

Committee: **Corporate Parenting Panel**

Date: **27 July 2018**

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

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

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

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

1. Background and supporting information

1.2 Services for LAC are predominantly funded from the Children's Services base budget with some additional smaller funding streams supporting specific activity eg Virtual School activity from the Pupil Premium Grant.

1.3 The past quarter has continued to see sustained pressure on the system and at the end of June, ESCC had 606 children in care. Work has taken place to drill down into the underlying reasons for the steady rise over a number of months, with the conclusion that while the number of children entering the system over the past year has remained fairly stable, children are staying longer in placement in the context of the following factors:

- Older children who are being exploited both criminally and sexually
- Improved practice on neglect identifying larger family groups with a spread of children of different ages
- Courts being increasingly reluctant to approve adoption for some young children and also protracted legal challenges to plans for adoption delaying the permanence process.

1.4 The rate in East Sussex is now 57.2 and closer to but still below the IDACI expected rate of 59 (which would equate to 625 children). A total of 425 children were in foster care at the end of June, with 85 of those children in agency placements, a rise of 8 over the quarter. In addition we have 50 young people in supported housing options, homes or hostels. 23 children were placed for adoption. 6 children were placed with foster carers who are also approved adopters under the Fostering for Adoption pathway.

1.5 The number of children with kinship carers now stands at 45, some of whom have been placed with family members at the direction of a judge.

1.6 The number of children placed at home with their parents whilst subject to a legal order has reduced by 4 to 17. Planning for placements of this sort is always monitored rigorously in order to mitigate any risk factors and agreement to begin or end a placement with parents is given at a senior level. However some of these children remain placed with parents on interim legal orders during ongoing proceedings and hence they are not subject to internal Placement with Parent processes.

1.7 At the end of the quarter 33 children were placed in agency residential placements, a rise of 6 over the period. Budget pressure has been mitigated to some extent but not eradicated by a step down from residential placement to Supported Housing, a return home etc.

1.8 At the end of the quarter 1 ESCC child remained secured at Lansdowne; the same young woman who was reported as secured at the last meeting of the CPP. Her behaviour is still very troubled. It had been hoped that she would leave Lansdowne within this quarter however staff applied in June for her Secure Order to be extended by a Court and the search for a suitable placement to enable her to leave Lansdowne continues. This will be a very delicate piece of work with few options being identified given her complexity.

1.9 We have had no new remands to custody during this quarter and, at the end of June, there were no young people still on remand and awaiting sentencing.

1.10 Overall the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people has remained stable because, although ESCC has continued to accept transfer of young people via the dispersal scheme when it is possible to allocate social work staff, some of our young people have turned 18 and become care leavers. As far as possible new young people already placed in or close to East Sussex continue to be prioritised for transfer to ESCC to facilitate staff contact etc.

1.11 There numbers of children subject to Child Arrangement/Residence Orders has risen by 1 to 331 and 439 children were subject to Special Guardianship Orders, a rise of 2. Sadly a number of children have become LAC due to a breakdown in SGO placements for them.

1.12 During Q1 of 2018/19 1 complaint was received from a young person in one of our Children's Homes who was complaining that she felt that a member of staff was singling her out and making false allegations of assault and trying to get her arrested. An internal investigation was carried out and it was found that the assault was witnessed by a third party and reported to the Police, which was considered appropriate. The young person was warned by staff about her behaviour and offered a further meeting if she so wished. The complaint was therefore not upheld.

2. Conclusion

2.1 Pressure on the system continues, driven by the numbers of and costs for children and continued close oversight will be maintained.

2.2 1 complaint was received and investigated fully but not upheld.

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Director of Children's Services

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Local Members

All

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Children's Services LAC Summary between 01/07/2017 and 30/06/18

Background documents

None