

Report to: Children Young People and Families Scrutiny Committee

Date: 23rd July 2009

Subject: Looked After Children / Fostering Service / Out of Borough Placements

Report of: The Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services

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Purpose / summary: To provide members with information around the profile of Looked After Children in Wigan and their responsibilities as Corporate Parents. To inform members of the roles and responsibilities of a Fostering Service with details of children placed with Wigan foster carers. To give members an overview of the numbers and costs for Looked After Children placed in resources outside of Wigan.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: None

Recommendation / decision: For members to note the contents of this report.

The decision will be made as a result of this report and will be published within 48 hours

Risks / Implications:

Financial:
Staffing:
Policy:
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?
Wards affected: All

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council's asset base or its occupation?
No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? **No ***

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? **No ***

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No ***

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	X
Discussion leading to a decision	
Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	

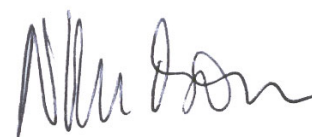
	X
Discussion	
Decision	
Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
	23rd July 2009		

There are no Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer



Date

13th July 2009

Looked after Children

1.0 Looked After Children and Young People

- 1.1 The term 'looked after' refers to any child or young person for whom the authority has, or shares, parental responsibility, or for whom the authority provides care and accommodation on behalf of their parent.
- 1.2 The majority of the children and young people need alternative care and accommodation due to the inability of their parent, for a range of reasons, to offer safe and effective caring within the family home and many, but not all, of our children and young people have suffered abuse or neglect of some form prior to coming into our care.
- 1.3 The term "child" can refer to any child or young person between 0-18 years. The Authority also has a duty and responsibility to those young people who leave their long term care after the age of 16 years until they reach the age of 21 years, or 24 if they are in higher education.
- 1.4 Looked after children are some of the most vulnerable children in society; living away from their families because their parents faced difficulties and pressures in providing for their care, or the children have suffered abuse or neglect whilst in the care of their families. It is rare that children and young people are offered care purely due to their poor behaviour. The Local Authority has a duty to ensure children are provided with care and accommodation which meet their needs. Most often this will be in the family home of foster carers but young people may also be placed in residential schools or care homes. Children may spend a short time in the care of the local authority, either returning to their families or moving to permanent arrangements such as adoption; but for others their care is for many years lasting through to adulthood.
- 1.5 The Children Act 1989 provides the statutory framework through which the Local Authority's responsibilities towards the care of children are defined. The Act states that a child may be 'looked after by a Local Authority' through either being:
 - 1.6 i) In their Care (subject to a Court Order, Section 31 of the Children Act 1989) where the Local authority shares "parental responsibility" with the parent for the child to ensure planning for their care meets the child's needs or
 - 1.7 ii) Provided with Accommodation (Section 20) where the Local Authority supports the parent in the care of the child through offering accommodation because the parent or person with parental responsibility recognises such support is required to achieve the best outcomes for the child. The Local Authority does not share parental responsibility for these children, which remains with the parent.

2.0 **Legislation and Guidance**

- 2.1 **The Children Act 1989** is the key piece of legislation with respect to corporate parenting and sets out the duties of local authorities in relation to children looked after by them. Section 27 of the Act places a duty on Housing, Education and Health Authorities to assist Social Services to fulfil their functions under the Act, and this includes assisting with the corporate parenting function.
- 2.2 **The Quality Protects Programme** was launched in 1998, and established nine national objectives designed to improve the management and delivery of children's social services to address the issues of social exclusion for the most vulnerable children in society.
- 2.3 **The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000** set the agenda and duties of local authorities towards young people who have been looked after in bridging the gap between these young people and their peers.
- 2.4 **Education Protects** has helped to develop improvements in the educational opportunities of looked after children through the introduction of a designated teacher in each school with responsibility for looked after children and a requirement for Personal Education Plans to be drawn up and regularly reviewed for each child and young person.
- 2.5 **Choice Protects** is the agenda for change aimed at providing quality stable care for children looked after through better planning and commissioning with partner agencies.
- 2.6 The government has established a **Public Service Agreement** target to:
- improve outcomes for care leavers,
 - reduce offending of looked after children
 - improve the educational engagement and attainment of looked after children.
- 2.7 The latter has become a requirement on Local Authorities through the Children Act 2004.
- 2.8 “**Every Child Matters**”, the Green Paper, 2003, led to the Children Bill, which was presented to Parliament in March 2004 and is now enacted as **Children Act 2004**. The Act sets out a long term programme for change for children's services across the country. It places a duty on all Local Authorities to produce a plan which addresses disadvantage, raises achievement and safeguards children and young people in their area.
- 2.9 In 2006 the Government produced a Green Paper, Care Matters – Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care. This was followed by the White Paper, **Care Matters - Time for Change - 2007**, which outlined an agenda to ensure that the outcomes for children in care narrowed significantly compared to the general child population. The subsequent **Children and Young Persons Act 2008** enshrined these intentions in law.
- 2.10 Care Matters – Time for Change clearly outlined the Government's expectations in the following key areas:

- 2.11 **Corporate parenting: getting it right** – children in care deserve excellent parenting – nurturing, supportive and ambitious care which provides stability, promotes resilience and respects their cultural heritage. Because of their unique relationship with the State, this task is complex and requires careful implementation at each level of the system. A key strand of this theme is the development of a Children in Care Council which links directly with Elected Members and the production of a ‘pledge for children in care’.
- 2.12 **Family and parenting support** – a key element of the Care Matters agenda, which was reinforced by the strength of the consultation responses, was the need to support children at home with their families (family includes birth family and extended family), where possible.
- 2.13 **Care placements: a better place to live** - there is a need to ensure that children in care are provided with right placement that can meet their needs. This was a key theme coming out of consultation with children in care.
- 2.14 **Delivering a first class education** – getting a first class education is vital to improving outcomes for children in care. It acts as a foundation for improving outcomes throughout their lives.
- 2.15 **Promoting health and wellbeing** – securing the health and wider wellbeing of children in care is of fundamental importance. Good health makes an active and enjoyable life possible, as well as underpinning achievement in school and the work place.
- 2.16 **Transition to adulthood** - many children receive excellent support from their carers and leaving care services but too often young people in care move into adult life with out being prepared or supported. Reasonable parents would not want their children to be left on their own and unsupported, any good parent will continue to offer love and support to their children well beyond 18, giving them the best start in life they can. The Government expects no less for young people in care.
- 2.17 **The role of the practitioner** – in practice, the corporate parent is embodied for children in care by the professionals whom they see on a day to day basis. The Government is keen to ensure that children in care experience a seamless service which is consistent, responsive to need, and receptive to their wishes and feelings.
- 2.18 As part of the Care Matters Implementation plan (www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications), the Government is supporting a number of pilots across the country to test out different models of social work practice and interventions.

3.0 **Corporate Parenting**

In 1998 the Government recognised the key role of the corporate parent:

- 3.1 *For children who are looked after, your council has a legal and moral duty to try to provide the kind of loyal support that any good parent would give their children...you should do your utmost to ensure that children in the public care get a good start in life ... (Dobson 1998, p.2)*

- 3.2 The notion of the corporate parent has over the past 10 years been developed with greater emphasis being placed upon the importance of the role:
- 3.3 *As the corporate parent of children in care the State has a special responsibility for their well-being. Like any good parent, it should put it's own children first That means being a powerful advocate for them to receive the best of everything and helping children to make a success of their lives.(Care Matters – Transforming the lives of Children and Young People in Care DfES 2006, p.31)*
- 3.4 The key tasks of a Council in respect of children in care can be summarised as:
- Providing care, a home , and access to health and education
 - Celebrating and sharing achievements, and
 - Acting as a good parent.
- 3.5 These tasks are accompanied by performance indicators, such as:
- Attainment in education, training and employment compared with other local children
 - The number of moves of home and school that children in care experience
 - The number of children in care with health care plans
- 3.6 For a full list of National Indicators relating directly to children in care see Appendix 1.
- 3.7 As Corporate Parents, Elected members are responsible for the following:
- Being aware of the corporate parenting role and the shared responsibility for ensuring that the needs of children in care and care leavers are met.
 - Having some knowledge of the profile and needs of the children the Authority looks after and how these may be changing.
 - Understanding the impact on children in care of all Council decisions
 - Receiving information about the quality of care and the quality of services that children are experiencing
 - Considering whether this would be good enough for their own child
 - Ensuring that action is being taken to address any short comings in the service and to constantly improve outcomes for children in care.
- 3.8 Although all elected members have corporate parenting responsibilities, the tasks that are required to be undertaken will differ according to the role/s that individuals have accepted. The different levels of responsibility fall under three broad headings:
- Universal responsibility
 - Targeted responsibility
 - Speciality responsibility

3.9 The development of Corporate Parenting responsibilities and the establishment of effective communication links with children in care present Councils with a challenging task. The National Children's Bureau has produced a handbook for Councillors, Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice to support Councillors to understand their role more effectively.

4.0 **Wigan Response**

Care Matters – Action Plan

4.1 In response to the Care Matters agenda, Wigan Borough Partnership for Children and Young People mandated that an audit be undertaken to identify those areas of good practice in relation to services for children in care and those where there was a need for improvement.

4.2 This audit was undertaken with representatives from the constituent members of Wigan Borough Partnership for Children and Young People and focused upon

- Participation of children in care in service design and delivery
- Practice issues
- Policies and procedures

Partnership relationships

4.3 An action plan to take forward the Care Matters agenda was produced, and approved by Wigan Borough Partnership for Children and Young people in September 2008.

4.4 This plan focuses upon a number of areas of activity which mirror the themes of the Care Matters agenda and, if fully implemented, will contribute significantly to improving outcomes for children in care.

4.5 The thematic areas of activity contained within in the Care Matters Action Plan are as follows:

- **Corporate parenting** – the establishment of corporate parenting body together with the production of a corporate parenting strategy, ensuring the strengthening of relationships between partners.
- **Participation of children and young people** – the establishment of a Children in Care Council and the development of a 'pledge for children in care' ensuring that there are effective channels of communication between children in care and their corporate parents.
- **Placement choice & placement stability** – the development of a fostering model that meets the wide range of placement needs of children in care.
- **Delivering a first class education** – produce a business case for the development of a Virtual School Head Teacher for children in care.
- **Promoting health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities for children in care** – develop a range of resources that promote as well as meet the physical and emotional needs of children in care.
- **Sustainable training and employment opportunities** – develop a range of sustainable employment and training opportunities within the Council and partner organisations together with sustainable accommodation options for care leavers.

- 4.6 As part of the Action Plan a Corporate Parenting Strategy for Children in Care has been developed and will be presented to the CYPS Senior Management Team for approval prior to presentation to Children and Young People and Families Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.7 The aim of this strategy is to improve the life chances of children and young people in our care through the development of a holistic approach to the delivery of services. The strategy supports the Council's Plan for Children and Young People and incorporates the Council's commitment to its six priority objectives for the Children and Young People of Wigan.
- 4.8 The strategy aims to drive forward, support and strengthen the areas of good practice and working within the Authority through a whole Authority approach to Corporate Parenting and through strong and effective working with key partners from other Agencies, including the voluntary and private sectors.
- 4.9 The strategy aims to achieve and support improvements in all the key Performance Indicators relating to children and young people in care, in line with National targets and to continuously improve the outcome for children and young people in care, in line with their peers.
- 4.10 The strategy also acknowledges the need to ensure strong and effective prevention, to ensure that the vast majority of children who are in need are supported to remain living within their own families and communities, and that children and young people come into care only when it is necessary to safeguard and promote their welfare.

5.0 **Consultation and Communication**

Children and Young people

- 5.1 Communication and consultation with children and young people is an underlying principle of corporate parenting and at present is facilitated by the Children and Young People's Service Children Rights Officer and the Children in Care Council.
- 5.2 The views of children in care to Wigan Council are actively being sought and the Children in Care Council have been consulted on the pledge and have assisted in the consultation process with other children and young people.
- 5.3 *In undertaking this piece of work the children in care have identified the following four key areas that should form the basis of the pledge.*
- Service delivery - Transition into care, contact with friends and family, quality of placements, Support and service from carers, social workers and support workers
 - Involvement – Respecting views, opportunities to have your say, review process and complaints procedure.
 - Achievement/Milestones – Support at school, within further education, preparation for adulthood, employment, and independent living
 - Retaining and developing identity – Making the most of talents and championing interests, providing opportunities for life enhancing experiences and happy memories.

- Children in Care Council presented their pledge to full Council on 29th April. It was voted on and accepted unanimously.

- 5.4 This strategy endorses an on-going commitment to increased communication, consultation and involvement with children and young people in care.
- 5.5 In addition to this an advocacy service is provided to enable children and young people to represent their views and achieve change. Advocacy Services will be used to enable effective communication between children and young people and Members to influence decision-making
- 5.6 Children and young people will receive information on Corporate Parenting appropriate to their understanding including a children's version of this strategy.
- 5.7 *Formal links will be established between the Children in Care Council, the Lead Officers Group and elected members to ensure that the views of children in care are heard at all levels throughout partnership organisations. We also plan to consult with children in care as to how they would like their achievements to be celebrated and will ensure Elected Members are invited to attend any event or activity that celebrates the achievement of children in care.*
- 5.8 Young people will be included in the recruitment process of staff in the services with responsibility for children in care and this will be extended to cover other groups of people who work with children eg foster carers.
- 5.9 Disabled children, who, due to their unique and complex needs are often looked after in residential establishments outside of Wigan, far from their homes and family networks, are particularly vulnerable. The communication difficulties experienced by some of these children and young people increases this vulnerability. To consult with severely disabled looked after children and young people the Council will involve specialist services to ensure that people with skills in communicating with children and working directly with this vulnerable group.
- 5.10 Children and young people from black and ethnic minority groups also experience increased vulnerability when they come into care. The Council will ensure that the views and specific needs of this group of children will be met.

- 5.11 *In Wigan, the Council's Corporate Parenting Panel has yet to be established.*
- 5.12 Elected Members, through effective scrutiny, should ensure children in care are considered in the development of all policy and service provision in relation to children. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be made aware of issues and developments.
- 5.13 **The Children in Care: Lead Officers Group.**
- The Children in Care lead Officers Group will seek to ensure that Elected Members are enabled to meet directly with children in care and their carers to listen to their views.
- Training will be arranged through The Children in Care lead Officers Group so that Councillors are aware of issues of importance to children and young people and how to communicate with them effectively.
- 5.14 *The children in care Lead Officers Group will be responsible for taking forward the following key work streams*
- i Promotion and development of corporate parenting responsibilities*
 - ii Development of the participation of children in care in service design and delivery.*
 - iii Development of placement choice and stability*
 - iv Delivering a first class education*
 - v Development of sustainable employment and accommodation*
 - vi Promoting health and well being*
- 5.15 The Children in Care Lead Officers Group will arrange for consultation of all children in care, including those from black and other ethnic minority groups and disabled children and those placed outside the Authority, in respect of the implementation of the Strategy and the important issues for Children in Care.
- 5.16 The Children in Care Lead Officers Group will report on a regular basis to Elected Members and receive reports from other groups with responsibilities for Children in Care to ensure Members receive the information necessary on the Children in Care population.

6.0 **Progress against the Action Plan**

6.1 **Placement Choice and Placement stability** - A Fundamental Review led by the Chief executive's office is underway in respect of the range, quality and value for money of placements and support for looked after children.

6.2 **Delivering a first class education** - Although some individual children do well, generally Looked After Children as a whole have poor experiences of education and very low educational attainment. Their educational outcomes, in terms of the proportion who reach the average levels of attainment expected of seven, eleven, fourteen, and sixteen year olds, remain significantly lower than for all children. A relatively small number of Looked After Children progress to higher education.

The business case for a Virtual Head Teacher has been presented and the post is currently being evaluated prior to advert.

6.3 **Promoting health and well being** – Wigan has not done as well in this area in the past with performance below that of comparator Local Authorities. This led to the healthy care audit and an action plan designed to address this and the wider corporate parenting issues. The PCT continue to support the development of the children in care service and a second full time nurse for looked after children has been appointed. All children in care have access to an NHS dentist. The Primary Child Mental Health Team are leading on the assessment of the emotional well being of looked after children by utilising the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire contained within the National Framework for Assessment.

6.4 **Sustainable training opportunities** – a post has been agreed and funded via the worklessness strategy to work strategically to create employment and training opportunities across partner agencies.

7.0 **Inspection regime**

Comprehensive Area Assessment

7.1 CAA has replaced the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and the new methodology makes changes to inspection and assessment to support the White paper and progress towards "Strong and Prosperous Communities"

7.2 Within the CAA a new programme of inspecting safeguarding and services for Looked After Children has been developed and will replace the previous Joint Area Review arrangements. This has taken account of the recent review by Lord Laming and has led to a strengthened focus on safeguarding and on quality of services rather than relying solely on performance indicators. The Looked After children inspections will take place at least once every three years and be held with a two week notice period.

In addition there will be unannounced annual checks on contact, assessment and referral centres lasting 2 days.

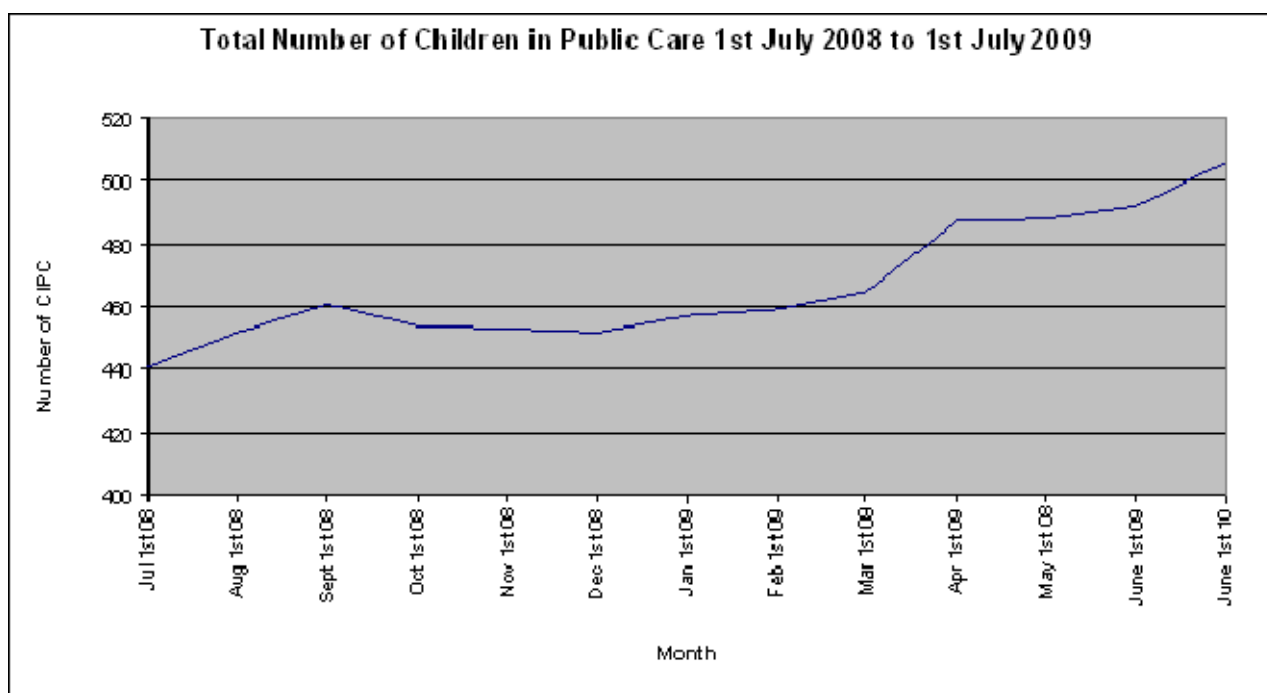
The emphasis on these inspections will be on the quality of the service providers. In the case of looked after children the residential homes, the fostering and adoption services and the social work services will all be subject to scrutiny and inspection. The outcome of these inspections will impact on the overall assessment of Children and Young People's Services and the Council.

8.0 **Current performance**

The current performance against national indicators is available as Appendix 6

8.1 **Children in Care**

At July 1st 2009 Wigan Council were looking after 503 children and young people.



8.2 The above graph shows that there has been a substantial rise in the number of children looked after since June 2008. The June 2008 figure also representing a significant rise on previous years where the number of children looked after remained fairly constant between 398 and 408.

8.3 This rise in numbers is not unique to Wigan and is reflected amongst other North West authorities and England and Wales.

8.4 Closer examination of the figures show that the most prevalent group of recently looked after children are those under 3 years old. There are 154 looked after children under 3 and a further 39 under 5 years old.

8.5 Although numbers in care were beginning to rise prior to the events in Haringey surrounding Baby Peter in November 2008 there has been a substantial increase in referrals and child protection plans since that time.

8.6 In June 2008 112 children were subject to a child protection plan and in June 2009 this number had risen to 215.

- 8.7 The public and professionals have a heightened awareness of concerns around children, particularly young children where the risk factors are highest. Again it is important to point out that increases in child protection activity is reflected across all local authorities in England and Wales.
- 8.8 Children may become looked after as part of a child protection plan but more usually enter the care system when a plan has failed and legal action is needed to secure a child's future. The increases in the looked after population from March 2009 are likely to reflect those children for whom child protection plans have been insufficient to secure their safety.
- 8.9 Clearly such a significant rise in numbers of children with a child protection plan and children looked after places great pressure on the full range of resources, including social work staff, foster placements, support to foster carers, residential placements and support to families where children are placed at home under a range of orders.
- 9.0 **Residential Care within Wigan Borough**
- 9.1 Wigan has seven residential children's homes. Two provide services to children with a range of disabilities. One five bedded unit provides a series of short breaks 364 days a year and the other provides 52 week residential care for four young people aged 9-18 with severe learning disability and autism. One of the four beds is used to provide a residential assessment facility to support parents in the care of their child in the community if at all possible. Since opening in January 2008 no children with disability have been placed in an agency or out of borough residential resource.
- 9.2 The other five children's homes offer care to children aged from 9-18 years in a range of settings. Three homes offer care to six children, One to five children and the other to two children.
- 9.3 In total 28 children are looked after on a permanent basis within the Council's own residential facilities.
- 9.4 Each Children's home is subject to a regulation and inspection regime and as commented earlier the outcomes of these inspections form part of the grading of the overall performance of the council.
- 9.5 As part of the regulations governing the running of children's homes a monthly visit referred to as a Regulation 33 visit is required. Elected members are expected to be part of this process. In the Borough, elected members rarely accompany the Independent Reviewing Officer on such visits. This is an area that should be addressed by the provision of an awareness raising / training event for members.
- 10.0 **Fostering services**
- 10.1 Wigan Council is a registered fostering agency which operates within a robust legal framework governed by regulation and subject to Inspection. The last Inspection against national minimum standards in November 2007 rated the service as Good. A further inspection can be anticipated within the next 12 months).

The service is responsible for the recruitment, training and support of foster carers and provides a fee for each child to reflect their maintenance and the professional input of carers. Those children placed with family and friends also receive a fee to support the child's maintenance. 296 children are looked after within the Wigan fostering service.

10.2 The Care Matters action plan highlights the need to increase choice of placements for children and young people and the grant has provided for two additional social workers to increase the numbers of carers. The fundamental review of services to looked after children will also interrogate the number and types of placement offered.

10.3 The following table shows the year on year growth in carers but given the rise in numbers they have been insufficient to provide places for all the children who need them.

10.4 To increase further the number of foster carers there would need to be an increase in the number of social workers and managers to provide the recruitment, assessment and support service.

	1st August /2007	1st July 2009
LAC with recruited carers	146	186
LAC with Friends and Family	85 (61 carers)	110 (85 carers)
Total	231	296
Number of exemptions	3	20
Number of Recruited Carers	76	94 (+16 -3)

10.5 However even if the decision were made today to invest further in the fostering service the process of recruitment of staff and then the recruitment and approval of carers in line with regulation could not be achieved in less than 6 months.

11.0 **Children cared for outside the Borough**

11.1 No local authority can provide for all of its looked after children within their own resources as the individual needs of some children require them to receive a specialist service. Resources in the private and voluntary sector tend to be more expensive than in house resources partly as a result of their specialism and partly because the costs represent full cost recovery of the infrastructure of the organisation.

11.2 However in the current climate many children are being placed out of Wigan, not to meet specific specialist need but because there are insufficient placement resources within Wigan.

11.3 The local authority is a member of Placements Northwest a consortium of all NW local authorities who work together to manage the market in terms of price and quality. This ensures any placements in the region are made in a way which both takes account of the children's needs but also offers the best value.

- 11.4 Year on year the management of external placements within the CYPS budget has been problematic but the increase from 440 to 503 children is exceptional and places great pressure on resources in the service.
- 11.5 The financial position reported in the May 2009 budget monitoring statement for social care (to Overview and Scrutiny) will continue to be under increasing pressure as each new placement out of Wigan will add to an already over committed budget.
- 11.6 Cabinet will be receiving a report from the Executive Director CYPS and the Executive Director BSS on the 30th July indicating a projected overspend of £4 million before any remedial action.
- 11.7 This is based on known cases at this point in time and does not take into account any new children who will enter into care.
- 11.8 Once children are placed out of Borough, particularly when they are subject to Court Proceedings, it is very difficult to bring them back should a vacancy occur. This is because the child has often settled in their new home, school and community and placement stability is critical to good outcomes. Most children prefer a placement in Borough near their home, friends and school however if they had a choice.

12.0 **Financial Information**

		Budget	Outturn	Variance
OOB residential re	35 children	3,454,295	4,771,771.08	-1,317,476.08
OOB Fostering	52 children	1,978,876	2,390,069.85	- 411.193.85
Secure Accommodation	1 child	0	67,385.00	- 67,385.00
Mother and Baby	1 parent and child	0	54,784.00	-54,784.00

26 placement searches underway for agency placements/ If all these children are placed by 6.07.09 and remain in placement until the end of the financial year the additional costs will be:

Budget	Outturn	Variance
9,852,219	13,764,292	-3,912,072.64

13.0 **Preventing Children becoming Looked After**

- 13.1 In circumstances other than an emergency before a child or young person becomes looked after they will have been subject to a range of social work interventions. These will include assessments, the provision of services and for many a multi- agency child protection plan.

13.2 If following discussion with managers the assessment indicates a child may need to be looked after then the case is presented to a Panel which includes the local authority legal advisor and Head of Service for Social Care together with representatives from the Fostering and Duty Services. Membership of this Panel will be extended in September 2009 to include the Head of Service, Integrated support and a Service manager from Early Years.

13.3 It is hoped that by widening the membership a more co-ordinated approach to service deliver and support can be achieved thereby avoiding the admission of some children in to the care system.

14.0 **Management of External Placements**

14.1 The decision to place a child in care is taken separately from the decision about placement. This is extremely important to ensure that financial considerations alone do not influence the decision to look after a child who would otherwise be at risk of significant harm.

14.2 Once a decision has been made that a child needs to be removed from home the first consideration will always be to place with a family member or friend if suitable. If that is not possible then placement will be looked for within the Authority's own resources, usually foster care but for some children residential care is the placement of choice. If this is not possible then subject to a Manager's agreement a search is undertaken of available regional resources.

14.3 Once a placement or range of placements have been identified a service manager must agree that it is necessary at this time and the placement recommended is appropriate to meet the child's needs. Approval to make the placement is given by the Head of Service , Social care or a member of the Senior Management Team

14.4 Out of Borough placements are monitored on a fortnightly basis by a Panel chaired by the Head of Service, social care and consisting of members of finance , brokerage & procurement, social care fostering and residential services, manager SEN commissioning and the Head of Service, health , well being, strategy and commissioning.

14.5 Consideration is given to new requests and current placements are kept under review with the emphasis always on providing placements in Borough where possible. The commissioning of external placements will be scrutinised as part of the Fundamental Review.

Appendix 1

CARE MATTERS – TIME FOR CHANGE

HEALTHY CARE AUDIT

BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE CHILDREN IN CARE PLEDGE:-

- A commitment to involve children in decisions which affect them and to take account of their wishes and expressed feelings about the services they receive.
- Qualified social workers for every child in care with clear arrangements in place for the child in care to contact his/her social worker as necessary
- Effective assessment of individual needs and an up to date care plan based on those needs
- A placement with carers who can meet needs
- Contact with siblings and birth parents in line with their care plan
- Regular reviews in which children will be enabled to participate meaningfully (particularly for disabled children with communication difficulties)
- Services which recognize the diverse ethnic and cultural needs of the children
- Access to advocacy services if children have a complaint
- An Independent Reviewing Officer to ensure children's rights are upheld
- Access to high quality free early years provision at age 3 and 4
- A place at a good school
- A designated teacher in school to ensure high quality support in school
- Details of support available to participate in positive leisure time activities
- Support to reduce absence from school
- Help to catch up with school work if they fall behind
- Regular assessments of their health (physical and emotional)
- Details of support available when they move on from care
- The support young people can expect when entering further and higher education
- How the Local Authority will support young people seeking employment, including employment with training.

Appendix 2

National Indicators specifically for children in care

NI 58 Emotional and behavioural health of children in care

NI 61 Timeliness of placements of looked after children adopted following an agency decision that the child should be placed for adoption

NI 62 Stability of placement of looked after children – number of moves

NI 63 Stability of placement of looked after children – length of placement

NI 66 looked after children cases which were reviewed within required timescales

NI 71 Children who have run away from home/care overnight

NI 99 Children in care reaching level 4 in English at Key Stage 2

NI 100 Children in care reaching level 4 in English at Key Stage 2

NI 101 Children in care achieving 5 A* -C GCSEs (or equivalents) at Key Stage 4 (Including maths and English)

NI147 Care leavers in suitable accommodation

NI 148 Care leavers in employment education or training

Appendix 3

National Indicators not directly linked to children in care

NI 51 Effectiveness of CAMHS

NI 55 Obesity amongst primary school children in reception

NI 56 Obesity amongst primary school children in year 6

NI 87 Secondary school persistent absence rates

NI 110 Young peoples involvement in positive activities

NI112 Under 18 conception rates

NI113 Prevalence of Chlamydia in under 20's

NI 114 Rate of permanent exclusion from school

NI 115 Substance misuse by young people

NII 117 16 – 18 who are NEET

NI 123 16+ smoking rate prevalence

Appendix 4

A Checklist Of Roles And Responsibilities

Although all elected members have corporate parenting responsibility, the tasks that need to be undertaken will differ according to the role/s that individuals have taken on.

The different levels of responsibility can be summarized as follows.

Universal responsibility (level 1)

All councillors must ask themselves:

- Do I understand why children need to be looked after and the legal and policy framework that governs this?
- What are the governance arrangements within my council for corporate parenting and are they effective?
- Do I know about the profile and needs of the children looked after by my council?
- Are we providing the best care possible to out looked after children and care – leavers? Would it be good enough for my child?
- Do I know how well my council is doing in comparison with other councils and government indicators?
- Is there an action plan to address any shortcomings in the service and to constantly improve the outcomes for looked after children?
- Am I taking responsibility for promoting the welfare of looked after children in all my work for the council – and in my other capacities?

Targeted responsibility (level 2)

For councillors who undertake visits to children's homes (Regulation 33 visits) or who are members of a corporate parenting group, their role will be more extensive. In addition to the above, they will need to ask themselves:

- Are the right structures and systems in place in order for my council to be an effective corporate parent and are all the right partners involved?
- What are the current (and proposed) government expectations regarding the service to looked after children and care-leavers?
- Do I have access both qualitative and quantitative information on the service, and do I have enough knowledge to understand and evaluate this information?
- Are there sound mechanisms within my council for hearing and responding to the views of looked after children and care-leavers – and their parents/carers?
- Which needs are we meeting well and which are we failing to meet?
- What is the action plan across the council and involving partner agencies to improve the service and to ensure it responds to changing needs?

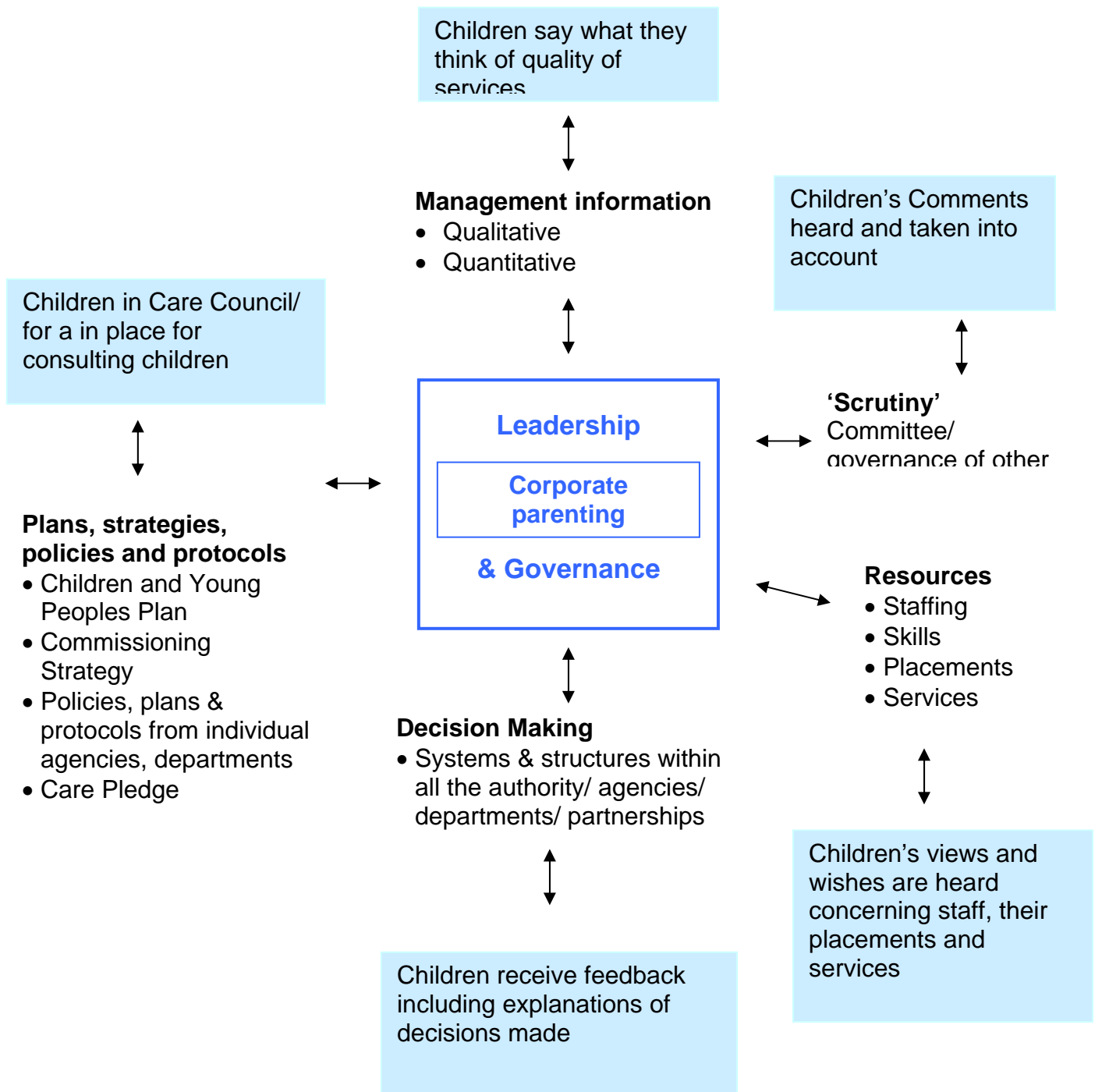
Specialist responsibility (level 3)

Finally, there will be key roles where corporate parenting is at the heart of an individual's role. The Lead Member for Children's Services and, where they have been established, the chairs or corporate parenting groups will need to work closely with the Director of Children's Services to ask:

- Are we providing leadership in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of looked after children?

- Are effective governance arrangements in place to implement any decisions regarding looked after children across the authority and partner agencies?
- Have we undertaken an in-depth analysis of the needs of the council's care population and all aspects of the service required to meet those needs so that there is clear evidence to inform future action? Is there a review process to ensure adaptation to changing needs?
- Have we made sure that the strategic plans of the children's services authority and joint plans with partner agencies meet the needs of looked after children and care-leavers?
- Are we up to date with emerging research findings and new initiatives that should inform the direction of services?

A Model of Effective Corporate Parenting



Key Performance Indicators – Social Care

Appendix 6

This section of the report sets out key performance indicators we use to monitor and manage our performance. These have been developed through our planning process. It shows how we have performed this period for measures where quarterly data is currently available. For reference, the table gives past performance and shows our target for year end.

The table of performance uses the following symbols to help interpret performance:

Performance against our targets (P+)

 Annual performance better than target range


 Annual performance within target range


 Annual performance worse than target range


 No formal local target for this indicator currently


 No quarterly data available for this indicator currently


Direction of change

 Performance was better than the year before where 'smaller is better'

 Performance was better than the year before where 'bigger is better'









 Performance was worse than the year before where 'smaller is better'











 Performance was worse than the year before where 'bigger is better'

 Performance is the same as last year

 Unable to compare with last year

Key Performance Measures	Responsible Officer	Wigan Actual 2007/08	2007/08 – 2008/09	2008-09 Target	Quarter 4 Actual (2008/09)
NI 58: Emotional and behavioural health of Children in Care	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	-		Baseline year	11.8
NI 59: The percentage of initial assessments within seven working days of referral	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	72.6%	●	74.5%	73.5% Improvement in performance but below target
NI 60: The percentage of core assessments that were completed within 35 working days of their commencement	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	69.7%	★	75.1%	83.0% Significant improvement and target exceeded
NI 61: Percentage of children adopted who were placed within 12 months of the decision to adopt	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	81%	▲	100%	75% Drop in performance from last year and below target
NI 62: The percentage of children looked after at 31 March with three or more placements during the year	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	10.8%	▲	9.0%	10.9% Performance similar to last year, but above target where smaller is better

Key Performance Measures	Responsible Officer	<i>Wigan Actual 2007/08</i>	2007/08 – 2008/09		2008-09 Target	Quarter 4 Actual (2008/09)
NI 63: The percentage of looked after children aged under 16 who had been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years, who were living in the same placement for at least two years, or are placed for adoption	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	73.5%			75.0%	65.8% Drop in performance from last year and below target
NI 64: Percentage of children ceasing to be the subject of a child protection plan during the year who have been the subject of a child protection plan for two years or longer	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	0%			3.0%	1.1% Drop in performance from last year but still in line with target
NI 65: Children with a second or subsequent child protection plan	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	12.2%			12.0%	10.2% Improvement in performance and in line with target
NI 66: The percentage of children looked after which should have been reviewed during the year that were reviewed during the year	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	89.0%			100%	89.9% Slight Improvement in performance but below target

Key Performance Measures	Responsible Officer	Wigan Actual 2007/08	2007/08 – 2008/09	2008-09 Target	Quarter 4 Actual (2008/09)
NI 67: The percentage of child protection cases which should have been reviewed during the year that were reviewed	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	96.6%	 	100%	100% Improvement in performance and target met
NI 68: The percentage of children referred to children's social services departments whose cases go onto initial assessments	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	86.3%	 	72.5%	78.9% Drop in performance from last year but target exceeded
NI 99: Proportion of children in care (for at least one year) achieving level 4 in English at Key stage 2	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	42.86%	 	42%	47.1% Improvement in performance and target exceeded
NI 100: Proportion of children in care reaching expected levels in Maths at Key Stage 2	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	47.62%	 	42%	58.8% Significant improvement in performance and target exceeded
NI 101: Proportion of children in care (for at least one year) achieving 5 A*C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key stage 4 (including English and maths)	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	0%	 	24%	5.6% Improvement in performance but below target

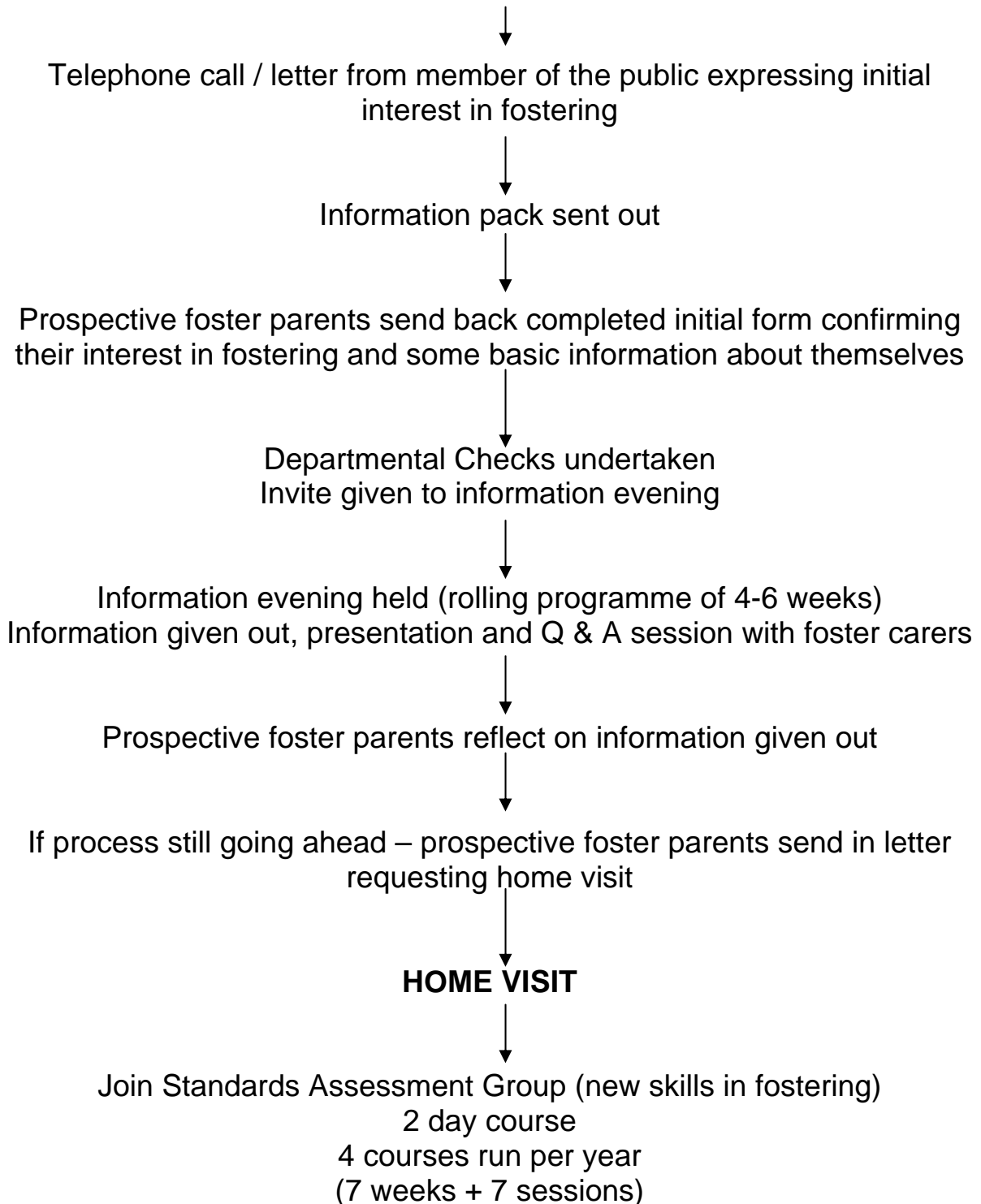
Key Performance Measures	Responsible Officer	<i>Wigan Actual 2007/08</i>	2007/08 – 2008/09		2008-09 Target	Quarter 4 Actual (2008/09)
NI 147: % of care leavers who are living in suitable accommodation	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPs	84.8%	●	✓	100%	91.2% Improvement in performance but below target
NI 148: % of care leavers in education, employment or training	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPs	69.7%	●	✓	75%	79.4% Significant improvement in performance and target exceeded
CH 142: Percentage of referrals that are repeat referrals within 12 months.	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPs	28.9%	●	✓	25.0%	25.2% Improvement in performance and target met
PAF CF/C23: The number of looked after children adopted, or placed on a Special Guardianship Order during the year	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPs	9.3%	★	✓	8.1%	9.8% Slight improvement in performance and target exceeded

Key Performance Measures	Responsible Officer	<i>Wigan Actual 2007/08</i>	2007/08 – 2008/09		2008-09 Target	Quarter 4 Actual (2008/09)
PAF CF/C63: The number of looked after children who communicated their views specifically for each of their statutory reviews	AD Care/ Inclusion CYPS	82.6%	★	✓	95%	99.7% Significant improvement in performance and target exceeded

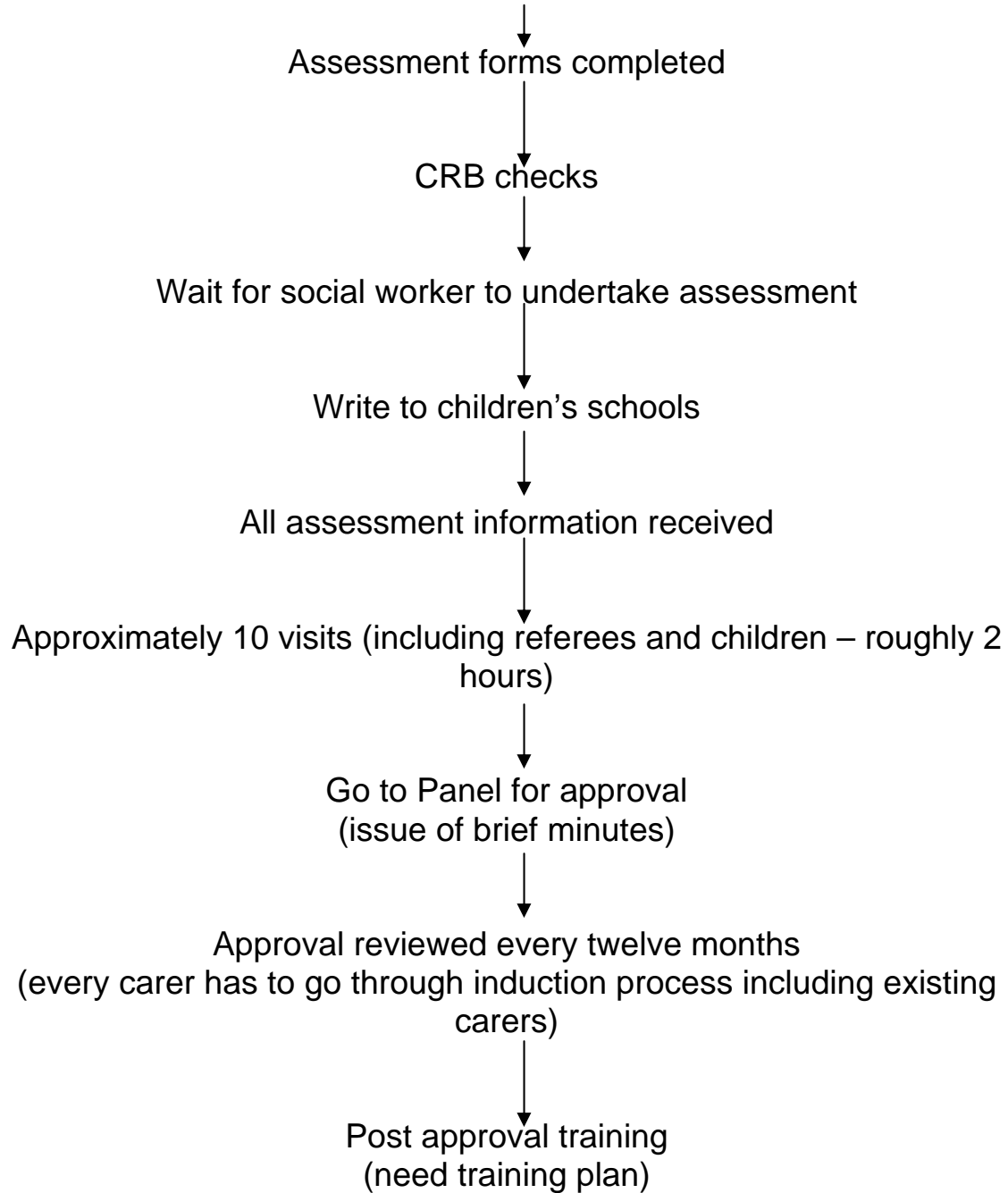
Guide to Fostering Service July 2009



RECRUITMENT



ASSESSMENT



Annual Review

Post approval pack with policies and procedures sent to foster carers as soon as approved and (CWDC) induction and training plan put in place

↓
Annual review – 1st review always go to panel
(After this- to panel if change in registration recommended)

↓
Appeal process

Supervisory visits

Wigan minimum once a month

Inspection regime

↓
2 main documents – annual quality assurance assessment and data set

↓
6 week notification of inspection (need to send back report 2-3 weeks)

↓
Get the children's views

↓
Equality and diversity

↓
5 outcomes

↓
Management reviews

↓
Evidence gathered and added to last plan

No foster carer forums but consultation days (ie smoking policy, mileage, holidays etc. policies for safe care on holiday, caravan settings).

FOSTERING ALLOWANCES FOR RECRUITED CARERS 2009/2010

AGE	1 DAY	2 DAYS	3 DAYS	4 DAYS	5 DAYS	6 DAYS	1 WEEK	2 WEEKS	HOLIDAY GRANT	XMAS ALLOW	B'DAY ALLOW
0 - 1	33.07	66.14	99.21	132.27	165.34	198.41	231.48	462.96	212.00	106.00	106.00
1 - 4	33.07	66.14	99.21	132.27	165.34	198.41	231.48	462.96	216.00	108.00	108.00
5 - 7	33.06	66.12	99.18	132.23	165.29	198.35	231.41	462.82	238.00	119.00	119.00
8 - 10	33.83	67.66	101.49	135.31	169.14	202.97	236.80	473.60	238.00	119.00	119.00
11 - 12	34.89	69.78	104.67	139.57	174.46	209.35	244.24	488.48	274.00	137.00	137.00
13-15	35.67	71.35	107.02	142.69	178.36	214.04	249.71	499.42	274.00	137.00	137.00
16+	39.18	78.36	117.54	156.72	195.90	235.08	274.26	548.52	318.00	159.00	159.00

FOSTERING ALLOWANCES FOR FAMILY/FRIENDS CARERS 2009/2010

AGE	1 DAY	2 DAYS	3 DAYS	4 DAYS	5 DAYS	6 DAYS	1 WEEK	2 WEEKS	HOLIDAY GRANT	XMAS ALLOW	B'DAY ALLOW
0 - 1	15.14	30.29	45.43	60.57	75.71	90.86	106.00	212.00	212.00	106.00	106.00
1 - 4	15.43	30.86	46.29	61.71	77.14	92.57	108.00	216.00	216.00	108.00	108.00
5 - 10	17.00	34.00	51.00	68.00	85.00	102.00	119.00	238.00	238.00	119.00	119.00
11 - 15	19.57	39.14	58.71	78.29	97.86	117.43	137.00	274.00	274.00	137.00	137.00
16+	22.71	45.43	68.14	90.86	113.57	136.29	159.00	318.00	318.00	159.00	159.00

SPECIAL NEEDS ALLOWANCES 2009/2010						
LOWER RATE			BANDS	HIGHER RATE		
%	PER WEEK	PER DAY		%	PER WEEK	PER DAY
100	61.054	8.72	5	100	149.15	21.31
90	54.95	7.85	4	90	134.23	19.18
80	48.84	6.98		80	119.32	17.05
70	42.74	6.11	3	70	104.40	14.91
60	36.63	5.23		60	89.49	12.78
50	30.53	4.36	2	50	74.57	10.65
40	24.42	3.49		40	59.66	8.52
30	18.32	2.62	1	30	44.74	6.39
20	12.21	1.74		20	29.83	4.26
10	6.11	0.87		10	14.91	2.13

Child Benefit 17.45 34.90
 11.70 23.40

LOWER 61.05 HIGHER R 149.15

LOWER RATE = 70% MAXIMUM ALLOWANCE 2000/01

HIGHER RATE = 171% MAXIMUM ALLOWANCE 2000/01

Diversity Impact Assessment form

Section:

Policy/Service Area:

Person Completing Form:	Date:
-------------------------	-------

Do any of the below groups suffer specific disadvantage (please indicate)

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Race			Disability		
Ethnicity			Gender		
Age			Religion		
Class			Sexual Orientation		

Is there evidence of disadvantage or associated problems?

How was the information collected and/or who have you consulted with?

Action Plan – <i>What specific actions are planned to tackle any disadvantage identified?</i>

Is the policy in line with current equality legislation and relevant codes of practice?

Timescale	
Responsibility	
Comments	

Are the actions specified included in any other documents/plans?

Departmental Service Plan	
Section/Team Plan	
Other (Specify)	

Date for further review

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