



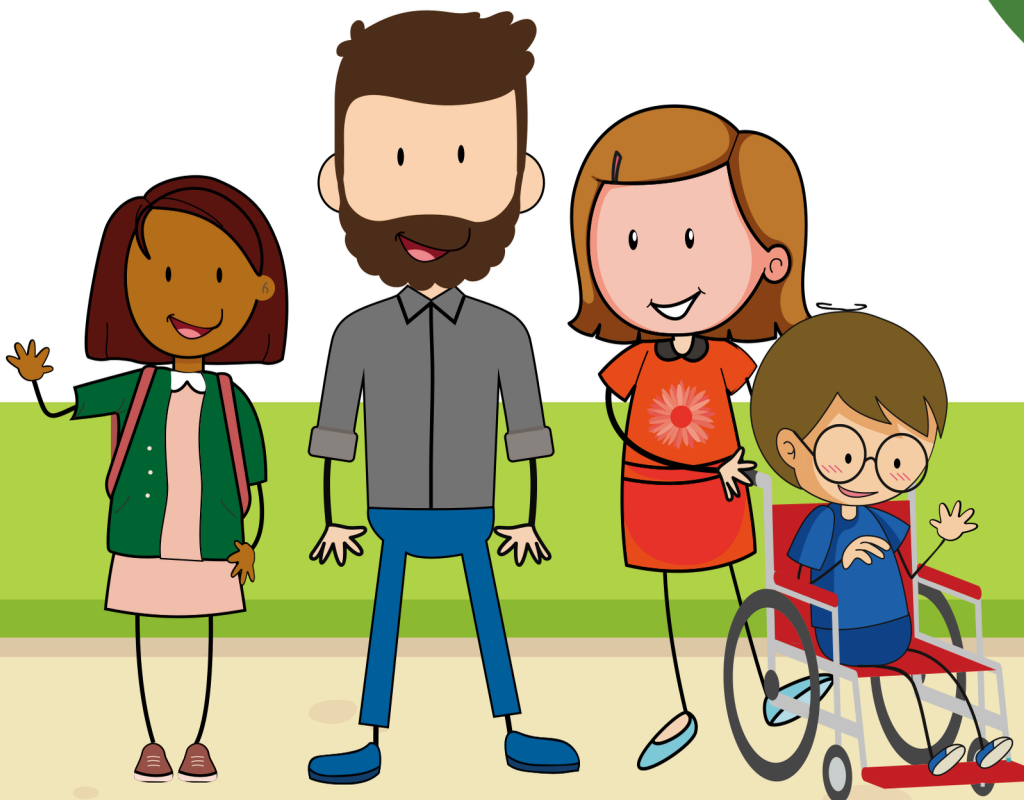
# Sufficiency Strategy 2026 - 2028

ENSURING A SUFFICIENT RANGE AND NUMBER OF  
HIGH-QUALITY ACCOMMODATION FOR CHILDREN  
IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS IN WAKEFIELD

## Our Vision for Our Children:

“Our vision is that all children and young people are happy, healthy, safe, resilient and hopeful for their future”

Wakefield Children & Young People Plan 2025 - 2028



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# Introduction



The Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to take reasonable steps to secure sufficient accommodation for children who cannot live at home and live in local authority care. This is commonly referred to as 'the sufficiency duty'. The statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for children in care sets out the local authority's responsibilities in more detail and has been fully reflected in the production of this strategy and the underpinning action plan. This strategy aims to demonstrate how we prioritise the accommodation that is offered to our children in care. We expect each of our children to be offered a safe, loving and caring environment for them to be able to thrive.

The Sufficiency Action Plan sets out a comprehensive programme of work that enables us to continuously deliver on the vision and ambitions outlined in the strategy. Throughout the development of this strategy, we have actively considered equality and diversity issues to ensure our approach is inclusive and responsive to the needs of all children, young people, and families. The profile of our Wakefield population, and of our children in care is well understood. Our processes provide for a regular and thorough review of our children in care, their specific needs and the availability and type of placements to provide for them. Though the provision of the right kinds of placement for children in care is consistently challenging, in Wakefield we are committed to using creative ways to improve and develop our placement offer – ultimately providing the best possible outcomes for the children we care for.

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care (2022) called for major reforms to ensure vulnerable children in England experience stable, loving homes. In response, the Government published Stable Homes, Built on Love (Feb 2023), outlining changes to improve care and support. Key initiatives include Staying Close (2023–2025), which offers accommodation and emotional support for young people leaving children's homes, and the Families First Partnership (March 2025), which promotes Family Help, multi-agency child protection reforms, and Family Group Decision Making to keep children safely within their families wherever possible. We anticipate that the Children's Well-being and Schools Bill will be introduced later in 2026. In preparation, we have already begun progressing work aligned to the proposed key elements of the Bill, and we will continue to review its development to ensure children in care and care leavers benefit from any forthcoming reforms. We will always endeavour to use a 'family first' approach to ensure that only those children who need to be cared for by the Local Authority are so. The strategy (and its underpinning action plan) seeks to provide a vision for creating and maintaining enough of the right kinds of care provision for children who need it, in the short, medium, and longer term.

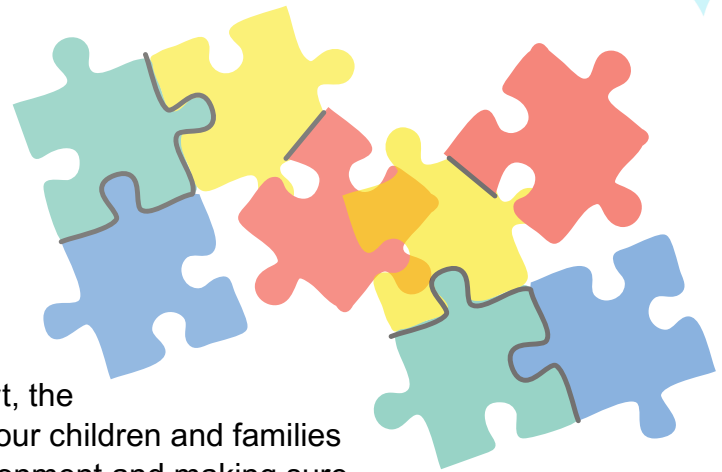
In Wakefield, we are committed to making the changes needed to ensure that all our children in care experience the stability, love, and support they deserve, so they can enjoy the same life chances as any other child. This work is already well underway and aligns with the Government's delivery expectations for safeguarding partners across England.

At our last children's social care inspection in 2025 Ofsted highlighted that Wakefield's innovative approach to placement sufficiency has significantly strengthened the local offer. Inspectors reported that this work had increased placement stability for children in care and halved the number of children placed outside Wakefield, due to our innovative approach.

# Our Vision, Ambitions & Achievements

## Building a Fairer Future

The Councils Corporate Plan 'Building a Fairer Future' sets out how we will work with communities and partners to deliver our ambitions for the district. The plan sets out the priorities that will make Wakefield an even better place to live, work, visit and study. At the heart, the plan is the priority the Council has given to support our children and families to thrive by creating the best possible learning environment and making sure that children and families receive the right support at the right time.



Our Sufficiency Strategy will make a direct contribution to achieving this key ambition through ensuring that vulnerable children for whom we have a corporate parenting responsibility are provided with a home where they feel safe, are well cared for and provided with the opportunities to build a positive future.

## Wakefield Children and Young Peoples Plan 2025 - 2028

Children and young people across Wakefield have shaped this overarching plan, ensuring it reflects their voices and priorities. It sets out our ambitious vision and focuses on what matters most to them, driving improvements that make a real difference in their lives. In summary:

*“Our vision is that all children and young people are happy, healthy, safe, resilient and hopeful for their future”*

The plan has been agreed by the Children's and Young Peoples Partnership and endorsed by full Council. All partners are committed to a range of actions to improve the lives of children with the focus on four key priorities for children which are:

- Our Safety and Feeling Loved
- Our Health
- Our Education
- Our Futures

Our Sufficiency Strategy will make a direct contribution to improving children's lives by ensuring those who are cared for by us, and our partners are nurtured, safe, respected, listened to, and provided with the care, education and health services that will help them on the path to success.



## **Our Principles in Achieving Permanency for Every Child and Young person**

We are committed to ensuring that children and young people in care have placements, support and services that are always of a high quality and appropriate to their needs. Stable, sustainable placements and the relationships that build as a result, are the foundation for our children's healthy development and future success.

To ensure a sufficient range of high-quality placements in Wakefield our focus will be to:

### **Intervene Early**

By understanding emerging risks, need and offering early help to avoid unnecessary escalation of challenges leading to additional harm and higher levels of intervention. This will involve working with a range of people who support children including wider family / kinship networks and the broader partnership across our communities.

### **Place permanence at the heart of our planning decisions**

By ensuring that our work with children and young people focusses on achieving or retaining permanent, lifelong relationships with people who are the most likely to meet their needs to the best standard possible. By doing this we will minimise the amount of time which children remain in care, helping them to find legal, physical, and emotional permanence with care givers who will be with them throughout their lives.

### **Keep children within our District where this is right for them**

By creating and sourcing in house and local placements, in line with the assessed needs of our children.

### **Be forward thinking, creative and ambitious**

By developing a range of placements through our owned and managed accommodation and our commissioning frameworks, which best meet the needs of the children we care for

### **Engage the broader Council and Partnership in our sufficiency work**

By cultivating the governance and visibility of our placement availability, choice and outcomes, and by seeking constructive challenge and feedback regarding our continued work to drive improvements.

### **Help families to help themselves**

By helping families to help themselves, supporting and empowering families to stay together and adopting a strengths-based and restorative approach. We will make active use of family network meetings and family group conferencing to identify solutions within the wider support system, while maintaining a realistic focus on the levels and nature of risk and harm.

### **Drive a partnership approach to children in care**

By maximising the contribution that partners make to the education, health, and other needs of children in care. By doing this we will promote joint ownership of the corporate parenting role, sharing decision making functions and jointly commissioning services in the best interests of children.

### **Know our children in care well**

By reviewing in detail the needs of our children, we will have a thorough and up to date knowledge about the types of help and placements that our children require. By doing this, we will develop our in-house services (including placement type) to address the current needs of children in our care. We will also be able to accurately predict the future needs of the children we care for, promoting effective future planning.

### **Listen to and act on the views and experiences of our children in care**

By establishing a range of ways to engage with and seek the views of children in our care, our children's views will inform our work to develop and improve. In addition, we will systematically review our practice with a specific focus on the outcomes we achieve for the children we care for.

### **Demonstrate leadership and commitment to ensuring equality and inclusion**

By recognising and promoting diversity through services that are responsive, accessible, inclusive, and understand the needs of our children. In addition, we have a skilled and diverse workforce which demonstrates inclusive behaviours and practices.

# Our Key Achievements 2024-2026



## **Preventing Children Coming into Care - since 2024 we have:**

- Embedded our 'Under 10's Project' which aims to provide intensive, proactive and dynamic support to children and their families, offering the right support at the right time to prevent escalation. For children under 10 who are subject to a Child Protection (CP) Plan and/or Public Law Outline (PLO) as part of the core offer, the service provides intensive, tailored support to help reduce risks and prevent further harm. This whole-family approach aims to prevent admissions into care, where it is safe and appropriate to do so. Reviews and dip sampling undertaken evidence reduction of risk in most cases; 51 children during 2025 were safely de-escalated from child protection planning to child in need planning.
- Achieved robust tracking and monitoring processes for children subject to child protection planning, including the implementation of child impact meetings enabling de-escalation of needs, children able to remain in their families and preventing children coming into care.
- Successful relaunch of the public law outline, to include mandatory family network meetings and robust oversight of children presented to Legal Gateway Panel.
- Continued to offer a perseverant and holistic service to families in crisis through our Families Achieving Change Team (FACT). From December 2024 to December 2025, 283 children had been allocated to the team, with an overall 91% success rate of children remaining in their family networks, returning home from care, or moving on to independent living.
- Strengthened joint working between the Kinship Team and the Emotional Wellbeing Team with the development and delivery of Introduction to Therapeutic Parenting training course for kinship carers.
- Embedded a robust support service for family placements which includes support to access the Adoption and Special Guardianship Order fund (ASGSF).

## **Permanence and Discharges from Care - since 2024 we have:**

- Appropriately and safely ended periods of care for 465 individuals (up to December 2025)
- Secured 99 Child Arrangements Orders/Special Guardianship Orders. Our aims remain, where appropriate and in the best interests of children, to move towards legal permanence as soon as possible.
- Embedded guidance pertaining to Supervision Orders, to ensure independent oversight and scrutiny by Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Chairs, to avoid the use of care orders where the Local Authority does not need to share Parental Responsibility
- Successfully long term matched a total of 220 children to foster families
- Continued to progress adoption placements, with strong performance in the time it takes from a child being placed for adoption, to the Adoption Order being granted. The average time taken for Wakefield children placed with their adopters to an Adoption Order being made, from October 2024 to December 2025 was 214 Days which was below the national average of 274 days.
- Continued to progress placements for our children with complex needs and sibling groups. We worked well with our Regional Adoption Agency, One Adoption West Yorkshire to creatively find an adoptive placement for 3 children.

- Maintained a consistent focus on all permanence plans through the Permanence and Resource Panel to ensure these are achieved and to understand any barriers to addressing progress.
- Worked with CAF/CASS proactively to consider care planning for children.
- Ensured the Complex Care Panel effectively supported placement disruption for out of area placements.
- Expanded the level of services and support offered by our Emotional Wellbeing Team (EWBT) including the stability and disruption pathway, consultation for foster carers and recruited a dedicated 16-25-year old worker. The dedicated 16–25 EWBT worker provides early, accessible emotional wellbeing support for young people as they move into adulthood.
- Introduced a specialist care navigator to work with care leavers aged 16-25 years to support care leavers to achieve permanence in the right placement.

### **Providing Enough of the Right Kind of Placements - since 2024 we have:**

- Implemented new financial incentives for foster carers who offer consistent placements to children, to improve foster carer retention.
- Implemented a renewed Recruitment Strategy to attract new, experienced and specialist foster carers to increase the number of fostering placements.
- Approved 19 new foster carers providing 23 placements.
- Increased the number of Fostering Mockingbird Constellations from 1 to 3. This approach links several fostering households to one experienced “hub” foster carer, who offers practical and emotional support to the group as a whole. All the carers within the constellation also support each other, creating a normalised extended family model of fostering.
- Significantly reduced the number of children living in external residential provision by 50%, enabling children to be cared for in their own communities.
- Secured additional finance that enables adaptations to foster carer homes to support siblings remaining together with 6 households engaging in this currently.
- Opened the new ‘Foster Hub Home’, a bespoke model for children to step down in to foster care placements from residential settings, offering support akin to the Mockingbird model, including respite care for foster carers. To date, we have successfully moved on 2 children since the home opened in March 2025.
- Further developed our Kinship Offer and identified as a potential local authority for the Kinship Financial Pathway as part of the Kinship reforms.
- Embedded our Staying Close offer, which includes supporting care leavers with a bespoke plan to develop independent, emotional skills and resilience to become tenancy ready.
- Grown our Staying Put arrangements with foster carers. As at the end of 2025, 10.78% of young people leaving care were in Staying Put arrangements.
- Worked with social and private landlords to provide tenancies at the right time for our care leavers. We have successfully moved on a total of 38 young people between January 2025 to December 2025.
- Commissioned bespoke accommodation for our care leavers with the voluntary sector, offering a number of beds for care leavers aged 18+.
- Built upon our established team of Independent Support Workers (ISA’s) to provide weekend and out of hours support.
- Grown the number of Ofsted registered 16/17-year-old supported accommodation, now offering 75 placements.
- Developed relationships with adult social care and accommodation providers to jointly plan and support a collaborative transition for young people’s post 18 provision for those with complex needs and who require more supportive accommodation.

## Wakefield's Children's Homes, since 2024, we have:

Received Ofsted outcomes of **'Good' or 'Outstanding'** in all our Wakefield children's homes

Increased our residential portfolio to **9** mainstream children's homes, in total offering up to **20** placements for children. This includes the specialist Foster Hub Home and 2 mainstream homes offering **emergency care**, to prevent the use of unregulated provision

Targeted our **local provision** for those children with the most complex of need and have seen a **de-escalation in placement disruption and risk**

Worked with our housing colleagues to **secure two social housing homes**, successfully building upon our mainstream residential estate capacity

**Secured funding** to progress plans to develop a **new specialist children's home**



## Wakefield's Homes for Children with Complex Needs, since 2024, we have:

Received Ofsted outcomes of **'Good'** for all our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) homes

Increased the number of SEND home capacity by one to enable a **sibling group to stay together**

Continued to operate three homes of this kind, overall providing a mix of full time and short break overnight care, with one of the homes providing **nursing care** for those with complex healthcare needs

Alongside short breaks the service, also offers **day care, holiday playschemes** and when necessary, **emergency crisis support**

Received a CQC outcome of **'Outstanding'** for one of our homes

Undertaken **targeted recruitment** to increase numbers of foster carers for children with SEND

Strengthened our offer for adults (18 -24-year-olds) to have **respite care**, we can now accommodate five adults at any one time. We have had good feedback from adults / carers / professionals, and this is allowing us to **build positive relationships** with Adult Services.

# About Our Local Area

Wakefield District covers 350 square kilometres and is one of 5 local authorities in the West Yorkshire region. The district is made up of several towns and villages, located on the outskirts of the City of Wakefield. The district is well served by transport links, being located on 2 major motorways (the M62 and M1). It borders Leeds (to the Northeast, Barnsley and Doncaster to the South and Kirklees to the West).

## Population



Mid 2022 ONS estimates put the district's population at 357,729 people, this represents a 1.1% increase in the size of the population compared to mid-2021. According to the latest Census data (2021) in Wakefield, the population size has increased by 8.4%, this is higher than the overall increase for England (6.6%).

## Children & Young People



According to the latest data from the 2025 Wakefield JSNA, there are around 75,000 children under 18, making up 21% of the Wakefield population. This is slightly lower than the 23% figure from the 2021 Census, likely due to demographic shifts and declining birth rates (3,507 births in 2023).

## Ethnic Diversity



Wakefield's population is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse, in the 2021 Census 88.2% of Wakefield District residents identified as 'White: British, English, Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish' ethnicity. The proportion of the population from an ethnic minority background has increased over time in Wakefield, from 7.2% in the 2011 Census to 11.8% in the 2021 Census. The most reported ethnic minority groups in Wakefield were 'White: Polish' (2.1%) and 'Asian or Asian British: Pakistani or British Pakistani' (2.0%). In the 2021 Census 8.5% of people in Wakefield reported being born outside the UK. In the 2023/24 school census 79.4% of children were of White British ethnicity, with 5.7 % identified as 'Any other white background', 5.1% having Asian ethnicity and 2.9% of Black ethnicity

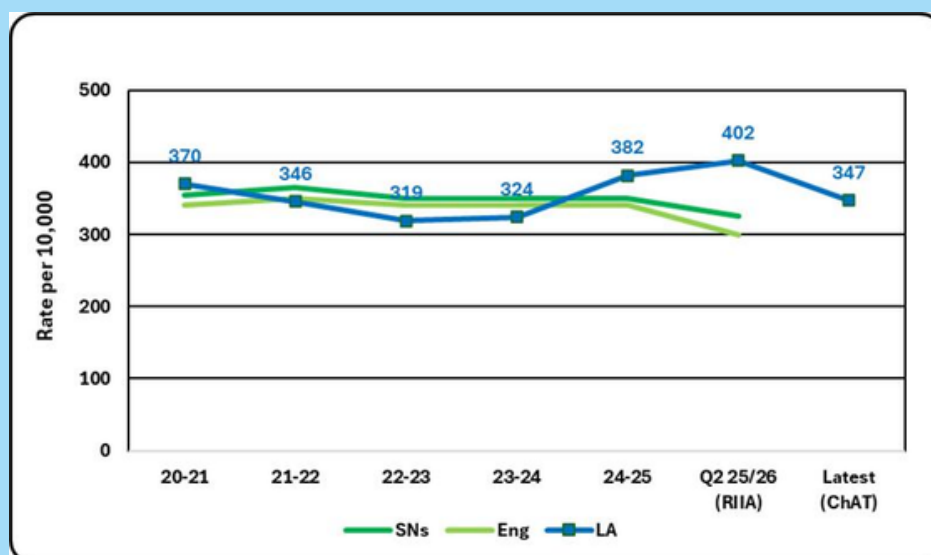
## Deprivation



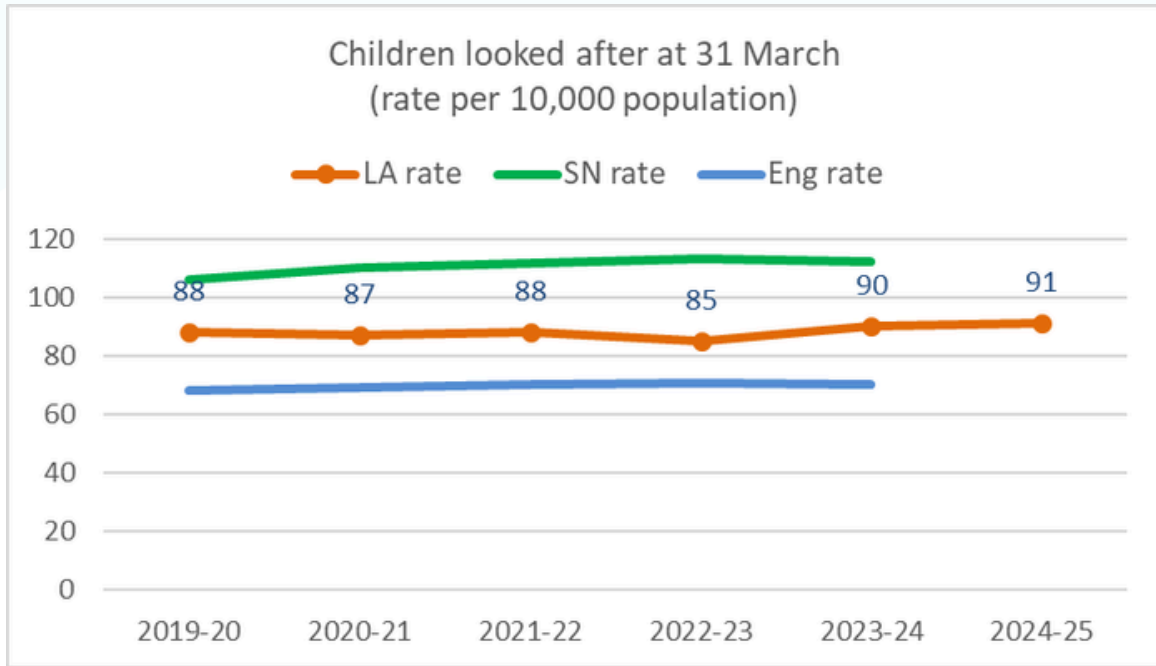
The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025 (IMD25) has been published, in which Wakefield is ranked 58th most deprived local authority in England out of 317 districts. This is a slight change from 2019, when Wakefield was ranked 54<sup>th</sup> although the methodology has changed. While the overall rank for Wakefield is 58th, the district contains multiple Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that fall into the bottom decile for deprivation in England. Persistent deprivation hotspots remain, particularly in parts of Wakefield city, Castleford, and Knottingley.

# Demand for Children's Services

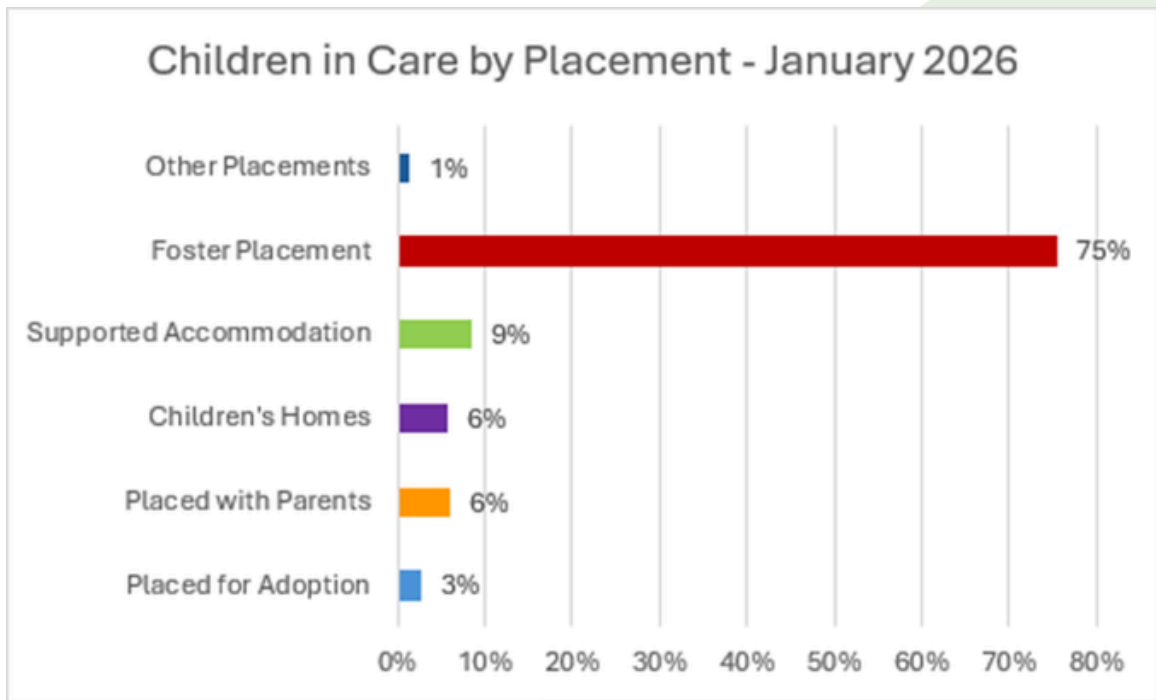
The following series of charts provides an overview of key trends in children's social care in Wakefield over the past six years. They illustrate the rate of children assessed as being in need of services per 10,000 population and compare Wakefield's position with statistical neighbours and the national picture. The charts also show the number of children in care in Wakefield, the types of placements they live in, and indicators of placement stability. In addition, they highlight trends in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), new admissions into care, discharges from care, adoption rates, and the number of children who became subject to a Special Guardianship Order (SGO). Together, these measures provide a comprehensive view of demand, outcomes, and the experiences of children and families in Wakefield.



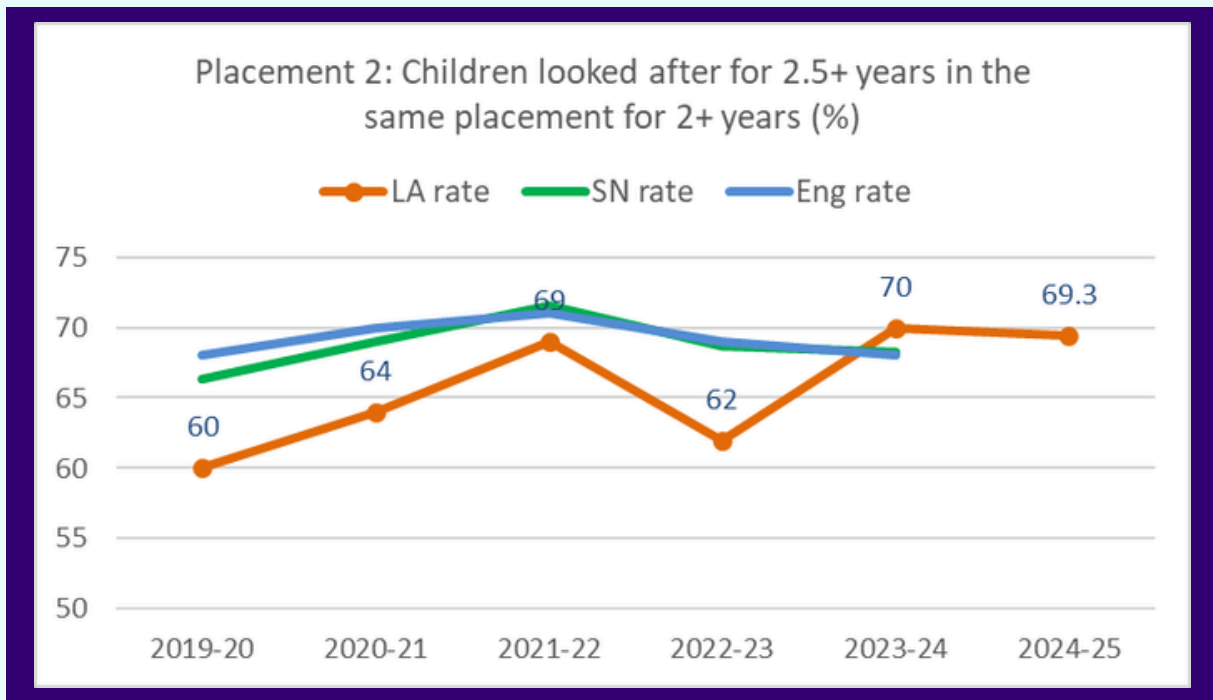
The above chart shows the rate of children assessed by Social Care to be 'in need' of services in Wakefield (per 10,000 population) over the last 6 years and how this compares to the rates for statistical neighbours and England. This includes all children accessing statutory children's services such as Children deemed in Need, Children subject to Child Protection Planning and Children in Care. Whilst we saw an increased rate in 2024/2025 which continued into Quarter 2 2025, we are now seeing the demand reduce to 347 as of the latest data set (January 2026). Although the overall rate has seen recent fluctuations, due to a robust Targeted Early Help Offer the rate of demand has reduced. This remains an increase from 2023/2024 and above our statistical neighbours and the England average.



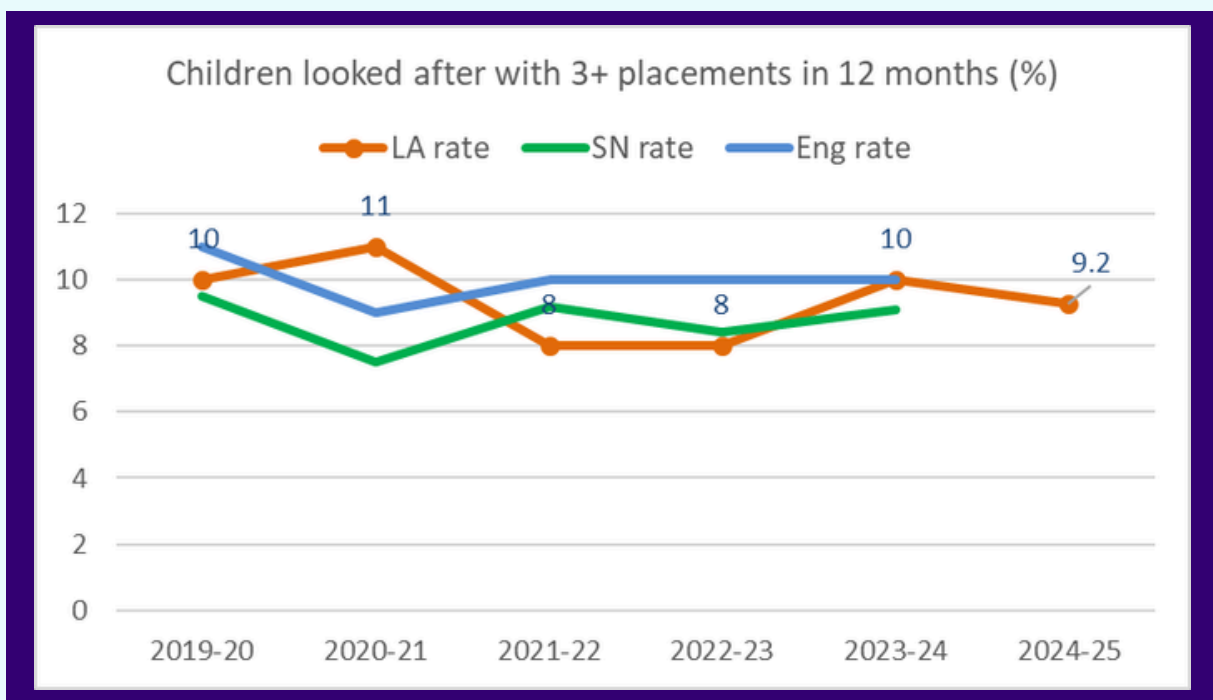
The chart above shows an upward trajectory in numbers of Children in Care in Wakefield over the last 6 years, similar to that of statistical neighbours. However, Wakefield’s rate remains lower than statistical neighbours but higher than the England average.



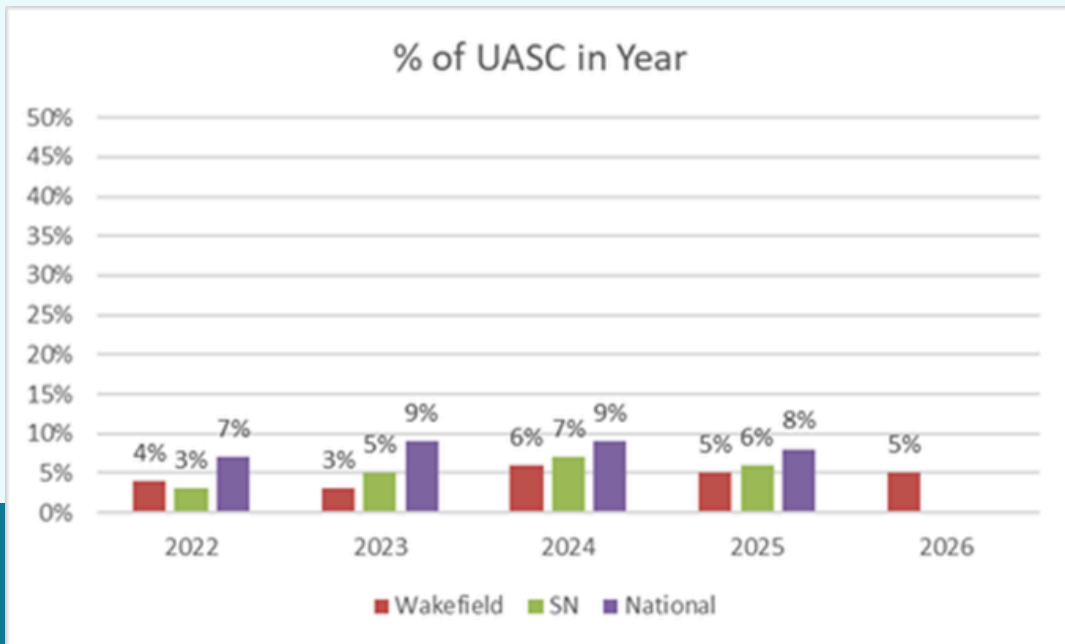
We believe family placements for children in care is, in most cases, the best arrangement for them, allowing for the development of attachments to main care givers and most closely matching the experience of children in the general population. Shown in the chart above, as of January 2026, 75% of Wakefield children in care were living with a foster carer, which is higher than both the statistical neighbour rate of 69% and England rate of 68%.



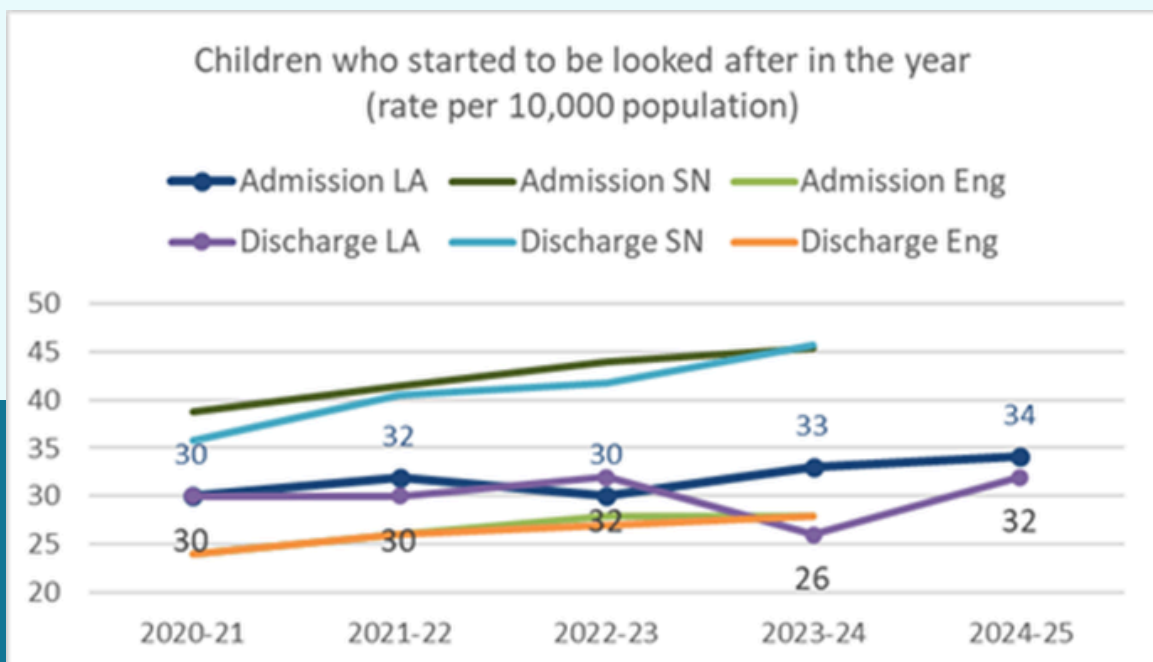
We believe that it is important for children to have stability and consistency in the care that they receive. The chart above shows that Wakefield’s rate was higher than statistical neighbours and the England rate for achieving long-term placement stability, meaning that a large majority of children stay in the same placement for more than 2.5 years.



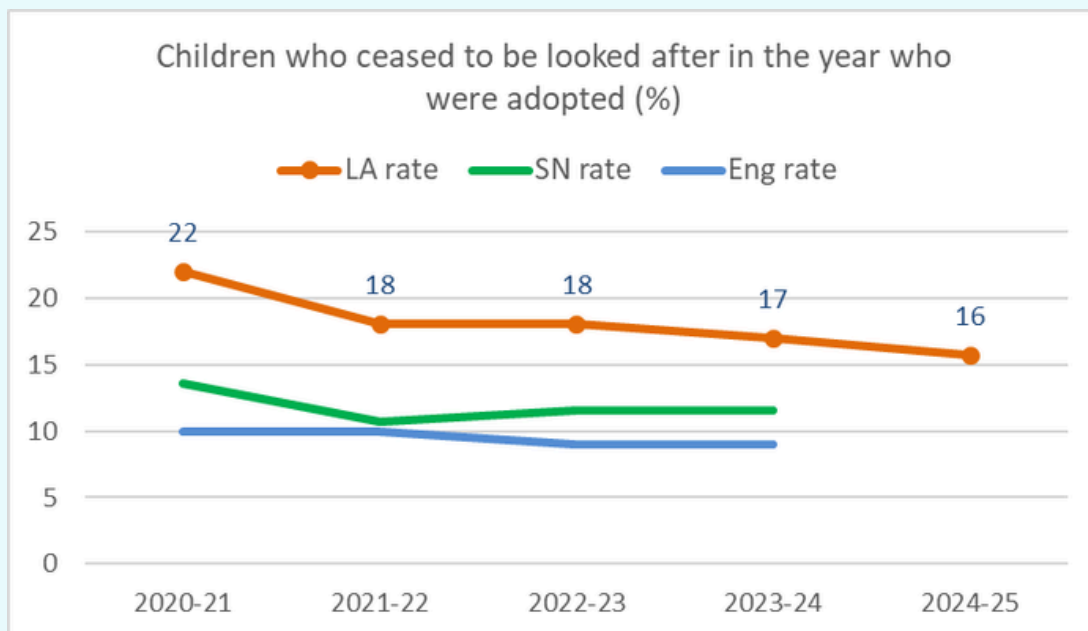
The chart above shows that the number of children with 3 or more placements in a 12 month period has reduced. This is positive and reflects the effectiveness of our robust stability pathway and support offered to our carers. At last published data, Wakefield achieves similar placement stability to the England average and slightly higher than our statistical neighbours. The current data set shows further improvement in this area, with our current rate as of January 2026 standing at 8.6% meaning that more children have remained stable in their homes.



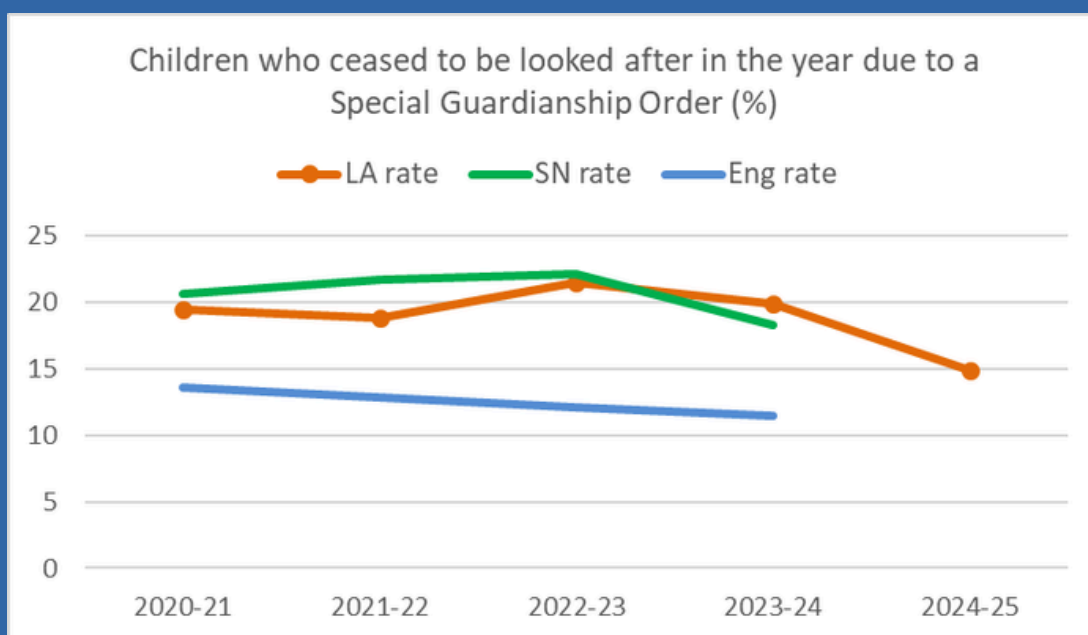
The chart above shows that the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people (UASC) in Wakefield has remained similar to previous years, with a slight increase in 2024. Wakefield's numbers are typically lower because the district has no coastline or international port, resulting in very few spontaneous arrivals of UASC. The UASC population in Wakefield is largely dependent on referrals through the mandatory National Transfer Scheme, which reallocates young people from high pressure entry authorities to other councils to achieve a more balanced national allocation. Most (87%) of current UASC in Wakefield are placed in our in-house provision to allow them better access to the Local offer.



The chart above shows that during 2024/2025, the numbers of admissions and discharges kept better pace with each other. This is reflective of our overall focus on early intervention, preventing admissions to care and focussing on achieving permanence at an earlier stage.



The chart above shows that Wakefield achieves a higher rate of adoptions than our statistical neighbours and the England average, despite an overall national challenge in recruiting adopters. However, we have seen a decline compared to previous years, which is reflective of initiatives to help keep children within their family network.



The chart above shows that Wakefield achieves a higher rate of Special Guardianship Orders than the England average and statistical neighbours when the last data was published. Our latest data set shows a reduction in numbers which is attributed to the Supervision Order initiative and use of lesser orders which prevent an episode of care for children which is considered the least interventionist approach.

# Our Current Offer

We currently have **133** in house foster carers, providing up to **248** placements for children in care. We provide a strong and well-supported fostering offer that includes **competitive financial support** and **council tax discount** alongside a **family rail card** and **gym membership**. There is also up to **£1,500 further financial support for new carers**. Carers receive a dedicated supervising social worker, regular support meetings, 24/7 access to crisis support, and specialist emotional wellbeing support. They also benefit from comprehensive virtual and face to face **training, peer support groups**, and a **community-based model** that prioritises strong matching and keeping children within the local area wherever possible.

We have multiple Ofsted registered 16+ supported accommodation options for children providing up to 50 placements and a further 25 in house accommodation options for care leavers aged 18+. We offer 3 emergency housing provisions for children aged 16+ who are at risk of homelessness.

Within the SEND accommodation service, we have 3 Ofsted registered children's homes, 2 of which specialise in short breaks and 1 which offers medium to long term care.

Within the Mainstream Residential Service, there are 9 homes with up to 20 placements available all providing care. Two homes provide short term placements for up to 12 weeks for children aged between 5 to 17 years old. Five homes offer medium to long term care for children aged between 7 to 17 years old.

We have one specialist home for children who have complex mental health needs jointly funded with health, which provides care for up to two children aged between 11 to 17 years old for up to 12 months. The Croft has a clinical in reach service and is thought to be the first of its kind in the country.

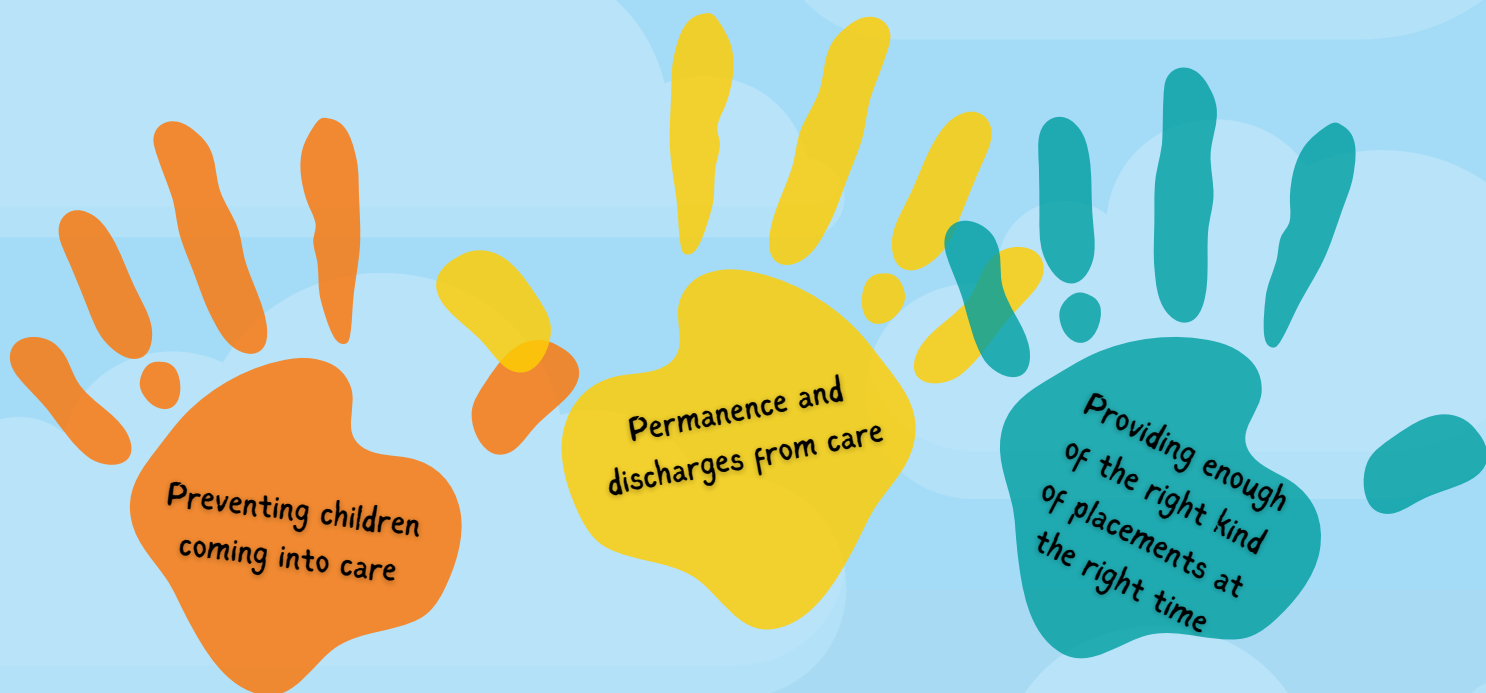
The Foster Hub Home was opened in 2025 to support children aged between 7-15 years move from residential care to long term stable foster placements within 3 to 12 months. The Foster Hub Home is linked to and works in partnership with the fostering service. The Foster Hub Home is also understood to be the first of its kind in the country.



# Oversight and Governance

In Wakefield, ensuring the sufficiency of placements for children in our care remains a key priority. We recognise that having the right placement at the right time is crucial in enabling children to thrive throughout childhood and successfully transition into independence. To achieve this, we have established robust governance arrangements through a sufficiency steering group held at a minimum of bi-monthly and chaired by the Service Director for children's social care. This forum provides oversight, challenge, and direction to the activity required to meet our sufficiency ambitions. These arrangements ensure that we maintain a clear understanding of local need, drive forward targeted actions, and continuously develop a range of high-quality, stable placements that support our children to achieve the best possible outcomes.

**Our Sufficiency governance arrangements focus on 3 key strands of activity:**

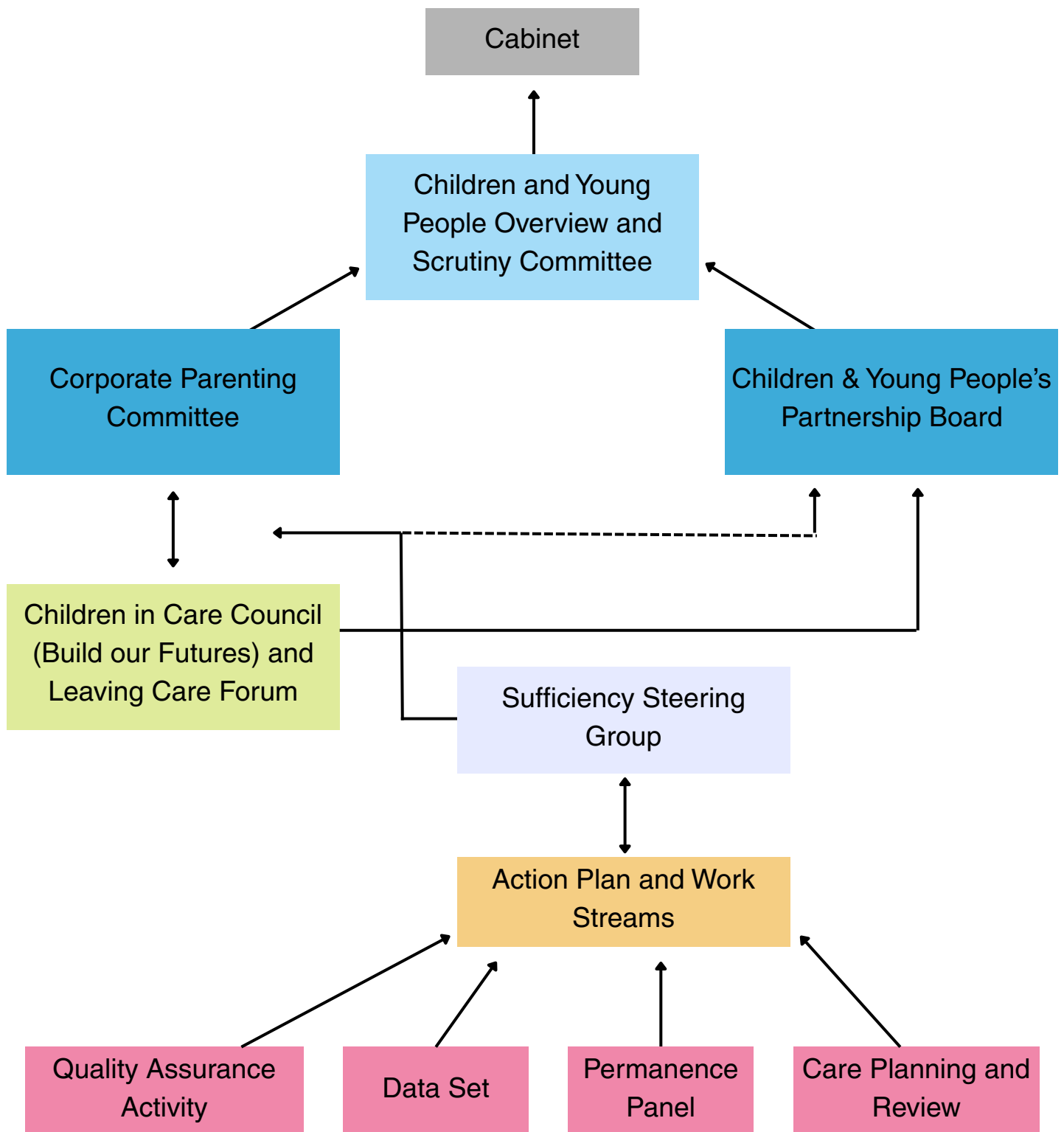


We set out how we will achieve these ambitions in the underpinning “Sufficiency Action Plan”.

Our sufficiency work is reported regularly to our Directorate Management Team and is considered by our Corporate Parenting Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Our Children in Care Council (Build our Futures) are routinely engaged in our governance arrangements. Our quality assurance process, Independent Reviewing processes, advocacy, complaints and complements processes also provide opportunities for us to understand and respond to feedback from our young people. This strategy and the resulting action plans are informed by this activity.

# Sufficiency Strategy Governance Framework



## Our Ambitions for the next 2 years - Preventing Children Coming into Care

In Wakefield we are committed to strengthening families and reducing the number of children needing to enter care by providing timely, targeted, and effective support at the earliest opportunity. Our whole-system approach brings together a range of evidence-informed interventions and coordinated pathways designed to stabilise families, reduce risk, and build resilience.

Our ambitions to prevent children coming into care include:

### ***Implementing the PAUSE Project***

PAUSE Wakefield is a targeted intervention programme designed to support women who have experienced repeat removals of children from their care. The programme aims to reduce the cycle of removal, improve outcomes for women, and reduce demand on statutory services. Following successful funding approval in September 2025, PAUSE Wakefield will be embedded within the Targeted Early Help Service and will mobilise from April 2026. (Feedback from foster carer)

### ***Family Network Meetings***

Our Kinship Team to attend Family Network Meetings at the earliest point to offer information and support, drawing on extended family strengths to create safe, sustainable arrangements for children and prevent them entering care where possible.

### ***Differential Planning***

The introduction of sustainable alternatives to care for young people is a key priority, particularly where parental change is unlikely and where long-term practical support offers a better route to stability. By promoting and strengthening preventative interventions, we aim to support young people to remain safely within their communities, reduce the likelihood of escalation into care, and ensure that care is only used when it offers a clear improvement in outcomes. This approach reinforces our commitment to early, proportionate support that places the young person's best interests at the centre of decision-making, led by our FACT team.

### ***Under 10's Project***

The Under 10's project offers intensive family support to children aged under 10 and their families to prevent escalation of risk and need and subsequently admissions to care.

### ***IDART (Integrated Domestic Abuse Response Team)***

The delivery of specialist domestic abuse services through dedicated, integrated, multi-agency teams to support to reduce harm, increase safety, and stabilise family environments.

## ***Supporting Parenting Engagement Protocol***

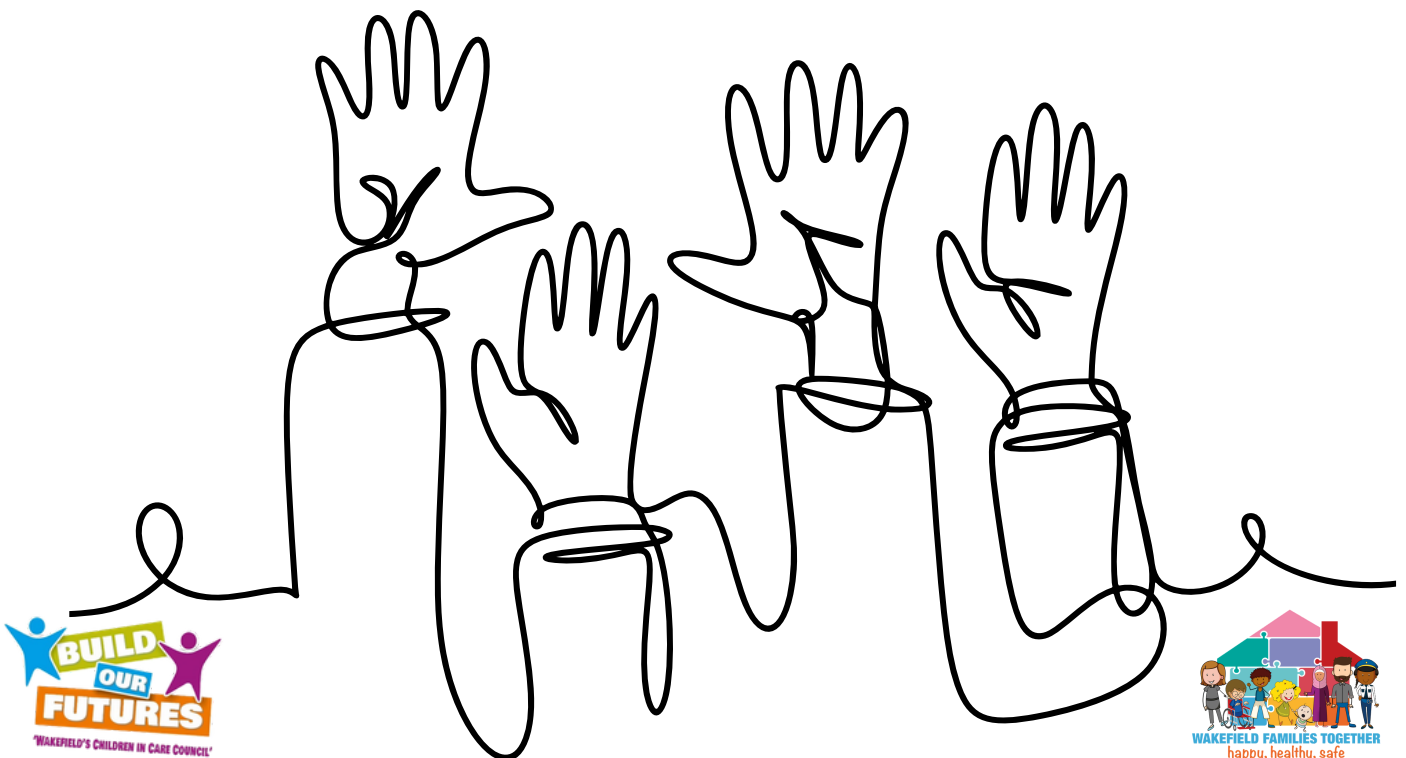
Wakefield Children's Social Care and Youth Justice Service have a joint protocol to support and promote parental responsibility for vulnerable children aged 10-17 who are at risk of offending and their parents are not working effectively with services to protect their child(ren) and the community from harm. The protocol pays particular attention to children who are most at risk of multiple adverse outcomes including but not limited to: serious youth violence/offending, poor school attendance, exploitation and modern slavery and poor emotional wellbeing. We would describe these parents as 'hard to reach' as they are not working with services involved and the risk to their child continues to increase. For example, parents who are not communicating with services, not supporting visits, not reporting their child when missing from home or being absent from multi-agency planning. This includes parents and carers who have limited contact with their child but continue to hold parental responsibility.

## ***Quality Assurance and Effectiveness of Plans***

The continued development of our quality assurance activities. Our approach centres on the effective use of Child in Need and Child Protection planning, supported by responsive, high-quality service provision that addresses the underlying causes of concern and promotes long-term safety and stability. To ensure plans are both robust and outcome-focused, we have a range of quality assurance mechanisms which include regular auditing, reflective case discussions, management oversight, impact meetings and multi-agency review processes which collectively help us evaluate the effectiveness, timeliness, and impact of interventions. These methods ensure that plans are clear, purposeful, and proportionate, and that they drive meaningful change for children and families.

## ***Transformation Plan***

We will continue the delivery of our transformation plan against the national social care reforms including initiatives such as the introduction of multi-agency child protection teams.



## **Our Ambitions for the Next two Years - Permanence and Ending Periods of Care**

In Wakefield, we are committed to securing permanence for every child in our care by ensuring they are known well, understood holistically, and supported by carers who are equipped to meet their needs. Permanence is the driving principle within all care planning. Our approach focuses on strengthening children's resilience and confidence through consistent, high-quality support. For many children, both legal and physical permanence will be achievable, and where this is the case, it will be pursued robustly and without delay to ensure long-term stability and positive outcomes. We know that children leave care for a variety of reasons and our main ambition for children is that we can achieve permanence within their own family network. A significant number of children in care ultimately return home to the care of their families, when it is safe and in the child's best interests to do so.

Our ambitions to achieve permanence and ending periods of care (where safe and appropriate) include:

### ***Strong focus on achieving permanence through utilising the family network***

The focus over the next two years will be continuing to ensure that children remain in their family networks. This includes providing a high-quality kinship offer and extending this furthermore. Our focus will be to achieve legal permanence through the form of Special Guardianship Orders and use of lesser Orders such as Child Arrangement Orders and enabling periods of care to safely end. We also aim to introduce virtual school support for children living within their family network and to strengthen family network meetings.

### ***Management Oversight and Review***

To focus on reunification wherever this is safe and appropriate. This will also include support via the introduction of the Differential Planning project and FACT, supported by our Placement with Parent assessment process.

### ***Growth in the number of Foster Carers***

To focus on having carers linked to our Foster Hub Home to enable children to move out of residential placements into family-based settings, with enhanced wraparound support. We will aim to achieve permanence through the long-term matching process.

### ***Support for Carers***

With bespoke offers of support to be considered at Complex Care Panel and / or Permanence and Resource Panel to maintain and strengthen placement stability for children.

### ***Limit Placement Disruption & Improve Stability***

We have a dedicated disruption and stability pathway which is strengthened by support from our Emotional Well-being Team. All processes are fully embedded and are to be used so that placement disruption is avoided – by employing a “Team Around the Child (TAC) Approach.” When placement disruption cannot be avoided, we will quickly gather, share, and collate information, learning from what went wrong so that similar circumstances may be avoided in the future. We aim to continue to strengthen stability for children through intensive support, including FACT support for children cared for within their family unit.

### ***Adoption***

Where reunification or remaining in the family network is not achievable for children, our aim will be to ensure that children are placed in permanent, safe homes.

## **Our Ambitions for the Next two Years - Providing Enough of the Right Kind of Placements**

In Wakefield, we are committed to providing enough of the right types of placements to meet the diverse needs of our children. By taking a whole-system approach to data interrogation, and by listening closely to the views and experiences of our children in care, we are able to fully understand their needs. This insight enables us to identify the placement types required to support children holistically and ensure they receive the right care at the right time.

To ensure we have enough placements to truly meet children's needs, our focus will be to:

### ***Continue to Grow our already-increased Placement Offer***

Growing placement availability through targeted foster carer recruitment for teenagers and growing the cohort of carers linked to our Foster Hub Home. We aim to achieve this by launching targeted recruitment campaigns.

### ***Strengthen and Widen the Range of Placement Types***

Broaden the choice and range of placements by using data and information from our carers and partners to determine future placement need. We will continue to strengthen the diversity of our foster care population by actively increasing engagement with Wakefield's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. This will remain a core priority within our foster carer recruitment strategy to ensure that our children and young people can access culturally appropriate, identity-affirming care. We will also seek to grow our 'staying close' model for children leaving care, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children who do not yet have leave to remain status.

### ***Continue Implementing Support for Kinship Carers***

Through our dedicated Kinship Team we will continue to develop and enhance support for our kinship carers. We will continue to link kinship carers to Mockingbird constellations to increase support for those being cared for within their family unit. We will also work closely with the Virtual School (VS) to strengthen and grow the support and advice to kinship carers and schools should issues arise.

### ***Retain our Current Cohort of Foster Carers***

By improving the experience for prospective carers, from enquiry through to assessment as well as expand the number of Mockingbird constellations by at least one. We will use Mockingbird to stabilise placements, improve support for carers, and reduce disruption for children. In addition, we will explore a Mockingbird constellation specifically for children with complex needs and children exiting residential care.

### ***Increase Provision for Children with Complex Needs***

Recruit carers specifically equipped and trained to provide high-quality care for children with complex or challenging needs. We aim to expand respite options as well as longer term options for children in care with complex needs whilst also strengthening partnership working with health and education to provide integrated support.

## ***Create Even More 16+ Supported Accommodation Places***

By increasing locally based in house 16+ placements to support independence while keeping young people connected to their communities. We aim to engage with providers to co-develop high-quality semi-independent settings with strong safeguarding and support as well as build pathways that prepare young people for adulthood, education, employment, and stable futures

## ***Expand our 18+ Provision for Care Leavers***

Grow our 18+ accommodation options for care leavers. We already have a successful Joint Housing Protocol between Wakefield Council and Vico Homes to ensure our care leavers are afforded housing priority status. Although, at times we know that there is a need for different types of accommodation when our care leavers are not quite ready for full independence at 18 or, like unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who do not yet have leave to remain so cannot obtain their own tenancy, for example. We will also further develop relationships with adult social care, accommodation providers and commissioning for those young people with complex needs who require more supportive accommodation, and we aim to grow this further by introducing a Complex Care Panel for care leavers to enable smooth transitions and ensure the best outcome for those leaving care.

## ***Increase Emergency Capacity***

By recruiting emergency and out-of-hours foster carers to provide a rapid response / crisis model that ensures children always have safe, supported accommodation when needed.

## ***Open a New Specialist Children's Home***

We know that we can provide excellent care for our children with complex levels of need in our own residential homes, we have seen that the 2 bedded home model works and has allowed our children to thrive and continue to live within their hometown, this is an area that we want to look at expanding further over the next two years. We aim to work towards opening a new DfE funded home by 2028 which will offer care for up to 3 children who have been exploited. The home will embed a focus on safety which will include clinical support when needed and a focus on activities to increase self-confidence. The home will also be supported by a unique education package whereby alternative provision comes into the home.

## ***Further strengthen and maintain strong multi-agency collaboration***

We will continue to embed best practice through strong multi-agency collaboration, including strengthened partnership working with health partners and education, and through the joint multi-agency commissioning of placements and provisions that deliver integrated support and meet children's needs. In addition, we will explore opportunities to contribute at a regional level to support ongoing improvement.

## ***Strengthen and Expand Training for Carers in Mainstream Homes***

New Therapeutic Crisis Intervention roles will be created to support the growth of the service. These trainers will not only support the compliance around behaviour management techniques but also build upon resilience where challenges and risks present the most, providing a wraparound support and recognition of workers displaying resilience.

# To Close

To bring this sufficiency strategy to a close we reaffirm our commitment to building upon our existing resilient model built around the voices and experiences of children that delivers the right support at the right time.

By focusing on our three core strands of activity: Preventing Children Coming into Care, Permanence and Discharges from Care, and Providing Enough of the Right Kind of Placements, we will continue to strengthen our local offer and improve outcomes. Through close partnership working, investment in our carers, and a clear focus on keeping children safely within their families wherever possible, we aim to ensure every child in Wakefield benefits from stable, nurturing, and high-quality care. This strategy sets the foundation for sustained improvement, greater sufficiency, and long-term sustainability for the years ahead. We look forward to updating you of our achievements in 2028.