



# Looked After Children's Annual Progress Report 2022-23

**Sally Carnie**

**Head of Service for LAC**

# Who did we look after?

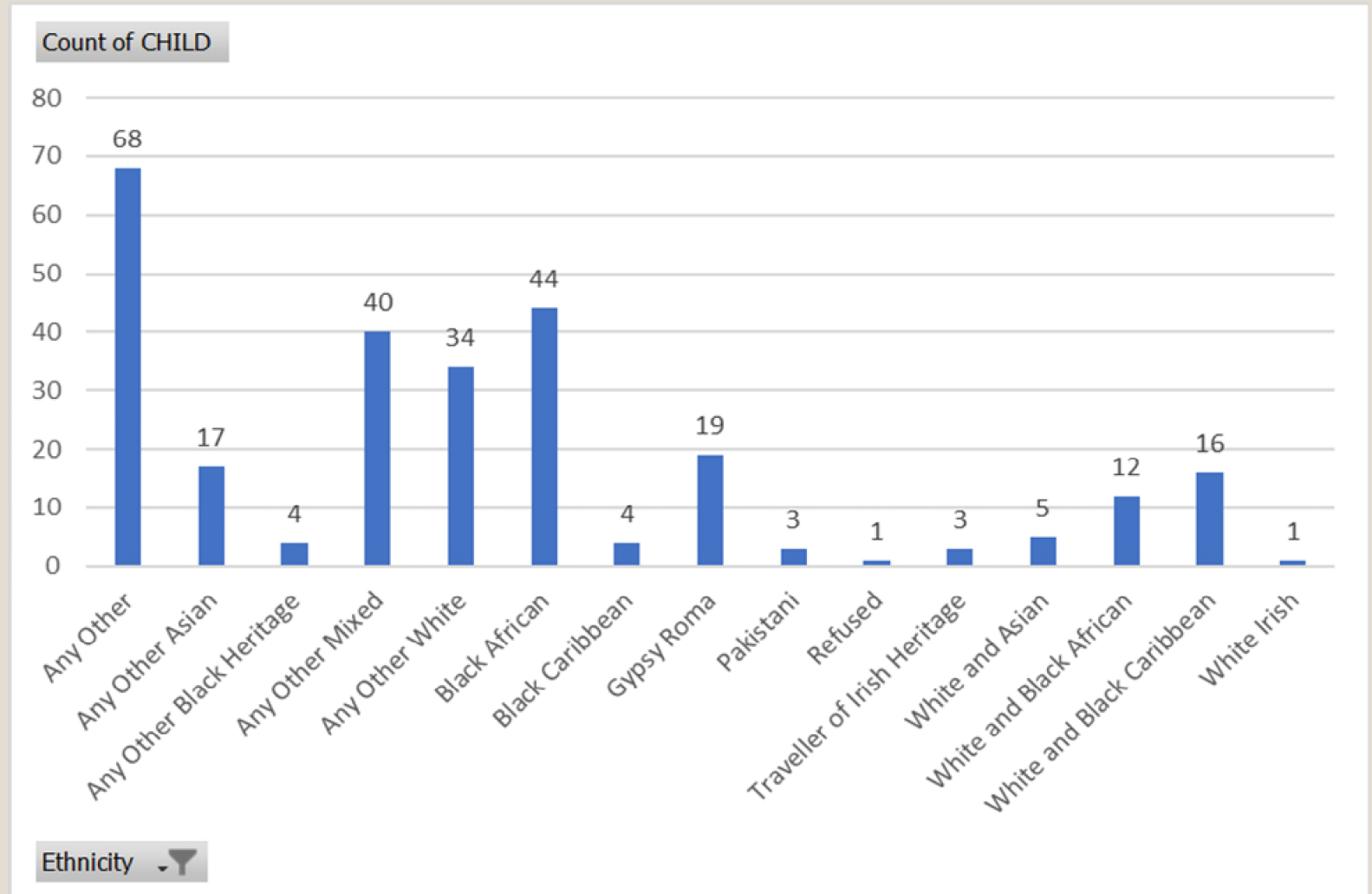
The data shows a snapshot as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

- We looked after 374 boys and 287 girls.
- There were more children in care than the previous year. This was in part due to an additional 8 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in the snapshot figure as compared to the previous year.
- There were lower numbers of children who left care in this period compared to last year and more children came into our care overall.
- 865 children came in and left our care during the year which is an increase of 20 as compared with 2021-22. This represents significantly higher activity levels across the service.

Statistics	2021-2022	2022-2023
Looked After Children	628	661 (+33)
Children coming into care	246	249 (+3)
0-5 year olds admitted to care	81	81 (-)
6-12 year olds admitted to care	71	57 (-14)
13+ admitted to care	94	111 (+17)
Children leaving care	228	217 (-11)
0-12 year olds leaving care	94	92 (-2)
13+ leaving care	134	125 (-9)

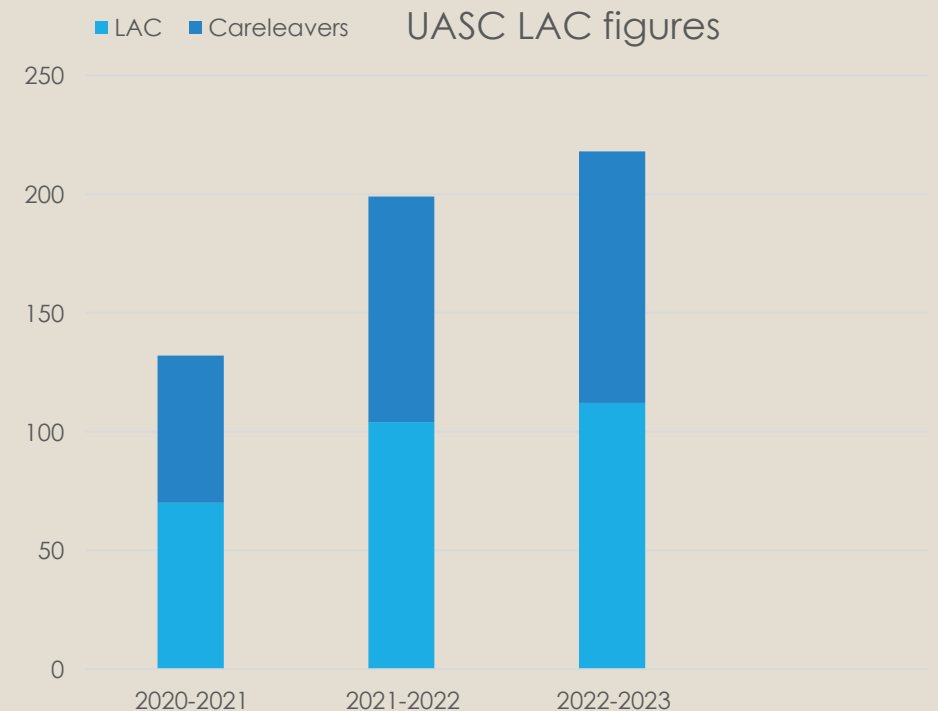
# Ethnicity of our Looked After Children (LAC)

31% of our Looked After Children (LAC) during 2022-23 identified as being of a minority ethnic background or of mixed heritage.



# Our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

- East Sussex County Council (ESCC) cared for 112 UASC under 18 during 2022-23, compared to 104 during 2021-22. In addition, there were 106 Care Leavers aged 18+ which is an increase of 11 from the previous year.
- Our UASC were mainly male; 85% were aged 16 or over and the youngest was aged 12.
- During 2022-2023 35 young people came to ESCC through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) and the remainder were spontaneous arrivals via Police involvement or directly from Newhaven Port.
- Most of these children were from Afghanistan, closely followed by Sudan and Iran. There were also small numbers of children from Vietnam, Egypt, Albania, Eritrea, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Libya, Gambia, Algeria, Angola, Turkey, Ethiopia and Chad.





# Children looked after by the Disability Service

- The Children's Disability Service criteria for allocation is 'Children who have severe and enduring cognitive delay, severe learning disability, low functional abilities and physical disabilities.
- As of 31st March 2023, this service worked with 17 LAC. 12 children were aged 0-15 and 5 were aged 16-18.
- Geographically, 4 children were living outside East Sussex.
- These 17 children were in receipt of full time care. In addition, the service provided extensive packages of support and respite to other children and their families in the community.

Placements	
ESCC foster carers	3
Agency foster carers	2
ESCC Residential Homes	7
Independent Residential Homes	4
Supported Accommodation	1

# Where our children are living

Decrease in	Decrease in children placed with total number of foster carers, kinship and ESCC foster carers.
Increase in	Increase in both children placed for adoption and children placed with parents.
Increase in	Increase in children aged 16+ living with our supported accommodation providers including with our inhouse supported lodgings providers.
Increase in	Increase in children living in both ESCC and agency Children's Homes.

Data shows a snapshot as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

Placement Type	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023
With foster carer	426	451	431
Of these: in house carers	265	276	257
Kinship carers	65	84	77
Agency carers	96	91	97
Placed for Adoption	23	14	16
Supported Accommodation / Supported Lodgings	57	63	87
ESCC Children's Homes	14	16	22
Agency Children's Homes	57	58	68
Agency Special Schools	1	1	1
Placed with Parents	22	22	33
Independent Living	7	0	0
Youth custody/secure unit	3	3	1
Hospital/NHS establishment	1	0	1
Family Centre/Mother & Baby Unit	0	0	1
Total	611	628	661

# How well did we do in 2022-23?

Indicator Ref	Description	2022/23 Value		2021/22 England	2021/22 Value		2020/21 England	2020/21 Value	
NI 58	Emotional & Behavioural Health of children in care	16.2	↓	13.8	14.2	↓	13.7	14.1	↑
Adoption 1	Percentage of children who ceased to be looked after who were adopted	7.0%	↓	10.6%	8.4%	↓	10.2%	15.3%	↑
Adoption 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)	329 days	↓	199 days	301 days	↓	183 days	274 days	↓
NI62 Placements 1	Number of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year	15.0%	↓	9.8%	10.4%	↑	8.9%	13.3%	↓
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 adoption	71.4%	↓	71.0%	73.9%	↑	70.3%	63.7%	↑
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	17.2%	↓	16.5%	15.4%	↑	16.4%	17.3%	↓

Where performance has improved/increased it is shown with a green arrow ↑ and where it has dipped with a red arrow ↓

# How well did we do in 2022-23? (continued)

Indicator Ref	Description	2022/23 Value		2021/22 England	2021/22 Value		2020/21 England	2020/21 Value	
Leaving Care 1 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in education, employment or training	55.90%	↑	55.4%	54.9%	↑	52.0%	46.3%	↓
Leaving Care 2 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in suitable accommodation	87.4%	↓	87.8%	88.4%	↑	87.7%	87.8%	↑
Leaving Care 3 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 17-18 who were in education, employment or training	77.1%	↑	66.5%	71.8%	↑	65.0%	68.7%	↓
Leaving Care 4 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 17-18 who were in suitable accommodation	92.6%	↓	90.3%	94.5%	↓	90.6%	95.5%	↓
Thrive PI 9	Rate of Children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18	62.0	↓	70.0	58.9	↓	67.0	57.5	↓
Health 1	Percentage of children who had their teeth checked by a dentist	62.5%	↓	70.2%	70.3%	↑	39.6%	32.6%	↓
PAF C81	Final warnings, reprimands and convictions of lac	0.9%	↔	2.2%	0.9%	↑	2.4%	1.8%	↑

Where performance has improved/increased it is shown with a green arrow ↑ and where it has dipped with a red arrow ↓

\* Leaving Care Indicators—calculated using data collected at the time of each young person's 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> birthday

# What the performance data is telling us

ESCC performance data was produced for 2022-23 and the national data contained in the tables above was for the year 2021-22. The improvement arrows therefore refer to a comparison with the ESCC data for the previous year.

The overall performance has largely remained stable with very little significant movement.

The SDQ data dipped and as a result an action plan has been developed to address this.

The adoption data showed a deterioration in performance across all timeliness measures. This has been closely scrutinised at a child level and it has revealed that this performance had been affected by the particular levels of complexity contained within this cohort. (see adoption slide)

LAC with 3 or more placement moves also dipped, largely due to the national sufficiency issues regarding placement availability.

Percentage of dental checks completed also dipped. This is being closely monitored by the strategic health team who are trying to improve dental capacity and availability for LAC locally.

There was good performance across the Care Leaver indicators with significant improvements in relation to EET and suitable accommodation.

# Adoption South East (ASE)

Family Finding & Linking in East Sussex	2021 - 22	2020 - 21
Number of children adopted (AOs)	10	27
Number of children approved for adoption	16	26
Number of relinquished children	0	1
Number of 2 sibling groups matched	0	1
Number of 3 sibling groups matched	0	0
Number of 4 sibling groups matched	0	0
Number of children matched outside of ASE	3	3
Number of children matched within ASE	10	22
Number of children placed for Foster to Adopt (F2A)	8	8

- In 2022-23 Adoption South East (ASE) placed 84 children with their adoptive families. Of these children, 19 were from East Sussex, X in sibling groups and X single children.
- The average number of children ASE were actively family finding for each month during 2022-23 was 60. On average, each month, 6 of these children had no potential matches. This lack of a match can be due to various reasons i.e., the children are newly referred to us, that their foster carers are under assessment, or they require enhanced family finding to identify the right family that can meet their needs. Although some children do take longer than a year to place due to complexity, the team is ambitious to achieve adoption for all children with an adoption care plan.
- Early permanence has continued to be actively promoted by ASE aiming to improve the timeliness of placing children for adoption in ESCC.
- Adoption support has been an area of significant growth within ASE this year supporting over 2,000 families across the region with different strands of support. This included support via the ASE website, online courses, online and face to face groups, activity days, statutory birth record counselling and birth record information sharing. ASE has continued to provide a high level of therapy for families supporting over 1000 children. There has also been a continued commitment to Adoption Voices to ensure that families have easy access to local support.

\*See ASE Annual Report on slide 41



# Fostering Recruitment

The data provided is a final snapshot as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023  
**24** new foster homes, **40** placements created

Whilst the ESCC Fostering Service was able to recruit more foster carers, offering more placements during this period, it had become increasingly challenging given the extremely competitive nature of the market both from the independent sector and neighbouring Local Authorities.

The success the service had, was due largely to the dedicated specialist marketing and communications officer. This post enabled the service to refresh the recruitment and marketing strategy to focus on the recruitment of both experienced foster carers and applicants new to the fostering role.

The significant increase in conversion rate can be attributed to potential applicants being provided with more relevant information supporting them to make an informed decision at the start of the process, with 44% continuing their application to approval.

Recruitment	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Enquiries	268	227	200	274
Q&A calls	114	92	68	79
Initial visits	71	42	32	43
Approvals	22	20	14	24
Placements	39	30	21	40
Conversion rate Enquiry to approval	8%	9%	6%	7%
Conversion rate Screening call to approval	19%	22%	16%	24%
Conversion rate Initial visit to approval	31%	48%	34%	44%



# Fostering Recruitment (Continued)

Maintenance payments to foster carers were uplifted for implementation on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. Whilst this did not bring ESCC allowances in line with the national minimum allowance (NMA) this was widely welcomed by existing foster carers. The additional commitment to enhance payments to equal the NMA will be critical in the retention of our existing foster carer resource and encouraging new applications.

Incentive payments to foster carers signposting friends and family from their network to apply as foster carers continues and as seen as a valuable part of our overall recruitment strategy.

## Google Adverts - Covid Recovery Funded Project

East Sussex has invested funding to improve ESCC Fostering's position on "Google Ad Keyword Searches".

Carers transferring to ESCC had often advised that the presenting order of Google search results was a factor in their previous decisions to enquire with agencies.

## Fostering Friendly Employer Scheme

ESCC have implemented this as HR policy formalising the additional time off an ESCC employee is entitled to for the attendance of fostering related meetings.

## Other initiatives existing and targeted for 2023/2024

### Council tax discount or exemption

In discussion and to be explored in 23/24 for approved foster carers

### Recruitment events

Live online information sessions and revised schedule of community and pop-up locations for "Vinnie-the-Van"

### Review of outdoor advertising

i.e., roundabout and lamppost banners.

### Council tax postal mailout

Fostering flyers posted to 110,000 homes across East Sussex.

### Global Radio and More Radio campaigns

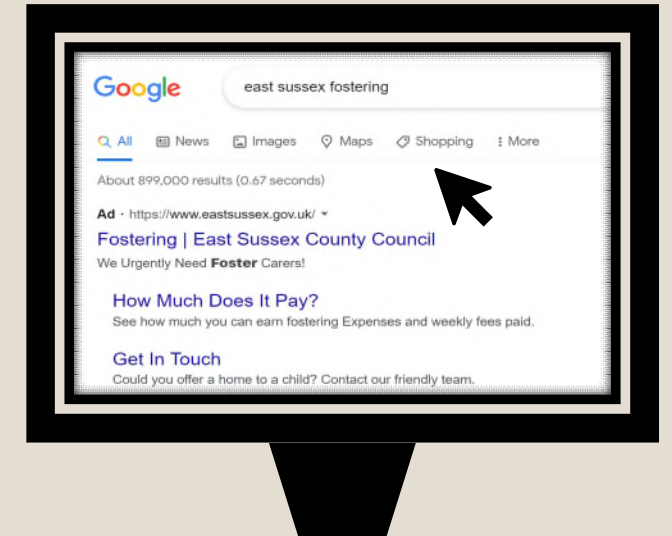
New scripts for ad's targeting diversity and parent and child applicants.

### Website editing and social media

Upgraded content on the ESCC website and social media profiles.

### Keeping in touch

With applicants and enquirers who previously did not progress if it was not the right time for them.



# SUPPORTED LODGINGS

The data provided is a snapshot as of 31st March 2023.

There were 33 registered supported lodgings providers

- ESCC recruited an additional 6 new SL households in 22/23.
- 24 providers cared for young people aged 16+ only.
- 9 of these providers were approved as “hybrid” (combined approval as foster carers and supported lodgings providers)
- 1 household was being assessed as a Supported Lodgings provider.

East Sussex Fostering Service was one of the first Local Authorities to extend the registration of appropriate supported lodgings providers to become foster carers. Hybrid foster carers are able to provide placements for young people under the age of 16

From 01/04/22 - 31/03/23, the service received 220 placement referrals in total to consider. Out of these, 102 Young people were placed in Supported Lodgings

- 3 of these young people were Homeless (18+)
- 7 were Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
- 92 were Looked After Children.

# Placement Support Service

Placement Support continued to work with some of the most vulnerable cared for young people at risk of placement breakdown.



The service worked closely with our Fostering Duty team to support short term emergency placements, by having workers who were on a weekend rota.



The Placement Support Service worked closely with the Virtual School to support cared for young people and those on the 'edge of care' (EOC) who were excluded or on a part-time timetable at school.



The Placement Support Service continued to support some of our young people in the Through Care Team, who were living independently, living in-house residentially or with an external agency.

## Feedback from other professionals

*“Thank you for your support and can I say what an amazing support S is to M, the way they work with her is something to be admired” (SW in training)*

*“Without you and your team ‘our’ and our foster carers job would not be possible” (SSW)*

# Placement Support Service (continued)

- Placement Support - 77 support packages
- Parent & Baby - 1 support package
- Through Care Team - 17 support packages to care leavers
- Edge of care - 5 support packages to families
- Reviews held - 65
- Set ups held - 17
- Worker ended - 26
- Virtual School sessions - 316, supporting 26 young people

100

Packages of Support Delivered

## Feedback from our evaluations

*“We couldn’t continue without the support; PSS has been the answer to our success as foster carers to our young adult”*

*“Couldn’t fault the support we receive”*

*“Amazing service, I don’t think we would have coped without it at times”*

*“Wonderful activities in the holidays”*

*“They just make the difference; I think the support helps me to not feel overwhelmed”*

*“We could not ask for a better service from our PSW’s, one can never over rate kindness and commitment”*

# Children in Care Council

## Recruitment

Members took part regularly on recruitment panels for new staff working with young people within East Sussex.

## Independent care review

CICC members joined a zoom meeting with Josh McAlister and other care experienced young people, to discuss his recommendations from the independent care review.

## APPG

CICC attended 2 APPG (All Parliamentary Party Group) meetings to discuss being a sibling in care and mental health provision.

## Corporate Parents and Senior Management Team

CICC members have met with members of the senior management team and corporate parents several times this year, building a better understanding for each other's roles.

## CICC Partnership working.

### Pan Sussex

CICC members worked with the CICC from Brighton and Hove to co-produce an evaluation framework, for relationship based social work practice.

## Children and Young People's Trust

CICC supported a refresh of the East Sussex children and young people's plan and its priorities at the annual trust event.

## Foundations for our Future

CICC members have been part of a project for mental health and wellbeing run by NHS Sussex, Priority 1-54 and ESCC giving their views on social prescribing and accessing mental health services offered for young people.



# Children in Care Council (continued)



## Volunteering

The average hours each member has spent volunteering over the past 12 months is 102.

## Funding

CICC secured an extra £1037.88 in extra funding this year for team building and qualifications for CV enhancements.

## SUSS it (Speak up Sessions)

36 activities giving 66 young people the opportunity to speak out and speak up if they wanted too. Through this engagement 48 young people have asked for help with individual issues.

## Digital Ambassadors

CICC were involved in the digital care project run by ESCC to train, update and promote resources for keeping cared for children safe and resilient online. They had the opportunity to work with the newest virtual reality technology and used 3D printers.

## National Participation

7 CICC members along with 87 cared for young people from all over the UK, attended a day at Westminster to lobby Parliament about important issues.

Our young people raised concerns around education and placement stability with one member having a one-on-one discussion with the education secretary at the time Nadhim Zahawi.



# Our Children's Homes

## Hazel lodge, St Leonards-on-Sea

- Judged as 'Good' by Ofsted in October 2022.
- Young people in the home made positive progress.
- The staff team remained stable and are focused on providing good quality care to the young people in the home.

## Brodrick House, Eastbourne

- **The home was judged as "Good" by Ofsted - October 2022**
- Staff team continued to be well established and consistent, with a full team. There was only one leaver in the last 2.5 years continued to offer sessional work with us.
- Young people continued to demonstrate positive outcomes and achieve personal goals overall.
- Young people enjoyed a number of trips away and positive activities.

## Homefield Cottage, Seaford

- **The home was judged by OFSTED to be 'Outstanding in all areas' in March 2023**
- The children/young people all made positive progress.
- The children/young people enjoyed the summer holidays and engaged in lots of fun activities.
- The staff team continue to be resilient, child focused and have high aspirations for our resident children and young people.





# Our Children's Homes (continued)

## Silver Birches, Hastings

- **Granted registration by Ofsted in May 2022**
- First admission May 2022
- Development of expansive outdoor space - outdoor gym installed, landscaping work completed
- **Judged as 'Good' by Ofsted in November 2022**

## Lansdowne Secure, Hailsham

- **Judged Good by Ofsted in November 2022**
- Service paused in Dec 2022 whilst restructure completed
- All children supported to move by end of January 2023
- Staff temporarily redeployed from February 2023
- Subject Matter Experts appointed February 2023 and Project Group Established
- Steering Group including DfE, San and NHS England in place
- Plan to reopen November 2023



# Our Children's Homes(Continued)

## Acorns, Bexhill-on-Sea

- Continued to provide care for 2 young people, both of which have a high level of complex needs.
- Staff worked closely with colleagues in the Health, Education and Social Care around the care and pathway planning for each young person.
- Judged as 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted in May 2023.

## The Bungalow, Eastbourne

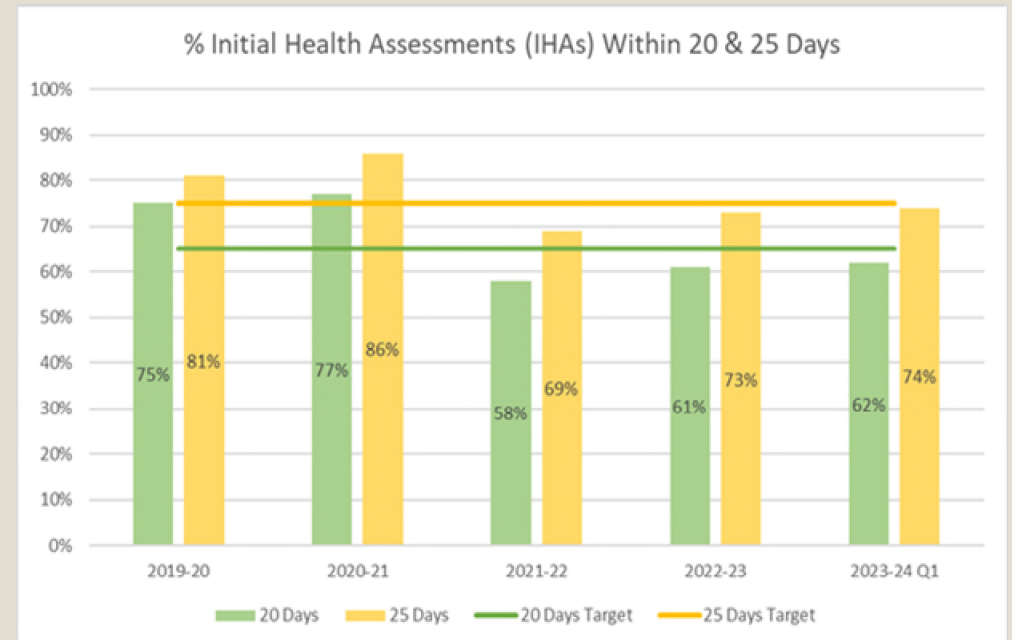
- Registered for 7 children aged 7-19 and provides full time accommodation to children with a severe level of disability who are unable to live in a family setting.
- During the period 2022-2023, most children attended local schools and all maintained contact with their families.
- The Bungalow received an Ofsted judgement of 'requires improvement ' in March and June 2023



# The health of our children

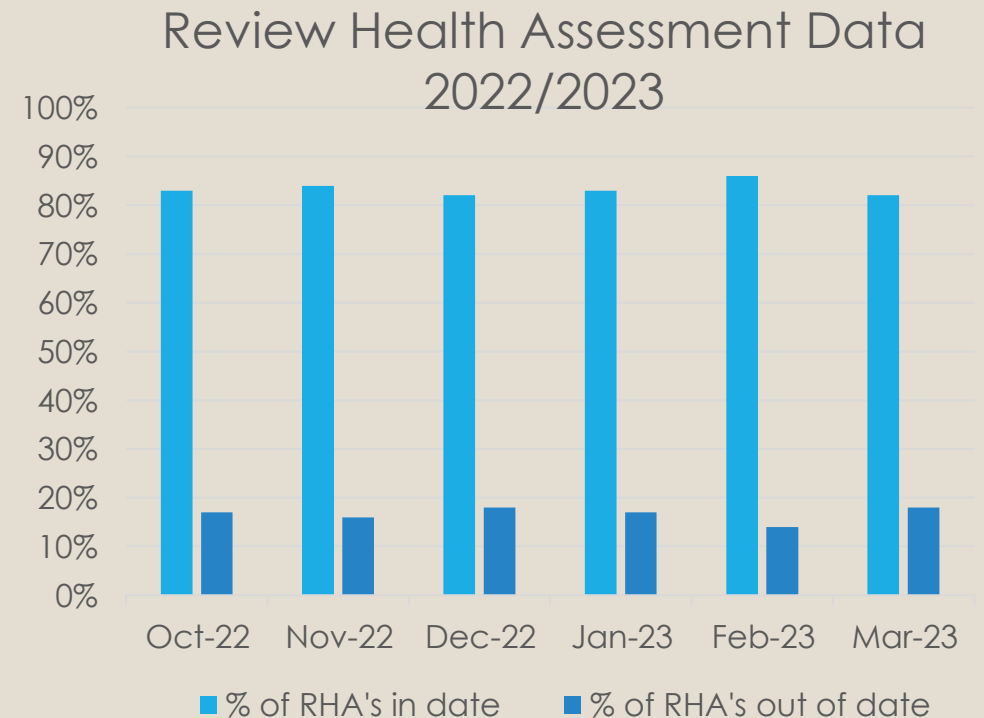
NHS Core Plus 5 - LAC and Care Leavers have been identified, both nationally and locally, as a group who should be included in the 'plus' cohort to ensure their health needs are prioritised across all services.

- There was a gradual improvement in the timeliness of the completion of Initial Health Assessments (IHA's), albeit the performance remained below the local target.
- The Head of Locality Services implemented a robust tracking and monitoring process to improve performance, and this data was scrutinised at the quarterly Health Strategic Meetings.
- Obtaining written consent within timescales remained a significant challenge for the service. The dip in performance 2021-22 was directly attributable to the post Covid health guidance and a return to written consent.
- The changes to the LAC age profile also impacted on this performance with a higher number of older children declining IHA's.
- In addition, the national placement sufficiency challenges resulted in more children being placed outside East Sussex, and therefore that local health service were required to complete the IHA. This often led to delays too.



# The health of our children (continued)

- Overall, the timely completion of Review Health Assessments (RHA's) was maintained between 80-90%. This performance was closely scrutinised by the Strategic Health Group and monitored on a monthly basis by the Head of Service LAC.
- However, the timely completion of RHA's in a small number of cases was impacted by the increased numbers of LAC, the number of children living in Other Local Authorities and the cohort of older children who declined taking part in an RHA.
- The Designated Nurse/ Doctor for LAC in Sussex recognised that the current system didn't offer enough flexibility for the older cohort of children and have proposed a more responsive system. There are plans to embed a caseload working approach which would facilitate longer term relationships between the young people and the health team. It is hoped that this will encourage young people to take up the offer of an RHA.



# The mental and emotional wellbeing of our children

- The Sussex Children and Young Peoples' Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy 2022-2027 for Sussex Children and Young People up to the age of 25s was produced by the Sussex Health and Care Partnership last year and it set the direction of travel for the development of local services.
- The Looked After Children's Mental Health Service (LACMHS) offered; 35 consultations to the networks during 2022-23 this was down by 5 on the previous year, 68 drop ins which was down by 22 for 2021-22, and one Therapeutic Parenting Group each quarter either to foster carers or Residential Children's Home staff. The numbers of cases opened at any one time varied between 88 (Q2) and 78 (Q4).
- The specification for LACAMHS was jointly reviewed during 2022-23 between the provider (SPFT), the Strategic Commissioner and the LAC Service. The new specification addresses the review findings of: longer waiting times due to increasing demand due to children coming into care, Section 20 cases, and Section 31 return home assessments; more LAC presenting with significant risk of harm to themselves or others; crisis situations, urgent assessments and interventions for high risk; the number of placement breakdowns and associated support for children affected; and the level of need arising in RCH. It is due to be issued in 2022-23.
- The ongoing staffing recruitment challenges within SPFT for the Adopted Children's Mental Health Service (ADCAMHS) were not resolved during 2022-23, the service was not able to take on any clients during the year but did continue to support existing clients. Mental Health Support for this group of children and their families was largely provided by independently commissioned therapists funded by the Adoption Support Fund. A proposal which could enhance this commissioning is currently being explored with the SWIFT service.

## The mental and emotional wellbeing of our children (continued)

- A specialist Mental Health Nurse was embedded within the Through Care Service to offer direct interventions to young people, and advice and guidance to their allocated workers.
- The Health and Wellbeing Project for Care Leavers was extended during 2022-23. Up until March 2023 277 personalised health budgets had been allocated to young people.
- SPFT appointed a Named Nurse for Looked after Children and Care Leavers in March 2022. The Named Nurse offers safeguarding consultation to LACAMHS and the wider SPFT services in East Sussex. During 2022-23 a total of 12 consultations, 4 of which were for LACMHS, were completed. In addition, they are available for ad hoc supervision / consultations.
- The Named Nurse completed a Quality Improvement project which focussed on improving performance data and training to increase SPFT staff awareness/knowledge regarding Looked after Children and Care Leavers. The training addressed core safeguarding issues in relation to adult specialist safeguarding and specialist children's safeguarding. Improvements in the data capture has assisted the day-to-day operational management, and it also enabled the service to identify Looked After Children requiring a transfer of care to adult mental health services or primary care.

# Virtual School (VS)

- **Virtual Head extended duties** - The Virtual Head Teacher's strategic role to promote the educational outcomes for children with a Social Worker was extended for a further two years. The VS worked strategically with social care and education teams across the authority including attendance, inclusion and special education needs. The VS provided advice and information to social workers in teams across the Authority and worked with the Designated Safeguarding Leads Network within schools.
- **Post 16 Pupil Premium** - The 2021 pilot was developed to enhance the educational outcomes for young people aged 16+ and was extended for a further two years. The VS worked in partnership with post 16 providers to ensure a joined-up approach, improve educational planning, track attendance and develop provision for UASC. VS funded academic tutoring and coaching for individual young people.
- **Tuition** - 299 blocks of tuition in core subjects were provided to 53 children last academic year. 100% of all children and young people said their confidence against their targets had increased. 98% of the young people achieved at least one target and partially met the others.
- **English as an Additional Language (EALS)** - Tutors delivered 169 sessions of EALS additional language tuition through the year.
- **Training** - An extensive training programme was developed by the VS. This included Designated Teacher training, attachment training for schools, Personal Education Planning training and an Education Master Series for Social Workers. This Education Series was aimed at improving Social Workers understanding of the education system.
- **Alternative education provision** - VS funded and supported 65 Alternative Provision interventions for 43 young people who required a specific intervention to support skills for learning, wellbeing and engagement in preparation for a return to school.
- **Extra-curricular activities** - A range of activities were delivered throughout 2022-23 including a film making course, university schools and Glyndebourne performances. Children and young people were also funded to take part in new activities such as music lessons, horse care, horticulture and water sports.
- **Children In Care Awards** - Achievement awards were presented by Jacqueline Wilson as part of an event at Bedes School. 101 children and young people were nominated in the categories of educational achievement, positive contribution, personal achievement and skills and talents. Another 37 primary aged children were nominated for awards which were presented at a special event.



# Education of our children - Headline data

**All current data is provisional, and progress and attainment 8 data is not yet available for GCSEs.**

- **Key Stage 1** data showed the percentage of ESCC LAC who reached the expected standard in Reading was in line with national and regional CLA results but writing and Maths levels were lower. There were no ESCC children working at greater depth.
- There was an improvement in the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in phonics from 33.3% last year to 50% this year. 22% of this cohort were given an EHCP since they sat the tests.
- **Key Stage 2** data showed significant improvement in reading. The percentage of children in care in East Sussex reaching expected standard or above in Reading in 2023 was **60.0%** compared with **44.4%** in 2022 (**+15.6%**). This was also higher than the percentage of looked after children in the South-East and nationally reaching expected standard in Reading.
- There was a small increase in writing from 35.7% in 2022 to 40% in 2023. This compares with CLA levels of 40% regionally and 47% nationally.
- The percentage of children reaching expected standard or above in Maths in 2023 was **40.0%** compared with 40.7% in 2022 (**-0.7%**). The South East figure for 2023 was 43% and the national figure 50%.
- The percentage of children in care to East Sussex achieving greater depth in Reading in 2023 was **25.0%** compared to **11.1%** in 2022 (**+13.9**). This was greater than the percentage of children in care in the South-East achieving greater depth which is 14.0% (+8%) and nationally (16%) and in line with all children at 27.6%
- Individual children made extremely good progress with progress scores of up to 22.6 in writing and 18.37 in reading.
- **Key Stage 4 Data** showed that the percentage of students achieving a 4 or higher in core subjects increased this year. 25% of students achieved a 4 or more in both English and Maths. This was a 3% increase from last year. 42% gained a 4 or higher in English or Maths which was 10% more than last year. 38.3% gained a level 4 and above in Maths and 27.7% in English. These figures were significantly higher than the pre COVID results from 2019.

# Education of our children - Headline data (continued)

- The percentage of students achieving a grade of 5 or above in English and Maths reduced from 14% to 6%. This is disappointing but supports the view that many of our young people performed better in the adapted assessments that took place because of COVID. The percentage getting a 5 in English or Maths was however slightly better (21.3%) than last year. This was an improvement on the 2019 results.
- There were some very pleasing individual achievements. 1 student achieved a level 6 in History and 5s in all other subjects. 1 student gained an 8 in Maths and another a 7 in biology. 2 students received distinctions in imedia BTEC. 1 student received a distinction in Hospitality and Catering with another a distinction in Level 1 Food and Cookery skills.
- **Post 16** results enabled 5 Care Leavers to gain University places. 2 of these young people have however, decided to defer for a year.
- 1 student achieved a B in A-level Art and Photography. Another achieved a B in A-level photography and a distinction, which is equivalent to an A at A-level, in B-tech sport. 2 other young people passed the first year of a level three course and are staying on an additional year to complete the course.
- Many other post 16 young people also achieved level 1 and 2 qualifications which will enable them to progress onto other courses.
- **Overall attendance** last year was 88.76% (June 2023). This is a 1.75% drop on last year. This should be compared with East Sussex data of 91.9% (June 2023 all children). Most of the absence was authorised and the main type selected was 'other'. This code is used when a child or young person is unable to attend because they have moved. Data compared to last year shows an increase in unauthorised absence. Of the unauthorised, some of this was holiday which schools had informally agreed but not authorised for exceptional reasons.
- 70.30% of our children and young people had attendance of above 90%.
- During this period the VS was involved in the development of a cross county policy which focused on improving attendance, one strand of which was to ensure that it was identified as a priority for all professionals supporting children.

# The Through Care Team

## What we have achieved in 2022-23

- Groupwork returned to 'in person' meetings during this period with a weekly meeting for lunch, careers advice and mental health support in Eastbourne and a fortnightly meeting in Hastings.
- Young people took part in a variety of consultation events, such as reviewing the Pathway Plan and Wellbeing pilot, some events took place in person and others remotely, thus ensuring wider accessibility and participation.
- The Care Leavers Council met each month remotely.
- Young people participated in Corporate Parenting Panel.
- A Facebook notice board was launched providing young people with information about upcoming events and useful links.
- Young people represented East Sussex at National Benchmarking events.
- Young people all had access to laptops and Wi-Fi in order to continue with their education, facilitate their access to employment and to keep in touch with their families.
- The updated Local Offer was published and shared with all young people ensuring they were aware of the support available to them.
- Developments continued to extend the wider corporate parenting role across all agencies in East Sussex and the multi-agency Care 2 Work Strategic meeting was re-established.
- The Health and Wellbeing Project continued to support young people to use personalised budgets for activities designed to improve their overall wellbeing. This initiative has received widespread acclaim nationally.

# The Through Care Team

## What we have achieved in 2022-23 (continued)

- Placement Support Workers (PSWs) continued to work closely with our young people who were isolated in their own accommodation or were struggling to maintain their placements.
- A Rent Guarantor pilot scheme was implemented to secure better quality private rental accommodation options for young people.
- Young people accessed the Life Long Links service, which promoted connections with family members and other significant adults in their lives.
- The (TCT) continued to work closely with East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care Specialist Accommodation Team ensuring a smoother transition for those Care Leavers with diagnosed mental health needs or trauma related diagnoses.
- The Skills Journal was developed in partnership with Young People and is due to be launched in 23/24
- The housing pathway was reviewed and the CSAAL launched.



# Our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

## Developments 2022-23

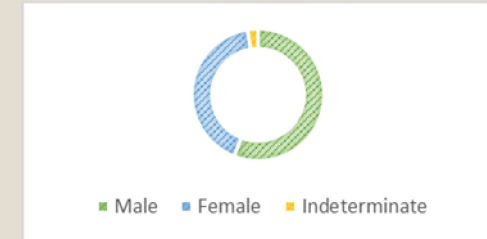
- Further investment was made to increase the capacity of the UASC team as it expanded to cover Ukrainian children.
- The establishment of adult asylum hotels across Eastbourne and Hastings by the Home Office (HO) placed considerable pressure on the service during this period. Over 60 referrals were received from people claiming that they had had their age incorrectly recorded at the point of entry and requesting support as children. 20 of these young people subsequently came into our care.
- The rising number of age assessments led to the development of a more streamlined service for managing and recording these referrals. The National Age Assessment Board also agreed to work in partnership ESCC to support with any outstanding age assessments. This will begin in September 2023
- The service worked closely with the South East Regional Group and the HO to pilot best practice by working directly with the social work teams at Kent Intake Unit to improve communication and information sharing.
- Young people's panels were developed to gather feedback regarding their support needs with issues such as cultural issues and life story work.

# Our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (continued)

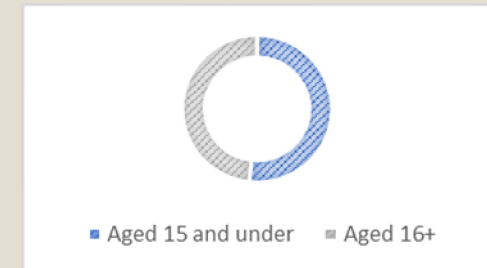
- The service continued to explore a range of new education offers for UASC including bringing a new provider into the area. The EALS (English as an additional language service) increased its offer of personalised tuition for this group of young people. Pupil Premium was established as a permanent offer to all our over 16 year olds.
- Joint work was undertaken with health colleagues to improve the health offer to UASC. The Initial Health Assessments were adapted to take account the specific issues for this cohort. The development of a greater understanding of the trauma and life experiences these young people had had was supported by the UASC team.
- This service worked closely with Adult Social Care in the development of a Migrant Help team, and has continued to support Unaccompanied Minors coming from Ukraine.
- Young people were supported to access additional social activities to improve their wellbeing in groups. This included cycling, rock climbing and water sports.
- The Refugee Council was commissioned to extend their offer to UASC including working with young people over the age of 18years.
- The 'Welcome to the UK' groups continued during this period, and further work was undertaken to develop a specific UASC Skills Journal to support independent living skills for these young people.

# Our Children who went missing

In 2022-23, 118 LAC went missing, of these, 66 were male, 49 were female and 3 were indeterminate



57 of the 118 missing LAC were aged 16 and over, while the other 61 were aged 15 and under



74 of the missing LAC went missing more than once



In 2022-23 there were 761 missing episodes throughout the year, 667 episodes of children being missing for less than 24 hours, 58 episodes of children being missing for between 24 to 48 hours, 30 episodes where children were missing between 2 and 4 days and 6 episodes where they were missing for 5 days or more.

All these children were tracked by Sussex Police and by Children Services staff. Risk assessments were regularly reviewed on high profile children who went missing and where necessary, formal strategy discussions were held in line with safeguarding procedures



# Our children who are at risk of criminal exploitation

- During 2022-23, 56 children were subject to ESCC MACE/SAFER operational oversight and therefore categorised as being at high risk of exploitation.
- 9 of these children were ESCC LAC, 1 was female and 8 were male.
- 1 of these children was deemed to be at risk of sexual exploitation and 8 deemed to be at risk of criminal exploitation.

# Our children involved in the Youth Justice Service

- The Youth Justice Service (YJS) worked with 22 looked after children/young people during 2022-23. 6 of those children became LAC as a result of being securely remanded.
- Nine percent of the YJS caseload in 2022/23 were Looked After Children.
- LAC aged 10 - 17 represented less than 1% of the total population of this age group across the county, however they remained over-represented within the YJS cohort.

# My Voice Matters (MVM)

## Timeliness of My Voice Matters meetings

- 95% of all MVM were held early or on time in 2022/2023
- 2019/2020 - 92%
- 2020/2021 - 95%
- 2021/2022 - 97%
- 6 MVM meetings were held within 4 weeks of the scheduled date.
- Most late MVM's were delayed either in the child's best interests or because an essential party was unable to attend

## Participation: children make their voices heard in lots of different ways

- 97% of Children aged 4+ participated in some way in their MVMs process
- 2019/2020 - 91%
- 2020/2021 - 95%
- 2021/2022 - 97%
- There was positive feedback about the development of IRO profiles, which were shared with Looked After Children. They noted that they liked knowing a little bit of personal information about their IRO.

# The role of our elected members

The Corporate Parenting Panel met virtually three times during 2022-23 to discuss the agenda items set out below

## 29 April 2022

- Children in Care Council (CiCC) Annual Report - 2021 - 2022
- Developing the Corporate Parenting Panel
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Ofsted Inspection reports for Brodrick House
- Children's Home Regulations 2015, Regulation 44: Inspection reports for the following Children's Homes - Acorns at Dorset Road, Brodrick House, Hazel Lodge, Homefield Cottage, Lansdowne Secure Unit and The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive, Silver Birches and The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive

## 29 July 2022

- Ofsted Inspection reports for Brodrick House and The Bungalow
- Children's Home Regulations 2015, Regulation 44: Inspection reports for the following Children's Homes - Acorns at Dorset Road, Brodrick House, Hazel Lodge, Homefield Cottage, Lansdowne Secure
- Fostering Services Annual Progress Report 2021-22
- Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2021-22
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics

# The role of our elected members (continued)

## 28 October 2022

- Quarterly Registered Children's Homes Report for the following Children's Homes - Brodrick House, Homefield Cottage, Hazel Lodge, Silver Birches, Lansdowne Secure Children's Home, Acorns and the Bungalow
- Ofsted Inspection reports for Silver Birches and Lansdowne Secure Children's Home
- Virtual School Annual Report
- Look After Children's (LAC) Annual Report
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Presentation on proposed new approach to Corporate Panel Parenting (CPP)
- National Review - Children with disabilities and complex health needs placed in residential settings - verbal report

## 20 January 2023

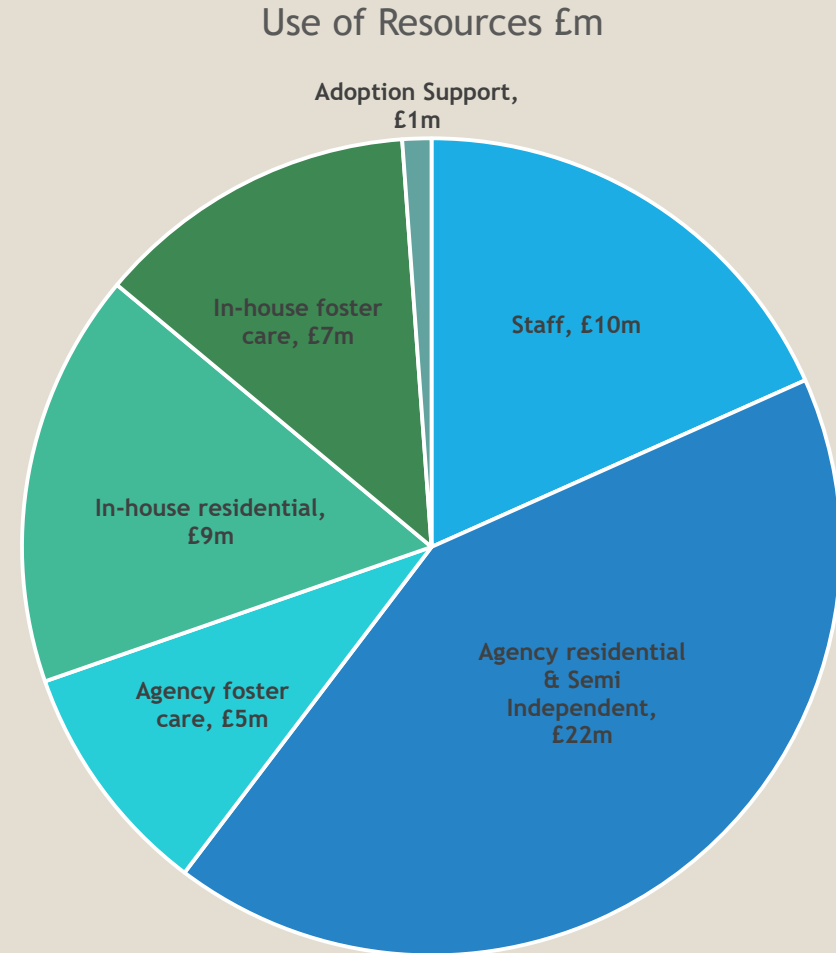
- Quarterly Registered Children's Homes Report for the following Children's Homes - Brodrick House, Homefield Cottage, Hazel Lodge, Silver Birches, Lansdowne Secure Children's Home, Acorns and the Bungalow.
- Ofsted Inspection reports for Acorns, Hazel Lodge and Brodrick House
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Lansdowne Secure Unit-temporary closure and forward plan
- Placement Sufficiency-National Context
- East Sussex Sufficiency Strategy presentation
- Key priorities in relation to care and placements from our children and young people
- Foster Carers Association reflections on demand, current challenges and opportunities
- Discussion-Corporate Parenting Panel Response to Sufficiency Challenges and proposals

# Sufficiency

- Sufficiency of all placement types continued to be very challenging during this period. A consequence of this was that there were occasions when children were placed in unregistered provision for short periods of time. These arrangements were subject to robust risk assessments and carefully monitored.
- A thorough analysis of the sufficiency issues experienced locally was undertaken during 2022-23 and a revised sufficiency strategy was produced. All recommendations were presented to Departmental Management Team (DMT)
- A specialist team of consultants (Impower) were engaged at the end of 2022-23 to assist with the development of sufficiency solutions.

# Use of Resources

- The service maintained minimum levels of staffing in order to support all in house placement types and meet its statutory responsibilities for LAC.
- The budget of £7m supported 334 children living in in-house fostering placements. In addition, 97 children were placed in agency fostering placements at a cost of £9m. Overall, there were fewer children in fostering placements. These placements provide the best value for money.
- More children with very complex behaviours were placed in in-house residential homes during this period. Additional costs were incurred due to the very high levels of supervision and support required. Nonetheless, a market premium rate would have been substantially higher had the independent sector been able to offer suitable placements.
- There was an increase of 10 children placed in agency residential (68) and an increase of 24 children placed in semi independent provision (87). Agency residential costs are substantially higher than those for semi independent provision. Both sets of costs are reported in the same cost centre, alongside any unregistered placement costs/wrap around support. This accounts for just under half of the total LAC placement budget.
- There was an overspend of £9m for this period which was largely attributable to the increased use of agency residential placements and the additional wrap around support for our most complex children.



# Priorities for 2022-23

- Delivery of revised sufficiency strategy.
- Consolidate changes made to Corporate Parenting Panel. Further develop and extend corporate parenting responsibilities across key partners.
- Continue to contribute to service developments in relation to emotional wellbeing and mental health of our looked after children including strengthening joint commissioning with the NHS
- Embed the Local Offer for our Care Leavers across whole Council and key partners responsible for corporate parenting.
- Further develop and focus on meeting the identity needs of our children, young people and their families.



# Priorities for 2022-23 (continued)

- Develop ambitious programme to enable our children and Care Leavers to maintain safe relationships within their networks and promote Life Long Links for all.
- In partnership with ASE, promote best practice in relation to early permanence, keeping in touch and post adoption support. Improved performance in relation to timeliness for children with a plan for adoption.
- Reopen Lansdowne Secure Childrens Home
- Launch reunification programme to promote the safe return home for LAC
- Launch revised Life Story Work Pilot
- Contribute to ESCC's implementation of the Care Review

# Children's Services Annual Reports 2022-23

