



# **Southampton Corporate Parenting Committee**

**Annual Report**

**For the period  
2013/2014**

## Foreword

Corporate Parenting is, in many ways, the most crucial part of being a Councillor. In the same manner anyone who is a parent prioritises their children above all else, so it must be for a Council in relation to children they look after.

Here in Southampton we have a large number of looked after children, in excess of 500, and as a result of those numbers we have, additionally, a significant number of 'Care Leavers', who just like every child, remain the parent's responsibility long after technically attaining majority.

This annual Report covers the work of the Corporate Parenting Committee, the cross-party body which meets 6 times a year to look at all that is being done by Southampton City Council to promote the welfare of those children for whom we have taken corporate parental responsibility. It also looks more generally at the current situation as to Corporate Parenting in Southampton and the challenges we face as well as celebrating the achievements and progress in supporting our young people so far.

The data within the Report itself (with the exception of the Educational figures which take account of the Summer 2014 results), runs to the beginning of April 2014, the Council's last full year. In light of the recent OFSTED Inspection report however and the publication of Serious Case Reviews relating to Family A and Children L, I & M, all of which occurred after April 2014, the priorities for this year set out in this Report do, as you would expect, take account of those findings.

To truly promote the welfare of our children there is much that remains to be done and this requires the Committee and all Councillors to 'robustly and consistently champion the needs of looked after children and care leavers', as noted by OFSTED<sup>1</sup>. The coming year offers many opportunities including to enter exciting future work with Southampton's Universities and the Saints Foundation in order to improve outcomes for our children.

It is right however to pay tribute to the countless professionals who already work tirelessly to allow Southampton's children to fulfil their potential in every sense. This Report flags the many challenges which we must tackle to fulfil our responsibilities, but crucially it was vital to read that according to OFSTED:

'... nearly all staff spoken to were positive about the changes achieved in Southampton and are enthusiastic and optimistic about the future<sup>2</sup>.'

All Councillors, Council Officers and Citizens of the City must now pull together to build on the momentum which has already formed.

MARK CHALONER  
Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding

ALISON ELLIOTT  
Director of People

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<sup>1</sup> OFSTED Inspection Report page 6 – Recommendation 42

<sup>2</sup> OFSTED Inspection report page 36 paragraph 155



## **1. Corporate Parenting – An Introduction and Context**

'Corporate Parenting' is the term used to describe the responsibility of the Local Authority and partner agencies towards looked after children and young people.

The central principle of Corporate Parenting is that all Elected Members, Council employees, service areas and directorates should consider looked after children as if they were their own children and seek to provide the quality of care which would be considered good enough for their own children. They should not just care 'for' the children but 'about' the children.

Primary Legislation outlines in broad terms the council's responsibility to children in our care. The Children Act 1989 is the underpinning legal framework for young people in care and leaving care. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 extended the types of services and the upper age limits of the young people who are leaving care that local authorities were responsible for as corporate parents. The Children & Young Persons Act 2008 reinforced the message that all councils, and particularly Elected Members, carry responsibility for ensuring good outcomes for children looked after by the local authority.

Looked After Children (LAC but sometimes referred to as CLA 'Children Looked After) are those children and young people aged 0 - 18 years who cannot remain with their family and are cared for by the local authority either through a voluntary agreement reached with their parents or by virtue of a court order. Looked after children and those leaving care at whatever age are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in our community.

The council also has responsibility for children considered to be on the edge of care. To this end the Council of course must offer suitable preventative and support services and it is only through such steps that the aim of allowing children to be cared for within families wherever possible can in fact be realised.

## **2. Corporate Parenting in Southampton and the Corporate Parenting Committee**

Councillors and Southampton City Council generally must do all they can to ensure and promote the best interests of children for whom they hold corporate parental responsibility.

It is right to record that the recent OFSTED Report, in addition to many insightful findings which might be considered operational, gave four key findings pertinent to Corporate Parenting in the City, namely that:

- Politicians have not been meeting their corporate parenting responsibilities to champion looked after children and care leavers and ensure that their needs are met<sup>3</sup>.
- [we must] strengthen arrangements to consult with looked after children and young people. This work should include consideration of the support arrangements for the Young People In Care Council and expanding the range and age of children involved in consultation<sup>4</sup>.
- [we must] ensure that members robustly and consistently champion the needs of looked after children and care leavers<sup>5</sup>.
- [we must] develop the role of scrutiny within the City to ensure that the wider multi-agency arrangements for the provision of early help and services to children and their families from children's social care, are routinely considered by political leaders<sup>6</sup>.

These recommendations come along with wide recognition following the recent publications of Serious Case Reviews into Family A and Children L, I & M that much work is required to promote and protect the interests of children in Southampton.

This Report is part of the process of ensuring that Members have sufficient information to enable them to fulfil their corporate parental responsibility and ensure the best possible outcomes for the children of our city. It is intended that the annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Committee will give a snapshot of our care and highlight to Elected Members and the public at large the strengths, weaknesses and developments in Corporate Parenting in any given year.

The responsibility of Elected Members is of course constant, however a key vehicle for ensuring Members' responsibilities are being met is the Corporate Parenting Committee, whose annual Report this is.

Southampton Corporate Parenting Committee was established to enable Elected Members, officers and strategic partners to fulfil their legal responsibilities to Southampton's more than 500 looked after children and care leavers aged from 0-

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<sup>3</sup> OFSTED Inspection Report page 3; Finding 1

<sup>4</sup> OFSTED Inspection Report page 5; Finding 31

<sup>5</sup> OFSTED Inspection Report page 6; Finding 42

<sup>6</sup> OFSTED Inspection Report page 6; Finding 43

25. The Committee maintains a comprehensive overview of the progress of children who are looked after and for care leavers, scrutinising the quality, effectiveness and performance of the services that support them.

Central to the role of the Corporate Parenting Committee is reviewing its responsibility and accountability for the well-being and future prospects for children looked after and care leavers and ensuring that this vulnerable group have an opportunity to shape and influence the services which they receive.

Overall The Corporate Parenting Committee has a responsibility:

- To oversee the implementation of the Southampton City Council Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan and monitor the quality and effectiveness of services to ensure they fulfil the council's responsibilities and achieve good outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.
- To monitor and evaluate progress of relevant legislation and government guidance and its implementation in Southampton to ensure services are responsive to the needs of looked after children and care leavers in line with the national agenda.
- To monitor and review the quality and effectiveness of services across the council, partner agencies and commissioned services to achieve continuing improvements in outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.
- To ensure that the voice and opinions of as wide a range as possible of children looked after and care leavers are heard and that their views are used to shape policy and monitor performance.
- To directly receive the views of children and young people looked after and leaving care via the Children in Care Council mechanisms (renamed the Young People In Care Council here in Southampton) and annual consultation to ensure their views and experiences directly influence decisions made at this level.
- To receive reports on all aspects of children looked after and care leavers' welfare as required from the local authority and partner agencies in sufficient detail to enable it to undertake its strategic responsibilities for planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- To monitor the performance of the Council by receiving progress reports on the score card of key performance indicators relating to children looked after and care leavers.
- To monitor Southampton's whole authority commitment to joint-working arrangements between council departments and partner agencies and examine ways in which holistic, integrated and cross-cutting practice can be further embedded and priorities and objectives agreed.
- To maintain a strategic overview on the developmental of all new policies, procedures and initiatives to ensure these are in line with local and national priorities and objectives including the Corporate Parenting Strategy; and that they will effectively meet the needs of children looked after.
- To make recommendations to decision makers in Southampton City Council and its strategic partners as it deems appropriate to fulfil its Corporate Parenting duty.

- To consider recommendations from internal and external inspections and reviews, for example Ofsted inspection, to agree the actions needed to address any issues identified and to evaluate the implementation of any plan agreed.

The Corporate Parenting Committee is chaired by the Cabinet member for Children's Safeguarding. In December 2013, Councillor Mark Chaloner took over this responsibility from Councillor Sarah Bogle and he has met with the Young People in Care Council and officers to develop the role and effectiveness of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

The Committee meets 6 times each year with exception meetings called as required.

There is generally good attendance at meetings by the full range of partners and a full annual work programme is agreed.

Over the past year the Committee has considered reports from the following service areas and themes including:

- Annual and quarterly data sets setting out trends in the care population
- Looked After Children Improvement Plan
- Looked After Children Strategy and Placement Commissioning Strategy
- Care leavers report and strategy
- Virtual school arrangements
- Update on the pupil premium
- Fostering Service quarterly and annual reports
- Southampton Foster Care association activity
- Adoption Service quarterly and annual reports incorporating adoption panel report
- Health report on Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- Building Links with the Young People in Care Council
- Report on Care Proceedings and response to the 26 week timescale
- Briefing on the Residential Reforms Consultations Response
- Briefing on Strengthening Safeguards for looked after children out of area
- Apprenticeships for looked after children
- Annual Independent Review Officers Report

This report sets out an annual update on the Corporate Parenting arrangements in Southampton; particularly progress and outcomes of the Committee and the Young People In Care Council.

The information presented in this report, save when specifically identified, uses data from comparators for 2012/13 as the 2013/14 local authority and national data is not yet available. Please also note that Southampton rates per 10,000 have been calculated using last year's population figures so will change after the most up to date population figures are received.

This Report is to be presented to Full Council on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014 and on that occasion all Elected Members will be asked to note the Report and endorse the

Southampton pledge promises to looked after children and care leavers<sup>7</sup>, which have been formulated previously in conjunction with Young people and then invited to sign accordingly that they will do their utmost to fulfil their promises to our children.

Excellent Corporate Parenting requires ownership and leadership at a senior level, including elected members. This Report and the opportunity for discussion and scrutiny that it gives and the re-affirmation of our commitment to the children of the city is a key element of exercising corporate parental responsibility.

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<sup>7</sup> At Appendix 1



### **3. Becoming a Looked After Child in Southampton**

There are clear thresholds for agreeing that children can become looked after and wherever possible arrangements will be made to support children and young people to remain safely with their families or within their communities.

As part of the Children's Services Transformation Programme major steps have been taken to integrate services and move towards a preventative programme through the establishment of Early Help Teams, an improved school offer, continued exemplary practice in our Children's Centres and through our award-winning Families Matter Team. The establishment of Early Help Teams has been successful at improving family support to enable children to remain living safely at home and, where possible, avoid the need for them to become looked after.

A major change in Southampton at the very end of the period considered by this Report was the establishment of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). This resource, containing staff from many partner Agencies receives all referrals to Children's Services and analyses the need or otherwise for intervention and / or support. This is crucial to recognise vulnerable children and intervene where necessary, but equally to allow early support to assist families in difficulty so that draconian steps are not required.

However, where this is not in the best interests of the child, a member of the Children's Services Senior Leadership Team scrutinises the circumstances around every children entering care and the proposed placement to ensure appropriate managerial oversight of these children's care.

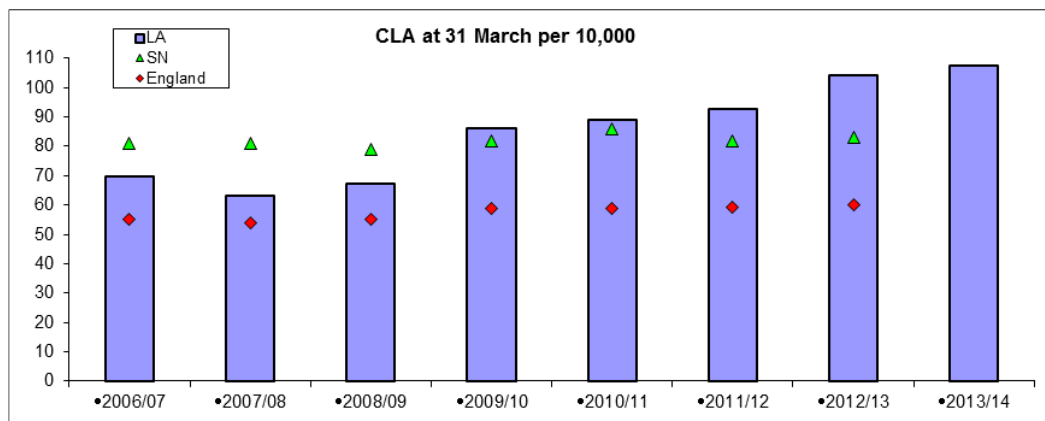
Entering Care will occur either through a Voluntary Agreement with Parents (pursuant to Section 20 Children Act 1989) or through the pursuit of Court Orders within Care Proceedings.

The recent Family Justice Review and now the Children and Families Act 2014 requires all care proceedings to be concluded within 26 weeks of issuing the care application. Research indicates that removal from parents and uncertainty for children about permanency which extended beyond 6 months significantly had a negative impact on the child's outcomes. This change of focus nationally has altered the approach of Courts and Local Authorities but is of crucial importance to Southampton. The average time for completing care applications for Southampton as of December 2013 was 47 weeks as compared with 33 weeks across the Hampshire region. It was predicted as a result of a cadre of changes and service developments this would significantly reduce in 2014 and come close to meeting the 26 week requirement as a result of service improvements already put in place and those proposed as part of the Phase 2 Transformation Programme. From April 2014 it was proposed that the courts would start to impose fines on local authorities who failed to meet the 26 week deadline for case completion, however to date this has not occurred.

#### 4. Who Are Southampton's Looked After Children?

As noted above, in addition to responsibilities to children in our care, Elected Members must also ensure there are appropriate resources devoted to those on the edge of care. There is of course a context to such matters and it is of note that Southampton is ranked the 81<sup>st</sup> most deprived Local Authority out of all 326 Local Authorities in England (where 1 is the most deprived) and Southampton ranks 114<sup>th</sup> out of 152 Local Authorities in England for the highest number of children and young people living in poverty. Whilst we have made progress against a range of indicators over the past year, in line with the Children's Services Transformation Programme, there are still key areas requiring improvement to evidence improved outcomes for children and young people.

Turning to children in our care, as at 31st March 2014 there were 500 looked after children which was an increase from 2012/13 (482). This figure is also significantly higher than statistical neighbours at a rate of 108 children per 10 000 compared to 83 (Statistical neighbours) and 60 (England). There has been much discussion as to Southampton's high rates and discussion below considers the reasons for them.



The overarching principle in respect of looked after children, and the principle which must be utilised to ensure their welfare is promoted is “right child, right time, right placement, and only for as long as necessary”.

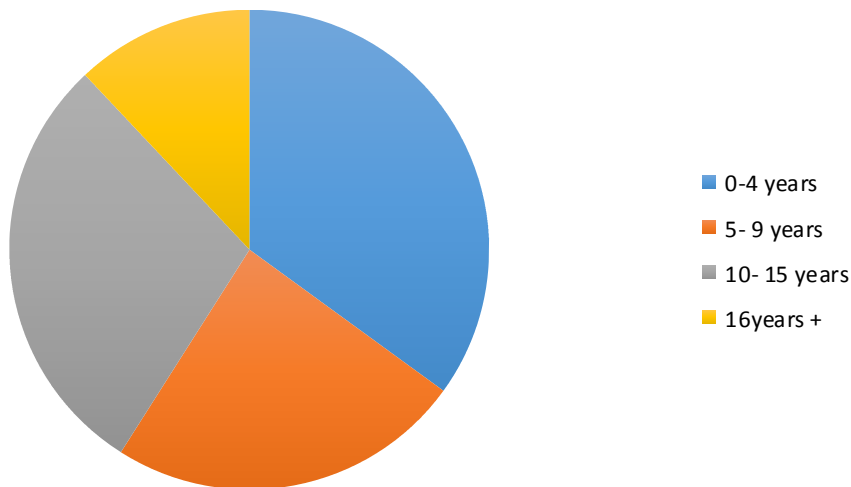
There were 15 children on 31st March 2014 on Child Protection Plans who were or had been subject to a legal care order in the previous 6 months. These children are of course particularly vulnerable having been identified by virtue of care proceedings as having suffered or been at risk of suffering significant harm.

The profile of the looked after children population shows that as at 31 March 2014 more young children were entering care in line with our early intervention strategy, well above the national average but also older children with increasingly complex needs requiring longer interventions are entering are in

large numbers as well. This latter group are mostly due to the historic legacy of inadequate or ineffective intervention by Southampton.

At 31 March 2014, the largest proportion of children in care in Southampton was aged 0 to 4 (35%) and 10 to 15 (29%). Slightly more young people aged 16 and over were looked after in 2013/14 (12%) compared to 2012/13 (11%) but significantly less than national (20%) and local (21%) trends.

### Age of LAC at 31st March



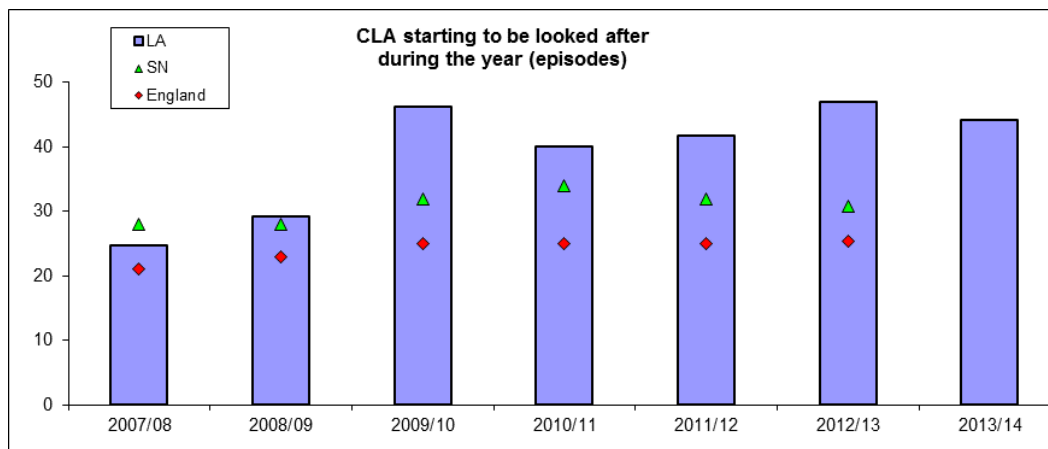
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Whilst we have seen a reduction in numbers newly becoming looked after this year, the overall total of looked after children has increased due to the number of children remaining looked after for 12 months or longer. Rates for children looked after for 12 months or more is 75 per 10,000 up from 2012/13 and higher than our statistical neighbours (57) and England (41). This is partly due to complexity of needs and partly due to higher numbers of children and young people with permanence plans for full care orders and adoption requiring longer periods as a looked after child.

There is a concern that Children Looked After in Southampton are still spending too long in the care system. 75 children per 100,000 are looked after for more than a year compared to 64 per 100,000 in 2012/13 and 41 per 100,000 nationally. Action is being taken to reduce the length of care proceedings as set out earlier and this should positively impact on this area, however it will also be crucial to ensure there is better 'grip and pace' in planning for children in our care by way of progressing moves to permanence via e.g. adoption more speedily.

In 2013/14 there were 205 new admissions into care, less than the 219 in

2012/13. The rate of newly looked after children dropped to 44 per 10, 000 compared to 47 per 10, 000 last year. However, this rate remains significantly higher compared to 31(SN) and 25 (England).



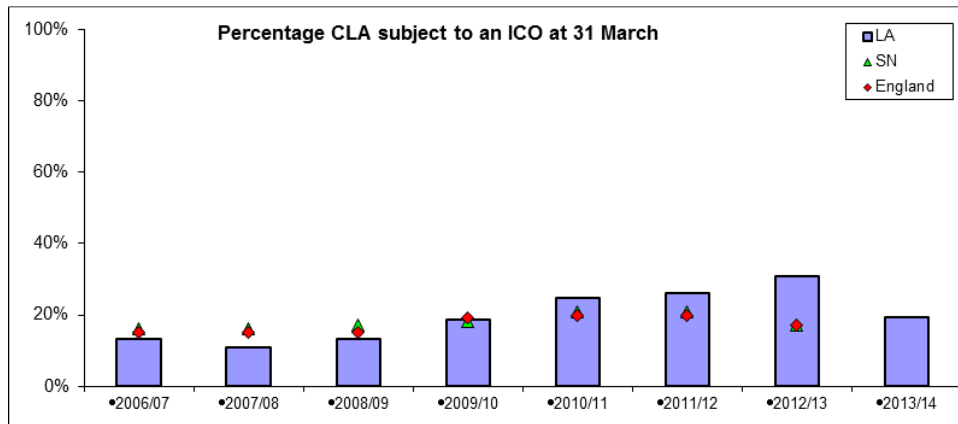
Infants aged 4 years and under remained the largest cohort at 45% of children entering care with 21% of those under the age of 1 in line with national and local trends and this group being a key indicator of the Authority's attitude towards early intervention. This year more young people aged 16 and over entered care at 12% bringing us back into line with national figures (13%).

Overall there continues to be more boys than girls looked after at the end of 2013/14 with 276 boys (57%) compared to 206 girls (43%). This difference is wider than national or neighbour figures.

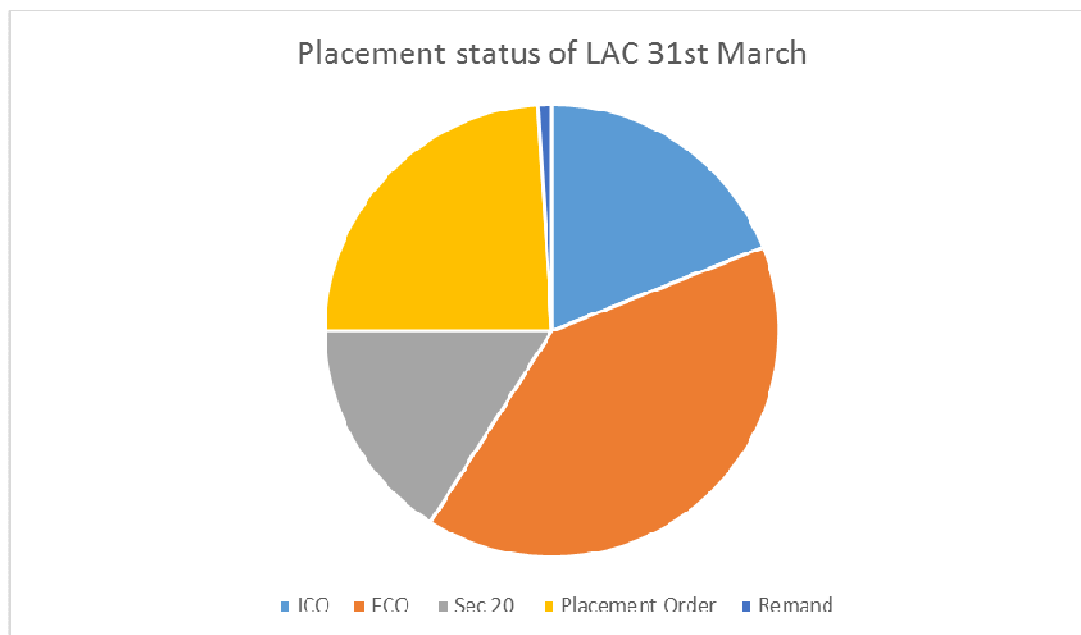
White children continue to represent the largest cohort of looked after children at 83%. Children from a dual heritage made up 10% and those from an Asian background made up 4% of the population. This is consistent with national and local figures.

### Legal Status

At the end of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 there were significantly less children subject to an interim care order at 19% down from 31% in 2012/13 and bringing us back into line with statistical neighbours and England. The largest proportion of Southampton looked after children were placed on a full care order at 40% compared to 29% 2012/13. Crucially, 24% of the cohort were the subject of a Placement Order (a plan for adoption) well above the previous year and our statistical neighbours (16%) and England (14%). This indicates signs that the looked after population will return to statistically more comparable levels.



Children accommodated under Section 20 (voluntary agreement) fell from 24% (2012/13) to 16% in (2013/14) bringing us below comparators. This was due to a focus by the service to use this arrangement only when in the best interests of the child and that it not delay plans for permanency.



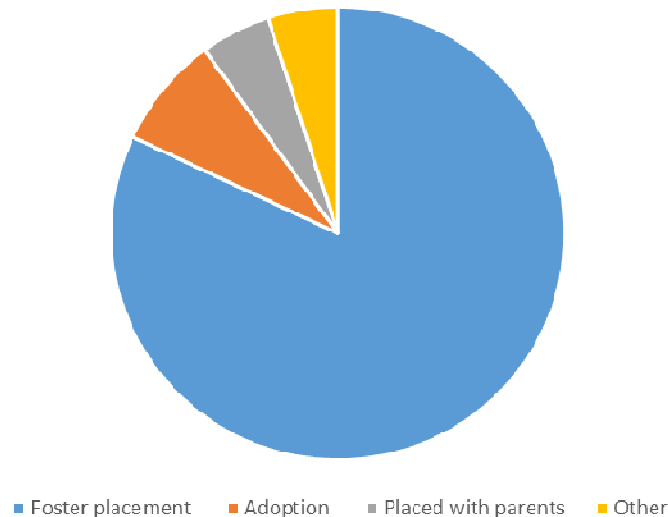
The majority of looked after children are placed with foster carers. The highest proportion of these children are placed in Southampton's own provision at 64%. Although a fall from 70% in 2012/13, this compares significantly better than national (61%) and statistical neighbours (58%). 26% of children are placed in private provision, slightly higher than the previous year, although remaining well below the statistical neighbours (31%) and national (32%) averages.

In April 2014, 40 children were placed in adoptive placements awaiting final adoption orders, signifying the leadership focus on permanence within the lives of our most vulnerable children. However, concerns still remain around the pace of decision making and delays in progressing some plans.

## 5. Placement of Children In Our Care

Children are looked after in a variety of settings; foster care and adoptive families, very few of our children are in children's homes (we have no in-house residential provision in Southampton at this time), and a small number are placed at home with their parents on Care Orders. As at 31st March 2014 415 (82%) of Southampton looked after children lived in foster care, well above the national average of 75%.

Placement status of LAC



Research highlights the importance of stability, security and lasting relationships as fundamental for the healthy development of children. 14% of looked after children in Southampton had 3 or more placements during the year up from 11% the year before, which is a decline in performance with comparator groups at (11%). In terms of longer term stability 70% of children who had been looked after for at least 2.5 years have been living in the same placement for 2 years or more or placed for adoption. Whilst this is lower than 2012/13 (77%) and 2012/13 (73%) it exceeds local (69%) and national (68%) figures.

In 2012/13 84% of children looked after were placed within 20 miles from their home compared to 76% (England) and 71% (SN) supporting them to maintain local networks and stability.

In 2013/14 16% of children looked after in 2012/13 were adopted, rising year on year in line with national trends.

### Fostering

When considering placements it is right to note that there has been a recent move from Edward Timpson to improve outcomes for Care Leavers. The option to "stay put" in established foster placements has been extended to encourage all care leavers to remain in placement. This will result in a reduction of

available placements and place a greater emphasis on increasing our resources and targeted recruitment. There is a need in the City to recruit carers for older, more challenging young people, sibling groups and parent and child placements. This challenge is compounded by the fact that all Local Authorities face similar challenges and will be crafting their recruitment strategies to meet their needs as well as private providers.

The fostering service has a dedicated recruitment officer. He has developed an ongoing and successful recruitment and marketing schedule with key activities throughout the year, which has consistently delivered good numbers of initial enquiries and we consistently achieve higher conversion rates of initial enquiries compared to Statistical Neighbours and England. The service has good quality marketing materials in the form of banners, posters, leaflets, DVD, small 'giveaway' materials such as pens. Fostering recruitment activity comprises face to face recruitment events in public buildings and local communities as well as radio and printed media campaigns and adverts, relationships with local media and targeting groups via leaflet drops and targeted advertising.

Out Of Hours (OOH) support for fostering was established as a result of a high number of children experiencing placement breakdowns during the evening and weekends. Feedback from the carers in a survey in November 2013 showed that the service was considered as invaluable by the carers spoken to. They feel reassured that no matter how small or big the problem is, there is always someone with time to support them.

There have been some significant challenges in 2013/14. A serious case review was commenced due to significant historical allegations against two foster carers. The two foster carers have long since been deregistered; however the seriousness of the allegations has resulted in the requirement to carry out a full review. There has also been an overall increase in allegations against foster carers in contrast to 2011/2012. All allegations have been investigated in line with local procedures and where appropriate, jointly with the police. There are also more stringent monitoring arrangements involving the Head of Service and Principal Officer for Children Looked After. Allegations are reviewed monthly both in meetings and in formal supervision.

## **Adoption**

In April 2014, 138 children had a plan for adoption; 40 were placed with adopters awaiting final orders; 15 waiting for an order and 83 had a placement order. 18 of these are lined up with placements for the Adoption Panel to match. The 49 children adopted in 2013-2014 included 6 children of BME heritage, evidencing a renewed focus on the way we are considering identity and heritage in the permanency plans for children.

The average number of days between a child becoming looked after and placement for adoption has increased from 634 in 2012 to 691 in 2013, higher than the rising national average of 636 days in 2012 to 647 in 2013. However the increase in this absolute indicator of the average number of days taken from

becoming looked after to adoption correlates with an increase in the age of children being adopted (In 2013, 7% were over age 5 and harder to place). This is a success because 7 groups of siblings were adopted in 2013-2014, including 11 children who were aged 5 or over, following a long search for the right match to the adopter, thus successfully placing older children with younger siblings.

Nevertheless, the 3 year averages for the children who have been adopted and waited less than 20 months between entering care and moving in with their family remains very low at 30% for 2013-2014, well below the national and statistical neighbour averages, both at 55%. This is predicted to improve in 2014-2015 as an increasing number of SGOs and increasing numbers of children are being adopted by foster carers and must be a focus of the Local Authority.

The adoption service has not actively advertised for adopters for over a year. Nevertheless we have received over 100 enquiries in the past 12 months, and have a number of adopters return to us for a second or third time. In January 2014 a marketing and recruitment expert looked at our service and identified some priorities for action to give us the most chance of success in recruiting more adopters. The Adoption Reform Grant is being used to commission places and a new recruitment strategy has been launched to ensure resources do not get in the way of finding an excellent match for our children.

There is a range of services to support children, their adoptive and birth families, including: birth parent counselling, therapeutic programmes for adopters, such as 'Theraplay' with a focus on attachment. Whilst support is provided quickly and effectively in response to an assessment of adoption support needs, we need to do more to secure consistent, longer term support for individual families and adopters in response to feedback.

As at 31st March 2014 136 have a plan for adoption and of those 50 children were either placed or matched for adoption. 46 children were placed for adoption throughout the year comparing to 23 the previous year. Progress is being made but this must be an area of real progress if we are to achieve the outcomes we seek for our children.



## 6. Education for Children In Our Care

Overall children looked after in Southampton have been performing better at school when compared to statistical neighbours and England although a big gap remains for looked after children compared to their peers. 58% of all children in Southampton achieved 5 or more A\* to C grades in 2013 including English and Maths compared to only 13% for Southampton's Looked After Children.

### Recent Exam Results

It is too early to give confirmed results and their comparators, however the advance figures from Summer 2014 indicate that of those pupils that have been looked after continuously for 12 months as at 31st March 2014 (29 pupils):

- 28% (8 no.) of pupils achieved A\*-C GCSE in English.
- 28% (8 no.) of pupils achieved A\*-C GCSE in Maths.
- 21% (6 no.) of pupils achieved A\*-C GCSE in English and Maths, this is an increase of 10% from 2013 when 11% of pupils achieved. This is 5% above the 2013 National performance of 16%.
- 21% (6 no.) of pupils achieved 5+ A\*-C GCSE, this is a decrease of 23% from 2013 when 44% of pupils achieved. This is 16% below the 2013 National performance of 37%. This indicator is likely to have been effected by the changes to GCSE's outline in the introduction for this cohort of pupils.
- 21% (6 no.) of pupils achieved 5+ A\*-C including English and Maths GCSE, this is an increase of 10% from 2013 when 11% of pupils achieved. This is 6% above the 2013 National performance of 15%.
- 66% (19 no.) of pupils achieved A\*-G in English.
- 66% (19 no.) of pupils achieved A\*-G in Maths.
- 66% (19 no.) of pupils achieved 5+ A\*-G.
- 62% (18 no.) of pupils achieved 5+ A\*-G including English and Maths GCSE.
- 83% (24 no.) of pupils achieved any level of pass.

The wider analysis of all Looked After Children as at July 2014 (41) shows:

- 22% (9 no.) of pupils achieved A\*-C in English.
- 20% (8 no.) of pupils achieved A\*-C in Maths.
- 15% (6 no.) of pupils achieved 5+ A\*-C.
- 15% (6 no.) of pupils achieved 5+ A\*-C including English and Maths GCSE.
- 59% (24 no.) of pupils achieved A\*-G in English.
- 56% (23 no.) of pupils achieved A\*-G in Maths.
- 46% (19 no.) of pupils achieved 5+ A\*-G.
- 44% (18 no.) of pupils achieved 5+ A\*-G including English and Maths GCSE.
- 80% (33 no.) of pupils achieved any level of pass.

The drive to educate CLA in good and outstanding schools and to promote attendance is impacting positively on standards, with overall absence falling from 9.5% to 5.2% over the last 4 years. 6.6% CLA classed as persistent absentees in 2012-13 reduced from 9.3% and is below national and Statistical neighbour averages. Absence is lower for younger pupils and impacts positively on educational outcomes, which is not as positive for secondary age pupils. However, in March

2014, over 77% of our Children Looked After were educated in Good or Outstanding schools.

### Virtual school arrangements & EYFS

In October 2013 Southampton's Virtual School commissioned a Target Tracker. It gives them the ability to track the attainment of Children Looked After educated both in and out of Southampton. Schools can input assessment information, track progress for their children and access the latest Personal Education Plan. Designated teachers have confirmed the usefulness of the CLA Tracker and how it helps them in their work. This will, for the first time, give us the opportunity to really examine the progress and successes of our young people and also to identify which pupils need that extra support and encouragement.

The City has challenged schools robustly through the head teacher and designated teacher networks to drive up standards and intervene to secure educational progress. The impacts are good for all CLA with significantly higher sustainable outcomes for the growing cohort of younger CLA.

The EYFS cohort that have been looked after for at least a year at the 31/03/2014 was 18 pupils in 2014. Each pupil therefore counts as 5.6%. 22% (4 pupils) of this cohort achieved 'a good level of development'. No National CLA data has been published for EYFS attainment. Whilst 22% is below the achievement of all pupils nationally in 2013 (60%) the complexity of this measure must be considered. A pupil must be working 'at' or 'above' in all 12 areas to be classed as achieving a good level of development. Therefore weakness in just one area results in a child not achieving this measure.

### **Year 1 Phonics**

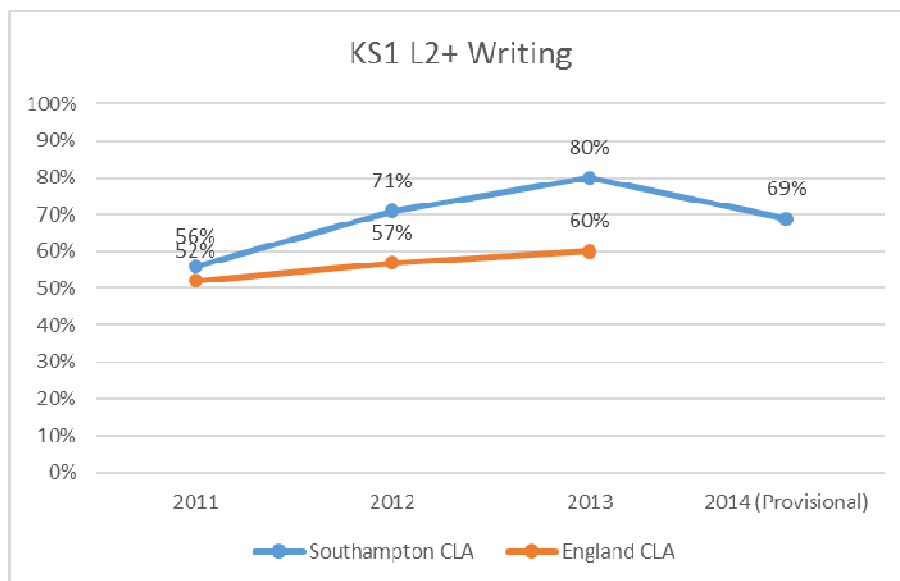
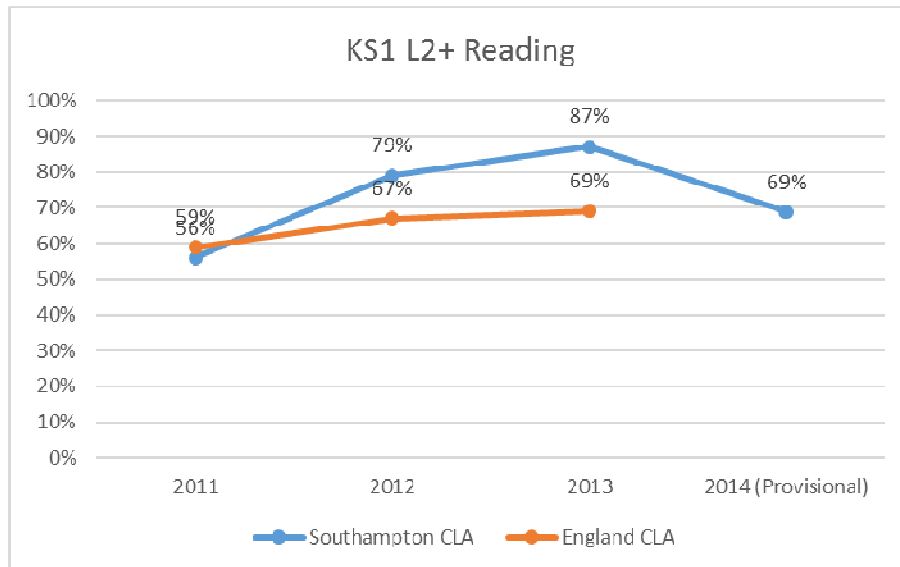
The Year 1 Phonics cohort that have been looked after for at least a year at the 31/03/2014 was 17 pupils in 2014. Each pupil therefore counts as 5.9%. 65% (11 pupils) were 'working at' the expected level at the end of year 1. No National CLA performance has ever been reported for the Year 1 Phonics check however, only a 4% gap exists between all pupils nationally in 2013 (69%) and Southampton CLA pupils in 2014 (65%).

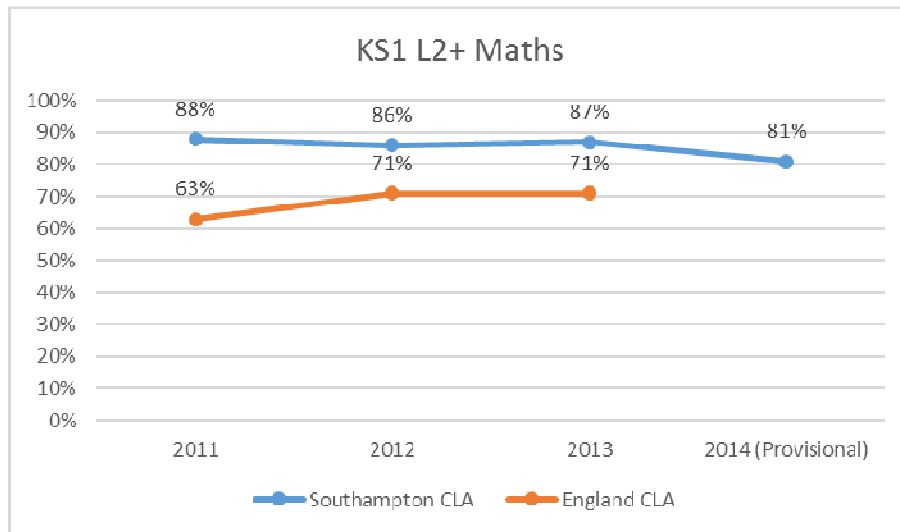
### **Key Stage 1 Performance**

The Key Stage 1 cohort that have been looked after for at least a year at the 31/03/2014 was 16 pupils in 2014. Each pupil therefore counts as 6.3%.

69% (11 pupils) of Southampton CLA pupils achieved L2+ in Reading in 2014 compared to 69% nationally in 2013. 69% (11 pupils) of Southampton CLA pupils achieved L2+ in Writing in 2014 compared to 60% nationally in 2013, a gap of 9%. 81% (13 pupils) of Southampton CLA pupils achieved L2+ in Maths in 2014 compared to 71% nationally in 2013, a gap of 10%. This therefore indicates that

despite KS1 2014 results regressing slightly that performance remains in line (Reading) or above (Writing and Maths) National CLA performance.

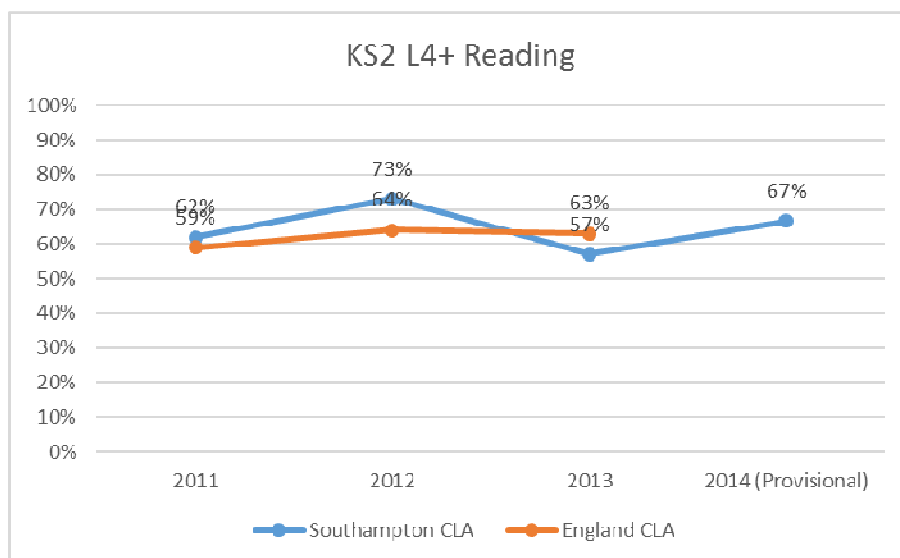


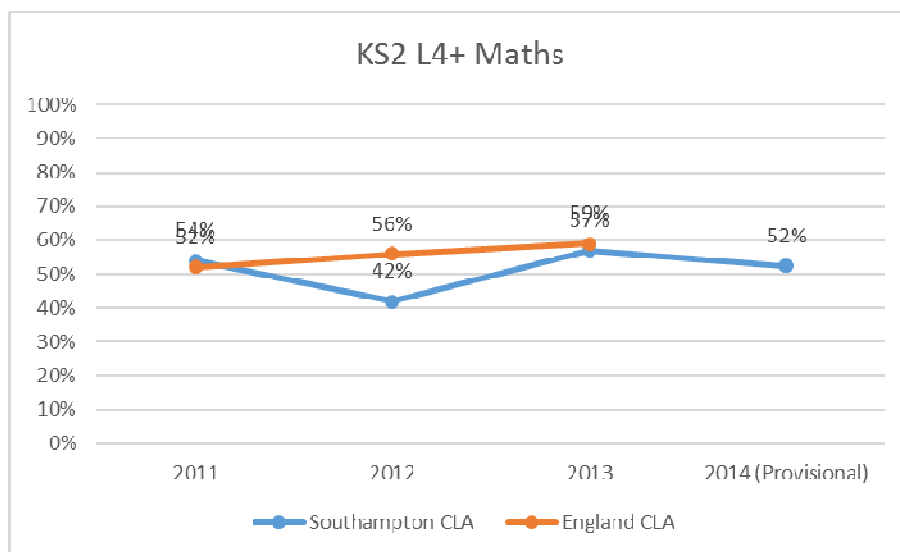
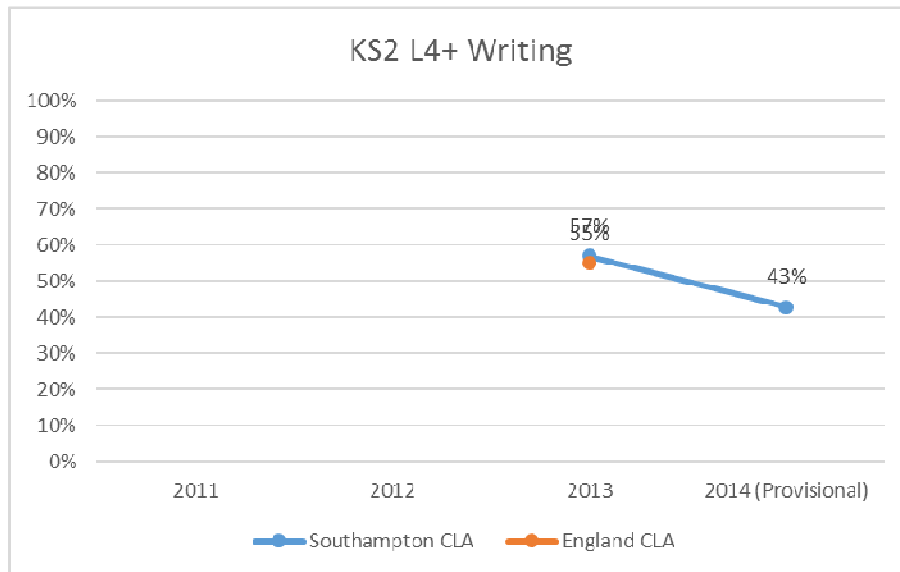


### Key Stage 2 Performance

There were 21 pupils within the 2014 KS2 cohort of pupils that have been looked after for at least a year at the 31/03/2014. Each pupil therefore counts for 4.8%. Whilst there has been a small decline in performance at KS2 for L4+ in Writing and Maths, Reading attainment has increased to 67% from 63% in 2013. Southampton's KS2 CLA performance therefore remains broadly in line with the National average for all CLA pupils but continues to show variation year on year a result of the small cohort numbers.

In 2014 28.6% (6 pupils) of Southampton CLA pupils achieved a level 5+ in Reading and one pupil achieved a Level 6 in Maths. This indicates that Southampton CLA pupils are supported to achieve beyond level 4 thresholds.





The impact for younger CLA is not yet making the same dramatic impact at Key Stage 4, although standards in 2012 and 2013 were just above or broadly in line with national averages for CLA, this is a key focus for the Virtual School and the use of the increasing pupil premium.

#### The pupil premium

The Pupil Premium is additional funding given to schools so that they can support certain groups of pupils and close the attainment gap between them and their peers. The Pupil Premium is allocated to schools for children who have been looked after by the local authority (CLA) continuously for more than six months. In 2013/14 the pupil premium rose substantially and will rise further in 2014/15. A proposal was taken to Schools' Forum by

the Virtual School regarding the central management of the Pupil Premium. Schools must be accountable for their use of the Pupil Premium although the Virtual School will monitor the use of the Pupil Premium. The Virtual School learnt from introduction of the central management of the pupil premium in East Sussex who have shown that results for children who are looked after have been boosted by working closely with and across primary, secondary and special schools; supporting the progress of children in secondary schools through one-to-one tuition, tailored resources, mentoring and revision courses.

The Virtual School tries to celebrate the successes of all our young people, and annually we have had an award evening to celebrate the young people and their successes. The Virtual School asks for referrals from all colleagues and carers over a number of categories for both education and personal achievement. In March 2014 they had the annual celebration event at St Mary's stadium, the home of Southampton Football Club. The event was a great success and had over 200 people made up of young people, foster carers, social workers, designated teachers, The Major of Southampton and delegates from the city council and our schools. It was a great opportunity to show off the huge successes of our young people and celebrate with them the determination, resilience and attributes.

### Early years offer

As at 31st March 2014 45.5% of children looked after are accessing the 2 year old education funding offer. A further 23% of 2 year olds were recently placed for adoption making it inappropriate for them to be in early years' provision whilst they are building attachments.

56.1% of children looked after are accessing the 3 and 4 year old funding offer. A further 21% were recently placed for adoption or have needs in relation to attachment or possible special educational needs meaning early years provision is not appropriate. The lead Early Years Advisory Teacher for looked after children has liaised closely with the Virtual School Team and with the Fostering Service to encourage foster carers to take- up the offer for children in their care, when appropriate.

### Literacy & the Virtual School

One of the areas the Virtual School has tried to address is the engagement of pupils with literacy for young people in year 7. This was a cohort with below average reading ages and often a history of non-engagement in reading and English lessons.

Southampton City Council through Foster Care Services funded the Letterbox Club project for 19 Year 7 Children Looked After young people who live in and out of the city boundary in 2013. The views of carers and young people were key in establishing the benefits of the project and outcomes. 78% of the young people provide feedback for the project.

The packs come out every 6 weeks and contain educational games, books work packs for the carers to work with the young person. This not only builds the relationship between the young person and carer, but also was to increase engagement into areas that are often a challenge for the young person.

The result show that out of the 19 pupils identified for the project

- 9 made significant improvements to reading ages
- 2 pupils did not engage with the project or moved during the project
- 1 pupil had significant learning disabilities and the impact was limited. But the foster carer did say that his engagement had improved and he was speaking more words because of it.
- 2 Pupils made no progress at all, but both were already achieving age appropriate results
- 5 pupils we are still awaiting progress reports as the assessment methods were different to the ones done at the beginning of the project.

Reports from social workers, carers and young people were very positive with some suggestions for the future. For example they felt that the books were more positive than the games. But the young people loved the stationary and most of the young people were excited to receive the packages. One area for development was for the young people out of the city and maintaining contacts and getting assessment data from the schools.

### *Apprenticeships for Children Looked After*

As a corporate parent, the Council has a particular responsibility to ensure that all young people in, or leaving it's care can (i) make informed choices about learning, skills and employment options including Apprenticeships, (ii) receive the support they need to progress to, and sustain learning and work and (iii) have available to them enough, suitable progression options, including Apprenticeships.

Analysis of information held by Pathways Team of 54 eligible 16-17 year olds has shown that one Looked After young person has accessed an Apprenticeship, and one is on a pre-Apprenticeship placement. There is clearly a need to increase the uptake of Apprenticeships by these young people. The Apprenticeships Scrutiny Inquiry met over six months and considered evidence regarding local, regional and national issues relating to the availability and recruitment of Apprenticeships in the City. In particular, all Southampton care leavers will:

- Have access to an Apprenticeship or work placement within the Council from 2014;
- Receive information, advice and guidance including Apprenticeship information, inspiration and role models to enable them to make informed choices;
- Have their post-16 employment, education and training aspirations planned, documented, supported and tracked.

## **7. Health of Children In Our Care**

The aim of the Children Looked After service in Solent NHS Trust is to improve the health of Children Looked After in the care of Southampton Local Authority. Although contractual performance has been good in the past in 2013/14 the service has experienced challenges in meeting the timescales for initial assessments and reviews. This has been caused in part by staffing issues within the service but also due to increasing service demand due to the number of looked after children and associated panel work (including adult health reports and adoption counselling). There has been ongoing work between the service, commissioners and social care during 2013/14 to address these problems, including additional investment in nursing. In addition, robust electronic monitoring process were introduced along with new processes for children placed out of area, streamlined processes around gaining consent from social care and a new booking system to reduce missed clinic appointments.

Despite the delays in appointments being offered, it is important to note that the service is still achieving high satisfaction rates amongst children and families with 100% satisfaction in Quarter 4 for 2013/14. The service continues to undertake a range of activities such as working with the BRS (Behaviour Resource Service) to screen for and assess emotional and behavioural difficulties in CLA, they have developed a Care-Leavers Health Care Plan and a "Declined Service" Path and Health Care Plan to ensure those young people who do not wish to engage with the service have access to health information and know how to re-engage when they wish and the service is also looking at incentives to improve the uptake of health assessments by young people.

CAHMS Offers a Tier 4 Service and the service has aimed to contribute to an improvement in placement stability for children looked after due to community support focused on addressing attachment and the family (including residential staff and foster carer) experience of mental health.

63.7% of children looked after had a Dental Check compared to 88% in 2012/13, a significant reduction. Immunisation rates also fell from 86% (2012/13) to 66.7% (2013/14). Although 100% of children had their developmental check outperforming local and national figures.

In 2012/13, 2% of children were identified as having a substance misuse problem during the year lower than 4% in 2011/12 and local and national averages. We consider this to be an indication of poor detection.



## **8. Checking on the Wellbeing of Children In Our Care**

Of those children who should have had reviews during 2013/14, 71% were reviewed on time down from 82% the previous year. This was due to rising numbers of looked after children and pressures within the Independent Reviewing Officer Service. An action plan is in place to improve performance.

Six weekly social work visits have increased from 62% in 2013 to 73% in March 2014. Alongside this there is an increase in the numbers sharing their views and wishes recorded to influence their plans.

The UK Government has made significant reforms to the youth remand framework with the implementation of the LASPO Act 2012. The Act implicitly attributes further responsibility to the Local Authority by means of children and young people being remanded to youth detention accommodation and being eligible for leaving care services. The LASPO team which sits within the Leaving Care Team has been in operation since December 2012 and is developing well but at a slower pace than initially expected. [ss3]

In 2012/13 12% of looked after children were new entrants to offending, lower than the previous year (2011/12) although still higher than the local 7% and national 6 % averages. This is of concern but more up to date information is not yet available.

Overall numbers of looked after children having a period missing from care have risen sharply to 45 in 2013/14 compared to 27 in 2012/13 and 28 in 2011/12. This is due to more accurate recording practices by social workers for missing children, rather than a true spike in the number of children missing. There are strict missing from care procedures in place. Figures and individual children's cases are now scrutinised by managers as over the last 3 years Southampton has a higher percentage of CLA missing from care at 3% compared to 1% for England. There was previously a lack of regard to 'Return Reports' but this has been remedied and focus is being given to 'missing' episodes as they can be early indicators of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). The Local Authority works with the LSCB 'Missing, Exploited and Trafficked' Group (MET).

A key project for Children's Services in 2014/15 will be the development of a tool to monitor the overall wellbeing of children in our care. It is hoped that this will allow far better tracking of progress of children and highlight areas where improvement is required.

### *Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Report*

In Southampton during 2013/14 a new Quality Assurance Business Unit was established, combining the IRO and CP (Child Protection) Advisory roles, allowing for new strategic links and reinforcing the IRO independent perspective and capacity to contribute to the quality assurance of services for Looked after children. Performance on the timeliness of reviews has declined this year to 71% from 82% last year which was a figure already significantly below the national average. Whilst,

improvements in the performance of the IRO Service were made in the first half of the year particularly in the timeliness of reviews, the instability and a lack of capacity at certain times given the high number of CLA have had a negative impact on this key indicator and the effectiveness of the service overall. Nevertheless, performance with respect to seeing children is good and has slightly improved and IROs continue to provide a focus on the child and permanence planning.

IROs monitor cases at risk of drift and there were some excellent examples of effective challenge but more work is needed to ensure that problem resolution is consistent and robust across the service and that information derived from this activity is tracked and reported regularly to managers.

The setting up of the integrated service of IROs and CPAs within the new Quality Assurance Unit, new business support arrangements regarding the organisation of reviews and the proposed increase in the number of chairs evidences the local authority's support for the IRO service and it is anticipated will lead to improvements in the health and effectiveness of the service. Actions to improve the quality and effectiveness of the Service were brought together in a summary work programme for 2014- 2015.

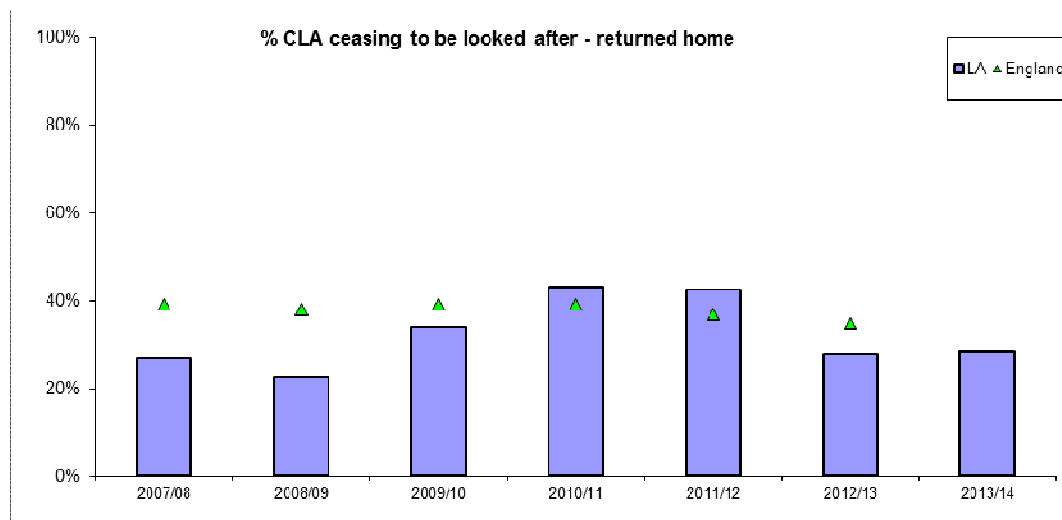
The IRO manager has been actively involved with the Pathways Team Manager and the Youth Options manager in work with the Bright Spots project funded by the Hadley Trust at Bristol University and facilitated in partnership with Coram Voice and nine local authorities including Southampton. This is an action research study with the aim of giving local authorities a better understanding of the policies and practices that contribute to a positive journey through care for CLA. Two focus groups of CLA from Southampton have been held. A key message from those attending the group for children over ten years old is the importance to them of reliable, close relationships with carers, social workers and other professionals who are 'there for them' and who actively do things to help. They also talked about the importance of family members and friends.

## 9. Leaving Our Care

### Returning Home / Achieving Permanence

The plans for returning children home when it is safe, and arranging for the child to leave care, are increasingly considered in a timelier manner as part of the tracking of children's cases improvement of service. During 2013-14 the rate of looked after children ceasing to be looked after increased from 38 in 10,000 to 42 in 10,000, well above the national average of 25 and statistical neighbours of 31. This trajectory is positive, and if sustained relieves some pressure from the service and shows children's plans are progressing.

Out of these 28% (48) of children were enabled to return home to live with their parents or placed with relatives. This is however, below the national average of 35%. The other large groups of those ceasing to be looked after included those with successful permanency plans including adoption (15%), those on a residence order (14%) and children granted a special guardianship order (10%). These figures demonstrated the relentless drive by the senior leadership team for permanence.



### Care Leavers

There has been progress against some measures of performance, but the pace of change has needed to be more rigorous. The Corporate Parenting Committee has agreed some significant recommendations to drive improvement, including: signing up to the national Care Leavers Charter; an allocation of £2,000 for all Care Leavers to support transition to independence; the creation of a more robust and effective Young People in Care Council; the development of a Facebook page to promote ongoing contact and support beyond their 25th birthday and to improve partnerships that enable Care Leavers to access apprenticeships, work experience, further and higher education.

The City currently undertakes a pathway needs assessment at 15yrs and 9 months for each young person who will remain looked after and therefore become a care leaver. We acknowledge this is often too late for the planning process to begin and plan to address this. The needs assessment informs the Pathway Plan which builds on the Care Plan, setting out the level and type of support a care leaver may need as they move towards and beyond their 18th birthday. The previously cumbersome Pathway Planning format has been reviewed by the Pathways team and the recent audit programme shows some improvement in quality. However, recent audit highlights the need for every young person to have an up to date, quality plan. We are proud of our practice in the relationships between care leavers, families/carers and the team of social workers, who are permanent, experienced staff; the excellent partnership with the co-located youth offending team which enables us to safeguard young people through a prevention agenda, that maintains lower levels of offending, reoffending and custody; the national 'Brightspots project', that looks into what makes fostering work and really engages an older group of CLA in the shaping and design of our future service.

### Accommodation

The city has developed a strategic approach to helping homeless young people since 2004. There is extensive use of homeless prevention, and well established pathways into and through supported housing services. The Homelessness Prevention strategy 2013/2018 consolidates the city's approach to homeless young people developed over many years and one area of priority is to carry out early planning for those leaving care in order to improve outcomes. A review of supported housing options is also underway. Users of services have been involved, and the findings from their feedback include:

- Ensuring care leavers have a place for the longer term, so that benefit changes at age 22 do not negatively impact on their housing status.
- Support to be better tailored to meet care leaver needs – targeted at supporting the full range of needs within supported housing.
- More information and support for care leavers prior to their foster care ending, so that they can better understand options and manage the move to the community, be this supported housing or other settings.
- The accommodation needs to be reconfigured, with smaller supported units, where possible.

The findings and conclusions from the strategic review indicate that support to young people at risk of homelessness needs to be more targeted and focused on prevention. This includes more time spent on equipping young people with the skills to live independently and safely. Access to training and employment are also key to young people achieving sustainable affordable long term accommodation.

A new model and structure for delivering housing support to young people at risk of homelessness is being developed and is being consulted on. Full multi-agency consultation has been carried out to inform the review including input from a group representing the Children in care Council. New services will be tendered in autumn 2014.

At the end of March 2014 70% of our care leavers who were in contact with us, were in suitable accommodation. Although an increase from 63% the previous year, this was significantly lower compared to 84% (SN) and 88% (England). Improving performance in this area has been a priority by the service and by the end of April 2014, this percentage had risen to 90%.

### Care Leavers & NEET

31% of care leavers are in education, employment or training a decline from the previous year (41%). We fare less well compared to 56% (SN) and 58% (England) and 81% (all young people living in Southampton). This represents a downward trend over the past seven years and shows a direct correlation between these outcomes and those relating to achievement at KS4 where the City's performance in relation to the percentage of looked after children who achieve A\* - C including English and Maths is not improving.

By mid- April, this figure had improved slightly to 43%. In this context, 11% are unable to work due to parenting responsibilities and pregnancy, 6% are in custody and 2% are medically unfit for work.

### Keeping In Touch

In 2012-2013, Southampton kept in contact with 81% of Care Leavers, this dipped to 65% during the year but was maintained at 75% of this group by April 2014, compared with 88% (SN) and 92% (England). This has implications in terms of the ongoing support that can be provided, for example in providing accommodation and accessing employment, education or training.

## 10. People's Voices

The active participation of children and young people is a key priority for Children's Services, as well as all other relevant partners. Our Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out a clear vision for practice, and the new designated Quality Assurance Business Unit will alongside the LAC Service facilitate effective consultation, involvement and participation of children and young people who are looked after, enabling significant progress in service development, and sustaining a wide range of tangible outcomes for children, young people and social work practice.

We wish to improve on our children and young people's participation in regional and national children rights and participation events and activities. This will form a part of the children and young people's engagement strategy for 2014/15. An annual awards ceremony recognises the achievements and contribution of children and young people looked after.

### *The Young People In Care Council*

The Children in Care Council (in Southampton called the Young People In Care Council – YPiCC) directly supports the Corporate Parenting Board to measure and monitor the effectiveness and quality of 'Corporate Parenting' to children and young people; according to the views and experiences of the children who are in care. The board remains fully committed to listening to the voice of service users and the active involvement of children and young people within the decision-making processes.

At its meeting of the 5th November 2013, the Corporate Parenting Committee subscribed to new Terms of Reference. An extract from these are as follows:

- To ensure that the voice and opinions of as wide a range as possible of children looked after and care leavers are heard and that their views are used to shape policy and monitor performance;
- To directly receive the views of children and young people looked after and leaving care via the Children in Care Council mechanisms and annual consultation to ensure their views and experiences directly influence decisions made at this level.

Since the 5th November, Councillor Chaloner has been elected as Cabinet Member for Safeguarding and the new chair of this Committee, the YPiCC have elected a Chair and two Vice Chairs, and Youth Options, who support and operate the YPiCC have successfully been granted the contract from 1st April 2014. An introductory meeting was also held on the 26th February 2014 between Councillor Chaloner, and the Chair and Vice-chair of the YPiCC. The YPiCC are about (Oct 2014) to re-elect their leadership.

The Young People in Care Council (YPiCC) has had a fluctuating membership in the past year but consists currently of about 10 young people aged 16-21. The group meets on a monthly basis with an agenda negotiated between them and officers, and the Chair and Vice Chair also attend and participate at Corporate Parenting meetings. The Lead

Councillor for Children's Services has attended some of the YPICC meetings, as have the Principal Officer and Head of Children's services.

The group has worked at developing its own identity this year and is currently focused on encouraging increased participation from younger looked after children especially. The group's overall aim is to provide a voice for the wider population of looked after children and care leavers and to influence service development as a result.

The Chair and one other group member recently attended a conference in London with the Lead Member and a Children's Services Team Manager in order to meet and share experiences and ideas with other Children in Care Councils from other Local Authorities, and to work alongside corporate parents for the day in order to better understand each other's perspectives. Group members have also signed up to the care Leavers Charter with senior managers, interviewed individuals for senior manager posts and helped facilitate consultation days with younger LAC, who is it hoped may choose to become YPICC members soon too.

There is an on-going focus on recruitment to the YPiCC and an attempt to ensure that greater integration of children's voices is made to the Corporate Parenting Committee.

#### Advocacy and Independent Visitor Scheme

Just 4U offers Independent Advocacy to children and young people aged 5 to 18, who are either Looked After or Children in Need. Advocacy can also be provided for young people over the age of 18 where there is an identified need, e.g. the young person is a care-leaver. 56% of referrals to advocacy for 2013/14 were for upcoming planned LAC reviews. However, the communication of advocacy services for CLA and 'making a complaint' has had limited impact, with 19 CLA using advocacy but only one formal complaint received, which was immediately actioned. Views of CLA and more informal issues raised are being recorded more appropriately on case files, but there is a great deal more to do to ensure CLA are seen and heard to influence the services they receive, as well as in relation to their own care plan and future pathway.

#### Foster carer association

The Southampton Foster Care Association is made up of 16 carers. The group membership includes mainstream and friends and family carers and one carer who has a Special Guardianship Order in respect of a child she cares for. These carers meet on a monthly basis. The association works in partnership with the Fostering Service to support Southampton carers, looked after children and carers birth children. The Association runs many events throughout the year with the most popular being their annual Christmas Party seeing record numbers this year with over 280 in attendance. Since April they have already run events supported by the fostering service. These have included a Victoria Country Park Picnic, BBQ and AGM, sponsored cycle and pram push, Mystery Coach Trip (a day event to Butlins) and an outing for foster carer's birth children to Play Zone.

As an association, they are committed to training and development. They support the training of new foster carers by attending each evening of the induction course as a way of introducing themselves and outlining the role of the association. Two other members work with the Pathways Team to run a successful 'buddies' scheme, enabling new foster carers

to meet an experienced foster carer and help them settle into their new role with confidence. The association also facilitates support groups, run by foster carers for foster carers, which take place on the first Thursday of each month. The Association is valued by foster carers and by the Fostering Service as it ensures the views of foster carers are routinely fed into the service. The Association has been represented in Corporate Parenting Committees in 2013/14 as a voice for foster-carers and an additional route by which children's voices can be heard.



## 11. Concluding Remarks

The Children's Services Transformation Programme has outlined the ambition for Southampton's looked after children:

*Where children cannot safely and effectively be brought up within their own immediate family our interventions will be timely and our service provision of a sufficiently good standard to ensure our looked after children population subscribes to the 'right child, right placement, right time' and only for as long as necessary.*

In Southampton we want the same things for the children and young people we look after as any good parent would want for their child. We want our children to be healthy and happy in childhood. We want them to feel valued for who they are and to feel loved. We want them to enjoy learning and to benefit from the experience. We want them to grow into well adjusted, emotionally balanced individuals who will experience positive relationships, be responsible citizens, fulfil the goals and ambitions they have for themselves and ultimately provide good parenting to their own children.

Elected Members are asked to note the contents of this Report, to re-affirm their commitment to the principles within it and the promises to Young People in Appendix 1 and to use this Report as a foundation to all and any decisions they take over the course of the next year and beyond to prioritise our children. In particular the following points may be of particular pertinence:

- During this period of austerity measures the Council as a whole must remain committed to its parental responsibility towards over 500 vulnerable children and young people. This group must remain a priority and future cuts must not negatively impact upon them.
- Southampton must continue on its improvement journey to provide a good service; and translate its improved social work practice into improved outcomes for LAC children and care leavers.
- Elected members note their responsibility in promoting positive outcomes for children and young people in care.
- Every child matters and corporate parents must encourage each and every child/young person to achieve their full potential in life and make good choices.
- The gap between looked after children, care leavers and their peers is still too wide and there is much to be done to improve educational outcomes for looked after children and young people in Southampton.

**Appendix 1:  
Southampton City Council Promises to Children and Young People In  
our Care  
Care Leavers Charter**