



## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

FRIDAY, 24 JULY 2020

10.00 AM COMMITTEE ROOM - COUNTY HALL, LEWES

**~~++PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS MEETING IS TAKING PLACE REMOTELY++~~**

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

### A G E N D A

- 1 Minutes of the meeting held on 24th January, 2020 (*Pages 3 - 8*)
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 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.
- 4 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.
- 5 The launch of Adoption South East, the Regional Adoption Agency (*Pages 9 - 14*)
- 6 Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Adoption Service 1 April 2019 - 31 March 2020 (*Pages 15 - 30*)
- 7 Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service - 1 April 2019 - 31 March 2020 (*Pages 31 - 42*)
- 8 Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics (*Pages 43 - 46*)  
Report by Director of Children's Services.
- 9 Any other non-exempt items considered urgent by the Chair.
- 10 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.
- 11 The Impact of COVID- 19 on Corporate Parenting Services (*Pages 47 - 52*)
- 12 Update on Residential Homes (*Pages 53 - 62*)
- 13 Any other exempt items considered urgent by the Chair.

PHILIP BAKER  
Assistant Chief Executive  
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16 July 2020

Contact

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**NOTE:** As part of the County Council's drive to increase accessibility to its public meetings, this meeting will be broadcast live on its website and the record archived. The live broadcast -is accessible at: [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/yourcouncil/webcasts/default.html](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/yourcouncil/webcasts/default.html)

# Agenda Item 1

## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held in the Committee Room - County Hall, Lewes on 24 January 2020.

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### PRESENT

Councillors Charles Clark, Chris Dowling, Kathryn Field, Colin Swansborough, Sylvia Tidy and Francis Whetstone

### ALSO PRESENT

Liz Rugg – Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care

Teresa Lavelle Hill - Head of Service LAC

Sally Williams – Operations Manager, Residential and Directly Provided Services, Children's Disability Service

Beverley Moores – Strategic Lead, Children's Disability Social Care ISEND

Nicola Scott – Operations Manager, Residential and LAC Services

Dr Katayoon Afsharpad – Designated Doctor LAC in East Sussex

Linda Burgess- Designated Nurse LAC

Janet Fairless – RHM Homefield Cottage

Scott Lipa – RHM Brodrick House

Charlotte De Retuerto – RHM The Bungalow

Shirin White – RHM Acorns

Ian Williams – RHM Hazel Lodge

Helen Simmons – RHM Lansdowne Secure Unit

Tina Henderson – Trustee of East Sussex Foster Care Association

Lysette Grosvenor – Trustee of East Sussex Foster Care Association

27 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 OCTOBER 2019

27.1 RESOLVED: to agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2019.

28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

28.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Jim Sheppard and Susanne Beesley, Chair of the East Sussex Foster Carers Association.

29 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

29.1 There were none.

30 URGENT ITEMS

30.1 There were none.

31 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

31.1 The Panel agreed to exclude the press and public for the next two agenda items on the basis that if they were present there would be disclosure to them of information considered to be exempt by virtue of Category 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to an individual.

32 OFSTED INSPECTION REPORTS FOR THE FOLLOWING CHILDREN'S HOMES: ACORNS AND LANSDOWNE

32.1 The Panel received Ofsted reports for the following Children's Homes:

- Acorns
- Lansdowne Secure Unit

32.2 The Panel welcomed the positive outcomes of the Ofsted Reports

32.3 RESOLVED: to note the reports.

33 CHILDREN'S HOME REGULATIONS 2015, REGULATION 44: INSPECTION REPORTS FOR OCTOBER 2019 - DECEMBER 2019

33.1 The Panel considered Regulation 44 Reports for the period October 2019 to December 2019 for the following Children's Homes:

- Acorns
- Brodrick House
- Hazel Lodge
- Homefield Cottage
- Lansdowne Secure Unit
- The Bungalow

33.2 Each Registered Home Manager (RHM) gave a verbal update on the activity at the homes covering the period since the last Panel meeting.

33.3 The Panel discussed the issue of young people absconding from Children's Homes. In particular, Members wanted to understand more about the procedures RHMs follow when a young person absconds and they asked for clarification about this. In response, Members were assured that the Department have well-established procedures which aim to resolve these issues as quickly as possible. For example, Sussex Police are aware of the sensitivities relating to young people in care and are used to assisting with the process of locating an individual who has absconded. Members were also informed that whilst the issue of a young person absconding is serious, it was important to keep in mind that the majority of cases relate to, for example, a young person wanting to stay out with their friends later than had been agreed with their social worker. In other words, the majority of these incidents are examples of normal behaviour for an adolescent and not a situation where a young person has made a concerted effort to leave their Home and not return. Councillor Whetstone requested that a sheet be included in the CPP papers that relates the reference numbers of the reports to the names of the homes.

33.4 RESOLVED: to note the reports.

34 ANY OTHER EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR

34.1 There were none.

35 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EAST SUSSEX FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION

35.1 The Panel considered the annual report of the East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA). The report provided an update on the work of the Charity and its plans for future development. These plans include:

- **Room to rant:** the ESFCA financially supported members of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) to hold two workshops at Audio Active studios in Brighton. This gave the young people the opportunity to write and perform a rap song. This activity was well-received and helped the young people express their feelings.
- **PGL trips:** the ESFCA received funding from Children in Need which enabled the provision of 3 residential experiences for 57 LAC at a PGL centre. This gave the children an opportunity to experience a number of different activities and build deeper relationships with other foster children and their social workers.
- **Make it Reel project:** the ESFCA received a donation from the Reel Poster Company to create the 'Make it Reel Project' which enabled social workers to purchase items/activities that would help support the children and young people they are working with. These items include: weighted blankets to aid with anxiety, football coaching, and a necklace for a young person to wear at a prom.

35.2 The Panel were also informed that the ESFCA have been awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2019. This award recognised the achievements and work that the organisation has undertaken over the past twenty-five years. The Panel congratulated the ESFCA on receiving this award.

35.3 RESOLVED: to note the report.

36 ANNUAL HEALTH OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN REPORT

36.1 The Panel considered a report from Dr Katyoon Asfarpad Designated Doctor for LAC and Linda Burgess, Designated Nurse for LAC. The report detailed the health needs of children and young people who are already in care or who are coming into care and the way in which these needs are managed. The Panel were informed that all Designated LAC professionals within the Sussex CCGs (Clinical Commissioning Groups) have contributed towards the report.

36.2 The Panel were updated on developments regarding the health of LAC and the health services provided for them for the 2018/19 period. This update included details on:

- **Ofsted Inspections:** the quality of Health assessments for LAC were positively highlighted by Ofsted in the East Sussex inspection and received an outstanding rating.
- **Safeguarding standards:** since April 2019 all CCG contracts for providing services for LAC must meet the requirements of the Sussex Safeguarding Standards which include having a named lead for the child or young person.
- **Initial Health Assessments:** there is a multi-agency focus on improving meeting statutory timescales for Initial Health Assessments (IHA) for LAC.
- **Reporting requirements:** there are plans moving forward to standardise and align reporting requirements for service providers across Sussex, this will allow for more accurate data comparisons and will aim to reduce variation in data collection methods.
- **Continuity of care:** the Designated Doctor and Designated Nurses are working with health care providers across Sussex to ensure that key principles regarding medical records of children who are adopted are being applied. This includes, for example, ensuring that health records held by an organisation are managed appropriately to ensure continuity of care as the child moves from one health provider to another.

36.3 The Panel asked whether mental health support for LAC was being treated as a key priority and whether joint working across services was ensuring that support was in place. In response, the Panel were informed that Designated Professionals are working closely with CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) to improve the waiting times for support for LAC.. One aspect of this work includes, for example, Designated Professionals holding regular meetings with the Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust to ensure that mental health services are being treated as a priority. The Panel were also informed of a key development which means that all health professionals can now make a referral for LAC support from CAMHS, whereas previously this could only be done by a child's social worker.

36.4 The Panel discussed waiting times for mental health support for children and young people. In particular members were concerned about the impact of delays in support being provided for LAC. The Panel therefore agreed that a letter should be sent by Councillor Tidy to the Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust highlighting the concern and asking what steps could be taken to reduce waiting times for this especially vulnerable group.

36.5 RESOLVED:

- 1) to note the report; and
- 2) Councillor Tidy to write on behalf of the Panel to the Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust regarding waiting times for mental health support for LAC.

37     LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN STATISTICS

- 37.1   The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on Looked After Children Statistics.
- 37.2   The Panel were informed by Liz Rugg, Assistant Director for Early Help and Social Care on the current figures for LAC in East Sussex.
- 37.3   RESOLVED: to note the report.

38     ANY OTHER NON-EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR.

- 38.1   There were none.

The meeting ended at 12.11 pm.

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# Agenda Item 5

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>24 July 2020</b>
Title of Report:	<b>The launch of Adoption South East, the Regional Adoption Agency</b>
By:	<b>Director of Children's Services</b>
Purpose of Report:	<b>To update the Panel on the launch of the Regional Adoption Agency</b>

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

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

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### **1 Background**

1.1 As Corporate Parenting Panel members will know, all Local Authorities in England are required to deliver their adoption services through a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) by December 2020. To this end the East Sussex County Council Adoption Service has worked towards becoming part of a RAA over 2019 / 20. Adoption South East (ASE) is a partnership between East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey County Councils and Brighton and Hove City Council. The RAA is not a legal entity in its own right and therefore East Sussex County Council hosts the central functions of the RAA, employing the Head of Service and chairing the Executive Board through the Director of Children's Services (DCS), Stuart Gallimore.

The RAA provides:

- Equality of opportunity for all children in relation to family finding and placement for adoption.
- Proactive matching to mitigate the risk of delays
- Weekly linking and tracking meetings
- Monthly business meetings
- Creative approaches to family finding for children (currently impacted by Covid19).

1.2 ASE operates with a central hub team located in East Sussex at County Hall, and with four spoke offices; Woking, Horsham, Eastbourne and Brighton. Each Spoke is led by a Service Manager. Each spoke office undertakes the full range of adoption social work, with each Service Manager leading on an area of shared activity.

1.3 Adoption South East went "live" as a RAA on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. It operates with a pooled budget, with its staff groups remaining on their sovereign terms and conditions in each of the partner Local Authorities. The operations of the RAA are underpinned by a partnership agreement between the four Local Authorities. Clearly the RAA has been launched during the Covid-19 pandemic which has added additional challenges to the way in which various activities can operate.

1.4 Adoption South East operates a regional Adopter Recruitment service and a regional child and family matching process. To support these two shared areas of operation, the

RAA operates a shared Adoption Panel. Adoption Support Services will be delivered locally over the course of 2020/21 during which time they will become aligned in order that a regional adoption support offer is established.

## **2. Recruitment and Assessment of adopters**

2.1 This work was provided by the East Sussex Adoption Service for the reporting period (2019/20). The recruitment of adopters transferred to the RAA on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. Please see Appendix 1 for information relating to ASE recruitment activity in Q1 and the comparison with the LA collective figures for the same period in 2019/20. It is too soon to determine whether the improvement in activity is related to the RAA or to the impact of Covid-19.

2.2 The RAA offers a regional end to end recruitment process for prospective adopters including for foster carers who wish to make a commitment to children already in their care, and applicants willing to offer Foster to Adopt placements. There is a RAA virtual recruitment team which provides;

- Dedicated centralised enquiry process
- Online Information Sharing sessions with enquirers
- Stage 1 and Stage 2 assessments
- Preparation to Adopt training (currently online)

### 2.3 Current volumes of activity

There have been:

- 305 enquiries since 1 April 2020 (go live)
- 115 Information sessions since 1 April 2020
- 55 Registrations accepted (applications) since 1 April 2020

Early data reflects that initial enquiries have increased significantly as has the rate of conversion of initial enquiries to initial interviews. Information Sessions are currently provided virtually as are Preparation to Adopt training courses. Adopter Assessments are being conducted via video call with applicants, with some face to face assessment social work being undertaken in order that we do not recommend applicants without meeting them in person or inspecting their accommodation. 34 adoptive households have been approved since going live on April 1<sup>st</sup>; these are assessments which were started whilst the adoption services were being provided directly by the Local Authorities.

2.4 The RAA will provide performance data to the Executive Board which comprises the DCS for each authority on a quarterly basis, and will provide an annual and half yearly report through our Executive Board.

2.5 Medical Advisors continue to provide medical advice in relation to children with plans for adoption, drawing on the LAC health assessments and undertaking face to face appointments with carers via virtual platforms.

## **3. Family finding and matching**

3.1 East Sussex County Council Adoption Team undertook the work in placing children for adoption in the reporting period. The linking and matching of children for adoption has been the responsibility of the RAA since April 2020.

3.2 The RAA aims to identify ASE approved adopters for 80% of children referred into ASE by all 4 partner authorities and to have effective and efficient processes and systems to ensure matches are made in a timely manner. The remaining 20% of children are anticipated

to require interagency placement given that the profile of their needs identifies them as being children who will be harder to place for adoption given the national deficit of adopters who are looking for sibling groups, children from BAME backgrounds and children with diagnosed developmental disabilities or complex health needs.

**3.3 Current volumes of activity are as follows:**

- 59 children with a plan for adoption
- 38 Placement Orders in place
- 50 approved adopters
- Currently 5 interagency matches with ASE adopters
- Currently 5 interagency matches (children matched with other RAA (2)/Voluntary Adoption Agencies (3) )
- 18 ASE children moving towards matching approval with ASE adopters (proceeding with links with Panel booked) including 4 sibling pairs
- 19 ASE children in linking and matching process with identified ASE adopters (including 2 sibling pairs)
- 11 children (5 sibling pairs and a single boy, aged between 21 months twins and 6 years) awaiting links with appropriate adoptive families.

**4. Adoption Panels**

4.1 Adoption Panels were operated by East Sussex Adoption Service throughout 2019/20. The work of Adoption Panels transferred to the RAA when it went live on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

4.2 In response to Covid 19, Adoption Panels are held virtually through video conferencing. The three Panel Chairs have embraced this new way of working. Post Covid the plan is for panels to be held on a weekly basis, based in Horsham, Uckfield and Woking. Three Panel Chairs were recruited in March 2020. Panel Members from the existing four authority Panels were invited to submit an expression of interest in relation to the Panel they wished to sit on, with Brighton and Hove and East Sussex merging their Panel membership; the Uckfield Panel replaces the previous East Sussex Panels and the Brighton and Hove Panel. Quoracy was agreed in the development phase of the RAA and elected members no longer sit on Panels in their capacity as elected members, however some members have continued to sit in their private capacity.

4.3 Panel meetings have worked well in terms of our processes and requirements and initial feedback from service users has been that this has worked well for them too.

**5. Adoption Support**

5.1 The regionalisation of Adoption Support Services will be part of a longer-term development plan for the RAA given the range of commissioned services in each spoke and differing degrees of integration with other services.

5.2 The priority since going live in the time of Covid-19 has been to ensure continuity of adoption support provisions and to ensure compliance on the part of all providers with the requirements of their accrediting bodies for the safe provision of virtual therapies.

5.3 During the pandemic there have been very few new referrals regionally for adoption support, notably fewer than at any other time and this is reflected nationally. There are requests for financial support where adoption allowances have previously been stopped due to means testing and household incomes have now reduced due to parents being placed on

furlough or unable to earn. Both agreement for payment and the cost of Adoption Allowances remain with ESCC. £350k of additional funding for Covid-19 specific support for adopters and special guardians has been secured through a shared application between the RAA and the four Special Guardianship Services.

## **6. Conclusions**

6.1 Despite the impact of Covid-19, the RAA has been launched and has made a strong start. East Sussex is acting as the host authority with the agreement of all partner authorities. Governance and finance agreements are in place and will be overseen by an Executive Board. Performance will also be reported to the Executive Board.

6.2 In addition to an encouraging start in relation to local performance, regionalisation has enabled greater connection with the other RAAs across England, and with the Department of Education who are better able to consult the sector. Additional Government funding for the recruitment of adopters has been used collectively in order to boost recruitment of adopters, with a national adopter recruitment campaign launching in the autumn of 2020. National standards in relation to adopter recruitment and assessment are being developed and RAA leaders meet regularly to share learning and good practice, which has been invaluable to the local and national response to Covid-19 and in keeping services working well.

## **7. Recommendation**

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

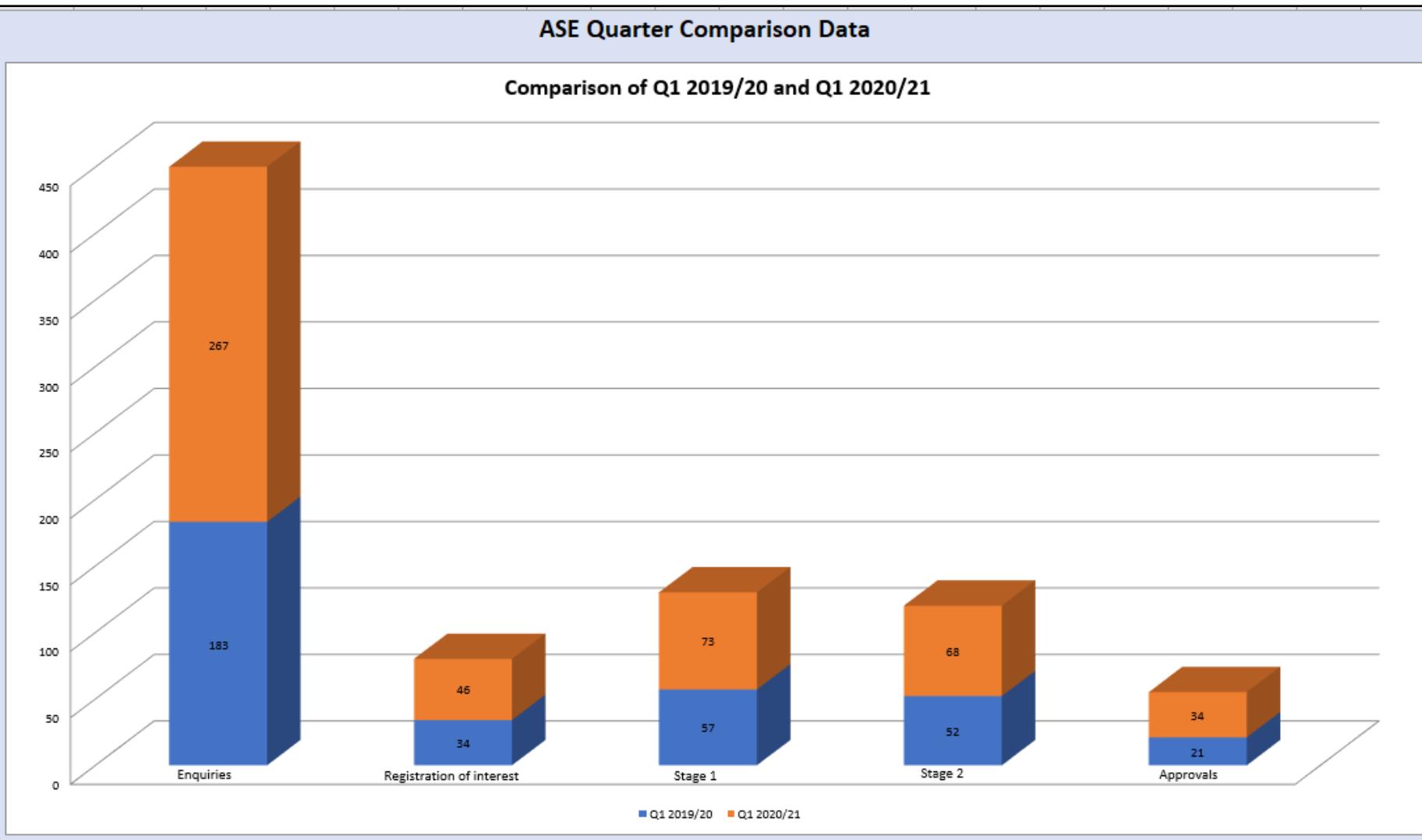
**STUART GALLIMORE**  
Director of Children's Services

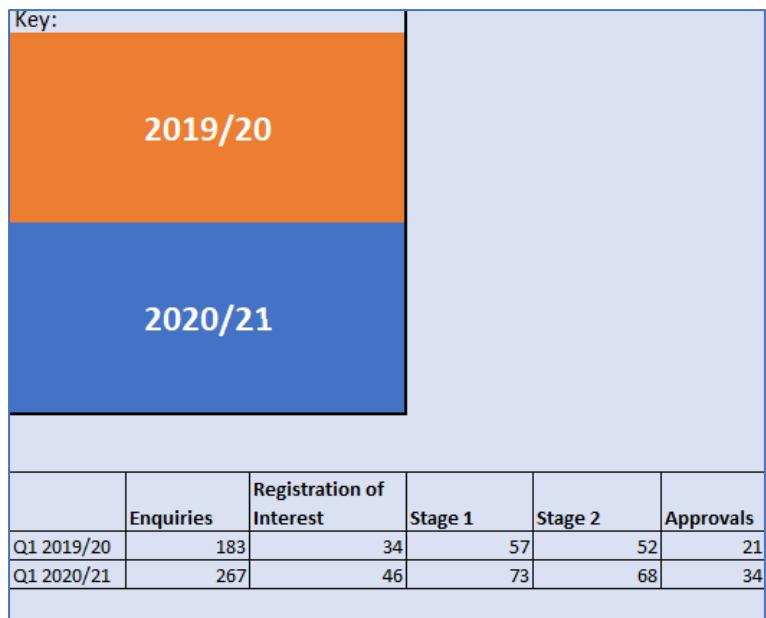
### Appendices

Appendix 1 – Adoption South East (ASE) Comparison Data Q1 2019/20 and Q2 2020/21

### Contact Officer:

Michael Wilson, Head of Service for Adoption South East





# Agenda Item 6

Report to: **Corporate Parenting Panel**

Date: **24 July 2020**

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

Title of report: **Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Adoption Service 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020**

Purpose of report: **To outline the performance of the Adoption Service between 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020**

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

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

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**1. Background information**

1.1 The Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Adoption Service is attached as Appendix 1

**2. Recommendations**

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

**STUART GALLIMORE**  
Director of Children's Services

**Contact**

Carole Sykes, Operations Manager, Adoption and Permanence Service

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**Appendices**

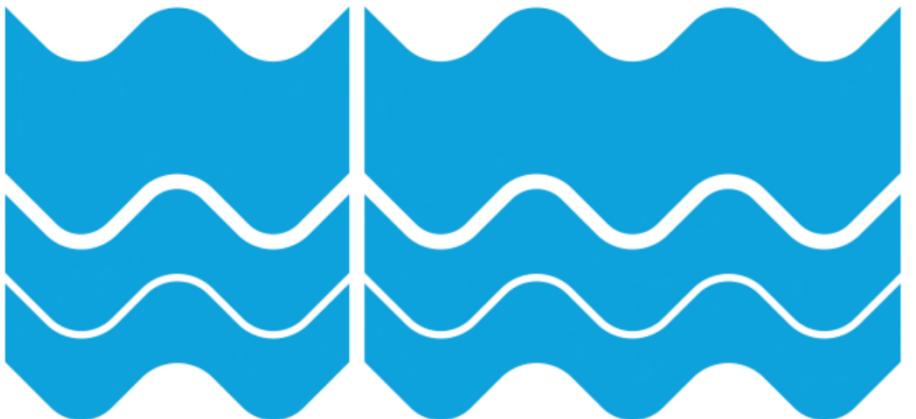
The Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Adoption Service is attached as Appendix 1.

**Background Documents**

None

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# East Sussex County Council



## East Sussex Adoption Services Annual Report 2019/20

Carole Sykes, Operations Manager

## RECRUITMENT:

### RECRUITMENT:

#### **ASE Developments:**

Managers and staff have been actively involved in the recruitment work stream, developing common practice, shared resources and also, in the final quarter of the year, processed all recruitment enquiries for Brighton and Hove.

# RECRUITMENT

**East Sussex adoption service has a key role in developing regional recruitment practice.**

There has been a notable rise in more complex applications which take longer to process.

We have had positive feedback re our local recruitment process from adopters, which contributes to high quality regional practice.  
Page 16

In recent months we have seen a considerable rise in recruitment activity.

Recruitment	2019-2020
<b>Info Sessions</b>	13
<b>Number of Households attending Info Sessions</b>	78
<b>No. of Households that registered interest to adopt</b>	46
<b>No. of applications accepted</b>	39
<b>No of Withdrawals before stage 2</b>	1
<b>No. of applicants not approved at the end of stage 2</b>	1
<b>Total No. of applicants approved</b>	19
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Time adopter approvals</b>	3
<b>Total No. of adopters approved</b>	22

# RECRUITMENT

Despite high levels of recruitment activity, the number of adopters approved continues to fall compared with previous years and reflecting the national position on adopter sufficiency .

Page 20

Recruitment	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Total No. of adopters approved	30	25	33	22
No of 2 <sup>nd</sup> time Adopters	0	0	4	3

# FAMILY FINDING AND LINKING

## FAMILY FINDING AND LINKING:

### ASE Developments:

Joint working with other ASE regional teams has continued to focus on sharing best practice within the work stream.

# FAMILY FINDING AND LINKING

- Those children approved for adoption have complex backgrounds and needs
- Large sibling groups may have a different plan for individual children eg a mixture of long term fostering and adoption and may need to be separated, as it is difficult to place them altogether
- Children of mixed heritage tend to be placed out of county in areas reflecting greater ethnic diversity
- Complex health and genetic conditions, together with protracted care proceedings, contribute to delay in family finding and placement
- Early permanence meetings continue with locality teams to promote timely planning and family finding.
- There has been an increase in the number of children placed for Fostering to Adopt and this continues to be keenly promoted, especially for young children.

Page 22

FAMILY FINDING & LINKING	2019-2020
No. of children adopted (AO's)	32
Number of children approved for adoption	29
No. of relinquished children	2
Total No. of children matched	31
No. of sibling groups matched x 2	7
No. of siblings groups matched x 3	0
Nos of siblings groups x 4 or more matched	0
No. of children matched (outside of ASE)	7
No. of children matched within ASE	4
No. of children placed for F to A	6

# FAMILY FINDING AND LINKING

There has been a decrease in the number of children with a plan for Adoption. In the period 2018-2019 there were 43 with a plan for Adoption compared to 2019-20 when 29 children were approved.

We continue to have a number of young children for whom adoption is the plan. There are also a number of older children to be placed for adoption, as well as sibling pairs. This more complex cohort of children continues to be a challenge in terms of finding adoptive families. Some larger sibling groups have needed to be separated in order to find an appropriate adoptive placement often necessitating complex contact

Page 23  
Family Finding and Linking

<b>FAMILY FINDING AND LINKING</b>	<b>2016-2017</b>	<b>2017-2018</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>
<b>Total No. of children approved for adoption</b>	52	69	43	29
<b>Total No. of children approved for permanence</b>	32	24	22	21

# ADOPTION SUPPORT:

## ADOPTION SUPPORT ASE Developments:

Service involved in adoption support work stream  
Aim to agree a regional adoption support strategy and a core offer.  
Challenge due to diverse regional variations in current level of service provision.

# ADOPTION SUPPORT

Within Adoption Support we have a range of services which include:

- Adoption Support Fund applications
- Services to Adopted Adults
- Letterbox & Direct Contact Service
- Throughcare pathway for adopted adolescents
- Adopted Families Group
- ADCAMHS

Page 25

ADOPTION SUPPORT 2019/20	2019-2020
Post Adoption Support Assessments carried out; statutory responsibility to assess and provide coordinated package of support or sign post	56
No. of open cases, including therapeutic interventions, parent consultations, respite, education & virtual school advice and family social work	152

# ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES

- The national Adoption Support Fund is now extended to March 2021, offering access to funding for a range of therapeutic services
- The Virtual School is a good source of advice, information and support to adoptive parents and children
- THRIVE caseworkers work closely with the Virtual School. The approach draws on insights from neuro science and attachment theory and greatly assists children and parents to re-engage with learning:

THRIVE COURSES		2019-2020
No of courses run		3
No of sessions per course		6
No. of families attending		18

# SERVICES TO ADOPTED ADULTS

Currently provide a service to 115 adopted adults; involving links with other local authorities, adoption agencies and courts.

Relatives may be offered an intermediary/ tracing service via an external contract.

## LETTERBOX & DIRECT CONTACT SERVICE

Referrals to this service continue to increase:

2565 open letterbox arrangements & 590 exchanges were processed .

211 Direct contact arrangements involving staff coordinating face to face arrangements .

LETTERBOX & DIRECT CONTACT SERVICE	2019-2020
No. of open letterbox arrangements	565
No of exchanges processed	590
Direct contact arrangements involving staff coordinating face to face arrangements	211

## THROUGH CARE

### **8 families are currently receiving TCT**

We have worked closely to develop a pathway for adopted adolescents to avoid placement breakdown.

## ADOPTIVE FAMILIES GROUP

The group meet on a regular basis with a range of events and keynote speakers, aiming to lobby and raise the profile of adoption issues. An annual picnic was held in late summer 2019 and was well attended by adoptive families.

## ADCAMHS

**We have commissioned this service to work with 40 families however over 60 families have been provided with support.**

It is highly valued by adoptive families and staff and offers a range of services such as:

Therapeutic consultations, parent clinics, group supervision

Therapeutic parent group

Teenage group & Woodland camp

# ADOPTION PANELS:

## ADOPTION PANEL ASE Developments:

East Sussex lead in setting up regional adoption panels across ASE. The ASE panel work stream commenced in September

Regional panel chairs were appointed in February 2020 and long serving East Sussex panel chairs ended their service in March 2020

Virtual panels commenced due to lockdown in late March 20

The service continues to be actively involved in developing and streamlining the panel process across ASE

# ADOPTION PANEL

- Panel activity continues at a similar level of frequency to the previous year.
- The venue for holding panels within East Sussex remains at Uckfield
- Since lockdown in late March panels have been held virtually
- Panel papers are delivered electronically to all panel members
- During 2019/2020 we have had two changes in administration staff

ADOPTION PANEL		2019-2020
No. of Adoption Panels held		35
No of adoptive households approved		22
No. of adoptive matches approved		31
No of disruptions held		2

# Agenda Item 7

**Report to:** Corporate Parenting Panel

**Date:** 24 July 2020

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

**Title of report:** Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service  
1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020

**Purpose of report:** To outline the performance of the Fostering Service between  
1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

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

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### **1 Background and supporting information**

1.1 Services to LAC are supported by base budgets within Children's Services.  
There are no increased costs arising from this report.

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

### **2 Recommendation**

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

## **STUART GALLIMORE Director of Children's Services**

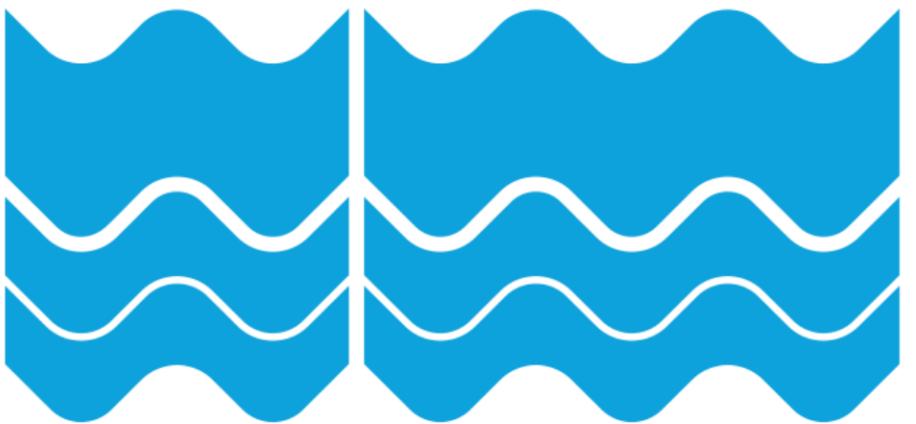
Contact Officer  
Adrian Sewell – Operations Manager  
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Appendices  
Appendix 1 - Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service  
1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020

Background documentation:  
None

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# East Sussex County Council



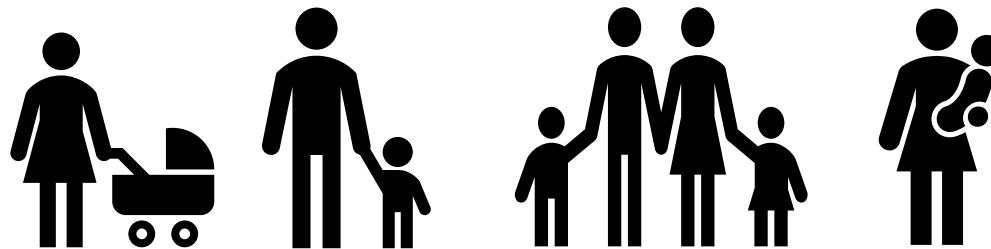
## East Sussex Fostering Services Annual Progress Report 2019/20

Appendix 1.  
Adrian Sewell, Operations Manager

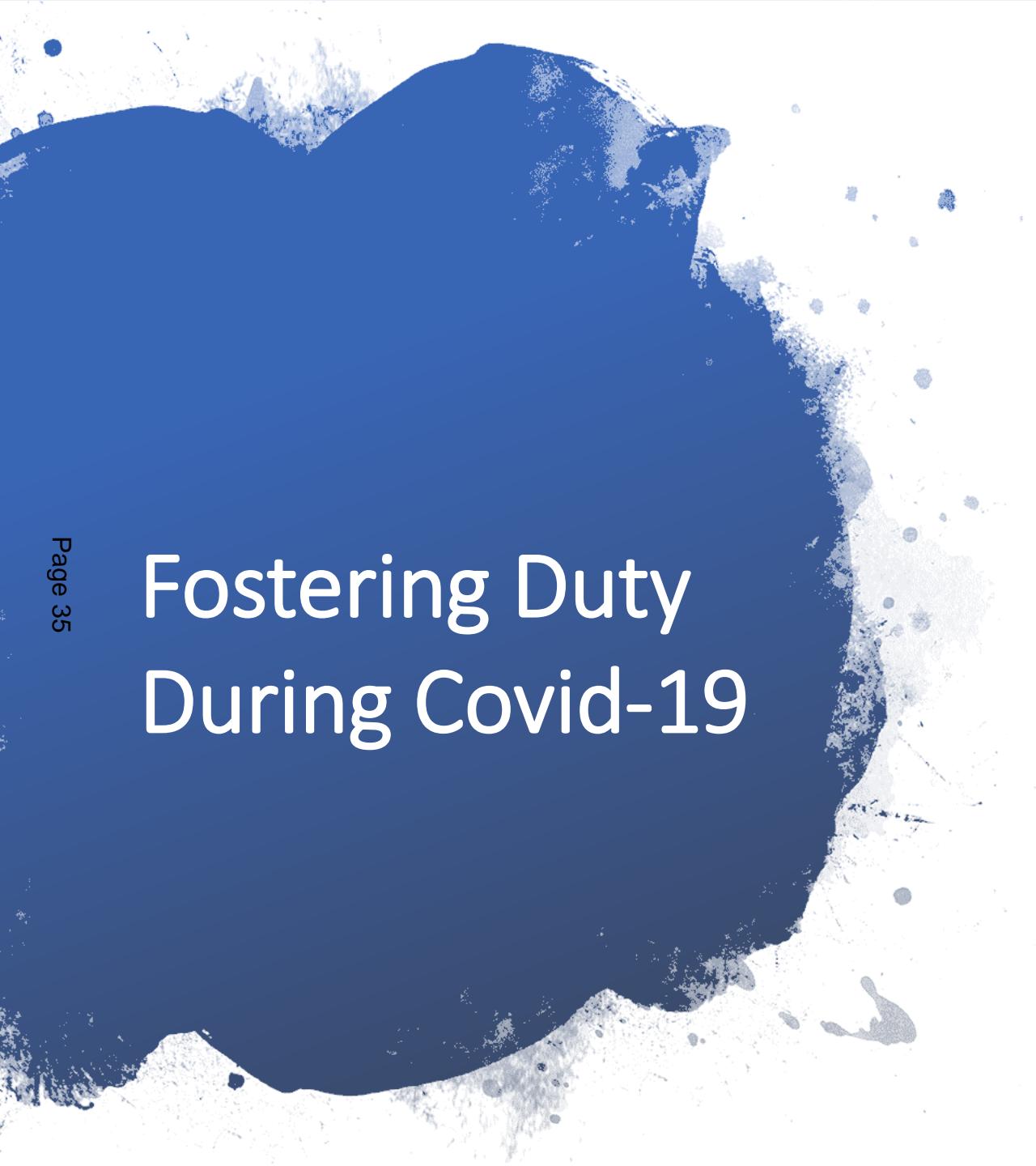
# Fostering Duty

381 “in-house” placements were made during 2019/20

- The data below is a snapshot as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.



Statistics	2018-2019	2019-2020
Matching referrals completed	532	553
Agency placements	99	77
In-house placements	385	381
Not required	121	95



# Fostering Duty During Covid-19

## Placement finding during Covid-19 period

- Figures drawn from the commencement of lockdown (21<sup>st</sup> March 2020 to 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020 ).
- **122** Matching referrals' completed,
- **32** Matching referrals were worked on and then not required.
- **68** new "in house" placements identified.
- The challenge of finding appropriate placements was exacerbated by a number of placement disruptions of children with complex needs.
- The number of respite referrals greatly reduced due to children remaining in their substantive placement throughout lockdown.
- The fostering service received a significant increase in the number of parent and child referrals due to Covid lockdown compromising contact arrangements between babies and their parents.

# Fostering Recruitment and Retention

- There were 22 foster households approved during 2019/20
  - The conversions rates have continued to increase annually.
  - The fostering service's recruitment strategy and advertising has been successful in targeting potential foster carers.
  - The fostering service experienced a small increase in enquiries compared to 2018-19.
- At the close of 2019/20, the fostering service had 254 approved foster homes and 451 approved foster carers.
- All foster carer households have a supervising social worker who provide intensive support.

Page 36

Retention	Households		
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Approvals ending Retirement	22	10	8
Approvals ending Change in circumstances	9	3	9
Approvals ending Terminated at panel	1	4	3

Recruitment	Households		
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Enquiries	346	266	268
Screening calls	157	118	114
Initial visits	86	70	71
Skills to foster training (STF)	43	29	21
Applications for assessment	31	35	35
Closed	5	3	7
Withdrew	7	11	6
Total allocated but did not progress	12	14	13
Approvals	19	21	22
Placements	37	36	39
Conversion rate	5.5%	7.9%	8.2%
Enquiry to approval			
Conversion rate	12%	17.8%	19.2%
Screening call to approval			
Conversion rate	22%	30%	31%
Initial visit to approval			

# Fostering Recruitment:

## Transfer of foster carers to East Sussex Fostering Service

- There were **3** households that transferred to the East Sussex Fostering Service during 2019/20.
- These transfers resulted in significant income and savings for the fostering service.
- The fostering service has reviewed the transfer process so it is a shorter, expedient process with prompt timescales.

## Connected, Family and Friend Foster Carers

- Page 37.
- The fostering service has seen an increasing number of assessments of connected family and friend foster carers.
  - There were **5** connected households approved during 2019/20.
  - The fostering service offered advice regarding fostering applications on **16** connected carer cases.
  - Although these assessments secured **5** appropriate placements for **7** children, it does not add to the fostering service's mainstream foster carer pool or give the duty team any further placement capacity.
  - In 2020/21, the fostering service will be introducing an information leaflet to advise about the respective benefits of fostering and special guardianship orders, to reduce the number of cases the service is involved in at the early stages.



Transfer Approvals			Connected Approvals		
2017- 2018	2018- 2019	2019- 2020	2017- 2018	2018- 2019	2019- 2020
1	2	3	0	1	5

# Foster Carer Training

**566 Foster carers accessed “in-house” training during 2019/20**

Since April 2019, training has continued to be offered to foster carers, including a range from mandatory courses to more individualised bespoke training to support placement stability. There have been a number of new courses specific to mental health awareness and the promotion of emotional well-being, including courses for the foster carers themselves, particularly around mindfulness.

Page 38

**7** foster carers commenced their Level 3 Diploma in the children’s workforce qualifications.

**566** foster carers accessed in-house training during 2019/20.

## Training during the Covid-19 Period

Training has adapted during the current times and continues to offer carers a full range of courses through many different online mediums. All carers have the opportunity to download an eBook on Therapeutic parenting and can now access ‘Live’ training events. There are weekly resources sent out to foster carers, particularly on internet safety, in recognition of the increased usage and added risks.



## New Courses offered during 2019/20

- Health matters
- Mindfulness and the art of meditation practice
- Anxiety & PTSD
- Mental health matters
- The risks and rewards of online and social media contact with birth families
- Safe practice on the internet, keeping yourself safe
- Lego therapy
- Inclusive play
- Fostering for all ages - 6 week course

# Supported Lodgings:

## Supported Lodgings: Approvals

- There were **11** supported lodgings households approved during 19/20 offering **14** placements.
- NET gain of **+3 Supported Lodgings households**.

## Placements

- **61** young people were placed with supported lodgings providers during 19/20.

## Young people placed:

- **57** Looked After Children (LAC) **93.44%**
- **1** Homeless **1.64%**
- **3** Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) **4.91%**

# Placement Support Service

- **The placement support service delivered 143 packages of individual support during 2019/20.**

PSS support includes:

- PSS Foster carers - 75 child support packages
- Children In Care Council (CICC) - 10 child support packages
- Special Placement Scheme (SPS) - 6 child support packages
- Through Care Team - 50 young person's support packages
- Attachment Project (SWIFT) - 1 family supported
- Foster Care Agency - 1 child support package

Evaluations of PSS support packages are undertaken annually and 25% of all support packages noted that:

**“I would not have continued this placement without Placement Support”**

**“95% of carers noted that the placement support service resulted in a positive impact on the placement”.**

**“60% of carers would prefer more hours of placement support.”**

# Children in Care Council (CICC)

- ❖ The CICC has continued to consult, listen and network with young people and the CICC has had an integral role in updating the “ESCC Pledge to Children in Care”.
- ❖ The CICC have been instrumental in the renaming of LAC reviews for young people to “My Voice Matters” The CICC are continuing to examine how legal processes and the language can be more young person centered.
- ❖ Using “Language that Cares” as the standard is viewed as very important for the CICC members” and they have liaised and worked in consultation about this with the Office of the Children’s Commissioner.
- ❖ The CICC rucksack project has received a grant from the East Sussex Foster Carer Association and support through Cllr Elkin and has helped many children.
- ❖ The CICC attends the Placement Support holiday activities program and through this the CICC took forward 58 issues raised by children in care and raised them to relevant professionals. Responses have been relayed back to the children.



**Retention of foster carers –  
a key part of our strategy**

**Embed anti-racist and anti-  
discriminatory practice  
throughout the service.**

## Priorities for 2020/21

**Recruitment of  
foster carers including  
encouraging foster carers to  
transfer to East Sussex**

**Improve the flexibility of  
Placement Support Service to  
maintain placement stability and  
continuity.**

# Agenda Item 8

Committee:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>24 July 2020</b>
Title of Report:	<b>Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics</b>
By:	<b>Director of Children's Services</b>
Purpose of Report:	<b>To update the Panel on changes in the last quarter</b>

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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

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### **1. Background and Supporting information**

1.1 Services for LAC are predominantly funded from the Children's Services base budget with some additional smaller funding streams supporting specific activity e.g. Virtual School activity from the Pupil Premium Grant.

1.2 As members will recall, the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting that was due to take place in April was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence numbers of children in this report will be compared to those at the end of December 2019, as the quarterly figures presented to panel members in the January meeting ran up until the end of December 2019.

1.3 Data is drawn as a snapshot on the last day of the month and inevitably there will be some changes subsequently as data is cleansed, however the past two quarters have seen a slight increase in numbers of children and on the last day of June there were 599 children in care, up from 594 in December after the figures were cleansed. It continues to be extremely busy with pressure on the Fostering Duty system remaining intense as new children come in and existing children disrupt and need to be moved, often at short notice. The context of Covid-19 has placed additional pressure on many households and this has also meant both that internal placement options have reduced and that externally there are very limited (and very expensive) placement options.

1.4 A total of 372 children were in foster care at the end of June, with 83 of those children in agency placements, a rise of 3 from December. In addition, we have 56 young people in supported housing options, homes or hostels. 29 children were placed for adoption. 7 children were placed with foster carers who are also approved adopters under the Fostering for Adoption pathway. Adoption Order applications were delayed significantly at the start of the pandemic but are beginning to be considered again by the Courts. This has consequently blocked a number of foster placements, but more importantly it has delayed placing some very young children with their adoptive families.

1.5 Over the quarter the number of children with kinship carers now stands at 66.

1.6 The number of children placed at home with their parents whilst remaining subject to a legal order stands at 19. 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.

1.7 At the end of June 39 children were placed in agency residential care placements, the figure having remained stable since December. Staff continue to make every effort to place children in our in- house beds before they seek agreement from a senior manager for an agency placement, however admission to in- house beds has been complicated both internally and externally by the Covid-19 context and the need to isolate any new child for 14 days.

1.8 At the end of June 3 ESCC children were secured at Lansdowne. 1 in the context of sexual exploitation, 1 having severe emotional wellbeing difficulties and the third having just transferred to a secure placement from Brodrick Road following a lengthy period of very violent and sexualised behaviour. His move was delayed significantly by a lack of secure beds nationally during the lockdown for Covid-19. Since the end of June 1 of the children has now moved to a local agency placement and planning is underway to move the second child imminently, hopefully to Brodrick Road.

1.9 1 young person was remanded to custody in January on a murder charge. Although the trial was initially scheduled for June it has now been delayed until September. Whilst of course if he is found guilty at his trial, any time served on remand will be deducted from the ultimate duration of his sentence, remand costs sit with the Youth Offending Team budget in ESCC rather than with the Secure Estate.

1.10 Overall the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking (UASC) young people were up to 41 at the end of June.

1.11 The numbers of children subject to Child Arrangement/Residence Orders and Special Guardianship Orders have also remained broadly stable at 337 and 455 respectively.

1.12 There have been no complaints from our LAC in the last 2 quarters.

## **2. Conclusion**

2.1 Pressure on the system continues, driven by complexity and costs for children and exacerbated significantly by Covid-19. Continued close oversight will be maintained.

2.2 There have been no complaints during the last 2 quarters.

## **3. Recommendation**

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

### **STUART GALLIMORE**

Director of Children's Services

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### Appendices:

Appendix 1 – LAC Summary between 01/07/2019 and 30/06/20

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## Children's Services LAC Summary between 01/07/2019 and 30/06/2020

Placement Type	Jul 19	Aug 19	Sep 19	Oct 19	Nov 19	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20	Apr 20	May 20	Jun 20
A3 - Placed for adoption with consent (under section 19 of the 2002 Act) with current foster carer	1	1	1									
A4 - Placed for adoption with consent (under section 19 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer	4	4	4	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
A5 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) with current foster carer	3	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4
A6 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer	19	22	25	25	25	24	22	22	23	21	22	23
H5 - Residential accommodation	28	32	34	34	37	39	30	29	29	38	38	40
K1 - Secure unit	5	4	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
K2 - Homes and Hostels	55	56	54	54	57	58	60	59	56	58	56	56
P1 - Placed with own parents	19	20	22	21	20	21	24	24	20	18	19	19
P2 - Independent living	4	4	4	6	5	3	2	2	4	7	6	4
R2 - NHS/Health Trust	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	1
R3 - Family centre or mother and baby unit	1											
R5 - Young Offender Institution or prison					1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
S1 - All Residential schools											1	1
U1 - Foster placement with relative or friend- long term fostering	8	8	5	5	5	6	6	5	5	5	5	5
U3 - Foster placement with relative or friend- not long term or FFA	50	55	57	60	64	58	62	56	56	56	58	61
U4 - Placement with other foster carer- long term fostering	87	85	81	84	82	83	83	83	82	80	80	78
U5 - Placement with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter- FFA	4	4	3	3	5	5	8	7	6	6	6	7
U6 - Placement with other foster carer - not long term or FFA	308	297	293	291	291	285	285	294	296	296	295	294
Total	598	598	593	595	604	594	595	593	589	596	597	599

Immigration Status	Jul 19	Aug 19	Sep 19	Oct 19	Nov 19	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20	Apr 20	May 20	Jun 20
Asylum Seeker	4	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	1		
British Citizen	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2
Discretionary Leave to Remain in the UK to 18 (DLR)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
DLR to 18th Birthday, extension applied for	1	1	1									
Exceptional Leave to Remain in the UK (ELR)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Humanitarian Protection applied for under ECHR	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Refugee Status	10	10	10	10	11	9	2	2	2	2	2	2
Refused Asylum, Appeal applied for	1	1	1									
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child	16	22	23	22	23	22	23	25	26	34	35	35

Legal Status	Jul 19	Aug 19	Sep 19	Oct 19	Nov 19	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20	Apr 20	May 20	Jun 20
Child Arrangements Order/ResidenceOrder S8(1)CA'89	333	333	334	333	333	335	335	335	336	336	336	337
Special Guardianship Order S14A CA 89	454	454	454	455	455	455	454	456	456	456	455	455

# Agenda Item 11

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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# Agenda Item 12

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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