



CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

FRIDAY 28 JULY 2017

10.00 AM COMMITTEE ROOM, COUNTY HALL, LEWES

MEMBERSHIP - Councillors Charles Clark, Chris Dowling, Kathryn Field, Jim Sheppard, Colin Swansborough, Sylvia Tidy and Francis Whetstone

A G E N D A

1 Election of Chair

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2017 (*Pages 3 - 6*)

3 Apologies for absence

4 Disclosure of Interests

Disclosure by all members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the member regards the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.

5 Urgent items

Notification of items which the Chair considers to be urgent and proposes to take at the end of the appropriate part of the agenda. Any members who wish to raise urgent items are asked, wherever possible, to notify the Chair before the start of the meeting. In so doing, they must state the special circumstances which they consider justify the matter being considered urgently.

6 Exclusion of Press and Public

To consider excluding the public and press from the meeting for the next two agenda items on the grounds that if the public and press were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as specified in Category 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to any individual.

7 Ofsted Inspection reports for the following:

7a Hazel Lodge (*Pages 7 - 14*)

8 Children's Home Regulations 2015, Regulation 44: Inspection reports for the period April - June 2017

8a Acorns at Dorset Road (*Pages 15 - 82*)

8b Brodrick House (*Pages 83 - 150*)

8c Hazel Lodge (*Pages 151 - 220*)

8d Homefield Cottage (*Pages 221 - 286*)

- 8e Lansdowne Secure Unit (*Pages 287 - 354*)
- 8f The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive (*Pages 355 - 428*)
- 9 Any other exempt items considered urgent by the Chair.
- 10 Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2016/17 (*Pages 429 - 440*)
Report by the Director of Children's Services.
- 11 Annual progress report of the East Sussex Fostering Service (*Pages 441 - 450*)
Report by the Director of Children's Services.
- 12 Annual progress report of the East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service (*Pages 451 - 456*)
Report by the Director of Children's Services
- 13 Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics (*Pages 457 - 460*)
Report by Director of Children's Services.
- 14 Any other non-exempt items considered urgent by the Chair.

PHILIP BAKER
Assistant Chief Executive
County Hall, St Anne's Crescent
LEWES BN7 1UE

20 July 2017

Contact: Hannah Matthews, 01273 335138

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CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held at County Hall, Lewes on 28 April 2017.

PRESENT Councillors Roy Galley (Chair) Councillors Jim Sheppard, Rosalyn St. Pierre and Philip Howson

ALSO PRESENT Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care
Teresa Lavelle- Hill- Head of LAC
Nicola Scott- Operations Manager Residential
Antony Julyan- Operations Manager Disability
Shirin White- RHM Acorns
Janet Fairless- RHM Homefield
Oliver White- Deputy RHM Brodrick
Helen Simmons- RHM The Bungalow and Interim RHM Lansdowne

29 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2017

29.1 The Panel agreed that the minutes were a correct record of the meeting held on 27 January 2017.

29.2 The Panel asked as a matter arising how many Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people were in East Sussex County Council's care. The Assistant Director Early Help and Social Care said that the Council currently had 26 children in its care with an average age of 16.

30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

30.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs O'Keeffe, Tidy, Phillips (substitute: Cllr Howson) and Clark.

31.1 Apologies for absence were also received from Dawn Emsley, Deputy RHM Hazel Lodge.

31 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

31.1 There were no disclosures of interest.

32 URGENT ITEMS

32.1 There were no urgent items.

33 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

33.1 The Panel resolved to exclude the public and press from the meeting for the next two agenda items on the grounds that if the public and press were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as specified in Category 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to any individual.

34 OFSTED INSPECTION REPORTS

34.1 The Panel considered reports received from Ofsted on the following services:

- a) Acorns at Dorset Road
- b) The Bungalow
- c) Homefield Cottage
- d) Lansdowne Secure Unit

34.2 The Panel also considered a verbal report on the Ofsted inspection of Brodrick House.

34.3 The Panel were informed that officers had unsuccessfully challenged the result of the Ofsted inspection of The Bungalow but had decided not to take the matter further.

34.4 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

35 CHILDREN'S HOME REGULATIONS 2015, REGULATION 44: INSPECTION REPORTS FOR THE PERIOD DECEMBER 2016 TO FEBRUARY 2017.

35.1 The Panel considered Regulation 44 Reports for the period December 2016 to February 2017 for the following Children's Homes:

- (a) Acorns at Dorset Road
- (b) Brodrick House
- (c) Hazel Lodge
- (d) Homefield Cottage
- (e) Lansdowne Secure Unit
- (f) The Bungalow

35.2 Each Registered Homes Manager gave an oral update on activity at the home covering the period since the last Panel meeting.

35.3 The Panel discussed a number of issues including:

- the difficulty in maintaining short stay vacancies at the Acorn respite service when parents decline to take back their child from the service – and the Council has a corporate parenting duty towards the child – and how this risk can sometimes be reduced by providing additional support to the family;
- the continued work to reduce the number of agency staff at all sites but the requirement to use them on occasion, e.g. due to sudden vacancies; and
- the value of carrying out Return Home Interviews in instances where the child was known to be safe during the time that they had absconded; and
- how the Corporate Parenting Panel is effective at holding children's homes to account and in promoting the importance of the Council's corporate parenting role; the Panel considered ways that it could become even more effective in the future.

35.4 The Panel RESOLVED to note the reports.

36 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

36.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which outlined the changes to the numbers of Looked After Children (LAC) in the last quarter. The Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care, explained that the statistics represented a snap-shot of the activity of the Service at the end of the quarter and that there is considerable activity which goes on throughout the months.

36.2 The Panel were advised that the LAC service ended the financial year with a £750k overspend due to the needs driven cost of placing children in care. The LAC service continues to look at ways of reducing costs whilst fulfilling its obligations, e.g. pushing for joint funding with the NHS where appropriate.

36.3 The Panel debated whether more time should be spent looking in detail at the cohorts of children other than the 50 or so who are in East Sussex children's homes or in the secure unit. The Assistant Director advised that each child has regular LAC reviews and that annual reports by the Independent Reviewing Officer team were also produced and presented to the Panel.

36.4 The Panel was informed that the Council has notified Ofsted about a child currently in an unregulated placement. Ofsted had confirmed that ESCC has made all reasonable efforts to identify a regulated placement but agreed that to date this has not proved successful.

36.5 The Panel RESOLVED

- 1) to note the report;
- 2) to receive an annual report from the Independent Reviewing Officer team concerning the cohorts of children in foster care etc; and
- 3) to record its thanks to Councillor Rosalyn St. Pierre upon her retirement as an important member of the panel and as an advocate for Looked After Children.

The meeting ended at 11.40 am.

Councillor Roy Galley
Chair

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Report to: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of meeting: Friday 28 July 2017

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2016/17

Purpose: To update the Corporate Parenting Panel on the contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers to Quality Assuring and Improving Services for Looked After Children

RECOMMENDATION:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to comment on and note the contents of the report.

1 Background

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

2 Supporting information

2.1 The report is attached as Appendix 1.

3. Recommendations

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

STUART GALLIMORE
Director of Children's Services

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Local Members

All

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Annual Independent Reviewing Officer Report

Background documents

None

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Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report April 2016 – March 2017

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

1. Purpose of service and legal context

- 1.1 The 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 Children Looked After (CLA) 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 National Children's Bureau research 'The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officers in England' (March 2014) provides a wealth of information and findings regarding the efficacy of IRO services. The foreword written by Mr Justice Peter Jackson; makes the following comment:

The Independent Reviewing Officer must be the visible embodiment of our commitment to meet our legal obligations to this special group of children. The health and effectiveness of the IRO service is a direct reflection of whether we are meeting that commitment, or whether we are failing.

2. Key messages

Achievements and challenges for 16/17 included:

- 3 half day workshops and audits focussed on Care Leavers, diversity and ethnicity and Voluntary Section 20 placements.
- Continued monitoring of Placement Orders and Placement with Parents.
- Development of new Issues Resolution procedure.
- Working together to improve the consistency and quality of pathway planning for care leavers.
- Improving the quality of outcome focussed care plans and using new data base.
- Increased quality assurance feedback activity for locality and children looked after teams.
- Continued challenge to the operational teams regarding care planning.
- Rising numbers of CLA and CP, decreasing staff numbers and pressure on operational resources.
- Long term professional relationships ending as young people turn 18.

3. Thematic Audit Feedback

3.1 IRO/CPA's and managers undertook three half day audits focussing on children accommodated voluntarily (Section 20); Diversity and Pathway Plans.

3.2 Care Plans and Pathway Plans - *Embedding new ways of working*

3.3 The single child's plan is now integrated into the whole system and is designed to be responsive and dynamic to the child's changing needs and environment. It is central to the IRO role and review process and has been the focus of audit and improvement over the last year, with a particular focus on pathway plans for young people over 16 who are preparing for independence.

3.4 The purpose of the new plans is to enhance collaboration with children, parents, carers and other professionals making the plans more accessible, relevant, specific, incremental and focussed on the identified outcome and the audit process has been measuring to this standard.

3.5 IROs have contributed to the improvement plan by auditing files with a subsequent report presented to senior managers, feeding back any issues to the relevant Operational Managers. This work is ongoing as new ways of working are embedded into the culture and practice of the service. The outcome of raising the profile of the plans and the joint work between the services has led to further training regarding pathway planning, using the new database and employing a temporary consultant to the Through Care Team. This cohort has also been the subject of audit across all levels of the service regularly across the year.

3.6 The new system has also presented challenges to the IROs who have changed their practice in recording the reviews. IROs support and training needs in this area continue to be further developed and reviewed.

3.7 Ethnicity and Diversity - *Understanding the child's lived experience*

3.8 East Sussex is predominantly White British and an audit was completed to ensure the needs of the small cohort of black and minority ethnic children and young people are understood and addressed. Whilst statistical information is useful and important it is limited and so it is also important to be confident that children and young people are able to talk to

those close to them about their religious faith/belief, sexuality, gender identity and/or any other feelings of being different. This means also understanding the messages that they are getting from their environment. This is also an area identified by Ofsted in the last inspection as in need of improvement.

3.9 IRO/CPAs undertook a thematic audit of 29 (38%) of CLA who are from different minority ethnic backgrounds. The first section of the audit focussed on recorded factual information and the second on the child's lived experience. Some of the questions were deliberately speculative to stimulate thinking about seeking and recording more textured information. The hypothesis was that the information gathering and understanding of the needs of children and young people from ethnic minorities is inconsistent and general in nature.

3.10 Key findings:

- There were some examples of detailed consideration of needs but overall Information was generic, impersonal, at times inaccurate and confused.
- The environment of children and young people is not routinely explored or recorded so did not inform an understanding of their lived experience and therefore potential needs or relevant services.

3.11 Recommendations taken forward were as follows:

- Social Workers should be informed of opportunities offered by the new database and encouraged to record in more detail and always check out accuracy.
- Information about the environment including ethnic population of the school, knowledge about relevant support groups should be sought and recorded in the Care Plan part 1 and inform assessments.
- Greater specificity of recording of religion will enhance assessment and planning.

3.12 These findings were shared with the Looked After Children Teams and the equalities team who as a result formulated some systems and practice guidance for social workers to use.

3.13 **Children accommodated voluntarily - *Consent and drift***

3.14 East Sussex revised the practice guidance regarding children who become looked after voluntarily with the parents' consent (Section 20, Children Act 1989) to enhance the timeliness of planning for these children. The aim of this small scale audit was to measure compliance with the new guidance and the hypothesis was that these children will have up to date consent, the parent continues to understand his or her rights and is consulted as appropriate, there is a clear plan for the child to return home and the need for accommodation is reviewed.

3.15 Key findings:

- Out of the eleven audited only one did not have consent
- It was not always easy to find senior manager signed agreement on the system
- Nine had a clear plan, 2 did not.

4. Problem resolution and escalation

- 4.1 A pivotal role of the IRO/CPA is to raise issues affecting a child's care 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 formerly as a Dispute Resolution Process whereby the issue can be escalated to the attention of senior managers and ultimately the Chief Executive and externally to Cafcass for resolution.
- 4.2 The newly named Issues Resolution Process shifts the emphasis to reflect what happens in practice in building on the good relationships and collaborative approach at the earliest opportunity to resolve problems and differences.
- 4.3 IROs continue to advocate for timely planning and intervention for children and young people. Examples include:
- scrutinising the status and progress of plans for a number of children who are placed voluntarily (Section 20);
 - delay in agreeing resources for a Special Guardian Order (SGO) plan for a child;
 - delay in interventions and planning for timely contact;
 - scrutinising assessments;
 - chasing up the timely initiation and completion of statutory duties.
- 4.4 Specific examples include two young people who have been out of school for a considerable time. The two respective IROs involved have worked collaboratively with the social work teams and the Virtual School over many months to get these young people into school.
- 4.5 Over the last year there have been 2 formal challenges using the Issues Resolution Process. One involved a change in services for a young person with disabilities where his care plan of short breaks was affected by the pressure on the short breaks resources. The outcome of this was to raise the profile of the potential problem with the pressure on the resource but also to prompt an updating assessment of his care plan that concluded this needed to change anyway.
- 4.6 The second was the unplanned return of a child to his mother's care and the need for timely assessments and intervention. Support was put in place quickly and this has been resolved but remains a vulnerable arrangement.
- 4.7 IROs also raised concerns with senior managers about the impact of delay in the police service completing criminal investigations, length of time for Criminal Prosecution Service (CPS) decision making and timing of court hearings; on young people's emotional health as well as on planning, for their education for example. Some of these involved children, both alleged victim and perpetrators, waiting for up to a year before these were resolved.
- 4.8 Good practice is also recognised and often escalated to senior managers so that it is acknowledged across the service. Examples of these include alerting senior managers to a young person who said of her social worker, "she was really kind and good at explaining things" and that she was "brilliant". The excellent qualities of a child friendly care plan were highlighted (see the feedback on the following page for two social workers' relationship based practice).

Feedback 1

“At H’s LAC review I was impressed to see and hear the easy relationship D (social worker) has built with H over a relatively, short and traumatic period of time. I am highlighting this as this young man can be so anxious he actually took his GCSE’s at home. He had his previous social worker for a number of years and the change of SW at the end of August 2016 was daunting. H was also seriously ill end November/ December 2016 - he was in intensive care – had a heart attack. He also suffers PTSD.”

Feedback 2

“I just wanted to highlight the excellent SW intervention in this case. As you know it has been a rocky road but M’s thoughtfully planned intervention has in my view been pivotal in helping K turn the corner. K is currently accepting all interventions - I know things can change again but think this high standard of social work should be applauded.”

5. Children and Young people leaving care

- 5.1 Children and young people leave care for a variety of reasons but the majority are either placed permanently under relevant legislation including adoption or they turn eighteen.
- 5.2 It is well documented in research that one of the most consistent professional relationships with a young person is with the IRO. Currently 31% of our CLA are aged between 15 and 17 and most of these young people have had the same IRO for many years. Over the last year and in the coming years, IROs are saying goodbye to many young people they have known for a long time. There is a plan in the year ahead to look in more detail at these young people collectively as an IRO group and consider any feedback they have given and their individual outcomes to see what insights this offers to planning and practice.
- 5.3 A few young people have given their IRO hugs goodbye and have wanted to mark the ending in some way and IROs remember the following comments from two young people.

One felt “he would have benefited from a move to the Through Care Team at 14 years”.

And the other one said that he would always remember the paper planes the IRO made for him to help him feel more relaxed during his reviews when he was younger.

6. Quantitative information about the IRO/CPA service

**1,529 CLA review meetings for 684 children
were held in the year compared with:**
1229 in 15/16
1232 in 14/15
1530 in 13/14
1688 in 12/13

6.1 Although THRIVE programme is no longer in place the targets for the year remained.

As at 31 st March 2015	Thrive target	Actual figures
CP	502	469
LAC	522	548
31st March 2016	Target	
CP	469	459 (18.2.16)
LAC	522	548 (18.2.16)
31st March 2017	522	563

6.2 CLA numbers have risen steadily over the year ending on 563 and well above the target of 522 reversing the trend of previous years as more children and young people are being accommodated than leaving.

6.3 The table below indicates the gap between male and female CLA narrowed slightly last year and numbers of BME children and young people have increased.

31.3.17	18.2.16	31.3.15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44% Female • 56% Male • 16% BME • 7% involved with disability teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42% Female • 58 % Male • 14% BME • 7.5% involved with disability teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41% Female • 59% Male • 15% BME • 6% involved with disability teams

6.4 A closer look at the figures show that 31% of CLA are aged between 15 and 17 and 62% of this cohort are male.

6.5 Numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people have increased following the introduction of the dispersal scheme and account for 4.5% of the CLA population. Many of these young people are placed out of the county and in specialist residential placements in London. Two IROs have taken responsibility for chairing the reviews for the young people placed in London and identifying and raising issues that affect them such as sexual health treatment and guidance and financial support which is the subject of challenge and concern and has been raised with senior managers.

6.6 IRO caseloads

6.7 Overall across the service referral rates have increased over the year. In tandem with the increase in the CLA numbers, children subject to child protection plans has also increased, going from 448 to 477 and have escalated steeply so far this year to currently 551. However staffing in the unit has decreased in line with savings plans and this has consequently resulted in IROs and CPAs having caseloads in excess of 100 again. In East Sussex, IRO/CPAs have always carried higher than average caseloads compared with both their colleagues in other authorities and the DfE guidance 'IRO Handbook' of between 50 and 70. As with the whole of the service the increases have an impact on the pressures on IROs.

7 Children's Participation

7.1 Encouraging children and young people to take part in their reviews begins at an early age in recognition of the importance of this to his or her self-esteem and self-efficacy and the consequent impact on good outcomes. Ways of engaging children are many, varied and highly individual and we try to measure this in a number of ways.

7.2 Our participation figures are consistently high and this year is no different. Twenty-two children and young people did not attend or contribute to their reviews. Out of these almost half were still very young and for others social workers were just beginning to build relationships with the children. In another a manager had to cover sickness absence and had not had the opportunity to meet with the children. The target for participation is 95% and the performance in this area exceeds this target given the very small number of children who do not participate (greater than 98%).



8. Late reviews

8.1 Services for CLA are highly regulated with specific timescales for reviews. The unit works hard to achieve this so that children's plans can be considered in a timely way, however due to the pressures on the service, the reorganisation of administrative support and the introduction of the new data base there has been an increase in the number of late reviews from 6 (0.4%) in the previous year to 17 (1%) this year. The majority of these were no longer than a week late.

8.2 The reasons vary and include errors by all those involved and also reflect the need to be responsive to events that happen in children's lives. Some young people for example had late reviews because they were part of the dispersal scheme and the handover from Kent was delayed. This is a target area for improvement this coming year.

9. Permanence Outcomes

9.1 A central function of the IRO role is to ensure timely planning for outcomes for permanence for children and to challenge any drift. IROs liaise closely with Children's Guardians when there are care proceedings and contribute their views to the final care plan. A permanence plan should be discussed and agreed at the second review, approximately 4 months after a child becomes looked after.

9.2 Looking only at children 12 and under, these plans were in place for 85% (78) of children in this cohort. The remaining 15% (12) who did not have a permanence plan agreed by the 2nd review reflect some of the complexities of care planning. An example is a baby who was allegedly being poisoned by his parents who are denying this. The evidence had to be tested in a Fact Finding hearing to seek a determination; however the parents are now appealing the outcome of this hearing so it has not been possible to identify a permanence plan. Other examples include previously agreed family placements being withdrawn unexpectedly. In one case progress has been delayed due to staffing changes in the social work team and this was followed up by the IRO.

9.3 Following the making of a Placement Order by the court where the agreed plan is adoption, IROs also monitor drift in the process of making adoptive placements in a timely way and in the revocation of the order when adoption is no longer the plan. IROs challenge any drift in this process on an individual case by case basis but also by feeding back jointly to the Operations Managers in the Safeguarding and CLA services respectively who monitor progress. In past years this has been the subject of challenge and dispute but there has been improvement this year and this has not been necessary.

10. Professional Profile of the IRO and CPA Service

10.1 The IRO service sits within the Performance and Planning Directorate of Children's Services and is managed by the Head of Safeguarding, Douglas Sinclair, and two operations managers, Sue McGlynn and Alex Sutton who have the leads for the IRO and Child Protection Adviser (CPA) role in Child Protection and LAC respectively. When the unit was created, chairing Child Protection Conferences (CPC) and LAC reviews were separate specialisms. These two roles are further separated by the different legislation and regulatory protocols underpinning them. Although in the main the roles are no longer separated the names have stuck and chairs have been referred to within this report as IRO/CPA.

10.2 The IRO/CPA team began the year with a complement of 9.6 full time equivalent staff at Practice Manager Level (LMG2). This equates to 10 IRO/CPAs, 8 working full time and 2 part time. In response to the reduction in CP Plans achieved during 2015/16, sustained during Quarters 1-2 2016/17, and efficiency savings required, it was agreed that the Unit would reduce by 1 IRO/CPA position at the end of November 2016 and the two Safeguarding Operations Managers would be allocated partial caseloads. An IRO/CPA took early retirement from the Local Authority after 33 years' service and this post was not replaced so the savings were made. Amanda Glover, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), is also part of the Unit and has responsibility for managing allegations against people who work, care or volunteer with children. Operations Managers Sue McGlynn and Alex Sutton act as LADO when Amanda is on leave.

10.3 IRO/CPAs have continued to undertake a number of different activities although this is currently constrained due to their increased caseloads:

- permanent IRO/CPAs chair CP Conferences as well as CLA reviews
- 3 IROs chair CLA reviews
- IRO/CPAs quality assure all referrals for a CP Conference on a duty basis
- 1 IRO has specialist lead for children with disabilities
- 2 IRO/CPAs lead LSCB training
- 1 IRO/CPA is part of the Young People's Participation Group
- 1 IRO/CPA chairs PREVENT meetings
- 2 IROs lead on asylum seeking children and young people.

11. Conclusion and actions for the year ahead

11.1 Overall the Safeguarding Unit is performing well. The achievements and challenges over the last year have been managed by the team with characteristic willingness to go the extra mile and support each other. IRO/CPAs continue to play a significant role in advocating for timely care planning and alerting the organisation to issues affecting young people on an individual and collective basis. There are clear areas presented in the report to celebrate, such as high participation rates, timely challenge to care planning and highlighting the need to develop pathway planning. There are also clear areas to improve such as building on the quality of outcome focussed plans and ensuring more reviews take place on time. In addition further challenges ahead include reducing the risks to vulnerable young people from sexual exploitation, working with families where neglect is a factor and working within an increasingly pressured environment.

Key messages

Improvement activities for the year ahead:

- IROs will have an increased focus on monitoring and reviewing statutory requirements e.g. Initial Health Assessments and PEPs
- IROs will continue to monitor children subject to Section 20 placements to address any drift in planning
- Half day workshops and audits focussed on Diversity needs, pathway plans and sibling contact.
- Improved performance for reviews being held on time.
- Improved quality of outcome focussed care plans
- Reduced IRO/CPA caseloads



Written by Alex Sutton 10.7.17



co-signed Sue McGlynn

Operations Managers
Safeguarding Unit

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Report to: Corporate Parenting Panel
Date: 28th July 2017
By: Director of Children's Services
Title of report: Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service
1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017
Purpose of report: To outline the performance of the Fostering Service between
1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017

RECOMMENDATION:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to comment on and note the contents of the report.

1 Background information

- 1.1 The Annual Progress report of the East Sussex Fostering Service is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Services to LAC are supported by base budgets within Children's Services. There are no increased costs arising from this report.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the contents of the report.

STUART GALLIMORE
Director of Children's Services

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Local Members:

All

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Annual progress report of the East Sussex Fostering Service.

Background documentation:

None

Appendix 1

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 which are addressed fully throughout the report. The core functions are as listed:

- Recruitment and retention
- Assessment
- Supervision and review
- Foster carer training
- The matching and placing of children and young people with foster carers

2. Recruitment and Retention of Carers

2.1 2016/2017 has been another challenging year for the recruitment of foster carers. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) experiences are consistent with those of both our neighbouring authorities and of Fostering Services nationally, who have all reported similar challenges. There appears to be a number of different reasons for this. Some applicants continue to be concerned about the implications of allegations. Previous high success rates in ESCC's recruitment of foster carers have, to some extent, exhausted the existing pool of carers. The number of foster carers transferring from agencies has also decreased this year. Those carers who initially agreed to transfer due to lack of placements and support from their own agencies have then been persuaded to remain with their own agencies by being offered financial incentives. In addition, the successful reduction in the use of agency placements has resulted in fewer carers looking after East Sussex children who are available for transfer. There are also some agency carers wishing to transfer who have not always meet the quality standards of ESCC Fostering Service.

2.2 As with last year, the recruitment and retention team have continued to achieve their timescale targets for assessments of 6 – 8 months (dependent on the complexity of the assessment). In order to attain the expedient and efficient transfer of carers from other agencies, the recruitment and assessment team continue to use an abridged assessment tool, optimising the existing statutory information from the foster carers' previous agency. This has allowed the Fostering Service to approve transferring carers within a maximum of 3 months of their initial enquiry.

2.3 From 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017, 411 new enquiries were received which led to 182 screening calls and 76 initial visits to prospective foster carers. This year the Fostering Service has introduced a text enquiry service where applicants can text, phone, email, or complete a web form to enquire about the service. These methods maximise enquiries at weekends and out of office hours.

2.4 There were 6 'Skills to Foster' pre-assessment preparation courses held during 2016/17 and 28 households attended these courses. During the assessment process, the Children in Care Council (CICC) continued to play an active role by holding informal interviews with applicants and providing feedback for the assessment report.

2.5 There were 21 households offering 50 placements approved in 2016/17 compared with 26 households in 2015/16 offering 44 placements. 3 of these households were transfers from independent fostering providers and 1 of these households had an East Sussex looked after child placed. The reasons why 17 further assessments did not progress to Stage 2 (presentation to the Fostering Panel) were as follows-

- 3 agency carers chose to remain with their agency after being offered "incentives "
- 9 cases were due to changes in personal circumstances that could not have been predicted earlier
- 5 cases were closed by the Fostering Service due to issues at Stage

There were 6 fostering assessments still in progress at 31 March 2017.

2.6 ESCC Fostering Service performs better in relation to our immediate neighbouring authorities in recruitment activity. This is based on the Ofsted Dataset returns of 2015/16. This is the first year Ofsted have released this information.



East Sussex Fostering Service still performs slightly better than the national average for the retention of its foster carers.

2016/17	ESCC	Nationally
Loss of foster carers	8%	12%
Average length of service of carers	7.34 years	7.8 years

The breakdown of reasons that carers have given for leaving ESCC during 2016/17 were as follows-

- Adoption of foster children
- Termination of approval
- Retirement

Given that ESCC continues to have a high percentage of foster carers over 55 years of age, it is anticipated that there will be an increasing number of foster carers retiring. This local trend reflects a wider national demographic trend.

2.7 The Fostering Service continues to employ the marketing strategy of 'continual presence'. This consists of wide-ranging extensive advertising throughout the year using a range of different mediums. The Fostering Service marketing strategy for 2016/17 has focussed on 'You can be a foster carer in 6 months' and 'Don't keep our children waiting'.

Below are some examples of mediums used to recruit foster carers:

- Radio advertising - Heart FM
- Monthly newspaper advertising – county wide in all areas of East Sussex and on the borders of Kent, West Sussex and Brighton
- Lamppost banners
- Football hoarding advertising – Lewes, Eastbourne and Hastings
- Roundabout advertising – 2 in Eastbourne and 1 in Hastings
- Car park tickets – Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Seaford and Newhaven
- Bus stops – Eastbourne and Hastings
- Net Natives – interruption advertising
- Advertising on the Amey courier vans

- Display vans in both Hastings and Eastbourne
- 'Your County' magazine – delivered to every household in East Sussex
- Editorial in East Sussex Herald & Hastings Observer – January 2017
- Magnet Magazine
- ESCC payslips
- Twitter
- Facebook

Recruitment Events

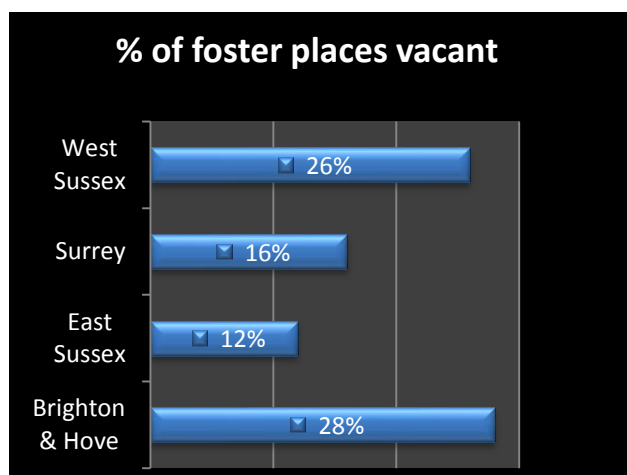
- The Fostering Service has facilitated a number of information events in different locations to ensure a high profile across the county. Information evenings have been held on a monthly basis in Eastbourne, Hastings and Uckfield. The service also facilitated 3 further information evenings in Eastbourne, Lewes and Hastings giving information about the needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking children requiring placements in East Sussex. The Fostering Service also attended and gave out information at Volunteer Fairs in Peacehaven, Uckfield and at 2 staff conferences.

Retention Events

- In May 2016, an evening event was held at Barnsgate Manor to say "Thank You" to our foster carers. This was attended by 120 carers and staff.
- In August 2016, all foster carers and their families caring for East Sussex children were invited to a picnic at Knockhatch. Both children's social workers and supervising social workers attended. Agency foster carers were also invited to give them the opportunity to meet ESCC foster carers and staff, and to find out more about our service.
- In October 2016, the children of our foster carers were invited to an activity day at 'Branching Out' in celebration of 'Fostering Network's Sons and Daughters week'.

2.8 Percentage of foster care vacancies

The % of foster care vacancies is indicative of a service's ability to match and effectively manage its foster carer's resources. ESCC Fostering Service had only 12% foster care vacancies as outlined in the Ofsted data set in 2015/16 as compared to higher numbers in neighbouring authorities. The more recent Ofsted 2016/17 returns would indicate a similar percentage of healthy operational vacancies within ESCC Fostering Service.



3. Foster Care Training and support

3.1 From 1st April 2016 to the 31st March 2017, 796 training places have been taken up by foster carers (as compared to last year's equivalent of 589), evidencing a substantial increase in attendance.. Overall, the evaluations of the courses by participants were rated as excellent,

although there has been a reduction of evaluations being completed since the introduction of the East Sussex Learning Portal.

3.2 New courses introduced this year have included:

- Fostering changes, under 12's, addressing behaviour management strategies
- Introduction to child sexual abuse
- Managing children with sexually harmful behaviours
- Caring for asylum seeking, refugee and unaccompanied children
- Supporting education and success, a practical approach for primary aged children
- Supporting education and success, a practical approach for secondary aged children
- Internet safety: fostering in a digital world - 13 years old and over
- Internet safety: fostering in a digital world - under 12 year olds

3.3 Given the varied expertise, knowledge and skill base of our foster carers, a number of courses have successfully been delivered by experienced foster carers. The new courses so far delivered by foster carer trainers are:

- Parenting traumatised children
- Practical skills to help children protect themselves
- Understanding self-harm
- Caring for children with additional needs
- Using visuals to help communication
- Supporting new carers workshops
- Creative ideas for digital photo albums

These courses have received excellent feedback. Foster carers have identified the value of having experienced carers who understand the fostering task delivering specific expertise training. This model of delivery also provides a more cost effective way to upskill those foster carers that need further training. To ensure the quality of training, there is an agreed framework of requirements and support identified with opportunities for continual professional development. 16 foster carers are undertaking a variety of qualifications. These include the level 3 diploma children and young people's workforce qualification, and Level 3 and 4 in training and education. There are also 5 dedicated foster carers involved in the delivery and assessment of the children and young people's qualification.

3.4 Planned courses for 2017/18 include (in conjunction with the Virtual School):

- Mental health first aid
- Supporting Thrive in education
- Supporting young people where English is not their first language.

3.5 Other courses that Foster Carers / Supervising Social Workers are being trained to deliver are:

- An introduction to Non-violent resistance
- An introduction to Theraplay
- Understanding sensory attachment
- Understanding the angry child
- The impact of childhood experiences on mind, body and brain

To support the reduced training budget, identified training will be actively promoted to other agencies for income generation opportunities.

4 Foster carer support and supervision

4.1 The Fostering Service currently has 292 fostering households that provide a range of placements for children and young people including parent and baby placements. Supervision and contact plans are assessed on the complexity of the children placed, taking into account the needs of the foster carers and their families. The pressures and demands over the last year on foster carers and supervising social workers (SSW's) have increased, but the quality of the support provided has remained of a high standard.

4.2 Support groups are available to provide foster carers with opportunities to meet with other carers, to increase support networks and to give the opportunity for shared learning. There are four localised groups in Uckfield, Rotherfield, Eastbourne and Newhaven. There are also three themed support groups: a parent and child foster carers' support group; a support group for carers of adolescents and a 'men who foster' support group. In recognition of the growing demands on foster carers and the increased complex needs of the children placed with carers, a "Buddy" system was launched in April 2017. Nationally, research evidences that peer support for foster carers is very successful. There are a number of 'Buddy' systems around the country which focus on the support of carers in relation to moving children on, coping with allegations and childcare and support. There is no doubt that foster carers receive a different kind of support knowing that they are talking to a colleague who has often experienced the same issues as they have.

4.3 Further support is provided for foster carers through the fostering advice line - an out of hours service, available to all foster carers and supported lodgings providers for 365 days per year. This service is staffed by a team of 7 workers from the Fostering Service, working on a rota basis, to provide support and advice to all foster carers. The service deals with a range of issues such as placement disruption, children and young people missing from placement, police involvement or generally supporting carers in managing challenging behaviours presented by our children or young people. The fostering advice line received 297 contacts from foster carers seeking support or advice during 2016/17.

4.4 There continue to be close working relationships with Looked After Children(LAC) teams, The Child and Adolescent Mental Health service (CAMHS), The Virtual School and Placement Support Services(PSS); all of which are invaluable in supporting foster carers in sustaining placements and endeavouring to meet the children and young people's needs.

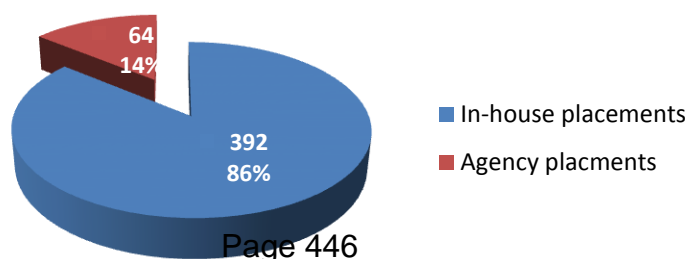
5 Health

5.1 Meeting the health needs of LAC remains a high priority for the Fostering Service. Foster carers continue to prioritise the health needs of their children with supervising social workers monitoring foster carers contribution to timely health assessments. There have been a number of training courses available which can be accessed by foster carers to focus on the health needs of young people. These include: autism, self-harm, first aid and healthy living.

6 Placement Activity

6.1 On 31st March 2017 there were 456 children in foster care. 392 of these children were placed with in-house placements. This includes in-house 'parent and child' placements, children subject to special guardianship orders placed with foster carers and those older young people remaining in their "staying put" fostering placements through to independence. The number of East Sussex LAC placed with agency foster carers has decreased from 77 children in 2015/16 to 64 at the end of March 2017.

Placement Activity 2016/17



The above figures illustrate that 86% of young people were looked after by in-house foster carers which is an increase of 4% from the previous year.

6.2 As of 31st March 2017, 25 young people (over 18 years of age) remain with their foster carers under 'Staying Put' arrangements. There are also 26 children who are currently subject to special guardianship orders placed with East Sussex foster carer and there has been 1 adoption order granted to an East Sussex foster carer during 2016/17.

6.3 Of the 506 referrals received between 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2017, 441 resulted in placements being made or matched. Of the 506 referrals, 65 were ultimately not required. On 31st March 2017 there were an additional 23 active referrals waiting to be matched with foster carers. These figures represent a slight increase in the number of matches and placements made as compared to last year. This is a significant workload for a small duty team who may also be seeking residential placements for some of our children.

7 The Supported Lodgings Team

7.1 East Sussex's supported lodgings provision continues to be an invaluable resource for LAC, care leavers and homeless young people. As in the previous year, the service has seen an increase of young people with very complex needs being accommodated within the service. A few young people have been able to step-down from therapeutic residential environments to supported lodgings providers. This has in part been due to the support and training on offer to providers and the increased approval of 6 providers being dual registered as foster carers and supportive lodging providers. During the last year, supported lodgings providers have provided a number of placements for children from in-house residential placements as well as from costly external agency placements. This has achieved a saving of £419,000. This vital step-down provision has not only made a valuable contribution to budgetary savings but has also been in young people's best interests, supporting them on the path to independence.

7.2 As of March 2017 there were 34 supported lodgings households providing a total of 50 placements across the county. This has given the service a net gain of 2 households and one placement as a result of 5 resignations and 7 new approvals.

7.3 In the period 1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017 the Supported Lodgings Team received 107 referrals requesting placement for young people of which 21 were for LAC placed in foster care, 41 were for care leavers and 45 were in respect of homeless young people. Of the 107 referrals received 19 were ultimately not required.

7.4 Flexibility of providers and their ability to accommodate a range of young people with different needs remains one of the primary objectives of the service. A priority for 2017/18 is to recruit a broader range of supportive lodgings providers. A new recruitment campaign is currently being launched.

8 User Participation

8.1 The Children in Care Council (CICC) continues to go from strength to strength. A new group was formed during 2016 comprising of 17 young people. All members are working on accredited courses such as Asdan, Youth Voice, Arts Award, First Aid Training, Food Hygiene, and Leadership.

8.2 The CICC attended 31 holiday activities, giving 98 young people the opportunity to raise issues about being in care and helping 45 young people to resolve their own individual issues.

8.3 CICC members have also participated in 80 opportunities to promote their work both locally and nationally. Examples below include:

- Production of a short film 'This is Us'. CICC members have been holding assemblies in their own schools to encourage discussions of, and reducing the stereotypes about being in care

- Meeting with the Children's Commissioner about separating siblings
- Attendance at the All Party Parliamentary Group to hear about The Family and Social Work Act and how ESCC could improve outcomes for looked after children in Personal Health Social Emotional lessons and apprenticeships
- Involvement nationally with Social Care Institute for Excellence in a national mental health project
- Holding local consultations, with CAMHS, CGL (Change Grow Live Advocacy Service) and LAC Nurses
- Regularly attendance at foster carer's preparation groups and recruitment panels for staff
- Shadowing of the Chief Executive Officer for the NSPCC for national takeover day. This was a very exciting opportunity in which the CICC joined a web chat with 50 other people and attended a meeting inside Buckingham Palace.
- Generating income of £2700 to enable young people to attend courses and a summer prom
- Design of new Pledge leaflets and a contact card
- Production of a very successful Christmas newsletter that was sent to all ESCC young people in care aged 8.
- Attendance at the Corporate Parenting Panel to update members on their work progress

9 Working in Partnership with East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA)

9.1 The Operations Manager attends the monthly evening meetings of the ESFCA management group to report on the developments of the East Sussex Fostering Service and on Children's Services more generally. During 2016/17 ESFCA elected a new chair and new trustees and agreed an ambitious agenda to support East Sussex County Council's foster carers, which has been very helpful to our LAC. They have also continued to provide support to foster carers who have raised concerns at the surgeries held in conjunction with both the Fostering and LAC Operational Managers.

10 The Placement Support Service (PSS)

10.1 The PSS is currently supporting 98 children in placement. During 2016-2017, 28 new pieces of work were commissioned including 6 pieces of life story work. The PSS also responded to 85 emergency or crisis requests from carers that resulted in 101 days support. The use of placement support is vital in sustaining extremely challenging placements, which would most likely, in the absence of this service, require alternative and more costly agency placements.

10.2 PSS staff are increasingly being asked to provide additional support to young people who are unable to sustain their school placement thus creating additional pressures on foster carers. This additional direct work is funded by the Virtual School. Income of £2,700 was generated by the service from grant applications to fund various activities and training for young people.

10.3 Despite some financial challenges the PSS has continued to provide some holiday and weekend group activities to LAC aged 5 to 17. All activities have an educational element and cover sport, art, environment or national curriculum. During the year:

- 41 group holiday activities were provided
- PSS worked with 110 young people
- 461 places were offered to children and young people
- 10 to 15 young people attend on average each activity

The feedback of 98% of young people who evaluated their activities ranged between good and excellent. The Fostering Service's partnership with St Bede's has continued, allowing our young people to access sports facilities and their swimming pool free of charge. The PSS has also been able to negotiate free tickets to a few of Brighton and Hove Albion football matches for our LAC.

10.4 A successful summer prom was held in June at the request of the CICC and other young people. This was jointly funded by the department and by income generated by the CICC. 120 young people and their carers attended the event. Feedback from young people included:

'Everyone dressed to impress and looked absolutely amazing'

'We danced all night as well as taking an insane amount of photos in the photo booth to help maintain long lasting memories'

'It was an incredible experience; I can't wait for the next one'

'The prom also gave the young people an opportunity to have fun with old friends as well as make new friendships'

'We felt really special celebrating - well 'just us'

10.5 Foster carers value PSS support and holiday activities highly as illustrated by the comments extracted from annual evaluations:

'We are more than just foster carers; placement support gives us time to be 'us'

'We get valuable time for ourselves; placement support is a great benefit to this young man'

'Over the years placement support has given us valuable time to simply re-charge for a while'

'It is difficult to say if we would have survived without placement support'

'Placement support is so important for my family to continue fostering'

'It has been invaluable to have placement support when young people are challenging'

'Gives my young person time out and builds their confidence'

'I would like to pass on my thanks to the placement support service for supporting my young person and carrying on my strategies'

'Without PSS I could not have offered the young person a placement for the 7 weeks she was here'

11 Summary

11.1 The Fostering Service continues to be highly effective but primary challenge of the service continues to be the recruitment and retention of foster carers. As outlined earlier in the report, in relation to population size, ESCC's Fostering Service remains proportionally the lead authority regionally in the recruitment and retention of foster carers as compared to our 4 neighbouring authorities. The recruitment strategy for 2016/17 focused on the transfer of suitable carers from independent agencies, especially for those carers who had East Sussex LAC placed with them. However, the tactics employed by agencies have served to thwart this plan with most carers initially wanting to transfer subsequently remaining with their agencies following the offer of increased enhancements. For 2017/18 the service will persevere with the transfer of suitable carers where possible, as well as continuing robust and energetic recruitment of a range of new foster carers.

The Key Management Priorities for 2017/2018 include:

- To continue the provision of high quality training and support for our foster carers so that stability for children is prioritised.
- To continue with an extensive recruitment strategy throughout the year to attract potential foster carers to come to East Sussex as the preferred fostering agency in this area. This will include targeted recruitment on the borders of East Sussex in order to recruit foster carers that (potentially) the Fostering Service could make available to our neighbouring authorities should there be a surplus.
- To recruit a wider pool of supportive lodgings providers to ensure more housing options are available for vulnerable homeless¹⁶ and 17 year olds and for our care leavers.

Adrian Sewell **Operation Manager Fostering Service**

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Report to: **Corporate Parenting Panel**

Date: **28 July 2017**

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

Title of report: **Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017**

Purpose of report: **To outline the performance of the Adoption and Permanence Service between 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017**

RECOMMENDATION:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to comment on and note the contents of the report.

1. Background information

1.1 The Annual Progress report of the East Sussex Fostering Service is attached as Appendix 1.

1.2 There are no increased costs arising from this report.

2. Recommendation

2.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the contents of the report.

STUART GALLIMORE
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Carole Sykes, Operations Manager, Adoption and Permanence Service
Tel: 01323 747406

Local Members:

All

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Annual Progress Report of the East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service.

Background Documents:

None

1. Supporting Information

	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017
1. Number of children adopted	57	43	45	38
2. Number of adoption matches (children)	50	56	32	38
3. Number of permanent fostering matches (children)	10	7	10	14
4. Number of East Sussex adoptive matches (children)	40	33	26	30
5. Number of consortium adoptive matches (children)	1	6	0	0
6. Number of inter-agency matches (children):				
Permanence:	4	3	2	0
Adoption:	9	17	6	8
7. Number of prospective adopters approved (households)	44	50	41	30
8. Number of permanent carers approved (households)	8	4	2	1
9. Number of children approved for adoption up to 31 st March 2017 (including 2 re-approvals)	52	43	53	52
10. Number of children approved for permanence up to 31 st March 2017	24	26	14	32
11. Number of approved adopters waiting to be matched	17	20	22	20
12. Number of disruptions presented to Panel:				
Permanence:	0	0	0	0
Adoptions:	1	0	1	0

2. Recruitment Activity

2.1 Activity levels have remained consistent over the past year and prospective adopters have continued to give positive feedback about the process. The dedicated telephone number for enquiries, specific adoption recruitment email address and the on-line enquiry form ensured that all enquirers received a prompt and personal service. Nonetheless there was a significant drop in the number of applications. This reflected the national picture and also that of neighbouring authorities and partners in Adoption South East (ASE).

2.2 The time taken to approve prospective adopters was maintained at an average of nine months from registering an interest to approval at Adoption Panel. With the introduction of the two stage assessment process it had been anticipated that most adopters would want to get through to approval as quickly as possible. However, the local evidence has shown that many more applicants want to take time to prepare themselves for adoption through Stage 1. However the time taken to assess applicants in Stage 2 remained on target.

2.3 During 2016/17 the Agency received 192 enquiries, 81 households attended information events and 46 households registered their interest in adoption. The conversion rate from

Information event to registration remained high, but unfortunately only 30 adopters were approved by year end. This was, in part, due to a significant number of the applicants having far more complex histories than the service has seen in previous years. A number of assessments could not be completed and resulted in the applications being paused, whilst others were counselled out of adoption completely. Fortunately the over recruitment of the previous year offset the reduction in approvals for 16/17.

2.4 The Service continued to offer monthly information events for prospective adopters, which profiled the needs of the children waiting. ESCC advertising and recruitment activity was hosted through the Government Gateway, First4Adoption, New Family Social, Coram BAAF and ESCC websites. In addition, the service's Facebook page was developed to offer information regarding local adoption services, as well as any key national developments.

2.5 Throughout the year the Government regionalisation agenda gathered pace, with the five pilot adoption regions set to go live in Autumn 2017. During 2016/17 ESCC joined the ASE partnership with Brighton and Hove, Surrey and West Sussex to explore forming an adoption region. Four subgroups were formed to develop closer working practices across the region in relation to recruitment, family finding, adoption support and finance. There remain a number of challenges given the different staffing structures, processes and cultures of each authority. However the partnership persisted in working together to find solutions which would also preserve some of the key individual features from each authority.

2.6 During 2016/17 the Service continued to receive enquiries from applicants living outside ESCC boundaries. Currently ESCC generates income from the interagency fees charged when ESCC approved adopters are used by other local authorities. Ten ESCC families were used by other local authorities to place 12 children during 2016/17, generating an income of £291,000. However this is likely to change if ASE becomes a fully functioning region with centralised processes.

2.7 In 2016/17 6 experienced adopters were reassessed as second time adopters, and 1 set of foster carers were assessed to adopt a child already in their care. In addition, 7 prospective adopters were approved for fostering to adopt i.e. beginning the placement as foster carers but then converting to adopters if the care child for the child becomes adoption. This minimises disruption for very young children.

3. Children with a plan for Adoption.

3.1 The number of children with a plan for adoption in ESCC remained consistent with 53 in 2015/16 and 52 2016/17. This was not reflected nationally, with some Courts appearing to favour a plan for Special Guardianship Orders over Adoption Orders. Locally there appeared to be more children who remained with their birth families during the legal process than had been seen in previous years. This raised a number of practice issues in relation to the care planning process, and greater complexity for the family finding process. If this becomes more widespread during 2016/17 it has the potential to cause delay for children. The Service will need to monitor this carefully.

3.2 The Service placed the majority of children with ESCC adopters. Of the 44 children matched this year; 36 were matched with ESCC approved adopters and 8 placed with interagency adopters. Of the 8; there were 2 sibling pairs, one sibling group of 3 children and a single child. Where children were not matched with ESCC adopters the main family finding organisations used were Linkmaker and ASE.

3.3 ASE held one joint adoption event which took place on 27th March 2017. It was based in, and mainly set up by West Sussex. 25 households of adopters attended of the 32 households invited and 39 children were featured. West Sussex and Surrey had the largest number of children at this event, whilst ESCC had a higher number of adopters. It is intended that 4 events will be held each year, with ESCC and Brighton to host the next one.

3.4 The recruitment and family finding elements of the Service continued to work closely together to identify adopters needed to match the children coming forward. It should be noted that there were a number of children who required genetic testing and/or had complex health needs. In addition many of the children had experienced domestic abuse, severe substance misuse and neglect within their birth families.

4. Staffing

4.1 At year end the service was recruiting to a range of posts as 6 staff had moved on during 16/17. It is pleasing to note that this was largely for promotion, retirement or relocation. This meant that the service was more dependent on freelance Social Workers to complete some of the key tasks such as assessments whilst recruitment was underway. Nonetheless there was some impact on the overall service offer and delivery.

5. Permanence

5.1 The Service has continued to target family finding for those children whose plan is permanent fostering. The permanence tracking workshop met regularly during 16/17 to closely monitor the timescale of permanence plans and matches. The number of children approved for permanence increased by 50% during the year to 32. There was specific targeted recruitment for a number of these children given the complexity of their needs and care plans. A number of 'in house' foster carers offered long term care to children already in placement with them, or were matched via the family finding newsletter. At year end there were 7 children with a plan for permanence for whom the service was actively family finding.

6. Adoption Support

6.1 There was a significant increase in the number of adopters who requested adoption support during 16/17. The placement of children with complex needs, or who are older and part of sibling groups always poses more challenges in the context of adoption support. From 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017 there were 56 requests for assessments of post adoption support needs, and of these 52 resulted in the provision of support.

6.2 'AdCAMHS' has continued to offer a dedicated therapy and consultation service during the year. It continued with its established unique partnership model, where clinicians and adoption workers 'think together' to consider the therapeutic needs of children and their parents. The desired outcome for the service was to contribute to adoption stability, to promote positive attachments within adoptive families and ultimately to prevent placement breakdown. At year end AdCAMHS was working with an average of 65 families.

6.3 The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was launched nationally in May 2015. The Government committed to ongoing funding of ASF for the duration of Parliament, originally being 2020. The ASF criteria was extended during this period, to be available to children adopted from care, intercountry adoption and children subject to Special Guardianship

Orders. The remit of the ASF though continued to be based specifically for the provision of therapeutic support. ESCC has worked closely with the fund, and used this to complement the work of AdCAMHS.

6.4 The Adoption Service worked closely with dedicated workers within the Virtual School. During the year they provided adoptive families with support for educational and school based issues, and offered training to schools in relation to the attachment needs of adoptive children in education.

6.5 For some families exhibiting high levels of need, the Adoption Service worked closely with Locality colleagues to manage safeguarding risks, with the aim of preventing adoptive families from breaking down.

6.6 During the year, the adoption service has held two social events for adoptive families. These were organised and supported by the service to enable adopters and their children to meet informally and have a fun day out. In addition, a number of support groups for children and adopters were facilitated by the service, and the contract with PAC-UK was maintained.

6.7 The demands on the indirect/letterbox and direct contact services increased throughout 16/17 with 817 indirect contact agreements open at year end, and 312 direct contact arrangements being supported by the service. Furthermore, the service also worked with 81 adopted adults wanting to access their records, and commissioned CMB Counselling to provide an intermediary service to adopted adults and their relatives.

7. Adoption & Permanence Panel

7.1 The number of Panels reduced over the last 12 months due to the reduction in recruitment activity and the introduction of greater efficiencies across the county. The number of Panels held in 2015/16 was 32, reducing to 27 in 2016/17.

7.2 The contract for medical advice to the panels transferred from Kent Health Care Trust to East Sussex Health Care Trust at the end of the year. This resulted in a greater level of consistency to both Panels, and also delivered a greater connectivity in relation to the paediatric needs of ESCC Looked After Children.

7.3 The Panel venue moved permanently from The View Hotel in Eastbourne in July 2016 to the Bellbrook Centre in Uckfield. This proved to be a successful move and has led to significant savings.

7.4 A successful Panel Training day was held in June focussing on disruption and fostering to adopt. This was well received by all.

8. Management Priorities 2016/17

- To continue to target recruitment for ESCC children and to work towards regaining previously achieved targets.
- To continue to strengthen and build on ESCC's high national profile and to further expand into a regional service together with our partners in Surrey, Brighton & Hove and West Sussex.

- To update and revise policies and procedures in accordance with new regulations and strategy guidance.
- To maintain and extend adoption support developments including the revised CAMHS contract, close partnerships with the Virtual School and continue to use the Adoption Support Fund to good effect.
- To maintain and support the new Health Services contract to improve provision to children.
- To ensure ESCC's role in the Regionalisation Agenda brings added value and builds on success.

Committee:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	28 July 2017
Title of Report:	Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
By:	Director of Children's Services
Purpose of Report:	To update the Panel on changes in the last quarter

RECOMMENDATION:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to comment on and note the contents of the report.

1. Background and supporting information

1.1 At the end of June 2017, there were 9 more children overall bringing East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to a total of 573 LAC. This is the highest number of children looking back over monthly data for the rolling year. A total of 410 children were in foster care with 68 of those children in agency placements, an increase of 4 over the quarter. 19 children were placed for adoption. 6 children were placed with foster carers who are also approved adopters under the Fostering for Adoption pathway.

1.2 The number of children with kinship carers now stands at 42, some of whom have been placed at the direction of a judge.

1.3 19 children subject to a Care Order were placed at home with their parents, a decrease of 4. Planning for placements of this sort is always monitored rigorously in order to mitigate any risk factors and agreement to begin or end a placement with parents is given at a senior level.

1.4 At the end of the quarter, 18 children were placed in agency residential placements, an increase of 3 placements.

1.5 At the end of the quarter, 3 children were secured via a welfare route. One young man had been readmitted in the context of dangerous substance misuse, one young woman who is almost 18 was secured after repeated episodes of challenging behaviour that put her at risk and the other child is still secured whilst she is supported to give evidence in a criminal trial against a family member. The young man is placed in Exeter because Lansdowne was full at the point of admission. The other two young people are both at Lansdowne. Exit planning is underway for all 3.

1.6 At the end of the period there were no LAC from ESCC remanded to criminal secure placements. Sadly 2 of our young people have been sentenced to custody over the quarter.

1.7 The numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people has remained stable. ESCC has continued to accept steady number of young people via the dispersal scheme, prioritising young people already physically in placement in East Sussex.

1.8 There were still 329 children subject to Child Arrangement/Residence Orders, a rise of 2 and 421 children subject to Special Guardianship Orders, a rise of 9.

1.9 During Q1 of 2017/18 one complaint was received from one of our Looked After Children at Lansdowne. She alleged that a member of staff had been 'disrespectful' to her. This was investigated by the manager and the complaint was upheld.

1.10 Services for LAC are funded from the Children's Services base budget.

2. Conclusion

2.1 Numbers and costs for LAC have continued to rise and continued close oversight will be maintained.

2.2 Only one complaint has been received and has been investigated fully.

STUART GALLIMORE Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care Tel: 01273 481274

Local Members:

All

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Children's Services LAC Summary between 01/07/2016 and 30/06/2017

Background documents:

None

Children's Services LAC Summary between 01/07/2016 and 30/06/2017

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Placement Type	Jul 16	Aug 16	Sep 16	Oct 16	Nov 16	Dec 16	Jan 17	Feb 17	Mar 17	Apr 17	May 17	Jun 17
A4 - Placed for adoption with consent (under section 19 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer	12	13	19	18	19	18	14	15	14	14	14	14
A5 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) with current foster carer				1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
A6 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer	7	7	7	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
H5 - Residential accommodation	5	4	7	8	10	9	7	8	11	11	13	17
K1 - Secure unit	5	4	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
K2 - Homes and Hostels	40	41	47	45	45	45	44	44	45	47	48	46
P1 - Placed with own parents	15	15	17	20	23	23	22	22	23	23	21	19
P2 - Independent living	10	13	18	16	15	14	13	13	9	7	4	2
R1 - Residential care home											1	
R2 - NHS/Health Trust					1	1	1	1	1	1		
R3 - Family centre or mother and baby unit		1	1	1								
R5 - Young Offender Institution or prison					2	2	2	2	2	5	5	5
S1 - All Residential schools	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
U1 - Foster placement with relative or friend- long term fostering	11	11	10	10	9	9	9	11	11	11	11	11
U2 - Foster placement with relative or friend who is also an approved adopter- FFA						1	1	1	1	1	1	1
U3 - Foster placement with relative or friend- not long term or FFA	28	32	34	33	34	36	34	34	31	34	31	31
U4 - Placement with other foster carer- long term fostering	159	153	150	144	141	142	141	137	134	132	130	129
U5 - Placement with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter- FFA	5	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	5	5
U6 - Placement with other foster carer - not long term or FFA	228	237	230	236	249	248	256	256	265	267	272	281
Total	531	541	551	547	566	565	560	561	564	569	568	573

Immigration Status	Jul 16	Aug 16	Sep 16	Oct 16	Nov 16	Dec 16	Jan 17	Feb 17	Mar 17	Apr 17	May 17	Jun 17
Asylum Seeker	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	3
British Citizen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK (ILR)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child	11	15	18	19	22	22	21	24	24	25	24	23

Legal Status	Jul 16	Aug 16	Sep 16	Oct 16	Nov 16	Dec 16	Jan 17	Feb 17	Mar 17	Apr 17	May 17	Jun 17
Child Arrangements Order/Residence Order S8(1)CA'89	320	321	321	323	321	321	322	325	327	327	328	329
Special Guardianship Order S14A CA 89	384	387	391	396	400	400	405	407	412	414	420	421

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