

**Report to:** Corporate Parenting Panel

**Date of meeting:** 20 January 2023

**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

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

**The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to discuss and consider the report.**

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**1. Background information**

**Financial Appraisal**

1.1 Services for Looked After Children (LAC) are predominantly funded from the Children's Services base budget with some additional smaller funding streams supporting specific activity e.g. funding for unaccompanied asylum seeking children from the Home Office Grant. The increase in LAC, pressures across the national system and pricing of placements are leading to budget pressures in this area.

**2. Supporting information**

2.1 Data is drawn as a snapshot on the last day of the month and inevitably there will be some changes as data is cleansed. There has been an increase of 24 in the number of Looked After Children during the last quarter and on the last day of December 2022, there were 654 children in care. The service remains very busy and the sufficiency of any placements either in-house, or in the independent sector, is extremely challenging. This is a reflection of a national issue across the UK.

2.2 A total of 358 children were living in foster care at the end of December: an increase of 6 since the last quarter. Of that number, 268 were living with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) carers. This includes 7 children were placed with foster carers who were also approved as adopters which is part of the Fostering for Adoption pathway. A further 90 children were living with agency carers. In addition, 83 young people were living in supported housing options, homes or hostels, which is an increase of 13 since the previous quarter. A further 19 children were placed for adoption.

2.3 At the end of the quarter 79 children were living with kinship foster carers. This figure has decreased by 9 since the previous period.

2.4 The number of children living at home with their parents whilst remaining subject to a legal order to ESCC has increased by 7 to 28. Planning for placements of this nature is monitored rigorously to mitigate any risk factors. Agreement and authorisation for this type of placement is given at a senior level unless it is court mandated.

2.5 At the end of December, the number of children living in residential children's homes increased from 77 to 85. Of that figure, 20 children were living in ESCC children's homes which is an increase of 2 on the previous quarter and 65 were placed in agency residential children's homes which is an increase of 6. Our staff work strenuously to place children in our in-house provision before they seek agreement from a senior manager for an agency placement. Robust negotiations on both quality and price are a feature of every external placement search. An

additional ESCC children's home has now been registered which has increased placement capacity.

- 2.6 At the end of December we had 2 ESCC children placed in the Secure Unit at Lansdowne and 1 further child was placed in an external secure unit. Early exit planning is currently underway for all 3 children.
- 2.7 There were no children remanded into youth detention accommodation in this quarter.
- 2.8. ESCC is fully participating in the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) in relation to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). The number of asylum-seeking young people who were looked after at the end of December was 77. In addition, there were 104 asylum seeking young people who were Care Leavers during this period.
- 2.9 During this period, hotels were commissioned by the Home Office as part of the adult contingency planning (dispersal accommodation). This increased the overall number of such hotels in East Sussex. 40 young people who had previously been assessed as adults by the Home Office when they arrived, presented themselves as children and have been subject to age assessment during this period. An additional hotel was commissioned by the Home Office in East Sussex, to accommodate UASC awaiting placements through the NTS. This has placed significant pressure on the specialist UASC team, local services and accommodation.
- 2.10 The number of children subject to Child Arrangement/Residence Orders has increased by 1 to 341 and those children subject to a Special Guardianship Order has decreased by 1 to 478.
- 2.11 There were 2 complaints from looked after children during this period. Both have been responded to in a timely manner. 1 has been satisfactorily resolved and the other is progressing.

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 The overall increase in looked after children during this quarter has comprised of children presenting with very complex and challenging behaviours, alongside the significant increase in UASC (through the Home Office hotels for adults). This accounts for the increase of children placed in any residential care setting, and the higher number of children placed in supported housing options, homes or hostels. This has significantly increased the pressure in the Looked After Children's system during this period, which is compounded with the national shortage of care placements. A revised sufficiency statement has been completed and will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

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#### LOCAL MEMBERS

All

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

Children's Services LAC Summary between 01/01/2022 and 31/12/2022

| Placement Type   | Jan 22 | Feb 22 | Mar 22 | Apr 22 | May 22 | Jun 22 | Jul 22 | Aug 22 | Sep 22 | Oct 22 | Nov 22 | Dec 22 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| A4 - Placed for adoption with consent (under section 19 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer         | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      |
| A5 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) with current foster carer     | 4      | 4      | 4      | 4      | 5      | 5      | 5      | 5      | 5      | 5      | 5      | 5      |
| A6 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer | 13     | 10     | 10     | 10     | 10     | 10     | 11     | 11     | 12     | 12     | 13     | 13     |
| H5 - Residential accommodation   | 59     | 56     | 61     | 63     | 64     | 70     | 70     | 63     | 69     | 72     | 89     | 83     |
| K1 - Secure unit   | 3      | 2      | 2      | 1      | 1      | 2      | 2      | 2      | 2      | 2      | 3      | 3      |
| K2 - Homes and Hostels   | 72     | 74     | 73     | 75     | 77     | 77     | 76     | 77     | 76     | 81     | 81     | 83     |
| P1 - Placed with own parents   | 21     | 26     | 22     | 22     | 23     | 23     | 22     | 20     | 20     | 22     | 27     | 28     |
| P2 - Independent living  | 1      |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| R2 - NHS/Health Trust  |        |        |        |        |        |        |        | 1      | 1      | 1      |        |        |
| R5 - Young Offender Institution or prison  |        | 1      | 1      | 2      | 2      | 1      |        |        |        |        | 1      |        |
| S1 - All Residential schools   | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      |
| U1 - Foster placement with relative or friend- long term fostering   | 11     | 11     | 11     | 11     | 11     | 12     | 12     | 12     | 12     | 14     | 14     | 14     |

|   |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| U3 - Foster placement with relative or friend- not long term or FFA         | 73         | 68         | 73         | 74         | 72         | 72         | 76         | 78         | 72         | 70         | 65         | 65         |
| U4 - Placement with other foster carer- long term fostering                 | 167        | 160        | 157        | 154        | 149        | 146        | 142        | 141        | 135        | 134        | 130        | 128        |
| U5 - Placement with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter- FFA | 4          | 4          | 5          | 5          | 6          | 7          | 7          | 7          | 7          | 7          | 7          | 7          |
| U6 - Placement with other foster carer - not long term or FFA               | 182        | 186        | 202        | 200        | 201        | 202        | 205        | 210        | 210        | 210        | 219        | 223        |
| Z1 - Other placements   |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            | 1          |            |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>612</b> | <b>604</b> | <b>623</b> | <b>623</b> | <b>623</b> | <b>629</b> | <b>630</b> | <b>629</b> | <b>623</b> | <b>632</b> | <b>657</b> | <b>654</b> |

| Immigration Status                         | Jan 22 | Feb 22 | Mar 22 | Apr 22 | May 22 | Jun 22 | Jul 22 | Aug 22 | Sep 22 | Oct 22 | Nov 22 | Dec 22 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Adult Asylum Seeker                        | 5      | 5      | 8      | 8      | 8      | 8      | 8      | 8      | 5      | 5      | 4      |        |
| British Citizen                            | 7      | 7      | 7      | 7      | 7      | 8      | 8      | 8      | 8      | 8      | 8      | 8      |
| Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK (ILR) | 2      | 2      | 2      | 2      | 2      | 2      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      | 1      |
| Refugee Status                             | 21     | 20     | 20     | 19     | 18     | 18     | 17     | 15     | 16     | 14     | 11     | 9      |
| Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child         | 25     | 26     | 30     | 33     | 33     | 35     | 34     | 37     | 40     | 45     | 62     | 63     |

| Legal Status  | Jan 22 | Feb 22 | Mar 22 | Apr 22 | May 22 | Jun 22 | Jul 22 | Aug 22 | Sep 22 | Oct 22 | Nov 22 | Dec 22 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Child Arrangements Order/Residence Order S8(1)CA'89 | 342    | 342    | 342    | 342    | 342    | 342    | 342    | 341    | 340    | 340    | 340    | 341    |
| Special Guardianship Order S14A CA 89               | 471    | 475    | 476    | 477    | 477    | 478    | 478    | 478    | 478    | 478    | 480    | 479    |