

Children's Services – end of year 2022/23

Summary of progress on Council Priorities, issues arising, and achievements

Education

Early Years

East Sussex outcomes for the Early Years Foundation Stage were above the national average for academic year 2021/22. 69% of pupils achieved a good level of development compared to the national average of 65%. This is the first set of data since 2019. Changes in the new statutory framework mean that data cannot be compared to previous years. 98.6% of early years providers in East Sussex are rated as good or outstanding compared to 96% nationally.

Take up of funded 2 year places, for eligible 2 year olds in East Sussex for the spring 2023 funding period was 82%. East Sussex remains above the national average of 72%.

Childminder Conference

In March, the early years improvement team held their first conference specifically aimed at childminders. 52 childminders from across the county attended. The conference theme focussed on The Gift of Language. It included a variety of keynote speeches and the opportunity to network with colleagues. It included representatives from the Healthy Active Little Ones (HALO) team, the 50 Things to do Before You're 5 team, East Sussex Library Service, and The Curiosity Approach.

Hastings Priority Investment Area

In March 2023 Government Ministers agreed the delivery plan for the Hastings Priority Investment Area (PIA). The PIA is a three year programme up to August 2025 which will focus on three key priorities. The Hastings PIA will receive an additional investment of £800k to deliver on these priorities:

- Improving attendance.
- Improving key stage 2 maths outcomes.
- Improving key stage 4 outcomes through strong and stable leadership.

Mental Health Support Team

The Mental Health Support Team (MHST) launched a second Hastings team in September 2022. Four primary schools and one secondary school have been identified as placement schools. The remaining six primary schools will have newly qualified staff from last year's Hastings Team One cohort allocated to them. A Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) specialist has been recruited to the Hastings Two team to work with two of the Hastings special schools. The schools are engaging well with the service and are welcoming the additional mental health resource provided. 71 schools are now part of the MHST programme in East Sussex.

Work Experience Placements

Our Work Experience team continue to see an increase in work experience placements booked, with record numbers of Year 10/Year 11 going out on placement in the academic year 2021/22 – 3,767. So far in this academic year, 2022/23, we are on course to reach over 4,200 placements.

The Local Agreed Religious Education (RE) Syllabus

The new agreed syllabus for RE, Faith and Belief in the 21st Century, is the statutory curriculum for all maintained schools in the county. It was rolled out in September 2022. It was developed with external advice from RE Today and significant consultation with school and subject leaders, children, young people, and their families. The new agreed syllabus focuses on the major world religions whilst allowing for wider world views and thematic, moral, and ethical questions. Two free launch events were provided covering the new agreed syllabus. 89% of all primary schools and 87% of all secondary schools including academies engaged with the training offer.

iCan Careers Event

On Wednesday 8 March 2023, 25 schools from across East Sussex attended the annual iCan Careers Event at the Towner Gallery in Eastbourne. iCan is a free bespoke careers event arranged by the Careers Hub. It is mainly for young people aged 14-16 who experience barriers to accessing mainstream careers events, such as those with SEND and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.

iCan brought together 63 professionals from 36 education, training and employment providers from across East Sussex and the surrounding counties. 259 students attended iCan this year, more than doubling from last year. 95 teachers/school staff also attended. It gave them the opportunity to meet and learn about education and training providers in and around the area.

Allocation of primary and secondary school places for 2023/24

The Admissions and Transport team completed the allocation for secondary schools in March 2023 and for primary schools in April 2023.

- 96.7% of East Sussex residents who applied on time for a secondary school place have been allocated a place at one of their preferred schools. 87.8% were offered their first preference.
- 92.9% of East Sussex residents who applied on time for a primary school place were offered their first preference, and 98.5% were offered one of their preferences.

Percentage of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) annual review meetings where the child gave their view and/or participated

93.1% (2,271 out of 2,439) children and young people gave their views and/or participated in their EHCP annual review.

Proportion of new EHCPs issued within 20 weeks

656 EHCPs were issued in 2022/23. This is 46.8% more than the 447 issued during 2021/22. Of the new EHCPs issued, 85.9% (519 out of 604) including exceptions and 87.6% (518 out of 591) excluding exceptions were issued within statutory timescales. This is above the targets of 65% and 70% respectively for 2022/23.

Phase transfer of EHCPs

The SEND Assessment and Planning team met two key statutory deadlines in Q4 related to children with EHCPs who are moving into a different phase of education in the coming September. Phase transfer EHCPs supported by our 0-13 team must be finalised by 15 February, and phase transfer EHCPs supported by our 14-25 team must be finalised by 31 March. Both teams finalised 100% of plans by the statutory deadlines. The two teams finalised a total of 983 plans between them.

Young SEND Ambassadors

In February, four of our Young SEND Ambassadors represented the Council at the Children's Disability Council's, Youth Voice Matters Conference in Manchester. The conference was addressed by the Minister for children, Claire Coutinho. The ambassadors took part in workshops focusing on co-production and mental health. It was a great opportunity for them to interact with young people from across the country and have their voices heard at a national level.

SEND strategy

In November 2022 we launched the new [East Sussex Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) Strategy 2022-25](#) after a 10-month consultation period with key partners across the East Sussex SEND community. The Strategy outlines a joint approach to service provision and commissioning. It puts children and young people, and their families at the centre of decision-making. The strategy sets out the shared ambitions we aim to achieve across Education, Health and Social Care over the next three years for children and young people with SEND.

New SEND Provision

All Saints CE Primary School, Bexhill opened a new specialist facility on 1 September 2022. The facility will accommodate 12 children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and associated Social, Emotional and Mental Health and Speech, Language and Communication Needs.

Summerdown School is a new free special school which is part of The Southfield Trust. The school will educate up to 84 learners between the ages of 5 and 16 who have a diagnosis of autism. It will also include a separate centre called The Southfield Centre. This will educate up to 51 learners with complex learning and medical needs. Pupils may be accommodated in other schools within the trust while the building of the school is completed. Further information about Summerdown School is on [The Southfield Trust website](#). The Council has worked closely with the Trust to open the new school, which is part of our strategy to ensure that children and young people with SEND are able to access the right provision.

Service user feedback surveys

- 76.5% of respondents to the feedback surveys who agree that things have changed for the better as a result of Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Services.
- 95.5 % of respondents to the feedback surveys who agree that things have changed for the better as a result of 0 – 19 Early Help Service.

The percentage of young people meeting the duty of RPA (Raising the Participation Age) by either participating in education, training or employment with training or undertaking re-engagement provision at academic age 16 (Year 12) and academic age 17 (year 13)

94% (ref i) of academic age 16 (year 12) met the duty to participate in education, training or employment with training in Quarter 4, meeting our target of 93%. 86% (ref ii) of academic age 17 (year 13) met the duty meeting our target of 86%.

Early Help and Social Care

The Household Support Fund

Funding from the government's Household Support Fund was used over the February half term and the Easter holidays to provide food vouchers to 2-19 year olds who are eligible for free school meals. Vouchers are provided directly to families by schools, settings and colleges. Vouchers can be used in all major supermarkets. The scheme has been extended for another year up to the end of March 2024. Food vouchers will be provided to eligible pupils over the school holidays.

Delivery of Safeguarding Reviews

East Sussex schools are committed to the welfare and safety of all children and to developing their safeguarding practice. This is evidenced through 100% of state funded schools returning their annual safeguarding audit to the Council. There was also a significant rise in referrals to the Single Point of Advice (SPOA) and Early Help Services over the past year.

In September 2022 all maintained schools made a new agreement to participate in a safeguarding review as part of a 2-year cycle. A new quality assurance review process with independent non-maintained special schools has also been implemented. More comprehensive monitoring of standards of safeguarding in all types of schools and colleges will allow the Education Safeguarding team to work with the East Sussex Safeguarding Children's Partnership to tailor training according to needs.

Connected Families Service

The new Connected Families Service launched in September 2022 for families with children aged 11-17 who are on the edge of care. The service aims to enable children to live safely at home, or where care is necessary, to maintain relationships and work to support children to return home when appropriate. Connected Families brings together Intensive Support Practitioners, coaches and a Multisystemic Therapy Team to provide proactive, tailored support for families at their point

of need. Staff work flexibly across evenings and weekends to support relationships, build resilience and encourage ambition. We have built relationships with partner agencies to enable us to smooth pathways and ensure that children are accessing health and education. We have partnered with East Sussex College to base our services in one of their buildings which opens opportunities for young people to access college facilities. There are currently 55 open cases and we have worked on and closed 16 cases. Q1 2023/24 will provide the first set of performance data for this service.

Lifelong Links

In October 2021 East Sussex, along with three other local authorities, were successful in a bid through the South East Regional Recovery Fund to explore options to deliver the Lifelong Links programme for children in our care. Lifelong Links aims to ensure that children in care have a positive support network around them during their time in care, and into adulthood; this may include relatives, friends, previous carers or professionals. A trained, independent Lifelong Links coordinator works with the child to find out who is important to them, who they would like to be back in touch with and who they would like to know more about.

All Lifelong Links Coordinators within the Family and Friends Service are now working with one or more children to develop Lifelong Links and the service has a waiting list. The offer has been extended out across all Looked after Children (LAC) and ThroughCare Teams.

The Digital in Care programme

The Digital in Care Programme is working to ensure children and young people in care have the same opportunities as their peers to reap the benefits of the online world, by ensuring carers and practitioners are equipped and able to support them.

The programme launched its training in online safety and digital resilience in 2022. It is innovative because it combines both carers and practitioners in the same training. This is working well, and they are able to learn from each other. Feedback so far is very positive with 92% feeling more confident to support young people and 100% knowing where to go to get help. Our Digital Hive website launched in August 2022. It is our one stop shop for carers and practitioners to access training, resources, advice and support.

The percentage of Care Leavers undertaking a Level 4 – 6 qualification

12% of care leavers aged 18-25 are undertaking level 4 – 6 qualifications. Eleven care leavers gained university places for the 2022/23 academic year and nine have taken up the place.

Social Care Quality Assurance Framework

Following the appointment of a Quality Assurance (QA) Operational Manager there has been further enhancement to our QA activity in Early Help and Children's Social Care. This has resulted in focussed attention and improvements made to a number of performance indicators.

December 2022 Annual Health Survey Early Help and Social Workers

The 2022 Children's Services Social Care Health Check was carried out between 7 December 2022 and 30 January 2023. All Council Children's Services Social and Early Help Workers were sent an online survey to provide feedback on several key areas of working life which impact their health and wellbeing. There were 281 responses to the survey, from these 99% of the Social Workers said they would recommend working for the Council (up from 95% in 2019 and 92% in 2018).

The National Referral Mechanism National Pilot

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM), as set out by the Home Office, is the UK's framework for identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery. East Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council are taking part in a national pilot to develop approaches on decision-making for children who have been identified as victims of modern slavery and exploitation. Multi-agency

decision-making panels, which include representatives from Sussex Police, Children's Services, Health and the Youth Justice Service, have been established in both local authorities and now consider all NRM referrals for children under 18 allocated to East Sussex or Brighton and Hove. The East Sussex panel has been operational since March 2023 and four of the five children referred have received positive conclusive grounds decisions within 45 days. This compares to pre-pilot decision making timescales which, in some cases, exceeded 12 months. Further information about the national pilot can be found here [Devolving child decision-making pilot programme: general guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/devolving-child-decision-making-pilot-programme-general-guidance)

Collaboration Against Child Exploitation (CACE)

CACE is a 7-week educative programme for parents/carers whose young people are either at risk of or are experiencing Child Criminal or Child Sexual Exploitation. CACE is run at various locations across East Sussex including Crowborough, Peacehaven, Eastbourne and Hastings. Session themes include, what is exploitation, knives and weapons, substances, emotional-wellbeing, adolescent to parent violence and strengthening relationships and social media and online presence. The final CACE session is co-facilitated by a parent mentor who provides invaluable 1:1 and group support with lived experiences of Child Exploitation.

Following the 7-week educative programme, parents/carers continue to meet on a monthly basis. At these support groups parents are able to request further information on topics they feel are relevant for example, education or the youth justice service. Parent mentors also run a telephone helpline as well as Facebook and Instagram pages. Since April 2022 CACE has delivered eight education groups and four support groups, reaching in excess of 125 parents.

The percentage of LAC participating in education, training or employment with training at academic age 16 (Year 12) and academic age 17 (year 13)

81% of LAC aged 16 (year 12) (**ref iii**) are participating in education, training or employment with training, above the target of 80%. 82% are participating in education, training or employment (without training). The percentage of LAC at academic age 17 (year 13) participating is 67% which is below our target of 70%. 80% are participating in education, training or employment (without training). The Virtual School, Through Care Team and Youth Employability Service continue to support those not in employment, education or training back into education. We have some young people in part time jobs who are looking at returning to further education in September 2023. We are also providing support through different agencies through re-engagement activities.

Average Progress 8 score for LAC

The national Department for Education data was released in March 2023. East Sussex LAC (**ref iv**) in academic year 2021/22 had a progress 8 score (overall) of -1.17. This is better than the national score of -1.3 for LAC. Results in English, Ebacc and other are also less than 0.5 points below national LAC results. The average progress score for Maths, -0.66, was better than the national LAC score of -0.83. Further actions we are taking for future cohorts include:

- Early identification of young people who are not making good progress.
- Promoting use of assistive technology for children with literacy difficulties.
- High quality academic intervention for LAC through development of Virtual School intervention teacher provision.
- Coaching intervention to support emotional resilience and development of positive study skills.
- The Youth Employment Service working with all LAC from year 10 and providing intensive input for young people unclear of future pathways.
- Further links with further education colleges and higher education providers to ensure high aspirations and support transitions.

Rate of Children on a Child Protection (CP) Plan and LAC (per 10,000 children)

Over the past two years we have seen sustained increases in demand:

- 37.29% increase in Single Point of Advice (SPOA) referrals seen in 2022/23 (17,409) compared with 2020/21 (12,680).
- 21.37% increase seen in Multi Agency Screening Hub (MASH) referrals 2022/23 (21,181) compared with 2020/21 (17,452).
- 5.40% increase seen in Referrals to the Duty and Assessment Team (DAT) 2022/23 (4,018) compared with 2020/21 (3,812).
- 18.25% increase in DAT assessments in 2022/23 (2,955) compared with 2020/21 (2,499).

The rate of children with a CP Plan at Q4 was 64.8 (691 children). This is 155 children above our target of 536 children (50.3 per 10,000). We continue to monitor this carefully. In addition to the robust management oversight of plans, a mid-way review by the Children Protection Advisor is being embedded into practice. The mid-way review provides additional scrutiny and identifies what factors/barriers there are to ending a plan and what actions need to take place for the plan to be safely ended at the next review.

The rate of LAC at Q4 was 62.3 per 10,000 children (664 children). Of the 664 children, 73 were Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC), and this cohort represented 25% of our new entrants to care in 2022/23. A change in the National Transfer Scheme for UASC means that the authority is now required to look after up to 106 UASC. We are also experiencing an increase in asylum seeking young people, placed in adult hotels in the area requiring age assessment and placements.

Delays in court system are contributing to higher numbers of LAC, this has an impact on vulnerable children as it results in delays in moving children to more permanent arrangements e.g. Special Guardianship Order or for very young children to adoptive families. There continues to be an increase in the number of adolescents with complex needs entering care.

After reaching a high mark of 980 open Children in Need (CIN) at the end of Q2, we have managed to reduce this figure to 897 by the end of Q4. There continues to be a significant focus on ensuring pace and purpose in our work with CIN, and progressing to ending plans where it is safe to do so. A recent audit of children on a CIN plan for 9+ months did not highlight concerns regarding drift or delay. We are continuing to see increases in the demand for CIN plans to support adolescents with complex needs.

Participation and strategic partnerships

Children and Young People's Trust Annual Event

Children's Services held their first face to face Children and Young People's Trust Annual Event since COVID-19 on 3 May 2022. 168 delegates attended, including 42 young people, representing a variety of sectors and youth voice groups. The event focused on the refresh of our Children and Young People's Plan and provided the opportunity to discuss each of the Plan's five priority areas; Best Start in Life; Safeguarding; Education; Physical Health; and Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing.

The East Sussex Youth Cabinet annual report for 2022-2023

The Youth Cabinet are the elected voice of children and young people aged 11-18. Members work with decision-makers and other youth voice groups to campaign on issues and work together to bring about change.

The annual report [Championing Youth Voice 2022-2023](#) highlights key activities and outcomes regarding the campaigns and activities of the Youth Cabinet across their key priorities, including work on:

- Environment and Climate Change Strategy.
- Jobs, Money, Opportunities and Skills.
- Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing.
- Engaging with key decision-makers through the Children and Young People's Trust Annual Event and Council business planning.

Holiday Activities

In 2022, the Council continued to successfully deliver the Department for Education (DfE) funded Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme. Enriching activities were provided for free to eligible young people aged 5-16 during the Easter, summer and winter school holidays in 2022. All activities included the provision of a healthy meal. The DfE has confirmed funding for the HAF programme for at least 2023 and 2024.

Activities were spread across the whole county, with a focus in six target areas with higher need (Hastings, Eastbourne, Bexhill, Hailsham, Newhaven and Peacehaven). Provision was targeted at young people in receipt of benefits-related free school meals (FSM), but 15% of places across the programme were also available to other eligible groups. These included those with SEND, Looked After Children, a child protection plan, children in need and young carers.

- The Council funded 86 external HAF providers, many across all three holiday periods.
- More than 30,000 individual sessions took place, with over 6,000 different children and young people engaging with the programme over the course of 2022.

We received positive feedback from parents/carers, young people and providers. The DfE focus for the programme was to encourage young people to be more active and eat more healthily, but the feedback also demonstrates that positive activities have also had a positive impact on mental health too.

Revenue Budget Summary

The final outturn against the net budget of £103.543m is an overspend of £11.477m for the year (**ref v**), a decrease of £0.073m since Q3. Within the forecast there are £3.663m of COVID-19 costs and lost income which has been offset with COVID-19 tranche funding.

Early Help and Social Care

The outturn overspend against budget relating to Early Help and Social Care (**ref vi**) has decreased since Q3 by £0.051m, to £10.328m.

Main variances from last quarter include in Looked After Children (LAC) position which has improved by £0.4m to an overspend against budget of £7.757m, this has been offset by increased overspend of £0.2m in Locality Social Work and Family assessment to £2.464m overspend, and £0.2m in Specialist Services taken the overspend against budget to £0.372m.

Communication, Planning and Performance

For Communication, Planning and Performance (**ref vii**) there has been no change from Q3 with the majority of the overspend of £2.422m within Home to School Transport (net of COVID-19 funding of £0.991m for ongoing related pressures) as growth in solo provisions for some children has slowed slightly.

Central Resources

Central Resources, where the department records any efficiencies and staff vacancies from across a number of areas in the department, is underspent by £1.217m (**ref viii**).

Next steps

The department is continuing to look for further mitigations, with senior managers leading in taking every opportunity to save costs where possible. However, containing costs in Children's Services continues to be a significant challenge across the country, against the background of increased demand and complexity of needs emerging from the pandemic and acute supply side shortages in both care and education provision.

Actions continue to include:

- Further engagement with regional local authority commissioning groups to drive down costs and increase purchasing power for commissioned placements.
- Head of Service and Assistant Director sign off required for all external placements, including continuing to seek contributions from health partners wherever possible.
- Monthly Head of Service and Assistant Director review of top 20 high-cost placements including scrutiny of move on/ exit plans.

The department has continued looking at any longer-term impact from the 2022/23 outturn on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The MTFP includes significant investments totalling some £8.9m for Home to School Transport, LAC, Locality, New School attendance duties and Care leavers from 2023/24.

There are no planned savings for 2022/23.

Capital Programme Summary

The Capital Programme for Children's Services for 2022/23 is £2,327m which includes new investment of £193m of the Youth Investment Funds. **(ref ix)**.

Performance exceptions (See How to read this report for definition)**Priority – Driving sustainable economic growth**

Performance measure	Outturn 21/22	Target 22/23	RAG Q1 22/23	RAG Q2 22/23	RAG Q3 22/23	RAG Q4 22/23	2022/23 outturn	Note ref
% of young people meeting the duty of RPA by either participating in education, training or employment with training or undertaking re-engagement provision at academic age 16 (Year 12)	93%	93%	A	A	A	G	94%	i
% of young people meeting the duty of RPA by either participating in education, training or employment with training or undertaking re-engagement provision at academic age 17 (Year 13)	85%	86%	A	A	A	G	86%	ii
% of Looked After Children participating in education, training or employment with training at academic age 16 (Year 12)	76% RPA (78% EET)	80%	G	A	R	G	81% (86% EET)	iii
Average Progress 8 score for Looked after Children	N/A	Ac. Year 21/22 no more than 0.5 percentage points below the nat ave.	G	G	A	G	Ac. Year 21/22 -1.17 Nat. Ave -1.3	iv

Savings exceptions 2022/23 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2022/23	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved	Note ref
	-	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Savings	0	0	0	0	0	
			-	-	-	
			-	-	-	
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0	
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	0	0	0	0	0	

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total	Note Ref
	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	
Total	0	0	0	

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Revenue Budget 2022/23 (£'000)

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2022/23 Gross	2022/23 Income	2022/23 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note ref
Central Resources	2,791	(1,448)	1,343	1,436	(1,310)	126	1,355	(138)	1,217	viii
Early Help and Social Care	90,084	(14,946)	75,138	104,990	(19,524)	85,466	(14,906)	4,578	(10,328)	vi
Education and ISEND	109,555	(14,260)	95,295	105,733	(10,494)	95,239	3,822	(3,766)	56	
Communication, Planning and Performance	27,514	(7,055)	20,459	30,444	(7,563)	22,881	(2,930)	508	(2,422)	vii
DSG non Schools	-	(88,692)	(88,692)	-	(88,692)	(88,692)	-	-	-	
Schools	156,078	(156,078)	-	156,078	(156,078)	-	-	-	-	
Total CSD	386,022	(282,479)	103,543	398,681	(283,661)	115,020	(12,659)	1,182	(11,477)	v

Capital programme 2022/23 (£'000)

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget 2022/23	Actual 2022/23	Variation (Over) / under 2022/23 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
House Adaptations for Disabled Children's Carers	1,053	1,040	50	37	13	13	-	-	
Schools Delegated Capital	28,523	28,523	2,097	2,097	-	-	-	-	
Conquest Centre redevelopment	356	356	15	-	15	-	15	-	
Youth Investment Fund	193	193	193	193	-	-	-	-	
Total CS D	30,125	30,112	2,355	2,327	28	13	15	0	ix