

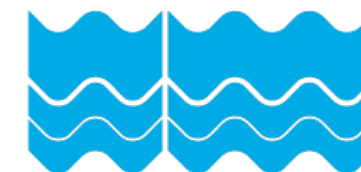
CPP update Jan'25

Fostering recruitment
performance

South East Regional Hub
impact



Recruitment statistics summary



| Recruitment | 2019/20 | | 2020/21 | | 2021/22 | | 2022/23 | | 2023/24 | | 2024 Q1, Q2, Q3 | |
|-------------------------------|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|--------------------|----|
| Enquiries | 260 | | 228 | | 200 | | 274 | | 237 | | 206 | |
| Q&A calls | 106 | | 95 | | 69 | | 79 | | 70 | | 17* | |
| Home visits (IV) | 68 | | 50 | | 33 | | 43 | | 45 | | 63* | |
| Approvals H/holds > places | 22 | 39 | 20 | 30 | 14 | 21 | 24 | 40 | 26 | 38 | 24 | 35 |
| Targets | 30 | 44 | 30 | 44 | 30 | 44 | 25 | 44 | 26 | 44 | 36 | 50 |
| Conversion | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Enquiry to IV | 26% | | 21% | | 17% | | 16% | | 19% | | 31% | |
| Enquiry to approval | 8% | | 9% | | 7% | | 9% | | 11% | | 12% | |
| IV to approval | 32% | | 42% | | 42% | | 56% | | 58% | | 38% | |

* New 2024 ESCC system of removing the Q&A call from the recruitment process in some cases to improve response to assessment speed. This is reflected in Q&A call volume reduction and increase in home visits.

| Recruitment Q2 + Q3 only | ESCC lead | LAFSE lead |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Enquiries since LAFSE launch 08.07.24 | 132 | 3 |

Loss/gain of placement opportunities



| Foster Carer | 2023/24 | 2024/25 Q1, Q2, Q3 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Approved places/households | 26/28 | 24/35 |
| Deregistrations places/households | 20/45 | 10/16 |
| Loss/gain places/households | +6/ -17 | +14/ +19 |

| Deregistration reasons 2024/25 Q1, Q2, Q3 | Households 10 |
|--|------------------|
| Transfer to another agency | 1 |
| Ceasing to foster | 5 |
| Allegation | 1 |
| Moved area | 1 |
| Other | 2 |

★ Payments and allowance uplift since Apr'24 has had a positive impact on our carers:

- staying at ESCC
- recommending ESCC
- ability to focus on fostering
- their wellbeing and outcomes for the children

★ More focus on exit interviews data



Service user feedback on assessment



[Our assessing social worker] has been absolutely amazing and has answered every query quickly and been there for both of us throughout the last few months.

The whole experience has been extremely positive from the initial phone call... We were treated with respect throughout and was able to reflect at our own pace.

I really enjoyed the whole process and already felt like a valued member of your team

[We would have liked] more contact with other applicants and more access to foster carers.

We appreciated the pace of the assessment process (not rushed) and the timings of the meeting were arranged to suit our diaries.

Fostering service response:

- Set up a Recruitment Ambassador scheme so enquirers can talk to 'real' foster carers for an initial chat and during online information events
- A structured Buddy scheme has been implemented in 2024 to further support approved foster carers with new and challenging situations and to underpin the layers of support discussed in assessment
- Valuing Care programme now built in to new carer assessments

The 'LAFSE' regional hub launched July'25



What's working well?

- Closer working practice with neighbouring LA's within our regional 'sub-cluster'
- Funding received by ESCC has contributed to operational costs (but staff hours for the LAFSE pilot have been significant)
- Some useful LAFSE workshops for staff and foster carers
- LAFSE appointed an advertising agency whose campaigns, on platforms beyond our individual LA budgets, went live Q3 to raise awareness of the national need for more foster carers:
 - Oct'25: Bus sides, radio campaign, YouTube
 - Nov/Dec'25: Facebook, Instagram, Teads, Google Ads
 - Local ESCC fostering offer and its promotion successfully running alongside LAFSE marketing

...and what is/was not:



- Netready website provider glitches
- Marketing activity gap for first 4 months.
- Difficulties aligning priorities and ensuring consistent messaging
- Under-representation of LA's at some meetings
- Insufficient consultation about events / challenge of large region
- Lack of accurate metrics to evidence marketing sources and detailed campaign success (most advertising actions lead to one main landing page only)
- No out-of-hours enquiry line cover
- Data duplication and IG compliance/sharing/storage issues
- Dual branding confusion for the public and our foster carers

Mockingbird

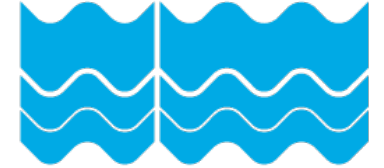
Part of the DfE LAFSE funding package

- Mockingbird set up, promotion & running spend (by end March '25)
- Recruitment from in-house staff and foster carer cohort
- Some commissioning pressures and structure changes required
- If successful, an ongoing cost-saving project with improved outcomes for foster carer retention and placement stability
- Specific Liaison Social Worker recruited Nov'24
- Home Hub Carers recruited Dec'24
- First Satellite Carers recruited Jan'25
- ESCC Mockingbird launch: Feb'25



It takes a village to raise a child

East Sussex
County Council



East Sussex
Fostering

Other initiatives eg:

Improving our corporate parenting to black and mixed heritage children in care

- The fostering team (Amy, Alison and Emma in the centre) alongside Replenish CIC staff, James and Sarah, working together to [drive change](#)
- Better meeting diverse religious and cultural needs
- Giving foster carers easy access to resources and information to support the child's identity
- Ongoing workshops for foster carers and social workers to think in a different way about the complexity of race and culture



Reasons to celebrate



- Maintaining sector leading in-house foster carer statistics
 - ★ 76% in-house against national average of 60%(@ 31/3/24)
- Improved retention and transfer figures
 - ★ 18 fostering applications allocated for assessment (@ w/c 20.01.25)
 - 7 of which are 'live' transfers (plus 3 already approved 2024/25)
 - Compared to 2 transfers approved in 2023/24
 - We are seeing increased interest from experienced agency carers



- More multi-generational foster carers

- ★ Helen has been an ESCC foster carer for 9 years. Her son, Sam, has grown up with fostering. He and his partner Olivia were approved as new foster carers at October's panel



- Increased YPWF engagement [George's story](#)

- ★ YPWF events and engagement with the public and the service. Numbers of YP attending events have consistently doubled in 2024

Questions?



Operational reassurance

Although the Regional Hub has not made the measurable positive difference we had hoped for, it has evidenced that amongst 20 LA's in the south east region, we were already doing things right operationally.

It has been a pleasure to share good practice.

Collaboration with colleagues across Sussex has been strong with further initiatives planned.

