



Executive Summary:
Children Looked After
Sufficiency & Commissioning
Effective Placements Strategy
2014 - 2017

1. Foreword

The Sufficiency Strategy sets out Lancashire's vision and plans for fulfilling its responsibilities and duties as a Corporate Parent for children and young people who need to be looked after in Lancashire. The Strategy and Action Plan are complemented by the following strategies which together, form Lancashire's priorities to improve outcomes for children and young people who are Looked After and leaving care.

- Children Looked After Strategy
- Care Leavers Strategy
- Active Participation Strategy

The Sufficiency Strategy reaffirms Lancashire County Council's commitment to children and young people who are looked after and reinforces the corporate responsibility of the whole organisation, jointly with partner agencies to ensure that the life chances of every child and young person in its care are improved and the outcome gaps are narrowed.

Every child needs a good parent who will care for them, speak out on their behalf and respond to their varied and diverse needs. For children who are looked after, this is essential and is the statutory responsibility of the local authority.

The Strategy will be regularly reviewed to ensure that the children we look after receive the best possible care at all times. Children and young people can also be assured that Lancashire County Council will fulfil the pledge it made to them about what they can expect from us.

Our ambition is to significantly improve the life chances of the children and young people that we care for. As with all citizens in Lancashire, children looked after are entitled to opportunities that will improve their health and wellbeing, provide them with support when they are in need and ensure that they grow up prepared for the future. We want children and young people to feel secure and to be able to learn and have fun. We will do all we can to provide them with stable foundations for the rest of their lives.

We recognise the diversity of children and young people are in our care. We will ensure that all their individual needs are met, taking into consideration their age, gender, ethnicity, disabilities, faith and sexual orientation.

Lancashire County Council are committed to working effectively and collaboratively with its partners to achieve our ambitions in ensuring that children and young people are safe and are able to fulfil their aspirations. Alongside the key strategies stated above, the key driver for this will be the Children and Young People's Plan 2014- 17.

2. Introduction

Local authorities have a statutory duty (as laid down in Section 22G of the Children Act) to ensure that there are sufficient placements within their area to meet the needs of all children looked after (CLA), as far as is 'reasonably practicable'.

This Summary of the Children Looked After Sufficiency and Commissioning Effective Placements Strategy draws together what we know about our CLA, our current provision and what the evidence is saying we should be doing. It explores likely changes in the overall care population between now and 2017 and puts forward recommendations for how we can further develop provision to ensure we meet our statutory duty. The full version of the Strategy contains the findings in detail.

Please note that this Summary includes references to benchmarked authorities (which for this strategy are Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Kent) and statistical neighbours (the ten local authorities which Lancashire compares performance against).

Please also note that in February 2014, the system for recording and monitoring information about CLA was changed from ISSIS to the Lancashire Children's System (LCS). At the time of writing this strategy, there is some uncertainty as to the accuracy of some information in LCS, therefore any local analysis referred to within this strategy post 24th February 2014 should be viewed with caution.

3. The Understand Stage- What's the current situation?

3.1 *Analysis of Lancashire's CLA*

Over the last three years there has been a large increase in the number of Lancashire CLA, with the numbers increasing every month until March 2014. Over the four months since March 2014, the numbers of CLA have been similar.

As at the end of June 2014, there were 1,597 Lancashire CLA, a rate of 66 CLA for every 10,000 children and young people. There are more CLA in Lancashire than in England (60 out of 10,000) but less than in the North West (79 out of 10,000) and slightly less than in Lancashire's statistical neighbours (67 out of 10,000).

Pendle, Hyndburn and Burnley have the highest rates of CLA, with the rate in Burnley increasing by 45% since 2011/12.

Although the rate of referrals to Children's Social Care in Lancashire saw a 12% decline between 2010 and 2013, there has been an increase in the number of re-referrals recently. The average re-referral rate in 2013/14 increased slightly to 21 re-referrals out of each 100 referrals received. The latest Corporate Parenting Board Report (June 2014) suggests re-referrals have increased further. Additional analysis is needed to validate this and, if confirmed, explore reasons behind this increase.

The rate of children in need is relatively low compared to national, regional and benchmarked authorities' rates. The number of children with a Child Protection Plan showed a sharp increase in

Lancashire in 2013/14, greater than the increase experienced nationally.

In January 2014, a third of our CLA were between 10 and 15 years of age. The 'bulge' ages for children becoming looked after in Lancashire appears to be ages 10-15 years and 0-4 years, which are similar to trends in other authorities. The proportion of CLA aged 16 and over is lower than the national average.

Lancashire has a lower percentage of children who become looked after with disability as a category of need compared to regional, national and statistical neighbours, indicating that our early support offer to families of children with disabilities is effective.

Local analysis of a sample number of children who became looked after in Lancashire during 2012 found that at the point of becoming looked after:

- 39% were not achieving their potential
- 32% were regularly missing school
- 41% were described as having poor behaviour overall - 27% were displaying poor behaviour at school and 37% were displaying poor behaviour at home.
- 46% of 12 – 17 year olds were misusing drugs and alcohol
- 16% had been engaged in some form of anti-social behaviour in the community
- 11% were explicitly described as stressed
- 5% had chronic physical health problems

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Children and Young People in Lancashire (2013) identified that around one in twenty CLA in Lancashire were found to have a substance misuse problem, slightly above the national average, with half of those refusing treatment compared with less than a third nationally.

Further specific analysis on the needs of our CLA is not currently available. However, information from the Looking for Permanence Panel, which is a strategic group of key stakeholders who meet to consider whether needs are being met in the most efficient and cost effective way, suggests that there are identified needs in relation to violent behaviour, traumatised children with a high risk of sexualised behaviours and the ability of in house provision to meet profound health needs.

During consultation, stakeholders (senior managers, practitioners and providers) raised concerns about the increased complexity of needs of children and young people becoming looked after, including: sexualised behaviour, sexual exploitation, sexual offending, sexually abused younger children; emotional neglect; young people who self harm with suicidal tendencies; aggression; arson; offending; continual absconders; pregnancy; older siblings/ larger groups; children with disabilities; and unresolved relationship issues. Stakeholders reported that it can be challenging to find placements to support these specific needs.

Stakeholders also reported that it can be challenging to find appropriate placements for young people aged 16 and 17 and get the right support for young people moving into independence.

There are a small number of young people for whom it is difficult to find a placement in the current market due to the challenging nature of their needs. It is felt that there is a need for the development of more bespoke placements in order for these needs to be met.

Some of the needs analysis requested to inform this strategy has not been available, such as information about CLA with disabilities, out of area placements and outcomes by placement type.

3.2 Early Intervention and Assessment of Need

Evidence suggests that a realistic way of redesigning care provision is to focus resources on an effective early help offer and improved assessment of need to ensure that only those who need to be are in care.

Local research concluded that 19% of cases analysed could potentially have been diverted by early support and prevention services, providing estimated savings (based on average weekly costs of a conservative 10% of cases) of almost £35,000 for every week those children were not in care.

A review of performance in December 2013 showed that Family Group Conferencing (FGC), Edge of Care (EoC) and Residential Outreach (RO) were running at full capacity and were receiving a good level of referrals, although there was variation in referrals from different districts. The calculated savings being delivered by the three interventions to date is £1.258m: £0.72m for FGC; £0.348m for RO; and £0.148m for EoC. The same cost savings analysis will be applied to Fostering Outreach and Social Workers in Schools. There is a need across all preventative services to analyse savings and outcomes in more detail to ensure value for money. Stakeholders have identified that there is a gap in support to help prevent 16 and 17 year olds coming into care.

Research has identified a crucial 6 to 12 week period, after entry into care, during which the likelihood of a successful return home is greater. This is where intervention can have the greatest impact on achieving and sustaining change in the behaviour of young people and the responses and care of their parents. The In House Residential Service has suggested the establishment of short term assessment units, to support the assessment of children and young people coming into care, particularly for those who need to be placed in an emergency. They feel this system would ensure that children and young people are correctly assessed, supported to move back home where possible or supported into the right placement through better matching to individual needs. Information on outcomes from short term assessment placements does suggest that they are more likely to successfully return young people home. Getting the assessment right will help to prevent inflated agency prices and increase the likelihood of the right placement being found.

3.3 Placement Matching

Both in house and agency providers have reported that the information provided by Lancashire is often not sufficient to allow them to make an informed decision as to whether the placement would be an appropriate match. Stakeholders suggest that there is a need for clearer and more dynamic communication at the point of considering and securing the placement. They feel that the current form based approach and existing centralised system is overly bureaucratic, not responsive to individual child needs and not conducive to finding the best placement. Some councils have developed Access to Resources or Brokerage Teams to facilitate the matching of individual children's needs with placements. There is evidence that these models can promote better choice of placements and save considerable amounts of money.

Stakeholders have stated that there is a need to manage the market more proactively. An Agency Fostering Provider Forum has already been established in Lancashire and providers have reported that they would welcome a residential provider forum, where needs and future plans are discussed and good practice is shared. Concerns have been raised in relation to the fragmentation of the placement finding process and a lack of capacity within the Business Relations Team, which has made it more difficult to be able to communicate with providers and build the market to meet need. It is felt that the process worked more effectively when placement finding and business relations were one team, further strengthening the suggestion to develop an Access to Resources/ Brokerage Team.

Feedback from children and young people tells us that they want more say about where they live, with a choice of placements where possible and sufficient information to help them decide which placement is right for them. They want to be included in the decision making process from the outset and feel that more effort should be put into finding the right placement to avoid unnecessary moves.

3.4 Emergency Placements

Providers have raised concerns about the number of emergency admissions they currently have to deal with. In 2013/14, 42% of all admissions into Lancashire's in house residential provision were emergency placements and 22% of requests for agency residential provision were required on the same day.

Requests for emergency placements are more difficult to meet under the new Ofsted regulations and often do not allow providers sufficient time to fully consider and explain what they can offer. Providers have queried whether all such requests are always an emergency, or whether more time could be made available to enable a more planned approach. They have suggested that there should be a clear, shared definition of what constitutes an emergency placement to ensure only true emergencies are labelled as such. Concerns have been expressed that delays in our own in house placement finding processes may be adding to the number of emergency placements.

3.5 Commissioning

Lancashire County Council has a team within the Directorate for Children and Young People which supports the commissioning of a range of services, including Children's Social Care. Greater linkages with Placement Finding, Procurement and Business Relations would further assist effective commissioning, particularly in relation to understanding presenting need and potential gaps in provision. Whilst links have begun to be developed, there is further work that can be done in this area. As already suggested, capacity has been raised as an issue and the development of an Access to Resources/ Brokerage Team would be one way to address this and bring the different functions together.

3.6 Placement Analysis

Lancashire has a policy of placing children in provision judged good or better and, as of 30th June 2014, the vast majority of our children (97.4%) were placed in good or better placements.

Analysis of placements for 2009-2014 suggests that although the number of CLA has increased, the proportion of placements appears to have largely remained the same.

In 2013/14, the CLA placement budget totalled £48.3m:

- In house fostering (including Family and Friends) had the highest percentage of placements (44%) but only cost 25% of the total placements budget
- 11% of the budget was spent on in house residential for 3.4% of placements
- 58% of the budget was spent on agency placements (35% on agency fostering for 30% of placements; and 23% on agency residential for just 5% of placements).

As of 31st March 2013, Lancashire had one of the lowest percentages (51%) of children placed in internal fostering and residential provision when compared to all statistical neighbours and the national and regional averages. Stakeholders report that there is a need to analyse the current split between in house and agency expenditure and adjust trends of the high number of agency placements spend to develop cost effective in house placement capacity and develop prevention and early intervention services. It has been suggested that consideration is given to reshaping in house provision so they

provide for our more vulnerable CLA. However, an extensive independent review, carried out in 2013, acknowledged that developing in house provision may not be feasible for children with disabilities who have very complex needs and that these placements would be best delivered through the independent sector.

3.7 Placement Type

Children placed at home with their parents or a person with parental responsibility

In Lancashire, the percentage of children placed with a parent or person with parental responsibility has remained fairly constant (between 10 – 11%) over the past five years, double the national figure of 5% and higher than the regional percentage of 9%.

Family and Friends Foster Care Placements

Family and Friends foster care is highlighted as being the most likely to achieve placement stability and offer more local placements. Lancashire has less than half the percentage of Family and Friends carers who are approved foster carers (5%) compared to the national average (11%).

National research indicates that these carers are likely to receive less support than unrelated foster carers, which can put placements under strain. Local research suggests that even with improved support, Family and Friends foster care is the cheapest placement option. It is estimated that just 10 more Family and Friends carers generated per annum would save Lancashire County Council approximately £78,000, with further cost savings associated with reduced placement instability.

Unrelated Foster Care

Compared to statistical neighbours, Lancashire has the third lowest percentage of children who are fostered (71%), lower than the national average of 75% and the regional figure of 73%. Lancashire's policy is to primarily seek an in house foster care placement. As of 31st January 2014, 57% of fostering placements were placed in house.

Evidence indicates that if foster care is to flourish, enough carers have to be recruited and retained. The In House Fostering Service has suggested that an increase in the budget for marketing campaigns would make the service more competitive with the independent agencies, who work on large budget campaigns. Local research estimates that if just 10 children more are placed in internal foster care compared with agency foster care, the saving to the council would be approximately £182,000. An investment of £100,000 or less in improved recruitment and retention of in house foster carers could easily result in 10 more in house placements. However, care would need to be taken with regard to the potential scale of this transfer as some children currently placed in more expensive agency placements are actually receiving an 'enhanced' foster care service.

A snapshot of Lancashire children in residential care in September 2013 suggested that a foster placement could have been appropriate for approximately 8% of the cohort, but a suitable foster placement was not available at the time. This is reinforced through analysis of agency placement searches and consultation with Children's Social Care. Stakeholders have suggested that additional support and training should be provided to build the capacity of foster carers to enable the placement of more children and young people with complex needs in foster care. The current system of enhanced payments for in house foster carers is linked to the skill of the carer, with tier 3 comparable to the rates paid to an agency foster carer. It has been suggested that a campaign to recruit in house foster carers to meet the needs of more complex/specialist CLA should be developed, with rates matching agency rates but savings achieved through not having to pay the agency premium. There are currently no specific marketing campaigns to recruit carers who could foster children and young people with disabilities. It is estimated that Lancashire would save £668,000 per annum if the 8% in residential care

could be placed in either mainstream or enhanced foster care delivered either in house or by an external provider.

It has also been suggested that there should be a review of the current payment system for in house foster carers to ensure that funding is based on the needs of the child, not the skills of the carers.

Lancashire spent £16.6m on agency foster placements in 2012-13 (which rose to £17m in 2013/14) and placed the second highest number of children in agency fostering placements in the North West region. A Lancashire Agency Fostering Framework Agreement has been developed, which went live on 5th April 2014. There are currently 28 providers on the framework, which includes three tiers, based on price and quality. The impact of the framework is already being seen - within the first month, there has been a 16% increase in the number of new carers in tier 1 and an increase of 8% across the framework, resulting in a 2% increase in the number of children able to be placed. Average weekly costs for tier 1 placements have decreased by 6% and by 1.3% across the framework. It is hoped that as tier 1 providers increase their capacity to place more CLA, the percentage of placements in tier 1 will increase and weekly costs will decrease still further. Placements made under the new framework also attract a 5% discount after 12 months and a further 10% discount after 2 years, which will deliver further improved efficiencies.

Work has already begun to manage the market, through the establishment of the Agency Fostering Provider Forum in May 2014. The forum will be utilised to provide information on needs of CLA, share good practice and develop and enhance provision to improve outcomes and better meet the needs of CLA in Lancashire.

Residential Care

In January 2014, 8.5% of Lancashire's CLA were placed in residential care, in line with national figures. Lancashire is well placed in relation to residential provision. We have 60 in house residential beds, with capacity usually at around 95%. A quarter of all Children's Homes are located in the North West of England, with 1 in 7 within Lancashire County Council boundaries, providing a total of 193 agency residential beds, 128 of which are in good or outstanding homes. Despite an ambition for only 40% of residential care to be provided by agency in Lancashire, the total currently stands at 60%. Two thirds of agency placements are with Northern Care and ROC North West (preferred providers for category A and B/C placements).

Categories are currently used for residential care based on the needs of CLA:

- Category A covers those children displaying emotional, behavioural difficulties. The majority of children requiring a category A placement will be those typically displaying lower intensity levels of need.
- Category B covers those children who are hard to manage including those children and young people with autistic spectrum disorder or moderate learning disability.
- Category C covers those children with complex needs such as risky, sexualised behaviour or a serious eating disorder.

In house residential care mainly provides category B placements, although there is increasing demand for them to take category C placements. Both Children's Social Care and providers report that they do not find the categories particularly useful. It has been suggested that it would be more useful if Lancashire moves to having a set price for core costs and 'add ons'. Stakeholders do not feel it is always clear exactly what is being paid for with some of the high cost agency residential placements – a move to core costs and 'add ons' would provide more clarity.

Concerns have been raised about the current way agency residential placements are commissioned, including the perception that it is allowing the preferred providers to 'cherry pick' placements. Current commissioning arrangements come to an end in January 2015. Many local authorities are moving away from contracts with specific providers and are utilising tiered framework agreements, based on quality and cost. A move towards a framework agreement was supported by providers.

Evidence suggests that local authorities sometimes think too little about whether and how they can return children in residential care to their birth family or move to other forms of care when appropriate. Alongside this, concerns have been expressed in relation to difficulties in moving young people once they have been placed in agency residential care. Stakeholders have suggested that there should be more clarity with providers about expectations from a placement (for example a 90 day placement with a view to going home) and that there should be clear criteria to determine which young people should go into agency placements, for example, those where it is very unlikely they will return home, or our less vulnerable young people, should the decision be taken for in house provision to take our most vulnerable/ challenging CLA placements. It has also been raised that, whilst there is evidence of the support required (and therefore the cost of the placement) reducing as a result of an effective placement in house, initial analysis has provided no clear indication of this happening in agency placements.

In House Residential Overnight Break Units

Lancashire currently has 8 Residential Overnight Break Units for children with disabilities (providing 46 beds per night), registered for children between the ages of 5 – 17 years. Following a full review, which is part of an overall strategy to provide an alternative menu of services for families of children with disabilities, this will reduce, taking account of changing demand and development of other provision coming on stream, including the recently modernised outdoor education facilities. The potential selling of surplus places to neighbouring authorities who have limited or no in house overnight break provision will be considered as part of this review.

IDSS has developed alternative options to residential overnight break provision, including working in partnership with adult Shared Lives provision for young people with learning disabilities aged 16 and above. It has been suggested that this work can be further developed by providing training to Shared Lives carers so they can offer support for our more complex cases.

Residential Establishments Providing Medical or Nursing Care

Placement choice for this provision is very limited. There are currently only two providers in the whole of the North West which provide placements including medical or nursing care, only one of which is of sufficient good quality, according to CQC.

Secure Units

There are no secure units or placements which offer secure welfare placements in Lancashire. The nearest secure unit in St Helen's has recently closed. Although not in high demand, it can be challenging to find a secure welfare placement. This is an issue both regionally and nationally. Lancashire is working with other North West local authorities to explore how this can be addressed moving forward.

3.8e Out of Area Placements

Amendments to the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations create new requirements for local authorities making distant placements (those outside of the authority and any bordering authorities) to consult and share information with children's services in the area of placement, and for the Director of Children's Services to approve these placements. Local processes for approving such placements have been agreed in light of these new requirements.

The proportion of children looked after placed outside of Lancashire's boundaries in truly 'distant' placements is low, at just under 4% of the total CLA population. This represents improved performance from March 2013 (6%) and compares favourably with our regional (8%) and statistical neighbours (9%), as well as an England average of 12% (at March 2013).

A national report suggests that Corporate Parents do not give enough priority to ensuring that children living out of area are receiving high quality care and do not routinely collect separate data on the progress of children living out of area. Those that did rarely analysed the information to inform service planning.

Compared to statistical neighbours, Lancashire had one of the highest numbers of CLA placed from other areas (685) and one of the highest net gains (425) of CLA when numbers of internal CLA placed externally and numbers of external CLA imported were compared. This has implications not only on the number of locally available placements but also on the impact on local services (such as health and education), the sharing of information between authorities and the DfE recommendation that the Director of Children's Services should know all residential placements in their area.

3.9 Plan for Permanence

In 2013, Lancashire had the second lowest percentage of children who ceased to be looked after returning home (30%), compared to national, regional and benchmarked authorities' figures.

Between 2010-2013, Lancashire's performance against the national adoption scorecard objectives was poor. Lancashire has used the additional Adoption Reform Grant (ARG) funding, which was made available to local authorities in 2013/14 and again in 2014/15, to increase internal staffing capacity and the budget to pay Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) to find adopters for some of our children. The Adoption Service report that, in 2013/14, there has been significant success in timescales for placement, in the numbers who have been placed for adoption and the number of adopters recruited. Despite much improved performance in timescales for adoptions in 2013/14 and continued improvements to date, the impact of the three year average calculations used for the adoption scorecard will mean that Lancashire will remain at high timescales until 2016, when a large decrease is anticipated.

Given that approximately £50,000 a week is spent on placements for children with a placement order for adoption, it has been suggested that consideration should be given to utilising the CLA placements budget to continue to fund the use of VAAs, and the other in house measures that have been able to be put in place as a result of the ARG, once this funding ceases.

External agencies have been commissioned to undertake prospective adopter assessments and life story work. An Adoption and Permanence Framework has also been tendered with the aim of providing additional capacity, as and when required, over a 4 year period. Although providers were consulted and engaged throughout development, only one has been recruited to the framework, which is unlikely to provide Lancashire with enough additional capacity. A Steering Group has been established to monitor the framework, identify what external support will be required over the next 3 years and explore alternative options moving forward. To date only 4 children have been referred to the 'It's all about me' (IAAM) scheme due to the expense and uncertainty over whether it will provide value for money.

According to the latest published national statistics, during 2012/13, 10% of the children who ceased to be looked after, both nationally and locally, were as a result of a Special Guardianship Order (SGO). More recent local analysis shows that the percentage in Lancashire has increased to 17% in 2013/14, equating to a fourfold increase in the number of SGOs granted each year between 2009/10 to 2013/14.

Nationally, 6% of children in 2012/13 ceased to be looked after because of the granting of a Residence Order (RO). The percentage of ROs in Lancashire in 2012/13 was half the national figure and was the lowest compared to regional and benchmarked authorities' figures. More recent local analysis suggests that this percentage increased to 10% in 2013/14.

Although SGOs and ROs do provide placement cost savings, in 27 cases, they have also reduced the 'pool' of in house carers. Cost savings attributed to SGO and RO cases therefore need to take into account the cost of recruiting and assessing an additional in house foster carer or the cost differential of an agency compared to an in house fostering placement.

3.10 Support for Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Children's Social Care highlighted that there is a need to develop further the **SCAVI+** psychology service, which is felt to provide effective advice and intervention on the emotional health and wellbeing to CLA and their carers. The successful work of **SCAVI+** is further evidenced by results from the annual Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs), which show that the emotional health of CLA in Lancashire is slightly better than the national average.

3.11 Leaving Care

In 2013, the percentage of children leaving care at the age of 18 years rose for the second consecutive year in Lancashire to 76%, the highest percentage compared to national, regional and statistical neighbour averages. The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation in Lancashire fell sharply from 93% in 2010/11 to 80% in 2012/13. This percentage was significantly below the national, regional and statistical neighbour averages and placed Lancashire in the bottom quartile (125th) for performance against this indicator. More recent local analysis suggests that the percentage increased in 2013/14 to 82%, however this still remains below the local target of 89%. Although numbers of young people placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation is very low in Lancashire, the Corporate Parenting Board have requested that they are alerted if any of our young people do need to be placed temporarily in such accommodation. It is recommended that a comprehensive understanding of need is undertaken to inform the future commissioning of leaving care.

The need for increased provision and support to aid transition into independence was identified by children and young people and other stakeholders. Funding has been secured through the Home Office's Vulnerable and Disengaged Young People's Fund to help address the need for increased support to care leavers. Stakeholders have also reported that there is a need to develop the market and build capacity to support care leavers with more complex needs.

3.12 Advocacy and Gaining CLA views

Since April 2011, Lancashire Children's Rights Service has been commissioned to deliver an advocacy service for CLA. A thorough understanding of need will take place during 2015/16 to inform the commissioning of this service from 2016.

Barnardo's currently deliver the Children and Young People's Participation commission, which includes facilitating the voice and influence of CLA in decisions that are made for them and about them. In addition to this, CLA are going to be invited to give their views on how services for them can be improved by becoming involved in the Lancashire Young Inspectors Programme. During 2014/15, both in house and agency fostering and residential providers will be approached to see whether they would wish to be assessed by the Young Inspectors.

4. Outcomes

4.1 Outcomes

The following information explores how well we are currently doing in terms of achieving good outcomes for our CLA.

Education - Lancashire does not perform well in this area compared to national, regional and statistical neighbours. In 2013:

- 52% of CLA reached level 4+ in Maths at Key Stage 2, which is lower than the England average of 59% and lower than the North West and statistical neighbours averages.
- 60% of CLA reached level 4+ in reading at Key Stage 2, an increase of 3% from the previous year but again lower than the national (63%), North West and statistical neighbour averages.
- 48% of CLA reached level 4+ in writing at Key Stage 2, again an increase of 3% from the previous year but still lower than the national (55%), regional and statistical neighbour averages.
- 12.9% of CLA achieved 5+ GCSEs A* to C or equivalent including English and Maths, lower than national (15.3%), regional and statistical neighbour averages.

Lancashire performs much more favourably in relation to the level of absenteeism amongst CLA, with the proportion of fixed-term and persistent absentees lower in Lancashire than elsewhere. In 2013, the percentage of CLA with fixed rate exclusions was at 7.4%, much lower than the national average of 11.36% and lower than statistical neighbours and the North West average.

Employment, Education and Training - In 2013, 38% of CLA in Lancashire were not in employment, education or training at age 19, a decrease of 4% on the previous year. However, this is still higher than national (34%), regional (36%) and statistical neighbour (28%) averages.

Youth Offending - In 2013, the percentage of CLA aged 10 and over convicted or subject to a final warning or reprimand during the year had decreased to 5.9%, the lowest percentage compared to national, regional and statistical neighbour averages.

Teenage Pregnancy - In 2013, the North West had the highest percentage of mothers aged 12 years old and over who were looked after. The region also had the highest percentage in 2012 and was the third highest in 2009-11. Figures are not available at local authority level.

Substance Misuse – Around one in 20 CLA in Lancashire were found to have a substance misuse problem, slightly above the national average, with half of those refusing treatment, compared with less than a third nationally.

Placement Moves - The percentage of children in Lancashire who have had three or more placements during 2013 stood at 11.0%. This is lower than that of Lancashire's statistical neighbours (11.98%) but is higher than that of the England average (10.85%). More recent local analysis indicates that 7.8% of CLA moved twice or more in 2013/14, which is an improvement on 2012/13 (8.7%) and 2011/12 (9.5%) and well within the target set of 9.5%.

Length of Placement - In terms of children in placements for at least 2 years, Lancashire's performance has improved since 2011/12 (from 71.7% in 2011/12 to 73.4% in 2012/13). As of February 2014, 72.1% of CLA were in a long and stable placement, which is lower than the previous year and slightly below the target set by Lancashire.

4.2 Outcomes Monitoring

Although we have performance information on outcomes for CLA overall, we are not currently able to easily compare the outcomes of our CLA to placement type and specific service provision. This information, alongside a review of the current contract monitoring system, could help to facilitate a more outcomes based approach to monitoring with providers.

To support more effective monitoring of individual CLA outcomes, Lancashire is introducing a SDQ assessment at the point at which a decision is made to look after a child/young person to provide a baseline to assess future progress. Alongside this, it is proposed that the 'My Goals' form will be used to record a child's views, wishes and their top three priorities or 'goals' for their placement. Progress against these goals will be reviewed at statutory visits every 6 months, or sooner where there is a concern or change. The goals and progress 'scores' will be recorded in LCS, therefore allowing the information to be extracted centrally for analysis and audit purposes.

5. Forecasted Numbers of CLA

Predicting the numbers of CLA Lancashire is likely to have over the next few years is important to enable us to ensure we achieve sufficiency for our CLA population going forward. This is challenging to do however as the numbers have varied considerably over the last decade producing no clear trend to apply going forward. Taking that into account the most realistic way to predict numbers would therefore be, to calculate the average annual increase in Lancashire over the last 11 years (2.3%) and apply this moving forward. To make this more robust we have applied upper and lower confidence intervals which gives us a lower end figure which we are unlikely to go below and a higher end figure which we are unlikely to exceed.

These figures, however do not take into account any reductions which we would expect to see from the impact of our early support and prevention services. If we predicted that these preventative services would achieve a 1% reduction in the population year on year then our average annual rise would reduce from 2.3% to 1.3%. The table below shows our predicted numbers for the next five years based on a 2.3% increase (without prevention) and a 1.3% increase (factored down for prevention) as well as the highest number and lowest number we are likely to have based on confidence intervals (CI).

Year	1.3% year on year rise (Factored down for Prevention)			2.3% year on year rise		
	Lowest Number (Lower CI)	Predicted Number	Highest Number (Upper CI)	Lowest Number (Lower CI)	Predicted Number	Highest Number (Upper CI)
2014/15	1556	1634	1715	1571	1650	1732
2015/16	1576	1655	1737	1608	1688	1771
2016/17	1597	1677	1759	1646	1727	1810
2017/18	1619	1699	1781	1685	1767	1851

If we continue to place our CLA in a similar way to the previous two years and our preventative work is effective (i.e. there is a rise of 1.3%), it is predicted that by 2017/18 we will need an additional 6 Family and Friends carers; 50 in house foster carers; 37 agency foster placements; and 6 agency residential placements (from the 2013/14 baseline).

However if the numbers rise at an increase of 2.3%, we will need an additional 9 Family and Friends

carers; 74 in house foster carers; 56 agency foster placements and 10 agency residential placements.

Applying the average unit costs available for 2013/14 to these placement predictions results in the following annual projected costs for fostering and residential care:

- 2014/15 - spend of between £46.2m and £46.7m (representing an increase of £1.9m to £2.4m);
- By 2017/18 – spend of between £48.0m and £50.0m (an increase of between £3.7m and £5.7m)

Please note that the above figures take no account of general inflation, external market factors or changes in the mix of provision.

To ensure our future commissioning continues to offer value for money, it is recommended that we:

- Regularly review our predictions and subsequent planning as new data becomes available
- Monitor the impact of preventative measures with specific regard to those coming in and out
- Review the current mix of provision and set targets for a future mix which offers best value for money whilst ensuring needs and outcomes are achieved.

6. Summary of Key Recommendations

Early Support and Prevention

- Continue to invest in, promote and evaluate early support and prevention services

Strategic Needs Analysis

- Develop improved needs analysis to inform longer term approach to commissioning
- Further analysis is needed to validate increased numbers of re-referrals into Children's Social Care and, if confirmed, explore reasons behind this increase
- Carry out analysis of reasons for out of area placements and needs of CLA placed out of area, to inform service planning
- Regularly review predicted numbers of CLA and subsequent planning as new data becomes available

Assessment

- Explore how assessments of young people becoming looked after can be further improved, including the consideration of the establishment of a Short Term Residential Assessment Unit

Commissioning Placements – Placement Finding

- Review the current placement finding process, including exploring the feasibility of developing an Access to Resources/ Brokerage team and how CLA can have more of a say in placement decisions
- Review and agree timescales for placement searches, including the development of a shared definition of what constitutes an emergency placement
- Review processes for distant placements

Commissioning Placements - Provision

- Review the current mix of provision and set targets for a future mix which offers best value for money whilst ensuring needs and outcomes are met

- Review the number of children placed at home with a parent or a person with parental responsibility
- Continue to make use of Family and Friends foster care and explore the potential for widening post permanence support to these carers
- Invest in improved recruitment of in house foster carers, including carers of children with disabilities
- Explore how the needs of more complex/ specialist CLA, including children with disabilities, could be met through the use of bespoke placements and increasing the number of foster carers who can meet these needs
- Consideration to be given to the payment structure for foster carers and how this can be linked to the needs of the child
- Develop the new agency residential care commission to include a review of the use of categories and a greater clarity of cost
- Work with residential providers to explore how children and young people can be supported to return to their birth family or move to other forms of care, including ensuring expectations for placement are clearly communicated to providers
- Provide training to Shared Lives carers and foster carers so they can offer support to more complex children with disabilities
- In partnership with CCGs, explore the feasibility of developing either the internal or external market to provide localised placements in residential establishments providing medical or nursing care and mental health provision
- Work with other North West local authorities to explore ways in which secure welfare placements can be used more effectively
- Develop support and an accommodation strategy for 16-17 year olds, linked to homelessness

Plan for Permanence

- Analyse why a lower percentage of children in Lancashire are returning home and ceasing to be looked after compared to national, regional and other benchmarked authorities. Research practice in good performing authorities
- Agree the sustainable use of the VAA process for adoption placements
- As part of a strategic review/ redesign of the LCC adoption service identify what external support will be required over the next 3 years and develop a commissioning strategy
- Review the impact of the 'It's all about me' social impact bond programme
- Continue to promote the use of ROs and SGOs and provide support through in house and commissioned providers, ensuring that hidden costs are taken into account when calculating cost savings of SGOs and ROs

Leaving Care

- Undertake a comprehensive analysis of Leaving Care to inform future provision
- Work with housing providers to identify need and make provision for good quality housing in order to support the increased availability of suitable accommodation for care leavers

CYP Views and Advocacy

- Develop the Young Inspectors scheme for use in fostering and residential provision
- Review the provision of advocacy for children looked after

Outcomes Monitoring

- Implement the agreed individual outcomes monitoring process for CLA
- Implement an agreed process for monitoring different service provision by outcomes

Children Looked After Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy (2014- 17) Action Plan

Recommendation/ Key Actions	Expected Outcome	Link to CYPP	Lead	Significant Checkpoint	Progress	RAG	
Early Support and Prevention							
Continue to invest in, promote and evaluate early support and prevention services	Develop and deliver an integrated commissioning strategy for Prevention and Early Help	Early help and prevention services are commissioned effectively	1.1 1.3 3.1	Head of Prevention and Early Help	Phase 1 by April 2015 Phase 2 by April 2016	Once Phase 1 of the council transformation is complete the SMT will develop an integrated commissioning strategy to deliver the Wellbeing, Prevention & Early Help agenda. Work is currently being undertaken to review existing commission arrangements including the transfer of the 0-5 HCP to the local authority in 2015.	
	Ensure clear pathways are in place and promoted to districts	Districts are aware of and use pathways	1.1 1.3 3.1	Head of Prevention and Early Help	Oct 2014	Pathways now in place. Promoted at CSC Team Manager/ Practice Manager event and sent out via weekly brief	
	Monitor the impact of preventative interventions and de-commission any which fail to have an impact or achieve value for money	Effective, value for money interventions are delivered	1.1 1.3 3.1	Head of Prevention and Early Help	March 2015	Core offer services to continue into 2015/16. Mini competition to finalise providers to be completed by mid-Feb. Plans for post April 2016 commissioning arrangements to be discussed as phase 2 of transformation progresses.	

Strategic Needs Analysis							
Develop improved needs analysis to inform commissioning through: - agreed PDRO work plan; - ensuring placement finding process feeds into needs analysis; - ensuring outcome monitoring framework identifies unmet need		There is a better understanding of unmet needs and gaps in provision are addressed	1.3 3.1	Head of Performance Head of Commissioning	March 2015	Systems agreed via monthly performance meetings to develop PDRO work plan and link to an Access to Resources/ Brokerage Team	
Carry out analysis to validate increased numbers of re-referrals into CSC	Carry out analysis on number of re-referrals If confirmed, explore reasons behind increase	Numbers of re-referrals are validated If increased, reasons are identified and action is taken to reduce	1.3 3.1	Head of Children's Social Care PDROs	Dec 2014	Completed – re referral rate was incorrect and based upon change/ impact of new IT system	Complete
Carry out analysis of CLA placed out of area to ascertain reasons for placement		CLA placed out of area are in the right placement	1.3 3.1	PDROs	July 2015	This work will tie in with setting up of the Access to Resources Team – audit activity is ongoing	
Regularly review predicted numbers of CLA and subsequent planning as new data becomes available		Future placements and provision are effectively planned	1.3 3.1	PDROs	Quarterly	Regular monthly performance meetings arranged	
Assessment							
Explore how assessments of young people becoming looked after can be further improved	Carry out research, including cost benefit analysis, into the establishment of a short term residential assessment unit	Assessments are improved Ensure the right permanent placement can be identified Children who can return home are identified and supported to do so	1.3 3.1	Head of YOT, Fostering, Adoption and Residential Services	Dec 2014	Preparation to run one of our children's homes as an assessment unit is underway. The Statement of Purpose is being drafted and the identified home will commence operation in February 2015	

Commissioning Placements – Placement Finding							
Review the current mix of provision	Analyse the current deployment of the placement budget, including the split between in house and agency expenditure Set targets for a future mix which offers best value for money whilst ensuring needs and outcomes are met, including consideration of high end placements being provided in house	Most appropriate, best matched placements are sourced The CLA Placement budget is deployed effectively and efficiently	1.3 3.1	Head of Children's Social Care/ Commissioning DELT	March 2015	Leads identified – and work plan established – links to Access to Resources/ Brokerage Team and review of fostering and residential commissioning framework	
Review the current placement finding process	Explore the feasibility of developing an Access to Resources/ Brokerage Team	Clear, more dynamic placement finding process is developed	3.1	Head of Children's Social Care Commissioning Head of YOT, Fostering, Adoption and Residential Services	Jan 2015	Task and Finish Group established to explore feasibility. Visit to Bournemouth taken place – Report to be presented to DELT in February. Office space at county hall has been identified for the team to commence the work.– on timescale for phase one	
	Review information given to and received from providers	Most appropriate, best matched placements are sourced	3.1	Head of Children's Social Care/ Commissioning	March 2015	Paul Hegarty/ Task and Finish Group leading	
	Review and agree timescales for placement searches, including the development of a shared definition of an emergency placement	The number of emergency placements is reduced	3.1	Head of Children's Social Care/ Commissioning	March 2015	Paul Hegarty/ Task and Finish Group leading	

	Explore how young people can have more of a say in placement decisions	CYP views inform choice of placement	3.1 5.1 5.2	Head of Children's Social Care/ Commissioning	March 2015	Paul Hegarty/ Task and Finish Group leading	
Review processes for distant placements		Distant placements are only made when it is the most appropriate available and consistent with assessed need	3.1	Head of Children's Social Care	Oct 2014	Completed – all signed off and process launched	Complete
Commissioning Placements - Provision							
Review the number of CLA who are placed with parents	Analyse whether placements with parents was the preferred option and reasons for court decision. Subject to findings, raise with LFJB Develop a recovery plan for discharging home placements	Reduce number of home placements where appropriate	3.1	Head of Children's Social Care	Feb 2015	Work in progress (DB/ CB/ CG) Work in progress (DB)	
Continue to make use of Family and Friends foster care and explore the potential for widening post permanence support to these carers		There are increased numbers of family and friends foster carers	3.1	Head of YOT, Fostering, Adoption and Residential Services	March 2015	Work is under way to consider options as part of phase 2 in the transformation programme	
Increase the number of foster carers, including those who can meet the needs of more complex/ specialist CLA	Invest in improved recruitment of in house foster carers Increase the number of foster carers able to meet more complex/ specialist need	More CLA are placed in internal foster care provision More in house foster carers are able to meet the needs of more complex/ specialist CLA	3.1	Head of YOT, Fostering, Adoption and Residential Services	March 2016	A review is underway as to how the service will continue to recruit its foster carers. A new marketing strategy is being implemented. A project aimed at enhancing the skill set of foster carers to support more complex young people is under way.	

	Provide training to Shared Lives carers and foster carers so they can offer support to more complex children with disabilities	More in house foster carers are able to meet the needs of more complex/ specialist CLA	3.1	Head of YOT, Fostering, Adoption and Residential Services	March 2016	A review of current the current skill set of carers is to be undertaken to identify training needs	
Consideration to be given to the payment structure for foster carers and how this can be linked to the needs of the child		In house foster carers are paid based on the needs of the child not the skills of the carer	3.1	Head of YOT, Fostering, Adoption and Residential Services	March 2016	Review of foster carer enhancements will commence to determine options going forward.	
Explore how the needs of more complex/ specialist CLA could be met through the use of bespoke in house residential placements		The best possible placements are found for CLA with most complex needs	3.1	Head of YOT, Fostering, Adoption and Residential Services / Commissioning	Jan 2015	Bespoke packages in place to support placements.	
Develop the new agency residential commission to include clear costs and expectations from placements		Commissioning of agency residential placements is improved	3.1	Commissioning	March 2016	Lancashire Agency Residential Framework to be developed. Task and Finish Group established to lead.	
Work with residential providers to explore how CLA can be supported to return to their birth family or move to other forms of care through establishment of Agency Residential Forum and permanence monitoring target in residential commission		CLA in residential care are supported to return home or move to other forms of care, where appropriate	3.1	Commissioning	March 2016	To be explored through forthcoming stakeholder events and Provider Forum once established. Will be included as performance monitoring target in framework	
Explore the feasibility of developing the market to provide localised medical or nursing care including mental health provision		More local medical/ nursing/ mental health placements are available	3.1	Commissioning	March 2016	Included as an agenda item at CYP Health Commissioner Meeting on 10 th December. Further discussion required therefore to be included as a future	

					agenda item	
Work with other North West local authorities to explore ways in which secure welfare placements can be used more effectively	Secure welfare placements are available when required	3.1	Head of Children's Social Care/ Commissioning	March 2015	Manchester did not include LCC in DfE bid – currently on hold	
Develop an accommodation strategy for 16-17 year olds, linked to homelessness	Accommodation options for 16-17 year olds are improved	3.1	Head of Children's Social Care	July 2015	Leads identified. PDRO lead to be established in meeting to develop PDRO work plan	
Plan for Permanence						
Analyse why a lower percentage of children who cease to be looked after return home and research practice in good performing areas	More children are supported and are able to return home and cease to be looked after	1.3 3.1	Head of Children's Social Care PDROs	March 2015	Meeting arranged to develop PDRO work plan	
Identify what external adoption support will be required over the next 3 years	Develop a commissioning strategy	1.3 3.1	Head of Children's Social Care/ Head of YOT, Fostering, Adoption and Residential Services/ Commissioning	July 2015	Current information on the number of placements made this year to project the number of placements for next year is being undertaken. The approach to place children either in house or with VAAs will continue to run concurrently.	
	Sustain use of VAA process for adoption placements					
Continue to promote the use of ROs and SGOs and provide support through in house and external agencies, ensuring that hidden costs are taken into account when calculating cost savings of SGOs and ROs	More CLA achieve permanence as a result of ROs and SGOs	1.3 3.1	Head of Children's Social Care	Quarterly	On going	
Leaving Care						

Undertake a comprehensive analysis of Leaving Care to inform future provision	Future provision of leaving care is enhanced	2.3	Head of Children's Social Care/ Commissioning	Sept 2015	Analysis has begun. Working with Placements NW to review current regional framework and whether it meets the needs for Lancashire placements	
Work with housing providers to identify need and make provision for good quality housing and support the increased availability for care leavers	More care leavers are placed in suitable accommodation	2.3	Head of Children's Social Care	Sept 2015	Link to workstream 'Develop an accommodation strategy for 16-17 year olds, linked to homelessness'	
CYP Views and Advocacy						
Develop the Young Inspectors scheme for use in fostering and residential provision	CLA views influence services	5.1 5.2	CYP Participation Strategic Lead	Oct 2014	11 CLA have been trained as Young Inspectors. 10 inspections to take place by March 2015. 3 inspections have been carried out so far (1 LCC home, 1 agency home and 1 agency fostering provider). Further inspections booked in for agency homes and foster agency providers from Jan – March. Discussions to take place with providers re. building Young Inspectors into specification moving forward	
Review the provision of advocacy for CLA	CLA can access effective and efficient	5.1 5.2	Commissioning	Oct 2015	Understanding of need commenced. Current	

	advocacy support				service extended to ensure compliance with Care Act	
Outcomes Monitoring						
Implement the agreed individual outcomes monitoring process for CLA	Individual outcomes monitoring is more effective and accessible	5.1 5.2	Contracts/ Commissioning	Oct 2014	Approach piloted on all new cases between November and December. Feedback will be used to inform next steps. Plan is to use with all CLA from Feb 2015	
Implement an agreed process for monitoring different service provision by outcomes	Service provision can be effectively compared and monitored for outcomes	1.3	Contracts/ Commissioning	July 2015	Performance Monitoring task and finish group established	