

Report to: **Corporate Parenting Panel**

Date: **22 October 2010**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **Report on the LAC Service**

Purpose of report: **To provide an annual summary of activity within the LAC service.**

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**Recommendation: The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the report**

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## **1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 The total LAC budget allocation is £19,421,100. Just over £12 million of this budget to set to cover all of the demand led aspects of the service i.e. foster care allowances, adoption allowances, agency placements, accommodation for care leavers etc. The remainder is largely committed to staffing, and for some aspects of the service, the staffing levels are set by statute. The critical pressure points and potential financial risks for the forthcoming year will be fostering allowances, agency placements, supervised contact and the secure unit.

## **2. Supporting information**

2.1 See Appendix 1

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Director of Children's Services

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Local Members: All

## LAC Service Annual Report to CPP 2009-2010

### 1 Placement Data

1.1 During 2009/10, the number of children looked after by the County Council increased (by 64) 14%. On 31 March 2010, there were 525 looked after children, placed as follows, with 2009 figures in brackets:-

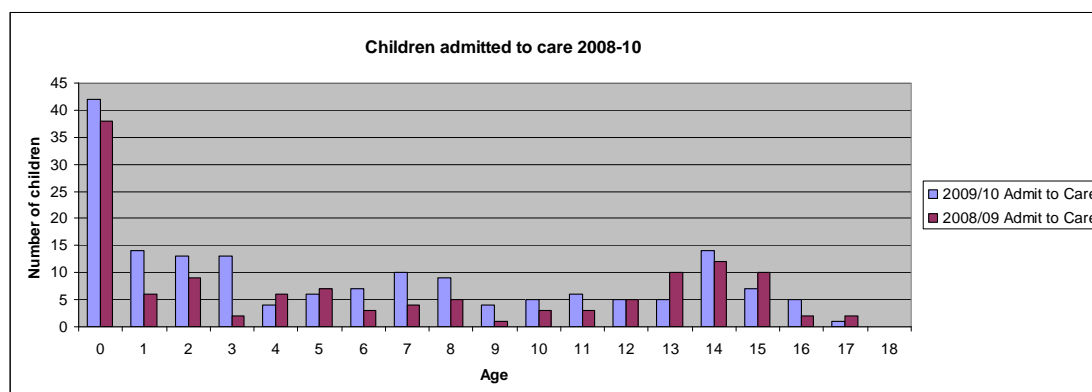
with foster carers	434	(374)
of these: in house carers	297	(258)
kinship carers	65	(61)
agency carers	72	(55)
placed for adoption	20	(27)
in lodgings	1	(5)
in ESCC children's homes	19	(17)
in agency children's homes	12	(7)
in agency special schools	15	(12)
placed with own parents	21	(18)
youth custody/secure unit	3	(1)

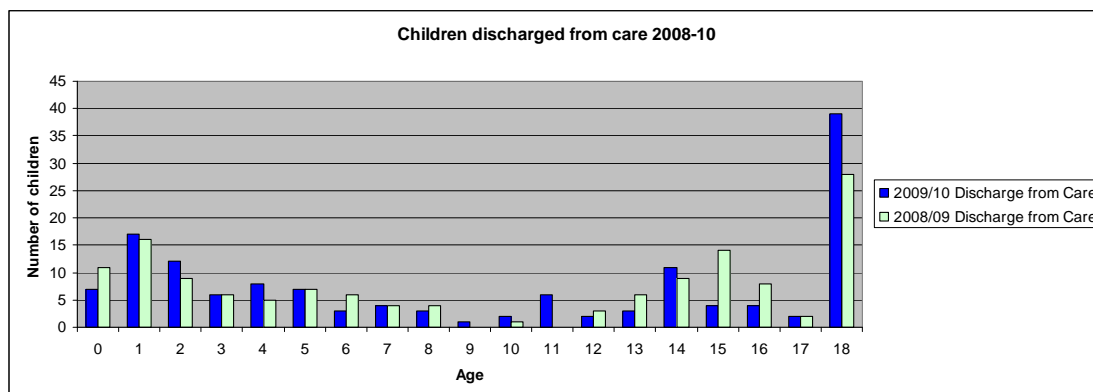
1.2 It is not possible to give the national comparator data yet as this is still unavailable. However, the proportion of LAC who are placed in family placements remains high

Fostered	82.7%
Fostered by friends and family	12.4%
Residential Care	8.8%
Placed with own parents	4.0%
Other placements	4.6%

1.3.1 The increase in LAC numbers throughout 2009/2010 is showing a sustained level of growth which at year end is continuing to rise. This is largely due to the increase in number of children who are subject to child protection plans (475 31/3/09 to 544 31/3/10). This has translated into 75 sets of care proceedings 09/10 from 57 the previous year. Most sets of care proceedings involve sibling groups of 2 or more children. Perhaps more alarming still is the 10/11 data which is showing 31 sets of proceedings being issued in the first quarter alone.

1.4

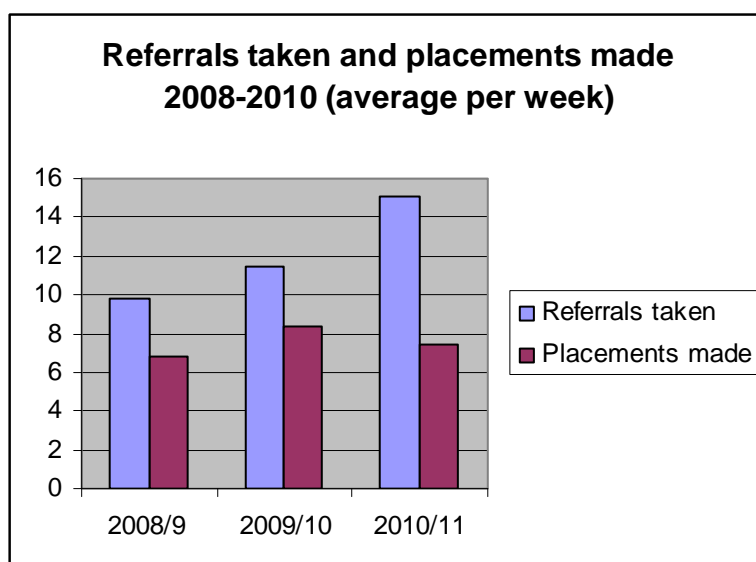




The above charts give a very clear picture of the admission and discharge trends for each age group over the last two years. You will see the steep increase in admissions for younger children and the impact of adoption in terms of the discharge data. However once children reach 3 years the discharges begin to drop and by 5/6 years you can see the impact of the permanent/long term fostering policy. This trend is interrupted at 14 years where we have higher levels of movement both in relation to admissions and discharges. However discharges remain low until the age of 18 years. This data is often referred to as 'churn' in the system and doesn't reflect the same individual children coming in and going out of care each year/month. Behind this group sits the cohort of children who are stable for at least one year.

1.5. The total LAC budget allocation is £19,421,100. Just over £12 million of this budget to set to cover all of the demand led aspects of the service i.e. foster care allowances, adoption allowances, agency placements, accommodation for care leavers etc. The remainder is largely committed to staffing, and for some aspects of the service, the staffing levels are set by statute. The critical pressure points and potential financial risks for the forthcoming year will be fostering allowances, agency placements, supervised contact and the secure unit.

1.6 All placements of LAC are made through the centralised duty team based in the fostering service. There has been a huge increase in referrals over the past year from a total of 510 in 8/09 to 603 09/10 (19 %).

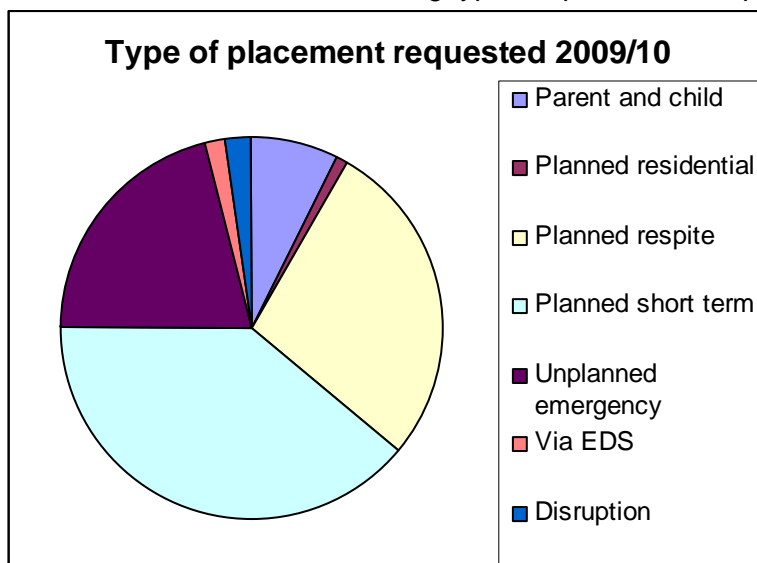


It should be noted that this chart demonstrates the continued rise in referrals for 2010/11. The drop in placements made is explained by the fact that the fostering provision is full and there are currently only 2 foster carers with vacancies who are already matched to children. This team matches children to families, and manages the threshold into the care system by providing robust challenge to area teams. Family finding can only begin once evidence is received that all

alternatives to care have been explored. All 13+ admissions are escalated to HOS and HIC's for joint agreement and all referrals for agency placements are scrutinised by OM, HOS and AD.

1.7 There are currently 50 open referrals for children awaiting a family placement. Of these, 11 are open referrals requesting fostering placements from home/friends for children deemed to be at significant risk or who pose a risk to others. There are 6 open referrals requesting respite from home in order to support main carers i.e. parents or grandparents to prevent a permanent admission to care. The HOS LAC post, is the pinch point for the management of risk and spend. It should be noted that given the very significant pressures in the LAC budget currently a heightened degree of risk to both safeguarding and permanence performance is being managed to prevent the use of agency placements.

1.8 Please find below a chart detailing types of placement requested for 2009/10.



Of the total number of 603 placements requested, 438 children were placed with foster carers. Only 66 of these were referred to independent agencies, 27 of which were for M&B assessments. Nonetheless 39 new agency placements were made via the duty team throughout the year, which combined with disability service use of the independent sector, brought the total to 72 by 31/3/2010.

1.9 Placement provision for disabled children is managed discreetly within the specialist disability service. It ranges from in-house and agency foster care through to independent residential homes and schools. A further 4 young people were living in the 2 in-house short break units at year end (agreed by Ofsted).

## 2. Fostering

2.1 The fostering service currently has a resource base of 213 foster carers. There were 26 new households approved in 2009/10 with 11 terminations and 32 new assessments underway at the year end. This represents a higher rate of retention than the previous year and a higher rate of recruitment. However, it is clear when considering the placement duty data that the level of demand is outstripping the level of in-house resources.

2.2 The service has staged a wide range of recruitment and retention events throughout the year, using a variety of media outlets. Whilst this has increased capacity it has not delivered the number and range of carers required, which in turn has led to an increased use of agency foster placements. In order to speed up the pace of foster care recruitment a campaign is currently being planned for autumn 2010. This will be resource and time intensive, however, it is the only effective mechanism to increase the foster care base within the timescales required. Although there will be costs as a result it will significantly reduce the need to rely on increased agency

usage. Recruitment will be targeted on families who can care for sibling groups, for teenagers, for children from BME backgrounds or for parents and babies.

2.3 Of the existing 213 foster carers many families are looking after more children than they were originally approved for as a means of extending the number of placements available. Most of our foster carers have 2/3 looked after children in their homes at any one time and a number exceed the 'usual limit' of 3 opening their homes at times to 5 and 6 children. This can be a very pressurized environment for these foster families. However, most have been able to manage this increase in children with the intensive support offered by the placement support service eg leisure opportunities and school runs can be very difficult if a family has children in 2 or 3 different schools etc. In addition foster families have found the support provided by the virtual school invaluable to those children who find the school environment difficult and are subject to delayed admissions or exclusions. In many of these instances the virtual school has supported the placement in the short term by offering these children input during the school day, thus relieving the pressure on the foster carer.

2.4 The placement support service has also spearheaded the developments in relation to the Children in Care Council (CICC). It has been involved in number of local and national initiatives and has developed a range of materials to support the pledge, the guide for children in care and the newsletter. At least 15 of the CICC are currently working on their Gold keystone awards (equivalent to an A-C grade GCSE). The CICC has become a robust voice for children in care and are confidently holding managers to account for the quality of service delivery to them.

### **3. Adoption**

3.1 The adoption and permanence service approved 27 new adopters and 6 permanent foster carers during 2009/10. They too have struggled to cope with the rise in the number of children requiring permanent placements and have planned to coordinate a range of recruitment activities during 2010/11 which are targeted specifically to meet the needs of the LAC cohort. This may produce a range of complaints from prospective adopters who cannot meet the needs of the priority groups of children and who will not be offered priority assessment as a result, but this targeting is essential if the service is to rise the challenges that the increased activity demands.

3.2 The number of children adopted in 2009/10 was 32. This represents an increase of 50% on the previous year. The number of children with care plans for adoption approved by the adoption and permanence panel was 35, and 27 had been matched for adoption at year end. In addition, the panel approved and matched a further 10 children to permanent foster families and 6 children within the special guardianship regulations. The very significant increase in adoption activity is not reflected throughout the country with some areas such as inner London showing a decrease in the number of adoptions and an increase in the use of special guardianship orders.

3.3 During 2009/10 East Sussex adoption service was selected by the Df E as an example of good practice in relation to its performance in the timeliness of children being placed for adoption (NI 61). It was judged to be in the top quartile nationally at 78.1%. Clearly timely planning is good for children but also for the overall costs to the budget.

3.4 The adoption support element of the service has become increasingly intensive given the complexity of the children being placed for adoption. The service worked actively with 40 families during 09/10, all of whom would be considered to have ongoing complex needs requiring extensive support to prevent placement disruption. In addition there were 530 letterbox contacts (an increase of 18 08/09 and 54 07/08), and 93 direct contacts (77 08/09) of which 65 required supervised contact (43 08/09).

### **4. Residential**

4.1 The four group homes continue to offer care to some of our most challenging young people. Three of the four group homes achieved gradings of 'good' overall in their unannounced inspections, many with outstanding elements. One group home only achieved 'satisfactory' overall

with a number of 'good' elements. Lansdowne Secure Unit received a very positive inspection achieving 'outstanding' in safeguarding, enjoying and achieving, and management. The plans to rebuild the secure unit are being progressed via the project board. DCSF (D of E) have approved funding in principle for the rebuild at the gateway design stages D and H, following sign off by the specialist architectural advisor. Progress to stage H, approval for construction, has been delayed awaiting the outcome of ministerial approval. Clearly in the new political climate the potential for this project to be abandoned is considerable. It is also of note that Lansdowne has struggled at times to maintain levels of occupancy that enable the budget to break even

At year end 09/10 average occupancy: OLA 3.41  
ESCC 0.86  
TOTAL 4.27

Income required 09/10 1,080,900 - actual income generated 1,091,720. Thus delivering a very small surplus. This may become still more acute as referring authorities tighten their belts. The proposal to increase capacity should the redevelopment go ahead represents an even greater risk of budget pressure.

## **5. Supported Lodgings**

5.1 In April 09 Children's Services terminated its contract with NCH for the provision of supported lodgings. The service was then located within the integrated LAC service and has significantly improved its VFM within the first 12 months. Prior to the TUPE process the service could offer a maximum of 35 beds to care leavers and homeless young people at any one time. At the year end there were 52 placements available with 13 new assessments underway. Nonetheless there remain 23 young people awaiting placements. Whilst the majority of these young people are homeless, a proportion of them are care leavers, 7 of whom were in B & B accommodation as of 03/10.

## **6. Looked After Children's Teams**

6.1 The three LAC teams based in Hastings, Lewes and Hailsham continue to take prime responsibility for all those looked after children where the care plan is permanency outside the birth family. The number of children managed within in the LAC Services was 314 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 10. The remaining 211 looked after children are distributed between the disability, family support, youth support and care leavers teams. A specialist service is provided to 42 LAC with disabilities (an increase of 13%) via the disability FST and transition team. Social workers in all the teams act as key workers to build relationships with children, their families and carers to progress and monitor child care plans. Where it becomes clear during the care proceedings that the plan is for adoption/permanence or the child meets the criteria for the disability service, the LAC teams and disability teams work alongside the area teams to pick up the planning for the child.

6.2 The Children and Young People's Act which received its Royal Assent in November 2008, and the ensuing regulations and guidance issued in April 10, is designed to extend the statutory framework for children in care and to ensure that young people receive high quality care and services which are focused and tailored to their needs. The guidance is substantial and is due to be implemented between April 10 and April 11. LAC policies and guidance are currently being reviewed to take into account this new framework.

6.3 Consistency of service provision to LAC remains a significant challenge given the current organisational structure. The development of closer working relationships, a matrix management approach and a greater emphasis on core services will begin to address some of the issues identified.

## **7. Independent Review Service**

7.1 Independent scrutiny of all care planning arrangements for looked after children is provided by Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) who are accountable to the HOS Safeguarding. This

service provides a valuable check and balance to the operational services' decision making regarding admission and discharge from care. In addition the IRO service has a duty to ensure that young people are involved in the decision making processes via participation in their reviews. IROs monitor the progress of care plans and quality assure the social work service delivered to children. There is an identified IRO who takes responsibility for the QA processes for disabled children, ensuring best practice is promoted for this small cohort. The new regulations will significantly enhance the role of the IRO and may include visits to children outside the review meeting.

7.2 The IRO service has also experienced a significant increase in activity levels during 2009/2010. There have been over 1200 individual reviews held during the year, with 91% of these being held within statutory timescales. Whilst performance has dipped since the previous year, the heavy snowfall in January caused major disruption to planning for children. In addition a number of meetings that were held outside of the required timescales were planned late in order to accommodate the needs of individual children or parents. The participation performance shows a slight improvement, which fell short of the local target for 09/10 but nonetheless displays the commitment social work staff have to empowering children and young people.

## 8. Care Leavers Service

8.1 Following the senior management file audit in October 2009 the management of the care leavers service was transferred to the LAC service. There were a number of very significant issues identified in relation to safeguarding, risk management, quality and consistency of intervention and communication problems. These concerns were heightened by factors within the cohort which included:

- 71 NEETS
- 7 pregnant C/L's
- 10 C/L mothers
- 5 C/L fathers
- 7 C/L living in B&B
- 4 lost contact

In its entirety the service was working with 230 care leavers at year end and 155 were in EET, of which 9 are progressing through the university system. The team consists of 2.5 SP's, 8 PA's and 1 practice manager.

8.2 The Operations Manager LAC has worked intensively with this group of staff since November, particularly in regard to safeguarding processes and risk management. It is clear there has been a good level of progress made but the action plan outlines the extent of the work which is outstanding. The care leaver service has not yet experienced the significant increases in activity that the other wider LAC services have seen, but it is highly likely that these increases will begin to impact over the next 12 months.

## 9 Performance

9.1 Many of the key performance indicators have remained steady or have slightly dipped during 09/10. It is not possible to assess this performance against the national data as this is not available until September. However, given the increased levels of activity it is pleasing that the service has sustained this level of performance.

I have indicated whether the indicator value has improved/increased with ↑ and where it has dipped with ↓

NI	APA Indicator	Description	2009/10 Value	National Data 09/10	2008/09 Value
NI 58		Emotional & Behavioural Health of children in care	15.8 ↑	14.2	16.1
NI 61	2058SC	% of lac adopted during the year who were placed for adoption within 12 months of their	78.1%↑	72.4%	62.5%

		best interest decision being made			
NI 62	2043SC	Number of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year	9.4%↓	10.9%	5.8%
NI 63	2065SC	% of lac under 16 who've been lac for 2.5 years or more & in the same placement for 2 years or placed for adoption	72.4%↑	68.0%	70.5%
NI 66	2064SC	% children looked after cases which should have been reviewed during the year which were reviewed during the year	90.3%↓	90.5%	94.1%
NI 147	5037SC	% of care leavers at age 19 who are living in suitable accommodation	91.2%↑	90.3%	85.3%
NI 148	5022SC	% of young people looked after on 1st April in their 17th year (aged 16) who were engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19	67.6%↓	62.1%	70.6%
	3072SC	% of young people leaving care aged 16 or over with at least 1 GCSE grade A*-G or a GNVQ	72.7%↓	Not yet published	75.0%
	3073SC	% of young people leaving care aged 16 or over with 5 or more GCSE's at grade A*-C or a GNVQ	9.1%↓	Not yet published	12.5%
		Children aged between 10-15 looked after in foster placements or placed for adoption	87.7%↑	Not yet published	86.8%
	2059SC	Number of lac adopted during the year as a % of the number of lac who had been looked after for 6 months or more	9.9%↑	Not yet published	5.5%
	4016SC	Number of children who communicated their views for each of their statutory reviews as a % of the number of lac during the year for more than 4 weeks	92.4%↑	Not yet published	91.6%
	3085SC	Distance children newly looked after are placed from home	11.7%↑	Not yet published	12.9%
	2042SC	Children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18	50.1↑	58.0	46.4
	2052SC	% of lac in residential accommodation	9.9%↑	12.7%	8.5%
	2054SC	% of lac fostered by relatives or friends	12.1%↓	11.2%	13.7%
	1037SC	Average of the % of children looked after who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months who had an annual assessment and their teeth checked by a dentist during the previous 12 months.	90.7%↑	85.9%	90.5%
	3071SC	% of lac who were pupils in year 11 who were eligible for GCSE exams who sat at least 1 GCSE exam	75.6%↓	71.1%	80.6%
	3074SC	% of lac for at least 12 months, of compulsory school age, who missed at least 25 days schooling for any reason during the previous school year	9.9%↓	11.5%	7.3%
NI 99		Children in Care Reaching Level 4 in English at Key Stage 2	33.3%↓	46.0%	45.0%
NI 100		Children in Care Reaching Level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2	29.6%↓	46.0%	40.0%
NI 101		Children in Care achieving 5 A*-C GCSE's at KS4 (inc Eng & Maths)	4.4%↓	9.8%	8.3%
	4015SC	Final warnings, reprimands and convictions of lac	1.74↓	2.5	1.69

## 10 Inspections

10.1 During 2009/10 the children's homes settings inspections were judged as follows:

- The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive – outstanding
- Acorns, Dorset Road – outstanding
- Brodrick House – satisfactory
- Rose Cottage – good



- Homefield Cottage – good
- Hazel Lodge - good
- Lansdowne Secure Unit – good.

All those with an overall “good” had “outstanding” in one or more areas.

There have been no further settings inspections of either the fostering service or the adoption service. However, preparation for the likely announced inspection has continued to be at the forefront of the ILAC staff team’s planning.

## **11. Virtual School**

11.1 The virtual school for children in care is now fully established incorporating the old “TEST” team, with a newly appointed head teacher. During 09/10 a comprehensive database was developed to enable the school to track, monitor and target support to individual LAC, and for the first time accurately report on the achievements, attainment and attendance of children in the care of East Sussex. This has enabled the team to raise expectations within the wider educational context for example, setting educational targets within schools based on expected levels of progress. In 08/09 only 2 young people achieved five or more good GCSEs including English and maths (4.4%), this year the expectation is that 8 will do so (20%) which is double the national outcomes achieved last year.

11.2 The school has been instrumental in raising the awareness of designated teachers of their roles and responsibilities for looked after children via a range of training events. The conference held in the spring of 2010 was attended by over 100 delegates. The virtual school has also established a local network of virtual head teachers to develop local protocols and to enhance joint working arrangements. This is particularly important given that a number of LAC from ESCC are placed in other authorities and ESCC is a net importer from other areas.

11.3 The brief of the school was extended during 09/10 to prioritise care leavers who are, or who are likely to become NEET. The virtual school will monitor and co-ordinate the educational and training support for care leavers, and where appropriate provide direct support. In addition it will work strategically through care2work, the development of protocols with local FE providers, connexions IPA’s and the youth development service.

11.4 The virtual school is particularly concerned to advocate robustly for LAC in relation to all aspects of educational delivery to improve access, attainment and attendance, particularly in relation to the number of exclusions from school and NEETs

## **12. CAMHS**

12.1 The range and quality of mental health support to LAC and their carers continues to be met through the LAC mental health service (LACMHS), the specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and privately commissioned therapy. The LACMHS is a multidisciplinary child & adolescent mental health service working closely within the Integrated LAC service in East Sussex which provides a specialist service for looked after children for whom the plan is permanence. The remit of the service is to contribute to placement stability by providing consultation to, assessment of, and focussed therapeutic work with the looked after child/young person and the system supporting them. The service also contributes to the training and support of social workers and foster carers and has in the last year been instrumental in an innovative project to ensure best practice in respect of the NI58 initiative. In 2009/10, the service worked with 75 children and their carers. In addition, 163 East Sussex LAC received a service from specialist CAMHS.

## **13. Supervised Contact Service**

13.1 The community family work (CFW) service provides supervised contact for LAC. Its main remit is the supervision of contact between parent(s), extended families and children, where the

child has been removed from the family home and placed either in foster care or in kinship arrangements. It is a countywide service managed by a part time practice manager with 1 senior practitioner and 21 CFWs (18.5 FTE). The staff group is divided between Ridgeway(Hastings) and a temporary office at Lansdowne(Hailsham). There is an ongoing challenge in maintaining sufficient levels of staff, given pay differentials with other unqualified staff working with children in the department, and they frequently leave to move into admin posts or childrens centre posts.

13.2 The service was originally set up to deliver 370 sessions of supervised contact per month. On average there are currently 650 contacts being delivered each month in-house, with additional sessions provided by six casual /relief staff. However, the impact of the increase in care proceedings and parent(s) and baby placements has meant that the demand has outstripped the in-house capacity. The judiciary frequently 'order' five and sometimes seven days contact per week for the child/baby. This is compounded by the increased demand for large sibling contact, and contact within complex kinship placements. Consequently it has been necessary to impose threshold criteria which prioritises LAC contact needs only during care proceedings. There is an urgent need to work alongside our legal representative's, the judiciary and CAFCASS to review and challenge robustly current practice because children's contact arrangements are often treated as a 'deal breaker' within the court arena with unrealistic or inappropriate levels of contact being traded for agreement to a legal order.

13.3 During the last two quarters of 2009/10 the Head of Service LAC has been in negotiations with independent providers to deliver supervised contact within a framework agreement when it had previously been spot purchased by the area teams. From June 2010 all commissioning of supervised contact from the independent sector will be coordinated directly by the in-house contact service. This will introduce a much greater degree of management control and scrutiny to the commissioning process. However this process has also revealed a far higher level of pressure within this budget line than had been previously expected or forecast.

13.4 There also remains the challenge of meeting the demand for suitable venues for contact to take place. Children's Centres are utilised where their organisation/structure allows, but there are ongoing challenges where there is a high risk to children from adults that may try and abscond with the child, or who may be volatile because of substance/alcohol misuse, domestic violence, or mental health and who may consequently make threats against staff. The CFWs safeguard children whose circumstances require constant supervision (the child remaining within sight and hearing at all times) whilst simultaneously discharging the duty to promote contact for LAC with their parents, extended family and siblings. A key priority for the service is to retain staff in order to meet this substantial demand and to maintain good practice.

## **14. Missing From Care**

14.1 In 2002 LAC circular (2002) 17, was issued requiring that local authorities and police forces should review their systems with regard to children who are missing from care and that absences from foster placements and residential homes should be monitored annually. A Sussex wide "Joint Protocol for Children Missing from Care 2002" was agreed with Sussex Police. This was reviewed in 2008 but no changes were recommended given the then imminent review of Missing from Care and Home Guidance (2002) which was to set out clear roles and responsibilities in responding to young people who have run away from home or care. This work was then extended and confirmed in a new protocol which relates to missing children more generally, which was launched in 2009.

14.2 The number of children who go missing from care i.e. those who are persistently missing, either from residential homes or foster care is extremely low. There have only been 10 LAC missing from care in 09/10. All of these were missing for less than 12 hours with the majority missing for less than 3 hours. Where there is serious concern for a young person a multi agency meeting is convened and police and social workers intervene at an early stage to prevent further escalation. The Missing from Care and Home Project has contributed to an improved response to young people who go missing from home and care. The project is able to track and better manage those young people who put themselves at risk and effectively engages young people in reducing the number of missing from care episodes. The project tracks all those young people who

persistently go missing from care and home. A monthly meeting with all agencies takes place and further support is offered under a contractual arrangement with Catch 22 Mentoring Service.

## **15 Corporate Parenting Panel**

15.1 The Panel has met quarterly, has continued to take a keen interest in the progress of LAC and scrutinises the performance of services that support them. During 2008/09 the Panel has received a presentation from East Sussex Foster Care Association and the CICC. The Corporate Parenting Panel has considered reports as follows:

24<sup>th</sup> April 2009

- Action Plan of East Sussex Foster Care Association
- Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service
- Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service
- Aiming higher for disabled Children –Implementation of Commissioning Plan
- LAC Statistics

24<sup>th</sup> July 2009

- Children in Care Council Questioned the Panel
- Draft Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel
- LAC Statistics

23<sup>rd</sup> January 2010

- Virtual School for Looked After Children
- Social Work Recruitment
- Annual Report of Local Safeguarding Children Board
- LAC Statistics

15.2 In addition, at each Panel, the monthly Regulation 33 reports for each children's home, (compiled by an off-line manager) are considered as well as statistics on numbers of LAC, Residence Orders and Special Guardianship Orders. The members take a keen interest in these detailed reports, which supplement their own knowledge of the children's homes gained through regular visits.

## **16. Conclusion**

16.1 Whilst the service has achieved an enormous amount during 2009/2010, there remains much to be done in relation to narrowing the gap in outcomes between LAC and their peers – most particularly in the arena's of educational attainment and achievement, in health, in the reduction of teenage parenthood, and in making a positive transition into adulthood through suitable EET opportunities and accommodation options. In addition our collective performance in relation to corporate parenting alongside our partners in health, and the districts and boroughs, needs to be strengthened to fulfil our shared duties.

16.2 Research shows that the most effective way of improving outcomes for LAC is via secure permanent stable placement throughout childhood. Therefore, the quality of permanence planning, the continued drive to recruit adoptive parents, permanent and short term foster carers and maintaining stable placements remain top priorities for the integrated LAC service.

16.3 One central "wicked problem" remains however:  
How do we ensure that we deliver safe, responsive parenting to our most vulnerable children within a finite budget when this is a needs lead service?