

1 Looked after Children Trend Data

1.1 On 31 March 2016 there were 544 Looked After Children (LAC) in ESCC; this represents a reduction of 4 children (0.7%) as compared to 2014/15 and a rate of 51.7 per 10,000 population. This is below the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) expected rate (a measure in terms of population profiles and deprivation levels) of 56.6 and the 2015 England average of 60.

1.2 There is a strong link between rates of LAC and the rate of children subject to Child Protection (CP) Plans. The rate of children subject to CP plans has shown a marginal reduction from 44.5 per 10,000 in 2014-15 to 44.2 in 2015/16. This is still higher than the IDACI expected rate of 40.7. All IDACI data is based on national Children in Need (CIN) and LAC data for 2015, as the 2016 data is not yet available.

1.3 The LAC data only ever gives a snapshot of the children moving in and out of the system at a fixed date each month/year and considerable activity sits beneath it. The data is referred to as 'churn'. This cohort of children will come in and out of the system within the year, or some may come in and stay whilst others leave. Behind this group sits the cohort of children who are stable for at least one year. It has been calculated that there is a churn figure of 185 for 2015/16 which, added to the total number of LAC, equates to the service working with 729 children. This shows that the service worked with more children overall during the course of 2015/2016, and that the churn rate was higher than for the previous year (179 2014/15, 185 2015/16).

1.4 There was a significant increase in admissions to care from 159 in 2014/15 to 190 during 2015/16, and there were some interesting changes to the trends for each age group. The number of 0 – 5 year olds admitted to care increased during this period from 77 in 2014/15 to 94 in 2015/16, but there was a reduction in admissions of 6 -12 year olds from 48 in 2014/15 to 43 in 2015/16, and an increase in admissions of children aged 13+ from 34 in 2014/15 to 53 in 2015/16.

1.5 At year end in 2015/16 there was an overall increase in the number of LAC discharged from care, 191 from 185 in 2014/15. The number of 0 - 12 year olds discharged from care has fallen slightly from 121 in 2014/15 to 117 in 2015/16. This was made up of 88 0-5years olds and 29 6-12 year olds. There was a further increase in the 13+ age group from 64 discharged in 2014/15 to 74 in 2015/16.

1.6 These data together show a picture of an overall increase in the numbers of LAC worked with during the course of the year. There was a high level of activity with the cohort of 0-5 year olds given the increased admissions and discharges. This is reflective of timely social work to protect children, with 56 children becoming subject to Adoption, Special Guardianship or Residence Orders and 32 returning to their birth family at discharge. The 5-12 year old cohort showed marginally fewer admissions to care, and significantly fewer discharges, producing a net increase over the course of the year. This is reflective of ESCC's permanence policy in that when children become looked after they tend to remain in permanent placements. The 13+ cohort showed both higher numbers of admissions and discharges, and this relates primarily to relatively small increases of children in a range of categories: children remanded to care, unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and a number of complex, chaotic children often subject to CSE risks. The increased statutory activity both in relation to admission and discharge plans was particularly challenging given the reduced social work workforce.

1.7 In terms of UASC, at year end ESCC was caring for 17 children, mainly male and over 16. With an additional 11 having ongoing support needs as care leavers.

These young people have usually arrived in a clandestine way via Newhaven or been found elsewhere in East Sussex. During 2016-17 we have also assumed responsibility for 4 children placed by Kent within East Sussex and for a further 5 placed with ESCC via the national dispersal scheme. A number of young people have disappeared from care placements before age assessments can be completed to determine whether they are indeed children.

1.8 The end of year snapshot data showing LAC placements were as follows (2015 figures in brackets):-

with foster carers	440	(433)
of these: in house carers	313	(305)
kinship carers	37	(34)
agency carers	90	(94)
placed for adoption	31	(43)
in supported lodgings	7	(6)
in ESCC children's homes	18	(21)
in agency children's homes	26	(21)
in agency special schools	1	(5)
placed with own parents	16	(11)
youth custody/secure unit	5	(5)
Hospital/NHS establishment	0	(0)

2. Fostering

2.1 As at 31st March 2016 there were 440 LAC living with foster carers. Of these, 350 were living with ESCC approved foster carers and 90 with agency carers. This represented a decrease of 4% of LAC in agency placements compared to the previous year. In addition to the 350 LAC placed with in-house foster carers, 32 children were living with Special Guardians who were previously ESCC foster carers. In effect the service was supporting 400 children in family placements against 386 in 2014/15.

2.2 The number of foster carers approved in 2015/16 was 26 households offering 44 placements, a marked reduction from 2014/15 where 41 households were approved offering 62 placements. This downturn is reflective of a national trend across all fostering agencies be they Local Authority, Independent, or Voluntary sector. There were generally fewer households applying to become foster carers and those who were already approved were reporting that they were being asked to care for more traumatised children with increasingly complex behaviours. This in turn, resulted in carers feeling very stretched and exhausted. Fostering capacity reached saturation point in the South East and at times the placement team found the market unable to respond to the demand for fostering placements of any kind, even agency carers. During 2015/16 the in-house service suffered a loss of 24 foster carers largely for personal reasons and due to changes in circumstances. This represented 8% of the total in-house resource and although it was an increase from 2.3% in 2014/15, it continued to be below the national average of 12%. This trend will need to be carefully monitored, given the limited supply and reported exhaustion of carers.

2.3 Supported Lodgings carers provided a number of step-down placements for children from in-house residential and foster placements. There were 32 households providing 49 placements in 2015/16 for young people across the county. In addition, 16 new households were recruited, 9 were approved by year end, and a further 6 were still underway. Four of the supported lodgings providers were reapproved during the year with a dual registration (hybrid) this enabled them to offer more flexible care placements to younger more complex/challenging young people before they became 16.

Please see Annex 1 for full Fostering Service Annual Report 2015-16.

3. Physical and Mental Health

3.1 As anticipated in the 2014/15 LAC Annual Report, the performance of initial health assessments during 2015/16 remained poor due to the significant disruption to the service provided by East Sussex Healthcare Trust (ESHT) during 2014 and the performance measure being based on a rolling year. The proportion of initial health assessments completed on time, fell again from 53% in 2014/15 to 49% in 2015/16. However, 62% were completed in 21-24 days and 75% in 25-30 days. As of November 2014, Kent Health Care Trust (KHCT) was commissioned to deliver a fully integrated offer encompassing: initial health assessments, the designated doctor role, adoption medicals and medical services to both the Adoption and Permanence, and Fostering Panels. Delivery of the health care plans continued to be commissioned through ESHT via the LAC nursing team. Despite the performance issues with timeliness there was very positive feedback regarding the quality of the written health assessments and of the overall medical advice.

3.2 The LAC Mental Health Service (LACMHS) received 70 new referrals during the year 2015/16, all of which were accepted and an initial consultation offered. A number of children were also seen urgently due to the severity of the symptoms they presented such as suicidal thoughts and/or serious self-harm, depression or psychotic symptoms. In addition, there was also a cohort of LAC in receipt of on-going therapeutic support such as individual therapy, dyadic therapy (child and carer together), systemic therapy and/or consultation to the foster carer and network. At one point there were 99 LAC in receipt of this service. LACMHS also provided:

- Two Therapeutic Parenting Groups (working with the carers of 16 young people, their Social Workers and Supervising Social Workers)
- Weekly consultation to Homefield, Broderick, Hazel Lodge residential children homes
- Weekly consultation to the Care Leavers service
- Monthly 'drop in' surgeries to the Fostering Service and each of the three LAC teams
- Two Participation days for service users (children, young people and their carers)
- Mental health services commissioned by NHS England to Landsdowne Secure Unit, including sessions of a child and adolescent psychiatrist, a clinical psychologist, and mental health nurse.

3.3 The work of LACMHS was highly regarded by carers, professional staff and children alike. However, the increasing complexity of the LAC cohort and the demand for intensive on-going support to LAC and their networks resulted in increased waiting times for access to on-going therapeutic interventions. During 2016/17 consideration should be given to extending this service.

For a more detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis see Annex 6 LAC Mental Health Service Audit 2015 -16, LAC in Fostering and Residential.

4. Adoption and Permanence

4.1

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
1. Number of Children Adopted	16	44	57	43	45
2. Number of Adoption Matches (children)	41	53	50	56	32
3. Number of Permanent Fostering Matches (children)	26	10	10	7	10
4. Number of East Sussex Adoptive Matches (children)	28	44	40	33	26
5. Number of Consortium Adoptive Matches (children)	2	1	1	6	0
6. Number of Inter-Agency Matches (children):					
Permanence:	10	2	4	3	2
Adoption:	11	8	9	17	6
7. Number of Prospective Adopters Approved (households) *	21	39	44	50	41
8. Number of Permanent Carers Approved (households)	7	4	8	4	2
9. Number of Children Approved for Adoption up to 31 st March 2016	78	69	52	43	53
10. Number of children Approved for Permanence up to 31 st March 2016	33	17	24	26	14
11. Number of Approved Adopters waiting to be Matched	12	16	17	20	22
12. Number of Disruptions presented to Panel:					
Permanence:	1	1	1	0	0
Adoptions:	(during intros)				1

4.2 The number of children with a plan for adoption increased from 43 in 2014/15 to 53 in 2015/16. This scale of increase was not reflected nationally; indeed many Adoption Agencies reported that the number of approvals for adoption had significantly decreased in favour of Special Guardianship Orders. Locally however, the courts responded to a clear Government directive which suggested that adoption should continue to be promoted at the earliest opportunity as a realistic permanence option for young children. During 2015/16 28 children were matched with local adopters, with only 2 sibling pairs placed out of county giving a total of 32 children matched in the 12 month period. There was also a marked rise in the number of

sibling groups with complex permanence plans, some of which involved adoption for the younger children and permanent foster placement for the older children. Furthermore, the Adoption Scorecard issued by the Department for Education (DfE) evidenced that ESCC placed children for adoption more speedily than the national average, achieving placement in 223 days.

4.3 During 2015/16 the agency received 287 enquiries about adopting with ESCC and 81 requests were received for registration of interest forms. The conversion rate from enquiry to registration was 28%, which is a drop compared to 34% in 2014/15, however this still compares well with the Coram BAAF suggested national figures of around 10%. There was also a decrease in the number of adopter households approved from 50 in 2014/15 to 41 in 2015/16. In line with the national picture, there was an increasing mismatch between adopters wishes compared with the profile of children needing placement. Many of the children identified with a plan for adoption had experienced domestic violence, trauma and loss, and were likely to have ongoing and complex therapeutic, post adoption support needs. During this period it was enormously beneficial to apply to the Adoption Support Fund with an identified therapeutic support package for adopters and their families. East Sussex made 64 applications to the fund and received payment of £219,965.80. During 2015/16 the Government announced a commitment to maintain this fund until the end of this parliament.

4.4 The individually commissioned therapeutic support was complemented by the AdCAMHS service which offered dedicated therapy and consultation to adopters and their children throughout 2015/16. There has been a significant increase in demand for this service and despite being commissioned to work with 40 families, at year end there were 68 cases open to the service. In addition, the excellent links with the Virtual School provided adoptive families with support for educational and school-based issues, in order to promote the educational achievements of adopted children within East Sussex. The extensive support offered within East Sussex, both pre and post adoption enabled a significant number of older children with more complex needs to be placed for adoption who would otherwise have remained in fostering placements. The service has continued to be ambitious for this cohort and robust in family finding.

Please see attached Annex 2 for Adoption Service full Annual Report.

5. Residential Services

5.1 In October 2015 Lansdowne Secure Unit (LSU) was inspected and the home was judged to be "Good" overall. A further interim inspection during 2015/16 however was not carried out. It should be noted that the children placed in LSU continued to display violent and extreme self-harm and suicidal behaviours. This impacted significantly on the staff team in terms of increased levels of stress, absence and vacancy levels. During 2015/16 there was a significantly higher number of East Sussex LAC placed in LSU than in previous years. This was the result of a number of children in the group homes exhibiting high levels of risk taking behaviours particularly in relation to sexual exploitation, drug misuse, mental health issues and violence.

5.2 In April 2015, the DfE introduced revised Children Homes Regulations 2015 and new Quality Standards 2015. Simultaneously, Ofsted introduced a new framework for the inspection of children homes. From September 2015, 3 ESCC children's homes received an overall rating of "Requires Improvement" by Ofsted. A robust residential improvement plan was put in place and this, together with a challenging dialogue with Ofsted, resulted in these 3 group homes receiving "Improved Effectiveness" in the following interim inspections. This was the highest rating possible in an interim inspection. During 2015/16, a high proportion of young people with extremely

complex and challenging needs were placed in the 3 group homes. At times, these young people displayed risk taking behaviours which resulted in increased levels of physical and verbal abuse to both young people and staff. This in turn impacted on the service being able to maintain sufficient staffing levels in the homes due to either injury or stress. Vigorous efforts were made to recruit sufficient staff but it remained a challenge throughout the year. This was further compounded by Ofsted's expectations that all temporary and agency staff were required to have a QCF Level 3 qualification prior to being deployed. Additional management capacity was agreed and recruited to by year end to try and manage the service more robustly. Staff and managers worked closely with other professionals including colleagues from CAMHS, U19 Substance Misuse, Youth Offending Team, Missing People, WISE (What is Sexual Exploitation?), and the Virtual School.

6. Care Leavers Service

6.1 At the end of 2015/16, the service was working with 226 care leavers; 70 16 - 17 year olds and 156 18 - 24 year olds. A significant proportion of this cohort presented highly complex behaviours with a range of challenging safeguarding issues. In addition, the service piloted a 'through care' model whereby those younger LAC with complex challenging behaviours were referred to the service at an earlier stage with the aim of establishing a relationship with a care leaving specialist, to help plan a more seamless transition into independence. There had been some success with this model at year end, with a number of children who responded very well to the different approach and more empowering ethos. However, it was not formally evaluated at that point.

6.2. The Care2Work strategic multi agency board has implemented a range of developments designed to improve the skills of care leavers and to ensure a successful transition into education and employment. The action plan was reviewed in 2015/16 and it was noted that there had been a significant impact on this cohort of young people. The programme for 2016/17 will aim to consolidate and embed the good practice already established.

6.3 As of 31st March 2016 of LAC who were in continuous care for at least 12 months before sitting their GCSE examinations 89% of 16 – 17 year olds (year 12) were in education, training and employment (EET); 78% of 17 - 18 year olds (year 13) were EET. This cohort included care leavers who had significant learning disabilities and who were managed within the Transition Service. Of all eligible care leavers, 22% (24/107) were at University. This performance showed improvement in every measure.

6.4 The number and range of accommodation options for care leavers remained static during 2015/16. Particular emphasis was placed on encouraging care leavers to remain with their foster carers in "Staying Put" arrangements either in foster care or in Supported Lodgings. Supporting People providers continued to offer a range of Foyer type accommodation across the county – Newhaven, Eastbourne, Hastings and Hailsham. In addition, the partnership between the Care Leavers Service and YMCA Eastbourne, continued to support a 3 bedroom flat which is staffed at evenings and weekends. However, providing sufficient accommodation for the most chaotic and challenging young people continued to be problematic and on the 30th March 2016 there were 5 care leavers living in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, 3 were aged 16 - 17, and 2 were over 18 years old. Clearly this type of accommodation is unsuitable for care leavers. It is only used in emergency situations where the young person has completely exhausted all alternative accommodation options. Any decision to place a young person in emergency accommodation must be authorised by an Assistant Director and accompanied with a clear risk assessment. A wrap around package of support is identified and regularly reviewed whilst suitable

alternative accommodation is sought. Most young people are only in bed and breakfast for short periods.

7. Performance

7.1 The 2015/16 national data has not yet been published by the DfE, therefore this section does not benchmark the performance of ESCC against other local authorities and statistical neighbours. However, these data do show that good performance was at least maintained in most areas during 2015/16. There were some improvements in adoption timeliness, and notably in care leaver performance in relation to suitable accommodation and EET. But there was a dip in performance for NI63 (3 or more placement moves), nonetheless it remains below the national rate for 2014/15. The evidence in section 1, which demonstrated increased numbers of LAC worked with during the year did not impact on the overall rate of LAC which remained unchanged. Educational outcomes for LAC continued to improve overall, especially at KS4. Good progress was supported by additional home tuition funded through Pupil Premium. For overall performance of LAC educational outcomes in 2014 please see The Virtual School Annual Report 16th October 2015 Annex 4 and Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report in Annex 3.

The indicator value has improved/increased with a ↑ and where it has dipped with a ↓

Indicator Ref	Description	2015/16 Value	2014/15 Value	2014/15 Eng	2013/14 Value	2013/14 Eng	2012/13 Value	2012/13 Eng
NI 58	Emotional & Behavioural Health of children in care	13.4 ↑	15.4 ↓	13.9	15.1 ↓	13.9	14.3 ↑	14.0
Adoption Scorecard 1	Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted. (3 year average)	517 days ↑	520 days ↑	593 days	536 days ↑	628 days	538 days ↑	647 days
Adoption Scorecard 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)	223 days ↓	190 days ↑	223 days	199 days ↓	217 days	168 days ↑	210 days
Adoption Scorecard 3	% of children who wait less than 16 months between entering care & moving in with their adoptive family (3 year	59% ↑	57% ↑	47%	54% ↑	51%	53% ↓	49%

Indicator Ref	Description	2015/16 Value	2014/15 Value	2014/15 Eng	2013/14 Value	2013/14 Eng	2012/13 Value	2012/13 Eng
	average)							
NI62 Placements 1	Number of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year	10.8% ↓	9.7% ↓	10.0%	8.9% ↑	10.9%	12.4% ↓	11.3%
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	64.0% ↔	64.0% ↑	68.0%	57.4% ↓	66.5%	57.5% ↓	66.8%
Placements 3	% of LAC at 31 st March placed outside LA boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live	9.4% ↑	10.0% ↓	12.5%	8.7% ↑	12.2%	9.2% ↑	12.2%
Leaving Care 2 * see note below	% of former relevant young people aged 17-21 who were in education, employment or training	62.4% ↑	52.6% ↓	47.8%	55.0%	45.0%	n/a	n/a
Leaving Care 3	% of former relevant young people aged 17-21 who were in suitable accommodation	81.7% ↑	74.3% ↓	80.7%	85.3%	77.6%	n/a	n/a
Thrive PI 9	Rate of Children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18	51.7 ↔	51.7 ↑	60.0	54.5 ↑	60.0	57.3 ↑	59.8
PAF C19	Average of the % of children looked after who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months who had an annual assessment and their teeth checked by a dentist during	92.8% ↑	92.6% ↓	87.7%	93.5% ↑	86.4%	89.9% ↓	84.7%

Indicator Ref	Description	2015/16 Value	2014/15 Value	2014/15 Eng	2013/14 Value	2013/14 Eng	2012/13 Value	2012/13 Eng
	the previous 12 months.							
PAF C81	Final warnings, reprimands and convictions of lac	3.8% ↔	3.8% ↓	5.2%	1.8% ↑	5.6%	5.7% ↑	6.2%

** Leaving Care 2 Indicator – this is calculated using data collected at the time of each young person’s 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday.*

8. The Virtual School

8.1 The Virtual School for LAC maintained a core staffing establishment during 15/16, supporting the education of all East Sussex LAC, care leavers and adopted children wherever they were educated. The Pupil Premium enabled the school to enhance its provision to schools, carers, individual LAC and recruit a bank of specialist tutors. In addition, the Head of the Virtual School fostered excellent working relationships across the council and the local community which resulted in LAC being prioritised for a range of complementary services.

For further information on the work of the Virtual School see The Virtual School Annual Report (Annex 4)

9. LAC who are Missing from Care and who are at risk of Children’s Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

9.1 Progress continued to be made both on a strategic and operational level for all children missing and at risk of CSE. The Multi Agency Children’s Sexual Exploitation (MACSE) Action Plan 2015/16 demonstrated significant progress throughout the year in relation to the four strands of Prevent, Prepare, Protect and Pursue, and was reported regularly to the LSCB. MACSE operational practice guidance was developed for all staff and managers and took account of learning from local practice, audit and national research. It covered:

- Pathways for advice and referral
- Assessing risk
- Safety planning for children
- Understanding barriers to disclosure for children vulnerable to or experiencing CSE
- Identifying perpetrators
- Proactive use of legislation
- Additional vulnerabilities for Looked After Children
- Services and ongoing support for victims and their families (including witness support)

9.2 The development of the MACSE response within the Multi Agency Screening Hub (MASH) provided a clear and consistent pathway for all CSE referrals. It was further strengthened by the introduction of increased management capacity to chair all CSE strategy discussions, including those for Looked After Children.

9.3 Locally the Return Home Interview (RHI) service was commissioned from the national charity, Missing People. In April 2016 this was extended to incorporate all the Sussex authorities via a three year contract. The commissioning process and contract management was led by ESCC. Missing People provide quarterly reports

and the end of year report was scrutinised by the LSCB on the 28 April 2016. The primary focus was to capture all RHI data required for inspection and statutory returns. It is hoped that this will reduce the risks of our most vulnerable children by enabling strategies to be developed in a timely manner.

9.4 In 2015/16 there were 40 LAC with missing episodes, 16 of whom were missing more than once. There were also 18 LAC who were absent, not where they should be but we knew where they were, and 8 of these were absent more than once. In terms of periods of absence, there were 56 occasions when this cohort of LAC were missing for more than 24 hours, 39 times they were missing for more than 48 hours and 15 times they were missing for more than 5 days. They were all actively tracked by the Police and Children's Services staff. Risk assessments were reviewed on these high profile young people and safety plans put in place.

9.5 Of the 40 LAC who went missing, 19 were female and 21 male, and 18 were aged 16 and above. The data suggested that out of the total missing LAC cohort, 31 episodes were recorded where risk of sexual exploitation was a significant factor. For further information on the data see Annex 5, the Missing People Annual Report.

10. Inspections

10.1 The inspection outcomes for the residential homes during 2015/16 were as follows:

- Homefield: full inspection was judged as overall "Requires Improvement" 30/09/15. Interim inspection judged as "Improved Effectiveness" 27/01/16.
- Brodrick: full inspection was judged as overall "Requires Improvement" 14/10/15. Interim Inspection was judged as "Improved Effectiveness" 01/03/16.
- Hazel Lodge: full inspection was judged as overall "Requires Improvement" 09/09/15. Interim inspection judged as "Improved Effectiveness" 04/03/16.
- The Bungalow: full inspection was judged as overall "good" 03/012/15. Interim inspection was judged as "Improved Effectiveness" 24/03/16.
- Acorns: full inspection was judged as overall "good" 17/12/15. Interim inspection was judged as "Sustained Effectiveness" 23/03/16.
- Lansdowne Secure Unit: full inspection was judged as overall "Good" 06/10/15.

11. Corporate Parenting Panel

11.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel met quarterly during 2015/16 to scrutinise the performance of all services in relation to LAC and Care Leavers, paying particular attention to outcomes. It also received presentations from the CICC, from the East Sussex Foster Care Association and from the Adopted Families Group. The reports outlined below were presented and considered

April 2015:

- Annual progress report of the East Sussex Fostering Service
- Annual progress report of the East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service
- Looked After Children (LAC) Health Service Update
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Children's Home Regulations 1991, Regulation 33: Inspection reports for September, October and November 2014 for the following children's homes:
 - Acorns at Dorset Road
 - Brodrick House
 - Hazel Lodge
 - Homefield Cottage

- Lansdowne Secure Unit
- The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive

10 July 2015:

- THRIVE – end of programme review
- Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2014/15
- Children’s Home Regulations 1991, Regulation 33: Inspection reports for march and April 2015 for the following children’s homes:
 - Acorns at Dorset Road
 - Brodrick House
 - Hazel Lodge
 - Homefield Cottage
 - Lansdowne Secure Unit
 - The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Video presentation of the East Sussex County Council fostering recruitment advert

16 October 2015:

- Children in Care Council – presentation
- Children’s Home Regulations 1991, Regulation 33: Inspection reports for May, June and July 2015 for the following children’s homes:
 - Acorns at Dorset Road
 - Brodrick House
 - Hazel Lodge
 - Homefield Cottage
 - Lansdowne Secure Unit
 - The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Trafficked Children and Families with No Recourse to Public Funds
- Looked After Children Annual Report 2014-15
- The Virtual School Annual Report including the use of Pupil Premium
- East Sussex Foster Care Association Annual Report

29 January 2016:

- Ofsted Inspection reports for the following
 - Brodrick House
 - Hazel Lodge
 - Homefield Cottage
 - Lansdowne Secure Unit
- Children’s Home Regulations 1991, Regulation 33: Inspection reports for August, September, October and November 2015 for the following children’s homes:
 - Acorns at Dorset Road
 - Brodrick House
 - Hazel Lodge
 - Homefield Cottage
 - Lansdowne Secure Unit
 - The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Adopted Families Group
- Update for Unaccompanied Asylum seeking children

12. Conclusion

12.1 Overall the LAC service has performed consistently well during 2015/16, with continued emphasis on the safe reduction of the number of LAC in the system and on the delivery of efficiency savings following the end of both Thrive funding and of the Adoption Reform Grant. This was achieved whilst good outcomes for LAC and Care Leavers were also maintained.

12.2 The challenge for 2016/17 will be to continue to ensure that the right children are in the right placements for the right amount of time and that we secure the best outcomes possible within the available resources.

**Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service
1 April 2015– 31 March 2016**

1. Safeguarding

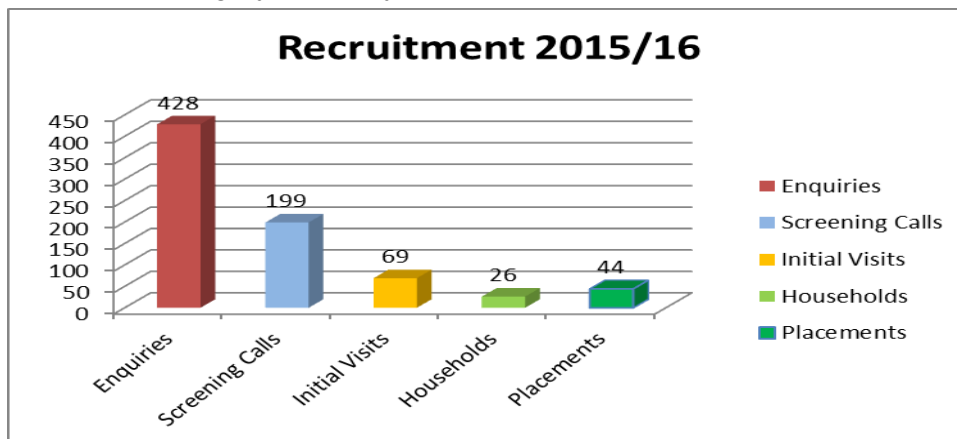
1.1 This outcome is fundamental to the delivery of fostering services across East Sussex and is embedded in each of the core functions: recruitment and retention; assessment, supervision and review; foster carer training; the matching and placing of children and young people with foster carers. These areas are addressed in more detail below.

2. Recruitment and Retention of Carers

2.1 2015 – 2016 proved to be a challenging year for fostering recruitment. The experiences of our immediate neighbours and Fostering Services nationally have also reflected that the recruitment of foster carers has been particularly challenging. While there appears to be no consistent rationale for this, a contributing factor is thought to be public awareness of historical allegations, highlighted in high profile prosecutions of abuse. In addition, the success of ESCC recruitment of foster carers over the last 2 or 3 years has, to some extent, exhausted the existing recruitment pool. This is evidenced in the poor quantity and quality of agency carers available in the East Sussex region. The age range of approval has also narrowed over the past year, with households being approved for sibling groups within a restrictive age range. Once foster carers have gained some experience, supervising social workers work with foster carers to extend their age range as they become more confident and skilled in managing the complex needs of many of our looked after children (LAC). The number of foster carers transferring from agencies still remains healthy, although many have been persuaded to remain with their own agencies by being offered huge financial incentives.

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

2.3 From 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016, 428 new enquiries were received which led to 199 screening calls and 69 initial visits to prospective foster carers. The recruitment strategy focused for the first part of the year on prioritising the recruitment of carers for older children. This resulted in very few enquiries. The strategy was then reviewed to include all age ranges. This resulted in an increase of enquiries as evidenced in the upturn of approvals towards the end of the year. The recruitment for Children with Disabilities (CWD) remains marketed under the same fostering banner with imagery and copy relevant to CWD.



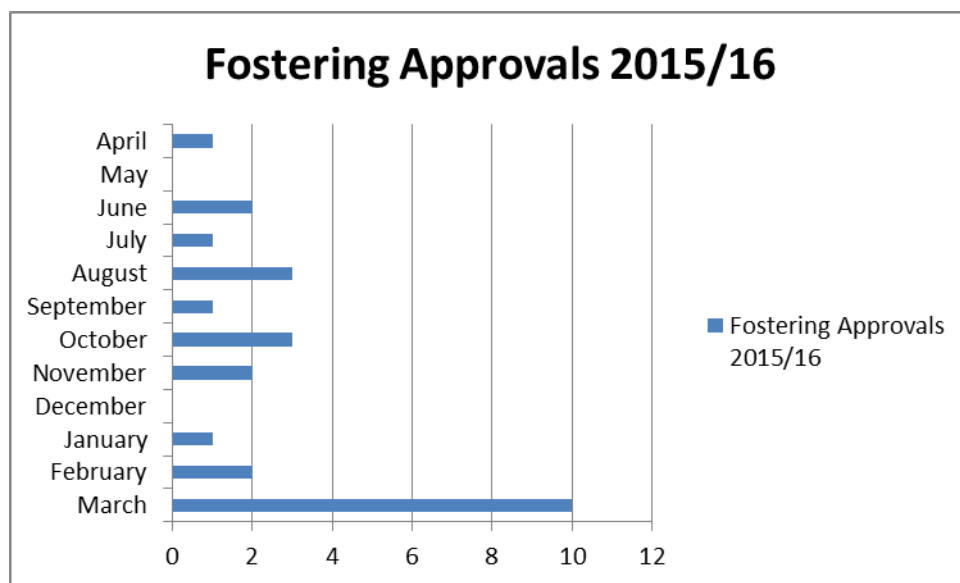
2.4 The Children in Care Council (CICC) now play a full role in contributing to the assessment, holding informal interviews with all applicants going through ESCC's foster carer approval process. 6 "Skills to Foster" pre-assessment preparation courses were held during 15-16 and 27 households have attended these courses.

2.5 26 households that offer 44 placements were approved in 2015-16. 6 of these households were transfers from independent fostering providers with 4 East Sussex looked after children already placed with these families. 2 LAC from other local authorities were also placed with these foster carers. This has brought significant income generation into the service. After the deduction of the East Sussex foster carer allowances paid to these foster carers, the transfer of these foster carers equates to a saving to ESCC of £288,305 per year in agency fees.

2.6 For 2015/16 the Fostering Service saw the loss of 24 carers which represented 8% of its total carer resource. Although this is an increase on last year's retention of just below 3%, it continues to be well below the national average of 12% last recorded. A breakdown of reasons for carers leaving ESCC include: foster carers applying for special guardianship orders and adoption orders and changes in foster carers' personal circumstances. Nearly one third of losses were due to carers deciding to retire from fostering. The Fostering Service has anticipated that there will be an increasing number of foster carers retiring given that the percentage of our foster carers over 50 years of age is high, and this is part of a wider demographic trend. The Department of Education's Local Authority Fostering Service Benchmark Report (2014) cites:

"According to the Fostering Network research, foster carers stay in their role for an average of seven and a half years. Many leave due to changes in personal circumstances or at a natural point for their time as foster carers to cease. This is often retirement age as foster carers on average are aged 50-55 years".

2.7 The diagram below illustrates the total number of carers recruited each month.



2.8 There were 14 fostering assessments still in progress at 31 March 2016. The recruitment and retention team is also following up enquiries from a further 3 fostering households currently approved by independent fostering agencies who are expressing an interest in transferring to ESCC.

2.9 The service continues to employ the marketing strategy of "continual presence". This consists of wide-ranging extensive advertising throughout the year using a range of different mediums. As the Fostering Service marketing strategy for 2015-16 has been the most high profile to date, the service is confident via its data that when residents of East Sussex want to consider fostering, it is ESCC they approach first.

Below are some examples of the mediums used to promote fostering recruitment this year:

- Bus shelters
- Local buses
- Sovereign FM Radio, Arrow FM Radio and Heart FM
- Local papers
- Lamp post banners
- 'Display vans' in both Hastings and Eastbourne
- 'Your County' magazine
- Twitter
- Facebook
- ESCC payslips

2.10 One of the new marketing initiatives in 2015/16 was the use of television advertising to produce a series of advertisements demographically targeted to recruit carers in the west and north east of the county. Although the take up was lower than predicted, the advertisement was developed so as to allow the service to retain the copyrights. The filming was re-edited to provide very effective social media clips that went across a range of popular social media sites including You-Tube and Facebook.

Recruitment Events

- Information evenings have been held monthly - 10 in Eastbourne, 1 in Hastings. The Operations Manager attended a special event with Home For Good, a charitable organisation helping to deal with the refugee crisis. Over 60 people attended and this generated 5 enquiries, one of which is currently progressing through to assessment.

Retention Events

- In October 2015, the Fostering Service in conjunction with East Sussex Foster Carer Association (ESFCA), held a 'Children Who Foster' residential trip at PGL, Windmill Hill in celebration of Sons & Daughters week. In August 2015, a picnic was held at Knockhatch for all carers of ESCC children and staff. This continues to prove to be a successful way of raising our profile with agency carers.
- In June 2015, an evening event was held at Bannatynes Spa Hotel, Hastings, to say 'Thank You' to our carers. This was attended by 130 carers and staff.
- The Fostering Service continues to send newsletters to foster carers providing up to date information on the service and looked after children and to promote the service's support groups and training events.

Advertising and Media Coverage



- This year the Fostering Service originally focussed their recruitment strategy on "Could you foster a teenager". It became apparent in the first part of the year that the take up for this age group was particularly challenging. The strategy was reviewed to refocus our target group to foster carers for all ages. The campaign of "Don't keep them waiting" proved to be more successful.

Marketing Partnerships

For the first time the Fostering Service was able to secure a marketing partnership with Amey, an ESCC commissioned company, with their countywide van fleet now sporting promotional fostering signage.



3. Foster Care Training

3.1 From 1st September 2015 to the 31st March 2016, 589 training places have been taken up by foster carers (last year's equivalent was 554), predicting a slight increase for the overall academic year. Evaluation of the courses by participants shows 89 % to be excellent.

3.2 New courses introduced this year have included:

- Missing and Child Sexual Exploitation.
- Prevent Awareness.
- Insiders Course, promoting foster carers' resilience.
- Fostering Changes, adolescence, addressing behaviour management strategies.
- Understanding and Supporting Lesbian and Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Unsure Children and Young People.
- Legal High Drug Awareness, prior to the law change.
- Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome.
- Understanding Autism.
- Promoting Positive Behaviours 5 day course, supporting foster carers by developing a Behaviour Support Plan.
- Adolescent Support Discussion Groups, addressing many aspects regarding looking after teenagers.
- Internet Security / Parental Controls and Filters Course.
- Digital Photo Albums.

3.3 Continual Professional Development Opportunities are also available: 15 foster carers are undertaking a variety of qualifications. These include the level 3 Diploma, Children and Young People's Workforce qualification, and the Level 3 Training, Assessment and Quality Assuring qualification in assessing occupational competence.

3.4 In recognition of the varied expertise, knowledge and skill base of some of our foster carers, it is planned to bring courses in-house. This will do two things, it will enable us to use the existing expertise, knowledge and skills of East Sussex Carers in a training role, and secondly it will be more cost effective to upskill those that need further training. To ensure the quality of training, there is an agreed framework of requirements and support identified:

- To have a minimum recognised occupational based qualification (Qualification and Credit Framework Level 3 Diploma Children and Young People Workforce).
- To attend a Train the Trainers course.
- To plan course content and delivery in conjunction with the foster carer training and development consultant.
- Quality assurance activities to be undertaken.
- To gain an education and training qualification at either level 3 or 4.

3.5 Planned courses for 2016/17 include developing:

- Internet Safety Courses, addressing primary and secondary aged children, addressing the risks and management strategies.
- Added concerns regarding the internet, CSE and Radicalisation, incorporating the Dark Web.
- Fostering Changes, under 12's course.
- Caring for asylum seeking, refugee and unaccompanied children.
- Supporting education and success, a practical approach for primary and secondary aged children.
- Promoting children and young people's health and healthy living.
- Practical skills to manage challenging behaviours.
- Discussion groups, identified subject area, supporting foster carers understanding.

3.6 As of July 2016, foster carers will be able to access the East Sussex Learning Portal, to be able to apply to the wide ranging training provided by Local Safeguarding Children's Board and Children's Services courses and to manage their own continuous professional development.

3.7 Men who Foster

The introduction of the 'Men who Foster' group in 2014 continues to be successful, now attracting a consistent membership. The subjects addressed in 2015/16 included:

- Addressing safe care issues.
- What makes a positive male role model?
- The difference between being a parent and a foster carer.
- How does fostering impact on your relationships?

4. Foster carer support and supervision

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

4.2 Support groups are available to provide foster carers with opportunities to meet with other carers, to increase support networks and to give the opportunity for shared learning. There are four localised groups in Uckfield, Rotherfield, Eastbourne and Newhaven. There are also four themed support groups: black and minority ethnic children and young people's support group; a

parent and child foster carers' support group; a support group for carers of adolescents and a 'men who foster' support group. A "Buddy" system is also available when this is required.

4.3 Further support is provided for foster carers through the Fostering Advice line - an out of hours advice line service available to all foster carers and supported lodgings providers for 365 days per year. This service is staffed by a team of 7 workers from the Fostering Service, working on a rota basis, to provide support and advice to all foster carers.

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

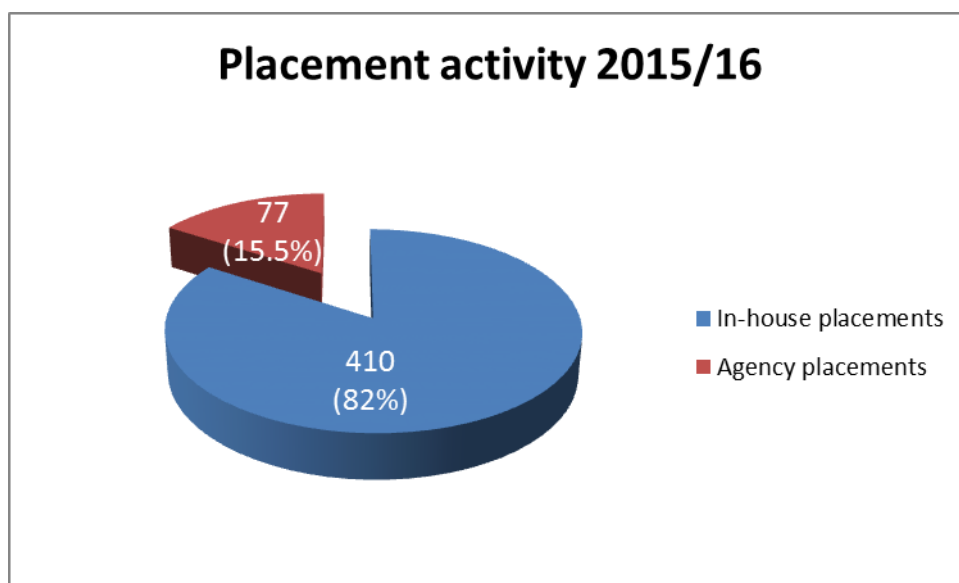
5. Health

5.1 Meeting the health needs of LAC remains a priority for the Fostering Service. In 2015/16 foster carers continued to prioritise the health needs of their children, with SSWs monitoring and supporting foster carers to ensure timely health assessments are in place, via notifications and liaison with Kent Community Health Care Trust, the designated nurse for LAC and the LAC nurses.

6. Placement Activity

6.1 On 31st March 2016 there were 498 children in foster care. 410 of these children were placed with in-house placements. This includes in-house "parent and child" placements, children subject to Special Guardianship Orders placed with foster carers and those children remaining in their "staying put" fostering placements through to independence. There were 88 fostered children placed with agency carers.

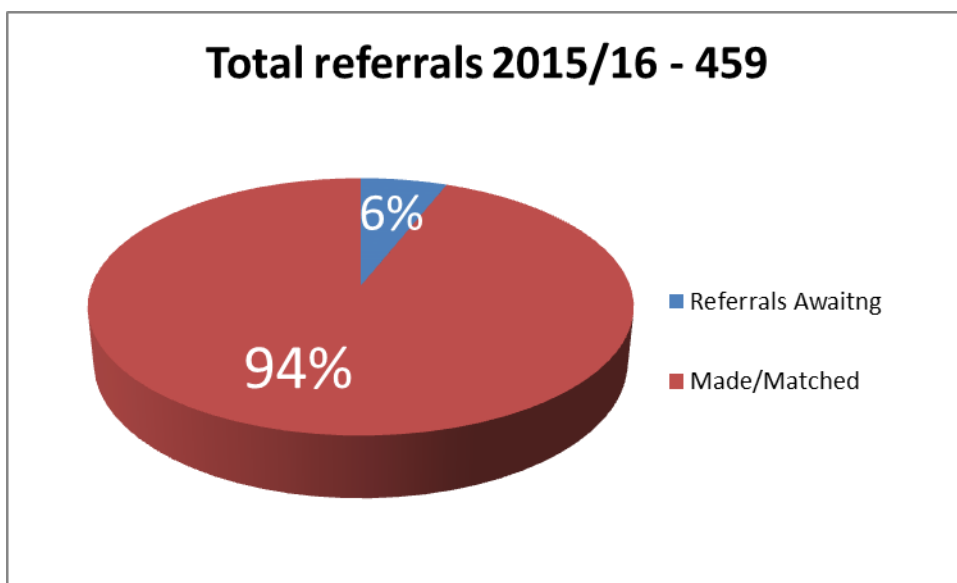
6.2 The number of East Sussex LAC placed in agency placements has decreased from 94 children (19%) in 2014/15 to 77 (15.5%) at the end of March 2016. Given the challenging matching considerations and complex needs of many of the young people for this reporting period, the Fostering Service would consider this a significant achievement.



6.3 18 young people (over 18 years of age) remain with their foster carers under the 'Staying Put' arrangements. There are also 32 children who are currently subject to Special Guardianship Orders placed with East Sussex foster carers. Fostering households also provide adoptive parents for 9 children, with one further foster carer currently undergoing an assessment to adopt a child in

placement. Clearly this level of stability is very positive for individual children but it does impact on the number of placements.

6.4 Of the 459 referrals received between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016, 434 resulted in placements being made or matched. Of the 459 referrals, 153 were ultimately not required and 27 remain awaiting placement (a combination of respite and short-term placements). The figures show an efficient duty service which has converted 94% of referral to placements made/matched which is on a par with last year's performance. In order to meet the challenge of our children with more complex and challenging needs, Fostering Duty managers have worked closely with their operational colleagues to be given advanced notice of pending placement requests.



6.5 The matching process remains vital. The ongoing challenge is that if we match children with complex needs with newly approved foster carers, an extensive support package needs to be put in place, so that foster carers are adequately supported to deal with some of our most challenging LAC.

7. Placement Support

7.1 The Placement Support Service (PSS) is currently working with 110 children, young people and their foster carers by providing targeted packages of support both short and long term. In 2015-2016, 24 new referrals were picked up by the service including life story work. 81 support packages were reviewed with 15 pieces of work ending as 'aim achieved'. PSS also responded to 65 emergency or crisis requests from carers that resulted in 141 days of support being provided.

7.2 PSS remains a vital and valued resource that provides flexible, robust and creative support to sustain the most challenging foster care placements and in preventing a move to costly agency alternatives. The following examples of feedback from carers demonstrate how much they benefit from this support:

- *'Placement Support Service is incredibly helpful and the young person comes home happy from their activities'*
- *'PSS and activities are a very valuable support for the whole family especially in the holidays.'*
- *'PSS gives us a break from our daily challenges.'*
- *'Helps the young person increase in self-confidence and raises self-esteem.'*

- *'This has helped us get through some difficult times.'*

7.3 The PSS continues its close partnership with the Looked After Children's Mental Health Service (LACAMHS) by attending their monthly multiagency meeting.

7.4 During the reporting period the Virtual School commissioned PSS staff to support 11 children with complex needs who were temporarily without education for a total of 181 days. PSS continues to maintain the positive links developed with the Virtual School who are supportive of the activities PSS provide.

7.5 The PSS provides respite holiday and weekend group activities to some LAC aged 5 to 17 during school holidays. The activities provide enriching, fun and educative experiences for children who cannot access community resources. They aim to build confidence, raise self-esteem and to reduce the stigma that some young people feel by being in care. It is a cost effective way of providing support at the most stressful periods for foster carers.

7.6 The PSS has:

- Provided 42 group activities as well as an additional 8 group Saturday activities. 10 to 15 young people attend each activity.
- Offered 451 places to children and young people. 98% of children rate the activities as good to excellent.
- Formed a positive relationship with Rhythmix, a voluntary organisation whose focus with children is music. These activities are provided free and are particularly successful for young people who find it difficult to engage in activities.
- Continued to work with St Bedes who have provided free zoo days as well as free access to their sports facilities that have also been popular.
- Negotiated free visits to the local Fire Station and to Raystede animal sanctuary. Children also regularly swim for free at Crowhurst Country Park.

8. User Participation

8.1 The Younger User group met six times during the year and following a review decided that a separate group was no longer needed. They felt that a better way of involving more junior aged children should be via SUSS IT (speak up sessions) that take place during the school holidays. This has worked well as an alternative and 29 issues for this younger group of LAC have been satisfactorily resolved. A recurring theme is a need to improving contact arrangements for children.

8.2 In April 2015 the Junior Action Day was held and 36 primary school aged children attended, the theme being Protective Behaviours.

8.3 The latest Children In Care Council (CICC) commenced on 28th September 2013 and goes from strength to strength. The CICC has decided to continue as an ongoing group in future and to replace members as necessary, rather than start afresh every three years. They have met as a group twelve times. Senior managers from the LAC service, other social work children's teams, and NYAS have also attended.

8.4 The 2015 CICC Newsletter was produced and widely distributed to children in care and professionals, as were the Children's Handbook, Pledge and CICC top tip playing cards.

8.5 During 2015-2016 the CICC/CICC coordinator attended:

- 41 holiday activities to promote Speak up Sessions (SUSS IT). 53 issues raised by looked after children were resolved as a result.
- 23 local and national meetings, events and consultations that included: meeting with the Corporate Parenting Panel, the Children's Minister, the Children's Commissioner, the local judiciary, testing the MOMO app, and meeting with a wider Pan Sussex group.
- Recruitment panels and events that included appointing the new Children's Commissioner, foster carer recruitment via Sky, and three ESCC staff recruitment panels.

CICC has attended the following personal development and training events:

- 3 members completed Level 1 Leadership training.
- 8 Completed British Youth Council Democracy Champion training.
- 7 have completed I Food Hygiene training.
- 7 attended National Takeover Day.
- 14 children are currently working on their Bronze Arts Award.
- 1 completed Basic First Aid Training.
- 2 completed SPARK representative training, a voluntary organisation set up to train volunteers who wish to do youth work.
- CICC members continue to volunteer both in the community and for ESCC.

9. Working in Partnership

ESFCA

9.1 The Operations Manager of the Fostering Service continues to attend the monthly meetings of the East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA) management group to report on developments in the Fostering Service and Children's Services. This relationship is particularly significant at the moment as the association has, in the last 6 months, gone through a change of chair and trustees. The association is taking forward a new agenda for its members which includes them supporting the fostering services in its operational responsibilities, including informal support, advice and "buddying" of new carers.

9.2 The Operations Managers for Looked After Children and the Fostering Service with the Chair of the ESFCA continue to host monthly 'surgeries' for foster carers who can bring issues and problems directly to key managers.

Virtual School

9.3 Partnership work with The Virtual School continues to be very significant in the support and promotion of children's educational needs, both for their prospective and existing placements. Placement stability has a direct correlation with a young person's school placement and if the school can remain consistent when a child becomes LAC, the likelihood of placement breakdown is significantly reduced.

10. The Supported Lodgings Team

10.1 Supported lodging providers continue to offer valuable placements for LAC, care leavers and homeless young people in the East Sussex area. Over the last year we have seen an increase in the high level of care needed for very complex young people coming into placement.

Our providers have demonstrated their skills, flexibility and willingness to rise to the challenge of accommodating these older looked after children.

10.2 There are currently 32 supportive provider households providing a total of 49 placements across the county. Since April 2015, 16 supported lodgings assessments have been undertaken with 9 being approved and a further 6 assessments awaiting approval.

10.3 An objective over this past year has been to encourage supported lodging providers to consider becoming approved foster carers, therefore enhancing their potential to provide placements for younger LAC. This has been successful with 4 carers now holding dual registration as foster carers and supportive lodgings providers which enables them to provide care placements for our younger and more complex and challenging Looked After Children before they become 16 years old.

10.4 During the last year, supported lodging carers have provided a number of 'step down' placements for children from in-house residential placements as well as from both agency and in-house foster placements. Significantly, supported lodgings carers have provided 7 placements for LAC moving from expensive external residential provision at a saving of £544,195.

10.5 The Supported Lodgings Team recognise the increased pressure on the availability of supported lodgings beds. As a result the team is pushing forward with a recruitment campaign. The team regularly advertises in local newspapers and once a year in Your County magazine. This has proved to be very successful in generating new applicants and interest in the Service.

11. Summary

11.1 2015/16 has brought a number of challenges to the Fostering Service: financial constraints and the ever reducing pool of new foster carers to recruit from. Despite these challenges, the outcomes for the Fostering Service have remained strong. However, this has only been achieved by using extensive resources (more staff and management time, energy and commitment) to match our children and young people who demonstrate more risk taking behaviours and complex needs. As with last year's success, this year has been built on a strong foundation of effective support to our foster carers. Agency foster carers who have transferred to ESCC have come to us because of our reputation of supporting our foster carers well. Recruitment of new carers has been challenging not only for ESCC but also for our neighbouring partners (and nationally). All our providers, including our preferred independent foster agencies continue to struggle to recruit any new foster carers. Therefore, our focus continues to be on attracting existing approved foster carers to our authority and on developing and retaining our existing foster carers.

11.2 Our referral profiles of children requiring placements have changed considerably over the last year, with carers being asked to take on more young people with challenging and complex needs. Therefore, it is inevitable that placement breakdowns are more likely to occur. Even so, our placement stability has only seen a small increase for children who experience 3 placements or more to just above 10%. This is comparable with the national average.

11.3 The Supported Lodgings Service has built on its success from last year, making bespoke and appropriate placements for young people whilst also making significant savings. The care packages provided by this service have been excellent, giving young people the opportunity to develop independence skills with the support and supervision of care providers. The complexity of placements being taken on by the Supported Lodgings Service has necessitated access to appropriate training and support for carers, the take up of which has increased considerably during this reporting period.

11.4 We have targeted recruitment and designed our income generation programme around the recruitment of all potential local carers. These carers would then be available, not only for children in East Sussex, but could also be 'sold' to our neighbouring authorities for their use. This would

give neighbouring authorities the opportunity of having good quality placements supported by East Sussex Fostering Service at a cost that is less than that of an independent fostering agency.

The Key Management Priorities for 2016-2017 include:

- To continue active recruitment and provision of high quality training and support for our carers so that stability for children is prioritised.
- To continue with an extensive and continuous recruitment strategy throughout the year to attract potential foster carers to come to East Sussex as the preferred fostering agency in this area. This will include targeted recruitment on the borders of East Sussex in order to recruit foster carers that potentially the Fostering Service could make available to our neighbouring authorities.

Adrian Sewell

Operation Manager Fostering Service

Adoption and Permanence Service Annual Report

Annex 2

1. Supporting Information

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/2016
1. Number of Children Adopted	57	43	45
2. Number of Adoption Matches (children)	50	56	32
3. Number of Permanent Fostering Matches (children)	10	7	10
4. Number of East Sussex Adoptive Matches (children)	40	33	26
5. Number of Consortium Adoptive Matches (children)	1	6	0
6. Number of Inter-Agency Matches (children):			
Permanence:	4	3	2
Adoption:	9	17	6
7. Number of Prospective Adopters Approved (households) *	44	50	41
8. Number of Permanent Carers Approved (households)	8	4	2
9. Number of Children Approved for Adoption up to 31 st March 2016 (including 2 re-approvals)	52	43	53
10. Number of children Approved for Permanence up to 31 st March 2016	24	26	14
11. Number of Approved Adopters waiting to be Matched	17	20	22
12. Number of Disruptions presented to Panel:			
Permanence:			0
Adoptions:	1	0	1

2. Recruitment Activity

2.1 The two stage recruitment process which is now fully embedded within East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) Adoption Service, received very positive feedback from adopters during 15/16. Prospective adopters reported that they particularly appreciated the support they received during the process. Not only did ESCC's reputation as a welcoming and helpful recruitment service lead to local enquirers choosing to adopt with ESCC, it also attracted significant numbers of adopters from outside East Sussex borders which have been pursued if the geography is helpful. During this period the service continued to offer a dedicated telephone number for enquiries, a specific adoption recruitment email address and an on-line enquiry form to ensure that all enquirers received a prompt and personal service.

2.2 The time taken to approve prospective adopters was maintained at an average of nine months, from registering their interest to approval at Adoption Panel. While the service continued to explore ways to reduce this timescale where possible, it was clear that adopters taking control of the timescales during Stage 1 led to delays at this point more frequently than might have been predicted. It had been anticipated that most adopters would want to progress to approval in the quickest time possible, but in reality more applicants chose to take more time to prepare themselves for adoption. However the time taken to assess applicants in Stage 2 remained on target.

2.3 During 2015-16 the agency had 287 enquiries about adopting with ESCC. Following receipt of information packs, 81 requests were received for registration of interest forms. The conversion rate from enquiry to registration was 28%, which is a drop compared to 34% in 2014-15, however this still compares well with the Coram BAAF suggested national figures of around 10%. While difficult to be certain, it is suspected that the reduction was due to the decision to pause accepting applications from potential adopters to adopt babies. This decision was taken in order to prioritise applications from adopters wanting to adopt older children and sibling groups. In line with the national picture, there was an increasing mismatch between adopters wishes compared with the profile of children needing placement. Consequently there was a significant drop in new registrations from December to April 2016. Given the recent rise in numbers of children being referred for an adoption placement, as well as an encouraging increase in the number of adopters matched with children, ESCC have reviewed the decision to pause applications to adopt young single children. This appears to have resulted in an immediate increase in the rate of registrations of interest from enquirers.

2.4 Throughout 15/16 the Adoption Service continued to organise regular recruitment activities for prospective adopters; profiling the range of needs of each child waiting for a placement. Advertising and recruitment activity in 2015-16 included providing information about open events on the Government Gateway, First4Adoption, New Family Social and Coram BAAF websites as well as reviewing and updating information on the ESCC website, radio advertising, and bespoke advertising on ESCC payslips, at supermarket sites, and on buses travelling around the county. The Adoption Facebook page remained popular in reaching a range of prospective adopters, particularly as it was updated regularly with information regarding local adoption services, and key national developments. Monthly information drop-in events were also held in the evenings and at weekends.

2.5 The continued trend of ESCC receiving enquiries from applicants living outside ESCC borders resulted in the service generating increased levels of income from interagency fees. Four ESCC families were 'purchased' by other local authorities in 2015-16. In addition, there have been a further 6 matches identified with other local authority children that are at various stages of progress at time of writing. All will bring income to the service should children be placed ultimately.

2.6 All recruitment processes, including stage 1 meetings and preparation to adopt courses, were reviewed during the year in order to streamline practice. A post approval training course was piloted to give adopters a better understanding of the additional attachment needs of their adopted children with tailored support strategies available at the point of placement. There was very positive feedback from this pilot and consideration is being given to setting up two six week courses in 2016-17.

2.7 During 2015-16 a further 6 experienced adopters returned for assessment, and one set of foster carers applied to be assessed as adopters for children in their care. In addition, four families were recruited to offer fostering for adoption placements for four children. Three of these four children were placed on a fostering basis with adoptive families where their siblings had previously been placed. The fourth child was placed with a childless couple willing to take the risk of offering a foster placement prior to an adoption placement being made, and subject to the Court agreeing to the care plan for adoption for the child. He has since been adopted, thus ensuring he had the minimum number of moves possible during his time in our care.

3. Children with a plan for Adoption.

3.1 The number of children with a plan for adoption increased from 43 14/15 to 53 in 15/16. This scale of increase was not reflected nationally; indeed many Adoption Agencies reported that the number of approvals for adoption had significantly decreased in favour of Special Guardianship Orders. Locally however, the courts responded to a clear Government directive which suggested that adoption should continue to be promoted as a realistic permanence option for young children at the earliest opportunity. During 15/16 28 children were matched with local adopters, with only 2 sibling pairs placed out of county giving a total of 32 children matched in the 12 month period. There was also a marked rise in the number of sibling groups with complex permanence plans, some of which involved adoption for the younger children and permanent foster placement for the older children. These arrangements were very challenging in terms of contact and involved detailed professional and co-ordinated working across children's teams.

3.2 The family finding service was refined to more effectively co-ordinate and develop local in house provision, and explore placement options for children approved and waiting for both adoption and permanence. Improving communication between this service and the family support and looked after children's teams and resulting in timely notification of children entering the system with a possible plan for adoption minimising any potential delays. One of the greatest challenges in the past year was the number of children who remained at home during care proceedings and the impact these arrangements had on permanence planning.

3.3 The specialist recruitment and family finding staff within the adoption service worked closely together during this period to identify the types of adopters needed to meet the needs of the children coming forward. It should be noted that there was a continued rise in the number of children identified with a plan for adoption who had experienced domestic violence, trauma and loss. Many of these children will have ongoing complex therapeutic post adoption support needs in the future. During this period it was enormously beneficial to apply to the Adoption Support Fund with an identified support package for adopters and their families at the earliest stage in placement.

3.4 In November 2015 ESCC participated in an adoption activity day with our former consortium partners. Whilst there was initial interest in a number of East Sussex children sadly it did not result in any matches. However, the children have been successfully matched since with both in house and inter agency adopters.

4. Staffing

4.1 There have been a number of staffing changes over the last 12 months with a number of long standing members of the team moving on. A small number of these posts were recruited to, but 5 staffing vacancies have been held in order to manage the very difficult budget position the council found itself in during 15/16.

5. Permanence

5.1 The Adoption & Permanence Service continued to use targeted family finding for those children with a plan for permanent fostering; particularly those children with complex needs or who were part of a sibling group. The permanence tracking workshop met regularly during 15/16 to monitor closely the timescale of permanence plans and ensure suitable matches were progressed.

5.2 The service had a number of in-house foster carers who were willing to put themselves forward to offer long term care to children already in placement with them, or for those for whom they have expressed a specific interest. This was particularly advantageous for those children who had been “claimed” by the foster carers, and for those children who had expressed a clear wish to remain in that placement. The number of children approved for permanence reduced from 26 in 14/15, to 14 in 15/16. At year end there were 12 children with a plan for permanence for whom the service was actively family finding, this included four sets of sibling pairs.

6. Adoption Support

6.1 Between April 2015 and March 2016 there were 36 requests from adopters for post adoption support assessments. Of these, 28 resulted in the provision of support. At year end, 141 families were in receipt of post adoption support packages. This represents a significant increase on last year.

6.2 The specially commissioned CAMHS service for adopted children and their families ‘AdCAMHS’ was funded by the Local Authority CAMHS grant throughout 15/16. The aim of the service was to offer post adoption support to families with dedicated therapy and consultation services. The service was commissioned to work with 40 families at any one time, however there are currently 68 cases open to the service. The service was designed to contribute to adoption stability, promote positive attachments within adoptive families and ultimately to prevent placement breakdown. There was clear evidence collected by the service which indicated that these interventions had had a very positive impact on placement stability.

6.3 The adoption service also commissioned individual therapists to provide specialist support to families in areas such as therapeutic life story work and ‘Theraplay’. Play, Drama and Music therapies were identified as effective tools in enabling children to communicate and express themselves more creatively. There were also a number of adoption cases where child to parent violence was identified as a key factor and a systemic family therapist was commissioned, with expertise in the ‘Non Violent Resistance’ (NVR) approach, to offer advice and interventions to families. These interventions were all funded by applications to the national Adoption Support Fund (ASF)

6.4 Excellent links were maintained with the Virtual School, who continued to fund two part time adoption support workers within the service. These roles provided adoptive families with support for educational and school-based issues, in order to promote the educational achievements of adopted children within East Sussex. The Virtual School also offered advice and guidance to schools in drawing down the Pupil Premium for adopted children. Training for schools on attachment and on the needs of adoptive children in an education setting, was identified as a key area of intervention.

6.5 Closer collaborative links between the Adoption Support Team and Locality Services, particularly with the Duty and Assessment, Family Support, Youth Support and Targeted Youth Support teams were forged, enabling a more seamless service to be provided to families when a family assessment was required. In complex adoption support cases, a team around the child, particularly though not exclusively in adolescence, is vital in managing risk and safeguarding issues as well as preventing some of our young people returning to care.

6.6 During the last 12 months, the Adoption Support Team facilitated a group for adopted children aged 10-12 years, and 2 groups for adoptive teenagers facilitated jointly with AdCAMHS. A further 12 week therapeutic parenting programme was successful in bringing adopters together to focus on adoption issues with the support of two child and adolescent

psychotherapists, also under the umbrella of AdCAMHS. ESCC continued with its contract with Adoption UK to deliver support to adopters and funded four support groups at different locations across East Sussex. This contract was regularly monitored and reviewed by the adoption service and evaluated by service users.

6.7 The Adoption Service also maintained its close working relationship with the Adoptive Families Group (AFG), set up in January 2013. This is an independent adopter-led group which focuses on lobbying and raising the profile of the needs of adoptive families both locally and nationally. During this period AFG focused on education, the use of Pupil Premium and raising awareness of the Adoption Support Fund in relation to therapeutic support.

6.8 The Adoption Service has continued to commission the services of CMB Counselling (a small independent agency) to provide an intermediary service to adopted adults and their relatives, and the Adoption Support Team provided a service to adopted adults wishing to access their records. In March 2016, 45 families were in receipt of adult adoptees support packages (not one off advice).

6.9 The adoption service in 2015/2016 held two events for adoptive families. These were social events organised and supported by the service, and designed to enable adopters and their children to meet informally and have a fun day out. These events were well received and attended.

6.10 The same sex adopters group met on a regular basis with speakers in attendance from time to time.

6.11 The direct contact service supported 300 arrangements during 15/16, and a further 781 indirect contact agreements; both of which demonstrate a substantial increase on 14/15. This aspect of the service requires a high level of professional scrutiny as well as dedicated full-time administrative support.

6.12 In 15/16 the Adoption Service trained a caseworker to become a licensed practitioner in the use of 'THRIVE', funded through Pupil Premium. THRIVE is a systemic approach used in relation to the early identification of emotional developmental need in children. It has been used increasingly in schools to help children in their relationships with others and equips them to be open to learning. There were also several THRIVE workshops commissioned for adopters, funded via the Adoption Support Fund.

6.13 The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was rolled out nationally in May 2015 (following the prototype phase which involved East Sussex). As part of its programme of adoption reform, the Government made a financial commitment to fund the ASF until the end of this parliament. This was an acknowledgement of the need to strengthen arrangements for adoption support. The ASF is available specifically for the provision of therapeutic support. Since the roll out of the fund, the scope has broadened for 16/17 with the eligibility to include children from the time of placement in their adoptive families, intercounty adoptions and Special Guardianship. Since the national roll out of the ASF, East Sussex made 64 applications to the fund and the total agreed is £219,965.80.

7. Adoption & Permanence Panel

7.1 There have been a number of changes to the membership of the Adoption and Permanence Panels during 15/16, but quoracy was maintained. Panel processes and venues were reviewed during this period in order that best value for money was achieved, and savings made. This resulted in a change to the venue, a reduction in the frequency of Panel meetings and all panel members now receive their papers electronically. A very

successful Panel training event took place in September 2015 facilitated by Elaine Dibben from Coram BAAF. The topic of Adoption Matching was enthusiastically discussed.

7.2 Kent Health Care Trust (KHCT) were commissioned for 15/16 to deliver all medical advice to the Panels, and all initial health assessments and adoption medicals for Looked after Children. They encountered a number of personnel issues during this timeframe which resulted in the emergency appointment of a number of locum staff. At year end KHCT were in the process of recruiting to two permanent medical advisor posts specifically to work with ESCC children and the Adoption Panel.

8. Consortium & Regionalisation

8.1 For 12 years East Sussex was a member of the South East Regional Consortium together with Brighton and Hove, Bromley, Bexley, Kent and Medway. Brighton and Hove left the consortium in July 2014, and Kent's position changed following the differently commissioned relationship with Coram. Medway, Bexley and Bromley forged links with Central London local authorities. In Jan 2015 ESCC joined the South Central Consortium in together with a number of South Eastern local authorities and PACT, a voluntary adoption agency. In April 2015 the government and DfE announced the introduction of Regional Adoption Agencies whereby existing consortium arrangements were reviewed. There was an expectation that all local authorities would join together in regions to submit a bid to become a new entity, and that it should include at least one voluntary agency. ESCC were instrumental in compiling a bid together with Brighton & Hove, Surrey and West Sussex. This was submitted in September 2015 but was not successful. However, the four local authorities have continued to work closely together, developed a senior management board and an operational group to drive forward this agenda under the banner of Adopt South East.

9. Management Priorities 2016/17

- Using the expertise developed in ESCC's outstanding Adoption Service to drive forward adoption recruitment, practice innovation and collaboration both locally and across the region, with a view to generating income or attracting grant funding.
- Consolidate targeted recruitment of adopters for ESCC children, whilst maintaining a strategy of over recruitment in order to release additional resources/funds particularly in the Southern region.
- Work together with other Local Authority partners in Surrey, Brighton & Hove and West Sussex to develop an effective region. Ensure regional developments bring added value to the service and greater local placement choice for children.
- Update and revise policies and procedures in accordance with new regulations and strategy guidance.
- Maintain and extend adoption support developments, including the revised CAMHS contract and close partnerships with the Virtual School. Ensure continued use of the Adoption Support Fund to full effect.
- Ensure the contract with KHCT maintains a good standard of medical support across Adoption and Fostering Services.

Carole Sykes.
Operations Manager,
June 2106

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report April 2015 – March 2016

The Contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) to Quality Assuring and Improving Services for Looked After Children (CLA)

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

The IRO Annual Report must be presented to: Corporate Parenting Board and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

1. Purpose of service and legal context

- 1.1 The IRO service is set within the framework of the updated IRO Handbook, linked to revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance which were introduced in April 2011. The responsibility of the IRO has changed from the management of the Review process to a wider overview of the case including regular monitoring and follow-up between Reviews. The IRO has a key role in relation to the improvement of Care Planning for CLA and for challenging drift and delay. One of the key tasks for IROs is to build relationships with children, young people and the professional and family network to enhance effective planning for positive outcomes.
- 1.2 The National Children's Bureau (NCB) research 'The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officers in England' (March 2014) provides a wealth of information and findings regarding the efficacy of IRO services. The foreword written by Mr Justice Peter Jackson; makes the following comment:

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

2. Overview and Update

Key messages

Achievements for 15/16 included:

- The delivery of outcome focussed care plans
- Enhancing children and young people's understanding of IROs and Child Protection Advisors (CPA) roles and responsibilities
- Effective communication with operational teams
- Increased quality assurance feedback activity for locality and children looked after teams
- Continued challenge to the operational teams regarding care planning
- Implementation of new legislation for permanence

2.1 The single child's plan is now integrated into the whole system and is designed to be responsive and dynamic to the child's changing needs and environment. Since last summer the new approach to child protection conferences has been piloted across the whole service using the headings below as the central focus for the conference.

2.2

What's Working Well? <i>(Strengths)</i>	What are we worried about? <i>(Risks/Needs)</i>	What will it look like if things improve <i>(Goal)</i>	Who does what, by when?
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2.3 Building on this with the implementation of the new social care information system, it is also now central to the processes involving children who are looked after. The purpose is to enhance collaboration with children, parents, carers and other professionals making the plans more accessible, relevant, specific, incremental and focussed on the identified outcome.

2.4 See below for brief example:

What's working well? Strengths	What are we worried about? Risks/Needs	What will it look like when things improve? Goals	Who does what, by when?
Billy and Barney's behaviour has been calmer since being placed in foster care.	Billy and Barney have not shown any distress or emotional response after leaving their mothers care.	Billy and Barney are able to show their feelings and vulnerability, trusting that they will be comforted and listened to.	1) K and SW will do some play activities with them to help them understand about foster care and their care plans. Starting within the week.
Billy and Barney appear to be responding to boundaries and nurturing consistent care.	How their experience of not having their needs for warmth, comfort, food, education and nurture met has affected them over time.	Billy and Barney begin to see their needs as important and expect them to be met consistently and warmly.	2) K will do activities with the boys to build their self-esteem and confidence and help them to understand what is and isn't safe. Starting immediately.
Barney is learning not to retaliate if	How the changing moods and reactions to them from their parents has affected	Billy and Barney learn to make sense of their experiences and can take part in thinking about	3) SW and foster carers to consult with LAC/CAMHS to

Billy smacks him.	<p>them.</p> <p>Billy and Barney can be very physically aggressive towards each other.</p> <p>Billy and Barney crave adult attention and can be over familiar with people that they don't know making them vulnerable.</p> <p>Impact of losses they have experienced siblings, parents. Barney has asked mum where her baby is.</p>	<p>and talking about what the options are for their future and what they want to happen.</p>	<p>think about meeting the boys' emotional needs and whether interventions like theraplay might be helpful for Billy and Barney.</p>
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2.4 IROs update the care plan during the review to reflect progress and decisions made at the review. To manage a particularly difficult review or to enhance participation IROs have used flipchart paper and held the review in the same way as a child protection conference to good effect. There is an evaluation exercise currently underway regarding the new conference model and the outcome will inform the ongoing development of the LAC review process. So far the feedback has been very positive but it is one part of continual improvement that will be reviewed, revised and enhanced over time.

2.5 Problem resolution and escalation

2.5.1 One of the pivotal roles of the IRO/CPA is to raise issues affecting a child's care where, for example, performance issues, care planning and resources are affecting the child or young person's progress. IROs will always discuss issues with the social worker or their manager but if there is no resolution there is a formal process known as a Dispute Resolution Process whereby the issue can be escalated to the attention of senior managers and ultimately the Chief Executive and Cafcass for resolution.

2.5.2 In previous annual reports only those issues that go into a formal dispute were detailed. These are few and many more are resolved before getting to the formal process. Although we do not at the moment maintain separate records of these, over the last year there have been at least 30 children where issues have been raised by the IRO and these have been resolved without going into a formal dispute.

2.5.3 Although many and varied broadly the main themes were suitability of placements, drift in care planning including planning for permanence, delay in revocation of Placement Orders, delay in issuing care proceedings, delay in completing risk assessment to inform planning, out of date recording and plans, encouraging broader look at care planning options (placement with parents for example) and encouraging timely decision making sure that children know about the things that are important to them such as school placements.

2.5.4 Some examples include 3 children who are placed together permanently have been asking to have this confirmed but there has been delay due to the social worker not having completed the necessary paperwork. The IRO advocated on behalf of the children and the matter was resolved. A young person's placement had broken down and the IRO advocated for an assessment of the mother to be included in the care planning and this was resolved but will need on-going review. A further example

involves 2 siblings whose placement was breaking down and there were no placements available for the children to be placed together given their complex and challenging needs. Although understanding the difficulties the IRO was clear that she did not agree with this care plan. A placement was found for them together but the IRO was then once again on the brink of raising a formal dispute because there was no clear risk assessment and the placement was very near to their mother's home. An urgent risk assessment was undertaken and the placement went ahead.

- 2.5.5 There is good communication between the IROs, Practice Managers and Social Workers and as well as raising issues, IROs acknowledge good practice. This is also often escalated to senior managers so that it is acknowledged across the service. Examples of these include praise for effective direct work with a child, speedy and timely decision making, managing changes for a child smoothly and passing on children's feedback. An example of this is two young people who spoke about their foster carers in the review, one saying that the best thing about his foster home was "his opinion always counts" and the other child said "they are the most loving and caring people in the world".
- 2.5.6 Over the last year there have been 2 formal challenges using the Dispute Resolution Procedures.
- 2.5.7 One involved a young person with very challenging behaviour whose placement ended suddenly due to the unexpected death of one of the carers. There was evidence that his placement was struggling to meet his complex needs and there was a delay in an assessment of this placement. Consequently a dispute was raised to challenge the delay in the assessment. This was escalated to senior managers. The assessment was completed and the young person's placement was changed.
- 2.5.8 The other was where there was drift in care planning for a child who was voluntarily accommodated. The IRO initiated a dispute and raised this with senior managers. Proceedings were initiated and there is now a clear plan for the child.
- 2.5.9 The dispute resolution process is currently under review to change the focus to 'issues resolution' whilst maintaining the focus on the professional challenge. This is due to go for wider consultation.

2.6 New legislation

- 2.6.1 Reflecting the views of children and young people who are securely settled in permanent placements the law changed this year to reduce the levels of Children's Services intervention in their lives. Specifically this means potentially having one review meeting a year. Where cases are reviewed on an annual basis there will be a paper review that the IRO undertakes by consultation every 6 months. Also social work visits to CLA where annual reviews are agreed can reduce to a minimum of 6 monthly instead of 3 monthly.
- 2.6.2 These arrangements are agreed by IROs at a review having been authorised by CLA services and are specifically for children who have been in a permanent placement for 1 year. This is currently being trialled with an identified list of potential children and will be evaluated in the autumn.

2.7 Contact cards for children

- 2.7.1 The idea of having an introductions card with the contact details of the IRO and a brief explanation of their role for children and young people to have when they are first accommodated changed into a card with the contact details of the social worker as well as the IRO and this is currently being finalised by the Children in Care Council.

3 Quantitative information about the IRO/CPA service

**1,229 CLA review meetings were held in the year up to 18th February, 2016
(Compared with 1688 in 12/13 and 1530 in 13/14 and 1232 in 14/15)**

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

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

- 3.2 CLA numbers have been stable over the year ending last year on 548 and on the 18.2.16 they were also 548. However the trend of numbers reducing has continued and at the time of writing they are below 540 but they are still above the target set of 522.

- 3.3 There are minor differences in the profile of the children as at the 18.2.16.

31.3.15	18.2.16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41% female • 59% male • 15% BME • 6% have a disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42% female • 58 % male • 14% BME • 7.5% involved with disability teams

- 3.4 A closer look at the figures indicates that there are marginally more children 52% who are 11 and under and within this group 55% are male. Consequently the differential in this cohort is significantly lower than the 12 and over group with 62% male and a differential of 24%.

- 3.5 The analysis of our CLA population who are BME is complex and should also take into account areas

of deprivation. The numbers of children in East Sussex are relatively small but the highest cohort of CLA are white any other background (19 children). We know that in the community as a whole this is also the highest cohort and out of this group the majority are Polish (according to schools information so therefore only reflects school age children). However this does not appear to be reflected in the CLA group where there are 4 children of Polish heritage representing 21% of this group. Ofsted has recently published national information about the personal characteristics, including age, gender and ethnicity, of all children looked after on 31 March 2015 as well as details of the child's placement, including the type of placement, and location.

- 3.6 In terms of pressures within East Sussex the numbers for children aged between 10 and 17 is the same as the national picture of 60% and within that group the highest numbers of children who are looked after are aged between 15 and 17. Much can be written about the complexities of working with these young people but the review process provides a forum for the young person and agencies to come together to consider their needs and develop personal plans.
- 3.7 Another key finding of the Ofsted report was that CLA from Ethnic Minorities were more likely to be placed in an area with higher levels of crime. Areas with higher levels of crime had 38% of BME children living within them and 25% of White children. The opposite is true in ES but the numbers are so low that it is difficult to draw conclusions. As at 31st March 2015, 5.1% of CLA from Ethnic Minorities were placed in areas with the most crime (top 25%), compared to 12.4% of White British CLA. As at 31st March 2016, 7.7% of CLA from Ethnic Minorities were placed in areas with the most crime (top 25%), compared to 13.0% of White British CLA. There will be further analysis and consideration of the issues affecting CLA in East Sussex over the coming year.

4 Children's Participation

- 4.1 Encouraging children and young people to take part in their reviews begins at an early age in recognition of the importance of this to his or her self-esteem and self-efficacy and the consequent impact on good outcomes. Ways of engaging children are many, varied and highly individual and we try to measure this in a number of ways.
- 4.2 Some national standard measures for children are reported quarterly to the Department of Education. Our target figure for children's participation in their review for the year is 95%. This is consistently exceeded and this year was higher again than last year at 98.5% compared with 98.2% in 14/15, 95.4% in 13/14 and 96.9% in 12/13. (NB however our figures for this year only go up to the middle of February due to a reporting issue following the implementation of the new recording system in February 2016)
- 4.3 There was an increase in children and young people attending their reviews, over half, 51.8% compared with 49.1% in 14/15.
- 4.4 14 children did not participate at all in their reviews. The majority of these were children who were not of an age or understanding to contribute to the review or because it was so complex and there were so many other people speaking to them it was not appropriate to include them on that occasion. The remaining 4 were young people aged 16 & 17 who were either due to attend but did not do so on the day or who are clear that they did not want to attend.

5 What children and young people have been saying to their IRO/CPA

A young care leaver who is now 22 got in touch with his IRO (who had not seen him for 4 years) asking to meet for coffee, so he could let him know "how well he was doing". They arranged to meet at the local Costa Coffee shop (other coffee shops are available) and he was very proud to tell him that he was now living independently in his own flat and was working as a care assistant in a residential unit for adults with learning difficulties. He said he wasn't sure if he would have been able to achieve all this without the consistent support and encouragement that the IRO had given him during LAC Reviews whilst he was being looked after and he had remembered what the IRO had told him about believing in himself and always doing his best. He felt the IRO had been the most consistent person in his life (apart from his foster carers) for the five years he was looked after until he was eighteen.

A young person thanked their IRO for suggesting life story work as it had been very helpful.

A girl wrote to her IRO thanking her for asking her questions (consultation for Lac review) as sometimes they make her feel safe.

Another rang to ask the IRO to help them with a complaint which they duly did and the outcome was positive.

A young person rang their IRO to ask who their social worker was because they had been transferred to another team and didn't know who they were.

6. Qualitative information about the IRO service

6.1 Late reviews

6.2. Services for CLA are highly regulated with specific timescales for reviews. The unit work hard to achieve this so that children's plans can be considered in a timely way. Over the last year we have developed new practice guidance for managing timescales when reviews are adjourned or held as a series of meetings. Due to the way these have previously been recorded, in the short term this resulted in a small increase in reviews regarded as late. Unfortunately due to reporting issues following the implementation of the new recording system we do not have absolutely accurate data but there were 6 late reviews reported which is the same figure as in the previous year.

6.3 The majority of these were due to meetings needing to be adjourned due to key people not being present or where the team was not notified of a placement within timescales. One was a couple of days late because it was out of area, the young person had a number of other meetings and key professionals who were important to the child and to care planning were only able to make it on that day.

6.4 Permanence Outcomes

- 6.4.1 A central function of the IRO role is to ensure timely planning for outcomes for permanence for children and to challenge any drift. IROs liaise closely with Children's Guardians when there are care proceedings and contribute their views to the final care plan.
- 6.4.2. A permanence plan should be discussed and agreed at the second review. Looking at children under 12 only, 12% did not have a permanence plan agreed by the 2nd review. This amounted to 10 children and most were situations where there was new information or a new event to consider thus causing reasonable delay but no significant drift. However for 3 children the issue of permanency was not addressed as robustly by the IRO and there was some drift but this has now been addressed.

6.5 Children who put themselves at risk

- 6.5.1 As part of monitoring services for children who are at risk from, for example, child sexual exploitation, IRO/CPAs record whether a child is identified as at risk and whether agencies are working together effectively to reduce that risk. IROs assessed 124 children and young people as being at high risk. For 7 of these young people the IROs did not judge that agencies were working together sufficiently to address the risks. IRO/CPAs follow this up on an individual basis with the relevant teams.
- 6.5.2 Four of these children were part of the group mentioned earlier of children where issues were resolved without recourse to formal dispute procedures. One young woman is vulnerable to child sexual exploitation and has recently been placed in a secure unit. Another was a young man who was putting himself at physical risk at work.
- 6.5.3 The final one of these 7 is a young man who is experiencing considerable delay in the resolution of a criminal investigation involving an alleged sexual assault. This has been going on for over 6 months and it is preventing effective planning for him. IROs have raised the issue of children and young people waiting for the resolution of police proceedings with senior managers because it has such a significant impact on young people and their ability to progress in their lives including with education, placements and becoming independent.

7. Professional Profile of the IRO and CPA Service

- 7.1 The IRO service sits within the Performance and Planning Directorate of Children's Services and is managed by the Head of Safeguarding, Douglas Sinclair, and two operations managers, Sue McGlynn and Alex Sutton who have the leads for the IRO and Child Protection Adviser (CPA) role in Child Protection and LAC respectively. When the unit was created, chairing Child Protection Conferences (CPC) and LAC reviews were separate specialisms. These two roles are further separated by the different legislation and regulatory protocols underpinning them. Although in the main the roles are no longer separated the names have stuck and chairs have been referred to within this report as IRO/CPA.
- 7.2 The IRO/CPA team is currently made up of 9.6 fte staff at Practice Manager level (LMG2). This equates to 10 IRO/CPAs, 8 working full time and 2 part time. In order to manage the day to day

demands of the service across the year the Unit has at times required the services of two part time independent consultants.

7.3 This reduction in numbers for children subject to Child Protection plans has had a significant impact on IRO/CPA's caseloads and with the advent of the new caseload weighting system IRO/CPA's are seeing their workloads reducing and the average of 90 cases was sustained throughout the year, although this number is still above the national recommendations of the IRO Handbook of between 50 and 70 cases.

7.4 IRO/CPAs undertake a number of different activities:

- 6.6 IRO/CPAs chair CP Conferences as well as CLA reviews
- 3 IROs chair CLA reviews
- IRO/CPAs also see and quality assure all referrals for a conference on a duty basis
- 1 IRO has specialist lead for children with disabilities
- 2 IRO/CPAs lead LSCB training
- 1 IRO/CPA is part of the Young People's Participation Group
- 1 IRO/CPA chairs PREVENT meetings
- 2 IRO/CPAs led the implementation of the new Conference Model.

7.5 Amanda Glover, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), is also part of the unit and has responsibility for managing allegations against people who work, care or volunteer with children. Operations Managers Sue McGlynn and Alex Sutton act as LADO when Amanda is on leave.

8. Conclusion and actions for the year ahead

8.1 An inescapable pressure over the past year has been the impact of the financial savings that need to be made by the council. Promoting stability for children and young people whose lives have been characterised by instability and abuse so that they can be safe, flourish and realise their potential is a complex challenge to the skills and resources of the service as a whole. During this time of financial pressure, delivering any changes safely for children and young people will draw on the need for teamwork between children, social workers, IRO/CPAs and colleagues in health and education. The effectiveness of this relies on the continuation of good communication and IRO/CPAs raising issues, where necessary, in a timely way. The IRO/CPAs are ideally placed to have eyes over the wider system and to identify any emerging concerns at an early stage to assist in keeping children safe.

Key messages

Improvement activities for the year ahead:

- Half day workshops and audits focussed on Mental Health; Care Leavers; diversity needs; sibling contact
- Improved quality of outcome focussed care plans
- Review progress of implementation of new procedures for Annual reviews
- Develop new Dispute Resolution procedure
- Consideration to how the IRO role may function within proposed innovations bid to central government in developing our work with adolescents

1. Summary of Virtual School Developments and Achievements

1.1 The Virtual School (VS) consists of a team who work with Designated Teachers, Social Workers and Foster Carers to support the education of all East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Looked After Children (LAC) and formerly LAC wherever they are educated.

1.2 The VS is led by a Virtual Headteacher and a Head of School, the core team consists of 10 members of staff (7.5 FTE) plus a number of claims only staff, mainly Tutors and Teaching Assistants who work directly with children funded through Pupil Premium (PP). In addition there are 2 posts funded by PP that extend the remit of the VS to support adopted children and Care Leavers. The whole team consists of 3 Teachers, 2 Education Support Workers, 5 Caseworkers and 2 Administrators. The team was based in Hailsham Community College until April 2016 but is now based at Dunbar Drive in Hailsham although most of the team have adopted an agile approach and therefore work from a variety of bases.

1.3 The core services provided by the VS include monitoring and evaluating the attendance and progress of all ESCC LAC, to provide a named Caseworker for every East Sussex school and for any school outside of East Sussex that has an ESCC LAC on their roll. The VS provides advice, training and support for all those who are involved in a LACs education and will challenge any professional that makes decisions that may impede a child's educational progress. In addition to these core functions the VS manages the LAC PP which enables significant additional support for learning.

1.4 The VS organises a number of residential and day courses for LAC including a 3 day Year 6 transition residential, a 2 day Year 11 revision residential, spring school in the Easter holidays for Years 7,8 and 9 and weekly summer holiday activities for Early Years children. These residential activities provide the children and young people with specific skills and experiences, and at the same time ensure that VS staff build relationships with the young people that they support.

1.5 The Annual Children in Care Awards evening celebrated the many outstanding achievements this year. Just like the Oscars we invited nominations and all nominees and their carers were invited. Award categories were for Educational Achievement (Attainment and Progress), Making a Positive Contribution and Gifted and Talented. Award winners included two Year 11 students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) who achieved 5+ A*-C including English and Maths (including one who achieved an A in Maths). Care Leavers too received awards including one now at University having achieved excellent BTEC and Apprenticeship experience and another, also at University following excellent A level results. Enormous thanks should be extended to Bede's, a partner boarding school, who hosted and fully funded the event including a sit down dinner and entertainment. We continue to work in close partnership with Bede's who provide boarding places for a number of our children and allow us to use their facilities during the school holidays.

1.6 ESCC VS continues to be seen as a model of good practice nationally and we await with interest a DfE report into the effectiveness of VSs which we have contributed to. We also continue to work more closely with Ofsted and are keen to support the inspection process through, for example, providing inspectors with the corporate parents view of how schools support LAC to achieve their potential.

2. Virtual School priorities for the school year 15/16

2.1 To expand and increase the quality of the tutor programme and to recruit more skilled staff to provide direct support for children and schools

- A significant programme is in place of directly appointing, training and managing a team of Specialist Teachers. Currently 17 Tutors and 4 Support Staff are employed directly on a claims only basis. The cost of this programme since September 2014 has been approximately £155,000. 260 young people have benefited from this programme which contributes significantly towards academic progress, particularly in English and Maths and also improves attitudes to learning. All LAC are offered, and are encouraged to take up 1:1 tuition.

- The use of specialist staff to work with the most challenging young people to prevent permanent exclusion and reduce the likelihood of fixed term exclusions has also been expanded. Although the impact on overall exclusion levels and persistent absence has yet to be seen in the overall data, some very powerful individual case studies can illustrate its effectiveness on an individual basis.

2.2 To improve the skills and support for Designated Teachers and other school staff:

- The VS continues to support schools access to the Thrive programme, a therapeutic programme used in schools. 21 primary schools, 12 secondary schools and 2 special schools have staff who have undertaken the programme. In East Sussex there are now 50 Thrive practitioners across schools and Children's Service teams, 11 in ESBAS, 1 in adoption support, 1 in placement support and 1 in Lansdowne Secure Unit. The Thrive programme helps to develop a common approach and a common language in supporting all vulnerable children to access learning in schools
- Attachment training for school staff has been delivered in 70 schools over the last 4 years. 110 Early Years Practitioners have received attachment training. Over 120 foster carers have attended training by the VS in looking at ways to support the education of the children and young people they care for. Training specifically tailored to the needs of Designated Teachers continues to be offered although the uptake is low. The offer of coaching and support to Designated Teachers and key adults has been available but again the uptake remains low

2.3 To increase the capacity of the VS through working with and through other Children's Services teams

- There has been a very significant improvement with inter-team working with teams across Children's Services that work with, or make decisions that may impact on, LAC. There are now named designated officers, who understand the nature of the care system and share a common understanding of their duties as corporate parents. There are named officers in ESBAS (Behaviour Support Service), ISEND (Inclusion, SEN and Disability), School Admissions, Transport and the Speech and Language team.

A significant priority for the VS two years ago was to recruit an Educational Psychologist (EP) to work 50% of the time within the VS and 50% of the time with EP Team. This has so far proved elusive. Currently the VS is able to access 50 hours of EP time and, whilst this is extremely helpful, there are limitations on how this time is used.

2.4 To expand work experience placements and apprenticeship programme for Care Leavers and the provision of engagement projects..

- There have been 12 work experience placements provided to Care Leavers by ESCC since September 2014. This includes 1 FT internship for one of our undergraduates. There is a service level agreement and additional funding available for the Youth Employability Service (YES) to ensure that there are 2 identified YES Advisors who work with Year 11 and the Care Leavers team. Care Leavers are now part of ESCC Employability Strategy. An accredited course for independent living skills has been commissioned. A VS Case Worker has been appointed to work alongside the Care Leavers team to provide and commission engagement and enrichment projects for young people and help focus work on improving educational and training outcomes.

3. Virtual School priorities for the school year 16/17

3.1 To develop a Key Stage(KS) 4 intervention programme in partnership with other teams to support those young people who though successful in KS1 – KS3, for one reason or another, disengage and therefore underachieve at KS4.

- 3.2 To increase our capacity to provide additional educational psychology hours.
- 3.3 To work with the Assessment and Planning team in ISEND to develop a new Personal Education Plan (PEP) that will be compatible with school based plans.
- 3.4 To be clear about how we measure the progress that a child is making including progress from Early Years Foundation Stage to the end of KS1
- 3.5 To take into account Progress 8 measures of successful outcomes at the end of KS4
- 3.6 To build on existing good practice of joint planning between social worker, young person and Designated Teacher.
- 3.7 To develop extra-curricular programmes with partner organisations (and develop the concept of partner organisations) with an emphasis on identifying and supporting gifted and talented young people.
- 3.8 To develop and embed “agile working” across the team to ensure that accommodation restrictions do not present obstacles to team working

4. Use of Pupil Premium (2015 – 2016)

- 4.1 The PP for LAC of £1900 per child, is managed by the Virtual Headteacher and is used to support the education of LAC. In the financial year 2015 – 2016 the total fund was £859,464. The PP for formerly LAC (also £1900 per child) is paid directly to the schools that they attend. The PP for LAC in early years settings is £400 a year and is managed by the VS.
- 4.2 Requests for funding from PP, and the evaluation of the impact the additional resources have on learning, is identified through the PEP. Although in order to be responsive, requests can be made to the VS at any time by Designated Teachers, Social Workers or VS Case Workers.
- 4.3 A VS PP panel meet once a month to consider all requests. The criteria for allocating funding are in two parts. The first is that the additional resource will support the young person’s learning and improve their educational outcomes; the second is that the funding would not normally be expected to come from any other funding stream (such as core VS budget, SEN funding, school base budget, fostering allowances etc.) The criteria are well known and the evidence for this is that almost all requests are met.
- 4.4 PP may also be used to support groups of children and young people by, for example, providing specialist training for staff, supporting school based inclusion projects or by increasing the capacity of other teams, including the VS itself, to provide support for LAC and formerly LAC.

Table 1 – Breakdown of Expenditure

Budget Heading	Allocated	% Budget	Examples of Types of Expenditure
Alternative Provision	£56,730	7%	Includes accessing courses through third party

			providers such as DV8, Challenger Troop, Act on It and costs associated with work experience and other off- site provision.
Assessment	£5,500	1%	Speech and Language Therapists, EP's
Books	£25,226	3%	All children in primary school and those children who opt in in secondary school receive termly parcels of books and educational resources that we commission from "Bags of Books" in Lewes.
ESBAS	£39,440	5%	Ensuring that every LAC has access to ESCC behaviour and attendance support when needed.
ESMS	£11,121	1%	Ensuring that every LAC has access to the ESCC Music Service.
Extending Remit	£92,891	11%	Additional staffing to extend the remit of the VS to support all those children and young people who were formerly LAC(adopted children, those on Special Guardianship Orders and Care Leavers in full time education)
Extra Curricular	£12,692	1%	Music lessons (other than those provided by ESMS) and support for Sport and Drama.
IT Equipment	£19,557	2%	Laptops, tablets and associated hardware and software including apps.
Resources	£8,658	1%	A range of items such as magnetic letters, calm boxes, phonic resources etc.
School Based Inclusion Projects	£45,432	5%	Where schools with large numbers of LAC have developed inclusion projects that will benefit LAC and other vulnerable learners and have requested part funding
Schools Visits	£6,639	1%	Usually a maximum of one third of the cost of a school visit is supported (the rest coming from the foster carer's allowance)
TA/INA Support	£56,744	7%	Funding for schools to increase Teaching Assistant provision to support individual pupils
Therapy and Support	£77,007	9%	Fegans, Counselling, Sand play and Thrive sessions
Training	£43,826	5%	Mainly Thrive training. 18 schools have received support to enable a member of staff to become Thrive trained
Maintaining School Places	£205,835	24%	The cost of transporting children who have had to move home either because they have just come into care or where there has been a change of placement.
Tuition	£152,166	18%	The provision of 1:1 tuition in a range of subjects but predominantly English and Maths

Table 2 - Categories of Recipients

LAC	£737,493	86%
Care Leavers	£64,372	7%

Adopted	£8,187 ¹	1%
All Groups	£49,411	6%
Total	£859,464	

Table 3 – By Type of School

		No. of requests ²	No. of children
Nursery	£1,318	6	29
Primary	£222,578	557	166
Secondary	£202,833	452	155
Special	£53,212	112	63
Projects ³	£357,903	40	328
College	£10,965	35	82
University	£10,655	4	24
Total	£859,464	847	

5. Educational Outcomes (end of school year 2015)

5.1 For the last six years LAC in East Sussex have performed well at school when compared to LAC in other local authority areas. Since 2014 the proportion of local LAC with SEN has been greater than the proportion nationally with SEN and this has had an impact on reported comparative outcomes, particularly at KS4. Across all key stages in 2014/15 East Sussex LAC generally outperformed the national outcomes when broken down by SEN groups (those without SEN, those with SEN support and those with Statements of SEN or with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)).

5.2 The good educational outcomes for ESCC LAC are achieved as a result of a number of factors: a high proportion of “attachment friendly” schools, the collaborative relationship between social care and educational services, targeted and imaginative use of PP together with a strong sense of corporate parenting responsibilities.

5.3 In KS1 there were 13 children who had been in continuous care for the 12 months ending on 31st March 2015 who undertook KS assessments at the end of Year 2 last summer. 9 children have SEN (69% of the cohort). All the children attend East Sussex schools.

KS1

All Pupils	LAC (East Sussex)	All (East Sussex)	LAC (England)	ALL (England)
% achieving	L2+			

1 Pupil Premium for Adopted Children is paid directly to Schools. This sum relates to funding that has come from the LAC Pupil Premium .

2 The number of requests refers to the number of separate requests for funding in the year.

3 Projects includes all uses of Pupil Premium that benefit a number of different children for example school based projects, staff development and building additional capacity.

Reading	69%	91%	71%	90%
Writing	54%	88%	63%	88%
Maths	69%	94%	73%	93%

L2+ Reading	LAC (East Sussex)	ALL (East Sussex)	LAC (England)	ALL (England)
NO SEN	4/4 100%	96%	NA	96%
Statement or EHC Plan	1/4 25%	24%	NA	27%
SEN without Statements	4/5 80%	47%	NA	60%

L2+ Writing	LAC (East Sussex)	ALL (East Sussex)	LAC (England)	ALL (England)
NO SEN	4/4 100%	94%	NA	95%
Statement or EHC Plan	0/4 0%	19%	NA	21%
SEN without Statements	3/5 60%	29%	NA	51%

L2+ Maths	LAC (East Sussex)	ALL (East Sussex)	LAC (England)	ALL (England)
NO SEN	4/4 100%	98%	NA	89%
Statement or EHC Plan	1/4 25%	26%	NA	29%
SEN without Statements	4/5 80%	50%	NA	67%

5.4 Of the four children who failed to achieve level 2 in Reading and Maths, one was working towards national curriculum levels in all three subjects and three achieved level 1 in all three areas. Only one child achieved a level 2 in Reading and Maths but not in Writing. The four children who do not have SEN all achieved level 2s and in most cases achieved higher level 2s (2As and 2Bs). Two children (both with SEN) achieved a level 3, one in Reading and one in Maths.

5.5 In KS2 there were 30 children who had been in continuous care for the 12 months ending on 31st March 2015 who undertook KS assessments at the end of Year 6 last summer. 21 children have SEN (70% of the cohort) and 12 of these (30%) have Statements of SEN or EHCPs. This is higher than national proportions at KS2 where the percentages are 65% and 24% respectively. Of the 30 children, 24 are educated in maintained schools or academies within East Sussex and 6 are educated outside of East Sussex. In total 5 (17%) are educated in special schools.

L4+ Reading	LAC (East Sussex)	ALL (East Sussex)	LAC (England)	Non LAC (England)
NO SEN	9/9 100%	95%	94%	95%
Statement or EHC Plan	4/12 33.3%	39%	33%	30%
SEN without Statements	8/9 88.9%	72%	70%	69%
L4+ Writing	LAC (East Sussex)	ALL (East Sussex)	LAC (England)	Non LAC (England)
NO SEN	9/9 100%	96%	92%	95%
Statement or EHC Plan	3/12 25%	26%	20%	21%
SEN without Statements	8/9 88.9%	65%	54%	57%
Level 4+ Maths	LAC (East Sussex)	ALL (East Sussex)	LAC (England)	Non LAC (England)
NO SEN	9/9 100%	94%	89%	94%
Statement or EHC Plan	3/12 25%	28%	26%	26%
SEN without Statements	8/9 89%	64%	61%	64%

KS2							
All Pupils	LAC (East Sussex)		All (East Sussex)		LAC (England)		ALL (England)
% achieving	L4+	EP	L4+	EP	L4+	EP	L4+
Reading	72%	82%	90%	91%	71%	82%	89%
Writing	71%	79%	89%	96%	61%	84%	87%
Maths	69%	80%	86%	89%	64%	77%	87%
By SEN group							
Expected Progress Reading	LAC (East Sussex)	ALL (East Sussex)	LAC (England)	Non LAC (England)			
NO SEN	9/9 100%	n/a	95%	94%			
ALL SEN	14/19 74%	n/a	73%	78%			
Statement or EHC Plan	5/10 50%	n/a	53%	49%			
SEN without Statements	9/9 100%	n/a	85%	83%			
Expected Progress Writing	LAC (East Sussex)	ALL (East Sussex)	LAC (England)	Non LAC (England)			
NO SEN	9/9 100%	n/a	96%	97%			
ALL SEN	14/20 70%	n/a	76%	81%			
Statement or EHC Plan	5/11 45%	n/a	54%	53%			
SEN without Statements	9/9 100%	n/a	88%	86%			
Expected Progress Maths	LAC (East Sussex)	ALL (East Sussex)	LAC (England)	Non LAC (England)			
NO SEN	9/9 100%	n/a	92%	93%			
ALL SEN	15/21 71%	n/a	68%	74%			
Statement or EHC Plan	6/12 50%	n/a	49%	47%			
SEN without Statements	9/9 100%	n/a	80%	79%			
Whole cohort of 30 - progress cohorts less than this as some data not counted							

5.6 With the exception of progress in Writing, ESCC's LAC outperformed national cohorts in all measures despite having a higher than average number of children with SEN. All nine children (100%) without SEN achieved at least a level 4 in Reading, Writing and Maths, this compares to just 82% of LAC without SEN across the country as a whole. 43% of our children with SEN achieved level 4 in Reading, Writing and Maths compared to just 33% LAC nationally and 39% of non LAC. In terms of the progress children made all SEN groups outperformed national LAC outcomes in Mathematics and other than those with Statements of SEN or EHCPs, they also outperformed national LAC outcomes in Reading and Writing.

5.7 In KS4 there were 45 children who had been in continuous care for the 12 months ending on 31st March 2015 who finished Year 11 last summer. 40 children have SEN (89% of the cohort) and 26 of these (58%) have Statements of SEN or EHCPs. This is higher than national figures in England generally at KS 4 where the percentages are 55% and 23% respectively. Educationally, this is our most challenging cohort by far. Of the 45 children 33 are educated in East Sussex maintained schools or academies and 12 are educated outside of East Sussex (6 of these in special schools) In total 15 (33%) are educated in special schools.

(RAG applies to comparison with national LAC outcomes)

All Pupils	LAC (East Sussex)		All (East Sussex)	LAC (England)	England all 2015
% achieving	Cohort	%		%	%
5+ A*-C Including En and Ma	45	8.9%	56.3%	13.8%	57.3%
Expected Progress English	35	31.4%	72.5%	34.5%	71.3%
Expected Progress Maths	36	30.6%	68.8%	26.3%	67.0%
By SEN group					
5+ A*-C inc EN and MA	LAC (East Sussex)	ALL (East Sussex)	LAC (England)	Non LAC (England)	
NO SEN	0/5 0%	64%	31.70%	64.20%	
ALL SEN	4/40 10%	14.80%	8.20%	19.10%	
Statement or EHC Plan	2/26 8%	9.90%	2.80%	8.80%	
SEN without Statements	2/14 14%	16.70%	12.50%	22.10%	
Expected Progress English	LAC (East Sussex)	ALL (East Sussex)	LAC (England)	Non LAC (England)	
NO SEN	2/4 50%	n/a	54.80%	75.30%	
ALL SEN	10/31 32%	n/a	30.80%	46.50%	
Statement or EHC Plan	4/19 21%	n/a	17.70%	29.30%	
SEN without Statements	6/12 50%	n/a	41.80%	51.50%	
Expected Progress Maths	LAC (East Sussex)	ALL (East Sussex)	LAC (England)	Non LAC (England)	
NO SEN	2/4 50%	n/a	48.50%	72.50%	
ALL SEN	7/32 22%	n/a	21.60%	36%	
Statement or EHC Plan	2/19 11%	n/a	11.70%	21.40%	
SEN without Statements	5/13 38%	n/a	29.80%	40.20%	

whole cohort of 45 - progress cohorts are less than this as some data not counted.

5.8 Given the exceptional nature of this cohort these outcomes should be considered as a positive achievement given the proportionally high level of SEN. If indeed the data is analysed against SEN groups and comparisons are made with LAC and non LAC children the picture looks very different. The only group to underachieve were the group of 5 children who did not have identified SEN. Had two of these children gained a grade C rather than a grade D at GCSE English or Maths then East Sussex would have outperformed national outcomes within every group identified above.



East Sussex Return Home Interview and Advocacy Service
Delivered by Missing People
Annual Report: July 2015 to 31st March 2016

**211 RHIs
done**

**All targets
met or
exceeded!**

**67% CYP reached
within 72 hours**

56% take up of RHIs

32 CYP received ongoing support

374 CYP offered a service

96% of CYP gave permission to share everything they told us

9 local volunteers recruited

100% CYP offered 24/7 support

Safety plans, including for suicidal CYP and exploited CYP

100% of parents & carers offered 24/7 support

33 schools and colleges informed of our services

18 parents given extra support

Presentations to social workers, schools and colleges

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1. Executive Summary

The charity Missing People is the UK's only charity dedicated solely to missing children and their parents & carers nationally. We are specialists with over 20 years' experience in supporting this highly vulnerable group. 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, we work across the UK to reconnect missing children with a safe place and to provide a space for them to explore their options and problems without judgement.

We are commissioned by East Sussex County Council to provide a Return Home Interview Service and a 1-1 Support to children and young people across East Sussex between July 2015 and 31st March 2016.

Return Home Interviews (RHIs) are being offered to children and young people under the age of 18 who have been missing. RHIs aim to find out why young people went missing, what happened while they were away, and what support they need to be safe and prevent them going missing again.

Missing People took part in the Railway Children's research report into the Social Return of Investment for return home interviews. The cost finding was that £1 invested in RHIs and follow-up support achieves a social value of between £3 and £7, with a best estimate of £5.27. The report showed that of the young people receiving a RHI, 73% of their parents or carers said they had reduced stress. Positive outcomes for stakeholders were; safeguarding, achieving shared objectives, costs savings when missing episodes reduced and provided with police intelligence.

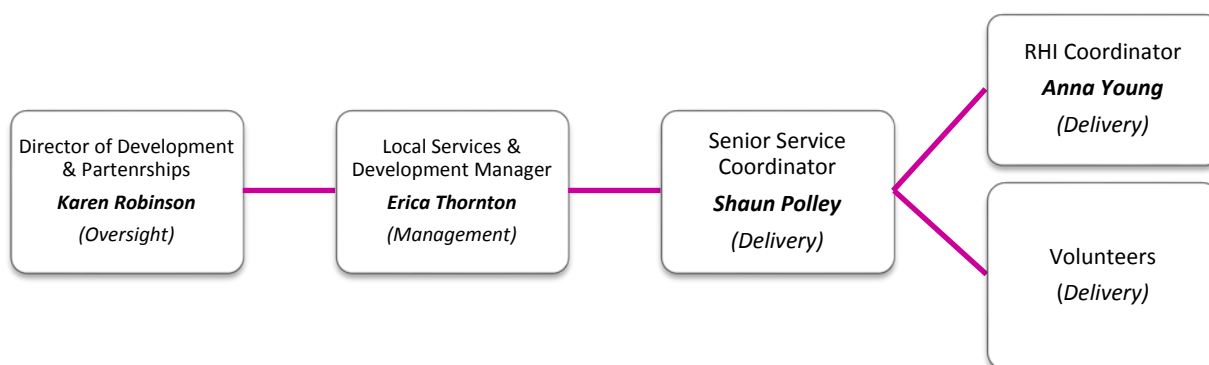
The 1-1 Support is offered to young people identified as vulnerable due to their missing experiences and provides one to one tailored support to help reduce their risk of harm.

East Sussex County Council recently led the jointly commissioned Pan Sussex Missing Children's Service. We were successful in winning this three year contract and are delighted to continue working in partnership with East Sussex County Council to improve outcomes for vulnerable children, ensure independence and enhance all partners' ability to safeguard and reduce risk to missing children.

This report sets out delivery and impact between July 2015 and 31st March 2016 and demonstrates how embedded our service is in management of risk to missing & exploited children.

2. Project infrastructure and planning: progress to date

2.1. Staffing



2.2. Volunteers

Our two fully trained volunteers began delivering RHIs in December 2015 and helped meet and greet Pan Sussex candidates for the second round interviews at our Head Office. We recruited seven new volunteers in December giving us a volunteer team of nine. They began their induction in January 2016, due to the tender process we have delayed the full training until our Pan Sussex staff are in place. Our volunteer team will conduct RHIs and support the administration of the project alongside the staff team. We plan to recruit more volunteers across Sussex and Surrey over the next three months. All our volunteers will have an enhanced DBS check and 35 hours of training and induction in readiness for their roles.

"I think having a volunteer come to see me is great because they aren't being paid to be there...they must really want to be there"

Young person (15)

3. Project Delivery: Progress to Date

3.1. The independent voice

In East Sussex we are pleased to be working in partnership with children's services and understand that there are occasions when another professional such as the social worker will be the most appropriate person to offer that young person a RHI.

Research tells us that missing and runaway children respond positively when a truly independent and neutral person offers them a Return Home Interview¹. In this context, many children define 'independence' as someone who works outside of the statutory sector and who has no 'official' powers or involvement in their care. For example, some young runaways *'feel more secure [talking to other services], because they need to have your permission to tell anyone, unless they think you're at risk'*².

¹ Here to Listen – Children's Society 2013

² Smeaton, E. (2013) *Running from hate to what you think is love: The relationship between running away and child sexual exploitation* London: Barnardo's and Paradigm Research

Our team have worked with Social Workers in East Sussex who share this experience, and often encourage our staff to approach the young person in the hope that this independence encourages disclosure. We have also conducted joint visits with Social Worker as a means of facilitating positive interaction either way.

Most importantly, we like to promote choice, and when a young person has a professional they would prefer to see – like a Social Worker or police officer - we encourage this to happen and lend our support as needed.

“My experience of Missing People has been very positive. They are skilled in working alongside young people and advocating their views and experiences whilst having an holistic view of their situations and the risks present”

Sharna Cass, MASH Manager

3.2. Referrals

484 missing episodes have been referred out of 521 missing between July 2015 and 31st March 2016, an **average of 12 per week**. **East Sussex County Council** commissioned Missing People to **offer RHIs for 425 missing episodes** in this time; therefore we have met and exceeded the requirements of the contract.

The referral procedure changed in the last quarter when we began receiving electronic notifications from COMPACT. This mechanism changed to help us save the administrative burden for the Police team and enabling us to reach young people soon after they return from being missing.

Sometimes young people choose to be seen by a Children’s Services worker because of their pre-existing relationship. On other occasions police or social workers feel it would not be appropriate for us to conduct the RHI if, for example, the young person is under the age of eight.

“I think it is important that we have been able to develop good working relationships with the Missing People team within the MASH as we have continued to liaise , assess and monitor the CSE risks to young people in East Sussex, my responsibility being the Hastings and Rother area, this then provides us with clear opportunities to make clear decisions and respond within the 72 hour timescales within our child protection guidelines”

Paula Black, MASH Manager

As soon as we are aware that a young person has returned from being missing the team attempt to make contact with a young person up to three times to offer them an RHI. The interviews are designed to gather information on why a young person was missing, what happened while missing and to assess their support needs so that relevant services and support can be put in place to prevent future harm and future missing incidents.

3.3. Delivery

Since July 2015 we were able to reach and **offer a service to 77%** of all missing episodes. **56% of young people** offered an RHI **received an interview** with 61% being the highest take-up rate in Q3.



Highlights for the year to date:

- We have achieved **56% uptake** of young people agreeing to a Return Home Interview
- We have **reached 77% of individuals referred** to the service

We have **offered a service to 93% (n484) of all missing children incidents** in East Sussex. While **12% (n113) of those referred were unreachable**, we have written to these young people to let them and their parents & carers know we are here 24/7 in case they decide they would like to access our support. Of the children we offered a service to, we managed to **reach 77% (n374)** and verbally offer the service. Of these;

- **55%** (n211) of episodes young people **agreed to a Return Home Interview**
- **31%** (n119) of episodes **young people declined** a Return Home Interview
- **11%** (n44) of episodes **parents or carers declined** a Return Home Interview for their child

In October 2015 we began collecting data for time taken, individuals, legal status, schools and risk indicators which is displayed in more detail in various charts and graphs in this report. Tables containing detailed breakdowns of the number of return home interviews completed by age, sex, legal status, LAC status, school are contained in Appendix 1 (page 12).

3.4. Time taken (72 hours)

Highlight for January to March 2016:

- **67%** of episodes - young people were **contacted within 72 hours** of referral
- **55%** of **RHIs** were **delivered within 72 hours** of referral
- **85%** of **RHIs** were **delivered within 5 consecutive days** of referral

In October 2015 we began recording the time it takes to make contact with a young person from after they return from a missing episode. We continued to monitor the time it took to contact from the time we received the notification from police because it wasn't until 8th December that we began to receive notifications directly from COMPACT. Missing People are now able to attempt contact with from soon after the time of return.

The data below shows how successful we have been in making contact with young people soon after they return from a missing episode. The number of episodes relates to the number of times we were able to capture this information. You will see from the chart below that we conducted

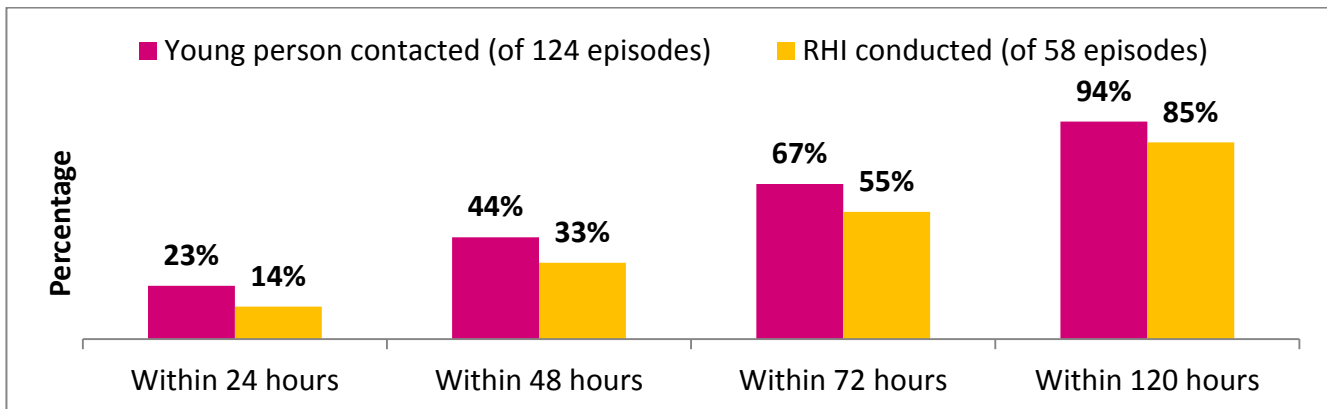


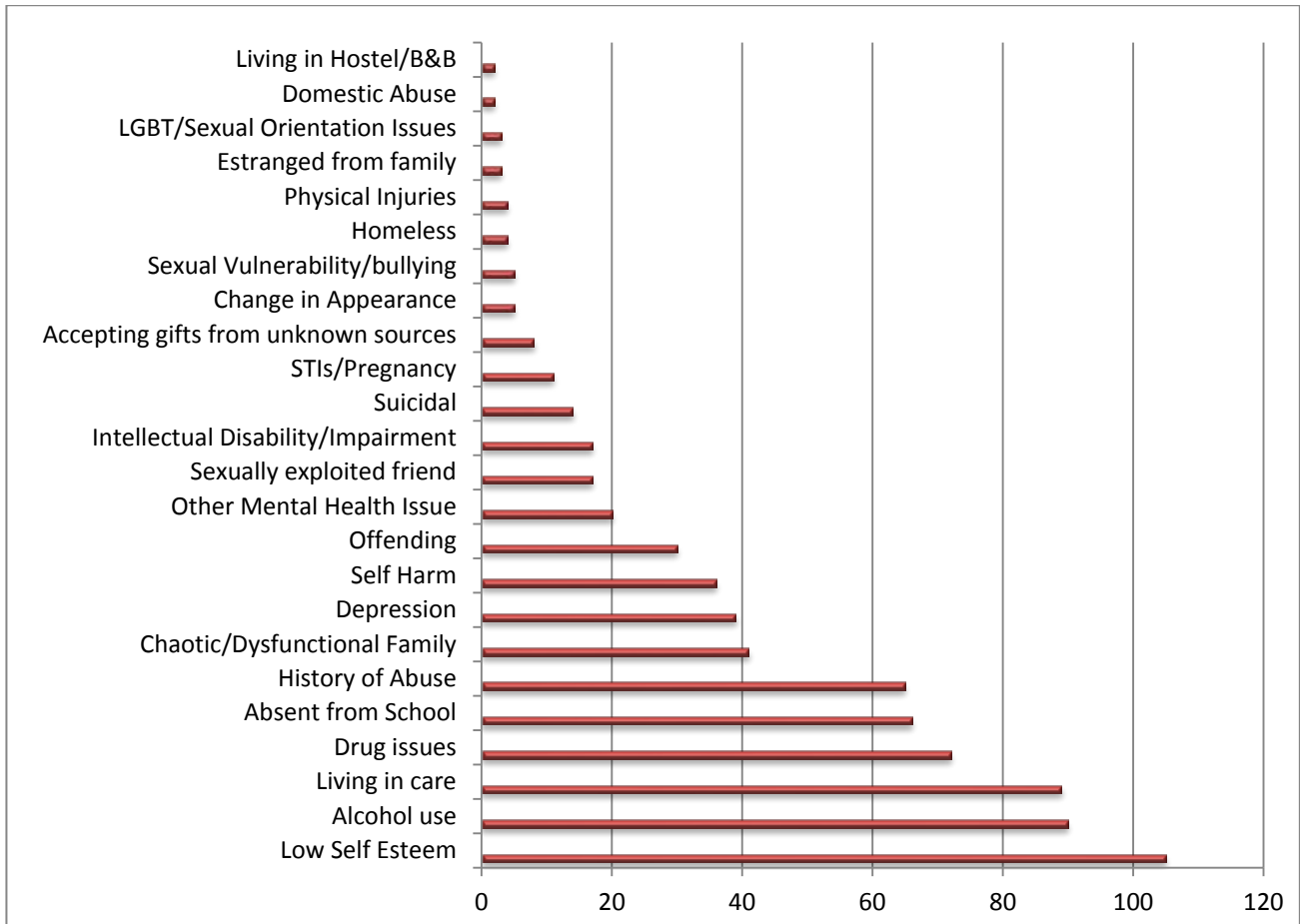
Table relates to data collected between Jan 2016 and March 2016

3.5. Weekend team

After successfully winning the contract to deliver RHIs across Sussex and Surrey we were able to recruit two Telephone RHI Coordinators who are based at our head office in London. They work weeked shifts, taking new referrals from Police and making contact with all young people and their families. This ensures that we deliver a seven day a week service and better safeguards those young people going missing over the weekend. This will also increase capacity to reach the 72 hour deadline.

3.6. Risk Indicators Identified

Since October 2015 (approx. 110 RHIs) we have recorded any of the OCC’s list of risk indicators identified during an RHI. We anticipate this analysis will develop as we move into a Pan Sussex level of delivery. The chart below relates to risk indicators identified during each missing episode.



3.7. Safeguarding

96% of children gave us permission to share every word they told us during the RHI!

Understanding why young people run away is essential to assessing risk and planning for the future safeguarding of that child. We find out why children ran away by working in a child-led way so that the child feels safe to talk to us. We have over 20 years’ experience of working in this empowering way, gaining the trust of children by employing and training non-judgemental and highly skilled people who will support them to open up and accept help. As a result, 96% of children give us permission to share every word they told us with statutory partners. If we had a concern that a child was at risk of significant serious harm, we would breach confidentiality if we were unsuccessful in getting their consent and work together with you to keep them safe from harm. We ensure that every child we meet is 100% clear on what will happen with the personal information they have shared, who will see it and what will happen next. We pride ourselves on the care we take to do this and children tell us it makes them feel safe in our hands. We feel that it helps them tell us more which allows us to work with them to address any harm they may have suffered or be exposed to.

"I can talk openly because I know what's going to happen next. They never hide things from me"

Young person (14)

When conducting RHIs we received information from young people on **15 occasions that we assessed as being a significant safeguarding concern**, subsequently sharing with Children's Services and/or Sussex Police and completing a Statement of Referral for each.

4. Added Value

4.1. 1-1 Support Service: referrals

Missing People's 1-1 support is designed to give practical and emotional support to young people who have been missing and where the risk of harm increases due to their pattern of absconding. They may need support with issues such as self-esteem, safe relationships, bullying and safety planning. For the length of the contract we have provided **32 young people with 1-1 support** which **surpasses our contracted targeted of 25** young people provided with 1:1 support.

Aims of 1-1 support;

- identify goals with every young person we support and plan an intervention which helps achieve these goals
- see each child weekly for a minimum of six weeks and a maximum of nine months
- identify the push and pull factors causing their missing episodes and develop plans to address these
- Support young people to understand and be resilient to (for e.g.) safe relationships, family breakdown, living in care, exploitation, bullying, self-esteem etc.
- Speak up for young people who need assistance articulating their needs to parents, carers, social workers and other professionals.

4.2. 1-1 Support Service: delivery/case studies³

Amy (not real name), female, age 11

We first met with Amy for a return home interview in December 2015. Amy was a victim of domestic violence when she was younger and had difficulty controlling her emotions, as a result she was frequently running away when she felt stressed or overwhelmed. Amy was particularly vulnerable as she seemed to have limited understanding of the risks posed to her whilst she was missing. Amy had also not engaged in education at mainstream school for three months. We were able to offer listening support not only to Amy but also to her mother who was having a difficult time managing Amy's behaviour. This support took place at the initial return home interview and at a follow up session in December.



We were able to help ensure Amy had a smooth transition to a more suitable school by providing weekly 1-1 support sessions to her at her new school over a period of 10 weeks. These support sessions gave Amy the chance to express her emotions and explore what “safety” means. Amy has completed a safety plan which helps her to identify who safe adults are (police/teachers/Mum) and what she can do if she feels like running away (calling the Runaway Helpline/talking to Mum).

Amy told us recently that she enjoyed her support sessions with Missing People as she thinks that tasks are fun but they also make her think about how to stay safe. Amy said she feels she can trust her Missing People support worker. We have been able to provide Amy with a consistent and reliable source of support through a difficult time for her and her family. We were also able to facilitate a handover to a long term support service for Amy to ensure that her emotional and education needs are met.

Since commencing support with Missing People Amy has not been reported missing again and said that if she feels she wants to run away in the future she has a better understanding of safety and how to manage her emotions.

³ Missing People always use composite case studies with the specific intention of avoiding anyone recognising themselves or their own clients. In this report, the composites are made up of East Sussex children.

Chloe (not real name), female, age 13

We first met Chloe for a return home interview in October. Chloe was running away because she was having problems at home (arguing with her parents) and she had also formed a new friendship group who were drinking and using cannabis.



Chloe said that during the initial meeting she felt able to talk openly and honestly about her feelings towards her family and her new friends because we explained we would only share information if there were risks involved. Chloe also disclosed her history of mental health problems and how she felt this was still a problem but she had no support in place to help manage it.

Following the RHI we were able to refer Chloe for long term mental health support and offer her 1:1 support sessions whilst she was held on their waiting list. During this time we facilitated meetings between Chloe and her family to help foster a more positive relationship between them which also helped Chloe open up to her family about her mental health.

Throughout our time working with Chloe we were able to build a positive and trusting relationship, having frank and honest discussions about the risks associated with alcohol and drug use. We were able to address all the issues that Chloe raised at her initial return home interview and explore any further issues she was facing.

Chloe said Missing People helped her to open up to her family and be more honest with them. Chloe's mother said our involvement with the family has been positive and helped her to get appropriate help for Chloe. She also felt that whilst on the waiting list with mental health services it was important for Chloe and the family to have a consistent and reliable worker to contact.

4.3. Family support

We offer Missing People's Family Support service to all parents and carers we have met and spoken with as a result of our RHI and 1-1 Support Service. To date, we have met and spoken with around **half of the young people's parents and carers** when we have undertaken a RHI or delivered our 1-1 support, and offered our family support services, which include practical and emotional support and a bespoke counselling service. To date **18 family members have received face to face support and advice** from the local team and many more are accessing help from our 24/7 Family Support workers. This includes advising parents on how to keep their children safe, how to report them missing and the 24/7 emotional support available from the charity.

"You've been the only consistent face that she's seen since the start of all this, it's been good to have someone who she feels comfortable talking to. Whilst things still aren't great at home at least she knows you've been there"

Mother of young person

4.4. Uptake of 24 hour helpline

We know that the helpline service has been well received by young people we have worked with in East Sussex and that a good proportion of children and parents we meet go on to use our 24/7 services.

We are offering our 24/7 free confidential helpline to all children, young people and parents we provide support to in East Sussex. Our helpline is confidential and callers can remain anonymous, so we will not always know whether they have accessed this service. Anecdotally, we believe that children and parents have used these services approximately 20⁴ times between July 2015 and March 2016.



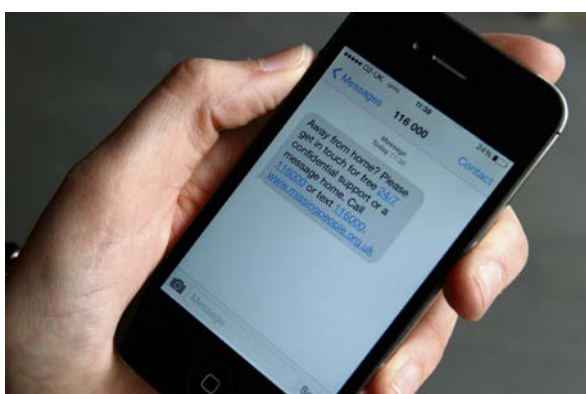
it's your call...

You can always talk to Runaway Helpline. We're here to listen and offer support. Not judge or tell you what to do. It's your call.

runaway helpline
call • txt
116 000
free • 24/7 • confidential

Click here to go to our new Runaway Helpline website

We also know that we speak to between 15-20% of children in East Sussex who have received a TextSafe® while they are missing. A TextSafe® is a supportive message that can be sent to a missing child's phone so they can reach the Runaway Helpline for free and confidential support. It lets the child or adult know how to reach help via phone, text and email 24 hours a day. Currently, Sussex police uses TextSafe® around 20-30 times per month and some of these uses will be for East Sussex children.



We are working with Sussex police to help them increase uptake of this service which is proven to safeguard and reconnect missing children. Furthermore, we know that when we have had contact with a child while they are missing it also makes the offer of an RHI upon their return more likely to be accepted.

Furthermore, we know that when we have had contact with a child while they are missing it also makes the offer of an RHI upon their return more likely to be accepted.

⁴ Estimated number based on feedback from young people, parents and Missing People staff

4.5. Publicising the project in East Sussex

Schools and Colleges:

- Schools remain the most common place for the team to conduct Return Home Interviews and are welcoming and supportive of the service.
- We delivered group work in Bexhill Academy to try and engage a young person who was going missing regularly but did not want to engage one to one with any professional
- Through our time in East Sussex we have visited numerous schools and colleges to raise awareness of the issues of missing and how they can access support for students.

East Sussex County Council:

- The team promoted the service to professionals in children's services teams across East Sussex between July 2015 and March 2016. Some teams were visited more than once and daily/weekly contact was maintained with managers and social workers whose children we supported.

Posters and 116000 Runaway Helpline cards are regularly handed out to Children's Services professionals, Police, schools and young people

Our newly re-branded 'Runaway Helpline' launched on 21st October 2015 as a way to tailor our branding for our 24/7 helpline to children and young people. The number is the same as the Missing People helpline number; 116000, and can be reached by call or text (for free) 24 hours a day. Due to the regular promotion of our core services we have also seen an increase in;



- Poster Partner sign ups; a network of businesses and premises' who join the search for missing children and adults by displaying posters,
- Support Partner Network members; a network of professional agencies who work with vulnerable people (for e.g. hostels, soup kitchens, health centres etc.) who receive notifications about vulnerable missing children and adults in their area and are skilled-up by us about how to support a missing person, and;
- Child Rescue Alert sign ups; a network of members of the public who agree to receive text message alerts in the event that a Child Rescue Alert is issued by police for a very high risk missing child
- TextSafe®, Family Support and Publicity; all of these services are being used more frequently by Sussex police meaning we can help to find and reconnect more missing children in East Sussex, and support their loved ones left behind

5. Future of the project

We are delighted to be chosen to deliver the Pan Sussex Missing Children Service (April 2016 to March 2019) enabling us to continue working in partnership with East Sussex County Council to improve outcomes, safeguard and minimise risk to missing children.

Author and contacts at the charity:

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Appendix 1 – Data recorded from July 2015 to March 2016

	Year (July '15 - March '16)		Q4 (Jan - Mar)		Q 3 (Oct - Dec)		Q 2 (July - Sep)
	Total number of						
	Episodes	Individuals Q3&4 only	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes
Missing	521		178	n/k	179	104	164
Referred ⁵	484		161	77	168	99	155
% of missing	93%		90%		94%	95%	93%
Reached ⁶	375		124	55	118	70	132
% of referred ⁷	77%		77%	71%	84%	84%	85%
Completed	211		59	22	72	40	80
% of reached	56%		48%	40%	61%	57%	61%
Young Person Declined	119		49	22	35	18	35
% of reached	32%		40%	40%	30%	26%	27%
Parent/carer declined	44		16	11	11	8	17
% of reached	12%		13%	20%	9%	11%	13%
Unreachable	58		27	12	21	12	10
% of referred	12%		30%	16%	13%	12%	8%
Social Worker dealing ⁸	14		3	3	11	6	0
% of referred	3%		2%	4%	7%	6%	0%
Other professional doing RHI	37		7	7	17	10	13
% of referred	8%		4%	9%	10%	10%	8%
Outstanding	0		0	0	1	1	0
% of referred					0.6%	1%	0%

⁵ 6% of missing not referred because Police assess it is not appropriate or another professional is permanently assigned to be dealing with all RHIs

⁶ Total = Referred – (Unreachable + Social Worker dealing + Other professional dealing + outstanding) – see chart on Page8 for time taken

⁷ Total = Referred – (Social Worker dealing + Other professional dealing)

⁸ Referred to MASH due to high no. of referrals or SW deemed most appropriate to deal

Number of completed; by location							
	Year to date		Q4		Q3		Q2
	Episodes	Individuals Q3&4 only	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes
Hastings & Rother	102 (48%)		31 (53%)	9 (41%)	30 (42%)	18 (45%)	41 (51%)
Lewes & Wealden	73 (35%)		15 (25%)	9 (41%)	20 (28%)	11 (27.5%)	38 (48%)
Eastbourne	36 (17%)		13 (22%)	4 (18%)	22 (30%)	11 (27.5%)	1 (1%)
Number of completed; by age							
	Year to date		Q4	Q4	Q3		Q2
	Episodes	Episodes	Episodes		Episodes	Individuals	Episodes
11	3 (1%)		1 (1%)	1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)
12	6 (3%)		0	0	2 (3%)	2 (5%)	4 (5%)
13	15 (7%)		5 (8%)	2	3 (4%)	2 (5%)	8 (10%)
14	84 (40%)		30 (51%)	6	34 (47%)	20 (50%)	20 (25%)
15	49 (23%)		7 (12%)	6	19 (26%)	10 (25%)	23 (29%)
16	37 (18%)		8 (14%)	3	10 (14%)	5 (13%)	19 (24%)
17	16 (8%)		8 (14%)	2	4 (6%)	1 (2%)	4 (5%)
Number of completed; by gender							
	Year to date		Q4		Q3		Q2
	Episodes	Individuals Q3&4 only	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes
Male	41 (19%)		11 (19%)	5 (23%)	17 (24%)	13 (32%)	13 (16%)
Female	170 (71%)		48 (71%)	17 (77%)	55 (76%)	27 (68%)	67 (84%)
Number of completed; by legal status							
	Year to date		Q4		Q3		Q2
	Episodes (Total LAC not all broken	Individuals Q3&4 only	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes

	down)						
Total LAC(Q2 not all broken down)	136 (64%)		26 (44%)	10	46 (64%)	24 (60%)	64 (80%)
East Sussex LAC (not all broken down)	44 (22%)		14 (24%)	7	18 (25%)	8 (20%)	12 (15%)
Other LA LAC (not all broken down)	50 (24%)		12 (20%)	3	28 (39%)	16 (40%)	10 (12%)
Child In Need	11 (5%)		10 (17%)	4	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
Early Help	22 (10%)		3 (5%)	2	17 (24%)	9 (22%)	2 (3%)
Not open to any agency	11 (5%)		4 (7%)	2	4 (5%)	4 (10%)	3 (4%)
Not yet known	3 (1%)		0	0	2 (3%)	1 (3%)	1 (1%)
Not recorded	70 (33%)		16 (27%)	4	3 (4%)	2 (5%)	51 (64%)
Number of completed LAC; by LAC status							
	Year to date		Q4		Q3		Q2
	Episodes	Individuals Q3&4 only	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes
IH Foster	21 (15%)		1 (4%)	1	11 (24%)	8 (33%)	9 (14%)
IH Residential	32 (24%)		7 (27%)	3	5 (11%)	5 (21%)	20 (31%)
Private Foster	15 (11%)		3 (11%)	2	3 (6%)	2 (8%)	9 (14%)
Private Residential	38 (28%)		8 (31%)	2	16 (35%)	7 (30%)	14 (22%)
Supported Lodgings	8 (6%)		0	0	7 (15%)	1 (4%)	1 (2%)
Not recorded	22 (16%)		7 (27%)	2	4 (9%)	1 (4%)	11 (17%)
Number of completed; by school attended							
	Year to date		Q4		Q3		Q2
	Episodes Q3 only	Individuals Q3&4 only	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes	Individuals	Episodes
Beacon Community College	4		3	1	1	1	n/a
Bexhill High School	21		17	1	4	3	n/a
Cuckmere School	1		0	0	1	1	n/a

Eastbourne Academy	2		0	0	2	1	n/a
FLESS	1		0	0	1	1	n/a
Hailsham Community College	1		0	0	1	1	n/a
Hastings Academy	1		0	0	1	1	n/a
Hastings College	1		0	0	1	1	n/a
Heathfield Community College	1		0	0	1	1	n/a
Helenswood Academy	5		2	2	3	1	n/a
Peacehaven Community School	12		9	4	3	1	n/a
Robertsbridge CC	5		1	1	4	1	n/a
Seaford Head School	1		1	1	1	1	n/a
Seahaven Academy	1		0	0	1	1	n/a
St Richard's Catholic College	1		1	1	1	1	n/a
Willingdon Community School	1		0	0	1	1	n/a
ARK William Parker Academy	0		0	0	0	0	n/a
Chailey School	0		0	0	0	0	n/a
Claverham Community College	0		0	0	0	0	n/a
Gildredge House	0		0	0	0	0	n/a
Priory School	0		0	0	0	0	n/a
Ratton School	0		0	0	0	0	n/a
Ringmer Community College	0		0	0	0	0	n/a
Rye College	0		0	0	0	0	n/a
Rye Studio School	0		0	0	0	0	n/a
The Bishop Bell CofE School	1		1	1	0	0	n/a
The Causeway School	1		1	1	0	0	n/a
The Cavendish School	0		0	0	0	0	n/a
The Eastbourne Academy	0		0	0	0	0	n/a
The Hastings Academy	0		0	0	0	0	n/a
The St Leonards Academy	0		0	0	0	0	n/a
Uckfield CTC	0		0	0	0	0	n/a

Uplands Community College	0		0	0	0	0	n/a
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East Sussex CAMHS
Looked After Children's Mental Health Service (LACMHS)

AUDIT 2015 – 2016
LAC in Fostering and Residential (not SECURE provision¹)

The Looked After Children's Mental Health Service (LACMHS) is a multidisciplinary child & adolescent mental health service managed by Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust (SPFT) and co-located with Children's Services. It provides a specialist service for children and young people who are in the care of East Sussex Local Authority and for whom the plan is permanence². The LACMHS has the following remit - to contribute to placement stability by supporting the mental health, emotional and behavioural needs of the looked after child and promoting positive attachments with their new carers.

DATA SUMMARY – Year 2015-2016

The LAC Mental Health Service (LACMHS) received **70 NEW referrals** during the year 15/16, all of which were accepted and an initial consultation offered. A number of children were also seen urgently due to the severity of the symptoms they presented such as suicidal thoughts and/or serious self-harm, depression or psychotic symptoms.

IN ADDITION there was also a cohort of ESCS LAC in receipt of **on-going therapeutic support** e.g. individual therapy, dyadic therapy (child and carer together), systemic therapy and/or on-going consultation to the foster carer and network. Over the year 15/16 this **ranged between 67 (3rd quarter) and 99 (2nd quarter) LAC.**

LACMHS also provided:

- *Two Therapeutic Parenting Groups (working with the carers of 16 young people, their Social Workers and Supervising Social Workers)
- *Weekly consultation to Homefield Broderick residential homes
- *Weekly consultation to the Care Leavers service
- *Monthly 'drop in' surgeries to the Fostering and each of the three LAC teams
- *Two Participation days for service users (children, young people and their carers)

¹ LACMHS provision to Lansdowne Secure Residential Unit provision has been funded separately by NHS England since April 2014 when commissioning arrangements transferred.

² For children/young persons involved in court proceedings there has been a Final Hearing and a Full Care Order granted (with a Care Plan for Permanence either through Fostering or Adoption*).

For children/young persons NOT involved in court proceedings the LAC Review Decisions from the IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer) confirm that the child/young person will remain looked after and that there is no plan to rehabilitate the child/young person with their birth family.

This does NOT mean: The child/young person must be in their permanent placement.

QUANTATIVE DETAIL

Year	15/16
<p style="text-align: center;">Number of new referrals accepted for initial extended consultation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SEE NOTE [1]</p>	58
<p style="text-align: center;">Waiting time (weeks) referral to <u>first available consultation</u> (mean, min-max)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SEE NOTE [2]</p>	8 (1 – 14)
<p style="text-align: center;">Waiting time (weeks) referral to <u>actual consultation accepted by referrer</u> (mean, min-max)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SEE NOTE [3]</p>	11 (2-50)
<p style="text-align: center;">Percentage of referrals discharged after one extended consultation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SEE NOTE [4]</p>	34%
<p style="text-align: center;">Average waiting time (weeks) for a therapeutic service after consultation (mean, min - max)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTE excludes those seen for priority assessments e.g. suicidal ideation and/or serious self harm, depression, psychotic symptoms</p>	30 (3 – 53)
<p style="text-align: center;">Number of children/young persons receiving on-going therapy from LACMHS during year</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SEE NOTE [5]</p>	99
<p style="text-align: center;">Duration (WEEKS) of contact (mean, min-max) for children/young persons CLOSED during 15-16 after on-going therapy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SEE NOTE [6]</p>	64 (1-172)
<p style="text-align: center;">Number of sessions (mean, min-max) for children/young persons CLOSED during 15-16 after on-going therapy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SEE NOTE [7]</p>	29 (3-98)

Notes to accompany Table 1

[1] All new referrals to LACMHS receive an extended network consultation of 2 hours duration with two members of LACMHS that is attended by the child's social worker, the foster carer's supervising social worker and the foster carer. Prior to the consultation the LACMHS clinicians read relevant documents such as the child's care plan, chronology etc. the aim of which is to ensure that the time is spent focused on the concerns presented. A written report is provided within 24 hours of the consultation outlining the concerns and recommendations made by LACMHS.

[2] All non-urgent new referrals receive within 1 week of receipt of referral a phone call from a LACMHS clinician to make an assessment of risk and to determine whether the young person needs to be assessed before the network consultation. Urgent referrals are responded to on the day.

[3] The maximum figure quoted (50) was due to a delay at the request of the referrer, which reflected continuing changes in the young person's network and an appropriate request to wait before continuing with the consultation.

[4] This is a relatively stable figure for LACMHS with a percentage of approximately 1/3 of referrals being discharged after the initial extended consultation, across many years.

[5] The range of on-going therapeutic work includes a variety of therapeutic approaches to assessment (e.g. Narrative Story Stem assessments, state of mind assessments, sibling attachment assessments, psychometric tests and neuropsychological assessments) and treatment (e.g. trauma work using EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), intensive psychotherapy, play therapy and CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) consultation and systemic therapy. All of the work is essentially multi-systemic, that is in collaboration with the wider network supporting the child/young person.

[6] The maximum figure quoted (172 weeks which is also the same case as the maximum 98 sessions quoted in the next box) was a case that could not be closed any earlier due to the level of trauma and risk the young woman presented. The intervention was a mix of network and child-carer work at different times and on closing there was a significant improvement in the young person's emotional regulation and capacity for seeking help appropriately and a significant reduction in self harming and aggressive/threatening behaviour to others. Had the case been closed prematurely it would have contributed to multiple referrals at times of crisis which were avoided by keeping the case open to us and varying the intensity of intervention across this period as dictated by need and concern expressed.

[7] Although provided for interest, this figure must be interpreted with CAUTION as it is by no means an accurate reflection of the hours attached to each case. For example a Narrative Story Stem assessment is typically

recorded as 2 sessions but takes approximately 13 hours. Likewise a neuropsychological (cognitive) assessment is typically recorded as 2 or 3 direct contacts but takes approximately 10 hours. In addition most cases require additional support outside of the direct appointment with phone calls for some in-between sessions and liaison with the wider network supporting the child/young person ensuring that a joined up approach to the child/young person's needs is aimed for.

QUALITATIVE DETAIL

Service user feedback (on both the quality of delivery and outcome on referred problems) received for LACMHS is consistently positive with the only criticism of the service being the delay for an on-going service. Examples of feedback received during the year 2015-2016 from young people, their carers and social workers:

"It has looked at the needs of the whole family and not just the needs of the child as although the child's needs are our main focus it has strengthened our ability to uphold that."

"Helped us to understand how M perceives her world and history and enabling us to better meet her individual needs. Specific and expert input."

"I feel that not only our child's needs have been appropriately identified and worked with but the input we have received has significantly contributed to the on-going formulation of a well functioning family unit."

"The appointments have always been positive and constructive. The care has been genuine and wonderful results have been achieved."

"My child and I have been able to build an excellent relationship with our therapist. She has listened, given sound advice and help and always responded to any concerns/questions in a positive and helpful manner."

"LACMHS have provided both our child and us with excellent information, guidance and support which has enabled us to continue to effectively manage our child's diverse and changing needs. Without support from LACMHS, SW and SSW and the Virtual School this would not have been possible."

"Being able to speak to the clinician and getting an understanding of underlying problems."

"Very kind staff and people who listen".

"All the professional advice given to me really helps and makes me think about the other ways of dealing with situations".

"Very helpful staff".

“Our clinician is very professional and the children look forward to seeing him”

“Overall a really helpful service”

“Being able to express myself and show myself what characteristics I have was really good”.

“The care was really good because my psychologist gave me some strategies/techniques to help me to calm down and to help me to control my anger. The strategies/techniques have really helped me a lot.”

“The service I received went well and everything was absolutely perfect, helpful, advisable and good. There was nothing I disliked”.

“They listened to the problems and tailored the sessions to the problem”.

“Felt we were listened to and all questions answered”.

“Good team work”

“Everyone that has been involved with the young person is very approachable and friendly”.

“I was kept up to date with what was going on”.

“Clinician was very friendly and helpful.”

Examples of feedback received from foster carers who attended the Therapeutic Parenting Group during the year 2015-2016:

“The Therapeutic Parenting Group training has been invaluable, an absolute game changer. We have learnt so much about brain based parenting, had practical guidance and support and an arena to specially focus on our child’s needs. The information, support and helpful suggestions offered within these sessions offered by both facilitators has been provided at a good and steady pace. The new techniques reviewed at each session has facilitated a deeper understanding and awareness of not only what brain based parenting is, but how to use it to meaningful effect. All of the topics covered have been so beneficial we will be continuing to study in more depth when the course is over”

“Found the trainers and their warm and compassionate approach, whilst also professional, helped provide a foundation to the group being a positive and supportive one – where it was a safe place to be. I found I looked forward to attending and it provided a positive therapeutic time for me. It also gave me time to stop and think. I think it is a shame this course is not more readily available to more foster carers and supervising social workers”.

"I thoroughly enjoyed the course. I feel I am better equipped to continue my role as a foster carer and have learned such a lot (about myself as well). Taking away a folder of useful literature to be able to refer to was useful".

"All information throughout the course has been of value"

"Learning new skills has really helped us all live in a calmer household"

In addition feedback from foster carers at an Education Committee inquiring into the Mental Health of LAC (3rd March 2016 on BBC Parliament):

"Really helpful in East Sussex. Very good. Only thing- discharge, the problem hasn't gone away, need CAMHS again if having flashbacks or something. The SW got (YP name) back in to CAMHS again in two weeks. It's been very good".

"I found service in East Sussex fantastic, really really good. Since moving to different part of the country, I've had no service for them at all around here".

CONCLUSION

LACMHS continues to work in close collaboration with its partner agencies to provide a respected service to ESCS LAC for whom the care plan is permanent accommodation out of their birth family. The response to new referrals is prompt (e.g. a risk assessment being provided within one week) and initial advice in an extended consultation thorough and inclusive of multiple perspectives with excellent communication across multiple teams and agencies. On-going therapeutic work is highly regarded.

However the prevailing issue for LACMHS over the last few years has been the increasing complexity of the LAC cohort and the demand for intensive on-going support to the child/young person and their networks. The impact on service delivery has meant that the waiting time for on-going therapeutic interventions has increased. A proposal for a Service Redesign to address some of this delay has been written for discussion with our partner agencies and commissioner.

Rachel Swann
Principal Clinical Psychologist
Looked After Children's Mental Health Service

June 2016