

**Report of the Director of Children's Services**

**Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)**

**Date: 8<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

**Subject: External Placements Review**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. At the June meeting, members of the Scrutiny Board agreed that there would be an inquiry into reducing the numbers of looked after children, with a particular focus on external placements. This report therefore provides an overview to Children's Scrutiny Board of the key issues relating to external placements for looked after children in Leeds.

**Recommendations**

2. Scrutiny Board are asked to consider and note the contents of the report.

## 1 Purpose of this report

1.1 This report provides an overview to Children's Scrutiny Board of the key issues relating to external placements for looked after children in Leeds. This overview includes;

- Background and National Context
- Statistical information and analysis
- Financial information and analysis
- Managing demand and new service approaches and developments
- Placement commissioning service

## 2 Background information

2.1 The Leeds Children's Trust Board has identified as one of the top three 'Obsessions' the need to reduce the number of Looked after Children. Actions to deliver on this are set out in the Children and Young Peoples Plan. These plans were produced following an outcomes based accountability exercise with all partners. This plan is currently being re-freshed.

2.2 As of the end of July 2011, 1449 children and young people were in care in Leeds representing a rate of 95.1 per 10,000. This is a small increase on the July 2010 figure of 1424, a rate of 93.8. At the end of July 2011, there were 89 children and young people in externally provided residential placements and 254 children and young people in placements with Independent Fostering Agencies. There has been a year on year increase in the numbers of children and young people in externally provided placements therefore increase spend. This growth is reflected elsewhere in the country.

2.3 Whilst the numbers of children looked after has increased this is a lower increase than could have been expected when looking at the numbers of children subject to a Child Protection Plan. In July 2011 1074 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan, a rate of 70.6; this is a significant increase from the July 2010 numbers of 662, a rate of 43.6.

2.4 While reflecting improved practice the relationship and impact on looked after children numbers will need longer term consideration. This also reflects additional demand on services. While numbers of looked after children and child protection plans reflect the acute levels of need it is also important to note that there were over 13,000 referrals to social care in the past year all representing some level of need and/or concern.

	<b>July 2011</b>	<b>July 2010</b>
<b>Children subject to a CPP</b>	1,074	662
<b>CPP rate per 10,000</b>	70.6 (based on 152,200)*	43.6 (based on 151,800)*
<b>Looked after children</b>	1,449	1,424
<b>LAC rate per 10,000</b>	95.1 (based on 152,200)*	93.8 (based on 152,200)*

\* Mid-year population figures changed from 151,800 to 152,200 in July 2011 (from ONS website)

	<b>April 2011 - 30 August 2011</b>	<b>2010-11</b>
<b>Referrals</b>	5,862	13,643
<b>Requests for Service</b>	6,533	12,934
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,395</b>	<b>26,577</b>

Based on YTD figures, we are predicting an 11.9% increase in 2011-12 when compared to 2010-11

- 2.5 This increase in workload has been so significant and sustained that individual caseload levels for social workers remain high despite additional investment in staff. The number of child protection teams needed to meet this level of demand is increasing; and this will continue until there are significant reductions in referrals and children in need cases currently managed in these teams, effectively served by targeted and universal services.
- 2.6 The past year has seen good improvement in the overall approach in Leeds with the challenge now to translate this into impact. To date efforts have focused on addressing service improvements in line with the children's services improvement plan, strengthening the children's trust partnership arrangements at city and locality levels and the development of early intervention strategies. It is the development of this latter strand that is a priority, building on the foundations of improved service performance and partnership working. This is consistent with the findings of the Munro review and overall national direction in terms of effective early intervention.
- 2.7 The challenge is significant especially when placed in the context of the resources available. There is an implicit tension in the rising number of looked after children and increasing social care workload placed against the resources available for more effective early intervention. High social worker caseloads were at the core of the 'inadequate' judgement in the announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services in November 2009. However there is also significant potential to translate our partnership efforts and local approaches into impact, this is being reflected in the increasing adoption of Outcomes Based Accountability approaches. This includes: improved targeting of need at the local level; more integration around the child and the family at the frontline; increasing the use of the Common Assessment (CAF) as a partnership tool to focus collective effort; and encouraging a shared culture of leadership, responsibility and support.

### **3 Main issues**

#### **National Context**

##### **3.1 Life in Care**

- 3.2 In April 2010 the children's Charity 'Barnardo's' and the Government think tank 'Demos' launched a joint research study into the cost of life in care 'In Loco Parentis'.

*Children enter care for a variety of reasons and have very different needs and characteristics when they arrive. If we are to understand the many purposes served by the care system, we must be aware of the heterogeneous nature of the care population. The complex makeup of the care*

population reaffirms the range of purposes the system serves and the limitations inherent in pursuing a 'one size fits all' approach. In practice there will always be a group of children for whom prevention from entering care or permanent solutions such as adoption are not realistic outcomes. Instead of oscillating between these positions of 'prevention' and 'permanency' we should aim to use public care far more proactively to:

- provide support to families as soon as they need it rather than waiting until they reach crisis point
- achieve early permanency for those children who cannot return to their families
- provide stability for those children and young people for whom a permanent solution is not desirable or feasible.

*(In Loco Parentis' extract)*

### Statistical Information and Analysis

3.3 Leeds City Council was, as of 1<sup>st</sup> August 2011 the Corporate Parent for 1449 children. Numbers of children, looked after remained stable between 2006/7 to 2008/9 (from 1359 in 2006/07, to 1364 in 2007/8, and 1338 in 2008/9) in 2009/10 numbers rose sharply to 1414 and rose again to 1444 in 2010/11 Numbers of Children Looked after have risen slightly since then to 1449 at 1<sup>st</sup> August 2011.

3.4 Leeds City Council sits within both a Statistical Neighbour and Core City Comparator group. Leeds has over three times the numbers of looked after children than our Statistical Neighbours and approximately 50% more looked after children than the average Core City. Leeds City Council has seen a substantial increase in numbers of Looked after Children. Leeds Looked after Population has increased by 6.55%, on average the Core Cities have remained stable and Statistical Neighbours have increased by 10.6%. The average rates do though mask a wide variation in rates of increase between Local Authorities

2006-07		
Leeds	Core City	Stat Neighbour
1359	1006	414

2007-08		
Leeds	Core City	Stat Neighbour
1364	996	421

2008-9		
Leeds	Core City	Stat Neighbour
1338	986	427

2009-10		
Leeds	Core City	Stat Neighbour
1414	1008	458

2010-11
Leeds
1449

- 3.5 The value for money Benchmarking Group compiles useful comparator statistics for numbers of Looked after Children per 10,000 0 to 17 population.
- 3.6 Leeds currently has a rate of 93 per 10,000, the Core City comparator average being 95, the highest Core City ratio being Manchester at 143 per 10,000 and the lowest Sheffield with 54 per 10,000. It is important however to note that Leeds has a lower socio economic indicator of deprivation than the average core city and would be expected to have a lower ratio of children looked after.
- 3.7 The reasons for the increase in numbers of Looked after Children are complex and interdependent, however key factors include:
- The unannounced inspection judgement of inadequate in 2009 and a requirement to review thresholds of intervention.
  - The national impact following the death of baby Peter Connolly and the Laming report
  - Although Leeds has resources in preventative service provision it has been identified that there is a lack of co-ordination of early intervention and edge of care services and that there has yet to be significant impact on reducing the need for children to become looked after.
- 3.8 It is worth also noting that demographic changes in the population of Leeds, including increased numbers of children overall and changes in communities settling in Leeds as a result of economic migration will also impact on all children's services including those for Looked after Children.
- 3.9 There has been a detailed analysis of the trend figures for Looked after Children since January 2009. Numbers of children entering our care each month vary greatly but the trend line has remained steady at an average of 37 per month. Similarly, the trend line for numbers of children leaving our care has remained steady at an average of 33 per month and the numbers rehabilitated home to their parents has remained steady at an average of 8.2 per month, albeit with a wide variation from month to month. The impact of this is a significant variation in the Looked after Children population each month as social workers work hard to support children to move out of our care but an increased number move in.
- 3.10 The numbers of children discharged from our care through the making of a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) have increased over time with an average of 1.4 per month in January 2009 to a current position of 4.1 per month. Special Guardianship orders enable foster carers to take more parental responsibility for the child in their care. Foster Carers become the child's guardian and replaces the care order on the child. The use of these orders has increased and should continue to increase further. An SGO provides stability for the child and although the Council retains some financial responsibility for the child, some costs are reduced. As Special Guardians were the Child's foster carer who continues to provide a placement for a child who would otherwise be looked after, these placements are not lost but the conversion from a care order to a Special Guardianship order does mask a continued slight increase in numbers of children for whom we retain financial responsibility.

3.11 Similarly, the numbers of children discharged from our care following placement with parents has increased (see table below). Children may be placed with their parents whilst on a Care Order in order to ensure we retain parental responsibility whilst assessing their parents ability to appropriately care for their child. Once we are satisfied that the parents can care for their child we may return to court to discharge the order. We are now more efficient in seeking an early return to court to request discharge of a Care Order. This is good child care practice but as these children were not using either in house or external placement resources, their discharge from our care does not reduce pressure on placements.

Children placed with parents discharged from care								
2004 Apr-Dec	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011 Jan-Mar	Grand Total
29 (39*)	55	50	49	55	52	73	19 (76**)	382

\* Projected full year figures

## 4 Corporate Considerations

### 4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 There are a number of areas outlined in this report that require consultation with elected members, local authority staff, partners, children and young people and parents/carers. This engagement and consultation will form part of the detailed service and implementation planning.

### 4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 The report outlines key areas that need full consideration in relation to issues of equality and diversity. Full impact assessments will be required for all service changes and developments.

### 4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 Reducing the need for children and young people to be looked after is the key priority for the Children's Trust Board partners. Detailed action plans are included as part of the Children and Young People's Plan.

### 4.4 Resources and Value for Money

#### Financial Information and Analysis

4.4.1 Each year, the Audit Commission produce a database of Value for Money (VFM) profiles. This information, based on 2009/10 is used to compile our own Value for Money profiles and benchmark these results against the other Core City authorities (Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield). Information from the 2011 profile indicates that Leeds has the 5<sup>th</sup> (out of

8) highest number of looked after children and has the lowest (8<sup>th</sup> out of 8) planned spend in this area.

- 4.4.2 The 2011/12 budget was set against a backdrop of £50m of grant cuts and around £40m of demographic pressures, the latter falling largely within Children’s Services and Adult Social Care. In terms of Children’s Services, there was a significant reduction in national grants and funding for Children’s Services, both in terms of the Governments emergency budget in 2010 and also in the Comprehensive Spending Review and Local Government Financial settlement. For Children’s Services and Schools, the impact of this was a £17.1m or a 2.7% reduction in grants & funding.
- 4.4.3 The 2011/12 budget strategy recognised the continuing demand pressures within Children’s Services and also the need to prioritise resources and services to support the vulnerable. In terms of overall Council resources, the 2011/12 net managed budget for Children’s Services of £129.5m equated to 22% of the overall net council spend which represented an increase of 2.6% from 2010/11 demonstrating the Council’s commitment to realign resources to meet priorities around vulnerable groups. However, given the overall financial challenge facing the Council, the net managed budget for 2011/12 for Children’s Services actually reduced by £12.5m from the adjusted net managed budget for 2010/11.
- 4.4.4 The main pressure on the budget continues to be around the high number of looked after children and in particular the externally provided residential and fostering placement budgets.
- 4.4.5 The 2011/12 budget for externally provided placements was calculated on the basis of informed forecasts around potential increased demand together with a plan to ‘turn the curve’ and reduce placement numbers/costs over the course of the 2011/12 financial year. The latter is described in the ‘turning the curve’ action plan which is based around delivering against several key challenges including reducing the number of looked after children through work with families and partners at a local level to intervene early and prevent the need for escalation to social care services and also to have a stronger focus on multi-agency working to de-escalate cases where risks have been diminished. In addition, work is ongoing around reducing placement costs through negotiation and contract management with external providers, by increasing capacity within in-house looked after children services and through improved cost sharing with partners. At this stage of the financial year, the number of referrals to Children’s Social Care remains high and demand for external placements continues to grow.
- 4.4.6 The table below shows how budget and actual spend on external placements has increased over the last 4 financial years. As can be seen, whilst the budget between 2008/09 and 2010/11 increased by £2.8m, actual spend rose by £12.3m, resulting in overspends on these budgets in each of these years. For 2011/12, the budgets for these two areas were increased by £8m, which was a greater increase than in any year previously and greater than the total spend in 2008/09.

2008/09			2009/10			2010/11			2011/12		
Budget	Act	Over	Budget	Act	Over	Budget	Act	Over	Budget	Fore- cast	Over

	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
IFA	1.36	1.89	0.53	1.56	4.68	3.12	2.08	7.08	5.00	5.35	10.76	5.41
External Residential	3.74	4.86	1.12	4.74	7.37	2.63	5.82	12.00	6.18	10.55	12.98	2.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.10</b>	<b>6.75</b>	<b>1.65</b>	<b>6.30</b>	<b>12.05</b>	<b>5.75</b>	<b>7.90</b>	<b>19.08</b>	<b>11.18</b>	<b>15.90</b>	<b>23.74</b>	<b>7.84</b>

Unit costing of in house resources has been undertaken in conjunction with the Children's Services Financial Management team. The average full unit cost of an in house foster care placement with a level 4 (professional) foster carer, the equivalent of an independent agency foster carer, is £517.00 per week, or £467.00 if two children are in placement together. The average cost of an externally purchased placements is £780.00 per week.

#### Fostering Fees with On-costs

Level 4 Carers - Weekly payment based on 56 weeks & Ad hoc charges

	0-4	5-10	11-12	13-15	16+
Level 4 - 1 Children	404.04	420.19	453.58	453.58	497.73
Level 4 - 2 Children	353.96	370.12	403.50	403.50	447.65

As Table above with on-cost based on 30% Management fee and 750 children (see Oncost Calculation tab)

	0-4	5-10	11-12	13-15	16+
Level 4 - 1 Children	467.66	483.81	517.20	517.20	561.35
Level 4 - 2 Children	417.58	433.73	467.12	467.12	511.27

4.4.7 The average unit cost for an in house residential placement per week is £2,003 compared to an average unit cost of £2,750 for an independent residential placement. The weekly difference per placement is £747.

4.4.8 It would be expected that we would require a small number of highly specialist independent placements for those children requiring the type of specialist placements that would not be feasible for a Local Authority to provide.

In House Unit Cost Per week **2,003**

Average External Residential Place **2750**

Difference **747**

4.4.9 The Local Authority Benchmarking Club collate average spend per looked after child per week. Leeds reports, by a considerable margin, the lowest average spend at £273.57 with Manchester spending the most at £772.62.

4.4.10 Not all care journeys cost the same, the Barnardo's and Demos report 'In local parentis' considers two care journeys: one of a child, brought into care following appropriate assessment and provided with a stable placement and one of a child brought into care in crisis and subsequently having a number of placement breakdowns. The research highlights the importance of early and good assessment



and of appropriate resourcing of care provision to avoid placement breakdown. An extract is highlighted below;

*...However, we must be clear that the care system certainly does not deliver poor experiences universally, but that it is patchy. Children's experiences vary hugely, and not just between local authority areas. Dozens of separate decisions and events, made by several different individuals, may fundamentally change a child's care journey and future outcomes. And of course, the intrinsic characteristics of the child themselves and their needs will influence the path they take through the care system. It is for these reasons that the same care system is able to produce successful, university educated adults, as well as some of society's most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people. To illustrate the full scale of this variation, we have modeled the costs of caring for two children who have contrasting but realistic experiences at the two extremes of the care system, from the time that they first enter care, until age 18.*

*The difference in costs between a stable and unstable care journey should be borne in mind when we present our recommendations. We are aware that we are entering a period of unprecedented fiscal constraints. Children's services are likely to experience substantial reductions in funding, and as local authorities must meet their statutory safeguarding commitments, cuts will have to be made elsewhere. In such circumstances, it is understandable that local authorities may 'firefight' to deal with child protection cases and urgent needs, rather than invest in approaches that may save costs over the long term. However, we hope that by costing an unstable journey, we have demonstrated that timely care decisions along with stability and better mental health can reduce immediate costs to the local authority by reducing social work time, use of expensive agency and residential placements, and therapeutic support. These are not distant cost savings beyond the budgetary cycle, but amount to an average of £32,755.37 in the difference between the two journeys, which could be saved each year while that child is in care*

(Barnardo's and Demos report 'In Loco Parentis')

## **4.5 Managing Demand and New Service Approaches and Developments**

4.5.1 It is only through a fundamental change in culture, behaviour, strategy and front line practice that we can maintain a reduced demand for placements for Looked after Children. Central to this is the overall ambition to support children to live safely within their family home through enabling families to provide stable and loving homes for their children. This preventative intervention requires absolute commitment from all partners working with children and adults in Leeds and will need interventions including:-

- Sexual health and contraceptive support
- Ante-natal, post natal and early parenting support
- Early identification and support for vulnerable families
- Domestic violence programmes
- Work with adults on mental health and drug and alcohol misuse
- Work with adult and young offenders
- Support for parents with a learning disability
- Support for families with children with a disability
- Culturally appropriate support for families from a BME heritage, economic migrant families and families seeking asylum

- Specialist family support programmes for those families with children identified as on the edge of care
- Emergency care provision and rapid response work for children requiring short period of time in our care
- Practical support for families, for example housing related support or Welfare rights support

4.5.2 Although there is a general acceptance of the importance of this issue, there is a need to ensure a whole systems approach to service delivery and a fully integrated multi agency response .

#### **4.6 Social Care**

4.6.1 Children and Young People's Social Care has developed robust procedures, to ensure all decisions to look after a child or to instigate Care Proceedings are subject to scrutiny at the most senior level. Every case held by a social worker is subject to scrutiny through supervision and case audit, in addition, safeguarding of children is managed within the statutory child protection case conference procedure. If the social worker, team manager and service delivery manager assess that thresholds have been met for a child to require looking after, they must present their case to a panel chaired by a Head of Service. All decisions regarding external placements are made through the Placement Panel, which is chaired by the Head of Service for Looked after Children.

#### **4.7 Head of Service Decision and Review Panel (HOSDAR)**

4.7.1 The Head of Service Decision and Review Panel has been in operation since July 2010. This panel, chaired by a Head of Service, includes a Service Delivery Manager, legal representation and a worker from the Family Group Conferencing service. Panel intensively scrutinises all cases prior to a child's admission into our care. A review of the work of the panel in the first 12 months has been recently undertaken. Key findings are:

- 650 children from 399 families were referred
- The request for care entry was refused on 17 occasions
- On 15 occasions workers were asked for more information
- There were 149 requests for care proceedings of which 127 were agreed
- There were 68 requests for Public Law outline (PLO), a formal pre-care proceedings stage, 42 were agreed

4.7.2 The panel has taken a robust approach to challenge but has found that in the majority of cases, thresholds had been met and it was necessary to proceed.

#### **4.8 Placement panel**

4.8.1 The placement panel is chaired by the Head of Service for Looked after Children. The panel meets each week and is a multi agency forum considering the needs of children requiring placements within the independent sector. This is a practice led panel which considers the presented needs of children and resources to meet their needs. Consideration is given to financial issues as well as the quality of service and where

necessary cases are referred on to the joint decision and review panel (JDAR). The placement panel links more clearly with both HOSDAR and JDAR than previously and there are consistencies in recording decisions. The placement service takes a lead focus in managing this panel and its business.

#### **4.9 Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers**

- 4.9.1 Recruitment and retention of Foster carers is a key element of the LAC Strategy, the Placement Sufficiency Strategy and the Budget Action Plan. The fostering service has been restructured to enable the development of a Recruitment and Assessment team. A new manager has been recruited, who has extensive experience of working within the Independent Sector and who brings a clear business model to the service. An action plan in place and we are on target to deliver 20 additional foster carers this financial year and 40 the year after. Recruitment of Foster Carers though has to be understood within a National Context
- 4.9.2 There is a national shortage of Foster Carers, partly as demographic changes have given women who have traditionally chosen to foster more choice within the work place. Competition between Local Authorities and the Independent Sector has also increased and Local Authorities have to work hard to recruit and retain foster carers, as the following extracts indicates.

*.. But the UK is desperately in need of more foster carers. There are now about 87,000 looked-after children in the UK and it is estimated that about 10,000 more foster families are needed. With many foster carers now approaching retirement age – 65% are in their 50s, 60s or 70s – many fostering organisations fear that the problem could get worse. This is, in part, due to an increase in the number of children being placed in care, which rose dramatically following the death of 17-month-old "Baby Peter" Connelly.*

*And while there are shortages across the board, finding suitable carers for certain groups of children, such as teenagers, the under-fours and sibling groups is a particular challenge, new research from the Fostering Network, published last Monday as part of Foster Care Fortnight, has found.*

*Its survey of 127 fostering services across the UK (92 local authorities and 35 independent providers) found that 98% need to find more foster carers to look after teenagers, while 54% have a shortage of foster carers for children under four.*

*(The Guardian 18/05/11)*

*It said the average age of a UK foster carer had risen by seven years since 2000, to 53 for women and 54 for men, and more needed to be done to recruit younger people. Currently only 6 per cent of foster carers are in their 30s and very few are younger.*

*Mr Tapsfield said: "It's extremely worrying that such a very high proportion of the foster care workforce is potentially so close to retiring. For the sake of the tens of thousands of children who need the support and care of a foster family each year, it's crucial more people come forward. In order to avert the impending crisis, it's essential that we attract people of all ages. Older people can bring experience and skills from previous jobs, while it's essential we also appeal to the untapped pool of those in their 20s, 30s and 40s, who are particularly well placed to offer long-term care to younger children".*

*(The Independent 2009)*

- 4.9.3 Fostering has become a more complex task, with carers being expected to: provide therapeutic parenting for children with complex needs; manage relationships with birth families and work as part of a multi agency professional team. In Leeds as in most Local Authorities, there has been a need to improve the quality of care provided within the in-house foster placements resulting in some carers being de-registered. We also have a foster carer population that is nearing retirement and are working to gain clarity about the retirement plans of our foster carers to understand the impact of this on our recruitment and retention plan. See below for the National picture.
- 4.9.4 Previously in Leeds, foster carers cared for large numbers of children within one household. This practice was outside Fostering Regulation and was highly criticised by Ofsted inspection in 2009 (no more than three children may be placed in a foster home except where all children are siblings or where an exemption is agreed for specific and justifiable reason). Instant and urgent action was required to reduce numbers in each household. Since 2009, the fostering team has reduced the number of exemptions. There has been a constant need to ensure that the quality of care remains good and the use of exemptions has only being considered where the children can be cared for safely and there is a clear reason for the exemption to be granted. The number of children placed per fostering household has therefore decreased.
- 4.9.5 Turnover rates of foster carers and the impact of the current recruitment campaign have been assessed. The yearly figures as below above show a marked decrease in approvals from previous years and there is a small net gain over the year

Fostering Approvals / De-Registrations April 2010 – end March 2011

<b>Approvals</b>	<b>2010 /11</b>
Level 4 Permanent	<b>3</b>
Level 4 Parent Child	<b>3</b>
Level 2	<b>13</b>
Holiday Cover (for Level 4)	<b>12</b>
Family placement Short Breaks	<b>7</b>
Kinship Care	<b>40</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>78</b>

**De –Registrations:** Total: 33

**De – Registrations Kinship Care:** Total: 26

## Net gain of carers in 2010/11

- + 5 for fostering
- + 14 for kinship carers

The figures for this year to date are as follows:

### Fostering approvals/ Deregistrations 2011/12 (April - July)

Level 4 (Inc. 1 parent/ child 1 permanent and 1 temporary)	3
Level 2	9
Short breaks carer	1
Kinship	16
Holiday cover (for level 4 carer)	1

**De registrations** :- 24 carers (12 kinship)

**Net gain to date this year:** - 4 kinship carers  
+1 foster carer

4.9.6 A Recruitment and Retention Action Plan has been developed to ensure recruitment and assessment of foster carers is prioritised. Central to this plan is the development of a Recruitment and Assessment Team through redeployment of in house resources. The team is now in operation and has a new manager who previously worked within the independent sector and brings this perspective to his work. The new recruitment team has a target to increase the number of in-house carers over the next three years with a target of an increase of 20 this financial year and 40 in subsequent years. Targets for timeliness of assessment and approval have also been set and are well within British Agency for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) guidance .

4.9.7 The recent fostering campaign of “Do something amazing” has helped increase interest in fostering which is 35% higher, compared to this time last year. Currently applications are at the following stages:-

Registration of interest	81
Initially screened out	11
Proceed to Team for initial visit	70

4.9.8 Following the initial visits there are currently 34 assessments in progress. It is anticipated that a percentage of these will drop out following training. However, the target for the completion of the assessments is 3 months to complete with a presentation at fostering panel within 4 months of application. If there are any carers waiting for assessment sessional workers are recruited to complete these. Additional training is taking place over the summer. The targets from new carers is 20 this financial year and 40 next financial year.

4.9.9 However, it is imperative that further work is required on the advertising and marketing and work is in progress. National research indicates that over 50% of prospective foster carers access information over the internet and this percentage is

increasing rapidly. Colleagues in the communications team are assisting us with a review of our current site and will make recommendations for change.

- 4.9.10 Retention of carers is equally as important as recruitment. Nationally, turnover of carers is high as for many families this is a role they undertake for a short period many carers also move between Local Authorities and the independent sector and carers financial and practical support is crucial to retention.
- 4.9.11 A full review of carers terms and conditions has been undertaken and a new competency based payment for skills framework has been developed, allowing carers to progress from level 1 (basic skills) to level 4 (professional care) through evidencing quality of care and ability to care for children with the most complex needs. This brings Leeds in line with best practice within Local Authorities.
- 4.9.12 Following a successful bid, Leeds City Council has been granted Government funding to establish a KEEP fostering scheme. This is an evidence based model of intensive training and support to foster carers who provide care for the most challenging children.

#### **4.10 Residential Resource**

- 4.10.1 A full review of children's homes resource has commenced. As part of this review, a buildings conditions and fit for purpose review has been conducted. The needs, welfare and aspirations of the children for whom we care are central to the review. Principles driving the review are as follows:-
  - a) Be child centred, not resource driven, ensure an ethos and culture where the child is at the centre of the home.
  - b) Have buildings and facilities that are well-resourced and fit for purpose.
  - c) Offer a continuum of provision that will enable the corporate parent to continue to meet the changing behavioural, emotional, educational and physical needs of young people regardless of age, culture, race, gender or disability.
  - d) To ensure that effective placement and care planning informs the basis on which we are working with children and families and which has as its principal aim a return to family where appropriate.
  - e) Ensure that there are services in place to support residential workers to meet the needs of the children they care for and in doing so in making residential care a placement of choice for social workers, and of course young people.
  - f) To be adequately and appropriately staffed with a clear strategy in place to support, develop and train residential workers with an aim of 'growing our own' managers of the future.
  - g) The aim of every home is to be 'outstanding' and in doing so encourage an ethos where the life and professional practice of the home is open to constant outside

scrutiny through knowledgeable inspection, critical and supportive managerial supervision and ordinary interaction with the outside world.

- h) Ensure that the registered managers of homes have the required experience and motivation to take full personal and professional responsibility for the whole home and are prepared to be uncompromising in their commitment to children's rights.

#### **4.11 Service Development and Improvement**

- 4.11.1 Development of consistency of quality and approach is a high priority. This will be achieved through: grouping of the homes under senior managers with a clear remit for mutual support and shared learning; ongoing workshops for all staff and development of an overarching therapeutic approach to our work.
- 4.11.2 The development of a therapeutic crisis intervention approach has substantially reduced the number of restraints. This model of training, support and review has proven to be very effective. The trainers will use the same model to establish restorative practice across all homes. These models fit very well into a social pedagogic structure. A workshop on this model was held in July 2011 for all staff and further consideration will be given to implementation of the model.
- 4.11.3 A cohesive 'Wrap around service' will be developed for all units, building on the work already in existence. This will include:-
  - a) Therapeutic social work support, this is in place and is valued by many of the units but would benefit from review
  - b) Therapeutic crisis intervention and restorative practice training
  - c) Links to the virtual school and education provision, these are currently being reviewed and improved
  - d) Support from the youth service, discussions with the service have proven to be very fruitful but this needs further embedding
  - e) Links to local health provision, support from the LAC Nurses is highly valued but local links require improvement
  - f) Liaison with local police and safer neighbourhoods team, many units have good linkages though this is inconsistent
  - g) Relationships with local ward members and the community, much good work is undertaken. Member links are to be improved through a review of Regulation 33 visits and member involvement
- 4.11.4 The review will be completed in November 2011 and will include proposals for further service development including cost/benefit analysis of further development of the in house resource. The re-design will include a full review of the Statements of Purpose and Function of all the homes and will aim to ensure we meet identified

need. We recognise that a primary need is to develop a good quality resource to meet the need to place children in an emergency and provide intensive support to children and their families to enable their swift and safe return home.

#### **4.12 Targeted Service and Cluster Approach**

- 4.12.1 The Leeds Children and Young Peoples Plan identifies the need to reduce the number of Looked after Children as one of the top three priorities, the 'Obsessions'. An Outcomes Based Accountability exercise has been undertaken with all partners and an action plan developed. Although some work can be undertaken to enhance in house resources and reduce spend on external placements, the majority of cost saving will be engendered through more efficient and targeted early intervention and edge of care provision.
- 4.12.2 The primary focus of this work is within local clusters and targeted services, the use of multi-agency assessments based on the Common Assessment Framework (C.A.F.'s) is central to ensuring a joined up and focussed approach to this work.
- 4.12.3 Children's Services and partners are seeking to work in an integrated way in localities, based around clusters of schools. Clusters will use Outcomes Based Accountability to focus on responding to families in a 'joined up' way to ensure that families and children have an integrated response to their needs before they escalate into problematic levels. Clusters will receive data on a wide range of issues, including the number of Looked After Children; referrals to social care; children with child protection plans. Successful cluster arrangements are expected to provide earlier, integrated approaches to reduce the numbers in these categories by providing professional, appropriate services to families before the needs escalate.
- 4.12.4 There are currently early adopter areas, working with interim Targeted Service Leaders to develop a 'top 100' methodology. This approach is one which asks agencies to identify children and families where there are concerns which are not responding to a single agency approach. This method works to ensure that there is a lead professional working with families and that there is a shared assessment and shared plan for each child. This work presents challenges, not least that agency staff are sometimes, for a number of reasons not able to take the role of lead professional and ensure that a Common Assessment (CAF) is undertaken. The new integrated children's services will have a Head of Targeted Services who will also manage intensive family support; family group conferencing; multi-systemic therapy teams and the youth offending team.
- 4.12.5 It is essential that quantity and quality of common assessments undertaken is addressed in order to identify and meet needs at an early stage. CAFs should be routinely undertaken with families where a single agency does not feel they can meet need and so consultation with other agencies is needed, with parental consent. The number of CAFs (children needing universal or targeted services) should exceed those needing a specialist assessment from social care. In the 2010/11 financial year, 1131 CAFs were initiated. There were 13643 referrals to social care in the same year and over 26,000 requests for service.
- 4.12.6 Of the CAF's instigated in 2010/11 42% were initiated by schools, 20% by early years services, and 16% by health service with a further 6% by the third sector. In



terms of the needs being addressed through the CAF process over half (58%) of CAFs have mental or emotional health needs identified and almost half (46%) identify the need to achieve personal, social development and enjoy recreation. A third of CAFs (33%) identify the need for security and stability at home with there being a further 3 reasons being provided in more than a quarter of CAFs: ability to deal with life changes and challenges (30%); physical health needs (28%); and needs to attend and enjoy school (27%).

#### **4.13 Placement Commissioning Service**

##### **Service Development**

- 4.13.2 Following the professional decision to look after a child there is then the need to commission a suitable and appropriate placement for that child based on the needs assessment and which takes into account service quality and value for money judgements. Over the last year there has been improvements made to the commissioning of external placements, this has included the development of initial placement commissioning capacity. Functions carried out within this service include service contracting, contract management and monitoring of all residential and IFA providers, invoice processing and quality assurance. Over the coming months this work will be further developed to create a permanent placement commissioning service.
- 4.13.2 Audit and review outcomes have identified the need to make improvements to a number of issues relating to the commissioning of placements; this includes meeting the sufficiency duty, decision making, payments, placement matching and contracting processes. In response to this a number of improvements have been made in the last 12 months, this has included the development of service procedures, identifying additional capacity and more robust decision making. However, there a number of outstanding issues and challenges still to be met.
- 4.13.3 Collaborative working has continued between all Local Authorities in the sub-region and commercial and financial information has been shared in respect of provider charges. Whilst all parties have previously agreed in principle to a collective and shared approach in negotiating with major residential and IFA providers, the approach is still being developed between authorities within the sub-region. At a local level Leeds Children Services has identified a number of local providers that principally provide IFA and residential places to Leeds, and we are in the process of commencing discussions with them to secure possible price reductions in respect of Children Placements.
- 4.13.4 Other collaborative approaches include discussions between sub-regional parties as to the best procurement vehicle that will offer the best value for money. Whilst a Dynamic Purchasing System is currently being trialled by Leeds Children Services, further discussions are taking place as to the potential development of a sub-regional framework agreement.
- 4.13.5 A further area for development is to ensure a greater contribution from partner agencies, namely the NHS and education, to the cost of external placements.

Currently then total contribution by the NHS to Leeds external placement costs is less than 1% of total costs. This bench marks as low when compared to core city data.

## **Contracting**

- 4.13.6 A dynamic purchasing system (DPS) has been developed and has been the subject of a number of trial placements. These will shortly be extended to include residential placements. The DPS will create an environment that will facilitate the development of a market place of providers that should be constantly evolving to meet the changing demands of Leeds. The DPS should also create a degree of commercial competition within the placement environment. Further discussions are taking place across the region to identify the potential for the system to be utilised on a regional or sub-regional basis, which will further enhance the number and variety of available providers and further increase the level of competition within the market.
- 4.13.7 Procurement savings have already been made on external placements by negotiating reduced rates with providers. £550k was saved in 2010/11 with an additional £500k saving projected for 2011/12. A number of quality assurance visits have taken place to new and existing providers and through these discussions further reductions on fees have been agreed in advance of any placements being made.
- 4.13.8 Links with the regional consortium have enabled the sharing of knowledge and financial issues which have also proved beneficial to cost savings. Further joint work with neighbouring local authorities is planned and ongoing.

## **Improvement in Quality Overview**

- 4.13.9 Work on the quality assurance framework has been ongoing for 12 months. The quality assurance framework aims to set out guidance on how Leeds City Council will monitor independent residential provisions for young people and independent fostering agencies. This framework links quality of practice, safeguarding and contract monitoring. This work has been addressed through both the contracting and service delivery areas of the service. It is recognised that there needs to be a clear and concise process to quality assure monitoring of the independent providers and this should be linked to the contract monitoring responsibilities of the service.
- 4.14 The development of the quality assurance framework and practices has created a focal point for responding to queries and concerns around quality issues. This has generated significant volumes of work and has resulted in significant challenge to some providers and on some occasions children being removed from provision.

## **5.0 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 5.1 This report is not subject to call in.

## **6.0 Risk Management**

- 6.1 The issues outlined in this report are included in both the Children's

Services and Corporate financial risk register as very high risks; these are

- The increase in the fostering budget (£3.3m) may not be sufficient to meet demand. In addition, slippage on the budgeted action plan around recruiting additional in-house carers and reducing the use of externally provided Independent Fostering Agency placements may not be achieved.
- The increase in the externally provided residential placement budget £4.7m may not be sufficient to meet demand

6.2 The Children's Services directorate have in place a number of measures to mitigate these risks; these mitigations are subject to on-going review and challenge.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

7.1 The need to safely drive down the number of children looked after by the Local Authority is one of the three top priorities in the Children and Young Peoples Plan. This will only be achieved through a whole system approach targeting effective early and edge of care interventions. The Local Authority and its partners are giving these actions considerable focus. Turning this curve will though, inevitably take some time. Comprehensive actions are also being undertaken to improve and expand the in house resource and to effectively manage the commissioning and procurement process.

7.2 Demographic changes in the local population and the current economic down turn will provide further challenge to safe reduction in the Looked after Children population.

## **8.0 Recommendations**

8.1 Scrutiny Board are asked to consider and note the contents of the report.

## **9.0 Background documents**

Report to June Children's Trust Board - Update on Children's Services' Obsessions – Reducing the need for children to be looked after (Help children to live in safe and supportive families) – attached