



Corporate Parenting Board

Date: Tuesday, 11 February 2020
Time: 3.00 pm
Venue: Committee Room 1, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

Membership: (Quorum 3)

Toni Coombs (Chairman), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chairman), Ryan Holloway, Stella Jones, Andrew Kerby, Cathy Lugg and Andrew Parry

Chief Executive: Matt Prosser, South Walks House, South Walks Road, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1UZ (Sat Nav DT1 1EE)

For more information about this agenda please contact Liz Eaton, Democratic Services Officer Tel: 01305 225113 - Liz.Eaton@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk



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A G E N D A

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1 APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2 MINUTES

5 - 18

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2019.

3 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive any Declarations of Interest.

4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive any questions or statements on the business of the Board from Town and Parish Councils and members of the public.

5 URGENT ITEMS

To consider any items of business which the Chairman has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for the urgency shall be recorded in the minutes.

**6 CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD DATA SET - VERBAL UPDATE
- 3.15 PM**

To receive a verbal update from officers on the Corporate Parenting Board Data Set.

7 PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY - 3.30 PM

19 - 44

To consider the report by the Interim Executive Director of People – Children.

**8 OFSTED ANNUAL REPORT - BRIEFING REPORT FOR
INFORMATION ONLY - 3.40 PM**

45 - 48

To consider the Briefing Report by the Interim Executive Director of People – Children.

9 EXEMPT

To consider passing the following resolution:

To agree that in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting in relation to the business specified in items 10, 11, 12 and 13 because it is likely that if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs detailed below or Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

10 PLACEMENTS PROVISION - 3.55 PM 49 - 54

To consider the report by the Interim Executive Director of People – Children.

11 UNREGISTERED PLACEMENT POSITION AND CASE STUDIES - 4.05 PM 55 - 62

To consider the report by the Interim Executive Director of People – Children.

12 RESPONSE TO OUTSTANDING CHALLENGE CARDS - 4.15 PM

To receive a response from officers on the Challenge Cards presented to previous meetings of the Board.

13 CLICC UPDATE AND CHALLENGE CARDS - 4.30 PM 63 - 66

To receive an update from CLiCC and make comment on Challenge Cards 1 and 2.

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DORSET COUNCIL - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 9 DECEMBER 2019

Present: Cllrs Toni Coombs (Chairman), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chairman), Stella Jones, Cathy Lugg and Andrew Parry

Apologies: Antonia Dixey, Chief Executive, Participation People, Lynn Giles, Dorset Advocacy and Independent Visitors Service and Martin Hill, Foster Carer

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Maggie Aldwell (Service Manager, Care and Protection), Paul Beecroft (Communications Team), Louise Drury (Quality & Assurance), Jane Edwards (Operational Manager (C&S 13-25)), Ann Haigh (Participation Worker, Participation People), Madeleine Hall (Corporate Parenting Officer), Tanya Hamilton-Fletcher (Service Manager Care & Support), Jan Hill (Foster Carer), Theresa Leavy (Interim Executive Director of People - Children), Elaine Okopski (Dorset Parent Carer Council), Claire Shiels (Assistant Director for Commissioning and Partnerships), Mary Taylor (Acting Assistant Director for Care and Protection), Fran Thompson (Fostering and Permanence Panel), Michelle Wintrip (Dorset Advocacy and Independent Service) and Liz Eaton (Democratic Services Officer)

53. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2019 were confirmed and signed.

54. Declaration of Interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were made at the meeting.

55. Public Participation

There were no public questions or statements received at the meeting.

56. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items of business.

57. Fostering and Permanence Panel Annual Report

The Corporate Parenting Board received the Annual Report from Fran Thompson, Independent Panel Chair, Fostering and Permanence Panel.

She informed the Board since 2007, there had been a requirement on all local authorities to have a fostering panel chair. A stable membership panel had built up and met 4 times a month on concurrent Tuesdays and Wednesdays

hearing approximately 5 or 6 cases each day. A total of 167 cases had been heard between April 2018 and March 2019, out of those 21 mainstream foster carers and 19 connected persons were recommended for approval. The Annual Household Review of foster carers had been carried out and improved upon during the year due to the appointment of two Reviewing Officers to assist in the process following the Modernising Fostering review in 2017.

After 2017, the Fostering Panel undertook the role of recommending matches for those children in care who required long-term fostering.

The Chairman asked what the challenges were for the fostering panel and what the Board could do to make things better. The Panel Chair explained that when a child has been placed with a family member, they went through the same assessment process with references taken up. There was a huge variance in the way the family responded to the assessment as quite often they did not feel they should be assessed. Statistics showed there was great benefit if a child stayed with the family, the Panel had to weigh that up with the standards expected of foster carers. If the family member was not recommended as a foster carer the courts may recommend a Special Guardianship Order (SGO). The biggest challenge was administration, the panels tend to be lengthy and they had to be minuted and with blue print for change administration was not being completed. The courts were also setting dates that were unreasonable by not allowing adequate time for the assessment process to be completed.

The Interim Executive Director of People – Children thanked the Panel Chair for her report emphasising it was necessary to provide the right support for the Authority's carers as they were looking after children who had been traumatised. She felt it was important to get the connected support on board. Regarding administrative support sometimes there was an over-approval of minutes and perhaps there was a way of getting them agreed quicker. She wanted to limit the amount of recording that people carried out and training support would be provided on that.

The CLiCC representative asked the Board if it was found to be safe for a child to be with a family member were they asked straight away, and if the foster panel thought the child was safe with other family members would you ask those family members. The Independent Panel Chair explained the child would already be placed with a family member, if possible, as an emergency. The Fostering Panel had to weigh up the consequence of not placing the child with the family. If approval was refused the child would have to move again. If it was thought other family members would be able to look after the child, they would be asked to do so.

One member enquired how many family members, for example, grandparents refused to have a DBS check and what proportion were turned down. The Panel Chair confirmed that some family members were turned down although it was not a large proportion and would estimate somewhere in the region of 15% were not recommended for approval. It might be the parenting the grandparents had provided for their own children was not acceptable for them to look after a grandchild. Sometimes they were unable to accept that.

One member commented that Foster Panel members produced a fair report even when they turned down a foster parent. The loss of administrative support would mean case reports would not be provided in a timely fashion and it would be difficult if the case files were not produced on time.

The Chairman hoped to have teased out where there were difficulties by the time the next Fostering and Permanence Panel Annual Report was presented to the Board when it was hoped things would have improved.

Resolved

That where there were administrative difficulties these would have been resolved by the time the next Fostering and Permanence Panel Annual Report was presented to the Board.

58. Annual Fostering Service Report

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on the Annual Fostering Service Report.

Officers confirmed changes had taken place during the last couple of years, they were still working closely with Whitehead-Ross Education and Consulting (WREC) whose role it was to recruit new foster carers over a two year contract period. A booklet had been designed for training foster carers, each carer having their own personal development plan. A recruitment and retention strategy had been developed to encourage recruitment of foster carers and gain enthusiasm for people locally to look after children. The format of support groups had changed to ensure foster carers had time out and their children who were particularly supportive had been recognised at the Awards Ceremony.

The Foster Carer Representative commented that although WREC's marketing was excellent they were a little behind the projected two year target on delivering 70 new foster carers with 21 approved and 14 more this current year. Officers confirmed this was so and mentioned a number of carers had retired and would need to be replaced. It was confirmed the contract was a payment by results contract and there was a close partnership between the fostering team and WREC. It was considered that the Authority was comparable with the private sector service with the range of support carers required, if a family had difficulty with a placement they would have support and a short break away from the family could be arranged. Supporting our foster carers was paramount.

The CLiCC representative asked what was meant by "mainstream". Officers explained "mainstream" would be someone looking after a child they did not know and "connected" they would be looking after a child they were related to eg, grandchild.

One member asked if the Authority advertised in schools or colleges. Officers confirmed the opportunity to advertise in schools and colleges should not be missed.

The Chairman mentioned she had looked at the summary in the report and wondered what success looked like and considered it was about foster carers staying with the Authority, having the right person and the right number. Success was getting it right so that everyone was happy and settled.

The Interim Executive Director of People – Children confirmed that of the 297 foster carers 203 were in placements. All our carers provided good care. Where people were located was important as it was hugely disruptive for a child not only to leave their family but also to leave the locality they lived in and move away. The CLiCC representative asked how long the process took to become a foster carer and whether there was a minimum age. Officers confirmed the process took approximately 6 months and explained that some applicants may not be suitable for various reasons. It was confirmed there was a minimum age and officers asked the CLiCC representative what they thought it should be. The CLiCC representative thought it should be approximately 20 and felt the child needed to go to a home where it would be loved regardless of whether they were middle-class or lower-class carers. Officers confirmed 21 was the minimum age for someone to become a foster carer and the Authority wanted people from all backgrounds, faiths, LGBT community etc. The CLiCC representative asked whether the Authority promoted the various backgrounds as they might not be shown in advertisements. It was confirmed that getting the match right was important lots of foster carers were over the age of 50 and older parents could be brilliant with children.

One member asked if the Authority looked at service families as she was aware of several army families who did not think they were eligible to foster. The Interim Executive Director of People – Children felt they required people who could provide respite and provide shared lives. Working people who could provide supportive lodgings for older children.

The Foster Carer Representative asked whether the Authority currently specifically targeted diverse groups. One officer confirmed the Authority did and there had also been conversations with service families.

The Chairman mentioned having considered both the independent report and the service report she was a little worried there was no mention of the point made regarding lack of administrative support in the service report and would hope the report would reflect where there were challenges. The Fostering Panel Chair confirmed her report was written up until April 2019 and they had lost 2 panel members in the last 2 months, when the report was written there was no issue, but in the meantime felt there should be some help.

The Chairman hoped there were plans for promoting foster caring next year as the Appendix only related to the Foster Carers fortnight. Officers confirmed there was not only the Foster Carers Fortnight but a strategy with WREC about how things were progressed.

Noted

59. **Commissioning Arrangements for Independent Fostering Agency Placements**

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on Commissioning Arrangements for Independent Fostering Agency Placements.

Officers informed the Board there was a framework agreement across a number of Local Authorities with different fostering providers whereby the Authority would require providers to meet the needs of the individual child. There were 50 providers with 102 Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements, about half the placements were with Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) the other half were placed further afield.

BCP carried out the contract management of the agreement and held quarterly meetings ensuring key performance indicators were met. In addition, officers held annual conversations with foster providers. All providers were either rated as good or outstanding and occasionally a place may have to be independently bought for a child outside of the framework, currently there were about 20 children where that had happened.

The Chairman asked when a child was placed with an agency that was not on the framework how did that compare in terms of costs. Officers confirmed they would have contact with them and would have an individual contract for that child, quality would remain the same.

One member asked who monitored children who were fostered outside of the area and whether the children came back into the county. It was confirmed that the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) and Social Workers would monitor and feed back to officers and, yes, sometimes children would come back into the county.

Regarding quality assurance the Chairman asked if the Authority received feedback from the young people on placement. Officers confirmed they did but not as much as they would like, and more work had to be completed in this area.

One member referred to paragraph 4 of the report and the market engagement event held during the autumn with independent providers and asked officers if they were conscious that if it cost £500 to have a child in county that amount would double for an IFA and did that still apply. Officers confirmed it could do as there was a price differential and the Authority had to ensure it received value for money in terms of the range of provisions available.

One member asked whether for a new contract, the current terms and conditions would be reviewed and whether there was enough flexibility. Officers confirmed they were always in conversation with the providers and at the time of retendering officers would review what was required.

Noted

60. Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2018/19.

Officers informed the Board there had been some progresses and some areas where improvements could be made.

One member felt the Board ought to get involved with the children more and considered it was not fair to have the same representative from CLiCC attending meetings.

The Participation Worker, Participation People mentioned that everyone was invited to the activity days. The Chairman asked that next year's calendar be reissued.

The Chairman mentioned the proposal for future meetings of the Board was to have 6 formal and 6 informal meetings. The informal meetings, to include the young people, would consist of 3 workshops and 3 activity meetings. The formal meetings would be open to the public the informal meetings would not.

All Board members present agreed with the new proposal.

The Chairman drew attention to paragraph 4.2 of the report and mentioned the Leader of the Council had also attended the awards ceremony and thoroughly enjoyed the event.

Members thought the ceremony was very high profile in recognising the achievements of children and young people but also allowed for quieter conversations to be had with foster carers.

The Chairman informed the Board there would be an action plan, the Corporate Parenting Officer would keep and update the master list.

The Corporate Parenting Officer mentioned all recommendations within the report ought to be added to the action plan.

The Chairman drew attention to paragraph 6.6 which contained links to Board members' working lives. At the present time with social housing renting you could not get an extra bedroom until you became an approved foster carer but could not become an approved foster carer until you had an extra room. She was on the Housing Register Executive Advisory Panel (EAP) and they were currently looking at this situation to enable things to go forward.

The Board discussed the working opportunities Dorset Council should be able to offer to children and young people who were in care, for example if someone wanted experience of working in a country park or working with animals the Authority should be able to offer that to them. There should be a

real opportunity for all young people who wanted to be in education, training or a workplace.

The Chairman asked the CLiCC representative if they had any view about what the Corporate Parenting Board did and the way it was done. The CLiCC representative mentioned that at the last training day for Corporate Parents out of the 19 candidates attending only 2 knew what the Corporate Parenting Board did. The Corporate Parenting Officer confirmed CLiCC received information through Participation People and that they all received a 'Your Care Spotlight Pack' which provided information about Corporate Parents. Young people were involved in the induction and training of new recruits to include elected members.

It was noted the Recommendations were agreed.

Resolved

1. That the Participation Worker, Participation People re-issue next year's calendar of activities.
2. That Board meetings would consist of 6 formal and 6 informal meetings.
3. That the Corporate Parenting Officer keep and update the master Action Plan.
4. That the recommendations contained within the report be agreed and added to the Action Plan.

61. Service Update and Performance Data - Ofsted Inspection/JTAI and QA

Officers confirmed this item would form part of the following report on Children in Care and Care Leavers Performance Overview.

62. Children in Care and Care Leavers Performance Overview

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on Children in Care and Care Leavers Performance Overview.

Officers informed the Board the Executive Summary on the report gave a snapshot over the previous 6 months.

The Chairman asked whether officers were receiving any feedback from young people on the type of accommodation they were looking for. Officers confirmed they were working with Adult Services and young people varied some wanted independence while others wanted to stay close to the residential home and others wanted accommodation with other young people, but they all wanted security and to know they would be safe.

The Chairman asked if there was a range of accommodation the Authority was squeezed on. Officers thought supported accommodation and secure tenancies were a problem with the cost of accommodation being quite high in Dorset. Some care leavers were in private rented accommodation which was quite costly. Trying to find accommodation for young people who attended university during their end of term breaks was difficult.

It was mentioned there would be a workshop around accommodation and housing and perhaps the Chairman could invite other members from the Housing Register EAP to attend once the date had been agreed.

The Board discussed developing a pathway to independence for young people, it was important that foster carers provided life skills for young people.

One member asked officers to pass his thanks onto the Friends of Dorset Care Leavers for their sterling work.

Reference was made to page 59 of the report and one member asked about the reasons for the increase in the number of children in care. It was reported by officers that this was due to an increase in the number of children that came into the Council's care as well as a reduction in the number of children that were leaving the Council's care during the previous 6 months. Officers reported it was important the Council had strong care planning in place to ensure that good decisions about permanency were made in a timely manner.

The Interim Executive Director of People – Children stated that by March 2020 all children matched in long-term arrangements with foster carers would have a permanency plan in place.

The Chairman asked that by Easter 2020 the Board would like to know that was the case and all children would know what the plan was regarding their permanency.

Resolved

1. That the Chairman invite the members on the Housing Register EAP to attend the Workshop on accommodation and housing once a date had been agreed.
2. That by Easter 2020 the Interim Executive Director of People – Children inform the Board that all children matched in long-term arrangements with foster carers had a permanency plan in place.

63. Care Leavers Annual Report

The Corporate Parenting Board considered the report by the Executive Director of People – Children on the Care Leavers Annual Report.

Officers confirmed the report was self-explanatory and would draw the Board's attention to service development work. Agreement had been reached for care leavers to be exempt from paying Council Tax. Attention was drawn to Friends of Dorset Care Leavers who were brilliant as they were not connected to the statutory service.

One member referred to unsuitable accommodation and asked what measures were in place for those in custody or had no fixed abode. It was noted that those in custody would receive regular visits from a welfare adviser and officers would be informed when they were due for release so that accommodation could be organised although some of them would enter the

Probation Care Service on release. The Personal Advisers (PA) would give them a personal phone to use on release.

Officers confirmed the specialist Personal Adviser, who had been in post for approximately one month, was developing a range of accommodation including supportive housing and lodgings and looking at the benefits of shared housing for those in custody or who had no fixed abode. This was a grant funded fixed term appointment for 12 months. There was also a PA currently working on education and employment who was working with Bournemouth University.

The CLiCC representative asked whether the Council tax exemption had started. Officers confirmed that would start next year from April 2020.

The Interim Executive Director of People – Children thought this area of work to be of huge significance as the number of LAC was high and would rise. Investing in the service was essential. The Chairman extended the Board's thanks to Friends of Dorset for their commitment which was improving the lives of care leavers and making a real difference.

The Chairman mentioned she was involved with a charity outside of Dorset the Atwell Trust and was going to visit the Young Lives Foundation in Maidstone.

The Interim Executive Director of People – Children asked if there was anything the Board could help to deliver. Officers thought the Board could drive through employment opportunities and housing development as the needs of young people were essential to that planning. The Chairman commented that now the Authority was one council the design of housing need should become easier and thought a workshop on planning and housing might be of benefit.

Officers mentioned another development was in relation to apprenticeships. Agreement had recently been reached that each Directorate would have one apprenticeship that would be offered to young people. One member thought all the organisations the Authority used ought to take on an apprenticeship.

The Chairman asked officers to provide a further update report on the delivery of the service to the meeting of the Board on 11 February 2020.

Resolved

That officers provide an update report on the delivery of the service to the meeting of the Board on 11 February 2020.

64. Child Exploitation and Missing Children

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on Child Exploitation and Missing Children.

Officers mentioned there had been an increase in the last quarter of missing children due to the summer months and every report to the Police of a

missing young person was recorded. Although they may have been reported missing that was not always the case, for example a young person late home may be reported as missing. Officers offered a Return to Home interview (RHI) to every child that was reported as missing, there were very few exceptions but if someone was in hospital it would not be appropriate. There was concern about the very high decline rate for an RHI and if that could be improved upon.

One member asked whether it would be easier to carry out an RHI on-line and how long were they missing before being reported to the Police. Officers confirmed that could vary but could be as little as 5 minutes in some cases.

One member referred to the report and asked whether the declines from young people who went missing on multiple occasions was a cause for concern. Officers confirmed that it did concern them as they did not know where the young people wanted to be, they might just want to spend the night with a boyfriend they do not necessarily think they are missing. The Return to Home Interviewing officers visit their house and they still refuse to see them. The Chairman asked if the interview was on a one to one basis. Officers confirmed they would like to see them on their own as there could be something pushing or pulling them away.

The Foster Carer representative gave an example of a teenager who stayed with them on respite who had run away. She refused to see the RHI officer initially but he encouraged her by using non-verbal communication through a series of cards and she handed them back to him with the reason why she had run away.

The Interim Director of People – Children asked if future reports could show the age of missing children.

There Board discussed curfews and young people being made aware of the consequences of missing a curfew. It was noted that a measured response was required if a young person missed a curfew it should not be seen as a punishment.

Officers explained it was the first year of using the new toolkit to monitor child exploitation which had been positively received by the Authority's partners. There had been an improvement in the way exploitation was being handled and a difference was being made with some young people, but this was work in progress.

Resolved

1. That all future reports included the age of missing children.
2. That officers provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an update report at their meeting on the 23 April 2020.

65. Exempt

66. Unregistered Placements Update Report

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on Unregistered Placements Update.

Officers informed the Board in addition to the 3 young people in unregistered placements there had been one young person in overnight accommodation, one in accommodation for about 6 days and another who had stayed overnight. The 3 young people remained in the same accommodation as previously reported and officers were currently working to take one property over from the out of county provider. Child B and C were placed in Dorset Council accommodation with Child B remaining in that property as they would turn 18 and become an adult in the new year. Officers were in discussion with Ofsted to arrange for the properties to become registered.

One member asked if the properties became registered would they always be registered and what was the position regarding a children's home. Officers confirmed as long as the properties were correctly staffed, they would remain registered. Regarding a children's home there were a couple of properties in the Weymouth area that were considered appropriate, but it would be a few months before the Authority would know if it was possible to use the accommodation.

The Interim Executive Director of People – Children thought the Board would benefit from reading some of the case studies for some young people who had very complex cases and would provide some for the meeting of the Board in February 2020.

Officers confirmed that emergency placements were visited regularly by a social worker and independent person who checked everything was correct and staff log books were accurate. It was very important to have the correct matching of young people sharing accommodation.

Resolved

1. That the Interim Executive Director of People – Children provide some case studies for the meeting of the Board on 11 February 2020.
2. That officers provide a further update report on progress to the meeting of the Board on 11 February 2020.

67. CLICC Update and Challenge Cards

The Participation Worker, Participation People asked if Board members would like to attend the residential being held on the 19 February 2020 at PGL, Osmington. The youth summit was being held at the Plaza Cinema on the 30 January 2020 and there were still places available for the Takeover Challenge being held on 14 February 2020, members could book a place through Eventbrite. If Board members could not attend officers asked if they would please mention the dates to colleague Councillors.

The Board considered the 6 Challenge cards:

Challenge One – “In June we were promised the results of the transport review and how that affects our taxi challenge. What were the results of that review?”

The Participation Worker, Participation People commented that young people were promised the answer after the July meeting. The Corporate Parenting Officer confirmed she would provide the result at the next formal meeting of the Board in February 2020.

Resolved

That the Corporate Parenting Officer provide the result at the next formal meeting of the Board on 11 February 2020.

Challenge Two - “We feel that foster Carer training needs a bit of a re-vamp and concentrate more on things that concern the young people they care for. We would like more training on mental health and behaviour – to help carers to deal with difficult behaviour better. Is this possible and can we help?”

The Participation Worker, Participation People mentioned that some young people felt that foster carers would be out of touch with LGBT and they would like foster carers to have dedicated training in some of those areas. The CLiCC representative mentioned the important topics were not being touched on in training. The Interim Executive Director of People – Children Confirmed officers would look at the training plan and work with CLiCC to co-produce the training. The Acting Corporate Director – Commissioning and Partnerships would look into the training and report back on the situation to the formal meeting of the Board on 11 February 2020.

Resolved

That the Acting Corporate Director – Commissioning and Partnerships look into the training and report back on the situation to the formal meeting of the Board on 11 February 2020.

Challenge Three – “Some children in care want to have access to their records before they are 18. Is there a way this can be facilitated if the young person in question feels they are ready?”

Officers saw no reason why young people could not have access to parts of their files. The Participation Worker, Participation People commented the young person in question, who was 15, felt they were ready to read their file. Officers would discuss how this should be handled and as they would not want the young person to read their files off the computer. The Acting Corporate Director Care and Protection would report back on this challenge to the formal meeting of the Board on 11 February 2020.

Resolved

That the Acting Corporate Director Care and Protection would report back on this challenge to the formal meeting of the Board on 11 February 2020.

Challenge Four - “When there is a problem at school, some of us feel that communication between the school and Social Services is not good enough or fast enough. What can be done to address this?”

The Interim Executive Director of People – Children mentioned the Virtual School had carried out a great deal of work to ensure that did not happen as the last thing the Authority wanted was vulnerable young people being excluded. She would ask the Corporate Director – Education and Learning to investigate and report back to the formal meeting of the Board on 11 February 2020.

Resolved

That the Corporate Director – Education and Learning investigate and report back to the formal meeting of the Board on 11 February 2020.

Challenge Five – “One of our previous challenges was to help Foster Carers to understand how to use Delegated Powers. What has happened about this and is there any evidence that it is working?”

The Acting Assistant Director of Care and Protection mentioned she had spoken with the Fostering Team and while there was evidence that delegated powers were being used by some carers, officers did not seem to have a very good picture of how it was working. She would take this away for the IRO service to report on.

The Participation Worker, Participation People mentioned this related to requests to have a sleepover or going away on short breaks or relations birthdays.

Officers agreed to talk with the Looked After Team to find out whether delegated powers were working and mentioned foster carers could always contact the IRO. The Acting Corporate Director Care and Protection would report back on this challenge to the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board on 11 February 2020.

Resolved

That the Acting Corporate Director Care and Protection to report back to the Board at the formal meeting on 11 February 2020.

Challenge Six – “In July of this year, as a response to our challenges, we were told that Social Workers would be carrying identity cards. We have seen no evidence of this yet and Social Workers we have spoken to don’t seem to know about the cards. Can we have an update please?”

The Participation Worker, Participation People thought the process was in place but when she had asked Social Workers about the ID cards, they did not know anything about them. The Acting Assistant Director for Care and Protection mentioned everything had been agreed and all that was required was the contact details for the social worker and duty team and then teams changed and moved around. The Interim Executive Director of Children – People thought they could get some printed up with contact numbers to be

completed by February 2020. The Interim Executive Director of People - Children would report back on this challenge to the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board on 11 February 2020.

Resolved

That the Interim Executive Director of People – Children report back to the formal meeting of the Board on 11 February 2020 regarding this challenge

The Chairman mentioned as the Challenge Cards were mainly aimed at officers and were submitted in advance of the meeting would officers come prepared with an answer in future.

Duration of meeting: 3.00 - 5.36 pm

Chairman

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Corporate Parenting Board

12/02/2020

Placement Sufficiency

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr A Parry, Children, Education and Early Help

Executive Director: Theresa Leavy, Interim Lead for Children's Services

Report Author: Stuart Riddle
Title: Senior Manager
Tel: 01305-225539
Email: s.riddle@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation: That the Board note current plans to deliver the Council's sufficiency duty for placements for children in care and care leavers.

Reason for Recommendation: Regular progress reports are made to Board on this issue.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The September 2019 Cabinet report Children's Residential Provision recommended the following strategy for placement sufficiency:

- Change commissioning approach - block contracting, or a similar vehicle, to identify providers who will guarantee access to a number of placements
- Hybrid provision - where DC owns or leases properties which providers use to run children's homes, or which are directly provided by DC.
- Use existing, or new, sources of capital investment, such as a Social Impact Bond, to buy or build additional capacity in the residential estate for Dorset

1.2 This paper gives an update on progress since then.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 This strategy is intended to deliver efficiencies by:
- Ensuring supply and price stability
 - Ensuring better value for money and better outcomes for children
 - Ensuring that more council expenditure is recirculated in the local economy

3. Climate implications

- 3.1 This strategy is intended to contribute to emissions reduction by reducing travel requirements.

4. Other Implications

- 4.1 This strategy will contribute to the safeguarding of children, and the sustainability of council services and the local economy

5. Risk Assessment

- 5.1 Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:
- Current Risk: High- Financial/Reputation- the rate of increase of numbers of children in care remains high, and it will take time to reshape the market. There is therefore a risk of continued pressure on the budget, and the risk that children will need to be placed in distant placements.
 - Residual Risk: High – as above

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.1 Our approach to this strategy is rights based, and rooted in our design principles of co-production, and making the voices of children and families central to all that do. There is no current EQIA, but the 2020-21 Sufficiency Plan will address equality issues.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Children in Care and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy (Update April 2019)

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 Looked After Children Reduction case for Change
- 8.2 Looked After Children Reduction case for Change
- 8.3 Children's Residential Provision

9. Commissioning approach

- 9.1 A successful market engagement day was held with both residential and fostering providers in September.
- 9.2 Residential providers with homes in Dorset are keen to move to block contract and this process has begun. However, in some cases, there are children placed by other local authorities in these homes and they will need to move on before we can become sole users of the facility. There are a total of 8 beds in 3 homes which could come under these arrangements. Currently, we have two beds blocked, and will be proceeding to confirming a third.
- 9.3 Other residential providers are keen to move into Dorset by acquiring and registering suitable properties. They would be potentially be interested in leasing suitable DC properties which we declare surplus. We are developing our relationships with providers and with the regional Ofsted team to ensure that the South West is an attractive place to register new provision.
- 9.4 There are several constraints on further development – time to source and adapt properties, the length of the registration process with Ofsted, and the need to recruit and train a staff team. The consensus is that residential provision needs to be part of a cluster to provide resilience.
- 9.5 Fostering providers are generally less open to block contract approaches, but there is willingness to move to first refusal on carers who live in Dorset for Dorset children, and an openness to look at developing specific schemes – such as short breaks, or step-down foster care linked to residential provision.
- 9.6 There are gaps are in fostering placements for teenagers, parent and family placements, and where there are specific matching issues - for example, those who cannot be placed in a household with other children and/or pets. Our market position statement returns to the South West survey identified the following areas for our main placement needs.
 - Retained emergency carers

- Staying Put placements 18+
- Placements for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children
- Placements for 16/17-year olds
- Placements for children who have offending behaviour / remand beds
- Younger children with Social Emotional and Mental Health needs
- Placements for children at risk of Criminal Exploitation
- Placement for teenagers with complex needs, including non-CIS gender teenagers

10. Hybrid provision

We have existing partnerships where care providers are looking after young people in our properties. This would also be an option which would need to be evaluated in any business case for capital development.

11. Capital Investment

- 11.1 The corporate review of estates is identifying properties which could be repurposed as children's homes or supported accommodation. Business cases are being prepared for Cabinet in respect of these properties as they are identified.
- 11.2 People - Children are also stakeholders in the [Building Better Lives](#) programme, and we are actively involved in looking at the opportunities and potential of each BBL development.

12. Other developments

- 12.1 Blueprint for Change is a programme to reorganise the way services for children are delivered by moving to locality based multi-professional working. Early help, school support and social work staff will be jointly managed in integrated teams based in defined localities. This is expected, over time, to reduce the number of children entering the care system.
- 12.2 Modernising Fostering is a project to reconfigure our in-house service to meet our changing needs and increase the supply and resilience of in-house foster carers. The table below shows the gap in our ability to make in house placements.

| Financial year | Type of placement | Expected numbers of children | Budget (£) | Actual numbers of children | Actual expenditure (£) | Under/overspend (£) |
|----------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 2019/20 | IFA | 81 | 3,272,200 | 90 | 4,449,178 | 1,217,978 |
| | In-house | 231 | 5,126,900 | 198 | 4,159,265 | 967,635 |
| | Total | 312 | 8,399,100 | 285 | 8,649,443 | 250,343 |
| 2018/19 | IFA | 47 | 2,099,200 | 100 | 4,943,662 | 2,844,462 |
| | In-house | 203 | 4,508,400 | 197 | 3,891,994 | 616,406 |
| | Total | 250 | 6,607,600 | 297 | 8,835,656 | 2,228,056 |
| 2017/18 | IFA | 41 | 1,899,200 | 107 | 4,799,385 | 2,900,185 |
| | In-house | 220 | 4,341,591 | 208 | 3,181,589 | 1,160,002 |
| | Total | 261 | 6,240,791 | 315 | 7,980,974 | 1,740,183 |

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

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Children in Care and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy Update (April 2019)

Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Key Data**
- 3. Actions taken since the last sufficiency plan was published**
- 4. Action plan**

Appendix 1 – Action plan tracker (subject to regular updates)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 It is a legal requirement for all local authorities to provide a Placement Sufficiency Strategy as set out in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989. This paper sets out how Dorset Council will secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient, good or outstanding accommodation for looked after children within the Dorset Council area. This document offers a summary of the key data relating to children who are looked after (CLA) including information on demand, use and supply of placements. It outlines areas of placement provision where we need to develop further capacity and identifies the plans in place to address this.
- 1.2 The sufficiency of placements for children in care, care leavers and other vulnerable young people is a workstream that relates to work that is directed to changing the placement landscape for those children who are looked after as part of our statutory responsibility. The sufficiency work is placed alongside the work being undertaken to reduce the need for care through our approaches to early action and intensive support to those families whose circumstances reduce the ability to parent well.
- 1.3 This workstream is part of a suite of actions and projects aimed to make sure that Children's services have access to sufficient accommodation – including foster care, kinship care, residential care, semi independence provision and housing. Provision will be within Dorset or within a 20-mile radius of the child's home whenever possible and meeting their needs. The workstream is aligned to other work to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation and services in the region to provide family assessments, both residential and community based. Most importantly the projects must ensure that services represent value for money, help to improve the life chances of children and young people and help to reduce inequalities.
- 1.4 The sufficiency work is overseen by the Sufficiency Strategy Group that meets every two months and is chaired by the Assistant Director of Commissioning and Partnerships for Children's Services. Membership of the group comprises senior operational managers for the Care and Protection of children and Commissioners from Children's Services and Adult Services together with a finance representative.

- 1.5 The statistics used in this document are for the whole Dorset County Council area and not for the new Dorset Council area with the Christchurch Borough Council area disaggregated from the new Council.
- 1.6 The overall number of looked after children as at March 2019 is 446, up from 442 as at October 2017. The rate of looked after children per 10,000 children has also remained broadly similar during this period at 58 (March 2019) from 57.3 (October 2017). Over the last 12 months the proportion of children placed over 20 miles from their originating address is also stable at around 40%.
- 1.7 **Overall aim:** Restore children to birth families or to a family environment in line with the child's permanency plan and in so doing increasing the percentage of looked after children placed within family settings, whilst improving the pool of residential, emergency, short and long term, accommodation available within the Dorset Council area.
- 1.8 **Priorities:**
- 1.9 Increase in-house fostering provision by improving the recruitment and retention of carers including connected persons and establishing retained foster carers for emergency placements.
- 1.10 Enhancing services for the prevention of care including short breaks.
- 1.11 Ensuring maximum value in our work with Independent Foster Agencies.
- 1.12 Sufficient provision for care leavers including supported lodgings, supported housing, staying put and staying close provision.
- 1.13 Sufficient therapeutic residential provision.
- 1.14 Provision of emergency and short-term accommodation.
- 1.15 Promote the use of 'Shared Lives' placements and support successful preparation for and transitions to adulthood.

- 1.16 Identify additional sources of move-on housing accommodation for care leavers.
- 1.17 Develop capacity for good quality short term support packages for use when placements are not available.
- 1.18 Ensure education, health and social care partners decision making is robust and is consistent with achieving the child's permanency plan. This is to be reflected in the joint planning and funding agreements through the Joint Commissioning Panel.

2. Key Data

2.1 Children in care population

As at 31st March 2019, the children in care population in Dorset stood at 446 and at a rate of 58 per 10,000 population, lower than the national average of 64 per 10,000 population, but higher than the statistical neighbour average of 50 per 10,000 population and the South West rate of 55 per 10,000 population.

Table 1: Number and rate per 10,000 of looked after children

| 2018 - 2019 | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Apr-18 | May-18 | Jun-18 | Jul-18 | Aug-18 | Sep-18 | Oct-18 | Nov-18 | Dec-18 | Jan-19 | Feb-19 | Mar-19 |
| 449 | 443 | 444 | 445 | 445 | 442 | 436 | 438 | 441 | 445 | 448 | 446 |
| 58.2 | 57.4 | 57.8 | 57.9 | 57.9 | 57.5 | 56.7 | 57.0 | 57.4 | 57.9 | 58.3 | 58.0 |

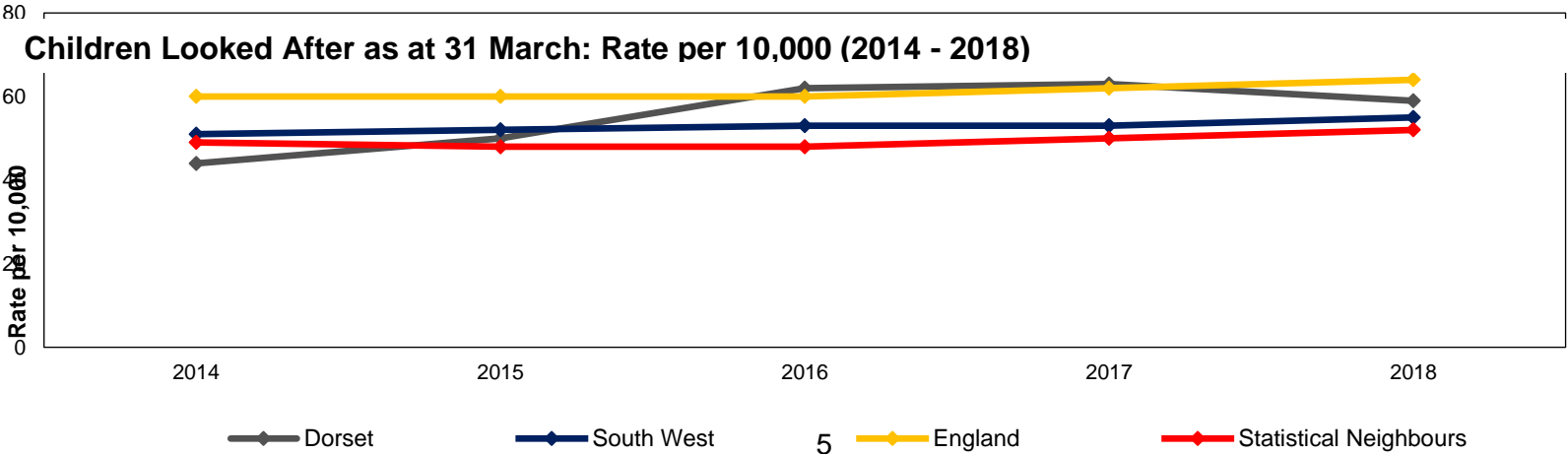
Figure 1: Changing rates of children in care: Dorset and comparators

Children Looked After as at 31 March: Rate per 10,000

| Local Authority | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| West Sussex | 36 | 38 | 37 | 39 | 41 |
| Wiltshire* | | 39 | 40 | 42 | 42 |
| Somerset | 45 | 45 | 46 | 43 | 47 |
| Devon | 48 | 49 | 50 | 48 | 48 |
| Gloucestershire | 39 | 42 | 45 | 48 | 52 |
| North Somerset | 52 | 55 | 52 | 52 | 55 |
| South West | 51 | 52 | 53 | 53 | 55 |
| Suffolk | 48 | 48 | 52 | 55 | 56 |
| East Sussex | 55 | 52 | 51 | 53 | 57 |
| Shropshire | 45 | 52 | 47 | 49 | 57 |
| Dorset | 44 | 50 | 62 | 63 | 59 |
| England | 60 | 60 | 60 | 62 | 64 |
| Worcestershire | 56 | 60 | 60 | 66 | 68 |

Colour indicates change compared to previous year

Improved No change Worsened

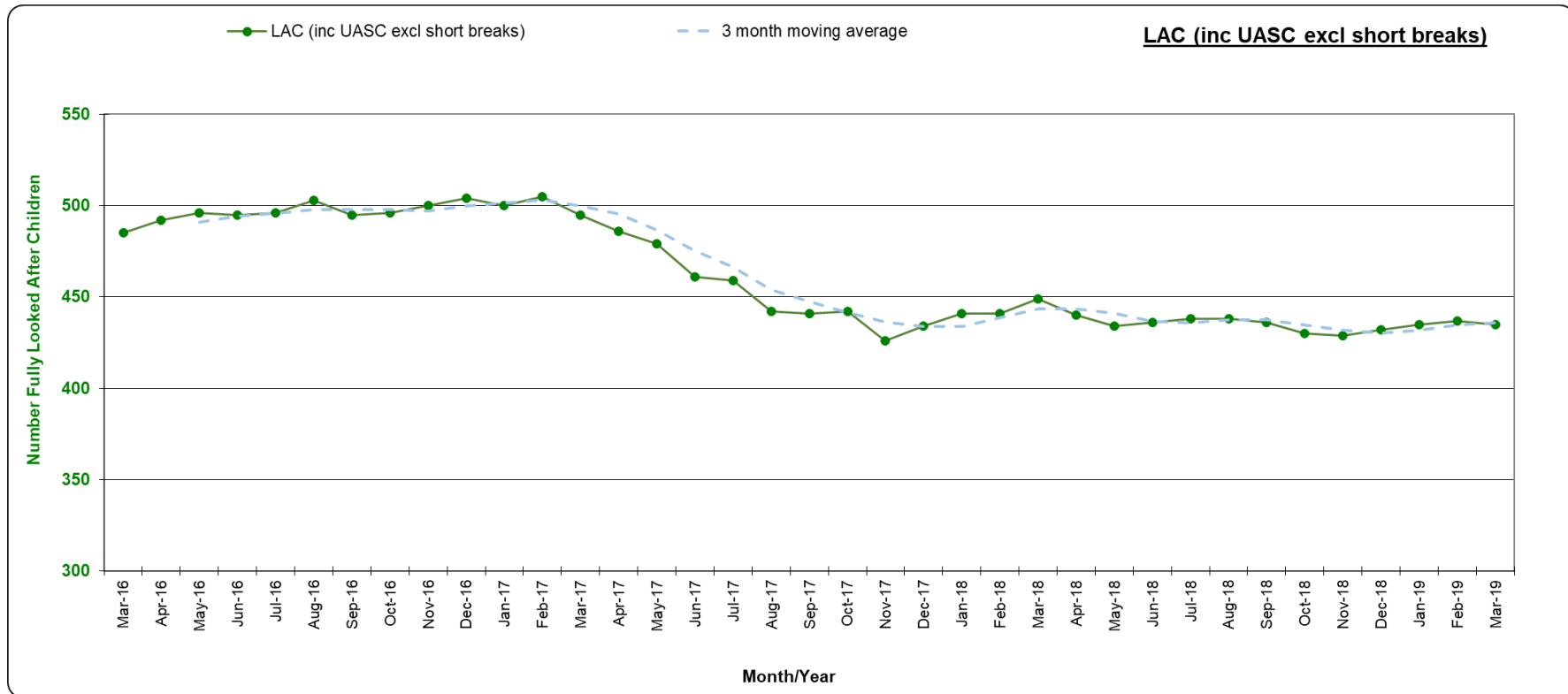


2.2 Trend analysis

As at 31st March 2019, the children in care population in Dorset stood at 446 and at a rate of 58 per 10,000 population.

Local data from our electronic case recording system shows the actual month on month numbers of children in care from March 2016 to March 2019. This table shows that the number of children in care began to fall and have since plateaued at close to the current 446.

Figure 2: Monthly trend analysis (Source: local case recording system)

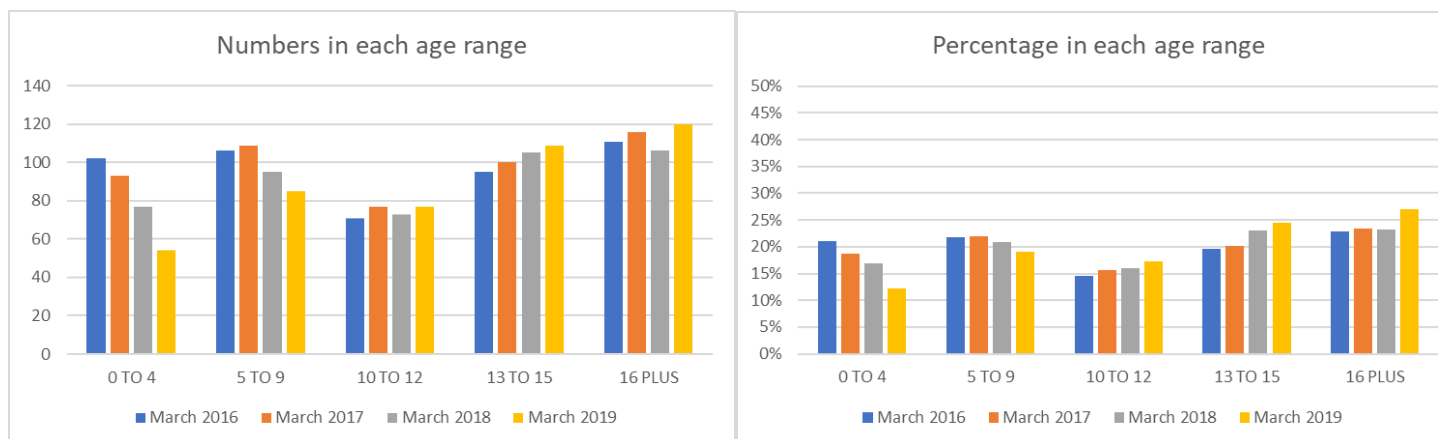


2.3 **Profile of children in care**

On March 31st, 2019 the largest age group of children in care in Dorset were aged over 12 years, with over two thirds of all children in care aged over 10 years. The only age group where the number of children in care has risen is the 10-15-year-old age group where there are 186 children compared to 166 children in March 2016. All the other age groups have seen falls of numbers of children in care. The average age of a child in care is 11.45.

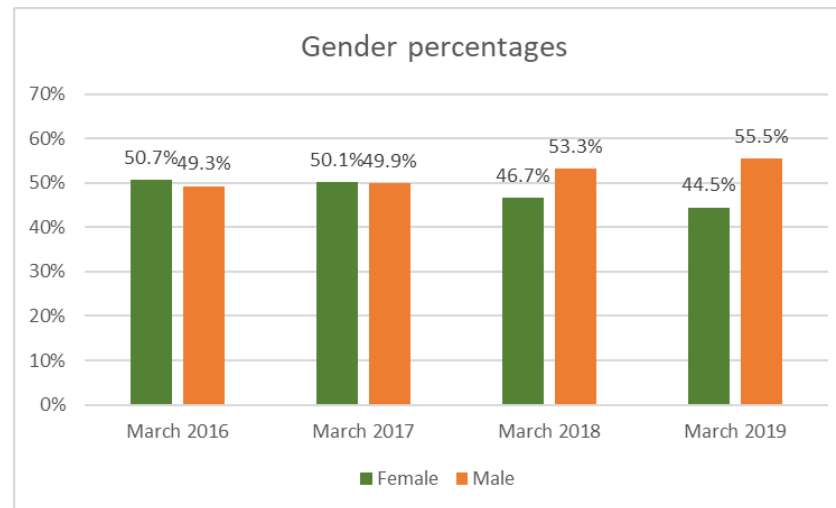
Figure 3: Age profile and average age of Children in Care – excluding children only looked after under a series of short breaks (Source – local monitoring) – see tables and graphs below

| Year Group | March 2016 | | March 2017 | | March 2018 | | March 2019 | |
|--------------------|------------|-----|------------|-----|------------|-----|------------|-----|
| 0 – 4 | 102 | 21% | 93 | 19% | 77 | 17% | 54 | 12% |
| 5 – 9 | 106 | 22% | 109 | 22% | 95 | 21% | 85 | 19% |
| 10 – 12 | 71 | 15% | 77 | 16% | 73 | 16% | 77 | 17% |
| 13 – 15 | 95 | 20% | 100 | 20% | 105 | 23% | 109 | 24% |
| 16 plus | 111 | 23% | 116 | 23% | 106 | 23% | 120 | 27% |
| Average Age | 9.98 | | 10.45 | | 10.79 | | 11.45 | |



As at 31st March 2019 there were 247 males (55%) and 198 females (44%) of children in care in Dorset. Since 31st March 2016 the gender profile of children in care in Dorset has changed from similar proportions of males (49%) and females (51%). At the time that was out of line with the gender profile both nationally and regionally where there was a greater proportion of males (56%) than females (44%) in care. (Source DfE - Children looked after in England including adoption)

Figure 4: Gender Comparison March 2016 (Source DfE – Children looked after in England including adoption)



2.4 Location of placements

At the end of March 2016, 62% of LAC were placed within our borders. This is a slightly lower proportion compared to the South West (68%). A very high proportion of LAC (270) are living under 20 miles away from home within Dorset County Council border. And (65) LAC living under 20 miles away from home but in a neighbouring Local Authority. There are 130 LAC living over 20 miles away from home. Half are within the Dorset border and half outside of the border.

Figure 5: Looked after children by location of placement

(Source DfE – Children looked after in England including adoption) – see tables and graphs below.

Placement Inside or Outside LA borders

Percentage of Local Authority's CLA placed outside Local Authority boundary

| Local Authority | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| East Sussex | 11 | 17 | 15 | 14 | 16 |
| Gloucestershire | 12 | 11 | 14 | 17 | 18 |
| Suffolk | 19 | 19 | 21 | 18 | 22 |
| West Sussex | 14 | 15 | 23 | 20 | 23 |
| Devon | 15 | 18 | 21 | 25 | 24 |
| Worcestershire | 18 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 26 |
| Somerset | 23 | 24 | 23 | 27 | 31 |
| Dorset | 23 | 22 | 27 | 34 | 34 |
| South West | 28 | 30 | 31 | 34 | 34 |
| Shropshire | 31 | 27 | 33 | 39 | 37 |
| Wiltshire* | 30 | 30 | 27 | 34 | 37 |
| England | 38 | 40 | 39 | 40 | 41 |
| North Somerset | 30 | 33 | 34 | 42 | 43 |

Colour indicates change compared to previous year: Improved (Green), No change (Yellow), Worsened (Red)

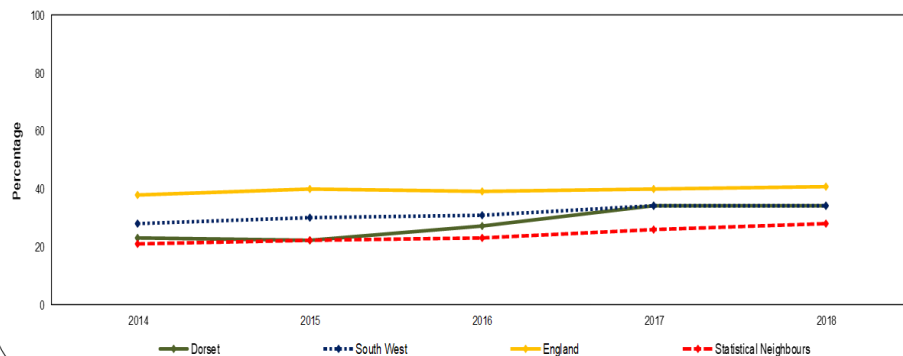
Placement Distance – over 20 miles from home address

Percentage of children looked after at 31 March with more than 20 miles distance between home and placement

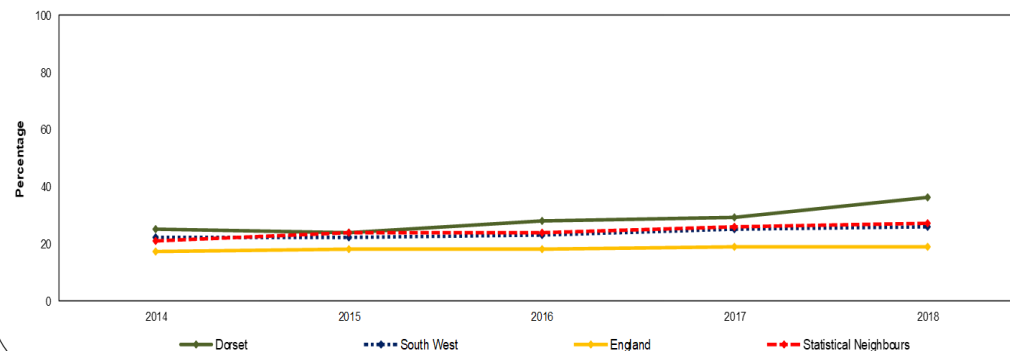
| Local Authority | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Worcestershire | 13 | 16 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| England | 17 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 19 |
| East Sussex | 17 | 18 | 17 | 19 | 19 |
| Gloucestershire | 11 | 14 | 15 | 18 | 21 |
| West Sussex | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 21 |
| Shropshire | 24 | 30 | 29 | 26 | 26 |
| South West | 22 | 22 | 23 | 25 | 26 |
| North Somerset | 20 | 24 | 23 | 27 | 27 |
| Wiltshire* | 30 | 30 | 32 | 32 | 32 |
| Suffolk | 35 | 34 | 36 | 35 | 34 |
| Somerset | 32 | 37 | 29 | 33 | 36 |
| Dorset | 25 | 24 | 28 | 29 | 36 |
| Devon | 29 | 15 | 32 | 36 | 36 |

Colour indicates change compared to previous year: Improved (Green), No change (Yellow), Worsened (Red)

Percentage of Local Authority's Children Looked After placed outside the LA boundary 2014 - 2018



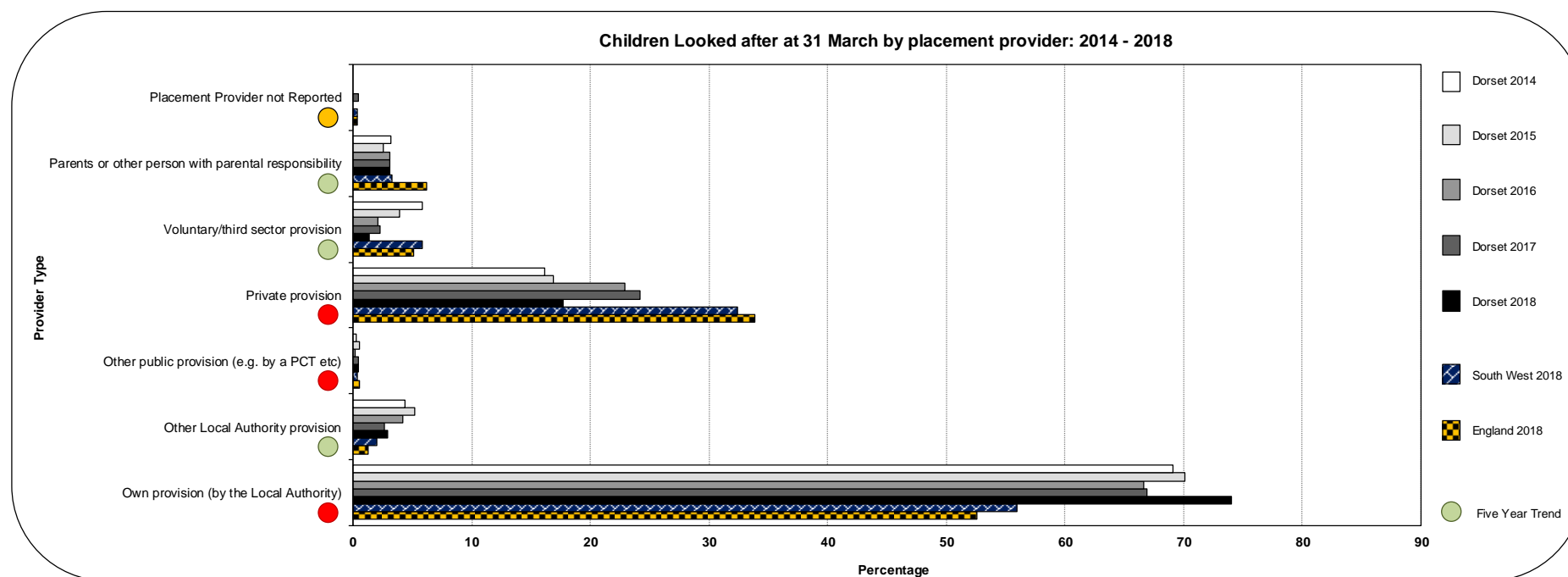
Percentage of children looked after at 31 March with more than 20 miles between home and placement 2014 - 2018



2.5 Type of placement

There are a number of different placement options for children in care including: adoption, family and friends care, with parents (or person with parental responsibility), family-based care (fostering), residential care (children's home), residential special schools and supported accommodation for 16+. These placements can be provided in-house by the local authority, or externally by private or voluntary sector. This section will describe the trends in the patterns of these different types of placements.

Figure 6: Children in Care by provision type (Source DfE – Children looked after in England including adoption)



2.6 Placement usage

2.61 Children placed in Dorset County Council Foster Care

We are working towards less usage of independent providers and making more in-house foster placements. Over the period 31st March 2018 to 31st March 2019 the overall number of carer households has remained constant at 141 with numbers of children placed slightly down to 160 from 165 over that period. However, a campaign to recruit additional carers is now in full train and we are confident of achieving a significant net increase in carer households by 31st March 2020.

2.62 Independent Fostering Agency Placements

Independent fostering agency placements have been made from the tendered sub-regional frameworks (South West until 31.3.17) and South Central since 1.4.17 that can provide for special and particular needs, where these cannot be met within local provision. There were 36 independent fostering service providers pre-qualified to provide placements on the South West framework. The South-Central Independent Fostering Framework provides the consortium of local authorities with 49 foster agencies able to provide standard foster placements, 43 children with a disability placement and 43 parent and child placements. This Framework has 9 providers who can provide a new service of Alternatives to Residential placements.

Usage of independent fostering placements

| | South West Framework | South Central Framework | Off Framework |
|---|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| 0-12 | 45 | 17 | 5 |
| 13-25 | 13 | 4 | 4 |
| Children who are disabled (CWAD) | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL IFA Placements: | 91 | | |

2.63 Children placed in Dorset Council's Children's Home

Dorset has one internally provided or 'in-house' residential children's home. This home is for children, between 4 and 18 years with severe learning disabilities and complex needs. Complex needs can include behaviours which challenge, physical disabilities, and issues around communication. The building is divided into 4 small self-contained units for compatible groups, including three for residential stays of a more permanent nature. The home is able to provide accommodation for up to 9 children of either sex who are aged below 18 years of age. The occupancy levels of each unit are determined by the

needs and the mix of the children. At the time of writing (April 2019) there are 5 children living at the home and the average number of children living at the home across 2018-19 was 5.

2.64 Children placed in independent children's homes

There are 5 Independent children's homes located within Dorset:

- One 4 bed home in Ferndown, Dorset
- One 4 bed home (currently for boys) in Sherborne, Dorset
- One solo home in Weymouth, Dorset
- One 1 bed home for children who are disabled in Weymouth (currently running as a solo)

From the 10 beds above – Dorset currently (as at 31 March 2019) occupy 4 beds. This is a fairly low figure, however is due to matching of young people to any available beds.

The remaining Dorset children placed on 31 March 2019, in children's homes were in the following areas:

20 are in the surrounding Local Authorities – Hampshire, Wiltshire, BCP, Devon and Somerset.

18 are placed further afield in Berkshire, Cambridge, Staffordshire, Derby, Surrey, Kent and Wales.

Usage of Independent Children's Homes

| | |
|--|-----------|
| National contract (spot purchase) | 24 |
| South Central Framework | 7 |
| South West Framework | 17 |
| Total | 48 |

There are 4 independent residential special schools in Dorset, offering various lengths of boarding:

- Purbeck View School
- The Forum School
- The Sheiling School
- Portfield School

2.65 Children placed in Supported Housing

The Supporting Housing Block Contracts (joint Adult Services and Children's Services) which focusses on accommodation (with support) for 16 – 21-year olds, went live in April 2016 and following an extension is now due to expire on 31st March 2020. There are five providers offering supported accommodation within Dorset through these block contracts.

This equates to 35 beds in the East Dorset and 50 beds in Mid Dorset and West Dorset. This has provided much of the resource required to meet the needs of this cohort of young people. However, it has still be necessary to spot purchase additional accommodation and support from other providers for a small number of young people (approximately 10 per annum). They are typically looked after children aged 16-17 requiring support to move out of residential/foster care, supporting them into independence. This is particularly for young people who are not able to move in to hostel/multiple occupancy provision (because of vulnerability or matching).

There is another cohort of young people with highly complex needs. This cohort of young people would typically be aged 17 and require a high level of support to keep them & others safe. Examples of young people in the cohort could be:

- Young people who have left a secure unit/custodial sentence
- Young people who are awaiting court & likely to have a custodial sentence
- Young people who have been evicted from other semi-independent provision.

Beyond this there is a growing need for move-on accommodation and support for care leavers and other vulnerable young people who are ready to progress further to independent living.

2.7 Analysis of the current position

In the 2 years to April 2019 the Dorset looked after population reduced by 8% against a national picture of increasing numbers of children needing care. On 1st April 2019 Dorset Council was caring for 417 children or 61 children per 10k. This is lower than the national average but higher than the regional (55 per 10k) and statistical neighbour (53 per 10k) averages. The age distribution of the looked after population is the same as national averages for ages 5-10 (19%) and 10-15 (39%) however we have noticeable differences at ages 0-4 where the national figure is 19% but in Dorset 12% and likewise for children aged 16 + nationally this is 23% but 28% in Dorset. The gender balance of looked after children is the same as the national picture.

The category of need reflects the national picture aside from in 2 key areas, where there are lower proportions of children in care in Dorset as a result of Abuse and Neglect (63% nationally, 53% in Dorset) and a higher proportion as a result of Family Dysfunction (15% nationally, 24% in Dorset). Dorset has a lower use of care orders (67%) than nationally (73%) and a higher proportion of children accommodated under section 20 (19% nationally, 23% in Dorset).

We have an increasing challenge over the availability of local placements as a result of limited growth in our local foster care provision and a lack residential provision locally that is able to meet the individual needs of the child. This results in too great a use of distant and out of area placements and an increasing use of the independent sector. We are also having to use unregistered provision when there is no provision available.

Our data suggests that there is a need to improve edge of care support for families experiencing difficulty, particularly with parenting teenage children to enable parents and the extended family to maintain care of their children. We also need to improve our offer to families affected by substance misuse, domestic abuse and mental ill health to address these issues and to enable families to stay together for longer. This would help us to reduce the number of children in care.

3 Actions taken since the last sufficiency plan was published (September 2017)

- 3.1 Much work on reshaping the fostering service has been undertaken including the addition of a Fostering Services Manager post and a re-structure of the team into one pre and two post approval teams. The pre-approval team's focus is on assessing and delivering new carers efficiently and effectively. The two post-approval teams offer a consistent approach to ensure foster carers receive a high standard of support, supervision and continued professional development as part of a strategy to retain approved foster carers. Fostering Social workers have been freed-up from the placement finding element of fostering duty, which is now covered by the Placements Team. The fostering team has established a long-term family finding role out of its existing complement of staff. A professional foster carer service has been established with a skills-based fees scheme (based on 4 levels of skill) incentivising learning and development and career progression. The Fostering Panel has become a Fostering and Permanence Panel so that all permanency planning/matches and changes of approval are presented to this panel. The Fostering Service's pre-approval team is working in partnership with an independent organisation, Whitehead Ross Education and Consulting, to achieve a significant net increase of foster carers through an agreed fostering marketing strategy which is being implemented.
- 3.2 The South-Central Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) Framework has provided us with more choice and availability of IFA placements and almost all of our IFA placements are now made through this framework. These placements have been successful in meeting the needs of the children placed in them. The number of IFA placements has been between 95 and 110 over the last 18 months. Our work with the South-Central Consortium of local authorities and the contract coordination provided by Bournemouth Borough Council has helped inform providers of our needs and where they need to recruit carers and what type of carers are needed.
- 3.3 Measures have been taken to strengthen arrangements for connected persons placements and make these more appealing to prospective connected persons carers, who now receive the same offer of training, support and supervision as mainstream foster carers. This is also helpful as one of the possible longer-term outcomes is for connected persons placements to become special guardianship placements. This has been an element of permanency planning where we perform well.

- 3.4 Work has been undertaken to provide additional Supported Housing capacity within the Dorset area for 16 plus accommodation and support for young people with complex needs and for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children aged 16 and 17. Since February 2019 a South-Central Framework contract has been in place following a joint tender. This framework of 18 providers covering 4 lots (Looked after Children including UASC -16 providers; Care Leavers -16 providers; Young People with Complex Needs – 14 providers and parent and child – 7 providers) also provides us with the ability to block contract for specific numbers and types of placements.
- 3.5 The two Dorset County Council Children's Homes for Children with emotional and behavioural difficulties have both closed in the last 18 months. To replace this capacity and better meet needs of children referred a project group has been investigating the feasibility for block contracts for therapeutic children's home placements to be established in Dorset or close to Dorset's boundaries. The group looked at a proposal to initially offer three therapeutic placements for children aged 8-12 with complex needs with a separate block contract of two therapeutic placements for young people with complex needs aged 13 to 16. We are considering running mini-competitions from the Local Authorities of the Southern Region (LASR) flexible framework for children's home placements (612 homes are on this framework, however most of these homes are located in other local authority areas). Work is now in progress looking in to the feasibility of providing our own children's homes. Drawing on this work the business case is now being established for 3 children's' homes in Dorset.
- 3.6 The LASR flexible framework is now ready for our use for calling-off placements as and when required in the following categories (*number of homes in each category shown in brackets*):
- i. Planned and Same Day Residential Care (214);
 - ii. Crisis Care (64);
 - iii. Residential Care with DFE Regulated Education (137);
 - iv. Residential Parenting Assessments (2);
 - v. Therapeutic Residential Care (161);
 - vi. Children with Disabilities (34).
- 3.7 We are also still able to source children's home placements from the current South West Residential Framework which runs until 31st March 2020. This framework does not offer the option of block contracts.

- 3.8 There has been an increase in the number of children placed in long-term fostering from 8 in January 2018 to 27 by February 2019. In addition, other children have been placed in long-term fostering with a relative or friend increasing from 3 in January 2018 to 11 by February 2019. There are 50 permanence through long-term fostering arrangements. There were approximately 50 recorded permanence through long-term fostering arrangements as of 31st March 2019 and this continues to be an area of focus to promote stability of care arrangements for looked after children.
- 3.9 Dorset Police, Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset Council and the Borough of Poole Council have developed an Alternative to Police Custody Fostering/Supported Lodgings Scheme, through retained Carers from the Borough of Poole. This scheme began in early 2018 and supports compliance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 which states that children under the age of 18 should not be held in police custody and should be transferred to the care of the Local Authorities, if it is not appropriate to return to their home address. As part of this scheme there is an agreed process to the transfer children and young people who are detained in police custody.

4 Action Plan

- 4.1 Support packages including alternative care are a potentially useful option for short term arrangements or where no placements are available. We will establish a quality-checked (safeguarding, quality and transparency of costs) list of providers to enable social workers to use the options available to create support packages covering: Transport of children who may be traumatised and/or showing challenging behaviour, support for young people in their community, family support (including parenting support and/or child care in their own home).
- 4.2 We will monitor the demand and effectiveness of alternatives to care services and if there is sufficient demand and these services provide useful support options. We would look to undertake a formal tender exercise during 2019/2020 for a framework of this type of provision.
- 4.3 The Fostering Marketing plan will ensure there is an ongoing recruitment campaign to generate more interest in fostering for Dorset Council and opportunities will be explored to find ways of using the Council's role to pass on any further benefits to our foster carers, for example free parking or discounted council tax. The Fostering Service will continue to work in partnership with Whitehead Ross Education and Consulting to recruit foster carers so there is a substantial net increase in foster carers.
- 4.4 We will undertake further analysis of the demand for therapeutic residential placements, in particular the frequency of demand and the likely length of such placements. The first option to consider for block contracts is to look to source these from providers on the Southern Residential Framework. Market engagement conversations with providers would be helpful to understand the market's appetite for such contracts and identify key considerations for block contracting generally.
- 4.5 We are in discussion with Adult Services colleagues in relation to the re-development of local authority and health sites in Dorset (Wareham and Bridport) for possible move-on accommodation for care leavers and other vulnerable young

people. Our needs relating to care leavers and our initial feedback based on intended living destinations for current LAC/Care leavers means we've identified a need for move on accommodation perhaps starter tenancies as our data shows a need for about 5 across 'East Dorset' (i.e. Purbeck and East Dorset). We will keep in touch with the Bridport Hub project too as we can see that by 2019 there will be 9 young people requiring move-on accommodation in West Dorset including 7 for anywhere in West Dorset. Meetings with Housing colleagues have commenced. A new allocations policy is being developed for 2021, beginning shortly with a process of consultation with key stakeholders. Children's Services are well positioned to be in the forefront of the consultation. Housing will feature on the new Children's Services Transformation Programme – details to emerge shortly.

- 4.6 We are also considering seeking tenders for block contracts for Supported Housing via mini-competition from the Supported Housing Framework for 6 places (possibly over 2 properties) within Dorset for 16 plus accommodation and support for young people with complex needs and for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children aged 16 and 17. Our experience shows that properties that can accommodate 2 to 3 young people, offer the best opportunity to progress successfully to independence. The tender would be looking for providers to offer local property within reasonable travelling distance (by public transport of local amenities including schools and training providers).
- 4.7 We are investigating the feasibility of expanding the current adults 'Shared Lives' family placement service to young people aged 16 plus for people with a range of learning disabilities who need ongoing care, support and the benefits of living in a family-based setting.

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Corporate Parenting Board 11 February 2020 Briefing Paper – Ofsted Annual Report 2019/20

Choose an item.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr A Parry, Children, Education and Early Help

Executive Director: Theresa Leavy, Interim Lead for Children's Services

Report Author: Madeline Hall
Title: Corporate Parenting Officer
Tel: 01305221464
Email: madeleine.hall@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Choose an item.

Recommendation:
Information Only

Reason for Recommendation:
Regulatory advice

1. Executive Summary

Key themes identified in Ofsted Annual report 2019/20

2. Financial Implications

None Identified

3. Climate implications

N/A

4. Other Implications

None

5. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: N/A

Residual Risk: N/A

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

N/A

7. Appendices

N/A

8. Background Papers

The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2018/19

9. Highlights from the latest Annual Ofsted report as reported by the Ofsted's National Director for Social Care- Yvette Stanley.

- The Director's overview acknowledges an increasingly effective response to the most vulnerable children.
- Almost half of local authorities inspected last year are now either good or better. All the local authorities that were re-inspected this year also improved.
- Resulting in 860,000 more children living within good and outstanding authorities, and around 1.3 million fewer children living in areas of inadequacy.
- Acknowledges a testament to the hard work and dedication of Directors of Children's Services, social workers and other staff up and down the country.

10. Challenging financial context

- The report states that significant challenges will continue given the challenging financial context for social care.
- The pressure to meet the needs of the care population along with reductions in local government funding mean that local authorities are spending an increasing proportion of their budgets on children in need of help, protection and care.
- There is little left for early help and prevention which will continue to raise problems in the future.

- Improvements observed amid a difficult financial climate makes the achievements all the more impressive although raises difficult questions about how much further an already stretched sector can continue.

11. Children's homes

- 75% of the children's social care services that Ofsted inspect and regulate were judged good or better last year.
- The report highlights Ofsted concerns about the quality of some children's homes. The two biggest challenges facing the sector are sufficiency and capability.
- That there is a requirement for improved national oversight and strategic leadership to solve the problem and suggests the solution is not a single Local Authority solution.

12. Unregistered provision

- The report also repeats concerns about the rise of illegal, unregistered children's homes.
- Many local authorities are spending vast amounts on individual children and unregistered homes only tend to be used following an extensive search for a placement. Suggesting that this is about poor decisions and poor oversight.
- Some local authorities are not taking all the steps that they should to make sure that children are living somewhere appropriate and safe.
- Clearly statement that good decisions for children must be made no matter how difficult the circumstances are.

13. Moving forward

- The Director promotes the industry and suggests operators should be proud of the good work achieved but more regulatory work is to be done and looking forward to next year and hopeful of an increased improvement in the sector.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

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