

<b>DECISION-MAKER:</b>	COUNCIL		
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT		
<b>DATE OF DECISION:</b>	18 NOVEMBER 2015		
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE		
<b><u>CONTACT DETAILS</u></b>			
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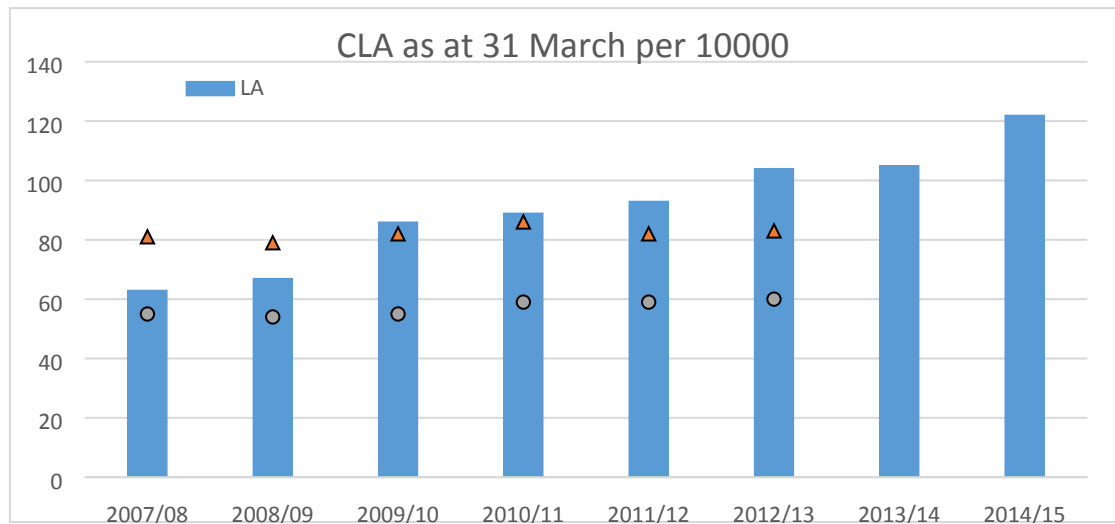
<b>STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY</b>	
N/A	
<b>BRIEF SUMMARY</b>	
<p>The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2011) require Local Authorities to provide an annual report on the outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC) which is to be presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee. This report fulfils that requirement, provides a profile of Southampton's looked after children and care leavers for the year 2014/2015</p>	
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>	
(i)	The Council is requested to review and comment on the contents of this report. This is to provide evidence, alongside other reporting and scrutiny requirements, that the care of Southampton's looked after children is robustly and appropriately monitored.
<b>REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
1.	For information
<b>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED</b>	
2.	N/A
<b>DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)</b>	
3.	Looked After Children are those children and young people from birth to 18 years of age who are unable to remain with their family and are cared for by the local authority either through a voluntary agreement reached with their parents or by virtue of a court order. Looked after children and those leaving care at whatever age are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in the community. The term 'care leaver' refers to a Looked after Child/young person aged 16+ who is transitioning from childhood into adulthood. Local authorities have a statutory obligation to support care leavers until they are 21 years old (or 25 if they are in education or training).
4.	The concept of Corporate Parenting, introduced in The Children Act 2004, places collective responsibility on local authorities to achieve good parenting for all children in public care. "Corporate Parent" defines the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees and partner

agencies for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after in public care. Elected members in Southampton carry out this duty through:

1. Regular meetings between the Cabinet Member for Education and Children’s Social Care and the Service Director, Children and families Service.
2. Scrutiny of regular reports at the Corporate Parenting Committee which meets 6 times per year with exception meetings called as required and is chaired by Lead Cabinet Member.
3. Representation from the Young People in Care Council at some meetings and additional meetings between this group, the Lead Cabinet Member and senior officers.
4. The Children and Families Scrutiny Panel led by Elected Members robustly examines the work and performance of services and outcomes for children and young people in the City and includes a targeted focus upon children in care and care leavers.

**Profile of looked after children and care leavers**

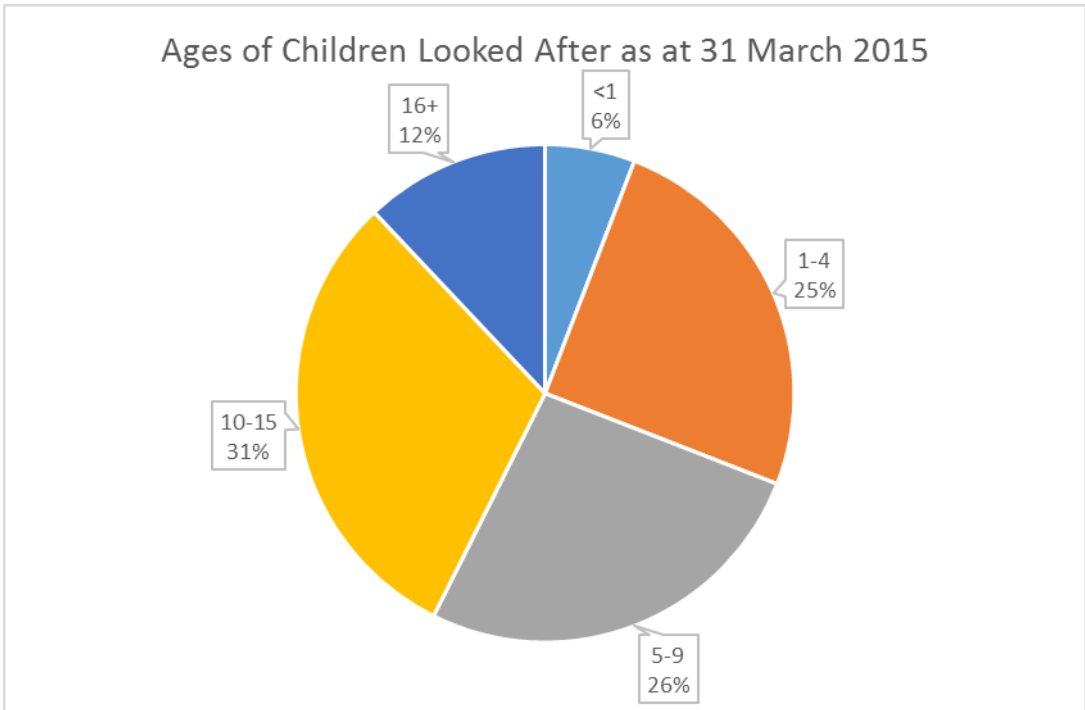
5. As at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015, 586 children and young people were looked after in Southampton in contrast to 500 looked after children on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, which was an increase from 2012/13 (482). This figure is also significantly higher than statistical neighbours at a rate of 122 children per 10,000 compared to 83 (Statistical neighbours) and 60 (England). Over the last four years the rate of looked after children has risen steadily with a sharp rise in the first quarter of 2014 (see below).



The rate of newly looked after children in 2014/15 was 56 children per 10,000, which represents a 27% increase on 2013/14.

6. At 31 March 2015, the largest proportion of children in care in Southampton was aged 10 to 15. Overall, there continues to be more boys than girls looked after at the end of 2014/15 with 329 boys (57%) compared to 252 girls (43%). This difference is wider than national or neighbour figures, but remains in line with previous years. (see below) Infants aged 4 years and under remained the largest cohort at 44% of children entering care with 19% of those under the age of 1 in line with national and local trends and this group being a key indicator of the Authority’s attitude towards early intervention.

7.



White British children continue to represent the largest cohort of looked after children at 77%. Children from a dual heritage made up 11% and those from an Asian background made up 6% of the LAC population

8.

**Achieving Permanence**  
 Over the past 13 months 65 children have been successfully placed with their adoptive families. As at 31st March 2015, 50 children had been placed in comparison to 39 children in the preceding 12 months period.

9.

The average length of time between entering care and being adopted was 1001 days (or 33 months) for those children adopted in the year ended 31 March 2015. Of those adopted in the year, 16% were adopted in 20 months or less.

10.

Plans for returning children home when it is safe, and arranging for children to leave care, are increasingly considered as part of usual business processes contained within the tracking of children’s cases. During 2014/15 the rate of looked after children ceasing to be looked was 41 in 10,000 compared to 42 in 10,000 last year, well above the national average of 25 and statistical neighbours of 31. This trajectory is positive, and if sustained and built upon will relieve some pressure from the service and shows children’s plans are generally progressing in an increasingly more timely manner.

11.

Of these children, 30% were enabled to return home to live with their parents or placed with relatives. This is however, below the national average of 35%. The other large groups of those ceasing to be looked after included those with successful permanency plans including adoption (26%), those on a residence order (4%) and children granted a special guardianship order (6%). Progress is being made in this area at pace but must be sustained if the Local Authority is to effectively manage the looked after children population within a range closer to its statistical neighbours.

12.

**Education of Looked after Children**  
 The Virtual School continues to work hard so that each of Southampton’s children in care realises their educational. The completion rate of Personal Education Plans over the last year increased from approximately 55 % up to

	68% in March 2015. Since this time performance has fallen away, but a focussed recovery plan has been put in place by the Virtual Head Teacher to address this matter urgently.
13.	The education data contained within this report is provisional and represents performance achieved by pupils Looked After for at least a year at the 31/03/2015.
14.	<p><u>EYFS (Year Reception, Age 5)</u></p> <p>The 2015 EYFS cohort that has been Looked After for at least a year at the 31/03/2015 was 23 pupils. Of this group, one student was not sitting against the English National Curriculum. As such, for this purpose, the cohort is considered to be 22. Each pupil therefore counts as 4.5%. 14% (3 pupils) of this cohort achieved 'a Good Level of Development' (GLD). No national LAC data has been published for EYFS attainment. Whilst 14% is below the achievement of all pupils nationally in 2015 (66.1%), and below the Southampton LAC figure of 22% in 2014, the complexity of this measure must be considered. A pupil must be working 'at' or 'above' in 12 of the 17 areas to be classed as achieving a Good Level of Development. Therefore, weakness in just one of these areas results in a child not achieving the measure.</p>
15.	<p><u>Year 1 Phonics (Year 1, Age 6)</u></p> <p>The 2015 Year 1 Phonics cohort that has been Looked After for at least a year as at the 31/03/2015 was 24 pupils. Each pupil therefore counts as 4.2%. 63% (15 pupils) were 'working at' the expected level at the end of year 1. No national LAC performance has ever been reported for the Year 1 Phonics check. A 14% gap exists between all pupils nationally in 2015 (77%) and Southampton LAC pupils in 2015 (63%).</p>
16.	<p><u>Key Stage 1 (Year 2, Age 7)</u></p> <p>The 2015 Key Stage 1 cohort that has been Looked After for at least a year at the 31/03/2015 was 21 pupils in 2015. Of this, one student was not sitting against the English National Curriculum. As such, for this purpose, the cohort is considered to be 20 pupils. Each pupil therefore counts as 5%.</p> <p>85% (17 pupils) of Southampton LAC pupils achieved L2+ in Reading in 2015, which is 14% above the LAC national figure of 71% in 2014. This is just 5% behind the national average for all pupils of 90% for 2015. 70% (14 pupils) of Southampton LAC pupils achieved L2+ in Writing in 2015 compared to just 61% of LAC nationally in 2014, a gap of 9%. Southampton's KS1 LAC performance is 18% behind the national average for all pupils in 2015 (88%). 85% (17 pupils) of Southampton LAC pupils achieved L2+ in Maths in 2015 compared to 72% of LAC nationally in 2014, a gap of 13%. This is 8% behind the national average for all pupils of 93% in 2015.</p> <p>This is the third consecutive year that Southampton LAC KS1 results are above National LAC performance in all subjects.</p>
17.	<p><u>Key Stage 2 (Year 6, Age 11)</u></p> <p>There were 21 pupils within the 2015 KS2 cohort of pupils who had been Looked After for at least a year at the 31/03/2015. Each pupil therefore counts for 4.8%. 2015 KS2 LAC L4+ Reading attainment (57% - 12 pupils) was below the 2014 LAC National average of 68%. 2015 KS2 LAC L4+ Writing attainment (57% - 12 pupils) was 2% below the 2014 LAC national average of 59%. Southampton KS2 LAC L4+ Maths (57% - 12 pupils) attainment was broadly in line with national performance of 61%. LAC attainment at L4+ for the combination of Reading Writing and Maths (43%) was 5% below the</p>

	<p>national (48%). For Southampton's KS2 LAC performance to be in line with national, one more pupil needs to achieve this indicator.</p> <p>In 2015, 19 % (4 pupils) of Southampton LAC pupils achieved a level 5+ in Reading, 1 in Writing and 29% (6 pupils) achieved a Level 5+ in Maths. This indicates that Southampton LAC pupils are supported to achieve beyond level 4 thresholds.</p>
18.	<p><b>Key Stage 4 (Year 11, Age 16)</b></p> <p>There were 27 pupils within the 2015 KS4 cohort of pupils who had been Looked After for at least a year at the 31/03/2015. Each pupil therefore counts for 3.7%.</p> <p>11% (3 no.) of pupils achieved 5+ A*-C including English and Maths GCSE, this is a decrease of 7% from 2014 when 18% (5 no.) of pupils achieved. Southampton's 2015 performance is in line with the 2014 National performance of 12%.</p> <p>15% (4 no.) of pupils achieved 5+ A*-C GCSE, this is a decrease of 14% from 2014 when 29% (8 no.) of pupils achieved. Southampton's 2015 performance is in line with the 2014 National performance of 16%.</p> <p>19% (5 no.) of pupils achieved A*-C GCSE in English and Maths, this is broadly in line with the 2014 when 21% (6 no.) of pupils achieved. This is above the 2014 National performance of 14% by 5%.</p>
19.	<p>The Virtual School continues to work with schools within Southampton to improve and develop opportunities for looked after children and tracking mechanisms are in place to robustly monitor the progress of each child in care. An extra Pupil Premium funding allowance is given to schools to specifically address the individual needs of looked after children and the Virtual School works in partnership with schools to make best use of this investment to improve outcomes for the relevant children and young people.</p>
20.	<p><b>Health of children in care and care leavers</b></p> <p>Looked After Children and young people share the same health risks and problems as their peers but often to a greater degree. They often enter care with an inferior level of health to that of their peers in part due to the impact of poverty, abuse, neglect and inadequate parenting.</p> <p>The aim of the Local Authority and Solent NHS Trust is to improve the health of children in care. Performance in 2013/14 was poor. The service experienced challenges in meeting the timescales for initial health assessments and reviews. This had been caused in part by staffing issues within the service but also due to increasing service demand due to increasing numbers of looked after children and associated panel work (including adult health reports and adoption counselling). There has been ongoing work between the service, commissioners and children's social care during 2014/15 to address these problems including additional investment in nursing. In addition, robust electronic monitoring was introduced along with new processes for children placed out of area to reduce missed clinic appointments.</p>
21.	<p>This work has now led to approximately 85% of health assessments being completed within the required timescales. In addition, the quality of health plans are being improved through the auditing of each plan by the looked children's designated nurse.</p>
22.	<p>The service continues to undertake a range of activities such as working with</p>

	<p>the BRS (Behaviour Resource Service) to screen for and assess emotional and behavioural difficulties in CLA, they have developed a Care-Leavers Health Care Plan and a “Declined Service” pathway to ensure those young people who do not wish to engage with the service have access to health information and know how to re-engage when they wish. The service is also looking at appropriate incentives to improve the uptake of health assessments by young people.</p>
23.	<p>66% of children looked after had a Dental Check in 2014/15 compared to 64% in the previous year. Immunisation rates were 67% in 2014/15, unchanged from 2013/14. 100% of children had their developmental check outperforming local and national figures.</p>
24.	<p>Work in this area is focussed upon delivering rapid and sustained improvement. Scrutiny of the data indicates that there are gaps in the consistent recording of health information. This is being actively addressed through the care review process and health assessments. More frequent monitoring reports are being scrutinised by managers from the multi-agency partnership to identify and tackle potential gaps at an earlier stage.</p>
25.	<p><b>Care leavers</b></p> <p>There has been continued progress against some measures of performance for young people leaving care but further work is required to improve and maintain a consistently good level of outcomes and opportunities. For instance, in 2014/15 an average of 89% of care leavers kept in contact with the service compared to 84% of statistical neighbours and 83% for England as a whole. Clearly, such a level of contact provides opportunities for practitioners to work with young people to address and deliver improved outcomes in relation to identified needs.</p>
26.	<p>The city has developed a strategic approach to sourcing and accessing suitable accommodation for young care leavers and a wide range of options are available including a “staying put” offer for care leavers to continue to reside with their current foster carer(s). Steps have been taken to improve the joint working between the Care Leavers/Pathways Team and the Housing Needs Team. This will ensure that the most appropriate housing and support is identified as part of the young person’s pathway planning process, including access to a secure tenancy with SCC or one of the City’s Housing providers. A joint protocol between the relevant agencies to ensure all partners understand their roles and young people experience a planned and supported transition to independent living is in place. Importantly, this includes a shared commitment by agencies to adopt a ‘corporate parenting’ approach for care leavers. Other improvements include 5 accommodation units at Defender Road dedicated to care leavers. This provision has been consistently occupied and young people have then successfully moved on from the provision to either privately rented or SCC properties depending on individual circumstances. Very recently, SCC Housing Department has agreed that a further 5 properties will be set aside in general stock for care leavers.</p>
27.	<p>In March 2015 77% of care leavers who were in contact with the service were in suitable accommodation. This represents an upward trend in performance of 10% since March 2014. This compares to a national rate of 78% and outcomes in the area continue to improve although the service recognises that activity in this area must continue to drive improvement up to statistical neighbour rates of 88% and beyond.</p>

28.	Following approval by the Corporate Parenting Committee, the Local Authority has committed to the national Care Leavers Charter; an allocation of £2,000 for all Care Leavers to support transition to independence; the creation of a more robust and effective Young People in Care Council; the development of a Facebook page to promote ongoing contact and support beyond their 25th birthday and to improve partnerships that enable Care Leavers to access apprenticeships, work experience, further and higher education.
29.	The City currently undertakes a pathway needs assessment at 15yrs and 9 months for each young person who will remain looked after and therefore become a care leaver. It continues to be acknowledged that this planning process should be commenced earlier to ensure stronger plans which have comprehensive 'buy-in' from young people and involve carers and the entire professional network at each stage of planning. Auditing outcomes are well established to monitor and then check that the Pathways team is focussing upon improving the quality and timeliness of plans.
30.	<p><b>Education, Training and Employment for care leavers</b></p> <p>52% of care leavers are in education, employment or training as of March 2015, an increase on the previous year (38%). Despite the improvement in this area, care leavers in Southampton fare less well compared to statistical neighbours (59%) and England (62%) and the 88% rate for all young people living in Southampton. It remains a key priority improvement area and a range of focussed activities are in place to secure better outcomes and performance. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved tracking of personal education plans for year 10 and 11 looked after pupils transitioning towards independence.</li> <li>• Monitoring and tracking of the cohort of young people not engaged in education, training and employment with partners within the council, educational provision and the third sector.</li> <li>• Catch 22 providing apprenticeship and employability support in the city and prioritising Southampton care leavers.</li> <li>• The provision of a part time worker from City Deal to assist in this area. The City Deal worker is dedicated to care leavers and is at full capacity for referrals and the service is exploring access via other City Deal resources.</li> <li>• A practitioners group is beginning to share experiences of best and most effective practice approaches to addressing current take up of opportunities in this area.</li> </ul>
31.	<p><b>Participation and engagement of children and young people</b></p> <p>The active participation of children and young people is a key priority for Children's Services and its partners. The strategy for looked after children sets out a clear vision for practice, and the Quality Assurance Business Unit alongside the LAC Service facilitates consultation, involvement and participation of children and young people who are looked after. Consultation is gradually feeding into service development, and sustaining a number of tangible outcomes for children, young people and social work practice such as improved accommodation policies and availability for young people and participation events for younger children.</p>
32.	An annual awards ceremony recognises the achievements and contribution of

	children and young people looked after and care leavers.
33.	The Children in Care Council (in Southampton called the Young People In Care Council – YPiCC) directly supports the Corporate Parenting Board to measure and monitor the effectiveness and quality of ‘Corporate Parenting’ to children and young people in accordance with the views and experiences of the children who are in care. The board remains fully committed to listening to the voice of service users and the active involvement of children and young people within the decision-making processes.
34.	The Young People in Care Council (YPiCC) has had a fluctuating membership in the past year but consists currently of about 10 young people aged 16-21. The group meets on a monthly basis with an agenda negotiated between them and officers, and the Chair and Vice Chair also attend and participate at some Corporate Parenting meetings. The Lead Councillor for Children’s Services has attended some of the YPiCC meetings, as have senior officers.
35.	<p>During 2014/15, the group has continued to work at developing its own identity and role and focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging increased participation from younger looked after children</li> <li>• Providing a voice for the wider population of looked after children and care leavers and to influence service development as a result</li> <li>• Representing Southampton at events and conferences</li> <li>• Developing resources and materials for children and young people such as the production of a DVD on exploitation and abuse, this will be shown at the next care leavers’ awards event.</li> </ul>
36.	The group is currently reviewing its structure and approach with the facilitation of a Youth Options practitioner to explore ways to increase membership and attendance. Further work is required to build and develop capacity in the area of engagement, participation and the involvement of children/young people in all areas of individual planning and wider service innovation.
37.	<p><b>Children Missing from Care</b></p> <p>Overall numbers of looked after children having a period missing from care rose sharply in 2013/13. However, this figure has now fallen to 29 in the current year. Robust missing from care procedures remain in place and the individual cases of missing children are tracked and scrutinised by managers on a daily basis.</p>
38.	Barnardo’s deliver a return ‘safe and well’ service for Southampton children and young people. When a child/young person returns from going missing, Barnardo’s are notified and then contact that child/young person to identify any issues or concerns that are ongoing for them. Information on the matter is then passed to the relevant ‘lead professional’ via the MASH and this is used to help inform future safety and protection planning where relevant. The Local Authority works with the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board’s ‘Missing, Exploited and Trafficked’ Group (MET) to identify particular concerns for individual children, and areas of the City, and then addressed these matters through the sharing of intelligence amongst agencies, joint planning and targeted interventions.
39.	<p><b>SUMMARY AND PRIORITIES FOR 2015 – 2016</b></p> <p>Improving the outcomes for looked after children and care leavers and</p>



	narrowing the gap between children in care and their peers remains the key focus of the work of the service, the wider partnership and the Corporate Parenting Committee. This report has summarised the progress made in a number of key areas as well as identifying where performance has not progressed as planned and where further focussed work is required.
40.	High aspirations and keen ambition must continuously drive all plans drawn up for and with looked after children and care leavers.
41.	The numbers of children in care at the end of March 2015 has risen significantly over the preceding year and it is clear that further options need to be developed to strengthen available support to children and young people to remain in the care of their own families with support when assessed appropriate.
42.	Adoption rates and the timeliness of placements have shown significant improvement over the past 12 months and it will be important for the service to build upon progress made in the next year. To this end, tracking and permanency planning processes for children are being continuously reviewed and strengthened to ensure that public law care proceedings for children are concluded in a timely manner. Where children are unable to remain in, or return to, the care of their birth parents, options for permanence through special guardianship and adoption will be pursued through increasingly efficient and creative methods to provide as many children as possible with a secure family environment in which to live and fulfil their potential during their minority.
43.	Health assessments for looked after children have been significantly improved over the past 12 in both timeliness and quality. This improvement must be monitored and maintained through the partnership of agencies and processes put in place to establish these improvements. Solent NHS Trust and the Local Authority also need to deliver similar improvements in relation to immunisations and dental checks for children in care.
44.	Priorities going forward include the development and introduction of a health "passport" for all care leavers which is given to young people when they leave care. The health passports for all LAC will contain key health information about all children throughout their formative years and provide young people with a complete health history which is crucial in promoting and managing individual health needs.
45.	Other work will focus on ensuring that the Local Authority better understands the emotional and mental health needs of young people prior to, and after they leave care, and ensure that services consistently meet identified needs, and promote services designed to address such needs.
46.	The educational performance of children in care declined during the year amongst the older age group, but there has been relatively good performance across other age ranges. However, in general outcomes for looked after children and care leavers in Southampton requires improvement and is a major priority for the Corporate Parenting Committee chaired by the Lead Elected Member in the year ahead. The way the Virtual School works has been refreshed in recent months and their staff are working more closely with care planning practitioners and have identified a clear approach for monitoring the educational development and needs of looked after children. Additionally, the Personal Education Plan (PEP) assessment tool has been strengthened

	and used more effectively to identify children's needs, set realistic and ambitious goals and to put support in place quickly. The PEP completion rates require significant improvement and will be monitored and driven meticulously throughout the year ahead.
47.	A further challenge for the coming year will be to support and maintain the current cohort of 16 to 18 year old young people in their education, employment and training settings and empower them to complete chosen pathways successfully, and transition on to fulfil their individual ambitions and potential. These young people together with those up to the age of 21 will be closely monitored through a multi-agency group and officers will explore greater opportunities to increase apprenticeships and work based opportunities for looked after children and care leavers.
48.	Services designed to involve children and young people in participation and engagement activities require greater coordination over the year ahead. It will also be important for services to explore creative approaches to building capacity in this area which practically empowers and supports children and young people to input into consultative, decision-making and delivery mechanisms including the Corporate Parenting Committee.
49.	Working with looked after children with significant levels of vulnerability including those at risk of sexual exploitation and offending behaviours will continue to be an overarching priority. The Service will continue to work closely with key partners and build on the successes of the current year to both identify these young people as early as possible and to ensure that appropriate services are put into place to support and keep them safe.
<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>	
<b><u>Capital/Revenue</u></b>	
50.	There are no new resource implications arising from this report.
<b><u>Property/Other</u></b>	
51.	N/A
<b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b>	
<b><u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u></b>	
52.	The Children Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to take collective responsibility for good parenting of children in care and looked after.
<b><u>Other Legal Implications:</u></b>	
53.	The corporate parenting responsibilities must be carried out having regard to the Equalities Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998 and all other pervasive legislation.
<b>POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS</b>	
54.	The proposals set out in this report are wholly consistent with the Council's Policy Framework.

<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	No
<b>WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:</b>	All

<b><u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u></b>	
<b>Appendices</b>	
1.	None
<b>Documents In Members' Rooms</b>	
1.	None
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessments (ESIA) to be carried out.	No
<b>Privacy Impact Assessment</b>	
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) to be carried out.	No
<b>Other Background Documents</b>	
<b>Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:</b>	
Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
1.	None