

# Looked After Children's Annual Progress Report 2020-21

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**Teresa Lavelle-Hill**  
Head of Service for LAC



# Who did we look after?

**The data shows a snapshot as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.**

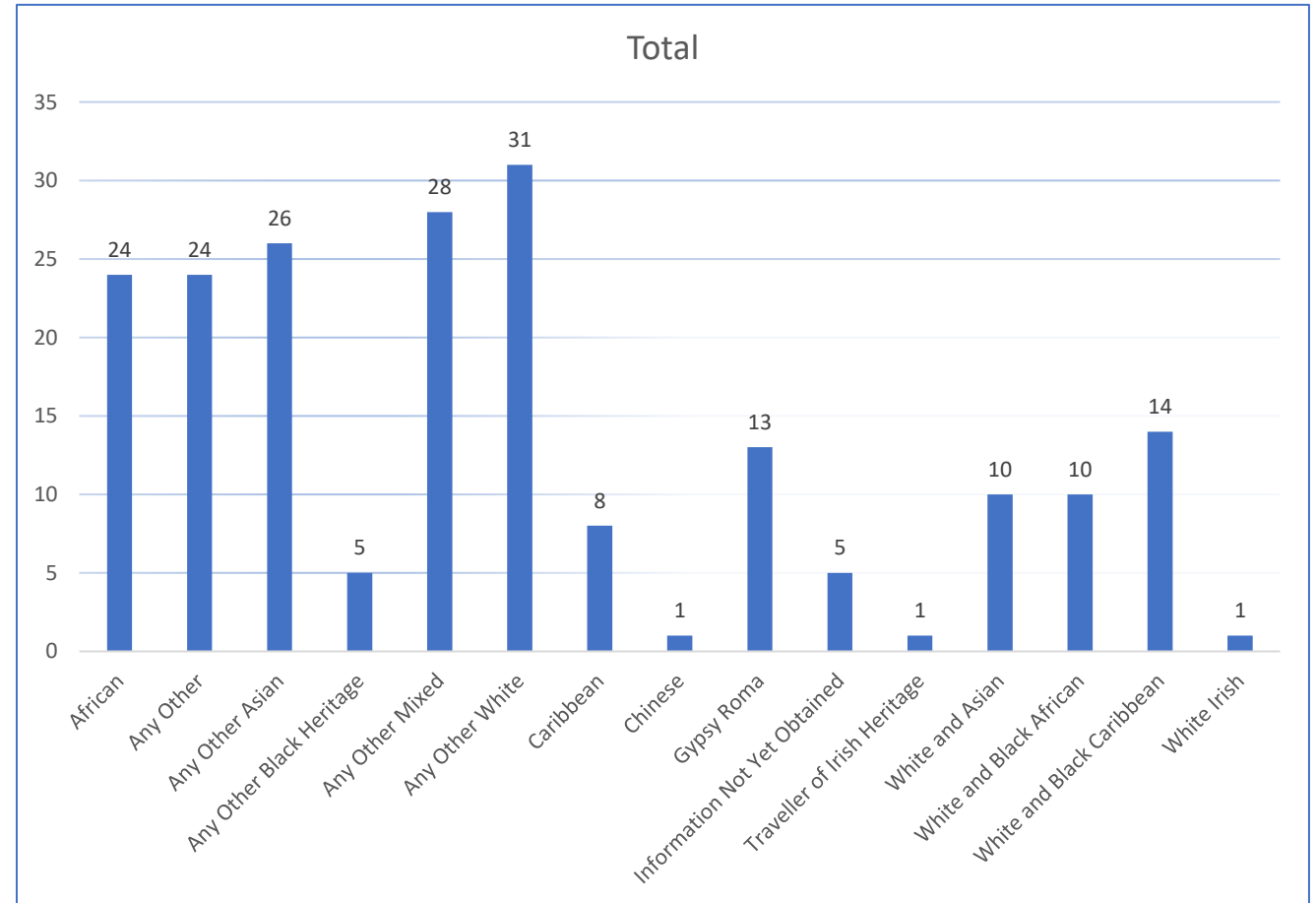
At year end we were looking after 343 boys and 268 girls.

- Overall, there were more children in care than the previous year. This is due in part to an increase of an additional 22 unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) in our care as compared to the previous year.
- This is also because we had more children come into our care than left our care.
- In addition to the snapshot year end figure, there is also the 'churn' figure, which is made up of the number of children moving in and out of care during the year. When added to the year end figure, this shows an increase of 22, as compared with 2019/20. In total there were 782 children allocated to social workers and worked with during 2020/21.

Statistics	2019-2020	2020-2021
Looked After Children	592	611
Children coming into care	179	209
0-5 year olds admitted to care	75	83
6-12 year olds admitted to care	38	49
13+ admitted to care	66	77
Children leaving care	177	178
0-12 year olds leaving care	64	91
13+ leaving care	105	87

# Who did we look after

26% of our children looked after during 2020/21 identified as being of a minority ethnic background or of mixed heritage. This includes children who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.



# Our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs)

- East Sussex County Council were caring for 54 UASC under 18 during 2020/21 plus 62 care leavers aged 18+ .
- Our UASC were mainly male, 90% were aged 16 or over but our youngest was aged only 13.
- In the last year, 12 young people came into our care via the National Transfer Scheme and the remainder have been spontaneous arrivals found either by the Police within East Sussex or at Newhaven Port.
- The majority of these children are Kurdish (predominately Iranian) followed by Sudanese. These groups have taken over from Vietnamese being the predominant nationality. We also have children from Eritrea, Afghanistan, Mali, Somali, Ethiopia, Albania, Kuwait, Libya, Syria and Egypt.

Statistic s	2019/ 20	2020/ 21
UASC in care	32	54

# Children with disabilities

- The number of children with severe disabilities in our care remains similar to previous years.
- At 31st March 2021, there were 23 LAC allocated to social workers from the Children's Disability Service (CDS), with 18 aged 15 or less and with 5 aged 16- 18.
- In addition, there are a significant number of other children in our care with a wider range of disabilities and allocated to other social work teams, including those who present with an autistic spectrum condition or who have other neuro diversity needs.
- Only 5 of the CDS children are living outside East Sussex. This number has reduced over the past few years.
- 8 CDS children were living with ESCC foster carers and 1 with independent agency foster carers. 5 were living in ESCC children's homes and 8 were living in independent children's homes. Some of these children are with us full time and some with us for significant packages of respite to support their families.
- 1 child was living in a residential school due to behavioural needs arising from an ASC diagnosis.

# Where our children are living

Decrease in	Decrease in children placed with ESCC foster carers
Decrease in	Decrease in children placed for adoption.
Increase in	Increase in children 16+ living with our supported accommodation providers including with our in-house supportive lodgings providers.
Increase in	Increase in children living in agency children's homes.

Data shows a snapshot, with the key weekly care costs

Placement Type	2019-20	2020-21
With foster carer	447	426
Of these: In house carers	293	265
Kinship carers	62	65
Agency carers	92	96
Placed for Adoption	30	23
Supported Accommodation/Supported Lodgings	30	57
ESCC Children's Homes	19	14
Agency Children's Homes	38	57
Agency Special Schools	0	1
Placed with Parents	20	22
Independent Living	3	7
Youth custody/secure unit	4	3
Hospital/NHS establishment	1	1
Absconded	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>611</b>

19/20 Total spend £31.9m

In house foster carers £343/ week

○ Kinship foster carers £149/ week

○ Agency foster carers £964/ week

○ ESCC Children's homes £3,132/ week

○ Agency Children's homes £4,084/ week

20/21 Total spend £32.3m

In house foster carers £379/ week

○ Kinship foster carers £146/ week

○ Agency foster carers £1,000/ week

○ ESCC Children's homes £3,066/ week

○ Agency Children's homes £4,230/ week

+ Supported accommodation mainly under block contracts for young people 16-18 at £985-£3,060/ week in the 2 years.



# How well did we do in 2020-21?

Indicator Ref	Description	2020/21 Value		2019/20 England	2019/20 Value		2018/19 England	2018/19 Value	
NI 58	Emotional & Behavioural Health of children in care	14.2	↑	14.1	14.5	↓	14.2	14.4	↑
Adoption 1	Percentage of children who ceased to be looked after who were adopted	15.8%	↑	11.7%	15.3%	↓	12.0%	16.0%	↓
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)	274 days	↓	175 days	248 days	↓	178 days	197 days	↑
NI62 Placements 1	Number of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year	13.3%	↓	11.0%	13.0%	↓	10.0%	12.0%	↓
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	64.1%	↑	68.0%	62.8%	↓	69.0%	70.1%	↓
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	17.3%	↓	16.0%	15.2%	↓	15.0%	13.0%	↓

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 2020-21? (continued)

Indicator Ref	Description	2020/21 Value		2019/20 England	2019/20 Value		2018/19 England	2018/19 Value	
Leaving Care 1 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in education, employment or training	46.3%	↓	53.0%	52.8%	↑	52.0%	52.0%	↑
Leaving Care 2 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in suitable accommodation	87.8%	↑	85.0%	78.8%	↓	85.0%	79.9%	↑
Leaving Care 3 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 17-18 who were in education, employment or training	68.7%	↓	64.0%	76.3%	↑	64.0%	65.0%	↓
Leaving Care 4 * <i>see note below</i>	% of former relevant young people aged 17-18 who were in suitable accommodation	95.5%	↓	90.0%	97.4%	↑	88.0%	91.0%	↑
Thrive PI 9	Rate of Children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18	57.5	↓	66.7	55.7	↑	65.0	56.0	↑
Health 1	Percentage of children who had their teeth checked by a dentist	32.6%	↓	86.0%	91.2%	↓	85.0%	94.0%	↑
PAF C81	Final warnings, reprimands and convictions of lac	1.8%	↑	3.0%	2.6%	↓	3.0%	2.0%	↑

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



# How well did we do in 2020-21 - Summary

- Overall performance has continued to remain strong with little change in most of our performance indicators despite the impact of Covid-19. **Note – the national data for 20/21 England is not yet published so performance when compared to the 2020/21 national data for England may look different.**
- The rate of LAC has increased from 55.5 in 2019/20 to 57.5 per 10,000 population in 20/21. Although this is well below the national average for England of 66.7 for 2019/20, it is higher than the rate for our statistical neighbours for 2019/20 which is 50.5.
- Suitable accommodation for our Care Leavers aged 2019/21 has improved markedly from last year and now stands at 87.8% compared to an England average of 85%.
- The emotional and behavioural health of children in care (as measured via the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire - SDQ scores) has improved slightly and the average score per child is 14.2 which is a reduction of 0.3.
- Performance on timely placements for children with a plan for adoption, children with 3 or more placement moves and children placed outside of ESCC boundaries have all been more challenging. This largely reflects the impact of Covid-19 on care planning and court timescales and a lack of enough placement options for children. It is also a reflection of the wider national picture.
- 25% of our foster carers felt unable to take placements during the pandemic and so the number of children that we have placed with ESCC foster carers has reduced to 265 from 293 in 2019-20
- Health indicators have also been adversely affected by Covid-19 and the complete lack of access to dental appointments. The percentage of children who had a dental check drastically reduced from 91% in 2019/20 to 32.6% in 2020/21. Due to Covid-19, dentists were closed during the first lockdown with practices reopening from July 2020 but offering a limited number of appointments. The last 2 months of data shows an improvement in the percentage of our children having dental checks
- Similarly, Covid-19 has impacted on the number of our Care Leavers aged 19-21 who are in education, employment and training which has fallen from 53% to 46% and now stands below the England average.

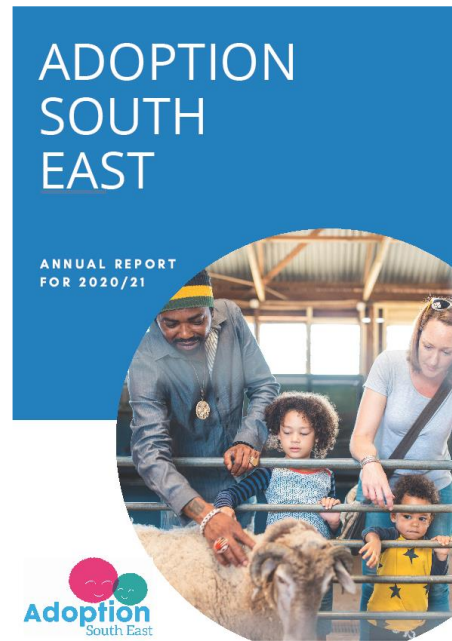
# Adoption South East (ASE) Regional Adoption Agency

- Despite the pandemic, ASE went live on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 with ESCC leading it which was a huge achievement.
- The global pandemic posed huge challenges for family finding and linking. Despite this, the 4 Local Authorities (Surrey, ESCC, WSCC and Brighton and Hove) agencies met weekly to consider all children and available adopters in order to identify potential links.
- As a result of the pandemic, ASE had to be creative when linking and matching children. The majority of the work took place on MS TEAMS and included adult contact as well as meeting children. Rigorous risk assessments were in place to support contact.
- When they could go ahead, care proceedings continued to be protracted causing significant delays to the plans for children. However, adopters and foster carers worked very closely together, self-isolating with families to minimise contact with others prior to introductions.
- ASE now have an ethnically diverse group of adopters to consider for children.
- A mandatory 'Fostering to Adopt Workshop' (F2A) has led more adopters to consider fostering for adoption. with both babies and older children. being placed in this way.

Family finding and linking for East Sussex children	2020-2021
Number of children adopted (AO's)	27
Number of children approved for adoption	26
Number of relinquished children	1
Number of 2 sibling groups matched	2
Number of 3 sibling groups matched	0
Number of 4 sibling groups matched	0
Number of children matched (outside of ASE)	3
Number of children matched within ASE	22
Number of children placed for F2A	8

# Adoption Recruitment and Post Adoption Support

Please see Adoption South East Annual Report for 2020/21



# Fostering Recruitment and Retention

The data provided is a snap shot as of 31st March 2021.

- There were 20 fostering households approved during 2020/21 offering 30 placements.
- The number of enquiries was significantly reduced compared to 2019/20.
- 2 fostering households transferred from agency foster care to become East Sussex foster carers bringing children with them and creating a saving of £40K per year.

Recruitment	Households		
	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019
Enquiries	227	268	266
Screening calls	92	114	118
Initial visits	42	71	70
Skills to foster training (STF)	37	21	29
Applications for assessment	53	35	35
Closed	7	7	3
Withdrew	13	6	11
Total allocated but did not progress	20	13	14
Approvals	20	22	21
Placements	30	39	36
Conversion rate Enquiry to approval	9%	8.2%	7.9%
Conversion rate Screening call to approval	22%	19.2%	17.8%
Conversion rate Initial visit to approval	48%	31%	30%

# SUPPORTIVE LODGINGS

- Supportive lodgings providers offer accommodation for our older children and also for homeless young people aged 16 to 21.
- As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, East Sussex Fostering Service had 55 approved providers offering a total of 82 places.
- There were 7 new household approved offering 8 placements during 2020/21.
- 57 children and young people were living in supportive lodgings during 2020/21.
- 8 'hybrid' providers (approved as both supportive lodgings providers and registered foster carers) provided stability and continuing care for children aged 14+.

# Placement Support Service

- During Covid-19 the team adjusted regularly to ensure that the most vulnerable children and their carers continued to receive face to face support on a risk assessed basis.
- The Placement Support Service supported 131 children during 2020/21.

Despite all the challenges and difficulties during the Pandemic, the commitment and sensitivity of the placement support workers has been outstanding'

**Placement Support - 84 support packages**  
**Special Placement Scheme - 5 support packages**  
**Mother & Baby – 2 support packages**  
**Through Care Team - 35 support packages**  
**Attachment - 1 support package**  
**Edge of care - 3 support packages**  
**Agency - 1 support package**

Placement support has always been a lifeline and the level of support they gave to me and D was truly exceptional, I couldn't have continued without it'.

'Our PSW's are very caring people when P was in hospital, they called many times to offer their help and have a chat, thank you



# CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL (CICC)



The CICC operated creatively during the pandemic ensuring young people's voices continued to be heard.

- The CICC contributed to projects being delivered through schools, youth services and agencies working with young people.
  - A CICC young person led a project inspecting the mental health support provided to students in schools in East Sussex.
  - Members of the CICC remained in touch with younger children in care during lockdown to help them feel less isolated. This small project will be developed into an official Buddy Scheme.
  - The CICC continued to attend Placement Support holiday activities. 13 issues raised by children in care were taken forward by the CICC with relevant professionals.
  - The CICC had a Zoom call with Anne Longfield, Children's Commissioner for England, with discussion around the impact of lockdown on their mental health, education and what support they were receiving.
  - The CICC gave input into training for professionals working with young people. Themes include the role of the CICC and the work they are doing, the impact of loss and separation, and the impact that inappropriate language can have on children in care.
- <https://www.youtube.com › watch>

# Our Children's Homes

## Hazel lodge St Leonards-on-Sea

- Judged as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in June 2019.
- The Manager left and an Acting Manager was appointed.
- The Manager and team worked incredibly hard during lockdown to keep the home open and safe.
- The children enjoyed appropriate socially distanced activities and trips out of the area.

## Brodrick House Eastbourne

- Continuing 'Outstanding' judgement by Ofsted.
- A new Manager and Deputy Manager were appointed.
- Staff undertook impressive work throughout the Covid-19 lockdown to keep the home open and safe.
- Successful and very positive outcomes for the children. eg one young person reached the summit of Snowdon which was a personal goal.
- Young people continued with their education throughout lockdown and made impressive progress.

## Homefield Cottage Seaford

- Judged 'Good' by Ofsted.
- Children responded to new boundaries during lockdown and outcomes were very positive.
- Children enjoyed the summer 'staycation' involving planned activities and decoration of the garden.
- A new kitchen was installed.
- Following lockdown some young people moved on to semi-independent placements and new children arrived.

# Our Children's Homes (continued)

## The Bungalow Eastbourne

- Registered for 7 children aged 7 - 19 and provided full-time accommodation to some of our disabled children who are unable to live in a family setting.
- All children attended local schools and all maintained with their families.
- The Bungalow received and Ofsted judgement of 'Good' in 2020.

## Lansdowne Secure Children's home Hailsham

- Judged as 'Good' by Ofsted in February 2020.
- New interim manager was appointed after the departure of the RHM and Deputy Manager.
- The extension of the building works were further delayed due to Covid 19, impacting on the physical environment and meaning reduced numbers of children.
- Despite Covid 19 significantly impacting on the majority of the workforce , Lansdowne was able to stay open albeit caring for a reduced number of children with very complex needs.

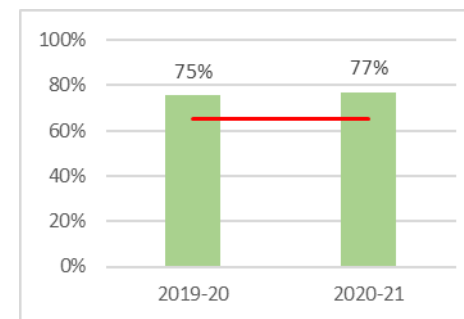
## Acorns Bexhill-on-Sea

- Continued to provide full-time care for 2 young people , both having a high level of complex needs.
- Staff worked closely with colleagues in the Positive Behaviour Support Services and the Child Adolescent Mental Health Service.
- Judged as 'Good' by Ofsted in October 2019. An Interim Ofsted Inspection in January judged as 'Declined effectiveness'.

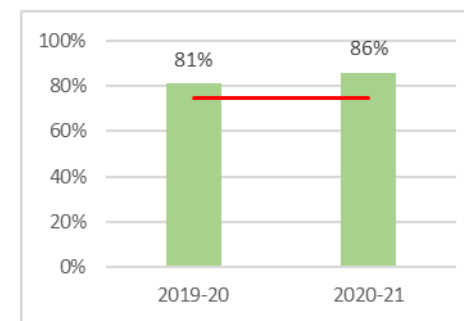
# The health of our children

- We built on excellent performance in 2019/20 to achieve both targets again in 2020/21.
- During 2020/21, 77% of Initial Health Assessments were undertaken within 20 days against a target of 65%, and 86% achieved within 25 days against a 75% target.
- 84-86% of Review Health Assessments are being achieved consistently with robust systems in place to remind staff to organise these in a timely manner.
- 89% of children that have been looked after for more than 12 months have been immunised.

% Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) Within 20 Days



% Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) Within 25 Days



# The mental and emotional wellbeing of our children

- A Pan Sussex whole system review of Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health access and support for children and young people was commissioned by the 3 Sussex local authorities, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust (SPFT) culminating in the Foundations For Our Future report published in March 2020 with 20 recommendations.
- Those children and young people who need more extensive and specialised help, including LAC, are identified in the iTHRIVE model which was adopted as part of this review.
- Looked After Children's Mental Health Services (LACMHS) largely operated via online clinics during the pandemic but face to face provision was offered to young people in crisis.
- There were 44 consultations to children and their networks, 89 drop in consultations to professionals working with LAC, and one therapeutic parenting group.
- The number of cases opened to LACMHS at any one time varied from 104 (1<sup>st</sup> quarter) to 57 (4<sup>th</sup> quarter) because of staff shortages and a period of recruitment in the final quarter.
- The Adopted Children's Mental Health Service (ADCAMHS) worked with 72 children, young people and their families providing bespoke treatment and support packages. These packages included specialist consultations, assessments and therapeutic interventions.

# Education of our children

## Headline data

- All statutory educational assessments, tests and regulated qualification grades were determined by teaching staff for the second year running. Data will not be published and will only be used to identify key patterns/trends.
- The National Looked after Children's data set will not be available for any robust comparative work. The ESCC Virtual School has collected individual results, with many young people able to celebrate particular successes. GCSE's results were particularly pleasing. The percentage of students achieving a level 4 or above in both English and Maths was significantly higher than last year. The percentage of our students achieving five GCSEs at level 5 and above is now higher than the percentage that achieved five GCSEs including English and Maths at level 4 and above in 2019.
- Post 16 results enabled 10 Care leavers to go to university in September. Many others achieved the level 2 qualifications needed to progress on to level 3 courses.
- School attendance for Looked After Children during lockdown remained good with staff and Foster Carers working hard to reduce barriers to attendance.
- In terms of exclusions, 0% of the Looked after Children cohort had permanent exclusions, 4.53% had at least 1 fixed term exclusion (now called suspension), 3.34% had 1 exclusion and 1.19% had more than one exclusion. 89% of those excluded are in secondary school. There is no national comparable published data on exclusions.



# Education of our children During the Covid-19 pandemic

- Virtual School participated in the Vulnerable Children at Risk Steering Group. This was formed to assess and manage risk to all vulnerable children during lockdown.
- Teaching interventions delivered to Children in Care virtually, against agreed targets.
- Dedicated language teaching provision for newly arrived Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.
- Designated Teacher training delivered on line included pre-recorded training resources and live discussions.
- Foster Carer training 'Carers as Coaches' was delivered virtually – tackling challenging behaviour and improving young people's wellbeing, pro-social skills and academic success.
- Alternative provision was commissioned via a range of providers for young people with complex behaviours – Jamie's Farm, Eggtooth Project, one to one interventions etc.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Conference was held.
- Newsletter for Designated Teachers and Foster Carers went out regularly.



## Education of our children

### Future developments

- Virtual Headteacher to take on strategic role to promote the educational outcomes of any child 0-18 years who has, or previously has had a Social Worker.
- Post 16 pilot to enhance the educational outcomes for young people 16 + and developments in FE provision.

# The Through Care Team (TCT)

## What we have achieved in 2020/21

- The TCT kept in close contact with our young people during the Covid-19 lockdowns, offering virtual visits and weekly group activities e.g. art and cookery lessons. As soon as it was safe to do so, face to face meetings resumed outdoors.
- Young people 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.
- Development of our corporate grandparenting role through an enhanced safeguarding plan for parents and babies, emotional support via support groups, and financial support for essential baby equipment.
- Placement Support Workers continued to work closely with our young people who were isolated in their own accommodation or who were struggling to maintain their placement.
- A specific Placement Support Worker was appointed with a focus on prevention of homelessness/rough sleeping and on our hardest to reach young people.

# The Through Care Team

## What we have achieved in 2020/21 (continued)

- Our Care Leavers Council met throughout the year on virtual platforms and were involved in significant research undertaken by the University of Sussex regarding the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the care experienced by young people.
- The housing pathway was extended to include more commissioned providers providing intensive support and offering more choice to our most vulnerable young people.
- Peer mentors received training and a pilot scheme will be launched in the autumn 2021.



# The Through Care Team

## Future Developments

- Extend the local offer to our young people to include affordable/free access to leisure activities including local gyms and subsidised travel on public transport.
- Work to increase the quality of private rented accommodation provision for those Care Leavers who have exhausted options through traditional housing pathways, including the development of a rent guarantor scheme.
- To work with CAMHS and Adult Mental Health Services to improve therapeutic intervention to our older young people, particularly those who are experiencing the impact of trauma and for those who require tier 4 services.

# Our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

## Developments 2020/21

- Specialist training was delivered to foster carers and professional network regarding the challenges and needs of this cohort.
- Pilot scheme with the Home Office to offer timely Virtual Interviews for asylum claims.
- Collaboration with Sussex Police on a national operation to protect UASC and treat them as victims of crime. The aim has been to reduce numbers of children who are re-trafficked or drawn into Modern Day Slavery.
- A toolkit has been developed for County Councillors.
- Additional ESOL language provision has been made available at Eastbourne Campus with effect from September 2021.
- A bespoke mental health service has been commissioned from the Refugee Council.
- Partnership with Diversity Recourse International to assist linking young people into existing resources, building safer community networks and supporting identity and cultural needs of this cohort.
- Accommodation pathways have been enhanced.
- The ESCC Specialist UASC Team has been expanded. Staff have consolidated their knowledge and understanding and have improved relationships with external agencies e.g. Immigration Solicitors, Interpreters, Therapists and Charities.
- During lockdown, virtual one to one support and group sessions were provided alongside online education provision.



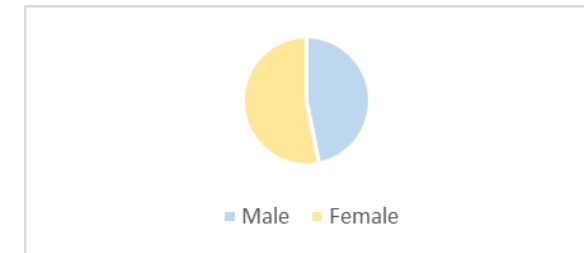
# Our unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) (continued)

- **Next steps**
  - To review the staffing complement of the Specialist Team.
  - Face to face support groups re-established – understanding life in the UK.
  - Extend training offer to Local Children's Safeguarding Partnership
  - To collaborate with the Fostering Service to extend diversity of the fostering offer.

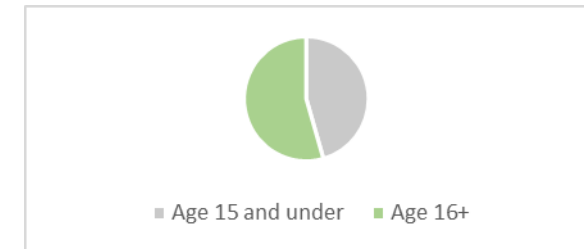


# Our Children who went missing

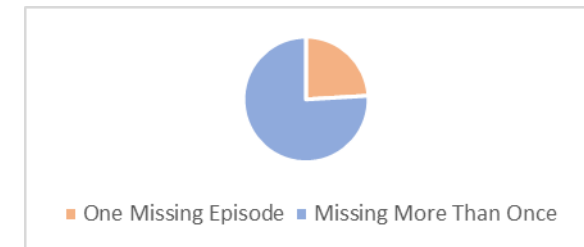
In 20/21, 79 LAC went missing, of these, 37 were male and 42 were female



43 of the 79 missing LAC were aged 16 and over, while the other 36 were aged 15 and under



60 of the missing LAC went missing more than once



In 2020/21 there were 639 missing episodes in total for all children throughout the year, 556 episodes of children being missing for less than 24 hours, 50 episodes of children being missing for between 24 to 48 hours, 20 episodes where children were missing between 2 and 4 days and 13 episodes where they were missing for 5 days or more.

All these children were tracked by Sussex Police and by Children Services staff and offered Return Home Interviews . 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

- The Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) operational group continued to meet monthly each side of the county to consider referrals of all exploited children who were deemed to be at the highest risk. Referrals to the group were screened through a multi-agency screening hub with processes tightened in line with feedback from the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI).
- As of the end of March 2021, there were 15 children subject to East Sussex MACE operational oversight and therefore categorised as being at high risk of exploitation. 4 of these children were East Sussex LAC, and all were female. 2 of these children were deemed to be a risk of sexual exploitation and 2 deemed to be at risk of both criminal and sexual exploitation.
- The MACE strategic group met bi-monthly to consider the issues raised in relation to safeguarding of this group of children. The criminal exploitation of children connected to 'County Lines' (drugs) activity remained a significant issue in East Sussex, with changes during Covid-19 focusing on increased criminal exploitation in the Hastings area. There continued to be a number of contextual safeguarding responses particularly focusing on older children and place based interventions.

# Our children who offend

- The Youth Offending Team (YOT) worked with 14 looked after children during 2020/21.
- Children who were not previously in the care system become LAC when they are remanded to the care of ESCC and/or when they are remanded to secure accommodation such as a Young Offenders Institution because they have been charged with a serious offence. For children who were not previously LAC before the remand, their LAC status ceases once they are sentenced.
- A snapshot of the looked after status of open cases showed that the YOT were working with 2 looked after children on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2021 which equates to 2% of the YOT caseload. LAC aged 10 - 17 represent less than 1% of the total population of this age group across the county, therefore they are over represented within the YOT cohort.
- There is a Pan Sussex protocol in place which has been agreed with Sussex Police and which focusses on keeping LAC out of the criminal justice system as far as possible and when appropriate.

# Participation

## How we listen to what our children think and say

- 95% of all My Voice Matters Meetings were held early or on time in 2020/21 which is up from 92% the previous year despite the challenges of the pandemic.
- Only 13% of reviews were delayed by more than 4 weeks. The majority of reviews were delayed in the child's best interest or because an essential party was unable to attend.
- A review of administrative support processes in quarter 2 of 2021-22 should further reduce the number of late or ineffective reviews in the future.





# Participation

## Children and Young People make their voices heard in lots of different ways

- In 2020/21, 95% of children aged 4+ participated in some way in their My Voice Matters meetings, up from 91% on the previous year.
- Social Workers have demonstrated skill and creativity in gathering children's views including the use of alternative communication methods to fully consult children wherever possible.
- More children are chairing their meetings and asking questions about their plans.
- The My Voice Matters letter means that children receive the meeting outcome in their own/age related appropriate language or in their preferred communication style





# The role of our elected members

All elected members in ESCC are Corporate Parents for the children in our care and those young people moving into adulthood as care leavers. This means that they should consider the needs of these children and young people as they fulfil their roles across the Council and ask themselves the question 'would this be good enough for my child?'

The Corporate Parenting Panel met virtually three times during 2020/21 to continue to scrutinise the performance of all services in relation to LAC and care leavers. The panel meeting for the April 2020 panel was cancelled due to the pandemic. The reports set out below were presented and considered:

## **24<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

- The launch of Adoption South East, the Regional Adoption Agency.
- Annual Progress Report of East Sussex Adoption Service.
- Annual Progress of East Sussex Fostering Service.
- LAC Statistics.
- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Corporate Parenting Services.
- Update on Residential Homes.

## **30<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

- Regulation 44 Inspection reports for the following Children's Homes: Acorns (Dorset Road), Brodrick House, Hazel Lodge, Homefield Cottage, Lansdowne Secure Unit and The Bungalow.
- Annual Report of services for LAC 2019/20.
- Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report.
- Virtual School Annual Report 2019/20.
- Looked After Children Health Report.
- LAC Statistics.

## **29<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

- Annual Report of the East Sussex Foster Carer Association (ESFCA).
- LAC Statistics.
- Ofsted Inspection reports for the following Children's Homes: The Bungalow, Lansdowne Secure Unit and Acorns.
- Regulation 44 Inspection reports for the following Children's Homes: Acorns, Brodrick House, Hazel Lodge, Homefield Cottage, Lansdowne Secure Unit and The Bungalow.

# Priorities for 2021/22

- Improve options for all our children- adoption, fostering and residential.
- To complete the building works of Lansdowne Secure Children's Home and the opening of a new children's home in Hastings.
- To embed good practice in meeting the identity needs of our children, young people and their families.
- To enhance the 'local offer' for our Care Leavers.
- To develop a Lifelong Links project with regional colleagues to build stronger support networks for LAC and care leavers.
- To contribute to the Pan Sussex whole system review of Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health for children and consolidate the partnership between Adult Social Care (ASC) and Children's Services to improve mental health pathways for Care Leavers aged 18 to 25.
- To develop best practice for post adoption support across Adoption South East.
- To contribute to a new, integrated multi-agency service to support families with children who are 'on the edge of care' to build family resilience and prevent children entering care or promote a return home or to extended family members where possible.

# Children's Services Annual Reports 2021/21



**Virtual School Annual Report 2020-21**



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