Recommendation: The panel is recommended to note the Annual Report

1. **Financial Appraisal**
   1.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations of the report.

2. **Supporting Information**
   2.1 The Annual Report of the Looked After Children Service is attached at Appendix 1.

3. **Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation**
   3.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the contents of the report.

STUART GALLIMORE
Director of Children’s Services

Contact Officer: Teresa Lavelle Hill (Joint Head of LAC Services)

Local Members: All
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None
1. List of Appendices and Relevant Council Plan Targets

Appendix 1  Report
Appendix 4  IRO Annual Report April 2013 – March 2014
Appendix 5  Educational Outcomes for Looked After Children in 2013
Appendix 6  Educational Outcomes for Looked After Children in 2014
Appendix 7  Looked After Children (LAC) who go missing and who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE)
2 Looked after Children Trend Data

2.1 On 31 March 2014 there were 573 looked after children (LAC) in ESCC; this represents a reduction of 23 children (3.9%) as compared to 12/13. Whilst this reduction in the LAC population is very positive, it is not reducing at a sufficient pace to deliver the Thrive target of 520 by year end 14/15. The Children’s Social Care Management Team (CSCMT) have produced a range of plans to accelerate the reduction the LAC population safely. LAC were placed as follows (2013 figures in brackets):-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement Type</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>with foster carers</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>(484)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of these: in house carers</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>(322)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kinship carers</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>(41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agency carers</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>(121)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>placed for adoption</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>(28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in supported lodgings</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in ESCC children’s homes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in agency children’s homes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in agency special schools</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>placed with own parents</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>youth custody/secure unit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital/NHS establishment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absconded</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 The proportion of LAC who were placed in family placements during this period continued to remain high in ESCC as compared to the national data. However the proportion of LAC who were fostered through family and friends, and placed with parents was lower as compared to the national data. This was due to East Sussex’s policy of placing children through Section 17 with family and friends (non LAC) and permanence through Special Guardianship Orders or Residence Orders. Permanence planning for LAC children was judged to be outstanding in the Jan 14 Ofsted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement Type</th>
<th>ESCC</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fostered</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fostered by friends and family</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Care</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placed with own parents</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other placements</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 The number of children who were subject to Child Protection (CP) Plans increased from 549 (31/3/13) to 613 (31/3/14). However, there was a reduction in the number of sets of care proceedings from 112 in 11/12, to 86 in 12/13 and 77 in 13/14. There is a correlation between the rise in CP plans and, the reduction in care proceedings and LAC admissions, demonstrating a greater confidence in managing safeguarding risks in the community. There are though, always a proportion of these birth parents who 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 and 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 205 for 13/14 which, added to the total number of LAC, equates to the service working with 778 children. There were fewer children worked with overall during the course of the year, whilst the churn was slightly higher for 13/14 than 12/13.
2.5 The above charts give a very clear picture of the admission and discharge trends for each age group over the last four years. There was an increase in the number of 0 – 5 year olds admitted into care from 93 in 12/13 to 111 in 2012-13, and a decrease in admissions 6 -12 years from 55 in 12/13 to 47 in 13/14. Admissions in relation to 13 year olds and above increased from 28 in 12/13 to 32 in 2013-/14. Overall LAC admissions for 12 year olds and under have reduced by 16.8% since the beginning of the Thrive programme (190 in 10/11 to 158 in 13/14). During this same period there has been an increase of only 1 in the 13+ admissions despite the changes in policy regarding YOI/remand, Southwark etc. In addition there has been an increase in the number of 0 - 12 year olds discharged from care from 123 in 2012-13 to 132 in 13/14. This 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). Permanence planning for LAC children was judged to be outstanding in the Jan 14 Ofsted. In addition there was an increase from 74 in 12/13 to 80 LAC discharged from care aged 13+. This is indicative of a greater number of teenagers being able to return to the care of birth family networks. Overall LAC discharges have accelerated since the Thrive programme was instigated by 24%.

2.6 All placements for LAC continue to be made through the centralised duty team based in the Fostering Service. The chart below outlines the number and type of referral received by the duty service 2013/14.
There was an increase of 60 referrals in 2013/14 compared to the previous year but a drop in placements required. Of the 557 referrals received during 13/14, 356 resulted in placements being made; 137 were not needed due to other forms of support being successful and 64 were in the process of being matched at year end. The majority of requests for placements were for planned placements. In addition there were a further 18 young people who continued to live with their foster carers post 18 under a staying put arrangement; 29 children were subject to special guardianship orders with East Sussex foster carers and 8 children were living with adopters who had previously been East Sussex foster carers and one further assessment was underway.

2.7 During this period the service maintained the exceptionally low figure of 3 fostering disruptions which is significantly lower than the national average. This is attributed to careful risk assessment/management when making matches for secure placements or, where notice is given, a move being undertaken in a planned way rather than an urgent same day move being made. Planning for children to move in this way is obviously much better for children.

3. Fostering

3.1 The additional investment provided by the Thrive programme to the fostering service has enabled the service to sustain higher levels of recruitment both in relation to foster carers and supported lodgings providers. There were 43 new fostering households approved in 13/14 which were able to offer an additional 77 placements to LAC; and 6 new supported lodgings households were approved providing 8 placements for homeless young people and care leavers. As at 31/03/14 there were a further 11 fostering assessments and 5 supported lodgings assessments underway.

3.2 East Sussex Fostering and Supported Lodgings Service has developed a reputation as the ‘service of choice’ in the market due to the placement choice it is able to offer to carers, alongside the reputation it has built for the wrap around support offered. Almost one third of the carers recruited during 13/14 were existing foster carers who transferred from independent fostering providers to ESCC. Moreover, the most recent Ofsted survey states that nationally in 2012-2013 there were 7,227 foster carers recruited but 4,759 were lost through resignation or termination of approval. The same survey states that there are 42,591 foster carers nationally so that means 11% of foster carers are lost nationally per year. In 2013-2014 East Sussex lost 6.6% of their foster carers which in retention terms is significantly better than the national average.
3.3 Please see Appendix 2 for full Fostering Service annual report

4. **User Participation and feedback**

4.1 Feedback has been received, collated and analysed from the following LAC services and activities

- Children’s Rights Directors monitoring Survey
- Care Leavers residential weekend focus groups
- Care Leavers snapshot survey
- Fostering service snapshot survey
- Fostering ongoing survey
- Fostering short breaks survey
- Adoption recruitment service survey
- Adoption and Permanence panel feedback
- The Looked After Children’s Community Family Work (LAC CFW) Service survey
- SUSS IT monitoring
- LAC game consult
- Placement Support Service
- LAC teams
- LAC consultation booklet review
- Virtual school council for adopted children
- CICC

5. **Physical and Mental Health**

5.1 A centralised service with a named GP nominated to undertake all initial health assessments (IHA’s) for LAC remained in place located at Hailsham during 13/14. The LAC nurses continued to be co-located with the named GP, where they monitored the quality of the IHA’s and tracked that they were completed within statutory timescales. The target for completion for all initial health assessments was met for 13/14, with 80.2% initial assessments completed within 28 days.

5.2 The LAC Mental Health service (LACMHS) received 71 new referrals during the period 13/14, all of which were accepted and an initial consultation offered. A number of children were seen urgently due to the severity of the symptoms they presented such as suicidal thoughts and/or with serious self harm, depression or psychosis. There was also a cohort of LAC in receipt of therapeutic support e.g. individual therapy, therapy with the child and their carer, or consultation to the carer. In addition LACMHS also provided; two 12 week therapeutic parenting groups, weekly consultations to the residential homes and monthly ‘drop in’ consultations (‘surgeries’) to the LAC teams and Fostering Service.

5.3 The 2012 Needs Assessment commissioned by the Strategic Commissioning Lead for Health, Children and Maternity in East Sussex identified that additional mental health provision was required for Lansdowne Secure Unit. It is planned that NHS England will fund increased provision in relation to:

- A comprehensive psychological assessment of the young people on admission to Lansdowne
- Psychological consultation to the staff group
- Psychological input to the Independent Reviews and Care Planning Meetings
- Direct therapeutic work with the young people

5.4 A specially commissioned CAMHS service for adopted children and their families, ‘ADCAMHS’, was developed during 13/14. The aim of the service was to support families post adoption with a dedicated therapy and consultation service, providing specialist consultations and individual, family or group therapy for adopted children, their families and the professionals supporting them. The desired outcome for the service was to contribute to adoption stability and promote positive attachments within adoptive families (ultimately to prevent placement breakdown). The Adoption service also commissioned a number of individual therapists to provide specialist support to families in areas such as therapeutic life story work and ‘Theraplay’.
6. **Adoption and Permanence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Number of Children Adopted</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Number of Adoption Matches (children)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Number of Permanent Fostering Matches (children)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Number of East Sussex Adoptive Matches (children)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Number of Consortium Adoptive Matches (children)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Number of Inter-Agency Matches (children): Adoption:</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Number of Prospective Adopters Approved (households) *</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Number of Permanent Carers Approved (households)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Number of Children Approved for Adoption up to 31st March 2014</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Number of children Approved for Permanence up to 31st March 2014</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Number of Approved Adopters waiting to be Matched</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Number of Disruptions presented to Panel: Adoption:</td>
<td>1 (during intros)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.1 The government’s focus on adoption continued during 13/14 particularly in relation to timescales for children and adopters. Within ESCC the majority of adopters, over 80%, waited less than 3 months before a child was placed. The Adoption Scorecard issued by the Department of Education evidenced that East Sussex County Council placed children for adoption more speedily than the national average. The additional funding provided by the Thrive programme was instrumental in sustaining the enhanced performance in both the recruitment of adopters and the placement of children in a timely manner.

6.2 During 2013/14 the numbers of children with a plan for adoption reduced from 69 last year to 52, 17 less than the previous year. This was a significant decrease but should be considered in the context of the use of SGO’s and Residence Orders, alongside the impact of Thrive which reduced the overall number of children entering the care system. The Adoption service placed the majority of children locally with ‘in house’ adopters. The total number of children matched in the past year was 50, only 9 of these children, i.e. less than 20% were placed outside of East Sussex in interagency placements. The number of children approved for permanence increased during the same period to 24. At year end there were 19 children with a plan for permanence for whom the service was engaged in family finding.

6.3 East Sussex Adoption Service has continued to be at the cutting edge of adoption service developments nationally and the Ofsted rating of Outstanding was very pleasing. ‘Adoption support services are excellent and the level of support provided for adoptive families is exceptionally strong. The service demonstrates an impressive commitment to adoption support, one that is well tailored and individualised at all stages of the adoption journey’. Ofsted Report, March 2014. In January 2014, East Sussex was selected as one of 10 Local Authorities nationwide to pilot the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) prototype. As part of its programme of reforms to the adoption system, the Government extended its commitment to strengthening arrangements for post adoption support. The prototype began in January and will run for 18 months until the full ASF is in place. It is envisaged that the fund will pay for therapeutic services that are of high cost but will be adopter lead.

6.4 Please see attached appendix 3 for Adoption service full annual report.
7. Residential Services

7.1 The new Lansdowne Secure Unit opened on 9th April 2013, initially as a five bedded unit with the existing staff group undertaking onsite training and the young people moving across from the old building. The old building was finally demolished and landscaping for the new gardens began in earnest. The new unit was inspected by Ofsted and the Department for Education (DfE) on 9th September 2013 and its overall effectiveness was judged as “Good.” Ofsted and the DfE gave agreement for the Lansdowne’s registration to be increased to 7 beds from November 2013, having been satisfied that all systems were functional and robust and the level of staffing was in place. A number of snagging features and design faults were exposed by two very challenging young people but these were quickly rectified. For the remainder of the year, the unit remained full and operated at 79.45% occupancy for other local authority children, achieving its income target for the remaining 4 months.

7.2 Rose Cottage, a Children’s Home registered for 4 boys from the ages of 11 to 18 was temporarily closed in June 2013 due to damage sustained to the property by two very challenging young people. Staff were redeployed across the remaining residential estate. The decision to close Rose Cottage on a permanent basis was taken by Cabinet in February 2014. The house has since been boarded up and has been transferred to corporate properties. The remaining 3 group homes have remained fully occupied and have continued to offer high standards of care to some of our most challenging and disaffected young people who are unable to sustain living in a family environment. Many of the young people have not only displayed very challenging behaviours, but have had autistic traits which have required specialist staff training in order to manage these behaviours.

8. Looked After Children Teams

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

8.2 The number of LAC allocated to a social worker within the service as of the 31st March 14 was 335. The remaining LAC are managed by the Disability Service (34), the transition service (14) the Family Support teams (80 + 35 dual CP/LAC) and by the Youth Support teams (17 + 10 dual CP/LAC).

8.3 There is a collaborative approach to allocation across all the teams. During care proceedings, where the likely outcome is permanence away from the birth family, the LAC teams and Locality teams co-work to ensure proactive and timely permanence planning is achieved through adoption, special guardianship or long term fostering.

9. Care Leavers Service

9.1 At end of the year 13/14, the service was working with a cohort of 201 care leavers; 52 16 to 17 years olds, and 149 18 to 24 year olds. A significant proportion of this cohort presented highly complex behaviours and a range of challenging safeguarding issues. In Jan 14 the service was inspected by Ofsted under the new inspection framework, which introduced a specific judgement for care leavers. Ofsted judged the service offered to care leavers as “requiring some improvement”, and an action plan has been developed to address all areas identified. There had been some instability within the staffing establishment during this period, but the newly appointed professional staff, increased personal advisor capacity in the team and the appointment of a second Practice Manager has ensured that the service is well placed to focus on improving the outcomes for all care leavers for 14/15.

9.2 The Care2Work strategic multi agency board has continued to oversee the development of improved skills to enable care leavers to successfully progress into education and employment. The service has continued to track and monitor the education and training of the whole cohort of care leavers with all key partners and has embedded a post 16 vulnerable protocol during this period. Similarly the board has continued to raise the profile of LAC and care leavers across the Council. As a result the training and recruitment team have run 3 employability workshops and delivered follow up support to care leavers to enable them to apply for in house WEX and apprenticeship opportunities. In addition, the council plan now includes specific targets for apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers. The Virtual School
complemented this work with the use of a service level agreement with the Universities of Brighton and Sussex to raise awareness and aspiration for LAC and care leavers locally.

9.3 As of 31st March 2014 78% of 16-17 year olds (year 12) were in education, training and employment (EET); 71.4% of 17-18 year olds (year 13) were EET. This cohort included care leavers who were within the transition service, and were in continuous care for at least 12 months before doing their GCSE examinations. 63.4% of care leavers who turned 19 during the same period were EET. Approximately 37% of care leavers were not in education, employment or training (NEET) at this point.

9.4 The number and range of accommodation options for care leavers has been enhanced during 13/14 by extending the supported lodgings scheme; “staying put” in foster care post 18 has been introduced by the government building on existing local practice, and the Supporting People providers have continued to offer a range of foyer type accommodation options in different parts of the county – Newhaven, Eastbourne, Hastings and Hailsham. In addition, the partnerships developed between the Care Leavers service and voluntary sector providers such as YMCA Eastbourne and Downlink Group YMCA delivered a fully renovated and refurbished 3 bedroom flat, staffed at evenings and weekends, and two four bedroom houses with support. However it has been challenging to agree definitive staffing costs for one of these units and it has been underused as a result. At year end there were 8 care leavers living in bed and breakfast accommodation, 4 of which were 16-17 year olds, and 4 were over 18 years old. Although clearly this type of accommodation is a last resort, sometimes there are currently simply no alternatives available on the day for a young person who has very volatile and challenging behaviour or a significant history of offending. The task then becomes to wrap a support package around the young person and to try and locate a suitable alternative in a timely way.

10. Performance

10.1 There has been a delay in the production of the 13/14 data due to significant operational problems with the DfE website. However, the data that became available in September 2014 shows that ESCC key performance indicators have continued to improve during 13/14 and many remain above the national average. There were improvements in relation to timeliness of health assessments, emotional and behavioural health, timeliness of children adopted (the adoption scorecard), the number of LAC with 3 or more placements moves during the year, the rate of children who are LAC per 10,000 population aged under 18, the number of LAC who have had final warnings, reprimands and convictions and finally there was a significant improvement in the performance of care leavers who are engaged in EET in their 17th year. There was however, a dip in performance in relation to National Indicator (NI) 61 which in part can be attributed to delays being experienced by additional family and friends assessments being requested at a later stage in the court process, and also the impact of Re: BS which lead to delays in confirming the permanence plan for some LAC. In relation to NI 63 this is a very slight dip and is the result of a small cohort of older complex LAC who returned to their birth families or wider family networks. It is also important to note the dip in performance in relation to participation of LAC in their LAC reviews, and statutory timescales for LAC reviews. Whilst the shift is relatively small these elements provide the critical challenge to the service and ensure LAC plans have adequate oversight. Please see Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report in appendix 4

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NI 58</td>
<td>Emotional &amp; Behavioural Health of children in care</td>
<td>12.3 ↑</td>
<td>14.3 ↑</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>15.6 ↓</td>
<td>15.4 ↓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI 61</td>
<td>% of lac adopted during the year who</td>
<td>73.7% ↓</td>
<td>80.9% ↑</td>
<td>61.1% ↓</td>
<td>71.9% ↑</td>
<td>82.4% ↑</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>were placed for adoption within 12 months of their best interest decision being made.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption Scorecard</td>
<td>Adoption Scorecard</td>
<td>Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted. (3 year average)</td>
<td>536 days ↑</td>
<td>548 days ↑</td>
<td>625 days ↑</td>
<td>556 days ↑</td>
<td>636 days ↑</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI 62</td>
<td>2043SC</td>
<td>Number of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year</td>
<td>8.9% ↑</td>
<td>12.4% ↓</td>
<td>11.1% ↑</td>
<td>8.8% ↑</td>
<td>11.0% ↓</td>
<td>9.7% ↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI 63</td>
<td>2065SC</td>
<td>% of lac under 16 who’ve been lac for 2.5 years or more &amp; in the same placement for 2 years or placed for adoption</td>
<td>58.5% ↓</td>
<td>59.4% ↓</td>
<td>67.3% ↓</td>
<td>60.4% ↓</td>
<td>71.1% ↓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI 66</td>
<td>2064SC</td>
<td>% children looked after cases which should have been reviewed during the year which were reviewed during the year</td>
<td>96.8% ↓</td>
<td>97.6% ↑</td>
<td>93.1% ↑</td>
<td>91.7% ↓</td>
<td>91.9% ↑</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI 14 7</td>
<td>5037SC</td>
<td>% of care leavers at age 19 who are living in</td>
<td>88.5% ↓</td>
<td>90.9% ↓</td>
<td>87.9% ↓</td>
<td>91.7% ↓</td>
<td>88.4% ↑</td>
<td>97.4% ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI 14</td>
<td>APA Indicator</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>2013/1 3 Value</td>
<td>2012/1 3 Value</td>
<td>2012/1 3 England</td>
<td>2011/1 2 England</td>
<td>2010/1 1 Value</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5022SC</td>
<td>% 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</td>
<td>63.5% ↑</td>
<td>56.4% ↓</td>
<td>65.9%</td>
<td>61.1% ↑</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td>50.0% ↓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C63</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>95.4% ↓</td>
<td>97.2% ↑</td>
<td>94.1% ↑</td>
<td>93.0% ↑</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C69</td>
<td>Distance children newly looked after are placed from home</td>
<td>8.9% ↑</td>
<td>9.3% ↓</td>
<td>12.1% ↑</td>
<td>8.1% ↑</td>
<td>15.0% ↓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrive PI 9</td>
<td>Rate of Children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18</td>
<td>54.5 ↑</td>
<td>57.3 ↑</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>59.9 ↑</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>56.5 ↑</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C19</td>
<td>Average of the % of children looked after who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months who had an annual</td>
<td>93.2% ↑</td>
<td>89.9% ↓</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>95.3% ↑</td>
<td>88.6% ↓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>assessment and their teeth checked by a dentist during the previous 12 months.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C81</td>
<td>Final warnings, reprimands and convictions of lac</td>
<td>1.8% ↑</td>
<td>5.7% ↑</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>6.5% ↓</td>
<td>6.1% ↓</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

10.2 Educational outcomes for LAC continued to improve overall, especially at KS4. Good progress was supported by additional home tuition funded through Pupil Premium. See table below for performance in LAC educational outcomes 13/14.

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children in Care Reaching Level 4 in English at Key Stage 2</td>
<td>R 65% W 41%</td>
<td>R 63% W55%</td>
<td>47%↑</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>37.5%↑</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Care Reaching Level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2</td>
<td>71%↑</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>63%↑</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>43.8%↑</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Care making expected progress in English at Key Stage 1 to 2</td>
<td>R 81% W69%</td>
<td>R77% W81%</td>
<td>82%↑</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>67%↓</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Care making expected progress in Maths at Key Stage 1 to 2</td>
<td>75%↓</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>91%↑</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>67%↑</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in care achieving at least one GCSE</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>81%↓</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>84%↓</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in care achieving 5+ A*-C including English and Maths</td>
<td>25%↑</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>21%↑</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>14%↓</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Care making expected progress in English at Key Stage 2 to 4</td>
<td>47%↑</td>
<td>3 2.6%</td>
<td>39%↑</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>32%↓</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Care making expected progress in Maths at Key Stage 2 to 4</td>
<td>37%↑</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>26%↑</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>21%↓</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in care who were persistently absent from school (new measure – more than 15% absence)</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>n/a – new tracking system in place since January</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4.7% (old measure 20%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 11 Virtual School

#### 11.1 The Virtual School for Children in Care maintained the core staffing establishment during 13/14 to support the education of all East Sussex LAC and adopted children wherever they were educated. However, the increased Pupil Premium and Adoption Reform Grant enabled the school to enhance its core provision. It was recognised nationally as a beacon of good practice, and made a very positive contribution to the Jan 14 Ofsted judgement. Edward Timpson, the Children’s Minister has repeatedly referred to the innovative work of East Sussex Virtual School in National Speeches, and incorporated the learning into government policy. In particular the new requirement for Virtual Headteachers to manage the Looked after Children Pupil Premium and the requirement to consider, where appropriate, boarding school placements which is now enshrined in DfE guidance. For further information on the work of the Virtual School see The Virtual School Annual Report (appendix 5) and the Educations Outcomes Report for 2014 (appendix 6).

### 12 Supervised Contact Service

#### 12.1 During 13/14 additional investment was provided to extend the supervised contact service by the Thrive programme. This was intended to achieve better value for money and less reliance on the costly independent sector. The Thrive target of providing 90% of all contact in-house was achieved by year end 13/14 and is likely to be exceeded in 14/15. The volume of supervised contacts plateaued during this period at approximately eight new referrals per month and fifteen hundred hours per month of direct contact for LAC.

#### 12.2 The service has been reconfigured into three teams across the county and work has been undertaken to develop a third contact site in Hailsham. The Children’s Centre building at Dunbar Drive now hosts the central team and the refurbished Dunbar Drive resource centre came on-stream in July 2014. The service is very responsive and is now able to respond within 24 hours to all new requests for contact. The practice manager and senior social workers continue to 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. There is a plan to extend the service to non LAC contact in 2014-15 so that families with SGOs etc can be better supported and costs for ESCC can be reduced.

### 13 LAC who are Missing from Care

#### 13.1 There has been significant progress during 13/14 in relation to the multi-agency working arrangements, data collection, and operational oversight for LAC who go missing and/or are at risk of child sexual exploitation. Please see full report (appendix 7).
14. Inspections

14.1 The Fostering Service is now inspected as part of the overall SIF process and contributed to the overall rating of ‘good’ achieved earlier this year. The sub judgement for the Adoption Service during the same SIF inspection was ‘outstanding’, one of only two such judgements nationally to date.

14.2 The settings inspections during 13/14 for the residential homes were as follows:
- Homefield: full inspection was judged as overall “Good” 28/08/13. Interim inspection judged as “Making good progress” 22/01/14.
- Brodrick: full inspection was judged as overall “Good” 5/06/13. Interim Inspection was judged as “Making good progress” 22/01/14.
- Hazel Lodge: full inspection was judged as overall “Good” 28/10/13. Interim inspection judged as “Making good progress” 29/01/14.
- Acorns: full inspection was judged as overall “Outstanding” 31/10/13. Interim inspection was judged as “Making good progress” 12/02/14.
- The Bungalow: full inspection was judged as overall “Outstanding” 19/08/13. Interim inspection was judged as “Making good progress” 12/03/14.
- Lansdowne Secure Unit: Full inspection was judged as overall “Good” 09/09/13. Interim inspection was judged as overall “Making good progress” 11/02/14.

15. Corporate Parenting Panel

15.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel has met quarterly, and continued to scrutinise the performance of all services in relation to LAC and care leavers, paying particular attention to their outcomes. It has received presentations from the CICC and from the East Sussex Foster Care Association and considered the reports outlined below:

19th April 2013
- 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
- Regulation 33 reports for Children’s Homes

19th July 2013
- Annual Report of Looked After Children’s Service 12/13
- LAC statistics
- Regulation 33 reports for Children’s Homes

18th October 2013
- Education Attainment of Looked After Children in 2013
- Future commissioning and needs assessment for health of children and young people in Lansdowne Secure Children’s Home
- The Children’s Disability Service
- LAC statistics
- Regulation 33 reports for Children’s Homes

17th January 2014
- Annual Report of Local Safeguarding Children’s Board
- Reducing the rate of prosecution of LAC
- LAC statistics
- Regulation 33 reports for Children’s Homes

15.2 Elected members of the panel also made a number of visits throughout the year to all of the residential group homes and to the secure unit.
16. Conclusion

16.1 Overall the LAC service has performed well during 13/14 with continued improvements in most of the outcomes for ESCC LAC. This was noted most clearly in the Safeguarding and LAC inspection judgements made by Ofsted. The continued Thrive funding and Adoption Reform Grant enabled the service to sustain an increase in the number of foster carers and adopters approved, reduce the costs for supervised contact and reduce the overall LAC numbers. Whilst the budget remained pressured at year end, these contributions significantly mitigated against the worst case scenario.

16.2 The challenges for the service for 14/15 remain to close the gap in outcomes for our LAC and care leavers; especially in the area of educational attainment and achievement, and to increase employment, education and training opportunities. The improvements required to deliver the identified outcomes in the care leavers action plan will need support throughout the corporate parenting network, both within the county council and its partners i.e. housing etc.

16.3 Finally, although there has been some progress in reducing the LAC numbers, if the Thrive target of 520 at the year end of 2014-15 is to be achieved and a return to a sustainable budget position secured, the Children's Service Department will need to pick up the pace of LAC reduction. The position of the LAC budget, within the overall CSD budget, is likely to be negatively impacted by ongoing financial pressure upon ESCC finances as a whole and the requirement to make significant additional savings in the future. The task remains to ensure that only when necessary does the statutory children's service intervene with families to safeguard children and this has to be managed within the available resources. Ultimately there will need to be fewer children in the system and LAC.
Appendix 2

Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service
1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014

1. Safeguarding
1.1 This outcome is fundamental to the delivery of fostering services across East Sussex and is embedded in each of the core functions: recruitment and retention; assessment, supervision and review; foster carer training; the matching and placing of children and young people with foster carers. These areas are addressed in more detail below.

Recruitment and Retention of Carers

1.2 The recruitment and assessment team consists of 1.5 senior practitioners, 4 social workers and 2 children’s services caseworkers. The team has been effective in speeding up the process for applicants to foster so that from initial inquiry to approval now takes a maximum of 6 to 8 months depending on the complexity of the assessment. The recruitment and retention team have been able to fast track transfer assessments from foster carers approved with independent fostering providers. The team has also developed a system that enables the service to ‘stay in touch’ with applicants who are not able to foster now but may be a potential future resource. The recruitment and assessment team have reviewed and amended their processes and recording systems to ensure they are effective, informative and timely.

1.3 From 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014, 542 new enquiries were received. This compares to 533 for the same period 2012-2013, 522 for 2011–2012 and 471 for 2010-11. The recruitment strategy has focused on the recruitment of foster carers for children and young people of all ages.

1.4 During this period the service has facilitated ten ‘Skills to Foster’ pre-assessment preparation courses. 37 households have attended these courses. This compares to 7 courses being held last year and the attendance of 41 households in 2012-2013. The Children in Care Council (CICC) are still helping to facilitate these preparation groups and this continues to work extremely well.

1.5 The number of foster carer households approved in 2013–2014 was 43 households that offer 77 placements. The number of approvals meets the service’s challenging THRIVE target and is the same number as the previous year where there were 43 households approved offering 76 placements. 13 of these households were transfers from independent fostering providers. There was 1 East Sussex looked after child placed in one of the households. 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 £16,900 per year in agency fees. The service also receives income of £9,909 per year for another authority’s looked after child placed with foster carers who transferred in to East Sussex. The most recent OFSTED survey states that nationally in 2012-2013 there were 7,227 foster carers recruited but 4,759 were lost through resignation or termination of approval. The same survey states that there are 42,591 foster carers nationally so that means 11% of foster carers are lost nationally per year. In 2013-2014 East Sussex lost 6.6% of their foster carers which in retention terms is significantly better than the national average.

1.6 There were 11 general fostering assessments in progress at 31 March 2014. 3 of these are transfers from independent fostering providers. There are also enquiries from 2 other foster carers currently approved by independent fostering agencies expressing interest in transferring to East Sussex County Council.

1.7 During 2013–2014 the service delivered a number of recruitment and retention events and these have included:

Recruitment Events
- Monthly information evenings have been held (excluding December) – 11 general sessions (6 in Eastbourne, 5 in Hastings) plus 1 in Eastbourne and 1 in Uckfield as joint events with Adoption. The
team also attended Priory Meadow shopping centre in Hastings for one day, Lewes Farmer’s Market and an Open Day at Raystede animal shelter.

Retention Events
- In April 2013, an event was held at Knockhatch for children who foster.
- In June 2013, an event was held at the Kent & East Sussex Railway for carers, children and staff.
- In August 2013, an event was held at Knockhatch for carers, children and staff. We also invited children’s social workers.
- In September 2013, an evening event was held at Barnsgate Manor Vineyard to say ‘Thank You’ to our carers and this was attended by carers and staff.
- In October 2013, a ‘children who foster’ outing took place at Lloyd’s Lanes in celebration of Sons & Daughters week.
- Skills to Foster sessions for ‘children who foster’ were held in October 2013 and March 2014.

Advertising and Media Coverage
- Sovereign FM Radio and Arrow FM Radio advertising has taken place from April 2013 to March 2014. This has consisted of a generic advert on a rolling basis, specific ongoing adverts prior to each recruitment or information event and some additional short ‘filler’ adverts.
- Advertisements have been placed in local papers specific to the area of each fostering recruitment event 1 week prior to the event taking place.
- Articles have been placed in the Eastbourne Gazette and the Hastings Observer and will be repeated to coincide with ‘Foster Care Fortnight’ in May 2014.
- Lamp post banners were placed in Eastbourne throughout certain times of the year.
- Advertisements have been placed on M.A.Displays vans in both Hastings and Eastbourne areas 3 times between April 2013 and March 2014.
- The service has been featured alongside, adoption, short breaks and supported lodgings services quarterly in ‘Your County’ magazine which is distributed to every household in East Sussex.

2. Foster Care Training
2.1 The total number of places taken up for the last academic year (October to June 2013) was 624, evidencing a slight increase from the previous year’s number which was 609. So far, the number of places taken up on training courses from October 2013 - February 2014 by foster carers is 319. Overall the courses are evaluated by participants as excellent. There have been some new courses introduced within the current programme, particularly embracing technology and internet use, including Fostering in a Digital World, Record Keeping (including Digital Records) and Basic Computer skills. The foster carers who have attended these courses have all identified a need for ongoing training within this area. We are currently recruiting foster carers, to train them to become digital mentors to offer one to one training and support to the foster carers who require additional help. We have sought the views from the Children in Care Council regarding their internet use and have incorporated their views, in particular, ‘carers should be up to date, and they should not stop our use because they don’t understand.’

2.2 Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Trafficking courses have also received positive feedback, for example, ‘Very informative and enjoyable. I would recommend this course for all carers’. The identification of social workers accessing the courses provided to foster carers is a common theme within the feedback received. Life Story Work is a further course that has been highly recommended for both foster carers and social workers.

2.3 There are currently 12 foster carers undertaking an occupational based qualification within the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF), alongside 1 foster carer having completed their assessor award. In addition 12 foster carers are completing single QCF units as part of their continual professional development, within the following subject areas: The Role of a Foster Carer, Understanding Attachment and Managing the Administration of Medication. The QCF qualifications provide foster carers with a professional qualification which evidences their competence within their care provision: meeting the child/young person’s individual needs, developing their understanding of legislative frameworks and supporting partnership working.

2.4 In addition, to the courses detailed within the training programme, foster carers have accessed online courses, and Children Services training. There is a special event course in May 2014, for ‘men who foster and caring for children who have been sexually abused – a male perspective’, which is fully booked.
2.5 Plans for next year’s training programme include developing the courses on behaviour management including sexualised behaviours, and ‘bite size’ courses on specific subject areas, i.e. use of secure email.

3. Social Work Training

3.1 In 2013-2014 a new government policy for delegating day to day authority for decision making by foster carers and residential managers was implemented. 2 successful familiarisation sessions for social workers were hosted by the Operations Managers for Looked after Children & Fostering to ensure the practice of delegation is embedded in social work practice. The Fostering Service and The Adoption Service also held 2 workshops for social workers, adoptive parents and foster carers on the theme of “moving children to permanence”, which were enthusiastically received by their audience.

4. Placement Activity

4.1 The Fostering Duty Team received 557 fostering referrals up to 31 March 2014. This is 60 more than for the same period 2013-2014. On 31 March 2014 there were 573 children in care with 473 of these in foster placements (313 in-house; 116 agency; 27 kinship placements, 4 parent and baby placements and 13 in supported lodgings). The number of children in foster care for the same period last year was 476. There has been an increase in referrals compared to the previous year but a drop in placements required. However this continues to place a considerable amount of pressure on the Fostering Service because, although the some of the placements were ultimately not needed, work has taken place in matching some of these children to foster carers.

4.2 The number of looked after children as of 31 March 2014 was 573. The looked after children (LAC) statistics reward careful analysis. For example, when young people become 18 years of age they stop being looked after children that day but do not necessarily leave their placements and ESCC foster carers continue to offer homes to 18 young adults. In addition, 29 children are currently subject to special guardianship orders with East Sussex foster carers and fostering households also provide adoptive parents for 8 children, with one foster carer currently undergoing an assessment to adopt a child in placement.

4.3 Of the 557 referrals received between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, 356 resulted in placements being made. 137 were not needed due to other forms of support being successful and 64 are in the process of currently being matched.

4.4 The team continues to meet the constant daily challenges of finding appropriate matches for vulnerable children within our current in house resources and continue to strive towards limiting the need to use costly agency placements. The challenge at present is to match complex children with newly approved foster carers and to ensure support packages are in place before the children are placed so that foster carers are adequately supported to deal with our most challenging looked after children.

5. Health

5.1 The Placement Support Service successfully bid for £1000 funding from the ‘Lets Get Cooking’ project to promote healthy eating and safe cooking to all looked after children in East Sussex. Staff and looked after children undertook several training sessions and the majority of the young people completed their individual cooking targets with each receiving £20 vouchers as a result of their efforts.

5.2 Looked after children were able to benefit from music and rhythm sessions provided by ‘Rhythmix’ a voluntary organisation set up to promote the therapeutic benefits of music to young people. Music tutors engaged very well in motivating our most challenging young people to take part in these sessions.

6. Placement Support

6.1 The Placement Support Service is currently supporting 122 children, young people and their foster carers with tailored packages of support. In 2013-2014, 85 packages were reviewed with 20 pieces of work
ending as ‘aim achieved’ and 26 new pieces of ongoing support to foster carers and children and life story work were commissioned. Holiday activities which ease the pressure on fostering households and in the main offer an educative and fun experience for looked after children were extremely successful. 39 activities offering 453 places were organised in 2013-2014. The feedback rated the activities of 86% of participants as ‘excellent’, 12% as ‘good’ and only 2% as ‘fair’ or ‘poor’.

7. User Participation

7.1 In September 2013, the second CICC ended and the third incoming CICC began. In total the outgoing and incoming CICC have met as a council 11 times during 2013-2014. All activities undertaken by the CICC have an educational function which aims to enable those taking part to achieve, strengthen confidence and develop their independent skills. This year the CICC Action Day theme was, ‘learn a new skill’. 67 looked after children attended the day and the feedback was that these events should continue and if possible be more often than once a year.

7.2 In addition, the CICC and other looked after children have been involved in 20 consultations some of which have been at a national level. Three on-line national surveys were completed: the Ofsted children’s care monitor survey (which asked children to comment on their view of the ‘state of children’s care in England’), Health and the NHS (which looked at the health of looked after children), and looked after children’s views on residential care. Participation in these surveys is usually very high; for example 97 looked after children completed the children’s care monitor survey. East Sussex looked after children continue to influence the national agenda. Two young people from the Young Users Group who are now CICC members met with the Children’s Minister, Edward Timpson, to consult on key issues affecting their lives as looked after children.

7.3 The Young Users Group continues to develop and is a springboard for young people who may show an interest in joining the CICC. The group comprises of 11 children aged from 7 to 11 who meet bi monthly to discuss care issues that concern them. They met 6 times during the year and on average 8 children attended each meeting. They have discussed topics such as ‘What do I call my foster carers and what do I tell people at school about my home situation?’ The group also completed questionnaires about life story work, and the frequency of contact and the quality of their relationship with their social workers. In general most were satisfied with their social workers.

8. Partnership work with foster carers

8.1 The Integrated Looked After Children’s Service (ILAC) continues to work in partnership with the East Sussex Foster Carer Association (ESFCA) to staff residential weekends for looked after children. This year 4 residential events took place including one for Children Who Foster which attracted 26 children and 5 Fostering Service supervising social workers. This was an important move forward as Children Who Foster’s contribution to fostering can be overlooked. The other three residential weekends were for looked after children aged 7 to 11, 11 to 16 and 15 to 18 year olds. As usual these events were oversubscribed. Staff from the Fostering Service and Looked after Children’s Teams also took part in 3 fundraising events with the ESFCA. The East Sussex Foster Carers’ Charter which, as noted in last year’s report, had been signed off by the Assistant Director, Children’s Services and the Chair of the East Sussex Foster Care Association, is now in operation.

8.2 The Operations Manager of The Fostering Service continues to attend the monthly meetings of the ESFCA management group to report on developments in the Fostering Service and Children’s Services. There is now a standing item at the meeting which asks for feedback from foster carers and enables them to raise issues quickly to allow for a speedier resolution. The Operations Managers for Looked After Children and The Fostering Service and the Chair of the ESFCA continue to host monthly ‘surgeries’ for foster carers who can bring issues and problems directly to key managers. In 2013 – 2014, 3 foster carers attended the surgeries to discuss issues such as delaying the transfer of a child between teams at a critical time for that child, and a delay in starting life story work for a child. 2 foster carers were booked into surgeries but did not have to attend as their concerns were successfully dealt with prior to attendance. Feedback continues to show that carers who have attended these surgeries believe that they have been listened to and their concerns and issues dealt with in a timely manner.
9. **Fostering Allowances**

9.1 A complaint by a related (kinship) foster carer to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) led ESCC to concede, in line with a recent change in case law and national guidance, that the payment of the fee element of the foster carer allowance cannot be restricted to fully approved non-related foster carers. The LGO’s judgement in this case asked the local authority:

- to produce clear guidelines for relevant staff explaining the criteria for paying fees on top of the basic maintenance allowances and ensure that these comply with national guidance.
- to include information about the criteria in all its policy documents, public information and leaflets provided to foster carers.
- to make it clear in these documents that the fee element is not restricted to non-related professional carers.
- to remind all relevant staff of the criteria, the policy, and the requirement not to discriminate between related and non-related foster carers.

9.2 A policy has now been approved by Lead Member and endorsed by the East Sussex Foster Carer Association. From the 1 April 2014 all non-related foster carers will receive the fee element and all foster carers will have to show a commitment to and completion of key pieces of training in order to retain that element of their allowances.

10. **The Supported Lodgings Service**

10.1 Supported lodgings providers continue to offer much needed placement provision for care leavers and homeless young people in the East Sussex area. There are currently 31 households providing 50 placements to these young people. 6 new households were approved in 2013-2014 providing 8 placements and currently there are 5 assessments being carried out which should provide a further 7 new placements early in the new financial year. Between 2013 and 2014 the Service received 151 referrals for placements. 77 of these were for care leavers with 52 of them placed and 74 were for homeless young people of whom 44 were placed. A pilot scheme began in April 2013 with a newly approved ‘Enhanced Supported Lodgings Provider’ who has offered accommodation for our care leavers with the most complex and challenging needs. A further application to approve an ‘enhanced provider’ will be tabled at the May Fostering Panel. These carers will link in with our Adolescent Placement Scheme to ensure there is a joined up service for our older and more challenging looked after young people.

11. **OFSTED**

11.1 The new Ofsted inspection framework for Safeguarding and Looked after Children has now been implemented and all settings inspections (with the exception of children’s homes) are integrated into the new inspection framework for Looked after Children and Safeguarding. Unlike Adoption Services the Fostering Service will not receive an individual grading. However this report notes that the last two inspections of The Fostering Service graded it outstanding and following the Ofsted inspection of January 2014, the provision of permanence through adoption, special guardianship and long term fostering was graded as outstanding.

12. **Summary**

12.1 The Panel is asked to note the performance and achievement of the East Sussex Fostering Service for this period and to endorse the key management priorities outlined in the fostering service improvement plan for 2014-2015.

- To continue with the excellent achievement of recruiting foster carers in line with our ambitious THRIVE targets and to ensure that the diverse needs of the community and of the children who are fostered are reflected in active foster carer recruitment. THRIVE or alternative funding will need to continue for 2015-2016 to continue to sustain the high numbers of approvals of a range of foster carers and supportive lodging providers for our care leavers or core funding will have to be redirected from elsewhere within the services.

- To continue revising policies, procedures and operational instructions including updating the foster carer’s handbook. Changes this year include the new 2 tier assessment process for foster
carer applicants, delegation of authority and changes to policy regarding the way the fee element of fostering allowances are paid.

- To continue to prioritise the provision of placement support in order to maintain placement stability, prevent disruptions and sustain adequate levels of user participation. There has been unprecedented demand in 2013-2014 for this service and the impact has been significant: placement stability of 3 or more moves as of 31 March 2014 as measured by National Indicator 61 was 8%, a full 3.2% below the national average where lower is better.

- To recruit and retain sufficiently experienced and qualified staff to meet the support and supervision needs of carers. This will be crucial to retaining our recently recruited foster carers and to meeting our challenging THRIVE recruitment target for 2014-2015.

- To continue to improve partnership working with locality social work, the family assessment service and LAC colleagues to limit the need for agency placements which have been reduced in 2013-2014.

- To continue to facilitate a proactive CICC to enable active feedback and involvement from our children in care at both a national and local level.

- To continue to promote special guardianship and adoption orders with foster carers. The promotion of adoption and special guardianship orders is a significant contribution to achieving permanence and the reduction of looked after children numbers.

STEVE HUNT
Operations Manager Fostering Service
Appendix 3

Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service
1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014

1. Supporting Information

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<td>1. Number of Children Adopted</td>
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<td>2. Number of Adoption Matches (children)</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Number of Permanent Fostering Matches (children)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Number of East Sussex Adoptive Matches (children)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Number of Consortium Adoptive Matches (children)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Number of Inter-Agency Matches (children):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanence:</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption:</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Number of Prospective Adopters Approved (households) *</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Number of Permanent Carers Approved (households)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Number of Children Approved for Adoption up to 31\textsuperscript{st} March 2014</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Number of children Approved for Permanence up to 31\textsuperscript{st} March 2014</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Number of Approved Adopters waiting to be Matched</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Number of Disruptions presented to Panel:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanence:</td>
<td>1 (during intros)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Recruitment Activity

2.1 East Sussex has successfully piloted and embedded the two stage recruitment process, which the government has now introduced to all adoption agencies from July 2013. It continues to be popular with prospective adopters who have advised that they consider the assessment to be “timely, fair and thought provoking”, together with speaking “highly of the training programme to support them.” (OFSTED 2014). The time taken to approve prospective adopters has been reduced with most being approved between six and nine months from registering their interest to approval at Adoption Panel.

2.2 A dedicated telephone number for enquiries has been introduced with a specific email address and an on-line enquiry form embedded in an updated webpage, ensuring everyone that makes an initial enquiry receives a prompt and personal service.

2.3 During 2013-14 the agency had 298 enquiries about adopting with East Sussex. Following receipt of information packs we received 99 requests for Registration of Interest Forms. We continue to maintain the conversion rate of enquiry to registration.

2.4 Recruitment activity has been more focused and has been targeted to meet the needs and profile of the children waiting. Activity has included providing information on the Government Gateway website First4Adoption, newspaper, radio, and bespoke advertising on petrol pumps, at supermarket sites, and on buses travelling around the county. In addition a concerted effort has been made to ensure myths about adoption are challenged using the Government research. The introduction of a Facebook page is proving popular in reaching a different range of prospective adopters.

2.5 A key focus for the recruitment element of the service in 2013-2014 has been to improve performance in reducing timescales in matching children to families. The service is very pleased to report that compared to our statistical neighbours and the South East Local Authorities East Sussex had the lowest percentage of approved families who were waiting to be matched with children. ESCC Adoption Service also had a higher percentage of adoptive families who waited less than three months to be matched to children.
2.6 The new recruitment process consists of two stages the first being adopter led and the second stage being the assessment of the prospective adopter. Within the two stage process we now offer an open Information Event is offered where prospective adopters can meet workers and adopters every month, weekdays and Saturdays, across the county, which is an increase from 2012-13. The Stage 1 meeting offers support with their registration and provides an early opportunity to become aware of the children waiting for adoption.

2.7 During 2013-14 the use of the adoption reform grant has enabled the service to appoint an additional case worker for recruitment, and a senior practitioner to acting practice manager to oversee recruitment activity. The information pack has been revised and distributed electronically which means the prospective adopters receive information very quickly. In order to comply with the Government regulations there is now a bespoke process for foster carers who wish to adopt children in their care, and for experienced adopters. This enables the service to build on the information already held about them and make their move through the process more timely.

2.8 During 2013-14 4 fostering families requested that they be assessed as prospective adopters for children in their care, and 10 experienced adopters returned for assessment. Furthermore there have been 4 families who have offered Fostering For Adoption placements for children which avoids delay and disruption for those whom the court had yet to make a judgement. All of these children were placed in adoptive families where their siblings had previously been placed.

3  Children with a plan for adoption

3.1 During the period 2013/14 the numbers of children with a plan for adoption has reduced from 69 last year to significantly on last year from 69 last year to 52 - 17 less than the previous year. This is a significant decrease but needs to be considered in the context of the continued popularity of SGO's and Residence Orders as well as the impact of Thrive in reducing the number of children entering the care system.

3.2 The revised plan for approving children for adoption by the Agency Decision Maker is completely embedded; with thorough and detailed input from our colleagues in Legal Services.

3.3 There have been some examples of decision making being delayed due to extra assessments requested by the Court of family members or friends who have put themselves forward at a later stage in the process.

3.4 A recent Court ruling ReBS at the end of last year has meant that the case for adoption has to be argued very clearly by the child’s Social Worker in court with clear evidence in which details the reasons why adoption is the best plan. In doing so the Social Worker is expected to explore the pros and cons of all of the alternatives including remaining with the birth parents and also remaining with the foster parents. In some cases this has led to delay in confirming the permanence plan for children.

3.5 The Adoption Service continues to place the majority of children locally with ‘in house’ adopters. The total number of children matched in the past year was 50, only 9 of these children, ie. less than 20% were placed outside of East Sussex in interagency placements; a considerable achievement in the current climate.

3.6 There is an obvious advantage to placing children locally, in that it is easier to achieve smooth transitions and providing ongoing support. But in addition the service has retained the ability to secure interagency placements for harder to place and more complex children.

3.7 The Adoption Scorecard issued by the Department of Education has for the second year shown that East Sussex County Council places children for adoption more speedily than the national average. This is an excellent result

3.8 The increased funding from the Adoption Reform Grant made a significant contribution to the progress development and activity levels of the Adoption Service in the past financial year.

3.9 The service has recruited a dedicated Practice Manager with specific responsibility for matching and linking children together with. An additional full time caseworker has also enabled the service to progress
the liaison with other agencies, as well as supporting links with the National Adoption Register and the Consortium.

3.10 The service has prioritised family finding, linking and has promoted a more efficient exchange of information between the Adoption Service and children’s services teams. Generally there has been an increase in collaborative working across the services to promote the matching of children.

3.11 The government’s focus on adoption timescales continues and the attention to waiting times for children and adopters is critical. The majority of adopters, over 80% wait less than 3 months before a child is placed. East Sussex continues to maintain its positive reputation for delivering a timely service to both children and adopters.

3.12 East Sussex held a second DVD event in February 2014, children’s social workers attended and brought along information relating to the children such as books, soft toys etc. The impact of the event enabled adopters to question their own matching criteria. The result of this was that some adopters moved from thinking about just having young children to considering older children.

3.13 In addition during the early spring East Sussex attended two other events, one run by the National Adoption Register and another arranged by our Consortium partner, Kent. From these events alone interest has been expressed in seven children and links are currently being followed up.

3.14 On April 26th 2014 East Sussex is initiating an Activity Day with the Consortium partners. East Sussex are taking 13 children, 3 sibling pairs of 2 and 7 single children. There are two more Activity Days planned one on November 8th 2014 and one will take place in Spring 2015. Only invited adopters and workers can attend and there will be between 40-50 children at each event.

3.15 East Sussex Adoption Service continues to be at the cutting edge of adoption service developments nationally and the Ofsted rating of Outstanding was hard earned and well deserved. The staff group have shown great commitment, professional skill and embraced this very challenging agenda.

4. Permanence

4.1 The Adoption & Permanence Service continues to target family finding for those children whose plan is for permanent fostering. The permanence tracking workshop continues to meet at least twice a year and closely monitors the timescale of permanence plans and matches.

4.2 Targeted recruitment for these children is necessary particularly for those who have complex needs or are part of a sibling group. A significant proportion of current foster carers both in house, and agency put themselves forward to offer long term care to children they currently care for. This is significant, in that these are carers and children who claim each other and this frequently leads to successful outcomes for all involved.

4.3 The number of children approved for permanence has risen in the past 12 months to 24. Some of these children may be subject to an SGO in the near future but foster carers sensibly wait until they feel confident in the potential stability of a placement before they offer this.

4.4 There are currently 19 children with a plan for permanence for whom the service is already family finding. These include 3 sibling groups of 2 children; one sibling group of 3 children and 12 single children. Currently matches are being considered for 4 of these children. However, the continued challenge is to recruit increased numbers of permanent foster carers.

5. Adoption Support

5.1 The East Sussex Adoption Service has developed from strength to strength in the last year and in January Ofsted quoted: ‘Adoption support services are excellent and the level of support provided for adoptive families is exceptionally strong. The service demonstrates an impressive commitment to adoption support, one that is well tailored and individualised at all stages of the adoption journey’. Ofsted Report, March 2014
The demands on the post adoption service continue to rise as the activity levels in recruitment and matching have considerably increased. An increasing number of families are needing access to adoption support services throughout their adoption journey, with particular challenges in latency and adolescence; this is reflected in the rising number of referrals.

The adoption service continues to work collaboratively with the local CAMHS service. The specially commissioned CAMHS service for adopted children and their families, ‘ADCAMHS’, is continuing to thrive. The aim of the service is to support families post adoption with a dedicated therapy and consultation service, providing specialist consultations and individual, family or group therapy for adopted children, their families and the professionals supporting them. The desired outcome of the service is to contribute to adoption stability and promote positive attachments within adoptive families (and ultimately to prevent placement breakdown).

The adoption service also commissions individual therapists to provide specialist support to families in areas such as therapeutic life story work and ‘Theraplay’. A systemic and family psychotherapist is currently working with three families, post adoption, piloting a ‘Non-Violent Resistance’ approach where child to parent violence is a feature of family relationships. A Senior Practitioner from the adoption support service has undergone specific training in this, particularly pertinent as there is a steady rise in the number of such cases.

Excellent links continue to be forged with the Virtual School. Since September 2013, two temporary part-time adoption support workers have been appointed to the team, funded from the Adoption Reform Grant. These roles provide adoptive families with support for educational and school-based issues, with the aim of promoting the educational achievements of adopted children within East Sussex. These workers have set up a weekly helpline for parents to access and have established a new student council for adopted children. They are also assisting with the innovative of the Pupil Premium Plus. The development of these services is welcomed by adoptive families and their children.

Collaborative links continue to be made between the adoption team and locality services, particularly with the Duty and Assessment, Family Support, Youth Support and Targeted Youth Support teams where additional resources and social care assessments are required. In complex post adoption support cases, a team around the child, particularly in adolescence, is vital in managing risk and safeguarding issues, as well as preventing some of the more seriously disturbed and damaged young people returning to care.

The service currently offers support to over 65 families with multiple and complex needs and this number is likely to increase.

During the last year, the post adoption team has facilitated a group for adopted children aged 10-11 years. At the end of April 2014, a second group will be running for 11-12yr olds. In May 2014, an adopted teenage group will be run and facilitated jointly between the adoption service and ADCAMHS. A therapeutic parenting group will be launched in September 2014, facilitated by two child and adolescent psychotherapists, through the designated ADCAMHS service.

The adoption service continues to support and work closely with the Adoptive Families Group (AFG) which was set up in January 2013. This is an independent adopter-led group who focus on lobbying, awareness raising and education in relation to issues pertaining to adoption support.

The service has continued with its contract with Adoption UK and funds three support groups at different locations across East Sussex. This contract is regularly monitored and reviewed by the adoption service, and evaluated by service users. Since AAA-NORCAP ceased trading in January 2013, the adoption service has commissioned an independent counselling practice to ensure that a service continues to be offered to adopted adults and their relatives.

The adoption service held two events last year for adoptive families, an Easter party and an event in September, both of which were very well attended. A further event is planned for 12th April 2014.

The Same Sex Adopters Group continues to meet on a regular basis, facilitated by members of the adoption team, with speakers sometimes invited to attend.
5.13 The activity of the indirect/letterbox and direct contact services continue to increase every year. The direct contact service is currently involved in supporting 218 arrangements, up from 198 in 2012/13. There are currently 685 indirect contacts agreements on the system, up from 616 in 2012/13. This aspect of the contact service requires a high level of professional scrutiny as well as dedicated full-time administrative support.

5.14 In January 2014, East Sussex was selected as one of 10 Local Authorities nationwide to pilot the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) prototype. As part of its programme of reforms to the adoption system, the Government has committed to putting in place new strengthened arrangements for post adoption support, as the supply of adopters has increased. The prototype began in January and will run for 18 months until the full ASF is in place. It is envisaged that the fund will pay for therapeutic services that are of high cost but is adopter lead. Trialing the use of personal budgets for adopters is also part of this process.

6. Adoption & Permanence Panel

6.1 Continuing the theme of recent years, the Government interest in adoption activity has not diminished. There has been a raft of initiatives including the Children & Families Bill and Adoption Getting it Right.

6.2 The Scorecards continue to closely monitor timeliness and current Children’s Permanence Reports are being revised and updated. As stated in previous sections we have been selected as one of the six local authorities to pilot the scheme of direct payments within the Adoption Support Service.

6.3 The major change to Panel process was detailed in last year’s report, namely that children’s plans for adoption are no longer presented to Panel. This has obviously led to a reduction in the workload of Panel and has led to some Panels being cancelled – approximately one a month to date. However, given the continued emphasis on timeliness for approval of adopters and matching of children it would not be prudent to reduce the frequency any further.

6.4 The Adoption Panels have participated in one in house training event in October and a further event is planned for May/June involving an external trainer.

6.5 The Panel appraisal process was reviewed in 2013 and a further process was implemented which has proved more efficient and equally effective. Once again considerably high levels of satisfaction were experienced by all Panel members.

7 Management Priorities 2014/15

7.1 To continue the excellent progress in adoption recruitment and continue to promote the outstanding adoption service within and beyond the East Sussex boundary.

7.2 To prioritise and target recruitment for East Sussex children and to maintain a strategy of over recruitment in order to release additional resources to other local authorities.

7.3 To strengthen and build on our high national profile and build on the opportunities given to further expand the East Sussex Adoption Service.

7.4 To update and revise policies and procedures in accordance with new regulations and strategy guidance.

7.5 To maintain and extend all Adoption Support Developments including the revised CAMHS contract and close partnerships with the Virtual School.

7.6 To take forward opportunities offered for development change, ie. piloting the prototype of Adoption Support Funds.

7.7 To expand the opportunities to deliver medical advice across the Fostering and Adoption Panels.
The Contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers to Quality Assuring and Improving Services for Looked After Children

1. Purpose of service and legal context

1.1 The Independent Review Officers’ (IRO) service is set within the framework of the updated IRO Handbook, linked to revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance which were introduced in April 2011. The responsibility of the IRO has changed from the management of the Review process to a wider overview of the case including regular monitoring and follow-up between Reviews. The IRO has a key role in relation to the improvement of Care Planning for Looked After Children (LAC) and for challenging drift and delay. One of the key tasks for IROs is to build relationships with children, young people and the professional and family network to enhance effective planning for positive outcomes.

1.2 The recently published National Children’s Bureau research entitled ‘The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) in England’ (March 2014) provides a wealth of information and findings in regards to the efficacy of IRO services and outlines a number of important recommendations. At the Local Authority level the following are most pertinent to the service currently in East Sussex and each Director of Children’s Services is exhorted to promote a culture demonstrating their support for these by:

- Setting out the expectations of the role and disseminating this information to all those involved in services for looked after children and young people, including children and young people themselves
- Creating systems to give IROs a voice
- Specifying the process for producing an IRO Annual Report, including who will be involved in contributing to the report, how it will be responded to, and how it will be used to contribute to improved outcomes for looked after children and young people.
- Reviewing and strengthening quality assurance processes in accordance with the IRO Handbook, including feedback from social workers and children and young people, direct observation of IRO practice and opportunities for reflection.
- Assessing the training and development needs of IROs and IRO managers and commissioning role specific training and support.
- Undertaking an analysis of the time required by IROs to undertake their duties, so as to then plan the number of IROs they require in order to provide the standard of service recommended in the IRO Handbook.

1.3 In the foreword written by Mr Justice Peter Jackson he makes the following comment
What are we doing about it?

On a national level it was recommended that all Local Authorities use the same template for formulating their reports. This report is written using the template that is being piloted this year.

This Annual IRO report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the IRO Services in East Sussex local authority as required by statutory guidance.

Professional Profile of the IRO Service

1.4 The IRO service sits within the Performance and Planning Directorate of Children’s Services and is managed by the Head of Safeguarding and two operational managers. The unit experienced considerable change during the year as a number of longstanding members of staff left the department. These included the Safeguarding Manager of the unit who left in April, the office manager and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO); all 3 had worked for East Sussex for a significant number of years.

1.5 As part of a wider agenda within the unit in 2012 to increase the effectiveness of the unit and further develop the quality assurance role a second temporary managerial post was created to increase management capacity and drive forward changes in child protection both within the unit and locality services. This post was made permanent in June 2013 and the commitment to two managers continued with the creation of a further temporary post in May 2013 until March 2015. This post has the lead role in developing the IRO role with Looked After Children and contributing to the service as a whole. Furthermore in response to the high numbers of children subject to Child Protection plans and children who were Looked After the THRIVE project was initiated and this funded two extra posts in the service in 2012 continuing to March 2015 giving the unit a complement of 10.1 fte (full time equivalent) reducing to 8.1 fte in April 2015 when this funding ends.

1.6 The IRO team is currently made up of 8.5 fte staff at Practice Manager level (LMG2). This equates to 9 IROs, 7 working full time and 2 part time, one of whom went on maternity leave in February 2014. In order to manage the day to day demands of the service there are currently two full time agency workers and two part time self employed workers.

1.7 The Team has experienced considerable change during the year and alongside the changes in management two longstanding IROs left the unit to take up new posts. In addition there have been significant periods of sickness involving several members of staff.

1.8 In January 2014 we were happy to welcome a new IRO to the unit but unfortunately two further recruitment campaigns have been unsuccessful to date and the unit has been reliant on agency and self employed workers.

1.9 This has led inevitably to some degree of discontinuity in relationships with Looked After Children. The permanent staff group have been long standing members of the unit and have worked hard to minimise the effect of the changes in the unit on the children and their families. However all the IROs
are under significant pressure in the context of high caseloads in comparison to other authorities and to those recommended by Department of Education, the pressures of sickness absence, a decreasing permanent staff pool and an increase in responsibilities and expectations within the department and from the Government.

1.10 We have a mix of male and female IROs but not at the same level as the LAC population which is approximately 43% female and 58% male. The ethnicity of the Looked After Children cohort is predominantly white British and around 15% are from ethnic minorities and around 7% have a disability.

1.11 These numbers are relatively small in percentage terms and the staff group are white British or white other and thus reflect the majority culture. Consequently ensuring that the needs of these children are met and understanding the pressures, difficulties and potential discrimination that they face in a predominantly white culture is a priority and challenge to IROs and children’s services.

1.12 As with society at large our Looked After children have a wide range of needs across a broad spectrum and although there is no ethnic minority representation in the staff group of the unit there is a diverse mix including disability and sexuality. The IROs sensitively consider and promote the different needs of children including from ethnic minorities, religious faiths, children with disabilities, children’s sexuality and gender identities to ensure that their care plan addresses their specific ethnicity and diversity needs. One of the IROs specialises in working with children with disabilities and continues to undertake specific training to enhance her skills in this area and to share her experience and expertise with the unit as a whole.

What are we doing about it?

IROs are engaging in specific training to increase their awareness of the diversity of the East Sussex population.

1.13 We have:

- 4 IROs who chair Child Protection Conferences as well as Looked After Children’s reviews
- 3.2 fte temporary staff chair Child Protection Conferences only
- Child Protection conference chairs also see and quality assure all referrals to the unit on a duty basis for a conference
- 1 IRO with specialist disability experience and short breaks
- 1 IRO who undertakes regulation 33 inspections of East Sussex residential units. (These have to be completed monthly and are statutory inspections of residential units submitted to Ofsted and undertaken to a clear set of criteria to ensure children’s safety and well being is being promoted.)
- 2 IROs contribute to the Child Sexual Exploitation working group
- 2 IROs lead LSCB training
Regional and National links

1.14 IROs also meet up with their colleagues in West Sussex and Brighton and Hove as part of a consortium and attend three training afternoons a year led in turn by each authority.

1.15 There is also a regional meeting where representatives from the southeast region, involving 9 different authorities, meet to discuss relevant topics three times a year. Unfortunately only the Operations Manager has been able to attend this year due to capacity issues in the unit.

1.16 The Operations Manager is also now part of the National group who meet with the Department of Education (DfE) and consider changes to policy and practice, gather relevant statistical information for government and work toward consistent practice across the country.

2 Quantitative information about the IRO service

A total of 1,530 LAC reviews were held in the year
A total of 1,191 Child Protection Case Conferences were also held in the year

2.1 Numbers of Looked After Children reduced quite quickly at the beginning of the year from 592 but since then they have hovered around the 570s ending the year on 573.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12/13</th>
<th>13/14</th>
<th>Average per month</th>
<th>New</th>
<th>Average per month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nos LAC</td>
<td>discharged</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>596</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>573</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 There is a consistent trend over the last two years as the table shows of higher numbers of children leaving care compared to those entering.

LAC ADMISSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010-11 PRE THRIVE</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-12 YEARS</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13+</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3 Annual LAC admissions for 12 and under have reduced by 16.8% since the beginning of the THRIVE programme (from 190 in 2010-2011 to 158 in 2013-14). The small rise in admissions during 2013-14 is attributable to a small number of very complex cases with large sibling groups within care proceedings (e.g. Kx8; Px5 Bx4).

2.4 There has also been a small increase in 13+ admissions. This rise is primarily attributable to the unusual number of 16+ year old admissions (12 compared with 7 in previous year). Teenage admissions include 3 UASC; 5 YOI/remand; 4 within sibling groups in care proceedings; 2 teenage parents previously LAC.

2.5 LAC discharges are also increasing across all age groups. It is positive to note the increase in under 12 discharges. This is reflective of improved timeliness of permanence planning with more care proceedings concluding than in previous years with children moving quickly to their adoptive families and SGO Family and Friends arrangements.

2.6 The way the team is currently configured means that staff able to undertake LAC reviews currently equates to 5.4 fte and Staff able to undertake CP conferences including the current temporary staff is 5.1 fte which is .4 over the staff complement of 10.1.

2.7 The following table illustrates the average caseloads of IROs chairing meetings during January to March this year. The figures are calculated to include staff absence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LAC reviews</th>
<th>CP conferences and LAC</th>
<th>If all staff did both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan – March 2014 (avg.staff 10)</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.8 The IRO Handbook recommends that case loads for IROs need to be between 50 and 70. Nationally, the average caseload for IROs ranges between 50 and 95 identified in a recent (December 2013) national benchmarking survey. The size of caseload alone does not indicate the workload for each IRO; the number of other responsibilities added to the role including visiting children between reviews, the number of Out of County placements, large family groups, disability, remand placements and quality assurance work doubles the time commitment.

2.9 As mentioned above the staffing levels of the unit are currently augmented from the Thrive initiative and are due to reduce at the end of March, 2015 when this programme ends. However these are based on Thrive targets being met.
2.1 These figures demonstrate that the current number of CP plans is significantly higher than the target. If the target is not achieved by March 2015 consideration will need to be given to how we sustain the additional resources (posts) in the Safeguarding Unit.

2.2 Furthermore if the Thrive targets are reached at the end of March, 2015, the average caseload for IROs based on the staff complement of 8.1 will be 126 for those undertaking conferences and 127 for those chairing reviews and 126 if the whole staff group did both. These figures indicate that even with the targets reached caseloads will in fact increase at the end of March 2015 and continue to be higher than those recommended or those in other authorities.

2.3 An independent audit within Children’s Services was completed during the year and this also highlighted the high case load numbers in comparison with other authorities.

### What are we doing about it?

In the summer a Benchmarking report is being considered by senior managers alongside an in depth analysis of the responsibilities of the role, the configuration of the service and the current Thrive targets.

The reasons for the rise in Child Protection plans is being explored and examined as a matter of urgency.

2.5 IROs also represent the service on a number of strategy groups including Child Sexual Exploitation, outcome focussed care plans, practice development group and are linked to specific teams to maximise communication.

2.6 Regulation 33 inspections are currently undertaken on a monthly basis by a part time IRO who will be retiring at the end of this year. During 2013/14 new legislation was introduced regarding Regulation 33 inspections and these are currently being considered with regard to whether the IRO service continues to undertake this work.

2.7 The Local Authority Designated Officer is also part of the unit and has responsibility for managing allegations against people who work or volunteer with children.

### Advocacy Service

Responsibility for the Contract Management of the Advocacy Contract for children is managed by the Participation Officer and is funded by the service. This service is currently provided by NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service).
3  Qualitative information about the IRO service

3.1 Looked After Children’s reviews must be held within specific timescales and the unit work hard to achieve this so that children’s plans can be considered in a timely way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. reviews</th>
<th>No. late</th>
<th>% late</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/13</td>
<td>1688</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/14</td>
<td>1530</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Out of the 1,530 meetings this year, four were late and did not adhere to timescales. The reasons for this were:

- Staffing issues in the care leavers team
- Incorrect recording of the date a child became Looked After (this was a young person who was on remand)
- A child was made subject to an order and thus became looked after but they remained in the same placement (with relative) pending moving to a permanent placement a few week’s later. This is an unusual situation and the social worker did not let the unit know of the change of status and the review therefore went out of timescales. However in practice there was no delay or impact on the child and their review took place within timescales after they moved as appropriate.
- The last one was due to a diary error by the IRO who went to the wrong venue in the first place and then the 2nd review was not arranged formally. The impact on the child was minimised as the IRO discussed the situation in full with the Social worker, reviewed the care plan and agreed ongoing decisions. It did not result in delay, however the young person was having a difficult time and would have benefitted from a more responsive review process.

What are we doing about it?

Feedback is given to all the teams via the link IRO system and managers are informed of the issues arising. A new system will also be introduced to monitor any changes in information recorded on careFirst (social care recording system) regarding status of young people and children.

3.3 IROs, social workers and the LAC administration co-ordinator work together to avoid these situations and IROs undertake a number of 2 part reviews to start the process off within timescale and then complete within 20 days as a series of meetings combining as the review.

3.4 Ensuring the centrality of the child and their voice in their care plans and their participation in meetings affecting them is a primary objective of the unit. Children participated in 95.4% of their reviews in the year 2013/14. This is slightly lower than 2012/13 where 96.9% was achieved but still above the target of 95%. The majority of children who do not participate are 17/18 year olds with complex issues, who are difficult to engage and build relationships with but who are also engaging often in high risk behaviours or are unmotivated with little interest in attending a meeting or giving their views. These figures are considered quarterly to monitor the trend. However these figures do not tell the whole story and having achieved this level of consistency in high participation rates the unit now wants to build on this to gather more qualitative information about what children are actually saying and how this is influencing their care plans.

3.5 Coupled with this process has been a review of the way in which children’s wishes and views are gathered and recorded. Currently prior to each review the child and social worker complete together an age appropriate booklet that was developed in conjunction with the Children in Care Council.
There has been some research and analysis of these forms that highlighted their inconsistent use and raised challenging questions about the relevance to the child of some of the questions being asked and the way these were presented. This has led to work currently being undertaken to develop a greater variety of tools for engaging with children and young people maximising the potential for their wishes and feelings to be meaningfully explored and shared. One young person has developed their own booklet and shared this with the department.

**What are we doing about it?**

A working group is looking at the different ways that can be used to engage children in direct work and conversation about the things that are important to them, including tools for children with disabilities.

Training will be offered to social work teams during the year

The booklets will be re-launched to promote consistent use

Booklets will also be re-designed where appropriate based on consultation with and feedback from children and young people

A system for more interactive internet based programme will be explored as part of the new data base being introduced to Children’s Services.

IROs complete a questionnaire following reviews that will enable more detailed and qualitative information to be garnered about the impact and influence of children’s participation

3.6 The IRO Handbook makes it an expectation that the IRO will meet with the child prior to the Review meeting or as part of the process. The expectation is that this contact takes place on a separate occasion before the meeting. Due to capacity issues this has been very difficult to achieve and children are being seen just before their reviews quite often. Currently IROs prioritise visits to children where they do not attend their reviews. However despite the difficulties in seeing children due to the IROs caseload, during the recent Ofsted inspection it was found that that there was substantial evidence that the IROs knew the children they review and that the young people also know them. This was also a finding in the management audit that took place. (see below for further detail)

**What are we doing about it?**

A new form has been developed and IROs use this to record on in the recording system when they have met and/or spoken to the young person

IROs also complete a quality assurance questionnaire following all reviews and are asked to confirm when they have met and/or spoken to the young person

3.7 Distribution of completed review Outcomes and reports does not always meet the required timescale of 5 working days for decisions and 20 for decisions and discussion record.

**What are we doing about it?**

A monitoring system is being put in place to accurately assess the level of compliance with timescales
4 Achievements and impact of IRO service

4.1 There was an inspection of the service by Ofsted in January 2014 where the efficacy of the IRO service was scrutinised. The following excerpts are taken from the Ofsted report:

Looked after children’s reviews and care plans are consistently reviewed within statutory timescales. The Independent Reviewing Officers provide consistency and a continuity of oversight of the progress children make. Children know their reviewing officers well. The service provides effective challenge to some care planning arrangements, for example, through challenging the quality of provision in an agency children’s home or through delaying a young person’s move to a new home until their exams had finished.

Social workers and the independent reviewing service are active in moving forward decisions where permanence is considered to secure stability for children.

Children who live some distance away from East Sussex are well supported and receive the same level of services as those children who live within the county. Social workers visit them regularly and their looked after reviews are held within statutory timescales. In one particular case, a young person visited by an inspector said she had the same Independent Reviewing Officer over a number of years and as a consequence she was confident in the decisions being made about her.

4.2 Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers March 2014

4.3 Ofsted gave the overall judgement as good with gradings of good for children needing help and protection; good for looked after children and permanence sub-grades of outstanding for adoption and requires improvement for care leavers; and good for leadership, management and governance.

4.4 During the inspection one young person told inspectors that her IRO was a ‘legend’ and there was substantial evidence that the IROs knew the children they review and that the young people also know them.

Children’s Views

4.5 Unfortunately due to the number of surveys our young people contributed to and the Ofsted inspection the planned feedback exercise was postponed and is part of the work plan for the coming year.

Case study 1

An IRO identified a number of young people she reviews who had been waiting for some time for permanent placements with foster carers. These were children who did not have any special needs or difficulties. The IRO advocated on their behalf and in one case opened a dispute to challenge senior managers about placements as the timeliness of the move needed was acute so that the young person could start senior school in a planned way. This dispute was escalated to the Director of Children’s Services and the Chief Executive. This was resolved and he and his brother were placed permanently with foster carers and have maintained a high level of continuity. The other young people have also been placed.
**Case Study 2**

J was born in May 2011 with a number of complex health needs – and was placed with his current carers at 3 weeks. An assessment of his parent’s ability to care for him was undertaken, however neither parent engaged with the assessment process and made the decision that they wished to relinquish the care for J and for him to be placed for adoption. Attempts were made to encourage parents to provide details of family members who may be in a position to care for J, however neither parent provided these details to the Social Worker.

The Local Authority’s chosen permanence plan for J was Adoption and was considered by the permanence and adoption panel in September 2011 and it was agreed that pursuing potential adopters for J would be put on hold pending a clear diagnosis of J’s health needs and if possible J under going his first operation. Between this decision being made and February 2013 the Social Worker followed up a number of potential adopters all of whom were not willing to pursue adoption of J.

The carers had considered J remaining with them permanently but did not wish to go through adoption process, but wanted to consider long term fostering. This was due to his health needs. In July 2013 a decision was made that there should be a twin track approach for three months and if no adopters could be found the care plan should be that J be placed with his current foster family.

This was considered to be in J best interests as he is clearly very loved by the family and attached to all family members and the match was considered at the Adoption and Permanence panel in December 2013 and the care plan for him to remain with his carers permanently was recommended and subsequently agreed by the Agency Decision Maker. J’s carers will consider an application for Special Guardianship order after his next surgery when he is five. The IRO advocated for this care plan for J on the basis of his attachment needs and attempts made to find adopters for him.

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**Children and young people chairing their own reviews**

4.6 This continues to take place where appropriate, however there is currently no system in place to record how many. From this year IROs are being asked to report on this.

**Monitoring and tracking of Care Plans between LAC Reviews**

4.7 The recent National Children’s Bureau research, Ofsted thematic review in 2013 and the findings of the recent Ofsted inspection highlighted the need for IROs to be more targeted in their decisions at the reviews, with expectations about specific timescales for actions. IROs should also regularly check the progress of the decisions between reviews. This is an area for improvement in the service and is closely linked with capacity issues. IROs frequently see the social workers for the children they review and discuss issues with them and as Ofsted reported ensure progression of the plan but this has not hitherto been recorded consistently outside of the review process.

**What are we doing about it?**

IROs are now recording their intervention in between reviews onto the careFirst recording system.

**Quality of Care Plan**

4.8 IROs play a significant role in monitoring permanence planning at an early stage and considering all options for young people by their 2nd review. The practice in Children’s Services is to recognise that planning for long term stability and permanence for a child begins with the first intervention. IROs also
continue to monitor the timeliness of family finding and preparation of children for adoption and permanent placements and raise any issues appropriately. Plans for adoption and permanence, the timeliness of family finding, completion of reports for panel and planning for introductions are scrutinised during reviews.

4.9 **IROs also have a significant role in reviewing plans for court to ensure that they meet children’s needs.** This also means monitoring and having regular oversight of care plans to ensure that there is no drift or unnecessary delay in permanence planning both during and particularly after proceedings have completed. IROs are consulted and kept up to date at each stage of decision making and reviews are held in a timely manner to agree any changes or challenge issues arising.

4.10 **However an area that Ofsted found required improvement is care planning for children leaving care and becoming independent.** They found that pathway planning for young people was not sufficiently robust. This was an issue that the service had already recognised and had already agreed additional management capacity and resource for that team. This is an age group coming under significant scrutiny nationally as well with the staying put duty becoming law in the Children and Families Act and the duty to have an allocated personal adviser in recognition that young people struggle to manage independence to varying degrees and need ongoing support.

### What are we doing about it?

The Operations Manager is leading a working group to develop outcome focussed care and pathway plans for LAC that are accessible to children and young people. This will include consideration of the single plan recommended by Ofsted and the SEND reforms.

IROs are specifically reporting on the quality of care and pathway plans using the Ofsted criteria

IROs are ensuring that young people know their entitlements

IROs are specifically reporting on timeliness of family finding and permanence planning

### 5 Quality Assurance of the IRO Service

#### Auditing and observations

5.1 **An audit tool was developed to evaluate the efficacy of the role of the chair in both Looked After Children Reviews and Child Protection Conferences and an audit was undertaken during Quarter 3 of the reporting year as part of the Management Audit programme. These audits involved senior managers including the Chief Executive and interviews with IROs.**

5.2 **11 LAC children’s cases were audited and children were judged to be safe. There was evidence of:**

- timely lac reviews
- good level of contact and effective multi agency work
- longstanding positive relationships with children
- many cases young people actively involved in reviews; in all cases young people’s views have been taken into account in planning and review. Young people who were involved in their reviews seemed to be appreciative of their voices being heard
- effective and purposeful planning and robust consideration of the care plan and safeguarding issues
- effective monitoring of permanence plans and challenge of potential drift
- monitoring, positive feedback and challenge of practice with social workers and managers (issues addressed were drift in planning; standards of care; late production of work)
5.3 Areas for improvement:

- Documents not being completed and shared with IROs within timescales
- More outcome focussed reviews with explicit timescales for actions
- Need to monitor child’s care plan between reviews
- More explicit evidence in records of whether placement meets the child’s needs
- More personalised records of reviews taking account of each child’s needs and point of view
- Breadth of work undertaken by IROs not recorded on ICS

5.4 Due to the changes in the team and the pressure of workload it has not been possible to begin a programme of observations but this will now be put in place for 2014/15 with the Head of Safeguarding and the Operations Managers observing practice.

5.5 There has also been an audit of children who are waiting for permanence and subject to Placement Orders to ensure that the care plan is still appropriate for that child.

What are we doing about it?

The Operation Managers and Head of Service will undertake audits on a quarterly basis and will also observe at least one meeting chaired by an IRO over the course of the year, this will be either a Looked After Child’s review or Child Protection Case Conference.

Recommendations from the audit have been included in the work plan for the year ahead.

Problem resolution and escalation

5.6 One of the pivotal roles of the IRO is to raise issues affecting a child’s care with the local authority where, for example, performance issues, care planning and resources are affecting the child or young person’s progress. IROs will always discuss issues with the social worker or their manager but if there is no resolution there is a formal process known as a Dispute Resolution Process whereby the issue can be escalated to the attention of senior managers and ultimately the chief executive for resolution.

5.7 Over the last year there have been 11 formal challenges to the authority using the Dispute Resolution Procedures. The issues included:

5.8 Delay in finding permanent placements (∗4)

5.9 Lack of evidence of senior manager agreement for care plan

5.10 Number of changes of social worker

5.11 Legal status of placement

5.12 All these matters have now been resolved and one was escalated to the Director and Chief Executive. All were resolved with good outcomes for the children. There is also a substantial amount of discussion and resolution of issues before they go into formal challenges.

Supervision and training
IROs receive regular monthly supervision and have enjoyed attending the Action Learning Sets for Practice Managers that are facilitated by two experienced external trainers. There has also been a considerable number of briefing training for managers on relationship based practice skills. However the issue of specialised training for IROs is on the national agenda and is being explored further as it is recognised as a unique role.

IROs work to specific timescales and after each review a further meeting is planned. The longest timescale between reviews is 6 months and this therefore means that an IRO’s diary can be full up to 6 months in advance. Most training is offered with up to three months notice and this makes it very difficult for IROs to juggle their diaries to attend training.

What are we doing about it?

Where possible trainers are asked to attend team meetings to give their presentations and there is the opportunity for discussion.

Nationally there is exploration of tailored training for IROs.

Any resource issues that are putting at risk the delivery of a quality service

The IRO role is not to identify the Resources needed to meet a young persons needs but to ensure that those resources utilised match the needs of the young person and are of a high quality. IROs will challenge when the placement fails to address needs.

Achievements for this last year

IROs are visiting more children

IROs carry Complaints and Advocacy information to give out when required.

IROs ensure children know about the Pledge

IROs ensure good communication with Children’s Guardians

IROs have achieved almost 100% of reviews taking place on time

IROs have continued to manage high caseloads and develop relationships with young people despite the significant changes in the team

A new questionnaire for quality assurance and reporting has been formulated

Auditing processes have been established

IROs are formally challenging issues where appropriate and recording all discussions regarding the child.

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6 Annual work programme for next year April 2014 – March 2015
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic objective</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Actions</th>
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| Quality Assurance and Performance management activity provides challenge to operational services and identifies priorities for service development | QAF Annual Report  
Safeguarding Unit dashboards developed for both CP and LAC and quarter reporting to CSCMT (to include quantitative and qualitative information and highlight any key themes and suggested actions)  
CPC and LACR outcome records to be improved to demonstrate effectiveness and impact of care plan  
Improve reporting of dispute resolution for both LAC and CP  
Ensure policy, procedure and OICS are up to date and respond to changes in national guidance  
Workload management tool to be developed and review of capacity of IRO/CPA  
Ensure IRO annual report is presented to CPP & LSCB to enable senior managers and elected members to properly consider how this service effectively challenges children’s care planning arrangements  
Reduce data security incidents | Quarterly management report to CSCMT  
To populate SU dashboards  
Appraisal target for IRO/CPA and to populate SU dashboard  
CSCMT to agree priorities  
Administration process to be reviewed alongside ICT development |
| Children and young people receive timely and effective multi-agency help and protection through risk based assessment and planning | Improve the quality assurance of assessment and plans presented to CPCs and LACRs  
Ensure effective outcome focussed child in need plan when a CP plan ends  
Improve the outcome records for both CPCs and LACRs to include quantitative and qualitative information | Quarterly reporting to CSCMT  
Reduction in repeat CP plans |
| Children and young people in need receive effective multi-agency help that is proportionate to the level of risk, does not drift and is regularly | Convene multi-agency short-life working group through the LSCB to review and develop core group activity  
Further develop relationship based | Revised agenda and format for CPCs  
Audit and practice observation
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategic objective</th>
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<th>Reporting/Notes</th>
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| reviewed to secure change | practice within CPCs  
Improve involvement and participation of children and young people at reviews |                                                     |
| Looked after children have a plan that is outcome focused and they are supported to participate in the development and review of their plan | LAC MCI to be completed  
Working group to develop and improve outcome focussed LAC plans  
Improve involvement and participation of children and young people at reviews  
Improve Pathway Plans for Care Leavers so they are effective and understood by young people | Quarterly reporting to CSCMT  
Audit demonstrates meaningful participation |
| Develop an understanding of the diversity of the local population and how the service reflects these diverse needs | Quality Assurance of assessments and plans to ensure diversity issues addressed  
Diversity information to be presented at unit meetings | Quarterly reporting to CSCMT |
| Provide opportunities for care leavers in your service | Identify possible opportunities for work experience, mentoring etc.  
Include care leavers in service development |                                                     |
| Service User Feedback (check target with AG) |                                                                     |                                                      |
| Review of Terms and Conditions |                                                                     |                                                      |

7 **Overview and Summary**
7.1 This has been a challenging and busy year with significant changes in personnel in the safeguarding unit. Expectations of the work of the IRO have increased alongside developing priorities for the unit, specifically the quality assurance role. Keeping up with additional responsibilities has continued to be a challenge but the IROs are committed to providing a high quality service and meeting those challenges and these were recognised both by Ofsted and the management audit.

7.2 Capacity and staffing continues to be a significant issue that potentially compromises the good practice of the unit but IROs continue to monitor the care plans of our looked after children and young people, challenge cases highlighted as at risk of drift and use the escalation protocol effectively, managing the greater number of escalations at the Practice Manager/Operations Manager level, which leads to a quicker resolution of the issue.

7.3 As stated in the body of the report the scrutiny by Ofsted and the management audit found that IROs know the children they review very well and are trusted to advocate on their behalf.

Alex Sutton 12th June, 2014
Acting Operations Manager, Safeguarding Unit
Educational Outcomes for Looked After Children in 2013

1. Summary

1.1. Overall these are the best examination outcomes for Looked after Children in East Sussex and the continuation of a clear upward trend that we are confident will continue into 2014. Key outcome measures have been significantly above the average for looked after children for the last four years and there is clear evidence that the gap between the overall outcomes of looked after children and all other children in East Sussex is narrowing. Of the 32 children who left Year 11 last summer, 30 of them are currently in education or training.

1.2. The cohorts for attainment measures consist of those children who have been in continuous care for at least 12 months to the year ending March 31st 2012 who were at the end of the Key Stage in the summer and who were educated in a school in England. There were 23 at the end of KS1 (Year 2), 20 at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6) and 32 at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11).

1.3. The cohorts for progress measures vary considerably (and can vary between different subjects) as only children with “matched data” are included in the calculations.

1.4. A high proportion of each cohort has identified special educational needs. At KS2 70% of children have identified special needs half of whom have a statement of special educational needs, at KS4 80% of children have identified special needs with 30% having a statement of special educational needs.

1.5. There were 32 young people in the Y12 cohort (who left Year 11 in Summer 2013) and 42 young people in the Y13 cohort (who left Year 11 in Summer 2012).

2. Data Collection

2.1. There is no simple or totally reliable way to collect the data, especially at KS4 and post 16. We rely on phone calls and emails to schools, carers and in some cases the children and young people themselves. The data presented is as accurate as is possible within the resource we have. Where it has been possible to cross check with the Research and Information Team we have done so but some of our children are placed outside the local authority or in non-maintained schools.

2.2. Where comparisons are made with national data this is based on 2012 figures, Overall East Sussex figures for all children are included from the 2013 cohort where available.

3. Key Stage 1 (Year 2, 7 year olds)

3.1. The proportion of children achieving the expectation of level 2 in Reading was significantly above looked after children nationally (77% against 67%) in writing it was below (52% against 57%) and in Maths was broadly similar (70% against 71%). It is difficult to draw conclusions from these figures as there is no progress data available yet and the cohort is small. (see Table 3)

4. Key Stage 2 (Year 6, 11 year olds)
4.1. Outcomes for children leaving primary school are very encouraging. See Table 1 and Table 2 (because of the added complexity of English results being split between Reading, Writing and Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling I have not included graphs from KS2)

4.2. Overall 81% of the cohort made expected progress in Reading and 69% expected progress in Writing. 74% of LAC nationally made expected progress in the old combined measure last year.

4.3. In Maths 75% of the cohort made expected progress compared to 66% of the national LAC cohort last year

5. Key Stage 4 (Year 11, 16 year olds)

5.1. Outcomes for young people at the end of Key Stage 4 have never been better. The proportion of young people achieving the national benchmark of five good GCSEs including English and Maths is the highest on record at 25% and well above the national figure for 2012 of 14.6%. The proportion of young people making expected progress in English and Maths is also the highest on record and significantly above the national figures for 2012. See Table 1 and Table 2 and Graphs.

5.2. Over 80% of young people end Key Stage 4 with an accreditation of some form and around 70% achieve at least one GCSE. There are no national comparisons available for these broader measures of educational attainment of looked after children

6. Post 16

6.1. 93% (30/32) of care-leavers who completed KS4 last summer are in education, training or employment with training.

6.2. Four care leavers graduated from university in 2013, five are currently completing university courses and five have started university this September.

6.3. Students who don’t fall in to this cohort because of when they come into care are also supported with tutoring and in some cases with alternative provision to re-engage them back into education. We work closely with the youth offending team to monitor those who are in custody. One young person who came into care after the end of year 11 in September 2012 now attends Bedes 6th Form, has accessed support from Sussex University and has attended a university summer school.

6.4. Of the 42 young people who left Year 11 in Summer 2012, 31(73%) are engaged in education, training or employment with training, 9 following L3 courses at college or in 6th form provision, 5 have either progressed on to L2 courses or are developing more specific skills, 3 are on L1 vocational courses. 2 are in employment with training. 1 YP is in custody, the remaining are in specialist provision as they have a statement or are supported via college on, foundation learning or specialist courses. Six young people are planning to apply for university courses.

7. Reasons for Improvements

7.1. We continue to attribute these positive outcomes to a greater emphasis in schools on supporting the progress of vulnerable groups and to a greater awareness of the particular needs of looked after children (and, thanks to training provided by the Virtual
School, improved knowledge and skills of school staff and a greater awareness of the support that is available).

7.2. Virtual School caseworkers have now been linked to individual schools for the last three years and as a consequence are able to build up strong professional relationships with designated teachers over an extended period of time, attending PEP meetings, working with the children in the schools and helping to identify additional needs to ensure that children and young people make good progress.

7.3. The Virtual School has a school based database for tracking each individual child and we contact every school on a weekly basis in order to be in a position to provide additional support or guidance where necessary.

7.4. Access to the Pupil Premium has allowed for considerable resource to be directed to individual learning needs, in particular the use of 1:1 tuition in English and Maths using a small team of specialist tutors. Pupil Premium has also funded the “Letter Box Club” where all children across Key Stage 2 receive regular parcels of “fun” educational materials for use at home.

7.5. Significant improvement in the support for education for care-leavers through good links with FE and training providers, joint projects with the universities, the Individual Advice and Guidance commissioned from My Future Starts Here, the development of work experience opportunities and the embedding of the post 16 PEP.

8. Future focus and challenges

8.1. The disparity between Reading and Writing at both KS1 and KS2 suggests a greater emphasis on writing may be required and we will be working with our tutors, schools and the school improvement service to see how best to support improvements in writing.

8.2. Changes to the national curriculum and to exam syllabuses and GCSE equivalent courses, together with a likely reduction in early entry to GCSE courses, may present some of our children with greater challenge and fewer opportunities to succeed in the future and we will be working with schools and the young people to ensure that this does not put them at a disadvantage.

8.3. The planned increase in Pupil Premium for 2014 will provide additional resource to support looked after children achieve their potential and to continue to close the gap between the outcomes of looked after children and their peers.

9. Case Studies

Key Stage 1
S entered KS1 with a very low Foundation Stage Profile score. She was described by LAC CAHMS professionals as one of the most damaged and complex children they had come across. S struggles with any changes and found the transition to KS1 particularly difficult. Not only did she make limited progress at the start of year 1, but it also became increasingly evident that she would benefit from an additional key adult to act as a secondary attachment figure in school. The Virtual School funded additional one to one support for an extended period and supported the school’s application for an SEN statement by completing a Boxall Profile to highlight S’s emotional, social and behavioural needs. S was provided with additional resources from her statement which allowed for provision of a part-time Individual Needs Assistant At the start of year 2, the Virtual School again funded additional support to supplement this to
full-time to help achieve a smooth transition. S achieved level 2s for both reading and maths at the end of KS1, a real achievement for a child with such a high level of emotional and learning needs.

T has experienced several changes of placements and schools (including out of county) since coming into care and she has also been separated from siblings. The Virtual School has closely monitored T’s progress and attended PEPs to offer advice and guidance regarding supporting changes of school. Despite these numerous changes, T achieved outstanding end of KS1 results - all level 3s!

Key Stage 2
L was working at P8 (below national curriculum levels) in both reading and writing and 2C in maths at the end of Key Stage 1. With his exceptional hard work, support from school and the tutor supplied through the virtual school L came on in leaps and bounds receiving a 4C in English and 4B in Maths at the end of key stage 2 and also received regular parcels of reading material and maths game though the Letter Box Club which he was able to make use of at home with his carer. This was excellent progress for L and a fantastic start for him as he enters into secondary education.

M. entered KS2 below the national curriculum levels. Initially when she came into care, she lacked any motivation to succeed at school and frequently tried to abscond. Over the course of KS2, her primary school and Virtual School worked collaboratively with her carers to help turn around M's attitude towards learning and with the addition of extra tuition funded by the Virtual School, she achieved level 4s at the end of KS2, representing outstanding progress.

L. had 4 changes of school and 5 changes of placement in Year 2. He left care to live with grandparents out of county, but unfortunately this quickly broke down and he was returned to care in East Sussex. Despite all these changes and losses, he has managed to maintain progress and achieved level 2As for reading and maths and 2B for writing - all above the national expectations. L is currently finding it hard to deal with his return to care and make sense of his world and so the Virtual School are funding play therapy sessions to support his emotional well-being.

Key Stage 4
BR has been in the UK for 4 years, he arrived with minimal English. BR embraced education and in partnership with his social worker, carers, school and Virtual School a robust plan was put in place to ensure he was well supported to make progress. BR had an additional English tutor in year 10, he gained a C grade in maths in November 2012 and achieved 5A*-C in June 2013. BR is a gifted cricketer and was selected to be part of the new Sussex Cricket Academy which combines a development cricket programme with robust academic studies. BR plans to go on to University.

JL has a statement of SEN and at the start of year 11 experienced considerable difficulty with peer relationships at school following the breakdown of her foster placement and significant changes at school. The Virtual School worked closely with JL’s new carers and social worker and were able to negotiate an individualised school timetable and provide one to one tutoring to ensure that JL achieved GCSE grades that would allow her to go on to college to do a Level 2 Health and Social Care Course (HSOC). She achieved 7 A*- G grades including C grades in science and ICT. She has started her L2 HSOC.

Due to a need to change the location of where she was living AB changed school in April 2012; she embraced the change of school and to support the transition the Virtual School provided a tutor to help her settle in all key subjects and fill the gaps where there were aspects of the GCSE syllabus that she had missed. AB took every opportunity via her school and the Virtual School to visit colleges and HE providers, to get involved in additional workshops and residential. AB achieved an exceptional set of GCSE results and is now studying for 4 A levels at 6th Form College.

Post 16
CK had a statement of special educational needs until he was 16, he tried various engagement opportunities and at 17 he decided to return to college to study ICT. He took 3 years, starting at L1 to achieve L3 BTEC ICT Diploma with 2 Distinctions and 1 merit. At the start of his 3rd year he decided he wanted to go to University and couldn't do this without English and maths GCSE. The Virtual School funded a maths and English tutor for 7 months and a dyslexic specialist who supported him with strategies. In addition the Virtual School linked him with the widening participation team at Sussex
University who provided mentoring and set up a work placement with the ICT department. CK had offers from 2 universities to do ICT. He achieved a C grade in his maths and a D grade in English; his first choice University accepted him and he has started at university.

JG did extremely well at GCSE, however he has always been reluctant to engage with support or advice from the Virtual School. He agreed to a PEP in Year 13 and as a result had his awareness raised about opportunities for care-leavers at University. He agreed to visits and taster days at both Sussex and Brighton University and met with a mentor as a result he applied to University and received offers from all. He achieved an A and 2 B grades at A level, and is currently doing an Art foundation course with plans to go on to University in September 2014.

AW left his special school in July 2011 with 5 GCSE's D-G, he joined the “Explorer” Course at a mainstream college in September 2011. He achieved a Level 1 in Vocational Studies and Entry Level functional skills English, maths and ICT. AW Progressed on to L1 public service and sport course which he passed and has now been accepted on to a L2 ICT programme with the plan to move on to an apprenticeship, he has a regular work placement working alongside an ICT technician.

NB is a young mother who completed her GCSE's in 2012 and went on to an Equine studies course where she achieved outstanding results and is continuing with her L3 studies alongside caring for her child.

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or Anna Brookes
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anna.brookes@eastsussex.gov.uk
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em><em>KS4 5+ A</em>-C including English and Maths</em>*</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25% (8/32)</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KS4 Expected Progress in English</strong></td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>46.7% (14/30)</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KS4 Expected Progress in Maths</strong></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>36.7% (11/30)</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KS2 Level 4 English</strong></td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading 65% (11/17)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Writing 41% (7/17)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>GaPS 47% (8/17)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>KS2 Level 4 Maths</strong></td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>71% (12/17)</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KS2 Expected Progress English</strong></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading 81% (13/16)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Writing 69% (11/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KS2 Expected Progress Maths</strong></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>75% (12/16)</td>
<td>66%</td>
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Table 2

**Closing the gap, East Sussex LAC, KS2 and KS4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013¹</th>
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¹ English results split between Reading, Writing and Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling (GaPS) in 2013 so comparisons with previous years difficult. Progress cohorts vary as a result of variations in children with both KS1 and KS2 levels. All
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KS4 A* - C including English and Maths</th>
<th>LAC</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>LAC</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>LAC</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>LAC</th>
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<tr>
<td>4.4% 20% 15.2% 20% 25% (8/32) 59.3%</td>
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<thead>
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<th>LAC</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>LAC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26% 32% 37% 66.9% 46.7% 71.6%</td>
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<th>All</th>
<th>LAC</th>
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<th>LAC</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>LAC</th>
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<tr>
<td>21% 36.7% (11/30) 69.8%</td>
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<th>LAC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44% 79.4% 27.3% 79.5% 40% R85.7% 84.1% (11/17) 85.4%</td>
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<tr>
<th>KS2 Level 4 Maths</th>
<th>LAC</th>
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<th>LAC</th>
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<th>LAC</th>
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<th>LAC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36% 76.2% 47% 78.6% 70% 84.1% 71% (12/17) 81.7%</td>
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<tr>
<th>KS2 Expected Progress English</th>
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<th>LAC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56% 83% 67% 81% 82% 88% 90.7%</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>KS2 Expected Progress Maths</th>
<th>LAC</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33% 67% 80% 91% 84% 75% (12/16) 84.8%</td>
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figures based on national approach at measuring LAC outcomes. Cohorts will vary for different measures.

\(^2\) 18.4% was reported nationally, the national dataset contained three children who were not in the cohort (out of age).
Table 3
East Sussex LAC, KS1 (aged 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Maths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looked after Children (ES)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>77% (18/23)</td>
<td>52% (12/23)</td>
<td>70% (16/23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looked after children (England)</td>
<td>1670</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Sussex (All)</td>
<td></td>
<td>87.3%</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Children (England)$^3$</td>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7

Looked After Children (LAC) who go missing and who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE)

1.1 In September 2009, a Joint Protocol for Children Missing in Sussex was agreed between Sussex Police and the three Sussex Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs). In January 2010, a minor amendment to the protocol was introduced with reference to different responses by the police to “missing” episodes and children who are “absent”. National definitions define “missing” as “young people not being where they should be and agencies do not know where they are,” and “absent” as “young people not being where they should be, but agencies know where they are.”

1.2 More recently in 2013 new Statutory Guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care was issued by the Department for Education (DfE). To meet the statutory guidance, priorities within East Sussex include the following:

- To identify a strategic lead responsibility for children or young people who run away or go missing.
- The LSCB needs to have in place systems to monitor prevalence of and the responses to children and young people who go missing.
- An updated Runaway and Missing from Home and Care Protocol (RMFHC Protocol) needs to be in place. This should be agreed with Sussex Police.
- LAC plans and child protection plans need to include a strategy about keeping the child safe including when the risk of CSE is identified. Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) should be kept informed about missing/absent episodes and should address these in statutory reviews.
- A new framework for out of area placements was issued by the DfE in January 2014. Agreement to all out of area placements is required to be given at a senior level. Agreement should be based on an assessment of need with a plan that includes a range of services in place to meet those needs. All statutory notifications to the ‘receiving’ local authority should take place.
- Brief Safe and Well checks should be undertaken by the Police when a child/young person is found after a missing episode. A formal return interview should then be undertaken. Following the Safe and Well check and a return interview, any information/intelligence that arises should be passed to the Police for analysis and action so that disruption of offenders or of people posing risk can take place.
- Under the new guidance, ESCC should ensure that Return Home Interviews (RHIs) are undertaken within 72 hours of the child/young person being located. They should happen in a neutral place and the child should be asked who they wish to speak to. The statutory guidance suggests that the person could be a social worker (other than the child’s social worker), an IRO an independent visitor, a teacher, a school nurse, a youth offending or youth worker, a voluntary sector practitioner, or a police officer whom the child knows and trusts.

1.3 Significant progress has been made between Sussex Police and East Sussex Children’s Services in reviewing the new statutory guidance. It is an expectation that IROs should ensure that LAC reviews address strategies for keeping the young person safe. Agreement has to be given by the Assistant Director for Safeguarding, LAC and SEN for all LAC who are placed with carers who live outside East Sussex. This ensures that the identified placement is able to meet the needs of the child and that there is a robust multi agency support plan in place. A new process for undertaking RHIs has been drafted between Sussex Police and the Head of Service...
for LAC. This is to ensure that there is both consistency in practice and a comprehensive and robust system, so that no young person falls through the net. After a Safe and Well check has been completed, the Sussex Police Missing Person’s Coordinator requests that Catch 22, a voluntary partner commissioned jointly by ESCC and Sussex Police, or another appropriate professional undertakes a RHI. The RHI summary is shared with the Missing Person’s coordinator. Any reports of crime are reported to a nominated phone number at Sussex Police. Any intelligence is reported using an agreed intelligence pro-forma and submitted to a specific email address at Sussex Police. This new draft process for RHI’s will need to be agreed at a strategic level by the LSCB. A joint commissioning arrangement for undertaking RHI’s is also being considered across West Sussex and Brighton and Hove Children's Services.

1.4 Since January 2013 East Sussex Children’s Services has implemented a new social care recording system for identifying all LAC who go missing or who are absent. This has produced a more accurate system for analysing episodes when children are missing. The system enables the department to interrogate the data in terms of timescales, gender, age, reason for missing episode, etc. In 2013-14 there were 25 LAC with missing episodes. Of these 25, 15 LAC were missing more than once. There were also 14 LAC who were ‘absent’. Of these 14, 6 LAC were absent more than once. Of the 25 LAC who were missing, on 19 occasions they were missing for over 24 hours, 17 times they were missing for over 48 hours and 9 times they were missing for over 5 days. All these young people, apart from one young unaccompanied asylum seeker, were tracked actively by the Police and by our staff, found and up to date safety plans were put in place. The Police believe that the UASC who has been missing for many months has disappeared to the Continent. Of the 25 LAC who went missing, 14 were female and 11 male. 21 out of the 25 young people that went missing were aged 16 and above. Out of the total missing and absent episodes for LAC, 15 episodes recorded that the risk of sexual exploitation was a significant factor whilst they were missing/absent. We are confident that the higher numbers of episodes of both missing and absence for LAC as compared to previous years, is due to the introduction of the new recording system and improved reporting.

1.5 In addition to the internal recording system, all the residential homes use a comprehensive system of recording young people who are missing or absent. This includes recording duration and numbers of episodes. 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 a proactive approach within the homes: staff members go out in the evenings and night time to follow, search for, and collect any young people who are at significant risk; as well as regularly communicating with the Police. The LSCB manager has also visited a significant number of private children’s homes in East Sussex in order to remind them of their statutory responsibilities in relation to children placed by other local authorities who go missing. LAC placed in East Sussex by other local authorities are also tracked at the fortnightly multi agency Missing and Risk of CSE group.

1.6 When LAC go missing, for many of them there is inevitably a close correlation with an increased risk of CSE. National awareness that CSE was becoming a more widespread issue was reported by the DfE in “Tackling CSE-Action Plan”, which was published in November 2011. This has formed the basis for building a response to CSE in East Sussex and National Working Group members have acted as consultants in the development of our local planning. There is a Pan Sussex Strategy
for CSE which has been agreed by East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove LSCB's.

1.7 In East Sussex, there is currently a multi-agency Missing and Risk of CSE Group. This meeting is chaired alternately by the LAC Operational Manager and Sussex Police’s Missing Person’s Coordinator. The purpose of this meeting is identification, tracking, sharing of information about all children/young people (those living at home as well as all LAC) who go missing and are at risk of CSE. This is attended by a range of different agencies including the Police Missing Person’s Coordinator), the Sex and Safety Service for You (SASSY) nurse, the LAC nurse, all 3 voluntary organisations working in ESCC on CSE/missing issues, ESCC Registered Homes Managers, representatives from the Behaviour and Attendance Service, and managers from the LAC and Youth Support teams. The frequency of this meeting has been recently reviewed. It is now held fortnightly (previously it was held monthly), alternating between the East and West of the county according to the home address for the young person. This increased frequency allows more time for discussion and risk management.

1.8 In October 2013, referral pathways were agreed with the three voluntary organisations (Catch 22, What Is Sexual Exploitation (WISE) from Sussex Central YMCA and Barnardos), working in East Sussex to help protect and support young people who are at risk of Sexual Exploitation. These pathways are used to make referrals to any of the three voluntary organisations once the immediate safety of the child has been considered via the child protection process. The referral pathways reinforced the expectation that normal child protection processes should apply for any child or young person who is at risk of significant harm due to sexual exploitation or sexual abuse. Currently, the three voluntary organisations are working with approximately 30 vulnerable young people including LAC and are providing consultation to a range of staff including to the residential homes and Lansdowne secure unit.

1.9 A small number of specialist agency placements external to East Sussex have been procured to respond to the complex needs of a small number of young women who have been victimised by offenders and often this has been after a period in secure accommodation.

1.10 The Police have also been successful in disrupting some networks who have targeted local children.

2. **Summary.**

2.1 The panel is asked to note the data and progress in relation to LAC who go missing and who may be at risk of CSE and to endorse the key priorities for Children’s Services and East Sussex’s LSCB.

- To finalise the process for undertaking Return Home Interviews with Sussex Police and Catch 22 and for this to be signed off by the strategic group of the LSCB.
- To consider a Pan Sussex re-commissioning arrangement for undertaking Return Home Interviews.
- To ensure that there is more accurate recording of all missing/absent episodes for looked after children.
- East Sussex LSCB to regularly review and analyse data on LAC who go missing or who are absent.
- East Sussex LSCB to review the ability of local partner agencies to be proactive in respect of disruption and prosecution.