**Report Submission Form
and Template**

OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

*This form and the attached outline are to help authors preparing reports for Cabinet (including individual Cabinet Members acting under delegated powers), Committees and Sub-Committees. The form includes notes for guidance on drafting the report; authors do however need to fill in the boxes where shown, using the Tab key to move through the form. The **completed form must accompany the report** when submitted to Democratic Services for processing and publication.*

*The whole document, including the report outline, may be saved locally as a template (\*.dot) and called up for use as required.*

### Part A: Basic Information

*Please complete all the boxes in this section.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Report Title** | *This should be brief and (where applicable) should be consistent with the Cabinet Forward Plan, Scrutiny Work Programme etc.* |
| | PROGRESS REPORT ON CHILDREN IN AND LEAVING CARE |
| **Target Date(s)** | *Insert the expected date(s) for consideration by the Cabinet, Cabinet Member or [Sub-]Committee. For the Meetings Calendar see Intranet> Shared Info>Support>Reporting to Cabinet and Committees.* |
| | -<br>27 - NOVEMBER 2012 |
| **Main Contact Officer** | *Please give the name, job title, directorate and telephone number of the officer to whom any enquiries about the report should be addressed in the first instance.* |
| | Matthew Edwards , Children, Education Families - Select Directorate: tel: (01865) 323097 |
| **Any Exempt or Confidential Information?** | *If Yes, please also indicate whether all or only part of the report is recommended not to be published. For guidance see Part D.* |
| | x  No exempt or confidential information is involved<br><br>☐ Yes – "Exempt"<br>   Yes – "Confidential"  ☐ Whole report private<br> ☐ Main report public, annex(es) private<br> ☐ Main report public, oral report private |
| **Attachments** | *Please list any annexes and other documents to be published with the report. For guidance see Part D.* |
| | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Background Papers** | *Please list any unpublished documents relied on and where they will be kept. For guidance see Part D.* |
| | |
| **Other Documents Produced** | *Please list any other documents referred to and where they may be seen. For guidance see Part D.* |
| | |

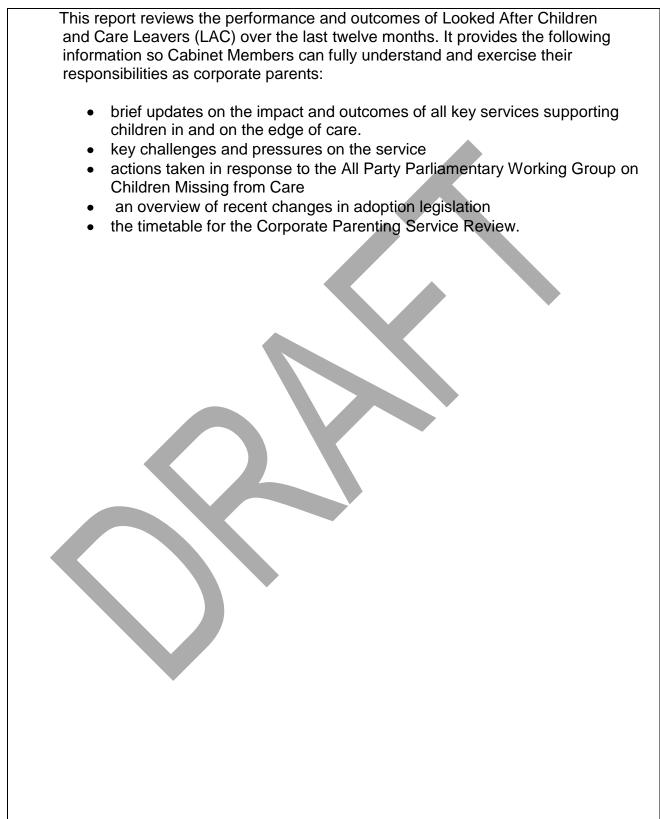## Part B: Corporate Policy, Financial and Other Implications

*The following must be completed for all reports. The issues must be assessed in good time, with advice taken from relevant specialist staff (eg on behalf of the Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer as Section 151 Officer or the County Solicitor & Monitoring Officer) and taken into account before the report is finalised and submitted to Democratic Services. An indication as to who is responsible for the assessment (eg the report's author), and which specialist officer was consulted, should always be included.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Corporate Policies and Priorities** | *In addition to any relevant plans and policies specific to the service area concerned, the report should explain how any proposals in the report support the Vision, Values, Objectives and Strategic Priorities in the County Council's Corporate Plan (see Intranet>Shared Info>About Us> Key documents), identifying the outcomes that are intended for the benefit of service users and the wider community.* |
| *Outcome of Assessment* | ☒ Links with corporate policies and priorities are discussed in the report OR ☐ Procedural item - no such policies/priorities have been identified as applicable. |
| *[indicate method and consultee(s)]* | This assessment has been undertaken by |
| **Financial and Staff Implications** | *This section must be included in every report unless purely procedural. It must identify what revenue and/or capital and/or staff resources would be involved in the course of action (or alternative courses of action) discussed in the report. It should state how these are expected to be funded, eg: within programme allocations already agreed; from identified savings; by transferring staff resources. If there are no new or additional implications, this should be specifically stated and explained.* |
| *Outcome of Assessment* | ☐ Financial and staffing implications are discussed in the report OR ☒ The report is not considered to raise any financial or staffing issues |
| *[indicate method and consultee(s)]* | This assessment has been undertaken by |

| Legal Implications | *It is the author's responsibility to ensure that any potential legal implications of new proposals have been explored, in consultation with the County Solicitor as appropriate. If assessment highlights legal issues which should be taken into account by the decision maker, these need to be spelt out in the report.* |
|---|---|
| *Outcome of Assessment* | ☐ Legal implications are discussed in the report   OR<br>☒ The report is not considered to raise any legal implications. |
| *[indicate method and consultee(s)]* | This assessment has been undertaken by |
| **Equality & Inclusion Implications** | *The report must show how "in planning, delivering, monitoring and evaluating our work, equality and diversity issues are [being] appropriately considered from the outset". New proposals must be screened for relevance against our statutory duties to promote equality and where relevant an impact assessment (EQIA) must be completed. For guidance see Intranet>Shared Info>Equality and Social Inclusion.* |
| *Outcome of Assessment* | ☐ Equality and inclusion implications are discussed in the report and an equality impact assessment (EQIA) has been completed OR<br>☒ The report is not considered to raise any equality or inclusion issues. |
| *[indicate method and consultee(s)]* | This assessment has been undertaken by |
| **Sustainability Implications** | *The report should quantify any additional environmental impacts and show how the proposals will help meet the sustainability objectives of the Council's Future First Project ([www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/futurefirst](www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/futurefirst)) aimed at reducing the Council's environmental footprint through improving resource efficiency (eg energy and water); reducing $CO_2$ emissions and pollution; and waste minimisation and recycling.* |
| *Outcome of Assessment* | ☐ Sustainability implications are discussed in the report  OR<br>☒ The report is not considered to raise any sustainability issues. |
| *[indicate method and consultee(s)]* | This assessment has been undertaken by |
| **Risk Management** | *The report needs to show how risks and opportunities to the Council have been considered as part of the development work - particularly for a policy decision, strategy or project involving major change. The report needs at least to include a summary of the assessment and of any action to be taken to minimise risks. A more detailed risk assessment for major change or complex proposals should be made available (eg in the Members' Resource Centre). For guidance on the scope and process of risk management see Intranet>Shared Info>At Work> Handbook for managers>Performance management.* |
| *Outcome of Assessment* | ☐ An assessment of risk is included in the report  OR  ☒ No actions are proposed which are considered likely to pose any material risk |
| *[indicate method and consultee(s)]* | This assessment has been undertaken by |

**Part C: Agenda Summary**

*This should identify the main subject matter of the report in about 200-300 words. It should explain why the report and decisions are required and indicate the main themes of the report. The report's recommendations should not be included.*

This report reviews the performance and outcomes of Looked After Children and Care Leavers (LAC) over the last twelve months. It provides the following information so Cabinet Members can fully understand and exercise their responsibilities as corporate parents:

- brief updates on the impact and outcomes of all key services supporting children in and on the edge of care.
- key challenges and pressures on the service
- actions taken in response to the All Party Parliamentary Working Group on Children Missing from Care
-  an overview of recent changes in adoption legislation
- the timetable for the Corporate Parenting Service Review.

**Part D: Drafting Checklist**

*This section provides practical guidance on the drafting of the report. The report should be created using the attached outline as a template. (The format should be adapted as appropriate for special types of documents, such as project appraisals.)*

| | |
|---|---|
| **General Approach** | *The report should be aimed at the general reader but assuming a reasonable knowledge of the service and budget and of the local government context. Keep in mind in drafting the report that it will have several purposes: as well as giving the body or individual a sound basis on which to make a decision, it will serve to inform interested observers both direct and through the media; it will form part of the permanent record of the Council's proceedings for future reference; and (in the event of challenge of a decision) it may be cited as evidence that the right matters were taken into account in reaching the decision.* |
| **Format** | *The template provides defaults to the appropriate house conventions: general layout, fonts and font sizes, heading styles, paragraph numbering, indents, etc.* |
| | *The basic font (12pt Arial) is the Council's corporate standard for publications and is now adopted for Cabinet and committee documents also. It should be used for all run of text (14pt for main headings), but the size may be reduced in tables, graphs, plan legends etc if necessary for presentational purposes,* |
| **Division(s)** | *This box should identify those county electoral division(s) <u>directly</u> affected by the subject matter of the report. If there are more than six enter ALL; if the report is not division-specific enter N/A. To confirm which divisions are affected use the **Planweb** system – see Intranet>Shared Info>Support.* |
| **Introduction** | *This should explain briefly why the report and the recommended decisions are required. It should provide essential background and history. Ensure any previous reports referred to are the versions which were finally agreed and published and that previous decisions are quoted accurately.* |
| **Exempt and Confidential Information** | *If either category applies, the precise grounds must be stated in the report, by reference to the special circumstances that apply. If no potentially exempt or confidential information is involved, omit this section from the report. For guidance see Intranet>Shared Info> Support>Reporting to Cabinet and Committees.* |
| **General Content** | *Set out the relevant facts, policies, options, arguments for and against and conclusions. Be as brief as possible (advisory limit: 4 sides of A4)while ensuring that the essential factors are covered.* |
| | *Give structure with headings/sub-headings. Use plain English. Explain any technical terms and abbreviations where first used (using brackets or footnotes) or in a separate glossary. Use annexes for illustrative material, large amounts of data, comments on consultation responses etc.* |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Reporting on Consultations** | *Care must be taken to report and respond to all points of substance made by consultation respondents. They should be summarised either in the body of the report or (if extensive) in an annex. Current Data Protection advice is that individuals should not be identifiable (by name or by address).*<br><br>*Copies of the original responses should normally be placed in the Members' Resource Centre. See also Intranet>Shared Info> Support>Advice for Consultation.* |
| **Recommendations** | *Each decision sought should have a separate recommendation. The wording should allow adoption of each recommendation without changing its wording. Referring back to details set out in the report may be desirable to ensure certainty of effect. Care should be taken to ensure that recommendations depending on some other event, are made subject to an appropriate caveat. Generally avoid open recommendations and recommendations that merely invite "noting".* |
| **Attachments** | *See also **General Content** and **Reporting on Consultations** above. Additional documents, plans, illustrations and tables to be circulated with the report must be produced at A4 size (preferably in portrait format) and in electronic form (all agendas and supporting public documents are included on the Council's web-site.) Generally such attachments should be labelled as "Annex 1, Annex 2 etc"; this may not be necessary for plans and major free-standing documents. Colour must be avoided.* |
| **Background Papers** | *Any unpublished documents on which the report has been substantially based must be specifically listed. A copy must be kept and made available for public inspection at 24 hours' notice for at least 4 years from the date of the report. See further Access to Information Rule 8 in Section AA of the Constitution - Intranet> Shared Info>Support>Reporting to Cabinet and Committees.* |
| **Other Documents Produced** | *Any other document made available to members for reference in connection with the report should be identified in the report with an indication of where it may be seen (eg in the originating directorate or the Members' Resource Centre.) It must be available by the time the agenda is circulated and a copy must be available for public inspection. Any documents for the Members' Resource Centre or for public inspection should be sent via Committee Services.* |
| **Contact Details** | *Contact officer details should be given for each service whose Director or Head is named as a signatory to the report..* |
| **Report Submission** | *The report and completed form should be e-mailed to the Committee Reports mailbox when all consultations on the report (including CCMT if appropriate) have been completed and the report has been finalised. The deadlines for submitting reports are specified in Meeting and deadline timetables - see Intranet>Shared Info> Support>Reporting to Cabinet and Committees.* |

Democratic Services
January 2009

| Division(s):  Children, Education and Families |
| --- |

# CABINET - 27 NOVEMBER 2012

# PROGRESS REPORT ON CHILDREN IN AND LEAVING CARE

### Report by Director for Children's Services

## Introduction

1.   This report reviews the performance and outcomes of Looked After Children and Care Leavers (LAC) over the last twelve months. It focuses specifically on actions taken in response to the All Party Parliamentary Working Group on Children Missing from Care, the impact of changes in adoption legislation and the timetable for the Corporate Parenting Review. This report will be considered by Children's Services Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 14 November and feedback from that meeting will be made will be available for Cabinet.

2.   Since the last Cabinet report, there have been no OFSTED inspections for the whole service which remains rated as "Good". OFSTED is changing the inspection arrangements going forward, such that from April 2013 inspections will be unannounced and will be multi agency (including Ofsted; Care Quality Commission; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (as appropriate) and Her Majesty Crown Prosecution Service). However both children's homes have recently been re-inspected under much more challenging requirements. The Moors was rated as overall good with some outstanding features and Maltfield had an overall rating of outstanding. Adoption, inspected in July 2011, and  Fostering, inspected in March 2012 were both rated as good.

## The Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy

3.   Many priorities remain the same since the last report to Cabinet: the need for stable and consistent care; the support necessary to minimise time spent in care; access to the best possible appropriate education and healthcare, and ensuring all children and young people (CYP) feel valued and listened to. However the corporate parenting review will need to address some of the rising pressures on the service particularly around building "in-county" capacity including adopters, foster carers and residential homes.

4.   The number of CYP looked after is at the level we would expect for our demographic profile and remains similar to last year. Oxfordshire has the 12th lowest level of need of the 152 authorities for children and the 7th lowest rate of looked after children. The profile of CYP looked after remains similar to last year.

**Table 1: Children and Young People Looked After In Oxfordshire**

| | September 2011 | September 2012 |
|---|---|---|
| **Total Looked After** | **439** | **440** |
| Of who unaccompanied asylum seekers | 36 | 24 |
| % from Black & Minority Ethnic background | 23% | 25% |
| Male | 249 | 256 |
| Female | 190 | 184 |
| 0-9 years old | 161 | 171 |
| 10-15 years old | 150 | 157 |
| 16+ years | 128 | 112 |

5.   The number of children looked after rose by 6% in Oxfordshire in 2011/12 compared with 2% nationally and 1.4% for our statistical neighbours. However in the first 6 months of 2012/13 the number of children and young people looked after in Oxfordshire fell by 10 people (2.2%). At end of September the figures include 24 young people who were Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers, this is a drop of 20% (6 young people) compared with the number who were looked after at 31 March 2012. National trends are also showing a drop in the number UASCs who are looked after. There are also 378 care leavers, including 88 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs).

## Reason why children are looked after

6.   253 children entered care in 2011/12, 126 (50%) had a reason of abuse or neglect, the second highest reason for entering care was family dysfunction (52 children, 21%, see table below for sub-category for entering care), this follows the national trend for reasons entering care.

**Table 2: Family Dysfunction by sub category**

| Sub Category | Number |
|---|---|
| Child at risk of significant harm due to inadequate parenting | **13** |
| Child exhibiting behaviour parent(s) find difficult to manage | **12** |
| Inability to provide stable relationships | **2** |
| Problems related to homelessness | **1** |
| Young Persons presenting as homeless (15-17 years) | **15** |
| No sub category recorded | **9** |
| **Total** | **52** |

## Attaining best possible outcomes for LAC

7. Performance at key stage 2 is in line with other authorities and has been for a number of years. Performance this year was maintained for level 4+ English and level 4+ maths, and improved for level 4+ for English and Maths. This was achieved when 42% (5/12) children in the cohort had a statement, compared to 14% (1/7) last year.

**Table 3: KS2 results for children looked after compared to other groups**

| | Actual Results 2011/12 cohort | | Oxon 2010/11 | LAC Children (Stat Neighbour) | LAC Children (England) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No | % | % | % | % |
| Level 4+ English | 6 | 50% | 50% | 46% | 50% |
| Level 4+ Maths | 6 | 50% | 50% | 51% | 48% |
| Level 4+ English & Maths | 6 | 50% | 50% | 41% | 40% |

8. Educational achievement at key stage 4 in Oxfordshire remains marginally below that of comparable authorities and significantly below that of other children in Oxfordshire. However results in 2011/12 academic year improved across all grades compared to last year. For the headline figure used by the Department for Education and Ofsted (5 or more A*-C of children looked after continuously between April 1st 2011 and March 31st 2012) performance was better than any of the 6 years and showed consistent, but small, year on year improvement over the last three years. Of the 32 children and young people looked after for more than a year, just under a half (48%) achieved their Fischer Family Trust D (FFTD) level, which predicts performance for the top 25%. 18 of the 32 children (56%) met the individual results targets set for them by the virtual school, but 44% did not.

**Table 4: KS4 results for children looked after compared to other groups**

| | Actual Results 2011/12 cohort | | Oxon 2010/11 | LAC Children (Stat Neighbour) | LAC Children (England) | All Children (Oxon) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No | % | % | % | % | % |
| 5+ A*-C with English & Maths | 3 | 9.4% | 8.3% | 11.3% | 12.8% | 57.4% |
| 5+ A*-C | 8 | 25.0% | 19.4% | 24.0% | 31.2% | 74.0% |
| 5+ A*-G with English & Maths | 17 | 53.1% | 50.0% | | | |
| 5+ A*-G | 18 | 56.3% | 52.8% | | | 96.0% |
| 1+ A*-G | 26 | 81.3% | 75.0% | | | 99.0% |
| 1+ Entry Level Certificate | 9 | 28.1% | 30.6% | | | |
| No Pass | 6 | 18.8% | 25.0% | | | |
| Total | 32 | | | | | |

## EET performance and Post 16 outcomes

9. Performance on young people leaving care being in employment, education and training remains better than the national average and that of similar authorities, and is continuing to improve. The latest available comparative data is for September 2010.

**Table 5: Education, Employment and Training of CYP in care and leaving care**

|  | National 2010 | SE 2010 | Oxon 2010 | Oxon 2011 | Oxon 2012 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Education and employment status of year 11 | 82% | 83% | 92% | 96% | 97% |

10. 36 out of 37 young people leaving year 11 who had been looked after continuously for 12 months made a positive progression and were engaged in EET on 30th of September 2012.   However only 4 out of 9 young people who either came into care very late in year 11 or left care very early were engaged in EET at the same stage.  Performance as published by DfE  in October 2011 for the 'position at 19' indicator as an average over three years from 2009 to 2011 was 85% in EET placing us jointly leading this indicator nationally. Over the same period, performance around those living in suitable  accommodation was at 91% placing Oxfordshire just above the national average for this indicator.

11. In September 2012, overall participation in Higher Education increased slightly from 11% to 12% of the 18+ cohort despite a national drop in applications of 10% (across the whole population not only care leavers).  Two thirds of Oxfordshire care leavers who are currently engaged in Higher Education are UASC.

## Health assessments

12. A greater proportion of looked after children in Oxfordshire have up to date health checks than comparative authorities thought the figures dropped in 2011/12 which is a small concern. Children Looked after are presenting with increasingly difficulties as measured by the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire.

**Table 6: Health Outcomes**

|  | National 2010/11 | Statistical neighbours 2010/11 | Oxon 2010/11 | Oxon 2011/12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Immunisations up to date | 78.9% | 73.2% | 89.8% | 86.1% |
| Dental check completed | 82.4% | 83.9% | 89.1% | 84.3% |
| Review health assessment completed | 84.2% | 83.1% | 96.0% | 97.4% |
| LAC identified with a substance misuse problem | 4.3% | 5.0% | 4.7% | 6.0% |
| SDQ total difficulties score |  | 14 | 15.5 | 16.7 |

## Missing from Care

13.  The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Looked after Children and Care Leavers published their report in June 2012. The report comprised of 6 overarching and 31 detailed recommendations and a working group was set up to immediately review the Oxfordshire position in relation to these and identify where practice could be strengthened.

14.  The following changes have been put into immediate effect:

- Missing notifications for all out of county placements (both residential and agency foster placements) centrally monitored by Placement Duty Team
- Return Interviews simplified and chronology of missing episodes created
- Auditing and role of Independent Reviewing Officers has been strengthened
- New guidance for foster carers issued on when child is "missing" and when it is "unauthorised absence".
- Monitoring Reports on completion of return interviews for all out of county placements instigated and will be reviewed by Corporate Parenting Manager

15.  The working group also identified a key workforce development area around improving the use of risk assessment across the service and LAC recording. A Risk Assessment and Management Plan will be used for all looked after children and all social work teams will be trained in risk assessment and management by June 2013.

16.  The CICC have also asked to feed into the development of better advocacy services and the Service Specification for VIVA will be rewritten to improve advocacy for our out of county young people

## Service Review

17.  The main conclusion from the consultation exercise and the data analysis was the structure of the pathway was broadly operating well. The Joint Housing Team Steering Group has provided a strategic focal point allowing partners to align housing options for young people across the County. A notable success of the Pathway has been its ability to house our priority needs group, predominately 16 and 17 year olds. This has however highlighted the need for greater Countywide provision for those young people with the most complex needs.

18.  **Corporate Parenting Review**: Corporate Parenting is the last part of Children, Education and Families to be reviewed and the process will take place between October 2012 and June 2013. The key review themes will include building in-county capacity (foster carers, adopters, residential), targeting our interventions, ensuring throughput, creating care pathways, being outcome focused, and improving systems for reviewing, tracking and monitoring progress.

## Service Development

19.  **Children in Care Council (CICC):** has received an outstanding rating for the last two years from Ofsted and is about to be featured on an Ofsted website demonstrating good practice. Over the last twelve months the CICC have discussed challenging issues such as raising attainment, missing from care, and sexual exploitation in order to feed directly into policies and practices being agreed at the Corporate Parenting Panel. CICC members have been directly involved in the recruitment of a wide range of social work staff and managers. Nationally CICC members have been active in the All-Party Association Parliamentary group, the SE Regional CICC Chairs forum and the Young People's Benchmarking Forum. The key challenges are to ensure all children and young people in the care system know about the CICC, use it to air their views, and measuring the CICC's impact on improving outcomes for all children and young people in care.

20.  **Community Parenting Team (CPT) :** the aim of this new service is to carry out early pre-birth assessment for young, vulnerable "parents" where concerns have been identified regarding future parenting capacity. Referrals come via JR Women's Centre for women between 18-22 weeks gestation. These families are offered assessment and intensive intervention during pregnancy using the "Parents Under Pressure" model.
     The priority for the service is to make well-informed and timely decisions re: safe care of infants from an early stage so that intensive support can be given to those families that engage with the service and safe, early care planning can be put in place for those infants whose parents are unlikely to be in a position to offer" good enough" parenting.

21.  **Family Group Conferencing (FGC) service:** The FGC service is now placed within Corporate Parenting, alongside other "edge of care" support services. Oxfordshire County Council has now committed to offering a FGC to all families whose children are at risk of being taken into care and the process is now written into the workflow chart for children at risk of harm, in Pre Proceedings and for consideration in LAC reviews. Of the 92 conferences held in 2011-12 (62 initials and 30 reviews), 171 children were involved in pre-FGC planning and 136 young people were engaged sufficiently to be able to attend their FGC in person. 23 children seen as at high risk of becoming looked after were prevented from entering care, 12 went into kinship care, and 6 were returned home who had already entered care.

22.  **Family &Placement Support Service (FPSS):** This service has recently been identified by Ofsted as a model of good practice in with working with families on the "edge of care". During the past year the service has introduced assessment and review scales in order to independently assess and measure a family's capacity to change over time. In 2011-12 F&PSS received 172 referrals. 137 of the children and young people referred to F&PSS have not required a referral to Placement Duty team for alternative care arrangements.

23. **ATTACH team**: this service promotes placement stability through offering treatment for emotional and behavioural difficulties arising from the early experience of maltreatment. Aside from their work in promoting children moving to adoption and preventing re-entry into care for adoptive families, the ATTACH team at any one time works with about 50 looked after children with the majority (88%) being referred for placement instability. A recent audit in August 2012 indicated that 61% of cases meeting long term stability in Oxfordshire were being seen or were known to the service. Over the last few months better tracking of potentially disrupting placements has allowed ATTACH to provide a rapid assessment and intervention to address instability where this arises from the child's level of disturbance.

## Fostering:

24. At 22 October 2012 there were 434 children and young people looked after, 298 were placed in a foster placement.

**Table 7: Children looked after at 22 October 2012 in a Foster Placement by placement location**

|  | Oxfordshire | Neighbouring Authority | Other Authorities | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Oxfordshire Foster Carer | 167 | 6 | 3 | 176 |
| Independent Fostering Agency | 34 | 27 | 14 | 75 |
| Friends/Family Placement | 40 | 4 | 3 | 47 |
| Total | 241 | 37 | 20 | 298 |

Oxfordshire has around 330 foster carers who offer a range of provision from relief and short break care to long term and specialist provision. Recruitment of foster carers remains a priority for the service due to the need to sustain in house provision to meet the demand for in house placements and replace those who may choose not to foster any longer for normal "natural turnover" reasons such as age/retirement etc. We have a dedicated marketing and publicity team which continues to attract high levels of enquiries from prospective carers. There is a particular focus on recruitment of foster carers for hard to place children (for example disabled children and sibling groups.)

25. A specialist foster care scheme, MTFC (Multi-dimensional Treatment foster care) has operated as a pilot in Oxfordshire since 2008. It has proven to be a highly successful model of support and care for some of our most vulnerable and challenging CYP.A new MTFC-A scheme sponsored by the DfE has been established for adolescents who need intensive support to live in a foster placement.

26. KEEP (Keeping Foster and Kinship Carers Supported), a training programme based on MTFC principles is offered to mainstream foster and kinship carers with CYP of 5-12 years. This programme has been beneficial in maintaining placements for the majority of carers who have attended. Further KEEP

programmes are currently being established for carers of other children including adolescents, 3-6 year olds and adopted children.

## Adoption

27. Thirty-two children were adopted in 2011/12. We are sustaining the trend in 2012/13 with 19 children having already been adopted in the first 6 months. National figures show, that as an average over 3 years (2009 to 2012), Oxfordshire has reduced the time from entering care to moving to an adoptive family by 2 weeks, nationally this has increased by 1.5 weeks. Oxfordshire also have a higher percentage of children from a BME background adopted than the national average and a higher percentage of children aged 5 and over who are adopted.

28. The adoption team has responded by setting challenging targets to recruit more adopters to meet the needs of children requiring adoptive families. In the first 6 months we have placed 20 children and approved 14 prospective adoptive families. This is an improvement on previous years. Our particular challenge going forward is finding families for children in large sibling groups, children over age 6, and children with disabilities.

29. In March 2012 the government produced an Action Plan. The action plan sets out a range of proposals to speed up the process for children; to overhaul the service for prospective adopters, and to strengthen local accountability for the timeliness of adoption services. A change in the role of adoption panels was introduced from 1/09/12. Adoption Panels will continue to hear cases for approving adoption applicants and linking children for adoption but will no longer hear cases regarding adoption plans for children in court proceedings.

30. Score cards have been issued to all local authorities showing current performance and giving targets for improvement over the next 4 years
The indicators measure how long it takes for children to move in with adopters, from the time they enter care; what proportion of those children wait longer for adoption than they should, and the time it takes a council to match a child to a family, once the court has decided adoption is the best option.
There will be penalties for local authorities who do not perform adequately in terms of placing children from the looked after system without delay.

31. Oxfordshire have scored well in terms of timeliness of children being placed with adoptive families for 2011-12, however, with current high numbers of young children in the looked after system needing adoption, a great deal of effort will need to go in to sustaining this high score. New Adoption Regulations will be published in the summer of 2013. The expectation will be for adopters to be approved within 6 months rather than the current 8 month period.

## Pressures

32. **Out of County placements**

Fewer young people are placed out of county than other authorities. At 31 March 2012, 81 (18%) looked after children were in an out of county placement more than 20 miles from their home address. Table 8 below provides the most up to date information on where children are placed by placement type. The Corporate Parenting Review will address where additional "in-county" provision could better meet need, reduce risk and track and monitor outcomes for our looked after children.

**Table 8: Children looked after at 22 October 2012 by placement location**

|  | Oxfordshire | Neighbouring Authority | Other Authorities | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Foster Care | 201 | 33 | 17 | **251** |
| Relatives/Friends | 40 | 4 | 3 | **47** |
| Residential Home | 26 | 4 | 13 | **43** |
| Indept Living | 31 | 3 | 2 | **36** |
| Placed for adoption | 22 | 1 | 8 | **31** |
| Placed with Parent | 18 | 0 | 0 | **18** |
| Residential School | 3 | 0 | 1 | **4** |
| NHS Establishment | 0 | 1 | 1 | **2** |
| Secure Unit | 0 | 0 | 1 | **1** |
| Young Offenders Institute | 0 | 0 | 1 | **1** |
| **Total** | **341** | **46** | **47** | **434** |

33. **Remands**

From December 2012 all young people receiving a secure remand or custodial sentence will become looked after while they are in custody. From 1 April 2013, Oxfordshire will have to fund the cost of secure accommodation for young people on remand and the associated transport costs. 18 additional young people are likely to become looked after each year as a result of these changes. 10 additional young people will become care leavers each year, and Oxfordshire will have a responsibility to support them until they are at least 21 years old. The funding from Ministry of Justice is unlikely to meet all the costs of associated with looked after children and care leavers, resulting in pressures on these services

34. **Adoption reforms**

Meeting the tighter timeframes will require rapid changes to working practices, new policies and procedures, changes to adoption panels and training for staff and key partners. The government is planning to introduce an 'adoption passport' providing a guarantee of the minimum support that adoptive families will receive throughout the process.

## RECOMMENDATION

**35.    The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to note this report**

JIM LEIVERS
Director for Children's Services

Background papers: None

Contact Officer: Matthew Edwards, Corporate Parenting Manager (01865) 323097