Early Help Offer
- 4.3 Ensure we listen to the voice of the child when developing and delivering service offers
- 4.4 Develop Edge of Care provision and re-unification support
- 4.5 Develop our Care Leavers Strategy including ensuring that there is sufficient, good quality and available accommodation for young people leaving care
- 4.6 Develop and continually improve the Kinship Strategy with partners to ensure kinship carers are supported and given priority when this will enable them to care for a child who would otherwise need to be looked after
- 4.7 Recruit and approve more internal fostering households to enable more children to live within the county in cost effective placements
- 4.8 Develop a Regional Adoption Service
- 4.9 Regularly monitor and forecast the average days children have been looked after to support regular placement planning and budget performance management

5. What will success look like?

By 2020 we will have achieved:

- 5.1 An increase in children in Worcestershire in-house foster carer placements (as a ratio to external) from 50:50 in 2017 to 70:30 and maintenance at this level
- 5.2 An increase in the number of Placement Plus foster carers by 8
- 5.3 A 10% year on year increase in children permanently placed via a Special Guardianship Order
- 5.4 An extra 10 in-house residential provision beds
- 5.5 An increase in children in Worcestershire in-house residential placements as a ratio to external from 40:60 in 2017 to 50:50
- 5.6 Extra 15 places in internal provision for young people who wish to live independently in supported accommodation including 4 places specifically for young people with complex needs
- 5.7 4 additional places for short breaks for children on the edge of care
- 5.8 Improvements that ensure that all care leavers are living in suitable accommodation

- 5.9 An increase in the proportion of housing support that is delivered to care leavers, 16/17 year olds (where appropriate) and young parents (10% increase in 2017/18 and in 2018/19)
- 5.10 Provision of an in-house parent and baby placement

6. Commissioning appropriate and sufficient provision

The refreshed Corporate Plan *Shaping Worcestershire's Future 2017 to 2022* sets out four areas which we believe continue to be fundamental to delivering our vision of a '*prosperous Worcestershire*'. These key areas of focus are:

1. **Championing Open for Business**
2. **Supporting Children and Families**
3. **Protecting the Environment**
4. **Promoting Health and Well-being**

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/corporateplan>

In Worcestershire the commissioning process is driven by fulfilling the needs of our residents, being open as to who delivers services across all providers in the local economy and having an absolute focus on outcomes for communities.

Commissioning means that across the organisation we need to apply a consistent and joined up process to source the right service from the right provider at the right price

Commissioning is informed by a comprehensive analysis of current demand, provision and forecast need. A comprehensive data set and analysis is contained in Appendix 1 to this strategy. In summary it tells us that:

- At 31 March 2016, Worcestershire's looked after children figure was the same as the national average but 12/10,000 greater than our statistical neighbour average. Worcestershire's number of looked after children at that point would have needed to be 132 lower to equal our statistical neighbour average.
- The numbers of looked after children has increased nationally and across our statistical neighbours between 2011 and 2016, however, Worcestershire's increase is significantly higher. The national increase was 7.5%, the statistical neighbour 9.1% with Worcestershire's being 17.8%.
- Our percentage of children in foster care is lower than the national average by 6%.

- Worcestershire currently has 25 vacancies for in-house fostering. Further work needs to be undertaken with these families in order to match them with children who require foster families.
- There are a high number of sibling groups who need to be placed with in excess of 50 sibling groups placed at the end of December 2016. Most of these are being placed in families via the external market as there is insufficient provision within the in-house service.
- Although the number of agency residential placements has decreased there are still more children placed in agency residential care than in internal residential units. Our external to internal ratio is 64:36. This is a decrease from 67:33 in April 2015. Further developments in this area are still required to even out the distribution.
- The number of children adopted has decreased in the last year.
- We have more children who have had three or more placements than our national and statistical neighbours. Placement stability is therefore an issue for Worcestershire and a focus on appropriate matching and placement choice is needed.
- We have a significantly lower proportion of children who are accommodated under s20 than the national average.
- There is an over-representation of males in the 16 plus age group.
- We have higher numbers of looked after children aged from 11 to 15 than the national average and the percentage is increasing.
- The percentage of children commencing care in Worcestershire is significantly higher than those leaving care.
- Worcestershire's turnover of looked after children is lower than the national or statistical neighbour rate, which demonstrates that children are staying in care longer. Worcestershire's exit rate is lower than the start rate.
- An analysis of unit costs demonstrates that internal fostering provision is 40% cheaper than the independent sector; supported living is also 40% cheaper and residential 18% less than the independent sector, on average.
- The average weekly cost per placement is £964 (it was £1,021 at its highest in July 2015). The total weekly spend at the highest point was £638k when Worcestershire had 662 children. Worcestershire now has 20 more children and is spending £36k less i.e. Worcestershire now spends less per placement than it did in previous years.
- Based on the needs analysis, and assuming the rate of looked after children remains consistent Worcestershire could have between 760 and 800 Looked After Children by the year end 2017/18 assuming there is no mitigation strategy in place. This is an

additional rise of between 60 and 100 children over and above the figure used to calculate the budget.

- The cost of caring for an additional 60 - 100 children is £2.9m - £4.8m which has been based on placing them for the full year, based on the December 2016 average cost of a placement. If more of them are placed in independent sector places this cost could be considerably higher.
- The number of care leavers in Worcestershire is higher than the national average. For Worcestershire the figure was 285 at the end of March 2015, rising to 305 at March 2016 i.e. a 7% increase which was an increase of 5.5% on the previous year.
- In March 2016 15 of Worcestershire care leavers were deemed to be in unsuitable accommodation, and there were 55 Care Leavers whose accommodation status was unknown. 135 of Worcestershire's Care Leavers were NEET and those whose education, employment or training position was unknown was 55. Tracking of Care Leavers remains an issue for all local authorities and a further focus on this for 2017 onwards is required.
- There is an increase in the number of placements held by young people over 18, some of whom have disabilities. Further work with the Young Adults team is required in order to support their transition into adult care.
- There is an increase in the number of young people remaining with their foster carers under Staying Put arrangements. This means that additional foster care placements will need to be recruited to take account of the young people remaining for longer.

As a result of this analysis the following actions have been identified as priorities for future commissioning to ensure the provision of suitable and sufficient accommodation for looked after children in Worcestershire:

- Focus on activity that leads to an increase in the proportion of looked after children who are able to:
 - live in Worcestershire,
 - live with foster carers,
 - live in settings that meet their assessed needs
 - access universal and targeted support in their communities
- Focus on the impact of early help and social care interventions, including reduction in demand for social care services and planning for those children on the edge of care, to increase the number of children able to be cared for safely within their own family, or only needing to be looked after for a time-limited period.
- Increase the number of available adoptive families and improve the adoption journey of the child to match the number of children identified as needing an adoptive family, especially those children who may be 'hard to place'.

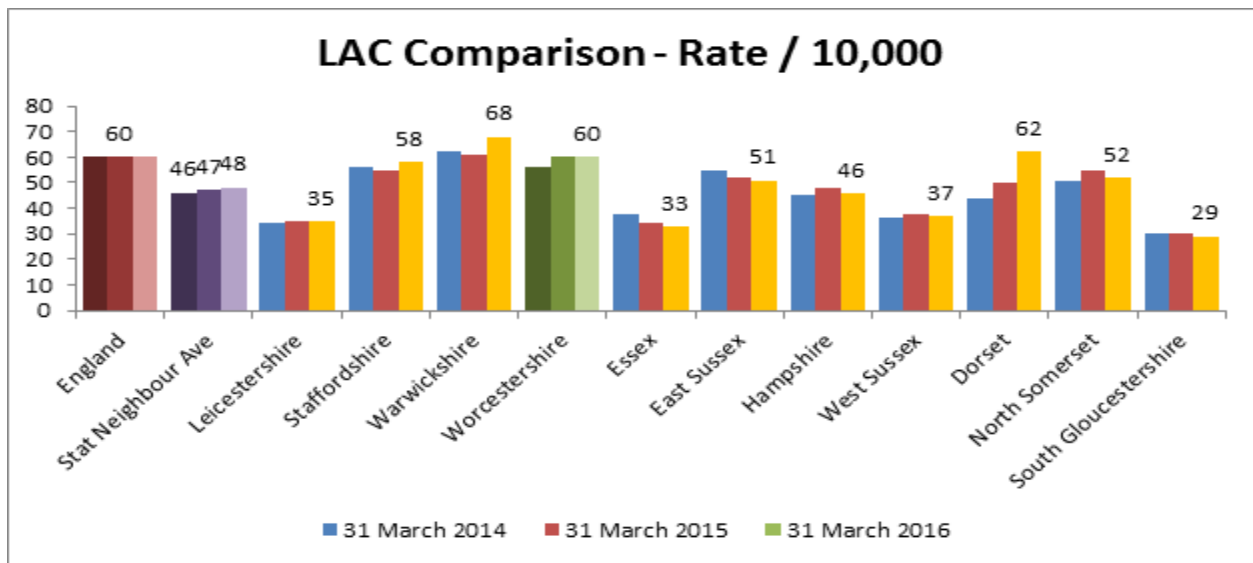
- Increase the ratio of children in Worcestershire in-house foster carer placements (to those placed in external placements). The focus of in-house provision should be to meet the needs of 'hard to place' young people, those aged 11 – 17, sibling groups and children with disabilities.
- Increase the number of Placement Plus foster carers - for those children who are hard to place or have challenging needs.
- Increase the % of children permanently placed via a Special Guardianship Order
- Increase internal provision for young people who wish to live independently (including those who are care leavers) in supported accommodation by 15 beds (including 4 for young people with complex needs)
- Increase in-house residential provision by 10 beds, with additional capacity for children with disabilities
- Increase in provision for short breaks for children on the edge of care by 4 beds
- Increase the proportion of commissioned housing support that is provided for targeted groups, e.g. care leavers, 16/17 year olds where appropriate and young parents
- Review all procurement frameworks relevant to external provision - including children with disabilities, fostering, supported living and housing support
- Undertake market development linked to the implementation of the activities within this strategy - where appropriate this will be at a regional level
- Participate in regional initiatives that support the above actions

Appendix 1 – Needs analysis

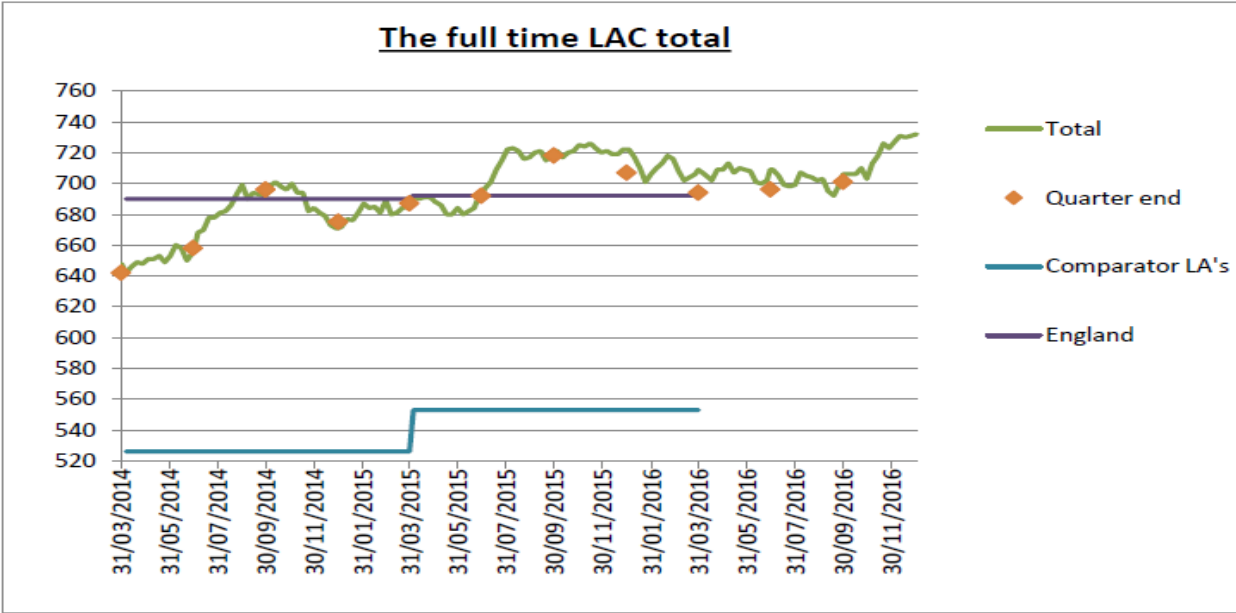
WORCESTERSHIRE, STATISTICAL NEIGHBOURS AND NATIONAL TRENDS

Looked after children

The looked after children population is measured as a rate per 10,000 of the population. The English average at 31st March 2016 was 60 per 10,000 of population and the statistical neighbour rate was 48 per 10,000. Worcestershire's rate at that time was 60 per 10,000, however had risen to 64 per 10,000 at the end of December 2016.

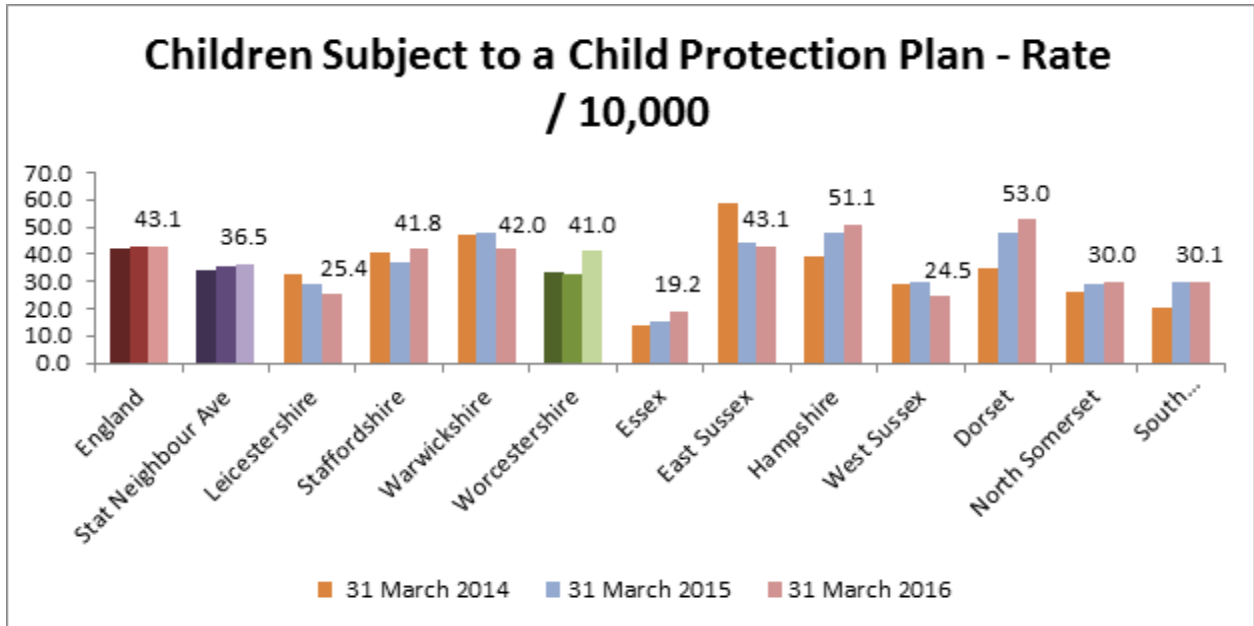


Since 2007/08 the looked after children rate per 10,000 children in Worcestershire has gone up faster than both the England average and the statistical neighbours average. The position at the end of December 2016 shows the highest point to date at 73.2. Worcestershire's rate continues to be above that of statistical neighbours and the national average.



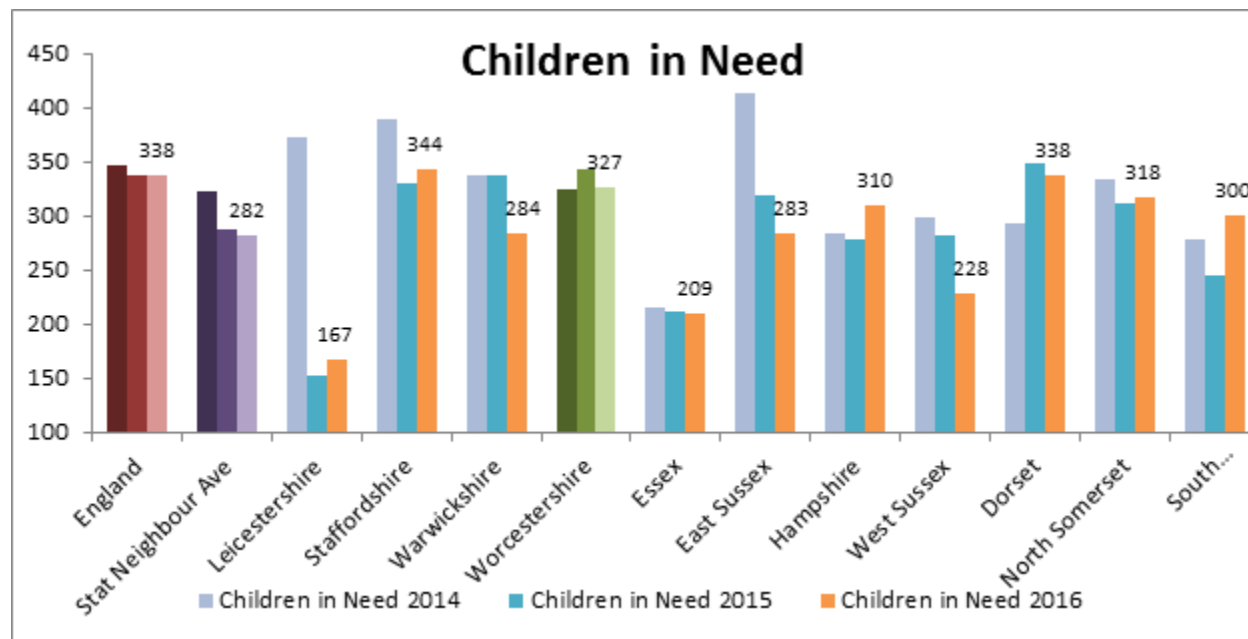
Child Protection

The English average at 31st March 2016 was 43.1 per 10,000 of population and the statistical neighbour rate was 36.5 per 10,000. Worcestershire's rate at that time was 41 per 10,000, however had decreased to 37 per 10,000 at the end of December 2016.



Children In Need

The English average at 31st March 2016 was 338 per 10,000 of population and the statistical neighbour rate was 282 per 10,000. Worcestershire's rate at that time was 327 per 10,000 as detailed in the graph below.



Key Trends Nationally compared to Worcestershire

The key trends below help to highlight some of the trends nationally in comparison to Worcestershire in relation to Looked after children.

National	Worcestershire
<p>↓ Looked after children numbers went up in March 2016 by 1.4% from the previous year. There were 70,440 looked after children, an increase of 5% compared to 31 March 2012. The number of looked after children has increased steadily each year and is now higher than at any point since 1985.</p>	<p>↓ Looked after children numbers went up in March 2016 by 0.7% from the previous year. This represents an increase from 690 to 695 Looked after children. There has been an increase of 15.8% compared to March 2012, which is significantly higher than the national position.</p> <p>↓ The figures for December 2016 have demonstrated further increase to 732, an increase of 2.6% since March 2016. We do yet have the statistical or national data for this period</p>

↓ 77% of children who were looked after at March 2016 were in a foster placement, an increase of 0.7% from 2015.	↓ 67.5% of children who were looked after at March 2016 were in a foster placement, a decrease of 2.1% from 2015.
↓ 14% decrease of looked after children placed for adoption from 2015.	↓ 24% decrease of looked after children placed for adoption from 2015.
↑ 13% of looked after children cared for in secure units, children's homes and hostels, which is an increase of 6% since 2015.	↓ 12% of looked after children cared for in secure units, children's homes and hostels, which is a decrease from 16% in 2015.
↑ 7% of children looked after were placed with their parents. There has been an 8% increase in the number of children placed with parents from the previous year, but only a 0.5% increase in the percentage of the looked after children population.	↓ 5% of children looked after were placed with their parents, this figure has decreased from 6% in March 2015, despite an increase in the looked after population.

(DfE, 2016)

Care Leavers

As at the end of March 2015, the national number of Care Leavers who were aged 19, 20 and 21 who were looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday including some time after their 16th birthday was 26,010. This had increased to 26,340 at the end of March 2016, an increase of 1%.

For Worcestershire the figure was 285 at the end of March 2015, rising to 305 at March 2016 i.e. a 7% increase which was an increase of 5.5% on the previous year.

At the end of March 2016, 5% of Worcestershire Care Leavers were deemed to be in unsuitable accommodation, compared with the national position of 7%. Those Care Leavers whose accommodation status was unknown nationally was 11% with Worcestershire's at 18%.

Worcestershire was in touch with 79% of its Care Leavers, compared with the national position of 87%. 44% of Worcestershire's Care Leavers were NEET compared with 40% nationally, and Worcestershire's Care Leavers whose education, employment or training position was unknown was 18% compared to 11% nationally.

As at end of December 2016, the number of placements or Staying Put arrangements occupied by young people 18 and over was 49, compared with 29 at the same point in 2015, and 35 in 2014 and was broken down as shown below.

Type of provision	December 2014	December 2015	December 2016
Agency Residential		1	
In-house Residential			1
Supported Living	1	1	4
Supported Lodging	28	7	4
Student Accommodation			6
Safe Base			1
Staying Put		16	24
IFA	1	1	2
UASC	5	3	7
Total	35	29	49

This demonstrates the increased use of Staying Put arrangements and student accommodation, the decrease in the use of supported lodgings and the overall increase in the number of young people supported by Worcestershire post-18.

SERVICE OVERVIEW

Looked after children (LAC) Population

- On 31 December 2016 Worcestershire had 732 looked after children and 315 care leavers.
- 26% entered care through s20 arrangements.
- There were 500 children living in foster care. 286 lived with Worcestershire County Council foster carers (84 kinship carers and 202 non-related foster carers) and 214 with foster carers in Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA). 58 of the children living with IFA carers were outside the county boundaries.
- 27 children lived in local authority children's homes and 48 lived in residential homes run by independent providers of which, 39 were placed out the county.
- 2 children were placed in secure units outside the county.
- 3% of our looked after children had their disability as being the primary reason for becoming looked after.
- 145 children were non-white British.
- 39 looked after 16/17 year olds lived in supported independent living (this figure includes all young peoples in Independent living placements with and without formal support and excludes young people in supported lodgings, hostels, foyers).
- There were 70 children with a plan for adoption and of these 30 were placed with prospective adopters (*the number of children with a plan for adoption does not include parallel plans where one of the plans is adoption*).
- WCC currently has 42 approved prospective Adoptive carers awaiting a match.
- 369 had a plan to remain looked after until adulthood (*this figure only includes children & young people placed with foster carers (not relative/friend placements) or in residential placements*).

- 164 children were subject to a Special Guardianship Order.
- 49 children were subject to Child Arrangement Order (Residence Order).
- The families of 53 children were in receipt of Adoption Allowances.
- 166 Direct Payments were being made.

Provision

- Worcestershire has a Fostering Service recruiting, training, assessing and supporting foster carers. On 31st December 2016, there were 286 in-house placements, of which 200 children were placed with non-related carers, 2 children were placed with Placement Plus carers and 84 with kinship carers. At 31st December, there were foster carers with vacancies for 25 children.
- Worcestershire has a Residential Service supporting 7 children's homes with provision for 29 children, including 8 placements for children with disabilities. In addition, there are also 2 homes providing short breaks for up to 8 children with disabilities.
- There is one six-bed residential home identified for children on the edge of care (3 beds), for a child subject to Police and Criminal Evidence (1 bed) and for children placed in an emergency due to placement breakdown (2 beds).
- There are 40 young people aged 16/17 and 7 18 year-olds accommodated in supported living properties, of which, 20 were placed with in-house provision and 27 with external placement providers. 10 of the young people placed in external provision are outside the county.
- Worcestershire has an Adoption Service recruiting, assessing and supporting prospective adopters. On 31st December 2016, 53 adopters were being supported post approval and a further 42 households were awaiting match.
- There are Framework Agreements in place to procure external foster placements and residential placements, and supported independent living providers. These ensure best value and quality assurance of external provision.
- There is a Child & Family Support Service and Outreach Team providing support for young people on the edge of care. The Outreach Team also supports young people in independent living.
- The Family Front Door, co-located with Police, Health and CAMHS takes referrals to social care and targeted family support
- There are 15 locality based Safeguarding Teams and 3 LAC Permanency teams working with children across the county who are subject to Child in Need, Child Protection arrangements and of whom are looked after.
- There is a Service for those young people who present as homeless.
- There is a service for young people who present as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.
- There is a specialist service for children with disabilities, including a Young Adults Team focussing on 16-24 year olds.
- There is an Integrated Specialist Service supporting the health, education and well-being of looked after and adopted children.

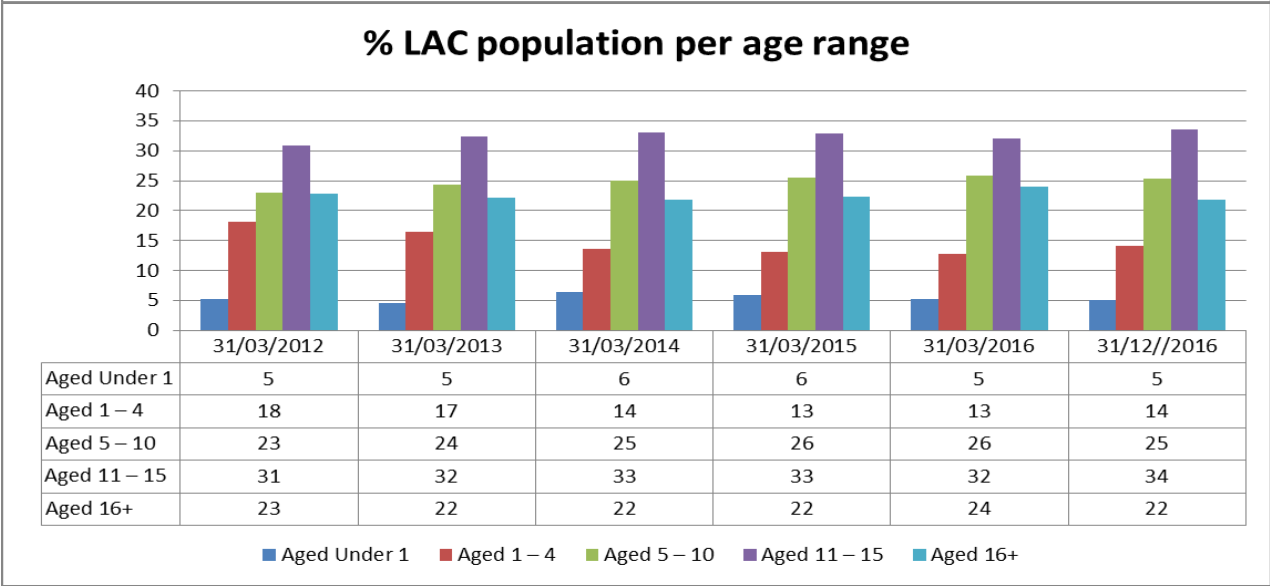
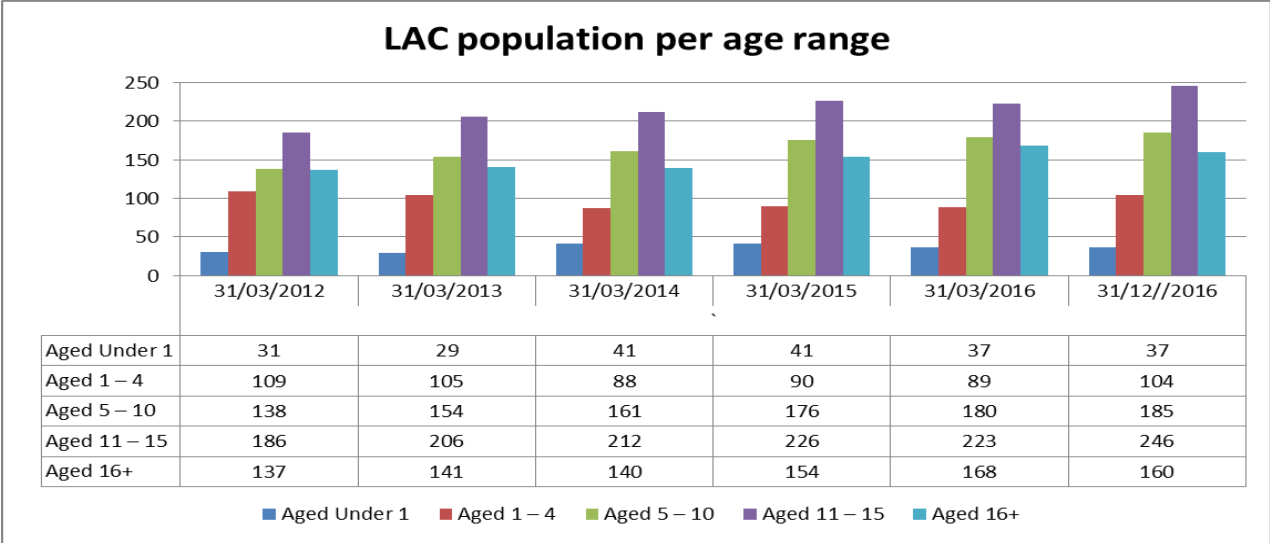
- This service also provides post-order support to adopted children and their adoptive parents and, children and carers living in kinship care arrangements under a Special Guardianship Order.

Outcomes

- During 2015/16
 - 240 children started to be looked after and 235 ceased to be looked after.
 - 45 were adopted and 29 converted to Special Guardianship Order
- As at 31st December 2016,
 - 12.7% of LAC were placed more than 20 miles from home, compared with a national position of 14% and a statistical neighbours position of 14.2%
 - the percentage of LAC with 3 or more placements in previous 12 months was 12.7% compared with a national position of 10% and a statistical neighbours position of 11.4%
 - 34.2% of our care leavers were NEET compared with a national position of 39% and a statistical neighbours position of 39.5%

SUMMARY OF NEEDS ANALYSIS

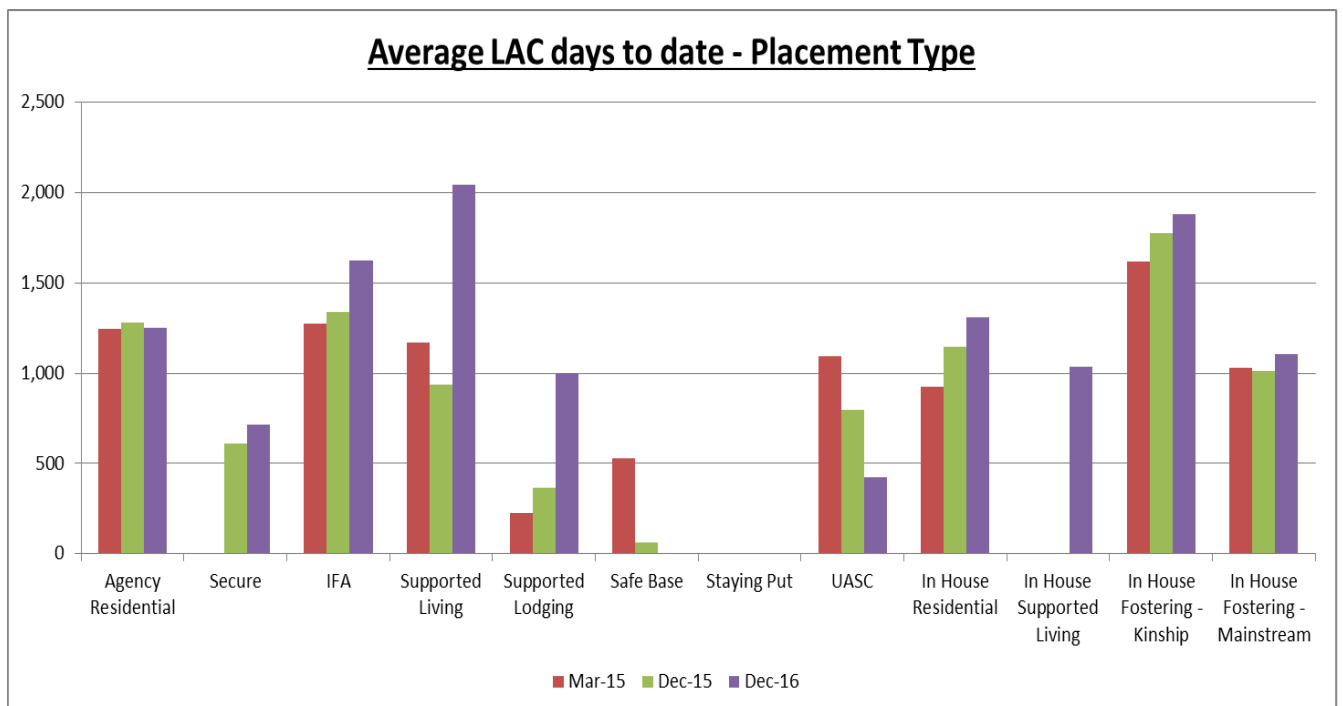
- The total number of looked after children as at 31st December 2016 was 732.
- The proportion of males to females mirrors the national average, but there is an overrepresentation of males in the 16+ age group (61%).
- The proportion of the looked after child population whose ethnicity is other than White British is greater than the proportion of the child population in Worcestershire and significantly greater than the national average (20% : 10.4% and 34% respectively).
- The national average for the use of s20 is 61%. Worcestershire's use of s20 at 31st December 2016 is 20%.
- The highest numbers can be found in the 11 to 15 year age bracket with a total of 246 (34%) as at 31st December 2016, having risen from 31% at March 2012. This is 5% greater than the national average of 29%.



- Children with disabilities only account for 3% of the looked after population as a whole but make up 30% of children in an external residential placement. Of the 25 young people who were looked after at 31st December 2016 due to disability, 15 of those are in external residential placements. A possible reason for the high proportion of young people with a disability being placed in external residential placements could be that the external providers are able to provide specialist support for the individual's disability and may provide resources that are not available through internal providers.
- As at 31st December, Worcestershire had 68% of looked after children in foster care. This is 6% lower by comparison to the National average (74%). Since 2012 the percentage in foster care has decreased by 5%. However, we now have more children placed with parents and in supported living accommodation than we had at that time.
- 25% (185) of all looked after children and young people (732) are aged between 5-10 years, and 34% are aged between 11-15 years (246). Young people in the older cohort are

predominantly placed with external foster carer providers. We also have 160 (22%) young people who are aged 16 plus.

- Whilst action continues to be taken to increase the number of local authority foster placements, there is a risk that the number of in-house placements lost each year against those gained will not be sufficient enough to extend the placement stock with the speed necessary to ensure that there is both the volume and choice required to offset the cost of Independent Fostering Agency placements.
- The number of children adopted at March 2016 had decreased to 45 from 54 the previous year.
- The trend relating to the average days a child has been in each type of placement is shown below.

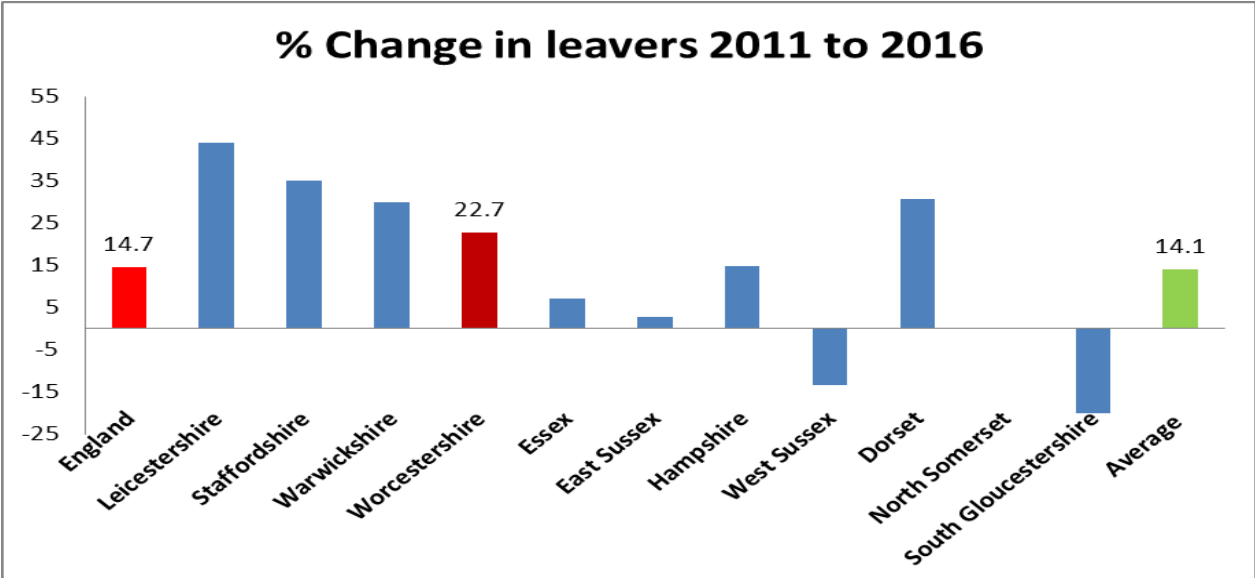
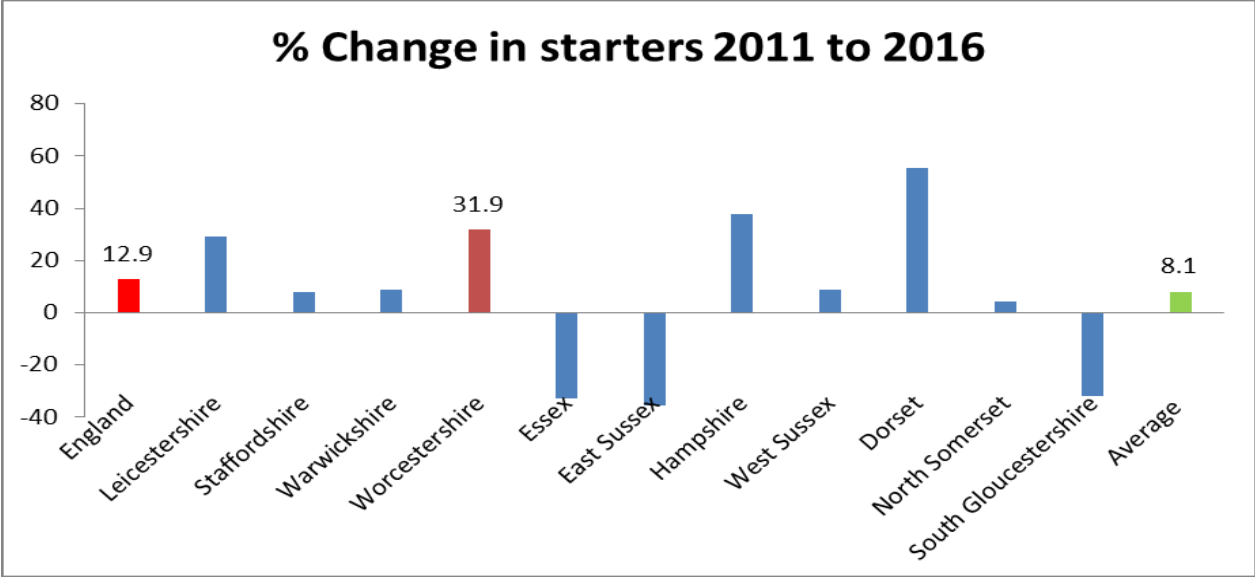


STARTERS, LEAVERS AND TURNOVER

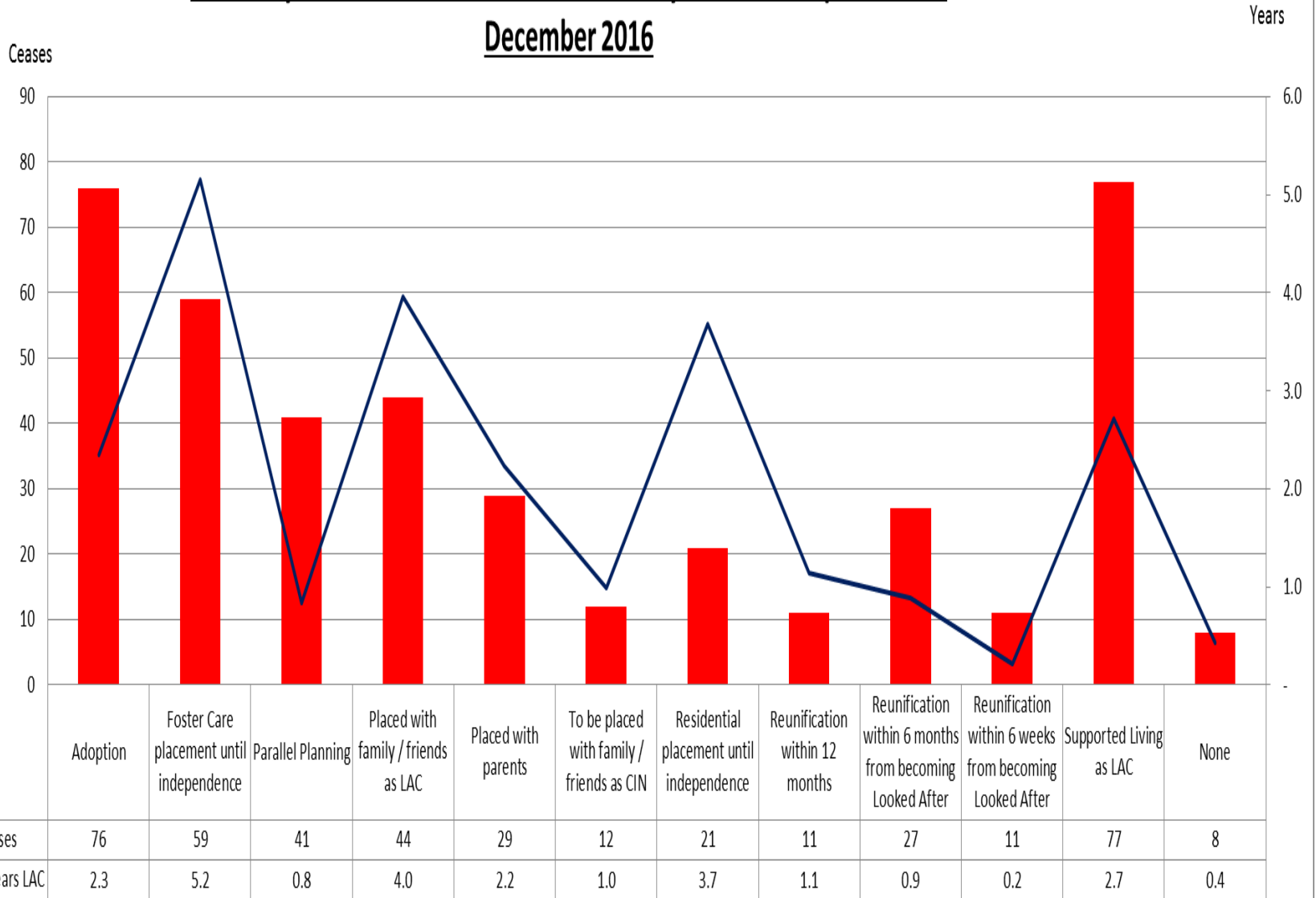
Starters and Leavers

Along with the reasons for becoming looked after, the number of starters and leavers had been explored in order to identify the impact this had on the number of looked after children in Worcestershire e.g. does the authority have a high admission rate but low discharge rate hence the number of looked after children.

For both the national and statistical averages the percentage increase in leavers over the past 5 years has been higher than the percentage increase in starters; however the opposite is true for Worcestershire. The percentage increase in starters is significantly higher (31.9%) than the increase in leavers (22.7%).

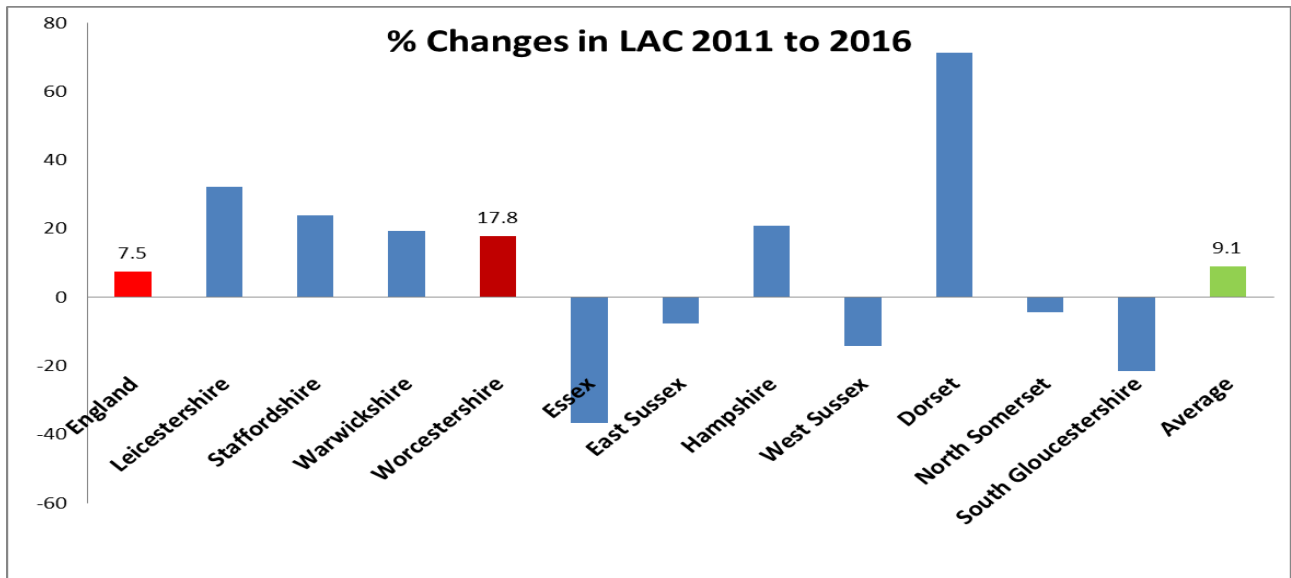


**Ave LAC years when child ceases to be LAC by Care Plan - April 2015 to
December 2016**

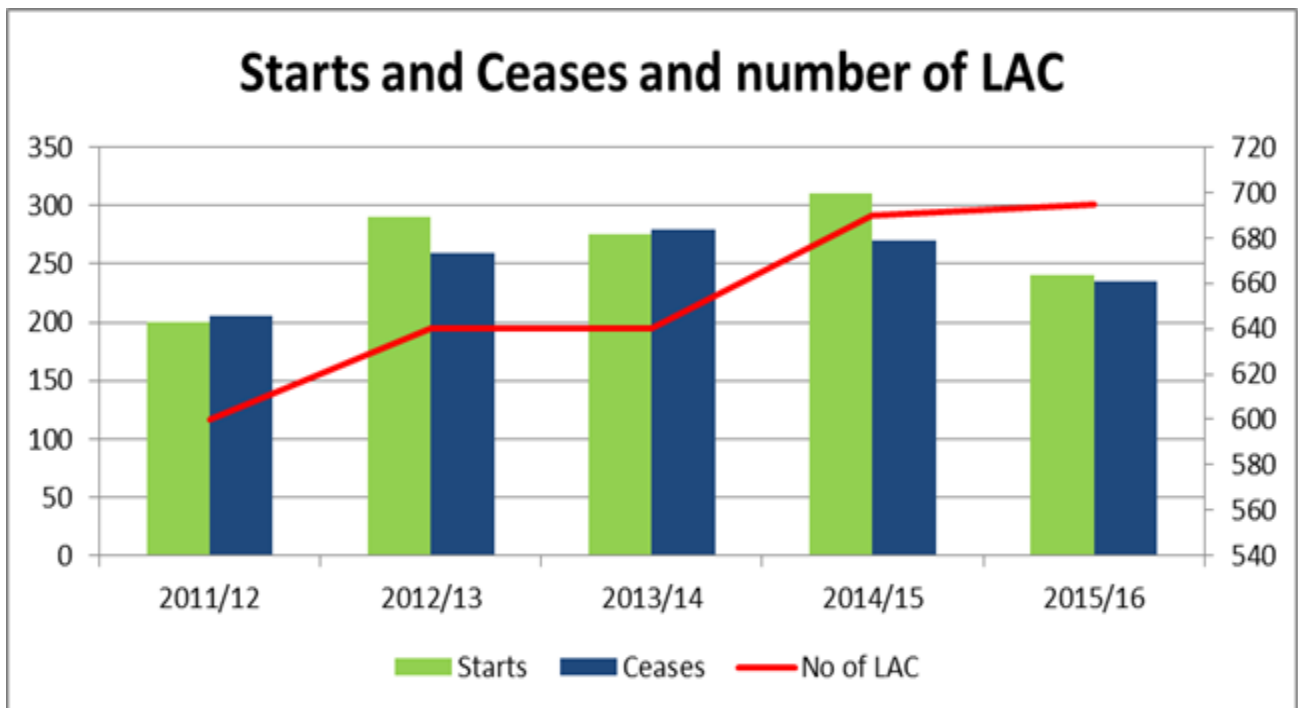


Increase / decrease in Looked after Children

The graph below demonstrates that although the numbers of LAC have increased nationally and on average across our statistical neighbours between 2011 and 2016, Worcestershire's increase is much higher.

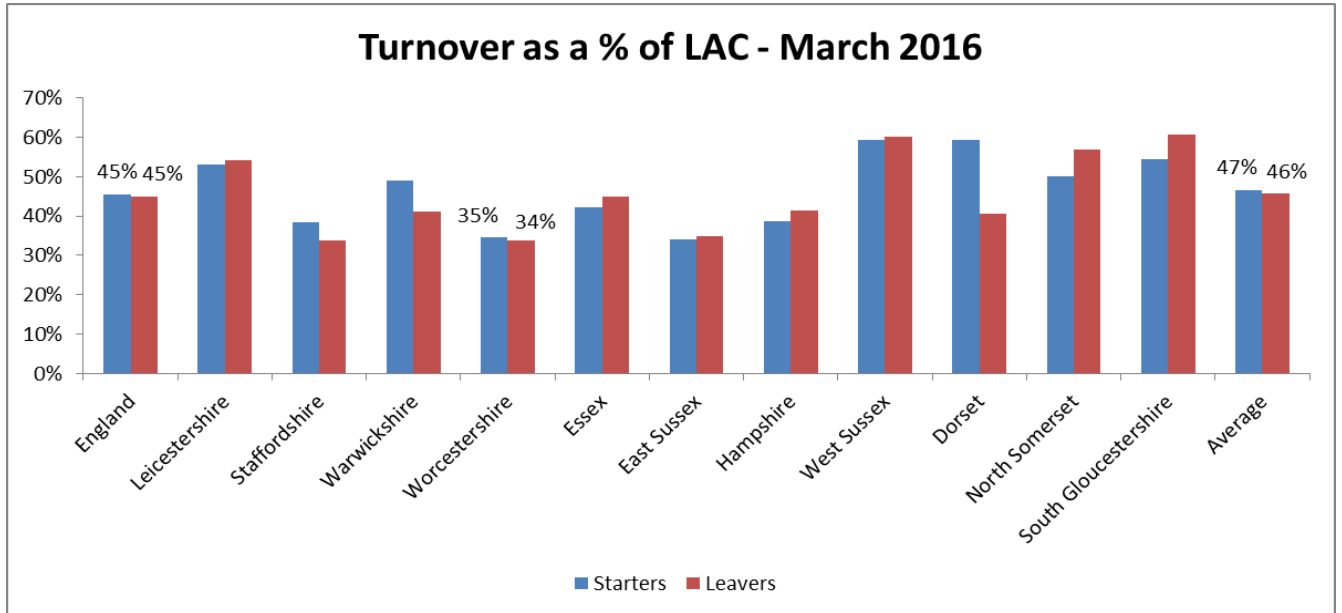


A summary of the starters, ceases and numbers of LAC over the last 5 years is shown below.



Turnover of Looked after Children

The graph below shows that nationally there were 45% of the LAC population who started in care and 45% of the LAC population who ceased care in 2015/16. Our statistical neighbours turnover rate is slightly higher than the national picture but their leavers are slightly lower than their starters. Worcestershire's rate is much lower than the national or statistical neighbour rate. This demonstrates that children are staying in care longer and the exit rate is lower than the start rate.



PLACEMENT MIX

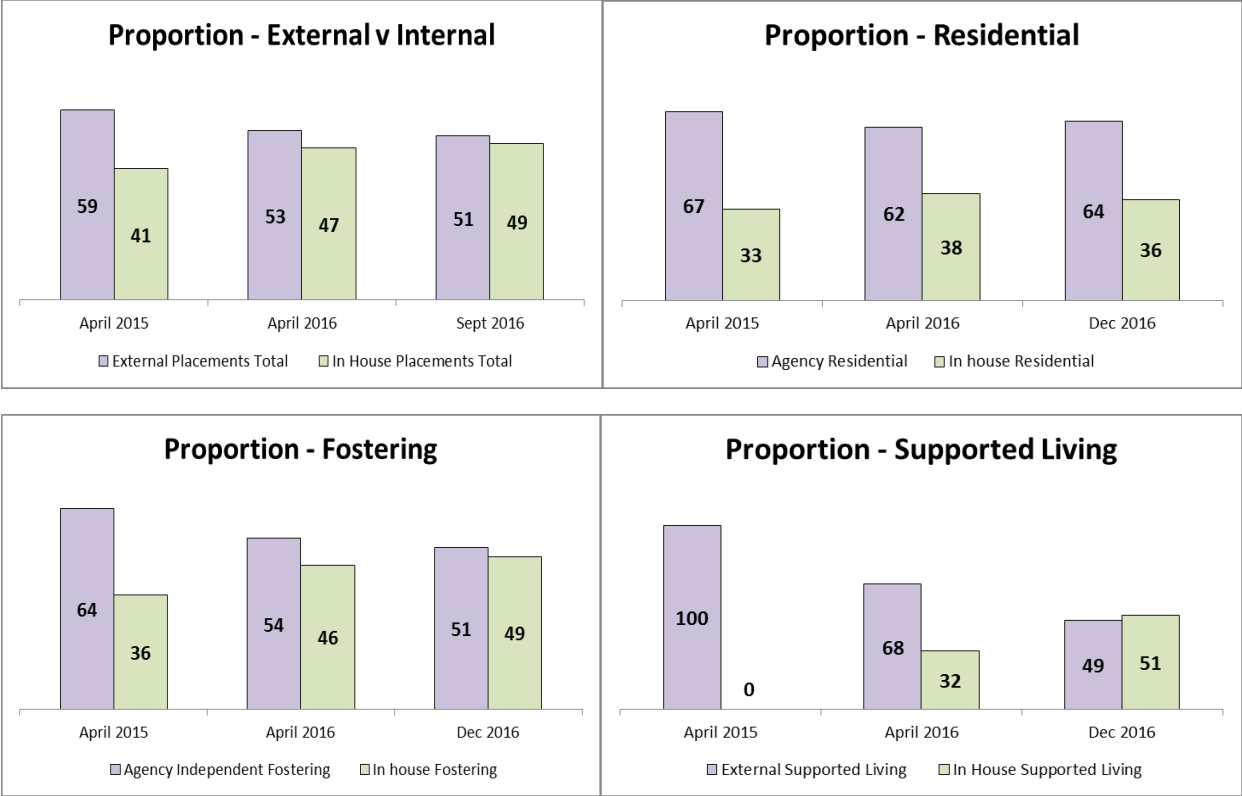
Where children are placed

The following table provides a snapshot of the placement mix as at 31st December 2016:

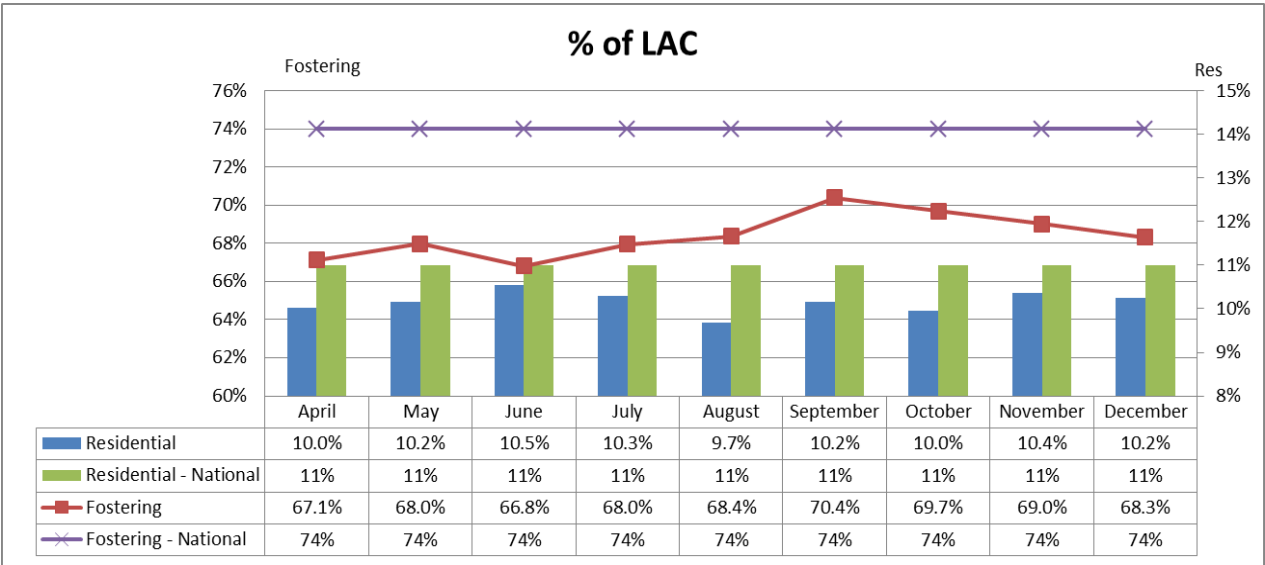
	31 December 2016
Agency Residential	48
Secure Units	2
In-house Residential	27
IFA	226
In-house Fostering	202
Kinship Fostering	88
External Supported Living	27
Internal Supported Living	20
Safe Base / Supported Lodging	20
Placed with Parents / Friends (no cost)	74
TOTAL LAC	732
Staying Put Arrangements	26
Adoption Allowances	53
Special Guardianship Orders	164
Residence Orders	49
Direct Payments	166

Internal v External Placements

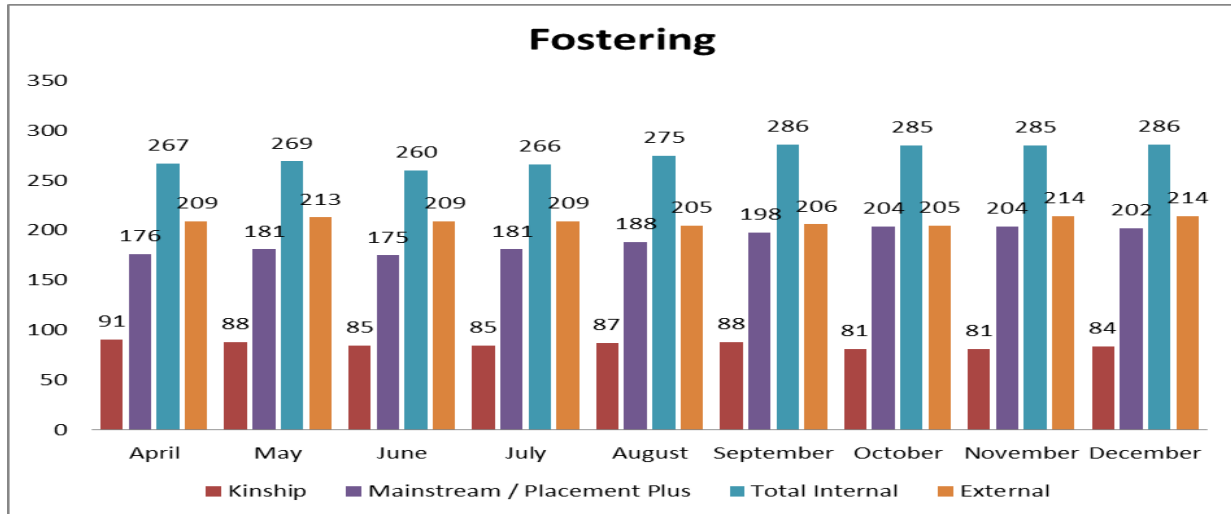
Worcestershire County Council utilises a wide mix of placements but over the last 2 years has concentrated on increasing the number of internal placements as demonstrated in the following graphs. Further work is needed in the residential area but in-house supported living and fostering provision is developing well.



The number of children in external residential placements is still higher than internal placements but remains lower than planned. Nationally, 11% of LAC are in placed in residential care with Worcestershire's figure at 10.2% - this has decreased significantly and stood at 12.4% in April 2015. The move to in-house fostering is positive and for the last 17 months there have been more new children placed with in-house carers than external ones. 74% of LAC nationally are in foster care with Worcestershire's figure being 68.3%. Worcestershire has more children in supported living and placed with parents / friends than the national averages.



The trend through 2016 for fostering is shown below



Placement Unit Costs

Unit costs continue to be reviewed and the analysis below demonstrates that internal residential, supported living and fostering provision is significantly more cost effective than external provision.

Placement Type	Average Weekly Cost - Net
Agency Residential	3,274
In House Residential	2,678
Secure	6,227
Independent Fostering	791
In-house Fostering	470
Kinship	387
Staying Put	156
External Supported Living	659
In House Supported Living	395
Supported Lodging	307
Student Accommodation	102
Safe Base	357
Direct Financial Support Packages	
Special Guardianship Orders	114
Residence Orders	93
Adoption Allowances	126
Direct Payments	72

Internal fostering provision is 40% cheaper than the independent sector; supported living is also 40% cheaper and residential 18% less than the independent sector, on average. Included in the calculations for internal provision are costs for additional services including the costs for administration and management, employee on-costs, outreach support, office costs, and payments such as the reimbursement of expenses to foster carers and training.

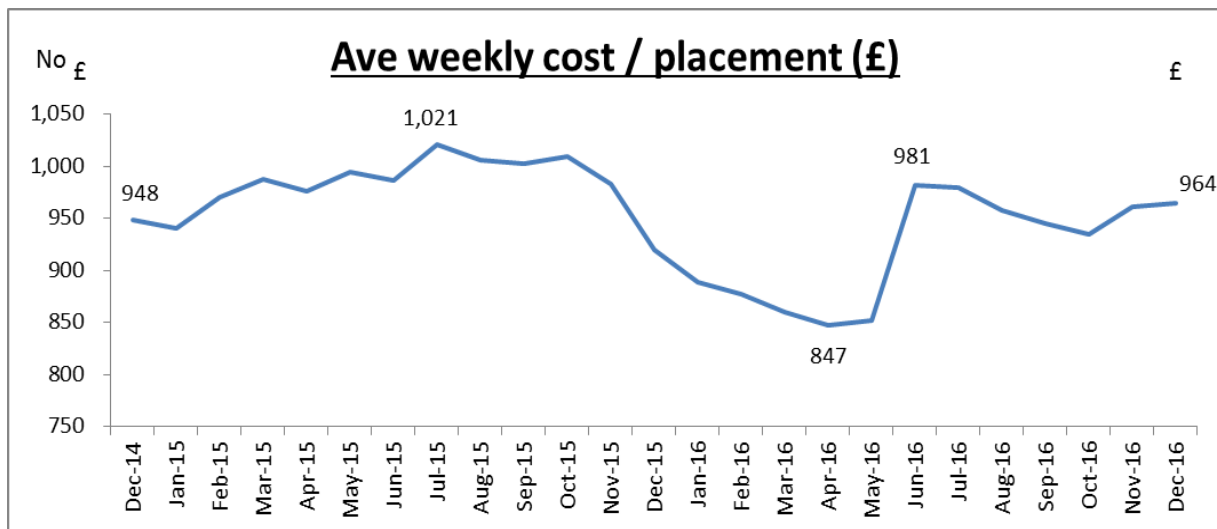
It is important to note that most providers in the independent sector operate on the principles of the private sector and provide services based upon an agreed profit margin. Prices across the independent providers vary considerably and purchasing on demand does not provide the best negotiating framework or necessarily the best value so the county has introduced a foster care framework agreement, which was reviewed in 2016, through which the cost of external placements have been renegotiated. A similar process is now in place for external supported living.

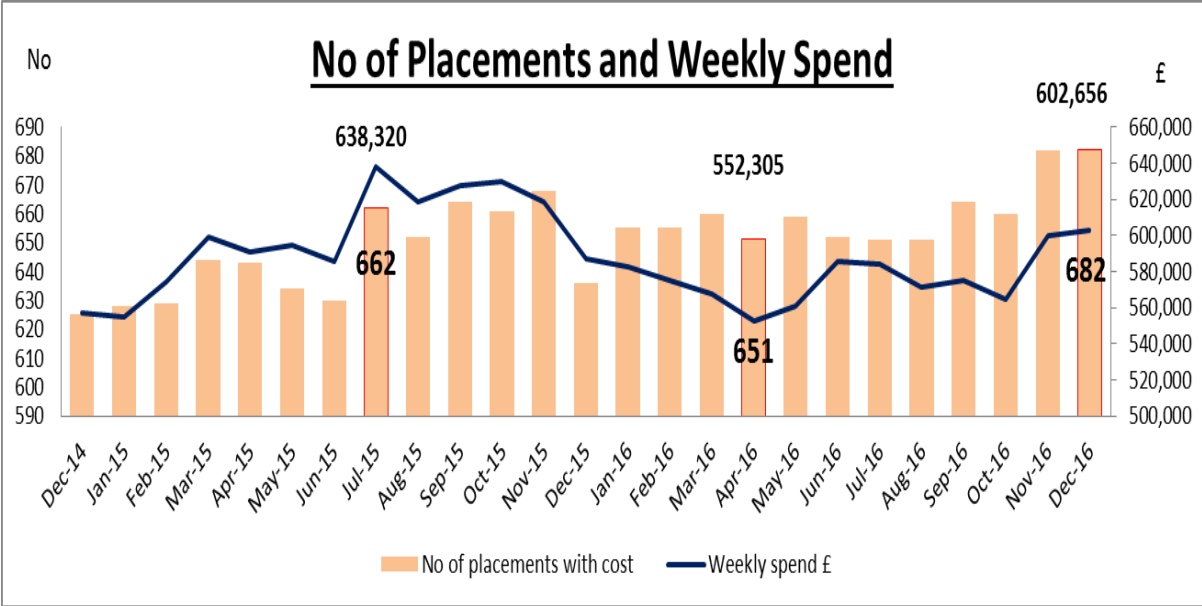
Worcestershire County Council continues to actively seek to increase the number of internal fostering households based upon an analysis of placement needs to reduce the need for external, high cost external placements.

Average weekly costs

The average weekly cost per placement increased slightly between October and December 2016 as did the total weekly spend due to the increased number of higher cost placements over this period. However the weekly spend in December 2016 was similar to that in March 2015 when there were 38 more children.

The average weekly cost per placement is £964 (it was £1,021 at its highest in July 2015). The total weekly spend at the highest point was £638k when Worcestershire had 662 children. Worcestershire now has 20 more children and is spending £36k less i.e. Worcestershire now spends less per placement than it did in previous years.





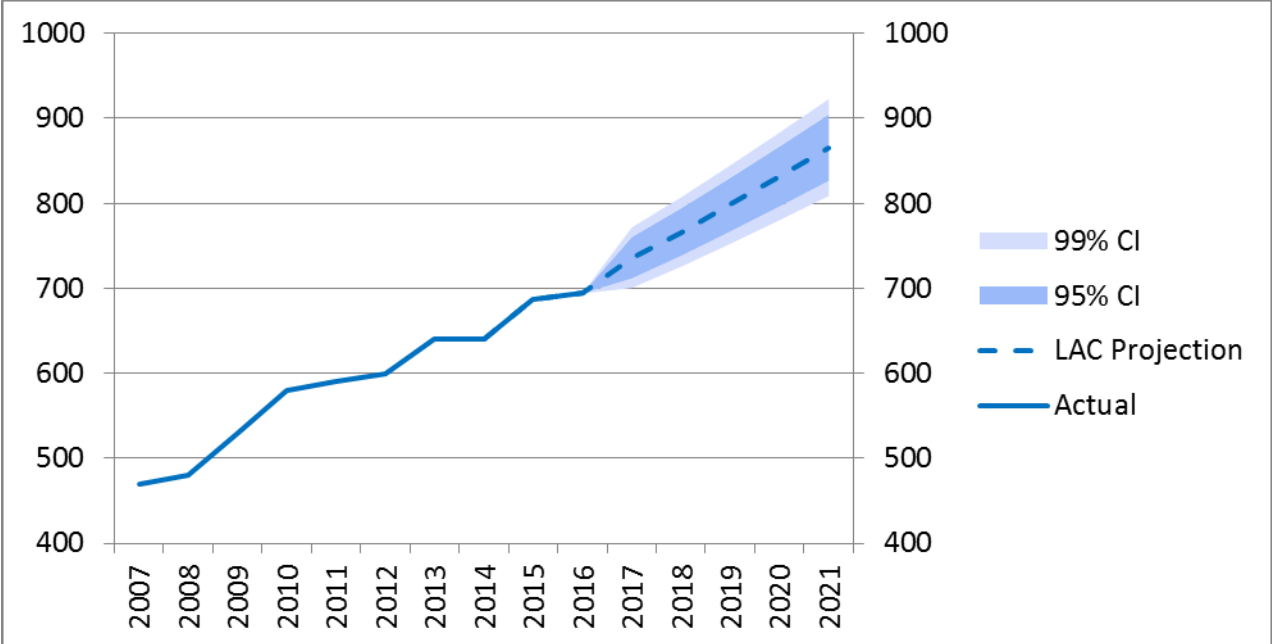
FINANCIAL FORECAST

2017/18 position

When the budget for 2017/18 was calculated in the summer of 2016, the number of looked after children was 699. By 31st December the number was 732. Further to the completion of the looked after children needs analysis, further modelling of costs has taken place. To ensure we account for a potential increase in new looked after children, as there is an expected increase in the population of children overall, we have attempted to highlight how the number of looked after children could rise if the last year rate increase continues year upon year, and no strategy is in place to reduce figures.

The graph below shows the forecast number of looked after children based on the assumption that the trend we have seen over the last 10 years will continue. The rate of LAC per 10,000 population under 18 in Worcestershire between 2007 and 2016 was used to identify the increasing trend. This trend was then projected up to 2021 taking into account the 2014 based ONS population projection for Worcestershire. The forecast is an estimate and therefore has some uncertainty around the actual level observed. The forecast line represents the middle of the range of forecast values and the blue shaded, fan shaped areas represent the range within which the forecast line may actually fall.

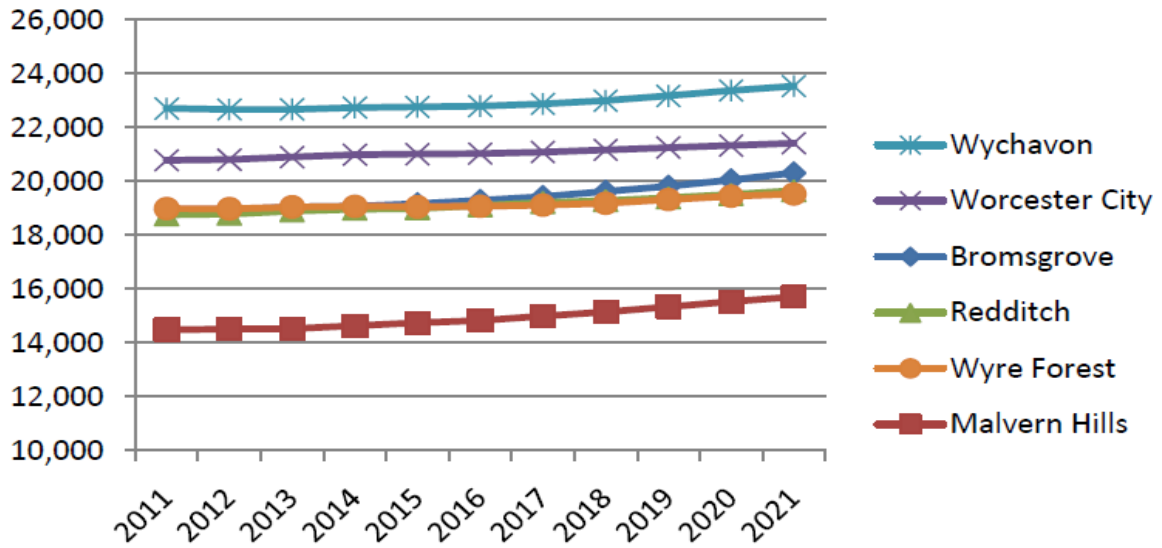
This shows that between 2017 and 2021 the trend in LAC numbers is expected to go from between 700 and 772 to between 809 and 923.



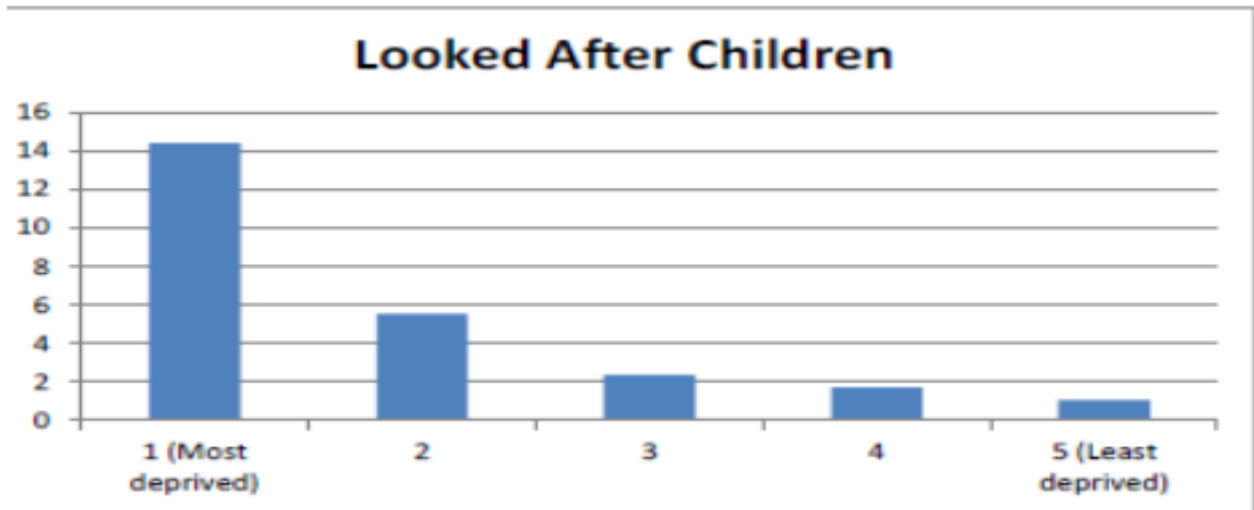
Using the graph above and assuming the rate of looked after children remains consistent it would give a figure of 760 - 800 by the year end 2017/18 assuming there is no mitigation strategy in place. This is an additional rise of 60 - 100 children over and above the figure when the budget was calculated. This is a net increase and there will obviously be a number of starters and leavers throughout the year. The cost of an additional 60 - 100 children is £2.9m - £4.8m which has been based on placing them for the full year, based on the December 2016 average cost of a placement. If more of them are placed in independent sector places this cost could be considerably higher.

There is also a prediction that the 0-17 population will increase in each of the districts as detailed in the graph below.

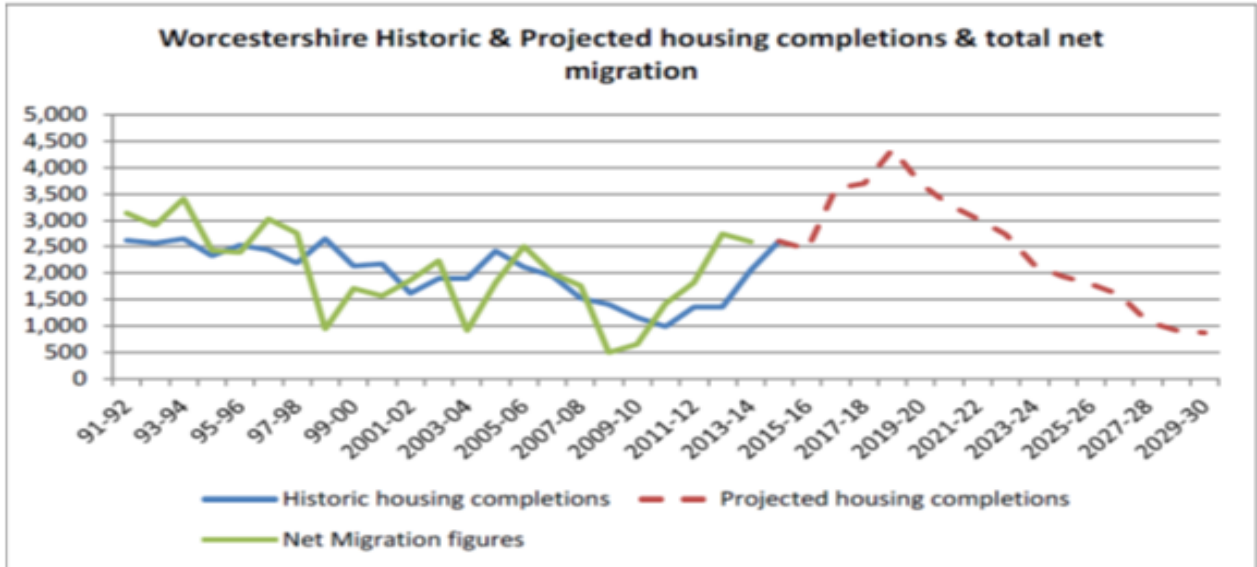
Projected Population aged 0-17 by District, 2011-21



The rate of LAC is higher in more deprived areas, as reported in the 2014 Public Health report with the rate per 1,000 being significantly higher in deprived areas as shown below.



There is also expected to be rapid growth in the housing market over the coming years.



Source: Housing completions taken from DCLG live tables on house building & Worcestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment Monitoring Reports. Migration figures taken from ONS components of change 1991-2015

These projections highlight the need for our Looked after children & Care Leavers' Commissioning Strategy in order to manage the demand on Children's Services and in particular the cost of placements for Looked after children.

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CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

2017 – 2020



Foreword



Councillor Marc Bayliss

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to introduce the revised Corporate Parenting Strategy for Worcestershire for 2017-2020.

The revised Corporate Parenting Strategy is not an end in itself; it provides an agreed direction of travel and a common commitment to action. We will work in partnership to fulfil our statutory duty as corporate parents to nurture, respect and be ambitious for our looked after children and young people as we would for our own children.

As Worcestershire County Council's Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children, Families and Communities, I am clear that the wellbeing of our looked after children and care leavers is of the highest priority. As corporate parents we have a particular duty of care to all our looked after children and young people.

We know that looked after children and young people and care leavers are amongst the most vulnerable in our community, and that all too often their life chances are restricted. We have a responsibility and a commitment to changing this pattern.

Through implementation of this strategy, we will strive to ensure that our looked after children and young people have the best possible start in life that we can deliver. We will support and care for them as they grow up and take their first steps towards self-reliance and independence. We will also make sure that we continue to be there for our young people as they enter early adulthood, just as any responsible parent would.

Cllr Marc Bayliss
Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families and Chair of Corporate Parenting Strategy.

1.0. Introduction

1.1. When a child comes into care, they become “looked after” and Worcestershire County Council (WCC) becomes their Corporate Parent. This means that everyone who works for WCC, in any capacity, its elected members and its partners – in fact all those who play any part in making decisions for children in Worcestershire – have a special and important responsibility in fulfilling the corporate parent role.

A child or young person is looked after if they are subject to a Care Order or are being looked after under a voluntary agreement, subject to the Children Act 1989. The local authority has a statutory duty to those aged 0 to 18 years. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 extended the responsibility of the local authority to young people leaving care, requiring them to plan the young person’s transition to adulthood and provide ongoing advice and assistance until at least the age of 21, with a duty to keep in touch until a young person is 25, and in higher education. Best practice is an offer to keep in touch with all care leavers up to 25 years, which we aim to achieve.

1.2. Worcestershire County Council is committed to being an effective and trustworthy corporate parent for any child or young person who is in our care irrespective of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, faith or ability. The values underpinning this strategy are contained in Worcestershire County Council’s Corporate Parenting Pledge and in the national Care Leavers’ Charter, and their principles are embedded throughout this document.

Every good parent knows that children require a safe and nurturing environment in which to grow and thrive. Parents protect and support their children in coping with the dangers and risks of everyday life. Parents are ambitious for their children and strive to support them to reach good or better progress and achieve their potential. Parents celebrate and share in their children’s achievements, however large or small. A child who is cared for by the Council has the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that they would expect from a good parent in the community.

1.3 For corporate parenting to be effective it needs commitment from all elected members, and council employees in a council-wide approach. The whole council needs to be involved, as well as our partners, i.e. Health, Police, District Councils, housing providers and the voluntary sector, all acting as good parents, committing resources and working together to improve the lives of all children and young people in our care and care leavers. It is about prioritising children and young people’s needs, listening to what they want and supporting them to make the most of their lives and opportunities.

Being a good corporate parent means:

- Seeking the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own child
- Accepting responsibility for all children in the Council’s care
- Making their needs a priority and acting appropriately with clarity
- Listening to the views of children and young people and taking account of them
- Giving young people the support they need as they move into adulthood

1.4 Looked after children are among the most vulnerable children in our community. They are unable to live at home with their immediate family, for any number of reasons, and they become looked after by Worcestershire County Council. This may be through a voluntary agreement with the child's parents or through a court order. Whatever their journey into care looks like, most looked after children will have experienced some form of neglect, harm or emotional distress in their lives before becoming looked after.

Research shows that outcomes for children and young people who are in, or have left care, remain worse than for other children and is something for which we must take collective responsibility. They often do not do as well at school, are less likely to go on to higher education, more likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) and are over-represented in youth offending institutions. There is also a long term impact when looked after children become parents themselves.

Corporate parents should play a key part in narrowing the gap in outcomes between looked after children and other children in the community. The part you can play is to engage with your local school and pre-school providers and to support local foster carers in linking with local community groups.

2.0. Corporate Parenting

2.1. Corporate parenting operates at strategic, operational and individual levels. It has three key elements:

- A statutory duty, detailed in the Children Act 1989 and the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, on all parts of a local authority to co-operate in promoting the welfare of children and young people looked after, and a duty on other partners and agencies to co-operate in fulfilling that duty. Detail of the legislation relating to children, young people and care leavers is given in Appendix 1.
- Co-ordinating the activities of the many different professionals and carers who are involved in a child or young person's life and taking a strategic, child centred approach to the delivery of services
- Shifting the emphasis from "corporate" to "parenting", making sure our moral and statutory responsibilities towards looked after children and care leavers are being fulfilled.

The Corporate Parenting Board will deliver its annual plan in line with the aims of this strategy, and this will ensure that the Board:

- listens to the voice of the child
- celebrates the successes of children in care and care leavers
- sets higher expectations for children, young people and care leavers
- seeks to improve long term outcomes for all children in care – their happiness, wellbeing, educational success and future prospects

- Develops an informed view of County Council provision and services through a programme of well-planned visits and feedback from Board members.

Worcestershire's Corporate Parenting Board has committed to:

- Make sure that the whole council and partner agencies commit to the principles of excellent corporate parenting.
- Set high expectations and seek to improve long term outcomes for all children in care – their happiness, wellbeing, educational success and future prospects
- Make sure that the voice of the child and young person in care influences both policy and the services that they receive, and that young people are engaged with any action intended to develop and improve services or to recruit key staff members
- Ensure that there is a good understanding of current and proposed government expectations regarding the services to looked after children and care leavers.
- Receive reports on qualitative and quantitative information about services and outcomes in a timely manner and review the progress of the Children and Young People's Plan with regards to looked after children and care leavers.
- Lead on the development, review and promotion of the Corporate Parenting Strategy across the Council and involve partners in order to improve services and respond to changing needs.
- Celebrate the successes of children in care and care leavers
- Develop an informed view of County Council provision and services through a programme of well-planned visits and feedback from Board members.
- Link as appropriate with the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- Develop a relationship with Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board and Worcestershire Safeguarding Adult Board for sharing information.

The terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Board is given in Appendix 2

2.2 Our Corporate Parenting Pledge to looked after children and care leavers:

- Support and help you to keep safe and prevent bullying
- Ensure that your physical and emotional health and well-being is fully supported
- Make sure that your learning is a priority and opportunities maximised to achieve the best outcomes for you
- Support you to leave care when it is safe to do so
- Support your carers by helping them to help you grow and develop into adulthood
- Help you meet regularly with those who are responsible in supporting and caring for you
- Work hard to minimise the number of changes you have in your social worker or Personal Advisor
- Help you to access a range of fun and leisure activities
- Ensure you are fully involved in key decisions being made about your care
- Your carers will make day to day decisions so there is no delay in you being able to carry out safe activities of your choice
- Our aspirations and goals as Corporate Parents will be the same as any good parent. We will require the best for our looked after children not just 'good enough'

3.0. The role and responsibilities of county and district councillors, council departments, and other partners

3.1 All Councillors should be aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities and must:

- Have a clear understanding and awareness of the issues for looked after children and care leavers in the authority area and those placed out of area
- Champion the interests of looked after children and care leavers in all they do
- Ask questions about outcomes for children and challenge appropriately looked after and care leavers
- Ensure looked after children and care leavers have a say in how decisions are made about the services that affect them, and so that they can influence those decisions. This includes councillors engaging with the looked after council and the leaving care council
- Provide meaningful work based training opportunities, including apprenticeships for care leavers within the Council and its partners and contractors to improve their future prospects
- Ensure children placed out of county receive an equal service
- Ensure that the Council, as corporate parent, is keeping the promise it has made in the Corporate Parenting Pledge, and the Care Leavers' Charter
- Require evidence of improving positive outcomes and aspirational progress for Worcestershire looked after children
- Ask how all elements of council business have an impact for looked after children
- Make connections and links between council plans, strategies and decision-making for looked after children
- Consistently challenge "Would this be good enough for my own child?"

3.2 Worcestershire County Councillors

All County Councillors are in the unique position of being able to promote opportunities for looked after children and care leavers through their political power and influence and; through their connections to the community, schools, health services, youth justice, local businesses, employers and voluntary organisations. The Worcestershire County Council Cabinet Member for Children and Families has the lead political role in ensuring that looked after children by the local authority have their interests protected, their opportunities maximised, their educational achievement enhanced, their voices heard and have services shaped to meet their needs. Other councillors who are members of the Corporate Parenting Board have a specific role in ensuring that responsibilities towards looked after children and care leavers are being fulfilled.

Good corporate parenting requires ownership and leadership at the most senior level and this includes elected members. As corporate parents, it is the responsibility of all elected members to be satisfied that there is a joined up, effective and holistic approach to meeting the needs of looked after children and care leavers through policy and planning. This means that when policy is being set or plans are agreed it is important to consider opportunities for improving outcomes for looked after children. The Corporate Parenting Board leads for the Council in fulfilling this responsibility, but it is also important that each Councillor is aware of the vital role that they can play. This can be through scrutiny, through input at council meetings and through day to day engagement with the local community including schools, health care providers and other organisations in local areas. There is also an interface with District colleagues and wider partners, for example, housing.

Support from officers and training will enable councillors to undertake their role in the most effective and timely way and develop knowledge in the following areas:

- Have a clear understanding and awareness of the issues for looked after children and care leavers in the authority area and those placed out of area
- Champion the interests of looked after children and care leavers in all they do by ensuring those who are responsible for their welfare and education are held to account.
- Ask questions and constructively challenge outcomes for looked after children and care leavers
- Communicate with looked after children and care leavers through appropriate channels so they have a say in how decisions are made about the services that affect them, so that they can influence those decisions positively.
- **Consistently ask "Would this be good enough for my own child?"**

3.3 District Councillors' specific responsibilities

- the development of work experience opportunities for young people looked after and care leavers within their respective organisations across Worcestershire, and with key partner agencies
- Help support the development of apprenticeships and employment opportunities, having a buddying system, so individual support can be given to young people

- Have a system in place to support and prioritise care leavers for housing/move-on housing in all areas
- Support/request foster carers being a priority housing group
- Provide priority access to leisure facilities to looked after children and care leavers up to the age of 25 years
- Promote fostering for Worcestershire at a local level
- Be champions for looked after children and care leavers at every opportunity.

3.4 All Council Services

All councillors and council officers share corporate parenting responsibilities and cannot abdicate this responsibility.

Worcestershire's most important collective contribution to corporate parenting is how it can deliver better graduate schemes, employment, apprenticeships, traineeships, and work experience opportunities for looked after children and, most importantly, care leavers up to the age of 25 years.

These opportunities are designed to:

- Offer care leaver graduates opportunities to work in a graduate scheme
- Help young people meet their potential and achieve their ambitions, hopes and aspirations
- Help them become confident individuals
- Give them a taste of the world of work
- Broaden their horizons from little or no experience of employment options
- Help them become economically and socially contributing citizens.

3.5 Children Families and Communities

Corporate parenting principles will form part of the staff induction programme.

The quality of relationships that young people have with their carers and the professionals closest to them is crucial to their success whilst in, and leaving, care. Young people looked after have told us again and again about their need for good relationships that provide love, stability and continuity in the home and in learning, their need to be listened to and involved in decision making, and most of all their need to be parented like other children. This is the basis of our strategy. A good corporate parent encompasses our Pledge to looked after children, and the Leaving Care Charter for our care leavers, and supports the gap between being parented by birth parents to being in the care of, or leaving the care of, the local authority.

3.6 Virtual School

The Worcestershire Virtual School for looked after children is responsible for providing leadership, strategic direction, good inclusion and partnership working with schools and colleges to secure successful educational outcomes for all children and young people looked after. It maintains an overview of all looked after children to ensure they can sustain a school place and has in place support designed to meet their individual needs.

The relationship between being looked after and poor educational outcomes is explained, in part, by the trauma of pre-care experiences, such as physical or sexual abuse and neglect and

attachment. In addition, many looked after children have had gaps in their education which can sometimes be a continuing significant factor whilst they are looked after. Looked after children are more likely to be excluded from education than their peers.

The assumption that being looked after always leads to poor outcomes is incorrect. Educational targets are often set too low, or are not sufficiently challenging, or the support required for a child who is not attaining educationally is not provided. Accelerated progress targets would better reflect our ambition for looked after children, accompanied by appropriate and targeted support, having proper regard to the use of the Pupil Premium Plus and holding schools to account, for each and every child and young person in our care.

3.7 Schools, Colleges and other Education Providers

These partners have a range of responsibilities including ensuring that every child looked after has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and is supported to achieve their potential. Maintaining looked after children and care leavers in school, and endeavouring to avoid exclusions is an important part of achieving this. All schools should have a designated teacher with special responsibility for looked after children. School governors have statutory responsibilities which include monitoring the progress made by looked after children. Schools must engage with the Virtual School and respect the role of the Corporate Parent.

3.8 Health Service Providers

Health providers have important responsibilities for improving the health, both physical and psychological, of all looked after children. Health assessments must be undertaken and Specialist nurses for looked after children must ensure that Personal Health Plans (Health Passports) are developed with the child or young person and that they are fully implemented.

3.9 Housing Providers

District councils through their housing function and the social housing providers have an essential role to play in working with Worcestershire County Council to provide enough good quality accommodation for care leavers who are ready to live more independently, and provide a range of move-on accommodation for care leavers wanting to move from more supported accommodation. District councils, Childrens Social care and Babcock Prime advisors should work together to ensure that young people are supported to find employment that does not conflict with their ability to meet rent payments.

3.10. Community Organisations

There is a wide range of community organisations throughout Worcestershire, who provide important services and support for looked after children and care leavers, including advice and guidance, mentoring, supported housing, and drug and alcohol services. These services are vital to the task of preventing care leavers from needing the intervention of statutory services.

4.0. Corporate Parenting Strategy – Drivers from Worcestershire Key Strategic Plans

4.1 The Corporate Plan - Shaping Worcestershire Future 2017 - 2022

Children and Families is one of the four strategic priorities for the Council as part of its Corporate Plan - Shaping Worcestershire Future 2017 – 2022 and states that the Council will:

- Continue to make improvements to safeguarding
- Address causes of problems rather than the symptoms by strengthening our services to families at an early stage

It will measure its success by

- The number of families who can provide stable and loving homes for their children
- The quality of our help and protection services
- GSCE or equivalent attainment and progress for the latest academic year with a focus on championing the needs of the most vulnerable
- A-Level or equivalent attainment for latest academic year

4.2 Children's Families and Communities Vision and Aims

This strategy has key links to the overall vision and aims for Children's Services within Worcestershire.

- Our Vision: To ensure children feel safe and have the care and support they need to be healthy, happy and to live successfully lives.
- Our Aim: To ensure that for every child we become involved with, we make their lives better. We will do this by working with our partners, our communities and our families across the county. This is a golden thread priority through all our strategic plans.

4.3 Worcestershire Children and Young People's Plan

The Worcestershire Children and Young People's Plan sets the overall priorities for the Council and its partners to fulfill our duties and promote good outcomes for all our children and young people. The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out how agencies in Worcestershire meet the needs of looked after children and care leavers including commitment to the Worcestershire's Corporate Parenting Pledge and the Charter for Care Leavers.

4.4 Safeguarding Improvement Plan

The strategy builds on the recommendations from the recent external Ofsted inspection as published in January 2017 and recommendations from the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. The Council has developed a detailed Service Improvement Plan to address these issues and summarised into an "8-Point Plan" which is embedded below.



Ofsted Improvement
Plan.pdf

This Corporate Parenting Strategy also provides a link between all our corporate and cross-service plans and strategies relating to children and young people; many of which have specific targets and key priorities to meet the needs of children and families.

5.0. Leadership and the Corporate Parenting Board

5.1. This Strategy will be adopted by Full Council. The Worcestershire County Council Cabinet Member for Children and Families has the lead political role in ensuring this strategy is taken forward and the Director for Children, Families and Communities provides the strategic service leadership. The Corporate Parenting Board will be responsible for the delivery of the identified key objectives and the Board's annual plan.

5.2. The Worcestershire Corporate Parenting Board will lead and support all corporate parenting activity of Worcestershire County Council and its partner organisations, some of whom will be Board members. The Board will reflect its key role of representing the wider corporate parenting responsibilities of all elected members and officers. The Board has formal accountabilities to the County Council and it also has important relationships with the Health Service, District Councils and Police as well as partnerships such as the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

5.3 The Corporate Parenting Board will act as a leadership, advisory and consultative body to the Council and its partners and will provide challenge to ensure that Corporate Parenting duties are carried out effectively and consistently. It will ensure that the outcomes and life chances of looked after children and care leavers are maximised, so they are in line with their peers, and will act as the champion for these children and young people. It is the role of the Corporate Parenting Board, to monitor the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Care Leavers' Charter.

5.4 The Board will hold the Council and its partners to account if there are gaps in service provision to looked after children, or in the performance of their corporate parenting responsibilities. The Board will have access to good qualitative and quantitative management information in order to monitor performance effectively against outcomes, and track delivery of the Pledge commitments. Individual Board members must attend appropriate training to be prepared for their task.

5.5 The views the Children in Care Councils i.e. Big Voice for Little Kids, Who Cares, We Care, and Speak Out will be made available to the Board.

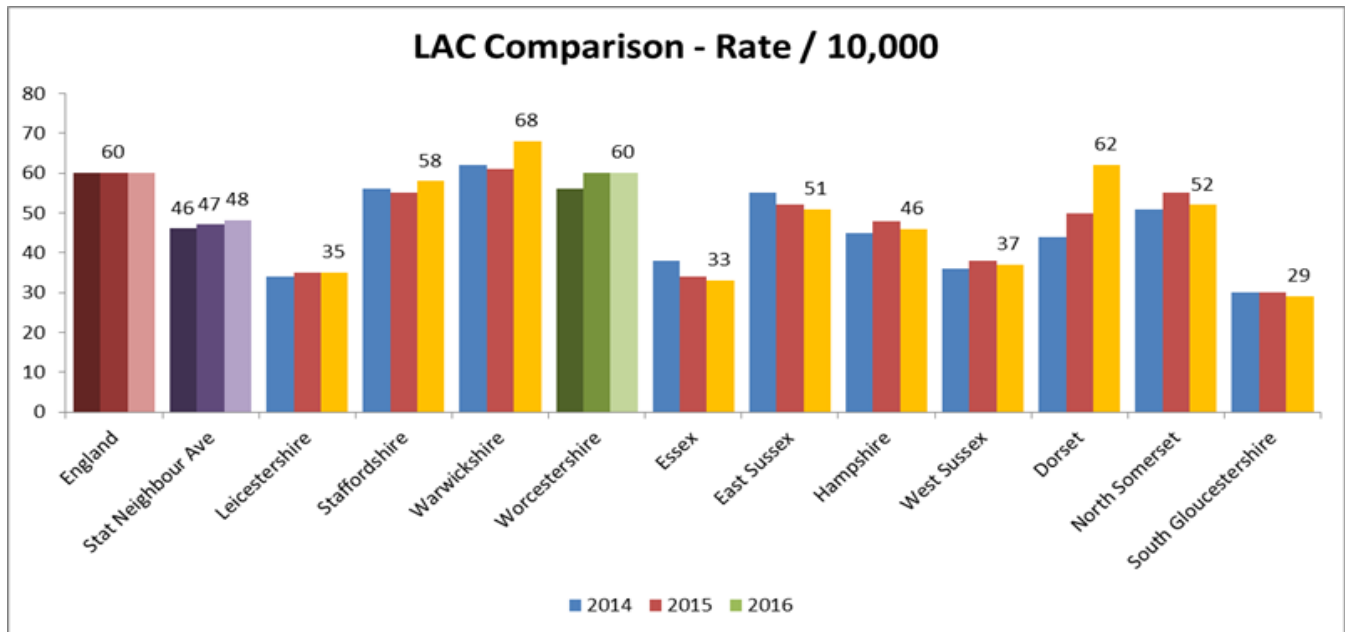
6.0 The Worcestershire context – Looked after children and Care Leavers

6.1 National and Local Context

In the last three years the number of looked after children in Worcestershire has been:

Date	No	Rate
31 March 2014	642	56/10,000
31 March 2015	687	60/10,000
31 March 2016	694	60/10,000

2016 statistics show that Worcestershire has the same rate as the national average i.e. 60/10,000. However when compared with statistical neighbours, Worcestershire is 9th out of 11. Worcestershire would need to see a drop of 10-15/10,000 (circa 200 LAC) to fall in line with average of statistical neighbours. Of our statistical neighbours, Warwickshire and Dorset have rates higher than Worcestershire and South Gloucestershire has the lowest rate.



6.2. Outcomes for Looked after children

Educational Outcomes

- At key stage 2 outcomes for looked after children are below that of their peers in Worcestershire and below national benchmarks. In 2016 only 15% of looked after children achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths.
- At key stage 4 only 15% of looked after children by the council and attending school in Worcestershire achieved 5 A*-C grade GCSEs
- Looked after children are more likely to be excluded from school than their peers

Care Leaver Outcomes

Nationally:

- Around a 25% of those homeless, living on the streets have a background in care

- The average age to leave home is 22 (1 in 10 still live at home at 40), but 33% of young people aged 16 or over that left care in 2013-14 did so before their 18th birthday
- 6% of care leavers were in higher education in 2013-14 compared with around one-third of all 19-year-olds
- 49% of young men under the age of 21 who had come into contact with the criminal justice system had a care experience
- in 2014, 22% of female care leavers became teenage parents
- in 2012, it was reported that looked-after children and care leavers were between four and five times more likely to self-harm in adulthood
- 2/3 of LAs Care Leaver Service Ofsted Inspection judgements are Inadequate or Requires Improvement

Locally there are at any one time about 315 Care Leavers.

Of these:

- 52% are in Education, Employment or Training
 - 20% are in Employment
 - 2.8% on an Apprenticeship
 - 22.3% in College/Training
 - 5.4% at University
- 77% in 'suitable' accommodation
- 16.9% are parents, and of these half have their children living with them
- We have lost contact with 4 (1.2%) of our care leavers
- 8.6% of our young people do not want a care leaver service and are non-engagers

Worcestershire Figures October 2016

7.0. Measures of success – How do we know if our services to Looked after children are good?

7.1 The Board will seek to ensure that current and future priorities and decisions and deployment of resources relating to Looked after children reflect **their** needs and concerns.

Data will be provided to support and evidence progress on the priorities of the Corporate Parenting Board. On reading the data provided to the Board, the first question the Board must answer is, *would this be good enough for my child?* Elected members are ultimately accountable for the quality of the service, so the data received needs to ensure that it is telling them what they need to know.

7.2 This strategy will be monitored and evaluated by the successful delivery of the corporate parenting plan. This will be done by:

- Listening to children and young people who are looked after

- The effective use of local data to identify areas for improvement and the extent to which national and local indicators around looked after children are being met
- The Corporate Parenting Board receiving reports from across service areas and from partners as required
- Seeking external evaluation of Worcestershire's effectiveness in delivering this strategy. This is essential to ensure that agencies in Worcestershire deliver continuous improvement.
- Feedback from partners, agencies, parents, carers and children and young people about services
- Continued revision of actions in the plan in the light of monitoring and evaluation to ensure effective delivery of the strategy.

Appendix 1 - The Statutory and Legislative Framework

The Children Act 1989 is the primary legislation setting out local authority responsibilities to children in need, including looked after children. Section 22 imposes a legal duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of each child they look after. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 extended the responsibility of the local authority to young people leaving care, requiring them to plan the young person's transition to adulthood and provide ongoing advice and assistance until at least the age of 21, with a duty to keep in touch until a young person is 25, and in higher education. Best practice is an offer to keep in touch with all care leavers up to 25 years.

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and Guidance clarify the expectations of care planning and review for looked after children and strengthen the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to challenge when identified needs are not being met. The manager of the IRO service is required to prepare an annual report that must be made available to corporate parents.

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transitions to Adulthood for Care Leavers gives details of how care leavers should be provided with comprehensive and holistic personal support so that they are able to achieve their full potential as they make their transition to adulthood. It includes the need for care leavers to be living in suitable and safe accommodation and to receive appropriate, consistent and timely support to continue in education or training and to find employment.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 introduced Special Guardianship Orders as an additional legal order to Adoption to secure permanence for children. The Act also required IROs to ensure looked after children have plans for permanence. Worcestershire along with many other local authorities has developed Permanency Tracking Panels to ensure that plans for Special Guardianship and Adoption are not delayed.

Local authorities have been entitled to expect other agencies, e.g. Housing and Health to assist them in discharging their functions since the implementation of the Children Act 1989 (Section 27). The Children Act 2004 introduced a legal duty on named agencies both to co-operate with the local authority (Section 10) and to ensure that they take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in fulfilling their own functions (Section 11). It also made provision for local authority areas to set up Children's Trusts, bringing together relevant agencies, and to develop a Children and Young People's Plan, through which it can be evidenced that partners are fulfilling their responsibilities. These are now not mandatory however the 'duty to cooperate' (Section 10, Children Act 2004) remains with the requirement to improve the well-being of children in Worcestershire in relation to: (a) physical and mental health, and emotional well-being; (b) protection from harm and neglect; (c) education, training and recreation; (d) the contribution made by them to society; and (e) social and economic well-being.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 placed a duty on upper-tier Local Authorities and Local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) to undertake a joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) of their local population.

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 requires local authorities to take steps to secure sufficient suitable accommodation for looked after children within their area that meets their needs. It also strengthens the care planning process and the role of the IRO in monitoring the care plan. Children's health and education plans are essential components of the care plan.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 transferred responsibility for commissioning local health services, apart from primary care, to Clinical Commissioning Groups. Primary care and specialist services are commissioned by the NHS Commissioning Board, who are also responsible for holding the CCG to account. The Act also established Health and Wellbeing Boards, led by the Director of Public Health within the local authority, to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population and reduce health inequalities. Under Section 12 local authorities have a duty to take steps to improve the health of people in their area.

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 has introduced a single remand order for children and young people under the age of 18 who are refused bail, which will mean that they become the responsibility of the local authority and will be regarded as a young person in the care of the local authority for the duration of the remand, and may mean that they are entitled to leaving care service, depending upon the length of time they remain looked after.

Promoting the Educational Achievement of looked after children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities clarified the duty to actively support the education of looked after children. Measures include the priority that must be given to looked after children in terms of school admission, restriction on the use of school exclusion and the introduction of the Pupil Premium to purchase tailored support.

Virtual Head Teacher for Looked after children

The Children & Families Act 2014 required every Local Authority to have a 'virtual school head' to champion the education of children in the authority's care, as if they all attended the same school. The person appointed to this role has three key areas of responsibility and is accountable for:

- Making sure that there is a system in place to track and monitor the attainment and progress of looked after children
- Ensuring that all looked after children have a robust and effective personal education plan (PEP), and access to one to one support, including personal tuition where appropriate (using the Pupil Premium)
- Championing the educational needs of looked after children across the authority including those placed out of authority.

This is a diverse role and depending on the number of looked after children and size of the local authority, it is not usually possible for one person to do everything. However, it falls to the virtual head to ensure that each of the component parts of the above three key responsibilities is undertaken effectively. The Virtual Head Toolkit, DCSF March 2010, explains in detail the responsibilities of the role.

Statutory Guidance: Securing Sufficient Accommodation for looked after children requires local authorities to develop a plan to secure sufficient accommodation for looked after children

within their local authority area that meets their needs. They can only do this if they work in partnership with other agencies as the requirement is not just about accommodation and placements but also securing a “diverse range of universal, targeted and specialist services working together to meet children’s needs” and applies not only to looked after children but also those on the edge of care and at risk of custody. The Worcestershire Sufficiency Statement 2016–2019 has recommendations that are incorporated into the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the Corporate Parenting Board Plan.

Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Director of Children’s Services and the Lead Member for Children’s Services. This covers both the social care and education services of the local authority. These individuals should provide strong leadership and ensure that there is a clear line of accountability for children’s wellbeing. They have particular responsibility for vulnerable groups of children, including those for whom they are corporate parents. The Lead Member should provide political leadership whilst the Director of Children’s Services should provide professional leadership.

The Equality Act 2010 places an additional responsibility on public organisations to consider the needs of protected characteristics (age, disability, sex, ethnicity, religion and belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, plus locally determined protected characteristics) and the effect of changes on them. This legislation also asks public organisations to support communities to get along better and understand each other. Both requirements are valid for adults and children. This work is captured in the Worcestershire Children and Young People’s Plan 2017–2020.

The Inspection Framework

Ofsted’s framework and evaluation schedule for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, looked after children and care leavers was published in September 2013 and came into force in November 2013.

Ofsted considers a good Local Authority as being one that is an active, strong and committed corporate parent that knows the children and young people it looks after well. It acts as an effective and successful champion of their progress (particularly in education and learning) and an ambitious corporate parent, ensuring that each child has every opportunity to succeed. It actively challenges and engages partners where appropriate to support children and young people, such as engaging a Local Authority’s strategic housing function.

The Worcestershire Children and Young People’s Plan sets out the key improvement programmes for achieving a good service for all children in Worcestershire, and partners are integral to that plan. These key priorities are also reflected in the Corporate Parenting Strategy, and the Corporate Parenting Board’s Work Plan.

Appendix 2 – Corporate Parenting Board Terms of Reference



CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose of the Corporate Parenting Board

Worcestershire County Council looks after approximately 700 children who are unable to remain in the care of their parents. When a child becomes 'looked after' the tasks of their parents become the corporate responsibility of the County Council.

This is known as 'corporate parenting' and it is the collective responsibility of the council to prioritise the needs of children in care and seek for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children.

There are three defining themes for achieving better outcomes for children in care and their families through excellent corporate parenting. These are high aspirations, stronger relationships and taking time to listen to the voice of the child.

The Corporate Parenting Board is designed to provide the necessary leadership that drives an ambitious and multi-agency approach to improving outcomes for children in care and care leavers. It will oversee satisfactory completion of actions identified within the Board's strategy and will promote the pledges within the Children in Care Charter in a way that becomes meaningful to corporate parents and officers who work with children in care and care leavers. In order to undertake these functions well it must work in a way that ensures the voice of children and young people is influential in decision making.

1. Role and Remit of the Corporate Parenting Board

The Corporate Parenting Board was established by the County Council's Cabinet in July 2004 in order to develop a Corporate Parenting Strategy and progress the Corporate Parenting agenda.

The Board is a cross-party advisory body to the Council's Executive and others and is chaired by the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families (as appointed by the Leader of the Council from time to time).

The Board does not take executive decisions but provides leadership and a governance structure for corporate parenting in order to drive forward the outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

The Board will:

- Make sure that the whole council and partner agencies commit to the principles of excellent corporate parenting.
- Set high expectations and seek to improve long term outcomes for all children in care – their happiness, wellbeing, educational success and future prospects
- Make sure that the voice of the child and young person in care influences both policy and the services that they receive, and that young people are engaged with any action intended to develop and improve services or to recruit key staff members
- Ensure that there is a good understanding of current and proposed government expectations regarding the services to Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
- Receive reports on qualitative and quantitative information about services and outcomes and review the progress of the Children and Young People's Plan with regards to Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
- Lead on the development, review and promotion of the Corporate Parenting Strategy across the Council and involve partners in order to improve services and respond to changing needs.
- Celebrate the successes of children in care and care leavers
- Develop an informed view of County Council provision and services through a programme of well-planned visits and feedback from Board members.
- Link as appropriate with the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- Develop a relationship with Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board and Worcestershire Safeguarding Adult Board for sharing information.

2. Membership of the Corporate Parenting Board

County Councillors (voting)

- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children, Families and Communities (Chair).
- County council membership, which be politically representative and will be appointed after the May 2017 County Council elections.

(Representative of the political groups will be as nominated by their respective Group Leaders from time to time.)

District Councils (voting)

- 1 representative from each of the 6 District Councils within Worcestershire (i.e. Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, Worcester City, Wychavon and Wyre Forest) as nominated by each District Council with the expectation that the nominee will be the Children and Young People's Champion for that particular Council.

Children in Care and Care Leavers representatives (Co-opted non-voting)

- 2 representatives from Children in Care and Care Leavers (Attendees to be nominated by a representative of the Director of Children, Families and Communities)

Family/carer representatives (Co-opted non-voting)

- 2 representatives from families and carers (Attendees to be nominated by a representative of the Director of Children, Families and Communities)

Attendance by Others (Non-voting)

- The Board will be supported by the Director of Children, Families and Communities and/or her staff.
- Representatives of Health bodies.
- Appropriate Cabinet Members with Responsibility, other elected members, officers of the Councils (County and/or districts) or any other individual or organisation may be invited by the Board or the Chair to attend Board Meetings as guests e.g. when relevant to their portfolios or office are considered. Such attendees are not members of the Board but may address the Board or respond to its questions at the discretion of the Chair. Reasonable notice of an invitation will be provided to such invitees.

3. Frequency of Meetings and Items of Business

- A Vice-Chairman will be appointed from amongst the County Council membership of the Board at the first meeting following the County Council elections. The Vice-Chairman shall not be a member of the County Council administration. The term of office will be for the life of the Council unless that Member ceases to be a member of the Board
- The Corporate Parenting Board will meet at least 6 times a year at County Hall.
- Agendas and reports for the Board will be sent out by or on behalf of the Director of Children, Families and Communities at least one week prior to each meeting (based on a forward planning process of agenda items). If a report is unavailable at the time of despatch of the agenda then it will be circulated as soon as it becomes available.
- Urgent agenda items which are not on the agenda may only be considered with the consent of the Chair. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman be authorised to give consent to urgent items.
- Urgent meetings of the Board may be called by the Chair.
- The Board will not meet in public.

- The Board will endeavour to operate by consensus. Should the Board need to take a decision other than by consensus, then each member of the Board present shall have one vote, and in the event of a tie the Chair may exercise a second or casting vote.
- A meeting is only a quorum if three elected members of the Board are present.
- Substitutions should not be appointed.
- Informal sub-groups can be established by the Board as and when required in relation to particular subject matters. The size and membership of the sub-group will be determined by the Board. The sub-group would report their findings back to the Board.

4. **Objectives**

The Corporate Parenting Board will oversee the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the link into Worcestershire's Children and Young People Plan.

5. **Reporting**

The Corporate Parenting Board will produce an Annual Report in March each year on their work and findings over that year. This will be presented to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children, Families and Communities, the Director of Children, Families and Communities and the Chief Executive of the County Council, and reported through the Health and Well-being Board, the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Children in Care Council. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children, Families and Communities will make reference to the Annual Report in his/her report to Council. District Council representatives will report to their Councils as appropriate.

6. **Scrutiny**

Although the Board is not a statutory scrutiny body, when there is a specific need for scrutiny related to Looked After Children and Care Leavers the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny panel may request the Corporate Parenting Board (plus any additional members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny who are not on Corporate Parenting Board to carry out the scrutiny).

SL - September 2016

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Worcestershire's Care Leaver Strategy

2017 - 2019

'Start earlier, stay longer and join up'

(Worcestershire Care Leaver 2016)

1. Purpose of this Strategy

Care is what we receive from our family and friends. Sometimes, we can forget that it can be as simple as having supportive and healthy relationships with people who care about us. As corporate parents we try to replicate that relationship as closely as possible, so that care leavers get the same support that many of their peers get as they begin adulthood.

Eleanor Schooling, Ofsted National Director of Social Care, December 2016

This Strategy is a whole system joined up approach to supporting our Care Leavers. It provides a framework for the County Council, District Councils, Elected Members, Officers and Partners to fulfil our duties and responsibilities as Corporate Parents for Care Leavers. It sets out what must be done by whom, to ensure that our care leavers receive the support, help and guidance they may need to live independently and to be able to support themselves.

This strategy has been developed with our care leavers.

2. Who are our Care Leavers?

Children looked after are among the most vulnerable children in our community. They are unable to live at home with their immediate family, for any number of reasons... This may be through a voluntary agreement with the child's parents or through a court order. Whatever their journey into care looks like, most children looked after will have experienced some form of neglect, harm or emotional distress in their lives before becoming looked after.

Outcomes for children and young people who are in, or have left care, remain stubbornly worse than for other children and is something for which we must take collective responsibility. They do not do as well at school, are less likely to go on to higher education, more likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) and are over-represented in youth offending institutions. There is also a long term impact when children looked after become parents themselves.

Catherine Driscoll, DCS, Briefing Note for County Councillors, January 2017

Care leavers are young people who were previously looked after (The Children (Care Leavers) Act 2000). To become a care leaver the young person must be:

- *Eligible:* aged 16-17 and still in care and has been 'looked after' for a total of 13 weeks from the age of 14 up to and after their 16th birthday;

- *Relevant*: aged 16 and 17 and has left care, but was looked after for at least 13 weeks from the age of 14 and looked after at some point while they were 16 or 17;
- *Former Relevant*: aged between 18 and 21 (and up to 25 if in further or higher education) who were eligible and/or relevant.

Care Leavers can also be classified as '*qualifying*' care leaver. This category applies to young people who:

- Left care after 1st October 2001, after they had turned 16, but who are not 'eligible' or 'relevant' because they did not fulfil the 13 week criteria.
- Were accommodated, but in residential education, health or mental health provision, private fostering or Special Guardianship.

3. The picture nationally and locally

Nationally:

- Around a 25% of those homeless, living on the streets have a background in care
- The average age to leave home is 22 (1 in 10 still live at home at 30), but 33% of young people aged 16 or over that left care in 2013-14 did so before their 18th birthday
- 7% of care leavers were in higher education in 2015/16 compared with around one-third of all 19-year-olds
- 49% of young men under the age of 21 who had come into contact with the criminal justice system had a care experience
- in 2014, 22% of female care leavers became teenage parents
- in 2012, it was reported that looked-after children and care leavers were between four and five times more likely to self-harm in adulthood
- 63.1% (77/122) of Care Leaver Services inspected by Ofsted were judged as Inadequate or Requiring Improvement

Locally there are at any one time about 315 Care Leavers. Of these:

- 52% are in Education, Employment or Training
 - 20% are in Employment
 - 2.8% on an Apprenticeship
 - 22.3% in College/Training
 - 5.4% at University
- 77% in 'suitable' accommodation
- 16.9% are parents, and of these half have their children living with them
- We have lost contact with 4 (1.2%) of our care leavers
- 8.6% of our young people do not want a care leaver service and are non-engagers

Worcestershire Figures October 2016

4. What are our Care Leavers telling us?

Our own care leavers are clear what makes the difference for them:

- *'Start earlier, stay longer and join up'*: Making plans as early as possible, provide help and support for as long as is needed, making sure services and support are joined up, and young people get the specialist help they need when they need it.
- *Relationships are key*: Having a Personal Advisor who knows them, who they can trust, and who is there when they are needed.
- *Avoiding the 'cliff edge'* that can occur at 18 and at 21
- Having *access to good quality information* and knowing where to go for help.
- *Everyone has a role in preparing young people for independence*: making sure carers know what to do to help young people to prepare for leaving care
- *Better use of mentors*: knowing there are people who can help with practical problems and can provide additional support
- *Being better prepared*: more Educational Support, better training such as ASDAN Personal Finance training
- *Mental Health support* is important, especially when over 18. Don't stop asking how you feel just because you're over 18.

Speak Out Consultations on 8 December 2016 and 16 February 2017

5. What is corporate parenting?

When a child becomes looked after by Worcestershire County Council for whatever reason, the tasks that would normally be the responsibility of their parents become the responsibility of everyone at the county council and partners.

Worcestershire County Council and all 6 District Councils share Corporate Parenting responsibility for all looked after children and care leavers.

This means that we have a legal and moral responsibility to improve the lives of all of those we look after and who leave our care. Just as we would with our own children, we must prioritise their needs and create the right conditions for them to thrive and have happy and fulfilling lives. This is a priority across the whole council and not just for those working in children's services.

Catherine Driscoll, DCS, Briefing Note for County Councillors, January 2017

Being a good corporate parent means:

- Seeking the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own child
- Making their needs a priority and acting appropriately with clarity
- Accepting responsibility for all children in the Council's Care
- Listening to the views of children and young people and taking account of them
- Giving young people the support they need as they move into adulthood
- Working with partners to provide joined up and seamless services

6. Our Promise to our Care Leavers

Working with our care leavers we have developed a pledge that is our contract with our young people. This Pledge was launched in October 2016:

1. *I will provide different ways for you to get in touch with me and endeavour to get back to you as soon as possible. I will try to be flexible with when we meet and ensure that the time is suitable for you.*
2. *I will tell you what you need to know, straight as adults. I will try to make sure we are both on the same level.*
3. *I will work with you to involve you in decisions and not make them for you, and provide the necessary information to help you make these decisions.*
4. *I will always try to be aware of your individual situation*
5. *I will have a working knowledge of relevant topics for you and will be honest about whether I know something or not, but do my best to find out or point you in the right direction.*

7. Our Vision

We want every Care Leaver to be happy, healthy and safe and to achieve their full potential. By working with our care leavers we will give them the opportunities to develop the necessary life-skills, confidence and experience they need to enable them to thrive.

We want to ensure our care leavers have the same level of help and support we provide to our own children. The question we therefore need to keep asking ourselves is:

“Would this be good enough for my own child?”

We want to provide our care leavers with a good service, and we know from Ofsted that the elements of a *good* service are:

<i>What Ofsted says is a good service</i>	<i>How we are going to do this</i>
<i>Building trusting relationships by co-working with social workers</i>	<i>We will work with all eligible young people from the age of 16 and allocate a personal adviser at 16½ and ensure they have a PEP from 14. We will ensure that personal advisors, social workers, education, careers, schools , housing, DWP and other partners all work together to effectively support care leavers</i>
<i>Parents help their children to plan their future and care leavers need the same. This is why pathway planning is so important from as early as possible as it provides a</i>	<i>We are introducing a Practice Lead role who will ensure that all eligible young people have a pathway plan by the time they are 16, and that this enables us to make sure a</i>

<i>focus and continual challenge</i>	<i>young person is as prepared as they can be for adult life.</i>
<i>Pathway plans that consider the key aspects of a young person's life, such as their health, future job prospects, social support network and hobbies or passions, as well as financial planning.</i>	<i>We want all care leavers to have a realistic plan for how they are going to be helped to live independently. We have introduced a new Pathway Plan that covers all of the things a young person needs help with in order to live independently. This was developed with care leavers</i>
<i>Practical help such as filling in job or university applications, accessing benefits, opening a bank account or helping to sort out a leaking tap</i>	<i>We are increasing the number of personal advisors by over 60% so that they will have smaller caseloads and be able to spend more time with care leavers</i>
<i>Ensure that where it is what the young person wants, that they can remain with their foster carer under a 'Staying Put' arrangement, and that this is planned early, so that both care leavers and foster carers understand and can have input into how care continues beyond 18.</i>	<i>We already have some staying put arrangements in place but want to extend this to all young people in foster care. We will be talking to all of our foster carers to ensure that wherever possible all young people stay with their foster carers in a staying put arrangement until they are 21.</i>
<i>Develop 'Staying Close' arrangements for young people leaving residential care so they are able to maintain links with, and get support from, children's homes.</i>	<i>We will develop this once we have further details from the DfE</i>
<i>Ensuring that all young people has someone consistent who can fight their corner for them, whether this is their ex-foster carer, a personal adviser, a mentor or a youth worker</i>	<i>Having more personal advisors will mean that all care leavers will have their own PA at least to they reach 21 and in some instances up until they are 25</i>
<i>Effective corporate parenting means that planning and care leaver support is everyone's responsibility and services (e.g. the county council, housing services, the Department for work and Pensions, Health and Mental Health Services and Employers) work together so that care leavers receive a seamless and joined up service.</i>	<i>A Corporate Parenting Pledge will be developed. We will ensure that all foster carers, residential workers, social workers and other support workers within Worcestershire County Council and the 6 District Councils receive training about their corporate parenting responsibilities. This way young people will be confident that any professional they are in contact with will understand what it means to be a care leaver</i>

Continued access to help and support, particularly mental health support, when a young person reaches 18.

The transition to adulthood can mean that services a young person receives can disappear once they reach 18. We want to avoid this 'cliff' by working with Adult Social Care, CAMHS and Adult Mental Health Services to ensure there are smoother transition routes for services

8. What needs to be done?

The Care Leavers Strategic Plan sets out 7 priorities (See the Care Leavers Strategic Plan for more details):

1. Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

- We will produce a Care Leavers Contract that sets out what help and support a young people can expect when they reach 18. This Contract will be the Local Offer of services from the local authority and partners for care leavers
- The Corporate Parenting Board has a crucial role in overseeing the effectiveness of help and support for care leavers and for holding partners to account. They will oversee the effectiveness of the Care Leavers Action Plan and hold the county council and partners to account for their part in implementing this
- We will develop a Corporate Parenting Pledge that all partners will be asked to sign up to
- The Setting Up Home Grant increased to £2,000 in April 2017, enabling Worcestershire and its partners to sign up to the national Care Leavers Charter

2. Developing the Care Leavers Service

- Currently Personal Advisors are allocated at 17.5 years. This is too late and results in very late planning and potentially poorer outcomes for some young people.
- Currently Personal Advisors have caseloads of 28, which is too high and these need to reduce
- The county council recognises that the service is under-resourced and is providing funding for up to 8 additional Personal Advisors to address this

3. Improving Pathway Planning

- The transition to adulthood is a time of increased vulnerability, and too many care leavers are ill-prepared for this.
- Pathway planning needs to start earlier, be more comprehensive and identify what needs to be done, by whom to help a young person be ready for adult life.
- In consultation with young people, we are introducing a more grounded pathway plan process that is much clearer about what has to be done, by whom, with timescales, to prepare a young person for adulthood.

4. Ensuring all care leavers have suitable accommodation

- Due to their particular vulnerabilities some care leavers are unable to maintain their own accommodation and this can lead them to become homeless or in B&B. We do

not place young people in B&B, but some young people end up being placed by housing providers in an emergency. We will work with the local housing providers to prevent this happening.

- We will develop Safe Base and Crash Pad facilities to avoid the need to use B&B
- Most young people do not leave home when they reach 18, and care leavers should be given the same opportunity if they want this. Therefore for many care leavers remaining with their previous foster carer until they are 21 is much the best plan. We will take a much more proactive approach to Staying Put, by speaking to foster carers much earlier and reviewing our current scheme.
- Many young people are supported into independence through the in-house independent living accommodation provided by the outreach service. Some care leavers are in externally provided accommodation. The in-house provision has a good track record of preparing young people for independence and is very cost effective. This however ends when the young person reaches 18, and for some young people this is too soon. We are extending our in-house provision of independent living for our more vulnerable care leavers and increasing the age range up to 19
- Supported Lodgings provision has been declining and has not been available for care leavers over the age of 18. The age range is being extended to 21
- The DfE has stated that they will be introducing Staying Close provision to enable young people to live near to the residential home they were previously in. We welcome this and intend to develop local staying close arrangements once the DfE announce more details

5. Health and Emotional Wellbeing

- All young people need to have a comprehensive Health Assessments prior to leaving care and be given a Health Passport which provides them with information about their own health history and key contacts for help with any physical, sexual, general wellbeing and substance misuse
- We have re-introduced a 16+ and Transitions Nurse to provide additional health and wellbeing support to care leavers

6. Education, Employment or Training (EET)

- Work needs to be done to increase the number of care leavers in education, employment and training. Too many care leavers do not sustain their post 16 learning and/or make a successful transition into employment. To address this we are putting together a proactive strategy for supporting those young people in care from 14 years old, which includes working with a range of partners to extend the provision of work experience opportunities, apprenticeships and training courses within the County
- Better information sharing between schools and post 16 learning providers will ensure that the right level of support is in place so that care leavers sustain and achieve in further education.
- Care leavers who leave their post 16 provision early need to be identified quickly and supported to re-engage in education, employment or training.

- Better partnership working across key agencies, education and training providers is needed to support care leavers; we are working with a range of partners to extend the provision of work experience opportunities, apprenticeships and training.
- The establishment of the Virtual College will also support this area of work.

7. Transitions

- Some care leavers require additional support as adults and may be eligible for adult social care services. We are working with Adult Mental Health Services and Adult Social care to improve the pathways into their services and to ensure that care leavers have a smoother transition into adult services

March 2017

CARE LEAVERS STRATEGIC PLAN

2017 – 2019

Priority	What needs to be done?	What does success look like?	When does this need to be done by?	Who is the lead for this?
1. Corporate Parenting Responsibilities				
1.1. Developing the Care Leavers Contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worcestershire's Local Offer and Pledge was launched in October 2016. This needs to be re-launched as the Care Leavers Contract This will include details of services and help every care leaver can expect from the county council and partners It will also include what support is available for care leavers who go into further or higher education can expect (such as bursaries and help with accommodation) The Setting Up Home Grant (SUHG) was increased to £1,500 in 2016. This is being increased We will sign up to the national Care Leavers Charter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care Leavers Contract agreed and launched Care Leavers are informed about the range of receive services available and receive this help SUHG to be increased to £2,000 in April 2017 Worcestershire signed up to the national Charter 	<p>Care Leavers Contract launched in April 2017</p> <p>SUHG increased from April 2017</p> <p>National Charter signed in April 2017</p>	<p>Stuart Watkins / Jake Shaw / Corporate Parenting Board / Adult Social Care / local Housing Providers / Department for Work and Pensions / Health</p>
1.2. Strengthening the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Corporate Parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate 	<p>April 2017</p>	<p>Corporate</p>

Corporate Parenting Board's oversight of care leavers provision and outcomes	<p>Pledge that members, officers and other partners can sign up to. This will ensure that all understand what being a corporate parent means</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Parenting Training to be rolled out to all members, officers and partners • The CPB to oversee the implementation of the Care Leavers Strategy • To receive regular updates on the effectiveness of provision for care leavers 	<p>Parenting Pledge signed and all using this</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Programme in place and partners attending • CPB receives progress reports and holds all to account for the effectiveness of the Care Leavers Strategy Looked After Children and Care Leavers are active members of the CPB 	<p>June 2017</p> <p>Six monthly</p>	<p>Parenting Board / Worcestershire County Council / local Housing Providers / Department for Work and Pensions / Health / Care Leavers</p>
2. Developing the Care Leavers Service	What needs to be done?	What does success look like?	When does this need to be done by?	Who is the lead for this?
2.1. Allocate a Personal Advisor to all eligible care leavers when they reach 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a Practice Lead role. Part of their role will be to ensure all eligible young people have a Pathway Plan Assessment and robust Pathway Plan by their 16th birthday • Personal Advisors to be allocated when a YP reaches 16.5 or when they become eligible if later • Start sooner, build up the relationship earlier so by time YP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice Lead appointed and in post • All eligible young people have an up to date Pathway Plan • All eligible young people have a Personal Advisor 	<p>April 2017</p> <p>April 2017</p> <p>May 2017</p>	<p>Stuart Watkins / Sam Thornton / Zarina Goodwin</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working Agreement to be devised to set out social worker and PA roles and responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> by the time they are 16.5 Roles and responsibilities clearly defined 		Justine Bishop / Rachel Betteridge / Carol Stewart
2.2. Reduce Personal Advisor caseloads to 20 - 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently about 28 too high Additional resources are being provided for up to 8 extra PAs. Once appointed this will significantly reduce the number of Care Leavers each worker supports and provide the additional capacity to allocate YP at an earlier age PA support no more than 20 – 22 care leavers Consider appointing Peer Mentors and a Volunteer Coordinator Develop a Practice Lead role to oversee the monitoring and tracking of provision for all care leavers Work alongside allocated worker – co-worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All new posts are appointed to No PA has a caseload greater than 22 young people The service is in touch with all care leavers Statutory visits are all on time 	<p>May 2017</p> <p>May 2017</p> <p>May 2017</p> <p>April 2017</p>	Sam Thornton / Zarina Goodwin / Stuart Watkins
3. Improving Pathway Planning	What needs to be done?	What does success look like?	When does this need to be done by?	Who is the lead for this?
3.1. Improving the Effectiveness of Pathway Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new more task-focused Pathway Plan is being developed. Ensure that social care teams complete comprehensive pathway plans on time and that these inform planning for eligible young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Pathway Plan implemented All Care Leavers have an up to date Pathway Plan Assessment, Risk 	<p>April 2017</p> <p>May 2017</p>	Sam Thornton / Zarina Goodwin / Justine Bishop / Senior IRO

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathway Plan Training is provided for all relevant professionals • The role of IRO needs to be strengthened to ensure that all young people have effective Pathway Plans 	Assessment and Pathway Plan which ensures that young people are properly prepared for adulthood		
3.2. Preparing young people for independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training to be provided for Foster Carers, Residential Workers, Education professional and social workers to help them to understand what they need to do to prepare young people for independence • Consider training programme for agency residential homes • Commission 'training accommodation' to enable YP to experience living on their own for short periods prior to actually leaving care • Provide drop-in facilities for care leavers where they can meet with their Personal Advisor, make a drink, use the internet and do their washing • Work with IROs to ensure that preparing young people for independence is a key focus of their care plan. • Submit expression of interest to Children's Social Care innovation Programme to test the use of social investment to improve support for care leavers • Consider using to provide volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Care Leaver Training programme is available for workers across agencies and carers • A range of accommodation training facilities are in place for young people so that they can experience brief periods of caring for themselves • EOI submitted and accepted. • Full bid being worked up 	<p>June 2017</p> <p>June 2017</p> <p>February 2017</p> <p>March 2017</p>	<p>Sam Thornton / Zarina Goodwin / Justine Bishop / Senior IRO</p> <p>St Basil's and</p>

	for care leavers to address NEET and provide accommodation support			YMCA
3.3. Tracking and Monitoring System for all eligible young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Tracking System for all eligible young people aged 16 plus is being developed to improve oversight and planning for all eligible young people • This will link into existing data collected by the Post 16 Participation and Tracking Team in the IYSS system which tracks all Year 11 to Year 13 young people resident in Worcestershire and provides monthly reports to the DfE. The team also has access to sources of data that could provide information on older individuals or individuals no longer resident in Worcestershire as well. • All eligible young people have an effective Personal Education Plan post 16 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality management information is available for all eligible, relevant and former relevant young people • EPEP tracks all eligible young people up to the age of 18 	<p>March 2017</p> <p>May 2017</p>	Sam Thornton / Zarina Goodwin / Gwen Fennell
4. Ensuring all care leavers have suitable accommodation	What needs to be done?	What does success look like?	When does this need to be done by?	Who is the lead for this?
4.1. Preventing care leaver homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some care leavers have ended up in B&B as no other accommodation was available. We will work with the local housing providers to prevent this happening. • Safe Base / Crash Pad emergency accommodation to be used for care leavers who are at immediate risk of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The county council does not place any young person in B&B • Safe Base / Crash Pad facilities in place to prevent 	<p>Immediate</p> <p>July 2017</p>	Stuart Watkins / 6 District Councils / Debbie Herbert

	<p>becoming homeless</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More vulnerable care leavers will be encouraged to remain in supported accommodation until they are much older (i.e. beyond 19) • Work will be undertaken with the local Housing Providers and Housing Associations to put in place plans to prevent care leavers becoming homeless • Jointly recommission Floating Support for young people in rented properties 	<p>the use of B&B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable care leavers remaining in more suitable accommodation for longer (i.e. up to 21 in some instances) 	May 2017	
4.2. Expanding Staying Put provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make Staying Put the expectation for all looked after young people • Review the Staying Put financial arrangements to ensure that these provide sufficient incentive for foster carers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most young people who are in foster care remain with their ex-carers under a staying put arrangement • New Staying Put guidance in place 	<p>April 2017</p> <p>May 2017</p>	Stuart Watkins / Barbara Carter / Senior IRO
4.3. Review Independent Living accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most 16 year olds will not be ready for Independent Living. In instances where this is being considered there must be a detailed assessment that demonstrates that this is right for the young person and takes into account their views and wishes • Review the current age-range for in-house independent living accommodation and consider moving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of internal and externally provided accommodation is available that meets the support needs of care leavers up to the age of 21 	April 2017	Justine Bishop / Rachel Betteridge / Stuart Watkins / Department for Work and Pensions / Placement Team / Debbie Herbert

	<p>this up to 19 or possibly 21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once 18 young people will need to pay rent on their accommodation and claim benefits if not working Develop summer independence camps (possibly using university accommodation) Outreach to provide transitional support for care leavers when they leave independent living. This service could be funded through rent income Review the use of external independent living accommodation to ensure that young people receive the same level of service 11 additional units of accommodation are being actively sought 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement with Housing and DWP that care leavers can claim Housing Benefit once they are 18 Revised framework in place New units operational 	<p>April 2017</p> <p>Summer 2018</p> <p>Immediate</p> <p>May 2017</p> <p>June 2017</p>	
4.4. Recommission Supported Lodgings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review current Supported Lodgings contracts to ensure they are able to provide this up to the age of 21 Review current level of provision and consider commissioning additional accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current provider contracts extended to 21 Recommission supported lodgings to enable more care leavers up to remain with their carers until they reach the age of 21 	<p>Completed December 2016</p> <p>September 2017</p>	<p>Stuart Watkins / Justine Bishop / Placements Team</p>
4.5. Staying Close	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once the DfE announce the details to explore the possibility of implementing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people in residential care 	<p>TBC.</p> <p>Dependent on</p>	<p>Stuart Watkins / Steve</p>

	<p>this locally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will require agreement with the local housing providers to maintain the young person's local connection and eligibility for social housing 	<p>have the choice of staying close accommodation near to their current children's home</p>	<p>DfE announcement</p>	<p>Orchard / Jake Shaw / District Councils</p>
5. Health and Emotional Wellbeing	What needs to be done?	What does success look like?	When does this need to be done by?	Who is the lead for this?
5.1. Improve the Health and Wellbeing of care leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need for targeted Health Worker input for eligible young people Targeting CAMHS to meet the specific mental health needs of care leavers All eligible and relevant young people to have an up to date health Assessment Reintroduce a Health Passport for all care leavers Work closely with Adult Services, CAMHS and AMHS to close gaps and improve transitions between CAMHS and Adult Mental Health Develop proposals for Prevent / 'Breaking the Cycle' approach for care leavers who are not able to care for their own children with the aim of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care leavers receive the physical health and mental health services they need when they need them 16+ and Transitions Nurse role to be re-introduced For those care leavers who need adult services, that there is a smooth and seamless transition at 18 Proposals to be worked up 	<p>March 2017</p> <p>March 2017</p> <p>May 2017</p> <p>September 2017</p> <p>September 2017</p>	<p>Stuart Watkins / Liz Altay / Children's Commissioners</p>

	enabling more to be successful parents			
6. Education, Employment and Training (EET)	What needs to be done?	What does success look like?	When does this need to be done by?	Who is the lead for this?
6.1. Young People Not in Employment, Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider expanding of the Virtual School Head responsibility for care leavers • Work with the NEET Strategy team to develop proactive strategy and delivery plan for Education and Careers planning for young people in care • Review current Care Leavers Education and Careers Planning service to young people. • Consider the need for Education / NEET Mentor role within the Care Leaver Service • Consider having Personal Education Plans post 18 if the young person agrees • Make pathways and support mechanisms clearer to Social work teams including Care leavers • Provide full Staff training on Education and Careers Planning for Care leavers team • Care leavers team to attend Careers and Education Conference in Worcestershire on annual basis • Care leavers team managers to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care leavers have a range of suitable education, employment and training options • Most care leavers are in Employment, Education and training • Fewer Worcestershire care leavers are NEET • Target to be set 	April 2017	Stuart Watkins / Virtual School Head / Carys Ingham / Zarina Goodwin / Sam Thornton / Steve Larkin / Kim Wattie / Judy Chadwick

	<p>attend and where appropriate invite Care Leavers to attend Worcestershire annual skills show.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider strategies to improve liaison between Schools Careers Advisers and Personal Advisers to ensure young people in care have better EET options. • Consider the development of a Careers Passport • Work with WCC Learning and Development teams to implement an apprenticeship programme for care leavers as well as other WCC connected organisations such as :- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Green Fingers ○ Liberata ○ Districts ○ Suppliers to WCC • Consider need for a summer school working with Care leavers before leaving school offering employability, careers support and other key skills for young people. Consider incentivising attendance 			
7. Transitions	What needs to be done?	What does success look like?	When does this need to be done by?	Who is the lead for this?
7.1. Transition into Adult Social Care provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with all Adult Services that affect Care Leavers to ensure that assessments take place in a timely manner so there is a smooth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no disruption to the services care leavers need when 	March 2018	Stuart Watkins / Adult Social Care / DC and DCS /

	transition	they reach the age of 18 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The transition to adult services is smooth and seamless		CAMHS and AMHS / YAT
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