

Report to: **Corporate Parenting Panel**

Date: **27 January 2012**

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

Title of report: **Annual Progress Report of Looked After Children's Services  
1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011**

Purpose of report: **To outline the performance of the Integrated LAC Service between 1  
April 2010 to 31 March 2011**

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**RECOMMENDATION: Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note and endorse the contents of the report**

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**1. Financial appraisal**

1.1 There are no increased costs arising from this report.

**2. Supporting information**

2.1 The Annual Progress report of Looked After Children's Services is attached as Appendix 1

**3. Recommendation**

3.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note and endorse the contents of the report.

MATT DUNKLEY  
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Teresa Lavelle-Hill and Sally Carnie Joint Heads of Service for Looked After Children: tel: 01323 747197

Local members: all

Background documents: none

## Appendix 1

### 1 Introduction

1.1 During 2010/11 the Looked After Children (LAC) system within East Sussex County Council (ESCC) has faced some considerable challenges; a sustained level of growth in activity, an Ofsted inspection and the introduction of new regulations and guidance which were fully implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011.

1.2 The LAC trend data shows that the increased numbers of LAC 9/10 continued to rise at, at least, the same rate for 10/11. Indeed there are some early indications that the trajectory will heighten this year. Inevitably this impacts on all aspects of service delivery to children. The provider services such as adoption, fostering, supervised contact and supported lodgings are struggling to increase capacity quickly enough to keep abreast of the level of need. There is less social work time available to carry out the required duties to children. And finally, the financial pressures drive very robust child care planning and decision-making which increasingly place the department in conflict with the court system.

1.3 Ofsted arrived in November to carry out the announced Safeguarding and LAC inspection and reported in January 11. The results were very pleasing and demonstrated that despite these unprecedented levels of growth, LAC at that point, were judged to be receiving good quality services. All aspects were assessed to be good or outstanding, other than health which received an adequate judgement. The inspectors summarised the looked after children service as 'being well planned, very well managed and consistently delivers services of high quality'.

1.4 The revised Children Act 1989 has reformed the statutory framework for the care system. A suite of statutory guidance and regulations came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 which brings together a single set of requirements for how the local authority should carry out its range of responsibilities and duties to LAC. The status of the guidance and regulation is statutory, and must be complied with. It is extensive (12 volumes of guidance and 10 volumes of regulations), very prescriptive and extends the role of the Local Authority (LA). Whilst the new act enshrines good practice, it does however, introduce another tranche of responsibilities which will add additional pressure to an already very pressurised system. The Head of Service (HOS) LAC is currently calculating the financial impact of this new legislation if it is implemented fully. See separate report to Corporate Parenting Panel by Head of Service for Safeguarding.

### 2 LAC Trend Data

2.1 On 31 March 2011, there were 589 looked after children in ESCC, this represents a growth of 67 children (13%). They were placed as follows (2010 figures in brackets):-

with foster carers	494	(432)
of these: in house carers	325	(297)

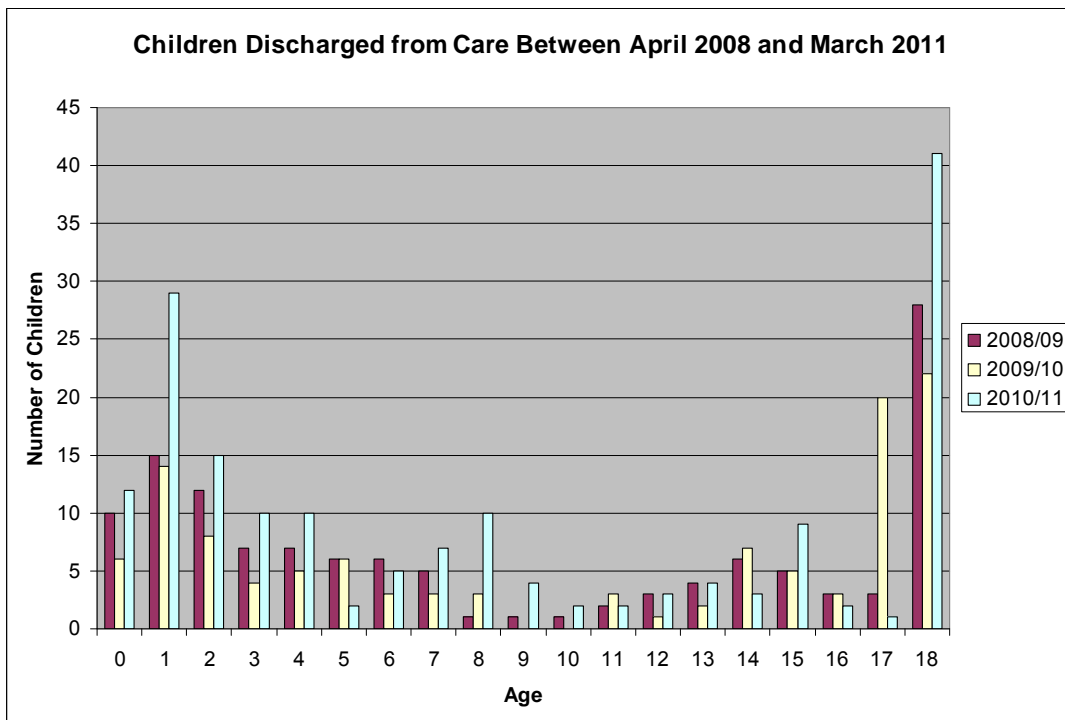
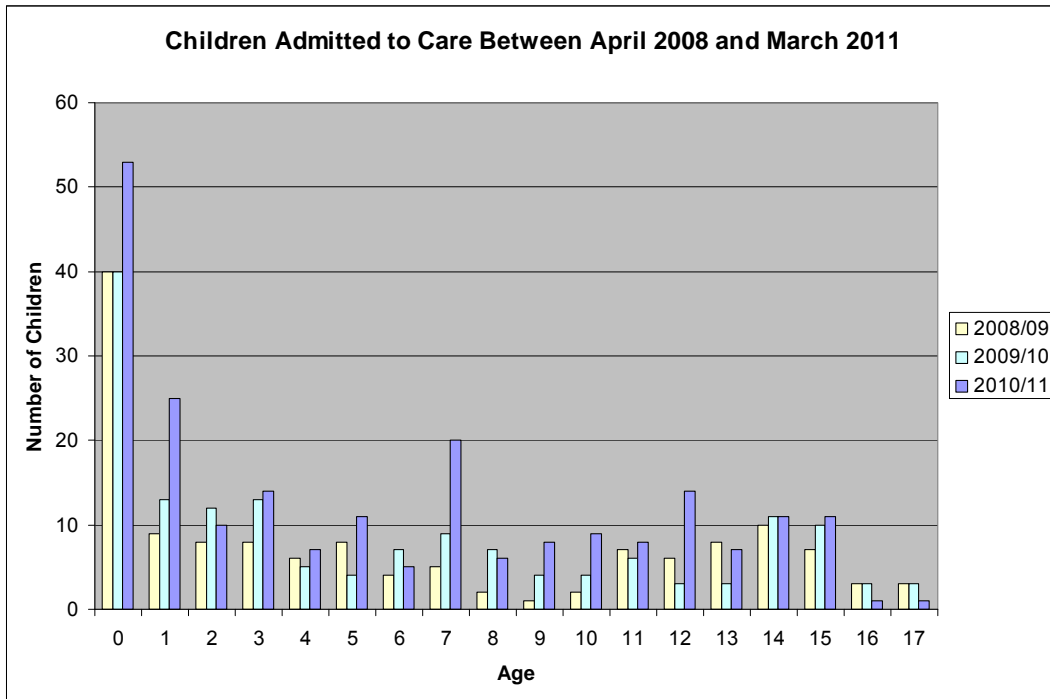
kinship carers	68	(61)
agency carers	101	(74)
placed for adoption	16	(20)
in lodgings	3	(1)
in ESCC children's homes	19	(19)
in agency children's homes	16	(10)
in agency special schools	13	(16)
placed with own parents	22	(19)
youth custody/secure unit	4	(4)
Hospital/NHS establishment	2	(1)

2.2 The proportion of LAC who are placed in family placements remains high in ESCC as compared to the national data

		<b>England</b>
Fostered	83.9%	74%
Fostered by friends and family	11.5%	11.4%
Residential Care	8.1%	11.5%
Placed with own parents	3.7%	6.0%
Other placements	4.3%	8.4%

2.3 The number of children who are subject to child protection plans has also continued to rise from 546 (31/3/10) to 620 (31/3/11). This translated into 112 sets of care proceedings for 10/11, from 75 the previous year. This has a direct relationship to the number of children who become LAC, as there are always a proportion of these birth parents who are unable to make the necessary changes to safely care for their children. The trend data in the first quarter of 11/12 has shown a slight increase from 10/11, with 32 sets of proceedings being issued.

2.4

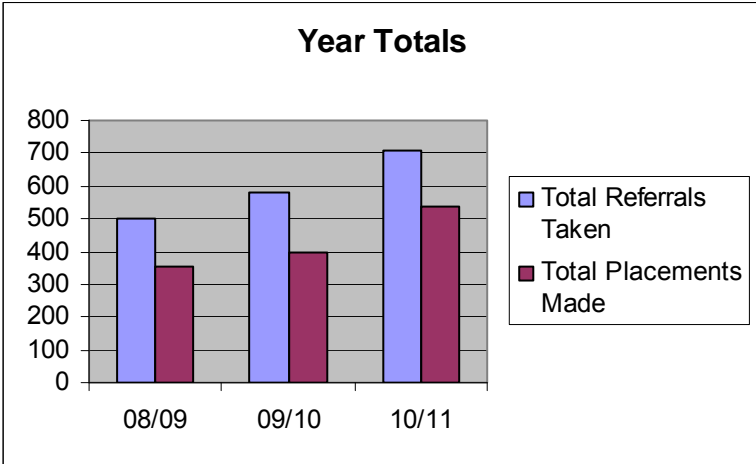


2.5 The above charts give a very clear picture of the admission and discharge trends for each age group over the last three years. There is an overall increase in volume, evident in both sets of data for 10/11. Admissions rise in almost every age group up until the age of 12 years. Equally, the increased numbers of discharges up to the age of 8 years reflects the throughput created by permanence planning with higher numbers of children/sibling groups being adopted or made subject to residence and special guardianship orders. Between 8 and 17 years, the numbers of

admissions and discharges are generally fewer, but reflect that for the majority of children, once they are in the system they require a stable/long term placement. The spike at the age of 18 shows the full impact of the 'staying put' policy. This provides our young people with a stable family placement much more akin to the life experiences of their peers, but clearly this adds a significant burden to the budget.

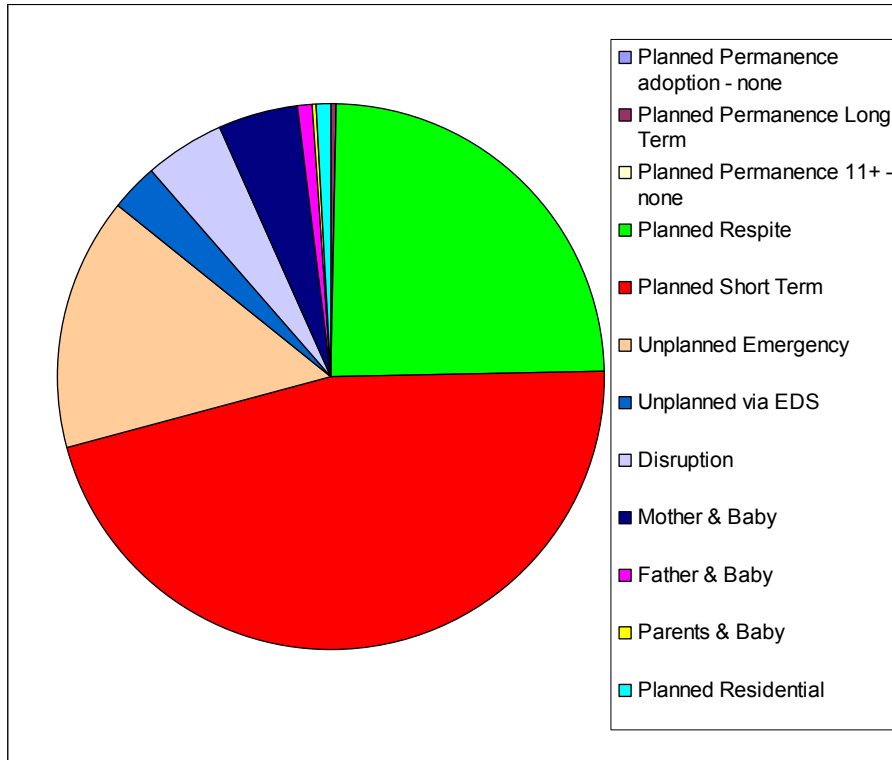
2.6 This data as shown can only ever give a snapshot of the children moving in and out of the system each month/year, but doesn't necessarily reflect the same individual children. This data is referred to as 'churn'. Behind this group sits the cohort of children who are stable for at least one year. It has been calculated that there is a churn figure of 153 for 10/11 which, added to the total number of LAC, equates to 742 a more realistic figure for the numbers of LAC worked with during the course of the year.

2.7 All placements of LAC are made through the centralised duty team based in the fostering service. The placement referrals have grown from 510 per year in 08/09, 603 in 09/10, to 710 10/11.



2.8 This chart demonstrates the continued rise in both referrals and placements made for 2010/11. The team matches children to placements, and manages the threshold into the care system by providing robust challenge to fieldwork teams. Family finding or placement matching can only begin once evidence is received that all alternatives to care have been explored. All 13+ admissions are escalated to HOS LAC and Locality for joint agreement and all referrals for agency placements are scrutinised by Operations Manager (OM), HOS and Assistant Director (AD).

## 2.9 Please find below a chart detailing types of placement requested for 2010/11.



Of the total number of 710 placements requested, 499 children were placed with foster carers, 12 in residential placements, 57 remained open awaiting a placement and 142 were not needed. At year end 83% of all children placed with foster carers were in ESCC in-house provision. This is a significantly higher proportion than our neighbours in Brighton and Hove (B&H) and West Sussex; yet it still remains the case that the use of agency placements increased from 74 at year end 09/10 to 101 10/11. This does include the increased usage of parent and baby (43 -10/11, 27 - 09/10), as well as mainstream and disabled children.

2.10 Placement provision for disabled children had previously been managed discreetly within the specialist disability service. However, the short breaks and fostering service moved to sit within the LAC service as of 1/10/11 in the hope that recruitment activity for specialist placements for disabled children will benefit from closer synergy with other staff carrying out recruitment activity and will increase as a result.

## 3. Fostering

3.1 The fostering service currently has a resource base of 230 foster carers. There were 30 new households approved in 2010/11 with 9 new assessments underway at the year end. Of the 12 terminations of approval, the majority were recorded as resignations or retirements for personal reasons and 1 carer transferred to an independent agency. This represents a dip in our overall retention this year but a higher rate of recruitment. The threat of the independent sector to the LA resource base is ever present and must not be underestimated.

3.2 The service has staged a wide range of recruitment and retention events throughout the year, using a variety of media outlets. In September 2010, 4 fostering social workers formed a specialist recruitment and assessment team to fast track assessments. This has resulted in reducing the timescales from initial enquiry to approval down to 4-6 months. This has increased capacity, although the service is still struggling to keep pace with the referrals.

3.3 Of the existing 230 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. For example, leisure opportunities and school runs can be very difficult if a family has children in 2 or 3 different schools/locations but it is manageable if there is the support of a placement support worker. In addition, foster families have found the support provided by the virtual school invaluable to those children who find the school environment difficult and who 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.

3.4 The placement support service has nurtured the new members of the Children in Care Council (CICC) to form as a new group. They have once again been at the forefront of the national agenda working with the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), involved with a consultation with the local judiciary to discuss the impact of the courts on their individual experiences, and the publication of The Children's Guide to Being in Care. During the Ofsted inspection the lead inspector commented that the CICC was having a positive impact on looked after children in East Sussex. The CICC has become a robust voice for children in care.

#### **4. Adoption**

4.1 The adoption and permanence service approved 32 new adopters in 10/11, an increase from 27 in 09/10, and 7 permanent foster carers a small increase on the previous year. The very dramatic increase (48%) in the number of children being admitted to care (0 – 5 years) with a plan for adoption has begun to outstrip the in-house resource base.

4.2 In addition there are some noticeable changes to the cohort of children being approved for adoption; for example there were 9 sibling groups (20 children) 10/11, as opposed to 2 groups of 2 (4 children) 09/10. Only 50% were under 2 years of age, with 34% aged between 3 – 5 years and 16% 5 years +. The levels of complexity are increasing with 75% of the younger children having been exposed to drugs and alcohol prior to birth. Inevitably these factors make family finding much more problematic. The number of children adopted in 10/11 was 34, (32 09/10), and 30 children had been matched for adoption 10/11, (27 09/10). East Sussex LAC outcome data shows an increased use of adoption orders. This bucks the dominant trend in many other local authorities. There were also 18 children approved and

matched with permanent foster families in 10/11, and 19 children matched under a Special Guardianship Orders in 10/11.

## Number of Adopters Approved in last 2 years

	2009 / 10	2010/11
Brighton and Hove	21	16
East Sussex	27	32
Surrey	31	29
Hampshire	31	36
Oxford	24	25
West Sussex	26	28
Berkshire (Consortium)	44	34
Luton	-	18
Portsmouth	14	11
Medway	10	21
Bucks.	-	16

## Number of Children Approved for Adoption

	2009 / 10	2010/11
Hampshire	49	58
Brighton and Hove	42	55
East Sussex	33	49
Surrey	52	44
Oxford	32	44
West Sussex	61	39
Berkshire Consortium	81% increase	
Luton	13	17
Bucks		29
Medway	30	26
Portsmouth	10% increase	

Full workload data is not available yet but B&H has 3.91 managers and 12.55 SW staff whereas ESCC has 2.8 managers and 8.9 SW staff

4.3 At year end there was a shortfall of 6 adoptive households. This would cost approximately £80,000 to purchase from the Consortium or other local authorities, and £144,000 from Voluntary Adoption Agencies. This is likely to be a conservative



estimate as the continuing rise in demand for adoptive placements is showing no sign of abating in the first quarter of 11/12. A range of recruitment events have been organised throughout the year 10/11. However, urgent consideration must be given to releasing sufficient social work capacity to recruit and assess far greater numbers of adopters.

4.4 The Adoption Support element of the service has become increasingly intensive given the rise in numbers and the complexity of the children being placed for adoption. The service worked actively with 45 families during 10/11, all of whom would be considered to have ongoing complex needs requiring extensive support to prevent placement disruption. In addition there were 568 letterbox contacts (an increase of 38 on last year, and 145 direct contacts (93 last year) 77 require supervised contact an increase from 65 last year.

## **5. Residential**

5.1 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. There have been higher numbers of children with very complex, high risk behaviours within the system this year, which has resulted in an increased use of independent residential placements. These placements are spot purchased by the placement duty team. Consideration will be given to joining a pan Sussex tender in order to drive down costs. However, experience to date shows that ESCC are able to purchase placements at an average rate of £22/23k per week whilst our neighbours are currently unable to purchase residential placements below £3k. The mixed economy in this sector certainly offers ESCC a stronger bargaining position within the market.

5.2 The plans to rebuild the secure unit are now well underway. However, there remains a significant concern regarding the financial risks associated with taking forward this project. Much will hinge on how much flexibility the Department of Education (D of E) will offer in underwriting some or all of the risks. There has been a national drop in the usage of secure beds over the course of 10/11, with high levels of vacancies throughout the year.

At year end 10/11 average occupancy for Lansdowne Secure Unit was 83%. This was made up by 65% LAC from other local authorities and 18% LAC from East Sussex County Council.

Income required to break even during 10/11 £858,700 and the actual income generated £895,600. Despite the national backdrop Lansdowne Secure Unit was able to make a very small profit.

## **6. Supported Lodgings**

6.1 Supported Lodgings providers are the backbone of the placement provision for care leavers and homeless young people in East Sussex. At year end there were 36 households providing 58 placements to these young people. 8 new households were approved during the year, providing 10 new placements and there were 9 assessments underway. During 10/11 the service received 165 new referrals for placements; 64 of these were for care leavers with 44 placed, and 101 were for homeless young people of whom 51 were placed. For most young people the aim is to work with them to achieve the stability necessary for them to become independent. However there is a significant proportion who have highly complex needs and are likely to need far more intensive support.

6.2 There were 18 young people awaiting placement at the end of the year; 9 of which were care leavers, 8 homeless young people and 1 15 year old LAC. In addition there were a further 5 care leavers in Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation.

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

7.1 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 permanence outside the birth family. The number of children managed within the LAC Services was 328 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 11. The remaining looked after children are distributed between the disability, family support, youth support and care leavers teams. A specialist service is provided to 46 LAC with disabilities.

7.2 Consistency of service provision to LAC remains a significant challenge given the current organisational structure and the volume of work. The existing structure has created a bottleneck in the Family Support Team (FST's) where Children in Need (CIN), Child Protection (CP) and LAC work is allocated, this inevitably impacts on the provision offered to LAC.

## **8. Care Leavers Service**

8.1 Ofsted commended the decision to relocate the care leavers service within the Integrated ILAC service commenting that 'it brought the required focus, direction and momentum to this work'. At the beginning of 2011 the service was brought together onto one central site. Whilst the retention of satellite bases enabled the team to access more user friendly meeting places for young people, the central office base has enhanced team working and management of safeguarding risks. During 10/11 the 'Wolverhampton SCR' was published, this reinforced safeguarding as a critical issue for care leaver services. The OM and Practice Manager (PM) have undertaken a local review to assess how far the identified concerns in the 09/10 action plan have been addressed.

8.2 At year end the service was working with a cohort of 220 care leavers; 85 x16/17 year olds, 33 LAC, 128 x18-21 year olds and 9 in higher education. The overall performance of Education, Employment or Training (EET) is very poor with only 50% of care leavers in EET at year end. This shocking figure shows 110 care leavers as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), this has no doubt been impacted upon by the poor economic climate. Nonetheless this is a significant drop from 08/09 when 70% of care leavers were in EET. An education coordinator has been appointed from the virtual school to work directly with the care leavers service to address this.

8.3 There has been some progress in the provision of accommodation to care leavers via the supporting people protocol, although once again this is very slow. Care leavers currently have access to supported lodgings, foster care, supporting people accommodation, Lee Road and Fort Road (house share with lead tenant), 1 flat in a hostel for 16/17 year olds and B&B.

8.4 Ofsted commented 'the needs of young people leaving care are clearly at the heart of the work undertaken by the service's personal advisors, in partnership with an extensive range of other professionals.....a number of new strategies, policies and procedures have been put into place, but it is too early to judge the overall impact....' There remains much to be done to enhance the life chances of this very vulnerable group of young people.

## 9 Performance

9.1 Many of the key performance indicators have remained steady or have slightly dipped during 10/11. However, given the increased levels of activity it is pleasing that the service has sustained this level of performance and remains well placed against the national data. ESCC performance in relation to NEET's and health remain a challenge which will require some focussed work with our partner agencies.

The indicator value has improved/increased with a ↑ and where it has dipped with a ↓

NI	APA Indicator	Description	2010/11 Value	2010/11 England	2009/10 Value	2008/09 Value
NI 58		Emotional & Behavioural Health of children in care	15.4 ↓		15.8 ↑	16.1
NI 61	2058SC	% of lac adopted during the year who were placed for adoption within 12 months of their best interest decision being made	82.4% ↑	73.8%	78.1%↑	62.5%
NI 62	2043SC	Number of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year	9.7% ↓	10.7%	9.4%↓	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	71.1% ↓		75.7%↑	70.5%
NI 66	2064SC	% children looked after cases which should have been reviewed during the year which were reviewed during the year	91.9% ↑		90.3%↓	94.1%
NI 147	5037SC	% of care leavers at age 19 who are living in suitable	97.4% ↑	89.8%	91.2%↑	85.3%

		accommodation				
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	50.0% ↓	61.2%	67.6%↓	70.6%
	3072SC	% of young people leaving care aged 16 or over with at least 1 GCSE grade A*-G or a GNVQ	66.7% ↓		72.7%↓	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	9.5% ↑		9.1%↓	12.5%
		Children aged between 10-15 looked after in foster placements or placed for adoption	89.3% ↑		87.7%↑	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	13.1% ↑		9.9%↑	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	93.0% ↑		92.4%↑	91.6%
	3085SC	Distance children newly looked after are placed from home	15.0% ↓		11.7%↑	12.9%
	2042SC	Children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18	56.5 ↑	59.0	50.1↑	46.4
	2052SC	% of lac in residential accommodation	9.5% ↓	12.9%	9.9%↑	8.5%
	2054SC	% of lac fostered by relatives or friends	12.0% ↓	12.1%	12.1%↓	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.	88.6% ↓		90.7%↑	90.5%
	3071SC	% of lac who were pupils in year 11 who were eligible for GCSE exams who sat at least 1 GCSE exam	82.5% ↑	78%	73%↓	81%
	3074SC	% of lac for at least 12 months, of compulsory school age, who were persistently absent (more than 20% absence)	5.5% ↑	5.7%	4.9%↓	7.3% (more than 25 days absence)
NI 99		Children in Care Reaching Level 4 in English at Key Stage 2	27.3% ↓	45%	29.6%↓	45%
NI 100		Children in Care Reaching Level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2	31.8% ↑	44%	33.3%↓	40%
NI 101		Children in Care achieving 5 A*-C GCSE's at KS4 (inc Eng & Maths)	22.5% ↑	11.6%	4.4%↓	8.3% (5+ GCSEs at C and above)
	4015SC	Final warnings, reprimands and convictions of lac	6.1%↓		1.74↓	1.69

## 10 Inspections

10.1 During 2010/11 the children's homes settings inspections were judged as follows:

- The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive – outstanding
- Acorns, Dorset Road – outstanding

- Brodrick House – good
- Rose Cottage – satisfactory
- Homefield Cottage – good
- Hazel Lodge - outstanding
- 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.

10.2 Judgements within the Ofsted announced safeguarding and LAC inspection were as follows :

#### 10.2.1 **Safeguarding services**

Overall effectiveness - Good

Capacity for improvement - Good

#### 10.2.2 **Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people**

Children and young people are safe and feel safe - Good

Quality of provision - Adequate

The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe - Adequate

Ambition and prioritisation - Good

Leadership and management - Good

Performance management and quality assurance - Good

Partnership working - Good

Equality and diversity - Good

#### 10.2.3 **Services for looked after children**

Overall effectiveness - Good

Capacity for improvement - Outstanding

#### 10.2.4 **How good are outcomes for looked after children and care leavers?**

Being healthy - Adequate

Staying safe - Good

Enjoying and achieving - Outstanding

Making a positive contribution, including user engagement - Outstanding

Economic well-being - Good

Quality of provision - Good

Ambition and prioritization - Outstanding

Leadership and management - Good

Performance management and quality assurance - Good

Equality and diversity – Good

## 11. Virtual School

11.1 The Virtual School supports all children and young people in the care of East Sussex by providing additional support where necessary, running residential programmes, training designated teachers and other professionals who have

responsibility for their educational progress and, where appropriate through challenging those decisions which may impact negatively on educational outcomes. Outcomes for children in care have improved significantly this year with the number of young people achieving 5+ GCSEs including English and Maths rising from 4.4% in 2009 to over 22% in 2010. There is confidence that this improvement will be maintained when the results are published this summer.

11.2 The Priorities identified in 2010/11 (improving outcomes, reducing exclusions, improve tracking and improving support for care leavers) are now embedded /established in the work of the Virtual School and the school's over-riding priority is to maintain the focus on these core priorities or "Key Intents" In addition the following short term priorities have been identified for this year

- To move the existing database to a School Information Management System (SIMS) based system to allow for greater flexibility in reporting and tracking
- To improve the quality assurance of Personal Education Plan (PEPs) to include clear feedback to those involved in the meetings
- To develop peer mentoring of designated teachers in schools
- To set up a Learning Platform for Designated Teachers, Carers and children/young people
- To relocate the Virtual School in to spare accommodation within a school in East Sussex (discussion with Hailsham Community College progressing)
- To identify additional income to enable the Virtual School to continue to commission additional education input for looked after children

11.3 In 2010 the work of the Virtual School and its impact on outcomes contributed to Ofsted judging "Enjoy and Achieve" as "Outstanding".

11.4 In early 2011, Headteachers across East Sussex Schools agreed that the Virtual School should hold the LAC Pupil Premium to enable the needs of individual Looked After Children to be met.

## **12. CAMHS**

12.1 During 2010/11 LAC Mental Health Service (LACMHS) worked with 141 children, young people and/or their carers. An additional 137 East Sussex LAC received a service from specialist CAMHS. This increased level of activity of the LACMHS specialist team is attributed to a number of factors: an increase in referrals that reflects the increase of East Sussex LAC (and therefore meeting current referral criteria), a commensurate shift in team resources to increase the number of initial consultations available to ensure a timely response, an increase in treatment episodes through the addition of a 0.8fte Play Therapist to the team (fixed-term, funded through slippage), an increase in the number of therapeutic parenting groups for foster carers within the year, and for the first time the inclusion in the figures of any work with children and young people in any of the LA's Children's homes. Unfortunately the data is quite crude due to some administrative and IT difficulties and it is not therefore possible to provide a more sophisticated analysis at this point. However CAMHS is in the process of attempting to retrieve and cleanse the data in order to produce a more thorough analysis in the annual audit.

### **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. Maintaining suitable levels of staffing during 10/11 has presented the manager with a significant challenge, particularly given that the pay differentials with other unqualified staff working with children in the department remains an unresolved issue. In addition, access to suitable accommodation both as an office base and as a venue for the delivery of supervised contact also remains problematic, this adds a further financial pressure to the service. A protocol for the use of Children's Centre premises will be launched in June 11, following a year of negotiation and co-work with regard to best practice. Nonetheless there still remain areas within the county where the contact service does not have access to the local Children's Centres.

13.2 The service was originally set up to deliver 370 sessions of supervised contact per month. During 09/10 there were on average 650 contacts being delivered each month in-house, 10/11 has seen the volume rise to 900 contacts, with a further 450 sessions being purchased from independent agencies. A variation to the framework agreement has been established in order to drive down to costs of the agency provision. Nonetheless this pressure is unrelenting and shows no sign of diminishing. The management of this commissioning process has been streamlined and is directly monitored by the HOS LAC. This has inserted a much greater degree of control and scrutiny to the process.

### **14. Missing From Care**

14.1 The number of children who go missing from care in East Sussex i.e. those who are persistently missing, either from residential homes or foster care is relatively low. There have only been 14 LAC missing from care in 10/11; 4 went missing from foster care for 12 hours (approx), 8 went missing from residential care for 3-12 hours, and of these 12 all returned safely to their placement. Two young people went missing for more than 12 hours and a multi-agency action plan was instigated resulting in the young people being found and placed back in suitable accommodation.

14.2 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:

29<sup>th</sup> January 2010

- Recruitment and retention
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2010

- Action Plan of East Sussex Foster Care Association 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2014
- Annual progress report of the East Sussex Fostering Service 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010
- Annual progress report of the East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics

23<sup>rd</sup> July 2010

- Family Plus Service
- Education of Looked After Children
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2010

- The Education Attainment of Looked After Children
- Report on the Looked After Children Service
- Looked After Children (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. Budget**

The cost of delivering statutory services to looked after children has become very high profile given the continued increase in the numbers of children becoming looked after, and the very significant financial challenge this presents to the Children's Service. The LAC service very carefully monitors and robustly challenges the social work activity, given the pressure this places on the budget. All potential economies



are acted upon immediately. Local benchmarking demonstrates how streamlined and cost effective the services are in comparison with our neighbouring authorities. Nonetheless, we still face a very significant budgetary pressure in the provider services such as fostering, adoption and contact. Extensive work is currently being carried out for Senior Management Team (SMT)

## **17. Conclusion**

17.1 Whilst the service has achieved an enormous amount during 2010/2011, 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 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. This has been highlighted in the performance data in relation to NEETs and timeliness of health assessments, and the outcome judgement of satisfactory for health during the announced Ofsted inspection.

17.2 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.

17.3 To date ESCC has maintained it's financial commitment to LAC despite a very challenging financial context. This has meant that the ILAC service can continue to deliver high quality support and good outcomes for children. However rising numbers of children coming into the care system has put this capacity under pressure and will continue to do so, particularly for children who are being held earlier in the system and who have not transferred into the ILAC service.