

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services

May 2009

Children's Delivery Programme

Report by Director of Operations (Children and Young People)

Ref No. CYP24 (08/09)
Key Decision: Yes
Part I
Electoral Divisions: N/A

Executive Summary

The Annual Performance Assessment of West Sussex County Council (WSCC) by Ofsted judged the 'Staying Safe' component of the service to be inadequate. In response, The Children's Delivery Programme has identified areas of weakness and produced a recovery programme to improve the 'Staying Safe' component of Children's services. The programme focuses on improving front door services, improving placement choice and improving support to a range of placements. The CYPS Select Committee has been consulted and supports the Programme.

The Cabinet Member is asked to approve the Children's Delivery Programme, which includes the development of a new Assessment and Care planning model and the expansion of the Family Resource Service.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Member is asked to:

- Review the progress made to date
- Review the proposed approach and plan
- Approve the proposed approach and plan

1. Background

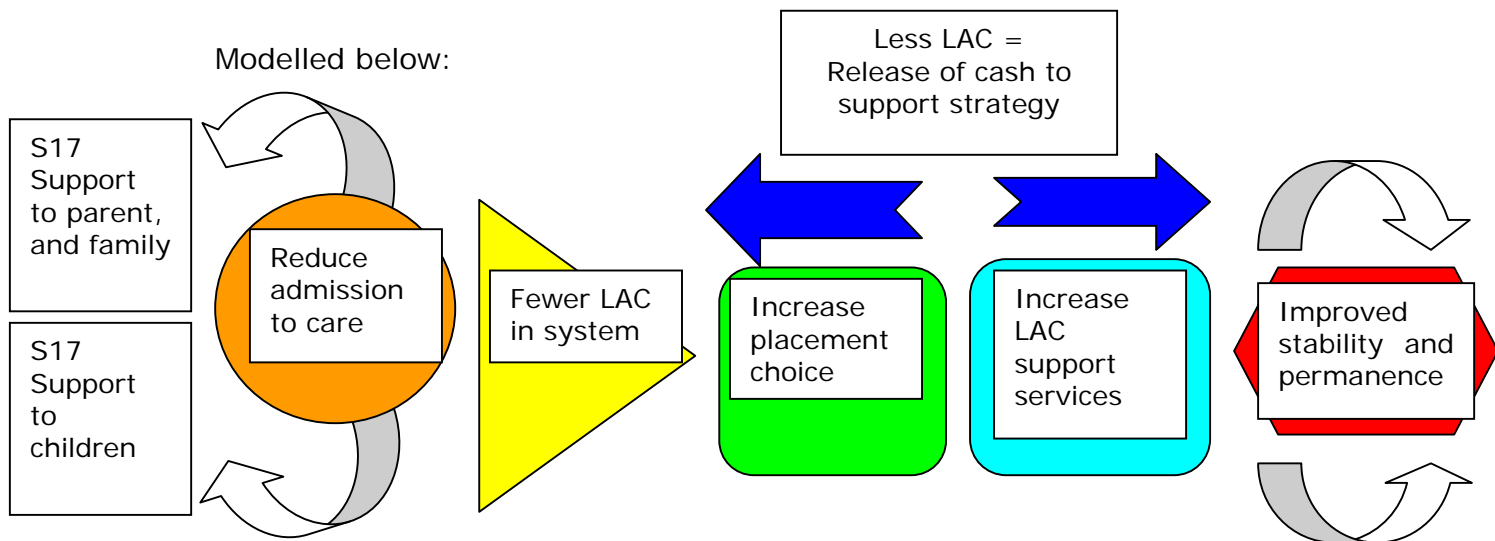
1.1 The Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of WSCC by Ofsted, judged the 'Staying Safe' component of the service to be inadequate, one of eight local authorities to be judged in this way based on their 2007/08 performance.

1.2 The Children's Delivery Programme is a specific response to the following areas of weakness identified in the APA and contributes to a wider recovery programme, namely:

- Improving front door services¹
- Improving placement choice
- Family support –Improving placement support

1.3 Through the effective delivery of this programme the service will secure better outcomes for children, young people and their families. It will also improve performance and reduce children in care costs by ensuring we have **the right children looked after, in the right placement, for the right amount of time** underpinned by **timely and proportionate high quality assessments**.

¹ Investing in prevention, early intervention, diversion from care, rapid rehabilitation and tight 'gate keeping'



This model illustrates the process being advocated in the Children's Delivery programme.

2. Discussion

2.1 Improving front door services

2.1.1 Assessment & Care planning: The APA self assessment and recent Ofsted inspection identified an urgent need to significantly improve timescales for the completion of Initial and Core Assessments in West Sussex. In response, the County Council has considered best practice and it is proposed to restructure the current eight Assessment teams into four Assessment teams across each paired Integrated Service Delivery Area (ISDA).

2.1.2 Each of these teams will be split into four separate groups of staff (Team 1, 2, 3 & 4) who will spend 5 days on duty over a 4 week period, allowing 3 weeks to complete work. The model will be piloted in Worthing/Arun East in June 2009.

2.1.3 The additional staff numbers required has been calculated according to the volume of new assessments required, existing staff allocation and caseloads. These have been benchmarked against well performing authorities. To implement the new Assessment model across West Sussex will require the following additional staff:

- 8 Senior Social Work Practitioners (Grade 11)
- 8 Social Workers (Grade 8 – 10)
- 8 Assistant Care Managers (Grade 6/7)

2.2 Family Support

2.2.1 Family Resource Service (FRT): The desired outcome of this project will be to divert children (particularly focusing on those aged 11+) from the Care system. This will be achieved by extending the scope of the Family Resource Service to engage with families as soon as issues are identified and to return those young people who are admitted to Care to their families at the earliest opportunity.

2.2.2 Having considered various options for expanding the service, the proposal is to expand the capacity of the existing FRT service from 14.2 fte² to 30 fte staff.

2.2.3 Family Support teams within Children's & Families (C&F) Centres: Currently a wide range of services are provided by Family Support teams within Children and Family centres. There are differences and inconsistencies of the services provided by the teams. Therefore, the proposal is to provide a clear and agreed Statement of Purpose - providing a range of quality, effective services; outcome focused work and a defined referral processes in order to ensure consistency across teams.

2.2.4 Improved placement support (non Looked After Children Packages): The desired outcome would be a dedicated service to support non Looked After Children placements. This would include Residence Orders, Special Guardianship placements & Section 17 packages³.

2.2.5 The current recommendation is to introduce a **Family Support Team** which will be made up of: 1 x Team Manager, 1 Senior Social Work Practitioners, 1 Social Worker and 5 x Family Support workers. Consideration is also being given to using the Family Support Worker costs to purchase Sessional Worker hours on the basis that this will considerably enhance the flexibility of the scheme.

2.3 Improving placement choice

2.3.1 The desired outcome will be to have more in-house foster care placements, which will provide more choice of placement. Whilst the Access to Resource team will assess the suitability of placements, in-house fostering placements should always be the first option where appropriate.

2.3.2 To achieve this objective a review of the marketing, recruitment and support strategies within the fostering service will need to take place. In addition, the arrangements for reviewing foster carer approvals, the relationship between front line social workers, their managers and the fostering service, and a range of issues relating to the fostering panel will also need to be addressed.

2.3.3 The current fostering service establishment is considered sufficient to allow for an expansion of the recruitment & assessment process for foster carers. However, as new foster carers come on stream additional resource will be required to provide them with high quality support. The current recommendation is to increase the team by 3 fte staff.

3. **Consultation**

3.1 **Consultation to date:**

² fte – full time equivalent

³ **Section 17** - of the Children Act 1989, local authorities have a duty to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need'. Local authorities can therefore provide a range of services for children who are 'in need'. Such services include support and help to families, including families of children with disabilities and other special needs.

- Children and Young People's Select Committee April 2009
- In-house workshop in December 2008 sharing initial ideas with staff and obtaining feedback
- Partner engagement workshop January 2009 (included Police, NHS, CAMHS, schools) and District/Borough Councils – attended by Pat Arculus. Again sharing ideas & obtaining feedback
- Project teams/working groups established for each project with representation from across CYPS and Business Services
- National Parents' week – understanding what services we provide work and those that need improvement
- Department of Children Schools & Families (DCSF) review of programme objectives, plans and outcomes

3.2 Consultation planned throughout Programme:

- Further in-house workshops to engage staff and train on new ways of working (Jun – Sept 2009)
- Further partner engagement workshops (June 2009 onwards)
- Bring partners onto Project teams/working groups at appropriate stage
- Continual review from DCSF

4. Resource Implications and Value for Money

4.1 Timeliness of assessments will improve significantly as will the allocation and quality of assessments. Continuous improvement in this area of activity across the county will contribute to improved performance against the 'Staying Safe' measures applied by Ofsted. Improved assessment processes and better support arrangements will, in some cases, reduce the need to go to court and where this is achieved, potentially reduce the costs incurred to commission expensive independent assessments. A breakdown of benefits and costs are shown in Appendix A.

4.2 By establishing an overall strategic approach and expanding the Family Resource Service, West Sussex County Council (WSCC) will provide a range of high quality, effective services that are outcome focused and consistent across the county. This will provide WSCC with a preventative service focused on working with families and only using Care placements where absolutely necessary or as a temporary option. This will enable WSCC to reduce the number of admissions into care (particularly older children) and also contribute to meeting the family support outcomes required by the pending Children's Bill.

4.3 By reducing the admissions into Care and creating more in-house foster placements it is anticipated that over 3 years the Children's Delivery Programme will develop the potential to deliver circa £4 million savings per annum. Whilst the benefits would start to accrue during Year 1 (2009/2010), full year benefits would be realised during Year 2/3 (2010/2012).

4.4 The additional costs will be offset against the planned savings over the life of the programme. However, the Change Board has indicated that should savings not be realised as quickly as anticipated, due to recruitment difficulties, the Board would support a bid against contingency. (See Appendix B for supporting evidence)

5. **Risk Management Implications**

In advance of the Ofsted publication WSCC had already taken a number of steps to address the concerns identified. The Children's Delivery Programme is a specific response to the areas of weaknesses identified in the APA. There is a risk that if WSCC do not continue with the Programme as planned, the DCSF may intervene further.

6. **Customer Focused Appraisal**

The screening process has been undertaken and it has been decided that a Customer Focus Appraisal is not required for this decision as the Children's Delivery Programme is part of the wider FSR programme.

7. **Crime and Disorder Act Implications**

Provision of good care planning will help reduce the risk of Children & Young People being subject to legal interventions with regard to crime and disorder.

8. **Human Rights Act Implications**

A decision to remove a child from his/her parents and place him/her in care will always engage article 8, and therefore the decision must be shown to be necessary and proportionate. The following principles have been laid down by the European Court:

1. Taking a child into care should normally be regarded as a temporary measure to be discontinued as soon as circumstances permit
2. Any measures taken to implement a decision to place a child in temporary care should be consistent with the ultimate aim of reuniting the natural parent and child
3. Therefore a fair balance must be struck between the interests of the child in remaining in public care and those of the parent in being reunited with the child
4. When assessing whether a fair balance has been struck, particular importance attaches to the best interests of the child which, depending on their nature and seriousness, may override those of the parent
5. In particular, a parent cannot be entitled under article 8 to have measures taken that would harm the child's health and development

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Appendix A

It is anticipated that the Children's Delivery Programme will deliver the following kind of Benefits:

COSTS	Year 1 costs (09-10)	BENEFITS	Year 1 benefits (09-10)
Expansion of Family Resource Team – 15.8 fte increase over 2.5 quarters of 09 -10.	£584,000	Reduction of older LAC	£980,000⁴
Expansion of Non LAC Family Support – 4fte during 09 -10	£161,000	Fewer Residence Order & SG breakdowns	
Expansion of Fostering service – 1 fte during 09 - 10	£46,000	Higher proportion of LAC fostered in-house -	£200,000⁵
Pilot of Assessments process – 12fte (rolled out in 2 ISDA's)	£457,000	Timely initial and core assessments & improved quality	
TOTAL	£1.248,000	TOTAL	£1.180,000

COSTS	Year 2 costs (10-11)	BENEFITS	Year 2 benefits (10-11)
Expansion of Family Resource Team – Full Yr effect 15.8fte	£798,000	Reduction of older LAC	£3.438,000⁶
Expansion of Non LAC Family Support – Full Yr effect 8 fte	£324,000	Fewer Residence Order & SG breakdowns	
Expansion of Fostering service – Full Yr effect 3 fte	£135,000	Higher proportion of LAC fostered in-house	£624,000⁷
Roll out of Assessments process – Full Yr effect 24fte	£1.174,000	Timely initial and core assessments & improved quality	
TOTAL	£2.422,000	TOTAL	£4.062,000

COSTS	Year 3 costs (11-12)	BENEFITS	Year 3 benefits (11-12)
TOTAL	£2.483,000	TOTAL	£6.812,000⁸

⁴ This assumes an aggregate 20% reduction of LAC throughout 09-10 i.e. 40 fewer LAC @ 31st March 2010

⁵ This assumes an aggregate 10 additional in-house foster carers throughout 09-10 i.e. 20 extra foster carers @ 31st March 2010

⁶ This assumes @1st April 2010 40 fewer LAC & @31st March 2011 100 fewer LAC, this arrogates 70% reduction throughout 2010 – 2011

⁷ This assumes an aggregate 30 additional in-house foster carers throughout 09-11 –i.e. 40 extra foster carers @ 31st March 2011

⁸ This assumes a further reduction to 635 LAC - 15 fewer purchased placements (5 residential & 10 IFA) & 40 IFA placements now in-house

Appendix B

Supporting evidence:

1. The table below shows the number of LAC in WSCC per 10,000, compared with the national and statistical neighbour averages.

LAC per 10,000				
	2005	2006	2007	2008
West Sussex	42.8	46.1	44.9	46.9
Statistical Neighbours	40.9	40.0	38.3	40.0
National (England)	55.1	54.6	54.6	54.1
Source: APA Dataset				

It is apparent from this data that the number of Looked After Children in WSCC is rising at a greater rate than the national average. The 2008 figures actually represent in excess of **100** more LAC in West Sussex than the average for our statistical neighbours.

2. It is also evident that children who started to be looked after aged 11+ are rising, in addition children of this age range are:
 - Coming into care via Section 20 admissions (coming into care on a voluntary based agreed with parents – not children at risk)
 - Often not returning home in the short to medium term

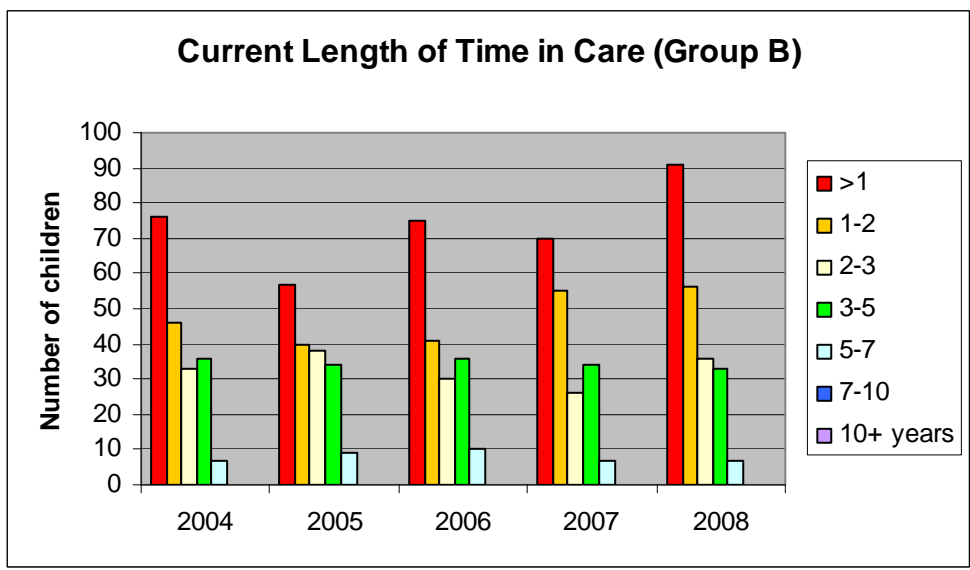
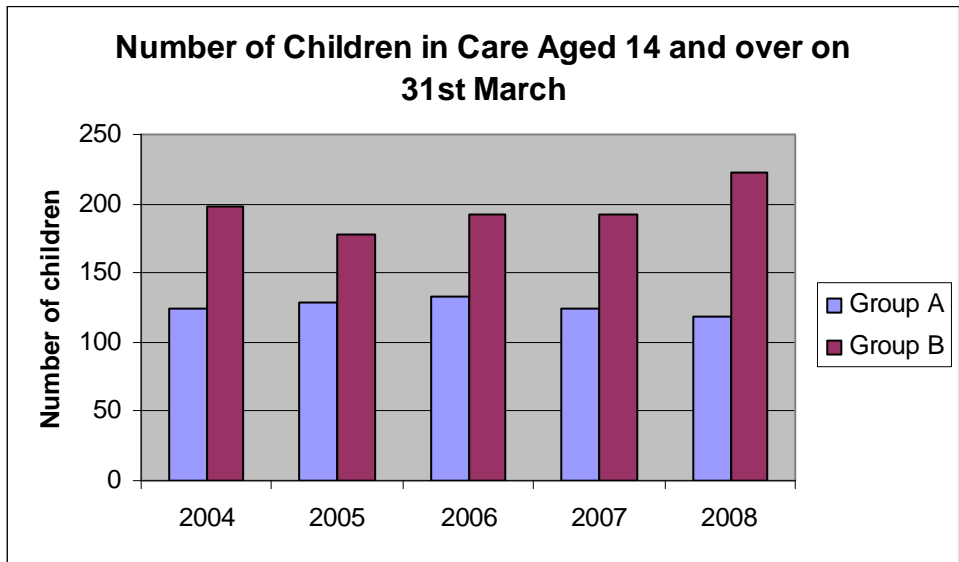
The use of Independent Fostering Agencies is also steadily increasing with this particular age range of children coming into Care.

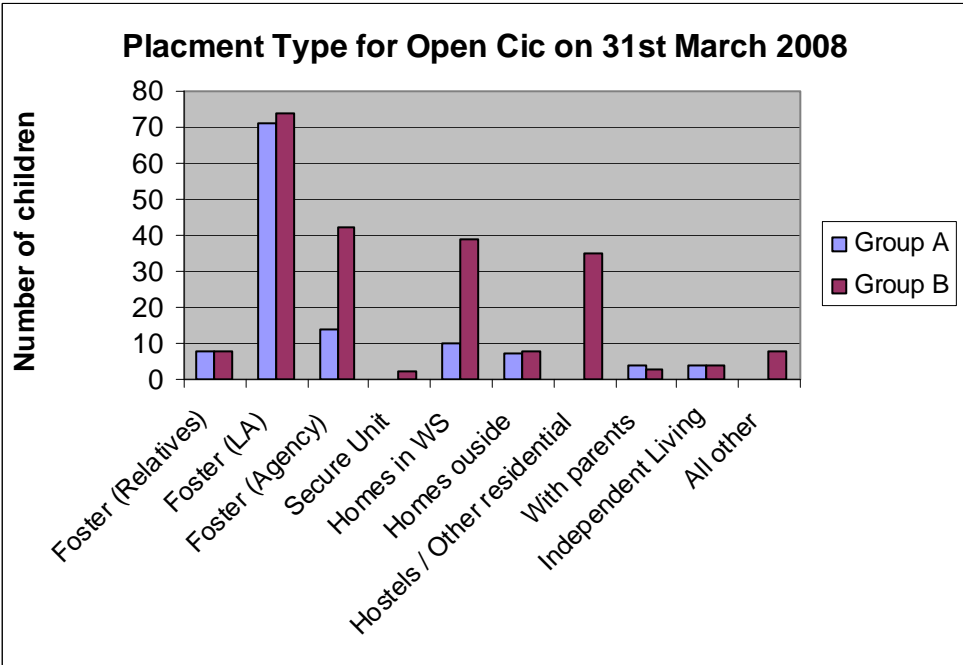
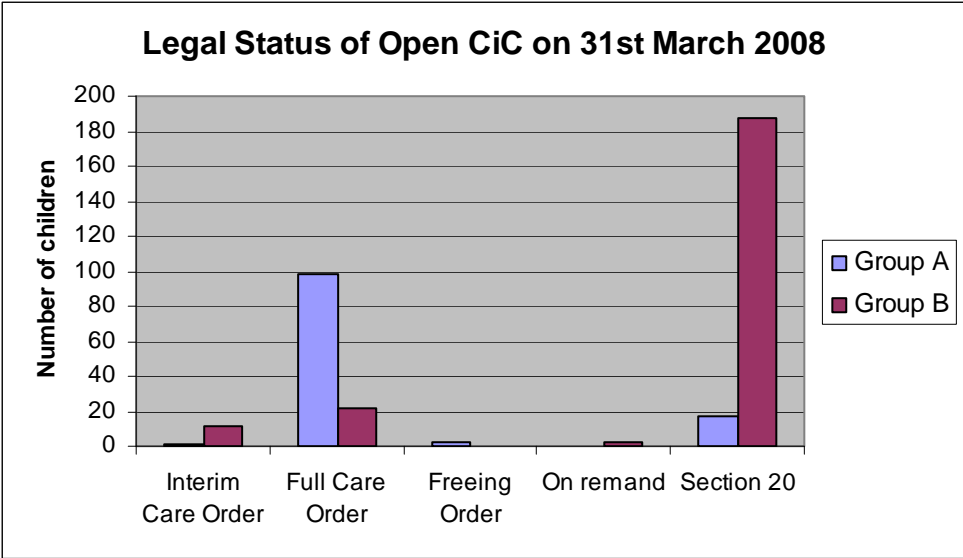
Statistical Information, Source: Resources & Performance, Sept 08:

Key:

Group A = Children who started to be looked after in the latest period of care aged under 11.

Group B = Children who started to be looked after in the latest period of care aged 11 or over.





**Placement Type of Open CiC on 31st March
(Group B)**

