

Report to: **Corporate Parenting Panel**

Date: **19 October 2012**

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

Title of report: **Annual Progress Report of Looked After Children's Services
1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012**

Purpose of report: **To outline the performance of the Integrated LAC Service between 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012**

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

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

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Local members: all

Background documents: none

1 LAC Trend Data

1.1 On 31 March 2012, there were 622 looked after children in ESCC, this represents a growth of 33 children (5.6%). They were placed as follows (2011 figures in brackets):-

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|
| with foster carers | 515 | (494) |
| of these: in house carers | 344 | (325) |
| kinship carers | 53 | (68) |
| agency carers | 118 | (101) |
| placed for adoption | 34 | (16) |
| in lodgings | 3 | (3) |
| in ESCC children's homes | 19 | (19) |
| in agency children's homes | 18 | (16) |
| in agency special schools | 5 | (13) |
| placed with own parents | 20 | (22) |
| youth custody/secure unit | 5 | (4) |
| Hospital/NHS establishment | 3 | (2) |

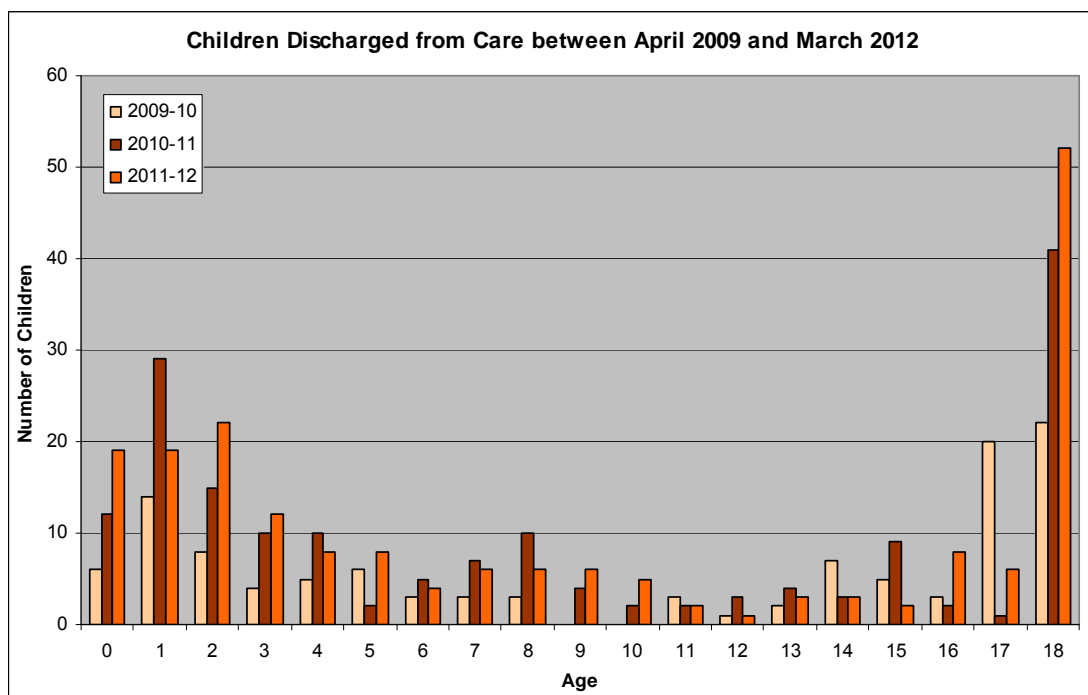
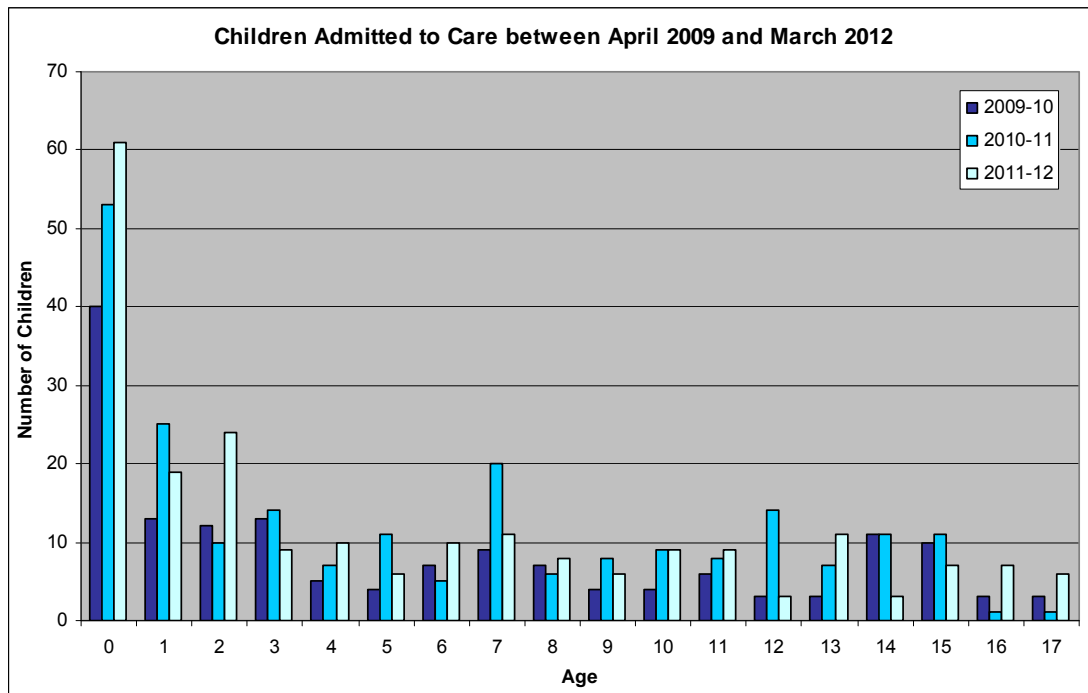
1.2 The proportion of LAC who are placed in family placements remains high in ESCC as compared to the national data. The proportion of LAC who are fostered through family and friends and placed with parents is lower as compared to the national data. This is due to East Sussex's policy of placing children through Section 17 with family and friends (non LAC) and seeking a permanency outcome through a special guardianship order or residence order.

| | | England |
|--------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Fostered | 82.8% | 74% |
| Fostered by friends and family | 8.5% | 11.4% |
| Residential Care | 6.8% | 11.5% |
| Placed with own parents | 3.2% | 6.0% |
| Other placements | 7.2% | 8.4% |

1.3 The number of children who are subject to child protection plans has also continued to rise from 620 (31/3/11) to 675 (31/3/12). This translated into 112 sets of care proceedings for 11/12 with 25 sets initiated in quarter one for this year as compared with 31 sets in quarter one of last 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.

1.4 The data as shown above only ever gives a snapshot of the children moving in and out of the system each month/year, but does not necessarily reflect the same individual children. The latter 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 178 for 11/12 which, added to the total number of LAC, equates to 800, a more realistic figure for the numbers of LAC worked with during the course of the year.



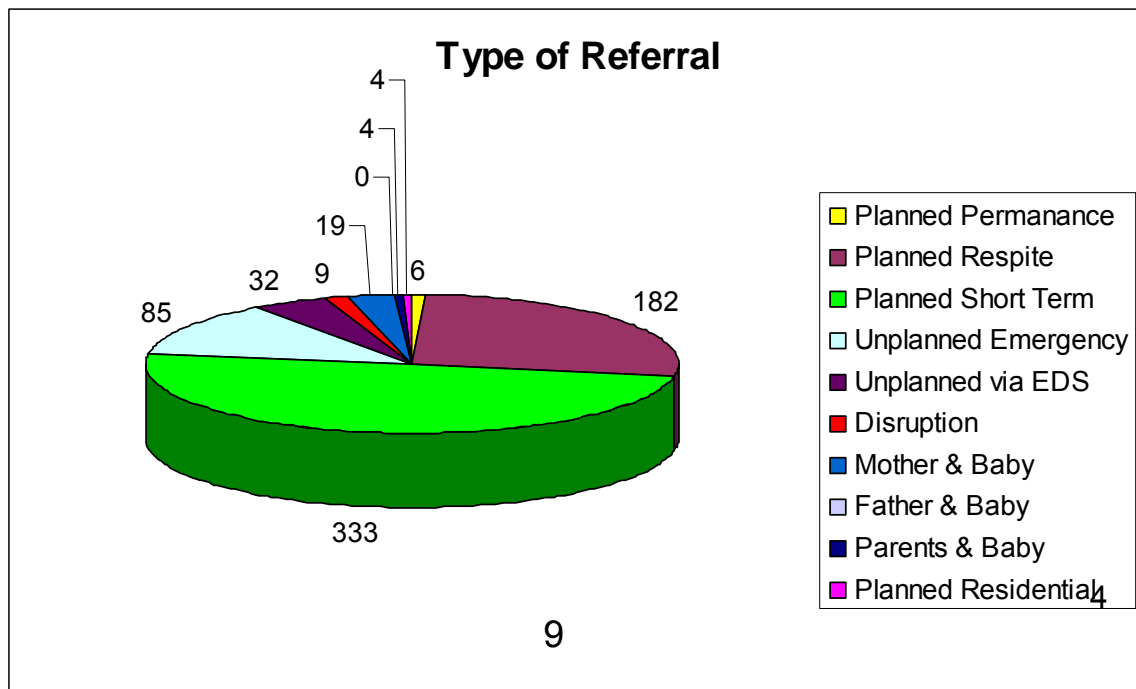
1.5 The above charts give a very clear picture of the admission and discharge trends for each age group over the last three years. There is a small increase in numbers of 0 to 5 LAC admitted into care (9 more children as compared to 10/11). There is a particular spike in LAC aged 2 (as compared to the previous 2 years). There were slightly more admissions in relation to 16 and 17 year as compared to 10/11, which while numbers are

relatively low, reflects largely some of the vulnerable young women who have been subject to sexual exploitation. There have been an increased numbers of discharges up to the age of one year (19 compared to 12 in 10/11 and 6 for 09/10),which 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. This pattern of discharges remains high overall for the 0 to 5 years old. The discharge rates for 16 and 17 years olds have been significantly higher than last year, often reflecting a change to the care plan for a return to parents where the risks have been reduced and reflecting the wishes of the young people to return to their birth parents.

1.6 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, 710 in 10/11, to 671 for 11/12. Although there has been a very slight drop in referrals compared to the previous year the “churn” (numbers of children coming into and exiting care) continues to place a considerable amount of pressure on the Fostering Service. The LAC statistics also require careful analysis. For example, when young people become 18 years of age they stop being LAC that day but do not necessarily leave their placements. At the end of 11/12, there were 19 ex looked after children “staying put” in their placements. This is an excellent result for our young people but inevitably has an impact on placement capacity.

1.7 The Fostering duty team continues to meet the constant daily challenges of finding appropriate matches for vulnerable children within our current in house resources and strives towards limiting the need to use costly agency placements. 11/12 saw an increase of 7 agency placements as compared to 10/11, which could have been potentially a lot higher given the increased trend in LAC numbers in this year. Of the 671 referrals received between April 2011 and March 2012, 468 resulted in placements being made. 63 referrals were in the process of being matched. 140 were not needed due to other forms of support being found or courts not agreeing to removal.

1.8 Please find below a chart detailing types of placement requested for 2011/12.



On 31st March 2012 of the 622 children in care 515 of these were in foster placements (326 in-house; 118 agency; 53 kinship placements, 15 in supported lodgings placements and 3 in parent and baby placements). During 11-12 the service had only 9 disruptions which is significantly lower than the national average. This is attributed to careful risk assessment on making matches that allows placements to remain secure or, where notice is given, a move being undertaken in a planned way rather than an urgent same day placement move being made.

2. Fostering

2.1 The number of foster carer households approved in 2011 – 2012 was 23 households that offered 59 new placements. Two of these were transfers from independent fostering agencies. In 2011-2012 there were 9 terminations of approval of fostering households compared to when there were 12 terminations of approval. Our overall number was affected by a number of significant concerns or carers transferring from independent fostering agencies, which meant we could no longer proceed with these additional approvals. This means that the net gain in household numbers in 2011-2012 was only 4 less than 2010-2011. In addition to this 9 Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) were granted to East Sussex foster carers which again is positive for the child but which effectively blocks a placement. The number of assessments in progress at 31 March 2012 was 15 general fostering assessments and 5 SGO assessments in progress.

2.2 The targeted recruitment team have produced a new recruitment strategy to include the Thrive targets. The new targets under Thrive are to recruit an additional 18 fostering resources in addition to its annual target. This will be a challenge particularly as the service has to date not been able to successfully recruit experienced staff into the 3 new posts provided by Thrive funding. As well as monthly recruitment events a high level campaign is planned for the autumn to recruit both foster carers, adopters, and supportive lodging carers to boost our supply of good quality in house resources as a consequence of the increased numbers of looked after children over the last few years.

2.3 The Children's Disability & Short Breaks Fostering Service has, since September 2011, been integrated into The Fostering Service. A priority is to increase the number of respite and general foster carers for disabled children and to lessen the dependence on expensive agency placements. Bringing staff with expertise and confidence about disability issues to the fostering service has supported the development of staff within the existing mainstream service. This year the service has transferred 2 agency foster families with 4 East Sussex children with disabilities in placement, into the fostering service saving approximately £100K per year.

2.4 The second Children in Care Council (CICC) became established during 2011 and has met 12 times, which included a residential weekend.

During 2011/12 the CICC has been consulted with regard to a number of services provided to looked after children. This included advocacy provided by the National Youth Advisory Service, and therapy services provided by the health service through the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The CICC members also met with an Ofsted inspector in October 2011 as part of the Fostering Inspection. Nationally, during 2011-2012, the CICC has attended the first southern regional forum for CICC's, has joined the youth advisory body for Children's Workforce Development Council, and has completed an on line survey for Ofsted regarding the role of Independent Reviewing Officers. The CICC has completed the children's care monitor survey of the experiences and opinions of looked after children. This was published in February 2012. The Children's Commissioner invited East Sussex CICC to be involved in the making of a DVD titled 'Do more than Listen', which demonstrates how children feel about coming into care. The DVD can be viewed on the Children's Commissioners' website.

3. Health

3.1 From March 2012, a new initiative with health to improve initial health assessments both in terms of timeliness and quality was trialed. A named GP for initial health assessments based in Hailsham will now complete all initial health assessments. This will provide consistency and the ability to provide assessments within timescales. It will also enable fast tracking to specialists whenever complex health issues are identified. This new initiative has resulted in a marked improvement in quarter one of this year in timeliness of initial health assessments.

4. Adoption and Permanence

4.1

| | 2010/11 | 2011/12 |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. Number of Children Adopted | 34 | 16 |
| 2. Number of Adoption Matches (children) | 30 | 41 |
| 3. Number of Permanent Fostering Matches (children) | 12 | 26 |
| 4. Number of East Sussex Adoptive Matches (children) | 26 | 28 |
| 5. Number of Consortium Adoptive Matches (children) | 3 | 2 |
| 6. Number of Inter-Agency Matches (children): | 2 | 10 |
| Permanence: | 1 | 11 |
| Adoption: | | |
| 7. Number of Prospective Adopters Approved (households) | 32 | 21 |
| 8. Number of Permanent Carers Approved (households) | 6 | 7 |
| 9. Number of Children Approved for Adoption | 49 | 78 |
| 10. Number of Children Approved for Permanence | 18 | 33 |
| 11. Number of Approved Adopters waiting to be Matched | 18 | 12 |
| 12. Number of Disruptions presented to Panel: | 1 | 1 (during |
| Permanence: | (adoption) | intros) |
| Adoptions: | | |

4.2 During 11/12, the number of children needing adoption has continued to rise significantly in line with the rise in numbers of children in the care of East

Sussex. This has been recognized in the recent investment of extra resources into the service (Thrive). It is intended that this will enable the service to meet the needs of our LAC locally, thereby reducing the need to use expensive agency placements. All areas of adoption service activity have also continued to increase from family finding, recruitment and assessment of adopters to adoption support. Notably during 11/12 the service worked hard to enable 41 children to be matched for adoption which was 11 more than 2010-11. In 2011-12 adoption was the approved plan for 78 children at Adoption Panel, which is a huge rise of over 60% over the 49 children who had that plan in 2010-11. The profile of the children over the last 12 months continues to show a higher proportion of sibling groups and older children. Over the last year around 30% of the children with an adoption plan have needed to be placed with a sibling, which continues to impact on adopter recruitment activity.

4.3 While the majority of children placed have been matched with in-house East Sussex adopters, the predicted shortfall in adoptive placements has resulted in increasing use of the Consortium and other adoption agencies during 2011-12. As mentioned above this situation will inevitably continue through the first half of the year of 2012-13 until the benefits of the current recruitment campaign for more local adoptive families can bear fruit and begin to impact on these figures.

4.4 The Adoption service has a target of 56 new adoptive households over 2012-13 underpinned by the new staffing resources funded by the Thrive project. This target represents an increase of more than 80% over the target for 2011-12. The adoption service is on track with its additional resources from Thrive to meet this target thereby reducing the need for expensive agency placements. The number of children and young people matching permanently with their foster carers continues to grow and last year at panel 26 matches were made. Many of these young people attended panel for the formal matching process.

4.5 Given the increased risks around placements of older children and sibling groups, adoption support needs remains a pressure, and is a major concern for enquirers thinking about adopting them, as well as requests for support from adoptive families whose children have considerable problems and challenges in their adolescent years. Some of these children and families are not known to ESCC, having been matched by other LAs. Much of the work involves advising and supporting families experiencing various levels of family dysfunction and crisis. The adoption support team offered support to in excess of 50 families at end of 11/12. Some of these had significant safeguarding issues and required referral to locality teams and occasionally admission to care.

4.6 The Contact Service for children post adoption continues to grow year on year and end of year was involved in directly supporting 157 direct contacts (145 last year). The Letter Box coordinators work has also seen an increase on last year to 581 (568 last year). This aspect of service delivery requires a high level of professional scrutiny as well as dedicated administrative support.

4.7 Nationally, the Government has accepted the recommendation of the Family Justice Review removing the requirement for Adoption Panels to consider the suitability for adoption of a child whose case is before the court, thereby reducing the risk of unnecessary delay. Martin Narey, the Government Advisor on Adoption, visited the Adoption Service in December 2011 and was very impressed with the Service. As a result of this, managers of the Service were asked to attend various consultation meetings with both the Children's Minister and the Prime Minister. East Sussex now has a central role in the National Adoption agenda and reforms that are currently underway, and have been invited to write a good practice guide for timely adoptions for young children in conjunction with Thomas Coram, as well as piloting the new Parent and Child Report.

5. Residential Services

5.1 Final agreement was reached in the autumn between the DfE and East Sussex County Council for a grant of £8 million to rebuild Lansdowne on the same site. Enabling work began in January to allow parts of the building to be demolished. The current home continues to operate.

East Sussex has recently secured 7 children resulting from high levels of concern around sexual exploitation and this has clearly impacted on the service at Lansdowne as this is obviously the preferred placement for a local child. The consequence of this was that the income target was not met and this put considerable pressure on the LAC end of year budget position. The new building is progressing quickly with a realistic handover date of April 2013.

5.2 Single status was completed across the residential estate including the disability respite care units. This had some impact on the morale of staff given that for some group workers this will have a significant reduction on their salary, particularly when protected salary will end in three years time.

5.3 External inspection of the group homes and of Lansdowne during 2010-11 has continued to rate the service highly.

6. Supported Lodgings

6.1 Supported Lodgings continue to be in high demand when it comes to looking for placements for our care leavers and homeless young people in the East Sussex area. At end year there were 36 households providing approximately 62 placements to these user groups. 5 new households were approved in 2011 – 2012 providing 7 placements and currently there are 4 assessments being carried out which should provide a further 4 new placements. Between 2011 -2012 the Service received 191 referrals for placements. 81 of these were for care leavers with 62 of them placed, 108 were for homeless young people of whom 75 were placed, 1 was for a young person who was referred from CAMHS who was placed, and 1 was for a young person managed by the Disability Service who was also placed. For

most young people placed the aim is to work with them to achieve the stability necessary for them to move on to their own independent accommodation.

7. Looked After Children 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 368 as at 31st March 12. 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. There continue to be tensions with fieldwork colleagues about the size of caseloads within the service, however joint working is promoted where possible to relieve the pressure on hard pressed FST social workers.

8. Care Leavers Service

8.1 During 10/11 the Wolverhampton Serious Case Review was published which reinforced safeguarding as a critical issue for care leaver services. The Operational Manager and Practice Manager have undertaken a review to assess how far the identified concerns in the Care Leavers Action Plan have been addressed. As a result of this review, and given the continuing high level of risk displayed by some of our most vulnerable care leavers, the service is moving to a greater professionalization of the service, by redressing the balance to having more qualified social work posts and fewer para-professionals.

8.2 At year end the Service was working with a cohort of 221 care leavers; 88 16/17 year olds, 33 LAC, 137 18-24 year olds and nine in higher education. The overall performance of Education, Employment and Training (EET) is gradually improving. We have 143 in education and training compared to last year's figure of 110, although 77 care leavers are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Nonetheless there has been significant progress from 08/09 when 70% of care leavers were NEET. An education co-ordinator from the Virtual School continues to work directly with the Care Leaver's Service to address employment via work experiences, work pairing, apprenticeships, and internships (through the Council and its commissioned providers) which are driven through a strategic multi agency group, Care to Work.

8.3 There has been significant progress in the provision of accommodation to care leavers via the Supporting People protocol and the expansion of supported lodgings placements. Care leavers currently have access to supported lodgings, foster care, Supporting People accommodation, Lee Road and Fort Road (house shares with a lead tenant), one flat in a hostel for 16/17 year olds and in exceptional cases the use of bed and breakfast. There is willingness for the Supporting People providers to take higher risk care leavers. The service is currently working closely with Supporting People's providers to see if we can jointly resource more intensive housing options for

our most challenging and high need care leavers. Over 2011/12 there has been a substantial reduction in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation by the Care Leavers Service. At end of year there were only two young people in bed and breakfast accommodation and both are monitored closely .

9. Performance

9.1 The key performance indicators have remained more or less steady or have slightly dipped during 11/12. However, given the increased levels of activity it is positive that the service has sustained this level of performance and remains well placed against the national data. (The gaps in national comparative data for 11/12 are due to be released on 29th November 2012). ESCC has improved its performance in relation to NEET's health assessments, distance that our LAC children are placed from East Sussex County Council boundaries during 11/12 as compared to our performance in 10/11. Placement stability is likely to dip in 12/13, as we continue to place often 3 children or more with our foster carers to avoid the use of expensive agency placements.

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

| NI | APA Indicator | Description | 2011/12 Value | 2010/11 Value | 2011/12 England | 2009/10 Value | 2008/09 Value |
|--------|---------------|---|---------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| NI 58 | | Emotional & Behavioural Health of children in care | 15.6 ↓ | 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 | 61.1% ↓ | 82.4% ↑ | 71.9% | 78.1%↑ | 62.5% |
| NI 62 | 2043SC | Number of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year | 8.8% ↑ | 9.7% ↓ | 11.0% | 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 | 60.4% ↓ | 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 | 93.1% ↑ | 91.9% ↑ | | 90.3%↓ | 94.1% |
| NI 147 | 5037SC | % of care leavers at age 19 who are living in suitable accommodation | 91.7% ↓ | 97.4% ↑ | 88.4% | 91.2%↑ | 85.3% |
| NI 148 | 5022SC | % of young people looked after on 1st April in their 17th year (aged 16) who were engaged in education, | 61.1% ↑ | 50.0% ↓ | 57.8% | 67.6%↓ | 70.6% |

| NI | APA Indicator | Description | 2011/12 Value | 2010/11 Value | 2011/12 England | 2009/10 Value | 2008/09 Value |
|----|---------------|--|----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| | | training or employment at the age of 19 | | | | | |
| | 3072SC | % of young people leaving care aged 16 or over with at least 1 GCSE grade A*-G or a GNVQ | n/a | 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 | n/a | 9.5% ↑ | | 9.1%↓ | 12.5% |
| | | Children aged between 10-15 looked after in foster placements or placed for adoption | 88.3% ↓ | 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 | 11.4% ↓ | 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 | 94.1% ↑ | 93.0% ↑ | | 92.4%↑ | 91.6% |
| | 3085SC | Distance children newly looked after are placed from home | 8.1% ↑ | 15.0% ↓ | | 11.7%↑ | 12.9% |
| | 2042SC | Children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18 | 59.9 ↑ | 56.5 ↑ | 59.1 | 50.1↑ | 46.4 |
| | 2052SC | % of lac in residential accommodation | 8.1% ↓ | 9.5% ↓ | 11.8% | 9.9%↑ | 8.5% |
| | 2054SC | % of lac fostered by relatives or friends | 9.3% ↓ | 12.0% ↓ | 11.0% | 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. | 95.3% ↑ | 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 | 84% (achieved at least one GCSE) | 82.5% ↑ | | 73%↓ | 81% |
| | 3074SC | % of lac for at least 12 months, of compulsory school age, who were persistently absent (more than 20% absence) | 4.7% | 5.5% ↑ | | 4.9%↓ | 7.3% (more than 25 days absence) |
| NI | | Children in Care | 37.5% | 27.3% ↓ | | 29.6%↓ | 45% |

| NI | APA Indicator | Description | 2011/12 Value | 2010/11 Value | 2011/12 England | 2009/10 Value | 2008/09 Value |
|--------|---------------|---|---------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| 99 | | Reaching Level 4 in English at Key Stage 2 | | | | | |
| NI 100 | | Children in Care Reaching Level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2 | 43.8% | 31.8% ↑ | | 33.3%↓ | 40% |
| NI 101 | | Children in Care achieving 5 A*-C GCSE's at KS4 (inc Eng & Maths) | 14% | 22.5% ↑ | | 4.4%↓ | 8.3% (5+ GCSEs at C and above) |
| | 4015SC | Final warnings, reprimands and convictions of lac | 6.5%↓ | 6.1%↓ | | 1.74↓ | 1.69 |

10. Inspections

10.1 The Fostering Service was inspected between 31st October and 4th November 2011. The Fostering Service maintained the overall rating of outstanding and in fact improved on the last inspection because all aspects of the Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standard were met and therefore there were no “notifications for improvements”.

10.2 The Adoption Service was also inspected between 20th - 24th February 2012 and achieved the overall rating of outstanding and there were no “notifications for improvements”.

10.3 Rose Cottage: January 12, Interim inspection, “making good progress”. Bungalow and Acorns: judged as 'outstanding' in the full inspections. Homefield: full inspection was judged as overall “good”. March 2012, Interim Inspection was judged as inadequate progress (due to a number of administrative omissions); however quality of care was rated as “good”. Most recent full inspection rated as overall “good”. Brodrick: full inspection was judged as overall “good”. March 2012 Interim Inspection was judged as satisfactory progress. Most recent full inspection was rated as overall “good”. Hazel Lodge: Full inspection was judged as overall “outstanding”. March 2012, interim inspection “good”. Most recent inspection rated as overall “outstanding”.

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 continued to improve significantly over the last three years both at Key Stage 2 and at Key Stage 4 and 2012 saw the best outcomes in nearly all attainment measures.

11.2 The priorities originally 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". Short term priorities identified last year have in the main been fully met. The Virtual School is now operating successfully from its new base in Hailsham Community College and its new SIMS database enables more robust tracking. Headteachers' agreement for the Virtual School to manage the LAC Pupil Programme added significantly to the total resource available to support our Looked After children.

11.3 Priorities for the coming year include piloting single plans under the South East 7 SEND Pathfinder arrangement to improve outcomes for children who are placed outside East Sussex and securing agreement to manage Pupil Premium for 2012/13 and beyond and continuing to focus on supporting the education and training of care leavers to meet the statutory requirements of the raising of the participation age. The Virtual School is also attempting to develop a more robust approach to monitoring and reporting on attendance.

12. CAMHS

12.1 In 2011/12 the LACMHS (LAC mental health service) received 68 new referrals. A total of 116 East Sussex LAC received a service. In addition consultation was provided to staff caring for a further 21 young people placed in residential homes and in the secure unit. A number of children who were urgently seen were presenting with high suicide risks and serious self harm. Two Therapeutic Parenting Groups operated in the county on a rolling programme. The clinicians also continue to offer consultation surgeries to social workers at their offices. This is a highly valued resource where social workers can receive advice and guidance on the problems of their looked after children.

12.2 A further 100 LAC also received and/or continued to receive an ongoing service from locality Tier 3 CAMHS.

13. Supervised Contact Service

13.1 The LAC Contact Service is a county wide and originally was set up to deliver 370 sessions of supervised contact per month (4, 440 per year). During 11/12 this had increased to 25,000 contact sessions over the whole year. There has been significant progress on key strands of the development strategy:

- There are early signs that strategy of recruiting more in house staff to supervise high frequency contact with less reliance on agencies is beginning to have an impact on our saving targets.
- A new site for contact was established in the west of the county at Meeching Road, Newhaven which has been completely refurbished and which provides a venue for high risk contact.

- A senior practitioner provides support for social workers in court with expertise / up to date research on appropriate levels of contact.
- The Single Status process was completed which has enhanced the service's ability to recruit and retain community family workers.
- The balance between in house delivery and agency has shifted towards the majority of contact now being delivered in house.
- We continue to look for an additional centre or venue based in the centre of the County.

14. Missing from Care

14.1 The number of children who have gone missing from care in East Sussex, i.e. those who are persistently missing for either a few hours or over 24 hours from residential homes or from foster care in 2011/2012 was 15. These were persistent 'mispers' but all were tracked and found by joint work with the Police, Children's Services and Catch 22.

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. A monthly meeting with all agencies takes place with the police and further support is offered under a contractual arrangement with the Catch 22 Mentoring Service. This project is jointly overseen by Sussex Police and Children's Services. The Catch 22 Project is extending its work in further undertaking a preventative group work programme with all our residential homes within East Sussex to educate and prevent young people who go missing from care for short and long periods.

15. Corporate Parenting Panel

15.1 The panel continues to meet quarterly, and scrutinises the performance of all services in relation to LAC, care leavers and their outcomes. The Corporate Parenting Panel continues to receive presentation from the CICC. The Corporate Parenting Panel has considered reports as follows:

20th May 2011

- Children in Care Council
- Annual progress report of the East Sussex Fostering Service 1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011
- Annual progress report to the East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service 1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011

15th July 2011

- Annual report of the East Sussex Foster Care Association
- Young People Leaving Care

21st October 2011

- KS2 and KS4 Outcomes for Looked After Children
- Transitions Service
- Development of Lansdowne Secure Unit and reconfiguration at Rose Cottage

27th January 2012

- Children in Care Council
- Annual Progress Report of LAC Services 1 April 2010-31 March 2011
- Update from the Independent Reviewing Officer service

15.2 In addition, at each meeting, the Corporate Parenting Panel considers the monthly Regulation 33 reports for each children's home (compiled by an off line manager) as well as statistics on numbers of LAC, where they are placed, as well as numbers of Residence Orders and Special Guardianships Orders. Members of the panel also undertake visits to all of the residential group homes and to the secure unit.

16. Conclusion

16.1 The service continues to perform well despite increasing numbers of LAC into the system during 11/12. This impacted very significantly on the outturn budget position for 11/12 which, while significantly under pressure, was better than our worst case scenario. The pressure was largely due to increased costs of fostering allowances, agency costs, contact costs and inability to meet Lansdowne secure unit income target.

16.2 The challenges for the service are to continue to reduce the gap in outcomes for our looked after children especially in the area of education attainment and achievement, in EET opportunities for our care leavers, and in the provision of wider and less costly housing options for our most challenging care leavers. This will need us to advocate with our partners and with the council as a whole to take on their wider corporate parenting responsibilities.

16.3 The most significant challenge will be for the service to meet its Thrive targets. While the recruitment of good quality foster and adoptive placements to achieve permanency for our looked after children has to be our key priority in order to further reduce our unit costs. If social care is to return to its 10/11 budget position, ultimately there will need to be fewer children in the system. This is being carried forward in the overall Thrive agenda.

Teresa Lavelle-Hill
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