





# Warrington

# **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment**

**Children in Care** 

2017/18

**April 2019** 

# Warrington Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) - Children in Care

# **Background**

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. It is the responsibility of agencies involved with children in care to act as a Corporate Parent. The role of a Corporate Parent is to make decisions and provide services that enhance a child's potential or simply to act as a good parent. Key responsibilities are outlined in Warrington's <u>Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy</u><sup>1</sup>

Children in Care generally have poorer outcomes than the wider population – particularly with regards to educational attainment, homelessness and mental health issues. Children may enter care for all sorts of reasons, but many enter because they have been abused or neglected. Such experiences can leave children with complex emotional and mental health needs and affect relationships with the adults who can offer protection and support (Rahilly and Hendry, 2014)<sup>2</sup>. Children may display behavioural problems and attachment difficulties (problems forming secure relationships). Previous experiences may prevent children forming positive peer relationships, whilst complex emotional health needs can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse (Bazalgette, Rahilly, and Trevelyan, 2015; Luke et al, 2014)<sup>3</sup>,<sup>4</sup>. Providing children with the support they need, and when they need it, can help them achieve their potential.<sup>5</sup>

The numbers of Children in Care in England continue to rise. There were 75,420 Children in Care at 31 March 2018, an increase of almost 10% compared to 31 March 2014. In Warrington, the increase was more marked and this has created significant challenges for Warrington around the sufficiency of in-house provision and the budget pressures resulting from the rise in our numbers. Numbers of Children in Care increased each year over the past 5 years, rising from 232 in March 2014 to 401 in March 2018; an increase of 73%. This latest published figure equates to 90 children per 10,000 of the population of 0-17 year olds in Warrington, compared

<sup>1</sup> https://www.warrington.gov.uk/info/201114/publications-and-strategies/1719/children-in-care-and-leaving-care-strategy

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Rahilly, T. and Hendry, E. (eds) (2014) <u>Promoting the wellbeing of children in care: messages from research.</u> London: NSPCC.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Bazalgette, L., Rahilly, T. and Trevelyan, G. (2015) <u>Achieving emotional wellbeing for looked after children: a whole system approach.</u> [London]: NSPCC.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Luke, N. et al. (2014) What works in preventing and treating poor mental health in looked after children? London: NSPCC.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> NSPCC: Looked After Children

to 64 per 10,000 in England. The narrowing placement market internally and externally in the North West means that there is very limited choice in placements and costs – particularly for young people post 13 years. Warrington is engaged in sub-regional work in respect of the recruitment, assessment and retention of foster carers and ensuring value for money around external agency placements. With the challenges around placements, another key priority for Warrington is around safely reducing numbers in care and seeking legal permanence for children at the earliest opportunity. Several work streams are ongoing in order to reduce overall numbers and improve permanency and support for children either in care, or on the edge of care.

#### Context

A range of National Strategies, Policy and Guidance provide the guidelines by which organisations, professionals and carers can work together to help looked-after children and young people reach their full potential and enjoy the same opportunities in life as their peers. Corporate Parenting requirements formally came into force in 1998 as part of the Department of Health's 'Quality Protects' Programme. The main principle behind corporate parenting is that the local authority has a legal and moral duty to provide the kind of support that any good parent would provide for their own children. This includes enhancing children's quality of life as well as simply keeping them safe. An extensive statutory and legal framework now underpins this responsibility, including the:

- Children and Families Act 2014
- Keep on Caring: Supporting young people from care to independence 2016
- Putting Children First 2016
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers

To thrive, children and young people have certain needs that all good parents will meet and in our role as Corporate Parents, Warrington partners are committed to fulfilling these needs as we would for our own children. As part of our work we have adopted the seven corporate parenting principles introduced as part of the Children and Social Work Act in 2017<sup>6</sup>:

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2021

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of children and young people in care
- To encourage children and young people in care to express their views, wishes and feelings
- To take into account their views, wishes and feelings
- To help children and young people in care gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people in care
- To make sure that children and young people in care are safe, and have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- To prepare children and young people in care for adulthood and independent living.

#### What we know about Children in Care and Care Leavers in Warrington

In Warrington, at the end of March 2018<sup>7</sup>:

- 401 Children in Care as of the 31 March 2018; 58% (231) of children in care in Warrington are male and 42% (170) female.
- 343 (85%) Children in Care recorded as white British
- 58 (15%) Children in Care recorded as being from an ethnic minority
- 166 Care Leavers
- 22 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)
- 140 children living in Warrington in the care of another council

The age breakdown of Children in Care in Warrington shows that in 2017/18:

- 18% are aged between 0-4
- 22% are aged between 5-9
- 41% are aged between 10-15
- 19% are aged 16 and over

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Mosaic Information Management System 2018

#### **Numbers and rates**

Over the past five years, numbers of Children in Care increased in Warrington by 73%, from 232 in March 2014 to 401 in March 2018 with continuing trends of more children being admitted into care than being discharged.

Figure 1: Number of children in Care

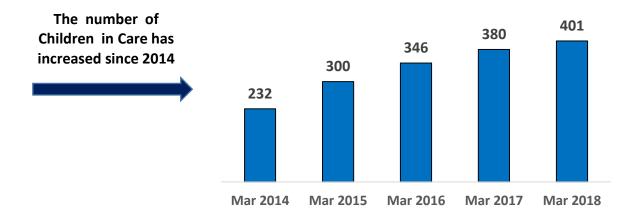
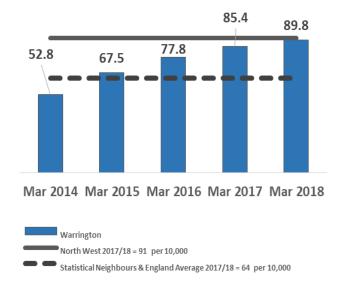


Figure 2: Rate of children in Care

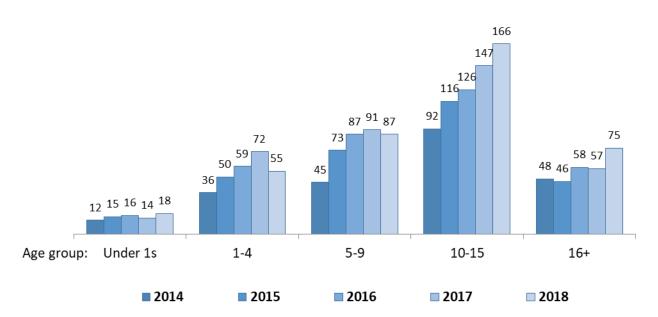
Children in Care - rate per 10,000 0-17 year olds



We have a high rate of Children in Care, compared to the national, and statistical neighbour averages (64). We are close to the North West average (91).

There is a continued shift in balance towards older children over this time period, most notably in children aged 10 and over, bringing additional challenges in terms of finding suitable placements for these children.

Figure 3: Number of children in care by age and year



No. of Children in Care by age by year (31st March)

#### **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**

The number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children has risen and this has impacted on numbers of Children in Care. The number has risen from 4 in April 2016 to 22 in March 2018. We have taken six young people on the National Transfer Scheme (one since 31st March 2018). Future entrants into care may be spontaneous arrivals, typically being dropped off at motorway service stations, although we may expect further referrals through the national transfer scheme.

# Placements<sup>8</sup>

Warrington sees the vast majority of children living happily and safely within their own families. A small number of children need to live away from their families on a temporary or permanent

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> 2017/18 figures are provisional

basis in a range of alternative care arrangements that include foster care, residential care and supported independent living. It is not just about sufficiency but we must also have a regard to the benefits of securing diverse provision and a range of services. Fundamentally the accommodation available must meet the needs of our children<sup>9</sup>.

Children in Care in Warrington are more likely to have three or more placements in a year than Children in Care nationally. Almost 11% of Children in Care in Warrington at March 2018 had three or more placements in the previous 12 months compared to 10% nationally. In March 2018, 57% of children who have been in care for 2.5 years or more have lived in the same placement for over 2 years. This has declined from 76% in the previous year, and we are lower than our statistical neighbours, North West and England average. We want a high percentage of our children to experience long-term placement stability and there will be continued emphasis to maintain a good level of performance in this area. The Placement Support Service and involvement of the families first team has assisted through the support that can be offered to improve this further and prevent disruption.

Adolescents are the other large group and present different challenges as they enter care usually at a point of trauma and often require a range of additional support services to address health, education and social needs. Finding appropriate and timely residential placements can be difficult in a saturated North West marketplace. Notably, at the same time as a rise in the overall number of Children in Care there has been also been an increase in the number of children and young people that have very complex (often mental health) needs and particularly challenging behaviour. These children and young people place themselves and those that care for them at such risk their needs often can only be met by a combination of therapeutic and very specialist care. Despite this trend in previous years, the overall proportion of those in care using residential had decreased to 11%. As noted earlier there has also been a slight proportionate rise in the number of children cared for by relatives and friends, through either a Child Arrangement Order but mainly by Special Guardianship Orders. There is a notable continuing rise in the proportion of children and young people in foster care; chiefly as a result of ongoing work around recruitment of foster carers.

Approximately 71% of Children in Care are placed in Warrington with foster carers. Warrington places high emphasis on maintaining placements within wider family networks called kinship placements. These account for 19% of all Children in Care in Warrington, with the proportion of these placements increasing over the past few years.

<sup>9</sup> Securing Sufficient Accommodation For Children in Care and Care Leavers

Warrington continues to have a low number of children looked after outside of its boundaries and placed at a distance. The majority of children who are in care but out of borough, are placed within neighbouring local authorities. This enables good, local multi agency interventions to be offered to individual children.

## **Permanency**

All Children in Care have a Permanence Plan in place and 67% have been permanent matched to their current carers or achieved permanence in another way. In 2017/18, 57%<sup>10</sup> of Children in Care were in the same placement for at least 2 years, (or were placed for adoption and their adoption and their adoptive placement together with their previous placement lasted for at least 2 years).

The number of children being adopted increased to 25 in 2017/18 and the percentage of those children ceased to be looked after due to adoption was 20.2%. For the first time, our three year national adoption targets has been reached for measure A1 which is the average number of days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family during the year (416 days) Performance against measure A2, the average number of days between an LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family during the year, has also improved year on year.

#### **Educational Attainment**

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, nationally Children in Care are more than five times more likely to have a fixed period exclusion than all children, (around one and a half times more likely than children in need). Children in Care are almost four times more likely to have a special educational need (SEN) than all children and are almost 10 times more likely to have a statement of special educational need or education, health and care (EHC) plan than all children.<sup>11</sup>. 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 important to remember it is unfair to compare this group of children against those who have grown up in relative secure and happy lives<sup>12</sup>. It is also key to remember that there are those in care who achieve excellent children in

<sup>10 2017/18</sup> figures are provisional

<sup>11</sup> Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March 2017

<sup>12</sup> Ofsted Social Care Annual Report

educational outcomes. Statutory guidance is available in the publication <u>Promoting the Education of Looked After Children</u>

Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for Children in Care aged 2 to 18 years are completed on a termly basis and compliance has been at above 99% for the last two academic years. The quality of Personal Education Plans is consistently good or better. Pupil Premium is allocated though the PEP process and impact of Pupil Premium funded educational intervention is tracked and analysed to inform future practice and improve outcomes.

Academic attainment has improved consistently over the last three years in Early Years, Primary and Post 16 education. There has also been improving picture of attainment at Key stage 4 over the last 4 years, with consistent outcomes for the last two.

#### **Health outcomes**

Whilst not every child or young person who is in care has greater needs, children often enter care with a poorer levels of physical and mental health than other children and nationally health (especially mental health) outcomes for Children in Care are significantly worse than for the child population as a whole.

The table below, taken from the NSPCC document 'Achieving Emotional Wellbeing for Looked after Children' (2015), provides a comparison of the rates of mental health/emotional health or behavioural disorders among children in the UK aged 5-17 years.

Table 1: Proportion of mental health/emotional health or behavioural disorders among children in the UK aged 5-17 years

Category of disorder	Non-disadvantaged	Disadvantaged	Looked after children
	children (n=1253)	children (n=761)	(n=9677)
Any disorder	8.5%	14.6%	46.4%
Anxiety disorders	3.6%	5.5%	11.1%
Post-traumatic stress	0.1%	0.5%	1.9%
disorder			
Depression	0.9%	1.2%	3.4%
Behavioural disorders	4.3%	9.7%	38.9%
ADHD	1.1%	1.3%	8.7%
Autistic spectrum disorders	0.3%	0.1%	2.6%
Other neurodevelopmental	3.3%	4.5%	12.8%
disorders			
Learning disability	1.3%	1.5%	10.7%

(In this study, children living in their birth families were divided into 2 groups: 'disadvantaged' if their parents had never worked or worked in unskilled occupations; and 'non-disadvantaged' if

their parents had other types of occupations. These 2 groups were then compared with a representative sample of looked after children in the UK).

The data clearly shows that rates of mental health difficulties are significantly higher for children and young people in care than the other two groups. The consequences of delay in identifying and meeting the mental health needs of our children and young people in care can include poor educational outcomes, the risk of instability in care, relationship difficulties, poor self- esteem and drug and alcohol use. This can and does impact on the chances of them reaching their full potential, and of them leading happy and fulfilled lives as adults<sup>13</sup>.

Children in Care receive regular health assessments and these provide a good overview of the health needs of individual children. 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 Specialist Nurse for Children in Care provides dedicated health care, advice and support to ensure health needs are met. Warrington was above or in-line with the national average for all health checks for Children in Care. The number of children that have not received their health checks in timescale was below 20 children in all checks. Warrington was above or in-line with the national average for all health checks for Children in Care. Data for 2017/18<sup>14</sup> shows that:

- The majority of Children in Care have had a dental and health check in the last 12 months.
- 93% of children in care aged 3 to 16 years had completed a Strengths and Difficulties Screening Questionnaire which is used to identify children and young people with mental health needs.
- 2.1% of Children in Care had been identified with a substance misuse issue. This is a key area for development; improving the early identification of children and young people at risk of addiction.

Emotional health is measured by the use of the SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire). Although the average SDQ scores for children in Warrington are lower than those for our Statistical Neighbours and the England average, this belies the fact that there are children who have scores classed as borderline or of concern, and services to improve emotional wellbeing are offered to individual children who score high on this measure.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Report on emotional wellbeing and mental health service provision for children in care.pdf (Warrington CCG)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> 2017/18 figures are provisional

The Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group's Mental Health and Wellbeing Local Transformation Plan<sup>15</sup> (produced in partnership with Halton CCG) has committed to a greater focus on our most vulnerable young people including those on the edge of care or in care.

There is increasing alignment and integration of these Early Help and Social Care services with health to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people, e.g. in moving to a THRIVE model. In terms of targeted interventions and those on the edge of care or currently in care, a range of services are (in addition to the SDQ) available including:

- Meeting needs early through the Families First Edge of Care service.
- Targeted support through therapeutic social workers.
- Commissioning bespoke psychological treatments when required.
- Providing placement stability for those in care.

## Forward Plans for targeted interventions and Edge of Care

- Workforce development programme for social workers based on relationship based practice to be implemented.
- Social workers to access the systemic family practice training through Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)
- An ambition to offer mental health first aid training to the whole children's services workforce.
- Develop links between peri-natal mental health and infant mental health pathways where specialist support is needed to strengthen attachment, and with specialist services such as forensic CAMHS and sexual assault services.
- Increase engagement with children in care to find what they want in terms of support for their mental health and wellbeing
- Develop the role of a dedicated educational psychologist.

#### **Care Leavers**

Young people who have been in care can be particularly vulnerable as they transition into adulthood. 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Warrington and Halton Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Local Transformation Plan

spent some time in the care system<sup>16</sup>. They are also a particularly vulnerable group that are at risk of being drawn into crime. Equally we know Care Leavers can be particularly vulnerable to becoming a victim of crime, including in some cases falling victim to grooming and exploitation online or offline.

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. Warrington has maintained a consistent record of ensuring that all care leavers have suitable accommodation. At the end of 2017/18, there were 166 Care Leavers (aged 16-21) in Warrington. Of the Care Leavers aged 19-21, 90% were living in suitable accommodation, in comparison to 84% nationally and 85% for our statistical neighbours.

Forty-nine per cent of Care Leavers aged 19-21 secured education, employment or training opportunities in 2017/18, compared to a national average of 51%

# **Current Activity & Services**

A key priority for Warrington is to seek legal permanence for children at the earliest opportunity and safely reduce the numbers in care in line with the rates of other areas.

The Children in Care demand management programme was set up in January 2018. The programme's focus is to ensure that:

- Children and their families are provided with effective help and support to prevent the escalation of need
- The right children are in the care of the local authority and where possible, legal permanence is sought at the earliest opportunity.

A number of work streams were set up to look at specific topics and services with a clear aim of reducing the number of Children in Care.

Recruitment of foster carers is a key priority. The new Fostering Marketing and Recruitment Hub, is tasked with recruiting new foster carers and is also focused on encouraging IFA carers to become in-house carers for Warrington children. This will increase placement choice for our children, allowing children to return to in-borough placements and prevent children going to

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Ministry of Justice: Prisoner's childhood and family backgrounds

agency placements.

Where adoption is the best plan, arrangements are started as soon as possible. Where children and young people are living with their family members we will work with both the child in care and the family members to explore whether a Special Guardianship Order may be more appropriate, so that legal permanence for the child can be achieved.

Addressing a legacy issue of drift, achieving legal permanence is a service priority so that children on the edge of or in the care of Warrington Borough Council are able to live in settled families that meet their needs. In order to help counter the rise in admissions and address budgetary pressures, the Families and Wellbeing directorate established an Edge of Care service in July 2016 targeting families with children and young people at risk of coming into care and putting in place additional support to enable families to sustain the changes required for them to keep their children safe. Using Warrington's Permanence Strategy and programme of training this aspiration for every child to live in a settled family is embedded across the Children's Social Care to Social Workers and Team Managers. The support offer to Special Guardians has been strengthened so that there is no financial detrimental impact and they can access outreach services via the Families First Team. Warrington's Special Guardianship policy continues the practice of matching fostering allowances for those carers who wish to change to become a Special Guardian.

More children return to the care of their parents with support of the Families First service. The Discharge from Care Panel takes place on a monthly basis to ensure that reunification plans are implemented effectively and are well supported so that they have every chance of success. At the end of March 2018, a cohort of children had been identified as being likely to achieve legal permanency and be discharged from care where it is safe to do so. These children are robustly tracked in order to ensure that permanence is achieved as soon as possible. Improvements to the pre-proceedings process means permanency has been achieved for children without the need for care proceedings. The introduction of a relationship focused model underpinned by Systemic Practice is planned. This is expected to reduce applications for Care Orders, particularly for those that result in placement with parents.

All of Care Leavers have a Pathway Plan in place to support them with a successful transition to adulthood and independence and an area of development is to ensure these are recorded promptly on a child's record. All young people in foster care are offered the opportunity to continue to live with their carers under Warrington's Staying Put Policy subject to their own wishes and feelings, as well as the views their foster carers and 14 young people are currently in Staying Put arrangements. Those young people leaving residential placements provided by Warrington Borough Council are encouraged to maintain relationships and are invited back to visit i.e. in line with Staying Close Policy. As part of our Local Offer, we have put in place drop in

sessions to provide practical support around claiming benefits, looking for employment and housing and dealing with a whole range of challenges that they may encounter living independently. Care Leavers have reported back to the Corporate Parenting Forum that they have found this "really useful". Additionally, Care Leavers in Warrington report that the support offered to them is good and the introduction of policy exempting all Warrington care leavers from paying council tax is valued.

As Children in Care, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children benefit from the same services, support and care that other Children in Care receive. They have often had significant physical and emotional health needs as a result of their journey which need to be addressed. Arrangement of a suitable placement to meet their needs is paramount and provides a secure base for the young person to feel settled and safe, and support their long term welfare.

Children and young people who go missing from home or care are at risk of being targeted for involvement in gangs, trafficking, criminalisation, sexual exploitation and violence. It is recognised that children and young people do not always acknowledge what may be an exploitative and/or abusive situation. As Corporate Parents have a responsibility to safeguard and work to prevent, disrupt activity and prosecute perpetrators. Any young person who is reported as missing is referred to our commissioned service who undertake a 'return to home' interview to support on-going risk management and reduce the likelihood of further missing episodes<sup>17</sup>.

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 Head teacher 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. A new review process has also been implemented which reflects the work of the Virtual School on Personal Education Plans and has been found to be highly effective in securing continued progress for children and young people. This new process ensures that EHC Plan Coordinators work closely with education, health and care providers to prevent drift in EHC Plans and ensure that the interventions are focused on improving outcomes.

# **Local Views & Insights**

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. Children and young people have a clear role in participating in and influencing the care planning process. Our Children in Care and

\_

 $<sup>^{17}</sup>$  Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2021

Care Leavers tell us that they benefit, when possible, from the support of one social worker and in consultation have asked us to maintain a dedicated Permanency Service. There is a well-established council for Children in Care and Care Leavers which aims to improve the services received by Children in Care and Care Leavers by listening to the voices and views to those young people who are in the care of the council. The 'Noise Makers' (8-12 years) and 'Have Your Say' (13-18 years) groups meet twice a month. Care Leavers also have a monthly group where you can meet workers who can support with benefits, housing, advocacy and employment. Over the past year the Children in Care Council have met regularly with the Director of Families and Wellbeing Services and the head of the virtual school to ensure that the voices of Children in Care are heard. The group are also involved in a number of projects, including helping to recruit senior managers, attending the All Party Parliamentary group for Children in Care and Care Leavers meetings at the Houses of Commons and Lords in London, and sharing their experiences of being in care with Ofsted and other Children in Care Councils in the region.

Warrington Borough Council has a moral and statutory "Corporate Parent" responsibility for Children in Care. There is a social, reputational and legal risk if we do not fulfil these responsibilities.

## **Unmet Needs & Gaps**

The social and financial costs associated with increased numbers of Children in Care are very significant, particularly as placement costs can run into thousands of pounds per week and thus impact on Local Authority and health budgets.

An identified priority for the Council is to ensure that children are safe and supported to achieve their full potential. Services are offered to families in order to enable them to care appropriately for their children. Children only enter care when the wellbeing of a child is compromised. The social and financial costs associated with increased numbers of Children in Care are very significant. Placements costs for Children in Care can run into many thousands of pounds per week and can impact on Local Authority and health budgets.

There are insufficient suitable foster, residential and independent accommodation options to ensure that the first placement is the right placement. Some children will experience placement instability as a result. The number of foster carers being recruited is increasing and the number of agency placements is decreasing but recruiting and retaining foster carers that can meet the range and level of needs presented remains a challenge. Our evidence is telling us that the independent market for children in care placements largely good, but is now very fragile and

can no longer be described as sufficient<sup>18</sup>. This lack of choice combined with relatively large numbers of children in care is placing severe budgetary pressures on the local authority. The new Fostering Marketing and Recruitment Hub which launched in April 2018, is tasked with recruiting new foster carers and is also focused on encouraging independent fostering agency (IFA) carers to become in-house carers for Warrington children. Since April 2018, Warrington has received 330 enquiries and 56 expressions of interest from households to become foster carers and there have been 16 new households approved, 4 of which are IFA transfers.

It is essential that we extend residential and fostering offer to meet children with complex needs without resorting to external provision.

# What should we be doing next?

- Push forward with earlier prevention and intervention measures for children on the edge of care.
- Improve our services for the Emotional Health and Wellbeing for our children in care and those on the edge of care, as outlined in the CCG's Local Transformation Plan.
- Embed the improved edge of care offer and our new model of Systemic Practice to reduce applications for care orders, particularly those that result in placement with parents.
- Increase the proportion of children being discharged from care as a result of a Special Guardianship Order.
- Improve the stability of the workforce within the Children's Social Care Service.
- Increase and sustain placement stability so that Children in Care have fewer placement moves.
- Provide a range of accommodation options through internal and external provision and providers to meet the diverse needs of Children in Care. Focus on extending our residential and fostering offer to meet children with complex needs without resorting to external provision.
- Maintain regional/shared approach to contracting and development of services and increase the recruitment and retention of local Foster Carers and potential and actual adopters, able to meet the needs of all children.
- Further develop 'step down' services to support children and young people leaving residential care.
- Ensure we have compliance the timely recording of annual health assessments and dental check dates for children, particularly those placed out of area.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Securing Sufficient Accommodation For Children in Care and Care Leaves, 2018

- Ensure all our Care Leavers have a Pathway Plan with timely updates in place, to support them with a successful transition to adulthood and independence.
- Further engage our care leavers in the employment market.

# **Key Contacts**

Amanda Amesbury – Operational Director, Children's Social Care Helen Lawes – Business Intelligence Officer