



Children Looked After Topic Review: Action Plan Update

RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 The report presents the October 2007 position on the action plan which was approved in January 2007. The Commission is asked to note the progress that has been made.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2.1 BACKGROUND

The Children and Young People's Commission undertook a detailed topic review of services for Children Looked After in July 2006. A report with recommendations was produced in November 2006. The Departmental response to this including a proposed action plan was approved by the Commission in January 2007

- 2.2 It was agreed that a progress report against this plan would be received by the Commission in November 2007. The action plan has been updated to show the progress that has been made against the recommendations which were approved by the Commission.

2.3 PROGRESS REPORT

The revised action plan showing the progress that has been made is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

- 2.4 Of the 34 recommendations 11 have been fully achieved. A further 9 have been achieved and are being monitored on an on-going basis to ensure the progress is sustained. There are 12 recommendations where progress has been made and where there is further work to complete.

One recommendation was not accepted (15) and this was agreed as appropriate by the Commission.

2.5 The 20 recommendations that have been achieved are as follows:

1.	Achieved	Monitored on an on-going basis
4	Achieved	Further progress dependent on 08/09 budget
5	Achieved	
7	Achieved	Monitored on an on-going basis
9	Achieved	Monitored on an on-going basis
11	Achieved	
14	Achieved	
16	Achieved	
17	Achieved	Monitored on an on-going basis
19	Achieved	Monitored on an on-going basis
20	Achieved	
21	Achieved	
22	Achieved	
25	Achieved	
26	Achieved	
27	Achieved	
28	Achieved	
29	Achieved	Monitored on an on-going basis
31	Achieved	Monitored on an on-going basis
33	Achieved	Monitored on an on-going basis

2.6 The recommendations where further work is to be completed are numbers 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 18, 23, 24, 30, 32 and 34. Details of the actions required are shown in the action plan at Appendix 1. Several of these are dependent on the Governments expected announcement on “Care Matters” and also on the budget settlement for 08-09 which is currently under consideration.

2.7 **PERFORMANCE AGAINST PAF INDICATORS FOR CLA**

The Corporate Parenting sub-commission receives a regular report on the Council’s performance against the Performance Assessment framework key indicators for children looked after.

2.8 In five of the seven relevant indicators we are currently performing at top band 5. One is band 4 and improving. Our only band 3 (satisfactory) indicator is B79 – *Children aged at least 10 and under 16 looked after in foster placements or placed for adoption*. The figure of 76.5% here is just short of band 4 performance and reflects the current age profile of our Looked After population.

2.9 Overall our performance in relation to Children in Care (CIC) is good and well above average for our comparator group of Authorities. Outcomes overall for Children in Care are below the average for all children and remain a challenge for all Councils.

For more information contact:
Background papers:
List of appendices:

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 A number of the actions will depend on the Government's expected announcement on Care Matters and the Councils overall budget position for 08/09.

Legal

- 2.1 None directly arising.

Personnel

- 3.1 None directly arising.

Equalities impact

- 4.1 Several actions have been accounted for within the relevant Equalities Impact Assessments. Services continue to develop and take account of cultural, racial, religious, disability and gender issues for this group of vulnerable children.

Corporate Priorities

- 5.1 Helping us to be Healthy and Independent.
- 6.1 Supporting everyone in learning and achieving.

APPENDIX 1 CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER – TOPIC REVIEW ACTION PLAN

OCTOBER 2007

	Recommendation	Current Position	Action	Who	When
1.	Managers and staff should accurately record all time spent working, including evenings and weekends, to enable decision and budget makers to have a true picture of the extend of the problem and allocate resources more accurately.	Achieved. It is a requirement that staff do record this in accordance with the European working time directive. Currently staff use either the TOIL record or the work life balance form.	Recording is standardised and monitored quarterly by Service Managers.	SM's	Jan 2007
2.	A twin approach is needed to minimise the time spend by social workers and family support workers on administration: making sure all the tasks that <i>can</i> be undertaken efficiently by administrative staff are undertaken by the; using computer software to link form filling and report writing to replicate information for Section 47 enquiries, care proceedings, looked after children reviews and adoption processes.	The Integrated Children's system and the Electronic Social Care Records project should achieve this by July 2008. The delay is due to complex software and IT supplier issues.	A Project Board is in place to deliver this requirement as part of the e-government initiative. A Principal Officer was appointed in August 2007 and meetings with the DCSF have taken place.	AD PO	July 2008
3.	Generally training budgets need to be protected in order to promote the professional development of staff; there needs to be sufficient staffing capacity to allow team members to be released to take up appropriate training opportunities.	A review of training and development requirements is underway under pinned by the Children's Workforce Development Council. Within current budget constraints relevant training is prioritised for staff including within post development activity.	Complete the review in line with CWDC recommendations. A local review of the Workforce Learning and Development function is also taking place. Ensure training activity is prioritised within existing budgets.	AD's HOS'	On Going.

	Recommendation	Current Position	Action	Who	When
4.	The budgets that allows the 'home growing' of qualified social workers, through the training of family support, community care and residential care workers need protecting – and ideally expanding.	The budget for traineeships has not been reduced in the 2007 – 08 budget. There is however no current capacity to increase this although it is expected that the growth in newly qualified workers projected for 2008 will come through.	No action proposed over and above current traineeship activity. Current vacancy levels are low with a good interest being shown in vacancies that are advertised. Budget pressures in 2008 / 9 will preclude additional investment.		
5.	There is a national need to raise the status of social workers in court proceedings, to have them accepted as professional experts, and achieve a concomitant reduction in the use of other experts. To initiate a campaign the Council should express these views in writing to the Secretary of State and Lord Chancellor, copies to lead members and directors for children and young people and the professional journals.	The recommendation was accepted.	Strong representation was made regarding this area in the Council's submission on the Care Matters consultation. The CYPD continues to use opportunities to recognise and raise the contribution that SW's make.	C&YP DMT	On going
6.	The Chief Executive, as chair of the Community Safety Partnership, should engage with the Court Service with a view to reducing waiting times at the Youth Court; this might be achieved through indicative hearing times being given in advance and SMS alerts on the day.	There is a reported improvement in the time scale for proceedings with most being met within the 40-week protocol. Some particularly complex cases do take longer. Solicitors report that often "waiting" time at the hearing itself is used for negotiation between parties and can often lead to a speedier conclusion within the hearing.	This is monitored on an on-going basis. The family court user group needs to be re-initiated to provide a forum for issues to be addressed as they arise. Changes in the protocol are being introduced in April 2008.	AD Legal Svcs.	April 2008

	Recommendation	Current Position	Action	Who	When
7.	<p>(i) Looked after children should be asked periodically whether there are wider family members – aunts, uncles, cousins etc – with whom they might wish to have contact;</p> <p>ii) a lack of time to provide transport by social worker, residential worker and foster carer should not be an obstacle to such contact – CRB-cleared volunteer drivers should be used and, when needed, the costs of overnight accommodation reimbursed.</p>	<p>For CLA contact is routinely covered within the statutory review framework. Social Workers to be reminded of this.</p> <p>The use of volunteer drivers is not felt to be a viable way forward. The Council's review of transport includes this issue. There have been some positive changes made to the Escort service, which have improved efficiency.</p>	<p>Ensure CLA have their contact issues routinely addressed and considered by the SW.</p> <p>No further action is proposed on this issue at this time.</p>	HOS SM's	On going
8.	<p>The Council should explore with representatives of looked after children the desirability of an adult befriending scheme; this might be along the lines of an adoptive auntie or uncle or the American "big brother, big sister" concept.</p>	<p>Each child's needs are considered on their own merits. The use of both the Independent visitor scheme and the advocacy project should ensure that no child is without some level of independent support. The CYPD continues to use independent advocacy and independent visitors for CLA where this is appropriate.</p>	<p>This matter is covered within the Care matters white paper. The announcement on actual funding levels for Derby is expected shortly following which proposals will be put forward.</p>	AD LAC Strat Group	Jan 2008
9.	<p>Although there was no evidence that Derby's Child Protection Register thresholds were misplaced, the comparatively high number of registrations means there would be merit in an inter-authority benchmarking exercise.</p>	<p>The recommendation was accepted.</p> <p>Review of our thresholds against other Authorities has taken place. There is no evidence to show that the threshold criteria in Derby are being inappropriately applied.</p>	<p>This issue is kept under constant review and the key indicators are tightly monitored on a monthly basis.</p> <p>The review was reported and discussed at the LSCB.</p>	HOS (QA)	On Going

	Recommendation	Current Position	Action	Who	When
1 0.	The reported difference in the ratio of children and families social care staff between Derby (35 per 10,000 children) and Nottingham (48 per 10,000 children) needs examination. The Commission wishes to have this question answered: is the difference a reason for our social workers needing to work in the evening and at the weekend?	<p>TOIL levels have reduced from the previously high levels.</p> <p>The approach being taken in Derby is to bring a wide group of staff together to respond to the needs of families and children.</p> <p>A plan is in place to establish a dedicated service for children who are looked after and have long term or permanent plans. The service will be resourced equitably in relation to service demands.</p>	<p>TOIL levels to be routinely checked by HOS / SM's</p> <p>Area 1 pilot well established and being evaluated. Social care planned integration for other areas scheduled for January 2008.</p> <p>To be established in January 2008.</p>	<p>HOS SM's</p> <p>AD's</p> <p>AD's</p>	<p>On going</p> <p>Jan 2008</p> <p>Jan 2008</p>
1 1.	Council Cabinet should protect Family Support staffing levels when considering future revenue budgets.	Frontline services, including family support, have been protected wherever possible within the 2007 – 08 budget setting exercise.	The two FSW posts that were reinstated temporarily were made permanent in the 07 – 08 budget.		
1 2.	The Council must complete the move to Fostering Network-recommended allowance levels.	Budget restrictions currently do not allow for increases above the level of inflation.	The Council remains committed to achieve this as resources permit.	C&YP DMT	April 2008
1 3.	Foster carers in the employment of the City Council should as of contractual right have up to 3 working days per year to attend reviews and other meetings about the child(ren) in their care; through the Derby City Partnership other employers should be encouraged to do the same.	The recommendation was accepted in principle.	Discussion has taken place in the AD group and the employees have been identified. Proposal to be finalised for approval from April 2008.	AD	April 2008

	Recommendation	Current Position	Action	Who	When
1 4.	To make the fostering task easier, the Council should consider giving non-cash incentives to its foster carers, for example, free parking or bus pass, free entry to leisure centres.	The recommendation was accepted in principle. The passport to leisure scheme has been extended with additional benefits for CLA, their carers and their carers' families.	Achieved. Further benefits to be considered as opportunities arise across the Council and partner agencies.	AD LAC Strategic group	On going
1 5.	There should be closer collaboration between councils over the recruitment of foster carers in the region, including co-ordinated, jointly funded marketing campaigns.	This recommendation was not accepted. Derby recruits and retains a significant number of carers who do not live in the City. The evidence is that we would be a net loser in any joint campaigns.	We continue to develop and improve our solid approach to marketing. Previous joint campaigns have been failures; in particular a Government lead national campaign in 2001.	AD HOS	On Going
1 6.	There should be a record kept of the number of 18+ year olds who continue to reside at the foster carer's address.	This recommendation is accepted and a system is now in place.	Achieved. No further action required other than monitoring.	HOS	On going
1 7.	Because of the high number of mixed heritage looked after children, there should be increased cultural awareness training so that every child can learn about <i>all</i> aspects of their background.	The recommendation was accepted although the number of CLA from dual heritage backgrounds is not statistically higher than would be expected.	Encourage use of available equalities training and prioritise access to diversity training through the A&D process. C & YP fostered with carers of different cultural backgrounds are helped to access information about their own heritage.	AD's HOS' LAC Strategic Group	On going

	Recommendation	Current Position	Action	Who	When
1 8.	The 'Roller Coaster' fostering recruitment DVD should be shown at the beginning of a full Council as the web-cast makes it accessible to a wider audience; it should also be shown at a round of Area Panel meetings.	The recommendation was accepted in principle. The DVD has been shown on several occasions and a number of Members have taken the opportunity to view it. This DVD together with a number of other relevant productions was shown at an event this month.	DCS to raise with COG and the Leadership for the DVD to be shown.	DCS	Dec 2007
1 9.	The Council Cabinet Members for Children and Young People and for the Environment be requested to jointly consider the specification for fixtures and fittings and repair standards in the five children's homes and report back to the Commission the outcome.	The SM and home manager within the available budget currently determines specifications for fixtures and fittings within Children's homes. The HOS has worked with property services and agreed an improved schedule and priority system for this work.	HOS and property services continue to work together to address these issues.	HOS	On going
2 0.	Each Council children's home should have broadband access for staff and residents.	This recommendation was accepted.	Achieved.		
2 1.	All members of the Council should be strongly encouraged to be active Corporate Parents by being CRB-checked and undertaking visits to the Council's children's homes	This recommendation was accepted. New arrangements for member visits were agreed by the Corporate Parenting Commission in September.	New arrangements for Councillor visits are now being implemented.	CPC Chair and Vice Chair	On going

	Recommendation	Current Position	Action	Who	When
2 2.	Recruitment of potential adopters for older and other hard-to-place children should be considered on a regional basis via the existing consortium of authorities; locations could include East Midlands Airport, Trent Barton buses and Midland Mainline.	Accepted. There is already a high level of collaboration on the identification and use of adopters within the consortium.	The consortium continues to operate effectively.	HOS	On going
2 3.	As there was a consensus among witnesses that CAMHS' capacity was inadequate for the number needing its services, the new Derby Primary Care Trust should be asked to augment the service.	CAMHS developments for the City are covered within the CAMHS steering group which is chaired by a C&YP Department AD. This issue is highlighted within the "Care Matters" white paper. Recruitment to CAMHS posts has improved and waiting times have fallen. Currently waiting times are within national standards.	CAMHS services are essential to the well being of LAC. The service continues to be developed through the CAMHS commissioning group. The LAC strategic group monitors services specifically for LAC.	AD LAC Strategic Group	On Going
2 4.	There should be a change of practice by CAMHS so as to give a priority to looked after children for assessment, though not for treatment which should continue to be based on need.	This issue is being progressed as per recommendation 23.	See above.	AD LAC Strat Group	On Going
2 5.	The CAMHS pilot at Moorfield Children's Centre should be made permanent and rolled out to the other four homes.	Funding was identified within the LAA to ensure that this continues during 07n- 08.	Achieved for 07 - 08. Implications for 08 – 09 are being considered as part of the current budget round.	AD	Nov 07

	Recommendation	Current Position	Action	Who	When
2 6.	The creation of a single Children and Young People Department offers the opportunity to deliver updated co-ordinated awareness training for all school governors and in-depth training for designated governors. Appropriate training should be included in the training programmes for governors and staff.	This recommendation was accepted. Specific training for governors has been provided. Some existing training courses for governors have been amended to include LAC issues.	Specific input in relation to LAC and their education is planned for the Governor's conference in October. Further impetus will be given to this as the White paper is implemented in 2008.	AD's	Oct 2007
2 7.	The involvement of looked after children in reviews should be used to check whether the child knows who the designated teacher is at their school <i>and</i> discreetly check whether she or he would feel comfortable approaching that teacher with a problem.	The recommendation was accepted. Statutory reviews continue to examine progress against the PEP. This issue is incorporated into that process.	Achieved.	IRO's	On going
2 8.	As a model, draft 'School Policy for Looked After Children' can achieve a de facto city-wide protocol about roles and responsibilities, including those of designated teachers, it is essential the draft is finalised and that all governing bodies are encouraged to adopt it.	This recommendation was accepted. The policy has been approved by the trade unions and was finalised in June 2007. This has been disseminated to Heads and schools through the normal processes.	Achieved.		
2 9.	The creation of a single Children and Young People Department should be used to recognise 'Derby Beacon Schools' as a local scheme to share the best practice between schools in the education of looked after children, with a focus on the successful management of the difficult issues.	Sharing best practice among Designated Teachers takes place through the operation of the peer mentoring scheme; during visits to Designated Teachers; by dissemination of information through the schools' circular; and in relevant training events.	Continue to Identify and share good practice in schools, and ensure all schools are meeting the requirements.	AD PO	On Going

	Recommendation	Current Position	Action	Who	When
3 0.	The proven skills and tactics of the Leaving Care Team may be transferable to the work with younger, looked after children and the residential service should consider drawing on that to promote school attendance.	The Specialist services management team look to share best practice and identify transferable skills and across their respective services.	The Specialist services structure should be completed in January 2008.	SSMT SM's	Jan 2008
3 1.	To encourage learning by children who do not attend school, a scheme based on the PASSPORT concept in hostels should be considered in order to give credit for educational and other positive activity.	Alternative provision of various kinds is found for children in care who choose not to attend school. This includes vocational programmes and e-learning which have some accreditation. There is a very low occurrence of exclusion for LAC with many innovative programmes being used to deliver learning.	Good progress has been made here. Continuous monitoring is established.		
3 2.	A constructive alternative should be developed for older looked after children who will not attend school. This might be based on the Leaving Care team's highly successful trainee placement scheme that helps the school leavers, but honed of offer an age appropriate experience, for example, in the voluntary sector.	The designation of Moorfield as a PRU for LAC and the operation of the enhanced care unit have been achieved.	The expansion of the trainee scheme has budget implications and will be dependent on the funding announcement expected before Xmas.	AD HOS	April 2008
3 3.	Funding for fostered or adopted children to meet special needs and provide behaviour therapy, extra tuition etc should follow the child and not be limited, as now, to schools in deprived wards.	Arrangements already exist to ensure that funding for individual needs highlighted within care plans can "follow the child".	Ensure present system is operated to the child's best interest and not determined by ward deprivation factors.	HOS SM's	On Going

	Recommendation	Current Position	Action	Who	When
3 4.	Council Cabinet be informed that it is essential that the LPSA-funded post promoting Employment, Education and Training be continued when the funding time-expires.	The LPSA funding stream is currently under review. This recommendation will be taken into account as far as resources permit within the 2008 – 09 budget.	To be considered within budget discussions.	AD	Nov 2007