

Report to: **Corporate Parenting Panel**

Date of meeting: **25 April 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.**

Recommendation:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the report.

1. Background information

Financial Appraisal

1.1 Services for Looked After Children are predominantly funded from the Children's Services base budget with some additional smaller funding streams supporting specific activity e.g., Virtual School activity from the Pupil Premium Grant and the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children's grant from the Home Office.

2. Supporting information

2.1 Data found at appendix 1 is drawn as a snapshot on the last day of the month and some changes occur as data is cleansed. There has been an increase in the number of Looked After Children during the last quarter and on the last day of March 2023, there were 664 children in care. This is an increase of 10 children reported from the last quarter. 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 national issue.

2.2 A total of 357 children were living in foster care at the end of March, a decrease of 1 since the last quarter. Of that number 260 were living with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) carers, which includes 8 children placed with foster carers who were also approved adopters as part of the Fostering for Adoption pathway, 95 children were living with agency carers and 2 with Other Local Authority Carers. In addition, 85 young people were living in supported housing options, homes or hostels, which has increased by 2 since the previous quarter. 16 children were placed for adoption.

2.3 At the end of the quarter 77 children were living with kinship foster carers, this has decreased by 2 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, increased to 33. Planning for placements of this sort is always 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 when realistically ESCC has no choice in the matter.

2.5 At the end of March, the number of children living in regulated residential children's homes has increased from 85 to 92. Of that figure 21 children were living in ESCC children's homes and 71 were placed in external homes. Due to the challenges in sufficiency of foster care places ESCC has had to place an increasing number of younger children in residential provision, currently there are 25 children under the age of 11 in residential children's homes. All attempts are made to place children in our in-house provision prior to referring out to an agency placement, the searches for foster carers continue after a child is placed. There are rigorous negotiations on both quality and price when placement searches are made with external providers.

- 2.6 At the end of March there were no ESCC children placed in Secure Units.
- 2.7 At the end of March there was 1 child remanded into youth detention accommodation.
- 2.8 ESCC fully participates in the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. The number of young people seeking asylum was 74 at the end of March. In addition, there were 110 Asylum Seeking young people who were Care Leavers during this period which in a significant increase from 92 the previous quarter.
- 2.9 The number of children subject to a Special Guardianship Order decreased by 1 to 478.
- 2.10 There were no complaints from Looked After Children during this period.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 The Looked After Children's system has continued to be very pressurised during this period with a national and local shortage of care placements. It is to the credit of the fostering placement service that ESCC has been able to find suitable regulated placements for the majority of our Looked After Children.

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LOCAL MEMBERS
All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
None