

CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM NO. 6
13 MARCH 2017	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of the Corporate Director for People and Communities		
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REVIEW OF PLACEMENT STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE AND UPDATE OF PROGRESS TO ESTABLISH THE PERMANENCY SERVICE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This report provides Scrutiny with information about the number of children and young people in care, changes in the characteristics of this group and of the types of placements within which children and young people in care are living.
- 1.2. The report also provides a brief update to Scrutiny on progress towards implementing the new Peterborough Permanency Service, which begins operations from 1st April 2017.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. Committee is asked to:
 1. Note the contents of this report, and in particular the changing demography of the child in care population and the overall reduction in numbers of children and young people in care, and:
 2. Seek an updated report on the child in care population in Peterborough and the mix of placements for children and young people in care in 12 months' time, which would also present an opportunity for information to be provided on the impact of the new Permanency Service.

3. LINKS TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND RELEVANT CABINET PORTFOLIO

- 3.1. This report relates to the corporate priority to support vulnerable people.
- 3.2. The report falls within the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1. This report updates Members on changes in the population of children and young people in care in Peterborough, drawing comparisons with the national and statistical neighbour information as this is available. It also considers changes in the mix of placements and the financial implications of an increase in use of residential placements over the last 12 months.
- 4.2. The report concludes by updating Members on the progress being made in implementing the new Permanency Service, which goes live from 1st April 2017 and which is designed to improve the recruitment of foster carers and increase the number of children and young people who are living in permanent, loving, family homes.

Context

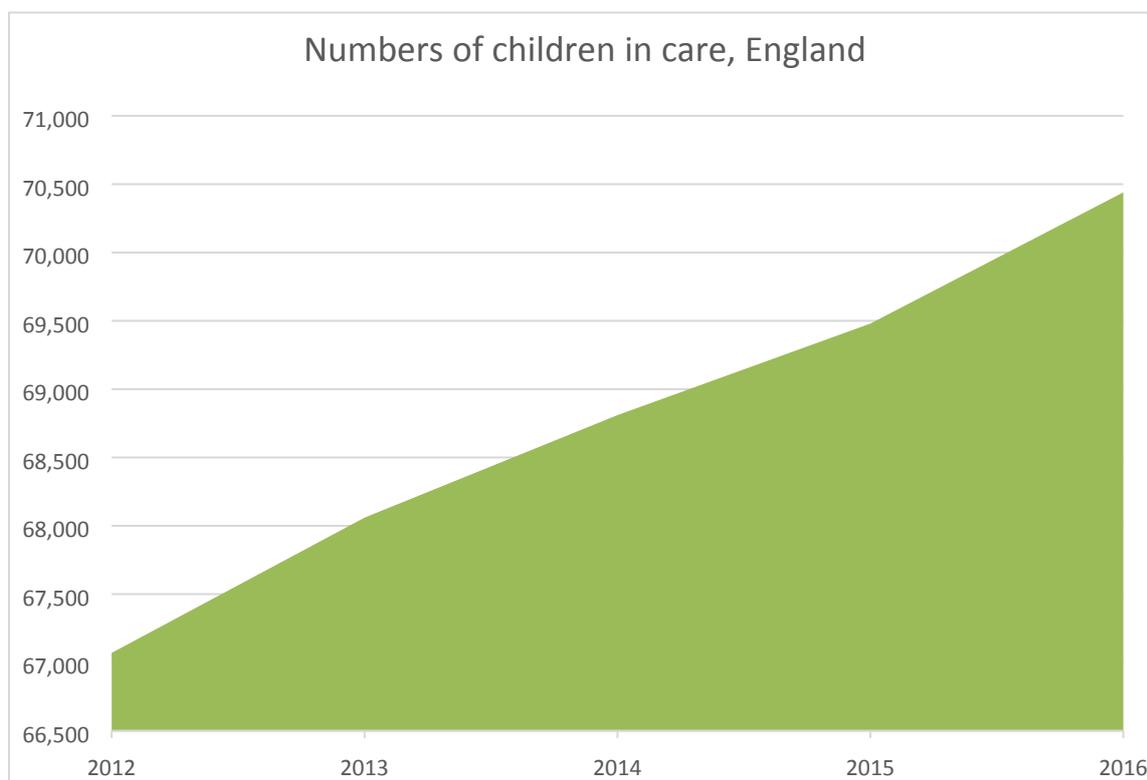
- 4.3. The term 'Children and Young People in Care' is used throughout this report. This reflects messages from national research that children and young people in care prefer this term to 'Looked after Children' or 'Children Looked After' because for them, 'in Care' more accurately describes their experience and makes more sense to them.
- 4.4. Most children and young people achieve the best lifelong outcomes by growing up within their families. While all families experience short term crises from time to time, in most circumstances, families are able to call on their own extended family or friendship networks to support them through such crises without the need for any other external support.
- 4.5. Not all families have access to informal support mechanisms, however, making it more difficult for them to manage the sort of challenges experienced by us all. In addition, some groups of families – those with a child with a complex disability for example – may have considerable support from their family and friendship networks, but still need this to be supplemented if they are not to come under significant pressures.
- 4.6. A small group of children are unable to be safely cared for within their families without an intensive programme of assessment and support. A still smaller group cannot remain with their families at all because the risks to them are too great. This latter group of children and young people may be cared for by relatives, but if this is not a viable option for them, they will come into the care system.
- 4.7. Where children do have to move from their birth families, it is better that they do so at as early an age as possible. This is so they can make secure attachments to their new permanent carers, who are either adopting them or who have applied for a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement Order.
- 4.8. Our overall strategic aim is therefore to protect early help and prevention services, enabling families to access support in order to prevent difficulties from emerging, to offer a range of intensive support services for families who are experiencing a crisis, while seeking to identify at an early stage where it seems unlikely that it will be in the best long term interests of a child to remain with their parents.
- 4.9. Where it is not likely to be in the best long term interests for a child to remain with their parents, we explore whether members of the extended family may be willing to provide a permanent alternative home for the child or children, often through a Special Guardianship Order. Such arrangements are frequently made within Family Group Conferences, where

extended family and friends work together to develop a family plan that will ensure that the child remains safe and well cared for.

- 4.10. Where there are no extended family available to take on the care of the child or young person, and where they would otherwise be at risk of suffering significant harm, the local authority will act to seek to bring the child or young person into care.
- 4.11. The Council will always seek to identify permanent carers for this group of children. This is an area where we have generally performed well, but also one where we hope to do even better through the development of the new Permanency Service.
- 4.12. A significant number of children and young people who come into care will return home to their parents after a period of time – nationally, 34% of children and young people leaving care leave to return home to a parent or parents. However, a significant proportion of children and young people who come into care, and particularly those who come into care aged 7 and above, will remain in care throughout their childhoods.
- 4.13. For this group, long term outcomes are usually best where they are placed within a family based setting – a foster placement – and where they do not experience any number of unplanned placement changes.

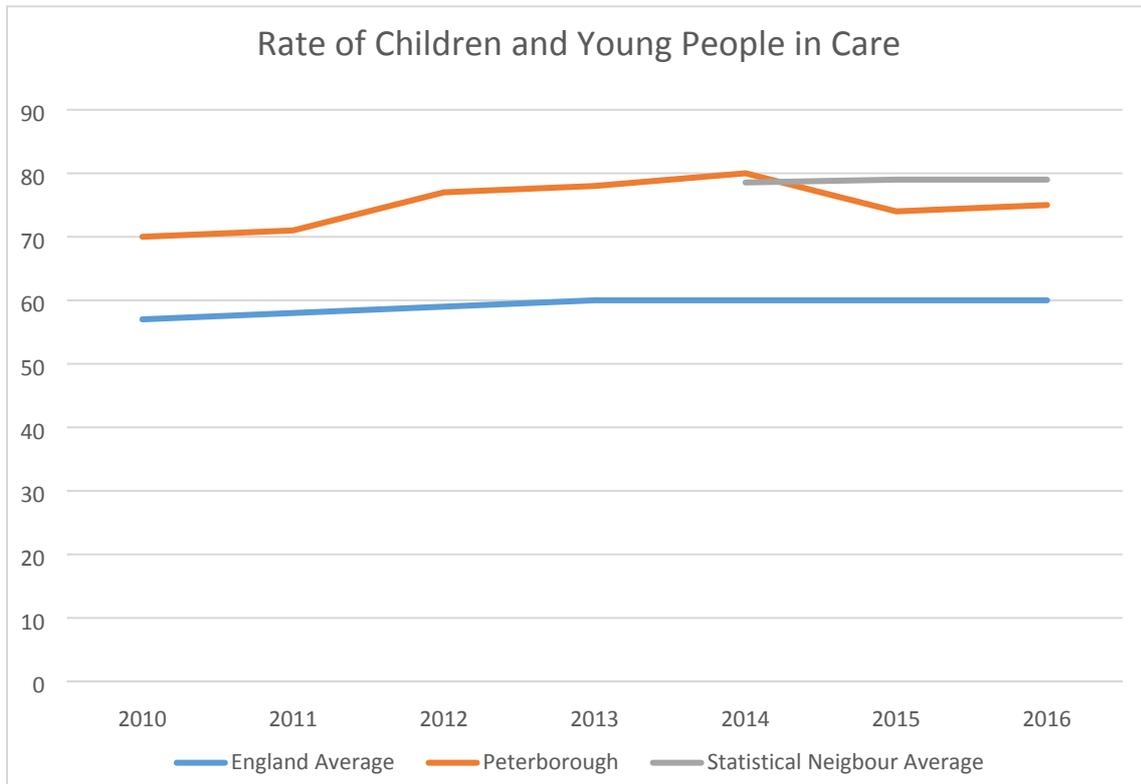
Overall Numbers of Children and Young People in Care

- 4.14. Nationally, there has been a fairly steady trend of increasing numbers of children and young people in care, as shown by the chart below:



- 4.15. The most common way of expressing numbers of children and young people looked after is the rate per 10,000 population of children and young people. This enables comparisons to be drawn with national and similar authority trends and performance.

4.16. In Peterborough, the rate of children and young people in care per 10,000 over the last few years is compared with statistical neighbour and England Averages:



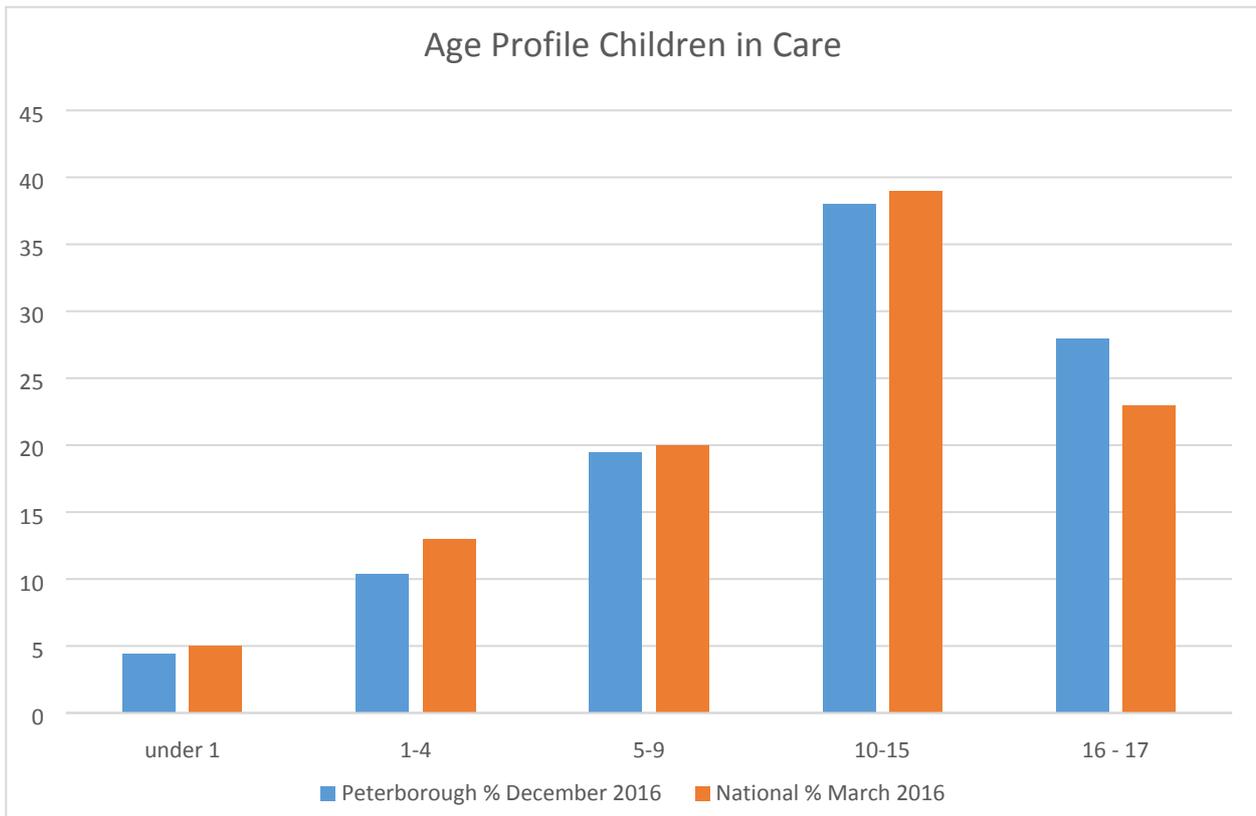
4.17. Our statistical neighbour grouping changed in 2014/15, making direct comparisons for earlier years difficult. Looking at the rate in Peterborough, there was a clear increase in overall numbers between 2012 and 2014, which is likely to be related to the improvement journey taking place at the time, which is often associated with a temporary increase in numbers of children and young people coming into the care system.

4.18. The rate of children in care per 10,000 in Peterborough in December stood at 76 per 10,000 – equivalent to 364 children and young people. Numbers have fluctuated slightly over the current financial year. The number of children in care was 354 in April 2106; this number increased to 371 in June and July 2016, but has reduced steadily again to the current number of 364.

4.19. The rate in Peterborough is slightly below our new statistical neighbour average. There is however a very wide variation between individual local authorities with the lowest rate of children and young people in care being 46 per 10,000 and the highest being 120 per 10,000.

Characteristics of Children and Young People in Care Population

4.20. The chart below compares the age profile of children and young people in care in Peterborough with the national distribution:



- 4.21. This indicates that at most age groups, the cohort in Peterborough is relatively similar to national averages, with the exception that there are a higher percentage of children and young people aged 16 and 17 in the Peterborough cohort.
- 4.22. This is likely to be partly explained by the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking young people in the care system in Peterborough - most of whom arrive in the UK as older teenagers with the majority being aged 16 and above.
- 4.23. Members will, however, be aware of proposals to develop a targeted youth service in Peterborough, which will involve the reconfiguration of some existing services to form a dedicated multidisciplinary response to young people including those with complex needs. Among other things, this approach is expected to improve our response to young people and their families where relationships are at acute risk of breaking down, leading to a risk of homelessness or of young people coming into the care system.
- 4.24. This is important since young people coming into care as older teenagers have some of the least positive long term outcomes. They will also often drift back to family and extended family as adults, making it even more important that we do all we can to prevent the disruption of these relationships in the first place.
- 4.25. Unsurprisingly, the largest group of children and young people in care are from White British backgrounds [65% of the population]. White British children are slightly underrepresented in the in-care cohort when compared with the Office for National Statistics [ONS] estimate that 71% of all children and young people in Peterborough are White British.
- 4.26. Children and young people in care from mixed cultural backgrounds are a growing group, with 11.5% of the current population in care from mixed cultural heritages compared with

8% in December 2015. This group is now also overrepresented compared with the ONS population estimate that 8% of Peterborough children and young people are of mixed parentage. The largest proportionate growth among children and young people has been children with one white and one Asian parent. The service is looking at this area of over-representation to establish whether there are any underlying factors that are contributing to this increase.

- 4.27. Children from Asian backgrounds are underrepresented in the care system in Peterborough, as they are nationally. There are very few children from these backgrounds in care in Peterborough compared with the general child population.
- 4.28. We continue to look after a number of young people who have arrived in this country as unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people. Of note is the agreement by local authorities in the Eastern Region to organise a rota system to determine which will take young people when they are detained in the region. This means that authorities where there are very few unaccompanied asylum seeking young people [including, for example Norfolk and Suffolk] are 'on duty' more frequently than areas where the number of unaccompanied children and young people in care is higher, including Thurrock and Peterborough.
- 4.29. Once the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people in care in any one authority is higher than the limit set by Government, that local authority comes off the rota altogether. The limit set by Government is the equivalent of 0.07% of the population of children and young people in each local authority area. Here in Peterborough, this equates to 34 children and young people. Our current population of unaccompanied children is around 30 as of January 2017, meaning that we are likely to be asked to go back on the rota for the Eastern Region in the near future.
- 4.30. This is a much better system than the one it replaced. Under the old system it was the local authority where the child or young person presented to authorities that had responsibility. This meant that authorities like Peterborough, located on lorry routes from the channel ports, were likely to become responsible for relatively significant numbers of young people, while other local authorities would be very unlikely to be required to look after this group. This new approach also means that there is much more predictability; we should not be asked to go above our agreed numbers, and we are less likely to be affected by significant variations in numbers when, for example, numbers of young people travel together and present together in a particular area. The latter issue could put a particular pressure on local services in a small authority such as Peterborough.
- 4.31. There has been an increase of numbers of children in care in many eastern region local authorities over the last 1 – 2 years. Many of these additional children and young people are previously unaccompanied minors. This increase has contributed to a shortage of suitable foster placements, which has in turn resulted in increased use of residential placements, as is described in the next section.

Children Looked After: Placement Mix

- 4.32. The chart below illustrates how the mix of placement types in Peterborough has changed over recent years and how it compares with national averages:

Placement Type	P'borough Nov 2012 %	P'borough Nov 2013 %	P'borough Nov 2014 %	P'borough Nov 2015 %	P'borough Dec 2016 %	National Average 2016 %
In House fostering [A]	35%	38%	39%	46%	45%	n/a
Agency Fostering [B]	38%	33%	32%	29%	30%	n/a
Connected [C]	6%	9%	9%	7%	5%	n/a
All Foster Placements [A+B+C]	79%	80%	80%	82%	80%	74%
Residential including secure, secure remands & residential schools	10%	9%	7%	8%	11%	12%
Independent Living	5%	4%	6.5%	8%	7%	3%
Placed for adoption	5%	4%	5%	2%	2%	4%
Placement with Parents	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	5%

- 4.33. Although the percentage change is small, the significant change in the last 12 months has been an increasing number of Peterborough children and young people who have been placed in residential care. At 11% this is now close to the national average, reversing a trend over recent years where the proportion of children and young people in residential care in Peterborough has been significantly below national averages.
- 4.34. There will always be a number of children and young people who have needs that are so complex that only residential placements will be suitable. What has become notable since the beginning of the current financial year, however, is that it has become more difficult to identify foster carers for children and young people either among our own fostering households or in the independent sector for whom families would have been previously possible to identify.
- 4.35. This is significant for a number of reasons. Most importantly, outcomes for children and young people placed in residential placements tend to be less good than for those who remain in family based placements. This is connected to factors such as the changing rota of people who provide care and the peer group within many residential placements. There are some very good residential placements that provide very high quality care for young people who have very complex needs and as such these are invaluable – but they are often not ideal for children and young people who would ordinarily be able to live with skilled foster carers in a family based setting.
- 4.36. Where a child or young person is placed in a residential placement, the aim will be for them to move back to a family based placement as soon as possible, in accordance with their needs and progress. This means that they will inevitably experience a further change of placement and possibly also of school place than they might have done had an appropriate foster placement been identified in the first place.
- 4.37. The final factor is cost; residential placements for children and young people start at around £3,000 per week and rise to £6,000 per week and above, with a typical placement costing around £4,000 per week. It is easy to see how even small numbers of children and

young people moving from foster to residential care can have a significant impact on budgets.

- 4.38. In view of the additional budget pressures developing as a result of this, Corporate Management Team identified an additional £400,000 resource to support the placement budget for 2016/17 and £600,000 for 2017/18.
- 4.39. Despite this increase, Peterborough continues to place a higher proportion of our children and young people in foster care than is the case nationally, which is positive, and despite the increase in use of residential placements, these remain slightly below national averages. We have also developed new approaches within the service to ensure that the care plans of our most vulnerable children and young people in particular, which will include those in residential placements, are being progressed effectively.
- 4.40. As Members are aware, the new contract to deliver Permanency Services in Peterborough in partnership with the Adolescent and Children's Trust [TACT] goes live from 1st April 2017. A key aspiration of this new approach is to increase local placement choice and to recruit and support more carers able to provide loving homes for children and young people who have experienced significant trauma and hence are likely to display quite challenging needs. This development will also support the reduced use of residential placements except where such placements are absolutely necessary to meet the needs of the children or young people concerned.

The Peterborough Permanency Service

- 4.41. Members are of course aware of the development of the Permanency Service. The invitation to tender was published in March 2016, and submitted tenders evaluated by a range of key stakeholders, including members of staff, young people in care and foster carers.
- 4.42. The outcome of the evaluation process was that The Adolescent and Children's Trust [TACT] was the organisation that scored most highly overall. The then Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Committee considered the recommendation to Cabinet to award the contract to TACT on 12th September 2016. On 26th September 2016, Cabinet made the decision to award the contract to TACT.
- 4.43. The key drivers for establishing this new service is to improve outcomes for children and young people in care and on the edge of care by ensuring that as many as possible are supported to live in permanent, loving family based homes. This will be supported by re-invigorating our recruitment of foster carers, meaning that we place more children with our own carers as opposed to placing with agency carers. This has advantages because we know our carers better, meaning we can better match them to children and young people for whom we need to find homes, and because unit costs are lower. A proportion of the savings achieved by reducing unit placement costs will then be re-invested into services to support children and young people on the edge of care.
- 4.44. This arrangement requires members of staff in fostering and adoption services, the access to resources team and family group conference service, together with a number of support roles occupied by employees of Serco, to transfer to TACT under TUPE arrangements. The new service will commence on 1st April 2017.
- 4.45. The formal 30-day TUPE consultation began on 17th January 2017, meaning that it had not been completed at the time that this report was written. However, it is the case that overall, members of staff have generally responded well to the consultation. The great

majority have used the opportunity to meet individually with TACT senior officers, and have made a number of comments and asked a number of questions.

- 4.46. Comments raised include a dislike of the names TACT propose to use for describing teams and roles. Questions asked have included one around the proposal to introduce a skill mix model and arrangements for staff to provide an on-call service to foster carers.
- 4.47. The last two issues are the ones that have perhaps generated the most questions. The current arrangement is that social workers specialise in fostering or adoption. TACT would like to introduce an approach where there are leads on these areas as well as on Special Guardianship Order assessments, but where social workers are asked to work across all areas. This approach brings additional flexibilities, although staff have concerns about loss of specialism and the need for training in some areas. TACT has acknowledged that training for some staff will be needed. TACT has agreed to continue to consult with staff as to how the new approach will work in detail.
- 4.48. TACT staff also operate an on call system to support their foster carers. All staff, including the TACT Chief Executive, participate in this rota. Some Peterborough staff have expressed concerns about the impact of this on their lives outside work. TACT say that in practice, very few foster carers use the service – it is more about them knowing that they can contact someone if they need to. In Peterborough, staff would be on call around three weeks per annum, and would receive an additional payment of £1,000. Discussion was ongoing in relation to this aspect of the new service as this report was written.
- 4.49. These questions notwithstanding, the consultation appears to be going well. Staff have been positive about the way that TACT is responding to their questions and their feedback on the plans. TACT has found the consultation process helpful as this is helping them to gain a fuller understanding of the service.
- 4.50. Foster carers have also welcomed the decision to award the contact to TACT. This is largely because they recognise that TACT is a child-centred organisation that has a good track record in supporting foster carers.
- 4.51. TACT is also working to bring other services and innovations to Peterborough, using its position as a leading charity to attract other resources to the City. This is a further benefit to this new arrangement; TACT is able to bring added value in a way that the Council is not able to do by virtue of its status as a charity.
- 4.52. The main period of staff consultation will conclude on 16 February 2017. Staff have already received full responses to the questions raised during the consultation period. Under TUPE legislation staff have the right to continue discussions with TACT right up to the date of transfer if they have any outstanding areas of concern. An update will be available to Members on any further developments between the date when this report was written and the date of the Scrutiny Committee on 13th March 2017.

5. KEY ISSUES

- 5.1. Key issues arising from the above include:
 - Overall numbers of children and young people in care have increased slightly over the summer months of 2016 but are now reducing again steadily. They have remained below the average of our statistical neighbours;

- The agreement within the Eastern Region for local authorities to participate in a rota will help to ensure that numbers of unaccompanied children and young people in Peterborough remain steady and do not increase beyond a certain level;
- The Peterborough care population has a higher proportion of 16 and 17 year olds than the national average. This is partly explained by our population of unaccompanied asylum seeking young people, but we also plan to develop a multi-agency targeted youth service to provide a timely response to young people at risk of experiencing a family breakdown and be more likely to come into care as a result;
- A growing proportion of our population of children and young people in care are from mixed parentage backgrounds. In response to this, we are sampling individual case files to see whether there are underlying patterns and a need to develop a different response to the needs of this diverse group of children and families;
- Although we continue to place a greater percentage of children and young people in care in family based placements, the proportion placed in residential has increased over this financial year;
- The development of the new Permanency Service is continuing to progress and affected staff have been taking part in formal consultation processes. The new service is expected to increase our ability to recruit local foster carers, which is better for children and young people and should help to address the challenge of a growing use of high cost residential placements. A proportion of the savings made by the service will be re-invested to improve services to children and young people on the edge of care.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. As noted above, members of staff affected by the proposal to develop a Permanency Service are taking part in formal consultation processes. They will transfer to TACT as the new service goes live on 1st April 2017.
- 6.2. Affected members of staff will transfer on their current terms and conditions. TACT has applied for admitted body status to the Local Government Pension Scheme, which means that current members of this scheme will remain members on transfer.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1. Consultation has taken place with legal, finance and HR colleagues throughout the tender process and in relation to the content of this report.
- 7.2. Members of staff have been formally consulted about their transfer to TACT under TUPE, with the support of their trade union representatives.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1. The Permanency Service will go live on 1st April 2017.
- 8.2. A programme of engagement with staff to consider the shape of the proposed Targeted Youth Support Service is continuing but will be expanded during March 2017 in order to ensure that as many members of staff can participate as possible.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985:

9.1. None

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