

SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL: SUFFICIENCY DUTY

**January
2016 –
2019**

**Placement Commissioning Strategy
for Looked After Children, Young
People and those on the 'Edge of
Care' and Custody**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The 'Sufficiency - Statutory Guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children,' seeks to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people by providing guidance on the implementation of section 22G of the Children Act 1989. This section requires Local Authorities to take steps to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the Local Authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the Local Authority's area.
- 1.2 This statutory guidance requires strategic action through partnership between the Local Authority and its Children's Trust partners. The Children Act 2004 under Section 10 places a duty on the Local Authority to improve the wellbeing of children through the arrangements that promote cooperation with its relevant partners.
- 1.3 Whilst the sufficiency duty applies in respect of all looked after children, it recognises the importance of earlier, preventive action to support children and families so that fewer children become looked after – those who are on the 'edge of care.'
- 1.4 The Guidance sets out core requirements for Local Authorities, which involves:
 - ✓ Supporting and maintaining a diversity of provision to better meet the needs of looked after children and young people;
 - ✓ Placing children within their Local Authority area where reasonably practicable;
 - ✓ Supporting the market to deliver more appropriate placements.
- 1.5 It also calls for a whole system approach to designing universal, targeted and specialist services to improve outcomes for looked after children and children in need at risk of care or custody. The Local Authority must also be seen to be developing new provision in response to emerging trends and to be able to accommodate emergency placements.

2. Context

- 2.1 This document sets out the strategic intentions of Shropshire Council Children's Services in fulfilling our Sufficiency Duty as outlined in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 towards Children in Care along with the statutory guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children 2010.
- 2.2 The Shropshire Council Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy 2016-2019 includes an analysis of our current LAC population and ways to ensure the range, quality and suitability of placements available.
- 2.3 It is well understood that the quality of placements strongly relates to children and young people 'doing well' in care – the higher the quality, the better children and young people do' (Sinclair et al, 2007)
- 2.4 The determinants of quality placements are:
 - Thorough assessment and timely review
 - Foster care: providing nurturing, social and psychological, or 'authoritative' parenting

- Residential care: well-staffed and managed; low turnover; consistent regime; restorative approach; a positive culture that supports education and well-being
 - Kinship or Connected Person care: practical, emotional support and if required financial support
- 2.5 Principally, this strategy addresses our approach to children who are in need of, or who currently access, the following services:
- *Foster care placements*
 - *Residential Care*
 - *Specialist Short Breaks provision*
 - *Leaving Care placements*
 - *In custody or remanded to local authority care*
- 2.6 In addition, there are a number of approaches that underpin our ability to provide the right placements at the right time and keep families together where possible:
- *Edge of Care and Early Help*
 - *Good exit planning*
 - *Commissioned services for children in care*
 - *Our approach to identifying and tackling child sexual exploitation*
- 2.7 Our aim is to give Children and Young People the best placements in order for them to thrive in a loving, stable and secure environment and, where possible, for those children to remain within their own families.
- 2.8 This strategy reinforces our Corporate Parenting approach to ensure that children and young people are safe and their experiences in care are positive.
- 2.9 This strategy is underpinned and supplemented by a suite of statutory duties, strategies, and policies, including:
- ✓ *The national Sufficiency Duty*
 - ✓ *Early Help Strategy*
 - ✓ *Corporate Parenting Strategy*
 - ✓ *Children and Young People's Plan*
 - ✓ *West Mercia Youth Offending Service and Shropshire Children Services Remand Protocol*
 - ✓ *Shropshire Children Services Permanency Policy*
- 2.10 In considering the above, this strategy is also reinforced by the following key principles:
- The responsibility for meeting the needs of children in care lies across all areas of Children Services, and our partner agencies who are key stakeholders and corporate parents for children in care.
 - Most children are likely to thrive and achieve good outcomes if they are cared for within their own families. Early help will be provided to ensure that families are given the best possible chance of remaining together.
 - Where children cannot remain within their immediate family, the first consideration should be placement within the extended family network as a connected person.
 - Where children cannot remain within the extended family, they should be placed in a substitute family, the preference being with in-house foster carers.
 - Unless there is a good reason why not, siblings should be placed together.
 - A small number of children and young people may have needs such that a residential placement is the preferred choice of placement. This may be either because of complexity of needs or because previous experience has resulted in the young person finding the intensity of living within a family too difficult for the time being.

- When a child is placed within a residential setting, consideration should be given at all stages in care planning as to whether the child can return to live with his or her birth family or could be placed in foster care.
- Children should, unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary, be placed within their communities, so that they remain close to their birth family, friends, school and other networks.
- Whenever a placement is made, the planning must include the child's education, health and emotional well-being. All efforts must be made to minimise the disruption to the child's education, whatever the child's age, but particularly at Key Stage 4. In addition to this and in accordance with the statutory guidance for Local Authorities on Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children, if the placement could involve a change of education provision then the Virtual School Head Teacher must be consulted prior to the placement being made.

3. Needs Analysis

- 3.1 Shropshire is one of England's most rural and sparsely populated counties with a large geographic area of 1,235 square miles. Situated in the West Midlands, bordering Wales to the west and Cheshire to the north, the area has a population of 310,100 (ONS, mid-year estimates 2014). Shropshire's population is largely of White British ethnic origin. The numbers of residents from minority ethnic groups is low; at 4.6% of the population (this includes white other, gypsy/traveller and Irish). 40.1% of Shropshire's population live in the main market towns of Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Whitchurch, Market Drayton, Ludlow and Bridgnorth. (Census 2011)
- 3.2 Shropshire has approximately 66,400 children and young people under the age of 19 years. This is 21.4% of the total population (ONS, mid-year Estimates 2014). The proportion entitled to free school meals is 10% which is below the national average but in line with similar local authority areas. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for approximately 6.1% of the 0-19 population, compared with the English average of 24.2%. (Census 2011). In January 2015, the number of children whose first language is not English was 1040. This equates to 2.9% of the school population (figures exclude nursery aged children).
- 3.3 In July 2014 The Head of Children Social Care commissioned a three year trend analysis report to support the service in understanding the trends and needs of the looked after children population in Shropshire. The report reviewed the LAC population for the past three years 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14 and provided insight into the ages and circumstances in which children and young people entered care, time spent in care. The report also considered placements and permanency outcomes for those who have exited the care system. The analysis informed service development end to end, identified where early help and prevention into care required development and where permanency care planning and support needs for children exiting care.
- 3.4 The outcomes sought by the LAC strategy are not simply to reduce the number of children received into local authority care but to:
1. Reduce the number of children received into local authority care via Section 20 i.e. family breakdown / voluntary request, where timely and effective early help could have prevented the need for LA care.

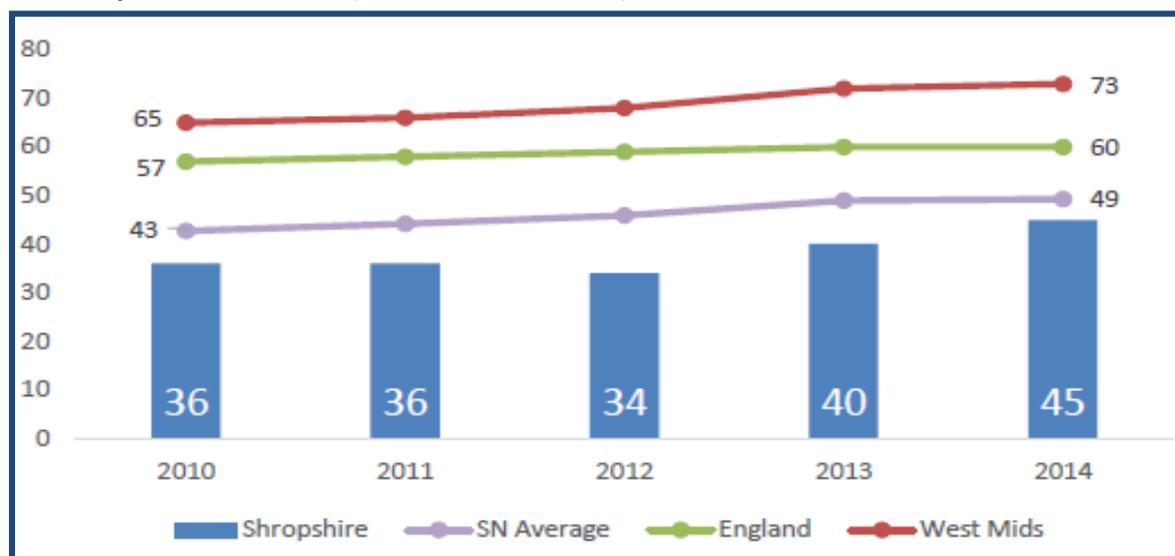
2. Increase the number of children who achieve permanency outside of local authority care in order to ensure these children can move forward leading 'normal' family lives without long term intervention of the local authority.
3. To increase the number of children who are placed locally in Shropshire maximising potential to achieve stability in their school and health provision and connections with community and family where this is appropriate.
4. Reduce the duration of time children spend in local authority care, achieving permanency as soon as possible.
5. Reduce the number of children re-entering the care system by supporting sustained rehabilitation to parental care where it is safe to do so.

3.5 Reducing the percentage of children entering the care system under S20 and supporting older children to remain in family care where it is safe to do so have been key areas of work in our LAC strategy 13/15 and 14/15. Our progress against these key activities can be viewed in the table below:

Children looked after by the Council	313
Children placed with foster carers (71 of whom are with relatives and friends who are assessed as foster carers)	216
Children placed for adoption	15
Children placed at home with parents	15
Children placed in residential care	43
Children are in the care of the Council through a legal order	173
Young people are care leavers aged between 18-24 still in receipt of statutory services	119

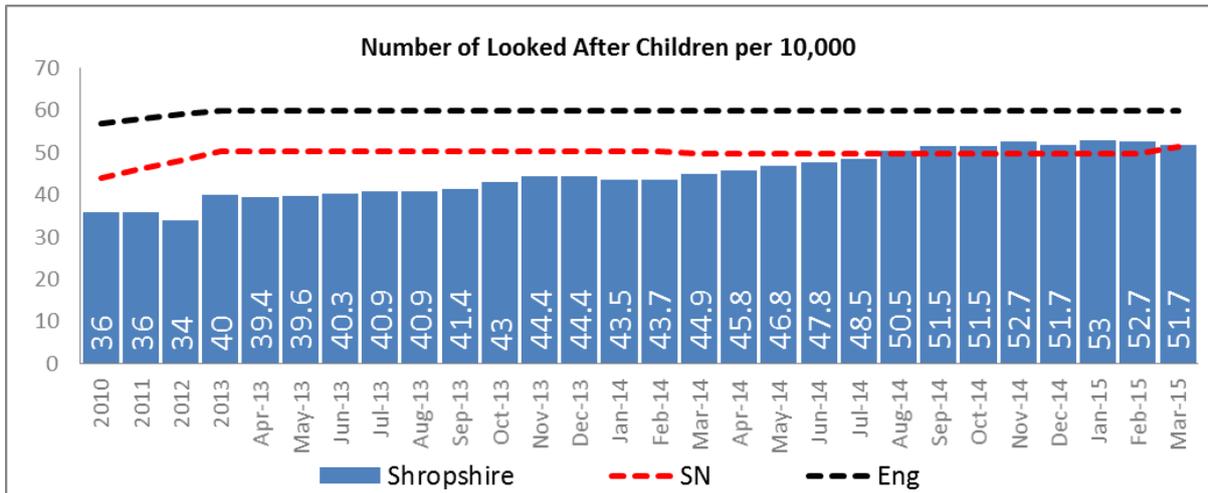
3.6 DfE figures released in October 2014 demonstrate a five year trend for Shropshire alongside All England, Shropshire's statistical neighbours and the West Midlands region. Although, Shropshire has seen a rise in its overall LAC population this is in line with rises seen in other LA's nationally and regionally. In Shropshire our overall LAC population per 10K of children continues to be lower than that of All England and our Statistical neighbours.

LAC rate per 10k 2010-2014 (as at 31st March 2014)



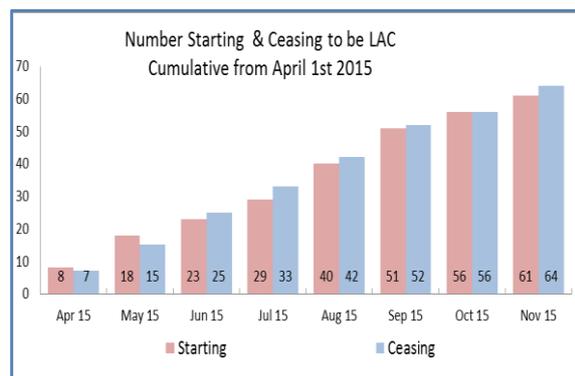
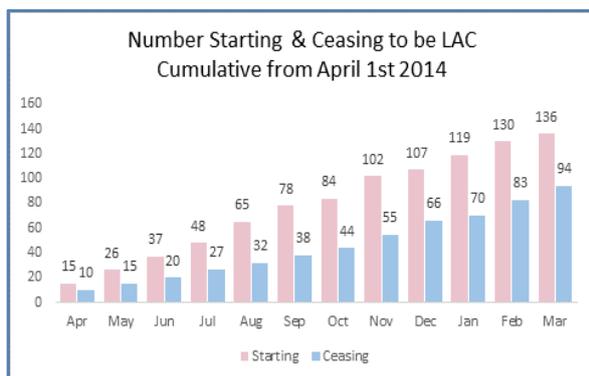
Rate 2014 / 2015

3.7 At the end of March 2013 there were 241 children looked after by Shropshire Council and by comparison at the end of March 2014, there were 271 and at the end of March 2015 there were 313 which is a 15.5% increase in numbers or a rate of 52.2 /10000 which is an increase of 7/10000 on the previous year. This is above our statistical neighbours but below all England (2014/15)



3.8 In 2014\15 the rate of children entering the care system was greater than those exiting. Our edge of care services have been strengthened including the development of a Short Break provision (Havenbrook) and outreach for young people on the edge of care and a mechanism to quickly identify and review support required by young people and their families - Support Plus Panel. This is discussed further in section 6.

3.9 We have over 2015 seen this trend changing to be more equal or reversing.



4. Decision Making.

- 4.1 In April 2014 we introduced the Pathway to Local Authority Care. (PALAC). This was revised in August 15. This form and process aim to ensure that for every child received into LA care there is in one place a clearly recorded decision as to the need for LA accommodation evidencing consideration of the placement type / area / impact on education and views of the child.



PALAC Revised Aug
15.doc

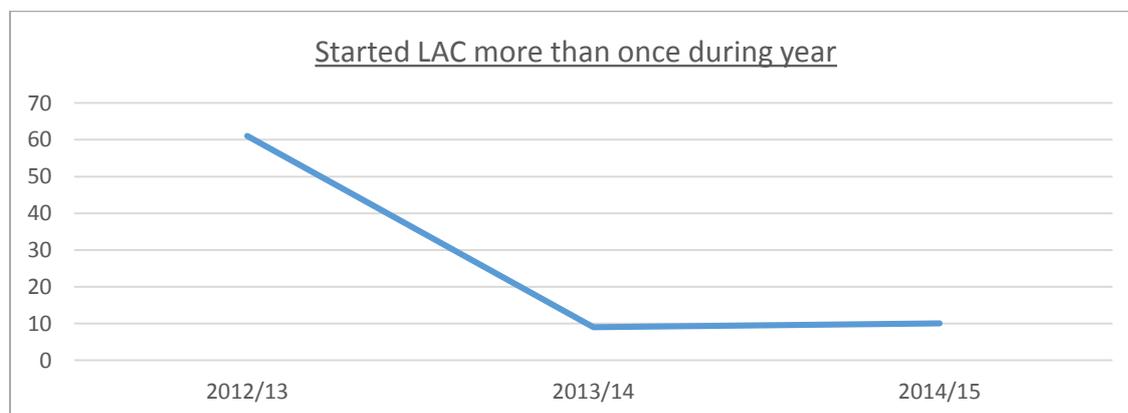
5. Statistical and National performance

- 5.1 The following set of charts outlines the DfE LAC analysis across Local Authorities and was released December 2015. This shows us how the LAC population of Shropshire compares with our statistical neighbours and All England data.



LAC 2nd Stage
Analysis (produced dec

- 5.2 With effective edge of care support in place and focused work under child protection and pre proceedings we have been able to reduce our S20 percentage from 41% as at 31st March 2015 to 37% by September 2014 and we have been able to maintain this year to date. Also the number of children entering care over the age of 10yrs is comparatively lower than our SN and England and whilst in Shropshire from 14/15/- 15/16 we have an increasing number of children placed in Foster care provision this is still lower than SN/England. We have achieved a significant reduction in the number of children placed in residential care settings.
- 5.3 Repeat LAC is also an indicator of where support to rehabilitate children and young people to parental care has been ineffective. The chart below show a significant improvement in the past two year of children who have repeat care episodes. This indicates impact of edge of care work, appropriate care planning outside of parental care and sustained rehabilitation.



6. Children in care and Education

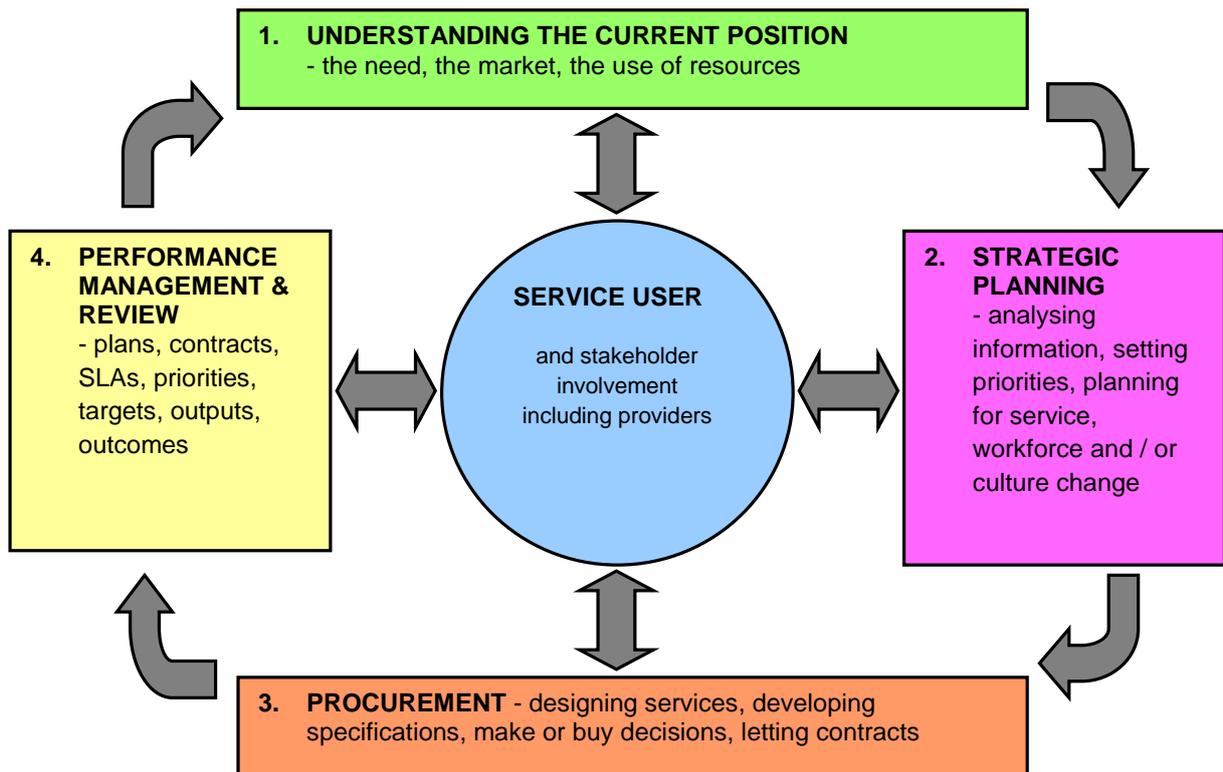
- 6.1 Under Section 22 (3)(a) of the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to promote educational achievement as an integral part of their duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children they look after. This means that every authority must give particular attention to the educational implications of any decision about the welfare of those children, including placement planning and decision making.
- 6.2 This duty applies to all children looked after by Shropshire Council, wherever they are placed. It includes making sure that young children access good quality early years education places, those who are of statutory school age and extends to supporting relevant and former relevant children to do as well as they possibly can in education.
- 6.3 Where a young person is in school years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4) there is an expectation that a young person's education should not be disrupted other than in an emergency placement. Particular efforts should be made to avoid disruption to their education as a result of a placement move, given the importance of stability whilst studying for GCSEs or equivalent qualifications, and that the disruption may have a negative impact on their chances to enter further education or to get a job in the future.
- 6.4 In order to achieve this we will:
- Have the highest aspirations for all our children and young people in care to provide them with the stability and access to resources that will support them to achieve at least in line with their peers.
 - Ensure that the PEP is a personalised learning and support plan that records everything the child or young person needs to achieve their full educational potential.
 - Keep a clear focus on educational needs as part of our care planning and decision making.
 - In the first instance try to ensure that the child or young person can continue in the same school even if s/he can no longer live in the immediate neighbourhood if it is in their best interests; in order to fulfil this obligation transport may need to be provided (Care planning Regulations and Guidance 3.16).
 - Ensure that prior to changing placement and disrupting the child's education provision, all other options have been explored and exhausted and that the reasons recorded within the PEP.
 - Consult with the Virtual School Head teacher and the designated teacher of the school that the young person is registered with, prior to a placement decision being made. If placement involves a change of school then the designated teacher of the proposed new school will also be consulted and the PEP amended accordingly.
 - Ensure that where it is impossible for the child to remain in his/her existing educational placement the care placement will not, except in an emergency, be made unless the education provision is made at the same time.

- Ensure that the PEP identifies all the additional support a child or young person may require to either stay in the same school if they move care placement or successfully integrate into their new school/education provision.

7. Shropshire's Approach to Sufficiency and Commissioning

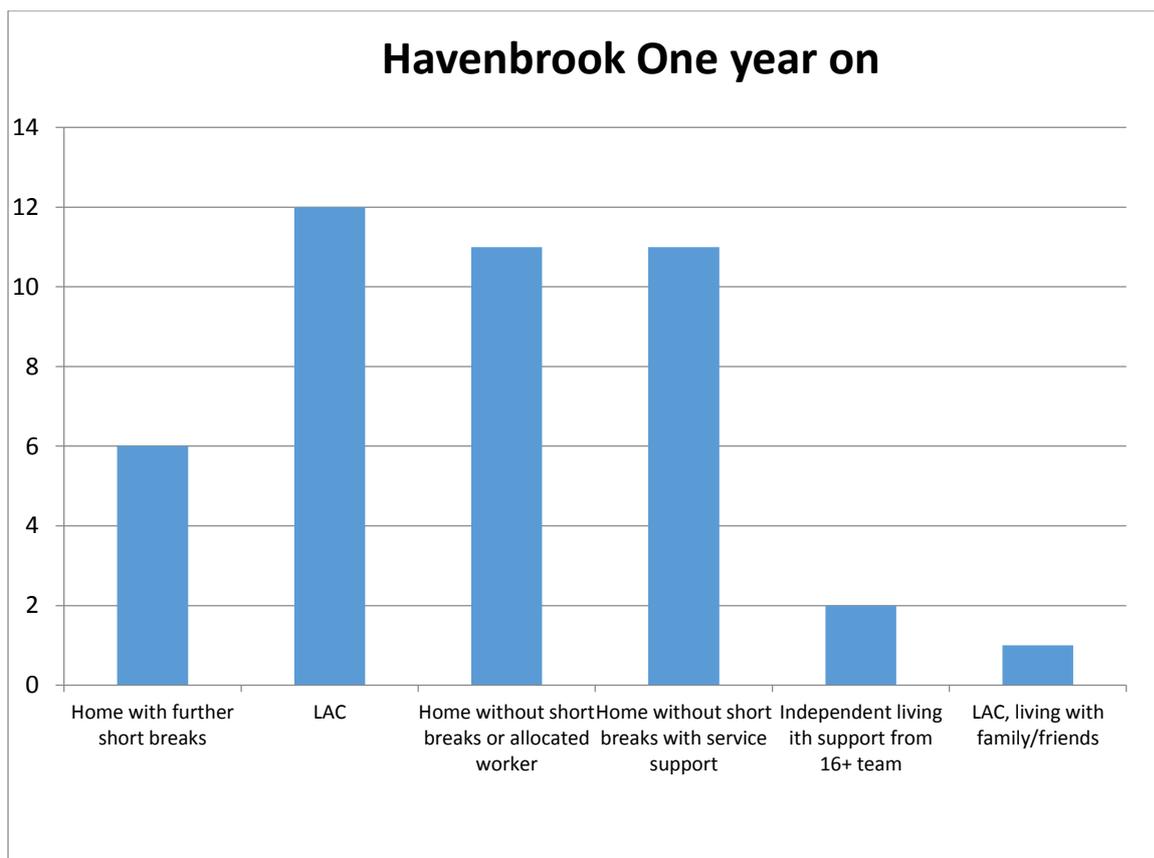
- 7.1 Sufficiency Duty is critical in ensuring improved outcomes for looked after children. Our aim is to ensure that all children and young people receive the right support at the right time and in the right way. This extends to our Sufficiency Duty, ensuring that any child or young person looked after is in the most appropriate accommodation and as such that we provide the right accommodation to meet a wide range of needs. As far as is practically possible we will ensure that there is sufficient accommodation and that it is within the local authority area. To do this effectively and to help young people achieve positive outcomes we will work with our partners in fulfilling this duty. This underpins the arrangements for effective corporate parenting, a shared responsibility across all services for children.
- 7.2 Our LAC strategy for working with the needs of children in local authority care recognises the wide range and complexity of needs presented by individual children and importantly their parents. It acknowledges the research that tells us that children achieve better outcomes when cared for in their family and local communities where it is safe to do so but where children are removed the importance of timely permanency planning is a priority.
- 7.3 **Commissioning Placements**
The Statutory Guidance suggests that good practice in meeting the sufficiency duty can be met through a step change in commissioning practice in which Local Authorities are active in managing their market and work with their Children's Trust partners to achieve this goal.
- 7.4 Applied locally this requires a whole system approach to early intervention and prevention alongside services for looked after children and those young people leaving care. This is broader than having sufficient beds in certain locations.
- 7.5 It should enable siblings to remain together, provide for children and young people with disabilities and encompass a range of placement options for older young people. Placement provision needs to be supported by a range of social work and other specialist services targeted at meeting the specific health, educational and personal development needs of looked after children and young people.
- 7.6 In Shropshire we have 1 Local Authority residential children's home that can accommodate 5 children and 1 Local Authority residential home that offers planned short breaks to 4 children and young people on the edge of care and 1 crisis admission.
- 7.7 We also have a well-established block contract with a residential care provider (Keys). This was instigated in 2008 \ 09 to meet the needs of some of our most complex looked after children and to achieve best value. In April 2015 we began a retendering process to broaden the scope of commissioned residential care provision with the aim of achieving more choice of type, operating model and location. The aim of the retendering process was achieved and the new residential contract will commence in February 2016. During 2015 we will have joined additional sub regional and regional commissioning frameworks for both residential care and Independent Fostering agencies to achieve the same goals.

7.8 Our commissioning model follows the four phases of the cycle outlined below:



8. Edge of Care

- 8.1 The Early Help strategy developments include support from social workers to partner organisations to help manage risk at lower levels outside of social work intervention. More support is being provided to the children on the edge of care. With targeted resource at the 8-16 year olds. These include residential short breaks, outreach and family group conferencing.
- 8.2 **Havenbrook** short break residential service was piloted in June 14 to provide short breaks for non-disabled children on the edge of care. 43 children used the service in the six month pilot period. 29 on a planned short breaks, 2 of these subsequently became LAC. 13 used a crisis short breaks, six of whom were subsequently brought into LA care.
- 8.3 An audit of this cohort has been completed to measure longer term impact and is detailed below.



8.4 The above chart confirms current outcome one year on for 43 young people who received a support breaks within the first six months June _ Dec of the Havenbrook pilot.

8.5 13 (30.2%) of young people have been accommodated during this period.
30 (70%) children and young people remained out of LAC since receiving a support service from Havenbrook.

8.6 Outcomes for those who did not become LAC:

- Home with Short breaks. 6 (13%)
- Home without Short Breaks or allocated worker 11 (26%)
- Home without Short breaks with other service support 11 (26%)
- Independent living with 16+ support 2 (5%)

8.7 From 31st March 2015 to 1st December 2015 there have been 75 different young people who have accessed short breaks at Havenbrook. Of the 75 young people, 49 were planned short breaks and 26 accessed the service on a Crisis basis.

8.8 Of the 75 young people 50 (66.6%) are still at home (16 have had, or are still receiving Residential Outreach support and 23 are continue to access planned short breaks). 25(33.3%) young people have been accommodated or were already accommodated by the Local Authority.

8.9 **Financial Impact** - Previous analysis of LAC over three years identified an average care duration of four months once a child is received into LA care. Using an average cost of a placement in an internal foster care (£1,983) the prevention of 30 children coming into the

care system represents a £237,960 potential saving on the placement budget. This would be greater if any of those young people had required external foster care or residential

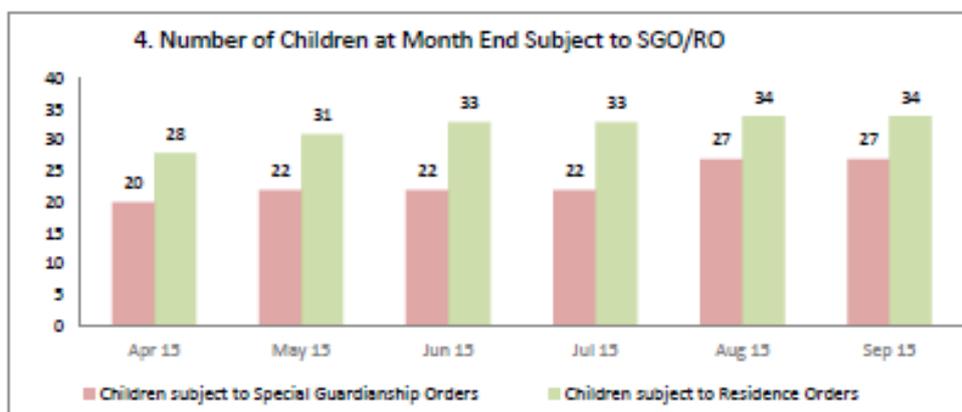
8.10 **In March 2015** a new Support Prevention panel (SPP) was introduced to manage all voluntary S20 care requests from parents and or young people. The aim of the panel being to challenge and support parents to exercise their parental responsibility in caring for their children in the family home where it was considered safe to do so. The impact of this is yet to be demonstrated but early indications are positive.

8.12 Exit from Care

The larger number of LAC with full care order was identified in our three year analysis which identified a significant number of very young children with permanency care plans being within LA care i.e. FFC / Foster care.

8.13 Long term care planning is a significant factor in understanding Shropshire’s position and performance in relation to children exiting care. Our three year LAC analysis undertaken, May 2014, identified high number of very young children having been received into care with a long term care plan of a LAC status, some with friends and family carers and some in foster care.

During 2014/15 we have done work with carers and social workers and IRO’s to promote permanency care options that give children permanency and stability in a care arrangements outside of LA care including SGO, Adoptions. The impact of this work has seen an increase of SGOs five children of four families moved to SGO in 2014 (in the previous 2 years we had 1 new SGO carer). This has risen in the current year (see below chart) and there are currently (October 2015) 11 open SGO assessments.



8.15 In Shropshire, our aim is to achieve permanency for children outside of Local Authority Care. Wherever possible and safe to do so our intention should always be to support the birth parents to provide care that meets the permanence needs of their child or children in a secure and continuous way. The permanency policy was updated and launched in Autumn 2015 and it provides a framework to underpin the care planning practice.

9. Adoption

- 9.1 The Joint Adoption Service (JAS) of Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council was established in 1998 to provide a comprehensive adoption service to children placed in the local authorities of Shropshire & Telford & Wrekin. The arrangement was that this service level agreement would be reviewed every five years and more recently every three years. The Joint Adoption Service are an active part of the West Midlands Consortium of adoption agencies.
- 9.2 The Adoption Service is committed to recruiting adopters who can meet the needs of children both regionally and nationally, if capacity within the team allows. JAS works within the required timescales prescribed in National Statutory guidance to recruit, assess and approve prospective adopters.
- 9.3 Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Council's recognise that the Adoption and Post Adoption Support Agencies play a pivotal role in meeting its responsibilities in respect of children in public care for whom adoption is the plan and for adopted children, adoptive parents, adopted adults and members of a child's birth family who have been in some way touched by adoption.
- 9.4 The JAS and Post Adoption Support Services place the child's needs as their central concern and focus for service provision. The Services adhere to the principles of good child care practice spelled out in the Regulations and Guidance of the Children Act, the Adoption and Children Act and the National Minimum Standards in respect of Adoption and Adoption Support Agencies.
- 9.5 JAS endeavours to work closely with social work teams in identifying children requiring adoptive placements, and will introduce a system of tracking and monitoring meetings, which will provide information on the number, needs and individual profiles of children who are likely to be in need of adoption.
- 9.6 Careful consideration is given to the type of family needed for each particular child. Effective communication between JAS and child care teams is the key to inform the number of prospective adopters required.
- 9.7 The number of adopters required each year is reviewed annually but in the year 2014-15 we recruited 42 adopters and placed 47 children. In 2015-2016, 45 will need to be recruited to meet the needs of Shropshire's and Telford and Wrekin's children, and to increase the number of adopters regionally to meet the needs of children outside the Shropshire area, due to the nationwide shortage of adoptive families particularly for older children and large sibling groups.
- 9.8 Regionalising Adoption**
Following the publication of the government's expectations in relation to adoption reforms in [Regionalising Adoption](#) on 19 June, Local Authorities were tasked with coming up with proposals to develop regional adoption agencies that meet the following criteria:

- Approximately or at least 200 children a year. Could start small and scale up, but cannot be 2 small LAs coming together
- Innovative ideas re LAs working with each other, with VAAs or outside of LA control. Scope can be wider than “just” adoption. Could use models like social enterprise etc. or those similar to the Social Work Practice model.
- We would need to target activity to meet the needs of the area we serve.

9.9 Indeed in October 2015 a successful bid was made to DfE to scope and define a proposed regional adoption agency that would see Shropshire Council and Telford and Wrekin Council (JAS), Walsall Council, Wolverhampton City Council, Sandwell Council, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council and a Voluntary Adoption Agency come together as one regional adoption agency. Work continues at a strategic level through a regional steering group, ADCS West Midlands and the regional ALB.

10. Care Leavers

- 10.1 There are a variety of options that have been commissioned or are part of Shropshire’s in house provision that are available for young people moving towards independence in Shropshire
- 10.2 **SAAIL** (Supported Accommodation and Independent Living) is a locally based company that rents 2/3 bed properties for 2 care leavers to share and provides an agreed level of staff support that can be stepped down as required – used as a step down from residential care for young people who are making good progress to adulthood. This provider can also provide single and more supported placements for higher need young people.
- 10.3 **JustOne** is a private company based in the North West. The model is single occupancy rented accommodation that can take care leavers with needs around mental health / substance misuse / offending. The service can provide 2:1 support 24/7 if the need is identified. This is utilised as an alternative to residential care. Support can be stepped down as progress made and the move to more independent living becomes more achievable.
- 10.4 Both companies above are registered with the West Midlands Framework of which Shropshire is a party.
- 10.5 **Supported Board and Lodgings** is Shropshire Council managed and funded post 16 family based accommodation for care leavers up to age 21 years (over if in education) – provides for care leavers with minimal support needs through to care leavers who require a higher level of support – e.g. around mental health; these are known as SWAN (Support With Additional Needs) with usually around 5 young people being in these arrangements
- 10.6 **SHIP** (Supported Housing Independence Project) is commissioned by Shropshire Council Housing Options and delivered by Shropshire Housing Alliance. Four 2 bed house shares for care leavers aged 16 – 21 with floating support from Shropshire Housing Alliance. This provides occupational licences to reside until ready for move on to a tenancy. The continued commissioning of this provision will be reviewed in 2016 / 17.
- 10.7 **The Leaving Care Training** flat is currently ‘in between providers’ – looking at a new resource from SHA – aim is to start the real life experience of independence with short periods of occupancy (either supported by staff from a residential placement or sole occupancy)

- 11.8 There are also 5 crisis beds in 16-25 year old mainstream Supported Housing which are commissioned by Shropshire's Housing Options Team and available to homeless young people or care leavers who lose their accommodation. 16 – 25 year old care leavers can access occupational licences in the five supported housing units in Shropshire.

11. Disabled Children

- 11.1 Securing accommodation which 'meets needs' has implications for a number of aspects of service provision including children with disabilities.
- 11.2 There is a range of services commissioned and provided in house which are used to meet the sufficiency requirement in Shropshire.
- 11.3 **Section 20 children supported by DCT**
- The Disabled Children's Team Social Workers support 5 children who are Section 20 (4) Short Breaks (allocated over 75 nights per annum).
 - There are 21 Section 20 (1) LAC children supported by Social Workers from the Disabled Children's Team. 6 children are in Education settings (Sunfield & Overley Hall), 8 are with Foster Carers (7 in Shropshire and 1 child living out of Shropshire) and 7 children are living in residential settings in Shropshire.
 - 4 LAC children living with Foster Carers are also receiving daycare and overnight short breaks with Family Based Shared Carers and commissioned residential short break providers (Men Cap and Action for Children).
- 11.4 **Section 17 (6) children**
Total number of children supported by Disabled Children's Team staff are 136, Social Workers hold 104 cases supported by Family Support Worker and 32 cases held by Short Breaks Reviewing Officer (low level provision, monitored and reviewed on a six monthly basis).
- 11.5 **The Range of Shropshire Short Break assessed provision include;**
6 children access overnight care through Shropshire Council Family Based Share Care,
51 children access a specialist residential home - Bradbury House or Willows (Men Cap and Action for Children);
42 children are supported through Direct Payments;
5 children are supported with Personal Care in the child's own home provided by an agency registered with CQC;
7 children access Childminding/afterschool club (Ofsted registered);
8 children receive sessional support provided by an agency registered with CQC;
39 children access Shropshire Activity Support (Action for Children – Specialist Activities Clubs).
- 11.6 **Shropshire's duty to provide non-assessed Short Breaks**
Shropshire Council's Short Breaks programme via its **All In** projects have supported 1,779 disabled children and children with additional needs over the data collection period of 4 years. In addition to supporting the disabled child, 327 siblings have also accessed **All In** projects.

- 11.7 Shropshire Council's Short Breaks programme support **All In** providers and universal provision with developing the workforce with training and grants to improve access to the environment and purchase specialist equipment.
- 11.8 Parent Carers of disabled children have a key role with the Short Breaks Commissioning Group Parent including the planning of service specifications and tender evaluation, providing feedback on the delivery of the services, and being involved in the review of services.
- 11.9 **Range of non-assessed Short Breaks (All In programme) include;**
- All year round school holiday play schemes;
 - Saturday Activity Clubs;
 - Cycling projects county wide for families;
 - Music courses;
 - Arts and crafts clubs;
 - Sports Village and Shrewsbury Town Football Club community sports trust delivering football skills and multi-sport activities;
 - Trampolining;
 - Swimming lessons and swimming clubs;
 - Horse riding and carriage driving for the disabled;
 - Autism specific clubs, featuring music, drama, creative arts, team games, gardening, and sensory free play, soft play;
 - Autism family friendship groups;
 - Autism independence summer programmes;
 - Shropshire Youth Clubs;
 - Angling sessions;
 - Shropshire Youth Clubs in Bridgnorth, Shrewsbury and Ludlow;
 - Coached angling sessions

12. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

- 12.1 In accordance legislation and with Shropshire Council's vision for children, our approach is that Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children are entitled to the same quality of services as children normally resident within the boundaries of the county. They are seen as children first and foremost, vulnerable and in need of care, protection and encouragement.
- 12.2 In Shropshire the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children has historically been and is low. In 2015 \ 16 there were 3 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who were assessed and provided with accommodation and Looked After Child services under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
- 12.3 A range of provision is and will continue to be utilised to provide appropriate accommodation options including foster care and Supported Board and Lodgings (a semi independence post 16 family based accommodation provision which is funded and managed by Shropshire Council).

13. Young People in Custody or Remanded to Local Authority Care

- 13.1 People under 18 who are sentenced to custody are sent to secure centres for young people, not to adult prisons. A court can give a young person a [custodial sentence](#) if:
- the crime is so serious there is no other suitable option
 - the young person has committed crimes before
 - the judge or magistrate thinks the young person is a risk to the public
- 13.2 A young person can also be sent to custody on [remand](#).
- 13.3 The Youth Justice Board decides which secure centre a young person will be sent to. They will choose somewhere that:
- can deal with the young person's needs safely, e.g. if they have a health problem
 - is suitable for their age, sex and background
 - is as near to their home as possible
- 13.4 The youth remand provisions in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012 came into force on 3 December 2012. They make significant changes to the remand framework for 10 to 17 year olds in criminal proceedings.
- 13.5 The Act imposes a new scheme for remands of children (other than on bail). All children must now be remanded into local authority accommodation, or (where certain criteria are met) Youth Detention Accommodation. In both situations, the cost of this accommodation must be met by the designated local authority, and the child will attain Looked After status.
- 13.6 The main changes are:
- i. All children under 18 will be subject to the same remand criteria, compatible with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - ii. Previously 17-year-olds were effectively treated like adults and were required to be remanded to prison
 - iii. All children not released on bail must now be remanded to local authority accommodation, unless certain specified conditions justify remand to Youth Detention Accommodation. All such children will be Looked After.
- 13.7 This means if remanded to local authority care the young person can be placed in any accommodation provided by or on behalf of a local authority.
- 13.8 In 2014 \ 15 there were 2 young people from Shropshire refused bail and remanded into youth detention centres due to the nature of the alleged offences.

14. Priorities 2016-19

In order for Shropshire to be resource 'sufficient' during the next three years we will continue our work to the support and maintain diversity of services to better meet the needs of children to achieve permanency by strengthening families through the provision of preventive and early help services and delivering good quality and timely care planning for those who need to be looked after children ; In order to do this we will:

- further develop the work of our edge of care provision including planned and crisis short breaks and outreach support to families in the community and support stability of foster placements through outreach and short breaks
- Increase the voice of the child to better understand the quality and the child's experience of our fostering and residential provision in Shropshire
- Support the step- down from residential to foster care where family based care experience is in the child's best interest
- Continue to support the seeking of permanency through Adoption, Special Guardianship or Care Arrangement Orders as a permanency option where identified in the child's best interest and provide support and training to those carers to enable them to meet the needs of children in their care
- Continue our management and review of commissioned foster care and residential care placements to ensure children are matched to placements best able to meet their needs and at best value to the LA. We will do this through recommissioning our block contract for residential providers locally and we will explore and join sub and regional frameworks for commissioning a range of other placement provisions
- Review the needs of our LAC population who are moving to adulthood as care leavers to ensure there is a range of accommodation and support services available to them achieve continued stability and outcomes in health and education/employment
- Place children within their Local Authority where this is reasonably practicable and where it is consistent with a child's needs and welfare; We will target our fostering recruitment according to need and develop our training offer to ensure high quality and well supported carers and continue to recruit foster carers who can provide permanency and placements for adolescents and sibling groups.
- Provide a comprehensive, inclusive and transparent service to those interested in adoption to enable trust of the adoption service to develop; respond quickly to enquiries and provide prospective adopters access to all necessary information to assist them in their decision making process.
- Find families for Shropshire children awaiting permanence through adoption AND be ambitious and positively consider a broader range of children and recruit equally ambitious prospective adopters. This will be strengthened through the development and progression of the Regional Adoption Agency.
- Provide a post adoption service that is flexible to the needs of adoptive families experiencing challenges or difficulties by providing a range of therapeutic support either directly or through commissioning including accessing the Adoption Support Fund.

January 2016 (Full Review date January 19)