



Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2015

Children in Care and Care Leavers

The JSNA considers a wide range of factors that affect the health and well-being of the people of Warrington.

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Warrington Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) - Children in Care and Care Leavers Chapter

1) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1) Introduction

This chapter of the JSNA gives an overview of the needs of children in Warrington who live away from their families in a range of alternative care arrangements including foster care, residential care and supported independent living. These children are described as being 'in care' and are the responsibility of the local authority.

In England, there were 68,840 children in care at 31 March 2014, an increase of 1% compared to 31 March 2013 and an increase of 7% compared to 31 March 2010. The numbers have increased steadily over the past 5 years. The majority of looked after children – 62% in 2014 - are provided with a service due to abuse or neglect.¹

Children in care generally have poorer outcomes than the wider population – particularly with regards to educational attainment, homelessness and mental health issues. It is difficult to determine the extent that these outcomes may have been caused by the child's experiences prior to coming into care, rather than their experiences once in care. Whatever the determining cause, these children and young people need additional support to overcome the effects of the abuse and neglect they have suffered and to reach their potential.

This chapter presents information on the demographics of children in care in Warrington, reviews their current needs, outlines services on offer and analyses future trends and projected service needs. Recommendations are made to shape future commissioning to meet identified service gaps and unmet needs.

1.2) Overview of Children and Young People in Warrington

Warrington has a population of 48,826 children aged 0-19 years, of which, 25,137 are male and 23,689 are female. The 0-19 year old group makes up nearly a quarter of Warrington's total population. Previously, the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) Needs Assessment found that:

- Most of our children and young people feel safe and are safe
- Most live in settled families that work, although a rising number have seen change
- Most have good health
- Most of our children enjoy and do well at school.

Demographics tell us that for every 100 children and young people in Warrington (2014):

- 16 need extra help with learning
- 12 are eligible and claiming free school meals (Jan 2014)
- 15 are living in poverty (under 16 years) (HMRC)
- 2 are considered 'children in need'
- 10 are from a black or minority group
- Less than 1 is registered disabled (0 to 19 years)

¹ Statistical First Release: Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2014

At year end 2013-14, there were 232 children and young people in care in Warrington. This equates to 53 children per 10,000 of the population.

1.3) Key Issues and Gaps

All children need their home to be as supportive as possible whilst they are growing up. This is even more important for children in care who have experienced the trauma of removal from their birth family and events that may have affected their early development.

Children in care are recognised as an 'at risk' group of vulnerable children (Department of Health, 2009; NICE, 2010) and may need extra encouragement and support to:

- overcome their early experiences
- make emotional attachments
- develop the skills for adult independent life.

Many are at greater risk of social exclusion than other children of a similar age.

The vision of the Children and Young People's Planⁱ is to 'ensure that every child and young person in Warrington has the opportunity to reach their potential.' This applies equally to children in care but additional support and encouragement may be needed to achieve this vision.

No one service or agency can provide all the support needed by children in care by itself. 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.

This means caring about children and young people as well as caring for them and nurturing all aspects of their development. Caring about children encompasses:

- their education
- their health and welfare
- their safety and security
- what they do in their leisure time and holidays
- how they celebrate their culture
- praising and encouraging their achievements

It also extends to providing appropriate support once young people have left care to enable them to live independent and positive lives within the community.

The Children in Care and Care Leavers strategyⁱⁱ is the framework that agencies and services in Warrington use to 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 shared priorities for children and young people in care and the actions to be taken over the next three years to make a positive difference to their lives and outcomes. A mid-term Review has recently been produced which further develops the roles of partner agencies as corporate parents within the Strategy.

1.3.1) Fostering

Fewer children in care have been placed with Warrington's own foster carers in recent years due to a shortage of foster carers, changes in patterns of fostering from family and friends and changes in legislation limiting the number of children who can be fostered in each household. In order to address this gap in provision, the local authority has developed and implemented a strategy for recruiting to and maintaining the pool of local authority foster carers, including a dedicated recruitment role and changes to foster carer allowances. The strategy is beginning to show a return.

In the twelve month period, April 2012- March 2013, the Service successfully approved an additional 14 foster carer households, providing up to 27 placements for children, which again surpassed the targets for new placements to be recruited during the year.

However, twelve approved carers were de-registered who together provided 22 placements. The service therefore gained an additional five placements in the twelve month period.

In the subsequent twelve month period, April 2013- March 2014, the Service successfully approved an additional 20 foster carer households, providing up to 26 placements for children, which again surpassed the targets of 15 new placements to be recruited during the year.

As in the previous year, there have been significant numbers of de-registration, with 12 sets of approved carers leaving the service providing a potential 20 placements for children. The service therefore had a net gain of six placements in this twelve month period.

1.3.2) Adoption

Launched in March 2012, three North West councils (Warrington, Wigan and St Helens) collaborated to form WWiSH, a pioneering shared adoption service, in a bid to make the local adoption process more efficient and to help overcome the nationally recognised shortage of people wishing to adopt. The service aims to make the adoption process more effective through widening the pool of prospective carers. This makes it easier and more likely to place children with families best suited to their individual needs. In the North West there has been a 2 per cent decline in the number of children seeking adoption and a 20 per cent rise in adopters. WWiSH also offers an enhanced Adoption Support Service which supports adopters, adopted children and those adults who were adopted as children.

During 2013/14 a total of 22 Warrington children have been adopted and at year-end, seven children were placed with adopters awaiting their Adoption Order, the annual target has been met. Of those 22 children, 19 were placed with WWiSH approved families, a proportion of 86%.

Measures are in place to ensure that children who should achieve permanence through adoption do so in a timelier manner in 2014/15.

1.3.3) Placement stability

During 2013/14, 10.3% of children in care had three or more placements in line with the England average of 11%, and this represents an improvement from 2010/11 performance of 13.4%. Performance had improved in 2011/12 and 2012/13, with 11% and 7.5% of children having three or more placements respectively.

At the end of 2013/14, 67.5% of children who have been in care for two-and-a-half years had been living in the same placement for more than two years, which is higher than the England average of 67% and significantly higher than our statistical neighbours (62.3%). There has been a slight increase in performance since 2012/13, with 66% of children who have been in care for over two-and-a-half years also living in the same placement for two years. A Placement Support Service has been established to improve this further and prevent disruption through focused assistance. There will be continued emphasis on this area of practice during 2014/15.

1.3.4) Care leaver accommodation

Many young people, whether they can no longer live at home or are leaving care, can face significant difficulty in accessing housing. Additionally many do not possess the skills required to live independently and manage their own tenancy. A young person as part of the national review of care leaving arrangements commented that 'I did not so much as leave care – it left me'.

Warrington has maintained a consistent record of ensuring that all care leavers have suitable accommodation. At March 2014, 100% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation which is well above the England average of 78%.

By supporting young people to develop practical skills and emotional stability they are more likely to achieve their full potential. Most young people will require assistance with practical tasks such as cooking, budgeting and shopping economically, while others will need more emotional support. Extended arrangements will need to offer the encouragement and guidance to assist the young person to develop their independence in a safe and appropriate way.

1.3.5) Educational achievement – narrowing the gap

The Virtual School in Warrington was established in summer 2011 with the aim of maximising the educational outcomes for vulnerable children, including Children in Care. Led by the Headteacher for the Virtual School for Vulnerable Pupils, the Virtual School aims to do this by significantly raising the profile of and championing the educational needs of vulnerable groups across Warrington.

The school is 'virtual' in the sense that students do not actually attend as most go to a school in Warrington or in other local authorities. The Virtual School currently has a roll which includes over 150 children in care, their educational progress including attainment, attendance and exclusion is tracked and monitored. The Virtual School works alongside schools, social workers, carers, parents and a range of agencies and professionals to remove barriers to educational attainment to help these young people to improve their educational outcomes and their life chances. This is already proving to have a real impact particularly in narrowing the attainment gap between all children.

1.3.6) Children in care – Recent academic results

In Warrington, educational attainment for children in care as a cohort is lower when compared to the whole school population, which is also the case nationally. However, within this cohort, it is key to remember that there are children in care who achieve excellent educational outcomes.

1.3.7) Educational Attainment for Children in Care - headlines

The overall results at Key Stage 2 decreased slightly from 63.6% to 60% 2014 from the previous year although were still higher than the 2012 results and 12% higher than national for

children in care attainment for 2014. 90% of children achieved Level 4 or higher in reading. Outcomes were at Key Stage 2 in 2014. There are 10 children in the cohort.

The overall results at Key Stage 4 decreased slightly in 2014. In 2014, 47.4% of the 19 children in care passed 5 or more GCSEs grades A*-G. This is a slight drop from previous years but it should be noted that the cohort of 19 children who entered is relatively small.

1.3.8) Additional data on the children in care cohort

In 2013/14 attendance of Children in Care was 96.1% which is above the LA averages and national averages for Children in Care (95.6% in 2012/13). A large majority have greater than 95% attendance with a small number of children who have less than 85% attendance. Persistent absence (PA) for Children in Care was 6.4% compared with 6.5% nationally.

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) figures for care leavers at age 19 was 28% in March 2014; however, the range of young people measured in the cohort widened in April 2014 to include those people aged 19, 20 and 21 and the figure immediately rose to 47%. Since April, there has been a gradual trend of improvement and in December 2014, the figure had fallen to 41% with 59% in education, employment or training.

All schools received £430 in 2011/12 directly from the Local Authority through the pupil premium to support the education of each Child in Care. This amount has since increased and is £1,900 in 2014/15. The spending of the pupil premium is monitored through annual visits to schools and negotiations take place as to how this money should be spent. Schools spend this on a variety of interventions including tuition, equipment such as laptops and books, extra specialist staff to reduce group sizes etc. There have been no cases where the funding has not been spent on these Children in Care. All schools have a statutory responsibility to report how they are using their funding and what impact it has. The headteacher for the virtual school approves all pupil premium spending and applications for funding are linked to the Personal Education Plan.

1.3.9) Specific actions taken by the Virtual School to support Children in Care

- Consultation has taken place in autumn 2014 with Children in Care, Social Workers, Foster Carers and all Warrington Schools regarding the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process in order that it could be improved. A PEP is written for every child in care of school age (will also be pre-school and post-16 during 2015) to ensure that they receive targeted help and guidance to reach their educational potential. A new PEP document has been launched and implemented across Warrington which has led to an improvement in compliance so that it was consistently above 80% in 2013/14. This is an improvement from 70% in May 2011.
- The Head of the Virtual School attends Children in Care Council meetings every half term and has consulted on a range of initiatives including work experience and careers guidance.
- All social workers received basic training on the new PEP process and further training took place on a range of issues including attendance.
- Governors in all schools were offered training on the education of Children in Care in November 2011 and 20 took part in the training.
- Three training sessions took place in 2013/14 which involved over 50 Warrington Foster Carers about how they can best support the education of Children in Care.

1.3.10) Continuing Practice Developments

- Limit any potential for changes of school which are known to be disruptive and prevent stability being achieved.
- Virtual School to continue to ensure that Social Workers maintain a high level of PEP compliance so that the majority of Children in Care (95% plus) have an up to date and effective PEP at all times.
- All schools will be visited, receive training and be challenged about their work with children in care.
- The Virtual School training programme will continue to support Social Workers, Foster Carers, School Governors and schools in improving the education of Children in Care.
- Networks are to be further developed for primary and secondary school designated teachers for Children in Care.
- Education data systems to be embedded and used more effectively by a wider range of professionals.
- Extra tuition and the book programme to continue to be targeted to those pupils who will benefit the most. This will be monitored through data tracking systems and the PEP process.
- The Virtual School will monitor use of the pupil premium through school visits.
- Robust tracking, monitoring and intervention systems will be developed for all post-16 children in care and care leavers in education, employment and training or NEET. This will build on systems that have already been developed. Education and Employment Adviser positions will be further developed to support post-16 young people.
- Specific action plans will be put in place for all students in year 11 so they can succeed and progress in their education.

1.4) Recommendations for Commissioning

- Increase recruitment and retention of local Foster Carers able to meet the needs of all children.
- Increase and sustain placement stability.
- Increase the number of potential/actual adopters recruited by WWiSH.
- Investigate the viability of developing a local supported lodgings scheme in Warrington to assist young people to develop the life skills required for independent living.
- Further develop 'step down' services to support children and young people leaving residential care.
- Provide a range of accommodation options through external provision to meet the diverse needs of Children in Care.
- Develop earlier prevention and intervention measures for children on the edge of care.
- Maintain a regional/shared approach to the contracting and development of services.

2) WHO IS AT RISK AND WHY?

A child in care is legally termed a 'child looked after,' which has a specific meaning based on the Children Act 1989. A child is looked after by a local authority if he or she has been provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, in the circumstances set out in Sections 20 and 21 of the Children Act 1989, or is placed in the care of a local authority by virtue of an order made under part IV of the Act (that is, under a Care Order).

This means that a child is looked after by a local authority either through a voluntary arrangement made with the child's parents or under a court order and includes children who have been placed or have been authorised to be placed with prospective adopters.

Children can be ‘looked after’ under any of the following arrangements:

- A voluntary arrangement in partnership with parents, for example a disabled child who receives a regular series of short breaks (Section 20)
- Remanded by the courts to the care of the local authority (Section 21)
- Subject to a full Care Order (Section 31) or an interim Care Order (Section 38)
- Subject to an Emergency Protection Order (Section 44).

The term ‘child in care’ is used in Warrington at the request of the Children in Care Council² and is synonymous with the legal term ‘child looked after’.

Many children return to their families after a period of time, once the necessary changes have been made for their parents or carers to sustain safe and nurturing care at home. Those who do not return home will remain in long term care and be looked after by the local authority until they are adopted, placed with alternative carers under Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Orders, or they reach 18 years of age.

National research data collected on children in care and the general child population indicates that children and young people in care need additional support to have the same life chances as their peers. Outcomes for children in care are slowly improving, but there is still an unacceptable gap between their outcomes and those of their peers. For example, children in care are five times less likely to achieve five good GCSEs, nine times more likely to be excluded from school, and six times less likely to enter higher education than their peers. Care leavers are over-represented in some of the most vulnerable adult groups, including young parents, prisoners, and the homeless. A quarter of people in prison today have spent some time in the care systemⁱⁱⁱ.

3) THE LEVEL OF NEED IN THE LOCAL POPULATION

Warrington has a total population of 205,100. Children and young people under 20 years account for 24% (48,826) of the total population (ONS Mid 2013 population estimates). Overall, it is estimated that there are 85,500 households in Warrington.

Table 2 outlines the population figures for under-20s by sex, it shows that there are slightly more males than females. As compared to population trends both nationally and regionally, Warrington has a similar proportion of young people aged 0 to 14 years (17.9%) compared to the North West and England.

Table 1: Population Figures and Gender for Under-20s.

Age Range (years)inclusive	Male	Female	Total
Aged under 1 year	1,225	1,166	2,391
Aged 1 - 4 years	5,215	4,999	10,214
Aged 5 – 9 years	6,206	5,966	12,172
Aged 10 - 14 years	6,159	5,745	11,904

² Have Your Say, the Children in Care Council, was formed in 2009 to provide a platform for children in care to have their voice heard by local and national decision makers. It provides a safe and welcoming atmosphere where young people can challenge perceptions and influence policy.

Aged 15 - 19 years	6,332	5,813	12,145
0 – 19 years	25,137	23,689	48,826

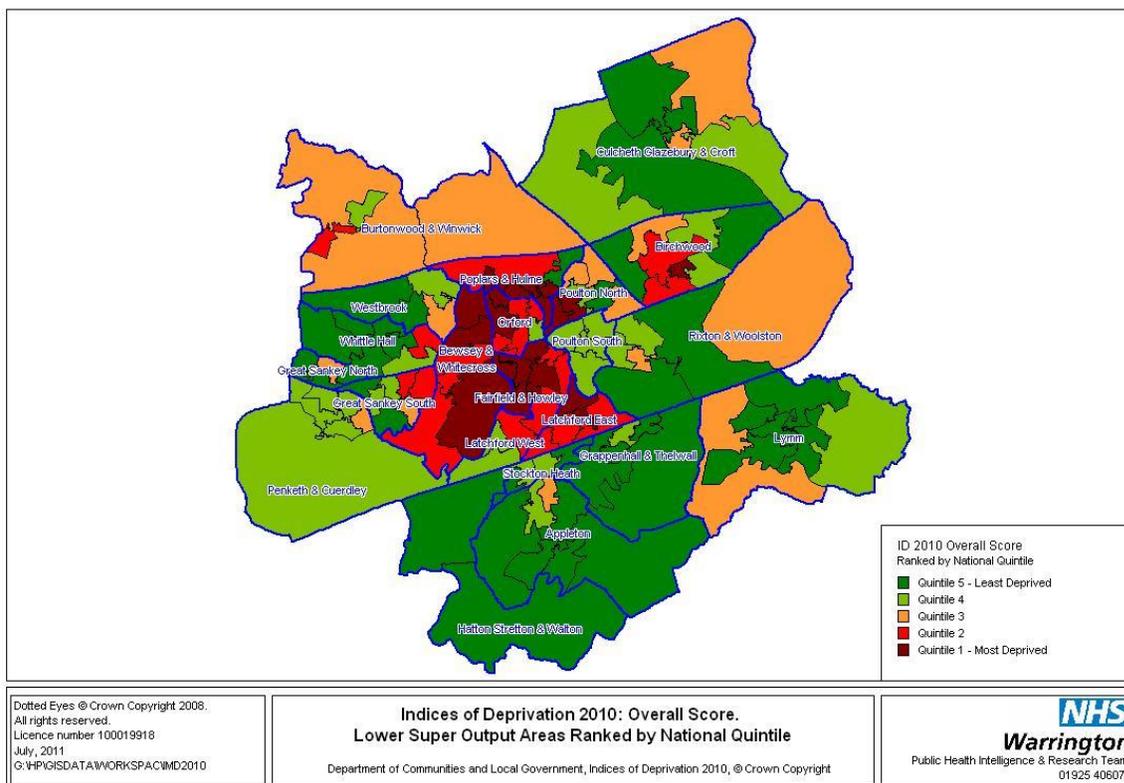
Data Source: ONS population estimates mid-2013, © Crown copyright reserved.

The total population across Warrington has increased by almost 6.4% between 2005 and 2013. The population of all 0-19s increased slightly (by 1.3%) between 2005 and 2011. This figure has since fallen slightly (by 0.2%) between 2011 and 2013. However, there are differences within age-bands: there was an increase of 11.5% amongst 0-4s from 2005 to 2011 and a further slight increase of (1.6%) to 2013. However from 2005 to 2011 there was a decrease of 4% amongst those aged 5 to 14 years, this has increased slightly (by 0.7%) up to 2013.

Increases in the total local population are projected to continue to over time. The largest population increases projected are likely to be among those aged 65+, although the projected population increase of children and young people in Warrington is estimated to be smaller than regional averages. There is more information on populations in the JSNA Chapter on the Demographic Profile of Children and Young People in Warrington.

Statistics suggest that Warrington is a relatively affluent district; however, borough-wide figures hide pockets of poverty and deprivation. Map 1 illustrates the geographically delineated deprivation across the inner and outer wards. According to the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation, Warrington has 20 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs¹) ranked within the 20% most deprived nationally, an increase from 18 LSOAs in 2007, the majority of which are located within the inner wards. Eleven of these LSOAs fall within the most deprived 10% nationally, the same as identified in 2007. There is more information available in the Deprivation Chapter of the JSNA.

Map 1: Indices of Deprivation 2010



Data Source: Department of Communities and Local Government 2010, © Crown copyright reserved.

Deprivation and Poverty: National indicator 116 (Proportion of Children in Poverty) defines poverty as *“the proportion of children living in families in receipt of out of work benefits or in receipt of tax credits where their reported income is less than 60 per cent of median income.”* In Warrington, eleven LSOAs fall within the most deprived 20% areas for income deprivation affecting children. Across these LSOAs, the proportion of children living in poverty ranges from 39% to 58% (see the Deprivation Chapter of the JSNA for more details).

Eligibility for free school meals is another indicator of poverty. In Warrington’s nursery and primary schools, 2,104 (12.4%) children and young people in Warrington are eligible for and receive free school meals (School Census, Jan 2014).

Review of the current position: At 31 March 2014, 68,840 children in England were in the care of a Local Authority, an increase of 1% from 2013. This national figure represents 60 children per 10,000 children aged less than 18 years^{iv}. In Warrington, however, 232 children were in care, an increase of 2% from the previous year. The local figure equates to 53 children per 10,000 children aged less than 18 years in Warrington.

The following tables provide a local breakdown of children in care data from the previous five years.

Table 3 provides details of the children in care population as at 31 March over a six year period. In 2010-11 the number of children in care rose sharply as a consequence of the 'inadequate' rating from the Ofsted inspection which resulted in increased admissions due to necessary safeguarding activity. The Warrington rate for children in care per 10,000 was 52.8 in March 2014 and remains lower than statistical neighbours and the England average which is 60 per 10,000.

However, by December 2014, the population of children in care had risen to 286 which exceeds the England average (64.6 per 10,000 compared with 60 for England overall). Given the overall population forecasts and the actual number and the rate per 10,000 of children in care over the past five years, which has remained fairly stable, it is anticipated that current levels of children in care may well continue to rise into the future.

Table 2: Trend in the number and rate of Children in Care in Warrington

Description	Mar 2010	Mar 2011	Mar 2012	Mar 2013	Mar 2014	SN	EA
Number of Children in Care	265	245	236	227	232	416	456
Rate of Children in Care per 10,000	62	57	54.81	51.60	52.83	59	60

Gender: In Warrington, the male population of children in care in 2013/14 accounts for 55% of children in care and is lower than the proportion of males last year, which was 58%. In general terms however, the gender imbalance is consistent with the national picture.

Table 3: Trend in the number and rate of Children in Care in Warrington, by Sex

	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Male	148 (56%)	136 (55%)	122 (52%)	120 (58%)	128 (55%)
Female	116 (44%)	110 (45%)	114 (48%)	107 (47%)	104 (45%)
Total	265	246	236	227	232

Age Range: Table 5 presents the trend in the number and percentage of the children in care by age group. This shows a slight reduction in the proportion of children in care that are aged 0 to 4 years. This needs to be taken into consideration when looking at the recruitment of foster carers and adoptive family recruitment.

Table 4: Trend in the number and rate of Children in Care in Warrington, by Age

	2009 – 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
0 to 4 years	71 (26.8%)	64 (26.0%)	60 (25.4%)	53 (23%)	48 (21%)
5 to 9 years	52 (19.6%)	55 (22.4%)	49 (20.8%)	44 (19%)	45 (19%)
10 to 14 years	73 (27.55%)	72 (29.27%)	71 (30.08%)	92 (41%)	73 (31%)
15 to 18 years	69 (26.04%)	55 (22.36%)	56 (23.73%)	38 (17%)	66 (28%)
Total	265	246	236	227	232

Disabled Children: Table 6 provides details of the number of disabled children in care³. Disability may or may not be the reason that the child or young person is in care. The number has reduced over the past 12 months which can be attributed to the changes in legislation resulting in fewer children being taken into care as a result of their disability.

Table 5: Trend in the number of disabled Children in Care in Warrington

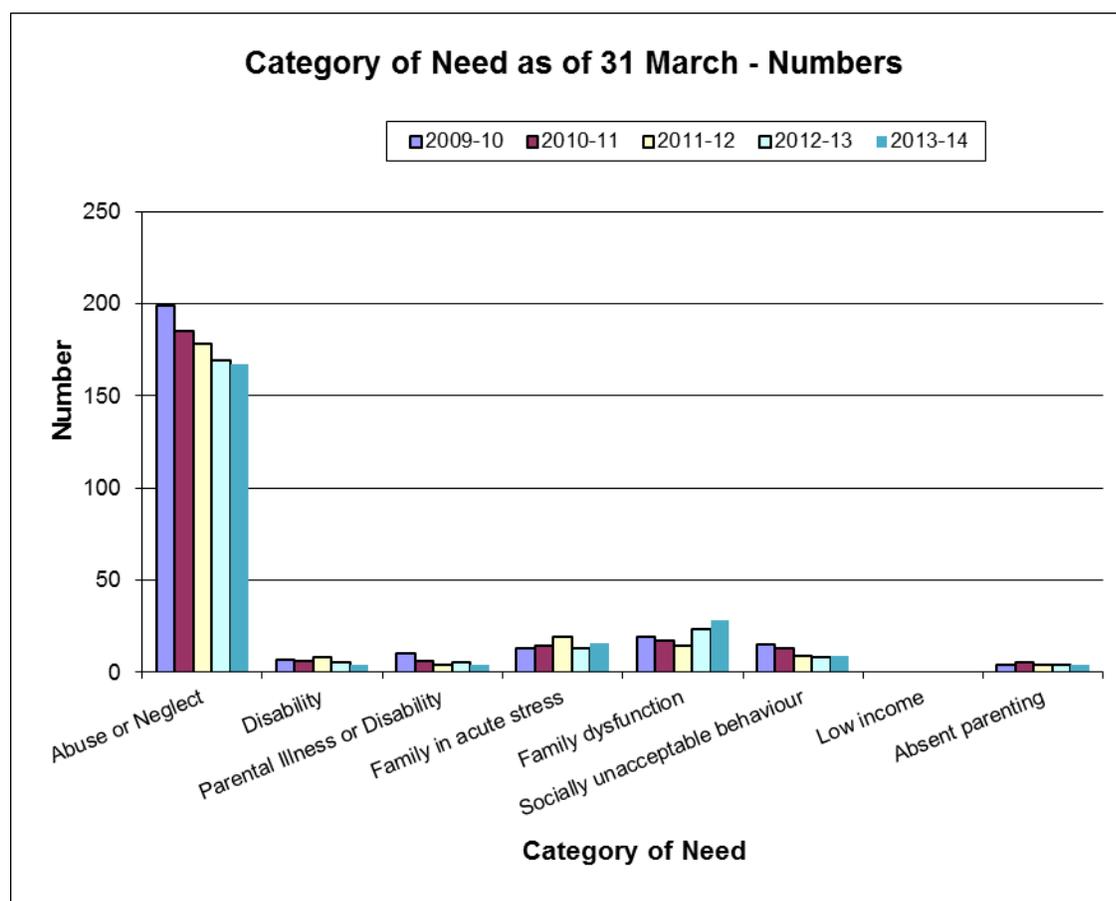
	2008 - 2009	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2013 - 2014
Number of disabled children and young people in care	47	53	52	58	46	41

Ethnicity: At 31 March 2014, 7.7% of children and young people in care were from a minority ethnic background, an increase on the previous year (7.05%). The numbers of children in care from a minority ethnic background has increased this year to 18. In the last four years the numbers remained fairly constant, ranging from 11 to 18 children per year.

Category of need for children coming into care: The majority of children are received into care as a result of abuse or neglect with this category of need affecting 165 of 232 young people at 31st March 2014. This has been consistent over the past five years and is in line with the national picture. Chart 1 presents the recorded categories of need resulting in the child coming into care.

³ The Regulations and Guidance for Care Planning, Placement and Case Review changed in April 2010. Prior to this change a disabled child who received short breaks amounting to 72 nights or more a year was classed as a child in care.

Chart 1: Category of need breakdown of Children in Care



Health: The provision of health care for children in care is good. The health assessment results in a health care plan being formulated and shared with the child/young person’s social worker, which, in turn, informs the care plan. The Designated Doctor for Children in Care and the Specialist Nurse for Children in Care provide dedicated health care, advice and support to ensure health needs are met.

The table below shows the percentage of children in care who had their annual health assessment within a year of their last assessment and visited the dentist each year.

Table 6: annual percentages of children receiving annual health/dental assessments

	2008 - 2009	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2013 - 2014
% of children who had an annual health assessment	81.71%	85.71%	94.23%	90.24%	95.03%	88.3%
% of children who attended the dentist annually	N/A	57%	66%	91%	88.8%	80%

In 2013/14, 116 children in care completed a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) - a screening tool which measures the emotional wellbeing of children aged between 5–16 years

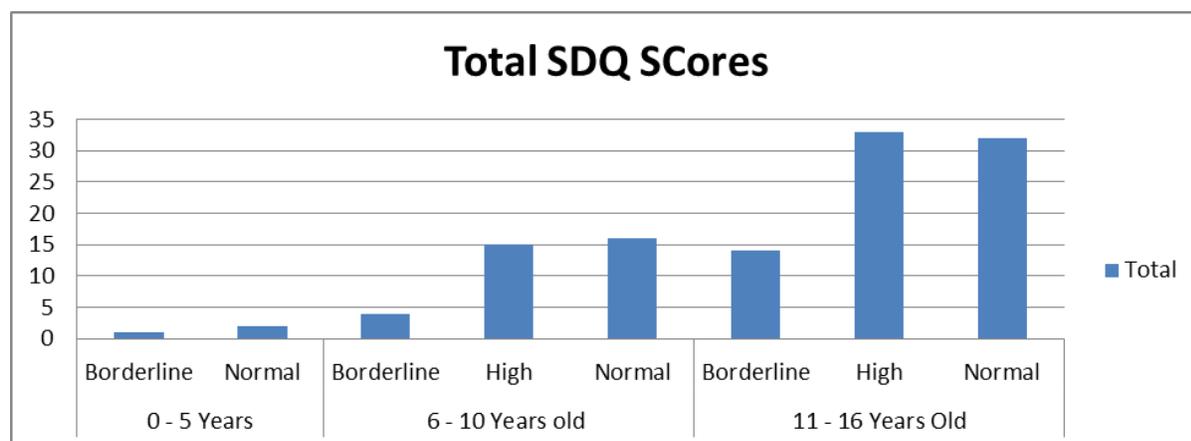
old. The SDQ forms the referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) via CAMHS workers based in the children in care social work teams. More information is included in the Children and Young People’s Emotional Health and Wellbeing Chapter.

The SDQ generates a score between 0 and 40. Scores ranging between 0 and 13 are considered ‘normal’. Scores ranging between 14 and 16 are considered ‘borderline’. Scores between 17 and 40 are considered ‘abnormal’ (or high). The standard practice in Warrington is to refer all Children in Care with a score above 11 to the CAMHS team for consultation.

Based on the cut-off bandings described above, as Chart 2 illustrates, it appears that the proportion of children with an abnormally high score increases with age.

The local cut-off for referral to CAMHS is a score of over 11. In 2013/2014, 59% of children in care in Warrington who had an SDQ completed met the criteria for referral. This data highlights that a higher proportion of males scored over 11 and are therefore eligible for a referral to CAMHS. Of those with a completed SDQ score greater than 11, 65% were male; 35% female.

Chart 2: SDQ Results from Children in Care, 2013/14, Warrington



Education: As at 31st March 2014, Warrington was corporate parent to 232 children and young people in care, of which 155 were of statutory school age. 70% of school age children were regarded as having Special Educational Needs (SEN). These children require educational support for learning difficulties which is provided via the following initiatives:

- School Action, where a child is not progressing and action is required to meet learning difficulties via different learning materials, special equipment or a different teaching strategy
- School Action Plus, where School Action support has not been able to help the child make adequate progress, external advice from the local authority, health and social services will be sought
- Statement, which documents the child’s special educational needs and any additional help the child should receive.

Warrington children in care are supported by a Virtual School which works with a wide range of partners to maximise the educational outcomes for children and young people in care or care

leavers. It seeks to significantly raise the profile of and champion the educational needs of these children and young people across Warrington and when placed outside the authority.

Personal Education Plan (PEP): All local authorities have a statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of children in care, wherever they are placed, and make sure that all of these children have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that is reviewed at least every term. The PEP is also a record of a key multiagency meeting. PEPs must be started within 10 school days of a child becoming a child in care and it is good practice to combine the PEP meeting with the Special Educational Needs (SEN) annual review, where appropriate. Since the new guidance was implemented in July 2014 and with the move to termly PEPs, Warrington's Autumn Term PEP compliance has been 93%.

Educational attainment for children in care: The tables below show the percentage of children in care⁴ attaining key results.

Table 7: Educational Attainment for Children in Care: Key Stage 2

Table 1a: Key Stage 2	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Number in Cohort	9	10	11	10
Level 4 English (Warrington children in care)	33%	50%	Reading: 72.7% Writing: 81.8%	Reading: 90% Writing: 60%
Level 4 English (National children in care)	45%	60%	Reading: 63% Writing: 55%	n/a
Level 4 Maths (Warrington children in care)	44%	50%	72.7%	70%
Level 4 Maths (National children in care)	44%	56%	59%	n/a
Level 4 English and maths (Warrington children in care)	33%	50%	R,W,M: 63.6%	n/a
Level 4 English and maths (National children in care)	36%	50%	n/a	n/a

Percentage achieving Level 4+ in Reading, Writing and Maths	2012	2013	2014
Children in Care – Published Cohort	50.0%	63.6%	60%
All Warrington pupils	77.9%	80.1%	83.3%

⁴ 903 Defined Cohort (Pupils at the end of Year 11 who have been in care continuously for 12 months from 1st April)

Table 8: Educational Attainment for Children in Care: Key Stage 4

	2011	2012	2013	2014	All LA 2014 (unverified)	All National non Children in Care 2013	CiC National 2013
Cohort	11	14	16	19	-	-	-
5+A*-G	7 (78%)	13 (93%)	9 (56.3%)	9 (47.4)	93.9%	-	-
5+A*-C	5 (45%)	10 (71%)	5 (31.3%)	3 (15.8%)	65.1%	80.3%	36.6%
5+A*-C incl. Eng and Maths	4 (36%)	6 (43%)	4 (25%)	3 (15.8%)	54.2%	58.0%	16.1%
Percentage expected progress English	-	-	4 (25%)	4 (21.1%)	-	68.5%	32.6%
Percentage expected progress Maths	-	-	4 (25%)	4 (21.1%)	-	69.1%	29.2%

In 2014, 47.4% of the 19 children in care passed 5 or more GCSEs grades A*-G. This is a slight drop from previous years but it should be noted that the cohort of 19 children who entered, is relatively small.

Attendance at school and exclusions for children in care:

Table 9 – Absence from school

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	% Overall Absence	% Persistent Absence								
Warrington Children in Care	5.8	5.4	5.2	7.2	5.3	10.2	6.3	11	3.9	6.4
National Children in Care	5.7	4.5	5.5	6.5	4.7	6.1	4.4	5	n/a	n/a
National – all children	6	2.9	5.8	6.1	5.1	5.2	4.6	5.3	n/a	n/a

In 2013/14 attendance of Children in Care was 96.1%, above the LA averages and national averages for Children in Care (95.6% in 2012/13). A large majority have greater than 95% attendance with a small number of children who have less than 85% attendance. Persistent absence (PA) for Children in Care nationally was 5.3% in 2013.

Persistent absence (pupils who have missed the equivalent of 23 days of the school in an academic year) has reduced significantly this year by 4.6%. However, it is still above the National average for Children in Care last year.

A small number of Children in Care are having a high level of absence particularly in Key Stage 4. Problems are more likely to occur when there are mental health issues, problems with placement or the child is living with his/her own parents but still in care.

A revised robust process was introduced in September 2014 to identify early persistent absence. The Virtual School meet on a monthly basis with the attendance team to analyse the data from welfare call and troubleshoot any attendance issues. The Virtual School Support Officer follows up unexplained absence with social workers and the Virtual School Education Manager also intervenes with individuals and their schools to address poor attendance. The attendance team within the LA make Children in Care a priority in the schools where they have bought in their services. The approach to improving attendance is a multi-agency one.

Welfare call reports on absence daily to the Virtual School allowing problems to be quickly identified.

Table 10 – Exclusions from school (%)

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Warrington Children in Care	12.6%	12.9%	14.5% (17/117)	903 cohort 5.0%* (6/119) Entire annual cohort 10.6% (17/160)
Statistical Neighbour	10.5%	12.0%	Not known	Not known
National Children in Care	11.8%	11.4%	Not known	Not known

**Please note that this is provisional data and is measured using welfare call. This data may change.*

	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012- 2013	2013- 2014
Warrington children in care - permanent exclusion	0	0	0	0	0
Warrington children in care – number with at least 1 fixed-term exclusion	9.5	12.4	12.9	14.5	5%
National children in care – permanent exclusion	0.27	0.24	0.15	0.11	Not available
National children in care – number with at least 1 fixed term exclusion	12.6	11.8	11.3	9.8	Not available

The most recent published data from 2013/14 shows a significant reduction in fixed term exclusions after a few years of steady increase. 9.8% of Children in Care were fixed term excluded nationally in 2013.

Currently significant resource is allocated from the Virtual School to work directly with schools when children are identified to be at risk of exclusion and who we know are especially vulnerable. The Virtual School has had to be increasingly creative with its support and advice to schools with Children in Care in our Primary schools, as we have received an increase in the number of calls from primary head teachers who are dealing with very challenging behaviour.

There is a close link between exclusions and persistent absence in Warrington.

Warrington children in care have not been permanently excluded from education for the period 2008-2014, which demonstrates a sustained performance. Fixed term exclusion from education for children in care in Warrington over the same period highlighted a marked increase for the year 2010-11 which was due to significant behavioural issues which have now been addressed. This figure has now declined. The absence of the most recent data for the national fixed term and permanent exclusion percentages prevents a like for like comparison.

Care Leavers:

The cohort of Care leavers refers to young people aged 16 to 21. Our involvement with young people can extend up to the age of 25 in certain circumstances if for example the young person remains engaged in Higher Education.

Care leavers aged 16 to 21 fall into three categories as defined within the legislation:

Eligible: young people aged 16 and 17 who have been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and are still in care after their 16th birthday.

Relevant: young people aged 16 and 17 who have been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and have left care after reaching the age of 16.

Former Relevant: young people aged 18-21 who have been either 'eligible' or 'relevant' or both. The upper age limit can extend up to 25 if the young person is engaged in Higher Education

As at March 2014, there were a total of 122 care leavers⁵. As at 31st July 2014 (when the data was most recently collated) there were 116 Care Leavers in one of these three categories, broken down as follows:

- 37 Eligible young people
- 6 Relevant young people
- 73 Former Relevant young people

In Warrington, the expectation for children in care is that they to continue to live in care placements until the age of 18 or as close to that age as possible. This is recognition that the overwhelming majority of young people in care require the support of living within a foster family or in a residential children's home until at least that age.

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) figures for children in care /care leavers at age 19 was 28% in March 2014. This year, however, the cohort includes 19, 20 and 21 year olds, and after an initial figure of 47% at the beginning of the year, a gradual improvement in performance with the expanded cohort of 63 young people stood at 41% in December 2014

As at 31st March 2014, 90% of all 19, 20 and 21 year old care leavers who were eligible for care leaver support were living in suitable accommodation, with 29 of the 122 care leavers living outside the borough. By December 2014, this figure was 93.7%

Children who go missing from care: Over 3,000 missing person reports are made in Cheshire every year. Approximately 75% of investigations undertaken annually in Cheshire involve people under the age of 18 years old. Over 300 children in Cheshire go missing on at least

⁵ Who are eligible, relevant or former relevant under The (Children) Leaving Care Act 2000

three occasions a year. Many of these are children in care, including children's care homes operated by Local Authorities as well as by private care providers but the majority who are reported missing are living at home with parents. It is important to note that the majority of children in care do not go missing. (Pan Cheshire Protocol 2011)

Children may go missing from care for a number of reasons including being given a placement away from their families and their increased vulnerability may make them a target for exploitative adults.

In 2013/14 there were 5 children who were reported missing from placement for more than 24 hours during the year, which equates to 2.2% of the children in care population. A comparison with the national average cannot be made at this point as the figure is yet to be published (as of December 2014).

4) CURRENT SERVICES IN RELATION TO NEED

The following services involving a number of different agencies and providers collectively ensure that the needs of children in care in Warrington are met:

- **Children in Care Social Work Teams** - the social workers in the two teams complete court care proceedings to ensure that all children in care are placed within permanent, secure and stable care arrangements whether that is through fostering, adoption, return to birth family, residential care, independence or through seeking an alternative order. The service supports children and young people in long term care throughout their childhood and provides a service to care leavers to ensure that their transition into adulthood is successful.
- **Placement Support Service** - provides long term support to children in care and care leavers through facilitating contact with birth families; direct work and life work with children and young people; providing support to foster and residential placements to prevent disruption and enhance placement stability
- **Fostering Team** - recruits, assesses and trains prospective foster carers and provides foster placements to Warrington children in care. Foster carers are provided with a range of support, both formal and informal, through the supervising social worker and Warrington's Fostering Forum which is facilitated by the fostering team.
- **Foster Carers** - During the year 1 April 2013 - 31 March 2014 the service successfully approved an additional 20 foster carer households who provide 26 placements for children. This surpassed the set target of 15 new placements to be recruited during the year.
- **A Marketing and Communications Strategy** for 2013-15 was launched in May 2013. This includes a new standalone website for the Fostering Service, social media and Google advertising. In the next 12 months we expect that the service will continue to grow. Feedback informs us that Warrington's reputation is good and foster carers are actively recommending our service to both potential and experienced foster carers.
- **WWiSH Adoption Service** – a shared service with Wigan and St Helens which recruits, assesses and trains prospective adopters and family finds for children who need an adoptive family. WWiSH also provides an adoption support service to adopters and both

child and adult adoptees. The service aims to provide more placement choice to children through the sharing of adopters across a wider geographical footprint. This is having and will continue to have a positive impact on the timeliness of adoptive placements being made.

- **Residential Children's Homes Services** – consisting of one three bedded and four two bedded children's homes which provide short and long-term care to children and young people for whom foster care is not the best option. The homes offer nurturing, homely and non-institutionalised care. The houses are in a mainstream residential setting and are fully integrated within the community.

An additional children's home has been specifically designed to provide short breaks for children and young people with disabilities and complex needs.

All of the residential children's homes have been inspected by Ofsted and three are rated as 'Good' and three as 'Outstanding'. (December 2014)

- **Conference and Review Managers**
Conference and Review Managers manage the case review process for children in care and undertake Regulation 33 visits to Warrington Borough Council's children's residential homes in the role of Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs).
- **Health services for Children in Care**
Children in care receive a comprehensive health service and have their own allocated Health Visitor or School Nurse as well as designated contacts in CAMHS, a specialist nurse and a designated doctor. At the end of March 2014, 99% of children in care were registered with a GP and 86% were registered with a Dentist.

Individual Health Care Plans are shared with young people and carers at their health assessment and a copy sent to the Fostering team to send to the carers. Immunisation is part of the health assessment and if not up to date is included in the care plan.

- **Schools – designated teachers for children in care**
Each primary and secondary school has designated teachers for Children in Care who receive training on the issues that affect the educational outcomes for these vulnerable children and also on how they can best support them through the use of personal education plans.
- **NYAS**
National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) is a children's charity which works with children and young people to ensure that their voice is heard in important decisions which affect their lives. In Warrington, NYAS provides an advocacy service for children in care. Advocacy is a process which helps children and young people to speak up for themselves about important decisions which affect their lives. An advocate can attend meetings including children in care case reviews, personal education plans and child protection conferences to ensure that the wishes and feelings of young people are heard about important issues in their lives.

NYAS also supplies independent visitors to visit, advise and befriend young people who are looked after by the local authority as part of the Independent Visitors Scheme. An

Independent Visitor is there to befriend a young person and offer them consistency, support, advice and encouragement. The scheme contributes to the welfare of children in care by promoting their individual needs and interests.

- **Children in Care Council**

The Children in Care Council aims to improve the service received by children in care and care leavers by listening to the voices and views of those young people who are in the care of the local authority.

The 3Cs is a Children in Care Council for younger children in care aged 8-12 years old.

Over the past year the Children in Care Councils have met regularly with the Director of Children and Young People's Services and the head of the virtual school to ensure that the voices of children in care are heard. They have held a number of events for the junior members to gain their views and enjoy new experiences.

The 'Have Your Say' newsletter is distributed quarterly to every child in care and care leavers to keep them up to date with the latest events and information, and to share good news stories.

The group is also involved in a number of projects, including helping to recruit senior managers, meeting the children's minister, and sharing their experiences of being in care with Ofsted and other Children in Care Councils in the region.

- **Careers for Young People**

Children in care and care leavers have dedicated Education and Employment Advisers that help provide information, advice and practical help to enable these young people to reach their potential and enter a rewarding career. The Education and Employment Advisers work in a range of places such as the Careers Centre, schools, colleges and community centres.

- **Catch 22**

Catch 22 helps to reduce the risk of a young person in care running away, or if they have already run away, works with them to support them and reduce the risk of them repeating this behaviour. The service works with the young person, their family and anyone else involved, such as school or children's and adults' social work services, to address the reasons why the young person ran away in the first place.

- **The Children in Care Sub Group**

This group was established by Warrington's Safeguarding Children Board and brings together all agencies involved in the care and support of children and young people in care.

Membership of the Sub-Group is:

- Children and Young People's Targeted Services
- Chair of the Children in Care Council
- Connexions Service
- National Youth Advocacy Service
- Youth Service

- Primary Care Trust
- Bridgewater Community Healthcare Trust
- Boroughs Partnership CAMHS
- Youth Offending Team
- Cheshire Police
- Catch 22

The Sub-Group has reported regularly to the Warrington Safeguarding Children Board but from January 2015 will report directly to the Corporate Parenting Forum.

• **Placements for children in care in Warrington:**

Table 12 presents figures on the number and percentage of children in care by placement. As the figures illustrate, the vast majority of children in care are accommodated within families in foster placements, with most of these being in foster care provided by the Council.

Table 11: Trend in the number and percentage of Children in Care by placement

	31 March 2009	31 March 2010	31 March 2011	31 March 2012	31 March 2013	31 March 2014
Foster care (WBC provision)	112 (45.7%)	115 (43.4%)	112 (45.5%)	97 (41.1%)	93 (41%)	104 (45%)
Foster care (agency or OLA provision)	20 (8.2%)	23 (8.7%)	25 (10.2%)	47 (19.9%)	43 (19%)	33 (14%)
Foster care (relative or friend)	49 (20.0%)	61 (23.0%)	52 (21.1%)	39 (16.5%)	23 (10%)	31 (13%)
Total foster care	205 (73.9%)	226 (75.1%)	205 (76.8%)	183 (77.5%)	159 (70%)	168 (72%)
Residential	24 (9.8%)	23 (8.7%)	26 (10.6%)	33 (13.9%)	37 (16%)	36 (16%)
Placed with own parent or person with parental responsibility	24 (9.8%)	27 (10.19%)	16 (6.50%)	12 (5.1%)	11 (5%)	11 (5%)
Leaving care	5 (2.0%)	4 (1.5%)	6 (2.4%)	7 (2.9%)	8 (4%)	9 (4%)
Other	11 (4.5%)	12 (4.5%)	9 (3.7%)	1 (0.4%)	12 (5%)	8 (3%)
Total Children in Care	245	265	246	236	227	232

Children in the care of foster carers: Locally and nationally, the majority of children and young people in care in foster placements. Over the past four years, the proportion of foster placements has slightly increased nationally from 73% to 75% and regionally from 74% to 75%.

The table below shows the percentage of foster placements in Warrington compared to regional and national figures from 2009 to 2014.

Table 12: Trend in the percentage of children in care in foster placements

	As at 31 March 2009	As at 31 March 2010	As at 31 March 2011	As at 31 March 2012	As at 31 March 2013	As at 31 March 2014
Warrington	74%	75%	77%	77%	70%	75%
North West	69%	71%	72%	73%	73%	73%
England	73%	73%	74%	75%	75%	72%

Warrington's use of foster placements during the four year period, from 2009 to 2012, has consistently been above the national and regional level, and shows a gradual increase year on year until 2013 due to the number of children with complex needs requiring specialist residential placements either in children's homes or residential schools.

Where possible, children in foster care are placed in Warrington's own provision. However, in 2011-12 there was an increase towards the use of independent fostering agencies or other local authority provision (rising from 8% at March 2009 to 20% in 2012); due to a shortage of local authority foster places. 62% of all children in care (177 of 286) were placed with Warrington recruited carers or Warrington approved friends/family carers at December 2014. A recruitment drive for local authority foster carers has sought to address this over the last twelve months. The focus on recruitment and retention of local authority foster carers will need to continue in order to maintain or improve the level of care within Warrington provision.

Children in residential care: As at the end of March 2014, 36 children and young people were in residential care. Of these, 25 were in agency residential placements and 11 were in local authority residential provision. Warrington's own provision was restructured during 2011-12 to provide four smaller two-bedded children's homes and one three-bedded home so that the homes provide a local setting that is as close to 'family living' as possible, where children can continue to attend the same school, GP, dentist and have the opportunity to maintain contact with their families and friends.

Adoption Placements: Warrington now shares an adoption service with the neighbouring authorities of St Helens and Wigan (WWiSH Adoption Service). There is a refreshed focus on the recruitment of adopters and the new timeframe for adopters being approved from the point of initial enquiry is 6 months.

During 2013-14, 22 Warrington children were adopted. Of these, three were placed in purchased placements from other local authorities. The WWiSH development plan outlines the need to place children with WWiSH approved adopters and at 31st March 2014 there were 23 children in Warrington with a plan of adoption. A successful recruitment year for WWiSH has meant that over 70 sets of adopters were approved in the year to March 2014, so it should be possible to place the vast majority of Warrington children with a plan for adoption with WWiSH approved adopters. Performance targets have been set across WWiSH to measure the number of children placed with WWiSH recruited own adopters, the target will be that over 90% of Warrington children are placed with WWiSH recruited adopters.

In March 2012, the Department of Education published "*An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay*" which outlined what the government intended to do to accelerate the adoption process, so that more children benefit from adoption and are placed more rapidly. Accompanying the

action plan was an 'adoption scorecard,' setting out each local authority's performance against three key indicators:

1. The average time it takes for a child who goes on to be adopted from entering care to moving in with his or her adoptive family (threshold will be set at 16 months - 487 days for 2014/15).
2. The average time it takes for a local authority to match a child to an adoptive family once the court has formally decided that adoption is the best option (threshold will be set at 4 months - 121 days for 2014/15).
3. Children who wait less than 16 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (number and %) for 2014/15.

The adoption scorecard was refreshed in November 2014 showing data for 2011-14. Warrington was below the threshold for indicator 1 (by 132 days), below target for indicator 2 (by 90 days) and below the national average for indicator 3 (48% compared with 51%) based on the threshold of 18 months in the 2011-14 scorecard.

As at 31 March 2014, 16 children were awaiting adoption placements; however, as a result of improved activity, by December 2014, that figure has reduced to four.

Profile of placements for Warrington children in care: The number of children in care at March 2014 was 232 and 93% (216) of these children were placed in accommodation within 20 miles of Warrington.

In March 2014 97% of out of borough independent agency placements were rated 'good' or better by Ofsted, in December 2014, that figure was 84%. Of these, twelve are 'Outstanding' providers with 29 children and young people in these placements. There are 20 Providers whose current full inspection is recorded as 'Good', with 29 children and young people. There are four Residential Provisions and two fostering Providers with an Adequate report which includes a Secure Placement and there are 13 children and young people in these settings. This marks the first fall below 90% of our agency placements being good or outstanding and is largely the result of two fostering services moving from Good in the last quarter. Our position is still very good when compared to other NW Local Authorities

Stability of placements for Warrington children in care: While foster care may be able to provide permanence for foster children in a similar way to adoption, long stays with the same foster carers are relatively rare. The Social Care Institute for Excellence reports that placement disruption in fostering is much less likely if the child is aged less than 10 years and is more common amongst teenage placements. They estimate that around half of teenage placements break down before the young person reaches 18. Research shows that less than 20% of young people stay with foster carers after they reach the age of 17 and that the child's age, emotional disturbance and motivation appear to be key factors in placement breakdown^Y.

The principle of reciprocal matching foster families and children has become common practice over the past two years and as of the 31 March 2014, 32 open placements in Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) and 14 of these had been matched. This has contributed to placement stability in the long term.

Warrington has two key indicators for measuring placement stability. These are:

- The percentage of children who have been in care for 2.5 years or more and have been in their current placement for a minimum of 2 years. In 2013/2014 the figure was 67.5% remaining stable from the 2012/13 figure of 65.8% (but below the target of 68%). In the current year, the rate was 70.5% at December 2014, above target and significantly higher than England average and our statistical neighbours.
- The percentage of children who have had 3 or more placements since they came into the care of the local authority. In 2013/14 the figure increased from the previous year from 7.5% to 10.3%. As of 31st December 2014, this figure was 8.4%, but is a rising cumulative total to year end. If the average rate continues to year end, the cumulative total will be 11.2%.

Disruptions: Significant efforts are made to support placements and avoid unnecessary disruption of children's placements. Multi-disciplinary placement stability meetings, introduced in 2013, are an integral part of the care planning process within the fostering service and take place where there is an identified risk of placement breakdown. These identify what support is needed to maintain the placement and develop an action plan to ensure that both the child and carers are supported.

Care Leavers

Our care leavers (Post 18) have a wide range of potential a range of options available to them. Of the 73 young people referred to earlier in the document (as of July 2014), 66 were in suitable accommodation and the arrangements for them illustrate this:

- 32 young people living independently in rented accommodation
- 13 young people living with their former foster carers as part of a 'staying put' arrangement
- 10 young people living with parents or other relatives
- 6 young people living in community homes or other residential provision
- 1 young person living in supported semi-independent accommodation
- 4 young people living in supported lodgings

The seven young people not in suitable accommodation in July 2014 are broken down as follows:

- 5 young people not living in settled accommodation
- 2 young people serving custodial sentences

Staying Put: Warrington has a Staying Put policy that enables young people to remain within their foster placement beyond the age of 18, where this is agreed by both the young person and the carer. Staying put arrangements usually conclude by the time a young person becomes 21 years of age, however this can be extended up to 25 years when a young person is in education or training that commenced prior to their 21st birthday. The Service currently has 14 young people 'Staying Put' with their foster carers after leaving care (December 2014).

Children in the care of other local authorities placed in Warrington: Local authorities have a statutory duty to notify the host local authority when a child in care is placed in their area. Warrington writes to all local authorities twice a year to update records. The number of children placed in Warrington from other local authorities is 147 (December 2014). Whilst Warrington Borough Council does not have corporate parenting responsibilities for children in the care of other local authorities placed in Warrington, this group of children is recognised as a group vulnerable to poorer outcomes than their peers. As such, Warrington monitors children who go missing from homes or from education under its child protection arrangements.

5) PROJECTED SERVICE USE AND OUTCOMES IN 3-5 YEARS AND 5-10 YEARS

The *Children in Care Sufficiency Statement* and the *Children in Care Community Action Plan* outline the needs of children in care and care leavers. The sufficiency statement sets out how placement provision will reflect need in a cost effective and positive manner.

Over the last four years the number of children in care in Warrington has averaged 230. In 2010/11 the number of children in care rose sharply as a consequence of the 'inadequate' rating from the Ofsted inspection which resulted in increased admissions due to necessary safeguarding activity. The Warrington rate for children in care per 10,000 was 52.8 in March 2014 but has subsequently risen to be comparable and subsequently higher than (at 64.56 in December 2014), both statistical neighbours and the England average which is 60 per 10,000.

Table 14 – Number and Rate of Children in Care

Description	Mar 2010	Mar 2011	Mar 2012	Mar 2013	Mar 2014	Dec 2014	SN	EA
Number of Children in care	265	245	236	227	232	286	416	456
Rate of Children in care per 10,000	62	57	54.81	51.60	52.83	64.56	59	60

The main reason for entering care in 2013/14 was as a result of neglect or abuse with this category of need affecting 165 of 232 young people. The status of children in care is summarised over the page, this is significant as it does affect the options for accommodation in the short, medium and longer term.

Full Care Orders are rising; at 122 (in March 2014), this is showing a 3 year increase from 90 in March 2011. The trend has continued in 2014/15 with the number at 31st December at 141. Interim Care Orders have risen substantially in 2014/15, rising to 61 as at 31st December.

Section 20 arrangements have declined steadily to 31st March 2014 but have subsequently remained relatively stable and were at 54 as of December 2014.

Table 15 – Legal Status of Children in Care

Description	Mar 2010	Mar 2011	Mar 2012	Mar 2013	Mar 2014	Dec 2014
Accommodated S20	93	76	67	66	59	54
Other Legal Status	21	25	24	31	27	30
Care Orders (interim)	46	55	55	31	25	61
Care Orders (Full)	109	90	90	99	122	144

The number of children in care during 2013/14 was relatively consistent with a near balance between admissions and discharges. This trend has not continued, admissions have outnumbered discharges as numbers of children in care has risen by 23% in the nine months to December 2014.

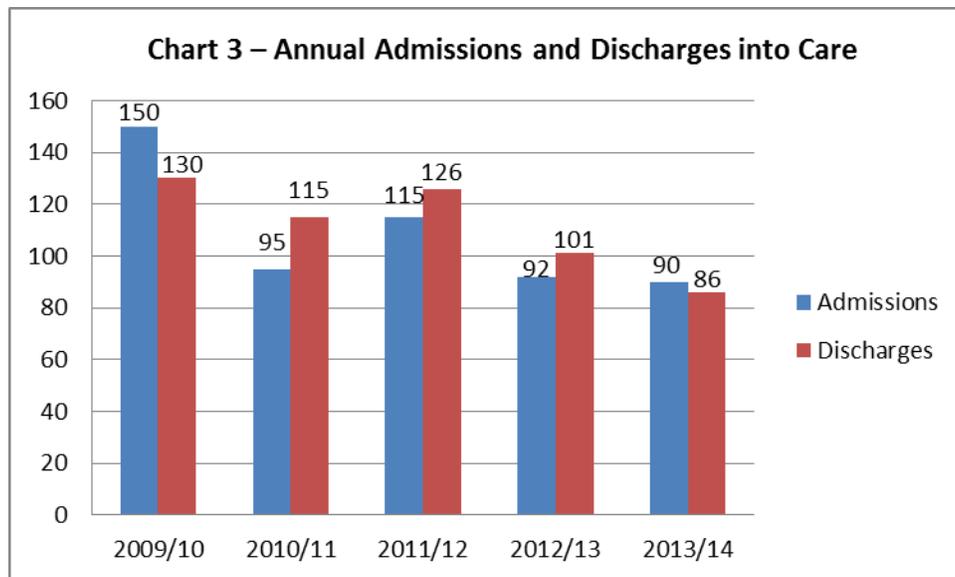


Table 16 - Monthly Admissions and Discharges into Care

Admissions & Discharges 2013-14	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
Admissions 2013-14	5	5	5	15	7	6	11	4	3	15	8	6	90
Discharges 2013-14	7	8	11	3	7	8	8	7	6	4	6	11	86

The overall reduction in admissions over the last 3 years has not continued as changes to the court process and accountability of the Council around homelessness due to Welfare Reform and Young Offenders change. Based on the review of the last 12 months and previously, our expectations are to see a rise in:

- Mother and baby (assessment) placements
- Remands to care
- Supported Lodgings Provision for 16 to 18 year olds and care leavers up to 21 years old and in some instances 25
- Adoptive placements
- Specialist foster placements to manage
- Young people with high level complex social needs – possibly solo placements
- Placements for sibling groups
- Provision for children with physical care needs that require invasive medical care
- Short break care for children with physical and learning disabilities.

6) EVIDENCE OF WHAT WORKS

The Department of Education manages a number of interventions that have proved to be effective at working with looked after children and children on the edge of care or custody. Local Authorities who are piloting one or more of these programmes have found:

- Improved outcomes for particular groups of children in the short, medium and longer term
- Evidence of cost-prevention through increased placement stability, a reduction in use of residential care and other high-cost services
- Wider 'system' changes including improved multi-agency working, upskilling of workforce and more positive perceptions of looked after children, particularly by the children themselves.

Further details for all the interventions can be found on the Department of Education website.

Staying Put

The Staying Put pilot, which began in 11 councils in July 2008, is targeted at young people who have established relationships with foster carers and offers this group the opportunity to remain with their carers until they reach the age of 21.

The pilot aims to enable young people to build on and nurture their attachments to their foster carers, so that they can move to independence at their own pace and be supported to make the

transition to adulthood in a more gradual way. It also aims to provide the stability and support necessary for young people to achieve in education, training and employment.

The interim report presents findings from a mapping exercise and face-to-face interviews conducted between December 2009 and April 2010 with managers responsible for implementing Staying Put in each of the 11 pilot authorities.

It explores how authorities are actually implementing Staying Put (and any changes compared to plans submitted to the Department); and looks at the challenges and issues that they face in implementing Staying Put in practice.

Warrington has been making use of Staying Put arrangements and had 14 young people in Staying Put as of December 2014.

Edge of Care

Warrington has a number of young people who have come into care relatively late in childhood. There are occasions when young people have entered the care system but assessments have indicated that their needs would best be met whilst remaining within the wider family. Family Group Meetings are used to support this aim.

Our intent is to undertake a market test to establish if there are providers who may be operating in other parts of the country who may be interested in delivering an Edge of Care Service locally to offer more intensive levels of support, including evenings and weekends; to include parenting support, mediation and Family Group Meetings.

7) POPULATION/SERVICE USER VIEWS

A key commitment, which focuses on improving the experiences of children in care, was to put the voice of the child in care at the heart of the care system, so that corporate parents take into account children and young people's wishes and feelings when making decisions, as should all parents. Research also shows that when children and young people are involved in the development and operation of services, provision is more likely to be what children and young people want and need, leading to greater stability for them and better outcomes.

The children in care of Warrington are very clear about what they expect from the people who provide their care and support. The Pledge to Children in Care, which was launched in November 2010, and presented to full Council in March 2011, has been fully accepted by elected members in their role as corporate parents. Details of the pledge are set out below:

- Allow us to choose our own activities and support us in our interests
- Say what you mean and mean what you say
- Let us learn from our mistakes
- Respect us when we want to see our family
- Friends are an important part of growing up, don't discourage it
- Let us smile
- Don't criticise us because of our past, accept us for who we are
- Agree to follow the pledge – make a promise and don't break it
- Our dreams can come true if you support us
- Help us understand our true feelings
- Love us like one of your own
- Work with us, not against us

The Children in Care Council regularly reviews the effectiveness of the pledge in their weekly meetings. The Chair of the Children in Care Council attends the Children in Care Strategy Group and the Corporate Parenting Forum. The Chair also attends full Council to present the annual report of the Children in Care Council.

The Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy was launched in April 2013 with significant input from the Children in Care Council. The Mid Term Strategy Review, produced in October 2014 also included input from the 3C's group (the Children in Care Council for children aged 8-12) with Top Ten Tips for teachers in working with children in care. A new Strategy will be produced for launch in April 2016.

There is, therefore, evidence that the voice of the Children in Care Council is heard and is proving effective.

Both parents and children were involved in service design for the new build children's residential homes between mid-2011 and May 2012.

- All parents were written to and consulted with about the proposal to build the new two bedded children's homes and the vast majority were very supportive. They participated in discussions about design and implementation
- All of the children and young people (7) who were moving into the homes were fully involved in choosing all the decoration and fittings. Each bedroom has been fully personalised with the young person's choice of decoration, bedding and personal items.
- All parents visited the homes as they opened.
- Records of parents views are kept at each children's home
- In response to requests from parents and children, contact visits now take place in the children's homes, with care taken to provide space and privacy without disrupting the other occupant.

The views of children in care also impact on service and care planning as part of an ongoing process. Children are encouraged to feedback in different ways according to what suits them best. Creating a relaxed environment ensures high quality and regular participation.

8) UNMET NEEDS AND SERVICE GAPS

Key background influences and issues that affect the local authority's current sufficiency position and the ability to improve outcomes are summarised below:

- A pattern of older children needing care and protection with complex social and needs – typically those entering care aged 12-16.
- The distinction between emergency short term placements where stability and assessment are needed and medium/long term placements that offer stability and care for a longer period.
- Recruiting and retaining foster carers that can meet the range and level of needs presented.
- Rising numbers of babies/children/young people with significant special needs – creating severe stress on families and resulting in care.

- Changes in guidance and regulations increasing local authority responsibilities towards support for homeless young people (aged 16 and 17) and young offenders. As a result of this there are issues securing a range of provision to meet the needs of such older young people who become looked after at 16 and 17, and to support the continuity of care beyond the age of 18.
- In a recent DfE report the Children's Homes Reform Quality Group observed that the children's residential home market was showing 'significant turbulence' and that 'local authority demand is changing and moving towards children with more complex needs'. In the future there is expected to be greater demand for smaller specialised homes. Information provided by Placements NorthWest supports the national picture on a regional basis.
- More accommodation options are needed for expectant and young mothers where there is a need for specialist and tailored assessment and support.

9) RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND COMMISSIONING

- Increase recruitment and retention of local Foster Carers able to meet the needs of all children (particularly teenagers and children of other ethnicities and cultures) and to reduce the use of independent fostering and residential agencies.
- Increase and sustain placement stability to improve outcomes.
- Increase the number of potential/actual adopters for older children and sibling groups recruited by WWiSH.
- Further develop 'step down' services to support children and young people leaving residential care.
- Provide a range of accommodation options through internal and external provision and providers to meet the diverse and increasingly complex needs of children in care and the increasing numbers of children with significant special needs.
- Provide a range of accommodation options to meet the diverse and increasingly complex needs of care leavers taking into account the increasing numbers of children with significant support needs. We have gone some way to achieving this through the provision of small children's homes and the development of local resources within a regional context.
- Develop and maintain earlier prevention and intervention measures for children on the edges of care and consider the development of a dedicated Edge of Care service.
- Maintain regional/shared approach to contracting and development of services. Further collaboration between authorities is essential to ensure, whenever possible that collaborative arrangements are developed around gaps in provision – including disability, mother and baby, remand arrangements, older young people and care leavers.

Key contacts

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ⁱ Warrington Children and Young People's Plan 2011 - 2014

ⁱⁱ Warrington Children in Care Strategy Refresh August 2011

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/pages/the-statistics.html>

^{iv} <http://www.education.gov.uk/researchandstatistics/statistics/allstatistics/a00213762/children-looked-after-las-england>
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