

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 15 December 2015

Report of: Director of Children's Services

Title: Annual Progress Report of Looked After Children's Services
1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015

Purpose: To outline the performance of the Looked After Children's Service
between 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015

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

1. Background

1.1 The Annual Report is attached as appendix 1. At present the full comparative national data is still not available and so an update will be provided to the next Corporate Parenting Panel so that local performance can be assessed in that context.

1.2 The services for Looked After Children (LAC) are supported via core funding from the Children's Services budget with additional funding from the Delegated Schools Grant to support the Virtual School.

1.3 Overall the Looked After Children Service has performed consistently well during 2014/15 with continued emphasis on a safe reduction in the number of LAC in the system. This has delivered the consequent significant reduction in overall placement costs. This has also been achieved whilst still maintaining some good outcomes for LAC, albeit a reduced performance for care leavers particularly in regard to those living in suitable accommodation and education, employment and training. The continued Thrive funding and Adoption Reform Grant during 2014/15 enabled the service to sustain the increased numbers of foster carers and adopters approved. In addition the costs for supervised contact have been reduced both across LAC and Child Protection. Whilst the budget remained pressured at the year end, these contributions significantly mitigated against the worst case scenario.

1.4 The challenge for 2015/16 will be to continue to ensure that the right children are in the right placements for the right amount of time and that we secure the best outcomes possible within the available resources.

2. Conclusion and reasons for the recommendations

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to note the contents of the report which outlines the performance of the Looked After Children's Service in 2014/15.

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Local Members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

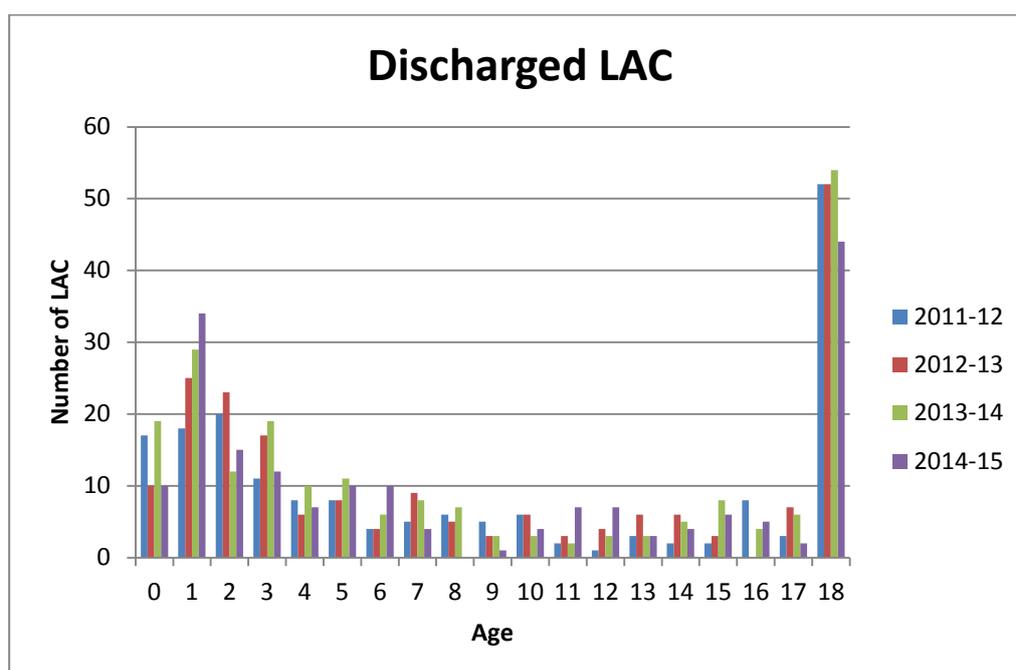
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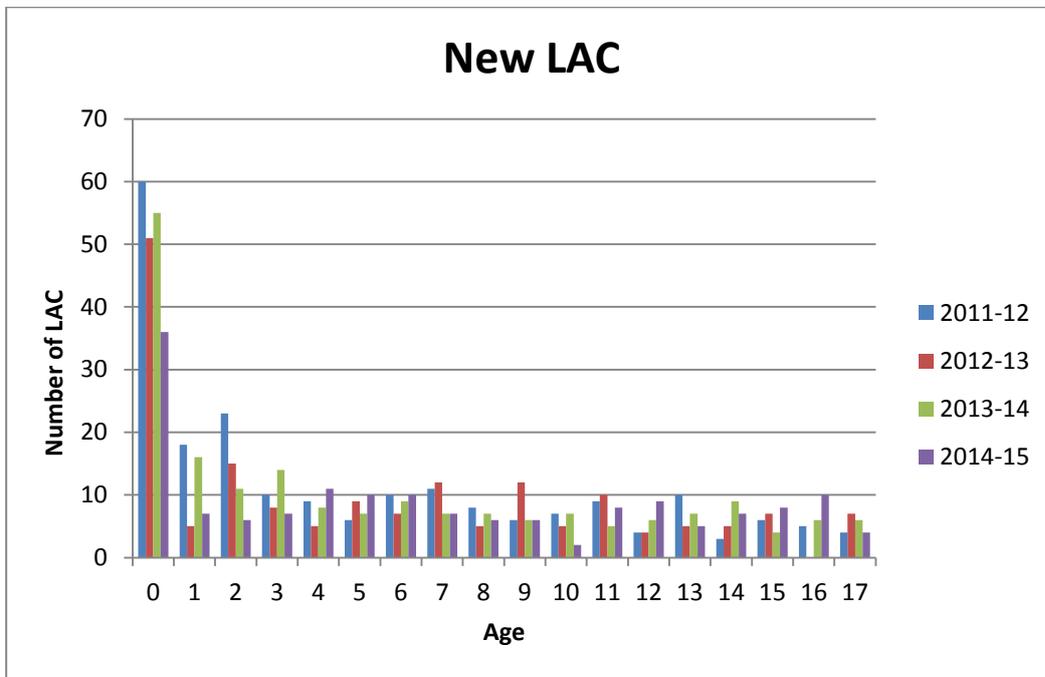
- Appendix 1 Report
- Appendix 2 Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Fostering Service 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015
- Appendix 3 Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015
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1 Looked after Children Trend Data

1.1 On 31 March 2015 there were 548 Looked After Children (LAC) in ESCC; this represents a reduction of 25 children (4.4%) as compared to 13/14 and a rate of 51.7 per 10,000 population. Whilst this reduction in the LAC population did not achieve the Thrive target of 520 at year end, the service has sustained a reducing trajectory. It should be noted that the Thrive target, is below the IDACI expected rate (a measure in terms of population profiles and deprivation levels) of 56.6 and the 2014 England average of 60. LAC IDACI is the sole performance figure in the report that is based on 2015 National data as the rest are still anticipated.

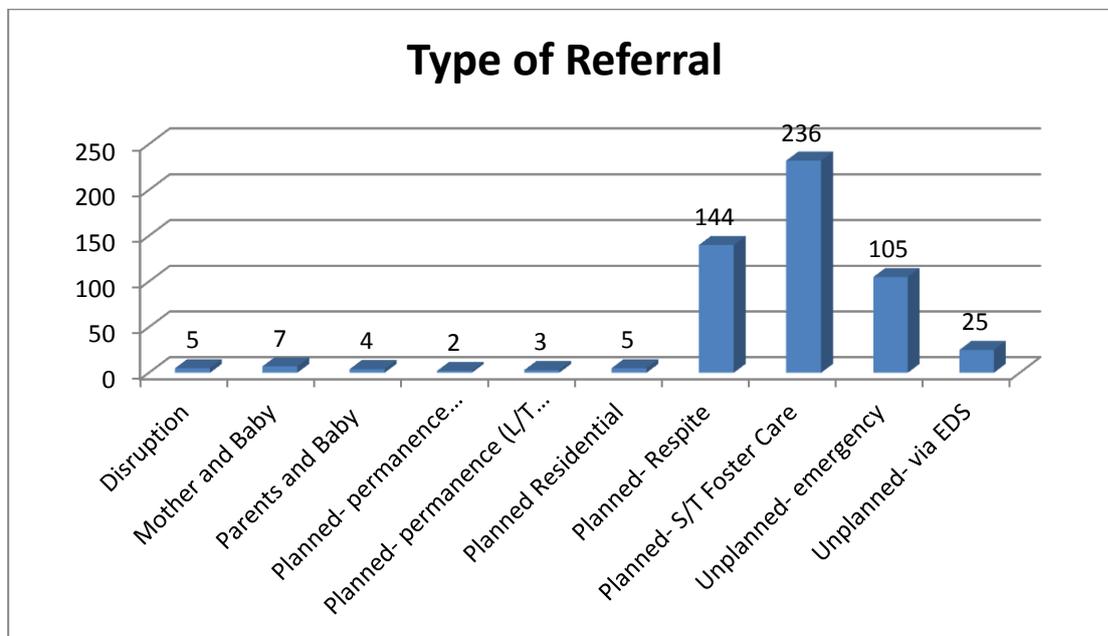
1.2 There is obviously a strong link between rates of LAC and the rate of children subject to Child Protection (CP) Plans. Following an increase in 2013-14 there was a significant reduction in 2014-15 to 44.5 per 10,000 compared to 58.5 in 2013-14. This is still higher than the IDACI expected rate of 40.7. An actual reduction of 40 CP plans is required to match the IDACI expected rate. Please note that 2015 IDACI Expected Rates are based on the national CIN data for 2014 and will be revised once the 2015 data is published later this month. These data demonstrate a greater confidence in managing safeguarding risks in the community, although there are always a proportion of these birth parents that are unable to make the necessary changes to care for their children safely and consistently.





1.3 The data as shown above only ever gives a snapshot of the children moving in and out of the system at a fixed date each month/year and considerable activity sits beneath it. The latter data is referred to as 'churn'. This cohort of children will come in and out of the system within the year, or some may come in and stay whilst others leave. Behind this group sits the cohort of children who are stable for at least one year. It has been calculated that there is a churn figure of 179 for 14/15 which, added to the total number of LAC, equates to the service working with 727 children. This shows that the service worked with fewer children overall during the course 14/15, and that the churn rate was lower than the previous year. (205 13/14, 179 14/15)

1.4 The above charts also give a picture of the admission and discharge trends for each age group over the last four years. There was a significant decrease in the number of 0 – 5 year olds admitted to care during this period from 111 in 13/14 to 77 in 2014/15; and a marginal increase in admissions of 6 -12 years from 47 in 13/14 to 48 in 14/15. Admissions in relation to 13 year olds and above slightly increased from 32 in 13/14 to 34 in 2014/15. Overall LAC admissions for 12 year olds and under have reduced by 34.2% since the beginning of the Thrive programme (190 in 10/11 to 158 in 13/14 to 125 in 14/15). At year end in 14/15 there was an overall decrease in the number of LAC discharged from care, 185 from 212 in 13/14. The decrease in the number of 0 - 12 year olds discharged from care has fallen from 132 in 13/14 to 121 in 14/15, and there was a further decrease in the 13+ age group from 80 in 13/14 to 64 in 14/15. These data very clearly demonstrate the impact of the CSCMT management action plan 13/14 to reduce LAC numbers and hence costs. The LAC admissions were contained and reduced in number across the board. Planned actions in relation to accelerating LAC discharges in 13/14 and in the first quarter 14/15 were implemented, leaving the remainder of the LAC cohort in stable permanent placements. By the end of 14/15 this showed as a reduced discharge rate. The increased activity in relation to protecting young people who are at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) has resulted in a small but notable rise in LAC admissions for ages 12, 15, 16 and fewer discharges from care for those ages groups.



1.5 All placements for LAC continued to be made through the centralised duty team based in the Fostering Service. The chart above outlines the number and type of referrals received by the duty service in 14/15. Of the 536 referrals received in 14/15; 505 resulted in placements being made or matched, 83 were ultimately not required, and 20 were awaiting placement at year end. In order to prioritise need, the Fostering Duty Team developed a new referral form that incorporated a 'traffic light' system highlighting the urgency of placement need and introducing senior management authorisation.

1.6 LAC were placed as follows (2014 figures in brackets):-

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|
| with foster carers | 433 | (473) |
| of these: in house carers | 305 | (330) |
| kinship carers | 34 | (27) |
| agency carers | 94 | (116) |
| placed for adoption | 43 | (29) |
| in supported lodgings | 6 | (7) |
| in ESCC children's homes | 21 | (18) |
| in agency children's homes | 21 | (17) |
| in agency special schools | 5 | (9) |
| placed with own parents | 11 | (14) |
| youth custody/secure unit | 5 | (3) |
| Hospital/NHS establishment | 0 | (1) |
| Absconded | 3 | (2) |

2. Fostering

2.1 The additional investment provided by the Thrive programme enabled the Fostering Service to sustain higher levels of recruitment activity both in relation to foster carers and supported lodgings providers. As at 31st March 2015 there were 433 LAC living with foster carers. Of these, 339 were living with ESCC approved foster carers and 94 with agency carers. This represents a decrease of 19% of LAC in agency placements compared to the previous year. In addition to the 339 LAC placed with in-house foster carers, 14 young people (over 18) were still in placement with their foster carers under the 'Staying Put' arrangements, and 33 children were living with Special Guardians who were previously East Sussex foster carers. In effect the service was supporting 386 children in family placements.

2.2 The CSCMT management action plan identified 18 children in agency provision to be prioritised for transfer to in-house placements by virtue of placements disrupting or coming to an end because of their age. Of those 18 children, 12 children were placed with in-house foster carers by year end and this produced a saving of £630k. Between September 14 and March 15 only 2 children were placed in external agency placements.

2.3 The number of foster carers approved in 14/15 was 41 households offering 62 placements. 8 of these households were transfers from Independent Fostering Agency providers with 9 East Sussex LAC already in placement, this equates to a saving of £256,000 per year in agency fees. 3 LAC from other Local Authorities were also placed with ESCC foster carers during this period which also generated income for the Council. During 14/15 Supported Lodgings carers have provided a number of step-down placements for children from both in-house residential and foster placements. Significantly, Supported Lodgings carers provided 4 placements for LAC moving from expensive external residential provision at a saving of £800,000 per annum. It also allowed some young people to come back to East Sussex.

2.4 It is very pleasing to note that the Fostering Service has maintained an excellent retention rate, having only lost 2.3% of their foster carers in 14/15 compared with 6% in 13/14. This is significantly better than the national average of 12% found in Fostering Network's most recent survey.

Please see Appendix 2 for full Fostering Service Annual Report 2014-15.

3. User Participation and Feedback

3.1 A summary report was completed in August 2014 which collated and analysed data from the following LAC services and activities:

- Children's Rights Directors monitoring Survey
- Care Leavers residential weekend focus groups
- Care Leavers snap shot survey
- Fostering service snapshot survey
- Fostering ongoing survey
- Fostering short breaks survey
- Adoption recruitment service survey
- Adoption and Permanence panel feedback
- The Looked After Children's Community Family Work (LAC CFW) Service survey
- SUSS IT monitoring
- LAC game consult
- Placement Support Service
- LAC consultation booklet review

3.2 The key messages in relation to LAC and Care Leavers can be found in the Report "You Said, We Did", particularly sections 10-12. (see appendix 6)

4. Physical and Mental Health

4.1 During the period 13/14 health services provided to LAC were delivered by East Sussex Healthcare Trust (ESHT) and were subjected to considerable disruption due to staff sickness and an inability to cover and prioritise this work. This seriously impacted on the performance of initial health assessments completed within 28 days, with rates reducing from 80.2% in 13/14 to 53.2% in 14/15. In November 2014 Kent Community Healthcare Trust (KCHT) were commissioned to deliver a fully integrated offer; encompassing initial health assessments, the designated doctor role, adoption medicals and medical services to both the Adoption and Permanence, and Fostering Panels.

Delivery of the health care plans continued to be commissioned through ESHT via the LAC nursing team. This solution was built on the successful interim arrangements that had been put in place early in 2014, and were formally led by an experienced paediatrician, Dr Siggers, and her team. The referral process remained the same and ESHT and KCHT remained committed to developing a close working partnership with good communication. Given that this was a new arrangement, the Clinical Commissioning Groups have monitored the contract closely to ensure that all of the statutory elements of LAC health services were being addressed. It is anticipated that performance in 15/16 will continue to be adversely affected given that the performance is measured on a rolling year basis.

4.2 The LAC Mental Health service (LACCAMHS) received 75 new referrals during the period 14/15, all of which were accepted and an initial consultation offered. A number of children were seen urgently due to the severity of the symptoms they presented such as suicidal thoughts and/or serious self-harm, depression or psychotic symptoms. There was also a cohort of LAC in receipt of therapeutic support e.g. individual therapy, therapy with the child and their carer, or consultation to the carer. Over the year 14/15 this ranged between 71 (second quarter) and 102 (first quarter) LAC. LACCAMHS also provided two 12-week therapeutic parenting groups, weekly consultations to the residential homes and monthly 'drop in' consultations to the LAC teams and Fostering Service. LACCAMHS also provided 2 days per week of Clinical Psychology provision to Lansdowne Secure Unit.

4.3 During 14/15 NHS England commissioned additional mental health provision to Lansdowne Secure Unit of 1 session of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry per month. This was intended to assess and review the mental health needs of LAC subject to a Secure Order, including any prescribed medication. In addition a mental health nurse was appointed to work alongside the LAC nurse and Psychologist.

5. Adoption and Permanence

5.1

| | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. Number of Children Adopted | 16 | 44 | 57 | 43 |
| 2. Number of Adoption Matches (children) | 41 | 53 | 50 | 56 |
| 3. Number of Permanent Fostering Matches (children) | 26 | 10 | 10 | 7 |
| 4. Number of East Sussex Adoptive Matches (children) | 28 | 44 | 40 | 33 |
| 5. Number of Consortium Adoptive Matches (children) | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| 6. Number of Inter-Agency Matches (children): | 10 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Permanence: | 11 | 8 | 9 | 17 |
| Adoption: | | | | |
| 7. Number of Prospective Adopters Approved (households) * | 21 | 39 | 44 | 50 |
| 8. Number of Permanent Carers Approved (households) | 7 | 4 | 8 | 4 |
| 9. Number of Children Approved for Adoption up to 31 st March 2014 | 78 | 69 | 52 | 43 |
| 10. Number of children Approved for Permanence up to 31 st March 2014 | 33 | 17 | 24 | 26 |
| 11. Number of Approved Adopters waiting to be Matched | 12 | 16 | 17 | 20 |
| 12. Number of Disruptions presented to Panel: | 1 (during intros) | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Permanence: | | | | |

| | | | | |
|------------|--|--|--|--|
| Adoptions: | | | | |
|------------|--|--|--|--|

5.2 The Government's focus on adoption continued during 14/15 particularly in relation to timescales for children being placed and adopters being approved. Within ESCC the majority of adopters (over 80%) waited less than 3 months before a child was placed. The Adoption Scorecard issued by the Department for Education (DfE) evidenced that ESCC placed children for adoption more speedily than the national average, achieving placement in 190 days. The additional funding provided by the Thrive programme was instrumental in sustaining the enhanced performance both in terms of recruitment of adopters and the placement of children in a timely manner.

5.3 Alongside the national down turn in numbers, during 2014/15 the number of local children with a plan for adoption continued to decline and has reduced from 52 last year to 43, 9 less than the previous year. The decrease was in part influenced by local courts being resistant to making a plan for adoption, preferring to explore alternative options such as placement with family or friends under Residence Orders and Special Guardianship Orders. The Adoption Service placed a high proportion of children locally with 'in house adopters'. The total number of children matched in the past year was 52, and 37 of these were placed with 'in house adopters' and 15 were placed with carers approved by other adoption agencies. The number of children approved for permanence via long term fostering increased during the same period to 26 from 24. At year end there were 16 children with a plan for permanence where family finding was in progress.

5.4 The specially commissioned pilot CAMHS service for adopted children and their families, 'AdCAMHS' was officially launched in November 2014 by Edward Timpson MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families. The service at year end was supporting 60 adoptive families. Excellent links were forged with the Virtual School, particularly in relation to assisting schools with implementing the new process for claiming Pupil Premium for adopted children. Attachment training was also provided to schools, specifically in relation to the needs of adoptive children in an education setting. In addition, East Sussex was instrumental in developing the criteria for the Adoption Support Fund prototype in preparation for its national launch.

Please see attached appendix 3 for Adoption Service full annual report.

6. Residential Services

6.1 In October 14 Ofsted granted a one year licence to Lansdowne Secure Unit (LSU) and judged the home as "Requires Improvement" overall. A further full inspection was undertaken in March 2015 where it was judged again as "Requires Improvement". The management team developed an action plan to address the issues raised in the Ofsted report. It should be noted the cohort of residents placed in the LSU during this period were particularly challenging, exhibiting extreme self-harm and suicidal behaviours. This impacted significantly on staff in terms of stress, absence and vacancy levels.

6.2 Similarly there have been some extremely complex young people placed in the 3 group homes during the same period. There have been a number of serious allegations and extreme risk taking behaviours exhibited by the young people. This in turn led to increased levels of physical and verbal abuse to both young people and staff. In particular it impacted on the ability to maintain sufficient staffing levels in the homes. All allegations against young people were investigated under ESCC Safeguarding Procedures and actions were taken to minimise risks. Staff and managers worked closely with other professionals including colleagues from CAMHS, U19 Substance Misuse, Youth Offending Team, Missing People, WISE (What is Sexual Education), and the Virtual School. Suffice to say that staffing of all the homes was particularly challenging. Interim management arrangements were put in place in Hazel Lodge following the established deputy leaving

the organisation, leaving a reduced management capacity across the wider residential service. Vigorous efforts have been made to recruit sufficient staff but it has not always been possible to attract new recruits and more extensive use of relief staff, in most cases staff that are providing regular relief sessions and are hence known to the children, has sometimes been the result.

6.3 The hard work and commitment to managing and caring for this cohort of young people should not be underestimated. To strengthen oversight of the residential services we have commissioned an external agency to conduct the monthly Regulation 44 visits of our three small group homes and of the Secure Unit on our behalf. The new Ofsted framework for inspection is bringing considerable challenge and debate with a robust discussion with inspectors about prioritising care of and outcomes for children over process issues.

7. Looked After Children Teams

7.1 The three LAC teams based in Hastings, Lewes and Hailsham have maintained responsibility for all LAC where the overall care plan was permanence outside of the birth family. The number of LAC allocated within the service as of the 31st March 2015 was 327. All remaining LAC were managed by Disability Service (30), the Transition Service (13), the Family Support Teams (78 + 15 dual CP/LAC) and by the Youth Support Teams (28 + 1 dual CP/LAC).

7.2 The service has continued with a collaborative approach to allocation across all the teams. During care proceedings, where the likely outcome was permanence outside the birth family, the LAC Teams and Locality Teams have frequently co-worked to ensure proactive and timely permanence planning through adoption, Special Guardianship or long term fostering.

8. Care Leavers Service

8.1 At the end of 14/15, the service was working with a cohort of 209 care leavers; 56 16 - 17 year olds and 153 18 - 24 year olds. A significant proportion of this cohort presented highly complex behaviours with a range of challenging safeguarding issues. During this period the team focussed on responding positively to the Action Plan developed in response to the Ofsted Inspection in 2014. The team is also planning to pilot a Through Care model of practice which should provide a more consistent approach to some of our most challenging young people as they reach their mid-teens.

8.2. The Care2Work strategic multi agency board has implemented a range of developments designed to improve the skills of care leavers and to ensure a successful transition into education and employment. It has also continued to track and monitor the education and training of all care leavers. Similarly, the board has raised the profile of LAC and care leavers within the wider Council. As a result ESCC Human Resources department delivered a number of bespoke employability workshops to assist care leavers to be ready for work, and support them to apply for in house work experience and apprenticeship opportunities. The Council Plan 14/15 incorporated specific targets for each department to identify apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers. The Virtual School set up a Service Level Agreement with the Universities of Brighton and Sussex to raise awareness and aspiration for ESCC LAC and care leavers. In addition a 16+ caseworker was employed specifically to work alongside the Care Leavers Service and external providers to support students with training and employment opportunities.

8.3 As of 31st March 2015 80% of 16 – 17 year olds (year 12) were in education, training and employment (EET); 69% of 17 - 18 year olds (year 13) were EET. This cohort included care leavers who have significant learning disabilities and who are managed

within the Transition Service, and were in continuous care for at least 12 months before sitting their GCSE examinations. Of 155 eligible care leavers, 14% (22) were at University

8.4 The number and range of accommodation options for care leavers remained static during 14/15. Building on existing practice, particular emphasis was placed on encouraging care leavers to remain with their carers in “Staying Put” arrangements either in foster care or in Supported Lodgings. Supporting People providers continued to offer a range of Foyer type accommodation across the county – Newhaven, Eastbourne, Hastings and Hailsham. The partnership between the Care Leavers Service and YMCA Eastbourne has delivered a fully renovated and refurbished 3 bedroom flat which is staffed at evenings and weekends. However providing sufficient accommodation for the most chaotic and challenging young people continues to be problematic and on the 30th March 2015 there were 6 care leavers living in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, 3 were aged 16 - 17, and 3 were over 18 years old. Clearly this type of accommodation is unsuitable for care leavers. However, it is only used in emergency situations where the young person has completely exhausted all alternative accommodation options. Any decision to place a young person in emergency accommodation must be authorised by an Assistant Director and accompanied with a clear risk assessment. A wrap around package of support is identified and regularly reviewed whilst suitable alternative accommodation is sought. Most young people are only in bed and breakfast for short periods.

9. Performance

9.1 The 14/15 national data has not yet been published by the DfE, therefore this section does not benchmark the performance of ESCC against other local authorities and statistical neighbours. However, this data does show that generally performance in ESCC remained fairly static for 14/15. There were some improvements in adoption and in the rate of LAC, but also deterioration in care leaver performance, particularly in relation to suitable accommodation and EET. Educational outcomes for LAC though, continued to improve overall, especially at KS4. Good progress was supported by additional home tuition funded through Pupil Premium. For overall performance of LAC educational outcomes in 2014 please see The Virtual School Annual Report 16th October 2015 Appendix 5 and Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report in Appendix 4.

The indicator value has improved/increased with a ↑ and where it has dipped with a ↓

| Indicator Ref | Description | 2014/15 Value | 2014/15 Eng | 2013/14 Value | 2013/14 Eng | 2012/13 Value | 2012/13 Eng | 2011/12 Value | 2011/12 Eng |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| NI 58 | Emotional & Behavioural Health of children in care | 15.1 ↔ | | 15.1 ↓ | 13.9 | 14.3 ↑ | 14.0 | 15.5 ↓ | 13.9 |
| Adoption Scorecard 1 | Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted. (3 year average) | 520 days ↑ | | 536 days ↑ | 628 days | 538 days ↑ | 647 days | 553 days | 636 days |
| Adoption Scorecard 2 | Average time between an LA receiving court authority to | 190 days ↑ | | 199 days ↓ | 217 days | 168 days ↑ | 210 days | 179 days ↓ | 195 days |

| Indicator Ref | Description | 2014/ 15 Value | 2014/ 15 Eng | 2013/ 14 Value | 2013/ 14 Eng | 2012/ 13 Value | 2012/ 13 Eng | 2011/ 12 Value | 2011/ 12 Eng |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| | place a child and the LA deciding on a match with an adoptive family (3 year average) | | | | | | | | |
| Adoption Scorecard 3 | % of children who wait less than 18 months between entering care & moving in with their adoptive family (3 year average) | 65% ↑ | | 54% ↑ | 51% | 53% ↓ | 49% | 54% ↑ | 47% |
| NI62 Placements 1 | Number of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year | 9.7% ↓ | | 8.9% ↑ | 10.9% | 12.4% ↓ | 11.3% | 8.8% ↑ | 11.0% |
| 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 | 57.0% ↓ | | 57.4% ↓ | 66.5% | 57.5% ↓ | 66.8% | 60.4% ↓ | 67.7% |
| Placements 3 | % of LAC at 31 st March placed outside LA boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live | 14.9% ↓ | | 8.7% ↑ | 12.2% | 9.2% ↑ | 12.2% | 10.5% ↑ | 12.1% |
| Leaving Care 2 <i>* see note below</i> | % of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in education, employment or training | 52.6% ↓ | | 55.0% | 45.0% | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Leaving Care 3 | % of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in suitable accommodation | 74.3% ↓ | | 85.3% | 77.6% | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Thrive PI 9 | Rate of Children looked after per 10,000 population aged | 51.7 ↑ | | 54.5 ↑ | 60.0 | 57.3 ↑ | 59.8 | 59.9 ↑ | 59.1 |

| Indicator Ref | Description | 2014/15 Value | 2014/15 Eng | 2013/14 Value | 2013/14 Eng | 2012/13 Value | 2012/13 Eng | 2011/12 Value | 2011/12 Eng |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| | under 18 | | | | | | | | |
| PAF C19 | Average of the % of children looked after who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months who had an annual assessment and their teeth checked by a dentist during the previous 12 months. | 92.6% ↓ | | 93.5% ↑ | 86.4% | 89.9% ↓ | 84.7% | 95.3% ↑ | 84.3% |
| PAF C81 | Final warnings, reprimands and convictions of lac | 3.8% ↓ | | 1.8% ↑ | 5.6% | 5.7% ↑ | 6.2% | 6.5% ↓ | 6.9% |

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

10. The Virtual School

10.1 The Virtual School for LAC maintained a core staffing establishment during 14/15, supporting the education of all East Sussex LAC, care leavers and adopted children wherever they were educated. The increased Pupil Premium enabled the school to enhance its provision to schools, carers and to individual LAC. It was recognised nationally as a beacon of good practice and Edward Timpson, the Children’s Minister, repeatedly referred to the innovative work of East Sussex Virtual School in National Speeches, and incorporated the learning into government policy. ESCC practice of the Virtual Headteacher managing the LAC Pupil Premium and the development of a Boarding School project is now enshrined in DfE national guidance. For further information on the work of the Virtual School see The Virtual School Annual Report (appendix 5)

11. Supervised Contact Service

11.1 The Thrive target of providing 90% of all contact in-house was achieved within 13/14 and was exceeded in 14/15 with the delivery of 100% supervised contact in-house. The volume of supervised contacts reduced during this same period from 1800 hours of contact per annum to 1200. This has enabled the service to extend its delivery to the wider social work teams.

11.2 The reconfigured service, into three teams across the county, proved very effective during 14/15, and resulted in reduced travel for children and for workers. This is clearly more cost effective, as well as best practice. In addition, the service has been more responsive to requests for supervised contact responding to referrals within 24 hours. The practice manager and senior social workers have played an active role in Care Proceedings by providing expert evidence on type, frequency and duration of contact. During 14/15 there were significantly higher numbers of parents who were judged to present a high level of risk to staff and children due to alcohol, drugs, violence or mental health vulnerability/volatility. This has meant that 50% of all contact has needed to be co-

worked to keep everyone safe. The service has provided a number of reflective learning events to practitioners across the county. Community Family Workers have provided family support to LAC and their families when children have gone home, as well as life story book work for infants due to be placed for adoption.

11.3 The service is still challenged at times to identify enough venue capacity, particularly in the East of the County and has developed a range of creative solutions as a result. However, there is a pressing need in 15/16 to move forward on this.

12. LAC who are Missing from Care

12.1 There has been significant progress during 14/15 in relation to the Bronze Multi-agency Children's Sexual Exploitation (MACSE) working arrangements, data collection, and operational oversight for LAC who go missing and/or are at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE). Children who go missing from both home and care and/or were at risk of CSE were individually monitored by the MACSE bronze group. The MACSE silver group set the strategic priorities for all key agencies working with these children. The MACSE Action Plan is benchmarked against The National Working Group Action Plan (Prevent, Prepare, Protect & Pursue strands). The plan is regularly refreshed to reflect learning and findings from national research, local reports and inspections and progress is reported regularly to the LSCB.

12.2 Catch 22, a local voluntary organisation, was the provider commissioned and responsible for completing Return Home Interviews (RHI)'s for young people who go missing from both home and care. This contract expired on 31/3/15 and a re-commissioning process was swiftly undertaken with a new contract awarded to the national organisation "Missing People". The delivery of RHI's and Advocacy Service by "Missing People" was contracted to focus on four key areas:

- support children when they return home from being missing; help identify and respond to issues which may have caused them to go missing and/or which have arisen while they were missing;
- safeguard children who have been missing and those who continue to be at risk, enhancing local intelligence about CSE;
- information-sharing with partners to allow better safeguarding of missing children;

In addition to delivering RHI's and advocacy to missing and exploited young people, "Missing People" will also provide 24 hour support and advice to children and young people who may need additional support in a crisis.

12.3 In 14/15 there were 30 LAC with missing episodes, 18 of which were missing more than once. There were also 12 LAC who were absent and 9 of these were absent more than once. In terms of periods of absence there were 70 occasions when these LAC were missing for more than 24 hours, 37 times they were missing for more than 48 hours and 14 times they were missing for more than 5 days. They were all actively tracked by the Police and Children's services staff. All were found apart from one Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC) who it was believed, by the police, had moved to Europe. Risk assessments were reviewed on these high profile young people and safety plans put in place.

12.4 Of the 30 LAC who went missing 19 were female and 11 male, and 13 were aged 16 and above. The data suggested that out of the total missing LAC cohort, 45 episodes were recorded where risk of sexual exploitation was a significant factor.

13. Inspections

13.1 The settings inspections during 14/15 for the residential homes were as follows:

- Homefield: full inspection was judged as overall “Good” 16/07/2014. Interim inspection judged as “Sustained Effectiveness” 12/03/2015.
- Brodrick: full inspection was judged as overall “Adequate” 4/06/2014. Interim Inspection was judged as “Improved Effectiveness” 4/03/2015.
- Hazel Lodge: full inspection was judged as overall “Adequate” 28/08/2014. Interim inspection judged as “Sustained Effectiveness” 29/01/2015.
- The Bungalow: full inspection was judged as overall “good” 30/07/14. Interim inspection was judged as “Sustained Effectiveness” 05/02/15.
- Acorns: full inspection was judged as overall “good” 13/08/14. Interim inspection was judged as “Sustained Effectiveness” 23/03/15.
- Lansdowne Secure Unit: Full Licence inspection was judged as overall “Requires Improvement” 13/10/2014. A full inspection was judged as overall “Requires Improvement” 20/05/2015.

14. Corporate Parenting Panel

14.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel met quarterly during 14/15 to scrutinise the performance of all services in relation to LAC and care leavers, paying particular attention to outcomes. It also received presentations from the CICC and from the East Sussex Foster Care Association. The reports outlined below were presented and considered:

2 May 2014

- Annual Progress Report of the East Sussex Fostering Service 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014
- Annual Report of the East Sussex Foster Care Association
- Annual Progress Report of the East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Regulation 33 reports for Children’s Homes

11 July 2014

- Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service
- Looked After Children who go missing or are risk of childhood sexual exploitation
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Regulation 33 reports for Children’s Homes

10 October 2014

- Looked After Children Service annual report
- Education outcomes for Looked After Children 2014
- The Virtual School annual report and report on the use of the pupil premium
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Regulation 33 reports for Children’s Homes

30 January 2015

- Specialist Adoption Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (AdCAMHS)
- East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Care Leavers’ Employability project
- Looked After Children (LAC) Statistics
- Regulation 33 reports for Children’s Homes

14.2 Elected members of the panel also made a number of visits throughout the year to all of the residential group homes and to the secure unit.

15. Conclusion

15.1 Overall the LAC service has performed consistently well during 2014/15 with continued emphasis on a safe reduction in the number of LAC in the system. This has delivered the consequent significant reduction in overall placement costs. This has also been achieved whilst still maintaining some good outcomes for LAC, albeit a reduced performance for care leavers particularly in regard to those living in suitable accommodation and education, employment and training. The continued Thrive funding and Adoption Reform Grant during 2014/15 enabled the service to sustain the increased numbers of foster carers and adopters approved. In addition the costs for supervised contact have been reduced both across LAC and CP. Whilst the budget remained pressured at year end, these contributions significantly mitigated against the worst case scenario.

15.2 The challenge for 2015/16 will be to continue to ensure that the right children are in the right placements for the right amount of time and that we secure the best outcomes possible within the available resources.