

**MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL: INTEGRATED SUPPORT AND SOCIAL CARE  
CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL - ANNUAL REPORT (2013/14)**

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 This is the 2013/14 Annual Report of the activities of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The report covers key areas of the council's corporate parenting performance and 2013/14 corporate parenting panel activity, structured to reflect the priority action areas for Children in Care agreed by the Panel in April 2013
- 1.2 This Annual Report covers the period from April 2013 to the end of March 2014.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the Annual Report.
- 2.2 That the Committee recommends any further areas which they feel should be considered by the Corporate Parenting Panel in 2014/15.

**3. Background**

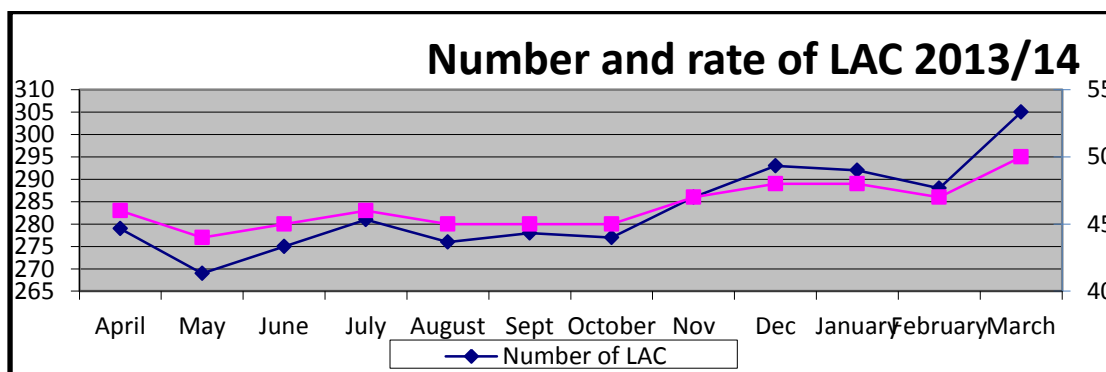
- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel was first established on an equal political party basis in 2003.
- 3.2 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008, which was fully implemented in April 2011, underpins the key role of 'corporate parenting' in shaping services to children in care. The Local Authority has a responsibility as a 'Corporate Parent' for all children in the care of Milton Keynes Council (sometimes referred to as Looked after Children (LAC)). 'Corporate parenting' emphasises the collective responsibility of the Council and its members to ensure good parenting and good outcomes for all children in their care.
- 3.3 The Children and Families Act (March 2014) covers a number of areas, and includes new legislation in relation to children in care.
  - In relation to adoption and contact, the Act makes provisions for implementing from the Government paper "*An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay*" which has the overall objective of seeing more children being adopted with less delay.
- 3.4 Milton Keynes Council's approach to working with the children in its care is detailed in the Children in Care plan, the framework for which forms the basis of this report.

#### 4. Milton Keynes Children in Care Profile

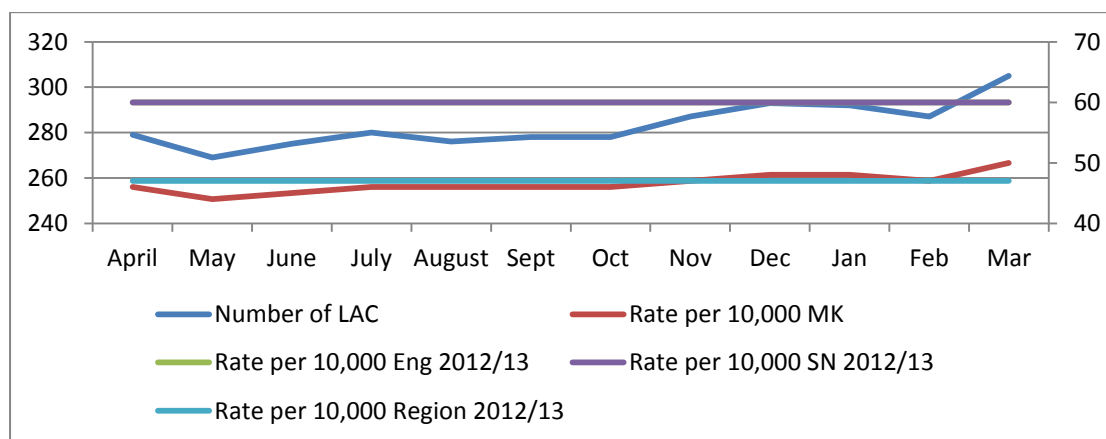
4.1 Data: Numbers in Care Rates per 10,000 are published by the DfE in October / November each year for the previous reporting year (April to March). The latest available rate (at 31 March 2013) appears on some charts as a flat line comparator.

##### Data: Numbers in Care

	April 2013	Mar 2014
Number of LAC	279	305
Rate per 10,000 MK	46	50
Rate per 10,000 England 2012/13	60	60
Rate per 10,000 SN 2012/13	60	60
Rate per 10,000 Region 2012/13	47	47

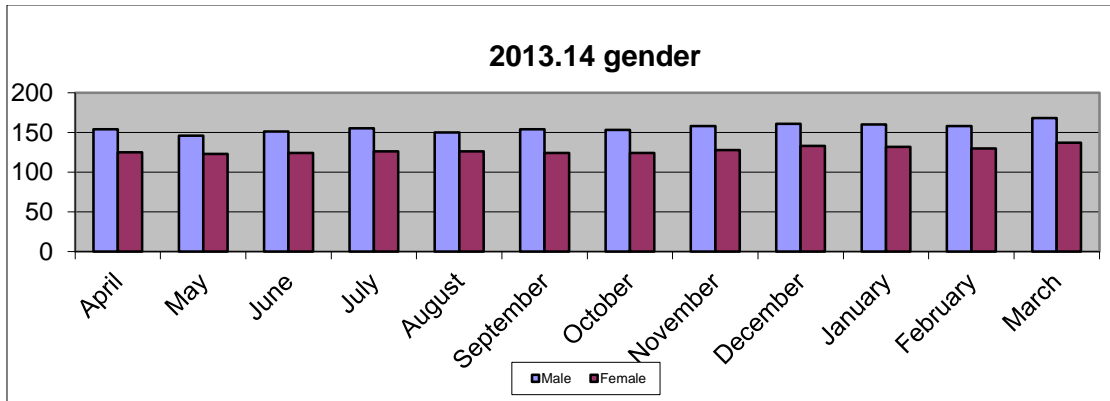


England and Statistical Neighbour rates are the same.



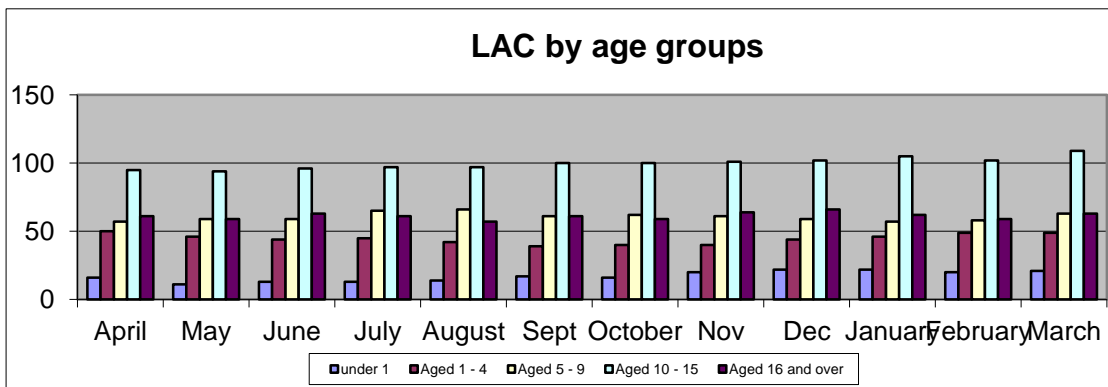
#### 4.2 Data: Gender

	April 2013	%	Mar 2014	%	England March 2013 %
Male	154	55	168	55	55
Female	125	45	137	45	45



#### 4.3 Data: Age

	April 2013	%	Mar 2014	%	England March 2013 %
under 1	16	66	21	7	6
Aged 1 - 4	50	18	49	16	18
Aged 5 - 9	57	20	63	20.5	19
Aged 10 - 15	95	34	109	36	36
Aged 16 and over	61	22	63	20.5	20



#### 4.4 Data: Ethnicity

	April 2013	%	Mar 2014	%	England March 2013 %
A1 White British	216	72	234	76.5	74
A2 White Irish	1		1		
A3 Any Other White Background	4		5		
A4 Traveller of Irish Heritage					
A5 Gipsy /Roma					
B1 White and Black Caribbean	9	3	10	3	3
B2 White and Black African	4		3		
B3 White and Asian	4		5		
B4 Any Other Mixed Background	5	1	7	2	3
C1 Indian			2		
C2 Pakistani	3		5		
C3 Bangladeshi	3		4		
C4 Any Other Asian Background	5		6		
D1 Caribbean	1		2		
D2 African	13	4.5	14	4.5	3
D3 Any Other Black Background	3		3		
E1 Chinese					
E2 Any Other Ethnic Group	8		4		
Not obtained / not recorded / unborn					
	<b>279</b>		305		

#### 4.5. Commentary

- The numbers of children in care has increased over the year but remains below the national and statistical neighbour average in terms of rate per 10,000. The MK rate is at 50 per 10,000 and the national and statistical neighbour rate is 60 per 10.000. This continues to reflect the effectiveness of the robust Family Support strategy which is in place in Milton Keynes.
- The demographic breakdown of the MK children in care population is very much in line with the national picture.
- The high numbers in the 5-9 and 10-15 age range indicate that it is unlikely that the majority of this core group of young people will exit care as the many of the permanency arrangements will be for these children in a care placement.
- The percentage of Black and Minority Ethnic children in care is 20%, which is lower than the Milton Keynes percentage of child population which is 35%.

## 5. Children in Care Plan: Priorities for Children in Care

### Corporate Parenting Panel Activity

- The action plan for Children in Care was presented to and agreed by the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- The Corporate Parenting Panel has met on 6 occasions since the production of the last annual report.
- In 2013/14 the Panel has been chaired by Cllr Norman Miles and panel members were Cllr Brock, Cllr O'Neill, Cllr Zealley, Cllr Bradburn, and Cllr Small. The panel was attended by Cllr Dransfield, Lead Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning.
- More broadly, the Corporate Parenting Panel has received reports relating to Inspection Improvement Plan actions relevant to Children in Care arising from the previous Safeguarding and Looked After Inspection in 2012 (SLAC).

### 5.1 Working with Families

- *The vast majority of children are most likely to thrive and achieve good outcomes if they are cared for within their own families, therefore preventative services and early intervention to support children in need and their families will be provided to give them every chance to stay together.*
- *Where children cannot be supported within their birth family, arrangements with friend's family and connected persons will be fully explored to provide permanent alternatives.*

### 5.2 Data: Family and Friends assessments and Placements

Year	Number Viability Assessments	Number completed/ agreed assessments	full	Number of F+F placements	England March 2013 %
09/10	36	6			
10/11	51	10			
11/12	46	12			
12/13	52	18		33 - 11% (as at March13)	8
13/14 to date	80	22		43 - 14% (as at March14)	

### 5.3 Commentary

- The Milton Keynes approach to working with families is detailed in the Family Support strategy and one of the measures of the effectiveness of

the strategy is the low numbers of children in care in comparison with statistical neighbours and the national average.

- Robust interventions take place through the council's Early Help services, Children and Family Practices and the Social Care Family Support teams and there are key processes in place at critical points in the child's journey with the Integrated referral hub and where there is a likelihood of a child entering care, and children are only admitted to care where this is judged to be the only safe and appropriate option for the child at that time.
- Where children become Looked After, there is an increase in the number of Looked After Children who are placed with Family and Friends, thereby evidencing the action plan aims of placing children with their family wherever possible. The percentage of children placed with Family and Friends in MK is above the national average
- The data table also indicates the assessment and approval activity in relation to Family and Friends placements where the children are in Care and this activity now has to take place in very tight prescribed timescales where the matters are before the court.

#### 5.4 Corporate Parenting Panel Activity

- The Corporate Parenting Panel focusses upon those children who have entered care in Milton Keynes and whilst it should be aware that there are a range of services that are in place to support children with their families, the activity will concentrate on those children in the care system.
- The information regarding Family and Friends carers has been included in the reports of the Fostering service to the Corporate Parenting Panel, detailing both the levels of activity and numbers of children who are in local authority care, but who are cared for by people already known to them and who have been approved as foster carers.

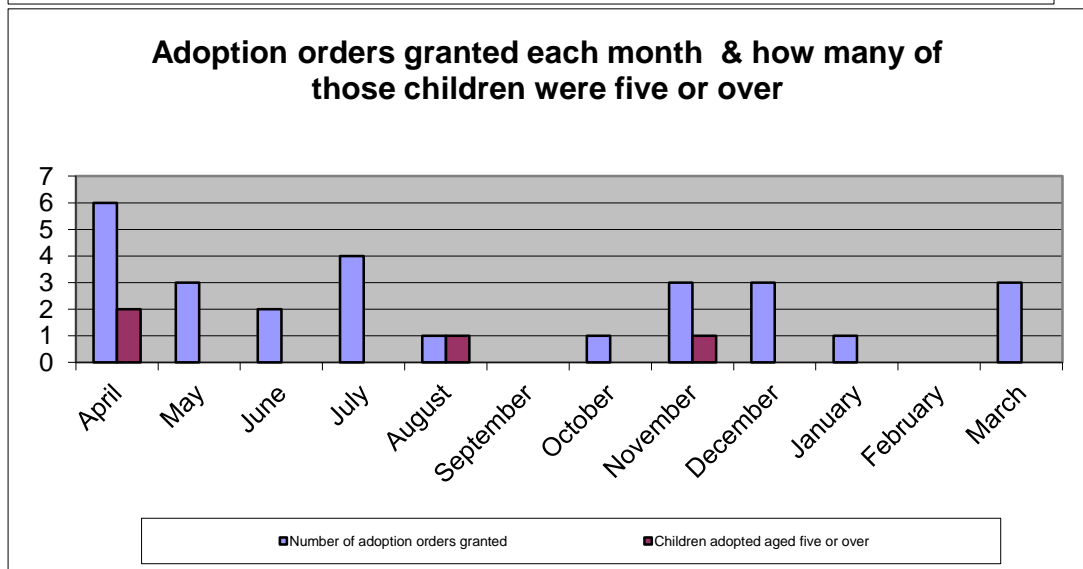
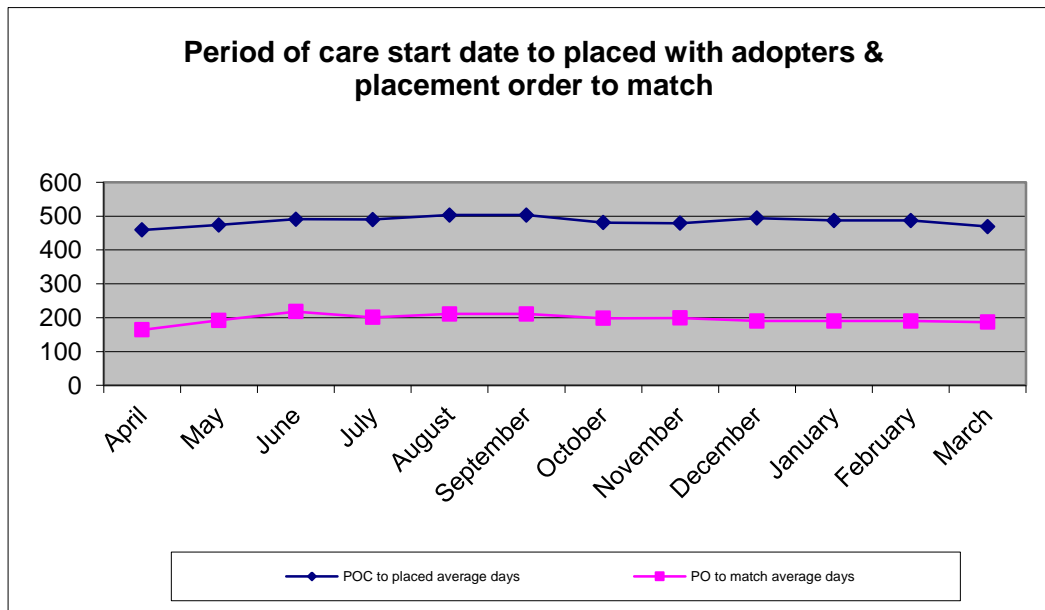
*The Children in Care survey (Jan 2014) showed that 52% children thought that they entered care at about the right time.*

#### 6. **Permanency**

- *We will promote and develop our permanency offer to ensure timely achievement of permanent placements and placement stability through adoptions, special guardianship residence orders, and permanently matched foster care.*
- *Emotional and physical stability is a key requirement for improving outcomes so that continuity of relationships, community links, education and health provision, provides the right conditions for maximizing potential. We will work closely with partners to improve placement stability.*

## 6.1 Data Adoption

	April 2013	Mar 2014		2010/2013	
				LA Av	England av
POC to placed average days	459	469		558	647
PO to match average days	164	187		280	210
	April	Mar 14	Total to date		
Number of adoption orders granted	6	3	27		
Children adopted aged five or over	2	0	4		



MK – 3 year average = 5%

England – 3 year average = 4%

## 6.2 Commentary

- The government and Milton Keynes have placed a high priority on increasing the numbers of children adopted and the timeliness in which they are placed both through amended guidance and measurements and through legislation (Children and Families Act).

- The adoption performance in Milton Keynes has continued to improve with both the numbers of children adopted and the timeliness within which they were placed with adopters and adoption orders granted. The performance has been above the national average other than in relation to the timescale between the making of the placement order and matching. This particular performance indicator does need to be seen in the context of Milton Keynes practice principle of continuing to search for adoptive placements even for hard to place/older children where it appropriate to do so and specific work has taken place to initiate the family finding process at an earlier stage.
- Milton Keynes has pushed forward with practice in line with national directives, including foster to adopt placements, Concurrent Planning developments and planned activity days to assist the placement of children waiting for adoption. The Fostering to adopt scheme is placing children directly with foster carers who may become their adopters, thereby ensuring placement for the child with their permanent carers at the earliest opportunity.
- Milton Keynes has clear procedures and processes for matching, including permanence matching, for children with foster carers and there are robust management monitoring mechanisms in place to track the timeliness of the permanence and matching activity for children in care.
- The Council has used the adoption reform grant to fund specific posts to develop and improve practice in the above areas of work.

### 6.3 Corporate Parenting Panel activity

- The panel receives 6 monthly reports in relation to adoption and permanence activity and as well as including the adoption information above, the reports contain information on activity in relation to Special Guardianship orders and Residence orders, which are alternative legal routes to securing permanent placements for children in family settings.
- The Panel received a paper in April 2013 detailing the implications of local and national adoption developments for children in the care of Milton Keynes, which included information relating to the planned use of national adoption grant monies.
- The reports also set out the quality assurance and oversight processes for this area of work.
- The Panel also receives 6 monthly reports in relation to the activities of the Fostering service and included in these reports are the activity and numbers of children who are permanently matched with foster carers.

*The Children in Care Survey identified a number of factors that children and young people thought were important for placement stability including feeling safe, feeling part of a family, getting support for themselves and for their carers and help with*



education. One young person said “Placements need to be long term, keeping moving doesn’t help”

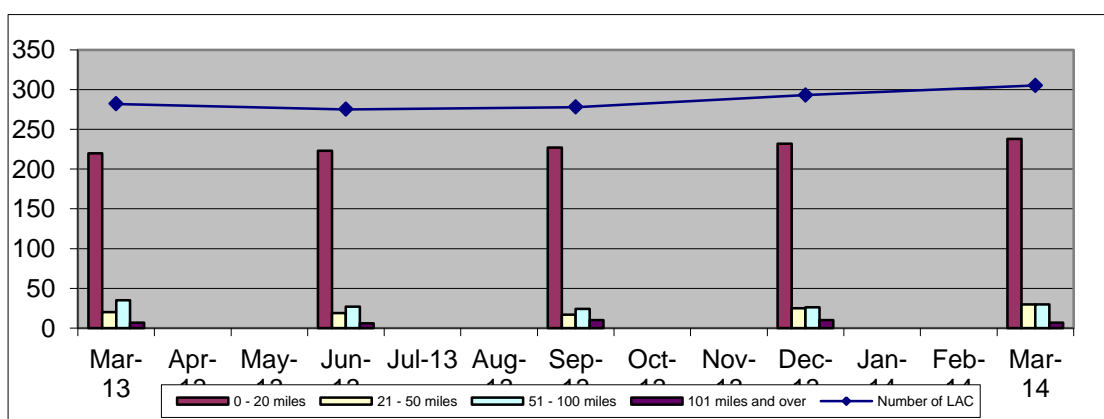
## 7. Local Placements

- We are committed to providing care placements wherever possible within the Milton Keynes area, preferably within appropriate family placements (foster homes), supported by the Council’s Family Placement Service.
- Residential placements will only be made where the complexity of a child’s needs mean that they cannot live in a family setting, or where a child expressly does not want an alternative family, and this is assessed to be in their best interests. Through the implementation of the sufficiency plan the council will seek to encourage provision of local residential care.

### 7.1 Data

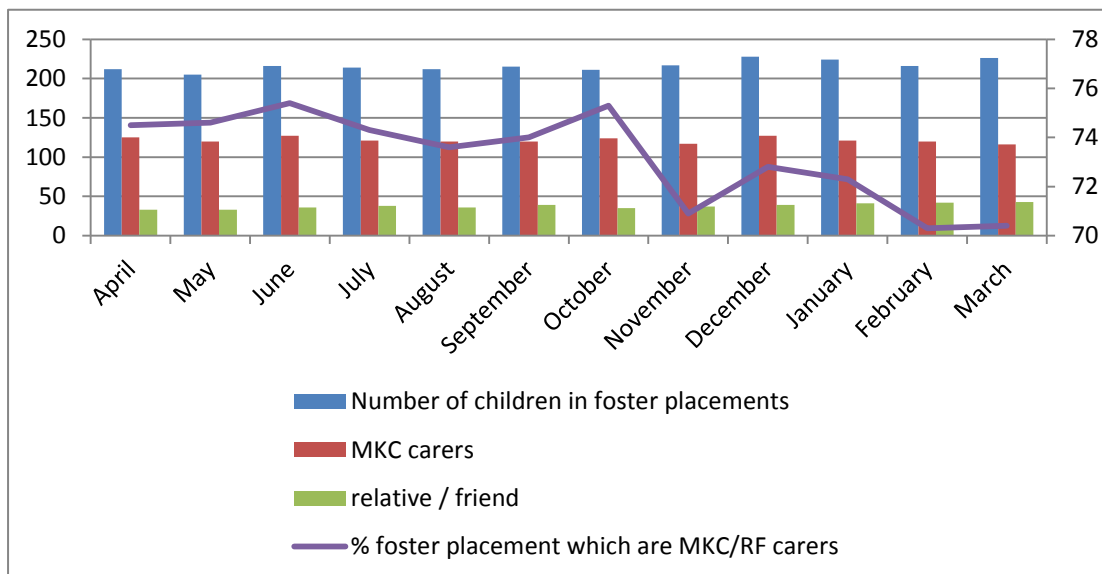
Data: Placement Distance from MK

	Mar-13	Jun-13	Sep-13	Dec-13	Mar-14	England March 2013
0 - 20 miles	220	223	227	232	238	
21 - 50 miles	20	19	17	25	30	
51 - 100 miles	35	27	24	26	30	
101 miles and over	7	6	10	10	7	
% 0 - 20 miles	78	81	82	79	78	76
<b>Number of LAC</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>305</b>	



Data: Foster Placement

	April 2013	Mar 2013	England March 2013
Number of children in foster placements	212	226	
Of which number of MKC carers	158	159	
% foster placement which are MKC carers	74.5	70.4	75



### Data: Placement Type

	April 13	July	October	Mar 2014		England March 2013
Placed for adoption	15	13	12	13		
In foster placement	212	214	211	226	74%	75%
Internal Residential	5	8	7	6		
External Residential	21	21	27	28		
Internal Residential School	1	2	2	2		
External Residential School	1	1	1	2		
Secure	1	1	0			
Nursing or Residential Assessment	2		2	2		
YOI	2	2	1			
Placed with parents	12	8	4	18	6%	5%
Independent living	6	11	8	8	2.5%	3%

### 7.2 Commentary

- Whilst there has been a rise in the numbers of children in care over the year, there has also been a rise in the numbers placed within 20 miles of Milton Keynes and whilst this has fluctuated through the year, the current percentage of children placed within 20 miles has slightly increased from the start of the year.
- It should be noted that the government guidance has recently changed the measure using the concept “at a distance”. This entails placements not within the Milton Keynes geographical area and not within an adjoining authority. Processes have been amended to ensure sign-off compliance for the making of these placements and reporting measures are being developed to monitor these.

- Milton Keynes has maintained a high percentage of children in family placements, including a high percentage with in-house foster carers. Although the percentage of in-house placements has slightly fallen in the last month, this still compares favourably with comparator averages.
- There are robust decision making and monitoring processes in place in respect of external placements.
- There has been an increase in the number of external residential placements and a specific piece of work is planned to analyse and make recommendations in relation to this, including the geographical location of the placements.
- The council's "placement sufficiency strategy" is due for review. This will be led by the Head of Corporate Parenting and will highlight placement and commissioning issues. The work in relation to residential placements identified above will feed into this.
- In-House residential placements are monitored through monthly visits (known as Regulation 33 visits) by an externally commissioned visitor independent of the service. The visits are required by national regulation and the guidance relating to these visits has recently been amended, reinforcing the need for independence. In light of this and the positive evaluation of the current service this arrangement will be continued in the next financial year.
- The monitoring visits described above are integrated with surgeries undertaken by elected members twice per year at each establishment, a practice recently implemented and which received positive appraisal from the January surgery. The surgery involves members meeting with parents, young people and staff at the establishment making it as relaxed and informal as possible and is a key element of gaining qualitative information and feedback.

### 7.3 Corporate Parenting Panel activity

- The Panel has received a specific report from the Head of Delivery Corporate Parenting detailing the activity and issues relating to Out of Area Placements in June 2013.
- The Panel also receives regular reports as highlighted above in relation to the activity of the fostering services, including recruitment and placement activity (known as Regulation 35 reports).
- The Panel receives reports to each meeting on the residential monitoring visits (Regulation 33), including member surgeries.
- The Panel also receives reports (Regulation 34) covering information relating to each of the residential establishments, including any information and action plans arising from OFSTED inspections.

- The member activity relating to the Regulation 33 surgeries has been detailed above and there is evidence of positive and practical outcomes from the recent surgery. This activity will be important in meeting development requirements for qualitative feedback from parents and other staff/young people as part of the monitoring process.

*The Children in Care Survey asked 4-11 year olds what would make a “good” foster home. Overall there were 6 common themes of safety, material things, house itself, behaviours, people and food. One young person aged 16 said of their placement” I don’t want to leave, it is amazing, but no doubt when I do, I will come and visit”*

## **8. Enjoying and Achieving**

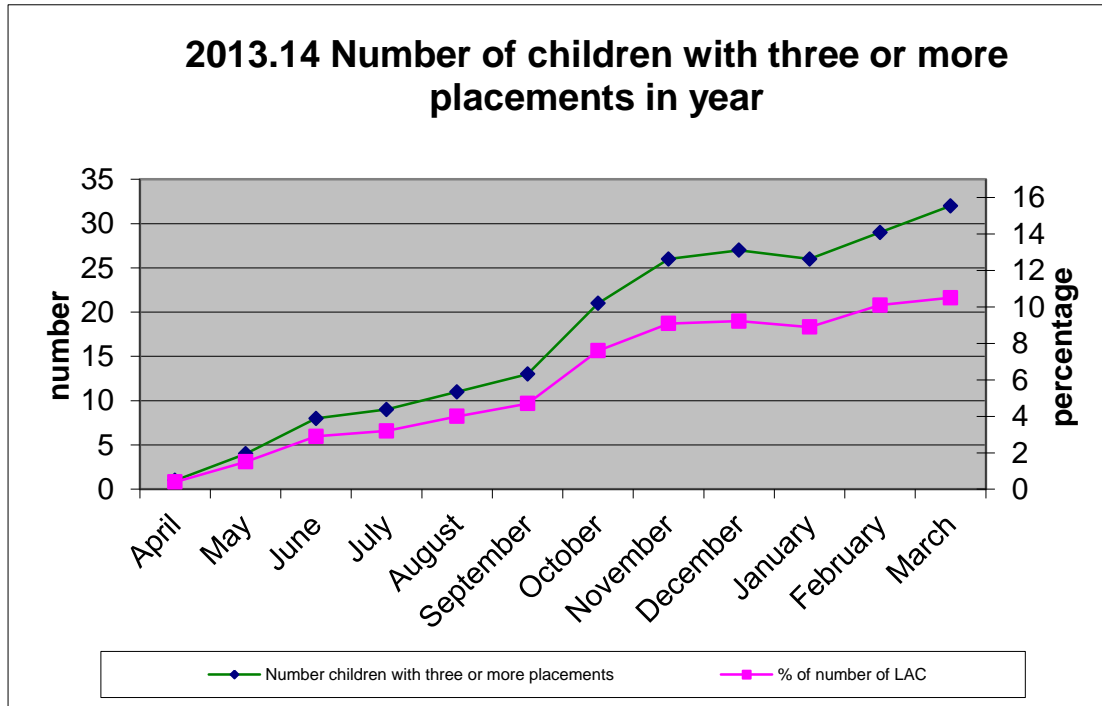
- *Emotional and physical stability is a key requirement for improving outcomes so that continuity of relationships, community links, education and health provision, ensure the right conditions for maximising potential. We will work with partners to improve placement stability.*
- *All looked after children will receive appropriate education provision regardless of their placement and ability to access school. Finding an appropriate education setting is just as important as finding suitable carers for looked after children. Personal Education Plans will be used to ensure education and learning arrangements are central in a looked after child’s care plan.*
- *Central to all children’s ability to fulfil their potential as they develop from childhood and through to teenage years is the need to be well – both physically and emotionally. Good health is a priority for our looked after children. Good physical and emotional health and wellbeing are key contributors to broader outcomes such as improved learning and achievement and to the long-term prospects of young people as they move into adulthood.*
- *All children, especially those in care will be safeguarded and protected, particularly from the risk of sexual exploitation. We will ensure information sharing and work with partners is robust through agreed and effective protocols to protect vulnerable groups such as those missing from care.*
- *We will aim to reduce the involvement of children and young people in criminal activities and ensure children and young people are not deprived of their liberty except where there are exceptional circumstances which are in accordance with legal and service procedures.*

### **8.1 Data Stability**

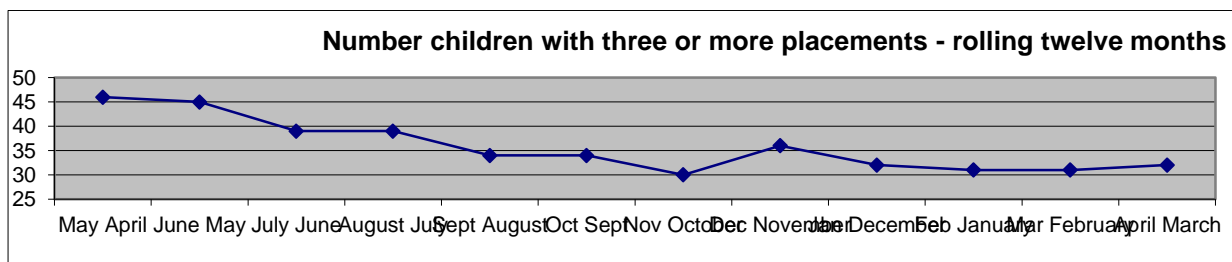
Children aged under 16 at 31 March who have been looked after for 2.5 years or more and in the same placement for 2 years or more

	April	July	October	Mar 14
% in same placement	76.2	72	69.1	62.2
numerator	80	70	65	56
denominator	105	96	94	90

Number of children with 3 or more placements in a year



England – March 2013 – 11%



## 8.2 Commentary

- Stability is a key element of enabling children to enjoy and achieve. The stability performance in Milton Keynes is improving and again there are robust management processes in place to monitor the effectiveness of practice in this area. Whilst the data on stability in terms of children who have remained in the same placement would indicate a downward trend through the year, in fact the percentage has dropped as the majority of the moves have been planned and positive moves (e.g. to an adoptive placement). The overall performance achieving 62% of relevant children remaining in placement has improved from the previous year and has exceeded the target of 54% set for the year. This however does still sit below the national average of 67%

- Further to this, the percentage of children with 3 or more placements is falling and again the target of 15% has been exceeded with the year-end percentage achieving 10% which is better than national (11%) and regional (12%) comparators. Management and monitoring processes identify the small number of young people who have a high number of moves and ensure that robust plans and services are in place to try and meet their needs.
- In terms of educational attainment and progress, the Virtual School service provides key support to and overview of the educational provision for Milton Keynes Looked after Children. There is in place a Virtual School Management Committee and a Virtual School leadership meeting providing operational and strategic overviews of the educational provision for children in care. There has been evidenced improvement of the quality of the PEPS (the detailed education plan for children in care) noted through the Quality Assurance processes.
- The Health Needs of Looked After Children are supported and overviewed by the Looked After Children (LAC) Health Forum and 2 LAC nurses and a Primary Mental Health worker are based in the corporate parenting team which underpins good joint working.
- Young people, including Looked After Children who go missing or who are suspected to be at risk of sexual exploitation, are monitored through a monthly MKMARM, a meeting of senior multi agency managers to ensure robust plans and support are in place.
- Looked After Children who are involved in criminal activity are supported by the Youth Offending Service.

### 8.3 Corporate Parenting Panel Activity

- The Panel considered a specific paper on placement stability based on recently published national data requirements and which included information on MK performance in this area in January 2014.
- Placement Information and activity is reported to the Corporate Parenting Panel through the fostering and adoption reports highlighted above.
- The Panel received an annual report on the activity of the Virtual School and, further to this, received a specific paper relating MK children in Education Boarding provision in November 2013.
- The Panel received an annual report relating to the Health of Looked after Children in September 2013.
- The Panel receives reports from the Youth Offending Service relating to work with LAC who are known to that service.

- The Panel received a paper on updated guidance relating to Missing Children and the MK response to the guidance amendments in April 2013.

*The Children in Care survey highlighted that for young people aged 16 or over, help with education was the most important factor from their placement. Further to this 91% of children and young people were happy with the way their health assessments were carried out.*

## 9. Transitions into adulthood

- *We will support looked after children and young people to make a successful transition into adulthood through the provision of good quality education, training and employment, suitable accommodation and support.*

### 9.1 Data: Accommodation and Education, Employment and Training (EET)

4. CARE LEAVERS		Target	Jun 2013	Sept 2013	Dec 2013	Mar 2014	England March 2013
	NI147 Care leavers in suitable accommodation %	92	83	77.8	86.6	92	88
	NI148 Care leavers in education, training or employment	72	50	55.6	60.0	72	58

### 9.2 Data: Pathway Plans completion rate

Sept 2013:	93%
December 2013	68%
March 2014	76%

### 9.3 Commentary

- The Leaving Care team was incorporated into the Corporate Parenting team in February 2013 to ensure a smoother transition into adulthood for young people leaving care.
- The work of the team is underpinned by working relationships with a range of partner agencies who play a crucial role in supporting this group of young people, particularly in the key performance areas highlighted above.
- The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has improved from the start of the year and the year-end target has been met.
- Similarly, the percentage of care leavers in education, training or employment has improved through the year and the target of 66% has been met.

- The performance in relation to Pathway plans has been affected by staff sickness and vacancy and there is currently a focus on urgent improvement of this measure to ensure timely completion and review of the Pathway plans which underpin the work and support to the young person to move into adulthood.
- Milton Keynes has adopted its own version of the National Care Leavers Charter following consultation with local young people and the impact of this will be measured alongside impact measures of the Children in Care strategy.

*The Children in Care survey asked young people aged 16 and over to rate the key themes for them as care leavers. These included, in order of rating, Sexual Health advice, their Health history, Support post 16 and Access to Information, Life History and Independent Skill Support,*

#### 9.4 Corporate Parenting Panel Activity

- The Corporate Parenting Panel received a report structured against the new OFSTED criteria for inspecting services for care leavers which detailed the work of the Milton Keynes Leaving Care service in light of those criteria, the joint working arrangements with partner agencies and the issues facing care leavers.

### 10 Participation

- *Children's rights include the right to participation in decisions made about them and their lives. Children in care will have the opportunity to make their views known at every stage, and we will ensure that those views influence both their individual plans and also the shape and design of current and future services.*

#### 10.1 Data: Participation of young people in their Child Care Reviews

Participation in Reviews	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4		
	No.	Total	%	No.	Total	%	No.	Total	%	No.	Total	%
Children and young people*	47	50	94.0	49	54	90.7	87	89	97.8	75	77	97.4

#### 10.2 Commentary

- The participation of children and young people in their statutory reviews is to ensure that there is clear consultation with them in relation to planning for and with them. The participation measure is wider than just attendance at meetings and there are a range of ways in which young people's views can be gained and shared at the reviews. The percentage of children participating is high, but the IRO service is considering ways of improving attendance as this is currently averaging about 60%.



- The broader involvement of Children and Young people in strategic developments is undertaken through a range of activities and is supported by the Participation worker.

### 10.3 Corporate Parenting Panel activity

- Children in Care in Milton Keynes are represented by a group of care experienced young people who are called Today's Children, Tomorrow's Future (TCTF). Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel meet on a quarterly basis with TCTF to ensure there is direct and effective communication with young people for members.
- Corporate Parenting Panel members attend key events such as True Triumph, a celebration of the achievements of Looked After Children.
- The Corporate Parenting Panel receives reports at every meeting detailing the work and activities of the TCTF in the period.

*The Children in Care Survey quoted in this report is just one of the mechanisms for ensuring that the voices of children and young people in care are heard*

## 11. Future Work Programme

- The new 2014/15 Corporate Parenting Panel will ensure that its operational arrangements are best suited to discharge its functions, particularly the engagement of children and young people in its work to ensure the best possible experience and outcomes for children in and leaving the council's care.
- In November 2013 OFSTED published a revised framework for inspecting Children's Services known as the Single Inspection Framework (SIF). The Panel will be key part of the inspection relating to Children in Care and given the high likelihood of the inspection taking place in the year 2014/15, any action plan arising from that inspection will be reported to the Panel.
- The Corporate Parenting Panel will continue to receive reports relating to the priority areas for the Children in Care plan and will receive reports relating to key areas of review and development for 2014/15, including the Sufficiency Review and related residential placement issues.
- The Panel will receive reports relating to the detail and impact of legislative and guidance changes.
- The Annual Report will provide an overview of the key issues relating to the Children in Care plan and will be one of the monitoring mechanisms considering the effectiveness of the implementation.
- The Panel will receive reports of service performance in meeting the commitments of the Care Leavers Charter.

- Corporate Panel members will continue to engage directly with TCTF members with regular attendance at TCTF meetings and representation at key events for Children in Care.
- Corporate Panel members will continue to offer “surgery” sessions at MKC residential establishments for parents, young people and staff as a key part of ensuring qualitative feedback within the Regulation 33 monitoring process