



Bristol City Council

Sufficiency Plan Placements for children in care and homes for care leavers

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Contents

Contents.....	2
Introduction	3
National Context	5
Local Context	8
Analysis.....	9
Costs and funding	13
Outcomes for children in care	14
Placements	15
Overview of current placements, commissioning arrangements and recommendations.....	16
Placements – overview	17
Placements – foster care	19
Placements – residential	21
Placements – post-16	22
Placements – parent and child assessment.....	24
Placements – disabled children	25
Delivering change – what we will do	26

Introduction

All children require a happy, stable home life if they are to achieve their potential. Children in care are no exception; those children who cannot live with their birth parents do best if they can live with a family member or other person connected to their family. For those children who do require local authority care, a stable, well-matched placement where they can live until prepared and ready to leave, is the single most influential factor in improving children's outcomes and creating the conditions from which they can go on to live successful adult lives.

Bristol City Council commissions foster care, residential care and post-16 supported accommodation placements from a mixed market of internal and external providers. Such placements are high cost and it is important that Bristol manages the market to ensure that placements are cost effective and of the highest quality.

Delivering sufficient accommodation for children in care and those leaving care must be seen as a core part of how we meet our broader duties to ensure that children's needs are fully assessed, and that effective care planning results in well matched placements able to meet the child's identified needs.

An important mechanism, both in terms of improving outcomes for children and in ensuring sufficient accommodation, is to take earlier preventative action to support children and families so that fewer children become looked after. Effective commissioning will improve placement choice, reduce placement breakdown, support integration between the looked after children's services, universal and specialist services; it may reduce numbers of children coming into care and deliver value for money thus reducing costs.

Our vision

Bristol is committed to being an effective, caring, and ambitious corporate parent. We must care about our children in care, not just for them, and ensure the same standard of care as any good parent. We have high aspirations for our children and will be strong advocates for them. We want to equip the children and young people in our care with the skills and tools to live a fulfilling, successful and rewarding life.

Our objectives

This plan forms part of our corporate parenting strategy. It sets out the placements we will need and our commissioning intentions for the forthcoming three years in order to contribute to the following corporate parenting strategy objectives as well as achieving value for money:

- Children receive the right services and only remain in care for as long as they need to
- Being in care is an enriching experience as possible for children and that we equip them for a successful and fulfilling future
- Ensure good quality local placements for children and provide placement choice keeping children placed locally and achieving high levels of placement stability
- All young people are in safe and secure accommodation
- Improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers
- Support children to live safely with their families and reduce the need to be cared for by intervening early

Introduction

What does the plan cover?

- This plan sets out the council's plans to meet its s.22G Children Act 'sufficiency duty'. The duty requires the council to take steps to ensure, as far as practicable, we can provide children in care with homes that meet their needs, within our area. This involves making sure there is a sufficient range and number of accommodation providers (foster carers and children's homes) capable of meeting the differing needs of our children in care. This includes:
 - Care placements for all of Bristol's children in care including:
 - Foster care
 - Children's homes
 - Residential special schools
 - Placements for disabled children
 - Homes for care leavers including:
 - 'Staying put' with their foster carers
 - Semi-independent and supported accommodation
 - Specialist foster and residential placements for parents with their children, including assessment placements

Related strategies and documents

- Corporate parenting strategy
- Bristol's pledge to children in care and care leavers
- Children in care population analysis
- Pledge children in care survey results
- New belongings survey results

These documents are published on the council's website

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/policies-plans-strategies/plans-and-policy-for-children-in-or-leaving-care>

National Context

Changes to law & policy since 2012

Delegation to foster carers - A requirement that foster carers are given authority to make day to day decisions about the children they care for, unless there is a good reason why not to¹.

Early permanence placements - Local authorities must consider placing a looked after child for whom they are considering adoption, with foster carers who are also approved prospective adopters².

Out of area placements - Where a local authority makes a placement outside of their area, not in an adjoining authority's area, the placement must be agreed by the Director of Children's Services and the placing authority must tell the receiving authority³.

Children's homes regulations and quality standards - The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 came into force in April 2015, replacing the previous set of regulations. They introduced nine Quality Standards (replacing the old National Minimum Standards)⁴.

New rules about running children's homes including a requirement that monthly quality assurance visits (Reg. 33 visits) are now carried out by an independent person⁵. There are new requirements about the qualifications children's homes managers and staff must have. Providers are also required to make sure that children's home premises are appropriately and suitably located to keep children safe and enable them to access the services they need.

Children who go missing – Where there are child protection concerns relating to a child or where a child has gone missing from their placement, their care plan must record the day to day arrangements put in place to keep them safe⁶. There is also new statutory guidance setting out the respective roles and responsibilities of the local authority, police, Local Safeguarding Children Board and other agencies.

Contact with siblings - When considering what contact there should be between a child and their family, the local authority must have regard to the child's care plan⁷. Changes to statutory guidance state that wherever it is in the best interests of each individual child, siblings should be placed together. There is also an emphasis on the importance of sibling contact where siblings cannot be placed together⁸.

¹ In force since July 2013. Introduced by the [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) Regulations 2013](#) which amends the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010.

² In force since July 2013. Introduced by the 2013 [Regulations above](#)

³ In force since January 2014. Introduced by the [Children's Homes and Looked-After Children \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](#) which amend The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/541/regulation/4/made>

⁵ In force since January 2014. Introduced by the [2013 Regulations](#) at footnote 4.

⁶ In force since January 2014. Introduced by the [2013 Regulations](#) at footnote 4.

⁷ [Regulation 8ZA - Adoption and Care Planning \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) Regulations 2014](#)

⁸ [DfE \(2014\) Looked After Children: Contact with Siblings, Update to The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volume 2: care planning, placement and case review](#)

National Context

Changes to law & policy since 2012

Permanent and long term foster placements – Changes to regulations⁹ include:

- foster carers and residential child care workers must be appropriately consulted and involved in decision making for children;
- where the plan for permanence is long-term foster care there must be an appropriate planning process which considers the needs of the child and the capacity of the carer to meet these needs;
- where a long-term foster placement is agreed this must be recorded in a child's placement plan; and that appropriate and flexible visiting and case review arrangements are made.

Children leaving care – Where a local authority is considering ceasing to look after a child, it must assess the proposed arrangements for the child and set out the support that will be provided when the child ceases to be looked-after. The authority must consult with the child, their parents and others to ensure that the proposed arrangements are in the child's best interests and will safeguard and promote their welfare. Also, the authority must have robust arrangements in place to scrutinise decisions to cease to look after a child¹⁰.

Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 – Includes a provision known as the 'prevent duty'. This requires local authorities, the NHS, schools and other partners to 'have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.' Guidance indicates that the local authority must provide appropriate training for staff involved in the implementation of this duty, including front-line staff who engage with the public.

Children and Social Work Bill – The May 2016 Queen's Speech announced the government's intention to introduce legislation to:

- Speed up adoption;
- Require councils to tell children leaving care what services they are entitled to;
- Give care leavers the right to a personal adviser up to the age of 25.

Immigration Act 2016 – Limits the extent to which local authorities are responsible to support care leavers who have 'no recourse to public funds' when they turn 18. This impacts on care leavers who, because of their immigration status, are not entitled to access welfare benefits, council housing or homelessness assistance at the time they reach 18.

⁹ The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015; DfE - [Permanence, long-term foster placements and ceasing to look after a child: statutory guidance for local authorities: March 2015](#)

¹⁰ Introduced by [2015 regulations](#) at footnote 10

National Context

New Ofsted inspection frameworks

New frameworks have been introduced for independent fostering agencies (in September 2013) and for children's homes (in April 2014). Local authority fostering services are now inspected under the new framework for local authority children's services (the latest framework was introduced in September 2015) Ofsted introduced a new framework for the inspection of children's homes. For all services, inspectors now make judgments on a four-point scale: outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate. The frameworks operate on the basis that only good is good enough for children.

Reform of services for children with SEN and disabilities

Parts of the Children and Families Act 2014 impact on looked after children with SEN and disabilities. The Act sets out general principles that apply when supporting disabled children and young people with SEN. Local authorities must pay particular attention to:

- the views, wishes and feelings of children and their parents, and young people
- the importance of them participating as fully as possible in decision-making and providing the information and support to enable them to do so; and
- supporting children and young people's development and helping them to achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.

Disabled children and those with SEN, and their carers will be able to request a joint assessment of their need for education, health and care services and the preparation of a combined Education, Health and Care Plan.

Child sexual exploitation

While sexual exploitation is not a new issue, there is increasing awareness of the scale and extent of such exploitation with some notable high profile prosecutions. There is a greater determination from government to ensure that more effective action is taken to identify potential victims, protect them from harm, support them better and prosecute more successfully the perpetrators of exploitation and abuse.

Reforms to adoption and Special Guardianship Orders

The Government intends to introduce measures to increase the number of children placed with their adoptive family sooner and reduce the time children spend in care waiting to move into their new home. The reforms will also require that all council adoption services are merged into regional bodies so children can be matched with parents more quickly.

The Government has also announced it will change regulations so that councils have to carry out more thorough assessments to make sure children placed with family members are in the right home and relatives they are placed with can look after the child right up until they are 18.

Local Context

A growing population

The population of Bristol is growing rapidly, increasing from 391,000 to 437,000 between 2003 and 2013, a rise of 11.8%. In this same period, children aged 0-15 increased by 14.2%, with the greatest increase among 0-9 year olds (25%). This population growth has implications for the numbers of children coming into care in the immediate future and longer-term future. For example, although the rate of children in care in Bristol remained consistent (at 77 per 10,000 children) between 2010 and 2014, the actual number of children in care increased by 50 (from 645 to 695) because of the growing child population.

An increasingly diverse population

The Bristol population has become increasingly diverse. 22% of the population are not “White British” and there are now at least 45 religions, at least 50 countries of birth represented and at least 91 main languages spoken by people living here. Changes to population characteristics have been concentrated in the inner city and inner east areas of the city. After White British, the largest populations by ethnic group are Non-White British, African (of whom a large proportion are of Somali heritage), Black Other, Pakistani, Caribbean and Indian.

Policy context

Building on our 2012-14 Children First change programme, the council’s current strategic priorities include:

- A new corporate parenting strategy
- A new Pledge for children in care and care leavers
- Working with city leaders to develop Bristol as a Learning City
- Increasing the capacity in the Early Help/Troubled Family support services

Budget pressures

Bristol City Council has a £80M funding gap for the three-year period 2014-2017. This makes it crucial that we contain the council’s spend on placements for looked after children by making sure we place them in the most suitable, cost effective and stable placements.

Housing pressures

There is a shortage of housing in Bristol, particularly affordable housing for low-income households. This makes it hard to find housing for care leavers and impacts on the ability to recruit local foster carers with spare rooms for children in care.

Signs of Safety

So that social workers can spend more time with children, we have introduced the “Signs of Safety” way of working, a strengths-based safety-organised approach to child protection casework. Signs of Safety identifies risks for children and places strong emphasis on what is working well for families and how we can support them to effect lasting change.

Remodelled children in care social work teams

The long-term children in care services have remodelled into seven through-care teams with the aim of offering more stable, long-term relationships with children and care leavers

Analysis

Key messages from children and young people

Listen to us – Children want to have space to talk, to be listened to and involved in decisions about where they are placed.

Relationships – They want those who care for and work with them to understand them and try to help. Children said a range of people can be important to them, from siblings and carers, to professionals such as learning mentors and police officers. They said the most important things they need from relationships were: trust, stability, love and care, respect, feeling safe, belonging and feeling included, keeping promises.

Family – Children in care said contact with their birth family is really important and they want to grow up with their siblings, even if they must live apart. Placements feel right to children where they feel part of a family, even in a children's home.

Living in the right place – 10% of those who responded to the children's commissioner's survey said where they lived was not right for them. The main reasons they gave were: did not feel they were listened to; were not helped; lack freedom, lack trust; do not get on with carers; feel they do not belong; are not living with their birth family; lack of contact with birth family; are located too far away from family, friends, school or college; or live in an isolating environment.

Moving – Children in care find changing placements easier if they have a chance to visit; know more about the placement beforehand; have more choice; are told of the move beforehand and their views are listened to. They said they often did not have time to say goodbye and important relationships could be disrupted.

Leaving care – Nationally just under a third of care leavers said they left care at the right time. The reasons were mainly feeling settled in their placement and being forced to leave before they were ready.

Doing things better – some suggestions from children and care leavers in Bristol included:

- Allow us to grow up with our siblings even if we can't live with them
- Carers should be able to make parental decisions without having to check everything with the social worker first
- Respect confidentiality better except when it's a safeguarding issue – this would make us be less guarded
- Support should continue beyond the age of 18 for those that need it
- Allow more regular contact with family, even when risks need to be managed
- If we're doing okay at school, stop making us attend PEP meetings
- In children's homes we want to do more activities and have more choice over what we do.

To find out more, see our Children in Care Needs Analysis, Pledge Survey findings <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/policies-plans-strategies/plans-and-policy-for-children-in-or-leaving-care> as well as the national children's commissioner's survey of children in care and care leavers (August 2015).

Analysis

Key messages from care leavers

In September 2015 we asked care leavers to give us their views by completing a survey. These are the key themes in survey responses that related to accommodation -

Family and social relationships - Accommodation can influence the relationships positively and negatively. People can feel isolated from family and friends, and can form new relationships which are not always positive.

Independence - Independence and living alone is highly prized amongst care leavers but the downside is social isolation and exposure to risks. Care leavers are not always ready to live alone and may need support to do so.

Preparation and support - Care leavers feel they need better preparation for moving on. Careful planning and the use of transitional stages would help them make a more successful move. Many need and value continuing support.

Cost, safety and standard - Care leavers feel accommodation does not always provide a safe environment, and is not always of a suitable standard or type appropriate to them. Care leavers need financial support when starting out and continuing guidance to prevent getting into arrears.

Number of care leavers

At the end of September 2015 we had a total of 589 care leavers including:

Number	Category of care leaver	Definition
172	Eligible children	Young people, aged 16 or 17, who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks and are currently looked after
13	Relevant children	Young people, aged 16 or 17 who are no longer looked after, who were looked after for 13 weeks or more including at least one day when they were 16 or 17
404	Former relevant children	Young people aged 18–25 years who have been either eligible children or relevant children

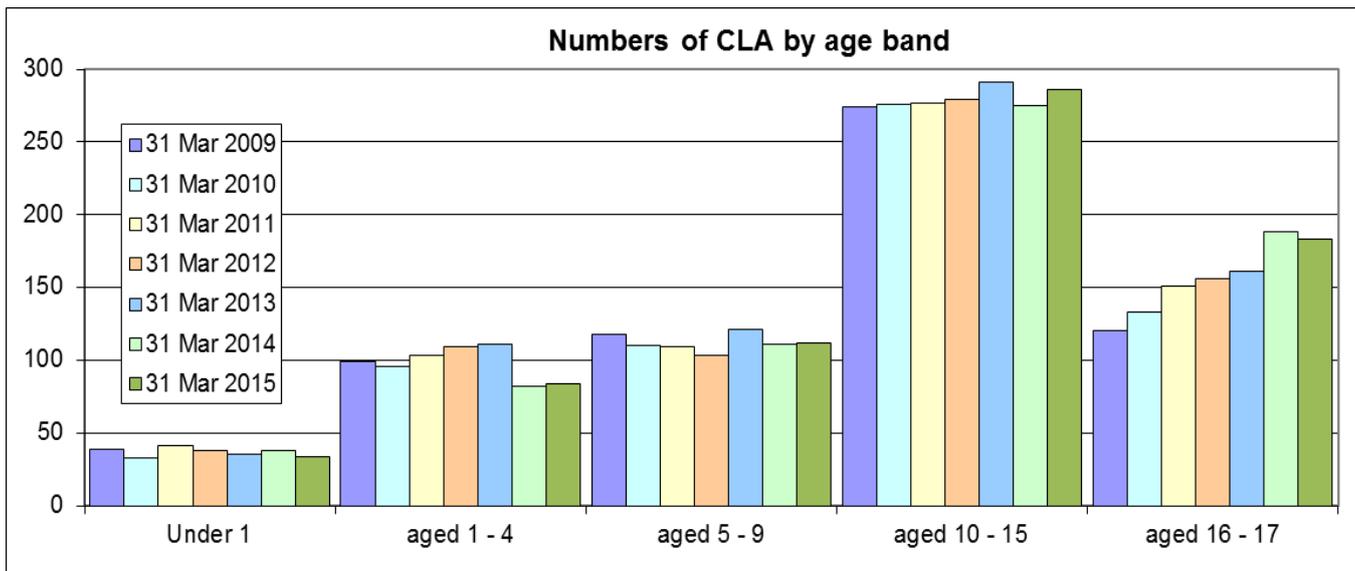
Analysis

Number and profile of our children in care

See children in care population analysis for more detail. <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/policies-plans-strategies/plans-and-policy-for-children-in-or-leaving-care>

Number – The number of Bristol children in care has remained reasonably static for the last five years at around 690.

Age – We have increasing numbers of young people in care aged 16-17 (from 120 in 2009 to 183 in 2015). Otherwise the proportions of children in other age groups have not changed significantly.



Legal status – 59% of Bristol’s CiC are subject to a full or interim Care Order and 40% are voluntarily accommodated under s.20 Children Act 1989 (both figures are similar to national averages).

Gender – The ratio of girls to boys among Bristol CiC is 50% each (compared to 45% girls and 55% boys nationally).

Ethnicity and religion – White British and Mixed Race children are over represented among Bristol children in care. There are small, but increasing, numbers of Muslim children in care in Bristol as well as children with Eastern European and Somali heritage.

Special educational needs (SEN) – 65% of Bristol CiC have SEN compared to 18% of the general Bristol pupil population.

Sibling groups – In 2013-14 there were 27 sibling groups who entered care. Where social workers requested that siblings were placed together this was achieved for all but one family that year.

Analysis

Outcomes

Placement stability (short term) – This is measured by how many children in care have three or more placements in the space of a year. We have reduced this to 8% (our target is ‘below 10%’). This compares favourably to national averages and statistical neighbours.

Placement stability (long term) – This is measured by how many of those children in care who have been looked after for more than 2.5 years have stayed in the same placement for at least two years, or been placed for adoption. Bristol has raised this percentage from 69% in 2010 to 72% in 2015 (the target is ‘above 70%’). This compares favourably to rates for England and statistical neighbours.

Distance from home – During the year to 31st March 2015, we placed 56% in the Bristol area, 27% out of the local authority area but within 20 miles and 13% (85 children) more than 20 miles away. The figures are broadly in line with those of 2014.

Gender		Distance from Bristol		Placement type	
Girls	35	20-50 miles	41	In-house foster care	27
				IFA	27
				Children’s home	14
Boys	50	50-100 miles	23	Residential school	3
				Parent & child unit	2
		Over 100 miles	21	Placed for adoption	3
				Other	1

Permanence – in 2013-14 49 children exited care to adoption and 48 left to live with parents or connected people with a Special Guardianship Order.

Education – The education attainment of Bristol children in care is similar to comparable authorities. However the gap in attainment with their local peers remains too great. Average school attendance of Bristol CiC has improved (from 85% in 2011-12 to 96% in 2013-14). However 6.9% of children in care had over 15% absence, compared to the city average of 4.2% for children who are not in care.

Care leavers in education, employment or training – At March 2015, 40% of our care leavers were in employment, training or employment and 60% were NEET (not in employment, education or training). Of those who were NEET, 27% was due to illness or disability and 8% due to pregnancy or parenthood.

Care leavers in suitable accommodation – 76% of our care leavers were in accommodation considered suitable. 9% were in unsuitable accommodation (6% in custody, 2% had no fixed abode and 1% for another reason) and we were not in touch with 14% and did not know about their accommodation.

Costs and funding

Expenditure 2014-15

The expenditure set out below is for direct placement spend (including direct staffing costs and corporate overheads for in-house services). Commissioning and contract management costs are not included.

Placement Type	Expenditure 2014-15
In-house foster service (SGOs & residence orders)	2,478,930
In-house foster service (looked after children and Staying Put)	6,156,780
Independent fostering agencies	7,731,610
In-house post-16 supported accommodation	159,420
Out of authority children's homes (social care element)	3,122,720
Parent & child placements (residential & foster care)	647,690
Secure units	152,510
In-house children's homes	3,549,874
External post-16 supported accommodation (high support)	554,260
Total	24,533,794

Average cost of placements

The average cost of different placement types have been calculated by taking placement spend and dividing by the number of placements. These costs exclude council overheads such as the cost of premises, IT, senior management and internal support services (e.g. human resources, finance, legal and procurement support) and commissioning costs. The exclusion of overheads does not enable a direct comparison between the cost of in-house and external placements. However, when we do estimate the cost of staffing and overheads, the in-house services are relatively good value compared with external provision.

Placement Type	average weekly unit cost as @ July 2015 (excluding LA overheads)
In-house foster service (SGOs & residence orders) – payments to carers	174
In-house foster service (looked after children and Staying Put) – payments to carers	280
Independent fostering agencies – whole cost	761
In-house post-16 supported accommodation – payments to hosts	100
Out of authority children's homes – whole cost to social care	2,661
Parent & child placements (residential & foster care) – whole cost	2,397
In-house children's homes – whole cost ¹¹	2,550
External post-16 supported accommodation (high support) – whole cost	1,128

¹¹ This is the forecasted annual direct cost of running the homes (including costs such as staffing, management, food and maintenance of the home).

Outcomes for children in care

These are the outcomes we seek to achieve for our children in care and how they will be measured.

Universal outcomes for all children	Strategic outcomes for children in care (CiC)	Proposed placement/provider outcomes measures
Safe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation I am safe from accidental injury and death I am safe from bullying, cyber-bullying and discrimination I am safe from crime and anti-social behaviour I have a safe and stable home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CiC and care leavers have a safe stable home CiC feel safe and free from discrimination and bullying CiC feel safe and secure in their home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation Percentage of placements disrupted Number of children missing from care and number of episodes Number of children absent from placement and number of episodes Percentage children reporting they feel safer than 6 months ago
Healthy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have good general health I have good physical health I have good emotional health I have good speech, language & communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CiC have good emotional and physical health Girls in care do not have babies CiC do not smoke CiC do not abuse alcohol or drugs The health needs of CiC are identified and effectively addressed No increase in obesity for CiC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of children whose SDQ scores have improved Percentage CYP identified health needs are being addressed appropriately
Socially engaged <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have access to a range of social and recreational activities I feel listened to and taken seriously by friends, family and the community I am involved in decision-making that will affect my future I act responsibly towards friends, family and the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offending and anti-social behaviour by CiC reduces CiC engage in a range of social and recreational activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % children whose individual care plan outcomes have been achieved
Successful learner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have access to suitable education and training opportunities I attend, engage & enjoy education and training opportunities I will achieve my full potential I am prepared for further education, employment or training opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CiC are in suitable education or training The educational attainment of CiC improves The gap between the attainment of CiC and other children narrows % care leavers aged 19 in education, employment or training increases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of care leavers aged 19 in education, employment or training Percentage children making expected level of progress at school
Parents and carers who love and care for me <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have informed and considerate parents and carers Parents and carers who support me with using technology safely Parents and carers who can cope with the stresses of everyday life Parents and carers who are economically active and independent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CiC care feel supported and cared for CiC have someone they can talk to about things that upset them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation of children in LAC reviews Percentage children in care who say they have someone to talk to about things that upset them

Placements

Placement finding principles

When we are identifying the best match for a child in care we aim to follow these principles where possible and in the best interests of the child:

- Place with a relative, friend or other person connected with the child

- Place with a family unless a residential setting better suits the child

- Make local placements in the Bristol local authority area

- Make sure all children are safe and feel safe

- Promote education and minimise disruption to schooling or training

- Place siblings together

- Offer children a choice of placement and take their wishes into account

- Take into account the wishes of the child's family

- Have regard to the child's language, culture, ethnicity and faith

- Ability of the placement to meet the specific needs of each child

- Commission placements that deliver the best value for money

Overview of current placements, commissioning arrangements and recommendations

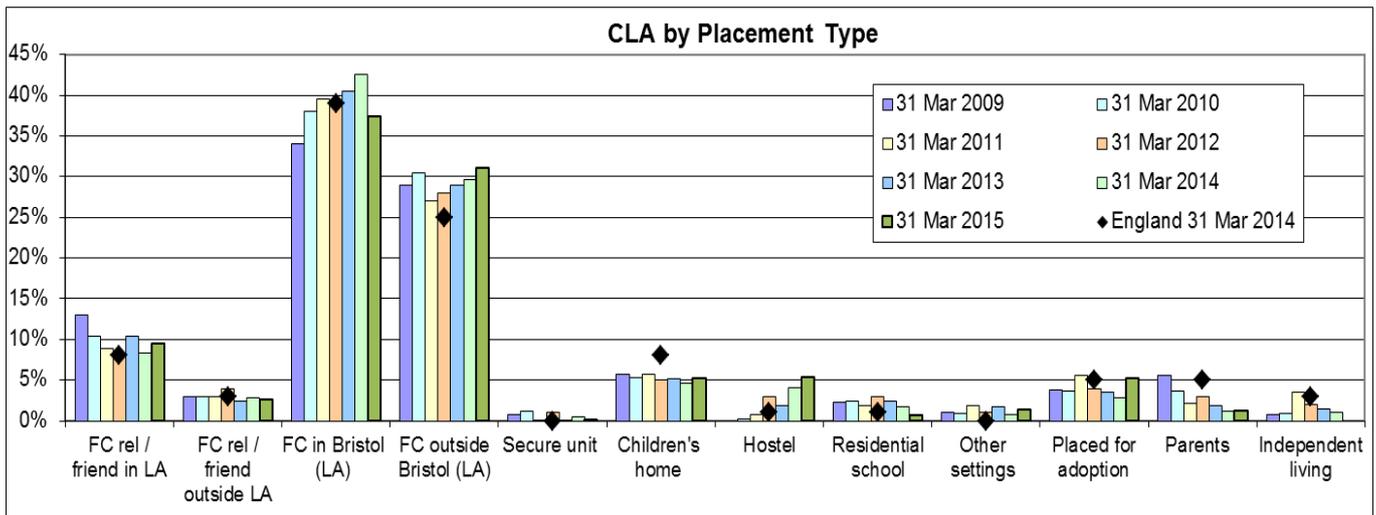
	Who is it for?	Current numbers (at March 2015)	Current commissioning arrangements	Future commissioning recommendations
Foster care	Foster care is the placement of choice for all children in care aged 0-17 yrs. Care leavers are often able to stay with their foster carers after turning 18.	In-House <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 270 carers 458 placements (430 children, 28 staying put) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal service level agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage service to increase capacity
		Independent Foster Agencies 36 providers on sub-regional framework 195 placements with 26 IFAs & 4 LAs (160 children, 35 "staying put")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-regional IFA framework (expires March 2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retender sub-regional framework to start April 2017.
Residential children's homes	Children's homes are used for young people, usually teenagers, whose needs make foster care unsuitable. Children in care with high levels of SEN may be placed in residential special schools if local placements and/or schools cannot be identified. These schools often provide integrated therapy and may be joint funded.	In-House 5 homes x 5 beds 20 children placed 8 children placed at Notton House local authority maintained residential school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal service level agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain existing in-house children's homes. Encourage development of a specialist home in Bristol for young people with more challenging behaviour
		Independent children's homes 30 homes on sub-regional framework 21 placements in 13 homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-regional framework (to be replaced by national framework Apr 16) Individual placements purchased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Award new national framework (to run from April 2016).
Residential schools	Children in care with high levels of SEN may be placed in residential special schools if local placements and/or schools cannot be identified. These schools often provide integrated therapy and may be joint funded by social care, education & health.	Maintained residential school Notton House specialist SEMH school in Wiltshire – 8 CiC placed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School place funding plus SEN top-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage IFAs to offer placements linked to the school by offering weekend and holiday placements for school pupils
		Independent residential schools 44 schools on framework (7 in southwest region) 8 CiC placed in 3 schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-regional framework Individual placements purchased (all places jointly funded by SEN and some also funded by CCG) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to purchase placements from sub-regional framework
Post-16 homelessness prevention supported accommodation	Young people with low, medium or high support needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16-17 yr olds in care Care leavers 16-21 yr olds at risk of homelessness 	Independent providers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High support accommodation Medium support accommodation Low support dispersed accommodation Young parents accommodation & floating support Young people's floating support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Block contracts Contracts funded and managed by Housing Solutions contracts & policy team Some additional funding provided from CiC placements budgets to contribute to cost of 4 assessment places and additional support for care leavers in low support accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New commissioning strategy to be developed in 2016 jointly by Housing Solutions and Children's to include housing and support for care leavers and other vulnerable young people
Other post-16 supported accommodation	Young people with medium to high support needs including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16-17 yr olds in care Care leavers 16-21 yr olds at risk of homelessness 	In-House 20 units supported accommodation (Youth Projects) 18 supported lodgings hosts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal service level agreements Jointly funded from Housing Solutions and children in care placements budgets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above
		Independent Providers 3 providers on Bristol external supported accommodation (ESA) framework 4 units (pilot block contract) 11 young people placed with 6 providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framework agreement expires Sep 16 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above
Parent + child assessment places	Usually young parents, sometimes themselves children in care, who need extra support to care for their child(ren) and help to develop parenting skills as well as assessing their ability to safely care for their child.	Foster care 5 placements with 5 IFAs Residential assessment placements 4 placements with 2 providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included on IFA framework (expires March 2017) Individual placements purchased from residential assessment units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review supported accommodation for young parents jointly with Housing Solutions Develop a market position statement detailing need for local foster and residential placements Purchase foster placements from new sub-regional IFA framework

Placements – overview

Current arrangements

Early intervention and prevention – We aim to continue to contain growth in the child in care population by investing in successful prevention and early intervention.

Mixed market - We commission placements from a mixed market of providers including in-house fostering and residential services as well as a range of independent foster agencies, children’s homes and residential schools.



Sub-regional working - We work effectively with commissioners in other local authorities in the sub-region and have sub-regional framework agreements for Independent Foster Agencies (IFAs), children’s homes and non-maintained specialist residential schools.

Kinship care - Rising numbers of children in care are either placed with kinship carers who are approved as foster carers, or leave care to live with family members or connected people under private law orders such as Special Guardianship Orders or Residence orders (now known as Child Arrangement orders).

Challenges

Placement stability - Stable placements are crucial for children in care. Psychological, social and academic outcomes are worse for children with many placements. Moving placements disrupts relationships and attachments and is costly for the local authority. Bristol has done better than national average in terms of the percentage of children whose first placement becomes their long-term placement. Nonetheless, there is still room to improve. Key to making stable placements is identifying the right placement for each child. This requires having a range of suitable placement options and minimising the use of short term bridging placements. Ideally, it involves presenting each child and young person with options so that children and their families, where appropriate, can be involved in making placement decisions.

Ofsted judgments - The new Ofsted children’s home inspection framework has led to an increase in inadequate judgements and some evidence of risk aversion from the market. This has reduced the placement availability for Bristol’s children. We aim to place in ‘good’ provision and undertake a rigorous series of assessments and checks when a placement provider gets an inadequate judgment. When a local provider has been judged inadequate by Ofsted this has had a significant impact on the availability of suitable local placements in independent homes.

Placements – overview

Trends and future demand

Regional trends - Southwest local authorities have identified an increase in the numbers of young people in care with complex and challenging needs e.g. substance misuse and/or sexual exploitation and/or with behaviour management or mental health issues. There is a lack of choice and availability of high quality residential children's homes places able to care for these young people. Local authorities are also struggling to find emergency accommodation to meet urgent needs while plans are made to return children home or to longer term placements.

Out of area placements - We have 14 children in out of area residential placements. Where possible, we aim to bring these children closer to Bristol and seek linked foster placements, supported accommodation or supported lodgings that can offer progression for these children.

Unaccompanied asylum seekers - There has been a recent increase, since July 2015, in unaccompanied asylum seeking children coming into care in Bristol (all male aged 14-16 years, the majority from Afghanistan with others from Albania, Syria and Kurdish areas). We anticipate an increase, of possibly around 50 additional asylum seeking, refugee and other children and young people migrating to the UK or being dispersed from other UK areas. We are seeking carers who are able or specifically interested in caring for these children and young people.

16-17 year old new entrants to care – We have high numbers of 16-17 year olds entering care (c.50 each year). We will explore the options for reducing this number, including how to better support young people to live safely with their families. Nonetheless, we anticipate continued demand for placements for these young people.

Young offenders - Increasing demand for overnight accommodation for young people, up to age 17 years who have been arrested and are awaiting a court hearing as well as for young offenders released from custody.

Staying put – Increasing numbers of care leavers are continuing to live with their foster carers.

How we will buy

Mixed market and frameworks - We will continue to commission places from a mixed market of in-house and independent providers. Independent placements will be purchased from the relevant provider frameworks wherever possible. We will avoid any spot purchases off framework in all but exceptional cases.

Overview - what do we need from providers?

- More homes for late entrants to care aged 16-17 years including supported lodgings type arrangements and accommodation able to meet the needs of those who are a risk to others
- More placements able to keep siblings together
- More local, specialist placements able to meet the needs of children and young people with mental health difficulties and/or ASD and/or risky behaviour that makes them vulnerable to others (including sexually harmful behaviour, child sexual exploitation, running away, self-injurious behaviour and offending, particularly violent or gang-related offences)
- More long term fostering provision
- Placements for disabled children and unaccompanied asylum seekers / migrants

Placements – foster care

Current arrangements

Placement of choice - Bristol places over 80% of our children in care with local foster carers.

In-house foster service - We have a successful in-house foster service providing suitable placements for most Bristol children. It has on average 270 carers offering approximately 460 places. It provides very good value for money, with unit costs significantly lower than independent foster agencies. Our policy has been to send appropriate referrals to the in-house service before circulating to the wider market. We have encouraged the service to increase its capacity, but this has slowed of late with recruitment unable to keep pace with the numbers leaving fostering. We have an internal service level agreement with the foster service and quarterly performance reviews involving the provider service and commissioners.

IFA framework - In April 2013 we entered into a sub-regional framework agreement with independent foster agencies (IFAs), which expires in March 2017. The framework increased the number of IFAs available to us from 24 to 36 and has contributed to containing costs on foster placements.

Treatment foster care Oregon – This is for primary school aged children with the most challenging behaviours. The scheme uses a positive behaviour, team around the child approach.

Challenges and future demand

Foster care recruitment - Local foster agencies, both in-house and independent, are finding it difficult to recruit foster carers in and around Bristol.

Meeting needs of kinship carers - There are rising numbers of kinship foster carers, who often have significant and different support needs to other foster carers.

Homes for challenging young people and offenders - It is particularly hard to find local foster carers for young people with more challenging behaviour and/or young people who are involved in gang-related activity and we are finding it hard to identify skilled carers for these young people.

Impact of staying put – Increasing numbers of young people are remaining with their foster carers after they turn 18. This is really positive for care leavers, but can mean that those carers are not available to provide placements for children in care.

How we will buy

- Foster care will continue to be the placement choice for nearly all Bristol children in care.
- The sub-regional IFA framework will be re-tendered in 2016, operating from April 2017. We will continue to use the sub-regional framework to procure all IFA placements.

Placements – foster care

Foster care - what do we need from providers?

We will continue to encourage our in-house foster service to increase its capacity with a focus on providing placements for the following children and young people:

- Children aged 10 and under
- Sibling groups – including foster carers caring for split sibling groups buddying up
- Disabled children
- Older teenagers
- Parent and child assessment placements (see below)
- Unaccompanied refugee and asylum seeking young people

We expect an increase in demand for specialist independent foster placements able to provide stable homes for the following children and young people:

- Those with more complex needs, including mental health difficulties, challenging and/or self-injurious behaviour, children who present a risk to others
- Young people, mostly boys aged 14-17 years, with a history of offending and/or anti-social behaviour and/or gang affiliation
- Short breaks or shared care for disabled children (who may have health care needs and/or challenging behaviours) to include developing mutually supportive relationships with birth families
- Specialist parent and child assessment placements (see below)
- Step-down places for about three young people aged 14-16 per year who are moving on from residential care, to include a package of graduated support
- Placements linked to Notton House school, our local-authority maintained residential specialist school in Wiltshire for learners with additional social, emotional and health needs. Carers would need to work in partnership with the school and offer weekend and holiday places or full-time places in the Wiltshire area.

Placements – residential

Current arrangements

Rising numbers - We aim for most children and young people to live in a family setting and only place in a children's home or residential school where this is the best option to meet their needs. The number of children in residential settings remained at around 45 for a number of years (with roughly 50% in our in-house children's homes). However, in 2015 there has been a sharp increase in residential placements.

In-house children's homes – This service is very responsive, working closely with commissioners to make appropriate placements and the stability of placements is good taking into account the needs of the young people placed. In 2013, we closed a five bed home for 11-14 year olds with the intention that those children would live in specialist foster placements.

Sub-regional residential framework - We commission independent residential placements from a sub-regional framework of providers established in April 2016. These are generally the most expensive placements, often catering for young people with higher levels of need.

Sub-regional framework of independent residential schools - We use this to purchase placements for some children in care with high levels of SEN in residential special schools if local placements and/or schools cannot be identified. These schools often provide integrated therapy and may be joint funded by social care, education and health.

Challenges and future demand

Insufficient specialist local residential placements – This has resulted in Bristol needing to place some of the most vulnerable children out of area. We seek to place all children locally unless they are at risk in this area.

Changing profile – We are placing more young children (aged 9-12 years) in residential settings and the main presenting SEN need has shifted from ASD to SEMH (social, emotional and mental health needs).

How we will buy

- A new national contract and sub-regional residential framework was established in April 2016 replacing the old sub-regional framework. The new framework will open every six months for new providers to apply to join. We will use this framework to procure out of authority children's home placements and will seek local placements wherever possible.
- We will continue to place children in care with significant SEMH needs at our maintained residential school (Notton House) and will purchase other places at specialist residential school places from providers on the sub-regional framework.
- In addition, we seek to commission a local specialist children's home able to meet the needs of children who have experienced complex trauma and/or with challenging behaviour.

Residential - what do we need from providers?

- A new children's home in the Bristol area (local authority-run or independent) for children aged 13-17 (but able to care for younger children and 18 year olds) with challenging behaviour related to SEMH and/or ASD.
- Other local, therapeutic residential provision for young people (aged 11-18 years) with severe learning difficulties as well as either mental health needs or ASD.

Placements – post-16

Current arrangements

Range of options - Most young people leave care by “staying put” with their foster carer, moving into supported accommodation arranged through the council’s housing support register, moving in to their own tenancy or by going to university. Some return to live with their families.

Staying put - We have a duty to give young people the option to stay with their foster carers beyond the age of 18 years where foster carers agree. This is positive for care leavers, but can decrease the availability of foster carers for children in care.

Housing Solutions supported accommodation - The council’s Housing Solutions service commissions supported accommodation and floating support services which are accessed via a central register known as the Housing Support Register (HSR). They include some accommodation and support exclusively for young people aged 16-21 years (and sometimes up to age 25). These services are not the subject of this Sufficiency Plan but they are included in the range of accommodation available to 16-17 children in care and care leavers.

Housing Solutions accommodation for young people aged 16-21

- 76 units of high support accommodation (including 3 assessment places) at St George’s House and the Foyer (provided by 1625 Independent People) and 4 crash pads
- 254 units of low support dispersed accommodation (provided by 1625 Independent People and Knightstone Housing Association). 1625 receive additional funding to provide enhanced support to care leavers.
- 36 units of supported accommodation for young parents plus floating support for young parents (provided by Elim Housing Association with Places for People)
- A floating support service for young people (provided by 1625 Independent People)
- 20 units of council-run supported accommodation (Youth Projects) mainly used by care leavers
- A council-run supported lodgings scheme with funding for up to 25 hosts (17 hosts currently)

External supported accommodation - We have a two-year framework agreement for external supported accommodation for young people with higher support needs. It was awarded in September 2014, with three providers at a comparatively high cost.

High support pilot - We have a block contract for five units of supported accommodation (provided under a pilot with 1625 Independent People) aimed at offering intensive, flexible support to young people with needs that cannot be met through the usual Housing Solutions supported accommodation.

Placements – post 16

Challenges and future demand

Changing demand – While the numbers of 16-17 year olds presenting as homelessness has not changed in recent years, the number of 16-17 year olds entering care is increasing.

Housing supply - Providers are finding it difficult to buy, rent or lease self-contained units in Bristol and consequently we find it hard to secure supported accommodation for young people whose needs require that they don't live with other people (because of their own vulnerability or the risk they pose to others).

Delays moving on - Young people are remaining longer than necessary in costly provision (including children's homes and Youth Projects) because of delays finding suitable accommodation for them to move to. This effectively blocks places needed for other young people. The delay moving on is largely due to the shortage of affordable housing in Bristol, but could be mitigated by timelier move on planning.

Disabled young people - We need some semi-independent supported accommodation that disabled young people can move into aged 16-17 and stay in as adults, with tapering levels of support. These young people will often have ASD and/or additional social, emotional and mental health needs. This is needed for approximately five young people each year.

How we will buy

- We intend to re-tender the external supported accommodation framework as an “open” framework that allows new providers to apply to join at any time. This will be for individual purchases or block contract purchases of self-contained supported accommodation for young people with higher support needs.
- We are reviewing and re-commissioning all services within the young people's housing pathway which will include accommodation for care leavers, and intend to consult on a draft plan in summer 2016.

Post-16 homes - What do we need from providers?

- Good quality “external supported accommodation”, i.e. self-contained supported or other supported accommodation for 16-17 year olds with higher support needs.
- Supported accommodation suitable for a small number of disabled young people (often with ASD and/or mental health needs) to move into aged 16-17 and stay in as adults with tapering levels of support.
- In-house service to increase the number of supported lodgings hosts.

Placements – parent and child assessment

Current arrangements

Parent and child places - We commission a small number of placements for parents to live together with their children. These placements are for parents who need extra support to care for their children, giving parents help to develop their parenting skills whilst assessing their ability to safely care for their child. Residential placements generally include the assessment, whereas the council usually carries out the assessment of parents living in parent and child foster placements.

Profile of parents - The parents are often young; many are themselves children in care or care leavers. Placements are made because of concerns about the parents' ability to care for their babies physically and/or emotionally and to respond appropriately to their babies' needs. Concerns include risk of neglect, chaotic lifestyle, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues and learning disabilities.

Current provision – In the last two years we have made placements with two residential parent and child assessment units and one specialist drug and alcohol unit (all three over 40 miles from Bristol). We have also placed into parent and child assessments regularly with ten IFAs.

Challenges and future demand

Care proceedings - Some placements are made as the result of a court order in the context of care proceedings or are commissioned as part of the pre-proceedings process.

Lack of local residential units - Current residential parent and child assessment units are outside of the Bristol area. It would be better to be able to place parents locally, to enable them to maintain existing social and support networks.

Specialist foster care - There is a need for more local foster carers offering parent and child places. We will encourage the in-house foster service to develop a scheme to include specialist carers.

Move on from assessment places - We need places for parents and children moving on from residential parent and child assessment places, to enable them to move closer to their homes and networks and to limit the spend on high-cost assessment placements.

How we will buy

- We will make more use of the young parents Housing Solutions supported accommodation for assessment places.
- We will purchase specialist parent and child foster placements from the sub-regional IFA framework (to be retendered in 2016-17).
- We will tender an open framework for parent and child assessment residential assessment placements (possibly sub-regional).

Parent & child assessments - what do we need from providers?

- IFAs to offer specialist parent and child foster care in Bristol
- More supported accommodation for parents and children moving on from their assessment places (this will be considered in the review and recommissioning of Housing Solutions accommodation in 2016)
- A local parent and child residential assessment unit in Bristol

Placements – disabled children

Current arrangements

Short breaks commissioning plan - The council's 2014 short breaks commissioning plan sets out how the council commissions short breaks.¹² This sufficiency plan is concerned with ensuring there are sufficient local placements for disabled children – both children who are in care full-time and those who live with their families but need “shared care” (where they are looked after by the local authority for a significant number of nights per year).

“One Service, One Process” - This includes a pooled budget agreement between health, social care and education to commission additional resources for children with complex needs and learning disabilities. These arrangements have meant we have supported families to care for their children and avoided costly out of authority placements.

Challenges and future demand

Emergency care - Our in-house residential short breaks units are sometimes being used to provide full-time care for disabled children in emergencies, where a parent is no longer able to care for their child, either short or longer term. This is not the intended purpose of the units and we seek to use the beds exclusively for short breaks.

Family-based care - We need more carers able to provide family-based care for children with significant learning disabilities, ASD, health needs and/or challenging behaviour. This includes a need for more carers in our in-house service to provide short breaks as well as more IFA carers.

How we will buy

- See short breaks commissioning plan – link below.
- We will continue to commission places from a mixed market of in-house and independent providers. Independent placements will be purchased from the relevant provider frameworks wherever possible. We will avoid any spot purchases off framework in all but exceptional cases.

Disabled children - what do we need from providers?

- More foster carers (in-house and IFA) with specialist skills to care for disabled children e.g. carers with nursing training and experience.
- Encourage foster agencies to recruit disabled carers.
- IFA carers to provide short breaks and/or shared care. The shared care needed includes emergency placements as well as longer-term regular care for between 75 and 200 nights per year and would involve developing a mutually supportive relationship with the child's birth family.
- We also seek other residential options for shared care and emergency placements for disabled children.

¹² <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/children-and-young-people/short-breaks-disabled-children>

Delivering change – what we will do

1. To make sure we have sufficient placements

1.1 Analysis and communication

- Information and Analysis team to produce and publish an annual children in care analysis
- Produce and publish an annual market position statement for all placement types and follow with an annual market engagement event.

1.2 Local foster placements

- Encourage in-house and independent foster agencies to increase their capacity to care for teenagers, sibling groups, disabled children and children with complex behaviours.
- Retender the sub-regional Independent Foster Agency framework agreement.
- Continue with regional and local performance monitoring and market development discussions.
- In relation to our in-house foster service, we will use performance reviews to make sure there are enough good quality foster placements for children by recruiting, retaining and commissioning sufficient foster carers to offer children placement choice and keep them placed locally. To achieve this, the in-house fostering service has committed to:
 - Implement a fostering recruitment campaign to address the need for foster carers for older children and sibling groups
 - Introduce a revised payment and fee structure
 - Actively encourage caring for children with complex needs
- Enable growth in in-house fostering service by increasing its budget in line with increases in the number of placements and regularly review.

1.3 Local residential placements

- Liaise with other regional commissioners to identify gaps in provision and encourage providers on the residential framework to establish local provision for disabled children and children with more challenging behaviours and/or mental health needs.
- Commission a new local children's home for those with the most complex needs (post-trauma including self-harm).

1.4 Post-16 accommodation and support

- Increase the availability of suitable provision for vulnerable 16-17 year olds and 18-25 year old care leavers by developing a detailed commissioning plan for post-16 accommodation and support for vulnerable young people. This plan is being developed jointly by commissioners in children's services and housing solutions and includes improved joint working arrangements to meet the housing needs of vulnerable young people including care leavers. We will be consulting on this draft commissioning plan in the summer of 2016. The plan will consider:
 - Recommissioning current housing solutions accommodation and support for young people (including floating support and provision for young parents)
 - Recruiting more in-house supported lodgings carers
 - Longer-term options for the supported accommodation pilot with 1625 Independent People and consider longer term options for this specialist service
 - Retendering the framework for external supported accommodation as an open framework
 - The need for supported accommodation and/or dual registered residential care for care leavers with disabilities (learning disabilities and/or mental health issues) to move into age 16/17 and remain post-18.

1.5 Parent and child assessment placements

- The in-house foster service will develop an in-house parent and child assessment scheme.
- Produce a market position statement detailing previous use and estimated future demand for these placements (both fostering and residential) – sub-regional / regional if possible.
- Evaluate the potential benefits of a sub-regional or local framework agreement and explore the demand at a sub-regional level for more local parent and child residential provision.
- Use the IFA framework tender 2017 to clearly signal to IFAs our requirements for parent and child foster placements.

1.6 Placements for disabled children

- Build on the short breaks commissioning plan by focusing on those families who need “shared care” or short-term respite, to include:
 - developing a common understanding of “shared care” to identify when an arrangement amounts to shared care, the implications and arrangements for funding the care
 - Assess the needs for shared care, (including emergency placements) and explore what models of care work (e.g. for children with ASD).
 - Investigate how best to develop good mutually supportive relationships between carers and families. Develop the market able to deliver the shared care needed.
 - Further develop proposals for respite units at specialist school for the most challenging pupils (including the Keep at Kingsweston School).
- See actions above for local foster placements as an alternative to residential, as well as the points above about analysing and encouraging closer residential care provision that enables children to stay at their local special school and close to family/home community.

2. To improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers

2.1 Achieving permanency

- Establish a permanency panel or other review arrangements to audit the quality of placements and challenge drift.
- Ensure timely and supported exit from care to permanent arrangements including return to family.
- Reduce repeat entries to care through implementation of Signs of Safety and good family based support.
- Implement arrangements in for long-term (permanent) foster care set out in the 2015 amendment to the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.

2.2 Improve outcomes for children and young people in connected care placements

- Identify best practice in other local authorities and ask our fostering service to review support arrangements for connected carers to ensure we are enabling as many children as possible to live with family members and connected carers.

2.3 Improve placement stability

- Do not accept notice to terminate a placement without a placement stability meeting. Use these meetings to prevent placement breakdown and make sure the right support is in place.
- Use the new placements panel to support timely care planning, prevent drift and utilise resources creatively to meet children’s needs and support them to exit care where it is safe and appropriate.
- Research best practice and ask foster carers, children and others what works with the aim of continuing to improve placement stability.

2.4 Improve emotional well-being of children in care and care leavers

- Ensure emotional health needs are identified in health needs assessments.

- Ensure timely completion of strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) and make sure that social workers consider whether to refer to Thinking Allowed any child with a score of 17 or more. Monitor completion of SDQs in placement provider performance reviews.
- Monitor the effectiveness and accessibility of new post-16 adult mental health services for children in care and care leavers as well as the pilot Partnership Outreach Team (which aims to help young people in mental health crisis and support them to avoid hospital stays). Influence future development of services based on this monitoring.

2.5 Improve participation

- Involve young people in performance management of placement providers.
- Encourage young people living in children's homes to participate in the Children in Care Council.
- Enable young people in out of area placements to participate in the Children in Care Council and/or find other ways for them to get involved and give their feedback.

2.6 Make sure children and young people are safe and feel safe

- Record data on how safe children feel as well as numbers who go missing and monitor this by provider. Use this data in the performance management of placement providers and make sure providers take action to continually improve safeguarding and risk management.
- Develop a learning culture among in-house children's homes staff and foster carers, promoting reflective practice and peer support by providing them with quality learning and reflection support. This training and support, where relevant, to focus on caring for children at risk of child sexual exploitation, street conflict, radicalisation, offending and drug use and to be informed by intelligence accumulated from return interviews of children who go missing. Require all providers to evidence how they are embedding reflective practice and peer support.
- Offer briefings on Signs of Safety for all independent placement providers and make sure Signs of Safety is embedded within our practice in-house.
- Monitor and report annually on our use of out of authority placements, developing an action plan to ensure children placed out of authority receive a high quality service.

2.7 Prepare young people for independence

- Implement the council's "Getting to Good" Children's Services Improvement Plan (February 2015) which contains a number of actions and targets to improve outcomes for care leavers including improving practice relating to keeping in touch, pathway planning, and better support to access into education, employment and training.
- Have high aspirations for our care leavers and set targets for continual development.
- Collect data on care leavers who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) and monitor by provider in our contract management.
- Review Staying Put arrangements to make sure staying put is planned for and agreed as part of the young person's pathway plan, that fees are reviewed and arrangements continue to be focused on outcomes and accountable; helping young people develop the skills needed for independence and delivering value for money.
- Make sure foster carers in the in-house fostering service and independent foster agencies are contributing fully to young people's Pathway Plans and the development of independence skills. We will know this when we audit Pathway Plans and can see the 'team' around the child contributing to the young person's successful development
- Work with ASDAN to use their accredited training modules to help children in care and care leavers to develop their independence skills. These will include modules in areas such as life skills, managing money, career planning. ASDAN will train a group of carers, personal assistants, youth workers and the Hope Virtual School personnel to be able to undertake the work with children and young people.

2.8 Improve education outcomes

- We will not move children or change their school, particularly in years 10 and 11, unless in exceptional circumstances.
- Choose 'good' schools for children local to their long term placements.
- Refuse to allow providers to take children out of school during term time.
- We will require carers to attend and/or contribute to Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings and evidence provision of homework support and out of school learning opportunities.

3. To achieve value for money

3.1 Maximise suitable placements into foster care

- Review every residential placement and consider suitability of step-down to a foster placement or other suitable move on placement. Where foster placement suitable in future, identify foster placement and plan package of graduated support.
- Commission step down placements to IFAs (from new framework). Consider payments by results contract. Encourage foster agencies to link with children's homes. We estimate about three young people per year, likely to be in middle teenage years, could step down.

3.2 Reduce average unit cost for children in foster care

- Prefer in-house placements where there is a good match.
- Provide clear information through tender, performance monitoring, and production of annual market position statement based on our analysis of children in care and care leaver population about the types of placement we require from the independent and in-house providers.
- Quarterly performance meetings with the in-house service to focus on numbers of carers and placements to ensure they are increasing in line with demand.
- Engender competition and contain costs by retendering the sub-regional residential framework.

3.3 Reduce average unit cost for children in residential care

- Engender competition and contain costs by retendering the sub-regional residential framework.

3.4 Reduce average unit cost for parent and child assessment placements

- See 1.5 above.

3.5 Enable timely move on to suitable post-16 options

- Make sure there is good, early pathway planning for all young people in care including developing plans for accommodation.
- Address this issue in the commissioning plan and protocol for meeting the housing needs of vulnerable young people including care leavers (see above).

3.6 Make sure all placements deliver value for money (quality, outcomes and price)

- We will purchase independent provision from framework agreements wherever possible, and explore the potential efficiencies and savings that may be achieved by moving framework agreements onto a dynamic purchasing system. Continue value for money reviews for all high cost independent placements, starting with out of authority residential placements
- Embed 'contract management' arrangements with in-house fostering service and residential service, to include quarterly performance review meetings.