

Report to: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of meeting: 27 October 2017

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Title: Annual Progress Report of Looked After Children's Services
1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017

Purpose: To outline the performance of the Looked After Children's Service
between 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017

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

1. Background and supporting information

1.1 The Annual Report is attached as Appendix 1. At present the full comparative national data is still not available and so an update will be provided to the next Panel meeting so that local performance can be assessed in that context.

1.2 The services for Looked After Children (LAC) are supported via core funding from the CSA budget, a small proportion of the Dedicated Schools Grant and the Pupil Premium for additional education support for children.

2. Recommendation

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

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Local Members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: Annexes 1-5 as set out below.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 - LAC Annual Report 2016 – 2017

Listed within Appendix 1 are the following annexes:

Annex 1 - Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017

Annex 2 – Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service 1 April 2016– 31 March 2017

Annex 3 – Independent Reviewing Officer's Annual Report 2016 – 2017

Annex 4 - Missing People Annual Report

Annex 5 – LAC Mental Health Service Audit 2016 -17

1 Looked after Children Trend Data

1.1 On 31 March 2017 there were 558 Looked After Children (LAC) in ESCC; this represents an increase of 14 children (2.57%) as compared to 2015/16 and a rate of 52.7 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 57.2 and the 2016 England rate of 60.3.

1.2 There is a strong link between rates of LAC and the rate of children subject to Child Protection (CP) Plans, with arguably some risk held at that lower level. The rate of children subject to CP plans has shown an increase from 44.2 per 10,000 in 2015-16 to 44.9 per 10,000 in 2016/17. This is higher than the IDACI expected rate of 42.9 and the 2016 England rate of 43.1.

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 below 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. It has been calculated that the churn figure for 2016/17 is 175 which, when added to the total number of LAC, equates to the service working with 733 children. This total figure is higher than last year (729 children), but the churn rate was lower than for the previous years (185 for 2015/16, 179 2014/15).

1.4 There was an increase in admissions to care from 190 during 2015/16 to 198 during 2016/17. This increase was across all age groups. The number of 0-5 year olds admitted to care during 2016/17 increased from 94 in 2015/16 to 98 in 2016/17, with a slight increase in admissions for 6-12 year olds from 43 in 2015/16 to 44 for 2016/17 and for children aged 13+ an increase from 53 for 2015/16 to 56 in 2016/17.

1.5 At year end there was a decrease in the number of LAC discharged from care, from 191 in 2015/16 to 183. The number of 0-12 year olds discharged from care also fell to 106 during 16/17 from 117 in 15/16. This was made up of 77 0-5 year olds and 29 were 6-12 year olds. There was a slight increase in the 13+ age group from 74 discharged in 2015/16 to 77 in 2016/17.

1.6 These figures combined continue to show a picture of an overall increase in the number of LAC worked with during the course of the year. There remains a high level of activity with the cohort of 0 to 5 year olds given the increased number of admissions and fewer discharges as children became subject to Adoption, Special Guardianship or Residence Orders, or remained in family arrangements. The 6 to 12 year old cohort showed higher admissions to care with a similar discharge pattern (as in the previous year), producing a net increase over the year. This means that for this age cohort of children, once they enter care, they tend to remain in permanent placements. The 13+ cohort continue to show a higher level of admissions. This relates mainly to a few children with complex needs, who are often subject to child sexual and/or criminal exploitation, as well as children remanded to care, or who are unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASCs).

1.7 In terms of UASC, at year end ESCC was caring for 24 children, mainly male and over 16, with an additional 15 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. East Sussex also continued to accept UASC via the national dispersal scheme. A small 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 (2016 figures in brackets):-

with foster carers	429	(440)
Of these: in house carers	304	(313)
Kinship carers	38	(37)
Agency carers	87	(90)
Placed for adoption	30	(31)
In supported lodgings	14	(7)
ESCC children's homes	23	(18)
Agency children's homes	25	(26)
Agency special schools	1	(1)
Placed with parents	23	(16)
Independent Living	7	*
Youth custody/secure unit	5	(5)
Hospital/NHS establishment	1	(0)
Absconded	0	*

*not recorded as a separate category for 2015/16

2. Fostering

2.1 On 31st March 2017 there were 456 children in foster care. 392 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 older young people remaining in their "Staying Put" fostering placements through to independence. The number of East Sussex LAC placed with agency foster carers has decreased from 77 children in 2015/16 to 64 at the end of March 2017. The figures above illustrate that 86% of children were looked after by in-house foster carers, which is an increase of 4% from the previous year.

2.2 2016/2017 has been another challenging year for the recruitment of foster carers. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) experience is consistent with that of both of our neighbouring authorities and of Fostering Services nationally, who have all reported similar challenges. Fostering capacity appears to have reached saturation point in the South East and at times the placement team has found the Private Provider market unable to respond to the demand for fostering placements of any kind. Very complex and challenging children are particularly hard to place with sometimes 50+ searched yielding nothing.

2.3 21 households offering 50 placements were approved in 2016/17 compared to 26 households in 2015/16 offering 44 placements. 3 of these households were transfers from Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) providers, and 1 of these households already had an East Sussex child placed with them at the point of transfer. 17 further assessments did not progress to Stage 2 (presentation to the Fostering Panel) due to a combination of changes in personal circumstances that could not have been predicted earlier, incentives offered to IFA foster carers to remain with their agencies and concerns emerging about standards. Despite the fall in the numbers of new approvals, ESCC Fostering Service performs higher in relation to both recruitment and retention as compared to our immediate neighbouring authorities based on the Ofsted Dataset returns of 2015/16. More up to date comparative data is awaited.

2.4 ESCC Supported Lodgings carers provided a number of 'step-down placements' for children from residential and foster placements and for vulnerable homeless young people. As in the previous year, the service has seen an increase in the number of young people with very complex needs. A few young people have been able to step-down from therapeutic residential placements to supported

lodgings providers. This has in part been due to the support and training on offer to carers and to the increased approval of 6 carers being dual registered as both foster carers, and Supported Lodging carers. The use of Supported Lodgings carers as 'step down' has achieved a saving of £419,000 over the year, but more importantly it has also been in young people's best interests, supporting them on the path to independence. At March 2017 there were 34 Supported Lodgings households providing a total of 50 placements across the county. This has given the service a net gain of 2 households and one placement as a result of 5 resignations and 7 new approvals. A priority for 2017/18 is to recruit a broader range of Supported Lodgings carers as part of a Corporate accommodation project investment for 2017/18. Please see **Annex 1** for full Fostering Service Annual Report 2016-17.

3. Physical and Mental Health

3.1 Performance in relation to the timeliness of Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) during 2016/17 has improved. The proportion of IHAs completed on time (within 20 working days), increased from 49% in 2015/16 to 63.8% in 2016/17. 71% of initial health assessments were completed within 25 working days. At the end of March 2017 the contract for IHAs and for undertaking adoption medicals transferred from Kent Healthcare Trust to East Sussex Healthcare Trust (ESHT) following an effective transitional period from December 2016 onwards. This has the advantage of integrating IHAs, LAC health care plans and adoption medicals as part of the community paediatric service agreed with ESHT. The intention is to create greater clarity across the system with all health partners, including maternity services, health visiting and school nursing, and also with social work, adoption and fostering teams in ESCC. A more integrated pathway should lead to further improvements in timely IHAs and to the delivery of better health care plans for children.

3.2 The LAC Mental Health Service (LACMHS) received 64 new referrals during 2016/17, all of which were accepted and an initial consultation was 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 ongoing 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 78 LAC in receipt of this service. LACMHS also provided:

- Two Therapeutic Parenting Groups (working with 21 carers of 15 young people, their social workers and supervising social workers)
- Three Therapeutic Parenting Groups provided to the residential staff of Homefield, Brodrick House and Hazel Lodge
- Weekly consultation to staff at Homefield, Brodrick House and Hazel Lodge.
- Weekly consultation to the Through Care Team
- Monthly 'drop in' surgeries to the Fostering Service and each of the three LAC teams
- Mental health services commissioned by NHS England to Lansdowne Secure Unit, including sessions of a child and adolescent psychiatrist, a clinical psychologist, and a mental health nurse.

3.3 LACMHS continues to work in close collaboration with its partner agencies to provide a service for children with a care plan of permanent placement out of their birth family. The response to new referrals continues to be prompt (e.g. a risk assessment being provided within one week) and ongoing therapeutic work continues to be highly valued by all partners. The challenge for LACMHS continues to be the increased complexity of children within the LAC cohort, and the consequent demand for intensive ongoing support to the child/young person and their networks.

The impact on service delivery has meant that the waiting time for ongoing therapeutic interventions for some children continues to be lengthy. However; alternative ways of reducing waiting times are being discussed within the team, and with the management of Sussex Partnership Trust.

For a more detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis see **Annex 5** LAC Mental Health Service Audit 2016 -17, LAC in Fostering and Residential.

4. Adoption and Permanence

4.1

	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017
1. Number of children adopted	57	43	45	38
2. Number of adoption matches (children)	50	56	32	38
3. Number of permanent fostering matches (children)	10	7	10	14
4. Number of East Sussex adoptive matches (children)	40	33	26	30
5. Number of consortium adoptive matches (children)	1	6	0	0
6. Number of inter-agency matches (children):				
Permanence:	4	3	2	0
Adoption:	9	17	6	8
7. Number of prospective adopters approved (households)	44	50	41	30
8. Number of permanent carers approved (households)	8	4	2	1
9. Number of children approved for adoption up to 31 st March 2017 (including 2 re-approvals)	52	43	53	52
10. Number of children approved for permanence up to 31 st March 2017	24	26	14	32
11. Number of approved adopters waiting to be matched	17	20	22	20
12. Number of disruptions presented to Panel:				
Permanence:	0	0	0	0
Adoptions:	1	0	1	0

4.2 The number of children with a plan for adoption remained consistent with 53 in 2015/16 and 52 in 2016/17. This consistency was not reflected nationally, with some Courts appearing to favour Special Guardianship Orders over Adoption Orders. Locally there appeared to be more children who remained with their birth families during the legal process with an eventual removal than had been seen in previous years. This has the potential to build in greater delay in permanence planning for some children. The service placed the majority of children with ESCC adopters. Of the 44 children matched this year, 36 were matched with ESCC approved adopters, and 8 placed with interagency adopters. Of the 8; there were 2 sibling pairs, one sibling group of 3 children and a single child. Most of the children 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 as a result. The national 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 212 days as compared to 223 days in the previous year.

4.3 During 2016/17 the Agency received 192 enquiries from people interested in adoption, 81 households attended information events and 46 households moved on to register their formal interest. The conversion rate from information event to registration remained high, but unfortunately only 30 adopters were approved by year end. This fall in the numbers of new approvals reflects the national picture where there is often a mismatch between the type of child adopters want and are approved for and the profile of children needing adoptive families.

4.4 The specialist mental health service, 'AdCAMHS' has continued to offer a dedicated therapy and consultation service during the year to families post adoption. The service works to maximise adoption stability by promoting positive attachments within adoptive families which ultimately will hopefully prevent placement breakdown. At year end 'AdCAMHS' was working with an average of 65 families. The Adoption Service has continued to work closely with the Government's Adoption Support Fund to provide therapeutic support but sadly to date it hasn't been possible to move from a model that seeks funding for individual children/families to a potentially much more cost effective model of funding the whole of AdCAMHS. The placement of children with complex needs, or who are older and part of sibling groups always poses more challenges in the context of adoption support and sadly a number of older children have returned to the care system.

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

5. Residential Services

5.1 The children's homes have continued to make overall progress in both ensuring good outcomes for children and in improvements to their Ofsted ratings. All homes successfully completed therapeutic parenting training with their staff, delivered over several months by CAMHS colleagues. This has had a very positive impact on staff, and on the quality of care provided to the young people with the most complex needs and challenging behaviours. The homes have worked hard with a number of young people in their care, facilitating moves either back home or into supported accommodation.

5.2 In the summer of 2016 a new Registered Homes Manager was appointed to Brodrick House, thus providing additional capacity within the management structure in order to satisfy Ofsted regulations and expectations. This has helped to improve Ofsted inspection ratings across the homes with all being judged as 'Good' during

this reported period. Two new external Deputy Managers were also appointed to two of the group homes bringing new enthusiasm, and experiences to the management team.

5.3 The Registered Manager of Lansdowne Secure Unit had an extended period of absence during 2016. Fortunately this period was covered by a very experienced manager from an “Outstanding” secure unit from another local authority. Immediately after this interim appointment, Lansdowne was subject to a full Ofsted inspection. The new interim manager was instrumental in pulling together a rigorous improvement plan following a disappointing inspection judgement of ‘Requires Improvement’. Staff and managers worked hard with the improvement plan in place to reach a ‘Good’ Ofsted rating at the next full inspection.

5.4 Care of LAC who are disabled and Inspection outcomes of the two homes have remained strong. Over the year the Disability Service has moved to a model of having a separate registered manager for both the Bungalow and Acorns in December 2016 in line with expectations from Ofsted.

6. Care Leavers Service

6.1 In 2016 the DfE produced the strategy document ‘Keep on Caring’, which sets out a vision to reform support for care leavers based on innovation, system reform, and on the embedding of corporate parenting responsibility across society. It identifies 5 key outcomes that care leavers will be supported to achieve:

- Be better prepared and supported to live independently
- Have improved access to education, employment and training
- Experience stability and feel safe and secure
- Have improved access to health support
- Achieve financial stability

6.2 The Government has underpinned this strategy with revised legislation (The Children and Family Social Work Act 2017) particularly in relation to Corporate Parenting responsibilities, and is fully expecting that alternative delivery models will be explored and implemented. There is recognition that there is a need for a cross Government approach as many of the issues are interrelated. Key aspects of this new legislation requires Councils to provide a published local offer for all its care leavers, and to extend the role of Personal Advisors to support care leavers up to 25 years.

6.3 As a response to the “Keep on Caring” Government strategy, ESCC undertook its own self-assessment against the 10 ‘gold standards’, which have been developed from a range of sources including from the Ofsted framework, DfE data packs and the Children’s Commissioner. The framework allows ESCC to identify both its current strengths and the areas that need development. An improvement plan for the Care Leaver’s service is in place for 2017/18.

6.4 At the end of 2016/17, the service was working with 241 young people; 13 under 16, 71 16 - 17 year olds and 157 18 - 24 year olds. A significant proportion of these young people had highly complex behaviour with a range of challenging safeguarding issues. A ‘Through Care’ model has been established, whereby 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. This model has worked well for a number of children who have responded positively to the different approach and to a more empowering ethos.

6.5. The Care2Work strategic 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 2016/17 and it was pleasing to note that there had been a significant impact on the employability of this cohort of young people. With the appointment of an enterprise advisor and in line with the 'Keep on Caring' agenda, a new action plan and programme for 2017/18 will aim to consolidate and embed the good practice already established, and in particular to contribute to the Passport to Independence for each young person.

6.6 As of 31st March 2017, of the children who were in continuous care for at least 12 months before sitting their GCSE examinations, 72% (23/32) of 16 – 17 year olds (year 12) were in education, training and employment (EET); 71% (32/45) of 17 - 18 year olds (year 13) were EET. This performance, although slightly lower than last year, included a greater cohort of care leavers who had significant learning disabilities, and who were managed within the Disability Transition Service. Of all eligible care leavers, 13% (18/140) were at University.

National data updated in February 2017 for care leavers who are ETT, and were looked after (for a total of at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday including some time after their 16th birthday), show that ESCC performs better as compared to the national average and to the South East:

	National	SE	East SX
17 & 18 year olds	61%	59%	65%
19, 20, 21 year olds	49%	47%	61%

National data updated in February 2017 for care leavers who are 19, 20, 21, and who are eligible for Higher Education (HE) and were looked after for (a total of at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday including some time after their 16th birthday), again shows that ESCC performs significantly better as compared to the national average and the South East:

	National	SE	East SX
19, 20, 21 year olds	7%	5%	13%

6.7 As of 31st March 2016 there were 5 16 to 18 year old care leavers living in bed and breakfast accommodation. Clearly this type of accommodation is completely unsuitable for care leavers. To address these challenges, and improve outcomes for young people, on 22 February 2017, the Chief Executive agreed to invest £650,000 to transform the accommodation offer for vulnerable young people. The scope of the Project is as follows:

- Vulnerable young people including care leavers and homeless young people
- Increasing the numbers of supported lodgings providers
- Developing the market and undertake specialist commissioning for supported semi-independent and independent accommodation
- Developing a 'Staying Close' provision to residential children's homes
- Developing a medium and high risk Crash Pad accommodation

This work is currently being overseen by a Project Board whose membership comprises representatives of key commissioning bodies, housing authorities,

relevant service providers and young people to provide strategic, operational and specialist input and expertise. This includes the Assistant Directors of Children and Adult Services and Heads of Housing for the 4 districts and boroughs. The Project Board will report to The Health and Housing Subgroup of the East Sussex Better Together Programme Board to ensure strategic coherence. Progress in developing a range of supported accommodation options for care leavers and vulnerable young people will be a key priority for the forthcoming 18 months.

6.8 Transition planning for LAC who are the most complex in terms of disability is managed by a specialist Transitions Team, managed within Adult Social Care.

7. Performance

7.1 Although performance is set out in the grid below, the 2016/17 national data set 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 for 2016/17. There continues to be significant improvement in adoption timeliness and in reduced offending of LAC. However, there has been a dip in performance in placement stability (NI63 and NI62). This is largely attributed to some movements of children in large sibling groups (due to limited placement options at the point of reception into care) and to a small cohort of young people with complex needs and challenging behaviours. There has also been a dip in performance of care leavers aged 17 to 21 placed in suitable accommodation and young people aged 17-21 who were in education, employment or training. However, the other indicators in relation to employability of older LAC and care leavers remains well above the South East and national average (see 6.1 above). LAC in ESCC continue to achieve better educational outcomes than their peers nationally, particularly at key stage 1 and at key stage 4. A specific report from the Virtual School will be available later in the year when educational outcomes have been validated nationally. The Independent Reviewing Officer Report in **Annex 3** also provides some helpful information.

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

Indicator Ref	Description	2016/17 Value	2015/16 Eng	2015/16 Value	2014/15 Eng	2014/15 Value	2013/14 Eng	2013/14 Value
NI 58	Emotional & Behavioural Health of children in care	14.2 ↓	14.0	13.4 ↑	13.9	15.4 ↓	13.9	15.1 ↓
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)	479 days ↑	558 days	517 days ↑	593 days	520 days ↑	628 days	536 days ↑
Adoption Scorecard 2	Average time between an LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA	212 days ↑	226 days	223 days ↓	223 days	190 days ↑	217 days	199 days ↓

Indicator Ref	Description	2016/17 Value	2015/16 Eng	2015/16 Value	2014/15 Eng	2014/15 Value	2013/14 Eng	2013/14 Value
	deciding on a match with an adoptive family (3 year average)							
Adoption Scorecard 3	% of children who wait less than 16 months between entering care & moving in with their adoptive family (3 year average)	61% ↑	47%	59% ↑	47%	57% ↑	51%	54% ↑
NI62 Placements 1	Number of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year	13.8% ↓	10.0%	10.8% ↓	10.0%	9.7% ↓	10.9%	8.9% ↑
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	65.0% ↓	68.0%	64.0% ↔	68.0%	64.0% ↑	66.5%	57.4% ↓
Placements 3	% of LAC at 31 st March placed outside LA boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live	10.0% ↓	13.0%	9.4% ↑	12.5%	10.0% ↓	12.2%	8.7% ↑
Leaving Care 2 <i>* see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 17-21 who were in education, employment or training	55.5% ↓	49.0%	62.4% ↑	47.8%	52.6% ↓	45.0%	55.0%
Leaving Care 3	% of former relevant young people aged 17-21 who were in suitable accommodation	76.1% ↓	83.0%	81.7% ↑	80.7%	74.3% ↓	77.6%	85.3%
Thrive PI 9	Rate of Children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18	53.0 ↓	60.0	51.7 ↔	60.0	51.7 ↑	60.0	54.5 ↑
PAF C19	Average of the	90.3%	87.0%	92.8%	87.7%	92.6%	86.4%	93.5%

Indicator Ref	Description	2016/17 Value	2015/16 Eng	2015/16 Value	2014/15 Eng	2014/15 Value	2013/14 Eng	2013/14 Value
	% 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 the previous 12 months.	↓		↑		↓		↑
PAF C81	Final warnings, reprimands and convictions of lac	3.4% ↑	5.0%	3.8% ↔	5.2%	3.8% ↓	5.6%	1.8% ↑

** 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 2016/17, supporting the education of all ESCC LAC, care leavers and adopted children wherever they were educated. Pupil Premium from the Government 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 with the local community, which resulted in LAC being prioritised for a range of complementary services such as the establishment of the VS choir.

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

9.1 Multi Agency Children’s Sexual Exploitation (MACSE) operational and strategic groups continue for all children missing and at risk of CSE. The groups sit within the structure of the LCSB. The process involves monthly multi agency meetings on both sides of the county, co-chaired by social work managers and by the Police. A very positive multi agency audit was completed in January 2017 that identified effective working practices. A clear and emerging theme in the last 6-9 months has been the increase in cases relating to criminal exploitation where children aged 13-17 are being groomed and recruited to assist in the supply of illicit drugs, including heroin and crack cocaine, within East Sussex. This issue has been identified across the county, but with specific ‘hot spots’ in certain areas. A number of children from other Local Authorities, especially from London, are also being exploited criminally to come and supply drugs in East Sussex. Some of these criminals are also mixing with some of our most vulnerable children locally, thereby increasing the risks.

9.2 The strategic Action Plan remains a live document that is updated regularly and includes details of emerging themes from casework that is being carried out. The priorities for 2016/17 included tackling the emerging risks around criminal exploitation and continuing the greater awareness of and focus on boys who can be missed all too easily.

9.3 All Return Home Interviews (RHIs) relating to missing children in East Sussex are now carried out by a national charity, Missing People, who are an independent organisation commissioned to deliver this work across Sussex by the three Sussex Local Authorities and by Sussex Police. RHIs are offered to all children who are reported to and treated as missing by Sussex Police. As a new development in 2016/17, a weekly meeting took place between East Sussex MASH Practice Managers, Sussex Police and staff from Missing People. This acted as an additional check and balance in the system to ensure that all children being recorded as both missing and absent (not where they should be, but we knew where they were), were being offered an effective response. As part of this meeting, MASH Practice Managers have access to the current list of children in ESCC children's homes as these children are a particularly vulnerable group. The Registered Homes Managers are able to feed into this meeting to determine when they feel RHIs are also required for children categorised as absent rather than as missing but where an interview is needed given their overall level of vulnerability.

9.4 In 2016/17 32 LAC went missing, 11 of whom were missing more than once. There were also 8 LAC who were absent, and 4 of these were absent more than once. In terms of periods of when children were missing, there were 56 occasions of children being missing for less than 24 hours, 10 times when they were missing between 24-48 hours, 7 times when they were missing between 2 and 4 days and 13 times when they were missing for 5 days or more. All these children were actively tracked by Sussex Police and by Children Services staff. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed on high profile children who go missing and, where necessary, formal multi agency strategy discussions are held in line with Safeguarding Procedures.

9.5 Of the 32 LAC that went missing, 19 were male and 13 were female. 13 of this cohort were aged 16 and above. For further information on the data see **Annex 4**, the Missing People Annual Report.

10. Inspections

10.1 The inspection outcomes for the residential homes during 2016/17 were as follows:-

- Homefield full inspection 24/07/16 was judged overall as 'good'.
- Interim inspection 6/01/17 judged as 'improved effectiveness'.
- Hazel Lodge full inspection 22/07/16 was judged overall as 'good'.
- Interim inspection 14/12/16 judged as 'improved effectiveness'.
- Brodrick House full inspection 08/09/16 judged overall as 'good'.
- Interim inspection 24/01/17 judged as 'sustained effectiveness'.
- Lansdowne Secure Unit 12/07/2016 judged overall as 'requires improvement'.
- Interim inspection 21/02/17 judged as 'improved effectiveness'.
- The Bungalow full inspection 06/07/16. judged overall as "outstanding"
- Interim inspection 27/02/17 judged as "Declined in Effectiveness"
- Acorns full inspection 26/10/16 judged as overall "good"
- Interim inspection 26/10/16 judged as "Sustained Effectiveness"

11. Corporate Parenting Panel

11.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel met quarterly during 2016/17 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 Children in Care Council and from the East Sussex Foster Care Association. The reports set out below were presented and considered:

April 2016:

- Update on Preparations for SEND Inspection
- Safeguarding concerns for young people in Secure Training Centres
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Ofsted Inspection reports for the following
 - Acorns at Dorset Road
 - Brodrick House
 - Hazel Lodge
 - Homefield Cottage
 - Lansdowne Secure Unit

- Children's Home Regulations 2015, Regulation 44: Inspection reports for December 2015 & January 2016 for the following children's homes:
 - Acorns at Dorset Road
 - Brodrick House
 - Hazel Lodge
 - Homefield Cottage
 - Lansdowne Secure Unit
 - The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive

July 2016:

- Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2015/16
- Ofsted Inspection reports for the Bungalow – March 2016
- Children's Home Regulations 2015, Regulation 44: 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
- Annual progress report of the East Sussex Fostering Service
- Annual progress report of the East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service

October 2016:

- Ofsted Inspection reports for the following
 - Hazel Lodge
 - Homefield Cottage
 - Lansdowne Secure Unit
 - The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive

- Children's Home Regulations 2015, Regulation 44: 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
- Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference and ways of working
- Looked After Children Annual Report 2015-16
- The Virtual School Annual Report including the use of Pupil Premium

January 2017:

- Children in Care Council
- East Sussex Foster Care Association Annual report
- Ofsted Inspection reports for the following
 - Acorns at Dorset Road
 - Brodrick House
 - Hazel Lodge
- Children's Home Regulations 2015, Regulation 44: 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

12. Conclusion

12.1 Overall the LAC service continued to perform well during 2016-17 and to achieve good outcomes for children in the care of ESCC. Continued pressure on recruitment and retention of in house carers and on availability of placements within the private market in the South East has impacted on placement stability, especially for those children with the most complex needs.

12.2 The challenge for 2017/18 is 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 a context of reducing resource in Children Services.

