



CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

TUESDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2023

10.00 AM PRIORY, ROOM 2F CENTRE BLOCK, COUNTY HALL - COUNTY HALL, LEWES

MEMBERSHIP - Councillors Bob Bowdler, Jonny Denis, Penny di Cara, Kathryn Field (Chair), Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood, Matthew Milligan and Colin Swansborough

A G E N D A

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2023 *(Pages 3 - 8)*
2. Apologies for absence
3. Disclosure of Interests
Disclosure by all members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the member regards the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.
4. Urgent items
Notification of items which the Chair considers to be urgent and proposes to take at the end of the appropriate part of the agenda. Any members who wish to raise urgent items are asked, wherever possible, to notify the Chair before the start of the meeting. In so doing, they must state the special circumstances which they consider justify the matter being considered urgently.
5. 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. ESCC Children's Homes Quarterly Regulation 44 summary report *(Pages 9 - 30)*
Report by Director of Children's Services.
7. Any other exempt items considered urgent by the Chair.
8. Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics *(Pages 31 - 36)*
Report by Director of Children's Services.
9. Looked After Children (LAC) Annual Report *(Pages 37 - 80)*
Report by Director of Children's Services.
10. Children in Care Council (CiCC) Annual Report - 1 April 2022 - 28 February 2023
(Pages 81 - 94)
Report by Director of Children's Services.
11. Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report *(Pages 95 - 120)*
Report by the 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

9 October 2023

Contact Belinda Trunfull, Democratic Services Support Officer,
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CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held at Priory, Room 2F Centre Block, County Hall - County Hall, Lewes on 25 July 2023.

PRESENT Councillor Bob Bowdler, Councillor Penny di Cara, Councillor Kathryn Field (Chair), Councillor Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood, Councillor Matthew Milligan and Councillor Colin Swansborough

ALSO PRESENT Kathy Marriott - Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care
Alison Jeffery - Director of Children's Services
Sally Carnie - Head of Looked After Service
Heather Lomas - Designated Nurse: Children and Young people in care
Dawn Siddens - Designated Nurse: Children and Young people in care
Adrian Sewell - Operations Manager, Fostering Team
Darren Edwardes - Senior Social Worker/Health and Wellbeing Project Manager
Belinda Trunfull - Member Services

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 APRIL 2023

1.1 RESOLVED to agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2023.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Jonny Denis.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

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

4. URGENT ITEMS

4.1 There were no urgent items.

5. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

5.1 RESOLVED to exclude the public and press from the meeting for items 6 and 7 on the agenda (see minutes 6 and 7) 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.

6. QUARTERLY REGISTERED CHILDREN'S HOMES REPORT

6.1 The Panel considered Quarterly Registered Children's Home reports for the following Children's Homes:

- Brodrick House
- Homefield Cottage
- Hazel Lodge
- Silver Birches
- Lansdowne Secure Children's Home
- Acorns
- The Bungalow

6.2 The Panel considered Ofsted Inspection reports for the following Children's Homes:

- The Bungalow
- Acorns
- Homefield Cottage

6.3 The Panel welcomed the reports and received a verbal update from Kathy Marriott, Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care. The Panel received a detailed explanation of Reg 44 and were also informed that all recommendations on the report had been actioned.

6.4 The Panel requested an update on inviting Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers to future meetings. In response, the Panel were updated that a young person was due to attend the meeting, however, due to unforeseen circumstances they were unable to. Alternative arrangements will be made to accommodate them in a future meeting.

6.5 The Panel discussed judgements on Ofsted reports and suggested that it would be useful to see a background narrative explaining the reason behind judgement decisions as this could be key in ensuring that that staff are not left feeling demoralised. Kathy Marriott updated the Panel that that this will be fed into a consultation taking place soon regarding Ofsted requirements for children's homes.

6.6 The Panel suggested writing to Ofsted putting their view forward regarding judgements and the importance of providing a narrative. Alison Jeffery, Director of Children's Services agreed to draft a letter for the Panel to review.

6.7 The Panel were satisfied that the Home Managers had appropriate action plans in place to address the recommendations within the reports.

6.8 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

7. ANY OTHER EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR.

7.1 There were none.

8. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

8.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on LAC statistics.

8.2 Sally Carnie, Head of LAC Services updated the Panel on the latest position for LAC in East Sussex. During the last quarter, a total of 677 children were living in care which is the

highest number of children the Local Authority (LA) has cared for in the last 20 years. Of this total, 342 children are in Foster Care (a decrease of 15). 250 were living with approved ESCC carers (a decrease of 10). 90 children were living with independent agency carers (a decrease of 5) and 2 with other LA carers. 88 young people were living in supported housing options, homes or hostels (an increase of 3). There were 20 children placed for adoption (an increase of 4).

8.3 Children living with kinship foster carers remained the same as the previous quarter at 77. The number of children living at home with their parents whilst remaining subject to a legal order to ESCC, has decreased from 33 to 30. The number of children living in regulated residential children's homes increased to 113 (increase of 21).

8.4 There were 2 children placed in external Secure Units. The number of young people seeking asylum was 71. The number of children subject to Child Arrangement / Residence Orders remained the same at 342 and those children subject to a Special Guardianship Order decreased by 3 to 475. There were no complaints from LAC during this period.

8.5 The Panel discussed the rise in numbers of care leavers and were informed that a few options are currently being explored like increasing in house capacity for children with complex needs, demand management and working with providers in the market to bridge the gap.

8.6 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

9. FOSTERING REPORT

9.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which outlined the performance and progress of the Fostering Service between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

9.2 Adrian Sewell, Operations Manager – Fostering Service provided further detail regarding the key activities and work of the service including information around fostering duty, high intensive supported accommodation, recruitment and retention, supported lodgings, support supervision of foster carers, foster carer training, Children in Care Council (CiCC) and priorities for 2023/24.

9.3 In response to a question from the Panel regarding pressures on Foster Carers and outstanding allegations, the Panel were informed that there were no allegations pending and that majority that go through the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) are usually unsubstantiated.

9.4 The Panel discussed supported lodgings and requested more detail on their set up and running. In response, the Panel were informed that a supported lodging is equivalent to a foster care placement which is overseen by the LA who ensure that all relevant safeguarding is in place. Supported lodgings can be used as a steppingstone to independence for 16 to 17-year-olds and is therefore essential that this market is maintained.

9.5 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

10. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) HEALTH

10.1 The Panel received a presentation from Heather Lomas and Dawn Siddens, Designated Nurses - Children and Young people in care outlining the role and responsibilities of the NHS in relation to children in care together with performance data and analysis. The presentation also

highlighted the priorities for NHS Sussex in relation to children in care and care experienced young people.

10.2 The Panel discussed performance data and the number of young people turning down referrals. The Panel were informed that Business Support Officers are now in place to chase up any referrals which have been turned down. In addition, a strategic health group meeting takes place quarterly, the group reviews declined referrals and how they are recorded with a view to streamlining the process and bringing down the numbers. The Panel agreed that it would be beneficial to see the refusal figures.

10.3 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

11. CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL (CICC) PRESENTATION AND BRIGHTSPOTS SURVEY - HEALTH

11.1 The Panel received a presentation from Kathy Marriott, Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care outlining Children in Care's experience of health and wellbeing services.

11.2 In July 2022, a survey was conducted with children in care aged 4-18 to understand their wellbeing and to identify what has gone well and what needs improvement.

11.3 Children felt that the time they got to spend with family was 'just right'; over 80% of 8-18 years olds felt that life was getting better and took part in hobbies and activities; 100% of 4-7-year-olds got to have fun at weekends; over 94% of 8-11-year-olds and 11-18-year-olds felt carers showed an interest in their education; 100% of 4-7-year-olds, 94% of 8-11-year-olds and 96% of 11-18-year-olds trusted their carers; and over 99% of children aged 8-11 and 11-18-year-olds knew who their social worker was, compared to 92% in other LAs.

11.4 The survey highlighted the importance of promoting hobbies and activities to establish healthy friendships and parity with peers. It is also essential for adults to ensure that that young people do not feel stigmatised for example by wearing lanyards when visiting young people in educational settings. Support needs to be offered in terms of activities to ensure that young people feel that the things they do in life are worthwhile.

11.5 Direct work with young people will be undertaken to clarify issues raised in the survey as follows:

- Virtual School to review Personal Education Plan (PEP) process.
- Safeguarding Unit to pick up issues raised through 'My Voice Matters' meetings.
- Pathway plan process to be reviewed.
- Further events planned to gain greater understanding from young people.
- Dissemination event to take place to share findings with all key stakeholders and young people in Autumn 2023.

11.6 The Panel welcomed the presentation and enquired if AB testing had been used during the survey. In response, the Panel were informed that the survey was completed anonymously, and it was not known if AB testing had been used, however, it was agreed that it would be interesting to see if this is something that affects responses for future surveys.

11.7 The Panel discussed how the survey compared to other LAs. It was noted that that there is a cost involved for the LAs and the completed rate was at around 30%.

11.8 The Panel RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

12. CARE LEAVERS - PERSONALISED HEALTH BUDGETS PROGRAMME

12.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the Health and Wellbeing Project for care leavers.

12.2 Darren Edwardes, Senior Social Worker - Health and Wellbeing Project Manager updated the Panel on the project's aim targeting those identified young people with the service who were experiencing difficulties with their mental health and wellbeing and whose lives were impacted adversely from their own experiences in life as well as through the Covid-19 pandemic.

12.3 The Panel watched a video compilation of young people speaking about their activities and the positive impact this has had on their mental wellbeing. The Panel were informed that the music used in the video had been produced by one of the young people interviewed.

12.4 In response to a question regarding funding, the Panel were informed that funding was allocated in October 2021 following a successful bid from NHS England, currently there has been an underspend on the funding, however options are being explored for future funding.

12.5 The Panel RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

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

13.1 There were none.

The meeting ended at 3.20 pm.

Councillor Kathryn Field
Chair

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

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Committee: **Corporate Parenting Panel**

Date: **17 October 2023**

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

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

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

Recommendations:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the report.

1. Background information

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 and the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children's grant from the Home Office.

2. Supporting information

2.1 Data found at Appendix 1 is drawn as a snapshot on the last day of the month and some changes occur as data is cleansed within the system. Once again, this quarter has seen the rising trend in the number of Looked after children continuing to increase, the figure rose by 9 children, and on the last day of September 2023, there were 686 children in care. The service remained very busy and the sufficiency of any placements either in-house, or in the independent sector, was extremely challenging. This is a national issue across the UK. Strenuous attempts were made to place children within their family networks which can be seen in the following data which supports this practice during this period.

2.2 A total of 337 children were living in foster care at the end of September, a decrease of 5 since the last quarter. Of that number 245 were living with approved East Sussex County Council (ESCC) carers, this is a further decrease of 5 from the previous quarter, and a trend which is very concerning. 5 children were placed with foster carers who were also approved adopters as part of the Fostering for Adoption pathway, this has reduced by 3 since last quarter. 90 children were living with agency carers, this remains the same as the previous quarter. In addition, there were 2 children placed with Other Local Authority foster carers, which also remains the same as the last quarter. There were 95 young people living in supported housing options, homes or hostels, and this has seen an increase of 7 since the previous quarter, it also includes 1 child under the age of 16 placed in a Z1 placement (other placements) where there was no alternative regulated provision available. There were 17 children placed for adoption at the end of September which is a decrease of 3 since the previous quarter.

2.3 At the end of the quarter, 13 more children were living with kinship foster carers, this increased significantly since the previous quarter from 77 to 90.

2.4 The number of children living at home with their parents whilst remaining subject to a legal order to ESCC, also increased from 30 to 34. 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.

2.5 At the end of September, the number of children living in regulated residential children's homes decreased slightly from 113 to 108, a total decrease of 5 in the quarter. Of the overall figure of 108, 18 children were living in ESCC run children's homes and 90 were placed in external residential homes. Exhaustive attempts are made to place children in our in-house provision prior to referring out to an agency placement. There are rigorous negotiations on both quality and price when placement searches are made with external providers. Wherever possible ESCC attempts to find family-based placements for our children either within their own networks or with foster carers. Where this is not possible and external residential homes are commissioned there remains a commitment to step the children down into a family arrangement at the right time.

2.6 At the end of September there was 1 ESCC child placed in an external Secure Unit.

2.7 At the end of September there were 0 children remanded into youth detention accommodation.

2.8 At the end of September there were 4 children placed in a Family Centre or Mother and baby units.

2.9 ESCC fully participates in the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. The number of young people seeking asylum was 81 at the end of September, which is an increase of 10 from the previous quarter. In addition, there were 113 Asylum Seeking young people who were Care Leavers during this period, 103 aged 18-21 and 10 aged 21-25. This is a slight increase from the previous quarter.

2.10 The number of children subject to Child Arrangement/Residence Orders increased from 342 to 345 and those children subject to a Special Guardianship Order decreased by 1 to 474.

2.11 There was 1 complaint from a Looked After Child during this period. This complaint arrived on the last day of the quarter and therefore there has not been time to progress any actions on it at this point.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The Looked After Children's system has continued to be very pressurised during this period with a national and local shortage of care placements. All key Local Authority commissioning groups have reported similar issues and that they are under intense pressure to find suitable regulated placements for their Looked After Children. It is to the credit of the ESCC fostering placement service that they have continued to find Ofsted or Care Quality Commission registered placements for the majority of our Looked After Children.

ALISON JEFFERY
Director of Children's Services

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Email: kathy.marriott@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

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Placement Type	Placement Provider Desc	Total
A5 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) with current foster carer	PR1 - Own provision by LA	3
A6 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer	PR1 - Own provision by LA	12
	PR2 - Other LA provision	1
	PR5 - Voluntary/Third Sector Provision	1
H5 - Unregistered Provider Supported Accommodation	PR2 - Other LA provision	3
	PR4 - Private Provision	74
	PR5 - Voluntary/Third Sector Provision	16
H5 - Registered Provider of Supported Accommodation	PR4 - Private Provision	1
K1 - Secure unit	PR2 - Other LA provision	1
K2 - Homes and Hostels		1
	PR1 - Own provision by LA	18
	PR4 - Private Provision	88
	PR5 - Voluntary/Third Sector Provision	2
P1 - Placed with own parents	PR0 - Parents or other person with parental responsibility	34
R3 - Family centre or mother and baby unit	PR3 - Other public provision	1
	PR4 - Private Provision	2
	PR5 - Voluntary/Third Sector Provision	1
U1 - Foster placement with relative or friend- long term fostering		2
	PR1 - Own provision by LA	21
U3 - Foster placement with relative or friend- not long term or FFA		1
	PR1 - Own provision by LA	69
U4 - Placement with other foster carer- long term fostering		2
	PR1 - Own provision by LA	88
	PR4 - Private Provision	29
	PR5 - Voluntary/Third Sector Provision	3
U5 - Placement with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter- FFA	PR1 - Own provision by LA	5
U6 - Placement with other foster carer - not long term or FFA		1
	PR1 - Own provision by LA	152
	PR2 - Other LA provision	2
	PR4 - Private Provision	57
	PR5 - Voluntary/Third Sector Provision	1
Z1 - Other placements	PR4 - Private Provision	1
	Total	686

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Report to: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of meeting: 17 October 2023

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Looked After Children's (LAC) Annual Report 2022-23

Purpose: To outline the performance of the Looked After Children's Service between 2022-23

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the annual report.

1 Background

1.1 The Annual LAC report provides a quantitative and qualitative overview of the LAC service, including the performance and quality of support and services provided to the children we care for in East Sussex.

2. Supporting information

2.1 The Annual LAC report 2022-23 is attached at Appendix 1.

3. Recommendation

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

ALISON JEFFERY

Director of Children's Services: Alison Jeffery

Contact Officer: Sally Carnie

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

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Looked After Children's Annual Progress Report 2022-23

Sally Carnie
Head of Service for LAC

Who did we look after?

The data shows a snapshot as of 31st March 2023

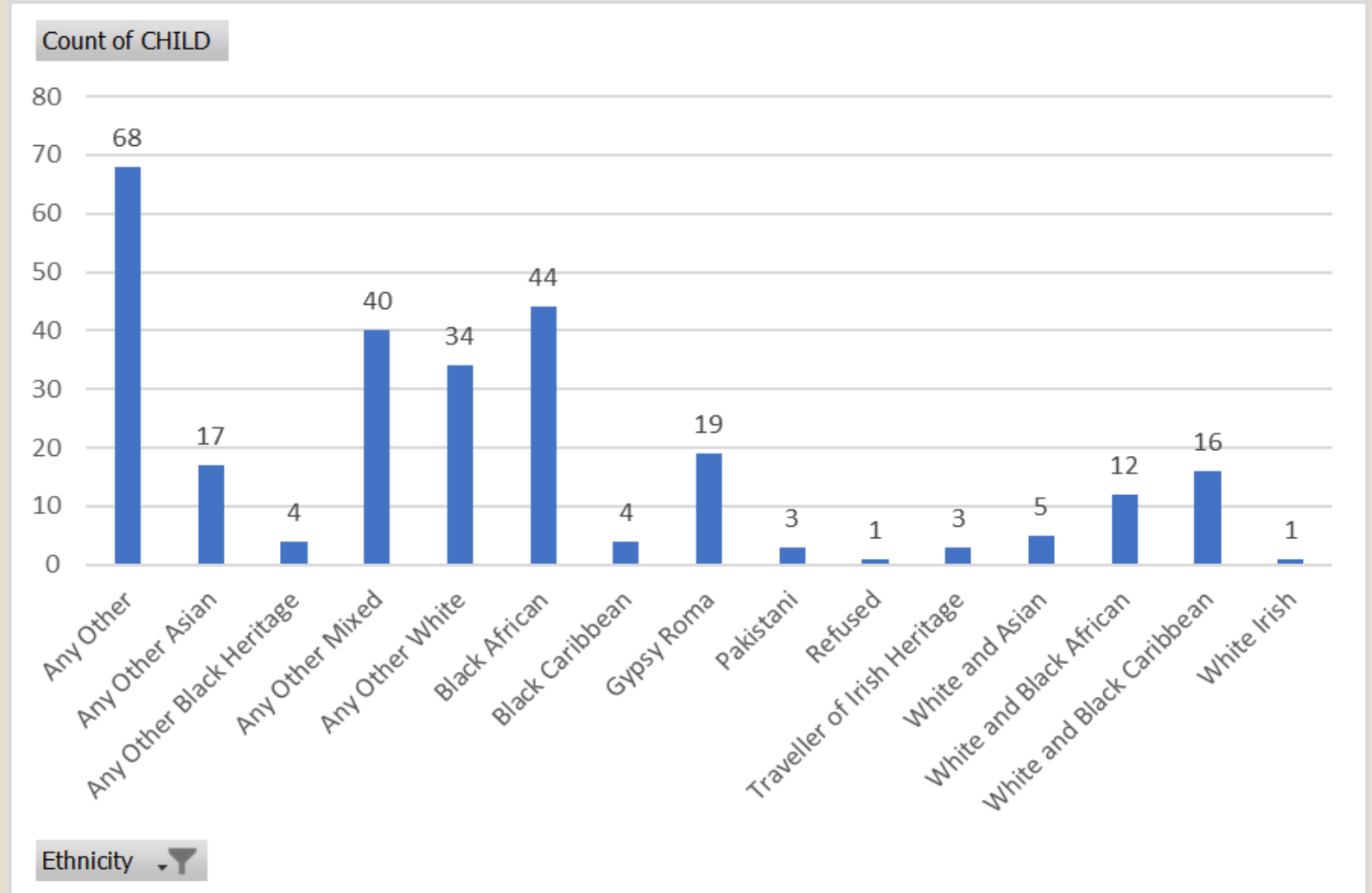
- We looked after 374 boys and 287 girls.
- There were more children in care than the previous year. This was in part due to an additional 8 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in the snapshot figure as compared to the previous year.
- There were lower numbers of children who left care in this period compared to last year and more children came into our care overall.
- 865 children came in and left our care during the year which is an increase of 20 as compared with 2021-22. This represents significantly higher activity levels across the service.

Statistics	2021-2022	2022-2023
Looked After Children	628	661 (+33)
Children coming into care	246	249 (+3)
0-5 year olds admitted to care	81	81 (-)
6-12 year olds admitted to care	71	57 (-14)
13+ admitted to care	94	111 (+17)
Children leaving care	228	217 (-11)
0-12 year olds leaving care	94	92 (-2)
13+ leaving care	134	125 (-9)

Ethnicity of our Looked After Children (LAC)

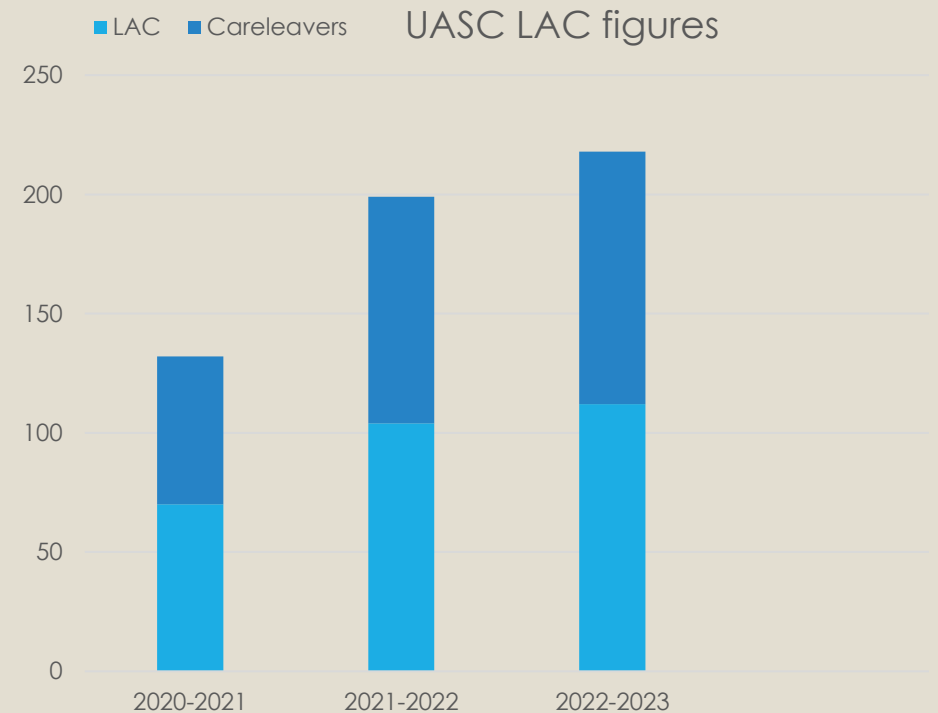
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31% of our Looked After Children (LAC) during 2022-23 identified as being of a minority ethnic background or of mixed heritage.



Our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

- East Sussex County Council (ESCC) cared for 112 UASC under 18 during 2022-23, compared to 104 during 2021-22. In addition, there were 106 Care Leavers aged 18+ which is an increase of 11 from the previous year.
- Our UASC were mainly male; 85% were aged 16 or over and the youngest was aged 12.
- During 2022-2023 35 young people came to ESCC through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) and the remainder were spontaneous arrivals via Police involvement or directly from Newhaven Port.
- Most of these children were from Afghanistan, closely followed by Sudan and Iran. There were also small numbers of children from Vietnam, Egypt, Albania, Eritrea, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Libya, Gambia, Algeria, Angola, Turkey, Ethiopia and Chad.



Children looked after by the Disability Service

- The Children's Disability Service criteria for allocation is 'Children who have severe and enduring cognitive delay, severe learning disability, low functional abilities and physical disabilities.
- As of 31st March 2023, this service worked with 17 LAC. 12 children were aged 0-15 and 5 were aged 16-18.
- Geographically, 4 children were living outside East Sussex.
- These 17 children were in receipt of full time care. In addition, the service provided extensive packages of support and respite to other children and their families in the community.

Placements	
ESCC foster carers	3
Agency foster carers	2
ESCC Residential Homes	7
Independent Residential Homes	4
Supported Accommodation	1

Where our children are living

Decrease in	Decrease in children placed with total number of foster carers, kinship and ESCC foster carers.
Increase in	Increase in both children placed for adoption and children placed with parents.
Increase in	Increase in children aged 16+ living with our supported accommodation providers including with our inhouse supported lodgings providers.
Increase in	Increase in children living in both ESCC and agency Children's Homes.

Data shows a snapshot as of 31st March 2023

Placement Type	31 st March 2021	31 st March 2022	31 st March 2023
With foster carer	426	451	431
Of these: in house carers	265	276	257
Kinship carers	65	84	77
Agency carers	96	91	97
Placed for Adoption	23	14	16
Supported Accommodation / Supported Lodgings	57	63	87
ESCC Children's Homes	14	16	22
Agency Children's Homes	57	58	68
Agency Special Schools	1	1	1
Placed with Parents	22	22	33
Independent Living	7	0	0
Youth custody/secure unit	3	3	1
Hospital/NHS establishment	1	0	1
Family Centre/Mother & Baby Unit	0	0	1
Total	611	628	661

How well did we do in 2022-23?

Indicator Ref	Description	2022/23 Value		2021/22 England	2021/22 Value		2020/21 England	2020/21 Value	
NI 58	Emotional & Behavioural Health of children in care	16.2	↓	13.8	14.2	↓	13.7	14.1	↑
Adoption 1	Percentage of children who ceased to be looked after who were adopted	7.0%	↓	10.6%	8.4%	↓	10.2%	15.3%	↑
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)	329 days	↓	199 days	301 days	↓	183 days	274 days	↓
NI62 Placements 1	Number of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year	15.0%	↓	9.8%	10.4%	↑	8.9%	13.3%	↓
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	71.4%	↓	71.0%	73.9%	↑	70.3%	63.7%	↑
Placements 3	% of LAC at 31 st March placed outside LA boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live	17.2%	↓	16.5%	15.4%	↑	16.4%	17.3%	↓

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 2022-23? (continued)

Indicator Ref	Description	2022/23 Value		2021/22 England	2021/22 Value		2020/21 England	2020/21 Value	
Leaving Care 1 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in education, employment or training	55.90%	↑	55.4%	54.9%	↑	52.0%	46.3%	↓
Leaving Care 2 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in suitable accommodation	87.4%	↓	87.8%	88.4%	↑	87.7%	87.8%	↑
Leaving Care 3 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 17-18 who were in education, employment or training	77.1%	↑	66.5%	71.8%	↑	65.0%	68.7%	↓
Leaving Care 4 <i>*see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 17-18 who were in suitable accommodation	92.6%	↓	90.3%	94.5%	↓	90.6%	95.5%	↓
Thrive PI 9	Rate of Children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18	62.0	↓	70.0	58.9	↓	67.0	57.5	↓
Health 1	Percentage of children who had their teeth checked by a dentist	62.5%	↓	70.2%	70.3%	↑	39.6%	32.6%	↓
PAF C81	Final warnings, reprimands and convictions of lac	0.9%	↔	2.2%	0.9%	↑	2.4%	1.8%	↑

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 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday

What the performance data is telling us

ESCC performance data was produced for 2022-23 and the national data contained in the tables above was for the year 2021-22. The improvement arrows therefore refer to comparison with the ESCC data for the previous year.

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The overall performance has largely remained stable with very little significant movement.

The SDQ data dipped and as a result an action plan has been developed to address this.

The adoption data showed a deterioration in performance across all timeliness measures. This has been closely scrutinised at a child level and it has revealed that this performance had been affected by the particular levels of complexity contained within this cohort. (see adoption slide)

LAC with 3 or more placement moves also dipped, largely due to the national sufficiency issues regarding placement availability.

Percentage of dental checks completed also dipped. This is being closely monitored by the strategic health team who are trying to improve dental capacity and availability for LAC locally.

There was good performance across the Care Leaver indicators with significant improvements in relation to EET and suitable accommodation.

Family Finding & Linking in East Sussex	2021-22	2020-21
Number of children adopted (AOs)	10	27
Number of children approved for adoption	16	26
Number of relinquished children	0	1
Number of 2 sibling groups matched	0	1
Number of 3 sibling groups matched	0	0
Number of 4 sibling groups matched	0	0
Number of children matched outside of ASE	3	3
Number of children matched within ASE	10	22
Number of children placed for Foster to Adopt (F2A)	8	8

Adoption South East (ASE)

- In 2022-23 Adoption South East (ASE) placed 84 children with their adoptive families. Of these children, 19 were from East Sussex, X in sibling groups and X single children.
- The average number of children ASE were actively family finding for each month during 2022-23 was 60. On average, each month, 6 of these children had no potential matches. This lack of a match can be due to various reasons i.e., the children are newly referred to us, that their foster carers are under assessment, or they require enhanced family finding to identify the right family that can meet their needs. Although some children do take longer than a year to place due to complexity, the team is ambitious to achieve adoption for all children with an adoption care plan.
- Early permanence has continued to be actively promoted by ASE aiming to improve the timeliness of placing children for adoption in ESCC.
- Adoption support has been an area of significant growth within ASE this year supporting over 2,000 families across the region with different strands of support. This included support via the ASE website, online courses, online and face to face groups, activity days, statutory birth record counselling and birth record information sharing. ASE has continued to provide a high level of therapy for families supporting over 1000 children. There has also been a continued commitment to Adoption Voices to ensure that families have easy access to local support.

*See ASE Annual Report on slide 41



Fostering Recruitment

The data provided is a final snapshot as of 31st March 2023
24 new foster homes, **40** placements created

Whilst the ESCC Fostering Service was able to recruit more foster carers, offering more placements during this period, it had become increasingly challenging given the extremely competitive nature of the market both from the independent sector and neighbouring Local Authorities.

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The success the service had, was due largely to the dedicated specialist marketing and communications officer. This post enabled the service to refresh the recruitment and marketing strategy to focus on the recruitment of both experienced foster carers and applicants new to the fostering role.

The significant increase in conversion rate can be attributed to potential applicants being provided with more relevant information supporting them to make an informed decision at the start of the process, with 44% continuing their application to approval.

Recruitment	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Enquiries	268	227	200	274
Q&A calls	114	92	68	79
Initial visits	71	42	32	43
Approvals	22	20	14	24
Placements	39	30	21	40
Conversion rate Enquiry to approval	8%	9%	6%	7%
Conversion rate Screening call to approval	19%	22%	16%	24%
Conversion rate Initial visit to approval	31%	48%	34%	44%

Fostering Recruitment (Continued)

Maintenance payments to foster carers were uplifted for implementation on 1st April 2023. Whilst this did not bring ESCC allowances in line with the national minimum allowance (NMA) this was widely welcomed by existing foster carers. The additional commitment to enhance payments to equal the NMA will be critical in the retention of our existing foster carer resource and encouraging new applications.

Incentive payments to foster carers signposting friends and family from their network to apply as foster carers continues and as seen as a valuable part of our overall recruitment strategy.

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

ESCC have implemented this as HR policy formalising the additional time off an ESCC employee is entitled to for the attendance of fostering related meetings.

Other initiatives existing and targeted for 2023/2024

Council tax discount or exemption

In discussion and to be explored in 23/24 for approved foster carers

Recruitment events

Live online information sessions and revised schedule of community and pop-up locations for "Vinnie-the-Van"

Review of outdoor advertising

i.e., roundabout and lamppost banners.

Council tax postal mailout

Fostering flyers posted to 110,000 homes across East Sussex.

Global Radio and More Radio campaigns

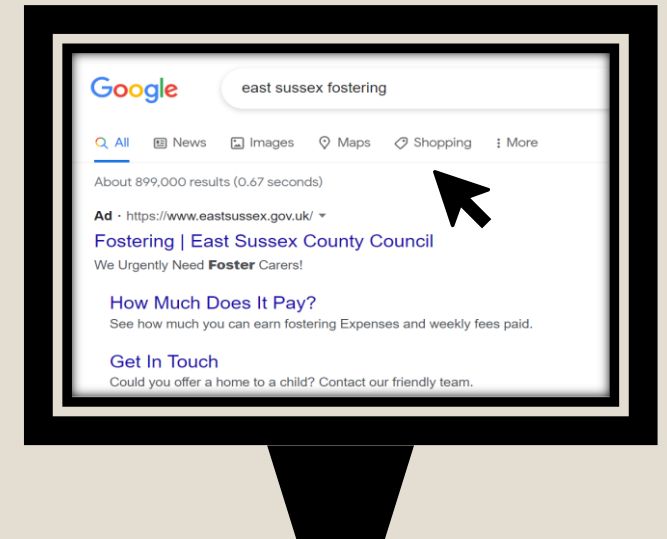
New scripts for ad's targeting diversity and parent and child applicants.

Website editing and social media

Upgraded content on the ESCC website and social media profiles.

Keeping in touch

With applicants and enquirers who previously did not progress if it was not the right time for them.



SUPPORTED LODGINGS

The data provided is a snapshot as of 31st March 2023.

There were 33 registered supported lodgings providers

- ESCC recruited an additional 6 new SL households in 22/23.
- 24 providers cared for young people aged 16+ only.
- 9 of these providers were approved as “hybrid” (combined approval as foster carers and supported lodgings providers)
- 1 household was being assessed as a Supported Lodgings provider.

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East Sussex Fostering Service was 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

From 01/04/22 - 31/03/23, the service received 220 placement referrals in total to consider. Out of these, 102 Young people were placed in Supported Lodgings

- 3 of these young people were Homeless (18+)
- 7 were Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
- 92 were Looked After Children.

Placement Support Service

Placement Support continued to work with some of the most vulnerable cared for young people at risk of placement breakdown.



The service worked closely with our Fostering Duty team to support short term emergency placements, by having workers who were on a weekend rota.



The Placement Support Service worked closely with the Virtual School to support cared for young people and those on the 'edge of care' (EOC) who were excluded or on a part-time timetable at school.



The Placement Support Service continued to support some of our young people in the Through Care Team, who were living independently, living in-house residentially or with an external agency.

Feedback from other professionals

“Thank you for your support and can I say what an amazing support S is to M, the way they work with her is something to be admired” (SW in training)

“Without you and your team ‘our’ and our foster carers job would not be possible” (SSW)

Placement Support Service (continued)

- Placement Support - 77 support packages
- Parent & Baby - 1 support package
- Through Care Team - 17 support packages to care leavers
- Edge of care - 5 support packages to families
- Reviews held - 65
- Set ups held - 17
- Worker ended - 26
- Virtual School sessions - 316, supporting 26 young people

100

Packages of Support Delivered

Feedback from our evaluations

“We couldn’t continue without the support; PSS has been the answer to our success as foster carers to our young adult”

“Amazing service, I don’t think we would have coped without it at times”

“Wonderful activities in the holidays”

“We could not ask for a better service from our PSW’s, one can never over rate kindness and commitment”

“Couldn’t fault the support we receive”

“They just make the difference; I think the support helps me to not feel overwhelmed”

Children in Care Council

Recruitment

Members took part regularly on recruitment panels for new staff working with young people within East Sussex.

Independent care review

CICC members joined a zoom meeting with Josh McAlister and other care experienced young people, to discuss his recommendations from the independent care review.

APPG

CICC attended 2 APPG (All Parliamentary Party Group) meetings to discuss being a sibling in care and mental health provision.

Corporate Parents and Senior Management Team

CICC members have met with members of the senior management team and corporate parents several times this year, building a better understanding for each other's roles.

CICC Partnership working.

Pan Sussex

CICC members worked with the CICC from Brighton and Hove to co-produce an evaluation framework, for relationship based social work practice.

Children and Young People's Trust

CICC supported a refresh of the East Sussex children and young people's plan and its priorities at the annual trust event.

Foundations for our Future

CICC members have been part of a project for mental health and wellbeing run by NHS Sussex, Priority 1-54 and ESCC giving their views on social prescribing and accessing mental health services offered for young people.



Children in Care Council (continued)



Volunteering

The average hours each member has spent volunteering over the past 12 months is 102.

Funding

CICC secured an extra £1037.88 in extra funding this year for team building and qualifications for CV enhancements.

SUSS it (Speak up Sessions)

36 activities giving 66 young people the opportunity to speak out and speak up if they wanted too. Through this engagement 48 young people have asked for help with individual issues.

Digital Ambassadors

CICC were involved in the digital care project run by ESCC to train, update and promote resources for keeping cared for children safe and resilient online. They had the opportunity to work with the newest virtual reality technology and used 3D printers.

National Participation

7 CICC members along with 87 cared for young people from all over the UK, attended a day at Westminster to lobby Parliament about important issues.

Our young people raised concerns around education and placement stability with one member having a one-on-one discussion with the education secretary at the time Nadhim Zahawi.

Our Children's Homes

Hazel lodge, St Leonards-on-Sea

- Judged as 'Good' by Ofsted in October 2022.
- Young people in the home made positive progress.
- The staff team remained stable and are focused on providing good quality care to the young people in the home.

Brodrick House, Eastbourne

- Page 56
- **The home was judged as "Good" by Ofsted - October 2022**
Staff team continued to be well established and consistent, with a full team. There was only one leaver in the last 2.5 years continued to offer sessional work with us.
 - Young people continued to demonstrate positive outcomes and achieve personal goals overall.
 - Young people enjoyed a number of trips away and positive activities.

Homefield Cottage, Seaford

- **The home was judged by OFSTED to be 'Outstanding in all areas' in March 2023**
- The children/young people all made positive progress.
- The children/young people enjoyed the summer holidays and engaged in lots of fun activities.
- The staff team continue to be resilient, child focused and have high aspirations for our resident children and young people.



Our Children's Homes (continued)

Silver Birches, Hastings

- **Granted registration by Ofsted in May 2022**
- First admission May 2022
- Development of expansive outdoor space - outdoor gym installed, landscaping work completed
- **Judged as 'Good' by Ofsted in November 2022**

Lansdowne Secure, Hailsham

- **Judged Good by Ofsted in November 2022**
- Service paused in Dec 2022 whilst restructure completed
- All children supported to move by end of January 2023
- Staff temporarily redeployed from February 2023
- Subject Matter Experts appointed February 2023 and Project Group Established
- Steering Group including DfE, San and NHS England in place
- Plan to reopen November 2023



Our Children's Homes(Continued)

Acorns, Bexhill-on-Sea

- Continued to provide care for 2 young people, both of which have a high level of complex needs.
- Staff worked closely with colleagues in the Health, Education and Social Care around the care and pathway planning for each young person.
- Judged as 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted in May 2023.

The Bungalow, Eastbourne

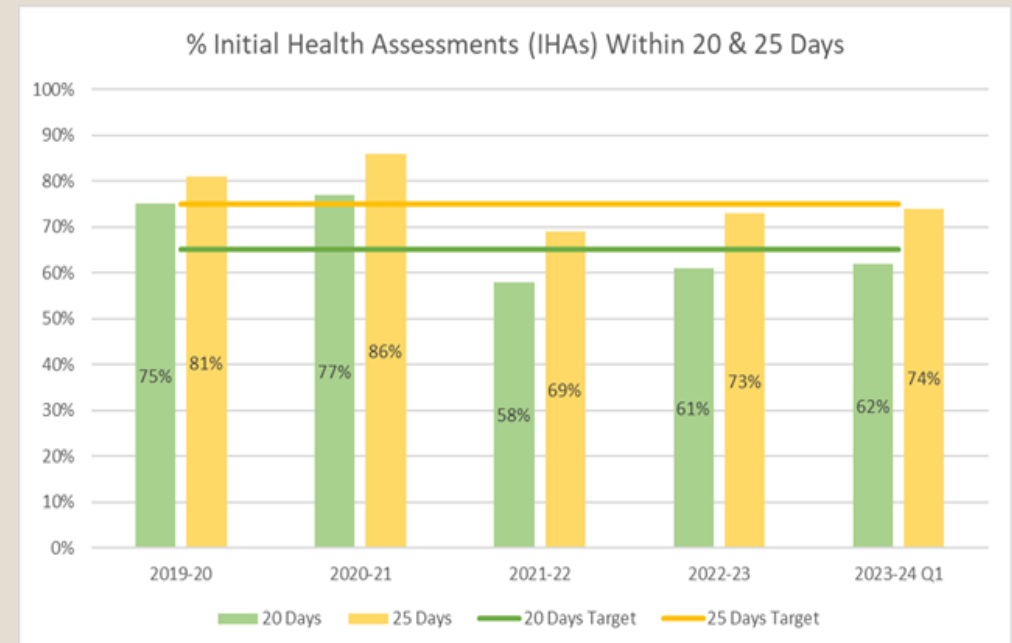
- Registered for 7 children aged 7-19 and provides full time accommodation to children with a severe level of disability who are unable to live in a family setting.
- During the period 2022-2023, most children attended local schools and all maintained contact with their families.
- The Bungalow received an Ofsted judgement of 'requires improvement ' in March and June 2023



The health of our children

NHS Core Plus 5 - LAC and Care Leavers have been identified, both nationally and locally, as a group who should be included in the 'plus' cohort to ensure their health needs are prioritised across all services.

- There was a gradual improvement in the timeliness of the completion of Initial Health Assessments (IHA's), albeit the performance remained below the local target.
- The Head of Locality Services implemented a robust tracking and monitoring process to improve performance, and this data was scrutinised at the quarterly Health Strategic Meetings.
- Obtaining written consent within timescales remained a significant challenge for the service. The dip in performance 2021-22 was directly attributable to the post Covid health guidance and a return to written consent.
- The changes to the LAC age profile also impacted on this performance with a higher number of older children declining IHA's.
- In addition, the national placement sufficiency challenges resulted in more children being placed outside East Sussex, and therefore that local health service were required to complete the IHA. This often led to delays too.

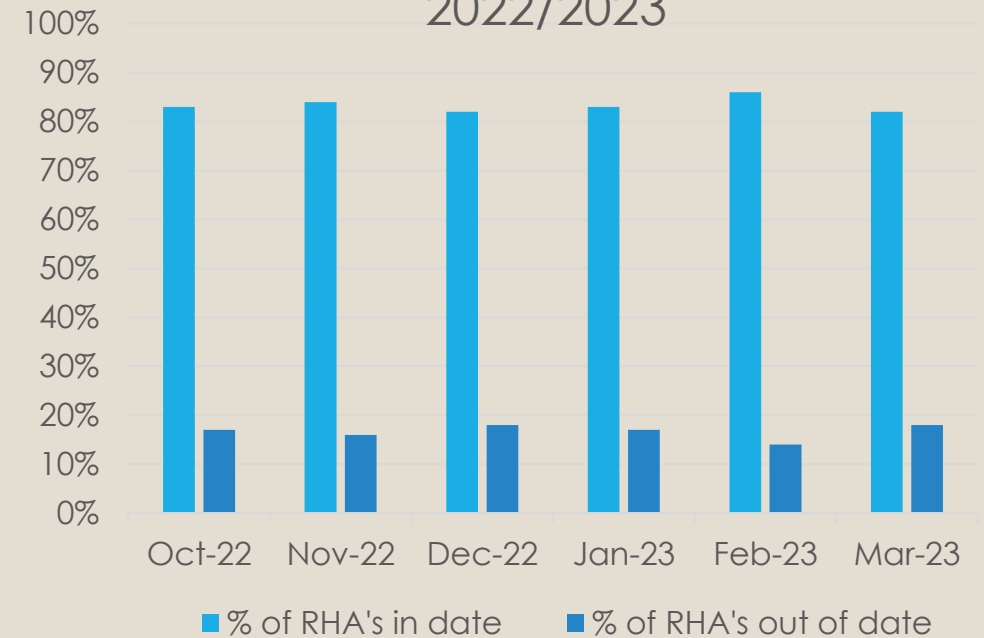


The health of our children (continued)

- Overall, the timely completion of Review Health Assessments (RHA's) was maintained between 80-90%. This performance was closely scrutinised by the Strategic Health Group and monitored on a monthly basis by the Head of Service LAC.
- However, the timely completion of RHA's in a small number of cases was impacted by the increased numbers of LAC, the number of children living in Other Local Authorities and the cohort of older children who declined taking part in an RHA.
- The Designated Nurse/ Doctor for LAC in Sussex recognised that the current system didn't offer enough flexibility for the older cohort of children and have proposed a more responsive system. There are plans to embed a caseload working approach which would facilitate longer term relationships between the young people and the health team. It is hoped that this will encourage young people to take up the offer of an RHA.

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Review Health Assessment Data
2022/2023



The mental and emotional wellbeing of our children

- The Sussex Children and Young Peoples' Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy 2022-2027 for Sussex Children and Young People up to the age of 25s was produced by the Sussex Health and Care Partnership last year and it set the direction of travel for the development of local services.
- The Looked After Children's Mental Health Service (LACMHS) offered; 35 consultations to the networks during 2022-23 this was down by 5 on the previous year, 68 drop ins which was down by 22 for 2021-22, and one Therapeutic Parenting Group each quarter either to foster carers or Residential Children's Home staff. The numbers of cases opened at any one time varied between 88 (Q2) and 78 (Q4).
- The specification for LACAMHS was jointly reviewed during 2022-23 between the provider (SPFT), the Strategic Commissioner and the LAC Service. The new specification addresses the review findings of: longer waiting times due to increasing demand due to children coming into care, Section 20 cases, and Section 31 return home assessments; more LAC presenting with significant risk of harm to themselves or others; crisis situations, urgent assessments and interventions for high risk; the number of placement breakdowns and associated support for children affected; and the level of need arising in RCH. It is due to be issued in 2022-23.
- The ongoing staffing recruitment challenges within SPFT for the Adopted Children's Mental Health Service (ADCAMHS) were not resolved during 2022-23, the service was not able to take on any clients during the year but did continue to support existing clients. Mental Health Support for this group of children and their families was largely provided by independently commissioned therapists funded by the Adoption Support Fund. A proposal which could enhance this commissioning is currently being explored with the SWIFT service.

The mental and emotional wellbeing of our children (continued)

- A specialist Mental Health Nurse was embedded within the Through Care Service to offer direct interventions to young people, and advice and guidance to their allocated workers.
- The Health and Wellbeing Project for Care Leavers was extended during 2022-23. Up until March 2023 277 personalised health budgets had been allocated to young people.
- SPFT appointed a Named Nurse for Looked after Children and Care Leavers in March 2022. The Named Nurse offers safeguarding consultation to LACAMHS and the wider SPFT services in East Sussex. During 2022-23 a total of 12 consultations, 4 of which were for LACMHS, were completed. In addition, they are available for ad hoc supervision / consultations.
- The Named Nurse completed a Quality Improvement project which focussed on improving performance data and training to increase SPFT staff awareness/knowledge regarding Looked after Children and Care Leavers. The training addressed core safeguarding issues in relation to adult specialist safeguarding and specialist children's safeguarding. Improvements in the data capture has assisted the day-to-day operational management, and it also enabled the service to identify Looked After Children requiring a transfer of care to adult mental health services or primary care.

Virtual School (VS)

- **Virtual Head extended duties** - The Virtual Head Teacher's strategic role to promote the educational outcomes for children with a Social Worker was extended for a further two years. The VS worked strategically with social care and education teams across the authority including attendance, inclusion and special education needs. The VS provided advice and information to social workers in teams across the Authority and worked with the Designated Safeguarding Leads Network within schools.
- **Post 16 Pupil Premium** - The 2021 pilot was developed to enhance the educational outcomes for young people aged 16+ and was extended for a further two years. The VS worked in partnership with post 16 providers to ensure a joined-up approach, improve educational planning, track attendance and develop provision for UASC. VS funded academic tutoring and coaching for individual young people.
- **Tuition** - 299 blocks of tuition in core subjects were provided to 53 children last academic year. 100% of all children and young people said their confidence against their targets had increased. 98% of the young people achieved at least one target and partially met the others.
- **English as an Additional Language (EALS)** - Tutors delivered 169 sessions of EALS additional language tuition through the year.
- **Training** - An extensive training programme was developed by the VS. This included Designated Teacher training, attachment training for schools, Personal Education Planning training and an Education Master Series for Social Workers. This Education Series was aimed at improving Social Workers understanding of the education system.
- **Alternative education provision** - VS funded and supported 65 Alternative Provision interventions for 43 young people who required a specific intervention to support skills for learning, wellbeing and engagement in preparation for a return to school.
- **Extra-curricular activities** - A range of activities were delivered throughout 2022-23 including a film making course, university schools and Glyndebourne performances. Children and young people were also funded to take part in new activities such as music lessons, horse care, horticulture and water sports.
- **Children In Care Awards** - Achievement awards were presented by Jacqueline Wilson as part of an event at Bedes School. 101 children and young people were nominated in the categories of educational achievement, positive contribution, personal achievement and skills and talents. Another 37 primary aged children were nominated for awards which were presented at a special event.

Education of our children - **Headline data**

All current data is provisional, and progress and attainment 8 data is not yet available for GCSEs.

- **Key Stage 1** data showed the percentage of ESCC LAC who reached the expected standard in Reading was in line with national and regional CLA results but writing and Maths levels were lower. There were no ESCC children working at greater depth.
- There was an improvement in the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in phonics from 33.3% last year to 50% this year. 22% of this cohort were given an EHCP since they sat the tests.
- **Key Stage 2** data showed significant improvement in reading. The percentage of children in care in East Sussex reaching expected standard or above in Reading in 2023 was **60.0%** compared with **44.4%** in 2022 (**+15.6%**). This was also higher than the percentage of looked after children in the South-East and nationally reaching expected standard in Reading.
- There was a small increase in writing from 35.7% in 2022 to 40% in 2023. This compares with CLA levels of 40% regionally and 47% nationally.
- The percentage of children reaching expected standard or above in Maths in 2023 was **40.0%** compared with 40.7% in 2022 (**-0.7%**). The South East figure for 2023 was 43% and the national figure 50%.
- The percentage of children in care to East Sussex achieving greater depth in Reading in 2023 was **25.0%** compared to **11.1%** in 2022 (**+13.9**). This was greater than the percentage of children in care in the South-East achieving greater depth which is 14.0% (+8%) and nationally (16%) and in line with all children at 27.6%
- Individual children made extremely good progress with progress scores of up to 22.6 in writing and 18.37 in reading.
- **Key Stage 4 Data** showed that the percentage of students achieving a 4 or higher in core subjects increased this year. 25% of students achieved a 4 or more in both English and Maths. This was a 3% increase from last year. 42% gained a 4 or higher in English or Maths which was 10% more than last year. 38.3% gained a level 4 and above in Maths and 27.7% in English. These figures were significantly higher than the pre COVID results from 2019.

Education of our children - Headline data (continued)

- The percentage of students achieving a grade of 5 or above in English and Maths reduced from 14% to 6%. This is disappointing but supports the view that many of our young people performed better in the adapted assessments that took place because of COVID. The percentage getting a 5 in English or Maths was however slightly better (21.3%) than last year. This was an improvement on the 2019 results.
 - There were some very pleasing individual achievements. 1 student achieved a level 6 in History and 5s in all other subjects. 1 student gained an 8 in Maths and another a 7 in biology. 2 students received distinctions in imedia BTEC. 1 student received a distinction in Hospitality and Catering with another a distinction in Level 1 Food and Cookery skills.
- Post 16** results enabled 5 Care Leavers to gain University places. 2 of these young people have however, decided to defer for a year.
- 1 student achieved a B in A-level Art and Photography. Another achieved a B in A-level photography and a distinction, which is equivalent to an A at A-level, in B-tech sport. 2 other young people passed the first year of a level three course and are staying on an additional year to complete the course.
- Many other post 16 young people also achieved level 1 and 2 qualifications which will enable them to progress onto other courses.
 - **Overall attendance** last year was 88.76% (June 2023). This is a 1.75% drop on last year. This should be compared with East Sussex data of 91.9% (June 2023 all children). Most of the absence was authorised and the main type selected was 'other'. This code is used when a child or young person is unable to attend because they have moved. Data compared to last year shows an increase in unauthorised absence. Of the unauthorised, some of this was holiday which schools had informally agreed but not authorised for exceptional reasons.
 - 70.30% of our children and young people had attendance of above 90%.
 - During this period the VS was involved in the development of a cross county policy which focused on improving attendance, one strand of which was to ensure that it was identified as a priority for all professionals supporting children.

The Through Care Team

What we have achieved in 2022-23

- Groupwork returned to 'in person' meetings during this period with a weekly meeting for lunch, careers advice and mental health support in Eastbourne and a fortnightly meeting in Hastings.
- Young people took part in a variety of consultation events, such as reviewing the Pathway Plan and Wellbeing pilot, some events took place in person and others remotely, thus ensuring wider accessibility and participation.
- The Care Leavers Council met each month remotely.
- Young people participated in Corporate Parenting Panel.
- A Facebook notice board was launched providing young people with information about upcoming events and useful links.
- Young people represented East Sussex at National Benchmarking events.
- Young people all 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.
- The updated Local Offer was published and shared with all young people ensuring they were aware of the support available to them.
- Developments continued to extend the wider corporate parenting role across all agencies in East Sussex and the multi-agency Care 2 Work Strategic meeting was re-established.
- The Health and Wellbeing Project continued to support young people to use personalised budgets for activities designed to improve their overall wellbeing. This initiative has received widespread acclaim nationally.

The Through Care Team

What we have achieved in 2022-23 (continued)

- Placement Support Workers (PSWs) continued to work closely with our young people who were isolated in their own accommodation or were struggling to maintain their placements.
- A Rent Guarantor pilot scheme was implemented to secure better quality private rental accommodation options for young people.
- Young people accessed the Life Long Links service, which promoted connections with family members and other significant adults in their lives.
- The (TCT) continued to work closely with East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care Specialist Accommodation Team ensuring a smoother transition for those Care Leavers with diagnosed mental health needs or trauma related diagnoses.
- The Skills Journal was developed in partnership with Young People and is due to be launched in 23/24
- The housing pathway was reviewed and the CSAAL launched.



Our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Developments 2022-23

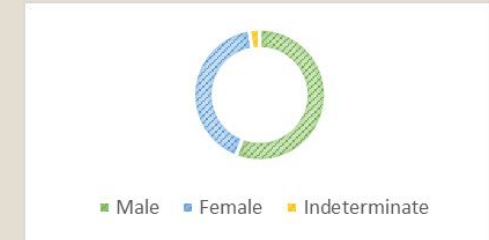
- Further investment was made to increase the capacity of the UASC team as it expanded to cover Ukrainian children.
- The establishment of adult asylum hotels across Eastbourne and Hastings by the Home Office (HO) placed considerable pressure on the service during this period. Over 60 referrals were received from people claiming that they had had their age incorrectly recorded at the point of entry and requesting support as children. 20 of these young people subsequently came into our care.
- The rising number of age assessments led to the development of a more streamlined service for managing and recording these referrals. The National Age Assessment Board also agreed to work in partnership ESCC to support with any outstanding age assessments. This will begin in September 2023
- The service worked closely with the South East Regional Group and the HO to pilot best practice by working directly with the social work teams at Kent Intake Unit to improve communication and information sharing.
- Young people's panels were developed to gather feedback regarding their support needs with issues such as cultural issues and life story work.

Our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (continued)

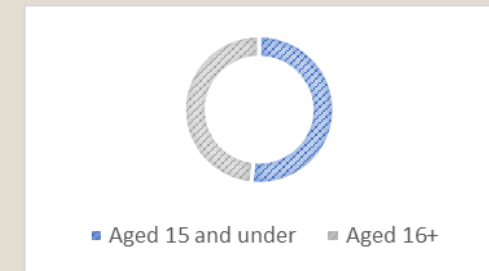
- The service continued to explore a range of new education offers for UASC including bringing a new provider into the area. The EALS (English as an additional language service) increased its offer of personalised tuition for this group of young people. Pupil Premium was established as a permanent offer to all our over 16 year olds.
- Joint work was undertaken with health colleagues to improve the health offer to UASC. The Initial Health Assessments were adapted to take account the specific issues for this cohort. The development of a greater understanding of the trauma and life experiences these young people had had was supported by the UASC team.
- This service worked closely with Adult Social Care in the development of a Migrant Help team, and has continued to support Unaccompanied Minors coming from Ukraine.
- Young people were supported to access additional social activities to improve their wellbeing in groups. This included cycling, rock climbing and water sports.
- The Refugee Council was commissioned to extend their offer to UASC including working with young people over the age of 18years.
- The 'Welcome to the UK' groups continued during this period, and further work was undertaken to develop a specific UASC Skills Journal to support independent living skills for these young people.

Our Children who went missing

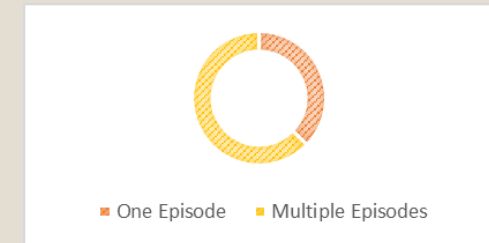
In 2022-23, 118 LAC went missing, of these, 66 were male, 49 were female and 3 were indeterminate



57 of the 118 missing LAC were aged 16 and over, while the other 61 were aged 15 and under



74 of the missing LAC went missing more than once



In 2022-23 there were 761 missing episodes throughout the year, 667 episodes of children being missing for less than 24 hours, 58 episodes of children being missing for between 24 to 48 hours, 30 episodes where children were missing between 2 and 4 days and 6 episodes where they were missing for 5 days or more.

All these children were tracked by Sussex Police and by Children Services staff. 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

- During 2022-23, 56 children were subject to ESCC MACE/SAFER operational oversight and therefore categorised as being at high risk of exploitation.
- 9 of these children were ESCC LAC, 1 was female and 8 were male.
- 1 of these children was deemed to be at risk of sexual exploitation and 8 deemed to be at risk of criminal exploitation.

Our children involved in the Youth Justice Service

- The Youth Justice Service (YJS) worked with 22 looked after children/young people during 2022-23. 6 of those children became LAC as a result of being securely remanded.
- Nine percent of the YJS caseload in 2022/23 were Looked After Children.
- LAC aged 10 - 17 represented less than 1% of the total population of this age group across the county, however they remained over-represented within the YJS cohort.

My Voice Matters (MVM)

Timeliness of My Voice Matters meetings

- 95% of all MVM were held early or on time in 2022/2023
- 2019/2020 - 92%
- 2020/2021 - 95%
- 2021/2022 - 97%
- 6 MVM meetings were held within 4 weeks of the scheduled date.
- Most late MVM's were delayed either in the child's best interests or because an essential party was unable to attend

Participation: children make their voices heard in lots of different ways

- 97% of Children aged 4+ participated in some way in their MVMs process
- 2019/2020 - 91%
- 2020/2021 - 95%
- 2021/2022 - 97%
- There was positive feedback about the development of IRO profiles, which were shared with Looked After Children. They noted that they liked knowing a little bit of personal information about their IRO.

The role of our elected members

The Corporate Parenting Panel met virtually three times during 2022-23 to discuss the agenda items set out below

29 April 2022

- Children in Care Council (CiCC) Annual Report - 2021 - 2022
- Developing the Corporate Parenting Panel
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Ofsted Inspection reports for Brodrick House
- Children's Home Regulations 2015, Regulation 44: Inspection reports for the following Children's Homes - Acorns at Dorset Road, Brodrick House, Hazel Lodge, Homefield Cottage, Lansdowne Secure Unit and The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive, Silver Birches and The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive

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29 July 2022

- Ofsted Inspection reports for Brodrick House and The Bungalow
- Children's Home Regulations 2015, Regulation 44: Inspection reports for the following Children's Homes - Acorns at Dorset Road, Brodrick House, Hazel Lodge, Homefield Cottage, Lansdowne Secure
- Fostering Services Annual Progress Report 2021-22
- Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2021-22
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics

The role of our elected members (continued)

28 October 2022

- Quarterly Registered Children's Homes Report for the following Children's Homes - Brodrick House, Homefield Cottage, Hazel Lodge, Silver Birches, Lansdowne Secure Children's Home, Acorns and the Bungalow
- Ofsted Inspection reports for Silver Birches and Lansdowne Secure Children's Home
- Virtual School Annual Report
- Look After Children's (LAC) Annual Report
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Presentation on proposed new approach to Corporate Panel Parenting (CPP)
- National Review - Children with disabilities and complex health needs placed in residential settings - verbal report

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20 January 2023

- Quarterly Registered Children's Homes Report for the following Children's Homes - Brodrick House, Homefield Cottage, Hazel Lodge, Silver Birches, Lansdowne Secure Children's Home, Acorns and the Bungalow.
- Ofsted Inspection reports for Acorns, Hazel Lodge and Brodrick House
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Lansdowne Secure Unit-temporary closure and forward plan
- Placement Sufficiency-National Context
- East Sussex Sufficiency Strategy presentation
- Key priorities in relation to care and placements from our children and young people
- Foster Carers Association reflections on demand, current challenges and opportunities
- Discussion-Corporate Parenting Panel Response to Sufficiency Challenges and proposals

Sufficiency

- Sufficiency of all placement types continued to be very challenging during this period. A consequence of this was that there were occasions when children were placed in unregistered provision for short periods of time. These arrangements were subject to robust risk assessments and carefully monitored.
- A thorough analysis of the sufficiency issues experienced locally was undertaken during 2022-23 and a revised sufficiency strategy was produced. All recommendations were presented to Departmental Management Team (DMT)
- A specialist team of consultants (Impower) were engaged at the end of 2022-23 to assist with the development of sufficiency solutions.

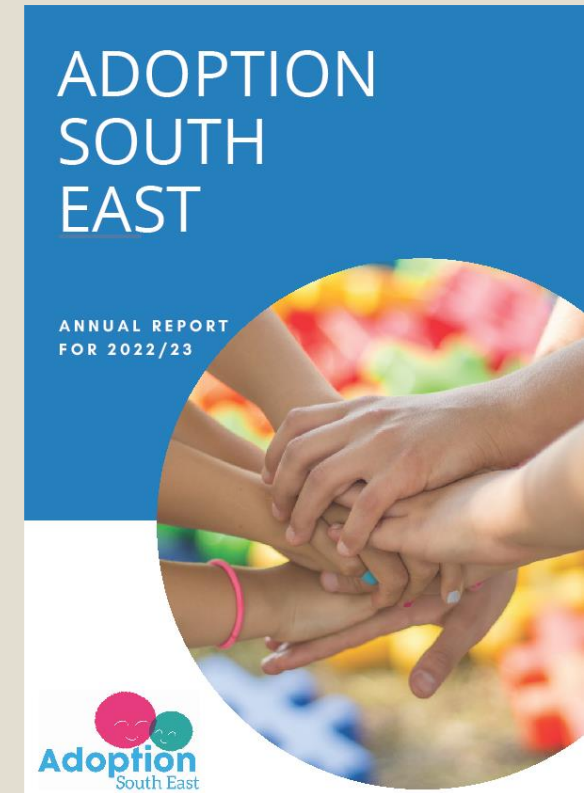
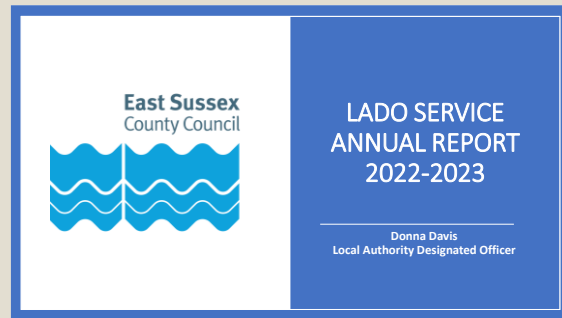
Priorities for 2022-23

- Delivery of revised sufficiency strategy.
- Consolidate changes made to Corporate Parenting Panel. Further develop and extend corporate parenting responsibilities across key partners.
- Continue to contribute to service developments in relation to emotional wellbeing and mental health of our looked after children including strengthening joint commissioning with the NHS
- Embed the Local Offer for our Care Leavers across whole Council and key partners responsible for corporate parenting.
- Further develop and focus on meeting the identity needs of our children, young people and their families.

Priorities for 2022-23 (continued)

- Develop ambitious programme to enable our children and Care Leavers to maintain safe relationships within their networks and promote Life Long Links for all.
- In partnership with ASE, promote best practice in relation to early permanence, keeping in touch and post adoption support. Improved performance in relation to timeliness for children with a plan for adoption.
- Reopen Lansdowne Secure Childrens Home
- Launch reunification programme to promote the safe return home for LAC
- Launch revised Life Story Work Pilot
- Contribute to ESCC's implementation of the Care Review

Children's Services Annual Reports 2022-23



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Report to: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of meeting: 17 October 2023

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Children in Care Council (CiCC) Annual Report – 1 April 2022 - 28 February 2023

Purpose: To update the Panel on the work of the Children in Care Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended note the annual report.

1 Background information

1.1 The Children in Care Council (CiCC) was established in 2008. The CiCC membership currently comprises of 12 young people.

2 Supporting information

2.1 The Annual Report attached as Appendix 1 sets out the work of the CiCC between 1 April 2022 and 28 February 2023.

3. Recommendation

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

ALISON JEFFERY

Director of Children's Services

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

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the children in care council

ANNUAL REPORT

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1st April 2022 - 31st March 2023

ESCC Children in Care Council has been well established since 2008. The fifth CICC commenced on 29th June 2019. Due to Covid, they will serve for an extended 12 months until summer 2023.

Introduction

The Children in Care Council continues to meet monthly. Its members have stayed focussed and committed to their role throughout the past year, this ensures other young people's voices have been heard. It is crucial that the views, wishes and feelings of cared for young people are considered in all that we do on their behalf in Children's Services. This keeps the work of the CICC prominent and as important as ever.

The CICC composition was reviewed and in the past year further recruitment has been made to ensure membership is as inclusive as possible. This will continue going forward ensuring proportionate representation from black and minority ethnic groups and the inclusion of young people with neurodiversity and additional needs are represented.

The following summary report outlines the areas of work the CICC have covered this year and my thanks go to the CICC members and CICC coordinator for all of their dedicated hard work.

Tracey Millen
Practice Manager
Fostering/CICC



CICC members visiting Silver Birches residential care home

What is the Children in Care Council (CICC)

The Children in Care Council is a group of cared for young people aged 12 - 18 all living in East Sussex. They are a representative voice for all children and young people looked after by East Sussex County Council. CICC members hold a key role in raising issues affecting children in care both locally and nationally.

The CICC is supported and managed by Placement Support, Children's Services.

Membership

CICC Membership strives to be as inclusive as it currently comprises of 16 young people (8 male and 7 female and 1 trans young person) aged 12 - 18. 6 young people are not Neurotypical and may have additional needs. 9 are White British, 1 is from a Traveller background, 3 are White/Asian, 1 is White/Black Caribbean, 1 is Black.

In addition, we have two members attending university who participate during holidays or virtually when possible.

Summary of CICC activity

April 1st 2022 - March 31st 2023

Participation

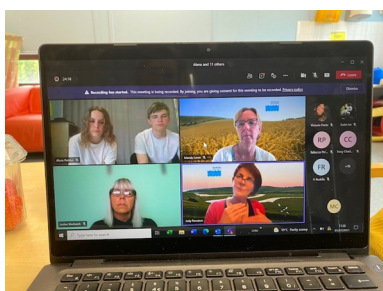
Participation this year has resumed to pre covid levels.

CICC staff deliver sessions and support with a nurturing approach, enabling the young people to feel valued, which in turn encourages long term commitment and participation. Communication, although this can be done via technology, it is primarily done by post, as members have expressed their preference for receiving their own mail.

This has been a positive year for CICC members and their role, their confidence has grown significantly and many of the senior members are taking on bigger roles, in advocating for the voices of cared for young people in East Sussex at a national level.

Solid friendships have been made and they have continued to support and socialise with each other outside of the meetings.

CICC's time together is very limited, the formal meetings are only once a month but without members continuing their CICC work outside of these meetings their voice would not have such a positive impact. They give up hours of their spare time to get their work done. This demonstrates passion and commitment to their role.



CICC members on a teams call with Virtual School



Our Care Rally - The Houses of Parliament



CYPT Conference

They have participated in **89** opportunities to promote their work to get the views of cared for children heard and promoted and have acted as representatives for CICC in a supportive or “expert by experience” role. (Appendix 1)

National Participation

It's our care.

7 CICC members along with 87 cared for young people from all over the UK, attended a day at Westminster to lobby Parliament about issues they feel are important. Our young people raised concerns around education and placement stability with one member having a one on one discussion with the education secretary at the time Nadhim Zahawi.



Independent care review

2 CICC members were invited to a zoom meeting with Josh McAlister and other care experienced young people, to discuss his recommendations from the independent care review. They raised questions about Josh's ideas for a national advocacy service and also how young people not meeting the threshold for CAMHS will be supported with their mental health needs.

APPG

CICC have resumed their post covid attendance at the national APPG (All Parliamentary Party Group) sessions. These meetings are made up from cross party parliamentarians and are aimed at promoting the voice of care experienced young people. These are usually themed, with siblings and mental health services covered this year. East Sussex will endeavour to raise at least one question on behalf of East Sussex.



SUSS it (Speak up Sessions)

A CICC member along with the Co-ordinator attended some of the 36 activities giving 66 young people the opportunity to speak out and speak up if they wanted to. It is through this engagement that young people have the opportunity to ask for help with individual issues. (*Appendix 2*)

As expected, issues involving technology have risen. The digital hive has been an excellent resource for helping and signposting young people with issues in their online lives. We expect technology to be a feature in the future, as it has been proven that a significant amount of issues that young people ask for help with, have a digital connection, because the digital world continues to become more embedded in young people's lives.

There has also been an increase in issues with education, the majority of these being requests for extra help. We expect this is due to students all still trying to catch up with their education after the pandemic.

There has also been an increase in general questions and signposting requests. These are often sent in through the CICC email address or can come from adults working with young people.

Digital Ambassadors

CICC members who are digital ambassadors have continued to participate in sessions run by the digital in care project, independently from their CICC role. They have been creating content for the successful digital hive website and have promoted resources for keeping cared for young people safe and resilient online. They have had the opportunity to work with the newest virtual reality technology and use 3D printers. This project will continue into 2023.

Corporate Parents and Senior Management Team

CICC members have met with members of the senior management team and corporate parents several times this year, building a better understanding for each other's roles. They are keen to continue this relationship going forward into 2023, with a new approach in how the voice of young people is heard within the corporate parenting panel.



CICC Members with the Lead Member for Children & Families - Cllr Bob Bowdler

University Masters Students

CICC members facilitated their annual two-hour face to face lecture at Brighton University with social workers undertaking their master's degree. They discussed their CICC role and showcased many of their projects. They delivered a quiz, as well as an interactive "separation and loss" exercise. The University fed back that the lecture was extremely powerful and thought-provoking for all post graduate students.

CICC Partnership working.

Pan Sussex

CICC members worked with the CICC from Brighton and Hove to co-produce an evaluation framework, for relationship based social work practice. This was hugely successful with both groups keen to collaborate again.

Youth Cabinet

Working alongside other youth voice groups is something CICC value. They have made positive links over the years with Youth Cabinet, SEND ambassadors and other youth voice groups within East Sussex. This has brought opportunities for exciting collaborative work, as well as increasing confidence in public speaking and interpersonal skills such as communication and negotiation. They have worked together to discuss council budgets (RPPR) and are currently reviewing new tender submissions for the YES (Youth Employment Service) provision.

Children and Young People's Trust

CICC supported a refresh of the East Sussex children and young people's plan and its priorities at the annual trust event. This was attended by several youth voice groups as well as adult decision makers. The plan's priorities were discussed further, which enabled links to be developed between decision makers and young people to influence change.

Foundations for our Future.

Promoting positive mental health and the lack of appropriate support is high on the CICC's priorities. 6 members have undertaken responsibility for representing cared for children, in a consultation project for mental health and wellbeing run by NHS Sussex, Priority 1-54 and ESCC. They have so far consulted and given their views on social prescribing and accessing mental health services offered for young people.

Training, Accreditation and Volunteering

Volunteering

All CICC members have received certificates for the volunteering hours they have completed this year for their CICC role and work in their local communities. The average hours spent volunteering over the past year is **102**, which is amazing.



Funding

CICC have secured an extra **£707.88** in extra funding this year from the HAF and COMF Government scheme. This was used for 2 enriching team building activities - tenpin bowling and Roller Skating during the summer holidays.

Further funding applications of **£330** were successful for life guarding training and online food hygiene courses, for cared for young people to enhance their CV's. - Thank you to ESFCA for their kind generosity.

CICC Participation (Appendix 1)

DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF ACTIVITY

10 x Full Meetings
 2 x Targeted Meetings
 4 x Smaller Group Meetings
 26 x Individual Support
 12 x Junior Suss it
 12 x Senior Suss it
 12 x Inter Suss it
 1 x APPG Meeting
 1 x Our Care - national rally
 1 x Skills to foster session
 1 x Award ceremony
 1 x Junior award ceremony
 1 x session with through care group
 1 x HOS Interview panel
 1 x University lecture
 1 x LAC nurse consult
 3 x new members
 2 x foundations for future Meetings
 6 x Digital in care sessions
 2 x Buddy sessions
 1 x ANV National Survey
 1 x NHS Survey
 1 x Health watch survey
 2 x digital safety surveys
 1 x Independent care review survey
 1 x meeting to feedback on independent care review recommendations to Josh MacAllister
 1 x IRO consult
 1 x CYPT annual conference
 2 x Lansdowne Secure unit interviews
 4 x NQSW interviews
 4 x ESCC Interviews
 5 x Food Hygiene training
 1 x 3 Month Summer Placement
 2 x Meetings with Cllr Bowdler Lead Member for Children & Families
 2 x Meeting with Ade Sewell Operations Manager
 3 x Meetings with Tracey Millen Practice Manager
 2 x Meetings with Alison Jeffery - DCS
 2 x Visits to Silver Birches residential home
 1 x Celebration trip to Theatre
 1 x recruitment ESSCP
 1 x RPPR Session
 1 x YES tender review
 2 x connected practice co production sessions.
 1 x Meeting with Police Service
 1 x survey for Childrens commissioner's office website feedback

SUSS IT (Appendix 2)

Issues raised with CICC 48

Theme

Social Worker	2
Contact	8
Placement / Respite	5
Other	6
Education / Employment	13
Digital	8
Mental Health	3
National Insurance	3
Signposting	2
Social workers not responding	2

You Said - We Did

You Said	We Did
<i>CICC or other cared for young people</i>	<i>CICC or teams within ESCC</i>
You wanted your key messages for social workers to be heard and refreshed within the teams.	A CICC member attended a SW team meeting to discuss these and other CICC work.
The waiting list for CICC was so long and you have asked several times when you would be able to join.	We held 2 taster days for some young people on the waiting list to have the opportunity to try CICC work. 3 male members were recruited from this.
National Insurance numbers are still taking too long to arrive and are preventing you from starting work.	You raised this concern with Alison Jeffery Director for Children's Services and members of the corporate parenting panel.
It is important young people have an involvement in training adults who work with you.	CICC facilitated a lecture at Brighton University with Students doing their social work master's degree. CICC continue to participate in interview panels for staff recruitment within ESCC.
<i>You Said</i> <i>CICC or other cared for young people</i>	<i>We Did</i> <i>CICC or teams within ESCC</i>
You are keen to rebuild broken links made with other CICC's and youth voice groups before the pandemic.	Joint sessions have been held with the new youth cabinet and other youth voice groups to discuss issues such as mental health for

	<p>young people and the East Sussex children's plan.</p> <p>CICC has renewed membership for Sussex clubs for young people, A National Voice and Become to broaden opportunities for networking locally and nationally.</p>
You wanted to improve links with young people living in residential care.	<p>Some of CICC attended the official opening of Silver Birches residential home to find out about residential care living.</p> <p>All of the CICC visited Silver Birches to find out about residential care and are keen to set up regular meetings once it is open.</p> <p>One young person living in residential care joined CICC and has attended a meeting. We will continue to support attendance from young people living in residential care whenever possible.</p>
You wanted a CV to apply for part time work.	<p>You had a one-to-one support session in which a CV was written and printed for you.</p> <p>This has been used as a template for many other young people to access this year.</p>
Some young people did not want to change social workers when they reach 16.	You raised this with IRO's and put your cases forward. This was accepted and two young people were able to keep their social workers.
You felt that young people do not always accept they need mental health support when it is offered but realise this when they have declined the help and then it is too late. Therefore, more money must be allocated for MH support.	You highlighted this to Josh MacAllister.
You feel that young person friendly information is needed to help encourage cared for young people to attend their MVM (my voice matters) meetings.	You met with Dawn Price safeguarding operations manager to discuss developing a film explaining the new MVM process in a young person friendly way.
<p>You Said</p> <p><i>CICC or other cared for young people</i></p>	<p>We Did</p> <p><i>CICC or teams within ESCC</i></p>
Some young people who are no longer in foster care got in touch to ask to be part of CICC.	They were put in touch with the participation worker for leaving care who has offered participation opportunities for older young people.

The rucksack project should continue into 2023	We still have sufficient funding to ensure this will continue throughout 2023
Many young people do not have CV's that they are confident about, and this can affect getting part time work.	We secured 15 online Food Hygiene certificates and advertised these in the 2023 newsletter. These can be incorporated in your CV'S.
You want to ensure all children cared for by East Sussex know about CICC and can contact you if needed. You are also keen to reinforce positive messages and share experiences.	A newsletter was produced in early 2023 and posted to all card for young people age 8+ including those who are placed out of county and in agency placements.
That too many young people were reporting meetings are being held in school time and that this was a broken pledge promise.	You raised this with the IRO team, SMT and the Virtual School. Designated teachers will be reminded about this and statistics for this are being reviewed.
You felt many young people feel that the changes to the My Voice Matters meetings are in name only and there is not enough information explaining the difference between MVM and the old LAC Review process.	<p>You told the participation worker for the IRO team your views and ideas to improve attendance at MVM meetings. There will be stronger links going forward between CICC and IRO's to improve participation.</p> <p>A new IRO link has been identified and will be introduced in May 2023.</p>
You said you wanted more control in decisions made about your medical appointments.	<p>We met with a LAC Nurse and you to discuss your views on medical appts and annual health reviews.</p> <p>You filled out a survey commissioned by CIC specialist nurses about this.</p>
You said you did not like the name LACCAMHS and also that the service doesn't help those who are not in crisis but need help urgently.	You met with Rhian Taylor from LAC CAMHS and fed back all of your views and ideas. This will be taken back and form part of the service review for CAMHS.
You are keen to ensure there is good quality MH Support for YP as well as wanting to promote talking about mental health and wellbeing.	Several members have joined foundations for our future (ffof) - a group of young people working together in partnership with NHS and Priority 1-54 to campaign for this.
You Said <i>CICC or other cared for young people.</i>	We Did <i>CICC or teams within ESCC</i>
You are concerned that there is not enough MH provision for those YP who do not meet the threshold for CAMHS but need support.	<p>You raised this with Alison Jeffery DCS and members of the corporate parenting board.</p> <p>You raised this with Josh MacAllister during a teams call</p>

	<p>You raised this during FFOF meetings</p> <p>You raised this with LACCAMHS</p>
There are many issues that siblings face when living in care.	<p>You raised this at the APPG (national all parliamentary party group).</p> <p>Nicola McGeown has suggested we could hold a possible webinar about this.</p>
That adults do not always get it right when it comes to understanding your digital lives.	You are part of the digital in care ambassador project working on keeping YP in care resilient online. This will eventually include training for adults working with YP
You are keen to contribute to National Policy and the Government agenda.	We took 8 members of the CICC to Westminster to lobby during the 'its our care' day in which you mt with other CICC's and spoke up to Government ministers about your views
You say that adults still continue to do things that make you feel awkward about being in care.	You wrote an article for the virtual school newsletter, which will be shared internally explaining some of the 'little' things that adults could change which would help this.
CICC were concerned for potential increases in mental health issues following COVID.	CICC raised this at RPPR and asked how the Council are ensuring that young people with mental health difficulties are well supported.
CICC wonder how the council help support those not accessing education or training especially if the drop out of school.	CICC raised this at RPPR and asked how the Council are working to ensure that young people have access to training, activities, and employment opportunities.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report, highlighting the continued essential work of the CICC.

Meshelle Carmody.



CICC Group



CICC collaboration - Connected Practice

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Report to: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date: 17 October 2023

By: Director of Children's Services

Title of report: Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2022/2023

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.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

1 Background information

1.1 The Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (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 IRO Annual Report for April 2022 – March 2023 is attached as Appendix 1.

3 Recommendation

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

ALISON JEFFERY
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Dawn Price
Tel. No: 01323 466606
Dawn.price@eastsussex.gov.uk

Local Members:
All

Background documentation:
None

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Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2022/2023

Dawn Price Operations Manager

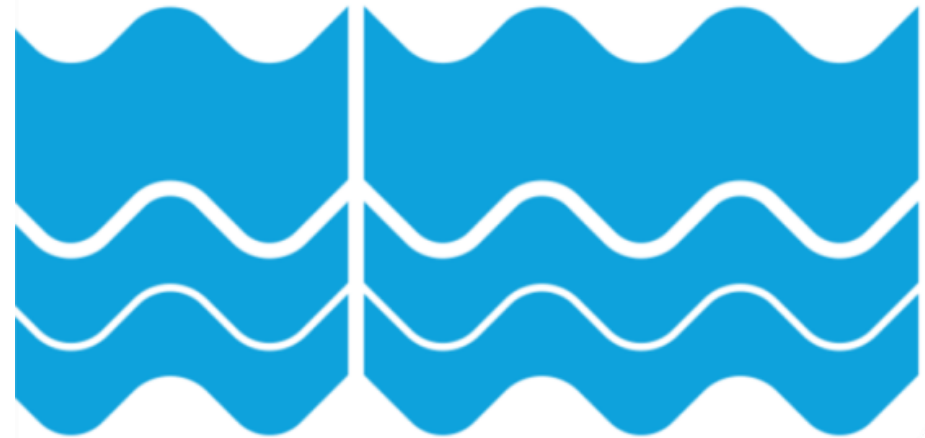
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The Annual IRO report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to IRO Services in East Sussex as required by statutory guidance.

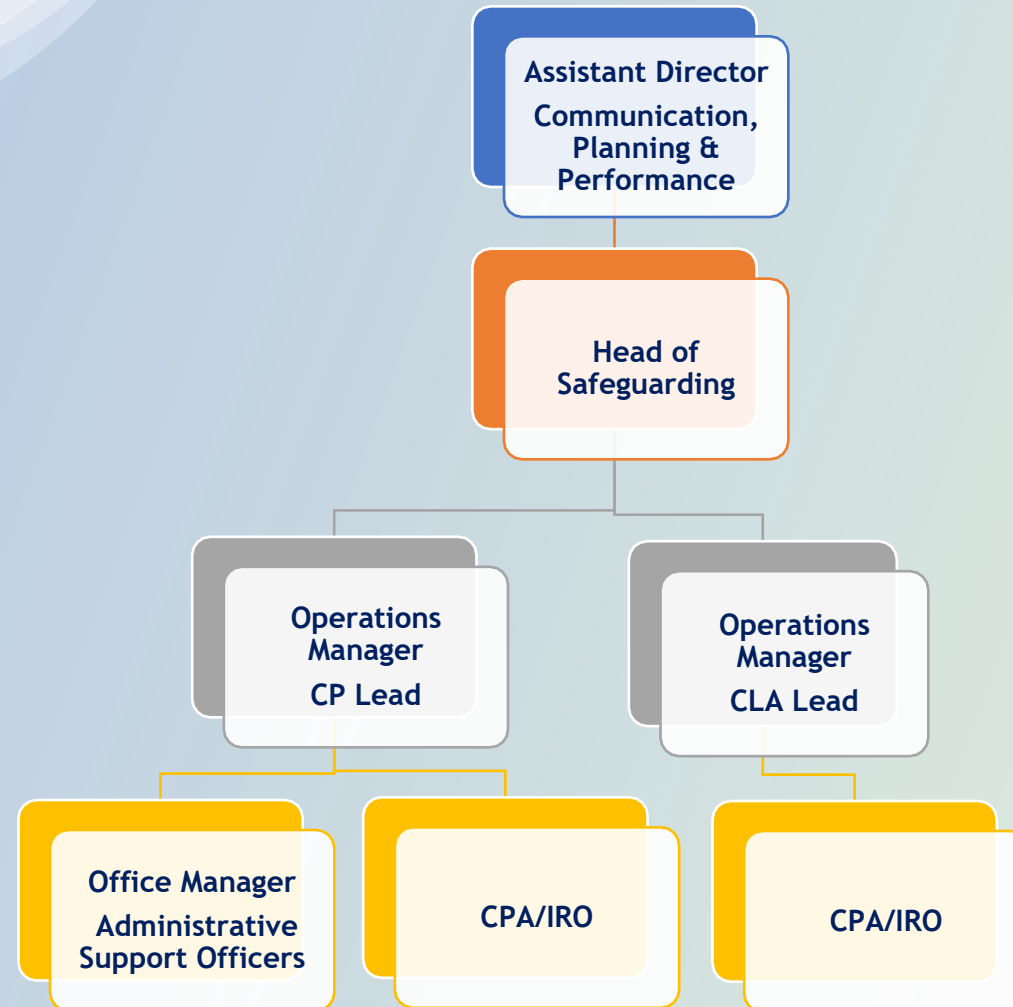
The IRO Annual Report must be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Please see Glossary for definitions

East Sussex
County Council



Children's Safeguarding Unit: Reviewing Service

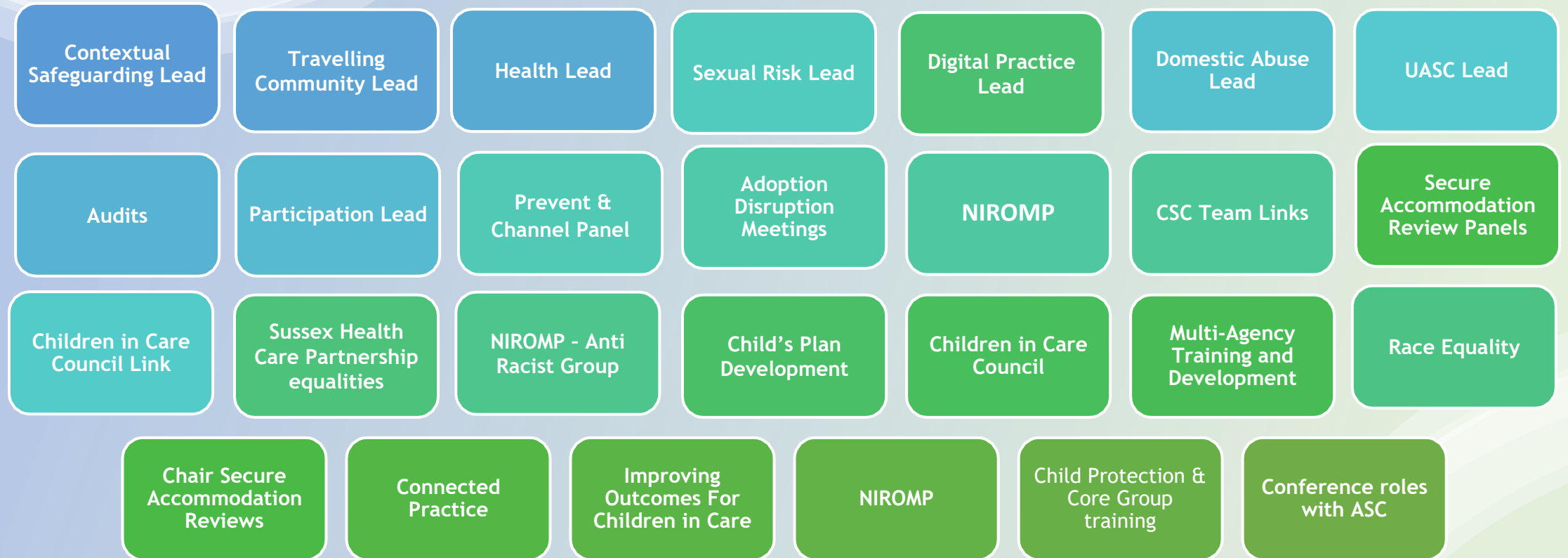


Profile of the Child Protection Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers

- 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.
- We are a diverse staff group who bring a wealth of personal and professional skills, along with experience to the role of chairing.
- IROs chair My Voice Matters Meetings; the statutory Looked After Children review meetings. 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 and knowledge.
- In common with some OLAs most of the Chair's fulfill a dual role thereby ensuring they retain a better sense of the child's journey and holistic experience. Separate management streams ensure a focus on legislative / practice developments and quality assurance of each function.
- 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.

CPA & IRO additional roles

CPAs/IROs undertake a range of additional responsibilities including:



Operations Managers additional responsibilities



Dual role caseloads

- Chairs in the Safeguarding Unit hold a dual role; reviewing both Child Protection Plans and Care Plans. Chairing an average of 5 conferences or My Voice Matters meeting each week, alongside other duties.
- The Unit operates a caseload weighting system using a formula to calculate workload points. The formula recognises that whilst IROs have additional responsibilities for children looked after, Child Protection caseloads can be more dynamic, meetings and often involve multiple children involving a higher level of risk. Proficiency in both roles necessitates an advanced depth and breadth of professional knowledge.
- Whilst CPA caseloads are not set in legislation the government has set statutory good practice guidance of a caseload of 50 - 70 children per for full time equivalent IRO (The IRO Handbook DfE).
- An increase in Child Protection Conferences and Children becoming Looked After has led to higher caseloads in this review period.
- In this review period the team have on average held a caseload of 101 children, which averages at 86 workload points. The number of children on an average caseload remains higher than the IRO Handbook recommendations. Additional resources agreed in 2022/23 for increased staffing in 2023/2024

Role of the Independent Reviewing Officer

In its response to the care review, the DfE pledged to retain both the IRO role and that of regulation 44 visitors, it pledged to “review and strengthen” both roles.

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 performance by the local authority's of their functions in relations 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; and
- Perform any other function as prescribed in the regulations.

The primary task of the IRO is to ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs and that actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child.

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

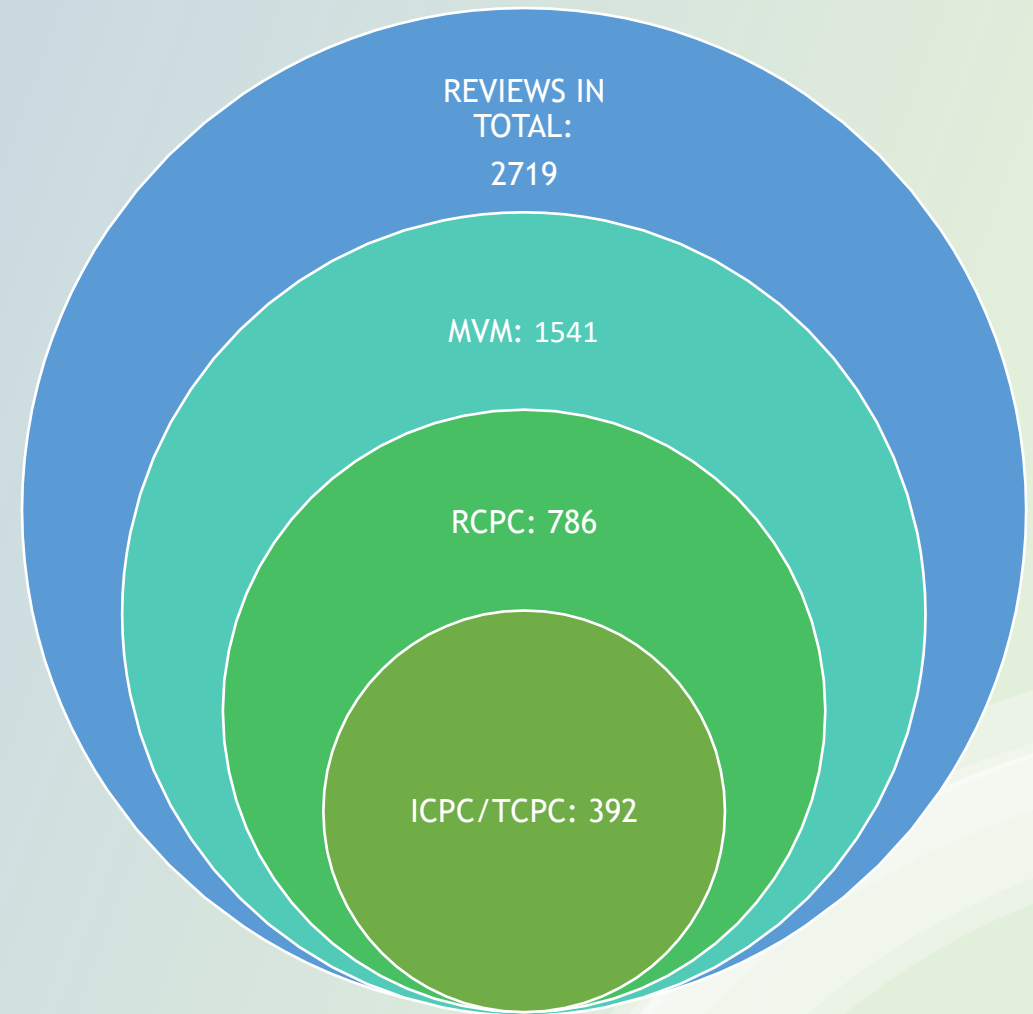
Provide care and support for children where there is evidence that they have suffered significant harm or are at immediate risk of significant harm and provide an alternative home for children who are unable to live with their parents or in their extended family.

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.

2020/21: reviews held 2698 (MVM - 1467. CP - 1231)
2021/22: reviews held 2621 (MVM - 1498. CP - 1123)
2022/23: reviews held 2719 (MVM - 1541. CP - 1178)

The service has chaired:
1178 Conferences involving 2385 Child's Plans
1541 individual My Voice Matters Meetings
Equating to on average 202 meetings/conferences per Chair

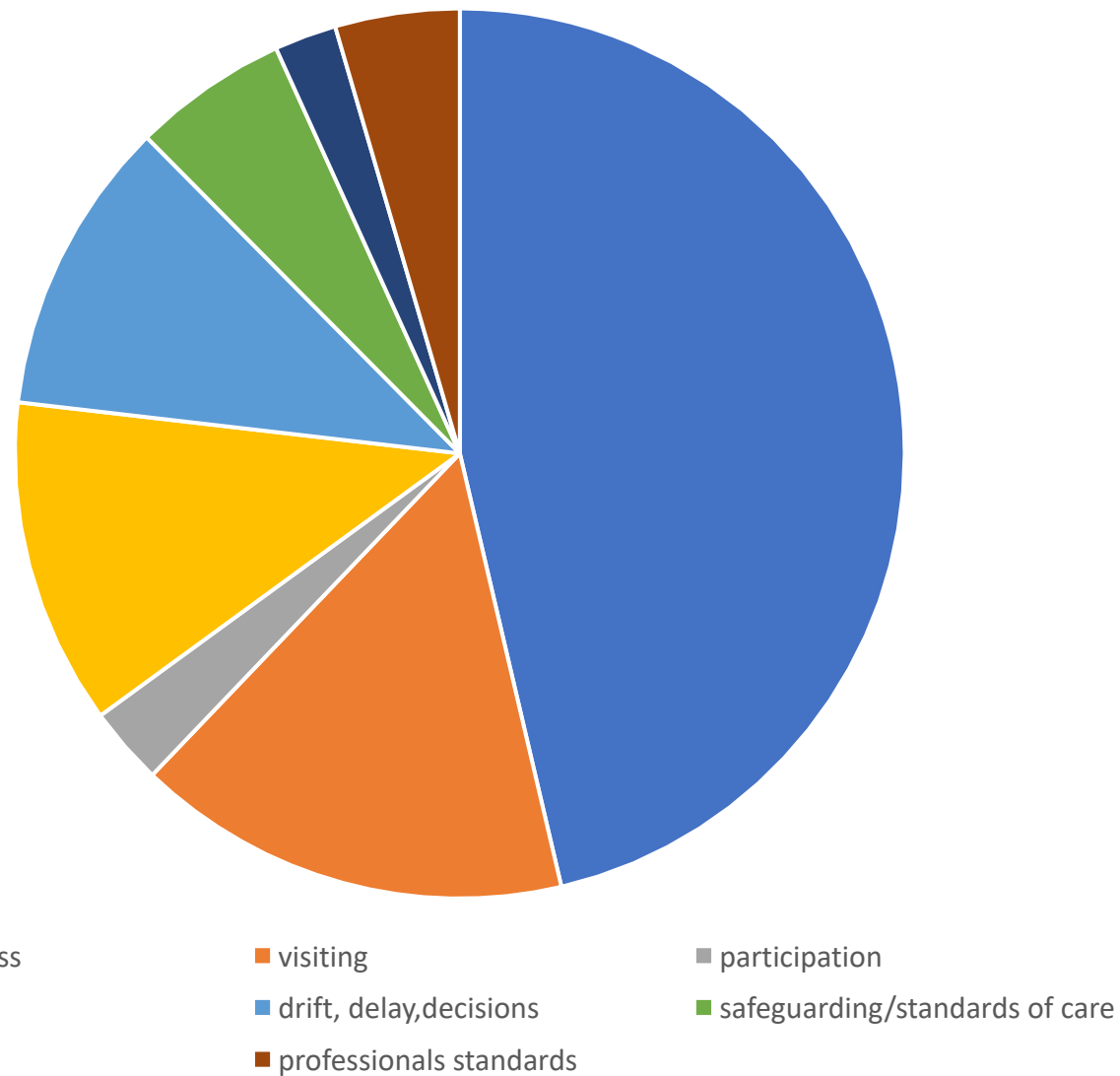


Issues Resolution

- Quality Assurance Monitoring and evidence of independent challenge via a locally agreed dispute resolution process is a statutory requirement of both the CPA and IRO function. The Safeguarding Unit operates a consistent process across the CPA/IRO service
- It is important that there is evidence of effective challenge by CPAs/IROs on a child's file.
- In this review period 118 Issues Resolutions were raised by the CPAs & IROs.
- 86% of the Issues Resolutions were resolved within 20 working days. To resolved the Practice Manager needs to reply and note the action that will be taken, and the CPA/IRO needs to agree the action is sufficient. When the Issues Resolution is about historic events, for example visiting the IR is closed when the PM agrees to review, address any concerns and monitor.
- 8% Issues Resolutions were escalated to the Operations Manager before being resolved, this includes sibling groups who share the issue being raised.
- No Issues Resolutions were escalated beyond Operation Manager level.

Issues Resolution

Raised by CPAs & IROs as part of the Quality Assurance role.



Consultation & Feedback: email & QR codes

The consultation and feedback forms for Child Protection Conferences and My Voice Matters meetings, have been in place for this review period. As a Unit we made the decision not to use these forms with children as they are able to access the Mind of My Own app either with their social worker or independently. We continue to work to increase the consultation and feedback, but the figures are a significant increase from previous years; since introducing digital options which include the use of the QR code.

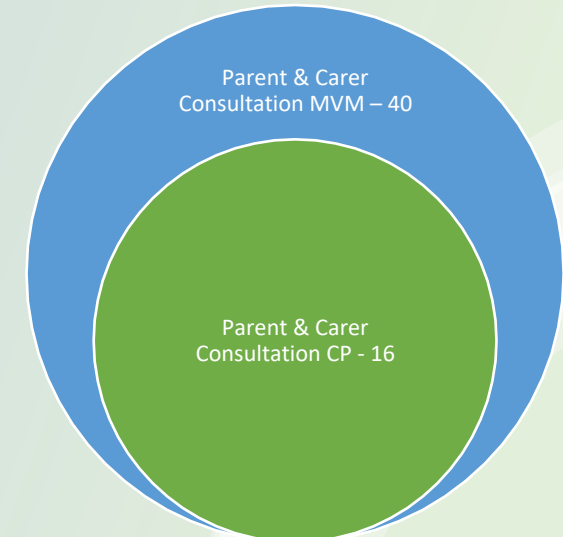
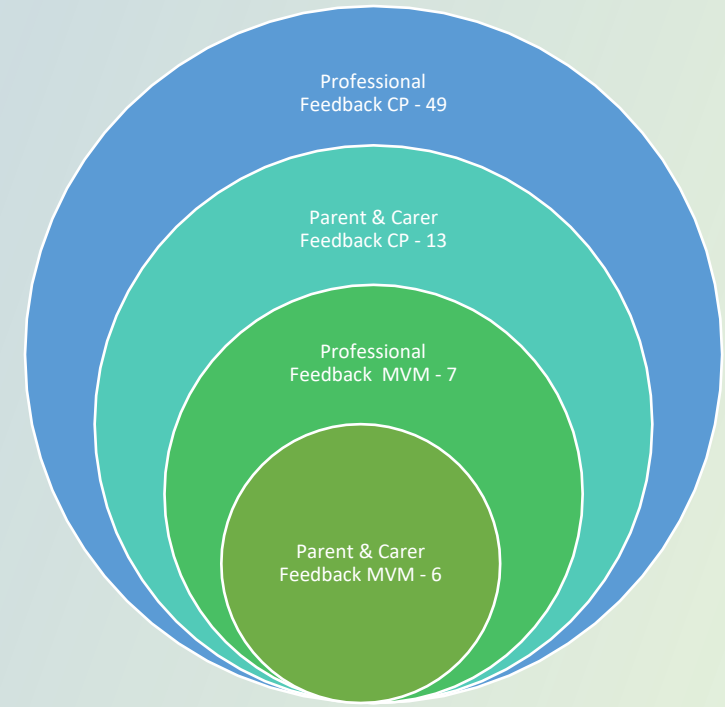
Mind of My Own:

The CPA/IROs encourage social workers to support children to use the app to gain their views prior to conferences and MVMs.

Children are using the app to prepare for their MVM meetings, used 102 times, with the conference app being used 10 times.

70% of children use the app with their social worker.

The My Life and This is Me app have been used 133 times, this holds key information that can be used by chairs to support positive engagement with children.



Knowing our Looked After Children

At the end of March 2023 ESCC was looking after 661 children, equivalent to 65 per 10,000.

This was an increase on the previous years:

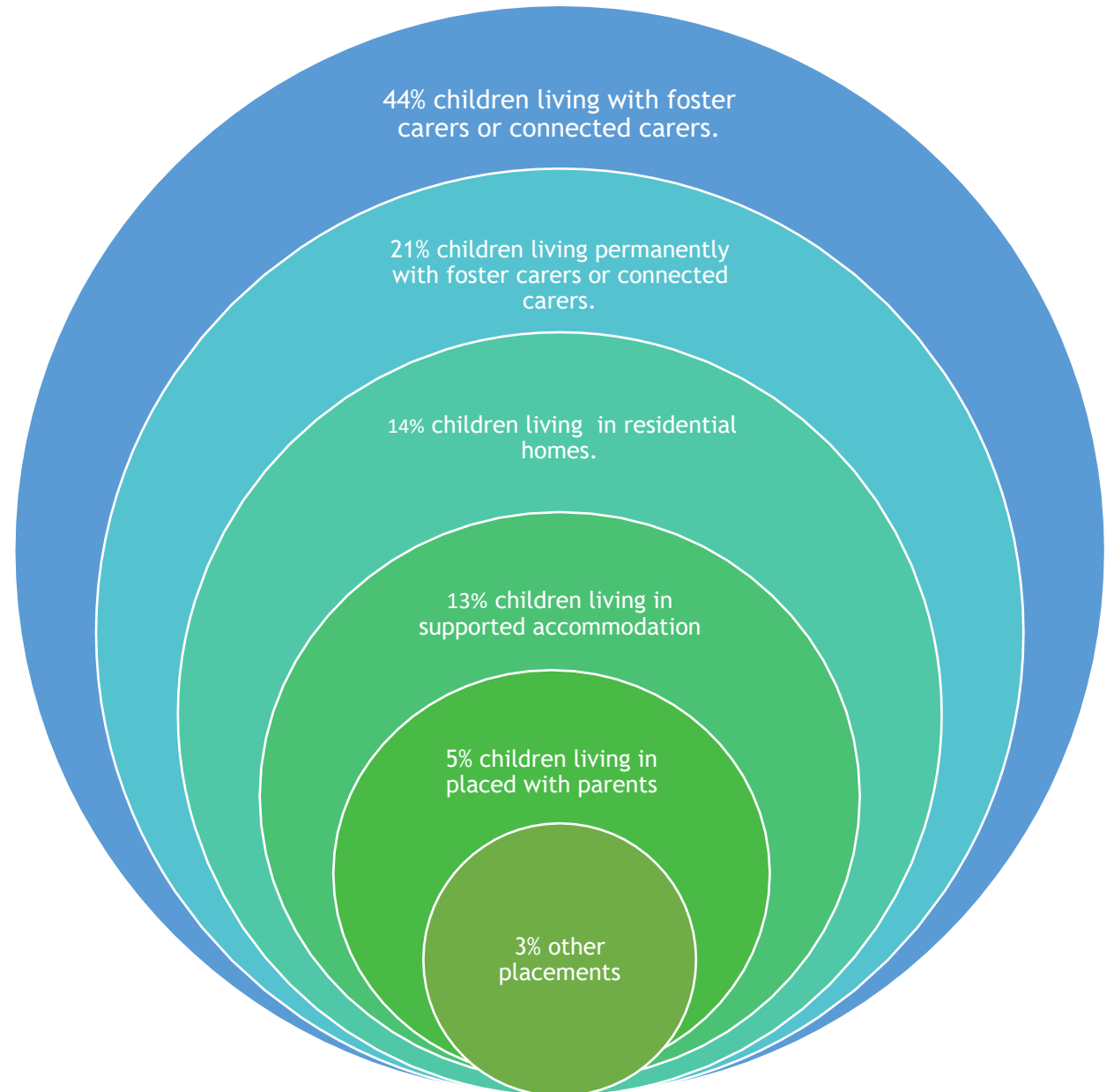
end of March 2020 - 592
end of March 2021 - 611
end of March 2022 - 623

12 children who are held in the children with disabilities service were also looked after.

57% of our looked after children were male.

69% of our children lived in a family settings at end of March 2023.

End of March 2022 73% of our children lived in family settings.



Knowing our Looked After Children

22% of placements for children Looked After by ESCC were out of County in 2022/2023.

68% 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 our Statistical Neighbour group* (66%)

IROs particularly scrutinise those plans where children have had a series of moves or where their placement appears fragile.

ESCC continues to promote children having long term relationships with the same IRO and ensuring that brothers and sisters have the same IRO where appropriate.

March 2020: 62% same placement for at least 2yrs (under 16yrs)

March 2021: 64% same placement for at least 2yrs (under 16yrs)

March 2022: 73% same placement for at least 2yrs (under 16yrs)

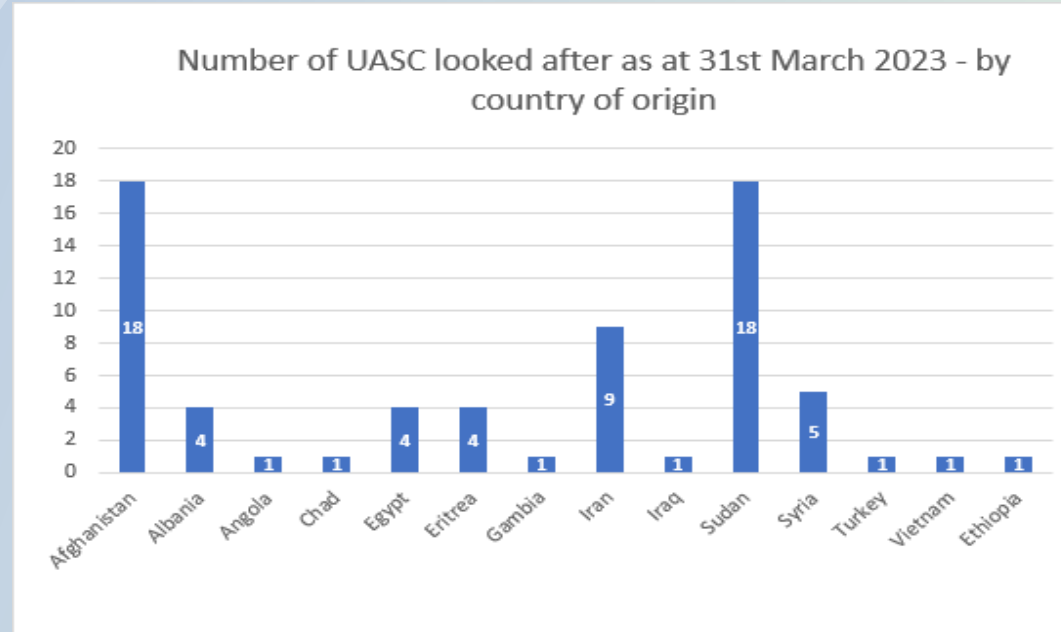
In November 2022 there was an unusual increase of children admitted to care; 40 children becoming looked after compared with average monthly figures of between 15-23 children. This led to an increase in demand for placements and 1st MVM meetings.

End of March 2023 ESCC were looking after 69 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

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UASC	Age at Mar23	Count of CHILD
	12	1
	14	2
	15	6
	16	23
	17	37



As per published DfE figures there were:

End March 2022 - 59 UASC

End March 2021 - 56 UASC

- For UASC coming in to care during 22/23, 24 were aged 17 (9 of these were at least 17½)
- UASC represent 38.3% of all ethnic minority children looked after as at 31st March 2023
- 9% of UASC end March are aged less than 16
- 96% of UASC end March are male

Ethnicity of the children looked after population.

(31st March 2023)

27.2% of our looked after children identify as minority ethnic or mixed heritage - this includes our UASC

Ethnicity	Count of CHILD
African	26
Any other Asian background	6
Any other Black background	2
Any other ethnic group	43
Any other mixed background	34
Any other White background	21
Caribbean	3
Gypsy / Roma	16
Pakistani	1
Traveller of Irish Heritage	2
White and Asian	5
White and Black African	8
White and Black Caribbean	13
White British	481

My Voice Matters Meetings

Timeliness of My Voice Matters meetings:

95% of all My Voice Matters Meetings were held early or on time in 2022/2023.

2019/2020 - 92%

2020/2021 - 95%

2021/2022 - 97%

6 MVM meetings were held within 4 weeks of the scheduled date. Most late reviews were delayed in the child's best interests or because an essential party was unable to attend.

Participation: children make their voices heard in lots of different ways:

97% of Children aged 4+ participated in some way in their review process;

2019/2020 - 91%

2020/2021 - 95%

2021/2022 - 97%

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

This is the ESCC approach to statutory LAC Reviews.

Paperwork is written to be accessible to the individual child. The records outcome is written as a letter to the child and copied to adult as necessary.

Outcome letters to children support their understanding in making sense of their experiences

Next year around January time, a Judge (Wise Owl) and a jury (a group of grown ups specially chosen) are going to hear all the information about the injuries you had when you were a baby. They will then decide whether they think that daddy caused these or not. This is called a trial. Your Social Worker has now made an application for criminal injuries on your behalf because of the injuries you suffered. Any money awarded to you will be kept in a trust fund until you are an adult. (3yrs)

BW gave an update on where things are with your Asylum claim. You are at the early stages and your first interview with your solicitor is scheduled to explain the Asylum process. RW also confirmed that you have received your ARC and that you can now open a bank account and start saving money yourself. You shared you are a practising Muslim and have everything you need in order to practise your faith. You also confirmed that you have spoken with your family back home in Afghanistan and they're OK and they know you are safe. (16yrs)

We heard that you have not seen or spoken to your mum for quite a long time as she has been needing to try and get help for herself. You have had some video calls with your dad. We spoke about how important it is for you to have time with mum and dad and for this to be a positive experience for you. There are worries that this has not always been the case with your mum and dad and we agreed some things to try and make sure this happens in future. (6yrs)

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We are all really pleased how things have gone over the last six months. Your confidence has increased, which has enabled you to attend things like the FS programme and we had great feedback from the staff too. It's really positive you taken on the role of peer mentor in school. It's an important job for sure, and I think you're very good at it too. (15yrs)

It was fun to see you today, we had an enjoyable time talking about Harry Potter and you gave me a very good quizzing of my knowledge - I thought I knew a lot about HP but you know even more! I really liked some of the questions you asked that went behind the thoughts and motivations of the characters, such as what certain characters would do in different situations, very creative and insightful. You were really good at staying the whole way through the meeting, and sometimes you covered yourself with a blanket and nodded, nudged me, or put your thumbs up to keep communicating - what a clever idea, you are getting so good at finding different ways to manage how you are feeling. You have a good relationship with your fostering family, particularly MW and you told me today that you trusted and love MW, MW said she trusts and loves you too. (13yrs)

Thank-you for helping me in the meeting by asking questions and using the finger puppets I gave you to help you be so actively involved, you were a star. I was so pleased to hear how well you are doing at school and that you are doing fantastically with your spellings and reading. You do lots of fantastic things like going for walks to the park, swimming and you recently went to Bewl water and to Bodiam Castle for an Easter Egg hunt. You said love watching films and you still love Elsa and Lion King. (7yrs)

You are a keen cricketer and JS is going to see if he can secure some funds for some cricket kit for you. EW also shared that you are a polite, respectful, fun-loving young person and great to be around. We talked about Ramadan and how you and some other boys will be sharing shopping, cooking, and eating together for the sunset breaking of fast. (17yrs)

Thanks so much for making us all so welcome. Thank you for talking through your feelings and views for your meeting that you had recorded via the App. It was good to hear you have so many good things in your life including talking about you having an amazing family, friends and teachers at school. You are very busy as usual with all your clubs and activities. We heard that you continue to do well at school, working hard on your learning and individual targets. Well done! We ended your meeting with you performing an amazing song for us. It was very special; you are so talented and it's a real joy to hear your music. Thank you so much! (10yrs)

Children's voices and achievements are captured in their outcome letters

Children,
Carers,
Parents &
Social Workers
share that
MVM meetings
and outcome
letters are
child focused
& meaningful

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“After you left, both K and FC said how much they liked the review with you. K said you were very kind and easy to talk to and they both felt they got a lot from the review.”

“It was a breath of fresh air seeing you on the floor with KP and writing your notes in that way. I have to say, it was the most child focused and inclusive review I have experienced. I am very pleased to have you on board.”

“I just wanted to drop you a line to say what a lovely MVM Review that was. Meeting new people can be a big thing for SC, but I could see how relaxed she was with your approach. What a pleasure it is to have you as the IRO.”

“Great letter, I can see DP having a little laugh about big foot whilst reading that. He feels able to ask JC to call you or me and set up a meeting and most of all; you do all the jobs he asks you to do for his MVM Meeting.”

2I went to see JS yesterday and was able to have some time with the carer, she said how impressed she was with you and described you as the best IRO she has worked with. Your breadth of knowledge came through and she just thought you were amazing.”

“Good news to report H stayed over at mum’s last night! Spoke to him this morning and he was beaming he’s like a different kid. I asked him if he enjoyed attending the meetings and being able to have a voice and he said he did. He said that when it was a split decision and you asked him to score about how he felt and then agreed with the plan that he wanted, that he felt really good (empowered) as he felt like he counted. He has asked to attend every meeting.”

“I would also like to thank you for making me feel at ease for the duration of the review.”

“You have a lovely nice and warm approach with the young people, it is lovely.”

Children in Care Council shared feedback with IRO link.

- Most of the CiCC agreed that they get a choice of where to hold their MVM meeting.
- Some of them shared that at times they had felt 'pushed' into agreeing who should come to the MVM meeting.
- They all agreed it was important to be asked about their MVM meetings; and then their wishes to be put into practice
- They said that they liked having in person meetings again.
- They like it when snacks are available at the MVM meetings.
- They said that short and less formal MVM meetings are better.
- They do not like it if they only come to part of their meeting, feeling that people are talking about them rather than with them.
- The group said they had not had the opportunity to chair their own MVM meetings, but they would like to.
- Most of the CiCC could name their IRO.
- There was mixed feelings about speaking/seeing their IRO outside of the MVM meeting.
- None of the CiCC had used an advocate for their last few MVM meetings.
- They had mixed feelings about using the Mind of My Own app; they questioned if the responses were read or used.

The points raised by CiCC will be shared with IROs and SWs to continue to improve the MVM meetings. The link will review with CiCC if they have seen an improvement in the points made.

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)

Increase the use of Midway Reviews:	IROs are reporting higher use of midway reviews. They are now being used for CP Plans too and CPA/IROs receive an alert to complete the review.
Utilise the Issues Resolution reporting system to identify themes, establish a mechanism for feedback to CSC managers:	There had been a significant delay in creating the data dashboard, this is now in place and the next phase will be sharing the information with CSC manager. The themes are included in this report.
Monthly QA audits of MVM letters & Midway Reviews, include timeliness and content:	This has been achieved, 3 CPA/IRO audited each month.
Embed and support the refreshed QA framework:	This has been achieved and CPA/IRO are part of the monthly audits. OM offered to visit all social work teams and as part of the visit share the QA part of the IRO role. Work has begun to outline a QA guidance sheet for pre-meeting reports and care plans.
Promote the Health Lead Link:	The health lead link has built good relationships with the health teams. The link updates the SGU on relevant health issues and can be available for discussions or advice to IROs.
Build a robust referral pathways for UASC under National Transfer Scheme:	This has been achieved and is in place in LCS to ensure that timescales are adhered to.
Increase the numbers of children supported by the Advocacy Service in the MVM process:	This review period the advocacy service worked with 77 looked after children; including 5 UASC. They supported several children to share their views about placement moves. The advocacy service, Asphaleia was awarded the contract in August 2021; this year 2022-2023 being their 1 st year of reporting. The data they provide shows a slight increase in the numbers of children looked after being supported in their MVM meetings; Jan-March 2022 - 7 children, Jan-March 2023 - 8 children. It remains a priority that IROs promote the use of an advocate, the details of the service are including the in the IRO information leaflet sent to all children looked after.

Progress on 2022-2023 service priorities

Implementation and promotion of the revised child protection plan process:	plans for CPAs to led on the training & promote in link meetings with SW teams.
Embedding the use of mid-way CP reviews:	review the percentage being completed and assess impact on the length of CP Plans.
Further develop service user feedback and voice of the child including the use of Mind of My Own, use of the parental contribution tools and promote advocacy:	plan to highlight in unit meetings, continued member in the steering group for MOMO, update the invites to encourage parental contributions.
Embed the Safeguarding Unit's quality assurance role:	plan continued attendance in unit meetings and quarterly themed audits.
Reviews to have a focus on school attendance, EHE and children missing education:	plan to ensure all chairs keep this items on their agenda and to raise concerns as appropriate. Audit within this review period.
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Identify looked after children where safe reunification with a family member could be a possibility:	reviewing care plans & contact plans, requesting appropriate FGC, being mindful from proceedings about parents who may have capacity to change outside of the court/child's timescales.
Promotion of life story work:	plan to have unit members in the steering group and promote in link meetings to raise awareness.

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
 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
 LCS - Liquid logic Children's Service (IT system)
 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