

**AGENDA ITEM:**

**Report to:** Corporate Parenting Panel

**Date:** 26 July 2019

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

**Title of report:** Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service  
01 April 2018 – 31 March 2019

**Purpose of report:** To outline the performance of the Fostering Service between  
01 April 2018 – 31 March 2019

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

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

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**1 Background information**

1.1 The Annual Progress report of the East Sussex Fostering Service is attached as Appendix 1.

**2 Recommendation**

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

**STUART GALLIMORE**

Director of Children's Services

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Local Members:

All

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service 01 April 2018 – 31 March 2019

Background documents

None

## **Appendix 1 – Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service 01 April 2018 – 31 March 2019**

### **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 which are addressed fully throughout the report. The core functions are as listed:

- Recruitment and retention
- Assessment
- Supervision and review
- Foster carer training
- The matching and placing of children and young people with foster carers and supported lodgings providers.

### **2. Recruitment and Retention of Carers**

2.1 The national challenge of recruiting foster carers was reflected locally and continued throughout 2018/19. Although The Fostering Service met this challenge with a robust and effective recruitment campaign and exceeded the recruitment achievements of its neighbouring authorities, the final number recruited for this period did fall short of expectations and of what we need. The summer of 2018 saw an Ofsted inspection of our Looked After Children's services (LAC) during which inspectors acknowledged the national challenge of foster carer recruitment and congratulated East Sussex County Council (ESCC) on their outcomes despite these pressures.

2.2 The numbers of LAC being placed with independent fostering agencies (IFA's) remained at similar levels as in 2017-8. The service continues to invest time and effort into encouraging IFA carers to transfer to East Sussex. Although this year saw 2 households transferring to ESCC, not all IFA carers completed the process due to IFA's using added incentives to retain them, such as increased allowances and offers of further placements.

2.3 Efficient assessment processes and tight timescales to approval continue to be an important factor in attracting carers to ESCC. An audit of our foster carer approvals over this period sees The Fostering Service retaining its timescale of assessments of 6-8 months.

2.4 From 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019, 266 new enquiries were received which led to 118 screening calls and 70 initial visits to prospective foster carers. Although 2018-19 saw the number of new enquiries fall as compared with the 2017-18 figures of 346 these enquiries translated into a larger number of completed fostering approvals. This would evidence that The Fostering Service's marketing strategy is attracting applicants with the vocation and skills to complete the process of approval.

2.5 'Skills to Foster' is an integral part of the approval process giving prospective foster carers an opportunity to meet and train with other applicants. There were 5 'Skills to Foster' pre-assessment preparation courses held during 2018/19 and 29 households attended. During the assessment process, the Children in Care Council (CICC) continued to play an active role by holding sets of informal interviews with applicants and providing feedback for the final assessment report.

2.6 21 households offering 36 placements were approved in 2018/19 compared with 19 households offering 37 placements in 2017/18. 1 of these households was an agency foster carer transferring from an Independent Fostering Agency (with an ESCC child in placement), and a further foster carer transferring from another local authority offering a placement for 3 young people. There were a further 14 assessments that were allocated for assessment and booked for presentation to the Fostering Panel that unfortunately did not progress. The reasons were as follows:

- 8 cases where the applicants withdrew due to changes in their personal circumstances. However 5 of these situations will see these applicants returning to East Sussex once the issues in their personal circumstances have been addressed.
- 1 case where the applicant, after an incentive from their IFA decided to remain with their agency.
- 1 case closed by The Fostering Service due to the information received at stage 1 of the assessment.
- 2 cases where The Fostering Service decided to suspend the application due to the needs of the children within their own family.
- 2 cases where The Fostering Service was unable to evidence that the applicants met the required standards of schedule 3 of the fostering regulations.

2.7 There were 9 fostering assessments in progress as of the 31 March 2019 booked onto the Skills to Foster courses in May and July 2019.

2.8 During 2018-19 the retirement figure for existing foster carers stabilised (compared to 2017-18 where 22 foster carers retired), with the service only losing 10 carers. The total figure of carers lost for 2018-19 was 17 and the reasons were as follows:

- Retirement - 10
- Divorce – 1
- Termination of approval following standards of care investigation – 4
- Foster carers obtaining special guardianship order – 1
- Terminal illness – 1

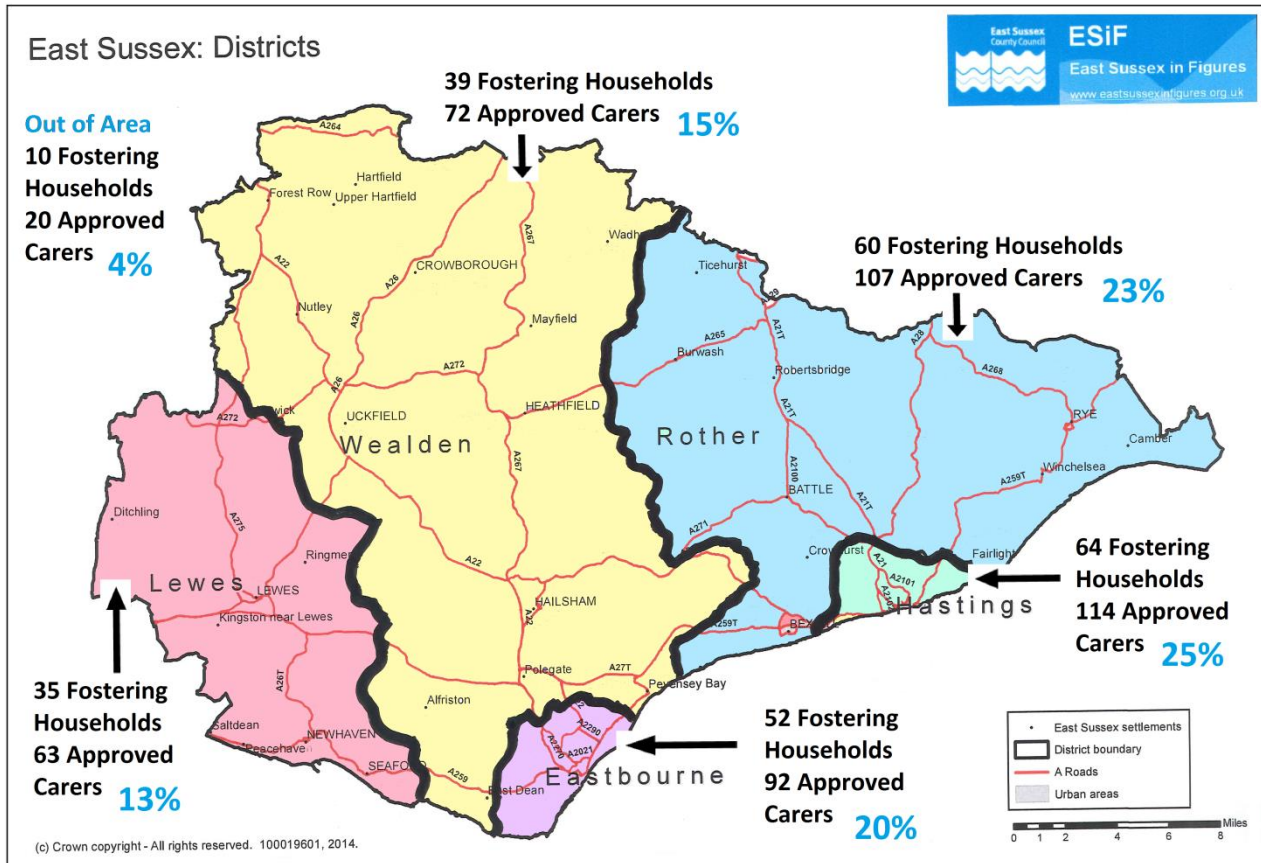
2.9 With the approvals of 21 new fostering households, The Fostering Service saw a net increase in its resources. Given the challenges experienced nationally for the recruitment of foster carers, a net gain of resources would evidence effective recruitment and retention strategies.

2.10 The marketing strategy for The Fostering Service remains one of “continual presence”. The Fostering Service has built on its existing strong partnership with ESCC communications department. Analysis of the effectiveness of The Fostering Service’s social media campaign has shown this to be effective in generating enquiries. Our fostering and supported lodgings branding of “foster with trust” and “support with trust” has been effectively used in all our purchased advertising promotions. Below are some of the examples of the mediums and events used to promote the recruitment of foster carers.

- Monthly information evenings promoted by advertising in the Herald, Hastings Observer, and Sussex Express ran from April to September 2018
- Weekly information events – The recruitment information van visited locations in October 2018 – March 2019, promoted on Facebook, twitter and the ESCC website
- Editorial in local press
- Roundabout advertising
- Google ‘ad words’ (search engine marketing)
- Heart radio campaign
- Promotional merchandise ‘giveaways’ (Mugs, pens, bags etc.)
- Lamppost banners across Eastbourne town centre and seafront
- Radio interviews – Supported Lodgings provider and The Fostering Service Operations Manager
- ESCC intranet editorial
- Applicants having a choice of how to enquire – text, email, telephone call, form on website or visiting our recruitment information van

2.11 The geography of East Sussex has always been a challenge for foster carer recruitment. The map below confirms that recruitment still remains most active along the county’s coastal strip

and within its two major conurbations of Hastings and Eastbourne (45% of all households). Previously effective, recruitment promotions within the rural districts of the authority has been a challenge. In September 2018 the service purchased a long wheel-based vehicle liveried in The Fostering Service and Supported lodgings branding (pictured). 'Vinny' now regularly presents in a number of predetermined locations (including rural locations), around the country and by invitation at events and shows.



"Vinny the van" has been able, not only to allow members of the public access to fostering professionals and foster carers who accompany "Vinny" on his travels, but also to act as an effective mobile billboard. It needs to be recognised that this medium is also very financially efficient. This has also enabled The Fostering and Supported Lodgings Services to work together.

### 3. The Fostering Panel

3.1 ESCC Fostering Panel continues to meet on a monthly basis. Panel activity included 21 new approvals, 22 initial annual foster care reviews and 2 standards of care reviews. The stability

and experience of its membership continues to provide those attending panel with a high level of advice, support and professional curiosity.

#### **4. Retention Events**

4.1. In May 2018, an evening event was held at Powder Mills to say “Thank You” to our foster carers. This was attended by 161 carers and staff compared with 120 carers in May 2017. This remains a significant event in the foster carer’s calendar and provides an opportunity for ESCC carer’s exceptional commitment to our looked after children being acknowledged by the Director of Children’s Services director and our Lead Member for Children and Families.

4.2. In August 2018, all foster carers and their families caring for East Sussex children were invited to a picnic at Knockhatch. Both children’s social workers and supervising social workers attended. Independent fostering agency foster carers were also invited to give them the opportunity to meet ESCC foster carers and staff, and to find out more about the service. This is a popular and well attended event. This was attended by 161 children, 98 foster carers and 25 staff.

4.3 In October 2018, the children of our foster carers were invited to a weekend at PGL Activity Centre. This was organised by the East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA) who worked in partnership with The Fostering Service to facilitate this event. Staff and managers spend time with the children of our foster carers in order to further forge the relationship between foster carers and social workers.

#### **5. Training**

5.1 From 01 April 2018 to the 31 March 2019, 876 training places have been taken up by foster carers (as compared to last year’s equivalent of 773), evidencing strong and continued interest in training. Overall, the evaluations of the courses by participants were rated as excellent. Attendance to courses has significantly improved with the launch of a Reminder Text Service.

5.2 New courses introduced this year have included:

- Understanding The Teenage Brain & Behaviours
- Advanced Attachment – The Neuroscience Theory of Attachment
- Understanding the Dark Web - (8+)
- Dyadic Developmental Psychology (DDP) & Attachment Focused Therapy
- Delegated Authority
- County Lines & Cuckooing
- Gang Culture
- The Montessori Method
- Developmental Trauma & Understanding Hidden Trauma
- Loss, Grief and the Childs View
- Dealing with Difficult Discussions
- The Resilient Foster Carer
- Supporting your own Children

5.3 The Fostering Service has continued in 2018/19 to use the extensive skills, knowledge and expertise of foster carer trainers from a variety of backgrounds to deliver some of its courses. These courses included:

- Parenting traumatised children
- Practical skills to help children protect themselves
- Using visuals to help communication
- Advanced Attachment – The Neuroscience Theory of Attachment
- Safer care
- The Montessori Method

- Developmental Trauma & Understanding Hidden Trauma

5.4 Foster carers have found that courses being led by their peers offer an empathy and understanding that benefits their learning. This model of delivery also provides a more cost effective way to up-skill those foster carers that need further training. To ensure the quality of training, 13 foster carers are undertaking a variety of qualifications. These include the level 3 diploma 'Children and Young People's Workforce' qualification, and level 3 certificate in 'Assessing Vocational Achievement'. There are also 6 dedicated foster carers involved in the delivery and assessment of the 'Children and Young People's Workforce' qualification.

5.5 Foster carer training has been central in promoting the resilience of foster carers and their families. Courses have included, Fostering Changes, Resilient Foster Carer and How to Support Your Own Children. In addition specific training and support has been offered to the sons and daughters of foster carers, including the creation of a 'Young People Who Foster Council', which currently has 10 members. This Council meets on a monthly basis, giving the young people an opportunity to 'have their say' on fostering, how it impacts on their lives and to identify their training and support needs. There have been a number of activities for all children over the age of 7 years, with an emphasis on safe care principles and the importance of communication. Each activity has been well attended and the feedback from the young people and parents has been positive, identifying the importance for such support.

5.6 Proposed new courses for 2019/20 include:

- Complexities of Child Mental Health
- Meditation / Mindfulness
- Lego Therapy
- Post Effects of Child Sexual Abuse and Understanding Them
- Alternatives to GCSE Qualifications
- What to do when a Child is Excluded
- CBT for Children

5.7 Additionally, Microsoft Office 365 will be introduced to all its foster carers, enabling the service to share latest guidance, research, informative articles and online free training sites.

5.8 To compensate for reductions in the training budget, identified training has been actively promoted to other agencies for income generation opportunities. This has been successful throughout the year with a number of local authorities and agencies commissioning our services, bringing an income of £4k so far.

## **6. Foster carer support and supervision**

6.1 The demand on ESCC foster carers remains high with 451 children placed with our in-house foster carers as of the 31 March 2019 (this figure includes children who are subject o Staying Put arrangements and subject to SGO's). In order to manage the demand of children requiring placements, the service has again relied on its fostering carers agreeing to variation of their approval (children being placed outside of their number or age of approval) or by exemption of their approval (three or more children in placement at any one time). All exemptions and variations have management oversight of the Operational Manager and Agency Decision Maker. When exemptions and variations are in place, there is an increased expectation of additional supervision and a higher level of support to be provided from The Fostering Service. This has placed increased pressure on supervising social workers to work with foster carers and social workers to maintain placement stability.

6.2 During 2018-19 The Fostering Service reviewed it allowances paid to all foster carers and supported lodgings carers in partnership with the ESFCA and recommended an uplift to elected members which was accepted. As a result, on 01/04/2019 all foster carer allowances were given a 3% uplift. This increase has been welcomed by foster carers via the East Sussex Foster Care

Association, with carers acknowledging that such a reward at a time of financial challenges for the authority is a positive recognition of their contribution to our children.

6.3 Support groups continue to be a large part of the service's support strategy. There continue to be 3 localised groups in Uckfield, Eastbourne and Newhaven. There are also three themed support groups: a parent and child foster carer's support group; a support group for carers of adolescents and a 'Men who Foster' support group. The group set up for female carers which was founded last year is receiving excellent feedback and good attendance.

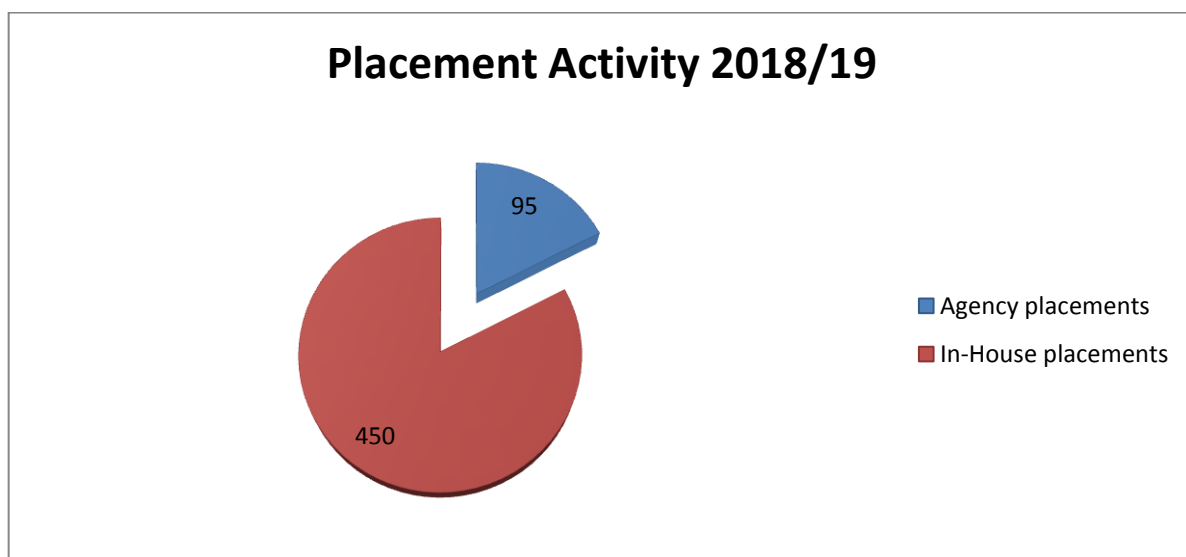
6.4 "Buddying" has increased the number of mentors available to the service whereby experienced carers provide much needed support to foster carers coping with the challenges of issues such as attachment behaviours and allegations.

6.5 Further support is provided for foster carers through the fostering advice line. This is an out of hour's service, available to all foster carers and supported lodgings providers for 365 days per year. This service is staffed by a team of social workers from The Fostering Service who work on a rota basis, to provide support and advice to all foster carers. The service deals with a range of issues such as placement disruptions, children and young people missing from placement, police involvement or generally supporting carers in managing challenging behaviours presented by our children or young people. The advice line has seen a decrease in activity in 2018/19, taking 307 calls in comparison with 2017/18's figure of 378. This may be attributed to foster carers being able to seek out of hours support more readily from peers (buddies).

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

## 7. Placement activity

7.1 On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 there were 585 children and young people living in foster homes<sup>i</sup>. 450 of these children were placed with in-house foster carers. 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 commissioning of external IFA placements remains at a similar level to that of 2017-18 with the total figure of mainstream LAC agency foster placements at 80. (The figure below of 95 includes Unaccompanied Asylum seeking young people and specialist agency foster placements for children with disabilities) .



7.2 As of 31 March 2019, 31 young people (Between 18 and 25 years of age) remain with their foster carers under 'Staying Put' arrangements. This figure is a 50% increase on last year and

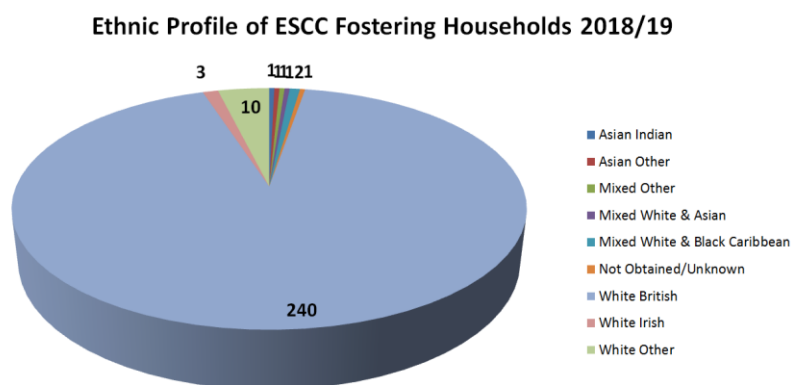
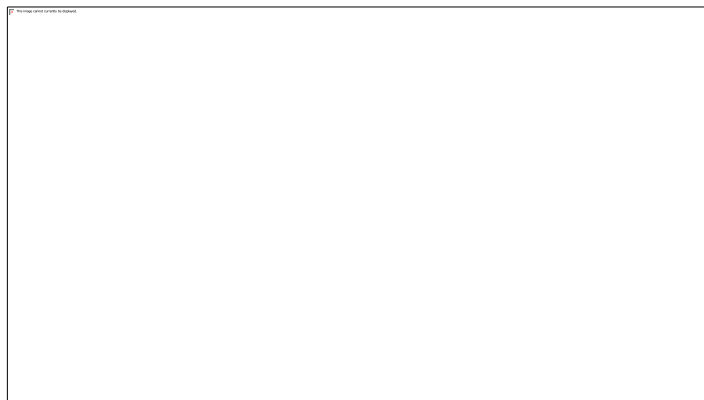


indicates that the Staying Put provision is starting to influence carer's decisions to help young people make the transition to independence. There are also 26 children who are currently subject to Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) placed with East Sussex foster carers. This figure remains similar to 2017/18 and indicates that although there have been a number of new SGOs granted to carers, there have also been a number of young people subject to SGO who have now reached 18.

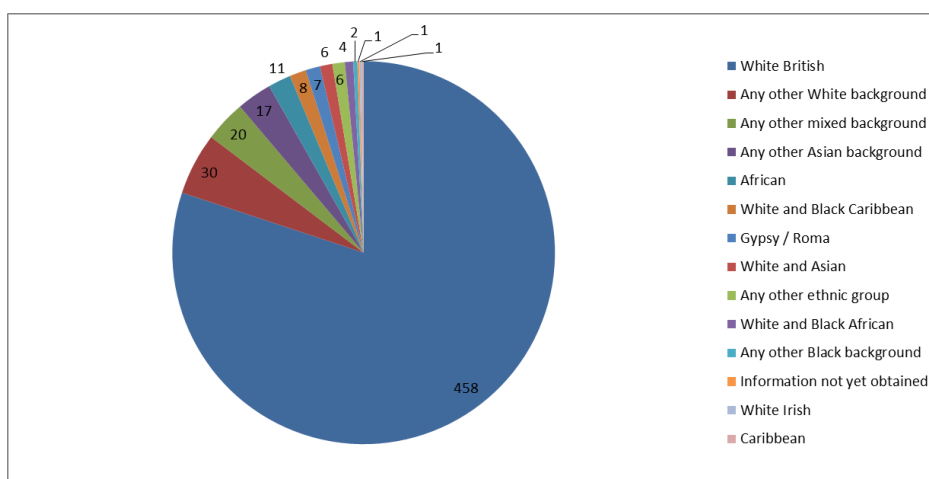
7.3 The Fostering Duty team is an extremely busy service providing a centralised service for the placement and commissioning of all placements for looked after children. The service often has to respond to emergency duty and same day placements (immediate safeguarding concerns), placing children subject to care proceedings as well as to the disruption of existing placements with very complex children and young people presenting with very challenging behaviours. Such disruptions will involve searching for an alternative placement which is hugely time consuming and may involve speaking to over 25 to 40 carers or external providers. The duty team are involved in the matching of children, quality assuring all independent fostering and residential placements and often sensitive negotiations regarding costs. The Fostering Duty team received 532 referrals between 01 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. The team worked on a total of 608 placements, 121 of which were not required. 487 placements were made overall with 398 placements made in-house.

## 8. Ethnic Profile of Carers and Referrals

8.1 ESCC is acknowledged as an authority with a lower than average diversity within its population. The charts below show our foster carer population to be primarily White British. However, our referrals received for placements of children who are other than White British are proportionally higher than the number placements available with carers of diverse backgrounds and matching ethnicity is not always possible.



8.2 To give context to the above, the chart below is an illustration of the ethnic breakdown of our LAC population as at the year-end 2018/19.





8.3 In order to address this we encourage foster carers to undertake bespoke training around understanding issues relating to ethnicity and diversity. These courses are both E-learning and live training events:

- Valuing & Promoting Diversity
- Understanding Caring for Asylum Seeking, Refugee and Unaccompanied Children
- Understanding and Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Unsure Children & Young People
- Preventing & Recognising Radicalisation

2018/19 will see the introduction of training around understanding and working with the travelling community.

## **9. The Supported Lodgings Team**

9.1 The Supported Lodgings Service continues to work with the communications team to promote, inform and educate the public to raise awareness of the scheme. Fresh content in the form of social media, radio adverts, flyers and merchandise have been utilised in various formats. The recruitment van, “Vinny”, is shared with the Supported Lodgings service, providing the same access to rural locations and offering mobile promotion of the services around the county.

9.2 Most recently, a video of current Supported Lodgings providers and a Vietnamese young person has been released with the aim of providing ‘real life’ insight into the supported lodgings role and the positive impact on vulnerable young people. Applications to date range from ‘landlords’ wanting to help a young person, to experienced carers who are looking for approval as a jointly registered foster carer/supported lodgings providers (hybrids). All these marketing strategies are underpinned by the new branding of “support with trust” with the ever-present strapline of “your home their future”.

9.3 April 2018-March 2019, 40 young people have been newly accommodated in Supported Lodgings placements, a mixture of LAC and homeless young people. Currently 57 young people are accommodated through this project. Providers have been encouraged to extend their approval potential to take more parent and child and more Emergency Duty placements. The scheme has also utilised experienced carers in providing accommodation and support to a number of young people under the age of 16, with robust risk assessments in place. This has resulted in two supported lodgings carers seeking fostering status and becoming ‘hybrid’ carers. Focused support and training is being developed to help providers offer statutory placements to young people with more complex needs, thereby expanding local support and pathway options.

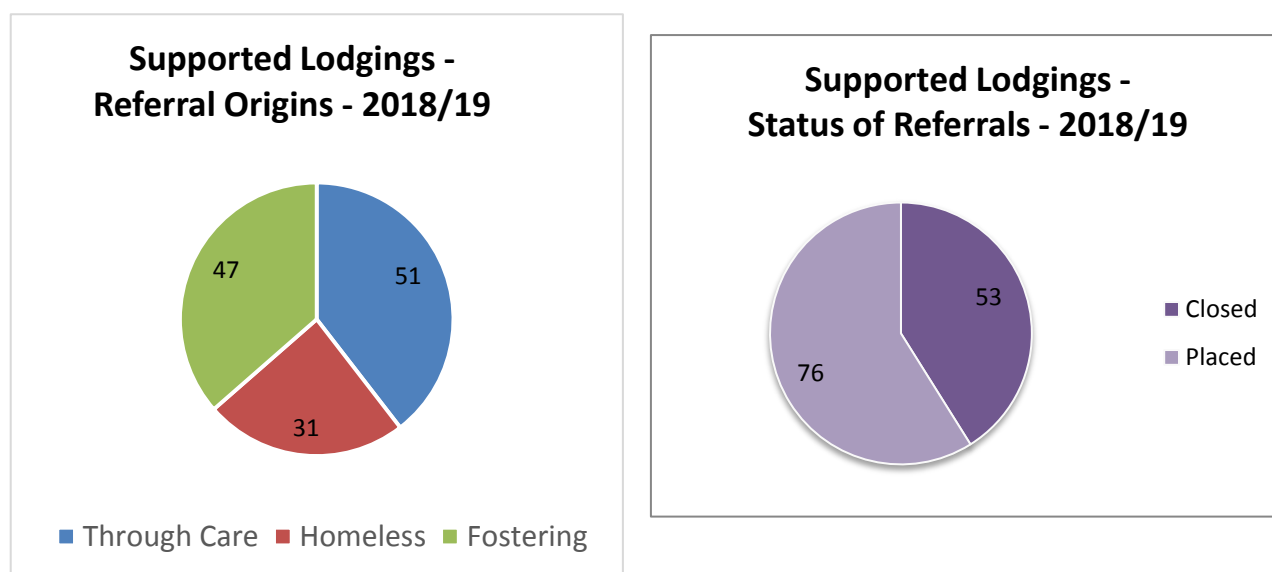
9.4 The Supported Lodgings service continues to demonstrate that when appropriately matched, young people can benefit by ‘stepping down’ from expensive agency placements to an appropriate supported lodgings provider. Two examples of this would be a young person who moved from a residential placement (at a cost of £890 a week) to a supported lodgings provider (at a cost of £202.00 a week). Another “step-down” from a young person’s agency residential placement costing £3,300 per week, to an appropriate supported lodgings provider, saved £2,987 per week. Currently 20 Care Leavers, 5 homeless young people, 21 fostered, 9 Staying Put and 2 UASC young people have been placed with Supported Lodgings providers.

9.5 As of 31 March 2019 there were 48 Supported Lodgings households providing a total of 73 placements across the county. In the year 2018/19 there has been 10 new approvals, providing 13 additional beds. Although this is an increase on the 2017/18 figures, recruiting in East Sussex remains challenging because of the competitive nature of this market. The service is in direct

competition with other organisations seeking host services such as student accommodation for language schools. The revised marketing strategy allows the service to attract applicants who may have previously considered taking overseas and local students, households where their own children have recently left home (empty nesters), single carers and foster carers wishing to transition to Supported Lodgings rather than retiring.

9.6 Of the 48 households, 12 of these hold 'hybrid' status offering both fostering and supported lodgings placements with a further household currently in assessment. 27 hold supported lodgings only status and a further 9 offer continuing support to young people with Looked After status under 'Staying Put' legislation.

9.7 Between 01 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, the Supported Lodgings team received 129 referrals requesting placements for young people. 51 of which were for care leavers, 31 were for homeless young people and 47 were older children requiring foster placements. Of the 129 referrals, 53 were closed, 76 young people were placed and 0 referrals remained open.



## 10. User participation

10.1 The Children in Care Council (CICC) continues to make a significant contribution to the support of LAC and to the advice it provides both locally and nationally to decision makers. Below are a number of examples of the CICC's activities over 2018/19.

- CICC have been involved in several projects with the Children's Commissioners office, including takeover day, recruitment panels in London and forming a working party for developing a new national digital hub, IMO, where LAC and care leavers can come together online.
- The royal visit was the highlight of this year and gave the opportunity for eight CICC members together with other youth voice groups from East Sussex to meet and speak directly to HRH Duke and Duchess of Sussex.
- CICC members shadowed two MPs Helen Tabiner and Helen Musgrove Deputy Directors for Youth and Social Action for the national takeover day.
- CICC members now invite young people aged 15+ to their meetings twice a year to discuss their issues, and separately also meet with younger looked after children.
- CICC have continued their participation in foster carer preparation groups and have developed their own recruitment panel for prospective foster carers.

- Two CICC members facilitated a morning lecture at Brighton University with social workers who are completing their master's degree in social work. They discussed their CICC role, and presented an interactive exercise about the separation and loss that young people can experience coming into care.
- CICC consulted with members of the senior management team, the Through Care Team, YES (Youth Employment Service), The Safeguarding Unit, School nurses and CGL (Change Grow Live Advocacy Service) about the services they provide to young people living away from their family.
- CICC published two newsletters that have been widely distributed to all ESCC LAC aged eight and above
- Work experience within Children's Services.
- Partnership working with the Through Care Team and the Housing Project resulting in care leavers now being exempt from council tax in all Sussex districts.
- The implementation of the "Rucksack" project and contents for young people coming into care for the first time.

## **11. Working in Partnership with East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA)**

11.1 The Operations Manager attends the monthly evening meetings of the ESFCA management group to report on the developments of the Fostering Service and on Children's Services more generally. During 2018/19 the service has worked closely with the now established chair and trustees of the ESFCA. The ESFCA have worked closely with the service and the LAC service to achieve a proposal for the implementation of consistent savings for looked after children. ESCC continues to offer ESFCA both office space and financial support.

## **12. The Placement Support Service (PSS)**

12.1 The PSS is currently supporting 155 young people. 81 reviews of packages of support were held throughout the year. During 2018-2019 74 new pieces of ongoing work were commissioned. This increase in activity was possible due to PSS recruiting additional staff to extend the service to the Through Care Team and that has been received very positively and provided care leavers with much needed support.

12.2 In addition, the PSS also responded to 120 emergency or crisis requests from carers that resulted in 140 days of support being given. The LAC and Through Care and social work teams, continue to value the rapid response PSS offers to our young people.

12.3 The PSS continues to generate income from a number of sources including Arts Award, Supermarkets, and ESFCA. Additional income has enabled holiday activities to continue for children and young people aged 5 to 17. This has been beneficial to LAC by providing continuity of education activities and therapeutic support.

12.4 The partnership with Bede's School continues to allow our young people to access sports facilities including the swimming pool free of charge at weekends. The PSS continue to negotiate free tickets to Brighton and Hove Albion football matches and free admission to Reystede Animal Welfare Centre.

12.5 During the year:

- 40 group holiday activities were provided
- PSS worked with 127 young people
- 454 holiday places were offered to children and young people
- 10 to 15 young people on average attend each activity

12.6 Foster carers value placement support and holiday activities highly and there are a number of examples where placements have been sustained because of PSS intervention. The quotes below are a small sample of the testimonies provided by foster carers.

*'Placement Support is what keeps this placement going, they are amazing'.*

*'There is a strong possibility this placement would have broken down without PSS'.*

*'Placement support is a great help and gives us a much needed break'.*

### **13. Summary**

13.1 During 2018/9 East Sussex Fostering Service received an outstanding Ofsted inspection as part of the wider Children's Service inspection. The wider report highlighted a number of areas of good practice in the Fostering Service including the support of carers, the matching of placements and the participation of young people who foster. Irrespective of these commendations, East Sussex Fostering Service, in common with its neighbouring local authorities (and nationally) remain challenged by the recruitment resources available to them. A net gain in foster carer resources this year is of course welcomed. However, with the increased number of LAC in the first half of this year, coupled with the complexity of the young people requiring placements, this has meant that the most appropriate placement match is not always available at the right time. We have called more than ever on the resilience of our existing carers to "hold" young people in bridging placements whilst appropriate placements are sought or become available.

13.2 It continues to be the case that external resources (independent fostering agencies) cannot be relied upon to shore up our fostering resource because even externally sometimes placements just aren't available. The success of East Sussex's recruitment activity means that the majority of foster carers living within East Sussex borders are in fact registered with ESCC. Therefore, our recruitment objectives going forward will be a combination of attracting households new to fostering, but significantly, also attracting experienced households wishing to transfer from independent agencies to East Sussex.

13.3 The services strengths remain good quality support and supervision, and close partnership working with our health colleagues, and the Virtual School. The uplift to fostering allowances allows more 'competitive remuneration' with IFA's and neighbouring local authorities. By using these USP's within our marketing strategy, The Fostering Service will hopefully continue to recruit effectively for the next 12 months.

13.4 Within the 12 month reporting period, the significance of our Supported Lodgings Service, in its ability to provide resources and support to a broad range of young people requiring accommodation has become even more apparent. It is the intention of the Fostering Service and the Supported Lodgings team to align their recruitment processes to ensure effective and timely responses to all applications and maximise flexible support to providers.

### **14. The Key Management Priorities for 2018/2019 include:**

- Continued investment into the Supported Lodgings Team in order to optimise recruitment potential.
- Recruitment of foster carers and building upon the net gain in 2018/19 by continuing to lead the recruitment strategy with "foster with trust" branding.
- Retention of foster carers by continuing to provide the high standard of support and supervision of our foster carers on which ESCC's Fostering Service has built its reputation.
- To provide appropriate placements for all young people becoming LAC by expanding the placement potential of fostering households through training and supervision.
- To work with colleagues from LAC and locality services to ensure more accurate ethnicity descriptions of young people being referred for placement finding.

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<sup>i</sup> These figures relate to children and young people living within foster homes of varied care status and they therefore may differ from other related reporting inclusive of the LAC population.