

Agenda Item 6

Report to: **Corporate Parenting Panel**
Date: **19 July 2013**
By: **Interim Director of Children's Services**
Title of report: **Annual Progress Report of Looked After Children's Services (LAC)
1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013**
Purpose of report: **To outline the performance of the Integrated LAC Service between
1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013**

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 at Appendix 1

3. Recommendation

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

GED ROWNEY
Interim 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

2 LAC Trend Data

2.1 On 31 March 2013 there were 596 looked after children in East Sussex County Council (ESCC); this represents a reduction of 26 children (4.2%) as compared to 11-12. This reduction is in line with our Thrive target to reduce the number of LAC by 100 over 3 years from 1st April 12. They were placed as follows (2012 figures in brackets):-

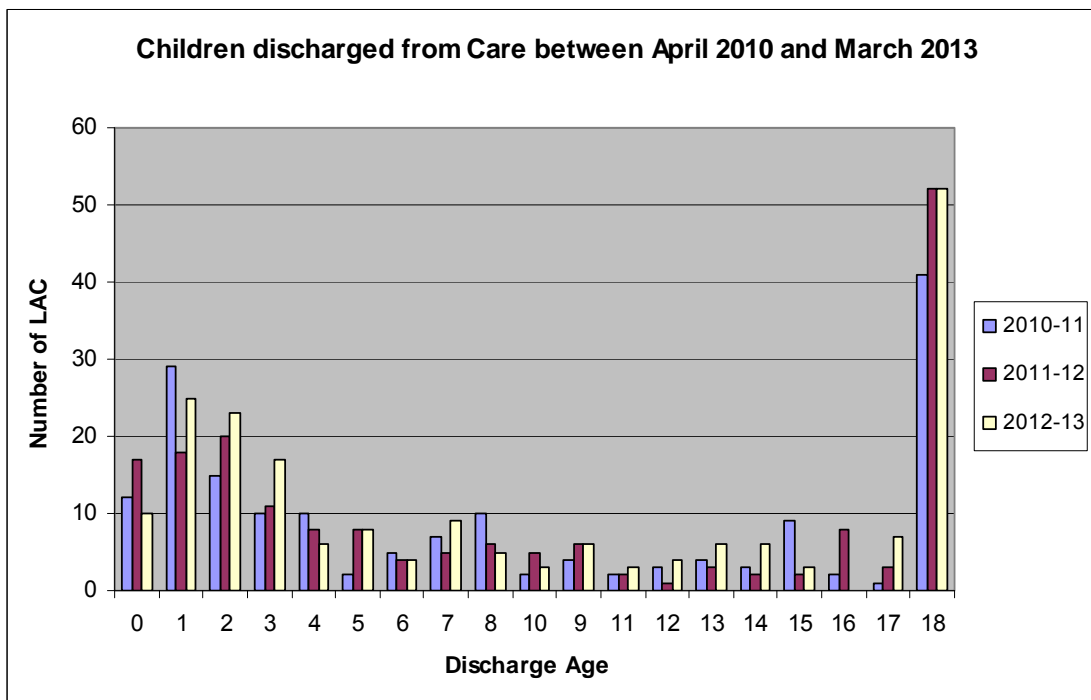
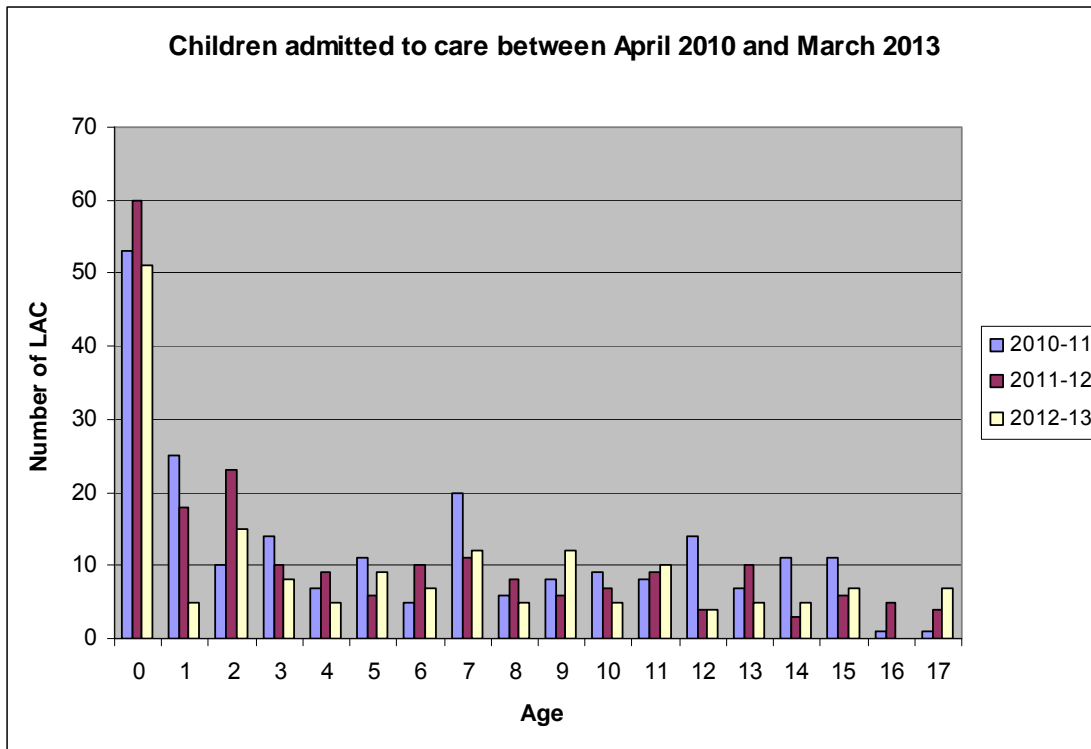
with foster carers	484	(515)
of these: in house carers	322	(344)
kinship carers	41	(55)
agency carers	121	(118)
placed for adoption	28	(34)
in lodgings	16	(3)
in ESCC children's homes	21	(19)
in agency children's homes	15	(18)
in agency special schools	5	(5)
placed with own parents	21	(20)
youth custody/secure unit	3	(5)
Hospital/NHS establishment	3	(3)

2.2 The proportion of LAC who are placed in family placements continues to remain 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 permanent outcome through a Special Guardianship Order or Residence Order.

		England
Fostered	81.2%	74%
Fostered by friends and family	6.9%	11.4%
Residential Care	6.9%	11.5%
Placed with own parents	3.5%	6.0%
Other placements	8.4%	8.4%

2.3 The number of children who are subject to Child Protection Plans has continued to fall from 675 (31/3/12) to 549 (31/3/13). This fall was reflected in a reduction to 86 sets of care proceedings as compared to 112 sets of care proceedings for 2011-2012. This has a direct relationship to the number of children who become LAC, as there are always a proportion of these birth parents that are unable to make the necessary changes to safely care for their children.

2.4 The data as shown above, only ever gives a snapshot of the children moving in and out of the system at a fixed date each month/year, but it does not show data about the same individual children. The latter data is referred to as 'churn'. This cohort of children will come in and out of the system within the year or some may come in and stay whilst others leave. 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 203 for 12-13 which, added to the total number of LAC, equates to the service working with 799 children. This is a more realistic figure for the numbers of LAC worked with during the course of the year.



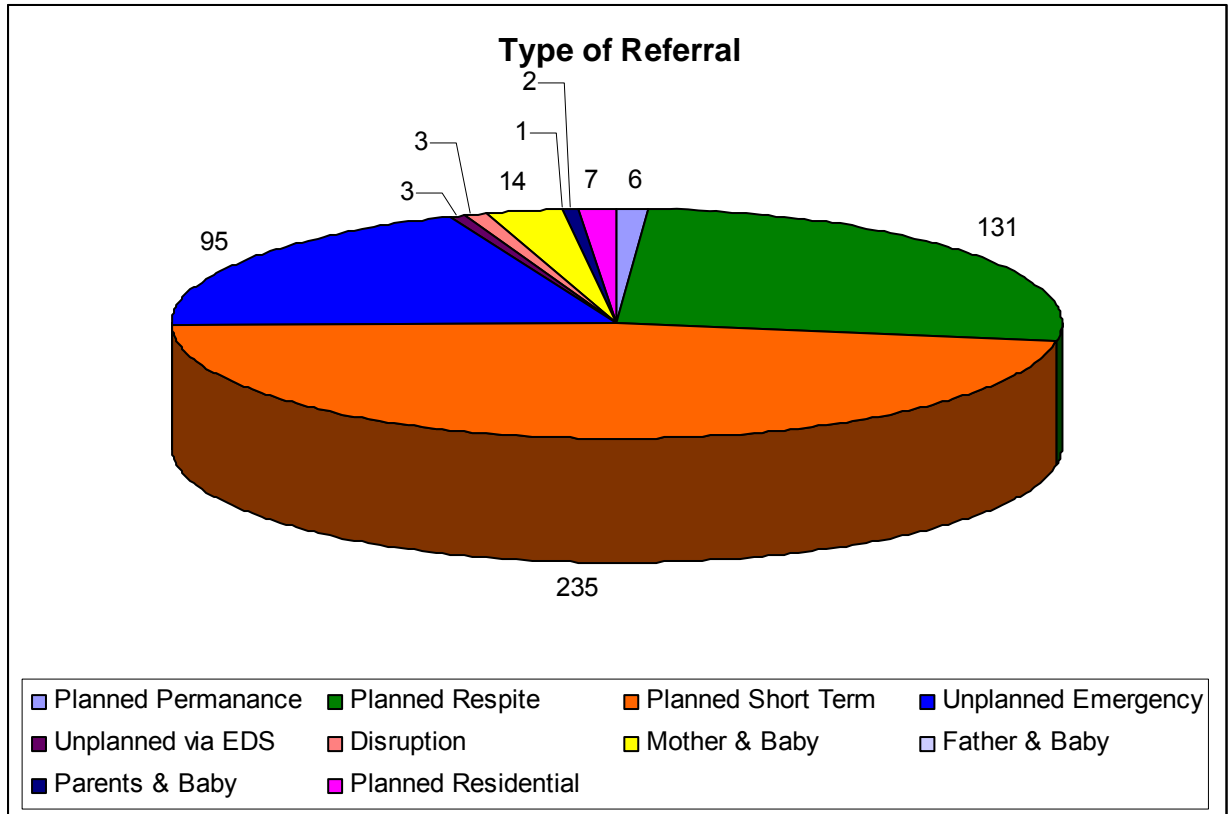
2.5 The above charts give a very clear picture of the admission and discharge trends for each age group over the last three years. There is a decrease in numbers of 0 to 5 LAC admitted into care (93 children as compared to 126 children in 2011-12). Admissions in relation to 13 year olds and above have remained stable at 28 as compared to 2011-12. Numbers of 17 year old admissions has slightly increased to 7 as compared to 4 in 2011-12. This is largely due to the legislative changes in relation to the revised legal status of young people who become remanded. There has been an increase in the number of discharges up to 5 years old (89 compared to 82 in 2011-12 and 78 for 2010-11), which reflects the throughput created by permanence planning, with higher numbers of children/sibling groups being adopted

or made subject to Residence Orders (RO's) and Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's). The discharge rates for 17 years olds have been significantly higher than last year (more than doubled), 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.

2.6 All placements of LAC are made through the centralised duty team based in the Fostering Service. The number of referrals for placement reduced for the first time in 3 years from 671 for 2011-12 to 497 in 2012-13. Although there has been a 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 2012-13, there were 19 former LAC "staying put" in their foster placements. This is an excellent result for our young people but inevitably has an impact on placement availability and thus on capacity. In addition we have significant numbers of foster carers who continue to care for our children permanently via SGOs. 23 children were placed in this way as at end of year with a further 11 SGOs underway. 6 fostering households have either been assessed or were in the process of being assessed as adoptive parents for 8 children subject to care orders. Again this offers a good outcome for individual children. These additional 61 children who are remaining with their foster carers on a different legal basis should also be counted since they reflect a more accurate number of 383 actual children who are placed with our in house foster carers at the end of 2012-13, as compared to the lower number of 322 indicated in 2.1 who are strictly fostering rather than offering permanence via SGO or adoption.

2.7 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. 2012-13 saw no overall growth in agency placements (both fostering and residential) as compared to 2011-12 which was largely a result of almost meeting our THRIVE target of recruiting new in house foster carers as well as a result of bringing back children to in house resources whenever it is possible to do this. Of the 497 referrals received between April 2012 and March 2013, 373 resulted in placements being made. 58 were not needed due to other forms of support being successful and 66 were in the process of being matched.

2.8 Please find overleaf a chart detailing types of placement requested for 2012-13.



The majority of requests for placements are for planned placements. The requests for parent and baby placements have fallen from 23 in 2011-12 to 17 in 2012-13. This reflects our success in Court of achieving separation at birth for those parents who have often had previous children removed and where there has been no significant change in the parents' circumstances in the intervening period.

2.9. During 2012-13 the service had only 3 disruptions compared to 9 in the previous year, which is significantly lower than the national average. This is attributed to careful risk assessment on making matches that allow 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. Planning moves in this way is obviously better for children.

3. Fostering

Recruitment and Retention of Carers

3.1 From 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013, 528 new enquiries were received. This compares to 496 for the same period 2011-2012, 471 for 2010–2011 and 405 for 2009–2010. The multi media recruitment campaign "Fillaspace" focused on the recruitment of foster carers for children and young people of all ages. There have also been specific targeted events for parent and child foster carers and for those for children with disabilities.

3.2 During this period the service has facilitated seven 'Skills to Foster' pre-assessment preparation courses. 43 households have attended these courses. This compares to five courses held last year and the attendance of 27 households. The Children in Care Council (CICC) now help to facilitate these preparation groups and this is working extremely well.

3.3 The number of foster carer households approved in 2012–2013 was 43 households that offer 76 placements for children. The number of approvals is just slightly short of the service’s challenging THRIVE target and is a significant improvement on the previous year (2011-12 where there were 23 households approved offering 35 placements). 5 of these households were transfers from independent fostering providers. There were 6 East Sussex looked after children already placed in these placements and 2 additional local children with disabilities who were receiving short breaks. After the deduction of the East Sussex foster carer allowances paid to these foster carers these transfers equate to a saving to East Sussex of £114,730.72 per year in agency fees. The most recent OFSTED survey states that nationally in 2011-2012 there were 7,400 foster carers recruited but 4,800 were lost to the national system. Fostering Network research states that nationally 13% of foster carers resign or their approvals are terminated each year. In 2012-2013 East Sussex lost 7.1% of their foster carers, which is far better than the national average. The Integrated Looked After Children’s Service continues to work in partnership with East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA). The Operational Managers for Looked After children and The Fostering Service and the Chair of ESFCA continue to host monthly “surgeries” for foster carers who can bring issues and any difficulties directly to managers.

3.4 There were 12 general fostering assessments in progress at 31 March 2013. One of those is a transfer from an independent fostering provider. There are also enquiries from 6 foster carers currently approved by independent fostering agencies expressing interest in transferring to East Sussex County Council. The recruitment and assessment team have reviewed and amended their processes and recording systems to ensure they are effective, informative and timely.

The Children in Care Council

3.5 The CICC have met 15 times during 2012-2013. All activities undertaken by the CICC have an educational function which aims to enable those taking part to achieve, strengthen confidence and develop their independence skills. To this end 10 members of the CICC have achieved their gold Keystone award and 3 have achieved the platinum award which is the equivalent of GCSE A*. A further 9 CICC members were based in different ESCC workplaces during ‘National Takeover Day’ in November 2012.

3.6 In addition, the CICC have been involved in many national consultations. The CICC met with members of The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) to discuss the health and wellbeing of LAC. A CICC representative met with Shadow Children’s Minister, Catherine McKinnell, at Westminster who wanted to know more about the issues for young people in care. CICC representatives also sit on the Children’s Minister Advisory group and have attended the following sessions: in May 2012 ‘siblings in care and contact’, in July 2012 ‘looked after children and education’, in September 2012 ‘looked after children and health’, and in December ‘social workers and other professionals’.

3.7 In 2012–2013 there have been significant new developments for the CICC. The CICC now participate in the Skills to Foster Preparation Groups for prospective foster carers and, along with other young people in care, were filmed for the foster carer’s and adopter’s recruitment campaign ‘Fillaspace’. The CICC now attend the younger user group (YUG) to ensure that they are alert to issues affecting younger LAC. The CICC have also started to develop links with children’s residential homes

and regularly visit to offer support. The CICC have initiated the development of a regional CICC group with West Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council.

4. Physical and Mental Health

4.1 From March 2012, a new initiative was piloted to improve initial health assessments, both in terms of the timeliness and quality of these assessments. A named GP for initial health assessments based in Hailsham now completes all initial health assessments. This provides consistency and the ability to ensure assessments are completed within timescales. This initiative enables fast tracking to specialists whenever complex health issues are identified. This new initiative has proved very successful with 80% of initial health assessments being completed within timescales during 2012–2013 as compared to 52% in 2011–2012.

4.2 In 2012-13 the LACCAMHS (LAC community adolescent mental health service), received 70 new referrals all of which were accepted and an initial consultation was offered. In addition a number of children were seen urgently because they presented with suicidal thoughts and/or with serious self harm or depressive symptoms

4.3 East Sussex LAC received an ongoing therapeutic service e.g. individual therapy, therapy with the child and their carer, or consultation to the carer.

The LACMHS also provided:

- two 12 week Therapeutic Parenting Groups.
- weekly consultation to all 4 residential homes
- weekly consultation to Lansdowne Secure Unit.
- monthly 'drop in' consultations ('surgeries') to the three LAC teams and Fostering Service.
- monthly representation at the two Permanency Planning Groups

5. Adoption and Permanence

	2011/12	2012/13
1. Number of Children Adopted	16	44
2. Number of Adoption Matches (children)	41	53
3. Number of Permanent Fostering Matches (children)	26	10
4. Number of East Sussex Adoptive Matches (children)	28	44
5. Number of Consortium Adoptive Matches (children)	2	1
6. Number of Inter-Agency Matches (children):		
Permanence:	10	2
Adoption:	11	8
7. Number of Prospective Adopters Approved (households) * + one kinship approval.	21	39
8. Number of Permanent Carers Approved (households)	7	4
9. Number of Children Approved for Adoption up to September 1 st 2012 by panel	78 (whole year)	30
10. Number of children Approved for Adoption from September 1 st 2012 onwards	N/A	39

by ADM		
11. Number of children Approved for Permanence up to September 1 st 2012	33 (whole year)	10
12. Number of Children Approved for Permanence from September 1 st 2012 onwards by ADM	N/A	7
11. Number of Approved Adopters waiting to be Matched	12	16
12. Number of Disruptions presented to Panel: Permanence: Adoptions:	1 (during intros)	1

5.1 The past 12 months have seen considerable interest from Central Government and from the DFE in all aspects of adoption activity. There has been a raft of initiatives; the Children and Families Bill, Adoption Gateway, Adoption Score Cards and the new legal process of the Family Justice Review. This has led to major changes to local adoption processes this year.

5.2 During the period 2012-13 there has continued to be significant numbers of children requiring adoptive placements in East Sussex, although fewer than in 2011-12. Additional staffing capacity resulting from the THRIVE investment has already resulted in an increase in the numbers of children matched to adopters by more than 25%, and at the same time has improved the timeliness of the matching process. This has only been possible by enhancing the recruitment process, and maintaining an increased availability of adoptive placements. Alongside this, the statistics show a welcome reduction in the use of expensive and often geographically distant interagency placements.

5.3 East Sussex County Council has been piloting the new draft prospective adopter report during this period. This was a national trial and East Sussex has led the way in developing the new two stage application process, as suggested by the national Expert Working Party on Adoption in April 2012. The pilot has already proved to have had a very positive impact locally, in that there has been a noticeable reduction in the time taken to assess prospective adopters, a greater reported satisfaction with the process and an increase in the number of adopters recruited by 'word of mouth'. This, in combination with the multi media recruitment campaign 'Fillaspace', has significantly increased the level of interest in adoption and the numbers of adopters applying to East Sussex as the chosen Adoption Agency.

5.4 As of the 1st April 2013 there were 33 adopters in assessment, with 16 of them already booked into Panel for approval between April and July 2013. The service is optimistic that with the additional capacity created last year; the strengthened infrastructure will be sufficient to recruit and assess higher numbers of adopters than will be necessary for ESCC children. This will help respond to the national shortage of suitable adopters, and will help neighbouring authorities. It also offers potential income for ESCC since a fee can be charged to cover the costs of assessing and approving adopters. The dedicated core functions for recruitment, family finding and the new assessment process have enabled the service to significantly improve its outputs this year. It is anticipated that there will be a challenging local adopter recruitment target in 2013-14. The service has already achieved a doubling in the numbers recruited in 2012-13, but is likely to require a more than tripling of adopter numbers in the coming year. However, the service is in a strong place to achieve this ambitious target given additional support of the Adoption Reform Grant in 2013-

14 which is intended to improve adoption services generally and is ring fenced to increase the national pool of adopters available for children waiting.

5.5 The process for approving a child's plan for adoption was amended as from 1st September 2012 as recommended by the Family Justice Review. There is no longer a requirement for Adoption Panels to consider the suitability of adoption as the plan for a child, if it is already being considered within the court process. A revised process has been implemented locally whereby a child's social worker prepares the child's permanence report which is presented to the Agency Decision-Maker (ADM) for consideration of the plan.

5.6 The number of children approved for adoption during 2012-13 has dipped slightly from the all time high of 78 in 2011-12. Nonetheless, 69 approvals of children with a plan for adoption, though lower than 2012, still represents an ambitious target. The number of children actually placed for adoption, however, has remained high with a total of 53 children being placed in 2012-13. This represents a rise of 29% over the previous year.

5.7 The Annual Report for the Adoption Service 2011-12 anticipated an increase in the likely number of interagency adoption placements required to meet the rising demand for adoption placements for our children in 2012-13. However, the number of children placed in high cost interagency placements was in fact lower than the previous year at only 9 children in 2012-13, from 13 children in 2011-12. This represents a considerable achievement in the current climate, given that 44 of the children placed for adoption were matched with an East Sussex adoptive family. Keeping children more local is also helpful in terms of facilitating introductions and providing ongoing support.

5.8 Improving performance by reducing the timescales in matching children to adopters has been a key target for 2012-13. The Adoption Scorecard produced by the Department of Education this year has shown ESCC placing children more quickly for adoption than the national average. These improvements have been achieved through the consolidation of the family finding process which supports coordination and identification of potential matches. This has been very successful with over 80% of adopters approved in East Sussex waiting less than three months to be matched with a child at Adoption Panel. Only one adopter, who is currently waiting for a match, has waited more than six months.

5.9 The numbers of children being approved for permanence has dropped considerably in the past 12 months, from 30 last year to 17 this year. This may be due, in part, to a policy change which has reduced the age range of children approved for permanence from 11 years to 9 years; and also to the changes to Panel process where the revised ADM process is still bedding in. It is also linked to ongoing rising numbers of ROs and SGOs which have resulted in children achieving permanence via those routes too. There are currently 23 children with a plan for permanence for whom the service is actively family finding. These include 9 sibling groups of two and 5 single children (all boys). There are currently 6 sets of foster carers expressing an interest in permanence; hence the challenge is to continue to encourage more carers to come forward to offer permanence via long term fostering.

5.10 The demands on the Adoption Support Service continue to rise as the activity levels in recruitment and matching have increased considerably. More families will need to access adoption support services throughout their adoption journey, with

particular challenges during adolescence. Much of the work involves advising and supporting families experiencing various levels of family discord and crisis.

5.11 The Adoption Service has developed some excellent links with the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) which continues to offer monthly consultation sessions to professionals involved in supporting some very complex situations. This has been supplemented during 2012-13 by the spot purchasing of specific therapeutic interventions from a number of selected independent providers, to support families in enabling them to stay together and to prevent children coming back into the care system. The service is very pleased to have secured a contract with CAMHS (initially for two years) for the future delivery of a specialist service to those children and adopters with complex needs. The service is also increasingly investing in supporting families during the early days of placement to assist with relationship building and with the formation of strong attachments which might avert crises in later years. The service currently offers support to over 50 families with complex needs, with a number of them having significant safeguarding issues and/or mental health issues.

5.12 The delivery of direct contact between LAC and their birth families continues to increase every year and the service is currently involved in supporting 198 arrangements, up from 157 in 2011-12. The activity in the indirect/letterbox service has also increased and is currently involved in 616 agreements, up from 581 in 2011-12. This aspect of contact requires a high level of professional scrutiny as well as dedicated administrative support.

5.13 The Adoption Support Team facilitates and works closely with the Adoptive Families Group launched in January 2013. This is an independent group with a focus on lobbying, awareness raising and education in relation to issues pertaining to adoption support.

6. Residential Services

6.1 The rebuilding of Lansdowne Secure Unit using a grant from the DfE has been successfully completed and a new 'state of the art' seven bedded unit opened on the 9th April 2013. The facilities provided within the residential and education areas are second to none. The residential area consists of seven bedrooms, one with the capacity to cater for a highly dependent young person with access and facilities for wheel chair use. All rooms have en suite facilities and entertainment pods including computers with access to education and learning. There are two lounges, a multi faith room for young people to worship, an art therapy room, a sensory room, a play therapy room and games room. The school area boasts a multi-media suite with the very latest technology via computer systems and interactive boards, an art room, domestic science room, technology and vocational studies room, hair and beauty facilities, and an enormous gym and fitness suite. Staff have undertaken rigorous familiarisation training and young people moved into the new facilities on May 15th 2013. Ofsted have visited the site and have agreed an operating licence for 5 young people, having being satisfied that all systems are robust and functional within the new unit. A full 4 day licence inspection for the 7 bedded unit will be undertaken by Ofsted and the DfE in September 13.

6.2 As of the 31st March 13, all the four group homes continued to remain fully occupied and to offer high standards of care to our high risk young people who can no longer manage living in foster placements. There has been a challenging mix of young people within the homes setting, impacting at times the fabric of the buildings

and the resilience of staff. Ofsted Inspections across the homes have been positive with excellent feedback, with all the homes being rated with an overall grade of “good”.

6.3 There are a further two residential homes, the Bungalow and Acorns, which are managed within the Children’s Disability Service and which do not form part of this Annual Report.

7. Supported Lodgings

7.1 Supported lodgings providers provide much needed placement provision for care leavers and for homeless young people in the East Sussex area. As of 31st March 2013 there were 36 households providing 53 placements to these young people. There were 6 new households approved in 2012-2013 providing 6 placements, with a further 2 assessments being undertaken. During 2012-2013 the service received 149 referrals for placements. 79 of these were for care leavers with 59 of them placed, 70 were for homeless young people of whom 61 were placed. 2 placements were for young people needing to move directly from hospital, with both having significant psychiatric and health needs. The service also provided housing options for several young people that were “electronically tagged” following criminal activity and who had significant involvement from the Youth Offending Service. For most young people the aim of the Supported Lodgings service is to work with young people to achieve the stability and skills required for them to move on to their own independent accommodation.

8. Looked After Children Teams

8.1 The three Looked After Children’s teams at Hastings, Lewes and Hailsham continue to take responsibility for all those looked after children where the overall care plan is permanence outside of the family.

8.2 The number of children worked within the service as of the 31st March 13 was 429. The remaining LAC are managed by the Disability Service, the Family Support teams and by the Youth Support teams.

8.3 There is a collaboration and supportive approach to allocation across all the teams. The Looked After Children Teams promote a proactive approach to permanence planning through adoption, special guardianship or long term fostering.

9. Care Leavers Service

9.1 At end of year, the service was working with a cohort of 206 care leavers; 69, 16 to 17 years olds, and 137, 18 to 24 year olds. The Care Leavers Service undertook a review of the service in 2012-13 due to the increasing numbers of high risk care leavers presenting with significant safeguarding issues. The review identified the need to increase the numbers of professionally qualified staff within the service by adding social work capacity. This has been achieved by deploying 2 additional senior practitioner posts within the service. Due to the high level of risk displayed by some of the care leavers and to reduce placement breakdown, the service is looking at employing placement support staff This support will be focussed at evenings and weekends.

9.2. The Care2Work strategic multi agency board chaired by the Head of Service for LAC oversees the development of improved skills to enable care leaves to

successfully progress into education and employment. The board has overseen a number of key activities to improve educational and employment outcomes. The service tracks and monitors the education and training of 206 care leavers with our partners in Further Education colleges, CRI and local universities, through our quarterly meetings with all FE and training providers, and by developing work and training opportunities with our key partners.

9.3 As of 31st March 2013 the LAC service supported 124 care leavers who are in education, training and employment (EET), with 82 care leavers who were not in education, employment or training (NEET). 8 of our care leavers were at university, with four planning to graduate in July 2013. A further 4 young people are applying to university this year. In addition, three young people were undertaking apprenticeships, with one having completed an apprenticeship who was awarded Sussex Downs Apprentice of the Year accolade.

9.4 In relation to our young people who are NEET support is provided by CRI. Those who are aged 16 to 17 are also eligible for the Youth Contract which provides additional support for those that are disengaged. This enables young people to move into education, training or work with training, by providing a 1-1 mentor for up to 6 months to re-engage the young person. Strategically, we are continuing to actively seek work experience and employment opportunities for care leavers within East Sussex County Council. We are very pleased that East Sussex Human Resource Management Board has agreed to prioritise care leavers across the spectrum of opportunities from paid employment to apprenticeships, internships, work experiences and pre-apprenticeship opportunities provided by the 'Work Rite' project.

9.5 There has been continued progress in expanding our range of housing options for our care leavers, especially for those high risk care leavers who tend to lead more chaotic lifestyles. There is now a range of accommodation options for care leavers via supported lodgings, staying in foster care post 18, and Supporting People Accommodation via our Protocol with Supporting People providers who offer a range of foyer type accommodation options in different parts of the county – Newhaven, Eastbourne, Hastings and Hailsham.

9.6 The Care Leavers Service has been successful in developing new housing options with voluntary sector partners via YMCA Eastbourne and Sussex Central YMCA and has negotiated specific contracts and service specifications. The former offers a fully renovated and refurbished 3 bedroom flat staffed at evenings and weekends which will provide both housing and support to our most complex and challenging care leavers. Sussex Central YMCA will provide staffing and management to two 4 bedroom properties which are leased to East Sussex County Council. Sussex Central YMCA will operate one house with a lead tenant (providing support in promoting independent living skills and enhancing education, employment and training opportunities). The other house will be able to accommodate more challenging or complex care leavers as they will provide in addition to a lead tenant, an added support worker between the hours of 5 p.m. and midnight. While these increased housing options will incur additional spend, savings will be made by prioritising these options for those care leavers who would previously have had to be placed in high cost agency placements. As of the 31st March 13 two care leavers were placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. Some care leavers refuse to be placed in alternative accommodation options while others may disrupt their placements due to their challenging behaviour and non compliance with rules and boundaries.

10. Performance

10.1 Most of our key performance indicators have continued to improve during 12-13 and many remain above the national average. (The gaps in national comparative data for 2012-13 will be filled by national data release in November 2013). ESCC has improved its performance in relation to timeliness of health assessments, improvement in emotional and behavioural health, participation of LAC in their LAC reviews, statutory timescales of LAC reviews, timeliness of children adopted (the adoption scorecard), and the rate of children who are LAC per 10,000 population aged under 18. ESCC performance with care leavers who are engaged in EET in their 17th year has dipped as compared to 2011-12. The cohort for this performance indicator is small (55 care leavers), and is effected by the nature and take up of engagement programmes and opportunities at any given time. Nevertheless, progression for learners to move into employment remains a challenge. Even when other indicators have slightly dipped, the majority are still higher than the national average for 2011/12. The Annual LAC Report for 2011-12 predicted that placement stability was likely to dip in 12-13, as we continue to place more children with our foster carers to avoid the use of expensive agency placements. In 2012-13 12.4% of our LAC had three or more placement moves in the year. Although this is a dip in performance for ESCC, it means our performance is more or less in line with the national average for 2011-12. It is also the case that many of the moves are linked to our permanency policy for our younger children. For example this could arise when the court requires the local authority to provide a parent and baby placement, this then may break down leading to a foster placement, and then there will be a move to an adoptive or permanent kinship placement. A small cohort of 3 or more moves is related to a very challenging group of older LAC who often disrupt placements because of their complex needs.

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

NI	APA Indicator	Description	2012/13 Value	2011/12 Value	2011/12 England	2010/11 Value	2009/10 Value
NI 58		Emotional & Behavioural Health of children in care	14.2 ↑	15.6 ↓		15.4 ↓	15.8 ↑
NI 61	2058SC	% of lac adopted during the year who were placed for adoption within 12 months of their best interest decision being made	80.9% ↑	61.1% ↓	71.9%	82.4% ↑	78.1% ↑
	Adoption Scorecard	Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted. (3 year average)	538.9 days ↑	556 days	636 days		
NI	2043SC	Number of	12.4% ↓	8.8% ↑	11.0%	9.7% ↓	9.4% ↓

NI	APA Indicator	Description	2012/13 Value	2011/12 Value	2011/12 England	2010/11 Value	2009/10 Value
62		children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year					
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	59.4% ↓	60.4% ↓		71.1% ↓	75.7%↑
NI 66	2064SC	% children looked after cases which should have been reviewed during the year which were reviewed during the year	97.6% ↑	93.1% ↑		91.9% ↑	90.3%↓
NI 147	5037SC	% of care leavers at age 19 who are living in suitable accommodation	90.9% ↓	91.7% ↓	88.4%	97.4% ↑	91.2%↑
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	56.4% ↓	61.1% ↑	57.8%	50.0% ↓	67.6%↓
	C63	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	97.2% ↑	94.1% ↑		93.0% ↑	92.4%↑
	C69	Distance children newly looked after are placed from home	9.3% ↓	8.1% ↑		15.0% ↓	11.7%↑
	Thrive PI 9	Rate of Children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18	57.3 ↑	59.9 ↑	59.1	56.5 ↑	50.1↑
	C19	Average of the % of children looked after who had been	89.6% ↓	95.3% ↑		88.6% ↓	90.7%↑

NI	APA Indicator	Description	2012/13 Value	2011/12 Value	2011/12 England	2010/11 Value	2009/10 Value
		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.					
	C81	Final warnings, reprimands and convictions of lac	5.7% ↑	6.5%↓		6.1%↓	1.74↓

10.2 Educational outcomes for LAC continue to improve and progress from KS1 to KS2 in both English and Maths is particularly encouraging. Overall attainment at KS4 in terms of the percentage of children achieving 5+ A*-C including English and Maths has been above national outcomes for the last three years. Good progress has been supported by additional home tuition funded through Pupil Premium. See table below for performance in LAC educational outcomes:

	2012/13 East Sussex	2012/13 England	2011/12 East Sussex	2011/12 England	2010/11 East Sussex	2009/10 East Sussex
Children in Care Reaching Level 4 in English at Key Stage 2	47%↑	60%	37.5%↑	54%	27.3%↑	29.6%
Children in Care Reaching Level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2	63%↑	56%	43.8%↑	52%	31.8%↓	33.3%
Children in Care making expected progress in English at Key Stage 1 to 2	82%↑	75%	67%↓	73%	80%↑	56%
Children in Care making expected progress in Maths at Key Stage 1 to 2	91%↑	69%	67%↑	65%	63%↑	33%
Children in care achieving at least one GCSE	81%↓	n/a	84%↓	n/a	89%↑	80%
Children in care achieving 5+ A*-C including English and Maths	21%↑	14.6%	14%↓	13.6%	21%↑	4.4%

Children in Care making expected progress in English at Key Stage 2 to 4	39%↑	31%	32%↓	32.9%	34%↑	26%
Children in Care making expected progress in Maths at Key Stage 2 to 4	26%↑	30.5%	21%↓	26.6%	25%↑	21%
Children in care who were persistently absent from school (new measure – more than 15% absence)	n/a – new tracking system in place since January	n/a	4.7% (old measure 20%)	n/a	5.5% (old measure 20%)	4.9% (old measure 20%)

11. Virtual School

11.1 The East Sussex Virtual School for Children in Care consists of a small team of staff, including two teachers, who support the education of all East Sussex LAC wherever they are educated. Our Virtual School is increasingly recognised nationally as a beacon of good practice, building on its “Outstanding” Ofsted judgement in 2011. Edward Timpson, the Children’s Minister has twice now referred to the work of our Virtual School in National Speeches (in his Speech on the Children’s Bill in February 2013 and again in his Speech to The Virtual Headteacher’s Conference in Bath in March 2013).

“We know, from Ofsted, that these educational champions can make a real difference, not only to a child’s progress, but also to the stability of their placements and their emotional wellbeing.

In East Sussex, for example, a Virtual School Head has boosted results by working closely with and across primary, secondary and special schools; with the progress of children in secondary schools supported by one-to-one tuition, tailored resources, mentoring and revision courses, ensuring that nobody gives up on them.”

(Extract from Edward Timpson’s Speech on the Family and Children’s Bill 2013).

11.2 The Virtual School manages the Pupil Premium (some £249,200) on behalf of East Sussex head teachers. The expected figure for 2013-14 will be £380,000 as the per capita funding increases from £623 to £900. East Sussex is one of only a handful of local authorities where local head teachers have agreed for the Pupil Premium to be managed on their behalf by the Virtual Headteacher for the benefit of all looked after children. The All Party Report “Education Matters in Care” that was published in November 2012 made strong recommendations for such a model and the DfE has recently asked the East Sussex Virtual Head to share this good practice nationally – via the National Virtual Headteacher’s Conference and via the National College of Leadership website. The local management of the Pupil Premium allows the Virtual School to provide significant additional support for learning and this model allows increased flexibility and responsiveness of funding for our children.

11.3 The Virtual School continues to widen its remit to include support for pre-school LAC, care-leavers and, where parents request support, for adopted children.

11.4 The Virtual School continues to explore a wide range of strategies to support LAC to achieve their potential, for example:

- by participating in the “Letter-Box Club” where LAC receive monthly parcels of fun educational materials.
- by pioneering hybrid care models in partnership with local boarding schools so that some of our LAC can attend mainstream private boarding schools at no additional cost to the local authority. It is hoped that East Sussex will become the first local authority partner to the Springboard Bursary Foundation, a new national charity that supports assisted boarding.
- by employing highly qualified and experienced teachers and other professionals to directly support children in school in the greatest need and thus reducing exclusions from school (there has only been one permanent exclusion of a looked after child in the last three years).

12. Supervised Contact Service

12.1 The current level of contact continues to exceed one thousand sessions per month. This equates to over fifteen hundred hours per month of direct contact for LAC. The THRIVE target is to achieve 80% being delivered by in house provision by the end of the Thrive programme because it is a better and more cost effective service and one year on we have already achieved 75% being delivered in this way.

12.2 The service has been reconfigured into three teams across the county and work is underway to develop a third contact venue in Hailsham. The service now has a cross county 'intake' system for a fast response to new requests for contact. The practice manager and senior social workers play an active role in care proceedings by providing expert evidence on type, frequency and duration of contact. Community Family Workers in the service continue to provide contact family support to LAC and their families as well as life story book work for infants who will be placed for adoption.

13. LAC who are Missing from Care

13.1 Using the police data base, 31 young people were initially recorded as missing from care. However, after cross checking the police and social care data (including specific children's files), a detailed analysis revealed that a large majority were only missing for a few hours, although clearly being missing for any period is concerning and will be responded to actively by care staff, social workers etc. Also, often those that were deemed missing for over 24 hours were not truly missing but “absent” (that is to say that they were known to be staying with relatives or family friends and were in constant contact with either their residential home or social worker). A more accurate picture revealed that there were 5 LAC from this original cohort of 31 who were missing for over 24 hours and who were persistently missing on many occasions. These young people were putting themselves at risk of harm, criminal activity and sexual exploitation despite intense support from multi agency professionals. All of these young people were tracked and found by proactive joint

work between the Police, Children's Services and a local voluntary organisation, Catch 22.

13.2 Strategically, the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) monitors all children who go missing, with a particular focus on those children who would be more vulnerable - and this includes LAC. All LSCB agencies support early intervention/prevention to stop all young people from going missing, as this is a clear safeguarding issue. Children who are missing and the overlap with both child sexual exploitation (CSE) and trafficking, is a key priority area of work for the LSCB and is the focus of work for a specific subgroup of the LSCB,

13.3 Operationally, since 2009, a multi agency meeting has been held on a monthly basis attended by the missing person's coordinator (MPC, Sussex Police), and a Detective Inspector from Sussex Police, staff from Catch 22, the Operational Manager for LAC, the Operational Manager for Residential Services, an Operational Manager from the Youth Support Teams, the Operational Manager for the out of hours Emergency Duty Service, a foster carer, the sexual health nurse and a manager from the YOT. This multi agency meeting has contributed to an improved response to young people who go missing from home or care. The monthly meeting specifically tracks, shares information across the agencies, assesses the risks and agrees specific actions in relation to individual young people. This multi agency intervention engages young people effectively, thus reducing the number of times that LAC go missing from care. Further support to young people when they return is offered under the contractual arrangement with the Catch 22 Mentoring Service which offers ongoing individual support.

13.4 Many of our LAC who go missing are challenging young people who are placed in our children's residential group homes. All the homes use a comprehensive system of recording young people who are truly missing, including duration and numbers of episodes, as well as those that are absent without permission (i.e. who have returned to family members or are staying with known friends). These statistics form part of the homes' quality assurance process and are reported to Ofsted on a 6 monthly basis in their Regulation 34 reports. There is very proactive good practice in all the homes, where staff frequently go out in the evenings and night time to follow, search, and collect any young people who are at significant risk as well as regularly communicating with the police. Staff in the homes have also received additional training to raise awareness of the risks when LAC go missing.

13.5 During 2012-13 Children's Services commissioned the WISE Project which is based in Brighton as part of Sussex Central YMCA. Funding from Children Services was agreed for a part-time Sexual Exploitation Development Worker), with the work managed strategically through the LSCB. For 2013-14 external funding has just been agreed for Sussex Central YMCA to fund a further 2 full time workers to work with vulnerable young people. A further joint funded post between ESCC and Barnardos has now been recruited to provide direct work with our LAC who are at risk of CSE. A coordinated approach with all the voluntary agencies is in place to allow for a consistent wrap-around service for all LAC and vulnerable young people as well as providing training and consultation to staff.

14. Inspections

14.1 The Fostering Service was last inspected between 31st October and 4th November 2011. The Fostering Service maintained the overall rating of "outstanding" and in fact improved on the previous inspection because all aspects of the Fostering

Regulations and National Minimum Standard were met and therefore there were no “notifications for improvements”.

14.2 The Adoption Service was also last inspected between 20th and 24th February 2012 and achieved the overall rating of “outstanding” and there were no “notifications for improvements”. The new Ofsted framework for full inspection for both Safeguarding and LAC is out for consultation at the moment.

14.3 For the 4 group homes and for Lansdowne secure unit within the LAC service; and for the Bungalow and Acorns that are managed within the Children’s Disability Service, inspections results during the year were as follows:

- Rose Cottage: full inspection was judged as overall “good” 05/07/12. Interim inspection judged as “making good progress” 22/01/13.
- Homefield: full inspection was judged as overall “good” 19/06/12. Interim inspection judged as “making good progress” 05/01/13.
- Brodrick: full inspection was judged as overall “good” 24/07/12. Interim Inspection was judged as “making good progress” 25/01/13.
- Hazel Lodge: full inspection was judged as overall “outstanding” 24/08/12. March 2012, interim inspection judged as making “satisfactory progress”.
- Acorns: full inspection was judged as overall “outstanding” 26/11/12. Interim inspection was judged as “making good progress” 11/03/13.
- The Bungalow: full inspection was judged as overall “outstanding” 11/12/12. Interim inspection was judged as “making good progress” 13/03/13.
- Lansdowne Secure Unit: Full inspection was judged as overall “good” 22/05/13. License inspection was judged as overall “good” 26/09/12.

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 presentations from the CICC and from the East Sussex Foster Care association . The Corporate Parenting Panel has considered reports as follows:

27th April 2012

- Looked After Children: Offending Protocol
- Annual progress report of the East Sussex Fostering Service
- Annual progress report of the East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- SE7 SEND Pathfinder and the impact for Looked After Children

13th July 2012

- Annual report of the East Sussex Foster Care Association
- LAC statistics

19th October 2012

- Annual report of Looked After Children’s Services 12-13
- Education Attainment of Looked After Children
- LAC statistics

- Consultation summary report in relation to Looked After Children

18th January 2013

- LAC statistics

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 and where they are placed, numbers of Residence Orders and Special Guardianships Orders.

15.3 Members of the panel also undertake visits to all of the residential group homes and to the secure unit.

16. Conclusion

16.1 Overall the LAC Service continues to perform well with continued improvements in most of the outcomes for our children. The additional THRIVE funding for 2012-13 resulted in increased numbers of approvals of foster carers and adopters, a reduction in contact costs and a reduction in LAC numbers. These activities meant that the outturn budget position for 2012-13 was significantly better than the worst case scenario that had been forecast in 2011-12. The pressures continue to be in agency costs, contact staffing costs, adoption support and in achieving the income target for Lansdowne Secure Unit as all authorities across the country seek to reduce their use of expensive secure placements.

16.2 The challenges for the service are to continue to reduce the gap in outcomes for our LAC, especially in the area of educational attainment and achievement and to increase employment, education and training opportunities for our care leavers. This will need us to continue to advocate with our partners and within the wider council as a whole for increased recognition of wider corporate parenting responsibilities. New government statutes in Adoption, Fostering and Kinship care will need to be implemented as well as changes to many of our policies and procedures.

16.3 We have made significant progress in reducing our LAC numbers in 2012-13 in line with the Thrive targets and are now performing below the national average in terms of numbers of LAC per 10,000 which is how it is measured. Reducing our LAC numbers safely by 100 to 522 by the end of 2014-15 will remain challenging. The recruitment of good quality foster and adoptive placements to achieve permanence for our LAC continue to be our key priorities. If Children's Services is to return to a sustainable budget position, ultimately there will need to be fewer children in the system. This is being carried forward in the overall THRIVE agenda. Our task remains to do the best possible job to support those children who we do have to remove permanently or temporarily from their families.

Teresa Lavelle-Hill
Head of Service for Looked After Children
14-7-13

