

Cheshire East  
Children and Young  
People's

Sufficiency Statement for  
Cared for Children  
2016-2017



Cheshire East  
Children & Young  
People's Trust

## **Our Shared Ambition in Cheshire East is that:**

Children and Young People are **valued as individuals** in their own right

Children and Young People **feel and are safe and protected**, free from fear and danger

Children and Young People are brought up and cared for within their own families wherever possible but **experience good care** where this is not the case

Children and Young People are **physically, mentally and emotionally healthy**

Children and Young People **enjoy their childhood** and youth and have a positive experience of social engagement with each other and their communities

Children and Young People have **every opportunity to achieve** and reach their potential and enjoy their school and learning experiences

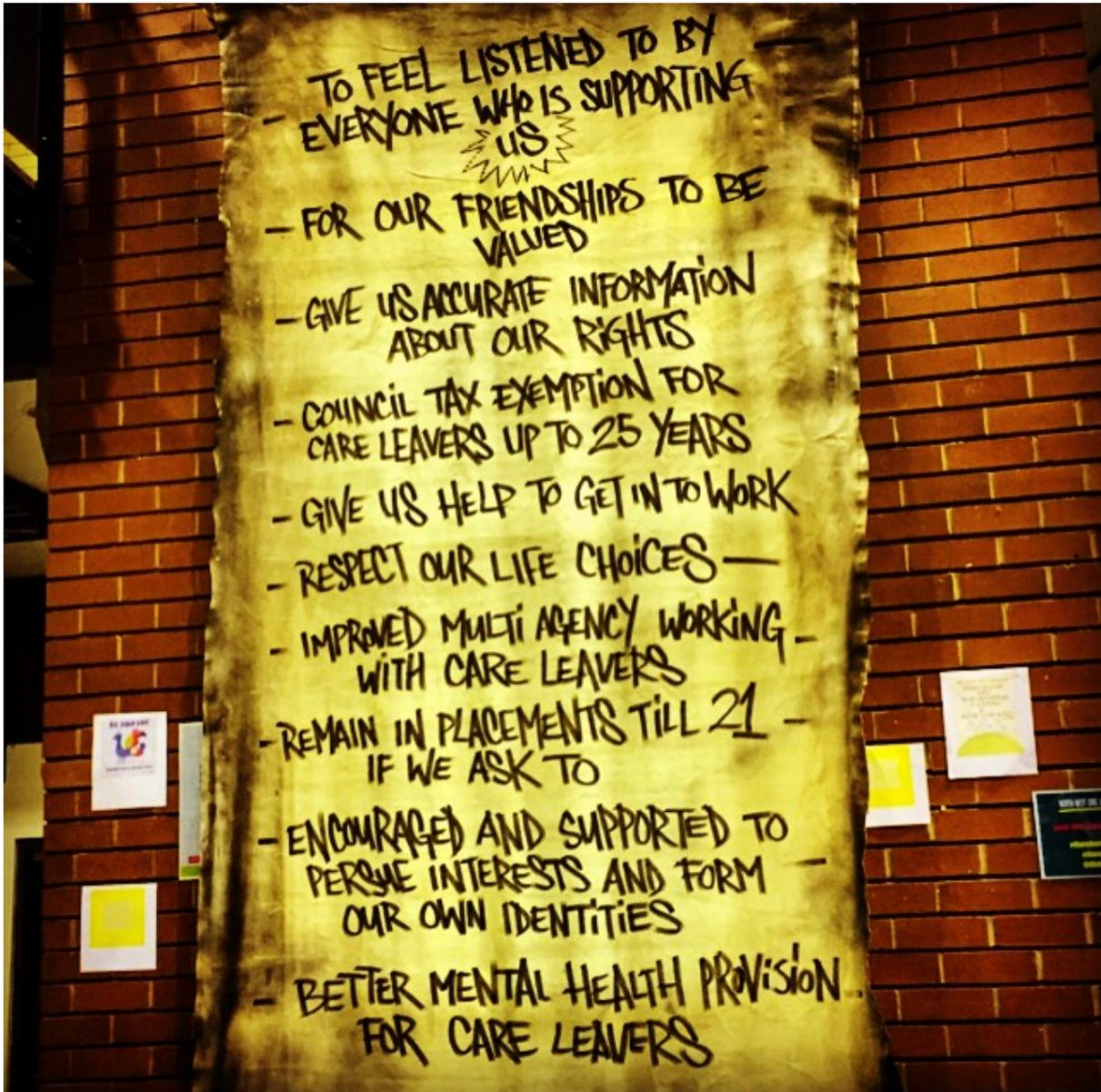
Children and Young People **have a say in the services they receive** - and **see meaningful participation as their right**

Children, young people, their families and services **work together to meet individual needs** and problem solve, and support is based on their lived experience

Young People are supported into adulthood **able to shape their own destiny**

The borough **celebrates the successes and achievements** of all children and young people

## The Care Leavers Pledge!



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## Foreword

Cheshire East Children and Young People's Plan sets out the vision for Cheshire East to be a place where children and young people thrive, are safe from harm, feel physically and emotionally healthy, have access to outstanding education and feel prepared for and excited about adulthood.

We work extremely hard to make sure this is the experience for all our children and young people. Our Early Help offer is in place to support families to stay together, however there are a number of children and young people whose families are unable to care for them; this may be because of temporary or permanent problems facing their parents, as a result of abuse or neglect or as a result of a range of difficulties including not having a parent to look after them. In these circumstances it is the Local Authority's responsibility for providing the best care and support.

*In Cheshire East our children and young people have been asked to be referred to as 'cared for children' and 'care leavers'. When safe and appropriate we want our cared for children to live in Cheshire East, this may not always be possible due to safety concerns but, regardless of where a young person is placed, we want them to feel nurtured and supported to have high aspirations and achieve their best outcomes.*

When a young person becomes cared for the Local Authority then has Corporate Parenting responsibilities. Corporate Parenting is the term used for the collective responsibility of the Local Authority and its partners to ensure all services i.e. housing, health, leisure are working together to support the care and protection of our children and young people.

All children are unique; children who come into care even more so with needs and circumstances each requiring an individual, tailored response. As a Corporate Parent it is our responsibility to ensure we understand what these needs are and that we have the skills, knowledge and resources to meet them.

The purpose of this Sufficiency Statement is to set out the provision we, as a local authority, have in place for cared for children, children on the edge of care or custody and care leavers. Ensuring it is flexible, diverse and most importantly is influenced by what our children and young people tell us.

## Introduction

- 1.0 The requirement, under s22G Children Act 1989 for Local Authorities, to publish an annual Sufficiency Statement for children in care accommodation was introduced from April 2011. This is Cheshire East's 4th publication of the statement, published under statutory guidance, and our commitment is to monitor, update and continuously improve our position against our sufficiency duty.
- 1.1 Most children are brought up in their own families, but in Cheshire East as in other areas a small number of children need to live away from their families and grow up in a range of alternative care arrangements which include foster care, residential care and supported independent living. These children are described as being 'in care' and are the responsibility of the local authority which is, in effect, their 'corporate parent'. As 'corporate parent' for a number of children and young people, we need to ensure that a sufficient number, type and quality of accommodation is available in order to ensure the welfare and emotional / physical well-being of every child and that they reach their potential.
- 1.2 All children need a stable home whilst they are growing up. This is even more important for children in care who have frequently experienced trauma, abuse and uncertainty that includes moving from their birth family or main carers. Such events often affect their early development, behaviour, confidence and ability to attach positively to adults.
- 1.3 No one service or agency can by itself provide all the support needed by children in care. It requires all services and agencies to 'share the care' and actively work together to ensure the right support and opportunities are made available to children and young people in care and their carers.
- 1.4 Cheshire East's Cared for Children and Care Leavers Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015-17 and the Children and Young People's Plan set out the principles by which agencies and services in Cheshire East will ensure that children in care have the same opportunities as their peers to enable them to fulfil their potential, and make a good start in adult life. It sets out the achievements so far, shared priorities for children and young people in care, and the actions to be taken to make a positive difference to their lives.
- 1.5 As corporate parents we have high expectations for our children and young people in care and encourage them to have high expectations of themselves. We want them to leave care with a sense of achievement and security, looking forward to a future where they will be

valued and involved citizens who are economically independent and able to contribute positively to the communities in which they live.

1.6 Our Corporate Parenting Strategy details five outcomes for which we can measure progress to ensure we are all working as hard as possible to ensure children and young people feel supported, encouraged and hopeful; these outcomes are in the words of our cared for children and care leavers:

- Involve Me
- Providing me with a Good Safe Home
- Keep Me Healthy
- Help Me to Achieve
- Support Me to Move to Adult Life

1.7 Each outcome has priorities and details actions of what needs to be achieved to meet each outcome; the voice of children and young people is central to the Corporate Parenting Strategy and informs this Sufficiency Statement.

## Executive Summary

2.0 The overall picture in Cheshire East is of good and improving performance in relation to our Children in Care. Whilst we have seen a slight increase in the number of cared for children during the past year we continue to be lower than both the regional and national average. We feel confident that for these cared for young people they are in the right environment that will best meet their needs; the highest driver for removing children from their family home continues to be abuse and neglect. We have seen an increase in the local child / young person population this alongside this national drivers, which have also put pressure on care numbers, and a change in culture and practice we believe contributes to the slight increase.

2.1 The number of children placed within a 20 mile radius of Cheshire East has remained consistent over the past 4 years. For those young people who are placed further away there is robust evidence provided in the placement approval request to demonstrate why that placement best meets need. There is an on-going priority to continue to place more children nearer home; expanding our internal residential offer to 5 properties from 3, utilising Ignition to ensure more planned moves and working with our local providers and neighbouring authorities will all assist with this.

- 2.2 Central to our approach is the wishes and views of our young people who have quite clearly told us that what is important is being consulted on where they live and having a choice where to live when leaving care. Cheshire East have signed up to The Care Leavers Pledge and are committed, with partners, to the priorities set out in Children and Young People Plan. The role of Corporate Parent is taken extremely seriously.
- 2.3 A recognised area for development is that of our internal foster carers; we have seen a slight decline during this past year and the priority for next year is to increase this number. We continue to develop our existing foster carers through our robust training plan and schemes such as Fostering Plus. Fostering Plus allows us to target our resources to ensure the best provision for some of our most vulnerable cohorts including complex needs, sibling groups and mother and baby whilst equipping and developing our foster carers.
- 2.4 Special Guardianship was a key area of development identified in the previous sufficiency statement; we are pleased to report success in this area with an increase in numbers of Special Guardianships.
- 2.5 North West and Greater Manchester Frameworks provide access to both Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) and Residential Placements. This provides greater value for money and core standards that are consistent across the region.
- 2.6 During the past year we have seen an increase in IFA's taking on more of our more complex cases. A number of IFA's have been identified as areas of good practice and we look to work with these partners to understand what makes them so effective.
- 2.7 During 2016 a tender opportunity invited providers to bid for the contract to deliver our internal residential offer. This contract will increase our provision in Cheshire East from 3 properties to 5. Of these two of the properties will be 2 bedroomed there by allowing greater choice and the flexibility to provide solo placements as a bridging gap.
- 2.8 Quality Assurance visits take place across all residential placements; this provides close scrutiny of the placement but, more importantly, the opportunity to develop relationships with our providers. Working together with our residential partners allows problems to be solved more effectively and efficiently, to understand issues and challenges being faced by the market and, long term, a greater choice of provision.

- 2.9 Progress continues within the Adoption Service, key areas have been working with other local authorities as part of the regional Partnership; this has strengthened our business profile and will provide more opportunities working as a collective.
- 2.10 Widening the recruitment out to attract more Foster to Adopt and families who would be able to adopt sibling groups and older children will provide greater capacity; allowing us to successfully place children and young people in forever homes.
- 2.11 Alongside our internal commitments Cheshire East fully supports national initiatives such as the welcoming of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers, Staying Put and Staying Close.
- 2.12 To date we have welcomed a number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers and continue to plan to ensure suitable accommodation and holistic support that enables good emotional health and well-being.
- 2.13 Staying Put and Staying Close allow young people to have the option and support in place to stay close to their Foster Care Placement or Residential home when they leave, or to reside with the Foster Care family past their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- 2.14 The proposed actions build upon the good and improving practice identified in this review, taking into account the areas of need and development highlighted through the analysis.

### **The Sufficiency Duty for Children in Care**

- 3.0 The Statutory Guidance sets out a requirement for Local Authorities to work with key partners to be in a position to secure, where reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in care in their local authority area which meets the needs of children and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area ('the sufficiency duty').
- 3.1 The sufficiency duty requires local authorities to do more than simply ensure that accommodation be 'sufficient' in terms of the number of beds provided. They must also have a regard to the benefits of securing a number of providers and a range of services. Fundamentally, the accommodation available must meet the needs of children.

3.2 When the sufficiency duty is applied to an excellent standard it should incorporate the following:

- All children are placed in the local authority area, except where this is not consistent with their needs and welfare.
- All children with a plan of adoption are placed with an adoptive family within 12 months of that plan being approved.
- There is a diverse range of universal, targeted and specialist services working together to meet children's needs, including children and young people who are already looked after as well as those at risk of becoming looked after or in custody.
- Our Children's Trust (including housing) work together to secure a range of provision to meet the needs of those who become looked after at the age of 16 and 17, and to support the continuity of education or accommodation beyond the age of 18.
- Services are available in adequate quantity to respond to children and young people including predicted demand for a range of needs, and emergencies.
- In addition to meeting relevant National Minimum Standards, services are of a quality to secure the specific outcomes identified in the care planning process for children and young people.
- Services are situated across the local authority area to reflect geographical distribution of need.
- Placement providers (including private, voluntary and public sector providers) are linked into the wider network of services and work with these services to offer appropriate support to deliver identified outcomes for looked after children.
- Universal services know when a child or young person is looked after and have good links with the range of targeted and specialist services which support them, including placement providers.
- There are mechanisms in place to ensure that professionals involved in placement decisions have sufficient knowledge and information about the

supply and quality of placements and availability of all specialist, targeted and universal support services within the local authority area.

- The local authority and the Children's Partnership collaborate with neighbouring Children's Trusts to plan the market for children in care and commission in regional or sub-regional arrangements.

## What do our children and young people tell us?

Be honest with us!



Be our lifelong champion!



We want to stay living in our communities



Do not judge or patronise us!



When we leave care we want a choice of where we live

We want to be consulted on where we live

Support us in our hobbies and interest



We want to see health professionals (particularly mental health) at a venue of our choosing



## National Picture

4.0 During the past year there have been a number of publications that have informed our plans and practice; this is not an exhaustive list but includes:

**Keep On Caring Supporting Young People from Care to Independence July 2016**

Ofsted Social Care Annual Report, 2016

**Putting Children First – Delivering our vision for excellent children’s social care, Department for Education, 2016**

Residential care in England, Report of Sir Martin Narey’s independent review of children’s residential care, Sir Martin Narey, 2016

**In Care, Out of Trouble, an independent review Chaired by Lord Laming, 2016**

Home Office Immigration Statistics, January to March 2016, Asylum Data, Volume 3

4.1 Sir Martin Narey’s independent review of residential care has a wide range of implications that will impact both upon the sector and how we as a children’s service operate. The review is split into 6 chapters with 34 recommendations.

**Chapter 1:** Obtaining better value for money in the commissioning of children’s homes

**Chapter 2:** Fostering, closeness to home, the size of homes and secure care

**Chapter 3:** The criminalising of children; staff confidence; setting boundaries for children; and the use of restraint

**Chapter 4:** Ofsted

**Chapter 5:** Staff qualifications, pay and recruitment

**Chapter 6:** Staying Close rather than Staying Put

4.2 The report makes a number of recommendations for commissioning residential services which are pertinent to consider in the NW regional work CE is part of.

4.3 These are listed as follows:

- 4.2.1 **“Recommendation 4:** *I recommend that providers examine their staff attendance systems to ensure they are as effective as possible in meeting the needs of children. And commissioners, when placing children, should look closely at the numbers of staff on duty at key times of the day”*<sup>1</sup>
- 4.2.2 **“Recommendation 7:** *I urge local authorities and consortia to be cautious about following any hard and fast rule about placement distance and to recognise the right placement for a child is more important than location. They should no longer impose geographical restrictions on where homes must be located to be included in contracts”*<sup>2</sup>
- 4.2.3 **“Recommendation 21:** *“Commissioners should abandon blanket policies that rule out placements in homes which, essentially, are satisfactory. And Ofsted should no longer encourage authorities only to place children in good or outstanding homes.”*<sup>3</sup>
- 4.2.4 **“Recommendation 29:** *“Commissioners should look for evidence that providers offer continuing staff development, particularly through team-based training. And DfE should advise commissioners about the RESuLT programme and similar team approaches, which are likely to prove effective in developing staff.”*<sup>4</sup>

4.3 Alongside the recommendations the report makes the particular point that efficiency savings can be achieved through eliminating the costs of ‘under occupancy’ which are factored into spot purchasing. Narey notes that the *“the Department for Education must require local authorities to come together in large consortia for the purpose of obtaining significant discounts from private and voluntary providers... homes will welcome greater assurances about occupancy... [and] be able to afford to lower unit costs”*<sup>5</sup>.

4.4 **“Keep On Caring Supporting Young People from Care to Independence”** sets out the requirements for Staying Close. Staying Close follows Staying Put, which gave young people living in foster families a right to stay with them until the age of 21 in order to better prepare them for adult life. Staying Close will enable young people who have lived in residential care to live independently, in a location close to the home they have resided at with ongoing support.

4.5 **“In Care, Out of Trouble”** looks into the numbers and possible reasons for the high number of young people who are in care or care leavers who progress to the criminal justice system. The report sets out the importance of early help, good parenting and effective joint working between families and partners agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> Residential Care in England: Report of Sir Martin Narey’s independent review of children’s residential care (July 2016) (page 20)

<sup>2</sup> (ibid, page 33)

<sup>3</sup> (ibid page 52)

<sup>4</sup> (ibid page 61)

<sup>5</sup> (ibid page 14) <sup>5</sup> (ibid, page 33)

<sup>5</sup> (ibid page 52)

<sup>5</sup> (ibid page 61)

<sup>5</sup> (ibid page 14)

4.6 The report supports “**Staying Put**” in the knowledge that the evidence shows that leaving care early is associated with poor outcomes. The report also recommends that support for care leavers who are not in education or training should be extended from 21 to 25 years, matching the support received by care leavers in training or education.

4.7 All of the findings and recommendations have informed the work and projects being undertaken within Cheshire East as set out in the action plan.

## North West Regional Commissioning Arrangements

5.0 The North West Regional Commissioning Group is a representative of all Local Authorities across the North West; it provides a forum for colleagues to discuss ideas, solutions and challenges that are presented within the system. There are named authorities who represent this collective and lead on areas; for example managing the residential and leaving care frameworks.

5.1 There are four residential frameworks which operate in the North West:

- Greater Manchester (Including Cheshire East)
- Merseyside and Partners (Including Cheshire East, CWAC, Wigan and Warrington)
- Blackpool Framework (Run as a single local authority)
- Lancashire Framework (Run as a single local authority)
- Cumbria and Blackburn with Darwen currently spot purchase

The Greater Manchester and Merseyside and Partners frameworks are similar models and are inter-operable; users named on one framework can use the other to secure placements at a distance

5.2 The residential market in the North West can be considered a ‘national market’. The North West authorities made 554 placements in 2015 a figure which while declining slightly has remained relatively consistent since 2010. There is however 1,398 beds supplied by the market across 401 children’s homes and 113 organisations within the boundaries of the North West. This delivers a notional surplus of 844 beds.

5.3 The significant surplus of residential provision in the North West is maintained by very high use of capacity by non-NW LAs. The market operated in the North West can, and has been,

described as a 'National Resource' by providers. There are providers who have informally confirmed that their services are not primarily targeted at the local authorities in their locality. A NW provider confirmed that in July 16, and with a paper copy of data, that 85% of their referrals for that month were from LAs outside the NW. The operation of a national market has the following impacts on NW LAs:

- Providers have greater choice in which referrals to accept. There is the potential to offer higher prices to LAs placing from a greater distance with whom a contractual relationship is not established or a 'higher spot purchase price' is agreed. This can lead to NW LA's being 'outbid'
- Providers have indicated that the greater number of referrals mean they are able to take less complex placements for which it is easier to report outcomes with the hope to evidence high performance and thus increasing opportunities for future business.
- Local Provision may not be tailored to service local needs if placements are primarily sourced from elsewhere.
- High volumes of inward placement impacts on Universal and specialist services. One LA identified 28% of Youth Offending Team (YOT) time was spent meeting the needs of YP from outside the authority.
- Services which are of poor quality and are not used by the LA can be sustained by inward placement.

5.4 The NW residential market takes up to 60% of its placements from LAs outside the NW. While this once helped control cost through a surplus of capacity, the increase in national demand has resulted in LAs struggling to source provision.

5.5 There is unlikely to be further cost savings from further frameworks. Meaningful savings will only come from smarter purchasing and LAs working flexibly in evolving collaborations to block book services for predictable need to remove the waste of under-occupancy and secure effective services for low incidence needs.

5.6 Despite the surplus of external residential provision located within the North West local authorities have been identifying challenges in securing sustainable, quality services for young people who present with the following needs:

Young people with:

- Mental Health Issues (particularly those on the cusp of Tier 4 services, who have not met threshold)

- Violence towards staff (and others)
- High numbers of placement breakdown
- High levels of missing

Other factors common include Autism, CSE, Substance Abuse, Arson and Criminal Behaviours.

5.7 The issues identified at a national and regional level are an accurate reflection of some of the challenges Cheshire East face, working with our neighbouring LAs as a collective provides a greater opportunity to make the changes that are required to meet our needs; developing closer working relationships with providers will be beneficial, monitoring who moves into the area; encouraging the providers we would like to work more, will further support meeting our sufficiency.

### **Proposals for a replacement contract**

5.8 The STAR (Stockport, Trafford and Rochdale procurement function) Procurement service has indicated the capacity to act as a regional procurement lead in partnership with PNW and NW LAs to develop a new framework. The flexibilities outlined below have been agreed in principle with their procurement lead.

5.9 It is proposed to use the greater flexibilities offered by the new procurement rules, building on the learning from the NW leaving care DPS, and development work towards the new regional SEN Education framework to implement a framework which has the following aims:

- Allow new providers to join mid-term reducing the need to retender regularly to expand capacity
- Allow for new categories of provision to be added in response to changing needs of the populations LAs serve
- Allow single LAs or collaborations (of any scale) to bulk purchase placements from suppliers via mini-competition. This could be for a set number of placements over a period of time, and could deliver lower cost services for predictable need or secure capacity to meet the most complex needs.
- Establishing this single route of purchase will allow a focus on commissioning access to secure rare services, remove the waste of under occupancy costs, and take a more active choice in securing therapeutic interventions.

- Gather greater information on the staffing models and attendant costs of contract providers
- Take a more flexible approach to Ofsted ratings as outlined by the Narey report, but retaining the ability for LAs to focus on quality providers as local need and strategy determines.

5.10 Two other frameworks that CE have access to are the North West regional framework for Foster Care which been in place since April 5<sup>th</sup> 2014 and the DPS Leaving Care Framework which has been in place since April 2015.

5.11 All of the frameworks provide a consistent approach to core costs in relation to placement, transport, clothing, holidays etc. The Terms and Conditions that have been agreed as part of the frameworks are also applied to “Off Contract” providers who, on the whole, sign up to them.

5.12 Working as part of a NW collaboration, consistently applying the Terms and Conditions and working with providers to meet the needs of our children and young people can only assist with meeting our sufficiency duty in a high quality assured way.

### Cheshire East Children and Young People’s Joint Commissioning

6.0 Commissioning takes place at strategic, operational and individual levels and by that we mean:

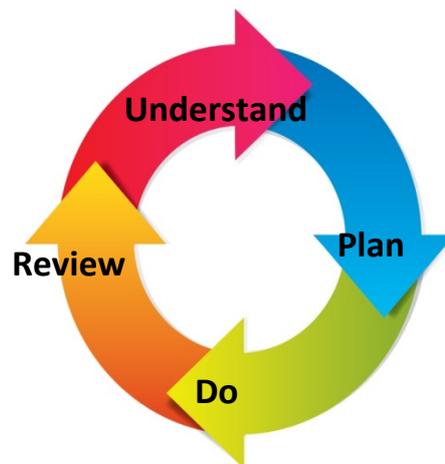
- **Strategic commissioning** – A shared vision with strategic objectives, priorities and values agreed to enable the development of services for children, young people and their families. This level of commissioning is done through Cheshire East Children’s Trust
- **Operational commissioning** – operates at a more local level ensuring that services are developed and improved within strategic parameters and are responsive to local need. This level of commissioning is done within individual organisations
- **Individual commissioning** – Ensuring the most appropriate package of service is procured to meet individual need. This level of commissioning is done through individual case planning.

6.1 Managing the relationship between these levels is key to improving outcomes for children, young people and their families, an overarching requirement is ensuring a vision and strong sense of leadership is embedded at a strategic level.

6.2 Cheshire East Children's Trust drives the commissioning priorities through their Children and Young People's Plan. Our Children and Young People Joint Commissioning strategy is linked intrinsically to the plan and aligns with the priorities; detailing clear action plans and timescales to achieve each priority.

6.3 The commissioning strategy has been developed adhering to the commissioning cycle: Understand, Plan, Do, and Review:

- Understand – population needs assessment and resource identification
- Plan – aligning resources to meet needs; filling gaps between needs and services
- Do - developing or purchasing services
- Review – monitoring performance and evaluating outcomes



6.4 This framework helps ensure commissioning is coherent and effective, delivering cost effective services that promote good outcomes for children, young people and their families. This cycle is especially important in allowing us to understand the needs of our cared for children population; we commission placements on an individual basis but to ensure we have sufficiency we must apply this approach to the bigger picture.

6.5 The alliance between the LA, CCG and other partners for Children and Young People's Services incorporates a commitment to the following principles:

- Children and Young People are able to participate in all stages of the commissioning process ensuring that children and young people are at the

heart of our thinking, planning and actions.

- Commission services that put children and young people first and are focused on quality and outcomes by being both effective and cost efficient
- Measurement of performance by how services impact on outcomes for children and families.
- Have a competent workforce focusing on joint training and development.
- Ensure services continuously improve their models of delivery taking account of effectiveness of care to children and families and stakeholder views.
- Drive change and improvement quality of service delivery by children and families experiences.
- Ensure providers of services are accessible, flexible and proactive in solution finding.
- Ensure providers focus on the overall experience of children and families as they journey through services with an emphasis on joined up and consistent approaches using evidence- based interventions including actively listening to children and families.
- Prevent harm, ill health and escalation of difficulties by adopting an early help approach across the whole system.

6.6 For those children in our care a happy stable home life and successful placement supports the achievement of all other outcomes.

6.7 The priority is to support children to remain with their families; wherever possible and when it is safe to do so. This means a focused approach to prevention and early intervention to support all families. Our Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out a number of principles that underpin our commitment to prevention and early intervention:

- The 'right' children will be in care
- Children and young people have the right to live with their families, wherever possible out of care
- Children will be in care for the shortest possible time

- Children with a Plan of Adoption will be adopted in a timely way
- Young people will be adequately prepared for the time they will cease to be 'Cared for'.
- Learning the skills to successfully live independently will not be a separate process but an integral part of the Cared for process
- Children who need to live in care will live in local placements wherever possible/appropriate.

6.8 Central to our joint commissioning approach is ensuring the voice of the child is captured and informs our approach. What matters to our children and young people who are placed in care is detailed in our ***Care Leavers Charter and Pledge for Children in Care***, they would like:

- **Vigilance:** to have adults notice when things are troubling them
- **Understanding and action:** to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
- **Stability:** to be able to develop an on-going stable relationship of trust with those helping them
- **Respect:** to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not
- **Information and engagement:** to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans
- **Explanation:** to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response
- **Support:** to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
- **Advocacy:** to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views

## Children in Need and Early Intervention

7.0 The Cheshire East Early Help Strategy sets out Cheshire East's Children's Trust's ambition for the development of Early Help services; defines what we mean by Early Help in Cheshire East and sets out the principles that will underpin the future development of services.

7.1 This means that there are no wrong 'front doors' and all agencies are committed to addressing the needs of families whether it falls within their immediate area of professional expertise or not. As partners in Cheshire East's Early Help Strategy all committed to a multi-agency approach to meeting the needs of our families

7.2 Where the support needed involves multiple agencies the Common Assessment Framework will usually provide the planning and review mechanism for this work. Where additional support for the CAF process is required it will be provided by Cheshire East.

7.3 The overall objective of early help is to work with families acknowledging that they are often able to address their own problems with support and to work with them to their address families' needs to the point where their needs can best be met from within universal services

7.4 In order to achieve these objectives we all take responsibility for fostering a shared inter-agency culture that values:-

- Positive challenge and holding each other to account for outcomes for families
- Support time for shared learning and ensuring that what we do is based on good evidence
- The contributions of all professional staff, volunteers and family members
- The identification and the taking of early help opportunities with families
- Working to overcome systemic barriers to achieving better outcomes.

7.5 We want to prevent individuals and families reaching crisis point. This means we need to:

- Prevent need by addressing the conditions that contribute to personal or social problems;

- Predict need, or recognising the early signs and symptoms of decline as it is happening and responding quickly to prevent decline.

7.6 Data collated as part of the commissioning cycle helps us understand need. The table below shows the different reasons children were cared for (March 2016). This information informs future service design, the way in which commissioned Early Help services deliver as well as the development needs for our workforce.

Need	Children
Abuse or neglect	265
Disability	7
Parental illness or disability	10
Family in acute stress	58
Family dysfunction	32
Socially unacceptable behaviour	4
Low income	1
Absent parenting	9
<b>TOTAL :</b>	<b>386</b>

7.7 This data, along with data collected from CHeCS (Cheshire East Consultation Service) shapes service design and delivery. The earlier we can identify and address issues the more we can stop things escalating and reaching crisis point.

### Cheshire East's Profile

8.0 Cheshire East is a vast area covering 447.18sq within which are the localities of Macclesfield, Crewe and Nantwich, Knutsford, Poynton and Wilmslow and Congleton. These localities provide a mix of urban and rural dwellings, the demographics for these towns are representative of this; with high population density in urban areas and lower density within the more rural areas.



8.1 The latest estimates show the current population is around 374,179. “Ambition for All – Cheshire East Community Strategy 2010 – 2025” describes the area as being relatively prosperous and a good place to live with 85% of residents saying they are satisfied with their local area. Employment rates are high and residents’ earnings are around 9% higher than the national UK average. Despite the relative affluence of the local authority area, around 6% of neighbourhoods fall into the top 20% most deprived in England (Indices of Multiple Deprivation). Nine out of the fourteen lower super output areas are in Crewe with others located in the towns of Macclesfield, Congleton and Wilmslow. A total of 22,700 people live in these areas including 6,500 children and young people.

8.2 The data informs us that the age structure of the population in Cheshire East has changed since 1991. The number of older people (aged 65+) has increased, whilst the number of children (aged 0-15) has fallen slightly (down 2% over the same period). Cheshire East’s infant and child mortality rates are similar to the England average

8.3 The latest in-house forecasting work indicates continuing decreases in the number of children, decreases in the working-age population and increases in the older age groups, with the largest proportional increase being in the 85+ age group. This intelligence is important as it will inform where services need to be targeted, the potential numbers of demand and the necessity of a flexible, responsively skilled workforce to meet this.

8.4 There are 42,500 households with 82,830 children aged (0-19 years) of these:

- 0 to 4 – 20,365
- 5 to 11 – 29,265

- 12 to 19 – 33,200

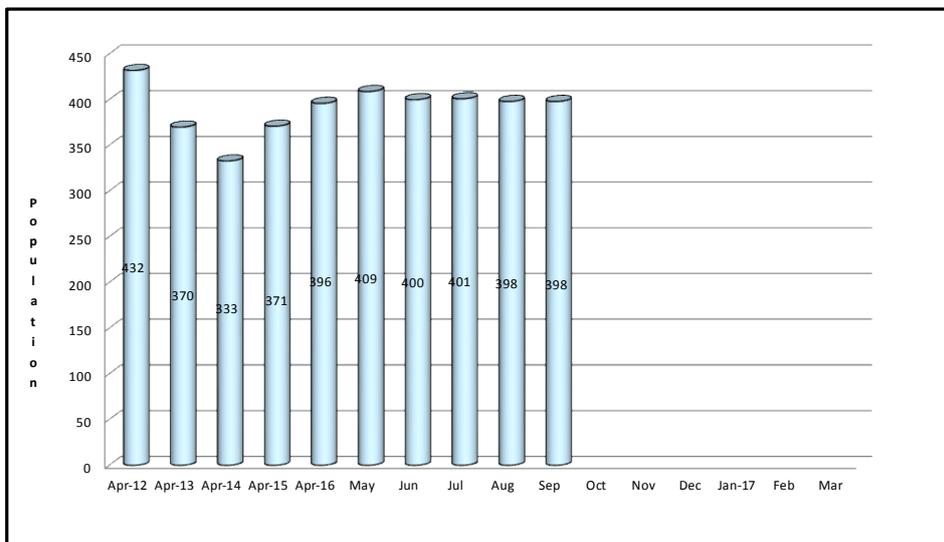
Live birth data 2013-2014 was 3,856 this was a decrease of 246 from the previous year. (According to the latest population estimates we have which are for 2014)

8.5 Young people’s educational attainment is generally good; the number of young people achieving 5 or more GCSEs grades A\*-C including English and Maths is consistently above national averages. The majority of young people make successful transitions from school into college, work or training and the numbers of young people that are NEET have been lower than regional and national averages over the past few years. However, although the majority of young people do well there is concern about a growing gap in educational performance between young people that live in the more affluent areas of the borough and those that live in areas with higher levels of need; for example, there is a growing gap in the educational attainment of young people that are entitled to free school meals and those that are not and the level of young people that are NEET are considerably higher in some of the more deprived areas of Crewe than in other areas of the borough.

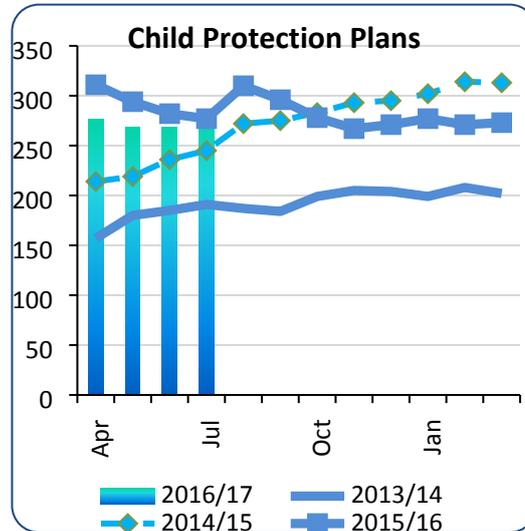
**Cared for Children in Cheshire East**

9.0 As at September 2016 there are 398 children and young people who are cared for with around 9% placed in residential children’s homes. This is a small decrease from the previous year and is evidence of the targeted work to ensure each young person is in a placement that best meets their needs and is working to meet the outcomes identified – be that returning home or ‘stepping down’ to foster care provision.

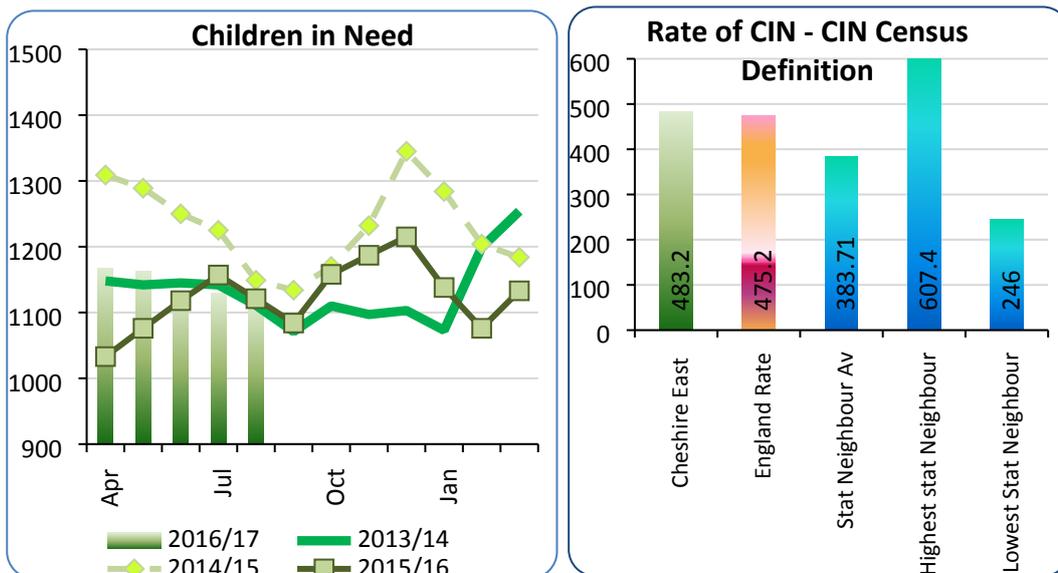
**Cared for Population (April 2016 – September 2016)**



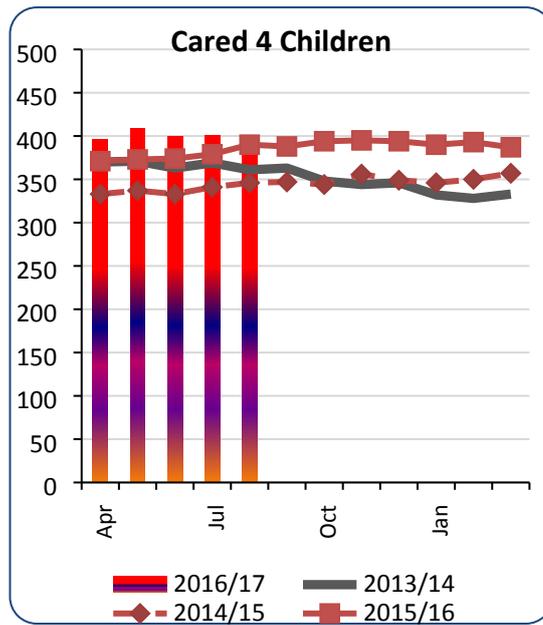
9.1 There has been a further increase over the last 12 months in those children subject to a child protection care plan (245 July 2014, 277 July 2015 and 284 July 2016) Further analysis of these cases highlight the increasing complexity of levels of need.



9.2 The number of children in need over the last 3 year period has steadily reduced from 1149 August 2014, 1121 August 2015 to 1114 August 2016. We know that targeting resources and providing the right support to families at an earlier point can help families to deescalate problems. The decrease in children in need and increase in child protection assures us that we are supporting families at an earlier point which is positive, yet dealing with more complex needs which has implications for the level of need for the young people who are coming into care.



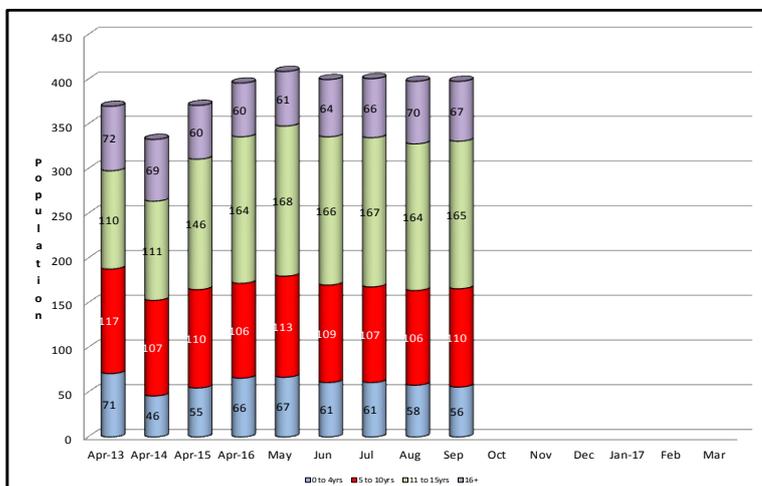
## Cared for Children



9.3 There was a substantial reduction in the number of children taken into care in the month of August, 2 of which were short term and have now been returned to parents. Based on admissions to date (77) should the trend continue the annual figure will be in the region of 185 (compared to 171 last year, an increase of 8%)

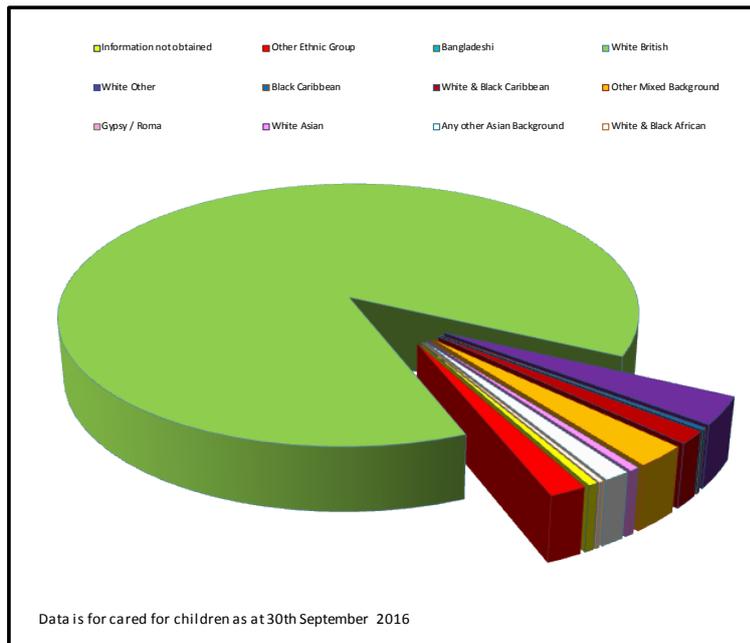
9.4 Discharges from care so far are 65 which means there is a net increase in year to date of 12 places.

9.5 As the table below demonstrates there has been an increase in young people aged 11 to 15 who are entering care, it has also become more difficult to find places for this age group; whilst this is a national challenge it is one Cheshire East will need to address finding different ways to engage with the market; developing relationships so we can deal direct with people and not rely on the electronic referral process. Working with providers to ensure they tailor their provision to meet the needs we identify.



9.6 When analysing the current cared for children population and their home town prior to coming into care it is clear that 67.5% of cared for children come from the Crewe and Macclesfield areas. This geographical mapping of the communities from which our cared for children originate has, influenced the early help strategy and the spread of accommodation that is required; be that through the residential redesign, additional supported living properties or foster carers.

## Ethnicity



Cared for Children Population by Ethnicity	
White British	351
White Other	13
Black Caribbean	1
White & Black Caribbean	6
Other Mixed Background	10
Gypsy / Roma	0
Bangladeshi	0
Information not obtained	2
Other Ethnic Group	7
White Asian	2
Any other Asian background	5
White & Black African	1

9.7 The Cared for Population of Cheshire East is currently 88.2%. This is a change to previous years where it has been consistently 92.8% White British. This change is a reflection of the changes within our communities, our Polish community continues to grow and we have started to welcome Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers to new homes in Cheshire East.

## Children with Disabilities

9.8 The implementation of the Children and Families Act 2014 included one of the most significant reforms of the legal system for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities for 30 years. The changes give children, young people and their families a greater say in local services and the specific support they receive. Preparing for and managing young people's transition to adulthood is a significant feature of the reforms and so has important implications for the long term planning needs of our cared for children.

9.9 Councils have overall responsibility for children and young people with SEN and disabilities from birth up to the age of twenty-five. The changes implemented since 2014 has changed the way in which we works with schools , health , social care and other professionals to assess for SEN support and deliver SEN support to raise educational attainment , through a single Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP ) for those with more complex needs .

9.10 At present a large piece of work is being undertaken to show the progress made and areas for development. It is recognised that whilst there has been a review of placements there is further work to be done to reduce the number of out of borough educational placements and related higher costs.

9.11 As with all placements being able to offer a wider choice we are better able to ensure that all placements, whether within the borough or externally; are made in the best interests of the child or young person. Alongside the higher cost of external placements, there is also the impact on social work effectiveness, safeguarding, transport costs and the ability to promote future independence when placements are a distance away from a child's home community. This is being addressed through the new statutory SEN assessment process.

9.12 A Sufficiency Statement for SEN is underway to ensure a clear understanding of the both the needs and provision within Cheshire East.

### **Wellbeing of our Cared for Children**

9.13 Changes to how we record health data for our cared for children means we now have a much more accurate picture. Whilst this data suggests 2015/2016 seen a significant drop in the number of health checks completed for our Cared for Children compared to 2015 data we are aware that the current data is much more accurate than previous years. We are also aware that some of our hard to reach young people have health checks outstanding; the team are working hard to identify different approaches and people to engage and address this. The 2015/2016 health checks recorded are as follows:

- 70% of Health Assessments are up to date
- 82.7% of up to date immunisations
- 82.4% of completed developmental check for children aged 5 or u
- 76% with up to date dental check

9.14 It has been acknowledged that there is work to be done to improve this area; our cared for children's health is paramount. Targeted work is underway to address these figures and ensure all young people are up to date with their health requirements.

9.15 In 2015/2016 there were 10 young people who were reported as having substance misuse problem (in 2014/2015 there were 6 and in 2013/2014 there were 8 young people). These young people were referred to services or received support as part of their placement.

9.16 Positively there has been a decrease in the % of young people aged 10+who have an offending outcome within the year: 6.5% down from 8.1%

### **Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)**

9.17 **Care Matters: Time for Change** highlighted the need to improve the mental health of children and young people in care. Evidence suggests that children in care are nearly 5 times more likely to have a mental health disorder than other children.

9.18 All local authorities are required to provide information on the emotional and behavioural health of children and young people in their care. This is collected through a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and a summary figure is submitted to the Department for Education (DfE). The SDQ is a short behavioural screening questionnaire with 5 sections that cover details of emotional difficulties; conduct problems; hyperactivity or inattention; friendship and peer groups; and also positive behaviour, plus an “impact supplement” to assist in the prediction of emotional health problems.

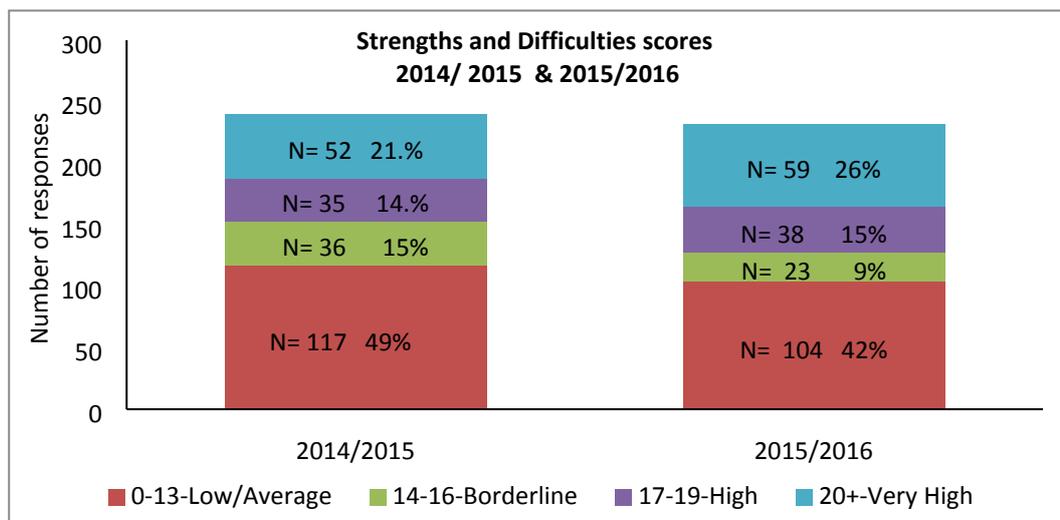
9.18 In accordance with Government requirements, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ's) are sent out annually to the carers of each Cared for Child between the ages of 4 to 16 years. The completed questionnaires are scored upon return, representing the level of difficulty in terms of emotional wellbeing and carer perspective of caring for the child;

- Scores from 0-13 are low/average
- Scores between 14-16 are considered 'borderline';
- Scores from 17 -19 are considered high.
- Any score over 20 is considered to be 'very high' and the maximum score is 40.

9.19 There is a robust process in place for systematically sending out the forms on a monthly basis, including close liaison with the Placements Team and Cared For Nurses (Initial and Review Health Assessments). Follow-up to chase returns includes close liaison with Social Workers, Supervising Social Workers and the Placements Team (in the case of Private Providers). All high scoring returns are alerted to the child's social worker by the Children and Families Support Team Manager, with an offer of a consultation if appropriate.

9.20 In the 2014/2015 cohort, 246 SDQ's were sent out the return rate achieved was 97.56%. In total there were 6 non-returns, of these, 5 were for children placed with parents or relatives. In the current **2015/2016** cohort, 238 SDQ's were sent out, with a return rate of **94.1%** (14 SDQ's not returned); of these 5 were children placed with parents or grandparents, the remaining 9 were not returned from carers. 2 of these non-returns were attributed to placement changes / moves.

9.21 The table below indicates comparisons in overall SDQ scores within this reporting period and 2014/2015 & 2015/2016.



9.22 There has been a 3% (6 children) increase in the reports of children in the very high range in the 2015/2016 cohort in comparison to the previous year's returns. In the 2014/2015 cohort; of the **52 very high scores (20+)**, **67 %** of these children had involvement from Children and Families Support Team.

9.23 In the 2015/2016 cohort, **59 returns had very high scores (20+)**, and **85%** of these children have or had involvement from Children and Families Support Team during this reporting period. At the time of the reporting period, 19 of these children were placed in Private Provision, 1 with Family or Friends Carer, 4 in Voluntary or Third Sector provision and the remainder with Local Authority Foster Carers / Residential. (This information is not static).

9.24 It is important to highlight that of the children scoring very high scores, (which can range between 20 and 40) the average very high score from within the data is **23**. 3 scores across the cohort were above **30**, with the highest being **32**.

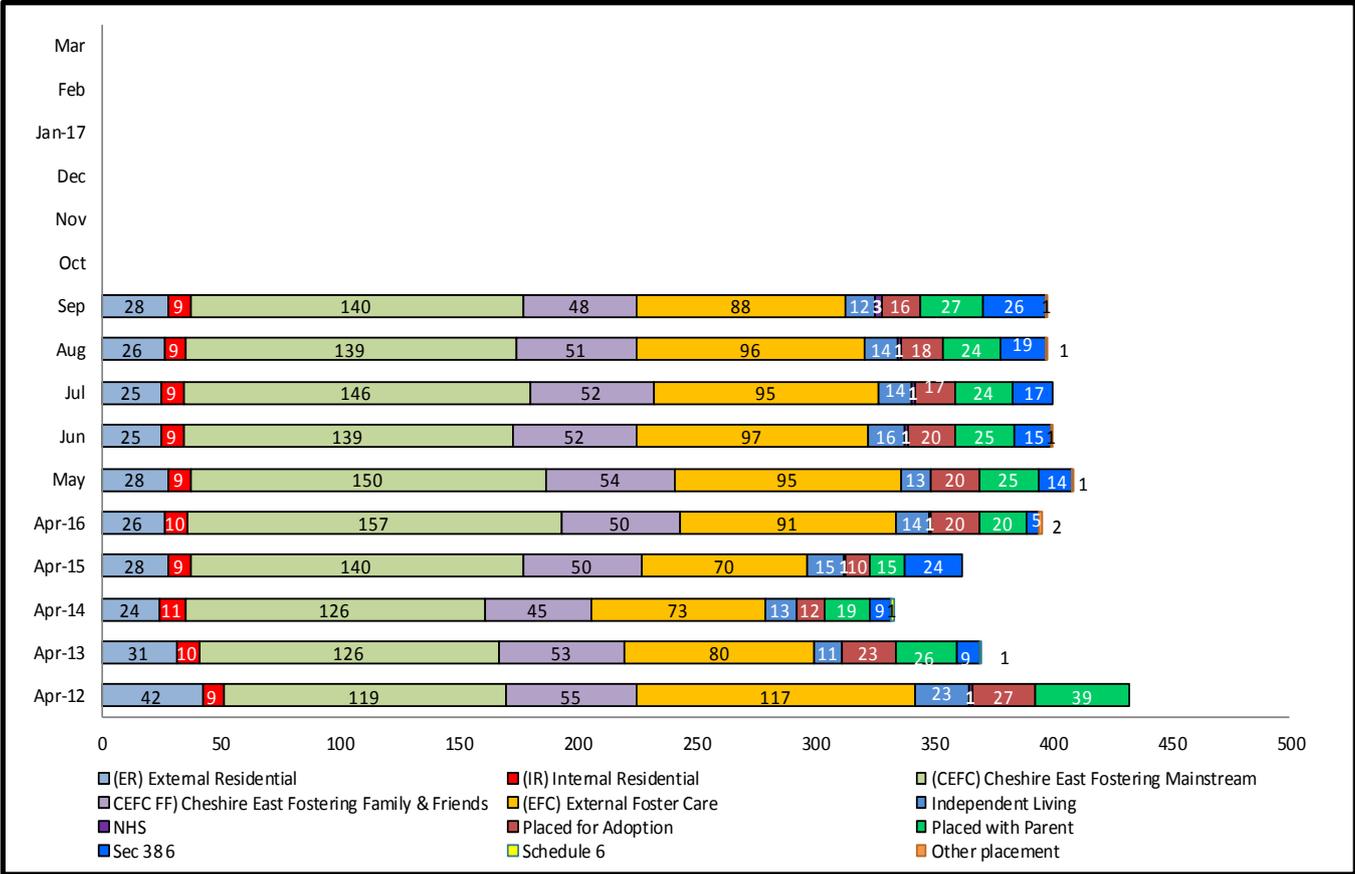
9.25 In comparison with last year's cohort there was a noticeable change in the genders of children with very high scores. It is evident that boys in the 11-17 age bracket are presenting in the current cohort year with more difficulties from the carer perspective as well as socially

and educationally, which is reflected in the higher reported scores. (2014/15 11-17 age bracket totals; 16 boys and 17 girls, compared to 23 boys and 16 girls in the current cohort)

**Placement Provision**

9.26 As highlighted there are challenges in finding residential placements across the North West and beyond. In the last month it was reported that there was only 1 secure placement available to the whole country. For Cheshire East there is also an additional challenge with the number of internal foster carers, how we use these carers and an increase in the usage of IFA’s. The following table presents the number of placement types used during this year, April – September alongside previous years dating back to 2012.

**Cared for Children by Placement Type (April 2016-March 2016)**



9.27 The table above shows an increase in the number of external foster carers being used; 91 in April 2016 compared to 70 in April 2015, Note that 77% (68) of children placed in IFAs are matched permanently this is supportive of our work to provide children permanence within a family setting. Whilst there is further work to be done to address this there is evidence that that work around the recruitment and good matching for CE foster carers is paying off with an increase of 17 (April 2016) compared to April 2015.

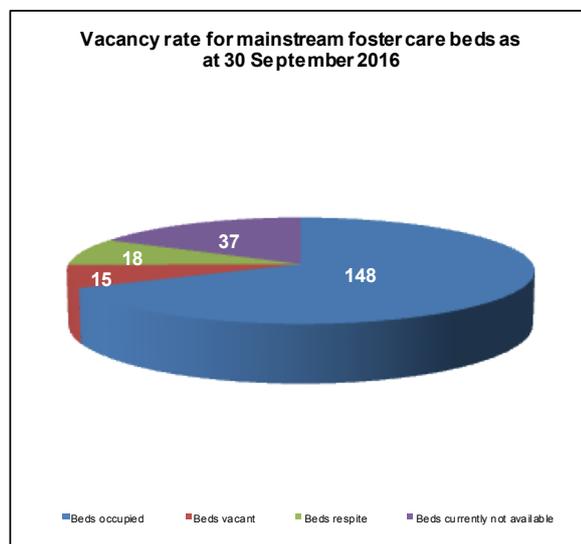
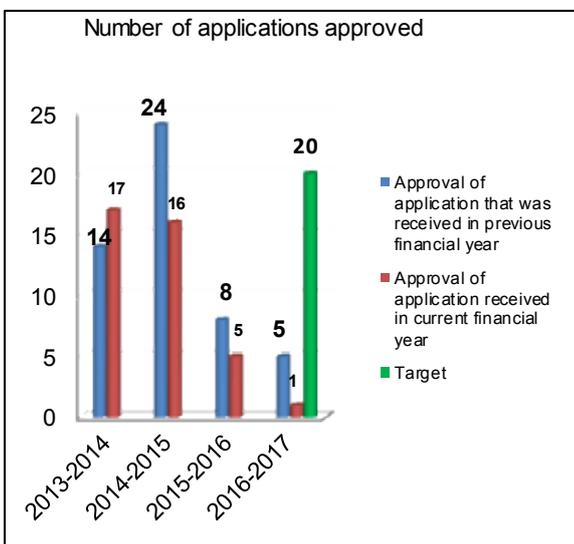
- 9.28 The percentage of the cared for children population (31<sup>st</sup> March 2016) accessing a placement beyond 20 miles of their previous registered address is 17%, this is a 1% increase from the previous year.
- 9.29 This means that less than 1 in 5 cared for children in Cheshire East is accommodated over 20 miles from their home authority. This position is not too far adrift of the general position across the North West and we would be looking to reduce this further to 10% and to better understand the rationale for those placed at distance from the authority. Further analysis is being undertaken to understand the placement decision, presenting need and any gaps in local provision that would have supported a placement closer to the young person's home community. However in line with Narey's report the driver in CE is to ensure we have the best fit placement that meets the needs of each young person, whilst ideally we would prefer this to be within or close to CE sometimes that is not the best solution for the individual.
- 9.30 The difficulties in finding placements for certain cohorts, the requirement for specialist placements that are lacking in CE all add to the work that is required to ensure a wider provision of placements. Work this year to develop the provider market, the residential redesign and a continued successful Early Help offer will hopefully impact and ensure an increase in positive outcomes.
- 9.31 In some cases it is quite appropriate for a cared for child to be placed a distance from their home setting due to safeguarding concerns or to accommodate the significant levels of need that sometimes present. This should be a clear part of the Child's Care Plan. Strong links with other authorities should also support this placement to ensure there are the right support and services available within that area, within an authority with clear strategies around MFH, CSE and has a strong LSCB that supports local providers.
- 9.32 When our cared for children are placed further afield inappropriately, however this can have an adverse effect in respect of quality of care; the distance from a child's wider family and community can lead to placement breakdown which will impact on good outcomes for the individual child . It may also increase the overall cost of placement (i.e. additional social work time and travel) and weaken the ability to quality assure the levels of care being provided. Ensuring all placements have clear IPA's and QA visits that challenge placements will help address this.

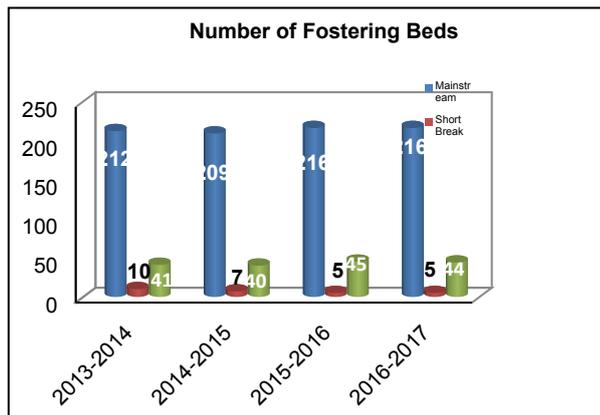
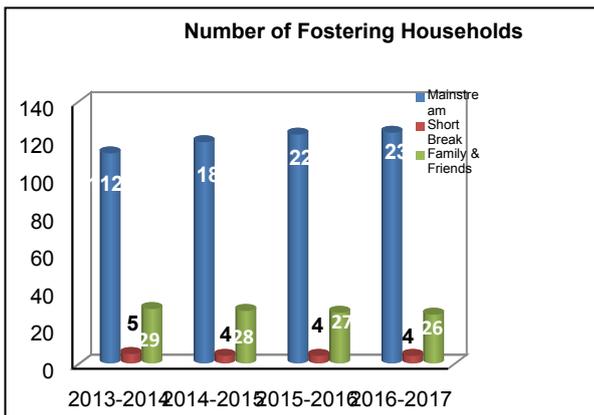
## Foster Carers

10. In 2015 -16 Cheshire East's Foster Carer recruitment strategy looked to strengthen capacity, building on the work begun in 2014. This work has continued; through publicising the benefits of working for Cheshire East and prioritising the following:

- Promotion of our Fostering Capacity Scheme loans and grants
- Promotion of our simpler payments scheme and guaranteed retainers for newly approved carers awaiting matching
- Reduction in assessment time to between 16-18 weeks and further collaboration with our North West partners to consolidate the reduction in assessment time across NW and increase the numbers of inquiries translated into approvals
- Comprehensive training and development for foster carers –from pre-approval through to specialist skill development for particular placement needs
- Development of our Fostering Plus Scheme to attract foster carers who can be supported to develop specialist skills.

10.1 We continue to build our portfolio of foster carers and develop the skills and capacity of our existing carers. It is recognised that there is more to be done as we are currently well below the targeted level and are more reliant upon IFA's for more specialist care.





10.2 Positively we have seen the reduction in assessment time having an impact on the number of approved foster carer applications. However whilst the process is speedier the number of successful applications has dropped.

10.3 Fostering Plus Scheme has proved successful with the carers who have been supported through this. Increasing the number of our carers with specialist skills will ultimately result in a greater opportunity of placement choice as an alternative to utilising residential provision or to act as a step down for some children currently in residential care.

10.4 Fostering Plus scheme includes a guaranteed level of payment; specifically for children aged 7-18 with complex needs, mother and baby, sibling groups. By targeting our resources we hope to ensure the best provision for some of our most vulnerable cohorts whilst at the same equipping and developing our foster carers.

10.5 Work continues with our neighbouring authorities to explore further collaboration opportunities around the use of spare capacity and specific skilled carer requirements. Specifically we are working with Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington to collaborate around capacity, recruitment and training.

10.6 The Front Door continues to be operational and to date successful, opportunities for collaborative work are being explored with Cheshire West and Warrington to develop this further.

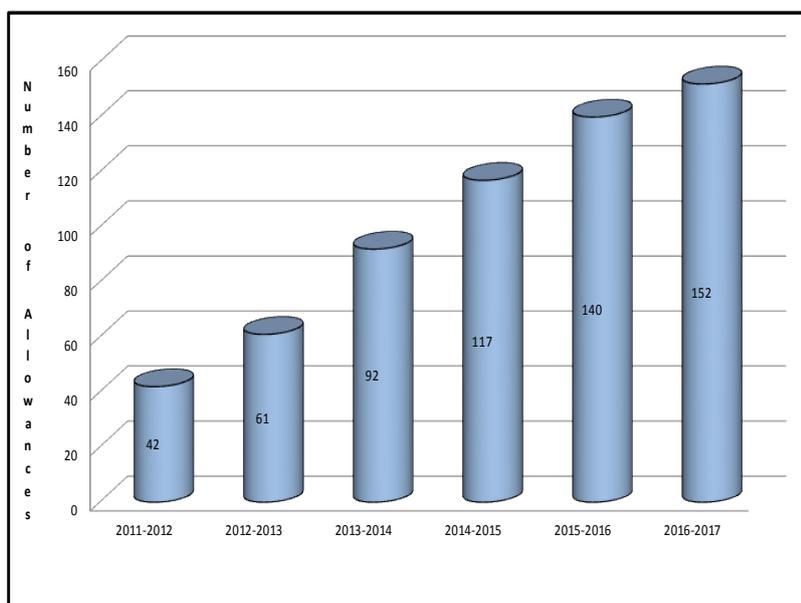
10.7 The number of Cared for Children placed with Cheshire East foster carers has been reducing slowly since 2010 from a high of 272 in September 2010, 181 at 31 March 2014 there was a slight rise in March 2015 to 197 but we have seen a decline during the past year with the current total at 148 . (September 2016)

However the % of cared for children placed with our foster carers remains consistent at around 50%.

10.8 We know we need to improve our ability to place older cared for children with the right foster carers; in particular children aged 11+ who often have more complex support needs. This includes foster carer households able to take on larger sibling groups of cared for children and carers who can support the needs of children with disabilities. We also need to broaden the diversity of our foster carer households- in particular to meet the needs of Eastern European families within the Cheshire East community. Work has begun to address these requirements through our recruitment and retention strategy

10.9 The number of Cheshire East Family and Friends placements has increased slightly having previously been 45 in March 2014, 49 at March 2015. It currently stands at 51. This remains consistent at 13% of the cared for population, compared to the national average which stands at 8.0%. Retaining family / friend ties for children is a real positive but Cheshire East recognises the risk to stability for children and the need for alternative arrangements should this type of placement breakdown. A significant amount of resource is required to support these arrangements to enable them to continue in a positive manner. Given the fragility of these arrangements and the focus on the more stable legal arrangements identified through Cheshire East's staying put policy; Cheshire East continues to work with families to pursue special guardianship as an alternative. Work undertaken following the previous Sufficiency Statements evidences the impact and success achieved in increasing the numbers of Special Guardianship.

### Number of Special Guardianship Allowances



10.11 In May 2014 the Children & Families Act 2014 place a duty on local authorities to have Staying Put arrangements in place to enable young adults to remain in their foster

placements until they are 21 years of age. Our new policy which is being introduced encompasses in-house placements and IFA placements. It clarifies the need for early identification of young people who are eligible or may wish to remain in current placement under staying put arrangements; so that we can establish as early as possible whether the carer household is able to meet the staying put arrangement. The financing of these placements would also be reviewed alongside fostering allowances. Cheshire East's Staying Put arrangement provides support and a monitoring process through our Personal Advisors who are located in our Permanence Through Care Team. This supports and informs capacity planning and the ongoing recruitment strategy. Our Foster carer training now also includes courses on preparing young people for independence. There are currently 15 young people in Staying put arrangements.

## Independent Fostering Agencies

- 11.0 Through the NW and GM Framework CE has access to a wide number of IFA's with a range of provision ranging from short breaks to therapeutic models. There are over 40 providers on the Frameworks, split into 3 Tiers, graded on a cost and quality basis. Referrals are sent out in order of the Tiers. Tier 1 Providers are the first point of call if the search for our internal Foster Carers has been unsuccessful and a FC placement has been identified as the most appropriate.
- 11.1 The average weekly cost of IFA placements across the NW local authorities has reduced from £829 in 2010 to £792 in 2014. Cheshire East's continuing participation in the NW Fostering framework contract has helped to reduce and stabilise our costs at £780 per week ie just under the NW average.
- 11.2 A number of IFA's are developing their provision to provide more specialist provision including CSE, harmful sexual behaviour as well as a 'step down' provision. Within CE we are working with providers to encourage IFA's and Residential providers to work more closely to further develop this offer to provide a step down provision.
- 11.3 During the past year we have noted that IFA's have stepped up to take on some of our more complex cases when our internal FC's have been unable to – a piece of work is currently underway to understand the reasons for this and to discover if there are things we could do differently internally.

11.4 In line with the Framework there are set Terms and Conditions, if a placement is not found within the framework a search maybe undertaken to seek an 'Off-Contract' IFA. This provider is requested to sign up to the T&C's providing a standardised approach to travel, pocket money, clothing allowance, holidays etc...

## Residential

12.0 It is an exciting time for our residential provision as Cheshire East Borough Council Children and Families Department are currently undertaking a procurement exercise to find a provider of residential children's care to support the Council with its continuing journey to improving outcomes for our cared for children and young people.

12.1 This service will provide care to five separate homes within Cheshire East, utilising the three existing ; two within the Macclesfield locality, and one within Crewe. The residential redesign has requested that the successful provider acquires two further homes within the Crewe area. Our target is for 8% of cared for children being placed in residential care. This would be good performance. If we have an average 375 cared for children this = 30 children in residential care. Therefore we would still be requiring agency beds to top up where need dictates.

12.2 The composition of the five homes will be as follows:

- Home 1 (existing) with 3 beds within Macclesfield Home 2 (existing) with 4 beds within Macclesfield\*
- Home 3 (existing) with 3 beds within Crewe
- Home 4 & 5 (new) with 2 beds each within Crewe

*\*The above homes have the option of providing one additional bed each and as such are registered as 4 bed units with Ofsted*

12.3 The additional two homes in Crewe will be within close proximity to each other. The care and support within these homes will work closely and in conjunction with the CEC Social Care, CEC therapeutic services and/or other Cheshire East based partner agencies to provide intensive support to the child/young person. This wrap around support will be formalised via a Service Level Agreement with the successful supplier. The additional two homes in Crewe will provide much needed capacity

- 12.4 This redesign is in response to needs identified as part of the 2015 sufficiency statement and ongoing commissioning work which ensures demand is identified and met in an ongoing process.
- 12.5 When searching for an external residential placement the following is taken into consideration; the experience of the provider, standard of accommodation, location, match with other children and young people and most importantly the need of the young person and their family.
- 12.6 When a placement is found the Placements team check Ofsted ratings, financial stability, insurance checks (via Placements North West) and references from other LA's.
- 12.7 Quality Assurance visits are conducted, Reg 44 reports are regularly reviewed and we collate notifications around Ofsted inspections. If there are concerns about a placement an unannounced inspection would be undertaken.
- 12.8 As part of Placements North West we contribute to the QA timetable, making better use of resources by sharing inspection findings.

### **Children's Home provision**

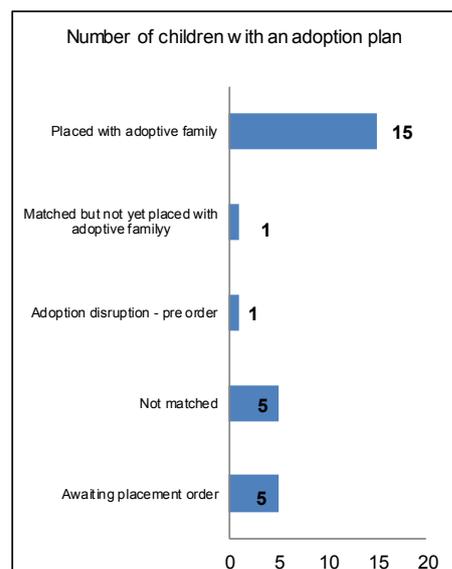
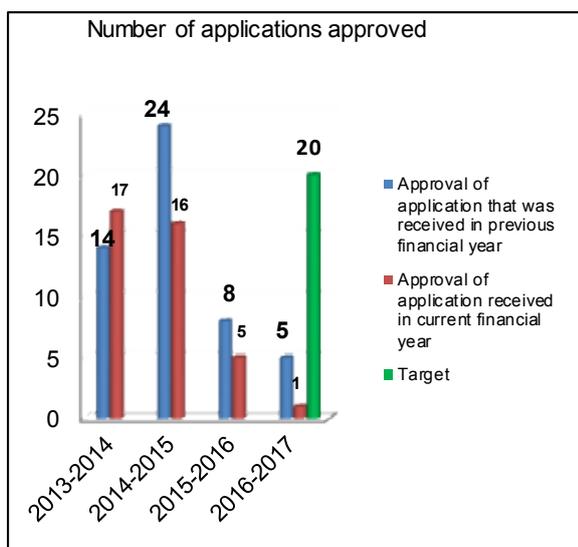
<b>Ofsted rating</b>	<b>Number of providers</b>	<b>Number of current placements</b>
Outstanding	6	6
Inadequate	1	1
Good	14	21
Wales CSSIW	2	2
Sustained Effectiveness	1	1
Requires improvement	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>36</b>

## Residential School provision

Ofsted rating	Number of providers	Number of current placements
Outstanding	3	4
Good	3	7
Wales CSSIW	1	1
Requires Improvement	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>

## Adoption

- 13.0 Cheshire East has continued to run its recruitment drive for prospective adoptive carers independently and alongside the regional partnership with Stockport MBC, Tameside, and Trafford known as Four4Adoption.
- 13.1 Moving forward Cheshire East is part of a Regional Adoption Agency with Stockport MBC, Trafford MBC, Manchester MBC and Salford MBC. The Regional Adoption Agency should be operational from April 2017
- 13.2 Income generation continued but decreased with a focus on linking and matching children to approved adoptive families waiting.
- 13.3 The table below shows the number of applications approved alongside the number of children with an adoption plan.



13.4 Recruitment was targeted to identify families who could consider children in terms of fostering to adopt and families who would be able to adopt sibling groups and older children.

13.5 The ability to have a good number of adoptive carers is essential to ensure a strong internal offer to children coming into care. Having clear plans for adoption as an option for our children is a significant positive for individual young people and also improves our ability to meet the sufficiency duty.

13.6 Cheshire East now runs its recruitment drive for prospective adoptive carers alongside the fostering recruitment drive. Cheshire East is now part of a regional partnership with Stockport MBC, Tameside MBC and Trafford MBC known as Four4Adoption and Adopt-Northwest 23. The service has now developed a strong business profile which has enabled Cheshire East to build a larger profile of adoptive carers who can take children with a wider range of complex need and from wider afield than Cheshire East. The ability to share a marketing and recruitment strategy across the region has created a more cost effective process which is also more efficient; this has also enabled Cheshire East to generate income from the service to support local adoptive requirements. Cheshire East will continue with this approach. The ability to match children in care to adoptive families and maintain these arrangements through the long term is essential in order to avoid the trauma of breakdown for individual children and the costs involved. Effective post adoption support is critical to the sustainability of adoption plans.

13.7 **Cheshire East Adoption Applications and Approvals** - There continues to be a national focus on the time taken to conduct the adoption process. Cheshire East has successfully improved its performance in this area in 2015/2016 reducing the approval time from 7 months to 5 months. Of those who took longer this was due to additional matching requirements including sibling groups and further complex needs.

13.8 Since April, sixteen children have been adopted and seven of these children were placed in foster to adopt placements. Another fifteen children are already placed with adopters – this is a great achievement for our children and young people.

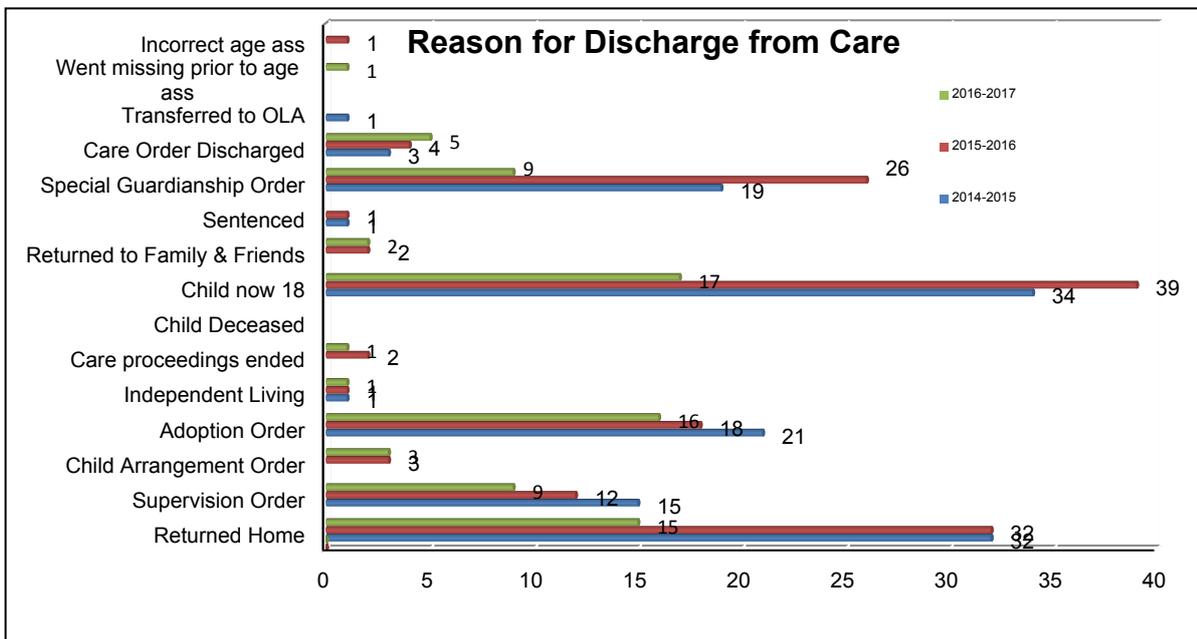
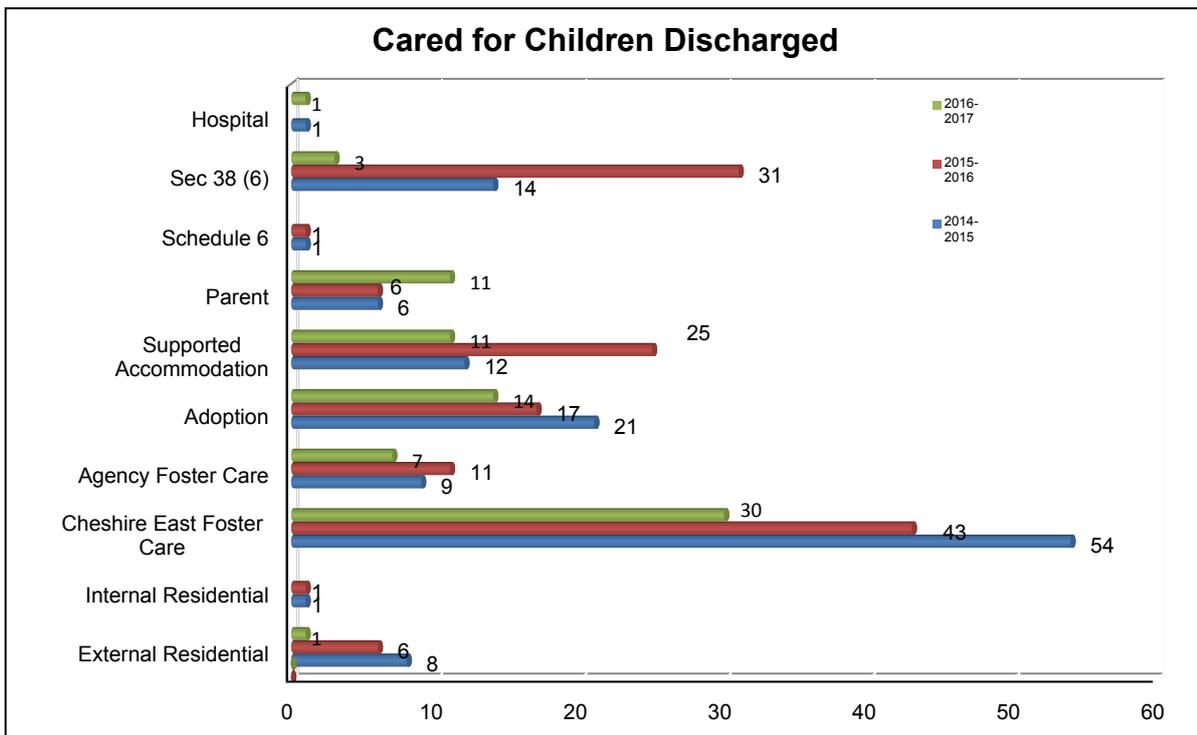
13.9 In 2016/2017 the aim is to continue to:

- Develop our Foster-to-Adopt strategy
- Identify 4 Foster-to-Adopt placements
- Launch specific recruitment drive for prospective adopters of older children with complex needs and for sibling groups

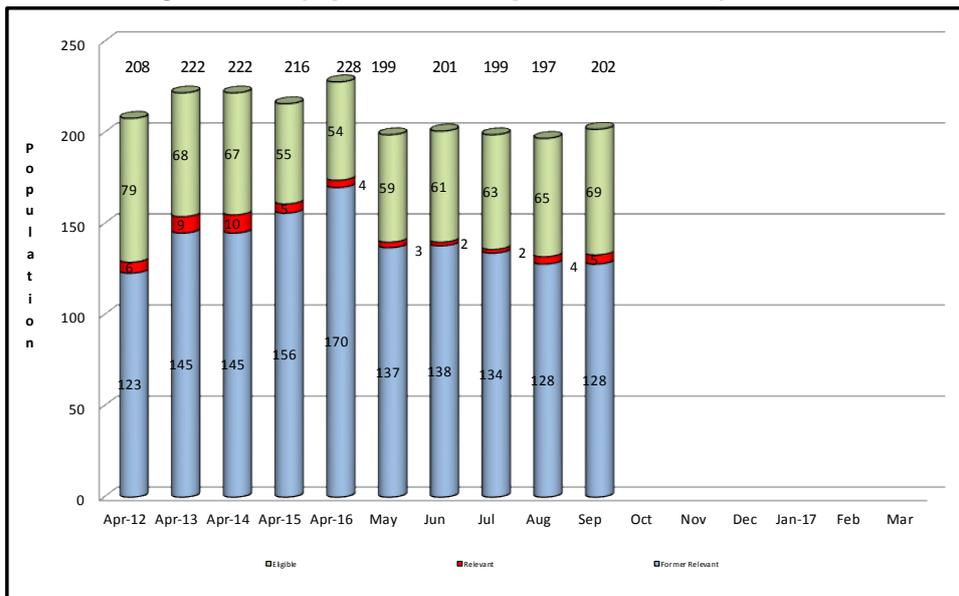
- Continue to support family and friends carers ,where appropriate, to take on special guardian ship
- Continue to review approval process and further reduce application/ assessment times where possible

## Leaving Care

14.0 During the past year there were 197 Care Leavers. .The table below shows the range of reasons for the numbers leaving or discharged from care.



## Care Leavers by Status (April 2016-September 2016)



- 14.1 The biggest development during 2015-2016 to support care leavers has been Ignition. Ignition is an innovate project that has been established to support young people to have the best, most appropriate transition for when they leave care
- 14.2 Ignition is for young people aged 15½ plus who are thinking about where and how they would like to live when they leave care (we think the earlier we can plan the better the experience!). Making sure our young people start independence at the right time and in the right place provides the best chance for a positive journey to adulthood and will support the best possible life chances.
- 14.3 When a referral is made to Children’s commissioning team the details are passed to Voice for Children or Crewe YMCA who each have identified people who will meet with individual young people to discuss their aspirations.
- 14.4 These views, the referral form and the key workers opinion all contribute to the panel’s discussion. Each young person is welcome to attend the panel or they can opt to be contacted during the meeting to ensure we can get any immediate feedback about ideas.
- 14.5 The panel shares ideas, suggestions, good practice etc. to develop an action plan that will support each young person to achieve their future living goals. This may be accessing a taster house, supported lodging or being supported through a semi-independent setting with a phased transition to young people being in their own property.
- 14.6 The panel also discuss young people who have been supported to move on; this helps ensure the placement is still meeting their needs and also helps develop our learning and

placement knowledge the whole process is very important for commissioning as it helps us to understand where any gaps may be that we can then work to address or identify good practice that we can celebrate and build upon.

- 14.7 We now have a strong offer for our care leavers including supported independent living, supported lodgings with 'hosts', dispersed properties with the offer of floating support alongside Staying Put and Staying Close arrangements. We want to ensure our role as a Corporate Parent continues to be a positive one; ensuring support – in whatever form that is required – is available.
- 14.8 We continue to work closely with our housing providers to further develop a better offer for our young people and ensuring the right offer is in place. Work is underway to look at how CE can act as the guarantor to Social Landlords thereby supporting young people to find a home that they can invest in and know they can continue to live in once they leave care.

### **Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers**

- 15.0 Asylum intake into the country is largely driven by world events. The ongoing conflict in Syria remains to pose a significant challenge in terms of asylum intake into the UK, with a mass population movement since summer 2015 having been seen as a result of this conflict. 2015 saw a significant increase in the volume of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) arriving in the UK, with 3,043 claims being lodged; representing a 56% increase on the previous year. Owing to their geography, Kent County Council bore the most significant brunt of UASC presentations, reaching over 1000 cases being taken into their care over the summer months of 2015
- 15.1 In February of this year, the Government also committed to resettling up to 3,000 individuals at risk from North Africa and the Middle East; with a focus specifically on resettling children at risk (CARS). These children will predominantly be in family care (parents or uncles/aunties); with family units largely consisting of one or two children. It is anticipated that family units will be resettled under the same terms as the Syrian Resettlement Programme (although this has yet to be confirmed formally), however that there will be a proportion of cases identified by UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that will be unaccompanied children who are deemed to be at risk.
- 15.2 In addition to the above commitments; in April of this year the Government also committed to resettle a specified amount (not yet determined) of unaccompanied refugee

children from Europe, where it is in the best interests of the child to do so. This is currently being termed as the Lord Dubs commitment.

15.3 Cheshire East have been extremely proactive in welcoming these extremely vulnerable young people. We have to date welcomed 6 young people as part of the government along with approximately 12 young people who have arrived via two of the large and busy service stations located in CE.

15.4 Analysing the needs of each young person we have been able to source accommodation in an innovative way; taking a long term lease on a private property

## **Rights and Participation**

16.0 Voice for Children is a Community Interest Company established by two passionate Cheshire East care leavers who have experience of the care system including residential, fostering, boarding schools and emergency placements. During 2016 they have continued to champion the voice of cared for children and care leavers, their portfolio of mentoring and training has continued to grow not only within Cheshire East but across the North West.

16.1 Voice for Children have worked alongside the Commissioners and commissioned services to complete QA placement visits and Reg 44 inspections. Their focus and perspective has been invaluable in challenging practice and thinking.

16.2 The Care Leavers Forum is an independent forum that continues to champion and strengthen the voice of children and young people who are in care or leaving care. In 2014 the care leavers group challenged staff to live on £21 per week and took part in a Ready, Steady Cook style challenge. This challenge has now become an annual event and has even produced a cook book!

## **PAN CHESHIRE JOINT PROTOCOL**

17.0 The PAN Cheshire Joint Protocol Children and Young People who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care 2016-2017 has been developed to ensure a consistent approach across all agencies and introduces the new Police definitions of 'missing' and 'absent'.

17.1 The protocol has been written jointly by Halton Borough Council, Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Warrington Borough Council and Cheshire Constabulary and relates to all children and young people who run away and go missing or absent from home or care. This includes children and young people looked after by another Local Authority and placed in a homecare or residential school within Cheshire. Additionally, the protocol applies in parts to children and young people looked after by Cheshire and placed in home, care or residential school outside of Cheshire.

17.2 The protocol alongside the work undertaken by Catch22 has resulted in a huge reduction of cared for children's missing episodes. Working collaboratively with neighbouring authorities has also been of great benefit and has strengthened the relationship with the police service.

### **Unassessed contact**

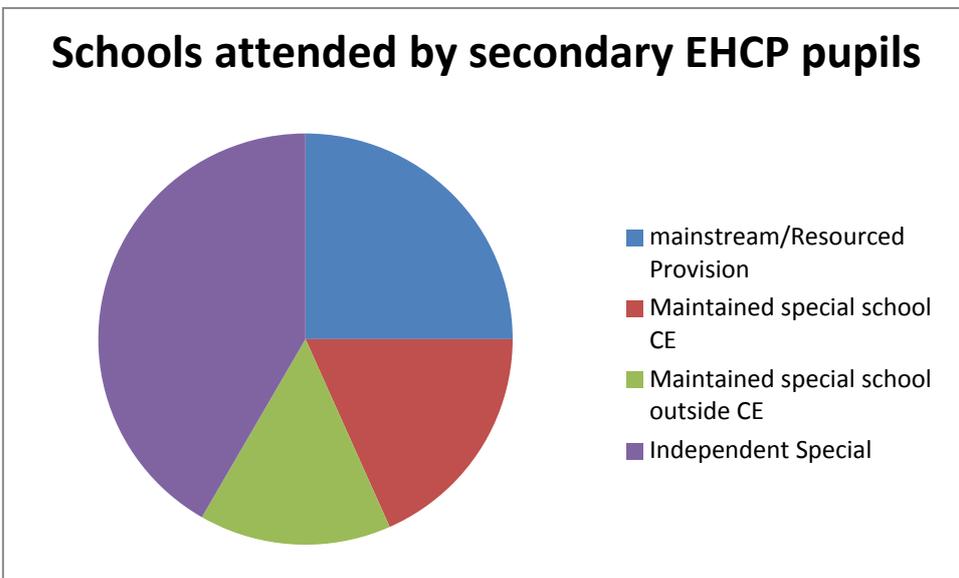
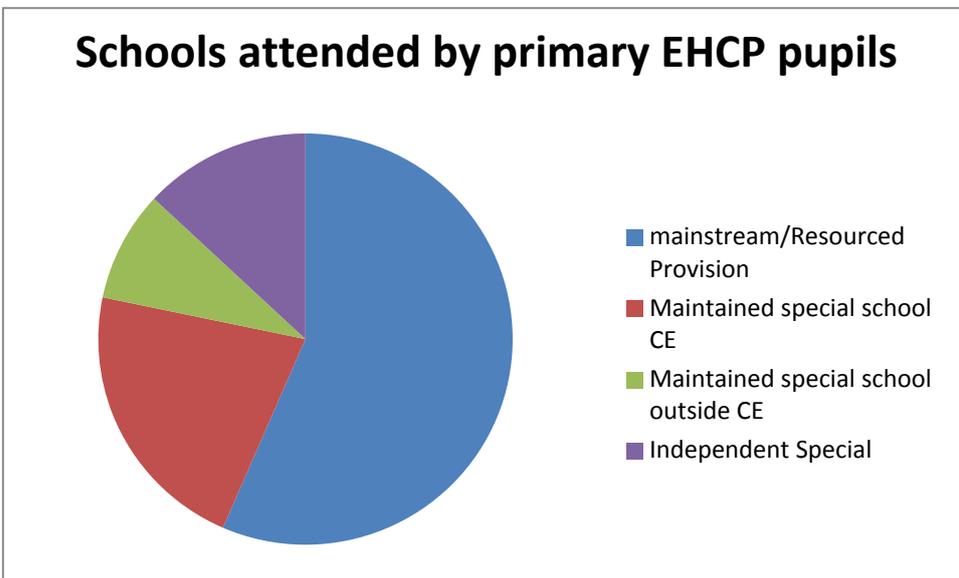
18.0 During the past year we have seen an increase in the demand for unassessed contact supervisions. This has resulted in a new commission that reflects this rise. Challenges have come from experiencing instruction from Courts as to the number of unassessed contacts which is often at odds to the number suggested by social care, an increase in sibling groups and a lack of effective monitoring of the existing contract. A needs analysis has been undertaken to ensure the new commission is effective and a monitoring group has been established to track use and demand.

### **Virtual School**

19.0 All children in care are supported by the Virtual School. This includes those who are under five and over 16 years old. The Cheshire East Virtual School is well resourced and each child will have the support of a specialist who is able to advise schools, settings and providers on the best way to identify and meet the needs of the child, always promoting high levels of engagement, achievement and progression. The focus of the school is to allow every child to achieve their full potential and narrow the attainment gap between them and their peers, particularly in GCSEs.

19.2 Working closely with Social Care the Virtual School has a prominent role in the planning, sourcing and quality assuring education places, including challenging schools when necessary. The effective impact of the work of the Virtual School is enhanced by close links with the Special Educational Needs, Early Years, Youth Engagement and Youth Support Services to ensure that the child is educated in the most appropriate place and receives the support they require in a co-ordinated way.

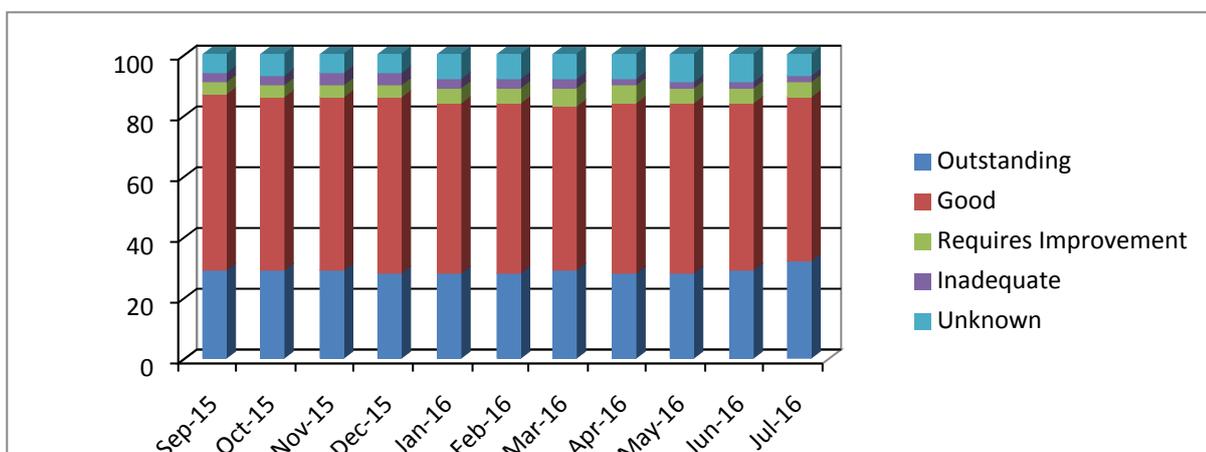
19.3 Forty seven percent of school age –children in care have Special Educational Needs which is lower than the national level of sixty one percent. The majority of these have an Education Health and Care Plan which is monitored and maintained by the Special Education Needs department who advise on the nature of the school required and then consult to secure a place.



Children are allocated places in independent schools when there are no places in the local maintained schools or where the Annual Review indicates that the maintained school cannot meet the needs of the child.

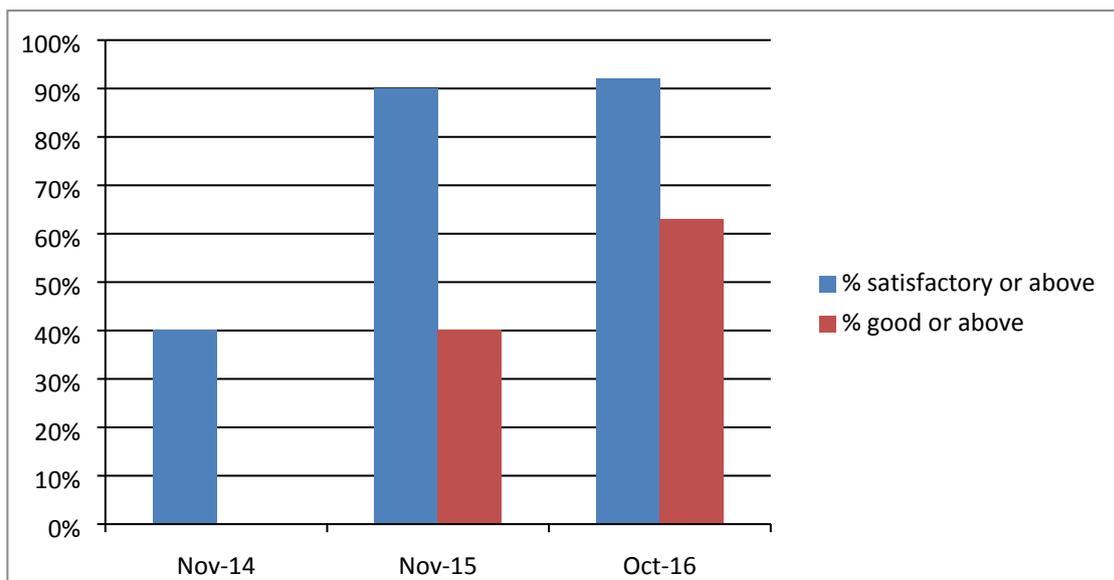
- 19.4 There are no independent special schools within Cheshire East so children requiring this provision who live in Cheshire East are transported to schools in neighbouring authorities.
- 19.5 We continue to work creatively with the Virtual School team to ensure we best meet the needs of our young people; for example planning and implementing a joint education and support programme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers and liaison between the Virtual School and Workforce Development to secure apprenticeships for care leavers with contractors working with the council.
- 19.6 Children are placed in schools which have Ofsted ratings of good or outstanding unless there are mitigating circumstances. Risk assessments are carried out for any child who attends a school where an inspection finds the school to be inadequate.

Graph below shows the ratings of school 2015-16. Schools outside of England or new schools, (Free School or new academy) which have not yet been inspected are recorded as unknown.



- 19.7 Personal Education Plans, (PEPS) are produced termly for all children and young people up to the age of 18. For children under two years old these are carried out by Social Workers with the carer while for those over two years old they are led by the education provider (nursery, school or college) with the Social Worker and returned to the Virtual School.
- 19.8 Schools are asked to provide termly data reports on each child so that their progress can be monitored.

- 19.9 Within the PEP document schools identify the support and interventions which will be provided that are part of the general school provision and also those which are over and above that available to all pupils. These are linked to academic targets where there is a need but may also include personal development and skill development. Funding for the additional support can be requested from the Virtual School from the Pupil Premium (CLA) grant to local authorities.
- 19.10 Schools are required to account for the spending of the Pupil Premium (LAC), to monitor its impact on the achievement of the child and to share their findings with the Virtual School.
- 19.11 Cases which are complex or where there are concerns about engagement, achievement or progress are rated as having high support needs and Virtual School Advisors will attend the PEP meeting to give support and advice.
- 19.12 The Virtual School attend PEPs for children in Y6 or Y11 or for those who have a change of school in order to ensure that the maximum support is in place before exams and to aid a smooth transition.
- 19.13 All returned PEPs are reviewed to assess the level of support needed. PEP quality is monitored through a thorough Quality Assurance process (revised 2015) and a report is returned to the school. Where PEPs are inadequate, the Virtual School will make contact with the individual school and advise on changes needed.
- 19.14 Designated Teachers and staff working with cared for children are offered training and support by the Virtual School. Regular network meetings and conferences are held and staff will visit schools to observe and put individual plans in place for children who are having significant difficulties.



## Cared For Children Panels

20.0 Within the service there are currently three panels related to cared for children. Each panel has a different focus but all have the common purpose of ensuring each placement is delivering the right outcomes for each young person and is the right fit.

20.1 **Complex Needs Panel** keeps track of some of the most complex cases. The panel also acts as a review point for social workers to provide updates and agree future funding and new review dates. The panel provides challenge to ensure the best plans are in place and that placements do not 'drift'.

20.2 **Permanence Tracking Panel** meets monthly and covers all new placements, family finder, family placements, Section 20 and care leavers. This panel comprises managers, IRO, Commissioning, Virtual School and Placements and allows information to be shared, issues to be addressed and a thorough knowledge of each young person.

20.3 **Children Causing Concern** is a relatively new panel whose purpose is too track children and young people who have:

- 3 or more placement moves
- Low attendance
- Youth Offending

20.4 The aim is that by identifying those children who may not have complex/high cost needs but who are matching some of the indicators that we know are likely to lead to poor outcomes – low educational attainment and becoming NEET post-16 – we can further understand some of the contributors to these issues and find ways to address them.

## Transition

21.0 The importance of effective pathways and care planning for our cared for children with complex needs transitioning to adulthood is fully recognised. However, in practice, the actual experience of that journey for individuals is not always positive and planned well. In 2014-15 a transition policy and protocol for all partners was developed to put in place new arrangements for the transition of young people as they move between the ages of 14-25. The first steps included the establishment of a Transition Operational Group to hold lead professionals to account for effective transition and help overcome barriers.

21.1 The joint adult and children's social care funded transition co-ordinator post has worked hard to bring this group together to ensure that effective joint working across Children's, Adult and Health Services fully support young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families prepare for adulthood and achieve positive life outcomes. It is important that services explore more joined-up working practices in order to ensure a smooth transition for young people in their transition to adulthood.

## Transport

22.0 The overall cost of placements for cared for children should include the cost of transport required for travel to school, contact and social worker time / cost of travel. A strong, local market (ie within 20 miles) ensures that additional costs associated with travel are minimised. Analysis of the options available when sourcing an external agency placement should include the cost of travel.

22.1 All the tendered regional frameworks for Residential and Fostering have clear expectations in the core cost specification for agencies to include all the transport costs with a 40 mile radius for residential and 20 mile radius for IFA.

22.2 In 2016-17 a review of home to school transport will be undertaken which will encompass transport for cared for children.

## Report Writing

23.0 Individual Placement Agreements (IPA) are a key component to enabling a successful placement. This is the document that sets out the agreed outcomes that the provider is to support the young person to achieve. The IPA is the only legally binding document the local authority has with the provider that specifies agreed outcomes and financial detail such as pocket money, savings etc, being clear at the start of the placement about what is expected to be achieved ensures everyone knows what they are working towards.

23.1 IPAs are completed promptly within the placement finding process. This enables quality assurance visits and social workers statutory visits to have clear direction through an IPA that contains bespoke outcomes for the individual child and a clear rational and timescale for any agreed additional services – ensuring no additional financial surprises once the placement commences.

23.2 Work is underway to look at raising the standard of all our IPA's and speeding up the timescales by adapting Liquid Logic so information submitted as part of the placement request / referral is easily transferred to the IPA providing a clear range of outcomes that only need specifics adding based upon the particular provider.

23.3 Workshops are planned during 2016/2017 to support our workforce to achieve high quality referral requests and clear and concise IPA's.

## Quality Assurance Visits

24.0 The framework for quality assurance visits has been reviewed to ensure that its coverage is rigorous and joined up with the collaborative approach being led by Placements North West. In January 2015 the approach to quality assurance visits started to include Voice for Children alongside Commissioning. These joint visits have continued and proved highly effective in ensuring the voice and eyes of the young person is central to the visit.

24.1 Prior to the QA visit information is collated from family, social workers, IRO, Virtual School and any other professionals who are linked to the young person. This information may be opinions on what is going well, concerns or contract issues. This information is shared with the provider. Likewise feedback is gathered from the provider and fed back to CE.

24.2 Work is underway to review the QA format, streamlining the existing form and ensuring it is more child / young person focused. If Ofsted, Reg 44 and Social Work & IRO Care Plans are all used effectively the purpose of the QA visit should be about the young person's outcomes and how these are being met and reviewed and progressed.

24.3 A commitment has been made to ensure at least one QA visit per year.

### Quality and Value for Money

25.0 Directing limited resources to our most vulnerable children in the most cost effective manner is critical. This requires the whole system and the sufficiency duty in its widest sense to be effective. It is vital that the current budgetary control over external agency placements is maintained in order to allocate maximum resources to children and young people priority areas.

25.1 The earlier that effective influence over required outcomes, quality assurance and negotiations within placement finding takes place the better.

25.2 When a placement is being considered and the provider / home has not been utilised in the past then a short joint visit by social worker and Commissioning is undertaken to gain assurance around quality and start the process of negotiation re price and package of support.

25.3 Commissioning should be fully involved from the earliest possible stage of placement finding in order to support the negotiation surrounding cost and quality when real influence can be applied.

25.4 In order to challenge providers on the cost of existing placements a clear rationale is deployed which includes the current quality of placement, care planning and benchmarked rates of other similar provision (and in some cases the price secured by other Local Authorities for the same placement). An effective negotiating strategy ensures that challenge to providers is productive whilst retaining positive ongoing relationships.

25.5 The external agency placement for cared for children have a formal, binding contract in place. This provides legal standing to the standards of service required, including safeguarding

responsibilities and ensure rigour to the delivery of excellent outcomes within core cost specifications. All cared for children providers are now required to complete an annual safeguarding self-assessment form that is evaluated jointly with commissioning and an independent safeguarding chair. The annual self-assessment will be tested through the programme of compliance visits.

25.6 A key element to the quality assurance of external agency placements is the statutory Ofsted inspection framework. Cheshire East, as far as possible, look to utilise provision that is rated as good or outstanding. The Authority does not consider inadequate provision when placement finding. The Ofsted rating of all our external agency placements is reported and discussed on a monthly basis at Complex Needs Panel.

### **Development and successes to date include**

26.0 We successfully aligned our Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2015 -2017 with the strategic Children and Young People's plan and service plan for Children's Social Care ; and include the New Belongings action plan so that we have an inclusive child's journey.

26.1 We have continued to build on our suitable accommodation strategy and increase the level of supported tenancies as well as multiple housing options. Our ambition is to offer a choice of two placements to all. This is a high priority for us and we will to work closely with Voice for Children, housing and commissioners to continue to improve our offer; Ignition has supported this development.

26.2 We have improved the numbers in Employment education and training there is still much work to do if we are to have all our young people meaningfully engaged/ supported with EET. We have councillor support and the Care Leavers forum actively engaged as the vehicle to steer this forward.

26.3 We widened the support to 25 years across all services, social care, health, offending and educational support. Young people have indicated a range of services that they would benefit from if they received continuity of support. We will seek to extend the core offer including support to those who offend post 18 years.

- 26.4 We continue to develop a protocol with DWP for timely access to benefits, and reduced sanctions. Although changes in key personnel have impacted on the ability to achieve desired outcomes, the work is in progress this as it remains priority for our young people
- 26.5 We have improved the range of housing and support to ensure suitable housing options for 16 and 17 year olds, whether independent, supported or semi-independent. Cheshire East continues to be a named local authority on the North West Leaving Care framework contract which offers a good range of options across the North West (split into 3 geographical zones). In recent years there has been an increase of semi-independent group living provisions being developed across the North West as this is seen as a good step towards independence for young people. The choice of semi-independent group living accommodation is good with two new semi-independent group living properties (one in Macclesfield and one in Middlewich) to complement the existing provision in Crewe This provides a much better spread of appropriate accommodation in the right locations. Our cared for children tell us that they feel happy and confident in their ability to play a full role in their communities when the choice of accommodation includes locations they feel are their communities. Crewe and Macclesfield represent the home community for 67% of our cared for population and are the places where young people wish to remain into adulthood.
- 26.6 In order to facilitate good planning and decision making for those young people experiencing accommodation difficulties a service has been now developed in partnership with Crewe YMCA to establish two emergency beds for 16 – 18 year olds. This service opened in September 2014. In 2015-16 we utilised the 2 emergency beds flexibly to provide accommodation and support when young people are released from custody. Cheshire East has evolved this provision into collaboration between Cheshire local authorities and Cheshire Police for PACE beds. Discussions are currently ongoing to develop emergency bed provision in Macclesfield.
- 26.7 Residential and IFA Provider Forum – after successfully developing the CE Provider Forum we are now collaborating with Warrington, Halton and Cheshire West and Chester to co-deliver a joint Provider Forum, making good use of time, skills and knowledge.

### **In Conclusion**

- 27.0 In many respects, the sufficiency duty is being met and considerable improvements have been made over the last 12 months to the whole system that works to deliver excellent

outcomes for our children in care through good quality / value for money placements that are close to home, however, plans are in place to further improve the position.

- 27.1 It is important that the actions identified in this Sufficiency Statement are monitored on a quarterly basis to ensure the improvement journey continues and the changes to the number / profile of children in care and the internal / external accommodation market provide appropriate influence on future actions.
- 27.2 The key to performance in this area is ensuring the levels and quality of accommodation for children in care across the market is maximised. The right placement at the start and the stability for children is the key to performance against the sufficiency duty. All our actions should focus on high quality outcomes for our cared for children, their voice should be loud and influence the way we work towards good quality, stable placements that are value for money.
- 27.3 Decision making should reflect the importance of effective early help for children and families and this continuing across the whole life course. Continuous reflection and effective decision making that is sustainable across the lifetime will provide excellent outcomes for our children in care.

## Proposed Actions

This action plan will be updated and added to on a quarterly basis.

<b>Placement Process</b>	<b>Lead:</b>	
<b>Action:</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Quality: to ensure the quality of placement requests is of a high standard through training and development workshops, sharing of good practice and constructive challenge		
To ensure all professionals are aware of and work towards the referral pathway, ensuring commissioning are involved at the right point to allow discussions and negotiations (where appropriate)		
Placement Ending – ensuring all placements have notice given in a timely manner that is clear and agreed – both by the provider and CE		
Undertake a home to school transport review (including cared for children) Reviewing all contracts to ensure all T&C's are being consistently met		
<b>Market Management</b>	<b>Lead:</b>	
<b>Action:</b>	<b>Timeframe:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
Development of a good quality local market through individual meetings with existing and potential providers and working in collaboration across the North West and beyond.	Ongoing	
Continue to develop the Provider Forum and the work / communication that happens between meetings ie via Children Homes and Police meetings (CHAPS)	Ongoing	
Collaboration with Warrington, Halton and Cheshire West and Chester to develop links with the		

providers via a shared forum		
<b>Quality Monitoring</b>	<b>Lead:</b>	
<b>Action:</b>	<b>Timeframe:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
Further development of the quality assurance process by inclusion of the NW CSE self-assessment / evidence framework.		
When IPAs are periodically refreshed outcomes should be updated and description enhanced (incl. internal residential provision)		Commissioning / Social Worker working together to improve the quality of IPA's with SMART Outcome
Pre Placement Visits with commissioning, social worker and following agreement that the placement is suitable the young person		
Quality Assurance Visits – ensuring every placement has at least one visit per year and using this information to inform practice and service delivery		
<b>Fostering</b>	<b>Lead:</b>	
<b>Action/Outcome:</b>	<b>Timeframe:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
Strong business continuity		
Target the recruitment drive for CE fostering and adoptive carers with a particular focus on specialist skills, recruiting carers for complex needs, sibling groups and adoptive carers for older age children etc.		
Challenge practice to ensure all FC are being well matched with children and young people, ensuring needs are met through in-house provision, not external IFA's		
Develop a campaign to spread the FC word through our workforce		
Developing appropriate support and training for FC and young people if placements begin to disrupt		
<b>16+</b>	<b>Lead:</b>	
<b>Action/Outcome:</b>	<b>Timeframe:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
A Care Leavers accommodation and support strategy that builds on the success of New Belongings and market management to date is		

compiled / implemented.		
Continue to develop a range of provision / support that improves independence and secures sustainable accommodation for care leavers beyond the age of 18		
Continue to support Staying Put and Staying Close		
Develop the support available to all young people post 18		
Continue to build upon the Pathway Plan review and use this knowledge to inform commissioning		
<b>Residential</b>	<b>Lead:</b>	
<b>Action/Outcome:</b>	<b>Timeframe:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
To work with the successful provider to deliver the new residential provision		
To continue to review provision against demand and work with providers to encourage new provision if appropriate		
Work with the NW region to address shortages, especially for key cohorts (i.e. 11-15 year olds)		
<b>Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UAAS)</b>	<b>Lead:</b>	
<b>Action/Outcome:</b>	<b>Timeframe:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
To develop plans to ensure appropriate accommodation for UAAS		

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCORECARD FOR CARED FOR CHILDREN'S ACCOMMODATION**

Key performance measures to supplement those included in service scorecards:

		2016-2017				Target	Comment
		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		
1	Actions in published sufficiency statement reviewed					Qtly review	
2	% of cared for children accommodated beyond 20 miles					10%	
3	% of cared for children in external agency placements that are rated good or outstanding					100%	
4	Number of cared for children in external agency placements rated inadequate					0	
5	Average weekly cost of external agency placements:  Residential  IFA					£2800  £760	
7	% occupancy level for internal residential					95%	
8	Contracts in place for external agency placements					100%	
9	Individual Placement Agreements for external agency placements which provide bespoke outcomes for cared for children					100%	
10	At least one compliance visit undertaken pa for each cared for child in an external agency placement					100%	

## Appendix 1

### Commissioning Managers Action Plan 2015/16 Report of Outputs

The following document provides a report into the outputs of the North West Commissioning Managers Meeting against its agreed action plan running from July 2015 to July 2016

Action	Regional Lead	Outcome
<b>Delivery of a Leaving Care Contract</b>	PNW / Tameside	A North West Regional Leaving Care Contract was implemented in 2015/16 with all 22 participating LAs contributing to its development and quality evaluation.
<b>Staying Put</b>	All	<p>A series of 3 provider engagement events were held with IFAs to scope out challenges in implementation for staying put and the regional position statement.</p> <p>Results were fed back to SLSVC which allocated a response to the challenges to the After Care Forum</p>
<b>Leaving Care Quality Assessment Programme Pilot</b>	PNW	<p>A pilot into a more robust approach to assessing quality of providers was held with 6 providers and assessed by a select group of commissioning managers as a task and finish group</p> <p>While the pilot was largely seen as successful, it has not been taken forward, as the quality gaps identified in the leaving care market in the tender necessitated a revision off the minimum standards and a more intensive re-assessment process absorbing the regional resource.</p>
<b>Collaborative Monitoring</b>	Trafford	<p>There has been limited uptake of the use of the collaborative monitoring document sponsored by Trafford, despite broad sign up.</p> <p>A simplified approach of just collecting where LAs have visited and where they intent to go has had limited success with only 12 LAs reporting completed visits. There are LAs who are monitoring provision who are not participating in this process.</p>
<b>Monitoring of CSE implementation in Residential provision</b>	LAs operating residential contracts	This action was rolled forward from 2014/15 and relates to a coordinated audit by LAs of 2 providers each of compliance against the CSE service specification implemented in the 2014 residential frameworks. While some LAs reported incorporating the monitoring into their standard provider review, no further bespoke monitoring was reported centrally by those LAs who had not assessed their allotted 2 providers.

<b>Development of sub-regional and regional sufficiency statement / gap analysis</b>	Halton / PNW	<p>This activity was supported by a sub-group which met in early 2016 before quickly being absorbed into the broader devolution agenda. An early draft for LCR was brought to July commissioning managers before it was further worked up for planned presentation to LCR DCS in November 16</p> <p>GM plans, remain in draft but are named in the LAC workstream for devolution.</p> <p>North and South are pending and should be rolled into the plan for 2016/17 for a NW perspective.</p>
<b>Adoption Commissioning</b>	Salford / PNW	Initially allocated to Wirral this action was picked up by Salford who act as the commissioning representative at the NW ALB and has acted as an advocate for involvement of commissioning in the strategic planning of the new RAAs. Salford have acted as the link between the ALB and the Commissioning Managers Meeting.
<b>ARG &amp; Post Adoption Support</b>	Salford / STAR/ PNW	While unallocated in the initial plan, this was picked up by Salford in July 2016 to develop a collaborative framework for adoption support. This will be rolled over into the 2016/17 action plan with the benefits of a clear lead and body of work established.
<b>Education Contract</b>	PNW / Wigan	The establishment of an education framework for Independent and Non Maintained Schools progressed well in early 2016 establishing agreement on an approach and a process. Work stalled due to capacity issues and will need rolling forward in to 2016/17 with a clear calendar for action.
<b>Trial of PBR</b>	Sefton	No activity was delivered against this target.
<b>SEND Reforms -1. Personal Budgets</b>  <b>2. Mediation and Disagreement Service</b>  <b>3. Market Development</b>	Manchester Halton  Liverpool (Merseyside sub-group)  CCG input	While work has been ongoing locally there has been no regional reporting to date.
<b>Learning Opportunities</b>	PNW	Agreed to be rolled forward in to 2016/17 a learning event has not been delivered in 2015/16 though key workshops have been identified.
<b>Specialist assessments for public law proceedings</b>		The meeting mapped out common areas of need but no lead authority has emerged to take this forward.