

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** 11 December 2018

**Report by:** Director of Children's Services

**Title:** Annual Progress Report of Looked After Children's Services  
1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018

**Purpose:** To outline the performance of the Looked After Children's Service  
between 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

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**RECOMMENDATION:** The Cabinet is recommended to note the contents of the report

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**1. Background**

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 Corporate Parenting Panel meeting so that local performance can be assessed in that context.

**2. Budget Implications**

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.

**3. Recommendations and Reasons for them**

The Corporate Parenting Panel has reviewed and agreed the contents of the report. The Cabinet is recommended to note the report

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**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

The following documents are referred to in Appendix 1:  
Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018  
Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service 1 April 2017– 31 March 2018  
Independent Reviewing Officer's Annual Report 2017 – 2018  
Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Virtual School 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017

## 1 Looked after Children Trend Data

1.1 On 31 March 2018 there were 606 Looked After Children (LAC) in ESCC; this represents an increase of 45 children (8.1%) as compared to 2016/17 and a rate of 56.9 per 10,000 population. This is just below the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) expected rate (a measure in terms of population profiles and deprivation levels) of 57.2 and below 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 a sharp increase from 44.9 per 10,000 in 2016-17 to 52.9 per 10,000 in 2017/18. 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 2017/18 is 153 which, when added to the total number of LAC, equates to the service working with 759 children. This total figure is higher than last year (733 children), but the churn rate was lower than for the previous years (175 for 2016/17, 185 for 2015/16).

1.4 There was an increase in admissions to care from 198 during 2016/17 to 212 during 2017/18. This increase was across all age groups. The number of 0-5 year olds admitted to care during 2016/17 increased from 98 to 104 in 2017/18, with an increase in admissions for 6-12 year olds from 44 in 2016/17 to 50 for 2017/18, and for children aged 13+ an increase from 56 for 2016/17 to 58 in 2017/18.

1.5 At year end there was a decrease in the number of LAC discharged from care, from 183 in 2016/17 to 164. The number of 0-12 year olds discharged from care also fell to 89 during 17/18 from 106 in 16/17. This was made up of 60 0-5 year olds and 29 were 6-12 year olds. There was also a slight decrease in the 13+ age group from 77 discharged in 2016/17 to 75 in 2017/18.

1.6 The trend for the last three years is showing a picture of an overall increase in the number of LAC worked with year on year. During 17/18 there was an increased number of admissions and fewer discharges across every age cohort. This means that with the higher number of children being admitted to care, a lower proportion of the overall cohort moved into alternative permanent options such as adoption, special guardianship or returned to their birth families. This produced a net increase of children in permanent or long term foster placements, and significantly fewer in the churn data. The increase was largely related to the changes in policy and practice both locally and nationally in relation to children who suffer neglect, and the application of the Southwark Judgement whereby teenagers can be offered or request section 20 accommodation and hence become LAC rather than being viewed as homeless.

1.7 The trend within the specialist disability children's and transition services has been a decrease in the number of LAC. At year end 2016/17 there were 43 LAC, which reduced to 34 at year end 2017/18. Throughout this period personal budgets were being offered to support families in a flexible way and 143 personal budgets were given to families assessed as requiring support, with the aim of preventing harm and family breakdown. Placement of disabled children made when they cannot remain within their families has largely mirrored proportionally that of non-disabled children, with an emphasis on placing close to home and in foster care wherever

possible, with fewer children being placed in residential homes and out of county placements. At year end there were 8 children placed full time within the in house disability residential provision. The number of children placed out of county has reduced year on year to 8 children. These represent a small number whose health needs cannot be met within a family setting, local school or a children's home. 6 of these children are funded jointly by health budgets in the context of significant health issues, for example uncontrolled epilepsy or occasionally due to extreme challenging behaviour. The transforming care agenda and other local solutions are anticipated to reduce this number still further as plans are formulated to meet the health needs of disabled children more locally.

1.8 In terms of UASC, at year end ESCC was caring for 20 children, 4 fewer than the previous year. These young people were mainly male and over 16, with an additional 10 having ongoing support needs as care leavers. These young people usually arrived in a clandestine way via Newhaven, or were found elsewhere in East Sussex. East Sussex also continued to accept UASC via the National Transfer Scheme. A small number of young people disappeared from care placements before age assessments could be completed to determine whether they were indeed children.

1.9 The end of year snapshot data showing LAC placements were as follows (2017 figures in brackets):-

with foster carers	470	(429)
Of these: in house carers	331	(304)
Kinship carers	46	(38)
Agency carers	93	(87)
Placed for adoption	26	(30)
In supported lodgings	27	(14)
ESCC children's homes	21	(23)
Agency children's homes	29	(25)
Agency special schools	0	(1)
Placed with parents	20	(23)
Independent Living	4	(7)
Youth custody/secure unit	5	(5)
Hospital/NHS establishment	1	(1)
Absconded	0	(0)

## 2. Fostering

2.1 On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 there were 494 children in foster care. 409 of these children were placed with in-house foster placements as compared to 392 in the previous year. This includes in-house 'parent and child' placements, children subject to Special Guardianship Orders placed with their former foster carers and those older young people remaining in their 'Staying Put' fostering placements through to independence. As a result of increased LAC numbers overall, the number of East Sussex LAC placed with agency foster carers increased from 64 children 2016/17 to 85 at the end of March 2018.

2.2 As in 2016/2017 East Sussex County Council (ESCC) continued to be challenged in the number of foster carers that could be recruited. This is a national issue with the 'National Stocktake' report, published at the end of this financial year, confirming that there was a national shortage of foster carers.

2.3 Of the 534 referrals received between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, 437 resulted in placements being made or children matched with carers and 97 were ultimately not required. However, on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 there were still 36 active referrals for LAC waiting to be matched with foster carers. This will include children needing respite and some children for whom a planned entrance to care is being

delayed whilst we look for a suitable placement. It became increasingly clear that the fostering market was struggling to respond to the level of demand and complexity that ESCC LAC were presenting and thus that a search for an agency placement was not a solution to a lack of placement in house.

2.4 ESCC Fostering Service recruited 19 households offering 37 placements in 2017/18 compared with 21 households in 2016/17 offering 50 placements. 1 of these households was a transfer from an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) with both an ESCC LAC and a West Sussex LAC in placement at the point of transfer. A further 12 assessments were allocated and booked for presentation to the Fostering Panel but did not progress to completion. This was due to changes in personal circumstances, insufficient evidence or information provided at Stage 1, and in 2 cases there were family members who did not wish to be assessed and approved as foster carers. However, there were 13 fostering assessments still in progress at year end compared to 6 at year end in the previous year. Overall when the recruitment figures were combined with the retention data, ESCC had a net loss of 4.3%. This compared well with the last available national benchmarking data which was published in 2015/16 and set the national figure at a 12% loss.

2.5 East Sussex Supported Lodgings provision has continued to be an invaluable resource for LAC, Care Leavers and homeless young people. In 2017/18 the Supported Lodgings service benefitted from Corporate Transformation funding for the Housing and Accommodation project to extend housing options for Care Leavers and homeless young people. As a result of this funding, the service has reviewed its recruitment strategy to maximize the potential of all applicants applying to the service, and encouraged people with a wide range of differing skills and experiences to apply.

2.6 From June 2017 to the end of March 2018, 61 Care Leavers (85%) and 11 16/17 year old vulnerable homeless young people (15%) were placed with Supported Lodgings providers. In addition providers were encouraged to extend their approval potential to take more parent and child, emergency duty and complex placements. As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 there were 38 Supported Lodgings households providing a total of 62 placements across the county. In addition there were 9 new approvals, providing 12 additional beds.

Further detail is included in the Fostering Service Annual Report 2017-18.

### 3. Physical and Mental Health

3.1 Notifications to the CCG (Designated Nurse LAC) of entry into care have shown a significant improvement in timeliness through 2017/18.

East Sussex LAC KPIs – LAC Medical team	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr	3 <sup>rd</sup> Qtr
<b>Initial Health Assessments</b>			
ESCC Notifications of Entry to Care (requiring IHA)	43	60	42
ESCC Notifications received within 5 working days of entering care	17	46	36
<b>% received within 5 working days of child entering care</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>86%</b>

However, sometimes an appointment was delayed as consents and essential paperwork took a variable time to be sent to the medical team. In the last quarter only **12.5% (8/64)** referrals (including Notification, consents and essential paperwork) had been received within 5 days of a child entering care. This significantly impacted on the ability of the LAC medical team to see children within statutory timescales.

However further discussion is ongoing with health colleagues because it is often not possible to apply the 'Gold Standard' of having signed parental consent to a medical or which allows access to parental health records. Unsurprisingly parents can often refuse to sign and provide consent of any kind. Further work is underway to try and address this and improve the rate of timely health assessments.

3.2 The delays in a child being seen within 28 calendar days of entering care have been identified jointly and are being addressed by the LAC health operational group (ESHT and ESCC) that was set up when the contract moved back to ESHT. ESCC have now developed a robust IHA tracking system which, in collaboration with EHST colleagues, is giving a clearer picture of where delays occur and an ability to track all IHAs that were due for children entering care in any given month.

3.3 Review Health Assessments (RHAs) were initiated by the LAC Nurse team with requests for consent and paperwork from social care 3 months prior to an assessment being due, following this up as necessary with repeat requests at intervals. This resulted in the high percentage of assessments within timescales. This process was, however, burdensome for clinical staff and was affecting nurses' time and impacting on their ability to attend LAC reviews or to follow up on health care plans. Therefore from April 2018 the process of requesting a RHA is now initiated by social care. This process is still bedding in but it is anticipated that this will resolve the clinical issues.

3.4 Over the year to March 2018, the LAC nursing team undertook 386 RHAs. 61 of these were commissioned by other Local Authorities (child placed in East Sussex) and 10 were for children who were Looked After by ESCC but placed across the border (within travelling distance). In total 56 young people declined a review health assessment.

<b>East Sussex LAC KPIs - LAC Nursing team</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Qtr</b>
<b>Review Health Assessments</b>				
Number of RHAs completed by LAC nursing team	70	86	79	78
Number of young people declining a RHA	9	18	13	16
RHA of Primary children within 12 months of IHA or previous RHA	26/28	40/43	36/40	-
RHA of Secondary children within 12 months of IHA or previous RHA	34/34	29/31	29/30	-
RHA of 16 + young people within 12 months of IHA or previous RHA	7/8	11/12	6/9	-
<b>Overall % RHA, for over 5 years, within timescales</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>-</b>

3.5 There is a particular challenge in commissioning both statutory health assessments and secondary health care (including CAMHS) for children placed out of area as processes are often complex and different areas have a variety of arrangements with providers. The IHAs for East Sussex children and young people placed out of area over the year were invariably delayed unless a young person was brought back to be seen by the local LAC medical team within East Sussex. The LAC nursing team will cover RHAs for all children placed within a reasonable distance in order to avoid delay. Young people placed in Brighton and Hove travel back into East

Sussex for IHAs due to a variation in provision in that area. The LAC health teams participate in a regional NHS England network and this participation, together with the increasing collaboration with LAC health teams from neighbouring authorities, is beginning to address these concerns.

3.6 The LAC Mental Health Service (LACMHS) received 52 new referrals during 2017/18, all but 3 of which were accepted and an initial consultation was offered. The 3 which were not accepted were due to the referrals not meeting LACMHS criteria (e.g. no care plan for permanence). 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. Over the year 2017/18 this ranged between 72 and 79 LAC at any one time. LACMHS also provided:

- One Therapeutic Parenting Group (working with 10 carers of 8 young people, their social workers and supervising social workers)
- Two 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. One Therapeutic Parenting Group for LSU was also completed in April 2017.

3.7 LACMHS continued to work in close collaboration with its partner agencies to provide a service for children with a care plan of permanent placement away from their birth family. The response to new referrals continued to be prompt (e.g. a risk assessment being provided within one week) and ongoing therapeutic work was highly valued by all partners. The challenge for LACMHS has been 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 of this on service delivery meant that the waiting time for ongoing therapeutic interventions for some children was longer than the service would have wanted.

## 4. Adoption and Permanence

### 4.1 Supporting Information

	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	<b>2017/8</b>
1. Number of children adopted	43	45	38	<b>29</b>
2. Number of adoption matches (children)	56	32	38	<b>30</b>
3. Number of permanent fostering matches (children)	7	10	14	5
<b>4. Number of East Sussex adoptive matches (children)</b>	33	26	30	<b>30</b>
5. Number of ASE adoptive matches (children)	6	0	0	0
6. Number of inter-agency matches (children):				
Permanence:	3	2	0	<b>1</b>
Adoption:	17	6	8	<b>6</b>

7. Number of prospective adopters approved (households)	50	41	30	<b>25</b>
8. Number of permanent carers approved (households)	4	2	1	3
9. Number of children approved for adoption up to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2017 (including 2 re-approvals)	43	53	52	69
10. Number of children approved for permanence up to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2017	26	14	32	<b>24</b>
11. Number of approved adopters waiting to be matched	20	22	20	<b>12</b>
12. Number of disruptions presented to Panel:				
Permanence:	0	0	0	0
Adoptions:	0	1	0	1

4.2 In 2017/18 there was a sharp increase in the number of children with a plan for adoption (ADM) from 52 children in 2016-2017 to 69. Within this group there were 2 large sibling groups of 6 and 5 respectively, plus a sibling group of 3 and 8 sibling pairs. Of the single children between the ages of 0-2 years, a number of them had significant complex medical needs and developmental delay. This cohort of children was particularly challenging in terms of family finding.

4.3 Despite the increased numbers of children approved, there were a number of plans changed unexpectedly which caused some delay, this was primarily due to late removal from the family home or to medical and legal complications. Nonetheless 30 matches were completed this year which was largely consistent with previous years.

4.4 During 2017/2018 the Adoption Service received 198 household enquiries, 81 households attended information events and 43 households registered their interest in adoption. The conversion rate from information event to registration remained high but unfortunately only 25 adopters were approved by the year end, this was a drop of 5 on 2016/2017. This was in part due to a significant number of the applicants having far more complex histories than the service had traditionally received. A number of assessments could not be completed and resulted in the applications being paused, whilst others were counselled out of adoption completely. This is the second year when the number of adopters being approved was lower than expected, and this has had an impact on the family finding element of the Service.

4.5 The Government's regionalisation agenda has gained significant momentum in the past year with 5 pilot regions going live in autumn 2017, and a further 4 going live in autumn 2018. ESCC is committed to the Adoption South East (ASE) partnership which submitted a bid earlier in the year. This proposal was accepted by the DfE who awarded a grant of £750k to explore the first stages of the development.

4.6 The adoption CAMHS service, AdCAMHS, has continued to offer a dedicated therapy and consultation service. The unique partnership model enabled clinicians and adoption social workers to think together to consider the therapeutic needs of children and their adoptive families. Undoubtedly the service contributed to the increased stability in adoption, promoted positive attachments and ultimately helped to prevent adoption breakdown for some families. Due to the limited clinical resource the service has considered therapists offering more consultations to social workers and doing less of the direct work, which could be bought in via the national Adoption

Support Fund (ASF). AdCAMHS was offering therapeutic support to 64 children at year end.

4.7 The demand for an assessment for post adoption support has continued to rise. With the increased placement of children with complex needs, older children and sibling groups this has significantly raised the challenge of adequately supporting these families in the longer term. Some of the most complex family situations required the service to coordinate multidisciplinary approaches. In these situations it was essential that the service worked closely with colleagues in the wider social work teams to manage risk and safeguarding concerns which at times lead to the use of Child Protection Plans, or to children being readmitted to the care system. In addition, there were an increased number of adopters who requested respite due to the complexities of their adopted children and the impact of their presenting behaviours on the family.

Further detail is included in the Adoption Service Annual Report.

## **5. Residential Services**

5.1 Most of the children's homes have again received positive inspection outcomes from Ofsted during 2017/18. Brodrick Road maintained Outstanding overall, with Hazel Lodge and Homefield Cottage achieving an overall rating of Good. This is a real credit to the managers and staff teams within the homes as they care for the most challenging and complex young people who are unable to remain living in foster homes. Lansdowne Secure Children's Home was also judged to be Good overall in July 2017 with Outstanding in outcomes for education and related learning activities with a judgement of Improved Effectiveness in the interim inspection (which Secure Children's Homes are subject to regardless of their full inspection judgement) in February 2018. In relation to the disabled children's homes the Bungalow received a judgment of Requires Improvement in December 2017. Acorns received an Ofsted judgement of Good in August 2017.

5.2 Homefield Cottage is registered for 4 children of single gender (female) with behavioural and emotional difficulties between the ages of 11-18 years, it is located in a residential area of Seaford. The home had a very challenging mix of young people towards the end of the year, resulting in damage to the fabric of the home and assaults on staff. However, those young people were moved to different placements and a period of redecoration has since improved the appearance of the home allowing new placements to be planned for the coming months.

5.3 Brodrick Road is registered for 4 children of either gender with emotional and behavioural difficulties between the ages of 8-18 years, it is located on a residential road in Hampden Park, Eastbourne. The home has cared for some very challenging young people and has been able to offer very supportive and positive outreach support to young people returning to their birth families or to move on accommodation options aged 16+. Those who have moved on have been replaced by young people with equally complex and demanding needs but the staff team have ensured that they all have their particular needs met.

5.4 Hazel Lodge is registered for 4 children of either gender with emotional and behavioural difficulties between the ages of 11-18 years, it is located in a residential area in St Leonards on Sea and has maintained a reasonably settled group despite discharges and admissions during this period. Two residents were successfully returned to the care of their family, which was a really positive outcome for them. One resident unfortunately required admission to Lansdowne as a result of high risk involvement with local criminal groups and suspected county lines drug dealing.

5.5 Lansdowne has been granted £7.3 million by the DfE to expand the existing provision from 7 beds to 11/12 beds from March 2020. Work on the new extension will commence in October 2018. The new extension will contain a high dependency area which will meet the needs of those young people who have extremely challenging and complex behaviours and who need to be cared for away from the main group of residents for a time, until they can be integrated into the group. The work will make the home more adaptable and able to accept the types of referrals which are now being received from across the country. The management team will be planning additional recruitment of staff next year.

5.6 The Bungalow in Eastbourne continued to provide longer term care for severely disabled young people. It retained a relatively stable group of young people who would have been unable to live in a family environment, but who were enabled to remain close to their families with contact facilitated on site. The Bungalow team worked closely with the special schools to implement strategies for managing challenging behaviour and hopefully prevent breakdown of either the residential or the school placement. However, one young person was moved to a residential school due to her challenging behaviour which had become unmanageable in either the Bungalow or in the local special school.

5.7 Acorns in Bexhill provided regular overnight respite care for severely disabled young people. Despite this high level of support, some of the families were no longer able to care for their children and they moved in on a full time basis. Therefore Acorns managed a mixture of full time young people and those on respite. The strategy of reducing the number of disabled young people placed in residential schools, often out of county, meant that both units have managed some very complex and challenging behaviour during this period.

5.8 In relation to the children who receive a service from either The Bungalow or Acorns Unit there have been a range of specialist initiatives developed which include working with the transitions service to develop independence skills and move older adolescents onto adult placements at the age of 18.

## **6. Care Leavers Service**

6.1 As a response to the Government's "Keep on Caring" strategy, the revised legislation and the appointment of a National Care Leaver's champion, ESCC undertook its own self-assessment of the service against the 10 'gold standards', which were developed from a range of sources including from the Ofsted framework, DfE data packs and the Children's Commissioner. The framework allowed ESCC to identify both its current strengths and the areas for development. The improvement plan for 2017/2018 formed the basis of a more sophisticated Local Offer which was drafted and consulted on with Care Leavers in March 2018. There remains some ongoing work for 2018 in relation to the formatting of the Offer and dissemination to young people and Corporate Parents. In addition, the opportunity for Care Leavers to return to the service for advice and guidance between the ages of 21 – 25 years is now embedded within local practice.

6.2 At the end of 2017/18, the service was working with 277 young people which was considerably higher than the 241 of the previous year. Of this cohort, 12 were under 16 compared to 13 in 16/17, 94 were 16 - 17 year olds (71 in 2016/17) and 171 18 - 24 year olds (157 in 2017/17). A significant proportion of these young people had highly complex behaviours with a range of challenging safeguarding issues. The introduction of the 'Through Care' model where younger LAC with chaotic challenging behaviours were referred to the service at an earlier stage has proved very beneficial for an increasing number of children. The aim of the pilot was to establish a relationship between the young person and a care leaving specialist to establish a more seamless transition into independence. This has worked well and

very positive feedback has been received from a number of key stakeholders. A Coramvoice survey was commissioned to take place in the autumn of 2018 and will pick up this feedback directly.

6.3 The Care2Work multi agency 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 has been reviewed and updated until end of March 2019 to consolidate and embed the good practice already established.

6.4 As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, of the children who were in continuous care for at least 12 months before sitting their GCSE examinations, 90% (56/62) of 16 – 17 year olds (year 12) were in education, training and employment (EET). This exceeded the target of 80% and is an improvement of 18% on last year's data. 87% (27/31) of 17 - 18 year olds (year 13) were EET, exceeding a target of 70% and showing an improvement of 16% on last year's data. Of all eligible care leavers, four young people secured University places for September 2017 and the target for the percentage of Care Leavers at University was exceeded by 3% (Target 10%-Achieved 13%).

6.5 During the spring of 2017 there were no 16 and 17 year old young people placed in bed and breakfast accommodation and no over 18 year olds placed in bed and breakfast accommodation by the local authority. This was possible because of the additional investment provided by the ESCC transformation fund to improve the accommodation offer for vulnerable young people.

The Project has remained focussed on the 5 key areas:

- Vulnerable young people including care leavers and homeless young people
- Increasing the numbers of supported lodgings providers
- Developing the market and undertaking 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

6.6 Transition planning for LAC who are the most complex in terms of disability and who will continue to receive a service from ASC is managed by a specialist Transitions Team within Adult Social Care.

## **7. Performance**

7.1 Although performance is set out in the grid below, the 2017/18 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 or statistical neighbours for 2017/18. Despite there being a higher rate of LAC per 10,000, there have been some real improvements in performance in relation to adoption timeliness, placement moves and stability for children and suitable accommodation for Care Leavers, with good performance being maintained in the majority of other areas. There has been a dip in performance for young people aged 19-21 who were in education, employment or training. However, this is snapshot data and the other indicators in relation to employability of older LAC and Care Leavers remains well above the South East and national average. 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 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	2017/18 Value	2016/17 Eng	2016/17 Value	2015/16 Eng	2015/16 Value	2014/15 Eng	2014/15 Value
NI 58	Emotional & Behavioural Health of children in care	14.4 ↓	14.1	14.1 ↓	14.0	13.5 ↑	13.9	15.4 ↓
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)	454 days ↑	520 days	479 days ↑	558 days	516 days ↑	593 days	520 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)	220 days ↓	220 days	212 days ↑	226 days	222 days ↓	223 days	190 days ↑
Adoption Scorecard 3	% of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care & moving in with their adoptive family (3 year average)	64% ↑	53%	61% ↑	47%	53% ↓	47%	57% ↑
NI62 Placements 1	Number of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year	11.1% ↑	10.0%	13.8% ↓	10.0%	10.8% ↓	10.0%	9.7% ↓
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	70.2% ↓	70.0%	70.7% ↑	68.0%	65.0% ↑	68.0%	64.0% ↑

Indicator Ref	Description	2017/18 Value	2016/17 Eng	2016/17 Value	2015/16 Eng	2015/16 Value	2014/15 Eng	2014/15 Value
	adoption							
Placements 3	% of LAC at 31 <sup>st</sup> March placed outside LA boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live	10.3% ↓	13.0%	8.4% ↑	13.0%	9.4% ↑	12.5%	10.0% ↓
Leaving Care 2 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in education, employment or training	51.9% ↓	50.0%	53.0% ↓	49.0%	61.0% ↑	47.8%	55.0% ↓
Leaving Care 3	% of former relevant young people aged 17-21 who were in suitable accommodation	77.3% ↑	84.0%	76.5% ↓	83.0%	81.7% ↑	80.7%	78.0% ↓
Thrive PI 9	Rate of Children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18	56.9 ↓	62.0	53.0 ↓	60.0	51.7 ↔	60.0	51.7 ↑
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 the previous 12 months.	88.2% ↓	86.0%	90.3% ↓	87.0%	92.8% ↑	87.7%	92.6% ↓
PAF C81	Final warnings, reprimands and convictions of lac	2.3% ↑	4.0%	3.4% ↑	5.0%	3.8% ↔	5.2%	3.8% ↓

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

## **8. The Virtual School**

8.1 The Virtual School (VS) for LAC maintained a core staffing establishment of caseworkers during 2017/18. These staff supported the education of all ESCC LAC, Care Leavers and adopted children wherever they were educated. A Teaching Assistant was also employed to enable direct work with LAC at the point of transition to a new setting or at other particularly challenging times. The VS advises on the placement and sustainability of specialist provision for disabled children by working in partnership with the Joint Agency Advisory Panel within ISEND.

8.2 Pupil Premium from the Government enabled the school to enhance its provision to schools, carers, individual LAC and to recruit a bank of specialist tutors. The primary focus for the use of this funding has been maintaining school placements and direct intervention to improve educational outcomes and school attendance (for full details of pupil premium spend and activity can be found in the Virtual School annual report). The VS continued to work with Bede's School to support LAC in boarding school settings. This has had positive outcomes both educationally and socially for all of these children. In addition, the VS team have continued to foster excellent working relationships across the Council and with the local community. Champions from different teams within the authority have raised the profile of LAC to ensure that needs are met quickly and to support effective joint working.

8.3 The attendance of LAC has continued to be an area of focus within the VS, with staff working as part of a countywide strategy to secure improved attendance.

8.4 Training in attachment has continued across East Sussex schools and the VS continued to develop partnerships with others in the LA working in the area of Mental Health and Emotional Well-being.

## **9. LAC who are Missing from Care and who are at risk of Child Sexual and Criminal Exploitation (CSE/CE)**

9.1 Part way through 2017/2018, there was a change to the structure of the Multi Agency Child Sexual Exploitation Panel (MACSE). The primary change was to formally widen the remit of the MACSE panel to include children at risk of other forms of exploitation. The MACSE panel thus became the MACE Panel (Multi Agency Child Exploitation). The primary reason for this change was the continued identification of children at risk of criminal exploitation in East Sussex. This is most closely related to children being exploited to deal illicit drugs through county drug lines. The process still involved monthly multi agency meetings, on both sides of the county, co-chaired by Social Work Managers and the Police. A further positive multi agency audit was completed in April 2018 that identified continued positive working practices. The audit chose several of our highest risk children to be looked at in detail. The audit highlighted the positive multi agency information sharing that exists in these cases and that creative approaches are being used to try and reduce risk for children being exploited in this way. It was acknowledged however that criminal exploitation and county lines remains an increasing problem across East Sussex. We continue to see local East Sussex children being recruited and exploited in this way together with children from the London area who are also being sent to East Sussex as part of county lines activity. It is also worth noting that the recent OFSTED inspection in July 2018 also identified some examples of exceptional practice in how cases of this type were being addressed.

9.2 The strategic MACE Action Plan is overseen by the LSCB and remains a live document that is updated regularly and which includes details of emerging themes

from the casework that is being carried out. The priorities for 2017/2018 included continuing to tackle the continuing risks around criminal exploitation and developing better ways to disrupt county lines activity. There was a continued focus on male children and the particular challenges in supporting them with criminal and sexual exploitation.

9.3 Throughout 2017/2018, all Return Home Interviews (RHIs) relating to missing children were carried out by a national charity, Missing People, an independent organisation commissioned by the 3 Sussex authorities to deliver this work across Sussex. During 2017/18 however, concerns emerged about the performance of Missing People and a decision was taken in May 2018 by all 3 authorities to terminate the contract. This ended therefore on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2018 and the service has been brought back in-house. All East Sussex Children who are either LAC or subject to the MACE panel discussion have their Return Home Interviews offered to them by their allocated Social Worker (or trusted professional). All other East Sussex children have this service offered by a team of Caseworkers now based in the Multi Agency Screening Hub (MASH). The weekly missing meeting within the MASH continues on both sides of the county, reviewing all missing episodes over the past week. The Registered Homes Managers are able to feed into this meeting as appropriate. This reflects the recognition that this group of children are at a particularly high level of risk of and from going missing.

9.4 In 2017/18 54 LAC went missing, 32 of whom were missing more than once. There were also 10 LAC who were absent (ie not where they should be), and 4 of these were absent more than once. Of these there were 105 occasions of children being missing for less than 24 hours, 55 times when they were missing between 24-48 hours, 24 times when they were missing between 2 and 4 days and 10 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 54 LAC that went missing, 32 were male and 22 were female. 29 of this cohort were aged 16 and above.

## **10. Independent Reviewing Officer Service**

10.1 The Independent Reviewing Office Service (IRO) is managed off line and is independent of the operational service for LAC and Care Leavers. However, IRO's work closely with Social Workers and Managers across the LAC Service to ensure the quality and effectiveness of care planning and ensure best practice. ESCC IROs are a relatively stable staff group with many children having had the same IRO throughout their journey through care. They are a well-qualified and experienced team who exercise appropriate levels of challenge as part of the review processes.

10.2 Most reviews were held well within timescales, were flexible, tailored to the child's needs and were compliant with at least minimum standards. IRO's fulfilled most of their expected functions to at least minimum standards and evidenced areas of good practice. However, the increased numbers of LAC within the system resulted in increased caseloads for each IRO and did not allow for the level of scrutiny which ESCC should aspire to. During 2017/18 1549 LAC review meetings were held for 724 children compared to 1529 in 16/17 and 1229 in 15/16.

10.3 Participation by children in their reviews remained stable and reflected the performance of previous years. Whilst the majority of LAC were aware of their right to an advocate, the take up of this service was inconsistent and was identified as an area for future development. The Children In Care Council (CICC) reflected back to the IRO service during 17/18 that LAC reviews no longer felt that they belonged to

the child and had drifted away from being 'the child's meeting'. Feedback from them suggested that the process had become overly bureaucratic with too many people in attendance. The IRO service has begun working with the CICC, LAC Managers and administrative staff to develop a more creative document and child centred processes and there is a commitment to re-launch the approach to LAC reviews in East Sussex during 2018/19.

10.4 Disabled children have largely retained consistent IRO's who were familiar with their needs and communication methods. The take up of advocacy has been limited among disabled children with the exception of the in-house children's homes. It is planned that this will be addressed by extending the advocacy service to the children with most complex needs regardless of their ability to fully understand or request this service.

10.5 The action plan 2018/19 for the IRO service will include:

- Develop a standalone form for IRO contribution to Care Proceedings
- Embed and develop the CPD programme
- Enhance the profile of IROs through lead areas and facilitating training
- Ensure robust, consistent scrutiny of care plans with use of the issues resolution process where necessary
- Roll out a more child friendly LAC review process/document in line with statutory duties and the requests of the CICC.
- Drive up standards within the unit to ensure that review decisions are circulated within timescales.
- Increase the expectation that IROs will visit or at least communicate with all LAC aged 5 and over between reviews.
- IROs will routinely record the quality of Health Assessments and PEPs.
- Dental Health amongst LAC in ESCC has been identified as being a particular cause for concern. This will be a focus for improvement across the LAC Service in 2018/2019. IROs will contribute to this target through pre and post review monitoring / discussions with carers, social workers and young people.

## **11. Corporate Parenting Panel**

11.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel met quarterly during 2017/18 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 2017:

- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Ofsted Inspection reports for the following children's homes:
  - Acorns at Dorset Road
  - The Bungalow
  - Homefield Cottage
  - Lansdowne Secure Unit
- Children's Home Regulations 2015, Regulation 44: Inspection reports for December 2016 to February 2017 for the following children's homes:
  - Acorns at Dorset Road
  - Brodrick House
  - Hazel Lodge
  - Homefield Cottage
  - Lansdowne Secure Unit
  - The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive

#### July 2017:

- Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2016/17
- Annual progress report of the East Sussex Fostering Service
- Annual progress report of the East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Ofsted Inspection reports for the following children's homes:
  - Hazel Lodge
- Children's Home Regulations 2015, Regulation 44: Inspection reports for April 2017 to June 2017 for the following children's homes:
  - Acorns at Dorset Road
  - Brodrick House
  - Hazel Lodge
  - Homefield Cottage
  - Lansdowne Secure Unit
  - The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive

#### October 2017:

- Looked After Children (LAC) Annual Report
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Ofsted Inspection reports for the following children's' homes
  - Lansdowne Secure Unit
  - Brodrick House
  - Acorns at Dorset Road
- Childrens' Home Regulations, Regulation 44: Inspection reports for August 2017 – September 2017 for the following children's homes:
  - Acorns at Dorset Road
  - Brodrick House
  - Hazel Lodge
  - Homefield Cottage
  - Lansdowne Secure Unit
  - The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive

#### January 2018

- Presentation from the Children In Care Council (CiCC)
- East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA)
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- The Virtual School Annual Report, including the use of Pupil Premium
- Ofsted inspection reports for the following children's homes
  - The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive
- Children's Home Regulations 2015, Regulation 44: Inspection reports for October 2017 – November 2017 for the following children's homes:
  - Acorns at Dorset Road
  - Brodrick House
  - Hazel Lodge
  - Homefield Cottage
  - Lansdowne Secure Unit
  - The Bungalow Sorrell Drive

## 12. Conclusion

12.1 Overall the LAC service continued to perform well during 2017-18 and to achieve good outcomes for children in the care of ESCC. The 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 2018/19 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.

12.3 It should be noted that shortly following year end, an Ofsted ILACs inspection was completed and reviewed the performance of the LAC services. It was very pleasing to note that a judgement of Outstanding was given to the overall service.