



## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

FRIDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2021

10.00 AM COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, LEWES

MEMBERSHIP - Councillors Bob Bowdler, Johnny Denis, Kathryn Field (Chair), Sam Adeniji, Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood, Matthew Milligan and Colin Swansborough

### A G E N D A

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2021 *(Pages 3 - 6)*

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. 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.

6. Ofsted Inspection reports

6a Acorns - Ofsted Inspection Report *(Pages 7 - 16)*

6b Brodrick House - Ofsted Inspection Report *(Pages 17 - 28)*

6c Homefield Cottage - Ofsted Inspection Report *(Pages 29 - 38)*

6d Lansdowne - Ofsted Inspection Report *(Pages 39 - 48)*

7. Children's Home Regulations 2015, Regulation 44: Inspection reports

7a Acorns at Dorset Road *(Pages 49 - 98)*

7b Brodrick House *(Pages 99 - 162)*

7c Hazel Lodge *(Pages 163 - 220)*

- 7d Homefield Cottage (*Pages 221 - 298*)
- 7e Lansdowne Secure Unit (*Pages 299 - 400*)
- 7f The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive (*Pages 401 - 486*)
- 8. Any other exempt items considered urgent by the Chair.
- 9. Virtual School Annual Report - 1 September 2020 - 31 August 2021 (*Pages 487 - 492*)  
Report by the Director of Children's Services
- 10. Looked After Children's Annual Progress Report 2020-21 (*Pages 493 - 530*)  
Report by the Director of Children's Services
- 11. Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics (*Pages 531 - 534*)  
Report by Director of Children's Services.
- 12. Any other non-exempt items considered urgent by the Chair.

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

21 October 2021

Contact

Aaron Sams – Democratic Services Officer  
Tel: 01273 335244  
Email: [aaron.sams@Eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:aaron.sams@Eastsussex.gov.uk)

## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 30 July 2021.

---

### PRESENT

Councillors Bob Bowdler, Johnny Denis, Kathryn Field, Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood, Matthew Milligan and Colin Swansborough.

### ALSO PRESENT

Liz Rugg - Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care

Sally Carnie – Head of Looked After Children’s Services

Nicola Scott – Operations Manager, Residential LAC Services

Sally Williams – Operations Manager, Residential and Directly Provided Services

Adrian Sewell – Operations Manager, Fostering Team

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

Steven Crowe – Registered Homes Manager, Brodrick House

Janet Fairless - Registered Homes Manager, Homefield Cottage

Charlotte de Retuerto – Registered Homes Manager, Acorns

Scott Lipa - Registered Homes Manager, Lansdowne Secure Unit

Aaron Sams – Democratic Services Officer

### 1 ELECTION OF CHAIR

1.1 Councillor Kathryn Field was elected Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

### 2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 APRIL 2021

2.1 RESOLVED to agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2021.

### 3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Sam Adeniji.

### 4 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

4.1 Councillor Matthew Milligan declared a personal non-prejudicial interest that a close relative is a registered Foster Carer in East Sussex.

## 5 URGENT ITEMS

5.1 There were none.

## 6 EAST SUSSEX FOSTERING SERVICES ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2020/21

6.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which outlined the performance and progress of the East Sussex Fostering Service for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. Adrian Sewell (Operations Manager – Fostering Service) provided further detail regarding the key activities and work of the service. This included information regarding: recruitment & retention activities, publicity campaigns, Foster Carer training, the work of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and an update on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the service.

6.2 The Panel were informed that 351 placements were made during the reporting period and that 277 of these were in-house and 74 were agency placements.

6.3 In response to a question from the Panel, Members were informed that the enquiry to conversion rate for potential carers was 9% in the previous financial year which is the highest conversation rate for the past 3 years. Whilst the Panel welcomed the latest increased figure, Members queried whether the 9% figure was still too low. In response, the Panel heard that nationally conversation rates are low and that in comparison to other local authorities East Sussex has a relatively high level of conversion. The Panel further heard that many people consider fostering and make initial enquiries about the role and then decide for a variety of reasons that it is not for them, or that it may be something they return to at a future date. Liz Rugg, Assistant Director for Early Help and Social Care also informed the Panel that the Foster Service has a selection process for approving Carers and that not everybody that expresses an interest will be approved.

6.4 The Panel discussed the recruitment campaigns for Foster Carers and requested more detail on the specifics of the targeted campaigns. In response, Mr Sewell informed the Panel that the targeted campaigns focus on the fostering of particular groups such as Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and children with disabilities. Further details were also provided about the content of the advertisements and the ongoing work with the Communications & Marketing Team. Sally Carnie, Head of Looked After Children Services also updated the Panel on the Department's targeted social media campaigns, which enable fostering recruitment posts to appear in the social media feeds of those that have already engaged with particular profiles which relate to fostering..

6.5 RESOLVED – to note the report.

## 7 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

7.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on Looked After Children (LAC) statistics.

7.2 Liz Rugg, Assistant Director for Early Help and Social Care updated the Panel on the latest data regarding LAC in East Sussex. Members heard that in the last quarter there has been an increase in the numbers of LAC and that on 30 June 2021 the total had increased to 622, up from 612 in March 2021. The Panel were informed that the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic continues to place significant additional pressures on many households, including on carers, agency foster carers and on placements with family members.



7.3 The Panel asked about the rate of payment for East Sussex County Council employed Foster Carers. Liz Rugg informed the Panel that fostering payments are comprised of two parts: the maintenance rate and the fee. The maintenance rate is non-taxable and covers the costs of the maintenance for looking after a child, and the fee is payment for being a foster carer. The fee received by individual carers takes into consideration, for example, the longevity of service and the level of training the carer has undertaken.

7.4 RESOLVED – to note the report.

## 8 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

8.1 RESOLVED - to exclude the public and press from the meeting for items 9 and 10 on the agenda (see minutes 26 and 27) 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 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to any individual. It was considered that the public interest in maintaining the exception outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

## 9 OFSTED INSPECTION REPORT FOR HAZEL LODGE

9.1 The Panel considered an Ofsted Inspection report for Hazel Lodge Children's Home.

9.2 Nicola Scott, Operations Manager – Residential Looked After Children's Services introduced the report. The Panel were informed that the Ofsted review took place at the end of May 2021 and that the overall inspection judgement was 'good' but that one area, the effectiveness of leaders and managers, received a 'requires improvement to be good'.

9.3 The Panel asked for more detail about the Ofsted review outcome and the steps being taken to ensure an effective action plan is in place. Nicola Scott confirmed to the Panel that a detailed action plan is in place for making these improvements and assured the Panel that this plan is shared with both Ofsted and the Regulation 44 inspectors to monitor its progress.

9.4 RESOLVED - to note the report

## 10 CHILDREN'S HOME REGULATIONS 2015, REGULATION 44: INSPECTION REPORTS

10.1 The Panel considered Regulation 44 Reports for the following Children's Homes:

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

10.2 The Panel received a verbal update from each of the Registered Homes' Managers (RHM's).

10.3 The Panel asked about the definition of 'missing' with regards to a child being absent from their home and sought assurance that this is resolved quickly and effectively. In response, Liz Rugg informed members that the term 'missing' includes a child being absent without permission or explanation. The Panel were also provided with information about the procedures the Department have in place to locate missing children and how they work closely with the Police to ensure children are located and returned as quickly and safely as possible.

10.4 The Panel asked whether children who have left a Home are able to keep in touch with staff and other residents. In response the Panel heard that if a child wants to, arrangements are in place to support continued contact and that children who are old enough often communicate with their peers via social media

10.5 The Panel raised a point of concern from one of the Regulation 44 reports. This report stated that no residential staff or children were interviewed as part of the inspection. Liz Rugg informed the Panel that inspections can take a number of forms and that occasionally the inspector does not have a chance or feel it necessary to interview staff or children. However, this is not typical, and most inspections will include interviews.

10.6 RESOLVED – to note the reports.

11 ANY OTHER EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR.

11.1 There were none.

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

12.1 There were none.

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank



Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank



Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank



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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank



Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank



Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank



Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank



Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

**Report to:** Corporate Parenting Panel

**Date of meeting:** 29 October 2021

**Report by:** Director of Children's Services

**Title:** Virtual School Annual Report - 1 September 2020 - 31 August 2021

**Purpose:** To outline the performance of the Virtual School between 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021

---

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

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

---

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

1.1 The Virtual School Report is contained within Appendix 1.

1.2 The Virtual School is funded through a combination of the Pupil Premium grant and core funding from ESCC and will continue to direct the funding to support the best possible educational outcomes for Looked After Children by effective use of available resources.

### **2. Recommendations**

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

**ALISON JEFFERY**  
**Director of Children's Services**

#### Contact

Sally Carnie - Head of Looked After Children's Services

Tel: 01323 747197

Email: [sally.carnie@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:sally.carnie@eastsussex.gov.uk)

#### Appendices

Appendix 1 - Virtual School Report 2020/21

## **Virtual School Annual Report - 1 September 2020 - 31 August 2021**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 During this period the Virtual School (VS) focused on the delivery of support to Schools, Carers and Social Workers to ensure the best possible outcomes for children who were looked after (CLA), previously looked after children (PCLA) and care leavers (CL). All interventions were designed to meet this overriding objective and used an evidence-based approach, incorporating national research and local quantitative and qualitative data.

1.2 The VS supported 419 CLA in schools and a total of 732 children and young people (CYP) when care leavers were included. We have 93 children placed out of county (22.19%). 103 children (24.5%) of the CLA cohort had an Education Health and Care Plan, 69 children (16.46%) were on the special needs register at SEN support level and 68 children (16.22%) were in Special Schools. In July 2021, there were 80 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and young people in years 7 to 13, 17 of whom are year 11 or under.

1.3 The VS was responsible for the management and administration of the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) for CLA. In the financial year 2020- 2021 each CLA was allocated £2,300. Funding from the PPG was pooled to ensure the best outcomes for our children as outlined in 1.1 and according to the school priorities. Pupil Premium funding for previously looked after children (PCLA) was also £2,300 but was held by their individual School. The VS advised schools on the appropriate spend of this grant allocation for this cohort.

1.4 Caseworkers in the VS had an average caseload of between 80 and 100 children each.

### **2. Key Outcomes**

2.1 The last academic year was a highly unusual one. The Department for Education (DfE) announced that data based on summer 2020 tests, assessments and exams at any phase would not be published. Schools and colleges would not be held to account for exam and assessment data from summer 2021 and data would not be used by others, such as Ofsted and Local Authorities, to measure performance of schools and colleges.

2.2 In 2021, pupils were awarded grades based on assessment by their school or college. Because of the changes in methodology over the past two years, trend comparisons between years should be treated with extreme caution.

2.3 National and Local Authority data will not be published by the DfE. It will therefore not be possible to issue a further briefing note outlining East Sussex's performance as compared to Statistical Neighbours, Core Cities and National performance for 2021 or national and regional comparisons of CLA datasets.

2.4 Primary Phase end of Key Stage tests were cancelled in summer 2021 and grades were not awarded.

2.5 We are, however, extremely pleased with these year's GCSE results which have shown a significant increase on last year. We are also pleased with post 16 results. Ten care leavers went on to University in September.

2.6 The exclusion of CLA from school has been a significant national issue. Exclusions have been low throughout COVID. There were no permanent exclusions last year but 4.53% of the cohort had at least one suspension. The VS has worked with all schools to support children who were in crisis to avoid exclusion where possible. This has included funding Education Support,

Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS) support, Educational Psychologist consultations, Extended Support Assistant classroom support and Alternative Provision.

2.7 The admission and attendance of CLA continued to be a key issue nationally with significant numbers having poor attendance. The VS tracked the attendance of all ESCC CLA educated both in and outside East Sussex and intervened as early as possible. The 2020/21 national attendance data has not been collected due to COVID and the partial closure of schools.

2.8 The VS tracked attendance for CLA during lockdown. Attendance during lockdown was monitored as part of the wider vulnerable children group within the ESCC system and support was given to ensure that all CLA were offered school places. The VS Headteacher was also part of the Vulnerable Children Risk Assessment Group who met weekly to ensure that adequate safeguarding measures were in place for vulnerable groups of children including CLA.

2.9 When year groups returned to school, the attendance of CLA was in line with or above the attendance of all children.

### **3. Virtual School Structure**

3.1 During this period the VS employed a Head Teacher (VHT), two Education Officers (Caseworkers with supervisory and additional responsibilities), an Advisory Teacher, 7 Caseworkers (full time equivalents) and a Teaching Assistant. The VS also employed 12 casual Intervention Teachers. In addition, two Personal Advisers (PAs) were funded to work within the Through Care Service. One PA focused on working with young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) and on increasing youth participation in local and national issues; the other on supporting the education of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC).

3.2 In addition, a VS Extended Support Assistant was employed to work within the East Sussex Behaviour and Attendance Team (ESBAS). This has enabled the VS to respond quickly to children in crisis and to support them in their own schools. This structure also ensured that the support offered was incorporated into the wider package of intervention delivered to schools.

### **4. Key Developments**

4.1 The quality of teaching and learning continued to be the VS's key focus. The VS's team of teachers delivered interventions across all age ranges. Literacy and numeracy remained the main areas for focus and included phonics support at Key Stage 2 (primary school) to improve reading. Most of the tuition took place on-line. The VS also used tutors from private agencies to deliver lessons, and the year 11 cohort participated in on-line maths revision lessons which included the opportunity to take part in on-line mock exams.

4.2 From September 2020 to August 2021 the VS provided both individual and group tuition sessions. Year 11s were a priority, but tutoring took place across all year groups in both primary and secondary. In total, the Virtual School funded 180 blocks of tuition. 32 blocks were group interventions. Results show that 64% of year 11 students achieving a Grade 4 and above had received additional tuition. 100% of young people recorded an increase in confidence and 95% met their intervention targets.

4.3 Partnerships between the VS and local providers continued throughout the year. These organisations mainly delivered services to young people who were not engaging with school. Eggtooth and the Education Futures Trust, both based in Hastings, and Develop Outdoors provided educational and therapeutic interventions. The VS also worked with Jamie's Farm, an organisation that offers disadvantaged young people a programme, combining work on the farm alongside the opportunity to work with others and develop a range of life skills. During the Easter, break a small group of young people spent time working with animals on the Farm.

4.4 Eggtooth also ran an on-line Art Club for children in Key Stage 2. Students in Years 7-9 attended Spring School run by Brighton University in their Easter holiday. The group took part in challenges such as an Egg Drop/Product Design challenge and a Tower building challenge using spaghetti.

*"I thought the challenges were great, especially the egg challenge. We had to find a way to throw an egg from a height without it breaking. When we threw the egg out of our window at 9.30am in the morning our neighbours laughed!" Child quote.*

4.5 The Youth Employability Scheme (YES), offered a universal service to all young people from year 10, and worked intensively with those who required more support in identifying future pathways. As a result of these partnerships there has been an increase in the percentage of young people in Education, Employment and Training compared to last year.

4.6 Personal Education Plans (PEPs) remained critical to raising educational outcomes for our children. Any applications for Pupil Premium funding to support CLA and their learning continued to be made via the PEP. Most PEP meetings took place on- line allowing caseworkers to attend more meetings, particularly for those children who are placed out of county. There has been a significant increase in the completion rates of PEPs and the VS has continued to work with schools to ensure that they are of a high quality. An audit on the quality of PEPs rated 93% of the PEPs sampled as green or amber overall.

4.7 The preparation of CLA for key educational transitions such as moving schools remained a focus during 2020/21 but sadly saw some cancelations in planned events in the same way as many wider events because of COVID. A summer school for pre-reception children took place in August 2021.

4.8 The VS continued to work closely with Bede's school to further develop the Springboard boarding project. Three students have taken up residential places this September, two in year 12 and one in year 7. We now have nine students attending Bedes school. One of our young people was made Deputy Head Boy and two others Heads of their boarding houses and school prefects.

4.9 The Children in Care Awards took place virtually last year. 80 young people aged 5 - 25, received awards in the categories of: educational achievement, positive contribution, personal achievement and skills and talents. There were 8 winner awards and 72 highly commended awards given.

4.10 The VS has continued to work closely with other services to develop the support for children's Social and Emotional Health across the Authority. Regular messages were sent out to Carers and Designated Teachers during lockdown, sharing strategies and resources to support mental health. The VS jointly ran a virtual summer conference on Mental Health with the Schools Mental Health Co-ordinator, and the Educational Psychology Service. Two of our young people presented at the conference along with VS staff. The VS has recently run its live attachment training to schools and the VS has funded over 60 places on an extended course in Attachment and Trauma.

4.11 Designated teacher training has taken place online and we held Designated Teacher support sessions with our link Educational Psychologist.

4.12 The VS funded a 10-week training programme for foster carers on 'The Empowerment Approach' led by Kitt Messenger. 100% of the reviews rated the training as excellent.

4.13 The VS has been involved in the STrAWB (Shared Training and Assessment of Well-Being for Looked-After Children) project feasibility study. This project will deliver a training and assessment package for foster carers and schools, designed to identify and support those



children who are at greatest risk of developing mental health difficulties, as well as those who are most resilient following maltreatment. It is led by researchers from the Universities of Oxford and Sussex. COVID caused a delay in the project but plans are now in place for it to go ahead later in the year.

## **5. The wider National context**

5.1 The Virtual Head Teacher (VHT) worked collaboratively with the national cohort of VHT's on a range of national priority areas.

5.2 In September 2021 the Head of the VS was given extended duties by Government to provide a strategic lead to improve the educational outcomes of children with a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker who are aged from 0-18. This was in recognition of the impact that they have had on improving the outcomes of looked after children and care leavers.

5.3 The role is a strategic one. In the first phase of this extension, VS staff are meeting with school Head Teachers and with Social Care managers to identify areas of good practice as well as areas for development and to recommend a best practice model of working.

5.4 The VS continued to work to develop better communication with local authorities across the country where ESCC CLA were placed out of the county. This remained an area of key challenge, particularly for those children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or those awaiting assessment for an EHCP. In June 2021 we were successful in our application to the Secretary of State to direct an Academy Trust in another area to admit one of our young people. The VS has continued to work closely with ISEND to develop policies and procedures to address this issue and continued to reduce the timescales for school admissions. This year we have developed provision for young people with the highest level of need who require a transition period before joining a school or college or who are awaiting a special school place. The VS has also worked with the English as an Additional Language Service and with Post 16 providers to further develop provision for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.

5.5 East Sussex has been successful in becoming part of a pilot for funding Post 16 provision. We are one of 30 LAs in the country and three in the south east who will receive funding based on the number of young people enrolled in Further Education Colleges. The pilot will include training for staff in FE colleges and in the Through Care Team, the development of guidance for teachers and social workers re post 16 provision and effective education planning as well as an offer of additional English and Maths lesson and personal coaching. It will also include the development of a clear policy on delivering education to UASC from the point of entry to the Authority and the provision of English as an Additional Language, language for Maths and for ICT lessons. There will also be funding for young people to take part in extracurricular activities which will support their inclusion in college life and their general wellbeing.

## **6. Governor priorities for the Virtual School 2021/22**

6.1 The Governor priorities for the Virtual School for 2021/22 are:

- To further improve the educational and wider outcomes for Looked After children
- To make a strategic contribution to the development of policies and practices that will improve outcomes for children and young people with a social worker
- To raise the profile of LAC/care leavers in FE.
- To improve attendance of LAC/care leavers at FE colleges
- To better support delivery of PEPs/pathway plans at individual/cohort level.

## **7. Conclusion and recommendations**

7.1 The Virtual Head Teacher, together with the national group of Virtual Head Teachers, to make an active contribution to the national debate regarding the ongoing DfE commitment to funding Pupil Premium Plus for CLA and PCLA, through the post 16 pilot, and to other issues impacting CLA such as the SEND policies, admissions and exclusions.

7.2 The VS to review the priorities above on an ongoing basis in response to the impact of COVID 19 on education and wellbeing in the longer term.

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

**Report to:** Corporate Parenting Panel

**Date:** 29 October 2021

**Title of Report:** Looked After Children's Annual Progress Report 2020-21

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

**Purpose of Report:** To update the Panel on achievements and challenges for services for Looked after Children in 2020-21

---

**Recommendations:**

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

---

**1. Background and supporting information**

1.1 Services for Looked After Children (LAC) are predominantly funded from the Children's Services base budget with some additional smaller funding streams supporting specific activity, for example, Virtual School activity from the Pupil Premium Grant.

1.2 Attached as Appendix 1 is the report of performance and outcomes in 2020-21 for services for Looked After Children in East Sussex, for whom the Council acts as Corporate Parents.

**2. Conclusion and recommendations**

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

**ALISON JEFFREY**

Director of Children's Services

Contact:

Teresa Lavelle-Hill - Head of Service for Looked After Children

Email: [teresa.lavelle-hill@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:teresa.lavelle-hill@eastsussex.gov.uk)

Tel: 01323 747197

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Looked After Children's Annual Progress Report 2020-21







# Looked After Children's Annual Progress Report 2020-21

**Teresa Lavelle-Hill**  
**Head of Service for LAC**





# Who did we look after?

## The data shows a snapshot as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

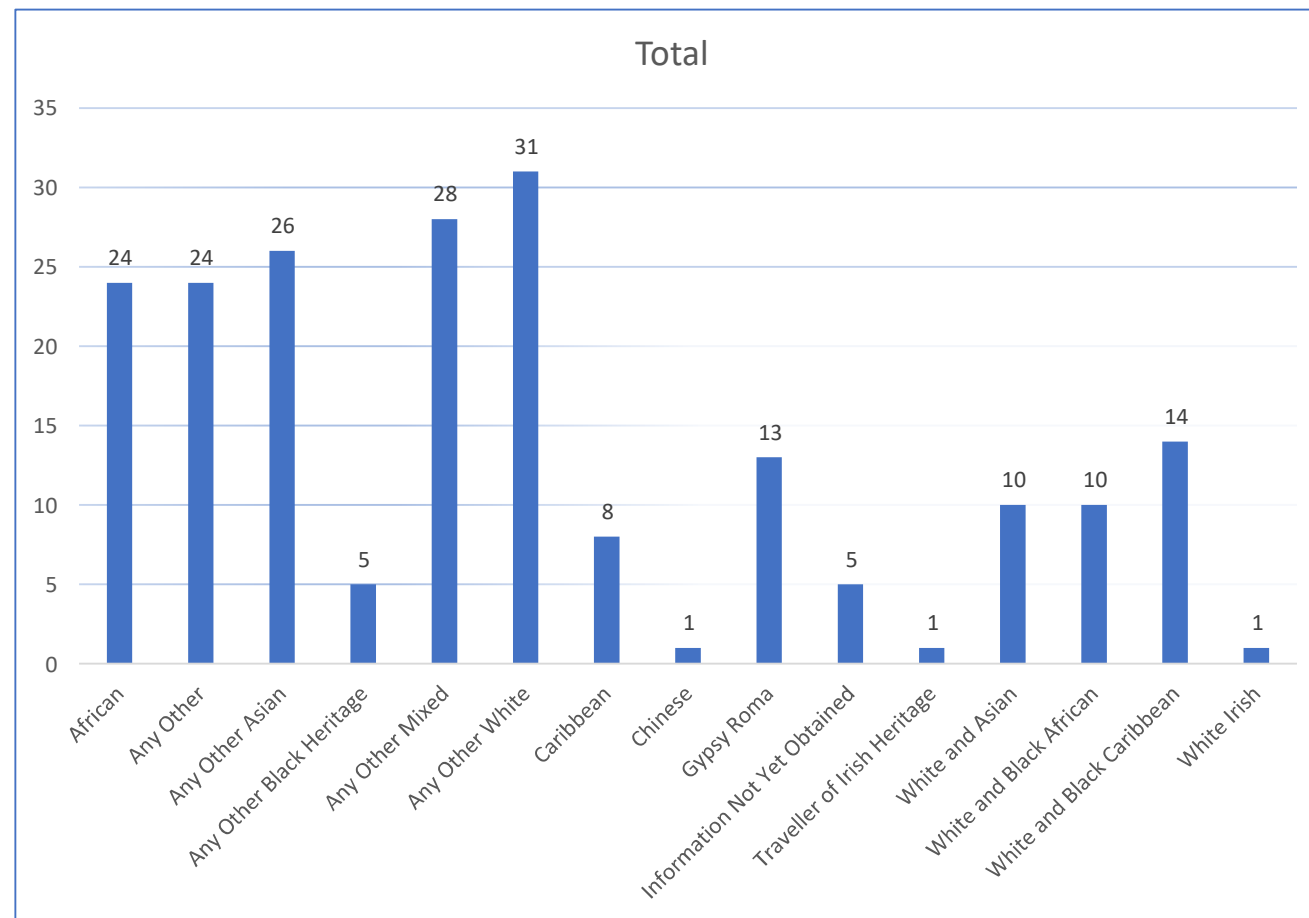
At year end we were looking after 343 boys and 268 girls.

- Overall, there were more children in care than the previous year. This is due in part to an increase of an additional 22 unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) in our care as compared to the previous year.
- This is also because we had more children come into our care than left our care.
- In addition to the snapshot year end figure, there is also the 'churn' figure, which is made up of the number of children moving in and out of care during the year. When added to the year end figure, this shows an increase of 22 as compared with 2019/20. In total there were 782 children allocated to social workers and worked with during 2020/21.

Statistics	2019-2020	2020-2021
Looked After Children	592	611
Children coming into care	179	209
0-5 year olds admitted to care	75	83
6-12 year olds admitted to care	38	49
13+ admitted to care	66	77
Children leaving care	177	178
0-12 year olds leaving care	64	91
13+ leaving care	105	87

# Who did we look after

26% of our children looked after during 2020/21 identified as being of a minority ethnic background or of mixed heritage. This includes children who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.



# Our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs)

- East Sussex County Council were caring for 54 UASC under 18 during 2020/21 plus 62 care leavers aged 18+ .
- Our UASC were mainly male, 90% were aged 16 or over but our youngest was aged only 13.
- In the last year, 12 young people came into our care via the National Transfer Scheme and the remainder have been spontaneous arrivals found either by the Police within East Sussex or at Newhaven Port.
- The majority of these children are Kurdish (predominately Iranian) followed by Sudanese. These groups have taken over from Vietnamese being the predominant nationality. We also have children from Eritrea, Afghanistan, Mali, Somali, Ethiopia, Albania, Kuwait, Libya, Syria and Egypt.

Statistic s	2019/ 20	2020/ 21
UASC in care	32	54



# Children with disabilities

- The number of children with severe disabilities in our care remains similar to previous years.
- At 31st March 2021, there were 23 LAC allocated to social workers from the Children's Disability Service (CDS), with 18 aged 15 or less and with 5 aged 16- 18.
- In addition, there are a significant number of other children in our care with a wider range of disabilities and allocated to other social work teams, including those who present with an autistic spectrum condition or who have other neuro diversity needs.
- Only 5 of the CDS children are living outside East Sussex. This number has reduced over the past few years.
- 8 CDS children were living with ESCC foster carers and 1 with independent agency foster carers. 5 were living in ESCC children's homes and 8 were living in independent children's homes. Some of these children are with us full time and some with us for significant packages of respite to support their families.
- 1 child was living in a residential school due to behavioural needs arising from an ASC diagnosis.

# Where our children are living

Decrease in	Decrease in children placed with ESCC foster carers
Decrease in	Decrease in children placed for adoption.
Increase in	Increase in children 16+ living with our supported accommodation providers including with our in-house supportive lodgings providers.
Increase in	Increase in children living in agency children's homes.

Data shows a snapshot as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

Placement Type	2019-2020	2020-2021
With foster carer	447	426
Of these: in house carers	293	265
Kinship carers	62	65
Agency carers	92	96
Placed for Adoption	30	23
Supported Accommodation/ Supported Lodgings	30	57
ESCC Children's Homes	19	14
Agency Children's Homes	38	57
Agency Special Schools	0	1
Placed with Parents	20	22
Independent Living	3	7
Youth custody/secure unit	4	3
Hospital/NHS establishment	1	1
Absconded	0	0
Total	592	611

# How well did we do in 2020-21?

Indicator Ref	Description	2020/21 Value		2019/20 England	2019/20 Value		2018/19 England	2018/19 Value	
NI 58	Emotional & Behavioural Health of children in care	14.2	↑	14.1	14.5	↓	14.2	14.4	↑
Adoption 1	Percentage of children who ceased to be looked after who were adopted	15.8%	↑	11.7%	15.3%	↓	12.0%	16.0%	↓
Adoption 2	Average time between an LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match with an adoptive family (3 year average)	274 days	↓	175 days	248 days	↓	178 days	197 days	↑
NI62 Placements 1	Number of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year	13.3%	↓	11.0%	13.0%	↓	10.0%	12.0%	↓
NI63 Placements 2	% of LAC under 16 who've been lac for 2.5 years or more & in the same placement for 2 years or placed for adoption	64.1%	↑	68.0%	62.8%	↓	69.0%	70.1%	↓
Placements 3	% of LAC at 31 <sup>st</sup> March placed outside LA boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live	17.3%	↓	16.0%	15.2%	↓	15.0%	13.0%	↓

Where performance has improved/increased it is shown with a green arrow ↑ and where it has dipped with a red arrow ↓

# How well did we do in 2020-21? (continued)

Indicator Ref	Description	2020/21 Value		2019/20 England	2019/20 Value		2018/19 England	2018/19 Value	
Leaving Care 1 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in education, employment or training	46.3%	↓	53.0%	52.8%	↑	52.0%	52.0%	↑
Leaving Care 2 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in suitable accommodation	87.8%	↑	85.0%	78.8%	↓	85.0%	79.9%	↑
Leaving Care 3 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 17-18 who were in education, employment or training	68.7%	↓	64.0%	76.3%	↑	64.0%	65.0%	↓
Leaving Care 4 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 17-18 who were in suitable accommodation	95.5%	↓	90.0%	97.4%	↑	88.0%	91.0%	↑
Thrive PI 9	Rate of Children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18	57.5	↓	66.7	55.7	↑	65.0	56.0	↑
Health 1	Percentage of children who had their teeth checked by a dentist	32.6%	↓	86.0%	91.2%	↓	85.0%	94.0%	↑
PAF C81	Final warnings, reprimands and convictions of lac	1.8%	↑	3.0%	2.6%	↓	3.0%	2.0%	↑

Where performance has improved/increased it is shown with a green arrow ↑ and where it has dipped with a red arrow ↓

\* Leaving Care Indicators—calculated using data collected at the time of each young person's 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> birthday

# How well did we do in 2020-21 - Summary

- Overall performance has continued to remain strong with little change in most of our performance indicators despite the impact of Covid-19. **Note – the national data for 20/21 England is not yet published so performance when compared to the 2020/21 national data for England may look different.**
- The rate of LAC has increased from 55.5 in 2019/20 to 57.5 per 10,000 population in 20/21. Although this is well below the national average for England of 66.7 for 2019/20, it is higher than the rate for our statistical neighbours for 2019/20 which is 50.5.
- Suitable accommodation for our Care Leavers aged 2019/21 has improved markedly from last year and now stands at 87.8% compared to an England average of 85%.
- The emotional and behavioural health of children in care (as measured via the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire - SDQ scores) has improved slightly and the average score per child is 14.2 which is a reduction of 0.3.
- Performance on timely placements for children with a plan for adoption, children with 3 or more placement moves and children placed outside of ESCC boundaries have all been more challenging. This largely reflects the impact of Covid-19 on care planning and court timescales and a lack of enough placement options for children. It is also a reflection of the wider national picture.
- Health indicators have also been adversely affected by Covid-19 and the complete lack of access to dental appointments. The percentage of children who had a dental check drastically reduced from 91% in 2019/20 to 32.6% in 2020/21. Due to Covid-19, dentists were closed during the first lockdown with practices reopening from July 2020 but offering a limited number of appointments. The last 2 months of data shows an improvement in the percentage of our children having dental checks
- Similarly, Covid-19 has impacted on the number of our Care Leavers aged 19-21 who are in education, employment and training which has fallen from 53% to 46% and now stands below the England average.

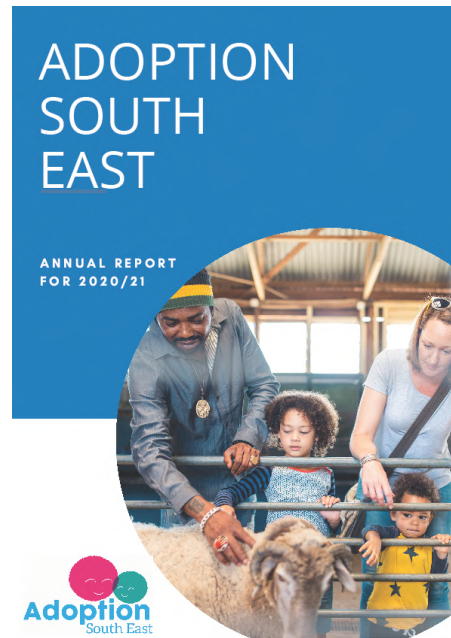
# Adoption South East (ASE)Regional Adoption Agency

- Despite the pandemic, ASE went live on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 with ESCC leading it which was a huge achievement.
- The global pandemic posed huge challenges for family finding and linking. Despite this, the 4 Local Authorities (Surrey, ESCC, WSCC and Brighton and Hove) agencies met weekly to consider all children and available adopters in order to identify potential links.
- As a result of the pandemic, ASE had to be creative when linking and matching children. The majority of the work took place on MS TEAMS and included adult contact as well as meeting children. Rigorous risk assessments were in place to support contact.
- When they could go ahead, care proceedings continued to be protracted causing significant delays to the plans for children. However, adopters and foster carers worked very closely together, self-isolating with families to minimise contact with others prior to introductions.
- ASE now have an ethnically diverse group of adopters to consider for children.
- A mandatory 'Fostering to Adopt Workshop' (F2A) has led more adopters to consider fostering for adoption. with both babies and older children. being placed in this way.

Family finding and linking for East Sussex children	2020-2021
Number of children adopted (AO's)	27
Number of children approved for adoption	26
Number of relinquished children	1
Number of 2 sibling groups matched	2
Number of 3 sibling groups matched	0
Number of 4 sibling groups matched	0
Number of children matched (outside of ASE)	3
Number of children matched within ASE	22
Number of children placed for F2A	8

# Adoption Recruitment and Post Adoption Support

Please see Adoption South East Annual Report for 2020/21



# Fostering Recruitment and Retention

**The data provided is a snap shot as of 31st March 2021.**

- There were 20 fostering households approved during 2020/21 offering 30 placements.
- The number of enquiries was significantly reduced compared to 2019/20.
- 2 fostering households transferred from agency foster care to become East Sussex foster carers bringing children with them and creating a saving of £40K per year.

Recruitment	Households		
	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019
Enquiries	227	268	266
Screening calls	92	114	118
Initial visits	42	71	70
Skills to foster training (STF)	37	21	29
Applications for assessment	53	35	35
Closed	7	7	3
Withdrew	13	6	11
Total allocated but did not progress	20	13	14
Approvals	20	22	21
Placements	30	39	36
Conversion rate Enquiry to approval	9%	8.2%	7.9%
Conversion rate Screening call to approval	22%	19.2%	17.8%
Conversion rate Initial visit to approval	48%	31%	30%



# SUPPORTIVE LODGINGS

- Supportive lodgings providers offer accommodation for our older children and also for homeless young people aged 16 to 21.
- As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, East Sussex Fostering Service had 55 approved providers offering a total of 82 places.
- There were 7 new household approved offering 8 placements during 2020/21.
- 57 children and young people were living in supportive lodgings during 2020/21.
- 8 'hybrid' providers (approved as both supportive lodgings providers and registered foster carers) provided stability and continuing care for children aged 14+.

# Placement Support Service

- During Covid-19 the team adjusted regularly to ensure that the most vulnerable children and their carers continued to receive face to face support on a risk assessed basis.
- The Placement Support Service supported 131 children during 2020/21.

Page 508

Despite all the challenges and difficulties during the Pandemic, the commitment and sensitivity of the placement support workers has been outstanding'

**Placement Support - 84 support packages**  
**Special Placement Scheme - 5 support packages**  
**Mother & Baby – 2 support packages**  
**Through Care Team - 35 support packages**  
**Attachment - 1 support package**  
**Edge of care - 3 support packages**  
**Agency - 1 support package**

Placement support has always been a lifeline and the level of support they gave to me and D was truly exceptional, I couldn't have continued without it'.

'Our PSW's are very caring people when P was in hospital, they called many times to offer their help and have a chat, thank you

# CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL (CICC)



**The CICC operated creatively during the pandemic ensuring young people's voices continued to be heard.**

- The CICC contributed to projects being delivered through schools, youth services and agencies working with young people.
- A CICC young person led a project inspecting the mental health support provided to students in schools in East Sussex.
- Members of the CICC remained in touch with younger children in care during lockdown to help them feel less isolated. This small project will be developed into an official Buddy Scheme.
- The CiCC continued to attend Placement Support holiday activities. 13 issues raised by children in care were taken forward by the CICC with relevant professionals.
- The CiCC had a Zoom call with Anne Longfield, Children's Commissioner for England, with discussion around the impact of lockdown on their mental health, education and what support they were receiving.
- The CiCC gave input into training for professionals working with young people. Themes include the role of the CICC and the work they are doing, the impact of loss and separation, and the impact that inappropriate language can have on children in care.

# Our Children's Homes

## Hazel lodge St Leonards-on-Sea

- Judged as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in June 2019.
- The Manager left and an Acting Manager was appointed.
- The Manager and team worked incredibly hard during lockdown to keep the home open and safe.
- The children enjoyed appropriate socially distanced activities and trips out of the area.

## Brodrick House Eastbourne

- Continuing 'Outstanding' judgement by Ofsted.
- A new Manager and Deputy Manager were appointed.
- Staff undertook impressive work throughout the Covid-19 lockdown to keep the home open and safe.
- Successful and very positive outcomes for the children. eg one young person reached the summit of Snowdon which was a personal goal.
- Young people continued with their education throughout lockdown and made impressive progress.

## Homefield Cottage Seaford

- Judged 'Good' by Ofsted.
- Children responded to new boundaries during lockdown and outcomes were very positive.
- Children enjoyed the summer 'staycation' involving planned activities and decoration of the garden.
- A new kitchen was installed.
- Following lockdown some young people moved on to semi-independent placements and new children arrived.

# Our Children's Homes (continued)

## The Bungalow Eastbourne

- Registered for 7 children aged 7 - 19 and provided full-time accommodation to some of our disabled children who are unable to live in a family setting.
- All children attended local schools and all maintained with their families.
- The Bungalow received an Ofsted judgement of 'Good' in 2020.

## Lansdowne Secure Children's home Hailsham

- Judged as 'Good' by Ofsted in February 2020.
- New interim manager was appointed after the departure of the RHM and Deputy Manager.
- The extension of the building works were further delayed due to Covid 19, impacting on the physical environment and meaning reduced numbers of children.
- Despite Covid 19 significantly impacting on the majority of the workforce , Lansdowne was able to stay open albeit caring for a reduced number of children with very complex needs.

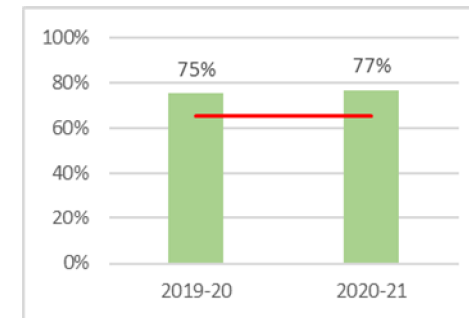
## Acorns Bexhill-on-Sea

- Continued to provide full-time care for 2 young people , both having a high level of complex needs.
- Staff worked closely with colleagues in the Positive Behaviour Support Services and the Child Adolescent Mental Health Service.
- Judged as 'Good' by Ofsted in October 2019. An Interim Ofsted Inspection in January judged as 'Declined effectiveness'.

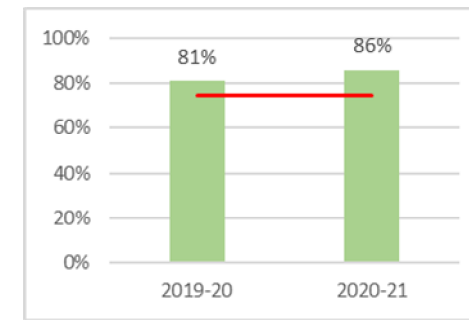
# The health of our children

- We built on excellent performance in 2019/20 to achieve both targets again in 2020/21.
- During 2020/21, 77% of Initial Health Assessments were undertaken within 20 days against a target of 65%, and 86% achieved within 25 days against a 75% target.
- 84-86% of Review Health Assessments are being achieved consistently with robust systems in place to remind staff to organise these in a timely manner.
- 89% of children that have been looked after for more than 12 months have been immunised.

% Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) Within 20 Days



% Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) Within 25 Days



# The mental and emotional wellbeing of our children

- A Pan Sussex whole system review of Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health access and support for children and young people was commissioned by the 3 Sussex local authorities, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust (SPFT) culminating in the Foundations For Our Future report published in March 2020 with 20 recommendations.
- Those children and young people who need more extensive and specialised help, including LAC, are identified in the iTHRIVE model which was adopted as part of this review.
- Looked After Children's Mental Health Services (LACMHS) largely operated via online clinics during the pandemic but face to face provision was offered to young people in crisis.
- There were 44 consultations to children and their networks, 89 drop in consultations to professionals working with LAC, and one therapeutic parenting group.
- The number of cases opened to LACMHS at any one time varied from 104 (1<sup>st</sup> quarter) to 57 (4th quarter) because of staff shortages and a period of recruitment in the final quarter.
- The Adopted Children's Mental Health Service (ADCAMHS) worked with 72 children, young people and their families providing bespoke treatment and support packages. These packages included specialist consultations, assessments and therapeutic interventions.

# Education of our children

## Headline data

- All statutory educational assessments, tests and regulated qualification grades were determined by teaching staff for the second year running. Data will not be published and will only be used to identify key patterns/trends.
- The National Looked after Children's data set will not be available for any robust comparative work. The ESCC Virtual School has collected individual results, with many young people able to celebrate particular successes. GCSE's results were particularly pleasing. The percentage of students achieving a level 4 or above in both English and Maths was significantly higher than last year. The percentage of our students achieving five GCSEs at level 5 and above is now higher than the percentage that achieved five GCSEs including English and Maths at level 4 and above in 2019.
- Post 16 results enabled 10 Care leavers to go to university in September. Many others achieved the level 2 qualifications needed to progress on to level 3 courses.
- School attendance for Looked After Children during lockdown remained good with staff and Foster Carers working hard to reduce barriers to attendance.
- In terms of exclusions, 0% of the Looked after Children cohort had permanent exclusions, 4.53% had at least 1 fixed term exclusion (now called suspension), 3.34% had 1 exclusion and 1.19% had more than one exclusion. 89% of those excluded are in secondary school. There is no national comparable published data on exclusions.



# Education of our children During the Covid-19 pandemic

- Virtual School participated in the Vulnerable Children at Risk Steering Group. This was formed to assess and manage risk to all vulnerable children during lockdown.
- Teaching interventions delivered to Children in Care virtually, against agreed targets.
- Dedicated language teaching provision for newly arrived Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.
- Designated Teacher training delivered on line included pre-recorded training resources and live discussions.
- Foster Carer training 'Carers as Coaches' was delivered virtually – tackling challenging behaviour and improving young people's wellbeing, pro-social skills and academic success.
- Alternative provision was commissioned via a range of providers for young people with complex behaviours – Jamie's Farm, Eggtooth Project, one to one interventions etc.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Conference was held.
- Newsletter for Designated Teachers and Foster Carers went out regularly.





## Education of our children

### Future developments

- Virtual Headteacher to take on strategic role to promote the educational outcomes of any child 0-18 years who has, or previously has had a Social Worker.
- Post 16 pilot to enhance the educational outcomes for young people 16 + and developments in FE provision.



# The Through Care Team (TCT)

## What we have achieved in 2020/21

- The TCT kept in close contact with our young people during the Covid-19 lockdowns, offering virtual visits and weekly group activities e.g. art and cookery lessons. As soon as it was safe to do so, face to face meetings resumed outdoors.
- Young people had access to laptops and Wi-Fi in order to continue with their education, facilitate their access to employment and to keep in touch with their families.
- Development of our corporate grandparenting role through an enhanced safeguarding plan for parents and babies, emotional support via support groups, and financial support for essential baby equipment.
- Placement Support Workers continued to work closely with our young people who were isolated in their own accommodation or who were struggling to maintain their placement.
- A specific Placement Support Worker was appointed with a focus on prevention of homelessness/rough sleeping and on our hardest to reach young people.

# The Through Care Team

## What we have achieved in 2020/21 (continued)

- Our Care Leavers Council met throughout the year on virtual platforms and were involved in significant research undertaken by the University of Sussex regarding the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the care experienced by young people.
- The housing pathway was extended to include more commissioned providers providing intensive support and offering more choice to our most vulnerable young people.
- Peer mentors received training and a pilot scheme will be launched in the autumn 2021.

# The Through Care Team

## Future Developments

- Extend the local offer to our young people to include affordable/free access to leisure activities including local gyms and subsidised travel on public transport.
- Work to increase the quality of private rented accommodation provision for those Care Leavers who have exhausted options through traditional housing pathways, including the development of a rent guarantor scheme.
- To work with CAMHS and Adult Mental Health Services to improve therapeutic intervention to our older young people, particularly those who are experiencing the impact of trauma and for those who require tier 4 services.

# Our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

## Developments 2020/21

- Specialist training was delivered to foster carers and professional network regarding the challenges and needs of this cohort.
- Pilot scheme with the Home Office to offer timely Virtual Interviews for asylum claims.
- Collaboration with Sussex Police on a national operation to protect UASC and treat them as victims of crime. The aim has been to reduce numbers of children who are re-trafficked or drawn into Modern Day Slavery.
- A toolkit has been developed for County Councillors.
- Additional ESOL language provision has been made available at Eastbourne Campus with effect from September 2021.
- A bespoke mental health service has been commissioned from the Refugee Council.
- Partnership with Diversity Recourse International to assist linking young people into existing resources, building safer community networks and supporting identity and cultural needs of this cohort.
- Accommodation pathways have been enhanced.
- The ESCC Specialist UASC Team has been expanded. Staff have consolidated their knowledge and understanding and have improved relationships with external agencies e.g. Immigration Solicitors, Interpreters, Therapists and Charities.
- During lockdown, virtual one to one support and group sessions were provided alongside online education provision.

# Our unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) (continued)

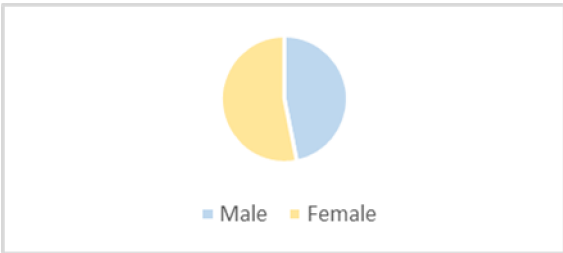
- **Next steps**

- To review the staffing complement of the Specialist Team.
- Face to face support groups re-established – understanding life in the UK.
- Extend training offer to Local Children's Safeguarding Partnership
- To collaborate with the Fostering Service to extend diversity of the fostering offer.

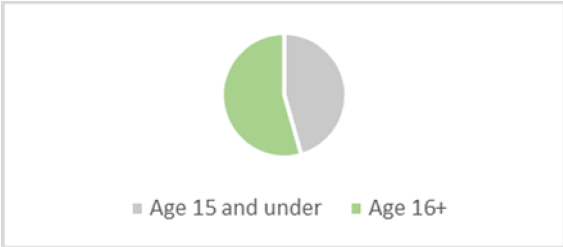


# Our Children who went missing

In 20/21, 79 LAC went missing, of these, 37 were male and 42 were female



43 of the 79 missing LAC were aged 16 and over, while the other 36 were aged 15 and under



60 of the missing LAC went missing more than once



In 2020/21 there were 639 missing episodes in total for all children throughout the year, 556 episodes of children being missing for less than 24 hours, 50 episodes of children being missing for between 24 to 48 hours, 20 episodes where children were missing between 2 and 4 days and 13 episodes where they were missing for 5 days or more.

All these children were tracked by Sussex Police and by Children Services staff and offered Return Home Interviews . Risk assessments were regularly reviewed on high profile children who went missing and, where necessary formal strategy discussions were held in line with safeguarding procedures



# Our children who are at risk of criminal exploitation

- The Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) operational group continued to meet monthly each side of the county to consider referrals of all exploited children who were deemed to be at the highest risk. Referrals to the group were screened through a multi-agency screening hub with processes tightened in line with feedback from the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI).
- As of the end of March 2021, there were 15 children subject to East Sussex MACE operational oversight and therefore categorised as being at high risk of exploitation. 4 of these children were East Sussex LAC, and all were female. 2 of these children were deemed to be a risk of sexual exploitation and 2 deemed to be at risk of both criminal and sexual exploitation.
- The MACE strategic group met bi-monthly to consider the issues raised in relation to safeguarding of this group of children. The criminal exploitation of children connected to 'County Lines' (drugs) activity remained a significant issue in East Sussex, with changes during Covid-19 focusing on increased criminal exploitation in the Hastings area. There continued to be a number of contextual safeguarding responses particularly focusing on older children and place based interventions.

# Our children who offend

- The Youth Offending Team (YOT) worked with 14 looked after children during 2020/21.
- A snapshot of the looked after status of open cases showed that the YOT were working with 2 looked after children on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2021 which equates to 2% of the YOT caseload. LAC aged 10 - 17 represent less than 1% of the total population of this age group across the county, therefore they are over represented within the YOT cohort.
- There is an agreed protocol in place which focusses on decriminalising LAC where appropriate.

# Participation

## How we listen to what our children think and say

- 95% of all My Voice Matters Meetings were held early or on time in 2020/21 which is up from 92% the previous year despite the challenges of the pandemic.
- Only 13% of reviews were delayed by more than 4 weeks. The majority of reviews were delayed in the child's best interest or because an essential party was unable to attend.
- A review of administrative support processes in quarter 2 of 2021-22 should further reduce the number of late or ineffective reviews in the future.



# Participation

## Children and Young People make their voices heard in lots of different ways

- In 2020/21, 95% of children aged 4+ participated in some way in their My Voice Matters meetings, up from 91% on the previous year.
- Social Workers have demonstrated skill and creativity in gathering children's views including the use of alternative communication methods to fully consult children wherever possible.
- More children are chairing their meetings and asking questions about their plans.
- The My Voice Matters letter means that children receive the meeting outcome in their own/age related appropriate language or in their preferred communication style



# The role of our elected members

The Corporate Parenting Panel met virtually three times during 2020/21 to continue to scrutinise the performance of all services in relation to LAC and care leavers. The panel meeting for the April 2020 panel was cancelled due to the pandemic. The reports set out below were presented and considered:

## **24<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

- The launch of Adoption South East, the Regional Adoption Agency.
- Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Adoption Service.
- Annual Progress of East Sussex Fostering Service.
- LAC Statistics.
- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Corporate Parenting Services.
- Update on Residential Homes.

## **30<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

- Regulation 44 Inspection reports for the following Children's Homes: Acorns (Dorset Road), Brodrick House, Hazel Lodge, Homefield Cottage, Lansdowne Secure Unit and The Bungalow.
- Annual Report of services for LAC 2019/20.
- Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report.
- Virtual School Annual Report 2019/20.
- Looked After Children Health Report.
- LAC Statistics.

## **29<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

- Annual Report of the East Sussex Foster Carer Association (ESFCA).
- LAC Statistics.
- Ofsted Inspection reports for the following Children's Homes: The Bungalow, Lansdowne Secure Unit and Acorns.
- Regulation 44 Inspection reports for the following Children's Homes: Acorns, Brodrick House, Hazel Lodge, Homefield Cottage, Lansdowne Secure Unit and The Bungalow.



# Priorities for 2021/22

- Improve options for all our children- adoption, fostering and residential.
- To complete the building works of Lansdowne Secure Children's Home and the opening of Silver Birches, a new children's home in St Leonards-on-Sea.
- To embed good practice in meeting the identity needs of our children, young people and their families.
- To enhance the 'local offer' for our Care Leavers.
- To develop a Lifelong Links project with regional colleagues to build stronger support networks for LAC and care leavers.
- To contribute to the Pan Sussex whole system review of Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health for children and consolidate the partnership between Adult Social Care (ASC) and Children's Services to improve mental health pathways for Care Leavers aged 18 to 25.
- To develop best practice for post adoption support across Adoption South East.
- To contribute to a new, integrated multi-agency service to support families with children who are 'on the edge of care' to build family resilience and prevent children entering care or promote a return home or to extended family members where possible.

# Children’s Services Annual Reports 2021/21



## Virtual School Annual Report 2020-21



Adobe Acrobat  
Document

This page is intentionally left blank



Committee:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>29 October 2021</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>

---

<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to comment on and note the report.</b>
-------------------------	--

---

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

1.1 Services for Looked After Children (LAC) are predominantly funded from the Children's Services base budget with some additional smaller funding streams supporting specific activity, for example Virtual School activity from the Pupil Premium Grant.

1.2 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 quarter has seen a slight decrease in numbers of children and on the last day of September there were 622 children in care, down from 625 in June. It remains extremely busy with ongoing pressure on the Fostering Duty system to find placements as new children come in and placements for existing children disrupt and they need to be moved, often at short notice. Both internal and external placement options for children continue to be limited and in particular external fostering agency placements remain in very short supply, which has again meant that some children who would previously have been placed with agency foster carers because in-house fostering capacity is full have had to be placed within a residential setting. Internal East Sussex County Council (ESCC) foster carers continue to work incredibly hard to welcome children wherever possible and to keep existing children living with them.

1.3 A total of 343 children were in foster care at the end of September, with 269 living with ESCC carers and a further 74 children living with agency carers, down 10 over the quarter. In addition, we have 77 young people in supported housing options, homes or hostels, a rise of 2 over the quarter. 17 children were placed for adoption, 2 further children being placed with foster carers who are also approved adopters under the Fostering for Adoption pathway.

1.4 At the end of the quarter the number of children with kinship foster carers stood at 80.

1.5 The number of children living at home with their parents whilst remaining subject to a legal order to ESCC stood at 31. Planning for placements of this sort is always monitored rigorously to mitigate any risk factors. Agreement to begin or end a placement with parents is given at a senior level, unless it is court mandated when realistically ESCC has no choice in the matter.

1.6 At the end of September, 63 children were living in residential children's homes, up 1 over the quarter. Staff continue to make every effort to place children in our in-house homes before they seek agreement from a senior manager for an agency placement and robust negotiations on both quality and price are a feature of every external placement search. As set out above, the use of residential placements is linked to the availability of in-house or agency fostering options.

1.7 At the end of September 2 ESCC children remain secured, both at Lansdowne. Exit planning is ongoing for both, but for one child timescales are linked to their new placement becoming registered with Ofsted. it will be very challenging to find a suitable placement for the other child because of repeated assaults on staff at Lansdowne.

1.8 At the end of the quarter there was 1 child remanded to custody who is therefore accorded Looked After Child status by virtue of the remand.

1.9 The numbers of young people seeking asylum rose to 59 at the end of September, up 6 over the quarter. Some young people seeking asylum and already in our care turned 18 during this time and so moved out of these numbers but remained eligible for ongoing support as care leavers.

1.10 The numbers of children subject to Child Arrangement/Residence Orders have stayed steady at 342 and the number of children placed with a Special Guardianship Order has increased by 3 to 459.

1.11 There were no complaints from a Looked After Children in the last quarter.

## **2. Conclusion and recommendations**

2.1 Pressure on the system continues, driven by complexity and costs for children and by the context of Covid-19 which is making placements very scarce.

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

**ALISON JEFFERY**  
**Director of Children's Services**

### Contact

Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care

Tel: 01273 481274

Email: [liz.rugg@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:liz.rugg@eastsussex.gov.uk)

### Appendices

Appendix 1 - Children's Services LAC Summary between 01/10/2020 and 30/09/2021

# Appendix 1

## Children's Services LAC Summary between 01/10/2020 and 30/09/2021

Placement Type	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21
A4 - Placed for adoption with consent (under section 19 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer	2	2	2	2	2	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	1	3	3	4	4	5	4	4	2	1	1	1
A6 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer	16	16	16	17	19	18	19	19	19	15	15	14
H5 - Residential accommodation	51	55	61	61	63	59	58	57	62	62	60	63
K1 - Secure unit	4	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2
K2 - Homes and Hostels	67	66	66	69	70	69	73	73	75	75	74	77
P1 - Placed with own parents	26	24	28	29	24	22	21	26	30	27	34	31
P2 - Independent living	4	3	4	4	5	6	6	5	4	5	4	4
R1 - Residential care home	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
R2 - NHS/Health Trust					1				1	1	1	1
R5 - Young Offender Institution or prison						1	1					
S1 - All Residential schools	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
U1 - Foster placement with relative or friend- long term fostering	4	4	4	3	3	11	11	11	10	10	11	10
U3 - Foster placement with relative or friend- not long term or FFA	57	55	54	53	59	55	52	56	54	59	59	70
U4 - Placement with other foster carer- long term fostering	74	71	65	63	61	187	186	184	183	178	177	173
U5 - Placement with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter- FFA	4	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
U6 - Placement with other foster carer - not long term or FFA	290	295	294	300	293	171	175	170	177	178	172	170
Total	603	604	606	614	612	612	613	612	625	619	616	622

Immigration Status	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21
Asylum Seeker	15	15	17	16	14	14	7	3	1	1	1	2
British Citizen	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
Discretionary Leave to Remain in the UK to 18 (DLR)	1	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		
Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK (ILR)	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Refugee Status	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	5
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child	26	28	32	34	34	34	34	37	40	46	47	46

Legal Status	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21
Child Arrangements Order/Residence Order S8(1)CA'89	341	340	341	341	341	341	341	340	340	342	342	342
Special Guardianship Order S14A CA 89	453	454	454	454	453	453	452	456	456	458	459	459