



**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**



# Oxfordshire Market Position Statement:

Positive Outcomes for  
Children and Young People in  
residential and fostering  
placements

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Note: we have included quotes from Oxfordshire children who have been in care throughout this document.

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## Foreword

We are pleased to introduce the Market Position Statement for Residential and Fostering Placements for Looked After Children in Oxfordshire. The information is aimed at potential and existing providers of care in Oxfordshire.

We wish to engage with care providers across all services to ensure that Oxfordshire’s children have access to a wide range of good value, high quality and innovative services.

This document builds on our vision to make ‘Oxfordshire the best place for children to grow up and be everything that they want to be’.

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. We hope you find the information contained here to be useful and we look forward to our building and maintaining successful working relationships with you to support the people of Oxfordshire.

Lucy Butler  
Director for Children, Education and Families



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## 1 Introduction

This Market Position Statement is produced by Oxfordshire County Council for providers who are currently providing and are interested in providing residential placements and foster care services for children and young people in Oxfordshire.

It represents the start of what we hope will be a constructive dialogue between commissioners and providers about how best to meet the emergent demand and likely needs of local children and young people requiring care and support. We value all those who provide good quality care to Oxfordshire's looked after children.

The document is informed by the local Placement Strategy for 2016-19 and recent national policy and research including:

- The over-arching 'Putting Children First' Government policy (2016) including:
- Continued emphasis on the 'Staying Put' for young people leaving foster care
- Commitment to the 'Staying Close' Pilot for young people leaving residential care
- The Narey Review (2016) including the latest thinking about residential care as a route to fostering
- The Oxford Brookes Review of 'Financial stability, cost charge and value for money in the children's residential care market' (2015)

## 2 Vision: What we are trying to achieve

Our overarching vision is to make Oxfordshire the best place in England for children and young people to grow up in, by working in a restorative way with children and young people and families to develop the skills, confidence and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential.

**Our four obsessions are:**

1 Be successful: Increasing school attendance – leading to improved attainment

2 Be healthy: Helping early – most effective, least intrusive, solutions to problems

3 Be safe: Safely reducing the number of looked after children – providing support to enable families to care

4 Be supported: Improving the confidence and capability of the whole workforce – to work effectively with families experiencing domestic abuse, parental mental health and drugs and alcohol issues.

The Council has been facing acute financial pressure on its budget. Our challenge therefore is to work in partnership with our providers and stakeholders to deliver high quality placements that deliver good outcomes and value for money for our looked after children.

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We are open and committed to work with our providers, families and all stakeholders to achieve this aim together.

### 3 Our Strategic Objectives: What we want to do

The OCC Placement Strategy for Children in and on the edge of care 2016-19 is based on the fundamental principle of 'keeping our riskiest and most vulnerable children closest'. Some children will require very specialist placements out of county but for the large majority we need to be able to place, educate, and provide therapeutic support within Oxfordshire.

*T is a young man who has had an ongoing series of extreme ups and downs in his life. He has left care and is now a qualified bricklayer and is becoming self-employed. T's message to others: 'Be patient and stay strong'.*

Children who are currently looked after by Oxfordshire County Council consistently tell us that staying close to home is what they would strongly prefer. Local placements promote continuity of schooling and opportunities for children to return home or to an extended family placement as soon as possible, where it is safe to do so.

#### Fostering

We continue to support family based care by recruiting internal foster carers and working closely with independent fostering agencies to deliver high quality support for all children in foster care. To achieve this, we work in partnership with families, foster carers and other agencies with the objective of delivering the best possible care and support to looked after children and young people.

There is a need to constantly recruit new carers due to the increasing number of looked after children entering care and carers leaving the service each year. We need to recruit more foster carers especially for sibling groups, teenagers, disabled children and mother and baby placements. We will continue targeted campaigns to recruit more carers for priority groups and to evaluate the impact of previous campaigns targeting children with disability, adolescents and siblings.

Oxfordshire County Council is a fostering friendly employer and our aim is to make Oxfordshire the most fostering friendly county in the country. A fostering friendly county is a place:

- where foster carers are supported and respected
- that appreciates the vital work foster carers do to transform lives
- that recognises that sometimes special consideration is needed to help those who care for children.

#### Residential Placements

We believe that a vibrant market ultimately delivers greater placement choice, which we know is associated with better outcomes for children. We value all those providing

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residential care and want to continue to build and maintain relationships with providers.

We want to broaden the type of provision in Oxfordshire or in neighbouring authorities. Looked after children and young people with complex health and social care needs face additional challenges in terms of finding suitable placements.

We understand that residential care for children and young people is a challenging market for providers for reasons including:

- Staffing issues: difficult to recruit and retain residential staff
- Increasing complexity of children’s needs
- Rise in placement breakdowns
- Perception that local authorities see residential placements as a last resort
- The difficulty in entering the market, for instance due to the high degree of regulation and the cost of leasing or buying property
- Regulatory effect- trying to retain good or outstanding Ofsted rating
- Uncertainty over local authority funding

We want to hear from residential providers to better understand the challenges that providers face and how we can work together to improve outcomes for this cohort of looked after children.

In the last few years OCC created a Children’s Residential Pathway adding four new homes and increasing our capacity from 12 beds to 32 beds to help prevent children being placed out of county.

The DfE has set up a national Residential Care Leadership Board to look at how placements are commissioned, engage with the wider sector to support the development of new approaches, and share best practice and we look forward to the output of this Board in 2018.

#### **4            Looked after children in Oxfordshire**

The number of looked after children has increased steadily over the last nine years in England. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, there were 72,670 looked after children, an increase of 3% compared to March 2016 and an increase of 23% compared to March 2008.

C has completed an Administration Apprenticeship, HR qualification, and played a large part in the formation of the Oxfordshire Care Leavers Association. C says: *“Success means having the courage, the determination, and the will to become the person you believe you were meant to be”*.

In March 2013 Oxfordshire had 415 looked after children, the 6<sup>th</sup> lowest rate in England. Between March 2013 and March 2017, the number of children and young

people looked after by the Council increased by 60% in Oxfordshire. This brought Oxfordshire in line with its statistical neighbours in terms of the rate of children looked after per 10,000 overall child population as can be seen below.

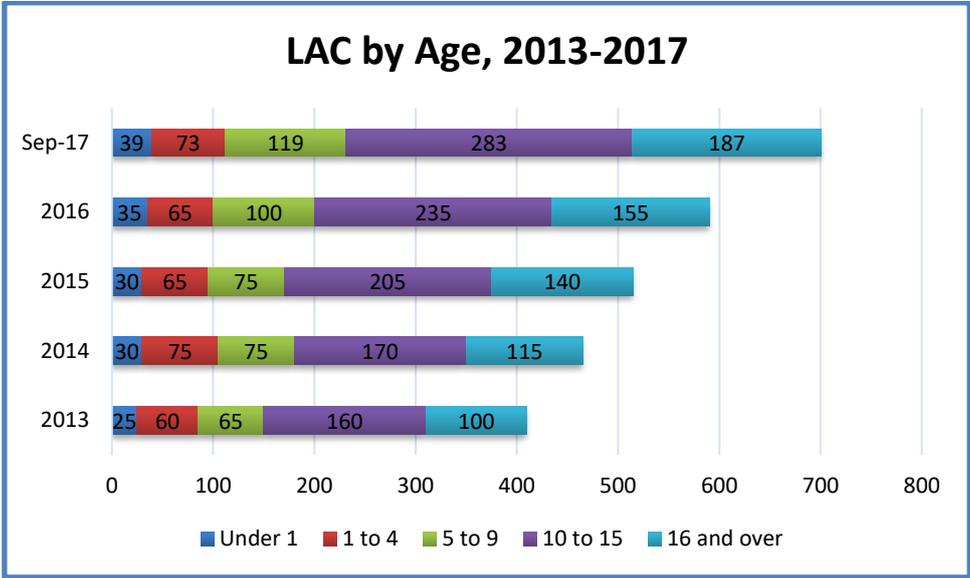
	Mar-13	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17
Oxfordshire	415	465	515	590	665
Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years, Oxfordshire	30	33	36	42	47
Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years, South East England	47	47	49	51	51
Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years, England	60	60	60	60	62

As of 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2017, there were 701 looked after children in Oxfordshire.

### Age and Gender Breakdown of LAC

There are more boys than girls in care in Oxfordshire, although the gap has been closing: in 2013 60 percent of LAC were boys and 40 percent were girls, in September 2017 this changed to 55 percent boys and 45 percent girls.

In terms of the age profile of LAC in Oxfordshire, 10-15 year olds are the largest group at 40% (283 children).



### Entering and Leaving Care

The increase in the number of looked after children in Oxfordshire is caused not only by the rise in children entering care but also children not leaving care. In 2013, 245 children started to be looked after and 290 children left care. Since then every year the number of children entering care exceeded the number of children leaving care; in 2017 350 children entered care where 285 ceased to be looked after.

## Placements

### Placement Type

In Oxfordshire, 70% of our looked after children (487 children) are in foster care, and 15% (100 children) are in residential placements. Since 2013, the biggest increase has been in the number of looked after children in kinship foster placements (158%), followed by Independent Fostering Agency placements (130%). The number of children placed with OCC foster carers remained stable.

Figure below summarises the trends in placements for 2013-2017 periods.

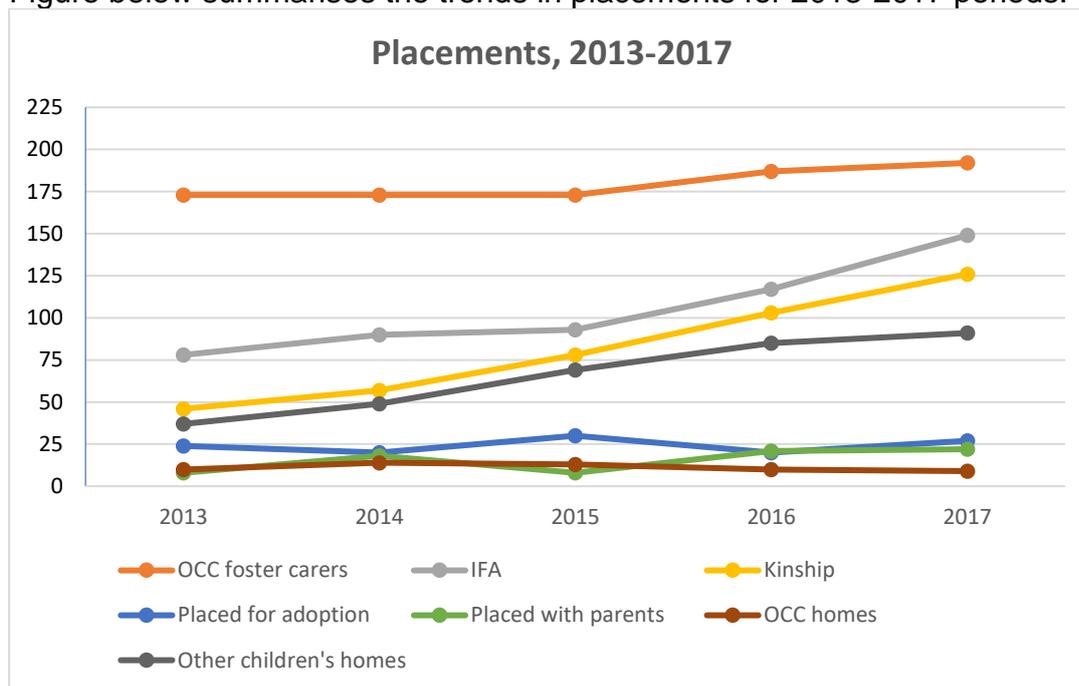


Table below shows the type of placements as at September 2017.

	Oxfordshire	Neighbour	Non-neighbour	Total
<b>Residential</b>	48	15	37	100
<b>Fostering</b>	345	64	78	487
<b>Total</b>	470	90	139	

### Residential Care

Of 100 children in residential care:

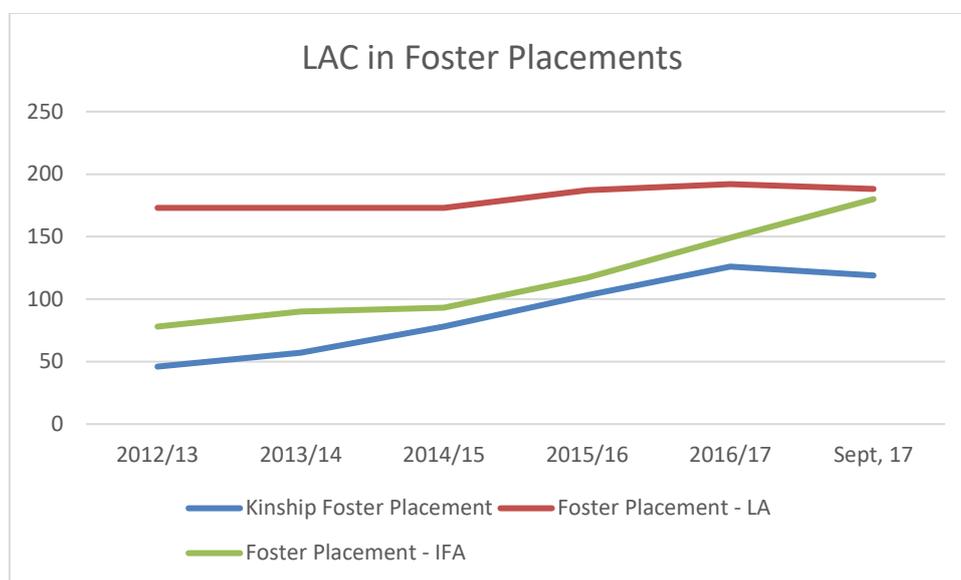
- 31 are girls and 69 are boys
- The age range is from 7 to 18, the average age is 14.3
- Abuse or neglect is the main category of need (43 children), followed by disability (18 children), family dysfunction (17 children), and family in acute stress (16 children)

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## Fostering

Of 487 children, currently in a foster placement:

- 237 are girls and 249 are boys
- The average age is 10.2
- 146 (approximately 30%) have been in the same placement for more than 2 years
- The number of local authority foster placements remained stable whereas IFA and kinship placements increased.
- 216 are looked after by OCC foster carers, 119 are with family and friends foster carers and 149 are with IFA foster carers.



## Location of Children in placements

Most children in foster care and nearly half of the children in residential care are in Oxfordshire. We have placements in neighbouring local authorities and further away as well, depending on the needs and circumstances of children and young people and the availability of suitable places at the time of placement.

*A has been in foster care since the age of 12. He says: "I would probably be in prison or not in this world if I wasn't in the care system. I am definitely more confident since I went into care because of the relationship with my mum & dad. If it wasn't for meeting them through being in care I wouldn't be a junior politician".*

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## 5 What services do we currently have?

Looked after children are placed in various settings depending on their needs and circumstances. Table 2 in the Statistical Annex provides the trends in residential and foster placements since 2013.

### Residential Care

The use of residential care in England peaked during the mid-1970s, when local authorities accommodated about 40,000 children, accounting for approximately 40% of all placements for looked after children. Since then there has been a sharp decline in both the size of the care population and the proportion in residential care.<sup>1</sup> Today residential care accounts for around 11% of all looked after children in England. The annual cost of caring for children in residential settings is about one billion pounds and the cost of the care in children's homes is about £750m a year in England.<sup>2</sup>

In Oxfordshire, residential provision for looked after children is currently provided through a mixed market:

- The children's residential pathway includes six homes owned and managed by OCC with 32 places in total. Two of the homes are for short term placements so that children's needs can be assessed in more depth.
- Through external placements commissioned as needed on an individual basis through regional Frameworks and spot placements, and
- Through the current Cross Regional block contract for residential and educational provision for looked after children with complex needs commissioned in partnership with 5 other local authorities. The provision includes six homes owned/leased and managed by an independent provider with a total of 20 places, of which Oxfordshire has nomination rights to 7.

The proportion of looked after children placed in residential children's homes is 14% in Oxfordshire (September 2017) whereas the average in England is 11% (March 2016).

As Table 3 in the annex shows, there are 81 places in 13 children's homes in Oxfordshire.

### Fostering

In England, there were 44,320 approved fostering households as at 31 March 2016, less than a 1% fall from the previous year.

At March 2017, there were 317 foster carers in Oxfordshire. On average 4 foster carers are approved a month. In 2016-17, 42 friends and family carers and 26 unrelated foster carers were approved.

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<sup>1</sup> Residential Care in England, Report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of children's residential care, July 2016.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

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The number of newly approved unrelated foster carers has been consistent over the last six years.

There are very few independent fostering agencies in Oxfordshire, so most of the children placed with IFAs are out of county.

**The Mockingbird Family Model** is a model for foster care which focusses on peer support for foster carers. The model develops a hub and constellation fostering service which establishes a sense of extended family and community around our looked after children and young people. Within Oxfordshire, we currently have two hubs, one in the North of the County and one in the Central area, primarily (but not exclusively) targeting foster carers caring for adolescents.

### Frameworks and spot purchasing

The Council is a participant or a named partner in regional and sub-regional arrangements and frameworks for placements for looked after children:

- **London Care Services** – The Council works with London Boroughs and some other Home County Local Authorities to purchase placements from a range of IFA and residential children's home providers.
- **The Children's Cross Regional Arrangements Group (CCRAG)** - a partnership of 17 Local Authorities from the East, South East and South West Regions of England who work together to support the sourcing, contracting, monitoring and annual fee negotiations for children's placements in independent and non-maintained special schools and children's residential care homes. The South-East partnership is hosted by Hertfordshire County Council.
- The Council is one of 14 Local Authorities who have commissioned the **South Central Independent Fostering Agreement framework**. Currently 50 providers are on the Framework all offering agreed prices. There are four categories of placement – mainstream, disabilities, parent and child and, of note, a new category – 'alternative to residential' which identifies providers who are willing to find foster placements for children with complex needs who would otherwise be placed in residential care.
- **Spot placements:** the Council utilises some model national contracts when contracting for children's services. The intention of the model contracts is to minimise bureaucracy for local authorities and providers.

### Services Supporting Children and Young People and Families in Oxfordshire

Achieving our vision of *'keeping our riskiest and most vulnerable children closest'* will require that all partners work in an integrated way. We have worked with other statutory partners in recent years to ensure that support services are available to looked after children in placements to keep them safe and to promote better outcomes. These services include Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Education and Thames Valley Police.

Our CAMHS is jointly commissioned with the Oxfordshire clinical Commissioning Group and the service model has recently been redesigned to include an improved

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response to looked after children. CAMHS and OCC are actively working together to support our looked after children and our riskiest young people to keep them in Oxfordshire where appropriate. This includes joint care planning, risk management plans and mental health support as well as consultation, advice and supervision. The Phoenix team which delivers Initial Health Assessments and reviews has also been redesigned and now works into OCC's Residential and Edge of Care Service (ReOC) to deliver health services and to help ensure that our looked after children have access to Health Services to meet their needs. Health providers, both acute and community services, have a long-standing partnership with OCC to deliver comprehensive and joined up services to support children and young people in their placements and to promote better outcomes.

OCC is transforming its children's services as part of a wider transformation agenda to make the Council fit for the future.

**The Family Solutions Service (FSS)** is for families and children aged 0 – 19 (and up to their 25th birthday if they have special educational needs with an Education Health and Care Plan in place) integrating the Children's Social Care Family Support Service with the Early Intervention Service. The aim is to provide timely support and interventions through case work and targeted interventions to vulnerable children and families requiring statutory or targeted support to reduce safeguarding concerns. The service is based in eight children and family centres alongside two linked sites.

**The Locality and Community Support Service (LCSS)** provides advice and guidance to universal professional partner agencies including schools, health and voluntary and community groups, across Oxfordshire when emerging concerns are raised for children that do not require an immediate safeguarding response. The LCSS are the first point of contact where non-immediate safeguarding concerns are identified.

**The Virtual School for Looked After Children and Care Leavers** is a partner to all schools in being the most ambitious and aspirational corporate parents we can be. The head teacher and her team ensure that schools, social workers, carers and other professionals understand statutory responsibilities and are aware of the best practice. Like all good parents, we ensure that communication about our children is regular and constructive and that we are all working together successfully to help them thrive. Inclusive practice in mainstream schools and high quality alternative education provision remain critical to the Placement Strategy being successful.

**Youth Justice Service:** The Oxfordshire Youth Justice Service is a multi-agency service. Its aims are to:

- Prevent re-offending.
- Help young people repair the damage they have caused by thinking about the effect it has on their victims.
- Encourage young people and their families to take responsibility for their offending.
- Reintegrate offenders into the wider community.
- Contribute to protecting the public by supporting local crime-reduction techniques.

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The **Children in Care Council** (CiCC) is a group of children and young people with experience of being in care who wish to help improve how children are cared for in Oxfordshire. The CiCC debates and discusses issues, views and experiences and helps improve the care system for all. CiCC also works with senior managers in Oxfordshire County Council to make sure the children and young people's voices are and considered in the decisions made about them. CiCC members also participate in a number of events and conferences too to promote their cause.

*'I feel more confident since joining the CiCC because I feel more listened to and instead of working against social services I feel as though I'm working with them.'* (Care Leaver)

Looked after children have access to a wide range of support and other services in Oxfordshire including:

- Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
- A designated teacher at their school for them to talk to if they have any problems or worries.
- The ATTACH Team which is a team of professionals trained in clinical psychology and social work. They support children and young people who may be having difficulties while living with foster carers, adoptive parents or in a children's home, or if they are living with grandparents or other family members.
- Our Comments and Complaints Service deals with both comments and complaints about social care services for young people.
- Independent visitors and advocates who support children and young people to ensure their views are heard and problems and worries are addressed. They are independent of the child's social worker.

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## 6 What services do we want to commission in the future and why?

Our priorities include:

To commission more foster care and residential placements for looked after children as close as possible to the places where they were living before coming into care. In many cases, this will mean 'in county' placements.

- We are in the process of commissioning, along with Southampton City Council as the Lead Purchaser and 17 other authorities in the South, a Regional Children's Residential Framework, which is due to be advertised in Spring 2018.
- The Council together with five other local authorities (Buckinghamshire, Reading, Bracknell Forest, Milton Keynes and Hertfordshire) commission a service for residential and educational provision for looked after Children with complex social, behavioural and educational needs. The current Cross Regional contract ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018. Oxfordshire County Council is leading on the recommissioning of the service. This opportunity was advertised at the end of January 2018 and will be for 26 bed spaces (OCC will have nomination rights to 10 of the beds). One of the homes will be in Oxfordshire.
- We are planning to carry out a market testing exercise with local residential and fostering providers and with the largest providers to assess the appetite and innovation available from closer engagement with providers. This testing will include discussions on a one to one basis with providers.
- To explore with providers how we can provide effective 'Staying Close' support services for children who have been looked after in residential care, once they become care leavers.
- To explore the need for secure accommodation in the region with neighbouring authorities.
- To work with local partners and providers to assess the need for short term crisis services and accommodation for children who have mental health needs.

We will continue to emphasise the commissioning of good quality, value for money and stable placements providing effective support to looked after children and promoting good emotional, health, educational and other outcomes.

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## 7 How do we intend to commission these services?

- We intend to commission in a planned way, working in partnership with providers to avoid relying on spot purchasing.
- We are currently reviewing our commissioning and procurement arrangements to ensure that they support effective mechanisms for matching child needs with the most appropriate placements, and would welcome stakeholder views about how we can improve in this area.
- We are committed to regional commissioning, of placements for children and young people with more complex needs.
- We have more children aged 13-16 with complex needs (aggression, gang involvement, drug exploitation) requiring some form of sub-welfare secure or alternative to welfare secure and we would like to ask providers to tell us what the barriers may be in terms of accepting children with complex needs.
- We would like to build relationships with all IFAs in or near to Oxfordshire including those we do not already purchase from.
- We are interested in exploring more flexible placement options.

## 8 What support will we offer to organisations interested in providing these services?

Oxfordshire County Council is committed to working with residential and fostering providers to achieve good outcomes for our children and young people. Our **Commissioning Team** based in County Hall works closely with the market and is open to opportunities to hear more from providers.

Oxfordshire has a **Placement Service Team** to match those children and young people requiring a placement with approved residential and foster carers based on the detailed assessments of the young person's needs and their strengths. Emergency placement requests are dealt with by the Placement Service Team or via the Emergency Duty Team. The Children's Placement Service will be merging with the Adult Social Care Placements team to ensure joined up working.

**The Quality and Contracts Team** work in partnership with providers and stakeholders to ensure quality and compliance as well as high standards for children and young people by encouraging improvements across all commissioned services. They are responsible for monitoring the level of risk and quality of provision in care and support services for children and adults purchased by the council.

The main aims of the Quality and Contracts Team are to:

- monitor the quality and compliance of care services in accordance with agreed strategies, priorities and systems;
- inform commissioners and stakeholders of issues relating to services and make recommendations for improvement;

- 
- advise and support services to enable them to achieve required levels of quality.

The Council's **Procurement Team** work closely with teams to ensure compliance with financial regulation and legislation governing public procurement. They work to ensure services provided to the people who use the council's services are of a high-quality and are cost and effective. The current Procurement Strategy follows the key principles of:

- Equal Treatment, Fairness and Transparency and Openness;
- Value for Money;
- On-going commercial management, partnerships and collaboration;
- Stakeholder engagement and market engagement;
- Regulatory compliance and governance;
- Risk Management, technology and efficiency.

Opportunities to bid to provide services or get involved in market consultation events can be found on the Council's e-tendering portal, which can be found on the Council's website. The team also provides direct advice during tender processes.

C came into care when she was 12 years old. She is thankful for support with education and the experiences that have enabled the development of forever friendships. Her message to others: *"YOU ARE STRONG! Be proud of yourself and you will accomplish all you set out to achieve."*

## 9 Key placement contacts:

Karen Kuehne, Strategic Commissioning Manager  
Email: [karen.kuehne@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:karen.kuehne@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

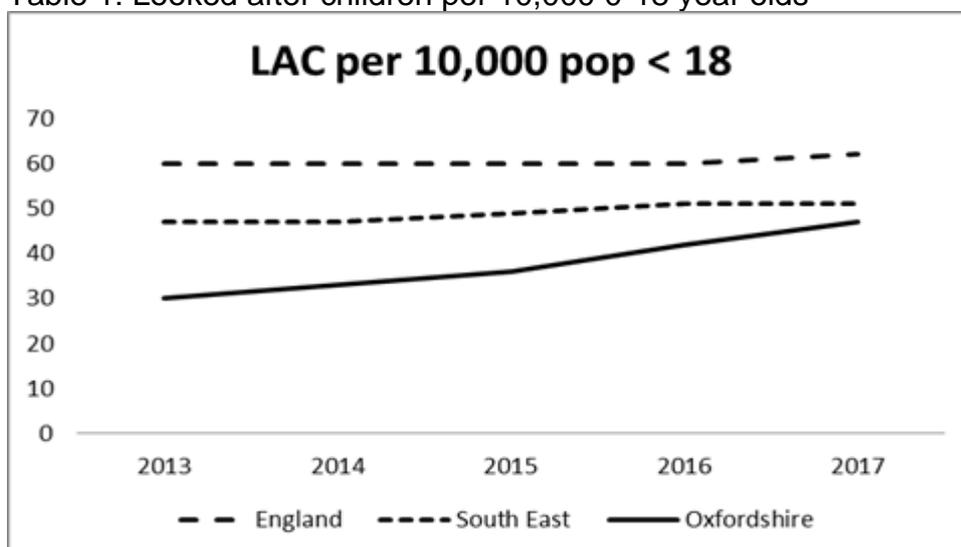
Grace Easie-Edgar, Interim Placement Service Manager  
Email: [grace.easie-Edgar@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:grace.easie-Edgar@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Dan Ruaux, Corporate Parenting Manager  
Email: [dan.ruaux@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:dan.ruaux@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Andrew Colling, Lead for Quality and Contracts  
Email: [Andrew.Colling@Oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.Colling@Oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## 10 Statistical Annex

Table 1: Looked after children per 10,000 0-18 year olds



Source: Performance an Information Service, OCC.

Table 2: Looked After Children Placements

Placement Type	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	September 2017
Children's Home - LA	10	14	13	10	9	12
Children's Home - Other	37	49	69	85	91	88
Kinship Foster Placement	46	57	78	103	126	119
Foster Placement - LA	173	173	173	187	192	216
Foster Placement - IFA	78	90	93	117	149	152
Secure Unit	3	0	1	2	2	1
Other placement including adoption	69	80	87	88	98	113
<b>Total</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>701</b>

Source: Performance an Information Service, OCC.

Figure 1: Age Profile in Residential and Foster Placements

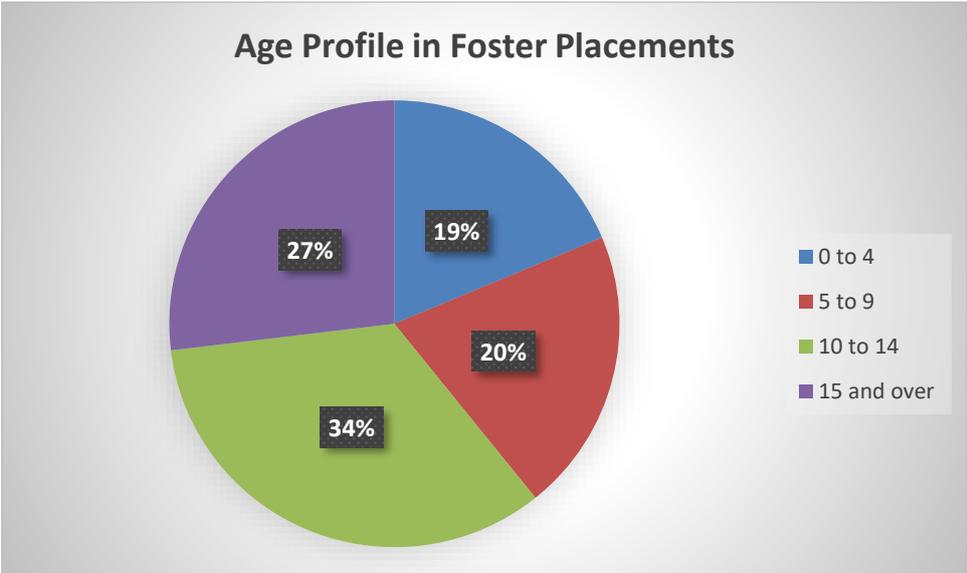
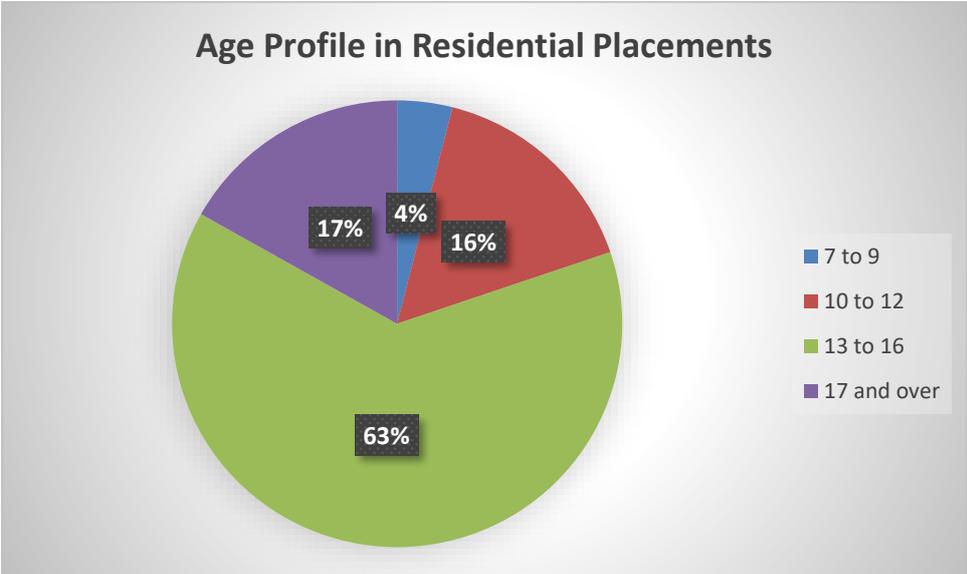


Figure 2: Children who started and ceased to be looked after during the year

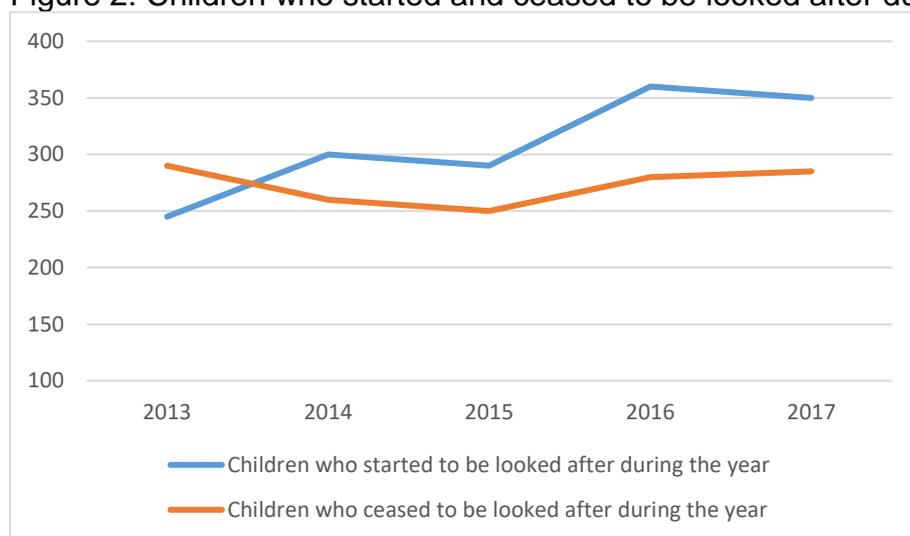


Table 3: Children's homes in Oxfordshire

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Provider Name</b>	<b>Setting Name</b>	<b>Max Users</b>
Local Authority	OCC	Glebelands	6
Local Authority	OCC	Merton House	4
Local Authority	OCC	The Moors	6
Local Authority	OCC	Maltfield House	6
Local authority	OCC	Maytree	4
Local authority	OCC		6
	<b>Total OCC</b>		<b>32</b>
Private	Calcot Children's Services	Florence House	5
Private	Hillcrest	Oathill Lodge	7
Private	Hillcrest	Steps	8
Private	Hillcrest	Park Farm	8
Private	Hillcrest	The Bartons	8
Private	Homes 2 Inspire	Magnolia House	5
Private	Witherslack Group	The Spires	8
	<b>Total Private</b>		<b>49</b>

Source: Performance and Information Service, OCC and Ofsted Database