



## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

FRIDAY, 29 JULY 2022

10.00 AM COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, LEWES

MEMBERSHIP - Councillors Johnny Denis, Kathryn Field (Chair), Johanna Howell, Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood, Matthew Milligan and Colin Swansborough.

### A G E N D A

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2022 (*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

6.1 Brodrick House - Ofsted Inspection Report (*Pages 7 - 14*)

6.2 The Bungalow - Ofsted Inspection Report (*Pages 15 - 22*)

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

7.1 Acorns at Dorset Road (*Pages 23 - 168*)

7.2 Brodrick House (*Pages 169 - 342*)

7.3 Hazel Lodge (*Pages 343 - 502*)

7.4 Homefield Cottage (*Pages 503 - 572*)

7.5 Lansdowne Secure Unit (*Pages 573 - 684*)

- 7.6 Silver Birches (*Pages 685 - 738*)
- 7.7 The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive (*Pages 739 - 884*)
8. Any other exempt items considered urgent by the Chair.
9. Fostering Services Annual Progress Report (*Pages 885 - 906*)
10. Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2021/2022 (*Pages 907 - 938*)
11. Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics (*Pages 939 - 942*)
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 July 2022

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## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 29 April 2022.

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

ALSO PRESENT Alison Jeffery – Director of Children’s Services  
Kathy Marriott – Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care  
Teresa Lavelle-Hill – Head of Looked After Children Services  
Bev Moores - Strategic Lead Children's Disability Social Care  
ISEND  
Meshelle Carmody - Children in Care Council Co Ordinator and Placement Support Worker  
Sally Hodson – Operations Manager  
Shirin White - Registered Homes Manager, Acorns  
Scott Lipa – Registered Homes Manager, Lansdowne  
Georgia Carty – Residential Homes Manager, Hazel Lodge  
Steven Crowe – Registered Homes Manager, Brodrick House  
Janet Fairless – Registered Manager - Homefield Cottage  
Charlotte De Retureto - Registered Manager

### 37. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 JANUARY 2022

37.1 RESOLVED to agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 21 of January 2022.

### 38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

38.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Bob Bowdler.

### 39. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

39.1 Councillor Matthew Milligan declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest that a close family member is an East Sussex County Council Foster parent.

### 40. URGENT ITEMS

40.1 There were no urgent items.

#### 41. CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL (CiCC) ANNUAL REPORT - 2021 - 2022

41.1 The Panel considered the Annual Report of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) which was presented by Meshelle Carmody, Children in Care Council Co Ordinator and Placement Support Worker.

41.2 The Panel were informed of the following areas of the CiCC work:

- CiCC recruitment: During the past year further recruitment has taken place to ensure that the membership of the CiCC remains inclusive and there is proportionate representation from black and minority ethnic groups, and those young people with disabilities.
- Partnership working: The CiCC have been working to build relationships with teams across East Sussex, Pan Sussex and nationally. This includes the Youth Cabinet, Silver Birches Residential Home and the Independent Reviewing Officer team.
- Buddy system: four members of the CiCC have undertaken training to become buddies for the new buddy scheme which has been piloted this year. The scheme provides support to children entering care from those who are already care experienced.

41.3 The Panel inquired about the buddy scheme and whether this would be held virtually and whether there were any age restrictions. Meshelle Carmody, Children in Care Council Co Ordinator and Placement Support Worker fed back that the scheme started virtually due to the pandemic but was moving to a face-to-face approach as well as utilising social media. Recruitment is targeted at young people 18 years or below, but once a part of the scheme, members are not required to leave. The Panel were informed of a CiCC member who is now at university and the benefit of this, as it gives care leavers an opportunity to speak to an older person who has shared experiences of leaving care.

41.3 The Panel queried the delays in young people receiving National Insurance Numbers and were assured by the Director of Children's Services that this is not a systematic issue and only one child has experienced a delay with obtaining their number. Social Workers are encouraged to apply for a National Insurance Number 12 weeks ahead of a looked after child's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

41.4 The Panel RESLOVED to note the report.

#### 42. DEVELOPING THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL (DISCUSSION ITEM) - VERBAL REPORT

42.1 The Panel considered opportunities for increased discourse and the inclusion of the CPP from partner organisations such as the National Health Service (NHS) and the Police. Partners have previously attended the CPP meetings, which has been a useful addition to the discussions, and it was agreed that these outside agencies should be invited to future meetings. In addition to this, the Panel were informed that an annual Looked After Children Health report will be coming to the Panel in the autumn.

42.2 Alison Jeffrey advised the Panel that an offer has been made for the CPP to receive a free session with Mark Riddell MBE, a former adviser to the Department of Education on care leavers. Mr Riddell who has been working with different authorities to strengthen and support their care leaver offer has provided availability on the 30 June, to speak to the East Sussex CPP remotely.

42.3 The Panel agreed to set up a meeting with Mark Riddell MBE on the 30 June, to be held remotely via Teams. It was noted that some Panel Members would be unable to attend due to a clash with the Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee.

#### 43. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

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

43.2 Kathy Marriott, Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care updated the Panel on the latest position for Looked After Children in East Sussex County Council (ESCC). There are significant pressures within the system and high demand both nationally and locally.

43.3 The service has seen a slight increase in the number of Looked After Children, with 358 children in foster care, a rise of 14 over the quarter. The service remains extremely busy with managing new placements as well as maintaining relationships with those already in care. Despite this pressure the service has placed 78% of LAC with in-house carers, which is a strong statistic and a credit to the team. The service was commended for the fantastic job it is doing in managing the demand and pressure.

43.4 ESCC continues to fully participate in the national transfer scheme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, as well as the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The number of young people seeking asylum rose to 62 at the end of March, up two over the quarter.

43.5 Challenges remain in the recruitment of high-quality staff. Despite recent pressures, no complaints had been received from LAC in the last quarter.

43.6 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

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

44.1 There were none.

#### 45. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

45.1 RESOLVED - to exclude the public and press from the meeting for items 10 and 11 on the agenda (see minutes 46 and 47) 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.

#### 46. OFSTED INSPECTION REPORTS FOR BRODRICK HOUSE

46.1 The Panel considered an Inspection report for Brodrick House following a visit from Ofsted in January 2022. The Panel were advised that following the visit in January there were several actions that the Register Homes Manager and staff had to complete to improve standards in the home. A further visit was made by Ofsted in March 2022 and it was agreed that all conditions in the January report had been fully met.

46.2 Steven Crowe, Registered Homes Manager advised the Panel that the team had worked hard to work through the solutions for both now and in the future, and as a result the home has seen marked progress despite the challenges it has faced.

46.3 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

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

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

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

47.2 The Panel received a verbal update from each of the Registered Homes' Managers (RHMs).

47.3 The Panel discussed a range of issues including access to education and opportunities for joint working, including the development of the Integrated Care Partnership and the establishment of a pan Sussex Children's Board.

47.4. The Panel discussed the presentation of the reg 44 reports, and it was agreed that a further discussion would be held during the session with Mark Riddell MBE to review the local care leaver offer. Following this session, officers would bring proposed changes for the Panel's consideration at a future CPP meeting.

47.5 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

#### 48. ANY OTHER EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR.

48.1 There were none.

Chair

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**Report to:** Corporate Parenting Panel  
**Date:** 29 July 2022  
**By:** Director of Children's Services  
**Title of report:** Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service  
01 April 2021 – 31 March 2022  
**Purpose of report:** To outline the performance of the Fostering Service between  
01 April 2021 – 31 March 2022

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

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

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### **1 Financial appraisal**

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

### **2 Supporting information**

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

### **3 Recommendation**

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

**Director of Children's Services:** Alison Jeffery

Contact Officer: Adrian Sewell  
Tel. No: 01323 463121  
Adrian.sewell@eastsussex.gov.uk

Local Members:

All

Background documentation:

None

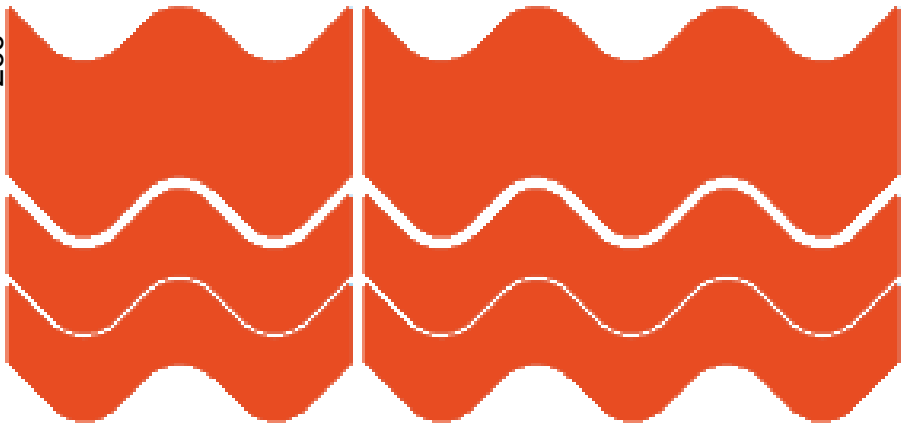
Adrian Sewell  
**Operations Manager Fostering Service**

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**East Sussex  
County Council**

Page 887



**East Sussex Fostering Services**  
**Annual Progress Report**  
**2021/22**

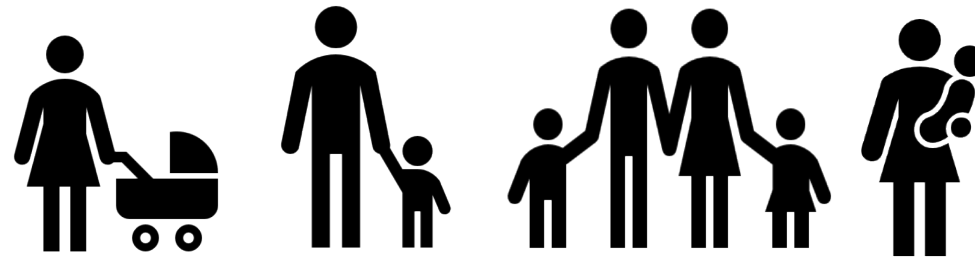
Appendix A

# Fostering Duty

**424** placements were made during 2021/22

**84%** of these placements were in house

The data provided is a snapshot as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.



Page 888

The Placement Duty Service enhanced their excellent record of **in-house placements (84%)** in 2021/22 with a **5%** increase on 2020/21 (79%)

- ❖ **79** Bridging placements
- ❖ **519** Placement matches (95 ultimately not required)
- ❖ **393** Completed referrals

Statistics	2021-2022	2020-2021
Matching referrals completed	519	461
Agency foster placements	68	74
In-house foster placements	356	277
Not required	95	110

## High Intensive Supported Accommodation

High Intensive accommodation is for young people who may require significant support whilst in placement. It has been coordinated since March 2020 by the Fostering Service. Access to the service has been via Placement Duty.

**155** High intensive referrals were received during 2021/22 (**76** East Sussex Children and **79** Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children).

**124** Young people were placed and matched in supported accommodation during 2021/22. (**53** East Sussex children and **71** Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children)





# Fostering Recruitment



The data provided is a final snapshot as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021  
**14** new foster homes, **21** placements created

East Sussex’s recruitment activity during **2021/22** mirrored the challenges experienced by fostering services nationally. East Sussex Fostering Service has proactively implemented new measures to maximise the conversion of enquiries to approved foster carers for 22/23:

- **Appointment of dedicated Marketing and Communications Officer**

This new role has been commissioned to enhance partnership working between between ESCC’s Fostering and Communications departments.

Leads on fostering recruitment strategy, East Sussex County Council’s fostering website, marketing tools and the use of social media.

- **Referral and Transfer “Incentive Schemes”**

As an incentive, East Sussex will reward foster carers who refer or transfer, with a **£500 payment** on the approval of the referee, and a further **£500 payment** when a young person is first placed with the referee.

Recruitment	Households		
	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020
Enquiries	200	227	268
Screening calls	68	92	114
Initial visits	32	42	71
Skills to foster training (STF)	15	37	21
Applications for assessment	36	53	35
Closed	7	7	7
Withdrew	9	13	6
Total allocated but did not progress	16	20	13
Approvals	14	20	22
Placements	21	30	39
Conversion rate Enquiry to approval	6%	9%	8%
Conversion rate Screening call to approval	16%	22%	19%
Conversion rate Initial visit to approval	34%	48%	31%

The percentage drop in conversion rate can be attributed to the quality of enquiries. Towards the end of the pandemic, there were a significant number of enquiries from applicants looking for alternative sources of income. However, many were sufficiently informed by the initial assessment process, to make the decision that fostering was not for them.

# Fostering Recruitment (Continued)

- **Google Adverts - Covid Recovery Funded Project**

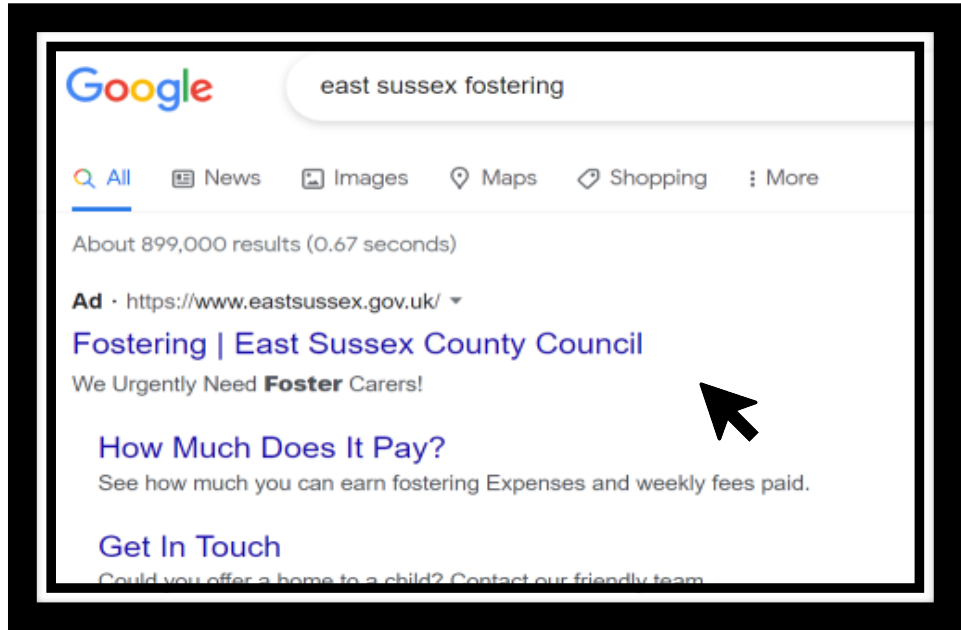
East Sussex has invested funding to improve ESCC Fostering’s position on “Google Ad Keyword Searches”.

Carers transferring to ESCC had often advised that the presenting order of Google search results was a factor in their previous decisions to enquire with agencies.

- **Fostering Friendly Employer Scheme**

In conjunction with ESCC HR department, we are currently looking into whether ESCC can adopt Fostering Network’s policy which would help aid recruitment and retention of foster carers from ESCC’s workforce. This would more generally demonstrate that ESCC is a supportive and flexible employer.

Page 890



- **Other initiatives existing and targeted for 2022/23**



# Fostering Recognition and Retention

2021/22 - was the second year of the pandemic and a time where a number of carers applicable for retirement decided to make that move.

- The age demograph of East Sussex's Foster carers, as common with a number of Local Authorities and fostering agencies, had left us vulnerable to losing carers through retirement.
- The majority of these retiring carers were holding onto older young people through to independence.

Page 891

243

Fostering  
Households  
Caring for 417  
looked after  
children

As of  
31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

265

Fostering  
Households  
caring for 424  
looked after  
children

As of  
31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

Ongoing  
supportive SSW  
relationships to  
keep building  
"team" ethos

Regular email  
newsletter  
with content  
for carers

Birthday cards  
and gift  
vouchers sent  
to all "children  
who foster"

Retention of  
foster carers



£500 Covid  
recognition  
payment to  
all households



Foster carer  
picnic and  
"thank you"  
dinner

Personal  
development  
opportunities  
for carers and  
providers



# Supported Lodgings

The data provided is a snapshot as of 31st March 2022.

## **The were 43 registered supported lodgings providers.**

- 32 of these providers cared for young people aged 16+ only.
- 10 of these providers were also approved as “hybrid” (approved as foster carers and supported lodgings providers)
- 1 Provider was being assessed as a “hybrid” foster carer.

East Sussex Fostering Service has been one of the first Local Authorities to extend the registration of appropriate supported lodgings providers to become foster carers. Hybrid foster carers are able to provide placements for young people under the age of 16.

## **46 Young people were placed in Supported Lodgings during 2021/22.**

- 10 of these young people were Homeless
- 10 were Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
- 26 were Looked After Children.



# Support and supervision of foster carers



## ”Pod-based supervision / Support system”

- Provides an opportunity for Supervising Social Workers to have an understanding and overview of carers supported and supervised by their colleagues.
- interim and emergency support to cover sick leave and annual leave can be provided by other SSWs in the absence of the allocated worker.

## Partnership working

- Strong partnership working with Looked After Children’s Teams, LACAMHS, Virtual School and Placement Support Service.
- Important in supporting foster carers, sustaining placements and attempting to meet the complex needs of looked after children and young people.

## Buddy Scheme

- Experienced foster carers provide much needed support and mentorship to foster carers coping with the challenges of issues such as attachment behaviours.

## Out of hours Advice Line (365 days per year)

- The Service deals with a range of issues such as placement disruptions, young people missing from placement or advice in managing young peoples behaviours.
- In **2021/22**, the advice line supported with **132** out of hours requests.





# Support Groups

- Monthly online support groups offered, including guest speakers from other key agencies such as the Virtual School, EDS & Placement Support
- Targeted monthly online meet-ups for Connected Persons Carers, Respite Carers and local areas trialled
- A survey sent to all carers asking their views on support groups including locations, times and themes. Responses from this used to inform future planning.
- Monthly in-person 'coffee meet-ups' hosted in the East and West of the country from the Autumn, initially in 'covid-friendly' outdoor terraces and then moving towards indoors
- Young People Who Foster Council - Monthly Meetings, Newsletters, Online Activities and Competitions.



# Foster Carer Training 2021/22

- **699** Foster Carers accessed virtual training courses (April 2021 to March 22).
- Regulated qualifications framework Level 3 Diploma and all mandatory foundation courses were maintained. **This included an online Paediatric First Aid.**
- The training offer was adapted to reflect challenges for Foster Carers during the pandemic. New courses were introduced: **The Resilient Foster Carer; Introduction to Meditation; Fostering All Ages; Managing Your Child's Anxiety**
- New webinars were introduced: **Parenting the traumatised child; De-Escalation; A-Z Therapeutic Parenting and Strategies on Managing Adolescent Behaviour**



# Future developments of our training offer

- **A review of the current training offer** and consultation with carers and social workers - April 2022-August 2022.
- Improvements to the **infrastructure** around training and development and giving carers **ownership** and **ease** of access.
- There will be a **re-launch** in September 2022 to focus on 4 key areas:
  - ❖ **Mandatory training** - bolster safeguarding, clarity of expectations
  - ❖ **Wellness** - mindfulness, targeted support, self reflection
  - ❖ **Bitesize** - Fostering Atlas resource bank, variety of formats to suit different learning styles, smaller time commitment training
  - ❖ **Deep Dive** - Externally commissioned half/full day courses, specialisms, responsive to the needs of carers.





# The GRACES model:

**G** - Gender, Gender Identity, Geography, Generation

**R** - Race, Religion

**A** - Age, Ability, Appearance

**C** - Class, Culture, Caste

**E** - Education, Ethnicity, Economics

**S** - Spirituality, Sexuality, Sexual Orientation

# Equality, Diversity, and the identity needs of our looked after children, foster carers, and supported lodgings providers



- Anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice embedded throughout the service - training, resources and seminars disseminated during 2021/22.
- Encouraging and supporting staff to challenge discrimination.
- Staff practicing the GRACES model to explore what identity means to their supported lodgings providers/foster carers and how they can meet the identity and diversity needs of our children.
- Staff ensuring that they speak with supported lodgings providers/foster carers about assumptions, prejudice and 'unconscious bias and any implications for fostering.
- Open discussions about our own unconscious bias in practice and ongoing discussions re: identity needs in supervision.
- Redevelopment of “caring for Black and Ethnic Minority Children” booklet.

# Placement Support Service

Placement Support has continued to ensure that the most vulnerable young people and their placements, continue to receive face to face support during the ongoing Pandemic.

The Placement Support Service has benefited from having the usage of 'Little Dunbar' over the past couple of years. This will now be our permanent base in the future.

The Placement Support Service continues to offer support to some young people who are living in our residential homes, some young people who are on the 'edge of care' (EOC), care leavers, and in partnership with the Virtual School, those on a reduced school timetable or excluded.



# Placement Support Service

(continued)

Page 899

**142**  
**Packages of Support Delivered**

- Placement Support - **90** support packages
- Special Placement Scheme - **5** support packages
- Parent & Baby - **2** support packages
- Through Care Team - **40** support packages to care leavers
- Edge of care - **3** support packages to families
- Agency - **2** support packages

*“Our Placement Support Worker is amazing, ‘M’ enjoys his time out each week”.*

## Feedback from foster carers:

*“The Placement Support Workers really seem to ‘get’ R, they are great at communicating with us and we value their support”.*

*“He talks to his Placement Support Worker about things he doesn’t talk to us about, like girlfriends”.*

*“Without the support from our Placement Support Worker, we wouldn’t still be looking after our young person”.*



# Children in Care Council

- **SUSS it (Speak up Sessions)**

29 activities giving 59 young people the opportunity to speak out and speak up if they wanted too. Through this engagement 21 young people have asked for help with individual issues.

- **Digital Ambassadors**

Involved in the digital care project being run by East Sussex County Council to train, update and promote resources for keeping cared for children safe and resilient online.

- **Partnership working**

Working in partnership with Ramshackle productions and Eggtooth, two community-based art companies, CICC Members were involved in creating a youth led social media channel for young people's positive online content. The CICC made a film entitled '10 things you don't say to people in care'.

- **Youth Cabinet**

The CICC and the youth cabinet joint together for a team day at Bushy wood. They worked together consulting on various campaigns and services within East Sussex.



the children in care council

# Children in Care Council (Continued)

- **Buddy Scheme**

Four CICC members attended four weeks training, to become buddies for the buddy scheme that we have piloted this year. The scheme provides support to children entering care from a buddy who is already care experienced.

- **Volunteering**

Page 901 All CICC members have received framed certificates for the volunteering hours they have completed this year for their CICC role and work in their local communities. In total, as a group they have completed **964** volunteering hours over the past **12** months.

- **Funding**

CICC have secured an extra £1288.30 in extra funding this year from the HAF and COMF Government scheme. This has been used for two, enriching team building activities - Ice Skating at Christmas and Ninja Warrior in February half term. Both activities were thoroughly enjoyed by everyone involved.

Further funding applications will be submitted during the year to buy in more training and qualifications for cared for young people to enhance their CV's.





# Digital in Care Project



In 2021 ESCC Fostering Service was successful in their bid for a “**Digital in Care Project**” funded by Nominet.

## Rollout of “Mind of My Own”

A communication tool that helps young people express their views in a way that suits them.

- Over 90 practitioners trained
- Over 150 worker accounts
- Over 150 statements submitted

## Offer for “high risk” young people

Provided consultations for high risk / complex cases relating to online issues:

- County Lines
- Device / screen addiction
- Parental controls



## Digital ambassador network established

11 young people (care leavers, children in care and young people who foster).

11 Practitioner (LAC, Through Care, UASC)

3 Foster Carers

## “Digital Hive” Launches in July 2022

This will be the one stop shop for all training, resources, signposting, advice and support for all carers, adopters, practitioners and young people

## Quote from a foster carer:

*“We as foster carers find the information sessions really meaningful and help us to feel supported not just by the project but also each other. And its not just me that’s getting involved as a Digital Ambassador one of the young people I am caring for and my grandchild are also involved and finding it really empowering. I am really looking forward to being part of the training programme when it launches.”*

## Information Sessions

Held monthly for carers and practitioners

- Parental controls
- Ask the awkward
- Preparing for Christmas devices
- Mental health
- Cyberbullying
- Criminal exploitation and County Lines
- Gaming

# Priorities for 2022/23

	<b>A revised recruitment and retention strategy jointly with comms</b>	
<b>Review of our sufficiency statement in light of the national shortage of placements for looked after children</b>		<b>Partnership working with locality and LAC teams in order to ensure children are placed in the right placements for the right amount of time</b>
	<b>Recommissioning of our semi-independent provision in light of legal changes to regulation and inspection framework</b>	

# Glossary (ESCC Fostering Service) - Part 1 of 2

**Fostering Duty** - Team who oversee placement finding for looked after children and young people.

**Assessment, Recruitment and Retention Team (ART)** - Responsible team for advertising and recruitment of ESCC Foster Carers (enquiries to approval) and retention.

**Assessing Social Worker (ASW)** - undertakes assessments of potential foster carers.

**Children In Care Council (CICC)** - A group of East Sussex looked after young people aged between 13 and 18. They meet up regularly to have their say on issues that matter to young people in care.

**Connected Foster Carer** - Carers approved for specific child, often a family member.

**Edge of Care** - Proactive work with vulnerable families to prevent children and young people becoming looked after.

**High Intensive Supported Accommodation (HI)** - Supported accommodation for older young people (16+).



## Glossary (ESCC Fostering Service) - Part 2 of 2

**Placement Support Service (PSS)** - Service that provide packages of support to placements through a combination of both individual and group work to encourage young people to develop positive trusting relationships/attachments.

**Special Guardianship Order (SGO)** - Permanence option. Foster Carers can apply to be Special Guardians of their Foster Children after 1 year.

**Special Placement Scheme (SPS)** - Service that offer long-term Foster placements to particularly hard to place, troubled Young people who can benefit from a therapeutic parenting style.

**Supported Lodgings** - Placements for young people aged 16 and above who are homeless or living in care.

**Through Care Team (TCT)** - responsible for supporting young people across the county while they prepare to leave care and after they leave.

**UASC** - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

**Young People Who Foster Council (YPWF)** - Birth children of Foster Carers.

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**Report to:** Corporate Parenting Panel  
**Date:** 29 July 2022  
**By:** Director of Children's Services  
**Title of report:** Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2021/2022  
**Purpose of report:** To update the Corporate Parenting Panel on the contribution of the Independent Reviewing Officers to Quality Assuring and Improving Services for Looked After Children.

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

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

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### **1 Background**

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

### **2 Supporting information**

- 2.1 The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report April 2021 – March 2022 is attached as Appendix 1.

### **3 Recommendation**

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

**Director of Children's Services:** Alison Jeffery

Contact Officer: Dawn Price – Operations Manager, Safeguarding Unit  
Tel. No: 01323 466606  
Dawn.price@eastsussex.gov.uk

#### Local Members:

All

#### Background documentation:

None

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# EAST SUSSEX INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022

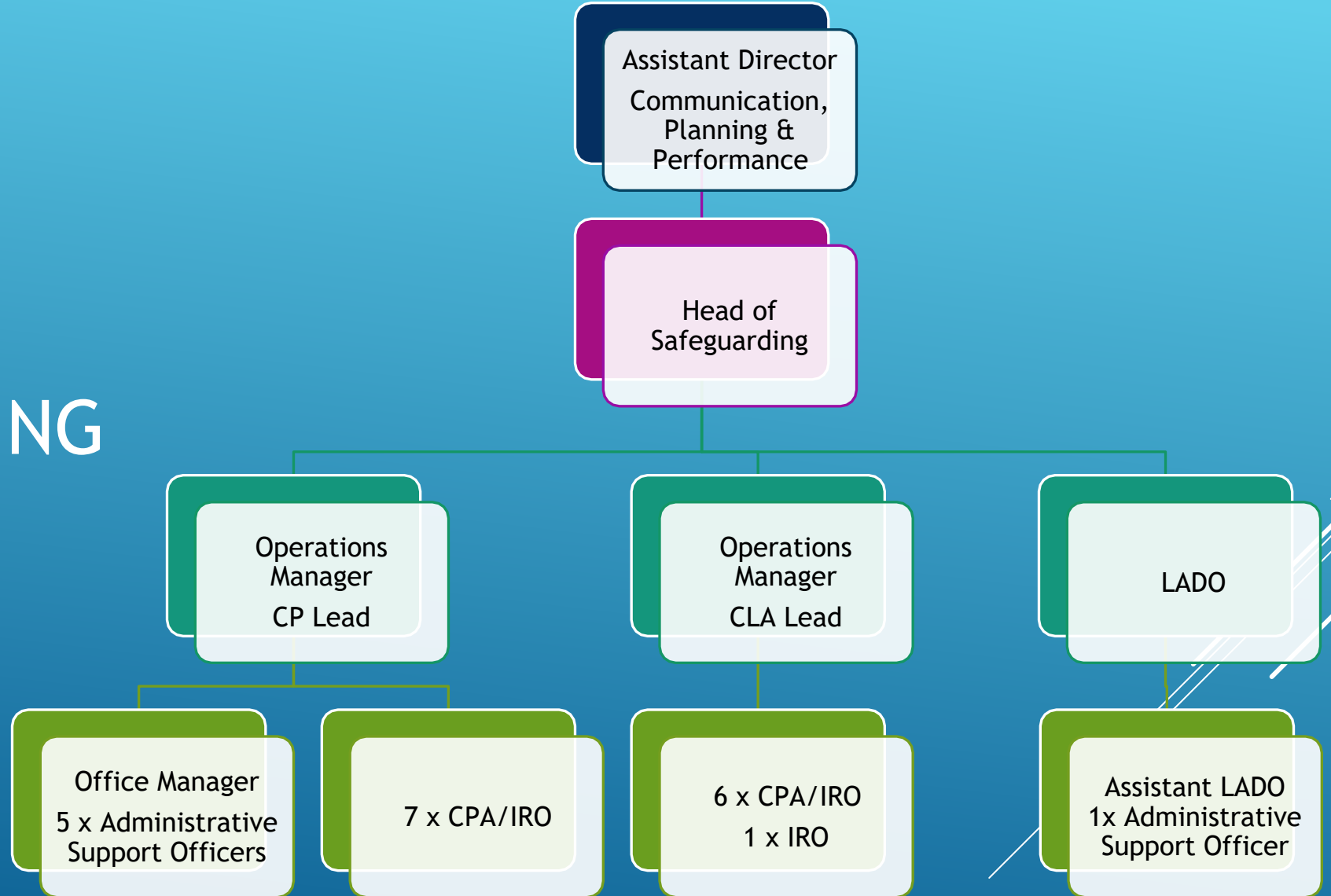
**Dawn Price Operations Manager**

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

The IRO Annual Report must be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Please see Glossary for definitions

# CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING UNIT



Staffing compliment is equivalent to 13.3

# PROFILE OF THE UNIT

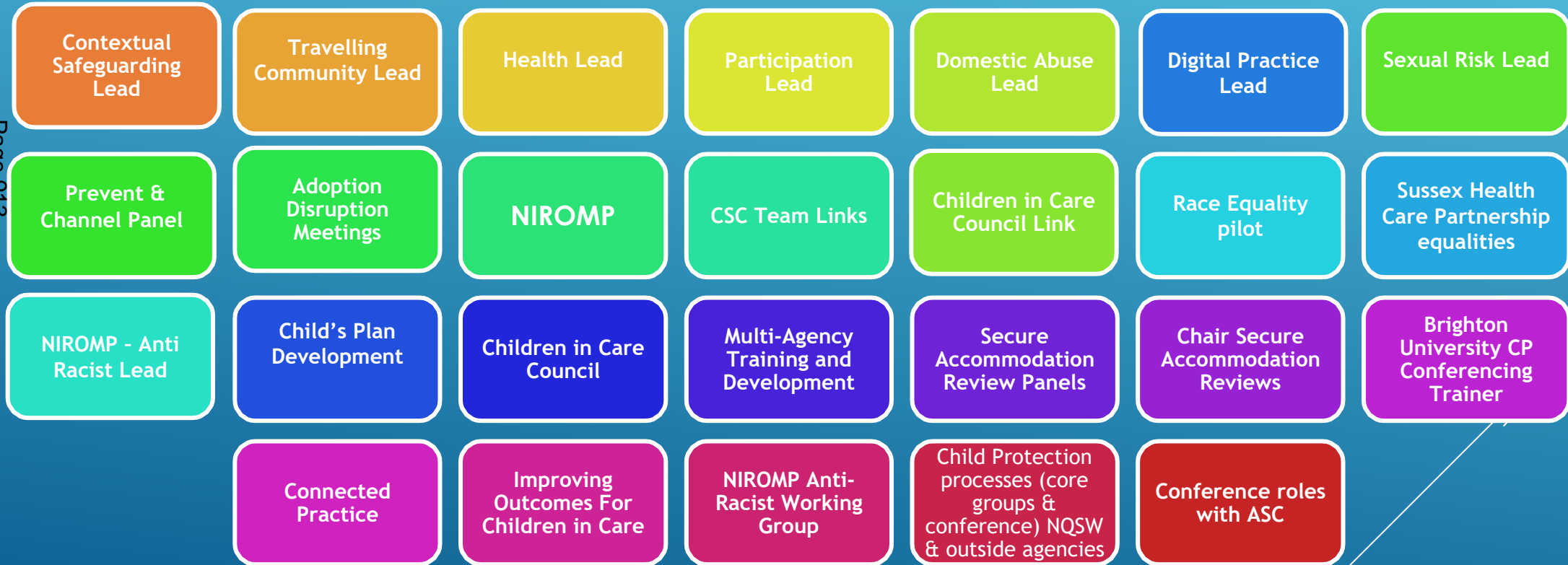
- IRO/CPAs are registered social workers with extensive experience. They have the confidence and knowledge to bring a critical perspective to plans for the most vulnerable children in our county.
- IROs chair My Voice Matters Meetings; the statutory Looked After Children review meetings. Whilst CPAs chair Child Protection Conferences; the two roles are separated by different legislation and regulatory protocols which each require a depth and breadth of expertise.
- In ESCC and in common with some of England and Wales, most staff operate a dual role; this ensures that Chairs retain a sense of the child's holistic experience. The separate management streams ensure a focus on legislative / practice developments and quality assurance of each function.

- In May 2021, the Safeguarding Unit celebrated its 20-year anniversary. In 2001 it was launched under the title - Children's Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Unit. The Unit had dedicated roles 4xCPAs and 4xIROs.
- The Unit has a diverse staff group who bring a wealth of personal and professional skills and experiences to their role. The combined experience of the Unit totals 431 years.
- The Unit was recently recognised, in the departmental achievement awards, for its innovative approaches to continuing to hear the voice of the family, holding purposeful meetings and using new technology during the lockdown period.
- In this review period we experienced high levels of unavoidable staff absence. Strategic management of case-loads combined with recruitment of temporary staff and increased hours of current staff, successfully resulted in minimal disruption to service delivery. Where children had established relationships with their IRO, we agreed to delay the MVM's to ensure their meetings remained purposeful.



# CPA & IRO ADDITIONAL ROLES

CPAs/IROs undertake a range of additional responsibilities including:



# OPERATIONS MANAGER ADDITIONAL ROLES



# CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CPAs/IROs have continued to access learning and development opportunities throughout the year including:





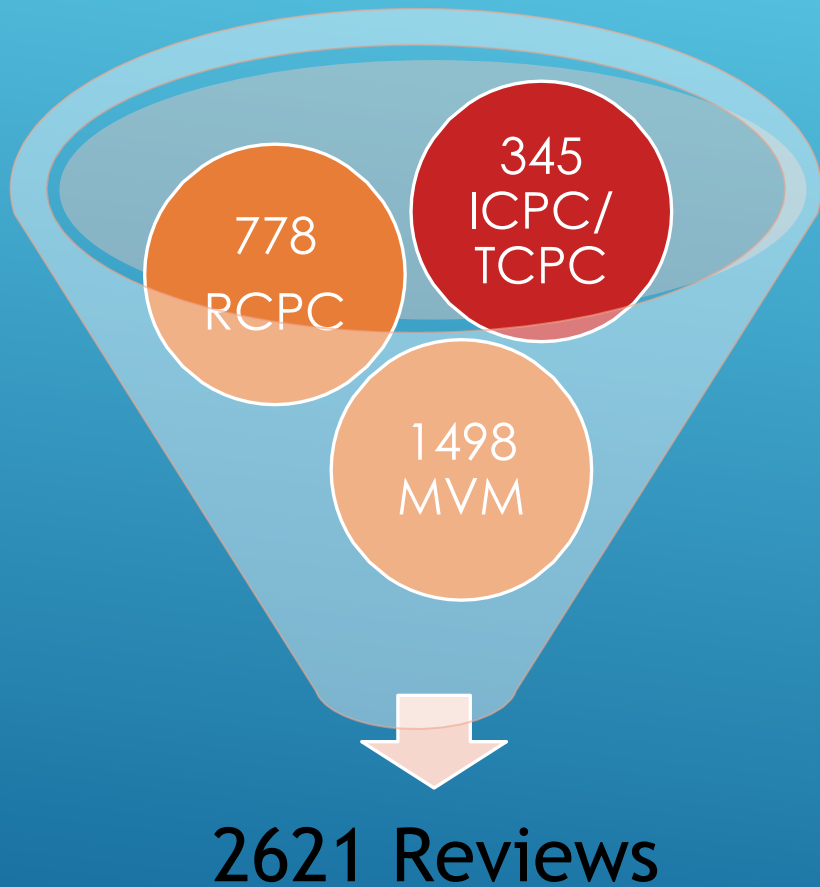
The majority of Chairs in the Safeguarding Unit hold a dual role; reviewing both Child Protection and Looked After Child / My Voice Matters plans.

CPA caseloads are not set in legislation; however, the government has set statutory guidance for IROs: a caseload of 50 to 70 children who are looked after for a full-time equivalent IRO, would represent good practice. (The IRO Handbook DfE).

In common with other Authorities ESCC operates a weighting system recognising that whilst IROs have additional responsibilities for LAC; Child Protection caseloads can be more dynamic, meetings can involve multiple children and may involve a higher level of risk. Covering both roles necessitates an advanced depth and breadth of professional knowledge.

In respect of caseload numbers ESCC remains higher than the IRO Handbook recommendations. At the end of March 2022 CPA/IRO combined caseloads averaged 84 workload points, remaining consistent with the previous year.

## CASELOADS



Conferences and My Voice Matters Meetings\* are usually held as a single review involving all relevant family and professionals. However meetings may be held in two or more parts to ensure that they are effective, safe and facilitate the child's needs.

In addition to their professional focus, preparing parents, carers and children for the meeting and ensuring their wellbeing throughout the process; Chairs exercise a key role in the implementation of the Local Authority's Quality Assurance Framework.

2019/20: reviews held 2725 (MVM - 1612. CP - 1113)

2020/21: reviews held 2698 (MVM - 1467. CP - 1231)

2021/22: reviews held 2521 (MVM - 1498. CP - 1123)

Over the year the Unit chaired:

- 1123 Conferences involving 2169 Child's Plans
- 1498 individual My Voice Matters Meetings
- Equating to 198 meetings/conferences per Chair

*\*My Voice Matters Meetings are the ESCC approach to statutory LAC Reviews.*



# ISSUES RESOLUTION

- Quality Monitoring and evidence of independent challenge via a locally agreed dispute resolution process is a statutory requirement of both the CPA and IRO function
- A new electronic mechanism for collating reliable data on the number and nature of Issues Resolutions raised has been recently introduced, the system is still in it's infancy. The electronic reporting mechanism for Issues Resolutions remains with ESCC Business Services Department for development, this will then provide a full picture and identify themes to be focussed on.
- An initial indication is that IROs raised an Issues Resolution on 10% of CLA processes 2021/22.
- OFSTED expect to see evidence of effective challenge by CPAs/IROs when looking at a child's file; Senior Managers recognised the need for a more consistent footprint and have taken steps to achieve this
- The Safeguarding Unit operates a consistent process across the CPA/IRO service.
- The Unit focussed on ensuring that families had been provided with statutory review paperwork prior to their meetings to ensure that they were fully able to participate
- Issues have been raised throughout the year in relation to social work practice or Child/Care Plans when necessary
- All Issues have been resolved at Head of Service or below with the majority resolved at the informal stage

# Role of the IRO

It is a legal requirement for every Looked After Child to have a named IRO.

IROs quality assure the Care Planning process for children who are Looked After and ensure that their wishes and feelings are understood.

## **The statutory duties of the IRO are to:**

- *Monitor the Local Authority's performance ... in relation to the child's case.*
- *Participate in any review of the child's case.*
- *Ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child are given due consideration by the appropriate authority.*
- *Perform any other function as prescribed in the regulations.*

## **The Independent Reviewing Service contributes to East Sussex's Core Offer for Children's Social Care:**

*Provide care and support for children and young people where there is evidence that they have suffered significant harm or are at immediate risk of significant harm and provide an alternative home for children who are unable to live with their parents or in their extended family.*

## NATIONAL PICTURE / RISKS

- “These latest figures show the support that local authorities have provided in the midst of a pandemic to safeguard and protect children and young people in their local areas. The statistics, that relate to year ending 31 March 2021, further highlight the impact of Covid-19 on children, families and children’s services. Due to national lockdowns, the number of children entering care fell as did the number of children leaving care leading to an overall rise in the size of this cohort. Referrals to children’s social care reduced significantly during the periods of national lockdown which was a worry for us, however, local authorities up and down the country worked hard to make sure they were there providing support for those children and families who needed it the most. We are only now seeing some of the emerging signs of the impact of the pandemic with families presenting greater complexity of need, but the lasting impacts will remain with us for years to come. It is essential that we have both the capacity and resources to meet these needs as quickly as possible.”
- “ADCS research shows that the number of children looked after has increased by a third since 2008, while local authorities have faced a 50% reduction in budgets since 2010.”

(Commenting on the latest DfE Children Looked After statistics, ADCS President Charlotte Ramsden, 19 November 2021 )



- “We welcome the study’s focus on the mental health of children in care, and the factors associated with improved mental health outcomes in this cohort. These include positive relationships with friends, carers and social workers and being satisfied with the frequency of contact with social workers. Living with a relative or sibling, spending less time on screens and not being excluded from school were also seen to be positive factors. The forthcoming Schools White Paper must have inclusion at its heart, not only is this important for the mental health of children in care but for all children.
- “There are some important messages in this report, captured through the surveys of children and young people, I’m sure the findings will be of interest to all those working with and supporting children in care. While the impact of successive lockdowns and ensuing restrictions on children and young people will have varied, we cannot ignore that there is a rising tide of poor mental health amongst children and young people. Most mental health problems begin in childhood so ensuring children get the right help and support at the earliest opportunity is crucial. Over the years much focus has been placed on improving mental health support for children and young people but too many children continue to face long waits to access appropriate help and accessing mental health support for children has long been an issue for children in care - we must do better for them.
- “Local authorities are absolutely committed to finding stable, loving homes for the children in our care and recruiting and retaining enough social workers so that we can meet children’s needs, but we need government to support us with this via a nationally led and funded campaign to encourage more social workers into the profession and to want to stay.”

(Commenting on a survey on the mental health of children in care in England in 2020 and 2021 Charlotte Ramsden, ADCS President 23 March 2022)

# OUR COUNTY - MY VOICE MATTERS



- My Voice Matters went live in March 2020
- This is the ESCC approach to statutory LAC Reviews and has been designed in consultation with CYP, taking account of messages from people who are Care Experienced and relevant research
- My Voice Matters prioritises the child's voice at the centre of their Care Plan and emphasises the importance of human relationships
- Paperwork is written to be accessible to the individual child. The record of the meeting is written as a letter to the child and copied to adults as necessary
- **We believe that children should understand and have a voice in their history, their present and their future**

## LETTERS TELL CHILDREN THAT THEY ARE VALUED AND HELP THEM MAKE SENSE OF THEIR EXPERIENCES

- This is written for you to read now, or when you are older or when you are an adult as may wish to see your social work file. I hope these notes will help you understand what was happening for you at this time in your life, and the decisions that were made while you were in care. (4 years)
- Things are a bit uncertain for you at the moment, but everyone is working hard to have the best plan for your future, and to make this happen as soon as possible. We all want you to be able to stay with your mummy, but we have to make sure she can do what a mummy needs to do to look after you properly. (3 week baby)
- You like music and enjoy listening to your Alexa, we all agreed I was far too old to know any of the people that you like to listen to, which made us laugh. You have started boxing twice a week and you showed me your skipping, and it was just like watching a professional boxer train on TV, you were so fast and nimble. (13 years)
- **The plan is a bit 'up in the air' at the moment. It would be good if you could go back to live with mum, but it might be hard to make this possible. SW is going to help work out whether you should go back to mum's, or whether you should stay in foster care. If you don't feel safe to go home, you won't be forced to go. SW thinks you can't go home until mum is not using drugs anymore, mum has used a couple of times in the last few weeks, so she's not ready to have you back yet. You need to be in care, we don't know how long for at the moment. (14 years)**
- You know that when you first became looked after this was agreed for a short period of time for the social worker to try and do some work with you and your family. Since this time, adults can see the positive impact that living with F & C has had on your mental health and well being it has been agreed that living with them is the right place for you to live. (16 years)
- On a positive note, it was good to hear that you now have 'leave to remain' for 5 years. I am happy for you as this is one less thing that you need to worry about. So now you need to think about your living circumstances and whether you want to remain in College and if not, what do you want to do. We discussed that your next Looked After Review will be your final Looked After Review, and it would be good to know what's your plan regarding these issues. (17 years)

# CHILDREN'S VOICES ARE STRONGER

- It was lovely to hear about all your adventures, you are a busy girl! The biggest news was that you played Bell in the school play Beauty and the Beast - wowzers this sounded amazing! You wore a yellow dress which you said you loved. You said it was "great" and you want to do more drama. You said you felt healthy and well. (13yrs)
- You said that you feel settled at school and are now part of the school choir which recently went to Arundel. You said that you would like more time with mum and that things are fine when you stay over at Nan's. You have been to see Dad with P and told us that you don't want to go back but are happy to receive letters from him but that you are not fussed about writing back. You can decide whether you want to speak on the phone when calls happen. (16yrs)
- You did so very well in your meeting! Thank you so much for our lovely treats that you picked out for us and it was lovely to talk to you about what we need to think about for you over the next few months. We talked about how much you love the park (especially if you get to go for cake afterwards!) that the lego batman film is your favourite film and you told us that you would like to start playing football - we'll add that to our to do list shall we? You told us about the mad hatters tea party that you had at home and that you made some yummy jam tarts. We talked a bit about what makes you feel sad or gives you fizzy feelings in your tummy and you were really brave in telling us that school sometimes gives you those fizzy feelings and that you find it hard when Mummy's train is late as this makes you feel worried about the time you spend with her. (7yrs)
- The most important thing for you that we talked about was Christmas day as you want to be able to see Nan and Grandad. We agreed for you to go for two hours and F will arrange this with them. F said that your plan currently is to see them once a month and you wanted this to stay the same as you said that you know they have a lot of commitments and you feel this amount of time together is right. (15yrs)
- It was so lovely to meet you today, have a little sit on the beanbags and then for you to come into your meeting - you were marvellous. You told me you are a healthy boy, your favourite food is noodles and you love playing on your Ipad. The only thing you wanted us to talk about today was if everybody could save some money and buy you a Nintendo Switch so that's what we talked about when we got into the room. You talked to me about how you are happy at home, can do the things you want to do, play on your Ipad and you gave being at home 10 out of 10 - that's fantastic! (6yrs)



I want to know who is going to be there as it will help me speak up if I know whose going to be in the room

My points of view are listened to and I get to say what I want to say. It feels respectful how we do it

I chair my MVM now but it has taken a while to feel confident

Its my life and I want to hear the decisions being made about me

Thanks too for today your meetings really highlights the children's voices

I feel my voice gets listened too even if they don't agree with what I am saying.

R feels able to ask his carer to call his SW or IRO and set up a meeting, but most of all you do all the jobs he asks you to do for his MVM Meeting

I practised 7x tables when my IRO visited and I was better than she was, this made me laugh!

I can't think of anything you may need to add - it is a beautiful letter

# MEETINGS CAN BE MORE MEANINGFUL

## TIMELINESS - MY VOICE MATTERS MEETINGS

- 97% of all My Voice Matters Meetings were held early or on time in 2021/22. MVMs held on time or early have continued to improve each year; 2019/20 - 92%, 2020/21 - 95%
- 11% of late reviews were due to a one day scheduling error.
- 21% of late reviews were held within 4 weeks of the scheduled date. The majority of late reviews were delayed in the child's best interests or because an essential party was unable to attend. As noted earlier in the report, some late MVMs held due to IRO sickness and to ensure meaningful meetings delayed until the IRO was able to chair.
- Further work to address the reasons for late MVMs and ensuring correct dates recorded on the system
- Meetings continue to be scheduled well in advance which contributes to a high level of compliance



# PARTICIPATION

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD IN LOTS OF DIFFERENT WAYS

- In 2021/22 97% of Children aged 4+ participated\* in some way in their review process; up from previous years. 2020/21 participation 95% up from previous year, 2019/20 participation 91%.
- Of children aged 4yrs+ 56% attended their meeting and 41% sent their views
- We now have a Participation Lead, who is working with social workers, partner agencies, carers and children to encourage diverse thinking in how to support meaningful participation
- My Voice Matters Letters mean that children receive the review outcome in their own/ age-appropriate language or in their preferred communication style
- There has been positive feedback about the IRO profiles that are now shared with Looked After Children; they noted that they like knowing a little bit about their IRO

\*actual date recovered from records rather than raw data



# CARE PLANS - IN COURT AND BEYOND

- Providing properly informed IRO views within Care Proceedings can be challenging, given the nature of Court directed timetables and the need for IROs have the opportunity to fully consider all evidence
- There have been a number of instances Nationally where Local Authorities have been criticised due to IROs failing to robustly monitor and comment on cases
- Working with the Legal Department we now have a system that enables the IRO to have full access to the Court Bundle throughout the case, ensuring that they are able to take proper account of all assessments when considering the Care Plan

*The IRO should feel confident that s/he is being kept fully informed of the progress of the child's case, during and at the conclusion of the proceedings...The legal department of the local authority should...provide copies of all relevant court documents to the IRO... (IRO Handbook)*



- At the end of March 2022 ESCC was looking after 628 children, equivalent to 58.9 per 10000. This was a slight increase on the previous year but remains below IDACI expected levels .

End of March 2021 - 611

End of March 2020 - 592

- The age and gender profile of CLA remains consistent with previous years and the national picture.
- Children with Disabilities represent a relatively small percentage of our CLA population, there is a good uptake of advocacy use at their MVM meetings
- At the end of March 2022 looking at the total population of CLA;
  - 33% living with foster carers (not long-term)
  - 26% children in long-term fostering
  - 12% living with connected carers
  - 12% lived in residential settings,
  - 4% children were placed with their parents
  - 1% living with connected carers (long-term)

With 12% living in other accommodation including prospective adopters, residential schools or secure accommodation.

## KNOWING OUR CHILDREN

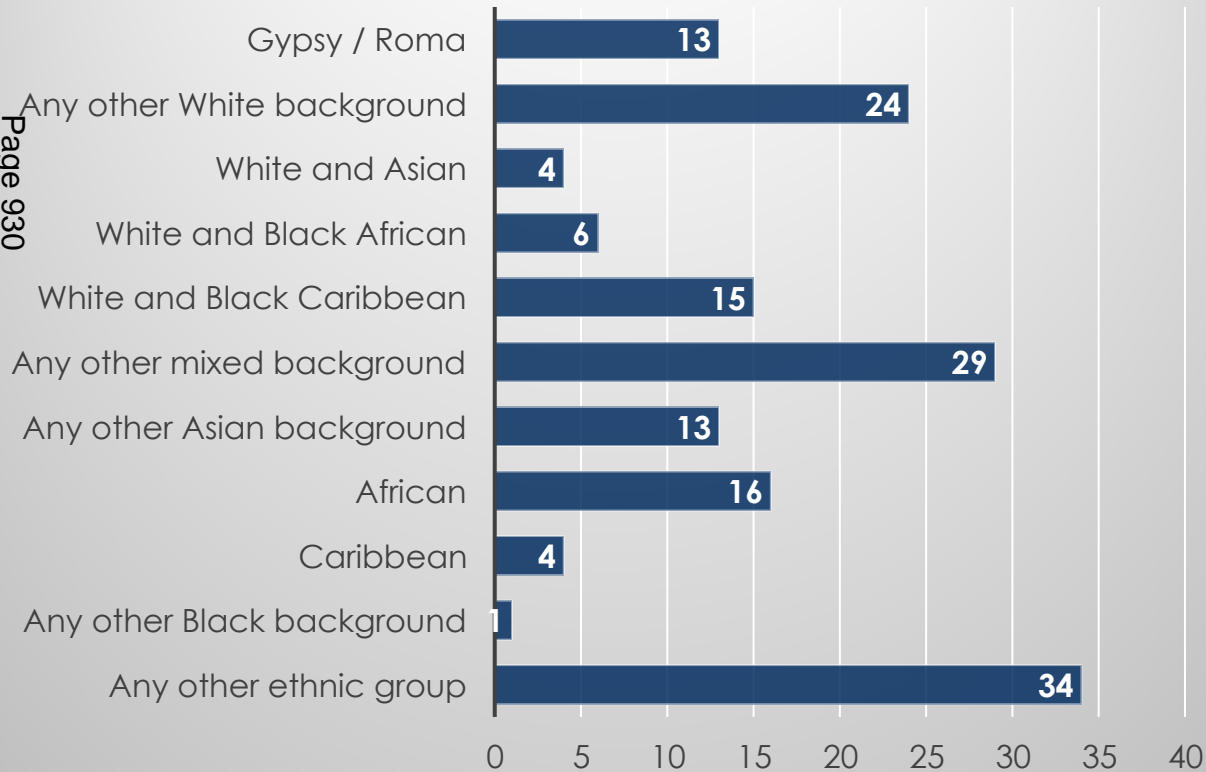


# REPRESENTATION

25% OF CLA IN ESCC IDENTIFY AS MINORITY ETHNIC OR MIXED HERITAGE – INCLUDING UASC MARCH 2022

27% OF IROS IN ESCC IDENTIFY AS MINORITY ETHNIC OR MIXED HERITAGE

## Minority Ethnic CLA Population at March 2022



Page 930



In March 2022 ESCC were looking after 59 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. Over 2021/22 it was a total of 67 children an increase from 50 children in 2002/21 and 48 children in 2019/20.

The biggest population of our UASC came from Iran, Afghanistan, Sudan, Vietnam and Egypt. With lower numbers from Syria, Iraq, Eritrea and Ethiopia. With Albania, Libya & Somalia only have 1 child from each area.

- 20% of UASC are under 16 years old
- 93% of UASC looked after by ESCC are male
- The majority of UASC are allocated to IROs with additional training and specialist knowledge of this particularly vulnerable group

## UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN

# KEEPING CLOSE

- 19.1% of placements for children Looked After by ESCC were out of County in March 2022. This compares very positively against a National benchmark of 42% (March 2021 - ADCS)
  - 73% of Looked After Children under 16yrs in ESCC had been accommodated in the same placement for at least 2 years. This is slightly higher than the National average\* (70%) and on par with our Statistical Neighbour group\* (73%)
  - IROs particularly scrutinise those plans where children have had a series of moves or where their placement appears insecure
  - ESCC continues to promote children having long term relationships with the same IRO and ensuring that brothers and sisters have the same IRO wherever possible
- 
- March 2021: 64% same placement for at least 2yrs (under 16yrs)
  - March 2020: 62% same placement for at least 2yrs (under 16yrs)

\*Statistical Neighbour and National comparisons are based on 2020/21 figures.



# SECURE ACCOMMODATION REVIEWS

## Criteria for Secure Accommodation Order

It is unlawful to restrict the liberty of a child in a secure children's home unless one of the criteria in Section 25(1) is met, no matter how short the period of restriction.

## Section 25 Children Act 1989

This is also known as the secure order. It is a court order which restricts the liberty of a child who:

has a history of absconding and is likely to abscond from any other description of accommodation; and if he/she absconds is likely to suffer significant harm

Or

if kept in any other description of accommodation, is likely to injure him/herself or other persons.

- During 2021/22 the Safeguarding Unit worked with Lansdowne to improve on the SAR process.
- We recruited senior social workers to sit on the SAR panel as the 3<sup>rd</sup> member and retained the Independent Person. We identified 7 IROs as SAR chairs, giving Lansdowne a healthy panel membership as SAR panels are required at short-notice.
- We agreed an agenda, to ensure all SARs are held in a consistent manner and only cover the areas required; they are not MVMs and the child's IRO does not attend.
- There is now a leaflet which explains the process for the child and can be shared with parents.
- The Exit Planning is in place to ensure planned transitions for children.

- In this review period we launched the IRO profile leaflets.
- The profiles are sent to all children on being allocated an IRO. They contain a photograph of the IRO, along with some information about the IRO for example hobbies, music or pets. There is information about the role of an IRO and contact details, including the advocacy service, CiCC and other organisations outside of the County.
- IROs have sent their profiles to their children too.
- CiCC have given positive feedback about the profiles along with ideas about tweaking the content for younger children. Overall, the feedback has commented on liking the photographs and learning something about their IRO.
- The team link for UASC has been working with the team to ensure the profiles are translated into the child's language.



## IRO PROFILE LEAFLETS

# PROGRESS ON 2021-2022 SERVICE PRIORITIES

- **Promote and learn from new feedback and consultation process for families and professionals**

There have been delays in being able to progress the forms, it is now in place to begin in July 2022. The delays have been around gaining appropriate GDPR.

- **Continue to promote children's voices through their My Voice Matters Meetings**

This has been successful with the thoughts and views of children being captured in both Care Plans and within the My Voice Matters Meetings. In this review period 97% of My Voice Matters meetings were held with the views of the child, either directly or indirectly, this was up 2% from the previous year. Some of these contained the observations of children with communication challenges. Supporting social workers to capture the views of children will be a priority in 2022/23, especially in respect of the 4-8yr olds and children with communication challenges.

- **Improve timeliness of meetings and sharing/completion of records**

During this review period 97% of My Voice Matters meetings were held in timescale, with the IRO noting within the records reasons for lateness, 2% increase on previous year. We continue to work on the data to gather the timeliness of children receiving their letters. Sending children their letter (outcome of the meeting) within time is essential to ensure the content remains meaningful.

- **Promote IRO monitoring by building on midway review process**

This continues to be an area of working progress, with the data collection not yet built in. IRO are more active in booking midway review dates with social workers and completing the form, this is essential to prevent drift of decisions between reviews. To strengthen the process it will now be included into the Looked After Children Operational Instructions.

- Continue to build on understanding identity issue for children who are Looked After:

The Safeguarding Unit attended BASW Anti-Racism together. The IROs feel more confident in the positive use of social GRRRAACCEEESSS when reviewing Care Plans, being more creative in how this tool is used. IROs are supporting social workers to think about the impacts of identity and to explore with the child what it means to them. As a unit we acknowledge there is still improvement to be made.

- Promote and encourage careful language as identified by the CiCC and Care Experienced People:

IROs continue to challenge language that is not child focused. The MVM outcomes are written in a letter to the child using this format ensures that the child is held in mind. We have held a group supervision focussed on language and we now have an IRO lead area with the CiCC, alongside the link in Through Care Team.

- Further develop IRO Lead Roles:

In this review period we have increased our lead roles to also include, Participation, Health, Neurodiversity and CiCC. The leads in sexually harmful behaviours have been attending additional training. The lead roles run alongside the links to teams, which we plan to expand in 2022/23.

- Development of hybrid meetings post covid-19

IROs returned to face-to-face MVM meetings, starting with meeting children for garden visits or walks. It is still the option for children to request virtual MVM meetings or for other parties to attend as hybrid meetings.

- Work across the Department to improve equality data monitoring specifically in relationship to children with disabilities:

The Safeguarding Unit contributed to the work completed in this area.



Increase the % of Midway Reviews. Evidence the impact in reducing drift & delay

Utilise the Issues Resolution reporting system to identify themes, establish a mechanism for feedback to CSC Managers.

Monthly QA audits of MVM letters & Midway Reviews - to include timeliness & content

Promote the Health Lead link: IROs to report on the quality of Health Assessments, ensure health appointments attending and notify delays in emotional health support.

Build robust referral pathways for UASC under National Transfer Scheme

Embed and support the refreshed QA framework and functions within the Unit and ESCC

Increase the numbers of children supported by the Advocacy Service in the MVM process

# IRO PRIORITIES 2022/2023

# Glossary

ASO - Administrative Support Officer

BASW - British Association of Social Workers

CiCC - Children in Care Council

CP - Child Protection

CPA - Child Protection Advisor

CSC - Children's Social Care

ESSCP - East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership

GPDR - General Data Protection Regulation

HR - Human Resources

Page 938 ICPC / RCPC - Initial Child Protection Conference / Review Child Protection Conference

IMR - Independent Management Review

IRO - Independent Reviewing Officer

LAC/CLA - Looked After Child

LADO - Local Authority Designated Officer

LSCLG - Local Safeguarding Liaison Group

MACE - Multi Agency Child Exploitation

MVM - My Voice Matters

OM - Operations Manager

QA - Quality Assurance

SCR - Serious Case Review

SEIROMP/NIROMP - South East / National IRO Managers' Partnership

SESLIP - South East Sector Led Improvement Programme

Social GGRRAACCEESSS - Gender, Geography, Race, Religion, Age, Ability, Appearance, Culture, Class, Education, Ethnicity, Spirituality, Sexuality, Sexual orientation

TCP - Transfer CP Conference

UASC - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child

**Committee:** Corporate Parenting Panel

**Date:** 29 July 2022

**Title of Report:** Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics

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

**Purpose of Report:** To update the Panel on changes in the last quarter

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**Recommendations:** The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the report.

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## 1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 Services for Looked After Children 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.

## 2. Supporting information

2.1 Data is drawn as a snapshot on the last day of the month and inevitably there will be some changes as data is cleansed. There has been a significant increase in number of Looked After Children during the last quarter and on the last day of June 2022, there were 638 children in care. This is an increase of 11 children from the last quarter. The service remains very busy and the sufficiency of any placements either in-house, or in the independent sector, is extremely challenging. This is a reflection of a national issue across the UK.

2.2 A total of 365 children were living in foster care at the end of June a rise of 7 children. Of that number 271 were living with ESCC carers and a further 94 children were living with agency carers. In addition, 70 young people were living in supported housing options, homes or hostels, which is an increase of 7 over the quarter. 18 children were placed for adoption, and a further 7 children were placed with foster carers, who were also approved adopters as part of the Fostering for Adoption pathway.

2.3 At the end of the quarter 87 children were living with kinship foster carers, 3 less than in the previous period.

2.4 The number of children living at home with their parents whilst remaining subject to a legal order to ESCC, decreased to 21. Planning for placements of this sort is always monitored rigorously to mitigate any risk factors. Agreement and authorisation for this type of placement is given at a senior level, unless it is court mandated when realistically ESCC has no choice in the matter.

2.5 At the end of June, the number of children living in residential children's homes increased to 78. Of that figure 19 children were living in ESCC children's homes and 59 were placed in external homes. Our staff work strenuously to place children in our in-house provision before they seek agreement from a senior manager for an agency placement. Robust negotiations on both quality and price are a feature of every

external placement search. An additional ESCC children's home has now been registered and has a number of children in placement.

- 2.6 At the end of June 1 ESCC child was placed in the Secure Unit at Lansdowne and 1 other child was in an external secure unit. Exit planning is currently underway for both children.
- 2.7 1 young person was remanded into youth detention accommodation in this quarter.
- 2.8. ESCC is fully participating in the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) in relation to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. The number of young people seeking asylum was 63 at the end of June. In addition, there were 92 Asylum Seeking young people who were Care Leavers during this period.
- 2.9 The number of children subject to Child Arrangement/Residence Orders have remained at 342 and those children subject to a Special Guardianship Order increased to 476.
- 2.10 There was one complaint from a Looked After Child during this period which was responded to in a timely manner and satisfactorily resolved.

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 There were significant pressures in the Looked After Children's system during this period. The impact of Covid-19 compounded the stresses felt by many families, and as a result more children came into care with a range of complex behaviours. This in turn, with the national shortage of care placements, has proved very challenging for the service.

Alison Jeffery  
Director of Children's Services

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Local Members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

## Children's Services LAC Summary between 01/07/2021 and 30/06/2022

Placement Type	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	Jan 22	Feb 22	Mar 22	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22
A4 - Placed for adoption with consent (under section 19 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer					1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
A5 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) with current foster carer	2	2	2	1	1	3	5	5	5	5	6	6
A6 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer	15	15	15	16	16	13	14	11	11	11	11	11
H5 - Residential accommodation	61	59	61	57	61	60	59	56	63	65	66	70
K1 - Secure unit	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	1	1	2
K2 - Homes and Hostels	75	75	78	75	72	73	72	74	73	75	77	77
P1 - Placed with own parents	27	32	29	30	23	20	21	26	22	22	21	21
P2 - Independent living	5	4	4	2	2	2	1					
R1 - Residential care home	1	1	1	1								
R2 - NHS/Health Trust	1					1						
R5 - Young Offender Institution or prison					1			1	1	2	2	1
S1 - All Residential schools	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
U1 - Foster placement with relative or friend- long term fostering	10	11	10	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	10
U3 - Foster placement with relative or friend- not long term or FFA	60	60	71	71	72	76	75	70	75	76	76	75
U4 - Placement with other foster carer- long term fostering	178	177	173	171	171	169	167	160	157	154	149	147
U5 - Placement with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter- FFA		1	1	3	8	6	4	4	5	5	6	7
U6 - Placement with other foster carer - not long term or FFA	176	170	168	172	173	174	182	186	202	200	201	207
<b>Total</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>636</b>

Immigration Status	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	Jan 22	Feb 22	Mar 22	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22
Asylum Seeker			1	1	1							
British Citizen	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	7
Discretionary Leave to Remain in the UK to 18 (DLR)	1	1	1	1	1							
Humanitarian Protection applied for under ECHR	1											
Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK (ILR)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Refugee Status	24	24	24	20	19	17	12	11	11	10	9	9
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child	27	29	30	34	35	38	39	40	49	52	52	51

Legal Status	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	Jan 22	Feb 22	Mar 22	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22
Child Arrangements Order/ResidenceOrder S8(1)CA'89	343	343	343	343	343	343	342	342	342	342	342	342
Special Guardianship Order S14A CA 89	462	463	463	465	469	470	470	474	475	476	476	476