

# Children's Services Committee

Date: **Tuesday 16 September 2014**

Time: **2.00pm**

Venue: **Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

**Persons attending the meeting are requested to turn off mobile phones.**

## **Membership**

Mr J Joyce - Chairman

Mr R Bearman (Vice-Chair)

Mrs J Chamberlin

Mr D Collis

Ms E Corlett

Mr D Crawford

Mrs M Dewsbury

Mr C Foulger

Mr T Garrod

Ms D Gihawi

Mr P Gilmour

Mr M Kiddle-Morris

Mrs J Leggett

Mr J Perkins

Mr E Seward

Mr R Smith

Miss J Virgo

## **Church Representatives**

Mrs H Bates

Mr A Mash

## **Non-voting Parent Governor Representatives**

Mrs S Vertigan

Mrs K Byrne

## **Non-Voting Schools Forum Representative**

Mrs A Best-White

## **Non-Voting Co-opted Advisors**

Mr A Robinson      Norfolk Governors Network

Ms T Humber      Special Needs Education

Ms V Aldous      Primary Education

Vacancy      Post-16 Education

Ms C Smith      Secondary Education

**for further details and general enquiries about this Agenda please contact the Committee**

**Officer: Julie Mortimer on 01603 223055**

or email [committees@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:committees@norfolk.gov.uk)

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## **A g e n d a**

**1 To receive apologies and details of any substitute members attending**

**2 Minutes from the meeting held on 15 July 2014.**

**(Page 5)**

To confirm the minutes from the meeting held on 15 July 2014.

**3 Members to Declare any Interests**

If you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a matter to be considered at the meeting and that interest is on your Register of Interests you must not speak or vote on the matter.

If you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a matter to be considered at the meeting and that interest is not on your Register of Interests you must declare that interest at the meeting and not speak or vote on the matter.

In either case you may remain in the room where the meeting is taking place. If you consider that it would be inappropriate in the circumstances to remain in the room, you may leave the room while the matter is dealt with.

If you do not have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest you may nevertheless have an Other Interest in a matter to be discussed if it affects

- your well being or financial position
- that of your family or close friends
- that of a club or society in which you have a management role
- that of another public body of which you are a member to a greater extent than others in your ward.

If that is the case then you must declare an interest but can speak and vote on the matter.

**4 To receive any items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as a matter of urgency**

**5 Local Member Issues/Member Questions**

Fifteen minutes for local members to raise issues of concern of which due notice has been given.

Please note that all questions must be received by the Committee Team (committees@norfolk.gov.uk or 01603 223055) by **5pm on Thursday 11 September 2014.**

**6 Children's Services Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring report for 2014-2015.**

**(Page 15)**

Report by the Interim Director of Children's Services.

- |           |   |                    |
|-----------|---|--------------------|
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Norfolk County Council Adoption Agency Annual Review</b><br>Report by the Interim Director of Children's Services.   | <b>(Page 42)</b>   |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Statement of Purpose of Norfolk's Fostering Services Annual Review</b><br>Report by the Interim Director of Children's Services  | <b>(Page 71)</b>   |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Annual Review of Norfolk Residential Service</b><br>Report by the Interim Director of Children's Services  | <b>(Page 108)</b>  |
| <b>10</b> | <b>The Council's Responsibilities for Safeguarding (Joint Paper)</b><br>Report by the Interim Director of Children's Services and the Director of Adult Social Care             | <b>(To follow)</b> |
| <b>11</b> | <b>Response to Looked After Children Reduction Strategy.</b><br>Report by the Interim Director of Children's Services   | <b>(Page 118)</b>  |
| <b>12</b> | <b>Children's Services Committee Plan</b><br>Report by the Interim Director of Children's Services  | <b>(Page 123)</b>  |
| <b>13</b> | <b>Commentary on results of a statutory consultation on a proposal to close King George VI School in Great Bircham</b><br>Report by the Interim Director of Children's Services | <b>(Page 165)</b>  |
| <b>14</b> | <b>Consultation on proposed changes to the School Admissions Code 2012</b><br>Report by the Interim Director of Children's Services   | <b>(Page 177)</b>  |
| <b>15</b> | <b>Exemption to Contract Standing Orders for Speech and Language Therapy.</b><br>Report by the Interim Director of Children's Services  | <b>(To follow)</b> |

### Group Meetings

Conservative	12:00pm	Colman Room
UK Independence Party	1:00pm	Room 504
Labour	1:00pm	Room 513
Liberal Democrats	1:00pm	Room 530

**Chris Walton**  
**Head of Democratic Services**  
 County Hall  
 Martineau Lane  
 Norwich  
 NR1 2DH

Date Agenda Published: 8 September 2014



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## **Children's Services Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Tuesday 15 July 2014**  
**2:00pm Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

### **Present:**

Mr J Joyce (Chair)

Mrs J Brociek-Coulton  
Mrs J Chamberlin  
Ms E Corlett  
Mr D Crawford  
Mr A Dearnley  
Mrs M Dewsbury  
Mr C Foulger  
Ms D Gihawi

Mr P Gilmour  
Mr M Kiddle-Morris  
Mrs J Leggett  
Mr J Perkins  
Mr E Seward  
Mr R Smith  
Mrs A Thomas  
Mr A White

### **Church Representatives**

Mrs H Bates

### **Non-voting Parent Governor Representatives:**

Dr K Byrne

### **Non-voting Schools Forum Representative**

Mrs A Best-White

### **Non-Voting Co-opted Advisors:**

Mr M Grimble  
Ms V Aldous

Norfolk Governors Network  
Primary Education

## **1 Apologies and substitutions**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Richard Bearman (Adrian Dearnley substituted); David Collis (Julie Brociek-Coulton substituted); Tom Garrod (Tony White substituted); Judith Virgo (Alison Thomas substituted); Tina Humber (Special Needs Education rep); Alex Robinson (Norfolk Governors Network - Mike Grimble substituted); Chrissie Smith (Secondary Education rep); Mr A Mash (Church Representative).

## **2 Minutes from the meeting held on 17 June 2014**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

- 2.1.1 Paragraph 5.2. A verbal response about why speech and language therapy in schools had been restricted to four sessions per pupil had been received, although the written response was still outstanding. A written response to be provided as soon as possible.
- 2.1.2 Paragraph 6.2, first bullet point to read Mr R Smith would replace Mr B Iles on the Capital Priorities Group.
- 2.1.3 Mrs J Leggett read out a statement regarding Eccles Primary school (attached at Appendix A to the minutes), after which the Chairman read out a statement of apology (attached at Appendix B to the minutes). The Chairman added that a Small Schools Committee had now been established which should avoid such instances in future.
- 2.2 The Committee requested future minutes of the Children's Services Committee are more detailed as these were used to provide evidence of the work carried out by Children's Services Department.

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

- 3.1 Mrs A Thomas declared an interest as a Trustee of the Benjamin Foundation.

### **4 Items of Urgent Business**

- 4.1 There were no items of urgent business.

### **5 Local Member Issues/Member Questions**

- 5.1 The Local Member questions and their responses are attached at Appendix C to these minutes.

### **6 Children's Services Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring Draft report for 2013-14.**

- 6.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Director of Children's Services providing an update on performance and finance monitoring information for the 2013-14 financial year. The report set out evidence of improvements and trends for a range of measures and indicators within children's social care services and support for school improvement.
- 6.2 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:
- The key to reducing the overspend in the SEN Transport category would be to educate SEN children as near to home as possible, although it was noted that a cultural change around the inclusion of SEN children in mainstream schools would be required before this could happen.
  - In order to give the Committee a greater understanding of the performance information, the Interim Head of Children's Services would arrange for a deep-dive exercise to be carried out alongside the performance report into

Looked after Children and SEN Transport.

- The Key Stage 4 predictions recently reported in the media had indicated that Norfolk schools were improving, although children who lived in Norwich were not doing so well. The Assistant Director, Education Strategy and Commissioning urged caution when considering the predictions made by the media.
- Members requested that future performance reports include overall trend data, with a dashboard of core indicators and quality analysis.
- A recruitment campaign was underway to recruit additional social workers within the Children's Services Department to carry out visits to children; however the Committee noted that the east of the county was performing well in this regard.
- The overall cost of Looked after Children averaged approximately £46.5k per child. A detailed deep-dive exercise would need to be conducted if members wanted more detailed information about the costs involved in looking after children in care.
- The objective and timescale for more adoption placements was progressing well, although Members noted that further work was needed, particularly in trying to find families for those hard to place children. A national campaign was being undertaken to raise the profile of adoption.
- The judgement from the recent Ofsted inspection was expected in early August.

### 6.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to:-

- Agree the format for the dashboard of indicators that would demonstrate Children's Social Care performance trends over time.
- Agree that there would be 'deep dive activity' on indicators of concern linked closely to scrutiny activity.

Note:

- The predicted improvement in outcomes in early years (predicted to exceed the target).
- The predicted improvement in outcomes at KS2 (predicted to exceed the target).
- The predicted improvement at KS4 which indicates we are on track to achieve the 2014 target (within tolerances).
- Ofsted ratings showing 70% of Norfolk schools overall are good or better.
- Significant improvement especially for children eligible for free school meals and girls performance.
- Progress made in delivery of the Early Help Improvement Plan.
- The financial pressures from the delay in delivery of the proposed looked after children savings.

- The financial pressures on the special educational needs transport budget and the historic trend within the dedicated schools grant related to special educational needs.

## 7 **Budget 2015-18 – developing our approach**

- 7.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Head of Finance setting out the proposed framework and timetable for the work between now and February to deliver the County Council's Revenue and Capital budgets.
- 7.2 The Committee felt that any cuts in children's services needed to fit into the current departmental improvement plan and agreed that the department was well placed to come up with proposals which could be linked to the improvement plan and improving outcomes for Norfolk.
- 7.3 The following responses to questions from the Committee were noted:
- The Committee agreed to organise a training session on finance so Members could understand the issues faced and propose some suitable suggestions for savings.
  - Following a question about the public consultation and what would happen if the respondents rejected the savings identified within the consultation document, the Interim Head of Finance suggested that the consultation document should include more savings than were required to give respondents a choice and to ascertain how the public felt about proposed options.
  - Early intervention services had been discounted from the list of possible savings at this stage as insufficient savings would be realised.
- 7.4 The Committee **RESOLVED** to agree:
- The timetable for budget production.
  - The scope of consultation required with residents in respect of 15/16 proposals.

## 8 **Update on Pathway Planning for Care Leavers**

- 8.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Director of Children's Services highlighting the progress to date against the action plan approved at the April Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- 8.2 The following points were noted in response to questions by the Committee:
- Although there was no specific mention within the report, the Committee noted that work was taking place to research and establish a list of apprenticeship roles which could be ring-fenced for looked after children.



- The QA monitoring programme was not due to be available until September 2014.
- An exercise was currently underway to restructure the Leaving Care team and it was hoped that this team would be in place in the near future. Work was also taking place to produce a Leaving Care pack and it was expected that this would be available at the end of July, after which the best way to cascade the information it contained would be decided.
- A tendering process was currently taking place for the accommodation at Linden House on Earlham Road. The specification included explicit reference to engaging with pathway plans and care leavers were involved, designing the specification and evaluating the resultant tenders. Once the tendering exercise had been completed, the results would be shared with the Committee.
- The Pathway Task and Finish Group had identified that in the past, young people did not have a Pathway Plan to support them in becoming independent adults. It was hoped that a framework could soon be established which would help young people to become independent well before they reached the age of 18.

8.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to note progress to date.

## 9 **Norfolk's Sustainable School Travel Strategy**

- 9.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Director of Children's Services setting out the strategy and approach to school transport and how Norfolk County Council would encourage more children to travel sustainably to and from school. The report was for information only as EDT Committee were the determining committee.
- 9.2 The following points were noted, which would help form the discussions between the Interim Director of Children's Services and the Interim Director of Environment, Transport and Development to agree the way forward:
- Environment, Development and Transport Committee had confirmed that any comments made by the Children's Services Committee would be included in the final strategy document.
  - The Committee asked how costs would be met if additional costs were incurred in route improvements to facilitate more children walking and cycling to schools and was reassured that a small amount of money was available in the highways capital budget to facilitate such schemes.
  - The responsibility for school crossing patrols rested with Norfolk County Council and the final strategy needed to reflect this.
  - The strategy document should reflect the fact that it was the responsibility of parents to ensure children got to and from school safely.

- The Committee considered that a working group could be established in the future to look at sustainable school transport.
- Norfolk County Council was able to offer cycles as an alternative mode of transport for families who lived over the three mile limit from school as an alternative to a free bus pass.

9.3 Members of the Committee were asked to let the Interim Director of Children's Services have any additional comments they wished to be included in the discussion between herself and the Interim Director of Environment, Transport and Development to finalise the strategy.

9.4 The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the report.

## **10 Process for proposing and deciding significant changes to School Organisation**

10.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Director of Children's Services suggesting a process for consulting on, proposing and determining decisions regarding major changes in school organisation. The process would include delegation to the Director of Children's Services responsibility for proposing and determining changes with the necessary varying degrees of support from the Committee Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and Members. In any proposal regarding closure, committee discussion would form part of the consultation programme unless specifically waived by Committee Group Spokespersons.

10.2 The Committee **RESOLVED** to agree the process for fulfilling the Local Authority role as Proposer and Decision-maker on School Organisation Changes.

## **11. Children's Services Committee Plan**

11.1 The Committee received the report by the Interim Director of Children's Services presenting the Children's Services Committee Plan. The Plan drew together the core information that Members required to inform decision-making on children's services in Norfolk, such as the Committee's focus, overview of services, current departmental priorities, details of key plans and strategies driving the Committee's work, risks, challenges, anticipated business and overview of performance.

11.2 Members of the Committee felt that the plan should be used to refresh the Children's Services Improvement Plan from September 2014. Committee members were asked to pass any comments about the information they would like to be included into the Children's Services Plan to the Interim Director of Children's Services and the Chairman, who would forward these to the Corporate Planning and Partnerships Manager.

11.3 The Committee **RESOLVED** to note:-

- That at the end of each financial year, the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, would provide an overview of the Committee's progress in

achieving key priorities for children's services in Norfolk. This information would assist the Policy and Resources Committee to monitor overall progress against the Council's key priorities and targets for children's services in Norfolk.

## 12 Working Groups

The Committee **RESOLVED** to agree to discuss the following three priority topics at the next Group Spokespersons meeting with a view to setting up Task and Finish Groups.

- 1 Children's Services Budget so the Committee could understand the issues faced and determine some suitable suggestions for savings.
- 2 Educational outcomes, especially around the variations in the districts.
- 3 Children's Centres

The meeting closed at 4.55pm

**CHAIRMAN**



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**Statement by Judy Leggett**

I would like to ask the Chairman to apologise on behalf of his department and the Council for the upset and disappointment that has recently been caused to the local community and users of Eccles Primary School.

We are extremely disappointed at the way the situation has been handled; while we recognise it is now too late for this decision to be reversed, we must emphasise the need for the Members to be involved in these decisions in the future. The manner in which this decision was made was wrong.

As Members may be aware, Eccles Primary School has been a small school for a long time with more than half of the children in its catchment choosing to go elsewhere and half of the pupils at the school coming from outside its catchment area.

Children's Services have long been aware of the challenges faced by small schools and Eccles has been one that has faced difficulty for some time.

Children's Services had made Councillor Askew, the local Member, aware it was intending to make a decision about the future of the school and Councillor Askew sought the assurance of the Chairman of the Committee the decision would be taken here.

Despite this assurance, the decision was taken under delegated authority in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to close the school. No-one contacted Cllr Askew to make him aware the decision would not be made at the Committee as promised. No-one contacted him to make him aware that a decision had been made until after he heard the news from a parent. It was a parent of a child at the school that contacted him and asked him about the decision that made him aware of this change.

We note the regrettable lack of clarity around the process of this matter and ask for a full and frank apology for Cllr Askew and the community at large for denying them the chance to have the discussion and debate here.

I ask the Chairman to apologise for giving an assurance not made good and for not ensuring, having given that assurance, the decision be taken by committee.

**Statement by the Chairman, Mr James Joyce re closure of Eccles Primary School.**

The process to propose and determine the closure of Eccles Primary School has been carried out in line with the procedures set out in the guidance on making changes to school organization published by the Department for Education in January 2014.

The formal process for proposing the closure of Eccles, Hargham and Wilby school has straddled the move from a Cabinet to a Committee structure within the County Council. The possibility that there might be a change in the way the Local Authority makes its decisions with regard to proposals for school organization changes has been acknowledged since the start of the process. It is a matter of regret that the Local Member was not kept up to date with the Committee's discussion of how the process would proceed and I apologise for this.

It was confirmed at the Children's Services Committee in June, that the Director of Children's Services would act as decision-maker with support of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee and the decision was duly made and communicated to parents and community members.

**5. Local Member Questions**

**Question 1 from Mr Jim Perkins.**

I would like to ask whether there are any cases of families where a series of children have been removed over a period of years in Norfolk.

**Reply by the Chairman:**

It is not unusual to have circumstances where children have been made subject of proceedings when a child has been removed previously and this has certainly happened in Norfolk. Although the parenting history is an important factor, it is important to note that whenever this happens, we assess the parenting of any future children quite separately. We would not remove children unless the previous concerns were of a serious nature and assessment shows that the risks to the child are clearly being replicated by the current situation.

**Question 2 from Mr Jim Perkins.**

I would also like to know whether Norfolk Social Services have had any contact with the families alcohol and drug courts.

**Reply by the Chairman:**

This is currently not available in Norfolk, please see the attached link for research information on this subject area  
<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/shssc/research/ccyr/research-projects/fdac>

# Children's Services Committee

Item No 6

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Children's Services Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring report for 2014-2015</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>16 September 2014</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Sheila Lock Interim Director of Children's Services</b>

## Strategic impact

Norfolk Children's Services is undergoing an intensive period of improvement and challenge under the direction of the new Children's Services Committee and the two independently chaired Norfolk Education Challenge Board and Norfolk Social Care Improvement Board and independently chaired Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board. Committee Members have stated that they wish to diligently oversee these improvements to ensure that all elements of Children's Services operations are increasingly evidencing greater effectiveness and efficiency.

The array of detailed evidence available is extensive and to ensure that Members are sighted on all aspects of Children's Services Improvement as they progress, there will be reports to this Committee at every meeting with the statutory reporting arrangements supplemented by additional information that demonstrates impact over time. This will be in line with the dash-board, developed as part of the Social Care Improvement Board activity. Accordingly members will see progress on a range of indicator and trend data and areas of variance such as over or under performance. Alongside the Task and Finish Groups and fact-finding activities planned for Members, these reports will assist in strategic decision-making.

The infrastructure and governance to support social care improvement is changing and becoming more sophisticated as Norfolk Children's Services move through the different planned phases of improvement. In consultation with DfE, Norfolk is leading on the development of a new model for social care improvement which will mean that there will be further refinements to the reporting arrangements to Committee over the next six months. However, it is anticipated that the two dash-boards (Education and Social Care) and summary of social care audit findings will be retained throughout. These provide for Committee an analysis of data that provides basic necessary assurances.

## Executive summary

This report provides an update on performance and finance monitoring information for the 2013/14 financial year. It sets out for the Children Services Committee the latest Children's Services performance information showing evidence of improvements and trends for a range of measures and indicators within children's social care services, support for school improvement and children's services finances. This evidence is qualitative, quantitative and outcome based.

The main performance points within the paper are:

### Support for School Improvement

- The recent Ofsted inspection of Local Authority Support for School Improvement (LASSI) has concluded that Norfolk County Council arrangements are now **effective**
- Early Years' Foundation Stage outcomes have improved by 13% with the gap between Norfolk and National outcomes narrowed to 2% (from 7% last year) and the gap between the highest and lowest outcomes narrowed from 18% last year to 5% this year
- For Year 1 pupils, phonics results have improved by 13% but remain below national

averages although the gap has narrowed from 8% to 5%

- Teacher assessments for pupils at age 7 show that Norfolk children perform at the same level as those nationally
- Outcomes for pupils at age 11 show that Norfolk's children are performing below the national averages by 5%, although data is still provisional
- Outcomes at Key Stage 4 show that results are broadly in line with those of last year although there are likely to be a large number of changes to the results caused by the national turbulence in examination arrangements this year
- There has been a small improvement in A level outcomes in Norfolk this year

### **Social Care**

- The number of contacts continue to rise
- The number of contacts from police have fallen however the conversion rate for these contacts to referrals remains too low
- The proportion of Family Support Plans (FSPs) which resulted in the needs of the family being met (as reported by the family) has increased to 74% (May to July) from 52% (February to April).
- The proportion of FSPs which escalate to social care has more than halved over the same period
- Timeliness of Children in Need plans continues to improve
- Timeliness of core assessments for child protection cases has fallen in July to 86% from 92% in June.
- The number of Looked After Children (LAC) is 1119, a 9% fall since May 2014
- Performance in relation to health of Norfolk LAC is good and favourable compared to national statistics. Dental checks lag behind other health assessments.
- Pathway planning remains a concern although it has improved significantly since February this year.
- LAC care planning continues to improve (82%) but needs to improve further

### **Finance**

- The Children's Services revenue budget shows a £1.280 million or 0.8% projected overspend for the year.
- The Schools Budget variations are contained within the approved contingency fund.
- The Children's Services capital budget shows a £0.000 million or 0.0% projected underspend for the year.

### **Recommendations:**

**The Children's Services Committee is asked to:**

**Note and comment on the information contained in this report and in particular**

- **The recent Ofsted inspection of Support for School Improvement which has resulted in an 'Effective' judgement**
- **The new arrangements for Risk Rating schools in the County**
- **Indicators that show improved social care performance and some which show movement downwards**
- **The improved position on the cost of looked after children and the continued focus that is still required.**
- **The continued pressure on special education needs home to school transport.**



# 1. Impact of Support for School Improvement

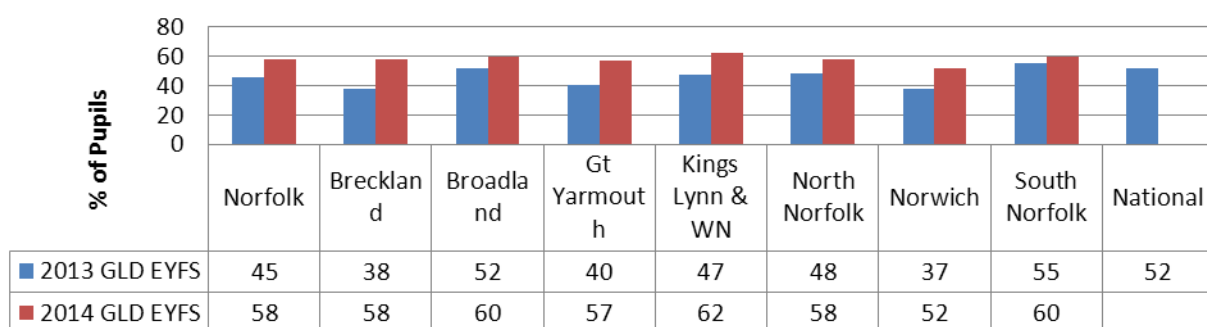
## Inspection of the Local Authority Arrangements for Supporting school Improvement

- 1.1 The LA was inspected in June 2014, a year on from a previous inspection which found the LA to be inadequate in its arrangements for supporting school improvement. The outcome of this re-inspection is that the LA arrangements are now judged to be **'effective'**. The report confirms that the proportion of good or better schools as judged by Ofsted inspection is improving, but that this percentage remains below the national average. The inspection highlighted a number of strengths:
- Outcomes for schools are improving
  - Forensic and accurate use of data
  - Focused support and challenge from the LA to schools
  - Swift, more robust and proportionate intervention in underperforming schools
  - Significant increase in use of warning notices and other powers
  - Increasingly effective use of system leaders
  - Strong partnership with London Leadership Strategy
  - Determined leadership from Council leaders and senior officers.
- 1.2 The report identifies four key areas for continued improvement.  
'To continue to improve its impact on schools, the local authority should:
- Work to increase the proportion of good and better schools still further, with a sharper focus on secondary schools and the smallest primary schools
  - Challenge schools leaders to improve the achievement of vulnerable groups, including those entitled to free school meals and looked after children
  - Focus support and challenge to eradicate the variability in pupils' outcomes between districts
  - Develop the role of system leaders further by building on external support to rapidly increase capacity in the county.
- 1.3 A Good School for Every Norfolk Learner continues to be the strategy to support further improvement in provision and outcomes in Norfolk schools. Following recent evaluation of the key elements of this strategy and the improvement priorities identified by Ofsted a revised and updated plan will be published by the end of September 2014.

## Educational Achievement for 2014

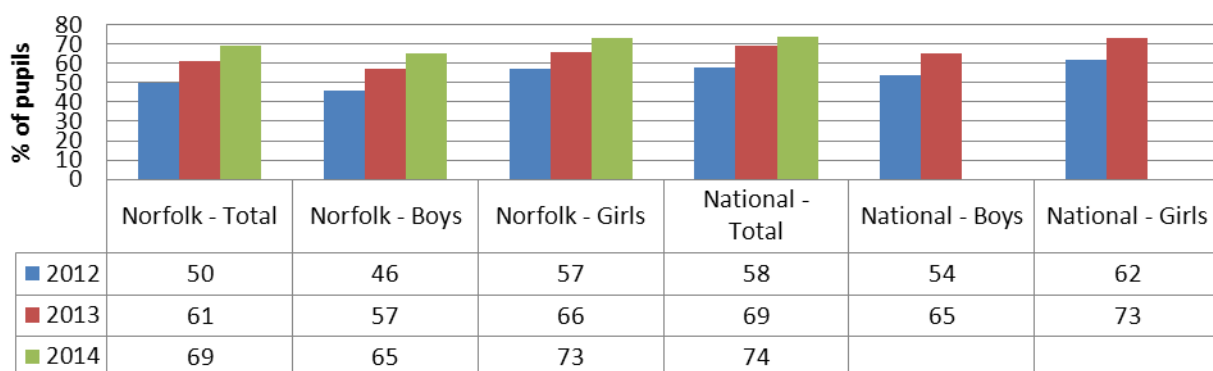
- 1.4 Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes have improved in 2014 by 13% overall in the percentage achieving a Good Level of Development. In 2013 the gap with the national average was 7%. In 2014 this gap has reduced to approximately 2% (based on very provisional national data). Variations across the districts remain, although the difference between the highest outcomes in a district and the lowest outcomes has reduced from an 18% difference to a 5% difference.

## Provisional EYFS % - Good Level of Development



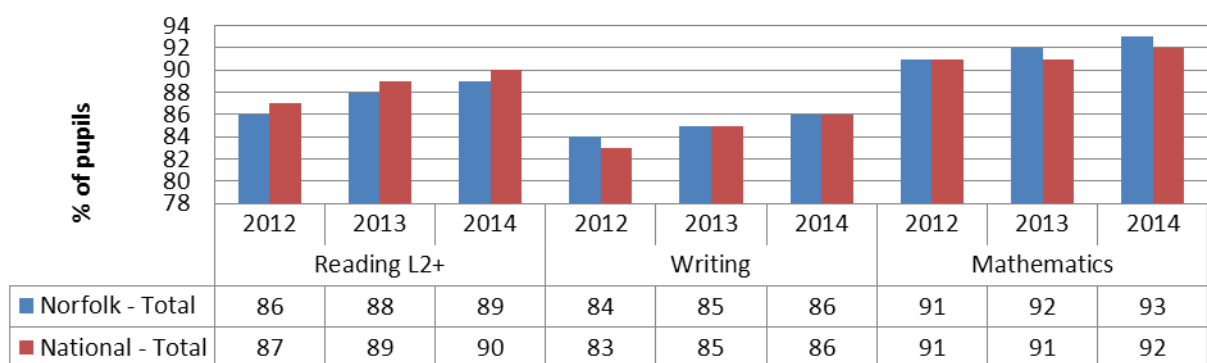
- 1.5 The Year 1 phonics outcomes in Norfolk are below the national average. Provisional outcomes for 2014 indicate a rise in Norfolk of 8%. Nationally the provisional result has also improved by 5%. The gap between the average for Norfolk pupils and the average nationally has decreased from 8% to 5%.

## Phonics (Year 1) Provisional 2014



- 1.6 Overall teacher assessments for pupils by the age of 7 have been broadly similar to those for children nationally. There is a 1% difference between Norfolk and national averages. Outcomes for boys and girls and pupils at Level 3 and above are also similar to national, typically within 1%.

## Key Stage 1 L2+ All pupils 2014 Provisional



- 1.7 Outcomes for 11 years olds are below the national average. Provisional results for 2014 indicate a gap of 5% with the national average in 2014. However the data is not yet reliable and subject to movement up and down as papers are remarked. There is no reliable provisional gender data yet. In the Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling tests the gap has narrowed slightly (by 1%) for Norfolk

pupils and the average for pupils nationally. Improvement in every subject and at each level appears to be similar to the national rate of improvement.

- 1.8 GCSE outcomes for 16 year olds in Norfolk are provisional (as they are nationally). Results for the percentage gaining 5 good GCSEs including English and mathematics appear to be broadly similar to 2013 outcomes. There is no national comparative figure available for 2014. Early indications show that Norwich is the most improved of the 7 Norfolk districts with 4% improvement in 2014. The national landscape for GCSE results this year is complex. Ofqual (The Office for Qualifications and Examinations Regulation) wrote to all schools across the country at the end of June 2014 to warn them that as a result of significant changes to the entry patterns for GCSE, a return to end of course examinations and some subject specific changes there is a possibility of school-by-school variation. They further highlighted a concern about the possible unpredictability of the impact on the national results overall for 2014. It should be noted that these GCSE outcomes represent the culmination of hard work carried out by school pupils and staff that began two years ago. The Council's strategy to support school improvement began one year ago and it is anticipated that further significant improvement will be demonstrated next year (2015) as a result of the effective strategies now in place.
- 1.9 Provisional A Level results indicate a small improvement in outcomes for Norfolk pupils. Outcomes are measured in a number of ways and in all 3 key measures Norfolk has improved slightly. Over the next few weeks there will be amendments and this usually leads to further minor improvements in outcomes. This is an improvement on previous years where attainment levels have been static for some time.

#### **Risk assessment of all Norfolk schools**

- 1.10 As in 2013 a risk assessment of every Norfolk school will take place at the beginning of September 2014 in order to categorise every school into one of 3 broad bands. The groupings, labelled A – F remain the same as for 2013 – 2014.

Category	Definition	Owner and commissioner of other Services as relevant
<b>A 4</b>	School of Concern – vulnerable to an adverse inspection – requiring significant intervention	Head of Intervention Service
<b>A3</b>	School of Concern – but improving significantly, has effective leadership but low published outcomes for children, is no longer in need of significant intervention but vulnerable to adverse inspection of the basis of published achievement	Head of Intervention service
<b>D (B) D (C) D (E) D (F)</b>	Temporarily of Concern – for up to 1 term. School may be in significant transition, experience crisis in leadership / staffing, be the focus of a serious complaint or Qualifying Complaint from Ofsted. ( <i>If concerns persist then schools will be automatically re risked to A4 after 1 term</i> )	Mary Jane Edwards
<b>B</b>	Schools requiring improvement , but where outcomes for pupils, in Ofsted outcome, or progress towards a good or better inspection outcome are stuck or declining	Head of Norfolk to Good and Great
<b>C</b>	Schools requiring improvement, but where outcomes for pupils, Ofsted outcome, or progress towards a good or better inspection outcome are improving.	Head of Norfolk to Good and Great
<b>E2</b>	Schools already judged by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding and	Senior Adviser

	where the achievement of pupils could maintain this judgement. Schools recently judged good or outstanding by Ofsted, from an LA risk assessment of B or C. Some vulnerability e.g. a minor weakness in the performance of a relevant pupil group, between subjects, or trajectory over time. <i>There could be other vulnerabilities in terms of staffing, finance, leadership or governance which are not significant enough to categorise the school as D.</i>	System Leadership (Partnership Service)
<b>E1</b>	Schools already judged good or outstanding where the achievement of pupils would maintain a confident good judgement. Schools recently judged outstanding by Ofsted, from an LA risk assessment of B or C.	Senior Adviser System Leadership (Partnership Service)
<b>F</b>	Schools already judged outstanding where the achievement of pupils would maintain a confident outstanding judgement.	Senior Adviser System Leadership (Partnership Service)

- 1.11 The criteria for the schools' risk assessment has been refined to take account of some additional aspects of school performance and local authority priorities. It remains focused on headline pupil achievement with a particular emphasis on the performance of vulnerable groups, especially those eligible for the Pupil Premium. Size of school is also a factor in this year's assessment taking account of the performance of pupils over 3 years. Schools will be informed of this year's risk assessment category during September 2014. As results remain provisional for the next few weeks an initial secondary risk assessment will be followed up at the end of September once more reliable data is available. For primary schools, letters for schools continuing as, or newly risked as 'Schools Causing Concern' will be sent ahead of the remaining categorisation which will be determined following more reliable data published mid-September.

<b>Letters to schools</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Autumn term risk assessment</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Autumn term risk assessment</b>
Primary schools	11 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2014 Schools causing concern – only	19 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup> sept 2014
Secondary schools	11 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2014	26 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2014

## 2. Impact of Child Protection Services and Services for Looked After Children and Early Help

- 2.1 At Appendix A is the July 2014 dashboard of quantitative indicators showing the latest trends in statutory and non-statutory processes associated with children's social care. Members are asked to note:
- The number of contacts continue to rise
  - The number of contacts from police have fallen however the conversion rate for these contacts to referrals remains too low
  - The high rate of re-referral of cases is the subject of a 'deep dive' audit commissioned by the NSCB (the results of this audit will be reported to the next Committee)
  - The proportion of Family Support Plans (FSPs) which resulted in the needs of the family being met (as reported by the family) has increased to 74% (May to July) from 52% (February to April).
  - The proportion of FSPs which escalate to social care has more than halved over the same period
  - Timeliness of Children in Need plans continues to improve

- Timeliness of core assessments for child protection cases has fallen in July to 86% from 92% in June. This has been an area of focus for child protection teams in August with staff holidays impacting significantly
- More demanding targets have been set for all child protection teams in terms of the frequency of visits. The target has been set at 20 days (previously 30 days). This is the right thing to do for these children however increases the pressure on resources
- More demanding targets have been applied to the delivery of Initial Child Protection Conferences due to a clarification of the national definition of 15 days from strategy discussion. Members should note that this will result in a dip in the performance from August
- The number of Looked After Children (LAC) is 1119, a 9% fall since May 2014
- Performance in relation to health of Norfolk LAC is good and favourable compared to national statistics. Dental checks lag behind other health assessments.
- Pathway planning remains a concern although it has improved significantly since February this year. Additional LAC social work agency resource in the West is expected to improve the data significantly next month (August)
- Care planning continues to improve (82%) but needs to improve further

2.2 At Appendix B is an analysis of the qualitative (audit) data for the month spanning June/July. Members are asked to note:

- The quality of initial assessments is improving overall (10% good, 20% borderline good, 50% requiring improvement however still too many inadequate cases being found (20%) It should be noted that this was a very small sample (10 cases from 5 each from 2 divisions)
- Auditors are continuing to work intensively with individual social workers to assess strengths and action plan for weaknesses thus providing bespoke improvement plans for individual workers and intelligence for managers to pick up through scheduled supervision
- Manager audits carried out by CIN managers highlighted some concerns on the quality of assessments that they have acted on swiftly
- The quality of initial assessments carried out by the additional capacity provided by Skylakes is being assessed monthly to ensure it meets Norfolk's high standards
- Auditors are continuing to coach social workers to help them present their cases with confidence showing professional expertise. This is part of the Ofsted preparation work in which the audit team are heavily involved
- Also in preparation for Ofsted auditors are carrying out monthly full day Ofsted 'Dry Runs'. This is to further assess the quality of social care practice and case recording and to prepare all teams for the Ofsted visit. Practicing the 'drill' will assist all members of the operational and audit teams so that when we are informed of the Ofsted visit the processes and systems run smoothly.

### **3. Compliments and Complaints**

3.1 The number of complaints and MP enquiries to date this year are similar to the number received last year (310 and 303) however there has been an ever

increasing volume of work in the department (as evidenced by contacts to children's social care services) therefore the rate of complaints has reduced.

- 3.2 The rate of increase of complaints is slowing (2% in August compared with 4% in July). Notable rises are in Education (52 cases this year compared to 38 last year) and in social care in Breckland and West (66 this year compared to 50 last year). Most of the Education cases (73%) are MP enquiries which are classed as complaints however many are enquiries concerned with Early Years issues, the quality of Norfolk schools following media interest and school admissions.
- 3.3 Social Care teams in the West of the County are experiencing a fall in complaints as are City and South teams where there has been a 29% fall in the number of complaints in the year to date compared with last year. There has been a marked reduction (37%) in complaints regarding child protection teams.

#### **4. Sickness Absence**

- 4.1 For 2013/14 the average number of sickness days per full time equivalent staff member was 8.82 days compared to 7.85 days for the year 2012/13. Increases were seen across all service areas and the most common category for these periods of sickness was mental well-being (including stress, depression and anxiety).
- 4.2 The period where sickness rates were at their highest was September 2013 to January 2014. This coincided with a period of intensive improvement activity initiated by the new interim management team. Since this period the sickness levels have decreased back to levels that correspond with previous years.
- 4.3 Service managers and their teams regularly receive data and have action plans in place for those staff who have reached trigger points. They are encouraged to use the support services that NCC have procured to support staff getting back to work.
- 4.4 **Evidence**  
Scrutiny of the above information by members of this committee provides evidence that members are being kept well informed of the performance of services to Norfolk's children and families and improvements that are taking place month on month. It also evidences that members are able to fully exercise their role as ultimate assurers of quality, efficiency and effectiveness of these services.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 **Revenue – Local Authority Budget**  
The 2014/15 Children's Services revenue budget is £161.903 million. There is no Local Authority funding of schools as they are funded completely by the Dedicated Schools Grant.
- 5.2 **This year end monitoring report shows a projected overspend of £1.280million for the year.**

- 5.3 The following summary table shows by type of budget, the actual spend for the year. The table shows the variance from the approved budget both in terms of a cash sum and as a percentage of the approved budget.

### Revenue – Local Authority Budget

Division of service	Approved budget £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Forecast +Over/- Underspend £m	Forecast +Over/- Underspend as % of budget	Movement since last report £m
<b>Spending Increases</b>					
Looked After Children - Agency	23.307	24.908	+1.601	+7	-1.103
Adoption allowances	1.200	1.359	+0.159	+13	+0.159
Adoption recruitment	0.140	0.160	+0.020	+14	+0.020
Fostering recruitment	0.041	0.139	+0.098	+239	+0.098
Residence/ kinship payments	2.268	2.550	+0.282	+12	+0.282
OFSTED unregulated accommodation	0.335	0.685	+0.350	+105	+0.350
Special Education Needs Home to School Transport	11.643	12.193	+0.550	+5	0
Education Support Grant	(10.756 )	(10.532)	+0.224	+2	0
<b>Spending Reductions</b>					
School Pension /Redundancy costs	4.094	3.610	-0.484	-12	+0.081
Looked After Children Legal	4.053	3.623	-0.430	-11	0
Looked After Children Transport costs	0.782	0.592	-0.190	-24	0
School Crossing Patrols	0.410	0.290	-0.120	-29	0
Clinical Commissioning	1.176	0.796	-0.380	-32	0
Information, Advice and Guidance Service	1.761	1.561	-0.200	-11	-0.200
Early Years and Childcare Service	1.417	1.217	-0.200	-14	-0.200

<b>Total</b>			<b>+1.280</b>		<b>-0.513</b>
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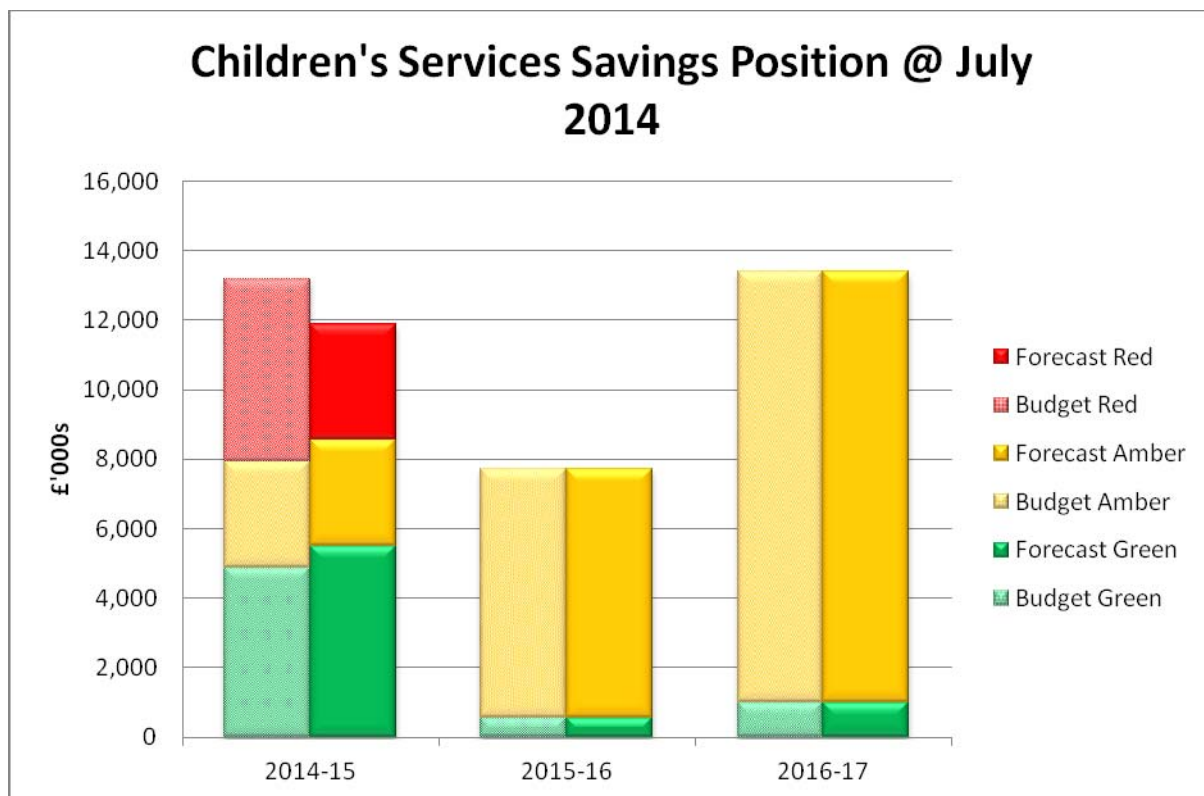
The main reasons for the variances are shown in the following table:-

<b>Division of service</b>	<b>Forecast +Over/ Underspend £m</b>	<b>Reasons for variance</b>
<b>Spending Increases</b>		
Looked After Children (LAC) - Agency placements	+1.601	Number of Looked After Children not reducing as quickly as originally planned .
Adoption allowances	+0.159	Increased cost of adoption allowance payments
Adoption recruitment	+0.020	Additional cost of recruitment
Fostering recruitment	+0.098	Additional cost of recruitment
Residence/ kinship payments	+0.282	Additional number and cost of residence/ kinship payments
Ofsted unregulated accommodation	+0.350	Additional cost of Ofsted unregulated accommodation for 16/17 year olds
Special Education Needs Home to School Transport	+0.550	Additional cost of school transport to Specialist Resource Bases and Short Stay Schools
Education Support Grant	+0.224	Reduced level of grant due to NCC schools becoming academies
<b>Spending Reductions</b>		
School Pension /Redundancy costs	-0.484	Reduced number of school teachers being made redundant
Looked After Children Legal	-0.430	Reduced cost of legal services
Looked After Children Transport costs	-0.190	Tighter control on non-public transport use
School Crossing Patrols	-0.120	Savings on staff vacancy costs
Clinical Commissioning	-0.380	Savings on therapy and assessment commissioned services
Information, Advice and Guidance Service	-0.200	Savings on staff vacancies and running costs
Early Years and Childcare Service	-0.200	Savings on staff vacancies and running costs

#### 5.4 Savings monitoring

The graph below shows the proposed savings compared to the current position and the delivery RAG rating.





For 2014/15 the red items relate to the Looked After Children savings, and the amber savings relate to either savings that are reliant on procurement conversations yet to occur or where a saving has been delivered in the financial year using one of reserves so is requiring further work to ensure that it is a recurrent saving.

## Revenue – Schools Budget

- 5.5 The Dedicated Schools Grant funds the Schools Budget. The Schools Budget has two main elements, the amounts delegated to schools and the amounts held centrally for pupil related spending. The amount delegated to schools includes a contingency which was allocated to schools for specific purposes.
- 5.6 The Dedicated Schools Grant can only be used for specified purposes and must be accounted for separately to the other Children's Services spending and funding.
- 5.7 **Variations on Dedicated Schools Grant Funded Budgets**

Currently there are no variances on budget to report. Although there are currently no variances to report, the trend over the past 12 months in the number of places required at special schools and the Short Stay School for Norfolk is indicating that there is a pressure building within the system and this is also being indicated through the special educational needs travel budget. There are also indications that there are pressures within the High Needs Block for Post -16 additional needs, further work is being done on this following the confirmation of places for the 2014/15 academic year that has started this month.

## Response to financial pressures

- 5.8 A review of the delivery of the Looked After Children reduction strategy has been undertaken and information is being looked at on an individual child basis by the operational team managers. The number of Looked After Children has stopped increasing with greater management oversight in the admission to care decision making, and the focus has turned to reunification which is starting to see a reduction in the numbers of Looked After Children. There will always be children who require a period of Local Authority intervention, and we need to ensure that this intervention is proportionate and timely and that this is focussed on the best long term outcomes for the child.
- 5.9 The main pressures within the special educational needs home to school transport are for transport to specialist resource bases, the Short Stay School for Norfolk, and other alternative provision. Work has been undertaken to look at how and where this provision is provided for the start of the 2014/15 academic year. We will be able to start to measure the impact of this after the start of term. This is the start of work being undertaken to develop a strong inclusive solution enabling children to be educated as much as possible in a local maintained setting and data has been produced to help understand the areas where schools using provision outside of their schools.
- 5.10 The Education Service Grant (ESG) is a non-ring-fenced grant that replaced the LACSEG (Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant). It is based on two elements (both calculated on a per pupil basis); a retained duties element, an amount the Local Authority is awarded regardless of the number of pupils attending academies, and the core ESG, which relates to the number of pupils educated in maintained schools, and reduced quarterly to reflect any schools that have become academies in that period. The forecast is based on the current information we have regarding the schools who have converted or have an academy order granted.

## Capital Programme

5.11

	2013/14 £M	Future Years £M
Approved Budget	92.190	46.897
Actual Outturn	92.190	46.897
<b>Variation from Approved Budget</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

The 2014/15 approved capital budget contained £83.066 million of estimated payments in 2014/15. Since approval the approved budget has increased by £9.124 million to £92.190 million.

The final 2014/15 outturn based on July monitoring information is £92.190 million.

All funding has been committed to individual schemes and programmes of work.

## **Children's Services Reserves and Provisions**

- 5.12 A number of Reserves and Provisions exist within Children's Services. The table in Appendix C sets out the balances on the reserve and provision in the Children's Services accounts at 1 April 2014 and the balances at 31 March 2015.

The table has been divided between those reserves and provisions relating to Schools and those that are General Children's Services reserves and provisions.

## **6. Issues, risks and innovation**

- 6.1 **Risk 1** – Failure to demonstrate the pace of improvement that will quickly impact positively on children and families in Norfolk and thereby satisfy DfE and HMI (RM14147)
- 6.2 **Risk 2** – Over-reliance on interim and agency staff which will result in unsustainable improvement in services to children and families (RM14148)
- 6.3 **Risk 3** – The number of looked after children continues to rise demonstrating failure in early help services and putting increasing pressure on children's services budgets (RM13906).
- 6.4 **Risk 4** – Lack of NCC capacity and infrastructure to support the back-office functions that Children's Services needs inhibits improvement progress. (RM14157).
- 6.5 These risks are regularly reviewed by both the CS Leadership Team and the Chief Officer group and are reported and reviewed at each Audit Committee meeting.
- 6.6 **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)**  
This report deals with equality issues throughout.

## **7. Background**

- 7.1 Improvement in Children's Services continues to be given a high priority by the Council with determined focus on safeguarding and support and challenge for schools. Our first priority is to make sure that all children are safe and achieve the best possible educational outcomes. We will then build dynamic, self-assured, forward thinking, sustainable services that are valued and recognised as outstanding by all service users, staff, auditors and inspectors. We will increasingly work with all our partners to ensure we provide a consistently high quality service that achieves the best possible positive outcomes and impact for children and families. We will get it right for every child every time.
- 7.2 This report summarises our progress against the operational improvement plans and strategic plans using performance measures contained in scorecards and associated information and data to demonstrate progress and highlight issues. The report also demonstrates mitigations against the four corporate risks that children's services are currently reporting which are:

## Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

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# Norfolk Children's Services Social Care Performance Overview Dashboard – July 2014 Data

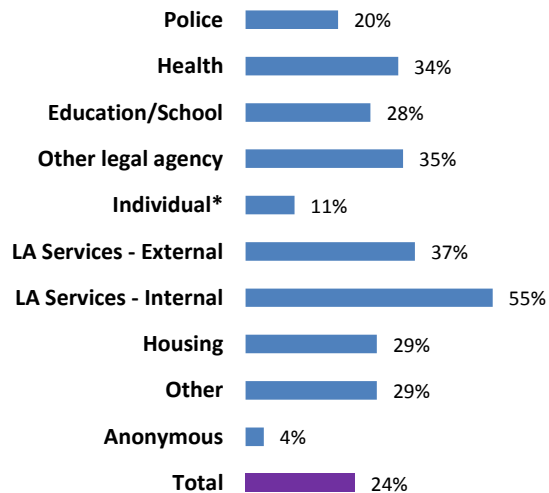
## Contacts and Initial Assessments:

### Initial Contacts by Source:

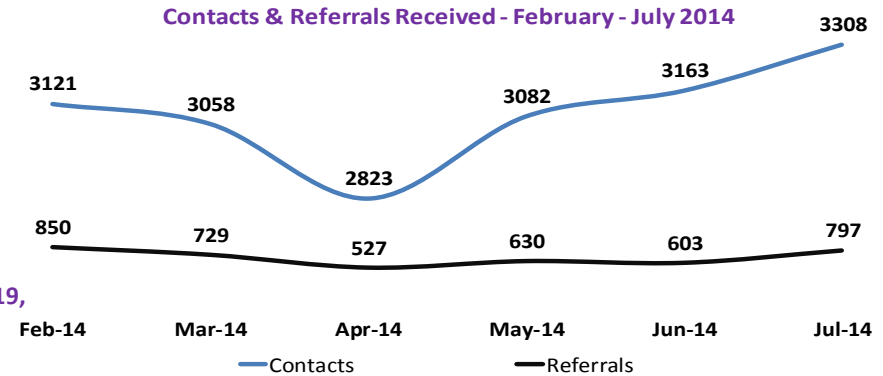
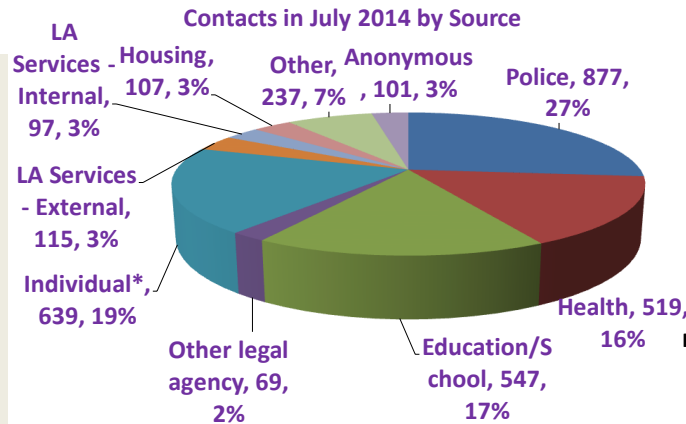
	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14
Police	1097	952	877
Health	424	404	519
Education/ School	425	552	547
Other legal agency	123	81	69
Individual*	476	597	639
LA Services - External	85	76	115
LA Services - Internal	91	74	97
Housing	75	119	107
Other	218	257	237
Anonymous	68	51	101
<b>Total</b>	<b>3082</b>	<b>3163</b>	<b>3308</b>

\* Individuals are comprised of: Stranger/Family/Carer/  
Neighbour/Self

### Conversion of Contacts to Referrals by Source:



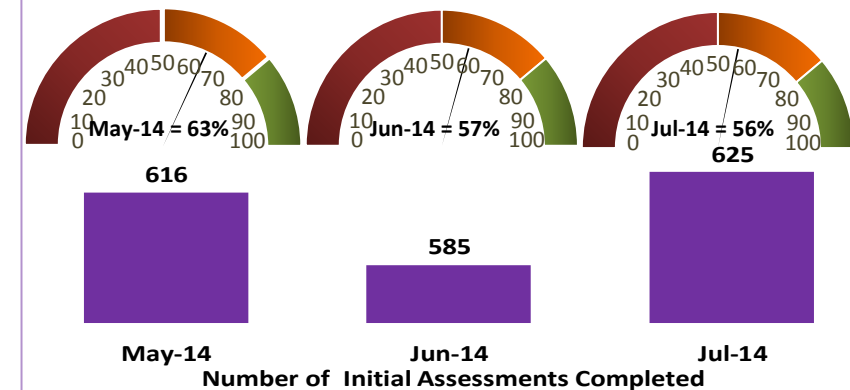
\* Individuals are comprised of: Stranger/Family/Carer/  
Neighbour/Self



### Percentage of Re-Referrals:

Re-Referrals	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14
Norfolk	22.9%	27.2%	21.3%
England 2012/13		24.9%	
Statistical Neighbours 2012/13		20.8%	
East of England 2012/13		23.4%	

### Initial Assessments Completed in Timescales:



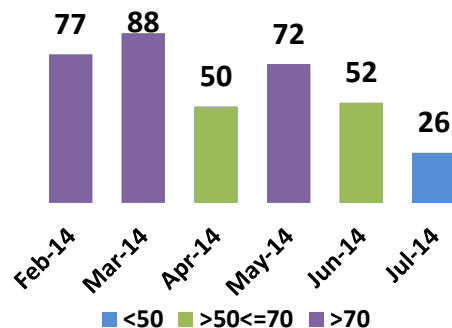
### Commentary:

- The number of contacts received continues to rise, with the number converted to referrals rising in line with this increase. Contacts from the police have decreased, however this has been off-set by an increase in contacts from health services.
- Over 700 contacts made by the police are not converting to referrals – this places a high demand on staff to process these contacts which result in no further social care intervention.
- Contacts from an anonymous source have the lowest conversion rate to referral – much of this can be attributed to insufficient information being provided at the point of contact or contacts where there is a malicious motive.
- The rate of re-referrals reduced to just over 21% in July, which is close to the average figure for Norfolk, but is still too high. An internal “deep-dive” review of re-referrals is being conducted to see whether there is any learning that can be applied to practice to help ensure a consistent downward trend in the numbers of children subject to repeated referrals.

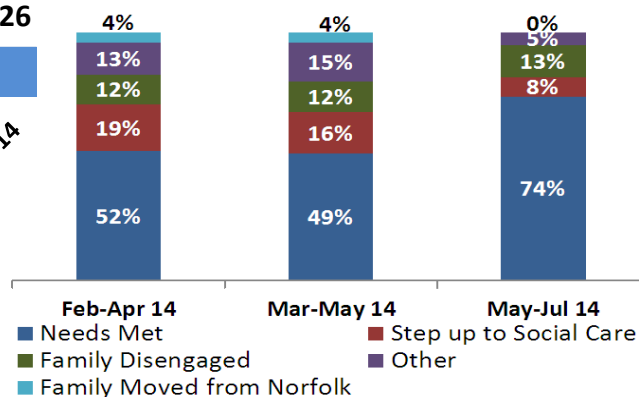
# Norfolk Children's Services Social Care Performance Overview Dashboard – July 2014 Data

## Early Help & Children in Need:

### Family Support Plans Initiated:



### Outcomes of Family Support Plans closed 1<sup>st</sup> May – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2014:



## Children in Need Allocated to a Qualified Social Worker:

	Feb-14	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14
No. Children in Need (not CP or CLA)	3371	2745	2584	2534	2593	2610
No. Allocated to Qualified Worker	2702	2463	2477	2465	2517	2486
% Allocated to Qualified Worker	80.2%	89.7%	95.9%	97.3%	97.1%	95.2%

## Rate of Children in Need per 10,000 Under-18 Population:

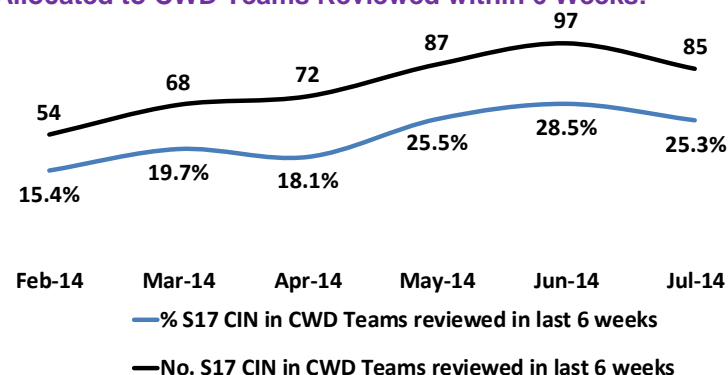
	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14
Norfolk (Current)	302.8	304.4	308.1
England 12/13		332.2	
Statistical Neighbours 12/13		304.0	

## Section 17 Children in Need in CIN & CWD Teams with an up-to-date\* CIN Plan:

	Feb-14	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14
No. s17 Children in Need	1,385	1,354	1395	1353	1352	1340
No. s17 with CIN Plan	1,005	990	1046	1067	1140	1171
No. s17 without a CIN Plan	380	364	349	286	212	169
% with a CIN Plan	72.6%	73.1%	75.0%	78.9%	84.3%	87.4%
No. CWD Children in Need	350	346	399	398	340	336
No. CWD with CIN Plan	116	123	109	84	159	149
No. CWD without a CIN Plan	234	223	290	314	181	181
% with a CIN Plan	33.1%	35.5%	27.3%	21.1%	46.8%	44.3%

\* To count as having a CIN Plan, any existing plan must have been started or reviewed within the last 30 working days

## CIN Allocated to CWD Teams Reviewed within 6 Weeks:



## Commentary:

- Although the number of Family Support Plans (FSP) being initiated appears to have fallen in June & July, this is consistent with trends typically seen during school holidays allied to delays in paperwork being sent to the central support team for recording.
- The proportion of FSPs which resulted in the needs of the family being met increased to 74% between May & July, from 52% between February – April. The proportion of FSPs which escalate to social care more than halved over the same period to 8.
- Almost 9 out of 10 Section 17 Children in Need in CIN teams now have an up-to-date CIN Plan and in many teams all now have an up-to-date plan.
- All CIN Section 17 cases are allocated to qualified social workers. Some teams are having delay in allocating new work due to vacancies / leave / sickness etc. however cases are unallocated for a shorter period of time compared to 6 months ago and teams have a target to allocate within 5 working days.

# Norfolk Children's Services Social Care Performance Overview Dashboard – July 2014 Data

## Child Protection:

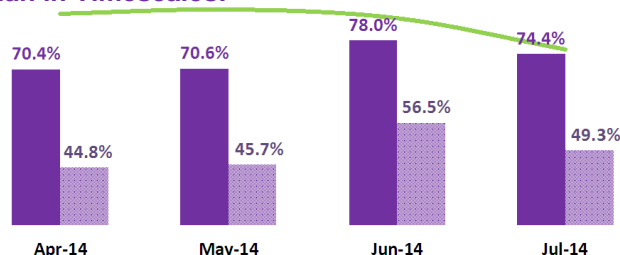
### Children in Child Protection Teams Allocated to a Qualified Social Worker:

	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14
No. Children on CP Plan	545	531	482
No. Allocated to Qualified Social Worker	536	530	480
% Allocated to Qualified Social Worker	98.3%	99.8%	99.6%

98.3% 99.8% 99.6%

May-14 Jun-14 Jul-14

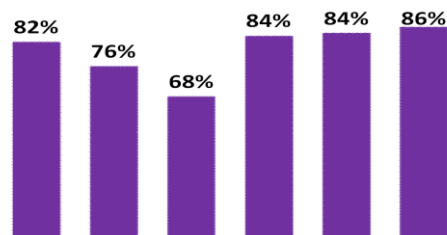
### Social Worker visits to Children on a Child Protection Plan in Timescales:



Apr-14 May-14 Jun-14 Jul-14  
 ■ % Seen in last 20 Working Days  
 ■ % Seen Alone in last 20 Working Days  
 — No. Children on CP Plan

	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14
No. Seen in last 20 Working Days	385	414	358
No. Seen Alone in last 20 Working Days	249	300	237

### ICPCs within 15 Working Days of Strategy Discussion:

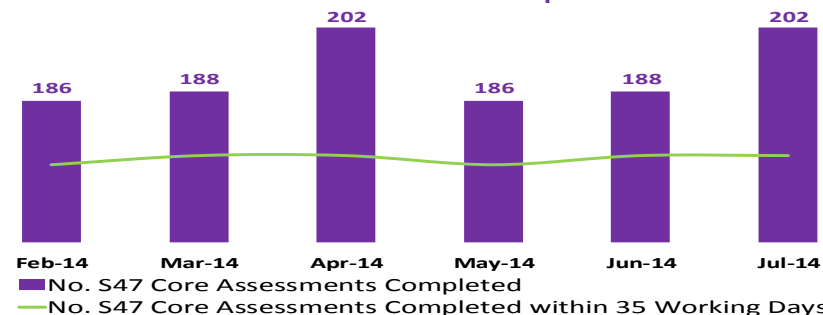


	Feb-14	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14
Total ICPCs	78	78	68	55	77	57
Within 15 Working days	64	59	46	46	65	49
Over 15 Working Days	14	19	22	9	12	8

### Rate of Children on a CP Plan per 10,000 Under-18 Population:

	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14
Norfolk (Current)	32.9	32.0	29.1
Norfolk 12/13		33.1	
England 12/13		37.9	
Statistical Neighbours 12/13		35	

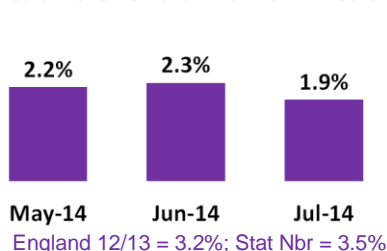
### Section 47 Core Assessments Completed in Timescales:



	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14
No. Section 47 Core Assessments Completed	186	188	202
No. Section 47 Core Assessments Completed within 35 Working Days	172	174	174
% Section 47 Core Assessments Completed within 35 Working Days	92.5%	92.6%	86.1%

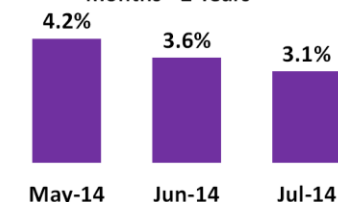
### Children on a CP Plan for 18 months & Over and Children Starting a CP Plan for a Second/Subsequent Time:

#### % Children on a CP Plan for 2+ Years



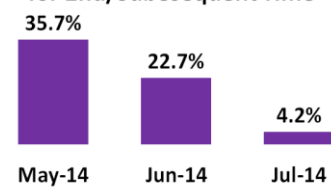
England 12/13 = 3.2%; Stat Nbr = 3.5%

#### % Children on a CP Plan for 18 months - 2 Years



England 12/13 = 14.9%; Stat Nbr = 15.6%

#### % Children Starting CP Plan for 2nd/Subsequent Time



England 12/13 = 14.9%; Stat Nbr = 15.6%

## Commentary:

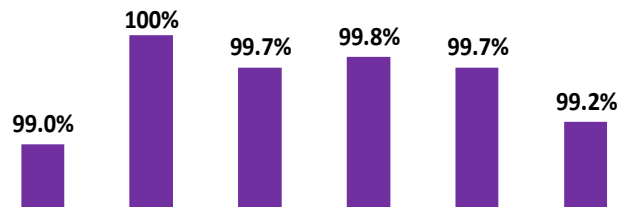
- All children subject to Child Protection Plans are allocated to qualified social workers.
- We have recently changed the maximum expected frequency of Social Worker visits to children on child protection plans from 30 working days to a more comparable 20 working days – many children on child protection plans are seen more frequently than this. Three quarters of children are seen within the new 20 working day timescale.
- The DfE have recently confirmed that an ICPC should take place within 15 working days of the first recorded strategy discussion, while until now we have measured timeliness against the most recent. As such, we will expect to see a decline in performance in this measure, as our reporting is adjusted to match DfE expectations.
- While timeliness of s47 core assessments fell in July, at 86% this is still well within acceptable boundaries.
- As increase our focus on managing risk within the community, we would expect the rate of children subject of CP Plans to increase in line with a reduction in our LAC numbers.
- At 2%, the proportion of children who have been on a CP Plan for more than 2 years is better than that seen nationally and among statistical neighbours.
- 4% of children starting a CP Plan in July had previously had a CP Plan. This figure is anomalous – the average within Norfolk is 20 – 25% - considerably higher than the England and statistical neighbour average.



# Norfolk Children's Services Social Care Performance Overview Dashboard – July 2014 Data

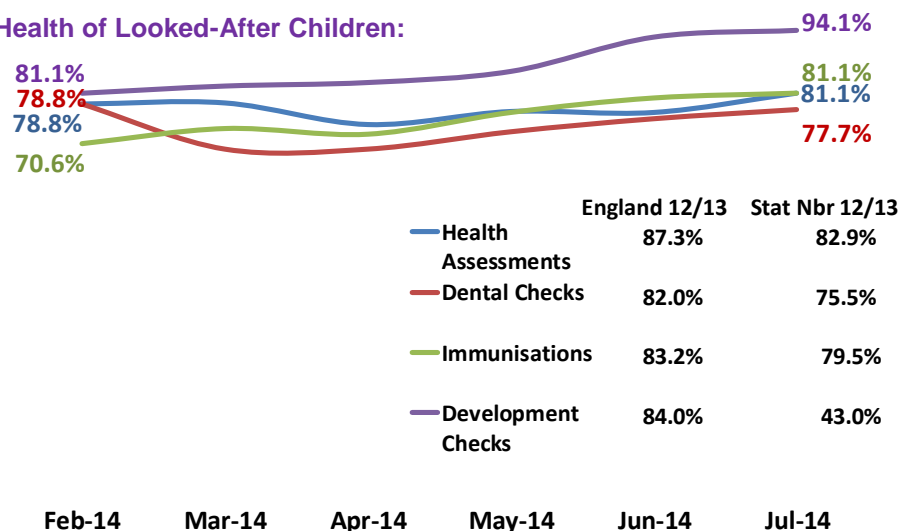
## Looked-After Children:

### Looked-After Children allocated to a Qualified Social Worker:

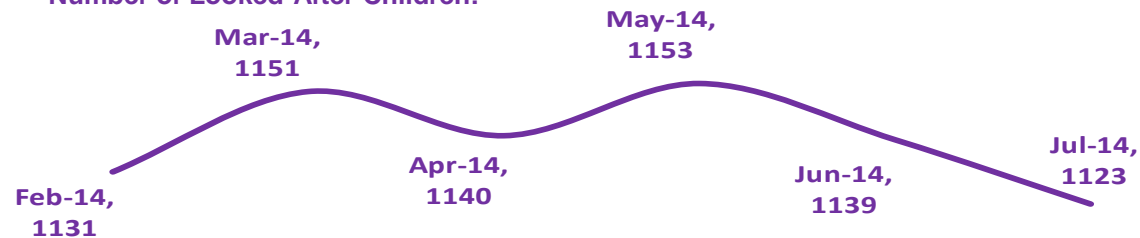


	Feb-14	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14
Number	1125	1146	1135	1123	1120	1116

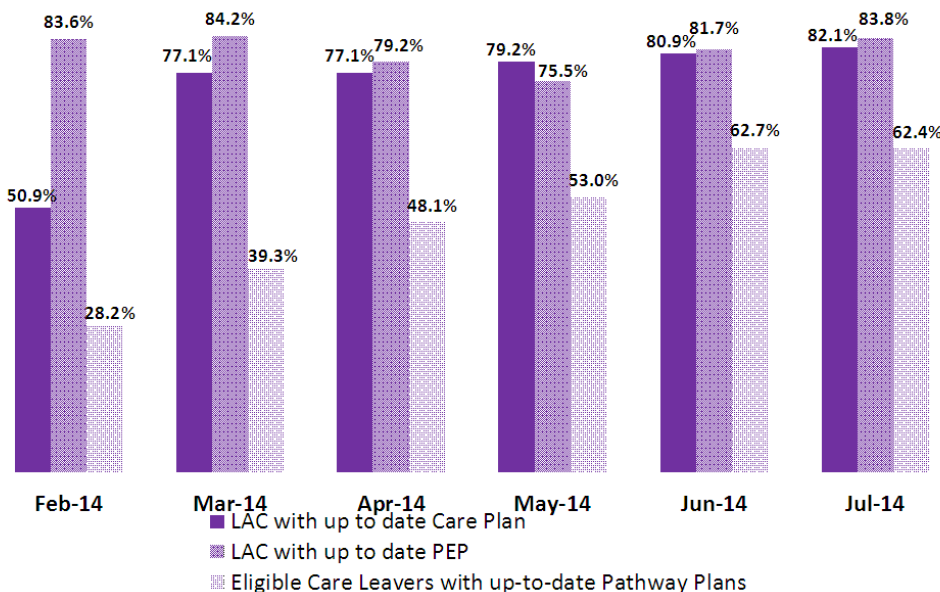
### Health of Looked-After Children:



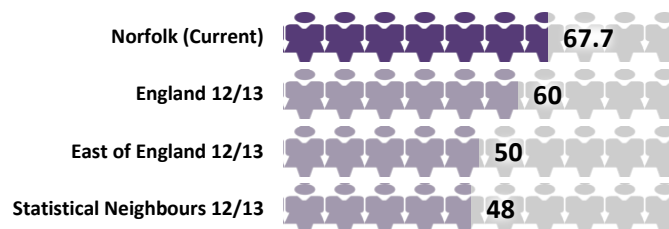
## Number of Looked-After Children:



### Care Plans, Pathway Plans & Personal Education Plans:



## Rate of LAC per 10,000 Under-18 Population



### Commentary:

- The number of Looked-after children in Norfolk fell to 1,123 in July – the lowest number seen since November 2013, and the first time LAC numbers have reduced on two consecutive months since February. It is also the first time since before 2011 that LAC numbers fell between May & July.
- Overall performance in relation to health of looked-after children remains good & is favourable compared with statistical neighbours and in-line with the England average. There are continued issues with health assessments for children placed outside Norfolk, but a strategy has been put in place to counter this & we expect to see performance improve further.
- Too many care leavers still do not have pathway plans and the pace of improvement has stalled between June & July. The introduction of the new leaving care service will address this issue & we expect to see performance improve rapidly once the new service is up & functioning fully.
- The percentage of LAC with an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP) is unlikely to improve further until September at the earliest, when the schools return from summer holidays.
- The proportion of looked after children with an up-to-date care plan improved slightly in July.



### Quality Assurance Team Activity June-July 2014

This table describes the QA activity for the period July – August 2014.

#### 1. Activity description – Quality of Initial Assessment audit

Resource - 1 x FTE audit officers	Activity type - Audit
<b>Rationale and methodology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ascertain what if any improvement is evidenced following the Ingsung audit.</li> <li>To consider 5 cases from both City and South and North East and Broadland duty teams to see if the features of the previous audit had been remedied</li> </ul>	
<b>Outcome - general</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The threshold in 9 cases was met and partially met in 1 case</li> <li>Only 2 initial assessments were concluded within 10 days</li> <li>In 8 case the child was seen and spoken to or observed</li> <li>In 6 cases professional agency checks were present and partially present in 3 cases</li> <li>7 cases had an analysis of the assessment was present and limited in 1 case</li> <li>8 cases contained a suitable manager's rationale and this was partially achieved in 1 case.</li> <li>1 case was considered to be good, 7 requiring improvement and 2 inadequate</li> </ul> <b>Outcome – city and south</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management rationale routinely included</li> <li>Children not always being seen as a matter of routine</li> <li>Multi agency views not always clear in the assessment</li> <li>Quality of analysis requires improvement</li> </ul> <b>Outcome – north Norfolk, Broadland and great Yarmouth</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvement in seeing children</li> <li>Improved multi agency contribution to assessment</li> <li>Improved quality of analysis</li> <li>Overall improved grading – 2 requiring improvement cases had good features</li> </ul>	

- Timescales not being met impacted on the overall grade of an otherwise good quality assessment
- Completing assessments and them being authorised within 10 days continues to be a challenge

**Recommendation**

- The duty and child protection manager audits scrutinises a larger sample of initial assessment to be sure of the improvement and whether it has been sustained.

**Impact**

- **Children and their families were seen**
- **Children were, in the main, included in their assessments and could convey their wishes and feelings**
- **The improved quality of assessment ensured children who continued to require a service did so**
- **The impact on families of poor timeliness is likely to have added to the anxiety of waiting for a children's services intervention or decision about what would happen next.**

**2. 1 case 1 worker audits. Covering 2 CP teams, 1 LAC team, 1 CiN team 1 duty team**

Resource 2.4 FTE audit officers	Activity type - Audit
<p><b>Outcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All social workers interviewed evidenced motivation to achieve good outcomes for children</li> <li>• The majority of children's files evidenced a good understanding of the impact social work intervention had on children and their families.</li> <li>• Caseloads are increasing in some teams</li> <li>• Quality of supervision and management overview records in CP West and City+ South 3, LAC North and CiN Breckland, requires improvement</li> <li>• Quality of supervision and management overview in duty team West is good</li> <li>• Duty team West epitomises the features of Ofsted's research paper High Challenge, High Expectation and High Support</li> <li>• Children in duty team West are benefactors of good quality social work.</li> <li>• Child protection team West are evidencing an increasing level of competence when completing assessments.</li> <li>• 5/9 cases from CP West demonstrated a strong sense of children's plans progressing effectively.</li> <li>• CP West evidences good use of the Public Law outline.</li> <li>• CP West had 1 critically inadequate case that was immediately referred to the tier 4 manager and responsible Assistant Director</li> <li>• LAC North has a stable team, low staff turnover and have known the children and young people for many years – many children have only experienced one worker.</li> <li>• Cases audited in LAC North demonstrated that children are visited more than the statutory minimum.</li> <li>• Cases audited in LAC North demonstrated that all required statutory processes had been followed during the previous 6 month period.</li> <li>• All cases audited in LAC North had an up to date plan on the current care first version</li> <li>• Social workers in CiN Breckland experience insufficient appropriate challenge to improve their social work delivery to children and their families despite demonstrating ability and desire to do this.</li> <li>• Whilst CP 3 City and South evidence as a particular strength their relationship building with children and families and the voice of the child being evident through assessment, planning and statutory visiting, they have found being a team of agency workers with an agency manager particularly challenging.</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This team will now be subsumed into the 2 permanent child protection teams and any deficiencies in practice will be shared with the respective team managers for remedy.</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For those children experiencing the best social the short, medium and long term are better. Their care and safety is secured quickly and their plans make clear what needs to change and why.</li> <li>Workers who consider immediate and longer term impact are able to plan more effectively.</li> <li>Children who see their social workers routinely and regularly experience better informed social work.</li> <li>For those children and families will feel anxious and understandably angry when they are expecting a service to be delivered but do not know when, by whom or why. This will make relationship building more challenging and possibly lengthen the period of intervention.</li> </ul>

### 3. Service led manager audits – CWD, CiN, Duty +CP and LAC

<b>Resource</b> 3 FTE Audit officers	<b>Activity type - Audits</b>
<b>Outcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Duty and CP managers audit focussed on the quality of initial assessments.</li> <li>LAC manager audit considered the same 2 cases to better understand the features of a good case.</li> <li>CiN manager audit for August was disappointing – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children continue to remain open to CiN teams when they do not require a service but a sibling does for specific reasons.</li> <li>Assessments remain poor in the cases audited – some cases did not have an up to date assessment.</li> <li>The voice of the child is not always evident</li> <li>Plans are not always sufficiently robust</li> <li>Previous findings have not been acted upon</li> </ol> </li> <li>Quality of supervision and management overview continues to be an area that requires improvement</li> <li>There was no CWD audit this month due the A/L of team managers</li> <li>Insufficient evidence of partnership working contained within assessments</li> </ul>	
<b>Impact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>From the cases audited the findings are patchy and disappointing.</b></li> </ul>	

- **CP and duty consistently see improved practice and overall better social work**
- **LAC manager audit must demonstrate both learning and how findings will be incorporated into improvement – they must embed audit activity and all that this entails into the QA function of being a tier 4 or team manager.**
- **CiN manager audit must focus on their priorities for improvement and not be swayed from the task until they are satisfied that practice is at the level they require.**

#### 4. Skylakes audit

<b>QA Manager</b>	
<b>Outcome</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sound decision making</li> <li>• Cases still not transferring smoothly thus building in drift and delay.</li> <li>• Of the cases audited only 1 had an assessment that exceeded the requirements of an initial assessment, included irrelevant information and was not fit for purpose.</li> <li>• BIPs have resent a number of the same cases for 3 months now despite the case previously being closed – this has limited the number of cases audited.</li> <li>• Difficulties in accessing support or services from some partner agencies</li> <li>• Diversity rarely considered or present in assessments – where it has been included in 2 assessments it was of a good standard.</li> </ul>	
<b>Impact</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to duty teams whilst historic case loads issues are attended to.</li> <li>• Children are not waiting for initial assessments</li> <li>• Children and their families are waiting for continuation of services whilst issues with transfer are remedied.</li> <li>• If cases do not transfer in a timely way skylakes become case managers and this impedes the service they have been contracted to provide</li> </ul>	

#### 5. Coaching for teams in case presentation -

2.4 FTE Audit officers + QA manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ofsted Readiness</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome</b>	

- Teams given time to consider Kolb cycle
- Teams supported in following mind maps of salient points of case management
- Workers encouraged to present cases to each other
- 1 Worker able to be interviewed by team members taking on different roles e.g. inspector, child, colleague
- Out of 9 teams the QA team have received a satisfaction rating of 100% - this has been broken down into 63% of workers being very satisfied and 37% of workers were satisfied. No worker reported that the sessions were disappointing or very disappointing. This represents 74 completed feedback questionnaires.

#### **Impact**

- Teams are better prepared and more confident in presenting their cases to a variety of audiences
- Teams become used to critically scrutinising each others work from a child's, colleagues and inspectors perspective.
- Children experience better considered social work.

### **6. Case file dry run**

3.4 Audit officers, QA Manager, 2 team manager,

#### **Outcome**

- Day 1 wk 2 of OFSTED inspection replicated
- 6 cases audited
- 5 workers interviewed
- 1 requiring improvement, 4 inadequate, 1 requiring improvement with good features
- 6 requiring improvement
- Whilst the outcomes were disappointing they confirmed what the audit team expected to find based on previously acquired intelligence for example the quality of social work from the specialist social work team, whether the quality of support provided by family support workers to care leavers is sufficient, whether progress has been made in a previously understaffed and poorly managed LAC team.

#### **Impact**

- Children's services have confidence that they will be prepared to provide good quality audit reports for library of evidence.

- Any issues outlined in the dry run activity will be remedied prior to inspection
- Workers will be better prepared as they will have had experience of the activity
- All of the expected outcomes were confirmed.

**Plans for August – September**

1. Thematic audit – re referrals
2. Continuation of 1 case 1 worker – specialist social work team, CiN Breckland and CP Breckland
3. 1 Ofsted case file dry run day – 12 September
4. Coaching and Impact workshops for NIPE team
5. Thematic audit - quality and purposefulness of pathway plans

1 FTE audit officer is supporting a confidential investigation – this has had an impact on the 1 case 1 worker audit cycle but did not impact on the manager audit or the inspection readiness dry run.

This level of activity has relied on the QA manager and 2FTE audit officers not taking any annual leave during the holiday period.

If CSLT require any additional thematic audit this will impact on the team's ability to complete the planned audit activity.

## Appendix C

### Children's Services Reserves and Provisions

Title/description	Balance at 01-04-14 £m	Forecast balance at 31-03-15 £m	Variance £m	Reason for variance
<b>Schools</b>				
Transport Days Equalisation Fund	0.249	0.655	+0.406	Reduced number of home to school/college transport days in the 2014/15 financial year as a result of the timing of Easter.
Schools Contingency Fund	9.315	8.315	-1.000	Investment in high need provision
Schools Non- Teaching Activities	1.170	1.170	0.000	
Building Maintenance Partnership Pool	1.197	1.197	0.000	
School Sickness Insurance Scheme	1.284	1.284	0.000	
School Playing surface sinking fund	0.248	0.188	-0.060	Schools becoming academies
Education Provision for Holiday Pay	0.017	0.017	0.000	
Non BMPP Building Maintenance Fund	1.034	0.996	-0.038	Schools becoming academies
Norfolk PFI Sinking Fund	2.061	2.061	0.000	
<b>Schools total</b>	<b>16.575</b>	<b>15.883</b>	<b>-0.692</b>	
Title/description	Balance at 31-03-14 £m	Forecast balance at 31-03-15 £m	Variance £m	Reason for variance
<b>Children's Services</b>				



IT Earmarked Reserves	0.249	0.144	-0.105	Use of reserves
Repairs and Renewals Fund	0.179	0.179	0.000	
Grants and Contributions	3.115	1.618	-1.497	Use of reserves
Children's Services post Ofsted Improvement Fund	1.741	0.241	-1.500	Use of reserves
<b>Children's Services total</b>	<b>5.284</b>	<b>2.182</b>	<b>-3.102</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>21.859</b>	<b>18.065</b>	<b>-3.794</b>	

# Children's Services Committee

Item No 7

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Norfolk County Council Adoption Agency Annual Review</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>16 September 2014</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Sheila Lock</b>
<b>Strategic impact</b> Every adoption agency has a statutory requirement to publish, and regularly update, a document which describes the ethos and goals of the adoption service, its management and oversight arrangements and the experience of its staff.  This <b>Statement of Purpose</b> (appendix 1) is a public document, approved by the County Council each year before being made available to adoptive families, adopted children, their birth parents and guardians and staff working in the field of adoption. It is also inspected by OFSTED (Office of Standards in Education). This committee paper will focus on a performance review of Norfolk Adoption Service.	

## Executive summary

The key strengths:

- The number of adopters approved is increasing year on year. Since 2011/12 there has been a 82% increase in the number of adopters approved in a year, to 69 in 2013/14
- The number of children matched with adoptive families has increased to its highest level, with 109 matches in 2013/14.
- The number of adoption orders granted, overall, is increasing.
- Norfolk children, on average, are waiting for a shorter period between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family.
- Norfolk adopters, once approved, are matched with children quicker than the national average.

The Key areas of challenge:

- The number of children with a plan for adoption continues to increase faster than the increase in the number of adopters. This is a trend reflected locally and nationally and if referred to as the adopters gap
- A significant improvement is required in the time taken between court decision for adoption and a child being matched with an adoptive family.
- The adoption support service requires a complete review in light of forthcoming Government changes.

### Recommendations:

**To recommend approval of the statement of purpose to full council and provide scrutiny and challenge to the adoption service.**

## 1. Proposal (or options)

Members are asked to scrutinise the information within the report and provide challenge to the service to ensure continued improved outcomes for Norfolk children and families along with internal performance improvement.

Members are asked to recommend approval to Cabinet of the Statement of Purpose and Functions for the Local Authority Adoption Service to comply with the Care Standards Act 2000.

## 2. Evidence

### 2.1 Background

#### 2.1.1 What is Adoption?

Adoption is a way of providing a new family for children who cannot be brought up by their own parents. It's a legal procedure in which all the parental responsibility is transferred to the adopters. Once an adoption order has been granted it can't be reversed except in extremely rare circumstances.

#### 2.1.2 What is the difference between adoption and fostering?

Foster carers share the responsibility for the child with a local authority and the child's parents.

Fostering is usually a temporary arrangement, though sometimes foster care may be the plan until the child grows up. This long-term or "permanent" fostering cannot provide the same legal security as adoption for either the child or the foster family but it may be the right plan for some children.

#### 2.1.3 Adoption is a key area of focus for the Government. The Department for Education (DfE) publication "An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay" (2012) has the key objectives of reducing the time it takes to recruit adopters and reducing the amount of time children wait to be adopted. Performance against these objectives is measured nationally through the Department for Education (DfE) Adoption Scorecard. The two key measures are:

- The average number of days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. In 2013/14 this was 502 days for Norfolk against a 3 year average target (2011–14) of 547 days
- The average number of days between a court granting a placement order (gives consent for local authorities to place the child with an adoptive family) and the local authority deciding on a match with an adoptive family. In 2013/14 this was 189 days for Norfolk against 3 year average target (2011–14) of 152 days

#### 2.1.4 As the Adoption Scorecard is based on a 3 year average and takes into account historical performance. As a result Norfolk is unlikely to achieve either key target this year. Norfolk is expected to achieve one of these targets in 2015/16 and both targets in 2016/17.

- 2.1.5 Norfolk has a higher rate of looked-after children than the England average. To ensure that only those children who need to be looked-after remain looked-after, Norfolk has a LAC reduction plan and adoption activity will be a critical component of this.

Authorities that have reduced their LAC population to be in-line with the England average have not achieved this by reducing the number of under-3s coming into care. Evidence suggests that adoption may continue at the same or higher rates when LAC populations are reducing. As a result, we expect that the demand for adoption and adoptive families will not reduce.

The LAC reduction plan and the service will focus on robust planning for:

- Children on care orders or interim care orders who remain placed with their parents.
- Children who are currently having regular contact with family.
- Children in foster placements where migration to SGO or adoption has been suggested.
- Children who have voiced a strong desire to return to their family either verbally or through their behaviour e.g. persistently returning to the family home.
- Out of County Placements

- 2.1.6 The following pages detail the performance of the adoption service and include the following information;

- Performance in recruiting adopters
- Performance in finding adoptive families for children
- Performance providing post adoption support
- Complaints
- Service-User Engagement

It is important to remember that the purpose of the adoption service is to approve prospective adopters, prepare children for adoption match adopter and child and to provide appropriate post adoption support. This supports the overarching outcome to find children/ young people permanent loving homes.

## 2.2 Performance & Benchmarking

### 2.2.1 Children Awaiting Adoption

The Department for Education produced a two “heat maps” showing the number of children awaiting adoption (as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013) for each local authority. Norfolk was shown as having 85 children awaiting for adoption a reduction from 110 at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012. As of March 2014 this had further reduced to 80 of which 12 were matched but not placed 23 were awaiting placement orders from the courts.

### 2.2.2 Number of children being adopted

The latest national figures report that there is an increase in the number of young people/ children being adopted and this trend is reflected in the East of England and Norfolk..

The table below shows the numbers of adoption orders granted for England, the East of England and Norfolk from April 2009 to March 2013, plus additional Norfolk data for 2013/14:

Area	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
England	3,200	3,090	3,450	N/a	N/a
East of England	320	280	350	N/a	N/a
Norfolk	60	30*	65	58	81

[Source: Office of National Statistics (Adoption Orders Granted) and CareFirst Norfolk Data]

\*The 30 adoption orders granted in 2010/11 was a reflection of delays in the court process, so the 2011/12 figure became inflated.

With 153 adoptions between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 & 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 against an average of 70 for Local Authorities across England and an average of 98 against statistical neighbour<sup>1</sup>. Norfolk ranks 9<sup>th</sup> out of 152 local authorities in England for the number of children adopted.

In the three years to 31<sup>st</sup> April 2014, 184 children in Norfolk were adopted

The following table shows the percentage of children who leave care via adoption for Norfolk and England:

	2010 - 2013			2013/14
	England Average	Norfolk	Statistical Neighbours	Norfolk
% Children Adopted from Care	13%	13%	15%	18%

[Source DfE SSDA903 Returns 2012/13 & 2013/14 (Norfolk Only)].

13% of care leavers in Norfolk were adopted between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 & 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, is in line with the England Average of 13% & statistical neighbour average of 14.2%. Almost 1 in 5 children ceasing to be looked-after were adopted from care between April 2013 and March 2014.

## 2.3 Recruiting Norfolk adoptive families

2.3.1 Throughout 2013/14, a dedicated project was in place to respond to the challenge set by the DfE to eliminate unnecessary delay in the adoption process. Through this project, Norfolk Adoption Service has significantly streamlined its processes for recruiting adopters. Activity has included:

- Development of a new two stage recruitment process in line with Government guidance. A key component of this service is ability to respond to initial contacts within one day

<sup>1</sup> Norfolk's statistical neighbours are: Cornwall, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Devon, Dorset, Herefordshire, Lincolnshire, Shropshire, Somerset and Suffolk.

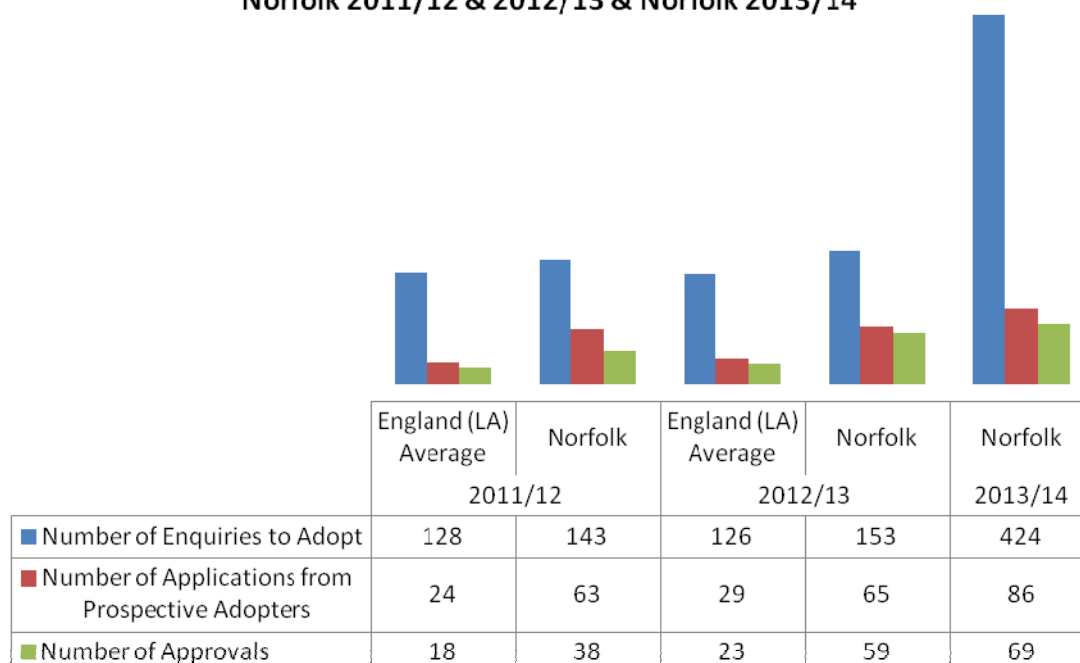
- Updating the Norfolk Adoption Service website – including ensuring that the website appears high up on search engine results.
- Introducing an on-line initial enquiry and screening form which has proven to be the most-popular medium for applicants to contact the service.

2.3.2 In spring 2013 Norfolk Adoption Service significantly increased the annual marketing budget to attract prospective adopters in Norfolk, which has lead to an increase in the number of initial enquiries by 277% in 13/14

**2.3.3** On average, Norfolk receives more enquiries and applications from prospective adopters and approves more adopters than local authorities across England as a whole.

As has already been mentioned, however, the number of children needing adoptive families continues to increase at a faster rate than the numbers of available adopters – an issue that is replicated across England. The chart below shows the numbers of enquiries to become an adopter, applications and adopter approvals for Norfolk compared with the England (local authority) average:

**Initial Enquiries, Applications & Approvals England (LAs Only) & Norfolk 2011/12 & 2012/13 & Norfolk 2013/14**



2013/14 was another record year for Norfolk with 69 approvals an increase of 10 adopter families compared with 2012/13. Over the last 3 years there has been a 53% increase in the number of adopters approved. An emerging trend seems to be that perspective adopters are contacting us earlier and after attending an open evening they are choosing to spend more time preparing to become adopters.

2.3.4 During 2013/14 a new system of approving adopters was implemented nationally and locally. Under the old system 49 out of 56 adopters (87.5%) were approved with in 8 months. From July 2013, when the new 2 stage process was implemented, 12 out of 13 adopters (92%) were approved within 6 months It is particularly heartening the new quicker system has been introduced and

performance has improved the one case out of timescales was only by a few weeks.

## 2.4 Finding adoptive families outside Norfolk

2.4.1 As highlighted earlier in this paper, while Norfolk Adoption Service is increasing the number of approved adopter's year-on-year, this is not at the rate required to provide enough adoptive families for all Norfolk children who require adoption. This places further demand on finding adoptive families from other local authorities or voluntary adoption agencies and a significant amount of the ring fenced grant funding is being used for this purpose.

2.4.2 Last year 24 children were placed with 23 families with other local authorities of voluntary agencies this compares to 17 the year before and 8 the year before that. These are the most complex children awaiting adoption in Norfolk and will have special needs or developmental uncertainty. If not adopted it is highly likely that most or all of these children would have spent their childhood in care.

As part of the government reforms the inter agency fee increased to £27,000 for local authorities, to bring in line with the fee paid to voluntary adoption agencies. This has resulted in a increase in the budget required to pay for inter-agency fees. A significant amount of the Adoption Reform Grants for 13/14 and 14/15, has and is being used for this purpose. This does give children secure and stable homes and delivers overall savings to Norfolk looked after children costs.

## 2.5 Matching Children with Adopters

2.5.1 The table below shows how long adopters wait to be matched with children after being approved as adopters:

	2012/13		2013/14
	England (LA) Average	Norfolk	Norfolk
Less than 3 Months	42%	73%	72%
3 to 6 Months	29%	21%	21%
6 to 9 Months	13%	2%	3%
9 to 12 Months	7%	0%	4%
12 – 18 Months	4%	4%	0%
18 Months or more	4%	0%	0%

Between April 2013 and March 2014, 93% of adopters approved by Norfolk Adoption Service were matched with children within six months of their date of approval (67 / 72). This compares very favourably with the England Local Authority average performance for the previous 12 months of 71% and is in line with Norfolk's performance in 2012/13 of 95%. Norfolk continues to match adopters in a timely manner.

2.5.2 The graph on the following page shows Norfolk's performance against the two key performance indicators on the Adoption Scorecard. In summary, performance is improving with the 2013/14 data showing improvement from the previous year.

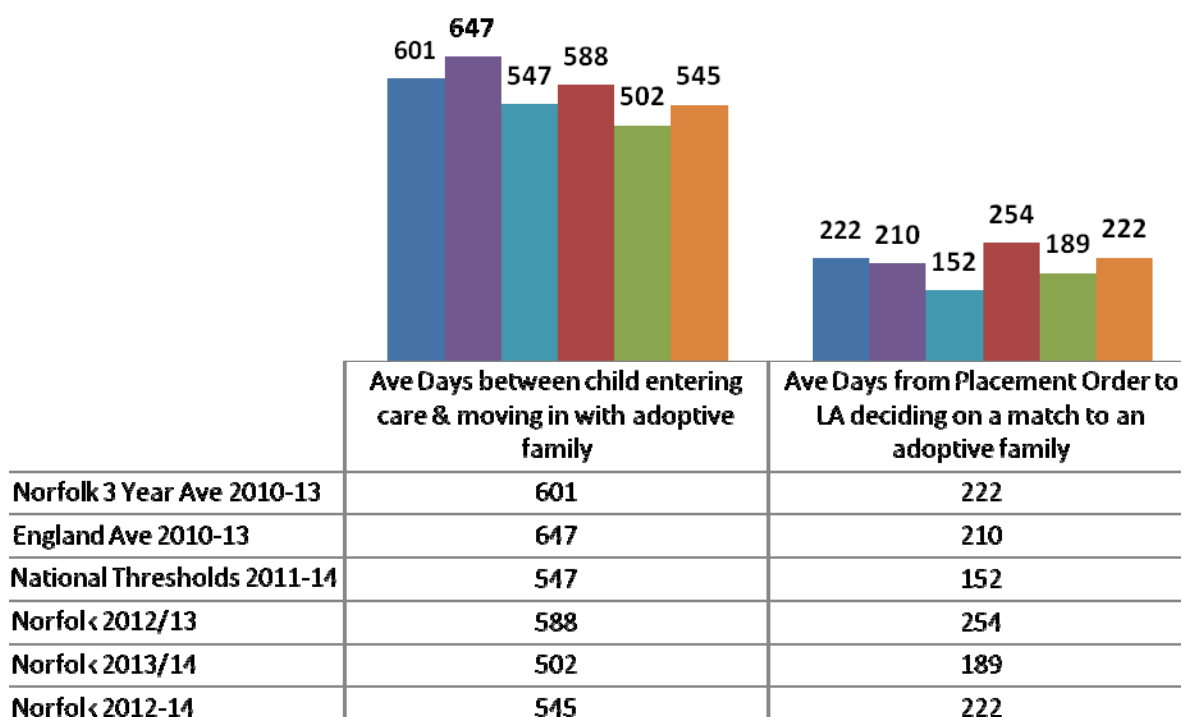
For both measures, the 2013/14 performance is better than the 3 year performance to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 (as published in the DfE Adoption Scorecard 2013).

This data has to be considered a weak area for Norfolk as the targets in place are based on a 3 year average which includes historical performance. However performance is improving with the implementation of the reforms which were introduced from July 2013 (Adoption Action Plan and new Public Law Outline) and the recent investment in social work posts in field teams.

Although yearly performance is improving the scorecard, when published, will continue to show that Norfolk is not achieving the DfE targets

These figures do come with a caveat that the average timescales could increase as Norfolk uses the grant funding made available by the DfE to find adoptive placements for those children who have waited the longest for adoption.

**Performance against Key DfE Adoption Scorecard Measures**





## 2.6 Post adoption support

- 2.6.1 The Adoption Support team works with adopted children and their families after the adoption order. All adoptive families are encouraged to subscribe to our regular newsletter, *Side by Side* and invited to our Christmas and Summer events and our programme of workshops.

In addition there is also a specialist Advice line and Consultation service twice a month for parents to meet with two social workers. If families want an on-going service from us then they are entitled to an Assessment of Need and a plan of intervention. As the majority of children have experienced developmental trauma, the intensive casework often involves therapeutic services including Therapy and Developmental Re-parenting. In 2013-14 the Adoption Service worked with 20 pre adoption support packages 59 post adoption support packages which included 28 new referrals.

- 2.6.2 Another area of adoption support provided by Norfolk Adoption Service is the Letterbox contact service where adopters and birth families can exchange messages. Between April 2013 and March 2014, over 4,000 exchanges were made.

Many queries arise from these exchanges and some have to be reviewed or have direct contacts supervised. Where required, birth parents are also given support to write their contact messages for children who have been adopted.

- 2.6.3 The Adoption Support Team provides access to information and intermediary services for adopted adults. In 2013-14, 253 cases were open. Intermediary services are also provided for birth relatives and in 2012 -13 the Adoption Support Team handled over 100 cases.

- 2.6.4 The Department for Education (DfE) has stated that the support families receive after adoption should be improved. In order to ensure we improve a project management and business process reengineering approach has been commissioned to review and improve this service using funding from the adoption grant.

## 2.7 Complaints

- 2.7.1 Between April 2013 and March 2014, Norfolk County Council received 4 complaints relating to the adoption service, all of which were resolved at an early stage. This number is above the average for local authorities in England Of 2.6, but this is to be expected due to the far higher numbers of enquiries and applications we process in Norfolk compared to the England average for local authorities. All four complaints related to single, isolated incidents, and no systemic issues were highlighted within the service.

## 2.8 Feedback from Adopters

### 2.8.1 Recruitment

Prior to redesigning the new two stage recruitment process, the adoption service undertook some research with approved adopters to understand their experience. Adopters were asked for feedback at each stage of the recruitment process and to rate their experience.

This developed the customer journey and their feedback was used to influence the new process design. We have continued to seek adopters' feedback on the new process and in early 2014 a survey monkey was sent out to adopters in the process. Their feedback, suggests that the new process is being received positively.

### 2.8.2 Adoption Support

A survey was sent to adopters to understand their views of the services they received in terms of adoption support. The key findings from the survey were then explored in more detail by a focus group of adopters, who then reviewed the current Norfolk adoption support offer. This process highlighted that the adoption support available in Norfolk needs to be explicit. This outcome is in line with the views from Westminster, as it is in agreement with the Department for Education (DfE) statement that the support families receive after adoption should be improved nationally.

Below are few of the many compliments we receive:

"Thank you for the wonderful service... we were impressed by the speed in which everything was handled and the efficiency of Rob. He provided a professional attitude at all times fully explaining each procedure."

Adopters told Panel about how impressed they were with "the quality and clarity of information provided"

From another local authority, adopters told Panel that they had received a "professional service" from their worker in contrast to their previous experience with another LA.

### 2.8.3 Adopters recently told us that "this lovely boy would not have been possible without your continued interest and support" a reflection on pre and post placement work for the child.

## 3. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications from recommending this report

## 4. Issues, risks and innovation

It is critical in performing it's duty as a corporate parent that the committee scrutinises the functioning of it's adoption service.

## 5. Background

Please see the attached Statement of Purpose (appendix one)

### Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained or want to see copies of any assessments, e.g. equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

<b>Officer Name:</b>	<b>Tel No:</b>	<b>Email address:</b>
Peter Ronan	01603 222574	<a href="mailto:peter.ronan@norfolk.gov.uk">peter.ronan@norfolk.gov.uk</a>



If you need this Agenda in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

# **Norfolk County Council Adoption Service**

**Appendix 1 – Norfolk Adoption  
Service Statement of Purpose  
2014/15**

## **Statement of Purpose 2014-15**



LOCAL AUTHORITY ADOPTION SERVICE REGULATIONS 2003

## CONSIDER Adoption



### Foreword from the Interim Children's Services Director, – Sheila Lock

#### Welcome

Adoption is of critical importance to Norfolk County Council. We have implemented the Government's Action Plan for Adoption. We have completely redesigned all our processes in conjunction with existing adopters and would always guarantee a warm welcome to prospective adopters. If you can demonstrate that you could meet the needs of a child or young person who is in the care of the Local Authority awaiting adoption, then we will consider your application.

Some of the children we need to place in families will have suffered trauma, grief and loss. Some will have experienced or witnessed abuse or lived in chaotic environments, which may have left them feeling vulnerable and unsafe. We are looking for prospective adopters who can provide children with a safe and stable home for them to grow and develop. You will need to help them feel comfortable in your home and their surroundings.

It's important to remember that we are not simply looking for people who have had straightforward lives. We will consider your family history sympathetically. Coming through and learning from difficulties or losses can be helpful experiences for adopting a child.

We welcome applications from adults over 21 years of age, from all walks of life and all ethnic backgrounds and religions. It doesn't matter if you are a home owner, tenant, or on housing benefit, employed or not employed. You need to have a genuine commitment to care for a child and lots of energy, understanding and patience. You need to have a spare bedroom in your home and sufficient time and space in your family to adopt a child.

Once a child has joined your family you will not be on your own. We can provide a range of adoption support services throughout childhood.

Thank you for taking the time to find out more about adopting in Norfolk.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Lock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

## CONSIDER Adoption

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### The Norfolk Children's Services Vision:

**'We believe that all children and young people have the right to be healthy, happy and safe; to be loved, valued and respected; and to have high aspirations for their future'**

Norfolk's Adoption Service was rated by OfSTED as 'Outstanding' in every category of their most-recent inspection of the service in August 2010

## CONSIDER Adoption

### The aims and objectives of Norfolk County Council Adoption Service are:

- ✓ Whatever their cultural background or disability, to identify and prepare children who need, and can benefit from, a permanent and legal attachment to an adoptive family.
- ✓ To implement effective strategies for the recruitment of sufficient adopters able to meet the needs of children waiting for adoption.
- ✓ To aspire to achieving a successful outcome for each child placed with a new family, minimising the number of placement disruptions.
- ✓ To provide a comprehensive adoption support service to adopted children and their families and also to birth families.
- ✓ To provide intermediary services to adopted adults and to birth families.
- ✓ To maintain high standards of practice within the adoption service by, exceeding the National Adoption Minimum Standards and the challenges of timeliness.
- ✓ To promote opportunities for professional development of adoption workers, both social care and administrative staff, to increase their knowledge of good practice and personal development and to strive constantly for service improvement.
- ✓ Working to meet the challenges of the Adoption Scorecard.



## CONSIDER Adoption

### Last year we:

- ✓ Completed 69 assessments of prospective adopters – our highest ever
- ✓ Matched 109 local children with adoptive families – again our highest number ever
- ✓ Achieved adoption orders for 85 children
- ✓ Found families for 10 children with complex needs at Adoption Activity Days
- ✓ Continued to run recruitment campaigns at intervals throughout the year using local media. The number of enquiries about adoption rose last year to 424
- ✓ Held an increased number of Information Meetings at monthly intervals for people interested in adoption which have been extremely well attended
- ✓ The new process for assessing adopters introduced in July 2013 is now embedded in our practice and working well Feedback from adopters via online survey was positive.
- ✓ Set up a project to look at the introduction of Concurrency and Foster to Adopt in Norfolk
- ✓ Changed the training we provide for adopters to fit better with the new process, and provided this more frequently at monthly intervals to reduce delay for adopters
- ✓ Completed assessments of applicants within 4 months of commencing their assessment.
- ✓ Proactively matched potential adopters to children at the earliest opportunity
- ✓ Continued to provide high quality adoptive placements for children with as little delay as possible
- ✓ Continuously reviewed our business processes to ensure matches & adoptions are achieved in a timely manner
- ✓ Provided bespoke therapeutic support to children with complex needs
- ✓ 59 families were in receipt of post-adoption support packages
- ✓ 18 families were provided with pre-adoption support out of County financed by Norfolk
- ✓ 253 Adult adoptees received Access to Birth records and Intermediary services

### This year we will:

- ✓ Plan and deliver training about adoption for children's social workers
- ✓ Continue to attend and promote regular activity and profiling events for Norfolk children awaiting adoption including the new resource Adoption Link.
- ✓ Develop and implement a training programme for families at the point of placement.
- ✓ Review the support offered to adoptive families via a business process analysis including the preparation and implementation of personal budgets.
- ✓ Launch a group for adopted children
- ✓ Undertake a cost-benefit analysis of inter-agency placements
- ✓ Train adoption workers in Care Assess to understand tracking data and performance information
- ✓ Develop awareness amongst professional partners of concurrency and foster to adopt as placement options in order to ensure that children likely to benefit are identified at the earliest possible stage
- ✓ Recruit a small pool of adopters willing to offer concurrency of foster to adopt
- ✓ Review our recruitment strategy focussing on priority groups



## CONSIDER Adoption

### Prospective Adopters - Who are we looking for?

All sorts of people can make successful adoptive parents. Norfolk adoption service welcomes enquiries from people of any ethnic background, age, religion or sexual orientation and from people with disabilities. Applicants may be single, married or living with a partner and may or may not already have children in their family.

The important thing is that adopters have the potential to meet the needs of the children who are waiting for secure and trusting families.



### What skills do adopters need?

- ✓ As can be seen from the flowchart which follows, Norfolk adoption service prepares and trains prospective adopters for the task of looking after, and claiming, children born to another family. The process helps applicants think about their strengths and skills and any areas where they may need more information or experience.
- ✓ Adoptive applicants don't have to be perfect. Nobody is. Often people who have had difficulties in their lives and have worked through them are stronger as a result.

By the time applicants are ready to adopt, we trust that they will be able to:

- ✓ *Provide a safe, stable, loving family life*
- ✓ *Have plenty of time and energy to spare*
- ✓ *'Stand in the shoes' of a child and understand how he or she may be feeling*
- ✓ *Help children feel good about themselves*
- ✓ *Encourage a child's education, hobbies and interests*
- ✓ *Keep a child safe and promote a healthy lifestyle*
- ✓ *Help a child feel a positive sense of who they are and where they have come from*
- ✓ *Tell their child about their background and sometimes keep in contact with important birth family members*
- ✓ *Be firm sometimes but also be able to negotiate and compromise*
- ✓ *Cope with the unexpected*
- ✓ *Stay calm and positive when things are not going according to plan*
- ✓ *Ask for help if they need it.*

## CONSIDER Adoption

### **The procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective adopters**

The Adoption Service aims to recruit a wide range of families to meet the differing needs of children requiring adoptive homes. The agency will welcome all enquiries. Anyone who uses the adoption service will be treated with respect and honesty.

The agency's strategy for recruiting prospective adopters is to prioritise applicants to reflect the needs of looked after children waiting for adoption at any one time.

Publicity and recruitment materials and leaflets have been produced to support good communication with prospective adopters and more accurately represent the profiles of children waiting to be adopted.

Details of the process for recruiting, assessing, preparing, approving and supporting prospective adopters are set out in the Adoption Service's procedures, available on request to the public, professionals and other agencies.

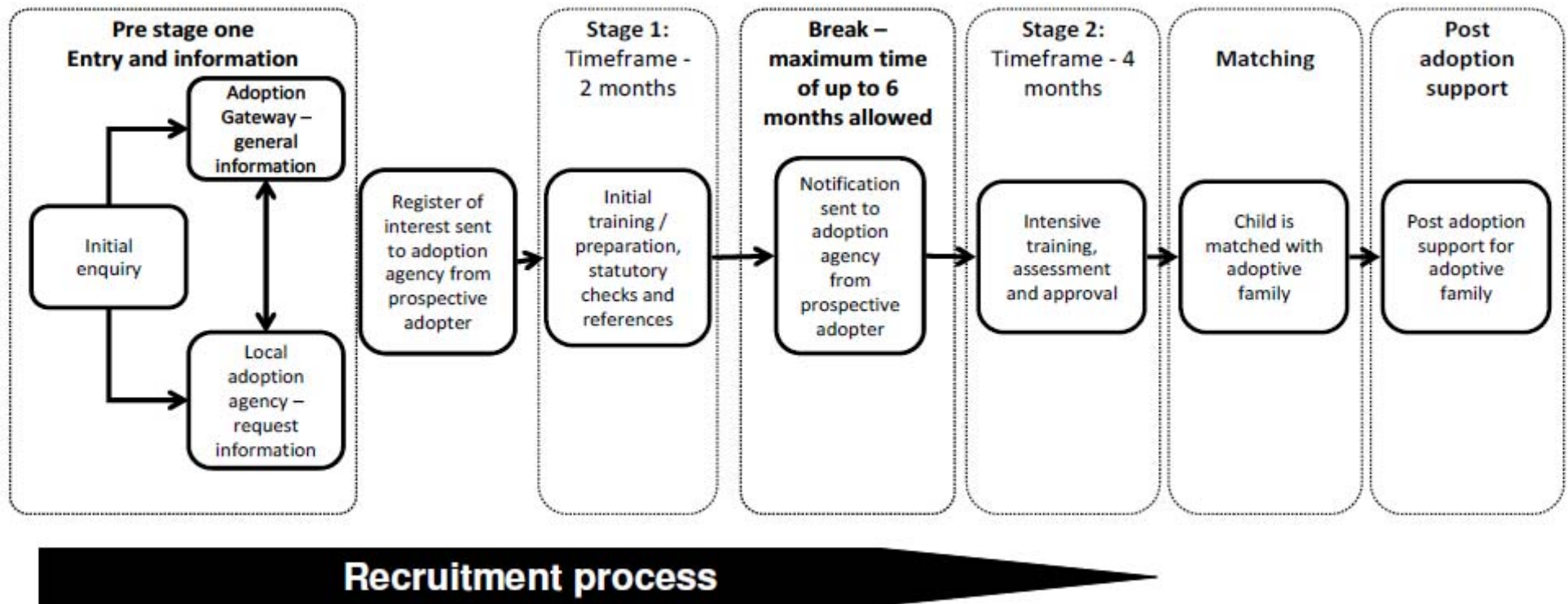
We aim to work in partnership and will seek your views about the assessment process and our relationship with you at regular intervals.



## CONSIDER Adoption

Flowchart of steps in recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective adopters

### The Adoption process





## CONSIDER Adoption

### Services provided by Norfolk Adoption Service

The Adoption Service in Norfolk consists of three social work teams which deliver the following:

- The recruitment, training and assessment of prospective adopters, including inter-country and in-family applicants
- The preparation of children when required for an adoptive placement
- Placement of children with approved prospective adopters
- Counselling for birth families relinquishing a child for adoption
- Consultation to child care social work teams in respect of adoption issues
- Services to other professionals including facilitation of the independent Adoption and Permanence Panel and completion of reports for Courts; participation in the Eastern Region Adoption Consortium
- Provide a range of helpful support to adoptive families
- An assessment of need post adoption and planned services in consultation with the family
- A Letterbox contact arrangement for exchange of information between adoptive and birth families
- Facilitation of any arrangements for direct contact between adoptive and birth families as appropriate for the child
- Access to birth records and information for Adopted Adults
- Intermediary services for birth families and Adopted Adults
- Therapeutic provision for children where required pre and post adoptive placement.



## CONSIDER Adoption

### Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Norfolk's Adoption Service receives regular internal and external scrutiny to ensure that services are robust and of good quality.

#### Internal monitoring is achieved by:

- ✓ Collection and scrutiny of data, recording outcomes for children and adopters.
- ✓ Tracking systems to measure the timescales involved for providing services.
- ✓ Quarterly performance board which reviews outcomes to allow performance to be checked against key performance indicators and national standards
- ✓ The three adoption teams meet regularly and take part in practice development together
- ✓ Gathering of service user feedback at different stages of the adoption process
- ✓ Statutory reviews and planning meetings provide a structure for the agency to record progress in individual cases
- ✓ Staff performance is routinely monitored during regular supervision sessions and annual appraisals with line managers
- ✓ Elected Members scrutinise the Agency's output through attendance at adoption panels and the Agency's Annual Reports and the review of the Statement of Purpose & Function.
- ✓ Auditing of case files.



#### We also maintain our quality by:

- ✓ The independent Adoption & Permanence Panels which closely examine the quality of cases referred to Panel, with annual review between the Panel Chair and agency managers and decision-maker
- ✓ Input from specialist external agency staff (e.g. Family Futures) who provide clinical supervision of some aspects of practice and training opportunities
- ✓ Collective scrutiny of regional practice and service delivery through membership of the Eastern Counties Adoption Consortium which includes several other local authority and voluntary adoption agencies
- ✓ Comprehensive, regular inspection by OFSTED which measures the agency's performance against the adoption national minimum standards and regulations.

## CONSIDER Adoption

### How to Make a Compliment, Complaint or Challenge a Decision

While Norfolk's Adoption Service endeavours to get things right first time, every time, there may be occasions where service users wish to make a complaint. This section sets out the procedures in place, should this situation arise.

#### The complaints procedure

Norfolk County Council has a designated Compliments & Complaints Team which coordinates the investigation of representations made by prospective and approved adopters. All compliments and complaints are logged by the team.

Children, young people or their representative can make a compliment or complaint by using the local rate number 0344 800 2020 or accessing the Norfolk County Council website [www.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk)

The key features of this complaints procedure are:

- ✓ Most issues can be resolved informally by the manager responsible for the service within 10 working days.
- ✓ If the case is not resolved, an independent person completes an investigation within a further 25 working days.
- ✓ If the issue remains contentious, the Chief Executive's Department commissions another investigation to make recommendations to be considered by a Panel of three independent people.

Children and young people wishing to make a compliment or complaint must either be receiving or seeking a service from Norfolk County Council Children's Services.

Any individual or group, other than children and young people, receiving or seeking a service from Norfolk County Council, who wish to make a complaint, can do so by writing to:

Compliments and Complaints Manager, FREEPOST IH 2076  
Norwich NR1 2BR or at [www.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk)

#### Challenges to decisions regarding suitability to adopt

If prospective adoptive enquirers are assessed as unsuitable as adopters before having a formal application accepted, they can seek to have the decision reviewed by a Team Manager.

If still negative, the enquirer(s) can ask for the decision to be referred to the Operational Manager (Adoption, Fostering & Residential Care) for final adjudication. If this reviewing officer upholds the original decision, there is no further ground for appeal.

If a formal application to adopt is accepted by the adoption agency, and doubts regarding suitability subsequently arise, the applicants are able to insist that their assessment as adopters is presented to the Adoption & Permanence Panel.

If the Panel recommends that the applicants are unsuitable as adopters, the case can be referred to an independent Panel through the Independent Review Mechanism.

## CONSIDER Adoption



Any serious concerns regarding the agency's practice can be referred to the OfSTED inspectorate. The main office for the OFSTED adoption inspectorate service is:

OFSTED National Business Unit  
Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Anne's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA  
Tel: 0300 123 1231  
e-mail address: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)



If a child has any serious concerns relating to the adoption agency, they can contact the Children's Commissioner themselves.

The details are:

Children's Commissioner  
Tel: 0800 5280731 (free phone)  
e-mail: [rights4me.org](mailto:rights4me.org)  
website: [www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org)

## CONSIDER Adoption

### Adoption Service Management Arrangements

The OfSTED named, responsible manager and adoption support services advisor is the Operational Manager (Adoption, Fostering & Residential Care).

### Pen picture of Peter Ronan – Adoption, Fostering and Residential Care Operations Manager

- History Honours Degree (University of East Anglia, 1984)
- Diploma in Social Worker (CETSW No 41175, 1993)
- Certificate in Management (NEBS NC970000221711051098, 1998)
- HCPC Council Registered Social Worker (Registration Number SW31989. Renewal Date 13/11/2014)
- Enhanced DBS (formerly CRB) issued 16 March 2013 (001398616817)

Peter has worked for Norfolk County Council since 1988 beginning in a residential children's home. Peter developed a key worker system whilst studying for his diploma in social work. Post qualifying, Peter developed an interest in working with families to achieve change. He Developed and led the Children Support Team which developed flexible packages of support to assist families to change drawing particularly from solution focused and attachment theory.

During this period Peter also chaired Foster Panels (1997 – 2000) and took on management responsibility for home care. Peter became the responsible individual for Children's Services Homecare, a service that has been constantly rated as 'outstanding'(3 teams) and 'good' (one team).

In 2006 Peter became a key member of Norfolk Children's Safeguarding Board, acting as Chair of the Southern Local Safeguarding Group and leading and managing 5 child protection teams across the Southern area.

Peter was also the operational lead for the re-write of Child Protection Procedures following Working Together 2010.

Peter brings a strong understanding of the families Looked After Children came from, detailed working knowledge of child protection and court process in adoption, fostering and residential care.

Since coming into his current post in June 2011, Peter has put continuous improvement at the heart of all three services he manages, and there are active improvement plans for each of the three services in place



## CONSIDER Adoption

**The Adoption Recruitment Team** takes a lead role in recruiting, assessing, training and approving prospective adopters. Other functions include providing the in-family (step-parent) assessment and court service and inter-country adoption.

**The Adoption Children's Team** specialises in family finding for children with complex needs, on a regional and national basis. A full matching, support and court reporting service is provided. These children can require therapeutic input to prepare them for placement and ongoing support

**The Adoption Support Team** provides post-adoption support services after an assessment of need. Such services can include casework, provision of therapy, support groups and links with trained 'buddies'. Counselling adopted adults regarding their personal histories, acting as intermediaries for birth relatives seeking contact with their adopted relations and delivering the 'letterbox' exchange of information between adopters and birth family members are vital components of the wider adoption support service.

Norfolk also has service level agreements with Family Futures and Barnardos for the provision of support services for adopted adults, birth family members as well as adoptive families.

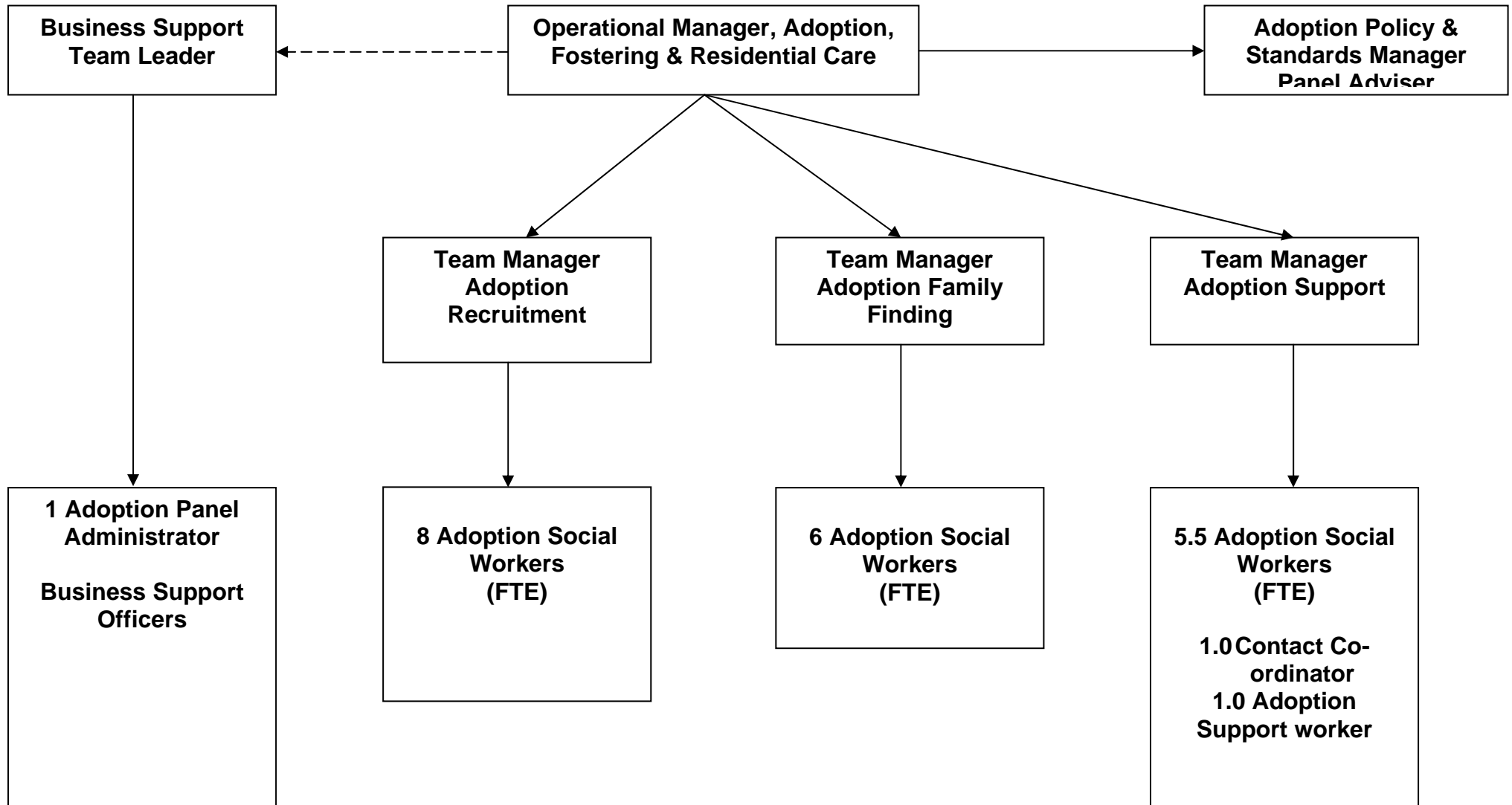
**The Adoption Panel**, commissioned by the adoption agency, meets once a week to make independent recommendations on the suitability of applicants as adopters and the quality of matches between families and children. The independent chair is a skilled, experienced adoption consultant. The Panel Advisor role is filled by the Policy & Standards Manager who is also an experienced child care manager.

The Norfolk County Council Adoption Agency is part of the regional East Anglian Consortium of Adoption Agencies consisting of three neighbouring local authorities and three voluntary adoption agencies. Children who cannot be placed within their 'home' area would be referred to the consortium as an identified priority.



## CONSIDER Adoption

**Diagram 1: The Structure of the Adoption & Family Finding Unit  
(from 1 April 2013)**



## CONSIDER Adoption

### Appendix One – Adoption Focussed Staff Employed by Norfolk Adoption Service

POSITION	QUALIFICATIONS	TOTAL SERVICE IN CHILD CARE	EXPERIENCE IN ADOPTION
Social Worker	Diploma of Higher Education in Social Work Studies, Diploma in Social Work, BA (Hons) in Specialist Practice (Children + Families)	14.5 years	2 years
Team Manager, Children's Team	MA DipSW Child Care Award	20 years	11 years
Social Worker	DipSw ; MA in Social Work , PQ Child Care Award BA (Hons)	17 years	13 years
Senior Social Worker	Diploma In Social Work Diploma in Higher Education Degree in Specialist Practice Working with Children and Families Theraplay® Practitioner Level 1 and 2	15 years	9 years
Social Worker	BSc Psychosocial Studies (Hons) MA/DipSW Social worker PQ1. Theraplay Practitioner	15years	12 years
Senior social worker	BA Applied Social Studies; CQSW and PQSW	23 years	13 years
Senior Social Worker	CQSW	9 years	6 years

### CONSIDER Adoption

	MPhil Diploma in Therapeutic & Educational Application of The Arts		
Agency Panel Advisor	BA Hons Eng Lit DipSW and MA PQ award	16yrs	16 years
Adoption Support worker	NNEB	26 years	9 years
Team Manager AST	BA (Hons) Philosophy, MA/DipSw, BA Specialist Practice, Theraplay practitioner 1; Cert. in Counselling	15 years	9 years
Social Worker	BSc Psychosocial Sciences MA in Social Work	8 years	2 years
Social Worker	Diploma in Social Work Post Grad Diploma in Play Therapy Introduction to Theraplay Introduction to Filial Therapy	18 years	11 years
Social Worker	BA Hons in social work and welfare studies. Masters degree in social work.	8 years	3.5 years
Social Worker	MSc in Social Work	12 years	4 .5 years
Senior Social worker	B.A Hons M.A. CQSW DASS	24 years	14 years
Senior social worker	NNEB CQSW	23 years	12 years

### CONSIDER Adoption

Adoption Support Worker	BA (Hons) Social Studies NVQ 3 Group and Foster Care Associate Theraplay Therapist	18 years	11 years
Social worker	Diploma in Social Work. Foundation in Art Therapy.	18 years	5 years
Social worker	BSC Psychology BA Hons in Social Work	5 years	2 years
Senior Social Worker	DipSW, DipHE, Practice Teaching Award	24 years	7 years
Senior social worker,	MA DipSW DDP1 & 2; NPP 1 & 2; Theraplay 1 Dissociation(RM)	15 years	7 Years
Social Worker	BA (Hons) Psychology MA Social Work	14 years	7 years
Social Worker	BA (Hons) Communication Studies MA in Social Work	9 years.	2 years
Social worker	Dip/S.W. Dip/H.E.	26 years	2 years.
Social Worker	University degree in social work/social pedagogy. Teachers degree Cert. in foundation course in systemic therapy. Cert. in foundation course music therapeutic methods and RA Forest school practitioner level 3	11 years	1.5 years
Social worker	Diploma in Social work/HE PQ in social work	5 years	5 years

### CONSIDER Adoption

	BA Specialist practise module- practice education Cert. in counselling skills		
Social Worker	BA Hons in social work	14 years	1 year
Team Manager, Recruitment Team	DipSW; MA Social Worker Child care Award PQ in Advanced practice	20 years	12 years
Social worker	BSc Psychosocial Science MA Social Worker	2.5 years	9 months
Social Worker	BSc (Hons)Psychology MA Social Work ABE; ASI	6 years	1 year

# Children's Services Committee

Item No 8

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Statement of Purpose of Norfolk's Fostering Services Annual Review</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>16 September 2014</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Sheila Lock</b>
<b>Strategic impact</b> <p>Every fostering service has a statutory requirement to publish, and regularly update, a document which describes the ethos and goals of the fostering service, its management and oversight arrangements and the experience of its staff.</p> <p>This <b>Statement of Purpose</b> (appendix 1) is a public document, approved by the Children's Services Committee before being made available to foster families, fostered children, their birth parents and guardians, and staff working in the field of fostering. It is also inspected by OFSTED (Office of Standards in Education).</p> <p>The committee paper will focus on a performance review of Norfolk Fostering Service.</p>	

## Executive summary

<p>The key strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recruitment continues at target and the average number of in house placements has increased bucking an eight year decline</li><li>• Continued improvement year-on-year in Annual Reviews, Unannounced Visits and DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service – the replacement for Criminal Records Bureau) checks completed on time</li><li>• Increased the number of approved foster places</li><li>• The proportion of Norfolk Foster Carers who have completed the Children's Workforce Development Council training – "Certificate in Training, Support and development Standards for Foster Care" remains very high</li></ul> <p>The key areas of challenge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Payments to Norfolk Foster Carers, at entry level, are below the market average</li><li>• Although improvement has been made to September 2013, not all foster carers' annual reviews are conducted within timescales.</li></ul> <p><b>Recommendations:</b> <b>To recommend the approval of the statement of purpose and provide scrutiny and challenge to the fostering service</b></p>
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## 1. Proposal (or options)

Members are asked to scrutinise the information within the report and provide challenge to the service to ensure continued improved outcomes for Norfolk children and families.

Members are asked to recommend approval to full Council of the Statement of Purpose and Functions for the Local Authority Fostering Service to comply with the Care Standards Act 2000.

## 2. Evidence

### 2.1 What is Foster Care?

Fostering is a way of providing a family life for children who cannot live with their own parents.

It is often used to provide temporary care while parents get help sorting out problems or to help children or young people through a difficult period in their lives.

Often children will return home once the problems that caused them to come into foster care have been resolved and it is clear that their parents are able to look after them safely.

Others may stay in long-term foster care, some may be adopted, and others will move on to live independently.

### 2.2 What is the difference between adoption and fostering?

Fostering is different from adoption because when a child is in foster care, the child's parents or the local authority still have legal responsibility for them. But when a child is adopted, all legal responsibility for the child passes to the new family, as though the child had been born into that family, and the local authority and the birth parents no longer have formal responsibility for the child.

When there is no possibility for a child to return home to their parents, attempts will be made to see if anyone else in the family can care for them. If this is not possible, a family must be found who can provide "permanence" for the child, to allow them to feel as secure as possible. This either happens through long term fostering or adoption. Security stability and permanence are the key factors that improve a child's outcomes and attainment.

If a foster carer decides that they want to adopt a child, they can ask to be assessed as a possible adopter for that child. Last year 12 foster carers became adopters for individual children.

### 2.3 Norfolk Fostering Service recruits, assesses, approves and supports the following types of foster carers:

- Permanent long term foster care
- Short term foster care, including pre-adoption and pre-permanence
- Emergency foster care
- Friends and Family foster care
- Parent and child foster placements
- PACE foster care (established following the service's Ofsted inspection of November 2011 as PACE – Police and Criminal Evidence Act beds to prevent young people staying overnight in custody suites)
- Short break foster care

### 2.4 The service is made up of the following teams:

- Three Fostering Support Teams who supervise and support foster carers (this includes on-going training needs)



- A Fostering Recruitment Team with responsibility for assessing and training prospective foster carers
- County Children with Disabilities Service – which runs two resource centres (short break residential units) and provides support to disabled children and young people to access the most appropriate services

## 2.5 Lower-cost placements for Norfolk:

In order to help Norfolk County Council achieve its target of reducing the average annual placement cost per looked-after child to £42,000 by 2017, the proportion of looked-after children placed with Norfolk Fostering Service carers will need to increase significantly from the current position. Benchmarking activity conducted by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA) clearly shows that the local authorities with the highest proportion of looked-after children placed with local authority foster carers have, as a general rule, the lowest average placement costs.

- In-house foster care is the best-value placement type available to Norfolk County Council.

Norfolk Fostering Service works closely with Norfolk Residential Service to scope the viability of closer partnership working to move children and young people, for whom it is appropriate, from residential placement into foster care.

The LAC reduction plan and the service will focus on robust planning for:

- Children on care orders or interim care orders who remain placed with their parents
- Children who are currently having regular contact with family
- Children in foster placements where migration to SGO or adoption has been suggested
- Children who have voiced a strong desire to return to their family either verbally or through their behaviour e.g. persistently returning to the family home
- Out of County Placements

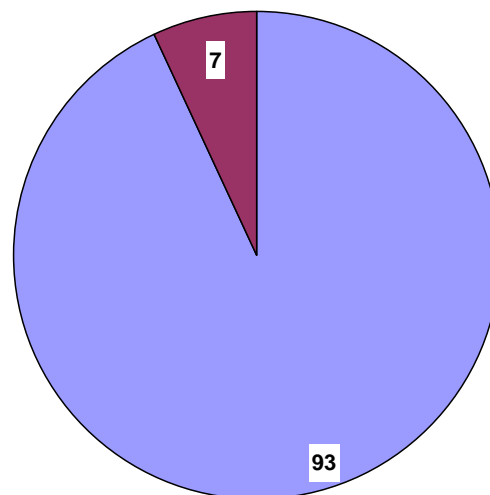
## 2.6 This report focuses on the following areas of performance:

- Placing children and young people in Norfolk foster carer homes
- Recruiting and retaining foster carers
- Allegations of Misconduct against Foster Carers and Child Protection Enquiries
- Children/young people going missing from foster carer households and restraint of children/young people
- Supervision of, and support for, foster carers
- The Value for Money of Norfolk Fostering Service
- Complaints
- Service-User Engagement

## 2.7 Numbers of children in Foster Care, Foster Carers, number of Carer Households and Placement Stability

- 2.7.1 At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, 432, 406 children and young people were placed in mainstream and friends and family foster homes provided by Norfolk Fostering Service, 26 more than the same time in 2013, with a further 26 placed in short breaks (respite) households.
- 2.7.2 42 young people in Norfolk Fostering Service placements had their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday during the twelve months to March 2013. Of these, 25 remained in their foster placement after their birthday, supported by Norfolk County Council and a further 21 young adults aged 19 to 21 remain living in their previous foster home. Last year 40% of children who reached 18 stayed put, this year this has risen to 60%.
- 2.7.3 Norfolk Fostering service managed 362 foster carer households at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, approved for 620 places for looked-after children, with a further 33 households available for short breaks (respite) placements.
- 2.7.4 Norfolk Fostering Service supported 668 approved carers across Norfolk at the end of March 2013, including 550 mainstream carers, 64 friends and family (kinship) carers and 54 short breaks carers.
- 2.7.5 Between April 2013 and March 2014, Norfolk Children's Service placed 100 sibling groups who were assessed to be placed together in the same placement. The chart below shows the proportion of sibling groups placed together, where this was deemed in their best interests:

**Sibling Groups Successfully Placed Together**



■ Assessed to be together - Placed Together ■ Assessed to be together - Apart

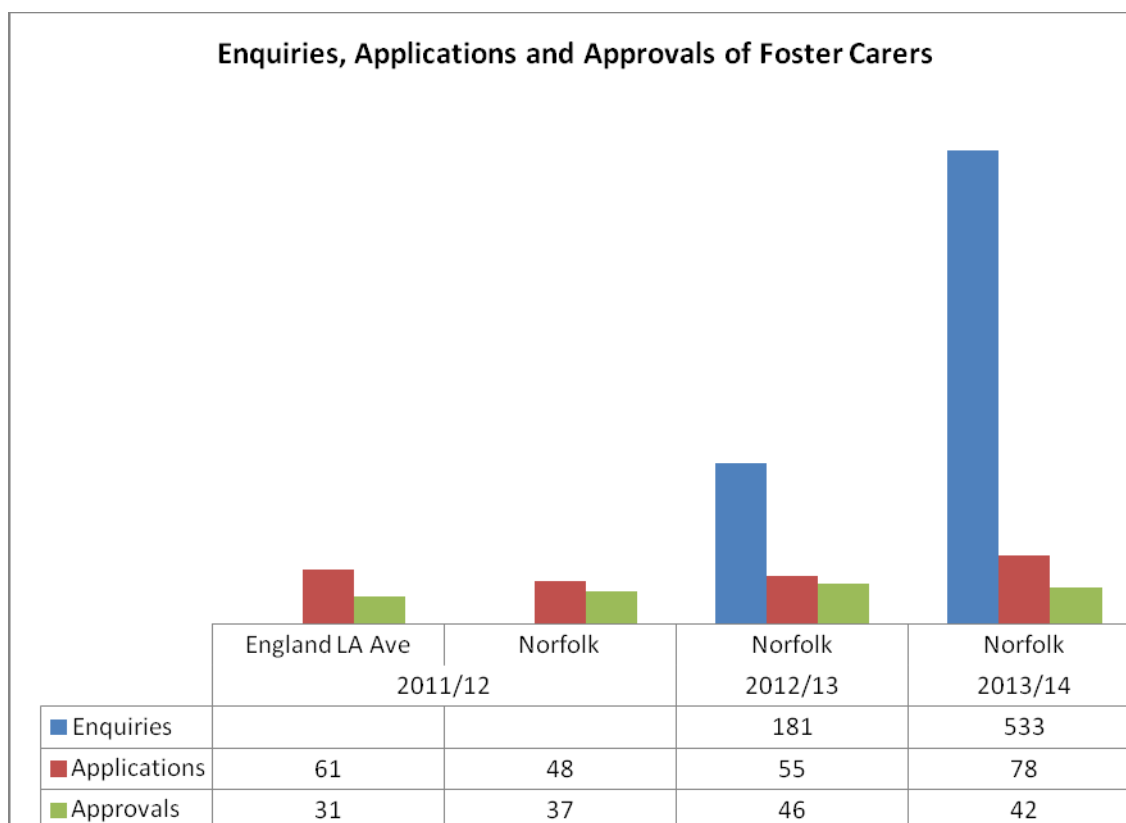
As can be seen from the chart, the overwhelming majority of sibling groups assessed to be placed together were accommodated as a group. In total, 222 siblings were placed together in foster carer households, while 15 were placed apart.

- 2.7.6 12 Foster Carer placements were subject of unplanned endings in 2013/14, compared with an average of 28.5 for local authorities in England 2012/13. When these figures are viewed as a rate per 100 children placed with foster

carers, Norfolk's rate of 1.6 is considerably better than the local authority average for England of 5.4 2012/13 national figures for this year are not available till November.

## 2.8 Recruitment & Retention of Foster Carers

2.8.1 The following chart shows applications and approvals of foster carers for England and Norfolk between April 2011 to March 2012, and enquiries applications and approvals of foster carers for Norfolk for April 2012 to March 2013 and April 2013 to March 2014:

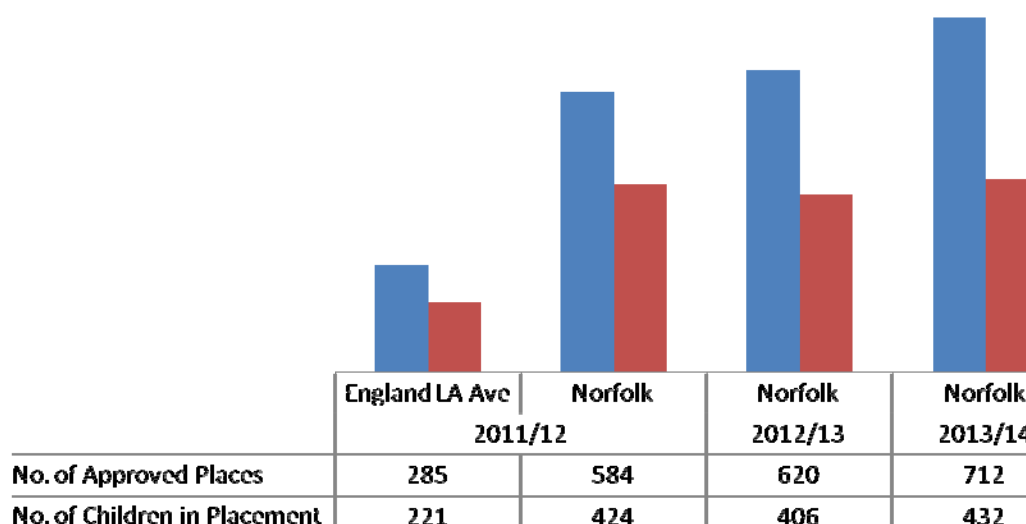


[Source Ofsted Data Collection 2011/12, 2012/13 & 2013/14]

Norfolk Fostering Service recruited 42 new foster care households between April 2013 and March 2014, 4 fewer than in the previous 12 months. This is higher than the English local authority average of 28 for 2012/13. It should be noted that there was a significant increase in the number of friends and families temporary approvals, which resulted in a significant increase in work load in the fostering recruitment team. Last year there were 63 temporary approvals.

2.8.2 72 foster care households left the fostering register between April 2013 and March 2014. Of these, 46 were temporarily approved friends and family foster care households, so only 24 panel-approved foster care households left the register - a net gain of 16 fostering households. Reasons for leaving included retirement, the end of a long-term placement, concerns regarding foster carers, changes in family circumstances, the end of long-term placements when a young person reaches the age of 18.

## Approved MainstreamFostering Places & Children in Placement



On average Norfolk fostering service has 40 vacancies it can match to at one time. Foster carers can be on hold for a variety of reasons including family circumstance, ill health, the needs of a child already placed or rarely as a result of concerns of allegations.

## 2.9 Concerns and Allegations against Carers and Child Protection Enquiries

2.9.1 There were 39 referrals and discussions with the Local Authority Designated Officer relating to Norfolk foster carers between April 2013 and March 2014. From these, 15 Section 47 (child protection) enquiries were made. Whilst the number of referrals and discussions was higher then last year the number of section 47 enquiries was identical.

2.9.2 Our foster carers are provided with individual membership of the Fostering Network – this provides access to a comprehensive website which includes library items on fostering, help lines, legal and medical advice, stress counselling and a new on-line community. It also provides the support of a solicitor and a worker who provides advice, mediation and advocacy for foster carers. The Fostering Network is well used by our carers.

## 2.10 Incidents of Restraint and Children Going Missing from Care

2.10.1 There were five incidents of restraint on children by Norfolk foster carers between April 2013 and March 2014. These incidents related to four children and were performed by four different carers. This compares against the average for local authorities in England for 2012/13 of 2 incidents of restraint. Considering Norfolk is a large fostering agency, these returns would be within the norm.

2.10.2 Five children/young people went missing from a Norfolk foster home in 2013/14 on 18 separate occasions. The average for English local authorities is 10 children going missing on 28 separate occasions.

## 2.11 Support for, and Supervision of, Foster Carers

- 2.11.1 Norfolk Fostering Service Managers complete quarterly audits, which have shown that foster carers regularly receive supervision and the quality of supervision ensures that carers are continually supported, kept informed of the latest developments and are able to share their concerns and ask questions.
- 2.11.2 All Norfolk Fostering Service carers receive regular newsletters and updates and communications from the service including letters from the interim director. A recent consultation event was attended by 70 foster carers with briefing by the interim director regarding the restructure and a presentation on the work to develop a fostering advisory partnership.
- 2.11.3 Every year, foster carers should be reviewed by their supervising social worker to ensure their continued appropriateness for the fostering task (an Annual Review). As at the end of March 2014, 343 (87%) fostering households had an up-to-date annual review. The number of fostering households who have not had an annual review within the last 12 months has fallen over the past year, from around 60 in April 2013, to 43 at the end of July 2014. The table below shows a breakdown of the length of time reviews are overdue.

<b>Foster Carers Overdue an Annual Review (as at 31/07/2013)</b>		
Time Overdue	No. of Carers Households	No. of Children Placed
< 1 Month	9	5
> 1 Month, < 3 Months	25	20
> 3 Months, < 6 Months	10	8
> 6 Months, < 12 Months	3	2
> 12 Months	1	0
Total	48	35

- 2.11.4 Norfolk Fostering Service should complete one unannounced visit to each fostering household per year. As at 31 July 2014, 381 carer households (97%) had had an unannounced visit within timescales, leaving 10 carer households out of timescale. Of these 10, the breakdown by the length of time overdue is shown below:

<b>Foster Carers Overdue an Unannounced Visit</b>		
Time Overdue	No. of Carer Households	No. of Children Placed
< 1 Month	5	3
> 1 Month, < 3 Months	1	0
> 3 Months, < 6 Months	2	0
> 6 Months, < 12 Months	0	0
> 12 Months	2	0
Total	10	3

The table above shows that there are no children in placements where the unannounced visit is more than one month overdue.

- 2.11.5 Foster Carers are required to have up-to-date DBS (Disclosure and Barring service that replaced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)) checks. As at 31 July 2014, 99% of all Norfolk Fostering Service carers had current DBS / CRB checks in place. Of the 9 who didn't have the check in place, 3 were on-hold and had no children placed and 6 were less than 2 months (4 of these less than 2 weeks) overdue with the application in progress. However, that there are any more than a couple of weeks overdue (to allow for paperwork etc. to be returned) is unacceptable, and managers and workers will ensure all paperwork is completed and records updated immediately.

Foster carers are also required to undergo medical checks from their GP to ensure their physical fitness to foster. At present 98% of carers have an up-to-date medical check recorded. Of the 11 carers (8 households) where the medical check is out-of-date, 1 the GP has refused to comply and we are following this up, 2 the carers are refusing to comply and we are following this up, 5 are less than 2 months out of timescales and we are awaiting a response from the GP surgery, while the remaining 3 are where the foster carer is suspended with no children in placement.

In order for a GP to provide the necessary details, the foster carer must send the GP written, signed consent for their personal data to be shared. Supervising social workers are reminding carers to send their written consent to their GP to allow records to be updated in a more timely manner.

- 2.11.6 Norfolk Fostering Service has a duty desk, which provides 24 hour telephone cover, staffed by experienced social workers from the service outside of normal office hours, and by specialist carer support workers during office hours. This means that if a carer is unable to reach their allocated social worker, there is ALWAYS a person to contact and help with any problems they might be facing.
- 2.11.7 Following a meeting with Norfolk Foster Carer Association and three Norfolk MPs, the Interim Director of Children's Services is commissioning an independent review to examine both individual cases and themes. This review was shared with Norfolk MPs in February 2014. The report described the service as improving and it's recommendations have been implemented.

## 2.12 Foster Carer Training

- 2.12.1 Foster carers are encouraged to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council's (CWDC) certificate in 'Training, Support and development Standards for Foster Care'. Foster carers are meant to complete this training within 12 or 18 months of their approval. Currently (31 July 2014) 6 fostering households have not completed in their relevant timescale or 98.5% of carer household have completed or are on course to complete within time scales.
- 2.12.2 Norfolk Fostering Service provides a wide range of training opportunities for foster carers. In addition to the mandatory courses of safeguarding and emergency aid, a variety of long and short courses are available both face-to-face and on-line via e-learning technology. Additional training is provided by

Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB), which carers often attend directly without the explicit knowledge of the fostering service. Carers are also able to access training courses provided by BREAK. This is done via the NCC Learning and Development team so that places can be monitored.

The following table shows attendance at courses run from April 2013 – August 2014

<b>Carer Attendance on Training Courses April 2013 – August 2014</b>	
<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Number Trained</b>
Secure Base training (short)	54
Delegated Authority training (short)	33
Bridging to Adoption (short)	28
Face Up to Facebook	19
Silent Links (working with children of prisoners) short	30
Practical Diversity	15
Norfolk Steps (de-escalation training) (short)	22
Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness (short)	66
Promoting Successful learning for LAC (short)	22
Promoting Continued Learning for LAC (short)	20
Health Information (short)	30
Overview of Autistic Spectrum disorder	34
Fostering Attachments (long)	40
Fostering Changes 12+ (long)	12
Fostering Changes 5-12 (long)	12
Solihull Training (long)	19
<b>Total Attendance at Training</b>	<b>456 attendees</b>

While 456 individuals received training in the period April 2013 – August 2014, it is disappointing that 10 shorter courses had to be cancelled due to low numbers booking.

A foster carer consultation regarding training is in progress.

2.12.3 The following comments from carers were received following attendance at a number of training courses

- *“A great course, all carers should do this” (Fostering Changes)*
- *“Useful and informative” (Foetal Alcohol Syndrome)*
- *“This pulls together all information, a must for adolescent carers” (Fostering Changes 12+)*
- *“The group support is great” (Solihull training)*
- *“I have really enjoyed this course” (Equality and Diversity)*

Carers have commented about day long courses being difficult to attend because of child care, so training, where possible, operates on a 10.00 – 1.00 bases.

We have also had feedback about courses being too rushed, and carers wanting more time for discussions.

Carers have passed comments on training to panel at the point of re-registration that some courses are excellent and of a very high quality but also that some courses are cancelled due to low numbers and the booking system for course places is complex.

Views of a supervising social worker:

*"I thought I would pass on the comments made by one of my carers about the Fostering Attachments course. The carer has been struggling with a very challenging placement for some time. She has been using this particular young person as an example during the course. She feels that what she has learnt, and been able to apply has made the difference between being able to sustain the placement, and it ending".*

## 2.13 Complaints

2.13.1 Between April 2013 and March 2014, Norfolk County Council received 18 complaints relating to the fostering service, 4 of which were upheld.

## 2.14 Service-User Engagement Feedback from Children and young People

For the last two years the Norfolk in Care Council (NICC) has organised awards for inspirational adults; this year there were 83 nominations for foster carers. For the first time, this year a supervising social worker was nominated and won an award for the support they gave to a young person.

The following quotes are from young people talking about their experience of Norfolk Fostering Service:

"My foster carers made a huge difference to my life. When I went to live with them I couldn't really read or write. They helped me at home and now I can read and write enough to get by and I am thinking of going to college. This would never have happened without their hard work."  
aged19

"My carer is amazing. I have problems with depression but she never ever gives up on me and she has me back in school and thinking about college. She is always smiling and encouraging me to try new things. She has been like a rock for me to lean on."  
Aged 15

"My carers are the family I never had. They are always there for me and put me straight when I make mistakes, yet never stop caring about me."  
Aged, 17

"My carers are the reason I am now working and studying to get my qualifications in building. My carers always support me by talking, helping me learn to make good decisions and sometimes just listening to me. They are the reason I am the person I am and I could never pay them back."  
Aged, 18

"My foster carers are just so nice. They made me feel welcome and have been really patient, helping me learn how to behave and act, I was very angry when I came to live with them and said mean things but they never stopped caring about me and I slowly learnt that that isn't the way to behave."  
Aged, 11



“My carers look after me really well. They make me smile even when I am sad, they feed me really well and made me a great bedroom with my own bed. I even now have a dog. I am happy now.”

Aged, 9

[Source Norfolk In-Care Council nomination forms].

## 2.15 Feedback from Foster Carers

The following are quotes from foster carers:

“We would really like to thank everyone involved in the process but specifically (our supervising social worker) as without her continued support and kind words of wisdom the situation would have been a lot harder for our family. She not only prepared us as a family unit what to expect but with her foresight and insight she was able to reassure us and she gave us some fantastic strategies when things became a little bit challenging for us all”.

“NCC social workers, especially our supervising social worker, are always there with wealth of experience, very good advice and most importantly care. We fostered very challenging children, but support from Norfolk County Council made fostering much easier. We definitely feel supported at NCC.”

Below are quotations from training evaluation forms:

“A better understanding of the child and why they behave”.

“The course has helped me to make sense of the underlying reasons for our young person’s reactions. I can, within reason, feed this back to others in our family and reassess how our reactions may smooth the way for the future”.

“Understanding why the child is acting in a certain way – not being so baffled and confused by their behaviour”.

“I feel more in tune with my child and myself”

“Without the course my young person would have been moved on”.

“I have been attending fostering courses for 13 years now. It's sometime very hard to keep switched on or find the enthusiasm to hear the same things over and over again. However I find myself eager to attend, even begging my daughter to manage her ill health for school so that I can still finish what I've started! The course is relevant refreshing and thought provoking. It allows carers to express their latest issues, and gain feedback from not only the course leaders but other carers. Usually there is not time on courses to discuss issues at home, but for twelve weeks we have been given guidance and support. Being able to feedback each week gives us a chance to remain focused on the tasks and therefore making progress at home. We have all had times to laugh, cry and come together and this course is a must for confidence and refreshing the love of caring.”

“As a foster carer for three years now I have attended numerous courses (list can be provided if required) but there are two ‘stand out’ courses - Fostering Changes

being one and Fostering Attachments being the other - these two courses combined have furnished me with such a depth of knowledge and understanding (Attachments) together with the tools for effectively managing challenging behaviours (Changes) that without them my understanding and abilities as a therapeutic carer would be incomplete and by definition I would not be able to make the progress with the children that they so deserve”

The service recently held a consultation with foster carers, with over 70 foster carers in attendance, where a model for foster care engagement was presented. The model was a result of work undertaken by foster carers and staff.

### 3. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications from recommending this report

### 4. Issues, risks and innovation

It is critical in performing it's duty as a corporate parent that the committee scrutinises the functioning of it's fostering service.

### 5. Background

Please see attached Statement of Purpose (appendix one)

#### Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

**Officer Name:**  
Peter Ronan

**Tel No:**  
01603 222574

**Email address:**  
peter.ronan@norfolk.gov.uk



If you need this Agenda in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

# **Norfolk County Council Fostering Service**

## **Statement of Purpose 2014-15**



LOCAL AUTHORITY FOSTERING SERVICE REGULATIONS 2011

## My Name is Hope – I Am a Foster Carer



### Foreword from the Interim Children's Services Director, – Sheila Lock

#### Welcome

Foster carers are of critical importance to Norfolk County Council.

We welcome people from all walks of life and all ethnic backgrounds and religions. It doesn't matter if you are a home-owner, tenant, or on housing benefit, employed or not employed. If you can demonstrate that you could meet the needs of a child or young person who is in the care of the Local Authority, then we will consider your application.

Many of the children we need to place in foster care will have suffered trauma, grief and loss. Some will have experienced or witnessed abuse or lived in chaotic environments, which may have left them feeling vulnerable and unsafe. We are looking for carers who can provide children with a safe and stable environment in which they can grow and develop. You will need to help them feel comfortable in your home and their surroundings. Foster carers work as part of a team with birth parents and a range of professionals to ensure good outcomes for children and young people.

It's important to remember that we are not simply looking for people who have had straightforward lives. We will consider your family history sympathetically. Coming through and learning from difficulties or losses can be helpful experiences for fostering.

We welcome applications from adults over 21 years of age. You need to have a genuine commitment to care for a child and lots of energy, understanding and patience. You need to have a spare bedroom in your home and sufficient time and space in your life to care for children and young people who may have a range of additional needs.

Thank you for taking the time to find out more about fostering in Norfolk.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'S. Lock', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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## Aims & Objectives of the Norfolk Fostering Service

### Norfolk Children's Services Vision:

'We believe that all children and young people have the right to be healthy, happy and safe; to be loved, valued and respected; and to have high aspirations for their future'

### The aims of Norfolk County Council's Fostering Service:

**We believe** that children and young people in our care should:

- ✓ Be helped to grow and reach their potential
- ✓ Be given safe, nurturing experiences within a variety of caring resources which reflect need, respect difference, value diversity and promote inclusion
- ✓ Be listened to and services we provide should take these views into consideration
- ✓ Receive high quality, relevant aftercare.

**We believe** that children looked after by Norfolk Children's Services deserve:

- ✓ Services which help them overcome adversity and positively address disability
- ✓ Good assessments and understanding of their needs
- ✓ Positive care planning and high aspirations for their future
- ✓ All significant adults in their lives to be working together
- ✓ To be heard

### The objectives of Norfolk County Council Fostering Service are:

- ✓ Recruit and assess carers who can meet the needs of Norfolk's looked after children and young people
- ✓ Train carers to the highest standards possible to ensure they can offer children and young people a safe and nurturing experience
- ✓ Ensure carers, as part of the team around the child, are able to support children and young people in accessing a full range of services to meet their needs; this will include their educational, health and attachment needs
- ✓ Work in partnership with our colleagues within Children's Services and external agencies to keep the child's best interests paramount
- ✓ Help carers to support our aims through:
  - Regular, planned and recorded supervision sessions
  - Ensuring the holistic, continuous professional development of all foster carers
  - Regular carer support groups (Network Groups)
  - Annual appraisals/reviews of carers that reflect continual practice and development
  - Publishing and advising our foster carer handbook
  - Agreeing a foster care charter with our carers
  - Offering 24 hour support
  - Involving carers in recruitment and training of new carers
  - Paying allowances and fees to carers

## My Name is Hope – I Am a Foster Carer

### Who Are We?

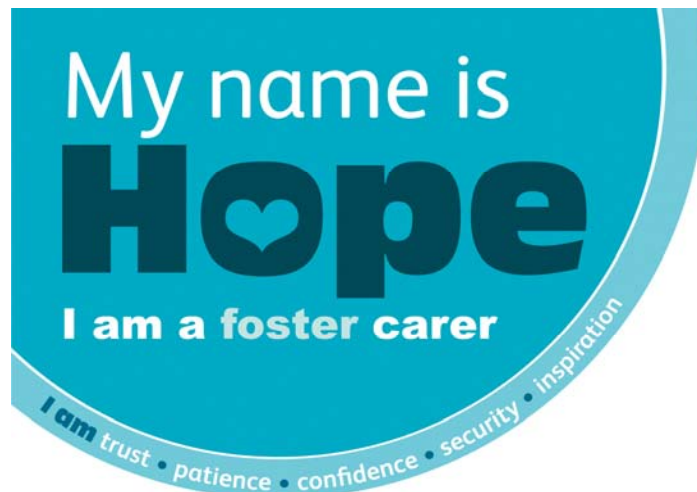
Norfolk Fostering Service comprises 4 teams plus 2 resource centres which offer short-term break to children with a disability:

**The Fostering Recruitment Team** takes the lead in recruiting and assessing new carers and **Family and Friends Carers County wide.**

**Three Family Placement Supervision Teams** supporting foster carers. These teams each service a geographical area.

**The Children with Disabilities Family Service** workers are based at Marshfield & Foxwood resource centres, this team also recruits and supervises carers offering short-term breaks for children with a disability.

Appendix 2 gives full details of all personnel in our service.



## **My Name is Hope – I Am a Foster Carer**

### **Achievements in 2013/14 & Plans for 2014/15**

#### **Last year we:**

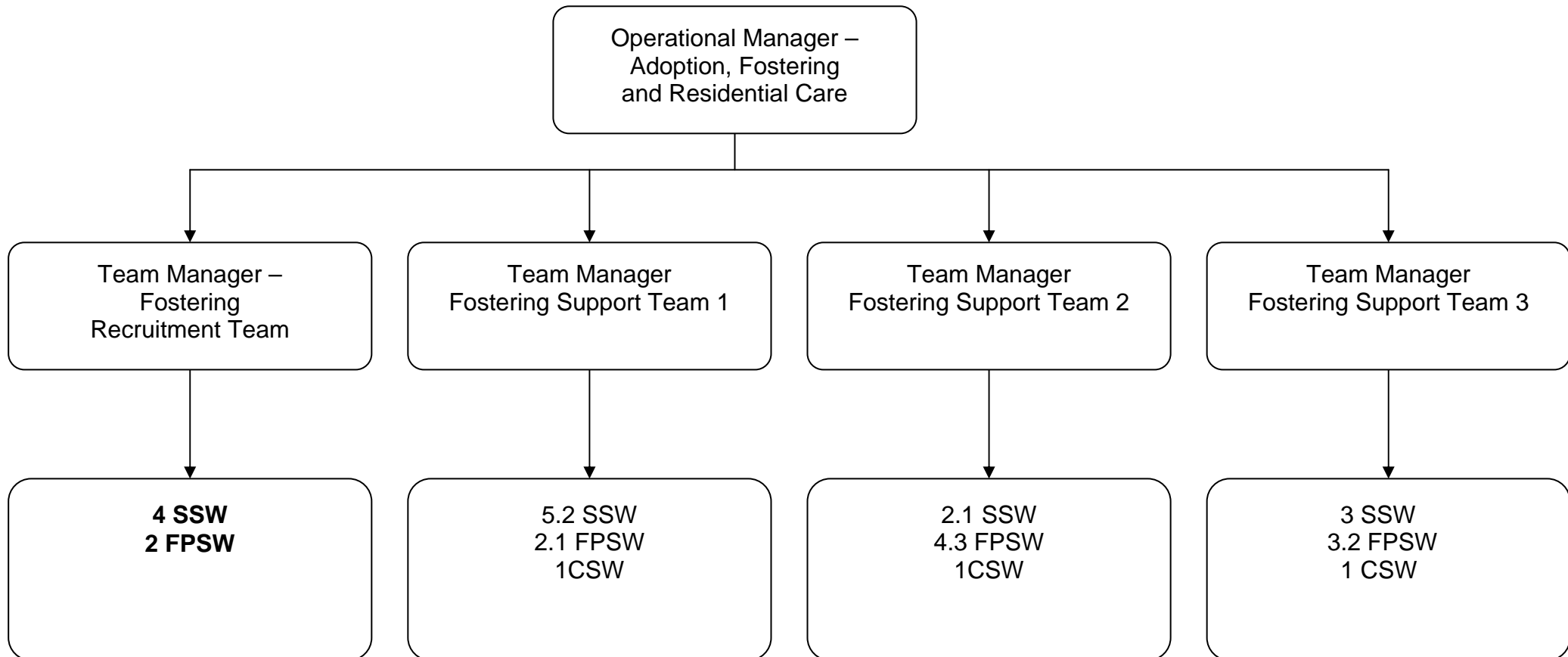
- Consolidated network groups in King's Lynn, Great Yarmouth and Norwich
- Reviewed our accreditation assessment process
- Promoted 2 recruitment campaigns
- Recruited 33 new Task Centered Foster Carers & 11 Family & Friends Foster Carers
- Approved 63 Temporary Foster Carers
- Reviewed & published our children's guides
- Developed a toolkit for the assessment of foster carers' own children
- Established a support group for foster carers' children.
- Reviewed post-18 placement support
- Undertook a systemic audit of files with regard to foster carer supervision
- Develop our cultural offer further with colleagues from museums
- Published a simple card for foster carers to keep by the telephone regarding what to do if a child goes missing from care
- Reviewed the fostering handbook.
- Establish an equal opportunities group led by the Operational Manager – Adoption, Fostering and residential care to include staff, foster carers and panel chair.
- Work with commissioners to ensure sufficiency and value for money of placements.
- Review and business process re-engineer our recruitment

#### **Next year we will:**

- Work across children's services to implement the improvement plans and reduce the number of looked after children
- Establish an advisory partnership with our foster carers and chaired by a foster carer
- Form a group of foster carers and key staff to improve team around the child practice.
- Recruit an additional PACE bed
- With Suffolk develop and implement MTF-C programme.
- Continue to gather and implement recommendations from foster carers children's group
- Review and improve the supervision format for foster carers
- Develop our use of electronic tracking/performance system in recruitment (Carefirst)
- Implement Digital Norfolk Ambition within the service
- Further develop our offer to staying put placements
- Work with our foster carers and Norfolk Drug and Alcohol team to develop training for carers
- Develop training in sexual health and teenage pregnancy.
- Work with LAC CAHMS and foster carers to review and revise our attachment training
- Develop restorative approaches training



## Norfolk Fostering Service Structure



### Glossary to Abbreviations

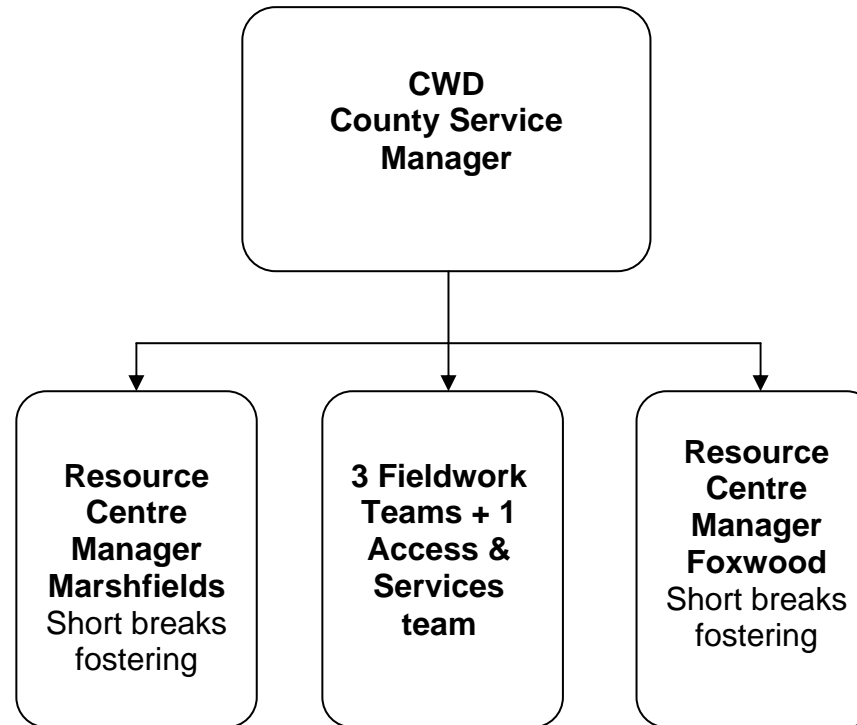
TM : Team Manager

SSW: Senior Social Worker

FPSW: Family Placement Social Worker

CSW: Carer Support Worker

## Norfolk Children with Disabilities Service Structure



## **Types of foster carers, numbers of foster carers and children**

### **Foster Carer Types: who are we looking for?**

Foster carers are approved to offer:

- ✓ Foster placements to meet the objectives of a child's care plan
- ✓ Parent and child placements
- ✓ Connected Persons (Kinship Care) approved as foster carers in order to offer a placement to a specific child or children known to them
- ✓ Short Term Breaks / Short Breaks Plus for children who have a disability
- ✓ Targeted recruitment for carers offering police and criminal evidence (PACE) beds.

### **Numbers of carers:**

At 31 March 2014, Norfolk County Council supervised and supported 359 foster carer households.

In the year 2013/2014, Norfolk County Council recruited 44 new foster families, 11 of which were kinship foster carers.

### **Numbers of Children:**

At the end of March 2014, there were 432 children living in Norfolk County Council foster homes. The short term break scheme and short term plus scheme for children with disabilities offered placements to 26 children and young people.



### The Fostering Recruitment Team

The Fostering Recruitment Team (FRT) has taken the lead in raising the public's awareness of the need for foster carers, responding to all initial enquiries, and in preparing and assessing all foster carers with the exception of those who specifically wish to care for children who have a disability.

### Aims and Objectives

In its fostering role, our aims are to target recruitment to meet placement demands and meet the diverse and complex needs of Norfolk's looked after children by:

- ✓ Introduction of open evenings co-presented by experienced foster carers and social workers.
- ✓ recruiting carers and assessing their suitability to offer fostering placements for children aged 0-18 years and into adulthood
- ✓ Assessing carers who wish to transfer to Norfolk from Independent Fostering Agencies or other local authorities
- ✓ Undertaking kinship care assessments (connected person carer assessments) using BAAF ( British association of fostering and adoption) form C
- ✓ Developing and maintaining a diverse and experienced staff team which includes qualified social work practitioners and administrative support
- ✓ Raising awareness of fostering with the general public, conducting specific publicity campaigns and promoting fostering as a rewarding and worthwhile activity
- ✓ Supporting the retention of current carers by including them and their children in the recruitment and training process of applicants to foster
- ✓ Offering consultation to those working with family and friends care.



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### Work of the Fostering Recruitment Team

#### Publicity

The FRT has collaboratively worked in partnership with the Norfolk County Council Corporate Marketing Office and Communications Unit neighbouring Local Authorities and Fostering Net Work.

The team have implemented Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations.

Information on our website produces a significant number of enquiries, and informs enquirers of the new processes.

There is on-going monitoring of the sources of our initial enquiries and recruitment and assessment process.

#### Recruitment and Assessment

(a) All members of the public who make an initial enquiry can do so by either going on line or by contacting Norfolk County Council Customer Services on 0344 800 8020. Information about Fostering for Norfolk Children's Services can be found on the Norfolk Fostering service web site [www.norfolk.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/fostering). If requested an information pack can be posted.

Once an enquiry has been noted, a Stage 1 Fostering Recruitment Social Worker will make contact with the enquirer to discuss the fostering task, including current placement and matching needs, they will gather basic information and if appropriate invite them to an information session.

Generally the information sessions are held every 3 weeks. A Fostering Recruitment Social Worker, a Fostering Supervision Worker and an experienced Foster Carer will be available to present information about fostering, the assessment process and answer any questions. People attending these sessions will be invited to complete and return a Register of Interest Form (ROIF) and once this has been received and discussed with a Team Manager a decision will be made as to whether an Initial Home Visit will be arranged.

(b) Applicants progressing beyond the initial visit stage are invited to attend a preparation course based on Fostering Network's "Skills to Foster" course. Working with difference is stressed throughout the course. The service aims to complete six courses per year. Basic Emergency Aid training is also provided. Young people from the Norfolk In Care Council attend this training and talk about their experiences of being fostered.

(c) For those who are considered suitable and identify their wish to proceed, a social worker will be allocated to start the BAAF form F Fostering Assessment. This normally involves 8-10 visits to both partners (less if a single applicant) and two individual sessions. In addition, a comprehensive set of checks are completed in line with the Brighton and Hove Part VIII report including:

- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks
- Six references
- Employment check/reference
- Contact made with ex-partners of a significant relationship
- GP report
- A Health & Safety checklist
- A Safe Caring Family Policy
- The assessing social worker also conducts an unannounced visit.

Applicants read, comment and contribute to the report by writing some sections themselves. Where an assessor and applicant(s) have differing views this will be clearly stated in the report.

(d) The report is presented to a Foster Panel for a recommendation on whether the application should be approved and the terms of any such approval. A suitably qualified senior manager, as Agency Decision Maker, will make the final decision.

## Work of the Fostering Recruitment Team – Continued

### Family and Friends wishing to be approved as foster carers (connected persons)

Regulations require that children who are looked after by the local authority can only be placed with either an approved foster carer or, for a period not exceeding 16 weeks, with a relative or friend of the child who has been approved as a temporary foster carer by an appropriate senior manager within Children's Services.

- The FRT offers consultation to the team and the practitioner where connected persons assessments may be required, and when temporary approval has been given
- Once temporary approval has been granted a social worker from the FRT will undertake an initial visit to complete the necessary paperwork required by regulation
- If suitable for assessment by FRT an assessment plan will be agreed and reviewed.
- The assessing social worker, together with the child's social worker, will complete a BAAF Form C assessment and present it to the fostering panel. The agency decision maker will make the final recommendation
- The FRT also undertake fostering assessments where specific children have been identified but not yet placed.



## Fostering Supervision and Support Teams

The teams offer supervision and support to foster carers. All carers have an allocated supervisor who will visit regularly, conduct an annual foster carer review, liaise with children's social workers and help to ensure appropriate placements are made. All children placed with foster carers should be in placements with a carer who has the quality, skills and experience to meet their needs.

The teams supervise and support two types of foster carers:

**Fostering:** Offering placements to children until the conclusion of their care plan.

**Connected Persons (Kinship Care):** Offering a Looked After Child a placement where the child is known to them as a family member or friend.

All newly registered foster carers are approved to care for children and young people between the ages of 0 to 18, but in line with our smoking policy, some carers will not be approved for children under the age of 5 (with exceptions for connected carer approvals).

### Foster carers and their families receive:

- ✓ Regular supervision visits **in line with the fostering task, generally** 4-8 weeks
- ✓ Twenty-four hour telephone support from an on-call **Fostering worker**
- ✓ Invitations to regular support groups held throughout the county, including educational and social events and a group specifically for the children of foster carers.
- ✓ All foster carers on approval are funded for membership of the Fostering Network which provides independent advice and mediation as well as other associated benefits
- ✓ Long service awards
- ✓ On-going training to encourage continuous development



### **Fostering Supervision and Support Teams – Continued**

The team provides supervision and support to enable foster carers to work to young people's care plans. We aim to provide foster placements offering therapeutic care by promoting a Team Around the Child approach, with the focus on the foster carer providing 'therapeutic re-parenting'. We actively manage the placement to ensure that outcomes for the children are our primary focus.

Foster carers need the following to "therapeutically re-parent" young people:

- To be seen as a key part of the Team Around the Child
- A heightened sense of self-awareness, including being emotionally grounded and evidencing the ability to be reflective in their practice
- To possess a good working knowledge of theoretical models to use as a framework for understanding young people's behaviour
- Access to good quality wrap-around services.

### **Partnership Working**

All carers are required to work closely alongside the families of looked after children, with sensitivity and an understanding of the responsibility attached to looking after another person's child. This can be complex and demanding, both for the carers and the child, and requires an emphasis to be placed on joint working with social workers and colleagues in all relevant agencies.

All carers are required to record details of the child's life in their care and contribute to effective assessments.

In addition to the basic allowance, in Norfolk we operate an accreditation scheme, based on the 'Task Skills Profile' which is used by the social worker and carer to determine whether a carer has the skills required to be accredited at a higher level.

All carers can access the LAC CAMHS Service (A Primary Mental Health Service for Looked After Children and Adopted Children). This service provides consultation and guidance to foster carers and professionals working with looked after children. Each child's situation will be considered individually and may include therapy for the child, work with the family and consultation to the team around the child.

### **Annual Foster Carer Review**

Annual reviews of carers ensure that we keep in the forefront our aims and objectives for the children in our care. The views of all those involved are sought to contribute to the review. It is particularly important that the child or young person's voice is heard.

It is at the review that decisions are made regarding the carers' continued suitability. Their terms of approval are reconsidered and support and training needs identified.

The supervision teams have developed the way in which reviews are carried out to ensure that foster carer reviews are reflective of continual practice, and support the continuous professional development of all foster carers.



### User Engagement

The fostering service has strong links with the Norfolk In Care Council (NICC). The NICC comprises a group of children and young people who are or have been looked after by Norfolk County Council Children's Services. It is hoped that by talking with and listening to those in our community who experience what it is like to be looked after in a foster family we can find ways to improve our service.

NICC contribute to the Skills to Foster preparation training for applicants to foster by attending a session and taking questions. All participants attending the course find this a useful part of the preparation training.

The NICC have been working in partnership with the fostering service and the virtual school to develop training programmes focused upon the educational requirements of looked after children and the role foster carers can play in maximising educational opportunities for the children in their care.

NICC have also been involved in helping to train foster panel members and divisional managers in the importance of placement planning. They attended sessions and underlined the importance of delegated authority



## **Short Term Break Service**

The scheme provides short break opportunities for disabled children and their families. Caring for a disabled child will present carers with challenges and difficulties significantly beyond those experienced by the carers of a non-disabled child. Disabled children do not always get the same opportunities as their nondisabled peers e.g. staying away from home with friends and relatives, the scheme offers them that experience.

Therefore the scheme provides parents and carers with a break and provides the children with a positive, alternative experience to living at home.

Carers are recruited to provide:

- A sitting service (carers going into the child's home thereby allowing the parents to leave their child).
- Care for a child in their own home for daytime, overnight (less than 24 hours) and overnight (more than 24 hours).

Carers are recruited, trained, assessed and approved in line with other carers in the broader fostering service. They attend a foundation course; undertake a detailed assessment and their approval is considered at a Foster Panel. Carers are fully involved in the matching process. Placements are planned and entail a series of introductory visits. Carers are supported in a variety of ways: by phone, home visit, at meetings, support groups and the sharing of information (e.g. newsletters). Levels of support relate to the task the carer undertakes. Carers, irrespective of their status, are reviewed annually. The demand for 'standard' short break carers has lessened significantly since the introduction of Direct Payments for families assessed as needing short breaks which empowers families to make their own arrangements for their children's care. There has also been a considerable expansion of other short breaks provision, giving families increased choice.

## **Short Breaks Plus Scheme**

The Short Breaks Plus Scheme was commissioned to provide a service for children and young people with complex health needs, autism and/or challenging behaviour who were 'hard to place'.

Fee paid (or contract) carers provide up to four nights planned care per week, caring for children that the STB scheme cannot place. High levels of support, more in-depth training and an expectation to take 'hard to place' children distinguish these carers from the STB scheme.

### Learning & Development

Skilled foster care is central to the County Council's ability to provide the best possible service to children; training is of central importance in supporting carers and helping them to increase skills to face the many challenges that foster caring brings.

To encourage and support the development of the *Team around the Child* fostering, training has been incorporated within the wider corporate parenting training plan. This facilitates and supports our belief that those who train together will work well together. It breaks down barriers and improves understanding of colleagues' different perspectives.

We have a training strategy that reflects the core beliefs and aims of the fostering service, and addresses the requirements set out in the National Minimum Standards for the Fostering Service Regulations.

Integral to all our training is valuing difference, diversity and challenging discrimination. Anyone who delivers training for Norfolk County Council is expected to sign a tutor agreement form which clarifies our anti-discriminatory practice.



Training for foster carers ensures the following:

- Training meets the needs of foster carers, the requirements of National Minimum Standards for the Fostering Service, and the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care
- The training provided enables foster carers to provide high quality care which meets the diverse and complex needs of the children placed with them
- The training promotes the recruitment and retention of foster carers
- The training ensures that carers are an integral part of Children's Services
- The training is delivered within existing and planned resources
- All training promotes partnership working.

We offer foster carers & staff an increased knowledge of what works & why, and some fresh ideas through the training programme.

The service offers foster carer buddies who work with carers to help them achieve the Fostering Training Standards and all aspects of the fostering task.

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The full Training Plan is updated each year. Every carer is expected to gain the knowledge required from the core training courses, which include: Skills training, Safeguarding Children and Emergency Aid; de-escalation training and workshops on equality and diversity.

Following the core courses, carers can choose from a range of further opportunities including:

- Working with Children and Young People in Care
- Fostering Changes Programme
- Managing Relationships
- Courses on attachment/helping manage behaviour
- Making and Maintaining Positive Relationships with Birth Families
- Making the Most of Reviews
- Substance Misuse
- Bridge training
- Secure Base training

Learning is offered by face to face courses, as well as e-learning and other learning opportunities.

An NVQ Level 3 qualification is available.



## **How to Complain or Challenge a Decision**

While Norfolk's Fostering Service endeavours to get things right first time, every time, there may be occasions where service users wish to make a complaint. This section sets out the procedures in place, should this situation arise.

### **The complaints procedure**

Norfolk County Council has a designated Compliments & Complaints Team which coordinates the investigation of complaints made by prospective and approved foster carers. All complaints are logged by the team.

Children, young people or their representative can make a complaint by using the local rate number 0344 800 2020 or accessing the Norfolk County Council website [www.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk)

The key features of this complaints procedure are:

- ✓ Most issues can be sorted out informally by the manager responsible for the service within 10 working days.
- ✓ If the case is not resolved, an independent person completes an investigation within a further 25 working days.
- ✓ If the issue remains contentious, the Chief Executive's Department commissions another investigation to make recommendations to be considered by a Panel of three independent people.

Children and young people wishing to make a complaint must either be receiving or seeking a service from Norfolk County Council Children's Services.

Any individual or group, other than children and young people, receiving or seeking a service from Norfolk County Council, who wish to make a complaint, can do so by writing to:

Compliments and Complaints Manager, FREEPOST IH 2076  
Norwich NR1 2BR or at [www.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk)

### **Challenges to decisions regarding suitability to foster**

If prospective fostering enquirers are assessed as unsuitable as foster carers before having a formal application accepted, they can ask for a Team Manager to review the decision.

If the Team Manager upholds the decision, the enquirer(s) can ask to refer the decision not to proceed with the process to the Operational Manager -Adoption, Fostering & Residential Care for final adjudication. If this reviewing officer upholds the original decision, there is no further ground for appeal.

If a formal application to foster is accepted by the fostering agency, and doubts regarding suitability subsequently arise, the applicants are able to insist that their assessment as foster carers is presented to the Fostering Panel.

If the panel recommends that the applicants are unsuitable as foster carers, and this recommendation is agreed by the agency decision-maker, the prospective carers can refer themselves to an independent panel through the Independent Review Mechanism.

## My Name is Hope – I Am a Foster Carer



Any serious concerns regarding the Fostering Service practice can be referred to the OfSTED inspectorate. The main office for the OFSTED fostering inspectorate service is:

OFSTED National Business Unit  
Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Anne's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA  
Tel: 08456-40-40-40  
E-mail address: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)



If a child has any serious concerns relating to Fostering Service they can contact the Children's Rights Director themselves. The details are:

Office of the Children's Rights Director  
Ofsted  
Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

Tel: 0800 528 0731  
Web address: [rights4me.org](http://rights4me.org)

## **Fostering Service Management Arrangements**

The OfSTED named, responsible manager is the Operational Manager-Adoption, Fostering & Residential Care.

### **Pen picture of Peter Ronan – Adoption, Fostering and Residential Care Operations Manager**

- History Honours Degree (University of East Anglia, 1984)
- Diploma in Social Worker (CETSW No 41175, 1993)
- Certificate in Management (NEBS NC970000221711051098, 1998)
- HCPC Council Registered Social Worker (Registration Number SW31989. Renewal Date 13/11/2014)
- Enhanced DBS (formerly CRB) issued 16 March 2013 (001398616817)

Peter has worked for Norfolk County Council since 1988 beginning in a residential children's home. Peter developed a key worker system whilst studying for his diploma in social work. Post qualifying, Peter developed an interest in working with families to achieve change. He Developed and led the Children Support Team which developed flexible packages of support to assist families to change drawing particularly from solution focused and attachment theory.

During this period Peter also chaired Foster Panels (1997 – 2000) and took on management responsibility for home care. Peter became the responsible individual for Children's Services Homecare, a service that has been constantly rated as 'outstanding'(3 teams) and 'good' (one team).

In 2006 Peter became a key member of Norfolk Children's Safeguarding Board, acting as Chair of the Southern Local Safeguarding Group and leading and managing 5 child protection teams across the Southern area.

Peter was also the operational lead for the re-write of Child Protection Procedures following Working Together 2010.

Peter brings a strong understanding of the families Looked After Children came from, detailed working knowledge of child protection and court process in adoption, fostering and residential care.

Since coming in to his current post in June 2011, Peter has put continuous improvement at the heart of all three services he manages, and there are active improvement plans for each of the three services in place

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### APPENDIX ONE: Staffing

Staffing at 01.04.2013 is as follows. Full time hours unless stated.

#### Adoption, Fostering and Residential Care Operational Delivery Manager

	Total Experience of Children and Families	Experience of Fostering
Peter Ronan	25	3

#### County Fostering Recruitment Team

	Total Experience of Children and Families	Experience of Fostering
<b>Team Manager</b>  Sheila English Certificate in Social Services, PQ Child Care Award, HCPC-registered Social Worker	<b>41 years</b>	<b>21 years</b>
<b>Family Placement Social Workers</b> CQSW, MA Social Work, PQ Child Care Award, HCPC-registered Senior Social Worker	25 years	5 years
DIP SW, BA Specialist Award Children & Families, PQ Certificate HCPC registered Senior SW	13 years	2yr & 3 mths
BSc (Hons), MA Social Work, DipSW, HCPC-registered Social Worker	11 years	5 years
DipSW, PSCC Inservice London, HCPC-registered Social Worker	29 years	11 years
CQSW, BA Specialist Award Children & Families, HCPC-registered Senior Social Worker	27 years	11 years
DipSW (Germany), MA Social Work, PQ certificate, HCPC-registered Senior Social Worker	16 years	5.5 years
DipSW, Degree in Social Sciences, RSA in Counselling Skills, HCPC registered Senior Social Worker, NNEB in Child Development	15 years	13 years

#### Fostering Team 1



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	Total Experience of Children and Families	Experience of Fostering
<b>Team Manager</b> Mike Woodward CQSW, Cert. Counselling, HCPC Registered SW	27	23
<b>Family Placement Social Workers</b> BA Classical Studies, MA/Dip SW, Child Care Award (MA Route). GSCC registered SW	12	6
DipSW, Practice Teaching Award, Specialist Award (Hons), HCPC Registered SW	22	7
DipSW, PQ1, HCPC registered SW	26	20
CSS. PQ, HCPC registered SW	33	9
BA Hons (First Class) History, MA/DipSW (Distinction), HCPC registered SW	12	6
Dip SW & HE Cert, Cert. Residential Care of Children and Young People, HCPC registered SW	17	11
HNC, DipSW, PQ1. HCPC registered SW	17	7
BA Hons Drama & English Literature, MA in Social Work, HCPC registered SW	9	4
BA Hons Theology, MA/DipSW, HCPC registered SW	6	5
<b>Carer Support Worker</b> NVQ Level 3 – Business Studies	2	2

## My Name is Hope – I Am a Foster Carer

### Fostering Team 2

<b>Team Manager</b> Suzy Holman, BA (Hons), CQSW, MA Social Work, Practice Teacher Certificate, Counselling cert, HCPC registered SW	26	14
<b>Family Placement Social Workers</b> DipSW, PQ (1), HCPC registered SW	12	8
Dip Sw, PQ, RGN, Management cert, HCPC registered SW	20	0
Dip SW, HCPC registered SW	26	8
DipSW, HCPC registered SW	23	13
DipSW, Montessori Teaching Cert. HCPC registered SW	22	8
Dip SW HCPC registered SW	13	7
BA Hons in Social work, HCPC registered SW	15	5
BA Hons in Social work, PQ, HCPC registered SW	24	5
<b>Carer Support Worker</b> BA English lit, Post graduate cert	5	5

### Fostering Team 3

	Total Experience of Children & Families	Experience of Fostering
<b>Team Manager</b> Martyn Lovett NEBS Management Certificate, DipSW, HCPC registered SW	30 Years	3 Years

### My Name is Hope – I Am a Foster Carer

<b>Senior Social Worker</b> CSS, HCPC registered SW CSS, HCPC registered SW CSS, HCPC registered SW	24 Years 32 Years 21 Years	7 Years 23 Years 11 Years
<b>Family Placement Social Workers</b>		
MA in Social Work, HCPC registered SW	4 Years	2 Year
MA in Social Work, HCPC registered SW	7 Years	18 Months
MA in Social Work, HCPC registered SW	2 Year	2 Year
MA in Social Work, HCPC registered SW	7 Years	5 Years

# Children's Services Committee

Item No 9

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Annual Review of Norfolk Residential Service</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>16 September 2014</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Sheila Lock</b>

## Strategic impact

Annual Approval of the Statement of Purpose of Norfolk's Residential Children's Homes and a Summary Review of the Year-

Members in their role as the registered provider of these homes are required under law (Children's Home Regulations 2001 (as amended); Care Standards Act 2000 (registration) (England) Regulations 2010) to approve each children's home's Statement of Purpose and Functions.

It is a requirement that each of our children's homes has a clear Statement of Purpose which details the aims and objectives and how the standards will be met. The standards are:

- Caring for Children
- Children's Behaviour
- Contact Details
- Education
- Health
- Staffing matters

Each home must also provide a children's guide which explains for the child the purpose of the home as well as how the child can complain and access advocacy services. Each unit's Statement of Purpose is available on Members Insight and hard copies will be in the members' room.

## Executive summary

This paper reports to Members on the performance and outcomes achieved by the Norfolk Residential Service.

The key performance outcomes achieved for the service this year are:

- Ofsted inspection outcomes which are above the national average
- The Service continues to offer high occupancy levels
- The Service continues to offer beds at a rate comparable with similar provision nationally
- A reunification unit which has contributed to reducing numbers of looked after children for Norfolk

The Service has contributed significantly to reducing the number of looked after children

placed in out of county provision. Primarily the extra six emergency beds capacity created last year has prevented young people entering care outside of Norfolk.

**Recommendations:**

**Members are asked to-**

- **Scrutinise the information within the report**
- **Challenge the service on the performance and outcomes achieved**
- **Recommend the approval of the Statements of Purpose and Functions for all the Local Authority children's homes to Full Council to comply with the Care Standards Act 2000**

## **1. Proposal (or options)**

Members are asked to scrutinise the information within the report and provide challenge to the service to ensure continued outcomes for Norfolk children and families along with internal performance improvement.

Members are asked to recommend approval to Cabinet of the Statement of Purpose and Functions for the Local Authority Residential Service to comply with the Care Standards Act 2000.

## **2. Evidence**

2.1 The Norfolk Residential Children's Service currently has seven children's homes, two residential respite children's homes and two supported flats. The service works alongside other services supporting children who are no longer able to live at home. Accommodating children is always a last resort and the authority has to be satisfied that the care threshold is met. Over the past year the service has rarely refused to place a young person (fewer than 5 occasions) and only does so when their needs and risk assessment identifies that the placement in Norfolk Residential Children's Services would not be suitable. We have reviewed and changed the services provided to ensure they meet the needs of all young people including those with challenging behaviours.

2.2 The following units deliver interventions to reduce the duration of time that young people spend in residential care-

- Norwich Road and The Lodge provide 10 beds, offering emergency accommodation, for children where there is an immediate need for accommodation following a crisis breakdown either at home or at their placement. This accommodation is used while an alternative, appropriate placement is sourced;
- Waterworks Road and Well Green both provide 2 beds which offer intensive support to young people in a period of transition. This may be to support a young person return to Norfolk and live independently or support a child who has serious health or social needs for example an eating disorder. These are used as care planning placements whilst suitable long term placement options are identified;

- Aylsham Road is a 4 bedded unit with a focus on the reunification of young people with their families either as new entrants to care or young people returning to Norfolk to live with their family;
  - Loki House is a 4 bedded unit offering crisis intervention and short term placements specialising in young people returning from out of county placements.
  - Easthills is a long term unit with 6 beds where the service assists young people during the transition to post-16 accommodation;
- 2.3 Foxwood and Marshfields offer respite care to children and young people with severe and complex disabilities some of whom have a life limiting condition.
- 2.4 There are also three supported flats available which are managed in partnership with Broadland Housing. These provide accommodation for 16 and 17 year-olds and help them prepare for independent living with 37 hours of support provided each week by Children's Services staff with 24 hour (7 days per week) telephone support available.
- 2.5 Norfolk County Council's Social Care Improvement Plan sets out the actions to reduce Norfolk's Looked-After Children population to levels comparable with the average for a Local Authority in England. The Service team's plan focuses on robust planning for the young people and the delivery of targeted interventions to reunify them with their families or extended families for those placed in County as well as for children who are currently in provision outside of Norfolk. For those old enough the service's flats provide support for the transition to independent living.
- 2.6 Promoting the young people's sense of inclusion during their placements and having the opportunity to be heard is crucial. This is achieved through regular residents meetings, key worker sessions, and informal sessions to gain their wishes and feelings. We have worked with the young people to develop the Residential Service. This has promoted the young people to invest in their placements and take pride in their surroundings. In feedback gathered after placements the young people have stated they felt they had a say in how things were run and felt they were listened to.
- 2.7 What Children and Young People say about the Service.

Feedback is gathered by the service from the young people as well as from families and professionals. This feedback is analysed to identify areas for development and to improve the service. The residential service regularly consults with the In-Care Council who offer advice and feedback, for example when opening new units.

The following is a selection of comments about Norfolk's Residential Service from children and young people who have been accommodated during the past 12 months:

*"I am cared for and supported in everything and loved"*

*"I felt welcomed and very safe at the unit, all staff were friendly"*

*"When I first came, my behaviour and school attendance and attitude were very poor. I began to settle down due to the fact staff encouraged me to do well and helped me build*

*my strengths and weaknesses, they never gave up on me and when the going got tough they never let me give up. With all the encouragement still came all the nagging and when I slipped up the staff would be there to set me straight and tell me what I had done wrong (you could never get anything past them). my overall time has been a lesson that has taught me the rights and wrongs of life and I'll never forget the staff here they have been a real pleasure to live with"*

*" I just wanting to write a letter to say thank you all for being so supportive and helpful. I wouldn't have gone back to College without the fantastic key worker. I never thought I would be where I am today in life without you all are the best. Love and miss you all, you are all special in different ways. THANK YOU ALL"*

*"you are all fricken amazing. The staff gave me independence and they gave me a lot of support"*

*"thank you so much for everything that you've done for me even when I was being a little s\*\*t. I know I'm not the easiest kid at times but you all stuck by me and never gave up on me. My time here was amazing and Im going to miss you all loads"*

## 2.8 Compliments

Each unit has a compliments book to capture positive experiences for residents, from April 2013 until March 2014 the service received 27 compliments.

*For example*, one professional fed back, "we were impressed with the professionalism and the work you carry out with the young person. It is obvious you are very focussed and passionate about your responsibilities. The environment appeared relaxed and the young person's welfare came top of the list".

*Another example* from a professional, "the young person has settled well, the placement responses have been appropriate, with the right guidance and boundaries, suited to this young person's needs"

## 2.9 Complaints

Each unit has a complaints book in which complaints from the public and young people are recorded. Young people have open access to a telephone should they wish to make a complaint at any time. Contact numbers for Ofsted, the Children's Rights Director and Voice, the independent advocacy service, are available to young people, as are complaints leaflets.

2.9.1 The homes' welcome books, which are available in a variety of formats to make them accessible for all ages and levels of ability, provide information and advice on how to complain. All residential staff have mandatory training on complaints and there is a Norfolk County Council complaints team which can offer consultation and advice to both staff and young people.

2.9.2 Since April 2013 the service has received 15 complaints in total. Seven complaints from the local communities near residential units mainly associated with noise, which the homes' managers responded to and resolved. Six complaints were received from young people. One was from a parent. One was from a social worker. All complaints are responded to as per procedure in order to find resolution and improve practice where appropriate.

## 2.10 Proposed next Steps for the Service

- 2.10.1 The Residential Service wish to take an active role in participating in the completion of pathway plans recognising the heavy workload of case accountable social workers and the residential staff team's insight into the young people's needs, working closely with them throughout their placement.
- 2.10.2 Relief Worker System: Develop a generic induction programme, with supervision and training monitoring from a central database.
- 2.10.3 Research Residents' handbook in various different formats, audio CD and audio in place.
- 2.10.4 Key worker/engagement sessions- explore paperwork, through consultation with young people, to develop formats used.
- 2.10.5 Asdan training: implement training across the service, to train all residential staff.
- 2.10.6 Update job descriptions and levels for residential practitioners to qualified workers.
- 2.10.7 Review residential policies and procedures.
- 2.10.8 Review of training needs for the Residential Service.
- 2.10.9 Liaison with lead for Norfolk Library Services to explore potential to offer educational and recreational opportunities to promote young people's outcomes.
- 2.10.10 Successfully bid for Evidence Intervention Programmes via the DfE

## 2.11 Ofsted Inspection Outcomes

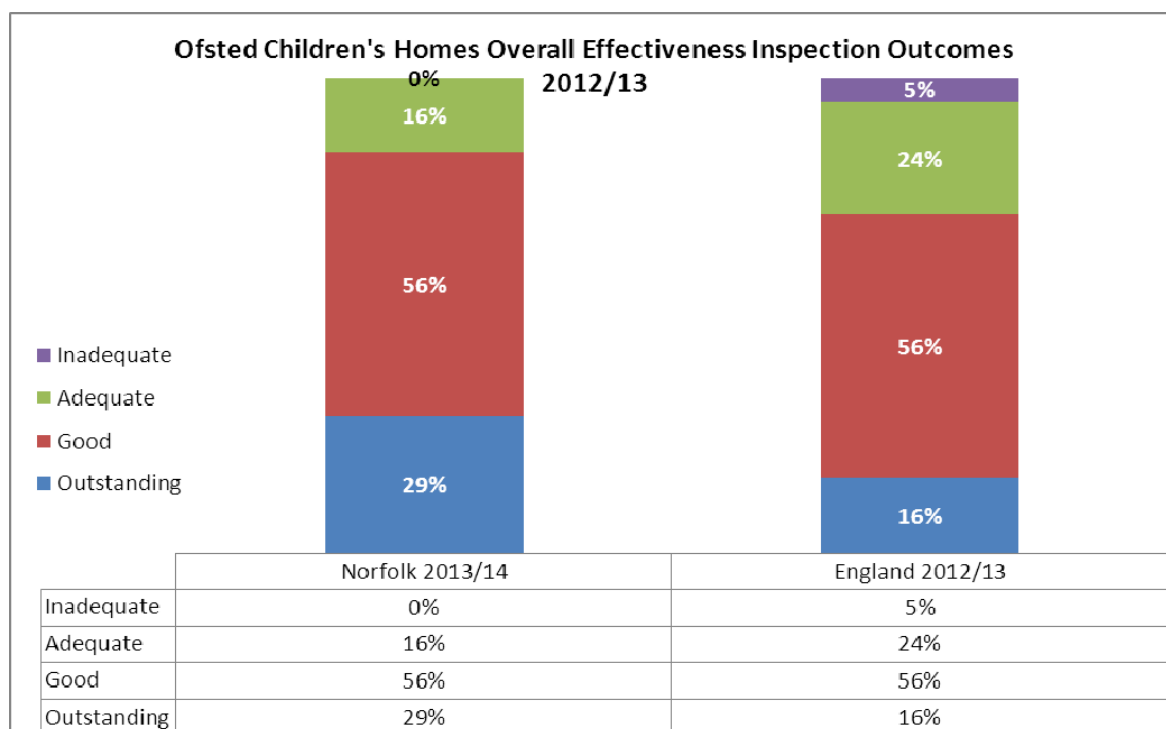
Each residential unit is inspected twice a year by Ofsted who conduct a full and an interim inspection. The latest judgement from the most-recent full inspection (as at 31/03/2014) of each home is shown in the table below:



Home	No. of Beds	Overall Inspection Findings	Outcomes for Children & Young People	Quality of Care	Safeguarding	Leadership & Management
Aylsham Road	4	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding
Easthills	6	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding
Foxwood	9	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good	Good
Marshfields	4	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Norwich Road	4	Adequate	Adequate	Outstanding	Adequate	Outstanding
Loki House	4	Adequate	Good	Good	Adequate	Adequate
The Lodge	6	Good	Adequate	Good	Good	Good
Waterworks Road	2	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Frettenham	2	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

The above table shows 13 Outstanding, 22 Good and 9 Satisfactory Ofsted inspection judgements. It is particularly pleasing to see the number of outstanding judgements with regard to quality of care and leadership and management.

## 2.12 How Norfolk's Children's Residential Children's Homes Performance compares to the National picture:



Ofsted judgements relating to the overall effectiveness of the homes shows Norfolk Residential Service's homes' performance is better than the national average.

2.12.1 The Residential Service continues to review and improve the standards of its service to meet the revised criteria from Ofsted, who continue to "raise the bar" in their inspections. There is an active improvement plan and after each inspection key themes and trends are shared across the service.

## 2.13 Outcomes for Permanency

2.13.1 From April 2013 to March 2014 Norfolk Residential Children's Homes have provided accommodation for 117 children and young people that reside in Norfolk. Of these children, 89 have moved on following interventions delivered by the service:

- 26 young people returned home
- 10 to foster care
- 20 to independent living or supported lodgings
- 3 have moved to a residential school
- 26 to other children's homes
- 1 to an asylum seekers refuge
- 1 returned to the county he originated from
- 1 went to a young offenders unit
- 1 to secure accommodation

## 2.14 Number of Children Accommodated in the homes and their Occupancy Rates

The table below shows the occupancy rates for all residential units since October 2013:

**Occupancy Rates & Children / Young People Accommodated by Children's Home**

	<b>% Bed Nights Occupied</b>	<b>Number of Children/Young People Accommodated</b>
Aylsham Road	80%	17
Easthills Road	89.26%	12
Frettenham	100%	Less than 5
Loki House	55%	9
Norwich Road	90.56%	31
The Lodge	95%	41
Waterworks Road	86%	6

As Norwich Road and The Lodge offer emergency provision turnover is necessary to be able to have placement availability for unplanned admissions.

Aylsham Road has achieved successful reunifications earlier than anticipated which at times has resulted in gaps between placements.

Loki House is a new unit which is in a period of establishing the group dynamic to support appropriate matching. It is currently working to full capacity

## 2.15 Service Development

2.15.1 Norfolk introduced the Children's Case Advisory Service (formally known as the Edge of Care Panel). The Service has 2 overall aims, to improve outcomes for children and young people on the edge of care and to improve social care practice, in line with Ofsted recommendations. The Service provides a forum for complex cases to be explored, with a multi-agency group of professionals. Since the Service was established, there has been an increasing need for mentors/outreach workers to assist in supporting children and young people within their family environment and local communities. A high proportion of these cases have been supported by Relief Residential Children's Practitioners, who have been able to cover the county and undertake the support requested and approved by the Advisory Service. We are in process of recruiting two full time members of outreach staff, that can have a base at the Lodge Residential Home, line managed by the management team of the Lodge, alongside the Residential Coordinating Manager for the County.

2.15.2 We have joined up with the Norfolk Constabulary to assess the risk of sexual exploitation in relation to Looked After Children, including the risk of online exploitation.

We commissioned the organisation CEOP Centre (Child Exploitation Online Protection) to train all residential staff. This organisation works across the UK tackling child sex abuse, exploitation and providing advice for parents and young people to ensure all are fully informed and are able to respond to needs appropriately.

2.15.3 We have developed the welcome book, which offers the young person an introduction to the residential unit they have moved into. There are now different formats available to meet a variety of communication needs, including a talking book, a DVD and versions depending on the child's age and level of understanding.

2.15.4 The Service has offered a placement to a social work student. The service has also offered 2 placements for students training to become police officers. These placements offer valuable learning opportunities to all involved.

2.15.5 We have established CareFirst "Champions", either nominated in a single home, or shared across more than one home; trained 99% of residential staff on CareFirst; and set up CareFirst to be available in all homes.

2.15.6 We have set up a single induction process for residential staff which involves young people in the process – this has been rolled out across the homes.

2.15.7 All residential staff have completed the e-learning online training on lone working.

2.15.8 A manager has been identified to be the link person with the In Care Council.

2.15.9 We have reviewed paperwork across all homes to set a consistent minimum standard and the process to keep this up to date.

2.15.10 We have developed a standard template for the Statement of Purpose and

Children's Guides for each of the homes.

- 2.15.11 We have rolled out the extended placement plan's health needs schedule, used at Norwich Road, across all units.
- 2.15.12 Following the success of the first 2 flats that support young people in the transition to independence, which we run in partnership with Broadland Housing, the service has expanded with a third flat offering additional placements.
- 2.15.13 Implemented Children of Concern Policy- to produce a checking system for high profile residents and an information sharing process. This will improve safeguarding and raise awareness.
- 2.15.14 We have worked with Norfolk Constabulary, including the Missing Persons Coordinator, to review our missing from care procedures and produce joint working protocols.

### **3. Financial Implications**

#### Financial Monitoring Information

Each placement in Norfolk's Residential Service children's homes in 2012/13 was on average £2086 per week. This compares favourably with the England 2011/12 average cost of an in-house residential placement of £ £2,565 and an average private / voluntary residential placement cost of £3,023 (source CIPFA benchmarking).

If the placement history of many of the young people accommodated is taken into account (i.e. they have been refused by private / voluntary providers or foster carers), the in-house average costs are perceived as even greater value for money, as the only alternative placements would be in high-cost (£4,000 to £5,000 per week) specialist provision most likely outside of Norfolk.

Following the last financial year, Norfolk Residential Children's Services achieved £70,000 under spend.

### **4. Issues, risks and innovation**

The key challenges for the Service are:

- Ensuring the Service meets the new Ofsted criteria and expectations
- Lowering the number of children and young people looked after
- Updating the local residential policies and procedures to meet new regulations under national guidance

#### Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

As can be seen in the purpose and functions document, all our homes are committed to policy, procedures and practice that enforce equality and address the poor outcomes for this group.

#### Impact on Children and Young People in Norfolk

Children's Services deliver a range of residential homes to meet the needs of young people who require residential care. As can be seen from the quality of care as judged by Ofsted, and our own quality assurance checks, our children's homes are having very positive effects on the outcomes of our young people.

## 5. Background

### Background Papers

The statement of purpose for each unit and the Service's improvement plan is available on Members Insight

### Officer Contact

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# Children's Services Committee

Item No 11

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Response to Looked After Children Reduction Strategy.</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>16 September 2014</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Sheila Lock</b>
<b>Strategic impact</b>  This work directly links to the LAC reduction strategy and the achievement of the £17 million savings objective across 2014-17.	

## Executive summary

This report provides an update on the progress we have made so far in implementing the LAC reduction strategy.

The current LAC population has reduced by almost 3%, from 1148 at the end of March 2014 to 1117 as at 15<sup>th</sup> August<sup>1</sup>. This is in contrast to historical trends of the LAC population in Norfolk which has traditionally seen a year on year increase of around 6%, representing a 9% performance swing. The reduction also bucks the national trend of year-on-year increases in LAC over the last 4 years.

Despite this relative success it is recognised that the pace and scale of delivery needs to accelerate if we are to reach the ambitious target set in the reduction strategy of a total population of 770 LAC by March 2017.

An operational delivery plan has been developed to ensure that the key objectives within the reduction strategy are being delivered in a systematic, measurable and accountable way. This is complimented by a LAC tracking tool which has been established to monitor performance against agreed objectives and commissioned activity at individual child level.

**Recommendations:** To note the progress made to date and endorse the approach being taken to scale-up performance.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Weekly LAC summary

## **1. Proposal (or options)**

The four priorities set within the LAC Reductions Strategy are:

- Reducing LAC numbers
- Delivering timely, high-quality care planning & assessment
- Re-engineering the placement offer
- Profiling and Delivering £17m in Savings

Progress and plans re: these objectives are as follows:

### **1.1 Reducing LAC numbers**

- 1.1.1 At time of writing the total LAC population was 1117. This represents a 3% reduction against the 1148 LAC as at the end of March this year. Whilst a 3% reduction is, in itself, a relatively moderate improvement, when viewed against the year-on-year previous trends of approximately 6% increase in LAC totals, it constitutes a 9% swing in performance which is significant.
- 1.1.2 The pattern we have seen of having a sustained period of stabilisation in LAC numbers preceding reduction also aligns with the experience of the 4 authorities (Derbyshire, Northamptonshire, Essex and Warwickshire) which were used to model our LAC performance objectives (as reported previously).
- 1.1.3 The introduction of the Admissions to Care Panel (ATCP) has ensured that the decision-making around new entrants to our care is robust, consistent and aligned with our core principles. The panel is Chaired by either Sheila Lock or Andrew Haley, as available.
- 1.1.4 It is recognised that the pace of operational delivery needs to be accelerated and to that end an Operational Delivery Plan (ODP) has been developed. The ODP requires social workers to map LAC reduction activity, at an individual child level, across a rolling 12-month timeframe.
- 1.1.5 Through the ODP individual workers will be accountable for delivery against the identified objectives.
- 1.1.6 To compliment the ODP, a LAC tracker has been devised which will be used to monitor and coordinate all LAC-reduction related activity again at individual child level.
- 1.1.7 As well as delivering LAC reduction through increased focus on and accountability for operational delivery, by quantifying the volume and timing of LAC reduction activity, the ODP and LAC tracker will also be vital tools in financial modeling, sufficiency planning and service development.

### **1.2 Delivering timely, high-quality care planning & assessment**

- 1.2.1 The action plan on pathway planning in response to the Overview & Scrutiny task and finish group findings, is being delivered and progress reported via CS committee.
- 1.2.2 The latest performance dashboard shows that pathway plan completion rates have increased from 28.2% in February 2014 to 62.4% in July. Ongoing focus in this area will continue to drive up performance.

- 1.2.3 From September 2014 an audit of pathway plans will commence with 5 Pathway plans from each LAC team being audited against standards described in Tri.X procedures. Whilst this is taking place an audit officer will interview each of the case responsible workers to ascertain their strengths and areas of development. The findings of their interview will be used to develop and inform the new Leaving Care Service.

### **1.3 Re-engineering the placement offer**

- 1.3.1 The key objective in placement re-engineering was to reduce the use of residential from its high point of 15% of total LAC at the time of the last inspection, to under the national average of 7%.
- 1.3.2 The number of LAC currently in residential provision is 132, which constitutes 11.8% of total LAC. This represents a reduction of 28 against the 160 LAC in residential placements at the same point last year, which equated to 14.3%.
- 1.3.3 Further reductions in the residential cohort will be very closely aligned to performance in overall LAC reduction.
- 1.3.4 An 'out of county' policy is being drafted with a view to significantly reducing the numbers of LAC placed outside Norfolk, with particular focus on residential settings. The draft policy will be presented to CS Committee in November 2014.

### **1.4 Profiling and Delivering £17m in Savings**

- 1.4.1 Achieving the required savings is directly dependent on the above activities and as such, financial performance will track operational delivery.
- 1.4.2 At the end of period 4 the agency budget is forecast to be £1.6million overspent. This is of course a cause for concern. However, the inroads we have made into LAC numbers and residential usage mean we have achieved a £600k decrease in spend against the same point last year. Scaling up our activity will have a corresponding impact on financial performance.
- 1.4.3 The ODP and LAC tracker will enable us to more accurately profile spend against budgets and further updates to CS Committee will include that data.

## **2. Evidence**

- 2.1 Within its criticism of our failure to provide an adequate service to children and young people, Ofsted highlighted that too many children and young people were in care.
- 2.2 Norfolk's LAC total has not been on a par with its statistical neighbours for almost 20 years.
- 2.3 Poor care/pathway planning has been cited as a significant problem both in relation to achieving good outcomes for LAC and in reducing the total number.



- 2.4 The use of residential provision is both high cost and contrary to our stated objective of children living within families, yet Norfolk has previously had twice the national average of LAC placed in residential.

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### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 Any costs associated with LAC reduction activity will be met from within existing budgets.
- 3.2 The activity has been designed to enable Children's Services to achieve its £17million savings objective

### **4. Issues, risks and innovation**

#### **Equality Impact**

- 4.1 It is well-established that the outcomes for LAC are generally significantly worse than their peers. Our LAC reduction activity seeks to redress that balance for those children and young people who could be supported to live with their families.
- 4.2 Allied to the above, lower LAC totals will enable Children's services to invest further in those children and young people who cannot be reunified with their families or who are leaving care, enhancing their care experience with a view to narrowing the gap with their peers.

### **5. Background**

- 5.1 Norfolk believes that so long as it is consistent with their safety and well-being and their expressed view, we believe a child or young person should be brought up within their own family or the extended family network. As such, our primary focus will be on the provision of services which support families to stay together.
- 5.2 Norfolk has for some time had too many children in care in comparison to both Statistical Neighbour Averages (SNA) and the national picture.
- 5.3 A challenging objective to save £17m across 2014-17 has been set.

#### **Background Papers**

- 5.3 In January 2014, a Looked After Children Reduction Strategy paper was presented to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

## Officer Contact

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# Children's Services Committee

Item No 12

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Children's Services Committee Plan</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>16 September 2014</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Sheila Lock, Interim Director of Children's Services</b>
<b>Strategic impact</b>	
Committee plans bring together summary information to inform committee decision-making on improved outcomes for children and young people in Norfolk. They ensure that the work of the Committee is visible and accessible to members of the public.	

## Executive summary

This report presents the revised Children's Services Committee Plan. The Plan has been developed since the Committee's last meeting in July to respond to members' feedback about the need to highlight the Committee's new ways of working. These 'new ways of working' are part of Children's Services wider improvement strategy, and particularly relate to three key activities for Committee members:

- **Engaging with staff delivering essential services for children and families** and with young people themselves – this will see the work of the Committee extending far beyond the meeting room, across Norfolk. Members will look at work that takes place on the ground by getting out and about meeting with staff delivering services for children and families and with young people themselves.
- **Robust scrutiny – improving performance and deepening knowledge** - in addition to meeting seven times a year, the Committee is establishing a range of cross-party 'task and finish' in-depth reviews across all aspects of children's services. This work will be aligned with the Committee's forward plan and will help improve performance as well as develop members' knowledge and enhance their role as Corporate Parents.
- **Additional Member Visits** Members will have an opportunity to visit social care and education settings beyond the work of the task groups.

The Committee is asked to consider and approve the revised Plan and draft terms of reference for the task and finish reviews, which are attached at **Annex 1** to this report.

## Recommendations:

1. To consider and agree the revised Committee Plan, and in doing so, to:
  - Agree the approach to task and finish in-depth reviews described on pages 7 to 8
  - Agree the approach to the budget workshops detailed on page 8.
  - Confirm the challenges listed on pages 13 to 15 of the Plan
2. To note the draft terms of reference for the three task and finish in-depth reviews (also noting that the detail of these will be reviewed at the first meeting of each group, to ensure a maximum impact for children and young people)

## Proposal (or options)

1. This report presents the Children's Services Committee Plan. The Plan draws together core information such as how the Committee intends to work, overview of services, current priorities, details of key plans and strategies, risks, challenges, anticipated business and overview of performance. This information has been identified by members as key to the operation of the new committees.
2. A key section of the Plan is entitled 'New ways of working'. This section explains to the public that the work of the Committee will extend far beyond the meeting room. Members will look at work that takes place on the ground and meet with staff delivering services for children and families and with young people themselves. This will include undertaking task and finish in-depth reviews of priority issues for children's services, to enhance members' understanding of complex issues to achieve better outcomes for children and young people.
3. It is proposed that the Committee's first three in-depth reviews will begin in September 2014, and report back findings over the next 3-4 months. The proposed subject areas are:
  - **Children's Centres** – this review crosses both education and social care and will seek to understand how effective our centres are in contributing to children's readiness for school
  - **Variations in educational attainment by district** - members noted at the July Committee meeting that there was significant variance in standards of attainment across the Norfolk districts. This review will examine why this is and what might be done to address it.
  - **Looked After Children** – to look at the high number of LAC and understand reasons for this. To work alongside the Director looking at the current work and plans and make any recommendations.
4. Members are requested to note the draft terms of reference for the in-depth reviews, attached at Annex 1. These set out the overall focus and format for each review (the detail will be considered and agreed at the first meeting of each in-depth review). Members will be asked to nominate themselves to a particular task and finish group.
5. Each of the Council's new committees has its own committee plan. Members have requested that this information be kept concise to ensure it is easily accessible by members of the public. The plans provide visibility and transparency to the work of the Committee.
6. The Plan is a working document for the Committee. This means it will be updated during the course of the year to reflect the Committee's work and progress. For example, this might include priorities the Committee wishes to progress, so that members can maintain an overview of progress and communicate this to the public.
7. The Plan will be used by the Policy & Resources Committee to monitor the Committee's overall progress against the Council's key priorities and targets for children's services in Norfolk.
8. For the early rounds of committee meetings, plans will be made available in hard copy. However, it is intended that plans will be e-enabled. This means they will become a live interface between members, the public and 'critical business' - through which key information can be easily accessed. For example, the 'performance' page would provide an immediate link to the latest performance dashboard.

## Evidence

9. Public consultation consistently indicates that members of the public and service users want clear, simple information about the work of the Council.

### Financial Implications

There are no significant financial implications arising from committee plans. The cost can be met within existing budgets and this is confirmed with the Chief Finance Officer.

## Issues, risks and innovation

10. Committee plans are a new way of working and bringing together complex information. They are concise plain English documents which promote access for all.

## Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please contact:

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# Draft Children's Services Committee Plan 2014/17



# Welcome to the Committee's Plan. In this you will find...



## About the Committee, what it wants to achieve and why

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# Committee membership



These are the elected Members responsible for decision-making on Children's services in Norfolk

In alphabetical order:



**James Joyce**  
**Chairman**



**Richard Bearman**  
**Vice - Chair**



**Jennifer Chamberlin**



**David Collis**



**Emma Corlett**



**Denis Crawford**



**Margaret Dewsbury**



**Colin Foulger**



**Tom Garrod**



**Deborah Gihawi**



**Paul Gilmour**



**Mark Kiddle  
Morris**



**Judy Leggett**



**Jim Perkins**



**Eric Seward**



**Roger Smith**



**Judith Virgo**



# Ambitions for every child in Norfolk



All children have the right to be healthy, happy and safe, loved valued and respected and have high aspirations for the future.

**We want Norfolk to be:**



## **A place of opportunity**

Where young people are able to live happy lives and make a positive contribution within their communities

## **A great place to be a child growing up**

Where outcomes achieved in and out of school are good and outstanding

**A place where children achieve their full potential** and have their needs met at the earliest possible opportunity so that no child is left behind.

## **Future**

A place where young people will want to live and work in the future

**Children's Services Committee oversees the following services:**

- Early years and child care
- Youth offending
- Child protection
- Children and young people in care
- Additional educational needs
- Fostering and Adoption
- Support for school improvement

**Committee decisions must take the following plans into account:**

- Children and Young People's Plan 2013/16
- Children's Services Improvement Plan 2014/16
- Strategic Improvement Plan (Feb 2014)
- Early Help Improvement Plan (Feb 2014)
- A Good School for Every Norfolk Learner
- Safeguarding Improvement Plan (Feb 2014)
- Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board Business Plan and Annual Report
- Looked After Children Improvement Plan (Feb 2014)

# County Council Plan

Norfolk County Council is the democratically elected body representing everyone living in Norfolk.



**Our ambition** is for everyone in Norfolk to succeed and fulfil their potential. By putting people first we can achieve better, safer future, based on education, economic success and listening to local communities

## Good infrastructure

We will make Norfolk a place where businesses can succeed and grow. We will promote improvements to our transport and technology infrastructure to make Norfolk a great place to do business.

## Excellence in education

We will champion our children and young people's right to an excellent education, training and preparation for employment because we know they have the talents and ability to compete with the best.

We will fulfil our ambition through three priorities

## Real jobs

We will promote employment that offers security, opportunities and a good level of pay. We want real sustainable jobs available throughout Norfolk.

### We will fulfil these priorities by:

- Standing up for the interests of people in Norfolk
- Promoting prosperity by championing the best practices, ideas and innovation for local economic success
- Working to increase life opportunities so that everyone can fulfil their potential
- Listening to and learning from our communities so local solutions can improve the quality of life
- Ensuring people get high quality services and clear information about them
- Improving the effectiveness of the Council by being more open and getting bigger input from your local representatives

# Children's services in Norfolk – an overview



The Committee has responsibility for a range of services for children and young people. It liaises with Communities Committee on issues around Children's Health, and Adult Social Services to ensure whole-family issues are addressed. It plays a key role to ensure that the life chances of children are improved as a consequence of its work, so focusing on outcomes is what matters. Children and their families come into contact with the Council for lots of reasons, getting it right quickly and early is essential.



**Support for school improvement** - we are determined that Norfolk schools will be as good as and then better than schools in any other part of England



**Effective early help** - reduces the number of children and families who need our help in the long term.  
**Early years and child care** - is key to breaking the cycle of poverty, social exclusion and disadvantage.



**Additional educational needs** - we want our children to benefit from an inclusive education that is as good as that available anywhere and we want them to be ready and prepared for life as economically ambitious citizens



**Child protection** - we believe that, so long as it is consistent with their safety and well-being, children should be brought up within their own family. Where this is not possible we will deliver the best care possible.



**Children and young people in care** - where a period of time in our care is necessary and appropriate, we will ensure that a professionally informed, risk assessed and dynamic planning and assessment framework are used as the foundation for decision-making, throughout young people's time in our care. We will work with whole families to achieve the best outcomes.



**Fostering and Adoption** - where reunification with their family is not possible, we will ensure that children have permanent nurturing placements which enable them to reach independence confidently and with optimism for their future.



**Children in trouble** – we want to prevent children and young people from offending whilst safeguarding their welfare, protecting the public and helping restore the damage caused to the victims of their crimes.



# Ways of working for the new committee



## Working differently for better results

Members of the Children's Service Committee are leading new ways of working, to maintain a relentless focus on improvement. This takes the work of the Committee far beyond the meeting room, across Norfolk. Members will look at the work that takes place on the ground by getting out and about meeting with staff delivering essential services for children and families and with young people themselves.



Meetings will feel different. Reports will focus on what impact will be made for Norfolk's children right from the start. There will be greater input from front line managers, to give members a direct account of live issues. Agenda setting will go through a number of stages, from the Committee through to discussions with the chair, vice chair and director, and spokespeople. The Committee's forward plan will set out the main programme of work ahead, and this will be updated monthly and published online [www.norfolk.gov.uk/committees](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/committees)



## Robust scrutiny – improving performance and deepening knowledge

In addition to meeting seven times a year, the Committee is establishing a new range of cross party 'task and finish' in-depth reviews for scrutiny across all aspects of children's services. This work will be aligned with the Committee's forward plan. It will help improve performance as well as develop members' knowledge on specific issues, and enhance their role as Corporate Parents.



As part of this work Members will visit a wide range of teams, partners and stakeholders, and meet young people to ensure their views are central to all discussions.

The working groups will comprise members of the Children's Services Committee, and may involve members from other committees, to facilitate a 'one-Council' approach to improvement. The working groups will report on progress at each Committee meeting. Reports will also be made to other service committees.



Our watchwords will be *What have we done today to improve the lives of children and young people in Norfolk?*

# Ways of working - continued



## The task group work programme

The Committees first three cross-party task groups will begin in September 2014, and report back findings in the next 3-4 months. They will look at:

- **Children's Centres** – this review crosses both education and social care and will seek to understand how effective our centres are in contributing to children's readiness for school
- **Variations in educational attainment by district** - members noted at the July Committee meeting that there was significant variance in standards of attainment across the Norfolk districts. This review will examine why this is and what might be done to address it.
- **Looked After Children** – to look at the high number of LAC and understand reasons for this. To work alongside the Director looking at the current work and plans and make any recommendations.



## Additional Member Visits

Members will also be offered the opportunity to visit social care and education settings beyond the work of the task groups. These will be organised to be relevant to issues in the forward plan. Some of the visits will include:

- Observation of the Colloquium October 2014
- The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- LAC Team
- Children's Centres
- A selection of schools and the Short Stay school



## Member Briefings – budget process

The Committee will continue the successful briefings introduced by the former Scrutiny Panel. The first of these will consider the budget process and will comprise a set of two hour sessions over the coming months.

The first of these sessions will be a briefing from officers on the detailed composition of the budget, and the savings already agreed. This will be followed by sessions(as required) looking at savings proposals. These will be open to all members of the Committee.



# In-depth reviews & scrutiny – how will it work?



Three cross-party task and finish in-depth reviews will be held during autumn/winter 2014. A rolling programme of reviews will take place each year. The process for task and finish reviews is as follows:

## Meeting 1 – context & intelligence

- The working group convenes to consider the scope of the review to ensure a collective understanding of core aims
- Members receive a series of presentations setting out the fundamental context and relevant business intelligence
- A summary of views of children and young people are heard
- An overview of the proposed visits is given, and why relevant to the review
- Members agree a set of lines of inquiry to follow at the visits

## Meeting 2 – visits and field work

- Over the course of a day/half day, the working group visits key teams and services for children and families and where appropriate young people.
- Key lines of inquiry are followed, as well as other relevant discussions, part of which will involve taking evidence from officers, stakeholders and interested parties.
- While travelling between visits, Members have an opportunity to compare and reflect on findings and discuss with officers

## Meeting 3 – analysis & conclusions

- The working group reconvenes to reflect , review, and debate issues
- Questions raised during the visits are answered, with additional intelligence being provided where necessary
- The working group agrees its findings and key learning and conclusions to report back to the Children's Services Committee

***The number of meetings at stage 2 may be increased as necessary***



# Voice of children and young people

What Norfolk young people say they would like members to bear in mind when making decisions.



"It is important how decisions are made as it must benefit the majority and not only one or two people!"

"Be informed, be aware, be knowledgeable, be active, be a good advocate for all children in Norfolk. That's how we safeguard children."

"It is really hard being parented by an organisation, we need everyone to recognise that they are corporate parents and to take this role seriously, by questioning decisions, challenging negative things said about us and fighting our corner."

"As a person who doesn't get the vote, it is important to me that my views are equally listened to and understood. I think it is important that young people are consulted about what they want and their understanding of what they want and need should not be doubted."

"It is important about how decisions are made because they can effect and motivate us to a better life in the future"

"We think [Members] should ask themselves "would this be good enough for my child" before they make any decision about anything that might affect children's lives. If their answer is no or they are not sure then they should think again until they can say yes with confidence"

For more about views from young people:

- [Norfolk In Care Council](#)
- [Norfolk Youth Parliament](#)
- [Fostered children and YP](#)
- [Hear by right tool for participation of YP](#)
- [Children and YP with disabilities video](#)
- [Transition case studies](#)

# What does growing up in Norfolk today really mean?



## Child population

Information from [Norfolk's Age and stage Commissioning Profiles](#)

Children and young people are not evenly spread across Norfolk - the highest numbers of children live in King's Lynn and West Norfolk and in Norwich and the lowest number in North Norfolk. They make up a smaller part of the population of Norfolk than they do across the Eastern region and the country as a whole.

## Economic needs

Many Norfolk children are growing up in households struggling to make ends meet. In 2010, more than 1 in 6 children under 20 was estimated to be living in poverty – a total of about 29,700 children. Most of these are in Norwich, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn and West Norfolk. 13% of children under 16 are living in homes where no one is working. In 2012/13, the number of children eligible for free school meals rose in all but one of Norfolk's local authority areas.

## Health needs

Disabilities affect the daily lives of a growing number of children and young people - more than 32,700 young people have long-standing illness or disability and this is expected to grow by a further 2,000 children by 2020. About 140 children are severely disabled. 975 pupils in Norfolk's primary and secondary schools have a severe learning difficulty.

## Family needs

Family difficulties make life challenging for some Norfolk children. A higher than average number of children in Norfolk are looked after and this has been increasing over time. 7,709 children were affected by domestic abuse in 2011/12 and around 12,000 are affected by parents abusing drugs or alcohol. About 2,960 young people are estimated to have significant caring roles, usually because they have family members with a long-term illness or disability that means they need support.

## Education needs

Some young people in Norfolk are not making the same progress in education as other people of their age nationally. At the age of 7, the attainment of children in Norfolk schools is similar to the rest of the country but it is below average for older age groups. In 2011 about 1,406 learners (15%) did not attain any further qualifications beyond those they had attained at age 16 compared to a national average of 12.9%.



The number of young people aged 16 to 18 who are not in employment, education or training is above the regional and national averages.

## Community needs

Well over 100 languages other than English are spoken in Norfolk schools, with almost 2,500 children in secondary schools (aged 11-16) whose preferred language is other than English (mainly in Norwich and Great Yarmouth).



# Chief Officer explains the Committee's challenges



## The Committee's challenges

The work of the Committee is focused on supporting the drive to improve Children's services across the county. There is a strong improvement plan in place, with a focused drive to make the experience of services better for children, young people and their families. The Committee will lead and monitor the progress on the delivery of improvement plans, looking specifically at whether the services delivered improve outcomes and life chances for all children across the county. The Committee will focus also on developing new services and changing services in dialogue with senior officers where the Department needs to respond to new legislation, as is the case with services for Disabled Children and Children with Special Educational Needs or where improvements need to be made, as is the case with Young People leaving care.



**Sheila Lock**  
Interim Director of  
Children's Services

The Committee's role will be to hold Council officers to account for delivery of high quality statutory services and outcomes for children and young people and to make sure that resources are allocated according to need. Central to the Committee's work will be hearing and listening to the voice of children and young people and to staff working with them. In order to effectively carry out this role, members will have regular information-sharing and dialogue with both users of children's services and officers and partners delivering those services. Fact-finding visits, task and finish groups and regular briefings will form part of members' work outside the committee and it is envisaged that through these activities the effectiveness of the scrutiny and the quality of decision-making of this Committee will remain high.

The financial constraints in which local authorities are operating across the country - and Norfolk is no exception - will be a particular challenge for all members to consider. We know that the earlier we can get help to children and their families when they are struggling the better outcomes we can see in terms of long term wellbeing. Working with our partners, communities and with young people will be a central part of our work going forward in re-designing the services we offer locally to families.

In all of the work ensuring we deliver timely, flexible, highly performing services is at the heart of the approach. The analysis and effective challenge of performance data and trends monthly will be an important part of the Committee's role and where necessary task and finish in-depth reviews will be commissioned by the Committee.

# Challenges

The Committee faces a range of challenges in achieving ambitions for children and young people in Norfolk. These must be taken into account during decision-making:



## Improvement

- Following recent inspection findings, Children's Services has embarked upon a major programme of improvement. Failure to deliver on this could lead to some services being taken outside of NCC control to ensure that children and families in Norfolk are guaranteed a good quality service

## Increasing demand for services

- Norfolk's rising population is not just placing greater demand on services - young people's needs are becoming more complex too. We have to be constantly creative and challenging to find ways to maintain current service levels and service quality.

## Skills base and Norfolk's economy

- We want to ensure that children in Norfolk leave education with the skills they need in order to achieve their full potential. This is not only beneficial to the individual but also to the local economy as a skilled workforce will attract more business opportunities

## Norfolk's future

- Ensuring that the local economy supports young people and can give them a place to live and grow is vital to their transition into adulthood and the success of the county. We want young people to see a future here, with good job prospects, quality of life and a sense of belonging.

# Challenges

The Committee faces a range of challenges in achieving ambitions for children and young people in Norfolk. These must be taken into account during decision-making:



## Poverty

- Some areas in Norfolk feature within the most deprived places to live in the country. Often children and their future prospects can be severely affected by growing up in poverty as options may be limited for them.

## Behaviours harmful to health

- Getting children to take up a healthier way of life can benefit them individually and stop them needing our services later in life. Influencing the way a child looks at their health will involve influencing their family as well.

## Our changing customers

- Our customers are changing, along with their expectations and needs. Increasingly Norfolk is becoming more culturally diverse, with different languages and customs coming together for the first time. We need to understand how this affects the services that people need.

## Rurality and customer need

- We are continuing to work on ways in which we can ensure children and young people can get to where they need to go. This is challenging because as a rural county we face additional obstacles and expense when it comes to actually getting people access to schools and other facilities.

# Challenges

The Committee faces a range of challenges in achieving ambitions for children and young people in Norfolk. These must be taken into account during decision-making:



## Foster Carers / Adopters

- There is a national shortage of foster carers and adopters. We need to encourage people to consider fostering or adopting, to ensure that children who cannot live with their families have an appropriate placement or new family who can meet their needs and give them the stability and love they need to achieve their potential.

## Workforce development

- Getting and keeping a good teaching and social care workforce is critical to deliver good quality services. The County Council is developing a sustainable approach to this issue working with the University of East Anglia.

## Continuing budget reductions

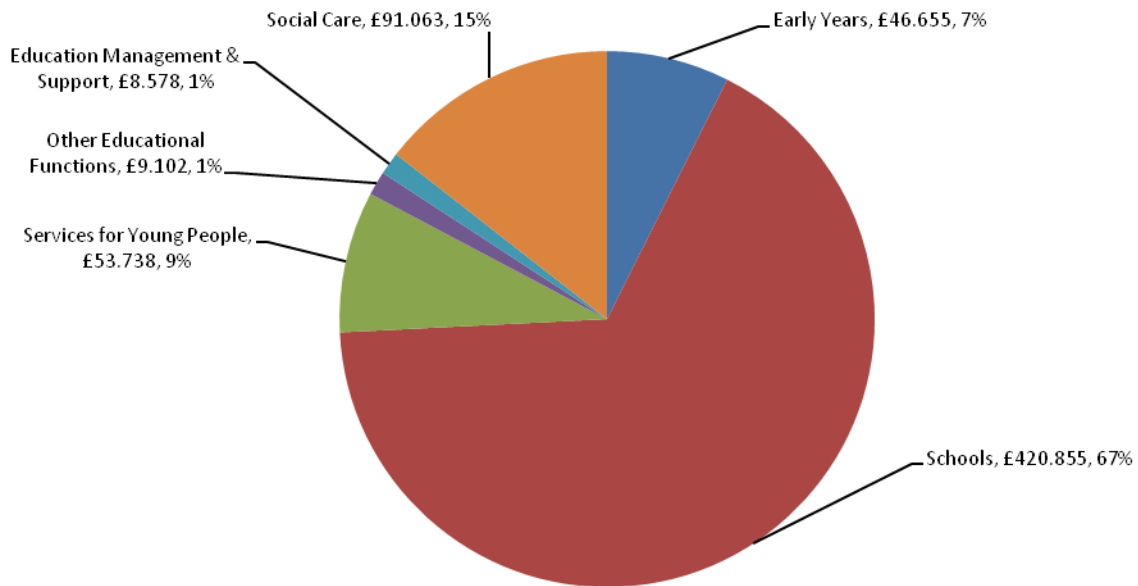
- We have limited ability to mitigate rising demand for services. Or provide income through trading and income generation so we must ensure that strict budget management continues. The pressure to reduce our budgets continues so we must be innovative and look at new ways of working.

# Resources and budget

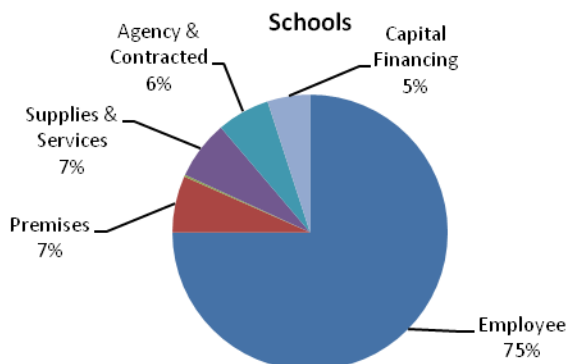


Local Government will experience yearly reductions in funding up to 2020. The two financial tasks for all committees are to deliver their 2014-15 budget, and plan for the next three years, 2015-18, to be agreed in February 2015. The scale of challenge requires a new approach, a wide range of options and significant public consultation.

Children's Service Expenditure 2014/15 £m



Children's Services expenditure is made up of three main areas; Schools, Social Care and Looked After Children and other Education functions.



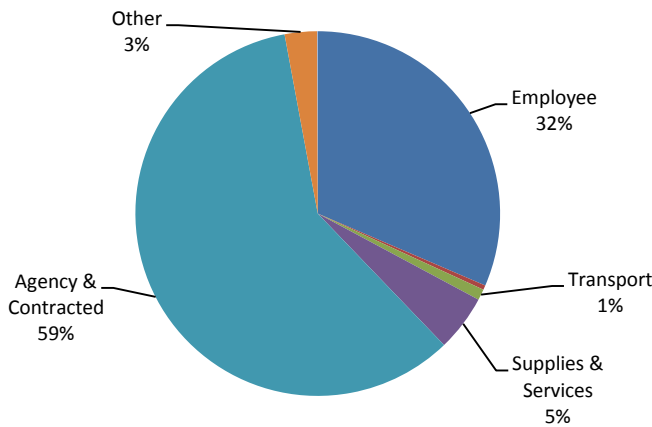
**Schools** funding is provided through the Dedicated Schools Grant and Pupil Premium, which is paid to the County Council and passed on to schools in accordance with the agreed formula allocation.



# Resources and budget



Social Care

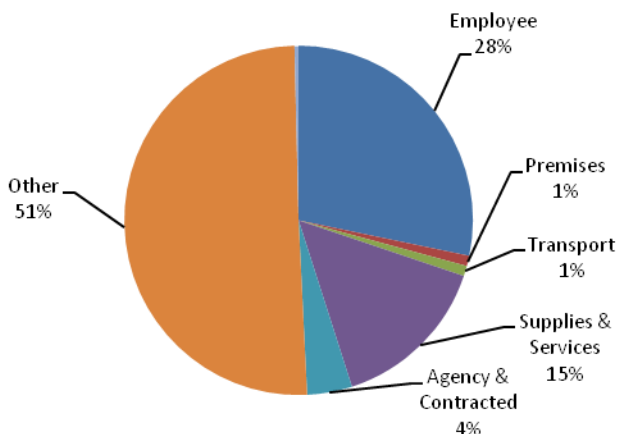


The majority of Social Care spend is on **Looked After Children**, including residential care, secure accommodation, fostering services, children placed with family and friends, advocacy services, leaving care support services and asylum seeker services. Other elements of the service include; central commissioning function and teams of social workers delivering **social care and safeguarding** services.. **Family Support Services**, including homcare, contribution to healthcare of individual children, short breaks (respite) for disabled children, substance misuse services and teenage pregnancy services. **Youth Justice**, including youth offending teams. **Children and Young People's Safety**, including child death review processes. **Other Children and Family Services**, including adoption services and special guardianship support.

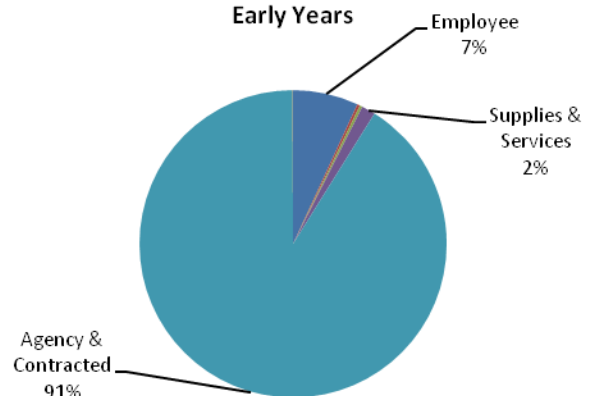
The **Services for Young People** budgets include; Positive Activities for Young People, Community Support for Youth Provision, Information Advice and Guidance Services, Study Support Centres, and Water Activities Centre.

The **Early Years** services include delegated nursery school budgets, local authority expenditure attributable to early years provisions, Children's Centres and payments to private voluntary and independent early years providers.

Services for Young People



Early Years



# Resources and budget



Norfolk County Council needs to find savings of £189m between 2014 and 2017. Savings were identified by management teams and members. Norfolk residents were consulted through the Putting People First budget consultation. The savings below are those relevant to the Children's Committee agreed by Full Council on 17 February 2014. It includes savings which formed part of the consultation as well as those associated with the general organisation and running of the Department.

	Saving 14/15	Saving 15/16	Saving 16/17
21. Increase the number of services we have to prevent children and young people from coming into our care and reducing the cost of looking after children	4.871	5.215	7.559
22. Change services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in response to the Children and Families Bill	-	-	1.912
23. Reduce the funding for restorative approaches	0.160	-	-
24. Stop our contribution to the Schools Wellbeing Service, Norfolk Music Service and Healthy Norfolk Schools programme and explore if we could sell these services to schools	0.474	0.215	-

# Resources and budget



	Saving 14/15	Saving 15/16	Saving 16/17
25. Change how we support child-minders, nurseries and other childcare providers	2.670	-	-
26. Reduce the cost of transport for children with Special Educational Needs	-	-	1.000
27. Reduce the transport subsidy provided to students aged 16 – 19	1.000	1.000	-
28. Reduce the amount of funding we contribute to the partnerships that support young people who misuse substances and young people at risk of offending	-	-	0.250
29. Reduce funding for school crossing patrols	-	0.150	0.150
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.175</b>	<b>6.58</b>	<b>10.871</b>



# Risks and innovation

By identifying risks and opportunities we can make better decisions about future activities and focus.



## Risks

As an organisation we have a risk management process which cuts across all departments and committees. The information below shows a snapshot in time and will be updated as the plan develops.

For the Children's Services Committee there are four main areas of risk which could affect what it does in the future.

Risk	How high is the risk?
Failure to improve at the required pace	<b>Amber</b>
Over reliance on interim capacity	<b>Amber</b>
Looked After Children Over Spends	<b>Amber</b>
Lack of corporate capacity and capability	<b>Amber</b>

## Innovation

As well as looking at future challenges we are also seeking new and exciting opportunities to help deliver our ambitions.

This includes things like new funding streams, different ways of working and even sometimes stopping delivering services where they are no longer needed or relevant. New opportunities and innovative ways of working will continue to be explored.

### Development

Norfolk County Council is working with the University of East Anglia to attract and increase the number of high quality social workers in Norfolk through an innovative new strategy -Norfolk Institute of Practice Excellence (NIPE)

# Performance

A key role of the Committee is to monitor progress against targets on a monthly basis.



## Commentary from the Chairman on behalf of the Committee for 2014/15


At the end of each financial year, the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, will provide an overview of the Committee's progress in achieving key priorities for children and young people in Norfolk. This information will assist the Policy and Resources Committee to understand and monitor overall progress against the Council's key priorities and targets for children and young people.



## Performance at a glance

This represents some of the important things that the Children's Services Committee along with Officers have achieved over the past year and some areas where we did not achieve as much as we had hoped.



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened leadership of the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board in order to ensure robust challenge to ourselves and partners.</li> <li>• In Spring 2013, Norfolk County Council, working closely with partners, devised a new collaborative strategy to ensure we have many more good schools.</li> <li>• Recruited more social workers to boost capacity</li> <li>• Improved use of Care First</li> <li>• New approach to case audit</li> <li>• Revised improvement plans</li> <li>• Aligned Finance and Business planning</li> </ul> |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Norfolk has one of the highest rates of looked after children in the country. This must and will change. We believe that, so long as it is consistent with their safety and well being, children should be brought up within their own family.</li> <li>• We have not, to date, delivered a sufficiently coherent multi-agency early help offer or targeted services which prevent the escalation of need and risk and improve outcomes for individuals. This has meant the delivery of early help has been inconsistent. This must and will change.</li> <li>• Pathway Plans for care leavers are not in place in all instances.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

Note: when the Plan is e-enabled this page will provide direct links to Children's Services performance dashboard to access progress updates on performance

# The Committee's forward plan



## Forward plans – what are they?

Children's Services Committee has its own forward plan – this is essentially a list of items that members will need to consider or make a decision on in the year ahead.

The forward plan is a key tool for members. It makes it possible for members to ensure the implementation of their vision for children, as well as:

- Ensuring performance issues are continually addressed
- Prepare and plan for the big decisions coming up eg by talking to constituents, doing background research or considering contentious issues
- To receive statutory reports in a timely way
- Avoid being 'surprised' by issues cropping up without warning
- Co-ordinate work across the different committees
- Spot issues that might need to be 'referred' to other committees
- Identify issues that might need to be considered by Full Council

Maintaining the pace of improvement will be a core feature of the forward plan.

## Where can I see the latest forward plan for Children's Services?

The forward plan is regularly reviewed so that it always shows the key decisions ahead. The plan is updated each month and published on the Council's website.

For the latest version of the Children's Services forward plan see:

[www.norfolk.gov.uk/committees](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/committees)

# Improvement work – priorities & actions



The **Children's Service's Improvement Plan** and other key strategies (see page 4) sets out in detail key priorities and actions for children's services. Namely:

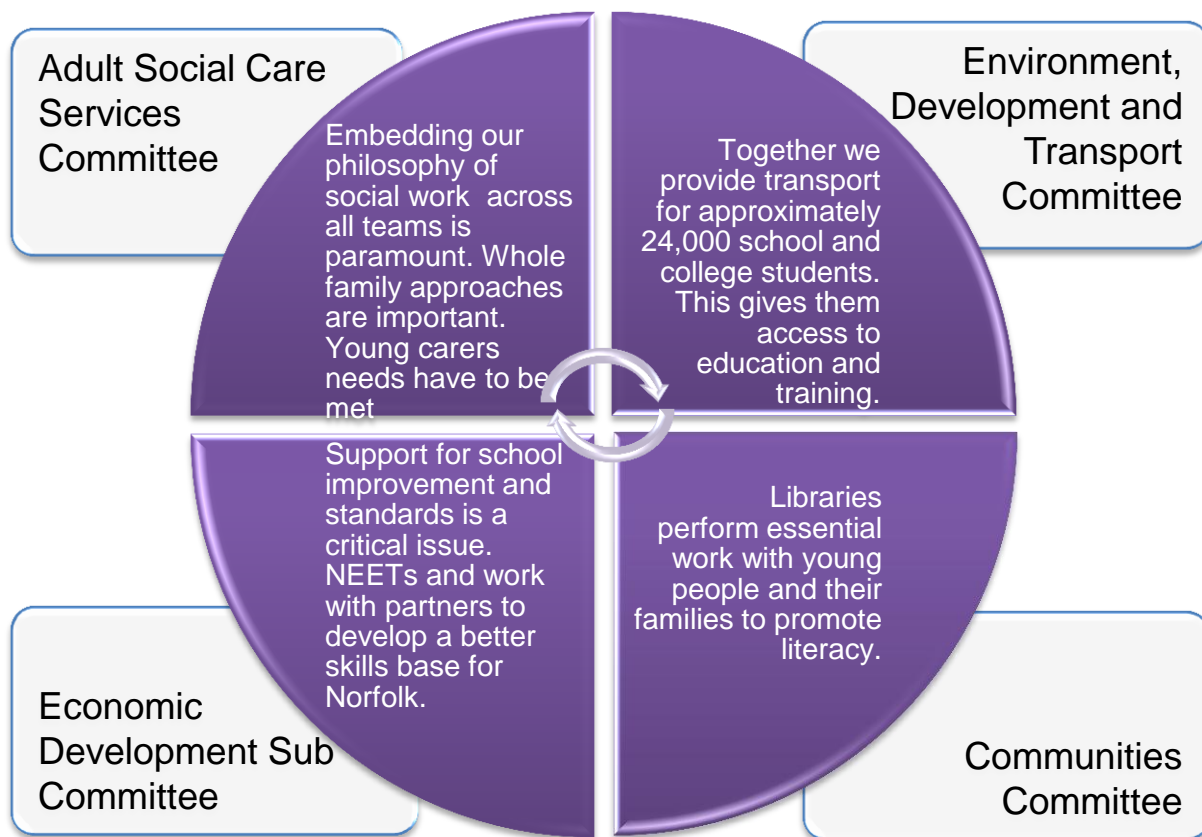
- Developing and implementing an effective Early Help offer
- Providing care only when a child cannot live at home safely with support – consequently reducing LAC numbers
- Getting a Good School for every Norfolk Child and moving forward from Good to great
- Making sure our most vulnerable children and young people are supported effectively
- Putting the voice of children at the heart of what we do
- Working effectively with our partners

Through this work and related activity such as in-depth task and finish group reviews, the Committee may identify additional work to support these priorities.





# Working with other Committees



## Policy and Resources Committee

The Policy and Resources Committee has a co-ordinating role, overseeing and leading development of the County Council Plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan. It has responsibility for enabling services such as ICT and HR, which help to support delivery at the front line of children's services. P&R Committee works hand in hand with each service committee, to maintain a 'whole council view' and an efficient and effective organisation.

Every committee has set responsibilities relevant to their remit. However, they **also work together** in order to achieve common goals. Key to this is that every member is a **Corporate Parent** for children looked after by the Council. Members need to view themselves as parents of these children and consider all the services the Council and public agencies provide - as an employer, provider of housing (District level) and so on.

**Norfolk County Council**  
**Children's Services**  
**Task and Finish Group Review**

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Children's Centres  
Scoping Document

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## **Background to reviews**

Getting the right topics for Task Group scrutiny reviews is the first step in making sure scrutiny provides benefits to the Council and the community.

This scoping template has been designed to assist in thinking through the purpose of a review and the means of carrying out the review.

In order to be effective, every review must be properly project managed. This is to make sure that the review achieves its aims and has measurable outcomes. One of the most important ways to make sure that a review goes well is to ensure that it is well defined at the outset. This way the review is less likely to get side-tracked or be overambitious in what it hopes to tackle. The Task Group's objectives should, therefore, be as SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Time-bound) as possible. It will be important for the Task group to 'hear' evidence from officers and other stakeholders first hand.

Task Groups will play an important role in performance improvement and should be seen as integral to this work.

The terms of reference should be signed off by the Committee or Chair and Vice Chair to ensure involvement of the Department and manage the overall work programme. As well as allowing the Task and Finish Group to consider any additional factors that may influence the proposed review. It also includes a section on public and media interest in the review which should be completed in conjunction with the Council's Communications Team. This will allow the Commission to be properly prepared for any media interest and to plan the release of any press statements.

Reviews will be facilitated by an appropriate Officer.

### **Evaluation**

Reviewing changes that have been made as a result of a review is the most common way of assessing effectiveness. Any review should consider whether an on-going monitoring role for the Committee is appropriate to the topic under review.

### **1. Title of Proposed Task and Finish Group Review**

Review of effectiveness of Norfolk's Children's Centres in particular how well do Children's Centres enhance children's readiness for school under the current contract arrangements?
---

### **2. Rationale**

Members should outline the background to this review and why it is an area worthy of in-depth investigation.

A main objective of the Early Help Improvement Plan is to improve outcomes for children at the end of the Foundation Stage, as they start school, with particular emphasis on the most disadvantaged. The role of children's centres in delivering this outcome is important.

### **3. Purpose and Objectives of Review**

Members should consider what the objectives of the review are

To understand the current arrangements and plans and how well they are working

To understand the effectiveness of children's centres in contributing to children's readiness for school

To understand how the reach of the Centres can be extended to include more and older children and so increase the impact of their work

To understand if and how we are achieving value for money with the current arrangements

To make any recommendations for policy and actions



## **Methodology/Approach**

Members should consider how the objectives of the review will best be achieved and what evidence will need to be gathered from officers and stakeholders, including outside organisations and experts.

- The Task and Finish Group will need to examine the performance data for children's centres and understand how well they are contributing to improved performance
- To fully understand their work in preparing children for school; review current documentation, policies and practice and organisation of the centres, with reference to Access to Services, Quality of Service and Practice, and Leadership and Management.
- The work of the Early Years Improvement Board may also be relevant.
- Take evidence from council officers, including commissioners, and the schools improvement service etc
- The Group will need to visit a sample of children's centres, and schools, and may divide this task up amongst the Group
- To understand the budgets and delivery structure to evaluate value for money
- Look at evidence from other authorities and national organisations where appropriate

In conducting the review the Task Group may want to consider the following questions:-

- 1) How many eligible children take up places in children's centres?
- 2) How does this compare with other similar authorities and what can we learn from them?
- 3) How effective are the centres in promoting attendance?
- 4) What is the take up of free early learning places?
- 5) How has the capital investment supported this?
- 6) What is the impact on the outcomes for the children? How do centres vary?
- 7) What recommendations should be made for consideration?

## **5. Deadlines and timetable**

Members should anticipate the likely length of the review being proposed.

It is anticipated that the review should start in September and be completed within 3-4 months. It will be important to produce some interim recommendations by January to inform the commissioning process timetable.  
The task group could comprise 5-6 members.  
Detailed timetable and work plan to be agreed at first meeting to ensure it is in step with the commissioning process.

## **6. Additional resource/staffing requirements**

All reviews should be facilitated by officers. Members should anticipate whether any further resource is required, be this for site visits or independent technical advice.

This review will require officer time from Children's Services, Children's centres

The review will need be supported to organise visits etc.

## **7. Outcomes**

A report to Committee of findings and making any recommendations for action and/or further work.

**Before approving this scoping document the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group should ensure the following boxes should be completed in conjunction with the relevant officers:**

## **9. Likely publicity arising from the review**

Members will wish to anticipate whether the topic being reviewed is high profile and whether it will attract media interest. If so, this box should be completed with help from the relevant officer in the Council's PR and Media Team.

Publicity will be through all Children's Committee meetings as they are public meetings.

Stakeholders of interest will be kept informed.

## **10. Terms of reference agreed by**

Children's Committee or Chair Vice Chair of Committee  
Date

**Norfolk County Council**  
**Children's Services**  
**Task and Finish Group Review**

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Looked After Children

Scoping Document

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Getting the right topics for Task group scrutiny reviews is the first step in making sure scrutiny provides benefits to the Council and the community.

This scoping template has been designed to assist in thinking through the purpose of a review and the means of carrying out the review.

In order to be effective, every review must be properly project managed. This is to make sure that the review achieves its aims and has measurable outcomes. One of the most important ways to make sure that a review goes well is to ensure that it is well defined at the outset. This way the review is less likely to get side-tracked or be overambitious in what it hopes to tackle. The Task Group's objectives should, therefore, be as SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Time-bound) as possible. It will be important for the Task group to 'hear' evidence from officers and other stakeholders first hand.

Task Groups will play an important role in performance improvement and should be seen as integral to this work.

The terms of reference should be signed off by the Committee or Chair and Vice Chair to ensure involvement of the Department and manage the overall work programme. As well as allowing the Task and Finish Group to consider any additional factors that may influence the proposed review. It also includes a section on public and media interest in the review which should be completed in conjunction with the Council's Communications Team. This will allow the Commission to be properly prepared for any media interest and to plan the release of any press statements.

Reviews will be facilitated by an appropriate Officer.

### **Evaluation**

Reviewing changes that have been made as a result of a review is the most common way of assessing effectiveness. Any review should consider whether an on-going monitoring role for the Committee is appropriate to the topic under review.

## **1. Title of Proposed Task and Finish Group Review**

Review of policies and practice relating to looked after children in Norfolk.

A review to look into the overall high numbers of looked after Children (LAC) and to understand the reasons for this. To understand the current approach and actions taken by the council and working with the Director to look at their effectiveness and consider what further actions might be taken to improve the outcomes for children and families.

## **2. Rationale**

Members should outline the background to this review and why it is an area worthy of in-depth investigation.

The number of Looked After Children (LAC) has been High for a significant time in comparison to statistical neighbours and stands at 1153 May 2014, against a target population of 770 based on comparative data. This is one of the issues underpinning the Ofsted Inspection 12 months ago and a review is timely. It has consequences for children and families and for the budget.

## **3. Purpose and Objectives of Review**

Members should consider what the objectives of the review are

The council is committed to safely reducing the number of LAC and the review will look at progress and what more might be done. The Task and Finish Group would like to examine the policies, and current work for LAC reduction and to fully understand the issues. To Understand the response to the Ofsted inspection in July 2013. To examine and understand the impact amongst other things, on resources, and the types and quality of care provided, and the outcomes for children and their families.

To consider what if any actions to recommend by considering the following:-

- 1) What are the reasons for high numbers of LAC are there any trends?
- 2) How does this compare with other authorities?
- 3) What effect does this have on services/resources?
- 4) How effective has the social work pilot in schools been in reducing social care referral rates?
- 5) What is the impact on the outcomes for the children?
- 6) What can we learn from other authorities who have experienced this issue?
- 7) What recommendations should be made for consideration?
- 8) To provide members with an in depth understanding of policies and practice for LAC

## **4. Methodology/Approach**

Members should consider how the objectives of the review will best be achieved and what evidence will need to be gathered from officers and stakeholders, including outside organisations and experts.

- To fully understand the issue; review current documentation, performance information and policies, the operational improvement plan for LAC, January 2014 Scrutiny report, etc
- Take evidence from officers and stakeholders, including referral agencies such as the police
- Look at evidence from other authorities and national organisations
- Approach the Children in Care Council (CIC) to get the views of young people/carers
- Visit and talk with staff in the MASH, leaving care team, initial assessment teams etc.

## **5. Deadlines and timetable**

Members should anticipate the likely length of the review being proposed.

It is anticipated that the review should start in September and be completed within 5-6 months. There could be interim reports for information to members.

The task group will comprise 5-6 members

The first meeting will agree a detailed timetable and work plan

## **6. Additional resource/staffing requirements**

All reviews should be facilitated by officers. Members should anticipate whether any further resource is required, be this for site visits or independent technical advice.

This review will require officer time from Children's Services.

The review will need to be supported by Officers to organise visits etc and to include the views of young people and carers either through the In Care Council or more directly.

Other sources of information the LGA etc.

## **7. Outcomes**

A report to the Children's Committee with recommendations for action and or further work. Giving Committee members an much greater knowledge and understanding of the issues which will in turn strengthen the overall approach to LAC.

**Before approving this scoping document the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group should ensure the following boxes should be completed in conjunction with the relevant officers:**

## **9. Likely publicity arising from the review**

Members will wish to anticipate whether the topic being reviewed is high profile and whether it will attract media interest. If so, this box should be completed with help from the relevant officer in the Council's PR and Media Team.

Publicity will be through all Children's Committee meetings as they are public meetings.

Stakeholders of interest will be kept informed.

**10. Terms of reference Signed off by**

Committee or chair and vice chair  
Date

DRAFT

**Norfolk County Council**  
**Children's Services**  
**Task and Finish Group Review**

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Variations in educational attainment by district  
Scoping Document

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## **Background to reviews**

Getting the right topics for Task Group scrutiny reviews is the first step in making sure scrutiny provides benefits to the Council and the community.

This scoping template has been designed to assist in thinking through the purpose of a review and the means of carrying out the review.

In order to be effective, every review must be properly project managed. This is to make sure that the review achieves its aims and has measurable outcomes. One of the most important ways to make sure that a review goes well is to ensure that it is well defined at the outset. This way the review is less likely to get side-tracked or be overambitious in what it hopes to tackle. The Task Group's objectives should, therefore, be as SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Time-bound) as possible. It will be important for the Task group to 'hear' evidence from officers and other stakeholders first hand.

Task Groups will play an important role in performance improvement and should be seen as integral to this work.

The terms of reference should be signed off by the Committee or Chair and Vice Chair to ensure involvement of the Department and manage the overall work programme. As well as allowing the Task and Finish Group to consider any additional factors that may influence the proposed review. It also includes a section on public and media interest in the review which should be completed in conjunction with the Council's Communications Team. This will allow the Commission to be properly prepared for any media interest and to plan the release of any press statements.

Reviews will be facilitated by an appropriate Officer.

### **Evaluation**

Reviewing changes that have been made as a result of a review is the most common way of assessing effectiveness. Any review should consider whether an on-going monitoring role for the Committee is appropriate to the topic under review.

### **1. Title of Proposed Task and Finish Group Review**

To understand why educational attainment seems to vary between districts in the county and what more could be done to improve attainment in areas where it is falling behind.

## **2. Rationale**

Members should outline the background to this review and why it is an area worthy of in-depth investigation.

It was noted at the July Children's Services Committee that educational attainment varied between districts and members wanted to understand why this was so.

The purpose of this review is to find out why there are variations and what might be done about to ensure that lower level of attainment at least matches the best

The recent Ofsted inspection of the School Improvement service noted that "Outcomes for the districts within Norfolk remain too variable. The proportion of Key Stage 2 pupils gaining level 4 or better in reading, writing and mathematics in 2013 showed a 12 percentage point gap between the highest and the lowest performing areas. This gap has only slightly reduced this year."

## **3. Purpose and Objectives of Review**

Members should consider what the objectives of the review are

To fully understand the current pattern of education performance.

To find out what the reasons might be for the differences geographically.

To make any recommendations for policy and actions.

## **4. Methodology/Approach**

Members should consider how the objectives of the review will best be achieved and what evidence will need to be gathered from officers and stakeholders, including outside organisations and experts.

- The Task and Finish Group would like to examine the performance data and map it geographically
- To fully understand the issue; review current documentation, performance information and policies
- Take evidence from education officers, the schools improvement service, governors organisation, etc. The Group may need to visit schools in certain areas and may divide this task up amongst the Group.
- Look at evidence from other authorities and national organisations if appropriate

In conducting the review the Task Group may want to consider the following questions:-

- 1) How recent are these differences?
- 2) How does this compare with other authorities?
- 3) What is the impact on the outcomes for the children?
- 4) What interventions have been used to tackle this and how effective have they been?
- 5) What can we learn from other authorities who have experienced this issue?
- 6) What recommendations should be made for consideration?

## **5. Deadlines and Timetable**

Members should anticipate the likely length of the review being proposed.

It is anticipated that the review should start in September and be completed within 3 months. The task group could comprise 5-6 members.

The first meeting will consider the detailed timetable and work plan.

## **6. Additional resource/staffing requirements**

All reviews should be facilitated by officers. Members should anticipate whether any further resource is required, be this for site visits or independent technical advice.

This review will require officer time from Children's Services, schools involvement

It would be useful to have the involvement of a representative from the Norfolk Governors Network.

The review will need be supported to organise visits etc.

## **7. Outcomes**

A report to Committee detailing findings and making any recommendations.

**Before approving this scoping document the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group should ensure the following boxes should be completed in conjunction with the relevant officers:**

**9. Likely publicity arising from the review**

Members will wish to anticipate whether the topic being reviewed is high profile and whether it will attract media interest. If so, this box should be completed with help from the relevant officer in the Council's PR and Media Team.

Publicity will be through all Children's Committee meetings as they are public meetings.  
Stakeholders of interest will be kept informed.

**10. terms of reference agreed by**

Committee meeting or Chair and Vice Chair.  
Date

# Children's Services Committee

Item No 13

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Commentary on results of a statutory consultation on a proposal to close King George VI School in Great Bircham</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>16 September 2014</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Sheila Locke</b>
<b>Strategic impact</b> Changes to the organisation of schools are made as part of our overall strategy for there to be 'A Good School for Every Norfolk Learner'.  The Local Authority is a named Proposer and Decision-maker for school organisation changes. Children's Services Committee at its meeting on 10 July, agreed the process for fulfilling this role, which suggests that the Committee should be asked to comment on any proposed school closure, before the Director of Children's Services makes a decision on whether or not to move to the publication of a formal notice proposing closure.  Relevant regulations - School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 came into force on 28 January 2014.	

## Executive summary

In June and July, the Local Authority carried out a statutory six week consultation on a proposal to close King George VI School in Great Bircham with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014. This report sets out the proposal in detail, and summarises the responses to the public consultation.

### Recommendations:

**Children's Services Committee is asked to consider and discuss the contents of this report to help inform the Director of Children's Services reach a decision on whether to publish a formal proposal to close King George VI School in Great Bircham.**

## 1. Proposal (or options)

The proposal is to close King George VI School, Great Bircham, with effect from 31 December 2014.

A statutory consultation on the closure proposal lasting six weeks has been carried out. Over 250 documents were issued and a survey was placed on the NCC Consultation hub (Citizen Space). The list of consultees is attached as Appendix A.

A total of 18 responses were received. (Copies of these are available in the Members' Room). In addition, a petition was submitted, containing 228 signatures supporting the request by parents and friends of King George VI School, to keep the school open. It was signed by residents of Bircham Village and from surrounding villages, with some from much further afield.

The tables below give a breakdown of the respondents to the consultation:

Parents	7
Local residents	4
Staff	3
Governing Body	1
Parish Councils	2
Other schools	1
Anonymous	1

A public meeting was held at the school on 2 July 2014. 28 people signed in, and the minutes of that meeting are attached at Appendix B.

Number of responses <b>in favour</b> of the proposal	<p><b>4 (22.22%)</b></p> <p>2 were from parents of pupils attending Docking Primary and Harpley Primary School 1 was from Houghton Parish Council 1 was from a local resident</p>
Summary of views expressed <b>in favour</b> of the proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is no longer viable due to low numbers and so closure seems to be the only option.</li> <li>• An analysis as to why the school has consistently failed to attract pupils with lessons learned, because school closure is sad for the local community.</li> <li>• Houghton Parish Council fully understands the proposed closure in view of the cost and lack of support from parents.</li> </ul>

Number of responses <b>against</b> the proposal	<p><b>10 (55.56%)</b></p> <p>1 from the Governing Body of King George VI School 2 from members of the King George VI School staff 3 were from parents of pupils attending Docking Primary, 1 from a parent of a pupil attending King George VI School 1 from a parent of a pupil attending Ingoldisthorpe Primary</p>
Summary of views expressed <b>against</b> the proposal / no opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• King George VI School Governing Body is strongly opposed to the school formally closing on 31st December 2014.</li> <li>• The Bircham site is better than Docking and has capacity to expand and grow.</li> <li>• Appreciate the school is not viable but the site could be used as a resource centre for educational purposes, or as part of Docking Primary School.</li> <li>• Pressure on Docking to accommodate the extra pupils.</li> <li>• The current running of the school needed serious overhaul, which has now happened. There is a need for a school in Great Bircham and should be restarted with a nursery and built up over the next 7 years. Numbers indicate that 12 children a year would progress from the nursery giving a school of 84 pupils (resident of Bircham with pupils attending Ingoldisthorpe).</li> </ul>

Number expressing no preference	<p><b>4 (22.22%)</b></p> <p>The Headteacher of Blenheim Park Primary proposed that consideration be given to relocating the pupils to the school which has ample space but has a falling roll (78 expected September 2014). The schools are 7.6 miles apart with a travel time of 13 minutes.</p>
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Although the statutory consultation is on a proposal to close the school, much of the discussion has been about the future of the site, with a number of respondents acknowledging the fact that the school is too small to be sustainable, but anxious that the site should be retained for community use. Norfolk County Council owns the land, other than the buildings, although its use is subject to a number of restrictions. The buildings belong to the Diocese. If the school were to close, further consultation with the local community would be needed to determine the future of the site.

Current guidance on proposals for school closure published by the Department for Education states that a full proposal must be published within 12 months of a consultation being concluded. The full proposal must be published on a website (school and/or Local Authority), along with a statement setting out:

- How copies of the proposal may be obtained
- That anybody can object to, or comment on, the proposal
- The date that the representation period ends (4 weeks from publication)
- The address to which objections or comments should be submitted.

At the end of the representation period, a final determination will be made by the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Children's Services Committee. In reaching a decision, s/he must have regard to the statutory 'Decision-makers Guidance'. In considering a closure of a small rural school the Local Authority must pay particular attention to:

- The likely effect of closure of the school on the local community
- The availability and likely cost to the Local Authority of transport to other schools
- Any increase in the use of motor vehicles and the likely effects of any such increase
- Any alternatives to the closure of the school

This report concludes that the Director of Children's Services should agree to the publication of a public notice proposing formally the closure of King George VI School, Great Bircham.

## **2. Evidence**

King George VI School is a primary school taking pupils from the age of 4 through to 11. It is designated by the Department for Education as a rural school serving a village, eligible for sparsity funding. It has been undersubscribed for at least the last ten years. Numbers of pupils on roll have dropped from 31 in January 2004 to 13 in January 2014, although the school has room to accommodate 52 pupils.

Norfolk has set out clearly in its strategy A Good School for Every Norfolk Learner, its plan for ensuring rapid school improvement across the county of Norfolk. An essential strand of this is securing high quality sustainable leadership which will ensure high standards of education for all.

King George VI School has been a school of concern for the Local Authority for many years, and especially since 2009 when the school was put into Special Measures by Ofsted. Progress over the following two years was only satisfactory, and although the school was removed from Special Measures when subject to a full re-inspection in March 2011, it was still deemed to Require Improvement.

The very small size of the cohort makes it difficult to make a sensible judgement about the standards achieved year on year in the school. In the last 4 years there have been two cohorts of 3, one cohort of 1 and one with no pupils at all. We do know, however, that as a very small school with far fewer than 50 pupils on roll, King George V1 remains a high risk school in terms of performance

Performance data related to size of school – Key Stage 2 % level 4 reading, writing and maths combined:

	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Schools < 50 pupils	<b>60.4%</b>	<b>61.8%</b>
Norfolk average	69%	71%
National average	75%	75%

In July 2013, a Senior Local Authority Officer, following a visit to the school, raised deep concerns about safeguarding arrangements, and about the quality of teaching in the absence of both the headteacher and a member of the teaching staff. In a letter to the Chair of Governors, he set out very clearly the urgency of the situation, and the powers of the Local Authority to intervene if steps were not taken immediately to remedy the situation.

When the headteacher resigned at the end of the summer term 2013, the governors agreed to approach the governing body of a neighbouring primary school to negotiate a partnership, and in September 2013, the headteacher of Docking Primary School took over the role of Acting Headteacher at King George VI.

In spite of this collaboration, leadership across the two sites proved difficult to sustain. In March 2014 interim arrangements were made, with the agreement of governors, the Diocese and the Local Authority, to move the King George VI children on to the Docking site with effect from the start of the summer term 2014. This arrangement is to be reviewed on a termly basis.

Discussions are continuing to take place with governors of a number of schools in the area about a wider long term solution for effective provision of schooling for children in this part of Norfolk, but these discussions do not alter the need to address the immediate problems which face King George VI School.

### **3. Financial Implications**

Nationally there is a trend towards a per-pupil funding policy for schools. This will further limit the way in which a Local Authority allocates funding to its schools. In the past financial year, The King George VI School received just over £16,000 per pupil, compared with the Norfolk primary school average of £4,500, but this disproportionate level of funding is unlikely to find support from the Schools Forum in the future. The continuing decline in pupil numbers and these changes to the way that schools are funded, are making it increasingly difficult to manage the budget, and to justify such inequality of provision across all Norfolk learners.

### **4. Issues, risks and innovation**

In coming to a final determination, as well as the factors specific to proposed closure of rural schools, the decision-maker will take into account:



Consideration of consultation and representation period  
Education standards and diversity of provision  
Demand  
School size  
Proposed admission arrangements  
National Curriculum  
Equal opportunity issues  
Community cohesion  
Travel and accessibility  
Capital  
School premises and playing fields

## 5. Background

“Sustaining high quality leadership in Norfolk Schools” (report to Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel 13 April 2014.

[http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Council\\_and\\_democracy/Your\\_Council/Committees/Committees\\_Archive/index.htm?searched=true&SS\\_Year=2014&SS\\_PaperType=0&SS\\_Committee=Childrens+Services+Overview+and+Scrutiny+Panel&Submit=Search](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Council_and_democracy/Your_Council/Committees/Committees_Archive/index.htm?searched=true&SS_Year=2014&SS_PaperType=0&SS_Committee=Childrens+Services+Overview+and+Scrutiny+Panel&Submit=Search)

“Sustaining high quality leadership in Norfolk schools – progress report (report to Children’s Services Service Committee 17 June 2014.

<http://norfolkcc.cmis.uk.com/NorfolkCC/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=j37DmJOVK8ogXQQR7J8nggjhZgWpCytLFD6TBsEMhjvwn6D7fryQcw%3d%3d&rUzwRPf%2bZ3zd4E7lkn8Lyw%3d%3d=pwRE6AGJFLDNih225F5QMaQWCtPHwdhUfCZ%2fLUQzgA2uL5jNRG4jdQ%3d%3d&mCTlbCubSFfXsDGW9lXnlq%3d%3d=hFfIUdN3100%3d&kCx1AnS9%2fpWZQ40DXFvdEw%3d%3d=hFfIUdN3100%3d&uJovDxwdjMPoYv%2bAJvYtyA%3d%3d=ctNJff55vVA%3d&FgPIIEJYlotS%2bYGoBi5olA%3d%3d=NHdURQburHA%3d&d9Qjj0aq1Pd993jsyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJff55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJff55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCPMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJff55vVA%3d>

School Organisation (Maintained School) January 2014 – Guidance for proposers and decision-makers – Department for Education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-organisation>

### Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with: **Officer Name: Alison Cunningham**

**Telephone Number: 01603 223480**

**Email address:** [alison.cunningham@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:alison.cunningham@norfolk.gov.uk)



If you need this Agenda in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

## King George VI School : List of consultees

Parents, staff and governors of:  
 King George VI School  
 Docking Primary School  
 Smithdon High School  
 Brancaster CE VA Primary School  
 Dersingham VA Primary & Nursery  
 Heacham Infant & Nursery School  
 Heacham Junior School  
 Hunstanton Infant School  
 Ingoldisthorpe CE VA Primary  
 Redgate Junior School  
 Sedgeford Primary School  
 Snettisham Primary School  
 Local Member : Michael John Baylis Chenery of Horsburgh  
 Norwich Diocese  
 Ely Diocese  
 Roman Catholic Diocese  
 Henry Bellingham MP  
 Ray Harding, King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council  
 Bircham Parish Council  
 Fring Parish Meeting  
 Sedgeford Parish Council  
 Old Hunstanton Parish Council  
 Holme Next Sea Parish Council  
 Thornham Parish Council  
 Titchwell Parish Council  
 Brancaster Parish Council  
 Docking Parish Council  
 Heacham Parish Council  
 Shernbourne Parish Council  
 Houghton Parish Council  
 Ingoldisthorpe Parish Council  
 Dersingham Parish Council  
 Flitcham & Appleton Parish Council  
 Harpley Parish Council  
 Hillington Parish Council  
 Sandringham Parish Council  
 Choseley Parish Council  
 Stanhoe Parish Council  
 Bagthorpe Parish Council  
 Mrs C Gibson, NAHT  
 Mike Smith, NUT  
 Collin Collis, NAS/UWT  
 Jonathan Dunning, Unison  
 Ivan Mercer, GMB  
 Bridget Carrington, JCC  
 Andrew McCandlish, ATL  
 Michael Sadler, VOICE

George Denby, NSEL  
Joy Adams  
Dersingham pre school  
Docking Day Care  
Footprints nursery  
Glebe House School  
Elizabeth Heffer  
Hunstanton CC  
Carole Richardson  
Rachael Sandle  
Nikki Forshaw, Additional needs co-ordinator  
Kirsten Cooper, Localities co-ordinator  
Gillian Hiles, Specialist SEN commissioner  
Snettisham Bobtails  
Elizabeth Warne  
Sandringham Estate  
Bircham Post Office  
cjgardenservices@aol.com  
claireludkin@yahoo.co.uk  
cgcaseley@hotmail.com

Online - NCC Internet School organisation site  
Online - Norfolk Schools School organisation site  
Online - NCC Citizen Space

Notes from the Public Meeting held at  
The King George VI School Great Bircham  
On 2 July 2014 at 6.00pm

Present:

Representing the Local Authority (LA): Alison Cunningham and Jan Munn

Representing the Norwich Diocesan Board of Education: Andy Mash

28 attendees from/representing: Governors and staff from King George VI School, Docking Primary School, Parents, Villagers, The Parish Council, The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk and the local population

Clerk to the Meeting: Rose Grant, Clerk to the Governors, King George VI School

A Cunningham opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explained her role within Norfolk County Council, saying that this includes overseeing formal consultations regarding school closures

J Munn explained that her role is to work with school/education providers to ensure the best possible opportunities for all young people in Norfolk

Andy Mash advised that he is the Diocesan Director of Education for the Norwich Diocese

A Cunningham reminded those present that the meeting had been convened as the County Council is going through the statutory consultation relating to the closure of King George VI Primary School. There is currently a transition arrangement in place for staff and pupils of King George VI Primary School, whereby staff and pupils have moved to Docking Primary School whilst the future of King George VI is being considered. Norfolk is finding it difficult to sustain high quality leadership in its schools and the LA want to ensure that all schools have good leaders. The statutory timescales for the consultation have been published and a formal decision on the future of the school will be made at the end of the consultation period which ends on 17 July 2014. If the decision is to make a formal proposal to close the school, there will be a four week period in which representation can be made to either support or reject the proposal. However, in the case that the proposal is to close the school, representation to reject the proposal must offer a viable alternative to closure because the LA would have recognised that the school does not have a viable future. Due to recent changes in how the County Council is constituted, it is not known at this time who will make the final decision regarding the school following the consultation period.

A question and answer session followed:

Question: The consultation document states that the interim arrangement can continue for another 4 terms. Why will a decision be made at the end of the consultation period – effectively in 4 weeks?

Answer: The LA is following the statutory consultation process. There is still up to 4 terms before implementation of any decision however; there would be no real merit in delaying implementation of any decision once made.

Question: The decision to move pupils from King George VI to Docking had been made in haste and this consultation appears to have been made in haste. Why were governors rushed into making decisions regarding the school and its pupils? Why were the governors not supported with a County Head and why are decisions for the future of the school being rushed? In

addition, why have pupils been moved to Docking, when it does not have the facilities to support them, all King George VI staff continue to be employed and the site maintained?

Answer: The LA had discussions with governors. The school has been struggling to survive for many years. All small schools in Norfolk have been made aware of the viability of small schools – a letter had been sent to the school/Chair of Governors and a response had been received from the school. (NB: D Bird (Chair of Governors King George VI) told the meeting that governors had not seen the letter in question and that although she acknowledges a response was made to the letter it was not from her or the governing body).

Space at Docking is not an issue. The majority of parents within King George VI catchment chose to send their children to schools elsewhere and the LA cannot stop them from doing this. Low pupil numbers and changes in the way funding is allocated to schools have meant that it has become very difficult to sustain the school and the LA does not have unlimited resources.

Comment: Governors asked for support from the LA when the Headteacher was off sick, their request for a County Head was refused and it was governors themselves that arranged for the partnership with Docking.

Comment: Governors did not have the power to stop the transfer of pupils to Docking, they were pressurised by the LA. Pupil numbers have been higher in the past. The LA needs to be more positive about the school and help the school to market itself. It would appear that the LA wants/needs to save money and this is why it is proposing the closure of the school. The decision on the future of the school should be made jointly in the community.

Answer: The LA wants a Good School for every Norfolk Learner. It is very difficult for very small schools to offer this.

Comment: Headteacher at Flitcham had told parents of King George VI pupils that King George VI was going to close.

Comment: Everyone present wants the best for all the pupils. However, it would appear that the future for these pupils and King George VI School is 'cut and dried.' There are valid ideas which would enable King George VI to remain open and with pupils and it would be good if the LA would agree to have a team of people, working with the village to discuss options/alternatives

Answer: A Cunningham reiterated that this is what the consultation period is for. It is an opportunity for interested parties to comment on the proposal and to suggest viable ideas/alternatives.

Comment: Henry Bellingham MP is very involved and has expressed the opinion that he would like both Docking and King George VI to remain open and used as combined sites

Comment: Having lived in France, could not their example be considered? Where pupil numbers were low, villages agreed collectively that schools would have a single year group with pupils being bussed to their schools. There was one peripatetic head supporting the schools and the villages flourished and were kept alive. King George VI has fantastic facilities and it would be diabolical if these facilities were lost.

Answer: A group of Headteachers from small schools have visited France to look at this model and they were very impressed. Unfortunately, this doesn't translate into our education system and this system is also dependent on having a certain number of pupils to make it work

Question: Why does Norfolk not do something radical and implement this French system? It could be funded from taxation. The school was ok and it delivered a good education. It is costing the LA money to maintain an empty site.

Response: Education and financial viability always has to be considered. Schools are told to look at innovative ways of working together and the LA has been working with, and continues to work with schools which form partnerships and federations.

Comment: I have watched the school go downhill over the last 18 years. However, it has excellent facilities which I believe could be used for a crèche during the day and/or a youth venue in the evenings. These would generate income for the school.

Would it be possible to split age groups eg. younger pupils at Docking and older pupils at King George VI?

Answer: The consultation is not about what the site might be used for. It is about ceasing to maintain the establishment here because it is radically undersubscribed as numbers have been dwindling. In addition, pupils were moved to Docking due to safeguarding issues. Space at Docking is not an issue. Alternative uses for the King George VI site would be considered in the future.

Question: Why were parents not made aware earlier of the uncertainty of the future of the school? Receiving the letter about the transfer of pupils in the interim was a shock.

Question: When was the position of the school made clear to governors?

Answer: The LA and the Diocese spoke with governors about collaboration 2 years ago

Question: Why couldn't collaboration be sustained?

Answer: The low number of pupils at King George VI mean that collaboration/federation is not viable.

Question: Has Docking applied for planning permission for a portacabin?

Answer: No

Comment: As a former governor of King George VI he did not think that it would not be possible to re-open the school. Efforts had been made over the years to make the school viable but they had been unsuccessful. However, he was unimpressed by the LA's handling of the transition arrangements. He has also found the current consultation unsatisfactory with mistakes in the original consultation document and arrangements to advise interested parties poor. He has been aware for at least 10 years of discussions regarding reorganisation of schools in the area. He asked what the LA's ideas on re-organisation were and suggested that the deadline be 'ditched' and a wider discussion take place.

Answer: A Cunningham advised that the LA is bound by statutory requirements, can only consult on a single proposal and not options and apologised for the mistakes in the original document.

Comment: The LA had said that the school was not sustainable, however, the budget for the school balanced for the next 3 years.

Answer: 3 years is not very long

Question: Does the LA have ideas for the possible use of the site?

Answer: No

Question: What is the plan for education in North West Norfolk?

Answer: All conversations regarding education begin with the governing bodies of schools. Some schools are choosing to convert to academy status. Options are explored and discussions like this, are taking place but currently plans have not been formatted.

Question: Could the village be asked to help sustain the cost of the school and what would be seen as a sustainable number of children?

Answer: Funding nationally is changing for schools. Norfolk has been very good at supporting its small rural schools. However, the government is pushing ahead with a single funding formula for all schools and Norfolk needs to look to the long term to see how to sustain education for pupils. In particular, schools with 50 or fewer pupils. County are also looking at groups of pupils, and not just numbers of schools when considering federation. A new build school would not be considered for fewer than 210 pupils.

Question: Will the LA commit to putting back the decision by four weeks so that the community can discuss the options for Docking, Brancaster, Sedgeford and King George VI?

Answer: The LA cannot give this commitment because of the statutory requirements of the consultation. However, the point of the consultation is to advise people that the process is taking place and to encourage interested parties to submit viable ideas and proposals to the LA during the consultation process which will end on 18 July. Input from the community will influence whether or not the LA moves to the next stage of the consultation and whilst individual responses will be considered a collective response may hold more weight. The consultation document advises how to make representation. If there is an overwhelming response to the consultation, the LA has the power to delay a decision to enable further discussions take place. Any suggestions made at this meeting would also be taken back and considered. Information is also available on the website. Anyone who leaves their name and address will be sent hard copies of the document. The document would also be available from Docking Primary School. In addition the future of the other 3 schools does not form part of these discussions.

Question: Due to the 'bodged' process, and the strength of local feeling should the consultation not start again?

Answer: The LA has followed the process as set out in the DfE regulations. The strength of local feeling is being heard through this consultation process – it is only once the public notice is published that the LA is formally proposing closure of King George V1 School.

Question: Who owns the site?

Answer: A Mash replied by saying that without checking the documents he could not say for certain but that he believed that it had been ceded to the County Council. He further said that as a church school, when considering its future, the Diocese would also consider the quality of  
A Cunningham  
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the education experience, the range and depth of the curriculum and the size of cohorts. The school would need to be sustainable financially. The LA/Diocese cannot compel parents to send their children to particular schools.

Comment: A Cunningham explained that the ability of the LA to deliver has been squeezed over a number of years. People have expectations of the LA but unfortunately, due to financial constraints it is not able to deliver some of these expectations. Pupils in King George VI receive four times more funding than elsewhere in Norfolk. Since new reforms have been implemented small schools have suffered.

Comment: It was confirmed that King George VI still has its own governing body. That the school has not closed and that pupils are still pupils of King George VI but are being taught on a different site.

Question: Radio Norfolk has said that Norfolk Schools were getting lots of money.

Answer: This is for school improvement and the Norfolk to Good and Great initiative. There has also been some additional money from the DFE for rural schools (Sparsity funding) in the short term. A delegation 18 months ago met with the DFE to highlight the detrimental impact that the funding changes would have on small schools and this resulted in the Sparsity Funding.

A Cunningham reminded those present that the purpose of the consultation was to get representation from interested parties. She reiterated that guidance makes reference to views such as those of parents/governing body being treated/considered with more weight than those of an individual but individuals were also encouraged to respond. Any proposals would need to be a viable alternative although they would not need to be fully costed. Responses must be received by the LA by 18 July 2014. Responses could be emailed to: [alison.cunningham@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:alison.cunningham@norfolk.gov.uk) submitted via the website or in paper format.

A report will then be written and made available to whoever is to make the decision to either proceed or not to proceed. When asked if it would be possible for the report to be made public A Cunningham agreed to ask if this would be possible.

Once a decision has been made it will then be ratified by the LA.

A decision is then made by the LA to publish the public proposal. This is the LA expressing its intention to proceed with the proposal. Any submissions made after this would need to convince the LA not to proceed with the proposal. There are 4 weeks to make these submissions after the date that the public notice has been published.

D Baldwin (Headteacher Docketing) said that there had been some very passionate and eloquent thoughts expressed at the meeting. He thought that the decision had been 90% political and financial and he urged the LA to look at the last OFSTED report which said that the school was working well and L Harris (Teacher King George VI) said that the school was making steps towards being graded as a Good School and this too was recognised by OFSTED.

All present were reminded to sign in and it was confirmed that notes of this meeting would be made available.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm



# Children's Services Committee

Item No 14

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Consultation on proposed changes to the School Admissions Code 2012</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>16 September 2014</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Sheila Lock</b>
<b>Strategic impact</b> The Department for Education are consulting on changes to the statutory school admissions code.  The proposals would allow all admission authorities to prioritise pupils eligible for pupil and service premium and to give priority for pupils eligible for pupil premium who attend a school's nursery.  Proposed changes to the timetable for determining admission arrangements would allow more time for School Adjudicators to resolve disputes.  The DfE advises that pupil premium proposals will support social mobility for disadvantaged children and the timetable changes will ensure more admission arrangements are lawful before parents apply for places.	

## Executive summary

The DfE issued a consultation on proposed changes to the School Admissions Code 2012 on 22 July 2014 seeking views from admission authorities, early years settings and practitioners, parents, schools and other interested parties. The consultation closes on 29 September 2014 and if approved by Parliament changes to admission arrangements will apply to pupil intakes from September 2017.

The DfE consultation seeks views on the proposed changes detailed below and does not seek views on wider changes to the school admissions code at this stage.

### Recommendations:

**Members are invited to comment on the proposals so that a response can be submitted to the DfE**

## 1 Consultation proposals

### 1.1 Priority for pupils entitled to pupil and service premium in state-funded schools:

The proposal is that from the September 2017 admission round all admission authorities for state funded schools will be empowered to include a criterion to prioritise pupils eligible for pupil premium or service premium. Pupil premium provides additional funding for schools to improve achievement of disadvantaged pupils and is payable for all pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who have been eligible at any point during the last six years. Service premium is

payable to schools for pupils of service families or former service families from the last four years.

The current 2012 School Admissions Code only empowers academies and free schools to include pupils entitled to pupil premium as a criterion. To date no Norfolk academy has exercised this power.

**1.2 Priority for some pupils attending nursery classes:**

The proposal is that from the September 2017 admission round all admission authorities for state funded schools will be empowered to include a criterion to prioritise pupils seeking a Reception place in a school if the pupil attends a nursery attached to the school or established and run by the school if the pupil is eligible for early years pupil premium, pupil premium or service premium.

From April 2015 the Government will introduce early years pupil premium for disadvantaged children in early years settings, using free school meals entitlement to confirm eligibility with up to £300 for settings per eligible child.

- 1.3 Parents need to be able to understand their priority for places at a school and the admission code requires admission criteria to be clear, fair and easily understood by parents. However, as pupil and service premium relate to current and past eligibility for free school meals a family may not be certain whether they meet the criterion or not. Additionally it is not clear how an admission authority would confirm eligibility/past eligibility. This could entail requiring parents to provide evidence of current or previous entitlement or seeking confirmation of entitlement from the current school or early years provider, however this could have data protection implications.

- 1.4 The introduction of the above criteria in community and voluntary controlled schools would need to be consulted on for at least six weeks concluding by 31 January 2016. This would form part of the overall consultation on proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools from September 2017.

- 1.5 Admission arrangements for community and Voluntary Controlled schools currently prioritise catchment children above non-catchment children to ensure local families have the highest priority for places at local schools. For out catchment children, siblings, and feeder school connections are used to prioritise applications to recognise family circumstances. Careful consideration would need to be given to the priority for this new criterion to ensure appropriate sensitivity for all families when prioritising applications in the event of over-subscription.

**1.6 Admissions timetable changes:**

Currently admission arrangements are consulted on for a minimum of 8 weeks ending by 1 March with admission arrangements determined by 15 April and published by 1 May for the admission round commencing the following September. Objectors currently have until 30 June to refer objections to determined arrangements to the Schools Adjudicator. Admissions authorities must comply with any decision imposed by the Adjudicator but the admission authority has until the determination date (15 April) in the following year to comply with the decision.

- 1.7 The proposal is to start the determination process earlier, reduce the period of consultation and require admission authorities to comply with adjudicator's

decisions more quickly. Consultation would last for a minimum of six weeks and be completed by 31 January each year. Arrangements would need to be determined by 28 February and published by 15 March. Objections to determined arrangements would need to be submitted to the Adjudicator by 15 May. Decisions would need to be implemented within two months of the decision or by the following determination date if this is less than two months from the date of the adjudicator's decision.

- 1.8 These proposals would have little effect on the County Council as admission authority for community and Voluntary Controlled schools, it merely changes the timescale for undertaking the process and members would need to determine arrangement before 28 February each year from 2016 rather than before 15 April, as currently required. Additionally the requirement to implement Adjudicator decisions more quickly is welcomed.

**1.9 Summer born children:**

The DfE introduced non-statutory guidance in relation to summer born children in July 2013. This expanded on the statutory duty already in the School Admissions Code which requires the admission authority to make decisions based on the circumstances of each case where a parent seeks a school place outside their normal age group.

- 1.10 The proposal is not to make any changes to the legislation but to include expanded guidance in the code highlighting the need to consider parent's views, information about the child's academic, social and emotional development, and the views of the Headteacher of the school concerned. The parent must be given detailed reasons for the decision and where the request is supported the application must be considered as part of the normal admission round.

- 1.11 The County Council has developed detailed guidance on the admission of summer born children following the publication of the DfE guidance in July 2013 and the above process is already in place for community and voluntary controlled schools. As part of the local authority's co-ordination role we also advise all own admission authority schools on how they need to deal with these applications to meet the statutory guidance and the proposals consolidate the earlier non-statutory guidance.

**1.12 Admission of previously looked after children:**

The proposal is to extend the definition included in the 2012 Code to include all children who have been adopted from local authority care. This is a helpful clarification but our community and voluntary controlled school arrangements have used this definition since the legislation was introduced.

## **2. Financial Implications**

There are no additional financial implications in the DfE's proposals.

## **3. Issues, risks and innovation**

- There are no additional risks, issues or innovation issues not highlighted in the report.

## 4 Background

DfE consultation is available at: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-school-admissions-code](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-school-admissions-code)

Current School Admissions Code (2012) at:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/275598/school\\_admissions\\_code\\_1\\_february\\_2012.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/275598/school_admissions_code_1_february_2012.pdf)

Cabinet report setting admission arrangements for September 2015 (item 22) at:  
<http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/download/cabinet140414agendapdf>

Latest determined admission arrangements for September 2015 at:  
[http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Childrens\\_services/Schools/School\\_admissions/Norfolk\\_admission\\_arrangements\\_2015-16/index.htm](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/Childrens_services/Schools/School_admissions/Norfolk_admission_arrangements_2015-16/index.htm)

## 5 Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

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