



**Sufficiency, Placement and
Commissioning Strategy for Children
Looked After and Care Leavers
2019-2021**

December 2018

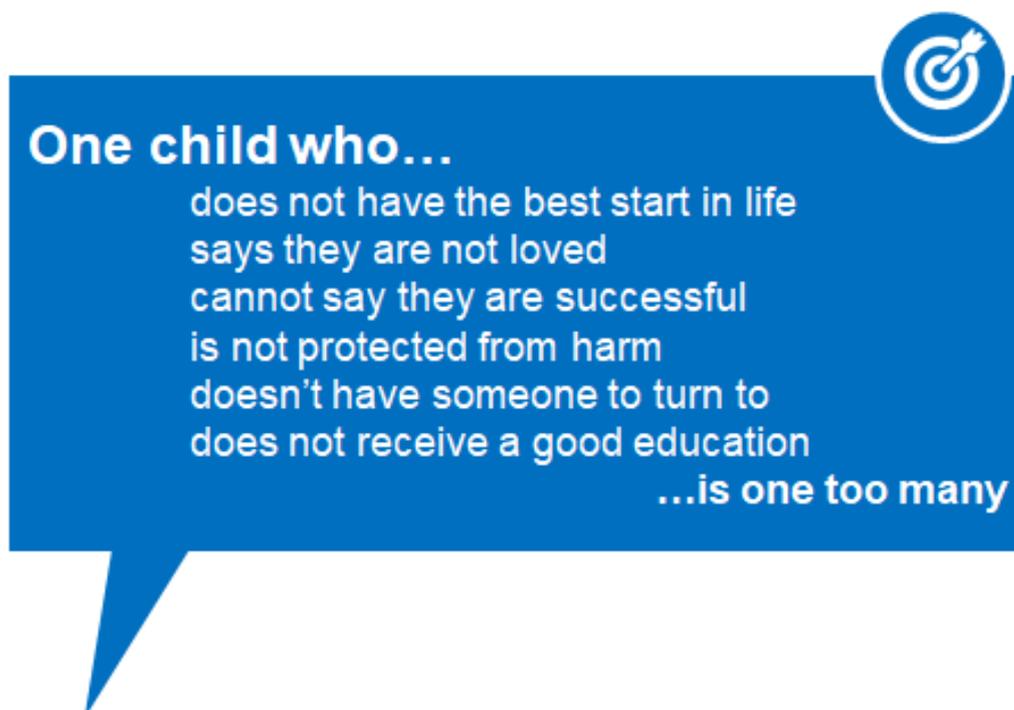
Table of Contents

1	Introduction	5
2	National Context.....	6
2.1	Figures.....	6
2.2	Health and Wellbeing	6
3	Local Context.....	7
4	Strategy formulation	7
5	Needs Analysis.....	8
5.1	Demographics	8
5.2	Ethnicity	10
5.3	Age	11
5.4	Legal status	12
5.5	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking or Trafficked Children.	12
5.6	Current Placements.....	13
5.7	Duration of Care Episodes.....	15
5.8	Placement Stability and Permanence	15
5.9	Health	17
5.10	Educational Attainment.....	17
5.11	Special Educational Needs	18
5.12	Offending	18
5.13	Care Leavers.....	19
6	Description of Current Provision for Children	20
6.1	Supporting Children and Young People on the Edge of Care 20	
6.2	Youth Services.....	20
6.3	Youth Offending	21
6.4	SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN CARE	21
6.5	Children’s Social Care.....	22
6.6	Placements	22
6.7	Residential Provision	22
6.8	Foster Care	23

6.9	Leaving Care	24
6.10	Education for children looked after and care leaver's.....	26
6.11	Health	28
6.12	Children Looked After and Young People's Participation	29
6.13	Corporate Parents.....	29
7	Local Challenges and Service Gaps.....	30
7.1	To Provide Appropriate Placements When Necessary	30
8	OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY.....	34
8.1	To Support Children and Young People on the Edge of Care 34	
8.2	To Minimise Delay in Placing Children for Permanency	34
8.3	Placement Stability and Effective Care Planning.....	35
8.4	To Improve Health and Wellbeing	35
8.5	To Improve Educational Outcomes.....	36
8.6	To Prepare Children and Young People for Adulthood and Independence	36
8.7	To Listen to Young People - about how they want their services delivered.	36
9	Commissioning Priorities.....	36
10	Value For Money.....	37
11.	How will we know we have succeeded?	37

Forward by Nikki Edwards, Director of People, Bracknell Forest Council

Our vision for the children we look after is simple.



We want everything the best parents would want for their children.

As corporate parents we want our children and young people to be happy and healthy, both physically and emotionally, to be safe and protected from harm and exploitation, and to be supported each step of the way through their transition to adult life.

We are ambitious for our children. We want them to achieve their potential, especially at school, to make the most of the learning opportunities they are offered and to participate in all decisions affecting their care and their lives. This includes making the transition to adulthood with continuity of support, access to good jobs and higher education, while living in good housing and being financially secure.

We want our Children Looked After to work with us, along with their parents and carers, in shaping how we manage and organise the planning, resources and services that support and care for them.

We are proud of our children and young people and take every opportunity to celebrate their achievements.

Our strategy invites us to work together with common purpose, putting the care of our Children Looked After at the heart of everything we do. This strategy shows how we plan to make this vision a reality for all our children.

1 Introduction

Local Authorities are required to take steps to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in care within their local area. In 2010, the Statutory Guidance for the Sufficiency Duty was issued. This guidance is explicit in placing a duty on Local Authorities to act strategically to address gaps in provision by ensuring that they include, in relevant commissioning strategies, their plans for meeting the sufficiency duty.

The Children Act 2008 defines Sufficiency as “a whole system approach which delivers early intervention and preventative work to help support children and their families where possible, as well as providing better services for children if they do become looked after. For those who are looked after, Local Authorities should seek to secure a number of providers and a range of services, with the aim of meeting the wide-ranging needs of looked after children and young people within their local area.”

The scope is not restricted to just making good quality placements; the intention is to co-ordinate the range of activity across the People’s Services, including a clear focus on supporting families to stay together through the operating model of Family Safeguarding, wherever it is safe to do so, thus minimising the need for children to come into care, or supporting their timely return to their families

This is the third Children’s Looked after Sufficiency Plan and Strategy to be developed by Bracknell Forest Council. It provides a picture of services for Children Looked After in the borough, based on intelligence held by the local authority and available through national datasets.

The Plan contains an assessment of needs which provides an illuminating insight into how we care for Children Looked After and enables the council to effectively prioritise and plan for developments that can be expected to improve outcomes as well as secure better value for money. The plan recognises the volatility of the Children Looked After cohort, and that provision needs to be both scalable and flexible enough to react to this. However, it does provide intelligence to allow the council to ensure it meets the diverse needs of the changing Children in Care population.

A secure and stable home life is fundamental to the successful development of all children and for children in care a successful placement is the most important factor in enabling them to flourish. Frequent moves between care and or education placements can have a negative effect on the ability of children to succeed both in education and in other areas of their lives.

This strategy has been structured using the vision as the central focus.

1.1 Priorities

The three priorities for the next three years as described later in this document are:

1. Ensure right children are in care of the local authority and this is used as a last resort.

2. Ensure there are sufficient in house foster placements for all children who require them and appropriate support is in place for all children to maintain placements and support stability.
3. Wherever we make placements they should be high quality, focused on the needs of the child supporting them to thrive and achieve permanence.

1.2 Pledge to Children In Care and Leaving Care

Our Pledge to Children in Care and Leaving Care is to 'help children and young people achieve their best and support them to learn in and out of school'.

Our aims are that:

- Children and young people's education is not adversely affected by care planning decisions,
- Children Looked After will achieve grades commensurate with their peers in the community.
- All the functions of a 'Virtual School Head' will be met
- Every school will have a trained Designated Teacher for Children Looked After
- No Children Looked After will be excluded from school
- Children Looked After will continue into further and higher education
- One to one tuition will be provided through the Personal Education Plan
- Additional support from Pupil Premium will be available for every Child Looked After at risk of not reaching their expected standards

2 National Context

2.1 Figures

At the end of March 2017, there were 72,670 children and young people looked after in England. This is an increase of 3% from the previous year. 53,420 (74%) of children who were looked after at 31 March 2017 were cared for in a foster placement (similar proportion as previous years), of which 62.3% were inside the Council boundary; 7,890 (10.9%) were cared for in secure units, children's homes and hostels - a 2% increase year-on-year; 4,370 (6%) were placed with their parents - a increase of 13% from 2016; 2,520 (3.5%) were placed for adoption - a 20% decrease from previous year which corresponds with a reduction in the number of children with placement orders. 380 children (1%) were in placements where the carer is also an approved adopter (fostering for adoption) or where they were subject to concurrent planning.

2.2 Health and Wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of children looked after that is, their physical health, and social, educational and emotional wellbeing – is influenced by nearly all aspects of their lives and the care they receive. Experiences early in life may have long-term consequences for health and social development. Our aspiration is for children looked after to have positive

experiences whilst looked after, achieving good emotional and physical health, do well in their education and to go on to have good jobs and careers. However, children looked after are more likely to have experienced deprivation and poverty as a result of low family income or parental unemployment. About 60% of children and young people who are looked after in England are reported to have emotional and emotional health problems and a high proportion experience poor health, educational and social outcomes after leaving care.

Children looked after should expect to have the same opportunities as other children and young people, including being healthy and safe. They should be provided with the opportunities needed to help them move successfully to adulthood.

The needs of children looked after and young people vary, but are often complex, and can be met only by a range of services operating collaboratively across different settings.

3 Local Context

Bracknell Forest lies 28 miles west of London, at the heart of the Thames Valley and within the county of Berkshire. The town of Bracknell was developed as a 'new town' after the Second World War initially housing families who relocated from London. The current population is 118,025 (Mid-2014 Estimates) of which 26% of the population is aged between 0 – 19 years. The borough contains six parishes, 18 wards and covers an area of 109 km sq. Bracknell Forest Council is a small authority which gained unitary status when the former Berkshire County Council was split up in 1998.

Although Bracknell Forest can be regarded as one of the least deprived areas of the country (ranked 287 out of 326 local authorities in England on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015) the demography and needs profile are rapidly changing and headline statistics mask significant pockets of deprivation: eleven primary schools in the borough have free school meal entitlements above 10%, rising to 24.8%. Poverty in Bracknell Forest has fallen and is now 10.0% (as defined by the Department for Work and Pensions). Four wards in the borough have child poverty figures above the South East average of 13.2%, and one ward is above the England average of 18.0%.

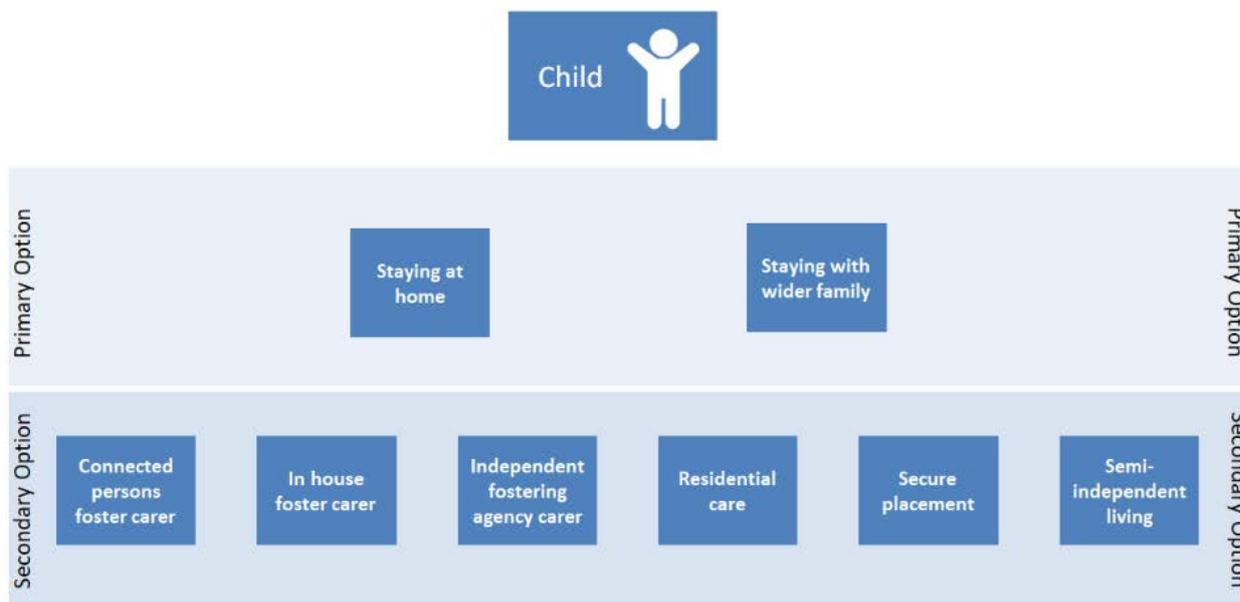
The 2011 Census showed that 84.9% of the population of Bracknell Forest was White British' and the BME population was 15.1%. The presence of the Ghurkha regiment at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst has led to a significant Nepali community in the south of the Borough. Since 2001 the proportion of school pupils from Minority Ethnic Groups has increased significantly from 6% to just over 19.5% in January 2015. 11.3% of pupils have English as an Additional Language (EAL) and 81 different languages are spoken in our schools, although many of these in very small numbers.

Services for Children Looked After and Care Leavers were judged to be Outstanding by Ofsted Single Inspection published in July 2017 as part of the overall rating of Good.

4 Strategy formulation

This strategy is based upon Bracknell Forest Council's vision which is pictorially represented in the Forward to this document . There is a relentless focus on having the child at the heart of everything we do. Our aspiration is to ensure all children remain at home or within their birth family where it is safe to do so and we are utilising the Family Safeguarding Model to support this. For those children who do become looked after there is a focus on permanency

planning from the outset. We want to ensure our children looked after receive placements where they have been offered stability and a nurturing environment.



5 Needs Analysis

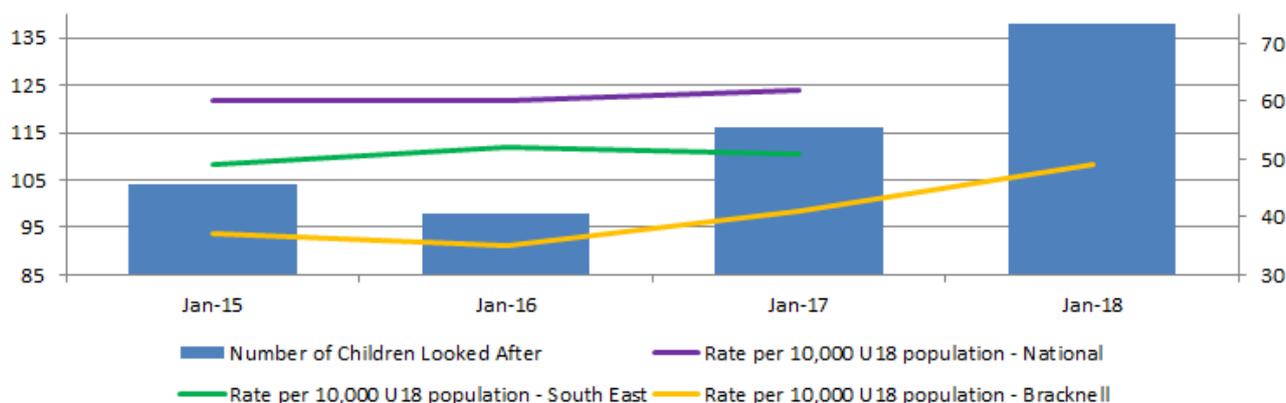
This section provides a summary of the analysis of the data and information available for our Children Looked After.

5.1 Demographics

Number of Children Looked After in Bracknell Forest

Over the last 4 years there has been an increase in the number of children looked after in Bracknell Forest. There are a variety of reasons for this. Numbers in Bracknell Forest have historically been low in comparison with national and south east indicators. There has been an increase nationally for Children Looked After and Bracknell Forest has followed this trend. In order to ensure the right children come into care there is a plan to introduce a Children's Panel. This will be a multi-agency panel which will look at ensuring the right children come into care and support is provided to families where required. This will also ensure that those children who do need to be looked after are placed in the most appropriate placement where there are clear plans to step down and review where appropriate.

Bracknell CLA data



There has been an increase in the number of Children Looked After which is represented in the above graph. There are a variety of reasons for this increase as outlined below.

- Increase in children coming into care from Assessment Team
- Police protection in 2017/18 increased by 120% on the previous year
- Care proceedings
- Of the numbers coming off Children Protection plans in 2017/2018 21% have become children looked after.
- Some drift and delay leading to a 'catch up'
- Increase in adolescents coming into care.
- More young children coming into care

Increase in new babies coming into care

	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18
Number of Children Looked After	104	98	116	138
Rate per 10,000 U18 population - National	60.0	60.0	62.0	Not Available
Rate per 10,000 U18 population - South East	49.0	52.0	51.0	Not available
Rate per 10,000 U18 population - Bracknell	37	35	41	49

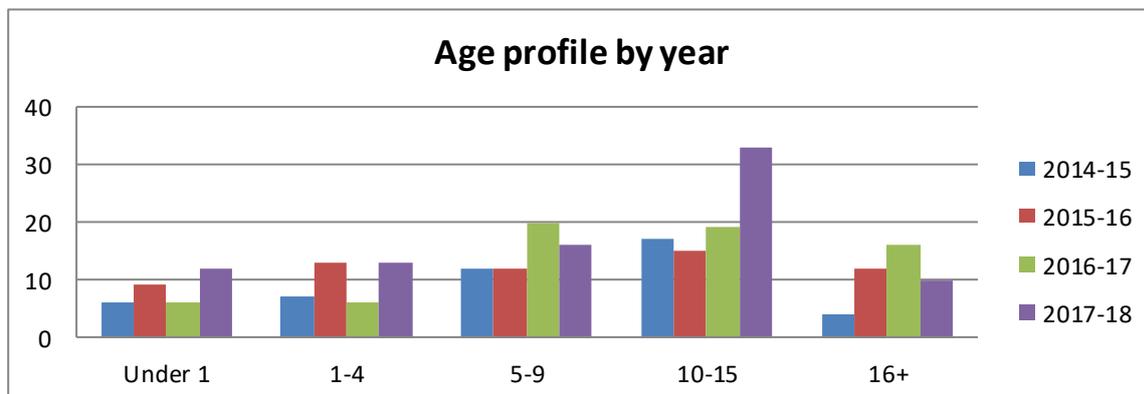
5.2 Ethnicity

	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18
White British	90	84	79	92	110
White Irish	0	0	0	0	0
Any other White background	7	4	3	2	2
Traveller of Irish heritage	0	0	0	0	0
Gypsy/Roma	0	0	0	0	0
White and Black Caribbean	5	7	8	7	5
White and Black African	3	2	1	2	2
White and Asian	1	1	0	0	1
Any other Mixed background	1	1	1	2	3
Indian	0	0	0	1	0
Pakistani	0	0	1	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0	0	0	0
Any other Asian background	3	2	1	3	7
Caribbean	0	0	1	1	1
African	1	1	2	3	3
Any other Black background	0	0	0	2	1
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	2	1	1	3
Refused	0	0	0	0	0
Information not yet obtained	0	0	0	0	0
Total number of looked after children	113	104	98	116	138

The table shows the representation of ethnicity and shows that 79.2% of the CLA population is white British. This is largely in line with the general population. The increases are largely in the white British category and other Asian.

The small number of children from BME groups provides additional challenges to ensure that the cultural needs of individuals are met appropriately. An example is the small number of Unaccompanied Minors from abroad who are placed outside the area in communities where their cultural needs can be more effectively met. There is ongoing work with the BME communities in order to recruit more foster carers to be able to meet the needs of children from a variety of BME backgrounds.

5.3 Age



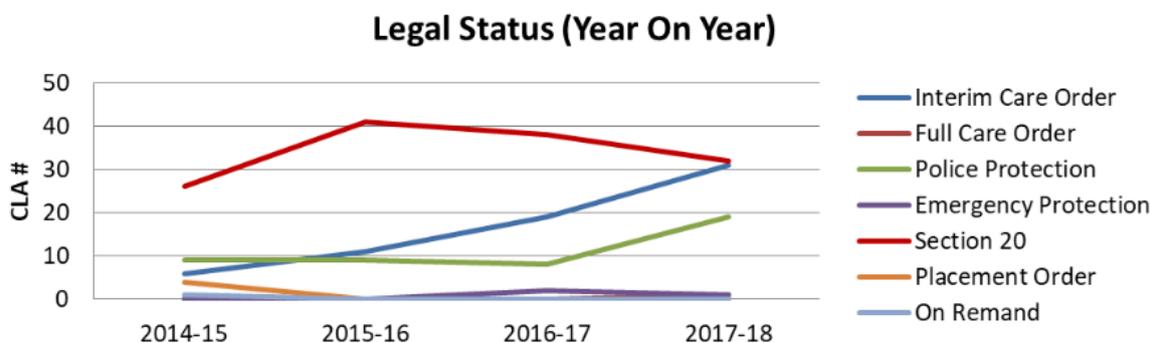
5.3.1 Analysis of figures

Under One: Analysis through the CLA and legal panel indicates an increase in children where parents have had previous children removed. Plans to address include Long Active Reversible Contraceptive (LARC) nurse (now in post following period of vacancy) work is also underway on a project to support parents following previous children coming into care, with a view to preventing further children coming into care.

1-4 years: There are a variety of reasons for this including thresholds being implemented to ensure early intervention with families. There has also been an increase in families where there are issues around domestic abuse and substance misuse. It is anticipated that work under the family safeguarding model will have a positive impact.

10-15 years: This has been the highest increase and the highest group of Children Looked After. Analysis of this group indicates this cohort of children have been known to services for a number of years and intervention has been unsuccessful. The Family Adolescent Support Team disbanded in 2014 and since this time there has been over a 100% increase in children aged 10 and over coming into care. Plans to address include family safeguarding model, edge of care services as part of transformation. Therapeutic and adolescent services need to be delivered earlier to have greater impact.

5.4 Legal status



This shows the Legal Status of children upon entry into care of the Local Authority. There has been a decrease in numbers of care proceedings in 2018 with cases issued previously now concluded in court. In March 2018 Bracknell Forest had 74% of CLA on an interim or full care order compared with the national benchmark of 69%. This has been increasing throughout the year. The numbers of children subject to a Placement Order is the same as national (7%) but there are lower numbers under Section 20 with parental consent (BF 19%, National 23%). This is due to the fact that legal advice is sought for all children and judicial oversight is gathered for all children including adolescents.

Children subject to placements orders both nationally and locally have seen a decrease which the National Adoption Leadership Board has linked to the impact of two relevant court judgements known as Re B and Re B-S. The Department for Education published a new adoption strategy 'Adoption – A vision for change' in March 2016 which addresses the decline in Adoption decisions and adoption placement orders further. However, the data shows that there is a divide between the Department for Education and the Judiciary with the former wanting to increase the number of adoptions but the decisions of the latter ensuring that these numbers continue to decrease.

5.5 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking or Trafficked Children.

Within our cohort of children looked after and care leavers the number of asylum seekers is very small, under five in both groups. We do not currently have any trafficked children looked after by Bracknell Forest. Given the small cohort, the Local Authority has sufficient arrangements to provide care for these children through the specific commissioning of IFA foster placements to meet their cultural needs.

The Immigration Act 2016 has legislated for the introduction of a national dispersal scheme to share the responsibility nationally for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. This is as a result of pressures that have been placed on a small number of local authorities where unaccompanied asylum seeking children are more likely to be present and require a service. In order to have a fairer system the Government wished for each local authority to have responsibility for, proportionately the same number of UASC. In order to reach this Bracknell Forest would take an additional 18 UASC (however only 1 has been placed as of April

2018). In order to meet the sufficiency demands of this proposal the Family Placement Team has been working with existing foster carers to identify carers to specialise in providing care for UASC. It is projected the majority of the children will be aged 16 or 17 and half of those will require foster care and the other half will require semi-independent provision. In addition to reviewing in house provision there will be specific fostering recruitment for UASC. There has been and there will continue to be liaison with the Housing Department about identifying existing housing resources used as a semi-independent living resource.

The range of suitable accommodation available for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children will contribute to Ofsted's evaluation of how well the local authority meets its sufficiency duty.

5.6 Current Placements

5.6.1 Type of Placement

	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18
Placed for Adoption	4	6	6	5	5
Foster Care (in house), in BF	55	43	38	43	45
Foster Care (in house), OLA	5	3	5	6	2
Fostered with relative/friend in BF	8	10	7	7	15
Fostered with relative/friend in OLA	0	1	2	4	5
Agency Foster Care, in BF	2	2	3	3	2
Agency Foster Care, OLA	20	21	16	19	30
Secure Unit	0	0	1	0	0
Homes/Hostels	14	12	13	18	20
Residential (not subject to Children's Homes Regs)	0	0	0	2	5
Placed with parents	2	1	1	2	3
Independent Living	2	4	2	5	5
Residential School	0	1	3	1	1
Other	1	0	1	1	0
Total number of looked after children	113	104	98	116	138

This data tells the story of the breakdown of types of placements for children looked after. Where possible children will ideally be placed with in-house foster carers and the data shows there has been an increase in children being placed with Bracknell Forest carers (67 children Q4 2017/18 to 74 children Q1 2018/19). This year has also seen an increase in the complexity of children's needs particularly in the Children's Specialist Support Team and Over 11's Team, which has led to an increase in children requiring specialist care in a residential / children's homes provision. This upward trend has also been recognised nationally.

Residential care is not usually seen as a permanency option for children. Residential placements as well as other external placements are monitored via quarterly placements meetings and adult transition panel to keep options under review and identify alternative permanency plans for children where appropriate. There is ongoing work as part of the transformation programme to review the way in which placements are made and reviewed

with a view to ensuring there are placements available when children need to step down from residential care and move to live with a family. The ambition is for as many children as possible to live in a family environment with bespoke wrap around support plans in place to support the children and the carer.

The increase in demand for foster carers of older children with complex needs has also meant that some children have been placed with Independent Foster Agency carers and homes/hostels. Overall, the number of children in family placements is in line with the national average. Bracknell Forest exceeded its target and approved 11 foster carers in 2017/18. Bracknell Forest currently has 55 approved fostering households. However, many of these have children in placement who have been matched long term with them or who are considering providing permanence through Special Guardianship Order or Adoption. This means that the current number of foster carers available to have children will increase at a slower rate as carers provide legal permanence to children or retire from fostering. However, through the Fostering Recruitment and Publicity Strategy 2017 / 2019, the intention is to recruit more local foster carers. The strategy identifies the shortfall in carers able to provide accommodation for children in the 11-15 category who can have a history of challenging behaviour or complex needs. The Family Placement Team are also in the process of considering strategies to encourage current experienced foster carers to feel confident to manage children with additional needs.

There has also been an increased need for short break carers particularly to provide care for children within the Specialist Support Team. It is therefore anticipated that this will be one of the priorities for recruitment. We aim to recruit at least 2 short break carers in 2018/19 in order to meet the demand not only for special support but also potentially for adolescents on the edge of care as a strategy to support families in crisis.

5.6.2 Children Placed outside of Bracknell Forest.

	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18
Total number of children placed outside the LA	40	38	42	47	64
Of this, number of children placed OLA <i>within Berkshire (exc those placed for Adoption)</i>	9	9	9	18	15
% of children placed OLA <i>within Berkshire (exc those placed for Adoption)</i>	22.5%	23.7%	21.4%	38.3%	23.4%
Total number of children placed <i>within Berkshire (excluding those placed for Adoption)</i>	71	69	59	82	84
% children placed <i>within Berkshire (excluding those placed for Adoption)</i>	65.1%	70.4%	64.1%	73.9%	63.2%

The table above shows the children placed outside of Bracknell Forest. For many children, but not all, it is in their best interests to be placed in homes near to their family and home community so that they can maintain contact with their family and friends, continue to attend the same school and be supported by local resources.

However, some children and young people are most appropriately placed outside the Borough for their own best interests for example to disrupt risks of child sexual exploitation or substance misuse. Their Education and Health needs are then met by local resources. Bracknell Forest does not have its own residential accommodation, apart from a short break respite unit for disabled children. Therefore the young people assessed as requiring residential provision are placed out of the area.

Until 2017 the Local Authority had a Procurement and Contracts Officer who ensures that Bracknell Forest receives good value for money in all placements identified. This included the renegotiations of fees and terms for placements to ensure value for money as well as ensuring that children are provided with appropriate resources within their local area. This role was changed to focus on wider contract management and as a result these functions are part of the Commissioning review.

5.6.3 Quality of Residential Placements

As of the 31st March 2018 there were 20 children in residential placements. Primarily these placements are for children with needs beyond what a foster carer is able to provide. In some cases this provision is required for a short term period, for children who are displaying challenging behaviour, with a view to them returning to a foster placement. However, for some children, residential placements are more able to meet their needs. Where this is the case, support had been provided by the contracts and procurement officer to identify an appropriate resource. Where possible Bracknell Forest will only consider residential provision which has been rated as Outstanding or Good by Ofsted. A monitoring system ensures that every residential home used by Bracknell Forest has robust policies for managing children who abscond and for those who may be at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation. Meetings are held with residential provisions local to Bracknell Forest so that when this type of placement is required the Local Authority can ensure that there is knowledge of the placement including the location risk assessment. The contacts and procurement officer post is currently being reviewed.

5.7 Duration of Care Episodes

There has been an increase in the number of younger children becoming looked after and remaining in care for over 12 months. The majority of these children will be the subject of care proceedings and may remain in the care system until plans for permanency are finalised. This means that there is a requirement for more placements for children given that there is an increase of children remaining in care.

5.8 Placement Stability and Permanence

5.8.1 Stability

Placements: Number	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18
Number of LAC with 3+ placements	15	14	17	11	19
Number of LAC (exc. Short term placements)	113	104	98	116	138
% of LAC with 3+ placements	13.3%	13.5%	17.3%	9.5%	13.8%

The number of placement moves for a small number of children is high. The data includes children who have had more than three placements for a number of reasons, or those who have moved to a respite placement whilst their foster carers take an extended holiday. The national average for three or more placements is 10%. This is an area of focus for the Local Authority. It is mostly older children where there are placement moves. There is a need to ensure that these children are provided the appropriate therapeutic support at the right time to prevent multiple placement moves. In addition, there is a need to have foster carers who are better equipped to manage some of the complex behaviours presented.

Placements: Stability	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18
Number of LAC in current placements for 2 years+	16	19	17	15	14
Total LAC aged under 16 and in care 2.5 years+	31	31	27	33	25
% in long term stable placements	51.6%	61.3%	63.0%	45.5%	56.0%

The stability of placements is measured by the number of children who have been looked after for longer than two and a half years and who have been in their current placement for more than two years. These figures only relate to children under 16 years so do not reflect the stability of young people between 16 and 18 years. These are critical years for developing independence programmes for young people as they move towards independence.

5.8.2 Permanence

	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18
Adoptions Orders Granted	10	6	9	4	5
Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)	5	9	10	13	10
LAC 6 months plus (i.e.183 days)	89	91	77	83	110
% LAC adopted or subject to SGO	16.9%	16.5%	24.7%	20.5%	13.6%
Child Arrangement Orders granted	4	1	2	2	5

The Permanency Strategy 2016 is now embedded within the culture of the council and as a result there has seen a continued increase in the number of children achieving legal permanence through Adoption or Special Guardianship. There are Permanency Planning Meetings for all Children Looked After which are chaired by the Head of Service to ensure permanence is considered for all children at the earliest opportunity.

In 2017, Bracknell Forest's adoption functions became part of the Regional Adoption Agency Adopt Thames Valley, hosted by Oxfordshire Children's Services. Following the Government Action Plan for Adoption, where the focus is on increasing the speed of children moving towards adoption and increasing the speed of adopters assessments, there was a spike in Adoption Orders being made in 2014. However, this has decreased in 2015 primarily as a result of the national increase in the making of SGO's. This maybe, as a result of the Re BS and Re B (both 2013) case law, where there is an expectation of providing greater analysis of

all permanency options as opposed to the assumption that adoption is the most appropriate plan for children who are unable to be cared for by their birth parents. In these instances Special Guardianship Orders are often being made to birth family members, which from a commissioning perspective places additional pressure on post order support services. This has been addressed by increasing staffing in this area to ensure that these families have an allocated worker and their support plans are reviewed annually. Please also refer to Adopt Thames Valley's Sufficiency Strategy for Adoption.

5.9 Health

	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18
Number who have had Health Assessments on time (regardless of how long looked after)	105	97	92	105	125
% of Health Assessments on time (excluding newly looked after)	95.5%	95.1%	96.8%	93.8%	92.6%
Number refusing to have a Health Assessment	2	2	3	7	4
Number of newly looked after (i.e. less than 28 days before end of March each year)	3	2	3	4	3
Number with Health Assessments overdue	3	3	0	0	6
Total number of looked after children	113	104	98	116	138

To ensure that the Sufficiency Duty is met in relation to Health the Berkshire East Health Team for Children Looked After are responsible, in conjunction with the child's social worker for ensuring that initial and review health assessments are completed. A Health Plan is formulated as a result of the health assessment and details how the child's health needs will be met. There has been a significant improvement in this performance since the Life Chances Team Coordinator has been supporting with monitoring this function. This is a positive result and shows that health is seen as a high priority for Children Looked After. The feedback from the Berkshire East Health Team is that Bracknell Forest has a clear system in place for organising health assessments and timeliness is good. The challenges in compliance are for those children who are placed more than 20 miles away and as a result it is the local health authority where they are placed that is responsible for completing the health assessment. There are quarterly meetings with East Berkshire Health Team and the Head of Service for Children Looked After. An escalation protocol has been established to raise any delays within the relevant health authority. The particular challenges are when children are placed in areas where there are a high numbers of Children Looked After.

5.10 Educational Attainment

Many Children Looked After perform poorly in the school system nationally. Due to the complexity of their needs and their life experiences there is a significant gap in educational attainment between Children Looked After and their peers and they are more likely to be excluded from school. Support from carers is vital for the young people to do well in school. Foster carers make a real difference to a young person's academic and social success in

school and ultimately their success as an adult. Foster carers should have high expectations of the young people in their care and be proactive in their approach to the young person's education. Whilst the social worker and the virtual school will have an overview of the child's education, it is the foster carer who deals with the day to day details of school life whereby they can make a real difference. In addition to the points above carers should:

- Attend Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings to celebrate progress and to set targets for development.
- Have regular contact with the school to communicate any difficulties a young person may be experiencing both at school and in their placement.
- Advocate for the young person's views.
- Supporting the school in expectations or discipline matters.
- Deal with problems in school, such as bullying or exclusion.
- Encourage young people to use local library and leisure facilities.
- Take a daily interest in how school is going.
- Offer support at times of choice, such as GCSE options or moving to primary/secondary school.

The Virtual School are represented on the Life Chances Team and Resource Panel to ensure that they are aware of when children are placed in foster carer and can liaise with the school and identify suitability.

There have been no permanent exclusions from school for a Children Looked After since 2010. There are strategies in place to support schools to avoid the need for permanent exclusion of Children Looked After and for monitoring attendance. However, there has been an increase in the number of children who are not in full time education. These children are also monitored via the Life Chances Team and plans are put in place for them to move to attend full time. Our ambition is that the excellent performance on permanent exclusions continues and that a higher number of children progress to higher education.

5.11 Special Educational Needs

42% of all Children Looked After (at 31st March 2018) have a statement of Special Educational Needs. A small number are placed in residential provision in order to meet their education needs but the majority attend mainstream or specialist day schools.

5.12 Offending

At the end of March 2015, 3 (2.7%) looked after children (regardless of how long they had been looked after) had offended during the year. Of that number, all had been looked after for 12 months or more. Given the age bands of this cohort, the Leaving Care Service together with the Youth Offending Service ensure more effective collaboration in working with those currently offending and also for preventative measures to be put in place for those at risk of offending.

5.13 Care Leavers

	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18
Eligible	24	24	26	31	33
- % in suitable accommodation	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
- % in Education, Training or Employment	79%	83%	85%	84%	79%
- % with Pathway Plan	100%	100%	100%	100%	94%
Relevant	3	1	2	2	1
- % in suitable accommodation	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
- % in Education, Training or Employment	100%	100%	50%	50%	0%
- % with Pathway Plan	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Former Relevant	57	46	43	51	52
- % in suitable accommodation	98%	100%	98%	96%	98%
- % in Education, Training or Employment	75%	72%	70%	73%	67%
- % with Pathway Plan	67%	98%	98%	92%	100%
Total number of Leaving Care Service clients	84	71	71	84	86

Pathway Plans were introduced in place of Care Plans from the age of 16 years for all eligible young people. Pathway Plans focus the young person and carers on the skills and knowledge that will be needed for the young person to move into independence. There are now robust plans in place to ensure that all children have a needs assessment at 15 ½ to ensure that their pathway plan reflects their current needs and considers further as well as current need.

‘Eligible’ young people are 16 & 17 year olds who are still Looked After but have met the criteria for Care Leaver support. There are currently 33 young people within this cohort.

‘Relevant’ young people are those between 16 & 17 years old who were looked after for thirteen weeks, including their 16th birthday. There are 1 young person currently within this cohort. Typically this cohort have either left care to either return to live with family; to live independently with friends or in the semi-independent housing schemes of Holly House or Rainforest Walk.

‘Former relevant’ young people are those over 18 years who were previously either ‘eligible’ or ‘relevant’ Of the 43 young people the measurement of their accommodation and Education Employment or Training status is made around their 19th birthdays.

Based on March 2018 figures, Bracknell Forest had 86 Qualifying, Relevant and Former Relevant young people working with the Leaving Care Service (LCS). There is ongoing liaison between the LCS and housing to ensure that there is appropriate provision for all of the care leavers.

Young people who are not in Education Employment or Training are referred to the Virtual School and progress is reviewed at the Virtual Care Leaver’s team monthly meeting. From 1st April 2018 Former Relevant and Qualifying care leavers are able to request support from Leaving Care Service for a specific need after age 21 and up to age of 25.

The LCS will contact all care leavers between ages 21-25 annually to be remind them of their entitlements

6 Description of Current Provision for Children

6.1 Supporting Children and Young People on the Edge of Care

SEVICES AIMED AT PREVENTING CHILDREN COMING INTO CARE

We aim to work with other agencies that will both prevent family breakdown and improve outcomes for children. Bracknell Forest local authority partners work together to proactively target support to children on the edge of care that are very vulnerable. This work has in part contributed to reduction in the number of Children Looked After. Services include:-

- **Family Group Conferences (FGCs).** Family Group Conferences are being used at an early stage, but there is a clear indication that FGCs are now also being used more than previously in higher threshold cases where there is a serious risk of the child becoming looked after, and where the child and their family are receiving support under the Child Protection Procedures. The team is undertaking more work in relation to early closing of cases and de-escalation of concerns.
- **Short break respite care** for children with disabilities. Further targeted recruitment of carers and use of shared care arrangements is continuing, with a designated social worker from the Family Placement Team managing the scheme. This type of foster care provision is now being included in our advertising material primarily for people who may not be able to offer the time commitment as a full time foster carer.
- The **Youth Offending Service offer a preventative programme** for children identified as at risk of offending behaviour that for some may lead to family breakdown.
- **Section 17 CiN support** for children who have left the care system to return to the care of their parent or family. Any child leaving care will be the subject of a single assessment to identify their needs and will be provided with a minimum of a 3 month Child in Need plan.
- There has been a sharp increase in the number of children coming into care as they are beyond parental control. Based upon the analysis of the increased number of children coming into care there has been a focus on Edge of Care as part of the Transformation Project. There have been a number of workshops with staff to identify if additional services being in place earlier could have prevented children coming into care. We are currently at the testing phase of this concept and already this this part of the action plan.

6.2 Youth Services

6.2.1 Universal Provision

- The targeted work being under taken by the youth service team now concentrates on;
 - Sexual Health – the delivery is primarily in schools (PSHE lessons) and in 9 clinics across the Borough. The Text Us service is growing and enables young people to text anonymously to get their issues and concerns dealt with in a completely confidential way, this is also being linked to the work in the Clinics, if young people require follow up or wish to see someone face to face.

- Alcohol and Substance Misuse – delivered to young people through PSHE in schools, and linked to Clinics and Smoking Cessation sessions in schools and the community and via the Text Us Service also.
- Accredited programmes, delivered in schools/with schools to enable those young people not thriving in school to understand why and to gain accredited outcomes.
- Mental Health, Self Esteem and Anger Management Programmes are also being delivered to young people and this also links to the support work of post 16 young people at NRG, who require support in getting back into education, into college and/or work, are homeless or need support in tackling the challenges of moving from adolescence to adulthood. NRG also supports young people with learning difficulties accessing Adult Services, and enabling them to learn life skills.

The ambition is to broaden the support of local voluntary organisations through the xpresionz website – offering Youth Scrutiny (Young Inspectors) visits, postings on xpresionz and Facebook and twitter and a presence on the website for the public to have information on other services available to young people.

6.3 Youth Offending

6.3.1 Preventative Work

The Youth Offending Service works with Children Looked After on a Youth Court Order or within its prevention service. Following a comprehensive assessment, an Individual Support Plan is agreed with the young person and his/her parent/carer which addresses the risk factors to offending in each case. Young people referred to the prevention service receive interventions delivered on a one to one basis, which are most closely related to their risk factors associated with offending and/or anti-social behaviour. There are a range of resources specifically designed for working directly with young people to address issues such as, substance misuse, negative peer group influences, family relationship difficulties, problems in school, bullying, physical and mental health, domestic abuse and anger management. At the end of the YOS intervention, an exit strategy to follow on from the work done is often necessary and will involve referral to local partner agencies.

6.4 Services For Children In Care

6.4.1 Life Chances Team

The Life Chances Team (LCT) is a virtual team comprised of representatives from all the agencies and specialist services in the children's workforce who have a responsibility for Children Looked After. The team was established in October 2011. The LCT meets on a monthly basis and uses a RAG status to monitor the Placement, Health and Educational progress of all Children Looked After; and agree action plans to address concerns or improve outcomes. The LCT has significantly improved the co-ordination of professionals working together for the benefit of individual children and in developing a closer working

relationship across the range of children's workforce. (See Life Chances Annual Report for further information on impact)

6.5 Children's Social Care

All Children Looked After have an allocated social worker from one of 3 long term child care teams; the Children's Specialist Support Team, who work primarily with children with disabilities from birth to 18 years, two age based social work teams (Over and Under 11's Teams).

6.6 Placements

6.6.1 Foster Care

Foster care services are managed by the Family Placement Team. This team is based in Time Square, alongside the social work teams, enabling close working relationships between the child's social worker and foster carer's supervising social worker. The team recruit, assess and support Bracknell Forest's approved foster carers.

External placement choice has been improved through our involvement in frameworks for independent fostering services and residential homes which are linked with special education provisions. We are able to confidently search nationwide for suitable placements for children and young people. Placements are sought which allow children and young people to maintain school attendance and minimise disruption to their education.

Participating in framework arrangements with neighbouring authorities allows for greater savings through economies of scale. It enables the group to monitor and influence providers more effectively. This project is due to end in December 2018.

6.6.2 Adoption

On 1st December 2017 Bracknell Forest became part of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), Adopt Thames Valley. The Government would like all Local Authority's to be part of a RAA by 2020. The role of recruiting prospective adoptive families, family finding for children with a plan of adoption and providing adoption support services is now with Adopt Thames Valley (which includes Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire, Wokingham, Reading, Swindon, Oxfordshire and Windsor and Maidenhead). It is anticipated that this service will improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of an adoption service by the timely recruitment of adopters and the placement of children, particularly older, harder to place children. As more adopters will be recruited, more children will be linked with prospective adopters at a much earlier stage. This new service will introduce new ways of finding families for these children through the introduction of Diligent Family Finding project.

6.7 Residential Provision

Bracknell Forest has responsibility for Larchwood Short Breaks Unit for children with disabilities which was judged 'Outstanding' by OFSTED in 2018. Apart from a unit offering residential short breaks for disabled children, there is no child care residential provision in the Bracknell Forest. There are a limited number of residential homes within reasonable travel distance, however none offer specialist education, thus limiting the children who can be placed with them. Generally residential care has to be spot purchased.

Bracknell Forest is part of a project with five other Local Authorities which has successfully commissioned a residential provider to set up a school and six satellite homes for twenty young people within a reasonable travel distance of the Borough. Over the last 2 years Bracknell Forest has continued to make effective use of this provision. Bracknell Forest has kept a young person in this provision at all time and this has provided stability for the children with the only reasons placements ending being children becoming adults. Other joint local authority work is planned to develop other framework agreements with residential providers to encourage increased residential provision in the area.

Any residential placements made have to be approved by the Assistant Director (Children's Social Care). If they are at a distance over 20 miles from Bracknell Forest, the Director CYP&L must also approve the placement.

Before making any external residential placements, Ofsted Ratings are viewed with the aim to place with providers rated: Good or Outstanding. A view from Education and Health is also obtained, to ensure that these young person's needs are able to be met by the placement.

Planned placements will usually give a window of time for children and their social worker's to visit the placement prior to the placement commencing, to allow introductions.

6.8 Foster Care

Bracknell Forest continues to try and recruit a greater number of foster carers to be able to care for children and young people. Feedback from foster carers is that they appreciate the support and training that is offered. There were 55 foster carers in March 2018. As previously stated the carers have predominately cared for younger children in the past and this has shifted with the increase in the number of children aged 10 years and older in care. Whilst training had been offered some carers do not feel confident in caring for older children. In order to address this, the Family Placement Team are ensuring that children are carefully matched to carers and that, where required, specialist support can be spot purchased for in house carers. There is currently a review of the family placement team functions with a view to providing recommendations in terms of whether there are any areas for efficiencies and improvements.

6.8.1 Cornerstone

In order to increase the number of in house foster carers the council has funded Cornerstone Partnership to provide support. They have worked successfully with a number of other Local Authorities to support the recruitment of foster carers. The project commenced in September 2017. There are three key elements, firstly to support with recruitment by providing additional resource so Bracknell Forest can attend more recruitment events and to a wider demographics. Secondly, to train carers in restorative parenting which provides greater insight into the trauma children in care have suffered as a result of the abuse or neglect they have suffered. In addition, they will have access to state of the art Virtual Reality equipment to place them in the position of the children to increase empathy. The third aspect is to set up a peer mentor scheme which enables carers to provide support to each other which is designed to complement that provided by the supervising social worker.

6.8.2 Recruitment targets

The family placement team have been able to at least meet the target for recruiting 10 foster carers per year for the last 5 years. The ambition, for the period 2018–2020, is to recruit an additional minimum of fifteen foster carers per year who can provide either short or long term care. Whilst activity will focus on recruiting carers to meet specific demand needs of children

requiring placements, over time we want to enable carers to develop their skills and confidence to meet a wide range of needs. The emphasis of the recruitment strategy is on identifying potential carers with the capacity to engage flexibly in the fostering role across the whole spectrum of need and who are committed to continuous development. The advertising campaign has been amended to reflect the need for different types of foster carers including those for short breaks.

6.8.3 Children with additional needs

There is a need to recruit more specialist carers for children with additional needs. These included carers to provide short breaks for children with disabilities and also to adolescent children, often with additional needs. To assist, the Family Placement Team is providing foster carers additional training to provide them with additional skills and build confidence. The advertising campaign has been amended to reflect the need for different types of foster carers including those for short breaks.

6.8.4 Fostering for Adoption

Fostering for Adoption is promoted. This places a child during the period of temporary local authority care with foster carers who are also approved as adopters. If the court agrees that the child should be adopted and the adoption agency approves the 'match' between the carers as adopters and the child, the placement becomes an adoption placement. Fostering for Adoption carers are recruited by Adopt Thames Valley who meet regularly with the Family Placement Team manager to update on carers that are available.

6.8.5 IFA Framework

The South Central framework was agreed between eleven local authorities in the region to manage Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA), managed by a project manager based in Southampton. There are a number of IFA fostering households in Bracknell Forest and nearby which are used when there are no suitable in-house carers available to meet the child's individual needs. These placements are considerably more expensive than in-house foster carers.

6.9 Leaving Care

Care Leavers are allocated a Personal Advisor from the age of 15½. Children, young people and their carers need to work together towards developing independence skills for when they reach 18. However it is recognised that not all young people are ready to live on their own at this age so a range of options are considered, including supported living hostels, private renting or 'staying put' with their foster carers.

6.9.1 Local Offer

The local offer is a single point of reference for care leavers and professionals which outlines the services / support available to care leavers. Mandatory requirements are specified by the Department of Education. Bracknell Forest Council has met these requirements and enhanced their local offer utilising a multiagency approach in relation to content.

Care leavers and a myriad of professionals have been involved in a consultation period, enabling changes that enhance the offer ensuring it is user friendly and relevant.

The Local offer encompasses the changes required when working with care leavers aged 21 - 25 as prescribed in the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Bracknell Forest has worked in partnership with Health and Education to have in place the Local Offer which is available online.

6.9.2 Staying Put

A clear 'Staying Put' policy has been established for Children Looked After within Bracknell Forest wishing to remain in their foster care placement past the age of 18. The policy formalises existing practice whereby if both the young person and the carer are in agreement, the Council does everything possible to establish a 'Staying Put' agreement. It also ensures the Council meets the requirements of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the Children and Families Act 2014, which imposed the duty on LAs to provide Staying Put arrangements and the Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers 2010 (Regulations and Guidance) to have a 'Staying Put Policy' that sets out arrangements to promote the extension of foster care placements beyond a young person's eighteenth birthday.

The scheme is for former relevant children who require an extended period of time with their carers due to delayed maturity, vulnerability and / or in order to complete education or training. Where a young person has an on-going cognitive disability and meets the Adult Services Fair Access to care services, Adult Services will be responsible for their plan.

6.9.3 Staying Close schemes

It is projected that there will be a continuation of young people moving from residential provisions into independence. There is a need for greater support for this cohort of young people to continue to develop their independent skills and to provide an environment that assesses their independence skills.

6.9.4 Accommodation Support

Accommodation Support is provided through the Leaving Care service in conjunction with Housing to source and support care leavers to maintain tenancies.

The Housing Options Service provides housing advice and assistance for people with housing issues. The housing options available for Children Looked After include:

- My Choice Housing Allocations System where young people eligible for social housing can bid for accommodation.
- Renting in the private sector. A young person aged 18 or older can hold a tenancy and apply for housing benefit to help meet the cost of the rent. From April 2012, single people under the age of 35 years are eligible for housing benefit for a room in a shared house.
- Look Ahead Housing Association provide 55 units of supported housing for young single people under the age of 25 years. Key workers work with residents to help them develop the maturity and life skills to live independently in the community.
- A floating support service is available to provide housing related support to vulnerable people living in the community, including young people who have previously been in care. The floating support service can work with people living in any housing tenure, including privately rented housing.

- A multi agency Young Person's Accommodation Panel receives referrals of young people including CLA who are in need of housing. The Panel assess each person's housing and support needs and prioritises referrals to supported housing or the floating support service.
- The housing service has restructured and now operates through welfare and housing caseworkers who aim to maximise customers income and independence. This will include ensuring customers are in receipt of all benefits they are entitled to and advising on impact on benefit entitlement and access to housing when taking on work. This also includes provision of loans for rent in advance and deposit payments to help CLA access private rented accommodation if that is what they choose.

Bracknell Forest Council Housing Department and Leaving Care Service working in partnership with a local housing provider (Look Ahead Housing) are undertaking a major refurbishment of their accommodation at Holly House, and providing 6 flats with support, ring-fenced for care leavers, particularly those with high support needs. The first block containing the 6 flats for care leavers with high support needs will be completed by October 2018. The contract in place with this provider also contains the provision of 4 ring fenced flats for care leavers with high support needs at another property, Rainforest Walk.

Further housing options are being explored with the Housing Department to meet future need.

6.10 Education for children looked after and care leaver's

6.10.1 Virtual School

As the concept of the Virtual School for Children Looked After has been so successful, Bracknell Forest has broadened this way of working to include other vulnerable groups. This service now also includes:

- Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service.
- Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) Prevention.
- Pupil Premium Strategy.
- Service Children.
- Care Leavers.

Children Looked After face a number of unique challenges in realising their potential. This vulnerable group of learners are a particular priority for the council, given the specific responsibilities we hold for them. Outcomes for this group nationally and locally often do not reflect their true potential and all parts of the system; the school, the LA and partners agencies need to marshal our shared resources to drive forward.

Schools are uniquely placed to offer support for learning and also stability to this group of children and young people. Indeed, school may be one of the few constants in their lives for some of them. Educational achievement for this group is important, not only to allow them to successfully move into adulthood but because educational achievement is a crucial mechanism for enhancing a child or young person's self-esteem and feelings of worth.

The LA has a shared ambition with schools for all of Bracknell Forest's CLA– wherever they are placed to progress and achieve their potential, making appropriate choices and securing a future in which they are confident and fulfilled.

The LA recognises that schools cannot do this work alone and in order to support schools we operate a Virtual School for CLA.

The role of the Virtual School is to:

- Proactively monitor the attainment, progress, attendance of all CLA the council has a responsibility for.
- Support education planning for CLA.
- Hold all stakeholders to account and rapidly intervene and support when necessary.
- Work positively and proactively with schools to ensure that CLA make at least good progress and the pupil premium grant that schools receive is being used effectively to support improved outcomes.
- Provide professional development and training for designated teachers.
- Provide advice to social workers and carers to help with PEPs, ensuring they are robust and contribute to attainment, progress and well-being.
- Ensure all vulnerable groups of young people – especially those at risk of being not in education, employment or training have access to and benefit from appropriate independent careers guidance.
- Advise and support schools and families who have adopted children or those for whom they have a special guardianship order.
- Develop and promote the strategic vision of the LA to ensure all stakeholders benefit from a co-ordinated support programme to meet the individual needs of vulnerable young people.

To support the reduction of NEET as well as reducing the risk of NEET the LA is supporting schools to:

- Use the Risk of NEET indicators (RONI) to identify vulnerable young people.
- Develop a menu of interventions to use with these young people in the school or other educational setting to support engagement.
- To monitor and evaluate their effectiveness of strategies and to try others.
- Work with partners to develop a range of opportunities to ensure young people remain engaged in education, employment and training.
- To support vulnerable young people in their placements.

6.10.2 Education Transition and Progress

Care Leavers can access education and career support from the Learning and Achievement transition worker whose aim is to support young people who may find it difficult to gain training or employment. Young people can receive practical support, as well as information, advice and guidance on further education, training and employment opportunities. Early identification of those in need using internal departments, external partners and data, ensures that the needs of CLA are addressed at the earliest opportunity.

The Virtual School has had an extended brief to provide advice, guidance and support to those in year 11 looking to continue their education as well as care leavers currently in a form of education. Their attendance and progress is regularly monitored – regardless of where they are placed. This also encompasses those young people whose immigration status is currently being established by the Home Office but who wish to attend University. A Personal Education Plan is offered to relevant young people should they wish to take up this opportunity.

The Participation Group, a multi-disciplinary team, convenes regularly and is made up of officers from various Local Authority departments, local colleges and training providers. Individual cases are brought to the Participation Group meeting and their current needs are discussed, and a plan is formulated to assist with their transition. The appropriate agency will engage with the young person, who will receive support and be sign posted onto an appropriate provider. Learners are supported to engage in an activity with the expectation of continued progression.

6.11 Health

Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust is responsible for providing universal and targeted health services for Children Looked After within Bracknell Forest. In addition to the provision of universal services such as health visiting and school nursing, there is a dedicated health team for Children Looked After in both the East and West of the county.

The Berkshire East Health Team for Children Looked After currently covers the three Local Authorities in East Berkshire, including Bracknell Forest. The team consists of a part time Designated Doctor, a part time Designated Nurse; three Specialist nurses and 1.5 administration support workers. One specialist nurse takes the lead for Bracknell Forest.

The team aim to assist NHS Berkshire and Bracknell Forest Council to improve the health of children who are looked after. The team coordinate the health assessment process through which health needs are identified and plans implemented to meet those needs. Support is also given to Social Workers, Foster Carers and health professionals to meet the needs of young people in their care. The Specialist Nurses also work directly with young people.

6.11.1 Emotional Well Being

Bracknell Forest has a Child and Mental Health service which is commissioned from Berkshire Health Foundation Trust (BHFT) by the Clinical Commissioning Group.

All looked after children and their foster carers have free access to leisure facilities within the Borough. Children placed out of the area are supported to access leisure activities.

6.11.2 Young People on Remand

Young people on remand to Youth Detention Accommodation become CLA and are allocated a YOS Case Manager who liaises directly with Children's Social Care and Education to notify them of the young person's placement. The YOS Case Manager in conjunction with the Secure Estate sets up and undertakes an initial remand review within 5 working days of the remand or sooner if the young person or their behaviour is causing immediate concern to prison/care staff. During the initial period of remand, the YOS work with services, the young person, their parents and carers, their legal representative and the secure establishment to consider a Remand to Local Authority Accommodation or Intensive Bail Support package and present it at the next court appearance if it is felt safe and appropriate to do so. If the young person is re-remanded following their next Court appearance the YOS and the young persons allocated Social Worker attend a Detention and Placement Planning Meeting within 10 working days of the initial remand to review bail options and put a remand plan in place which offers a programme of services from the YOS and the secure establishment to the young person during the period of remand. During a long period of remand the YOS visit the young person monthly and attend monthly remand planning meetings.

6.11.3 Liaison between Children's Social Care and the Youth Offending Service

The Youth Offending Service Operational Manager and Team Manager of the Over 11's Team meet monthly to review and discuss all Children Looked After who are currently in the Criminal Justice System. Children Looked After and children and young people deemed to be on 'the edge of care', identified as being at risk of offending are also discussed to facilitate referrals into the (YOS) Prevention Service.

6.12 Children Looked After and Young People's Participation

Say it Loud Say it Proud (SiLSiP) the Bracknell Forest Children in Care Council has regular monthly meetings. The Lead member for Children Young People and Learning, the Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel (CPAP), the Director, the Assistant Director (CSC) and the Head of Service for Looked After Children are invited to attend a meeting with SiLSiP representatives quarterly to hear representations from the young people. The Chair of CPAP then reports back to the panel and the panel receive SiLSiP's annual report.

An annual cycle of participation puts The Council's Pledge to Children Looked After at the centre of participation activity. It starts with an annual "Voting" event to identify key issues that Children Looked After want the council and SiLSiP to address on their behalf and aims to engage young people looked after who do not attend the formal meetings.

All Bracknell Forest's Children Looked After are able to access an Independent Advocacy Service and an Independent Visitor Service.

Key senior managers and Elected Members are supportive and actively involved in promoting participation opportunities and celebrating young people's achievements in this area.

6.13 Corporate Parents

A good Corporate Parent should put its own children first, be a powerful advocate for them to receive the best of everything and help them to make a success of their lives. The Bracknell Forest Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel is comprised of five Elected Members and their substitutes, a foster carer representative and the Executive Member for Children and Young People as a non-voting member.

The lead officers for the Panel are the Head of Service for Children Looked After and the Assistant Director for CSC. The Director of Children, Young People and Learning also attends. The purpose of the Panel is to ensure that the Council is carrying out its responsibilities as a good Corporate Parent to children and young people in its care by providing leadership across the Council to promote the health and well being of Children Looked After and Care Leavers, monitoring standards and checking progress on priorities for improvement in this CLA Commissioning Strategy. The chair of this panel the Lead Member for Children's Services.

7 Local Challenges and Service Gaps

In this part of the strategy we consider the analysis of local needs and provision and define the key challenges we recognise from this.

7.1 To Provide Appropriate Placements When Necessary

Foster care

- The number of children who became looked after rose from 98 in 2015 to 138 in 2018. The in house foster carer system was developed for around 100 children. The increase in the number of CLA means that there is significant addition pressure of the in house fostering capacity. This is something that Cornerstone are supporting with but there is no quick fix and there is likely to be a reliance on IFA placements over the next 3 years taking into account the increased demand.
- There are limited adolescent services which leads to a system where children will increasingly need to come into care as the services are not in place at the right time for children.
- The Children Looked After population has changed in recent years from being predominantly younger children to older children. There are different skills required of carers wanting to provide care for older children and we are committed to supporting our current foster carers and those carers who are recruited. Work with Cornerstone has been successful in supporting carers with additional training to maintain placements.
- Whilst the number of foster carers approved by Bracknell Forest has increased to 55, it has not yet been able to meet all the demands for placements locally and is rarely able to give a choice of placement. The type of local housing stock tends to limit the number of children a foster family can accommodate, usually having only one or two spare bedrooms. Placing large sibling groups within Bracknell Forest is therefore a challenge.
- The Fostering Recruitment and Publicity Strategy 2017 – 2019 describes the overall aim to recruit sufficient substitute carers to meet the predicted need, and sets out the actions within the annual Recruitment Action Plan, to be taken to meet this need over the next three years.
- There will continue to be a need to commission IFA carers particularly for older children with more complex needs during 2018 and 2019 but we anticipate decreasing this need in 2020 as the work from Cornerstone continues to be embedded.
- One area preventing those wishing to foster or existing carers wanting to foster more children is space. If carers had larger houses or ability to extend they would be able to care for more children locally.
- There is a lack of local good quality respite provision for adolescents. This would enable there to be a short period of time where children move out of home and enable the appropriate support to be put in place.

Adoption support

- The government has put aside £21 million as the Adoption Support Fund for the therapeutic support of adopters. This has been extended to include carers of children subject to Special Guardianship Orders and Inter Country Adoption. Local Authorities are able to apply for individual families and children who require therapeutic intervention. Where the criteria are met, application has been made for this funding. Local adoptive and SGO families access this support after an assessment of their need.

Remand beds

- Historically there have been a low number of demands for remand foster placements for children who are held in police cells or remanded to a Youth Detention Accommodation. These beds are often required without notice and the nature of the remand limits most standard foster homes to be able to meet the need. Currently placements are spot purchased through independent providers but the low demand means that the supply is limited. Bracknell Forest is in the process of working with some London Boroughs and neighbouring boroughs to identify a pooling arrangement for remand beds.

Health and Wellbeing ADD A SEPARATE SECTION FOR GAPS IN SUPPORT FOR CLA

- Some young people engage in risky behaviour as teenagers. The misuse of drugs and alcohol in general has an impact on the health and wellbeing of young people; also potentially exposing them to exploitation and risk of sexual harm. Tracking the health needs of Care Leavers and engaging them in addressing their health needs is challenging, as at this age they feel invincible.
- A number of children and care leavers are young parents and whilst some become good parents there are a number whose ability to develop parenting skills is limited. The result is that the Authority has to intervene and ensure other arrangements for the care of the child are made. Advising young people about the wisdom of early parenthood is a complex matter but a continued proactive approach to managing their sexual health and contraceptive needs may assist in reducing the number of pregnancies.
- There has been an increase in the number of babies needing foster care whose parent have been known to the LA for a number of years or where previous children have been placed in care. In 2018 Public Health appointed a specialist contraception nurse. Her role is to work with high risk women for whom pregnancy is likely, due to chaotic lifestyles or where children have previously been removed. She advises on their health needs including sexual health. It is anticipated this will lead to a reduction in number of pregnancies for this cohort of women.

Missing Children Looked After

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is a key duty on Bracknell Forest and requires effective joint working. When a child goes missing or runs away they are at risk of 'significant harm' we are therefore responsible for protecting them whether they go missing from Local Authority Care or home. Bracknell Forest

Children's Social Care aims to work with partner agencies to provide a service for children and young people who go missing.

- Children Looked After are particularly vulnerable in relation to missing person episodes. At a national level although the number of Children Looked After going missing is a small percentage of the overall number it is disproportionately high compared with the child population as a whole.
- Return home interviews for Looked After Children are undertaken independently from the child's social worker by a worker in the Children's Specialist Support Team and usually the Social Worker for Missing and Child Sexual Exploitation.

Child Sexual Exploitation

- Child sexual exploitation is an increasing issue of concern for our society. We have seen through recent media reporting the profound consequences on the lives of some very vulnerable children and young people. While this issue affects all elements of society, there are some groups of children and young people who are particularly at risk. Looked after children and those who have experience of the care system are one such group.
- Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people receive 'something' (eg food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts or money) as a result of them performing sexual activities. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them; violence, coercion and intimidation are common.
- To ensure safeguarding and best outcomes for children and young people Bracknell Forest Council has developed a Child Sexual Exploitation Screening Tool to be used by all professions working with children and young people.
- Where a professional has concerns about a child, the possibility that the child is being groomed for or is subject to child sexual exploitation should always be a consideration. This screening tool should help them focus on the specific indicators and determine whether further investigations are needed. Professionals need to use their judgement as factors such as the child's age, any additional vulnerabilities, like the life history, may mean that what for another child would be low level, for that child is high level.
- The following is an overview of additional services available to CLA who go missing and or at risk of exploitation. There is a specialist CSE and Missing Team and a dedicated resource. This work is delivered/undertaken by specialist workers whose role it is to assist in the prevention and disruption of exploitation.
 - Regular engagement
 - Return Home Interviews (wherever the child is placed) within 72 hours of return.
 - Liaison with local Police / Missing persons co-ordinators and OLA's.**
 - Attendance in strategy meetings
 - Missing risk assessment - including sharing these with professionals, updating and reviewing them.
 - Attendance at CLA meetings
 - Attendance at Placement planning meetings
 - Support in placement referrals
 - Missing Prevention Planning Meetings (new) including the child.

- Direct keep safe work:
 - healthy / safe relationships
 - online safety
 - Grooming
 - CSE
 - KYS programme
- CSE screening tools
- CCE screening tools
- sexual health support (referrals or taking them to a clinic)
- advice for carers around missing and reporting, CSE and online safety.
- Attendance at OLA SEMRAC equivalents.

The three priorities for the next three years as described later in this document are:

1. Ensure right children are in care of the local authority and this is used as a last resort.
2. Ensure there are sufficient in house foster placements for all children who require them and appropriate support is in place for all children to maintain placements and support stability.
3. Wherever we make placements they should be high quality, focused on the needs of the child supporting them to thrive and achieve permanence.

Care Leavers

- Legislation requires local authorities to give young people leaving care the opportunity to choose a Personal Advisor to support them as Care Leavers. Currently young people are allocated a worker from within the Over 11s and Leaving Care Team. Other members of the Children's Workforce, including foster carers, may be able to fulfil the role of Personal Advisor with oversight from the Local Authority.
- Children Looked After have been required to live independently as soon as they reach 18 and yet are often those least equipped with the practical and social skills necessary to manage independent life without considerable support. The new 'Staying Put arrangements' may support young people in this area. Currently the training and preparation to develop the skills for independent living are individualised and include the Life Skills programme.
- We want care leavers to remain in education or training until 18 or 21 as this gives them better life chances, future employability and independence.
- Limited availability of social housing nationally has led to greater reliance on private renting. However there is limited affordable private renting available in Bracknell Forest or landlords prepared to accept Housing Benefit.
- The current commissioned provision for housing does not meet the needs of those care leavers with complex needs, for example mental health, substance misuse and chaotic lifestyles.
- Similarly some young people who are identified as potentially vulnerable adults may not readily meet the criteria used to gain access to Adult Services.

The Leaving Care Services has the following plans to address the accommodation needs of care leavers.

- Needs mapping has taken place, which has included consultation with current care leavers to inform future planning.
- Joint work within Bracknell Forest Council Housing department to provide local bespoke accommodation for 10 care leavers with high level of support needs through a refurbishment of existing local housing project
- Care leavers continue to be referred to BFC Young Person's Resource Panel where referrals for supported housing can be made. The panel also acts as a multi-agency problem solving panel.
- Continue to use HMO properties provided by Look Ahead Housing for care leavers who are assessed as suitable for this provision. Look Ahead provide keyworker support and help with access to moving on accommodation.
- Use of the Council's rent deposit loan scheme which helps people access private rented accommodation.
- Continue to access placements provided by Moving On and Stepping Stones, which provide accommodation for care leavers with high support needs.
- Consider 'Staying Put' arrangements for all care leavers who meet the criteria.

8 Objectives of the Strategy

The three priorities for the next three years as described later in this document are:

1. Ensure right children are in care of the local authority and this is used as a last resort.
2. Ensure there are sufficient in house foster placements for all children who require them and appropriate support is in place for all children to maintain placements and support stability.
3. Wherever we make placements they should be high quality, focused on the needs of the child supporting them to thrive and achieve permanence.

8.1 To Support Children and Young People on the Edge of Care

As part of transformation Bracknell Forest Council has a project to increase the multi-agency support to families to ensure families stay together where it is safe for this to happen. These children are usually adolescents and specialist support is required. There are plans in place to extend this project.

8.2 To Minimise Delay in Placing Children for Permanency

The Permanency Strategy is at the core of commission and sufficiency in Bracknell Forest. Children benefit from growing up in a stable, consistent home where their needs are being met throughout their childhood. Where children are unable to return to the care of a parent efficient processes need to be in place to ensure that the needs of the child are well understood and they are prepared to move to a substitute permanent home.

8.2.1 Permanency through Adoption

The Adopt Thames Valley Recruitment and Publicity Strategy 2017-2019 sets out the plans for Adopt Berkshire to recruit and assess potential adopters to meet a child's needs for permanency.

Information from the Adoption Score card has been evaluated and analysed in terms of BFC children as measured against our neighbours and nationally.

8.2.2 Permanency through provision of Placements when necessary

In accordance with Statutory Guidance on the implementation of section 22G of the Children Act 1989, published at the beginning of 2010, Bracknell Forest Children's Social Care will take steps that secure, as far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for Children Looked After within their local authority area thus meeting "the sufficiency duty".

As evidenced in the needs analysis, the numbers of children requiring external placements has increased in the last three years. There is currently an evaluation exercise via the commissioning team and transformation program to review key roles in sourcing and maintaining placements in the future.

8.3 Placement Stability and Effective Care Planning

Our preventive approach means that the children who become looked after tend to be those with the most complex needs and challenging behaviour. For these children for whom we are corporate parents, we aim to act positively to promote their life chances and work intensively with our partner agencies to achieve that.

The basis for improving their life chances is to ensure a stable placement so that continuity of relationships, community and education is assured and provides the right conditions for maximising potential.

The Life Chances Team provides multi agency practical and effective support for children and their carers in order to maintain placements or, where a move is necessary, support a planned move to an appropriate alternative placement.

8.4 To Improve Health and Wellbeing

There are processes in place to ensure that all Children Looked After have good quality, up to date health plans. Health plans are monitored through the Life Chances Team to ensure that the health needs of children are met promptly and effectively. Health of CLA is also monitored via the Pan Berkshire Strategic Lead meetings attended by Heads of Services across the region. NICE Guidance has also been followed and an Action plan drawn up.

The longer term health and well-being of children is recognised as a significant aim for all children and young people. Children and young people are encouraged to understand the benefits of looking after their health and embed this into their way of life.

As young people, approach adulthood we will include effective sexual health counselling and encourage young people to avoid parenthood until they are able to positively parent.

The CLA nurse is a full time post dedicated to Bracknell Forest. This enables rapid response to any health concerns. Health provide strong contributions to the Life Chances Team.

8.5 To Improve Educational Outcomes

In Bracknell Forest, our ambition as a corporate parent is to ensure that all Looked After Children Looked After have access to appropriate high quality educational opportunities that help them to achieve the highest educational standards possible. This includes supporting their aspirations to achieve in further and higher education.

Bracknell Forest Council has a Learning Improvement Strategy which encompasses the universal offer which includes all children looked after.

8.6 To Prepare Children and Young People for Adulthood and Independence

Bracknell Forest aims to ensure that young people leaving care are properly prepared for independence and receive the support and encouragement they need.

- Children Looked After and Care Leavers will be well equipped emotionally, practically and financially to move on into adulthood and independence.
- Care leavers will be supported to stay on with their foster carers as supported lodgings placements when appropriate
- Care Leavers will be supported by a personal advisor up to the age of 25 if they are in education
- A member of the Children's Specialist Support Team, Over 11's Team and Leaving Care Service sits on the Approaching Adulthood Panel.

8.7 To Listen to Young People - about how they want their services delivered.

- Bracknell Forest will build on our existing high level of involvement of children and young people in their statutory reviews and personal education meetings to consult them in a variety of arenas at every appropriate opportunity, including formal and leisure based activities.
- The Children in Care Council (known as Say It Loud, Say It Proud) will continue to be promoted as a formal means of listening to the views of our looked after and care leaver population.
- We will ensure that all our Children Looked After have a copy of the Pledge and will promote the message that the Council listens to their views, will review and amend the details of the Pledge accordingly.

The Care Leavers' Charter was formally adopted by the Executive Member for CYPL and Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel, shared with young people and is being implemented.

9 Commissioning Priorities

The Local Authority recognise there is a need for greater systems to be in place around commissioning and as a result have recruited a permanent Assistant Director for Commissioning. There are plans in place to review the commissioning priorities and function across the People's Directorate in 2019.

10 Value For Money

CSC works closely with the finance team to ensure that good value for money is achieved regarding placements. Whilst Bracknell Forest prioritises the needs of children it does this to ensure value for money and enable the council to maintain a sustainable budget.

- Bracknell Forest is a member of the South Central Independent Fostering Agency Framework (with 11 neighbouring Local Authorities) which tests providers against a framework specification to ensure that children receive the best possible outcomes and placements are benchmarked.
- Bracknell Forest is part of the Cross Regional Group of 6 Local Authorities where we have an allocation of beds within residential homes across Southern England. Our commitment is that we pay for one bed which is always available for our use and when it is empty it can be leased to other members of other Local Authorities and therefore provide income.
- Bracknell Forest Council aspires to meet the increase in demand for specialist foster carers through a variety of innovative methods including working in partnership with the Cornerstone to create a bespoke fostering service that is able to focus on mentoring, peer support and co production to provide safe and stable homes for children who are looked after.

11 How will we know we have succeeded?

We will know we have been successful in our strategy if we see a reduction in the number of children looked after as we will be able to see our support services to the residence are successful. For those children who do need to become looked after we will be able to have a choice of suitable placement which will provide children with stability and consistency and result in improved life chances.

Sufficiency Strategy Action Plan 2019 (To be reviewed annually)

Priorities	Activity	Lead for delivery	Timeframe	Deadline	RAG Status
1. Ensure right children are in care of the local authority and this is used as a last resort.	Implement recommendations from the commissioning review	Head of Children Looked After	January 2019	January 2019	
	Put in place Children's Panel where there is multi disciplinary decision making to gate keep children's entry into care.	Head of Children Looked After	September 2018	September 2018	
	Test, implement and extend Edge of Care model to ensure adolescents are support to live within their families.	Children's Programme Manager	September 2018	April 2019	
	Work in partnership with housing to identify respite solutions for adolescents	Head of housing	December 2019	April 2019	
	Liaison with Heath and Early Help to look at contingency planning for LARK nurse if position if vacant to prevent high numbers of babies coming into care	Head of safeguarding	September 2018	January 2019	
2. Ensure there are sufficient in house foster placement for all children who require them and appropriate support	Review of support services offered to foster carers and plans put in place to provide front loaded suite of options to support carers to extend their offer and placements to be maintained	Head of Looked After Children	December 2018	April 2019	

is in place for all children to maintain placements and support stability					
	Review to be undertaken of the functions and systems within the family placement team. Following the recommendations in October 2018 implementation of recommendations	Head of Looked After Children	December 2018	April 2019	
	Work in partnership with Cornerstone to recruit more foster carers to increase the sufficiency for CLA. 15 foster carers to be recruited in 2018/19	Head of Looked After Children	April 2018	February 2019	
	Review of Staying Put Policy to make it easier for foster carers to provide care leavers accommodation and support	Head of Leaving Care	September 2018	January 2019	
	Housing to support foster carers wanting to foster more children but where space is a barrier	Head of Housing	January 2019	April 2019	
3. Wherever we make placements they should be high quality, focused on the needs of the child supporting them to thrive and achieve permanence.	Undertake a review of the commissioning functions for placements and other services for Children Looked After	Head of Commissioning	September 2018	January 2019	

	Ensure there are systems in place to review children in residential placements and there is sufficient commissioning resource to support these to step down to foster care when appropriate	Head of commissioning	September 2018	January 2019	
	Review of all children in semi independent accommodation and strategy to be put in place regarding this cohort	Head of Children Looked After	September 2018	January 2019	