



# Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy

2020-2023

## SUMMARY

This strategy identifies our sufficiency needs and how we plan to address our sufficiency gaps for Children Looked After and Care Leavers

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## 1 Executive Summary

The purpose of our strategy is to set out our vision and approach to providing sufficient, safe, secure and appropriate accommodation to meet the diverse needs of the children in our care and care leavers over the next three years. We want our children and young people to have access to accommodation which is of the highest quality; child and family centred; personalised and responsive to support our children to achieve the best possible outcomes. Our emphasis is to ensure that we are able to provide local placements in Reading or as close to Reading as possible to enable children and young people to remain in contact with family, friends and local services. Our key priorities are:

- To develop a good fostering service which can meet the placement needs of the majority of our children in care with specialist foster carers in Reading who can care for children in emergencies; provide respite with children with disabilities and provide therapeutic care.
- To reduce our dependency on spot purchasing arrangements for residential provision and focus on building local residential provision to meet the needs of our children, including those with complex trauma and challenging behaviours.
- To provide a range of accommodation options available to our care leavers via commissioning supported lodging provisions and service redesign, to enable our care leavers to progress confidently and successfully to independence.
- To ensure parent and baby assessments take place locally within suitable accommodation to meet the needs of the family.
- To work with providers so there is a sufficient and diverse range of accommodation and support within Reading able to meet the varying needs of children and young people.

Our strategy considers our current position and our future placement needs to meet our sufficiency responsibilities as follows:

Accommodation type	Current number of placements	Total placements needed over three years	Additional requirements needed each year			Total sufficiency placements gap to be addressed over three-years
			20/21	21/22	22/23	
Fostering	152	263	37	37	37	111
Residential homes	0	20	7	5	8	20
Semi Independent	172	190	10	4	4	18
Parent and child residential and IFA	13	27	4	4	4	12

Our action plan 2020-23 sets out activities, targets and timescales for achieving the key strategic priorities. By working towards meeting these priorities we will be better placed to provide the best placements possible for children in or leaving care and meet its sufficiency duty.

The delivery of our strategy is dependent on our ability to offer the right help and support at the right time much earlier in the process to enable children to remain with families, preventing needs from escalating and entering care. We are committed to working with partners to ensure that only the children and young people who need to come into care are accommodated. We will build on the strengths of our families by supporting them via a range of initiatives such as our pre-birth team, family reunification team and adolescent support team.

## 2. Introduction

The Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) Sufficiency Strategy for 2019-2023 details how the company intends to meet sufficiency duty on behalf of Reading Borough Council. This strategy is a statutory requirement set out in Section 22G of the Children's Act 1989. This duty requires "local authorities to take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area ('the Sufficiency Duty')".

Although the sufficiency duty lies with each local authority, that duty can be implemented most effectively through a partnership between the authority, company and partners. Each local authority has a duty, under section 10 of the Children Act ('the 2004 Act') to make arrangements to promote co-operation with its relevant partners with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority's area. Each of the statutory 'relevant partners' in section 10 is also required to co-operate with the local authority in making those arrangements. The duty on local authorities to secure sufficient accommodation should be undertaken within the context of these planning and co-operation duties which the 2004 Act places on the company, the council and all partners in order to improve the wellbeing of the child in the area.

### 1.1 Our Vision and principles

As stated, our vision for all children and young people in Reading: 'To unlock all the resources in the borough of Reading to help every child have a happy, healthy and successful life.'

Our work is informed by a series of guiding principles.

- Children and young people should be heard, and their opinion should be influential
- Children and young people should live in or close to their local communities unless this is not in their best interests
- Children and young people should have the opportunity to benefit from being part of some type of family
- Children and young people should get the support they need to thrive
- Children and young people should be enabled to grow and develop into independent adults

Our sufficiency strategy and plan set out how we will enable this to happen for every Reading child in our care and those leaving care. Throughout the life of this strategy the company will continue to work with our children in care, care leavers and key partners to deliver our priorities.

## 2. Reading's Children and Young People Profile

### 2.1 General population of children and young people in Reading

From the Public Health Berkshire Observatory, in 2018 Reading's children and young people population was 33,876, this is higher when compared to the rest of the south east and compared to national figures. The Office of National Statistics (see table 1 below) predicts that, by 2027 there will be an overall increase in the children and young people's population with an increase in children and young people aged between 11-19 and a reduction in the number of under-fives and 5-10-year olds.

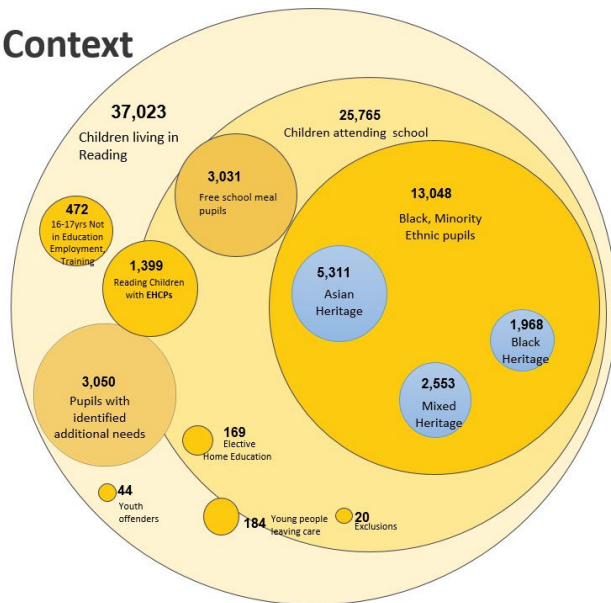
Table 1 Reading population under 25

Reading Population under 25																	
Actual and projected number of children and young people in Reading by age group																	
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Under 5	11,937	12,284	12,400	12,571	12,485	12,381	12,242	12,044	11,979	11,936	11,871	11,805	11,723	11,646	11,580	11,515	11,455
Aged 5-10	10,118	10,686	11,470	12,084	12,613	13,068	13,401	13,692	13,640	13,581	13,490	13,377	13,263	13,081	13,022	12,988	12,941
Aged 11-15	8,061	7,946	7,900	7,969	8,057	8,198	8,461	8,935	9,439	9,850	10,222	10,502	10,688	10,775	10,762	10,679	10,580
Aged 16-19	8,154	7,655	7,969	7,859	8,031	7,971	7,957	7,859	7,826	7,846	7,960	8,308	8,667	9,100	9,466	9,743	9,945
Aged 20-25	17,528	17,391	17,306	17,368	17,752	17,667	17,443	17,331	17,390	17,297	17,134	16,846	16,732	16,785	16,890	17,181	17,630
<b>Total</b>	<b>55,798</b>	<b>55,962</b>	<b>57,045</b>	<b>57,851</b>	<b>58,938</b>	<b>59,285</b>	<b>59,504</b>	<b>59,861</b>	<b>60,274</b>	<b>60,510</b>	<b>60,677</b>	<b>60,838</b>	<b>61,073</b>	<b>61,387</b>	<b>61,720</b>	<b>62,106</b>	<b>62,551</b>

In relation to gender, Reading’s children and young people’s population is equally divided between males and females. In terms of ethnicity, the general population of Reading has a higher number of individuals from ethnic minority groups with over double the percentage of those recorded in the rest of the south east at 34.7% and 14.8% respectively. This is highlighted in figure 1 below which shows data for Reading’s school-age population between September 2018 and September 2019. More than half of the children attending school are from black and minority ethnic groups (BAME) and approximately 170 languages are spoken by our school age population.

Figure 1 Demographic of Reading school age population <sup>1</sup>

### Reading Context



## 2.2 Readings Children on the edge of care Profile

The company supports children and young people of all ages who are at risk of becoming looked after or where care is a live option whilst managing risk at home. It is important to note that not all children do not necessarily experience or progress through our system.

<sup>1</sup> all EHCPs issued by Reading as at 29 Feb 2020

## 2.3 Child Protection

The number of children with a protection plan in Reading has fluctuated over the last 4 years as shown in table 2 (see data annexe). The number of child protection plans has been consistently lower than our statistical neighbours other than a one-off large increase in plans which occurred in 2017. Further scrutiny will be required to establish whether a lower number of child protection plans is due to lower need or insufficient identification of the children requiring plans.

## 3. Reading's Children in Care and Care leavers Profile

Since 2016 Reading has seen a sharp increase in the number of children in care. In 2019/20 year to date, (table 3) the number of children looked after is 288.

Table 3 Number of children looked after

No. of children looked after	16/17	17/18	18/19	YTD 19/20
Outturn	265	274	287	288
Per 10k pop	72	75	72	77.7
Target outturn	259.7	270.2	261.2	267.0
Target per 10k pop	NA	66	72	72
Nat. Average (Rnk)	62 (89)	64 (97)	n/a (95)	n/a (95)
SN Average (Rnk)	65.3 (6)	63.2 (8)	n/a (8)	n/a (8)

The age of our children in care has remained largely static over the previous five years and each age group has seen an increase. Our children aged 1 - 4 have experienced the greatest percentage increase at 40% over the past five years however due to the smaller numbers in this age group the largest increase of children numerically is within the 10 to 15-year-old age group see table 4 in data annexe.

### 3.1 New entrants into care and length of stay.

The number of new entrants into care has varied across years. Reading as a town is growing in terms of new homes being built, businesses moving into the town and increasing transport links which may have an impact on new entrants into care. The company's early help and prevention offer has been increased and it is hoped that this will have a positive impact on new entrants into care. However, from our data the ages at which children enter shows that; approximately 37% are likely to be 0-4; approximately 18% are likely to be 5-9; approximately 27% are likely to be 10-15 and approximately 18% are likely to be aged 16 and over.

In terms of how long children and young people stay in care, charts 1 and 2 below show that children aged between 0-4 and those 16 and over are most likely to be in care for less than two years. Data shows that this is due to 0-4-year olds being diverted out of care into the care of family or friends or into adoption and those who are 16 and over on entry into care leaving due to no longer requiring support post 18. Of all children remaining in care for 2 years plus, 10 -15-year olds have consistently represented the largest cohort of children than any other age groups.

Chart 1 In care under 2 years

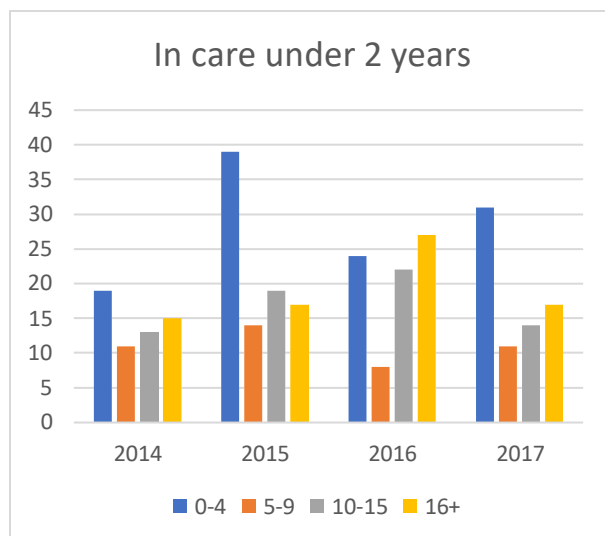
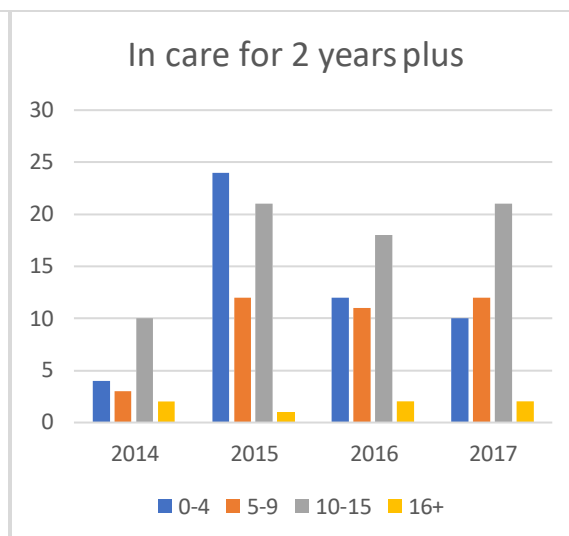


Chart 2 In care for 2 years plus



From our analysis, 22% of new entrants are likely to be from BAME groups and 17% are likely to have SEN requiring an EHC Plan. Between 2016/17 and 2017/18 the main reasons for children entering care was due to being at risk of domestic violence and neglect, increases were also seen in children who became looked after due to physical abuse. The number of children starting to be looked after in 2018/19 reduced significantly by 25%. To date in 2019/20 there has been an increase in children entering care as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children or due to abuse or neglect. The legal status of children is also changing with increases being seen in emergency protection orders, interim care orders and full care orders.

When comparing children in need and children with a child Protection Plans to our children looked after, there is an increase in the number of females becoming looked after bringing the percentage in line with the general population of Reading. The number of children on a Child Protection Plan with a disability and/or an Education Health and Care Plan is lower than those looked after or who are a child in need. On average 2% of the general school age population have an EHCP, an average of 19% of children in need have an EHCP, 9% of those on a child protection plan and 22% of children looked after.

For care leavers, the ratio of males continues to be substantially higher than females which needs further analysis as it is not representative of the general CLA population. A high proportion of care leavers are in suitable accommodation so understanding where female care leavers are placed may support future commissioning arrangements. The highest number of young people where age 17 which is to be expected, however there are six young people age 20 and over in semi-independent accommodation and support services already this financial year that must be looked at to ensure suitability of the placement. The number of young people recorded as being white is declining with an increasing number of young people from BAME groups.

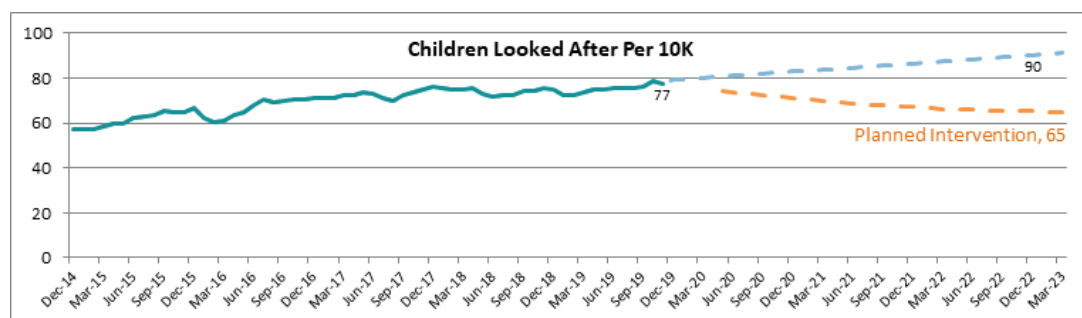
### 3.2 Planning for future demand

Based on historical data of our children entering care and an expected increase in the children and young people population, the number of children looked after per 10k and in total is expected to

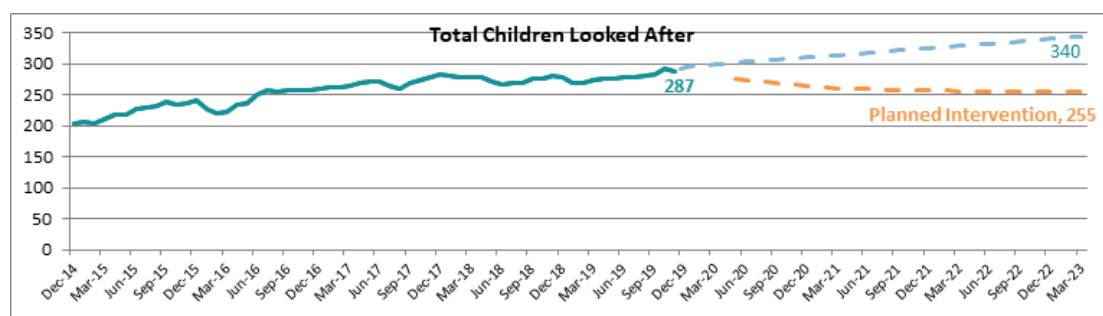


increase by 15% by 2022. However, the company is committed to reducing the number of children entering care by building community capacity to prevent cases from escalating. As outlined in the company’s business plan 2020-23, the company has secured transformation funding to embed three new teams: Pre-birth Team, Family Reunification Team and the additional Community Adolescent support Team. The implementation of a demand management strategy and effective partnership working, the numbers of children looked after is expected to decrease by 11% per 10k as shown in graphs 1 and 2 below.

Graph 1 Children looked after per 10k



Graph 2 Total Children looked after

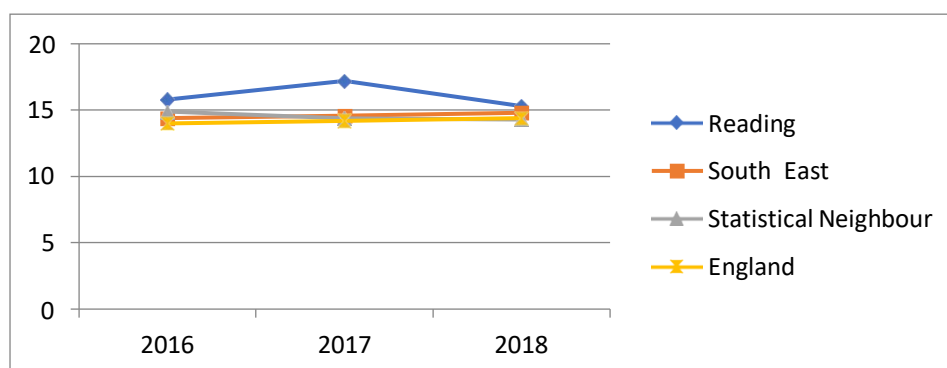


### 3.3 Mental health of Children Looked After

Children in care often have poor mental health outcomes. The rate of mental health disorders in the general population aged 5 to 15 is 10%. For Children looked after it is 45%, and 72% for children living in residential care<sup>2</sup>. In Reading our children in care on average have a slightly higher SDQ score (15.3) than both statistical neighbours (14.29) and the England average (14.2). Although the trend for Reading is decreasing, this is a challenge and will require focused attention for Reading to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of our children in care.

<sup>2</sup> NICE (2019) Draft Looked-after children and young people (update) <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/gid-ng10121/documents/draft-scope>

Graph 3 SDQ scores



### 3.4 Children looked after and their education

The attendance of children in Reading who are looked after is good with lower numbers of unauthorised absence when compared to the South East, Statistical Neighbours and nationally since 2014. The current percentage of unauthorised absence for children looked after continuously for the last 12 months stands at 0.9% compared to 1.3% nationally.

In relation to attainment and achievement, in 2019 children looked after continuously over a 12-month period achieved a sustained good level of development of 80% compared to 48% nationally. However, only 50% were at the expected level at their year 1 Phonics Screening Check compared to 66.7% nationally and 33% were achieving the KS1 expected Level in reading, writing and mathematics compared to 37% nationally. This falls further for KS2 expected Level in reading, writing and mathematics to 20% for our Children looked after compared to 37% nationally. For the general school age population in Reading, academic achievement at all stages is around the national average. However, the results of all our children at KS3 and KS4 is one of the highest in the country.

As shown in table 5 below, the number of requests for assessment for an Education, Health Care (EHC) has risen year on year, however the number of EHC plans issued is not following the same trend, with the number of EHC plans issued to children looked after significantly reduced in 2019. This may be in part to the length of time required to complete and placement instability resulting in a reduction in completed plans.

	Requests for EHC plan assessment	EHC Plan issued	EHC Plan issued to Children looked after	Number of Children looked after with an EHC plan as at 31st December	% of Children looked after with an EHC plan as at 31st December
2017	226	147	31	75	29%
2018	262	201	34	72	26%
2019	296	174	16	68	25%

Table 5 EHC Plans

### 3.5 How safe are our children?

Children and young people who are missing from home, care or full-time school education (including those who are excluded from school) and those at risk of exploitation and trafficking must receive well-coordinated responses that reduce the harm or risk of harm to them. In 2018, 58<sup>3</sup> children were identified at the Exploitation and Missing (EMRAC) meeting. Whilst the number of children at

<sup>3</sup> all children in Reading including children looked after

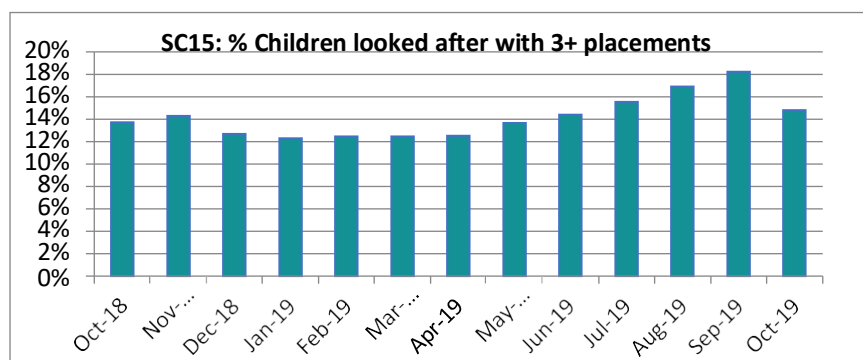
risk of exploitation in Reading are relatively low. Reading has been identified as one of the top 25 authorities<sup>4</sup> with the highest numbers of children at risk of gang involvement. Whilst these figures are not specific to children looked after in Reading, it is widely acknowledged that children looked after are at greater risk of being exploited.

Whilst not directly affecting the sufficiency of quality accommodation and support for children and young people looked after, young people with complex needs resulting in any form of exploitation can become harder to place affecting our ability to successfully utilise local services. This is due to matching their needs with the needs of other young people and the risk that can be posed to staff, property and the registration of services if risk is not contained or managed properly. Some young people also require solo placements in order to be able to protect themselves and others from harm. These factors reduce the choice of good quality placements within or close to Reading often leading to those with the most need being placed furthest away. Options for developing local provision with wrap around support for highly complex young people will need to form part of our response as well as working closely with Police and Health colleagues to reduce risks.

### 3.6 Placement stability and suitability

Of our children under 16 who have been looked after 66% had been in our care for at least 2.5 years and have been living in the same placement for at least 2 years or placed for adoption. This is below the national average of 70% and higher than our statistical neighbours (64.4%). Chart 3 below shows that there has been a consistent increase in Children looked after with 3+ placements between April 2019 and September 2019. Although the number of placement breakdowns fell significantly in October 2019 to 14.8%. This remains higher than both the England average (10%) and statistical neighbours (10.9%).

Chart 3 Children looked after with 3+ placements



The company will seek to ensure pre-disruption meeting always occur when placements are risk of breaking down. In addition, the company will work with the market to strengthen strong placement matching process to ensure the best placement for a child and fits within the regulatory framework that the Ofsted inspection process monitors.

It is vital for the company to work with partners in health, education, Police, and housing services to plan and deliver sufficient accommodation. We will need support from our health and education colleagues in planning our placement accommodation, when matching particular children to specific placements, and in supporting us to maintain the stability of placements. We will need to work co-

<sup>4</sup> Company Adolescents at Risk Strategy

operatively with the Police to manage and support young people at risk of exploitation and offending.

### 3.7 Children placed in Reading by other authorities

In the last four years there has been between 26% and 37% of placements made within the Reading boundary by other local authorities (table 6). In 2017/18 over a third of available placements were used by children from other boroughs. In order to target this local provision being used by other local authorities, the company’s commissioning team are working with access and assessment team which receives notifications from other local authorities who place in the Reading area. Through accessing these notifications, providers who have placements in the Reading area can be identified enabling the commissioning team to build relationships with them, identifying upcoming vacancies and as a result utilising a higher proportion of local carers and services, keeping our young people as close to Reading as possible.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>BFFC placements within the Reading boundary</b>	67	58	81	78
<b>Other Local Authority placements within the Reading boundary</b>	36	38	57	45

Table 6 Source of placements in Reading

### 3.8 What children and young people tell us about where they want to live

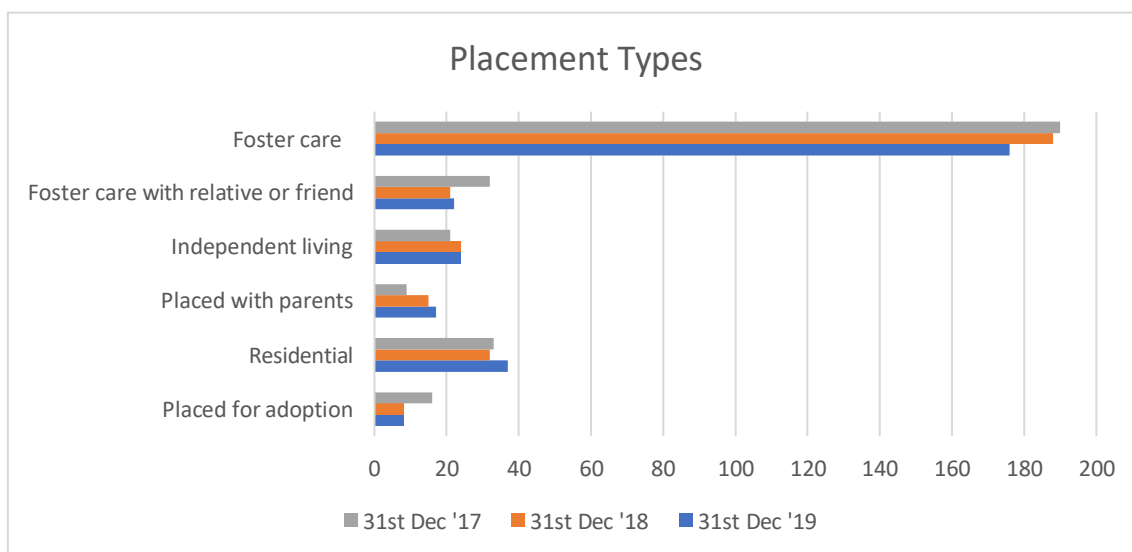
The company has an active Children in Care Council who meet regularly to feedback their experiences and to help shape the future direction of services.

The Children in Care Council have made it clear how important it is for our looked after children to remain in Reading where appropriate. The reason for this is due to supporting children and young people’s sense of identity, social networks and history/culture. When asked why being in Reading was important to our children in care, they replied ‘because it’s where you’re from’, it’s ‘near your family and friends’, ‘it’s where you went to school’, ‘it’s where you made your memories’ and ‘everything I know is in Reading’. When asked about the difficulties of being placed away from Reading our children looked after were concerned about how difficult it was to get back to Reading to be able to enjoy time with family and friends.

### 3.9 Reading Accommodation Profile

The Sufficiency Duty requires each authority to have a range of appropriate quality accommodation options for children in care and care leavers. The type of accommodation where a child is placed will depend on their assessed needs. Ensuring there is suitability of the accommodation for each child or young person’s placement is an important component to improving placement stability and improving overall outcomes. At the end of the last calendar year the majority of our children were living with foster carers (see chart 4 below). There has been a small increase in children in residential care, living with their parents or with family or friends but the split across placement types has remained largely static over the past three years

Chart 4 Placement types for Children looked after



### 4 Fostering

Many of our children looked after are living in short- or long-term fostering arrangements with either carers within the company’s Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) or with external IFAs. Nationally 73% of children looked after are living with foster carers compared with 74% in Reading and 71% in our statistical neighbour’s boroughs. Children accommodated within the company’s IFA the number of carers has reduced by 23% from 98 in 2017/18 to 74 in March 2020. Around 80% of the current company foster carers have more than 2 years’ experience. The majority are white (76%) followed by 14% Black or Black British 3% Asian or Asian British and 2% mixed heritage. These households provide 98 beds to our children and include 1 designated as day carers only, one designated as short break day carers only and two designated as respite carers. Of these 74 households, four are either committed to longer term arrangements such as staying put or retiring soon. There are 11 carers in the assessment stage with the potential to take 18 children if they are approved by the end of May 2020, increasing provision to 125 beds.

The company currently does not have a specialist fostering resource which could provide alternative and more local provision for our most complex and vulnerable children. In order to meet the needs of these children it is the intention to develop partnerships with therapeutic and special school nursing services alongside CAMHS and our in-house therapeutic Options Team to develop a small specialist therapeutic fostering team. Involving the fostering service and placements team early in the permanence planning journey for individual children will enable earlier assessment of

interfamilial placements and bespoke family finding which in turn will assist in general recruitment of mainstream foster carers. The retention of foster carers is also crucial, like other areas Reading as an ageing population of foster carers who have provided care for many years. Resignations through retirement has increased and there were 12 over the past year.

#### 4.1 Independent Fostering Agencies and IFA Framework

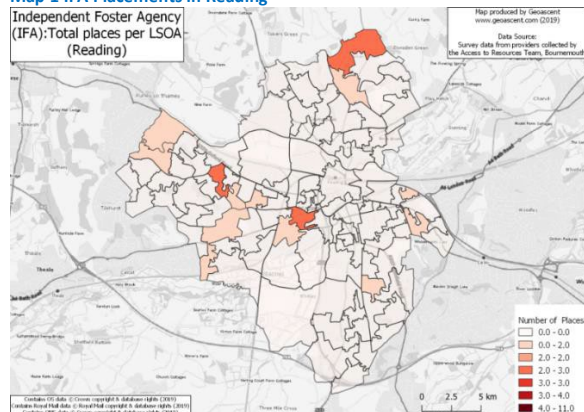
In instances, where the company IFA cannot identify a foster carer for child, the company's placement team will seek to source a foster placement from Independent Foster Agencies. These services are largely procured via the IFA South Central Framework. Those not procured via this route are often as a result of a lack of available placements on the framework or due to a specialist need that can't be catered for on the framework. These services are secured via spot purchasing arrangement.

The IFA South Central Framework is a consortium of 14 Local Authorities established by Southampton City Council in 2017 to support local authorities within the region to purchase foster care from IFA's (Independent Fostering Agencies). The framework is governed by a board with representation from each authority. There are currently 46 IFA's; new providers are encouraged to join on an annual basis. Providers can provide up to four different types of placements:

- General foster placement (Lot 1)
- Foster Care for Children with Disabilities (Lot 2)
- Parent and child placements (Lot 3)
- Alternative to Residential (Lot 4)

Analysis shows that Reading has the lowest number of placements within their area (27) of all 14 local authority areas within the framework consortium. Map 1 below shows that there are three pockets of higher numbers of foster carers; one near the town centre, another north of Reading and to the west of Reading. The areas in the north and west of Reading correspond with higher levels of affluence.

Map 1 IFA Placements in Reading



Although the number of IFAs on the framework has increased from seven in 2017 to 23 in 2019, equating to 60% this is yet to generate an increase in the number of carers available in Reading (see table 7). The registered placements in Reading reduced by 18% between 2018 and 2019, likely to relate to retirement or staying put arrangements. In relation to vacancies the company will need to actively work with the framework contract team and providers to reduce the number of vacancies and increase framework utilisation.

No of Foster Carers Maximum			Registered Placements			Current Vacancies as of the 1st of April		
2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
10	14	15	22	33	27	5	4	7

Table 7 IFA Framework carers

From the company's usage of external IFAs, the ratio of male and female children accommodated in IFAs has changed within the last 18 months with a higher ratio of males for the first time in several years. Children under 10 are the highest group of children in care and has remained static. 10 -12-year olds placed via the IFA South Central Framework have seen a significant increase in over the past five years from five (12%) in 2014/15 to 24 (28%) in the first 8 months of 2019/20. Over the same period 13 – 14-year olds have seen a decrease from nine (21%) to six (7%) with other age groups remaining largely the same. This would indicate that placements for an increasing number of under 12-year-old, male children are required.

## 4.2 Location of Fostering Placements

From looking at the location of external placements data shows distance of foster placements as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March over the last three years, there has been a year on year percentage increase the number of children placed within 20 miles of Reading (see table 8). However, there is a need to increase local foster placement sufficiency.

	Children placed Inside 20 miles	Children placed Outside of 20 miles	Children placed 20-30 miles	Children placed 30-40 miles	Children placed 40-50 miles	Children placed 50 miles +
31/03/17	117 (68%)	56 (32%)	2	9	13	32
31/03/18	122 (66%)	62 (34%)	4	12	16	30
31/03/19	124 (70%)	52 (30%)	3	6	11	32

Table 8 Distance of IFA placements

It is important to note, children who have lived with their Foster Carers on a long-term basis are most likely post 18 to remain with these families in 'staying put' arrangements. Despite a varied number of staying put placements the intention is for the utilisation of staying put to increase. The highest growing age range of Children looked after in Reading is aged 16 and over so it is anticipated that this will contribute to the increased numbers. The projected increase of staying put arrangements will result in a reduction in foster carers from an already under supplied market place and provide a significant challenge to the sufficiency of the company IFA and external IFAs. The company is committed to having discussions with independent fostering providers at an early stage regarding the option of a 'staying put' arrangement. Table 9 below shows the number of staying put placements arrangements commencing over the last five years.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Staying put placements commenced	9	5	4	12	16

Table 9 Staying put placements

## 4.3 Fostering Sufficiency

Over the last five years up to 2018/19 the council and the company have placed an average of 166 children at any one time, in either an in-house or IFA home. 60% of children are placed with the company IFA's carers while 40% are placed with external framework or non-framework providers. The company IFA is expecting to accommodate 125 children pending newly approved carers. If sufficiency from the company's IFA remained the same that would leave a deficit of 69 placements in an IFA setting. From the IFA framework, if the Company were to secure all 27 placements within Reading's borough boundary, there would be an overall deficit of 37 placements. Factoring in retirement of foster carers, increasing numbers of staying put placements and the reduced number

of CLA the company will need to source an additional 111 fostering placements over the coming three years. Addressing this deficit requires a combination of approaches including managing demand at the front door via prevention and early help services, better support to foster carers to improve placement stability and market development.

#### 4.4 Fostering Spend analysis

Table 10 shows the company spend on fostering both internally and externally. The external spend includes framework and non-framework provision. The average weekly unit cost for a placement within the company IFA can be a third of the cost of placing with a private and voluntary IFA. Figures do not include overheads for the company IFA therefore the total cost of the service is likely to be higher.

Provision	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
company IFA	£1,492,201	£1,668,911	£1,724,431	£1,837,165	£1,671,443
Average weekly unit cost	£171	£105	£334	£388	£391
Private & Voluntary IFAs	£3,314,806	£4,020,574	£4,774,167	£5,122,367	£5,667,468
Average weekly unit cost	£1249	£931	£966	£1036	£1651

Table 10 Fostering spend

#### 4.5 Next Steps for fostering sufficiency

- Maximise opportunities for kinship care to reduce demand on in-house general and specialist foster care.
- Continue to implement our company IFA foster carer recruitment strategy with the aim of recruiting 21 fostering households per annum which will include emergency foster carers; therapeutic foster carers and respite carers for children with disabilities. Alongside offering a robust package of support to retain foster carers.
- Engage and develop local IFA market where providers are aware of our children's placement needs; provide updates on current and planned vacancies; increase recruitment of local carers and share good practice to improve placement stability and outcomes
- Improve company's purchasing power via the participation in the recommissioning of regional IFA framework and other regional framework opportunities

## 5 Residential homes

The company does not have a children's home for children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and is dependent on both non-framework and framework providers. Within Reading there are two private residential providers which the company commissions via spot purchasing arrangements residential placements often as a result of a lack of available placements on the framework or due to a specialist needs such as emotional and/or behavioural needs which can't be met on the framework.

### 5.1 Residential Framework

Residential placements are sourced by the company's placements team from private residential providers via the Consortia Commissioning of Children's Residential Care Local Authorities of the Southern Region (LASR) Framework. The LASR Framework is a consortium of 18 authorities established in 2018 to support local authorities within the region to purchase care from the private residential market. The framework is governed by a board made up of representatives from each



authority. The LASR Framework currently works with 65 providers. New providers are encouraged to join on an annual basis. Providers can provide up to six different types of placements:

- Lot 1 – Planned and Same Day Residential Care - Children and young people requiring planned and/ or same day residential care and accommodation only.
- Lot 2 – Crisis Care -Children and young people requiring Crisis placements consisting of residential care at short notice for a relatively short duration
- Lot 3 – Residential Care with DFE Regulated Education
- Lot 4 – Residential Parenting Assessments - Parents and their Children requiring a placement for the purposes of conducting an assessment of parenting capacity.
- Lot 5 – Therapeutic Residential Care - Children and young people requiring a therapeutic residential placement.
- Lot 6 – Children with Disabilities - Children and young people with disabilities requiring planned and/ or same day residential care and accommodation only.

There are currently no providers within the framework who offer residential placements within Reading’s borough boundary. However, upon the recent annual re-opening of the framework (Oct 2019) it is likely that there will be more placements close to the borough, within 20 miles.

The number of placements across all age groups have risen substantially with the increased need for residential placements in the borough and across the country. The largest group of children placed in residential settings are white males aged 13-16. The number of children of ethnic minorities being placed in residential care is in line with the general population of Reading. Children with disabilities in residential care have seen a sharp decline although this needs to be analysed further as it may be a recording issue.

## 5.2 Location of Residential home placements

The company will always aim to place our children with foster carers, however where this is not possible residential care is considered. From table 11, although the number of our children has remained static at approximately a 4:6 ratio with more placements being made outside of the borough. Over the last two years there has been an increase in the number of emergency and highly complex referrals, resulting in more of our children placed 50 plus miles away. This presents three key challenges; firstly, the company’s ability to undertake effective reunification and step down. Secondly, no local emergency provision to prevent placement breakdowns and finally, how children with complex needs can be supported better in Reading whether through intensive residential therapeutic provision on a local or Berkshire wide footprint.

Year	Inside 20 miles	Outside of 20 miles	20-30 miles	30-40 miles	40-50 miles	50 miles +
31/03/17	11 (41%)	16 (59%)	2	3	2	9
31/03/18	12 (39%)	19 (61%)	3	5	1	10
31/03/19	13 (42%)	18 (58%)	2	5	0	11

Table 11 Distance of residential placements

## 5.3 Residential home sufficiency

The company has made 33 placements on the LASR Framework which is on average 4% of the placements made under the framework in the last four quarters. It is important that the company retain a good utilisation of vacancies particularly those closer to Reading.

From the two private residential providers operate across three sites within Reading’s borough boundary. These providers offer a combined total of 12 placements. Despite there being a small

number of homes within the Reading boundary there are significantly more within 20 miles of the borough boundary. As of November 2019, there were 29 homes within Reading’s three neighbouring authorities who offer a total of 159 placements. Six of these homes are run by their local authority with some only registered for disabled children and not all homes will be within 20 miles of Readings boundary. There are also 39 residential homes within 20 miles of the borough boundary run by 14 providers or local authorities and of these there are potentially 189 placements available. Of these 26% are outstanding services and 58% are good.

Over the last 3 years on average the company has commissioned 30 residential placements at any one time with 33 placements being made each year, 40% of these have been placed within 20 miles. As described above there appears to be enough sufficiency within 20 miles under the framework contract to accommodate all our residential needs. However, given demand for these placements to ensure that 60% of our children who are placed out of area can be accommodated within 20 miles. The Company will need access to 20 residential placements over the next three years.

Whilst it is a priority for the company to build relationships with residential providers to support access to placements. It is imperative that the company consider developing residential provision, whether that be for urgent or emergency accommodation or its own children’s home, where we can keep children who need a residential placement safe and local.

#### 5.4 Residential home spend analysis

Approximately 45% of the company’s spend on external placements is spent on residential care, the table below demonstrates residential costs have increased substantially in the last five years. This demonstrates the high cost of residential care compared to other placement types, on average 13% of placements made are in residential care. Although the average weekly cost in 2018/19 is £1580 the complexity of our children’s needs has increased requiring additional services within bespoke packages of care resulting in an overall increase in expenditure see table 12.

In order to understand need and spend a one-off review of our top 49 high cost placements was undertaken, many of which are residential placements. Through this exercise the company has been able to secure better packages of care by increasing option choices for care leavers and step down to care within a family setting, as close to Reading as possible.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Total cost	1,980,580	1,814,764	2,608,661	3,122,578	4,108,606
Average weekly unit cost	2,240.48	1,517.36	1,355.85	1,668.04	1,580.23

Table 12 Residential spend

#### 5.5 Next steps for residential sufficiency

- To reduce dependency on spot purchasing arrangements with framework and non-framework providers and to enter into block contracting arrangements with local providers.
- To develop in house or commission a children’s home for older young people as well as a therapeutic residential provision for children with complex behavioural and emotional needs.
- To undertake an options appraisal of short-term emergency home provision where children can achieve a level of stability and assessment in order to reduce children entering care and for children in care to ensure an effective, sustainable placement can be found or existing placement can be maintained.

- Improve company purchasing power via the participation of the recommissioning of regional residential framework and other regional framework opportunities

## 6 Residential homes for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities

### 6.1 Brighter Futures for Children registered homes

The company has two registered children's homes; Pinecroft, a four bed home for children who have a learning and/or physical and/or disability and/or sensory impairment and Cressingham a short breaks provision providing overnight accommodation for six children with complex health needs, learning and associated physical and/or sensory disabilities, complex communication disabilities (Autism) and/or challenging behaviour associated with a disability. Use of these services is prioritised for children and young people resident in Reading but can be accessed by other boroughs if vacancies cannot be filled.

Both Pinecroft and Cressingham are largely at capacity. All bed spaces within Pinecroft have been filled for the last 18 months with children from Reading. At Cressingham, the utilisation is unclear, a waiting list operates at times and at other times there are vacancies, mainly due to matching. As cited in the previous sections, the company IFA currently has one fostering household able to offer short break day care for children with disabilities. There are lots on both the South-Central IFA framework and LASR Residential framework for accommodation for children with disabilities. On the residential framework, there have been no placements made against lot 6 for children with disabilities and only one placement made under lot 3; Residential Care with DFE Regulated Education. Utilisation under these lots need to be explored further as both represent high cost placements and assurance needs to be sought that the framework was fully explored prior to placements being made elsewhere.

### 6.2 Sufficiency of accommodation for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities

Data from the past four years shows the number of children looked after who have a disability is averaging at 29 per year which is a cumulative figure and not new entrants. There are lots on both the South-Central IFA framework and LASR Residential framework for children who have disabilities. There are 47 IFAs on the framework who are can accommodate children with disabilities, however details of where the carers are is not available, so it is not possible to understand how this meets our sufficiency duty. On the residential framework there are 34 providers able to accommodate children with disabilities, none of these are within 20 miles of Reading and since the commencement of the framework the company has not placed any disabled children via the framework.

In order to meet our sufficiency requirement for children needing residential homes for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities it is likely that new services will need to be commissioned within 20 miles of Reading or our current in-house provision needs to be reviewed and further developed. Increasing the number of company IFA carers who can work with disabled children on a respite and longer-term basis is also required in order to increase sufficiency.

Some children and young people with SEN and or disabilities require placements in residential schools. This can be in form of 52 or 38-week (term time only) placements. There are no special residential schools offering 52- or 38-week placements within the borough of Reading. Table 13 shows the use of these services over the last 3 years.

	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019
52-week placement	7	8	7
<b>In borough</b>	0	0	0
<b>Out of borough</b>	7	8	7
<b>Within 20 miles</b>	3	3	3
38-week placement	4	5	1
<b>In borough</b>	0	0	0
<b>Out of borough</b>	4	5	1
<b>Within 20 miles</b>	2	3	0

Table 13 residential school placements for SEN and Disabled children

Approximately half of residential school placements are made within 20 miles of the borough evidencing the likely ability to place all children in residential schools closer to home with better relationships with the schools the company averages seven 52 weeks placements and four 38-week placements per year. Currently only three of the 52-week placements are placed within 20 miles and two of the 38-week placements. In order to meet our sufficiency requirement for all residential school placements, 12 additional 52-week placements and three additional 38-week placements must be sought within 20 miles over the next three years.

### 6.3 Spend Analysis on accommodation for children with special educational needs and disabilities

In 2018/19 the company spent £482,568 on Pineroft which includes all staffing and property costs. This equates to a weekly fee per young person of £2,320. It is hard to establish comparison costs as children in Pineroft have extensive and complex disabilities which require bespoke care, however this weekly figure is significantly lower than children placed in external placements without disabilities but with complex emotional and behavioural difficulties. In the first 8 months of 2019/20 £304,977 was spent on the service suggesting that running cost have reduced to date in this financial year.

In 2018/19 the company spent £477,906 on Cressingham which again includes all staffing and property costs. The mean unit cost of a daily placement based on actual costs & actual usage is £426 which is difficult to benchmark due to the complex nature of the children attending Cressingham and the risk assessment approach to utilisation of available bed spaces. In the first 6 months of 2019/20 £265,251 was spent on the service suggesting that running cost have increased to date in this financial year.

Spend on residential education placements are split between education and social care. Total cost spent by the company for the last three years are shown below and evidences a reduction in spend, this is not in line with the number of 52 and 38 week placements, however costs are generally based on need which may indicated the needs of our children and young people placed in residential education placements may be reducing or day school provision is better to support (table 14).

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
<b>1,387,925.60</b>	1,286,613.27	1,046,586.66

Table 14 Spend on Residential Education Placements

## 6.4 Next steps for accommodation for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities

- Conduct a full-service and market review against the accommodation and support needs of children with special education needs and disabilities to identify accommodation and support service options required in Reading
- Work with Adult social care colleagues to improve transition arrangements and local provision for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Develop strategic relationships with residential children’s homes and residential schools that could support children with complex needs in neighbouring authorities.

## 7 Semi Independent Accommodation

Semi-Independent accommodation services are used to enable young people to move from dependence to independence by providing access to accommodation, employment and personal development with appropriate advice and support. These services also have learning and development activities. The aim of the service is to provide a positive transition from care to semi-independent and subsequently independent living.

A number of providers used are currently unregulated provision by Ofsted and are used to accommodate young people aged 16 or over who, need support to live independently rather than needing full-time care. Unlike unregistered provision where a child or young person is receiving some form of ‘care’, which is illegal. It is the company’s view that these guidelines should be followed and that whilst our 16+ CLA cohort can be placed in unregulated provision dependent on their level of need, the use of unregistered provision should not be used. Since January 2020, audits have been regularly undertaken with this cohort of providers to safeguard the suitability and quality of accommodation and support.

Latest data tells us that the national average for the percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation is 84% and our statistical neighbours average 83.9%. As shown in table 15 below, the percentage of care leavers in Reading in suitable accommodation is consistently much higher. It is expected that that this trend will continue due to the new 16+ accommodation and support framework which commenced in August 2019.

	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19
<b>% Care leavers in suitable accommodation (16 - 25-year olds)</b>	98%	98%	95%	94%	94%	92%	94%	93%	96%	94%	95%

Table 15 Care leavers in suitable accommodation

The ratio of males continues to be substantially higher than females. A high proportion of care leavers are in suitable accommodation so understanding where female care leavers are placed may support future commissioning arrangements (table 16).

	14/15 %		15/16 %		16/17 %		17/18 %		18/19 %		APRIL – NOV '19 %	
<b>ACCOMMODATION TYPE</b>												
Hostel	5	31%	4	15%	5	11%	12	15%	16	13%	8	10%
Private rented/rent deposit	11	69%	4	15%	6	14%	4	5%	7	6%	3	4%
Supported Accommodation	0	0%	18	69%	33	75%	62	79%	96	81%	66	86%
<b>GENDER</b>												
Male	13	81%	17	65%	27	61%	44	56%	73	61%	48	62%
Female	3	19%	9	35%	17	39%	34	44%	46	39%	29	38%

Table 16 Leaving Care accommodation types

## 7.1 Semi Independent Accommodation and support provider Framework

In August 2019, the company procured a framework of semi –independent providers for two years, with an option to extend for a further two years, to replace the approved list. The framework providers support care leavers and homeless young people aged 16 and 17. There is also a requirement that providers can offer these services to vulnerable young people between the ages of 18 and 25.

The framework contains 17 providers covers four lots offering three additional options for our care leavers from what is currently available. This offers the ability to make placements which better suit the needs of our young people and provides a pathway of increasing independence. The framework is broken down into the following lots:

- Lot 1 - Standard Group Living defined as a situation where a young person lives within a multi occupancy property and either has shared communal facilities or lives within a 'bed-sit' type living space within a larger building. Support will be available to young people 24 hours a day seven days a week.
- Lot 2 – High Support Group Living defined as a situation where a young person lives within a multi occupancy property and either has shared communal facilities or lives within a 'bed-sit' type living space within a larger building. Support will be present on site 24 hours a day seven days a week.
- Lot 3 – Supported tenancies and floating support, defined as community-based accommodation with floating support, sourced from private or registered social landlords. Included within the standard price will be five hours each week of keyworker support. Additional support requirements will be agreed on a case by case basis depending on the needs of the young person.
- Lot 4 – Supported Lodgings, defined as placements within a “family” type home within the local community. The host will provide a room and cooking and washing facilities as well as offering ad hoc support and advice to the young person. Included within the standard price will be two hours each week of keyworker support. Additional support requirements will be agreed on a case by case basis depending on the needs of the young person.

The Reading YMCA is commissioned by the Council to provide accommodation and support to 40, 16 – 24 years old, including four dedicated separate units for young parents. The service provides accommodation and support for four different client groups:

- 16/17-year olds who are looked after or 16/17-year olds who are care leavers;
- 16/17-year olds who refuse to become looked after, but the authority has a duty to accommodate;
- 18+ year olds; and
- Young parents (single or with a partner) and their children

The service delivers medium to high-level accommodation-based housing related support to vulnerable young people. The YMCA are contracted to deliver four direct support hours per week to each young person. The service also delivers activities to enhance the daily living skills and leisure time of their residents.

## 7.2 Location of Semi-Independent Placements

Year	Inside 20 miles	Outside of 20 miles	20-30 miles	30-40 miles	40-50 miles	50 miles +
31/03/2017	10 (77%)	3 (23%)	0	1	2	0
31/03/2018	12 (57%)	9 (43%)	4	4	1	0
31/03/2019	16 (76%)	5 (24%)	2	2	0	1
16/01/2020	18 (95%)	1 (5%)	1	0	0	0

Table 17 Location of Semi-Independent Placements

As shown in table 17, prior to the commencement of the 16+ framework a significant number of young people in semi-independent accommodation were placed outside of 20 miles from Reading. In addition, pre-framework there were no defined lots, so placement costs and support levels were negotiated at the time of placement meaning there was little consistency and contributed to the difficulty in managing contracts and performance.

## 7.3 Semi Independent Accommodation Sufficiency

The current framework represents the following in terms of local area provision:

- Lot 1: 73 beds in Reading or within 20 miles across 20 properties (82 beds outside of 20 miles from Reading).
- Lot 2: 61 beds in Reading or within 20 miles across 16 properties (103 beds outside of 20 miles from Reading).
- Lot 3 and 4 are difficult to ascertain as property is not always owned by the provider and instead sought as and when it is required.

Lot 4 in particular has been a challenge and is an area for the company to prioritise to encourage supported lodgings providers to extend their services into the Reading area.

In the 5.5 months since the framework has been live, 37 placements have been made with three placed in hostel accommodation and of the remaining 34, 23 were placed via the framework and 11 were placed off-framework.

On average 19 placements are being made in semi-independent provision per year which represents 7% of CLA. Prior to the framework commencing an average of six were placed out of area each year, resulting in a need for 18 supported lodging placements over the next three years. As described above sufficiency gained through providers on the 16+ semi-independent

framework and via the YMCA hostel should provide more than enough volume within 20 miles of Reading to accommodate our CLA who are leaving care. However, ensuring availability of a range of accommodation which supports care leavers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children the support needed to live independently will need to be considered.

## 7.4 Semi Independent Accommodation spend analysis

The total amount spent on private and voluntary sector semi-independent leaving care provision off framework is shown in table 18. In the 6 months prior to the framework going live 72 semi-independent placements were made. Nine of these placements were hostel accommodation and the total cost over that period for the 72 placements was £539,632. The total cost since the framework went live has been £452,105, a cost reduction of £87,527 which is 18%. Of the framework placements made 65% were made on lot 1 which proves the highest amount of support, 26% on lot 2 and 9% on lot 3.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
<b>Total expenditure</b>	N/A	152,765	581,827	1,541,606	2,761,376
<b>Average weekly unit cost</b>	N/A	112.19	254.30	380.08	446.24

Table 18 Leaving Care spend

## 7.6 Next steps for Semi Independent Accommodation

- Work with the council's housing colleagues and young people to review and redesign existing provision in relation to crisis accommodation for 16/17-year olds; supported group living or possibly trainer flats with on-site support.
- Increase inhouse and externally commissioned supported lodgings provision to enable our care leavers will be supported in a family environment to transition to independence
- Work with local providers to improve provision and support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

## 8 Parent and child assessment placements

Parent and child placements can be in a residential setting or within a fostering environment and provide an opportunity for the parent's ability to care for their child to be assessed whilst being supported and shown how best to care for their child.

### 8.1 Location of Parent and child assessment placements

There are no residential assessment centres for parents and children within the Reading boundary and services tend to be more than 20 miles from the borough boundary. There are also not currently any company IFA foster carers who are able to offer parent and child placements. Data recording needs to be improved in this area as due to the varying nature in status of the parent and the child e.g. only one or both may be looked after or the parent may or may or be under 18, the placement can be recorded under either individual. A more robust form of recording needs to be developed so that sound demographic and volumes can be analysed.

### 8.2 Sufficiency of Parent and child Placements

The company averages 10 parent and child residential assessment placements per year. Current local sufficiency has resulted in three parents placed within 20 miles. The company averages 18



parent and child IFA placements per year. Current local sufficiency has resulted in 13 of those being able to be placed within 20 miles. With a focus on family-based accommodation the company's priority is to ensure IFA parent and child assessment placements are secured. An additional 12 placements will be required within 20 miles over the next three years. Increasing company IFA carers who can work with parent and child placements is required in order to increase sufficiency in addition to increasing our use of lot 3 IFA framework placements.

### 8.3 Parent and child spend analysis

Table 19 shows the number of parent and child placements over the past three years and the average cost per week of those placements. As shown the demand for parent and child placements is increasing. No parent and child placements have been made on the LASR residential framework despite there being a specific lot to accommodate it. Placements are being requested of framework providers however placement offers are not being made. This needs to be addressed with the framework contract managers.

	Residential spot purchased		Residential Framework		IFA Framework		Non- IFA Framework	
	Number of placements	Average cost p/w	Number of placements	Average cost p/w	Number of placements	Average cost p/w	Number of placements	Average cost p/w
<b>16/17</b>	4	£4077	0	0	3	£1105	0	£0
<b>17/18</b>	9	£4194	0	0	9	£1360	1	£1373
<b>18/19</b>	7	£2701	0	0	10	£1644	0	£0
<b>19/20<sup>5</sup></b>	19	£3060	0	0	5	£1463	0	£0

Table 19 Parent and child costs

### 8.4 Next steps for Parent and Child Placements

- Explore options of developing local residential parent and child assessment service and or recruiting company IFA foster carers who can support Parent and child placements locally
- Work with the South-Central Fostering Framework contract manager to establish Reading's local sufficiency of carers on the framework.

<sup>5</sup> Part year till 1 January 2020

## 9. Sufficiency Action Plan

Actions	Strategic Lead	Operational Lead	Start date	Key milestones	Completion date	Success measures
<p><b>Fostering Provision – what we know</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>74% of our children live with foster carers which is higher than the national average of 73% and our statistical neighbour's boroughs 71%.</li> <li>The company IFA can accommodate 125 children at any one time, our framework sufficiency provides 27 placements if sufficiency remained the same there would be a deficit of 37 placements a year.</li> <li>Factoring in retirement of foster carers and increasing numbers of staying put placements the company will need to source an additional 111 fostering placements over the next three years.</li> </ul>						
Maximising opportunities for kinship care to reduce demand on in-house general and specialist foster care	Director of Children Services	Company IFA Service Manager	Apr 2020		Mar 2023	90% of general and specialist fostered children are placed within 20 miles of home by 2023
Continue to implement a robust in-house foster carer recruitment, retention and training plan that is informed by an up-to-date needs' analysis	Head of Communications and Marketing	Company IFA Service Manager	Apr 2020	Increase in the number of enquires and timely response to enquiries	Mar 2023	
Establish a therapeutic support model for foster carers	Director of Children Services	Company IFA Service Manager	Jun 2020	A clear understanding of the support needs of foster carers	Sept 2020	
Increase the number of company IFA carers which would include emergency foster carers and therapeutic foster carers	Director of Children Services	Company IFA Service Manager	Dec 2020		Mar 2023	
Increase utilisation of company IFA and framework IFA providers by working with the framework contracts team by minimising vacancies	Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement	Senior Placements Officer	Apr 2020	At least 4 weekly contact with each local children's home to obtain regular vacancy updates resulting	Mar 2023	

Actions	Strategic Lead	Operational Lead	Start date	Key milestones	Completion date	Success measures
Participating in the recommissioning of regional agreements	Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement	Senior Placements Officer	Apr 2020	in a 10% vacancy factor each year New IFA framework in place	Mar 2021	
Identify and engage with non-framework IFA providers placing in Reading to understand how the company can collaborate better in the future.	Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement	Senior Placements Officer	Jun 2020	At least one provider market development event each year resulting in an increase in local carers	Mar 2023	
<p><b>Residential Provision – what we know</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The company is dependent on the use of framework and non-framework providers as no in-house provision available</li> <li>• There are 12 residential placements available within Reading the company has utilised 41% of these placements</li> <li>• Sufficiency within 20miles shows 159 placements however demand for these placements are high with complexity of needs resulting in distant placements</li> <li>• The Company will need access to 30 residential placements over the next three years.</li> </ul>						
To reduce spot purchasing arrangements with non-framework providers via contracted arrangements	Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement	Senior Contracts Officer	Apr 2020	Secured additional 4 residential placements	Jun 2020	A reduction in the number of children placed at distance in residential provision with 80% of children placed locally by 2023
To develop options for an inhouse or commissioned residential home as well as encourage new entrants to establish children’s homes to increase local sufficiency	Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement	Senior Commissioning Officer	Sept 2020	facilitate at least one provider market development event each year	Mar 2023	
Development of an inhouse short-term emergency respite provision as an aide to reduce children entering care and for children in care placement breakdowns and support reunification	Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement	Senior Placements Officer	Apr 2020	Identification of premises/refurb/staff recruitment and service commencement	Oct 2020	

Actions	Strategic Lead	Operational Lead	Start date	Key milestones	Completion date	Success measures
To increase utilisation of residential framework and work with the framework contract’s team to identify vacancies within a 20-mile radius of Reading	Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement	Senior Placements Officer	Apr 2020	At least 4 weekly contact with each local children’s home to obtain regular vacancy updates resulting in a 10% vacancy factor each year	Mar 2023	
Participating in the recommissioning of regional agreements	Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement	Senior Placements Officer	Apr 2021	New Residential framework in place	Mar 2022	
<p><b>Special Educational Needs provision– what we know</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The company has two residential special educational needs homes utilisation of these services is unclear</i></li> <li><i>There are no residential providers on the framework within 20 miles and no placements have been made</i></li> </ul>						
Conduct a full-service and market review against the accommodation and support needs of children with special education needs and disabilities to identify accommodation and support service options required in Reading	Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement	Education and SEND Commissioner	Jul 2020	Completion of service and Implementation of preferred accommodation and support service option recommendations by 2022	Dec 2020	At least 60% of children with special educational needs remain local by 2023
Work with Adult social care colleagues to improve transition arrangements and local provision for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.	Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement	Senior Commissioning Officer	Oct 2020	Shared decision making and transition management	Mar 2021	
Develop strategic relationships with residential children’s homes and residential schools that could support children with complex needs in neighbouring authorities.	Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement	Education and SEND Commissioner	Jan 2021		Mar 2022	

Actions	Strategic Lead	Operational Lead	Start date	Key milestones	Completion date	Success measures
<p><b><i>Semi Independent Provision– what we know</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Local sufficiency of semi-independent accommodation is good</i></li> <li><i>There is an increase at age 16 plus of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children</i></li> <li><i>An ability to offer a wide range of alternative supported accommodation for care leaver's is needed</i></li> </ul>						
To increase inhouse and external supported lodgings provision for care leavers	Head of Commissioning	Senior Placements Officer	Apr 2020	Up to 16 supported lodging beds available	Mar 2022	Greater range of accommodation options for care leavers with 80% in secure tenancy arrangements by 2023
To work with local providers regarding how unaccompanied asylum-seeking children can be better supported locally	Head of Commissioning	Senior Placements Officer	Apr 2020	unaccompanied asylum-seeking children receive the support needed addressing trauma and maintaining heritage and culture with timely documentation processed	Jun 2020	
To work with the council's housing department and young people to review and redesign existing provision in relation to crisis accommodation for 16/17-year olds; supported group living or possibly trainer flats with on-site support.	Head of Commissioning	Senior Placements Officer	May 2020	alterative provision redesigned and in place	Sept 2021	
<p><b><i>Mother and baby provision– what we know</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Our 0- 4 population is the highest group entering care and staying in care for under two years.</i></li> <li><i>An additional 15 placements will be required within 20 miles over the next three years.</i></li> </ul>						
Explore options of developing local residential parent and child assessment service and or recruiting company IFA foster carers who can support Parent and child placements locally	Director of Children services & Head of Commissioning	Company IFA Service Manager & Senior Placements Officer	Apr 2020	At least two specialists foster carers recruited each year with local residential provision in place	Apr 2022	Parents are supported to develop effective parenting skills to care for their children

Actions	Strategic Lead	Operational Lead	Start date	Key milestones	Completion date	Success measures
Work with the South-Central Fostering Framework contract managers to increase local sufficiency of carers on the framework.	Head of Commissioning	Senior Placements Officer	Apr 2020		April 2021	
<p><b>Partnership working to improve placement stability– what we know</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children in care with good mental health outcomes below the national average</li> <li>• Education attainment for children in care is lower than the national average</li> <li>• Children in care with education, health and care plans are low</li> </ul>						
<p>To work in partnership with our health colleagues to ensure that there is provision of therapeutic support to children in foster placement and their foster carers to promote emotional wellbeing and placement stability.</p> <p>To ensure there are strong working relationships between fostering and residential services, social workers, and the Virtual School for children in care to promote stability and continuity in children’s education and to ensure that school stability supports placement stability and vice versa</p>	<p>Director of Social Care &amp; Head of Commissioning</p> <p>Director of Education &amp; Head of Commissioning</p>	<p>Principal Social worker and Senior Placements Officer</p> <p>Head of Virtual Schools and Senior Placements Officer</p>	<p>May 2020</p> <p>Apr 2020</p>	<p>Improve decision making and case management between partners.</p>	<p>Mar 2023</p> <p>Mar 2023</p>	<p>Improved mental health SDQ scores; education attainment in line with the national average by 2023</p>

## 10. Data annexe

	Number of children on Protection Plans	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Children with a Disability	Children with an EHC Plan	Children receiving Special Educational need support
<b>2016</b>	253	119 (47%) F	0-4 90 (36%) 5-9 73 (29%) 10-15 71 (28%) 16+ 19 (7%)	Asian/Asian British - 38 (15%) Black/Black British - 6 (2%) Mixed - 49 (19%) Other - 1 (1%) White British - 159 (63%)	15 (6%)	22 (9%)	68 (27%)
<b>2017</b>	353	167 (47%) F	0-4 136 (39%) 5-9 93 (26%) 10-15 107 (30%) 16+ 17 (5%)	Asian/Asian British - 34 (10%) Black/Black British - 17 (5%) Mixed - 76 (21%) Other - 1 (1%) White British - 225 (63%)	12 (3%)	15 (4%)	102 (29%)
<b>2018</b>	298	151 (51%) F	0-4 90 (30%) 5-9 90 (30%) 10-15 101 (34%) 16+ 17 (6%)	Asian/Asian British - 30 (10%) Black/Black British - 33 (11%) Mixed - 54 (18%) Other - 1 (1%) White British - 180 (60%)	5 (2%)	24 (8%)	85 (29%)
<b>2019</b>	255	109 (43%) F	0-4 75 (29%) 5-9 73 (28%) 10-15 86 (34%) 16+ 21 (9%)	Asian/Asian British - 35 (14%) Black/Black British - 18 (7%) Mixed - 48 (19%) Other - 0 (0%) White British - 154 (60%)	6 (2%)	26 (10%)	74 (29%)

Table 2 Child Protection demographic

	Number of Children looked after	Gender	Age	Ethnicity breakdown by percentage	Children with a Disability	% of children with an EHC Plan	% of children receiving Special Educational need support
<b>2016</b>	222	(34%) F	0-4 (20%) 5-9 (19%) 10-15 (38%) 16+ (23%)	Asian/Asian British (4%) Black/Black British (5%) Mixed (18%) Other (2%) White British (71%)	(12%)	(13%)	(30%)
<b>2017</b>	265	(38%) F	0-4 (19%) 5-9 (21%) 10-15 (38%) 16+ (22%)	Asian/Asian British 4 (2%) Black/Black British 13 (5%) Mixed 54 (21%) Other 5 (3%) White British 183 (69%)	(12%)	(26%)	(29%)
<b>2018</b>	279	(46%) F	0-4 (23%) 5-9 (20%) 10-15 (38%) 16+ (19%)	Asian/Asian British (2%) Black/Black British (5%) Mixed (20%) Other (3%) White British (70%)	(11%)	(24%)	(30%)
<b>2019</b>	273	128 (47%) F	0-4 (20%) 5-9 (21%) 10-15 (40%) 16+ (19%)	Asian/Asian British (3%) Black/Black British (4%) Mixed (18%) Other (1%) White British (74%)	(10%)	(25%)	(32%)

Table 5 children looked after demographic