

REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL
CORPORATE PARENTING REPORT

15 FEBRUARY 2017

1. Number of Children in Care

- a) 599 children were reported as living in care at the end of December, down 4.5% on the last reported figure (627) as at end of September 2016. This figure represents a 5.8% rise on the corresponding figure from December 2015 (566).
- b) The current figure gives Gloucestershire a rate of 48.4 per 10,000 of the 0-17 population, comparing favourably to National (60) and South West (SW) (53) comparator data¹.
- c) Just under a third of children in care (32.4%) were placed with the agreement of their parents (194) as a voluntary arrangement under Section 20 of the 1989 Children Act. This number has reduced since October 2015 following a robust review of the arrangements. The ratio of children subject to Section 20 and legal orders is now more in line with statistical neighbours and national comparators.
- d) Most children (479) are placed with foster carers in family environments (80%), while a small proportion (51) are placed in residential schools or homes (85%). A further 24 children (4.0%) are placed for adoption and 40 children (6.7%) are placed with their parents or in independent living arrangements
- e) Of the 338 children who came into care in the 12 months to the end of December 2016, 63 (18.6%) came into care for a second or subsequent time. This is in-line with the position reported to the Corporate Parenting Board at the end of September 2016, (18.9%), although the drop in the number of children is down from 72.
- f) The overall aim is to keep the number of times children and young people are readmitted to care as low as possible, to avoid potential disruption and poor outcomes.

¹ 2015/16 financial year, published in November 2016

2. Aspirations Strategy and Action Plan

- a) At the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Group, the group considered the revised Aspirations Strategy 2017-20. In recent months, several workshops have been held to revise, review and accentuate key priorities and ambitions for children in care and care leavers in Gloucestershire.
- b) The Strategy is the result of work with managers, social workers and partners, including health and education. It is also the result of interactive workshops held with the Corporate Parenting Group, Children in Care Council, and following workshops and consultations with Children in Care and Ambassadors. Further work will be required to develop a summary action plan to accompany the updated Strategy.

3. Corporate Parenting Group

- a) In October 2016, the Corporate Parenting Group considered proposals relating to the membership and structure of the group, post the County Council elections in May 2017, including a proposal for Ambassadors for Vulnerable Children and Young People to be incorporated as core members of the group, expanding on the current arrangement whereby the Ambassadors are only invited to attend selected meetings.
- b) At the Corporate Parenting Group meeting in January, it was agreed to apply the following principles to the current review; a) to strengthen the current membership of the group and, b) to encourage those with a passion and interest in making a difference to children in care to join the group.

4. Work Plan 2017

The following topics were suggested as priority areas for the Corporate Parenting Group, (post the County Council elections in May 2017), to consider as part of the 2017 work plan: -

- A. CIC Influence - Voice of the Child
- B. Transitions into adulthood and preparation for independent living
- C. Health and Wellbeing (including emotional, physical health, education and life chances)

Cllr Paul McLain

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and Strategic Commissioning